



CERTIFIED CYBERSECURITY TECHNICIAN



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Chapter 8:

Network Security Assessment Techniques and Tools

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SCENARIO

Network security assessment plays a vital role in safeguarding the networks, devices, and data pertaining to an organization. To protect these assets from the evolving landscape of cyberattacks, organizations require an understating of the current technical security posture of their network. Network security assessment helps organizations in identifying the existing security flaws and possible security threats and risks to their IT assets. It also helps in improving the integrity and resilience of both the internal and external networks.

Therefore, a security professional must perform network security assessment on a regular basis to ensure safety of the local network and the systems connected to it.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lab is to provide expert knowledge in assessing network security. This includes knowledge of the following tasks:

- · Collecting data using search engines
- · Gathering threat intelligence feed using threatfeeds.io
- · Performing vulnerability research using Common Weakness Enumeration (CWE)
- Performing vulnerability assessment to identify vulnerabilities in the target system or network

OVERVIEW OF NETWORK SECURITY ASSESSMENT

Performing security assessments is the primary aim of a security professional. A security professional, attack a target network or organization with the knowledge and authorization of its management, to find loopholes in the security architecture. But the job does not end there. Finding such loopholes is a minor task. The most crucial task of security assessment is to apply the appropriate countermeasures in order to fix the loopholes. Conducting a security assessment to identify vulnerabilities can protect a network from sniffing attacks, MAC spoofing attack, ARP poisoning attack, etc.



LAB TASKS

Cyber security professional or a security professional uses numerous tools and techniques to examine network security. Recommended labs that will assist you in learning various techniques in network security assessment include the following:



Collect Data through Search Engines



Gather Threat Intelligence Feed using threatfeeds.io



Perform Vulnerability Research in Common Weakness Enumeration (CWE)



Perform Vulnerability Assessment to Identify Security Vulnerabilities in the Target System or Network

Note: Turn on PfSense Firewall virtual machine and keep it running throughout the lab exercises.



EXERCISE 1: COLLECT DATA THROUGH SEARCH ENGINES

Search engines are one of the information sources to locate key information about threats and vulnerability scenarios.

LAB SCENARIO

An easy way to find threats and vulnerabilities in websites and applications is to Google them or use other search engines, which is a simple method adopted by attackers. Using search engines, hackers can identify crucial vulnerabilities in application code strings, providing the entry point they need to break through application security.

A security professional should use the same methods used by hackers such as to collect data regarding all the existing vulnerabilities in the organizational infrastructure and patch them before an attacker identifies and tries to exploit them.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lab is to demonstrate the following:

- Collecting data using Google Hacking Database
- Collecting data using ThreatCrowd
- Collecting data through deep and dark web searching using Tor Browser

OVERVIEW OF SEARCH ENGINES

Search engines play a major role in extracting critical details about a target from the Internet. They return a list of Search Engine Results Pages ('SERPs'). Security professionals and threat analysts use search engines to extract information about target threats and threat actors such as industry threats, technology threats, exploit used, exploit delivery method, harm caused, etc. which help them in analyzing the impact of the threat to the organization. These search engines can also be used to gather organizational information from an attacker point-of-view which helps in identifying the loopholes or vulnerabilities in the organization infrastructure.



Note: Ensure that PfSense Firewall virtual machine is running.

1. Turn on the Admin Machine-1 virtual machine.

2. Log in with the credentials Admin and admin@123. Note: If Networks prompt appears once you have logged into the machine, click Yes.

3. Launch any browser, in this lab, we are using the Mozilla Firefox browser. Double-click Firefox shortcut icon on the desktop. Note: If an Update available pop-up appears, click on Dismiss.

4. In the address bar of the browser type https://www.exploit-db.com/google-hacking-database and press Enter. Google Hacking Database (GHDB) page appears.

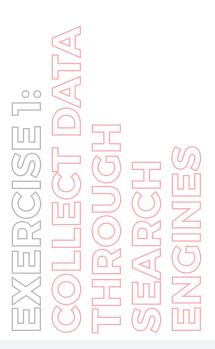


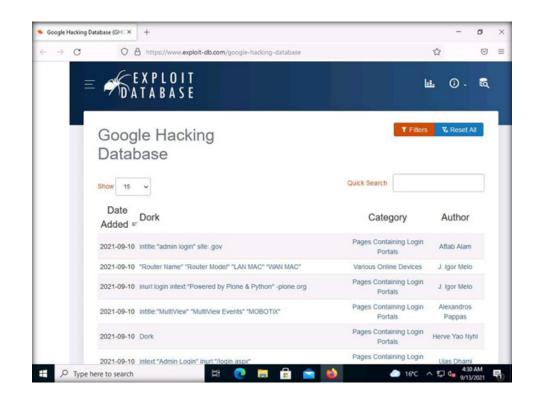


Scroll down the page and review the latest entries. These are entries that have been discovered and submitted by the community. Take a few minutes and click on a few of them and see what you can discover. As you can see, these links can display quite a bit of information. Some of them may fail because the queries have been discovered, but you should be able to find valuable information when you are doing your testing.

5. Click Filters.

Note: If cookies pop-up appears in the lower-section of the window, Use necessary cookies only.

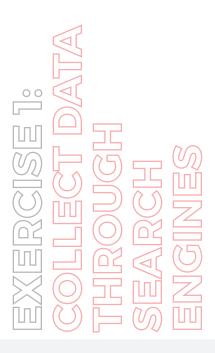


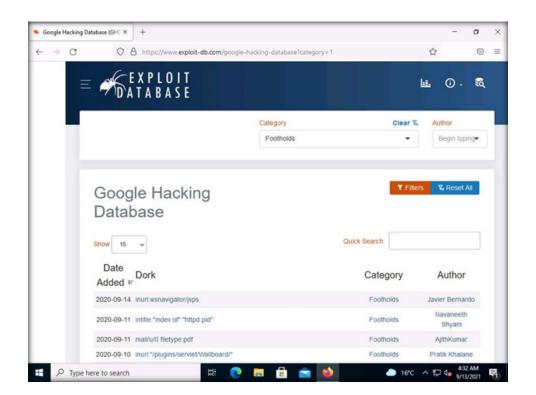




6. Click the drop-down menu in Category field to view the existing categories. Select Footholds category from the drop-down menu in Category field.

7. This will redirect you to the Footholds search results. What you would do in your testing is to create files of these queries. Then, with written authorization and permission to test the organizational site, you would use the string and enter the site that you are testing to see if there are any foothold weaknesses in the site. The foothold links are shown in the screenshot below.



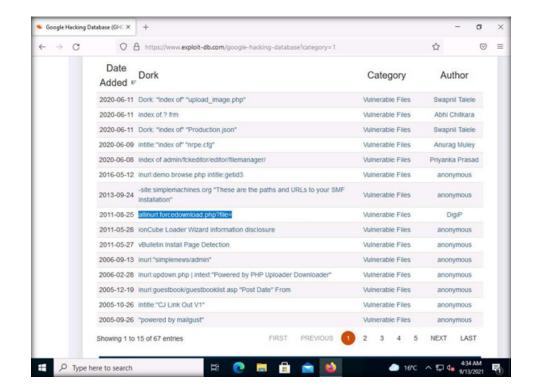




8. After you have reviewed the entries, select Vulnerable Files from the Category drop-down menu. In the vulnerable files results, there is a query that shows "allinurl:forcedownload.php?file="."

Note: The screenshots and search query results may vary in your environment, you may choose a query of your own and explore.

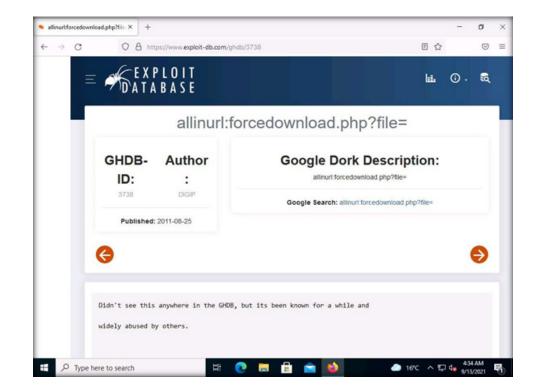






9. This query locates sites that use the forcedownload.php script and are vulnerable to URL manipulation. The site will spit out any file on the local site, including the PHP files, with all server-side code. We are not talking about the rendered page, but the source itself. This is most commonly used on WordPress sites to grab the wp-config.php file to gain access to the database but is not limited to WordPress sites. Many queries exist like this, and you are encouraged to develop your own and test whether the organization site is vulnerable.

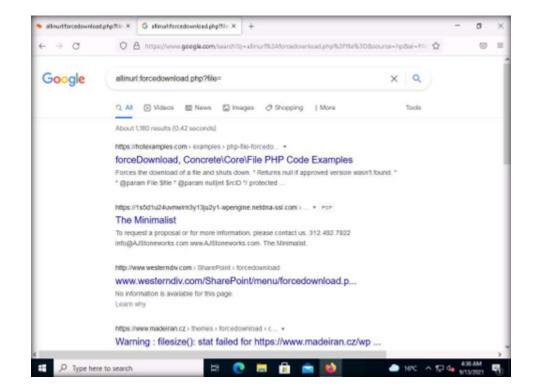






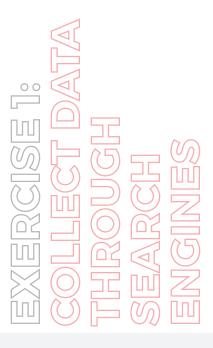
10. Now, open a new tab in the Firefox browser and open google.com website. In the Google search, type allinurl:forcedownload.php?file= and click Google Search. An example of Google search result of the above-mentioned query can be found in the screenshot below. Close the current tab in the browser window.

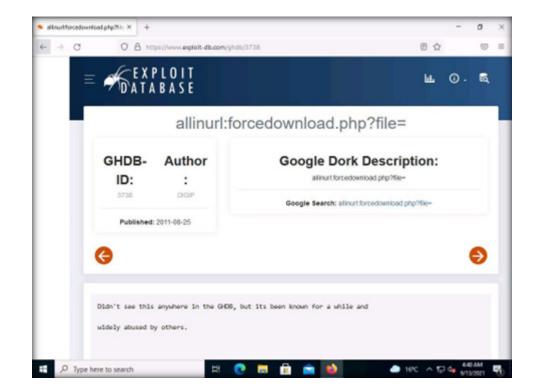






11. In the Exploit Database website, click Go back one page icon () to navigate back to the main page of site.

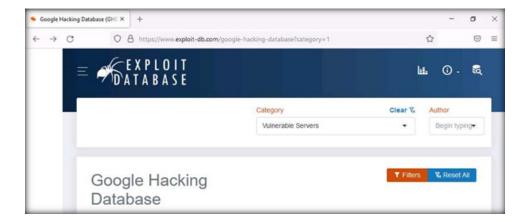






12. In the landing page the next set of items, we want to check vulnerable servers; therefore, select Vulnerable Servers from the Category. The page will now display queries related to vulnerable servers.



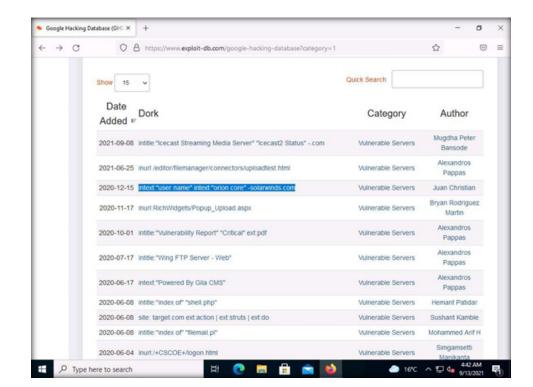




13. Once again, there are a number of queries we can use to identify potentially vulnerable servers. For example, we will look at the query intext:"user name" intext:"orion core" -solarwinds.com.

Note: The screenshots and search query results may when you perform this lab, you may choose a query of your own and explore.

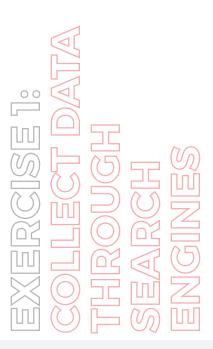


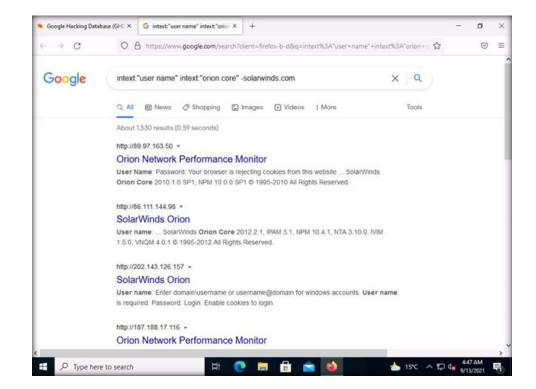




14. Open a new tab in the browser and open google.com website. In the Google search field, type intext:"user name" intext:"orion core" -solarwinds.com and click Google Search button. This query will look for SolarWinds Orion web consoles that are exposed to the Internet. The following screenshot shows the results of this query.

Close the current tab in the browser window.





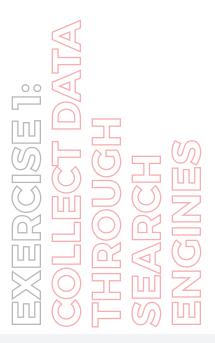


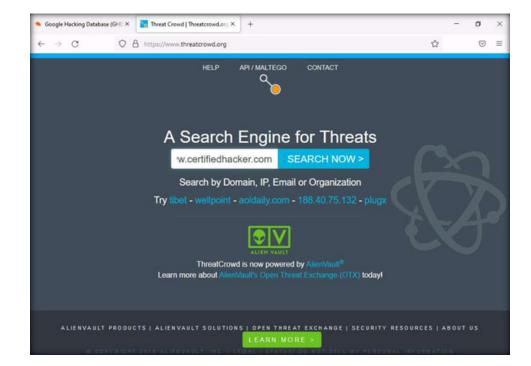
15. In the Exploit Database website, click Go back one page icon () to navigate back to the main page.

16. Similarly, you can explore other categories such as File Containing Usernames, Sensitive Directories, File Containing Passwords, etc.

17. Now, we shall perform the open-source intelligence gathering using ThreatCrowd. In a new tab, type https://www.threatcrowd.org in the address bar and press Enter. A Search Engine for Threats page appears as shown in the screenshot below.

In the search field, type the organization's URL that you wish to analyze (here, www.certifiedhacker.com) and click SEARCH NOW >.

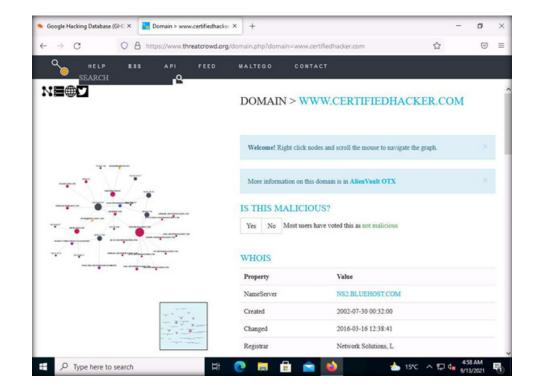






18. You will see the detailed information regarding the provided URL including IP address, name servers, DNS resolutions, WhoIs results, etc. These details are present in the public domain and are important to gather such information as they can pose a threat. You can further conduct a series of queries and gather publicly available organizational information from the ThreatCrowd site.







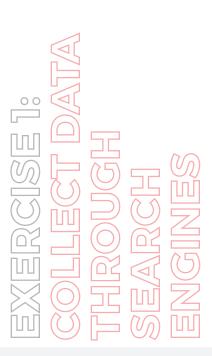
19. This concludes the demonstration showing how to gather open-source intelligence using Exploit Database and ThreatCrowd. Close all open windows.

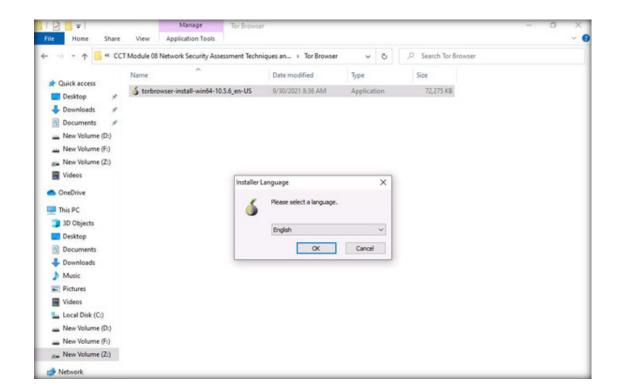
20. Now, we shall perform the open-source intelligence gathering by deep and dark web searching using Tor Browser. Open a File Explorer and navigate to Z:\CCT-Tools\CCT Module 08 Network Security Assessment Techniques and Tools\Tor Browser and double-click torbrowser-install-win64-10.5.6 en-US.exe.

Installer Language window appears, select your preferred language (here, English) and click OK.

Note: If Open File - Security Warning window appears, click Run.

Note: If the User Account Control pop-up appears, click Yes.



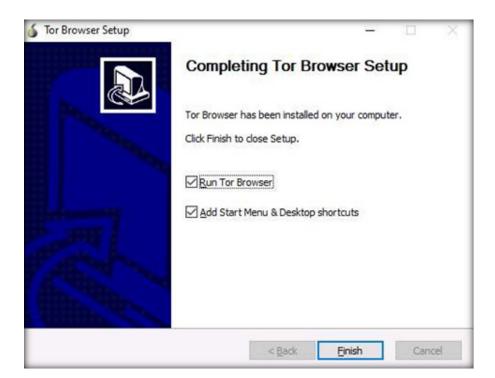




21. Follow the wizard steps (by selecting default options) to install Tor Browser. After the installation is complete, click Finish button to complete the installation and launch the Tor Browser as shown in the screenshot below.

Note: Make sure that Run Tor Browser option is checked.

EXERCISE 1: COLLECT DAIA THROUGH SEARCH ENGINES



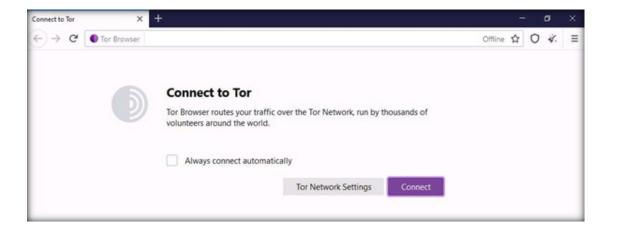


22. Connect to Tor page appears. Click Connect button to browse through Tor browser default settings directly.

Note: If Tor is censored in your country or if you want to connect through Proxy, click Configure button here and continue.

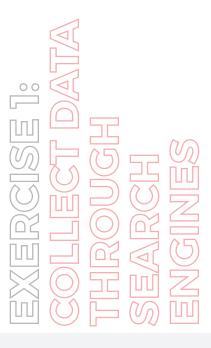
Note: It might take a while to launch the Tor Browser.

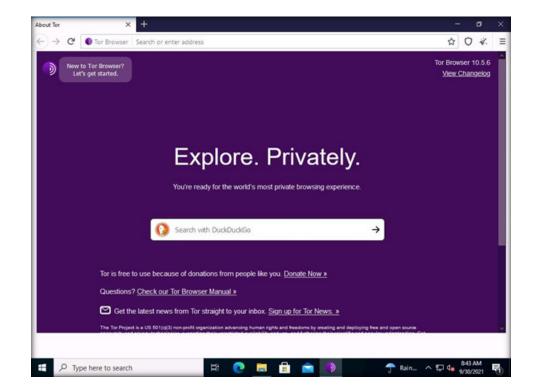






23. After a few second, Tor browser home page appears. The main advantage of the Tor browser is that it maintains the anonymity of the user throughout the session.

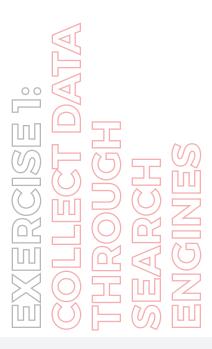


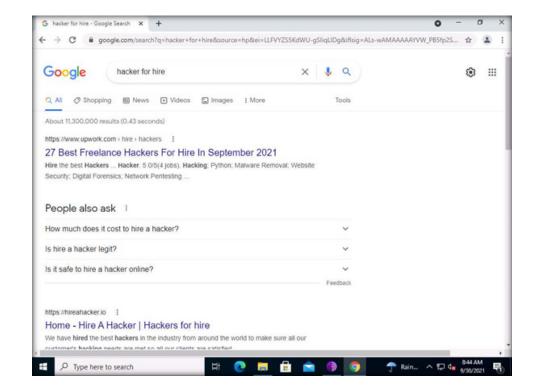




24. As a security professional, your job is to collect as much as information related to threats to the organization from the dark web. Before doing that, you must know the actual difference between surface web searching and dark web searching. Open Google Chrome. Navigate to www.google.com and in Google search, search for hacker for hire. You will be loaded with large amounts of irrelevant data as shown in the screenshot below.

Note: To launch Google Chrome, double-click Google Chrome shortcut present on the Desktop.



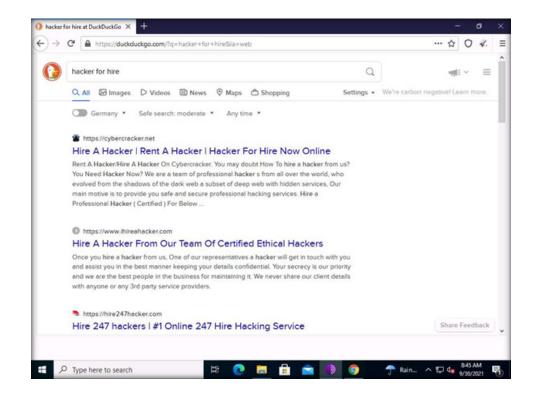




25. Now switch to Tor browser and search for the same (i.e., hacker for hire). You will find the relevant links related to the professional hackers who operate underground through the dark web. Click and open any of the search results (here, hire247hacker.com). Note: The search result may vary while you are performing the lab task.

Note: Tor uses DuckDuckGo search engine to perform a dark web search. The result may vary in your environment.







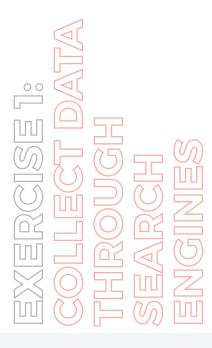
26. The hire247hacker.com web page opens up as shown in the screenshot below and you will see that the site belongs to professional hackers who operate underground. This information related to professional hackers and hacking services can be used to build effective threat intelligence.







- 27. A dark web search for security professionals does not stop with hire247hacker.com. You can collect large amounts of threat information through multiple dark web searches.
- 28. This concludes the demonstration showing how to gather open-source intelligence by searching over deep and dark web searching using Tor Browser.
- 29. Close all open windows.





EXERCISE 2: GATHER THREAT INTELLIGENCE FEED USING THREATFEEDS.IO

Threat intelligence feeds (TI feeds) are continuous streams of packaged data related to potential or current threats to the organization.

LAB SCENARIO

A security professional must have the required knowledge about gathering threat intelligence feeds from the open-source platforms such as threatfeeds.io. Threat feeds can assist security professionals in blocking bad IP addresses, blacklisting malicious or phishing websites, etc, in order to prevent the organizational network from outside threats.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lab is to learn how to collect TI feeds using online tools such as threatfeeds.io.

OVERVIEW OF THREAT INTELLIGENCE FEED

Threat intelligence feeds (TI feeds) feature a packaged collection of data taken from different sources related to potential or current threats in an organization. Most feeds concentrate on domains, malicious IP addresses, or botnet activity. These comprise actionable information and are implemented along with technical controls to prevent cyber-attacks.

threatfeeds.io is a free and open-source threat intelligence provider of popular free and open-source TI feeds and sources. It also lists links for direct downloads and live summaries.

Security professional can use the online tool threatfeeds.io, as a proof of concept to gather threat intelligence feeds.

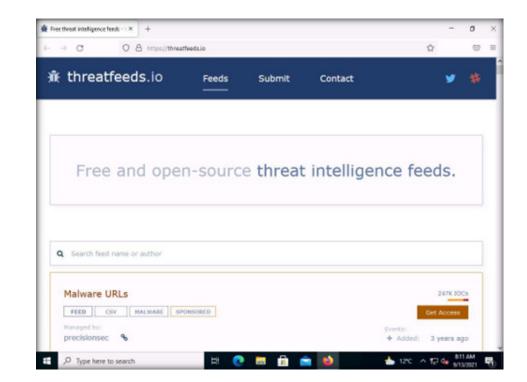


Note: Ensure that the Admin Machine-1 and PfSense Firewall virtual machines are running.

1. In the Admin Machine-1 virtual machine, launch any browser, in this lab, we are using the Mozilla Firefox browser. Double-click Firefox shortcut icon on the desktop.

2. In the address bar of the browser type https://threatfeeds.io and press Enter. threatfeeds.io page appears.

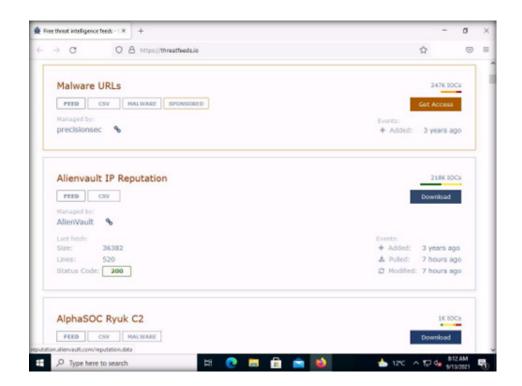




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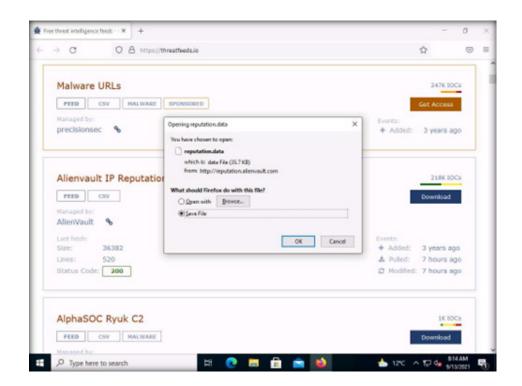


3. You can observe that threat feeds from different online resources are displayed. Scroll-down to Alienvault IP Reputation feed and click Download button to download the file.



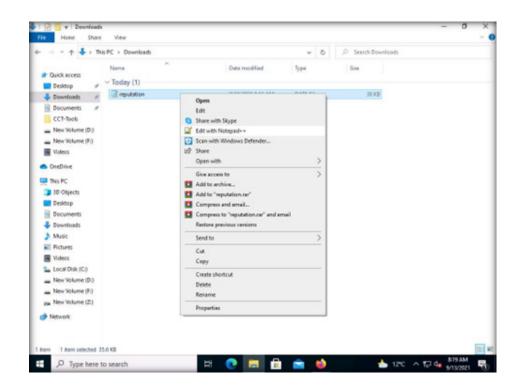


4. Opening reputation.data window appears, select Save File radio button and click OK.





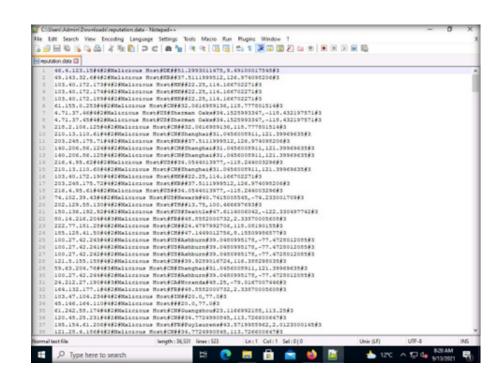
- 5. After the completion of download, navigate to the download location (here, Downloads).
- 6. Click to select the file reputation.data. Right-click on it and select Edit with Notepad++ from the options.





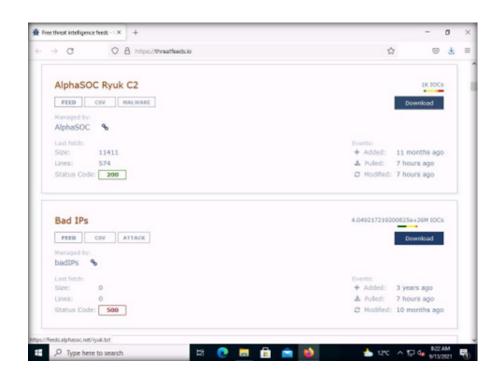
7. A Notepad++ window appears, displaying the file content. This file contains a list of malicious IP addresses, as shown in the screenshot below.

Note: If update notepad++ pop-up appears, click on No.



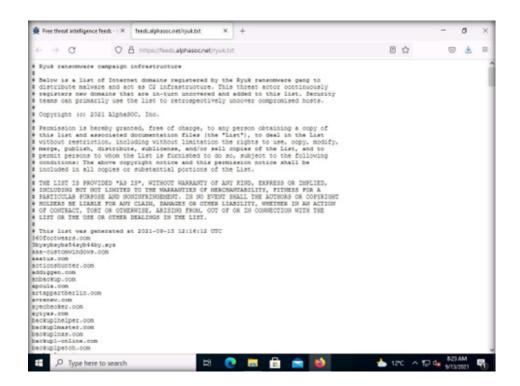


- 8. Close the Notepad++ window and navigate back to the browser window.
- 9. Now, click Download button in the AlphaSOC Ryuk C2 feed.





10. The file content appears in a new tab. This file contains a list of Internet domains that are used to distribute malware and act as C2 infrastructure, as shown in the screenshot below.





- 11. Close the current tab to navigate back to the tab where threatfeeds.io is opened.
- 12. Similarly, you can browse through other threat feeds from different online resources. These TI feeds can be used to enhance security infrastructure to thwart cyber-attacks on local network and systems.
- 13. This concludes the demonstration of showing how to gather threat intelligence feeds using threatfeeds.io.
- 14. Close all open windows.



EXERCISE 3: PERFORM VULNERABILITY RESEARCH IN COMMON WEAKNESS ENUMERATION (CWE)

Vulnerability Research discovers the vulnerabilities and design flaws that will expose an operating system and its applications to exploit, attack, or misuse.

LAB SCENARIO

A security professional must keep up with the most recently discovered vulnerabilities and exploits to stay one step ahead of attackers through vulnerability research.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lab is to learn how to perform vulnerability research using online resources such as Common Weakness Enumeration (CWE).

OVERVIEW OF THREAT INTELLIGENCE FEED

Vulnerability Research is performed, due to following reasons:

- · To gather information about security trends, newly discovered threats, attack surfaces, attack vectors and techniques
- · To find weaknesses in the OS and applications and alert the network administrator before a network attack
- To understand information that helps prevent security problems
- To know how to recover from a network attack

Common Weakness Enumeration (CWE) is a category system for software vulnerabilities and weaknesses. It can be effectively employed by the community as a baseline for weakness identification, mitigation, and prevention efforts. Further, CWE has an advanced search technique with which you can search and view the weaknesses based on research concepts, development concepts, and architectural concepts.

Security professional can use CWE to view the latest underlying system vulnerabilities.



Note: Ensure that the Admin Machine-1 and PfSense Firewall virtual machines are running.

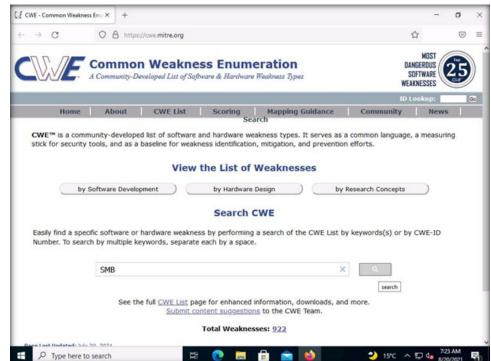
1. In the Admin Machine-1 virtual machine, launch any browser, here, we are using Mozilla Firefox. In the address bar of the browser place your mouse cursor and type https://cwe.mitre.org/ and press Enter

Note: - If the Default Browser pop-up window appears, uncheck the Always perform this check when starting Firefox checkbox and click the Not now button.

Note: - If New in Firefox: Content Blocking pop-up window appears, follow the step and click Got it to finish viewing the information. Note: If an Update available pop-up appears, click on Dismiss.

2. CWE website appears. In the Google Custom Search under Search CWE section, type SMB and click the search icon.



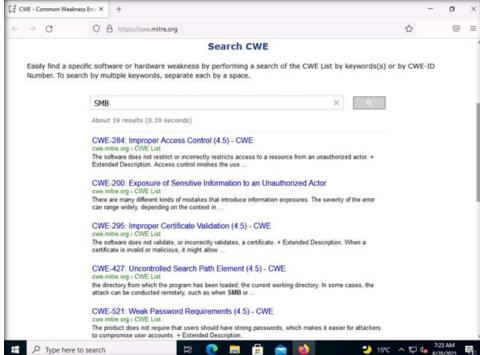




3. The search results appear, displaying the underlying vulnerabilities in the target service (here, SMB). You can click any link to view detailed information on the vulnerability.

Note: The search results might differ when you perform this lab.

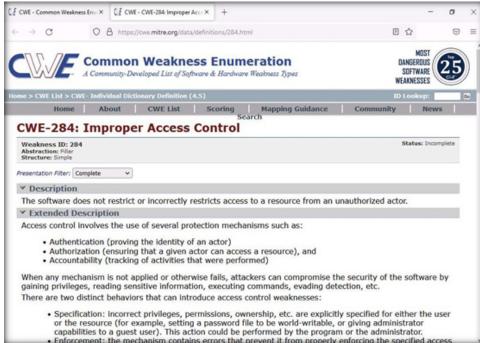






- 4. Now, click any link (here, CWE-284) to view detailed information about the vulnerability.
- 5. A new webpage appears in the new tab, displaying detailed information regarding the vulnerability. You can scroll-down further to view more information.







- 6. Similarly, you can click on other vulnerabilities and view detailed information.
- 7. Now, click on Home to navigate back to the CWE website, scroll down, and click the CWE List link present below the searched results.

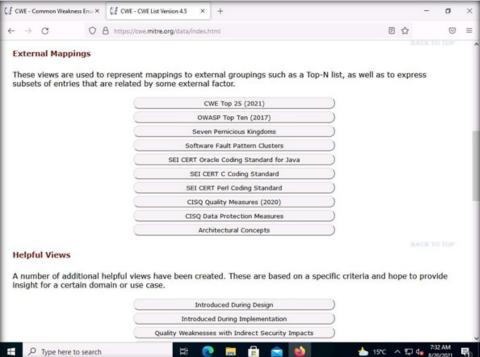






8. A new webpage appears, displaying CWE List Version. Scroll down, and under the External Mappings section, click CWE Top 25 (2021). Note: The results might differ when you perform this lab.





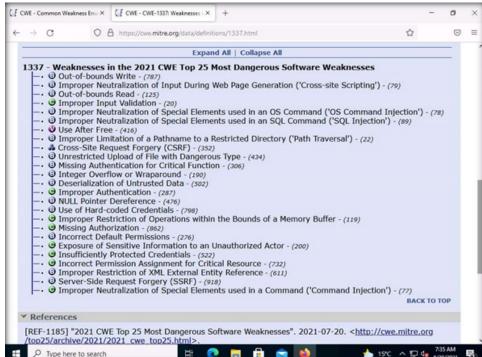


9. A webpage appears, displaying CWE VIEW: Weaknesses in the 2021 CWE Top 25 Most Dangerous Software Weaknesses. Scroll down and view a list of Weaknesses in the 2021 CWE Top 25 Most Dangerous Software Weaknesses under the Relationships section. You can click on each weakness to view detailed information on it.

Note: This information can be used to exploit the vulnerabilities in the software and further launch attacks.

Note: The result publishing year be might different when you perform this lab.







- 10. Similarly, you can go back to the CWE website and explore other options, as well.
- 11. This concludes the demonstration of checking vulnerabilities in the Common Weakness Enumeration (CWE).
- 12. Close all open windows and document all the acquired information.
- 13. Turn off the Admin Machine-1 virtual machine.





EXERCISE 4: PERFORM VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT TO IDENTIFY SECURITY VULNERABILITIES IN THE TARGET SYSTEM OR NETWORK

A vulnerability assessment is the process of identifying vulnerabilities in network components, including the OS, web applications, and web servers.

LAB SCENARIO

A security professional requires knowledge to perform vulnerability assessment in order to address the issues identified in the system and avoid serious damage to an organization's assets.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lab is to learn how to perform vulnerability assessment to determine system vulnerabilities using OpenVAS.

OVERVIEW OF VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

Vulnerability assessment helps identify the category and criticality of the vulnerability in an organization. An organization rates the vulnerabilities and prioritizes them, and design methods to remedy the situation accordingly. The assessment method helps measure the effectiveness of those remedies. The goal of the vulnerability assessment includes scanning, examining, evaluating, and reporting the vulnerabilities in a network to, thus, minimize the levels of risks to an organization.

OpenVAS is a framework of several services and tools offering a comprehensive and powerful vulnerability scanning and vulnerability management solution. Its capabilities include unauthenticated testing, authenticated testing, various high level and low-level Internet and industrial protocols, performance tuning for large-scale scans, and a powerful internal programming language to implement any vulnerability test. The actual security scanner is accompanied with a regularly updated feed of Network Vulnerability Tests (NVTs)—over 50,000 in total.

Security professional can use the OpenVAS Tool as a proof of concept to identify system vulnerabilities in an organization.



Note: In this task, we will use the Attacker Machine-2 (10.10.1.13) machine as a host machine and the Web Server (10.10.1.16) machine as a target machine.

Note: Ensure that PfSense Firewall virtual machine is running.

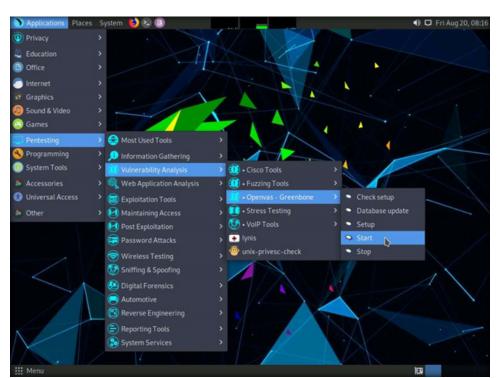
- 1. Turn on Attacker Machine-2 and Web Server virtual machines.
- 2. In the Attacker Machine-2 login page, the attacker username will be selected by default. Enter password as toor in the Password field and press Enter to log in to the machine.

Note: If a Parrot Updater pop-up appears at the top-right corner of Desktop, ignore and close it.

Note: If a Question pop-up window appears asking you to update the machine, click No to close the window.

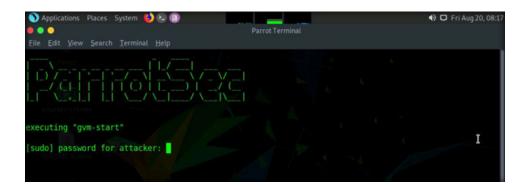
3. Click Applications at the top of the Desktop window and navigate to Pentesting → Vulnerability Analysis → Openvas - Greenbone → Start to launch OpenVAS tool.







4. A terminal window appears, in the [sudo] password for attacker field, type toor as a password and press Enter. OpenVAS initializes. Note: The password that you type will not be visible.





5. After the tool initializes, click Firefox icon from the top-section of the Desktop.



```
4) D Fri Aug 20, 08:18
Napplications Places System
      Tasks: 3 (limit: 9451)
     Memory: 209.7M
     CGroup: /system.slice/gvmd.service
                - 857 gvmd: Waiting for incoming connections
                 -1608 gvmd: Reloading NVTs
               L1610 gvmd: OSP: Updating NVT cache
Aug 20 08:11:07 parrot systemd[1]: Starting Open Vulnerability Assessment System Manager Daemon...
Aug 20 08:11:07 parrot systemd[1]: gvmd.service: Can't open PID file /run/gvm/gvmd.pid (yet?) after s
tart: Operation not permitted
 ug 20 08:11:18 parrot systemd[1]: Started Open Vulnerability Assessment System Manager Daemon.

    ospd-openvas.service - OSPD OpenVAS

     Loaded: loaded (/lib/systemd/system/ospd-openvas.service; enabled; vendor preset: enabled)
     Active: active (running) since Fri 2021-08-20 08:11:07 EDT; 6min ago
    Process: 633 ExecStart=/usr/bin/ospd-openvas --unix-socket=/run/ospd/ospd.sock --pid-file=/run/os
  /ospd-openvas.pid (code=exited, status=0/SUCCESS)
  Main PID: 822 (ospd-openvas)
Tasks: 3 (limit: 9451)
Memory: 669.4M
     CGroup: /system.slice/ospd-openvas.service

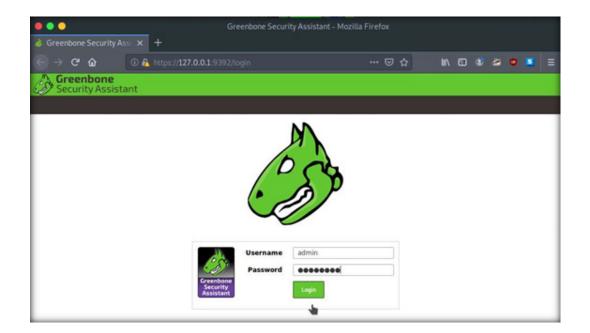
L822 /usr/bin/python3 /usr/bin/ospd-openvas --unix-socket=/run/ospd/ospd.sock --pid-fil
 =/run/ospd/ospd-openvas.pid
 ug 20 08:11:05 parrot systemd[1]: Starting OSPD OpenVAS...
 ug 20 08:11:07 parrot systemd[1]: Started OSPD OpenVAS.
 *] Opening Web UI (https://127.0.0.1:9392) in: 5... 4... 3... 2... 1...
       t@parrot |- [/home/attacker]
                                                                                                   134 🕲
          Parrot Terminal
```



- 6. The Firefox browser appears, in the address bar, type https://127.0.0.1:9392 and press Enter.
- 7. OpenVAS login page appears, log in with Username and Password as admin and password and click the Login button. Note: If Would you like Firefox to save login pop-up appears, click on Don't Save.

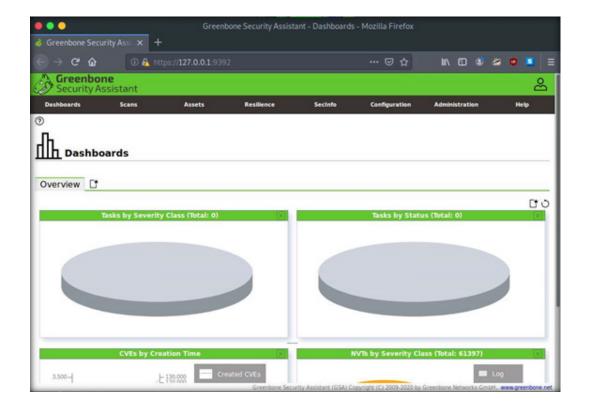
EXERCISE 4:
PERFORM
VULNERABILITY
ASSESSMENT TO
IDENTIFY SECURITY
VULNERABILITIES IN
THE TARGET SYSTEM
OR NETWORK

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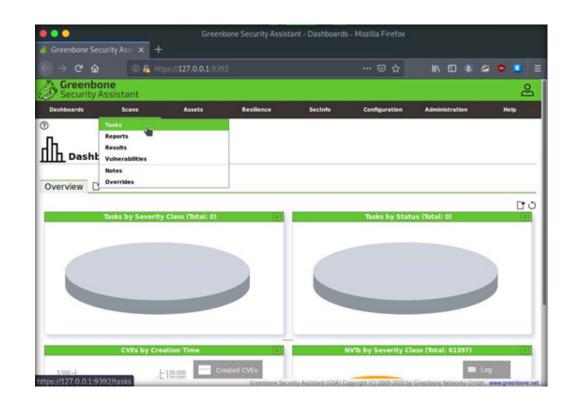


8. OpenVAS Dashboards appears, as shown in the screenshot below.



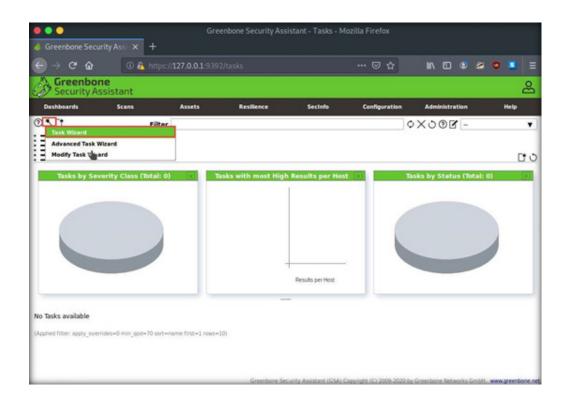


9. Navigate to Scans → Tasks from the Menu bar. Note: If a Welcome to the scan management! pop-up appears, close it.



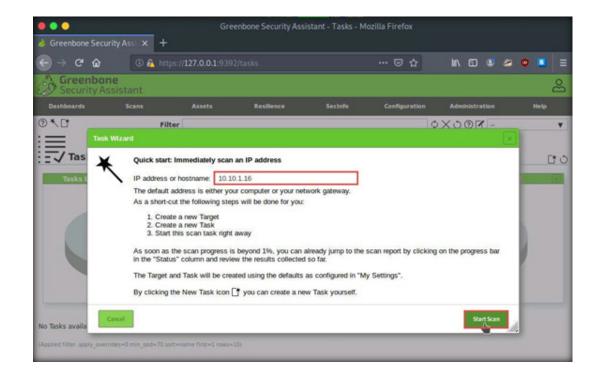


10. Hover over wand icon and click the Task Wizard option.



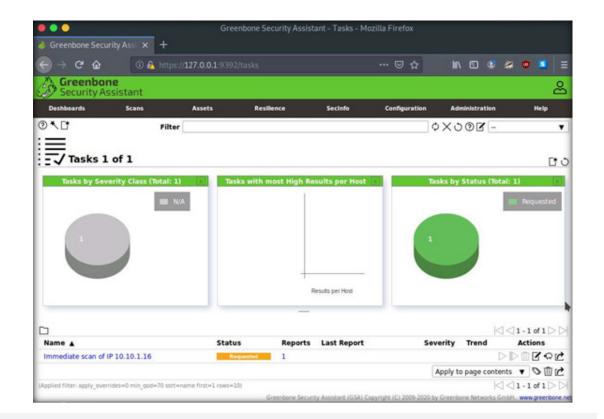


11. The Task Wizard window appears; enter the target IP address in the IP address or hostname field (here, the target system is Web Server [10.10.1.16]) and click the Start Scan button.





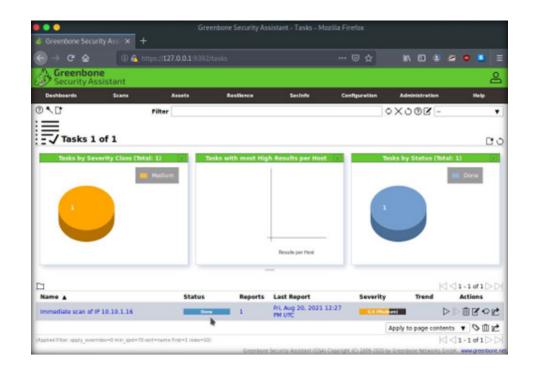
12. The task appears under the Tasks section; OpenVAS starts scanning the target IP address.





13. Wait for the Status to change from Requested to Done. Once it is completed, click the Done button under the Status column to view the vulnerabilities found in the target system.

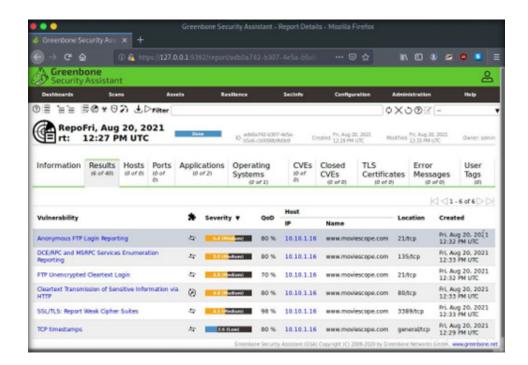
Note: If you are logged out of the session, login again using credentials admin/password.





14. Report: Information appears, click Results tab to view the discovered vulnerabilities along with their severity and the port numbers on which they are running.

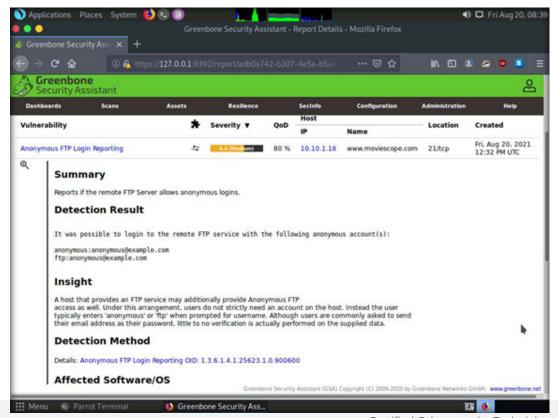






- 15. Click on any vulnerability under the Vulnerability column (here, Anonymous FTP Login Reporting to view its detailed information.
- 16. Detailed information regarding selected vulnerability appears, as shown in the screenshot below.







- 17. Similarly, you can click other discovered vulnerabilities under the Report: Results section to view detailed information regarding the vulnerabilities in the target system.
- 18. Next, go through the findings, including all high or critical vulnerabilities. Manually use your skills to verify the vulnerability. The challenge with vulnerability scanners is that they are quite limited; they work well for an internal or white box test only if the credentials are known.
- 19. This concludes the demonstration showing how to perform vulnerabilities analysis using OpenVAS.
- 20. Close all open windows and document all the acquired information.
- 21. Turn off Attacker Machine-2, Web Server, and PfSense Firewall virtual machines.



