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Red

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THREAT ADVISORY

ACTOR REPORT

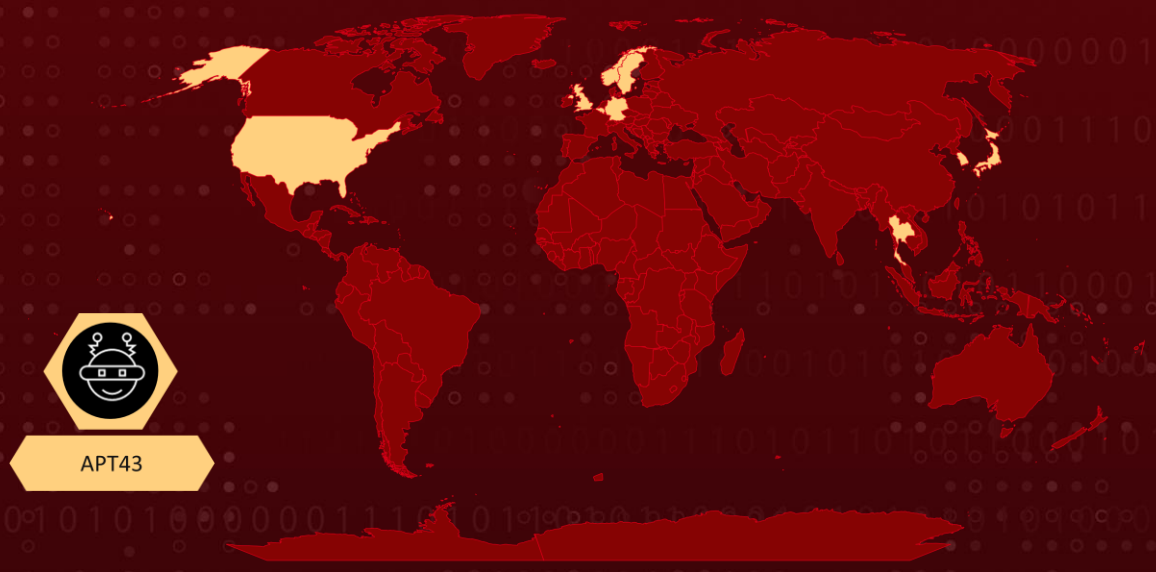
Unraveling North Korea's Cyber Espionage Group APT43 Targeting Geopolitical Interests

Date of Publication	Admiralty code	TA Number
April 4, 2023	A1	TA2023169

Summary

First Appearance: June 2018
Actor Name: APT43
Target Countries: United States, Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Thailand, South Korea, Japan
Target Sectors: NGOs, Education, Governments, Media and entertainment, Construction, Materials, Defense, Aerospace, Telecoms, High-tech , Pharmaceuticals, Consulting and Professional services

Actor Map



Actor Details

#1 APT43 is a cyber espionage group that serves North Korean regime interests by targeting government organizations, academics, and think tanks focused on Korean peninsula geopolitical issues, mainly in South Korea and the US. The group uses social engineering tactics and moderately advanced technical capabilities, funding its primary mission of collecting strategic intelligence through cybercrime operations. To purchase operational tooling and infrastructure, the group creates numerous fake personas and cover identities.

#2 The group collects strategic intelligence that aligns with North Korea's geopolitical interests and engages in financially motivated cybercrime. APT43's intelligence collection priorities align with North Korea's foreign intelligence service, the Reconnaissance General Bureau, and focus on foreign policy and nuclear security issues that support North Korea's strategic and nuclear ambitions. In 2021, the group also targeted health-related verticals to support pandemic response efforts.

#3 APT43 is highly active in phishing and credential collection campaigns and coordinates with other North Korean cyber espionage groups. The group targets regions including South Korea, the US, Japan, and Europe, with campaigns aimed at enabling North Korea's weapons program. The group's activities strongly correlate with geopolitical developments that affect North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and the ruling elite and closely align with state interests.

Actor Group

NAME	ORIGIN	TARGET COUNTRIES	TARGET INDUSTRIES
APT43	North Korea **MOTIVE** Information theft & Espionage; State-sponserd	United States, Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Thailand, South Korea, Japan	NGOs, Education, Governments, Media and entertainment, Construction, Materials, Defense, Aerospace, Telecoms, High-tech , Pharmaceuticals, Consulting and Professional services

Recommendations

Security Leaders

Phishing simulations and routine education and awareness training and communications rarely account for MFA fatigue and web browser hygiene. Integrate and communicate all lessons learned.

Security Engineers

- **Uni5 Users:** This is an actionable threat advisory in HivePro Uni5. Prioritize and block all indicators attributed to the threat actor through your Command Center. Test your controls with Uni5's Breach & Attack Simulation.
- **All Engineers:** Refer to and action upon the 'Potential MITRE ATT&CK TTPs' & 'Indicators of Compromise (IoC)' on the following pages.

Potential MITRE ATT&CK TTPs

TA0042 Resource Development	TA0001 Initial Access	TA0002 Execution	TA0003 Persistence
TA0005 Defense Evasion	TA0006 Credential Access	TA0007 Discovery	TA0009 Collection
TA0011 Command and Control	TA0010 Exfiltration	TA0040 Impact	T1566 Phishing
T1566.001 Spearphishing Attachment	T1566.002 Spearphishing Link	T1583 Acquire Infrastructure	T1583.003 Virtual Private Server
T1584 Compromise Infrastructure	T1588 Obtain Capabilities	T1588.003 Code Signing Certificates	T1588.004 Digital Certificates
T1608 Stage Capabilities	T1608.003 Install Digital Certificate	T1608.005 Link Target	T1047 Windows Management Instrumentation

T1053 Scheduled Task/Job	**T1053.005** Scheduled Task	**T1059** Command and Scripting Interpreter	**T1059.001** PowerShell
T1059.003 Windows Command Shell	**T1059.005** Visual Basic	**T1059.007** JavaScript	**T1129** Shared Modules
T1203 Exploitation for Client Execution	**T1204** User Execution	**T1204.001** Malicious Link	**T1204.002** Malicious File
T1569 System Services	**T1569.002** Service Execution	**T1071** Application Layer Protocol	**T1071.001** Web Protocols
T1071.004 DNS	**T1090** Proxy	**T1090.003** Multi-hop Proxy	**T1095** Non-Application Layer Protocol
T1102 Web Service	**T1102.002** Bidirectional Communication	**T1105** Ingress Tool Transfer	**T1132** Data Encoding
T1132.001 Standard Encoding	**T1573** Encrypted Channel	**T1573.002** Asymmetric Cryptography	**T1007** System Service Discovery
T1010 Application Window Discovery	**T1012** Query Registry	**T1016** System Network Configuration Discovery	**T1033** System Owner/User Discovery
T1057 Process Discovery	**T1082** System Information Discovery	**T1083** File and Directory Discovery	**T1087** Account Discovery
T1518 Software Discovery	**T1614** System Location Discovery	**T1614.001** System Language Discovery	**T1056** Input Capture
T1056.001 Keylogging	**T1113** Screen Capture	**T1115** Clipboard Data	**T1213** Data from Information Repositories
T1560 Archive Collected Data	**T1560.001** Archive via Utility	**T1137** Office Application Startup	**T1505** Server Software Component
T1505.003 Web Shell	**T1543** Create or Modify System Process	**T1543.003** Windows Service	**T1547** Boot or Logon Autostart Execution
T1547.001 Registry Run Keys / Startup Folder	**T1547.004** Winlogon Helper DLL	**T1547.009** Shortcut Modification	**T1027** Obfuscated Files or Information

T1027.001 Binary Padding	T1027.002 Software Packing	T1027.005 Indicator Removal from Tools	T1027.009 Embedded Payloads
T1036 Masquerading	T1036.001 Invalid Code Signature	T1036.007 Double File Extension	T1055 Process Injection
T1055.001 Dynamic-link Library Injection	T1055.003 Thread Execution Hijacking	T1070 Indicator Removal	T1070.004 File Deletion
T1070.006 Timestomp	T1112 Modify Registry	T1134 Access Token Manipulation	T1140 Deobfuscate/Decode Files or Information
T1218 System Binary Proxy Execution	T1218.005 Mshta	T1497 Virtualization/Sandbox Evasion	T1497.001 System Checks
T1548 Abuse Elevation Control Mechanism	T1548.002 Bypass User Account Control	T1553 Subvert Trust Controls	T1553.002 Code Signing
T1564 Hide Artifacts	T1564.003 Hidden Window	T1564.007 VBA Stomping	T1620 Reflective Code Loading
T1622 Debugger Evasion	T1489 Service Stop	T1529 System Shutdown/Reboot	T1020 Automated Exfiltration
T1110 Brute Force	T1555 Credentials from Password Stores	T1555.003 Credentials from Web Browsers	

Indicator of Compromise (IOCs)

TYPE	VALUE
MD5	982fc9ded34c85469269eacb1cb4ef26 de9a8c26049699dbbd5d334a8566d38d 144bd7fd423edc3965cb0161a8b82ab2 cd83a51bec0396f4a0fd563ca9c929d7 33df74cbb60920d63fe677c6f90b63f9 ebaf83302dc78d96d5993830430bd169 b846fa8bc3a55fa0490a807186a8ece9 f92a75b98249fa61cf62e8b63cb68fae 1dcd5afeccfe2040895686eefa0a9629 5fe4da6a1d82561a19711e564adc7589

TYPE	VALUE
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TYPE	VALUE
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TYPE	VALUE
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References

https://mandiant.widen.net/s/zvmfw5fnjs/apt43-report

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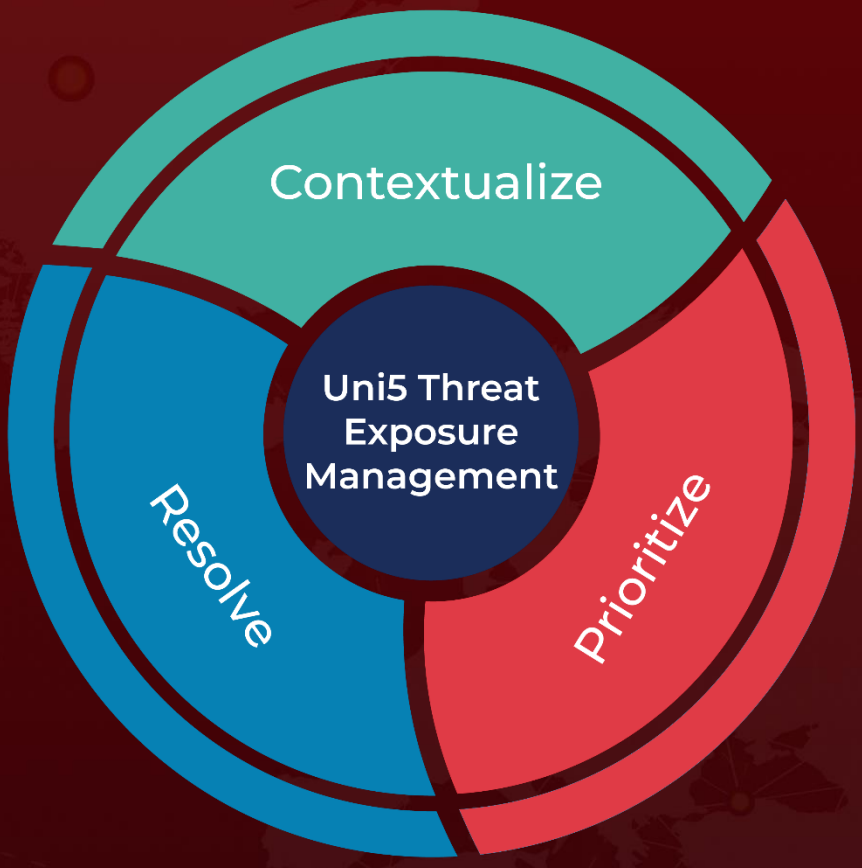

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