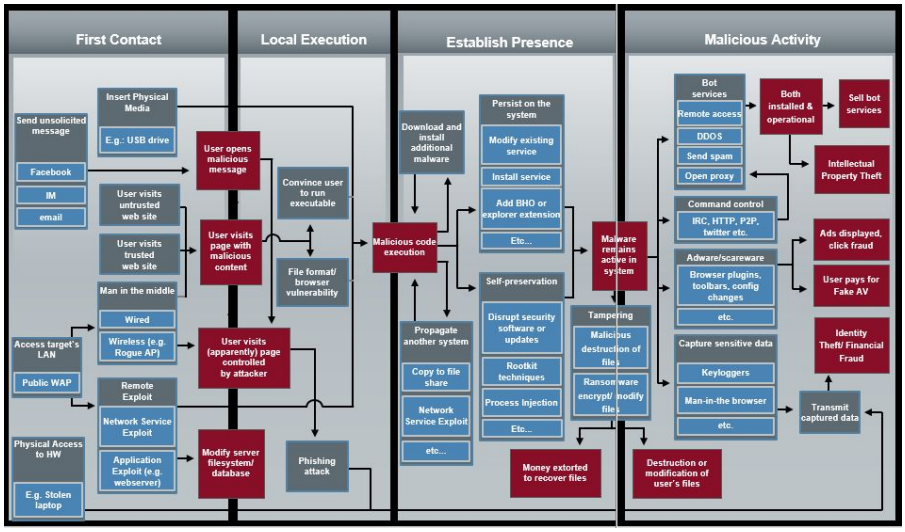
Writeup 3
CS 373
James Tyler Ball

Malware Defenses Lesson 1 (Craig Schmugar):

Happy99 is the first “big” worm to hit the public. This sparked interest in cybersecurity.

The lectures will examine how malware operates, what kind of defenses can be established, and how anti-malware is written.



The big takeaway from this graph is the four large steps Contact, Local Execution, Establish Presence, and Malicious Activity

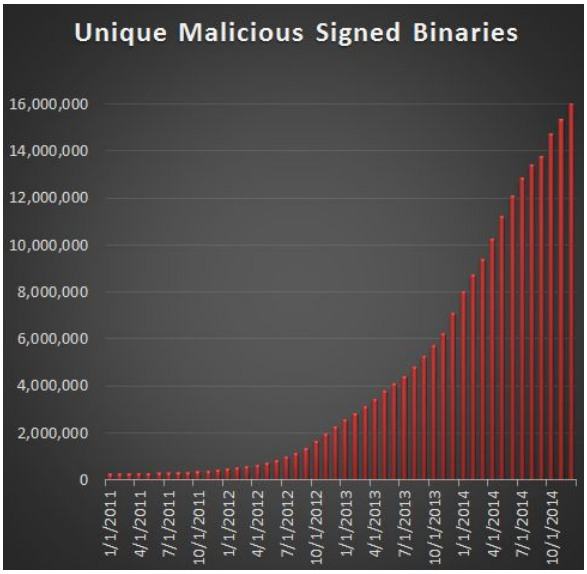
There are different ways that malware can be introduced to a system:

- ad networks
- emails
- direct attacks
- formerly instant messaging
- poisoned search results
- Watering Hole
- Physical Access

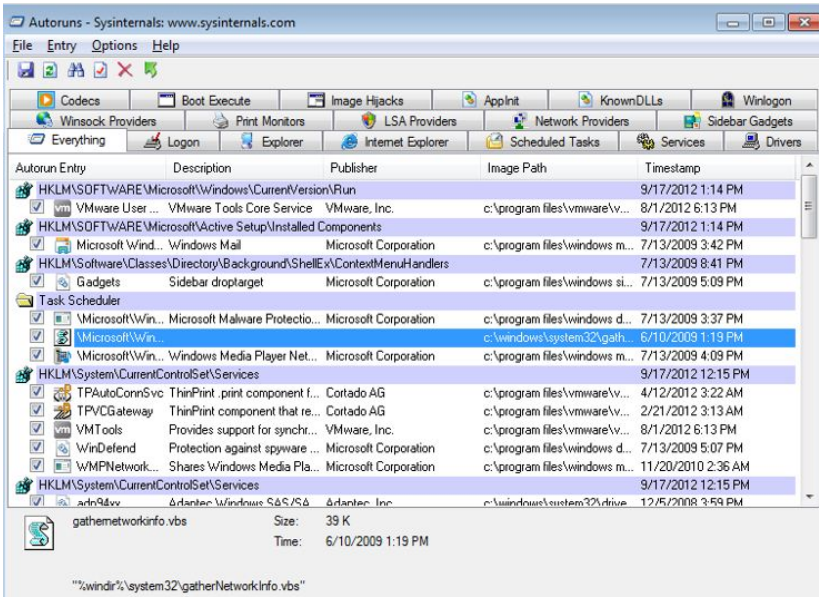
Next the code has to activate to impact the potential victim. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Autorun
- Social Engineering or fooling a user into running it
- Burying aspects into a EULA
- User clicks a malicious ad
- Exploitation feature

Third step is to establish a presence. This often involves avoiding detection by trying to appear legitimate:

- using filenames similar to the OS filenames
- changing timestamps to look like they've been there longer than they have
- being signed (which is becoming more common over time)
    - 

- bootkits and rootkits
    - modifying records to execute malicious code
- Note that the software also tries to remain in the system through reboots
    - All of the ways displayed below are methods that software can use to link to the startup of a Windows OS



- More recent methods involve side loading (replacing legitimate libraries), proxy configurations to modify the network to provide an IP which contains malware
- Buffer overflow exploits in otherwise legitimate programs can modify the software

Finally the malware executes

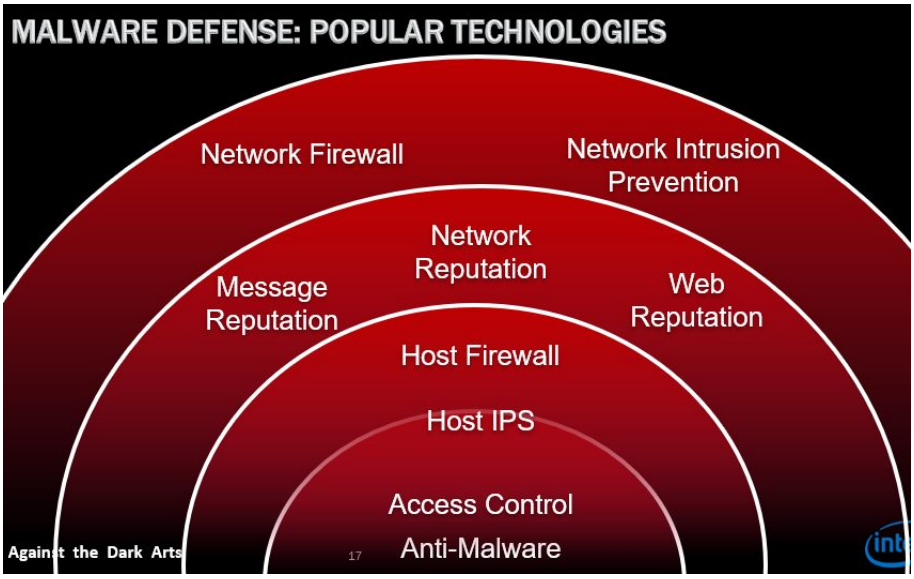
- It may try to gather information on the victim to seek valuable documents, passwords
    - It can do this via keyloggers of screen captures or a number of other methods

Anti-malware defenders need to use a variety of methods to protect their systems

- educate their users
- browsers can blacklist sites
- new systems are often sold with updated software
- script blockers
- stricter criteria for OS or browsers
- firewall

**** The lesson to learn here is that it's hard to build a single method that blocks all possible “points of entry” without blocking too much

- the result is layered security:

- 

- other developed nations are generally better at using two-factor authorization

Regarding the image above, the outer layers are more common and from what I can see also more distant from the end-user's experience (network firewalls are not often modified by the majority of users in a company).

Backups are an effective method of combating ransomware attacks. You can just ignore the encrypted files and rely on your backups. The key is convincing clients to actively take defensive measures before they encounter a problem, which is often hard to do.

From an investigative and defensive standpoint, this multi-layered defense also means that each layer or component of the defensive network can provide different pieces of information to better assess a threat.

Malware scanners have (not surprisingly) changed over time. They used to be on demand from a floppy disk (scan my computer, go!). Scanners are also more specialized now (some only look at rootkits, some only scan scripts).

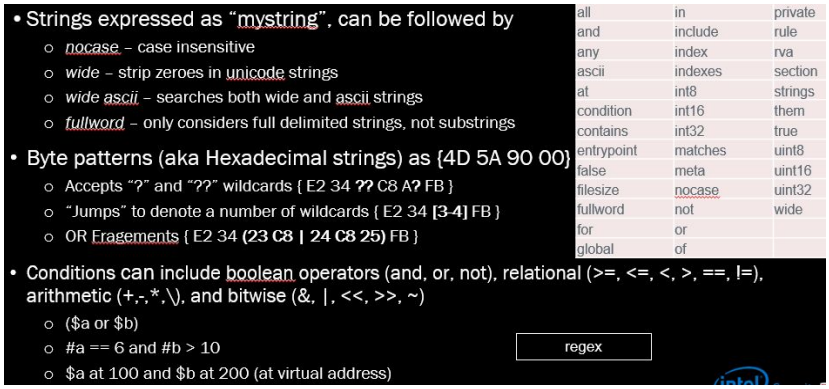
Again Professor Schmugar talks about the dangers on desensitizing users to alerts (warning about every cookie or script).

Now we hit YARA - “the pattern matching swiss army knife for malware researchers”

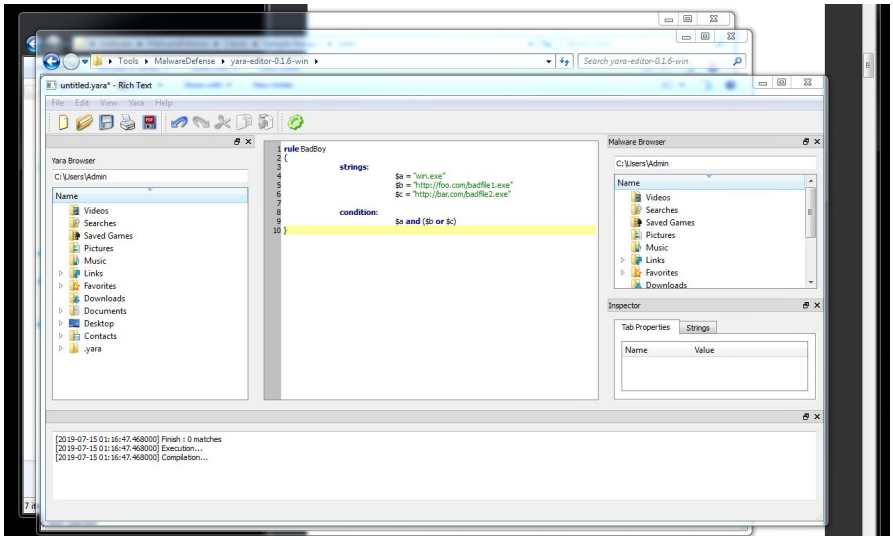
```
rule BadBoy
{
        strings:
                $a = “win.exe”
                $b = http://foo.com/badfile1.exe
                $c = http://bar.com/badfile2.exe
        condition:
                $a and ($b or $c)
}
```

Users wanted to write their own scripts for scanning, but anti-malware software was often closed, so YARA was created.

- yara is meant to be simple
- quick process from writing to scanning
- has some basic rules:

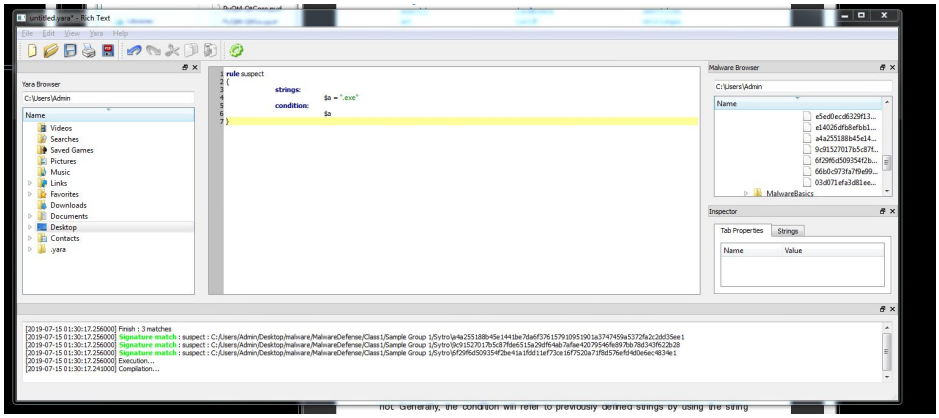


The next slide gave some loose instructions for using Yara. After booting up the cmd in the VM I followed the path, I was able to launch the yara editor. From there I ran the sample program:



Obviously this was run in the wrong place, but at least I had an idea of how the yara-editor worked.

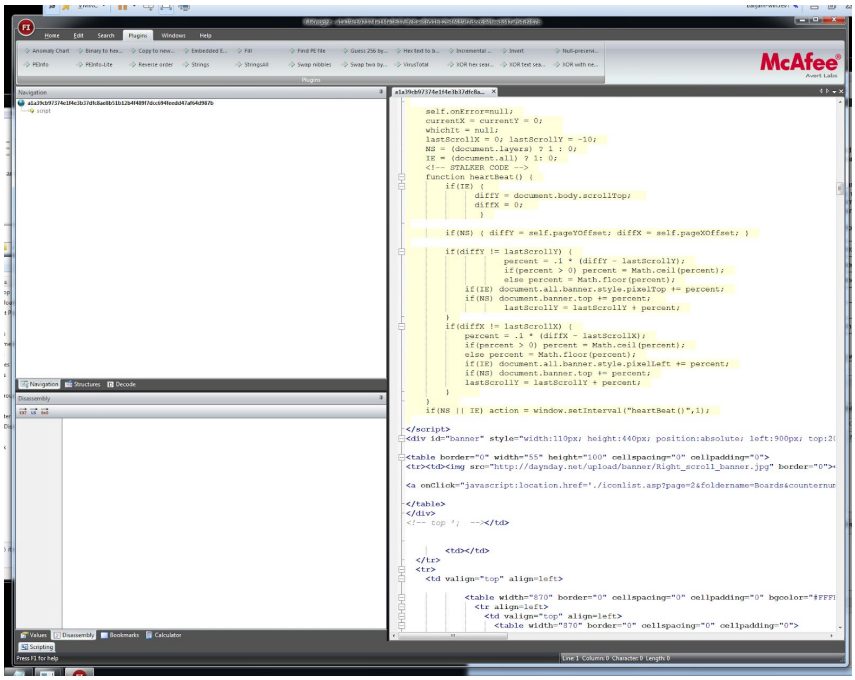
Next I looked at Sample Group 1 and did the simplest search I could think of:



Searching for the string ".exe returned three of the files in the target location. Right away these are the files I am most suspicious of.

Yara can be used to scan for files that do a combination of things (create executables and scans email, for example). Yara can also be used in combination with string extraction

(FileInsight) to find good targets to look for:



The debrief session that followed discuss that while the goal is to automate the process of defining malware, this is not always a quick process. A tool like yara can be used to do quick rough analysis of files/folders to reveal select suspicious criteria.

Again the professor stressed the challenges of an industry that faces ~500k pieces of new malware everyday.

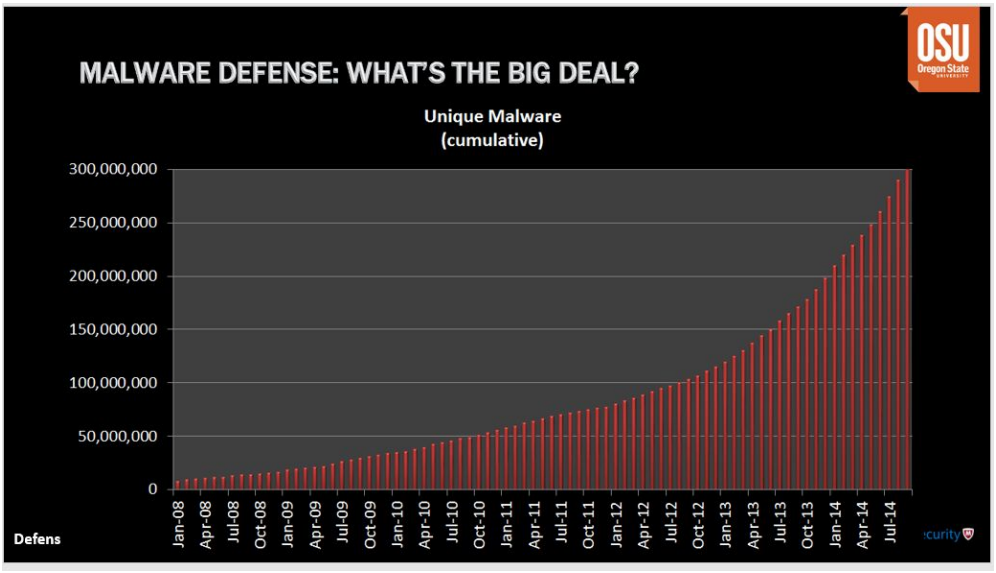
Malware Defenses Lesson 2 (Craig Schmugar):

I hadn't thought about this strategy, but Professor Schmugar talked about how once you identify a signature attached to known malware, you can check that signature against potentially millions of unknown files to identify potential threats.

Often malware investigators are handed vast numbers of files that seem to do similar things or have questionable credentials. The question was brought up what is the point of signatures if they can't be trusted? Sometimes credentials are revoked. Ultimately the "signers" are not police. Although keys are meant to establish trust, they are losing their authenticity.

Consensus within the industry is that while signatures are not dead or going away, they definitely require additional measures.

Malware continues to grow in popularity:



Why is it growing so fast? Defense is working. New malware is required to overcome rapidly expanding defenses.

In the last set of lectures, it was mentioned that one big goal of malware analysis is to automate as much as possible. This has a number of advantages:

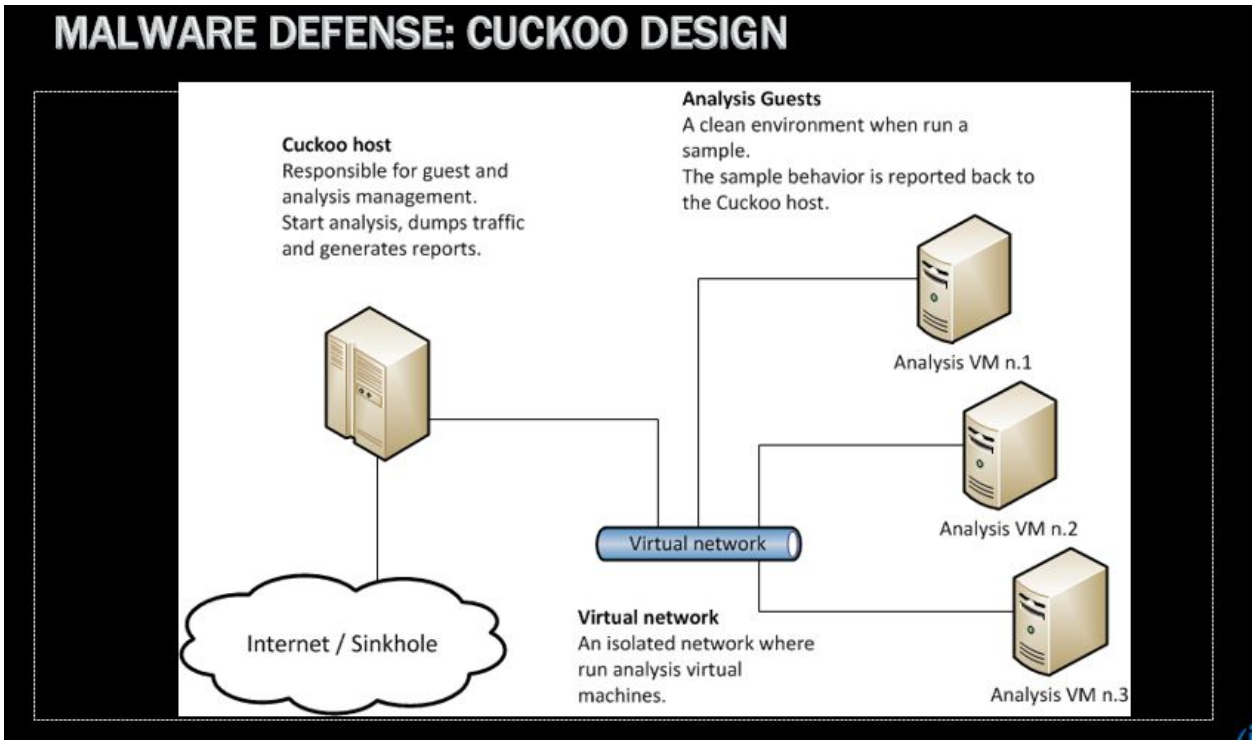
- Scale
- Speed (go through more files)
- computers are really good at comparing files
- precision

- computers can work 24/7

There are also disadvantages:

- computers aren't always good at dealing with new problems
- computers are prone to attacks and evasive tactics - malware can change the payload when it detects it's on a VM
- out of context - testing done by a machine is not the real world

CUCKOO - biggest automated analysis that's open source



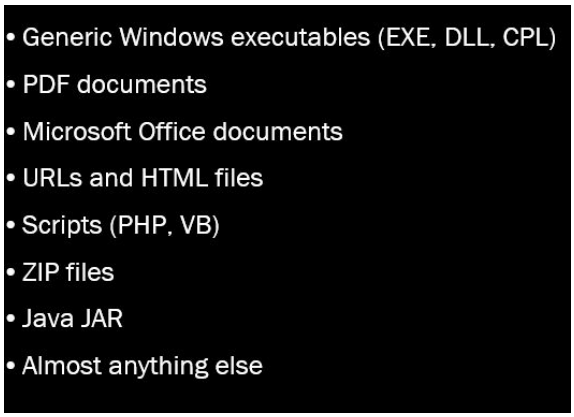
multiple vms can run analysis and give reports

Cuckoo looks at signatures, does a static analysis of strings, takes memory dumps, does network analysis, takes screenshots, and gives a summary:

Again we touched on the risks of bringing more tools to the VM also increases the chances that malware will detect it's on a virtual machine.

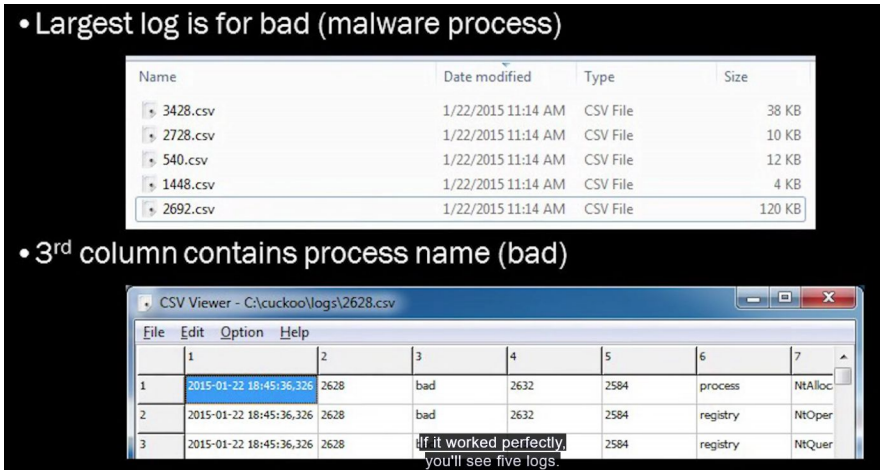
So why is malware so scared of a VM? There aren't enough people using VMs for valuable operations that an attacker would view full execution on a VM a higher priority than evasion.

Cuckoo's behavior analysis is valuable. It can tell us when files were created, the PIDs, files being copied, locations of these occurrences, all with timestamps. It also handles a number of different formats:



The next process the class went through was working with Cuckoo in the VM. The process was as straightforward as "run this, then that, wait for this window" and there seemed to be a large number of students (including myself) who encountered crashes or errors. Had it worked, there

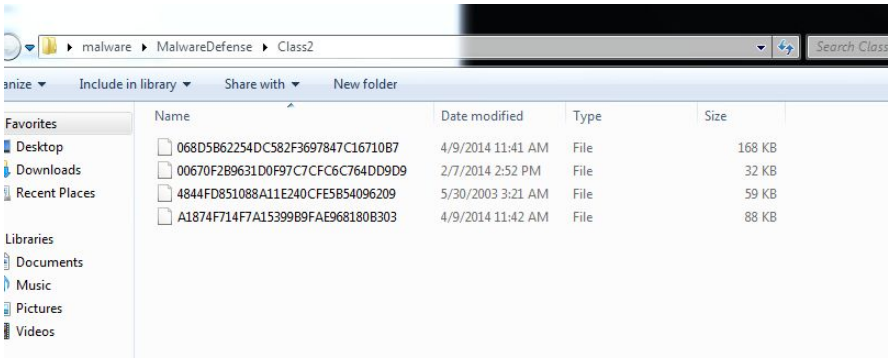
would have been 5 logs:



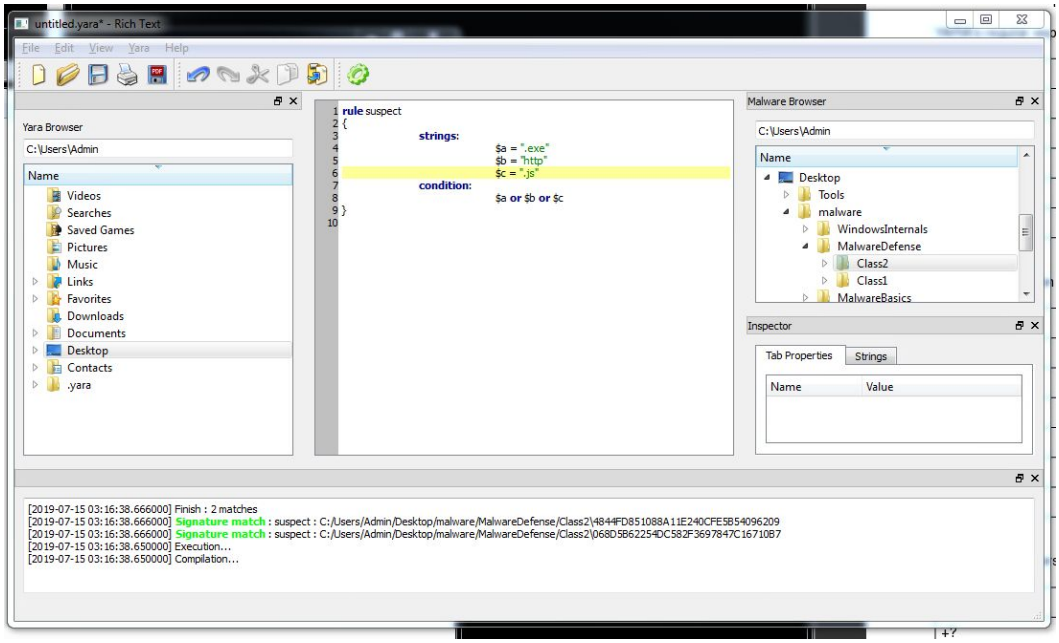
- note that the default sorting in cuckoo is to list the events as they occurred chronologically
- “cmd/c” is an instruction to run the cmd prompt with the following command

CLASS2 SAMPLES

In the desktop/malware/malwaredefense/class2 folder there are the following samples:

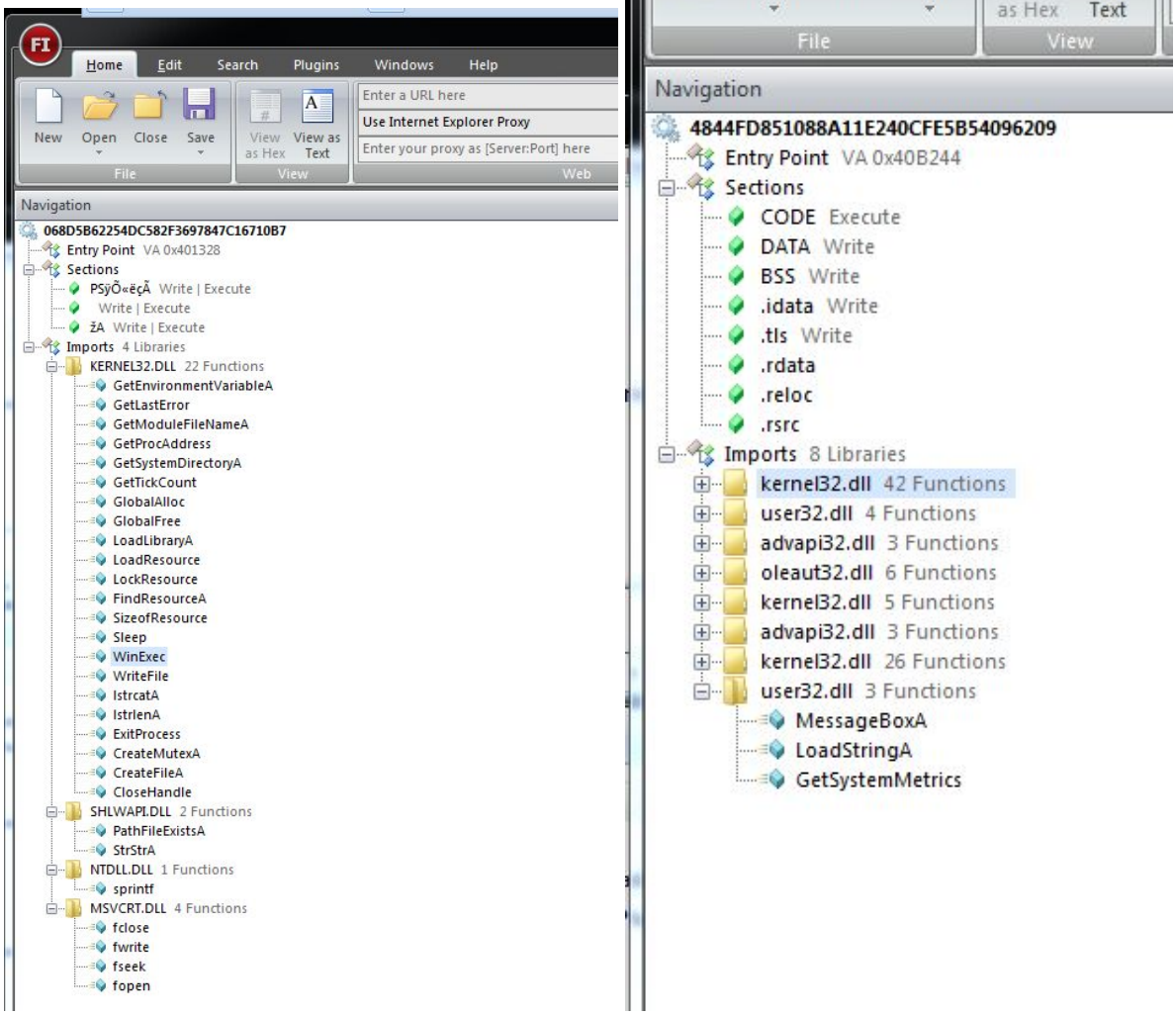


To try and figure out which are malicious, the first thing I'm going to try is search the files for known strings that we've identified as subject for suspicion:



Two results are returned, so let's use another method to look at these two files:

In the two suspect files, we see a large series of libraries and functions:



Continuing with our newest tool, Cuckoo shows us the following line near the end of the log:

```
ame->"
84","DesiredAccess->0x40100080","FileName->\??\c:\del8e6961.bat","CreateDisposition->5","Share
4","Buffer->0x0012fb68"

me->","CommandLine->C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe /c c:\del8e6961.bat","CreationFlags->0x000000(
```

Here we see the file trying to execute a command from the command line

FINDINGS

068D5:

- write and execute Sections
- attempt to execute on the cmd line (cuckoo log)

00670:

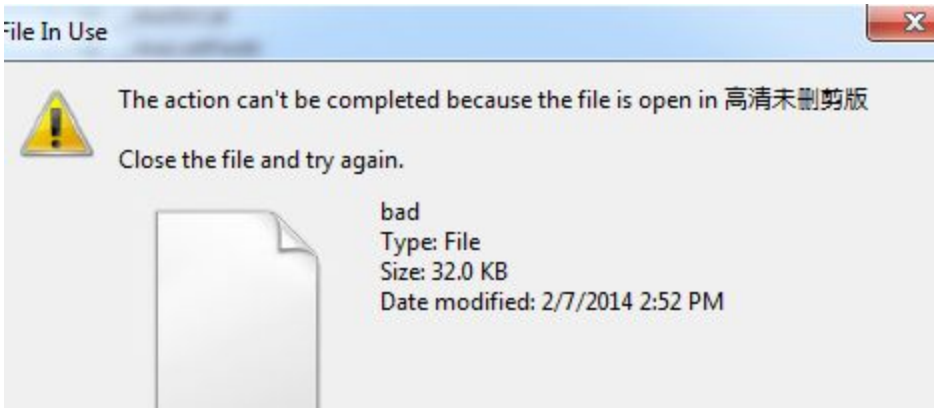
- execute and write sections
- only one library
- many vba functions

4844F:

- execute and write sections
- function “filetimetolocalfiletime”
- function “AdjustTokenPrivliges”
- functions for Registry Query, Open, and Close
- Weirdly I don’t see too much I recognize as malicious in the cuckoo logs

A1874:

- write and execute sections
- function for registry close key
- I can’t say with my limited knowledge that I see anything too alarming in the Cuckoo logs



Chinese characters… I couldn't get this to pop up again and I'm not sure what caused it

After looking over the functions and the logs, I remain in line with my initial findings: I suspect the files

- 4844FD851088
- 068D5B62254D

of being malicious files.

BLOG POST

James T Ball
July 14th 2019
20:33

I have come across a file within the Class2 folder that I highly suspect of being malicious. It began with a simple search within yara-editor that looked for the simplest of strings that may arouse suspicion:

```
rule suspect
{
        strings:
                        $a = ".exe"
                        $b = "http"
                        $c = ".js"
        condition:
                        $a or $b or $c
}
```

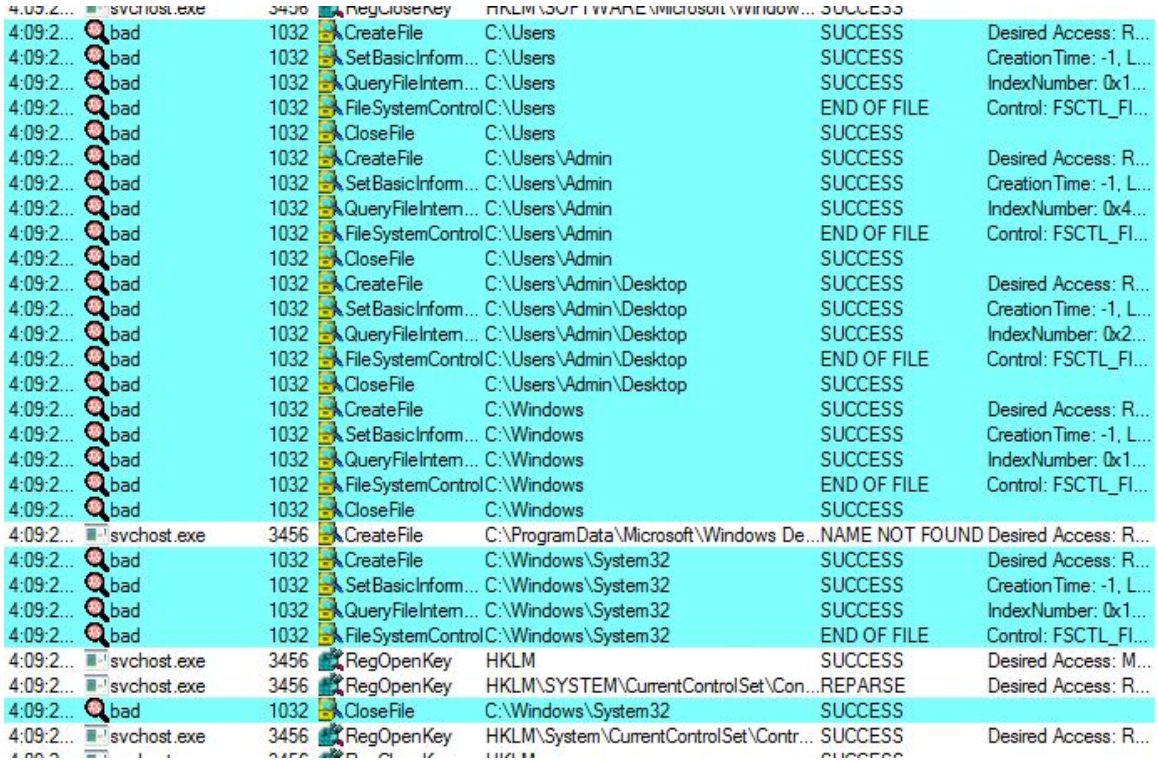
This returned two of our files one of which was the subject of this blog: 4844FD851088A11E240CFE5B54096209 which will be referred to as "4844" going forward.

To further investigate 4844, I opened the file within the FileInsight tool, and found 4844 contained a number of Sections for writing code, one for Execution, and a few other I wasn't sure of.

Digging further into the libraries, I found odd function names like function "filetimetolocalfiletime". Changing times is a common method in malware to avoid detection be changing records of when events occur. I also saw a function "AdjustTokenPrivliges", and now had reason to suspect this already questionable program of trying to alter privileges.

I then fired up the newest tool from week 3, Cuckoo.

While Cuckoo ran, I also had the old Process Monitor capturing data. The first thing 4844 did was create an alternative series of folders closely resembling windows folders:



4:09:2...	svchost.exe	3456	RegCloseKey	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Users	SUCCESS	Desired Access: R...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	SetBasicInform...	C:\Users	SUCCESS	CreationTime: -1, L...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryFileIntern...	C:\Users	SUCCESS	IndexNumber: 0x1...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	FileSystemControl	C:\Users	END OF FILE	Control: FSCTL_FI...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Users	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Users\Admin	SUCCESS	Desired Access: R...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	SetBasicInform...	C:\Users\Admin	SUCCESS	CreationTime: -1, L...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryFileIntern...	C:\Users\Admin	SUCCESS	IndexNumber: 0x4...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	FileSystemControl	C:\Users\Admin	END OF FILE	Control: FSCTL_FI...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Users\Admin	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Users\Admin\Desktop	SUCCESS	Desired Access: R...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	SetBasicInform...	C:\Users\Admin\Desktop	SUCCESS	CreationTime: -1, L...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryFileIntern...	C:\Users\Admin\Desktop	SUCCESS	IndexNumber: 0x2...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	FileSystemControl	C:\Users\Admin\Desktop	END OF FILE	Control: FSCTL_FI...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Users\Admin\Desktop	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Windows	SUCCESS	Desired Access: R...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	SetBasicInform...	C:\Windows	SUCCESS	CreationTime: -1, L...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryFileIntern...	C:\Windows	SUCCESS	IndexNumber: 0x1...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	FileSystemControl	C:\Windows	END OF FILE	Control: FSCTL_FI...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Windows	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	svchost.exe	3456	CreateFile	C:\ProgramData\Microsoft\Windows De...	NAME NOT FOUND	Desired Access: R...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Windows\System32	SUCCESS	Desired Access: R...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	SetBasicInform...	C:\Windows\System32	SUCCESS	CreationTime: -1, L...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryFileIntern...	C:\Windows\System32	SUCCESS	IndexNumber: 0x1...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	FileSystemControl	C:\Windows\System32	END OF FILE	Control: FSCTL_FI...
4:09:2...	svchost.exe	3456	RegOpenKey	HKLM	SUCCESS	Desired Access: M...
4:09:2...	svchost.exe	3456	RegOpenKey	HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Con...	REPARSE	Desired Access: R...
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Windows\System32	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	svchost.exe	3456	RegOpenKey	HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Contr...	SUCCESS	Desired Access: R...

After that, 4844 began opening and querying registry values.

4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Contr...	REPARSE	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Contr...	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Contr...	SUCCESS	Type: REG_SZ,
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Contr...	REPARSE	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Contr...	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Contr...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 16
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryBasicInfor...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	CreationTime: 11
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFileMapp...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	FILE LOCKED WI...	SyncType: Sync
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryStandardI...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	AllocationSize: 1
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFileMapp...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	SyncType: Sync
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryBasicInfor...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	CreationTime: 11
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFileMapp...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	FILE LOCKED WI...	SyncType: Sync
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryStandardI...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	AllocationSize: 1
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFileMapp...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	SyncType: Sync
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	QueryBasicInfor...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	CreationTime: 11
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFileMapp...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	FILE LOCKED WI...	SyncType: Sync
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CreateFileMapp...	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	SyncType: Sync
4:09:2...	bad	1032	Load Image	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	Image Base: 0x7
4:09:2...	bad	1032	CloseFile	C:\Windows\System32\imm32.dll	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	Load Image	C:\Windows\System32\msctf.dll	SUCCESS	Image Base: 0x7
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 1,024
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Contr...	REPARSE	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Contr...	NAME NOT FOUND	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKLM\Software\Microsoft\Windows N...	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 20
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegCloseKey	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKLM\Software\Microsoft\Windows N...	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegQueryValue	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	NAME NOT FOUND	Length: 172
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegCloseKey	HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Window...	SUCCESS	
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKLM\Software\Microsoft\Windows N...	NAME NOT FOUND	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKCU	SUCCESS	Desired Access:
4:09:2...	bad	1032	RegOpenKey	HKCU\Control Panel\Desktop\MuiCach...	NAME NOT FOUND	Desired Access:

Regrettably, I am still not sure what this file was hoping to do. I hope to revisit this file and process as I learn more methods of analyzing malware and become more comfortable with the processes I've been exposed to.