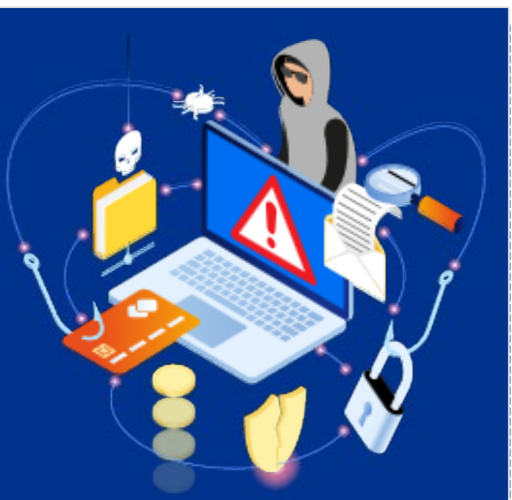
KPMG Cyber Threat Intelligence Platform

UNC1549 – Iran's Cyber Intrusion into Aerospace and Defense



UNC1549 (aka Smoke Sandstorm, Tortoiseshell), is a threat actor that has been publicly linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), has been active since at least June 2022, and continues to operate as of February 2024. The focus of this activity on defense, aerospace, and aviation-related entities is noteworthy, particularly in light of recent tensions between Iran and Israel due to the Israel-Hamas war. The campaign is targeting aerospace and defense entities in the Middle East, including Israel and UAE, along with Turkey, India, and Albania.

UNC1549 gains initial access through spear-phishing emails or social media with links to fake websites related to Israel-Hamas war or fake job offers. Backdoor payloads like MINIBIKE/MINIBUS arrive via compressed archives, often concealed within legitimate applications such as Microsoft OneDrive. These payloads often communicate with C2 servers using Microsoft Azure cloud infrastructure. Persistence is established via registry key manipulation or search-order-hijacking (SoH) techniques. To evade detection, attackers utilize tactics like hosting C2 infrastructure on Microsoft Azure and employing deceptive domain naming schemes. Conducts reconnaissance within the target network, observing security processes and virtual machines to identify valuable assets and potential targets for discovery. Credential harvesting occurs through fake job websites housing malicious payloads aimed at stealing users' credentials. By establishing communication with their C2 infrastructure, attackers maintain control over compromised devices and exfiltrate data.

UNC1549 highlights the importance of proactive defense strategies, combining user education and technological advancements. To secure digital environments effectively, organizations must remain adaptive, emphasizing the need of enhanced cybersecurity protocols.

What should you do?

- Monitor Indicators of Compromise (IoCs) in your environment to identify anomalies.
- Ensure your Windows environment is patched to the brim and is protected with multi-factor authentication.
- Conduct a comprehensive, full spectrum, threat assessment exercise to uncover blind spots and improvement areas.

The KPMG Cyber Threat Intelligence Platform is an industry defining, research-based capability for enhanced visibility into cyber threats.

Our machine ingestible feeds and analysis are the result of automated, sensor-based intelligence metrics with dedicated, expert insights of each threat to provide you the appropriate context on a timely basis in industry standard formats such as STIX/TAXII/MISP.

These feeds are additionally co-related with our industry partners and independent research for additional context. The intelligence obtained is then curated from strategic, tactical and operational perspective to give you a wide-ranging view of cyber threats.

We also assist you with our renowned cyber incident response and threat hunting services in case you identify an active threat in your environment.

We offer a wide-range of services, including:
Strategic threat intelligence report
Machine ingestible threat intelligence feeds
Threat intelligence driven pre-emptive threat hunting exercise
Cyber Incident Response Services

Contact us:

KPMG in India Cyber Response Hotline : +91 9176 471 471

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Indicators of Compromise: Domains	
1stemployer[.]com	xboxplayservice[.]com
vsliveagent[.]com	cashcloudservices[.]com
birngthemhomenow.co[.]il	jupyternotebookcollections[.]com
notebooktextcheckings[.]com	

Indicators of Compromise: Hashes
01cbaddd7a269521bf7b80f4a9a1982f
054c67236a86d9ab5ec80e16b884f733
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Indicators of Compromise: Hashes
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Indicators of Compromise: Hashes
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