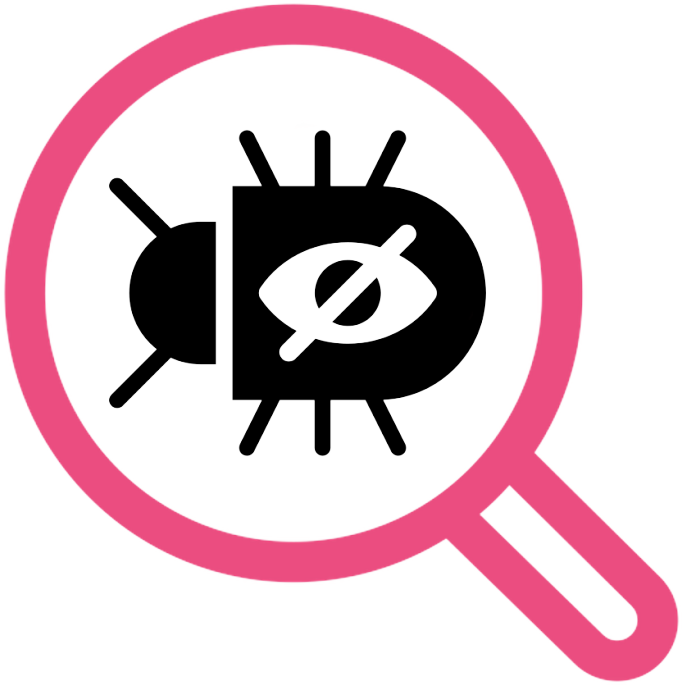

Malware Analysis Report

SikoMode Info-Stealing Malware

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Version 1.0

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1 Executive Summary

File name	sha256sum
unknown.exe	3aca2a08cf296f1845d6171958ef0ffd1c8bdfc3e48bdd34a605cb1f7468213e

Unknown.exe is a sophisticated information-stealing malware that exfiltrates user data byte by byte to an external domain, which is further encrypted with Base64 and RC4 to avoid detection. This Portable Executable is neutered, only stealing one specific image from the Desktop, but has the potential to steal a significant amount of sensitive data. Additionally, the binary covers its tracks through self-deletion once it has finished its operations.

Symptoms of infection include an RC4 password written to Public directory of Users, GET requests to the malicious domain whilst exfiltrating, and an initial call to the kill switch domain. Yara rules have been written and included in the Appendix.

2 High-Level Technical Summary

Unknown.exe first checks for internet connectivity to the "Hxxp://update.ec12-4-109-278-3-ubuntu20-04.local/" domain, then creates a password for the RC4 encryption algorithm, which encrypts the Cosmo.jpg image file from the Desktop. The data is sent byte by byte to "Hxxp://cdn.altimiter.local/feed?post=", until completion, where the binary will then delete itself. If at any point, internet connection is lost, the binary will immediately delete itself.

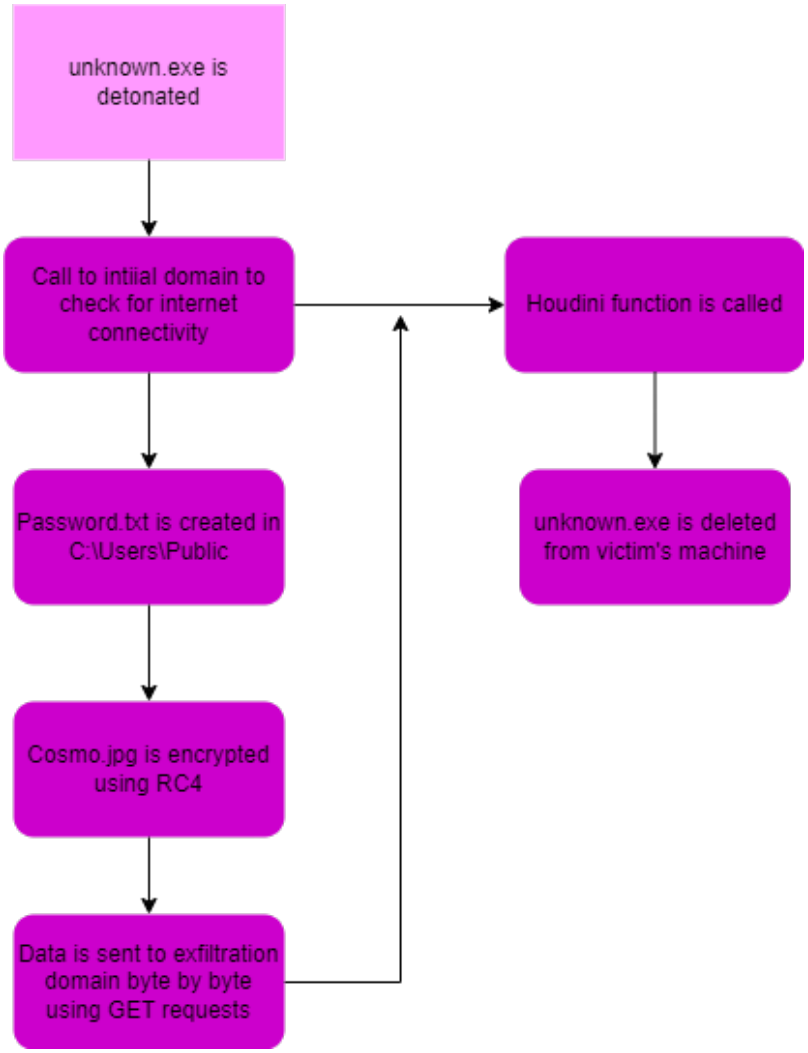

Figure 1: flow diagram of Unknown.exe

3 Malware Composition

File name	sha256sum	VirusTotal Result
unknown.exe	3aca2a08cf296f1845d6171958ef0ffd1c8bdfc3e48bdd34a605cb1f7468213e	43/71
password.txt	1eebfcf7b68b2b4ffe17696800740e199acf207afb5514bc51298c2fe7584410	0/71

Table 1: Sha256 and VirusTotal results for Malware components

3.1 unknown.exe

An information-stealing Portable Executable written in Nim for x64 systems, which checks for internet connectivity to "Hxxp://update.ec12-4-109-278-3-ubuntu20-04.local/", and then proceed to exfiltrate data to `Hxxp://cdn.altimiter.local/feed?post=` until complete, upon which the file is deleted.

3.2 password.txt

A simple text file written to `C:\Users\Public\` that contains the word "SikoMode", used as the password for the RC4 algorithm for stealing data.

4 Basic Static Analysis

Initial inspection of the binary reveals it to be a Portable Executable using file command, which was verified by the signature "MZ" at the start of the Hex data. Detect it Easy was used to find if the binary was packed, which was confident that no packing was involved, and with consistent entropy, as seen in Figure 2.

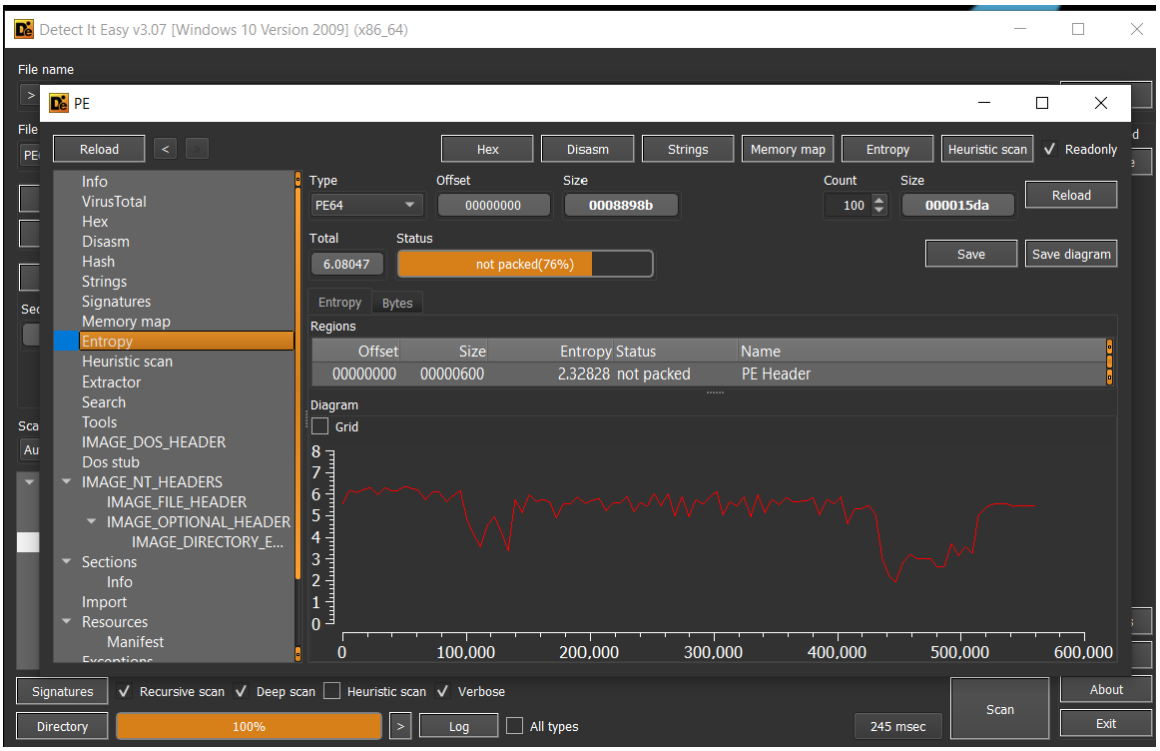

Figure 2: Detect it Easy stating the binary is not packed

The strings were particularly revealing, firstly that the binary is written in NIM, a light and fast option favoured by Malware authors. Secondly, a suspicious URL is present, that seems to be exfiltrating data, hinting that this could be an information stealing malware. There is further evidence of this theory, with several strings relating to HTTP setup, and the specific location of "cosmo.jpg"

```
@httpclient.nim(1082, 13) `not url.contains({'\r', '\n'})` url shouldn't contain any newline characters
@http://cdn.altimiter.local/feed?post=
@Nim httpclient/1.6.2
@Desktop\cosmo.jpeg
@SikoMode
@iterators.nim(240, 11) `len(a) == L` the length of the seq changed while iterating over it
@ccc
@Mozilla/5.0
@C:\Users\Public\passwrd.txt
Unknown error
```

Figure 3: Strings result showing NIM coding language, as well as other evidence

PE Studio shows the imports of the binary, which seem benign, but could be used for malicious purposes, such as VirtualAlloc.

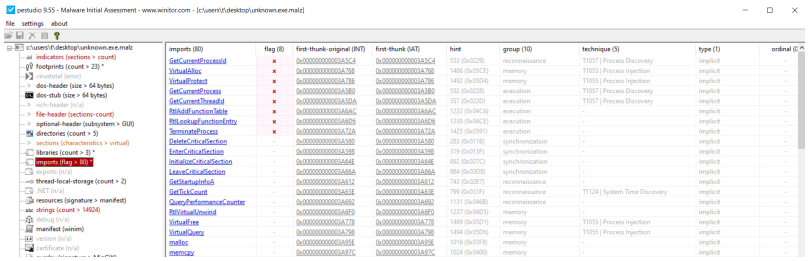

Figure 4: Imports revealed with PE Studio

Capa, Mandiant's malware feature identifier, was also ran against the binary, resulting in Figure 5, showing that there are anti-analysis techniques at play with checking for breakpoints. Additionally, there appears to be a function for checking the validity of payment cards, suggesting as to what this piece of malware intends to steal.

Capability	Namespace
check for software breakpoints	anti-analysis/anti-debugging/debugger-detection
compiled with Nim	compiler/nim
validate payment card number using luhn algorithm	data-manipulation/checksum/luhn
encode data using Base64	data-manipulation/encoding/base64
reference Base64 string	data-manipulation/encoding/base64
hash data using murmur3 (2 matches)	data-manipulation/hashing/murmur
contain a thread local storage (.tls) section	executable/pe/section/tls
query environment variable	host-interaction/environment-variable
read file on Windows (2 matches)	host-interaction/file-system/read
write file on Windows (4 matches)	host-interaction/file-system/write
get thread local storage value	host-interaction/process
allocate RWX memory	host-interaction/process/inject
terminate process	host-interaction/process/terminate
link function at runtime on Windows (2 matches)	linking/runtime-linking
enumerate PE sections (4 matches)	load-code/pe
parse PE header (2 matches)	load-code/pe

Figure 5: Capa results for unknown.exe

5 Basic Dynamic Analysis

The initial detonation of the binary, without an internet connection, resulted in the file deleting itself, as caught by Procmon in Figure 6. This is evidence of a kill switch in the program, likely to catch an analysis environment, or an inadequate victim. Clearly, network connection is a key aspect of this piece of malware.

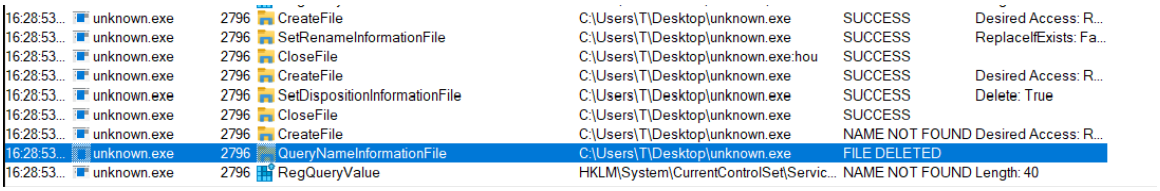

Figure 6: File deletion if the binary does not have internet connection

Wireshark caught two interesting pieces of evidence from the network traffic, the first being to a suspicious domain "Hxxp://update.ec12-4-109-278-3-ubuntu20-04.local/", as seen in Figure 7, which was also spotted in the host side network traffic when detonating without internet. This may the key variable for the kill switch, where the binary sends a request to this website and either continues or deletes itself based on the result.

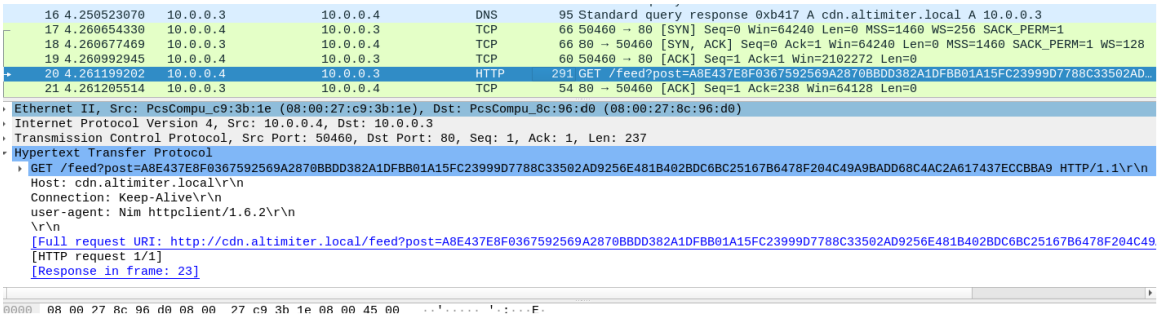

Figure 7: Intial domain that unknown.exe calls to

Secondly, there were repetitive HTTP GET requests to a different URL of "Hxxp://cdn.altimiter.local/"LONG DATA"", with unique encoded data in each request. This is the same URL as found in the strings and appeared to be using some form of encoding.

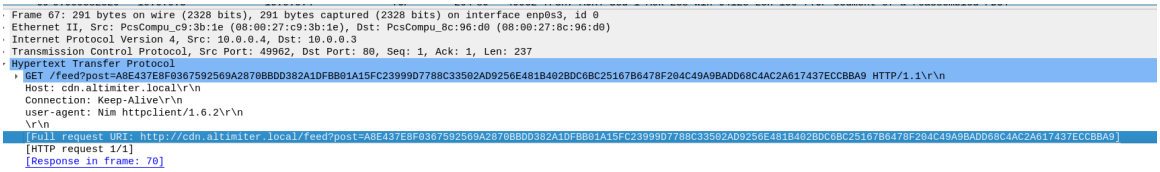

Figure 8: HTTP GET requests to suspicious domain, including posting of encoded information

Procmon was able to detect new evidence with the internet connection, notably the creation of a password text file in the `C:\Users\Public\` directory, which simply contained the word "SikoMode". The binary then accesses an image from the desktop, being `cosmo.jpg` which was highlighted in the strings, and then creates a connection, all of which can be seen in Figure 9. Procmon also caught the binary snooping into sensitive folders, like internet history, making it highly likely that this piece of malware is intended to steal a lot of the victim's information.

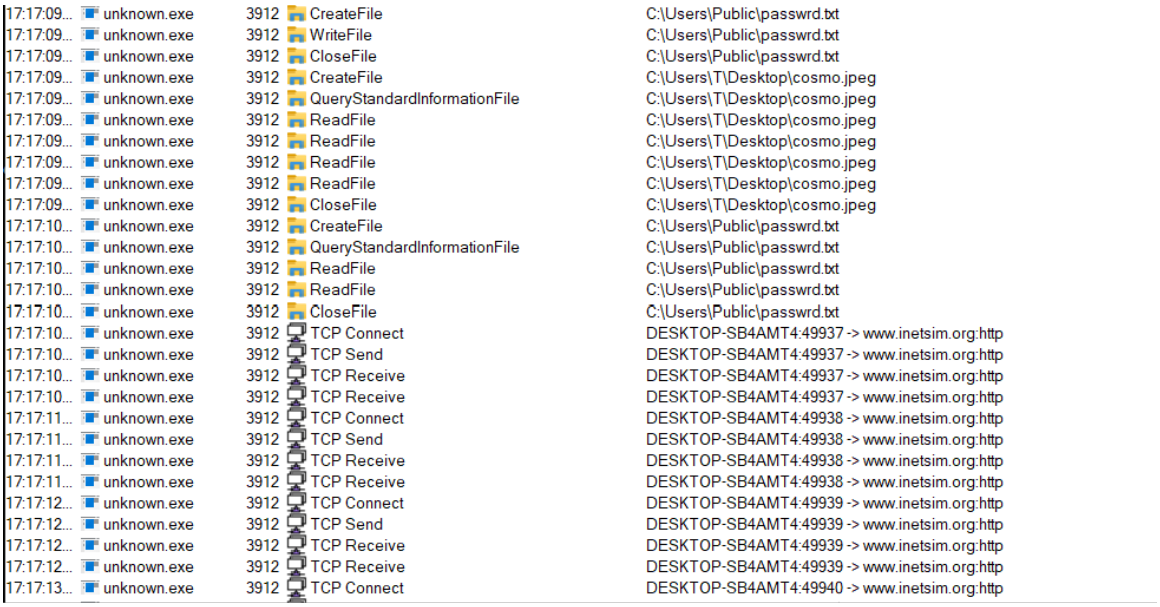

Figure 9: Password file creation, accessing of an image, and sending of information, all from Procmon

This evidence is intriguing, with hints to exfiltration of data to a suspicious domain, using GET requests to mask the sending of data.

6 Advanced Static Analysis

Unknown.exe was loaded into Cutter for disassembly, which revealed how the kill switch, named "Houdini", works. Essentially, there is an initial check for internet connectivity with the domain "Hxxp://update.ec12-4-109-278-3-ubuntu20-04.local/" and routinely checks for loss of connection whilst exfiltrating data. If the network is lost at any point "Houdini" is called which deletes the binary from the system, this function will always be called once `cosmo.jpg` has finished sending, thus covering the tracks of the malware.

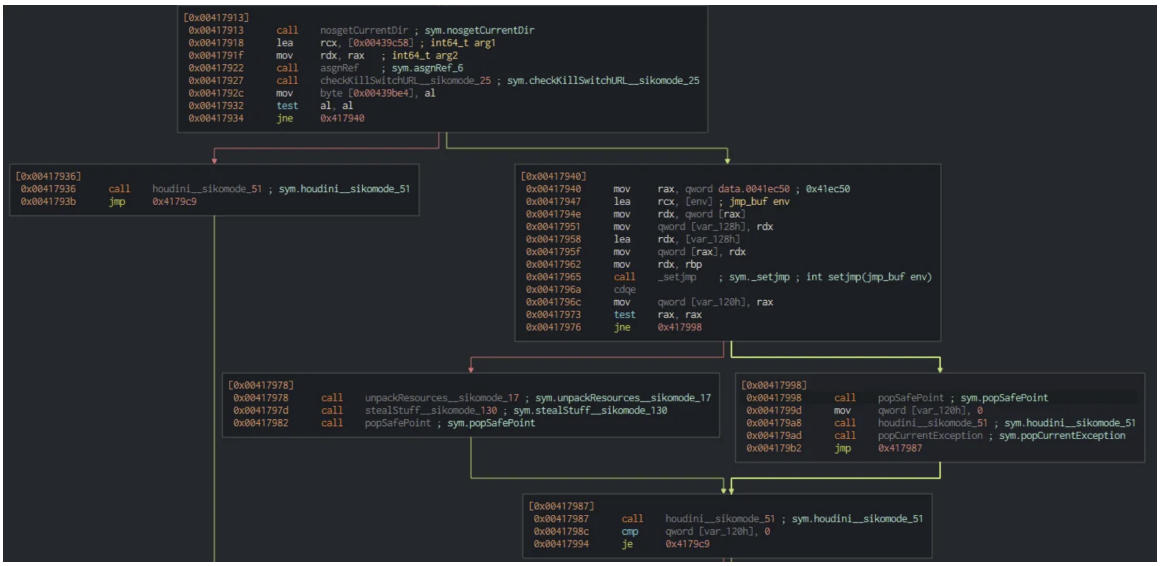

Figure 10: Cutter showing main functions for Unknown.exe

Looking through the functions of Cutter also revealed the usage of RC4, which is an encryption algorithm, showing the method of sending data. The "SikoMode" found in the password text file is certainly the password for the RC4 algorithm, with a further encoding in base64. This is a very novel way to steal data, and very difficult to restructure the data whilst in transit, further helping to cover tracks.

7 Indicators of Compromise

7.1 Host Based Indicators

- **Suspicious Strings -** Several suspicious strings will be present in the binary that can identify it from benign programs.
- **password.txt file -** a password text file will appear in the `C:\Users\Public\` directory after detonation, which is the RC4 password.

7.2 Network Based Indicators

- **Initial call to suspicious domain -** There will be an initial call to `Hxxp://update.ec12-4-109-278-3-ubuntu20-04.local/` to verify internet connection once the binary is detonated.
- **Posting of stolen data -** Whilst data is being exfiltrated, there will be continuous GET requests to `Hxxp://cdn.altimiter.local/feed?post= "LONG DATA"`.

8 Rules and Signatures

Yara rules were written for the binary, which were effective at catching both pre-detonation and post, with checking for the "SikoMode" string. The rules can be seen in Figure 11, the full version can be found in the Appendix.

```
rule sikomode_yara {

    meta:
        last_updated = "2024-02-23"
        author = "Thomas MacKinon"
        description = "Yara rules for Unknown.exe, aka SikoMode information stealer"

    strings:

        $URL1 = "http://cdn.altimiter.local/feed?post=" ascii
        $lang = "nim" // Common Malware Language
        $PE_magic_byte = "MZ" // This is the identifier of a Portable Executable, hinting at malware
        $URL2 = "http://update.ec12-4-109-278-3-ubuntu20-04.local/" ascii
        $encrypt = "toRC4" ascii
        $sikomode = "SikoMode" ascii
        $houdini = "houdini" ascii

    condition:

        $PE_magic_byte at 0 and //At position 0 meaning start,
        (
            (
                $lang and
                (
                    $houdini or
                    $encrypt
                )
            ) or
            (
                $URL1 or $URL2
            ) or
            (
                $sikomode
            )

        )


}
```

Figure 11: Yara rules for Unknown.exe

Appendix

Yara Rules

```
rule sikomode_yara {

    meta:
        last_updated = "2024-02-23"
        author = "Thomas MacKinon"
        description = "Yara rules for Unknown.exe, aka SikoMode
        information stealer"

    strings:

        $URL1 = "http://cdn.altimiter.local/feed?post=" ascii
        $lang = "nim" // Common Malware Language
        $PE_magic_byte = "MZ" // This is the identifier of a
        Portable Executable, hinting at malware
        $URL2 = "http://update.ec12-4-109-278-3-ubuntu20-04.local/"
        ascii
        $encrypt = "toRC4" ascii
        $sikomode = "SikoMode" ascii
        $houdini = "houdini" ascii

    condition:

        $PE_magic_byte at 0 and //At position 0 meaning start,
        (
            (
                $lang and
                (
                    $houdini or
                    $encrypt
                )
            ) or
            (
                $URL1 or $URL2
            ) or
            (
                $sikomode
```

)

)

}