

Combating Malware in the age of APT

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New directions for malware

- Malicious code used in APT attacks are usually:
 - Not "sexy" the simple techniques work well!
 - To some extent, custom
 - Not widely disseminated = not picked up by AV
 - Not necessarily custom code but custom "packaging"
 - Highly targeted
 - Mostly a factor of the delivery mechanism, spear-phishing email, web link, etc.
 - Modular
 - Monolithic binary is risky; reveals too much about the MO, capabilities of the attacker



Modular?

- Historically your neighborhood script kiddle had one of two choices for his exploitation tools:
 - The Unix way: a lot of tools, each one does a certain function very, very well
 - The Microsoft Word way: one tool to rule them all, contains all the functionality plus the kitchen sink
- However both of these techniques have drawbacks
 - The Unix way inevitably leads to tools that have vastly different interfaces, difficult learning curve
 - The Word way helps ensure a consistent interface but exposes all of your capabilities at once to the malware analyst



Modular Implants vs. Memory Analysis

- These modular implants pose a significant challenge to the incident responder
 - No longer is the entire binary (or binaries) available for viewing and analysis from the disk
 - Now we must fuse together the results of traditional malware analysis with the volatile data acquisition
- Malware authors will continue to improve in this arena
 - Freeing unused memory as soon as it is no longer necessary
 - Zeroing out sensitive memory areas after use
- Will need more research and development to keep pace with the malicious code authors!



Case Study: Poison Ivy

Suspend Take Snapshot Rollback Settings Unity Full Screen												
V victim [172.16.93.128] - Poison Ivy												
Information Process Manager												
💣 Managers	Image	Name	Path		PID Image Page Image Size			Threade	CPU	Mem Hearra	Freated	
Files		Sustem Idle Process	1 801		0			1	97	28 KiB		- •
Search		Sustem			4	00000000	00000000	56	0	236 KiB		
ab Regedit		smss exe	\SustemBoot\Sustem32\smss	exe	380	48580000	00005000	3	0 0	416 KiB	6/25/2010 3:58:33 PM	
Processes	LT =	CSISS EXE	\??\C:\WINDOWS\sustem32\	CSISS EXE	600	44680000	00005000	11	0	3.99 MiB	6/25/2010 3:58:34 PM	
Services	LT =	winlogon.exe	\??\C:\WINDOWS\system32\	winlogon.exe	624	01000000	00081000	20	0	4.26 MiB	6/25/2010 3:58:35 PM	
<u>À</u> Devices		services.exe	C:\WINDOWS\system32\serv	ices exe	676	01000000	0001D000	15	0	3.34 MiB	6/25/2010 3:58:35 PM	-
- Installed Applications		lsass.exe	C:\WINDOWS\system32\lsass	s.exe	688	01000000	00006000	19	0	1.36 MiB	6/25/2010 3:58:35 PM	
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		sychost eve	C:\\w/INDO\w/S\sustem32\svck	nost eve	1156	01000000	00006000	12	0	3.85 MiB	6/25/2010 3:58:37 PM	-
- 🔬 NT/NTLM Hashes	L.	spoolsv eve	C:\\w/INDO\w/S\sustem32\snor	lev eve	1460	01000000	00010000	13	0	6.13 MiB	6/25/2010 3:58:37 PM	-
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- 🐓 Share		TPAutoConnovc.exe	C:\\rfogram Files\vmware\vmv	ware Tools (TPAutoLon	1044	00400000	00041000	5 E	0	4.07 MID	6/25/2010 3:56:51 PM	-
		aig.exe	C:\winDOws\system32\aig.	exe	1344	01000000	00000000	5	0	3.51 MIB	6/25/2010 3:56:51 PM	-
- 🤣 Restart	받님	Wschtty.exe	C:\WINDOWS\system32\Wsci	ntry.exe	220	0100000	00006000	1	0	Z.TT MIB	6/25/2010 3:58:52 PM	-
🛶 🗙 Uninstall		TPAutoLonnect.exe	C:\Program Files\VMWare\VMV	ware Loois/TPAutoLon	652	00400000	00072000	1	0	4.35 MIB	6/25/2010 3:58:54 PM	-
		cma.exe	C:\WINDUWS\system32\cmd	.exe	2364	4AD00000	00061000	1	0	2.79 MIB	6/25/2010 3:59:41 PM	-
		ULLYDBG.EXE	C:\Documents and Settings\Ad	dministrator\Desktop\o	880	00400000	00153000	2	3	4.02 MiB	6/28/2010 3:29:43 PM	- 1
	받님	AdobeUpdate.exe	C:\WINDUW5\system32\Adol	beUpdate.exe	3100	0 00400000 0000	00001000	5	U	4.77 MiB	6/28/2010 3:29:46 PM	_
	받님	calc.exe	C:\WINDUWS\system32\calc	.exe	160	0100000	0001F000	2	U	3.12 MiB	77772010 9:10:37 PM	- 1
		notepad.exe	C:\WINDUWS\system32\note	pad.exe	344	0100000	00014000	1	0	916 KiB	7/7/2010 11:31:40 PM	- 1
	P 🗖	logon.scr	C:\WINDOWS\System32\logo	on.scr	2956	01000000	00039000	1	0	1.92 MiB	7/8/2010 12:15:22 AM	- 1
	P -	ntvdm.exe	C:\WINDOWS\system32\ntvd	m.exe	2012	0F000000	000A7000	4	0	2.36 MiB	7/8/2010 12:20:20 AM	
		CRUUMAAN 0	C:\WINDOWS\sustem32\cmd	exe	3644	4AD0000	00061000	1	Π	2.57 MiB	7/8/2010 12:20:30 AM	<u> </u>
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Start C:\WINDOW5\system	n32										2 ~ ~ % 2 12:24	AM
To return to your computer, press Control-# 📼 🥺 🕅 🖈 🚳 🖸 🛶 🌒 🕅 🖉												



The Challenge

AdobeUpdate P	roperties	<u>? ×</u>		
General Comp	patibility Summary			
	AdobeUpdate		7.00 KB (7,1)	58 bytes)
Type of file:	Application			
Description:	AdobeUpdate			
Location:	C:\WINDOWS\system32			
Size:	7.00 KB (7,168 bytes)			
Size on disk:	8.00 KB (8,192 bytes)			
Created:	Friday, June 25, 2010, 3:59:27 PM			
Modified:	Friday, June 25, 2010, 3:59:27 PM			
Accessed:	Today, June 30, 2010, 1:24:06 PM			
Attributes:	🗌 Read-only 🔲 Hidden 🛛 Advanc	ced		
	OK Cancel /	Apply		

• A 7kb file? Probably not much in there... but let's try anyway.





The 10,000 foot view





What do we have?

- We know that it pulls in several useful imports:
 - Socket creation/connection
 - Registry set/query (RegSetValue, etc.)
 - File manipulation (CreateFile/WriteFile, etc.)
 - Process listing (CreateToolHelp32Snapshot...)
 - Memory manipulation (VirtualAlloc/Free)
- Also, some framework for future "modules":
 - Most notably, a custom import resolver (to avoid using GetProcAddress)
 - Also, decryption code (Camellia block cipher)



But... not much else

- The application code as it exists on disk is limited to placing itself in the run key (for persistence) and using the network functions to "call out" to a server
- No indication of "command" functionality... but instead:
 - It validates that the server has the correct key
 - Decrypts the incoming data
 - Allocates some memory, copying the decrypted data to the new memory area
 - and jumps to it (blindly)





So now what?

- We can use the memory image of the target machine to (hopefully) reconstruct some of the capabilities loaded at run time by the attacker
- Wouldn't it be nice to have some record of the commands invoked by the attacker as well?



Some questions we can answer

- What dlls were loaded into this process?
 - Use dlllist from volatility
- Are there executable code segments outside of the mapped executable image?
 - If so, can we disassemble them?
 - Use the VAD tree to find these memory mappings and dump using vaddump from volatility
- What strings exist that might indicate malicious activity?
 - Possibly including command lines, etc.
- More importantly, we want to exclude 7kb image from these analyses, so we can "diff" against a baseline



Volatile "Diffing"

- Take a "baseline" of the VAD tree/DLL list/file list/etc when the binary has started up (without network connection)
- Compare with the corresponding analysis on the memory image from your incident
- This is especially useful if the original binary was packed
 For example, the memory regions used to unpack the binary
- For example...



Example

- Collect the DLL listing for the baseline and incident images:
 - volatility dlllist -p [PID] -f [Baseline Memory Image] > dlllist_base.txt
 - volatility vadinfo -p [PID] -f [Incident Memory Image] > dlllist_incident.txt
- Diff the two to determine what new DLLs were loaded once Poison lvy was able to call out to the C&C server:
 - diff -u dlllist_base.txt dlllist_incident.txt



Diffing the Loaded DLLs

The code executed from the server loads several additional Windows DLLs:

\WINDOWS\WinSxS\x86_Microsoft.Windows.Common-

 $\texttt{Controls}_{6595b64144ccfldf}_{6.0.2600.5512} \texttt{x-ww}_{35d4ce83} \texttt{comctl32.dll}$

\WINDOWS\system32\atl.dll

- \WINDOWS\system32\avicap32.dll
- \WINDOWS\system32\comctl32.dll
- \WINDOWS\system32\crypt32.dll
- \WINDOWS\system32\iphlpapi.dll
- \WINDOWS\system32\mpr.dll
- \WINDOWS\system32\msasn1.dll
- \WINDOWS\system32\msvfw32.dll
- \WINDOWS\system32\pstorec.dll
- \WINDOWS\system32\shell32.dll
- \WINDOWS\system32\winmm.dll



Getting to Executable Code...

- We could dump the entire process space, but that includes a lot of code & data we're not interested in (or have already analyzed)...
- So let's use "VAD Diffing" to narrow down to the new code downloaded by the tool from the network
- But first... what is the VAD?
 - Virtual Address Descriptor
 - Forensic application first discussed in a 2007 paper by Brendan Dolan-Gavitt
 - Essentially, metadata about allocated memory regions in a process
 - Is the region backed by disk?
 - What are the page protections?



VAD Tree for Poison Ivy





The VAD info list

 Each loaded executable or DLL image will have its own entry in the VAD info list

VAD node @8221ec40 Start 65000000 End 6502dfff Tag Vad Flags: ImageMap Commit Charge: 15 Protection: 7 ControlArea @820db218 Segment e1835300 Dereference list: Flink 0000000, Blink 0000000 0 NumberOfPfnReferences: NumberOfSectionReferences: 32 1 NumberOfSubsections: NumberOfMappedViews: 5 FlushInProgressCount: 0 NumberOfUserReferences: 1 Flags: Accessed, HadUserReference, Image, File FileObject @822c6028 (024c6028), Name: \WINDOWS\system32\advpack.dll WaitingForDeletion Event: 0000000 0 NumberOfSystemCacheViews: ModifiedWriteCount: 0 First prototype PTE: e1835340 Last contiguous PTE: fffffffc Flags2: Inherit File offset: 0000000



The VAD info list

• Dynamically allocated memory looks a bit different:

```
VAD node @81de8288 Start 00aa0000 End 00aa0fff Tag VadS
Flags: MemCommit, PrivateMemory
Commit Charge: 1 Protection: 6
VAD node @81d68330 Start 00ac0000 End 00ac0fff Tag VadS
Flags: MemCommit, PrivateMemory
Commit Charge: 1 Protection: 6
```

- We are most interested in these segments!
- As long as the system patchlevels match between the two machines and the program's allocation pattern doesn't change wildly between runs, you can get meaningful results from this (crude) method



IDA Pro with Dynamically Loaded Modules





What are we missing?

- How do the pieces fit together? Not clear...
 - Perhaps with interpretation of the thread state and stack we could determine a code flow
 - Would need to be semi-automated to be useful
- Everything in Poison Ivy is PIC, so lots of tables of imports and local functions are used vftable-style
 - Requires some significant effort on the part of the reverse engineer, but can be automated
- Once a module is no longer needed, the memory is VirtualFree()'d
 - Unlinks the memory region from the VAD tree and makes it very difficult to find and associate back with the process
 - Means we lose not only modules but also the associated data (commands, search strings, etc.)



There be Nuggets

- Fragments of data before decompression:
 - "confidential information.txt"
 - Not reliable as it gets overwritten pretty quickly

0	\varTheta 🔿 🔿 📄 XPMalware1-Snapshot3.vmem																
OHex	ASCII		Find	conf	id												
				_													
		Re	place														
											De	nlace		De	alace		aplace & Find Previous Next
=											Chi	place		(ne)	JIACE		eplace & Filid (Frevious) (Next)
186D9FA0	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	
186D9FC8	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	
186D9FE0	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	
186DA000	6FD2	3290	1CD3	326D	201C	8D45	606A	811F	E201	8B45	14D0	508A	4510	3000	0C30	00E0	o"2ê."2m .çE`jĂ.,.ãEPäE.00.‡
186DA026	2910	4DD8	8B55	9024	EØFF	530E	2C5B	21AF	1446	1412	FFFF	FF67	A714	6603	003B	5625).MÿäUë\$‡`S.,[!Ø.¶```gß.f;V%
1860A046	784F	AUAD	8B22	C030	4683	0408	0046	SBEA	F88B	F089	F095	8096	32AD	3080	6BAD	1528	XUT≠a"¿UFEJ».Fa`a@a@iAn2≠Uak≠`(
196DA000	05ED	3018	0204	0122	0492	D162	260E3	5057	DOCD	9300	F731	0475	0200	8530	2765	45UU	.10.0EO≠¬E−DA,,PWV 1- 103/Aµ0 0EA
186D4000	92AE	7EDC	0301	7103	900Z	0095 00D2	4003	7003 0004	DEBB	7903 F030	C680	9149	0300	0003 C115	8/45	7C55	0 ω 67 "/ «M/ · +9ΔÅÅΗ Ο: 85"
186DA0C0	1402	3000	D1C4	508B	511A	DC8B	C640	1446	P0000	00B9	24B0	2233	D251	0108	7E36	1882	"Ω _fPőΩ ∠őΔ0 E H π*m"3"Ω 6 C
186DA0E0	5300	BB06	P131	6CB0	N979	1903	29A1	2F00	8AD0	0300	7019	8104	02B8	9131	F18D	7024	S.º11V.J)°än.Åf.Të10cl\$
186DA100	08B9	1250	4001	F3A5	A01A	D88B	C304	8B90	A2C7	7234	8D4C	2400	348B	D78B	C3FF	566C	.π.P@.Û•t.Ÿä√.äꢫr4cL\$.4ä%ä√′Vl
186DA120	0180	7044	240C	5057	53FF	0496	CC51	1708	8D44	2420	21E6	008B	4424	2400	09D0	3308	.Ä D\$.PWS~.ñÃQcD\$!Ê.ãD\$\$3.
186DA140	C052	50B0	0030	33D2	0300	0424	1354	2404	83C4	6008	8904	2489	9000	2079	44C4	2404	¿RP∞.03"\$.T\$.Éf`.â.\$âê. yDf\$.
186DA168	1603	8104	4860	0480	6954	C30A	E108	9400	0001	1F23	CCC6	8B1F	2381	DØ28	0589	0003	ÅfH`.ÄiT√î¿#Ã∆ã.#Å-(.ầ
186DA180	1F23	DF1F	231F	2385	671D	1C1F	2300	9F26	90D4	D77D	031F	237F	0300	7F03	451F	2372	.#fl.#.#Ög#.ü&ê'\}#E.#r
186DA1A0	036F	1F23	742E	5028	1F23	001F	231F	2300	1F1F	2381	2B1F	2320	5C1D	2303	433A	005C	.o.#t.P(.##.##Å+.# \.#.C:.\
186DA1C8	1063	6F6E	6669	6400	656E	7469	616C	5F69	006E	666F	726D	6174	6940	6F6E	2E74	7874	.confid.ential_i.nformati@on.txt
186DA1E0	20E6	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	00A4	986A	7CE3	A618	0387	CCA5	00F5	ÊάÕ.ι
186DA200	6EED	4D92	1272	DØFØ	03BE	39A0	496F	4B30	8283	F2EC	1082	05CD	2003	4F2F	4F2F	6382	nlMí.r-é.@9†IoK0ÇÉÚI.Ç.Ö .O/O/cÇ
186DA220	1455	D377	3908	40B5	7088	45CA	E301	4CE3	30D3	D350	A027	041F	1445	E370	4108	4901	.U"w9.@µpàE ".L"0""P†'E"pA.I.
186DA248	837D	0000	0074	1983	7D10	0076	5013	8B45	10E0	010C	E901	8D18	55D3	B9A1	9142	3DF6	E}t.E}vP.äE.‡E.ç.U"π*ëB=
1860A266	0818	UEFF	0001	A106	2628	8BC7	6611	RAND	9881	0995	30AF	ENND	8BD9	2391	0006	45DB	y.L'*.&(a≪t.∞.oAjıUµ‡.aY#e.∆£€
100DA200	0088	7DE0	8802	8702	5940	3489	4500	8BAD	2000	8035	5AB1	4051	F10E	BDD0	1157	FFUE	.α}‡α.α"Y@4αΕΑα≠ .Α5∠±.∎U.Ω₩΄.
186DJ200	0042	1020	0070	DEDC	500A	4402	50FF	9761	0100	0170	0020	905A	6704	1020	1000	0001	.U.JTO<'.G.P CAATA}G MZ.UN ?
186D42E0	9613 85F4	200B	50079	SBSE	C861	00FF	5721	SBED	E085	E675	150B	0002	SE83	9000	0020 0F94	811C	ÖN DÄÖsa "WIÄttönu fökt DÄt
186DA300	8973	0800	8143	8210	4100	0000	4314	00L0	02DB	2109	1500 B304	5650	0F03 0416	01F8	6105	1101	$\hat{\alpha} = \hat{\lambda} \cap A$ $A \cap = f \mid > VP$ F_{α}
186DA32P	E3E0	924A	6203	8592	R100	NATU	1600	9227	E20B	7857	0023	45D4	3008	8943	0105	SBEE	Ú∉í@h.Őt.;í'Ű.nW. #F '@.ôCő
186DA348	8978	3453	8D16	85E2	PA83	02E0	C002	CODE	9822	F490	128B	C72B	A20A	8500	D874	AB20	âx4Sc.ÖÉ.tÃřê"Ûê.ã«+¢.Ö;Vt.P
186DA360	7072	6001	F860	0190	ØØAD	4402	0430	5300	893F	1701	0810	0112	8B70	0540	2840	0321	pr``.ê.≠D0S/â?ấp.@(@.!
186DA380	8BD0	0003	D789	55DØ	85D2	7402	1090	4401	57FF	55D0	83A0	F801	1BC0	4040	030A	C00C	ã◊âU-Ö"têJ.WັU-Ɇ⁻,@@/.
186DA3A0	6201	301B	01EB	1791	1B27	040C	2320	0462	308A	45DB	031F	C3FA	A970	1600	1E80	1401	b.01.ë.'# .b0äE€√®pÄ
186DA3C0	821F	D070	0E01	801F	8955	E08B	D88B	F30C	8B86	011F	216B	7834	8B87	01D5	1E87	E803	ÇpÄ.âU‡ãÿãÔ.ãÖ!kx4ãá.'.áË.
186DA3E0	0000	003E	2F5F	B7F0	7025	48FF	9CB3	EB5A	02C8	A000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	>/_∑ép%H ú≥ÎZ.»†
186DA400	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	0000	
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Which leaves us with...

- Some answers...
 - We can quickly focus in on code loaded/injected at runtime
 - That code can be analyzed just as if it were sitting on disk
- But in general, more questions ...
 - How do we (or can we) get that list of commands we were promised?
 - What new tools & techniques are required (or even possible) against this class of malicious code?
 - How best to integrate more "context" available from the memory dump into the reverse engineering analysis?





Questions?

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