Summary of Coverage:

Black Lotus Labs' Involvement in Microsoft's Operation Targeting the TrickBot Botnet

Oct. 20, 2020

Overview

On Monday, Oct. 12, Microsoft announced a major operation to disrupt TrickBot, a pervasive botnet, ahead of the U.S. election. Although there was no evidence that the botnet was being used to target the election, the operation was designed to potentially prevent such an attack. Black Lotus Labs' involvement included providing intelligence and a legal declaration that was filed with the court in support of Microsoft's application for a temporary restraining order to halt TrickBot's operations.

Microsoft announced the news via its blog, and Black Lotus Labs issued a blog at the same time. We did not write a press release because it was not our news; rather, we pitched our involvement to national and trade media.

The Lumen staff involved in producing and publicizing this blog include:

- Mike Benjamin – Head of Black Lotus Labs
- Suzanne Dawe – Lead PR Consultant
- Jill Domzalski – Marketing Communications Analyst
- Kevin Garlow – Lead Information Security Engineer
- Catherine Gasior – Social Media Manager
- Dave Maynor – Principal Information Security Engineer
- Marie Rotter – Lead Solutions Marketing Manager
- Stephanie Walkenshaw – Lead Solutions Marketing Manager

Results of Media Outreach

Quick Numbers

- 1,795 blog views
- 30,009 social media impressions and 400 engagements
- 51 media placements that mention Black Lotus Labs, including 13 that quote and/or link to our blog

Blog Views

- As of 5 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 12, the Black Lotus Labs blog had **448 page views**.
- As of 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 20 (one week after publication), the blog has **1,795 page views**.

Social Media Analytics

Post	Impressions		Total Engagements	
	Oct. 12	Oct. 20	Oct. 12	Oct. 20
Black Lotus Labs Tweet	2,762	**15,482**	54	**163**
Lumen Posts (3 total)	5,209	**14,527**	134	**277**
Total	7,791	**30,009**	188	**440**

Media Requests

We fielded five requests from reporters for information or interviews. These include:

- LightReading Podcast – Phil Harvey and Kelsey Ziszer, hosts
- Wired Magazine – Andy Greenberg reporting
- Bleeping Computer (a major trade publication)
- Risky Biz (a well-known podcast out of Australia)

- TechNewsWorld (a lesser-known trade publication)

Notable Reporter Feedback

- All of Microsoft's partners in the TrickBot takedown wrote blogs about their part in the operation, and the host of the Risky Biz podcast stated that the Black Lotus Labs blog was the best of them all.
- Although the Reuters story does not mention Black Lotus Labs, one of the reporters reached out to Mike Benjamin directly to congratulate him on the work.

Black Lotus Labs Coverage

Below is a summary of the coverage obtained as of 8 a.m. on Oct. 20, 2020. All coverage is positive in tone. Only English articles are listed.

Mike Benjamin appeared on two podcasts:

1. LightReading (audio, 20:48) – Mike is the only guest. He discussed:
    - How Black Lotus Labs works within Lumen, and how the team works to thwart bad actors.
    - The current state of cybersecurity, including a recent uptick in ransomware-focused DDoS, botnets and other malware, nation-state actors, and law enforcement.
    - Attacks on IoT devices and how to combat them.
2. RiskyBiz (audio, 51:53) – Mike interviewed with the Risky Biz hosts, but his audio is not part of the podcast. Lumen is mentioned, however, at 7:28.

Several publications quoted the Black Lotus Labs blog in their stories:

3. Politico - Trickbot is on its heels … for now
4. HelpNetSecurity - Microsoft and partners cut off key Trickbot botnet infrastructure
5. Bleeping Computer - TrickBot botnet targeted in takedown operations, little impact seen
6. SCMagazine -- Microsoft and partners unite to target Trickbot infrastructure in legal takedown
7. PC Magazine - Microsoft Disrupts Trickbot Botnet to Prevent it From Targeting US Election
8. TheCyberSecurity.News - Microsoft and partners unite to target Trickbot infrastructure in legal takedown
9. PG-Intel - Microsoft and partners unite to target Trickbot infrastructure in legal takedown
10. Security Boulevard - US Cyber Command and Microsoft Are Both Disrupting TrickBot
11. The CyberWire - Disrupting Trickbot. Questions of content moderation. Ryuk resurfaces with new tactics.
12. Security Boulevard - Trickbot On the Ropes: Microsoft's Case Against Trickbot
13. 2-Spyware - TrickBot survives Microsoft and other tech companies' initiated takedown

The following publications listed Black Lotus Labs in the subhead or lede sentence:

14. ZDNet - Microsoft and others orchestrate takedown of TrickBot botnet
15. Engadget - Microsoft helped disrupt the infamous Trickbot botnet
16. TechMeme - Microsoft, Symantec, ESET, and other tech companies orchestrated an attempt to takedown the TrickBot malware botnet, which had infected 1M+ computers
17. Dark Reading - Security Firms & Financial Group Team Up to Take Down Trickbot
18. Yahoo Money - Microsoft helped disrupt the infamous Trickbot botnet
19. Security Affairs - Microsoft partnered with other security firms to takedown TrickBot botnet
20. TechInvestorNews - Microsoft and others orchestrate takedown of TrickBot botnet
21. MySpaceBox.net - Microsoft partnered with other security firms to takedown TrickBot botnet
22. Cyware - Cyware Daily Threat Intelligence, October 12, 2020
23. Computer Weekly - Trickbot forced offline in major cyber security victory
24. Webmaster World - TrickBot Malware Botnet Taken Down by Coalition of Tech Companies
25. IT Security News - Microsoft and others orchestrate takedown of TrickBot botnet

26. ThreatRavens - Security Firms & Financial Group Team Up to Take Down Trickbot
27. TerabitWeb - Microsoft partnered with other security firms to takedown TrickBot botnet

Several other publications listed Black Lotus Labs as a partner in the operation, albeit further down in their stories:

28. ThreatPost - TrickBot Takedown Disrupts Major Crimeware Apparatus
29. RedmondMag - Microsoft Used Its Patents To Take Down Trickbot Network
30. DataBreach Today - Microsoft, Others Dismantle Trickbot Botnet
31. CyberScoop - Cyber Command, Microsoft take action against TrickBot botnet before Election Day
32. WilsonMedia - Microsoft Helped Disrupt The Infamous Trickbot Botnet
33. Duo - Microsoft And Partners Disrupt Trickbot Botnet
34. Security Week - Tech Companies Take Down TrickBot Botnet Infrastructure
35. The Hill - Microsoft disrupts international botnet group ahead of Election Day
36. The Register - Microsoft and chums use US trademark law to trash Trickbot malware network
37. GeekWire - Microsoft disrupted Trickbot, a 'prolific' ransomware distributor and election security threat
38. Infosecurity Magazine - Microsoft Disrupts Botnet Installing Ransomware
39. SDXCentral - Microsoft Wins Court Order to Fight Ransomware Ahead of Election
40. InfoTechLead - Microsoft reveals action to disrupt Trickbot malware
41. WinBuzzer - Microsoft Defender and Partners Take Down TrickBot Botnet Infrastructure
42. Cyber Risk Leaders - Global operation to disrupt Trickbot, a botnet that has infected over a million computers
43. Bank Info Security - Microsoft, Others Dismantle Trickbot Botnet
44. Taiwan News - Microsoft Takes Action to Disrupt Botnet and Combat Ransomware
45. NewsBreak - Microsoft and others orchestrate takedown of TrickBot botnet
46. CTN News - Microsoft Takes Action to Disrupt Botnet and Combat Ransomware
47. TechRadar - The Avengers of security teamed up to try and take down the TrickBot botnet
48. TechSpot - Microsoft fights botnet after Office 365 malware attack
49. Security Brief Europe - Microsoft takes legal action to disrupt botnet and combat ransomware
50. Washington Examiner - Microsoft and partners shut down major botnet
51. IDG Connect - News roundup: fallout continues after US probes big tech

Most of the major news outlets covered the story but did not list Black Lotus Labs or any of Microsoft's other partners:

52. Reuters – Court orders seizure of ransomware botnet controls as U.S. election nears
53. Washington Post - Microsoft disrupts Russian criminal botnet it fears could seek to sow confusion in the presidential election
54. New York Times - Microsoft Takes Down a Risk to the Election, and Finds the U.S. Doing the Same
55. CNN Microsoft takes down massive hacking operation that could have affected the election

Contact

For questions or comments about this report, please contact Suzanne Dawe, senior public relations consultant.