

Chinese media pans Google and alleges US intelligence links

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Chinese media unleashed a torrent of criticism against Google on Saturday after reports it would leave the country, with Xinhua news agency alleging that the company was linked to US intelligence.

The comments were the latest in a series of angry exchanges sparked by the row over the Internet giant's complaints of cyber hacking and censorship in the country.

"Some Chinese Internet users who prefer to use Google still don't realize perhaps that because of the links between Google and the US intelligence services, search histories on Google will be kept and used by the US intelligence agencies," Xinhua said in an editorial.

Google's main spokeswoman in Beijing declined to comment on the claims.

The English-language China Daily declared "Google in wrong game" as it took issue with the company's stance, saying: "The Chinese are enjoying unpre-cedented freedom in the country's more than 5,000 years of history."

"If the vested interests' accusation that the Chinese government censors the Internet to spy on its own people does not originate from ignorance, then [it] is a white lie and a malicious attack," China Daily said. "It will not do any good to Google either and by linking its exit from China with political issues, Google will certainly lose its credibility in a country that has the largest number of netizens."

On its Internet site, China Radio International accused Google of encroaching on the country's sovereignty.

"There has only been one such case in more than 100 years of colonialism and semi-colonialism — that of the British East India Company, which wanted to control India's sovereignty," the station said. "Perhaps if Google withdraws from the Chinese market it will have negative consequences for certain Internet users, but it will be Google that loses the most."

On Friday, the China Business News quoted an official with an unidentified advertising agency linked to Google as saying the US firm would carry out its threatened withdrawal on April 10. Google declined to comment on the report.

The issue has sparked a war of words between China and the administration of US President Barack Obama, which has called on Beijing to allow an unfettered Internet.

In other developments, Beijing will take retaliatory steps if the US declares China a currency manipulator and imposes trade sanctions, Chinese Minister of Commerce Chen Deming (陈德明) said yesterday, the latest salvo in a spat over the value of the yuan.

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Chen, speaking at the China Development Forum, again accused Washington of politicizing the issue ahead of an April 15 deadline when the US Treasury must decide whether to declare China a currency manipulator.

“The currency is a sovereign issue and should not be an issue to be discussed between two countries,” Chen said. “We think the yuan is not undervalued, but if the US Treasury gives an untrue outcome for its own needs, we will wait and see. If such an outcome is followed by trade sanctions, I think we will not do nothing. We will also respond if this means litigation under the global legal framework.”

He did not specify how Beijing might respond.

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