Keep up with Ransomware

The threat of the NoEscape Ransomware has reached Korea

Outline

In August 2023, the number of damage cases caused by Ransomware attacks decreased by 17.6% from the previous month (487 cases) to 401 cases. This is largely due to the fact that the number of damage cases posted by the Clop Ransomware group decreased from 170 to 5. The Clop Ransomware group has been actively carrying out attacks exploiting the MOVEit vulnerability since last June. However, looking at the recent actions of the Clop Ransomware Group, it appears that postings through the MOVEit vulnerability have ended, and it is presumed that there will be no additional postings.

Also, the Clop Ransomware Group had been downloading victimized companies' data from dark web leak sites, but moved the download platform to Torrent because it was difficult to distribute victimized companies' leaked data through download due to the slow speed of the dark web. Torrent's transmission speed is faster than that of existing dark web leak sites, and the stolen data can be distributed widely. So it seems that the intention is to put more pressure on victims to pay money. In this way, Ransomware groups are diversifying their means of distributing stolen data, and their strategies are also evolving day by day.

¹ Torrent: A protocol or program that divides a file existing on the Internet into several pieces for sharing them directly between users.

The number of damage cases caused by LockBit increased by 148.9% over the previous month (49 cases) to 122 cases. However, several operational issues have recently arisen within LockBit. Due to the absence of developers for a long period of time, the continued arrest of its members, and poor operations and measures, e.g., inefficient data theft and posting of leaked data, LockBit affiliates have been leaving the organization, and this is considered to be the reason for the failure of leaked data to be posted. It is presumed that this phenomenon is due to the fact that the infrastructure to support the LockBit Group was not formed normally while it was causing many victims and growing in size. If the LockBit Group continues to operate without solving these issues in the ever—changing Ransomware ecosystem, it may disappear in history like the REvil or Hive Group.

The Monti Ransomware Group, a group that used Conti's leaked source codes, recently returned with a Ransomware variant targeting the Linux environment after a two-month hiatus. The existing Monti Ransomware showed 99% similarity to the leaked codes of the Conti Ransomware and the Conti Ransomware was simply reused, but this variant Ransomware targeting Linux has only 29% similarity to Conti's codes. So, it seems that it was newly developed by borrowing Conti codes.

The Cuba Ransomware exploited the Veeam Backup & Replication² vulnerability, CVE-2023-27532³, to attack major infrastructure organizations in the U.S. and IT companies in Latin America. The initial access was carried out through RDP (Remote Desktop Protocol)⁴ by exploiting the vulnerable administrator's credentials. It was confirmed that after successful access, it operated meticulously, i.e. downloading the DLL file through its own BugHatch downloader, executing arbitrary commands sent by the C&C server, and terminating processes related to security software. The Cuba Ransomware Group is not a group that carries out large-scale campaigns like the Clop or LockBit Ransomware Group, but as it is a group that works steadily, its influence cannot be overlooked.

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² Veeam Backup & Replication: Software for backing up, restoring, and replicating virtual machine data.

³ CVE-2023-27532: A vulnerability that allows access to the backup infrastructure host by stealing credentials stored in the configuration database of Backup & Replication.

⁴ RDP: A protocol that allows you to remotely operate a computer.

The BlackCat(Alphv) Group is continuously carrying out attacks this month as it did last month, and disclosed samples of the data stolen from SEIKO, a famous Japanese watch manufacturer, and claimed that it carried out this attack. It also said that it attacked North East BIC, a British office rental company, and stole a total of 317GB of data, including personal data of employees, driver's licenses, insurance information, and business—related confidential data, and showed off its influence by posting the stolen data samples on dark web leak sites.

The Knight Group, which was rebranded from Cyclops to Knight last month, has recently been disguising itself as TripAdvisor and distributing HTML attachment files redirecting⁵ to fake sites through phishing e-mails. The redirected page is a complaint-related page where you can file a complaint. When you click the button, an Excel file is downloaded, malware is injected into the explorer.exe process, and Ransomware is executed. To prevent such attacks, it is advisable not to allow a message that downloads additional functions in Excel. Since rebranding, the group has introduced lightweight versions for not only Ransomware but also spam and spray-and-pray⁶ campaigns, and is actively recruiting affiliates on hacking forums. As yet, no victims have been posted on the rebranded dark web leak sites, but it is necessary to keep an eye on the group as it is showing active movements in various fields.

In Korea, the HakunaMatata Ransomware targeting Korean companies is being distributed. The HakunaMatata Ransomware not only encrypts files, but also monitors the clipboards of victimized systems and has a ClipBanker function that changes the virtual currency wallet address to the attacker's wallet address if it is copied. Systems damaged by the HakunaMatata Ransomware had RDP enabled and are exposed to the outside world, and Windows security events that occurred when login failed were recorded several times. So it can be presumed that a brute force attack⁷ targeting RDP was carried out. In addition, as massive damage can occur through account takeover and network propagation functions, it is recommended that the RDP service be disabled when unnecessary and to prevent initial access by complying with the correct password policy.

⁵ Redirecting: A function to link a website address to another address.

⁶ Spray-and-pray: A strategy to induce damage by indiscriminately attacking a large number of targets.

⁷ Brute Force Attack: A technique for substituting all possible values to crack a password.

This month alone, data from two domestic companies was posted on file encryption and dark web leak sites. The NoEscape Group attacked a domestic IT company, and MetaEncryptor, a new group discovered this month, attacked a domestic manufacturer. Although the NoEscape Group is a relatively new group discovered last June, it is showing active activity, e.g., posting 21 pieces of data this month after posting 17 pieces of victimized companies' data to dark web leak sites last month. The NoEscape Ransomware is a rebranded group of Avaddon, a Ransomware group that disclosed the decryption key and shut itself down in 2021. It provides decryption tools for free to victims in CIS⁸ countries. Their ransom demands are quite high, ranging from hundreds of thousands of dollars to over ten million dollars. It is claimed that they stole 15 GB of data by recently attacking not only domestic IT companies but also the Australian Domain Administration. However, it said there was no evidence of a breach.

Additionally, various new Ransomware groups are discovered this month, led by the Knight Group, rebranded from Cyclops. The Inc Group began its activities by posting leaked data from a hotel in Germany and a construction company in the Netherlands on the dark web, and the MetaEncryptor Group began its activities by posting leaked data from 12 companies, including a domestic manufacturer. Also, the Ransomed Group claims to have leaked data from 9 companies, including S&P, a famous American credit rating agency, and stole 6TB of data from S&P and demanded EUR200,000 (approximately KRW284.68 million). In addition, the newly discovered Cloak Group said that they had stolen data from as many as 24 companies and posted a threatening message saying that they would disclose the data if they reported it to the police.

In addition, various new Ransomware such as CryBaby, TrashPanda, and Howard were discovered. In particular, the ransom note of the CryBaby Ransomware is very similar to that of the WannaCry Ransomware, and the pop—up window displayed in case of infection with Ransomware is also reminiscent of WannaCry. Like this, some Ransomwares often imitate WannaCry, and since WannaCry had a significant impact in the past, it can be seen as a strategy intended to incite fear and pressure victims through the popularity of WannaCry.

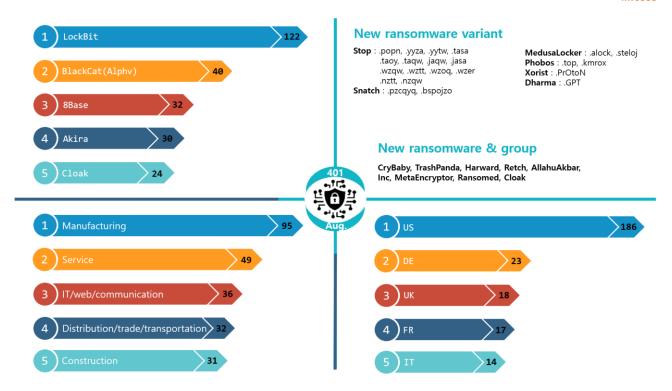
⁸ CIS: It is an international organization of countries that became independent after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It includes Russia, Moldova, Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.

	Leakage of LockBit 3.0 Builder Leads to the creation of multiple variants through exploitation
	Groups such as National Hazard Agency, Bloody, and Buhti exploit this
	Distributing LockBit 3.0 variants, each sample has different attacker contact details and ransom demands
	It might emerge as new ransomware with altered encryption and ransom note
\geq	LockBit ransomware group in decline, may be compromised
	Recently, the publication of leaked data from victimized companies has encountered obstacles
	Affiliates of LockBit are transitioning to competitors
	Recently, missing ransomware release dates has raised suspicions of developer absence
\sum	Colorado warns of data leakage of 4 million people due to IBM MOVEit breach
	IBM affected by MOVEit attack campaign, intrusion traces of attackers detected
0	Data breach exposes sensitive info of 4 million: Names, SSNs, Income, Health Records
	Monti group releases ransomware variant targeting VMware ESXi
	After 2 months of inactivity, Monti resurfaces with a variant targeting ESXi platform
Q	Unlike prior versions, this Monti variant shows significant divergence from the borrowed Conti ransomware code
\triangleright	Clop group distributes leaked data through torrents
	Approximately 600 organizations worldwide fall victim to data theft in the MOVEit campaign
	Clop uses torrents to exfiltrate data stolen in MOVEit attack campaign
	Torrents use P2P transmission between different users, so the transmission speed is faster than dark web
_	* P2P: A way to share and transfer data directly between
》	NoEscape claims Australian Domain registrar AUDA attack
	NoEscape claims to have attacked the agency that controls Australia's .au domain
	However, due to lack of concrete evidence, AUDA is conducting an investigation
	HakunaMatata ransomware, targeting Korean company
	HakunaMatata, a relatively recently developed ransomware discovered on July 6, 23
()	Trakullatvatata, a relatively recently developed ransoniware discovered on July 6, 25

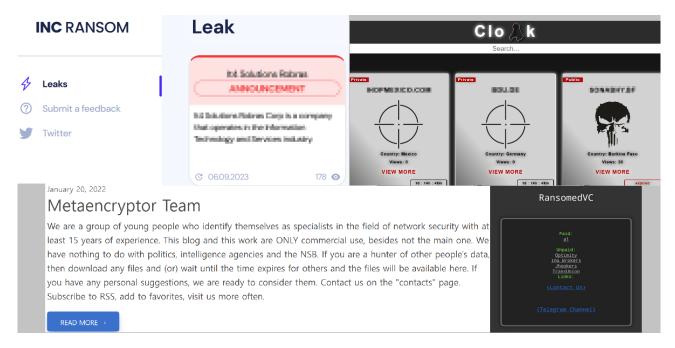
BlackCat(A	Alphv), launches latest Sphynx variant
Claims to	have completely redeveloped the code, including encryption
Some war	n that BlackCat(Alphv) ransomware has developed into a toolkit equipped with multiple tools
The tool i	s a network spreading and remote command execution tool
Cuba	group deploys new tools for attacks on US infrastructure and Latin American tech f
The Cuba,	now in its fourth year of operation, has carried out several high-profile attacks across industries
Exploiting	vulnerabilities in backup-related solution Veeam and introducing new tools
Cuba feat	ures a custom downloader BugHatch
Black	Cat(Alphv), claims to have attacked famous Japanese watch company SEIKO
SEIKO ackr	nowledges data breach, investigation underway
BlackCat(A	lphv) claimed responsibility for the attack and posted data samples on a dark web leak site
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Ransomware threats

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New threats



*Source: Images of INC, Cloak, MetaEncryptor, and Ransomed Ransomware group sites

There were 401 cases of Ransomware damage in August 2023, down from 487 cases in July 2023. The reason for this decrease is the decline in the number of victims due to the Clop Ransomware Group's MOVEit campaign. Over the years, the Clop Ransomware Group made numerous victims through the MOVEit campaign and posted a significant number of damage cases, but this month it posted only five cases of data, significantly lowering the overall number of damage cases. In addition, the Clop Ransomware Group previously distributed the data of victims of the MOVEit campaign through dark web leak sites, but has now moved its platform to Torrent and is now able to quickly distribute stolen data thanks to fast download speeds. Analyzing the past activities of the Clop Ransomware Group, it tends to prepare attacks through new vulnerabilities and then carry out large-scale attacks, requiring more interest and caution.

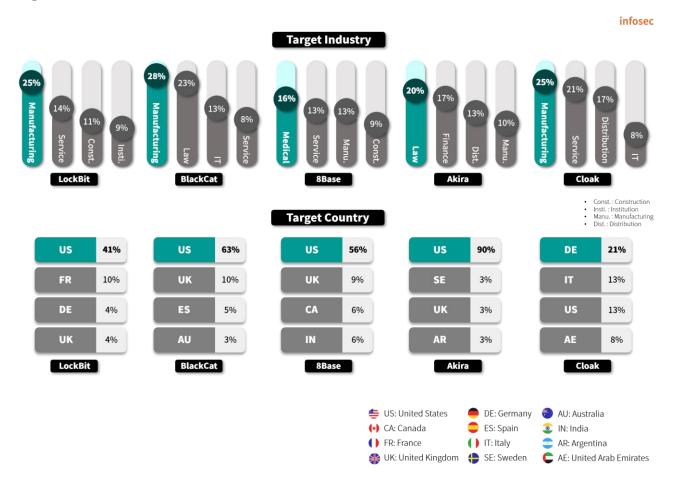
While new Ransomwares are discovered steadily during the month of August, the TrashPanda Ransomware is showing very unusual ransom note contents. This ransom note contains contents related to a military conflict reminiscent of the Russo-Ukraine War, saying, "We are not interested in data or money. We want our families to return to us and we want you to leave our country." Seeing that the Harward Ransomware is using the same e-mail address listed in the ransom note of the BTC-Azadi Ransomware, it is suspected that there is a connection between them. Additionally, as both ransomwares are associated with the Proxima series, there is a possibility that they were used or created by the same attacker. The Retch Ransomware uses an icon disguised as an Adobe PDF file to induce execution. So, users need to be careful. The AllahuAkbar Ransomware is a variant of the Chaos Ransomware, and considering that the contact information listed in the ransom note is invalid, it is likely to be a one-time Ransomware. Also, if you use Azerbaijani or Turkish, the program ends without encryption. In these two countries, Islam is overwhelmingly dominant, and the name of the Ransomware, AllahuAkbar, is a phrase used in Islamic prayers, which suggests a connection with Islam.

Inc, MetaEncryptor, Ransomed, and Cloak were discovered as new Ransomware groups, and Inc disclosed sensitive information such as copies of passports and transaction contracts of employees of construction–related companies and hotels in Germany and the Netherlands. MetaEncryptor attacked a domestic manufacturer and companies in various fields around the world, stole data and posted it on dark web leak sites. As five of the 12 cases of leaked data concerned Germany, it suffered the most damage from MetaEncryptor. A group called Ransomed operates a clear web⁹ blog called 'Ransomed.vc' and also provides dark web mirror sites of the blog. The main blog claims that it does not carry out attacks on hospitals and major infrastructures that could affect lives, and says that most of the organization's members are from Russia or Ukraine, and while posting the demands regarding recruitment of affiliates as well as the organization's rules prohibit attacks targeting those countries, it is actively recruiting affiliates. Lastly, the Cloak group operates the 'Shame Board' blog and posted as many as 24 cases of leaked data as soon as it appeared, and is indiscriminately stealing data and uploading it to dark web leak sites, regardless of country and industry.

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⁹ Clear web: General information found by search engines

Top 5 Ransomwares



This month, the manufacturing industry suffered the most damage among industry groups. As Ransomware damage continues in the manufacturing industry, in addition to the financial damage from paying the ransom, due to the nature of the manufacturing industry, if a disruption occurs in the manufacturing process, the financial loss itself is enormous. So companies that did not pay the ransom also suffered a total loss of approximately \$46 billion due to downtime¹⁰. This year alone, approximately 5.9 million pieces of data were leaked from the manufacturing industry due to Ransomware attacks. Among these, if you add up the data that would lead to severe damage when leaked, e.g., employees' sensitive information or confidential data of companies, it can be assumed that there was a huge loss. To prevent such damage, the top priority is to prevent attackers from making initial access. We recommend that you be careful with phishing e-mails, follow appropriate password policies, and make efforts to update your system and software.

¹⁰ Downtime: The amount of time during which the damage disrupts the operation of the normal manufacturing process.

As if the LockBit Group was aware of the reaction of the general public who talk about its recent downward trend, it posted 122 pieces of leaked data, making it the group that uploaded the most leaked data in a long time. This group is spreading the LockBit 3.0 Ransomware as part of a phishing campaign targeting the construction industry in Spain. In this campaign, LockBit does not simply send phishing e-mails and waits for a victim to occur, but is thorough enough to distribute the Ransomware after exchanging several e-mails under the disguise of a person trying to work on a construction-related project.

Since its appearance last March, the 8Base Group has been actively posting victims' data on dark web leak sites. This month, it posted 28 pieces of leaked data, including Delaney Browne, Toyota Forklift Dealer, and Skyroot Aerospace, but is experiencing difficulties due to the recent termination of AnonFiles, an anonymous file sharing service. Many attackers, including 8Base, have been using AnonFiles to distribute victims' leaked data or malware, but AnonFiles seems to have terminated the service in the belief that it has become difficult to block such malicious activities. Although the AnonFiles service was terminated, it is necessary to pay close attention as there is a possibility that attackers exploiting anonymity may appear if similar services appear again.

The Akira Group is a Ransomware group that appeared last April, and the frequency of posting leaked data is steadily increasing. Although Avast, a security company, released a Ransomware decryption tool in July, the Akira Group is still stealing data from victims and demanding money by patching the encryption logic. In particular, its attacks target not only Windows but also VMware ESXi servers. VMware ESXi is a hypervisor¹¹ that hosts virtual machines, and can run multiple virtual machines using a single hardware. It is widely used because it has the advantage of reducing costs and enabling easy expansion of infrastructure. From attackers' point of view, it is one of the access points where large-scale attacks are possible because important information is stored and all systems hosted on ESXi can be encrypted with a single attack. Even if attackers target ESXi, it will not be easy for organizations to hastily change the system or find alternatives due to the advantages provided by ESXi. Therefore, we recommend that companies strictly follow and use security measures, e.g., keeping ESXi software up—to—date and following correct password policies.

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Hypervisor: Software that allows multiple operating systems to run simultaneously in one physical machine

Lastly, the Cloak Group was first discovered this month and began its activities by posting 24 victimized companies on the dark web. Of the companies posted, 25% were manufacturing companies, and 21 of them paid a ransom to have their data deleted, which can be said to be quite costly. There was even a case where Cloak responded and released the stolen data when a victim reported it to the police. Cloak's initial access strategies include finding an access route through IAB (Initial Access Broker)¹² or purchasing stolen credentials using Infostealer¹³ to gain access to the victimized system.

¹² IAB: An individual or group selling the initial access route

¹³ Infostealer: Information stealing malware

■ Focus of Ransomware

Outline of the NoEscape Ransomware



*Source: Desktop changed when infected with the NoEscape ransomware

NoEscape, which appeared last June, is a rebrand of the Avaddon Ransomware, which ended its activities in 2021 due to pressure from investigative agencies. The Avaddon Ransomware Group began recruiting affiliates in June 2020 and began its activities in earnest. It is known that this group demanded an average of about USD 400,650(approximately KRW 55 million won) in ransom, and even used DDoS (Distribute Denial of Service)¹⁴ attacks as a means of blackmailing if they do not agree to negotiations. For this reason, the Avaddon Group was put under investigation, and in June 2021, one year after its establishment, it stopped its activities and disappeared after distributing the decryption key. However, two years later, in June 23, the Avaddon Ransomware Group returned as NoEscape.

Since NoEscape launched dark web leak sites, the number of leaked data postings has been increasing, and it is operating continuously. Meanwhile, this month, it was revealed that its threatening activities extended to Korea as well by posting leaked data from an IT company in Korea.

¹⁴ DDoS: An attack technique that transmits a large amount of Internet traffic to a target system for the purpose of service interruption

The Ransomware used by NoEscape generates a unique ID for each victim, and the file extension that changes after encryption also encodes¹⁵ the GUID¹⁶ with a custom algorithm. It is Ransomware that is created through a complex process such as encoding it once more with Base64¹⁷, and technical details such as encrypting and using the configurations necessary for Ransomware operation are applied to this Ransomware.

In particular, unlike other files that partially encrypt files with such extensions as "accdb", "edb", "mdb", "mdf", "mds", "ndf", and "sql" for rapid encryption during the encryption process, this Ransomware encrypts the entire file to leave no room for recovery. This extension is related to databases or storage devices, and is mainly used by companies. If encryption is carried out, there is a high probability of significant loss in business.

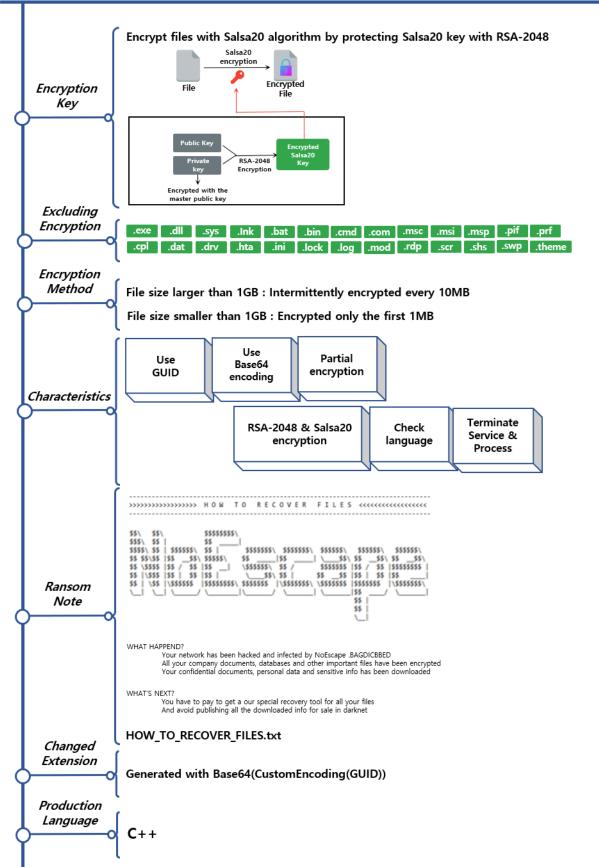
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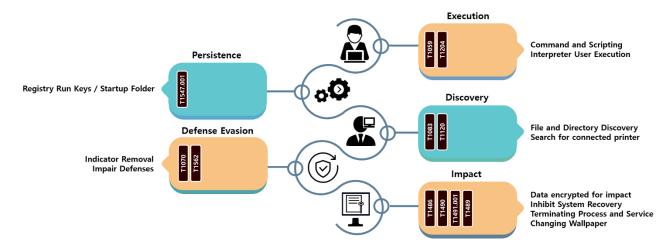
¹⁵ Encoding: The process of converting information or data according to specific formats or rules

¹⁶ GUID: A unique identifier with a unique value

¹⁷ Base64: An encoding method that converts data into a character string consisting of only alphabets, numbers, and a few special characters.







The characteristic of the NoEscape Ransomware is that it uses a complexly encrypted Config file to fetch and use necessary elements at the right time while the Ransomware is running.

High privileges are required to access various system components such as file encryption or registry manipulation, and at this time, privilege elevation is performed by bypassing UAC (User Account Control). UAC is a security mechanism that allows the user to choose whether or not to allow the program to perform actions that may affect the system with administrator privileges when executing a program.

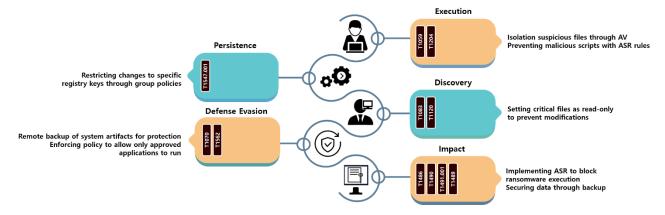
In the case of NoEscape, privilege elevation is forcibly achieved through registry manipulation without the user's consent. After bypassing UAC, the attacker terminates the running security software to bypass detection and encrypts the virtual machine disk in use by releasing the virtual machine–related process and mount. In preparation for a situation where the victim restores the system, a command to terminate the backup service and delete VSC (Volume Shadow Copy)¹⁸ is executed to prevent the system from being restored to its previous state. Then, it makes the rounds of the directories of all drives, creates a ransom note, and encrypts the files.

After the encryption process is completed, the wallpaper is changed to notify the victim that it has been infected with the NoEscape Ransomware, and if there is a connected printer device, a Ransom note is printed.

¹⁸ VSC: A technique for creating point-in-time backup copies of files or volumes on Windows systems

Response plan for each stage of the NoEscape Ransomware

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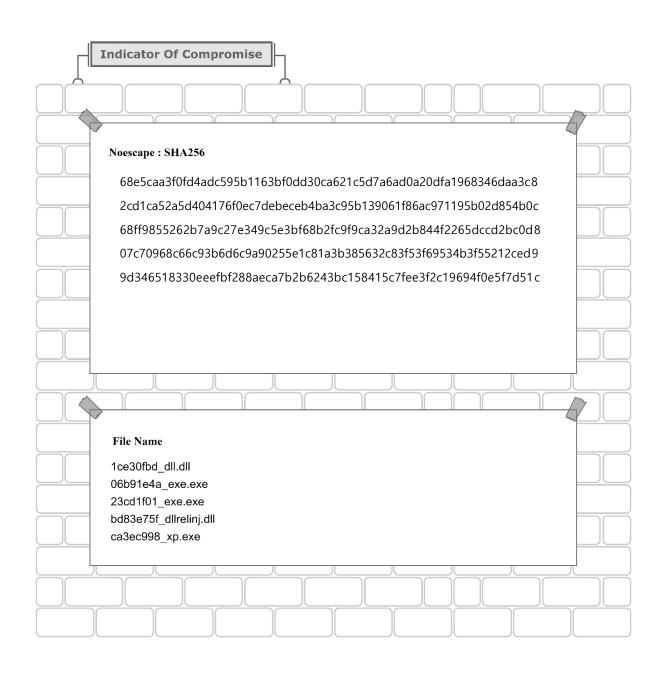
To prevent NoEscape from being executed, you can use a vaccine to isolate suspicious files in advance, or, if it was executed, apply ASR (Attack Surface Reduction)¹⁹ rules to prevent NoEscape from running malicious scripts.

This Ransomware registers itself in the registry and sets it to run automatically even when the system is rebooted. To prevent this behavior, you must apply a Windows group policy that restricts registry editing for accounts other than the administrator account.

Additionally, they delete system artifacts²⁰, including Windows event logs, to interfere with future analysis of infringement incidents. They may prevent the Ransomware from blocking the defense mechanism by backing up and preserving the artifacts in a remote location and adding an item to the system policy to allow only approved applications to be executed. Lastly, as NoEscape executes a command that deletes the system backup copy and VSC, you must perform a security backup in an environment that is difficult to access, rather than a general backup.

¹⁹ ASR: A technique for blocking the attack path of malware

²⁰ Artifact: Digital evidence that tracks or records user activities or system events



■ Reference sites

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URL: https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/spain-warns-of-lockbit-locker-ransomware-phishing-attacks/

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