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## White House steps in to Google's row with China

**Comment** Spin creates a silver lining for cloud

By [Nick Farrell](#)

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**THE WHITE HOUSE** has entered the spat that Google is having with China.

The US President's office said that it backs the "right to a free Internet" and confirmed it has held talks with Google, which has threatened to pull up stakes in China over censorship.

But we should not be surprised as it is starting to look like the whole thing is as much an embarrassment to the US government as it is to Google. Suggestions are that the same software Google uses to snoop on customers for US law enforcement might have provided Chinese hackers with their attack vector.

Julian Sanchez of the Cato Institute [said](#) that there is a problem with these automated law enforcement tracking systems in place at most major ISPs and web companies.

He said that the trend toward building surveillance capability into [telecommunications](#) architecture amounts to a breach-by-design and is a serious security risk.

As the volume of requests from law enforcement at all levels grows, that is making it difficult for telcos to permit access to user information with minimal human intervention.

With the automated process in place all the Chinese would have had to do was hack into it and all the information they wanted would have been available to them.

If this is true, it is running counter to the official story that claims Chinese dissidents were tricked with a bogus Trojan. It highlights the weaknesses in Google's [cloud computing](#) plans and how the US government's obsession to snoop on its citizens actually puts them at risk.

Fortunately for both Google and the US government, they can sidetrack the problem with a bit of spin that paints them as 'fighting for freedom' against the Chinese government's attempts to clamp down on free speech.

China has been successfully squeezing Internet companies for years and neither Google nor the US government had complained much.

Yet when the future of [cloud based](#) computing is threatened then Google apparently feels it is a good idea to threaten to pull out of China.

The US government too has an interest in Google's cloud based initiative succeeding. Instead of having to get court orders to snoop

at many ISPs it will only have to deal with one company, with which it could develop a very cosy relationship over time.

However if Google's snooping software did provide the Chinese attack vector, then it could make people less happy with both the government and cloud based computing.

So the White House now enters the spin war on Google's side.

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said that the President and his administration believe in the freedom of the Internet. The right to a free Internet was what the President talked about in China last November, he added.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi praised Google on Wednesday for threatening to quit China and urged other high-tech companies to resist Beijing.

Google is onto a PR winner here. With even Reporters Without Borders hailing Google's move, no one is taking any time to wonder how Chinese hackers were able to get into its cloud. μ

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