

2025

# Moroccan deep state



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# 1. SUMMARY

Recently, Moroccan institutions have suffered some digital attacks that have exposed the weakness of its digital administration. At the same time some relevant information has been leaked.

These leakages affect members of the Moroccan deep state (known as the Makhzen), such as members of the intelligence agencies and the King's inner circle.

This exposure is mixed with an internal war between intelligence agencies, between two men, both close to the King.

## 2. WARRING PARTIES

The Moroccan intelligence landscape is characterized by an intense power struggle between two main rival services, each with its own leadership.

### 2.1 Abdelatif Hammouchi

**Abdellatif Hammouchi** is described as a "super-policeman" and is frequently praised by the Moroccan press. He directs both the **Direction Générale de la Police Nationale (DGSN)** and the **Direction Générale de la Surveillance du Territoire (DGST)**.

He is primarily responsible for internal security, counterespionage, and counterterrorism. He is alleged to have supplied information to Belgian justice during the "Marocgate" scandal (bribing European politicians and journalists to support Morocco's claims over the Western Sahara), intending to compromise the Moroccan foreign intelligence agency.

He is credited with imposing a "hand of iron" on dissidents, activists, critics, and independent journalists, leading to their imprisonment. He has used the Israeli-NSO malware Pegasus to suppress opposition.

Hammouchi has also created the **Brigade National de Police Judiciaire (BNPJ)** with broad powers.

Hammouchi counts on **Fouad Ali el Himma**, a close advisor to King Mohammed VI and formerly his private secretary. Although once eclipsed by Yassine

Mansouri (see next paragraph), he remains a significant figure.

## 2.2 Yassine Mansouri

**Yassine Mansouri** directs the **Direction Générale des Études et de la Documentation (DGED)**, Morocco's foreign secret service. The DGED focuses on external intelligence, including clandestine operations, cyber-espionage, tracking dissidents abroad, and manipulating information.

**Yassine Mansouri** is a childhood friend of King Mohammed VI and has held his position for 20 years, making him one of the most powerful men in the kingdom.

The DGED was accused of bribing European politicians and journalists to support Morocco's claims over the Western Sahara. This is called the Marocgate, which has been mentioned above.

Its "Service Action" unit has been linked to the use of Pegasus spyware to monitor high-ranking officials in Spain (Pedro Sánchez) and France (Emmanuel Macron), as well as journalists and activists.

This unit has also been linked to intimidation, blackmail, and the use of false social media accounts to spread pro-regime narratives and attack opponents.

The conflict between Morocco's intelligence services, primarily the **DGST** led by Abdellatif Hammouchi and the **DGED** headed by Yassine Mansouri, has seen a series of aggressive actions. Hammouchi's faction has actively carried out a "**war without quarter**" against Mansouri's DGED. This involves **direct police repression** by the BNPJ, which is under Hammouchi's command. This repression has targeted **dozens of collaborators, friends, and even family members of Mehdi Hijaouy**, the former "number two" of the DGED, who had to flee from Morocco. It led to detentions and imprisonment in an effort to silence him or force his return to Morocco. For instance, Hijaouy's wife's business was closed, and her relatives were interrogated and detained.

## 3. LEAKS OF INFORMATION

Both parties have taken advantage of information leaked by a hacking team called **JabarootDZ**. Although the hackers seem

to be from Algeria (DZ stands for Algeria in domains for that country) it might not be so.

JabarootDZ revealed extensive financial and personal details of **Mohamed Raji, a high-ranking DGST official** and "the man behind Pegasus espionage operations," indicating he "enriched himself by providing sensitive information". These revelations were seen as "**a dagger through the heart of Morocco's security apparatus**".

More significantly, JabarootDZ also exposed the **real estate assets of Yassine Mansouri, the DGED chief**, and Foreign Affairs Minister Nasser Bourita.

Hammouchi's own newspaper, "Barlamane," surprisingly amplified these suspicions against Mansouri and called for an investigation into his property acquisitions, demonstrating how **Hammouchi's faction utilized these cyber-revelations as strategic ammunition against his rival**. These systematic actions underscore the intense and multifaceted nature of the conflict between the two intelligence services.

So, JabarootDZ has exposed information harming both sides. It means that the allegations that hackers might be insiders loses ground. **The Algerian choice gains traction** but the penetration capabilities of JabarootDZ might point to **France as another possibility**. Macron's telephone, among others, was hacked with Pegasus malware and Morocco was blamed for that. This could have ignited a front with the French DGSE (French signal intelligence agency is embedded in DGSE).

**Spain might also be another player**, but Spanish authorities have aligned with Moroccan authorities since 2022, after several members of the Cabinet's telephones were hacked allegedly by Morocco (like in France). Spanish government has acknowledged the Sahara belongs to Morocco, in an unexpected turn of events. At the same time, after a visit of the Director of the CNI to Morocco, Spain decided to reduce the CNI presence in Morocco and orders to improve cooperation in the intelligence arena were delivered. Cooperation in areas such as counterintelligence were to be improved, even with the BNPJ.

Therefore, it is **very unlikely that Spain plays a role** in the enactment of JabarootDZ.

## 4. MOROCCAN ROYAL HOUSEHOLD

Both sides have been very careful when it relates to the support of the current regime. Although some media outlets pretend to feed the divide within the Makhzen by stating that there are supporters of the Crown Prince and supporters of Prince Moulay Rachid (King's youngest brother), **there are no credible signs of such a cleavage.**

In April, JabarootDZ targeted the **National Social Security Treasury**, exposing data on two million affiliates, including Mounir Majidi, the King's private secretary, exposing his salary as the CEO of the Royal corporation SIGER (REGIS from right to left, KING in Latin). So JabarootDZ has also harmed the image of the Royal Household.

The King, although sick and weakened, maintains his grip on the Makhzen. Crown Prince is already old enough to replace his father if necessary.

So far, the internal fighting is focused on **positioning themselves before the future King**, but it is not in the mood of changing the regime. The regime as it is, represents the life that the **Makhzen has known since Mohammed V. New winds are not blowing** and the future King is very much in line with the current practices.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The DGED–DGST confrontation is primarily the product of **personal rivalries and institutional competition**, with little evidence that it reflects regime-change dynamics or divisions within the Royal Family.

The struggle should be described as **intra-security-apparatus score-settling** rather than a public palace split.

So far, it seems that Hammouchi has the upper hand. Both, Hammouchi and Mansouri, are **royal appointees**; Mansouri is also a **Royal College classmate** of Mohammed VI. Both have important members of their organisations involved in corruption practices which weaken their positions.

**Changes in the security apparatus of the regime are expected** (both men are aging, and a generation replacement must take place sooner or later) but the King remains in control and if he dies, **the future King will not have to struggle** to keep the power.