

Bilirakis: American Companies Must Not Forget American Values When Operating in China

Rep.

Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) reacts to a hearing by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on November 7, 2007 dealing with the topic of false testimony provided to Congress by Yahoo! Inc. regarding its involvement in providing account information to Chinese authorities leading to the arrest of a Chinese journalist and political dissident.

I understand the seemingly untamed nature of the Internet. Furthermore, I believe that we are just beginning to tap the vast possibilities of the World Wide Web in improving humankind globally. However, it is also apparent that countries seeking to undermine the interests and values of the United States are hard at work, learning ways to turn the Internet into a tool of cyber war.

In

some cases, U.S. technology and American companies are being used by these countries under the guise of a complex domestic legal framework, outdated international law, and sometimes outright bullying to not only develop these tools against American interests, but also to suppress and sometimes wipeout the opposition in their own countries.

While it is safe to say that the Internet in China may have empowered the Chinese people with more access to information to improve their daily lives in countless ways, it has not improved the ideology of the Communist regime that rules over the freedom of its people. This divergence over the freedom of ideas and expression found on the Internet and the ability to use the power of the World Wide Web as a tool of oppression and monitoring by authoritarian regimes, is what makes this discussion a human rights issue, not just one of spreading commerce, ideas and information.

The roles that companies like Yahoo! and Google play in China are integral to ensuring that we in America are doing our best to address these human rights concerns. This involves doing even more to work through every diplomatic, economic and political channel possible to ensure that American companies have an opportunity to compete in China, while not undermining American values.

It is the responsibility of American companies doing business in China, and certainly the responsibility of this Congress and Committee to ensure that our efforts to compete and expand our presence in Chinese markets do not get used by the Communist regime as a means of countering U.S. national security interests, and more importantly, undermine the human values we place on every individual.

We believe these values to be universal, and although the climate in which many of these companies may be operating in China does not hold a similar value, we expect our companies to do their best and our government to support policies to ensure that we are doing all we can to protect those who need it most.