# UK defence firms warn staff against charging phones in Chinese-made electric cars over espionage fears



Defence companies in the UK have reportedly issued warnings to their staff against charging mobile phones in Chinese-made electric vehicles due to concerns about potential espionage. According to a report in the Daily Mail, these security precautions are part of a broader, cautious strategy taken by the defence sector to mitigate the risk of sensitive national security information being compromised through the use of electric cars manufactured by Chinese firms.

The measures go beyond merely advising staff against charging their phones; they also include avoiding parking in car parks at production plants and banning connections between mobile devices and vehicles via Bluetooth or charging cables. This multifaceted approach is described by industry insiders as ‘cautious’ and ‘belt and braces’, indicating a high level of vigilance.

Companies believed to have implemented these measures include two of Britain’s leading defence contractors, BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce. A representative at one firm was quoted by the Daily Mail as saying, “The sale of Chinese cars is growing in the UK, and we are, rightly, cautious about that. We are making our staff aware of the sensible precautions to take.”

The context for these concerns is the increasing availability of Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) in the UK market. Brands such as BYD, Ora, Geely, and XPENG have been establishing a presence, while Chinese companies also own traditionally Western brands including MG, Volvo, and Polestar. The report notes that recent international tariffs imposed by former US President Donald Trump led to a doubling of prices for Chinese EVs in the US, which market analysts believe may encourage greater penetration of these vehicles in the UK.

Joseph Jarnecki, a research fellow in cyber and technology at the Royal United Services Institute, highlighted the particular sensitivity of defence firms as targets of espionage and endorsed the notion of increased vigilance given historical examples of Chinese spying efforts. However, XPENG, which recently introduced its all-electric G6 SUV to the UK, has denied that its vehicles are used to spy on drivers.

The tension between security concerns and commercial interests is underscored by China’s National Intelligence Law, which mandates that Chinese firms must collaborate with state intelligence agencies if requested. Conversely, some experts argue that the possibility of state-sponsored espionage via commercial car brands is low, owing to the potential reputational damage and economic fallout it would cause in the international market.

James Bore, managing director of cyber technology company Bores Group, told the Daily Mail, “There are theoretical attacks which allow your phone or your devices to be compromised through plugging them into a charger, but these have been shown under lab conditions, and I have seen no evidence that it has ever actually happened in the wild. The moment it does, the Chinese car company market collapses, and that’s not the sort of economic upheaval that China really wants.”

Requests for comment were also sent to several car makers involved in this sector, including BYD, MG, Ora, Geely, Volvo, Polestar, and the Chinese Embassy in London, but no statements were reported at the time of publication.

These developments highlight the complexity of balancing emerging commercial opportunities in the electric vehicle market with the imperatives of national security in the defence sector.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.roadandtrack.com/news/a64524038/uk-electric-vehicles-with-chinese-parts-banned-from-military-bases-report/> - This article confirms that the UK has banned electric vehicles with Chinese parts from military bases over espionage concerns, which aligns with the broader precautions taken by defence companies.
2. <https://www.autoexpress.co.uk/news/366599/chinese-evs-banned-uk-military-sites-over-spying-concerns> - It reports on the ban of Chinese EVs from UK military sites due to concerns that technology in these vehicles could be used for spying, supporting the article's mention of security precautions.
3. <https://www.techdigest.tv/2025/04/chinese-evs-banned-near-uk-military-intelligence-hub-over-spying-fears.html> - This piece highlights the ban of Chinese EVs near military sites, particularly around RAF Wyton, due to spying fears, which reflects the cautious approach of defence companies.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2025/04/17/electric-cars-threaten-national-security-defence-chiefs-war/> - Although full access is restricted, this article likely addresses the national security concerns related to electric cars, aligning with the report's focus on defence sector vigilance.
5. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11974531/Electric-cars-spying-fears-China-supermarket-Britain.html> - This Daily Mail article, while not directly accessed, likely contains original reporting on defence companies advising staff about precautions with Chinese-made electric vehicles due to security concerns.
6. <https://www.investors.com/news/china-electric-vehicles-mg-volvo/> - This article could provide background on Chinese electric vehicle brands' presence in the UK, such as MG and Volvo, which is relevant to the increasing availability and security concerns around these vehicles.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14654023/Dont-charge-phone-Chinese-electric-car-UK-defence-firms-warn-amid-security-data-fears.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data