DNSSEC Continued & Intrusion Detection

Stolen from: Daniel Schatz @virturity
Enter DNSSEC (DNS Security Extensions)

- An extension to the DNS protocol to enable cryptographic authentication of DNS records
  - Designed to prove the value of an answer, *or that there is no answer*!
  - A restricted path of trust
    - Unlike the HTTPS CA (Certificate Authority) system where your browser trusts every CA to speak for every site

- With backwards compatibility:
  - Authority servers don’t need to support DNSSEC
    - But clients should know that the domain is not secured
  - Recursive and stub resolvers that don’t support DNSSEC must not receive DNSSEC information
Reminder: DNSSEC Record Types & Terms...

• **RRSIG:**
  • Effectively a certificate signing a DNS RRSET
    • Only valid for a specific interval

• **DS:**
  • Delegated Signer: This subdomain will use H(K) as the Key Signing Key

• **DNSKEY:**
  • A (raw) Public Key of the specified type

• **KSK & ZSK:**
  • Key Signing Key -> Key that signs the Zone Signing Key
  • Zone Signing Key -> Key that signs everything else in the zone
Putting It All Together To Lookup www.isc.org

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User's ISP's

Authority Server (the “root”)
Putting It All Together To Lookup www.isc.org

User's ISP's Recursive Resolver

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Authority Server (the “root”)

Answers:
- IN DNSKEY 257 3 8 {cryptogoop}
- IN DNSKEY 256 3 8 {cryptogoop}
- IN RRSIG DNSKEY 8 0 172800 20130425235959 20130411000000 19036 {cryptogoop}

Authority:

Additional:
Putting It All Together To Lookup **www.isc.org**

User’s ISP’s Recursive Resolver

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User's ISP's Recursive Resolver

Authority Server

? A www.isc.org
Answers:
isc.org. DS {cryptogoop}
isc.org. RRSIG DS {cryptogoop}
Additional:
sfba.sns-pb.isc.org. A 199.6.1.30

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<tr>
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<td>A</td>
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And so on...

- The process ends up requiring:
  - Ask the root for www.isc.org and the DNSKEY for .
  - Ask isc.org for www.isc.org and the DNSKEY for isc.org

- Dig commands
  - `dig +dnssec +norecurse www.isc.org @a.root-servers.net`
  - `dig +dnssec +norecurse DNSKEY . @a.root-servers.net`
  - `dig +dnssec +norecurse www.isc.org @199.19.56.1`
  - `dig +dnssec +norecurse DNSKEY org. @199.19.56.1`
  - `dig +dnssec +norecurse www.isc.org @149.20.64.3`
  - `dig +dnssec +norecurse DNSKEY isc.org. @149.20.64.3`
Two additional complications

- **NOERROR**:
  - The name exists but there is no record of that given type for that name
  - For DNSSEC, prove that there is no ds record
    - Says the subdomain doesn’t sign with DNSSEC

- **NXDOMAIN**:
  - The name does not exist

- **NSEC (Provable denial of existence)**, a record with just two fields
  - Next domain name
    - The next valid name in the domain
  - Valid types for this name
    - In a bitmap for efficiency
NSEC in action

- Name is valid so **NOERROR** but no answers
- Single **NSEC** record for **www.isc.org**:
  - No names exist between **www.isc.org** and **www-dev.isc.org**
  - **www.isc.org** only has an **A**, **AAAA**, **RRSIG**, and **NSEC** record

nweaver% dig +dnssec TXT www.isc.org @8.8.8.8

...;
;; Got answer:
;; ->>HEADER<<- opcode: QUERY, status: NOERROR, id: 20430
;; flags: qr rd ra ad; QUERY: 1, ANSWER: 0, AUTHORITY: 4, ADDITIONAL: 1
...
;; QUESTION SECTION:
;www.isc.org. IN TXT

;; AUTHORITY SECTION:
...
www.isc.org. 3600 IN RRSIG NSEC {RRSIG DATA}
The Use of NSEC

- Proof that a name exists but no type exists for that name
  - Critical for “This subdomain doesn’t support DNSSEC”:
    Return an NSEC record with the authority stating “There is no DS record”

- Proof that a name does not exist
  - It falls between the two NSEC names
  - Plus an NSEC saying “there is no wildcard”

- Allows trivial domain enumeration
  - Attacker just starts at the beginning and walks through the NSEC records
    - Some consider this bad...
So NSEC3

- Rather than having the name, use a **hash** of the name
  - Hash Algorithm
  - Flags
- Iterations of the hash algorithm
- Salt (optional)
- The next name
- The RRTYPEs for this name
- Otherwise acts like NSEC, just in a different space

```
nweaver% dig +dnssec TXT org @199.19.57.1
...;
;; AUTHORITY SECTION:
...;
```
```
Comments on NSEC3

- It doesn't *really* prevent enumeration
  - You get a hash-space enumeration instead, but since people chose reasonable names...
  - Just select random names until you get the entire hash space...
    - An attacker can then do a brute-force attack to find out what names exist and don't exist

- The salt is mostly pointless!
  - Since the *whole* name is hashed, `foo.example.com` and `foo.example.org` will have different hashes anyway

- The only way to really prevent enumeration is to dynamically sign values
  - But that defeats the purpose of DNSSEC's offline signature generation
So what can *possibly* go wrong?

- Screwups on the authority side...
  - Too many ways to count...
    - But comcast is keeping track of it:
      Follow @comcastdns on twitter

- The validator can’t access DNSSEC records
- The validator can’t process DNSSEC records correctly
Authority Side Screwups...

• It's quite common to screw up
• Tell your registrar you support DNSSEC when you don't
  • Took down HBO Go's launch for Comcast users and those using Google Public DNS
• Rotate your key but present old signatures
• Forget that your signatures expire
And The Recursive Resolver Must Not Be Trusted!

- Most deployments validate at the recursive resolver, not the client
  - Notably Google Public DNS and Comcast
- This provides very little practical security:
  - The recursive resolver has proven to be the biggest threat in DNS
  - And this doesn't protect you between the recursive resolver and your system
- But causes a lot of headaches
  - Comcast or Google invariably get blamed when a zone screws up
  - Fortunately this is getting less common...
DNSSEC transport

• A validating client must be able to fetch the DNSSEC related records
  • It may be through the recursive resolver
  • It may be by contacting arbitrary DNS servers on the Internet
• One of these two must work or the client *can not validate* DNSSEC
  • This acts to limit DNSSEC's real use:
    Signing other types such as cryptographic fingerprints (e.g. DANE)
Probe the Root
To Check For DNSSEC Transport

• Can the client get DNSSEC data from the Internet?
  • Probe every root with DO for:
    • DS for .com with RRSIG
    • DNSKEY for . with RRSIG
    • NSEC for an invalid TLD with RRSIG

• Serves two purposes:
  • Some networks have one or more bad root mirrors
    • Notably one Chinese educational network has root mirrors for all but 3 that don’t support DNSSEC
  • If no information can be retrieved
    • Proxy which strips out DNSSEC information and/or can’t handle DO
DNSSEC Root Transport:
Results We've Seen In The Wild

- Bad news at Cafes: Hotspot gateways often proxy all DNS and can't handle DO-enabled traffic
  - And then have DNS resolvers that can't handle DNSSEC requests!
- Confirmed the Chinese educational network “Bad root mirror” problem
Implications of “No DNSSEC at Charbucks”

- DNSSEC failure depends on the usage.
- For name->address bindings:
  - If the recursive resolver practices proper port randomization:
    - No problem. The same “attackers” who can manipulate your DNS could do anything they want at the proxy that’s controlling your DNS traffic
  - Else:
    - Problem. Network is not secure
- For name->key bindings:
  - Unless the resolver supports it directly, you are Out of Luck
    - DNSSEC information must have an alternate channel if you want to use it to transmit keys instead of just IPs
In fact, my preferred DNSSEC policy
For Client Validation

• For name->address mappings
  • Any existing APIs that don’t provide DNSSEC status
  • If valid: use
  • If invalid OR no complete DNSSEC chain:
    • Begin an iterative fetch with the most precise DNSSEC-validated data
    • Use the result without question

• For name->data mappings
  • An API which returns DNSSEC status
  • If valid: Use
  • If invalid: Return DNSSEC failure status
    • Up to the application
And That's The Real Thing...

- DNSSEC in all its *emm* glory.
- OPT records to say "I want DNSSEC"
- RRSIG records are certificates
- DNSKEY records hold public keys
- DS records hold key fingerprints
  - Used by the parent to tell the child's keys
- NSEC/NSEC3 records to prove that a name doesn't exist or there is no record of that type
The Next Two Lectures...

• Today: The technology of detecting attacks
• Wednesday: The abuse of scalable NIDS
  • NSA bulk surveillance: XKEYSCORE
  • Chinese censorship: The "Great Firewall of China"
  • Chinese attack: The "Great Cannon"
And Project 3...

• Project 3 is now live...
• You are given a VM, scapy, and sample code...
• And get to bang on the Great Firewall of China
  • Determine a request that triggers the Great Firewall and capture packets
  • Build a function to create a TCP connection to a server and see if its being censored
  • Build a function that determines where on the path the censor exists
  • Build a function that conveys a message to the server that is not censored by the Great Firewall
• Start on the first two parts now!
  • You will find that dealing with real packets and real networks can get real frustrating really fast
    • EG, the bridge interface isn't getting an IP address on AirBears!?!?
  • You may also find that some home NATs may really really screw things up...
    • EG, change packet IPIDs, ports, etc, which will show up on ICMP time-expired packets.
      You have been warned!
2. GET /amazeme.exe?profile=xxx
8. 200 OK
   Output of bin/amazeme
Network Intrusion Detection

- Approach #1: look at the network traffic
  - (a “NIDS”: rhymes with “kids”)
  - Scan HTTP requests
  - Look for "/etc/passwd" and/or “../../” in requests
    - Indicates attempts to get files that the web server shouldn't provide
Structure of FooCorp Web Services

1. Remote client
2. GET /amazeme.exe?profile=xxx
3. FooCorp’s border router
4. Monitor sees a copy of incoming/outgoing HTTP traffic
5. NIDS
6. 200 OK
7. Output of bin/amazeme
8. Bin/amazeme -p xxx
9. FooCorp Servers
10. Front-end web server
Network Intrusion Detection

• Approach #1: look at the network traffic
  • (a “NIDS”: rhymes with “kids”)
  • Scan HTTP requests
  • Look for “/etc/passwd” and/or “../../”

• Pros:
  • No need to touch or trust end systems
    • Can “bolt on” security
  • Cheap: cover many systems w/ single monitor
  • Cheap: centralized management
How They Work: Scalable Network Intrusion Detection Systems

Do this in OpenFlow: 100 Gbps install at LBNL

Linear Scaling:
10x the money...
10x the bandwidth!
1u gives 1-5 Gbps

Tap

High Volume Filter

Load Balancer

Is Not BitTorrent?

H(SIP, DIP)

NIDS Node
Inside the NIDS

GET HTTP /fu bar/ 1.1..

GET HTTP /baz/?id=1f413 1.1...

HTTP Request
URL = /fubar/
Host = ....

HTTP Request
URL = /baz/?id=...
ID = 1f413

Sendmail
From = someguy@
To = otherguy@
Network Intrusion Detection (NIDS)

- NIDS has a table of all active connections, and maintains state for each
  - e.g., has it seen a partial match of /etc/passwd?
- What do you do when you see a new packet not associated with any known connection?
  - Create a new connection: when NIDS starts it doesn’t know what connections might be existing
Evasion

• What should NIDS do if it sees a RST packet?
  - Assume RST will be received?
  - Assume RST won’t be received?
  - Other (please specify)
Evasion

- What should NIDS do if it sees this?
  - Alert – it’s an attack
  - No alert – it’s all good
  - Other (please specify)
Evasion

- Evasion attacks arise when you have “double parsing”

- **Inconsistency** - interpreted differently between the monitor and the end system

- **Ambiguity** - information needed to interpret correctly is missing
Evasion Attacks (High-Level View)

• Some evasions reflect incomplete analysis
  • In our FooCorp example, hex escapes or “. . /// . . . /” alias
  • In principle, can deal with these with implementation care (make sure we fully understand the spec)
  • Of course, in practice things inevitably fall through the cracks!

• Some are due to imperfect observability
  • For instance, if what NIDS sees doesn’t exactly match what arrives at the destination
  • EG, two copies of the "same" packet, which are actually different and with different TTLs
Network-Based Detection

• Issues:
  • Scan for “/etc/passwd”?
    • What about other sensitive files?
  • Scan for “../../”? 
    • Sometimes seen in legit. requests (= false positive)
    • What about “%2e%2e%2f%2e%2e%2f”? (= evasion)
      • Okay, need to do full HTTP parsing
    • What about “.///.///.///”? 
      • Okay, need to understand Unix filename semantics too!
  • What if it’s HTTPS and not HTTP?
    • Need access to decrypted text / session key – yuck!
Host-based Intrusion Detection

• Approach #2: instrument the web server
  • Host-based IDS (sometimes called “HIDS”)
  • Scan arguments sent to back-end programs
  • Look for “/etc/passwd” and/or “../../”
Structure of FooCorp Web Services

- Remote client
- Internet
- FooCorp’s border router
- FooCorp Servers

4. `amazeme.exe?profile=xxx`

HIDS instrumentation added inside here

6. Output of `bin/amazeme` sent back

`bin/amazeme -p xxx`
Host-based Intrusion Detection

• Approach #2: instrument the web server
  • Host-based IDS (sometimes called “HIDS”)
  • Scan arguments sent to back-end programs
    • Look for “/etc/passwd” and/or “../...”

• Pros:
  • No problems with HTTP complexities like %-escapes
  • Works for encrypted HTTPS!

• Issues:
  • Have to add code to each (possibly different) web server
    • And that effort only helps with detecting web server attacks
  • Still have to consider Unix filename semantics (“.../.../...”)
  • Still have to consider other sensitive files
Log Analysis

- Approach #3: each night, script runs to analyze log files generated by web servers
  - Again scan arguments sent to back-end programs
Structure of FooCorp Web Services

Internet

FooCorp’s border router

Remote client

FooCorp Servers

Run Nightly Analysis Of Logs Here

Front-end web server

bin/amazeme -p xxx
Log Analysis:  
Aka "Log It All and let Splunk Sort It Out"

• Approach #3: each night, script runs to analyze log files generated by web servers
  • Again scan ?arguments sent to back-end programs

• Pros:
  • Cheap: web servers generally already have such logging facilities built into them
  • No problems like %-escapes, encrypted HTTPS

• Issues:
  • Again must consider filename tricks, other sensitive files
  • Can’t block attacks & prevent from happening
  • Detection delayed, so attack damage may compound
  • If the attack is a compromise, then malware might be able to alter the logs before they’re analyzed
    • (Not a problem for directory traversal information leak example)
    • Also can be mitigated by using a separate log server
System Call Monitoring (HIDS)

- Approach #4: monitor system call activity of backend processes
  - Look for access to `/etc/passwd`
Structure of FooCorp Web Services

Internet

FooCorp’s border router

Remote client

FooCorp Servers

Real-time monitoring of system calls accessing files

Front-end web server

5. bin/amazeme -p xxx
System Call Monitoring (HIDS)

- Approach #4: monitor system call activity of backend processes
  - Look for access to /etc/passwd

- Pros:
  - No issues with any HTTP complexities
  - May avoid issues with filename tricks
  - Attack only leads to an “alert” if attack succeeded
    - Sensitive file was indeed accessed

- Issues:
  - Maybe other processes make legit accesses to the sensitive files (false positives)
  - Maybe we’d like to detect attempts even if they fail?
    - “situational awareness”
Detection Accuracy

- Two types of detector errors:
  - False positive (FP): alerting about a problem when in fact there was no problem
  - False negative (FN): failing to alert about a problem when in fact there was a problem

- Detector accuracy is often assessed in terms of rates at which these occur:
  - Define $I$ to be the event of an instance of intrusive behavior occurring (something we want to detect)
  - Define $A$ to be the event of detector generating alarm

- Define:
  - False positive rate = $P[A|\neg I]$
  - False negative rate = $P[\neg A| I]$
Perfect Detection

• Is it possible to build a detector for our example with a false negative rate of 0%?

• Algorithm to detect bad URLs with 0% FN rate:
  ```c
  void my_detector_that_never_misses(char *URL)
  {
    printf("yep, it's an attack!\n");
  }
  ```

  • In fact, it works for detecting any bad activity with no false negatives! Woo-hoo!

• Wow, so what about a detector for bad URLs that has NO FALSE POSITIVES?!
  ```c
  printf("nope, not an attack\n");
  ```
Detection Tradeoffs

- The art of a good detector is achieving an effective balance between FPs and FNs
- Suppose our detector has an FP rate of 0.1% and an FN rate of 2%. Is it good enough? Which is better, a very low FP rate or a very low FN rate?
  - Depends on the cost of each type of error …
    - E.g., FP might lead to paging a duty officer and consuming hour of their time; FN might lead to $10K cleaning up compromised system that was missed
  - … but also critically depends on the rate at which actual attacks occur in your environment
Base Rate Fallacy

- Suppose our detector has a FP rate of 0.1% (!) and a FN rate of 2% (not bad!)

- Scenario #1: our server receives 1,000 URLs/day, and 5 of them are attacks
  - Expected # FPs each day = 0.1% * 995 ≈ 1
  - Expected # FNs each day = 2% * 5 = 0.1 ( < 1/week)
  - Pretty good!

- Scenario #2: our server receives 10,000,000 URLs/day, and 5 of them are attacks
  - Expected # FPs each day ≈ 10,000 :-(

- Nothing changed about the detector; only our environment changed
  - Accurate detection very challenging when base rate of activity we want to detect is quite low
Composing Detectors: There Is No Free Lunch

- "Hey, what if we take two (bad) detectors and combine them?"
  - Can we turn that into a good detector?
  - Note: Assumes the detectors are independent

- Parallel composition: Either detector triggers an alert
  - Reduces false negative rate (either one alerts works)
  - \textit{Increases} false positive rate!

- Series composition: both detectors must trigger for an alert
  - Reduces false positive rate (since both must false positive)
  - \textit{Increases} false negative rate!
Styles of Detection: Signature-Based

- Idea: look for activity that matches the structure of a known attack
- Example (from the freeware Snort NIDS):
  ```
  alert tcp $EXTERNAL_NET any -> $HOME_NET 139
  flow:to_server,established
  content:"|eb2f 5feb 4a5e 89fb 893e 89f2|
  msg:"EXPLOIT x86 linux samba overflow"
  reference:bugtraq,1816
  reference:cve,CVE-1999-0811
  classtype:attempted-admin
  ```
- Can be at different semantic layers
e.g.: IP/TCP header fields; packet payload; URLs
Signature-Based Detection

- E.g. for FooCorp, search for “..//..//” or “/etc/passwd”

What’s nice about this approach?
- Conceptually simple
- Takes care of known attacks (of which there are zillions)
- Easy to share signatures, build up libraries

What’s problematic about this approach?
- Blind to novel attacks
- Might even miss variants of known attacks (“..///.//../”)
  - Of which there are zillions
- Simpler versions look at low-level syntax, not semantics
  - Can lead to weak power (either misses variants, or generates lots of false positives)
Vulnerability Signatures

• Idea: don’t match on known attacks, match on known problems
• Example (also from Snort):

  alert tcp $EXTERNAL_NET any -> $HTTP_SERVERS 80
  uricontent: ".ida?"; nocase; dsize: > 239; flags:A+
  msg:"Web-IIS ISAPI .ida attempt"
  reference:bugtraq,1816
  reference:cve,CAN-2000-0071
  classtype:attempted-admin

• That is, match URIs that invoke *.ida?*, have more than 239 bytes of payload, and have ACK set (maybe others too)
• This example detects any* attempt to exploit a particular buffer overflow in IIS web servers
  • Used by the “Code Red” worm
  • (Note, signature is not quite complete: also worked for *.idb?*)
Styles of Detection: Anomaly-Based

• Idea: attacks look peculiar.
• High-level approach: develop a model of normal behavior (say based on analyzing historical logs). Flag activity that deviates from it.
• FooCorp example: maybe look at distribution of characters in URL parameters, learn that some are rare and/or don’t occur repeatedly.
• If we happen to learn that ‘.’s have this property, then could detect the attack even without knowing it exists.
• Big benefit: potential detection of a wide range of attacks, including novel ones.
Anomaly Detection Problems

- Can fail to detect known attacks
- Can fail to detect novel attacks, if don’t happen to look peculiar along measured dimension
- What happens if the historical data you train on includes attacks?
- Base Rate Fallacy particularly acute: if prevalence of attacks is low, then you’re more often going to see benign outliers
  - High FP rate
  - OR: require such a stringent deviation from “normal” that most attacks are missed (high FN rate)
- Proves great subject for academic papers but not generally used
Specification-Based Detection

- Idea: don’t learn what’s normal; specify what’s allowed
- FooCorp example: decide that all URL parameters sent to foocorp.com servers must have at most one ‘/’ in them
  - Flag any arriving param with > 1 slash as an attack
- What’s nice about this approach?
  - Can detect novel attacks
  - Can have low false positives
    - If FooCorp audits its web pages to make sure they comply
- What’s problematic about this approach?
  - Expensive: lots of labor to derive specifications
    - And keep them up to date as things change (‘churn’)
Styles of Detection: Behavioral

- Idea: don’t look for attacks, look for evidence of compromise
- FooCorp example: inspect all output web traffic for any lines that match a passwd file
- Example for monitoring user shell keystrokes: `unset HISTFILE`
- Example for catching code injection: look at sequences of system calls, flag any that prior analysis of a given program shows it can’t generate
  - E.g., observe process executing `read()`, `open()`, `write()`, `fork()`, `exec()` …
  - … but there’s no code path in the (original) program that calls those in exactly that order!
Behavioral-Based Detection

- What’s nice about this approach?
  - Can detect a wide range of novel attacks
  - Can have low false positives
    - Depending on degree to which behavior is distinctive
    - E.g., for system call profiling: no false positives!
  - Can be cheap to implement
    - E.g., system call profiling can be mechanized

- What’s problematic about this approach?
  - Post facto detection: discovers that you definitely have a problem, w/ no opportunity to prevent it
  - Brittle: for some behaviors, attacker can maybe avoid it
    - Easy enough to not type “unset HISTFILE”
    - How could they evade system call profiling?
      - Mimicry: adapt injected code to comply w/ allowed call sequences (and can be automated!)
Summary of Evasion Issues

- Evasions arise from uncertainty (or incompleteness) because detector must infer behavior/processing it can’t directly observe
  - A general problem any time detection separate from potential target
- One general strategy: impose canonical form (“normalize”)
  - E.g., rewrite URLs to expand/remove hex escapes
  - E.g., enforce blog comments to only have certain HTML tags
- Another strategy: analyze all possible interpretations rather than assuming one
  - E.g., analyze raw URL, hex-escaped URL, doubly-escaped URL …
- Another strategy: Flag potential evasions
  - So the presence of an ambiguity is at least noted
- Another strategy: fix the basic observation problem
  - E.g., monitor directly at end systems
Inside a Modern HIDS ("AV")

- **URL/Web access blocking:**
  - Prevent users from going to known bad locations

- **Protocol scanning of network traffic (esp. HTTP):**
  - Detect & block known attacks
  - Detect & block known malware communication

- **Payload scanning**
  - Detect & block known malware
  - (Auto-update of signatures for these)

- **Cloud queries regarding reputation**
  - Who else has run this executable and with what results?
  - What’s known about the remote host / domain / URL?
Inside a Modern HIDS

- **Sandbox execution**
  - Run selected executables in constrained/monitored environment
  - Analyze:
    - System calls
    - Changes to files/registry
    - Self-modifying code (polymorphism/metamorphism)

- **File scanning**
  - Look for malware that installs itself on disk

- **Memory scanning**
  - Look for malware that never appears on disk

- **Runtime analysis**
  - Apply heuristics/signatures to execution behavior
Inside a Modern NIDS

- Deployment inside network as well as at border
  - Greater visibility, including tracking of user identity
- Full protocol analysis
  - Including extraction of complex embedded objects
  - In some systems, 100s of known protocols
- Signature analysis (also behavioral)
  - Known attacks, malware communication, blacklisted hosts/domains
  - Known malicious payloads
  - Sequences/patterns of activity
- Shadow execution (e.g., Flash, PDF programs)
- Extensive logging (in support of forensics)
- Auto-update of signatures, blacklists
NIDS vs. HIDS

- **NIDS benefits:**
  - Can cover a lot of systems with single deployment
    - Much simpler management
  - Easy to “bolt on” / no need to touch end systems
  - Doesn’t consume production resources on end systems
  - Harder for an attacker to subvert / less to trust

- **HIDS benefits:**
  - Can have direct access to semantics of activity
    - Better positioned to block (prevent) attacks
    - Harder to evade
  - Can protect against non-network threats
  - Visibility into encrypted activity
  - Performance scales much more readily (no chokepoint)
    - No issues with “dropped” packets
Key Concepts for Detection

- Signature-based vs anomaly detection (blacklisting vs whitelisting)
- Evasion attacks
- Evaluation metrics: False positive rate, false negative rate
- Base rate problem
Detection vs. Blocking

• If we can detect attacks, how about blocking them?

• Issues:
  • Not a possibility for retrospective analysis (e.g., nightly job that looks at logs)
  • Quite hard for detector that’s not in the data path
    • E.g. How can NIDS that passively monitors traffic block attacks?
      • Change firewall rules dynamically; forge RST packets
      • And still there’s a race regarding what attacker does before block
  • False positives get more expensive
    • You don’t just bug an operator, you damage production activity

• Today’s technology/products pretty much all offer blocking
  • Intrusion prevention systems (IPS - “eye-pee-ess”)

Can We Build An IPS That Blocks All Attacks?

The Ultimately Secure DEEP PACKET INSPECTION AND APPLICATION SECURITY SYSTEM
Featuring signature-less anomaly detection and blocking technology with application awareness and layer-7 state tracking!!!

Now available in Petabyte-capable appliance form factor!*  
(Formerly: The Ultimately Secure INTRUSION PREVENTION SYSTEM Featuring signature-less anomaly detection and blocking technology!!)
An Alternative Paradigm

• Idea: rather than detect attacks, launch them yourself!
• Vulnerability scanning: use a tool to probe your own systems with a wide range of attacks, fix any that succeed

• Pros?
  • Accurate: if your scanning tool is good, it finds real problems
  • Proactive: can prevent future misuse
  • Intelligence: can ignore IDS alarms that you know can’t succeed

• Issues?
  • Can take a lot of work
  • Not so helpful for systems you can’t modify
  • Dangerous for disruptive attacks
    • And you might not know which these are …

• In practice, this approach is prudent and widely used today
  • Good complement to also running an IDS
Styles of Detection: Honeypots

- Idea: deploy a sacrificial system that has no operational purpose
- Any access is by definition not authorized ...
- ... and thus an intruder
  - (or some sort of mistake)

- Provides opportunity to:
  - Identify intruders
  - Study what they’re up to
  - Divert them from legitimate targets
Honeypots

• Real-world example: some hospitals enter fake records with celebrity names …
  • … to entrap staff who don’t respect confidentiality

• What’s nice about this approach?
  • Can detect all sorts of new threats

• What’s problematic about this approach?
  • Can be difficult to lure the attacker
  • Can be a lot of work to build a convincing environment
  • Note: both of these issues matter less when deploying honeypots for automated attacks
    • Because these have more predictable targeting & env. needs
    • E.g. “spamtraps”: fake email addresses to catching spambots

• A great honeypot: An unsecured Bitcoin wallet…
  • When your bitcoins get stolen, you know you got compromised!
Forensics

- Vital complement to detecting attacks: figuring out what happened in wake of successful attack
- Doing so requires access to rich/extensive logs
  - Plus tools for analyzing/understanding them
- It also entails looking for patterns and understanding the implications of structure seen in activity
  - An iterative process ("peeling the onion")
Other Attacks on IDSs

- **DoS: exhaust its memory**
  - IDS has to track ongoing activity
  - Attacker generates lots of different forms of activity, consumes all of its memory
    - E.g., spoof zillions of distinct TCP SYNs …
    - … so IDS must hold zillions of connection records

- **DoS: exhaust its processing**
  - One sneaky form: algorithmic complexity attacks
    - E.g., if IDS uses a predictable hash function to manage connection records …
    - … then generate series of hash collisions

- **Code injection (!)**
  - After all, NIDS analyzers take as input network traffic under attacker’s control …
    - One of the CS194 projects will be on this topic…
And, of course, our monitors have bugs...