



Public Service Announcement

FBI & CISA



13 May 2020

People's Republic of China (PRC) Targeting of COVID-19 Research Organizations

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) are issuing this announcement to raise awareness of the threat to COVID-19-related research. The FBI is investigating the targeting and compromise of U.S. organizations conducting COVID-19-related research by PRC-affiliated cyber actors and non-traditional collectors. These actors have been observed attempting to identify and illicitly obtain valuable intellectual property (IP) and public health data related to vaccines, treatments, and testing from networks and personnel affiliated with COVID-19-related research. The potential theft of this information jeopardizes the delivery of secure, effective, and efficient treatment options.

The FBI and CISA urge all organizations conducting research in these areas to maintain dedicated cybersecurity and insider threat practices to prevent surreptitious review or theft of COVID-19-related material. FBI is responsible for protecting the U.S. against foreign intelligence, espionage, and cyber operations, among other responsibilities. CISA is responsible for protecting the Nation's critical infrastructure from physical and cyber threats. CISA is providing services and information to support the cybersecurity of federal and state/local/tribal/territorial entities, and private sector entities that play a critical role in COVID-19 research and response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assume that press attention affiliating your organization with COVID-19 related research will lead to increased interest and cyber activity.
- Patch all systems for critical vulnerabilities, prioritizing timely patching for known vulnerabilities of internet-connected servers and software processing internet data.
- Actively scan web applications for unauthorized access, modification, or anomalous activities.
- Improve credential requirements and require multi-factor authentication.
- Identify and suspend access of users exhibiting unusual activity.

VICTIM REPORTING AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The FBI encourages victims to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to their local field office (www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field). For additional assistance and best practices, such as cyber hygiene vulnerability scanning, please visit <https://www.cisa.gov/coronavirus>.