

## Editorial

### Intellasia under attack

17/AUG/2007 INTELLASIA | AN NINH THU DO ONLINE

Intellasia has been very an active promoter of investing in Vietnam for many years now. But unfortunately today August 17 Intellasia is under official attack. In many online newspapers belonging to the state, there are many long articles alleging the Intellasia website is 'illegal' and has 'reactionary' content. These articles follow six weeks of harassment and interrogation of the proprietors and staff here at Intellasia.

The articles state that the owner of the website 'illegally operates a website without a license'. This is despite the fact that the proprietor had categorically shown evidence that the website is owned and operated by two Australians—one in Vietnam and the other in Australia. Moreover, the website is on a server in the United States and content is operated and maintained by another US-based company.

But now it is quite apparent that some officials here consider their legal jurisdiction extends to Australia and United States.

The article in An Ninh Thu Do is accompanied by website image extracts concerning articles about some court appearances of dissidents and activists. All of these articles were sourced from professional and reputable world wire services—AFP, AP, AAP, Reuters and so forth. The number of these types of articles would only number in the few dozen over a couple of years and a miniscule number compared to the 25,000 articles per year by Intellasia related to business and finance news.

Despite the fact that Intellasia has over the years promoted Vietnam as a safe and good destination for foreign investors, balanced news reporting that gives all sides to any story is banned. Intellasia has always endeavoured to present a fair picture of what is happening in Vietnam during the good and lean times over the years. But now that the country has joined the WTO, things have suddenly reverted ominously.

This is a very dark day for what should be a civilised country to operate in and it should be noted that any foreigner or foreign organisation here in Vietnam that also operates a website abroad could at any time suddenly find themselves in a similar position of persecution—no matter how seemingly innocent the content placed on a foreign-owned website—particularly if relating in any way to a state enterprise or state entity, even figures could draw official sanction. So, this begs the question: How safe is anyone really, now or in the future? – by the editor and proprietor Peter J Leech.

**Full article:** (translated *verbatim and unedited from the police newspaper website An Ninh Thu Do*): The office of cultural and ideology security of Hanoi city's police department recently detected and tackled an unlicensed web operator managed by an Australian. For years, the website has operated illegally and posted many distorted and reactionary articles about Vietnam's politics, human rights and democracy.

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By the first days of June 2007, Hanoi police was heard that there was a website in English addressed at [www.intellasia.com](http://www.intellasia.com) that often post bad political news.

Through investigation, the inspectors defined that the website is being managed by Tri Tue A Chau Ltd Co headquarters Room 1214 Floor 12, Building 671 Hoang Hoa Tham, Ba Dinh Dist, Hanoi. Being was found in May 2002, the firm director is Nguyen Thi Minh Tam (1972, living Vinh Phuc, Ba Dinh, Hanoi).

In line with Tri Tue A Chau Co's business license granted by Hanoi Department of Planning and Investment, the company is allowed to operate in fields of advertising, commerce, market news provision, consultancy for information and informatics sector. The chief accountant of Tri Tue A Chau is Nguyen Hoang (1981), Tam's younger sister.

In fact, all operations of the company are under the management of an Australian named Peter Jonathonleech (*sic*) (1959). It has 14 staffs, most of them gained Bachelor of Arts, especially their foreign language degree is very good. Under Peter's management, these staffs searched financial, banking, political, legal and trade news from domestic and foreign press. If news is in Vietnamese, staffs will translate into English and then send translated news to customers via email.

The company has over 100 domestic and foreign institutions that often buy translated news from Tri Tue A Chau with over 16 categories. Customers have to pay 900,000 *dong* a month for financial and banking news and 1.2 million *dong* a month for investment news.

Apart from full time staffs, Tri Tue A Chau has also part time staffs that earn from 1.5 million to two million *dong* a month here. All articles for translator are edited by Peter before being posted online. Peter himself also searches and posts reactionary articles to [www.intellasia.com](http://www.intellasia.com).

With gathered data, on July 3 the inspectors of Hanoi police carried out a check over operation of Tri Tue A Chau and made an administrative punishment document for the firm's director on the irregularities "Providing online news without a license". In addition, the website also used some advertising banners although it was not yet licensed.

Exchanging with An Ninh Thu Do's reporter yesterday, an official from the office of cultural and ideology security said that, Tri Tue A Chau violated Section C, Item 3, Article 7 Decree 56 concerning on press operation, and Article 23 of the post and telecom ministry's Law on Information Technology ruling on managing and using internet.

Moreover, Tri Tue A Chau's [www.intellasia.com](http://www.intellasia.com) website has a serve in foreign country (US). Due to all above irregularities, the company only was compelled to pay few tens of millions *dong*. So their unlicensed website is still beyond authorities' control.

Yesterday, An Ninh Thu Do's reporter still saw newly updated articles as logging in [intellasia.com](http://intellasia.com). Even the company's staffs still continue working despite of the knowledge that their firm broke the law.

It is some worries that many students and BA gainers also joined the illegal activities. But Vietnam to date has not yet had particular punishment to deal with these violators. (... *article ends*)

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