

EU ignores US calls to ban Huawei in 5G security blueprint

March 26 2019, by Kelvin Chan



In this Sept. 26, 2018 file photo, a staff member uses a laptop at a display for 5G wireless technology from Chinese technology firm Huawei at the PT Expo in Beijing. The European Commission recommends member countries share information as part of new cybersecurity measures for next-generation mobile networks. However, the commission is ducking U.S. calls to ban Chinese tech supplier Huawei. The executive Commission on Tuesday, March 26, 2019 released its roadmap for securing new ultrafast fifth-generation, or 5G, telecom systems that European Union countries will soon start rolling out. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein, File)

The European Commission ignored U.S. calls to ban Chinese tech supplier Huawei as it announced Tuesday a series of cybersecurity recommendations for next-generation mobile networks.

In its guidance for the rollout of ultrafast fifth-generation, or 5G, telecom systems across the European Union in coming years, the Commission urged member states to assess cyber threats to the 5G infrastructure in their national markets.

That information should then be shared among EU countries as part of a coordinated effort to develop a "toolbox of mitigating measures" and minimum common standards for 5G network security by the end of the year, the EU's executive branch said.

The proposals are a setback for the United States, which has been lobbying allies in Europe to boycott Huawei over fears its equipment could be used by China's communist leaders to carry out cyberespionage.

The EU's digital commissioner, Andrus Ansip, acknowledged those concerns, saying they stem from Beijing's 2017 intelligence law that compels Chinese companies to assist in intelligence gathering.

"I think we have to be worried about this," Ansip said at a press briefing in Strasbourg.

However, commission officials signaled they prefer to secure Europe's critical digital infrastructure with a more nuanced approach, rather than bowing to U.S. pressure for blanket bans.



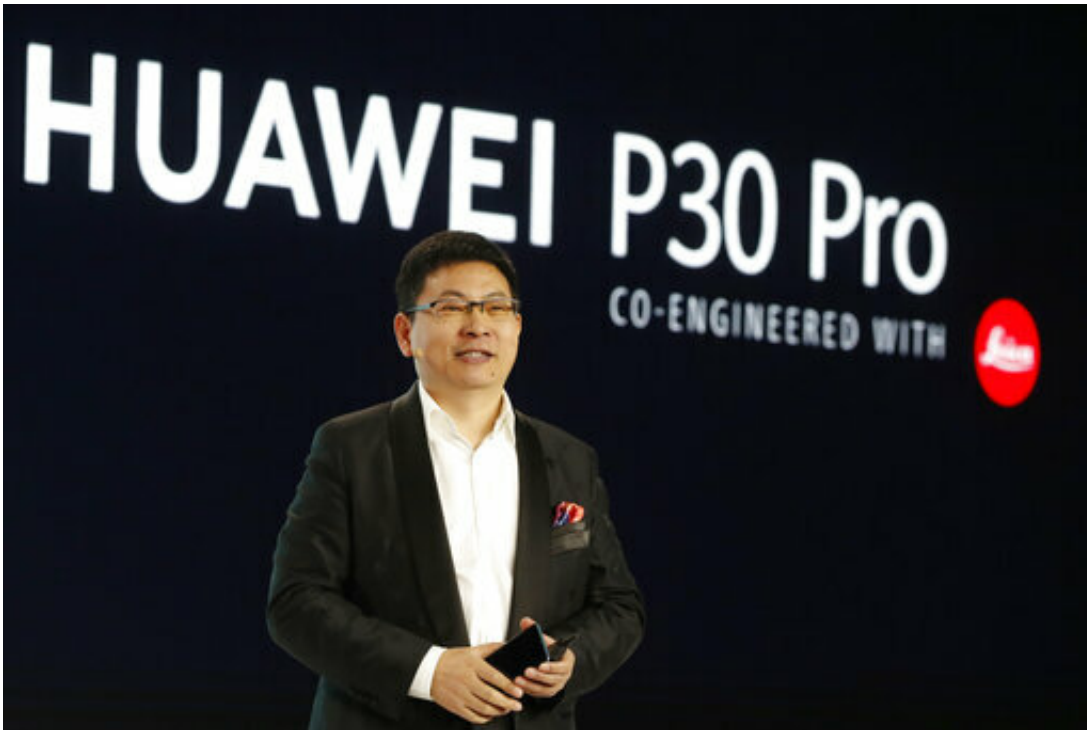
Huawei CEO Richard Yu displays the new Huawei P30 smartphone during a presentation, in Paris, Tuesday, March 26, 2019. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

Huawei said in a statement it welcomed the commission's "objective and proportionate" recommendations. The privately owned Chinese company has repeatedly said there's never been evidence it was responsible for any security breaches.

Huawei still faces scrutiny under Brussels' plan. Security Commissioner Julian King said EU countries should identify and manage security risks, including by ensuring a diverse range of equipment makers and factoring in "legal and policy frameworks governing third-country suppliers."

Countries would have the right to ban companies for national security reasons and could also agree on EU-wide measures to identify products or suppliers considered potentially unsecure, the commission said.

Commission guidance is non-binding but EU countries often use it as the basis for joint policies.

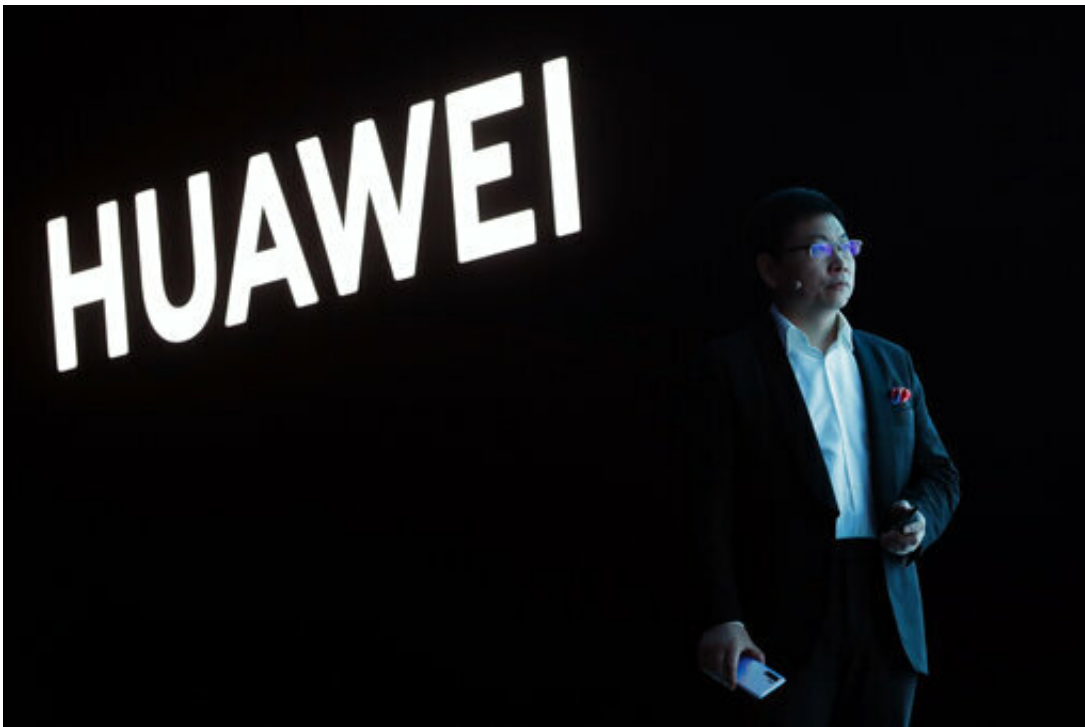


Huawei CEO Richard Yu displays the new Huawei P30 smartphone during a presentation, in Paris, Tuesday, March 26, 2019. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

5G mobile networks promise superfast download speeds with little signal delay, advances that are expected to underpin a new wave of innovation, including connected cars, remote medicine and factory robots.

Huawei is the world's biggest maker of telecom infrastructure equipment such as radio base stations and network switches. Telecom providers like its equipment because it's good quality and cheaper than Scandinavian rivals Nokia and Ericsson.

The issue has taken on more urgency as EU countries prepare to auction off 5G frequencies to telecom operators. The U.S. warned Germany, which began its auction earlier this month, that allowing untrustworthy companies to supply equipment could jeopardize the sharing of sensitive information.



Huawei CEO Richard Yu looks on during the presentation of the new Huawei P30 smartphone, in Paris, Tuesday, March 26, 2019. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

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