



Huawei

Huawei 'may have eavesdropped on Dutch mobile network's calls'

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The Chinese telecoms equipment supplier [Huawei](#) was able to monitor all calls made on one of the Netherlands' largest mobile phone networks, according to a confidential report seen by the Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant.

The report, made for KPN by the Capgemini consultancy firm in 2010, concluded that the Chinese company could have been monitoring the calls of the provider's 6.5m users without the Dutch company's knowledge, [according to the newspaper](#).

Conversations that Huawei staff in the [Netherlands](#) and China could have monitored included calls made by the then prime minister, Jan Peter Balkenende, and Chinese dissidents, the report claimed.

While KPN acknowledged the existence of the report, it said on Monday it had "never observed that [Huawei](#) took client information", adding that none of its

suppliers had “unauthorised, uncontrolled or unlimited access to our networks and systems”.

Huawei, which is the subject of widespread security concerns in many western countries, rejected any claim that it could have eavesdropped on KPN users. “We have never been accused by government bodies of acting in an unauthorised way,” it said.

KPN started using Huawei technology in 2009 and commissioned the report after the Dutch domestic intelligence service, AIVD, warned of possible espionage. The report also found Huawei could access numbers being tapped by Dutch security services.

Its findings put “the continued existence of KPN Mobile in serious danger” since users “may lose confidence ... if it becomes known the Chinese government can monitor KPN mobile numbers,” the report concluded.

KPN continued to award several contracts for parts of its core 3G and 4G networks to Huawei after receiving the Capgemini report, which it never made public.

In July 2019, a Dutch government task force recommended stronger vetting of telecoms equipment suppliers, but despite warnings from the US government and others of the dangers of Chinese espionage did not ban Huawei.

Last year, however, KPN became one of the first European operators to exclude the Chinese company from its core 5G network, opting for Sweden's Ericsson instead, while the Dutch government announced tighter restrictions for equipment suppliers including background checks on staff with access to networks.

Despite strong US lobbying, and the announcement of bans in countries such as the UK - from September 2021 - and Sweden, European countries are split on their attitude to Huawei, which has repeatedly denied spying for the Chinese state.

Europe remains a key battleground for the company, however: last year it announced it had secured 91 commercial 5G contracts, including 47 in Europe.

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