

Chapter 1

Introduction

Supply-chain attacks have become an increasing threat to computer systems and networks. The motivation for this kind of attack is relatively easy to understand: One can control entire organizations, governments, and countries if one can compromise the computer networks and their supply chains. An attacker could acquire enormous monetary funds by manipulating the economic systems or the decentralized financial systems of cryptocurrency blockchains such as NFTs. Attacks are possible when targets are inherently vulnerable from trust in their creators and trust in their supply chain, i.e., the hardware constructors and the software authors, the upstream development team, and the dependencies in the supply chain. An attacker could put a backdoor (Trojan horse) in a program or a system from a compromised build system. Software developers typically do not expect an attack on their code while the build system builds the next version.

System owners are concerned with confidentiality, integrity, and availability, where availability is at least as necessary as the others. What if documentation gets deleted or destroyed, or as in a chat, it sometimes automatically becomes unavailable after six months? The work with this project has been to investigate and understand the vulnerabilities and the means of mitigation.

Changing the build system undetected might sound complex, but it is possible. Hardened cybersecurity is feasible in two complementary ways: First, secure software development, a NIST initiative, detects vulnerabilities earlier in the development cycle. Second, software vulnerability testing and checking detect vulnerabilities in production systems. This project consists of investigation and feasibility studies with a

case study with the design of such an attack. The project includes the implementation and evaluation of the method of defense, named diverse double compiling. This report also suggests a few novel ideas to relax the prerequisites and reduce the probability of a compromised system in chapter ??.

1.1 Hypothesis Statement

Trusting Trust - The hypothesis of this project is: To what extent can cryptocurrency software be secure from supply-chain vulnerabilities? There are methods to reduce the attack surface of a computer system in general. The key idea is that to believe in a 100% secure system, every piece of software and hardware that was ever part of creating a system, including its build system, must be trustworthy. During the research of the topic, related work was surveyed and studied, techniques were created, and evaluated for new and established methods of diverse double-compiling in the context of the build system for interacting with the blockchain of the Bitcoin cryptocurrency [35].

To attack and compromise a transaction on a blockchain one might consider a few attack methods and exploits that can be tried and analyzed, for example:

1. Steal a PGP key from a maintainer and using that to sign new versions of Bitcoin-Core
2. Conduct a domain-specific attack where the compiler inserts code that changes the recipient address of a transaction, possibly more difficult to detect if it happens only in 1/10000 Bitcoin transactions.
3. A malevolent maintainer could upload malicious code and hide it. That would get normally caught by a verify signatures script

The hypothesis is: To what extent can we reduce the risk for a cryptocurrency transaction on the blockchain being compromised by supply-chain vulnerabilities?

1.2 Examples of Key Attack Techniques

1.2.1 SUNBURST Malware

Certain attacks, such as the SUNBURST attack against the SolarWinds system, happen because malware was put into a vendor's trusted software; then an enemy may attack all the vendor's client organizations at once. This was a supply chain attack that happened because of trust [42].

1.2.2 XcodeGhost

In 2015 a compromised compiler for Apple Xcode appeared that seemed more readily available in Asia. The malware had compromised the compiler so that it would inject malware into the output binary. It was named XcodeGhost and was a malware Xcode compiler for Apple macOS. In the incident, a compiler attack referred to as Xcodeghost (2015) constituted a malware Xcode compiler for Apple macOS that can inject malware into output binary. In September 2015, a new compiler malware attack appeared in China. The attack targeted Apple's Xcode development environment and the official iOS and OSX development environments. The attack was a malicious compiler that the user could download. As users in China had slow download speeds when downloading large files from Apple's servers, many users would instead download Xcode from other colleagues or Baidu Wangpan, a Chinese cloud service created by Baidu. According to reports, the malicious compiler spread initially through Baidu Wangpan. This malicious version of Xcode replaces CoreServices object files with malicious object files. These object files can compile many iOS and OSX applications. The author does not know if the attack did anything to OSX applications. Nevertheless, the attack infected many iOS applications. The compromised applications are then available from the Apple App Store to the end-users. Neither the applications' customers nor suppliers had been aware of the malware. Pangu Team claims the attack infected at least 3418 different iOS applications. Amongst the apps infected was WeChat version 6.2.5, a widely installed instant messaging application. In September 2015, WeChat had 570 million active users daily. As iOS had a mobile phone market share of approximately 25% at the same time, the virus could have reached millions of users by estimate. The infected iOS applications will gather system data, encrypt it and send it to a remote server using HTTP. The application also can attempt to

trick the user into giving away their iCloud password through a crafted dialogue box. Further, the attacker can read and write to and from the clipboard. It can also craft and open malicious URLs for malicious behavior by crafting specific URLs that open other apps with security weaknesses. The attack spread mainly in China, as the applications infected were mostly Chinese-developed applications targeting the Chinese market. Nevertheless, applications such as WeChat have been popular in more extensive regions of eastern Asia. The malware can also spread to more significant regions. Pangu Team also released an application to detect malicious applications created through XcodeGhost-infected compilers.

1.2.3 Win32/Induc.A

Another malware targeting Delphi compilers was called Win32/Induc.A

A relatively recent third incident of this type has been the Win32/Induc. A that was targeting Delphi compilers. W32/Induc is a self-replicating virus that works similarly to the compiler trap door attack. Chapter 3 of this text thoroughly describes such a compiler trap door attack. The virus inserts itself into the Delphi source libraries upon execution, infecting the compiler toolchain. It then inserts itself into all produced executables from the infected toolchain. The virus targets Delphi installations running on a Windows platform. The virus has three known variants: Induc-A, Induc-B, and Induc-C. The two initial runs were testing versions to test the insertion of the virus building up to the release of the more malicious Induc-C virus. Upon executing an infected file, the virus will check for the existence and location of a Delphi installation. Early virus versions looked for Delphi installations by looking for a specific registry subkey. Later versions will instead search the hard drive for a compatible Delphi installation. Once the installation is triggered, the malware creates a backup of the original SysConst.dcu (for earlier versions of the virus) or SysInit.dcu (for later versions of the virus) used for all produced executables. After this, it will copy the SysConst.pas or SysInit.pas file from the object library, modify the source code to include the malicious behavior, and compile the file. It will then copy to replace the original SysConst.dcu or SysInit.dcu. At this point, it compromises the Delphi compiler, and all produced executables from the compiler will also include the virus. Induc-C can also infect any .exe files on the computer. This behavior dramatically increases the virus' ability to spread to other computers. The initial versions of the

virus (Induc-A and Induc-B) seem not to include any malicious behavior other than self-reproduction. In contrast, Induc-C includes behavior where it downloads and runs other malware. It does this by downloading specific JPEG files containing encrypted URLs in the EXIF sections. It will then download and execute the malware at these locations. Amongst the known malware executed is a password stealer. Reports also indicate that Induc-C has a behavior for making botnets. A known defense against the attack is antivirus software, which can detect infected executables or infected object files. As of September 2011, over 25 difference between this and the compiler trap door attack is that instead of attaching the virus to the executable, it inserts itself into object files for compiling all programs using the infected toolchain. The compiler executable itself is not infected unless the same toolchain builds it. As the malware is not explicitly attached to the compiler executable, it can be quickly delivered through any infected executable and will then further spread itself to all compiled executables. It is reasonable to believe that this method will resort in a virus that spreads itself faster to more computers. However, it might also be easier to detect.

1.2.4 ProFTP Login Backdoor

In 2010 there was an injection of a login backdoor in the software named ProFTP. This was a supply chain attack that will probably be able to automatically detected in the not-so-distant future, while the attack was not merely in the binary code but also in the source code. What happened was that a malware hacker got access to the repository and made a commit that included a backdoor to the next version of the ProFTP software.

A malware can encrypt itself, spread, and replicate as a virus on computers. Packages used in programming languages have recently been high-profile targets for supply chain attacks. A popular package from the Ruby programming language used by web developers was compromised in 2019 when it started to include a snippet of code allowing remote code execution on the developer's machine. What is interesting about this case is that the authors' credentials were compromised, and the malicious code was never found in the code repository. It was only available from the downloaded version installed by the Ruby package manager.

<https://snyk.io/blog/malicious-remote-code-execution-backdoor-discovered-in-the-popular-bootstrap-sass-ruby-gem/>

1.2.5 launchpadhit

In another recent attack, there was a Trojan horse attack on cryptocurrency usage in a codebase that was compromised from a GitHub repository [51].

1.3 Cyberattacks against Bitcoin

Three relevant introductory works about Bitcoin are first two more technical texts by two different research groups [7] [36]. The third is an article written more from an economic perspective [5]. (MOVE TO RW?) In the context of Bitcoin, there have been a few notable cases of supply chain attacks. In all of these cases, the attackers could compromise the systems because they had control of the supply chain. The attackers could upload malicious code to the Bitcoin-Core project's code repository in the first two cases. In the third case, the attacker compromised the server that hosted the Bitcoin.org website. These cases show it can attack the Bitcoin network by compromising the supply chain. In all of these cases, the attackers could compromise the systems because they had control of the supply chain.

1.3.1 Backdoor vulnerability

The second case is the Bitcoin-Core project, where a malicious developer uploaded a version of the Bitcoin-Core software that included a backdoor. This backdoor allowed the developer to steal funds from any Bitcoin address. The developer did this by changing the code that generated Bitcoin addresses.

1.3.2 Web security

In the third case, the attacker was able to compromise the server that hosted the Bitcoin.org website. The third case is the Bitcoin.org website, where a malicious attacker could insert code redirecting users to a phishing website. The attacker did this by compromising the server that hosted the website.

1.4 Contributors

In Chapters 2 and forward the state of the art research is presented as well as novel approaches for an implementation of the attack and the defense. Exclude the first

chapter and references as well as appendix.