



# Differential File System Analysis for the Quick Win

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**SANS DFIR**

DIGITAL FORENSICS & INCIDENT RESPONSE

**SUMMIT &  
TRAINING 2023**

# About Me

## Kenneth G. Hartman

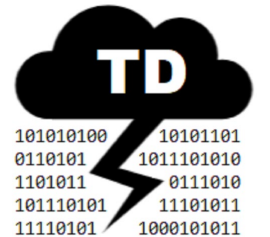
- Owner – Lucid Truth Technologies, a Digital Forensics Firm
- BS Electrical Engineering, Michigan Technological University
- MS Information Security Engineering, SANS Technology Institute
- Multiple Security Certifications: CISSP, GIAC Security Expert, etc.
- SANS Certified Instructor – SEC488: Cloud Security Essentials & SEC510: Public Cloud Security: AWS, Azure, and GCP

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***The content and opinions in this presentation are my own and do not necessarily reflect the positions, strategies, or opinions of any current client or previous employer.***



forensicate.cloud



TorrentialDownpour.net







# SANS CLOUD SECURITY

## CURRICULUM ROADMAP

### Baseline

SEC  
388

#### Introduction to Cloud Computing and Security

Ground school for cloud security

### Security Management

MGT  
520

#### Leading Cloud Security Design and Implementation

Chart your course to cloud security.

### Foundational Security Techniques

SEC  
488

#### Cloud Security Essentials | GCLD

License to learn cloud security.



### Core

SEC  
510

#### Public Cloud Security: AWS, Azure, and GCP | GPCS

Multiple clouds require multiple solutions.



SEC  
540

#### Cloud Security and DevSecOps Automation | GCSA

The cloud moves fast. Automate to keep up.



SEC  
541

#### Cloud Security Attacker Techniques, Monitoring & Threat Detection | GCTD

Attackers can run but not hide. Our radar sees all threats.



SEC  
549

#### Enterprise Cloud Security Architecture

Design it right from the start.

### Specialization

SEC  
522

#### Application Security: Securing Web Apps, APIs, and Microservices | GWEB

Not a matter of "if" but "when." Be prepared for a web attack. We'll teach you how.



SEC  
588

#### Cloud Penetration Testing | GCPN

Aim your arrows to the sky and penetrate the cloud.



FOR  
509

#### Enterprise Cloud Forensics and Incident Response | GCFR

Find the storm in the cloud.



[sans.org/cloud-security](https://sans.org/cloud-security)



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# Agenda

- AWS EC2 Concepts: Volumes, Snapshots & Images
- CI/CD, Secure DevOps, and the Cloud
- Hardened Images
- The SIFT workstation (in the Cloud?)
- Early EC2 Forensic Automation Proof of Concept
- Differential Filesystem Analysis
- XFS File System
- DEMO
- Automated Forensics Orchestration

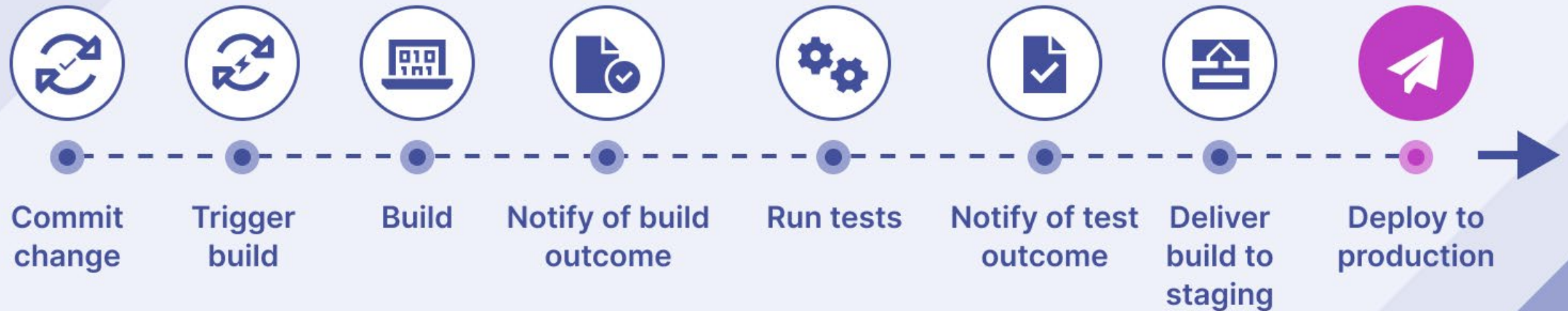
# AWS EC2 Concepts

- **EC2** – “Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (Amazon EC2) is a web service that provides secure, resizable compute capacity in the cloud.” (*Virtual Machine*)
- **EBS** – “Amazon Elastic Block Store (Amazon EBS) is an easy-to-use, scalable, high-performance block-storage service” (*Virtual Hard Drive*)
- **AMI** – “An Amazon Machine Image (AMI) is a supported and maintained image provided by AWS that provides the information required to launch an instance. You must specify an AMI when you launch an instance. You can launch multiple instances from a single AMI when you require multiple instances with the same configuration.” (*Virtual Machine Template*)
- **Snapshot** – “Amazon Elastic Block Store (EBS) Snapshots provide a simple and secure data protection solution that is designed to protect your block storage...EBS Snapshots are a point-in-time copy of your data...” Snapshots are incremental backups.

- <https://aws.amazon.com/ec2/getting-started/>
- <https://aws.amazon.com/ebs/>
- [Are Snapshots of Cloud Virtual Hard Drives Forensically Valid?](#)
- <https://docs.aws.amazon.com/AWSEC2/latest/UserGuide/AMIs.html>

# CI/CD, Secure DevOps & Cloud

## CI/CD PIPELINE



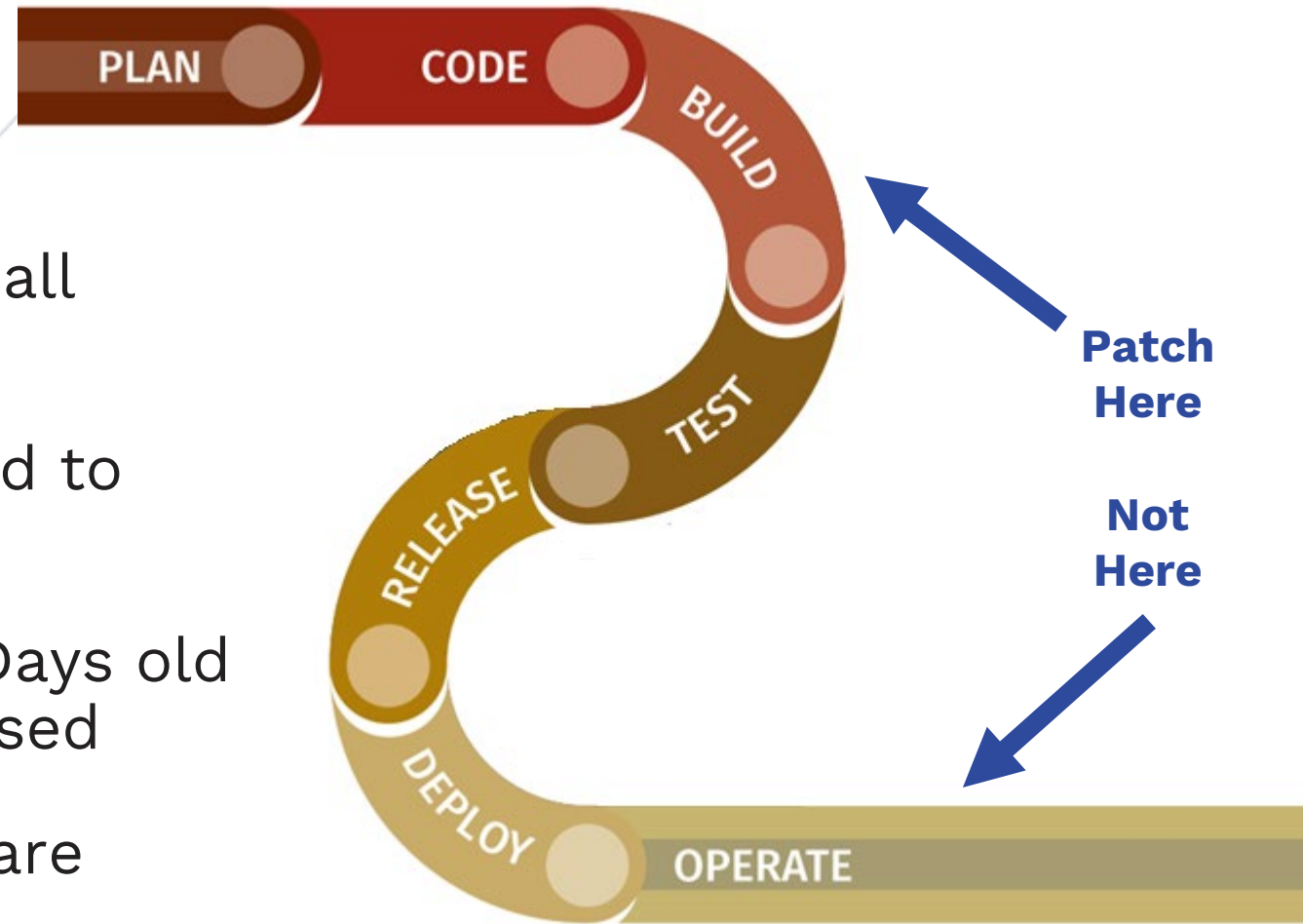
<https://katalon.com/resources-center/blog/ci-cd-pipeline>

- Lessons Learned from Illumina's SecDevOps Transition - <https://youtu.be/EIOHZt44wbc>
- Can You Really Be More Secure in the Cloud? - <https://youtu.be/ahTn5UhEkpQ>
- SANS SEC540 - <https://www.sans.org/cyber-security-courses/cloud-security-devsecops-automation/>



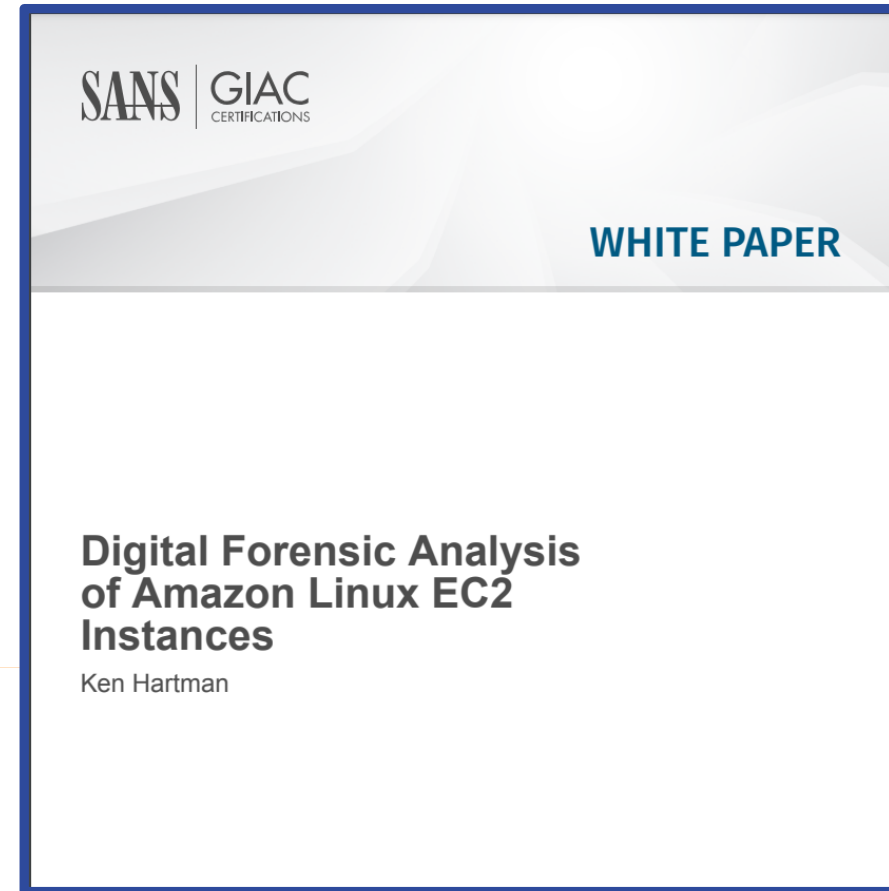
# Hardened Images

- Use automation to “bake” a hardened image (AMI) that is fully-patched
- Share these “blessed” AMIs to all accounts in scope
- Limit the AMIs that can be used to launch EC2 Instances
- Un-share the AMIs that are X Days old so that the newest is always used
- Terminate EC2 Instances that are older than the Patching SLO



# The SIFT Workstation (in the cloud?)

- **Took FOR508:** Advanced Incident Response, Threat Hunting, and Digital Forensics
- **Gold Paper:** *Digital Forensic Analysis of Amazon Linux EC2 Instances* (Jan 2018)
- **Bsides Vancouver:** *Step by Step Walkthrough of Forensic Analysis of Amazon Linux on EC2 for Incident Responders* (2019)  
<https://forensicate.cloud/ws1/>
- **Make a SIFT Workstation AMI**  
<https://forensicate.cloud/aws/sift-ami>



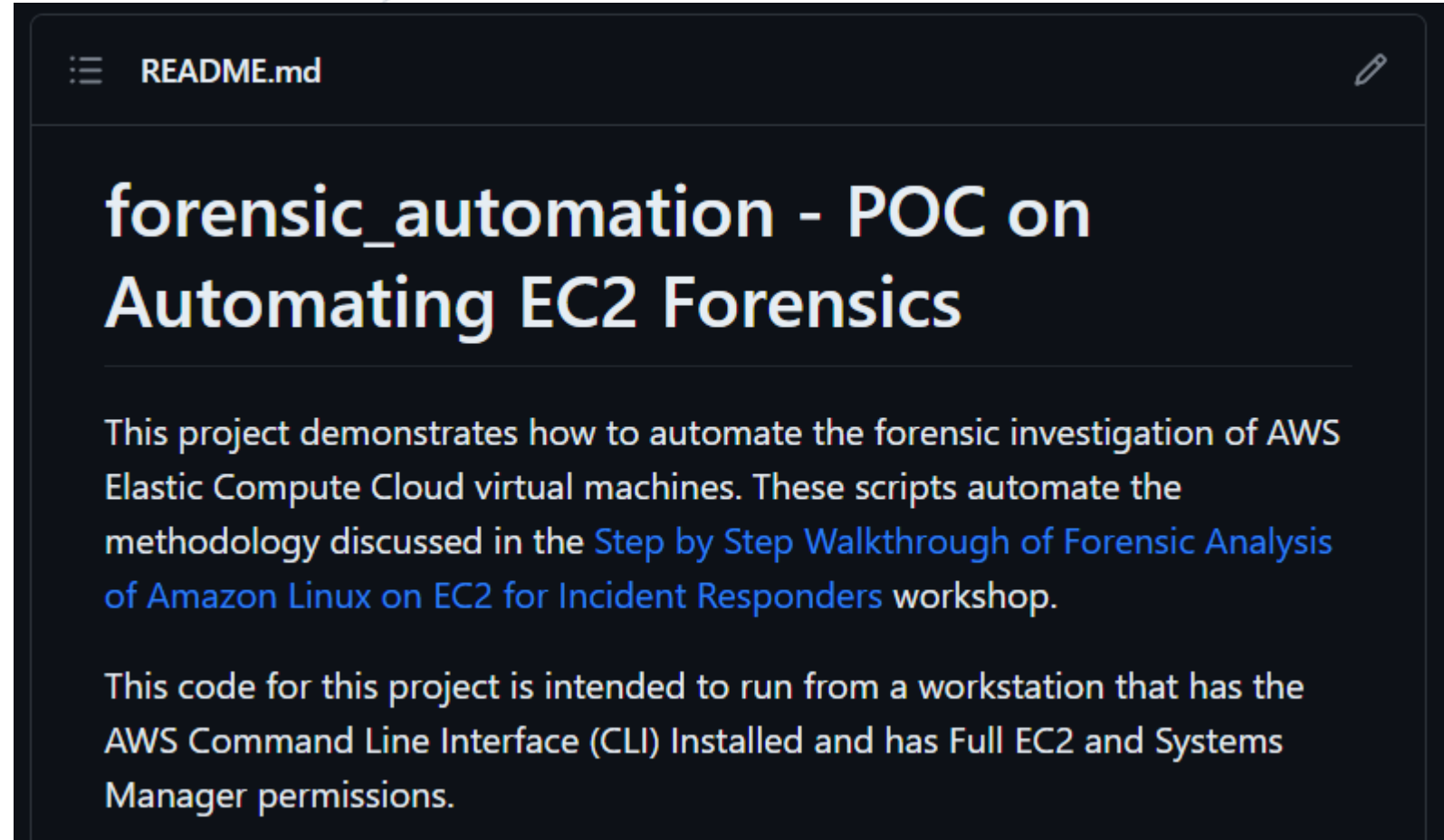
<https://www.sans.org/white-papers/38235/>



# Early EC2 Forensic Automation PoC

- Used a SIFT EC2 VM
- SIFT VM had SSM agent installed
- Processed EBS Volumes according to a SQS Queue
- Sent Artifacts to a S3 bucket

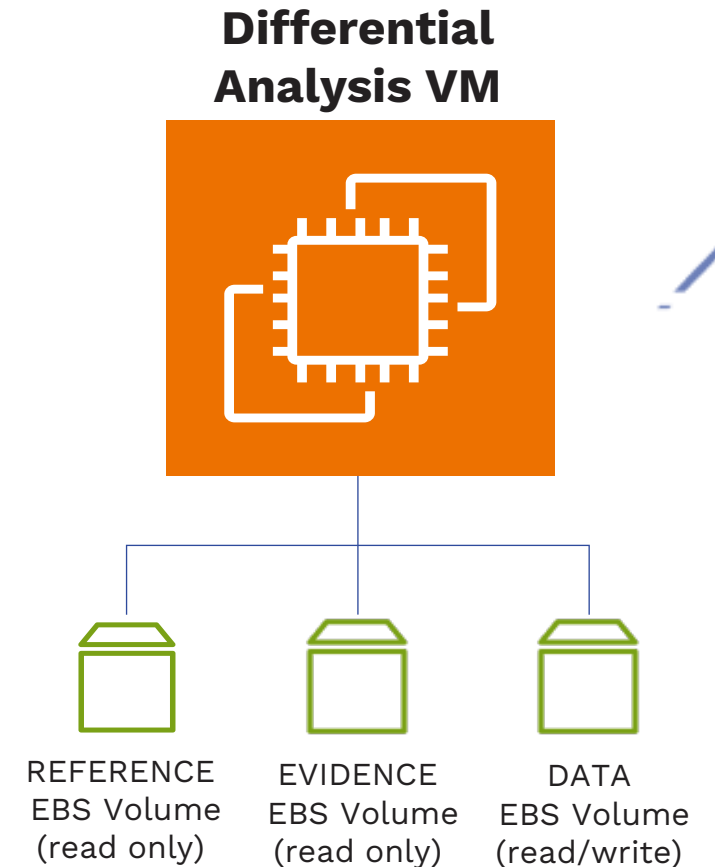
Initial Commit: Aug 19, 2019



[https://github.com/Resistor52/forensic\\_automation](https://github.com/Resistor52/forensic_automation)

# Differential Filesystem Analysis

1. Use a Snapshot prior to compromise to create the “REFERENCE” EBS volume.  
>> OR: Make a snapshot of another VM just launched from the same AMI.
2. Use snapshot after compromise to make “EVIDENCE” volume.
3. Make a new “DATA” volume.
4. Launch a “DFIR\_host” and attach the REFERENCE & EVIDENCE volumes as read only. Attach the DATA volume as read-write.
5. Mount all three volumes
6. Generate Hash Databases and Determine the Files that have been added, deleted, and changed.



# XFS File System

- XFS is a high-performance, journaling Linux file system that supports large files and file systems.
- XFS supports a maximum file system size of 500 TB and a maximum file size of 16 TB.
- It's the default file system for RedHat Linux 7 and is supported by most Linux distributions.
- Amazon Linux 2 uses XFS whereas Amazon Linux used ext4. Amazon Linux 2023 continues to use XFS
- Sleuthkit does not support XFS ☹️ (yet?)

➤ <https://docs.aws.amazon.com/AWSEC2/latest/UserGuide/ebs-using-volumes.html>

# Mounting the Volumes

# Format the new `DATA` volume

```
mkfs -t xfs /dev/xvdd
```

# Make mount points for the three volumes

```
mkdir /mnt/reference
```

```
mkdir /mnt/evidence
```

```
mkdir /mnt/data
```

# Change the UUID of the `REFERENCE` volume

```
xfs_admin -U $(uuidgen) /dev/xvdb1
```

# Mount the `REFERENCE` and `EVIDENCE` volumes  
as read-only and mount the `DATA` as read-write.

```
mount -o ro -t xfs /dev/xvdb1 /mnt/reference
```

```
mount -o ro -t xfs /dev/xvdc1 /mnt/evidence
```

```
mount /dev/xvdd /mnt/data
```

NAME	MAJ:MIN	RM	SIZE	RO	TYPE	MOUNTPPOINTS
loop0	7:0	0	24.4M	1	loop	/snap/amazon-ssm-agent/6312
loop1	7:1	0	55.6M	1	loop	/snap/core18/2745
loop2	7:2	0	63.3M	1	loop	/snap/core20/1879
loop3	7:3	0	111.9M	1	loop	/snap/lxd/24322
loop4	7:4	0	53.2M	1	loop	/snap/snapd/19122
xvda	202:0	0	8G	0	disk	
└─xvda1	202:1	0	7.9G	0	part	/
└─xvda14	202:14	0	4M	0	part	
└─xvda15	202:15	0	106M	0	part	/boot/efi
xvdb	202:16	0	8G	0	disk	
└─xvdb1	202:17	0	8G	0	part	/mnt/reference
└─xvdb127	259:0	0	1M	0	part	
└─xvdb128	259:1	0	10M	0	part	
xvdc	202:32	0	8G	0	disk	
└─xvdc1	202:33	0	8G	0	part	/mnt/evidence
└─xvdc127	259:2	0	1M	0	part	
└─xvdc128	259:3	0	10M	0	part	
xvdd	202:48	0	100G	0	disk	/mnt/data



# Hash Databases

# Create REFERENCE Hash Set

```
find /mnt/reference -type f -print0 | xargs -0 md5sum | tee reference_files.md5
```

# Create EVIDENCE Hash Set

```
find /mnt/evidence -type f -print0 | xargs -0 md5sum | tee evidence_files.md5
```

# Create the Hash Database

```
hfind -i md5sum reference_files.md5
```

```
hfind -i md5sum evidence_files.md5
```

**hfind** looks up hash values in a database using a binary search algorithm. This allows one to easily create a hash database and identify if a file is known or not. It works with the NIST National Software Reference Library (NSRL) and the output of 'md5sum'.

- <https://www.sleuthkit.org/informer/sleuthkit-informer-6.html#hashes>
- <https://www.sleuthkit.org/informer/sleuthkit-informer-7.html>

# Quick Win Analysis

MD5 Exists in		Conclusion	New Hash Set Filename
REFERENCE Hash Set	REFERENCE Hash Set		
YES	NO	File was deleted or changed	missing+changed_files+hashes_from_evidence.md5
NO	YES	File is New or Changed	new+changed_files+hashes_in_evidence.md5

Filename Exists in		Conclusion
missing+changed_files+hashes_from_evidence.md5	new+changed_files+hashes_in_evidence.md5	
YES	YES	File Has Changed
YES	NO	File was Deleted
NO	YES	File is New

```
wc -l evidence_files.md5 \
reference_files.md5
42157 evidence_files.md5
39619 reference_files.md5
81776 total
```

```
wc -l CHANGED_FILES.txt NEW_FILES.txt DELETED_FILES.txt
33 CHANGED_FILES.txt
2527 NEW_FILES.txt
1 DELETED_FILES.txt
2561 total
```

$2561 / 42157 = .06 \leftarrow$  Reduced to 6% of Files!

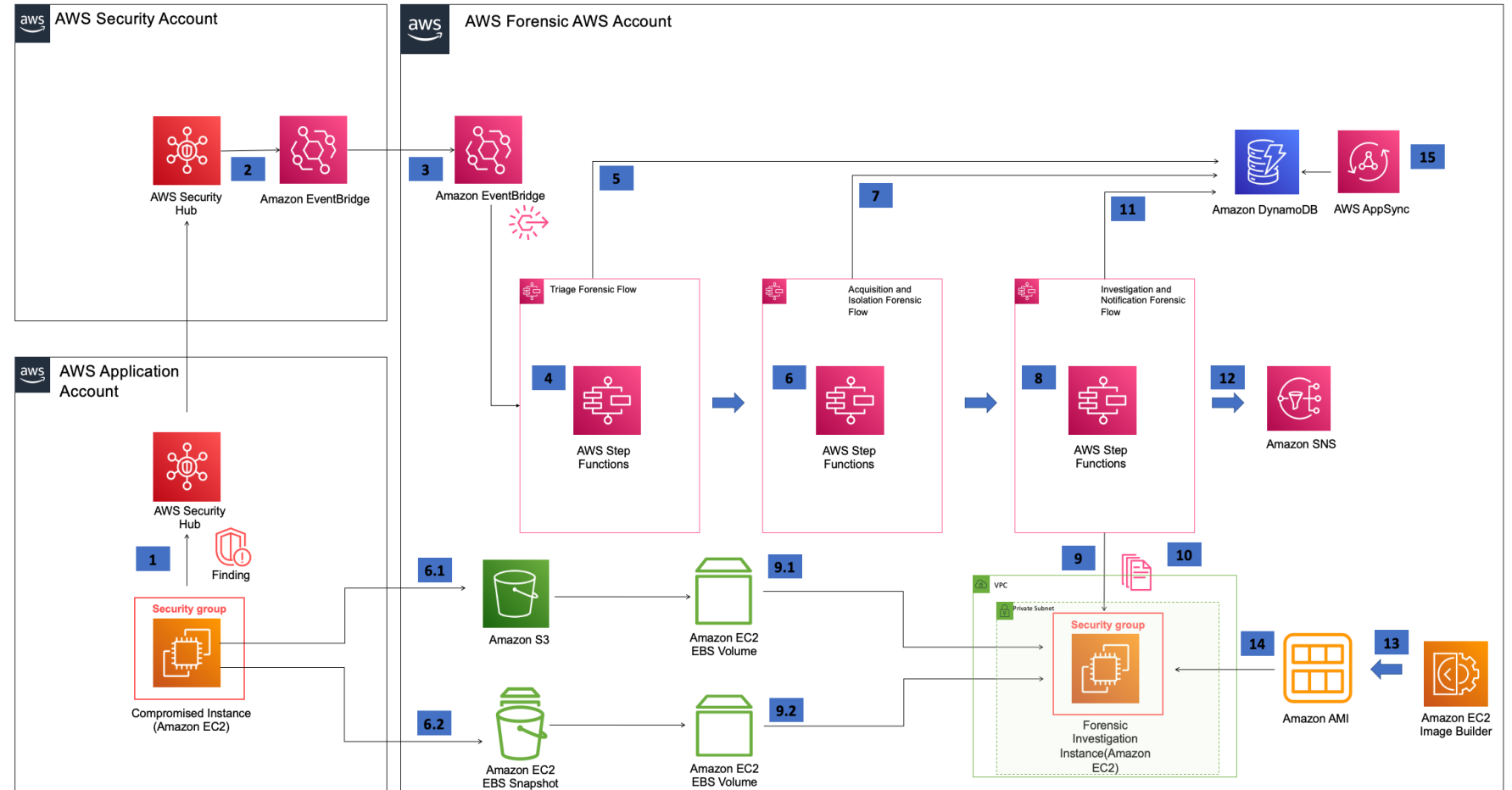
# DEMO

<https://github.com/Resistor52/DifferentialAnalysis>

<https://youtu.be/onC7x-BftSk>

# Automated Forensics Orchestrator for EC2

- 1) GuardDuty Alert sent to Security Hub
- 2&3) EventBridge invokes workflows using instance ID
- 4) Step Functions triage the request and initiates acquisition
- 5) Triage details are stored in DynamoDB
- 6) Memory & Disk forensics flows are started in parallel
- 7) Acquisition details are stored in DynamoDB
- 8) After acquisition, notice triggers investigation Step Function
- 9) Forensic instance started from forensic AMI, loads memory capture and creates an EBS volume from snapshot
- 10) AWS Systems manager documents run the forensic investigation
- 11) Output is stored in DynamoDB
- 12) Results are shared via SNS
- 13&14) EC2 Image Builder builds the Forensic AMI used by Step Functions
- 15) Forensic timeline can be queried by AWS AppSync



- <https://www.sans.org/white-papers/sans-2022-devsecops-survey-creating-culture-improve-organization-security/>
- <https://aws.amazon.com/blogs/security/how-to-automate-forensic-disk-collection-in-aws/> (2021)
- <https://aws.amazon.com/solutions/implementations/automated-forensics-orchestrator-for-amazon-ec2/>





Thank  
You

