

# Huawei lashes out at Estonia for 'unfounded' security claims

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In this May 29, 2019, file photo, a man uses his smartphone outside of a shop selling Huawei products at a shopping mall in Beijing. The New York Times reports the Trump administration plans to issue licenses to U.S. companies to supply "non-sensitive goods" to Chinese tech giant Huawei in a move that might help to cool tensions ahead of trade talks. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein, File)

Chinese telecom company Huawei on Tuesday criticized the Estonian government and media for spreading what it says are "arbitrary and unfounded" allegations about cybersecurity risks related to the company's mobile phones.

Hong Yang, head of Huawei's Baltic consumer business, said in a statement that the company "is always ready to defend its rights and interests in a situation where any party is spreading baseless rumors and malicious libel."

He referred to an Estonian television program aired in September that discussed the issue in detail. In it, Foreign Trade and Technology Minister Kert Kingo spoke about alleged security risks with Huawei phones.

It later was reported that Kingo used a Huawei handset as a work phone, and her ministry announced this week that it has now been replaced by an Apple iPhone.

"For Huawei, the security and privacy of our customers is of primary importance," said Hong Yang. "We do not collect or share personal information with third parties without the user's consent."

He didn't specify what kind of action the company was ready to take due to the allegations but referred to Estonia's Baltic neighbor Lithuania where Huawei recently won a legal case against one of the country's biggest newspapers, Lietuvos Rytas, for publishing "completely unfounded information that seriously damaged Huawei's reputation."

Estonian media reported in September that the small country, which is among Europe's most wired and technologically advanced nations, is set to restrict the use of equipment and technology from Huawei in its government sector.

It cited security concerns and recommendations by the United States, a key NATO ally, as the main reasons for the decision.

Kingo is heading an expert group that started its work in June with the aim of setting policies and standards this year for the use of technology in Estonian government institutions.

Local news portal Delfi said in September that the group had already taken a clear position that Huawei should not be allowed to provide technology for 5G networks in Estonia.

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