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The United States has imposed sanctions on two Irish-registered "spyware" companies that funnel scores of millions of euro in Middle East sales through their main business in Dublin.

The penalties were imposed by the US department of the treasury against Intellexa Ltd and its immediate parent Thalestris Ltd.

These Irish companies and their sole director were among five companies and two individuals sanctioned for commercial surveillance targeting American government officials, journalists and policy experts.

Imposing the penalties, Washington accused them of involvement in "cyber-enabled activities" linked to "a significant threat to the national security, foreign policy, or economic health or financial stability of the US".

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