

Top Aerospace Firm Sends Ransomware Crooks Packing

How HarcoSemco foiled a CryptoLocker attack with the push-button ease of Barracuda Backup.



The attack

Since it first appeared in 2013, the popular CryptoLocker ransomware, along with its many variants, has been used to extort billions of dollars from companies around the world. But when it was used to attack HarcoSemco, a leading manufacturer of aerospace components, IT Manager Brian O'Connor was determined to get the encrypted data back and leave the criminals empty-handed.

"It was terrible," O'Connor says of the morning when arriving employees found their files inaccessible and a threatening image on their desktops. "Everyone was freaking out, but we weren't about to pay the ransom."

According to O'Connor, the attack infected public folders and even a server with live financial data on it, which would have created a huge liability for the company. The potential damage to HarcoSemco's reputation alone would have been intolerable.

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Brian O'Connor
IT Manager
HarcoSemco

Profile

- Headquartered in Branford, Connecticut
- A top-rated aerospace components manufacturer
- Over 60 years of industry experience

Challenges

- Recovering critical data locked up by CryptoLocker
- High ransom demanded by attackers
- Minimizing downtime during recovery

Solution

Barracuda Backup

Results

- No ransom paid
- No significant downtime
- Ongoing peace of mind

The response

When O'Connor joined HarcoSemco, the company employed a tape-based system for data backup. But the built-in limitations of such systems—they're time-consuming and labor-intensive, they scale poorly, they don't update backup files often enough, and they can be unreliable—soon led him to look for a new solution.

"Our sister company in California was using Carbonite EVault, so we looked at that," says O'Connor. "But we found it to be a little kludgy. That's when I turned to TBNG Consulting for help, and they brought the Barracuda product to our attention." Following a successful trial period, O'Connor ordered two Barracuda Backup 690 appliances. One was installed in the Branford office, and the other replaced the California company's Carbonite solution. Each appliance replicated its locally backed-up files to the other one. Seven years later the same solution is still in production, although HarcoSemco has upgraded to higher-capacity 790 models.

So when CryptoLocker seized control of company files, as some people panicked, O'Connor just got to work deleting infected files and restoring them from the most recent backup files. "At first I was rolling back bits and pieces before realizing how extensive the attacks had been," he remembers. "At the end of the day, I ultimately decided to restore the whole server. Barracuda Backup worked exactly as it should. It was easy, it was fast, and our attackers got nothing."

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Looking ahead

"I'm always surprised when I hear about an organization that's had to pay ransom, or has lost critical data from ransomware," says O'Connor. "Any decent, modern backup solution, managed well, should make it almost impossible for that to happen. Having said that, Barracuda Backup stands out as a superior product due to its ease of use, the flexibility of its replication options, and its scalability."

HarcoSemco is looking forward to some changes that may make the flexibility O'Connor mentions especially useful. "Our California sister company will close soon," says O'Connor, "so all their data will come here, and we'll need to re-think our replication strategy. Then a new facility will open in Mexico, and we'll need to work that into the system as well."

One constraint O'Connor faces is complying with ITAR, the International Traffic in Arms Regulation. "When we first got the Barracuda Backup appliances, we felt that using the product's cloud replication feature might put us at some risk with regard to ITAR compliance," he says. "That's something we'll probably take another look at once the corporate shuffle is underway. Assuming it's ITAR compliant, cloud replication of our data backups could be very helpful in terms of scalability and long-term business continuity."

Learn more about Barracuda Backup

barracuda.com/products/backup

