Sharkbot V2

Overview

In early September 2022, threat researchers discovered multiple Google Play listings for dropper apps which installed the infamous mobile banking trojan Sharkbot. Since originally being discovered in late 2021, this Android malware has been used by financially motivated threat actors - targeting both banking apps as well as cryptocurrency apps and exchanges. Recent versions of Sharkbot dropper apps deliver an evolved version of the banking trojan that researchers are referring to as Sharkbot V2, and it includes an updated communication mechanism to C2 servers, a domain generation algorithm (DGA) and a fully refactored code base. It also now targets customers of banks in the UK, Italy, Spain, Australia, Poland, Germany, United States of America and Austria.

Lookout Analysis

The two dropper apps in question, Mister Phone Cleaner and Kylhavy Mobile Security, no longer rely on Accessibility permissions to automatically download and install the Sharkbot trojan. The malware is now installed under the guise of being an update to the two apps. They use a less sophisticated approach than previously-seen Sharkbot droppers, relying on the user unwittingly allowing the installation of the malicious package rather than attempting to implant the payload onto the user’s device automatically. This is simpler from a code perspective and likely is a deliberate decision by the threat actors to prevent the dropper’s code from being scrutinized. In addition to containing relatively little malicious code, the apps on the Play Store also leverage localization checks to maintain a low profile and limit attempts to drop the malicious package only to devices that match the intended victim profile.

Lookout Threat Advisory Service

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