

# Modern Ransomware's Double Extortion Tactics and How to Protect Enterprises Against Them

Mayra Fuentes, Feike Hacquebord, Stephen Hilt, Ian Kenefick, Vladimir Kropotov, Robert McArdle, Fernando Mercês, and David Sancho



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For Raimund Genes (1963-2017)

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55 Appendix The rapid evolution of ransomware through the years has fueled the increasingly targeted and undeniably virulent nature of modern ransomware attacks.<sup>1</sup> The actors behind the current top-ranking ransomware families, including Cl0p<sup>2</sup> and Ryuk,<sup>3</sup> have altered their strategies to inflict greater damage and collect larger payouts. In more recent years, ransomware actors did not just rely on phishing emails to enter the targeted network, they have also leveraged unpatched servers as an initial means into the network.<sup>4</sup> Ransomware actors also obtain network admin credentials and exploit vulnerabilities for lateral movement,<sup>5</sup> aiming to encrypt servers that host critical data.

Advanced cybersecurity technologies have made their way to corporate networks the world over to counter this nefarious threat. The application of machine learning technologies and behavior-based blocking in cybersecurity solutions have resulted in a dramatic reduction in the success rates of opportunistic ransomware attacks.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, modern disaster recovery and business continuity (DR/BC) processes are constantly improving, reducing recovery times and the need for companies to even consider paying ransom demands.<sup>7</sup>

In our opinion, the wide adoption of these technological advances has reduced the success of old-style opportunistic ransomware attacks. However, it has also forced cybercriminals to evolve their strategies out of sheer necessity, paving the way for what we now call modern ransomware.

Ransomware actors have learned to adapt and level up. Once they have identified the data that they would want to encrypt from a victim organization, they would often exfiltrate it out of the network instead of merely encrypting it. This strategy allows for a plan B: If the victim organization does not want to pay the ransom to recover their encrypted data, the attackers can threaten to publicize it. For modern enterprises, a data leak that involves intellectual property, proprietary information, employee personally identifiable information (PII), and customer data, comes with a significant price tag — not to mention regulatory penalties, lawsuits, and reputational damage.

The most remarkable commonality of modern ransomware attacks is their focus on taking over networks in various human-supervised stages, and not click-on-the-link, automatically driven events. This makes a modern ransomware attack appear to resemble a plain hacking incident with a ransomware payload.

The process of manually hacking a victim's network can be time consuming, as it can take days or months to successfully pull off. This means that the attackers can already be in multiple places within the network before unleashing the ransomware payload. This lack of visibility alone can make defending networks and systems against ransomware attacks substantially more difficult. It can also be challenging for cybersecurity professionals to put together the separate traces of a modern ransomware attack and realize that it is happening. To make things even more difficult, these ransomware actors usually perform lateral movement with common admin tools that are more likely to fly under the radar. This helps add a sense of invisibility for these kinds of attacks.

To put all of these together, the modern ransomware strategy of employing targeted attacks as opposed to merely automated ones is geared toward targeted ransomware rather than infecting by the numbers or "spraying and praying." Modern ransomware actors first look for a big target, then spend a significant amount of time conquering each section of the victim network until they are ready to set off the ransomware payload. In this respect, these attacks look more like nation-state advanced persistent threat (APT) attacks instead of traditional ransomware incidents.

To better describe this new wave of ransomware, we present an in-depth case study of the Nefilim ransomware family. Nefilim has been known to target mainly multi-billion dollar companies, making for a great case study on the topic. We also show how enterprises can formulate a defense strategy that will help prevent and mitigate the effects of modern ransomware attacks within the corporate network. Cross-layered detection and response tools and technologies<sup>8</sup> allow threat analysts and incident response (IR) teams to uncover hard-to-spot threats.

It is our opinion that there is a possible distinction between the cybercriminal groups that handle the different stages of these ransomware attacks. The actors who break into the network may not necessarily be the same ones who deploy the ransomware payload. This difference is the byproduct of a recent evolution in cybercriminal business operations: hackers, who previously just sold access to corporate networks, are now working with ransomware actors to monetize hacking-related breaches.<sup>9</sup> We explore this shift in cybercriminal business models in the next section.

# Shifts in Criminal Business Models

Ransomware has been around for several decades. The AIDS trojan, or PC Cyborg, of 1989 was the first-ever ransomware, albeit it having been a rudimentary attempt at encryption.<sup>10</sup> Since then, the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) that make up a typical ransomware attack — and consequently, the ransomware business model — has changed significantly, primarily to take advantage of new technologies that enhance the attackers' capabilities.

## Payment

The first technological advancement is related to the different financial instruments that actors use to receive payment from their victims. A decade ago, when mobile phones were first utilized as payment platforms, ransomware actors forced affected users to pay ransom by means of sending SMS to a premium rate number or adding money to an account that is linked to the phone number mentioned in the ransom note.

An alternative payment system called electronic wallets, or e-wallets, soon triggered the next wave of ransomware. Ransomware attacks that utilized e-wallets for payouts asked for larger ransom amounts.<sup>11</sup> The major issues with these payment methods, however, were that they were either localized to a particular geographical region or were regulated by governments, at least in relation to cross-border transfers or the maximum volume of anonymized transactions.

Next, and possibly the biggest development in the realm of ransomware payments, was the popularization of Bitcoin.<sup>12</sup> A general comprehension of Bitcoin shifted from it being an innovative technology into a currency with the capability of transferring money around the globe and bypassing regulations. By 2014, an estimated 80,000 merchants have started accepting Bitcoin as a valid form of payment, with current numbers being much higher.<sup>13</sup> The profitability and anonymity offered by Bitcoin were exactly what ransomware actors needed to bump up the number of ransomware incidents, the number of ransomware families, and ransom amounts.<sup>14</sup>

## Underground Communities and Communication Platforms

The second technological factor is related to how underground actors collaborate with one another. Communications among underground actors are implemented using different platforms, including forums, messengers, and sometimes even social media platforms.<sup>15</sup> New security and anonymization features of these platforms improved these actors' capability to covertly collaborate online.<sup>16</sup> The collaboration between botnet masters, other access brokers for compromised networks, and ransomware actors is one example of such developments.<sup>17</sup>

## **Cybercriminal Partnerships and Outsourcing**

An example of cybercriminal collaboration came in the form of ransomware as a service (RaaS), which enabled actors to look for affiliates to carry out ransomware attacks. Instead of having just one ransomware group doing all of the work, several collaborators split roles and ransomware profits.<sup>18</sup> During this time, we saw a combination of actors who had access to compromised assets collaborate closely with actors who have developed ransomware. The evolution of these affiliate programs increased the involvement of more cybercriminals into the increasingly effective monetization of compromised assets, which is profitable for all parties involved. A clear sign of this deeper collaboration is visible in underground forums, wherein compromised assets are sold explicitly for encryption since the other monetization paths had already been utilized.<sup>19</sup>

# Data-Driven Victim Profiling and Pipelining

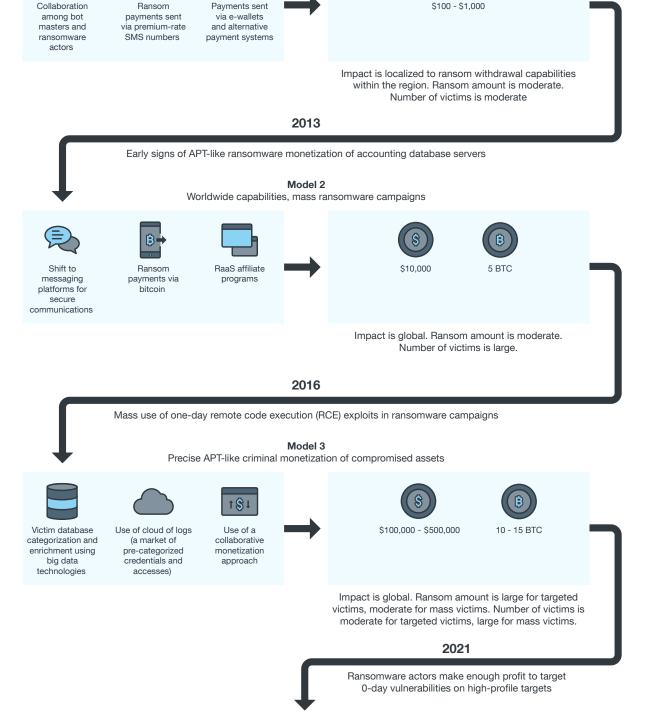


Figure 1. Major shifts related to the evolution of ransomware business processes and monetization campaigns

A different combination of items from the first two developments discussed earlier illustrates the evolution and the major shifts in different ransomware business models and their respective monetization methods.

Model 1 is related to early monetization strategies, wherein actors were limited by localized payment methods. This model is outdated and rarely used compared with Models 2 and 3. Some underground actors still prefer Model 2, which provides moderate monetization from a large number of victims. Ransomware groups who make use of Model 2 do not perform deep victim profiling prior to initiating ransomware deployment. This approach has been used by actors for many years and normally pose a lower risk to victims in contrast with Model 3.

Model 3 is related to more targeted monetization of victim assets and includes the deployment of several additional steps in the cybercriminal business process.

The first signs of targeted monetization that we know of appeared almost a decade ago in Russia. Cybercriminals targeted and manually encrypted accounting software database servers using ransomware and other tools before asking victims to pay a ransom to recover sensitive financial data. Due to the limited technologies and payment methods available during that time, attacks were restricted in terms of both geography and scale. The screenshot in Figure 2, which was taken from a forum discussion that was initiated by a victim of this attack type, shows that attackers used phone-linked e-wallets to receive the ransom. The ransom amount was RUB10,000, which was about US\$320 at the time.

virusinfo.info/showthread	d. E Sector Sect
04/04/2013 at 17:08	
	.BLOCKING virus blocked access to 1C
lunior Member	BLOCKING VIPUS DIOCKED ACCESS to 1C
egistration: 04.04.2013 Posts: 2 Reputation weight: 29	I could not open 1C (writes "the database directory was not found"). On the disk, the folder with the base was in place, but each folder contained an unpleasant letter (DECODING). We ran the server with all antivinues, "virus body was not found". It was not possible to unblock it using DrWeb descriptors and Kaspersky utilities. The 1C development company said that this was not their case, it was an attack from the outside, they simply sent to the FSB(supposed) they don't deal with such a trifle), but there is simply not department "K' in our "village"E's even scary to imagine what the threat loss of all data on the server (there 2012 and 2013 - all accounting and trade, all settlements with customers and suppliers, but reports are on the nose) For us, this is just a disaster It was not possible to attach file of this format (incorrect file format).
	Good day!
	We bring to you not the most pleasant news, your computer was attacked by the most dangerous virus. All your information (documents, databases, backups and other files) on this computer has been encrypted using the most cryptographically secure algorithms.
	All encrypted files are in the .BLOCKING format.
	Files can be recovered only with a decryptor and a password, which, in turn, only we know.
	It is impossible to pick it up. Reinstalling the OS won't change anything. No system administrator in the world can solve this problem without knowing the password.
	Do not modify the files under any circumstances! And if you decide, then make backups.
	Write us an email at (if you do not get an answer within 24 hours, then to ) for further instructions.
	The C: \ Program Files \ Internet Explorer folder is not encrypted, so you can start the browser there.
	The average response time of a specialist is 1-12 hours. Attach the file
	Threatening emails will get you nowhere.
	DON'T FORGET: only WE can decrypt your files!
	$> \diamond \diamond$
	> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>
	To get a decoder with a unique password for your PC, you need to top up our QIWI account for 10,000 rubles.
	After the receipt of funds, we will send you instructions for decrypting your files along with the decryptor and password.
	There are no discounts. Installment plans too.
	We are ready to decrypt any small file to confirm our intentions.
	! Along with it, attach the file ! If you could not find DECODING.TXT, you need to look in the quarantine files of your antivirus.
	You don't not made becomes ray, you need to foot in the quarantime meson your antivirus.
	We will send the details a few hours before payment, because they are constantly changing.
	The wallet is valid for 36 hours after it was sent to you.
	Please do not change the subject of the message.
	You need to top up our Visa QIWI Wallet (this is not a balance mobile)
	Choose the most convenient way of replenishment for you:
	!!! IN COMMENTS: PRIVATE TOP-UP !!! (If it is possible to write comments) The wallet is valid for 36 hours from the moment this message
	was sent. How to pay, write to us, and attach HOW_DECRYPT_FILES.TXT or HOW_TO_DECRYPT_FILES.TXT or WHAT_NO_DECRYPT_FILES.TXT Save
	How to pay, write to us, and attach How_DECKTP1_FILES.IXT or HOW_TO_DECKTP1_FILES.IXT or WHAT_NO_DECKTP1_FILES.IXT Save the payment receipt.

Figure 2. Example of a predecessor of the current APT-like ransomware monetization schemes using phone-linked e-wallets as a means of payment

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## **Vulnerability and Exploit Market**

Over the past few years, we have started seeing a clear shift toward targeted attacks or so-called APT-like ransomware monetization schemes. It is not just about searching for bigger payoffs; a targeted approach is needed due to the improved defensive capabilities of organizations. This means that the number of potential targets for opportunistic attacks is decreasing. The deployment of better recovery systems means that attackers need to seek out backups in order to prevent recovery.

At the same time, cybercriminals are eager to adopt new technologies for their own profit. Several key factors have contributed to this shift toward a more targeted criminal monetization scheme, including:

- The increased computing power of machines, which provides cybercriminals the ability to deeply automate processing and collect additional information about victims.<sup>20</sup>
- The availability of public and private databases and automation tools that help perform precise categorization of victims based on their location, industry, company name, size, and revenue.
- The capability to initiate anonymized high-volume cross-border money transfers using cryptocurrencies and cryptocurrency mixers.
- The extensive use of communication platforms that allow secure, interactive, and anonymized interactions and increased collaboration between various cybercriminal groups.

These four factors allowed criminals to add several notable steps that improved their business processes. This shift enhanced the impact of the ransomware incidents as well as the risks associated with each attack, making defense and mitigation strategies more difficult for targeted organizations. The shift means deep victim profiling has been performed before an attack is initiated, followed by a collaboration among multiple groups who are sharing accesses and are using optimized monetization strategies. This shift can be compared to a shift from perimeter security to perimeterless security in the terms of impact and after-effects.

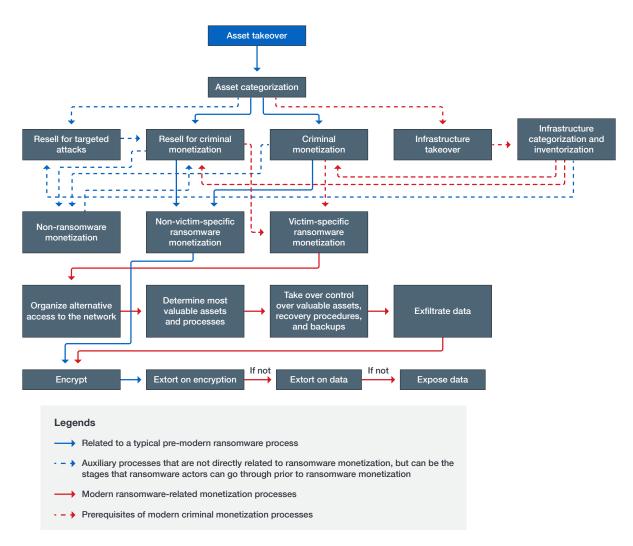


Figure 3. Updates to the business process of ransomware monetization

Figure 3 illustrates how the business process of ransomware monetization has progressed. During the earlier days of ransomware, when a victim asset or even an infrastructure was encrypted using automated tools, the ransom amount was either fixed or estimated by the attacker only after the victim initiated the negotiation. With today's updated business process, the attacker knows a substantial amount of information about the victim. This often includes the organization's name, the number of employees, its revenue, and the industry in which it belongs – allowing for a more tailored, victim-specific extortion ransom pricing.

With more experience using the updated business process, attackers now have a much more accurate estimation of the range of possible ransom amounts for a specific victim. They are also more knowledgeable of the reasonable volume of resources that they can invest for each victim. The whole attack chain often involves two or more groups who are responsible for the different attack stages. Since it is normal for this market to have a ransom for big organizations in the seven-digit range, attackers may be able to afford zero-day local privilege escalation (LPE) and remote code execution (RCE) exploits. We have seen mentions of these capabilities in underground forum threads related to ransomware affiliate programs.

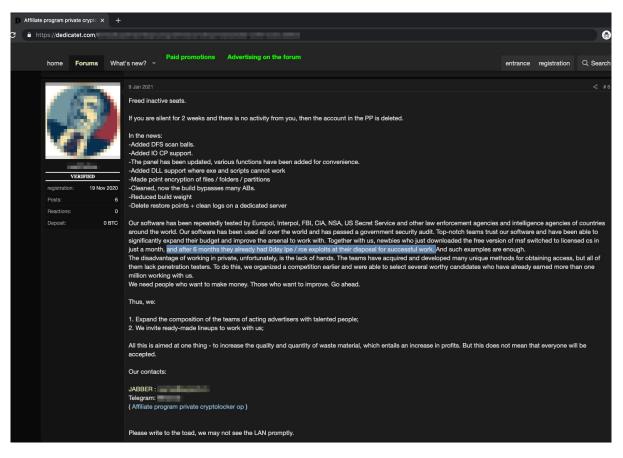


Figure 4. Mention of the use of zero-day LPE and RCE exploits in ransomware operations

Modern affiliate programs often involve collaboration between an actor who owns the ransomware and another actor who controls the compromised infrastructure and distributes malware over a network. The ransomware actors usually agree to a 20/80 or 30/70 split of the profit; the smaller cut goes to the group that provides the ransomware and negotiates with a victim while the majority of the profit goes to the group that handles network access and implements the active phase of the attack. Typically, the group that negotiates with a victim receives the full ransom amount and distributes the share to the participants responsible for the other attack stages. Most of the profits go to the affiliate actor responsible for obtaining network access and deploying the ransomware payload. Initial access to the victim infrastructure can be obtained by the same affiliate group, or that group can choose to sub-contract it and instead specialize on privilege escalation, lateral movement, and complete takeover of the victim infrastructure.

The price for access varies greatly — it can range from tens of dollars for a random victim asset, to several hundreds or even thousands of dollars for a categorized asset; access to the infrastructure of a large organization can cost five to six figures.

It should be noted, that by its very nature, a ransomware attack will eventually be very visible to the infrastructure owner once it is deployed. Therefore, several actors often implement other monetization paths prior to the ransomware deployment to make the overall intrusion as profitable as possible.<sup>21</sup> Because of this — and the fact that multiple cybercriminal groups often operate together sharing accesses, and following parallel monetization lifecycles — infrastructure owners can often see a crossover in attacker kill chains. This can be very confusing for defenders who may not be aware that they are looking at traces coming from several groups, which can be related to many parallel — and even unrelated — incidents. A situation with a crossover in kill chains can make attacker attribution based on TTPs alone extremely difficult. Due to this, it is important to understand criminal business models clearly, and attribute TTPs to separate simultaneous attacks or a single attack performed with close collaboration between actors who share access and join forces.

The increased visibility of the ransomware component invariably attracts more attention from the victim or law enforcement. However, it is important to understand the bigger picture — it is the affiliate groups who profit the most from this arrangement and who enable these compromises in the first place. Yet, these same groups are rarely investigated as meticulously as their ransomware partners, therefore helping this overall trend persist.

Defenders also need to note that when multiple cybercrime groups unite, they have experts working on the different attack stages or monetization paths of a targeted ransomware attack. The complexity of defending against sophisticated attacks can be greater compared to defending against traditional targeted attacks or APT groups. It may be comparable to an organization defending against the attacks of a penetration tester who is armed with seemingly unlimited capabilities.

For defenders, the prevalence of these sophisticated ransomware attacks means a shorter reaction time and a much higher potential impact. For threat hunting, incident mitigations, and attack investigations, it is critical to have XDR solutions that offer complete and central visibility over every critical component, whether it be an organization's endpoints, network, the cloud, or other devices.

## Modern Ransomware Case Study: Nefilim

The previous sections described a shift in the ransomware business model and how this fundamental change has reshaped the whole ransomware attack plan. The next sections will illustrate this with a case study.

Nefilim is one of the less-studied ransomware families and it will be used as an example of a modern ransomware attack here. This section will describe Nefilim's entry points to the corporate network and its general method for lateral movement. It will then show how the attackers trigger the ransomware payload once they firmly establish their foothold in the network and after they determine the most valuable data.

Finally and most importantly, the case study will provide a defensive strategy to make an attack's various pieces become visible to defenders. This defensive strategy is not Nefilim-specific; it can be applied to the ransomware business model in general. This procedure will involve software that can put together each of the attacker's separate and often disparate pieces and correlate them as being part of a single concerted attack.

We begin with how we think Nefilim first came to be. Based on our observations on Nefilim attacks to date, our hypothesis is that Nefilim is a RaaS operation whose business model closely resembles that of Nemty, another RaaS operation first spotted in August 2019.<sup>22</sup> We have tracked the actors behind both malware families under the intrusion set we track as "Water Roc." The Nefilim code seen in earlier versions is very similar to that of the Nemty ransomware. Interestingly, around the same time, two actors associated with Nemty (Jingo and jsworm) were seen actively recruiting affiliates. Both actors were advertising a 70/30 profit split, offering 70% to affiliates responsible for access and deployment and Nemty developers taking the remaining 30% of the profits. A volume discount for affiliates who can regularly supply high-quality victims was also advertised, increasing profit margins for affiliates to 90/10.

jsworm	Published by September 27, 2019
****	
	♥ Quote
1000	8 hours ago, said:
4	is still available?
User Posts: 104	have daily fud if spam? ratio still 70/30?
Reputation: • 35	thank you
	yes,
	work 70 \ 30

Figure 5. Actor jsworm mentioned the Nemty business model's 70/30 profit split in a forum

This profit model also means that initial access can vary based on the methods that the specific affiliate used before deploying the core Nefilim group's ransomware payload.

In March 2020, the actor jsworm discussed a new unnamed project that is believed to have been Nefilim. The first version of Nefilim was spotted in the wild (detected by Trend Micro as Ransom.Win32.NEFILIM.A) around that time.<sup>23</sup>

## The Way In

The people behind targeted ransomware attacks are, in a sense, like professional penetration testers with malicious intent. Armed with the required tools, skills, and financial motivation, they can achieve network access through various means such as access as a service (AaaS) brokers, where access to compromised environments is purchased for varying prices depending on how lucrative the victim network is; via direct exploitation of internet-facing infrastructure; and phishing.

In terms of how Nefilim actors gain access, externally facing infrastructures present attackers with potential inroads to internal corporate networks, especially when such infrastructures are not fully secured. In the case of Nefilim ransomware attacks, our investigations uncovered the use of exposed RDP services and publicly available exploits to gain initial access — namely, a vulnerability in the Citrix Application Delivery Controller (CVE-2019-19781).<sup>24</sup> After gaining initial access, Nefilim attackers start by downloading additional tools on a web browser. Among the files downloaded are a Cobalt Strike beacon, which is used to establish a remote connection to the environment and execute commands;<sup>25</sup> the Process Hacker tool used to terminate endpoint security agents;<sup>26</sup> and Mimikatz, which is used to dump credentials.<sup>27</sup> In one case that we analyzed, actors initially attempted to deploy an unsigned Cobalt Strike beacon, which was detected by the antimalware agent running on the server. The actors persisted, returning several days later with a signed beacon, which was once again detected. The next section describes the group's lateral movement approaches and the tools and techniques that they have used.

In order to run certain tools as administrator, the actors took advantage of an unpatched vulnerability in CVE-2017-0213,<sup>28</sup> a Windows Component Object Model (COM) elevation of privilege (EoP) vulnerability that was discovered by Google Project Zero<sup>29</sup> and fixed by Microsoft in May 2017. The fact that a patch has been available for this vulnerability for several years now also demonstrates the importance of timely patching, not only for critical vulnerabilities that tend to get more attention in the media, but any vulnerability that would allow attackers opportunities to compromise infrastructures.

At this point, the attackers have landed inside the victim environment. They have downloaded a tool that enabled persistent remote access to the system and have become ready to pivot to other areas of the network.

The following table lists the initial access methods that we have observed based on our analysis of Nefilim so far. We also call out methods that are commonly used by similar ransomware groups, but to date, have not been specifically observed to be used by Nefilim.

Tactic	Technique	Observable
Reconnaissance	Active scanning: Vulnerability scanning T1595.002	Attackers actively scan for internet-facing hosts that are vulnerable to recently disclosed exploits. Indicators of compromise are provided in the appendix. <sup>30</sup>
Initial access	T1133: External remote services	Attackers gain initial access using valid accounts that have been exposed via services such as RDP, VPN, Citrix, or similar services.
Privilege escalation	T1068: Exploitation for privilege escalation	Attackers exploit known vulnerabilities to elevate privileges to perform administrative actions or actions requiring elevated privileges. (See Appendix)
Credential access	T1003.001: OS credential dumping: LSASS memory	Attackers dump and use credentials to gain access to additional parts of the internal network after gaining initial access. It is also subsequently used for lateral movement. Look for evidence/artifacts indicating the use of such techniques.
* Credential access	T1110.003 Brute force password spraying	Attackers use commonly abused passwords across different accounts. Anomalies with respect to authentication success or failure events can point to password spraying attacks.

#### MITRE ATT&CK TTPs

Tactic	Technique	Observable
* Credential access	T1110.003 Credential stuffing	Attackers leverage credentials obtained from data breaches to gain successful access, particularly where credentials are reused across different accounts. Such attacks can be detected through anomalous authentication failures or other techniques like location or activity or statistical anomalies.

Table 1. Initial access methods of Nefilim actors and other commonly used methods by similar ransomware groups\*Commonly used TTPs but have not been observed in our Nefilim investigations

## Recommended Defenses: Preventing Ransomware Attacks by Mitigating Vulnerabilities

Internet-facing systems like VPN servers are directly exposed to untrusted networks and are at greater risk. Organizations can prevent ransomware attacks by mitigating vulnerabilities in internet-facing systems. In addition, attacks against internet-facing assets should also be secured through regular patching and the robust implementation of access controls. Solutions that provide virtual patching or vulnerability shielding can defend organizations against known and unknown vulnerabilities while avoiding work-related disruptions.<sup>31</sup>

#### Shielding the Network Perimeter From Exploits Used in Ransomware Attacks

Intrusion prevention systems (IPS) provide a layer of protection by shielding potentially vulnerable infrastructure through generic and specific filters from exploits that are used in targeted ransomware attacks. IPS can provide rapid protection ahead of patch availability or patch deployment. This is particularly important with targeted ransomware attacks, wherein attackers quickly capitalize on newly discovered vulnerabilities or poorly secured infrastructure.

Additionally, the mining of IPS logs can unlock a wealth of actionable intelligence such as exploit usage and attacker infrastructure. Having high central visibility over these logs can help spot the initial stages of an attack.

#### Network and Vulnerability Scanning

Defenders should maintain an inventory of all exposed services, including ports and software versions, across the corporate perimeter and mitigate risks as required. Periodic scanning for exposed services and vulnerabilities provides visibility on potential inroads to the network. Subscribe to security feeds from appliance and system vendors to ensure the timely mitigation of vulnerabilities.

#### **Account Security**

A least-privileged administrative model should be implemented. Organizations should provide users with the least permissive roles possible that would still allow them to accomplish their jobs or functions. On top of this, strong authentication systems such as multi-factor authentication (MFA) and conditional access for all users must be deployed.

Defenders also need to segment accounts into non-privileged, privileged, and highly privileged. It should be noted that the use of highly privileged accounts should be limited as much as possible and should only be used from select hardened machines.

#### **Incident Response**

Targeted ransomware attacks like Nefilim often utilize data that has been exfiltrated by informationstealing malware. Security teams should perform comprehensive IR investigations in the aftermath of an information-stealing malware infection. Compiling the full kill chain and root cause analysis provides important lessons in the learning phase of the IR life cycle to prevent reoccurrence.

On the detection of malware like those mentioned in Figure 6, predetermined procedures called playbooks can be used to ensure a consistent and comprehensive response to mitigate the latent threat posed by loaders and information stealers. A common defender mistake is to assume that an IR ticket can be closed upon the removal of early-stage malware files in the system. The exfiltration of sensitive data like credentials or the dropping of additional payloads and subsequent lateral movement could be missed in this case. We recommend that for any malware detected in an incident, defenders should read security reports and research to see if the malware variant in question is commonly used as an early part of a larger kill chain. If so, defenders should assume that the later stages of the kill chain may have already been deployed and they should be investigated and neutralized.

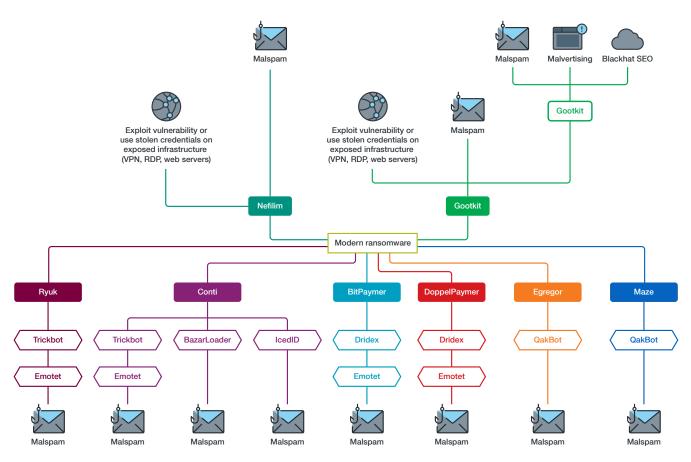


Figure 6. A non-exhaustive diagram that features the relationships between malware loaders and the final ransomware payload at the time of writing

#### **Cross-Layered Detection and Response**

It is becoming increasingly commonplace for organizations and enterprises to use multiple security layers to detect and block threats from email, endpoints, servers, cloud infrastructures, and networks. Though these perform their function well, the disparate layers can result to siloed threat information and an abundance of uncorrelated alerts. These can deter the proper and efficient remediation of threats.

Organizations can benefit from a threat defense platform that provides a correlated and comprehensive view of threats. This provides organizations with streamlined alerts of all pertinent threat-related activities that will allow them to investigate and launch a complete defense plan.

Visibility over the entire infrastructure including emails, networks, endpoints, on-premise servers, and the cloud is key to defending organizations against targeted ransomware attacks. Managed XDR solutions can give IR teams a broader perspective and provide better attack-centric context to the chain of events from a single dashboard. These tools help facilitate faster detection and complete remediation against multi-stage attacks like those seen in Nefilim ransomware attacks.

## Lateral Movement and Privilege Escalation

Once the attackers have gained a foothold into the network, they will attempt to perform host discovery activities to find even more hosts to attack and compromise. Lateral movement is the process by which an attacker tries to use a compromised system or systems to find others to which they can gain access. To avoid detection, attackers will often weaponize tools that are built-in or are commonly used by administrators, a tactic that is otherwise called "living off the land."<sup>32</sup>

**PsExec** is one of the most popular tools attackers use. It is a tool created by Microsoft's Sysinternals group and meant for legitimate purposes such as launching interactive command prompts on remote servers.<sup>33</sup> However, attackers abuse PsExec to execute programs on remote systems with credentials that have been harvested either via the lateral movement phase or pre-ransomware attack phases.<sup>34</sup> The tool is used to execute a batch script containing a list of commands that stop certain running services and processes from running. Ransomware actors would not be able to encrypt the files that are locked by certain processes and services, hence, they use PsExec to stop these from running.

The use of PsExec, a legitimate tool commonly used by system administrators, has been observed during Nefilim infections to launch taskkill.exe on remote machines. This would effectively stop processes that might alert the victim to an attacker's activities. In multiple cases, PsExec has been observed being used to stop a Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP) daemon, backup services, and other services. It has also been used to stop certain running services and processes in order to avoid access violations when encrypting files locked by those processes. PsExec is used to execute a batch script containing a list of commands. These commands stop certain running services and processes in order to avoid access violations that could prevent the ransomware from encrypting the files locked by those same running processes and services.

C:\Windows\system32\taskkill.exe	Process	/im dbeng50.exe /f	df3a0f49f9310b401fa5c2fe35c086dfa3018dba	C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe	8dca9749cd48d286950e7a9fa1088c937cbccad4
C:\Windows\system32\taskkill.exe	Process	/im dbsnmp.exe /f	df3a0f49f9310b401fa5c2fe35c086dfa3018dba	C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe	8dca9749cd48d286950e7a9fa1088c937cbccad4
C:\Windows\system32\taskkill.exe	Process	/im encsvc.exe /f	df3a0f49f9310b401fa5c2fe35c086dfa3018dba	C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe	8dca9749cd48d286950e7a9fa1088c937cbccad4
C:\Windows\system32\taskkill.exe	Process	/im dbeng50.exe /f	df3a0f49f9310b401fa5c2fe35c086dfa3018dba	C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe	8dca9749cd48d286950e7a9fa1088c937cbccad4
C:\Windows\system32\taskkill.exe	Process	/im dbsnmp.exe /f	df3a0f49f9310b401fa5c2fe35c086dfa3018dba	C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe	8dca9749cd48d286950e7a9fa1088c937cbccad4
C:\Windows\system32\taskkill.exe	Process	/im encsvc.exe /f	df3a0f49f9310b401fa5c2fe35c086dfa3018dba	C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe	8dca9749cd48d286950e7a9fa1088c937cbccad4

Figure 7. Triggered *taskkill.exe* to end select processes

**Windows PowerShell**, a management framework system administrators use for automating tasks, is another common tool that attackers abuse because it is a powerful open-source and cross-platform platform.<sup>35</sup> We observed how cybercriminals abused a PowerShell command to drop a Cobalt Strike beacon in one of these attacks from 2020.<sup>36</sup> The command uses the *FromBase64String* function to decode a Base64 blob. When manually decoded, it matches a PowerShell Cyberchef decoder recipe on GitHub that can extract Cobalt Strike shellcode.<sup>37</sup> This technique has been observed being used with multiple ransomware families, including all of the Nefilim attacks that we have analyzed.



Figure 8. The Base64-encoded Powershell

**Mimikatz**<sup>38</sup> is another tool that we have seen in a few Nefilim infections. Mimikatz is a popular penetration testing and Red Team tool that dumps plaintext passwords, hashes, Kerberos tickets, and other sensitive information from memory.<sup>39</sup>

In some cases, plaintext passwords are stored as variables in memory. Even if it only stores the hash of the password, there are ways to crack those hashes offline with tools such as hashcat<sup>40</sup> or John the Ripper (JtR).<sup>41</sup> It can also be used to utilize cracked passwords or tickets in pass-the-hash (PTH) attacks,<sup>42</sup> which is a common technique used to gain access to other systems within the network. While this tool is popular, there is no major legitimate purpose necessitating system administrators to deploy this tool in their systems. Mimikatz is also a tool that can be used for privilege escalation, which means that the attackers are looking for higher permissions on the system than the ones they have currently compromised.<sup>43</sup> This most commonly occurs if a service or a user with higher privileges is logged into a compromised machine, which can cause their passwords to still be in memory and possibly be extracted. Attackers can use unprivileged access to enter and explore a victim network, however, they would require elevated permissions to proceed with their intended objectives.<sup>44</sup>

Timestamp	Path	Detection
08/03/2020 20:54	C:\logs\x64\ProcessHacker.exe	PUA.Win64.ProcHack.C45
08/03/2020 20:54	C:\logs\x64\kprocesshacker.sys	PUA.Win32.ProcHack.B46
08/03/2020 20:54	C:\logs\x64\peview.exe	PUA.Win64. ProcHack.B.component <sup>47</sup>
08/03/2020 20:54	C:\logs\12.log	HS_MIMIKATZLOG.SM
08/03/2020 21:09	C:\logs\12.log	HS_MIMIKATZLOG.SM
08/03/2020 21:46	C:\Users\[redacted]\Downloads\1.log	HS_MIMIKATZLOG.SM
08/03/2020 21:46	C:\Users\[redacted]\Downloads\1.log	HS_MIMIKATZLOG.SM

Table 2. The tools an attacker dropped in our investigation

Note: Host information have been redacted

In a few cases, we have also observed the use of a tool called AdFind that searches the Active Directory for setup attributes<sup>48</sup> that can include computers and users who are part of the Active Directory domain. While system administrators can use this tool, other similar tools are considered suspicious. One of which

is **BloodHound**, an Active Directory visualization tool that can help identify different attack paths and understand the properties of the Active Directory.<sup>49</sup>

While Cobalt Strike uses multiple beacons to communicate to and from the command-and-control (C&C) servers, we have seen Nefilim actors using DNS, HTTP, or HTTPS protocols. Attackers typically deploy Cobalt Strike in strategic places on the network, such as important systems to which the attacker knows they will need extended access. Most often, these are servers and not workstations. Attackers can also avoid detection by using DNS beacons, which provide an inconspicuous — albeit slower — transmission of files and other items for exfiltration.<sup>50</sup> Because of this, we have also seen in many cases the use of MegaSync, a cloud-based synchronization application of the infamous MEGA cloud storage service, to exfiltrate data.<sup>51</sup> In some cases, attackers have used HTTP or HTTPS beacons as opposed to DNS beacons, which allows for faster data exfiltration. This is possibly why we might not always see both DNS exfiltration and MegaSync in the case of Nefilim.

Table 3 lists the tools that we have observed being used in lateral movement and privilege escalation. However, it should be noted that ransomware actors are not limited to these tools. Attackers use tools based on the environment being compromised and what tools they think they can run without getting caught.

Tactic	Technique	Observable
	T1550: Use alternate authentication material	Attackers can use Mimikatz to dump hashes, tickets, or plain text passwords.
Lateral movement	T1570: Lateral tool transfer	Attackers can deploy tools within systems to aid in lateral movement. This includes tools such as PsExec, Bloodhound, and AdFind.
	T1018: Remote system discovery	Cybercriminals can abuse tools like AdFind to collect Active Directory information and map out the infrastructure to find more targets.
Privilege escalation	T1068: Exploitation for privilege escalation	Attackers can exploit known vulnerabilities to elevate privileges and perform administrative actions or actions requiring elevated privileges. (See Appendix)

#### **MITRE ATT&CK TTPs**

Table 3. The tools used in lateral movement and privilege escalation

## Recommended Defenses: Preventing Ransomware Attacks by Blocking Lateral Movement and Privilege Escalation

Defending systems against the lateral movement and privilege escalation phase of a modern ransomware attack can be difficult. This is because attackers are more likely to abuse legitimate tools that administrators regularly utilize. In this attack phase, ransomware actors have already gotten inside the network and are starting to look for other hosts to compromise. And though it is possible for the time between the initial breach and the lateral movement phase to be lengthy, once the lateral movement phase starts, most actors tend to work more quickly knowing that their risk of discovery increases. During this stage, attackers will prioritize moving between hosts. Modern ransomware actors operating the same business model favored by the Nefilim group will start exfiltrating data.

#### Network Segmentation and Micro-Segmentation to Inhibit Lateral Movement and Support Security Monitoring

Attackers looking to extort victims through data theft and destruction with ransomware must first move around the network to discover sensitive data. Making lateral movement more difficult for an attacker slows them down and increases the chances that they will be discovered through effective security monitoring.

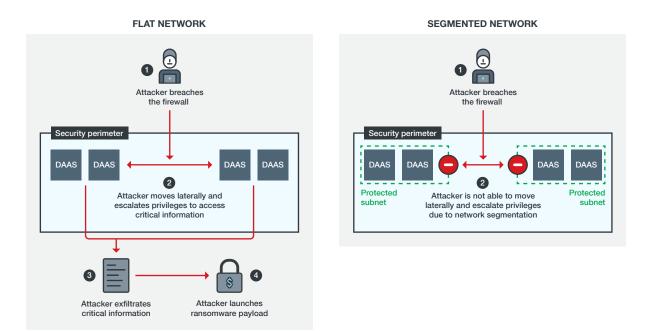


Figure 9. A diagram showcasing the differences in security between a flat network and a segmented network

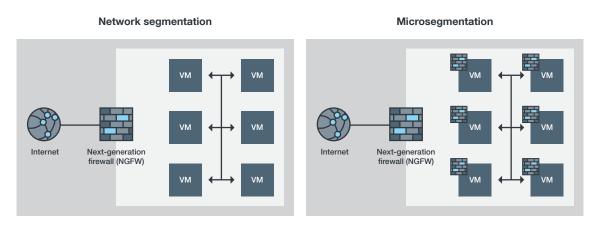


Figure 10. A diagram showcasing the differences between network segmentation and micro-segmentation

Organizations can benefit from segmenting office and server networks to effectively limit an attacker's scope of compromise. This can be done by micro-segmenting information systems, using properly defended management networks to protect underlying administrative interfaces on network infrastructure, and employing virtualization and cloud infrastructures.

#### **Intrusion Detection Systems**

Intrusion detection systems (IDS) can help detect malicious activities and aid security operations in tracking anomalous events after attackers have gained initial access to a system. IDS sensors can detect attackers leveraging compromised users, unknown malware, exploits, or covert C&C channels at the network, cloud, and endpoint, and server layers.

#### **Multi-Factor Authentication**

Employing multi-factor authentication (MFA) is a good way to limit the reuse of comprised credentials that may have already been stolen or collected by attackers from data breaches.<sup>52</sup> Attackers who have access to accounts that are being used in multiple machines and are running without MFA will be able to log in, execute commands, and pivot to more machines. This allows attackers to more easily perform lateral movement inside the network. It should be noted that security best practices must be followed when using local authentication methods, such avoiding the use of the same password on multiple machines and limiting the use of any administrative accounts if the built-in administrator must be enabled.

## **Calling Home and Exfiltration**

As discussed in the previous section, Nefilim-associated actors frequently use the commercially available software Cobalt Strike after they have successfully compromised an organization's network. Cobalt Strike is a versatile post-exploitation penetration tool that allows penetration testers, red teams, and unfortunately, attackers, to further attack the network, control the compromised system, and exfiltrate interesting data. For this to work, Cobalt Strike beacon is run on or injected into the compromised system.

When the software is abused for nefarious purposes, the beacon will connect back to the Cobalt Strike C&C server that an attacker controls. The callback can be achieved using several protocols, including HTTP, HTTPS, and DNS, as we have observed in the Nefilim attacks that we have analyzed. The attacker can connect to the team server component of the Cobalt Strike server, by default on port 50050/TCP. When this happens, the attacker can have a convenient overview of all compromised systems and the capability to remotely execute attacks. Our analysis of Nefilim attacks points to evidence showing that the attackers are connecting to different Cobalt Strike C&C servers through residential IP addresses, indicating that those have been compromised as well.

					Cobalt Strike					+ - = >
<u>C</u> ob:	alt Strike <u>V</u> iew <u>/</u>	<u>A</u> ttacks <u>R</u> eportir	ng <u>H</u> elp							
•		🕀 🖪 🗶 🔑 🖬	a 🏟 🖮 🗎 🖂	8 🛋 📕 📦						
	external	internal	listener	user	computer 🔺	note	process	pid	arch	last
12.	10.10.10.7 ****	10.10.10.3	local - http	SYSTEM *	DC		rundll32.exe	2300	×64	10m
12.		10.10.10.198	local - dns	SYSTEM *	DEVELOPER		rundll32.exe	8040	×86	15s
4	10.10.10.198	10.10.10.198	local - dns	Jamie.Grins	DEVELOPER		LocalBridge.e	6984	×86	22s
3	192.168.58.3	192.168.58.35	local - http	SYSTEM *	ENGINEER	Interest	rundll32.exe	1512	×86	27s
	10.10.10.191	10.10.10.7	local - http	SYSTEM *	FILESERVER	Interact	rundll32.exe	2604	×64	12s
3	10.10.10.7 ****	192.168.58.3	local - http	SYSTEM *	POWERDC	Access +	rundll32.exe	3956	×64	12s
1	10.10.10.198	192.168.57.18	local - dns	jgrins	ubuntu	Explore +	<u>B</u> rowser Pivot			41h
1	10.0.0.147	10.10.10.191	local - http	jim.stevens	WS1	<u>P</u> ivoting →	Desktop (VNC)	4844	×86	114ms
						<u>S</u> pawn	<u>F</u> ile Browser			
						Session →	Net View			
	ent Log X Be	acon 10.10.10.1	98@8040 X	Beacon 192.168	.58.35@1512 >	Desktop 192	Port Scan 0151	2 X		
				everything is great!	-	· ·	Process List			
							Screenshot			
				3	ATER SYSTEM OVERVIEW		<u>agreenane</u>	ļ		
					14 TRAIL 223 41	Alassa Breder W.T.P.				
				HE RE HE	Source View MARK SCYVP Libert Ress Libert Ress Art	Image: 1         Image: 1	19 19 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20			
				Drain	Cooling System (Don't	t ever push!)				
				<del>•</del>	Q Q Q Q	. 😭 Ctri Alt				

Figure 11. A screenshot of the Cobalt Strike management interface.

Image source: www.cobaltstrike.com

We have also seen different clusters on the internet hosting Nefilim-related Cobalt Strike C&C servers. The actors have a preference for hosting companies in various countries including Bulgaria, the UK, the US, and the Netherlands. Other Nefilim-related Cobalt Strike C&C servers are hosted through small bulletproof web hosting services created by various shell companies. These might belong to one bigger bulletproof hosting company. As far as we can tell, there are dozens of these shell companies, with their assigned IP ranges mostly being used for nefarious purposes. Most of these shell companies have been in business for several years and thus can provide stable bulletproof hosting for bad actors. Some of the shell companies seem to be set up almost exclusively for hosting Cobalt Strike beacon C&Cs, large scale internet scanning (including the scanning of Citrix servers), and in one case, the clear-web back end for a Tor-hidden website in which Nefilim actors post data stolen from their victims.

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Based on our observation, Nefilim actors make use of at least three different kinds of bulletproof hosting services. Apart from a Tor-hidden server that is used to leak stolen information from victims and the small IP ranges belonging to small shell companies, Nefilim also makes use of the so-called fast flux hosting. The front end of the clear-web website corpleaks[.]net, where attackers upload information stolen from victims, is hosted on a fast flux network. This means that the front end regularly changes its IP address. The same was true for the affiliate website of Nemty operators. The RaaS back end of Nefilim, which hosts the real content, is hosted through a fast flux network to keep it from being taken down for an extended period of time. We are confident that we have identified the back-end server of corpleaks[.]net, however, it is hosted by one of the small shell companies that offers bulletproof hosting.

One remarkable thing that we have discovered is that Nemty's websites, which were hosted on fast flux networks, consistently shared front-end IP addresses with websites of the infamous slilpp[.]io actors for more than one year. The slilpp[.]io actors specialize in the large-scale stealing and selling of financial assets. Whether sharing the same kind of fast flux front-end servers is merely coincidental or otherwise is part of our ongoing research.



Passive DNS data of slilpp[.]io and Nemty

Figure 12. The passive DNS data of slilpp[.]io and Nemty

Cobalt Strike beacon callbacks may be used by Nefilim actors to exfiltrate sensitive data in chunks of a fixed size. When the Cobalt Strike beacon malware makes use of DNS as a C&C protocol, victim machines will not directly communicate with the C&C servers, but via a configured recursive DNS server. For the exfiltration of large files, malicious actors have also been observed using external data sharing platforms like MEGA to exfiltrate data. Beginning Spring 2020, we have logged exfiltration data from an FTP server that was likely set up specifically for such a task.

C&C	Date Created	IP Address	Country	Protocol	Confidence Level
89.105.195.203	~2020-01-13	89.105.195.203	Netherlands	HTTPS	High
179.60.146.11	~ 2020-02-02	179.60.146.11	Sweden	HTTPS	High
185.147.15.14	~ 2020-02-02	185.147.15.14	Netherlands	HTTPS	High
localskype.com	2020-03-06T20:27:25.00Z	88.214.26.57	Bulgaria	DNS	High
nsskype.com	2020-03-06T20:27:25.00Z	88.214.26.57	Bulgaria	DNS	High
ns1.dnsskype.com	2020-03-06T20:27:25.00Z	88.214.26.57	Bulgaria	DNS	High
ns1.dnsskype.com	2020-03-06T20:27:25.00Z	5.188.206.219	Bulgaria	DNS	High
ns1.safeinet.dev	2020-06-01T12:40:16Z	109.234.36.148	Netherlands	DNS	High
securityupdatewin32. org	2020-07-01T11:52:53Z	209.250.247.32	Netherlands	HTTPS	Low
ns1.fairyschool.art	2020-07-01T19:55:54.0Z	88.214.26.29	Bulgaria	DNS	Low
win7securityupdate.net	2020-07-16T14:46:59Z	209.250.243.71	Netherlands	HTTP	Low
adobeupdate7x32.org	2020-08-26T11:51:19Z	78.141.211.59	Netherlands	HTTPS	Low
ns1.msdn7x32.net	2020-08-28T13:07:24Z	89.44.9.221	France	DNS	High
msdn64x7.net	2020-08-31T11:08:41Z	95.179.155.43	Netherlands	HTTPS	High
193.239.84.186	~ 2020-08-31	193.239.84.186	United Kingdom	HTTPS	High
ns1.vaultsecure.net	2020-09-02T10:13:36.00Z	5.188.206.221	Bulgaria	DNS	High
iqio.net	2020-09-17T12:07:02.00Z	185.153.198.134	Romania	HTTP	High
ns1.iioq.me	2020-09-17T12:07:05Z	185.153.198.7	Romania	DNS	High
ns1.iioq.io	2020-09-17T12:07:11Z	185.153.198.33	Romania	DNS	High
ns1.emailsafety.net	2020-09-29T21:07:29.00Z	88.214.26.33	Bulgaria	DNS	High
winupdate10pack2048. net	2020-10-15T09:36:01Z	95.179.138.46	Netherlands	HTTP	High
ns1.owadns.com	2020-10-19T11:37:10.00Z	45.227.252.161	Netherlands	DNS	Low
ns1.owadns.net	2020-10-19T11:37:20.00Z	45.227.252.59	Netherlands	DNS	Low
webintercom76delivery. net	2020-11-02T09:38:06Z	185.141.24.71	Netherlands	HTTP	Low
ns1.cafesunshine.me	2020-11-09T12:25:23Z	46.161.27.212	Netherlands	DNS	High
ns1.siteswhoisit.com	2020-12-30T12:06:12.00Z	41.216.186.237	Netherlands	DNS	Low
dns12.org	2021-01-11T15:02:48Z	144.202.108.45	United States	HTTP	Medium
dns20.net	2021-01-11T15:56:57.00Z	95.179.152.5	Netherlands	HTTP	Medium
dns25.net	2021-01-11T16:41:25.00Z	185.244.150.147	Netherlands	HTTP	Medium
ns1.dns30.net	2021-01-11T17:23:20.00Z	194.36.191.31	Netherlands	DNS	Medium
dns35.net	2021-01-11T18:08:12.00Z	194.36.191.25	Netherlands	HTTPS	Medium

Table 4. Cobalt Strike domains used by Nefilim

Tactic	Technique	Observable
Automated exfiltration	T1020	Adversaries may exfiltrate data, such as sensitive documents, through the use of automated processing after being gathered during collection.
Exfiltration over C2 channel	T1041	Adversaries may steal data by exfiltrating it over an existing command and control channel. Stolen data is encoded into the normal communications channel using the same protocol as command and control communications.
Data transfer size limits	T1030	Adversaries may exfiltrate data in fixed-size chunks instead of whole files or limit packet sizes below certain thresholds. This approach may be used to avoid triggering network data transfer threshold alerts.
Exfiltration over alternative protocol	T1048	Adversaries may steal data by exfiltrating it over a different protocol than that of the existing command and control channel. The data may also be sent to an alternate network location from the main command and control server.
Exfiltration over web service	T1567	Adversaries may use an existing, legitimate external web service to exfiltrate data rather than their primary command and control channel. Popular web services acting as an exfiltration mechanism may give a significant amount of cover due to the likelihood that hosts within a network are already communicating with them prior to compromise. Firewall rules may also already exist to permit traffic to these services.

Table 5. The TTPs used in Cobalt Strike

# Recommended Defenses: Halting Ransomware Attacks by Preventing Cobalt Strike C&C Server Misuse

To protect systems from Nefilim's calling back to Cobalt Strike C&C servers, we recommend keeping antivirus (AV) solutions up-to-date and implementing machine learning plugins of AV software. Defenders must also monitor — and if applicable, block — suspicious DNS, HTTP, and HTTPS connections. A policy can be created to block the uploading of files to file-sharing platforms, however it should be noted that this could hinder legitimate day-to-day operations. It is important to take measures to detect and block traffic to Cobalt Strike C&C servers in general. Since Cobalt Strike is designed to evade detection by security software, a multilayered approach is imperative in thwarting this type of threat. In some cases, it is possible to detect Cobalt Strike beaconing by looking at suspicious internet traffic patterns. For example, when an attacker uses DNS as the communication protocol for his Cobalt Strike malware, regular DNS requests to relatively young domains in the log files of the corporate recursive DNS server can be viewed as possible C&C traffic. It is critical to block Cobalt Strike C&C traffic that makes use of default Cobalt Strike settings and known JARM<sup>53</sup> fingerprints to either generate block lists or use third-party block lists of known Cobalt Strike C&C servers.

## Malware Payload

The first Nefilim ransomware sample we detected (SHA-256: 08c7dfde13ade4b13350ae290616d7c2f4a87c beac9a3886e90a175ee40fb641) has a compilation date of March 10, 2020, at 01:40 (UTC). At the time, the file was signed with a valid certificate issued by Sectigo, a cybersecurity provider of digital identity solutions. The sample was written in pure C/C++ using the Windows API and compiled for a 32-bit architecture. No packers or cryptors were used in the sample. We have reached out to Sectigo, who has promptly revoked all of the certificates used in this campaign, therefore making the execution of the malware substantially more difficult. It should be noted that Sectigo already revoked almost half of the certificates included in our report before we contacted them.

The malware decrypts a ransom note using a fixed RC4 key. It features three email addresses that victims can use to contact the Nefilim actors about the ransom payment.

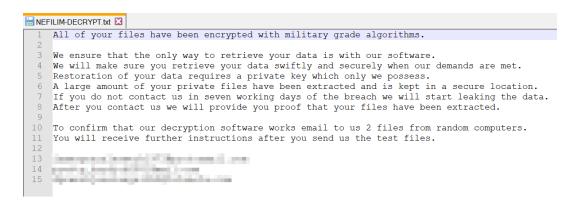


Figure 13. The Nefilim ransom note

It then generates a random AES key for each file that it queues for encryption.

To enable file decryption in case the victim pays the ransom amount, the malware encrypts the generated AES key with a fixed RSA public key and appends it to the encrypted file. To date, only the attackers can decrypt this scheme as they alone own the paired private RSA key.

#### **Detailed Execution Flow**

As stated in previous sections, Nefilim is a post-compromise ransomware. Therefore, it is launched manually by actors or affiliates only after they determine that they have adequate control over the victim's infrastructure. Once it is running, the execution flow is very straightforward. First, Nefilim creates a mutual exclusion (mutex) object to prevent more than one thread of the same process.

	ish	edi					
pu	ısh	offset Name				koy. My khodi"	
xo	or	esi, esi					
pu	ısh	esi	; bInitialO	)wner			
pu	ısh		; lpMutexAt	tributes			
mo	v	[ebp+var_40],					
ca	11	ds:CreateMutex					
pu	ısh		; dwMillise	conds			
pu	ısh		; hHandle				
ca	11	ds:WaitForSing	leObject				
ca	11	ds:GetLastErro					
cm	np						
jn	1Z	short loc_402D	80				
_	_			_	_		
						÷	
🗾 🚄 🖼				ſ	<b>II</b> 🔏 🛙	-	
push esi		dwExitCode					
		dwexitcode			loc 40	2000.	
call ds:ExitThrea							
Call ds:ExitInne					call	sub_402EFC	
Call ds:ExitInre		_			call push	<pre>sub_402EFC offset aNefilim ;</pre>	
call ds:ExitInre					call push lea	<pre>sub_402EFC offset aNefilim ; eax, [ebp+var_20]</pre>	
					call push lea call	<pre>sub_402EFC offset aNefilim ; eax, [ebp+var_20] sub_402190</pre>	
					call push lea call push	<pre>sub_402EFC offset aNefilim ; eax, [ebp+var_20] sub_402190 [ebp+var_10] ;</pre>	unsigned int
					call push lea call push call	<pre>sub_402EFC offset aNefilim eax, [ebp+var_20] sub_402190 [ebp+var_10] ; ??_U@YAPAXI@Z ;</pre>	
					call push lea call push call cmp	<pre>sub_402EFC offset aNefilim ; eax, [ebp+var_20] sub_402190 [ebp+var_10] ; [ebp+var_2], 8</pre>	unsigned int
					call push lea call push call cmp pop	<pre>sub_402EFC offset aNefilim ; eax, [ebp+var_20] sub_402190 [ebp+var_10] ; ?_U@YAPAXI@Z ; [ebp+var_C], 8 ecx</pre>	<pre>unsigned int operator new[](uint)</pre>
					call push lea call push call cmp pop mov	<pre>sub_402EFC offset aNefilim ; eax, [ebp+van_20] sub_402190 [ebp+van_10] ; ?_U@YAPAXI@Z ; [ebp+van_C], 8 ecx ecx, [ebp+van_20]</pre>	<pre>unsigned int operator new[](uint)</pre>
					call push lea call push call cmp pop	<pre>sub_402EFC offset aNefilim ; eax, [ebp+var_20] sub_402190 [ebp+var_10] ; ?_U@YAPAXI@Z ; [ebp+var_C], 8 ecx</pre>	<pre>unsigned int operator new[](uint)</pre>

Figure 14. Creation of a mutex

The next step involves decrypting the ransom note. This is done by calculating the SHA-1 digest from a hard-coded string to further derive it to an RC4 key. This is carried out using the following functions from the Microsoft CryptoAPI platform, which Microsoft has marked as deprecated a few years ago:

- CryptAcquireContextA
- CryptCreateHash
- CryptHashData
- CryptDeriveKey

If any of these functions fail, the ransomware exits without encrypting anything. It should be noted that though Microsoft CryptoAPI is deprecated, they still work on recent versions of Windows, such as Windows 10.

Nefilim has the ransom note hard-coded, encrypted with this RC4 key, and further encoded with base64.

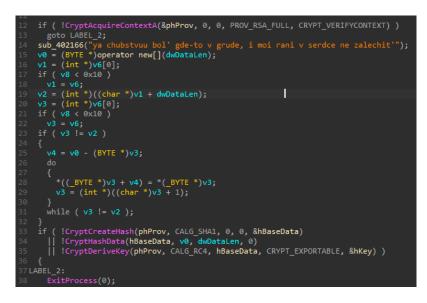


Figure 15. Decryption of the ransomware note

When the abovementioned function is called, the ransom note is kept in memory. It will be written to disk in a succeeding step.

#### **RSA Key Import**

After decrypting the ransom note, Nefilim imports an RSA-2048 public key and leaves it ready to use for encryption.



Figure 16. Importing the RSA-2048 public key for encryption

The key used by the function above is stored in the *.rdata* section of the executable, as shown in Figure 17.



Figure 17. The Base64-encoded RSA public key used to decrypt the ransom note

#### **Impact Modes**

#### Single Directory

The Nefilim payload supports a command-line argument that contains the full directory path. This contains the files the attacker wants to encrypt. In this mode, it does not create a ransom note. We believe that criminals use this for testing purposes and/or manual encryption of specified directories for performance reasons.

#### Normal Operation and File Encryption

If launched without any arguments, the Nefilim executable prepares to encrypt all logical drives with writing permissions, including A:, B:, C:, and D:, in an affected Windows machine. Removable drives and network shares are also targeted but the latter must be mapped to a drive letter for Nefilim to see it.

Figure 18. The malware iterates through drives to encrypt

For each suitable logical drive found, Nefilim decrypts and writes a ransom note file named "NEFILIM-DECRYPT.txt" (or "<VARIANT\_NAME>-DECRYPT.txt") in the drive root and creates a thread to encrypt all content in the drive.



Figure 19. Function for creating the ransom note

#### Exclusions

Before Nefilim starts to encrypt files, it checks if they match its exclusion list of files and directory names, as seen in Figure 20.

<pre>hFindFile = FindFirstFileW(v1, &amp;FindFileData); if ( hFindFile != (HANDLE)-1 )</pre>										
do										
<pre>if ( lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L".")</pre>										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"windows")										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"\$RECYCLE.BIN")</pre>										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"rsa")</pre>										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"NTDETECT.COM")</pre>										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"ntldr")</pre>										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"MSDOS.SYS")</pre>										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"IO.SYS")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"boot.ini")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"AUTOEXEC.BAT")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"ntuser.dat")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"desktop.ini")										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"CONFIG.SYS")</pre>										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"RECYCLER")</pre>										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"BOOTSECT.BAK")</pre>										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"bootmgr")</pre>										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"programdata")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"appdata")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"program files")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"program files (x86)")										
&& lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"microsoft")										
<pre>&amp;&amp; lstrcmpiW(FindFileData.cFileName, L"sophos") )</pre>										

Figure 20. Files excluded from Nefilim encryption

This prevents Nefilim from encrypting essential files to allow the operating system and common applications such as browsers and e-mail clients to continue working properly. Some folders directly related to common security products are also excluded, probably to avoid being detected by such products.

It also skips files with the following extensions:

- .cab
- .cmd
- .com
- .cpl
- .dll
- .exe
- .ini
- .lnk
- .log
- .mp3
- .mp4
- .msi
- .pif
- .ttf
- .url

Additionally, it also skips encrypting files that have previously been encrypted by checking the extension of the variant name, such as .NEFILIM and .MERIN. The exclusion list has changed for later versions of Nefilim variants, but it is still hard-coded.

#### **File Encryption**

The largest function in the Nefilim code is the encryption function. It uses different code techniques to attempt to bypass security products.

The overall algorithm:

 Generate two 128-bit random numbers using the *RtlGetRandom/SystemFunction036* function from *ADVAPI32.DLL*. As this function is not exported, Nefilim actors load it using LoadLibrary and *GetProcAddress*. The second generated number will be used as an AES-128 key in the future.



Figure 21. RtlGetRandom function dynamic resolution

- 2. Encrypt both numbers with the RSA public key and write the result to the end of the target file
- 3. Write an ASCII string containing the variant name to the end of the target file
- 4. Read the file content to a buffer
- 5. Encrypt the file content with AES-128 using the second random number as the key
- 6. Write the encrypted content back to the file, replacing the original content
- 7. Free both generated random numbers and the encrypted keys from memory
- 8. Add the variant name as an extension to the encrypted file
- Remove itself three seconds after completing encryption by executing the following commands: cmd. exe /c timeout /t 3 /nobreak && del <path> /s /f /q

#### Variants and Evolution

After its first version was spotted in the wild, we have continued to monitor Nefilim's activities and its evolution. To date, we have observed 18 different variants among an estimated 75 different samples, using a total of 22 valid certificates. We also noticed that the Nefilim actors tried to switch from Microsoft CryptoAPI to a newer replacement called Cryptography API: Next Generation (CNG).<sup>54</sup> We captured a unique sample that uses functions from the *bcrypt.h* header, which is a part of CNG API:

00512D7A	>	6A 00	push 0	ULONG dwFlags = 0
00512D7C		FF75 F8		ULONG cbInput
00512D7F		57	push edi	PUCHAR pbInput = "RSA1"
00512D80		68 00505100	push e508f4cda8e32c9b0b6112865b955ff88f	BCRYPT_KEY_HANDLE* phKey = 515000
		68 0C345100	push e508f4cda8e32c9b0b6112865b955ff88f	LPCWSTR pszBlobType = "RSAPUBLICBLOB"
00512D8A		6A 00		BCRYPT_KEY_HANDLE hImportKey = NULL
00512D8C		FF75 F4		BCRYPT_ALG_HANDLE hAlgorithm
00512D8F		FFD0		BCryptImportKeyPair

Figure 22. CNG (bcrypt.dll) functions seen in the Merin variant

The file analyzed in Figure 22 has a compilation date of October 4, 2020. It loads both *crypt32dll* and *bcrypt.dll* dynamically, using *LoadLibraryA* and *LoadLibraryW*, respectively. This completely replaces CryptoAPI and the need for ADVAPI32.dll as seen in previous samples written in C++. Interestingly, we

observed a major evolution on July 9, 2020, when the first variant of Nefilim written in the Go language appeared.

Throughout the different variants, the most significant change started with samples that encrypted files using the .MILIHPEN file extension. This variant completed the migration from CryptoAPI to CNG and uses an embedded JavaScript Object Notation (JSON)-based configuration. This suggests that a Nefilim ransomware builder exists. The JSON has configuration fields for mutex name, ransom note content, ransom note filename, RSA public key, directory names, file extensions to skip, and Windows API function names to resolve dynamically.



Figure 23. An example of a JSON-based configuration for the .MILIHPEN variant

This variant also has some debugging function calls that tell whoever runs the payload at which stage the ransomware resides. This was not surprising given the fact that Nefilim has been used as post-intrusion ransomware that is manually operated by its attackers.

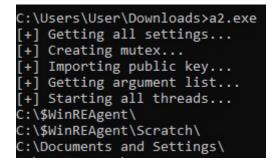


Figure 24. Debug messages from .MILIHPEN variant

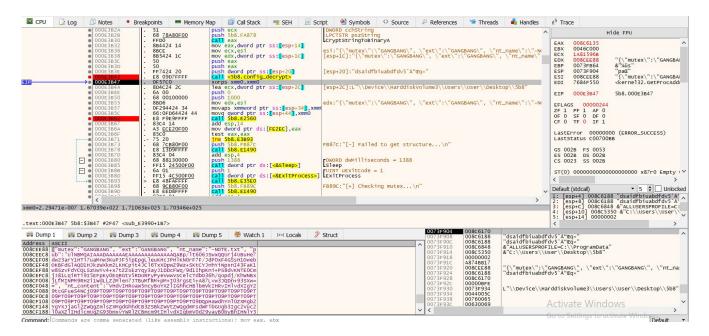
#### [+] All files have been successfully encrypted!

Figure 25. Success message when encryption is finished

Other variants include small tweaks to the code. For example, the GANGBANG variant added a custom encryption to hide its JSON-based configuration. It first decodes it using base64 and then decrypts it with a custom algorithm as shown in Figure 26.

CPU	Log DODE 3A9A	<ul> <li>Breakpoints Memory M</li> <li>66:0F1F4400 00</li> </ul>	ap 📴 Cal Stack 🗠 SEH 🗵 So nop word ptr ds:[eax+eax],ax	cript 🔮 Symbols 🗘 Source 🖉 References 🎐 Threads 📥 Handle	
	000E 3AA0	> 41	-inc ecx		A Hide FPU
0	O005 3AAL     O005 3AAL     O005 3AAL     O005 3AAC     O005 3AC     O	- 8089 78480F00 00 - 75 F6 4 60 8 600 8 60424 24 - 8 60 -	<pre>[cmp byte ptr ds:[ecx+EA878],0 public 508:E344, dword ptr ss:[esp+24] public 10 public 10 p</pre>	RtlallocateHeap 000FE330:&"WZE" LCCTSTR lpfileName = "crypt32.dll" LLoadLibraryA	EAX 0073F93C EXX 0073F93C EXX 00001000 LDX 765A6070 -ccrypt32.CryptString EsP 0073F6F4 6"%40" EST 76530E00 -ckernel32.coad.übrar EDT 76850E00 -ckernel32.coad.übrar EDT 76854F530 -kkernel32.coatUrbockdi EIP 000E3AED 5b8.000E3AED EFLAGS 00000344 ZF1 PF 1 AF0 GF 0 FF 1 FF 1 LastError 0000000 (ERROR_SUCCESS) LastEtuts c007008B GS 0028 F5 0053 ES 0028 D5 0028
	<ul> <li>000E3AE9</li> <li>000E3AEF</li> </ul>		mov dword ptr ds:[FE330],ecx mov eax,dword ptr ds:[<&CryptStri	N 000FE330;&"MZE"	CS 0023 <u>SS</u> 002B
	000E3AF4 000E3AF6	. 85C0 . 75 0D	test eax,eax		ST(0) 00000000000000000 x87r0 Empty -
	000E3AF8     000E3AF0     000E3AFE     000E3AFE     <	68 <u>D0B90F00</u> 51	push 568.FB9D0 push ecx call edi	LPCSTR lpProcName = "CryptStringToBinaryA" HMODULE Module GetProcAddress	<pre></pre>
dx= <crypt< td=""><td>32.CryptStringToBinary</td><td>&gt;</td><td></td><td></td><td>3: [esp+8] 00000001 4: [esp+C] 0000000</td></crypt<>	32.CryptStringToBinary	>			3: [esp+8] 00000001 4: [esp+C] 0000000
					5: [esp+10] 0073F92C
cext:000E	3ABD 5b8:\$3ABD #2EBD <s< td=""><td>ub_E3990+12D&gt;</td><td></td><td></td><td>&lt; &gt;</td></s<>	ub_E3990+12D>			< >

Figure 26. Base64 decoding of the JSON-based configuration





We have summarized the evolution of the Nefilim ransomware and took note of its variants in our Appendix. Based on the information we have gathered, Nefilim samples follow a consistent pattern. This suggests that:

- Each victim gets a unique sample including the contact information of the ransomware actors in the form of three e-mail addresses in the ransom note.
- When Nefilim authors change the certificate they use to sign the binaries, they also change the extension added to encrypted files.

There are quite a few interesting PDB strings and mutexes in the Nefilim samples we have found. Our investigation shows that most of the mutexes are connected to specific Russian rap songs. We will explore this angle further in the **Attribution** section.

Tactic	Technique	Observable
Initial access	T1078 – Valid accounts	Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of existing accounts as a means of gaining initial access, persistence, privilege escalation, or defense evasion.
Execution	T1106 – Native API*	Adversaries may directly interact with the native OS application programming interface (API) to execute behaviors.
	T1059 - Command and scripting interpreter	Adversaries may abuse command and script interpreters to execute commands, scripts, or binaries.
Privilege escalation	T1055 - Process injection	Adversaries may inject code into processes in order to evade process-based defenses as well as possibly elevate privileges.
Defense evasion	T1140 – Deobfuscate/Decode files or information	Adversaries may use obfuscated files or information <sup>55</sup> to hide artifacts of an intrusion from analysis.
	T1070 – Indicator removal on host*	Adversaries may delete or alter generated artifacts on a host system, including logs or captured files such as quarantined malware.
	T1070.004 - File deletion*	Adversaries may delete files left behind by the actions of their intrusion activity.

## MITRE ATT&CK TTPs

Tactic	Technique	Observable
Discovery	T1083 - File and directory discovery*	Adversaries may enumerate files and directories or may search in specific locations of a host or network share for certain information within a file system.
	T1120 - Peripheral device discovery*	Adversaries may attempt to gather information about attached peripheral devices and components connected to a computer system.
	T1135 - Network share discovery*	Adversaries may look for folders and drives shared on remote systems as a means way to identify of identifying sources of information to gather as a precursor for collection and to identify potential systems of interest for lateral movement.
Lateral movement	T1570 - Lateral tool transfer	Adversaries may transfer tools or other files between systems in a compromised environment.
Impact	T1486 - Data encrypted for impact*	Adversaries may encrypt data on target systems or on large numbers of systems in a network to interrupt availability to system and network resources.
	T1489 - Service stop	Adversaries may stop or disable services on a system to render those services unavailable to legitimate users.

Table 6. The TTPs used by Nefilim actors in the samples we have found and analyzed

## Recommended Defenses: Shielding Organizations Against Nefilim and its Variants

As stated before, Nefilim ransomware binaries are straightforward. Although some samples found were packed or protected, most of them were not. The following ransomware mitigation techniques can work to protect users from this ransomware family:

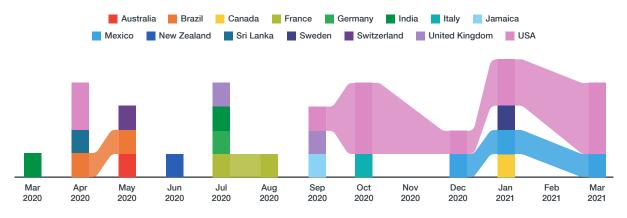
- Back up important files using the 3-2-1 rule: Have at least three copies, in two different formats, with one of those copies off-site.<sup>56</sup> The cloud is a good offsite backup, which provides additional security features such as data encryption and server virtualization.<sup>57</sup>
- Limit access to shared or network drives and turn off file sharing to minimize the risk of ransomware spreading throughout the network.

- Employ canary file-based monitoring and process killing. Organizations can make use of canary files, which are essentially files that ransomware actors are more likely to infect but are not valuable to the company. When ransomware actors infect canary files, it will trigger an alert for security teams.<sup>58</sup>
- Monitor encrypted network traffic via Next-Generation Intrusion Prevention System (NGIPS). This security tool allows SOC teams to inspect network traffic metadata to see where encryption and decryption are done.

## Victimology

The profile of a Nefilim victim is relatively broad in terms of location and industry. Nefilim has been observed to target multi-billion companies more than other ransomware groups. Nefilim has also been able to keep its website up and running for more than a year. At times, the Nefilim ransomware group posts the sensitive data of their victims over several weeks and even months to scare future victims into paying ransom.

The majority of Nefilim victims are located in North and South America, but victims are dotted throughout Europe, Asia, and Oceania.



Based on our observation, the US has been consistently targeted from Q3 2020 to Q1 2021.

Figure 28. Timeline of Nefilim activity by country per month from March 2020 to March 2021

A global look at the industries impacted by Nefilim operations highlights the breadth and scope of this threat. Based on our data, Nefilim has victims across five continents: North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania.

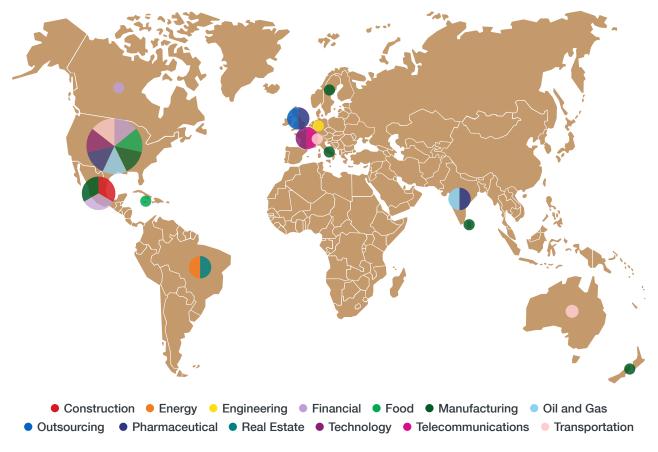


Figure 29. Nefilim victims by industry and location

The next section compares Nefilim with 16 other RaaS actors. Nefilim distinguishes itself from most other ransomware families by targeting high-profile companies with revenues often reaching billions of dollars per year. Nefilim also shows better control over its website compared to other ransomware families and is particularly vicious when it comes to leaking victims' sensitive data over extended periods of time.

Based on our data, there has been a steady and substantial growth in the amount of sensitive data that Nefilim actors leaked.

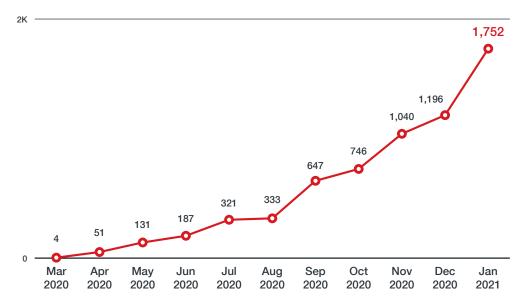


Figure 30. The cumulative data (in gigabytes) leaked by Nefilim actors from March 2020 to January 2021

## Leaking of Stolen Data: Nefilim Actors vs. Different RaaS Actors

To put further pressure on their victims, ransomware actors often threaten to leak sensitive data that have been stolen before deploying ransomware in their compromised networks. We found at least 16 other ransomware actors who maintain websites wherein they publish their victims' stolen data. Some of these websites are on Tor-hidden servers while others are hosted using bulletproof hosting. Some RaaS actors upload stolen files on commercially available and free file-sharing platforms. The effect of these sensitive data leaks on victims is not immediately clear. It is unlikely for a victim to eventually pay a ransom to a malicious actor to get sensitive data removed from a website, or to prevent even more stolen data from being leaked. Once sensitive data is stolen, a victim cannot do much else: sensitive data is already in the hands of malicious actors who can wreak havoc and monetize that data in different ways.

We think that the primary reason ransomware actors leak sensitive data is to issue a clear warning to future victims: ransomware actors will try to cause further harm when the ransom amount is not paid.

Some attackers seem to act in opportunistic ways and try to explore new ways of illicitly earning money. For example, the infamous REvil actors boldly started an "auction" option on their website on the dark web.<sup>59</sup> The stolen data of a victim organization that refused to pay the ransom is put on sale on their website to be sold to the winning auction bidder. To date, no one has participated in the REvil auction; all auction deadlines for stolen data have already passed without any public bids. But though this tactic seemed to have failed thus far, if and when malicious actors start to successfully auction off stolen data, it would prove to have a chilling effect on ransomware victims.

Some ransomware actors, including Cl0p, have also threatened to release the sensitive data of an organization that they have breached unless a ransom is paid.

We researched the leaked sites of 16 ransomware actors and found significant differences in the way these actors implemented their successful extortion tactics. Most actors claim that they will keep stolen data publicly available for several months. Some actors such as Nefilim and Cl0p manage to keep terabytes of stolen data online for over a year and claim to regularly leak an increasing amount of data from the same victim. Other actors, such as LockBit and REvil, host their stolen data mostly on free and premium file-sharing platforms. These file-sharing platforms are usually quick to take down content that goes against their terms and conditions. This means that only a limited amount of the stolen data by REvil and LockBit can actually be downloaded. We have also observed that the REvil RaaS website has many dead links to URLs that previously hosted their stolen data, which gives off an impression of disorganization. Several actors make stolen data available via Tor-hidden websites. However, storing hundreds of gigabytes of stolen data on a Tor-hidden server is of limited use: downloading large archive files over Tor takes time — in some cases up to several days — because of its low throughput. A determined person will eventually succeed in downloading data over Tor, but for extortion purposes, this kind of hosting on the dark web does not make much sense.

Some actors also host files on their own websites on the clear web. For instance, Nefilim actors have both clear web and Tor-hidden websites on which they publish stolen data. We detailed how Nefilim's website uses fast flux bulletproof hosting in the "Calling Home and Exfiltration" section. This is mainly because Nefilim's clear web website is hosted by fast flux bulletproof hosting.

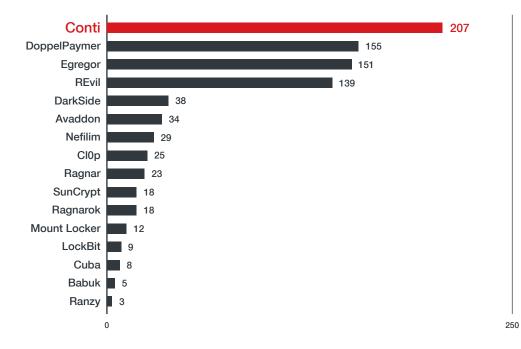


Figure 31. The number of victims with leaked data per ransomware family as of February 21, 2021

In terms of the number of victims with exposed stolen data that are hosted online, Conti, DoppelPaymer, Egregor, and REvil ransomware actors top the list.

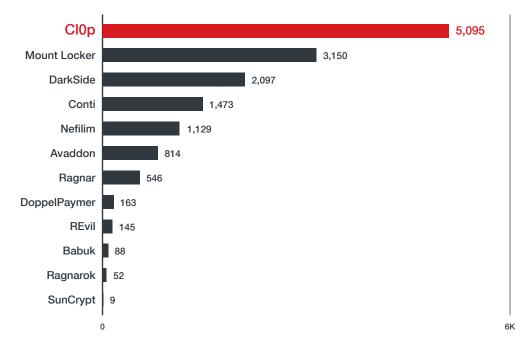


Figure 32. The volume of leaked data (in gigabytes) hosted online per RaaS as of February 21, 2021

Cl0p actors have the most stolen data hosted online. As explained earlier, though REvil has many victims, its website had many links pointing to free and commercial file-sharing websites that have already been taken down as of writing.

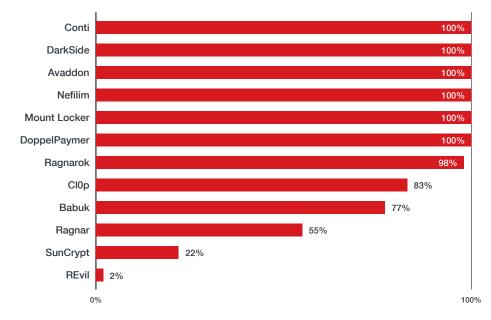


Figure 33. The percentage of leaked data that are still hosted online per RaaS as of February 21, 2021

In terms of the median revenue of ransomware victims whose sensitive data have been leaked online, Nefilim is clearly going after companies with a revenue of about US\$1 billion or more. Other RaaS groups such as REvil also expose the data of multi-billion dollar company victims. However, a large number of their victims are smaller companies, which makes the median revenue of the victims smaller.

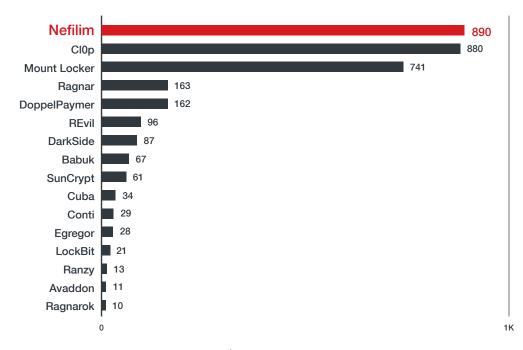


Figure 34. The median revenue (in millions of US\$) of ransomware victims with leaked data per RaaS as of February 21, 2021

## Attribution

While the main focus of this research is to describe the evolution of ransomware to its current, more targeted form — using Nefilim as a prime example of this development — we must look beyond the malware and focus on the actors behind them. Doing so allows us to better understand the driving force behind these ransomware developments.

The change in the tactics employed by these actors is a direct response to the new, defensive approaches applied by the security industry that has brought us to where we are today. As this malware trend continues to evolve, we have also seen a shift in the activities of malicious actors in recent years — including the actors behind the Nefilim and Nemty ransomware. We tracked the group behind these ransomware families under the intrusion set "*Water Roc*."

As discussed in a previous section, we believe that the Nefilim ransomware has evolved from an earlier ransomware family called Nemty. Jsworm and Jingo are two underground actors we currently associate with Water Roc activity. We have also seen both actors actively selling and supporting Nemty in the past. Based on their activities online, both actors are believed to be Russian speakers. Nemty's code also contained lyrics from several Russian songs and artists, as mentioned in an earlier section of this report.

call push	eax offset Name	; "na mne <b>prime</b> , pamc, pamc, pamc, "	
push push mov	edi edi ebx, eax	; bIni <sub>[; CHAR Name</sub> [] ; lpMu <mark>Name db 'na mne da sana, pamc, pame, pa</mark>	
call	ds:CreateMutexA	; DATA XREF: start+39	

Figure 35. Nemty code that contains the lyrics to the Russian song "MORGENSTERN - ПОСОСИ"

We first encountered jsworm in May 2019 with the initial sales postings for RazvRAT, a remote administration trojan (RAT), and the JSWorm ransomware affiliate program on a Russian forum called Exploit. It should be noted that "jsworm" refers to the ransomware actors, while "JSWorm" refers to the ransomware.

The RazvRAT malware was advertised with a US\$250 starting price. The amount was US\$950 for the full package, which included a hidden Virtual Network Computing (hVNC) module. Jsworm removed the listing after a buyer appeared several days later in what appears to be a one-off sale.

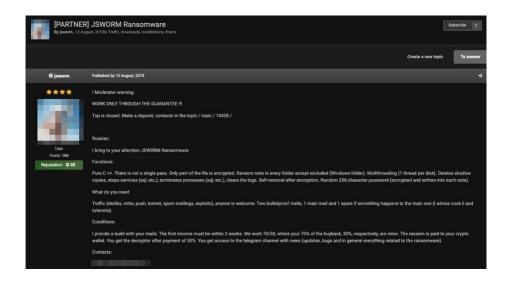
	RazyRAT (hVNC) by jawom, August 11, 2019in Virology			
1 2 FURTHER > Pag	ye 1 of 2 =			
jsworm	Published by August 11, 2019			
****				
	I bring to your attention a new Rat'nik with the hVNC module (which is so often searched for, but rarely found).			
	Functions:			
	Reverse proxy (the ability of the victim to make a socks4 proxy server without having open ports).			
	File manager (moving through directories, uploading a file to the bot, deleting files from the bot).			
User Posts: 104	Process manager (the entire list of processes and the ability to kill them).			
Reputation: © 35	Registry editor (a simple registry editor, without the ability to navigate through directories, but you can enter the path, key and value yourself).			
	Startup programs manager (view \ add \ remove programs).			
	KeyLoger in online mode (after starting the keylogger, the keys are logged in the online window).			
	Remote execution of CMD commands.			
	Download and Run function (download and run by URL).			
	Automatically restart the bot's server process if it closed it.			
	When connecting an infected machine, we get quite good and necessary information:			
	IP address.			
	Country.			
	Operating system.			
	PC name.			
	The amount of RAM.			
	Installed antivirus software.			
	A tagging system for each bot.			
	Benefits:			
	Native build, c ++ language. Low cost for functionality.			
	Fast bug fixes.			
	We are considering new functionality at the request of the buyer.			
	Rules:			
	We have the right to refuse a sale without giving a reason.			
	We do not make moneybacks (only in rare cases when our fault and the buyer informs about it in the first 24 hours after receiving the software).			
	We do not guarantee lifetime software support. But you get the full build and the server side NOT tied to our servers.			
	We do not encrypt files.			
	Contacts:			
	+ Quote			
	4000			

Figure 36. An advertisement for RazvRAT posted on an online forum

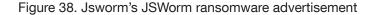
	1ay 1 2019							··· Next	
Control panel Options									
JP 127.0.0.1	Tag asss	Name_PC DESKTOP-SGTH#K6	Status Online	OS Windows 8 x64	Country Sweden	Processor_name Intel(R) Core(TH)	RAM 8156	AV Windows Defender	
Control o and									
Control panel Options IP	Tag	Name_PC	Status	OS	Country	Processor_name	RAM	AV	

Figure 37. The RazvRAT control panel

The sale of RazvRAT was followed by the emergence of the JSWorm ransomware from the same actor. Affiliates of the program had to provide their own traffic and two abused emails for inclusion in the ransomware note. Profits from any successful ransom were to be divided — 30% for jsworm and 70% for the affiliate user. Jsworm also advised his affiliates to use the cock[.]li or tutanota email providers. An early version of this ransomware was spotted in the wild in January 2019 by several security professionals. The JSWorm ransomware was spread through unprotected RDP configurations, email spam, malicious attachments, botnets, exploits, web injections, fake updates, and repackaged and infected installers.



English:	
I gonna present you new Ransomware - JSWORM.	
Functions:	
Native C++. No passes. Encrypting just a part of file. Ransom note in each encrypted folder (exception Windows) Multy-threaded (for each disk there is one thread) Delete shadow copie stop services (sql and etc), kill tasks (sql and etc), clear logs. Self-delete after all tasks. Random 256 symbols password.	s,
What you need:	
Traffic (rdp, vnc, push, botnet, sparn, exploits). Two abuze e-mails (I can advice you cock li or tutanota).	
Conditions:	
I give you build with your e-mails. The first income must be within 2 weeks. Work 70/30, 70% yours, 30% mine. Income pay to your cryptowallet. Decryptor after my 30%.	
Contacts:	
+ Quote	$\odot$
Published by 12 August, 2019	<



/// J	SWOR	M-DECRY	PT - No	tepad	
File	Edit	Format	View	Help	
JSWC	ORM 4	.0.1			
A11	your	files	were	encrypted	:(
Want	: to	return	?		
		_			

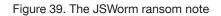




Figure 40. The JSWorm .JURASIK ransomware variant's ransom note

In early January 2019, the blog *https://id-ransomware.blogspot[.]com/2019/01/jsworm-ransomware[.] html* listed a decrypter for version 1.0. This predates the advertising of the malware on the forums we observed it on. This, combined with feature requests from users, led to a series of release notes and updates to the JSWorm ransomware being posted to the Exploit forum. JSWorm ransomware continued to get updates until version 4.0 in May 2019.

On August 20, 2019, jsworm started advertising the Nemty affiliate program on Exploit. By this time, jsworm had received several positive reputation points from his JSWorm ransomware program clients. A good reputation is very important for malicious actors in the criminal underground, where proving one's past activities is difficult due to the competing need for anonymity. Positive feedback from clients provides actors a better chance to charge more for their creations and services.

The initial version of Nemty supported Windows XP and later versions. It was written in C++, with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries banned from being targeted. The profit model was similar to that of the earlier JSWorm ransomware, allocating 30% to jsworm and 70% to the affiliate user. There were 25 affiliate slots available year-round.

jsworm	Published by August 22, 2019
****	We offer to join the NEMTY affiliate program.
1	The cryptolocker itself is in C ++ using Win32API. Support for Windows XP (no tap on the panel).
	The weight of a clean, uncovered build is 87kb.
User Posts: 104	
Reputation: • 35	Convenient panel with multiple functions.
	Behind the contact in the LAN, indicating the amount of traffic and where it is from.

Figure 41. Jsworm's Nemty advertisement

Meanwhile, Jingo started advertising Nemty on the Russian forum XSS on September 4, 2019. The terms of the affiliate program were the same as jsworm's with 30% for Jingo and 70% for the affiliate user. It also had 25 affiliate slots available year-round.

#### Private PP by cryptolocker

Sjingo · C 09/04/2019 · C cryptolocker ransomware

1 2 Forward •			Tr	rack
	09/04/2019		« П	#1
NO AVATAR jingo (P HDD-drive User Check In: 01.09.2019 Posts: 49 Reactions: nine	We increase the number of places in our team, only people with <b>good</b> traffic are accepted  Spammers  Dodiks and Bldg. networks  Doorwayers  You will find out the name of the locker as soon as you enter the panel located in the torus. We only need <b>25 advertisements</b> , no more, no less We do not accept for a "test", you either work or do not even write.  Our rules:  We do not work in the CIS, protection is installed. First, we work on the 70/30 tactic, down to 90/10 with huge volumes.  C ++ ransomware using AES-256 + RSA-2048 The panel has the ability to make a test decrypt of the 1st file First PM contact. We wait!  Nice job, Oleg  A complaint	+ Quote	ର Answ	ver



In January 2020, Nemty actors created a data leak website on the dark web to publish the data of the victims who refused to pay the ransom. This is their attempt to put additional pressure on hacked companies to pay the ransom demands. Other ransomware groups, such as DoppelPaymer and Sodinokibi, have adopted the same strategy in what has commonly become known as "Double Extortion Ransomware."

What's happen?	Chat
Files are encrypted. Only our service can provide full decryption! We are providing 1 test decrypt, to prove that we can recover your files. Click "Test Decrypt" at the menu on the top of this page to decrypt 1 file for free. Attention! We are decrypting only image files for free, as they don't have any significant value to you. Don't try to cheat us.	Victim monzaze reactas: wtf, man, I need decrypt!
To recover your files, you must pay the fee. Your current fee: 1000\$ (price is changing every hour) You must hurry up because your 50% discount will expire after the counter in the footer of this page will reach zero. If you fail to pay until that time, the fee will be doubled, so if it was 1000\$ it will become 2000\$.	
To pay the fee you must buy Bitcoin, and send exactly 0.12492028 BTC to this address: To see how to buy the bitcoins, click "Buy BTC" at the tab menu on top of the page. Received: 0BTC	Activate Windows Go to System in Control Ranel to activate Winke

Figure 43. The Nemty ransomware payment page

On March 30, 2020, jsworm posted that Nemty was completely rewritten and renamed as Nemty Revenue 3.1. The Nefilim ransomware was first spotted in the wild around this time. On April 14, 2020, jsworm announced that the new Nemty ransomware version was shifting to private sales only, and that Nemty

victims had one week to buy decryptors. Jsworm has been inactive on the Exploit forum since September 18, 2020, but we have seen continued activity from Jingo, who was seen looking for a Cobalt Strike expert in November 2020.

On November 16, 2020, Jingo posted an advertisement for Cobalt Strike using the Jabber contact farnetwork@jabb.im. Interestingly, a user by the name Farnetwork used the same Jabber contact on an XSS forum post published on November 9, 2020. The post indicated that the user was looking for a Cobalt Strike expert. We believe that Jingo and Farnetwork is the same actor using a new alias.

	11/16/2020
NO AVATAR	I need a competent crypt exe files for cobalt urgently for a price I will give more from the price list
<b>jingo</b> 🗊 RAID array	jabber farnetwork@jabb.im
User check in: 09/01/2019	Nice job, Oleg
Messages: 54 Reactions: eight	⇔A complaint

Figure 44. Jingo's advertisement for Cobalt Strike

Based on the code similarities between Nemty and Nefilim, as well as what appear to be similar business models, we believe that Nemty Revenue 3.1. was, in fact, the first version of Nefilim. While we cannot state with full confidence that either of these two actors are still actively involved in Nefilim's operations, we do believe that they were involved in Nefilim's early development at the very least.

### **Timeline: Nefilim Actors' Activities**

Date	Activity
May 1, 2019	jsworm posts on the Exploit forum for the first time. The JSWorm ransomware and RazvRAT go on sale
May 8, 2019	jsworm posts that the RazvRAT is no longer for sale
Aug. 20, 2019	The Nemty ransomware affiliate program starts with 25 vacancies available
Sep. 5, 2019	Jingo advertised the Nemty ransomware affiliate program on zloy[.]bz
Sep. 6, 2019	Jingo advertised the Nemty ransomware on a verified Tor website
Oct. 9, 2019	Nemty ransomware version 1.6 is released
Oct. 20, 2019	Nemty ransomware version 2.0 is released
Nov. 5, 2019	Nemty ransomware version 2.2 is released
Dec. 11, 2019	Nemty ransomware version 2.3 is released

Date	Activity
Jan. 20, 2020	Corporate links website launches the Nemty ransomware blog at http://nemty[.]top, nemty10[.]biz, and zjoxyw5mkacojk5ptn2iprkivg5clow72mjkyk5ttubzxprjjnwapkad[.]onion
Jan. 22, 2020	Nemty ransomware gets small updates
Mar. 6, 2020	Nefilim dnsskype.com is created
Mar. 10, 2020	The initial Nefilim ransomware variant is compiled
Mar. 14, 2020	jsworm mentions starting a separate project
Mar. 25, 2020	Nephilim ransomware variant is compiled
Mar. 30, 2020	Nemty Revenue 3.1 version is released on the Exploit forum
Apr. 2, 2020	Researcher tweets after learning that Nemty Revenue 3.1 is now Nefilim
Apr. 7, 2020	Nephilim variant is compiled
Apr. 14, 2020	jsworm shuts down the Nemty ransomware
Apr. 16, 2020	An XSS post links to ransomware sites Nemty listed as zjoxyw5mkacojk5ptn2iprkivg5clow72mjkyk5ttubzxprjjnwapkad[.]onion
Apr. 30, 2020	Nemty ransomware starts using Trickbot
Apr. 30, 2020	jsworm provides AV scan detected as Trickbot
Apr. 30, 2020	OFFWHITE ransomware variant is compiled
May 31, 2020	Sigareta ransomware variant is compiled
June 11, 2020	Telegram ransomware variant is compiled
July 2020	NEF1LIM ransomware variant is compiled
August 2020	Trapget ransomware variant is compiled
Oct. 4, 2020	Merin ransomware variant is compiled
December 2020	FUSION ransomware variant is compiled
December 2020	INFECTION ransomware variant is compiled
January 2021	DERZKO ransomware variant is compiled
Jan. 28, 2021	MILIHPEN ransomware variant is compiled
Feb. 27, 2021	GANGBANG ransomware variant is compiled
Mar. 16, 2021	MANSORY ransomware variant is compiled

Table 7. A timeline of Nefilim actors' activities

# Conclusion

Nefilim is one ransomware family among many, but it offers a good look into the modus operandi of modern ransomware:

- Nefilim's way into the network often involves the use of weak credentials on exposed RDP services or other externally facing HTTP services. In at least one case, Nefilim actors may have also used critical vulnerabilities on services, such as Citrix.<sup>60</sup>
- Once the attackers are inside the victim environment, they behave in a manner more commonly
  associated with manual targeted attacks as opposed to automated malware. They perform lateral
  movement to try and find important systems, which are more likely to contain sensitive data to
  steal and encrypt, in the victim network. They can also use important systems as jump-off points to
  keep finding more critical data. Moving to other servers in the network also allows them to maintain
  persistence. These lateral movement attempts often use common admin tools to avoid detection by
  automated defense tools, a technique that is called "living off the land."
- The attackers set up a call-home system using the Cobalt Strike software. This utilizes protocols that can pass through firewalls, like DNS, HTTP, or HTTPS. The C&C servers that the attackers use to receive these call-home signals are often hosted on bulletproof hosting services.
- Once the attackers have found data worth stealing, they proceed to exfiltrate it. They may use
  external hosting sites like mega.nz for uploading a large number of files. The exfiltrated data can
  be published on websites hidden behind Tor services and fast flux networks. The publication of this
  stolen information will be used at a later stage in an attempt to extort the victim.
- Once the attacker is ready, they launch the ransomware payload manually. The payload encrypts the data so that the attacker can demand a ransom. The encryption is well implemented, eliminating the possibility of creating generic decryption tools.
- Nefilim actors target high-profile, multi-billion dollar companies located worldwide.

Even though Nefilim certainly has unique aspects to it, the commonalities with other new-breed ransomware families are very pronounced. For example, even though other modern ransomware families tend to publish victim data one way or another, Nefilim has a more stable way of hosting stolen data. This could allow them to create a second way to extort money off a victim. If the first extortion attempt fails, they can threaten to publish the victim's critical data if they do not pay. This tactic, which involves exfiltrating data prior to encryption, is a common feature of modern ransomware.

Similarly, modern ransomware families behave like targeted attacks in a way that they are not usually automated. The vulnerability exploitation that provides them a way in is performed semi-automatically. This means that the attackers use automated tools to scan the company's external IP ranges. Once a possible crack is found, they try to exploit it and sneak inside. Once inside, they behave like targeted attackers by trying to move laterally looking for more targets. This contrasts with how traditional ransomware compromises a victim: the initial entry is done via phishing emails and the data encryption is done automatically just by looking for files with certain extensions.

An interesting observation that surfaced from our study is that the group of intruders who first breach the network is not always the same group who will try to move laterally and monetize the attack. Our research on criminal underground websites revealed how hackers and vulnerability operators sell access to breached networks to other criminals. This disconnect between the initial network access and the ransomware monetization that may come later is what we think we are seeing at play in these attacks.

A substantial side effect of this multiple and disparate involvement of many groups may confuse investigators who are trying to piece together the attribution part of a ransomware attack. The full kill chain becomes more complex because various groups are involved. Investigators need to be more aware of this and avoid merely relying on the perfect matching of observable events to known MITRE ATT&CK matrices.

The shift in business plans is now becoming more apparent: Ransomware affiliates are looking for bigger revenue targets. To do that, they do not launch an attack from the outside in. Instead, they just buy their way in from access brokers in a gamble to make their money back by searching for sensitive data, stealing it, unleashing the ransomware, and extorting the victim.

These newer business plans have also been enabled by modernized ransomware affiliate programs. The software that they use is highly professional and user-friendly for the affiliates. For example, they can log in and simply make some small changes in the configuration and the program will take care of generating samples, communicating via email, setting the ransom amount automatically, setting the ransom amount to increase over a specified period, and processing payments.<sup>61</sup>

Modern attackers have moved on from widespread mass-mailed indiscriminate ransomware to a new model that is much more dangerous. Today, corporations are subject to these new APT-level ransomware attacks. In fact, they can be worse than APTs because ransomware often ends up destroying data, whereas information-stealing APTs are almost never destructive. This puts network guardians in a difficult position: There is a more pressing need to defend organizations against ransomware attacks, and now, the stakes are much higher.

The current situation is as good as it gets for experts on the defensive side. This is the new benchmark — and cybersecurity and professionalism will only get better from here. Despite the apparent complexities of protecting organizations against nefarious threats, the takedown of malware giants such as Emotet proves that even the most advanced malware families can be brought down. For the good guys, winning the fight against the ever-evolving ransomware is within reach.

## Appendix

We have included a non-exhaustive reference set of the hashes for each of the major malware samples outlined in this research.

#### **JSWorm**

Detected by Trend Micro as variants of Ransom.Win32.JSWORM

- 0dfebfe5dcb8e8cfe420b1de32f49b5509c3afc46c83b13a3f0969b7ccd37868
- 0f0babba3778192eeaf9bb1e3084de192306bd5442f0caf02b705bd6736d35bf
- 182d23eeb0cc9885bdc80c6c96da99947c5eff702389ce4ecee6fe0f5b497026
- 1bf01b4fb827b2ce8fc04c952ad487d5a3606415fcf34447ed5d11207aad8a65
- 1bf5a742be1c1319ed3646793efe6b909b80e077c5960ac3b1cebc9522498b77
- 39786f7e6f59f0372c586e321f077c3c0930e0213b6223f1c9f037113e7a94d9
- 3d076d5fdee68cee80e7f457216ed4af4eaab892b55335d776b5fc6309de24d1
- 3d9cb812c0316691196aa2d6b2560a64c59a955228237f67cdb581d4bee9d396
- 40753596e42b5d9114e00d959b96f76d3575f6624a85b4d4e68a4f1d2c037389
- 46761b8b727f3002d1c73fa6c8568ebcf2ec00666666251f66dcda9d4268e03e8
- 4895da9ff897cb955c66499a0b6bc4d540ee1ed633fa28b3b62457b24cc26ddd
- 52389889be43b87d8b0aecc5fb74c84bd891eb3ce86731b081e51486378f58d2
- 5e640325c3ca93e8c860dfc85e9aca670a4568a191ea617825b6caf484201ffc
- 6e4b5f03370f782dbb46c1f4e24c4a55ef5bd57dbdadd8fb4c2d02253a038473
- 78d70856b3f33814434e2d485f7bb1e99cf70de452271bb15be644b6b90d9205
- 82bb0c287099b392e990a9f96b47e5d47373ef5e00255f4152d9d40fd309be78
- a0a1fa5d66c4e3de1d7be24ca02cb0ca65721735d42a5b45572a0f40961251c5
- c2febc4e0fd673a4e83bfa5f56382a6abb568a58c1f1d35678b1c9e4cf88da75
- c8d9642156e7f0144e009013792f16a9a7258393c1d1798e8813f60fd3dcf8bf
- d30f198cee2d81f876a756c85fbcac71389131b3c48ac639a48d2c1ac92ecac5
- Db78787540d1352b498c7838d14aa9ef0abe52949f5713559e558712f6dc5706
- db94b1740ead9c9b7e0e1362b16d42037ebd4bc53954b0cd3a30fb8d47275359
- fee98e2efdfa296666859e6fb652fe753b994cc62cdfa67c7c650ca194169725
- ff1e6435313860439c043cdb72084ca75b52e20d73faeef000b50b3dd57adf55

### Nemty

Detected by Trend Micro as variants of Ransom.Win32.NEMTY

- 1ac0c87c3ff27dc6d630cb3f543311fb48edfc88d33470836438b1d388ae9687
- 3207b5da6ecf0d6ea787c5047c1e886c0ee6342a5d79e4bcb757e7e817caa889
- 42e9356feb10e5814fb73c6c8d702f010d4bd742e25550ae91413fa2a7e7c888
- 664b45ba61cf7e17012b22374c0c2a52a2e661e9c8c1c40982137c910095179a
- 6e18acc14f36010c4c07f022e853d25692687186169e50929e402c2adf2cb897
- 7fab9295f28e9a6e746420cdf39a37fe2ae3a1c668e2b3ae08c9de2de4c10024
- 8e056ccffad1f5315a38abf14bcd3a7b662b440bda6a0291a648edcc1819eca6
- 8e6f56fef6ef12a9a201cad3be2d0bca4962b2745f087da34eaa4af0bd09b75f
- bf3368254c8e62f17e610273e53df6f29cccc9c679245f55f9ee7dc41343c384
- c2a32b7094f4c171a56ca9da3005e7cc30489ae9d2020a6ccb53ff02b32e0be3

#### Nefilim

Detected by Trend Micro as variants of Ransom.Win32.NEFILIM, Trojan.Win64.NEFILIM, and Trojan.BAT. NEFILIM.

		SHA-256			
	08c7	7dfde13ade4b13350ae290616d7c2f4a87cbeac9a3	886e90a175ee40fb6	41	
First Seen	Compiled	Certificate Thumbprint	Certificate For	Extension	Mutex
3-13-20 1:40 AM	3-10-20 11:06 PM	29239659231a88ca518839bf57048ff79a272554	Sectigo	.NEFILIM	Den'gi plyvut v karmany rekoy. My khodim po krayu nozha
PDB-like	RS	A Key Email 1	Em	nail 2	Email 3

String	RSA Key	Email 1	Email 2	Email 3
C:\Users\ Administrator\ Desktop\New folder\Release\ NEFILIM.pdb	BgIAAACkAABSU0ExAAgAAAEAAQCXkut23nN CCp9k856QuIO8Yy8x65qG+Bs8OgG4OF444bg iCofJzu1h7qo1Mn9ZdgQdW6uyC6NNcOjZz8C MBdT4LqJ09mhz4NsB56Py8dGNFpk6Ktr4IRfl VpWvYHzsqJA51DfOFgvSzYTYpeXhDD0kC84F CIAivnOdciPWse7qpWoOigOizEOF3S0MiiCMA sgWrUcLo8ZT4trJv/4Drd2XBFz2dFCXk7NfiNuR iOFXS8aZ8bkyirq3yAQee5gfjPFfkbynZWjuh6Um IA/jS5vDI8WLJwTQWVr/vAuV7ziDrUQFc56tvsrV 3YYIw492bQCgk62Rx4YCSfFy3jGsRsnc	jamesgonzaleswork1972@ protonmail.com	pretty_hardjob2881@ mail.com	dprworkjessiaeye195@ tutanota.com

			SHA-256					
	d449	2a9eb36f87a9b3156b59052	ebaf10e264d5d1ce4c01	5a6b0d2056	14e58e	3		
First Seen	Compiled	Certificate T	humbprint	Certific For		Extensio	n	Mutex
3-13-20 9:03 AM	3-10-20 11:06 PM	29239659231a88ca51883	39bf57048ff79a272554	Sectig	lo	.NEFILIM		Den'gi plyvut v karmany rekoy. My khodim po krayu nozha
PDB-like String	R	SA Key	Email 1		Ema	ail 2		Email 3
C:\Users\ Administrator\ Desktop\New folder\Release\ NEFILIM.pdb	CCp9k856QuIO8Yy8x CofJzu1h7qo1Mn9Zd BdT4LqJ09mhz4NsB WvYHzsqJA51DfOFg AivnOdciPWse7qpWo WrUcLo8ZT4trJv/4Dro FXS8aZ8bkyirq3yAQe	AAgAAAEAAQCXkut23nN 65qG+Bs80gG40F444bgi gQdW6uyC6NNc0jZz8CM 56Py8dGNFpk6Ktr4IRfIVp vSzYTYpeXhDD0kC84FCI OigOizE0F3S0MiiCMAsg d2XBFz2dFCXk7NfiNuRiO ee5gfjPFfkbynZWjuh6UmIA /vAuV7ziDrUQFc56tvsrV3Y /CSfFy3jGsRsnc	jamesgonzaleswork19 protonmail.com		pretty_hardjob2881@ mail.com		dprworkjessiaeye195@ tutanota.com	
			SHA-256					
First Seen	5ab Compiled	834f599c6ad35fcd0a168d93 Certificate Ti		e25cb1fdb2 Certifica For		Extension	1	Mutex
3-13-20 12:17 PM	3-10-20 11:06 PM					.NEFILIM	ka ki	en'gi plyvut v armany rekoy. My hodim po krayu ozha
PDB-like String	R	SA Key	Email 1		Ema	ail 2		Email 3
		AAgAAAEAAQCXkut23nN	jamesgonzaleswork19	72@ pret	ty_hard	job2881@		orkjessiaeye195@ ota.com

	YYIw492bQCgk62Rx4	YCSfFy3jGsRsnc					
	SHA-256						
	7a73	032ece59af3316c4a644903	44ee111e4cb06aaf00b4	1a96c10adfdd65559	9		
First Seen	Compiled	Certificate TI	numbprint	Certificate For	Extension	Mutex	
3-18-20 4:41 PM	3-10-20 11:06 PM				.NEFILIM		

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PDB-like String	RS/	АКеу	Email 1	Em	ail 2	Email 3
C:\Users\ Administrator\ Desktop\New folder\Release\ NEFILIM.pdb	CCp9k856QuIO8Yy8x6 CofJzu1h7qo1Mn9Zdg BdT4LqJ09mhz4NsB56 WvYHzsqJA51Df0Fgv5 AivnOdciPWse7qpWoC WrUcLo8ZT4trJv/4Drd2 FXS8aZ8bkyirq3yAQee	AgAAAEAAQCXkut23nN 5qG+Bs8OgG4OF444bgi QdW6uyC6NNcOjZz8CM SPy8dGNFpk6Ktr4IRflVp SzYTYpeXhDD0kC84FCI igOizEOF3S0MiiCMAsg 2XBFz2dFCXk7NfiNuRiO 5gfjPFfkbynZWjuh6UmIA AuV7ziDrUQFc56tvsrV3 'CSfFy3jGsRsnc	jamesgonzaleswork1972 protonmail.com	<pre>@ pretty_hard mail.com</pre>	-	lprworkjessiaeye195@ utanota.com
			SHA-256			
	5da7	1f76b9caea411658b43370	af339ca20d419670c755b9	c1bfc263b78f07f	1	
First Seen	Compiled	Certificate TI	humbprint	Certificate For	Extension	Mutex
3-19-20 7:11 AM	3-10-20 11:06 PM				.NEFILIM	Den'gi plyvut v karmany rekoy. My khodim po krayu nozha
PDB-like String	RS/	АКеу	Email 1	Em	ail 2	Email 3
C:\Users\ Administrator\ Desktop\New folder\Release\ NEFILIM.pdb	CCp9k856QuIO8Yy8x6 CofJzu1h7qo1Mn9Zdg Py8dGNFpk6Ktr4IRflVp YTYpeXhDD0kC84FCIA OizEOF3S0MiiCMAsgV BFz2dFCXk7NfiNuRiOF fjPFfkbynZWjuh6UmIA/	AgAAAEAAQCXkut23nN 5qG+Bs8OgG4OF444bgi QdW6uyC6NNcOjZz8CM WvYHzsqJA51DfOFgvSz ivnOdciPWse7qpWoOig /rUcLo8ZT4trJv/4Drd2X XS8aZ8bkyirq3yAQee5g jS5vDl8WLJwTQWVr/vA YIw492bQCgk62Rx4YC	jamesgonzaleswork1972 protonmail.com	<pre>@ pretty_harc mail.com</pre>	-	lprworkjessiaeye195@ utanota.com
			SHA-256			
	f51f12	28bca4dc6b0aa235590799	8758a2e3ac808f14c30eb0	b0902f71b04e3d	5	
First Seen	Compiled	Certificate TI	humbprint	Certificate For	Extension	Mutex
3-19-20 7:11 AM	3-10-20 11:06 PM					
			SHA-256			
	205dd	cd3469193139e4b93c8f76	ed6bdbbf5108e7bcd51b4	3753c22ee62027	65	
First Seen	Compiled	Certificate TI	humbprint	Certificate	Extension	Mutex
				For		

			SHA-256			
	fdae	efa45c8679a161c6590b8f5b	b735c12c9768172f81c93	30bb68c93a53002	2f7	
First Seen	Compiled	Certificate TI	humbprint	Certificate For	Extensior	n Mutex
3-20-20 4:51 PM	3-10-20 11:06 PM				.NEFILIM	Den'gi plyvut v karmany rekoy. My khodim po krayu nozha
PDB-like String	RS	БА Кеу	Email 1	Er	nail 2	Email 3
C:\Users\ Administrator\ Desktop\New folder\Release\ NEFILIM.pdb	NCCp9k856QuIO8Yy8 bgiCofJzu1h7qo1Mn9 CMBdT4LqJ09mhz4N VpWvYHzsqJA51Df0I CIAivnOdciPWse7qpV gWrUcLo8ZT4trJv/4D OFXS8aZ8bkyirq3yAC	AAgAAAEAAQCXkut23n 3x65qG+Bs8OgG4OF444 IZdgQdW6uyC6NNcOjZz8 IsB56Py8dGNFpk6Ktr4IRfl FgvSzYTYpeXhDD0kC84F VoOigOizEOF3S0MiiCMAs rd2XBFz2dFCXk7NfiNuRi Qee5gfjPFfkbynZWjuh6Uml /r/vAuV7ziDrUQFc56tvsrV x4YCSfFy3jGsRsnc	jamesgonzaleswork19	72@ pretty_ha mail.com	rdjob2881@	dprworkjessiaeye195@ tutanota.com
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PDB-like String	RSA Key	Email 1	Email 2	Email 3
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PDB-like String	RSA Key	Email 1	Email 2	Email 3
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			SHA-256			
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PDB-like String	RSA Key	Email 1	Email 2	Email 3
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		SHA-256		

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PDB-like String	RSA Key	Email 1	Email 2	Email 3
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81 | Modern Ransomware's Double Extortion Tactics and How to Protect Enterprises Against Them

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5/18/21 9:38 AM		ef24ae3635929c371d1427901082b	pe9f76e58d9a	Sect	igo	.NEFILIM	
PDB-like String		RSA Key	Email <sup>-</sup>	I	E	Email 2	Email 3
C:/Users/eugene/ Desktop/web/src/ aes_9TIFYum0uYMqSyNP. go	gKCAQEA0/ alpFPnzeBtx Q23SENVms BxHfilgjEsgl OeR4fIR\nId bN96HxMm 4\nODI4btLY WHzLi+kMK VqgDAXxP7	kqhkiG9w0BAQEFAAOCAQ8AMIIBC XaapaNtmXm2Lf73DPI\ nuyilta+jgM kleJODd33DT8ZU+GFabTs49EZ8hS sSxC/Owh\nIRraDsU74I9vWcMcq/a JGRIi+ODv6bOQMwKWijhYNJxdLu +R80hcR7n9uyl1nm/CSmZf+MTktD qVNGc7D9dIGmXw+SaNJnWMVuS fdReMXWeU4fGgmqgpLMjzjPxxeV ien1VXS3z7EZLRKsZt2ds\n6I+E2+ I dHb+3vWZF0trlKD2JjBS5jIDXWA56 YzbN9gPkJW\nKwIDAQAB	ThomasBrennar tutanota.com	n1993@	Brentd tutanoi	odson1990@ a.com	AshkeyPrice1990@ protonmail.com

## Nefilim Cobalt Strike Domains and IP Addresses

C&C	Date Created	IP Address	Country	Protocol	Confidence Level
89.105.195.203	~2020-01-13	89.105.195.203	Netherlands	HTTPS	High
179.60.146.11	~ 2020-02-02	179.60.146.11	Sweden	HTTPS	High
185.147.15.14	~ 2020-02-02	185.147.15.14	Netherlands	HTTPS	High
localskype.com	2020-03-06T20:27:25.00Z	88.214.26.57	Bulgaria	DNS	High
nsskype.com	2020-03-06T20:27:25.00Z	88.214.26.57	Bulgaria	DNS	High
ns1.dnsskype.com	2020-03-06T20:27:25.00Z	88.214.26.57	Bulgaria	DNS	High
ns1.dnsskype.com	2020-03-06T20:27:25.00Z	5.188.206.219	Bulgaria	DNS	High
ns1.safeinet.dev	2020-06-01T12:40:16Z	109.234.36.148	Netherlands	DNS	High
securityupdatewin32. org	2020-07-01T11:52:53Z	209.250.247.32	Netherlands	HTTPS	Low
ns1.fairyschool.art	2020-07-01T19:55:54.0Z	88.214.26.29	Bulgaria	DNS	Low
win7securityupdate.net	2020-07-16T14:46:59Z	209.250.243.71	Netherlands	HTTP	Low
adobeupdate7x32.org	2020-08-26T11:51:19Z	78.141.211.59	Netherlands	HTTPS	Low
ns1.msdn7x32.net	2020-08-28T13:07:24Z	89.44.9.221	France	DNS	High
msdn64x7.net	2020-08-31T11:08:41Z	95.179.155.43	Netherlands	HTTPS	High

C&C	Date Created	IP Address	Country	Protocol	Confidence Level
193.239.84.186	~ 2020-08-31	193.239.84.186	United Kingdom	HTTPS	High
ns1.vaultsecure.net	2020-09-02T10:13:36.00Z	5.188.206.221	Bulgaria	DNS	High
iqio.net	2020-09-17T12:07:02.00Z	185.153.198.134	Romania	HTTP	High
ns1.iioq.me	2020-09-17T12:07:05Z	185.153.198.7	Romania	DNS	High
ns1.iioq.io	2020-09-17T12:07:11Z	185.153.198.33	Romania	DNS	High
ns1.emailsafety.net	2020-09-29T21:07:29.00Z	88.214.26.33	Bulgaria	DNS	High
winupdate10pack2048. net	2020-10-15T09:36:01Z	95.179.138.46	Netherlands	HTTP	High
ns1.owadns.com	2020-10-19T11:37:10.00Z	45.227.252.161	Netherlands	DNS	Low
ns1.owadns.net	2020-10-19T11:37:20.00Z	45.227.252.59	Netherlands	DNS	Low
webintercom76delivery. net	2020-11-02T09:38:06Z	185.141.24.71	Netherlands	HTTP	Low
ns1.cafesunshine.me	2020-11-09T12:25:23Z	46.161.27.212	Netherlands	DNS	High
ns1.siteswhoisit.com	2020-12-30T12:06:12.00Z	41.216.186.237	Netherlands	DNS	Low
dns12.org	2021-01-11T15:02:48Z	144.202.108.45	United States	HTTP	Medium
dns20.net	2021-01-11T15:56:57.00Z	95.179.152.5	Netherlands	HTTP	Medium
dns25.net	2021-01-11T16:41:25.00Z	185.244.150.147	Netherlands	HTTP	Medium
ns1.dns30.net	2021-01-11T17:23:20.00Z	194.36.191.31	Netherlands	DNS	Medium
dns35.net	2021-01-11T18:08:12.00Z	194.36.191.25	Netherlands	HTTPS	Medium

# Comprehensive List of Hacking Tools Used in Ransomware Intrusions

Tool Name	Trend Micro Detection	Category	Notes
ADFind	Coverage by Vision One detection models	Lateral movement	Command line tool that queries Active Directory
PsExec	Coverage by Vision One detection models	Lateral movement	Executes processes on other systems
Mimikatz	Trojan.Win32.MIMIKATZ HackTool.Win64.MIMIKATZ	Lateral movement	Retrieves stored passwords in memory to move to other machines
	Trojan.Win32.MIMIKATZ.ADT Trojan.VBS.MIMIKATZ		
	HackTool.BAT.MIMIKATZ		

Tool Name	Trend Micro Detection	Category	Notes
BloodHoundAD	HackTool.PS1.BloodHound.SM	Lateral movement	Reveals hidden relationships within Active Directory enviroments
	HackTool.PS1.BloodHound.SM		
Process Hacker	PUA.Win32.ProcHack	Lateral movement	Allows the monitoring and debugging of processes running in a system
	PUA.Win64.ProcHack		
NetPass	HackTool.Win32.NetPass	Lateral movement	Password recovery tool
	HackTool.Win64.NetPass		
PC Hunter	HackTool.Win32.PCHunter	Lateral movement	Process manager, kernel module viewer, and other functions
	HackTool.Win64.PCHunter		
GMER	PUA.Win32.GMER	Lateral movement	Detects rootkits and stops other hidden processes
	PUA.Win64.GMER		
Revo Password Uninstaller	Coverage by Vision One detection models	Lateral movement	Removes desktop applications and Windows apps
LaZagne	HackTool.BAT.LaZagne	Lateral movement	Credential recovery tool for browsers, messaging platforms, databases, and many other software and system passwords.
	HackTool.Win32.LAZANGE		
	HackTool.Win64.LAZAGNE		
	PUA.Win32.LaZagnePUA.Win64.		
	LaZagne		

### Yara Rules

Yara rules are provided as a separate document in the References section.62

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