



Defining the Undefined: **What is Tier Zero? – Part 4**

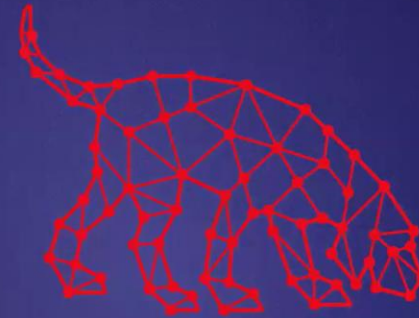
Martin Christensen, Lee Chagolla-Christensen, Jonas Bülow Knudsen

ghst.ly/novlive-tw



Release Recap

November 2024

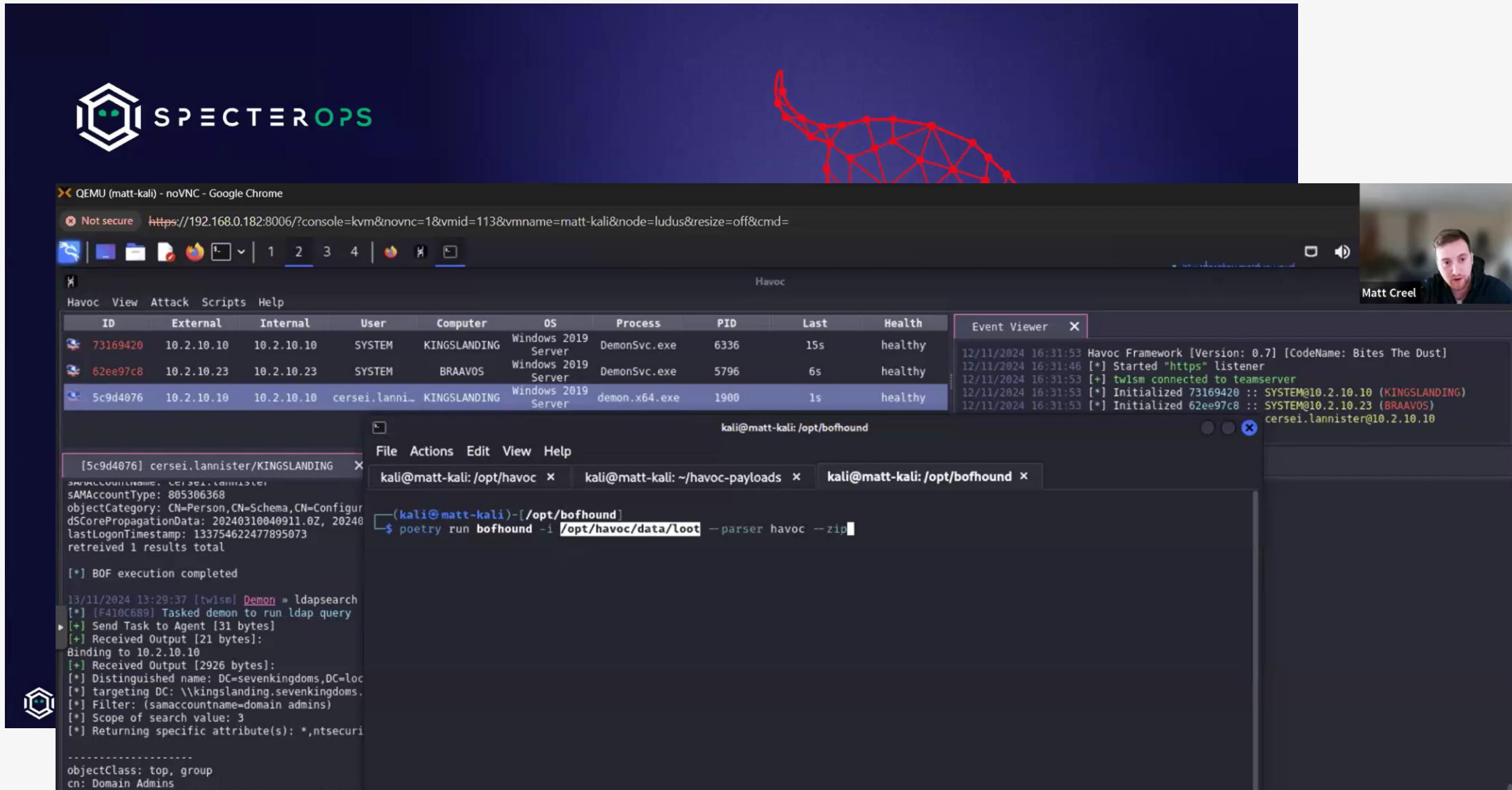


BLOODHOUND
COMMUNITY EDITION



BLOODHOUND
ENTERPRISE

ghst.ly/novlive-tw



SPECTEROPS

QEMU (matt-kali) - noVNC - Google Chrome

Not secure <https://192.168.0.182:8006/?console=kvm&novnc=1&vmid=113&vmname=matt-kali&node=ludus&resize=off&cmd=>

Havoc

Havoc View Attack Scripts Help

ID	External	Internal	User	Computer	OS	Process	PID	Last	Health
73169420	10.2.10.10	10.2.10.10	SYSTEM	KINGSLANDING	Windows 2019 Server	DemonSvc.exe	6336	15s	healthy
62ee97c8	10.2.10.23	10.2.10.23	SYSTEM	BRAAVOS	Windows 2019 Server	DemonSvc.exe	5796	6s	healthy
5c9d4076	10.2.10.10	10.2.10.10	cersei.lannister	KINGSLANDING	Windows 2019 Server	demon.x64.exe	1900	1s	healthy

Event Viewer X

```
12/11/2024 16:31:53 Havoc Framework [Version: 0.7] [CodeName: Bites The Dust]
12/11/2024 16:31:46 [*] Started "https" listener
12/11/2024 16:31:53 [+] twism connected to teamserver
12/11/2024 16:31:53 [*] Initialized 73169420 :: SYSTEM@10.2.10.10 (KINGSLANDING)
12/11/2024 16:31:53 [*] Initialized 62ee97c8 :: SYSTEM@10.2.10.23 (BRAAVOS)
12/11/2024 16:31:53 [*] Initialized 5c9d4076 :: cersei.lannister@10.2.10.10
```

kali@matt-kali: /opt/bofhound

File Actions Edit View Help

kali@matt-kali: /opt/havoc x kali@matt-kali: ~/havoc-payloads x kali@matt-kali: /opt/bofhound x

```
(kali@matt-kali)-[/opt/bofhound]
$ poetry run bofhound -i /opt/havoc/data/loot --parser havoc --zip
```

[5c9d4076] cersei.lannister/KINGSLANDING

```
sAMAccountType: 805306368
objectCategory: CN=Person,CN=Schema,CN=Configuration,DC=10.2.10.10,DC=10.2.10.10
lastLogonTimestamp: 133754622477895073
retrieved 1 results total

[*] Bof execution completed

13/11/2024 13:29:37 [twism] Demon => ldapsearch
[*] [F410C689] Tasked demon to run ldap query
[+] Send Task to Agent [31 bytes]
[+] Received Output [21 bytes]:
Binding to 10.2.10.10
[+] Received Output [2926 bytes]:
[*] Distinguished name: DC=sevenkingdoms,DC=loc
[*] targeting DC: \\kingsofthorns.sevenkingdoms.
[*] Filter: (samaccountname=domain admins)
[*] Scope of search value: 3
[*] Returning specific attribute(s): *,ntsecuri

-----
objectClass: top, group
cn: Domain Admins
```



MARCH 31 – APRIL 1, 2025
CALL FOR PRESENTERS

[SPECTEROPS.IO/SO-CON](https://specterops.io/so-con)



Defining the Undefined: **What is Tier Zero? – Part 4**

Martin Christensen, Lee Chagolla-Christensen, Jonas Bülow Knudsen

Who are we?

Martin
Sohn Christensen

Technical Account Manager



Lee
Chagolla-Christensen

Security Researcher



Jonas
Bülow Knudsen

Product Architect



Agenda

- Recap
- Community contributions
- Isolating Tier Zero - Insights from working with BloodHound Enterprise customers
- Microsoft Exchange on-prem
- Active Directory Certificate Services (ADCS)

Recap

Recap – Part 1, 2, and 3

- Part 1:
 - Our definition of Tier Zero:
Tier Zero is a set of assets in control of enterprise identities and their security dependencies
 - *Control: A relationship that can contribute to compromising the controlled asset or impact its operability*
 - *Security dependency: A component whose security impacts another component's security*
 - Microsoft's original list of Tier Zero AD groups
 - Tier Zero Table: <https://github.com/SpecterOps/TierZeroTable>
- Part 2: More on-prem AD objects
- Part 3: Entra ID admin roles

Community contributions

- DnsAdmins
 - Controls DNS – relay attacks and disruption
 - Contributors: kberkheiser and Adam Przybyszewski (sludgework)
- Performance Log Users (and Distributed COM Users)
 - Permissions to activate DCOM on DCs
 - Remote compromise users logged in on DCs through a coerce + NTLM relay attack
 - <https://decoder.cloud/2024/04/24/hello-im-your-domain-admin-and-i-want-to-authenticate-against-you/>
 - Contributor: Andrea Pierini (decoder)

Isolating Tier Zero

Insights from working with BloodHound Enterprise customers

Tiering at different scales

- Tiering is for everyone - small to very large
 - Woodside, leading Australian natural gas producer, ~5 000 employees
 - HEMA, leading Dutch retailer, ~17 000 employees
 - Global top-5 car company
- Technical Account Manager = BloodHound expertise and tiering guidance

BloodHound Enterprise case studies: <https://specterops.io/spec-resources/#case-studies>

Challenges

- Stakeholder Investment
- Classify Tier Zero
- Identify Violations
- Quantify Risk & Know Your Unknowns
- Usable Tiering & Continuous Audit

Stakeholder Investment

- Tiering = significant effort (design, implement, operationalize, sustain)
- Security organizations must “think in graphs”
 - Top-level support & make tiering a security policy
 - Security and Infrastructure must collaborate
- Sell the concept of tiering
 - What does every pentest reveal?
 - Assess your Tier Zero attack paths – at least just implement Tier Zero

Classify Tier Zero

- We gave you the definition, now you classify YOUR Tier Zero
 - BloodHound does a lot for you: Groups, GPOs, OUs, etc.
- Audit Tier Zero Memberships
 - *“Is that Tier Zero service account following the principle of least privilege?”*

What is Tier Zero — Part 1



Jonas Bülow Knudsen · Follow

Published in Posts By SpecterOps Team Members · 11 min read · Jun 22, 2023



103



Tier Zero is a crucial group of assets in Active Directory (AD) and Azure. Its purpose is to protect the most critical components by creating a security boundary and preventing a complete compromise.













 README  GPL-3.0 license




TierZeroTable

Table of AD and Azure assets and whether they belong to Tier Zero.

View the table here: <https://specterops.github.io/TierZeroTable>
















Identify Violations

 Users	10,624
 Groups	26,072
 Computers	3,544
 OUs	291
 GPOs	221
 AIACAs	0
 RootCAs	0
 EnterpriseCAs	0
 NTAuthStores	0
 CertTemplates	0
 IssuancePolicies	0
 Containers	894

 Sessions	1,906
 ACEs	375,044
 Relationships	635,739

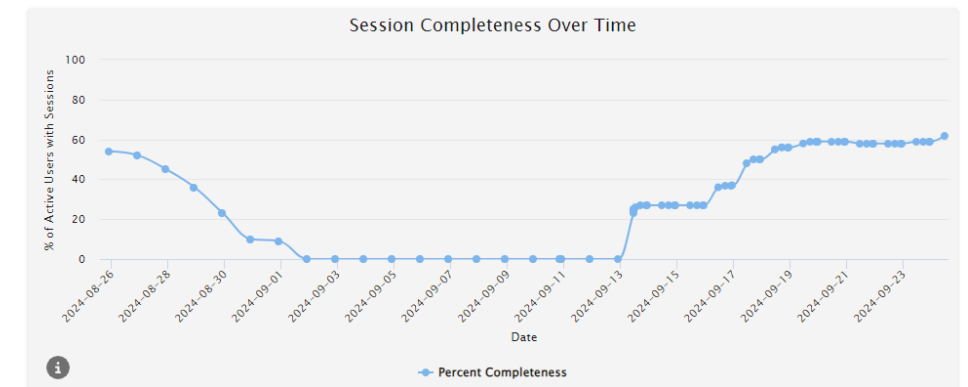
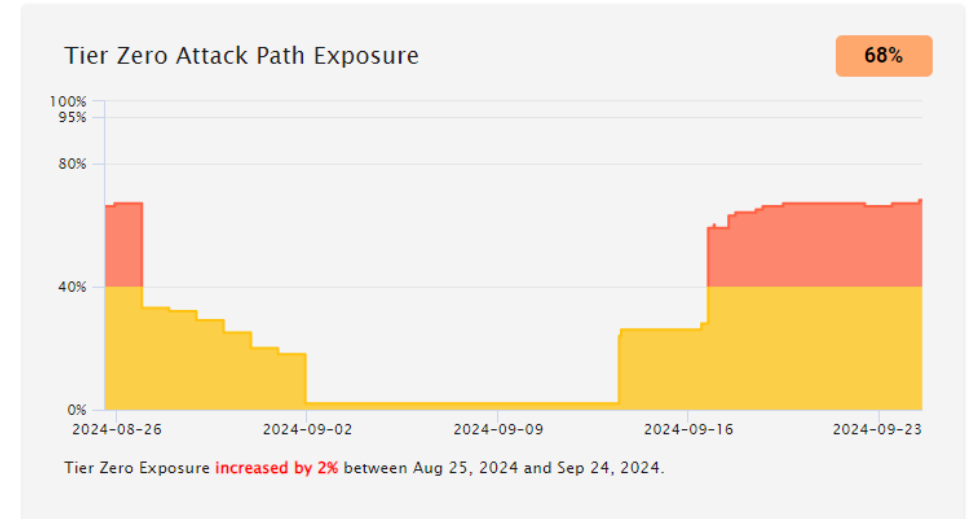
Identify Violations

- *“Which of our 635 739 relationships are tiering violations?”*
- All onboarded customers have violations
- Attack Path Management must be a strategic approach
- The graph (i.e., BloodHound) can solve the problem


 Users	10,624
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Quantify Risk & Knowing Your Unknowns

- Increase Graph Visibility = Increase Known Risk
- Ensure collection of all data types
 - Logon Sessions, Local Group Memberships, User Rights Assignments, DC Registry, CA Registry
- Did you miss anything?
 - Where are the DC backups?
 - Which key vaults store Tier Zero credentials?



Usable Tiering & Continuous Audit

- “*Security at the expense of usability, comes at the expense of security*”
 - Example: Logon restrictions in place; admin created an exception and logged in at a critical point...

The diagram consists of two blue arrows pointing towards the text 'Example: Logon restrictions in place; admin created an exception and logged in at a critical point...'. One arrow originates from the text 'Continuous Audit' and points to the end of the example sentence. The other arrow originates from the text 'Usability expense = Security expense' and points to the word 'exception' in the example sentence.

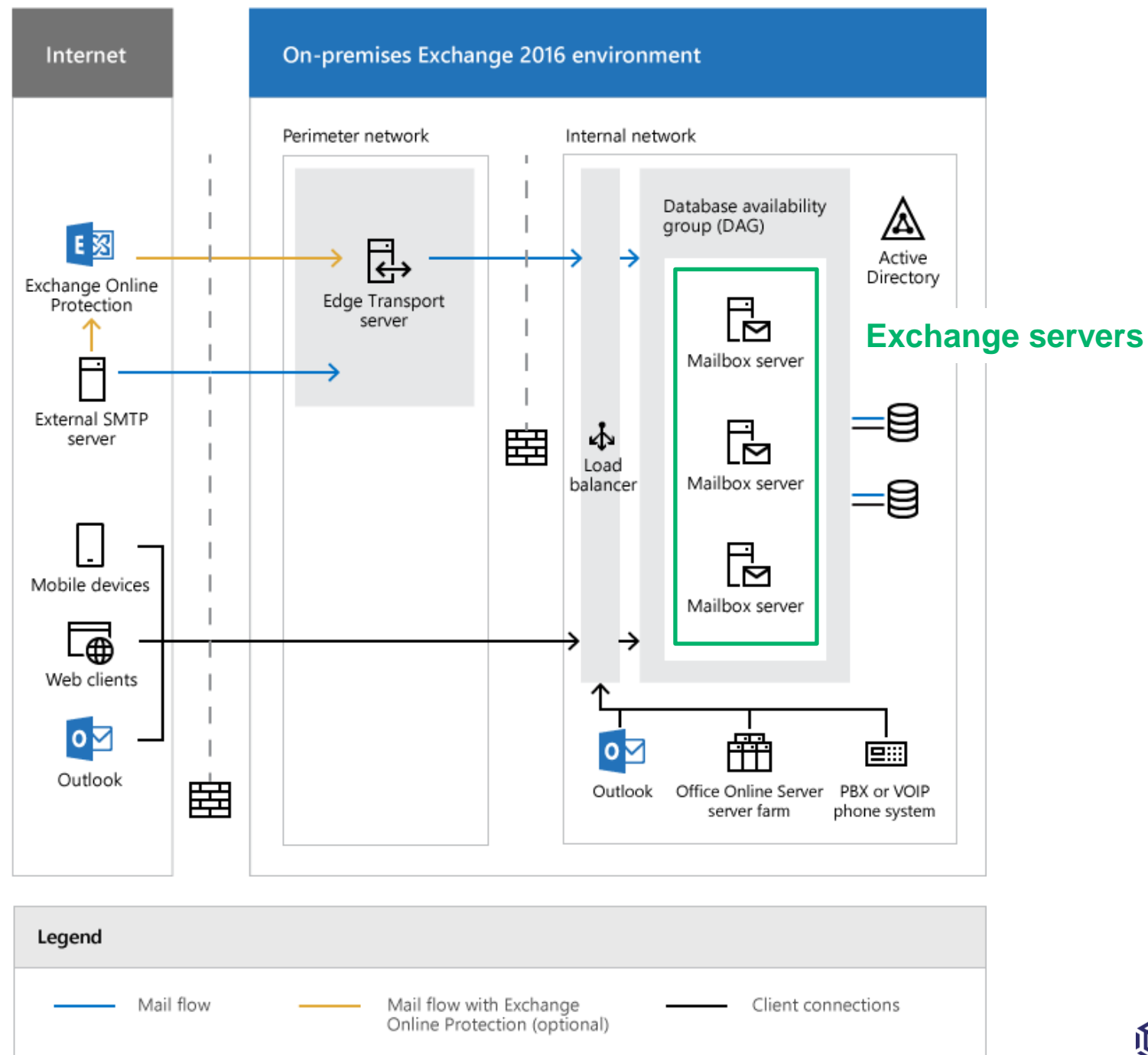
Continuous Audit

Usability expense = Security expense
- Industry changes, security now has more usability... but also new risks
 - Example: PAM rotates passwords.. but now PAM is Tier Zero and added complexity
- Risk Management Approach
 - Example: Accept clean source violation (no PAW) and reduce risk with MFA – risk of screen capture, keylogging, session hijack, MFA bypass, ...

Microsoft Exchange on-prem

Microsoft Exchange on-prem

- On-prem (or hybrid) solution for communication
 - Email, calendar, contacts, and tasks
- Should not be a Tier Zero security dependency
- .. but has it control over Tier Zero?
- We need to understand:
 - What are the Exchange components
 - Do the components have Tier Zero control



Microsoft Exchange on-prem components

- Components (we care about)
 - Exchange servers (mailbox servers)
 - AD groups
- What permissions do the components have in AD?

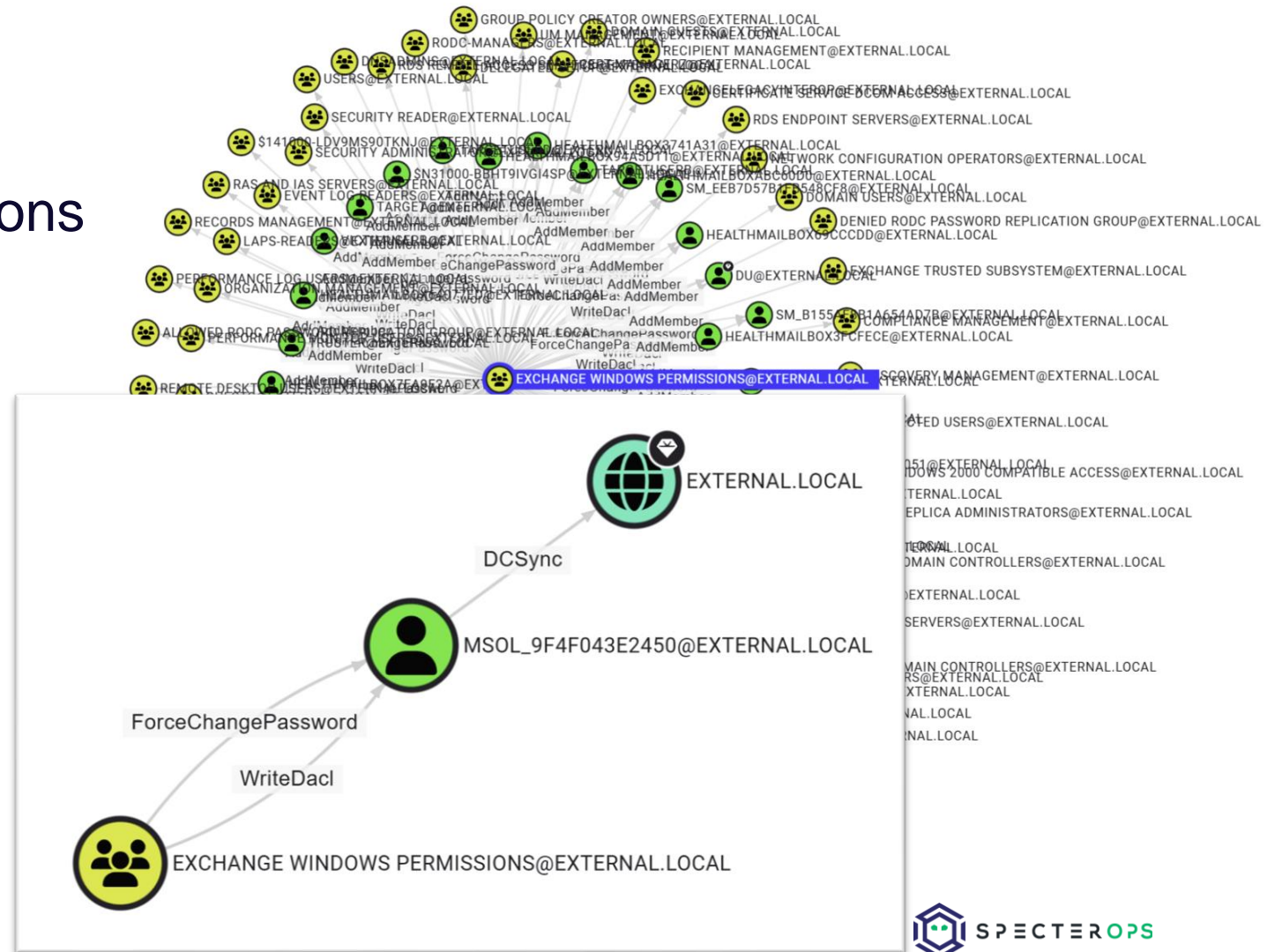
Active Directory Users and Computers [extdc01.ex]	
> Saved Queries	Name
▼ external.local	
> Built-in	Active Directory Administrators
> Computers	Compliance Management
> Domain Controllers	Delegated Setup
> ForeignSecurityPrincipals	Discovery Management
> groups	Exchange Servers
> Keys	Exchange Trusted Subsystem
> LostAndFound	ExchangeLegacyInterop
> Managed Service Accounts	Help Desk
> Microsoft Exchange Protected Groups	Hygiene Management
> Microsoft Exchange Security Groups	Managed Availability Servers
> myusers	Organization Management
> Program Data	Public Folder Management
> servers	Recipient Management
> System	Records Management
> Users	Security Administrator
> Microsoft Exchange System Objects	Security Reader
> NTDS Quotas	Server Management
> TPM Devices	UM Management
	View-Only Organization Management

Microsoft Exchange on-prem components

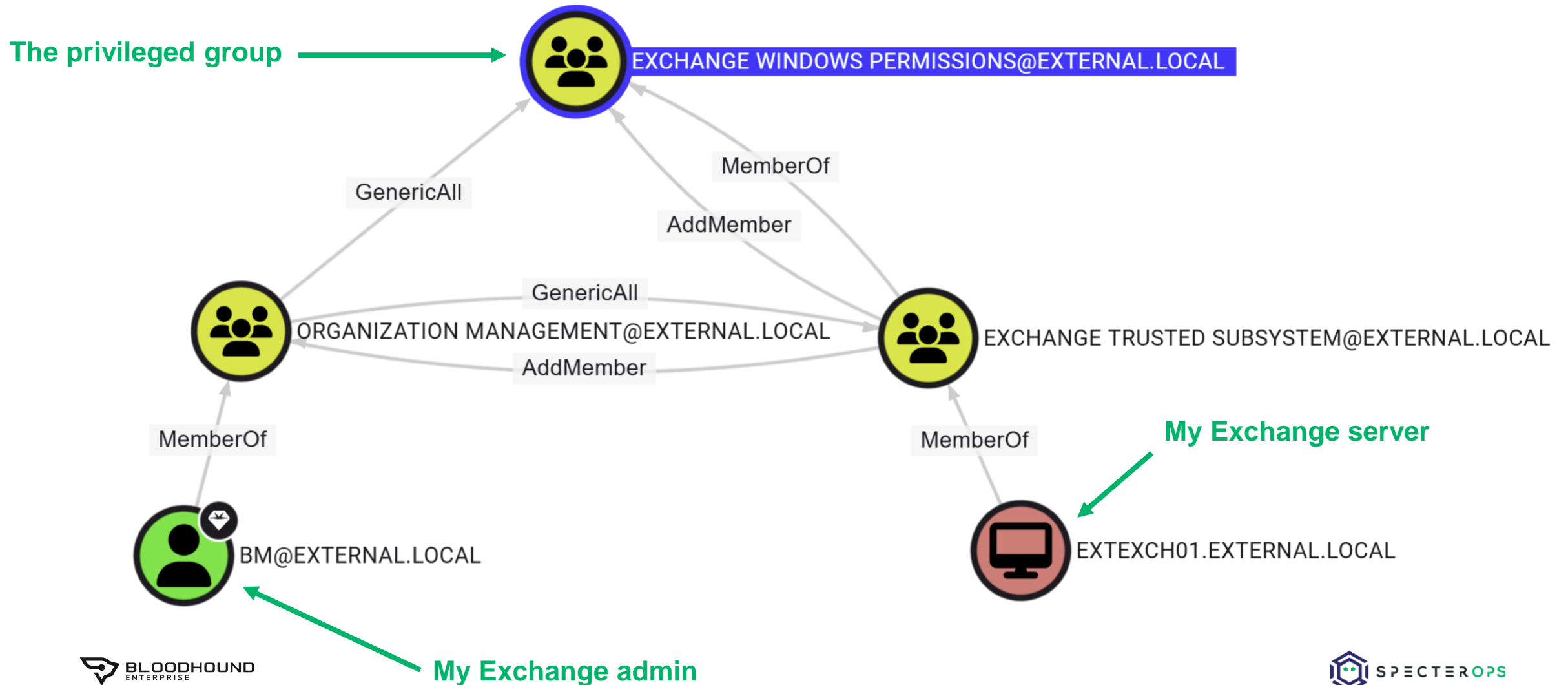
- What permissions do the components have in AD?
- Depends on the Exchange permission model:
 1. Shared permission model (default)
 2. Role-Based Access Control (RBAC) split permissions model
 3. AD split permissions model
- Approach: Deploy each model and audit permissions

Shared permission model (default)

- BloodHound analysis
- Exchange Windows Permissions (group) has outbound control
- ACEs on domain object:
 - Users: ForceChangePassword, WriteDacl
 - Groups: AddMember
- Who controls this group?



Shared permission model (default)



Shared permission model (default)

- Components with Tier Zero control:
 - Exchange Windows Permissions (group)
- Indirect controllers:
 - Organization Management (group)
 - Exchange Trusted Subsystem (group)
 - Exchange servers
 - Exchange admins
- Tier Zero control removable: Disable ACL inheritance from domain on Tier Zero objects

Shared model

Tier Zero security dependency:	✗
Tier Zero control:	✓
Tier Zero control removable:	✓

Exchange permission models

Shared model

Tier Zero security dependency: ✗

Tier Zero control: ✓

Tier Zero control removable: ✓

RBAC split model

Tier Zero security dependency: ?

Tier Zero control: ?

Tier Zero control removable: ?

AD split model

Tier Zero security dependency: ?

Tier Zero control: ?

Tier Zero control removable: ?

RBAC split permissions model

- Microsoft recommended model
- Better options for delegating limited control in Exchange RBAC
- AD permissions analysis: Same as shared model!
- Split permissions in Exchange RBAC (not in AD!)



Exchange permission models

Shared model

Tier Zero security dependency: ✗

Tier Zero control: ✓

Tier Zero control removable: ✓

RBAC split model

Tier Zero security dependency: ✗

Tier Zero control: ✓

Tier Zero control removable: ✓

AD split model

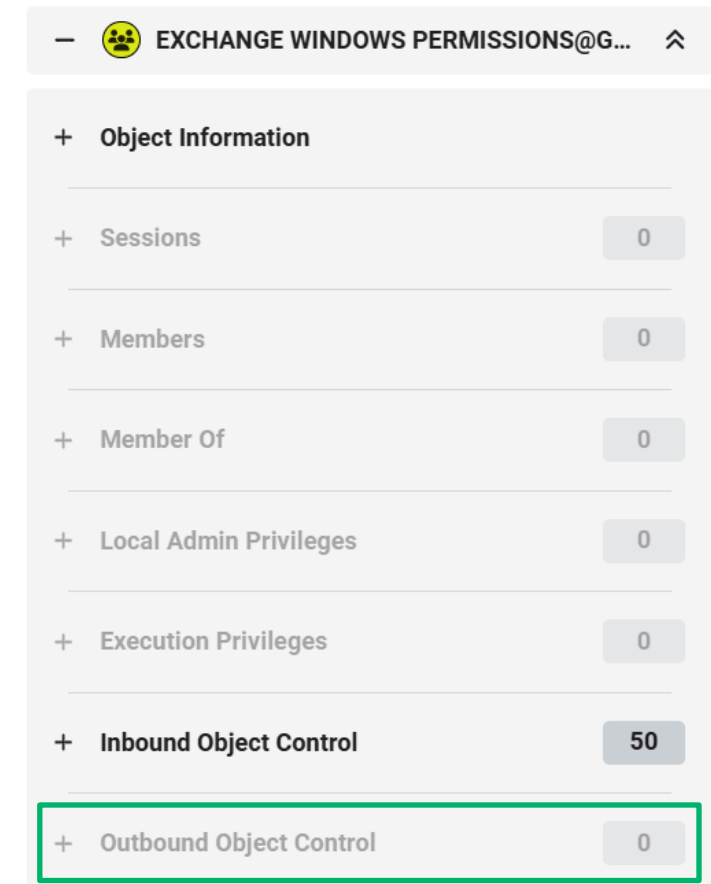
Tier Zero security dependency: ?

Tier Zero control: ?

Tier Zero control removable: ?

AD split permissions model

- Exchange Windows Permissions edges: Gone!
- Exchange now has limited write access in AD
- Admin challenge:
Grant the necessary permissions in AD



AD split permissions model

- BloodHound does not capture everything
- Exchange Trusted Subsystem (group) has Write Public-Information on users
 - ACE on domain object
 - Includes Alt-Security-Identities attribute
 - Attack: [ESC14 Scenario A](#)

Security descriptor - DC=external,DC=local

Owner

BUILTIN\Administrators

Group

BUILTIN\Administrators

SD control

☒ SELF_RELATIVE

☐ OWNER_DEFAULTED

☐ GROUP_DEFAULTED

DACL (116 ACEs)

T...	Trustee	Rights	Flags
Deny	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (altSecurityIdentities)	Inherit (computer)
Deny	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (Validated write to service principal name)	Inherit
Allow	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (proxyAddresses)	Inherit
Allow	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (showInAddressBook)	Inherit
Allow	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (Exchange Personal Information)	Inherit
Allow	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (adminDisplayName)	Inherit
Allow	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (msExchDataEncryptionPolicyLink)	Inherit
Allow	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (displayName)	Inherit
Allow	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (Public Information)	Inherit
Allow	EXTERNAL\Exchange Trusted Subsystem	Write property (displayNamePrintable)	Inherit

Exchange permission models

Shared model

Tier Zero security dependency: ✗

Tier Zero control: ✓

Tier Zero control removable: ✓

RBAC split model

Tier Zero security dependency: ✗

Tier Zero control: ✓

Tier Zero control removable: ✓

AD split model

Tier Zero security dependency: ✗

Tier Zero control: ✓

Tier Zero control removable: ✓

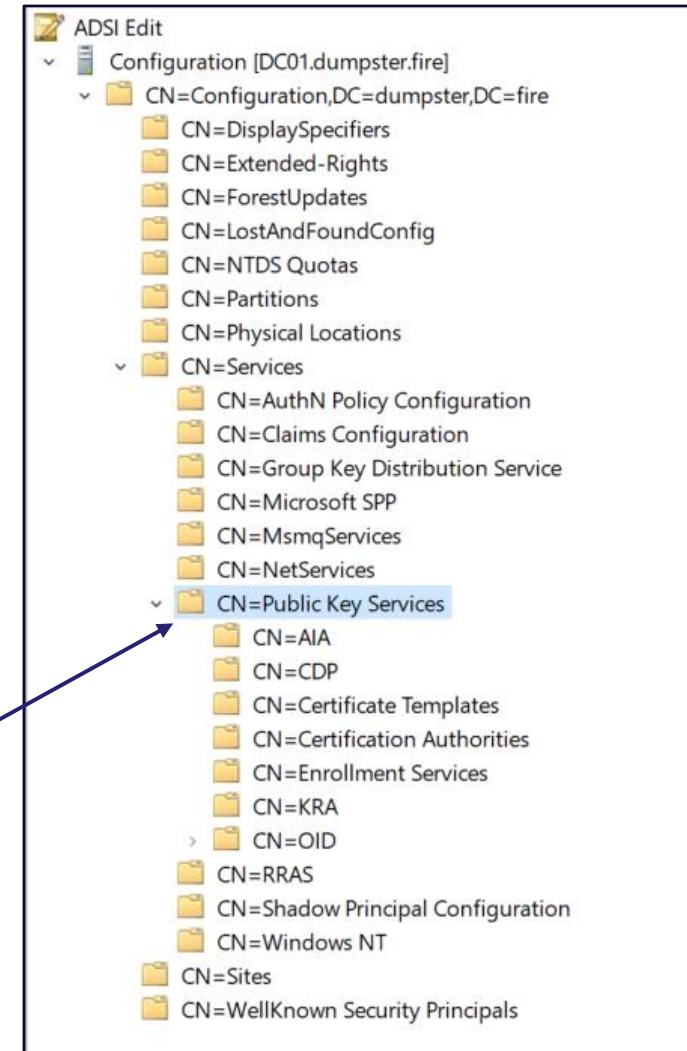
Microsoft Exchange on-prem - Summary

- Exchange components with Tier Zero control:
 - Exchange Windows Permissions – direct (except in AD split model)
 - Exchange Trusted Subsystem – direct
 - Organization Management – indirect
 - Exchange servers – indirect
 - Exchange admins – indirect
- Are the above components Tier Zero?
 - Yes, unless all Tier Zero users and groups are protected against ACL inheritance from the domain
- Microsoft's take: Exchange is typically Tier Zero

Active Directory Certificate Services

Active Directory Certificate Services (ADCS)

- Microsoft's Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) solution for Windows environments
- Issues and manages digital certificates
 - Example uses include SSL/TLS certificates, email digital signatures, code signing, and **authentication**
- Largely configured inside of Active Directory
 - See the Public Key Services container
- Old!!! First parts released in Windows Server 2000

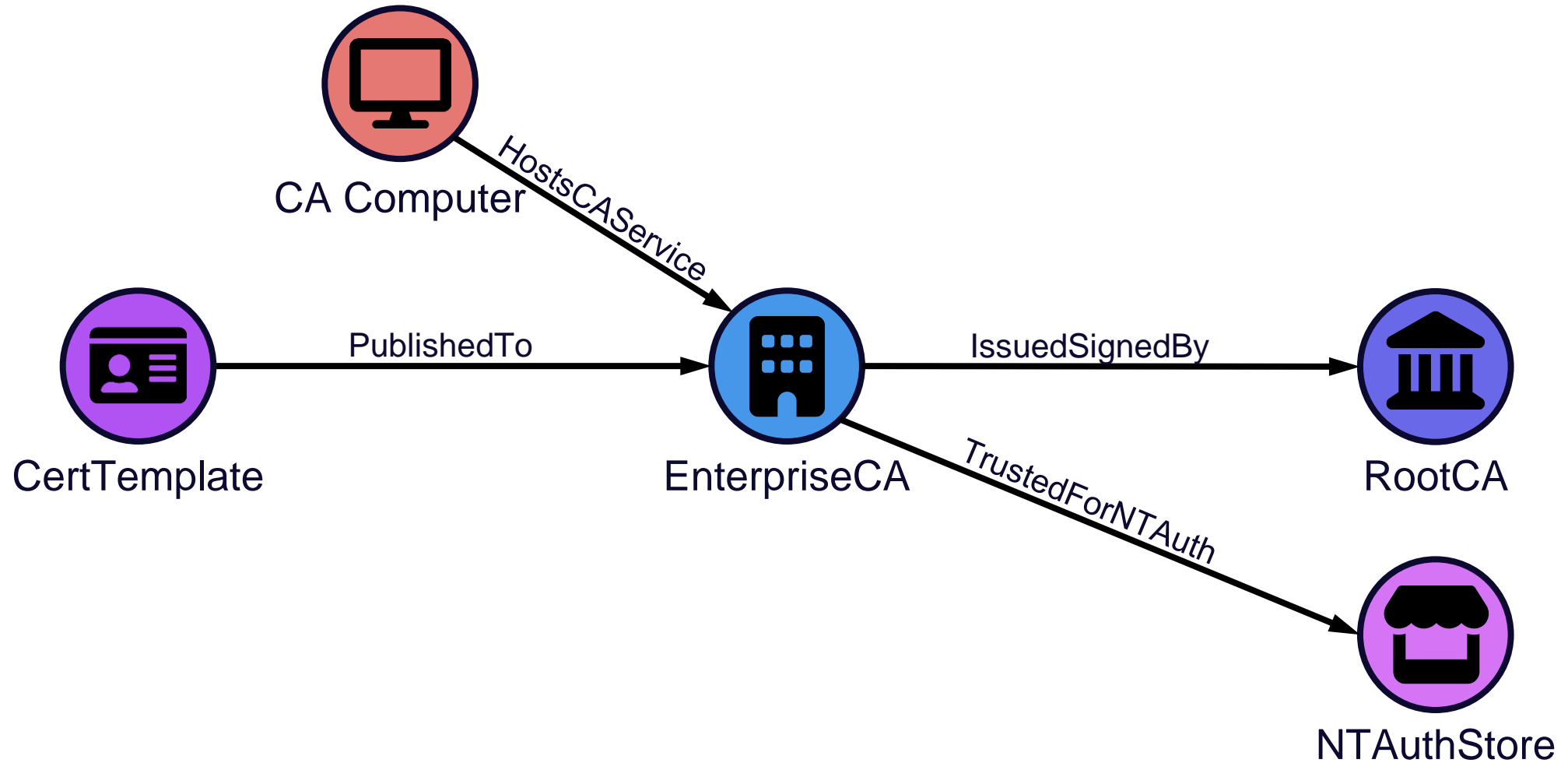


Active Directory Certificate Services (ADCS)

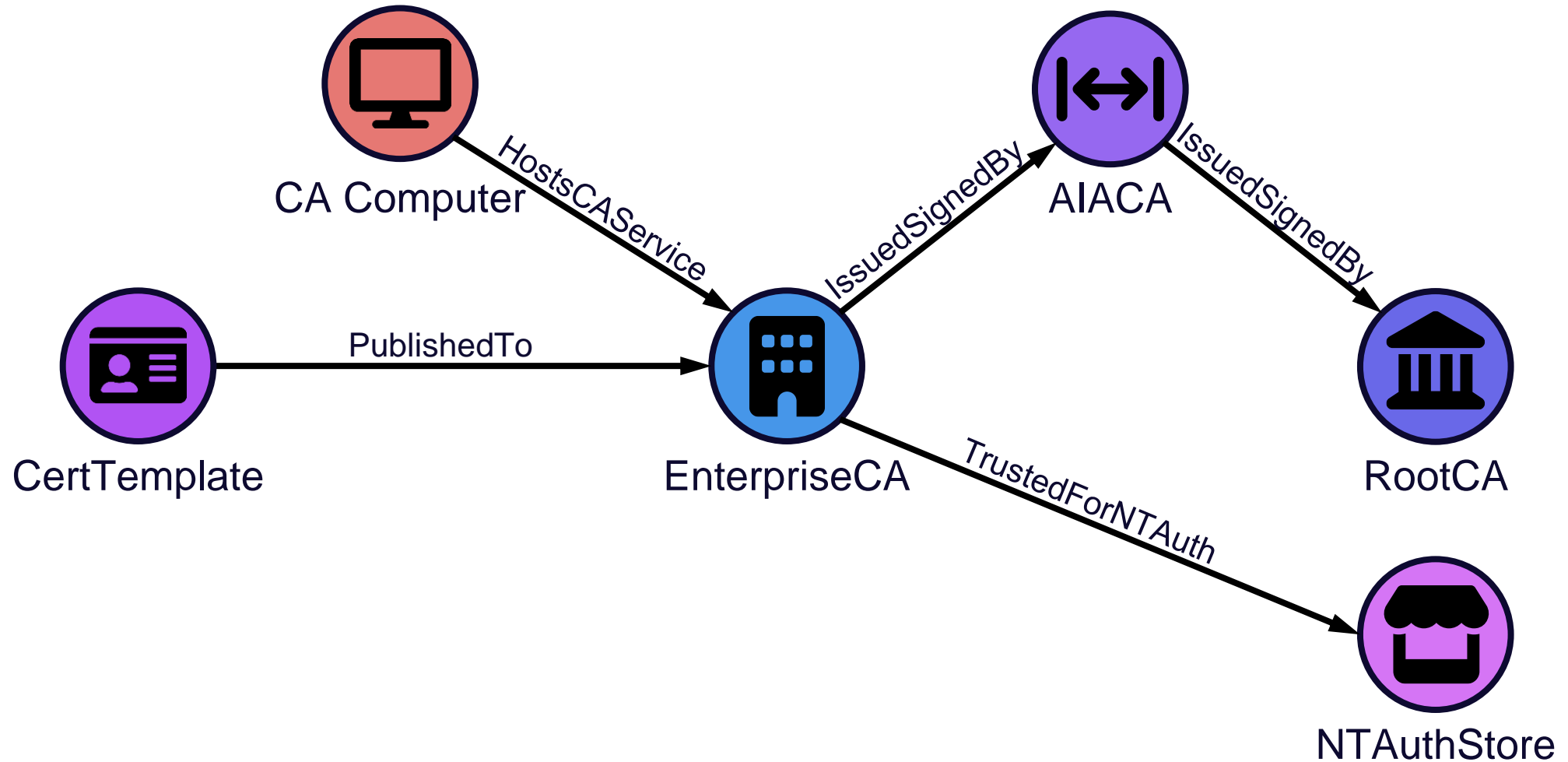
- 2021: Certified Pre-Owned ADCS whitepaper
 - Eight domain escalation techniques (ESC1 - ESC8)
 - AD CS persistence techniques
 - Detection guidance
- Since then
 - ***MANY*** full forest compromises on our assessments (and by threat actors 🤖)
 - More escalation techniques (ESC9 - ESC15)
 - Several CVEs and resulting changes in AD
 - Limited security improvements in ADCS itself



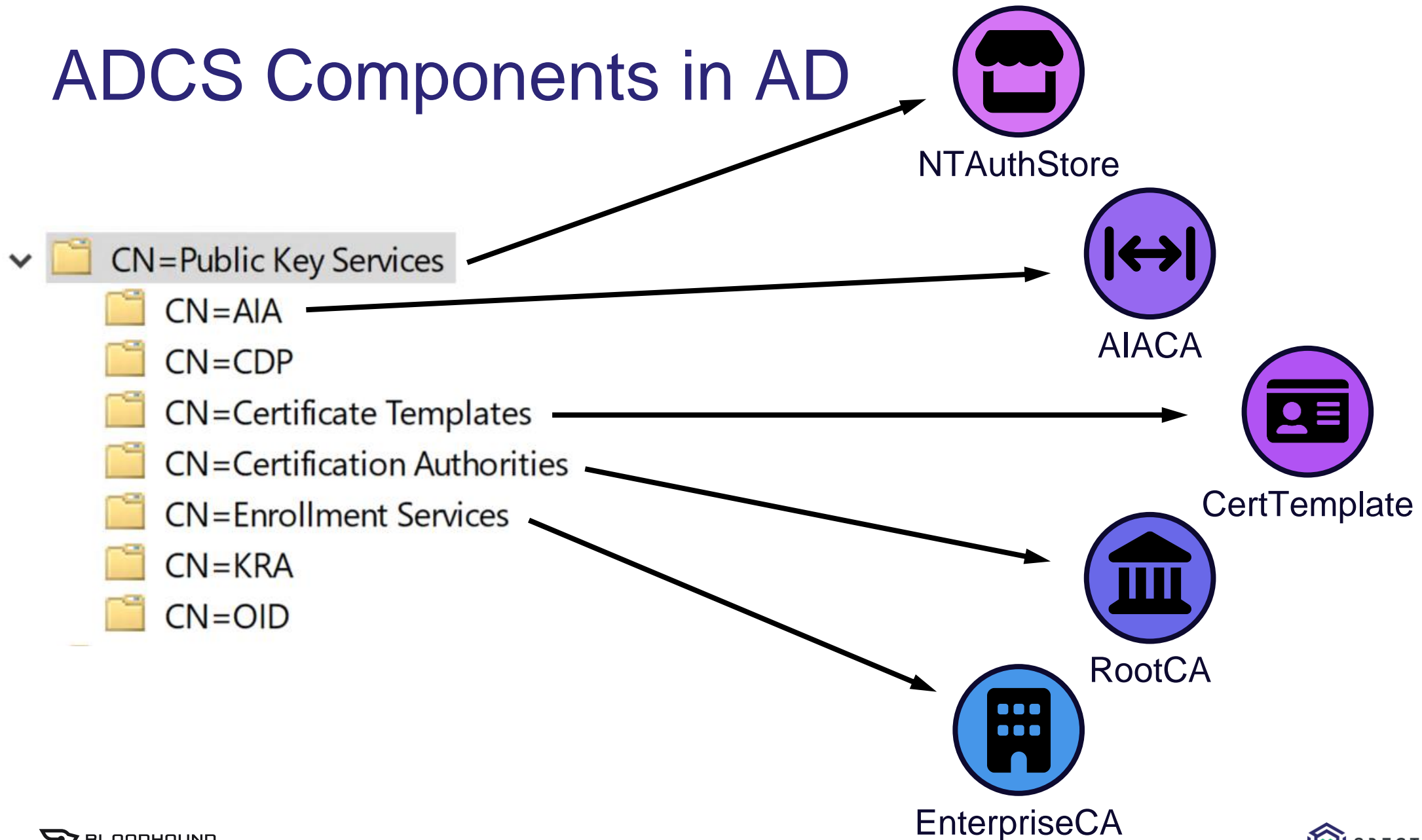
ADCS Components



ADCS Components

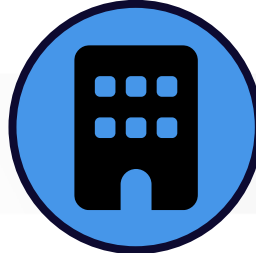


ADCS Components in AD





ESC1 Cert Template



Enterprise CA



Domain Controller

ADCS Abuse Example: ESC1



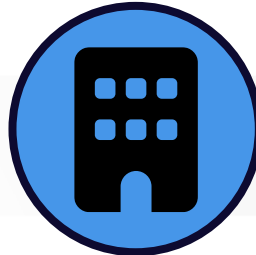
Alice



Bob



ESC1 Cert Template

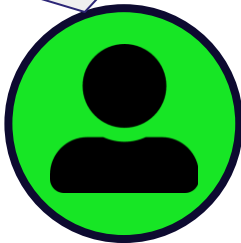


Enterprise CA



Domain Controller

“Please issue me a certificate using the ESC1 cert template. My subject alternative name is **bob@contoso.local**”



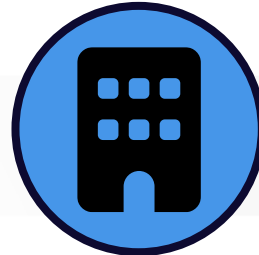
Alice



Bob



ESC1 Cert Template



Enterprise CA



Domain Controller



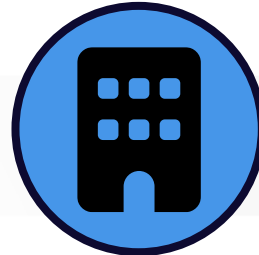
Alice



Bob



ESC1 Cert Template



Enterprise CA

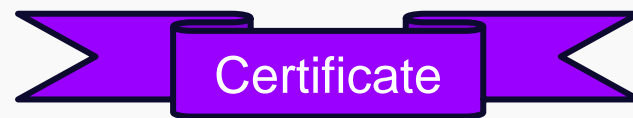


Domain Controller

“Please issue a TGT to me for **bob@contoso.local**. This certificate will serve as my credential for that user.”



Alice



EKU: Client Authentication
SAN: bob@contoso.local

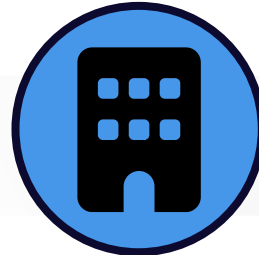


Bob





ESC1 Cert Template



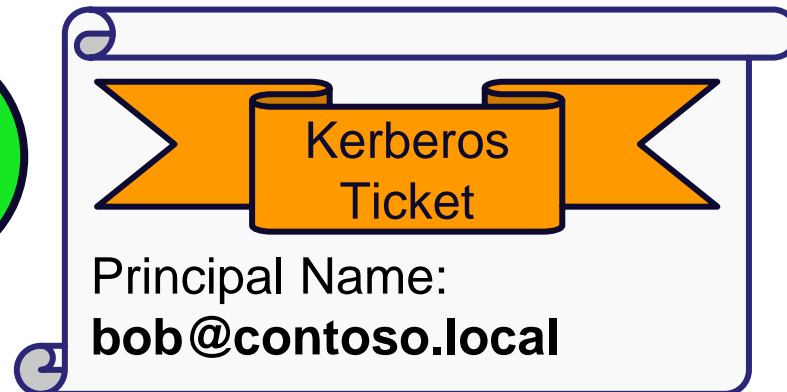
Enterprise CA



Domain Controller



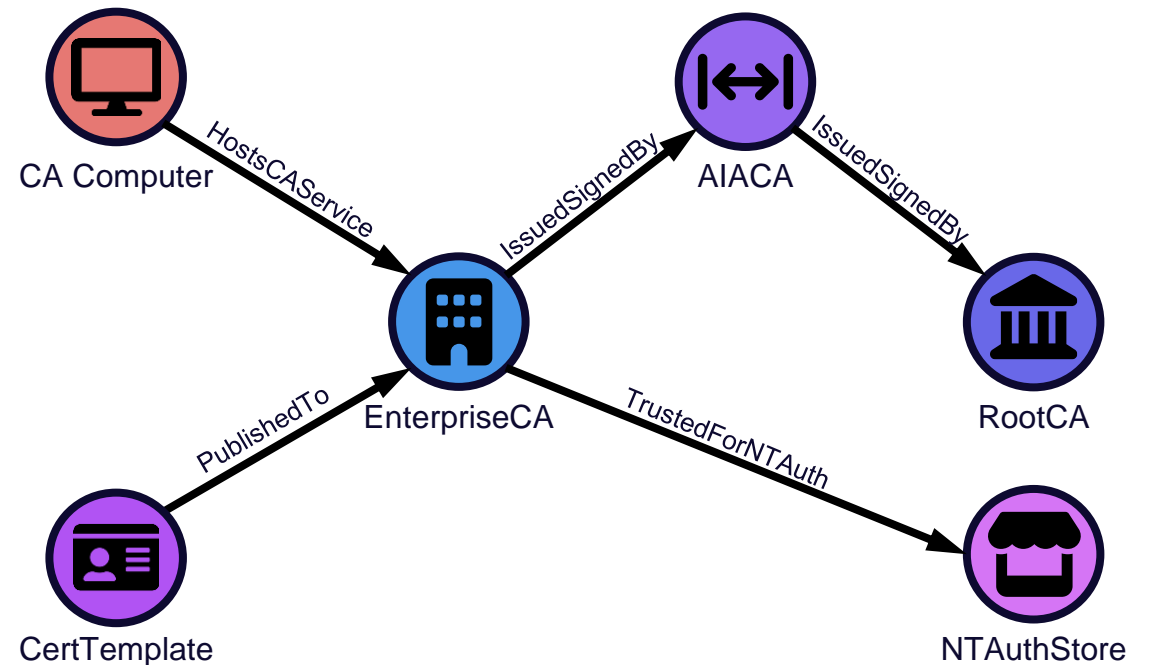
Alice



Bob

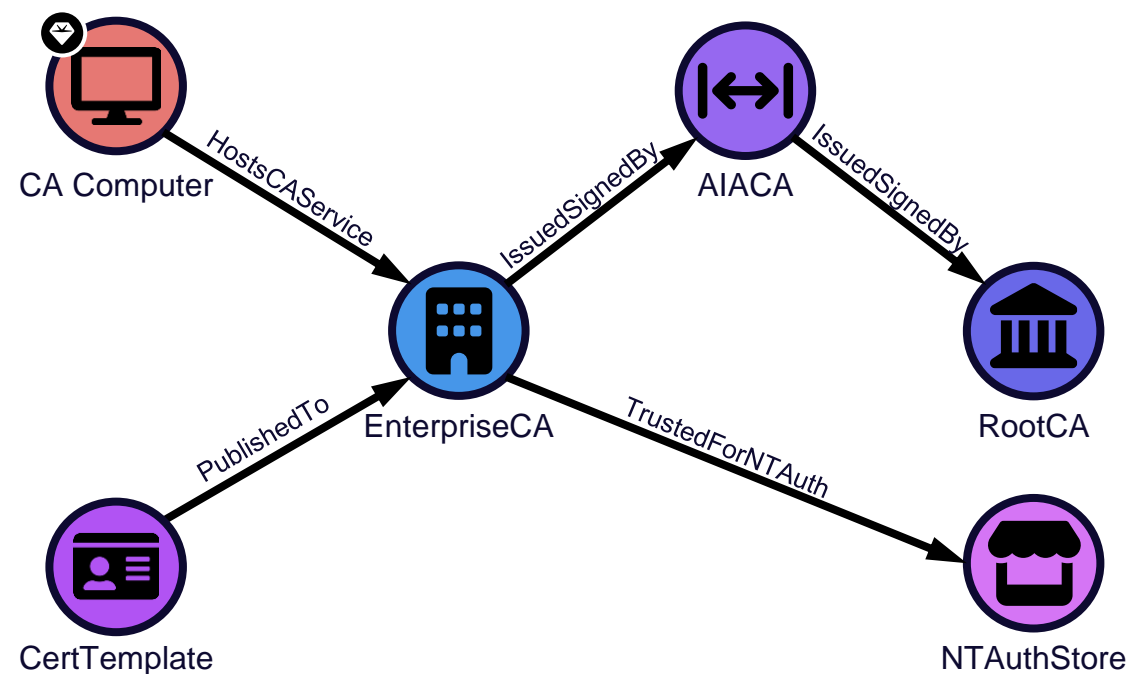
ADCS Components

- ADCS enables impersonation as anyone
 - Takeover control of Tier Zero
- Which components enables takeover?
 - Or disruption of Tier Zero



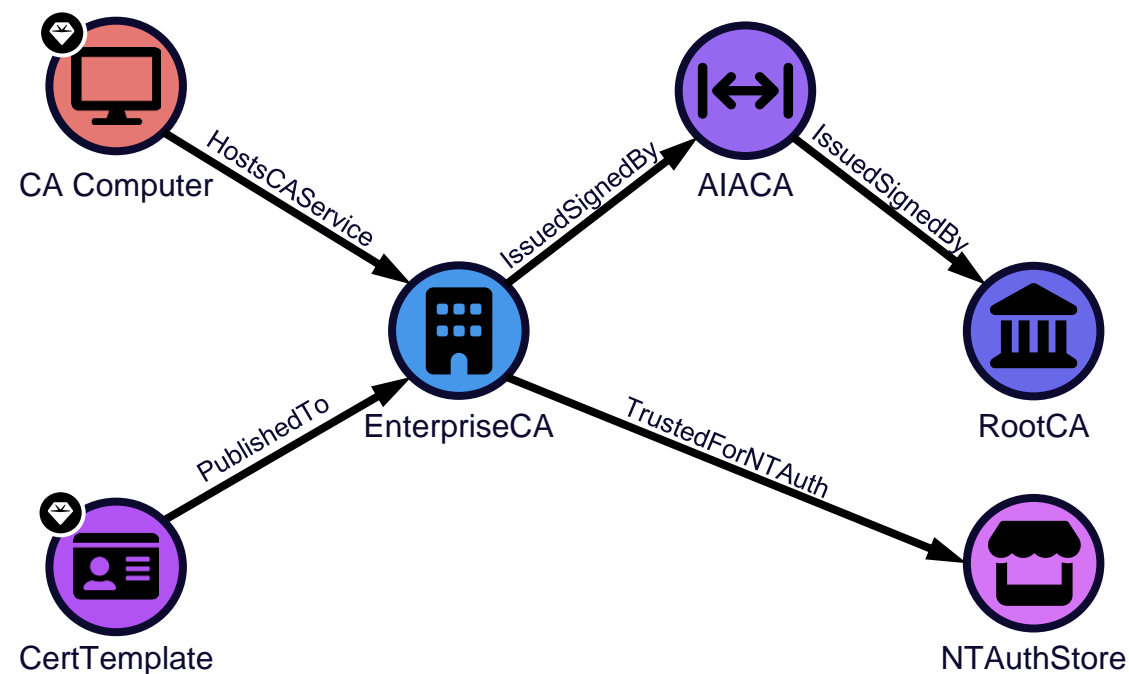
CA Computer

Tier Zero Compromise	Possibly (GoldenCert or ESC7)
Compromise actions	Forge cert, approve denied requests, modify pending requests ..
Compromise pre-reqs	CA certificate is trusted
Is Tier Zero	Yes



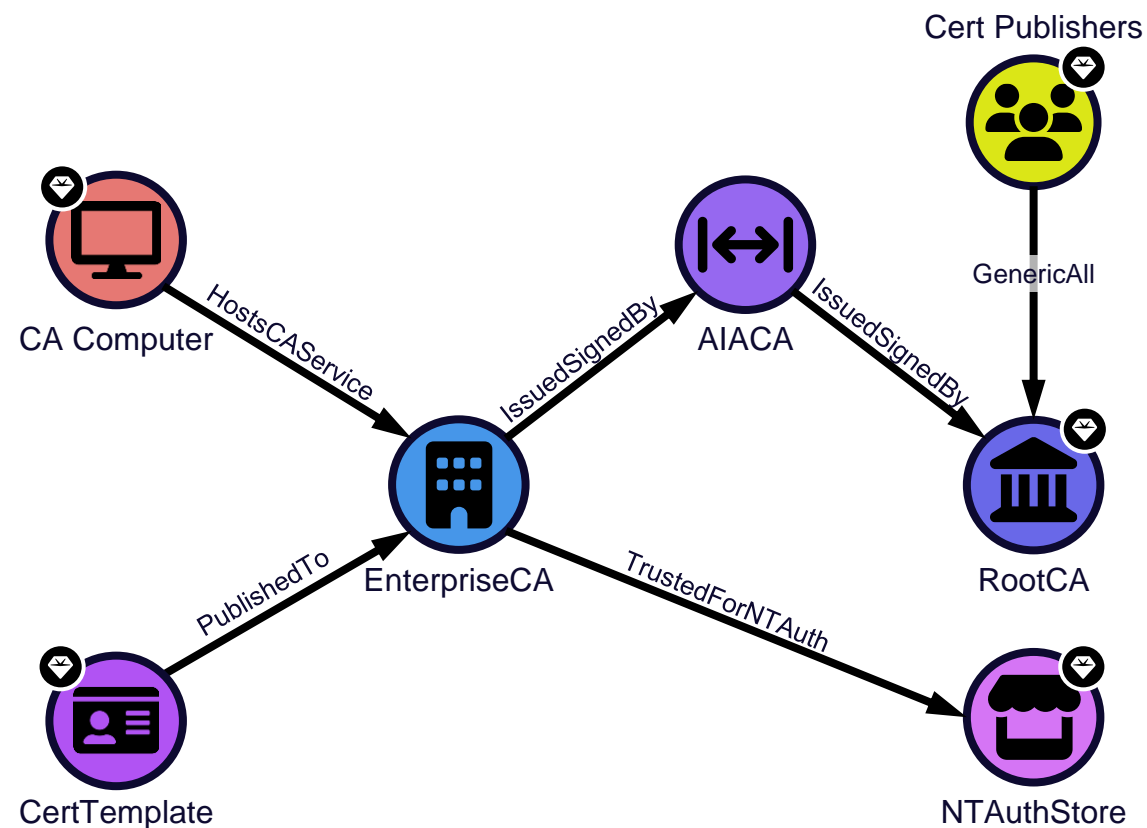
CertTemplate

Tier Zero Compromise	Possibly (ESC4)
Compromise actions	Modify template to enable ESCx
Compromise pre-reqs	Published to CA CA is trusted by NTAUTH and root CA
Is Tier Zero	Yes



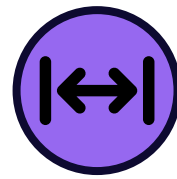
RootCA and NTAuthStore

Tier Zero Compromise	ESC5
Compromise actions	Add attacker root CA certificate Make it trusted by NTAuth store
Compromise pre-reqs	None
Is Tier Zero	Yes



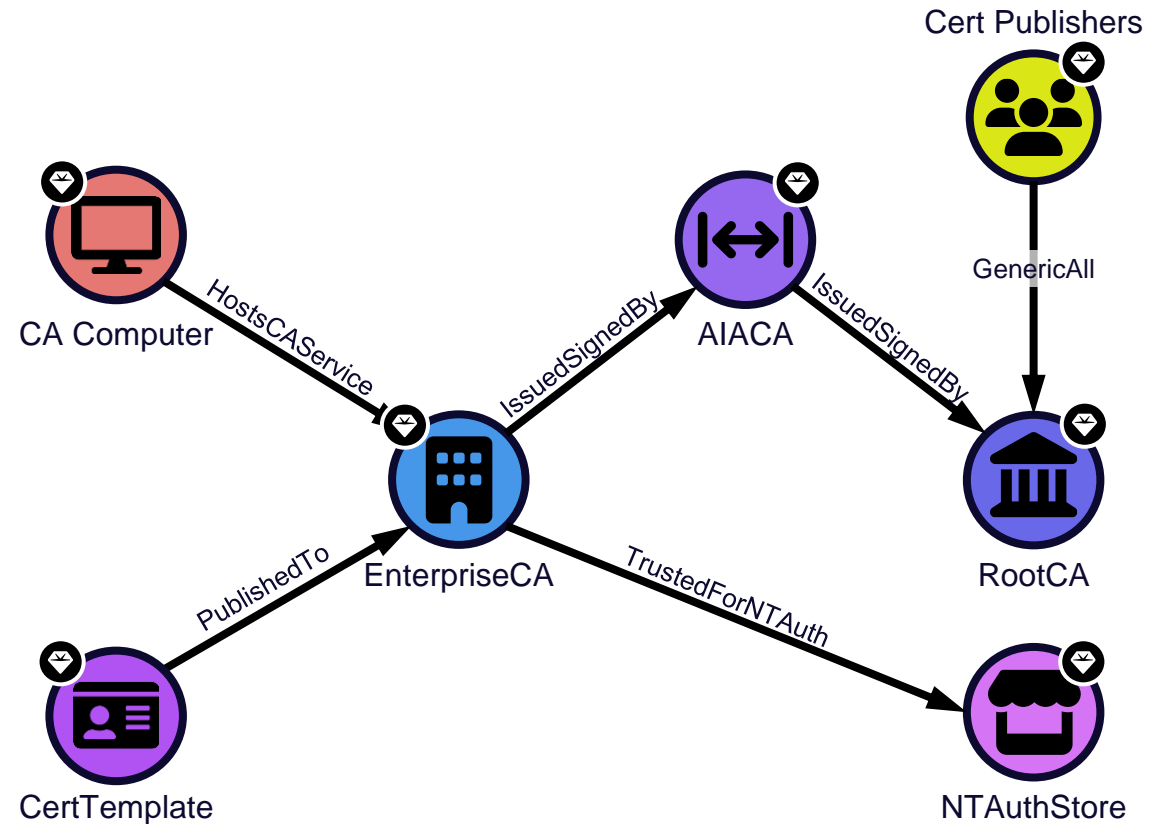


EnterpriseCA and



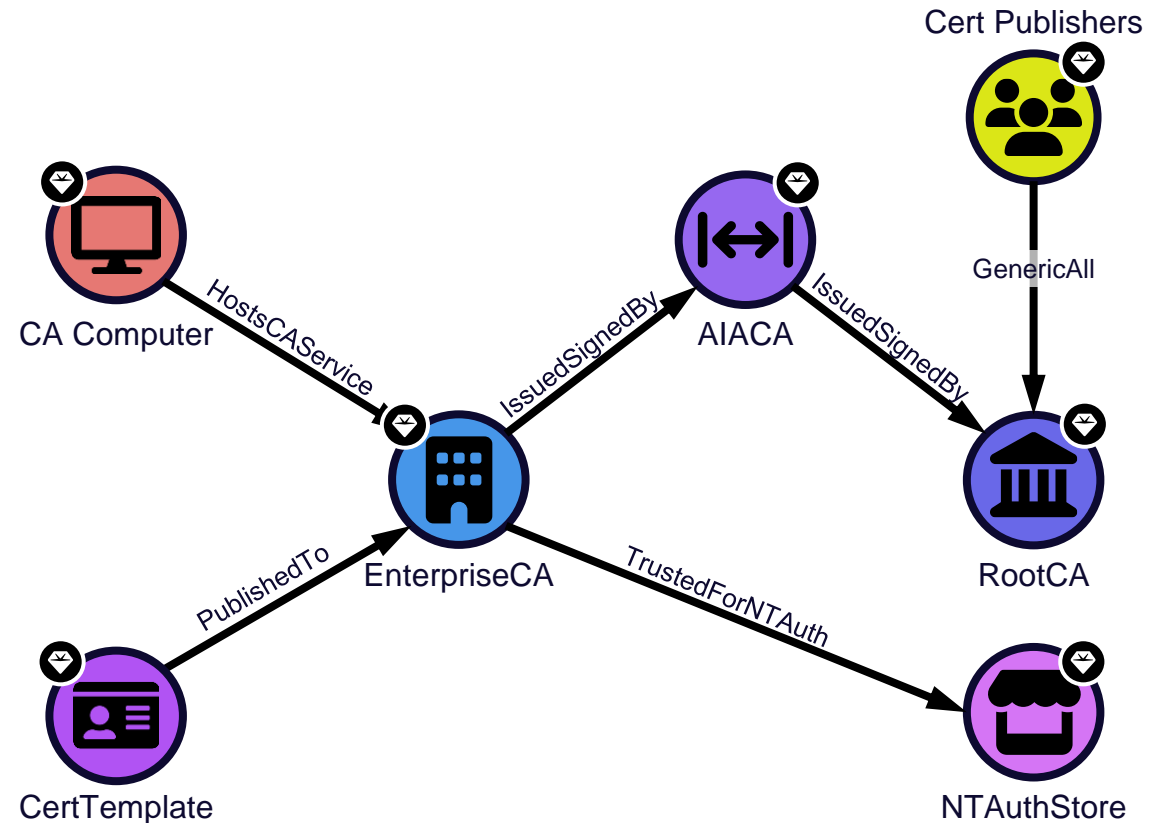
AIACA

Tier Zero Compromise	Disruption
Compromise actions	Delete the objects (break CA chain)
Compromise pre-reqs	None
Is Tier Zero	Yes



ADCS - Summary

- ADCS has Tier Zero takeover control
- Many components are Tier Zero security dependencies
- **Recommendation:**
 - Treat ADCS as Tier Zero
 - Non-Tier Zero has no control over ADCS by default – don't change that!
 - No ADCS? Maybe another PKI solution?



Tier Zero Table

SpecterOps / TierZeroTable

<> Code Issues 1 Pull requests Actions Projects Security Insights Settings

TierZeroTable

Edit Pins Unwatch 6

main

1 Branch 0 Tags

Go to file

Add file

<> Code

JonasBK

make table ux better

81ae08d · 1 minute ago

26 Commits

.github/workflows

Create cl.yml

last year

LICENSE

Create LICENSE

last year

README.md

Update README.md - Part 4

6 minutes ago

TierZeroTable.csv

Update TierZeroTable.csv - part 4

15 minutes ago

index.html

make table ux better

1 minute ago

README

GPL-3.0 license

TierZeroTable

Table of AD and Azure assets and whether they belong to Tier Zero.

View the table here: <https://specterops.github.io/TierZeroTable>

Blog posts:

What is Tier Zero - Part 1

What is Tier Zero - Part 2

Webinars:

Defining the Undefined: What is Tier Zero

Defining the Undefined: What is Tier Zero Part II

Defining the Undefined: What is Tier Zero Part III

Defining the Undefined: What is Tier Zero Part IV

TierZeroTable

Table of AD and Azure assets and whether they belong to Tier Zero.

Description of table columns and additional resources can be found here: <https://github.com/SpecterOps/TierZeroTable>

Hint: Click on a header to sort the table alphabetically.

Search...													
Name	Type	IdP	Identification	Description	Compromise by default	Compromise by configuration	Is Tier Zero	Reasoning	Cypher query	Privileged access security role	AdminSD Holder protected	What is Tier Zero episode ▲	External links
Account Operators	DC group	Active Directory	SID: S-1-5-32-548	The Account Operators group grants...	YES - Takeover	N/A - Compromise by default	YES	The Account Operators group has GenericA...	MATCH (n:Group) WHERE n.objectid ENDS WITH 'S-1-5-32-548' RETURN n	YES	YES	1	https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/... Read more
Administrators	DC group	Active Directory	SID: S-1-5-32-544	Members of the Administrators group have...	YES - Takeover	N/A - Compromise by default	YES	The Administrators group has full control...	MATCH (n:Group) WHERE n.objectid ENDS WITH 'S-1-5-32-544' RETURN n	YES	YES	1	https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/... Read more
Backup Operators	DC group	Active Directory	SID: S-1-5-32-551	Members of the Backup Operators group ca...	YES - Takeover	N/A - Compromise by default	YES	The Backup Operators group has the...	MATCH (n:Group) WHERE n.objectid ENDS WITH 'S-1-5-32-551' RETURN n	YES	YES	1	https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/... Read more

- <https://github.com/SpecterOps/TierZeroTable>
- Submit your contributions or refinements

Questions