Brin says Google compromised principles

By TED BRIDIS, Associated Press Writer

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WASHINGTON - Google Inc. co-founder Sergey Brin acknowledged Tuesday the dominant Internet company has compromised its principles by accommodating Chinese censorship demands. He said Google is wrestling to make the deal work before deciding whether to reverse course.

Meeting with reporters near Capitol Hill, Brin said Google had agreed to the censorship demands only after Chinese authorities blocked its service in that country. Google's rivals accommodated the same demands — which Brin described as "a set of rules that we weren't comfortable with" — without international criticism, he said.

"We felt that perhaps we could compromise our principles but provide ultimately more information for the Chinese and be a more effective service and perhaps make more of a difference," Brin said.

Brin also addressed Internet users' expectations of privacy in an era of increased government surveillance, saying Americans misunderstand the limited safeguards of their personal electronic information.

"I think it's interesting that the expectations of people with respect to what happens to their data seems to be different than what is actually happening," he said.

Google has battled the U.S. Justice Department in court seeking to limit the amount of information the government can get about users' Internet searches. It also says it has not participated in any programs with the National Security Agency to collect Internet communications without warrants.

Google's free e-mail service is among the Internet's most popular.

Brin visited Washington to ask U.S. senators to approve a plan that would prevent telephone and cable companies from collecting premium fees from companies such as...
Brin says Google compromised its principles in China, founder says

Google, Microsoft and Yahoo! for faster delivery of their services. Brin, dressed casually in jeans, sneakers and a black sport jacket, said he wasn't sure whether he changed any lawmakers' minds.

Google’s China-approved Web service omits politically sensitive information that might be retrieved during Internet searches, such as details about the 1989 suppression of political unrest in Tiananmen Square. Its agreement with China has provoked considerable criticism from human rights groups.

"Perhaps now the principled approach makes more sense," Brin said.

The Paris-based group Reporters Without Borders said Tuesday that Google's main Web site, http://www.google.com, was no longer accessible in most Chinese provinces due to censorship efforts, and that it was completely inaccessible throughout China on May 31.

Brin said Google is trying to improve its censored search service, Google.cn, before deciding whether to reverse course. He said virtually all the company's customers in China use the non-censored service.

"It's perfectly reasonable to do something different, to say, 'Look, we're going to stand by the principle against censorship and we won't actually operate there.' That's an alternate path," Brin said. "It's not where we chose to go right now, but I can sort of see how people came to different conclusions about doing the right thing."

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