

Owner of spyware ends contract with Italy

Stephanie Kirchgaessner and Angela Giuffrida - Thu 6 Feb 2025 The Guardian

1 Paragon Solutions, whose military-grade hacking software was allegedly used to target 90 people, including
2 journalists and members of civil society, in two dozen countries, has terminated its client relationship with Italy,
3 according to a person familiar with the matter.

4 Paragon's decision to end the Italy contract followed revelations that an Italian investigative journalist and two
5 activists who were critical of Italy's dealings with Libya were among the people who had allegedly been targeted
6 with the spyware. [[1]]

7 A person familiar with the matter said Italy had breached the terms of Paragon's contract with the government,
8 which does not allow for journalists or members of civil society to be targeted with the spyware.

9 Like Pegasus, the hacking software made by the rival NSO Group, Paragon's hacking spyware, called Graphite, can
10 infect a mobile phone without a user's knowledge. [[2]]

11 The news has sent shockwaves across the Italian parliament. [[3]]

12 Paragon's decision to terminate the contract, which was first reported by the Guardian, comes less than a week
13 after WhatsApp announced that Paragon's spyware had been used to target dozens of people. Like other spyware
14 vendors, Paragon sells its cyberweapon to government clients who are supposed to use it to prevent crime. It
15 remains unclear who all the specific government clients were behind the alleged attacks.

16 [[4]] They denied that domestic intelligence services or the government were behind the alleged breaches against
17 the journalist and activists.

18 The person familiar with the matter, who spoke to the Guardian on condition of anonymity, said Paragon had "out
19 of an abundance of caution" initially suspended the Italy contract when the first allegation of potential abuse of
20 the spyware emerged last Friday. [[5]]

21 The Guardian has contacted an Italian government spokesperson for comment.

22 Italian opposition parties on Thursday called on Meloni to urgently address parliament. Giuseppe Conte, leader of
23 the Five Star Movement (M5S), said: "The fact that journalists are being spied upon is in itself of unprecedented
24 severity in a democratic system. [[6]]

25 Asked for comment, a Paragon representative declined to confirm or deny the development. [[7]]

26 Francesco Cancellato, the editor-in-chief of Fanpage, a highly regarded investigative news outlet, was the first to
27 publicly state last Friday that he was one of the 90 people who had been notified by WhatsApp that his mobile
28 phone had been targeted, and most likely compromised, by the hacking software.

29 WhatsApp said all of the hacking attempts had been discovered in December, in part through the help of the Citizen
30 Lab at the University of Toronto, which tracks digital threats against civil society. It is not clear for how long the
31 individuals could have been surveilled or the government clients involved in each case.

32 While it is not entirely clear why Cancellato may have been targeted. [[8]] The two other people who were
33 targeted, Husam El Gomati, a Libyan activist living in Sweden, and Luca Casarini, the founder of NGO Mediterranea
34 Saving Humans, have both been vocal critics of Italy's alleged complicity in abuses suffered by migrants in Libya.

35 While Paragon's move is likely to assuage some concerns, there are still outstanding questions about dozens of
36 other cases that WhatsApp discovered.

Exercise 1 : Put the following segments where they belong in the text. ___/8

A. AND IF EVEN A COMPANY SAYS IT HAD TO INTERRUPT THE CONTRACT FOR ETHICAL REASONS
... THIS IS VERY SERIOUS.

B. HE SAID IT WAS THE COMPANY'S POLICY TO NOT DISCUSS POTENTIAL CLIENT MATTERS.

- C. HOWEVER, HIS PUBLICATION LAST YEAR PUBLISHED A HIGH-PROFILE INVESTIGATION THAT EXPOSED YOUNG FASCISTS IN MELONI'S PARTY.
- D. IT THEN GIVES THE OPERATOR OF THE SPYWARE FULL CONTROL AND ACCESS TO MESSAGES AND ENCRYPTED CHATS SENT OVER APPS SUCH AS WHATSAPP AND SIGNAL.
- E. MELONI'S OFFICE RESPONDED TO THE ALLEGATIONS OF INVOLVEMENT LATE ON WEDNESDAY.
- F. ONE MP SAID THAT, IF CONFIRMED, THE STORY REPRESENTED AN "UNACCEPTABLE VIOLATION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND AN ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY ITSELF".
- G. THE DECISION TO FULLY TERMINATE THE CONTRACT, THE PERSON SAID, WAS MADE ON WEDNESDAY AFTER PARAGON DETERMINED THAT ITALY HAD BROKEN THE TERMS OF SERVICE AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK IT HAD AGREED UNDER ITS PARAGON CONTRACT.
- H. THE WORK OF ALL THREE INDIVIDUALS HAS BEEN CRITICAL OF THE RIGHTWING GOVERNMENT OF ITALY'S PRIME MINISTER, GIORGIA MELONI.

[[1]]	[[2]]	[[3]]	[[4]]	[[5]]	[[6]]	[[7]]	[[8]]
H	D	F	E	G	A	B	C

Exercise 2: /8

What does Paragon Solutions normally help governments with? (/ 2)

They help get spying to prevent crimes.

What did the Italian government do instead? (/ 2)

They spied on Journalists, violating the terms of the contract.

True or false? Quote the **LINE NUMBER** to justify your answer. /3

- Paragon's spyware is called Pegasus.

T/F? - Line n°: ⁹ another software

- The Italian government admitted they had tried to spy on journalists.

T/F? - Line n°: ¹⁶ They denied

- WhatsApp did not warn any of the app users that they had been hacked.

T/F? - Line n°: ²⁷ they have been warned.

Explain with your own words: /1

'Alleged' or 'allegedly' are used a number of times in the text, what do they mean/why are they used?

It is an accusation without any proofs (yet)

Exercise 3: Find a word that matches the definition (they are in chronological order): /4

1. Put an end to: terminate
2. Repercussions of an unpleasant event: shock waves
3. Seller: vendors
4. Remove from membership for a limited time: suspended
5. probably: potentially
6. willing to express himself insistently, outspoken: publicly state
7. Appease, soothe: assuage
8. Remaining unsolved: cases