

Chinese schools deny Google cyber-attacks

Written by Taipei Times

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Chinese educational institutions named in connection with cyber-attacks on Google have denied involvement, state media said on Saturday, as differences festered between Beijing and the Internet giant.

The New York Times reported on Thursday that the cyber-attacks aimed at Google and dozens of other firms had been traced to Shanghai Jiaotong University and the Lanxiang Vocational School, which the newspaper said had military backing. The paper cited anonymous sources for the report.

Google vowed last month to stop bowing to Internet censors in China in the wake of sophisticated cyber-attacks aimed at the US firm's source code and at Gmail accounts of Chinese human rights activists around the world.

A spokesperson for Shanghai Jiaotong University told Xinhua news agency: "We were shocked and indignant to hear these baseless allegations, which may harm the university's reputation."

"The report of the New York Times was based simply on an IP [Internet Protocol] address. Given the highly developed network technology today, such a report is neither objective or balanced," the spokesperson said.

Li Zixiang, party chief at the Lanxiang Vocational School in Shandong Province, also named in the report, said: "Investigation ... found no trace the attacks originated from our school."

Li denied a relationship between the school and the military and rejected links made in the report to a computer science class taught by a Ukrainian professor.

"There is no Ukrainian teacher in the school and we have never employed any foreign staff," Li told Xinhua. "The report was unfounded. Please show the evidence."

Lanxiang teaches vocational skills such as cooking, auto repair and hairdressing, while the computer science class offers only basic courses, Xinhua reported.

The director of the school's general office, Zhou Hui, said 38 students had been recruited by the military since 2006 "for their talent in auto repair, cooking and electric welding."

Following its January comments, Google has continued filtering searches in line with Chinese law, while trying to negotiate a compromise with officials.

Google cofounder Sergey Brin said this month he hoped the Internet powerhouse would find a way to operate in China without censoring Web search results.

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“I’m optimistic,” Brin said during an on-stage chat at the prestigious TED Conference in Long Beach, California, on Feb. 12. “I want to find a way to really work within the Chinese system and drive more information.”

“A lot of people think I’m naive, and that may be true, but I wouldn’t have started a search engine if I wasn’t naive,” he said.

Brin declined to place odds on the chances of Google working out a compromise that would allow unfettered online searches in China, saying only that while it wasn’t likely to happen now it might “in a year or two.”

He defended Google’s decision to launch a filtered google.cn search engine in China in 2006, saying the company’s presence in that market “made a big difference, but things started going downhill after the [Beijing] Olympics.”

“We intend to stop censoring,” Brin said. “We don’t want to run a service that is politically censored.”

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