

Microsoft Says Russia-Linked Hackers Target Sports Organizations

By [Reuters](#)

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AP / TASS

Microsoft Corp said it has tracked "significant" cyberattacks coming from a group it calls "Strontium" or "Fancy Bear," targeting anti-doping authorities and global sporting organizations.

The group, also called APT28, has been linked to the Russian government, Microsoft [said](#) in a blog post.

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At least 16 national and international sporting and anti-doping organizations across three continents were targeted in the attacks which began on Sept. 16, according to the company.

The company said some of these attacks had been successful, but the majority had not.

Microsoft has notified all customers targeted in these attacks.

Strontium, one of the world's oldest cyber espionage groups, has also been called Sofancy and Pawn Storm by a range of security firms and government officials. Security firm CrowdStrike has said the group may be associated with the Russian GRU military intelligence agency.

Microsoft said Strontium reportedly released medical records and emails taken from sporting organizations and anti-doping officials in 2016 and 2018, resulting in an indictment in a federal court in the United States in 2018.

The software giant added that the methods used in the most recent attacks were similar to those used by Strontium to target governments, militaries, think-tanks, law firms, human rights organizations, financial firms and universities around the world.

Strontium's methods include spear-phishing, password spray, exploiting internet-connected devices and the use of both open-source and custom malware, it added.

Microsoft has in the past taken legal steps to prevent Strontium from using fake Microsoft internet domains to execute its attacks.

By August last year, Microsoft had shut down 84 fake websites in 12 court-approved actions over the past two years.

Microsoft said at the time that hackers linked to Russia's government sought to launch cyber attacks on U.S. political groups.

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