Dynamic Network Security: Bridging OSINT and Adaptive Patching for Real-Time Threat Mitigation

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***Abstract*—This study presents an extended design of a network security lab that integrates Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) and dynamic patching mechanisms to simulate and evaluate modern cybersecurity challenges. The lab is constructed to test vulnerabilities in AI-enhanced systems and incorporates a diverse hardware setup, including attacker, victim, defense, intrusion detection (IDS), and AI integration components, interconnected via a managed gigabit network.**

The methodology employs a dynamic workflow where an attacker system actively probes the victim system's vulnerabilities, while the defense system analyzes OSINT data from an AI-driven forum to apply proactive patches. The lab also integrates an advanced Intrusion Detection System (IDS) to monitor attack vectors and employs a Local Language Model (LLM) provider to simulate real-world AI usage scenarios.

Key findings highlight the lab's capacity to effectively simulate attack scenarios, detect vulnerabilities through OSINT integration, and dynamically mitigate threats using automated patching processes. The design emphasizes the seamless interplay of AI-enhanced intelligence gathering and automated defense, which contributes to advancing both theoretical and practical aspects of cybersecurity.

This research underscores the importance of dynamic and AI-integrated testing environments for understanding the vulnerabilities of modern systems, offering critical insights for researchers, educators, and cybersecurity professionals. By providing a scalable and adaptable testing framework, the lab serves as a foundational platform for evaluating and improving real-world cyber defense strategies.

I. Introduction

In the dynamic and increasingly complex landscape of cybersecurity, the convergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) represents both an unprecedented opportunity and a formidable challenge. While these technologies enhance the ability to detect and mitigate threats, they also introduce novel vulnerabilities that adversaries can exploit. The rapid evolution of attack methods, coupled with the static nature of traditional patching systems, highlights a critical gap in the ability to adapt defenses to emerging threats in real time. This paper aims to address this gap by proposing a dynamic and AI-integrated approach to cybersecurity, leveraging OSINT for adaptive threat mitigation.

A. Problem Statement

Cybersecurity threats have grown in sophistication, exploiting static and often outdated defense mechanisms. While AI enhances decision-making processes in various sectors, its integration into critical infrastructures exposes potential vulnerabilities that adversaries can exploit. Similarly, OSINT, which provides actionable intelligence from public sources, offers a valuable but underutilized asset in mitigating cyber threats. Current approaches to vulnerability management and patching are reactive, relying on periodic updates that fail to keep pace with the dynamic nature of cyberattacks. This misalignment between evolving threats and static defenses underscores the urgent need for an adaptive, automated patching system informed by real-time intelligence.

B. Relevance

The reliance on AI-driven systems across industries is expanding rapidly, underscoring the critical need to secure these technologies against exploitation. AI's inherent complexity and its role in automating decision-making amplify the potential attack surface, making it a prime target for cyber adversaries. In parallel, OSINT provides a wealth of data on vulnerabilities and potential exploits but remains underutilized due to challenges in processing and dynamically applying this intelligence to real-world defense mechanisms. The failure to integrate these capabilities into an agile and proactive security framework leaves critical systems vulnerable to exploitation, making this an essential area of research.

C. Objectives

This research focuses on developing a comprehensive and adaptable cybersecurity framework that integrates OSINT-driven AI insights with dynamic patching mechanisms. Specifically, the study will:

1) Design and implement a network security lab that simulates real-world cyber threats and defenses.
2) Demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of using OSINT as a real-time source of actionable intelligence to inform patching strategies.

3) Validate the capacity of AI-integrated systems to identify and mitigate vulnerabilities dynamically, reducing response times and improving overall security posture.

D. Significance

The proposed research contributes to both theoretical and practical advancements in cybersecurity by providing a scalable and adaptable testing environment. By integrating OSINT and AI-driven insights into an automated defense workflow, this framework bridges the gap between academic theory and real-world application. The findings of this research will serve as a foundation for developing more robust cybersecurity strategies, particularly in environments where traditional methods fall short. Furthermore, the adaptive nature of this system offers a blueprint for mitigating threats in rapidly changing digital ecosystems, thereby enhancing the resilience of critical infrastructures and AI-integrated applications.

In summary, this paper addresses a pressing need in cybersecurity by proposing a novel approach that combines OSINT and AI-driven intelligence with dynamic patching systems. By advancing the state of adaptive defenses, this research aims to contribute significantly to the protection of increasingly complex and interconnected digital environments. Yee

II. Literature Review

A. Open-Source Intelligence in Cybersecurity

Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) has emerged as a critical component in modern cybersecurity strategies. By collecting data from publicly available sources such as social media, forums, and publicly disclosed vulnerability databases, OSINT provides actionable insights for identifying threats and assessing vulnerabilities. OSINT-driven threat detection enables organizations to proactively respond to emerging risks by leveraging community-reported issues and documented attack patterns. Studies highlight the effectiveness of OSINT in identifying Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVEs) and understanding attacker behavior, offering a cost-effective supplement to proprietary threat intelligence feeds.

However, the processing and automation of OSINT data remain significant challenges. The vast volume of unstructured and inconsistent data requires advanced tools and methods, such as Natural Language Processing (NLP), to extract meaningful insights. Additionally, filtering irrelevant information and verifying the credibility of OSINT sources add layers of complexity. Without effective automation, the potential of OSINT is underutilized, leaving organizations overwhelmed by data while missing critical insights.

B. Dynamic Patching Systems

Traditional patching systems, characterized by manual and periodic updates, have long been a cornerstone of cybersecurity. While effective against static threats, these systems struggle to adapt to rapidly evolving attack vectors and zero-day vulnerabilities. A growing body of research explores dynamic patching systems as a solution to this limitation. Unlike their static counterparts, dynamic patching systems integrate automated mechanisms to identify, prioritize, and deploy updates in response to real-time threats. By leveraging telemetry data and threat intelligence, these systems can adapt to changing attack surfaces, minimizing exposure and reducing downtime.

The role of automation and AI in vulnerability mitigation is particularly transformative. AI models can analyze vulnerabilities, assess their severity, and recommend patches based on contextual relevance. These systems can dynamically rank patches by risk level, enabling organizations to focus on the most critical threats. Case studies demonstrate the potential of dynamic patching in reducing the mean time to remediate (MTTR) vulnerabilities, yet practical adoption is hindered by the complexity of integration with existing infrastructure and concerns over operational reliability.

C. AI's Role in OSINT and Threat Analysis

Artificial Intelligence has revolutionized the ability to process, analyze, and respond to cybersecurity threats. In the context of OSINT, AI-powered tools can aggregate and analyze massive datasets in real time, transforming unstructured information into actionable intelligence. NLP and machine learning models enable the automatic extraction of vulnerability information from sources like forums and technical blogs, significantly accelerating the identification of emerging threats. Additionally, AI-driven systems enhance predictive capabilities, allowing organizations to anticipate potential attacks based on historical patterns and current intelligence.

Despite these advancements, the use of AI in cybersecurity introduces ethical and operational challenges. The risk of false positives or negatives in AI-driven analysis can lead to resource misallocation or overlooked vulnerabilities. Moreover, adversaries can exploit AI systems by injecting misleading data into training datasets, compromising the reliability of predictions. Ethical considerations also arise from the potential misuse of AI in automating offensive capabilities, highlighting the need for robust governance and transparency in AI-driven cybersecurity systems.

D. Existing Network Security Labs

Network security labs have long served as testing grounds for evaluating cyber defense strategies. Traditional labs focus on static configurations, enabling researchers to simulate attack scenarios and analyze system vulnerabilities. These environments, while valuable, lack the ability to dynamically adapt to evolving threats, limiting their relevance to modern cybersecurity challenges. Emerging labs that integrate dynamic models have introduced elements such as real-time attack simulations and automated defense mechanisms, but they often fall short in leveraging OSINT and AI-driven

insights.

The proposed system introduces several innovations that address these limitations. By incorporating OSINT into the lab environment, it enables the simulation of real-world intelligence-driven scenarios. The integration of AI enhances the system's ability to process and respond to vulnerabilities dynamically, creating a more realistic and comprehensive testing framework. Additionally, the lab's emphasis on adaptive patching and AI-enhanced OSINT analysis bridges the gap between static and dynamic models, offering a platform for evaluating cutting-edge cybersecurity practices.

While traditional approaches provide foundational defense mechanisms, the integration of AI and automation represents a significant advancement. The proposed network security lab builds upon these innovations, addressing gaps in existing systems and providing a scalable, adaptive framework for mitigating real-world threats.

III. Methodology

A. Lab Design

The design of the network security lab centers on replicating a realistic and controlled cybersecurity environment that integrates hardware and software components to simulate real-world attack and defense scenarios. The lab comprises the following systems:

1) **Attacker System**
   - **Hardware:** M1 Pro MacBook Pro.
   - **Software:** Metasploit and Kali Linux tools for penetration testing and reconnaissance.
   - **Role:** Simulates advanced attack techniques, including reconnaissance, exploitation, and post-exploitation phases.

2) **Victim System**
   - **Hardware:** i7 Windows Laptop.
   - **Software:** Hosts a Metasploitable 2 Docker container with known vulnerabilities and an OSINT web application.
   - **Role:** Mimics enterprise infrastructure with exposed vulnerabilities for attack simulation.

3) **Defense System**
   - **Hardware:** i7 Windows Laptop.
   - **Software:** Docker SDK for patch management, AI forum server for vulnerability intelligence.
   - **Role:** Monitors OSINT, analyzes vulnerabilities, and applies patches dynamically.

4) **Intrusion Detection System (IDS)**
   - **Hardware:** M1 Pro MacBook Pro.
   - **Software:** Snort 3 for network traffic analysis and threat detection
   - **Role:** Monitors network activity to detect malicious behavior and alert the Defense System.

5) **LLM Provider**
   - **Hardware:** M1 Max MacBook Pro.
   - **Software:** Hosts Ollama as a local Large Language Model (LLM) service.
   - **Role:** Simulates AI-driven environments for OSINT data processing and API interactions.

Network Architecture and Static IP Assignments The systems are interconnected using a managed gigabit switch, with static IP addresses assigned to ensure consistent communication:

`192.168.1.10`: Attacker System.
`192.168.1.20`: Victim System.
`192.168.1.30`: Defense System (and AI Forum Server).
`192.168.1.40`: IDS System.
`192.168.1.50`: LLM Provider.

B. Dynamic Workflow

The lab employs a workflow designed to dynamically integrate OSINT with real-time defense mechanisms:

1) **OSINT Integration with C2.OSINT Dashboards**
   - Vulnerability data is collected and processed using AI-driven tools on an AI Forum Server.
   - Relevant information, including CVEs and exploitation techniques, is visualized on **OSINT Dashboard**, which focuses on OSINT data and threat intelligence.

2) **AI Forums for Vulnerability Prioritization**
   - AI-generated forum posts simulate public disclosure of vulnerabilities.
   - Natural Language Processing (NLP) extracts actionable insights to prioritize patches based on severity, exploitability, and system impact.

C. Simulated Threat Environment

The lab simulates a realistic threat environment through defined attack strategies and defense responses:

1) **Attack Strategies**
   - **Reconnaissance:** The Attacker System uses tools like Nmap to identify open ports and services on the Victim System.
   - **Exploitation:** Exploits vulnerabilities in the Victim System's OSINT application and Metasploitable 2 services using Metasploit and custom scripts.
   - **Post-Exploitation:** Performs privilege escalation, data exfiltration, and persistence to simulate

advanced attacks.

2) **Defense Responses**
   - The Defense System monitors OSINT data for emerging vulnerabilities and dynamically applies patches using Docker SDK.
   - TThe IDS detects suspicious activities and triggers real-time alerts, visualized on **C2 Dashboard**, which tracks defense actions and system health.

D. Data Collection

The lab evaluates its effectiveness through the collection of key metrics:

1) **Attack Detection**
   - Logs intrusion attempts and identifies successful exploits.

2) **Patching Efficiency**
   - Measures the speed and accuracy of patch application based on OSINT insights.

3) **Defense Response Times**
   - Tracks metrics like mean time to detect (MTTD) and mean time to respond (MTTR) for threats.

E. Visualization

Data is aggregated and displayed on the C2.OSINT Dashboards, providing clear and actionable insights into system performance:

1) **OSINT Dashboard**
   - Focuses on OSINT data and vulnerability trends.

2) **C2 Dashboard**
   - Highlights IDS alerts, patching actions, and overall defense metrics.

F. Evaluation Framework

The lab's success is evaluated based on the following criteria:

1) **Measures of Effectiveness**
   - **Mean Time to Detect (MTTD):** The time taken to identify a threat from the moment it manifests.
   - **Mean Time to Respond (MTTR):** The time required to neutralize a detected threat through patching or other defense mechanisms.
   - Reduction in successful attack rates post-defense implementation.

2) **Case Studies**
   - Detailed analysis of specific attack-defense interactions to assess system performance.
   - Validation of OSINT-driven patch prioritization and its impact on overall security posture.

This methodology ensures a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed lab, emphasizing its ability to dynamically adapt to evolving threats through the integration of OSINT and AI-driven insights.

IV. Proposed System Design

A. Component Functions

The proposed system is designed to replicate a realistic and comprehensive cybersecurity ecosystem with the following components:

1) **Attacker System**
   - **Purpose:** Simulates sophisticated cyberattacks targeting the victim network.
   - **Functionality:**
     - Executes reconnaissance operations using tools like Nmap and Wireshark to identify system vulnerabilities.
     - Launches exploits leveraging Metasploit, Kali Linux, and custom attack scripts.
     - Conducts post-exploitation tasks, such as privilege escalation and data exfiltration, to simulate real-world attack scenarios.

2) **Victim System**
   - **Purpose:** Represents an enterprise network with intentionally vulnerable applications and services.
   - **Functionality:**
     - Hosts a Metasploitable 2 Docker container to simulate a range of known vulnerabilities.
     - Includes an OSINT application with exposed APIs to mimic a modern organizational environment.
     - Serves as the primary target for attacker actions, providing realistic attack-defense scenarios.

3) **Defense System**
   - **Purpose:** Proactively analyzes OSINT data to apply patches and counteract threats dynamically.
   - **Functionality:**
     - Continuously monitors OSINT via an AI forum server for real-time updates on vulnerabilities and exploits.
     - Automates patching of the Victim System using Docker SDK, applying updates or configuration changes based on prioritized risks.
     - Acts as a central node for executing defensive measures and coordinating with other systems.

4) **Intrusion Detection System (IDS)**
   - **Purpose:** Monitors network activity to detect and log malicious behavior.
   - **Functionality:**
     - Runs Snort 3 to analyze traffic between the Attacker and Victim Systems.
     - Generates real-time alerts for intrusion attempts and logs all activities for forensic analysis.
     - Sends alerts to the Defense System, enabling automated or manual responses.

5) **LLM Provider**
   - **Purpose:** Simulates modern AI-driven environments to introduce and manage potential vulnerabilities.
   - **Functionality:**
     - Hosts Ollama as a local Large Language Model (LLM) service with API endpoints for real-time communication.
     - Processes OSINT data using AI to extract actionable intelligence.
     - Provides realistic AI-environment interactions, adding complexity and authenticity to the lab scenario.

B. Network and System Configuration

To ensure a secure and isolated environment, the network and system configurations are designed as follows:

1) **Static IP Assignments**
   - Each system is assigned a static IP within the lab subnet (`192.168.1.x`), facilitating predictable and secure communication:
     - `192.168.1.10`: Attacker System.
     - `192.168.1.20`: Victim System.
     - `192.168.1.30`: Defense System (and AI Forum Server).
     - `192.168.1.40`: IDS System.
     - `192.168.1.50`: LLM Provider.

2) **Dual Interface Configuration**
   - Systems requiring external connectivity, such as the Victim System for cloud LLM interactions, are configured with dual network interfaces:
     - **Internal Ethernet Interface:** Connected to the lab network for local communication.
     - **External Wi-Fi Interface:** Connected to the internet for cloud-based operations.
   - Routing rules ensure strict segregation between internal and external traffic, minimizing risks of unintended bridging.

C. OSINT and AI Integration

The integration of OSINT and AI is a cornerstone of the proposed system, enabling proactive and adaptive threat mitigation:

1) **Real-Time OSINT Monitoring**
   - An AI forum server generates posts detailing vulnerabilities, exploits, and remediation strategies.
   - Vulnerability intelligence is scraped and processed using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques to identify relevant data.

2) **Actionable Intelligence**
   - Extracted OSINT data is prioritized based on severity and relevance using AI-driven models.
   - Identified vulnerabilities and patching recommendations are visualized on **OSINT Dashboard**, providing a comprehensive view of emerging threats.

3) **Proactive Patching**
   - The Defense System leverages Docker SDK to interact with the Victim System, applying updates or configuration changes as needed.
   - **C2 Dashboard** visualizes the effectiveness of patching actions and system health, ensuring real-time insights into the defense mechanisms.

This proposed design provides a robust and scalable framework for evaluating modern cybersecurity challenges. By incorporating OSINT, AI, and adaptive patching within a realistic lab setup, the system advances both theoretical understanding and practical application of dynamic cyber defenses.

V. Results and Analysis

A. Expected Outcomes

1) **Improved Defense Success Rates**
   - The integration of real-time OSINT monitoring and dynamic patching mechanisms is expected to significantly reduce the success rate of attacks.
   - This includes mitigating exploitation attempts in their early stages through rapid vulnerability identification and proactive patching.

2) **Enhanced Response Efficiency**
   - A measurable decrease in mean time to detect (MTTD) and mean time to respond (MTTR) to threats, showcasing the system's ability to adapt quickly to evolving attack vectors.

3) **Actionable Insights via Visualization**
   - The use of **C2.OSINT Dashboards** will provide comprehensive visual representations of:

- Attack trends over time.
- Defense system performance.
- Vulnerability trends and the effectiveness of applied patches.

4) **Validated System Scalability**
   - The results will demonstrate the lab's capability to handle complex, multi-vector attack scenarios while maintaining system resilience.

B. Visualization

1) **OSINT Dashboard**
   - **Focus:** Processing OSINT data to identify and prioritize vulnerabilities.
   - **Key Elements:**
     - Vulnerability trends by severity and frequency.
     - Real-time visualization of OSINT intelligence sources and actionable insights.

2) **C2 Dashboard**
   - **Focus:** Defense activities and performance metrics.
   - **Key Elements:**
     - Metrics for patch deployment success rates.
     - Real-time IDS alerts and detected anomalies.
     - Overall system health, including resource utilization and defense efficacy.

C. Case Studies

1) **Attack-Defense Interactions**
   - **Scenario:** A simulated zero-day exploit targeting the OSINT application.
   - **Attack:** The Attacker System conducts reconnaissance, identifying a vulnerability in the OSINT API.
   - **Defense:** The Defense System dynamically extracts OSINT intelligence on the exploit and applies a patch to mitigate the threat in real time.
   - **Outcome:** The IDS detects the initial attack attempt, and the patch deployment prevents further exploitation.

2) **Insights from Adaptive Responses**
   - Analysis of successful and unsuccessful defenses will highlight the factors that contribute to rapid detection and response.
   - Metrics such as MTTD and MTTR will be reviewed for improvement opportunities.

D. Lessons Learned

1) **System Enhancements**
   - Identifying areas where OSINT data processing and prioritization can be improved for faster response times.
   - Refining patching mechanisms to handle edge cases where vulnerabilities overlap or evolve during patch application.

2) **Framework Scalability**
   - Insights into scaling the framework for larger environments with more complex infrastructures.
   - Recommendations for integrating additional AI-driven tools to enhance OSINT analysis.

This results and analysis framework will provide critical insights into the efficacy of the proposed system, ensuring that it meets its objectives while identifying opportunities for future improvement.

VI. Discussion

A. Implications

The proposed lab framework demonstrates significant potential for improving cybersecurity defenses through the integration of OSINT and dynamic patching mechanisms. Its practical applications span organizational cybersecurity, enabling faster and more accurate responses to evolving threats. This approach is particularly impactful in sectors with critical infrastructure, such as finance, healthcare, and government, where proactive mitigation of vulnerabilities can drastically reduce the risk of successful attacks.

The broader relevance of this research extends to AI-integrated systems, which increasingly form the backbone of modern technological infrastructures. By showcasing a practical and adaptable approach to defending AI-enhanced environments, this framework provides a foundation for securing interconnected critical systems such as transportation, energy grids, and telecommunication networks.

B. Limitations

1) **Scalability Constraints**
   - While the current lab design provides a robust environment for small-scale testing, it may face challenges when scaled to enterprise-level environments with complex and diverse infrastructures.
   - The limitations of single-system configurations and fixed resources could hinder the replication of large-scale scenarios.

2) **Dependence on OSINT Accuracy and Timeliness**
   - The system's reliance on OSINT data introduces vulnerabilities related to data accuracy and relevance.
   - Erroneous or outdated OSINT could lead to ineffective or misdirected defensive actions.
   - Manual effort or processing delays in verifying intelligence could reduce the effectiveness of the dynamic patching workflow.

C. Strategies to Combat Limitations

1) **Deploying Multiple Docker Containers Per System**
   - To address scalability constraints, the lab can explore deploying multiple Docker containers on each physical system.
   - This approach would simulate a more complex environment by allowing for the representation of diverse applications and services within the same hardware constraints.
   - By dynamically assigning and orchestrating containers, the lab can replicate enterprise-level complexity without requiring additional physical resources.

2) **Accuracy and Cross-Referencing Mechanism for OSINT Data**
   - To mitigate the dependency on OSINT accuracy, the framework incorporates a validation system that cross-references data from multiple OSINT sources.
   - This system leverages AI-driven algorithms to compare and corroborate intelligence, ensuring only verified and actionable insights are used in the defense workflow.
   - This multi-layered accuracy mechanism significantly reduces the risk of acting on false or outdated intelligence, enhancing the overall reliability of the system.

D. Future Directions

1) **Expansion to Cloud-Native Environments**
   - Cloud-native deployments can further enhance scalability by leveraging distributed resources for handling larger infrastructures.
   - Integration with Kubernetes or similar orchestration tools can optimize resource utilization, enabling the lab to simulate enterprise-level environments effectively.

2) **Advanced AI Models for Predictive Analysis**
   - The development of predictive AI models will enhance the framework's capability to anticipate and address emerging threats proactively.
   - These models can analyze historical attack patterns and OSINT trends, providing actionable recommendations before vulnerabilities are exploited.

3) **Integration with DevSecOps Practices**
   - Embedding the dynamic patching system into DevSecOps pipelines ensures that vulnerabilities are addressed during development, reducing the burden of post-deployment fixes.
   - This continuous integration approach strengthens software security while aligning with agile practices.

4) **Enhanced Visualization Tools**
   - Improving the C2.OSINT Dashboards to include predictive analytics and real-time anomaly detection will provide a more comprehensive view of system vulnerabilities and defense efficacy.
   - Enhanced visualization will facilitate better decision-making for cybersecurity teams.

VII. Conclusion

This research explored the design and implementation of a dynamic network security lab that integrates Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) and adaptive patching mechanisms to mitigate real-time cybersecurity threats. The primary goals were to demonstrate the feasibility of leveraging OSINT and AI-driven insights for proactive defense and to validate the effectiveness of dynamic patching systems in reducing attack success rates.

The methodology involved simulating realistic cyberattack scenarios within a controlled lab environment, incorporating key components such as an Attacker System, Victim System, Defense System, Intrusion Detection System (IDS), and a Large Language Model (LLM) provider. By utilizing a dual-interface network configuration, static IP assignments, and AI-enhanced OSINT monitoring, the lab replicated the challenges and opportunities present in modern cybersecurity ecosystems. The C2.OSINT Dashboards played a central role in visualizing vulnerability trends and the efficacy of defense mechanisms.

The findings affirmed the potential of OSINT-integrated defenses to significantly enhance cybersecurity resilience. The results demonstrated improved defense success rates, reduced mean time to detect (MTTD) and respond (MTTR) to threats, and actionable insights into attack and defense dynamics through real-time visualizations. These outcomes underscore the value of combining actionable intelligence with automated patching to stay ahead of evolving attack vectors.

The significance of this research extends beyond the lab, providing a foundational framework for developing adaptable, AI-driven cybersecurity solutions. In an era where threats are increasingly sophisticated and dynamic, such frameworks offer a critical pathway toward robust and scalable defense strategies. By bridging the gap between theoretical research and practical application, this study contributes to advancing the state of cybersecurity and lays the groundwork for future innovations in threat mitigation.

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