

Beat: Politics

The Spanish Government denounces espionage to PM Pedro Sánchez with Pegasus

And the Minister of Defense

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USPA NEWS - The Spanish Government denounced this Monday the espionage to the cell phones of the president, Pedro Sánchez, and the Minister of Defense, Margarita Robles, carried out with the Pegasus system a year ago, and filed a complaint with the National Court to clarify the origin of the wiretaps, which he described as "illicit and external." At a press conference at the Moncloa Palace, the Minister of the Presidency, Félix Bolaños, appeared together with the Government spokesperson, Isabel Rodríguez, to give an account of these "external" attacks by the cyberespionage program on the institutional cell phones of Sanchez and Robles.

In the midst of the controversy generated by a Citizen Lab report that denounced espionage on Catalan independence leaders, their families and lawyers, and which has caused the breakdown of negotiations between the regional government of Catalonia and the Government of Spain, with demands for resignation of the Minister of Defense, Margarita Robles, on whose department the National Intelligence Center (CNI in its acronym in Spanish) depends, the Spanish Government revealed on Monday that the cell phones of the Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, and of the Minister of Defense, were spied on in 2021 using the Israeli Pegasus software. This program, which is only sold to governments, would have stolen 2.6 gigabytes of data from Pedro Sánchez's cell phone, and a smaller volume of information from the Minister of Defense phone.

As reported on Monday by the Minister of the Presidency, Félix Bolaños, the Spanish Government still does not know which files were stolen from the cell phones of the president and the Minister of Defense. Bolaños confirmed that the espionage of the two members of the Government occurred between the months of March and June 2021, at a time when the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, would also have been spied on. The French politician accused Morocco of espionage and, according to various Spanish analysts, it would be consistent to think that the Maghreb country could also be behind the espionage of the two members of the Spanish Government.

Those same analysts believe that the announcement made this Monday by the Minister of the Presidency tries to deactivate the Catalan offensive against the Government, weakened by the withdrawal of Catalan support and with its far-left partner Podemos confronted by the espionage controversy. Also the new conservative leader, Alberto Núñez Feijóo, considered this Monday a suspicious coincidence that the announcement of espionage to Pedro Sánchez and Margarita Robles, and the complaint filed in Court, occur precisely now.

In the absence of a judicial investigation that confirms the relevant responsibilities for the use of Pegasus, a spokesman for the Prosecutor's Office said Monday that there is very little chance of finding the author of the espionage. Be that as it may, the controversy also weakens the National Intelligence Center, which the political parties point to as the probable user of the Israeli software.

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