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Automating ACI with Ansible

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Agenda

- Introduction – What is Automation?
- Overview of Ansible
- Automating ACI with Playbooks
- Signature Based Authentication
- A Three Tier Application
- ACI REST module

What is Automation?

(Why ACI Automation?)

What is automation?

- Exists to make repeatable things easier
- Uses tools to create process and instructions
 - Replaces manual work
- Benefits – speed, efficiency, \$\$\$



Why automation with ACI?

- GUI Point-and-click for configuration – one at a time
- Repetitive Tasks
- Does not scale when deploying large configurations
- ACI APIC provides robust API
 - Automation tools can leverage

The 'Create Tenant' form is divided into several sections. The top section, 'Specify tenant details', includes fields for Name (filled with 'TEST'), Alias, Description (optional), and Tags (with a dropdown for 'Enter tags separated by comma'). Below this is a table for 'Groups' with columns for Provider, Group, and Account Name. The 'Monitoring Policy' section has a dropdown for 'select a value'. The 'Security Domain' section has a table with columns for Name and Description. At the bottom, there is a 'VRF Name' field (filled with 'TEST-VRF') and a checkbox for 'Take me to this screen when I click Finish'.

The 'Create Bridge Domain' form is titled 'STEP 1 > Main'. It includes a 'Specify Bridge Domain for the VRF' section with fields for Name (filled with 'TEST-BD'), Alias, and Description (optional). The 'Type' is set to 'Vrf'. Below this, there are dropdowns for 'VRF' (filled with 'TEST-VRF'), 'Forwarding' (set to 'Optimize'), 'Endpoint Resolution Policy' (set to 'select a value'), and 'IGMP Group Policy' (set to 'select a value'). At the bottom, there are 'Previous', 'Cancel', and 'Next' buttons.

The 'Create Subnet' form is titled 'Specify the Subnet Identity'. It includes a 'Gateway IP' field (filled with '10.10.10.1/24') and a 'Description' field (optional). Below this, there are checkboxes for 'Treat as virtual IP address', 'Make this IP address primary', and 'Scope' (set to 'Private to VRF'). There are also checkboxes for 'Advertised Externally' and 'Shared between VRFs'. The 'Subnet Control' section has checkboxes for 'No Default SVI Gateway' and 'Quarrier IP'. The 'L3 Out for Route Profile' and 'Route Profile' sections have dropdowns for 'select a value'. At the bottom, there are 'Cancel' and 'OK' buttons.

Deploy Three Tier Application – APIC GUI

Create Tenant
Specify Tenant

Create Bridge Domain
Specify Bridge Domain for the VRF

Configure Contract
Contract Between EPGs

Create Contract Subject
Specify Identity of Subject

Name: app_to_db_subject
Alias: optional
Description: optional
Target DSCP: Unspecified
Apply Both Directions: ☒
Reverse Filter Ports: ☒

Filter Chain

Filters: L4-L7 SERVICE GRAPH
Directives: PRIORITY
QoS: optional

Create Filter
Specify the Filter Identity

Name: db-filter
Alias: optional
Description: optional
Tags: optional
Entries:

Name	Alias	EtherType	ADP Flag	IP Protocol	Match Only	Statusful	Source Port / Range	Destination Port / Range	TCP Session Rules		
db-filter		IP	Unspecified	tcp	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unspecified	Unspecified	1433	1433	TCP Session Rules

EPGs
Name: Alias: Application EPGs

PHG Trust Control Policy
select a value

PHG Trust Control Policy
Associate to VM Domain Profiles: ☐
Statically Link with Leaves/Paths: ☐
EPG Contract Master: Application EPGs

PHG Trust Control Policy
Associate to VM Domain Profiles: ☐
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EPG Contract Master: Application EPGs

PHG Trust Control Policy
Associate to VM Domain Profiles: ☐
Statically Link with Leaves/Paths: ☐
EPG Contract Master: Application EPGs

Overview of Ansible

Inventory, Playbooks, and Modules

What is Ansible?



ANSIBLE

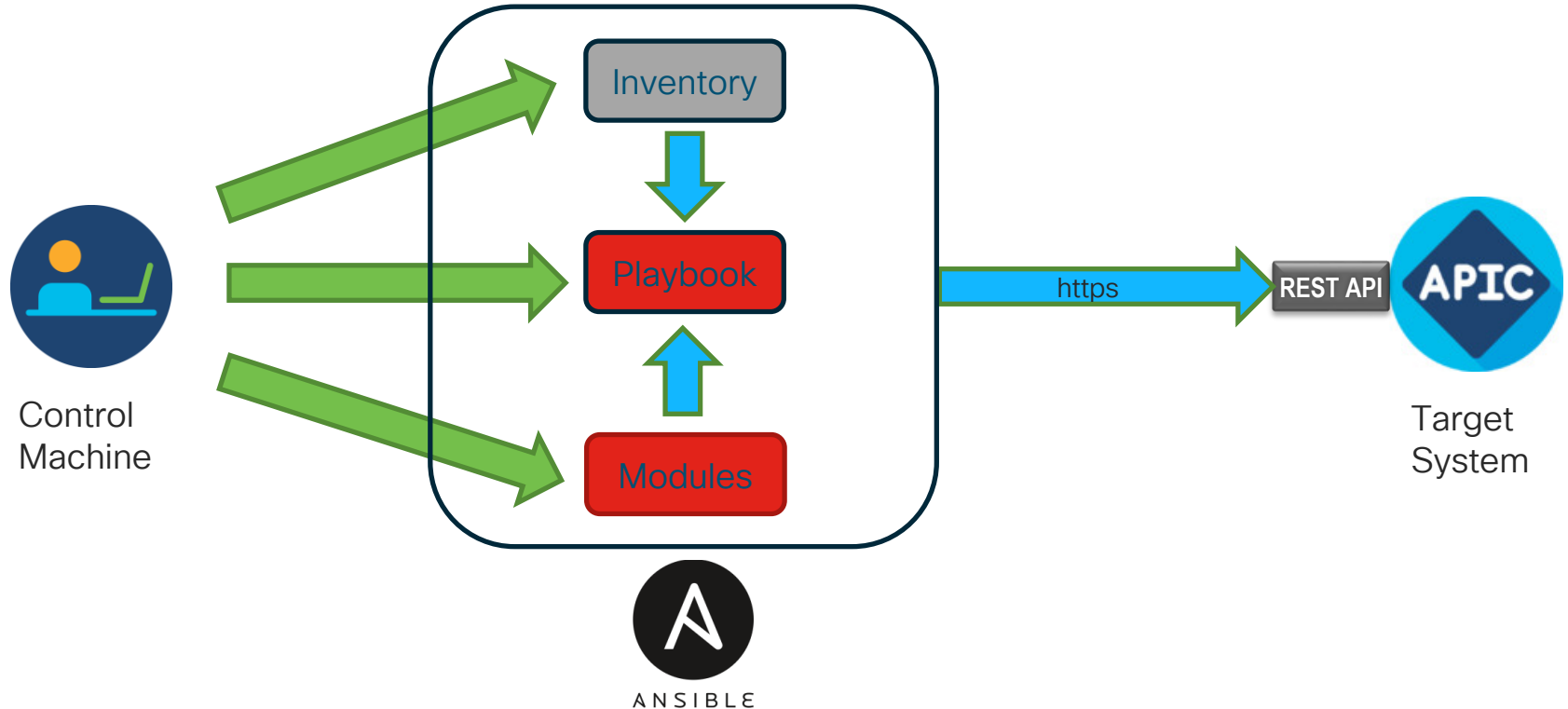
- Open Source
- Automation, Configuration & Orchestration
- Version 2.9
 - 2.8 & 2.7 also available
 - ACI support - 2.4
- Supported on UNIX/Linux
 - Windows Subsystem for Linux
- Can manage different systems
 - ACI, IOS, NX-OS, IOS-XR

What is Ansible?



- Agentless
 - Push Model
- Idempotent
- YAML based
 - Easily Readable
- APIC REST API interface
 - Same as GUI
- Requires no programming skills
 - Python is helpful – not required

What makes up Ansible?



Example ACI Ansible Inventory

YAML inventory file

```
all:
  hosts:
    Fabric1:
      inventory_hostname: 10.50.62.1
      username: admin
      password: cisco
    Fabric2:
      inventory_hostname: 10.51.92.1
      username: admin
      password: cisco
```

INI inventory file

```
[Fabric1]
la-apic1 username=admin password=cisco

[Fabric2]
ny-apic1 username=admin password=cisco
```

Ansible Playbooks Breakdown

- Contains a list of plays
 - Series of tasks to be performed on target systems
- Tasks are executed in order
- Built on YAML
- Proper Indentation is required
- “---” exists at the start of every playbook
- Apply specific roles to targets

Ansible Playbook breakdown

```
---
# Demo ACI Playbook
- name: Configuring Example Tenant
  hosts: apic1
  connection: local
  gather_facts: no

  tasks:
    - name: Create Tenant
      aci_tenant:
        hostname: "{{ inventory_hostname }}"
        username: "{{ username }}"
        password: "{{ password }}"
        tenant: "CiscoLive"
        description: "Tenant configured by Ansible"
        validate_certs: no
        state: present
```

Start of YAML

Comment

Name of Playbook

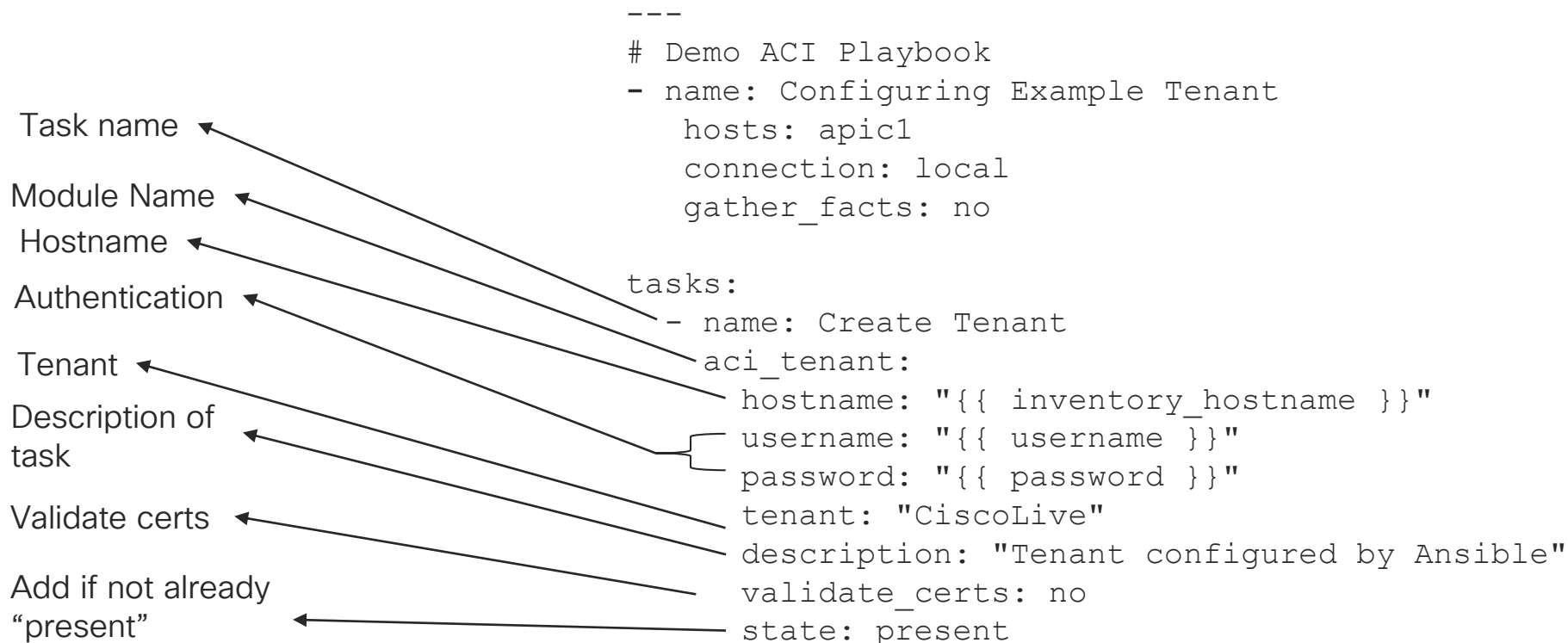
Hosts from inventory

Connection is local to this host

Collects information about targets

Watch the Indentation!

Ansible Playbook breakdown



Ansible ACI Modules

- Perform specific tasks (Create Tenant/VRF/BD)
- Already installed when you install Ansible
- Written in Python
 - Can develop your own modules
- 60+ ACI modules as of 2.9
 - 30+ Multisite Orchestrator Modules
- To see all Ansible Modules – `ansible-doc -l`
 - ACI specific ones – `ansible-doc -l | grep ^aci`

Ansible ACI Modules

```
THRENY-M-C56Q:~ threnzy$ ansible-doc -l | grep ^aci
aci_aaa_user                Manage AAA users (aaa:User)
aci_aaa_user_certificate    Manage AAA user certificates (aaa:UserCert)
aci_access_port_to_interface_policy_leaf_profile Manage Fabric interface policy leaf profile inter...
aci_aep                    Manage attachable Access Entity Profile (AEP) obj...
aci_aep_to_domain          Bind AEPs to Physical or Virtual Domains (infra:R...
aci_ap                    Manage top level Application Profile (AP) objects...
aci_bd                    Manage Bridge Domains (BD) objects (fv:BD)
aci_bd_subnet             Manage Subnets (fv:Subnet)
aci_bd_to_l3out           Bind Bridge Domain to L3 Out (fv:RsBDToOut)
aci_config_rollback       Provides rollback and rollback preview functional...
aci_config_snapshot       Manage Config Snapshots (config:Snapshot, config:...
aci_contract              Manage contract resources (vz:BrCP)
aci_contract_subject       Manage initial Contract Subjects (vz:Subj)
aci_contract_subject_to_filter Bind Contract Subjects to Filters (vz:RsSubjFiltA...
aci_domain                Manage physical, virtual, bridged, routed or FC d...
aci_domain_to_encap_pool  Bind Domain to Encap Pools (infra:RsVlanNs)
aci_domain_to_vlan_pool   Bind Domain to VLAN Pools (infra:RsVlanNs)
aci_encap_pool            Manage encap pools (fvns:VlanInstP, fvns:VxlanIns...
aci_encap_pool_range       Manage encap ranges assigned to pools (fvns:Encap...
aci_epg                   Manage End Point Groups (EPG) objects (fv:AEPg)
aci_epg_monitoring_policy Manage monitoring policies (mon:EPGPol)
aci_epg_to_contract       Bind EPGs to Contracts (fv:RsCons, fv:RsProv)
aci_epg_to_domain         Bind EPGs to Domains (fv:RsDomAtt)
aci_fabric_node            Manage Fabric Node Members (fabric:NodeIdentP)
aci_filter                Manages top level filter objects (vz:Filter)
aci_filter_entry           Manage filter entries (vz:Entry)
aci_firmware_source        Manage firmware image sources (firmware:0Source)
aci_interface_policy_fc    Manage Fibre Channel interface policies (fc:IfPol...
aci_interface_policy_l2    Manage Layer 2 interface policies (l2:IfPol)
```

Ansible ACI Modules

```
THRENY-M-C56Q:~ threnzy$ ansible-doc aci_epg
> ACI_EPG      (/usr/local/lib/python2.7/site-packages/ansible/modules/network/aci/aci_epg.py)

    Manage End Point Groups (EPG) on Cisco ACI fabrics.

OPTIONS (= is mandatory):

= ap
    Name of an existing application network profile, that will contain the EPGs.
    (Aliases: app_profile, app_profile_name)

= bd
    Name of the bridge domain being associated with the EPG.
    (Aliases: bd_name, bridge_domain)

- certificate_name
    The X.509 certificate name attached to the APIC AAA user used for signature-
    based authentication.
    It defaults to the 'private_key' basename, without extension.
    (Aliases: cert_name)[Default: (null)]

- description
    Description for the EPG.
    (Aliases: descr)[Default: (null)]

= epg
    Name of the end point group.
    (Aliases: epg_name, name)

- fwd_control
```

Ansible ACI Modules

```
1. less
EXAMPLES:

- name: Add a new EPG
  aci_epg:
    host: apic
    username: admin
    password: SomeSecretPassword
    tenant: production
    ap: intranet
    epg: web_epg
    description: Web Intranet EPG
    bd: prod_bd
    preferred_group: yes
    state: present
    delegate_to: localhost

- aci_epg:
  host: apic
  username: admin
  password: SomeSecretPassword
  tenant: production
  ap: ticketing
  epg: "{{ item.epg }}"
  description: Ticketing EPG
  bd: "{{ item.bd }}"
  priority: unspecified
  intra_epg_isolation: unenforced
  state: present
  delegate_to: localhost
```

Ansible ACI Modules

aci_epg – Manage End Point Groups (EPG) objects (fv:AEPg)

New in version 2.4.

- [Synopsis](#)
- [Parameters](#)
- [Notes](#)
- [See Also](#)
- [Examples](#)
- [Return Values](#)
- [Status](#)

Synopsis

- Manage End Point Groups (EPG) on Cisco ACI fabrics.

Parameters

Parameter	Choices/Defaults	Comments
ap string / required		Name of an existing application network profile, that will contain the EPGs. aliases: app_profile, app_profile_name
bd string		Name of the bridge domain being associated with the EPG. aliases: bd_name, bridge_domain
certificate_name string		The X.509 certificate name attached to the APIC AAA user used for signature-based authentication. If a <code>private_key</code> filename was provided, this defaults to the <code>private_key</code> basename, without extension. If PEM-formatted content was provided for <code>private_key</code> , this defaults to the <code>username</code> value. aliases: cert_name
description string		Description for the EPG. aliases: descr

Automating ACI with Playbooks

Running an ACI Playbook

- Ansible command
 - Good for running single commands – ad-hoc
 - `ansible 10.15.20.101 --user=admin --ask-pass -a "uptime"`
- Command to run our playbooks
 - `ansible-playbook -i {inventory file} {Playbook file}`
 - `ansible-playbook -i hosts ciscolive.yml`
- Check mode(--check)
 - Run through playbook without making changes
 - `ansible-playbook -i hosts tenant.yml --check`

Running our Tenant Playbook

```
(2.9) THRENY-M-F1G3:BRKACI-1619 threnzy$ ansible-playbook -i hosts ciscolive.yml
PLAY [Configuring Example Tenant] *****
TASK [Create a New Tenant] *****
changed: [10.95.33.231]
PLAY RECAP *****
10.95.33.231 : ok=1    changed=1    unreachable=0    failed=0    skipped=0
             rescued=0    ignored=0
(2.9) THRENY-M-F1G3:BRKACI-1619 threnzy$
```

- Runs through each task.
- Let's you know how many tasks were OK, changed, failed, etc.
- To see more output use “-v”, “-vvv”, or “-vvvv”

Tenant Playbook with verbose output

```
(2.9) THRENY-M-F1G3:BRKACI-1619 threnzy% ansible-playbook -i hosts ciscolive.yml -v
Using /Users/threnzy/Ansible/2.9/BRKACI-1619/ansible.cfg as config file

PLAY [Configuring Example Tenant] *****

TASK [Create a New Tenant] *****
ok: [10.95.33.231] => {
  "changed": false,
  "current": [
    {
      "fvTenant": {
        "attributes": {
          "annotation": "",
          "descr": "Tenant configured by Ansible",
          "dn": "uni/tn-CiscoLive",
          "name": "CiscoLive",
          "nameAlias": "",
          "ownerKey": "",
          "ownerTag": ""
        }
      }
    }
  ]
}

PLAY RECAP *****
10.95.33.231 : ok=1    changed=0    unreachable=0    failed=0    skipped=0
rescued=0    ignored=0
```

Verifying the APIC

All Tenants

Name	Alias	Description	Bridge Domains	VRFs	EPGs	Health Score
CiscoLive		Tenant configured by Ansible	0	0	0	100
common			1	2	0	100
infra			2	2	2	100
mgmt			1	2	0	100

Signature-Based Authentication

A Note about Authentication

- Authentication using username/password
 - Not very secure
- Large playbooks with lots of tasks can fail
 - Especially with iteration
- Can cause sessions to get throttled
 - NGINX throttling – ACI 3.1
- Workarounds
 - Disable APIC session throttling
 - Add pause in tasks
 - Signature-based authentication***

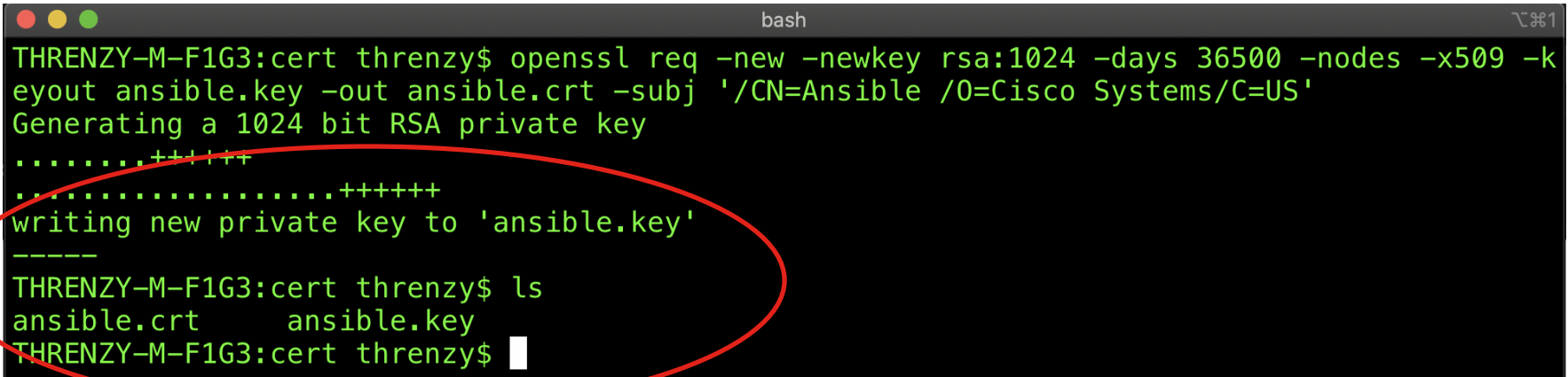
Signature-based Authentication

- Available as of 2.5
- Generate certificate using **openssl**
- Create a local user on APIC
 - Ansible Module - **aci_aaa_user**
- Push Certificate up to APIC
 - Ansible Module - **aci_aaa_user_certificate**
- Modify your tasks to leverage new Key
 - Replace username/password - private_key: keyname.key

Generate Self Signed Certificate

- Use “openssl” to generate your cert

```
openssl req -new -newkey rsa:1024 -days 36500 -nodes -x509 -keyout admin.key -out admin.crt -  
subj '/CN=Admin/O=Your Company/C=US'
```



```
THRENY-M-F1G3:cert threnzy$ openssl req -new -newkey rsa:1024 -days 36500 -nodes -x509 -k  
eyout ansible.key -out ansible.crt -subj '/CN=Ansible /O=Cisco Systems/C=US'  
Generating a 1024 bit RSA private key  
.....+++++  
.....+++++  
writing new private key to 'ansible.key'  
-----  
THRENY-M-F1G3:cert threnzy$ ls  
ansible.crt      ansible.key  
THRENY-M-F1G3:cert threnzy$
```

Automate Local User Creation

- Create a local user using `aci_aaa_user` module

```
---
# User certificate
- name: Push x509 cert and create user Ansible for signature based authentication
  hosts: apic1
  connection: local
  gather_facts: no

  tasks:
  - name: Add a user
    aci_aaa_user:
      hostname: "{{ inventory_hostname }}"
      username: "{{ username }}"
      password: "{{ password }}"
      aaa_user: ansible
      aaa_password: Cisco-321
      expiration: never
      expires: no
      email: threnzy@cisco.com
      phone: +1-650-248-1099
      first_name: Thomas
      last_name: Renzy
      validate_certs: no
      state: present
```

Add new Certificate to new Local User

- Can copy Cert to use `aci_aaa_user_certificate` Module

```
- name: Add a certificate to user ansible
  aci_aaa_user_certificate:
    use_proxy: no
    hostname: "{{ inventory_hostname }}"
    username: "{{ username }}"
    password: "{{ password }}"
    aaa_user: ansible
    certificate_name: ansible
    certificate_data: "{{ lookup('file', 'ansible.crt') }}"
    validate_certs: no
    state: present
```


Assign proper privileges to Local User

- Leverages the aci_rest module. – More later

```
- name: Add admin privileges to allow Ansible user to make changes
aci_rest:
  hostname: "{{ inventory_hostname }}"
  username: "{{ username }}"
  password: "{{ password }}"
  validate_certs: no
  path: /api/node/mo/uni/userext/user-ansible/userdomain-all.json
  method: post
  content:
    {"aaaUserDomain":
     {"attributes":{
      "name":"all",
      "rn":"userdomain-all",
     },
     "children":[
      {"aaaUserRole":
       {"attributes":{
        "name":"admin","privType":"writePriv",
        "rn":"role-admin",
       },
       "children":[]
      }
     ]
    }
  }
```



Demo – Deploy Signature-Based Authentication

Updated Tenant Playbook

Demo ACI Playbook

```
- name: Configuring Example Tenant
  hosts: apic1
  connection: local
  gather_facts: no
```

tasks:

```
- name: Create Tenant
  aci_tenant:
    hostname: "{{ inventory_hostname }}"
    username: ansible
    private_key: ansible.key
    tenant: "CiscoLive"
    description: "Tenant configured by Ansible"
    validate_certs: no
    state: present
```

Finally...



More complex Playbook – A Three Tier Application

A Sample Three Tier Application in Ansible

- We want to do the following:
 - Create a new Tenant – Ansible
 - New VRF – ansible-VRF
 - New BD – ansible-BD
 - Application Profile – ansible-AP
 - 3 EPGs
 - Web, App, DB
- 2 Contracts (and associated subjects/filters)
 - web_to_app – Communication between Web EPG and App EPG on http (tcp 80)
 - app_to_db – Communication between App EPG and DB EPG on sql (tcp 1433)

Variables in Three Tier Application

- Use of variables in Ansible
 - Can be used to substitute values in playbooks
 - Leverages jinja2 templating - “{{ Variable Value }}”
 - Defined in inventory, playbook, external
 - Variables have precedence

```
vars:  
    mytenant: ciscolive  
...  
tenant: "{{ mytenant }}"
```

Variables in Three Tier Application

```
vars:
  tenant: Ansible
  vrf: ansible-VRF
  bd:
    name: ansible-BD
    ip: 10.255.255.1
    mask: 24
  app_profile: ansible-AP
  http_filter: http_ans
  http_filter_entry: http_ans_entry
  web_to_app_contract: web_to_app
  web_to_app_contract_subject: web_to_app_subject
  db_filter: db_ans_entry
  db_filter_entry: db_ans_entry
  app_to_db_contract: db_to_app
  app_to_db_contract_subject: app_to_db_subject
  epg1: web
  epg2: app
  epg3: db
```


Loops (iteration) with loop

- Repeat a task multiple times
 - Suppose you need to create 3 or more EPGs
 - Tedious to write out 3 or more additional tasks
 - with_items: Also a method

```
aci_epg:
...
  epg: "{{ item.epg }}"
loop:
  - epg: "{{ epg1 }}"
  - epg: "{{ epg2 }}"
  - epg: "{{ epg3 }}"
```

Modules used in Three-Tier Application

- aci_tenant
- aci_vrf
- aci_bd
- aci_bd_subnet
- aci_ap
- aci_epg
- aci_contract
- aci_filter
- aci_filter_entry
- aci_epg_to_contract
- aci_contract_subject
- aci_contract_subject_to_filter



Demo – Deploy a Three Tier Application

The Ansible ACI REST Module

Ansible ACI Modules, XML and JSON

- Ansible is a great solution to automate ACI tasks
- ACI modules can do most common configurations
- Lots modules as of 2.9
 - Modules added to every version
 - Modules aren't 1-to-1 with all ACI features
- What if you are already using XML and JSON?

ACI REST Module (aci_rest)

- Direct access and management to APIC REST API
- Can use JSON, XML, and even YAML
- Can POST, DELETE, GET
 - Similar to what you can do in POSTMAN
- Variables work with this as well
- Can grab GUI configurations through
 - API Inspector
 - Download JSON/XML configuration

Example aci_rest module task

tasks:

- name: Add admin privileges to allow Ansible user to make changes

aci_rest:

hostname: "{{ inventory_hostname }}"

username: "{{ username }}"

password: "{{ password }}"

validate_certs: no

path: /api/node/mo/uni/userext/user-ansible/userdomain-all.json

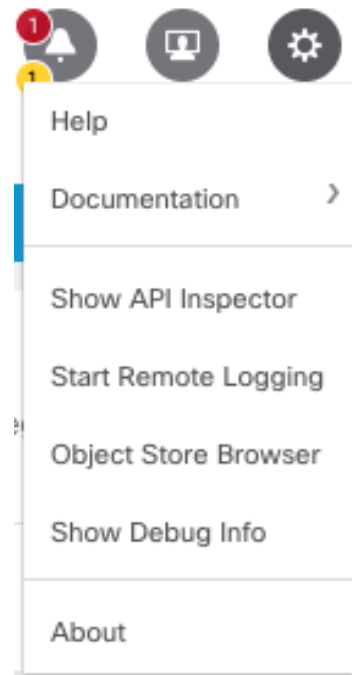
method: post

content:

```
{
  "aaaUserDomain": {
    "attributes": {
      "name": "all",
      "rn": "userdomain-all",
    },
    "children": [
      {
        "aaaUserRole": {
          "attributes": {
            "name": "admin", "privType": "writePriv",
            "rn": "role-admin",
          },
          "children": []
        }
      }
    ]
  }
}
```

Configuration Example with aci_rest

- Set my COOP policy to strict
 - Enables authenticated MD5 only
- End Point Loop Protection
 - Specified how frequent MAC moves are handled
- Global Enforce Subnet Check
 - Limit IP learning at the VRF level
- Currently no Ansible modules
- Grabbed from API Inspector



COOP Policy with ACI REST module

```
path: /api/node/mo/uni/fabric/pol-default.json
method: post
content: |
    {
      "coopPol": {
        "attributes": {
          "type": "strict",
          "dn": "uni/fabric/pol-default"
        }
      }
    }
```

Enforce Subnet Check with ACI REST module

```
path: /api/node/mo/uni/infra/settings.json
method: post
content: |
  {
    "infraSetPol": {
      "attributes": {
        "enforceSubnetCheck": "true",
        "dn": "uni/infra/settings"
      }
    }
  }
```

End Point Loop Protection with ACI REST module

```
path: /api/node/mo/uni/infra/epLoopProtectP-default.json
method: post
content: |
{
  "epLoopProtectP": {
    "attributes": {
      "action": "",
      "adminSt": "enabled",
      "loopDetectIntvl": "60",
      "loopDetectMult": "4",
      "dn": "uni/infra/epLoopProtectP-default"
    }
  }
}
```



Demo – Configuration with aci_rest

Summary

Benefits of Automating ACI with Ansible

- Automate repeatable tasks
- Saves time, efficient
- Ease of writing/reading inventory/playbooks
- No special programming skills needed
- Small learning curve
- Modules pre-built with most common tasks
- aci_rest module for leveraging JSON/XML
 - Can build tasks/plays not covered by a module

Hands on sessions

LABACI-1013 – Intro to Automating ACI with Ansible

LABACI-1001 – Introduction to the APIC

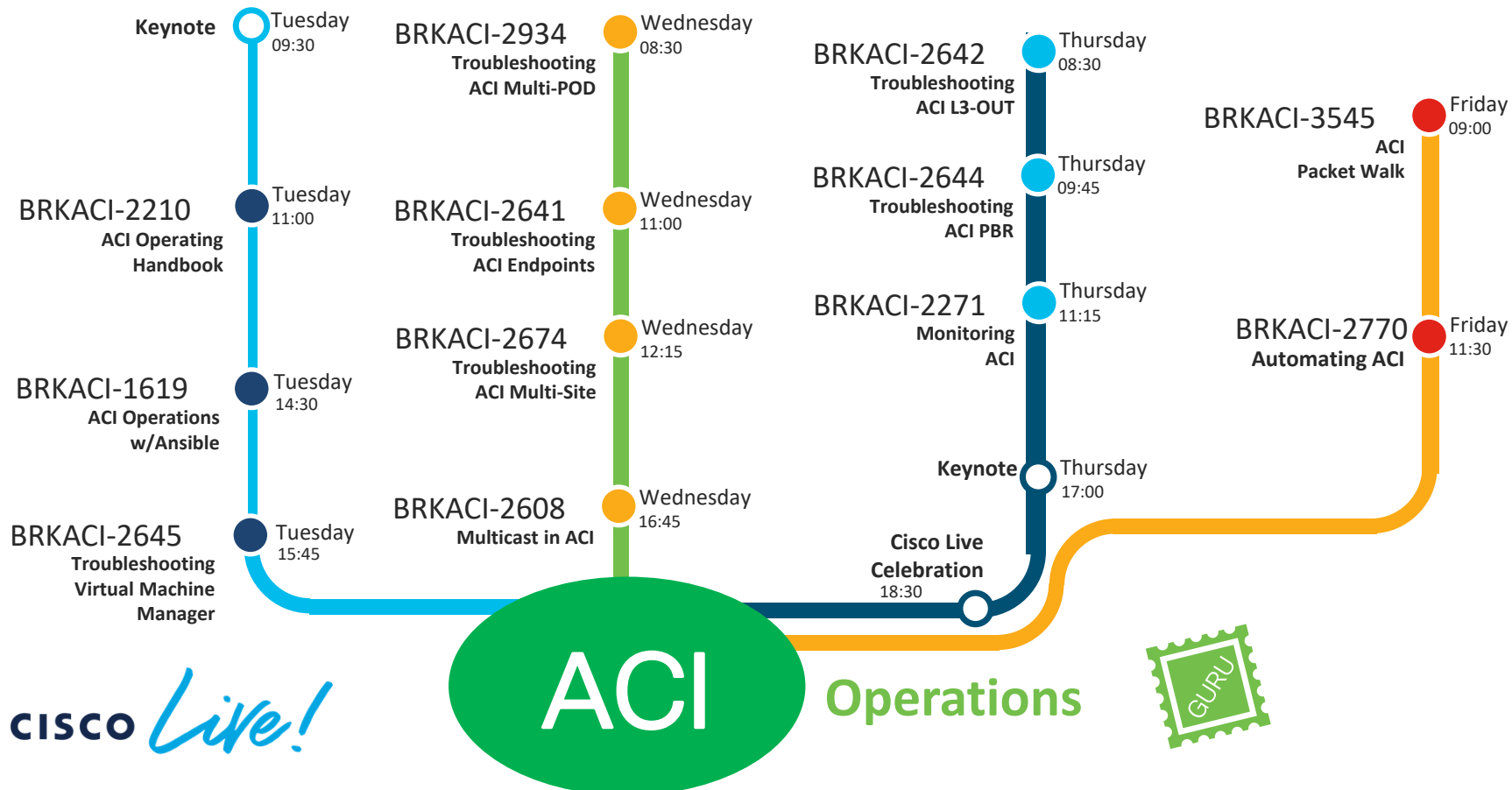
LABACI-1011 – Intro to Programming ACI with Python

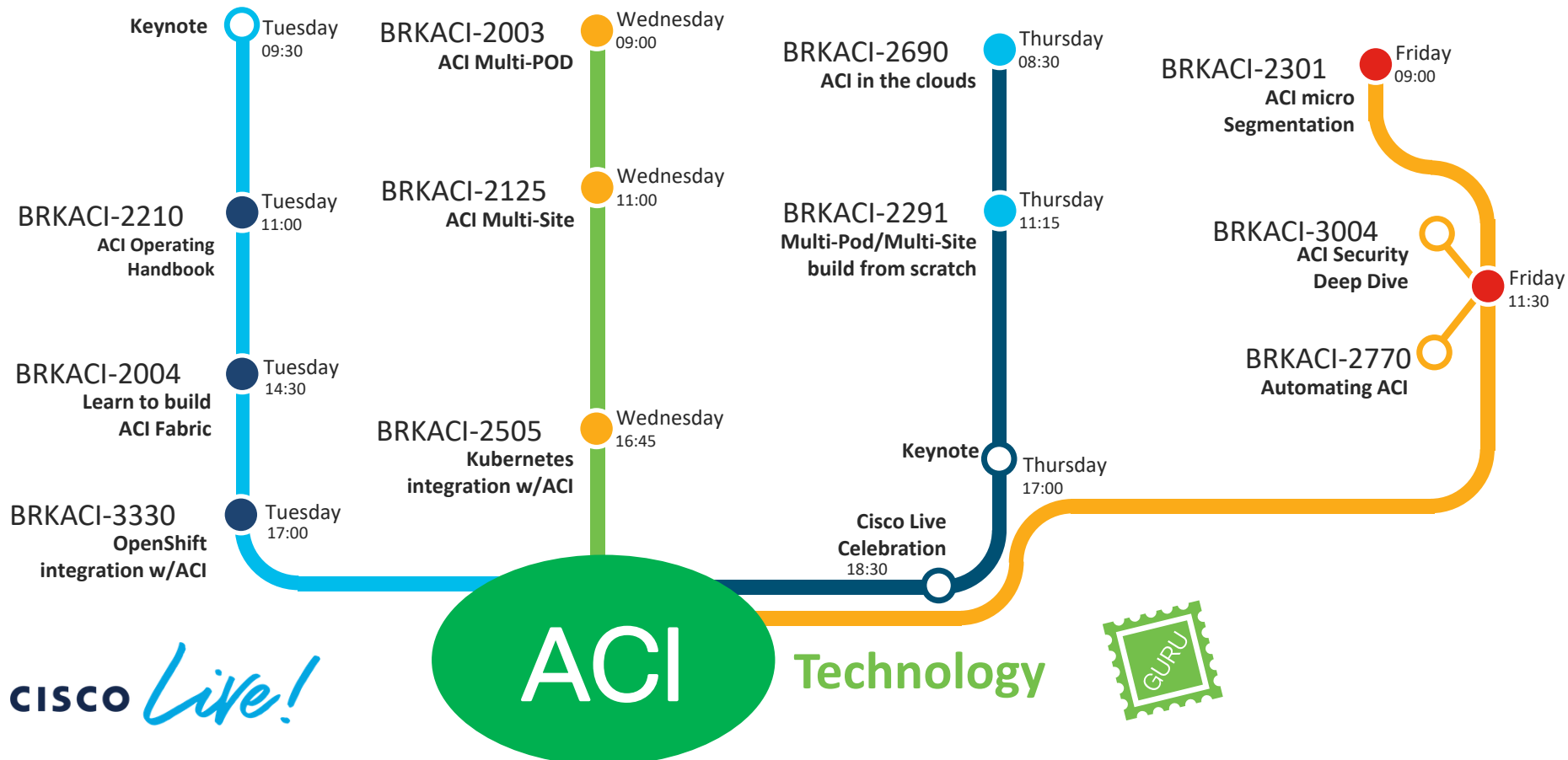
LABACI-1007 – ACI Infrastructure as code with Terraform

LABACI-2148 – ACI Monitoring, Stats, Analytics and Notifications...

LABDCN-1258 – Network Automation with Ansible (NX-OS)

DEVWKS-2232 – Automate your ACI Multisite with APIs





References

Ansible Documentation

<http://docs.ansible.com/>

Ansible ACI Documentation

https://docs.ansible.com/ansible/devel/scenario_guides/guide_aci.html

Ansible ACI Modules

http://docs.ansible.com/ansible/devel/modules/list_of_network_modules.html#aci

Ansible Variables (and precedence)

https://docs.ansible.com/ansible/latest/user_guide/playbooks_variables.html

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Meet the Engineer
1:1 meetings



Related sessions



Thank you





You make **possible**