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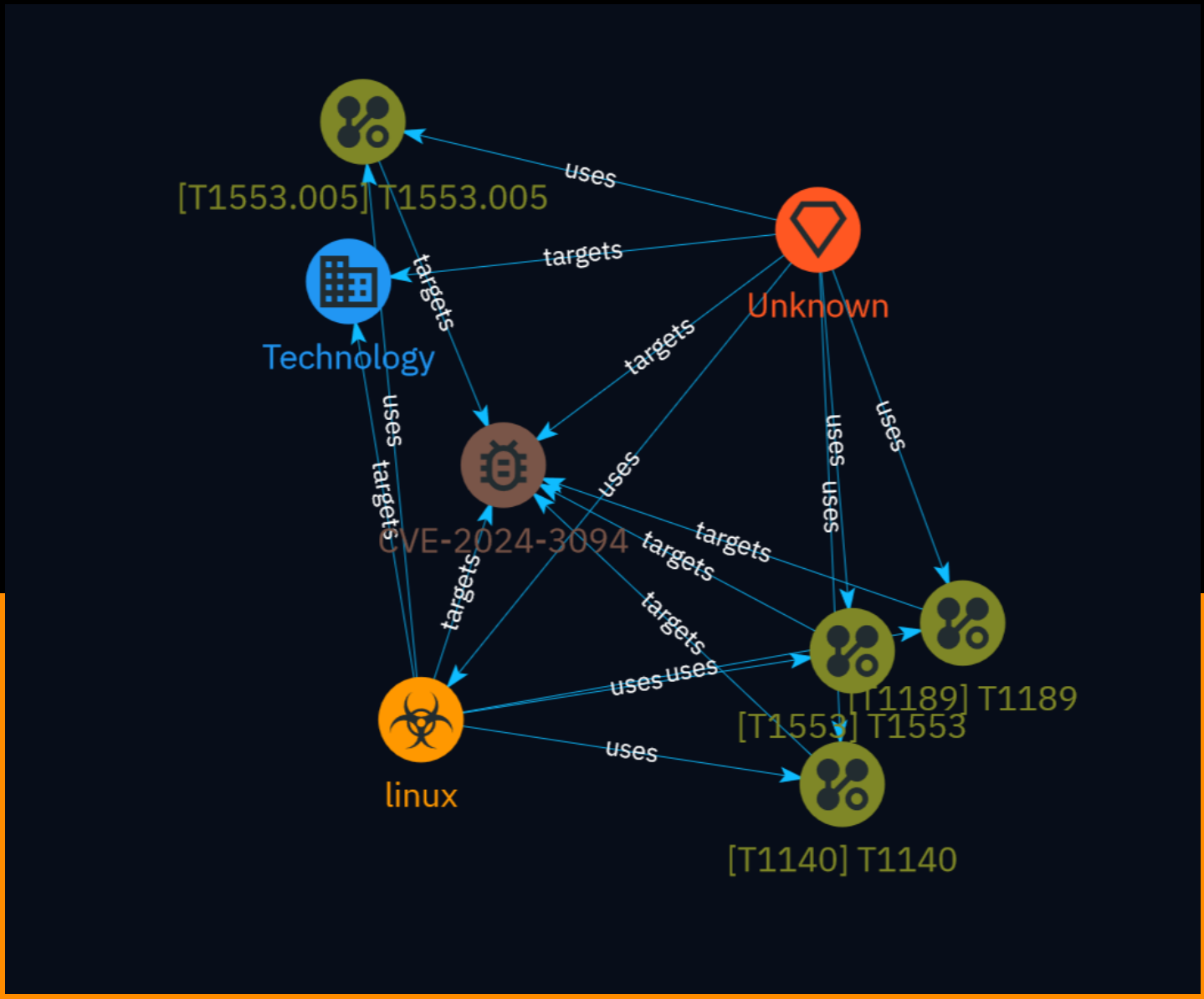
NETMANAGEIT

Intelligence Report

XZ Utils Backdoor | Threat Actor Planned to Inject Further Vulnerabilities



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Overview

Description

In March 2024, details emerged about a backdoor in the XZ compression libraries used by Linux distributions. The backdoor specifically targeted Debian and Fedora distributions. Analysis shows the threat actor made changes between versions that suggest plans to inject additional vulnerabilities without raising suspicion. The operation indicates the risk of supply chain attacks in open source projects, exploiting gaps in reputation processes and audits.

Confidence

This value represents the confidence in the correctness of the data contained within this report.

100 / 100

Content

N/A

Vulnerability

Name
CVE-2024-3094

Intrusion-Set

Name
Unknown

Malware

Name
linux

Attack-Pattern

Name
T1189
ID
T1189
Description
Adversaries may gain access to a system through a user visiting a website over the normal course of browsing. With this technique, the user's web browser is typically targeted for exploitation, but adversaries may also use compromised websites for non-exploitation behavior such as acquiring [Application Access Token](https://attack.mitre.org/techniques/T1550/001). Multiple ways of delivering exploit code to a browser exist (i.e., [Drive-by Target](https://attack.mitre.org/techniques/T1608/004)), including: * A legitimate website is compromised where adversaries have injected some form of malicious code such as JavaScript, iFrames, and cross-site scripting * Script files served to a legitimate website from a publicly writeable cloud storage bucket are modified by an adversary * Malicious ads are paid for and served through legitimate ad providers (i.e., [Malvertising](https://attack.mitre.org/techniques/T1583/008)) * Built-in web application interfaces are leveraged for the insertion of any other kind of object that can be used to display web content or contain a script that executes on the visiting client (e.g. forum posts, comments, and other user controllable web content). Often the website used by an adversary is one visited by a specific community, such as government, a particular industry, or region, where the goal is to compromise a specific user or set of users based on a shared interest. This kind of targeted campaign is often referred to a strategic web compromise or watering hole attack. There are several known examples of this occurring.(Citation: Shadowserver Strategic Web Compromise) Typical drive-by compromise process: 1. A user visits a website that is used to host the adversary controlled content. 2. Scripts automatically execute, typically searching versions of the browser and plugins for a potentially vulnerable

version. * The user may be required to assist in this process by enabling scripting or active website components and ignoring warning dialog boxes. 3. Upon finding a vulnerable version, exploit code is delivered to the browser. 4. If exploitation is successful, then it will give the adversary code execution on the user's system unless other protections are in place. * In some cases a second visit to the website after the initial scan is required before exploit code is delivered. Unlike [Exploit Public-Facing Application](https://attack.mitre.org/techniques/T1190), the focus of this technique is to exploit software on a client endpoint upon visiting a website. This will commonly give an adversary access to systems on the internal network instead of external systems that may be in a DMZ. Adversaries may also use compromised websites to deliver a user to a malicious application designed to [Steal Application Access Token](https://attack.mitre.org/techniques/T1528)s, like OAuth tokens, to gain access to protected applications and information. These malicious applications have been delivered through popups on legitimate websites.(Citation: Volexity OceanLotus Nov 2017)

Name

T1553

ID

T1553

Description

Adversaries may undermine security controls that will either warn users of untrusted activity or prevent execution of untrusted programs. Operating systems and security products may contain mechanisms to identify programs or websites as possessing some level of trust. Examples of such features would include a program being allowed to run because it is signed by a valid code signing certificate, a program prompting the user with a warning because it has an attribute set from being downloaded from the Internet, or getting an indication that you are about to connect to an untrusted site. Adversaries may attempt to subvert these trust mechanisms. The method adversaries use will depend on the specific mechanism they seek to subvert. Adversaries may conduct [File and Directory Permissions Modification](https://attack.mitre.org/techniques/T1222) or [Modify Registry](https://attack.mitre.org/techniques/T1112) in support of subverting these controls. (Citation: SpectorOps Subverting Trust Sept 2017) Adversaries may also create or steal code signing certificates to acquire trust on target systems.(Citation: Securelist Digital Certificates)(Citation: Symantec Digital Certificates)

Name

T1553.005

ID

T1553.005

Description

Adversaries may abuse specific file formats to subvert Mark-of-the-Web (MOTW) controls. In Windows, when files are downloaded from the Internet, they are tagged with a hidden NTFS Alternate Data Stream (ADS) named `Zone.Identifier` with a specific value known as the MOTW.(Citation: Microsoft Zone.Identifier 2020) Files that are tagged with MOTW are protected and cannot perform certain actions. For example, starting in MS Office 10, if a MS Office file has the MOTW, it will open in Protected View. Executables tagged with the MOTW will be processed by Windows Defender SmartScreen that compares files with an allowlist of well-known executables. If the file is not known/trusted, SmartScreen will prevent the execution and warn the user not to run it.(Citation: Beek Use of VHD Dec 2020)(Citation: Outflank MotW 2020)(Citation: Intezer Russian APT Dec 2020) Adversaries may abuse container files such as compressed/archive (.arj, .gzip) and/or disk image (.iso, .vhd) file formats to deliver malicious payloads that may not be tagged with MOTW. Container files downloaded from the Internet will be marked with MOTW but the files within may not inherit the MOTW after the container files are extracted and/or mounted. MOTW is a NTFS feature and many container files do not support NTFS alternative data streams. After a container file is extracted and/or mounted, the files contained within them may be treated as local files on disk and run without protections.(Citation: Beek Use of VHD Dec 2020) (Citation: Outflank MotW 2020)

Name

T1140

ID

T1140

Description

Adversaries may use [Obfuscated Files or Information](https://attack.mitre.org/techniques/T1027) to hide artifacts of an intrusion from analysis. They may require separate mechanisms to decode or deobfuscate that information depending on how they intend to use it. Methods for doing that include built-in functionality of malware or by using utilities present on the system. One such example is the use of [certutil](https://attack.mitre.org/software/S0160) to decode a remote access tool portable executable file that has been hidden inside a certificate file.(Citation: Malwarebytes Targeted Attack against Saudi Arabia) Another example is using the Windows `copy /b` command to reassemble binary fragments into a malicious payload.(Citation: Carbon Black Obfuscation Sept 2016) Sometimes a user's action may be required to open it for deobfuscation or decryption as part of [User Execution](https://attack.mitre.org/techniques/T1204). The user may also be required to input a password to open a password protected compressed/encrypted file that was provided by the adversary. (Citation: Volexity PowerDuke November 2016)

Sector

Name
Technology
Description
Private entities related to the research, development, manufacturing and distribution of electronics, softwares, computers and products related to information technologies.

External References

- https://www.sentinelone.com/blog/xz-utils-backdoor-threat-actor-planned-to-inject-further-vulnerabilities/
- https://otx.alienvault.com/pulse/6616ff09c09890c0c3ca3e02