# Hidden Fangs in South Asia—A Briefing on Recent Rattlesnake Attacks

# background

Sidewinder, also known as APT-C-17, Qi Anxin's internal tracking number is APT-Q-39. Its attack activities can be traced back as early as 2012. The organization mainly launched attacks against countries such as Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, aiming to steal confidential information from government diplomatic agencies, defense and military departments, and higher education institutions. Activities have a strong political background. The organization is capable of attacking both Windows and Android platforms.

The group primarily utilizes email spear-phishing, exploit documents, and DLL sideloading techniques to evade detection and deliver targeted implants. Commonly used attack bait types are: office documents and Ink. Among them, after Ink is executed, Powershell will release the real file and download and execute the hta script to load subsequent malicious files; Office documents are the group's favorite attack bait, which are executed by exploiting known vulnerabilities (such as the CVE-2017-11882 vulnerability) follow-up activities. The organization will also use the method of white and black to load malicious files <sup>[1]</sup>.

#### overview

The Rattlesnake Organization has always been our focus. Recently, the Red Raindrop team of Qi Anxin Threat Intelligence Center captured multiple attack samples of the organization in daily threat hunting. This type of sample uses Pakistan-related schools or the army as bait to carry out harpoon attacks, and its attack techniques and tactics (TTP) use the DotNetToJScript tool to generate JS code to load .net programs. In the recent attack activities, we summarized the characteristics of the attack methods of the Sidewinder organization:

(1) Make good use of social engineering and use more appropriate bait, even the bait comes from real documents;

(2) Multi-stage download and obfuscation of subsequent loads;

(3) Use a lightweight remote Shell backdoor, and continue to use related C2 even after being exposed.

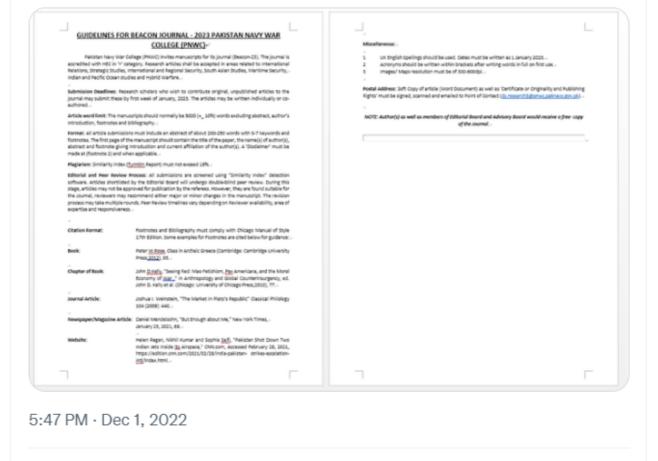
After discovering the attack, the Red Raindrop team immediately alerted the security community <sup>[2]</sup>, but this seems to have alerted the operators of the Rattlesnake organization, and shut down C2 immediately.



#APT #SideWinder targets Pakistan Navy War College (PNWC)

666b2b178ce52e30be9e69de93cc60a9 Filename: "GUIDELINES FOR JOURNAL - 2023 PAKISTAN NAVY WAR COLLEGE (PNWC).docx"

Template: hxxps://pnwc[.]bolnorth[.]com/5808/1/3686/2/0/0/0/m/filesa2e589d2/file.rtf



19 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 33 Likes

#### sample information

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The basic information of the bait file captured this time is as follows:

file name	GUIDELINES FOR JOURNAL - 2023 PAKISTAN NAVY WAR COLLEGE (PNWC).docx(Journal Guide - 2023 Pakistan Naval War College)
MD5	666B2B178CE52E30BE9E69DE93CC60A9
File size	13115 bytes
file type	docx

Using relevant documents of the Pakistan Navy as bait, the content of the bait is as follows:

There is no macro code in the decoy sample, and remote template injection is used to pull subsequent loads for execution, reducing the possibility of being killed by anti-software in the early stage. Its remote template injection address is https://pnwc.bol-north.com/5808/1/3686/2/0/0/m/files-a2e589d2/file.rtf, it can be seen that its domain name is disguised as pnwc Naval War College, Pakistan, agreed with the content of the bait.

# sample analysis

## remote template file

The remote template file is an RTF file, which uses the CVE-2017-11882 vulnerability to execute Shellcode, and releases the subsequent payload 1.a file to the %temp% directory through the RTF file feature.

Fi]	le: 'C:∖\Use	ers Desktop file.rtf'- size: 428929 bytes
id	lindex	OLE Object
Ø		<pre>format_id: 2 (Embedded) class name: 'Package' ldata size: 209330 lOLE Package object: Filename: u'1.a' Source path: u'C:\Users\user\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Wind lows\INetCache\Content.Word\1.a' Temp path = u'C:\Users\user\AppData\Local\Temp\1.a' MD5 = '749a2fc5a803a5b58c2023b9d8c2b686'</pre>
1	100067DB5h	Not a well-formed OLE object
2		format_id: 2 (Embedded) class name: 'Equation.3' data size: 1665 MD5 = 'c852244bc48fb3a21bdfa6fcbf82fb00' Possibly an exploit for the Equation Editor vulnerability (VU#421280, CVE-2017-11882)

After the vulnerability is executed, execute a ROP chain to jump to the Shellcode location, and the exploit will trigger two pieces of shellcode. The main function of the first shellcode is to obtain the specified memory block by calling the Globallock function, then calculate the starting position of the second shellcode, and jump to the second shellcode for execution.

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0012F350	BA 36646F1D	mov edx,0x1D6F6436		▲ 寄存器 (FPU) <
0012F355	81C2 0659D6E2	add edx,0xE2D65906		EAX 901E651F
0012F35B	8B 0A	<pre>mov ecx,dword ptr ds:[edx]</pre>		ECX 75D2A2BB kernel32.75D2A2BB
0012F35D	8B29	<pre>mov ebp,dword ptr ds:[ecx]</pre>		EDX 00000002
0012F35F	BF BC6B22A6	mov edi,0xA6226BBC		EBX 0000006
0012F364	81F7 0C0C64A6	xor edi,0xA6640C0C		ESP 0012F1D8
0012F36A	8B17	mov edx,dword ptr ds:[edi]	kernel32.GlobalLock	EBP 005C0074 ASCII "Pd""
0012F36C	55	push ebp		ESI 0012F7E4
0012F36D	FFD2	call edx		EDI 004667B0 <&KERNEL32.GlobalLock>
0012F36F	05 D4127595	add eax,0x957512D4		
0012F374	2D Ø5127595	sub eax,0x95751205		EIP 0012F379
0012F379 -	FFEØ	jmp eax		C 0 ES 0023 32位 0(FFFFFFF)
0012F37B		in eax,0xb4		P 6 CS 001B 32
0012F37D		inc edx		A 1 SS 0023 32位 0(FFFFFFF)
0012F37F		add byte ptr ds:[eax],al		Z 0 DS 0023 32位 0(FFFFFFF)
0012F381	36:2B03	<pre>sub eax,dword ptr ss:[ebx]</pre>		S 6 FS 003B 32倍 7FFDF000(FFF)
0012F384		test byte ptr ds:[esi],dh		T 0 GS 0000 NULL
0012F386		<pre>sub eax,dword ptr ds:[ebx]</pre>		D 0
0012F388	8DA7 0576F017	<pre>lea esp,dword ptr ds:[edi+0x17F07605]</pre>		0 0 LastErr ERROR SUCCESS (00000000)

The shellcode contains a large number of wasteful instructions, which indicates that Sidewinder is gradually improving its shellcode to slow down the analysis speed of analysts. The main function of Shellcode is to load mshtml.dll, call the API RunHTMLApplication function in it, and execute XOR-decrypted commands.

#### 1.a file

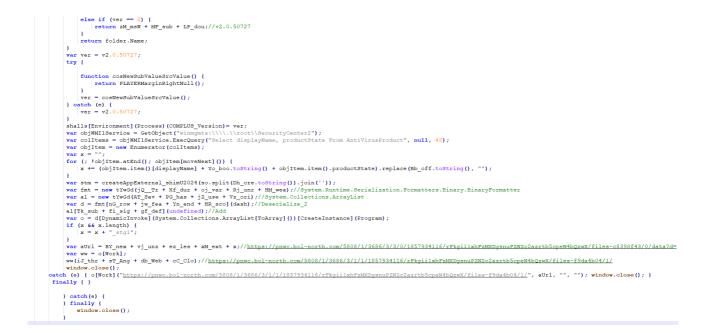
The basic information of the released 1.a file is as follows.

#### file name 1.a MD5 749A2FC5A803A5B58C2023B9D8C2B686

File size208968 bytesfile typeJavaScript

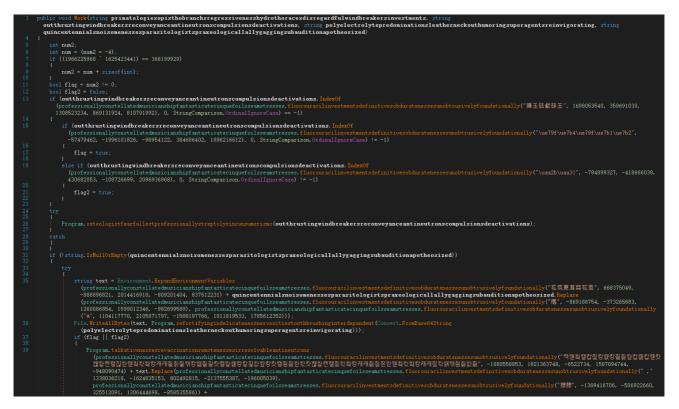
1.a file should be generated by modifying the open source tool DotNetToJScript. The string is obfuscated by multilayer nested conversion functions, and the embedded PE file is divided into two parts. The former part is obfuscated, and the latter part is used BASE64 for encoding.

The script first decrypts the App.dll, and loads the Work function in the DLL reflectively, and passes 4 parameters to the Work function. The parameter 1 is the URL for downloading file.hta, and the parameter 2 is the uploaded antivirus information. Since the decoy file has been displayed, here parameter 3 and parameter 4 are empty, unlike the previously encrypted decoy document content and decoy document name.



#### App.dll

App.dll is actually a dll written in .net, and it has also been obfuscated, but the obfuscator did not obfuscate the key code too much, and the core code is still readable.



Its main function is to download the follow-up payload from the URL parameter. The relevant method to initiate a request to C2 is Program.osteologistfearfullestprofessionallystreptolysinconsumerisms. The content downloaded from the URL corresponding to parameter 1 of the Work method will be decrypted through simple xor, and then loaded and executed.



Regrettably, C2 was closed shortly after we disclosed it for the first time, and we failed to download the follow-up paylaod. In the follow-up, as we continued to pay attention, the organization still uploaded attack files similar to TTP, such as Pakistani Naval procurement information is used as bait to attack.

United States of America.
Amendment 1 to Letter of Offer and Acceptance.
PK-P-GAA

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Dependable Undert	•					
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This Amendm	ent consists of pa	age l through	page 7			
U.S. Signature .		a <u>26 Oct 200</u> a Datea	а а	Purchaser Signatu	rea la	Date.
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The domain name of the link injected into the remote template is also faked to be related to the decoy content.

Some subsequent remote template files are basically consistent with the above. Based on this, we analyze the recent attack activities organized by the Sidewinder organization. The remote template file information is as follows:

# MD5

The download domain name of the subsequent payload 619885D19F4FB97E79227D61E085498E pnwc.bol-north.com

356F30BA570428A6D0896E3960DE8B70 paknavy-gov-pk.downld.net

# **Traceability association**

In addition, in the follow-up clue sorting, we also found another attack component of the Sidewinder organization. As of the completion of this manuscript, the C2 that delivered the attack component is still active. Since this component has been analyzed by a friend, we only make a brief disclosure and do not analyze it in detail.

The details of the attack components are as follows:

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# 41E72581C919A8BC5C80B6D43F2A72B0 preag.info C5CF7EEDA09C88CE5415CF8FF9AF9846 dolper. top AED57E12F7DD03911F48AE87413283A6 ongrep.xyz

The actual function of this attack component is a downloader, which also downloads and decrypts the JS code generated by the DotNetToJScript tool and executes it. The difference is that in the win10 system, Microsoft introduced AMSI and added the script features based on DotNetToJScript to the detection sequence, so if you do not bypass the processing and directly run the script generated by DotNetToJScript, it will be directly intercepted by the system. So the Sidewinder organization registered the DLL notification callback in the attack component and hooked the "AmsiScanBuffer" function to bypass detection.

The file downloaded from C2 is an encrypted JS file, which is executed in memory after XOR decryption.



The JS code also reflectively loads LiveConsoleModule.dll in the memory. This dll is actually a remote Shell RAT, which listens to the local TCP port 12323 and uses cmd to execute remote Shell commands.

## Summarize

For a long time, the Rattlesnake organization has been good at using social engineering to attack, especially using special file stealers to steal important information in the victim's network environment. In addition to causing leaks, the stolen information can also be used to make new bait, and in its attack activities, the fake C2 domain name also appears, which is very confusing.

Qi'anxin Red Raindrop team hereby reminds all users, do not open links from unknown sources shared by social media, do not click on and execute email attachments from unknown sources, do not run unknown files with exaggerated titles, and do not install apps from informal sources. Back up important files in time and update and install patches.

If you need to run or install applications from unknown sources, you can first identify them through the Qi Anxin threat intelligence file in-depth analysis platform (https://sandbox.ti.qianxin.com/sandbox/page). At present, it supports in-depth analysis of files in various formats including Windows and Android platforms.

At present, the full line of products based on the threat intelligence data of Qi Anxin Threat Intelligence Center, including Qi Anxin Threat Intelligence Platform (TIP), Tianqing, Tianyan Advanced Threat Detection System, Qi Anxin Tiangou Vulnerability Attack Protection System, Qi Anxin NGSOC, Qi Anxin Situation Perception, etc., have supported the precise detection of such attacks.

# IOCs

MD5

666B2B178CE52E30BE9E69DE93CC60A9

03940342FA0CCD5F3C40DA659776FD56

749A2FC5A803A5B58C2023B9D8C2B686

8934F22ED2D4390F2E6170E4CFDBD483

619885D19F4FB97E79227D61E085498E

 36D40B74ACBA4C051EDC140159025AC4

 3B853AE547346BEFE5F3D06290635CF6

 619885D19F4FB97E79227D61E085498E

 356F30BA570428A6D0896E3960DE8B70

 DE4438081659A1EF086B8F060CD1C733

 41E72581C919A8BC5C80B6D43F2A72B0

 5D9FF132811DC200EEF3ED7860CA6251

 12A69185E72B8298AE1613E9DC5DC822

 AED57E12F7DD03911F48AE87413283A6

 C5CF7EEDA09C88CE5415CF8FF9AF9846

URL

https://pnwc.bol-north.com/5808/1/3686/2/0/0//m/files-a2e589d2/file.rtf

https://pnwc.bol-north.com/5808/1/3686/3/1/1/1857934116/rFkgii1xhFzMXDgsnuPZNZc2azrtb5cpeN4bQzwX/files-f9da4b04/1/

https://pnwc.bolnorth.com/5808/1/3686/3/1/1/1857177634/AxRXAaDisLX12wCdCYmCVIaTQnRk0pN3aa4eAgGn/files-9183e1c1/1/ https://paknavy-gov-pk.downld.net/14578/1/6277/2/0/0/m/files-75dc2b1e/file.rtf

https://paknavy-govpk.downld.net/14578/1/6277/3/1/1/1856303893/Fra9anCDjiaq12rCbUAhXveAk5kMltaltuPZDQRd/files-1f77d26e/1/ https://kito.countpro.info/JRUrthNk4U0Sa2YvQlNfAABFBYB6QaikVRdwIa5G/29234/15853/abe617e3/resources/frAQBc8W/ https://preag.info/JRUrthNk4U0Sa2YvQlNfAABFBYB6QaikVRdwIa5G/29234/15853/abe617e3/resources/frAQBc8W/true https://ongrep.xyz/3WBI977bWhSm4IBs7BOZv2sFGxtX25pam2yoQt5I/1713/1079/1186f965/resources/frAQBc8W/true

https://dolper.top/6FnCr8UOSOWvbObM6sv5O1cUxUCExk8iq8vBi3dV/420/100/79933470/resources/frAQBc8W/true

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dolper. top

ongrep.xyz

## reference link

[1] https://ti.qianxin.com/apt/detail/5b2c7065596a10000e5f56ec?name=Sidewinder&type=map

[2] https://twitter.com/RedDrip7/status/1598252489866121216