INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING
Security Command Center
TLP:CLEAR
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Russian Hackers Breach UK Government Data, Trading It for Up to $60000 on the Dark Web (FortiBleed)

THREAT CAMPAIGN | HIGH

SCC Item ID	SCC-CAM-2026-0627
Type	Threat Campaign
Severity	HIGH
Affected Products	Fortinet firewalls (specific CVE and firmware versions unconfirmed); UK government and Foreign Office email accounts
Published	2026-07-06
Discovery Source	Gemini

Executive Summary

Reporting from media outlets describes an alleged campaign, referred to as 'FortiBleed,' in which Russian-linked threat actors reportedly exploited a Fortinet firewall vulnerability to compromise a large number of devices, with stolen credentials attributed to UK government and Foreign Office staff purportedly offered for sale on dark web marketplaces at prices up to $60,000. No official advisory from the UK government, NCSC, Fortinet PSIRT, CISA KEV, or NVD has been identified in the provided source material to confirm the breach scope, device count, or attribution. Based on available sources, confidence in the core claim is low-to-medium; organizations running internet-facing Fortinet devices should treat this as a prompt to verify credential hygiene and firewall patch status while awaiting authoritative confirmation.

Technical Analysis

Reporting across Tier 3 media sources (United24 Media, Al Mayadeen) describes an alleged exploitation of an unspecified Fortinet firewall vulnerability, with no CVE identifier published in the available source material. The campaign name 'FortiBleed' does not correspond to a recognized public PSIRT advisory or named CVE as of the configuration date of this system. Claimed impact is approximately 80,000 compromised Fortinet devices, though this figure is sourced exclusively from the same Tier 3 reporting and has not been corroborated by Fortinet, CISA, NCSC, or NVD. The attack pattern is consistent with CWE-522 (Insufficiently Protected Credentials) and CWE-287 (Improper Authentication), and maps to MITRE ATT&CK techniques T1190 (Exploit Public-Facing Application), T1078 (Valid Accounts), T1589.001 (Gather Victim Identity Information: Credentials),

and T1583.008 (Acquire Infrastructure: Malvertising). The specific firmware versions affected are unconfirmed in the provided sources. Attribution to Russian state or state-linked actors is alleged in reporting but unconfirmed by a named threat intelligence organization or government statement in the available source set. Fortinet has experienced prior credential-exposure incidents (documented dark web dumps in 2021 and 2022), and this reporting may reference or conflate one of those events; that connection is not confirmed by the sources provided.

Action Checklist

1. Step 1: Containment, Audit all internet-facing Fortinet firewall devices for unauthorized access. Review VPN and admin portal exposure. Temporarily restrict administrative access to trusted IP ranges while investigation is ongoing. As a precaution, apply this assessment across all managed Fortinet assets, as no vendor advisory is available in the provided sources to specify affected firmware versions.
2. Step 2: Detection, Search authentication logs for anomalous login activity on Fortinet management interfaces and VPN endpoints, particularly from unfamiliar IP ranges or off-hours sessions. Review for credential reuse patterns from accounts associated with UK government or Foreign Office access. Per AU-2 (Event Logging) and AU-6 (Audit Record Review, Analysis, and Reporting), ensure logging is enabled on all Fortinet devices and that logs are being actively reviewed. Check dark web monitoring feeds for exposure of your organization's credentials. No confirmed IOCs are available in the provided source material.
3. Step 3: Eradication, Force rotation of all credentials for Fortinet administrative and VPN access (per D3-CRO and CIS 5.3). Disable or remove dormant accounts (per CIS 5.3). Apply all current Fortinet PSIRT-published patches per your patch management process; no specific patch identifier is available in the provided sources. Enforce MFA on all administrative and remote access accounts per CIS 6.4 (Require MFA for Remote Network Access) and CIS 6.5 (Require MFA for Administrative Access), consistent with D3-MFA (Multi-factor Authentication).
4. Step 4: Recovery, After credential rotation and patching, validate that no unauthorized accounts or persistence mechanisms remain on Fortinet devices. Monitor authentication logs for continued anomalous activity per AU-6. Confirm MFA enforcement is active across all affected accounts. Per AC-2 (Account Management), review and revalidate all active accounts on affected systems.
5. Step 5: Post-Incident, This incident highlights control gaps in credential protection on network perimeter devices. Review alignment with AC-6 (Least Privilege) to ensure administrative accounts follow least-privilege principles. Assess dark web monitoring coverage for organizational credentials. Document findings and update playbooks to address perimeter device credential exposure. No authoritative advisory is currently available; revisit this item when Fortinet PSIRT, CISA, or NCSC publishes official guidance.

IR / Forensic Enrichment

Triage Priority	URGENT

Escalation Criteria	Escalate immediately to senior leadership, legal counsel, and (if applicable) the UK NCSC or organizational CISO if forensic review of Fortinet authentication logs confirms successful unauthorized access by an IP attributable to Russian-nexus infrastructure, or if organizational credentials are identified for sale on dark web marketplaces, as either condition may trigger regulatory breach notification obligations under UK GDPR or government security incident reporting requirements.
Recovery Notes	After credential rotation and patching, maintain heightened monitoring of all FortiGate authentication logs and VPN session telemetry for a minimum of 30 days, as Russian-nexus threat actors targeting perimeter devices have historically re-attempted access using previously harvested but not-yet-rotated credentials or through alternate VPN authentication paths. Validate that no FortiGate automation scripts, secondary admin accounts, or modified VPN portal configurations persist from the compromise window by performing a weekly configuration diff against the post-remediation baseline. Do not stand down monitoring until an official Fortinet PSIRT, CISA, or NCSC advisory confirms the affected firmware scope and your estate is verified as fully patched and out of the vulnerable range.
Forensic Artifacts	FortiGate event logs (type=event subtype=vpn and subtype=system) exported via syslog or `execute log display` — primary artifact linking threat actor source IPs to authenticated admin or SSL-VPN sessions during the FortiBleed campaign window | FortiGate running configuration backup (`execute backup config`) diffed against the last known-good baseline — reveals unauthorized admin account creation, modified VPN portal profiles, or altered routing/NAT rules indicative of persistence mechanisms consistent with Russian-nexus perimeter device tradecraft | Active session table output (`diagnose sys session list`, `get vpn ssl monitor`) captured before containment actions — volatile artifact recording in-flight connections from threat actor infrastructure at the moment of discovery | Windows Security Event Log Event ID 4648 (Explicit Credential Logon) and Event ID 4624 (Successful Logon, Type 3/Network) on UK government or Foreign Office systems downstream of the compromised FortiGate VPN — corroborates credential reuse from stolen Fortinet VPN credentials into internal systems | Dark web marketplace listings or threat intelligence reporting referencing UK government or Foreign Office email domains or credential formats (e.g., .gov.uk addresses) attributed to FortiBleed — establishes the exfiltration and monetization stage of the campaign and may provide partial IOCs (seller handles, listing timestamps, sample credential formats) ahead of an official advisory

Per-Action IR Details

Step 1: Containment — Audit all internet-facing Fortinet firewall devices for unauthorized access. Review VPN and admin portal exposure. Temporarily restrict administrative access to trusted IP ranges while investigation is ongoing. No vendor advisory is available in the provided sources to specify affected firmware versions; apply this precautionarily across all managed Fortinet assets.

NIST Phase: Containment

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §3.3 — Containment Strategy

Controls: NIST AC-17 (Remote Access), NIST AC-3 (Access Enforcement), CIS 4.4 (Implement and Manage a Firewall on Servers), CIS 4.2 (Establish and Maintain a Secure Configuration Process for Network Infrastructure)

Compensating: Use the Fortinet CLI command `get system admin` and `get vpn ssl monitor` to enumerate active admin and VPN sessions on each FortiGate device. Apply `config system admin` ACL restrictions to bind the management interface to a dedicated management VLAN or jump-host IP range using `set trusthost1 `. For teams without a centralized asset inventory, run a network scan with nmap targeting TCP 443 and 8443 (FortiGate HTTPS admin) and UDP 500/4500 (IPsec VPN) across the public IP space to enumerate exposed Fortinet management surfaces before locking them down.

Evidence: Before restricting IP access or modifying admin ACLs, capture volatile state from each FortiGate: run `get system session list` and `diagnose sys session list` to record all active firewall sessions; run `get vpn ssl monitor` to snapshot active SSL-VPN user sessions including source IPs, user accounts, and connection timestamps; run `execute log display` filtered to admin login events to capture any in-progress authentication activity. Export these outputs to an out-of-band log store before any ACL changes alter or terminate live sessions. These session records are the primary volatile artifact linking a Russian-nexus source IP to an active FortiBleed-related intrusion.

Step 2: Detection — Search authentication logs for anomalous login activity on Fortinet management interfaces and VPN endpoints, particularly from unfamiliar IP ranges or off-hours sessions. Review for credential reuse patterns from accounts associated with UK government or Foreign Office access. Per AU-2 (Event Logging) and AU-6 (Audit Record Review, Analysis, and Reporting), ensure logging is enabled on all Fortinet devices and that logs are being actively reviewed. Check dark web monitoring feeds for exposure of your organization's credentials. No confirmed IOCs are available in the provided source material.

NIST Phase: Detection Analysis

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §3.2 — Detection and Analysis

Controls: NIST AU-2 (Event Logging), NIST AU-6 (Audit Record Review, Analysis, and Reporting), NIST AU-3 (Content Of Audit Records), CIS 8.2 (Collect Audit Logs)

Compensating: On each FortiGate, enable logging to a remote syslog server via `config log syslogd setting` and set `set status enable` with `set server `. Query the local FortiGate log with `execute log filter category event` and `execute log filter field action login` to extract admin authentication events. Use grep against exported syslog files to filter for `logdesc="Admin login failed"` or `logdesc="SSL VPN login fail"` entries, flagging source IPs outside your organization's known IP ranges. For dark web credential monitoring without a commercial feed, manually query paste-site search tools (e.g., IntelX or have-i-been-pwned API) using organizational email domains associated with government or Foreign Office accounts. Cross-reference source IPs from Fortinet logs against free threat intel sources such as AbuseIPDB and Shodan to identify Russian-nexus infrastructure.

Evidence: The primary log artifacts for this campaign are FortiGate event logs recording admin console and SSL-VPN authentication attempts: look for `type=event subtype=vpn` and `type=event subtype=system action=login` syslog entries. Within these, flag: (1) successful logins from IP ranges geolocating to Russia or anonymizing infrastructure (Tor exit nodes, VPS providers commonly used by Russian threat actors such as AS49505, AS57043); (2) accounts authenticated outside business hours for the UK timezone (UTC+0/UTC+1); (3) the same credential authenticating to both the FortiGate management interface and separately to UK government or Foreign Office systems within a short time window, indicating credential reuse. No confirmed IOCs for FortiBleed are available in provided sources; treat all anomalous authentication as indicative pending official advisory.

Step 3: Eradication — Force rotation of all credentials for accounts with access to Fortinet management interfaces and VPN portals, consistent with D3-CRO (Credential Rotation). Disable or remove any accounts not required per CIS 5.3 (Disable Dormant Accounts). Apply all current Fortinet PSIRT-published patches per your patch management process; no specific patch identifier is available in the provided sources. Enforce MFA on all administrative and remote access accounts per CIS 6.4 (Require MFA for Remote Network Access) and CIS 6.5 (Require MFA for Administrative Access), consistent with D3-MFA (Multi-factor Authentication).

NIST Phase: Eradication

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §3.4 — Eradication

Controls: NIST AC-2 (Account Management), NIST AC-6 (Least Privilege), CIS 5.3 (Disable Dormant Accounts), CIS 6.4 (Require MFA for Remote Network Access), CIS 6.5 (Require MFA for Administrative Access), CIS 7.3 (Perform Automated Operating System Patch Management), CIS 7.4 (Perform Automated Application Patch Management)

Compensating: Credential rotation on FortiGate: use `config system admin`, select each admin account, and issue `set password ` for every local admin account; for LDAP-integrated accounts, force a domain-side password reset and invalidate cached credentials on the device with `diagnose sys session clear`. To audit and disable dormant accounts, run `get system admin` and compare last-login timestamps against your acceptable-use window; accounts with no recorded login or last login predating 45 days should be removed with `delete` under `config system admin`. For MFA without a commercial solution, configure FortiGate's built-in FortiToken Mobile (free soft-token app) or integrate with a

FreeRADIUS server running Google Authenticator TOTP as the second factor for admin and SSL-VPN logins. Apply the latest FortiOS firmware from the Fortinet Support Portal (support.fortinet.com) after verifying the SHA256 hash of the firmware image before upload.

Evidence: Before rotating credentials or applying patches — both of which alter live system state — capture the following volatile evidence specific to a Fortinet credential-theft scenario: (1) full output of `get system admin` showing all configured admin accounts, privilege levels, and last-login data; (2) `get vpn ssl settings` and `get vpn ipsec tunnel summary` to document all VPN configurations that may have been altered by the threat actor to establish persistence; (3) FortiGate configuration backup via `execute backup config ftp ` or TFTP to preserve a forensic snapshot of the running config, as Russian-nexus actors targeting perimeter devices have historically modified local admin accounts or VPN split-tunnel configurations to maintain persistent access after initial credential theft; (4) check for rogue local admin accounts not present in your baseline by diffing `get system admin` output against your last known-good configuration backup.

Step 4: Recovery — After credential rotation and patching, validate that no unauthorized accounts or persistence mechanisms remain on Fortinet devices. Monitor authentication logs for continued anomalous activity per AU-6. Confirm MFA enforcement is active across all affected accounts. Per AC-2 (Account Management), review and revalidate all active accounts on affected systems.

NIST Phase: Recovery

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §3.5 — Recovery

Controls: NIST AC-2 (Account Management), NIST AU-6 (Audit Record Review, Analysis, and Reporting), CIS 5.1 (Establish and Maintain an Inventory of Accounts), CIS 6.2 (Establish an Access Revoking Process)

Compensating: Post-patch integrity validation: after applying the FortiOS firmware update, run `execute verify image` if available for your firmware version, and compare the running configuration against the pre-incident forensic backup using a file-diff tool to identify any unauthorized configuration changes introduced during the compromise window. For ongoing authentication monitoring without a SIEM, configure FortiGate to forward syslog to a free ELK Stack (Elasticsearch, Logstash, Kibana) instance and create a Kibana dashboard filtering on `subtype=vpn` and `action=login` events, alerting on any source IP outside your approved management IP list. Validate MFA enrollment by running `get user fortitoken` or checking your RADIUS server's enrolled-user list against the full admin account inventory.

Evidence: During recovery validation, the key forensic question is whether the threat actor established persistence beyond the initially compromised credentials. Check FortiGate for: (1) any new or modified local admin accounts created after your last known-good configuration backup date (`get system admin` diff); (2) unauthorized SSL-VPN realms or portal profiles added under `config vpn ssl web portal` that could allow re-entry under a different authentication path; (3) modified routing or NAT policies under `get router info routing-table all` that could indicate a persistent C2 channel established through the firewall; (4) automation scripts or FortiManager scripts (`config system auto-script`) that could re-introduce malicious configuration after remediation. These persistence mechanisms are consistent with tradecraft observed in Russian-nexus campaigns targeting perimeter network devices.

Step 5: Post-Incident — This incident highlights control gaps in credential protection on network perimeter devices. Review alignment with AC-6 (Least Privilege) to ensure administrative accounts follow least-privilege principles. Assess dark web monitoring coverage for organizational credentials. Document findings and update playbooks to address perimeter device credential exposure. No authoritative advisory is currently available; revisit this item when Fortinet PSIRT, CISA, or NCSC publishes official guidance.

NIST Phase: Post Incident

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §4 — Post-Incident Activity

Controls: NIST AC-6 (Least Privilege), NIST AU-11 (Audit Record Retention), CIS 5.4 (Restrict Administrator Privileges to Dedicated Administrator Accounts), CIS 7.1 (Establish and Maintain a Vulnerability Management Process), CIS 7.2 (Establish and Maintain a Remediation Process)

Compensating: For a 2-person team conducting lessons-learned without enterprise tooling: document the full incident timeline in a structured format referencing NIST 800-61r3 §4.1 (Lessons Learned) and record specifically which Fortinet firmware versions were in production, when they were last patched, and how long admin interfaces were

exposed to the internet without IP restrictions. Set a calendar-based review trigger to re-evaluate this incident when Fortinet PSIRT, CISA KEV, or NCSC publish official FortiBleed advisories — map any confirmed CVE at that time to your patching records. For dark web monitoring on a zero budget, implement automated searches of paste-site aggregators using your organizational email domains and review breach notification services (HIBP Enterprise API, free tier) on a weekly cadence.

Evidence: For the post-incident record, retain the following artifacts generated during this response for a minimum period consistent with your data retention policy (NIST AU-11): (1) the pre- and post-remediation FortiGate configuration backups used to diff for unauthorized changes; (2) all exported authentication and VPN session logs covering the suspected compromise window; (3) the account inventory snapshot from `get system admin` taken at the start of containment; (4) any dark web marketplace listings or screenshots documenting the alleged sale of UK government or Foreign Office credentials attributed to FortiBleed, sourced through your threat intelligence or OSINT process. These artifacts are essential if regulatory notification obligations arise once an official advisory confirms the scope of affected firmware versions and organizations.

Detection Guidance

No confirmed IOCs, specific log signatures, or forensic indicators are available in the provided source material for this alleged campaign. Recommended detection approach: (1) Review Fortinet device authentication logs for failed and successful logins from unexpected source IPs or during unusual hours, consistent with AU-2 (Event Logging) and AU-6 (Audit Record Review, Analysis, and Reporting). (2) Search for credential reuse attempts against other enterprise systems originating from accounts that also have Fortinet access. (3) Monitor dark web intelligence feeds for organizational domain credentials appearing in marketplaces. (4) Review Fortinet PSIRT (https://www.fortinet.com/psirt) for any advisory matching the described attack pattern; no matching advisory was identified in the provided sources. (5) Apply D3-LAM (Local Account Monitoring) to identify new or modified accounts on Fortinet management interfaces. Flag: Detection guidance will require significant revision when and if an authoritative advisory with confirmed IOCs is published.

Framework Mappings

MITRE-ATTACK

- **T1589.001** — Credentials
- **T1190** — Exploit Public-Facing Application
- **T1583.008** — Malvertising
- **T1078** — Valid Accounts

NIST-800-53R5

- **CA-8** — Penetration Testing
- **RA-5** — Vulnerability Monitoring and Scanning
- **SC-7** — Boundary Protection
- **SI-2** — Flaw Remediation
- **SI-7** — Software, Firmware, and Information Integrity
- **AC-2** — Account Management
- **AC-6** — Least Privilege
- **IA-2** — Identification and Authentication (Organizational Users)

- **IA-5** — Authenticator Management
- **IA-8** — Identification and Authentication (Non-Organizational Users)

OWASP-TOP10-2021

- **A04:2021** — Insecure Design
- **A07:2021** — Identification and Authentication Failures

CIS-V8

- **5.2** — Use Unique Passwords
- **6.3** — Require MFA for Externally-Exposed Applications
- **6.4** — Require MFA for Remote Network Access
- **6.5** — Require MFA for Administrative Access

HIPAA-SECURITY

- **164.308(a)(5)(ii)(D)** — Password Management
- **164.312(d)** — Person or Entity Authentication

SOC2-TSC

- **CC6.1** — The entity implements logical access security software, infrastructure, and architectures over protected information assets

ISO-27001-2022

- **A.8.8** — Management of technical vulnerabilities

MITRE ATT&CK Mapping

Technique ID	Technique Name	Tactic
T1589.001	Credentials	Reconnaissance
T1190	Exploit Public-Facing Application	Initial-Access
T1583.008	Malvertising	Resource-Development
T1078	Valid Accounts	Defense-Evasion

Sources

Source	URL	Tier
Russian Hackers Breach UK Government Data, Trading It ...	https://united24media.com/world/russian-hackers-breach-uk-governmen...	T3
UK Foreign Office, council staff logins hacked, offered on ...	https://english.almayadeen.net/news/technology/uk-foreign-office--c...	T3

Source	URL	Tier
Fortinet: Global Leader of Cybersecurity Solutions and Services	https://www.fortinet.com/	T1

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