

New Zealand leader says no final decision on using Huawei

February 19 2019, by Nick Perry



In this image made from a video, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern speaks during an interview in Wellington, New Zealand Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2019. Ardern said that no final decision has been made on whether Huawei equipment can be used in a planned network upgrade. (NEWSHUB via AP)

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Tuesday that no final decision has been made on whether Huawei equipment can be used in a planned network upgrade.

New Zealand's international spy agency in November stopped mobile company Spark from using the equipment in its planned 5G upgrade, saying it posed a "significant network security risk."

But in a television interview with Newshub, Ardern said Spark had the option of mitigating the spy agency's concerns. Ardern said it was important to note there had been no final decision.

"I'm not here to pass assessments on vendors ..." Ardern told Newshub. "It's in the [public domain](#) that issues and concerns have been raised, but again, as I say, the ball is now back in the court of the company that made the application, and that is Spark."

Her comments came after China accused the U.S. of trying to block the country's industrial development, and British media reported that U.K. intelligence agencies found it's possible to limit the security risks of using Huawei.

Ardern's comments also come at a time that New Zealand's relationship with China, its largest trading partner, is under scrutiny.

A story last week in the Global Times newspaper, which is published by China's Communist Party and is known for its nationalistic tone, said some Chinese tourists were considering dumping their plans to travel to New Zealand as a way to punish the country for the Huawei decision.



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Ardern said the report was incorrect.

"China's foreign ministry spokesperson last week rejected these reports, suggesting those who were peddling the story were, quote, either making a big fuss over nothing, or harboring ulterior motives," Ardern said.

Figures released this month by Statistics New Zealand show that tourist numbers from China were up 7 percent in 2018 when compared to the previous year, to about 450,000. But there was a drop of 3 percent in the month of December when compared to the same month a year earlier.

Ardern also rejected reports that some New Zealand exporters were facing delays at China's border.

"New Zealand and China have differences of views on some issues, as we do with any other country," Ardern said. "However, this is a robust and mature relationship. We manage these differences together in a mature and respectful way."

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