## Forecast Modification for Better Performance

# 1.What we get from Volatility

The malware sample used for this document is "Nivdort". It's a windows executable named "sample.exe" that pretends to help user downloading pictures from the internet while doing despicable activities in the background.

To begin with, let's try to analyze the malware in Volatility. I ran sample.exe in a 32-bit Windows XP virtual machine, then got the virtual machine memory dump (named sample.bin), and then analyzed the dump file by Volatility standalone for Windows system.

First, we can run Volatility pslist plugin to see all processes running on the machine,

.\volatility\_2.6\_win64\_standalone -f sample.bin --profile=WinXPSP3x86 pslist

we can get the result that is shown in the figure below.

	Foundation Volatili	ty Framew	ork 2.6				
Offset(V)	Name	PID	PPID	Thds	Hnds	Sess	Wow64
9x89c009c8		4	Θ	54	439		E
9x899d8020		364	4	3	19		6
9x89aaeda0		588	364	10	374	Θ	6
9x89ae3890	winlogon.exe	612	364	22	515	Θ	E
9x89aaab28	services.exe	656	612	16	248	Θ	€
9x899beda0	lsass.exe	668	612	24	351	Θ	€
9x89a533b0	VBoxService.exe	824	656	9	124	Θ	6
9x8997fda0	svchost.exe	872	656	20	202	Θ	€
9x89995da0	svchost.exe	964	656	9	232	Θ	(
9x89a5a318	svchost.exe	1056	656	65	1257	Θ	(
9x89a9da98	svchost.exe	1100	656	7	85	Θ	(
9x89a22da0	svchost.exe	1156	656	15	196	Θ	(
9x89764da0	explorer.exe	1524	1460	17	460	Θ	(
9x899c4980	spoolsv.exe	1604	656	14	111	Θ	(
9x89756020	VBoxTray.exe	1708	1524	12	110	Θ	(
9x89a20938	wuauclt.exe	444	1056	8	176	Θ	(
9x899f3650	wscntfy.exe	1032	1056	1	28	Θ	
9x897296f8	alg.exe	1224	656	6	101	Θ	
9x89a6fda0	wmiprvse.exe	2020	872	7	139	Θ	
9x8975fda0	sample.exe	2400	1524	2	350	Θ	
9x896e1520	lowcvz3q8sygxru	3560	2400	Θ		Θ	
9x89b24670	tdtxjtat.exe	1216	656	4	352	Θ	
9x89666da0	ylxgpkkuiif.exe	4904	1216	1	314	Θ	

As we can see from the result, malware sample.exe has PID=2400, and "lowcvz3q8syqxru", "tdtxjtat.exe" and "ylxgpkkuiif.exe" are all processes belonging to the malware. Our next step is to ask Volatility to print the list of all open sockets

.\volatility\_2.6\_win64\_standalone -f sample.bin --profile=WinXPSP3x86 sockets

The result can be seen in the figure below. Among the entire list of open sockets, we can see that the malware executable "sample.exe", whose PID is 2400, has established an open socket for communication.

Volatility	Foundation	Volat	ility	ramework :	2.6
Offset(V)	PID	Port	Proto	Protocol	Address
	1056			UDP	10.0.2.15
0x899e2008	668	500	17	UDP	0.0.0.0
0x8971e290	1100	1043	17	UDP	0.0.0.0
0x899b7d00	4	445	6	TCP	0.0.0.0
0x899d30e8	964	135	6	TCP	0.0.0.0
0x896fee98	1156	1900	17	UDP	10.0.2.15
0x899f7008	1224	1029	6	TCP	127.0.0.1
0x899ce8e0	668	Θ	255	Reserved	0.0.0.0
0x899d7da0	4	139	6	TCP	10.0.2.15
0x899eae98	1056	123	17	UDP	127.0.0.1
0x899d0a68	1100	1025	17	UDP	0.0.0.0
0x896a3008	2400	1094	6	TCP	0.0.0.0
0x899d7550	4	137	17	UDP	10.0.2.15
0x89a58648	1216	80	6	TCP	127.0.0.1
0x89ae42e8	1156	1900	17	UDP	127.0.0.1
0x896fc008	668	4500	17	UDP	0.0.0.0
0x89a417a8	2400	1099	6	TCP	0.0.0.0
0x899b8648	4	445	17	UDP	0.0.0.0
0x899d7978	4	138	17	UDP	10.0.2.15

To see the connection in detail we can use connections plugin and connscan plugin

.\volatility\_2.6\_win64\_standalone -f sample.bin --profile=WinXPSP3x86 connections .\volatility\_2.6\_win64\_standalone -f sample.bin --profile=WinXPSP3x86 connscan

	Foundation Volatility Local Address	Remote Address	Pid
 9x899b3a50	10.0.2.15:1099	209.222.14.3:80	2400
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	Foundation Volatility		Did
	Foundation Volatility Local Address	Framework 2.6 Remote Address	Pid
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0ffset(P) 			Pid  1016
Offset(P)  0x096e83b8	Local Address	Remote Address	
Offset(P)  0x096e83b8 0x096ea820	Local Address 	Remote Address 	1016

We can see that process with PID=2400 (sample.exe) is communicating via port 1099, with remote address 209.222.14.3. (Port=80 means they are communicating by http).

PS: I didn't use Windows 7 virtual machine in this part because Volatility doesn't support analyzing socket and connection of dump files from Windows 7 system.

#### 2. Forecast failed to detect socket communication

In this part, the malware was run on a 32-bit Windows 7 virtual machine, and the malware dump file was created by task manager of Windows system (and named as "sample.DMP"). After setting up Forecast and creating virtual environment in an Ubuntu 18.04 virtual machine, we can let Forecast to analyze the dump file

\$ python run\_minidump.py /home/yunqishen09/Forecast/scripts/sample.DMP

The result can be seen in pages below.

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    forse, exchanges, degree of concreteness | DOC: 0.93, Cumulanto: 4.37 forse, exchanges, degree of concreteness | DOC: 0.93, Cumulanto: 4.37 forse, pulson: act | any to | concreteness | DOC: 0.91, Cumulanto: 5.37 forsee, techniques, degree of concreteness | DOC: 0.91, Cumulanto: 5.37
                                                                                                                         l_analysts | Called offset 8x425518 in sample DMP (6)
.degree_of_concreteness | DOC: 0.90, CumulRatio: 6.37
    forsee.techniques.degree_of_concreteness | DOC: 0.92, CumulRatio: 5.37
forsee.techniques.degree_of_concreteness | DOC: 0.96, CumulRatio: 5.37
forsee.techniques.degree_of_concreteness | DOC: 0.96, CumulRatio: 6.37
forsee.techniques.degree_of_concreteness | DOC: 0.96, CumulRatio: 6.37
      forsee.techniques.degree_of_concreteness | DOC: 0.93, CumulRatio: 5.37 forsee.techniques.degree_of_concreteness | DOC: 0.91, CumulRatio: 6.37
```

Unfortunately, Forecast failed to detected the socket connection, which should have triggered Forecast "C&C Domain" plugin to warn the user that C&C domain is detected.

#### 3. Improve Forecast performance

We can do some modifications to Forecast code to make Forecast perform better in socket detection (as well as some other malware function detection). Before beginning code modification, let's take a quick look at how Forecast is supposed to do when detecting sockets established by the malware.

### (1) How does Plugin works

For most of the plugins in Forecast directory, it has a list of "functions monitored", which contains a list of function name that related to the malware activity this plugin is taking responsibility for. For instance, function "socket", "InternetUrlOpenA" and "Open" are three functions that being monitored by plugin "cc\_domain\_dectection". It can be seen in class CCDomainDetection in Forecast\forsee\plugins\cc\_domain\_detection.py

Under the same class CCDomainDetection, there's a function named simprocedure (the code can be seen in the figure below), which acts as an intermedia of detected malware function and the log information presented to the user. Basically, what the function does is taking a variable that represents a function detected by Forecast underlying tools (for instance, angr in this case), and checking whether this function is a member of the function list that it is monitoring. If so, a corresponding waring log information will be presented to the user, and if not, nothing would be displayed on the command window and the program continues to explore the dump file.

```
def simprocedure(self, state: angr.SimState):
    """
    Tracks all SimProcedure calls and checks if it is calling a monitored function
    """

proc = state.inspect.simprocedure
    if proc is None:
        # Handle syscall SimProcedures
        log.debug("Reached a syscall SimProcedure")
        return

proc_name = proc.display_name

if proc_name not in self.functions_monitored:
    return

if proc_name == "socket":
    log.info(
        f"Detected possible C&C Domain: {proc.arg(0)} with DoC {state.doc.concreteness:.2f}"
    )

if proc_name == "InternetOpenUrlA":
    log.info(
        f"Detected possible C&C Domain: {proc.arg(1)} with DoC {state.doc.concreteness:.2f}"
    )

if proc_name == "Open":
    if proc_library_name == "IWinHttpRequest":
        log.info(
        f"Detected possible C&C Domain: {proc.arg(1)} with DoC {state.doc.concreteness:.2f}"
```

In a larger scale, while exploring the dump file, as soon as an underlying tool detected a malware function, it sends the function name to every plugin that works with this mechanism. If one of the plugins finds that the function being presented is one of the functions that it is monitoring, a serious of if statements in the plugin code would lead to a corresponding waring log on the command window.

### (2) Why does this happen

Considering the misfunction of Forecast in this situation, it might be caused by either the three reasons:

- (i) The plugin isn't initialized.
- (ii) The plugin doesn't get its desired function, so that nothing is shown out.
- (iii) The function is presented properly, it's the plugin itself that doesn't perform properly.

As we can see at the very beginning of Forecast outputted result, the log

```
forsee.plugins.cc domian detection | C&C Domain plugin initialized
```

indicates that C&C domain detection plugin is initialized, which means the first assumption is a false statement.

To check the other two assumptions, I collected all functions that being presented to these plugins, they are

```
KiFastSystemCallRet
TranslateMessage
DispatchMessageA
GetMessageA
```

and some of these functions are presented multiple times. The plugin never receives a

function named "socket", no wonder why it fails to warn the user that C&C domain has been detection. To make sure that the plugin can output what is supposed to say when a function is in the list is presented properly, I added the code

```
proc_name = "socket"
```

just before the if statements, which means the variable "proc\_name" that originally represents the function presented from the underlying tool, is changed to a fixed string "socket", and the modified value will be brought to the following if statements. In this case, I got the desired output from the plugin, which means assumption (ii) is the problem we are going to solve, and it could be the entry point to make Forecast perform better.

Does Forecast fail to detect socket function while exploring the dump file? The misfunction of C&C domain detection plugin may seem to be hard to alleviate if this is the case. Luckily, the situation is much better than the worst case, because we can find another source of function list derived from the dump file in somewhere else.

There's a function find\_sim\_procedure in class ExportManager in the file \Forecast\forsee\techniques\procedure\_handler\procedure\_handler.py, which contains the code below

```
# Search in cyfi's SimProcedures
for lib, procs in cyfi_procedures.items():
    if name in procs:
        sim_proc = procs[name](proj)
        log.log(5, f"Found {sim_proc} in {lib} (cyfi)")
        return sim_proc

# Search in angr's SimProcedures
# TODO: Optionally search a single library
for lib in angr.SIM_LIBRARIES:
    sim_lib = angr.SIM_LIBRARIES[lib]
    if type(sim_lib) == SimSyscallLibrary:
        if sim_lib.has_implementation(name, arch):
            sim_proc = sim_lib.get(name, arch)
            log.log(5, f"Found {sim_proc} in {lib} (angr)")
        return sim_proc

else:
    if sim_lib.has_implementation(name):
        sim_proc = sim_lib.get(name, arch)
        log.log(5, f"Found {sim_proc} in {lib} (angr)")
        return sim_proc
```

By back tracing the code, we can find that the variable name is a name of a specific function Forecast detects while exploring the dump file. The log is set not to display so that user can't see it in the command window.

By changing the first parameter in the log function from 5 to 50

```
log.log(50, f"Found {sim_proc} in {lib} (cyfi)")
log.log(50, f"Found {sim_proc} in {lib} (angr)")
log.log(50, f"Found {sim_proc} in {lib} (angr)")
```

we can change the log information to highest priority and can see what it has got from the Forecast output information. It turns out that there are a number of functions that Forecast does detect, but aren't sent to plugins to process. We can add the code

```
log.info(name)
```

in each if statement to display all functions the program has got. The figure below shows part of the output of procedure\_handler.py after code modification.



We can see that the function **socket** is detected, this source of function detection seems to be a better one compared to the one that the plugins are using. If we could add this source of function to all the plugins, it might lead to an improvement of performance on malware detection and analysis.

### (3) Help Forecast perform better

To begin with, we need to create a container to store the list of function that listed in procedure\_handler.py.

I created a new class FunctionList in a new file function\_detected.py under directory /Forecast/forsee/techniques to do the job. A python dictionary is defined in the class to collect all the function names procedure\_handler.py has got. Also, an add function is defined in the class to add new detected function in the dictionary, and the add process will not be executed if the same function already exists in the dictionary.

```
class FunctionList:
    dic = {'fucntion_name': 'function_name'}
    def add(the_name: str, the_list :dict = dic):
        if the_name in the_list.keys():
            return
        else:
            the_list[the_name] = the_name
            return
```

When we need this class, simply add

 $from\ forsee. techniques. procedure\_handler. function\_detected\ import\ FunctionList$ 

at the top of the file to import this class to the file we want.

Then it's time to feed all the plugin with this new source we have just modified. We are not going to change the source from previous one to this dictionary. Instead, we are going to add

an additional source to each plugin to help it performs better.

Let's take the plugin cc\_domain\_detection for example. Basically, within the function simprocedure, after comparing function\_monitored with the original source and executing all the if statements to display corresponding result, we are going to make it compare to our new defined collection after dealing with the old source, and execute the set of if statements for information display again. This could be done by iteratively assigning the value of proc\_name, which initially represents the function name provided by the default source, to function names collected in our collection, and then executing all the if statement to determine the output.

In order to avoid code repetition, it's better to define a new function taking charge of displaying information based on what we have got. When it comes to determine what should be displayed on the output, just pass the function name to the display function and it will make the decision.

```
def saySomething(self, proc_name: str, state: angr.SimState):
   proc = state.inspect.simprocedure
   if proc name not in self.functions monitored:
       return
   if proc_name == "socket":
       log.info(
           f"Detected possible C&C Domain: {proc.arg(0)} with DoC
           {state.doc.concreteness:.2f}"
       )
   if proc_name == "InternetOpenUrlA":
       log.info(
          f"Detected possible C&C Domain: {proc.arg(1)} with DoC
           {state.doc.concreteness:.2f}"
       )
   if proc_name == "Open":
       if proc.library name == "IWinHttpRequest":
          log.info(
              f"Detected possible C&C Domain: {proc.arg(1)} with DoC
               {state.doc.concreteness:.2f}"
          )
```

And the function simprocedure becomes

```
def simprocedure(self, state: angr.SimState):
    #Tracks all SimProcedure calls and checks if it is calling a monitored function
    proc = state.inspect.simprocedure
    if proc is None:
        # Handle syscall SimProcedures
        log.debug("Reached a syscall SimProcedure")
        return
```

```
proc_name = proc.display_name
self.saySomething(proc_name, state)
for function, typ in FunctionList.dic.items():
    self.saySomething(typ, state)
```

For all other plugins that work with a list of function\_monitored, we can do similar modification to add a new source for comparation. After all the modification are done, we can execute run\_minidump.py with the same dump file sample.DMP, and see if there's any improvement on its performance.

```
WARNING | 2022-11-10 13:57:44,774 | forsee.techniques.procedure_handler.special_sim_procedures | No SimProcedure for TranslateMessage. Returning unconstrained |
IMFO | 2022-11-10 13:57:44,774 | forsee.plugins.co.domain_detection | Detected possible debugger_detection. Called function: TranslateMessage |
IMFO | 2022-11-10 13:57:44,775 | forsee.plugins.co.domain_detection | Detected possible C&C Domain: =8032 0x12e884 with DoC 0.84 |
IMFO | 2022-11-10 13:57:44,775 | forsee.plugins.procedure_analysis | Reached SimProcedure -SimProcedure TranslateMessages |
IMFO | 2022-11-10 13:57:44,776 | forsee.plugins.procedure_analysis | Returned: <8032 unconstrained_set_TranslateMessage. |
IMFO | 2022-11-10 13:57:44,778 | forsee.plugins.procedure_analysis | Returned: <8032 unconstrained_set_TranslateMessage. |
IMFO | 2022-11-10 13:57:44,778 | forsee.plugins.call_analysis | Returning to offset_0x418256 in sample_DMP (0x418250)
```

Luckily, there're new findings listed in Forecast output after modification. The function socket is detected, and it triggers a warning message. Meanwhile, the plugin anti\_analysis detection also finds a function being provided by the new source is among its monitoring list, and another waring message comes out unsurprisingly.

What needs to be pointed out is that, the code modification above is just adding new analyzing approach in the program, it doesn't remove any existed functionality in Forecast code.

### (4) Shortcomings and deficiencies

After the code modification above, it's good news that Forecast can detect malware activity that is previously ignored, but this modification is far more from making Forecast a perfect one. The warning message is outputted, but it does not always come out with the accurate address and DoC value.