Snapshot Agent failed to create the directory

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Issue

The customer has configured Transactional Replication on Managed Instance. When they run the Snapshot Agent, either manually or from a schedule, it fails with the following error:

> The replication agent failed to create the directory '\xxxxx.file.core.windows.net ⧉\zzzzz\unc'

This error is returned in Replication Monitor for the Snapshot Agent, and in table `MSsnapshot_history` in the distribution database.

Investigation / Analysis

This issue relates to misconfiguration of the storage connection string that is required to connect to Azure file storage. The Snapshot Agent requires write permissions in order to store the script and bcp data files for the snapshot.

The most common cause for this error is the Snapshot Agent lacking permissions to access the file share. The storage connection string contains the credentials required to connect to Azure file storage, and if this connection string is misconfigured, the connection will fail.

A correct storage connection string will look something like this example:

> **DefaultEndpointsProtocol**=https;**AccountName**=replstorage;**AccountKey**=dYT5hHZVu9aTgIteGfpYE64cfis 0mpKTmmc8+EP53GxuRg6TCwe5eTYWrQM4AmQSG5lb3OBskhg==;**EndpointSuffix**=core.windows.net ⧉

Ask the customer the following:

- Is the account name still correct, or has it changed recently? You can check this by executing exec sp_helpdistpublisher ⧉; the snapshot file path with the storage account FQDN is shown on the `working_directory` column.
- Has the account key changed recently, e.g. due to scheduled or unscheduled key rotation?
- Is the `EndpointSuffix` correct? It is "core.windows.net ⧉" for the public cloud, but might be different for non-public clouds (Fairfax, Mooncake, Black Forest).

Mitigation

If you suspect that either the snapshot directory file path or the storage connection string is incorrect, you can update either with the following commands. The values are available through the storage account details on the Azure portal.

```
use distribution;

exec sp_changedistpublisher @publisher = @@ServerName,
    @property = N'working_directory',
    @value = N'\\replstorage.file.core.windows.net\snapshots';

exec sp_changedistpublisher @publisher = @@ServerName,
    @property = N'storage_connection_string',
    @value = N'DefaultEndpointsProtocol=https;AccountName=replstorage;AccountKey=dYT5hHZVu9aTgIteGfpYE64cfis0m
```

For further details about these two properties and their values, see How to configure the snapshot directory.

Internal Reference

- How to configure the snapshot directory
- TSGTRCL00013: ****The replication agent failed to create the directory '\XXX.file.core.windows.net\YYY\unc ↗

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