

BlackBerry buys German anti-eavesdropping firm

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A man looks at his email on a Blackberry in Washington on November 23, 2010

Canadian smartphone maker BlackBerry announced Tuesday the purchase of German voice and data encryption and anti-eavesdropping firm Secusmart, whose customers include NATO and German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her government.

Financial details of the transaction, which is subject to regulatory

approvals, were not disclosed.

The two companies had already partnered to offer Secusmart-equipped BlackBerry handsets to most German government ministries and to the chancellor herself following allegations last year of the United States spying on its ally.

The deal firms BlackBerry's reputation for secure mobile communications, chief executive John Chen said in a statement.

He said the security needs of smartphone users continue to increase "with the growing complexity of enterprise mobility, with devices being used for more critical tasks and to store more critical information, and security attacks becoming more sophisticated."

The acquisition of Secusmart, he said, addresses "growing security costs and threats ranging from individual privacy to national security."

It comes as the White House tries to patch up a serious rift with Germany over the disclosures that the US National Security Agency (NSA) tapped Merkel's mobile phone.

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