

Switzerland and Austria Investigate Reports of Spying on Iran Nuclear Talks



Vienna, June 12 (RHC)-- Switzerland and Austria say they are investigating reports that spyware linked to Israel targeted the hotels hosting the closed-door nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1 states.

The Swiss attorney general's office said on Thursday that it had launched a probe into the espionage reports on May 6th and conducted a raid six days later, seizing computer equipment, due to "suspicion of illegal intelligence services operating in Switzerland." However, it did not specify if the hotels hosting the negotiations on Iran's nuclear case were the target of the spying activities.

In a similar statement on Thursday, Austria also announced that it has started investigating possible spying at its hotels where Iran and the six world powers have held their sensitive nuclear discussions. "Investigations are ongoing" regarding the Palais Coburg hotel, Austrian Interior Ministry spokesman Karl-Heinz Grundboeck told AFP.

The announcements come as the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reports that a computer virus, widely used by Israeli spies, had attacked the hotels hosting nuclear talks between Iran and six powers. The development could serve as "the first concrete evidence that the nuclear negotiations were targeted and by whom," the

WSJ wrote.

Russian-based Cybersecurity Company Kaspersky said on Wednesday that the malware dubbed Duqu, a sophisticated spy tool that was believed to have been eradicated in 2012, appeared to have been used to spy on the talks on Iran's nuclear issue.

The malware has been characterized as an invigorated version of the Duqu virus, associated with Tel Aviv's "most sensitive intelligence-collection operations," the paper wrote.

Both Austria and the Switzerland have hosted several rounds of talks between Iran and the P5+1 states – Russia, China, France, Britain, the U.S. and Germany – which are working to reach a comprehensive nuclear deal by the end of June.

The two sides have held talks at Swiss hotels of Beau-Rivage Palace, Royal Plaza Montreux, Intercontinental and Hotel President Wilson as well as Palais Coburg in Vienna, Austria's capital.

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