Spyware dealers could face visa restrictions



The State Department will soon impose visa restrictions on people who it says have been involved in the development of spyware. In a press release issued on Monday, the department said it is taking steps to bar 13 people “who have been involved in the development and sale of commercial spyware or who are immediate family members of those involved” from entering the United States.

“These individuals have facilitated or derived financial benefit from the misuse of this technology, which has targeted journalists, academics, human rights defenders, dissidents and other perceived critics, and U.S. Government personnel,” the department’s release read.

The looming visa restrictions are the result of a policy implemented by Secretary of State Antony Blinken in February and were issued under Section 212 (a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which lets the government deem foreign nationals inadmissible if granting them a visa “would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for

the United States.”

As *Infosecurity Magazine* notes, this is part of a broader effort to crack down on commercial spyware companies. In March, the Treasury Department issued sanctions against Tal Dilian, the founder of the company behind the Predator spyware. The sanctions also targeted Dilian’s company, the Intellexa Consortium; Intellexa business manager Sara Aleksandra Fayssal Hamou; and five other entities associated with the company.

Intellexa’s Predator spyware was used to target journalists, human rights workers, and even two members of Congress, an October 2023 Amnesty International report found. The sanctions prohibit US citizens and businesses from doing business with Dilian, Intellexa, or any other listed entity.

The State Department release does not name the 13 people who will face visa restrictions.

https://www.theverge.com/2024/4/25/24140391/commercial-spyware-visa-restrictions-state-department