Moneybird Ransomware

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By **Mezo** in Ransomware

The Iranian hacker group Agrius, also known as Pink Sandstorm and formerly Americium, has recently developed a new strain of ransomware called Moneybird. This threatening malware has been observed targeting Israeli organizations specifically, signifying a significant shift in Agrius's tactics.

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Cybercriminals Expand Their Threatening Arsenal

Agrius has a history of carrying out destructive data-wiping attacks against Israeli entities, often disguising them as ransomware incidents. The emergence of Moneybird, coded in C++, showcases the group's growing expertise and ongoing commitment to creating new cyber tools.

The group's activities can be traced back to at least December 2020, when Agrius was involved in disrupting intrusion attempts targeting diamond industries in South Africa, Israel and Hong Kong. Previously, Agrius utilized a wiper-turned-ransomware called Apostle, based on the .NET framework, and its successor named Fantasy. However, Moneybird represents a significant advancement for the group, as it showcases its evolving cyber capabilities through its C++ programming language.

The Threat Actors Exploit Security Vulnerabilities to Gain Access

The attack methodology employed by the Moneybird Ransomware demonstrates a high level of sophistication, starting with the exploitation of vulnerabilities present in Internet-facing Web servers. This initial exploitation grants the attackers a crucial entry point into the targeted organization's network, facilitated by the deployment of an ASPXSpy Web shell.

Once inside the compromised network, the Web shell serves as a communication channel for the attackers to execute a range of well-known tools specifically tailored to conduct extensive reconnaissance of the victim's environment. These tools enable the attackers to move laterally within the network, gather valuable credentials, and exfiltrate sensitive data.

The Moneybird Ransomware is Equipped with Advanced Encryption Capabilities

Following the initial infiltration and reconnaissance phase, the Moneybird Ransomware is activated on the compromised host. This ransomware is designed with a specific focus on encrypting sensitive files located within the "F:\User Shares" folder. Upon execution, the ransomware deploys a ransom note, placing immense pressure on the victims to establish contact within a 24-hour timeframe, warning them of the potential public leakage of their stolen data.

The Moneybird Ransomware employs a highly sophisticated encryption methodology, utilizing AES-256 with GCM (Galois/Counter Mode). This advanced encryption technique generates unique encryption keys for each file and appends encrypted metadata at the end. The precision targeting and robust encryption implemented by Moneybird make the task of data restoration and file decryption extremely challenging, if not nearly impossible, in the majority of cases.

Important Security Measures to Stop a Ransomware Attack

Effective security measures can be implemented to safeguard devices and data from ransomware attacks. Firstly, maintaining up-to-date and robust security software is essential. Regularly updating anti-malware programs, along with enabling automatic updates, helps protect against the latest threats.

Implementing strong and unique passwords for all accounts is another crucial step. This comprises using a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols, as well as avoiding common and easily guessable passwords. Additionally, enabling multi-factor authentication adds an extra layer of security by requiring additional verification steps to access accounts.

Regularly backing up relevant data is vital to mitigate the impact of a ransomware attack. Creating offline backups or using Cloud storage solutions ensures that critical files can be recovered in the event of encryption or loss.

Being cautious while browsing the Internet and interacting with emails is essential. Users should exercise skepticism when clicking on suspicious links or downloading files from untrusted sources. It is crucial to be vigilant and avoid visiting potentially harmful websites or engaging with suspicious emails, as they may contain ransomware payloads.

Educating oneself and staying informed about the latest cybersecurity threats and attack techniques is highly beneficial. Recognizing common social engineering tactics used in phishing attacks and being aware of the signs of a potential ransomware infection can help users take proactive measures to prevent and respond to such attacks.

Regularly updating operating systems, applications, and firmware is another vital aspect of maintaining strong security. Patches and updates often include security fixes that address vulnerabilities that could be exploited by ransomware and other malware.

By performing a combination of these security measures, users can enhance the protection of their devices and data against the devastating impact of ransomware attacks.