



U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Hearing on the Access to Information in the People's Republic of China

Opening Statement of

Carolyn Bartholomew

Chairman and Hearing Co-chair

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Good morning everyone. Welcome to the seventh hearing of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission's 2007 reporting cycle. Commissioner Houston and I will be co-chairing today's hearing, entitled Access to Information in the People's Republic of China. On behalf of all the Commissioners, thank you for joining us.

The Commission's Congressional mandate directs us to review restrictions on freedom of expression and access to information in China. In doing so, we are required to assess the implications these restrictions have on our bilateral relationship with China in the areas of economic and security policy. At today's hearing we will be fulfilling this mandate by closely examining the methods that the Chinese government uses to control and censor information in China's mass media and on the Internet. We will also be examining the implications these activities have on the United States. In today's world, where goods, services, people and information move rapidly, restrictions on freedom of speech and a free press have consequences well beyond any one nation's borders.

Today's hearing is not the first time that this Commission has addressed these important subjects. Our first hearing on Chinese censorship took place in 2003, when China's government used their information controls to suppress news about the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS. The strict control of information at that time had consequences for people around the world.

While we'll be focusing on the how's and why's of Chinese censorship at today's hearing, we'll also hear from experts on how these controls may be fostering the production of dangerous food and consumer goods in China for both domestic consumption and export. Some believe that the Chinese government may be hiding the scope of this problem, as they did with SARS, and we hope to learn more about what role information controls are playing in the current food safety problems that are making headlines around the world.

We will also explore the systems and institutions that Beijing has developed to manage the content and opinions seen in Chinese mass media and the Internet. We already know that Government agencies like the Central Propaganda Department, the General Administration of Press and Publications, and the Ministry of Information Industry work to censor information in

China - - but it is also important to understand how they do it and where their directives come from. Experts from around the country have come here to share with us their analysis of how these institutions operate, how they've changed over time, and what direction China's leadership is likely to steer them towards in the future.

I'd like to thank all of our witnesses for their participation at today's hearing and, at this point, I'll turn the microphone over to Vice Chairman Blumenthal for his opening remarks.