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FSB Alleges Mass Cyber Spying Involving Global Tech Firms Fastly and Cloudflare

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Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) claimed Tuesday that it uncovered a major cyber operation orchestrated by Western intelligence agencies and major tech companies to secretly hack and spy on the smartphones of high-ranking Russian officials.

In a statement, the FSB alleged that malware planted on the phones allowed foreign spies to steal personal data, wiretap calls and remotely monitor and record surrounding audio and activity.

"Western intelligence obviously thought it would be simpler and cheaper to hack mobile phones than recruit high-value informants among holders of state secrets," an FSB officer said in a video accompanying the statement.

The officer, whose identity was not revealed and faced away from the camera, claimed that

compromised Russian officials are "systematically" added to U.S. and EU sanctions lists after Western intelligence agents collect "compromising materials" to pressure them.

The FSB did not identify any of the allegedly compromised Russian officials.

A separate video released by the state-run news agency TASS showed the San Francisco and London offices of major web services Fastly and Cloudflare, the latter of which Russia blocked access to last year. Both companies handle a large share of global internet traffic.

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At the same time, an expert at the Russian cybersecurity company Kaspersky Lab, which the U.S. banned in 2024, claimed in yet another FSB video that his team had uncovered a cyberattack in 2023 involving a sent and then unsent iMessage on an Apple iPhone.

That same year, exiled Russian journalist Farida Rustamova reported that government officials had been banned from using their iPhones during cabinet meetings and for work purposes.

On Tuesday, the FSB said it launched a criminal investigation into the unauthorized access of computer data and the creation and distribution of malicious software. It also issued a warning to Russian government officials.

"Discussing confidential information via these devices or in close proximity to them is strictly forbidden," the FSB said. "The content of your conversations could become exposed to third parties and lead to irreversible consequences."

According to Agentstvo, an investigative news outlet operating in exile, the latest accusations from the FSB mark an escalation in Russia's campaign against Cloudflare and Apple dating back to 2023.

Apple previously denied Russian accusations that it was working with U.S. intelligence to spy on iPhone users in Russia.

In 2023, the state communications regulator Roskomnadzor demanded that Cloudflare register in a database that requires companies to hand over user data to the FSB upon request. Cloudflare ignored the demand and was fined.

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