



Ransomware

# DarkSide on Linux: Virtual Machines Targeted

We focus on the behavior of the DarkSide variant that targets Linux. We discuss how it targets virtual machine-related files on VMware ESXI servers, parses its embedded configuration, kills virtual machines (VMs), encrypts files on the infected machine, collects system information, and sends it to the remote server.

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*Updated June 1, 2021, 12:02 am ET: This article has been updated to remove the Command-and-Control (C&C) URI String field in Table 1. Further study showed that it does not apply consistently to a number of samples.*

As we discussed in our [previous blog](#), the DarkSide ransomware is targeting organizations in manufacturing, finance, and critical infrastructures in regions such as the United States, France, Belgium, and Canada. The DarkSide ransomware targets both Windows and Linux platforms. We also noticed that the Linux variant, in particular, targets ESXI servers.

In this blog, we focus on the behavior of the variant that targets Linux. This entry also discusses how this variant targets virtual machine-related files on VMware ESXI servers, parses its embedded configuration, kills virtual machines (VMs), encrypts files on the infected machine, collects system information, and sends it to the remote server.

This table summarizes some of the differences between the behavior of the DarkSide ransomware on Windows and on Linux:

Table 1. Comparison of DarkSide variants on Windows and Linux		
	Windows Variant	Linux Variant
Encryption Mechanism	Salsa20 with RSA-1024	ChaCha20 with RSA-4096
Cipher Blocks	Salsa20 matrix is custom and randomly generated using “RtlRandomExW”	ChaCha20 initial block is standard, built using “expand 32-byte k” as a constant string
Configuration	Encrypted	Not encrypted
Terminates VMs?	No	Yes
Files	All files on the system except the files, folders, and file extensions mentioned in the configuration	VM-related files on VMware ESXI servers, with specific file extensions mentioned in the

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Ransom Note File Name	Consists of hard-coded part in the configuration as “README.” and the generated ID mentioned previously: for example, “README. 4731c768.TXT”	Hard-coded in the embedded configuration as “darkside_readme.txt” or passed by execution parameters
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## Analysis of the Linux Variant

### Targets

As we noted earlier, DarkSide also has a Linux variant to infect more machines and cause more damage in the victim network. However, this variant is quite specific, as its main configuration targets VM-related files on VMware ESXI servers as seen in the following figure:

```
00000000004231F1 mov     esi, offset aVmdkVmemVswpLo ; "vmdk,vmem,vswp,log,vmsn"
00000000004231F6 mov     rbx, rdi
00000000004231F9 sub     rsp, 10h
00000000004231FD lea     rdx, [rsp+18h+var_9]
0000000000423202 call    __ZN5Sc1EPKcRKSaIcE ; std::string::string(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&)
0000000000423207 add     rsp, 10h
000000000042320B mov     rax, rbx
```

Figure 1. Target file extensions

### Configuration

Unlike the Windows variant, the Linux variant’s strings and configuration are not obfuscated. The configuration of the Linux variant specifies features of the sample, such as the extension for encrypted files, C&C URL, number of threads, and a constraint on a minimum size of the target files to be encrypted.

Note that the root path — the starting point for encryption — in the following figure is “/vmfs/volumes/”, which is the default location for the VM files on ESXI hosts.

```
[CFG] Root Path...../vmfs/volumes/
[CFG] Key Size.....548 Bytes
[CFG] Public Key.....VALID
[CFG] Part Size.....500mb
[CFG] Space Size.....0mb
[CFG] Min Size.....1mb
[CFG] Search Extension.....vmdk,vmem,vswp,log
[CFG] New Extension.....darkside
[CFG] Thread Count.....1
[CFG] ReadMe File.....darkside_readme.txt
[CFG] ReadMe Size.....1969 Bytes
[CFG] Landing URL#[01].....http://securebestapp20.com/daecdcbecac
[CFG] User ID.....75fb1970b674cc4
[CFG] RC2 Key.....OK
```

Figure 2. Configuration of the Linux variant

In addition to the hard-coded configuration, the ransomware executable can accept parameters to infect more files and change its default settings. Figure 3 shows where the malware parses execution parameters.

```
v31 = sub_4571D0(v30, "space,S", v26, &unk_5BC761);
v32 = sub_4571D0(v31, "dir,d", v24, "Root Directory Path to Process");
v33 = sub_4571D0(v32, "ext,x", v22, "Extension To Apply For Renaming");
v34 = sub_4571D0(v33, "new,n", v20, "Extension To Apply For Encrypted Files");
v35 = sub_4571D0(v34, "log,l", v18, "Log File Path");
v36 = sub_4571D0(v35, "thread,t", v16, "Worker Threads Count, 0 - dynamic");
v37 = sub_4571D0(v36, "key,k", v14, "RSA Public Key File Paths");
v38 = sub_4571D0(v37, "rc2,e", v12, "RC2 Key as HEX string");
v39 = sub_4571D0(v38, "content,c", v10, "ReadMe File Path");
sub_4571D0(v39, "readme,r", v8, "ReadMe File name");
```

Figure 3. Linux variant parameter parsing

ESXCLI Commands

DarkSide runs several ESXCLI commands (such as the command- line interface framework in vSphere) in order to collect information about the infected ESXI host, such as the running virtual machinesVMs, storage- related information, and vSAN- related information.

Table 2 shows a list of ESXCLI commands run by DarkSide on the victim machine.

Table 2. ESXCLI Commands	
Commands	Desription
esxcli --formatter=csv --format-param=fields=="Device,DevfsPath" storage core device list	List the Devfs Path of the devices currently registered with the storage
esxcli --formatter=csv storage filesystem list	List the logical sections of storage currently connected to the ESXI host
esxcli --format-param=fields=="WorldID,DisplayName" vm process list	List the running VMs on the ESXI host
esxcli vsan debug vmdk list	List the status of VMDKs in vSAN
esxcli --format-param=fields=="Type,ObjectUUID,Configuration" vsan debug object list	List the UUID of the vSAN objects

Figure 4 shows how the DarkSide ransomware lists the running virtual machines on the ESXI.

```
0000000000427D84      call    __ZNStC1EPKcRKSAIcE ; std::string::string(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&)
0000000000427D89      lea     rdi, [rbx+8]
0000000000427D8D      lea     rdx, [rsp+98h+var_7E]
0000000000427D92      mov     esi, offset aFormatParamFie ; "--format-param=fields=="WorldID,Displa"...
0000000000427D97      call    __ZNStC1EPKcRKSAIcE ; std::string::string(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&)
0000000000427D9C      lea     rdi, [rbx+10h]
0000000000427DA0      lea     rdx, [rsp+98h+var_7D]
0000000000427DA5      mov     esi, offset aUm ; "vm"
0000000000427DAA      call    __ZNStC1EPKcRKSAIcE ; std::string::string(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&)
0000000000427DAF      lea     rdi, [rbx+18h]
0000000000427DB3      lea     rdx, [rsp+98h+var_7C]
0000000000427DB8      mov     esi, offset aProcess ; "process"
0000000000427DBD      call    __ZNStC1EPKcRKSAIcE ; std::string::string(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&)
0000000000427DC2      lea     rdi, [rbx+20h]
0000000000427DC6      lea     rdx, [rsp+98h+var_7B]
0000000000427DCB      mov     esi, offset aList ; "list"
0000000000427DD0      call    __ZNStC1EPKcRKSAIcE ; std::string::string(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&)
0000000000427DD5      lea     rcx, [rsp+98h+var_7A]
```

Figure 4. Listing running VMs

“esxcli vm process kill --type= force --world-id= <WorldNumber>”

```
0000000000426FA9      mov     esi, offset aWorldId ; "--world-id="
0000000000426FAE      push    r12
0000000000426FAB      push    rbp
0000000000426FB1      mov     rbp, rdi
0000000000426FB4      push    rbx
0000000000426FB5      sub     rsp, 0F8h
0000000000426FBC      lea     r15, [rsp+128h+var_58]
0000000000426FC4      lea     rdi, [rsp+128h+var_108]
0000000000426FC9      mov     rdx, r15
0000000000426FCC      call    __ZNSt6CStringBase1EString(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&);
0000000000426FD1      lea     rax, [rsp+128h+var_E8]
0000000000426FD6      lea     rdi, [rsp+128h+var_108] ; this
0000000000426FDB      mov     rsi, r13 ; std::string *
0000000000426FDE      mov     [rsp+128h+var_120], rax
0000000000426FE3      call    __ZNSt6CStringBase1EAppend(char const&);
0000000000426FE8      lea     rax, [rsp+128h+var_E8]
0000000000426FED      lea     rdx, [rsp+128h+var_109]
0000000000426FF2      mov     esi, offset aVm ; "vm"
0000000000426FF7      mov     rdi, r15
0000000000426FFA      mov     [rsp+128h+var_120], rax
0000000000426FFF      call    __ZNSt6CStringBase1EString(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&);
0000000000427004      lea     rax, [rsp+128h+var_E8]
0000000000427009      lea     rdi, [r15+8]
000000000042700D      lea     rdx, [rsp+128h+var_F8]
0000000000427012      mov     esi, offset aProcess ; "process"
0000000000427017      mov     [rsp+128h+var_120], rax
000000000042701C      call    __ZNSt6CStringBase1EString(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&);
0000000000427021      lea     rax, [rsp+128h+var_E8]
0000000000427026      lea     rdi, [r15+10h]
000000000042702A      mov     esi, offset aKill ; "kill"
000000000042702F      mov     rdx, rax
0000000000427032      mov     [rsp+128h+var_120], rax
0000000000427037      call    __ZNSt6CStringBase1EString(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&);
000000000042703C      lea     rdi, [r15+18h]
-----
```

Figure 5. Terminating running VMs

```
00000000004378B5      mov     rdi, r12
00000000004378B8      mov     [rsp+0A8h+var_68], rax
00000000004378BD      call    sub_498940
00000000004378C2      mov     rbx, rax
00000000004378C5      mov     [rsp+0A8h+var_60], rax
00000000004378CA      call    __cxa_get_globals
00000000004378CF      mov     eax, [rax+8]
00000000004378D2      lea     rdi, [rbx+8]
00000000004378D6      mov     esi, offset aEsxiKillVms___ ; "[ESXi] Kill VMs....."
00000000004378DB      mov     [rsp+0A8h+var_58], eax
00000000004378DF      call    sub_418930
00000000004378E4      lea     rdi, [rbx+70h]
00000000004378E8      mov     esi, r13d
00000000004378EB      call    __ZNSt6CStringBase1EString(char const*,std::allocator<char> const&);
00000000004378F0      mov     rdi, rbp
```

Figure 6. Reporting on VM killing status

Encryption

The Linux variant of the DarkSide ransomware uses a ChaCha20 stream cipher with RSA-4096 to encrypt targeted files on the victim machine.

It loops across the files on the root path mentioned in the embedded configuration or in the given parameter, as shown in Figure 7.

```
20 while ( 1 )
21 {
22     v6 = readdir(v5);
23     if ( !v6 )
24         break;
25     while ( 1 )
26     {
27         v7 = v6->d_name;
28         if ( !memcmp(v6->d_name, ".", 2uLL) || !memcmp(v6->d_name, "..", 3uLL) )
29             break;
30         v8 = v6->d_type;
31         if ( v8 == 4 )
32         {
33             v11 = byte_8A2478;
34             std::string::assign((std::string *)&v11, (const std::string *)v3);
35             std::string::append((std::string *)&v11, "/");
36             std::string::append((std::string *)&v11, v7);
37             sub_435B80(v2, (const char **)&v11);
38             std::string::_Rep::_M_dispose(v11 - 24, &v10);
39             goto LABEL_2;
40         }
41         if ( v8 != 8 )
```

Figure 7. Linux variant looping across files/directories

Before encryption, the ransomware performs a file size check to make sure that this is more than the minimum file size given in the embedded configuration or in the parameters.

```
125 v33 = std::operator<<<std::char_traits<char>>(v2 + 296, "[INFO] ");
126 v34 = (std::ostream *)std::operator<<<std::char_traits<char>>(v33, "File Size.....");
127 v35 = sub_5B0CB0(v34);
128 v36 = (std::ostream *)std::operator<<<std::char_traits<char>>(v35, "mb (");
129 v37 = sub_5B0CB0(v36);
130 v38 = std::operator<<<std::char_traits<char>>(v37, " Bytes");
131 std::endl<char,std::char_traits<char>>(v38, " Bytes", v39);
132 v40 = *(_QWORD *)(v2 + 120);
133 v41 = *(_QWORD *)(v2 + 128);
134 *(_QWORD *)(v2 + 152) = 0x100000LL;
135 v42 = v40 >> 20;
136 if ( v42 < v41 >> 20 )
137 {
138     if ( v42 < *(_QWORD *)(v2 + 160) )
139     {
140         LODWORD(v52) = 2;
141         v57 = &v52;
142         v47 = (const char *)sub_418430(v38, " Bytes");
143         v48 = (__int64 *)&v53;
144         sub_4178B0(&v53, v47, &v57);
145         while ( v53 )
146         {
147             v49 = sub_418430(v48, v47);
148             sub_418610(&v57, v49, &v53);
149             v47 = "File Too Small, Ignored";
150         }
```

Figure 8. Linux variant performing a file size check

The malware then opens the target file, reads the content based on the part and space size given in the configuration or in the parameters, encrypts them, and writes to the file as shown in the following code:

```
184 do
185 {
186     std::istream::read((std::istream *)&v107, v68, v11); // Read_file
187     if ( v109 )
188     {
189         v54 = (std::runtime_error *)__cxa_allocate_exception(32LL);
190         std::string::string(&v59, "File Reading Failed", &v84);
191         sub_5B4100(&v59, "File Reading Failed");
192         v55 = *__errno_location();
193         sub_416B60(v54);
194         std::string::_Rep::_M_dispose(v59 - 24, &v85);
195         __cxa_throw(v54, &off_8991C0, sub_5B4050);
196     }
197     Encryption_routine_sub_510EE0(&v88, v71, v68, v69 - (_QWORD)v68); // Encryption_Routine
198     v10 = v71;
199     std::ostream::write((std::ostream *)&v102, v71, *(_QWORD *)(v2 + 152)); // Write_the_encrypted_data
200     if ( v106 )
201     {
202         v54 = (std::runtime_error *)__cxa_allocate_exception(32LL);
203         std::string::string(&v59, "File Writing Failed", &v84);
204         sub_5B4100(&v59, "File Writing Failed");
205         v55 = *__errno_location();
206         sub_416B60(v52);
```

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Unlike the windows variant that randomly generates its custom Saisazo matrix by calling `RtlRandomExW` several times, the malware uses the standard constant **"expand 32-byte k"** in the Chacha20 cipher used to encrypt files on the victim machine, as shown in the next figure.

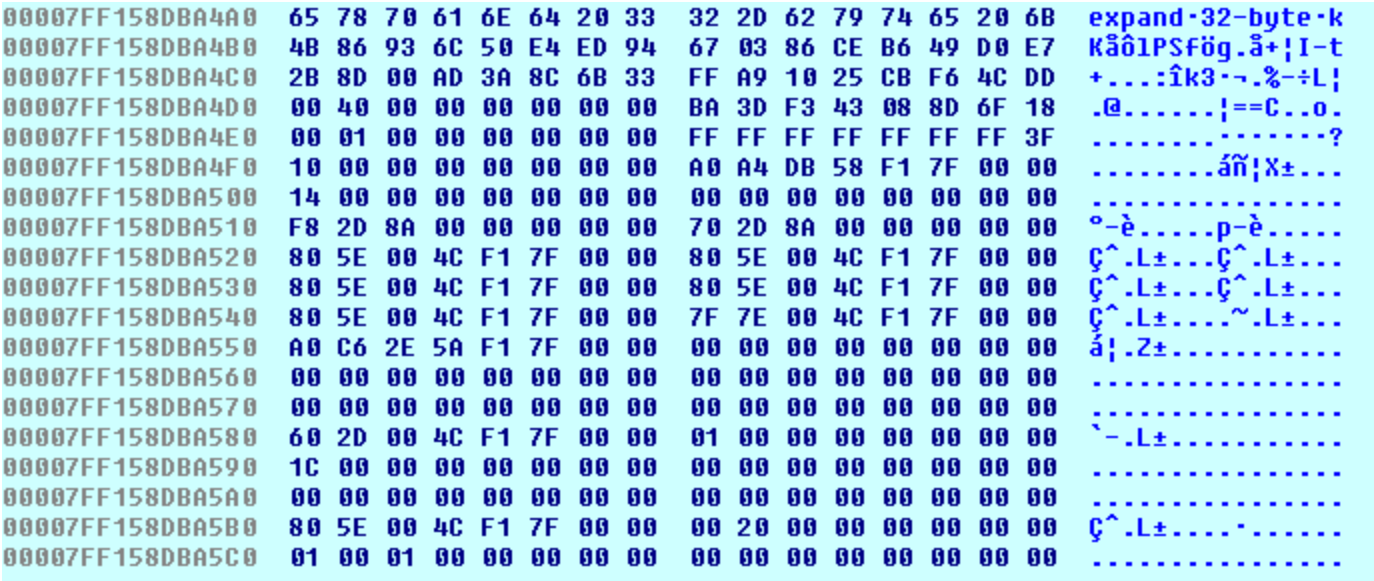


Figure 10. Using "expand 32-byte k" as a constant in the Chacha20 cipher

After encryption, the malware then adds a header and a cipher at the end of the encrypted files as shown in Figure 11.

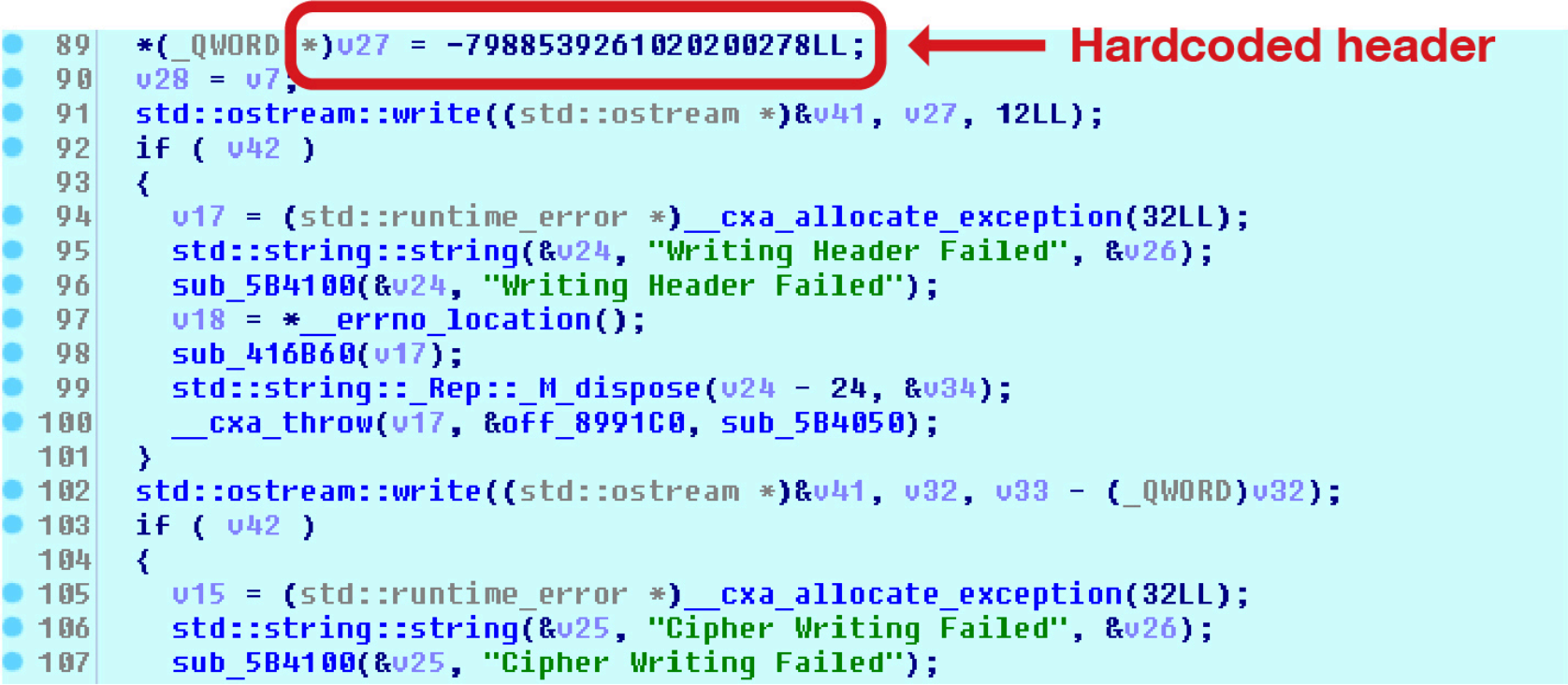


Figure 11. Adding code to header





Figure 12. Hex view of the encrypted file

The ransomware output console shows the results of the encryption, the encrypted filenames, the discarded files after size check, the time of encryption, and more.

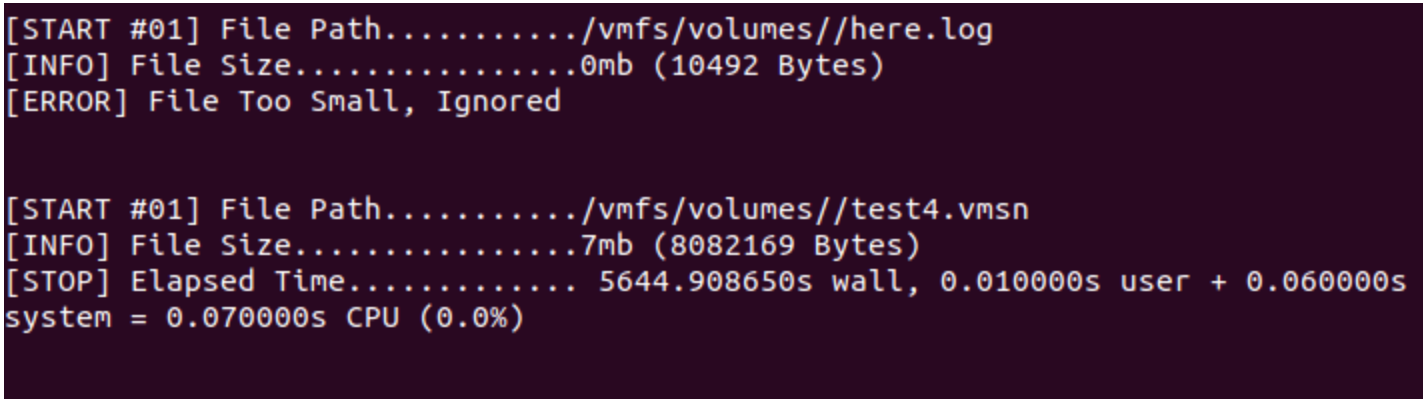


Figure 13. Ransomware output console

Ransom note and added extensions

The Linux variant drops a ransom note on the victim machine and adds a new file extension to the encrypted files.

Unlike the Windows variant, the ransom note file name and the new extension for encrypted files are hard-coded in the malware configuration file or given in a parameter, and the malware does not add any ID at the end of it.

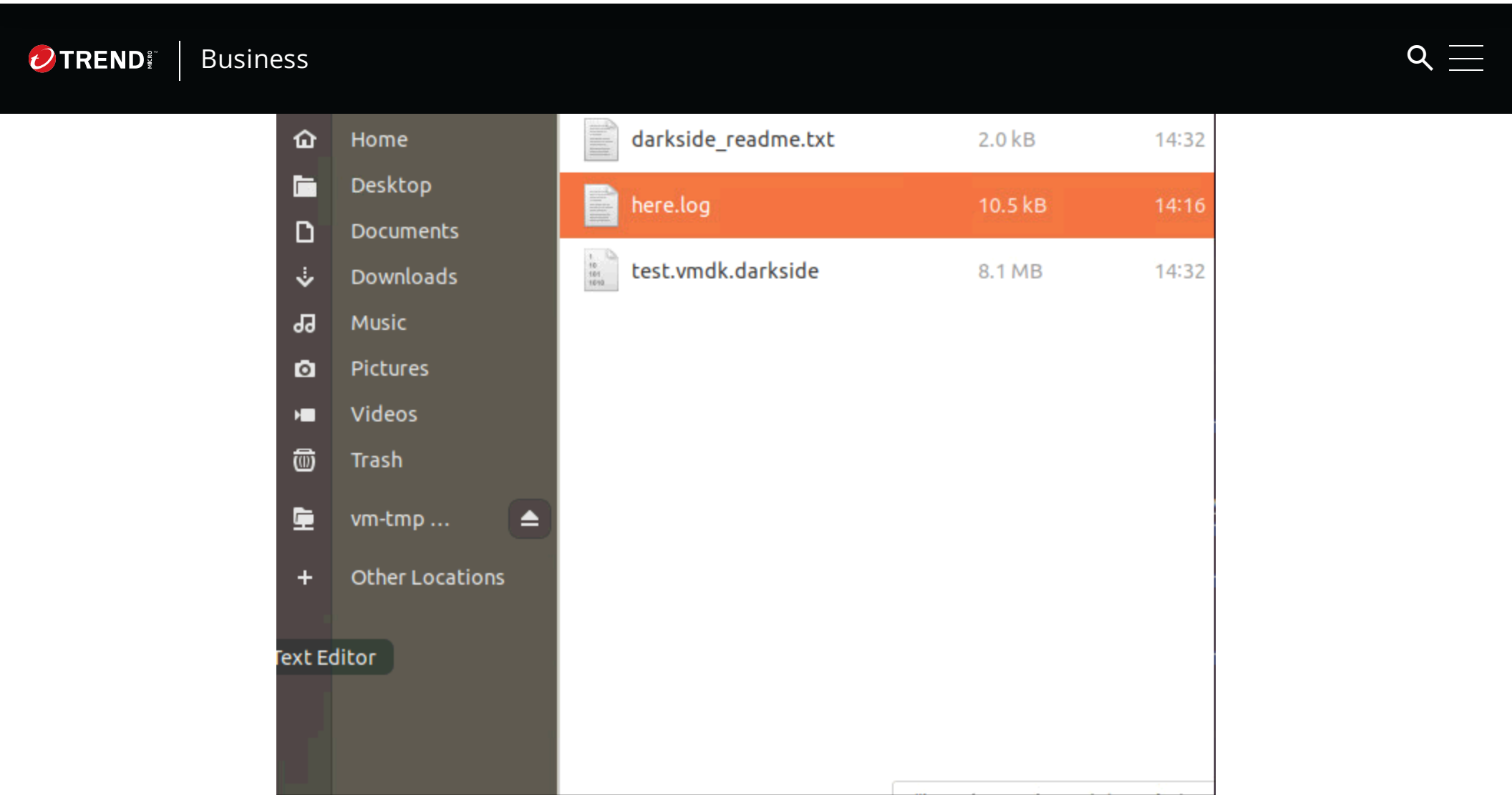


Figure 14. Encrypted folder with ransom note

C&C Beaconing

The DarkSide ransomware can send a C&C beaconing message with the collected system information to a remote server hardcoded in the configuration. It collects system information on the victim machine, such as host name, domain, and disk information, as evidenced in Figure 15.

```
174     v91 = v8;
175     v8 += 8LL;
176     v92 = *(__DWORD *)(__cxa_get_globals() + 8);
177     sub_418930(v8, "username: ");
178     v7 = v119;
179     sub_418630(v8, v119, *(__QWORD *)v119 - 3));
180     v6 = (__int64 *)&v90;
181     sub_417930(&v90);
182 }
183 LODWORD(v117) = 0;
184 *(__QWORD *)&name.sysname[0] = &v117;
185 v9 = sub_418430(v6, v7);
186 v10 = &v125;
187 v11 = (char *)v9;
188 sub_4178B0(&v125, v9, &name);
189 while ( v125 )
190 {
191     v93 = sub_418430(v10, v11);
192     v12 = sub_498940(&v125);
193     v94 = v12;
194     v12 += 8LL;
195     v95 = *(__DWORD *)(__cxa_get_globals() + 8);
196     sub_418930(v12, "group: ");
197     v11 = v122;
198     sub_418630(v12, v122, *(__QWORD *)v122 - 3));
199     v10 = (__int64 *)&v93;
```

Figure 15. System information collection

The ransomware then puts the collected system information of the victim machine with a hard-coded UID value in the following format:



```
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "version": "1.0",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "username": "username",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "group": "1000",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "os_type": "Linux",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "os_version": "Linux #42-Ubuntu SMP Tue Oct 23 15:48:01 UTC 2'
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  '018",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "os_build": "4.15.0-39-generic",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "os_arch": "x86_64",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "disks": [' ,0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  {',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "MountPoint": "\/",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "Type": "ext4",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "Device": "\dev\sda1",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "Size": "50138",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "Available": "38679",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  "Free": "41255",',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  },',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  ],',0Ah
debug006:00007F5C200076C8 db  },',0Ah,0
debug006:00007F5C2000790F db  0
```

Figure 16. System information format

It hashes the collected information before sending it to the URL mentioned in the embedded configuration of the sample. DarkSide also uses a random parameter of eight characters in the request body to make its C&C traffic more difficult to detect by IPS/IDS devices on the victim network. The request body has the following format:

<Random 8-character variable> = <Encrypted collected information> & <Random 8-character variable> = <hardcoded UID>

Figure 17 shows the HTTP POST request sent by the malware to the remote server with the collected information.

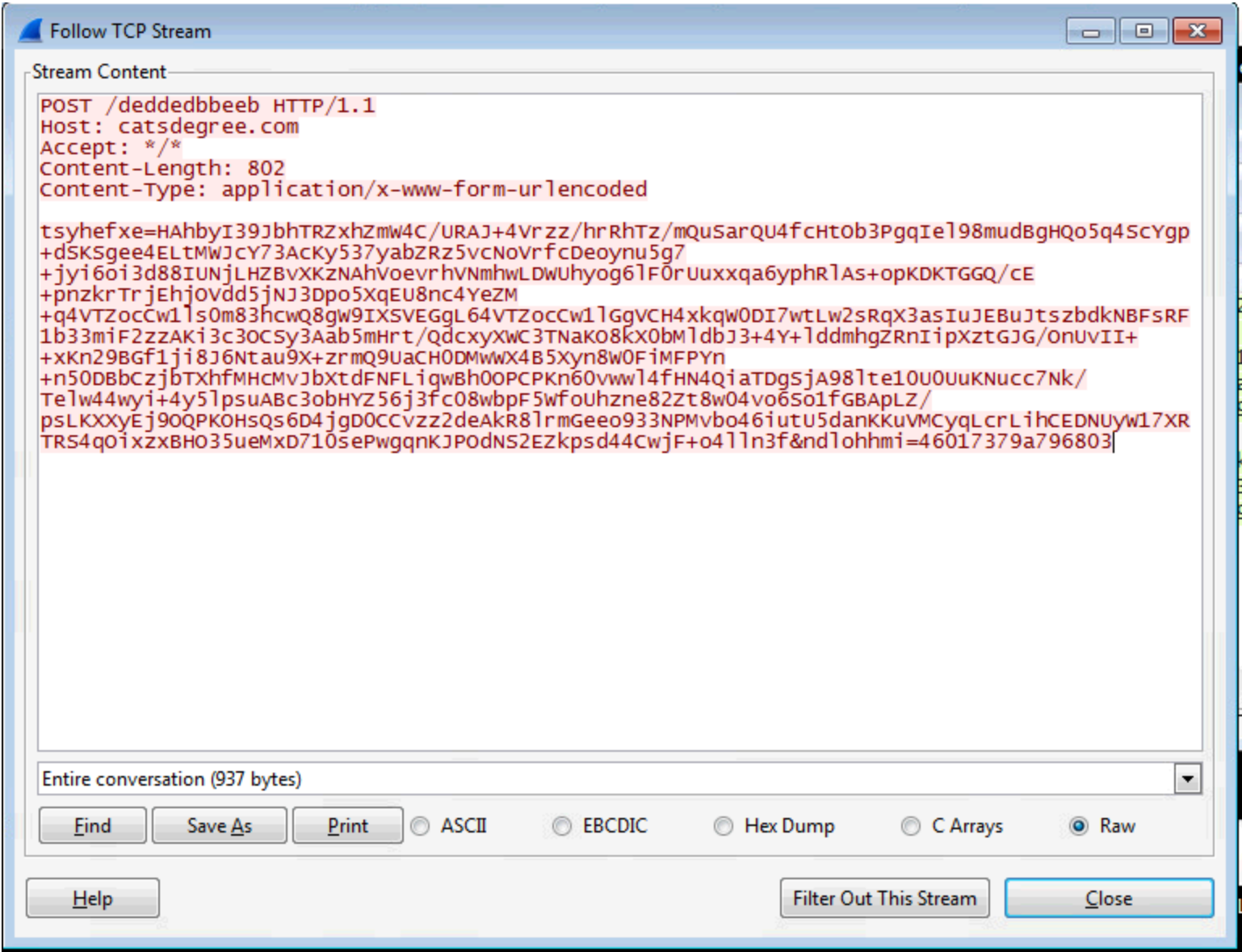


Figure 17. C2 beaconing HTTP traffic

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files, ransom note name, extension, C&C URL, and more.

The Linux variant uses a ChaCha20 stream cipher with RSA-4096 in order to encrypt the files on the victim machine. It mainly targets VM-related files on VMWare ESXI servers, such as VMDK files. It can also accept parameters to infect more files on the victim machine. Additionally, the DarkSide ransomware runs ESXCLI commands to get vSAN and storage information on the victim machine. It also lists and kills running VMs on the infected ESXI host before encryption. Lastly, it drops a ransom note on the encrypted directories on the victim machine.

## Indicators of Compromise

### C&C servers:

- [catsdegree\[.\]com](#)
- [securebestapp20\[.\]com](#)
- [temisleyes\[.\]com](#)

SHA256	Trend Micro Detection Name
984ce69083f2865ce90b48569291982e786980aeef83345953276adfcbbeece8	Ransom.Linux.DARKSIDE.THDBGBA
9cc3c217e3790f3247a0c0d3d18d6917701571a8526159e942d0fffb848acffb	
c93e6237abf041bc2530ccb510dd016ef1cc6847d43bf023351dce2a96fdc33b	
da3bb9669fb983ad8d2ffc01aab9d56198bd9cedf2cc4387f19f4604a070a9b5	

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