

# **Cybersecurity Advisory – Specially Crafted IEC 61850 Protocol Sequence Vulnerability in RTU500 Series**

CVE-2021-27196

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## Affected Products and versions

All RTU500 series releases including IEC61850 communication stack (ISS-stack) as client or as server are affected:

- RTU500 CMU firmware release 7.x
- RTU500 CMU firmware release 8.x
- RTU500 CMU firmware release 9.x
- RTU500 CMU firmware release 10.x
- RTU500 CMU firmware release 11.x
- RTU500 CMU firmware release 12.x

## Vulnerability ID

CVE ID: CVE-2021-27196

## Summary

A privately reported vulnerability in which an attacker (having access to the IEC 61850 network with knowledge on how to reproduce the attack and knowing the IP address of the RTU500 CMU running IEC 61850) can force an RTU500 CMU running IEC 61850 communication stack to reboot.

An attacker who successfully exploits this vulnerability could reboot the affected RTU500 CMU running the IEC 61850 communication stack, resulting in a denial-of-service situation. During the reboot phase, the primary functionality of the affected CMU is not available. In case of RTU560 configuration consisting of multiple CMUs only the attacked CMU is affected. Other CMUs of an RTU500 are not directly affected.

## Vulnerability Severity

The severity assessment has been performed by using the FIRST Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS) v3.1. The CVSS Environmental Score, which can affect the vulnerability severity, is not provided in this advisory since it reflects the potential impact of a vulnerability within the end-user organizations' computing environment; end-user organizations are therefore recommended to analyze their situation and specify the Environmental Score.

CVSS v3.1 Base Score: 7.5 (High)

CVSS v3.1 Temporal Score: 7.2

CVSS v3.1 Vector: AV:N/AC:L/PR:N/UI:N/S:U/C:N/I:N/A:H/E:H/RL:O/RC:C

CVSS v3.1 Link: <https://nvd.nist.gov/vuln-metrics/cvss/v3-calculator?vector=AV:N/AC:L/PR:N/UI:N/S:U/C:N/I:N/A:H/E:H/RL:O/RC:C&version=3.1>

## Vulnerability Details

A vulnerability exists in the command handling of the RTU500 CMUs included in the product revisions listed above. An attacker could exploit the vulnerability by using specially crafted message and force the attacked RTU500 CMU to reboot.

## Recommended immediate actions

The problem is corrected in the following product versions:

- RTU500 CMU firmware release 12.6.1.0
- RTU500 CMU firmware release 12.4.10.0 (planned)
- RTU500 CMU firmware release 12.2.11.0 (planned)
- RTU500 CMU firmware release 12.0.14.0 (planned)

For RTU500 series version of release 11 and older, migration to latest release 12 is recommended.

Hitachi ABB Power Grids recommends that customers apply the update at the earliest convenience.

## Mitigation Factors

Recommended security practices and firewall configurations can help protect a process control network from attacks that originate from outside the network. Such practices include that process control systems are physically protected from direct access by unauthorized personnel, have no direct connections to the Internet, and are separated from other networks by means of a firewall system that has a minimal number of ports exposed, and others that must be evaluated case by case. Process control systems should not be used for Internet surfing, instant messaging, or receiving e-mails. Portable computers and removable storage media should be carefully scanned for viruses before they are connected to a control system.

More information on recommended practices can be found in the Cybersecurity Deployment Guidelines for each product version.

## Workarounds

There is no workaround available.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the scope of the vulnerability?

An attacker who successfully exploits this vulnerability could reboot a RTU500 CMU running IEC 61850 communication stack.

### What causes the vulnerability?

The vulnerability is caused by a weakness in the message processing in the IEC 61850 protocol.

### What might an attacker use the vulnerability to do?

An attacker who successfully exploited this vulnerability could reboot a RTU500 CMU running IEC 61850 communication stack to reboot. During the reboot phase, the primary functionality of the attacked RTU500 CMU is not available.

### How could an attacker exploit the vulnerability?

An attacker could try to exploit the vulnerability by creating a specially crafted message and sending the message to an affected system node. This would require that the attacker has access to the system network, by connecting to the network either directly or through a wrongly configured or penetrated firewall, or that he installs malicious software on a system node or otherwise infects the network with malicious software. Recommended practices help mitigate such attacks, see section Mitigating Factors above.

## **Could the vulnerability be exploited remotely?**

Yes, an attacker who has network access to an affected system node could exploit this vulnerability remotely. Recommended practices include that process control systems are physically protected, have no direct connections to the Internet, and are separated from other networks by means of a firewall system that has a minimal number of ports exposed.

## **What does the update do?**

The update mitigates the identified weakness in the IEC 61850 protocol.

## **When this security advisory was issued, had this vulnerability been publicly disclosed?**

No, Hitachi ABB Power Grids received information about this vulnerability through responsible disclosure.

## **When this security advisory was issued, had Hitachi ABB Power Grids received any reports that this vulnerability was being exploited?**

No, Hitachi ABB Power Grids had not received any information indicating that this vulnerability had been exploited when this security advisory was originally issued.

## **Acknowledgements**

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- Markus Mahrla, GAI NetConsult GmbH
- Lars Lengersdorf, Amprion GmbH

## **Support**

For additional information and support please contact your product provider or Hitachi ABB Power Grids service organization. For contact information, see <https://www.hitachiabb-powergrids.com/contact-us/> for Hitachi ABB Power Grids contact-centers.