New Evil Corp ransomware mimics PayloadBin gang to evade US sanctions

bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-evil-corp-ransomware-mimics-payloadbin-gang-to-evade-us-sanctions/

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The new PayloadBIN ransomware has been attributed to the Evil Corp cybercrime gang, rebranding to evade sanctions imposed by the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

The Evil Corp gang, also known as Indrik Spider and the Dridex gang, started as an affiliate for the ZeuS botnet. Over time, they formed a group that focused on distributing the banking trojan and downloader called Dridex via phishing emails.

As cybergangs started to transition to highly profitable ransomware attacks, Evil Corp launched a ransomware operation called BitPaymer, which was delivered via the Dridex malware in compromised corporate networks.

After being sanctioned by the US government in 2019, ransomware negotiation firms refused to facilitate ransom payments for Evil Corp ransomware attacks to avoid facing fines or legal action from the Treasury Department.

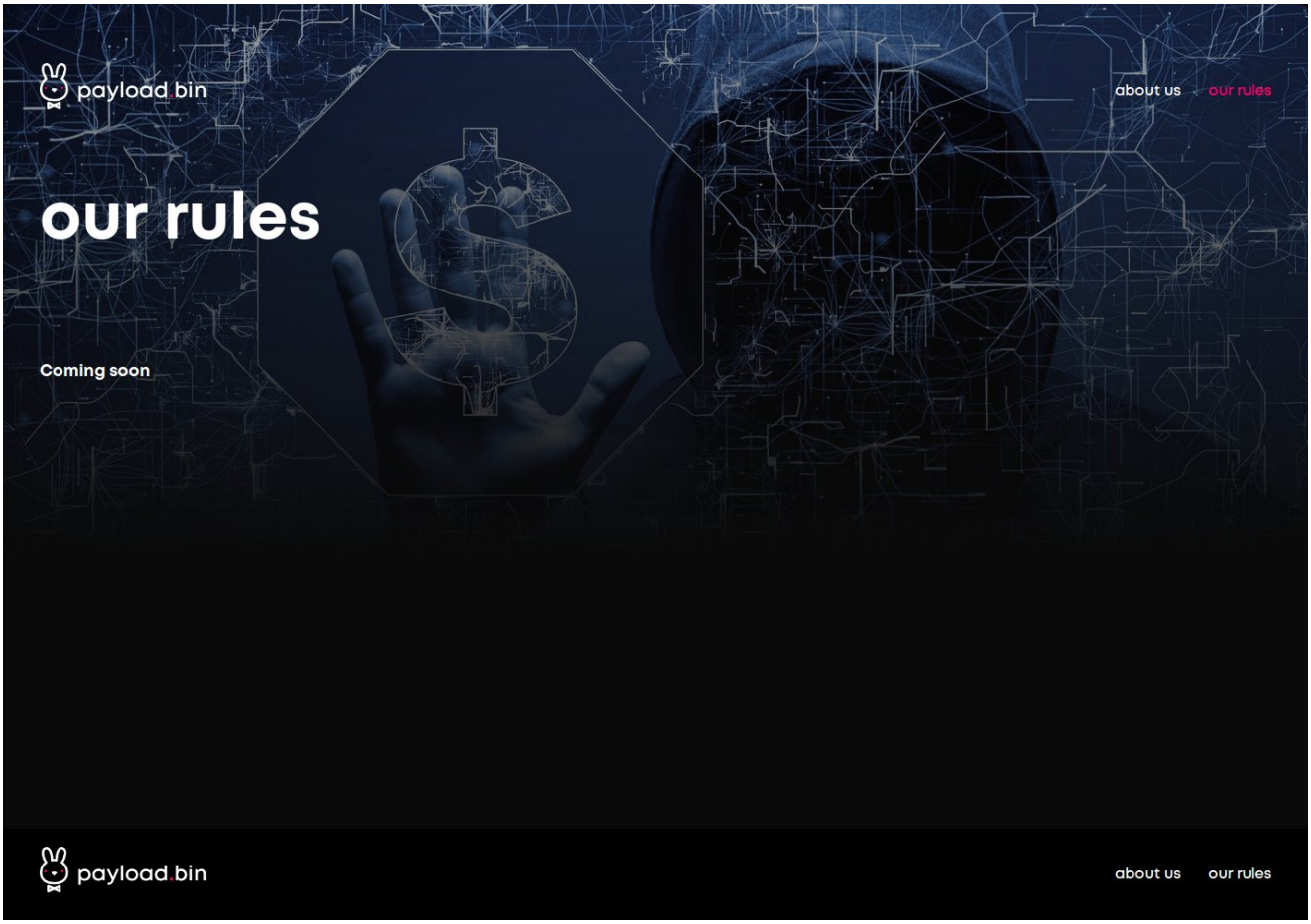
Evil Corp began renaming their ransomware operations to different names such as WastedLocker, Hades, and Phoenix to bypass these sanctions.

The threat actors used Phoenix in an attack on insurance firm CNA.

Evil Corp impersonates Payload Bin hacking group

After breaching the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, DC, and stealing unencrypted data, the Babuk gang said they were quitting ransomware encryption and instead focus on data theft and extortion.

At the end of May, the Babuk data leak site had a design refresh where the ransomware gang rebranded as a new group called 'payload bin,' shown below.

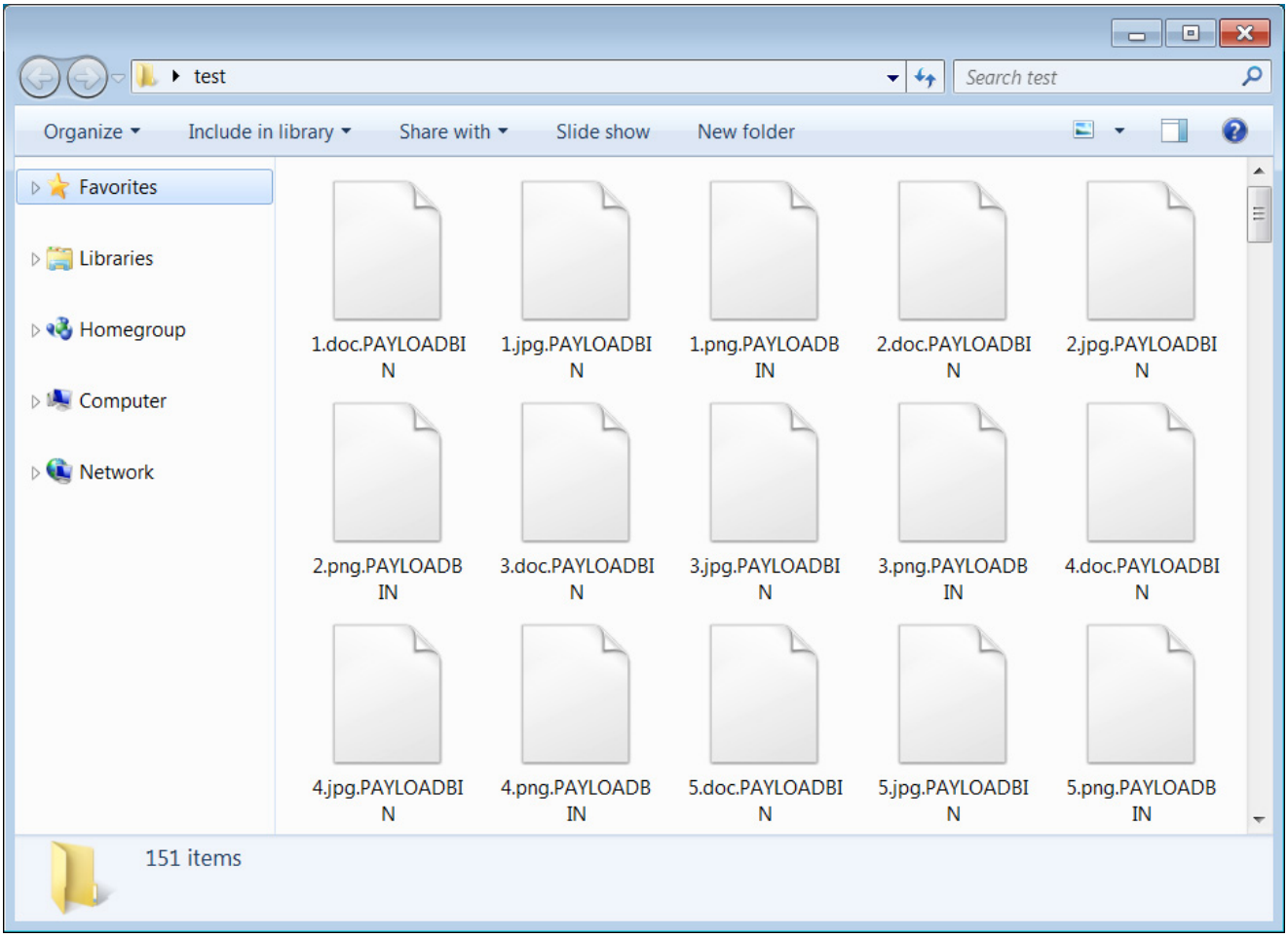


Babuk Tor site turned into Payload Bin site

Source: MalwareHunterTeam

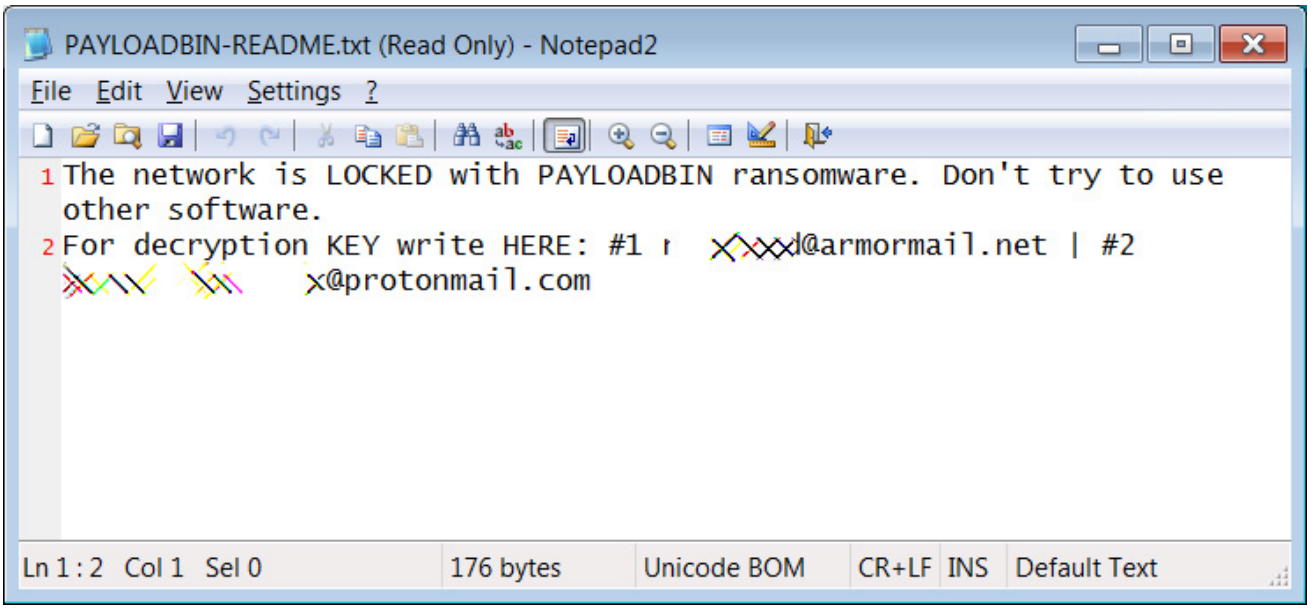
On Thursday, BleepingComputer found a new ransomware sample called PayloadBIN [VirusTotal] that we immediately assumed was related to the rebranding of Babuk Locker.

When installed, the ransomware will append the **.PAYLOADBIN** extension to encrypted files, as shown below.



Files encrypted by PayloadBIN

Furthermore, the ransom note is named '**PAYLOADBIN-README.txt**' and states that the victim's "networks is LOCKED with PAYLOADBIN ransomware."



PayloadBIN ransom note

After finding the sample, BleepingComputer thought Babuk was lying about their intentions to move away from ransomware and rebranded to a new name.

However, after analyzing the new ransomware, both Fabian Wosar of Emsisoft and Michael Gillespie of ID Ransomware confirmed that the ransomware is a rebranding of Evil Corp's previous ransomware operations.

> Looks like EvilCorp is trying to pass off as Babuk this time. As Babuk releases their PayloadBin leak portal, EvilCorp rebrands WastedLocker once again as PayloadBin in an attempt to trick victims into violating OFAC regulations. Sample: https://t.co/k669bbaNyV
>
> — Fabian Wosar (@fwosar) June 5, 2021

> WastedLocker -> Hades -> Phoenix -> PayloadBin, all same malware/group behind it. Probably a few in-between don't care to recall at the moment.
>
> — Michael Gillespie (@demonslay335) June 5, 2021

While discussing why they would have impersonated another cybercrime group, Wosar felt that they saw and took an opportunity to impersonate a hacking group that is not sanctioned.

> "Now they had a gang rebranding and just took the opportunity." - Fabian Wosar.

As the ransomware is now attributed to a sanctioned hacking group, most ransomware negotiation firms will likely not help facilitate payments for victims affected by the PayloadBIN ransomware.

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Lawrence Abrams is the owner and Editor in Chief of BleepingComputer.com. Lawrence's area of expertise includes Windows, malware removal, and computer forensics. Lawrence Abrams is a co-author of the Winternals Defragmentation, Recovery, and Administration Field Guide and the technical editor for Rootkits for Dummies.