

# Directory Services Internals

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## How the Active Directory Expiring Links Feature Really Works

April 3, 2016 | Michael Grafnetter | [No Comments](#)

One of the new features in Windows Server 2016 will be the Active Directory Expiring Links feature, which enables time-bound group membership, expressed by a time-to-live (TTL) value. Here is how it works:

### Enabling the Expiring Links Feature

The Expiring Links feature had been a standalone feature in early Windows Server 2016 builds, but as of TP4, it is a part of the broader [Privileged Access Management \(PAM\)](#) feature. It is disabled by default, because it requires **Windows Server 2016 forest functional level**. One of the ways to enable the PAM feature is running this PowerShell cmdlet:

```
1 Enable-ADOptionalFeature -Identity 'Privileged Access Management Feature'
```

Note that once this feature is enabled in a forest, it can never be disabled again.

### Creating Expiring Links using PowerShell

Unfortunately, this feature is not exposed in any GUI (yet), so you cannot create expiring links, nor can you tell the difference between a regular link and an expiring one. We will therefore use PowerShell to do the job:

```
1 # Add user PatColeman to the Domain Admins group for the next 2 hours
2 $ttl = New-TimeSpan -Hours 2
3 Add-ADGroupMember -Identity 'Domain Admins' -Members PatColeman -Member
4
5 # Show group membership with TTL
6 Get-ADGroup -Identity 'Domain Admins' -ShowMemberTimeToLive -Properties
7 <#
8 Output:
9 <TTL=6987>,CN=PatColeman,CN=Users,DC=adatum,DC=com
10 CN=Administrator,CN=Users,DC=adatum,DC=com
11 #>
```

As we can see, the TTL value in the output is in seconds (2h = 7200s). As soon as the TTL expires, the DCs will automatically remove user PatColeman from the Domain Admins group and his current **Kerberos tickets will also expire**.

### Creating Expiring Links using LDAP

PowerShell is great, but what if we needed to stick with pure LDAP? Well, if you want to add a user into a group for a limited amount of time, you do it exactly as you are used to, but you have to specify his distinguished name (DN) in the new [TTL-DN form](#): <TTL=TimeToLive,DN>. In our sample case, it would look like this:

<TTL=7200,CN=PatColeman,CN=Users,DC=adatum,DC=com>

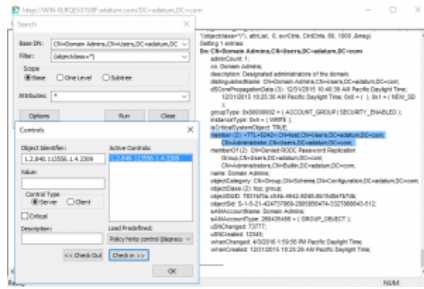
To view the group membership with TTLs, the corresponding LDAP search operation has to contain the [LDAP\\_SERVER\\_LINK\\_TTL](#) extended control (OID = 1.2.840.113556.1.4.2309). Here is a screenshot from the **ldp.exe** tool with this control enabled:

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## Implementation Details (Very Advanced Stuff)

I was also quite interested in how this feature is implemented in the `ntds.dit` file. I have found out that as soon as you enable the PAM feature, the DCs automatically extend their database schemas in the following way:

1. The `expiration_time_col` column is added to the `link_table` table. It contains timestamps (in the UTC `FILETIME / 107` format), after which the links get deactivated. This is yet another reason for the time to be in sync between DCs.
2. The `link_expiration_time_index` index is added to the `link_table` table. It is created over these columns: `expiration_time_col`, `link_DNT`, `backlink_DNT`. Thanks to this index, DCs can find expired links very quickly.

Tags: [Active Directory](#), [LDAP](#), [PowerShell](#), [Security](#)

## New Version Released

February 3, 2016 | Michael Grafnetter | [9 Comments](#)

I am happy to announce that a new version of the [DSInternals PowerShell Module](#) has been released, now with Windows Server 2003 support.

Tags: [Active Directory](#), [PowerShell](#), [Security](#)

## Retrieving Cleartext GMSA Passwords from Active Directory

December 28, 2015 | Michael Grafnetter | [No Comments](#)

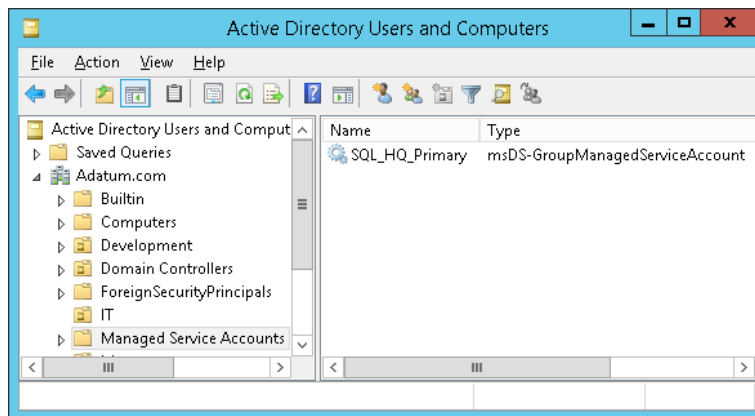
Have you ever wondered how the automatically generated passwords of Group Managed Service Accounts (GMSA) look like? Well, you can fetch them from Active Directory in the same way as Windows Servers do and see yourself. Here is how:

### Creating a GMSA

To start experimenting, we need to have a GMSA first, so we create one:

```
1 # Create a new KDS Root Key that will be used by DC to generate managed
2 Add-KdsRootKey -EffectiveTime (Get-Date).AddHours(-10)
3
4 # Create a new GMSA
5 New-ADServiceAccount `
6     -Name 'SQL-HQ_Primary' `
7     -DNSHostName 'sql1.adatum.com'
```

We can check the result in the *Active Directory Users and Computers* console:



Unfortunately, the built-in GUI will not help us much when working with GMSAs. Although there is a [nice 3rd party tool](#), we will stick to PowerShell.

## Setting the Managed Password ACL

Now we need to provide a list of principals that are allowed to retrieve the plaintext password from DCs through LDAP. Normally, we would grant this privilege to one or more servers (members of the same cluster/web farm). But we will grant the privilege to ourselves instead:

```
1 Set-ADServiceAccount `
2   -Identity 'SQL_HQ_Primary' `
3   -PrincipalsAllowedToRetrieveManagedPassword 'Administrator'
```

Of course, you should not use the built-in Administrator account in a production environment.

## Retrieving the Managed Password

Now comes the fun part:

```
1 # We have to explicitly ask for the value of the msDS-ManagedPassword d
2 Get-ADServiceAccount `
3   -Identity 'SQL_HQ_Primary' `
4   -Properties 'msDS-ManagedPassword'
5
6 <#
7 Output:
8
9 DistinguishedName      : CN=SQL_HQ_Primary,CN=Managed Service Accounts,DC
10 Enabled                : True
11 msDS-ManagedPassword  : {1, 0, 0, 0...}
12 Name                  : SQL_HQ_Primary
13 ObjectClass            : msDS-GroupManagedServiceAccount
14 ObjectGUID             : 5f8e24c5-bd21-43a4-95ab-c67939434e81
15 SamAccountName         : SQL_HQ_Primary$
16 SID                   : S-1-5-21-3180365339-800773672-3767752645-4102
17 UserPrincipalName      :
18
19 #>
```

Note that until now, we have only used regular, built-in cmdlets from the ActiveDirectory module, courtesy of Microsoft.

## Decoding the Managed Password

Let's have a look at the msDS-ManagedPassword attribute, that has been returned by the command above. It is a constructed attribute, which means that its value is calculated by DC from the KDS root key and the msDS-ManagedPasswordId attribute every time someone asks for it. Although documented, the cryptographic algorithm used is quite complicated. Furthermore, the value of the msDS-ManagedPasswordId gets re-generated every (msDS-ManagedPasswordInterval)-days (30 by default).

We see that the msDS-ManagedPassword attribute of our GMSA contains a sequence of bytes. It is a binary representation of the [MSDS-MANAGEDPASSWORD\\_BLOB](#) data structure, which contains some metadata in addition to the actual password. As there had been no publicly available tool to decode this structure, I have created one myself:

```
1 # Save the blob to a variable
```

```

2 $gmsa = Get-ADServiceAccount `
3     -Identity 'SQL_HQ_Primary' `
4     -Properties 'msDS-ManagedPassword'
5 $mp = $gmsa.'msDS-ManagedPassword'
6
7 # Decode the data structure using the DSInternals module
8 ConvertFrom-ADManagedPasswordBlob $mp
9
10 <#
11 Output:
12
13 Version : 1
14 CurrentPassword : 流0u櫛攏穰2几9a4X0a0랭5헛하0 ◆ 0랭0랭0랭g佩翹0主0
15 PreviousPassword :
16 QueryPasswordInterval : 29.17:15:36.3736817
17 UnchangedPasswordInterval : 29.17:10:36.3736817
18
19 #>

```

TADA!!! The CurrentPassword property contains the actual cleartext password of the GMSA in question. Why does it look like gibberish? Because it is just 256 bytes of pseudorandom data, interpreted as 128 UTF-16 characters. Good luck writing that on your keyboard. But if we [calculate its NT hash](#), it will match the [hash stored in AD](#).

## Conclusion

We have seen that retrieving the value of GMSA passwords is quite easy. But don't be afraid, there is no security hole in Active Directory. The cleartext password is always passed through an encrypted channel, it is automatically changed on a regular basis and even members of the Domain Admins group are not allowed to retrieve it by default. So do not hesitate and start using the (Group) Managed Service Accounts. They are much safer than using regular accounts for running services.

If you want to play more with this stuff, just [grab the DSInternals module](#). And for developers, the C# code I use to decode the structure can be found on [GitHub](#).

Tags: [Active Directory](#), [LDAP](#), [PowerShell](#), [Security](#)

## Source Code Released

December 27, 2015 | Michael Grafnetter | [No Comments](#)

Good news: I have open-sourced the DSInternals PowerShell Module. Its source codes can now be found at [GitHub](#) and Visual Studio 2013 is needed to build it.

Just note that it is still work in progress. It lacks documentation and needs some heavy code refactoring. Any help is welcome.

## Retrieving DPAPI Backup Keys from Active Directory

October 26, 2015 | Michael Grafnetter | [No Comments](#)

## Introduction

The Data Protection API (DPAPI) is used by several components of Windows to securely store passwords, encryption keys and other sensitive data. When DPAPI is used in an Active Directory domain environment, a copy of user's master key is encrypted with a so-called DPAPI Domain Backup Key that is known to all domain controllers. Windows Server 2000 DCs use a symmetric key and newer systems use a public/private key pair. If the user password is reset and the original master key is rendered inaccessible to the user, the user's access to the master key is automatically restored using the backup key.

## The Mimikatz Method

Benjamin Delpy has already found a way to extract these backup keys from the LSASS of domain controllers and it even works remotely:

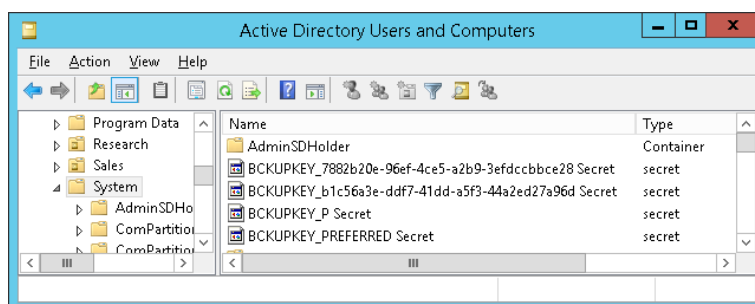
```
mimikatz # lsadump::backupkeys /export /system:lon-dc1
Current preferred key: <b1c56a3e-ddf7-41dd-a5f3-44a2ed27a96d>
* RSA key
Exportable key: YES
Key size: 2048
Private export: OK - 'ntds_capi_0_b1c56a3e-ddf7-41dd-a5f3-44a2ed27a96d.pvk'
PFK container: OK - 'ntds_capi_0_b1c56a3e-ddf7-41dd-a5f3-44a2ed27a96d.pfx'
Export: OK - 'ntds_capi_0_b1c56a3e-ddf7-41dd-a5f3-44a2ed27a96d.der'

Compatibility preferred key: <7882b20e-96ef-4ce5-a2b9-3efdccbbce28>
* Legacy key
4d8afa96d73f999fd8467d7de30b5f67a3b9d7ff143360246a96a14e8a11d732
b5c670262a4100c150e964aa164071e15a10b66123283bb083a1faa9b3710
699bb9d6e9463ecc8302d83f3b6911dd7e624d80e469b4cd88dc555f6d59e
48fb6daa5603f150bb449f843c647f7a4373442791d8d215e9fad8265741dec5
c7bce4e530be180ee6f645a42f3092554d8610cah903b3390705bhad4193251
3a8fc2fde92cc38c133ec1fb61de2c45b4e59ahd753bf28ac538d4de1ff0e37
29fe55b61076330841e3b997264bf172cfa10001a0eb51b54b0c766c184f60a1
d73941e292fe842b403a06afcc825be90a49c4adafbcccf0c674bf81cd37ad9

Export: OK - 'ntds_legacy_0_7882b20e-96ef-4ce5-a2b9-3efdccbbce28.key'
```

## Key Storage

I have taken Benjamin's research one step further and I can now extract these keys directly from the Active Directory database, where they are physically stored:



The keys are stored in the **currentValue** attribute of objects whose names begin with **BCKUPKEY** and are of class **secret**. The **BCKUPKEY\_PREFERRED Secret** and **BCKUPKEY\_P Secret** objects actually only contain GUIDs of objects that hold the current modern and legacy keys, respectively. Furthermore, the **currentValue** attribute is encrypted using **KeyKey** (aka **SysKey**) and is never sent through LDAP.

## The Database Dump Method

The **Get-BootKey**, **Get-ADDBBackupKey** and **Save-DPAPIBlob** cmdlets from my [DSInternals PowerShell Module](#) can be used to retrieve the DPAPI Domain Backup Keys from ntds.dit files:

```
1 # We need to get the BootKey from the SYSTEM registry hive first:
2 Get-BootKey -SystemHiveFilePath 'C:\IFM\registry\SYSTEM'
3
4 <#
5 Output:
6
7 41e34661faa0d182182f6ddf0f0ca0d1
8
9 #>
10
11 # Now we can decrypt the DPAPI backup keys from the database:
12 Get-ADDBBackupKey -DBPath 'C:\IFM\Active Directory\ntds.dit' `
13 -BootKey 41e34661faa0d182182f6ddf0f0ca0d1 |
14 Format-List
15
16 <#
17 Output:
18
19 Type : LegacyKey
20 DistinguishedName : CN=BCKUPKEY_7882b20e-96ef-4ce5-a2b9-3efdccbbce28 Se
21 RawKeyData : {77, 138, 250, 6...}
22 KeyId : 7882b20e-96ef-4ce5-a2b9-3efdccbbce28
23
24 Type : PreferredLegacyKeyPointer
25 DistinguishedName : CN=BCKUPKEY_P Secret,CN=System,DC=Adatum,DC=com
26 RawKeyData : {14, 178, 130, 120...}
27 KeyId : 7882b20e-96ef-4ce5-a2b9-3efdccbbce28
28
29 Type : RSAKey
30 DistinguishedName : CN=BCKUPKEY_b1c56a3e-ddf7-41dd-a5f3-44a2ed27a96d Se
31 RawKeyData : {48, 130, 9, 186...}
32 KeyId : b1c56a3e-ddf7-41dd-a5f3-44a2ed27a96d
33
```

```

34 Type : PreferredRSAKeyPointer
35 DistinguishedName : CN=BCKUPKEY_PREFERRED Secret,CN=System,DC=Adatum,DC=
36 RawKeyData : {62, 106, 197, 177...}
37 KeyId : b1c56a3e-ddf7-41dd-a5f3-44a2ed27a96d
38
39 #>
40
41 # In most cases, we just want to export these keys to the file system:
42 Get-ADDBBackupKey -DBPath 'C:\IFM\Active Directory\ntds.dit' -
43 -BootKey 41e34661faa0d182182f6ddf0f0ca0d1 |
44 Save-DPAPIBlob -DirectoryPath .\Keys
45
46 # New files should have been created in the Keys directory:
47
48 (dir .\Keys).Name
49
50 <#
51 Output:
52
53 ntds_capi_b1c56a3e-ddf7-41dd-a5f3-44a2ed27a96d.pfx
54 ntds_legacy_7882b20e-96ef-4ce5-a2b9-3efdcbbce28.key
55
56 #>

```

Note that mimikatz would name these files similarly.

## The DRSR Method

The same result can be achieved by communicating with the Directory Replication Service using the **Get-ADRepIBackupKey** cmdlet:

```

1 Get-ADRepIBackupKey -Domain 'Adatum.com' -Server LON-DC1 |
2 Save-DPAPIBlob -DirectoryPath .\Keys

```

## Defense

I am already starting to repeat myself:

- Restrict access to domain controller backups.
- Be cautious when delegating the “Replicating Directory Changes All” right.


Tags: [Active Directory](#), [DPAPI](#), [PowerShell](#), [Security](#)

## Update on the Azure AD Password Sync Security Analysis

October 21, 2015 | Michael Grafnetter | [No Comments](#)

A few days ago, I have published a [security analysis of the Azure Active Directory Password Sync feature](#). Today, a [discussion](#) between [Alex Simons](#) (Director of Program Management, Microsoft Identity and Security Services Division), Paul Bendall and me concerning the security of OrgId hashes took place on Twitter. Unfortunately, the Tweet length limit took its toll, because you simply cannot fit sophisticated thoughts on cryptography into 140 characters. Our statements might have therefore been slightly misinterpreted.

Here are Alex's Tweets I could not fully agree with, even though I know that they are a little bit exaggerated and cannot be considered to be his official statement:



**Alex Simons**  
 @Alex\_A\_Simons

Follow

@MGrafnetter @paulbendall Contents is a non-reversible hash. We hash it again with SHA256 before passing it over SSL.

7:59 PM - 21 Oct 2015

1

The contents Alex is referring to is MD4 (aka NT or NTLM) hash of user's password and it is true that MD4 is irreversible in the general case. But specialized tools like [oclHashcat](#) can crack any 9-character alphanumeric password hashed using MD4 in **less than 4 hours** using brute force on a computer equipped with 8 high-end GPUs. Adding one more character would prolong this operation to 2 weeks,

which would still not discourage a determined attacker. And even better results can be achieved using dictionary or hybrid attacks.

Of course, this would not have been a problem if everybody used at least 14 characters long and random passwords, but the reality is quite different from this ideal.



**Alex Simons**  
@Alex\_A\_Simons

Follow

@paulbendall Since SHA256 is strong and not reversible, we don't do anything extra here, it is sent over SSL to avoid MITM attacks.

3:35 AM - 21 Oct 2015

1

One can only agree that SHA256 is much better than MD4, but even moderately strong passwords hashed with SHA256 can be cracked in reasonable time on crackstations. It is obvious that the person at Microsoft who designed the password sync functionality was fully aware of this fact, as the OrgId hash consists of 100 SHA256 rounds rather than just one. My whole point was that increasing this number to – let's say – 2048 would make many not-so-strong passwords much more secure. Because **there are hackers out there**, who would like to get hands on these hashes stored on Microsoft's servers. No matter how improbable it is, they might succeed someday.

On the other hand, I must admit that a practical **MITM attack wouldn't be possible** in this case. I am therefore sorry for unintentionally spreading FUD. Although the sync agent does not use certificate pinning and [Fiddler can be used to monitor the traffic](#), this couldn't have been done without making the server trust Fiddler's root certificate.



**Alex Simons**  
@Alex\_A\_Simons

Follow

@paulbendall @MGrafnetter Paul - what do you guys keep in your directory that needs so much protection? Bank account numbers? ;-)

8:02 PM - 21 Oct 2015

Perhaps no one stores bank account numbers in Active Directory. But is AD used to protect corporate or government resources that are whole lot more sensitive than just bank account numbers? Definitely!

Despite this minor disagreement, I still think that **Azure is a great service** and I simply love it. Did I mention my blog was **hosted on Azure**?

## Dumping ntds.dit files using PowerShell

October 20, 2015 | Michael Grafnetter | [10 Comments](#)

Although there exist several tools for dumping password hashes from the Active Directory database files, including the open-source [NTDSXtract](#) from Csaba Báta whose great research started it all, they have these limitations:

- They do not support the built-in indices, so searching for a single object is slow when dealing with large databases.
- Most of the tools are either Linux-only or running them on Windows is not simple enough.
- Almost none of these tools can modify the database. And if they do, they do not support transaction logs and are quite cumbersome.

Therefore, I have decided to create [my own set of PowerShell cmdlets](#) that wouldn't have these shortcomings. In the process, I have unintentionally created my own

framework that is built on top of Microsoft's [ManagedEsent](#) library and hides the complexity of the underlying database. I am planning to release it at GitHub later this year.

One of the cmdlets I have created is **Get-ADDBAccount**, which can be used to extract password hashes, Kerberos keys and even reversibly encrypted passwords from ntds.dit files. Here is an example of its usage:

```
1 # First, we fetch the so-called Boot Key (aka SysKey)
2 # that is used to encrypt sensitive data in AD:
3 $key = Get-BootKey -SystemHivePath 'C:\IFM\registry\SYSTEM'
4
5 # We then load the DB and decrypt password hashes of all accounts:
6 Get-ADDBAccount -All -DBPath 'C:\IFM\Active Directory\ntds.dit' -BootKey $key
7
8 # We can also get a single account by specifying its distinguishedName,
9 # objectGuid, objectSid or sAMAccountName attribute:
10 Get-ADDBAccount -DistinguishedName 'CN=krbtgt,CN=Users,DC=Adatum,DC=com'
11 -DBPath 'C:\IFM\Active Directory\ntds.dit' -BootKey $key
```

The output is identical to what the [Get-ADReplicaAccount](#) cmdlet would return:

```
DistinguishedName: CN=krbtgt,CN=Users,DC=Adatum,DC=com
Sid: S-1-5-21-3180365339-800773672-3767752645-502
Guid: f58947a0-094b-4ae0-9c6a-a435c7d8eddb
SamAccountName: krbtgt
SamAccountType: User
UserPrincipalName:
PrimaryGroupId: 513
SidHistory:
Enabled: False
Deleted: False
LastLogon:
DisplayName:
GivenName:
Surname:
Description: Key Distribution Center Service Account
NTHash: 9b17bcfc3800df21baa6b8a4aee4b4fd
LMHash:
NTHashHistory:
  Hash 01: 9b17bcfc3800df21baa6b8a4aee4b4fd
  Hash 02: c9467e5fae14820500862d85c53747c1
LMHashHistory:
  Hash 01: 1a1d073fde1fca32c24f268fce835de2
  Hash 02: cc8019ecf6fdbcb06849a9980804e8d
SupplementalCredentials:
ClearText:
Kerberos:
  Credentials:
    DES_CBC_MD5
    Key: cddf7308d6cd5d2a
  OldCredentials:
    DES_CBC_MD5
    Key: cddf7308d6cd5d2a
  Salt: ADATUM.COMkrbtgt
  Flags: 0
KerberosNew:
  Credentials:
    AES256_GCM_HMAC_SHA1_128
    Key: 69b11bfec0e2b278702bc7d9fbfda23e3789128b92c59955e69932a4575
    Iterations: 4096
    AES128_GCM_HMAC_SHA1_128
    Key: bcfcc7a65379d7914c2c341a74ca0e0e
    Iterations: 4096
    DES_CBC_MD5
    Key: cddf7308d6cd5d2a
    Iterations: 4096
  OldCredentials:
    AES256_GCM_HMAC_SHA1_128
    Key: 809b0f1697dffe39bb87b2e3d79564dc8ef91b91bad2fc51abc444e42c7e8
    Iterations: 4096
    AES128_GCM_HMAC_SHA1_128
    Key: c30fb9e17cd7503f980592a6864c8daa
    Iterations: 4096
    DES_CBC_MD5
    Key: cddf7308d6cd5d2a
    Iterations: 4096
  OlderCredentials:
  ServiceCredentials:
  Salt: ADATUM.COMkrbtgt
  DefaultIterationCount: 4096
  Flags: 0
WDigest:
  Hash 01: eee4408f94b35bb5dc7077747d9762a3
  Hash 02: 00be705a97c4a1ded7f7fc912ef70aec
  Hash 03: 7b0b14e8f5cfa2de25d04d393c649bb7
  Hash 04: eee4408f94b35bb5dc7077747d9762a3
  Hash 05: 00be705a97c4a1ded7f7fc912ef70aec
  Hash 06: cf102efea5397a51edc9202b922682e5
  Hash 07: eee4408f94b35bb5dc7077747d9762a3
  Hash 08: 5737a1de1f94d3f6e0dbbe4e3f173036
  Hash 09: 9314bbcd0f0f8ab2d3879287e739f621
  Hash 10: 973ff6673784ce0faa956d10952b0be0
  Hash 11: b04c5754a36b8edaac0dfd3c8b741d1a
  Hash 12: 9314bbcd0f0f8ab2d3879287e739f621
```



```

Hash 13: decbd6b05ac2363ef7c772b42339fdab
Hash 14: b04c5754a36b8edaac0dfd3c8b741d1a
Hash 15: 71e248eae58d2f1f4b40baf412fde251
Hash 16: 8f03fa2cf1cddb300d0e0992fb5265e1
Hash 17: 5032b686f9b0187115c5b56a4de89d1e
Hash 18: eb804e4333521ee5e74241db4ecd7e5e
Hash 19: c86f4816e80f0a590cb03f0b9aa8c04c
Hash 20: 0e03a76194c6385754a1814384c99798
Hash 21: db13be8eb45adad0984e5a68ea2dfe23
Hash 22: db13be8eb45adad0984e5a68ea2dfe23
Hash 23: 5b6bba9bae24a347108ad7267e1ac287
Hash 24: e72cad8b0fc837d3e8de4ddc725eb81f
Hash 25: c19dd7b576c43eecd07ba475bd444f579
Hash 26: 021c07151ece2de494402cf11f62a036
Hash 27: d657b31bfcacb37443630759cc3a19bf
Hash 28: 5d49708350e04b16ddc980a0c33c409b
Hash 29: efe601100b7b4007fe3fa778499d5dda

```

I have also created several Views that generate output for the most popular password crackers, including [Hashcat](#), [John the Ripper](#) and [Ophcrack](#):

```

1 # Dump NT hashes in the format understood by Hashcat:
2 Get-ADDBAccount -All -DBPath 'C:\IFM\Active Directory\ntds.dit' -BootKey
3   Format-Custom -View HashcatNT |
4   Out-File hashes.txt
5 # Other supported views are HashcatLM, JohnNT, JohnLM and Ophcrack.

```

But with the **Golden Ticket** or **Pass-the-Hash** functionality of [mimikatz](#), an attacker could seize control of the entire Active Directory forest even without cracking those password hashes.

As a countermeasure, it is crucial for companies to **secure physical access** to domain controllers, their backups and their VHD/VHDX/VMDK images in case of virtualized DCs. Turning on BitLocker is not a bad idea either. I really look forward to the new security features planned for Windows Server 2016, including **Shielded VMs** and **Virtual TPMs**.

Tags: [Active Directory](#), [PowerShell](#), [Security](#)

## How Azure Active Directory Connect Syncs Passwords

October 18, 2015 | Michael Grafnetter | [2 Comments](#)

Many people have asked me about the security implications of synchronizing passwords from Active Directory to Azure Active Directory using the [Azure AD Connect](#) tool. Although there is an article on Technet that [claims](#) that the passwords are synced in a very secure hashed form that cannot be misused for authentication against the on-premise Active Directory, it lacks any detail about the exact information being sent to Microsoft's servers.

A [post](#) at the Active Directory Team Blog hints that the Password Sync agent retrieves pre-existing password hashes from AD and secures them by re-hashing them using SHA256 hash per [RFC 2898](#) (aka PBKDF2) before uploading them to the cloud. This sheds some light on the functionality, but some important implementation details are still missing, including the number of SHA256 iterations, salt length and the type of hash that is extracted from AD. Some [research](#) on this topic has been done by Alan Byrne, but it is inconclusive. Therefore, I have decided to do my own research and to share my results.

(more...)

Tags: [Active Directory](#), [Microsoft Azure](#), [Office 365](#), [PowerShell](#), [Security](#)

## Detecting Weak Active Directory Passwords

October 3, 2015 | Michael Grafnetter | [No Comments](#)

There is a new tool available for auditing Active Directory passwords, the [Get-BADPasswords cmdlet](#). It has been created by [Jakob Heidelberg](#) and it is built upon the features of the [DSInternals module](#).

Tags: [Active Directory](#), [PowerShell](#), [Security](#)

## List of Cmdlets in the DSInternals Module

September 29, 2015 | Michael Grafnetter | [No Comments](#)

Here is the list of cmdlets currently contained in the [DSInternals PowerShell module](#):

### Online operations with the Active Directory database

- **Get-ADReplAccount** – Reads one or more accounts through the [DRSR](#) protocol, including secret attributes.
- **Set-SamAccountPasswordHash** – Sets NT and LM hashes of an account through the [SAMR](#) protocol.
- **Get-ADReplBackupKey** – Reads the DPAPI backup keys through the DRSR protocol.

### Offline operations with the Active Directory database

- **Get-ADDBAccount** – Reads one or more accounts from a ntds.dit file, including the [secret attributes](#).
- **Get-BootKey** – Reads the BootKey (aka SysKey) from an online or offline SYSTEM [registry hive](#).
- **Set-BootKey** – Re-encrypts a ntds.dit with a new BootKey. Highly experimental!
- **Get-ADDBBackupKey** – Reads the DPAPI backup keys from a ntds.dit file.
- **Add-ADDBSidHistory** – Adds one or more values to the [sidHistory](#) attribute of an object in a ntds.dit file.
- **Set-ADDBPrimaryGroup** – Modifies the [primaryGroupid](#) attribute of an object in a ntds.dit file.
- **Get-ADDBDomainController** – Reads information about the originating DC from a ntds.dit file, including domain name, domain SID, DC name and DC site.
- **Set-ADDBDomainController** – Writes information about the DC to a ntds.dit file, including the highest committed USN and database epoch.
- **Get-ADDBSchemaAttribute** – Reads AD schema from a ntds.dit file, including datatable column names.
- **Remove-ADDBObject** – Physically removes specified object from a ntds.dit file, making it semantically inconsistent. Highly experimental!

### Views

The output of the **Get-ADDBAccount** and **Get-ADReplAccount** cmdlets can be formatted using these additional [Views](#):

- **HashcatNT** – NT hashes in [Hashcat's](#) format.
- **HashcatLM** – LM hashes in Hashcat's format.
- **JohnNT** – NT hashes in the format supported by [John the Ripper](#).
- **JohnLM** – LM hashes in the format supported by John the Ripper.
- **Ophcrack** – NT and LM hashes in [Ophcrack's](#) format.

### Password hash calculation

- **ConvertTo-NTHash** – Calculates NT hash of a given password.
- **ConvertTo-LMHash** – Calculates LM hash of a given password.
- **ConvertTo-OrgIdHash** – Calculates OrgId hash of a given password. Used by [Azure Active Directory Sync](#).

### Password decryption

- **ConvertFrom-GPPrefPassword** – Decodes a password from the format used by Group Policy Preferences.
- **ConvertTo-GPPrefPassword** – Converts a password to the format used by Group Policy Preferences.

- **[ConvertFrom-UnattendXmlPassword](#)** – Decodes a password from the format used in [unattend.xml](#) files.
- **[ConvertTo-UnicodePassword](#)** – Converts a password to the format used in [unattend.xml](#) or [\\*.ldif](#) files.
- **[ConvertFrom-ADManagedPasswordBlob](#)** – Decodes the cleartext password from a [Group Managed Service Account](#) (GMSA) object.

## Miscellaneous

- **[Save-DPAPIBlob](#)** – Saves the output of the [Get-ADReplBackupKey](#) and [Get-ADDBBackupKey](#) cmdlets to a file.
- **[ConvertTo-Hex](#)** – Helper cmdlet that converts binary input to the hexadecimal string format.

I promise to publish more information about my cmdlets in the near future.

Tags: [Active Directory](#), [DPAPI](#), [Microsoft Azure](#), [Office 365](#), [PowerShell](#), [Security](#)

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