

# Kubernetes Attack Simulation: The Definitive Guide

Adversary Village, DEF CON 32



# whoami

**Leo Tsaousis**

Senior Security Consultant

Attack Path Mapping Lead @ WithSecure

Purple Teams / Threat Simulation

Presented at ROOTCON, BSides

“

We need to measure our Attack Detection capability  
for this {Windows, Linux, On-prem, Cloud, Kubernetes}  
environment

”

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”

# Agenda

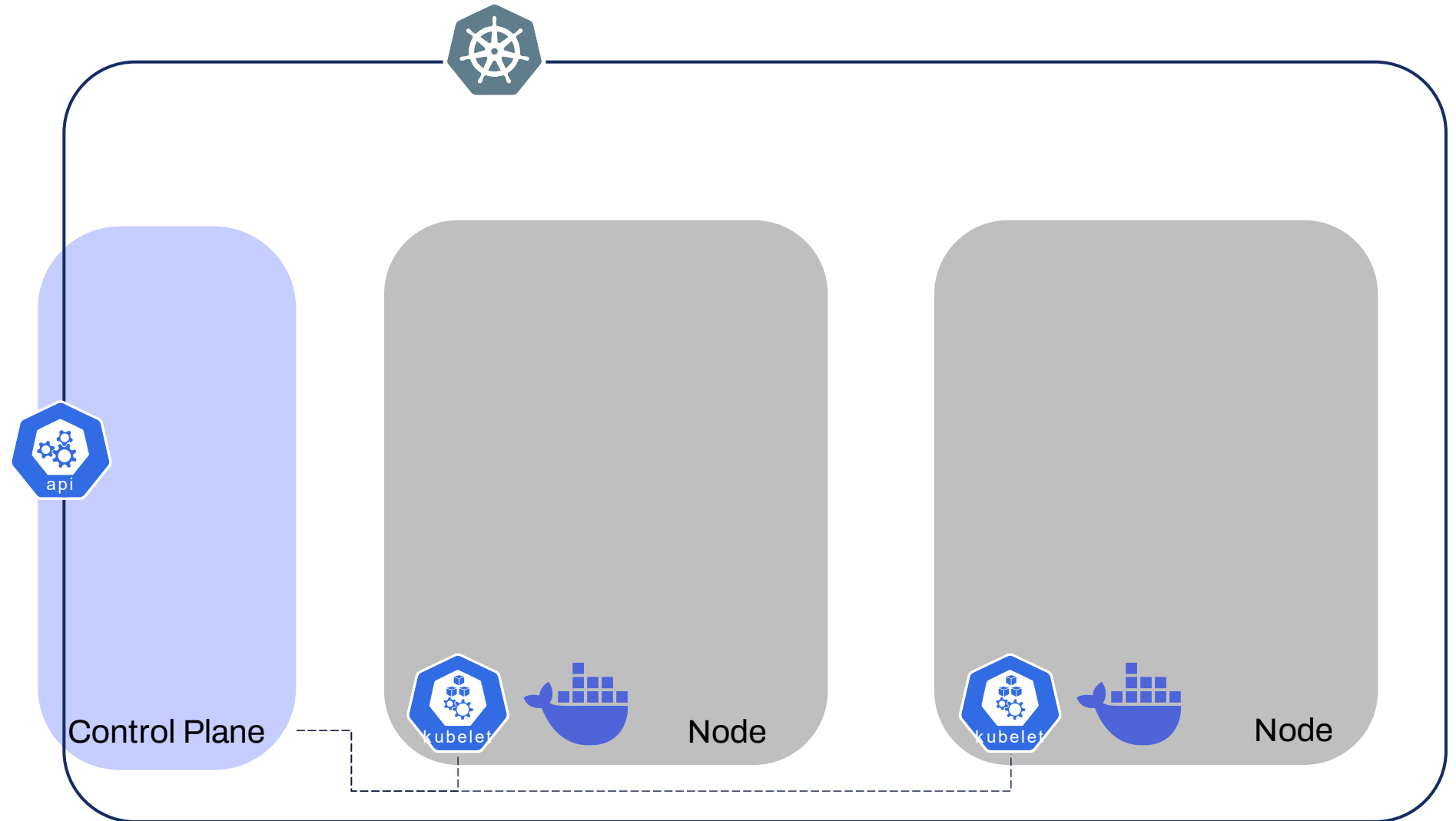
- 1 Kubernetes Introduction
- 2 Threat Modelling
- 3 K8S Attack Simulation
- 4 K8S Attack Detection
- 5 Demo



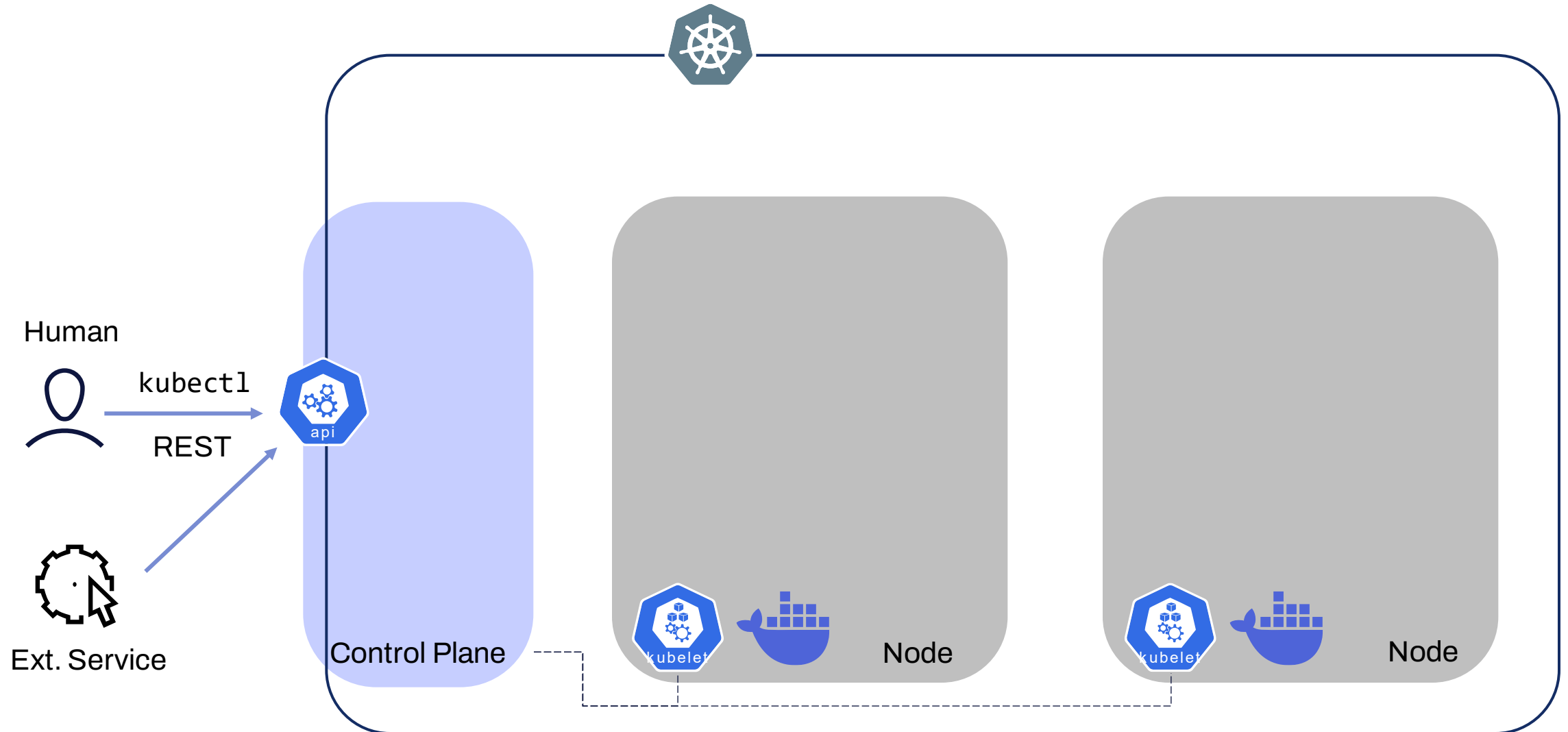
# Intro to Kubernetes



# A View to a Cluster

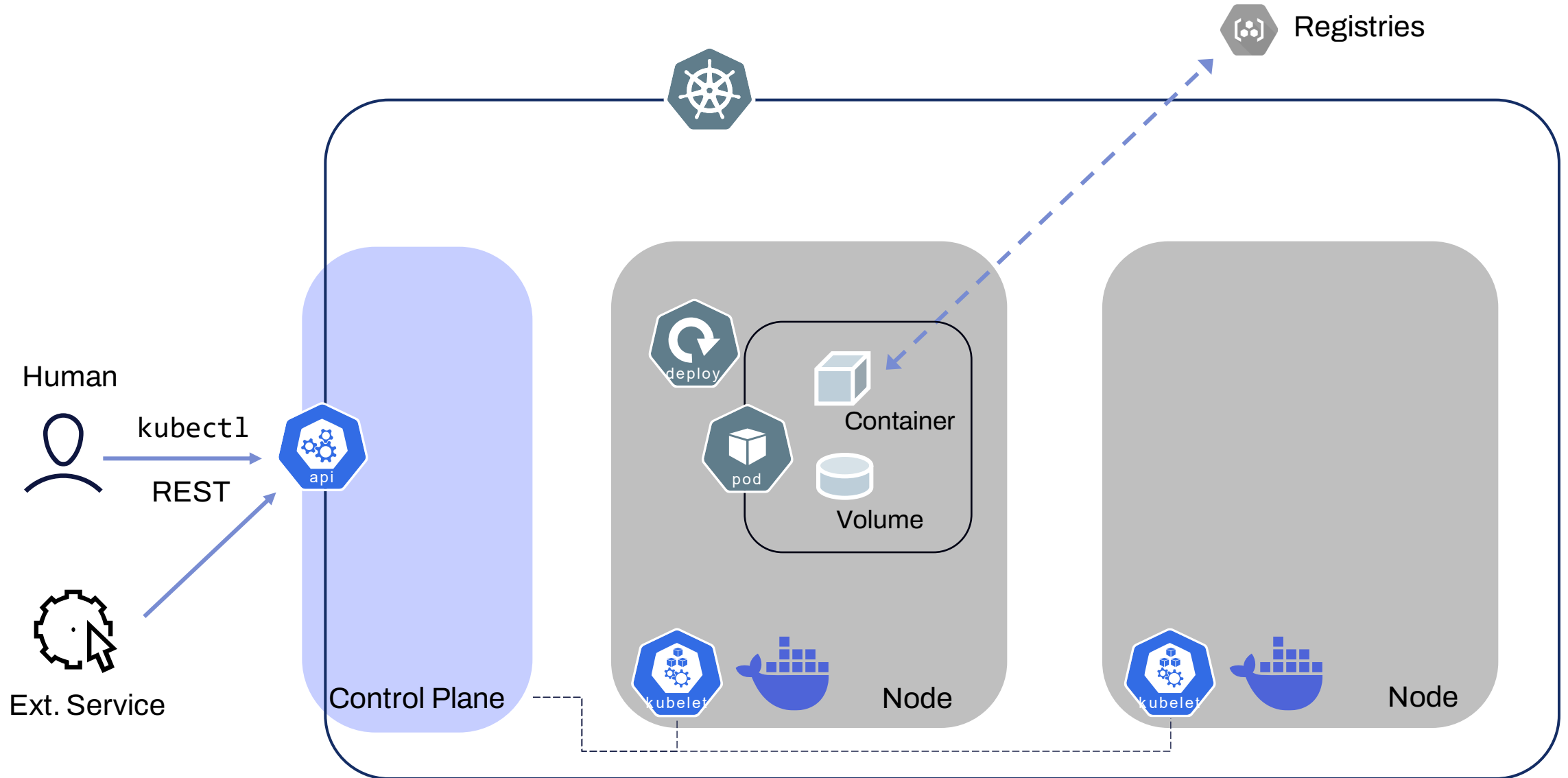


# A View to a Cluster

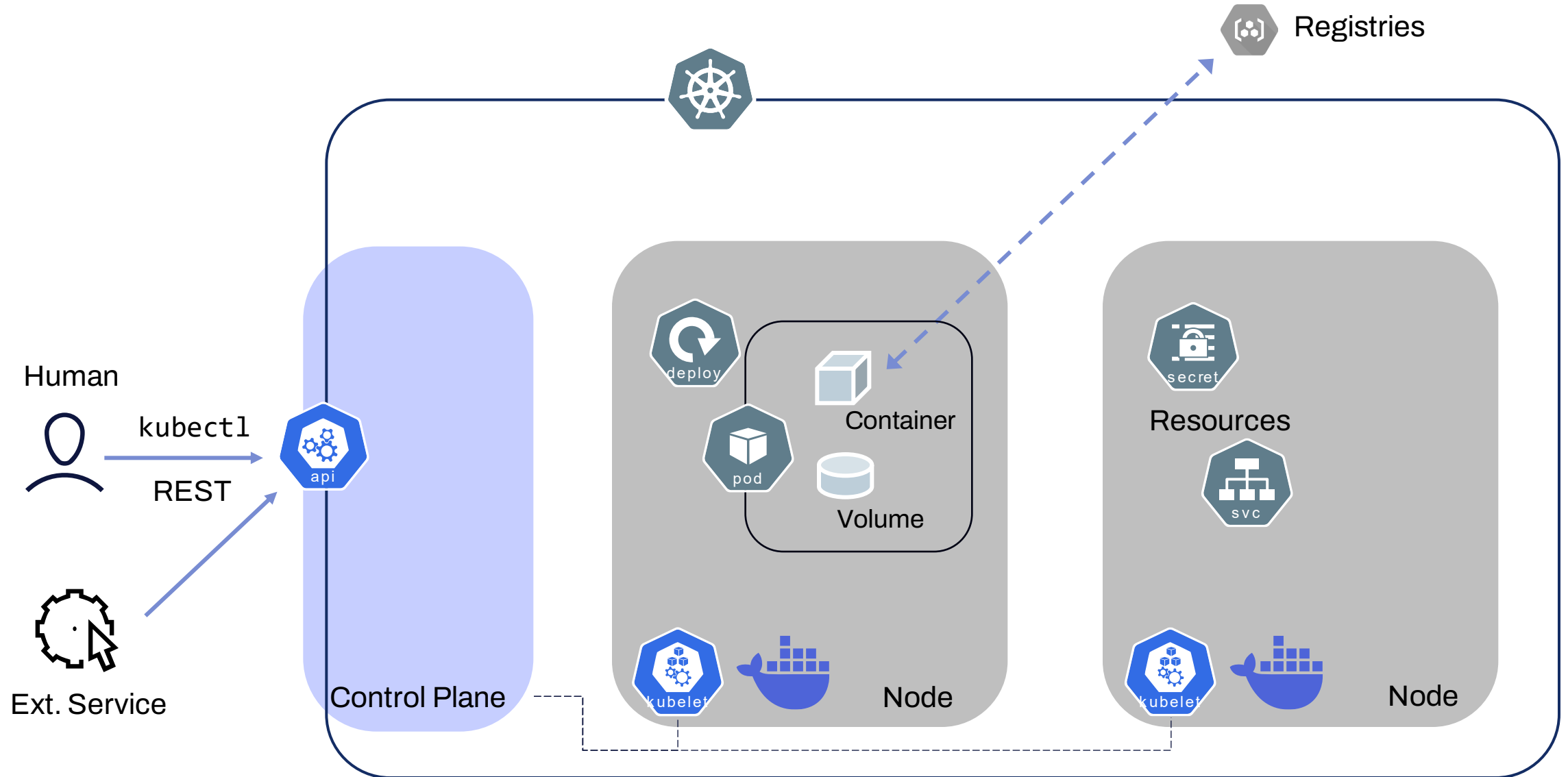




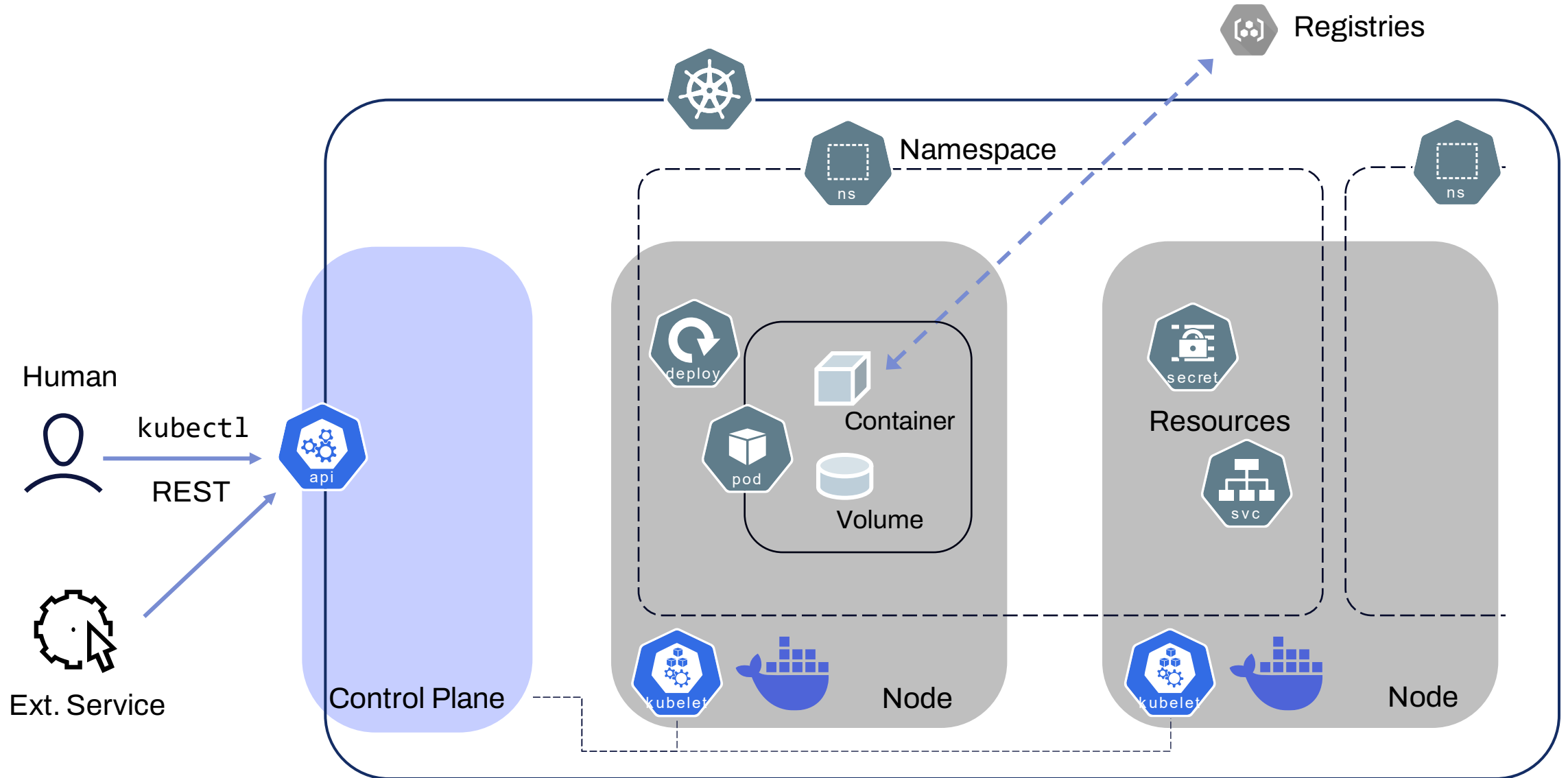
# A View to a Cluster



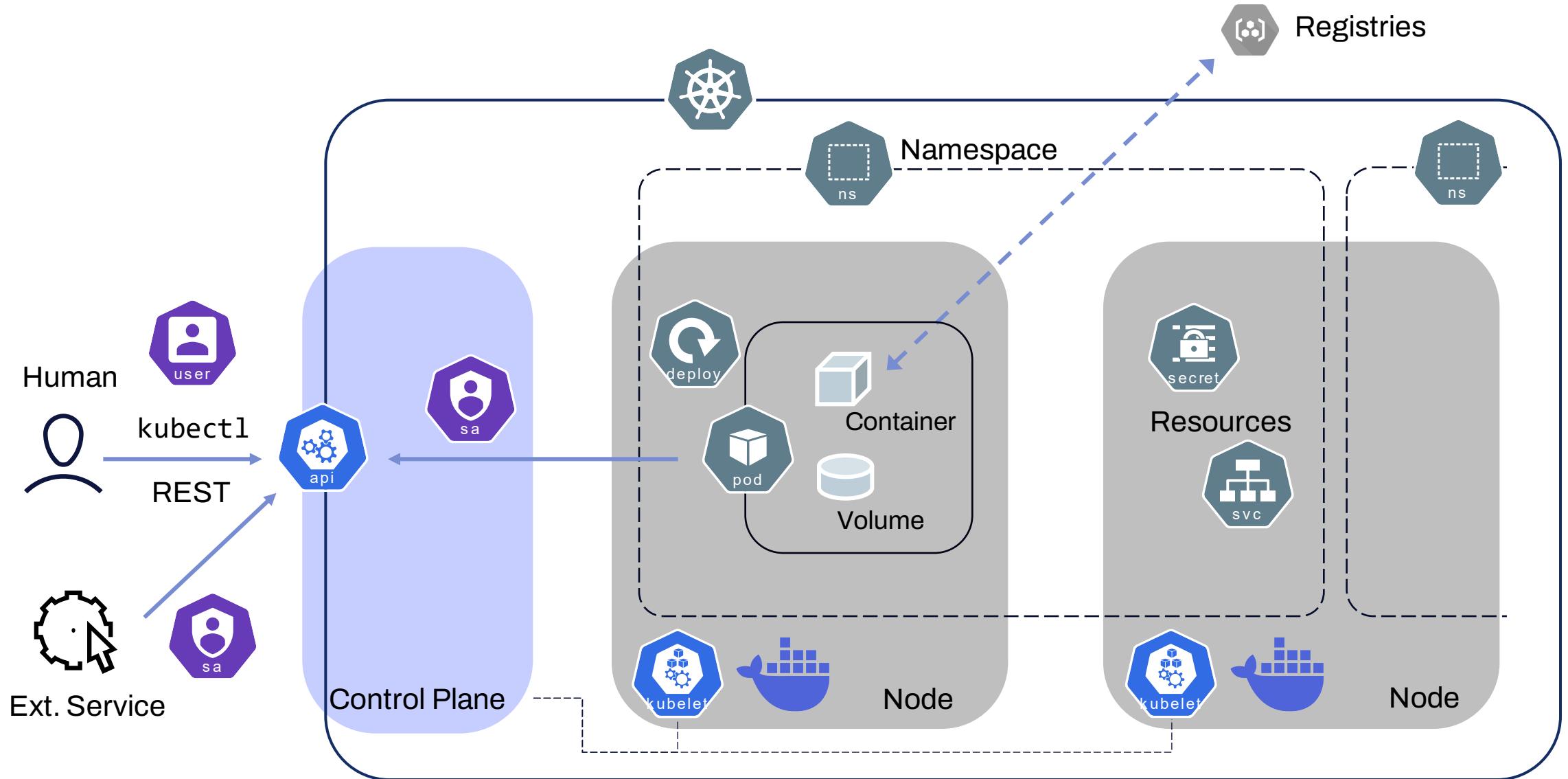
# A View to a Cluster



# A View to a Cluster



# A View to a Cluster



# Simple enough



## PROJECTS AND PRODUCTS

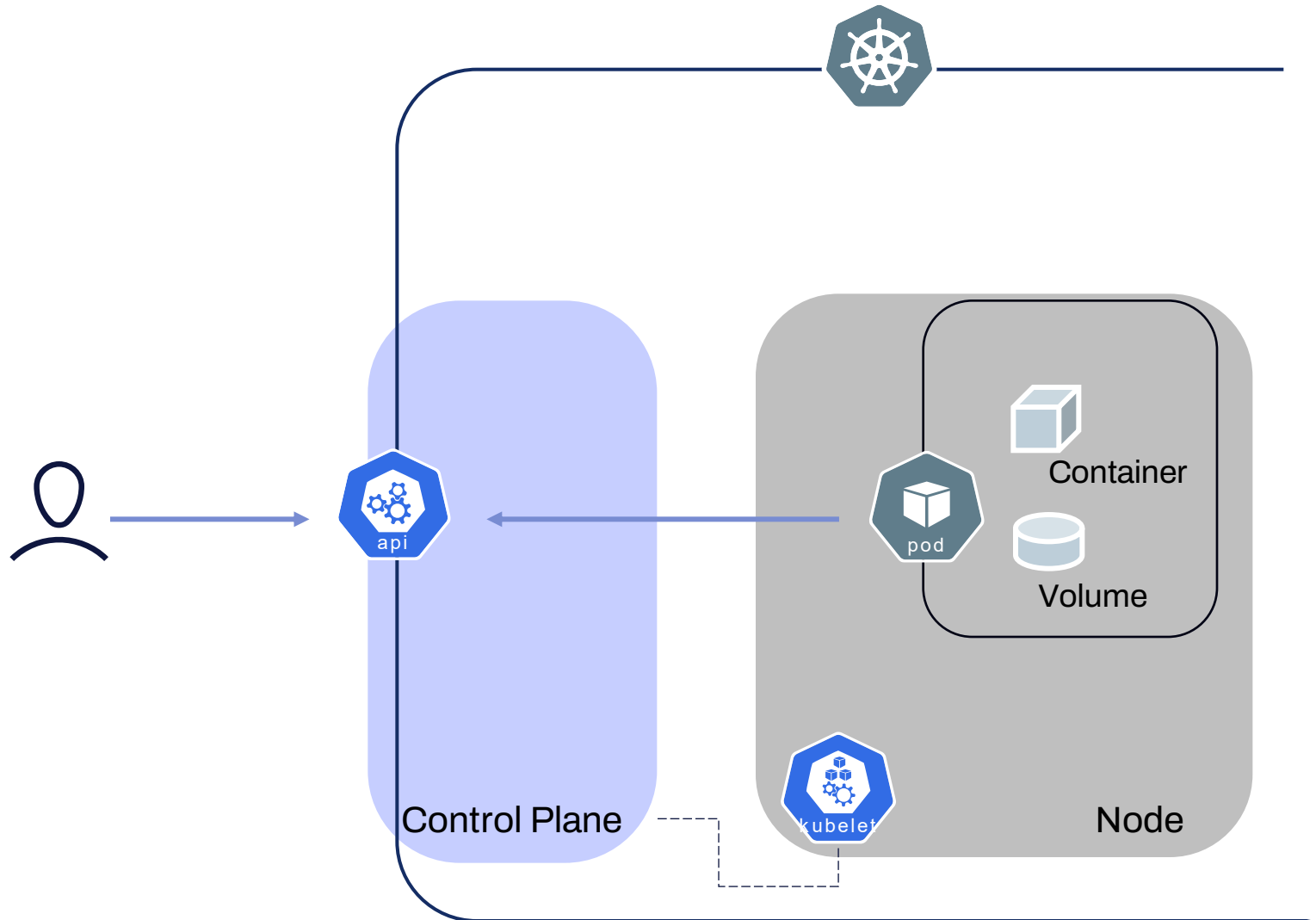
	Application Definition & Image Build	Database
App Definition and Development	 CNCF GRADUATED	 CNCF GRADUATED
	 CNCF INCUBATING	 CNCF GRADUATED
Orchestration & Management	 CNCF GRADUATED	 CNCF GRADUATED
	 CNCF GRADUATED	 CNCF GRADUATED
Service Proxy	 CNCF GRADUATED	 CNCF GRADUATED
	 CNCF GRADUATED	 CNCF GRADUATED
Cloud Native Storage	 CNCF GRADUATED	 CNCF GRADUATED
	 CNCF GRADUATED	 CNCF GRADUATED
Security & Compliance	 CNCF GRADUATED	 CNCF GRADUATED
	 CNCF GRADUATED	 CNCF GRADUATED

# Threat Modelling

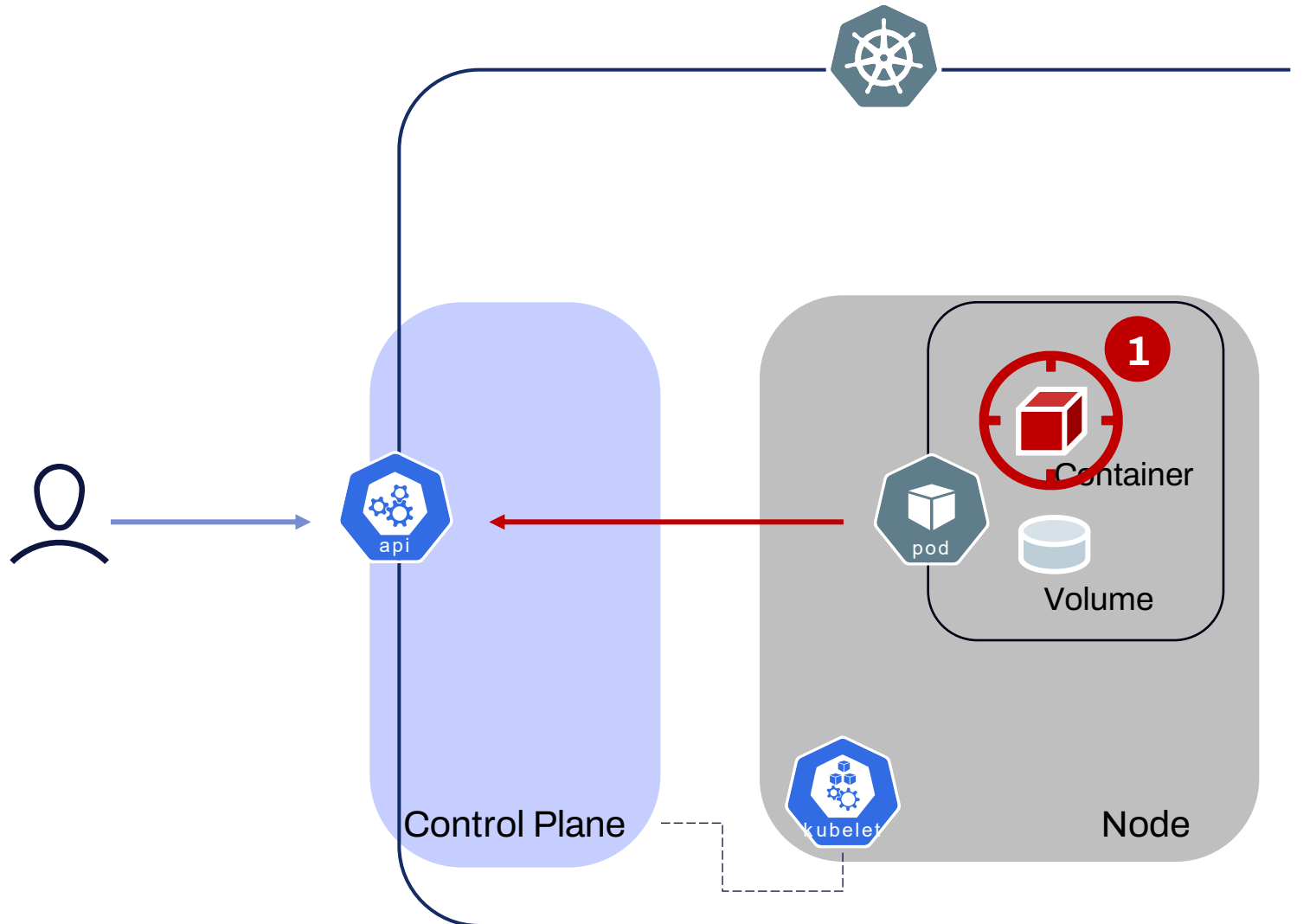
Kubernetes  
Attack Simulation

Kubernetes  
Attack Detection

# Attack Surfaces

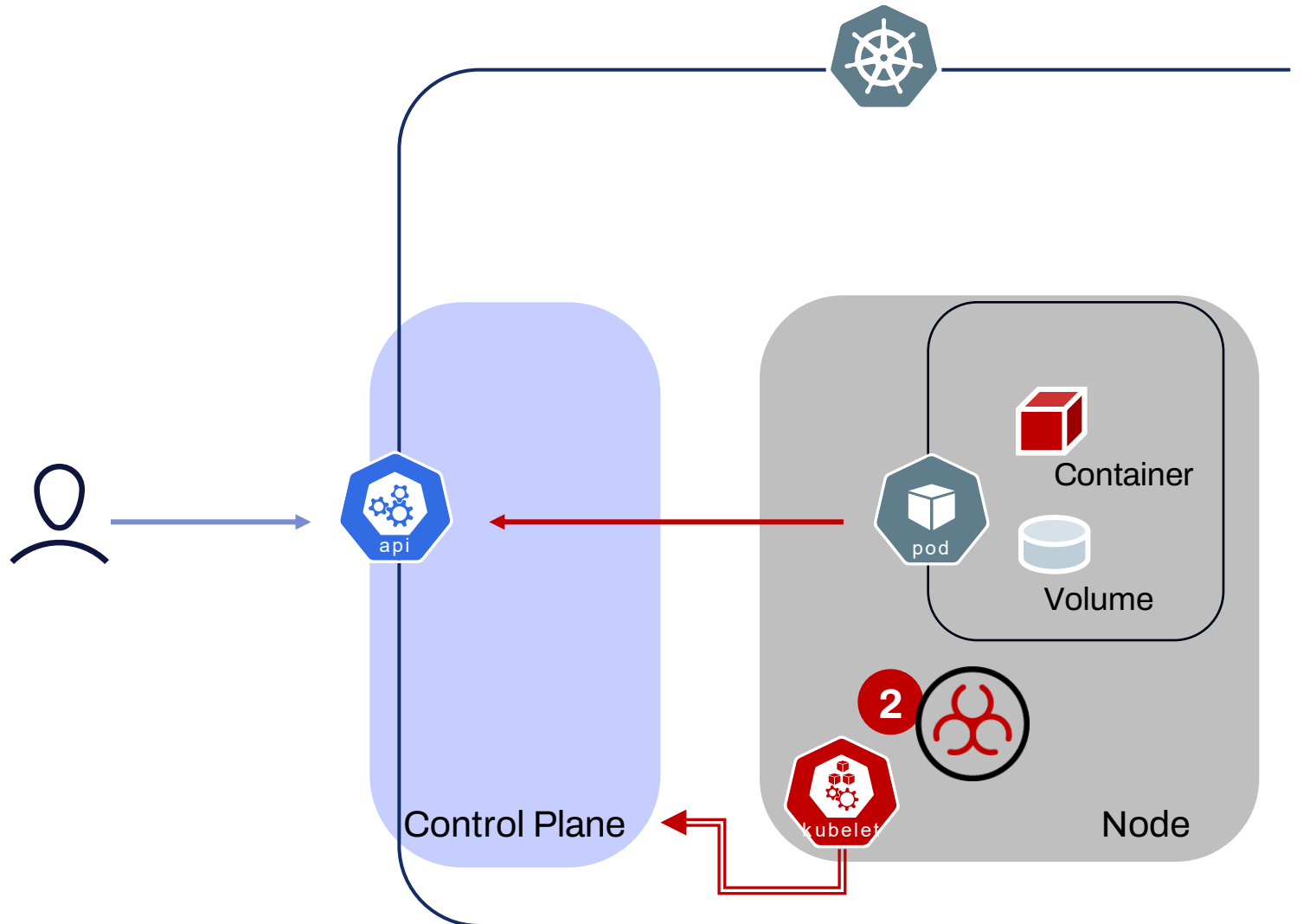


# Attack Surfaces

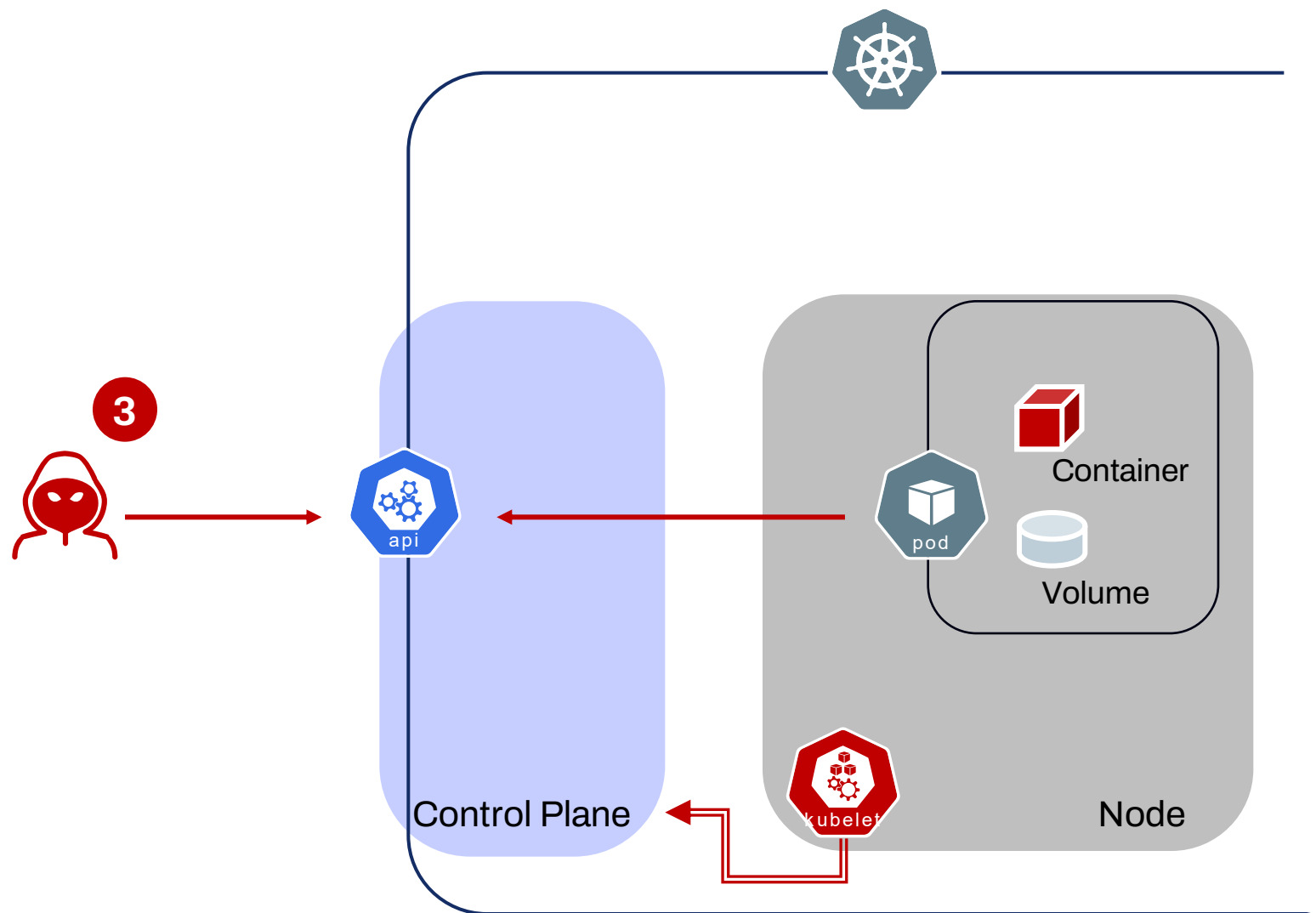




# Attack Surfaces



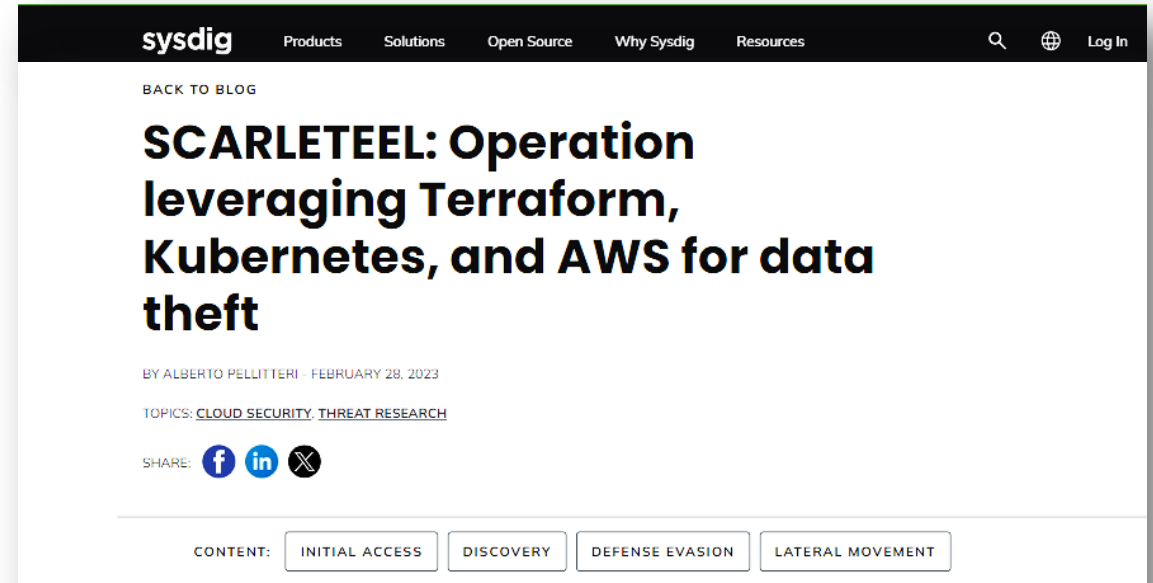
# Attack Surfaces



# Attacker Incentives

# Attacker Incentives

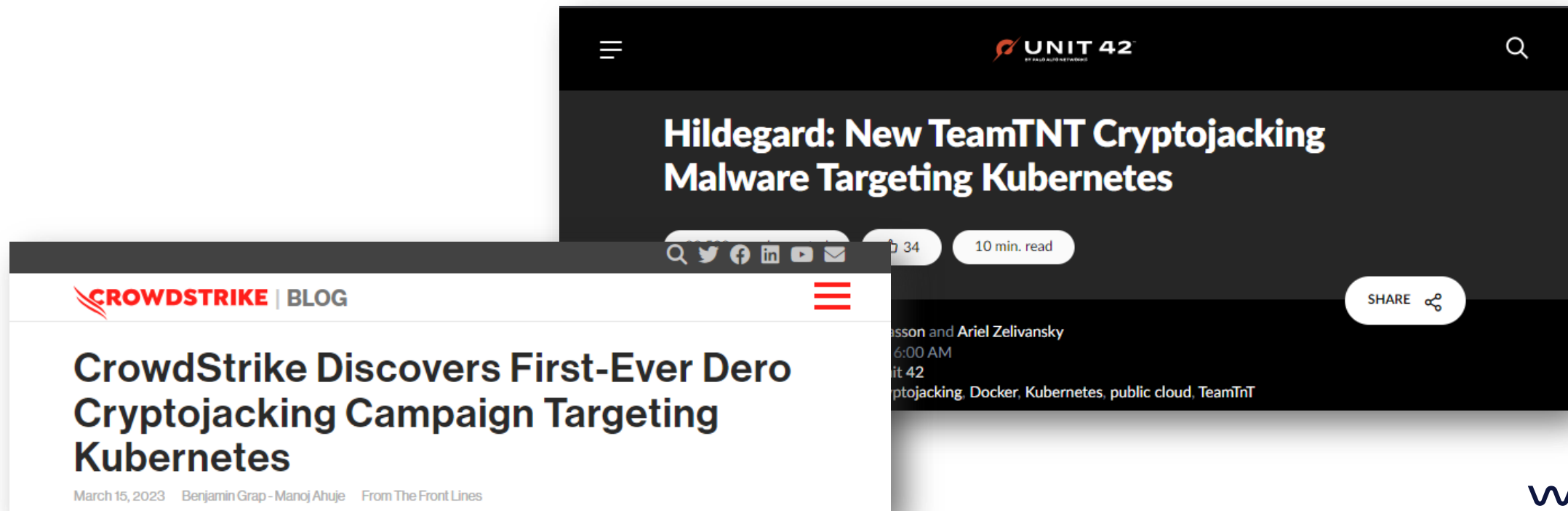
- Orchestration Platform = Application Infrastructure



knowledge of AWS cloud mechanics, such as Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2) roles, Lambda serverless functions, and Terraform. The end result wasn't just a typical cryptojacking attack. The attacker had other, more malicious motives: the theft of proprietary software.

# Attacker Incentives

- Orchestration Platform = Application Infrastructure
- Compute Resources = Hardware for Mining



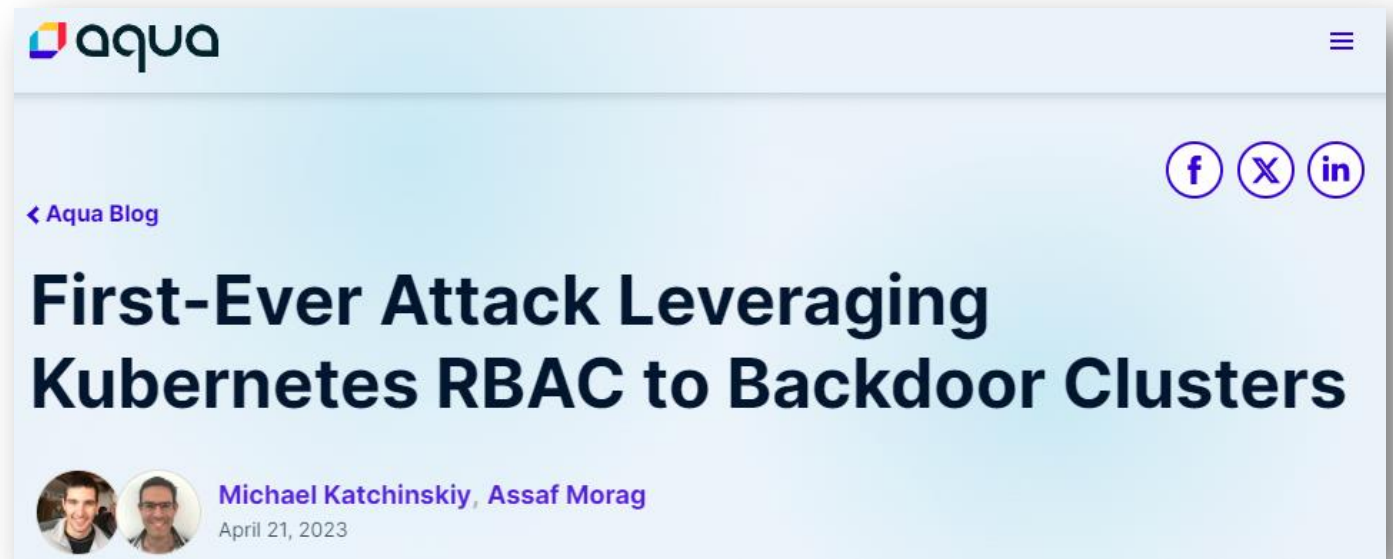
# Attacker Incentives

- Orchestration Platform = Application Infrastructure
- Compute Resources = Hardware for Mining
- Entrypoint to Cloud



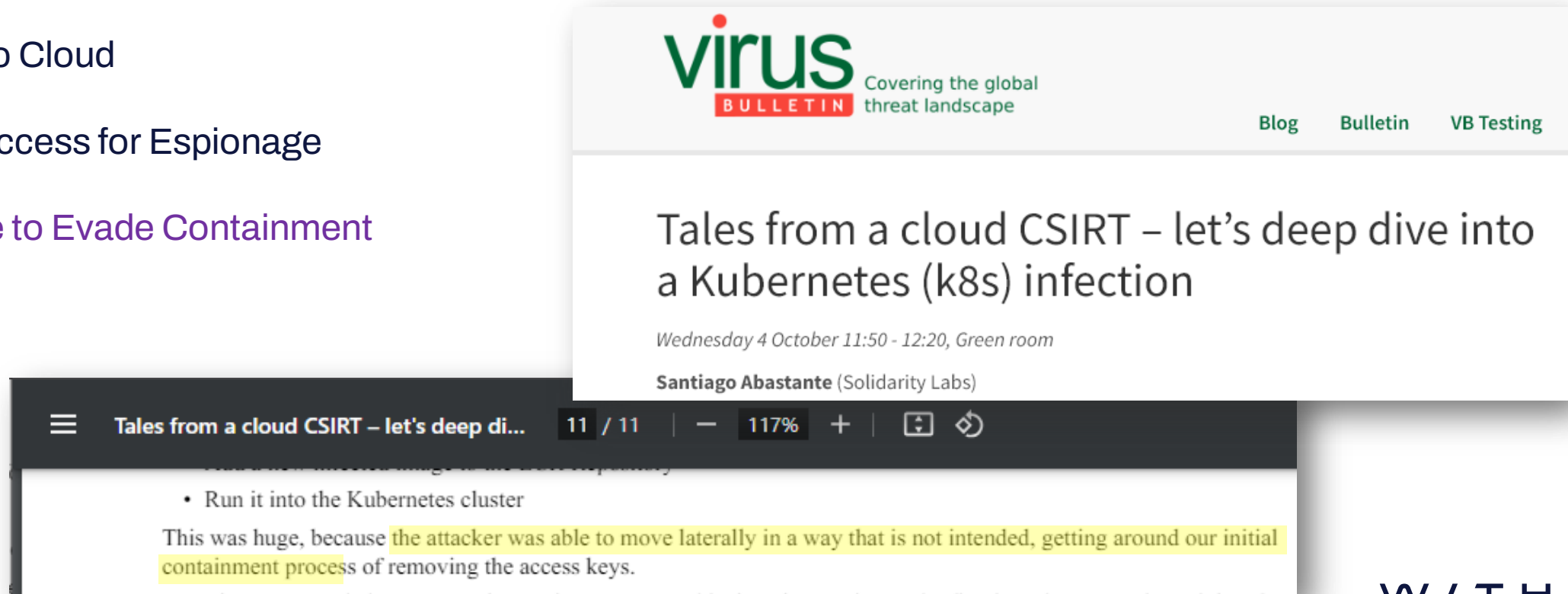
# Attacker Incentives

- Orchestration Platform = Application Infrastructure
- Compute Resources = Hardware for Mining
- Entrypoint to Cloud
- Persistent access for Espionage



# Attacker Incentives

- Orchestration Platform = Application Infrastructure
- Compute Resources = Hardware for Mining
- Entrypoint to Cloud
- Persistent access for Espionage
- Hiding place to Evade Containment





Threat Modelling

# Kubernetes Attack Simulation

Kubernetes  
Attack Detection

Demo

W / T H  
secure

# What is Purple Teaming?

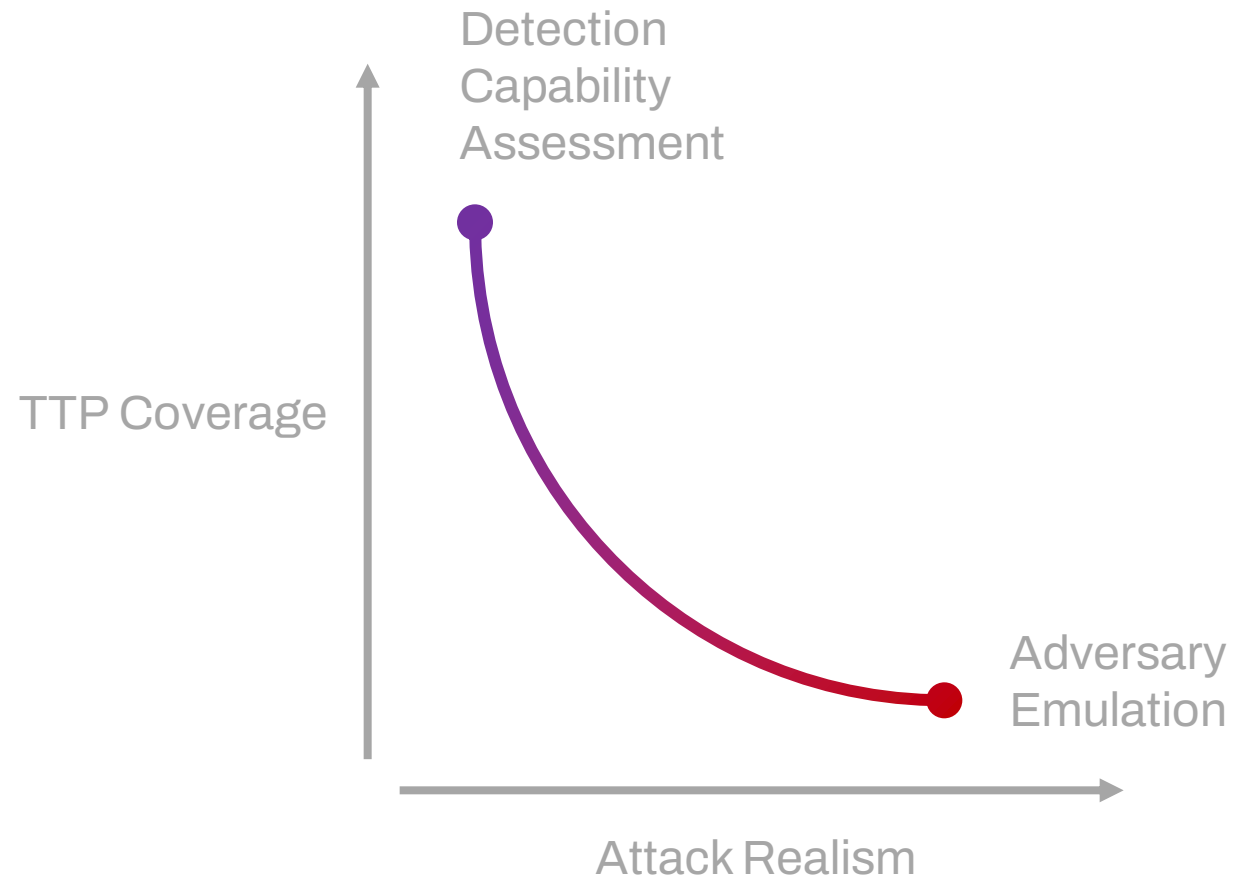
- Collaboration between Offense (**Red**) and Defense (**Blue**).
- Increase familiarity with or understanding of adversary TTP.
- Self-evaluation of existing security posture.
- Improving an organizations security posture or defenses.
  - Preventative Controls
  - Detective Controls
  - Response Procedures



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[Specter Ops | Purple Teaming \(Black Hat USA 2023 Booth Talk\)](#)

# Shades of Purple



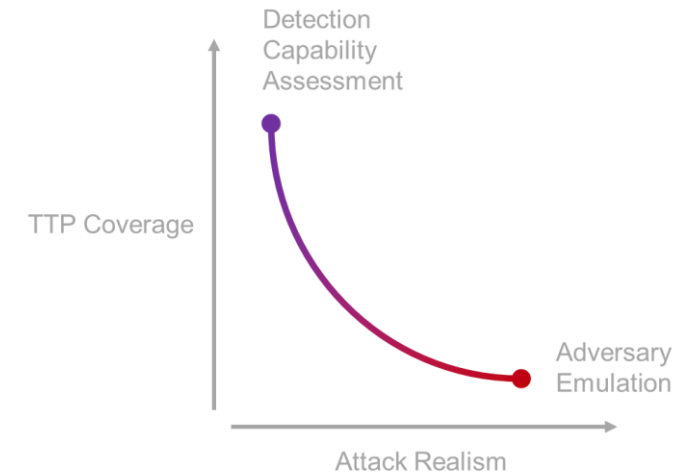
# Planning the Exercise

*TI-driven*

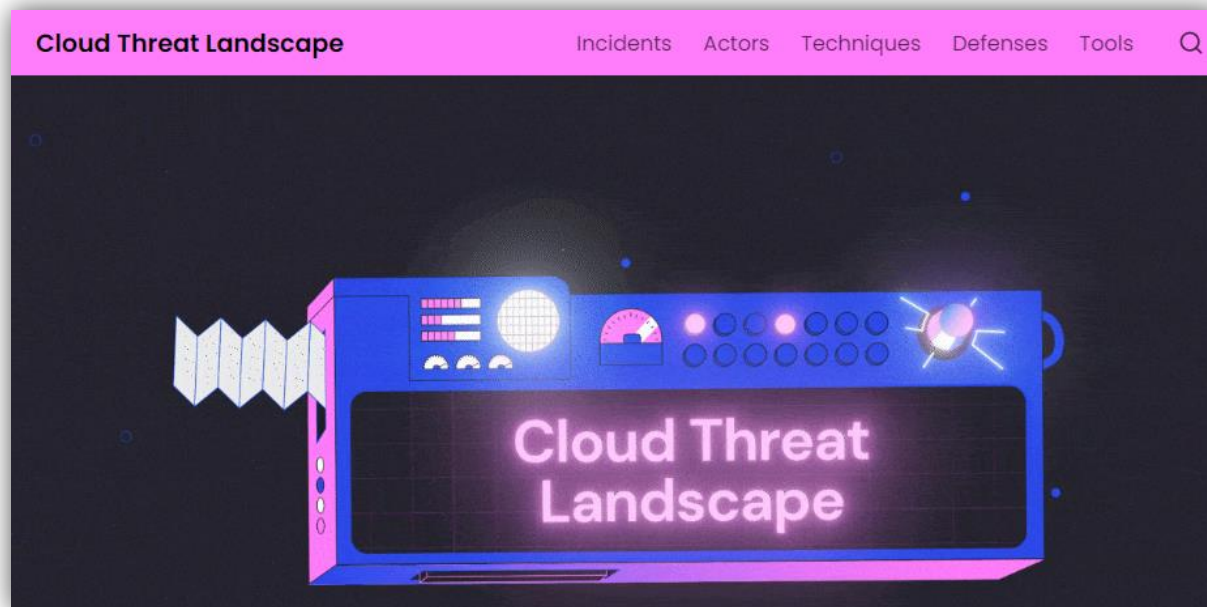


# Planning the Exercise

*TI-driven*

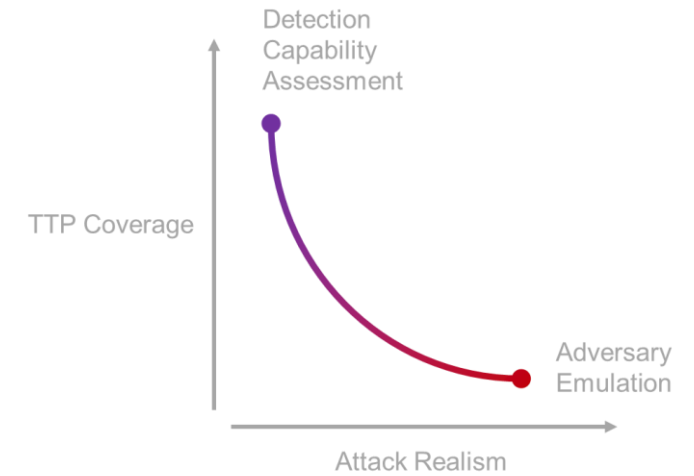


Select Campaign of interest



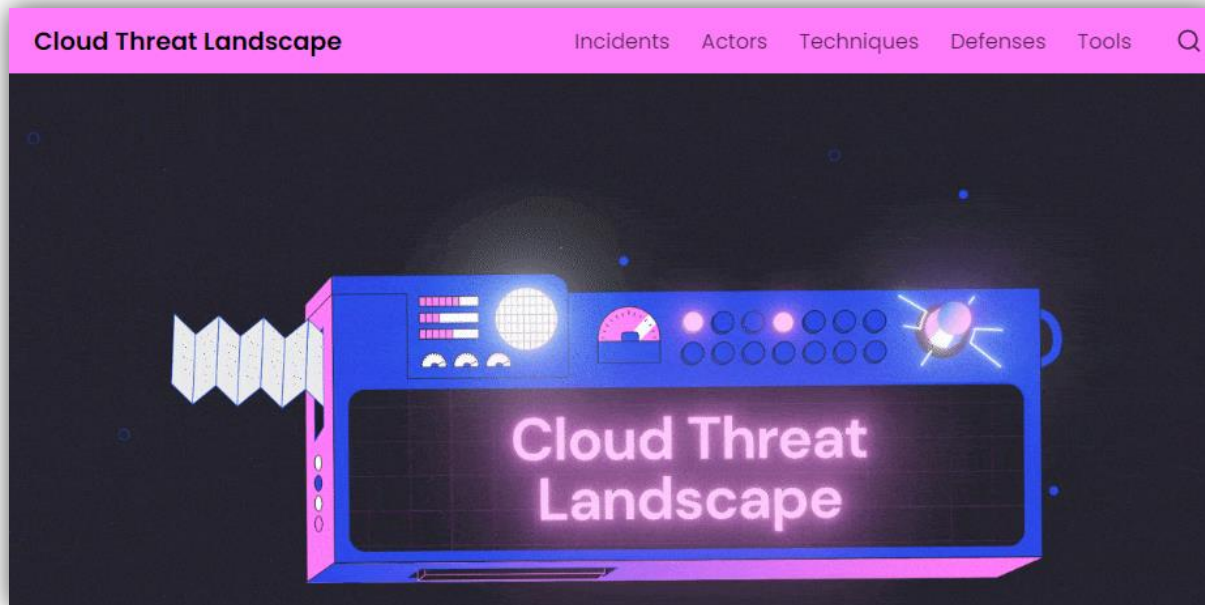
# Planning the Exercise

*TI-driven*



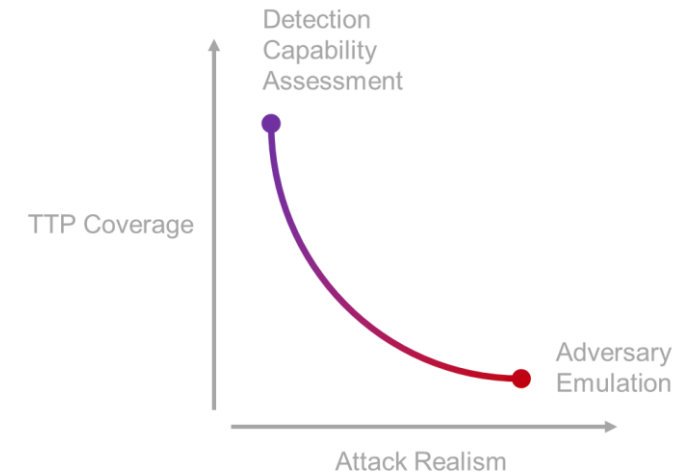
Select Campaign of interest

Gather Threat Intelligence



# Planning the Exercise

*TI-driven*



jupyter OF815 (autosaved) Logout

File Edit View Insert Cell Kernel Help Trusted Python 3 (ipykernel)

APT codename "OF815"

Simulation playbook for the fictitious threat actor "OF815" targeting Kubernetes clusters.

Running each cell will interact with a [Leonidas](#) instance deployed within the test cluster and listening on <http://leonidas-svc.cluster:5000>, to perform the TTP and fetch results back into the notebook.

Attack Chain

1. [Initial Access - Leaked Kubeconfig](#)
2. [Discovery - List Own Permissions](#)
3. [Discovery - Enumerate Namespaces, Deployments, Pods](#)
4. [Credential Access - List Secrets](#)
5. [Execution - Exec Into Pod](#)
6. [Impact - Remove Deployment](#)

APT "OF815"

Initial Access

Discovery

Cred. Access

Execution

Impact

Leaked Kubeconfig

List Secrets

Remove Deployment

Enumerate Cluster

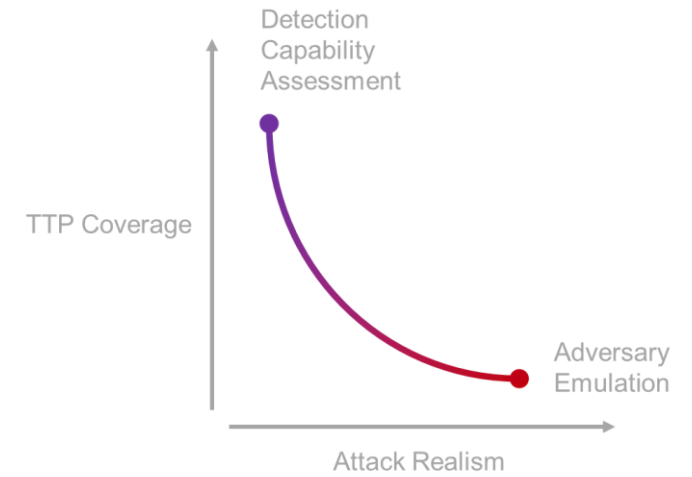
Exec Into Pod

Intelligence

Re-produce Attack Chain

# Planning the Exercise

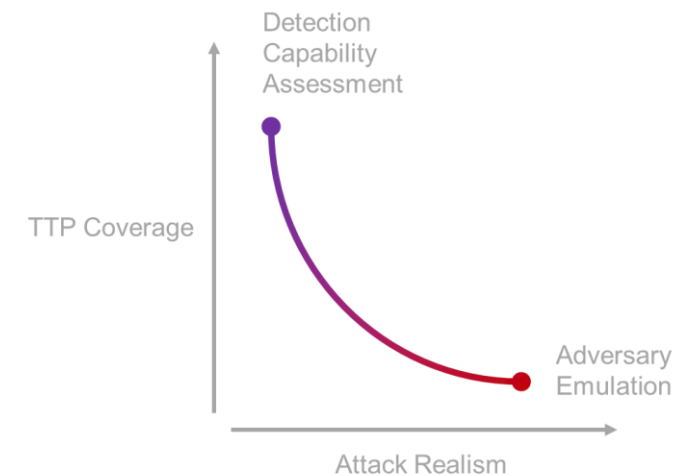
*Breadth-first*





# Planning the Exercise

## Breadth-first



Select TTPs

Microsoft

Threat Matrix for Kubernetes

Search

Tactics
Mitigations
About

Tactics

Initial Access

Execution

Persistence

Privilege Escalation

Defense Evasion

Credential Access

Discovery

Lateral Movement

Collection

Impact

Tactics

Initial Access	Execution	Persistence	Privilege Escalation	Defense Evasion	Credential Access	Discovery	Lateral Movement	Collection	Impact
Using cloud credentials	Exec into container	Backdoor container	Privileged container	Clear container logs	List K8S secrets	Access Kubernetes API server	Access cloud resources	Images from a private registry	Data destruction
Compromised image in registry	bash/cmd inside container	Writable hostPath mount	Cluster-admin binding	Delete K8S events	Mount service principal	Access Kubelet API	Container service account	Collecting data from pod	Resource hijacking
Kubeconfig file	New container	Kubernetes CronJob	hostPath mount	Pod / container name similarity	Container service account	Network mapping	Cluster internal networking		Denial of service
Application vulnerability	Application exploit (RCE)	Malicious admission controller	Access cloud resources	Connect from proxy server	Application credentials in configuration files	Exposed sensitive interfaces	Application credentials in configuration files		
Exposed sensitive interfaces	SSH server running inside container	Container service account			Access managed identity credentials	Instance Metadata API	Writable hostPath mount		
	Sidecar injection	Static pods			Malicious admission controller		CoreDNS poisoning		
							ARP poisoning and IP spoofing		



Kube-hunter hunts for security weaknesses in Kubernetes clusters

View the Project on GitHub  
aquasecurity/kube-hunter

Lookup Vulnerability

Vulnerability ID

Find

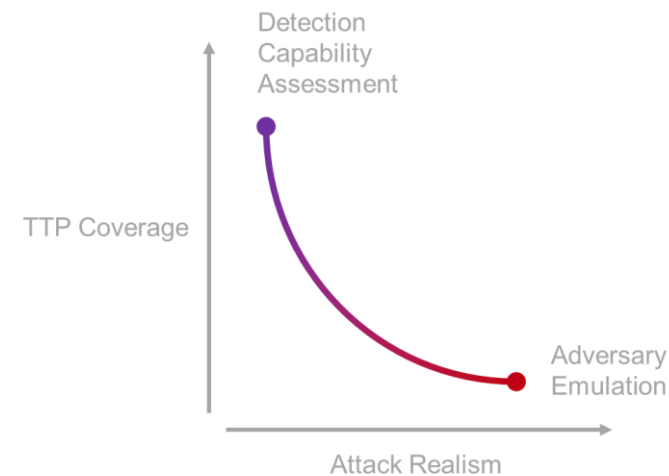
All vulnerabilities

## All articles

- KHV002 - Kubernetes version disclosure
- KHV003 - Azure Metadata Exposure
- KHV004 - Azure SPN Exposure
- KHV005 - Access to Kubernetes API
- KHV006 - Insecure (HTTP) access to Kubernetes API
- KHV007 - Specific Access to Kubernetes API
- KHV020 - Possible Arp Spoof
- KHV021 - Certificate Includes Email Address
- KHV022 - Critical Privilege Escalation CVE
- KHV023 - Denial of Service to Kubernetes API Server
- KHV024 - Possible Ping Flood Attack

# Planning the Exercise

*Breadth-first*



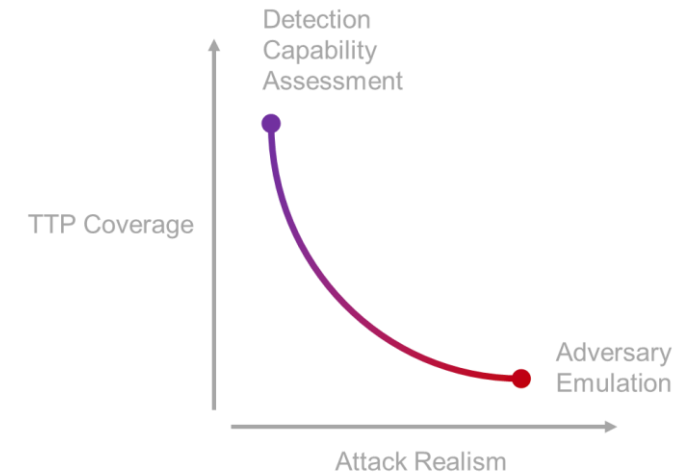
Select TTPs

Design Test Cases



# Planning the Exercise

*Breadth-first*



Select TTPs

Design Test Cases

Maintain, Expand, Repeat

```
On branch master
Your branch is ahead of 'origin/master' by 57 commits.
(use "git push" to publish your local commits)

Changes to be committed:
  (use "git restore --staged <file>..." to unstage)
    modified:   definitions/credential-access/access-secrets-api-server.yml
    modified:   definitions/credential-access/access-secrets-pod-filesystem.yml
    modified:   definitions/credential-access/app-creds-configmaps.yml
    modified:   definitions/credential-access/app-creds-env.yml
    modified:   definitions/defense-evasion/delete-kubernetes-events.yml
    modified:   definitions/defense-evasion/pod-name-similarity.yml
    modified:   definitions/discovery/enumerate-nodes.yml
    modified:   definitions/discovery/enumerate-pods.yml
    modified:   definitions/discovery/enumerate-rbac-permissions.yml
    modified:   definitions/execution/create-pod-public-image.yml
    modified:   definitions/execution/exec-into-container.yml
    modified:   definitions/execution/settofail.yml
    modified:   definitions/execution/sidecar-injection.yml
    modified:   definitions/impact/delete-pod.yml
    modified:   definitions/impact/delete-serviceaccount.yml
    modified:   definitions/persistence/create-serviceaccount.yml
```



# Execution

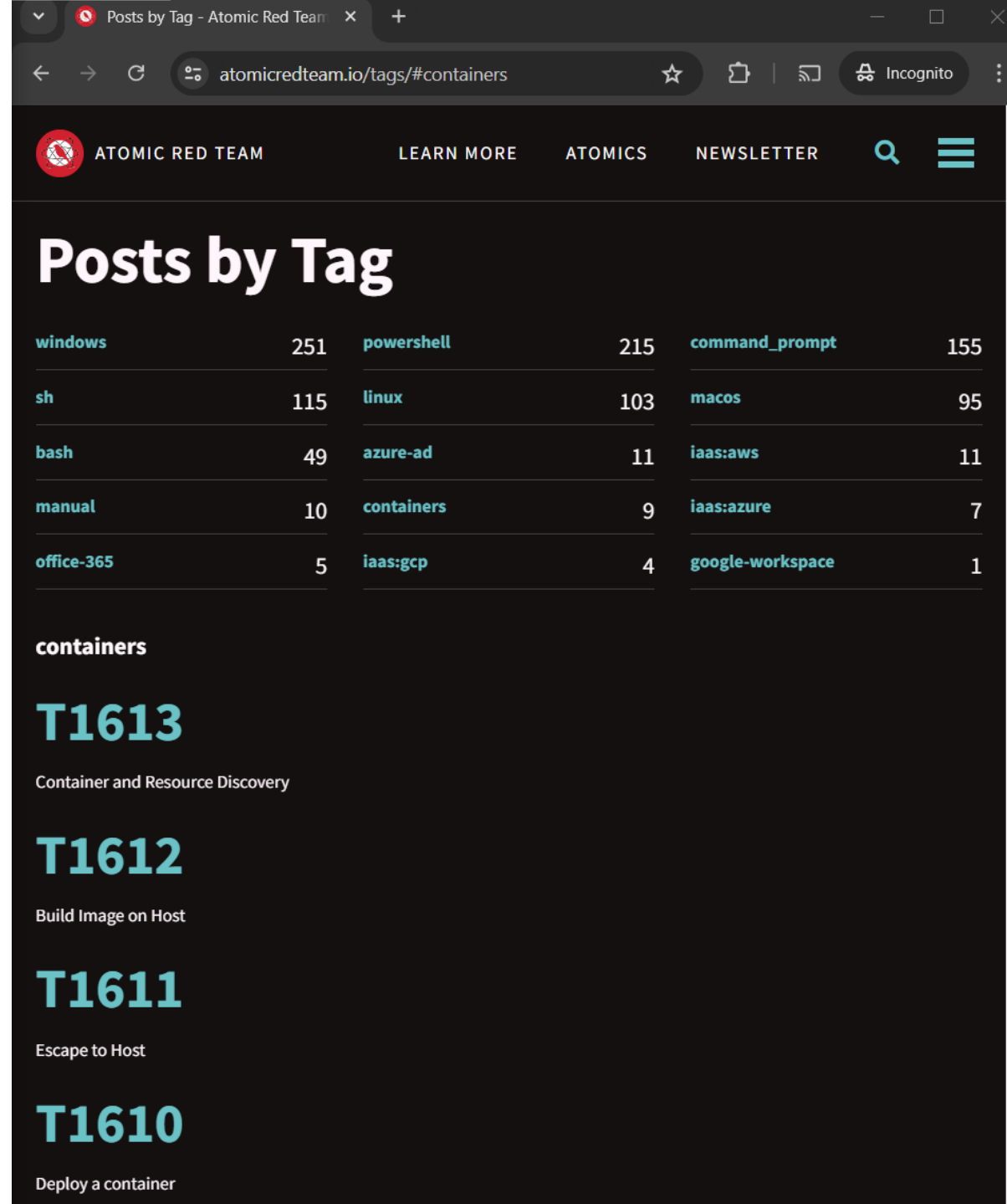
- K8S Attack Simulation Tools / Frameworks



# Execution

- K8S Attack Simulation Tools / Frameworks

## 1. Atomic Red Team



Posts by Tag - Atomic Red Team

atomicredteam.io/tags/#containers

ATOMIC RED TEAM LEARN MORE ATOMICS NEWSLETTER

## Posts by Tag

windows	251	powershell	215	command_prompt	155
sh	115	linux	103	macos	95
bash	49	azure-ad	11	iaas:aws	11
manual	10	containers	9	iaas:azure	7
office-365	5	iaas:gcp	4	google-workspace	1

### containers

#### T1613

Container and Resource Discovery

#### T1612

Build Image on Host

#### T1611

Escape to Host

#### T1610

Deploy a container

# Execution

- K8S Attack Simulation Tools / Frameworks

1. Atomic Red Team
2. Stratus Red Team

The screenshot shows a web browser with the URL `stratus-red-team.cloud/attack-techniques/kubernetes/`. The page has a purple header with the Stratus Red Team logo and navigation links: [STRATUS RED TEAM](#), [USER GUIDE](#), and [ATTACK TECHNIQUES REFERENCE](#). The main content area is dark grey and features a sidebar on the left with a list of attack techniques under the 'Kubernetes' category. The 'Kubernetes' category is highlighted in purple. The main content area on the right contains the title 'Kubernetes' and a description: 'This page contains the Stratus attack techniques...'. Below this, there are two sections: 'Credential Access' and 'Persistence', each with a list of attack techniques. The 'Credential Access' section lists 'Dump All Secrets' and 'Steal Pod Service Account Token'. The 'Persistence' section lists 'Create Admin ClusterRole', 'Create Client Certificate Credential', and 'Create Long-Lived Token'.

**Attack Techniques Reference**  
List of all Attack Techniques  
Philosophy  
Supported Platforms  
Attack techniques ▾  
    AWS >  
    GCP >  
    Azure >  
    Kubernetes ▾  
        Dump All Secrets  
        Steal Pod Service Account Token  
        Create Admin ClusterRole  
        Create Client Certificate Credential  
        Create Long-Lived Token  
        Container breakout via hostPath volume mount  
        Privilege escalation through node/proxy permissions  
        Run a Privileged Pod

## Kubernetes

This page contains the Stratus attack techniques...  
Tactic. Note that some Stratus attack techniques...  
Tactic.

### Credential Access

- [Dump All Secrets](#)
- [Steal Pod Service Account Token](#)

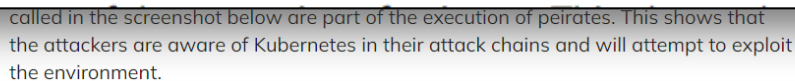
### Persistence

- [Create Admin ClusterRole](#)
- [Create Client Certificate Credential](#)
- [Create Long-Lived Token](#)



- K8S Attack Simulation Tools/ Frameworks

- including targeting Kubernetes. In particular, they also leveraged peirates, a tool to further exploit Kubernetes. The “get secrets”, “get pods” and “get namespaces” APIs



```

==IIIIIII.. ..IIIIIII..
.IIIIII..+++++++...+IIIIIII..
.IIIIII..+++++++...~IIIIIII..
.IIIIII..+++++:+++++=..IIIII..
.IIIIII..+. . . .+. +++.+.+. IIII..
.+IIII..+. . . ++++.+.+. . IIIII..
.IIIIII..+++++++...IIIII..
.IIIIII..+++++++...IIII7..
.IIIIII..+++++++...?IIIII..
.IIIIII.. .... IIIII?
.IIIIII.. .... IIIII.
.IIIIII..?IIIIIIIIIIIIII?..
.....?IIIIIIIIIIII..
.....
.....
.....
.....

Peirates v1.1.22 by InGuardians and Peirates Open Source Developers
https://www.inguardians.com/peirates

[+] IP address for eth0 : 192.168.117.147
[+] Cloud provider metadata API : -- Public Cloud Provider not detected --

Namespaces, Service Accounts and Roles |
+-----+
[1] List, maintain, or switch service account contexts [sa-menu] (try: list-sa *, switch-sa)
[2] List and/or change namespaces [ns-menu] (try: list-ns, switch-ns, get-ns)
[3] Get list of pods in current namespace [list-pods, get-pods]
[4] Get complete info on all pods (json) [dump-pod-info]
[5] Check all pods for volume mounts [find-volume-mounts]
[6] Enter AWS IAM credentials manually [enter-aws-credentials]
[7] Attempt to Assume a Different AWS Role [aws-assume-role]
[8] Deactivate assumed AWS role [aws-empty-assumed-role]
[9] Switch certificate-based authentication (kubelet or manually-entered) [cert-menu]

Steal Service Accounts |
+-----+
[10] List secrets in this namespace from API server [list-secrets, get-secrets]
[11] Get a service account token from a secret [secret-to-sa]
[12] Request IAM credentials from AWS Metadata API [get-aws-token] *
[13] Request IAM credentials from GCP Metadata API [get-gcp-token] *
[14] Request kube-env from GCP Metadata API [attack-kube-env-gcp]
[15] Pull Kubernetes service account tokens from kops' GCS bucket (Google Cloud only) [atta
[16] Pull Kubernetes service account tokens from kops' S3 bucket (AWS only) [attack-kops-aw

Interrogate/Abuse Cloud API's |
+-----+
[17] List AWS S3 Buckets accessible (Make sure to get credentials via get-aws-token or ente
[18] List contents of an AWS S3 Bucket (Make sure to get credentials via get-aws-token or e

Compromise |
+-----+
[20] Gain a reverse rootshell on a node by launching a hostPath-mounting pod [attack-pod-ho
[21] Run command in one or all pods in this namespace via the API Server [exec-via-api]
[22] Run a token-dumping command in all pods via Kubelets (authorization permitting) [exec-
[23] Use CVE-2024-21626 (Leaky Vessels) to get a shell on the host (runc versions <1.12) [l

Node Attacks |
+-----+
[30] Steal secrets from the node filesystem [nodefs-steal-secrets]

Off-Menu |
+-----+
[90] Run a kubectrl command using the current authorization context [kubectrl [arguments]]
[ ] Run a kubectrl command using EVERY authorization context until one works [kubectrl-try-all
[ ] Run a kubectrl command using EVERY authorization context [kubectrl-try-all [arguments]]
[91] Make an HTTP request (GET or POST) to a user-specified URL [curl]
[92] Deactivate "auth can-i" checking before attempting actions [set-auth-can-i]
[93] Run a simple all-ports TCP port scan against an IP address [tcpscan]
[94] Enumerate services via DNS [enumerate-dns] *
[ ] Run a shell command [shell <command and arguments>]

[short] Reduce the set of visible commands in this menu
[ outfile ] Write all kubectrl output to a file **ALPHA** [outfile [filename]]

[exit] Exit Peirates

=====
Peirates:># »

```

# Execution

- K8S Attack Simulation Tools / Frameworks
  1. Atomic Red Team
  2. Stratus Red Team
  3. Peirates
  4. Leonidas for K8S

The screenshot shows the Leonidas 1.0 API interface in a web browser. The browser's address bar shows the URL `cp.corpaws-cluster:5000`. The page title is "Leonidas 1.0" with a subtitle "[ Base URL: / ]" and a link to `/swagger.json`. Below the title, a description reads: "An API for executing attacker actions within cloud environments". The interface is organized into sections, each with a title and a description, and a list of API endpoints. The sections are: 

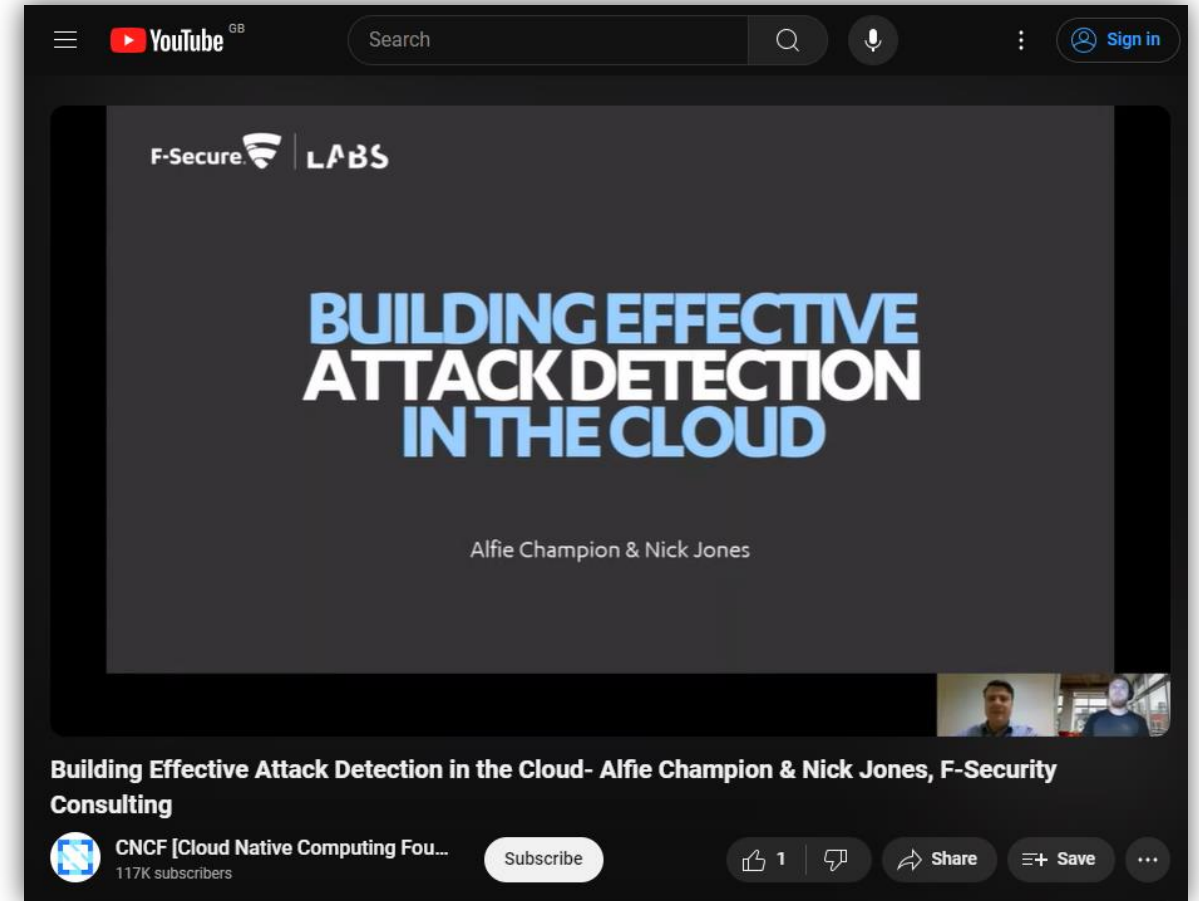
- credential\_access** (Credential Access): No endpoints listed.
- defense\_evasion** (Defense Evasion): No endpoints listed.
- execution** (Execution): No endpoints listed.
- privilege\_escalation** (Privilege Escalation):
  - PUT** `/privilege_escalation/privileged_container`: Create a privileged container.
  - PUT** `/privilege_escalation/writeable_hostpath_mount`: Create a container with a writeable hostPath mount.
- persistence** (Persistence):
  - POST** `/persistence/create_service_account`: Create a Kubernetes service account.
- impact** (Impact): No endpoints listed.
- discovery** (Discovery):
  - GET** `/discovery/enumerate_nodes`: Enumerate nodes within a cluster.
  - GET** `/discovery/enumerate_pods`: Enumerate pods within a namespace.
  - GET** `/discovery/list_own_permissions`: List the RBAC permissions assigned to the current entity.



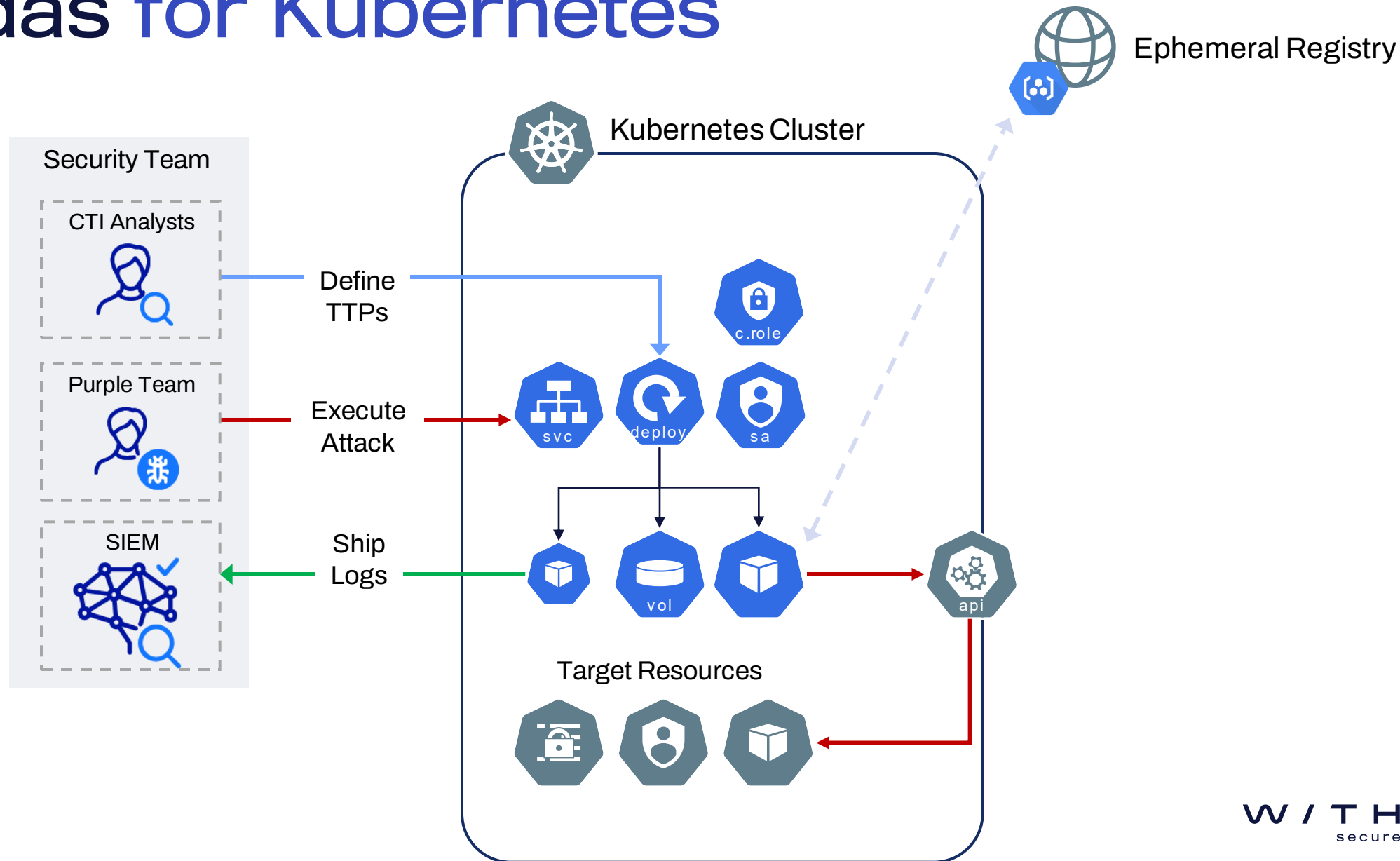
# Leonidas

<https://github.com/WithSecureLabs/leonidas>

- Extensible
- Easy to write attack test cases
- Attacks- & Detections-as-Code
- Permission management
- REST API / Scripting-friendly



# Leonidas for Kubernetes



# Leonidas for Kubernetes

Initial Access	Execution	Persistence	Privilege Escalation	Defense Evasion	Credential Access	Discovery	Lateral Movement	Collection	Impact
Cloud Credentials	Exec into container	Backdoor Container	Privileged container	Clear container logs	List K8S secrets	Access the K8S API server	Access cloud resources	Image from private registry	Data Destruction
Compromised image in registry	bash/cmd inside container	Writeable hostPath mount	Cluster-admin binding	Delete K8S events	Mount service principal	Access Kubelet API	Container service account	Collect data from pod	Resource Hijacking
Kubeconfig file	New container	Kubernetes CronJob	Hostpath mount	Pod / container name similarity	Access container service account	Network mapping	Cluster internal networking		Denial of service
Application Vulnerability	Application Exploit (RCE)	Malicious admission controller	Access cloud resources	Connect from proxy server	Application credentials in configuration files	Access Kubernetes dashboard	Application credentials in configuration files		
Exposed Dashboard	SSH server running inside container	Container service account				Instance Metadata API	Writeable volume mounts on the host		
	Sidecar Injection	Static pods					Access dashboard		
							Access tiller endpoint		
							CoreDNS poisoning		
							ARP poisoning and IP spoofing		

kubectl delete events

find /var/run/secrets/

kubectl -f /tmp/custom.yml apply

Threat Modelling

Kubernetes  
Attack Simulation

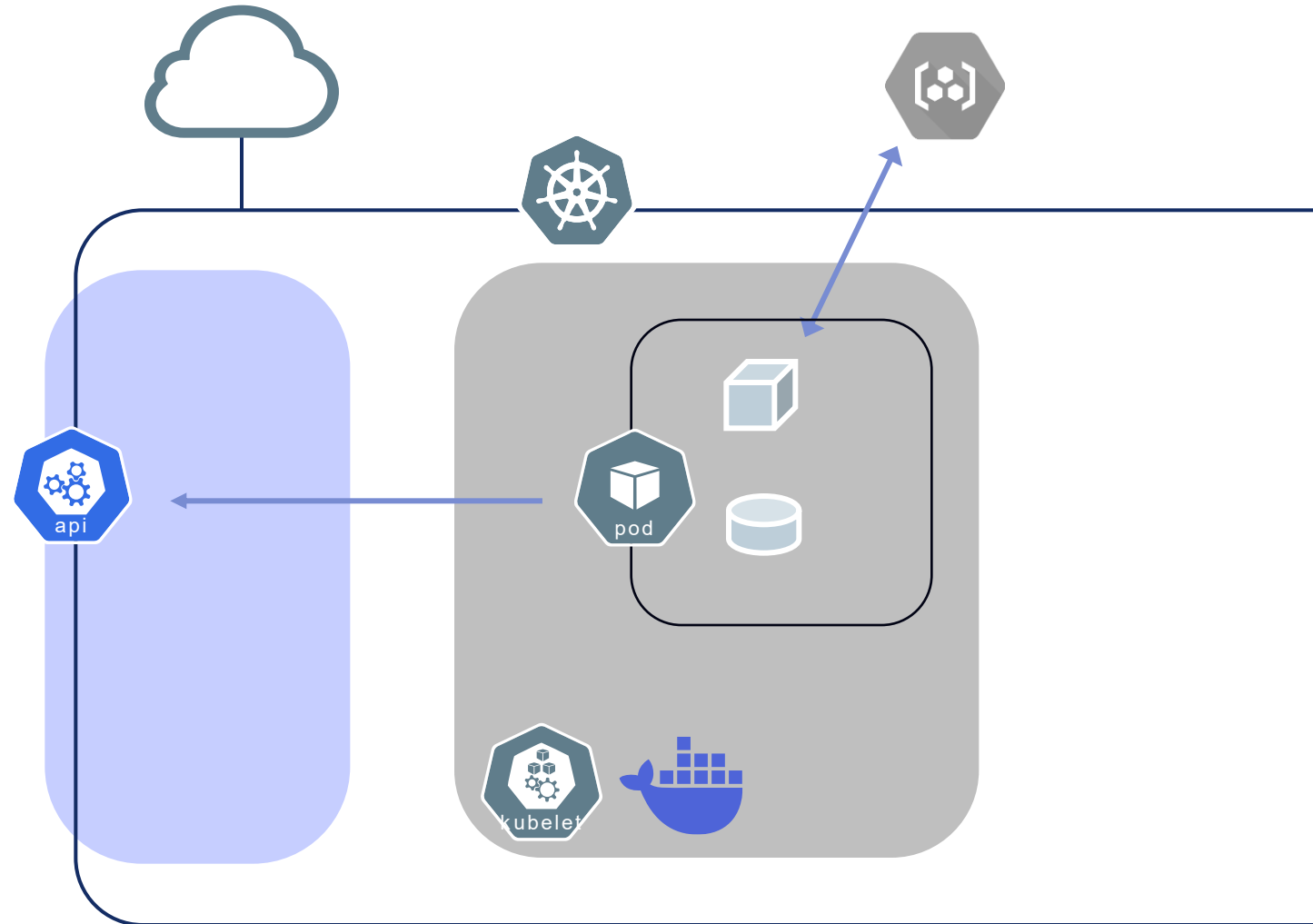
# Kubernetes Attack Detection

Demo



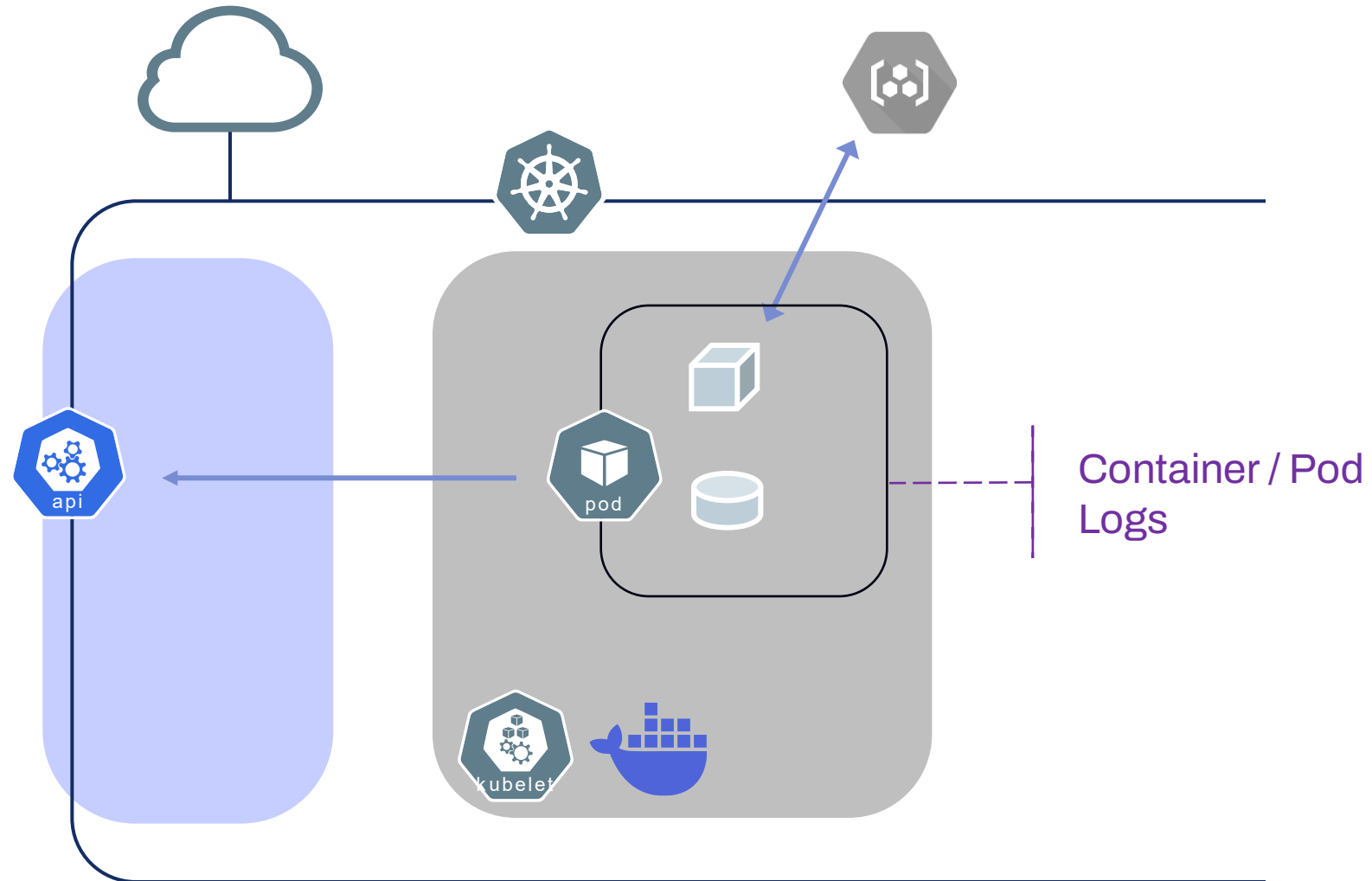
# Log Sources

<https://kubernetes.io/docs/concepts/cluster-administration/logging/>



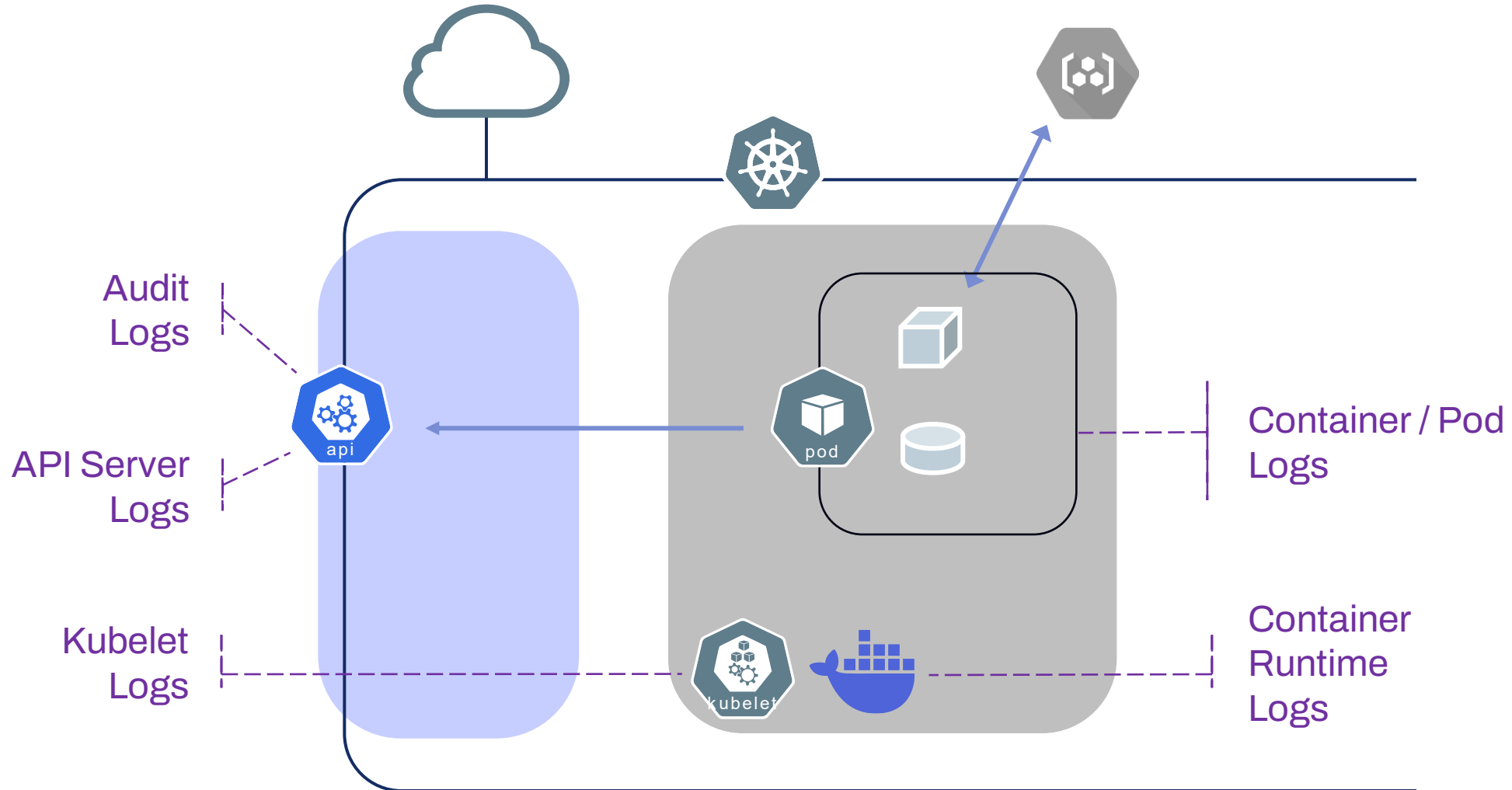
# Log Sources

<https://kubernetes.io/docs/concepts/cluster-administration/logging/>



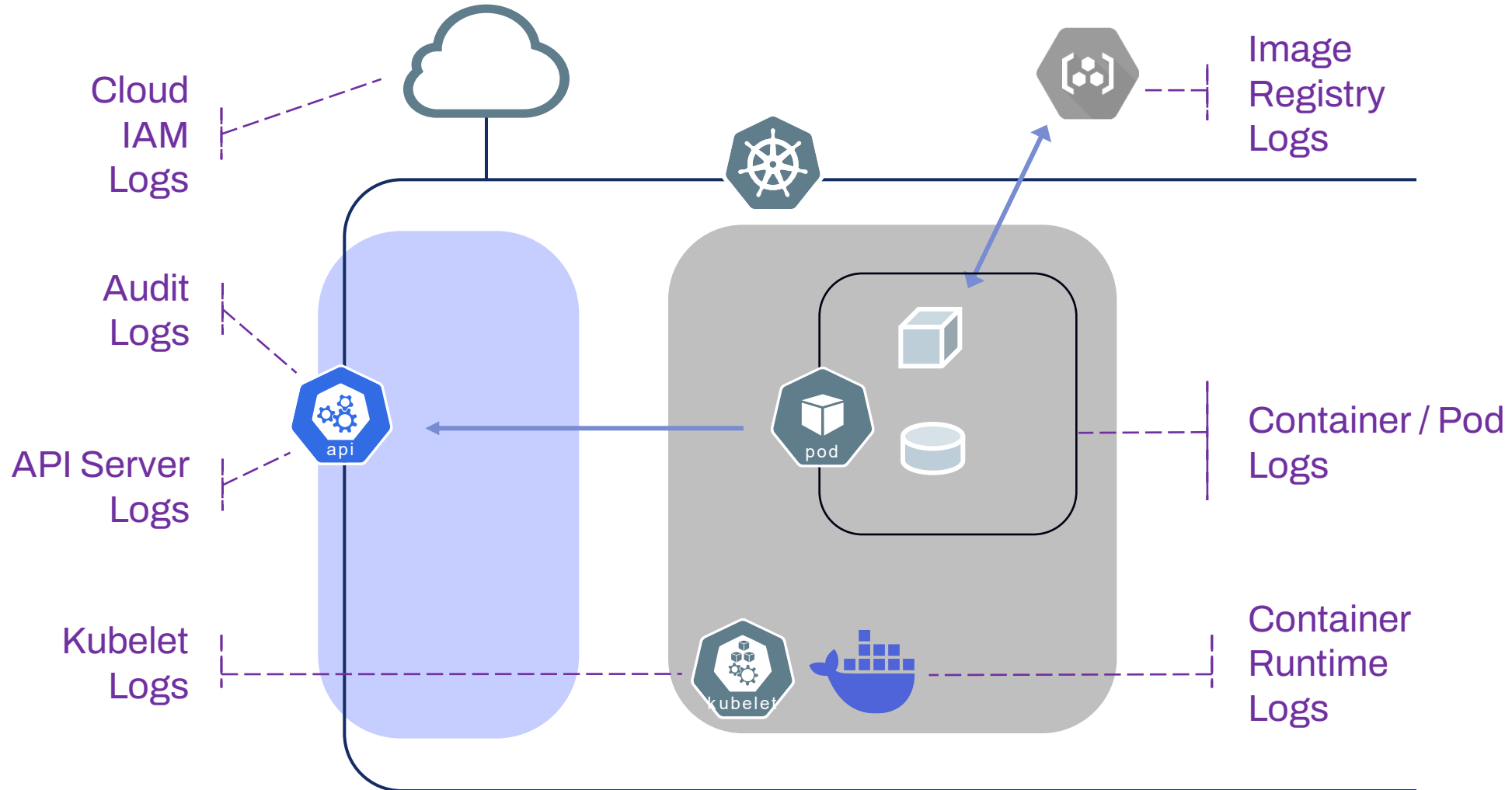
# Log Sources

<https://kubernetes.io/docs/concepts/cluster-administration/logging/>



# Log Sources

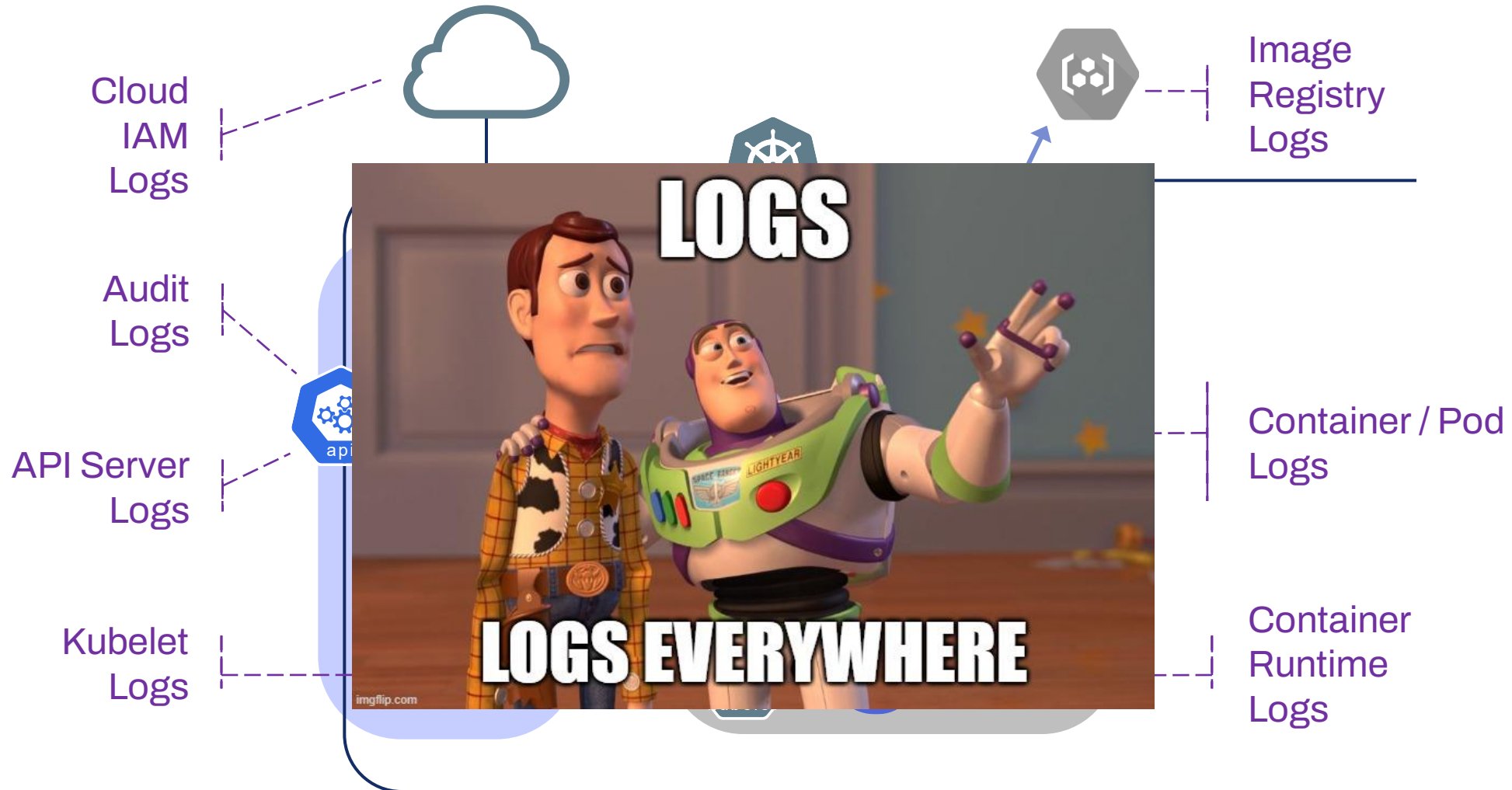
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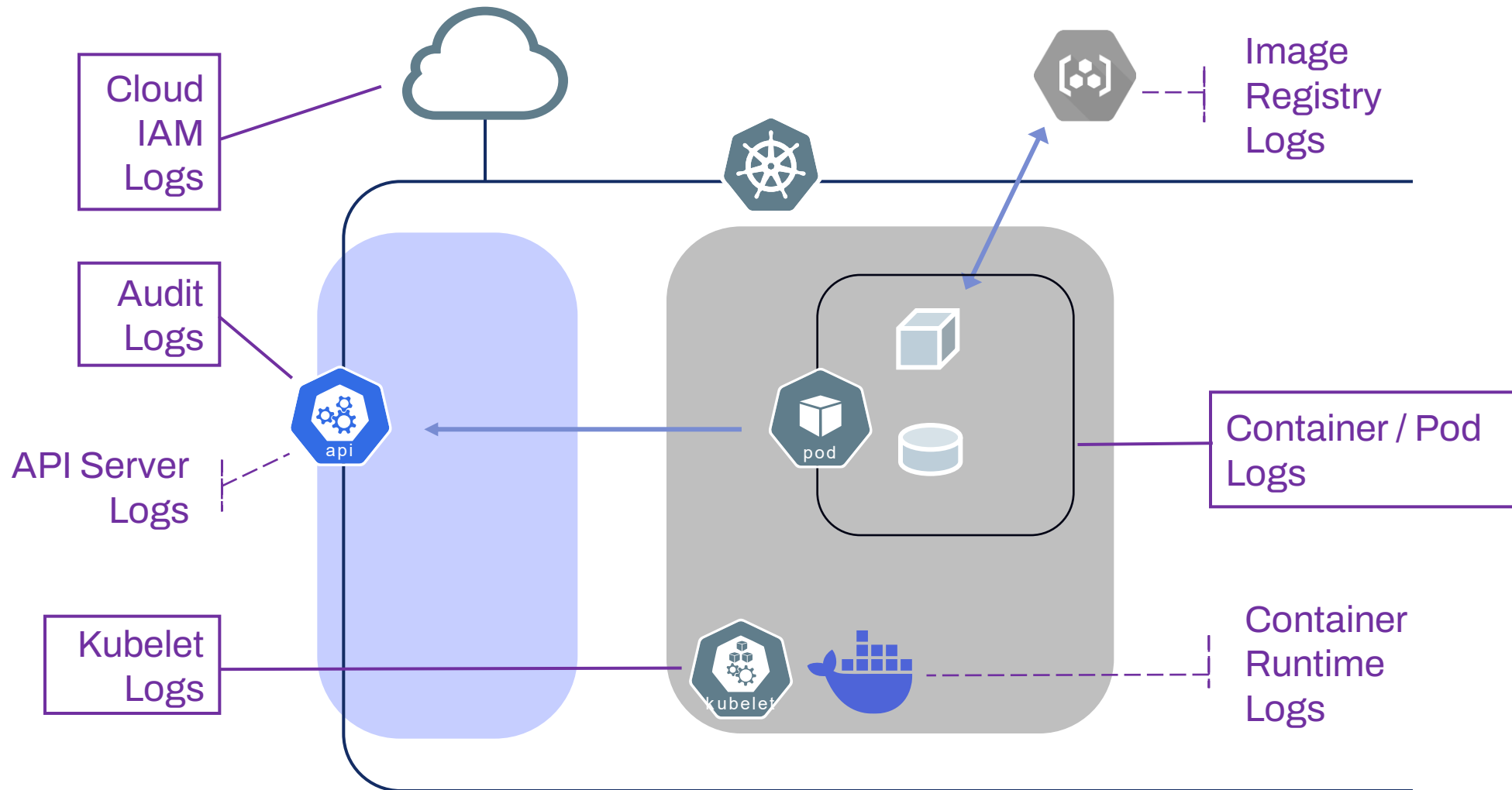


# Log Sources

<https://kubernetes.io/docs/concepts/cluster-administration/logging/>



# Security-relevant Logs



# K8S Audit Logs

- “Access Logs” of API Server
- *Not enabled by default*
- *There are ways to evade them*

when

what

who

where from

result

```
{
  "kind": "Event",
  "apiVersion": "audit.k8s.io/v1",
  "level": "RequestResponse",
  "requestReceivedTimestamp": "2024-06-21T09:40:53.077026Z",
  "auditID": "e3702320-1fd9-4d8e-8318-e3c881e1c266",
  "stage": "ResponseComplete",
  "verb": "create",
  "requestURI": "/api/v1/namespaces/kube-system/pods",
  "user": {
    "username": "system:node:cp",
    "groups": [
      "system:nodes",
      "system:authenticated"
    ]
  },
  "sourceIPs": [ "172.31.17.236" ],
  "userAgent": "kubelet/v1.30.0 (linux/amd64)
kubernetes/7c48c2b",
  "objectRef": {
    "resource": "pods",
    "namespace": "kube-system",
    "name": "kube-apiserver-cp",
    "apiVersion": "v1"
  },
  "responseStatus": {
    "metadata": {},
    "code": 201
  },
  "requestObject": {
    "kind": "Pod",
    "apiVersion": "v1",
    "metadata": { ... },
    "spec": {
      "volumes": [ ... ],
      "containers": [ ... ],
      ...
    }
  },
  "responseObject": { ... },
}
```

# K8S Audit Logs

- Audit Policy YAML
- Configurable **Verbosity** level - per Event
  1. None
  2. Metadata
  3. Request
  4. RequestResponse
- File / Webhook **Backend**
  - Agents like Filebeat can then pipe them into the SIEM
- Caveat: *Not customizable in managed clusters!*

```
apiVersion: audit.k8s.io/v1
kind: Policy
rules:
  # Don't log these read-only URLs
  - level: None
    nonResourceURLs:
      - /healthz*
      - /version
      - /swagger*

  # Secrets, ConfigMaps, TokenRequest and TokenReviews
  # can contain sensitive & binary data,
  - level: Request
    resources:
      - group: ""
        resources: ["secrets", "configmaps",
"serviceaccounts/token"]
      - group: authentication.k8s.io
        resources: ["tokenreviews"]
    omitStages:
      - "RequestReceived"

...

  # Default level for all other requests.
  - level: Metadata
    omitStages:
      - "RequestReceived"
```

# K8S Detection Engineering: Control Plane



```
title: Kubernetes Secrets Enumeration
description: Detects enumeration of Kubernetes secrets.
tags:
  - attack.t1552.007
logsource:
  category: application
  product: kubernetes
  service: audit
detection:
  level: low
  condition: selection
  selection:
    verb: 'list'
    objectRef.resource: 'secrets'
```

The screenshot shows a GitHub pull request for the repository `SigmaHQ/sigma`. The pull request is titled "Authored native Kubernetes Detections #4694" and is in a "Merged" state. It was merged by `nasbench` into the `SigmaHQ:master` branch from the `LAripping:kubernetes-cpattacks` branch on March 26. The pull request has 11 conversations, 6 commits, 12 checks, and 11 files changed. A comment from `LAripping` dated January 25 is visible, noting it was edited by `nasbench`. The summary of the pull request states: "This PR introduces a set of rules that detect well-documented Kubernetes control-plane attacks, using the raw Audit logs as a new logsource."

# K8S Detection Engineering: Kernel Level



```
- rule: Netcat Remote Code Execution in Container
```

```
desc: >
```

Netcat Program runs inside container that allows remote code execution and may be utilized as a part of a variety of reverse shell payloads

<https://github.com/swisskyrepo/PayloadsAllTheThings/>.

```
condition: >
```

```
spawned_process  
and container  
and ((proc.name = "nc" and (proc.cmdline contains " -e")))
```

```
priority: WARNING
```

```
tags: [T1059, mitre_execution, container, network, process]
```

The screenshot shows the Falcosecurity UI with two events listed. The top event is a 'Warning' triggered by a 'syscall' (w1) at 2024/07/02 03:36:02:124. The description is 'Read sensitive file untrusted'. The event details show a process named 'cat' running inside a container named 'net-utils', opening a file in the '/etc/shadow' directory. The bottom event is also a 'Warning' triggered by a 'syscall' (cp) at 2024/07/02 03:04:41:242. The description is 'Netcat Remote Code Execution in Container'. The event details show a process named 'nc' running inside a container named 'crazy\_noether', executing a command that spawns a reverse shell.

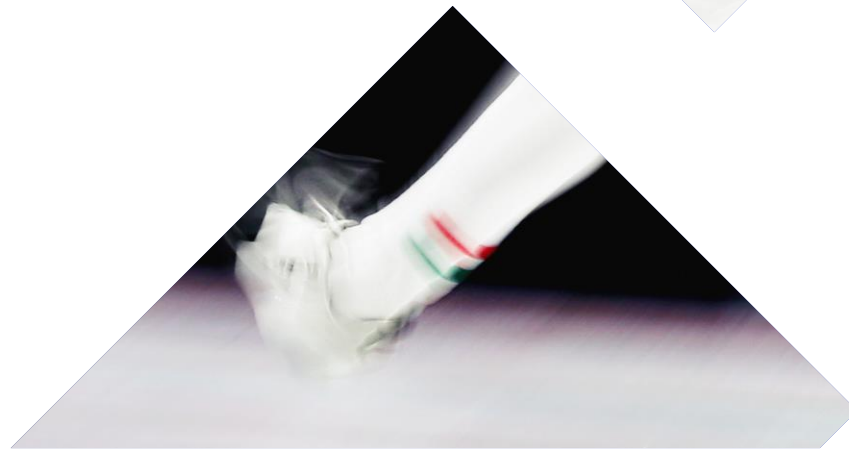
Time	Event	Severity	Description	Container	Process	Command
2024/07/02 03:36:02:124	syscall (w1)	Warning	Read sensitive file untrusted	net-utils	cat	cat /etc/shadow
2024/07/02 03:04:41:242	syscall (cp)	Warning	Netcat Remote Code Execution in Container	crazy_noether	nc	nc -nlvp 234 -e bash

Kubernetes  
Attack Simulation

Kubernetes  
Attack Detection

# Demo

## K8S Attack Simulation with Leonidas



W / T H  
secure

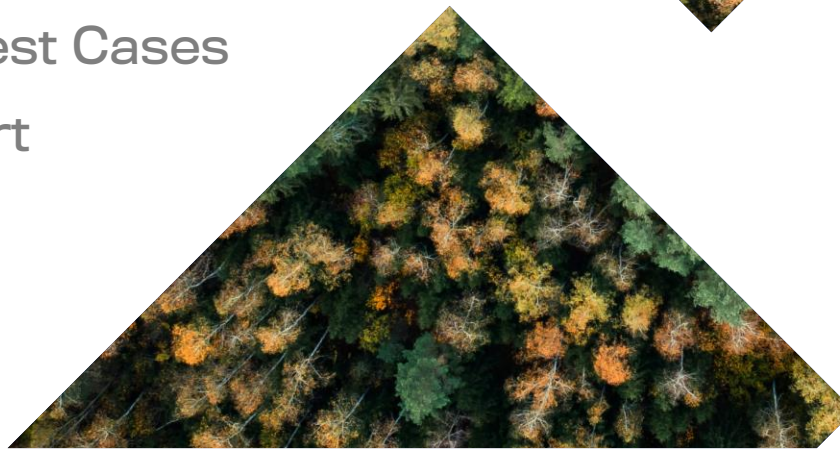


# Takeaways

- Understand the threats to your cluster
- Simulate adversaries proactively
- Build defences collaboratively

# Contributions

- Simulation Framework Leonidas for Kubernetes
- Attack Definitions 17 Kubernetes Test Cases
- Detection Signatures Sigma support





# Thank You



@LAripping  
@WithSecure



References