

# Britain pushing US to form 5G club of nations to cut out Huawei

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"D10" is coming for Huawei, if Britain has its way

Britain said Friday it was pushing the United States to form a club of 10 nations that could develop its own 5G technology and reduce dependence on China's controversial telecoms giant Huawei.

The issue is expected to feature at a G7 summit that US President Donald Trump will host next month against the backdrop of a fierce confrontation with China that has been exacerbated by a global blame game over the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Britain has allowed the Chinese global leader in 5G technology to build up to 35 percent of the infrastructure necessary to roll out its new speedy data network.

But Prime Minister Boris Johnson was reported by The Daily Telegraph last week to have instructed officials to draw up plans to cut Huawei out of the network by 2023 as relations with China sour.

The Times newspaper said Britain is proposing a "D10" club of democratic partners that groups the G7 nations with Australia and the Asian technology leaders South Korea and India.

It said one of the options involves channelling investments into existing telecommunication companies within the 10 member states.

A Downing Street spokesman confirmed that Britain is reaching out to partners in search for an alternative to Huawei.

"We (are) seeking new entrants into the market in order to diversify and that is something we've been speaking with our allies about, including the United States," the Downing Street spokesman said.

## Few options

Finland's Nokia and Sweden's Ericsson are Europe's only current alternative options for supplying 5G equipment such as antennas and relay masts.

"We need new entrants to the market," a UK government source told The Times.

"That was the reason we ended up having to go along with Huawei at the time."

Johnson's decision to include Huawei angered Washington because it believes that the private Chinese company can either spy on Western communications or simply shut down the UK network under orders from Beijing.

The United States has imposed several rounds of sanctions on Huawei that have put the future of Britain's 5G rollout in peril.

Downing Street said the UK National Cyber Security Centre was studying the implication of the US sanctions on Huawei's immediate ability to produce the equipment Britain needs.

Pressure on Johnson to cut ties with Huawei is being compounded by the new security law Beijing plans to impose on the once British-held Hong Kong.

London has infuriated Beijing by saying it would offer almost three million Hong Kong residents UK visa rights and a pathway to future citizenship if the new law goes into effect.

But Johnson's reported plan to completely remove Huawei from the UK network could prove costly at a time when his government is seeking new trade partners following Britain's exit from the EU.

It is also proving difficult to implement because private UK firms are pushing for the technology in order to stay competitive in a tight market.

Britain's BT said this month it was abandoning plans to strip out Huawei from the most sensitive part of its networks by the end of the year because the government's own deadline was set at 2023.

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