## Risky BIZness Into the DNS Wilderness

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#### UC San Diego



#### **About Me**

- ☐ Postdoctoral Researcher @ Stanford University
- Recent PhD @ UC San Diego
- Work in "Empirical Security"
  - ☐ Build systems to collect, and analyze data
  - Use insights to build better protocols, and systems
- ☐ Focus on the core Internet Infrastructure
  - □ DNS, BGP, and TLS (CAs)

## The Problem: Attackers Target DNS Infrastructure to Hijack Domains

In 2014, Snecma (now Safran Aircraft Engine Company) targeted by attackers



The French Connection: French Aerospace-Focused CVE-2014-0322 Attack Shares Similarities with 2012 Capstone Turbine Activity

#### BUSINESS NEWS

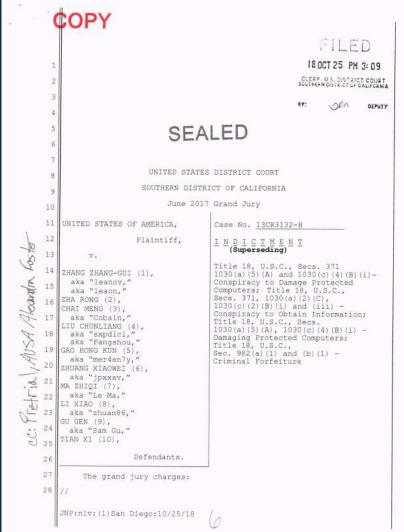
FEBRUARY 18, 2014 / 12:29 PM / UPDATED 9 YEARS AGO

Exclusive: France's Snecma targeted by hackers

- researcher

#### **Broader Context**

Part of a larger coordinated attack against *aerospace* companies.



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- Part of a larger coordinated attack against *aerospace* companies.
- Use of many known tactics
  - ☐ Spear phishing
  - Malware
  - Doppelganger Domains

c. Members of the conspiracy used a variety of computer intrusion tactics, alone or in combination, including but not limited to:

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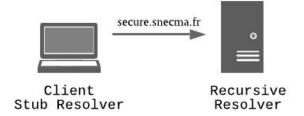
26

- Spear phishing, the use of fictitious emails embedded with malicious code (malware) that facilitated access to the email recipient's computer and connected network,
- Malware, including but not limited to certain malware, such as Sakula and IsSpace, that was uniquely used by members of the conspiracy during the period of the conspiracy,
- iii. Doppelganger Domain Names, the creation and use of domain names that closely resemble legitimate domain names to trick unwitting recipients of spear phishing emails,
- iv. Dynamic Domain Name Service (DNS) Accounts, a service of DNS providers that allows users, including members of the conspiracy, to register one or more domain names under a single account and frequently change the Internet Protocol (IP) address assigned to a registered domain name.
- v. Domain Hijacking, the compromise of domain registrars in which one or more members of the conspiracy redirected a victim company's domain name at a domain registrar to a malicious IP address in order to facilitate computer intrusions.
- vi. Watering Hole Attacks, the installation of malware on legitimate web pages of victim companies to facilitate intrusions of computers that visited those pages, and
- vii. Co-Opting Victim Company Employees, the use of insiders at victim companies to facilitate computer intrusions or monitor investigations of computer intrusion activity.

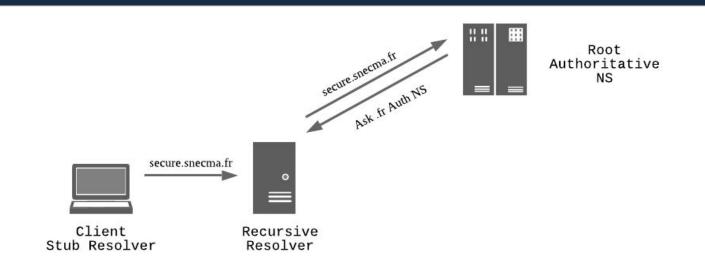
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		+	uniquely used by members o	
v.	Domain Hijacking, the	compromise	of domain	racy,
37 75	Johnson Harjacking, che	COMPTOMITSE	OI domain	creation and use
				g recipients of
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	conspiracy redirected a victim company's domain allows users,			
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	nome at a desail	,		single account
	name at a domain registr	ar to a r	malicious IP	et Protocol (IP)
	2		1	1 domain name.
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	intrusions,			company's domain
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				investigations of

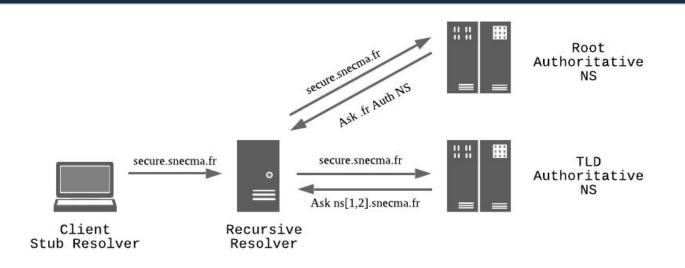
## Domain Hijack In Practice

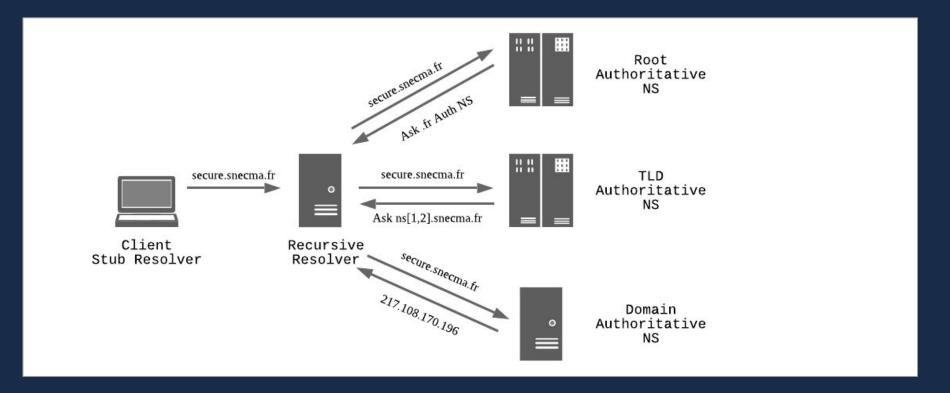
Client Logging Into "Secure" Network...

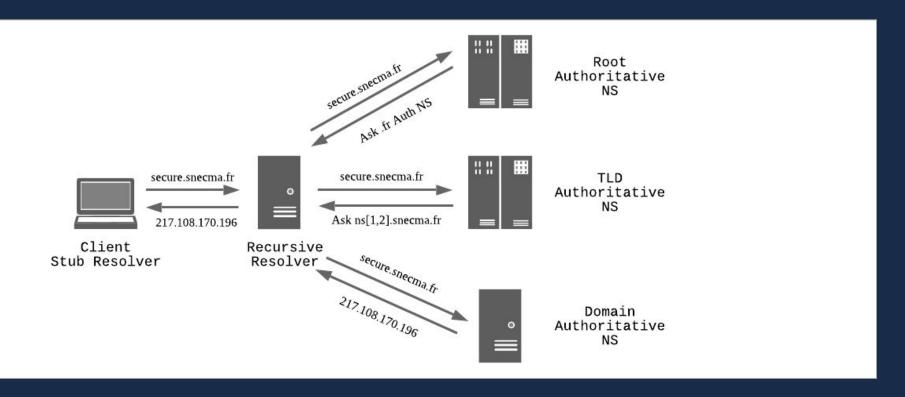


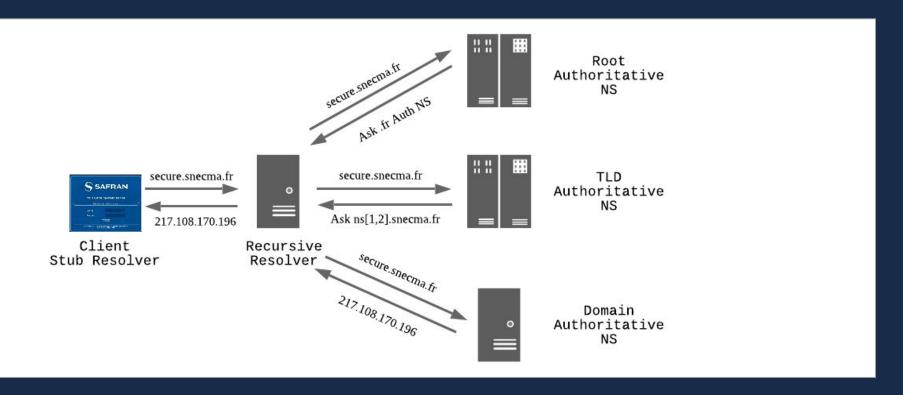




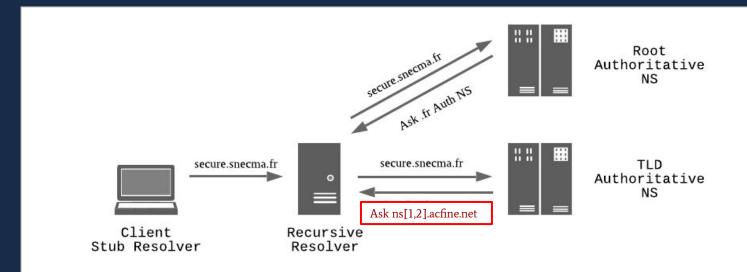




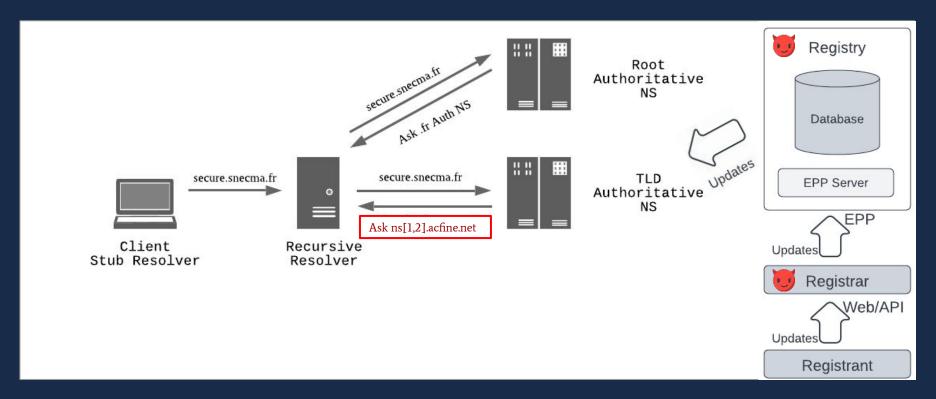




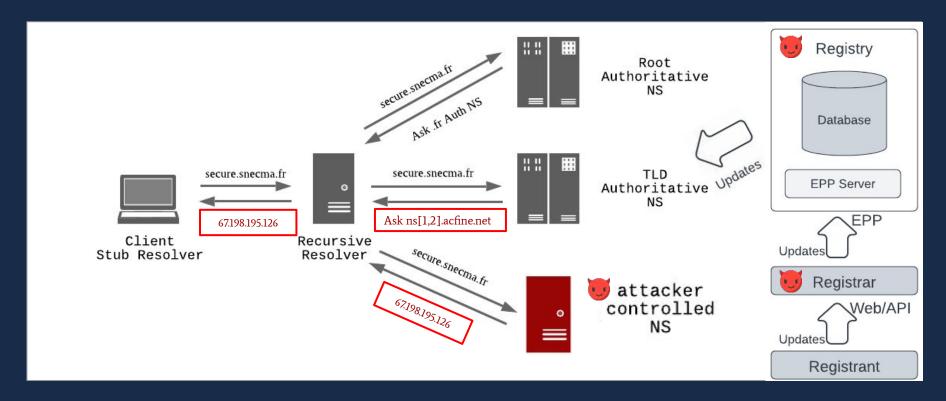
#### Malicious DNS Delegation Update (Circa 2014)



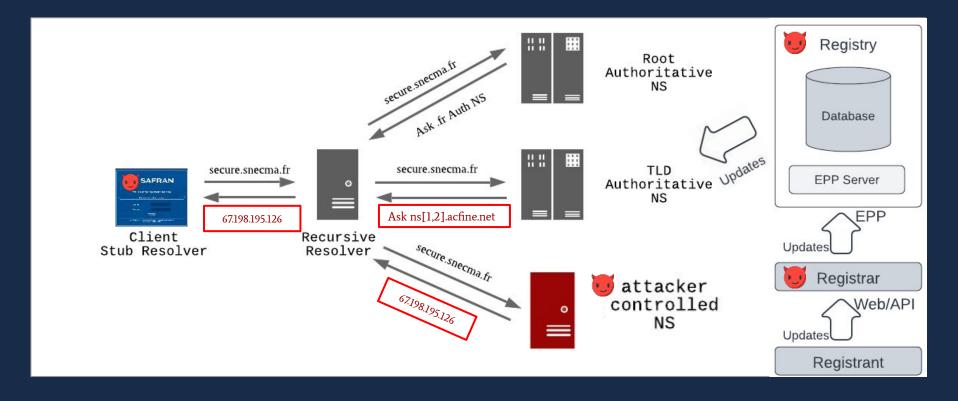
#### Attackers Target DNS Delegation Update Mechanism



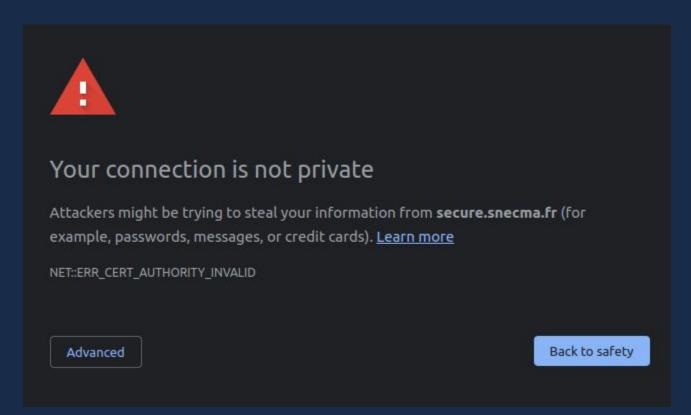
#### **Attackers Redirect All Users**



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#### What about TLS Certificates?



## Implicit Trust Dependence

- ☐ TLS protects against AiTM (adversary-in-the-middle) attacks
- Automated TLS Certificate Issuance using "Domain Validation" uses DNS to authenticate domain "ownership"

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- Attacker controls DNS → can obtainTLS certificates for the domain
  - Malicious but legitimate!



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- Automated TLS Certificate Issuance using "Domain Validation" uses DNS to authenticate domain "ownership"
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CT Logs allow for auditing!

## Anatomy of a Targeted Domain Hijack

- ☐ Acquire ability to control DNS delegations
  - Hijacks characterized by multiple brief updates to evade detection
  - ☐ Attacker can bypass TLS, and DNSSEC protections

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  - ☐ Infrastructure uses maliciously obtained TLS certificate
  - Practically, indistinguishable from legitimate infrastructure

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- Set up infrastructure to mimic target domain
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  - ☐ Practically, indistinguishable from legitimate infrastructure
- ☐ Harvest credentials or compromise redirected users to infiltrate target organization

#### **Learning New Tactics...**

- Attack adapted from a previous attack targeting NYTimes.
- ☐ Attack targets the *same* registrar three months later.

The New York Times Web site was taken down by DNS hijacking. Here's what that means.

The Washington Post

- y. On August 28, 2013, LIU sent MA a link to a news article that explained how the Syrian Electronic Army (SEA) had hacked into the computer systems of Company L, a domain registrar, in order to facilitate intrusions.
- on December 3, 2013, members of the conspiracy used the same method as the SEA to hack into the computer systems of Company L and hijack domain names of Company H, which were hosted by Company L.
  - On December 3, 2013, a member of the conspiracy installed Sakula malware on Company H's computer network and caused the malware to send a beacon to a doppelganger domain name under the control of one or more members of the conspiracy. Notably, the doppelganger domain name was designed to resemble the real domain of Company A, which had previously been hacked by members of the conspiracy.

#### DNS Hijacking Abuses Trust In Core Internet Service



# Global DNS Hijacking Campaign: DNS Record Manipulation at

Scale

DNSpionage Campaign Targets Middle East

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Washington, DC 20528





**Emergency Directive 19-01** 

Original Release Date: January 22, 2019

Applies to: All Federal Executive Branch Departments and Agencies, Except for the Department of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, and Office of the Director of

National Intelligence

FROM:

Christopher C. Krebs

Director, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

Department of Homeland Security

CC:

Russell T. Vought

Director (Acting), Office of Management and Budget

SUBJECT:

Mitigate DNS Infrastructure Tampering

#### The Goal

Construct a methodology to retroactively identify targeted DNS infrastructure hijacks as a third-party.

#### The "Master" Plan

Phase 1: Gather Data

Phase 2: ??????

Phase 3: Profit!!! Identify Hijacks



## "Now you have TWO problems"

#### **Mystery Nameserver Change?**

White County, Georgia Official Domain: whitecounty.net

## whitecounty.net

#### Nameservers

ns1.hemc.net ns2.internetemc.com

#### Nameservers

ns1.hemc.net

ns2.internetemc1aj2tkdy.biz

- ☐ internetemclaj2tkdy.biz is not registered...
- **☐** So *anyone* can register the domain to be the authoritative nameserver
- We find thousands of similar domains. What happened here?

#### The Larger Picture

Domain Hijacks

Targeted Hijacks

**Opportunistic Hijacks** 

**Retroactive Identification: IMC 2022** 

Risky BIZness: IMC 2021

#### The Larger Picture

Domain Hijacks

**Targeted Hijacks** 

Retroactive Identification: IMC 2022

**Opportunistic Hijacks** 

Risky BIZness: IMC 2021

## **Challenges in Identifying Targeted Hijacks**

Challenge #1: Delineating malicious updates from legitimate updates is hard

#### Malicious but looks Legitimate...

## stlouisfed.org

#### Nameservers

ns-533.awsdns-02.net ns-482.awsdns-60.com

#### Nameservers

ns1.stlouisfed.org ns2.stlouisfed.org

St. Louis Federal Reserve Suffers DNS Breach

KrebsonSecurity
In-depth security news and investigation

#### **Challenges in Identifying Targeted Hijacks**

Challenge #1: Delineating malicious updates from legitimate updates is hard

Challenge #2: Malicious updates to DNS are short-lived

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Challenge #1: Delineating malicious updates from legitimate updates is hard

Challenge #2: Malicious updates to DNS are short-lived

—

Lesson #1: Cannot solely rely on DNS to determine hijacks

Lesson #2: Need multiple data sets to corroborate hijacks

**Requirement #1:** Update DNS resolutions to malicious IP for the duration of hijack

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**Requirement #2:** Obtain new TLS certificate to prevent warnings

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**Requirement #3:** Attacker Infrastructure set up to use maliciously obtained new TLS certificate at a malicious IP address which the target domain resolves to intermittently

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Requirement #2: Obtain new TLS certificate to prevent warnings

Requirement #3: Attacker Infrastructure set up to use maliciously obtained new TLS

certificate at a malicious IP address which the target domain resolves to intermittently

#### Key Insight

Attacker infrastructure will appear in global IP scans looking for certificates.

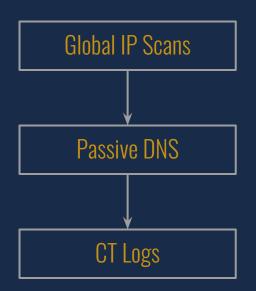
Global IP Scans

Identify Attacker Infrastructure. IP<sub>A</sub>+ Cert<sub>A</sub>



Identify Attacker Infrastructure. IP<sub>A</sub>+ Cert<sub>A</sub>

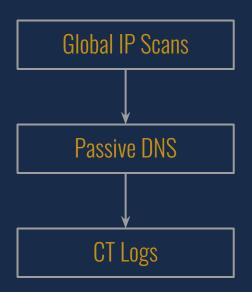
Corroborate target domain was redirected to IP<sub>A</sub>



Identify Attacker Infrastructure. IP<sub>A</sub>+ Cert<sub>A</sub>

Corroborate target domain was redirected to IP<sub>A</sub>

Corroborate Cert<sub>A</sub> was issued during redirection



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Corroborate Cert<sub>A</sub> was issued during redirection

#### Hijack Evidence

DNS Redirection + New Certificate + Use of New Certificate at Redirected IP

### **How to Identify Attacker Infrastructure?**

#### Map Observable Infrastructure

"Observable Infrastructure for a domain"

IP addresses and certificates that secure and serve the domain

### **Observable Infrastructure**



#### **Observable Infrastructure**





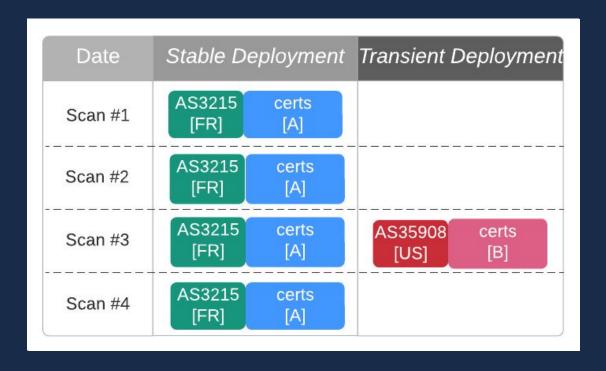








#### **Longitudinal View: Deployment Maps**



#### Suspicious Deployments → Potential Attacker Infrastructure



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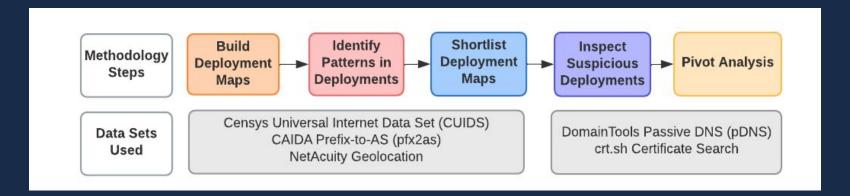


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#1: Check Passive DNS if secure.snecma.fr was redirected to 67.198.195.126

#2: Check CT Log to see if Cert <B> was issued during redirection

#### **Methodology Summary**



#### **Hijacked Domains**

Identified 41 domains as hijacked (between 2017-2020)

- 33 domains re-identified and verified from previous reports
- 8 domains not previously identified

High confidence manually evaluated hijacks!

Many many more domains where there is circumstantial evidence

### Kyrgyzstan Hijacks

		Hija	acked Domains	Attacker Infrastructure				
Date	Domain	Target	Organization	Malicious IP	Malicious ASN	Geo		
Dec'20	fiu.gov.kg	mail	Financial Intelligence Service	178.20.41.140	AS 48282	Russia		
Dec'20	invest.gov.kg	mail	Investment Portal	94.103.90.182	AS 48282	Russia		
Dec'20	mfa.gov.kg	mail	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	94.103.91.159	AS 48282	Russia		
Jan'21	infocom.kg	mail	Internet Services Provider	195.2.84.10	AS 48282	Russia		

#### zimbra

#### Вход

Для продолжения работы с сервисом электронной почты необходимо установить обновление безопасности: Скачать обновление

Имя пользователя

Пароль

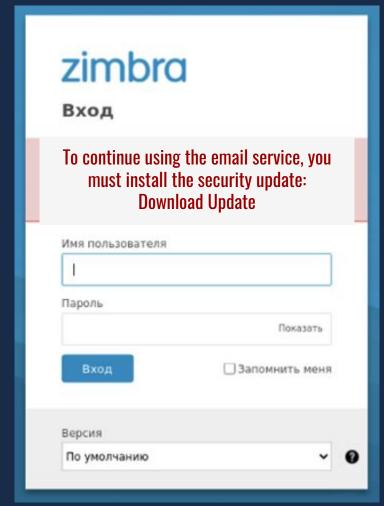
Показать

Вход

Версия

По умолчанию

✓ ②



		Targeted Domain Information		Cross Ref Attacker Infra.			. (Transient)		Legitimate Infra. (Stable)		
Type	Hij.	CC	Domain	Sub.	pDNS	crt	IP	ASN	CC	ASNs	CCs
T1	May'18	AE	mofa.gov.ae	webmail	~	1	146.185.143.158	14061	NL	[5384,202024]	[AE]
T1	Sep'18	AE	adpolice.gov.ae	advpn	1	1	185.20.187.8	50673	NL	[5384]	[AE]
T1*	Sep'18	AE	apc.gov.ae	mail	×	-	185.20.187.8	50673	NL	[5384]	[AE]
T2	Sep'18	AE	mgov.ae	mail	1	1	185.20.187.8	50673	NL	[202024]	[AE]
T1	Jan'18	AL	e-albania.al	owa	~	1	185.15.247.140	24961	DE	[5576]	[AL]
T2	Nov'18	AL	asp.gov.al	mail	1	1	199.247.3.191	20473	DE	[201524]	[AL]
T1	Nov'18	AL	shish.gov.al	mail	1	1	37.139.11.155	14061	NL	[5576]	[AL]
T1	Dec'18	CY	govcloud.gov.cy	personal	-	1	178.62.218.244	14061	NL	[50233]	[CY]
P-IP	Dec'18	CY	owa.gov.cy		6	1	178.62.218.244	14061	NL	[50233]	[CY]
T1	Dec'18	CY	webmail.gov.cy	*	1	1	178.62.218.244	14061	NL	[50233]	[CY]
P-IP	Jan'19	CY	cyta.com.cy	mbox	1	1	178.62.218.244	14061	NL	-	-
T1	Jan'19	CY	sslvpn.gov.cy		1	1	178.62.218.244	14061	NL	[50233]	[CY]
T1	Feb'19	CY	defa.com.cy	mail	1	1	108.61.123.149	20473	FR	[35432]	[CY]
T1	Nov'18	EG	mfa.gov.eg	mail	1	1	188.166.119.57	14061	NL	[37066]	[EG]
T2	Nov'18	EG	mod.gov.eg	mail	1	~	188.166.119.57	14061	NL	[25576]	[EG]
T2	Nov'18	EG	nmi.gov.eg	mail	1	1	188.166.119.57	14061	NL	[31065]	[EG]
T1	Nov'18	EG	petroleum.gov.eg	mail	1	1	206.221.184.133	20473	US	[24835,37191]	[EG]
T1	Apr'19	GR	kyvernisi.gr	mail	1	1	95.179.131.225	20473	NL	[35506]	[GR]
T1	Apr'19	GR	mfa.gr	рор3	1	1	95.179.131.225	20473	NL	[35506,6799]	[GR]
T2	Sep'18	IQ	mofa.gov.iq	mail	1	1	82.196.9.10	14061	NL	[50710]	[IQ]
P-IP	Nov'18	IQ	inc-vrdl.iq		1	1	199.247.3.191	20473	DE	[50710]	[IQ]
P-NS	Dec'18	JO	gid.gov.jo		1	1	139.162.144.139	63949	DE		-
P-NS	Dec'20	KG	fiu.gov.kg	mail	1	1	178.20.41.140	48282	RU	-	
T1	Dec'20	KG	invest.gov.kg	mail	1	1	94.103.90.182	48282	RU	[39659]	[KG]
T1	Dec'20	KG	mfa.gov.kg	mail	1	1	94.103.91.159	48282	RU	[39659]	[KG]
P-NS	Jan'21	KG	infocom.kg	mail	1	1	195.2.84.10	48282	RU		
T1	Dec'17	KW	csb.gov.kw	mail	1	V	82.102.14.232	20860	GB	[6412]	[KW]
P-IP	Dec'18	KW	dgca.gov.kw	mail	V	1	185.15.247.140	24961	DE	_	_
T1*	Apr'19	KW	moh.gov.kw	webmail	×	V	91.132.139.200	9009	AT	[21050]	[KW]
T2	May'19	KW	kotc.com.kw	mail2010	V	1	91.132.139.200	9009	US	[57719]	[KW]
P-IP	Nov'18	LB	finance.gov.lb	webmail	2	1	185.20.187.8	50673	NL		
P-IP	Nov'18	LB	mea.com.lb	memail	V	1	185.20.187.8	50673	NL	-	-
<b>T</b> 1	Nov'18	LB	medgulf.com.lb	mail	1	1	185.161.209.147	50673	NL	[31126]	[LB]
T1	Nov'18	LB	pcm.gov.lb	mail1	1	1	185.20.187.8	50673	NL	[51167]	[DE]
P-IP	Oct'18	LY	embassy.ly	***************************************	1	×	188.166.119.57	14061	NL	-	
P-NS	Oct'18	LY	foreign.ly	8	1	1	188.166.119.57	14061	NL		
T1	Oct'18	LY	noc.ly	mail	1	1	188.166.119.57	14061	NL	[37284]	[LY]
T1	Jan'18	NL	ocom.com	connect	1	1	147.75.205.145	54825	US	[60781]	[NL]
P-NS	Jan'19	SE	netnod.se	dnsnodeapi	V	1	139.59.134.216	14061	DE	-	
T1	Mar'19	SY	syriatel.sy	mail	1	1	45.77.137.65	20473	NL	[29256]	[SY]
P-NS	Dec'18	US	pch.net	keriomail	1	1	159.89.101.204	14061	DE		

### Organizations Hijacked

Domain	Hijacked
Organization Type	Domains
Government Ministry	12
Government Organization	4
Government Services	7
Infrastructure Provider	6
Law Enforcement	3
Energy Company	3
Intelligence Services	3
Civil Aviation	2
Insurance	1

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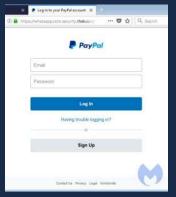
#### Summary

- Possible to identify targeted DNS infrastructure hijacks as a third-party
  - Analyzing DNS delegations alone does not work
  - Focus on operational requirements of attacks
  - Need to use a combination of data sources to build confidence in results
- Traditional mechanisms not effective against DNS infrastructure hijacks
  - Attackers can bypass DNSSEC and TLS since they control DNS Infrastructure
- Need for more transparency and proactive measurements to understand how to mitigate hijacks

## **Parting Thoughts**

DNS introduces *dependency* on external entities (registrar, registry) allowing for a "supply chain attack".

Not a hypothetical risk. Operators are prime targets.





Secure protocols do not always mean secure.



Secure protocols do not always mean secure.

Monitoring and Transparency are important

"You cannot secure what you cannot measure!"

#### DNS Transparency

- Organizations cannot tell if their nameservers ever changed!
  - Have apricot.net nameservers changed recently? [No, as per zone file data...]
  - But hijacks last for as little as 15 minutes and zone files updated daily.
  - Continuous monitoring?
- Certificate Transparency like transparency with DNS
  - ☐ Append only changes to domain nameservers at TLDs?

## Thank You!

#### **Collaborators**

Geoffrey Voelker

Ian Foster

KC Claffy

Mattijs Jonker

Raffaele Sommese

Stefan Savage

Zakir Durumeric

## Questions?

gakiwate -- at -- cs.stanford.edu

# Backup

	Targeted Domain			Cross Ref.		Attacker Infra. (Transient)			Legit. Infra. (Stable)		
Tar. Date	CC	Domain	Sub	pDNS	crt	IP	ASN	CC	ASNs	CCs	
Apr'20	AE	milmail.ae	_	×	×	194.152.42.16	47220	RO	[5384]	[AE]	
Apr'20	AE	mocaf.gov.ae	_	×	×	194.152.42.16	47220	RO	[5384]	[AE]	
Apr'20	AE	moi.gov.ae	250	×	×	194.152.42.16	47220	RO	[5384]	[AE]	
Dec'20	AE	epg.gov.ae		×	×	159.69.193.152	24940	DE	[202024]	[AE]	
Jun'20	CH	parlament.ch	-	×	×	8.210.146.182	45102	SG	[61098,3303]	[CH]	
Nov'20	GH	nita.gov.gh	_	×	×	78.141.218.158	20473	NL	[37313]	[GH]	
Sep'17	JO	psd.gov.jo	mail	×	×	185.162.235.106	50673	NL	[8934]	[JO]	
Jun'20	KZ	zerde.gov.kz	-	×	×	8.210.190.81	45102	SG	[48716,15549]	[KZ]	
Nov'20	LT	stat.gov.lt	-	×	×	8.210.190.214	45102	SG	[6769]	[LT]	
Jul'20	LV	iem.gov.lv	-	×	×	8.210.199.85	45102	SG	[8194, 25241]	[LV]	
Nov'20	LV	zva.gov.lv	_	×	×	8.210.36.66	45102	SG	[8194, 199300]	[LV]	
Apr'18	MA	justice.gov.ma	micj	-	×	188.166.160.110	14061	DE	[6713]	[MA]	
Apr'20	MA	mem.gov.ma	_	×	×	47.75.34.153	45102	HK	[6713]	[MA]	
Oct'20	MM	mofa.gov.mm	_	×	×	47.242.150.18	45102	US	[136465]	[MM]	
Nov'20	PL	knf.gov.pl	_	×	×	103.195.6.231	64022	HK	[34986]	[PL]	
May'20	SA	cmail.sa	_	×	×	194.152.42.16	47220	RO	[49474]	[SA]	
Sep'20	TM	turkmenpost.gov.tm	_	×	×	185.229.225.228	41436	NL	[20661]	[TM]	
Aug'20	US	manchesternh.gov	_	×	×	8.210.210.235	45102	SG	[13977]	[US]	
Dec'20	US	batesvillearkansas.gov	host	×	×	95.179.153.176	20473	NL	[32244]	[US]	
Apr'19	VN	ais.gov.vn	intranet	-	×	45.77.45.193	20473	SG	[131375,63748]	[VN]	
Dec'20	VN	mofa.gov.vn	_	×	×	45.77.27.9	20473	JP	[24035]	[VN]	
Mar'20	VN	cpt.gov.vn	_	×	×	103.213.244.205	136574	JP	[63747]	[VN]	
Mar'20	VN	most.gov.vn	_	×	×	103.213.244.205	136574	JP	[38731,131373]	[VN]	
Sep'20	VN	vass.gov.vn	-	×	×	47.74.3.121	45102	JP	[18403]	[VN]	