

Polish investigators seize Pegasus spyware systems as part of probe into alleged abuse

By Suzanne Smalley

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Polish prosecutors have seized Pegasus spyware systems from a government agency in Warsaw and are now studying them to “determine the functionality of the Pegasus software and the broad legality of its use,” a spokesperson for the National Prosecutor’s Office said Friday according to [local news reports](#).

The prosecutor’s office inspected and secured devices related to the powerful commercial surveillance tool at the headquarters of the Central Anticorruption Bureau on Tuesday and Wednesday, the spokesperson said.

The operation is part of a national scandal in which the previous Polish government is accused of widely abusing Pegasus to spy on opposition politicians.

Investigators also took documents from the Central Anticorruption Bureau, the Internal Security Agency, the Military Counterintelligence Service and the Police “regarding the purchase of Pegasus software, its functionality and use as part of operational inspections,” the spokesperson said.

“The obtained data was transferred to the Forensic Research Office of the Internal Security Agency, which was appointed to issue an opinion on the operation and functionality of the Pegasus system,” he added.

The National Prosecutor’s [announced](#) in March that it had begun a probe examining the prior majority’s use of Pegasus from November 2017 to December 2022.

Investigators are now focused in part on who purchased Pegasus for the Polish authorities.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński; former Deputy Minister of Justice Michał Woś; former director of the Department of Family and Juvenile Affairs at the Ministry of Justice Mikołaj Pawlak; and other Ministry of Justice employees have testified so far, according to local news reports.

Pegasus is manufactured by an Israeli company known as the NSO Group and has been increasingly showing up on the phones of civil-society figures in countries as far flung as Spain, Poland, Rwanda, Hungary, Mexico, Thailand and Latvia.

In April, Poland’s justice minister announced that nearly 600 people there, mostly opposition politicians and their allies, were targeted for surveillance with Pegasus under the former ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party.

Despite abuses such as those surfacing in Poland, NSO Group has [defended](#) the use of Pegasus on phones belonging to opposition “political operatives.”

Responding to Friday’s news, John Scott-Railton, a senior digital forensics researcher at The Citizen Lab, which helped uncover the abuse of Pegasus in Poland, [tweeted](#): “Win for transparency in Poland. Nightmare for NSO

Group.”

In September, [Poland's Senate unveiled findings](#) from a special commission’s investigation into the use of Pegasus to hack an opposition politician in 2019, saying the incident involved "gross violations of constitutional standards.”

The commission said it had notified prosecutors there of the potential for criminal charges against current and former Polish ministers who have been implicated in the use of the spyware.

The investigation, which ran across 18 months, also determined that the 2019 elections involving hacked opposition leader Senator Krzysztof Brejza were unfair due to use of the spyware.

“Pegasus is not an operational tool used by the services, but it is a cyber weapon, i.e. a tool to influence the behavior of other people,” Pegasus Surveillance Committee Chairman Marcin Bosacki said according to a summary report. “We can unequivocally state that Pegasus was used in Poland to an extremely aggressive degree.”

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