








CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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

Issue No. 47: February 16, 2012

Headlines

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-  Foreign TV series curtailed, banned from prime time
-  Party commissars set up shop inside microblog firms
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BROADCAST / PRINT MEDIA NEWS

Mum press sheds little light on Chongqing party intrigue

Inconsistent print and online coverage of an unfolding scandal involving former Chongqing police chief Wang Lijun has added to the uncertainty surrounding the case, which may prove to be one of the most important developments of the year ahead of a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership shuffle scheduled for the fall. The saga began on February 2, when it was announced that Wang Lijun, who had gained prominence as the right-hand man of Chongqing party secretary Bo Xilai, had been demoted. (Bo has been a rising star in the party, and is widely thought to be seeking a seat on the nine-member Politburo Standing Committee.) Then, on February 7, Wang made a late-night visit to the U.S. consulate in Chengdu. According to various unconfirmed reports, he tried to seek asylum and revealed damaging details about Bo, including his purported involvement in corruption, organized crime, and political repression. Wang stayed overnight and, according to a U.S. government spokeswoman, left the following day “of his own volition.” He was placed into the hands of representatives of the central government and has not been seen since. As the events unfolded and unverified accounts of intraparty intrigue circulated online—including on over two million reported Sina Weibo microblog posts—the print media were conspicuously silent. On February 9, the *Chongqing Daily*, the local CCP mouthpiece, made no reference to the incident,

instead running a story with a headline touting “Peaceful Chongqing.” A search by the China Media Project at the University of Hong Kong found references to Wang in only seven articles, all repeating the official word from Chongqing authorities that he had left for “vacation-style treatment” due to stress. Hong Kong’s *South China Morning Post* pointed out on February 13 that Bo himself was also absent from a 1,500-word *Chongqing Daily* story about Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper’s visit, during which Bo met with him and threw him a banquet. The omission signaled either a deliberate demerit from the propaganda authorities or a cautious move by editors at a time when Bo’s political fate is uncertain. In contrast to the silence in traditional media and despite sporadic reports of online censorship, microblogs and overseas news sites like Boxun, *China Digital Times*, and the *Epoch Times* have been buzzing with various tidbits of information and insight as Chinese netizens attempt to figure out what is really going on in the opaque world of high-level CCP politics.

- **China Media Project 2/10/2012: [Wang Lijun in China’s news pages](#)**
- ***New York Times* 2/12/2012: [Inside China’s greatest mystery](#)**
- ***South China Morning Post* 2/13/2012: [Bo conspicuous by his absence in media reports](#)**
- **China Media Project 2/16/2012: [He Weifang: Handle Wang Lijun case by rule of law](#)**
- ***China Digital Times* 2/16/2012: [Wang Lijun: Tip of the iceberg?](#)**
- **China Media Project: [Wang Lijun case connected to businessman who fled?](#)**
- **China Media Project 2/9/2012: [Wang Lijun and “peaceful Chongqing”](#)**
- ***Business Week* 2/14/2012: [News of provincial showdown travels far on Chinese web](#)**



Foreign TV series curtailed, banned from prime time

The State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) announced on February 13 that foreign television series would be banned during prime time, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. The decision is the latest in a string of government interventions designed to restrict commercially driven entertainment programming in favor of propagandistic content (see CMB No. [41](#)). According to the SARFT announcement, foreign drama series, in addition to being barred from prime time, should not exceed 50 episodes in length or take up more than a fourth of a television station’s quota for broadcasting drama series. Dramas that focus on topics such as crime, violence, and other “vulgar content” are completely banned. Authorities also urged stations to increase “regional diversity” by airing shows from a variety of countries. Provincial media regulators are tasked with punishing stations that fail to comply with the regulations. Although some American shows have won fans in China, popular foreign dramas have typically come from Japan, South Korea, and more recently Thailand. Some analysts said the new ban would encourage production of more local shows. However, Ren Jianwei of the Shanghai Media Group said “many of the regulations used to be conveyed orally and they are not new to us.” Viewers seeking greater access to foreign programs are expected to turn to DVDs and the internet.

- ***Shanghai Daily* 2/14/2012: [Prime-time ban for overseas TV series](#)**

- *Beijing Business Today* 2/14/2012 (in Chinese): [SARFT: Foreign TV dramas to be banned during prime-time](#)
 - SARFT 2/13/2012 (in Chinese): [Statement on import and broadcasting of foreign drama series](#)
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Print media face obstacles on critical content, investigations

Local Chinese authorities have continued to punish or interfere with critical journalism. On February 3, senior editors at the *Biancheng Evening News*, a local paper in Huaihua City, Hunan Province, were fired or suspended by the city propaganda department after the paper published the results of a survey in which residents expressed dissatisfaction with local officials. The February 1 special report was entitled “How Does Your Lunar New Year Taste?” More than 50 percent of the respondents complained about rising inflation rates. Some also said the city lacked government-organized activities to celebrate the Lunar New Year. In a separate incident in Pingshan County, Hebei Province, *Guangzhou Daily* reporter Zhang Dan was detained on February 9 while investigating several suppliers who had allegedly sold fake egg products in Guangdong Province. He was held for five hours at a police station, where officers made copies of his reporting materials and asked him to identify suppliers with whom he had met.

- IFEX 2/6/2012: [Senior newspaper staff fired for reporting inflation concerns](#)
 - *Time Weekly* 2/13/2012 (in Chinese): [Biancheng Evening News editorial team purged after lunar new year](#)
 - *Guangzhou Daily* 2/10/2012 (in Chinese): [Reporter held by police during fake egg investigation](#)
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Writers see repression reaching new extremes

A recent spate of long prison sentences for writers and bloggers in China is being interpreted as part of a general escalation in restrictions on free expression that began in 2008, with each year bringing a new impetus for intensified crackdowns. In 2012, the focus appears to be on ensuring “stability” ahead of a planned Communist Party leadership shuffle in the fall. Writers have reported stepped-up harassment and pressure from the authorities, and many have responded by self-censoring and even avoiding informal gatherings with colleagues. Dissident writer Yu Jie, who fled abroad in January (see CMB No. [44](#)), has said he believes that “this is the worst time for writers since 1989.” On February 10, Zhejiang-based writer Zhu Yufu was sentenced to seven years in prison by a local court in Hangzhou. He had been arrested in April 2011 on subversion charges over a poem entitled “It’s Time,” in which he called for Chinese people to defend their rights (see CMB No. [45](#)). Meanwhile, a document reportedly issued by the Anhui provincial government has surfaced on the internet. According to Radio Free Asia, the leaked document instructs local officials to increase vigilance against any activity that could threaten stability ahead of a National People’s Congress session in

Beijing in early March. The orders include measures such as round-the-clock surveillance of the internet, monitoring of text messages and microblog posts, and swift deletion of problematic content. Officials are also told to immediately report any local developments like “large-scale petitioning and mass incidents” to the provincial authorities.

- *Guardian* 2/10/2012: [China jails dissident Zhu Yufu over poem sent on Skype](#)
- *Radio Free Asia* 2/6/2012: [Leak reveals 'stability' measures](#)
- *South China Morning Post* 2/13/2012: [Pen is subject to the sword](#)

NEW MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY NEWS



Party commissars set up shop inside microblog firms

Taiwan's *United Daily News* (UDN) reported on February 6 that the Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) recently ordered the establishment of CCP branches in microblogging firms, including the four leading services: Sina, Tencent, Sohu, and Netease. According to the UDN report, party representatives would guide decisions on major microblogging policies and ensure that the directives of the propaganda department and government are properly implemented. The move is the latest in a string of efforts to intensify controls over microblogging, and is not the first time that CCP representatives have been deployed in private firms working in politically sensitive areas. Beginning in 2008, the CCP expanded its representation in law firms after attorneys started to take on sensitive human rights cases and attempted to hold free elections for the state-run lawyers' association. In November 2010, the *People's Daily* reported that the CCP had installed itself in 100 percent of the country's law firms. Meanwhile, as microblogging firms worked to implement a new real-name registration rule ahead of a March 16 deadline (see CMB No. 46), foreign users complained of difficulty registering without a Chinese identification card. The growing controls may be taking a toll on Sina's profitability; the company's shares have lost 54 percent of their value since they peaked in April 2011. As Chief Executive Charles Chao prepared for a presentation to investors, the *Financial Times* reported that a plan for how to generate revenue from Sina's immensely popular microblogging service would likely be further postponed, partly because of the new burden of implementing real-name registration. At present, Sina earns most of its profits through advertising, but some observers noted that this could be a weakness in the current political climate in China. Alicia Yap, an analyst at Barclays Capital, noted: “Brands worry that they could be tied to re-tweeted messages that might be sensitive.”

- *United Daily News* 2/6/2012: [Chinese Communist Party to establish party branches to directly manage microblogging firms](#)
- *CNET* 2/13/2012: [Foreign users of Weibo in confusion as China's 'real name' deadline looms](#)
- *Financial Times* 2/8/2012: [Sina wrestles with microblog revenue plan](#)
- *China Scope* 11/29/2010: [CCP achieves 100% coverage of law firms in China](#)



Microblog highlights: Valentine's Day, N. Korea, Jeremy Lin

Over the past week, several topics have arisen as the focus of discussion in China's microblogosphere, while others have been targeted for deletion. The rationale behind the censorship is clearer in some cases than in others. According to searches by *China Media Bulletin* editors on the University of Hong Kong's WeiboScope, which documents deletions from the popular Sina Weibo microblogging service, the items deleted by censors on February 14 and 15 included a large number of seemingly innocuous posts related to Valentine's Day. Also removed were posts reacting to the fact that Chinese vice president Xi Jinping did not take his wife, well-known singer Peng Liyuan, with him on his visit to the United States this week. Some users speculated that it was because "Xi is afraid that Peng will attract more attention than him." Other posts targeted by censors quoted Burmese democracy advocate Aung San Suu Kyi, cited the self-immolation of a Tibetan nun, and relayed the experience of a father trying to get his son out of a Chinese labor camp. Meanwhile, analysts are speculating as to why Chinese censors did not delete false rumors that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un had been assassinated at the country's embassy in Beijing. Separately, rising Taiwanese American basketball star Jeremy Lin of the New York Knicks jumped from 300,000 to over 1 million followers on Sina Weibo within five days, despite relatively muted state media coverage of his recent successes on the court.

- *Diplomat* 2/11/2012: [How Weibo 'killed' Kim Jong-un](#)
- *Foreign Policy* 2/10/2012: [Lies, damn lies, and Weibo rumors of Kim Jong Un's demise](#)
- *Fan Nation* 2/15/2012: [Jeremy Lin exceeds one million followers on Chinese social platform](#)
- *NBC News* 2/16/2012: [Yes, Jeremy Lin is big in China – but China is also very big](#)



Chinese American online activist abducted, beaten in China

In a sign that the Chinese authorities are willing to extend their crackdown on cyberdissidents to foreign citizens, a Chinese American physicist named Ge Xun has reported being beaten and interrogated during a recent visit to Beijing. Ge, who became an American citizen after moving to the United States in 1986, is a former member of a California-based Tibetan advocacy group and a webmaster for a site calling for the release of activist Chen Guangcheng, who has been under strict house arrest in Shandong Province since leaving prison in 2010. On February 1, using a photograph downloaded from the internet, three police officers identified Ge on the street outside the home of prominent human rights advocate Ding Zilin, whom he was going to meet. He was seized and taken to a secret location. On his camera and audio recorder, the police found evidence of his recent contacts with Chinese activists, including exiled writer Liao Yiwu and rights lawyer Teng Biao. When Ge refused to surrender the password for his Twitter microblog, the officers started kicking and beating him severely. Ultimately he agreed to log in to the account himself and let them examine it. Upon his release, after 21 hours in detention, Ge was asked to guarantee that he would not accept media interviews. "From when we met to when we separate...the entire process is a national secret," the police allegedly told him. He was driven directly to the airport for deportation.

- *New York Times* 2/14/2012: [American recounts beating by Chinese agents suspicious of social media](#)
 - Seeing Red in China 2/8/2012 (in Chinese): [Ge Xun: 21 hours in Beijing – part 1](#)
 - Seeing Red in China 2/9/2012 (in Chinese): [Ge Xun: 21 hours in Beijing – part 2](#)
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Sales ban sought in Apple iPad trademark dispute

A trademark dispute between U.S. technology giant Apple and Shenzhen-based Proview Technology over the name “iPad” has escalated. *Hebei Youth Daily* reported on February 13 that inspection teams set up by the local industry and commerce administration, and acting on a complaint from Proview, had raided retail stores in Shijiazhuang City, Hebei Province, and confiscated 45 of Apple’s iPad tablet computers. It emerged that Proview, which registered the name “iPad” as early as 2000 for its own tablet product, has asked authorities in 20 Chinese cities to stop selling Apple’s iPad, and is seeking a ban on exports of the device. Officials in some cities have reportedly complied with the company’s requests, ordering retailers to halt iPad sales. According to Chinese media, Apple could face fines of up to 240 million yuan (\$38 million), along with 10 billion yuan (\$1.6 billion) in compensation to Proview. Apple maintains that it bought the worldwide rights to the trademark years ago, but a December 2011 court ruling in Shenzhen found that the purchase—from Proview’s Taiwanese parent company—did not hold for the Chinese subsidiary or the Chinese market (see CMB No. [42](#)). Proview was crippled by the 2008 financial crisis, and its Hong Kong-listed shares have not traded since August 2010. The ongoing case, which will proceed in a court hearing set for February 29, has put a spotlight on the precarious nature of foreign technology companies’ legal rights in China.

- Reuters 2/15/2012: Exclusive: [Proview says any ban of iPad exports hard to impose](#)
 - *PC Magazine* 2/15/2012: [Proview pushes for expanded iPad Ban, but will China allow it?](#)
 - *Hebei Youth Daily* 2/13/2012 (in Chinese): [Apple iPad removed from store shelves due to trade mark issue](#)
 - Agence France-Presse 2/14/2012: [Firm in Apple row seeks to ban China iPad imports](#)
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BEYOND CHINA



China-based Nortel hacking, digital thievery risks reported

The *Wall Street Journal* reported on February 14 that at least as far back as 2000, China-based hackers had infiltrated the computers of Canadian telecommunications firm Nortel Networks, which is currently in the final stages of being broken up and sold as part of a 2009 bankruptcy filing. Brian

Shields, a former Nortel employee who led an internal investigation, said hackers were found using encrypted channels from internet addresses based in China. They had installed spyware and stolen passwords from top executives to gain access to business plans, research reports, and employee e-mail. An internal report said that Nortel “did nothing from a security standpoint,” aside from changing the seven stolen passwords. It also failed to inform the buyers of its assets, such as Ciena, Ericsson, and Avaya, leaving them vulnerable to continued infiltration. Separately, a *New York Times* article on February 10 highlighted a form of espionage that targets the personal electronic devices of foreign officials, researchers, and businessmen when they travel to China. Many such travelers now take elaborate steps to avoid exposure to theft and hacking, such as bringing only sanitized devices that are swept clean of data both before and after a trip. One cybersecurity expert told the paper, “Everybody knows that if you are doing business in China, in the 21st century, you don’t bring anything with you.”

- *Washington Post* 2/14/2012: [Report: Chinese hackers breach Nortel networks](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* 2/14/2012: [Chinese hackers suspected in long-term Nortel breach](#)
- Agence France-Presse 2/14/2012: [Nortel penetrated by Chinese hackers for at least a decade: report](#)
- *New York Times* 2/10/2012: [Traveling light in a time of digital thievery](#)



Confucius Institutes stir debate in Canada

On January 24, Hubei-based Central China Normal University and Canada’s Carleton University launched a joint program at a newly established Confucius Institute in Ottawa. The ceremony was attended by Ottawa mayor Jim Watson, who noted the growing number of Chinese visitors to the country. Confucius Institutes are Chinese government-sponsored facilities that offer Chinese language training and other educational programs. To date, there are over 300 institutes functioning in over 100 countries. They are cited by many analysts as an example of the Chinese Communist Party’s efforts to expand its influence and information control beyond China (see CMB No. 39). Li Changchun, the Chinese Communist Party’s propaganda chief and a Politburo Standing Committee member, has called the institutes an “important part of China’s overseas propaganda setup.” Lionel Jensen of the University of Notre Dame says that U.S. Confucius Institute directors take “special care in arranging programming that is uncontroversial in the eyes of their benefactor.” Faculty members at some universities have opposed efforts to set up such institutes on their campuses, citing the potentially negative impact on academic freedom. In January, the Faculty Association at the University of Manitoba published a special issue of its newsletter dedicated to the topic, stating that it is “strongly opposed to the establishment of a CI” and concerned about a discriminatory policy by which the Confucius Institutes’ parent agency accepts only teaching applicants who have no “record of participation in Falun Gong and other illegal organizations.”

- *People’s Daily* 1/30/2012: [New Confucius Institute started operations in Ottawa](#)
- *USA Today* 1/4/2012: [Chinese-funded institutes raise concerns on U.S. campuses](#)
- Faculty Association of University of Manitoba: [News & Views: January 2012](#)

NOTABLE ANALYSIS



Documentary on Ai Weiwei premieres at Sundance

American freelance journalist Alison Klayman's documentary *Never Sorry: Ai Weiwei* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah on January 29. The film follows prominent Chinese artist and blogger Ai Weiwei's journey over the past three years as he rose to become an internationally recognized and outspoken critic of the Chinese government. Klayman's record of Ai's story began in 2008 as he was preparing for the installation of his Sunflower Seeds exhibition in London, and the film follows him until his detention by Chinese authorities in April 2011 (see CMB No. [41](#)). It highlights the 2008 Sichuan earthquake as the key turning point in Ai's transformation from an artist to an avid blogger and activist. He began using social media such as Twitter to share information and call on the government to investigate the corruption that likely contributed to the deaths of thousands of children in schools that crumbled during the earthquake (see CMB No. [22](#)). Ai reportedly told Klayman, "If not for my use of the internet, I would just be an artist trying to put up a canvas in a gallery or a museum, which has almost no influence for the majority of society. It's only because I acted on the internet that the pressure comes. It made a lot of people feel scared, because they can never really stop my influence on the netizens." A schedule of upcoming screenings is available on the film's website, listed below.

- [Never Sorry: Ai Weiwei website](#)
- *Guardian* 2/13/2012: [Berlin 2012: Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry — review](#)
- *New York Times* 1/23/2012: [Ai Weiwei: Evolution of a dissident](#)

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

[*Freedom on the Net 2011*](#)
[*Freedom in the World 2011*](#)
[*Freedom of the Press 2010*](#)

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