Crossing the Streams with State Machines in IDS Signature Languages

Michael Rash
ShmooCon 2014 FireTalks
http://www.cipherdyne.org/
@michaelrash
flowbits Primer

- flowbits allows multiple Snort rules to function as a group for better attack detection
- flowbits criteria can essentially build a state machine out of a set of Snort rules
- Example:

  ```
  alert tcp any 143 -> any any (msg:"IMAP login"; content:"OK LOGIN"; flowbits:set,logged_in; flowbits:noalert;)
  alert tcp any any -> any 143 (msg:"IMAP LIST"; content:"LIST"; flowbits:isset,logged_in;)
  ```
flowbits Limitations

- Although flowbits is powerful, it cannot apply across multiple conversations

- Does this matter?
  - Put another way, would cross-stream flowbits enable better attack detection?
Multi-Conversation Metasploit Modules

- Look for Metasploit modules that require multiple connections/conversations for successful exploitation

- Good approximation derived from multiple calls to any of these three functions within a single module:
  - `connect()`
  - `connect_udp()`
  - `send_request_cgi()`
A Quick Approximation

$ cd ~/git/metasploit-framework/

$ git grep -c "^\[[:space:]\]*connect" modules | grep -v "^:1" | wc -l
132

$ git grep -c "send_request_cgi" modules | grep -v "^:1" | wc -l
263
Metasploit ContentKeeper Web Remote Command Execution

- modules/exploits/unix/http/contentkeeperweb_mimencode.rb
- Exploits the ContentKeeper Web Appliance (versions < 125.10) to acquire remote command execution as the Apache user
- Work flow:
  - 500 Internal error from /cgi-bin/ck/mimencode implies vulnerable
  - Script upload via HTTP POST /cgi-bin/ck/mimencode?-u+-o+spamkeeper.dat
  - Script execution via HTTP GET /cgi-bin/ck/spamkeeper.dat
  - Multiple HTTP requests are required for exploitation even without running the Metasploit check() function
Additional Metasploit Examples

- SCADA 7-Technologies IGSS Rename Overflow
- Apache ISAPI DoS
- Many more…
New Snort Keyword: “xbits"

- “xbits” would allow an xbit to be set on one conversation, and then tested within another conversation (spanning TCP, UDP, ICMP, or any other IP protocol)
- xbits would offer standard flowbits modifiers such as “set”, “unset”, “noalert”, etc. with identical semantics
- xbits would add two new modifiers:
  - “track” - with args “ip_pair”, “dst_port”, etc. to require tuple matches (or not) across conversations
  - “expire” - force xbit expiration independent of TCP connection close
Metasploit ContentKeeper
Exploit Detection

- Set xbit "Metasploit.ContentKeeper.recon" on initial HTTP connection (part of the Metasploit check() function).

- Test "Metasploit.ContentKeeper.recon" xbit with 'isset' and if it matches, then set xbit "Metasploit.ContentKeeper.recon_status_is_vuln" on '500 Internal' webserver response. Track by ip_pair.

- Look for an HTTP POST that uploads the base64 encoded perl script and test "Metasploit.ContentKeeper.recon_status_is_vuln" xbit. If this xbit is set, then set xbit "Metasploit.ContentKeeper.payload_uploaded" and track by ip_pair.

- Look for an HTTP GET to /cgi-bin/ck/spamkeeper.dat and test the "Metasploit.ContentKeeper.payload_uploaded" xbit. If it is set then generate an event "Metasploit ContentKeeper Web remote code exec".
Trade Offs

- Why not just look for requests like “POST /cgi-bin/ck/mimencode?-u+-o+” by themselves?
- Detection implications - potential false negative increase in exchange for higher confidence true positives, but definitions become important
- IDS engine implications (multi-threaded or not)
- Performance implications
Final Points

- Application communications by design frequently involve more than single conversations (Bittorrent, VoIP, anything that uses a signaling protocol).

- Corollary: *Attacks do as well*

- The Snort signature language itself should therefore contain a built-in ability to link groups of rules across multiple conversations

- Event correlation in the SIEM world is a related technology in some ways
Linux Firewalls

- Writing 2nd edition now
- xbits will be covered
Questions?

Michael Rash

@michaelrash

mbr@cipherdyne.org

http://www.cipherdyne.org/