

Four U.S. TV shows ordered off Chinese websites

By Louise Watt
The Associated Press

BEIJING — Chinese authorities have ordered video streaming websites in the country to stop showing four popular American TV shows, including “The Big Bang Theory” and “The Good Wife,” according to representatives from two sites.

The move suggests government attention is intensifying in the online streaming industry, which is freer than state television and China’s cinemas to show foreign productions and other content and has stretched the boundaries of what can be seen in the country.

A spokeswoman for a leading online video site, Youku, said it had received notification not to show sitcom “The Big Bang Theory,” political and legal drama “The Good Wife,” crime drama “NCIS,” and legal drama “The Practice.” Of those, Youku showed only “The Good Wife.” The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television didn’t give a reason for its order, said the spokeswoman, who couldn’t be named because of company policy.

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WATCH WATCH. Wearing what he said was a Chinese-made watch, Indonesian Armed Forces Gen. Moeldoko speaks to the media during a press conference in Jakarta, Indonesia. Under fire in the media after being photographed with the luxury watch on his wrist, Indonesia’s military commander says his critics should move on, explaining the timepiece is a cheap Chinese fake. (AP Photo)

Indonesian general says his flashy watch is a fake

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia’s military commander, under fire in the media after being photographed wearing a luxury watch, says his critics should be quiet because the timepiece is actually a cheap Chinese fake.

A Singapore website flagged a picture of the general and his watch last month, saying it was a Richard Mille worth more than \$100,000.

Gen. Moeldoko, who uses a single name, said it was a Chinese-made copy and cost only 5 million rupiah (\$430).

The website, mothership.sg, also showed photos of Moeldoko wearing other luxury watches, including an Audemars Piguet Millenary — either a \$43,000 Chronograph or a \$476,600 Minute Repeater limited edition.

Moeldoko, who became Indonesia’s military chief last August, reported total assets of about 36 billion rupiah (\$3 million) to the anti-graft commission last year.

A senior manager at another site, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said it received the surprise order last month to “clean their website.” The order, which was identical to the one sent to Youku and other companies, also listed a Chinese slapstick miniseries made by another site, Sohu, as having to be removed, said the manager.

Online streaming sites regularly receive orders to take down Chinese or foreign TV programs and movies, but usually because the regulator considers them to be too salacious or violent or because they infringe copyright laws. Sohu’s most popular U.S. shows are “Nikita” — episodes from the first and second seasons have been watched a combined total of 472 million times — and “Masters of Sex,” which weren’t included in the order.

From time to time the regulator limits American-style reality TV and other light fare on satellite channels, ostensibly to stop “vulgar content.” Some observers suspect authorities are concerned they are taking too much audience away from the national broadcaster, which the government sees as a tool to mold public opinion.

China’s privately owned video streaming websites started life as YouTube-style sites that depended on users uploading their own clips. But they soon expanded into showing legally licensed domestic and international TV series and movies, which are often free to watch and accompanied by advertising. They also increasingly produce their own low-budget shows and, in some cases, co-produce movies.

AP news assistant Henry Hou contributed to this report.



SHOWSTOPPER. An online streaming website shows a description of American TV show “The Big Bang Theory” on a computer screen in Beijing, but it no longer has access to episodes in the series. Chinese authorities have ordered video streaming websites in the country to stop showing four popular American TV shows: sitcom “The Big Bang Theory,” political and legal drama “The Good Wife,” crime drama “NCIS,” and legal drama “The Practice.” (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

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