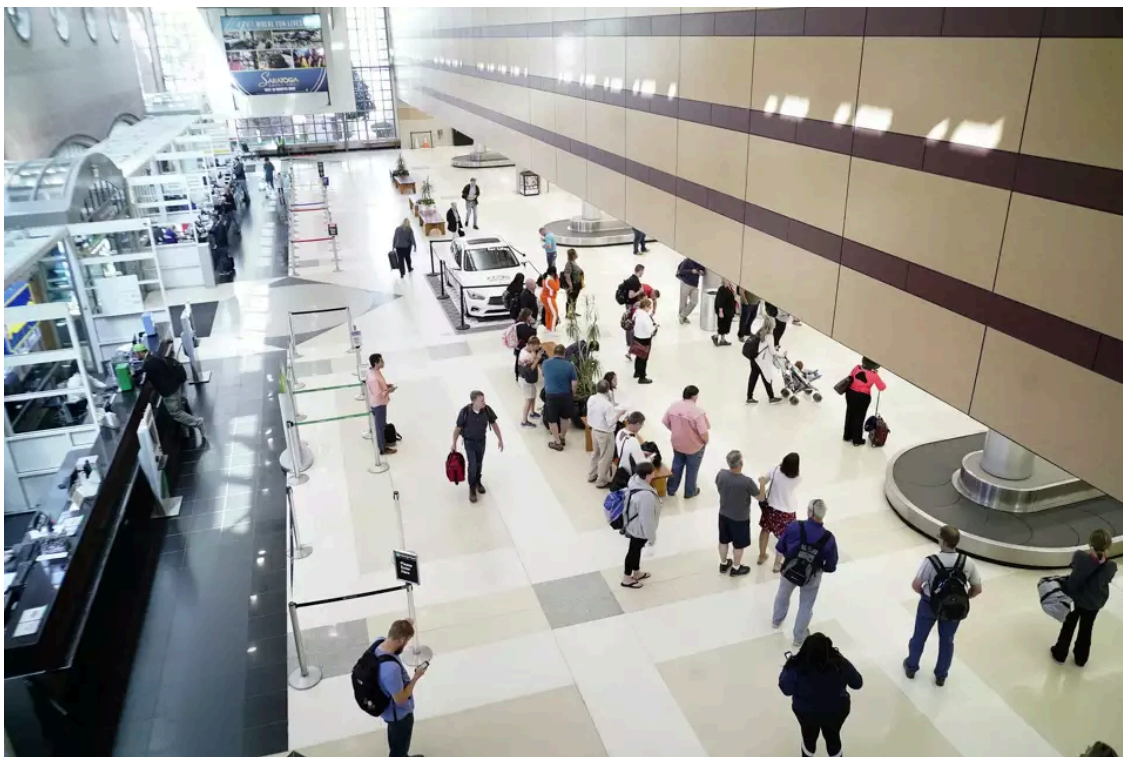


Ransomware attacks airport authority's servers

By Eric Anderson

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A crypto virus that attacked the Albany County Airport Authority's computer management provider during the Christmas holiday period ended up infecting the authority's servers as well, encrypting files and demanding a ransom payment.

Paul Buckowski/Times Union

COLONIE — A crypto virus that attacked the Albany County Airport Authority's computer management provider during the Christmas holiday period ended up infecting the authority's servers as well, encrypting files and demanding a ransom payment.

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The authority's insurance carrier authorized payment of the ransom, which airport CEO Philip Calderone only said was "under six figures."

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The attack came to light after Schenectady-based LogicalNet reported its own management services network had been breached. From there, the virus spread to the authority's servers, including its backup servers. The LogicalNet contract included providing security for the airport's system, Calderone said Thursday.

"We have severed our relationship with LogicalNet," he added. LogicalNet did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The ransom was paid in Bitcoin. The airport authority will seek to recover the \$25,000 deductible it paid on its insurance policy from LogicalNet. The airport's insurer reimbursed the authority for the rest of the ransom payment.



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Airport officials said no personal or travelers' information, including credit card numbers and other data, had been accessed. The attack also didn't affect airport operations and no TSA or airline computers had been breached.

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The safety and security of the traveling public, airport officials said, was never in jeopardy. Rather, the encrypted files included such items as Excel spreadsheets of budgets and other administrative items, including archived files.

The authority said it immediately notified the New York State Cyber Command, the FBI, and enlisted assistance from computer systems contractor ABS Solutions. ABS is redesigning the authority's computer system to prevent future attacks.

The Sodinokibi ransomware implicated in the LogicalNet attack is familiar to investigators. It was used in an attack discovered on New Year's Eve on London-based Travelex, a worldwide foreign exchange services provider.

In that ongoing case, the hackers are demanding \$6 million in ransom to return five gigabytes of sensitive customer information, which they had been downloading in the past six months, or the information would be sold online, the BBC reported.

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"To date, the company can confirm that whilst there has been some data encryption, there is no evidence that structured personal customer data has been encrypted," Travelex said in a statement on its website Thursday evening.

The airport authority's attack, which came to light Christmas Day, wound down by Monday. The Bitcoin ransom was paid on Dec. 30, and an encryption key was received two hours later, allowing the airport authority to begin restoring its data.

"Thanks to the fast action by our IT department, airport operations during one of the busiest travel periods of the year were not impacted and no passenger or airline data was acquired or accessed," Calderone said. "Within hours the authority was able to resume all administrative functions with systems functioning as normal. We are grateful for the assistance provided by the New York State Cyber Command, the FBI and our consultant ABS."

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Former Business Editor

Eric Anderson is the former editor of the Times Union's business section. Eric also writes the Traveling Man column for the Times Union's Upstate magazine.

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