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Elad Levi

MITRE ATT&CK Documentation

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# What is MITRE ATT&CK?

MITRE ATT&CK® is a globally accessible knowledge base of adversary tactics and techniques based on real-world observations. With the creation of ATT&CK, MITRE is fulfilling its mission to solve problems for a safer world by bringing communities together to develop more effective Cybersecurity. It is a documented collection of information about the malicious behaviors advanced persistent threat (APT) groups have used at various stages in real-world cyberattacks.

# Tactics

Tactics represent the "why" of an ATT&CK technique or sub-technique. It is the adversary's tactical goal: the reason for performing an action. For example, an adversary may want to achieve credential access.

## Reconnaissance

The adversary is trying to gather information they can use to plan future operations.

Reconnaissance consists of techniques that involve adversaries actively or passively gathering information that can be used to support targeting. Such information may include details of the victim organization, infrastructure, or staff/personnel. This information can be leveraged by the adversary to aid in other phases of the adversary lifecycle, such as using gathered information to plan and execute Initial Access, to scope and prioritize post-compromise objectives, or to drive and lead further Reconnaissance efforts.

### Techniques

Techniques represent 'how' an adversary achieves a tactical goal by performing an action. For example, an adversary may dump credentials to achieve credential access.

#### T1595 - Active Scanning

Adversaries may execute active reconnaissance scans to gather information that can be used during targeting. Active scans are those where the adversary probes victim infrastructure via network traffic, as opposed to other forms of reconnaissance that do not involve direct interaction.

Adversaries may perform different forms of active scanning depending on what information they seek to gather. These scans can also be performed in various ways, including using native features of network protocols such as ICMP. Information from these scans may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Exploit Public-Facing Application).

##### .001 - Scanning IP Blocks

Adversaries may scan victim IP blocks to gather information that can be used during targeting. Public IP addresses may be allocated to organizations by block, or a range of sequential addresses.

Adversaries may scan IP blocks in order to Gather Victim Network Information, such as which IP addresses are actively in use as well as more detailed information about hosts assigned these addresses. Scans may range from simple pings (ICMP requests and responses) to more nuanced scans that may reveal host software/versions via server banners or other network artifacts. Information from these scans may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services).

##### .002 - Vulnerability Scanning

Adversaries may scan victims for vulnerabilities that can be used during targeting. Vulnerability scans typically check if the configuration of a target host/application (ex: software and version) potentially aligns with the target of a specific exploit the adversary may seek to use.

These scans may also include more broad attempts to Gather Victim Host Information that can be used to identify more commonly known, exploitable vulnerabilities. Vulnerability scans typically harvest running software and version numbers via server banners, listening ports, or other network artifacts. Information from these scans may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: Exploit Public-Facing Application).

##### .003 - Wordlist Scanning

Adversaries may iteratively probe infrastructure using brute-forcing and crawling techniques. While this technique employs similar methods to Brute Force, its goal is the identification of content and infrastructure rather than the discovery of valid credentials. Wordlists used in these scans may contain generic, commonly used names and file extensions or terms specific to a particular software. Adversaries may also create custom, target-specific wordlists using data gathered from other Reconnaissance techniques (ex: Gather Victim Org Information, or Search Victim-Owned Websites).

For example, adversaries may use web content discovery tools such as Dirb, DirBuster, and GoBuster and generic or custom wordlists to enumerate a website’s pages and directories. This can help them to discover old, vulnerable pages or hidden administrative portals that could become the target of further operations (ex: Exploit Public-Facing Application or Brute Force).

As cloud storage solutions typically use globally unique names, adversaries may also use target-specific wordlists and tools such as s3recon and GCPBucketBrute to enumerate public and private buckets on cloud infrastructure. Once storage objects are discovered, adversaries may leverage Data from Cloud Storage to access valuable information that can be exfiltrated or used to escalate privileges and move laterally.

#### T1592 - Gather Victim Host Information

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's hosts that can be used during targeting. Information about hosts may include a variety of details, including administrative data (ex: name, assigned IP, functionality, etc.) as well as specifics regarding its configuration (ex: operating system, language, etc.).

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct collection actions via Active Scanning or Phishing for Information. Adversaries may also compromise sites then include malicious content designed to collect host information from visitors. Information about hosts may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Social Media or Search Victim-Owned Websites). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: Supply Chain Compromise or External Remote Services).

##### .001 – Hardware

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's host hardware that can be used during targeting. Information about hardware infrastructure may include a variety of details such as types and versions on specific hosts, as well as the presence of additional components that might be indicative of added defensive protections (ex: card/biometric readers, dedicated encryption hardware, etc.).

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct collection actions via Active Scanning (ex: hostnames, server banners, user agent strings) or Phishing for Information. Adversaries may also compromise sites then include malicious content designed to collect host information from visitors. Information about the hardware infrastructure may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: job postings, network maps, assessment reports, resumes, or purchase invoices). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: Compromise Hardware Supply Chain or Hardware Additions).

##### .002 – Software

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's host software that can be used during targeting. Information about installed software may include a variety of details such as types and versions on specific hosts, as well as the presence of additional components that might be indicative of added defensive protections (ex: antivirus, SIEMs, etc.).

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct collection actions via Active Scanning (ex: listening ports, server banners, user agent strings) or Phishing for Information. Adversaries may also compromise sites then include malicious content designed to collect host information from visitors. Information about the installed software may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: job postings, network maps, assessment reports, resumes, or purchase invoices). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or for initial access (ex: Supply Chain Compromise or External Remote Services).

##### .003 – Firmware

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's host firmware that can be used during targeting. Information about host firmware may include a variety of details such as type and versions on specific hosts, which may be used to infer more information about hosts in the environment (ex: configuration, purpose, age/patch level, etc.).

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct elicitation via Phishing for Information. Information about host firmware may only be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: job postings, network maps, assessment reports, resumes, or purchase invoices). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: Supply Chain Compromise or Exploit Public-Facing Application).

##### .004 - Client Configurations

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's client configurations that can be used during targeting. Information about client configurations may include a variety of details and settings, including operating system/version, virtualization, architecture (ex: 32 or 64 bit), language, and/or time zone.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct collection actions via Active Scanning (ex: listening ports, server banners, user agent strings) or Phishing for Information. Adversaries may also compromise sites then include malicious content designed to collect host information from visitors. Information about the client configurations may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: job postings, network maps, assessment reports, resumes, or purchase invoices). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: Supply Chain Compromise or External Remote Services).

#### T1589 - Gather Victim Identity Information

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's identity that can be used during targeting. Information about identities may include a variety of details, including personal data (ex: employee names, email addresses, etc.) as well as sensitive details such as credentials.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct elicitation via Phishing for Information. Information about users could also be enumerated via other active means (i.e. Active Scanning) such as probing and analyzing responses from authentication services that may reveal valid usernames in a system. Information about victims may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Social Media or Search Victim-Owned Websites).

Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Phishing for Information), establishing operational resources (ex: Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Phishing or Valid Accounts).

##### .001 – Credentials

Adversaries may gather credentials that can be used during targeting. Account credentials gathered by adversaries may be those directly associated with the target victim organization or attempt to take advantage of the tendency for users to use the same passwords across personal and business accounts.

Adversaries may gather credentials from potential victims in various ways, such as direct elicitation via Phishing for Information. Adversaries may also compromise sites then include malicious content designed to collect website authentication cookies from visitors. Credential information may also be exposed to adversaries via leaks to online or other accessible data sets (ex: Search Engines, breach dumps, code repositories, etc.). Adversaries may also purchase credentials from dark web or other black-markets. Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Phishing for Information), establishing operational resources (ex: Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Valid Accounts).

##### .002 - Email Addresses

Adversaries may gather email addresses that can be used during targeting. Even if internal instances exist, organizations may have public-facing email infrastructure and addresses for employees.

Adversaries may easily gather email addresses, since they may be readily available and exposed via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Social Media or Search Victim-Owned Websites). Email addresses could also be enumerated via more active means (i.e. Active Scanning), such as probing and analyzing responses from authentication services that may reveal valid usernames in a system. For example, adversaries may be able to enumerate email addresses in Office 365 environments by querying a variety of publicly available API endpoints, such as autodiscover and GetCredentialType.

Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Phishing for Information), establishing operational resources (ex: Email Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Phishing or Brute Force via External Remote Services).

##### .003 - Employee Names

Adversaries may gather employee names that can be used during targeting. Employee names be used to derive email addresses as well as to help guide other reconnaissance efforts and/or craft more-believable lures.

Adversaries may easily gather employee names, since they may be readily available and exposed via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Social Media or Search Victim-Owned Websites). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Phishing for Information), establishing operational resources (ex: Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Phishing or Valid Accounts).

#### T1590 - Gather Victim Network Information

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's networks that can be used during targeting. Information about networks may include a variety of details, including administrative data (ex: IP ranges, domain names, etc.) as well as specifics regarding its topology and operations.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct collection actions via Active Scanning or Phishing for Information. Information about networks may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Search Open Technical Databases). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Active Scanning or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: Trusted Relationship).

##### .001 - Domain Properties

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's network domain(s) that can be used during targeting. Information about domains and their properties may include a variety of details, including what domain(s) the victim owns as well as administrative data (ex: name, registrar, etc.) and more directly actionable information such as contacts (email addresses and phone numbers), business addresses, and name servers.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct collection actions via Active Scanning or Phishing for Information. Information about victim domains and their properties may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: WHOIS). Where third-party cloud providers are in use, this information may also be exposed through publicly available API endpoints, such as GetUserRealm and autodiscover in Office 365 environments. Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Technical Databases, Search Open Websites/Domains, or Phishing for Information), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: Phishing).

##### .002 – DNS

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's DNS that can be used during targeting. DNS information may include a variety of details, including registered name servers as well as records that outline addressing for a target’s subdomains, mail servers, and other hosts. DNS, MX, TXT, and SPF records may also reveal the use of third party cloud and SaaS providers, such as Office 365, G Suite, Salesforce, or Zendesk.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as querying or otherwise collecting details via DNS/Passive DNS. DNS information may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Search Open Technical Databases). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Technical Databases, Search Open Websites/Domains, or Active Scanning), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services).

##### .003 - Network Trust Dependencies

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's network trust dependencies that can be used during targeting. Information about network trusts may include a variety of details, including second or third-party organizations/domains (ex: managed service providers, contractors, etc.) that have connected (and potentially elevated) network access.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct elicitation via Phishing for Information. Information about network trusts may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Search Open Technical Databases). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Active Scanning or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: Trusted Relationship).

##### .004 - Network Topology

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's network topology that can be used during targeting. Information about network topologies may include a variety of details, including the physical and/or logical arrangement of both external-facing and internal network environments. This information may also include specifics regarding network devices (gateways, routers, etc.) and other infrastructure.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct collection actions via Active Scanning or Phishing for Information. Information about network topologies may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Search Victim-Owned Websites). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Technical Databases or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services).

##### .005 - IP Addresses

Adversaries may gather the victim's IP addresses that can be used during targeting. Public IP addresses may be allocated to organizations by block, or a range of sequential addresses. Information about assigned IP addresses may include a variety of details, such as which IP addresses are in use. IP addresses may also enable an adversary to derive other details about a victim, such as organizational size, physical location(s), Internet service provider, and or where/how their publicly-facing infrastructure is hosted.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct collection actions via Active Scanning or Phishing for Information. Information about assigned IP addresses may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Search Open Technical Databases). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Active Scanning or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services).

#### .006 - Network Security Appliances

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's network security appliances that can be used during targeting. Information about network security appliances may include a variety of details, such as the existence and specifics of deployed firewalls, content filters, and proxies/bastion hosts. Adversaries may also target information about victim network-based intrusion detection systems (NIDS) or other appliances related to defensive cybersecurity operations.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct collection actions via Active Scanning or Phishing for Information. Information about network security appliances may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Search Victim-Owned Websites). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Technical Databases or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services).

#### T1591 - Gather Victim Org Information

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's organization that can be used during targeting. Information about an organization may include a variety of details, including the names of divisions/departments, specifics of business operations, as well as the roles and responsibilities of key employees.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct elicitation via Phishing for Information. Information about an organization may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Social Media or Search Victim-Owned Websites). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Phishing or Trusted Relationship).

##### .001 - Determine Physical Locations

Adversaries may gather the victim's physical location(s) that can be used during targeting. Information about physical locations of a target organization may include a variety of details, including where key resources and infrastructure are housed. Physical locations may also indicate what legal jurisdiction and/or authorities the victim operates within.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct elicitation via Phishing for Information. Physical locations of a target organization may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Search Victim-Owned Websites or Social Media). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: Phishing or Hardware Additions).

##### .002 - Business Relationships

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's business relationships that can be used during targeting. Information about an organization’s business relationships may include a variety of details, including second or third-party organizations/domains (ex: managed service providers, contractors, etc.) that have connected (and potentially elevated) network access. This information may also reveal supply chains and shipment paths for the victim’s hardware and software resources.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct elicitation via Phishing for Information. Information about business relationships may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Social Media or Search Victim-Owned Websites). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Supply Chain Compromise, Drive-by Compromise, or Trusted Relationship).

##### .003 - Identify Business Tempo

Adversaries may gather information about the victim's business tempo that can be used during targeting. Information about an organization’s business tempo may include a variety of details, including operational hours/days of the week. This information may also reveal times/dates of purchases and shipments of the victim’s hardware and software resources.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct elicitation via Phishing for Information. Information about business tempo may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Social Media or Search Victim-Owned Websites). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Supply Chain Compromise or Trusted Relationship)

##### .004 - Identify Roles

Adversaries may gather information about identities and roles within the victim organization that can be used during targeting. Information about business roles may reveal a variety of targetable details, including identifiable information for key personnel as well as what data/resources they have access to.

Adversaries may gather this information in various ways, such as direct elicitation via Phishing for Information. Information about business roles may also be exposed to adversaries via online or other accessible data sets (ex: Social Media or Search Victim-Owned Websites). Gathering this information may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Phishing).

#### T1598 - Phishing for Information

Adversaries may send phishing messages to elicit sensitive information that can be used during targeting. Phishing for information is an attempt to trick targets into divulging information, frequently credentials or other actionable information. Phishing for information is different from Phishing in that the objective is gathering data from the victim rather than executing malicious code.

All forms of phishing are electronically delivered social engineering. Phishing can be targeted, known as spearphishing. In spearphishing, a specific individual, company, or industry will be targeted by the adversary. More generally, adversaries can conduct non-targeted phishing, such as in mass credential harvesting campaigns.

Adversaries may also try to obtain information directly through the exchange of emails, instant messages, or other electronic conversation means. Phishing for information frequently involves social engineering techniques, such as posing as a source with a reason to collect information (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts) and/or sending multiple, seemingly urgent messages.

##### .001 - Spearphishing Service

Adversaries may send spearphishing messages via third-party services to elicit sensitive information that can be used during targeting. Spearphishing for information is an attempt to trick targets into divulging information, frequently credentials or other actionable information. Spearphishing for information frequently involves social engineering techniques, such as posing as a source with a reason to collect information (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts) and/or sending multiple, seemingly urgent messages.

All forms of spearphishing are electronically delivered social engineering targeted at a specific individual, company, or industry. In this scenario, adversaries send messages through various social media services, personal webmail, and other non-enterprise controlled services. These services are more likely to have a less-strict security policy than an enterprise. As with most kinds of spearphishing, the goal is to generate rapport with the target or get the target's interest in some way. Adversaries may create fake social media accounts and message employees for potential job opportunities. Doing so allows a plausible reason for asking about services, policies, and information about their environment. Adversaries may also use information from previous reconnaissance efforts (ex: Social Media or Search Victim-Owned Websites) to craft persuasive and believable lures.

##### .002 - Spearphishing Attachment

Adversaries may send spearphishing messages with a malicious attachment to elicit sensitive information that can be used during targeting. Spearphishing for information is an attempt to trick targets into divulging information, frequently credentials or other actionable information. Spearphishing for information frequently involves social engineering techniques, such as posing as a source with a reason to collect information (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts) and/or sending multiple, seemingly urgent messages.

All forms of spearphishing are electronically delivered social engineering targeted at a specific individual, company, or industry. In this scenario, adversaries attach a file to the spearphishing email and usually rely upon the recipient populating information then returning the file. The text of the spearphishing email usually tries to give a plausible reason why the file should be filled-in, such as a request for information from a business associate. Adversaries may also use information from previous reconnaissance efforts (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Victim-Owned Websites) to craft persuasive and believable lures.

##### .003 - Spearphishing Link

Adversaries may send spearphishing messages with a malicious link to elicit sensitive information that can be used during targeting. Spearphishing for information is an attempt to trick targets into divulging information, frequently credentials or other actionable information. Spearphishing for information frequently involves social engineering techniques, such as posing as a source with a reason to collect information (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts) and/or sending multiple, seemingly urgent messages.

All forms of spearphishing are electronically delivered social engineering targeted at a specific individual, company, or industry. In this scenario, the malicious emails contain links generally accompanied by social engineering text to coax the user to actively click or copy and paste a URL into a browser. The given website may be a clone of a legitimate site (such as an online or corporate login portal) or may closely resemble a legitimate site in appearance and have a URL containing elements from the real site.

From the fake website, information is gathered in web forms and sent to the adversary. Adversaries may also use information from previous reconnaissance efforts (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains or Search Victim-Owned Websites) to craft persuasive and believable lures.

#### T1597 - Search Closed Sources

Adversaries may search and gather information about victims from closed sources that can be used during targeting. Information about victims may be available for purchase from reputable private sources and databases, such as paid subscriptions to feeds of technical/threat intelligence data. Adversaries may also purchase information from less-reputable sources such as dark web or cybercrime blackmarkets.

Adversaries may search in different closed databases depending on what information they seek to gather. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Valid Accounts).

##### .001 - Threat Intel Vendors

Adversaries may search private data from threat intelligence vendors for information that can be used during targeting. Threat intelligence vendors may offer paid feeds or portals that offer more data than what is publicly reported. Although sensitive details (such as customer names and other identifiers) may be redacted, this information may contain trends regarding breaches such as target industries, attribution claims, and successful TTPs/countermeasures.

Adversaries may search in private threat intelligence vendor data to gather actionable information. Threat actors may seek information/indicators gathered about their own campaigns, as well as those conducted by other adversaries that may align with their target industries, capabilities/objectives, or other operational concerns. Information reported by vendors may also reveal opportunities other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: Exploit Public-Facing Application or External Remote Services).

##### .002 - Purchase Technical Data

Adversaries may purchase technical information about victims that can be used during targeting. Information about victims may be available for purchase within reputable private sources and databases, such as paid subscriptions to feeds of scan databases or other data aggregation services. Adversaries may also purchase information from less-reputable sources such as dark web or cybercrime blackmarkets.

Adversaries may purchase information about their already identified targets, or use purchased data to discover opportunities for successful breaches. Threat actors may gather various technical details from purchased data, including but not limited to employee contact information, credentials, or specifics regarding a victim’s infrastructure. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Valid Accounts).

#### T1596 - Search Open Technical Databases

Adversaries may search freely available technical databases for information about victims that can be used during targeting. Information about victims may be available in online databases and repositories, such as registrations of domains/certificates as well as public collections of network data/artifacts gathered from traffic and/or scans.

Adversaries may search in different open databases depending on what information they seek to gather. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Trusted Relationship).

##### .001 - DNS/Passive DNS

Adversaries may search DNS data for information about victims that can be used during targeting. DNS information may include a variety of details, including registered name servers as well as records that outline addressing for a target’s subdomains, mail servers, and other hosts.

Adversaries may search DNS data to gather actionable information. Threat actors can query nameservers for a target organization directly, or search through centralized repositories of logged DNS query responses (known as passive DNS). Adversaries may also seek and target DNS misconfigurations/leaks that reveal information about internal networks. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Search Victim-Owned Websites or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Trusted Relationship).

##### .002 – WHOIS

Adversaries may search public WHOIS data for information about victims that can be used during targeting. WHOIS data is stored by regional Internet registries (RIR) responsible for allocating and assigning Internet resources such as domain names. Anyone can query WHOIS servers for information about a registered domain, such as assigned IP blocks, contact information, and DNS nameservers.

Adversaries may search WHOIS data to gather actionable information. Threat actors can use online resources or command-line utilities to pillage through WHOIS data for information about potential victims. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Active Scanning or Phishing for Information), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Trusted Relationship).

##### .003 - Digital Certificates

Adversaries may search public digital certificate data for information about victims that can be used during targeting. Digital certificates are issued by a certificate authority (CA) in order to cryptographically verify the origin of signed content. These certificates, such as those used for encrypted web traffic (HTTPS SSL/TLS communications), contain information about the registered organization such as name and location.

Adversaries may search digital certificate data to gather actionable information. Threat actors can use online resources and lookup tools to harvest information about certificates. Digital certificate data may also be available from artifacts signed by the organization (ex: certificates used from encrypted web traffic are served with content). Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Active Scanning or Phishing for Information), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Trusted Relationship).

##### .004 – CDNs

Adversaries may search content delivery network (CDN) data about victims that can be used during targeting. CDNs allow an organization to host content from a distributed, load balanced array of servers. CDNs may also allow organizations to customize content delivery based on the requestor’s geographical region.

Adversaries may search CDN data to gather actionable information. Threat actors can use online resources and lookup tools to harvest information about content servers within a CDN. Adversaries may also seek and target CDN misconfigurations that leak sensitive information not intended to be hosted and/or do not have the same protection mechanisms (ex: login portals) as the content hosted on the organization’s website. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Active Scanning or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Acquire Infrastructure or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: Drive-by Compromise).

##### .005 - Scan Databases

Adversaries may search within public scan databases for information about victims that can be used during targeting. Various online services continuously publish the results of Internet scans/surveys, often harvesting information such as active IP addresses, hostnames, open ports, certificates, and even server banners.

Adversaries may search scan databases to gather actionable information. Threat actors can use online resources and lookup tools to harvest information from these services. Adversaries may seek information about their already identified targets, or use these datasets to discover opportunities for successful breaches. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Active Scanning or Search Open Websites/Domains), establishing operational resources (ex: Develop Capabilities or Obtain Capabilities), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Exploit Public-Facing Application).

#### T1593 - Search Open Websites/Domains

Adversaries may search freely available websites and/or domains for information about victims that can be used during targeting. Information about victims may be available in various online sites, such as social media, new sites, or those hosting information about business operations such as hiring or requested/rewarded contracts.

Adversaries may search in different online sites depending on what information they seek to gather. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: External Remote Services or Phishing).

##### .001 - Social Media

Adversaries may search social media for information about victims that can be used during targeting. Social media sites may contain various information about a victim organization, such as business announcements as well as information about the roles, locations, and interests of staff.

Adversaries may search in different social media sites depending on what information they seek to gather. Threat actors may passively harvest data from these sites, as well as use information gathered to create fake profiles/groups to elicit victim’s into revealing specific information (i.e. Spearphishing Service). Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Spearphishing via Service).

##### .002 - Search Engines

Adversaries may use search engines to collect information about victims that can be used during targeting. Search engine services typical crawl online sites to index context and may provide users with specialized syntax to search for specific keywords or specific types of content (i.e. filetypes).

Adversaries may craft various search engine queries depending on what information they seek to gather. Threat actors may use search engines to harvest general information about victims, as well as use specialized queries to look for spillages/leaks of sensitive information such as network details or credentials. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Valid Accounts or Phishing).

##### .003 - Code Repositories

Adversaries may search public code repositories for information about victims that can be used during targeting. Victims may store code in repositories on various third-party websites such as GitHub, GitLab, SourceForge, and BitBucket. Users typically interact with code repositories through a web application or command-line utilities such as git.

Adversaries may search various public code repositories for various information about a victim. Public code repositories can often be a source of various general information about victims, such as commonly used programming languages and libraries as well as the names of employees. Adversaries may also identify more sensitive data, including accidentally leaked credentials or API keys. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information), establishing operational resources (ex: Compromise Accounts or Compromise Infrastructure), and/or initial access (ex: Valid Accounts or Phishing).

**Note:** This is distinct from Code Repositories, which focuses on Collection from private and internally hosted code repositories.

#### T1594 - Search Victim-Owned Websites

Adversaries may search websites owned by the victim for information that can be used during targeting. Victim-owned websites may contain a variety of details, including names of departments/divisions, physical locations, and data about key employees such as names, roles, and contact info (ex: Email Addresses). These sites may also have details highlighting business operations and relationships.

Adversaries may search victim-owned websites to gather actionable information. Information from these sources may reveal opportunities for other forms of reconnaissance (ex: Phishing for Information or Search Open Technical Databases), establishing operational resources (ex: Establish Accounts or Compromise Accounts), and/or initial access (ex: Trusted Relationship or Phishing).

## Resource Development

The adversary is trying to establish resources they can use to support operations.

Resource Development consists of techniques that involve adversaries creating, purchasing, or compromising/stealing resources that can be used to support targeting. Such resources include infrastructure, accounts, or capabilities. These resources can be leveraged by the adversary to aid in other phases of the adversary lifecycle, such as using purchased domains to support Command and Control, email accounts for phishing as a part of Initial Access, or stealing code signing certificates to help with Defense Evasion.

### Techniques

Techniques represent 'how' an adversary achieves a tactical goal by performing an action. For example, an adversary may dump credentials to achieve credential access.

#### T1583 - Acquire Infrastructure

Adversaries may buy, lease, or rent infrastructure that can be used during targeting. A wide variety of infrastructure exists for hosting and orchestrating adversary operations. Infrastructure solutions include physical or cloud servers, domains, and third-party web services. Additionally, botnets are available for rent or purchase.

Use of these infrastructure solutions allows an adversary to stage, launch, and execute an operation. Solutions may help adversary operations blend in with traffic that is seen as normal, such as contact to third-party web services. Depending on the implementation, adversaries may use infrastructure that makes it difficult to physically tie back to them as well as utilize infrastructure that can be rapidly provisioned, modified, and shut down.

##### .001 – Domains

Adversaries may acquire domains that can be used during targeting. Domain names are the human readable names used to represent one or more IP addresses. They can be purchased or, in some cases, acquired for free.

Adversaries may use acquired domains for a variety of purposes, including for Phishing, Drive-by Compromise, and Command and Control. Adversaries may choose domains that are similar to legitimate domains, including through use of homoglyphs or use of a different top-level domain (TLD). Typosquatting may be used to aid in delivery of payloads via Drive-by Compromise. Adversaries may also use internationalized domain names (IDNs) and different character sets (e.g. Cyrillic, Greek, etc.) to execute "IDN homograph attacks," creating visually similar lookalike domains used to deliver malware to victim machines.

Adversaries may also acquire and repurpose expired domains, which may be potentially already allowlisted/trusted by defenders based on an existing reputation/history.

Domain registrars each maintain a publicly viewable database that displays contact information for every registered domain. Private WHOIS services display alternative information, such as their own company data, rather than the owner of the domain. Adversaries may use such private WHOIS services to obscure information about who owns a purchased domain. Adversaries may further interrupt efforts to track their infrastructure by using varied registration information and purchasing domains with different domain registrars.

##### .002 - DNS Server

Adversaries may set up their own Domain Name System (DNS) servers that can be used during targeting. During post-compromise activity, adversaries may utilize DNS traffic for various tasks, including for Command and Control (ex: Application Layer Protocol). Instead of hijacking existing DNS servers, adversaries may opt to configure and run their own DNS servers in support of operations.

By running their own DNS servers, adversaries can have more control over how they administer server-side DNS C2 traffic (DNS). With control over a DNS server, adversaries can configure DNS applications to provide conditional responses to malware and, generally, have more flexibility in the structure of the DNS-based C2 channel.

##### .003 - Virtual Private Server

Adversaries may rent Virtual Private Servers (VPSs) that can be used during targeting. There exist a variety of cloud service providers that will sell virtual machines/containers as a service. By utilizing a VPS, adversaries can make it difficult to physically tie back operations to them. The use of cloud infrastructure can also make it easier for adversaries to rapidly provision, modify, and shut down their infrastructure.

Acquiring a VPS for use in later stages of the adversary lifecycle, such as Command and Control, can allow adversaries to benefit from the ubiquity and trust associated with higher reputation cloud service providers. Adversaries may also acquire infrastructure from VPS service providers that are known for renting VPSs with minimal registration information, allowing for more anonymous acquisitions of infrastructure.

##### .004 – Server

Adversaries may buy, lease, or rent physical servers that can be used during targeting. Use of servers allows an adversary to stage, launch, and execute an operation. During post-compromise activity, adversaries may utilize servers for various tasks, including for Command and Control. Instead of compromising a third-party Server or renting a Virtual Private Server, adversaries may opt to configure and run their own servers in support of operations.

Adversaries may only need a lightweight setup if most of their activities will take place using online infrastructure. Or, they may need to build extensive infrastructure if they want to test, communicate, and control other aspects of their activities on their own systems.

##### .005 – Botnet

Adversaries may buy, lease, or rent a network of compromised systems that can be used during targeting. A botnet is a network of compromised systems that can be instructed to perform coordinated tasks. Adversaries may purchase a subscription to use an existing botnet from a booter/stresser service. With a botnet at their disposal, adversaries may perform follow-on activity such as large-scale Phishing or Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS).

##### .006 - Web Services

Adversaries may register for web services that can be used during targeting. A variety of popular websites exist for adversaries to register for a web-based service that can be abused during later stages of the adversary lifecycle, such as during Command and Control (Web Service) or Exfiltration Over Web Service. Using common services, such as those offered by Google or Twitter, makes it easier for adversaries to hide in expected noise. By utilizing a web service, adversaries can make it difficult to physically tie back operations to them.

##### .007 – Serverless

Adversaries may purchase and configure serverless cloud infrastructure, such as Cloudflare Workers or AWS Lambda functions, that can be used during targeting. By utilizing serverless infrastructure, adversaries can make it more difficult to attribute infrastructure used during operations back to them.

Once acquired, the serverless runtime environment can be leveraged to either respond directly to infected machines or to Proxy traffic to an adversary-owned command and control server. As traffic generated by these functions will appear to come from subdomains of common cloud providers, it may be difficult to distinguish from ordinary traffic to these providers.

#### T1586 - Compromise Accounts

Adversaries may compromise accounts with services that can be used during targeting. For operations incorporating social engineering, the utilization of an online persona may be important. Rather than creating and cultivating accounts (i.e. Establish Accounts), adversaries may compromise existing accounts. Utilizing an existing persona may engender a level of trust in a potential victim if they have a relationship, or knowledge of, the compromised persona.

A variety of methods exist for compromising accounts, such as gathering credentials via Phishing for Information, purchasing credentials from third-party sites, or by brute forcing credentials (ex: password reuse from breach credential dumps). Prior to compromising accounts, adversaries may conduct Reconnaissance to inform decisions about which accounts to compromise to further their operation.

Personas may exist on a single site or across multiple sites (ex: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google, etc.). Compromised accounts may require additional development, this could include filling out or modifying profile information, further developing social networks, or incorporating photos.

Adversaries may directly leverage compromised email accounts for Phishing for Information or Phishing.

##### .001 - Social Media Accounts

Adversaries may compromise social media accounts that can be used during targeting. For operations incorporating social engineering, the utilization of an online persona may be important. Rather than creating and cultivating social media profiles (i.e. Social Media Accounts), adversaries may compromise existing social media accounts. Utilizing an existing persona may engender a level of trust in a potential victim if they have a relationship, or knowledge of, the compromised persona.

A variety of methods exist for compromising social media accounts, such as gathering credentials via Phishing for Information, purchasing credentials from third-party sites, or by brute forcing credentials (ex: password reuse from breach credential dumps). Prior to compromising social media accounts, adversaries may conduct Reconnaissance to inform decisions about which accounts to compromise to further their operation.

Personas may exist on a single site or across multiple sites (ex: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.). Compromised social media accounts may require additional development, this could include filling out or modifying profile information, further developing social networks, or incorporating photos.

Adversaries can use a compromised social media profile to create new, or hijack existing, connections to targets of interest. These connections may be direct or may include trying to connect through others. Compromised profiles may be leveraged during other phases of the adversary lifecycle, such as during Initial Access (ex: Spearphishing via Service).

##### .002 - Email Accounts

Adversaries may compromise email accounts that can be used during targeting. Adversaries can use compromised email accounts to further their operations, such as leveraging them to conduct Phishing for Information or Phishing. Utilizing an existing persona with a compromised email account may engender a level of trust in a potential victim if they have a relationship, or knowledge of, the compromised persona. Compromised email accounts can also be used in the acquisition of infrastructure (ex: Domains).

A variety of methods exist for compromising email accounts, such as gathering credentials via Phishing for Information, purchasing credentials from third-party sites, or by brute forcing credentials (ex: password reuse from breach credential dumps). Prior to compromising email accounts, adversaries may conduct Reconnaissance to inform decisions about which accounts to compromise to further their operation.

Adversaries can use a compromised email account to hijack existing email threads with targets of interest.

##### .003 - Cloud Accounts

Adversaries may compromise cloud accounts that can be used during targeting. Adversaries can use compromised cloud accounts to further their operations, including leveraging cloud storage services such as Dropbox, Microsoft OneDrive, or AWS S3 buckets for Exfiltration to Cloud Storage or to Upload Tools. Cloud accounts can also be used in the acquisition of infrastructure, such as Virtual Private Servers or Serverless infrastructure. Compromising cloud accounts may allow adversaries to develop sophisticated capabilities without managing their own servers.

A variety of methods exist for compromising cloud accounts, such as gathering credentials via Phishing for Information, purchasing credentials from third-party sites, conducting Password Spraying attacks, or attempting to Steal Application Access Tokens. Prior to compromising cloud accounts, adversaries may conduct Reconnaissance to inform decisions about which accounts to compromise to further their operation. In some cases, adversaries may target privileged service provider accounts with the intent of leveraging a Trusted Relationship between service providers and their customers.

#### T1584 - Compromise Infrastructure

Adversaries may compromise third-party infrastructure that can be used during targeting. Infrastructure solutions include physical or cloud servers, domains, and third-party web and DNS services. Instead of buying, leasing, or renting infrastructure an adversary may compromise infrastructure and use it during other phases of the adversary lifecycle. Additionally, adversaries may compromise numerous machines to form a botnet they can leverage.

Use of compromised infrastructure allows an adversary to stage, launch, and execute an operation. Compromised infrastructure can help adversary operations blend in with traffic that is seen as normal, such as contact with high reputation or trusted sites. For example, adversaries may leverage compromised infrastructure (potentially also in conjunction with Digital Certificates) to further blend in and support staged information gathering and/or Phishing campaigns.

By using compromised infrastructure, adversaries may make it difficult to tie their actions back to them. Prior to targeting, adversaries may compromise the infrastructure of other adversaries.

##### .001 – Domains

Adversaries may hijack domains and/or subdomains that can be used during targeting. Domain registration hijacking is the act of changing the registration of a domain name without the permission of the original registrant. Adversaries may gain access to an email account for the person listed as the owner of the domain. The adversary can then claim that they forgot their password in order to make changes to the domain registration. Other possibilities include social engineering a domain registration help desk to gain access to an account or taking advantage of renewal process gaps.

Subdomain hijacking can occur when organizations have DNS entries that point to non-existent or deprovisioned resources. In such cases, an adversary may take control of a subdomain to conduct operations with the benefit of the trust associated with that domain.

##### .002 - DNS Server

Adversaries may compromise third-party DNS servers that can be used during targeting. During post-compromise activity, adversaries may utilize DNS traffic for various tasks, including for Command and Control (ex: Application Layer Protocol). Instead of setting up their own DNS servers, adversaries may compromise third-party DNS servers in support of operations.

By compromising DNS servers, adversaries can alter DNS records. Such control can allow for redirection of an organization's traffic, facilitating Collection and Credential Access efforts for the adversary. Additionally, adversaries may leverage such control in conjunction with Digital Certificates to redirect traffic to adversary-controlled infrastructure, mimicking normal trusted network communications. Adversaries may also be able to silently create subdomains pointed at malicious servers without tipping off the actual owner of the DNS server.

##### .003 - Virtual Private Server

Adversaries may compromise third-party Virtual Private Servers (VPSs) that can be used during targeting. There exist a variety of cloud service providers that will sell virtual machines/containers as a service. Adversaries may compromise VPSs purchased by third-party entities. By compromising a VPS to use as infrastructure, adversaries can make it difficult to physically tie back operations to themselves.

Compromising a VPS for use in later stages of the adversary lifecycle, such as Command and Control, can allow adversaries to benefit from the ubiquity and trust associated with higher reputation cloud service providers as well as that added by the compromised third-party.

##### .004 – Server

Adversaries may compromise third-party servers that can be used during targeting. Use of servers allows an adversary to stage, launch, and execute an operation. During post-compromise activity, adversaries may utilize servers for various tasks, including for Command and Control. Instead of purchasing a Server or Virtual Private Server, adversaries may compromise third-party servers in support of operations.

Adversaries may also compromise web servers to support watering hole operations, as in Drive-by Compromise.

##### .005 – Botnet

Adversaries may compromise numerous third-party systems to form a botnet that can be used during targeting. A botnet is a network of compromised systems that can be instructed to perform coordinated tasks. Instead of purchasing/renting a botnet from a booter/stresser service, adversaries may build their own botnet by compromising numerous third-party systems. Adversaries may also conduct a takeover of an existing botnet, such as redirecting bots to adversary-controlled C2 servers. With a botnet at their disposal, adversaries may perform follow-on activity such as large-scale Phishing or Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS).

##### .006 - Web Services

Adversaries may compromise access to third-party web services that can be used during targeting. A variety of popular websites exist for legitimate users to register for web-based services, such as GitHub, Twitter, Dropbox, Google, etc. Adversaries may try to take ownership of a legitimate user's access to a web service and use that web service as infrastructure in support of cyber operations. Such web services can be abused during later stages of the adversary lifecycle, such as during Command and Control (Web Service) or Exfiltration Over Web Service. Using common services, such as those offered by Google or Twitter, makes it easier for adversaries to hide in expected noise. By utilizing a web service, particularly when access is stolen from legitimate users, adversaries can make it difficult to physically tie back operations to them.

##### .007 – Serverless

Adversaries may compromise serverless cloud infrastructure, such as Cloudflare Workers or AWS Lambda functions, that can be used during targeting. By utilizing serverless infrastructure, adversaries can make it more difficult to attribute infrastructure used during operations back to them.

Once compromised, the serverless runtime environment can be leveraged to either respond directly to infected machines or to Proxy traffic to an adversary-owned command and control server. As traffic generated by these functions will appear to come from subdomains of common cloud providers, it may be difficult to distinguish from ordinary traffic to these providers.

#### T1587 - Develop Capabilities

Adversaries may build capabilities that can be used during targeting. Rather than purchasing, freely downloading, or stealing capabilities, adversaries may develop their own capabilities in-house. This is the process of identifying development requirements and building solutions such as malware, exploits, and self-signed certificates. Adversaries may develop capabilities to support their operations throughout numerous phases of the adversary lifecycle.

As with legitimate development efforts, different skill sets may be required for developing capabilities. The skills needed may be located in-house, or may need to be contracted out. Use of a contractor may be considered an extension of that adversary's development capabilities, provided the adversary plays a role in shaping requirements and maintains a degree of exclusivity to the capability.

##### .001 – Malware

Adversaries may develop malware and malware components that can be used during targeting. Building malicious software can include the development of payloads, droppers, post-compromise tools, backdoors (including backdoored images), packers, C2 protocols, and the creation of infected removable media. Adversaries may develop malware to support their operations, creating a means for maintaining control of remote machines, evading defenses, and executing post-compromise behaviors.

As with legitimate development efforts, different skill sets may be required for developing malware. The skills needed may be located in-house, or may need to be contracted out. Use of a contractor may be considered an extension of that adversary's malware development capabilities, provided the adversary plays a role in shaping requirements and maintains a degree of exclusivity to the malware.

Some aspects of malware development, such as C2 protocol development, may require adversaries to obtain additional infrastructure. For example, malware developed that will communicate with Twitter for C2, may require use of Web Services.

##### .002 - Code Signing Certificates

Adversaries may create self-signed code signing certificates that can be used during targeting. Code signing is the process of digitally signing executables and scripts to confirm the software author and guarantee that the code has not been altered or corrupted. Code signing provides a level of authenticity for a program from the developer and a guarantee that the program has not been tampered with. Users and/or security tools may trust a signed piece of code more than an unsigned piece of code even if they don't know who issued the certificate or who the author is.

Prior to Code Signing, adversaries may develop self-signed code signing certificates for use in operations.

##### .003 - Digital Certificates

Adversaries may create self-signed SSL/TLS certificates that can be used during targeting. SSL/TLS certificates are designed to instill trust. They include information about the key, information about its owner's identity, and the digital signature of an entity that has verified the certificate's contents are correct. If the signature is valid, and the person examining the certificate trusts the signer, then they know they can use that key to communicate with its owner. In the case of self-signing, digital certificates will lack the element of trust associated with the signature of a third-party certificate authority (CA).

Adversaries may create self-signed SSL/TLS certificates that can be used to further their operations, such as encrypting C2 traffic (ex: Asymmetric Cryptography with Web Protocols) or even enabling Adversary-in-the-Middle if added to the root of trust (i.e. Install Root Certificate).

After creating a digital certificate, an adversary may then install that certificate (see Install Digital Certificate) on infrastructure under their control.

##### .004 – Exploits

Adversaries may develop exploits that can be used during targeting. An exploit takes advantage of a bug or vulnerability in order to cause unintended or unanticipated behavior to occur on computer hardware or software. Rather than finding/modifying exploits from online or purchasing them from exploit vendors, an adversary may develop their own exploits. Adversaries may use information acquired via Vulnerabilities to focus exploit development efforts. As part of the exploit development process, adversaries may uncover exploitable vulnerabilities through methods such as fuzzing and patch analysis.

As with legitimate development efforts, different skill sets may be required for developing exploits. The skills needed may be located in-house, or may need to be contracted out. Use of a contractor may be considered an extension of that adversary's exploit development capabilities, provided the adversary plays a role in shaping requirements and maintains an initial degree of exclusivity to the exploit.

Adversaries may use exploits during various phases of the adversary lifecycle (i.e. Exploit Public-Facing Application, Exploitation for Client Execution, Exploitation for Privilege Escalation, Exploitation for Defense Evasion, Exploitation for Credential Access, Exploitation of Remote Services, and Application or System Exploitation).

#### T1585 - Establish Accounts

Adversaries may create and cultivate accounts with services that can be used during targeting. Adversaries can create accounts that can be used to build a persona to further operations. Persona development consists of the development of public information, presence, history and appropriate affiliations. This development could be applied to social media, website, or other publicly available information that could be referenced and scrutinized for legitimacy over the course of an operation using that persona or identity.

For operations incorporating social engineering, the utilization of an online persona may be important. These personas may be fictitious or impersonate real people. The persona may exist on a single site or across multiple sites (ex: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google, GitHub, Docker Hub, etc.). Establishing a persona may require development of additional documentation to make them seem real. This could include filling out profile information, developing social networks, or incorporating photos.

Establishing accounts can also include the creation of accounts with email providers, which may be directly leveraged for Phishing for Information or Phishing.

##### .001 - Social Media Accounts

Adversaries may create and cultivate social media accounts that can be used during targeting. Adversaries can create social media accounts that can be used to build a persona to further operations. Persona development consists of the development of public information, presence, history and appropriate affiliations.

For operations incorporating social engineering, the utilization of a persona on social media may be important. These personas may be fictitious or impersonate real people. The persona may exist on a single social media site or across multiple sites (ex: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.). Establishing a persona on social media may require development of additional documentation to make them seem real. This could include filling out profile information, developing social networks, or incorporating photos.

Once a persona has been developed an adversary can use it to create connections to targets of interest. These connections may be direct or may include trying to connect through others. These accounts may be leveraged during other phases of the adversary lifecycle, such as during Initial Access (ex: Spearphishing via Service).

##### .002 - Email Accounts

Adversaries may create email accounts that can be used during targeting. Adversaries can use accounts created with email providers to further their operations, such as leveraging them to conduct Phishing for Information or Phishing. Adversaries may also take steps to cultivate a persona around the email account, such as through use of Social Media Accounts, to increase the chance of success of follow-on behaviors. Created email accounts can also be used in the acquisition of infrastructure (ex: Domains).

To decrease the chance of physically tying back operations to themselves, adversaries may make use of disposable email services.

##### .003 - Cloud Accounts

Adversaries may create accounts with cloud providers that can be used during targeting. Adversaries can use cloud accounts to further their operations, including leveraging cloud storage services such as Dropbox, MEGA, Microsoft OneDrive, or AWS S3 buckets for Exfiltration to Cloud Storage or to Upload Tools. Cloud accounts can also be used in the acquisition of infrastructure, such as Virtual Private Servers or Serverless infrastructure. Establishing cloud accounts may allow adversaries to develop sophisticated capabilities without managing their own servers.

Creating Cloud Accounts may also require adversaries to establish Email Accounts to register with the cloud provider.

#### T1588 - Obtain Capabilities

Adversaries may buy and/or steal capabilities that can be used during targeting. Rather than developing their own capabilities in-house, adversaries may purchase, freely download, or steal them. Activities may include the acquisition of malware, software (including licenses), exploits, certificates, and information relating to vulnerabilities. Adversaries may obtain capabilities to support their operations throughout numerous phases of the adversary lifecycle.

In addition to downloading free malware, software, and exploits from the internet, adversaries may purchase these capabilities from third-party entities. Third-party entities can include technology companies that specialize in malware and exploits, criminal marketplaces, or from individuals.

In addition to purchasing capabilities, adversaries may steal capabilities from third-party entities (including other adversaries). This can include stealing software licenses, malware, SSL/TLS and code-signing certificates, or raiding closed databases of vulnerabilities or exploits.

##### .001 – Malware

Adversaries may buy, steal, or download malware that can be used during targeting. Malicious software can include payloads, droppers, post-compromise tools, backdoors, packers, and C2 protocols. Adversaries may acquire malware to support their operations, obtaining a means for maintaining control of remote machines, evading defenses, and executing post-compromise behaviors.

In addition to downloading free malware from the internet, adversaries may purchase these capabilities from third-party entities. Third-party entities can include technology companies that specialize in malware development, criminal marketplaces (including Malware-as-a-Service, or MaaS), or from individuals. In addition to purchasing malware, adversaries may steal and repurpose malware from third-party entities (including other adversaries).

##### .002 – Tool

Adversaries may buy, steal, or download software tools that can be used during targeting. Tools can be open or closed source, free or commercial. A tool can be used for malicious purposes by an adversary, but (unlike malware) were not intended to be used for those purposes (ex: PsExec). Tool acquisition can involve the procurement of commercial software licenses, including for red teaming tools such as Cobalt Strike. Commercial software may be obtained through purchase, stealing licenses (or licensed copies of the software), or cracking trial versions.

Adversaries may obtain tools to support their operations, including to support execution of post-compromise behaviors. In addition to freely downloading or purchasing software, adversaries may steal software and/or software licenses from third-party entities (including other adversaries).

##### .003 - Code Signing Certificates

Adversaries may buy and/or steal code signing certificates that can be used during targeting. Code signing is the process of digitally signing executables and scripts to confirm the software author and guarantee that the code has not been altered or corrupted. Code signing provides a level of authenticity for a program from the developer and a guarantee that the program has not been tampered with. Users and/or security tools may trust a signed piece of code more than an unsigned piece of code even if they don't know who issued the certificate or who the author is.

Prior to Code Signing, adversaries may purchase or steal code signing certificates for use in operations. The purchase of code signing certificates may be done using a front organization or using information stolen from a previously compromised entity that allows the adversary to validate to a certificate provider as that entity. Adversaries may also steal code signing materials directly from a compromised third-party.

##### .004 - Digital Certificates

Adversaries may buy and/or steal SSL/TLS certificates that can be used during targeting. SSL/TLS certificates are designed to instill trust. They include information about the key, information about its owner's identity, and the digital signature of an entity that has verified the certificate's contents are correct. If the signature is valid, and the person examining the certificate trusts the signer, then they know they can use that key to communicate with its owner.

Adversaries may purchase or steal SSL/TLS certificates to further their operations, such as encrypting C2 traffic (ex: Asymmetric Cryptography with Web Protocols) or even enabling Adversary-in-the-Middle if the certificate is trusted or otherwise added to the root of trust (i.e. Install Root Certificate). The purchase of digital certificates may be done using a front organization or using information stolen from a previously compromised entity that allows the adversary to validate to a certificate provider as that entity. Adversaries may also steal certificate materials directly from a compromised third-party, including from certificate authorities. Adversaries may register or hijack domains that they will later purchase an SSL/TLS certificate for.

Certificate authorities exist that allow adversaries to acquire SSL/TLS certificates, such as domain validation certificates, for free.

After obtaining a digital certificate, an adversary may then install that certificate (see Install Digital Certificate) on infrastructure under their control.

##### .005 – Exploits

Adversaries may buy, steal, or download exploits that can be used during targeting. An exploit takes advantage of a bug or vulnerability in order to cause unintended or unanticipated behavior to occur on computer hardware or software. Rather than developing their own exploits, an adversary may find/modify exploits from online or purchase them from exploit vendors.

In addition to downloading free exploits from the internet, adversaries may purchase exploits from third-party entities. Third-party entities can include technology companies that specialize in exploit development, criminal marketplaces (including exploit kits), or from individuals. In addition to purchasing exploits, adversaries may steal and repurpose exploits from third-party entities (including other adversaries).

An adversary may monitor exploit provider forums to understand the state of existing, as well as newly discovered, exploits. There is usually a delay between when an exploit is discovered and when it is made public. An adversary may target the systems of those known to conduct exploit research and development in order to gain that knowledge for use during a subsequent operation.

Adversaries may use exploits during various phases of the adversary lifecycle (i.e. Exploit Public-Facing Application, Exploitation for Client Execution, Exploitation for Privilege Escalation, Exploitation for Defense Evasion, Exploitation for Credential Access, Exploitation of Remote Services, and Application or System Exploitation).

##### .006 – Vulnerabilities

Adversaries may acquire information about vulnerabilities that can be used during targeting. A vulnerability is a weakness in computer hardware or software that can, potentially, be exploited by an adversary to cause unintended or unanticipated behavior to occur. Adversaries may find vulnerability information by searching open databases or gaining access to closed vulnerability databases.

An adversary may monitor vulnerability disclosures/databases to understand the state of existing, as well as newly discovered, vulnerabilities. There is usually a delay between when a vulnerability is discovered and when it is made public. An adversary may target the systems of those known to conduct vulnerability research (including commercial vendors). Knowledge of a vulnerability may cause an adversary to search for an existing exploit (i.e. Exploits) or to attempt to develop one themselves (i.e. Exploits).

#### T1608 - Stage Capabilities

Adversaries may upload, install, or otherwise set up capabilities that can be used during targeting. To support their operations, an adversary may need to take capabilities they developed (Develop Capabilities) or obtained (Obtain Capabilities) and stage them on infrastructure under their control. These capabilities may be staged on infrastructure that was previously purchased/rented by the adversary (Acquire Infrastructure) or was otherwise compromised by them (Compromise Infrastructure). Capabilities may also be staged on web services, such as GitHub or Pastebin, or on Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) offerings that enable users to easily provision applications.

Staging of capabilities can aid the adversary in a number of initial access and post-compromise behaviors, including (but not limited to):

* Staging web resources necessary to conduct Drive-by Compromise when a user browses to a site.
* Staging web resources for a link target to be used with spearphishing.
* Uploading malware or tools to a location accessible to a victim network to enable Ingress Tool Transfer.
* Installing a previously acquired SSL/TLS certificate to use to encrypt command and control traffic (ex: Asymmetric Cryptography with Web Protocols).

##### .001 - Upload Malware

Adversaries may upload malware to third-party or adversary controlled infrastructure to make it accessible during targeting. Malicious software can include payloads, droppers, post-compromise tools, backdoors, and a variety of other malicious content. Adversaries may upload malware to support their operations, such as making a payload available to a victim network to enable Ingress Tool Transfer by placing it on an Internet accessible web server.

Malware may be placed on infrastructure that was previously purchased/rented by the adversary (Acquire Infrastructure) or was otherwise compromised by them (Compromise Infrastructure). Malware can also be staged on web services, such as GitHub or Pastebin.

Adversaries may upload backdoored files, such as application binaries, virtual machine images, or container images, to third-party software stores or repositories (ex: GitHub, CNET, AWS Community AMIs, Docker Hub). By chance encounter, victims may directly download/install these backdoored files via User Execution. Masquerading may increase the chance of users mistakenly executing these files.

##### .002 - Upload Tool

Adversaries may upload tools to third-party or adversary controlled infrastructure to make it accessible during targeting. Tools can be open or closed source, free or commercial. Tools can be used for malicious purposes by an adversary, but (unlike malware) were not intended to be used for those purposes (ex: PsExec). Adversaries may upload tools to support their operations, such as making a tool available to a victim network to enable Ingress Tool Transfer by placing it on an Internet accessible web server.

Tools may be placed on infrastructure that was previously purchased/rented by the adversary (Acquire Infrastructure) or was otherwise compromised by them (Compromise Infrastructure). Tools can also be staged on web services, such as an adversary controlled GitHub repo, or on Platform-as-a-Service offerings that enable users to easily provision applications.

Adversaries can avoid the need to upload a tool by having compromised victim machines download the tool directly from a third-party hosting location (ex: a non-adversary controlled GitHub repo), including the original hosting site of the tool.

##### .003 - Install Digital Certificate

Adversaries may install SSL/TLS certificates that can be used during targeting. SSL/TLS certificates are files that can be installed on servers to enable secure communications between systems. Digital certificates include information about the key, information about its owner's identity, and the digital signature of an entity that has verified the certificate's contents are correct. If the signature is valid, and the person examining the certificate trusts the signer, then they know they can use that key to communicate securely with its owner. Certificates can be uploaded to a server, then the server can be configured to use the certificate to enable encrypted communication with it.

Adversaries may install SSL/TLS certificates that can be used to further their operations, such as encrypting C2 traffic (ex: Asymmetric Cryptography with Web Protocols) or lending credibility to a credential harvesting site. Installation of digital certificates may take place for a number of server types, including web servers and email servers.

Adversaries can obtain digital certificates (see Digital Certificates) or create self-signed certificates (see Digital Certificates). Digital certificates can then be installed on adversary controlled infrastructure that may have been acquired (Acquire Infrastructure) or previously compromised (Compromise Infrastructure).

##### .004 - Drive-by Target

Adversaries may prepare an operational environment to infect systems that visit a website over the normal course of browsing. Endpoint systems may be compromised through browsing to adversary controlled sites, as in Drive-by Compromise. In such cases, the user's web browser is typically targeted for exploitation (often not requiring any extra user interaction once landing on the site), but adversaries may also set up websites for non-exploitation behavior such as Application Access Token. Prior to Drive-by Compromise, adversaries must stage resources needed to deliver that exploit to users who browse to an adversary controlled site. Drive-by content can be staged on adversary controlled infrastructure that has been acquired (Acquire Infrastructure) or previously compromised (Compromise Infrastructure).

Adversaries may upload or inject malicious web content, such as JavaScript, into websites. This may be done in a number of ways, including inserting malicious script into web pages or other user controllable web content such as forum posts. Adversaries may also craft malicious web advertisements and purchase ad space on a website through legitimate ad providers. In addition to staging content to exploit a user's web browser, adversaries may also stage scripting content to profile the user's browser (as in Gather Victim Host Information) to ensure it is vulnerable prior to attempting exploitation.

Websites compromised by an adversary and used to stage a drive-by may be ones visited by a specific community, such as government, a particular industry, or region, where the goal is to compromise a specific user or set of users based on a shared interest. This kind of targeted campaign is referred to a strategic web compromise or watering hole attack.

Adversaries may purchase domains similar to legitimate domains (ex: homoglyphs, typosquatting, different top-level domain, etc.) during acquisition of infrastructure (Domains) to help facilitate Drive-by Compromise.

##### .005 - Link Target

Adversaries may put in place resources that are referenced by a link that can be used during targeting. An adversary may rely upon a user clicking a malicious link in order to divulge information (including credentials) or to gain execution, as in Malicious Link. Links can be used for spearphishing, such as sending an email accompanied by social engineering text to coax the user to actively click or copy and paste a URL into a browser. Prior to a phish for information (as in Spearphishing Link) or a phish to gain initial access to a system (as in Spearphishing Link), an adversary must set up the resources for a link target for the spearphishing link.

Typically, the resources for a link target will be an HTML page that may include some client-side script such as JavaScript to decide what content to serve to the user. Adversaries may clone legitimate sites to serve as the link target, this can include cloning of login pages of legitimate web services or organization login pages in an effort to harvest credentials during Spearphishing Link. Adversaries may also Upload Malware and have the link target point to malware for download/execution by the user.

Adversaries may purchase domains similar to legitimate domains (ex: homoglyphs, typosquatting, different top-level domain, etc.) during acquisition of infrastructure (Domains) to help facilitate Malicious Link. Link shortening services can also be employed. Adversaries may also use free or paid accounts on Platform-as-a-Service providers to host link targets while taking advantage of the widely trusted domains of those providers to avoid being blocked.

##### .006 - SEO Poisoning

Adversaries may poison mechanisms that influence search engine optimization (SEO) to further lure staged capabilities towards potential victims. Search engines typically display results to users based on purchased ads as well as the site’s ranking/score/reputation calculated by their web crawlers and algorithms.

To help facilitate Drive-by Compromise, adversaries may stage content that explicitly manipulates SEO rankings in order to promote sites hosting their malicious payloads (such as Drive-by Target) within search engines. Poisoning SEO rankings may involve various tricks, such as stuffing keywords (including in the form of hidden text) into compromised sites. These keywords could be related to the interests/browsing habits of the intended victim(s) as well as more broad, seasonably popular topics (e.g. elections, trending news).

Adversaries may also purchase or plant incoming links to staged capabilities in order to boost the site’s calculated relevance and reputation.

SEO poisoning may also be combined with evasive redirects and other cloaking mechanisms (such as measuring mouse movements or serving content based on browser user agents, user language/localization settings, or HTTP headers) in order to feed SEO inputs while avoiding scrutiny from defenders.

## Initial Access

The adversary is trying to get into your network.

Initial Access consists of techniques that use various entry vectors to gain their initial foothold within a network. Techniques used to gain a foothold include targeted spearphishing and exploiting weaknesses on public-facing web servers. Footholds gained through initial access may allow for continued access, like valid accounts and use of external remote services, or may be limited-use due to changing passwords.

### Techniques

Techniques represent 'how' an adversary achieves a tactical goal by performing an action. For example, an adversary may dump credentials to achieve credential access.

#### T1189 - Drive-by Compromise

Adversaries may gain access to a system through a user visiting a website over the normal course of browsing. With this technique, the user's web browser is typically targeted for exploitation, but adversaries may also use compromised websites for non-exploitation behavior such as acquiring Application Access Token.

Multiple ways of delivering exploit code to a browser exist, including:

* A legitimate website is compromised where adversaries have injected some form of malicious code such as JavaScript, iFrames, and cross-site scripting.
* Malicious ads are paid for and served through legitimate ad providers.
* Built-in web application interfaces are leveraged for the insertion of any other kind of object that can be used to display web content or contain a script that executes on the visiting client (e.g. forum posts, comments, and other user controllable web content).

Often the website used by an adversary is one visited by a specific community, such as government, a particular industry, or region, where the goal is to compromise a specific user or set of users based on a shared interest. This kind of targeted campaign is often referred to a strategic web compromise or watering hole attack. There are several known examples of this occurring.

Typical drive-by compromise process:

1. A user visits a website that is used to host the adversary controlled content.
2. Scripts automatically execute, typically searching versions of the browser and plugins for a potentially vulnerable version.

\*The user may be required to assist in this process by enabling scripting or active website components and ignoring warning dialog boxes.

1. Upon finding a vulnerable version, exploit code is delivered to the browser.
2. If exploitation is successful, then it will give the adversary code execution on the user's system unless other protections are in place.

\*In some cases a second visit to the website after the initial scan is required before exploit code is delivered.

Unlike Exploit Public-Facing Application, the focus of this technique is to exploit software on a client endpoint upon visiting a website. This will commonly give an adversary access to systems on the internal network instead of external systems that may be in a DMZ.

Adversaries may also use compromised websites to deliver a user to a malicious application designed to Steal Application Access Tokens, like OAuth tokens, to gain access to protected applications and information. These malicious applications have been delivered through popups on legitimate websites.

#### T1190 - Exploit Public-Facing Application

Adversaries may attempt to take advantage of a weakness in an Internet-facing computer or program using software, data, or commands in order to cause unintended or unanticipated behavior. The weakness in the system can be a bug, a glitch, or a design vulnerability. These applications are often websites, but can include databases (like SQL), standard services (like SMB or SSH), network device administration and management protocols (like SNMP and Smart Install), and any other applications with Internet accessible open sockets, such as web servers and related services. Depending on the flaw being exploited this may include Exploitation for Defense Evasion.

If an application is hosted on cloud-based infrastructure and/or is containerized, then exploiting it may lead to compromise of the underlying instance or container. This can allow an adversary a path to access the cloud or container APIs, exploit container host access via Escape to Host, or take advantage of weak identity and access management policies.

For websites and databases, the OWASP top 10 and CWE top 25 highlight the most common web-based vulnerabilities.

#### T1133 - External Remote Services

Adversaries may leverage external-facing remote services to initially access and/or persist within a network. Remote services such as VPNs, Citrix, and other access mechanisms allow users to connect to internal enterprise network resources from external locations. There are often remote service gateways that manage connections and credential authentication for these services. Services such as Windows Remote Management and VNC can also be used externally.

Access to Valid Accounts to use the service is often a requirement, which could be obtained through credential pharming or by obtaining the credentials from users after compromising the enterprise network. Access to remote services may be used as a redundant or persistent access mechanism during an operation.

Access may also be gained through an exposed service that doesn’t require authentication. In containerized environments, this may include an exposed Docker API, Kubernetes API server, kubelet, or web application such as the Kubernetes dashboard.

#### T1200 - Hardware Additions

Adversaries may introduce computer accessories, networking hardware, or other computing devices into a system or network that can be used as a vector to gain access. Rather than just connecting and distributing payloads via removable storage (i.e. Replication Through Removable Media), more robust hardware additions can be used to introduce new functionalities and/or features into a system that can then be abused.

While public references of usage by threat actors are scarce, many red teams/penetration testers leverage hardware additions for initial access. Commercial and open source products can be leveraged with capabilities such as passive network tapping, network traffic modification (i.e. Adversary-in-the-Middle), keystroke injection, kernel memory reading via DMA, addition of new wireless access to an existing network, and others.

#### T1566 – Phishing

Adversaries may send phishing messages to gain access to victim systems. All forms of phishing are electronically delivered social engineering. Phishing can be targeted, known as spearphishing. In spearphishing, a specific individual, company, or industry will be targeted by the adversary. More generally, adversaries can conduct non-targeted phishing, such as in mass malware spam campaigns.

Adversaries may send victims emails containing malicious attachments or links, typically to execute malicious code on victim systems. Phishing may also be conducted via third-party services, like social media platforms. Phishing may also involve social engineering techniques, such as posing as a trusted source.

##### .001 - Spearphishing Attachment

Adversaries may send spearphishing emails with a malicious attachment in an attempt to gain access to victim systems. Spearphishing attachment is a specific variant of spearphishing. Spearphishing attachment is different from other forms of spearphishing in that it employs the use of malware attached to an email. All forms of spearphishing are electronically delivered social engineering targeted at a specific individual, company, or industry. In this scenario, adversaries attach a file to the spearphishing email and usually rely upon User Execution to gain execution. Spearphishing may also involve social engineering techniques, such as posing as a trusted source.

There are many options for the attachment such as Microsoft Office documents, executables, PDFs, or archived files. Upon opening the attachment (and potentially clicking past protections), the adversary's payload exploits a vulnerability or directly executes on the user's system. The text of the spearphishing email usually tries to give a plausible reason why the file should be opened, and may explain how to bypass system protections in order to do so. The email may also contain instructions on how to decrypt an attachment, such as a zip file password, in order to evade email boundary defenses. Adversaries frequently manipulate file extensions and icons in order to make attached executables appear to be document files, or files exploiting one application appear to be a file for a different one.

##### .002 - Spearphishing Link

Adversaries may send spearphishing emails with a malicious link in an attempt to gain access to victim systems. Spearphishing with a link is a specific variant of spearphishing. It is different from other forms of spearphishing in that it employs the use of links to download malware contained in email, instead of attaching malicious files to the email itself, to avoid defenses that may inspect email attachments. Spearphishing may also involve social engineering techniques, such as posing as a trusted source.

All forms of spearphishing are electronically delivered social engineering targeted at a specific individual, company, or industry. In this case, the malicious emails contain links. Generally, the links will be accompanied by social engineering text and require the user to actively click or copy and paste a URL into a browser, leveraging User Execution. The visited website may compromise the web browser using an exploit, or the user will be prompted to download applications, documents, zip files, or even executables depending on the pretext for the email in the first place. Adversaries may also include links that are intended to interact directly with an email reader, including embedded images intended to exploit the end system directly or verify the receipt of an email (i.e. web bugs/web beacons). Additionally, adversaries may use seemingly benign links that abuse special characters to mimic legitimate websites (known as an "IDN homograph attack").

Adversaries may also utilize links to perform consent phishing, typically with OAuth 2.0 request URLs that when accepted by the user provide permissions/access for malicious applications, allowing adversaries to Steal Application Access Tokens. These stolen access tokens allow the adversary to perform various actions on behalf of the user via API calls.

##### .003 - Spearphishing via Service

Adversaries may send spearphishing messages via third-party services in an attempt to gain access to victim systems. Spearphishing via service is a specific variant of spearphishing. It is different from other forms of spearphishing in that it employs the use of third party services rather than directly via enterprise email channels.

All forms of spearphishing are electronically delivered social engineering targeted at a specific individual, company, or industry. In this scenario, adversaries send messages through various social media services, personal webmail, and other non-enterprise controlled services. These services are more likely to have a less-strict security policy than an enterprise. As with most kinds of spearphishing, the goal is to generate rapport with the target or get the target's interest in some way. Adversaries will create fake social media accounts and message employees for potential job opportunities. Doing so allows a plausible reason for asking about services, policies, and software that's running in an environment. The adversary can then send malicious links or attachments through these services.

A common example is to build rapport with a target via social media, then send content to a personal webmail service that the target uses on their work computer. This allows an adversary to bypass some email restrictions on the work account, and the target is more likely to open the file since it's something they were expecting. If the payload doesn't work as expected, the adversary can continue normal communications and troubleshoot with the target on how to get it working.

#### T1091 - Replication Through Removable Media

Adversaries may move onto systems, possibly those on disconnected or air-gapped networks, by copying malware to removable media and taking advantage of Autorun features when the media is inserted into a system and executes. In the case of Lateral Movement, this may occur through modification of executable files stored on removable media or by copying malware and renaming it to look like a legitimate file to trick users into executing it on a separate system. In the case of Initial Access, this may occur through manual manipulation of the media, modification of systems used to initially format the media, or modification to the media's firmware itself.

Mobile devices may also be used to infect PCs with malware if connected via USB. This infection may be achieved using devices (Android, iOS, etc.) and, in some instances, USB charging cables. For example, when a smartphone is connected to a system, it may appear to be mounted similar to a USB-connected disk drive. If malware that is compatible with the connected system is on the mobile device, the malware could infect the machine (especially if Autorun features are enabled).

#### T1195 - Supply Chain Compromise

Adversaries may manipulate products or product delivery mechanisms prior to receipt by a final consumer for the purpose of data or system compromise.

Supply chain compromise can take place at any stage of the supply chain including:

* Manipulation of development tools
* Manipulation of a development environment
* Manipulation of source code repositories (public or private)
* Manipulation of source code in open-source dependencies
* Manipulation of software update/distribution mechanisms
* Compromised/infected system images (multiple cases of removable media infected at the factory)
* Replacement of legitimate software with modified versions
* Sales of modified/counterfeit products to legitimate distributors
* Shipment interdiction

While supply chain compromise can impact any component of hardware or software, adversaries looking to gain execution have often focused on malicious additions to legitimate software in software distribution or update channels. Targeting may be specific to a desired victim set or malicious software may be distributed to a broad set of consumers but only move on to additional tactics on specific victims. Popular open source projects that are used as dependencies in many applications may also be targeted as a means to add malicious code to users of the dependency.

##### .001 - Compromise Software Dependencies and Development Tools

Adversaries may manipulate software dependencies and development tools prior to receipt by a final consumer for the purpose of data or system compromise. Applications often depend on external software to function properly. Popular open source projects that are used as dependencies in many applications may be targeted as a means to add malicious code to users of the dependency.

Targeting may be specific to a desired victim set or may be distributed to a broad set of consumers but only move on to additional tactics on specific victims.

##### .002 - Compromise Software Supply Chain

Adversaries may manipulate application software prior to receipt by a final consumer for the purpose of data or system compromise. Supply chain compromise of software can take place in a number of ways, including manipulation of the application source code, manipulation of the update/distribution mechanism for that software, or replacing compiled releases with a modified version.

Targeting may be specific to a desired victim set or may be distributed to a broad set of consumers but only move on to additional tactics on specific victims.

##### .003 - Compromise Hardware Supply Chain

Adversaries may manipulate hardware components in products prior to receipt by a final consumer for the purpose of data or system compromise. By modifying hardware or firmware in the supply chain, adversaries can insert a backdoor into consumer networks that may be difficult to detect and give the adversary a high degree of control over the system. Hardware backdoors may be inserted into various devices, such as servers, workstations, network infrastructure, or peripherals.

#### T1199 - Trusted Relationship

Adversaries may breach or otherwise leverage organizations who have access to intended victims. Access through trusted third party relationship abuses an existing connection that may not be protected or receives less scrutiny than standard mechanisms of gaining access to a network.

Organizations often grant elevated access to second or third-party external providers in order to allow them to manage internal systems as well as cloud-based environments. Some examples of these relationships include IT services contractors, managed security providers, infrastructure contractors (e.g. HVAC, elevators, physical security). The third-party provider's access may be intended to be limited to the infrastructure being maintained, but may exist on the same network as the rest of the enterprise. As such, Valid Accounts used by the other party for access to internal network systems may be compromised and used.

In Office 365 environments, organizations may grant Microsoft partners or resellers delegated administrator permissions. By compromising a partner or reseller account, an adversary may be able to leverage existing delegated administrator relationships or send new delegated administrator offers to clients in order to gain administrative control over the victim tenant.

#### T1078 - Valid Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of existing accounts as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Compromised credentials may be used to bypass access controls placed on various resources on systems within the network and may even be used for persistent access to remote systems and externally available services, such as VPNs, Outlook Web Access, network devices, and remote desktop. Compromised credentials may also grant an adversary increased privilege to specific systems or access to restricted areas of the network. Adversaries may choose not to use malware or tools in conjunction with the legitimate access those credentials provide to make it harder to detect their presence.

In some cases, adversaries may abuse inactive accounts: for example, those belonging to individuals who are no longer part of an organization. Using these accounts may allow the adversary to evade detection, as the original account user will not be present to identify any anomalous activity taking place on their account.

The overlap of permissions for local, domain, and cloud accounts across a network of systems is of concern because the adversary may be able to pivot across accounts and systems to reach a high level of access (i.e., domain or enterprise administrator) to bypass access controls set within the enterprise.

##### .001 - Default Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a default account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Default accounts are those that are built-into an OS, such as the Guest or Administrator accounts on Windows systems. Default accounts also include default factory/provider set accounts on other types of systems, software, or devices, including the root user account in AWS and the default service account in Kubernetes.

Default accounts are not limited to client machines, rather also include accounts that are preset for equipment such as network devices and computer applications whether they are internal, open source, or commercial. Appliances that come preset with a username and password combination pose a serious threat to organizations that do not change it post installation, as they are easy targets for an adversary. Similarly, adversaries may also utilize publicly disclosed or stolen Private Keys or credential materials to legitimately connect to remote environments via Remote Services.

##### .002 - Domain Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a domain account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Domain accounts are those managed by Active Directory Domain Services where access and permissions are configured across systems and services that are part of that domain. Domain accounts can cover users, administrators, and services.

Adversaries may compromise domain accounts, some with a high level of privileges, through various means such as OS Credential Dumping or password reuse, allowing access to privileged resources of the domain.

##### .003 - Local Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a local account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Local accounts are those configured by an organization for use by users, remote support, services, or for administration on a single system or service.

Local Accounts may also be abused to elevate privileges and harvest credentials through OS Credential Dumping. Password reuse may allow the abuse of local accounts across a set of machines on a network for the purposes of Privilege Escalation and Lateral Movement.

##### .004 - Cloud Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a cloud account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Cloud accounts are those created and configured by an organization for use by users, remote support, services, or for administration of resources within a cloud service provider or SaaS application. In some cases, cloud accounts may be federated with traditional identity management system, such as Window Active Directory.

Compromised credentials for cloud accounts can be used to harvest sensitive data from online storage accounts and databases. Access to cloud accounts can also be abused to gain Initial Access to a network by abusing a Trusted Relationship. Similar to Domain Accounts, compromise of federated cloud accounts may allow adversaries to more easily move laterally within an environment.

Once a cloud account is compromised, an adversary may perform Account Manipulation - for example, by adding Additional Cloud Roles - to maintain persistence and potentially escalate their privileges.

## Execution

The adversary is trying to run malicious code.

Execution consists of techniques that result in adversary-controlled code running on a local or remote system. Techniques that run malicious code are often paired with techniques from all other tactics to achieve broader goals, like exploring a network or stealing data. For example, an adversary might use a remote access tool to run a PowerShell script that does Remote System Discovery.

### Techniques

Techniques represent 'how' an adversary achieves a tactical goal by performing an action. For example, an adversary may dump credentials to achieve credential access.

#### T1059 - Command and Scripting Interpreter

Adversaries may abuse command and script interpreters to execute commands, scripts, or binaries. These interfaces and languages provide ways of interacting with computer systems and are a common feature across many different platforms. Most systems come with some built-in command-line interface and scripting capabilities, for example, macOS and Linux distributions include some flavor of Unix Shell while Windows installations include the Windows Command Shell and PowerShell.

There are also cross-platform interpreters such as Python, as well as those commonly associated with client applications such as JavaScript and Visual Basic.

Adversaries may abuse these technologies in various ways as a means of executing arbitrary commands. Commands and scripts can be embedded in Initial Access payloads delivered to victims as lure documents or as secondary payloads downloaded from an existing C2. Adversaries may also execute commands through interactive terminals/shells, as well as utilize various Remote Services in order to achieve remote Execution.

##### .001 – PowerShell

Adversaries may abuse PowerShell commands and scripts for execution. PowerShell is a powerful interactive command-line interface and scripting environment included in the Windows operating system. Adversaries can use PowerShell to perform a number of actions, including discovery of information and execution of code. Examples include the Start-Process cmdlet which can be used to run an executable and the Invoke-Command cmdlet which runs a command locally or on a remote computer (though administrator permissions are required to use PowerShell to connect to remote systems).

PowerShell may also be used to download and run executables from the Internet, which can be executed from disk or in memory without touching disk.

A number of PowerShell-based offensive testing tools are available, including Empire, PowerSploit, PoshC2, and PSAttack.

PowerShell commands/scripts can also be executed without directly invoking the powershell.exe binary through interfaces to PowerShell's underlying System.Management.Automation assembly DLL exposed through the .NET framework and Windows Common Language Interface (CLI).

##### .002 – AppleScript

Adversaries may abuse AppleScript for execution. AppleScript is a macOS scripting language designed to control applications and parts of the OS via inter-application messages called AppleEvents. These AppleEvent messages can be sent independently or easily scripted with AppleScript. These events can locate open windows, send keystrokes, and interact with almost any open application locally or remotely.

Scripts can be run from the command-line via osascript /path/to/script or osascript -e "script here". Aside from the command line, scripts can be executed in numerous ways including Mail rules, Calendar.app alarms, and Automator workflows. AppleScripts can also be executed as plain text shell scripts by adding #!/usr/bin/osascript to the start of the script file.

AppleScripts do not need to call osascript to execute. However, they may be executed from within mach-O binaries by using the macOS Native APIs NSAppleScript or OSAScript, both of which execute code independent of the /usr/bin/osascript command line utility.

Adversaries may abuse AppleScript to execute various behaviors, such as interacting with an open SSH connection, moving to remote machines, and even presenting users with fake dialog boxes. These events cannot start applications remotely (they can start them locally), but they can interact with applications if they're already running remotely. On macOS 10.10 Yosemite and higher, AppleScript has the ability to execute Native APIs, which otherwise would require compilation and execution in a mach-O binary file format. Since this is a scripting language, it can be used to launch more common techniques as well such as a reverse shell via Python.

##### .003 - Windows Command Shell

Adversaries may abuse the Windows command shell for execution. The Windows command shell (cmd) is the primary command prompt on Windows systems. The Windows command prompt can be used to control almost any aspect of a system, with various permission levels required for different subsets of commands. The command prompt can be invoked remotely via Remote Services such as SSH.

Batch files (ex: .bat or .cmd) also provide the shell with a list of sequential commands to run, as well as normal scripting operations such as conditionals and loops. Common uses of batch files include long or repetitive tasks, or the need to run the same set of commands on multiple systems.

Adversaries may leverage cmd to execute various commands and payloads. Common uses include cmd to execute a single command, or abusing cmd interactively with input and output forwarded over a command and control channel.

##### .004 - Unix Shell

Adversaries may abuse Unix shell commands and scripts for execution. Unix shells are the primary command prompt on Linux and macOS systems, though many variations of the Unix shell exist (e.g. sh, bash, zsh, etc.) depending on the specific OS or distribution. Unix shells can control every aspect of a system, with certain commands requiring elevated privileges.

Unix shells also support scripts that enable sequential execution of commands as well as other typical programming operations such as conditionals and loops. Common uses of shell scripts include long or repetitive tasks, or the need to run the same set of commands on multiple systems.

Adversaries may abuse Unix shells to execute various commands or payloads. Interactive shells may be accessed through command and control channels or during lateral movement such as with SSH. Adversaries may also leverage shell scripts to deliver and execute multiple commands on victims or as part of payloads used for persistence.

##### .005 - Visual Basic

Adversaries may abuse Visual Basic (VB) for execution. VB is a programming language created by Microsoft with interoperability with many Windows technologies such as Component Object Model and the Native API through the Windows API. Although tagged as legacy with no planned future evolutions, VB is integrated and supported in the .NET Framework and cross-platform .NET Core.

Derivative languages based on VB have also been created, such as Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) and VBScript. VBA is an event-driven programming language built into Microsoft Office, as well as several third-party applications. VBA enables documents to contain macros used to automate the execution of tasks and other functionality on the host. VBScript is a default scripting language on Windows hosts and can also be used in place of JavaScript on HTML Application (HTA) webpages served to Internet Explorer (though most modern browsers do not come with VBScript support).

Adversaries may use VB payloads to execute malicious commands. Common malicious usage includes automating execution of behaviors with VBScript or embedding VBA content into Spearphishing Attachment payloads (which may also involve Mark-of-the-Web Bypass to enable execution).

##### .006 – Python

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Adversaries may use VB payloads to execute malicious commands. Common malicious usage includes automating execution of behaviors with VBScript or embedding VBA content into Spearphishing Attachment payloads (which may also involve Mark-of-the-Web Bypass to enable execution).[6]

##### .007 – JavaScript

Adversaries may abuse various implementations of JavaScript for execution. JavaScript (JS) is a platform-independent scripting language (compiled just-in-time at runtime) commonly associated with scripts in webpages, though JS can be executed in runtime environments outside the browser.

JScript is the Microsoft implementation of the same scripting standard. JScript is interpreted via the Windows Script engine and thus integrated with many components of Windows such as the Component Object Model and Internet Explorer HTML Application (HTA) pages.

JavaScript for Automation (JXA) is a macOS scripting language based on JavaScript, included as part of Apple’s Open Scripting Architecture (OSA), that was introduced in OSX 10.10. Apple’s OSA provides scripting capabilities to control applications, interface with the operating system, and bridge access into the rest of Apple’s internal APIs. As of OSX 10.10, OSA only supports two languages, JXA and AppleScript. Scripts can be executed via the command line utility osascript, they can be compiled into applications or script files via osacompile, and they can be compiled and executed in memory of other programs by leveraging the OSAKit Framework.

Adversaries may abuse various implementations of JavaScript to execute various behaviors. Common uses include hosting malicious scripts on websites as part of a Drive-by Compromise or downloading and executing these script files as secondary payloads. Since these payloads are text-based, it is also very common for adversaries to obfuscate their content as part of Obfuscated Files or Information.

##### .008 - Network Device CLI

Adversaries may abuse scripting or built-in command line interpreters (CLI) on network devices to execute malicious command and payloads. The CLI is the primary means through which users and administrators interact with the device in order to view system information, modify device operations, or perform diagnostic and administrative functions. CLIs typically contain various permission levels required for different commands.

Scripting interpreters automate tasks and extend functionality beyond the command set included in the network OS. The CLI and scripting interpreter are accessible through a direct console connection, or through remote means, such as telnet or SSH.

Adversaries can use the network CLI to change how network devices behave and operate. The CLI may be used to manipulate traffic flows to intercept or manipulate data, modify startup configuration parameters to load malicious system software, or to disable security features or logging to avoid detection.

#### T1609 - Container Administration Command

Adversaries may abuse a container administration service to execute commands within a container. A container administration service such as the Docker daemon, the Kubernetes API server, or the kubelet may allow remote management of containers within an environment.

In Docker, adversaries may specify an entrypoint during container deployment that executes a script or command, or they may use a command such as docker exec to execute a command within a running container. In Kubernetes, if an adversary has sufficient permissions, they may gain remote execution in a container in the cluster via interaction with the Kubernetes API server, the kubelet, or by running a command such as kubectl exec.

#### T1610 - Deploy Container

Adversaries may deploy a container into an environment to facilitate execution or evade defenses. In some cases, adversaries may deploy a new container to execute processes associated with a particular image or deployment, such as processes that execute or download malware. In others, an adversary may deploy a new container configured without network rules, user limitations, etc. to bypass existing defenses within the environment.

Containers can be deployed by various means, such as via Docker's create and start APIs or via a web application such as the Kubernetes dashboard or Kubeflow. Adversaries may deploy containers based on retrieved or built malicious images or from benign images that download and execute malicious payloads at runtime.

#### T1203 - Exploitation for Client Execution

Adversaries may exploit software vulnerabilities in client applications to execute code. Vulnerabilities can exist in software due to unsecure coding practices that can lead to unanticipated behavior. Adversaries can take advantage of certain vulnerabilities through targeted exploitation for the purpose of arbitrary code execution. Oftentimes the most valuable exploits to an offensive toolkit are those that can be used to obtain code execution on a remote system because they can be used to gain access to that system. Users will expect to see files related to the applications they commonly used to do work, so they are a useful target for exploit research and development because of their high utility.

Several types exist:

* **Browser-based Exploitation** - Web browsers are a common target through Drive-by Compromise and Spearphishing Link. Endpoint systems may be compromised through normal web browsing or from certain users being targeted by links in spearphishing emails to adversary controlled sites used to exploit the web browser. These often do not require an action by the user for the exploit to be executed.
* **Office Applications** - Common office and productivity applications such as Microsoft Office are also targeted through Phishing. Malicious files will be transmitted directly as attachments or through links to download them. These require the user to open the document or file for the exploit to run.
* **Common Third-party Applications** - Other applications that are commonly seen or are part of the software deployed in a target network may also be used for exploitation. Applications such as Adobe Reader and Flash, which are common in enterprise environments, have been routinely targeted by adversaries attempting to gain access to systems. Depending on the software and nature of the vulnerability, some may be exploited in the browser or require the user to open a file. For instance, some Flash exploits have been delivered as objects within Microsoft Office documents.

#### T1559 - Inter-Process Communication

Adversaries may abuse inter-process communication (IPC) mechanisms for local code or command execution. IPC is typically used by processes to share data, communicate with each other, or synchronize execution. IPC is also commonly used to avoid situations such as deadlocks, which occurs when processes are stuck in a cyclic waiting pattern.

Adversaries may abuse IPC to execute arbitrary code or commands. IPC mechanisms may differ depending on OS, but typically exists in a form accessible through programming languages/libraries or native interfaces such as Windows Dynamic Data Exchange or Component Object Model. Linux environments support several different IPC mechanisms, two of which being sockets and pipes. Higher level execution mediums, such as those of Command and Scripting Interpreters, may also leverage underlying IPC mechanisms. Adversaries may also use Remote Services such as Distributed Component Object Model to facilitate remote IPC execution.

##### .001 - Component Object Model

Adversaries may use the Windows Component Object Model (COM) for local code execution. COM is an inter-process communication (IPC) component of the native Windows application programming interface (API) that enables interaction between software objects, or executable code that implements one or more interfaces. Through COM, a client object can call methods of server objects, which are typically binary Dynamic Link Libraries (DLL) or executables (EXE). Remote COM execution is facilitated by Remote Services such as Distributed Component Object Model (DCOM).

Various COM interfaces are exposed that can be abused to invoke arbitrary execution via a variety of programming languages such as C, C++, Java, and Visual Basic. Specific COM objects also exist to directly perform functions beyond code execution, such as creating a Scheduled Task/Job, fileless download/execution, and other adversary behaviors related to privilege escalation and persistence.

##### .002 - Dynamic Data Exchange

Adversaries may use Windows Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE) to execute arbitrary commands. DDE is a client-server protocol for one-time and/or continuous inter-process communication (IPC) between applications. Once a link is established, applications can autonomously exchange transactions consisting of strings, warm data links (notifications when a data item changes), hot data links (duplications of changes to a data item), and requests for command execution.

Object Linking and Embedding (OLE), or the ability to link data between documents, was originally implemented through DDE. Despite being superseded by Component Object Model, DDE may be enabled in Windows 10 and most of Microsoft Office 2016 via Registry keys.

Microsoft Office documents can be poisoned with DDE commands, directly or through embedded files, and used to deliver execution via Phishing campaigns or hosted Web content, avoiding the use of Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) macros. Similarly, adversaries may infect payloads to execute applications and/or commands on a victim device by way of embedding DDE formulas within a CSV file intended to be opened through a Windows spreadsheet program.

DDE could also be leveraged by an adversary operating on a compromised machine who does not have direct access to a Command and Scripting Interpreter. DDE execution can be invoked remotely via Remote Services such as Distributed Component Object Model (DCOM).

##### .003 - XPC Services

Adversaries can provide malicious content to an XPC service daemon for local code execution. macOS uses XPC services for basic inter-process communication between various processes, such as between the XPC Service daemon and third-party application privileged helper tools. Applications can send messages to the XPC Service daemon, which runs as root, using the low-level XPC Service C API or the high level NSXPCConnection API in order to handle tasks that require elevated privileges (such as network connections). Applications are responsible for providing the protocol definition which serves as a blueprint of the XPC services. Developers typically use XPC Services to provide applications stability and privilege separation between the application client and the daemon.

Adversaries can abuse XPC services to execute malicious content. Requests for malicious execution can be passed through the application's XPC Services handler. This may also include identifying and abusing improper XPC client validation and/or poor sanitization of input parameters to conduct Exploitation for Privilege Escalation.

#### T1106 - Native API

Adversaries may interact with the native OS application programming interface (API) to execute behaviors. Native APIs provide a controlled means of calling low-level OS services within the kernel, such as those involving hardware/devices, memory, and processes. These native APIs are leveraged by the OS during system boot (when other system components are not yet initialized) as well as carrying out tasks and requests during routine operations.

Native API functions (such as NtCreateProcess) may be directed invoked via system calls / syscalls, but these features are also often exposed to user-mode applications via interfaces and libraries. For example, functions such as the Windows API CreateProcess() or GNU fork() will allow programs and scripts to start other processes. This may allow API callers to execute a binary, run a CLI command, load modules, etc. as thousands of similar API functions exist for various system operations.

Higher level software frameworks, such as Microsoft .NET and macOS Cocoa, are also available to interact with native APIs. These frameworks typically provide language wrappers/abstractions to API functionalities and are designed for ease-of-use/portability of code.

Adversaries may abuse these OS API functions as a means of executing behaviors. Similar to Command and Scripting Interpreter, the native API and its hierarchy of interfaces provide mechanisms to interact with and utilize various components of a victimized system. While invoking API functions, adversaries may also attempt to bypass defensive tools (ex: unhooking monitored functions via Disable or Modify Tools).

#### T1053 - Scheduled Task/Job

Adversaries may abuse task scheduling functionality to facilitate initial or recurring execution of malicious code. Utilities exist within all major operating systems to schedule programs or scripts to be executed at a specified date and time. A task can also be scheduled on a remote system, provided the proper authentication is met (ex: RPC and file and printer sharing in Windows environments). Scheduling a task on a remote system typically may require being a member of an admin or otherwise privileged group on the remote system.

Adversaries may use task scheduling to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for persistence. These mechanisms can also be abused to run a process under the context of a specified account (such as one with elevated permissions/privileges). Similar to System Binary Proxy Execution, adversaries have also abused task scheduling to potentially mask one-time execution under a trusted system process.

##### .002 – At

Adversaries may abuse the at utility to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code. The at utility exists as an executable within Windows, Linux, and macOS for scheduling tasks at a specified time and date. Although deprecated in favor of Scheduled Task's schtasks in Windows environments, using at requires that the Task Scheduler service be running, and the user to be logged on as a member of the local Administrators group.

On Linux and macOS, at may be invoked by the superuser as well as any users added to the at.allow file. If the at.allow file does not exist, the at.deny file is checked. Every username not listed in at.deny is allowed to invoke at. If the at.deny exists and is empty, global use of at is permitted. If neither file exists (which is often the baseline) only the superuser is allowed to use at.

Adversaries may use at to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for Persistence. at can also be abused to conduct remote Execution as part of Lateral Movement and/or to run a process under the context of a specified account (such as SYSTEM).

In Linux environments, adversaries may also abuse at to break out of restricted environments by using a task to spawn an interactive system shell or to run system commands. Similarly, at may also be used for Privilege Escalation if the binary is allowed to run as superuser via sudo.

##### .003 – Cron

Adversaries may abuse the cron utility to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code.[1] The cron utility is a time-based job scheduler for Unix-like operating systems. The crontab file contains the schedule of cron entries to be run and the specified times for execution. Any crontab files are stored in operating system-specific file paths.

An adversary may use cron in Linux or Unix environments to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for Persistence.

##### .005 - Scheduled Task

Adversaries may abuse the Windows Task Scheduler to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code. There are multiple ways to access the Task Scheduler in Windows. The schtasks utility can be run directly on the command line, or the Task Scheduler can be opened through the GUI within the Administrator Tools section of the Control Panel. In some cases, adversaries have used a .NET wrapper for the Windows Task Scheduler, and alternatively, adversaries have used the Windows netapi32 library to create a scheduled task.

The deprecated at utility could also be abused by adversaries (ex: At), though at.exe can not access tasks created with schtasks or the Control Panel.

An adversary may use Windows Task Scheduler to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for persistence. The Windows Task Scheduler can also be abused to conduct remote Execution as part of Lateral Movement and/or to run a process under the context of a specified account (such as SYSTEM). Similar to System Binary Proxy Execution, adversaries have also abused the Windows Task Scheduler to potentially mask one-time execution under signed/trusted system processes.

Adversaries may also create "hidden" scheduled tasks (i.e. Hide Artifacts) that may not be visible to defender tools and manual queries used to enumerate tasks. Specifically, an adversary may hide a task from schtasks /query and the Task Scheduler by deleting the associated Security Descriptor (SD) registry value (where deletion of this value must be completed using SYSTEM permissions). Adversaries may also employ alternate methods to hide tasks, such as altering the metadata (e.g., Index value) within associated registry keys.

##### .006 - Systemd Timers

Adversaries may abuse systemd timers to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code. Systemd timers are unit files with file extension .timer that control services. Timers can be set to run on a calendar event or after a time span relative to a starting point. They can be used as an alternative to Cron in Linux environments. Systemd timers may be activated remotely via the systemctl command line utility, which operates over SSH.

Each .timer file must have a corresponding .service file with the same name, e.g., example.timer and example.service. .service files are Systemd Service unit files that are managed by the systemd system and service manager. Privileged timers are written to /etc/systemd/system/ and /usr/lib/systemd/system while user level are written to ~/.config/systemd/user/.

An adversary may use systemd timers to execute malicious code at system startup or on a scheduled basis for persistence. Timers installed using privileged paths may be used to maintain root level persistence. Adversaries may also install user level timers to achieve user level persistence.

##### .007 - Container Orchestration Job

Adversaries may abuse task scheduling functionality provided by container orchestration tools such as Kubernetes to schedule deployment of containers configured to execute malicious code. Container orchestration jobs run these automated tasks at a specific date and time, similar to cron jobs on a Linux system. Deployments of this type can also be configured to maintain a quantity of containers over time, automating the process of maintaining persistence within a cluster.

In Kubernetes, a CronJob may be used to schedule a Job that runs one or more containers to perform specific tasks. An adversary therefore may utilize a CronJob to schedule deployment of a Job that executes malicious code in various nodes within a cluster.

#### T1648 - Serverless Execution

Adversaries may abuse serverless computing, integration, and automation services to execute arbitrary code in cloud environments. Many cloud providers offer a variety of serverless resources, including compute engines, application integration services, and web servers.

Adversaries may abuse these resources in various ways as a means of executing arbitrary commands. For example, adversaries may use serverless functions to execute malicious code, such as crypto-mining malware (i.e. Resource Hijacking). Adversaries may also create functions that enable further compromise of the cloud environment. For example, an adversary may use the IAM:PassRole permission in AWS or the iam.serviceAccounts.actAs permission in Google Cloud to add Additional Cloud Roles to a serverless cloud function, which may then be able to perform actions the original user cannot.

Serverless functions can also be invoked in response to cloud events (i.e. Event Triggered Execution), potentially enabling persistent execution over time. For example, in AWS environments, an adversary may create a Lambda function that automatically adds Additional Cloud Credentials to a user and a corresponding CloudWatch events rule that invokes that function whenever a new user is created. Similarly, an adversary may create a Power Automate workflow in Office 365 environments that forwards all emails a user receives or creates anonymous sharing links whenever a user is granted access to a document in SharePoint.

#### T1129 - Shared Modules

Adversaries may execute malicious payloads via loading shared modules. The Windows module loader can be instructed to load DLLs from arbitrary local paths and arbitrary Universal Naming Convention (UNC) network paths. This functionality resides in NTDLL.dll and is part of the Windows Native API which is called from functions like CreateProcess, LoadLibrary, etc. of the Win32 API.

The module loader can load DLLs:

* via specification of the (fully-qualified or relative) DLL pathname in the IMPORT directory;
* via EXPORT forwarded to another DLL, specified with (fully-qualified or relative) pathname (but without extension);
* via an NTFS junction or symlink program.exe.local with the fully-qualified or relative pathname of a directory containing the DLLs specified in the IMPORT directory or forwarded EXPORTs;
* via <file name="filename.extension" loadFrom="fully-qualified or relative pathname"> in an embedded or external "application manifest". The file name refers to an entry in the IMPORT directory or a forwarded EXPORT.

Adversaries may use this functionality as a way to execute arbitrary payloads on a victim system. For example, malware may execute share modules to load additional components or features.

#### T1072 - Software Deployment Tools

Adversaries may gain access to and use third-party software suites installed within an enterprise network, such as administration, monitoring, and deployment systems, to move laterally through the network. Third-party applications and software deployment systems may be in use in the network environment for administration purposes (e.g., SCCM, HBSS, Altiris, etc.).

Access to a third-party network-wide or enterprise-wide software system may enable an adversary to have remote code execution on all systems that are connected to such a system. The access may be used to laterally move to other systems, gather information, or cause a specific effect, such as wiping the hard drives on all endpoints.

The permissions required for this action vary by system configuration; local credentials may be sufficient with direct access to the third-party system, or specific domain credentials may be required. However, the system may require an administrative account to log in or to perform it's intended purpose.

#### T1569 - System Services

Adversaries may abuse system services or daemons to execute commands or programs. Adversaries can execute malicious content by interacting with or creating services either locally or remotely. Many services are set to run at boot, which can aid in achieving persistence (Create or Modify System Process), but adversaries can also abuse services for one-time or temporary execution.

##### .001 – Launchctl

Adversaries may abuse launchctl to execute commands or programs. Launchctl interfaces with launchd, the service management framework for macOS. Launchctl supports taking subcommands on the command-line, interactively, or even redirected from standard input.

Adversaries use launchctl to execute commands and programs as Launch Agents or Launch Daemons. Common subcommands include: launchctl load,launchctl unload, and launchctl start. Adversaries can use scripts or manually run the commands launchctl load -w "%s/Library/LaunchAgents/%s" or /bin/launchctl load to execute Launch Agents or Launch Daemons.

##### .002 - Service Execution

Adversaries may abuse the Windows service control manager to execute malicious commands or payloads. The Windows service control manager (services.exe) is an interface to manage and manipulate services. The service control manager is accessible to users via GUI components as well as system utilities such as sc.exe and Net.

PsExec can also be used to execute commands or payloads via a temporary Windows service created through the service control manager API. Tools such as PsExec and sc.exe can accept remote servers as arguments and may be used to conduct remote execution.

Adversaries may leverage these mechanisms to execute malicious content. This can be done by either executing a new or modified service. This technique is the execution used in conjunction with Windows Service during service persistence or privilege escalation.

#### T1204 - User Execution

An adversary may rely upon specific actions by a user in order to gain execution. Users may be subjected to social engineering to get them to execute malicious code by, for example, opening a malicious document file or link. These user actions will typically be observed as follow-on behavior from forms of Phishing.

While User Execution frequently occurs shortly after Initial Access it may occur at other phases of an intrusion, such as when an adversary places a file in a shared directory or on a user's desktop hoping that a user will click on it. This activity may also be seen shortly after Internal Spearphishing.

Adversaries may also deceive users into performing actions such as enabling Remote Access Software, allowing direct control of the system to the adversary, or downloading and executing malware for User Execution. For example, tech support scams can be facilitated through Phishing, vishing, or various forms of user interaction. Adversaries can use a combination of these methods, such as spoofing and promoting toll-free numbers or call centers that are used to direct victims to malicious websites, to deliver and execute payloads containing malware or Remote Access Software.

##### .001 - Malicious Link

An adversary may rely upon a user clicking a malicious link in order to gain execution. Users may be subjected to social engineering to get them to click on a link that will lead to code execution. This user action will typically be observed as follow-on behavior from Spearphishing Link. Clicking on a link may also lead to other execution techniques such as exploitation of a browser or application vulnerability via Exploitation for Client Execution. Links may also lead users to download files that require execution via Malicious File.

##### .002 - Malicious File

An adversary may rely upon a user opening a malicious file in order to gain execution. Users may be subjected to social engineering to get them to open a file that will lead to code execution. This user action will typically be observed as follow-on behavior from Spearphishing Attachment. Adversaries may use several types of files that require a user to execute them, including .doc, .pdf, .xls, .rtf, .scr, .exe, .lnk, .pif, and .cpl.

Adversaries may employ various forms of Masquerading and Obfuscated Files or Information to increase the likelihood that a user will open and successfully execute a malicious file. These methods may include using a familiar naming convention and/or password protecting the file and supplying instructions to a user on how to open it.

While Malicious File frequently occurs shortly after Initial Access it may occur at other phases of an intrusion, such as when an adversary places a file in a shared directory or on a user's desktop hoping that a user will click on it. This activity may also be seen shortly after Internal Spearphishing.

##### .003 - Malicious Image

Adversaries may rely on a user running a malicious image to facilitate execution. Amazon Web Services (AWS) Amazon Machine Images (AMIs), Google Cloud Platform (GCP) Images, and Azure Images as well as popular container runtimes such as Docker can be backdoored. Backdoored images may be uploaded to a public repository via Upload Malware, and users may then download and deploy an instance or container from the image without realizing the image is malicious, thus bypassing techniques that specifically achieve Initial Access. This can lead to the execution of malicious code, such as code that executes cryptocurrency mining, in the instance or container.

Adversaries may also name images a certain way to increase the chance of users mistakenly deploying an instance or container from the image (ex: Match Legitimate Name or Location).

#### T1047 - Windows Management Instrumentation

Adversaries may abuse Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI) to execute malicious commands and payloads. WMI is an administration feature that provides a uniform environment to access Windows system components. The WMI service enables both local and remote access, though the latter is facilitated by Remote Services such as Distributed Component Object Model (DCOM) and Windows Remote Management (WinRM). Remote WMI over DCOM operates using port 135, whereas WMI over WinRM operates over port 5985 when using HTTP and 5986 for HTTPS.

An adversary can use WMI to interact with local and remote systems and use it as a means to execute various behaviors, such as gathering information for Discovery as well as remote Execution of files as part of Lateral Movement.

## Persistence

The adversary is trying to maintain their foothold.

Persistence consists of techniques that adversaries use to keep access to systems across restarts, changed credentials, and other interruptions that could cut off their access. Techniques used for persistence include any access, action, or configuration changes that let them maintain their foothold on systems, such as replacing or hijacking legitimate code or adding startup code.

### Techniques

Techniques represent 'how' an adversary achieves a tactical goal by performing an action. For example, an adversary may dump credentials to achieve credential access.

#### T1098 - Account Manipulation

Adversaries may manipulate accounts to maintain access to victim systems. Account manipulation may consist of any action that preserves adversary access to a compromised account, such as modifying credentials or permission groups. These actions could also include account activity designed to subvert security policies, such as performing iterative password updates to bypass password duration policies and preserve the life of compromised credentials.

In order to create or manipulate accounts, the adversary must already have sufficient permissions on systems or the domain. However, account manipulation may also lead to privilege escalation where modifications grant access to additional roles, permissions, or higher-privileged Valid Accounts.

#### .001 - Additional Cloud Credentials

Adversaries may add adversary-controlled credentials to a cloud account to maintain persistent access to victim accounts and instances within the environment.

For example, adversaries may add credentials for Service Principals and Applications in addition to existing legitimate credentials in Azure AD. These credentials include both x509 keys and passwords. With sufficient permissions, there are a variety of ways to add credentials including the Azure Portal, Azure command line interface, and Azure or Az PowerShell modules.

In infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) environments, after gaining access through Cloud Accounts, adversaries may generate or import their own SSH keys using either the CreateKeyPair or ImportKeyPair API in AWS or the gcloud compute os-login ssh-keys add command in GCP. This allows persistent access to instances within the cloud environment without further usage of the compromised cloud accounts.

Adversaries may also use the CreateAccessKey API in AWS or the gcloud iam service-accounts keys create command in GCP to add access keys to an account. If the target account has different permissions from the requesting account, the adversary may also be able to escalate their privileges in the environment (i.e. Cloud Accounts).

#### .002 - Additional Email Delegate Permissions

Adversaries may grant additional permission levels to maintain persistent access to an adversary-controlled email account.

For example, the Add-MailboxPermission PowerShell cmdlet, available in on-premises Exchange and in the cloud-based service Office 365, adds permissions to a mailbox. In Google Workspace, delegation can be enabled via the Google Admin console and users can delegate accounts via their Gmail settings.

Adversaries may also assign mailbox folder permissions through individual folder permissions or roles. In Office 365 environments, adversaries may assign the Default or Anonymous user permissions or roles to the Top of Information Store (root), Inbox, or other mailbox folders. By assigning one or both user permissions to a folder, the adversary can utilize any other account in the tenant to maintain persistence to the target user’s mail folders.

This may be used in persistent threat incidents as well as BEC (Business Email Compromise) incidents where an adversary can add Additional Cloud Roles to the accounts they wish to compromise. This may further enable use of additional techniques for gaining access to systems. For example, compromised business accounts are often used to send messages to other accounts in the network of the target business while creating inbox rules (ex: Internal Spearphishing), so the messages evade spam/phishing detection mechanisms.

#### .003 - Additional Cloud Roles

An adversary may add additional roles or permissions to an adversary-controlled cloud account to maintain persistent access to a tenant. For example, adversaries may update IAM policies in cloud-based environments or add a new global administrator in Office 365 environments. With sufficient permissions, a compromised account can gain almost unlimited access to data and settings (including the ability to reset the passwords of other admins).

This account modification may immediately follow Create Account or other malicious account activity. Adversaries may also modify existing Valid Accounts that they have compromised. This could lead to privilege escalation, particularly if the roles added allow for lateral movement to additional accounts.

For example, in Azure AD environments, an adversary with the Application Administrator role can add Additional Cloud Credentials to their application's service principal. In doing so the adversary would be able to gain the service principal’s roles and permissions, which may be different from those of the Application Administrator. Similarly, in AWS environments, an adversary with appropriate permissions may be able to use the CreatePolicyVersion API to define a new version of an IAM policy or the AttachUserPolicy API to attach an IAM policy with additional or distinct permissions to a compromised user account.

Similarly, an adversary with the Azure AD Global Administrator role can toggle the "Access management for Azure resources" option to gain the ability to assign privileged access to Azure subscriptions and virtual machines to Azure AD users, including themselves.

#### .004 - SSH Authorized Keys

Adversaries may modify the SSH authorized\_keys file to maintain persistence on a victim host. Linux distributions and macOS commonly use key-based authentication to secure the authentication process of SSH sessions for remote management. The authorized\_keys file in SSH specifies the SSH keys that can be used for logging into the user account for which the file is configured. This file is usually found in the user's home directory under <user-home>/.ssh/authorized\_keys. Users may edit the system’s SSH config file to modify the directives PubkeyAuthentication and RSAAuthentication to the value "yes" to ensure public key and RSA authentication are enabled. The SSH config file is usually located under /etc/ssh/sshd\_config.

Adversaries may modify SSH authorized\_keys files directly with scripts or shell commands to add their own adversary-supplied public keys. In cloud environments, adversaries may be able to modify the SSH authorized\_keys file of a particular virtual machine via the command line interface or rest API. For example, by using the Google Cloud CLI’s "add-metadata" command an adversary may add SSH keys to a user account. Similarly, in Azure, an adversary may update the authorized\_keys file of a virtual machine via a PATCH request to the API. This ensures that an adversary possessing the corresponding private key may log in as an existing user via SSH.

Where authorized\_keys files are modified via cloud APIs or command line interfaces, an adversary may achieve privilege escalation on the target virtual machine if they add a key to a higher-privileged user.

#### .005 - Device Registration

Adversaries may register a device to an adversary-controlled account. Devices may be registered in a multifactor authentication (MFA) system, which handles authentication to the network, or in a device management system, which handles device access and compliance.

MFA systems, such as Duo or Okta, allow users to associate devices with their accounts in order to complete MFA requirements. An adversary that compromises a user’s credentials may enroll a new device in order to bypass initial MFA requirements and gain persistent access to a network.

Similarly, an adversary with existing access to a network may register a device to Azure AD and/or its device management system, Microsoft Intune, in order to access sensitive data or resources while bypassing conditional access policies.

Devices registered in Azure AD may be able to conduct Internal Spearphishing campaigns via intra-organizational emails, which are less likely to be treated as suspicious by the email client. Additionally, an adversary may be able to perform a Service Exhaustion Flood on an Azure AD tenant by registering a large number of devices.

#### T1197 - BITS Jobs

Adversaries may abuse BITS jobs to persistently execute code and perform various background tasks. Windows Background Intelligent Transfer Service (BITS) is a low-bandwidth, asynchronous file transfer mechanism exposed through Component Object Model (COM). BITS is commonly used by updaters, messengers, and other applications preferred to operate in the background (using available idle bandwidth) without interrupting other networked applications. File transfer tasks are implemented as BITS jobs, which contain a queue of one or more file operations.

The interface to create and manage BITS jobs is accessible through PowerShell and the BITSAdmin tool.

Adversaries may abuse BITS to download (e.g. Ingress Tool Transfer), execute, and even clean up after running malicious code (e.g. Indicator Removal). BITS tasks are self-contained in the BITS job database, without new files or registry modifications, and often permitted by host firewalls. BITS enabled execution may also enable persistence by creating long-standing jobs (the default maximum lifetime is 90 days and extendable) or invoking an arbitrary program when a job completes or errors (including after system reboots).

BITS upload functionalities can also be used to perform Exfiltration Over Alternative Protocol.

#### T1547 - Boot or Logon Autostart Execution

Adversaries may configure system settings to automatically execute a program during system boot or logon to maintain persistence or gain higher-level privileges on compromised systems. Operating systems may have mechanisms for automatically running a program on system boot or account logon. These mechanisms may include automatically executing programs that are placed in specially designated directories or are referenced by repositories that store configuration information, such as the Windows Registry. An adversary may achieve the same goal by modifying or extending features of the kernel.

Since some boot or logon autostart programs run with higher privileges, an adversary may leverage these to elevate privileges.

##### .001 - Registry Run Keys / Startup Folder

Adversaries may achieve persistence by adding a program to a startup folder or referencing it with a Registry run key. Adding an entry to the "run keys" in the Registry or startup folder will cause the program referenced to be executed when a user logs in. These programs will be executed under the context of the user and will have the account's associated permissions level.

Placing a program within a startup folder will also cause that program to execute when a user logs in. There is a startup folder location for individual user accounts as well as a system-wide startup folder that will be checked regardless of which user account logs in. The startup folder path for the current user is C:\Users\[Username]\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Windows\Start Menu\Programs\Startup. The startup folder path for all users is C:\ProgramData\Microsoft\Windows\Start Menu\Programs\StartUp.

The following run keys are created by default on Windows systems:

* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunOnce
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunOnce

Run keys may exist under multiple hives. The HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunOnceEx is also available but is not created by default on Windows Vista and newer. Registry run key entries can reference programs directly or list them as a dependency. For example, it is possible to load a DLL at logon using a "Depend" key with RunOnceEx:

reg add HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunOnceEx\0001\Depend /v 1 /d "C:\temp\evil[.]dll"

The following Registry keys can be used to set startup folder items for persistence:

* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\User Shell Folders
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Folders
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Folders
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\User Shell Folders

The following Registry keys can control automatic startup of services during boot:

* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunServicesOnce
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunServicesOnce
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunServices
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunServices

Using policy settings to specify startup programs creates corresponding values in either of two Registry keys:

* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Explorer\Run
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Explorer\Run

The Winlogon key controls actions that occur when a user logs on to a computer running Windows 7. Most of these actions are under the control of the operating system, but you can also add custom actions here. The HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon\Userinit and HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon\Shell subkeys can automatically launch programs.

Programs listed in the load value of the registry key HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Windows run when any user logs on.

By default, the multistring BootExecute value of the registry key HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager is set to autocheck autochk \*. This value causes Windows, at startup, to check the file-system integrity of the hard disks if the system has been shut down abnormally. Adversaries can add other programs or processes to this registry value which will automatically launch at boot.

Adversaries can use these configuration locations to execute malware, such as remote access tools, to maintain persistence through system reboots. Adversaries may also use Masquerading to make the Registry entries look as if they are associated with legitimate programs.

##### .002 - Authentication Package

Adversaries may abuse authentication packages to execute DLLs when the system boots. Windows authentication package DLLs are loaded by the Local Security Authority (LSA) process at system start. They provide support for multiple logon processes and multiple security protocols to the operating system.

Adversaries can use the autostart mechanism provided by LSA authentication packages for persistence by placing a reference to a binary in the Windows Registry location HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Lsa\ with the key value of "Authentication Packages"=<target binary>. The binary will then be executed by the system when the authentication packages are loaded.

##### .003 - Time Providers

Adversaries may abuse time providers to execute DLLs when the system boots. The Windows Time service (W32Time) enables time synchronization across and within domains. W32Time time providers are responsible for retrieving time stamps from hardware/network resources and outputting these values to other network clients.

Time providers are implemented as dynamic-link libraries (DLLs) that are registered in the subkeys of HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Services\W32Time\TimeProviders\. The time provider manager, directed by the service control manager, loads and starts time providers listed and enabled under this key at system startup and/or whenever parameters are changed.

Adversaries may abuse this architecture to establish persistence, specifically by registering and enabling a malicious DLL as a time provider. Administrator privileges are required for time provider registration, though execution will run in context of the Local Service account.

##### .004 - Winlogon Helper DLL

Adversaries may abuse features of Winlogon to execute DLLs and/or executables when a user logs in. Winlogon.exe is a Windows component responsible for actions at logon/logoff as well as the secure attention sequence (SAS) triggered by Ctrl-Alt-Delete. Registry entries in HKLM\Software[\Wow6432Node\]\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon\ and HKCU\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon\ are used to manage additional helper programs and functionalities that support Winlogon.

Malicious modifications to these Registry keys may cause Winlogon to load and execute malicious DLLs and/or executables. Specifically, the following subkeys have been known to be possibly vulnerable to abuse:

* Winlogon\Notify - points to notification package DLLs that handle Winlogon events
* Winlogon\Userinit - points to userinit.exe, the user initialization program executed when a user logs on
* Winlogon\Shell - points to explorer.exe, the system shell executed when a user logs on

Adversaries may take advantage of these features to repeatedly execute malicious code and establish persistence.

##### .005 - Security Support Provider

Adversaries may abuse security support providers (SSPs) to execute DLLs when the system boots. Windows SSP DLLs are loaded into the Local Security Authority (LSA) process at system start. Once loaded into the LSA, SSP DLLs have access to encrypted and plaintext passwords that are stored in Windows, such as any logged-on user's Domain password or smart card PINs.

The SSP configuration is stored in two Registry keys: HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Lsa\Security Packages and HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Lsa\OSConfig\Security Packages. An adversary may modify these Registry keys to add new SSPs, which will be loaded the next time the system boots, or when the AddSecurityPackage Windows API function is called.

##### .006 - Kernel Modules and Extensions

Adversaries may modify the kernel to automatically execute programs on system boot. Loadable Kernel Modules (LKMs) are pieces of code that can be loaded and unloaded into the kernel upon demand. They extend the functionality of the kernel without the need to reboot the system. For example, one type of module is the device driver, which allows the kernel to access hardware connected to the system.

When used maliciously, LKMs can be a type of kernel-mode Rootkit that run with the highest operating system privilege (Ring 0). Common features of LKM based rootkits include: hiding itself, selective hiding of files, processes and network activity, as well as log tampering, providing authenticated backdoors, and enabling root access to non-privileged users.

Kernel extensions, also called kext, are used in macOS to load functionality onto a system similar to LKMs for Linux. Since the kernel is responsible for enforcing security and the kernel extensions run as apart of the kernel, kexts are not governed by macOS security policies. Kexts are loaded and unloaded through kextload and kextunload commands. Kexts need to be signed with a developer ID that is granted privileges by Apple allowing it to sign Kernel extensions. Developers without these privileges may still sign kexts but they will not load unless SIP is disabled. If SIP is enabled, the kext signature is verified before being added to the AuxKC.

Since macOS Catalina 10.15, kernel extensions have been deprecated in favor of System Extensions. However, kexts are still allowed as "Legacy System Extensions" since there is no System Extension for Kernel Programming Interfaces.

Adversaries can use LKMs and kexts to conduct Persistence and/or Privilege Escalation on a system. Examples have been found in the wild, and there are some relevant open-source projects as well.

##### .007 - Re-opened Applications

Adversaries may modify plist files to automatically run an application when a user logs in. When a user logs out or restarts via the macOS Graphical User Interface (GUI), a prompt is provided to the user with a checkbox to "Reopen windows when logging back in". When selected, all applications currently open are added to a property list file named com.apple.loginwindow.[UUID].plist within the ~/Library/Preferences/ByHost directory. Applications listed in this file are automatically reopened upon the user’s next logon.

Adversaries can establish Persistence by adding a malicious application path to the com.apple.loginwindow.[UUID].plist file to execute payloads when a user logs in.

##### .008 - LSASS Driver

Adversaries may modify or add LSASS drivers to obtain persistence on compromised systems. The Windows security subsystem is a set of components that manage and enforce the security policy for a computer or domain. The Local Security Authority (LSA) is the main component responsible for local security policy and user authentication. The LSA includes multiple dynamic link libraries (DLLs) associated with various other security functions, all of which run in the context of the LSA Subsystem Service (LSASS) lsass.exe process.

Adversaries may target LSASS drivers to obtain persistence. By either replacing or adding illegitimate drivers (e.g., Hijack Execution Flow), an adversary can use LSA operations to continuously execute malicious payloads.

##### .009 - Shortcut Modification

Adversaries may create or modify shortcuts that can execute a program during system boot or user login. Shortcuts or symbolic links are used to reference other files or programs that will be opened or executed when the shortcut is clicked or executed by a system startup process.

Adversaries may abuse shortcuts in the startup folder to execute their tools and achieve persistence. Although often used as payloads in an infection chain (e.g. Spearphishing Attachment), adversaries may also create a new shortcut as a means of indirection, while also abusing Masquerading to make the malicious shortcut appear as a legitimate program. Adversaries can also edit the target path or entirely replace an existing shortcut so their malware will be executed instead of the intended legitimate program.

Shortcuts can also be abused to establish persistence by implementing other methods. For example, LNK browser extensions may be modified (e.g. Browser Extensions) to persistently launch malware.

##### .010 - Port Monitors

Adversaries may use port monitors to run an adversary supplied DLL during system boot for persistence or privilege escalation. A port monitor can be set through the AddMonitor API call to set a DLL to be loaded at startup. This DLL can be located in C:\Windows\System32 and will be loaded by the print spooler service, spoolsv.exe, on boot. The spoolsv.exe process also runs under SYSTEM level permissions. Alternatively, an arbitrary DLL can be loaded if permissions allow writing a fully-qualified pathname for that DLL to HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Print\Monitors.

The Registry key contains entries for the following:

* Local Port
* Standard TCP/IP Port
* USB Monitor
* WSD Port

Adversaries can use this technique to load malicious code at startup that will persist on system reboot and execute as SYSTEM.

##### .012 - Print Processors

Adversaries may abuse print processors to run malicious DLLs during system boot for persistence and/or privilege escalation. Print processors are DLLs that are loaded by the print spooler service, spoolsv.exe, during boot.

Adversaries may abuse the print spooler service by adding print processors that load malicious DLLs at startup. A print processor can be installed through the AddPrintProcessor API call with an account that has SeLoadDriverPrivilege enabled. Alternatively, a print processor can be registered to the print spooler service by adding the HKLM\SYSTEM\[CurrentControlSet or ControlSet001]\Control\Print\Environments\[Windows architecture: e.g., Windows x64]\Print Processors\[user defined]\Driver Registry key that points to the DLL. For the print processor to be correctly installed, it must be located in the system print-processor directory that can be found with the GetPrintProcessorDirectory API call.[1] After the print processors are installed, the print spooler service, which starts during boot, must be restarted in order for them to run. The print spooler service runs under SYSTEM level permissions, therefore print processors installed by an adversary may run under elevated privileges.

##### .013 - XDG Autostart Entries

Adversaries may modify XDG autostart entries to execute programs or commands during system boot. Linux desktop environments that are XDG compliant implement functionality for XDG autostart entries. These entries will allow an application to automatically start during the startup of a desktop environment after user logon. By default, XDG autostart entries are stored within the /etc/xdg/autostart or ~/.config/autostart directories and have a .desktop file extension.

Within an XDG autostart entry file, the Type key specifies if the entry is an application (type 1), link (type 2) or directory (type 3). The Name key indicates an arbitrary name assigned by the creator and the Exec key indicates the application and command line arguments to execute.

Adversaries may use XDG autostart entries to maintain persistence by executing malicious commands and payloads, such as remote access tools, during the startup of a desktop environment. Commands included in XDG autostart entries with execute after user logon in the context of the currently logged on user. Adversaries may also use Masquerading to make XDG autostart entries look as if they are associated with legitimate programs.

##### .014 - Active Setup

Adversaries may achieve persistence by adding a Registry key to the Active Setup of the local machine. Active Setup is a Windows mechanism that is used to execute programs when a user logs in. The value stored in the Registry key will be executed after a user logs into the computer. These programs will be executed under the context of the user and will have the account's associated permissions level.

Adversaries may abuse Active Setup by creating a key under HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Active Setup\Installed Components\ and setting a malicious value for StubPath. This value will serve as the program that will be executed when a user logs into the computer.

Adversaries can abuse these components to execute malware, such as remote access tools, to maintain persistence through system reboots. Adversaries may also use Masquerading to make the Registry entries look as if they are associated with legitimate programs.

##### .015 - Login Items

Adversaries may add login items to execute upon user login to gain persistence or escalate privileges. Login items are applications, documents, folders, or server connections that are automatically launched when a user logs in. Login items can be added via a shared file list or Service Management Framework. Shared file list login items can be set using scripting languages such as AppleScript, whereas the Service Management Framework uses the API call SMLoginItemSetEnabled.

Login items installed using the Service Management Framework leverage launchd, are not visible in the System Preferences, and can only be removed by the application that created them. Login items created using a shared file list are visible in System Preferences, can hide the application when it launches, and are executed through LaunchServices, not launchd, to open applications, documents, or URLs without using Finder. Users and applications use login items to configure their user environment to launch commonly used services or applications, such as email, chat, and music applications.

Adversaries can utilize AppleScript and Native API calls to create a login item to spawn malicious executables. Prior to version 10.5 on macOS, adversaries can add login items by using AppleScript to send an Apple events to the "System Events" process, which has an AppleScript dictionary for manipulating login items. Adversaries can use a command such as tell application "System Events" to make login item at end with properties /path/to/executable. This command adds the path of the malicious executable to the login item file list located in ~/Library/Application Support/com.apple.backgroundtaskmanagementagent/backgrounditems.btm. Adversaries can also use login items to launch executables that can be used to control the victim system remotely or as a means to gain privilege escalation by prompting for user credentials.

#### T1037 - Boot or Logon Initialization Scripts

Adversaries may use scripts automatically executed at boot or logon initialization to establish persistence. Initialization scripts can be used to perform administrative functions, which may often execute other programs or send information to an internal logging server. These scripts can vary based on operating system and whether applied locally or remotely.

Adversaries may use these scripts to maintain persistence on a single system. Depending on the access configuration of the logon scripts, either local credentials or an administrator account may be necessary.

An adversary may also be able to escalate their privileges since some boot or logon initialization scripts run with higher privileges.

##### .001 - Logon Script (Windows)

Adversaries may use Windows logon scripts automatically executed at logon initialization to establish persistence. Windows allows logon scripts to be run whenever a specific user or group of users log into a system. This is done via adding a path to a script to the HKCU\Environment\UserInitMprLogonScript Registry key.

Adversaries may use these scripts to maintain persistence on a single system. Depending on the access configuration of the logon scripts, either local credentials or an administrator account may be necessary.

##### .002 - Login Hook

Adversaries may use a Login Hook to establish persistence executed upon user logon. A login hook is a plist file that points to a specific script to execute with root privileges upon user logon. The plist file is located in the /Library/Preferences/com.apple.loginwindow.plist file and can be modified using the defaults command-line utility. This behavior is the same for logout hooks where a script can be executed upon user logout. All hooks require administrator permissions to modify or create hooks.

Adversaries can add or insert a path to a malicious script in the com.apple.loginwindow.plist file, using the LoginHook or LogoutHook key-value pair. The malicious script is executed upon the next user login. If a login hook already exists, adversaries can add additional commands to an existing login hook. There can be only one login and logout hook on a system at a time.

**Note:** Login hooks were deprecated in 10.11 version of macOS in favor of Launch Daemon and Launch Agent

##### .003 - Network Logon Script

Adversaries may use network logon scripts automatically executed at logon initialization to establish persistence. Network logon scripts can be assigned using Active Directory or Group Policy Objects. These logon scripts run with the privileges of the user they are assigned to. Depending on the systems within the network, initializing one of these scripts could apply to more than one or potentially all systems.

Adversaries may use these scripts to maintain persistence on a network. Depending on the access configuration of the logon scripts, either local credentials or an administrator account may be necessary.

##### .004 - RC Scripts

Adversaries may establish persistence by modifying RC scripts which are executed during a Unix-like system’s startup. These files allow system administrators to map and start custom services at startup for different run levels. RC scripts require root privileges to modify.

Adversaries can establish persistence by adding a malicious binary path or shell commands to rc.local, rc.common, and other RC scripts specific to the Unix-like distribution. Upon reboot, the system executes the script's contents as root, resulting in persistence.

Adversary abuse of RC scripts is especially effective for lightweight Unix-like distributions using the root user as default, such as IoT or embedded systems.

Several Unix-like systems have moved to Systemd and deprecated the use of RC scripts. This is now a deprecated mechanism in macOS in favor of Launchd. This technique can be used on Mac OS X Panther v10.3 and earlier versions which still execute the RC scripts. To maintain backwards compatibility some systems, such as Ubuntu, will execute the RC scripts if they exist with the correct file permissions.

##### .005 - Startup Items

Adversaries may use startup items automatically executed at boot initialization to establish persistence. Startup items execute during the final phase of the boot process and contain shell scripts or other executable files along with configuration information used by the system to determine the execution order for all startup items.

This is technically a deprecated technology (superseded by Launch Daemon), and thus the appropriate folder, /Library/StartupItems isn’t guaranteed to exist on the system by default, but does appear to exist by default on macOS Sierra. A startup item is a directory whose executable and configuration property list (plist), StartupParameters.plist, reside in the top-level directory.

An adversary can create the appropriate folders/files in the StartupItems directory to register their own persistence mechanism. Additionally, since StartupItems run during the bootup phase of macOS, they will run as the elevated root user.

#### T1176 - Browser Extensions

Adversaries may abuse Internet browser extensions to establish persistent access to victim systems. Browser extensions or plugins are small programs that can add functionality and customize aspects of Internet browsers. They can be installed directly or through a browser's app store and generally have access and permissions to everything that the browser can access.

Malicious extensions can be installed into a browser through malicious app store downloads masquerading as legitimate extensions, through social engineering, or by an adversary that has already compromised a system. Security can be limited on browser app stores so it may not be difficult for malicious extensions to defeat automated scanners. Depending on the browser, adversaries may also manipulate an extension's update url to install updates from an adversary controlled server or manipulate the mobile configuration file to silently install additional extensions.

Previous to macOS 11, adversaries could silently install browser extensions via the command line using the profiles tool to install malicious .mobileconfig files. In macOS 11+, the use of the profiles tool can no longer install configuration profiles, however .mobileconfig files can be planted and installed with user interaction.

Once the extension is installed, it can browse to websites in the background, steal all information that a user enters into a browser (including credentials), and be used as an installer for a RAT for persistence.

There have also been instances of botnets using a persistent backdoor through malicious Chrome extensions. There have also been similar examples of extensions being used for command & control.

#### T1554 - Compromise Client Software Binary

Adversaries may modify client software binaries to establish persistent access to systems. Client software enables users to access services provided by a server. Common client software types are SSH clients, FTP clients, email clients, and web browsers.

Adversaries may make modifications to client software binaries to carry out malicious tasks when those applications are in use. For example, an adversary may copy source code for the client software, add a backdoor, compile for the target, and replace the legitimate application binary (or support files) with the backdoored one. Since these applications may be routinely executed by the user, the adversary can leverage this for persistent access to the host.

#### T1136 - Create Account

Adversaries may create an account to maintain access to victim systems. With a sufficient level of access, creating such accounts may be used to establish secondary credentialed access that do not require persistent remote access tools to be deployed on the system.

Accounts may be created on the local system or within a domain or cloud tenant. In cloud environments, adversaries may create accounts that only have access to specific services, which can reduce the chance of detection.

##### .001 - Local Account

Adversaries may create a local account to maintain access to victim systems. Local accounts are those configured by an organization for use by users, remote support, services, or for administration on a single system or service. With a sufficient level of access, the net user /add command can be used to create a local account. On macOS systems the dscl -create command can be used to create a local account.

Such accounts may be used to establish secondary credentialed access that do not require persistent remote access tools to be deployed on the system.

##### .002 - Domain Account

Adversaries may create a domain account to maintain access to victim systems. Domain accounts are those managed by Active Directory Domain Services where access and permissions are configured across systems and services that are part of that domain. Domain accounts can cover user, administrator, and service accounts. With a sufficient level of access, the net user /add /domain command can be used to create a domain account.

Such accounts may be used to establish secondary credentialed access that do not require persistent remote access tools to be deployed on the system.

##### .003 - Cloud Account

Adversaries may create a cloud account to maintain access to victim systems. With a sufficient level of access, such accounts may be used to establish secondary credentialed access that does not require persistent remote access tools to be deployed on the system.

Adversaries may create accounts that only have access to specific cloud services, which can reduce the chance of detection.

#### T1543 - Create or Modify System Process

Adversaries may create or modify system-level processes to repeatedly execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. When operating systems boot up, they can start processes that perform background system functions. On Windows and Linux, these system processes are referred to as services. On macOS, launchd processes known as Launch Daemon and Launch Agent are run to finish system initialization and load user specific parameters.

Adversaries may install new services, daemons, or agents that can be configured to execute at startup or a repeatable interval in order to establish persistence. Similarly, adversaries may modify existing services, daemons, or agents to achieve the same effect.

Services, daemons, or agents may be created with administrator privileges but executed under root/SYSTEM privileges. Adversaries may leverage this functionality to create or modify system processes in order to escalate privileges.

##### .001 - Launch Agent

Adversaries may create or modify launch agents to repeatedly execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. When a user logs in, a per-user launchd process is started which loads the parameters for each launch-on-demand user agent from the property list (.plist) file found in /System/Library/LaunchAgents, /Library/LaunchAgents, and ~/Library/LaunchAgents. Property list files use the Label, ProgramArguments , and RunAtLoad keys to identify the Launch Agent's name, executable location, and execution time. Launch Agents are often installed to perform updates to programs, launch user specified programs at login, or to conduct other developer tasks.

Launch Agents can also be executed using the Launchctl command.

Adversaries may install a new Launch Agent that executes at login by placing a .plist file into the appropriate folders with the RunAtLoad or KeepAlive keys set to true. The Launch Agent name may be disguised by using a name from the related operating system or benign software. Launch Agents are created with user level privileges and execute with user level permissions.

##### .002 - Systemd Service

Adversaries may create or modify systemd services to repeatedly execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. The systemd service manager is commonly used for managing background daemon processes (also known as services) and other system resources. Systemd is the default initialization (init) system on many Linux distributions starting with Debian 8, Ubuntu 15.04, CentOS 7, RHEL 7, Fedora 15, and replaces legacy init systems including SysVinit and Upstart while remaining backwards compatible with the aforementioned init systems.

Systemd utilizes configuration files known as service units to control how services boot and under what conditions. By default, these unit files are stored in the /etc/systemd/system and /usr/lib/systemd/system directories and have the file extension .service. Each service unit file may contain numerous directives that can execute system commands:

* ExecStart, ExecStartPre, and ExecStartPost directives cover execution of commands when a services is started manually by 'systemctl' or on system start if the service is set to automatically start.
* ExecReload directive covers when a service restarts.
* ExecStop and ExecStopPost directives cover when a service is stopped or manually by 'systemctl'.

Adversaries have used systemd functionality to establish persistent access to victim systems by creating and/or modifying service unit files that cause systemd to execute malicious commands at system boot.

While adversaries typically require root privileges to create/modify service unit files in the /etc/systemd/system and /usr/lib/systemd/system directories, low privilege users can create/modify service unit files in directories such as ~/.config/systemd/user/ to achieve user-level persistence.

##### .003 - Windows Service

Adversaries may create or modify Windows services to repeatedly execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. When Windows boots up, it starts programs or applications called services that perform background system functions. Windows service configuration information, including the file path to the service's executable or recovery programs/commands, is stored in the Windows Registry.

Adversaries may install a new service or modify an existing service to execute at startup in order to persist on a system. Service configurations can be set or modified using system utilities (such as sc.exe), by directly modifying the Registry, or by interacting directly with the Windows API.

Adversaries may also use services to install and execute malicious drivers. For example, after dropping a driver file (ex: .sys) to disk, the payload can be loaded and registered via Native API functions such as CreateServiceW() (or manually via functions such as ZwLoadDriver() and ZwSetValueKey()), by creating the required service Registry values (i.e. Modify Registry), or by using command-line utilities such as PnPUtil.exe. Adversaries may leverage these drivers as Rootkits to hide the presence of malicious activity on a system. Adversaries may also load a signed yet vulnerable driver onto a compromised machine (known as "Bring Your Own Vulnerable Driver" (BYOVD)) as part of Exploitation for Privilege Escalation.

Services may be created with administrator privileges but are executed under SYSTEM privileges, so an adversary may also use a service to escalate privileges. Adversaries may also directly start services through Service Execution. To make detection analysis more challenging, malicious services may also incorporate Masquerade Task or Service (ex: using a service and/or payload name related to a legitimate OS or benign software component).

##### .004 - Launch Daemon

Adversaries may create or modify Launch Daemons to execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. Launch Daemons are plist files used to interact with Launchd, the service management framework used by macOS. Launch Daemons require elevated privileges to install, are executed for every user on a system prior to login, and run in the background without the need for user interaction. During the macOS initialization startup, the launchd process loads the parameters for launch-on-demand system-level daemons from plist files found in /System/Library/LaunchDaemons/ and /Library/LaunchDaemons/. Required Launch Daemons parameters include a Label to identify the task, Program to provide a path to the executable, and RunAtLoad to specify when the task is run. Launch Daemons are often used to provide access to shared resources, updates to software, or conduct automation tasks.

Adversaries may install a Launch Daemon configured to execute at startup by using the RunAtLoad parameter set to true and the Program parameter set to the malicious executable path. The daemon name may be disguised by using a name from a related operating system or benign software (i.e. Masquerading). When the Launch Daemon is executed, the program inherits administrative permissions.

Additionally, system configuration changes (such as the installation of third party package managing software) may cause folders such as usr/local/bin to become globally writeable. So, it is possible for poor configurations to allow an adversary to modify executables referenced by current Launch Daemon's plist files.

#### T1546 - Event Triggered Execution

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges using system mechanisms that trigger execution based on specific events. Various operating systems have means to monitor and subscribe to events such as logons or other user activity such as running specific applications/binaries. Cloud environments may also support various functions and services that monitor and can be invoked in response to specific cloud events.

Adversaries may abuse these mechanisms as a means of maintaining persistent access to a victim via repeatedly executing malicious code. After gaining access to a victim system, adversaries may create/modify event triggers to point to malicious content that will be executed whenever the event trigger is invoked.

Since the execution can be proxied by an account with higher permissions, such as SYSTEM or service accounts, an adversary may be able to abuse these triggered execution mechanisms to escalate their privileges.

##### .001 - Change Default File Association

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by a file type association. When a file is opened, the default program used to open the file (also called the file association or handler) is checked. File association selections are stored in the Windows Registry and can be edited by users, administrators, or programs that have Registry access or by administrators using the built-in assoc utility. Applications can modify the file association for a given file extension to call an arbitrary program when a file with the given extension is opened.

System file associations are listed under HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT.[extension], for example HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT.txt. The entries point to a handler for that extension located at HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\[handler]. The various commands are then listed as subkeys underneath the shell key at HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\[handler]\shell\[action]\command. For example:

* HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\txtfile\shell\open\command
* HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\txtfile\shell\print\command
* HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\txtfile\shell\printto\command

The values of the keys listed are commands that are executed when the handler opens the file extension. Adversaries can modify these values to continually execute arbitrary commands.

##### .002 – Screensaver

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by user inactivity. Screensavers are programs that execute after a configurable time of user inactivity and consist of Portable Executable (PE) files with a .scr file extension. The Windows screensaver application scrnsave.scr is located in C:\Windows\System32\, and C:\Windows\sysWOW64\ on 64-bit Windows systems, along with screensavers included with base Windows installations.

The following screensaver settings are stored in the Registry (HKCU\Control Panel\Desktop\) and could be manipulated to achieve persistence:

* SCRNSAVE.exe - set to malicious PE path
* ScreenSaveActive - set to '1' to enable the screensaver
* ScreenSaverIsSecure - set to '0' to not require a password to unlock
* ScreenSaveTimeout - sets user inactivity timeout before screensaver is executed

Adversaries can use screensaver settings to maintain persistence by setting the screensaver to run malware after a certain timeframe of user inactivity.

##### .003 - Windows Management Instrumentation Event Subscription

Adversaries may establish persistence and elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by a Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI) event subscription. WMI can be used to install event filters, providers, consumers, and bindings that execute code when a defined event occurs. Examples of events that may be subscribed to are the wall clock time, user loging, or the computer's uptime.

Adversaries may use the capabilities of WMI to subscribe to an event and execute arbitrary code when that event occurs, providing persistence on a system. Adversaries may also compile WMI scripts into Windows Management Object (MOF) files (.mof extension) that can be used to create a malicious subscription.

WMI subscription execution is proxied by the WMI Provider Host process (WmiPrvSe.exe) and thus may result in elevated SYSTEM privileges.

##### .004 - Unix Shell Configuration Modification

Adversaries may establish persistence through executing malicious commands triggered by a user’s shell. User Unix Shells execute several configuration scripts at different points throughout the session based on events. For example, when a user opens a command-line interface or remotely logs in (such as via SSH) a login shell is initiated. The login shell executes scripts from the system (/etc) and the user’s home directory (~/) to configure the environment. All login shells on a system use /etc/profile when initiated. These configuration scripts run at the permission level of their directory and are often used to set environment variables, create aliases, and customize the user’s environment. When the shell exits or terminates, additional shell scripts are executed to ensure the shell exits appropriately.

Adversaries may attempt to establish persistence by inserting commands into scripts automatically executed by shells. Using bash as an example, the default shell for most GNU/Linux systems, adversaries may add commands that launch malicious binaries into the /etc/profile and /etc/profile.d files. These files typically require root permissions to modify and are executed each time any shell on a system launches. For user level permissions, adversaries can insert malicious commands into ~/.bash\_profile, ~/.bash\_login, or ~/.profile which are sourced when a user opens a command-line interface or connects remotely. Since the system only executes the first existing file in the listed order, adversaries have used ~/.bash\_profile to ensure execution. Adversaries have also leveraged the ~/.bashrc file which is additionally executed if the connection is established remotely or an additional interactive shell is opened, such as a new tab in the command-line interface. Some malware targets the termination of a program to trigger execution, adversaries can use the ~/.bash\_logout file to execute malicious commands at the end of a session.

For macOS, the functionality of this technique is similar but may leverage zsh, the default shell for macOS 10.15+. When the Terminal.app is opened, the application launches a zsh login shell and a zsh interactive shell. The login shell configures the system environment using /etc/profile, /etc/zshenv, /etc/zprofile, and /etc/zlogin. The login shell then configures the user environment with ~/.zprofile and ~/.zlogin. The interactive shell uses the ~/.zshrc to configure the user environment. Upon exiting, /etc/zlogout and ~/.zlogout are executed. For legacy programs, macOS executes /etc/bashrc on startup.

##### .005 – Trap

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by an interrupt signal. The trap command allows programs and shells to specify commands that will be executed upon receiving interrupt signals. A common situation is a script allowing for graceful termination and handling of common keyboard interrupts like ctrl+c and ctrl+d.

Adversaries can use this to register code to be executed when the shell encounters specific interrupts as a persistence mechanism. Trap commands are of the following format trap 'command list' signals where "command list" will be executed when "signals" are received.

##### .006 - LC\_LOAD\_DYLIB Addition

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by the execution of tainted binaries. Mach-O binaries have a series of headers that are used to perform certain operations when a binary is loaded. The LC\_LOAD\_DYLIB header in a Mach-O binary tells macOS and OS X which dynamic libraries (dylibs) to load during execution time. These can be added ad-hoc to the compiled binary as long as adjustments are made to the rest of the fields and dependencies. There are tools available to perform these changes.

Adversaries may modify Mach-O binary headers to load and execute malicious dylibs every time the binary is executed. Although any changes will invalidate digital signatures on binaries because the binary is being modified, this can be remediated by simply removing the LC\_CODE\_SIGNATURE command from the binary so that the signature isn’t checked at load time.

##### .007 - Netsh Helper DLL

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by Netsh Helper DLLs. Netsh.exe (also referred to as Netshell) is a command-line scripting utility used to interact with the network configuration of a system. It contains functionality to add helper DLLs for extending functionality of the utility.[1] The paths to registered netsh.exe helper DLLs are entered into the Windows Registry at HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Netsh.

Adversaries can use netsh.exe helper DLLs to trigger execution of arbitrary code in a persistent manner. This execution would take place anytime netsh.exe is executed, which could happen automatically, with another persistence technique, or if other software (ex: VPN) is present on the system that executes netsh.exe as part of its normal functionality.

##### .008 - Accessibility Features

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by accessibility features. Windows contains accessibility features that may be launched with a key combination before a user has logged in (ex: when the user is on the Windows logon screen). An adversary can modify the way these programs are launched to get a command prompt or backdoor without logging in to the system.

Two common accessibility programs are C:\Windows\System32\sethc.exe, launched when the shift key is pressed five times and C:\Windows\System32\utilman.exe, launched when the Windows + U key combination is pressed. The sethc.exe program is often referred to as "sticky keys", and has been used by adversaries for unauthenticated access through a remote desktop login screen.

Depending on the version of Windows, an adversary may take advantage of these features in different ways. Common methods used by adversaries include replacing accessibility feature binaries or pointers/references to these binaries in the Registry. In newer versions of Windows, the replaced binary needs to be digitally signed for x64 systems, the binary must reside in %systemdir%\, and it must be protected by Windows File or Resource Protection (WFP/WRP). The Image File Execution Options Injection debugger method was likely discovered as a potential workaround because it does not require the corresponding accessibility feature binary to be replaced.

For simple binary replacement on Windows XP and later as well as and Windows Server 2003/R2 and later, for example, the program (e.g., C:\Windows\System32\utilman.exe) may be replaced with "cmd.exe" (or another program that provides backdoor access). Subsequently, pressing the appropriate key combination at the login screen while sitting at the keyboard or when connected over Remote Desktop Protocol will cause the replaced file to be executed with SYSTEM privileges.

Other accessibility features exist that may also be leveraged in a similar fashion:

* On-Screen Keyboard: C:\Windows\System32\osk.exe
* Magnifier: C:\Windows\System32\Magnify.exe
* Narrator: C:\Windows\System32\Narrator.exe
* Display Switcher: C:\Windows\System32\DisplaySwitch.exe
* App Switcher: C:\Windows\System32\AtBroker.exe

##### .009 - AppCert DLLs

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by AppCert DLLs loaded into processes. Dynamic-link libraries (DLLs) that are specified in the AppCertDLLs Registry key under HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager\ are loaded into every process that calls the ubiquitously used application programming interface (API) functions CreateProcess, CreateProcessAsUser, CreateProcessWithLoginW, CreateProcessWithTokenW, or WinExec.

Similar to Process Injection, this value can be abused to obtain elevated privileges by causing a malicious DLL to be loaded and run in the context of separate processes on the computer. Malicious AppCert DLLs may also provide persistence by continuously being triggered by API activity.

##### .010 - AppInit DLLs

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by AppInit DLLs loaded into processes. Dynamic-link libraries (DLLs) that are specified in the AppInit\_DLLs value in the Registry keys HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Windows or HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Wow6432Node\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Windows are loaded by user32.dll into every process that loads user32.dll. In practice this is nearly every program, since user32.dll is a very common library.

Similar to Process Injection, these values can be abused to obtain elevated privileges by causing a malicious DLL to be loaded and run in the context of separate processes on the computer. Malicious AppInit DLLs may also provide persistence by continuously being triggered by API activity.

The AppInit DLL functionality is disabled in Windows 8 and later versions when secure boot is enabled.

##### .011 - Application Shimming

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by application shims. The Microsoft Windows Application Compatibility Infrastructure/Framework (Application Shim) was created to allow for backward compatibility of software as the operating system codebase changes over time. For example, the application shimming feature allows developers to apply fixes to applications (without rewriting code) that were created for Windows XP so that it will work with Windows 10. [1]

Within the framework, shims are created to act as a buffer between the program (or more specifically, the Import Address Table) and the Windows OS. When a program is executed, the shim cache is referenced to determine if the program requires the use of the shim database (.sdb). If so, the shim database uses hooking to redirect the code as necessary in order to communicate with the OS.

A list of all shims currently installed by the default Windows installer (sdbinst.exe) is kept in:

* %WINDIR%\AppPatch\sysmain.sdb
* HKLM\software\microsoft\windows nt\currentversion\appcompatflags\installedsdb

Custom databases are stored in:

* %WINDIR%\AppPatch\custom and %WINDIR%\AppPatch\AppPatch64\Custom
* HKLM\software\microsoft\windows nt\currentversion\appcompatflags\custom

To keep shims secure, Windows designed them to run in user mode so they cannot modify the kernel and you must have administrator privileges to install a shim. However, certain shims can be used to Bypass User Account Control (UAC and RedirectEXE), inject DLLs into processes (InjectDLL), disable Data Execution Prevention (DisableNX) and Structure Exception Handling (DisableSEH), and intercept memory addresses (GetProcAddress).

Utilizing these shims may allow an adversary to perform several malicious acts such as elevate privileges, install backdoors, disable defenses like Windows Defender, etc. Shims can also be abused to establish persistence by continuously being invoked by affected programs.

##### .012 - Image File Execution Options Injection

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by Image File Execution Options (IFEO) debuggers. IFEOs enable a developer to attach a debugger to an application. When a process is created, a debugger present in an application’s IFEO will be prepended to the application’s name, effectively launching the new process under the debugger (e.g., C:\dbg\ntsd.exe -g notepad.exe).

IFEOs can be set directly via the Registry or in Global Flags via the GFlags tool. IFEOs are represented as Debugger values in the Registry under HKLM\SOFTWARE{\Wow6432Node}\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Image File Execution Options\ where <executable> is the binary on which the debugger is attached.

IFEOs can also enable an arbitrary monitor program to be launched when a specified program silently exits (i.e. is prematurely terminated by itself or a second, non kernel-mode process). Similar to debuggers, silent exit monitoring can be enabled through GFlags and/or by directly modifying IFEO and silent process exit Registry values in HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\SilentProcessExit\.

Similar to Accessibility Features, on Windows Vista and later as well as Windows Server 2008 and later, a Registry key may be modified that configures "cmd.exe," or another program that provides backdoor access, as a "debugger" for an accessibility program (ex: utilman.exe). After the Registry is modified, pressing the appropriate key combination at the login screen while at the keyboard or when connected with Remote Desktop Protocol will cause the "debugger" program to be executed with SYSTEM privileges.

Similar to Process Injection, these values may also be abused to obtain privilege escalation by causing a malicious executable to be loaded and run in the context of separate processes on the computer. Installing IFEO mechanisms may also provide Persistence via continuous triggered invocation.

Malware may also use IFEO to Impair Defenses by registering invalid debuggers that redirect and effectively disable various system and security applications.

##### .013 - PowerShell Profile

Adversaries may gain persistence and elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by PowerShell profiles. A PowerShell profile (profile.ps1) is a script that runs when PowerShell starts and can be used as a logon script to customize user environments.

PowerShell supports several profiles depending on the user or host program. For example, there can be different profiles for PowerShell host programs such as the PowerShell console, PowerShell ISE or Visual Studio Code. An administrator can also configure a profile that applies to all users and host programs on the local computer.

Adversaries may modify these profiles to include arbitrary commands, functions, modules, and/or PowerShell drives to gain persistence. Every time a user opens a PowerShell session the modified script will be executed unless the -NoProfile flag is used when it is launched.

An adversary may also be able to escalate privileges if a script in a PowerShell profile is loaded and executed by an account with higher privileges, such as a domain administrator.

##### .014 – Emond

Adversaries may gain persistence and elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by the Event Monitor Daemon (emond). Emond is a Launch Daemon that accepts events from various services, runs them through a simple rules engine, and takes action. The emond binary at /sbin/emond will load any rules from the /etc/emond.d/rules/ directory and take action once an explicitly defined event takes place.

The rule files are in the plist format and define the name, event type, and action to take. Some examples of event types include system startup and user authentication. Examples of actions are to run a system command or send an email. The emond service will not launch if there is no file present in the QueueDirectories path /private/var/db/emondClients, specified in the Launch Daemon configuration file at /System/Library/LaunchDaemons/com.apple.emond.plist.

Adversaries may abuse this service by writing a rule to execute commands when a defined event occurs, such as system start up or user authentication. Adversaries may also be able to escalate privileges from administrator to root as the emond service is executed with root privileges by the Launch Daemon service.

##### .015 - Component Object Model Hijacking

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by hijacked references to Component Object Model (COM) objects. COM is a system within Windows to enable interaction between software components through the operating system. References to various COM objects are stored in the Registry.

Adversaries can use the COM system to insert malicious code that can be executed in place of legitimate software through hijacking the COM references and relationships as a means for persistence. Hijacking a COM object requires a change in the Registry to replace a reference to a legitimate system component which may cause that component to not work when executed. When that system component is executed through normal system operation the adversary's code will be executed instead. An adversary is likely to hijack objects that are used frequently enough to maintain a consistent level of persistence, but are unlikely to break noticeable functionality within the system as to avoid system instability that could lead to detection.

##### .016 - Installer Packages

Adversaries may establish persistence and elevate privileges by using an installer to trigger the execution of malicious content. Installer packages are OS specific and contain the resources an operating system needs to install applications on a system. Installer packages can include scripts that run prior to installation as well as after installation is complete. Installer scripts may inherit elevated permissions when executed. Developers often use these scripts to prepare the environment for installation, check requirements, download dependencies, and remove files after installation.

Using legitimate applications, adversaries have distributed applications with modified installer scripts to execute malicious content. When a user installs the application, they may be required to grant administrative permissions to allow the installation. At the end of the installation process of the legitimate application, content such as macOS postinstall scripts can be executed with the inherited elevated permissions. Adversaries can use these scripts to execute a malicious executable or install other malicious components (such as a Launch Daemon) with the elevated permissions.

Depending on the distribution, Linux versions of package installer scripts are sometimes called maintainer scripts or post installation scripts. These scripts can include preinst, postinst, prerm, postrm scripts and run as root when executed.

For Windows, the Microsoft Installer services uses .msi files to manage the installing, updating, and uninstalling of applications. Adversaries have leveraged Prebuild and Postbuild events to run commands before or after a build when installing .msi files.

#### T1133 - External Remote Services

Adversaries may leverage external-facing remote services to initially access and/or persist within a network. Remote services such as VPNs, Citrix, and other access mechanisms allow users to connect to internal enterprise network resources from external locations. There are often remote service gateways that manage connections and credential authentication for these services. Services such as Windows Remote Management and VNC can also be used externally.

Access to Valid Accounts to use the service is often a requirement, which could be obtained through credential pharming or by obtaining the credentials from users after compromising the enterprise network. Access to remote services may be used as a redundant or persistent access mechanism during an operation.

Access may also be gained through an exposed service that doesn’t require authentication. In containerized environments, this may include an exposed Docker API, Kubernetes API server, kubelet, or web application such as the Kubernetes dashboard.

#### T1574 - Hijack Execution Flow

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the way operating systems run programs. Hijacking execution flow can be for the purposes of persistence, since this hijacked execution may reoccur over time. Adversaries may also use these mechanisms to elevate privileges or evade defenses, such as application control or other restrictions on execution.

There are many ways an adversary may hijack the flow of execution, including by manipulating how the operating system locates programs to be executed. How the operating system locates libraries to be used by a program can also be intercepted. Locations where the operating system looks for programs/resources, such as file directories and in the case of Windows the Registry, could also be poisoned to include malicious payloads.

##### .001 - DLL Search Order Hijacking

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the search order used to load DLLs. Windows systems use a common method to look for required DLLs to load into a program. Hijacking DLL loads may be for the purpose of establishing persistence as well as elevating privileges and/or evading restrictions on file execution.

There are many ways an adversary can hijack DLL loads. Adversaries may plant trojan dynamic-link library files (DLLs) in a directory that will be searched before the location of a legitimate library that will be requested by a program, causing Windows to load their malicious library when it is called for by the victim program. Adversaries may also perform DLL preloading, also called binary planting attacks, by placing a malicious DLL with the same name as an ambiguously specified DLL in a location that Windows searches before the legitimate DLL. Often this location is the current working directory of the program. Remote DLL preloading attacks occur when a program sets its current directory to a remote location such as a Web share before loading a DLL.

Adversaries may also directly modify the search order via DLL redirection, which after being enabled (in the Registry and creation of a redirection file) may cause a program to load a different DLL.

If a search order-vulnerable program is configured to run at a higher privilege level, then the adversary-controlled DLL that is loaded will also be executed at the higher level. In this case, the technique could be used for privilege escalation from user to administrator or SYSTEM or from administrator to SYSTEM, depending on the program. Programs that fall victim to path hijacking may appear to behave normally because malicious DLLs may be configured to also load the legitimate DLLs they were meant to replace.

##### .002 - DLL Side-Loading

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by side-loading DLLs. Similar to DLL Search Order Hijacking, side-loading involves hijacking which DLL a program loads. But rather than just planting the DLL within the search order of a program then waiting for the victim application to be invoked, adversaries may directly side-load their payloads by planting then invoking a legitimate application that executes their payload(s).

Side-loading takes advantage of the DLL search order used by the loader by positioning both the victim application and malicious payload(s) alongside each other. Adversaries likely use side-loading as a means of masking actions they perform under a legitimate, trusted, and potentially elevated system or software process. Benign executables used to side-load payloads may not be flagged during delivery and/or execution. Adversary payloads may also be encrypted/packed or otherwise obfuscated until loaded into the memory of the trusted process.

##### .004 - Dylib Hijacking

Adversaries may execute their own payloads by placing a malicious dynamic library (dylib) with an expected name in a path a victim application searches at runtime. The dynamic loader will try to find the dylibs based on the sequential order of the search paths. Paths to dylibs may be prefixed with @rpath, which allows developers to use relative paths to specify an array of search paths used at runtime based on the location of the executable. Additionally, if weak linking is used, such as the LC\_LOAD\_WEAK\_DYLIB function, an application will still execute even if an expected dylib is not present. Weak linking enables developers to run an application on multiple macOS versions as new APIs are added.

Adversaries may gain execution by inserting malicious dylibs with the name of the missing dylib in the identified path. Dylibs are loaded into an application's address space allowing the malicious dylib to inherit the application's privilege level and resources. Based on the application, this could result in privilege escalation and uninhibited network access. This method may also evade detection from security products since the execution is masked under a legitimate process.

##### .005 - Executable Installer File Permissions Weakness

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the binaries used by an installer. These processes may automatically execute specific binaries as part of their functionality or to perform other actions. If the permissions on the file system directory containing a target binary, or permissions on the binary itself, are improperly set, then the target binary may be overwritten with another binary using user-level permissions and executed by the original process. If the original process and thread are running under a higher permissions level, then the replaced binary will also execute under higher-level permissions, which could include SYSTEM.

Another variation of this technique can be performed by taking advantage of a weakness that is common in executable, self-extracting installers. During the installation process, it is common for installers to use a subdirectory within the %TEMP% directory to unpack binaries such as DLLs, EXEs, or other payloads. When installers create subdirectories and files they often do not set appropriate permissions to restrict write access, which allows for execution of untrusted code placed in the subdirectories or overwriting of binaries used in the installation process. This behavior is related to and may take advantage of DLL Search Order Hijacking.

Adversaries may use this technique to replace legitimate binaries with malicious ones as a means of executing code at a higher permissions level. Some installers may also require elevated privileges that will result in privilege escalation when executing adversary controlled code. This behavior is related to Bypass User Account Control. Several examples of this weakness in existing common installers have been reported to software vendors. If the executing process is set to run at a specific time or during a certain event (e.g., system bootup) then this technique can also be used for persistence.

##### .006 - Dynamic Linker Hijacking

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking environment variables the dynamic linker uses to load shared libraries. During the execution preparation phase of a program, the dynamic linker loads specified absolute paths of shared libraries from environment variables and files, such as LD\_PRELOAD on Linux or DYLD\_INSERT\_LIBRARIES on macOS. Libraries specified in environment variables are loaded first, taking precedence over system libraries with the same function name. These variables are often used by developers to debug binaries without needing to recompile, deconflict mapped symbols, and implement custom functions without changing the original library.

On Linux and macOS, hijacking dynamic linker variables may grant access to the victim process's memory, system/network resources, and possibly elevated privileges. This method may also evade detection from security products since the execution is masked under a legitimate process. Adversaries can set environment variables via the command line using the export command, setenv function, or putenv function. Adversaries can also leverage Dynamic Linker Hijacking to export variables in a shell or set variables programmatically using higher level syntax such Python’s os.environ.

On Linux, adversaries may set LD\_PRELOAD to point to malicious libraries that match the name of legitimate libraries which are requested by a victim program, causing the operating system to load the adversary's malicious code upon execution of the victim program. LD\_PRELOAD can be set via the environment variable or /etc/ld.so.preload file. Libraries specified by LD\_PRELOAD are loaded and mapped into memory by dlopen() and mmap() respectively.

On macOS this behavior is conceptually the same as on Linux, differing only in how the macOS dynamic libraries (dyld) is implemented at a lower level. Adversaries can set the DYLD\_INSERT\_LIBRARIES environment variable to point to malicious libraries containing names of legitimate libraries or functions requested by a victim program.

##### .007 - Path Interception by PATH Environment Variable

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking environment variables used to load libraries. Adversaries may place a program in an earlier entry in the list of directories stored in the PATH environment variable, which Windows will then execute when it searches sequentially through that PATH listing in search of the binary that was called from a script or the command line.

The PATH environment variable contains a list of directories. Certain methods of executing a program (namely using cmd.exe or the command-line) rely solely on the PATH environment variable to determine the locations that are searched for a program when the path for the program is not given. If any directories are listed in the PATH environment variable before the Windows directory, %SystemRoot%\system32 (e.g., C:\Windows\system32), a program may be placed in the preceding directory that is named the same as a Windows program (such as cmd, PowerShell, or Python), which will be executed when that command is executed from a script or command-line.

For example, if C:\example path precedes C:\Windows\system32 is in the PATH environment variable, a program that is named net.exe and placed in C:\example path will be called instead of the Windows system "net" when "net" is executed from the command-line.

##### .008 - Path Interception by Search Order Hijacking

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the search order used to load other programs. Because some programs do not call other programs using the full path, adversaries may place their own file in the directory where the calling program is located, causing the operating system to launch their malicious software at the request of the calling program.

Search order hijacking occurs when an adversary abuses the order in which Windows searches for programs that are not given a path. Unlike DLL Search Order Hijacking, the search order differs depending on the method that is used to execute the program. However, it is common for Windows to search in the directory of the initiating program before searching through the Windows system directory. An adversary who finds a program vulnerable to search order hijacking (i.e., a program that does not specify the path to an executable) may take advantage of this vulnerability by creating a program named after the improperly specified program and placing it within the initiating program's directory.

For example, "example.exe" runs "cmd.exe" with the command-line argument net user. An adversary may place a program called "net.exe" within the same directory as example.exe, "net.exe" will be run instead of the Windows system utility net. In addition, if an adversary places a program called "net.com" in the same directory as "net.exe", then cmd.exe /C net user will execute "net.com" instead of "net.exe" due to the order of executable extensions defined under PATHEXT.

Search order hijacking is also a common practice for hijacking DLL loads and is covered in DLL Search Order Hijacking.

##### .009 - Path Interception by Unquoted Path

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking vulnerable file path references. Adversaries can take advantage of paths that lack surrounding quotations by placing an executable in a higher level directory within the path, so that Windows will choose the adversary's executable to launch.

Service paths and shortcut paths may also be vulnerable to path interception if the path has one or more spaces and is not surrounded by quotation marks (e.g., C:\unsafe path with space\program.exe vs. "C:\safe path with space\program.exe"). (stored in Windows Registry keys) An adversary can place an executable in a higher level directory of the path, and Windows will resolve that executable instead of the intended executable. For example, if the path in a shortcut is C:\program files\myapp.exe, an adversary may create a program at C:\program.exe that will be run instead of the intended program.

This technique can be used for persistence if executables are called on a regular basis, as well as privilege escalation if intercepted executables are started by a higher privileged process.

##### .010 - Services File Permissions Weakness

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the binaries used by services. Adversaries may use flaws in the permissions of Windows services to replace the binary that is executed upon service start. These service processes may automatically execute specific binaries as part of their functionality or to perform other actions. If the permissions on the file system directory containing a target binary, or permissions on the binary itself are improperly set, then the target binary may be overwritten with another binary using user-level permissions and executed by the original process. If the original process and thread are running under a higher permissions level, then the replaced binary will also execute under higher-level permissions, which could include SYSTEM.

Adversaries may use this technique to replace legitimate binaries with malicious ones as a means of executing code at a higher permissions level. If the executing process is set to run at a specific time or during a certain event (e.g., system bootup) then this technique can also be used for persistence.

##### .011 - Services Registry Permissions Weakness

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the Registry entries used by services. Adversaries may use flaws in the permissions for Registry keys related to services to redirect from the originally specified executable to one that they control, in order to launch their own code when a service starts. Windows stores local service configuration information in the Registry under HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Services. The information stored under a service's Registry keys can be manipulated to modify a service's execution parameters through tools such as the service controller, sc.exe, PowerShell, or Reg. Access to Registry keys is controlled through access control lists and user permissions.

If the permissions for users and groups are not properly set and allow access to the Registry keys for a service, adversaries may change the service's binPath/ImagePath to point to a different executable under their control. When the service starts or is restarted, then the adversary-controlled program will execute, allowing the adversary to establish persistence and/or privilege escalation to the account context the service is set to execute under (local/domain account, SYSTEM, LocalService, or NetworkService).

Adversaries may also alter other Registry keys in the service’s Registry tree. For example, the FailureCommand key may be changed so that the service is executed in an elevated context anytime the service fails or is intentionally corrupted.

The Performance key contains the name of a driver service's performance DLL and the names of several exported functions in the DLL. If the Performance key is not already present and if an adversary-controlled user has the Create Subkey permission, adversaries may create the Performance key in the service’s Registry tree to point to a malicious DLL.

Adversaries may also add the Parameters key, which stores driver-specific data, or other custom subkeys for their malicious services to establish persistence or enable other malicious activities. Additionally, If adversaries launch their malicious services using svchost.exe, the service’s file may be identified using HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Services\servicename\Parameters\ServiceDll.

##### .012 - COR\_PROFILER

Adversaries may leverage the COR\_PROFILER environment variable to hijack the execution flow of programs that load the .NET CLR. The COR\_PROFILER is a .NET Framework feature which allows developers to specify an unmanaged (or external of .NET) profiling DLL to be loaded into each .NET process that loads the Common Language Runtime (CLR). These profilers are designed to monitor, troubleshoot, and debug managed code executed by the .NET CLR.

The COR\_PROFILER environment variable can be set at various scopes (system, user, or process) resulting in different levels of influence. System and user-wide environment variable scopes are specified in the Registry, where a Component Object Model (COM) object can be registered as a profiler DLL. A process scope COR\_PROFILER can also be created in-memory without modifying the Registry. Starting with .NET Framework 4, the profiling DLL does not need to be registered as long as the location of the DLL is specified in the COR\_PROFILER\_PATH environment variable.

Adversaries may abuse COR\_PROFILER to establish persistence that executes a malicious DLL in the context of all .NET processes every time the CLR is invoked. The COR\_PROFILER can also be used to elevate privileges (ex: Bypass User Account Control) if the victim .NET process executes at a higher permission level, as well as to hook and Impair Defenses provided by .NET processes.

##### .013 – KernelCallbackTable

Adversaries may abuse the KernelCallbackTable of a process to hijack its execution flow in order to run their own payloads. The KernelCallbackTable can be found in the Process Environment Block (PEB) and is initialized to an array of graphic functions available to a GUI process once user32.dll is loaded.

An adversary may hijack the execution flow of a process using the KernelCallbackTable by replacing an original callback function with a malicious payload. Modifying callback functions can be achieved in various ways involving related behaviors such as Reflective Code Loading or Process Injection into another process.

A pointer to the memory address of the KernelCallbackTable can be obtained by locating the PEB (ex: via a call to the NtQueryInformationProcess() Native API function). Once the pointer is located, the KernelCallbackTable can be duplicated, and a function in the table (e.g., fnCOPYDATA) set to the address of a malicious payload (ex: via WriteProcessMemory()). The PEB is then updated with the new address of the table. Once the tampered function is invoked, the malicious payload will be triggered.

The tampered function is typically invoked using a Windows message. After the process is hijacked and malicious code is executed, the KernelCallbackTable may also be restored to its original state by the rest of the malicious payload. Use of the KernelCallbackTable to hijack execution flow may evade detection from security products since the execution can be masked under a legitimate process.

#### T1525 - Implant Internal Image

Adversaries may implant cloud or container images with malicious code to establish persistence after gaining access to an environment. Amazon Web Services (AWS) Amazon Machine Images (AMIs), Google Cloud Platform (GCP) Images, and Azure Images as well as popular container runtimes such as Docker can be implanted or backdoored. Unlike Upload Malware, this technique focuses on adversaries implanting an image in a registry within a victim’s environment. Depending on how the infrastructure is provisioned, this could provide persistent access if the infrastructure provisioning tool is instructed to always use the latest image.

A tool has been developed to facilitate planting backdoors in cloud container images. If an adversary has access to a compromised AWS instance, and permissions to list the available container images, they may implant a backdoor such as a Web Shell.

#### T1556 - Modify Authentication Process

Adversaries may modify authentication mechanisms and processes to access user credentials or enable otherwise unwarranted access to accounts. The authentication process is handled by mechanisms, such as the Local Security Authentication Server (LSASS) process and the Security Accounts Manager (SAM) on Windows, pluggable authentication modules (PAM) on Unix-based systems, and authorization plugins on MacOS systems, responsible for gathering, storing, and validating credentials. By modifying an authentication process, an adversary may be able to authenticate to a service or system without using Valid Accounts.

Adversaries may maliciously modify a part of this process to either reveal credentials or bypass authentication mechanisms. Compromised credentials or access may be used to bypass access controls placed on various resources on systems within the network and may even be used for persistent access to remote systems and externally available services, such as VPNs, Outlook Web Access and remote desktop.

##### .001 - Domain Controller Authentication

Adversaries may patch the authentication process on a domain controller to bypass the typical authentication mechanisms and enable access to accounts.

Malware may be used to inject false credentials into the authentication process on a domain controller with the intent of creating a backdoor used to access any user’s account and/or credentials (ex: Skeleton Key). Skeleton key works through a patch on an enterprise domain controller authentication process (LSASS) with credentials that adversaries may use to bypass the standard authentication system. Once patched, an adversary can use the injected password to successfully authenticate as any domain user account (until the the skeleton key is erased from memory by a reboot of the domain controller). Authenticated access may enable unfettered access to hosts and/or resources within single-factor authentication environments.

##### .002 - Password Filter DLL

Adversaries may register malicious password filter dynamic link libraries (DLLs) into the authentication process to acquire user credentials as they are validated.

Windows password filters are password policy enforcement mechanisms for both domain and local accounts. Filters are implemented as DLLs containing a method to validate potential passwords against password policies. Filter DLLs can be positioned on local computers for local accounts and/or domain controllers for domain accounts. Before registering new passwords in the Security Accounts Manager (SAM), the Local Security Authority (LSA) requests validation from each registered filter. Any potential changes cannot take effect until every registered filter acknowledges validation.

Adversaries can register malicious password filters to harvest credentials from local computers and/or entire domains. To perform proper validation, filters must receive plain-text credentials from the LSA. A malicious password filter would receive these plain-text credentials every time a password request is made.

##### .003 - Pluggable Authentication Modules

Adversaries may modify pluggable authentication modules (PAM) to access user credentials or enable otherwise unwarranted access to accounts. PAM is a modular system of configuration files, libraries, and executable files which guide authentication for many services. The most common authentication module is pam\_unix.so, which retrieves, sets, and verifies account authentication information in /etc/passwd and /etc/shadow.

Adversaries may modify components of the PAM system to create backdoors. PAM components, such as pam\_unix.so, can be patched to accept arbitrary adversary supplied values as legitimate credentials.

Malicious modifications to the PAM system may also be abused to steal credentials. Adversaries may infect PAM resources with code to harvest user credentials, since the values exchanged with PAM components may be plain-text since PAM does not store passwords.

##### .004 - Network Device Authentication

Adversaries may use Patch System Image to hard code a password in the operating system, thus bypassing of native authentication mechanisms for local accounts on network devices.

Modify System Image may include implanted code to the operating system for network devices to provide access for adversaries using a specific password. The modification includes a specific password which is implanted in the operating system image via the patch. Upon authentication attempts, the inserted code will first check to see if the user input is the password. If so, access is granted. Otherwise, the implanted code will pass the credentials on for verification of potentially valid credentials.

##### .005 - Reversible Encryption

An adversary may abuse Active Directory authentication encryption properties to gain access to credentials on Windows systems. The AllowReversiblePasswordEncryption property specifies whether reversible password encryption for an account is enabled or disabled. By default this property is disabled (instead storing user credentials as the output of one-way hashing functions) and should not be enabled unless legacy or other software require it.

If the property is enabled and/or a user changes their password after it is enabled, an adversary may be able to obtain the plaintext of passwords created/changed after the property was enabled. To decrypt the passwords, an adversary needs four components:

1. Encrypted password (G$RADIUSCHAP) from the Active Directory user-structure userParameters
2. 16 byte randomly-generated value (G$RADIUSCHAPKEY) also from userParameters
3. Global LSA secret (G$MSRADIUSCHAPKEY)
4. Static key hardcoded in the Remote Access Sub-authentication DLL (RASSFM.DLL)

With this information, an adversary may be able to reproduce the encryption key and subsequently decrypt the encrypted password value.

An adversary may set this property at various scopes through Local Group Policy Editor, user properties, Fine-Grained Password Policy (FGPP), or via the ActiveDirectory PowerShell module. For example, an adversary may implement and apply a FGPP to users or groups if the Domain Functional Level is set to "Windows Server 2008" or higher.[4] In PowerShell, an adversary may make associated changes to user settings using commands similar to Set-ADUser -AllowReversiblePasswordEncryption $true.

##### .006 - Multi-Factor Authentication

Adversaries may disable or modify multi-factor authentication (MFA) mechanisms to enable persistent access to compromised accounts.

Once adversaries have gained access to a network by either compromising an account lacking MFA or by employing an MFA bypass method such as Multi-Factor Authentication Request Generation, adversaries may leverage their access to modify or completely disable MFA defenses. This can be accomplished by abusing legitimate features, such as excluding users from Azure AD Conditional Access Policies, registering a new yet vulnerable/adversary-controlled MFA method, or by manually patching MFA programs and configuration files to bypass expected functionality.

For example, modifying the Windows hosts file (C:\windows\system32\drivers\etc\hosts) to redirect MFA calls to localhost instead of an MFA server may cause the MFA process to fail. If a "fail open" policy is in place, any otherwise successful authentication attempt may be granted access without enforcing MFA.

Depending on the scope, goals, and privileges of the adversary, MFA defenses may be disabled for individual accounts or for all accounts tied to a larger group, such as all domain accounts in a victim's network environment.

##### .007 - Hybrid Identity

Adversaries may patch, modify, or otherwise backdoor cloud authentication processes that are tied to on-premises user identities in order to bypass typical authentication mechanisms, access credentials, and enable persistent access to accounts.

Many organizations maintain hybrid user and device identities that are shared between on-premises and cloud-based environments. These can be maintained in a number of ways. For example, Azure AD includes three options for synchronizing identities between Active Directory and Azure AD:

* Password Hash Synchronization (PHS), in which a privileged on-premises account synchronizes user password hashes between Active Directory and Azure AD, allowing authentication to Azure AD to take place entirely in the cloud
* Pass Through Authentication (PTA), in which Azure AD authentication attempts are forwarded to an on-premises PTA agent, which validates the credentials against Active Directory
* Active Directory Federation Services (AD FS), in which a trust relationship is established between Active Directory and Azure AD

AD FS can also be used with other SaaS and cloud platforms such as AWS and GCP, which will hand off the authentication process to AD FS and receive a token containing the hybrid users’ identity and privileges.

By modifying authentication processes tied to hybrid identities, an adversary may be able to establish persistent privileged access to cloud resources. For example, adversaries who compromise an on-premises server running a PTA agent may inject a malicious DLL into the AzureADConnectAuthenticationAgentService process that authorizes all attempts to authenticate to Azure AD, as well as records user credentials. In environments using AD FS, an adversary may edit the Microsoft.IdentityServer.Servicehost configuration file to load a malicious DLL that generates authentication tokens for any user with any set of claims, thereby bypassing multi-factor authentication and defined AD FS policies.

In some cases, adversaries may be able to modify the hybrid identity authentication process from the cloud. For example, adversaries who compromise a Global Administrator account in an Azure AD tenant may be able to register a new PTA agent via the web console, similarly allowing them to harvest credentials and log into the Azure AD environment as any user.

#### T1137 - Office Application Startup

Adversaries may leverage Microsoft Office-based applications for persistence between startups. Microsoft Office is a fairly common application suite on Windows-based operating systems within an enterprise network. There are multiple mechanisms that can be used with Office for persistence when an Office-based application is started; this can include the use of Office Template Macros and add-ins.

A variety of features have been discovered in Outlook that can be abused to obtain persistence, such as Outlook rules, forms, and Home Page. These persistence mechanisms can work within Outlook or be used through Office 365.

##### .001 - Office Template Macros

Adversaries may abuse Microsoft Office templates to obtain persistence on a compromised system. Microsoft Office contains templates that are part of common Office applications and are used to customize styles. The base templates within the application are used each time an application starts. [1]

Office Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) macros [2] can be inserted into the base template and used to execute code when the respective Office application starts in order to obtain persistence. Examples for both Word and Excel have been discovered and published. By default, Word has a Normal.dotm template created that can be modified to include a malicious macro. Excel does not have a template file created by default, but one can be added that will automatically be loaded. Shared templates may also be stored and pulled from remote locations.

Word Normal.dotm location:

C:\Users\<username>\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dotm

Excel Personal.xlsb location:

C:\Users\<username>\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Excel\XLSTART\PERSONAL.XLSB

Adversaries may also change the location of the base template to point to their own by hijacking the application's search order, e.g. Word 2016 will first look for Normal.dotm under C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft Office\root\Office16\, or by modifying the GlobalDotName registry key. By modifying the GlobalDotName registry key an adversary can specify an arbitrary location, file name, and file extension to use for the template that will be loaded on application startup. To abuse GlobalDotName, adversaries may first need to register the template as a trusted document or place it in a trusted location.

An adversary may need to enable macros to execute unrestricted depending on the system or enterprise security policy on use of macros.

##### .002 - Office Test

Adversaries may abuse the Microsoft Office "Office Test" Registry key to obtain persistence on a compromised system. An Office Test Registry location exists that allows a user to specify an arbitrary DLL that will be executed every time an Office application is started. This Registry key is thought to be used by Microsoft to load DLLs for testing and debugging purposes while developing Office applications. This Registry key is not created by default during an Office installation.

There exist user and global Registry keys for the Office Test feature:

* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Office test\Special\Perf
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Office test\Special\Perf

Adversaries may add this Registry key and specify a malicious DLL that will be executed whenever an Office application, such as Word or Excel, is started.

##### .003 - Outlook Forms

Adversaries may abuse Microsoft Outlook forms to obtain persistence on a compromised system. Outlook forms are used as templates for presentation and functionality in Outlook messages. Custom Outlook forms can be created that will execute code when a specifically crafted email is sent by an adversary utilizing the same custom Outlook form.

Once malicious forms have been added to the user’s mailbox, they will be loaded when Outlook is started. Malicious forms will execute when an adversary sends a specifically crafted email to the user.

##### .004 - Outlook Home Page

Adversaries may abuse Microsoft Outlook's Home Page feature to obtain persistence on a compromised system. Outlook Home Page is a legacy feature used to customize the presentation of Outlook folders. This feature allows for an internal or external URL to be loaded and presented whenever a folder is opened. A malicious HTML page can be crafted that will execute code when loaded by Outlook Home Page.

Once malicious home pages have been added to the user’s mailbox, they will be loaded when Outlook is started. Malicious Home Pages will execute when the right Outlook folder is loaded/reloaded.

##### .005 - Outlook Rules

Adversaries may abuse Microsoft Outlook rules to obtain persistence on a compromised system. Outlook rules allow a user to define automated behavior to manage email messages. A benign rule might, for example, automatically move an email to a particular folder in Outlook if it contains specific words from a specific sender. Malicious Outlook rules can be created that can trigger code execution when an adversary sends a specifically crafted email to that user.

Once malicious rules have been added to the user’s mailbox, they will be loaded when Outlook is started. Malicious rules will execute when an adversary sends a specifically crafted email to the user.

##### .006 - Add-ins

Adversaries may abuse Microsoft Office add-ins to obtain persistence on a compromised system. Office add-ins can be used to add functionality to Office programs. There are different types of add-ins that can be used by the various Office products; including Word/Excel add-in Libraries (WLL/XLL), VBA add-ins, Office Component Object Model (COM) add-ins, automation add-ins, VBA Editor (VBE), Visual Studio Tools for Office (VSTO) add-ins, and Outlook add-ins.

Add-ins can be used to obtain persistence because they can be set to execute code when an Office application starts.

#### T1542 - Pre-OS Boot

Adversaries may abuse Pre-OS Boot mechanisms as a way to establish persistence on a system. During the booting process of a computer, firmware and various startup services are loaded before the operating system. These programs control flow of execution before the operating system takes control.

Adversaries may overwrite data in boot drivers or firmware such as BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) and The Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI) to persist on systems at a layer below the operating system. This can be particularly difficult to detect as malware at this level will not be detected by host software-based defenses.

##### .001 - System Firmware

Adversaries may modify system firmware to persist on systems.The BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) and The Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI) or Extensible Firmware Interface (EFI) are examples of system firmware that operate as the software interface between the operating system and hardware of a computer.

System firmware like BIOS and (U)EFI underly the functionality of a computer and may be modified by an adversary to perform or assist in malicious activity. Capabilities exist to overwrite the system firmware, which may give sophisticated adversaries a means to install malicious firmware updates as a means of persistence on a system that may be difficult to detect.

##### .002 - Component Firmware

Adversaries may modify component firmware to persist on systems. Some adversaries may employ sophisticated means to compromise computer components and install malicious firmware that will execute adversary code outside of the operating system and main system firmware or BIOS. This technique may be similar to System Firmware but conducted upon other system components/devices that may not have the same capability or level of integrity checking.

Malicious component firmware could provide both a persistent level of access to systems despite potential typical failures to maintain access and hard disk re-images, as well as a way to evade host software-based defenses and integrity checks.

##### .003 – Bootkit

Adversaries may use bootkits to persist on systems. Bootkits reside at a layer below the operating system and may make it difficult to perform full remediation unless an organization suspects one was used and can act accordingly.

A bootkit is a malware variant that modifies the boot sectors of a hard drive, including the Master Boot Record (MBR) and Volume Boot Record (VBR). The MBR is the section of disk that is first loaded after completing hardware initialization by the BIOS. It is the location of the boot loader. An adversary who has raw access to the boot drive may overwrite this area, diverting execution during startup from the normal boot loader to adversary code.

The MBR passes control of the boot process to the VBR. Similar to the case of MBR, an adversary who has raw access to the boot drive may overwrite the VBR to divert execution during startup to adversary code.

##### .004 – ROMMONkit

Adversaries may abuse the ROM Monitor (ROMMON) by loading an unauthorized firmware with adversary code to provide persistent access and manipulate device behavior that is difficult to detect.

ROMMON is a Cisco network device firmware that functions as a boot loader, boot image, or boot helper to initialize hardware and software when the platform is powered on or reset. Similar to TFTP Boot, an adversary may upgrade the ROMMON image locally or remotely (for example, through TFTP) with adversary code and restart the device in order to overwrite the existing ROMMON image. This provides adversaries with the means to update the ROMMON to gain persistence on a system in a way that may be difficult to detect.

##### .005 - TFTP Boot

Adversaries may abuse netbooting to load an unauthorized network device operating system from a Trivial File Transfer Protocol (TFTP) server. TFTP boot (netbooting) is commonly used by network administrators to load configuration-controlled network device images from a centralized management server. Netbooting is one option in the boot sequence and can be used to centralize, manage, and control device images.

Adversaries may manipulate the configuration on the network device specifying use of a malicious TFTP server, which may be used in conjunction with Modify System Image to load a modified image on device startup or reset. The unauthorized image allows adversaries to modify device configuration, add malicious capabilities to the device, and introduce backdoors to maintain control of the network device while minimizing detection through use of a standard functionality. This technique is similar to ROMMONkit and may result in the network device running a modified image.

#### T1053 - Scheduled Task/Job

Adversaries may abuse task scheduling functionality to facilitate initial or recurring execution of malicious code. Utilities exist within all major operating systems to schedule programs or scripts to be executed at a specified date and time. A task can also be scheduled on a remote system, provided the proper authentication is met (ex: RPC and file and printer sharing in Windows environments). Scheduling a task on a remote system typically may require being a member of an admin or otherwise privileged group on the remote system.

Adversaries may use task scheduling to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for persistence. These mechanisms can also be abused to run a process under the context of a specified account (such as one with elevated permissions/privileges). Similar to System Binary Proxy Execution, adversaries have also abused task scheduling to potentially mask one-time execution under a trusted system process.

##### .002 – At

Adversaries may abuse the at utility to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code. The at utility exists as an executable within Windows, Linux, and macOS for scheduling tasks at a specified time and date. Although deprecated in favor of Scheduled Task's schtasks in Windows environments, using at requires that the Task Scheduler service be running, and the user to be logged on as a member of the local Administrators group.

On Linux and macOS, at may be invoked by the superuser as well as any users added to the at.allow file. If the at.allow file does not exist, the at.deny file is checked. Every username not listed in at.deny is allowed to invoke at. If the at.deny exists and is empty, global use of at is permitted. If neither file exists (which is often the baseline) only the superuser is allowed to use at.

Adversaries may use at to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for Persistence. at can also be abused to conduct remote Execution as part of Lateral Movement and/or to run a process under the context of a specified account (such as SYSTEM).

In Linux environments, adversaries may also abuse at to break out of restricted environments by using a task to spawn an interactive system shell or to run system commands. Similarly, at may also be used for Privilege Escalation if the binary is allowed to run as superuser via sudo.

##### .003 – Cron

Adversaries may abuse the cron utility to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code.[1] The cron utility is a time-based job scheduler for Unix-like operating systems. The crontab file contains the schedule of cron entries to be run and the specified times for execution. Any crontab files are stored in operating system-specific file paths.

An adversary may use cron in Linux or Unix environments to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for Persistence.

##### .005 - Scheduled Task

Adversaries may abuse the Windows Task Scheduler to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code. There are multiple ways to access the Task Scheduler in Windows. The schtasks utility can be run directly on the command line, or the Task Scheduler can be opened through the GUI within the Administrator Tools section of the Control Panel. In some cases, adversaries have used a .NET wrapper for the Windows Task Scheduler, and alternatively, adversaries have used the Windows netapi32 library to create a scheduled task.

The deprecated at utility could also be abused by adversaries (ex: At), though at.exe can not access tasks created with schtasks or the Control Panel.

An adversary may use Windows Task Scheduler to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for persistence. The Windows Task Scheduler can also be abused to conduct remote Execution as part of Lateral Movement and/or to run a process under the context of a specified account (such as SYSTEM). Similar to System Binary Proxy Execution, adversaries have also abused the Windows Task Scheduler to potentially mask one-time execution under signed/trusted system processes.

Adversaries may also create "hidden" scheduled tasks (i.e. Hide Artifacts) that may not be visible to defender tools and manual queries used to enumerate tasks. Specifically, an adversary may hide a task from schtasks /query and the Task Scheduler by deleting the associated Security Descriptor (SD) registry value (where deletion of this value must be completed using SYSTEM permissions). Adversaries may also employ alternate methods to hide tasks, such as altering the metadata (e.g., Index value) within associated registry keys.

##### .006 - Systemd Timers

Adversaries may abuse systemd timers to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code. Systemd timers are unit files with file extension .timer that control services. Timers can be set to run on a calendar event or after a time span relative to a starting point. They can be used as an alternative to Cron in Linux environments. Systemd timers may be activated remotely via the systemctl command line utility, which operates over SSH.

Each .timer file must have a corresponding .service file with the same name, e.g., example.timer and example.service. .service files are Systemd Service unit files that are managed by the systemd system and service manager. Privileged timers are written to /etc/systemd/system/ and /usr/lib/systemd/system while user level is written to ~/.config/systemd/user/.

An adversary may use systemd timers to execute malicious code at system startup or on a scheduled basis for persistence. Timers installed using privileged paths may be used to maintain root level persistence. Adversaries may also install user level timers to achieve user level persistence.

##### .007 - Container Orchestration Job

Adversaries may abuse task scheduling functionality provided by container orchestration tools such as Kubernetes to schedule deployment of containers configured to execute malicious code. Container orchestration jobs run these automated tasks at a specific date and time, similar to cron jobs on a Linux system. Deployments of this type can also be configured to maintain a quantity of containers over time, automating the process of maintaining persistence within a cluster.

In Kubernetes, a CronJob may be used to schedule a Job that runs one or more containers to perform specific tasks. An adversary therefore may utilize a CronJob to schedule deployment of a Job that executes malicious code in various nodes within a cluster.

#### T1505 - Server Software Component

Adversaries may abuse legitimate extensible development features of servers to establish persistent access to systems. Enterprise server applications may include features that allow developers to write and install software or scripts to extend the functionality of the main application. Adversaries may install malicious components to extend and abuse server applications.

##### .001 - SQL Stored Procedures

Adversaries may abuse SQL stored procedures to establish persistent access to systems. SQL Stored Procedures are code that can be saved and reused so that database users do not waste time rewriting frequently used SQL queries. Stored procedures can be invoked via SQL statements to the database using the procedure name or via defined events (e.g. when a SQL server application is started/restarted).

Adversaries may craft malicious stored procedures that can provide a persistence mechanism in SQL database servers. To execute operating system commands through SQL syntax the adversary may have to enable additional functionality, such as xp\_cmdshell for MSSQL Server.

Microsoft SQL Server can enable common language runtime (CLR) integration. With CLR integration enabled, application developers can write stored procedures using any .NET framework language (e.g. VB .NET, C#, etc.). Adversaries may craft or modify CLR assemblies that are linked to stored procedures since these CLR assemblies can be made to execute arbitrary commands.

##### .002 - Transport Agent

Adversaries may abuse Microsoft transport agents to establish persistent access to systems. Microsoft Exchange transport agents can operate on email messages passing through the transport pipeline to perform various tasks such as filtering spam, filtering malicious attachments, journaling, or adding a corporate signature to the end of all outgoing emails. Transport agents can be written by application developers and then compiled to .NET assemblies that are subsequently registered with the Exchange server. Transport agents will be invoked during a specified stage of email processing and carry out developer defined tasks.

Adversaries may register a malicious transport agent to provide a persistence mechanism in Exchange Server that can be triggered by adversary-specified email events. Though a malicious transport agent may be invoked for all emails passing through the Exchange transport pipeline, the agent can be configured to only carry out specific tasks in response to adversary defined criteria. For example, the transport agent may only carry out an action like copying in-transit attachments and saving them for later exfiltration if the recipient email address matches an entry on a list provided by the adversary.

##### .003 - Web Shell

Adversaries may backdoor web servers with web shells to establish persistent access to systems. A Web shell is a Web script that is placed on an openly accessible Web server to allow an adversary to use the Web server as a gateway into a network. A Web shell may provide a set of functions to execute or a command-line interface on the system that hosts the Web server.

In addition to a server-side script, a Web shell may have a client interface program that is used to talk to the Web server (e.g. China Chopper Web shell client).

##### .004 - IIS Components

Adversaries may install malicious components that run on Internet Information Services (IIS) web servers to establish persistence. IIS provides several mechanisms to extend the functionality of the web servers. For example, Internet Server Application Programming Interface (ISAPI) extensions and filters can be installed to examine and/or modify incoming and outgoing IIS web requests. Extensions and filters are deployed as DLL files that export three functions: Get{Extension/Filter}Version, Http{Extension/Filter}Proc, and (optionally) Terminate{Extension/Filter}. IIS modules may also be installed to extend IIS web servers.

Adversaries may install malicious ISAPI extensions and filters to observe and/or modify traffic, execute commands on compromised machines, or proxy command and control traffic. ISAPI extensions and filters may have access to all IIS web requests and responses. For example, an adversary may abuse these mechanisms to modify HTTP responses in order to distribute malicious commands/content to previously comprised hosts.

Adversaries may also install malicious IIS modules to observe and/or modify traffic. IIS 7.0 introduced modules that provide the same unrestricted access to HTTP requests and responses as ISAPI extensions and filters. IIS modules can be written as a DLL that exports RegisterModule, or as a .NET application that interfaces with ASP.NET APIs to access IIS HTTP requests.

##### .005 - Terminal Services DLL

Adversaries may abuse components of Terminal Services to enable persistent access to systems. Microsoft Terminal Services, renamed to Remote Desktop Services in some Windows Server OSs as of 2022, enable remote terminal connections to hosts. Terminal Services allows servers to transmit a full, interactive, graphical user interface to clients via RDP.

Windows Services that are run as a "generic" process (ex: svchost.exe) load the service's DLL file, the location of which is stored in a Registry entry named ServiceDll. The termsrv.dll file, typically stored in %SystemRoot%\System32\, is the default ServiceDll value for Terminal Services in HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\services\TermService\Parameters\.

Adversaries may modify and/or replace the Terminal Services DLL to enable persistent access to victimized hosts. Modifications to this DLL could be done to execute arbitrary payloads (while also potentially preserving normal termsrv.dll functionality) as well as to simply enable abusable features of Terminal Services. For example, an adversary may enable features such as concurrent Remote Desktop Protocol sessions by either patching the termsrv.dll file or modifying the ServiceDll value to point to a DLL that provides increased RDP functionality. On a non-server Windows OS this increased functionality may also enable an adversary to avoid Terminal Services prompts that warn/log out users of a system when a new RDP session is created.

#### T1205 - Traffic Signaling

Adversaries may use traffic signaling to hide open ports or other malicious functionality used for persistence or command and control. Traffic signaling involves the use of a magic value or sequence that must be sent to a system to trigger a special response, such as opening a closed port or executing a malicious task. This may take the form of sending a series of packets with certain characteristics before a port will be opened that the adversary can use for command and control. Usually this series of packets consists of attempted connections to a predefined sequence of closed ports (i.e. Port Knocking), but can involve unusual flags, specific strings, or other unique characteristics. After the sequence is completed, opening a port may be accomplished by the host-based firewall, but could also be implemented by custom software.

Adversaries may also communicate with an already open port, but the service listening on that port will only respond to commands or trigger other malicious functionality if passed the appropriate magic value(s).

The observation of the signal packets to trigger the communication can be conducted through different methods. One means, originally implemented by Cd00r, is to use the libpcap libraries to sniff for the packets in question. Another method leverages raw sockets, which enables the malware to use ports that are already open for use by other programs.

On network devices, adversaries may use crafted packets to enable Network Device Authentication for standard services offered by the device such as telnet. Such signaling may also be used to open a closed service port such as telnet, or to trigger module modification of malware implants on the device, adding, removing, or changing malicious capabilities. Adversaries may use crafted packets to attempt to connect to one or more (open or closed) ports, but may also attempt to connect to a router interface, broadcast, and network address IP on the same port in order to achieve their goals and objectives. To enable this traffic signaling on embedded devices, adversaries must first achieve and leverage Patch System Image due to the monolithic nature of the architecture.

Adversaries may also use the Wake-on-LAN feature to turn on powered off systems. Wake-on-LAN is a hardware feature that allows a powered down system to be powered on, or woken up, by sending a magic packet to it. Once the system is powered on, it may become a target for lateral movement.

##### .001 - Port Knocking

Adversaries may use port knocking to hide open ports used for persistence or command and control. To enable a port, an adversary sends a series of attempted connections to a predefined sequence of closed ports. After the sequence is completed, opening a port is often accomplished by the host based firewall, but could also be implemented by custom software.

This technique has been observed both for the dynamic opening of a listening port as well as the initiating of a connection to a listening server on a different system.

The observation of the signal packets to trigger the communication can be conducted through different methods. One means, originally implemented by Cd00r, is to use the libpcap libraries to sniff for the packets in question. Another method leverages raw sockets, which enables the malware to use ports that are already open for use by other programs.

##### .002 - Socket Filters

Adversaries may attach filters to a network socket to monitor then activate backdoors used for persistence or command and control. With elevated permissions, adversaries can use features such as the libpcap library to open sockets and install filters to allow or disallow certain types of data to come through the socket. The filter may apply to all traffic passing through the specified network interface (or every interface if not specified). When the network interface receives a packet matching the filter criteria, additional actions can be triggered on the host, such as activation of a reverse shell.

To establish a connection, an adversary sends a crafted packet to the targeted host that matches the installed filter criteria. Adversaries have used these socket filters to trigger the installation of implants, conduct ping backs, and to invoke command shells. Communication with these socket filters may also be used in conjunction with Protocol Tunneling.

Filters can be installed on any Unix-like platform with libpcap installed or on Windows hosts using Winpcap. Adversaries may use either libpcap with pcap\_setfilter or the standard library function setsockopt with SO\_ATTACH\_FILTER options. Since the socket connection is not active until the packet is received, this behavior may be difficult to detect due to the lack of activity on a host, low CPU overhead, and limited visibility into raw socket usage.

#### T1078 - Valid Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of existing accounts as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Compromised credentials may be used to bypass access controls placed on various resources on systems within the network and may even be used for persistent access to remote systems and externally available services, such as VPNs, Outlook Web Access, network devices, and remote desktop. Compromised credentials may also grant an adversary increased privilege to specific systems or access to restricted areas of the network. Adversaries may choose not to use malware or tools in conjunction with the legitimate access those credentials provide to make it harder to detect their presence.

In some cases, adversaries may abuse inactive accounts: for example, those belonging to individuals who are no longer part of an organization. Using these accounts may allow the adversary to evade detection, as the original account user will not be present to identify any anomalous activity taking place on their account.

The overlap of permissions for local, domain, and cloud accounts across a network of systems is of concern because the adversary may be able to pivot across accounts and systems to reach a high level of access (i.e., domain or enterprise administrator) to bypass access controls set within the enterprise.

##### .001 - Default Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a default account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Default accounts are those that are built-into an OS, such as the Guest or Administrator accounts on Windows systems. Default accounts also include default factory/provider set accounts on other types of systems, software, or devices, including the root user account in AWS and the default service account in Kubernetes.

Default accounts are not limited to client machines, rather also include accounts that are preset for equipment such as network devices and computer applications whether they are internal, open source, or commercial. Appliances that come preset with a username and password combination pose a serious threat to organizations that do not change it post installation, as they are easy targets for an adversary. Similarly, adversaries may also utilize publicly disclosed or stolen Private Keys or credential materials to legitimately connect to remote environments via Remote Services.

##### .002 - Domain Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a domain account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Domain accounts are those managed by Active Directory Domain Services where access and permissions are configured across systems and services that are part of that domain. Domain accounts can cover users, administrators, and services.

Adversaries may compromise domain accounts, some with a high level of privileges, through various means such as OS Credential Dumping or password reuse, allowing access to privileged resources of the domain.

##### .003 - Local Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a local account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Local accounts are those configured by an organization for use by users, remote support, services, or for administration on a single system or service.

Local Accounts may also be abused to elevate privileges and harvest credentials through OS Credential Dumping. Password reuse may allow the abuse of local accounts across a set of machines on a network for the purposes of Privilege Escalation and Lateral Movement.

##### .004 - Cloud Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a cloud account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Cloud accounts are those created and configured by an organization for use by users, remote support, services, or for administration of resources within a cloud service provider or SaaS application. In some cases, cloud accounts may be federated with traditional identity management system, such as Window Active Directory.

Compromised credentials for cloud accounts can be used to harvest sensitive data from online storage accounts and databases. Access to cloud accounts can also be abused to gain Initial Access to a network by abusing a Trusted Relationship. Similar to Domain Accounts, compromise of federated cloud accounts may allow adversaries to more easily move laterally within an environment.

Once a cloud account is compromised, an adversary may perform Account Manipulation - for example, by adding Additional Cloud Roles - to maintain persistence and potentially escalate their privileges.

## Privilege Escalation

The adversary is trying to gain higher-level permissions.

Privilege Escalation consists of techniques that adversaries use to gain higher-level permissions on a system or network. Adversaries can often enter and explore a network with unprivileged access but require elevated permissions to follow through on their objectives. Common approaches are to take advantage of system weaknesses, misconfigurations, and vulnerabilities. Examples of elevated access include:

* SYSTEM/root level
* local administrator
* user account with admin-like access
* user accounts with access to specific system or perform specific function

These techniques often overlap with Persistence techniques, as OS features that let an adversary persist can execute in an elevated context.

### Techniques

Techniques represent 'how' an adversary achieves a tactical goal by performing an action. For example, an adversary may dump credentials to achieve credential access.

#### T1548 - Abuse Elevation Control Mechanism

Adversaries may circumvent mechanisms designed to control elevate privileges to gain higher-level permissions. Most modern systems contain native elevation control mechanisms that are intended to limit privileges that a user can perform on a machine. Authorization must be granted to specific users in order to perform tasks that can be considered of higher risk. An adversary can perform several methods to take advantage of built-in control mechanisms in order to escalate privileges on a system.

##### .001 - Setuid and Setgid

An adversary may abuse configurations where an application has the setuid or setgid bits set in order to get code running in a different (and possibly more privileged) user’s context. On Linux or macOS, when the setuid or setgid bits are set for an application binary, the application will run with the privileges of the owning user or group respectively. Normally an application is run in the current user’s context, regardless of which user or group owns the application. However, there are instances where programs need to be executed in an elevated context to function properly, but the user running them may not have the specific required privileges.

Instead of creating an entry in the sudoers file, which must be done by root, any user can specify the setuid or setgid flag to be set for their own applications (i.e. Linux and Mac File and Directory Permissions Modification). The chmod command can set these bits with bitmasking, chmod 4777 [file] or via shorthand naming, chmod u+s [file]. This will enable the setuid bit. To enable the setgit bit, chmod 2775 and chmod g+s can be used.

Adversaries can use this mechanism on their own malware to make sure they're able to execute in elevated contexts in the future. This abuse is often part of a "shell escape" or other actions to bypass an execution environment with restricted permissions.

Alternatively, adversaries may choose to find and target vulnerable binaries with the setuid or setgid bits already enabled (i.e. File and Directory Discovery). The setuid and setguid bits are indicated with an "s" instead of an "x" when viewing a file's attributes via ls -l. The find command can also be used to search for such files. For example, find / -perm +4000 2>/dev/null can be used to find files with setuid set and find / -perm +2000 2>/dev/null may be used for setgid. Binaries that have these bits set may then be abused by adversaries.

##### .002 - Bypass User Account Control

Adversaries may bypass UAC mechanisms to elevate process privileges on system. Windows User Account Control (UAC) allows a program to elevate its privileges (tracked as integrity levels ranging from low to high) to perform a task under administrator-level permissions, possibly by prompting the user for confirmation. The impact to the user ranges from denying the operation under high enforcement to allowing the user to perform the action if they are in the local administrators group and click through the prompt or allowing them to enter an administrator password to complete the action.

If the UAC protection level of a computer is set to anything but the highest level, certain Windows programs can elevate privileges or execute some elevated Component Object Model objects without prompting the user through the UAC notification box. An example of this is use of Rundll32 to load a specifically crafted DLL which loads an auto-elevated Component Object Model object and performs a file operation in a protected directory which would typically require elevated access. Malicious software may also be injected into a trusted process to gain elevated privileges without prompting a user.

Many methods have been discovered to bypass UAC. The Github readme page for UACME contains an extensive list of methods that have been discovered and implemented, but may not be a comprehensive list of bypasses. Additional bypass methods are regularly discovered and some used in the wild, such as:

* eventvwr.exe can auto-elevate and execute a specified binary or script.

Another bypass is possible through some lateral movement techniques if credentials for an account with administrator privileges are known, since UAC is a single system security mechanism, and the privilege or integrity of a process running on one system will be unknown on remote systems and default to high integrity.

##### .003 - Sudo and Sudo Caching

Adversaries may perform sudo caching and/or use the sudoers file to elevate privileges. Adversaries may do this to execute commands as other users or spawn processes with higher privileges.

Within Linux and MacOS systems, sudo (sometimes referred to as "superuser do") allows users to perform commands from terminals with elevated privileges and to control who can perform these commands on the system. The sudo command "allows a system administrator to delegate authority to give certain users (or groups of users) the ability to run some (or all) commands as root or another user while providing an audit trail of the commands and their arguments."[1] Since sudo was made for the system administrator, it has some useful configuration features such as a timestamp\_timeout, which is the amount of time in minutes between instances of sudo before it will re-prompt for a password. This is because sudo has the ability to cache credentials for a period of time. Sudo creates (or touches) a file at /var/db/sudo with a timestamp of when sudo was last run to determine this timeout. Additionally, there is a tty\_tickets variable that treats each new tty (terminal session) in isolation. This means that, for example, the sudo timeout of one tty will not affect another tty (you will have to type the password again).

The sudoers file, /etc/sudoers, describes which users can run which commands and from which terminals. This also describes which commands users can run as other users or groups. This provides the principle of least privilege such that users are running in their lowest possible permissions for most of the time and only elevate to other users or permissions as needed, typically by prompting for a password. However, the sudoers file can also specify when to not prompt users for passwords with a line like user1 ALL=(ALL) NOPASSWD: ALL. Elevated privileges are required to edit this file though.

Adversaries can also abuse poor configurations of these mechanisms to escalate privileges without needing the user's password. For example, /var/db/sudo's timestamp can be monitored to see if it falls within the timestamp\_timeout range. If it does, then malware can execute sudo commands without needing to supply the user's password. Additional, if tty\_tickets is disabled, adversaries can do this from any tty for that user.

In the wild, malware has disabled tty\_tickets to potentially make scripting easier by issuing echo \'Defaults !tty\_tickets\' >> /etc/sudoers. In order for this change to be reflected, the malware also issued killall Terminal. As of macOS Sierra, the sudoers file has tty\_tickets enabled by default.

##### .004 - Elevated Execution with Prompt

Adversaries may leverage the AuthorizationExecuteWithPrivileges API to escalate privileges by prompting the user for credentials. The purpose of this API is to give application developers an easy way to perform operations with root privileges, such as for application installation or updating. This API does not validate that the program requesting root privileges comes from a reputable source or has been maliciously modified.

Although this API is deprecated, it still fully functions in the latest releases of macOS. When calling this API, the user will be prompted to enter their credentials but no checks on the origin or integrity of the program are made. The program calling the API may also load world writable files which can be modified to perform malicious behavior with elevated privileges.

Adversaries may abuse AuthorizationExecuteWithPrivileges to obtain root privileges in order to install malicious software on victims and install persistence mechanisms. This technique may be combined with Masquerading to trick the user into granting escalated privileges to malicious code. This technique has also been shown to work by modifying legitimate programs present on the machine that make use of this API.

#### T1134 - Access Token Manipulation

Adversaries may modify access tokens to operate under a different user or system security context to perform actions and bypass access controls. Windows uses access tokens to determine the ownership of a running process. A user can manipulate access tokens to make a running process appear as though it is the child of a different process or belongs to someone other than the user that started the process. When this occurs, the process also takes on the security context associated with the new token.

An adversary can use built-in Windows API functions to copy access tokens from existing processes; this is known as token stealing. These token can then be applied to an existing process (i.e. Token Impersonation/Theft) or used to spawn a new process (i.e. Create Process with Token). An adversary must already be in a privileged user context (i.e. administrator) to steal a token. However, adversaries commonly use token stealing to elevate their security context from the administrator level to the SYSTEM level. An adversary can then use a token to authenticate to a remote system as the account for that token if the account has appropriate permissions on the remote system.

Any standard user can use the runas command, and the Windows API functions, to create impersonation tokens; it does not require access to an administrator account. There are also other mechanisms, such as Active Directory fields, that can be used to modify access tokens.

##### .001 - Token Impersonation/Theft

Adversaries may duplicate then impersonate another user's token to escalate privileges and bypass access controls. An adversary can create a new access token that duplicates an existing token using DuplicateToken(Ex). The token can then be used with ImpersonateLoggedOnUser to allow the calling thread to impersonate a logged on user's security context, or with SetThreadToken to assign the impersonated token to a thread.

An adversary may do this when they have a specific, existing process they want to assign the new token to. For example, this may be useful for when the target user has a non-network logon session on the system.

##### .002 - Create Process with Token

Adversaries may create a new process with a different token to escalate privileges and bypass access controls. Processes can be created with the token and resulting security context of another user using features such as CreateProcessWithTokenW and runas.

Creating processes with a different token may require the credentials of the target user, specific privileges to impersonate that user, or access to the token to be used (ex: gathered via other means such as Token Impersonation/Theft or Make and Impersonate Token).

##### .003 - Make and Impersonate Token

Adversaries may make and impersonate tokens to escalate privileges and bypass access controls. If an adversary has a username and password but the user is not logged onto the system, the adversary can then create a logon session for the user using the LogonUser function. The function will return a copy of the new session's access token and the adversary can use SetThreadToken to assign the token to a thread.

##### .004 - Parent PID Spoofing

Adversaries may spoof the parent process identifier (PPID) of a new process to evade process-monitoring defenses or to elevate privileges. New processes are typically spawned directly from their parent, or calling, process unless explicitly specified. One way of explicitly assigning the PPID of a new process is via the CreateProcess API call, which supports a parameter that defines the PPID to use. This functionality is used by Windows features such as User Account Control (UAC) to correctly set the PPID after a requested elevated process is spawned by SYSTEM (typically via svchost.exe or consent.exe) rather than the current user context.

Adversaries may abuse these mechanisms to evade defenses, such as those blocking processes spawning directly from Office documents, and analysis targeting unusual/potentially malicious parent-child process relationships, such as spoofing the PPID of PowerShell/Rundll32 to be explorer.exe rather than an Office document delivered as part of Spearphishing Attachment.[3] This spoofing could be executed via Visual Basic within a malicious Office document or any code that can perform Native API.

Explicitly assigning the PPID may also enable elevated privileges given appropriate access rights to the parent process. For example, an adversary in a privileged user context (i.e. administrator) may spawn a new process and assign the parent as a process running as SYSTEM (such as lsass.exe), causing the new process to be elevated via the inherited access token.

##### .005 - SID-History Injection

Adversaries may use SID-History Injection to escalate privileges and bypass access controls. The Windows security identifier (SID) is a unique value that identifies a user or group account. SIDs are used by Windows security in both security descriptors and access tokens. An account can hold additional SIDs in the SID-History Active Directory attribute, allowing inter-operable account migration between domains (e.g., all values in SID-History are included in access tokens).

With Domain Administrator (or equivalent) rights, harvested or well-known SID values may be inserted into SID-History to enable impersonation of arbitrary users/groups such as Enterprise Administrators. This manipulation may result in elevated access to local resources and/or access to otherwise inaccessible domains via lateral movement techniques such as Remote Services, SMB/Windows Admin Shares, or Windows Remote Management.

#### T1547 - Boot or Logon Autostart Execution

Adversaries may configure system settings to automatically execute a program during system boot or logon to maintain persistence or gain higher-level privileges on compromised systems. Operating systems may have mechanisms for automatically running a program on system boot or account logon. These mechanisms may include automatically executing programs that are placed in specially designated directories or are referenced by repositories that store configuration information, such as the Windows Registry. An adversary may achieve the same goal by modifying or extending features of the kernel.

Since some boot or logon autostart programs run with higher privileges, an adversary may leverage these to elevate privileges.

##### .001 - Registry Run Keys / Startup Folder

Adversaries may achieve persistence by adding a program to a startup folder or referencing it with a Registry run key. Adding an entry to the "run keys" in the Registry or startup folder will cause the program referenced to be executed when a user logs in. These programs will be executed under the context of the user and will have the account's associated permissions level.

Placing a program within a startup folder will also cause that program to execute when a user logs in. There is a startup folder location for individual user accounts as well as a system-wide startup folder that will be checked regardless of which user account logs in. The startup folder path for the current user is C:\Users\[Username]\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Windows\Start Menu\Programs\Startup. The startup folder path for all users is C:\ProgramData\Microsoft\Windows\Start Menu\Programs\StartUp.

The following run keys are created by default on Windows systems:

* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunOnce
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunOnce

Run keys may exist under multiple hives. The HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunOnceEx is also available but is not created by default on Windows Vista and newer. Registry run key entries can reference programs directly or list them as a dependency. For example, it is possible to load a DLL at logon using a "Depend" key with RunOnceEx:

reg add HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunOnceEx\0001\Depend /v 1 /d "C:\temp\evil[.]dll"

The following Registry keys can be used to set startup folder items for persistence:

* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\User Shell Folders
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Folders
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Folders
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\User Shell Folders

The following Registry keys can control automatic startup of services during boot:

* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunServicesOnce
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunServicesOnce
* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunServices
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunServices

Using policy settings to specify startup programs creates corresponding values in either of two Registry keys:

* HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Explorer\Run
* HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Explorer\Run

The Winlogon key controls actions that occur when a user logs on to a computer running Windows 7. Most of these actions are under the control of the operating system, but you can also add custom actions here. The HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon\Userinit and HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon\Shell subkeys can automatically launch programs.

Programs listed in the load value of the registry key HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Windows run when any user logs on.

By default, the multistring BootExecute value of the registry key HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager is set to autocheck autochk \*. This value causes Windows, at startup, to check the file-system integrity of the hard disks if the system has been shut down abnormally. Adversaries can add other programs or processes to this registry value which will automatically launch at boot.

Adversaries can use these configuration locations to execute malware, such as remote access tools, to maintain persistence through system reboots. Adversaries may also use Masquerading to make the Registry entries look as if they are associated with legitimate programs.

##### .002 - Authentication Package

Adversaries may abuse authentication packages to execute DLLs when the system boots. Windows authentication package DLLs are loaded by the Local Security Authority (LSA) process at system start. They provide support for multiple logon processes and multiple security protocols to the operating system.

Adversaries can use the autostart mechanism provided by LSA authentication packages for persistence by placing a reference to a binary in the Windows Registry location HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Lsa\ with the key value of "Authentication Packages"=<target binary>. The binary will then be executed by the system when the authentication packages are loaded.

##### .003 - Time Providers

Adversaries may abuse time providers to execute DLLs when the system boots. The Windows Time service (W32Time) enables time synchronization across and within domains. W32Time time providers are responsible for retrieving time stamps from hardware/network resources and outputting these values to other network clients.

Time providers are implemented as dynamic-link libraries (DLLs) that are registered in the subkeys of HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Services\W32Time\TimeProviders\. The time provider manager, directed by the service control manager, loads and starts time providers listed and enabled under this key at system startup and/or whenever parameters are changed.

Adversaries may abuse this architecture to establish persistence, specifically by registering and enabling a malicious DLL as a time provider. Administrator privileges are required for time provider registration, though execution will run in context of the Local Service account.

##### .004 - Winlogon Helper DLL

Adversaries may abuse features of Winlogon to execute DLLs and/or executables when a user logs in. Winlogon.exe is a Windows component responsible for actions at logon/logoff as well as the secure attention sequence (SAS) triggered by Ctrl-Alt-Delete. Registry entries in HKLM\Software[\Wow6432Node\]\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon\ and HKCU\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon\ are used to manage additional helper programs and functionalities that support Winlogon.

Malicious modifications to these Registry keys may cause Winlogon to load and execute malicious DLLs and/or executables. Specifically, the following subkeys have been known to be possibly vulnerable to abuse:

* Winlogon\Notify - points to notification package DLLs that handle Winlogon events
* Winlogon\Userinit - points to userinit.exe, the user initialization program executed when a user logs on
* Winlogon\Shell - points to explorer.exe, the system shell executed when a user logs on

Adversaries may take advantage of these features to repeatedly execute malicious code and establish persistence.

##### .005 - Security Support Provider

Adversaries may abuse security support providers (SSPs) to execute DLLs when the system boots. Windows SSP DLLs are loaded into the Local Security Authority (LSA) process at system start. Once loaded into the LSA, SSP DLLs have access to encrypted and plaintext passwords that are stored in Windows, such as any logged-on user's Domain password or smart card PINs.

The SSP configuration is stored in two Registry keys: HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Lsa\Security Packages and HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Lsa\OSConfig\Security Packages. An adversary may modify these Registry keys to add new SSPs, which will be loaded the next time the system boots, or when the AddSecurityPackage Windows API function is called.

##### .006 - Kernel Modules and Extensions

Adversaries may modify the kernel to automatically execute programs on system boot. Loadable Kernel Modules (LKMs) are pieces of code that can be loaded and unloaded into the kernel upon demand. They extend the functionality of the kernel without the need to reboot the system. For example, one type of module is the device driver, which allows the kernel to access hardware connected to the system.

When used maliciously, LKMs can be a type of kernel-mode Rootkit that run with the highest operating system privilege (Ring 0). Common features of LKM based rootkits include: hiding itself, selective hiding of files, processes and network activity, as well as log tampering, providing authenticated backdoors, and enabling root access to non-privileged users.

Kernel extensions, also called kext, are used in macOS to load functionality onto a system similar to LKMs for Linux. Since the kernel is responsible for enforcing security and the kernel extensions run as apart of the kernel, kexts are not governed by macOS security policies. Kexts are loaded and unloaded through kextload and kextunload commands. Kexts need to be signed with a developer ID that is granted privileges by Apple allowing it to sign Kernel extensions. Developers without these privileges may still sign kexts but they will not load unless SIP is disabled. If SIP is enabled, the kext signature is verified before being added to the AuxKC.

Since macOS Catalina 10.15, kernel extensions have been deprecated in favor of System Extensions. However, kexts are still allowed as "Legacy System Extensions" since there is no System Extension for Kernel Programming Interfaces.

Adversaries can use LKMs and kexts to conduct Persistence and/or Privilege Escalation on a system. Examples have been found in the wild, and there are some relevant open-source projects as well.

##### .007 - Re-opened Applications

Adversaries may modify plist files to automatically run an application when a user logs in. When a user logs out or restarts via the macOS Graphical User Interface (GUI), a prompt is provided to the user with a checkbox to "Reopen windows when logging back in". When selected, all applications currently open are added to a property list file named com.apple.loginwindow.[UUID].plist within the ~/Library/Preferences/ByHost directory. Applications listed in this file are automatically reopened upon the user’s next logon.

Adversaries can establish Persistence by adding a malicious application path to the com.apple.loginwindow.[UUID].plist file to execute payloads when a user logs in.

##### .008 - LSASS Driver

Adversaries may modify or add LSASS drivers to obtain persistence on compromised systems. The Windows security subsystem is a set of components that manage and enforce the security policy for a computer or domain. The Local Security Authority (LSA) is the main component responsible for local security policy and user authentication. The LSA includes multiple dynamic link libraries (DLLs) associated with various other security functions, all of which run in the context of the LSA Subsystem Service (LSASS) lsass.exe process.

Adversaries may target LSASS drivers to obtain persistence. By either replacing or adding illegitimate drivers (e.g., Hijack Execution Flow), an adversary can use LSA operations to continuously execute malicious payloads.

##### .009 - Shortcut Modification

Adversaries may create or modify shortcuts that can execute a program during system boot or user login. Shortcuts or symbolic links are used to reference other files or programs that will be opened or executed when the shortcut is clicked or executed by a system startup process.

Adversaries may abuse shortcuts in the startup folder to execute their tools and achieve persistence. Although often used as payloads in an infection chain (e.g. Spearphishing Attachment), adversaries may also create a new shortcut as a means of indirection, while also abusing Masquerading to make the malicious shortcut appear as a legitimate program. Adversaries can also edit the target path or entirely replace an existing shortcut so their malware will be executed instead of the intended legitimate program.

Shortcuts can also be abused to establish persistence by implementing other methods. For example, LNK browser extensions may be modified (e.g. Browser Extensions) to persistently launch malware.

##### .010 - Port Monitors

Adversaries may use port monitors to run an adversary supplied DLL during system boot for persistence or privilege escalation. A port monitor can be set through the AddMonitor API call to set a DLL to be loaded at startup. This DLL can be located in C:\Windows\System32 and will be loaded by the print spooler service, spoolsv.exe, on boot. The spoolsv.exe process also runs under SYSTEM level permissions. Alternatively, an arbitrary DLL can be loaded if permissions allow writing a fully-qualified pathname for that DLL to HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Print\Monitors.

The Registry key contains entries for the following:

* Local Port
* Standard TCP/IP Port
* USB Monitor
* WSD Port

Adversaries can use this technique to load malicious code at startup that will persist on system reboot and execute as SYSTEM.

##### .012 - Print Processors

Adversaries may abuse print processors to run malicious DLLs during system boot for persistence and/or privilege escalation. Print processors are DLLs that are loaded by the print spooler service, spoolsv.exe, during boot.

Adversaries may abuse the print spooler service by adding print processors that load malicious DLLs at startup. A print processor can be installed through the AddPrintProcessor API call with an account that has SeLoadDriverPrivilege enabled. Alternatively, a print processor can be registered to the print spooler service by adding the HKLM\SYSTEM\[CurrentControlSet or ControlSet001]\Control\Print\Environments\[Windows architecture: e.g., Windows x64]\Print Processors\[user defined]\Driver Registry key that points to the DLL. For the print processor to be correctly installed, it must be located in the system print-processor directory that can be found with the GetPrintProcessorDirectory API call.[1] After the print processors are installed, the print spooler service, which starts during boot, must be restarted in order for them to run. The print spooler service runs under SYSTEM level permissions, therefore print processors installed by an adversary may run under elevated privileges.

##### .013 - XDG Autostart Entries

Adversaries may modify XDG autostart entries to execute programs or commands during system boot. Linux desktop environments that are XDG compliant implement functionality for XDG autostart entries. These entries will allow an application to automatically start during the startup of a desktop environment after user logon. By default, XDG autostart entries are stored within the /etc/xdg/autostart or ~/.config/autostart directories and have a .desktop file extension.

Within an XDG autostart entry file, the Type key specifies if the entry is an application (type 1), link (type 2) or directory (type 3). The Name key indicates an arbitrary name assigned by the creator and the Exec key indicates the application and command line arguments to execute.

Adversaries may use XDG autostart entries to maintain persistence by executing malicious commands and payloads, such as remote access tools, during the startup of a desktop environment. Commands included in XDG autostart entries with execute after user logon in the context of the currently logged on user. Adversaries may also use Masquerading to make XDG autostart entries look as if they are associated with legitimate programs.

##### .014 - Active Setup

Adversaries may achieve persistence by adding a Registry key to the Active Setup of the local machine. Active Setup is a Windows mechanism that is used to execute programs when a user logs in. The value stored in the Registry key will be executed after a user logs into the computer. These programs will be executed under the context of the user and will have the account's associated permissions level.

Adversaries may abuse Active Setup by creating a key under HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Active Setup\Installed Components\ and setting a malicious value for StubPath. This value will serve as the program that will be executed when a user logs into the computer.

Adversaries can abuse these components to execute malware, such as remote access tools, to maintain persistence through system reboots. Adversaries may also use Masquerading to make the Registry entries look as if they are associated with legitimate programs.

##### .015 - Login Items

Adversaries may add login items to execute upon user login to gain persistence or escalate privileges. Login items are applications, documents, folders, or server connections that are automatically launched when a user logs in. Login items can be added via a shared file list or Service Management Framework. Shared file list login items can be set using scripting languages such as AppleScript, whereas the Service Management Framework uses the API call SMLoginItemSetEnabled.

Login items installed using the Service Management Framework leverage launchd, are not visible in the System Preferences, and can only be removed by the application that created them. Login items created using a shared file list are visible in System Preferences, can hide the application when it launches, and are executed through LaunchServices, not launchd, to open applications, documents, or URLs without using Finder. Users and applications use login items to configure their user environment to launch commonly used services or applications, such as email, chat, and music applications.

Adversaries can utilize AppleScript and Native API calls to create a login item to spawn malicious executables. Prior to version 10.5 on macOS, adversaries can add login items by using AppleScript to send an Apple events to the "System Events" process, which has an AppleScript dictionary for manipulating login items. Adversaries can use a command such as tell application "System Events" to make login item at end with properties /path/to/executable. This command adds the path of the malicious executable to the login item file list located in ~/Library/Application Support/com.apple.backgroundtaskmanagementagent/backgrounditems.btm. Adversaries can also use login items to launch executables that can be used to control the victim system remotely or as a means to gain privilege escalation by prompting for user credentials.

#### T1037 - Boot or Logon Initialization Scripts

Adversaries may use scripts automatically executed at boot or logon initialization to establish persistence. Initialization scripts can be used to perform administrative functions, which may often execute other programs or send information to an internal logging server. These scripts can vary based on operating system and whether applied locally or remotely.

Adversaries may use these scripts to maintain persistence on a single system. Depending on the access configuration of the logon scripts, either local credentials or an administrator account may be necessary.

An adversary may also be able to escalate their privileges since some boot or logon initialization scripts run with higher privileges.

##### .001 - Logon Script (Windows)

Adversaries may use Windows logon scripts automatically executed at logon initialization to establish persistence. Windows allows logon scripts to be run whenever a specific user or group of users log into a system. This is done via adding a path to a script to the HKCU\Environment\UserInitMprLogonScript Registry key.

Adversaries may use these scripts to maintain persistence on a single system. Depending on the access configuration of the logon scripts, either local credentials or an administrator account may be necessary.

##### .002 - Login Hook

Adversaries may use a Login Hook to establish persistence executed upon user logon. A login hook is a plist file that points to a specific script to execute with root privileges upon user logon. The plist file is located in the /Library/Preferences/com.apple.loginwindow.plist file and can be modified using the defaults command-line utility. This behavior is the same for logout hooks where a script can be executed upon user logout. All hooks require administrator permissions to modify or create hooks.

Adversaries can add or insert a path to a malicious script in the com.apple.loginwindow.plist file, using the LoginHook or LogoutHook key-value pair. The malicious script is executed upon the next user login. If a login hook already exists, adversaries can add additional commands to an existing login hook. There can be only one login and logout hook on a system at a time.

**Note:** Login hooks were deprecated in 10.11 version of macOS in favor of Launch Daemon and Launch Agent

##### .003 - Network Logon Script

Adversaries may use network logon scripts automatically executed at logon initialization to establish persistence. Network logon scripts can be assigned using Active Directory or Group Policy Objects. These logon scripts run with the privileges of the user they are assigned to. Depending on the systems within the network, initializing one of these scripts could apply to more than one or potentially all systems.

Adversaries may use these scripts to maintain persistence on a network. Depending on the access configuration of the logon scripts, either local credentials or an administrator account may be necessary.

##### .004 - RC Scripts

Adversaries may establish persistence by modifying RC scripts which are executed during a Unix-like system’s startup. These files allow system administrators to map and start custom services at startup for different run levels. RC scripts require root privileges to modify.

Adversaries can establish persistence by adding a malicious binary path or shell commands to rc.local, rc.common, and other RC scripts specific to the Unix-like distribution. Upon reboot, the system executes the script's contents as root, resulting in persistence.

Adversary abuse of RC scripts is especially effective for lightweight Unix-like distributions using the root user as default, such as IoT or embedded systems.

Several Unix-like systems have moved to Systemd and deprecated the use of RC scripts. This is now a deprecated mechanism in macOS in favor of Launchd. This technique can be used on Mac OS X Panther v10.3 and earlier versions which still execute the RC scripts. To maintain backwards compatibility some systems, such as Ubuntu, will execute the RC scripts if they exist with the correct file permissions.

##### .005 - Startup Items

Adversaries may use startup items automatically executed at boot initialization to establish persistence. Startup items execute during the final phase of the boot process and contain shell scripts or other executable files along with configuration information used by the system to determine the execution order for all startup items.

This is technically a deprecated technology (superseded by Launch Daemon), and thus the appropriate folder, /Library/StartupItems isn’t guaranteed to exist on the system by default, but does appear to exist by default on macOS Sierra. A startup item is a directory whose executable and configuration property list (plist), StartupParameters.plist, reside in the top-level directory.

An adversary can create the appropriate folders/files in the StartupItems directory to register their own persistence mechanism. Additionally, since StartupItems run during the bootup phase of macOS, they will run as the elevated root user.

#### T1543 - Create or Modify System Process

Adversaries may create or modify system-level processes to repeatedly execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. When operating systems boot up, they can start processes that perform background system functions. On Windows and Linux, these system processes are referred to as services. On macOS, launchd processes known as Launch Daemon and Launch Agent are run to finish system initialization and load user specific parameters.

Adversaries may install new services, daemons, or agents that can be configured to execute at startup or a repeatable interval in order to establish persistence. Similarly, adversaries may modify existing services, daemons, or agents to achieve the same effect.

Services, daemons, or agents may be created with administrator privileges but executed under root/SYSTEM privileges. Adversaries may leverage this functionality to create or modify system processes in order to escalate privileges.

##### .001 - Launch Agent

Adversaries may create or modify launch agents to repeatedly execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. When a user logs in, a per-user launchd process is started which loads the parameters for each launch-on-demand user agent from the property list (.plist) file found in /System/Library/LaunchAgents, /Library/LaunchAgents, and ~/Library/LaunchAgents. Property list files use the Label, ProgramArguments , and RunAtLoad keys to identify the Launch Agent's name, executable location, and execution time. Launch Agents are often installed to perform updates to programs, launch user specified programs at login, or to conduct other developer tasks.

Launch Agents can also be executed using the Launchctl command.

Adversaries may install a new Launch Agent that executes at login by placing a .plist file into the appropriate folders with the RunAtLoad or KeepAlive keys set to true. The Launch Agent name may be disguised by using a name from the related operating system or benign software. Launch Agents are created with user level privileges and execute with user level permissions.

##### .002 - Systemd Service

Adversaries may create or modify systemd services to repeatedly execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. The systemd service manager is commonly used for managing background daemon processes (also known as services) and other system resources. Systemd is the default initialization (init) system on many Linux distributions starting with Debian 8, Ubuntu 15.04, CentOS 7, RHEL 7, Fedora 15, and replaces legacy init systems including SysVinit and Upstart while remaining backwards compatible with the aforementioned init systems.

Systemd utilizes configuration files known as service units to control how services boot and under what conditions. By default, these unit files are stored in the /etc/systemd/system and /usr/lib/systemd/system directories and have the file extension .service. Each service unit file may contain numerous directives that can execute system commands:

* ExecStart, ExecStartPre, and ExecStartPost directives cover execution of commands when a services is started manually by 'systemctl' or on system start if the service is set to automatically start.
* ExecReload directive covers when a service restarts.
* ExecStop and ExecStopPost directives cover when a service is stopped or manually by 'systemctl'.

Adversaries have used systemd functionality to establish persistent access to victim systems by creating and/or modifying service unit files that cause systemd to execute malicious commands at system boot.

While adversaries typically require root privileges to create/modify service unit files in the /etc/systemd/system and /usr/lib/systemd/system directories, low privilege users can create/modify service unit files in directories such as ~/.config/systemd/user/ to achieve user-level persistence.

##### .003 - Windows Service

Adversaries may create or modify Windows services to repeatedly execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. When Windows boots up, it starts programs or applications called services that perform background system functions. Windows service configuration information, including the file path to the service's executable or recovery programs/commands, is stored in the Windows Registry.

Adversaries may install a new service or modify an existing service to execute at startup in order to persist on a system. Service configurations can be set or modified using system utilities (such as sc.exe), by directly modifying the Registry, or by interacting directly with the Windows API.

Adversaries may also use services to install and execute malicious drivers. For example, after dropping a driver file (ex: .sys) to disk, the payload can be loaded and registered via Native API functions such as CreateServiceW() (or manually via functions such as ZwLoadDriver() and ZwSetValueKey()), by creating the required service Registry values (i.e. Modify Registry), or by using command-line utilities such as PnPUtil.exe. Adversaries may leverage these drivers as Rootkits to hide the presence of malicious activity on a system. Adversaries may also load a signed yet vulnerable driver onto a compromised machine (known as "Bring Your Own Vulnerable Driver" (BYOVD)) as part of Exploitation for Privilege Escalation.

Services may be created with administrator privileges but are executed under SYSTEM privileges, so an adversary may also use a service to escalate privileges. Adversaries may also directly start services through Service Execution. To make detection analysis more challenging, malicious services may also incorporate Masquerade Task or Service (ex: using a service and/or payload name related to a legitimate OS or benign software component).

##### .004 - Launch Daemon

Adversaries may create or modify Launch Daemons to execute malicious payloads as part of persistence. Launch Daemons are plist files used to interact with Launchd, the service management framework used by macOS. Launch Daemons require elevated privileges to install, are executed for every user on a system prior to login, and run in the background without the need for user interaction. During the macOS initialization startup, the launchd process loads the parameters for launch-on-demand system-level daemons from plist files found in /System/Library/LaunchDaemons/ and /Library/LaunchDaemons/. Required Launch Daemons parameters include a Label to identify the task, Program to provide a path to the executable, and RunAtLoad to specify when the task is run. Launch Daemons are often used to provide access to shared resources, updates to software, or conduct automation tasks.

Adversaries may install a Launch Daemon configured to execute at startup by using the RunAtLoad parameter set to true and the Program parameter set to the malicious executable path. The daemon name may be disguised by using a name from a related operating system or benign software (i.e. Masquerading). When the Launch Daemon is executed, the program inherits administrative permissions.

Additionally, system configuration changes (such as the installation of third party package managing software) may cause folders such as usr/local/bin to become globally writeable. So, it is possible for poor configurations to allow an adversary to modify executables referenced by current Launch Daemon's plist files.

#### T1484 - Domain Policy Modification

Adversaries may modify the configuration settings of a domain to evade defenses and/or escalate privileges in domain environments. Domains provide a centralized means of managing how computer resources (ex: computers, user accounts) can act, and interact with each other, on a network. The policy of the domain also includes configuration settings that may apply between domains in a multi-domain/forest environment. Modifications to domain settings may include altering domain Group Policy Objects (GPOs) or changing trust settings for domains, including federation trusts.

With sufficient permissions, adversaries can modify domain policy settings. Since domain configuration settings control many of the interactions within the Active Directory (AD) environment, there are a great number of potential attacks that can stem from this abuse. Examples of such abuse include modifying GPOs to push a malicious Scheduled Task to computers throughout the domain environment or modifying domain trusts to include an adversary controlled domain where they can control access tokens that will subsequently be accepted by victim domain resources. Adversaries can also change configuration settings within the AD environment to implement a Rogue Domain Controller.

Adversaries may temporarily modify domain policy, carry out a malicious action(s), and then revert the change to remove suspicious indicators.

##### .001 - Group Policy Modification

Adversaries may modify Group Policy Objects (GPOs) to subvert the intended discretionary access controls for a domain, usually with the intention of escalating privileges on the domain. Group policy allows for centralized management of user and computer settings in Active Directory (AD). GPOs are containers for group policy settings made up of files stored within a predicable network path \\<DOMAIN>\SYSVOL\<DOMAIN>\Policies\.

Like other objects in AD, GPOs have access controls associated with them. By default all user accounts in the domain have permission to read GPOs. It is possible to delegate GPO access control permissions, e.g. write access, to specific users or groups in the domain.

Malicious GPO modifications can be used to implement many other malicious behaviors such as Scheduled Task/Job, Disable or Modify Tools, Ingress Tool Transfer, Create Account, Service Execution, and more. Since GPOs can control so many user and machine settings in the AD environment, there are a great number of potential attacks that can stem from this GPO abuse.

For example, publicly available scripts such as New-GPOImmediateTask can be leveraged to automate the creation of a malicious Scheduled Task/Job by modifying GPO settings, in this case modifying <GPO\_PATH>\Machine\Preferences\ScheduledTasks\ScheduledTasks.xml. In some cases an adversary might modify specific user rights like SeEnableDelegationPrivilege, set in <GPO\_PATH>\MACHINE\Microsoft\Windows NT\SecEdit\GptTmpl.inf, to achieve a subtle AD backdoor with complete control of the domain because the user account under the adversary's control would then be able to modify GPOs.

##### .002 - Domain Trust Modification

Adversaries may add new domain trusts or modify the properties of existing domain trusts to evade defenses and/or elevate privileges. Domain trust details, such as whether or not a domain is federated, allow authentication and authorization properties to apply between domains for the purpose of accessing shared resources. These trust objects may include accounts, credentials, and other authentication material applied to servers, tokens, and domains.

Manipulating the domain trusts may allow an adversary to escalate privileges and/or evade defenses by modifying settings to add objects which they control. For example, this may be used to forge SAML Tokens, without the need to compromise the signing certificate to forge new credentials. Instead, an adversary can manipulate domain trusts to add their own signing certificate. An adversary may also convert a domain to a federated domain, which may enable malicious trust modifications such as altering the claim issuance rules to log in any valid set of credentials as a specified user.

#### T1611 - Escape to Host

Adversaries may break out of a container to gain access to the underlying host. This can allow an adversary access to other containerized resources from the host level or to the host itself. In principle, containerized resources should provide a clear separation of application functionality and be isolated from the host environment.

There are multiple ways an adversary may escape to a host environment. Examples include creating a container configured to mount the host’s filesystem using the bind parameter, which allows the adversary to drop payloads and execute control utilities such as cron on the host; utilizing a privileged container to run commands or load a malicious kernel module on the underlying host; or abusing system calls such as unshare and keyctl to escalate privileges and steal secrets.

Additionally, an adversary may be able to exploit a compromised container with a mounted container management socket, such as docker.sock, to break out of the container via a Container Administration Command. Adversaries may also escape via Exploitation for Privilege Escalation, such as exploiting vulnerabilities in global symbolic links in order to access the root directory of a host machine.

Gaining access to the host may provide the adversary with the opportunity to achieve follow-on objectives, such as establishing persistence, moving laterally within the environment, or setting up a C&C channel on the host.

#### T1546 - Event Triggered Execution

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges using system mechanisms that trigger execution based on specific events. Various operating systems have means to monitor and subscribe to events such as logons or other user activity such as running specific applications/binaries. Cloud environments may also support various functions and services that monitor and can be invoked in response to specific cloud events.

Adversaries may abuse these mechanisms as a means of maintaining persistent access to a victim via repeatedly executing malicious code. After gaining access to a victim system, adversaries may create/modify event triggers to point to malicious content that will be executed whenever the event trigger is invoked.

Since the execution can be proxied by an account with higher permissions, such as SYSTEM or service accounts, an adversary may be able to abuse these triggered execution mechanisms to escalate their privileges.

##### .001 - Change Default File Association

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by a file type association. When a file is opened, the default program used to open the file (also called the file association or handler) is checked. File association selections are stored in the Windows Registry and can be edited by users, administrators, or programs that have Registry access or by administrators using the built-in assoc utility. Applications can modify the file association for a given file extension to call an arbitrary program when a file with the given extension is opened.

System file associations are listed under HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT.[extension], for example HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT.txt. The entries point to a handler for that extension located at HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\[handler]. The various commands are then listed as subkeys underneath the shell key at HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\[handler]\shell\[action]\command. For example:

* HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\txtfile\shell\open\command
* HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\txtfile\shell\print\command
* HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\txtfile\shell\printto\command

The values of the keys listed are commands that are executed when the handler opens the file extension. Adversaries can modify these values to continually execute arbitrary commands.

##### .002 – Screensaver

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by user inactivity. Screensavers are programs that execute after a configurable time of user inactivity and consist of Portable Executable (PE) files with a .scr file extension. The Windows screensaver application scrnsave.scr is located in C:\Windows\System32\, and C:\Windows\sysWOW64\ on 64-bit Windows systems, along with screensavers included with base Windows installations.

The following screensaver settings are stored in the Registry (HKCU\Control Panel\Desktop\) and could be manipulated to achieve persistence:

* SCRNSAVE.exe - set to malicious PE path
* ScreenSaveActive - set to '1' to enable the screensaver
* ScreenSaverIsSecure - set to '0' to not require a password to unlock
* ScreenSaveTimeout - sets user inactivity timeout before screensaver is executed

Adversaries can use screensaver settings to maintain persistence by setting the screensaver to run malware after a certain timeframe of user inactivity.

##### .003 - Windows Management Instrumentation Event Subscription

Adversaries may establish persistence and elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by a Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI) event subscription. WMI can be used to install event filters, providers, consumers, and bindings that execute code when a defined event occurs. Examples of events that may be subscribed to are the wall clock time, user loging, or the computer's uptime.

Adversaries may use the capabilities of WMI to subscribe to an event and execute arbitrary code when that event occurs, providing persistence on a system. Adversaries may also compile WMI scripts into Windows Management Object (MOF) files (.mof extension) that can be used to create a malicious subscription.

WMI subscription execution is proxied by the WMI Provider Host process (WmiPrvSe.exe) and thus may result in elevated SYSTEM privileges.

##### .004 - Unix Shell Configuration Modification

Adversaries may establish persistence through executing malicious commands triggered by a user’s shell. User Unix Shells execute several configuration scripts at different points throughout the session based on events. For example, when a user opens a command-line interface or remotely logs in (such as via SSH) a login shell is initiated. The login shell executes scripts from the system (/etc) and the user’s home directory (~/) to configure the environment. All login shells on a system use /etc/profile when initiated. These configuration scripts run at the permission level of their directory and are often used to set environment variables, create aliases, and customize the user’s environment. When the shell exits or terminates, additional shell scripts are executed to ensure the shell exits appropriately.

Adversaries may attempt to establish persistence by inserting commands into scripts automatically executed by shells. Using bash as an example, the default shell for most GNU/Linux systems, adversaries may add commands that launch malicious binaries into the /etc/profile and /etc/profile.d files. These files typically require root permissions to modify and are executed each time any shell on a system launches. For user level permissions, adversaries can insert malicious commands into ~/.bash\_profile, ~/.bash\_login, or ~/.profile which are sourced when a user opens a command-line interface or connects remotely. Since the system only executes the first existing file in the listed order, adversaries have used ~/.bash\_profile to ensure execution. Adversaries have also leveraged the ~/.bashrc file which is additionally executed if the connection is established remotely or an additional interactive shell is opened, such as a new tab in the command-line interface. Some malware targets the termination of a program to trigger execution, adversaries can use the ~/.bash\_logout file to execute malicious commands at the end of a session.

For macOS, the functionality of this technique is similar but may leverage zsh, the default shell for macOS 10.15+. When the Terminal.app is opened, the application launches a zsh login shell and a zsh interactive shell. The login shell configures the system environment using /etc/profile, /etc/zshenv, /etc/zprofile, and /etc/zlogin. The login shell then configures the user environment with ~/.zprofile and ~/.zlogin. The interactive shell uses the ~/.zshrc to configure the user environment. Upon exiting, /etc/zlogout and ~/.zlogout are executed. For legacy programs, macOS executes /etc/bashrc on startup.

##### .005 – Trap

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by an interrupt signal. The trap command allows programs and shells to specify commands that will be executed upon receiving interrupt signals. A common situation is a script allowing for graceful termination and handling of common keyboard interrupts like ctrl+c and ctrl+d.

Adversaries can use this to register code to be executed when the shell encounters specific interrupts as a persistence mechanism. Trap commands are of the following format trap 'command list' signals where "command list" will be executed when "signals" are received.

##### .006 - LC\_LOAD\_DYLIB Addition

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by the execution of tainted binaries. Mach-O binaries have a series of headers that are used to perform certain operations when a binary is loaded. The LC\_LOAD\_DYLIB header in a Mach-O binary tells macOS and OS X which dynamic libraries (dylibs) to load during execution time. These can be added ad-hoc to the compiled binary as long as adjustments are made to the rest of the fields and dependencies. There are tools available to perform these changes.

Adversaries may modify Mach-O binary headers to load and execute malicious dylibs every time the binary is executed. Although any changes will invalidate digital signatures on binaries because the binary is being modified, this can be remediated by simply removing the LC\_CODE\_SIGNATURE command from the binary so that the signature isn’t checked at load time.

##### .007 - Netsh Helper DLL

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by Netsh Helper DLLs. Netsh.exe (also referred to as Netshell) is a command-line scripting utility used to interact with the network configuration of a system. It contains functionality to add helper DLLs for extending functionality of the utility.[1] The paths to registered netsh.exe helper DLLs are entered into the Windows Registry at HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Netsh.

Adversaries can use netsh.exe helper DLLs to trigger execution of arbitrary code in a persistent manner. This execution would take place anytime netsh.exe is executed, which could happen automatically, with another persistence technique, or if other software (ex: VPN) is present on the system that executes netsh.exe as part of its normal functionality.

##### .008 - Accessibility Features

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by accessibility features. Windows contains accessibility features that may be launched with a key combination before a user has logged in (ex: when the user is on the Windows logon screen). An adversary can modify the way these programs are launched to get a command prompt or backdoor without logging in to the system.

Two common accessibility programs are C:\Windows\System32\sethc.exe, launched when the shift key is pressed five times and C:\Windows\System32\utilman.exe, launched when the Windows + U key combination is pressed. The sethc.exe program is often referred to as "sticky keys", and has been used by adversaries for unauthenticated access through a remote desktop login screen.

Depending on the version of Windows, an adversary may take advantage of these features in different ways. Common methods used by adversaries include replacing accessibility feature binaries or pointers/references to these binaries in the Registry. In newer versions of Windows, the replaced binary needs to be digitally signed for x64 systems, the binary must reside in %systemdir%\, and it must be protected by Windows File or Resource Protection (WFP/WRP). The Image File Execution Options Injection debugger method was likely discovered as a potential workaround because it does not require the corresponding accessibility feature binary to be replaced.

For simple binary replacement on Windows XP and later as well as and Windows Server 2003/R2 and later, for example, the program (e.g., C:\Windows\System32\utilman.exe) may be replaced with "cmd.exe" (or another program that provides backdoor access). Subsequently, pressing the appropriate key combination at the login screen while sitting at the keyboard or when connected over Remote Desktop Protocol will cause the replaced file to be executed with SYSTEM privileges.

Other accessibility features exist that may also be leveraged in a similar fashion:

* On-Screen Keyboard: C:\Windows\System32\osk.exe
* Magnifier: C:\Windows\System32\Magnify.exe
* Narrator: C:\Windows\System32\Narrator.exe
* Display Switcher: C:\Windows\System32\DisplaySwitch.exe
* App Switcher: C:\Windows\System32\AtBroker.exe

##### .009 - AppCert DLLs

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by AppCert DLLs loaded into processes. Dynamic-link libraries (DLLs) that are specified in the AppCertDLLs Registry key under HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager\ are loaded into every process that calls the ubiquitously used application programming interface (API) functions CreateProcess, CreateProcessAsUser, CreateProcessWithLoginW, CreateProcessWithTokenW, or WinExec.

Similar to Process Injection, this value can be abused to obtain elevated privileges by causing a malicious DLL to be loaded and run in the context of separate processes on the computer. Malicious AppCert DLLs may also provide persistence by continuously being triggered by API activity.

##### .010 - AppInit DLLs

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by AppInit DLLs loaded into processes. Dynamic-link libraries (DLLs) that are specified in the AppInit\_DLLs value in the Registry keys HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Windows or HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Wow6432Node\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Windows are loaded by user32.dll into every process that loads user32.dll. In practice this is nearly every program, since user32.dll is a very common library.

Similar to Process Injection, these values can be abused to obtain elevated privileges by causing a malicious DLL to be loaded and run in the context of separate processes on the computer. Malicious AppInit DLLs may also provide persistence by continuously being triggered by API activity.

The AppInit DLL functionality is disabled in Windows 8 and later versions when secure boot is enabled.

##### .011 - Application Shimming

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by application shims. The Microsoft Windows Application Compatibility Infrastructure/Framework (Application Shim) was created to allow for backward compatibility of software as the operating system codebase changes over time. For example, the application shimming feature allows developers to apply fixes to applications (without rewriting code) that were created for Windows XP so that it will work with Windows 10. [1]

Within the framework, shims are created to act as a buffer between the program (or more specifically, the Import Address Table) and the Windows OS. When a program is executed, the shim cache is referenced to determine if the program requires the use of the shim database (.sdb). If so, the shim database uses hooking to redirect the code as necessary in order to communicate with the OS.

A list of all shims currently installed by the default Windows installer (sdbinst.exe) is kept in:

* %WINDIR%\AppPatch\sysmain.sdb
* HKLM\software\microsoft\windows nt\currentversion\appcompatflags\installedsdb

Custom databases are stored in:

* %WINDIR%\AppPatch\custom and %WINDIR%\AppPatch\AppPatch64\Custom
* HKLM\software\microsoft\windows nt\currentversion\appcompatflags\custom

To keep shims secure, Windows designed them to run in user mode so they cannot modify the kernel and you must have administrator privileges to install a shim. However, certain shims can be used to Bypass User Account Control (UAC and RedirectEXE), inject DLLs into processes (InjectDLL), disable Data Execution Prevention (DisableNX) and Structure Exception Handling (DisableSEH), and intercept memory addresses (GetProcAddress).

Utilizing these shims may allow an adversary to perform several malicious acts such as elevate privileges, install backdoors, disable defenses like Windows Defender, etc. Shims can also be abused to establish persistence by continuously being invoked by affected programs.

##### .012 - Image File Execution Options Injection

Adversaries may establish persistence and/or elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by Image File Execution Options (IFEO) debuggers. IFEOs enable a developer to attach a debugger to an application. When a process is created, a debugger present in an application’s IFEO will be prepended to the application’s name, effectively launching the new process under the debugger (e.g., C:\dbg\ntsd.exe -g notepad.exe).

IFEOs can be set directly via the Registry or in Global Flags via the GFlags tool. IFEOs are represented as Debugger values in the Registry under HKLM\SOFTWARE{\Wow6432Node}\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Image File Execution Options\ where <executable> is the binary on which the debugger is attached.

IFEOs can also enable an arbitrary monitor program to be launched when a specified program silently exits (i.e. is prematurely terminated by itself or a second, non kernel-mode process). Similar to debuggers, silent exit monitoring can be enabled through GFlags and/or by directly modifying IFEO and silent process exit Registry values in HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\SilentProcessExit\.

Similar to Accessibility Features, on Windows Vista and later as well as Windows Server 2008 and later, a Registry key may be modified that configures "cmd.exe," or another program that provides backdoor access, as a "debugger" for an accessibility program (ex: utilman.exe). After the Registry is modified, pressing the appropriate key combination at the login screen while at the keyboard or when connected with Remote Desktop Protocol will cause the "debugger" program to be executed with SYSTEM privileges.

Similar to Process Injection, these values may also be abused to obtain privilege escalation by causing a malicious executable to be loaded and run in the context of separate processes on the computer. Installing IFEO mechanisms may also provide Persistence via continuous triggered invocation.

Malware may also use IFEO to Impair Defenses by registering invalid debuggers that redirect and effectively disable various system and security applications.

##### .013 - PowerShell Profile

Adversaries may gain persistence and elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by PowerShell profiles. A PowerShell profile (profile.ps1) is a script that runs when PowerShell starts and can be used as a logon script to customize user environments.

PowerShell supports several profiles depending on the user or host program. For example, there can be different profiles for PowerShell host programs such as the PowerShell console, PowerShell ISE or Visual Studio Code. An administrator can also configure a profile that applies to all users and host programs on the local computer.

Adversaries may modify these profiles to include arbitrary commands, functions, modules, and/or PowerShell drives to gain persistence. Every time a user opens a PowerShell session the modified script will be executed unless the -NoProfile flag is used when it is launched.

An adversary may also be able to escalate privileges if a script in a PowerShell profile is loaded and executed by an account with higher privileges, such as a domain administrator.

##### .014 – Emond

Adversaries may gain persistence and elevate privileges by executing malicious content triggered by the Event Monitor Daemon (emond). Emond is a Launch Daemon that accepts events from various services, runs them through a simple rules engine, and takes action. The emond binary at /sbin/emond will load any rules from the /etc/emond.d/rules/ directory and take action once an explicitly defined event takes place.

The rule files are in the plist format and define the name, event type, and action to take. Some examples of event types include system startup and user authentication. Examples of actions are to run a system command or send an email. The emond service will not launch if there is no file present in the QueueDirectories path /private/var/db/emondClients, specified in the Launch Daemon configuration file at /System/Library/LaunchDaemons/com.apple.emond.plist.

Adversaries may abuse this service by writing a rule to execute commands when a defined event occurs, such as system start up or user authentication. Adversaries may also be able to escalate privileges from administrator to root as the emond service is executed with root privileges by the Launch Daemon service.

##### .015 - Component Object Model Hijacking

Adversaries may establish persistence by executing malicious content triggered by hijacked references to Component Object Model (COM) objects. COM is a system within Windows to enable interaction between software components through the operating system. References to various COM objects are stored in the Registry.

Adversaries can use the COM system to insert malicious code that can be executed in place of legitimate software through hijacking the COM references and relationships as a means for persistence. Hijacking a COM object requires a change in the Registry to replace a reference to a legitimate system component which may cause that component to not work when executed. When that system component is executed through normal system operation the adversary's code will be executed instead. An adversary is likely to hijack objects that are used frequently enough to maintain a consistent level of persistence, but are unlikely to break noticeable functionality within the system as to avoid system instability that could lead to detection.

##### .016 - Installer Packages

Adversaries may establish persistence and elevate privileges by using an installer to trigger the execution of malicious content. Installer packages are OS specific and contain the resources an operating system needs to install applications on a system. Installer packages can include scripts that run prior to installation as well as after installation is complete. Installer scripts may inherit elevated permissions when executed. Developers often use these scripts to prepare the environment for installation, check requirements, download dependencies, and remove files after installation.

Using legitimate applications, adversaries have distributed applications with modified installer scripts to execute malicious content. When a user installs the application, they may be required to grant administrative permissions to allow the installation. At the end of the installation process of the legitimate application, content such as macOS postinstall scripts can be executed with the inherited elevated permissions. Adversaries can use these scripts to execute a malicious executable or install other malicious components (such as a Launch Daemon) with the elevated permissions.

Depending on the distribution, Linux versions of package installer scripts are sometimes called maintainer scripts or post installation scripts. These scripts can include preinst, postinst, prerm, postrm scripts and run as root when executed.

For Windows, the Microsoft Installer services uses .msi files to manage the installing, updating, and uninstalling of applications. Adversaries have leveraged Prebuild and Postbuild events to run commands before or after a build when installing .msi files.

#### T1068 - Exploitation for Privilege Escalation

#### T1574 - Hijack Execution Flow

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the way operating systems run programs. Hijacking execution flow can be for the purposes of persistence, since this hijacked execution may reoccur over time. Adversaries may also use these mechanisms to elevate privileges or evade defenses, such as application control or other restrictions on execution.

There are many ways an adversary may hijack the flow of execution, including by manipulating how the operating system locates programs to be executed. How the operating system locates libraries to be used by a program can also be intercepted. Locations where the operating system looks for programs/resources, such as file directories and in the case of Windows the Registry, could also be poisoned to include malicious payloads.

##### .001 - DLL Search Order Hijacking

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the search order used to load DLLs. Windows systems use a common method to look for required DLLs to load into a program. Hijacking DLL loads may be for the purpose of establishing persistence as well as elevating privileges and/or evading restrictions on file execution.

There are many ways an adversary can hijack DLL loads. Adversaries may plant trojan dynamic-link library files (DLLs) in a directory that will be searched before the location of a legitimate library that will be requested by a program, causing Windows to load their malicious library when it is called for by the victim program. Adversaries may also perform DLL preloading, also called binary planting attacks, by placing a malicious DLL with the same name as an ambiguously specified DLL in a location that Windows searches before the legitimate DLL. Often this location is the current working directory of the program. Remote DLL preloading attacks occur when a program sets its current directory to a remote location such as a Web share before loading a DLL.

Adversaries may also directly modify the search order via DLL redirection, which after being enabled (in the Registry and creation of a redirection file) may cause a program to load a different DLL.

If a search order-vulnerable program is configured to run at a higher privilege level, then the adversary-controlled DLL that is loaded will also be executed at the higher level. In this case, the technique could be used for privilege escalation from user to administrator or SYSTEM or from administrator to SYSTEM, depending on the program. Programs that fall victim to path hijacking may appear to behave normally because malicious DLLs may be configured to also load the legitimate DLLs they were meant to replace.

##### .002 - DLL Side-Loading

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by side-loading DLLs. Similar to DLL Search Order Hijacking, side-loading involves hijacking which DLL a program loads. But rather than just planting the DLL within the search order of a program then waiting for the victim application to be invoked, adversaries may directly side-load their payloads by planting then invoking a legitimate application that executes their payload(s).

Side-loading takes advantage of the DLL search order used by the loader by positioning both the victim application and malicious payload(s) alongside each other. Adversaries likely use side-loading as a means of masking actions they perform under a legitimate, trusted, and potentially elevated system or software process. Benign executables used to side-load payloads may not be flagged during delivery and/or execution. Adversary payloads may also be encrypted/packed or otherwise obfuscated until loaded into the memory of the trusted process.

##### .004 - Dylib Hijacking

Adversaries may execute their own payloads by placing a malicious dynamic library (dylib) with an expected name in a path a victim application searches at runtime. The dynamic loader will try to find the dylibs based on the sequential order of the search paths. Paths to dylibs may be prefixed with @rpath, which allows developers to use relative paths to specify an array of search paths used at runtime based on the location of the executable. Additionally, if weak linking is used, such as the LC\_LOAD\_WEAK\_DYLIB function, an application will still execute even if an expected dylib is not present. Weak linking enables developers to run an application on multiple macOS versions as new APIs are added.

Adversaries may gain execution by inserting malicious dylibs with the name of the missing dylib in the identified path. Dylibs are loaded into an application's address space allowing the malicious dylib to inherit the application's privilege level and resources. Based on the application, this could result in privilege escalation and uninhibited network access. This method may also evade detection from security products since the execution is masked under a legitimate process.

##### .005 - Executable Installer File Permissions Weakness

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the binaries used by an installer. These processes may automatically execute specific binaries as part of their functionality or to perform other actions. If the permissions on the file system directory containing a target binary, or permissions on the binary itself, are improperly set, then the target binary may be overwritten with another binary using user-level permissions and executed by the original process. If the original process and thread are running under a higher permissions level, then the replaced binary will also execute under higher-level permissions, which could include SYSTEM.

Another variation of this technique can be performed by taking advantage of a weakness that is common in executable, self-extracting installers. During the installation process, it is common for installers to use a subdirectory within the %TEMP% directory to unpack binaries such as DLLs, EXEs, or other payloads. When installers create subdirectories and files they often do not set appropriate permissions to restrict write access, which allows for execution of untrusted code placed in the subdirectories or overwriting of binaries used in the installation process. This behavior is related to and may take advantage of DLL Search Order Hijacking.

Adversaries may use this technique to replace legitimate binaries with malicious ones as a means of executing code at a higher permissions level. Some installers may also require elevated privileges that will result in privilege escalation when executing adversary controlled code. This behavior is related to Bypass User Account Control. Several examples of this weakness in existing common installers have been reported to software vendors. If the executing process is set to run at a specific time or during a certain event (e.g., system bootup) then this technique can also be used for persistence.

##### .006 - Dynamic Linker Hijacking

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking environment variables the dynamic linker uses to load shared libraries. During the execution preparation phase of a program, the dynamic linker loads specified absolute paths of shared libraries from environment variables and files, such as LD\_PRELOAD on Linux or DYLD\_INSERT\_LIBRARIES on macOS. Libraries specified in environment variables are loaded first, taking precedence over system libraries with the same function name. These variables are often used by developers to debug binaries without needing to recompile, deconflict mapped symbols, and implement custom functions without changing the original library.

On Linux and macOS, hijacking dynamic linker variables may grant access to the victim process's memory, system/network resources, and possibly elevated privileges. This method may also evade detection from security products since the execution is masked under a legitimate process. Adversaries can set environment variables via the command line using the export command, setenv function, or putenv function. Adversaries can also leverage Dynamic Linker Hijacking to export variables in a shell or set variables programmatically using higher level syntax such Python’s os.environ.

On Linux, adversaries may set LD\_PRELOAD to point to malicious libraries that match the name of legitimate libraries which are requested by a victim program, causing the operating system to load the adversary's malicious code upon execution of the victim program. LD\_PRELOAD can be set via the environment variable or /etc/ld.so.preload file. Libraries specified by LD\_PRELOAD are loaded and mapped into memory by dlopen() and mmap() respectively.

On macOS this behavior is conceptually the same as on Linux, differing only in how the macOS dynamic libraries (dyld) is implemented at a lower level. Adversaries can set the DYLD\_INSERT\_LIBRARIES environment variable to point to malicious libraries containing names of legitimate libraries or functions requested by a victim program.

##### .007 - Path Interception by PATH Environment Variable

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking environment variables used to load libraries. Adversaries may place a program in an earlier entry in the list of directories stored in the PATH environment variable, which Windows will then execute when it searches sequentially through that PATH listing in search of the binary that was called from a script or the command line.

The PATH environment variable contains a list of directories. Certain methods of executing a program (namely using cmd.exe or the command-line) rely solely on the PATH environment variable to determine the locations that are searched for a program when the path for the program is not given. If any directories are listed in the PATH environment variable before the Windows directory, %SystemRoot%\system32 (e.g., C:\Windows\system32), a program may be placed in the preceding directory that is named the same as a Windows program (such as cmd, PowerShell, or Python), which will be executed when that command is executed from a script or command-line.

For example, if C:\example path precedes C:\Windows\system32 is in the PATH environment variable, a program that is named net.exe and placed in C:\example path will be called instead of the Windows system "net" when "net" is executed from the command-line.

##### .008 - Path Interception by Search Order Hijacking

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the search order used to load other programs. Because some programs do not call other programs using the full path, adversaries may place their own file in the directory where the calling program is located, causing the operating system to launch their malicious software at the request of the calling program.

Search order hijacking occurs when an adversary abuses the order in which Windows searches for programs that are not given a path. Unlike DLL Search Order Hijacking, the search order differs depending on the method that is used to execute the program. However, it is common for Windows to search in the directory of the initiating program before searching through the Windows system directory. An adversary who finds a program vulnerable to search order hijacking (i.e., a program that does not specify the path to an executable) may take advantage of this vulnerability by creating a program named after the improperly specified program and placing it within the initiating program's directory.

For example, "example.exe" runs "cmd.exe" with the command-line argument net user. An adversary may place a program called "net.exe" within the same directory as example.exe, "net.exe" will be run instead of the Windows system utility net. In addition, if an adversary places a program called "net.com" in the same directory as "net.exe", then cmd.exe /C net user will execute "net.com" instead of "net.exe" due to the order of executable extensions defined under PATHEXT.

Search order hijacking is also a common practice for hijacking DLL loads and is covered in DLL Search Order Hijacking.

##### .009 - Path Interception by Unquoted Path

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking vulnerable file path references. Adversaries can take advantage of paths that lack surrounding quotations by placing an executable in a higher level directory within the path, so that Windows will choose the adversary's executable to launch.

Service paths and shortcut paths may also be vulnerable to path interception if the path has one or more spaces and is not surrounded by quotation marks (e.g., C:\unsafe path with space\program.exe vs. "C:\safe path with space\program.exe"). (stored in Windows Registry keys) An adversary can place an executable in a higher level directory of the path, and Windows will resolve that executable instead of the intended executable. For example, if the path in a shortcut is C:\program files\myapp.exe, an adversary may create a program at C:\program.exe that will be run instead of the intended program.

This technique can be used for persistence if executables are called on a regular basis, as well as privilege escalation if intercepted executables are started by a higher privileged process.

##### .010 - Services File Permissions Weakness

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the binaries used by services. Adversaries may use flaws in the permissions of Windows services to replace the binary that is executed upon service start. These service processes may automatically execute specific binaries as part of their functionality or to perform other actions. If the permissions on the file system directory containing a target binary, or permissions on the binary itself are improperly set, then the target binary may be overwritten with another binary using user-level permissions and executed by the original process. If the original process and thread are running under a higher permissions level, then the replaced binary will also execute under higher-level permissions, which could include SYSTEM.

Adversaries may use this technique to replace legitimate binaries with malicious ones as a means of executing code at a higher permissions level. If the executing process is set to run at a specific time or during a certain event (e.g., system bootup) then this technique can also be used for persistence.

##### .011 - Services Registry Permissions Weakness

Adversaries may execute their own malicious payloads by hijacking the Registry entries used by services. Adversaries may use flaws in the permissions for Registry keys related to services to redirect from the originally specified executable to one that they control, in order to launch their own code when a service starts. Windows stores local service configuration information in the Registry under HKLM\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Services. The information stored under a service's Registry keys can be manipulated to modify a service's execution parameters through tools such as the service controller, sc.exe, PowerShell, or Reg. Access to Registry keys is controlled through access control lists and user permissions.

If the permissions for users and groups are not properly set and allow access to the Registry keys for a service, adversaries may change the service's binPath/ImagePath to point to a different executable under their control. When the service starts or is restarted, then the adversary-controlled program will execute, allowing the adversary to establish persistence and/or privilege escalation to the account context the service is set to execute under (local/domain account, SYSTEM, LocalService, or NetworkService).

Adversaries may also alter other Registry keys in the service’s Registry tree. For example, the FailureCommand key may be changed so that the service is executed in an elevated context anytime the service fails or is intentionally corrupted.

The Performance key contains the name of a driver service's performance DLL and the names of several exported functions in the DLL. If the Performance key is not already present and if an adversary-controlled user has the Create Subkey permission, adversaries may create the Performance key in the service’s Registry tree to point to a malicious DLL.

Adversaries may also add the Parameters key, which stores driver-specific data, or other custom subkeys for their malicious services to establish persistence or enable other malicious activities. Additionally, If adversaries launch their malicious services using svchost.exe, the service’s file may be identified using HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Services\servicename\Parameters\ServiceDll.

##### .012 - COR\_PROFILER

Adversaries may leverage the COR\_PROFILER environment variable to hijack the execution flow of programs that load the .NET CLR. The COR\_PROFILER is a .NET Framework feature which allows developers to specify an unmanaged (or external of .NET) profiling DLL to be loaded into each .NET process that loads the Common Language Runtime (CLR). These profilers are designed to monitor, troubleshoot, and debug managed code executed by the .NET CLR.

The COR\_PROFILER environment variable can be set at various scopes (system, user, or process) resulting in different levels of influence. System and user-wide environment variable scopes are specified in the Registry, where a Component Object Model (COM) object can be registered as a profiler DLL. A process scope COR\_PROFILER can also be created in-memory without modifying the Registry. Starting with .NET Framework 4, the profiling DLL does not need to be registered as long as the location of the DLL is specified in the COR\_PROFILER\_PATH environment variable.

Adversaries may abuse COR\_PROFILER to establish persistence that executes a malicious DLL in the context of all .NET processes every time the CLR is invoked. The COR\_PROFILER can also be used to elevate privileges (ex: Bypass User Account Control) if the victim .NET process executes at a higher permission level, as well as to hook and Impair Defenses provided by .NET processes.

##### .013 – KernelCallbackTable

Adversaries may abuse the KernelCallbackTable of a process to hijack its execution flow in order to run their own payloads. The KernelCallbackTable can be found in the Process Environment Block (PEB) and is initialized to an array of graphic functions available to a GUI process once user32.dll is loaded.

An adversary may hijack the execution flow of a process using the KernelCallbackTable by replacing an original callback function with a malicious payload. Modifying callback functions can be achieved in various ways involving related behaviors such as Reflective Code Loading or Process Injection into another process.

A pointer to the memory address of the KernelCallbackTable can be obtained by locating the PEB (ex: via a call to the NtQueryInformationProcess() Native API function). Once the pointer is located, the KernelCallbackTable can be duplicated, and a function in the table (e.g., fnCOPYDATA) set to the address of a malicious payload (ex: via WriteProcessMemory()). The PEB is then updated with the new address of the table. Once the tampered function is invoked, the malicious payload will be triggered.

The tampered function is typically invoked using a Windows message. After the process is hijacked and malicious code is executed, the KernelCallbackTable may also be restored to its original state by the rest of the malicious payload. Use of the KernelCallbackTable to hijack execution flow may evade detection from security products since the execution can be masked under a legitimate process.

#### T1055 - Process Injection

Adversaries may inject code into processes in order to evade process-based defenses as well as possibly elevate privileges. Process injection is a method of executing arbitrary code in the address space of a separate live process. Running code in the context of another process may allow access to the process's memory, system/network resources, and possibly elevated privileges. Execution via process injection may also evade detection from security products since the execution is masked under a legitimate process.

There are many different ways to inject code into a process, many of which abuse legitimate functionalities. These implementations exist for every major OS but are typically platform specific.

More sophisticated samples may perform multiple process injections to segment modules and further evade detection, utilizing named pipes or other inter-process communication (IPC) mechanisms as a communication channel.

#### T1053 - Scheduled Task/Job

Adversaries may abuse task scheduling functionality to facilitate initial or recurring execution of malicious code. Utilities exist within all major operating systems to schedule programs or scripts to be executed at a specified date and time. A task can also be scheduled on a remote system, provided the proper authentication is met (ex: RPC and file and printer sharing in Windows environments). Scheduling a task on a remote system typically may require being a member of an admin or otherwise privileged group on the remote system.

Adversaries may use task scheduling to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for persistence. These mechanisms can also be abused to run a process under the context of a specified account (such as one with elevated permissions/privileges). Similar to System Binary Proxy Execution, adversaries have also abused task scheduling to potentially mask one-time execution under a trusted system process.

##### .002 – At

Adversaries may abuse the at utility to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code. The at utility exists as an executable within Windows, Linux, and macOS for scheduling tasks at a specified time and date. Although deprecated in favor of Scheduled Task's schtasks in Windows environments, using at requires that the Task Scheduler service be running, and the user to be logged on as a member of the local Administrators group.

On Linux and macOS, at may be invoked by the superuser as well as any users added to the at.allow file. If the at.allow file does not exist, the at.deny file is checked. Every username not listed in at.deny is allowed to invoke at. If the at.deny exists and is empty, global use of at is permitted. If neither file exists (which is often the baseline) only the superuser is allowed to use at.

Adversaries may use at to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for Persistence. at can also be abused to conduct remote Execution as part of Lateral Movement and/or to run a process under the context of a specified account (such as SYSTEM).

In Linux environments, adversaries may also abuse at to break out of restricted environments by using a task to spawn an interactive system shell or to run system commands. Similarly, at may also be used for Privilege Escalation if the binary is allowed to run as superuser via sudo.

##### .003 – Cron

Adversaries may abuse the cron utility to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code.[1] The cron utility is a time-based job scheduler for Unix-like operating systems. The crontab file contains the schedule of cron entries to be run and the specified times for execution. Any crontab files are stored in operating system-specific file paths.

An adversary may use cron in Linux or Unix environments to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for Persistence.

##### .005 - Scheduled Task

Adversaries may abuse the Windows Task Scheduler to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code. There are multiple ways to access the Task Scheduler in Windows. The schtasks utility can be run directly on the command line, or the Task Scheduler can be opened through the GUI within the Administrator Tools section of the Control Panel. In some cases, adversaries have used a .NET wrapper for the Windows Task Scheduler, and alternatively, adversaries have used the Windows netapi32 library to create a scheduled task.

The deprecated at utility could also be abused by adversaries (ex: At), though at.exe can not access tasks created with schtasks or the Control Panel.

An adversary may use Windows Task Scheduler to execute programs at system startup or on a scheduled basis for persistence. The Windows Task Scheduler can also be abused to conduct remote Execution as part of Lateral Movement and/or to run a process under the context of a specified account (such as SYSTEM). Similar to System Binary Proxy Execution, adversaries have also abused the Windows Task Scheduler to potentially mask one-time execution under signed/trusted system processes.

Adversaries may also create "hidden" scheduled tasks (i.e. Hide Artifacts) that may not be visible to defender tools and manual queries used to enumerate tasks. Specifically, an adversary may hide a task from schtasks /query and the Task Scheduler by deleting the associated Security Descriptor (SD) registry value (where deletion of this value must be completed using SYSTEM permissions). Adversaries may also employ alternate methods to hide tasks, such as altering the metadata (e.g., Index value) within associated registry keys.

##### .006 - Systemd Timers

Adversaries may abuse systemd timers to perform task scheduling for initial or recurring execution of malicious code. Systemd timers are unit files with file extension .timer that control services. Timers can be set to run on a calendar event or after a time span relative to a starting point. They can be used as an alternative to Cron in Linux environments. Systemd timers may be activated remotely via the systemctl command line utility, which operates over SSH.

Each .timer file must have a corresponding .service file with the same name, e.g., example.timer and example.service. .service files are Systemd Service unit files that are managed by the systemd system and service manager. Privileged timers are written to /etc/systemd/system/ and /usr/lib/systemd/system while user level is written to ~/.config/systemd/user/.

An adversary may use systemd timers to execute malicious code at system startup or on a scheduled basis for persistence. Timers installed using privileged paths may be used to maintain root level persistence. Adversaries may also install user level timers to achieve user level persistence.

##### .007 - Container Orchestration Job

Adversaries may abuse task scheduling functionality provided by container orchestration tools such as Kubernetes to schedule deployment of containers configured to execute malicious code. Container orchestration jobs run these automated tasks at a specific date and time, similar to cron jobs on a Linux system. Deployments of this type can also be configured to maintain a quantity of containers over time, automating the process of maintaining persistence within a cluster.

In Kubernetes, a CronJob may be used to schedule a Job that runs one or more containers to perform specific tasks. An adversary therefore may utilize a CronJob to schedule deployment of a Job that executes malicious code in various nodes within a cluster.

#### T1078 - Valid Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of existing accounts as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Compromised credentials may be used to bypass access controls placed on various resources on systems within the network and may even be used for persistent access to remote systems and externally available services, such as VPNs, Outlook Web Access, network devices, and remote desktop. Compromised credentials may also grant an adversary increased privilege to specific systems or access to restricted areas of the network. Adversaries may choose not to use malware or tools in conjunction with the legitimate access those credentials provide to make it harder to detect their presence.

In some cases, adversaries may abuse inactive accounts: for example, those belonging to individuals who are no longer part of an organization. Using these accounts may allow the adversary to evade detection, as the original account user will not be present to identify any anomalous activity taking place on their account.

The overlap of permissions for local, domain, and cloud accounts across a network of systems is of concern because the adversary may be able to pivot across accounts and systems to reach a high level of access (i.e., domain or enterprise administrator) to bypass access controls set within the enterprise.

##### .001 - Default Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a default account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Default accounts are those that are built-into an OS, such as the Guest or Administrator accounts on Windows systems. Default accounts also include default factory/provider set accounts on other types of systems, software, or devices, including the root user account in AWS and the default service account in Kubernetes.

Default accounts are not limited to client machines, rather also include accounts that are preset for equipment such as network devices and computer applications whether they are internal, open source, or commercial. Appliances that come preset with a username and password combination pose a serious threat to organizations that do not change it post installation, as they are easy targets for an adversary. Similarly, adversaries may also utilize publicly disclosed or stolen Private Keys or credential materials to legitimately connect to remote environments via Remote Services.

##### .002 - Domain Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a domain account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Domain accounts are those managed by Active Directory Domain Services where access and permissions are configured across systems and services that are part of that domain. Domain accounts can cover users, administrators, and services.

Adversaries may compromise domain accounts, some with a high level of privileges, through various means such as OS Credential Dumping or password reuse, allowing access to privileged resources of the domain.

##### .003 - Local Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a local account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Local accounts are those configured by an organization for use by users, remote support, services, or for administration on a single system or service.

Local Accounts may also be abused to elevate privileges and harvest credentials through OS Credential Dumping. Password reuse may allow the abuse of local accounts across a set of machines on a network for the purposes of Privilege Escalation and Lateral Movement.

##### .004 - Cloud Accounts

Adversaries may obtain and abuse credentials of a cloud account as a means of gaining Initial Access, Persistence, Privilege Escalation, or Defense Evasion. Cloud accounts are those created and configured by an organization for use by users, remote support, services, or for administration of resources within a cloud service provider or SaaS application. In some cases, cloud accounts may be federated with traditional identity management system, such as Window Active Directory.

Compromised credentials for cloud accounts can be used to harvest sensitive data from online storage accounts and databases. Access to cloud accounts can also be abused to gain Initial Access to a network by abusing a Trusted Relationship. Similar to Domain Accounts, compromise of federated cloud accounts may allow adversaries to more easily move laterally within an environment.

Once a cloud account is compromised, an adversary may perform Account Manipulation - for example, by adding Additional Cloud Roles - to maintain persistence and potentially escalate their privileges.