

Britain's BT scrubs China's Huawei from 4G network

December 5 2018, by Dmitry Zaks



Alex Younger, head of Britain's MI6 foreign intelligence agency, had earlier this week warned Huawei poses a potential threat and had publicly questioned if it should be involved in the 5G platform

Britain's largest mobile provider revealed on Wednesday it was stripping

the equipment of China's telecoms giant Huawei from its core 4G cellular network after similar moves by the United States and New Zealand.

BT's announcement comes with Washington reportedly pushing its allies to shun Huawei [equipment](#) and technology as they roll out next-generation 5G platforms.

It also follows a warning from the head of Britain's MI6 foreign intelligence service about the potential threat Huawei poses to national and corporate security.

Huawei—one of the world's largest mobile equipment and [service providers](#)—has long been under scrutiny over its allegedly close ties to China's state intelligence services.

Both Beijing and the company deny the link.

BT said it has been in the process of removing Huawei equipment from instrumental parts of its 3G and 4G mobile networks since 2016.

It said in a statement that the decision was made "as part of [network architecture](#) principles in place since 2006".

"We're applying these same principles to our current RFP (request for proposal) for 5G core infrastructure," the British group added.

"As a result, Huawei have not been included in vendor selection for our 5G core."

'State or corporate espionage'

The Wall Street Journal reported last month that Washington has asked

its allies to cut ties with Huawei because its equipment posed strong cybersecurity risks.

The pressure is forcing companies and governments to finely balance their positions because of the enormous political and economic influence of both Washington and Beijing.

New Zealand's government last week insisted that it was not banning Huawei from its 5G network rollout because it was Chinese.

BT likewise stressed that "Huawei remains an important equipment provider outside the core network, and a valued innovation partner".

It added that Huawei would still be part of its secondary "5G Radio Access Network".

The FT said BT in 2005 became one of the first companies outside China to sign a landmark supply agreement with Huawei.

Its decision not to use the Chinese firm for its "core" services came the following year.

But it had to resume actively removing Huawei from the 3G and 4G networks used by the EE telecoms company it acquired in 2016.

The Wall Street Journal said the UK government is currently reviewing the makeup of its entire telecommunications equipment market.

Britain's MI6 head Alex Younger publicly questioned on Monday whether Huawei should be involved in the 5G platform.

"We need to decide the extent to which we are going to be comfortable with Chinese ownership of these technologies and these platforms in an

environment where some of our allies have taken a very definite position," he said in a rare public address.

He said a report by a security committee of the US Congress has concluded that China could exert sufficient pressure on companies such as Huawei to achieve strategic security goals.

Beijing could "force Chinese suppliers or manufacturers to modify products to perform below expectations or fail, facilitate state or corporate espionage, or otherwise compromise the confidentiality, integrity, or availability," Younger said.

BT used to be known as British Telecom—the government-run provider of fixed line services in the United Kingdom.

It changed its name and was privatised between 1991 and 1993. BT reports offering various services in around 180 countries.

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Citation: Britain's BT scrubs China's Huawei from 4G network (2018, December 5) retrieved 22 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-12-britain-bt-china-huawei-4g.html>

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