Network-Based Attacks

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No powerful infrastructure for attackers to use
  - Typically, single host with dial-up access

Needed to exploit vulnerabilities in protocol implementations to carry out effective attacks

IP-layer
  - Teardrop: overlapping IP fragments

ICMP
  - Ping of death: Oversized ICMP ECHO packets
  - Smurf: ICMP ECHO REPLY Flood

TCP
  - SYN-flooding
  - IP-spoofing
More Recent Attacks

- **Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS)**
  - Attacks carried out by a large number of “bots” that were previously compromised by the attacker
  - Bots run software (installed by attacker) that permit the attacker to command them
  - Bots initiate connections to avoid being noticed
    - make use of common protocols such as IRC or WWW
  - Bots don’t need to hide their identity
    - but it does help, as it allows them to operate longer before being discovered and taken down
  - Bots can carry out any attack, but most common are attacks that saturate a victim’s network link
    - The victim can do nothing to protect itself – it needs network help

- **Bots can be used for other things besides DDoS**
  - SPAM

- **Reflection attacks**
  - Bots send a query to well-known servers (e.g., DNS) all over the world with the spoofed IP-address of the victim
Self-propagating Attacks

- **E-mail viruses**
  - Started with Melissa (1999)
    - Cost of clean-up: $10 billion!
  - Recently, email viruses used to establish backdoors
    - These are later used to deploy more sinister malware
  - Most email viruses exploit “social engineering”
    - Solution to such attacks necessarily relies on user education
Self-propagating Attacks

- **Worms**
  - Morris – over 6000 hosts (1988)
  - Code Red -- ~300K hosts (2001)
  - Nimda -- ~200K (2001)
  - Slammer -- ~75K hosts in 10 minutes! (2003)
Types of worms

- Differences arise primarily due to scanning and propagation techniques
  - Random scanning
  - Localized scanning
  - Pregenerated hit lists
  - Permutation scanning
    - Combining hit lists with permutation scanning can produce Warhol worms that can spread within 15 minutes!
  - Topologically-aware
  - Flash worms (spreads in one minute or less!)

- Multi-vector (contagion worm)
  - Spread from server to client, and then from client to server
  - Nimda (email, IIS vulnerability, browser vulnerability, and other vulnerabilities and backdoors)

- For more details, see
  - “How to Own the Internet in your spare time,” 2002 USENIX Security Symposium
Classes of Attacks

- **Probing: Reconnaissance before attack**
  - Port sweeps
  - OS/application finger printing

- **Denial of Service (DoS)**

- **Privilege escalation**
  - Remote to user
    - attacker without any access to the victim machine gains access as a normal user, e.g., userid *nobody*
  - User to root
    - attacker with access as normal user gains administrative privileges through an attack
  - These two privilege escalation attacks may be chained
  - Remote-to-user attacks typically exploit server applications (e.g., web server), while user-to-root attacks exploit other applications.
  - They are rarely caused by OS errors or errors in network protocol implementations
Techniques for protecting networks

- **Firewalls**
  - Expose only the most secure servers that need to be accessible from outside
  - Limit access to those users that need access
  - Use VPN/NAT

- **Server configuration**
  - If possible, enable firewall capability on server
  - Use service configuration tools (e.g., /etc/inetd.conf) to limit access to only those servers that need to be accessible
  - Never underestimate the importance of backups
  - Key: Data integrity is often much more important than confidentiality in commercial and educational enterprises
  - Pay attention to file system permission settings
  - patch server software
  - Do not install non-essential software/services
  - Virus detection
  - File system integrity checks (detect Trojan software)
Techniques for protecting networks

- **Auditing**
  - Maintain careful logs of all accesses
    - on firewalls, servers, desktops, ...

- **Vulnerability analysis**
  - scan for network/software vulnerabilities

- **Intrusion detection**
  - The technique of last resort
Intrusion Detection
Intrusion Detection

- Some attacks will get through in spite of every protection measure. Intrusion detection is targeted to detect such attacks.
- Detection is a solution of last resort

- Assumption: Behavior of a system changes when it is subjected to attack
- Approach: Detect these changes in behavior
Intrusion Detection Issues

- **Detection rate**
  - What fraction of attacks are detected

- **False alarm rate**
  - May be measured in multiple ways
    - how many false alarms per day
    - what fraction of normal behavior is flagged as attack
    - what fraction of behavior reported as attack is *not* an attack
  - Considerable disagreement on which measure to use
    - but the third criteria is probably the best
    - But IDS vendors (and may be researchers) don’t like it
      - Will you buy a system will FA rate of 98%?
      - But you may not mind 10 false alarms a day!
Intrusion Detection Techniques

- **Anomaly detection**
  - Use machine learning techniques to develop a profile of normal behavior
  - Detect deviations from this behavior
  - Can detect unknown attacks, but have high FA rate

- **Misuse detection**
  - Codify patterns of misuse
  - Attack behaviors usually captured using signatures
  - Can provide lower false alarm rate, but ineffective for unknown attacks

- **Behavior (or policy) based detection**
  - Specify allowable behavior, detect deviations from specifications
  - Can detect new attacks with low FA, but policy selection is hard
Intrusion Detection Algorithms

- **Pattern-matching**
  - Most commonly used in misuse and behavior based techniques

- **Machine-learning**
  - Statistical
  - Algorithmic
  - Neural networks and other techniques
Intrusion Detection Behaviors

Behaviors of

- Users
- Systems
  - processes, kernel modules, hosts, networks, …
Intrusion Detection Observation Points

- **Network-based (Network intrusion detection systems)**
  - **Benefits**
    - Unintrusive: plug a dedicated NIDS device on the network
    - Centralized monitoring
  - **Problems**
    - Encryption
    - Level of abstraction too low
    - Difference between data observed by NIDS and victim app.

- **Host-based**
  - Strengths/weaknesses complementary to NIDS
  - May be based on
    - system-call interception
    - audit logs and other log files
    - file system integrity (TripWire)
    - keystrokes, commands, etc.
Network Intrusion Detection

- Packet-based Vs Session-based
- Signature-based Vs Anomaly detection
- Example: SNORT (open source)
  - Uses pattern-matching on individual packets
- Some systems can block offending traffic
  - This is often dangerous, as systems usually have high false alarm rates
Host-based Intrusion detection

- System-call based characterizations most popular

- Behavior-based
  - System-call interposition plus wrappers
  - Domain/Type Enforcement
    - Certain application classes can access only certain files
    - Can prevent many privilege escalation attacks
    - Used in SELinux

- Anomaly detection
  - Sequences (finite-length strings) of system calls
  - FSA and PDA models of behavior
  - System call arguments
Automata Models for Learning Program Behaviors
Background

Forrest et al showed that system call sequences provide an accurate and convenient way to capture security-relevant program behaviors.

Subsequent research has further strengthened this result.

Key problem:

What is a good way to represent/learn information about system call sequences?

Issues: compactness, accuracy, performance, …
Early Research

- Forrest et al [1999] compared several methods for learning system call sequences
  - Memorize subsequences of length N (N-grams)
  - Markov models
  - Data-mining (using RIPPER)

- N-grams found to be most appropriate
  - Markov models provided a slight increase in accuracy, but incurred much higher overheads
Illustration of N-gram Method

1. S0;
2. while (...) {
3.   S1;
4.   if (...) S2;
5.   else S3;
6.   if (S4) ... ;
7.   else S2;
8.   S5;
9. }
10. S3;
11. S4;

Sample execution:
- S0 S1 S2 S4 S5
- S1 S3 S4 S2 S5 S3 S4
- S0 S3 S4

3-grams learnt:
- S0 S1 S2
- S1 S2 S4
- S2 S4 S5
- S4 S5 S1
- S5 S1 S3
- S1 S3 S4
- S3 S4 S2
- S4 S2 S5
- S2 S5 S3
- S5 S3 S4
Drawbacks of N-gram Method

- Number of N-grams grows exponentially
  - N must be small in practice (N=6 suggested)
  - Implication: difficult to capture long-term correlations
    - S0  S3  S4  S2 never produced by program, but all of the 3-grams in this sequence are

- Remembers exact set of N-grams seen during training --- no generalization
  - necessitates long training periods, or a high rate of false alarms
Models without Length Limitations

- **Finite-state automata**
  - Even an infinite number of sequences of unbounded length can be represented
  - Naturally capture program structures such as loops, if-then-else, etc.

- **Extended finite-state automata**
  - FSA + a finite number of state variables that can remember event arguments

- **Push-down automata**
  - By capturing call-return info:
    - PDAs are more accurate than FSM
    - Models are hierarchical and modular:
      - Hierarchical nature facilitates presentation
      - Smaller program models
      - Reuse of models for libraries
  - Extend PDAs to incorporate variables
Model extraction approaches

- **Static analysis [Wagner and Dean]**
  - Pros: conservative
  - Cons:
    - difficult to infer data values, e.g., file names
    - difficult to deal with libraries, dynamic linking, etc.
    - overly conservative
      - for intrusion detection, can detect only attacks that are outside of the semantic model used for analysis
      - specifically, buffer overflows, meta character attacks, etc.

- **Machine learning by runtime monitoring**
  - Pros:
    - can detect a much wider range of attacks
    - can deal with libraries, dynamic linking
    - inferring data values is easier
  - Cons:
    - False positives
Difficulty in Learning FSA from Strings

- Strings do not provide any information about internal states of an FSA
  - given \( S_1 \ S_2 \ S_3 \ S_2 \), which of the following FSA should we use?

```
S1 -> S2 -> S3 -> S2
```
```
S1 -> S2 -> S3
```

- what is the criteria for determining the “better” FSA?
- even if we can answer this, the answer will depend on additional examples
  - e.g., sequences \( S_1 \ S_2 \) and \( S_1 \ S_2 \ S_3 \ S_2 \ S_3 \ S_2 \) will suggest that the second FSA is the right one

- Learning FSA from sequences is computationally intractable
  [Kearns & Valiant 89, Pitt & Warmuth 89]
Key insight:

For learning program behaviors, additional information can be used to simplify the problem:

exploit program counter value to obtain state information
1: S0;

2: while (…) {
3:   S1;
4:   if (…)
5:     S2;
6:   else
7:     S3;
8:   S4;
9: }
10: S5;

A sample intercepted program behavior:
(S0,1) (S1,3) (S2,5) (S4,8) (S1,3) (S3,7) (S4,8) (S5,10)
Approach Details

- **Interception of system calls using ptrace (Linux)**
  - same mechanism used by Forrest and other researchers

- **Examine process stack to obtain program counter information**

- **Dynamic linking poses a problem**
  - same function may be loaded at different locations during different runs
  - Solution: use program counter value corresponding to the code calling the dynamically loaded library
  - Side benefit: ignoring library behavior makes FSA more compact
Approach Details (Continued)

- **Fork**: Parent and child monitored with same FSA, but process contexts maintained.
- **Exec**: typically, a new FSA for the execve’d program is used.
- **Detection time**
  - mismatch may occur in terms of either the system call or program location
  - use leaky bucket algorithm for aggregation
  - program counter helps resynchronize even after observing behavior not seen during training
Approach Details

- Intercept system calls using ptrace or kernel module
- Examine process stack to obtain program counter information

- Dynamic linking poses a problem: same function may reside at different locations across runs
  - Solution: use program counter value corresponding to the code calling the dynamically loaded library
  - Side benefit: ignoring libraries yields more compact FSA

- Detection time
  - Mismatch may occur in terms of either the system call or program location
  - Program counter helps resynchronize even after observing behavior not seen during training
Training Convergence

- FSA method converges faster than N-grams
  - roughly speaking, FSA method can do with roughly an order of magnitude less training period than N-gram method
False Positive Rate

- FP results are similar to convergence
  - for a given FP rate, FSA method requires an order of magnitude less training than N-gram method
Extracting PDA models

- **Basic idea:** Examine the entire call stack, not just the most recent return address
  - FSA technique already does this partially to discard library behaviors

- **This enables call/returns to be identified**
  - Not all calls/returns captured, since our visibility is limited to system-call invocation points

- [Gao et al 2004] develops such a PDA technique
- [Feng et al 2003] developed an alternative stack-based model called VtPath
- Giffin et al develop similar techniques, but based on static analysis rather than runtime learning
PDA Vs FSA models

- **FSA models don’t capture call-returns accurately**
  - They are both represented as “goto” transitions
  - Resulting model admits behaviors where a function invoked from one program location can return to any other call site
    - “Impossible Path Problem”

- **Inaccuracies due to libraries**
  - Libraries are essentially “inlined” at their call site
    - All system calls become “self-loops” at call site, causing accuracy loss
    - Behavior of a library function has to be learnt independently at each call site – impacts convergence

- **Use of “wrapper” functions poses a problem for FSA technique**
Mimicry Attacks

- Attacks crafted with knowledge of IDS
- Execute only system call sequences that would be permitted by the model
- A mimicry attack can be developed from an attack sequence by inserting “junk” system calls that make it appear as if a legitimate sequence is generated
  - Junk system calls made possible by using bad system call arguments
- Graybox IDS complicate mimicry attacks due to the need to fake call site
  - Control does not return to attack code after a call!
- But can still be made to work
- Known mimicry attacks based on memory corruption+injected code
Learning System Call Arguments

- Earlier methods focus on control-flows
  - System call sequences (N-grams)
  - Automata models of behavior
    - FSA or PDA, with transitions labeled with system calls
    - System call arguments largely ignored
- Detects usual control-hijack attacks
- Don’t detect most attacks that modify resources access by a system call
  - Non-control data attacks
  - Race condition attacks
  - Mimicry attacks
  - ...
Approach

- **Incorporate dataflow info into control-flow models**
  - Exploit control-flow context to improve model precision
  - Go beyond treating system call arguments in isolation
    - “A program can only write a compressed version of its input file”
      - open("/home/joe/model.ps", "r"), ..., open("/home/joe/model.ps.gz", "w"), ...
    - “All sensitive files should be closed before execve operation”
      - open("/etc/passwd", "r") = 6, ..., close(6), ..., execve("untrusted_prog", ..., ...)
  - Learning temporal relations => parameterized models
    - command "find –exec /bin/ls...” resulting in execve("/bin/ls", ...)}
Need for Control-flow Context

- The dataflow properties need control-flow context
  - Example:
    - L1: `fd1 = open("/etc/passwd", O_RDONLY);`
    - L2: `fd2 = open("/tmp/out", O_RDWR);`
  - We cannot combine information about opened filenames, otherwise "/etc/passwd" at L2 will be accepted

- Control-flow context provided by previous FSA/PDA techniques could be used

- Context encoded by giving names for event arguments
Motivating Example: *simple.tar* program

```c
int main(int argc, char **argv) {
    source_dir = argv[1], target_file = argv[2];
    opendir(“/opt/proj”);
    opendir(“/opt/proj/src”);

    target_fd = open(target_file, WR);
    while (dir_name = pop() != NULL) {
        dir = opendir(dir_name);
        foreach(dir_entry dir) {
            if (isdirectory(dir_entry))
                push(dir_entry);
            else {
                source_fd = open(dir_entry, RD);
                read(source_fd, buf);
                write(target_fd, buf);
                close(source_fd);
            }
        }
    }
    close(target_fd);
}
```

```
open(“/tmp/proj.tar”, WR) = 3
opendir(“/opt/proj/src”)

while ((dir_name = pop()) != NULL) {
    isdirectory(“/opt/proj/README”)
    read(4, …)
    write(4, …)
    close(4)
    isdirectory(“/opt/proj/src”)
    {
        foreach(dir_entry dir) {
            if (isdirectory(dir_entry))
                push(dir_entry);
            else {
                source_fd = open(dir_entry, RD);
                read(source_fd, buf);
                write(target_fd, buf);
                close(source_fd);
            }
        }
    }
    close(target_fd);
}
```
Possible Dataflow Relationships

- **Unary Relations**: properties of a single system call argument
  - Represented as $X \mathcal{R} c$, where
    - $X$: an argument name,
    - $c$: a constant value,
    - $\mathcal{R}$: a unary relation
  - Examples of unary relation $\mathcal{R}$:
    - **equal** $\Rightarrow X$ takes only a single value always equal to $c$
    - **elementOf** $\Rightarrow X$ takes any value from the set $c$
    - **subsetOf** $\Rightarrow X$ takes values all of which are drawn from set $c$
    - **range** $\Rightarrow X$ takes values in the range $c$ (e.g., $c = (0, 2)$)
    - **isWithinDir** $\Rightarrow X$ is a file name argument that is always contained within a specified directory $c$
      - Example: If $X$ takes values “/home/user/abc” and “/home/user/xyz”, we can say that $X$ **isWithinDir** “/home/user”
Possible Dataflow Relationships

- **Binary relations**: captures relationships between two event arguments
  - Represented as $X \, R \, Y$, where
    - $X, Y$: argument names
    - $R$: a binary relation
  - Examples of binary relation $R$:
    - **equal** $\Rightarrow$ equality between $X$ and $Y$
    - **isWithinDir** $\Rightarrow$ file/directory $X$ is within directory $Y$
    - **contains** $\Rightarrow$ directory $X$ contains file/directory $Y$
    - **hasSameDirAs** $\Rightarrow$ $X$ and $Y$ are within a common directory
    - **hasSameBaseAs** $\Rightarrow$ $X$ and $Y$ have same base (eg: a.c, a.h)
    - **hasSameExtensionAs** $\Rightarrow$ $X$ and $Y$ have same extension (eg: a.c, b.c)
Binary Relations

How to interpret a binary relation?

- A naïve interpretation of X equal Y: X and Y have only one possible value in all traces
  - not useful interpretation when X and Y occur multiple times

Our approach: X R Y => X is related to closest preceding Y

- X R_T Y: For every occurrence of X in a trace T, X R Y holds

Example: For a labeled trace T of the form:
Y = 1, Z = 2, X = 1, Y = 2, X = 2,
we say that X equal_T Y, but not Y equal_T X

- X R_T Y: 8T 2 T, X R_T Y holds
Learning Unary Relations

- With each argument, maintain a list of all values encountered in all traces
- If too many values are associated with an argument, use relations that approximates set
  - range (min-max pair) for port numbers, file descriptors,
  - isWithinDir for file names
  - subsetOf for flag arguments of open

Runtime and storage requirements
- A trace of size $N$ (in bytes) can be learnt in $O(N)$
- Storage requirement: $O(S)$, where $S$ is size of control flow behavior model
Learning Binary Relations

- Key algorithmic issue: How to find pairs of arguments of relationship in near-linear time?
  - Trace lengths (N) can be $10^5$ to $10^7$
  - Quadratic algorithms too expensive

- Approach:
  - Equality relationships
    - Store most recent values of arguments in a hash table
    - Given the current value of an argument, simply look up in the hash table for the set of all candidate arguments
  - String relationships
    - Use trie data structure to achieve similar effect

- Algorithm complexity is $O(Nr)$ where $r$ is maximum number of relations involving any single argument
  - Much smaller than $N^2$ – typically $r < 10$
Effectiveness for Attack Detection

- Can detect data corruption attacks that don’t involve control-flow hijack
- Race condition attacks
- Allow verifying nontrivial security props
  - If the IDS doesn’t raise alarms then these properties will be preserved
- Examples of properties verified:
  - `find` executes only those programs that are specified using a “-exec” command-line option
  - All files read by `tar` would reside within the directory specified on the command-line
  - The only file written by `gzip` is obtained by adding “.gz” suffix to its argument
Effectiveness for Attack Detection

- **Fingerd symlink vulnerability**
  - Attack exploits absence of symbolic link check
    ```c
    if (lstat(tbuf, &sbuf1)) return 0;
    L1: fd = open(tbuf, O_RDONLY); ... 
    fp = fopen(fd, “r”); ...
    ```
  - Attacker makes `.plan` as a symbolic link to `/etc/passwd`
  - **Attack detection**: violation of binary relationship between username command line argument and file opened at L1
## False Alarm Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Training Trace Length (#syscalls)</th>
<th>Detection Trace Length (#syscalls)</th>
<th>False alarm rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Base (X 10^{-5})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>httpd</td>
<td>(X 10^{6}) 1.75</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>16.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sshd</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>14.74</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Unary relations increase false alarms modestly
- Binary relations add high false alarms in httpd
  - 95% of these are due to accidental relationships learnt for a rarely occurring system call in training phase.
  - We can address them by adding a notion of *confidence level* with each relation.
Models are very small as compared to size of programs. Program sizes: 68KB(find) to 435KB(wu-ftp)
Summary of Argument-Learning Approach

- Uses dataflow information to enhance precision of intrusion detection models
- Can be layered over other techniques for learning control flows
- Effective in detecting sophisticated attacks
- Extracts models that are compact and produce low false alarms
- Enables formal reasoning about security guarantees of models