

Britain waits for US before Huawei 5G decision

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Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright told parliament that London was still seeking clarity on the implications of US action against the Chinese telecoms giant, adding it would be "wrong to make specific decisions" beforehand.

"The government is not yet in a position to decide what involvement Huawei should have in the provision of the UK's 5G network," he said.

The sensitive decision, which the US authorities are monitoring closely, will therefore not be taken by the outgoing administration of Prime Minister Theresa May, who leaves office on Wednesday.

The decision will fall to her successor, either former London mayor Boris Johnson or Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt.

The new premier will have to decide whether to ban, partially admit or allow Huawei's complete involvement in the new 5G telecoms network.

Huawei faces pushback in some Western markets over fears that Beijing could spy on communications and gain access to critical infrastructure if the company is allowed to develop foreign 5G networks.

The company has repeatedly denied such allegations.

In May, Huawei was hit by an executive order from US President Donald Trump which effectively banned it from trading with any US companies, although a temporary licence was issued shortly after.

"Since the US government's announcement, we have sought clarity on its extent and implications but the position is not yet entirely clear," Wright said.

"Until it is, we have concluded it would be wrong to make specific decisions in relation to Huawei but we will do so as soon as possible."

Vodafone launched its 5G service in Britain this month, but without smartphones from Huawei.

By sidelining Huawei phones, Vodafone has mirrored action by EE, the first UK provider to roll out the technology that offers almost instantaneous data transfer which launched at the end of May.

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