

Edward Snowden urges governments to ban trade of spyware like Pegasus



Moscow, July 21 (RHC)-- NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden has warned against the use of Pegasus like software. Pegasus is a spyware that Israel's NSO Group makes and sells to global governments.

Edward Snowden warned that if the trade between companies that make for-profit software -- which can become a surveillance weapon in the wrong hands, such as Israel's NSO Group -- and the governments continue, we will soon see a world "in which no mobile phone is safe from state-sponsored hackers."

In a conversation from Moscow with The Guardian, NSA whistleblower Snowden expressed his concern against the use of mass surveillance software by global governments to snoop on the smart devices of anyone.

NSO Group's Pegasus raised eyebrows after an investigation carried out by Amnesty International -- and the report of which was reviewed by a consortium of news organisations called the Pegasus Project -- revealed the software was used to intercept mobile phones of prominent journalists, politicians, and even their families. Snowden calls spyware developers such as NSO Group "an industry that should not exist."

State-sponsored hacking involves legal rights that governments issue hackers to hack into a device in a bid that the government deems necessary for the security of the country. The hacking is done through sophisticated software, such as Pegasus that NSO Group manufactures and sells to governments.

The Pegasus spyware can be installed on a mobile phone through a loophole and help the government or the user harvest information. The level of information that this tool can intercept is scary, at least that is what the investigation has revealed. According to Amnesty, the Pegasus software could have been used to see call logs, text messages, photos, videos, stored files, as well as firing the camera unknowingly to surreptitiously record or click what the phone's camera can see.

The NSO Group has defended its software by terming it as a tool to detect activities related to terrorism and crime and calling the entire process of spying a controlled activity that leaves no traces. It has also claimed that it takes ethical considerations seriously, which is why it sells its software to "vetted" governments. Some of the customers of NSO's Pegasus software include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Azerbaijan.

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