

Security Brief: TA544 Targets Italian Organizations with Ursnif Malware | Proofpoint US

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Proofpoint threat researchers identified an increase in targeted threats impacting Italian organizations in 2021. This spike in observed threats is largely driven by a group called TA544 leveraging the Ursnif banking trojan. Proofpoint has observed nearly 20 notable campaigns distributing hundreds of thousands of messages targeting organizations in Italy so far this year, which equals 80% of the total number of similar campaigns in the entirety of 2020. As many as 2,000 organizations were targeted in each of the Italian-language campaigns.

[TA544](#) is a cybercriminal threat actor that distributes banking malware and other payloads in various geographic regions including Italy and Japan. Proofpoint has tracked this actor since 2017. Typically, this group varies its payloads which appear to be targeted by region – for example, in 2021, all TA544 Ursnif campaigns have specifically targeted Italian organizations while Dridex payloads associated with this threat actor do not have specific geographic targeting.

Ursnif is a trojan that can be used to steal data from websites, with the help of web injections, proxies and VNC connections; steal data such as stored passwords; and download updates, modules, or other [malware](#). Although this malware is used by multiple cybercriminal threat actors, TA544's activity targeting Italy differentiates it from other actors. Between January and August 2021, the number of observed Ursnif campaigns impacting Italian organizations surpassed the total number of observed Ursnif campaigns targeting this region in all of 2020.

Campaign Details

In recently observed campaigns, TA544 purports to be Italian courier or energy organizations soliciting payments from the targeted individual.

- Ebay
- Amazon
- Paypal
- Banca Sella
- CheBanca!
- IBK

The identified web injects are designed to steal credentials from a wide variety of sites and services likely to be used by Italian users. Although Ursnif has previously leveraged web inject capability to infect targeted users. This indicates TA544 is not interested exclusively in obtaining banking credentials, but also usernames and passwords affiliated with websites associated with major retailers.

Conclusion

Today's threats – like TA544's campaigns targeting Italian organizations – target people, not infrastructure. That's why you must take a people-centric approach to cybersecurity. That includes user-level visibility into vulnerability, attacks and privilege and tailored controls that account for individual user risk.

Here's what we recommend as a starting point.

- Train users to spot and report malicious email. Regular training and simulated attacks can stop many attacks and help identify people who are especially vulnerable. The best simulations mimic real-world attack techniques. Look for solutions that tie into real-world attack trends and the latest threat intelligence.
- Threat actors frequently distribute documents that require macros to be enabled to deploy the malicious payload. Ensure macros are disabled for all employees and include macro-laden attack simulations in security training demonstrations.
- At the same time, assume that users will eventually click some threats. Attackers will always find new ways to exploit human nature. Find a solution that spots and blocks inbound email threats targeting employees before they reach the inbox. Invest in a solution can manage the entire spectrum of email threats, not just malware-based threats. Some threats—including business email compromise (BEC) and other forms of email fraud—can be hard to detect with conventional security tools. Your solution should analyze both external and internal email—attackers may use compromised accounts to trick users within the same organization. Web isolation can be a critical safeguard for unknowns and risky URLs.

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