

Microsoft Alerts Law Firms Of Exchange Server Attacks

By **Steven Lerner**

Law360 (March 4, 2021, 4:48 PM EST) -- Law firms and other businesses have been targeted for online attacks through security vulnerabilities in an email server, according to an update this week from the Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center.

The attacks were carried out by a state-sponsored group in China, which Microsoft called Hafnium, that used leased virtual private servers in the United States.

Microsoft said in the Tuesday report there were multiple zero-day attacks, which means that hackers exploited a previously unknown flaw.

The attackers installed malware in the compromised systems and accessed email boxes, according to Microsoft. Sensitive information about organizations was stolen and shared across the internet.

The attacks occurred on the Microsoft Exchange Server, which is a service that organizations run on computers in their on-premises networks.

Cybersecurity firm Volexity wrote on a blog on Tuesday that it detected the attacks from two of its customers' Microsoft servers as early as Jan. 6.

Microsoft wrote on its own security blog on Tuesday that "We are sharing this information with our customers and the security community to emphasize the critical nature of these vulnerabilities and the importance of patching all affected systems immediately to protect against these exploits and prevent future abuse across the ecosystem"

The tech giant urged customers to update systems with a security patch released on Tuesday.

Claudia Rast, Butzel Long PC's cybersecurity group leader and co-chair of the American Bar Association's cybersecurity legal task force, told Law360 Pulse that firms with the server should get the security patch right away, but said it may be too late for some that have already been hacked.

Law firms are vulnerable to these types of attacks because lawyers are sometimes not tidy about cleaning their email boxes and protecting sensitive information, Rast said.

This isn't the first time in recent weeks that law firms found themselves targeted. Goodwin Procter LLP and Jones Day **both reported last month** that they had data stolen through a third-party breach.

In 2020, more than **50 law firms reported data breaches**.

--Additional reporting by Dave Simpson, Ben Kochman and Xiumei Dong. Editing by Brian Baresch.

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