



# CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

*A weekly update of press freedom and censorship news  
related to the People's Republic of China*

**Issue No. 74: November 15, 2012**

## Headlines

-  Hu report, Politburo lineup point to hard-liners' strength
-  Censors target Google, virtual private networks for party congress
-  Businesses pressured to install internet surveillance equipment
-  Pro-Beijing tycoon named as force behind Next Media purchase in Taiwan
-  Torture references stall James Bond film release in China

## PHOTO OF THE WEEK: LOCKE IN TIBET



Credit: [New York Times](#)

## BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS



### **Little left to chance at party congress press briefings**

Media coverage of the past week's 18th Communist Party Congress was tightly controlled, both within the venue and beyond (see below, CMB No. [73](#)). Provincial delegations and other officials held nominal press briefings, but they were carefully moderated to limit unscripted incidents. Party mouthpieces like Xinhua news agency, the *People's Daily*, and China Central Television were consistently given priority in asking questions, and few foreign journalists were offered the opportunity. One foreigner, Andrea Yu, was called on four times, but she works for a Chinese-Australian media company with reportedly close ties to state-run China Radio International. She later told the *Wall Street Journal* that her questions were drafted by Chinese colleagues, so "they know my questions are safe," and added that she would ask sharper questions if given free rein. Reuters reporter Ben Blanchard recalled that by contrast, during the 17th Party Congress in 2007, officials had given one-on-one interviews, and overseas journalists were encouraged to ask questions on a range of topics. He attributed the difference to a desire in 2007 to burnish an image of openness ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, though the contention surrounding the current congress's more extensive rotation of party leaders is likely playing a role. Not all press interactions appeared entirely scripted, as Yunnan's provincial delegation reportedly took questions from foreign journalists, including one on the sensitive topic of relations with Burma. The Committee to Protect Journalists, meanwhile, relayed a moment when two children from the Beijing-based *Chinese Teenage News* wrote their own questions, raising meaningful topics like housing costs and food safety concerns. Even if any unwelcome incidents occurred at the press conferences, the party was prepared to limit their reach. A series of leaked propaganda directives, reportedly disseminated by the Guangdong Province propaganda department during the week of the congress, included instructions that reports on a question-and-answer session between the governor and foreign journalists should "without exception, strictly adhere to the news wire copy provided by the general office."

- Reuters 11/12/2012: [China dodges politically sensitive questions at key congress](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* 11/13/2012: [At 18th party congress, a popular foreign reporter](#)
- CPJ 11/13/2012: [In China, kids ask the tough questions at party congress](#)
- *China Digital Times* 11/13/2012: [Ministry of Truth: Guangdong directives \(2\)](#)



### **Hu report, Politburo lineup point to hard-liners' strength**

In the run-up to the 18th Communist Party Congress, Qian Gang from the China Media Project at Hong Kong University published a series of short essays addressing key Chinese Communist Party (CCP) watchwords and how their use during speeches at the gathering could provide insight on future policy, particularly on political reform. On November 8, Qian published another brief essay providing a preliminary analysis of President Hu Jintao's political report as outgoing party leader, delivered that day. After scrutinizing the presence of terms like "Mao Zedong Thought," "power is given to the people," and "intraparty democracy," Qian ultimately concluded that "conservative forces within the Party are still very powerful." He added that judging from Hu's report, "there is very little prospect that substantive moves will be made on political reform." This conclusion was

reinforced when the lineup of the new Politburo Standing Committee was revealed on November 15, and observers remarked that the majority of its seven members are conservatives allied with former party leader Jiang Zemin. The fact that oversight of the censorship apparatus was downgraded from the Standing Committee level to the 25-member Politburo has led to speculation on a possible easing of media restrictions, but that appears unlikely given the conservative bent of the new leadership.

- **China Media Project 11/8/2012:** [Party report suggests old guard is strong](#)
- **Atlantic 11/15/2012:** [The triumph of conservative hardliners in China's power transition](#)
- **Wall Street Journal 11/15/2012:** [The Communist Party's reform punt](#)

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## NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



### **Censors target Google, virtual private networks for party congress**

Disruptions of access to foreign websites have increased in China since the 18th Communist Party Congress began on November 8. Internet users in the country complained that they were unable to access U.S. technology giant Google's various services for at least 12 hours on November 9, including its search engine, e-mail, and mapping function (see CMB No. [73](#)). In a statement released that day, the company said, "We've checked and there's nothing wrong on our end," indicating that the blocking was not a technical glitch. There were also reports of generally slow internet speeds and unusual interference with virtual private networks (VPN), which allow users to circumvent government censors and access blocked websites, including social media such as Twitter and Facebook. The U.S.-based VPN provider Witopia told the *Wall Street Journal* on the eve of the congress that the latest round of disruptions was "one of the most severe" the company had ever seen.

- **Wall Street Journal 11/7/2012:** [Why using the internet in China is so frustrating these days](#)
- **Bloomberg Businessweek 11/10/2012:** [Google reports higher traffic in China after earlier drop](#)
- **New American 11/12/2012:** [China blocks Google access for 12 hours](#)



### **Twitter informs China watchers of possible account hacking**

As the 18th Communist Party Congress began on November 8, several prominent individuals and organizations whose work includes China analysis reported that their accounts on the U.S.-based microblogging service Twitter, which is blocked in China, had been hacked. The China Media Project at Hong Kong University posted an e-mail message from Twitter on November 8, which read, "Twitter believes that your account may have been compromised by a website or service not associated with Twitter. We've reset your password to prevent others from accessing your account." News blog *Offbeat China* reported a similar experience, tweeting, "And me. Should I feel proud?"

Other affected users included *Foreign Policy* magazine contributing editor Christina Larson, Tsinghua University business professor Patrick Chovanec, and human rights groups such as Freedom House. Despite the curious timing and the nature of the targets, Twitter did not specify whether the unauthorized log-in attempts originated in China, and as the number of reports increased, it became evident that the password reset was not limited to those with links to China. Twitter later sent out a second notice, stating that its forced password resets were conducted on a wider range of accounts than it had intended, extending beyond those that it believed to have actually been compromised. The message did not clarify which accounts fell into the latter category.

- ***The Next Web* 11/8/2012: [China watchers subjected to Twitter hacking attempts as transfer of political power begins](#)**
- ***Voice of America* 11/8/2012: [Twitter apologizes for China hacking error](#)**
- ***China Digital Times* 11/7/2012: [Twitter accounts attacked as congress begins](#)**
- **ZDNet 11/9/2012: [Prominent China watchers suffer Twitter hacks](#)**



## Netizens critique Hu's party congress performance

Netizens responded with cynicism and perplexity to Chinese president Hu Jintao's speech at the opening of the 18th Communist Party Congress on November 8 (see above, CMB No. [28](#)). Hu warned that rampant corruption threatened the regime's legitimacy, but he insisted that only the party was capable of leading the country. "Neither will we follow the old path of closed doors and ossified politics, nor will we take to the evil way of changing our flags and banners," he said. In response, Peking University political science professor Fu Jun wrote on his Sina Weibo microblogging account, "A quick translation of this would be, neither old way nor odd way." Fu's interpretation was rephrased by prominent economist Xu Xiaonian: "In a nutshell, no way." Another Weibo user commented, "Won't walk down the old path. Won't walk down the wrong path. We only go down a dead end." Several netizens expressed frustration with the lack of clear, substantive content in Hu's slogan-freighted report to the congress, which did not refer directly to controversial issues like the one-child policy, land rights, or food safety. Searches related to the party congress were blocked on Weibo, but vibrant discussion surrounding Hu's leadership persisted. Users came up with an array of puns and code words to evade censors, including "Sparta," which sounds similar to the Chinese nickname for the congress (18 big), and "seven dwarfs," a reference to the seven new members of the Politburo Standing Committee.

- **Deutsche Welle 11/13/2012: [Chinese bloggers criticize party congress](#)**
- **Agence France-Presse 11/9/2012: [China web users greet Hu speech with derision](#)**
- **China Media Project 11/8/2012: [CCP congress enters the Weibo era](#)**
- ***Ministry of Tofu* 11/8/2012: [Weibo highlights: Chinese president Hu Jintao on political reform during 18th Party Congress](#)**



## Businesses pressured to install internet surveillance equipment

In a new development whose impact will continue long after the 18th Communist Party Congress,

several foreign and Chinese companies have allegedly been ordered in recent months to install government-designated monitoring software within their private networks. The *New York Times* and CNN reported that among the software's functionalities are the logging of web traffic, blocking of access to selected sites, and communication with local police servers. Copies of police orders from Shandong and Beijing obtained by CNN name specific government-approved equipment providers, require firms to upload collected data to Public Security Bureau servers, and list hotels among the targeted businesses. Some of the affected foreign firms reported being warned that noncompliance could draw heavy fines or suspension of internet service, though several quietly resisted the pressure given the risk such surveillance could pose to trade secrets. According to the intellectual property rights group Quality Brands Protection Committee (QBPC), which sent out a warning to its member companies in July, at least three of its members in Beijing, Hebei, and Shandong Provinces were approached with such demands by the police, who claimed that the monitoring systems would be used to track "illegal activity." The QBPC has also reportedly written to the Ministry of Commerce to voice concerns about the orders.

- *New York Times* 11/13/2012: [Chinese authorities putting pressure on businesses to help censor the web](#)
- CNN 8/24/2012: [International firms caught in China's security web](#)



## Dissidents face travel restrictions, interrogation, and denial of medical care

The following were among numerous cases of harassment or mistreatment of dissident writers and activists in the period surrounding the 18th Communist Party Congress:

- **Beijing:** Jailed online activist and lawyer **Ni Yulan**, who was sentenced in April to two years and eight months in prison for "fraud" and "creating a disturbance," has been denied medical treatment for thyroid cancer by Beijing authorities (see CMB No. [45](#)). Ni's daughter expressed concern over her mother's health after visiting her in jail on October 19. Ni's husband, Dong Jiqin, is serving a two-year prison sentence, also for "creating a disturbance." Ni, who is physically disabled from previous torture in police custody, had assisted homeowners fighting eviction by the authorities, and camped with her husband in a Beijing park after officials demolished her home and made it difficult for her to find a residence.
- **Anhui: Shen Liangqiang**, a dissident writer and former state prosecutor from Anhui Province, was held in unofficial detention by police to prevent him from attending a launch party for his book in Hong Kong on November 12. He said police had been harassing him for months, and that his computer had been hacked. Shen's book, *Double Discipline: An Investigative Report by a Former Prosecutor*, describes the Communist Party's internal, extralegal disciplinary system.
- **Zhejiang:** According to prominent AIDS and human rights activist Hu Jia, blogger **Cheng Zuo Liang** was interrogated by police in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, on November 9 for his alleged links to recent protests in the city over government plans to expand a chemical factory (see CMB No. [73](#)). The police reportedly had records of communications between the two activists. Hu had created three microblogging accounts since September 18, and all of them had been shut down (see CMB No. [70](#)). The last one, created November 8, had only remained

active for a day. Hu said the police had threatened to summon him after he made plans to give a telephone interview to foreign media

- **Guangdong:** Human rights lawyer and cyberdissident **Guo Feixiong** was barred by 10 police officers from leaving his apartment on November 9. He has recently been active in publicizing the case of a migrant worker who could not afford cancer surgery, but has long been a target of the authorities. Guo was sentenced to five years in prison in 2007 for “illegal commercial activity” for having printed and disseminated a book about corruption in Shenyang, and was allegedly tortured in jail.
- **Reporters Without Borders 10/24/2012:** [Jailed netizen with cancer needs proper medical treatment](#)
- **New York Times 4/10/2012:** [Rights advocate given prison term in China](#)
- **Radio Free Asia 11/12/2012:** [Light shed on secret probes](#)
- **NTDTV 11/12/2012:** [Honored in Hong Kong, imprisoned in China](#)
- **Reporters Without Borders 11/8/2012:** [Censorship and freedom of information during the 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party](#)
- **China Media Project 11/9/2012:** [Weibo: Human rights lawyer Guo Feixiong detained in Guangzhou](#)

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## TIBET & INNER MONGOLIA



### U.S. envoy discusses visit to Tibetan areas

During a live October 29 webcast to audiences in the United States, entitled “China Town Hall,” U.S. ambassador to China Gary Locke discussed his recent trip to the Tibetan region of Sichuan Province in September, saying his aim was to “get an appreciation of Tibetan culture and the way of life.” He urged the Chinese leadership to meet with Tibetan representatives and “reexamine some of the policies that have led to some of the restrictions and the violence and the self-immolations.” News of the visit—the first by Locke to a Tibetan area—had initially emerged in mid-October, when the *New York Times* obtained a photograph of Locke greeting an elderly Tibetan monk; the trip was subsequently confirmed by the U.S. State Department. The two monasteries that Locke visited on September 26 are located in Ngaba (Aba) Prefecture, where Chinese authorities have imposed a communications blackout and prevented most foreigners from entering (see CMB No. [71](#)). Ngaba is considered the epicenter of a broader series of self-immolations in which at least 69 Tibetans have set themselves on fire to protest Chinese rule since February 2009. Chinese state media offered little comment on Locke’s visit, but an October 18 English-language editorial on the Chinese web portal Sina accused the ambassador of engaging in “show business” and expressing an excessive interest in the “so-called human rights situation” in China. The article went on to tout Tibet’s social and economic development under Chinese rule. Locke has attained a degree of popularity among the Chinese public (see CMB No. [40](#)) and Columbia University professor Robert Barnett told the Times that the visit “suggests the embassy is finding creative ways to communicate messages within China that are effective without being aggressive.” Nevertheless, a search of Sina’s popular Weibo microblogging service by *China Media Bulletin* editors revealed a number comments that questioned Locke’s trip, including “What is he doing there?” and “Is the U.S. thinking of taking over Tibet?”

- Agence France-Presse 10/30/2012: [US envoy Gary Locke urges China to review Tibet policy](#)
  - *Global Times* 10/18/2012 (in Chinese): [U.S. confirms Gary Locke's September visit to Sichuan's Tibetan area, urging Chinese-Tibetan dialogue](#)
  - Sina English 10/18/2012: [Tibet in fact, not in the eyes of Gary Locke](#)
  - *New York Times* 10/17/2012: [U.S. ambassador confirms meeting with Tibetans in western China](#)
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## **Detained Mongol activist's wife and son disappear**

The New York–based Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC) said on November 7 that it had lost contact with ethnic Mongolian journalist Hada's wife, Xinna, and their son, Uiles, for at least two weeks. Hada, founder of the pro-Mongol newspaper *Voice of Southern Mongolia*, has been held in extralegal detention since December 2010, when he completed a 15-year prison sentence for “separatism.” According to SMHRIC, Xinna and Uiles had gone missing after they spoke with several international news agencies to call attention to Hada's deteriorating health in detention (see CMB No. [72](#)). In an interview with SMHRIC on October 22, Xinna said the Chinese authorities had threatened to arrest her if she continued to speak to foreign media. Hada's uncle, Haschuluu, told SMHRIC that he had not been able to contact Xinna and Uiles for the past six months, and that his requests to visit Hada were continually denied. Haschuluu said his telephone line had been disconnected, and that police had threatened him with arrest when he urged them to restore it.

- Radio Free Asia 11/7/2012: [Dissident's wife, son 'disappear'](#)
  - Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center 11/7/2012: [Wife and son of Hada disappear again](#)
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## **BEYOND CHINA**



## **Pro-Beijing tycoon named as force behind Next Media purchase in Taiwan**

According to a November 8 article in the biweekly business journal *Wealth Magazine*, Taiwanese tycoon Tsai Eng-meng provided NT\$9 billion (US\$309 million) for a NT\$17.5 billion (US\$600 million) deal to acquire the Taiwan assets of the Next Media group, owned by Hong Kong media mogul Jimmy Lai (see CMB No. [72](#)). A consortium led by financier Jeffrey Koo Jr. had been identified as the buyer when the pending purchase, which is still under government review, was unveiled in October. The *Wealth Magazine* article said Next Media representatives had been surprised when Tsai, who is known for his Beijing-friendly stance, showed up at a meeting with the buyers and demanded to make his role public, since he was providing the bulk of the investment. However, meeting participants told him to stay in the background lest the National Communications Commission, the country's media regulator, vote against the deal, given concerns over the growing concentration of media outlets in Tsai's hands. Tsai already owns media assets including the China

Times Group, and won conditional approval in July for his purchase of the country's second-largest cable provider (see CMB No. [66](#)). According to the article, Tsai reportedly said he aimed to change Next Media's "culture of being 'muckrakers,'" raising concerns that the proposed deal would leave Taiwan's media landscape less diverse and more supportive of closer ties with China. Lai, the current Next Media owner, is a vocal critic of the Chinese Communist Party, and some of the outlets for sale have gained a reputation non-partisan and investigative reporting on corruption.

- **Central News Agency 11/12/2012 (in Chinese): [NCC member unclear about buyers behind Next Media deal](#)**
- ***Asia Sentinel* 11/13/2012: [Pro-Beijing tycoons circle Taiwan media](#)**
- ***China Post* 11/8/2012: [Want Want exec also Next Media buyer: report](#)**
- ***Wealth Magazine* 11/8/2012 (in Chinese): [Exclusive: Next Media biggest buyer Tsai Eng-meng: I am the buyer, why should I be low-profile?](#)**



## **Torture references stall James Bond film release in China**

*Skyfall*, the latest film from the James Bond spy franchise, was released in Hong Kong on November 1, but it remains unclear whether it will reach theaters in mainland China amid possible censorship concerns. According to *South China Morning Post*, the delay stems from the movie's references to torture in China, which appear in a key character's backstory. On the popular microblogging platform Sina Weibo, Chinese netizens discussed editing alternatives that would allow *Skyfall* to enter the mainland market. One asked, "Why not replace China with North Korea? Who cares about North Korea anyway?" Another user suggested making Chongqing the location where the torture takes place, alluding to the reported abuses of purged Chongqing party chief Bo Xilai. Speaking at the Asia Society in Los Angeles on October 30, Han Sanping, president of state-run China Film Group, which is China's largest studio as well as the official gatekeeper for imported films and coproductions with foreign companies, claimed that the new political leadership set to take control after the 18th Communist Party Congress would be more open to Hollywood. Overlooking Beijing's ongoing censorship practices, Han assured the audience, "China's resources will serve your needs and you will make money in China." During a press conference for the party congress in Beijing on November 11, several senior culture officials provided an array of statistics to tout the country's achievements in the cultural sector. They said China had produced 558 feature films in 2011, compared with 140 in 2003. However, Tian Jin, party secretary of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), said Chinese films' revenue had declined, citing the "strong attack" of foreign films as the "immediate reason" (see CMB No. [67](#)).

- ***South China Morning Post* 11/12/2012: [Will James Bond bow to Beijing's censorship?](#)**
- **Asia Society 11/2/2012: [Chinese movie mogul promises new party leaders will open market to Hollywood](#)**
- ***New York Times* 11/11/2012: [China, at party congress, lauds its cultural advances](#)**

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For additional information on human rights and free expression in China, see:

[\*Freedom on the Net 2012\*](#)  
[\*Freedom of the World 2012\*](#)  
[\*Freedom of the Press 2011\*](#)

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