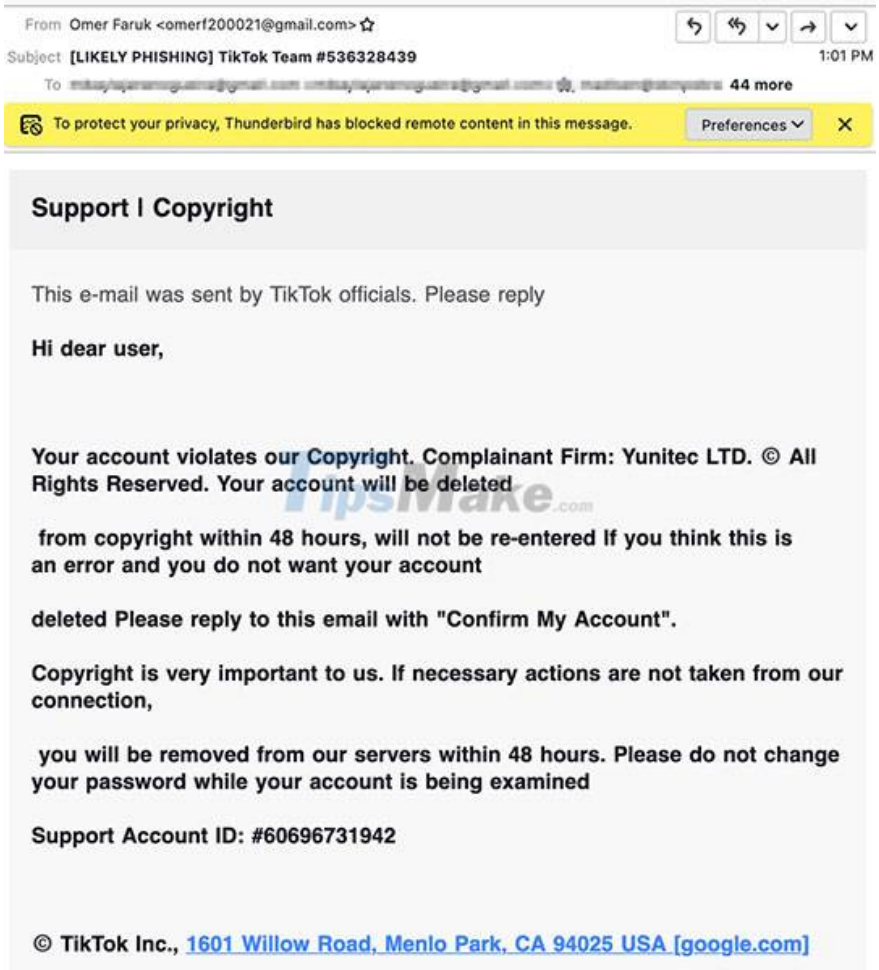
Detected malicious attack campaign targeting TikTok, threatening to delete accounts of many celebrities

International security researchers have recently issued an urgent warning about a new phishing attack campaign on the TikTok platform.

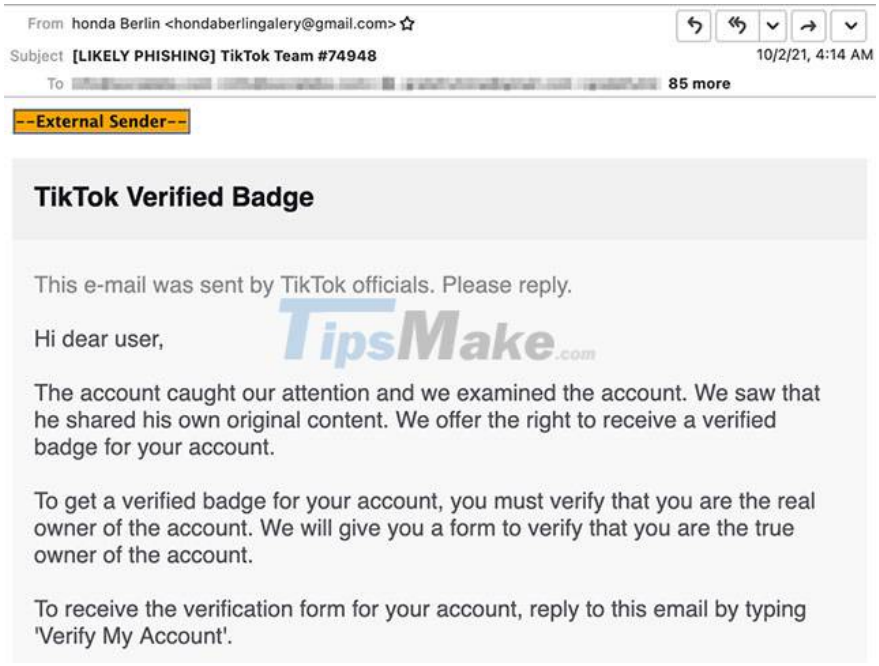
In particular, the threat actors mainly target the famous TikTok account, which has a lot of followers, interactions, and belongs to the people with great influence on this social networking site.

As revealed by researchers from Abnormal Security team, who first discovered the malicious campaign, there were 2 peak attack periods recorded in this campaign: On October 2nd. and November 1, 2021. Observing campaign email distribution shows that attack cycles tend to peak every 3-4 weeks. Hence a new 'loop' will most likely start in just a few weeks.

In some of the cases noted by Abnormal Security, malicious actors often impersonated TikTok employees to send emails to targets, threatening that their accounts were about to be deleted due to alleged violations of the general terms of the app. communication.



Another element of deception commonly used by hackers in spoofing emails is providing a 'Verified' badge for added credibility and authenticity. TikTok's 'Verified' badge is crucial to content posted by verified accounts, and is a signal that the platform's algorithm will increase the impression share of posts coming from these accounts. Using this scam is simple yet very effective, as many people will be delighted to receive an email offering them a chance to receive a verification badge from the platform. But that is not the case at all.



In either case, the attackers would provide the target with a method to verify their account: Clicking a link embedded in the spoofed email. Of course this is also a malicious link. Upon clicking this link, victims are redirected to a WhatsApp chat room, where they are greeted by a scammer posing as a TikTok employee.

After a few messages back and forth, the scammer will eventually ask the victim for an email address, phone number, and otp code that passes multi-factor authentication and resets the account's password.

Account hijacking or extortion?

At the moment, it is not clear what the real motives of the scammers in this campaign are. But more likely this could be an attempt to take over valuable accounts, or to blackmail the account owner.

TikTok's terms of service state that if an account, especially one with a lot of followers, violates the platform's general rules, it will be suspended or permanently locked. This means that after taking over a victim's account, malicious actors can easily threaten to post something inappropriate, resulting in the account being locked.

Regardless of the attackers' motives, if you own or manage valuable social media accounts, make sure to back up all your content and data in one safe place. Additionally, you should always secure your account with two-factor authentication (2FA) or 2-step verification. Ideally, use a hardware security key. At the same time, you should also be wary of unusual emails sent to your account.