# Malware Behaviour Analysis and Windows Registry Investigation

Researching and analysing malware behaviour and its impact on the Windows Registry

# CDAC, Noida CYBER GYAN VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

# **Submitted By:**

Ankit ThakorBhai Gamit Project Trainee, (May-June) 2024

# **BONAFIDE CERTIFICATE**

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# Malware Behaviour Analysis and Windows Registry Investigation

#### 1.0

#### **Introduction**

The continuous rise of cybercrimes and usage of malware has brought an immense attention in cybersecurity since it currently poses a severe threat to humans, as well as to businesses. Malware actually is a malicious software which is used to harm or gain unauthorized access to personal information. Malware is basically designed to disrupt, damage, and or to gain unauthorized access to computer systems. Many malwares target the windows registry with respect to their goal of persistence, executing malicious payloads, as well as evading detection. This project is given to us to gain more knowledge about what the malware are doing in terms of behaviour and how they utilize Windows registry is very important in order to develop strong defense methods for counteracting and mitigating the potential threat.

#### 1.1

#### **PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

Malware Behaviour Analysis and Windows Registry Investigation

#### PROBLEM ADDRESSED

The identification and analysis of malware, even as new developments in cybersecurity are made, continues to be big problem, this is due to the constant evolution of tactics, techniques, and procedures, employed by Cyber criminals. One of the most common means for malware persistence and execution involves the Windows Registry. Due to the complexity involved in Windows Registry and the complex nature of current malware make it difficult to accurately detect and analyze these changes.

This project focuses on research and analysis of malware behaviour in respect to the Windows Registry. It will involve a deep study of various malware types, the mechanism of interaction with the Windows Registry, as well as implementation and evaluation of the analysis and investigation tools.

#### **Learning Objective**

#### 1. Understanding Malware Behaviour

• Types of Malware:

Training is received on various types of malware, such as viruses, worms Trojans, ransomware and spyware.

Different malware were viewed in their independent characteristics and advantages they use for an attack vector.

Behaviour Patterns:

It has been observed try routine tactics, techniques and procedures common amongst malware in infecting systems

Documented how malware uses modification of the Windows Registry. Specific registry keys and values to look for that various malware strains target.

IoCs

Registry Change IoC's, Recognised Run keys with unusual entries, shell commands changed and hidden services. Development methodology to look for while doing a malware investigation.

#### 2. Tool Proficiency Malware Analysis Tools:

Earned experience for dynamic and static malware-sample analysis utilizing Cuckoo Sandbox.

Trained to use these normal tools to run malware samples in an isolated environment where I could observe the behaviour of a malware sample.

• Registry Monitoring Tools

Monitoring and recording registry changes using Regedit. Regshot to identify the various infected files and documents.

Trained in conducting a before and after snapshot of running malware to identify the changes introduced by malware. Forensic Analysis Tools.

#### 3. Analysis Techniques

Static Analysis:

Static Analysis is the process by which analysis of malware binaries takes place without executing those binaries actually. Strings and proper indicators embedded in malware exposing its functionality have been recognized.

#### Dynamic Analysis:

Behavioural analysis was carried out with the help of the Cuckoo Sandbox. Malware was dynamically analysed runtime; changes in file systems, network and registry have been observed

#### **Cross Method Comparison**

The methods of static and dynamic analysis has been compared to observe malware

#### 4. Documentation and Report

#### **Detailed Reporting**

Malware analysis and its finding has properly been documented in a detailed report.

The report therefore includes information on identified IOCs, specific registry changes and overall malware behaviour

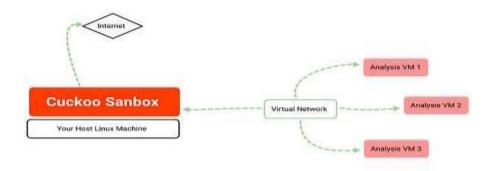
#### 1.3

#### **APPROACH:**

The tools and technologies that are used in this project are Oracle virtualbox version 7.0.10, Cuckoo Sandbox version 2.0.7. I also used kali linux version 6.3.0 having IP address 10.0.2.15, Microsoft Windows [Version 10.0.22631.3737] with IP address 192.168.83.21. Technologies like python, MongoDB, swig and YARA are used for different purposes. Regedit and Regshot are used for Windows Registry Investigation.

In this project I used an approach in which the testing is done using Cuckoo Sandbox in the virtual box. The file containing virus is put in the cuckoo sandbox to analyse the file and generate the report. For that purpose I needed various software like python version 2.7 because the cuckoo sandbox is only compatible with Python of that version.

In this project the cuckoo sandbox is installed in the VM and the malware file is inserted in the cuckoo sandbox to analyze. After analysing the file Regedit is used for investigation in the windows registry.



#### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

To Execute this project first setup an environment for the virtual machine to be installed.

#### **\*** Choose a Virtualization Platform:

Download and install VirtualBox or VMware Workstation Player.

#### **\*** Create a New Virtual Machine:

- Create a new VM.
- Download a Windows ISO and use it to install the OS on the VM.
- Set the network mode to Host-Only to isolate the VM.
- After the OS is installed and updated, create a snapshot for the virtual machine to be loaded for better security.





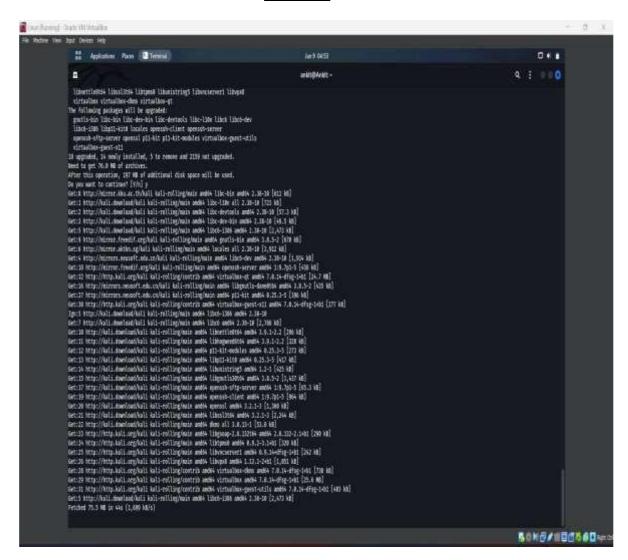
#### **!** Install Necessary Tools:

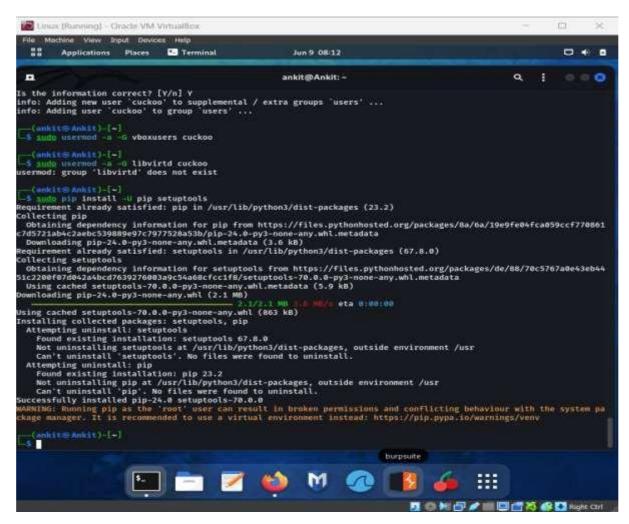
Download and install the following tools inside the VM

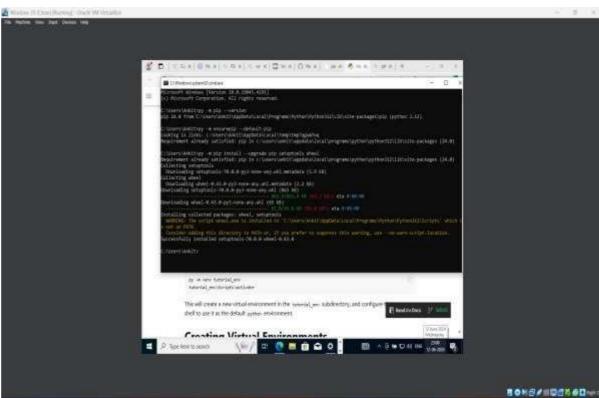
- Cuckoo Sandbox: Follow the setup instructions at cuckoosandbox.org.
- Wireshark: Download from wireshark.org.
- **RegShot**: Download from sourceforge.net.
- **Regedit**: Use the built-in Windows Registry Editor.
- **PEid**: Install PEid from their website.

#### Setup Cuckoo Sandbox:

- **Install Dependencies**: Follow instructions on the <u>Cuckoo Sandbox Documentation</u>.
- **Configure Cuckoo**: Edit <u>cuckoo.conf</u> for network settings, create a VM snapshot for analysis, and add the VM to Cuckoo's configuration.
- •Launch Cuckoo: Start Cuckoo with cuckoo start.







#### **Static Analysis**

#### **Step 1: Initial Examination**

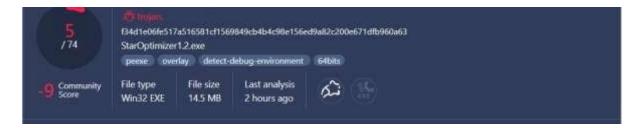
#### 1. File Headers:

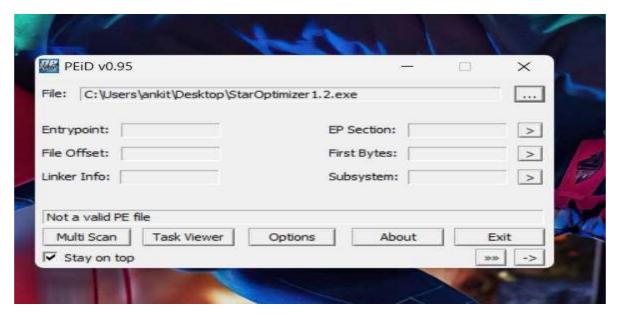
- o Use PEiD to inspect file headers.
- o Document file type, size, and attributes.

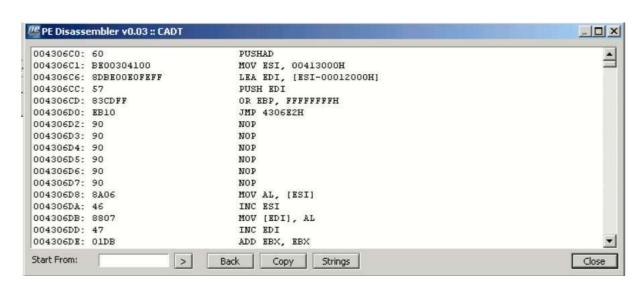
The file that I selected is .exe file that is a trojan malware. I downloaded this file from <a href="https://malshare.com">https://malshare.com</a>.

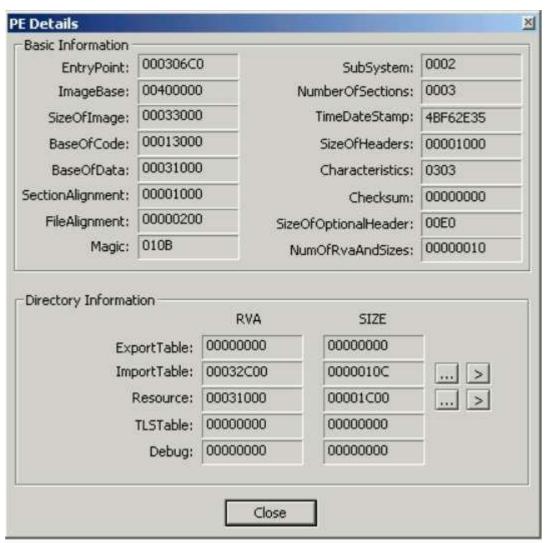
As seen the below image the file type is Win32 EXE. The size of the file is 14.5 MB. Its various attributes are displayed in the image.

The name of this file is "f34d1e06fe517a516581cf1569849cb4b4c98e156ed9a82c200e671dfb960a63" and StarOptimizer1.2.exe.



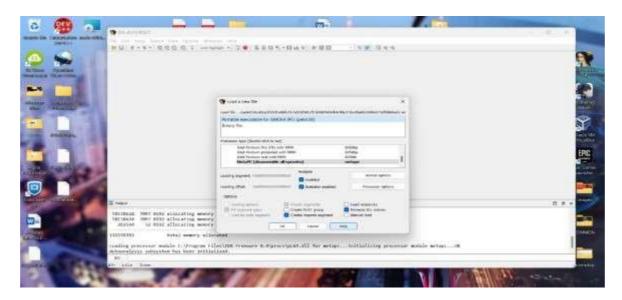


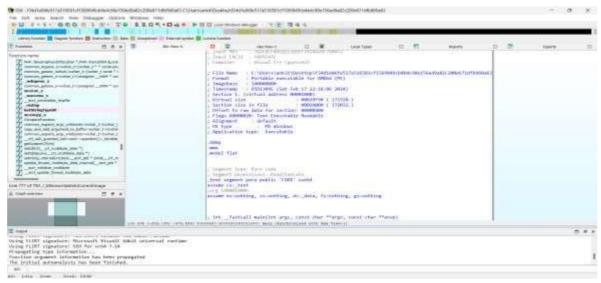


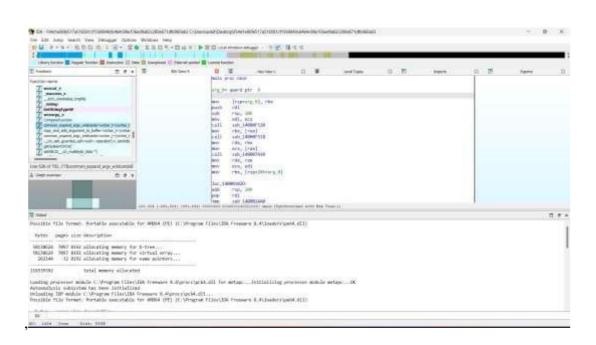


#### 2. Strings Extraction:

- Use strings command or tools like IDA to extract strings.
- o Look for URLs, file paths, and registry keys.







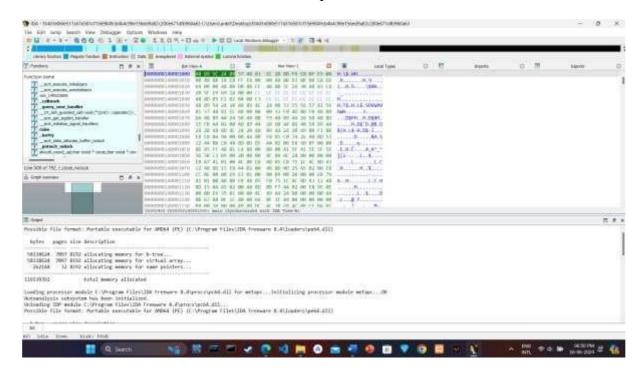
**Step 2: Disassembly and Decompilation** 

#### 1. **Open the Binary**:

- Load the malware in IDA or any other tool.
- Let the tool analyze and disassemble the binary.

#### 2. Analyze the Code:

- o Identify key functions and API calls.
- o Document control flow and suspicious functions.



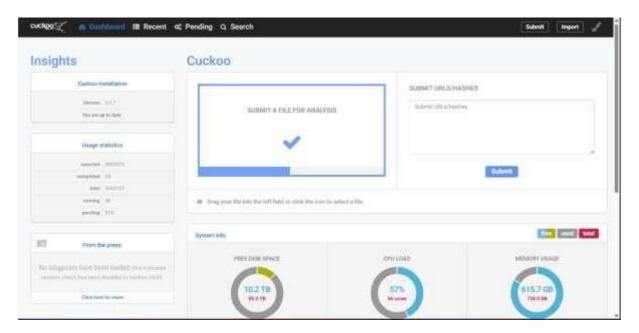




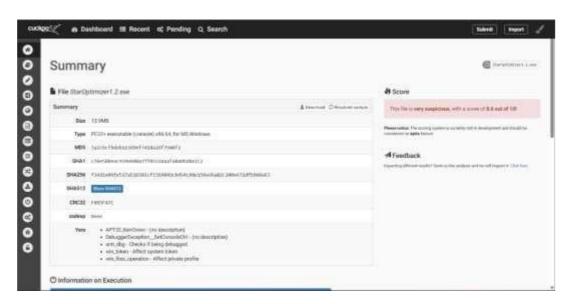
#### **Dynamic Analysis**

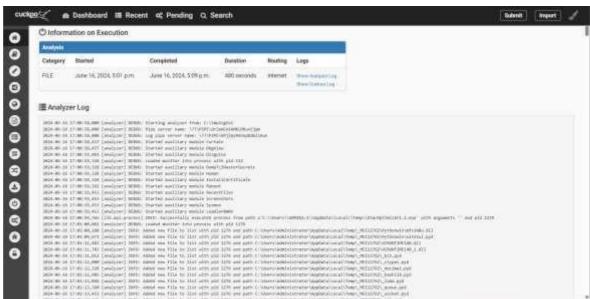
#### **Step 1: Preparing the Sandbox**

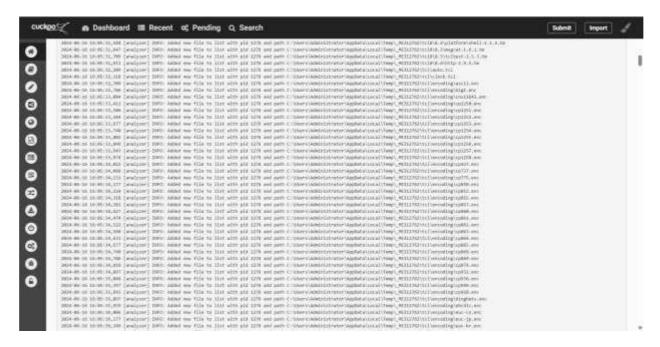
- 1. **Snapshot**: Take a snapshot of the clean VM state.
- 2. Run Malware in Cuckoo:
  - Submit the malware to Cuckoo Sandbox.
  - o Monitor through Cuckoo's web interface.







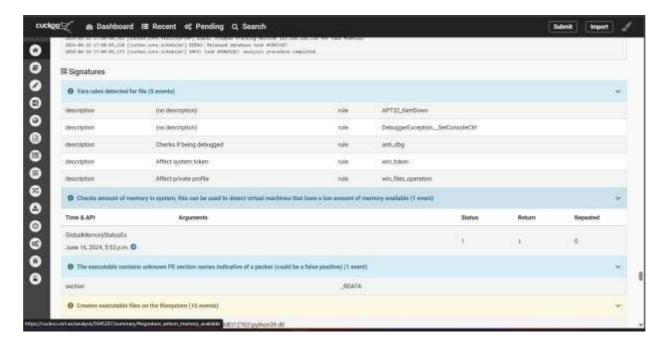


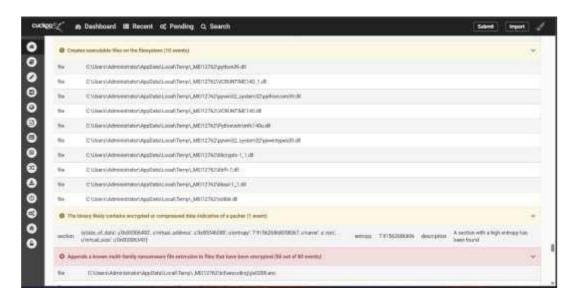


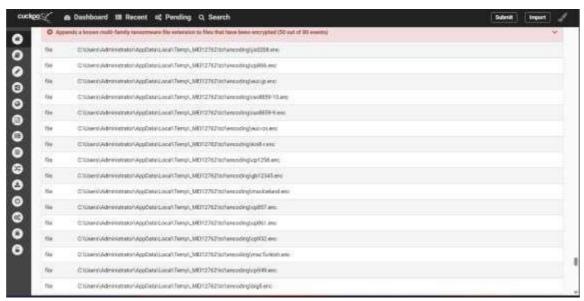


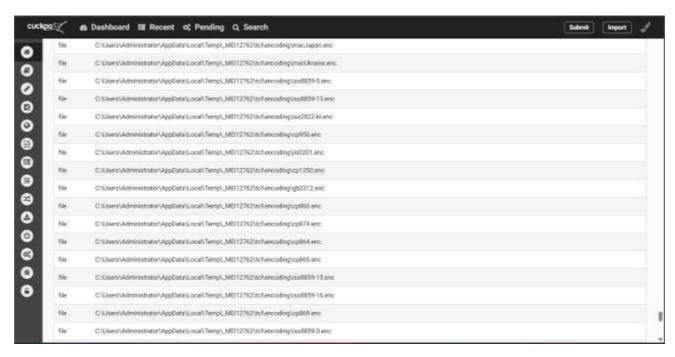


This is the image of the file that popping when the file is executed.















With this processes I can execute the Dynamic analysis on the given malware and see what files or what domains are linked and what URL are accessed.

# Windows Registry Investigation <a href="Step 1">Step 1</a>

#### 1. **RegShot**:

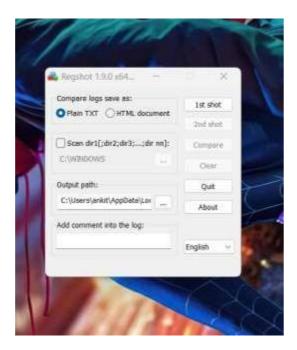
- Take an initial snapshot of the registry.
- o Run the malware and take a second snapshot.
- Compare the snapshots for changes.

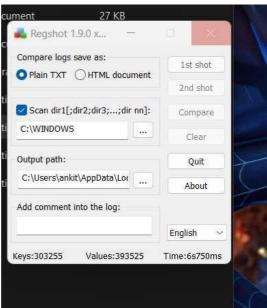
#### 2. Regedit:

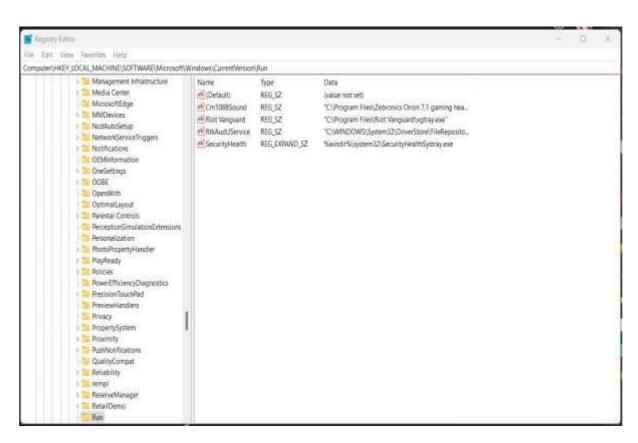
• Use regedit to see the file changes made in any directory.

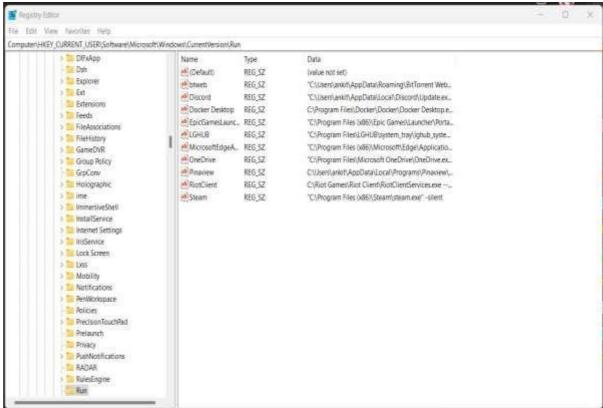
#### 3. Wireshark:

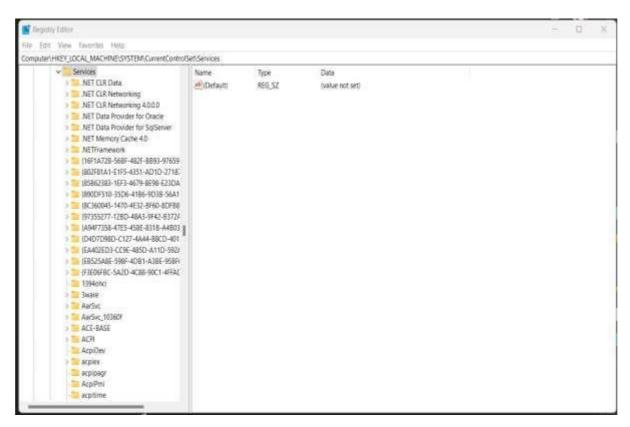
Start capturing network traffic before running the malware.

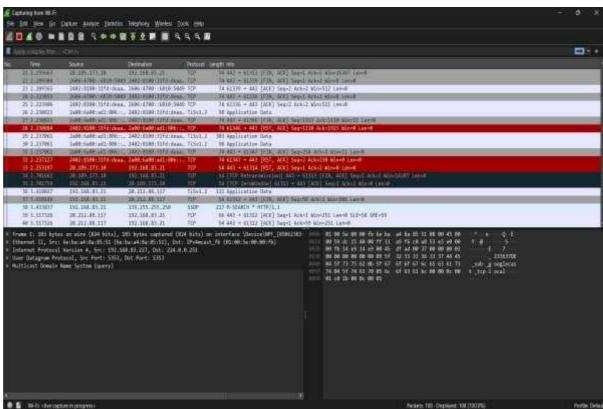


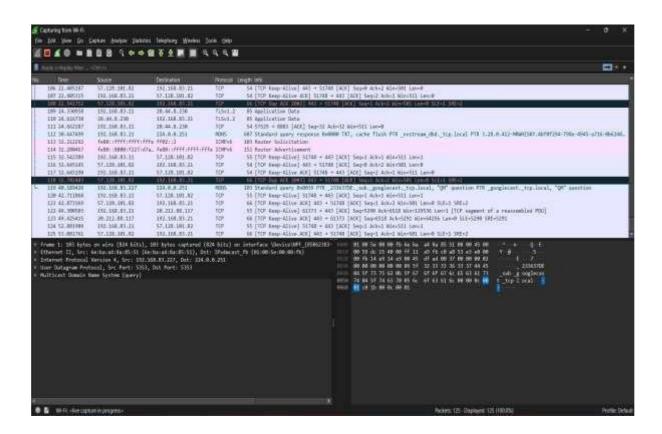








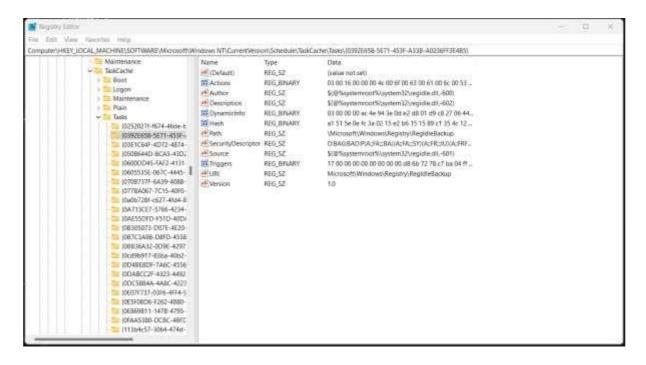




#### **Step 2: Document Observations**

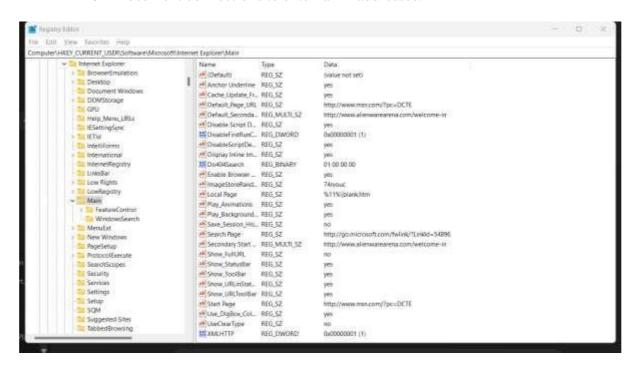
#### 1. File System Changes:

o Note new, modified, or deleted files.



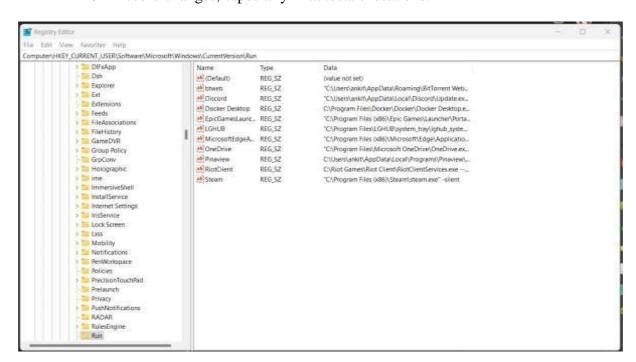
#### 2. Network Activity:

o Document connections to external IP addresses.



#### 3. **Registry Modifications**:

o Record changes, especially in autostart locations.



After Performing all the needed steps, see if there is any change in files of your Device.

**Indicators Of Compromise(IOC)**: After the attack was performed I noticed several IOC's such as

- As I executed the Malware I noticed Calls to suspicious API functions, such as those related to network communication, file manipulation, and process injection
- I noticed various different scripts and payloads that should not be there executing.
- After the execution of the malware, it created several files that displayed on desktop.
- As I searched my device for other may be possible files that may have generated, I saw some of the files with suspicious names or extensions in system directories.
- As I noticed in IPA I can see that the exe file had built Connections to known and unknown malicious IP addresses or domains.
- As I checked my Regedit I found several New and modified registry keys related to autostart or persistence and I got several popup notifications related to the Malware file (e.g., Run, RunOnce keys).
- As I compared my Regshot File with my Regeditor directory I noticed the Creation of unusual registry keys or values.
- I experienced Changes in system behaviour such as unexpected system reboots or lagging

#### **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This included a detailed analysis of malware behaviour and Windows Registry using different methods of static, dynamic and memory analysis. Here are the main results:

- Static Analysis Findings
- Suspicious Strings: URLs that point to different unrecognisable website.
- File Headers and Metadata: Not signed, unusual attributes to evade detection.
- Imported Functions: Network communication, file manipulation, process injection.
- Embedded Resources: Encrypted payloads and scripts to hide the purpose.
- Dynamic Analysis Findings:
- File System: Created files in system directories and modified critical application files.
- Network: Connected to external IP addresses. Connections were encrypted so we couldn't dig deeper into network traffic.
- Process and Service: New processes that looked like system processes and new services set to start automatically.
- Registry: Modified autostart registry keys to persist on the system. Also modified security settings to disable some protection.
- Behavioral: Ran unusual scripts and commands to spread or further compromise the system.

#### Registry Analysis:

- Autostart Entries: New entries found in autostart locations pointing to malicious executables.
- Security Settings Changes: Malware changed registry keys to turn off system defenses, firewall and security software.
- Persistence: Malware used multiple persistence mechanisms, scheduled tasks and WMI Event Consumers to stay active after reboots.

#### Based on the findings above, here are the mitigations to reduce the risk of the malware and overall security:

- o **Block Malicious IPs and Domains**: Use threat intel feeds to block IPs and domains related to the malware.
- **Network Segmentation**: Segment critical systems and limit communication between segments to stop the malware spread.
- o **Patch**: Keep your OS, apps and firmware up to date
- o **Monitor Registry Changes**: Continuously monitor registry keys for unauthorized modifications, especially in autostart and security settings.
- Quarantine and Eradicate Malware: Immediately isolate infected systems to prevent further spread and perform thorough cleaning and recovery procedures.
- Security Training: Run regular training sessions on phishing, social engineering and safe computing.
- Report Incidents: Get users to report suspicious activity or potential security issues ASAP.

#### <u>5.0</u>

#### **LIST OF REFERENCES:**

https://cuckoo.readthedocs.io/en/latest/installation/host/requirements

<u>Setting up Cuckoo Sandbox Step by Step Guide(Malware Analysis Tool) | by Lahiru Oshara Hinguruduwa | Medium</u>

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