

## Business & Human Rights Resource Centre Response

### Request

*We are writing from Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to invite Strategic Cyber to respond to a report its Cobalt Strike technology has been used by an attack group known as Ocean Lotus to target Vietnamese human rights defenders. Cobalt Strike response will be published alongside it, when the publication draws attention to these issues in its Weekly Update to be released on Wednesday, 10 March 2021.*

*Vietnamese Human Rights Defenders Targeted with Spyware Attacks”, 24 February 2021, Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2021/02/click-and-bait-vietnamese-human-rights-defenders-targeted-with-spyware-attacks/>*

**Response from** Greg Darwin, head of Cobalt Strike at HelpSystems, 4 March 2021

Thank you for drawing our attention to this article which outlines that Vietnamese Human Rights Defenders have been targeted by an attack group known as Ocean Lotus. We take this issue very seriously and we absolutely condemn any such illegal use of our technology. However, unfortunately today hackers are increasingly advanced and sophisticated. Adversaries use a variety of tools and techniques to circumvent data security systems and infiltrate organizations.

It is important to reinforce to your readers that we regularly, robustly vet everyone who legitimately purchases Cobalt Strike technology and our code of compliance and ethics is central to our philosophy and sales approach when engaging with new and existing customers. (<https://www.cobaltstrike.com/help-corp-compliance-ethics>).

However, inevitably there will always be situations where adversaries and attack groups, like Ocean Lotus, utilize our tools illegally to infiltrate a target by obtaining pirated versions of our software. Cobalt Strike – which is broadly acknowledged as a leading commercial security tool - is used to improve the security maturity of organizations worldwide. Enterprises use our software defensively to replicate the tactics and techniques of an advanced adversary in the network. Therefore, inevitably it will occasionally be misappropriated which could result in a security incident.

We are of course monitoring this situation very carefully, and we will certainly adapt our approach as necessary. This is one of the reasons we always recommend layering defenses to neutralize any potential external threats. It is important for organizations and individuals to defend against a broader set of techniques, such as these, used by adversaries whose sophistication continues to evolve at pace.

*On 9 March 2021 the following addition was made:*

We maintain a comprehensive export control compliance program to comply with U.S. export control regulations. This program also prevents fraud, denies adversary access to Cobalt Strike, and preserves the trust of our customers. Please see our code of compliance and ethics for more detail.

<https://www.cobaltstrike.com/help-corp-compliance-ethics>