

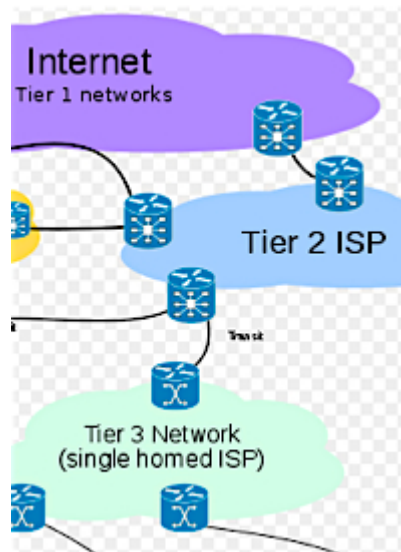


Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 27, 2011

U.S. Government Seeks to Create Website Ban List

The U.S. House of Representatives recently introduced a “rogue websites” bill that has managed to attract bipartisan support even though it would force Internet Service Providers to create a list of banned websites and prevent users of those websites from accessing their sites. The list is all too similar to the “ban lists” that are found in China.

Breitbart.com reports: “US lawmakers introduced a bill on Wednesday that would give US authorities more tools to crack down on websites accused of piracy of movies, television shows and music and the sale of counterfeit goods.”



Entitled the Stop Online Piracy Act, the bill reads:

A service provider shall take technically feasible and reasonable measures designed to prevent access by its subscribers located within the United States to the foreign infringing site (or portion thereof) that is subject to the order, including measures designed to prevent the domain name of the foreign infringing site (or portion thereof) from resolving to that domain name’s Internet Protocol address.

It is the House version of a bill that was introduced in the U.S. Senate earlier this year called the Theft of Intellectual Property Act or Protect IP Act.

While the touted focus of the bill is on foreign websites, it may just as easily be applied to all .com domains.

The very language of the bill indicates it is trying to empower the federal government to ban websites.

According to [journalist](#) Paul Joseph Watson, “The only difference between this system and the draconian measures currently in place in countries like Iran, China and North Korea, is that the ISP’s would be mandated to enforce the ban list, rather than the websites being blocked via a centralized government hub.”

The Center for Democracy and Technology issued a statement indicating that the House version of the bill “includes the most controversial parts of the Senate’s Protect IP Act, but radically expands the scope.” It adds, “Any website that features user-generated content or that enables cloud-based data storage could end up in its crosshairs.”

“Internet Service Providers would face new and open-ended obligations to monitor and police user behavior,” the CDT said. “Payment processors and ad networks would be required to cut off business with any website that rightsholders allege hasn’t done enough to police infringement.”

The proposal is not much different from the Internet kill switch proposed by Senator Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.), who said during an appearance on CNN, “Right now in China, the government can disconnect



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parts of its Internet in case of war and we need to have that here too.”

Lieberman has moved to shut down websites such as Amazon and Wikileaks without a court order.

Likewise, the Department of Homeland Security has seized a number of websites just for linking to copyrighted material, even when that material wasn't hosted on the website itself. Responding to this, the Electronic Frontier Foundation called the government's actions “Blunt instruments that cause unacceptable collateral damage to free speech rights.”

Once again, the federal government is being given permission to act in violation of individual rights just based on an accusation of something believed to be unlawful, without legal process.

The newest proposal to acquire the ability to ban websites should not come as too much of a shock, as the government has already taken the authority to demand that websites remove information and videos which contain too much “government criticism.” Google admits that there has been a substantial increase in the number of requests by the federal government to take down certain information.

“In the US, Google received 757 takedown requests across its sites and services, up 70 per cent from the second half of last year,” [reports technology website V3.co.uk](#). “US authorities also called for the removal of 113 videos from YouTube, including several documenting alleged police brutality which Google refused to take down.”

In Google's newly released transparency report, it reveals that the number of “user data requests” by U.S. authorities has increased by 29 percent over the course of the last reporting period. In the case of the removal of a YouTube video, for example, the reason listed was “government criticism,” and no content of the video was indicated or explained. Other videos which have been ordered to be taken down pertain to police brutality on the grounds of defamation.

Interestingly, the number of items requested by the U.S. government to be removed actually surpasses the number requested to be removed by authorities in China.

Meanwhile, Verisign, the global authority over .com domain names, has already demanded the power to destroy any website deemed “abusive” when a government orders it to be done, even if it is so ordered without court order and without any oversight.

“The company said today it wants to be able to enforce the “denial, cancellation or transfer of any registration” in any of a laundry list of scenarios where a domain is deemed to be “abusive,” [reports the UK Register](#).



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