

# Galileo satellite boss suspended over WikiLeaks cable

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The head of a German firm working on Europe's Galileo satellite navigation system has been suspended after a WikiLeaks cable cited him as describing it as a "stupid idea", the company said on Tuesday.

Satellite firm OHB Technology suspended Berry Smutny indefinitely and "with immediate effect", spokesman Steffen Leuthold said.

According to an October 2009 cable from the US embassy in Berlin obtained by [WikiLeaks](#) and released by Norwegian daily Aftenposten, Smutny said: "I think Galileo is a stupid idea that primarily serves French interests."

Smutny, whose firm won a 566-million-euro (759-million-dollar) contract to develop 14 satellites for the system, also said the project was "a waste of EU taxpayers' money championed by French interests," according to the cable.

The supervisory board of OHB "disapproves of these conversations and the quotes attributed to Mr. Smutny," said Leuthold.

Smutny has denied making the comments.

"We believe him, but the damage to our reputation was too big," Leuthold told AFP.

Galileo aims to challenge the dominance of the US-built [Global](#)

[Positioning System](#) (GPS) set up by the [Pentagon](#) in the 1980s, which is widely used in a huge variety of navigation devices.

Plagued by delays and cost over-runs, Galileo has an official price tag of 3.4 billion euros but reports have said the final cost of the system could exceed 20 billion euros. It is scheduled to be operational in 2014.

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