CFC190324 (Linux Fundamentals)

Project Title: Info Extractor

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Methodologies	3
Identifying the system's public IP	3
Identifying the private IP address assigned to the system's network interface.	3
Display the MAC address (masking sensitive portions for security)	3
Display the top 5 processes' CPU usage(percentage)	4
Display the Memory Usage, Free and Used	4
Display the top 10 files (size) from the /home directory	4
Display the active system services and status	5
Discussion	6
Identifying the system's public IP	6
Identify the private IP address assigned to the system's network interface	6
Display the MAC address (masking sensitive portions for security)	8
Display the top 5 processes' CPU usage(percentage)	9
Display the Memory Usage, Free and Used	10
Display the top 10 files (size) from the /home directory	10
Display the active system services and status	12
Conclusion	13
Recommendations	13
References	15

Introduction

This report details the development and findings of the "Info Extractor" project. This project aimed to create a script capable of gathering key system information for the purpose of generating comprehensive system reports. The script focuses on extracting crucial data points such as IP address, MAC address, CPU usage, and memory utilisation. This data provides a snapshot of the machine's health and performance, which can be valuable for troubleshooting issues, capacity planning, or security assessments.

Methodologies

In this chapter, we will briefly describe the commands used to obtain the relevant information.

1) Identifying the system's public IP

The following command was used:

```
curl -s ifconfig.io
```

With the following result

```
(kali⊕kali)-[~]

t curl -s ifconfig.io

.16.154
```

 Identifying the private IP address assigned to the system's network interface

The following command was used:

```
ifconfig | grep broadcast | awk '{print $2}'
```

With the following result

```
(kali⊕kali)-[~]

$ ifconfig | grep broadcast | awk '{print $2}'

192.168.31.130
```

3) Display the MAC address (masking sensitive portions for security)

The following command was used:

```
ip addr | grep 'link/ether' | awk '{print $2}' | cut -c 9-17 | awk '{print "XX:XX:XX:"$0}'
```

With the following results:

```
[ (kali⊕ kali)-[~]
$\frac{1}{2} \text{ ip addr | grep 'link/ether' | awk '{print $2}' | cut -c 9-17 | awk '{print "XX:XX:XX:"$0}' XX:XX:XX::44:a7:e5
```

4) Display the top 5 processes' CPU usage(percentage)

The following command was used:

```
ps aux --sort=-%cpu | head -n6
```

With the following results

```
-(kali⊕kali)-[~]
└$ ps aux --sort=-%cpu | head -n6
             PID %CPU %MEM
                             VSZ
                                     RSS TTY
                                                  STAT START
                                                                TIME COMMAND
             996 0.7 7.4 482196 150276 tty7
                                                  Ssl+ 07:14
                                                                1:16 /usr/lib/xorg/Xorg
root
            1403 0.7 2.0 215952 41276 ?
1342 0.5 1.4 342216 29868 ?
kali
                                                  sl
                                                       07:19
                                                                1:12 /usr/bin/vmtoolsd -
kali
                                                  sl
                                                       07:19
                                                                0:51 /usr/lib/x86_64-lin
kali
            2310 0.2 4.9 460536 100404 ?
                                                  Rl
                                                       07:20
                                                                0:28 /usr/bin/qterminal
                                                  sl
kali
            1282 0.2 6.2 1273484 125680 ?
                                                       07:19
                                                                0:24 xfwm4
```

5) Display the Memory Usage, Free and Used

The following command was used:

```
cat /proc/meminfo | grep Mem
```

With the following result:

```
(kali⊕ kali)-[~]
$ cat /proc/meminfo | grep Mem
MemTotal: 2015148 kB
MemFree: 828520 kB
MemAvailable: 1236208 kB
```

6) Display the top 10 files (size) from the /home directory

The following command was used:

```
find /home -type f -exec du -b {} + | sort -nr | head -n10
```

With the following result:

7) Display the active system services and status

The following command was used:

systemctl list-units --type=service --state=active

With the following results

```
$ systemctl list-units --type-service --state-active
                                             LOAD ACTIVE SUB DESCRIPTION
loaded active running Accounts Service
accounts-daemon.service
                                             loaded active running Manage, Install and Generate Color Profiles
loaded active exited Set console font and keymap
colord.service
console-setup.service
                                             loaded active running Regular background program processing daemon
cron.service
dbus.service
                                             loaded active running D-Bus System Message Bus
getty@tty1.service
                                             loaded active running Getty on tty1
haveged.service
                                             loaded active running Entropy Daemon based on the HAVEGE algorithm
ifupdown-pre.service
                                             loaded active exited Helper to synchronize boot up for ifupdown
keyboard-setup.service
                                             loaded active exited Set the console keyboard layout
kmod-static-nodes.service
                                             loaded active exited Create List of Static Device Nodes
lightdm.service
                                             loaded active running Light Display Manager
```

Overall, the script to extract the information is as follows:

```
#Line 1 Information is a shebang that tells the operating system which interpreter to use in order to execute the script #Please scroll right to see comments on the commands
5
          echo 'Your Public IP address is'
                                                                                                             #Writing String
          curl -s ifconfig.io
                                                                                                             #Command to obtain Public IP
6
7
                                                                                                             #Blank line
8
          echo 'Your internal IP address is'
                                                                                                             #Writing String
          ifconfig | grep broadcast | awk '{print $2}'
                                                                                                             #Command to obtain Internal IP
10
     echo
                                                                                                             #Blank line
11
          echo 'Your MAC address is'
                                                                                                             #Writing String
          ip addr | grep 'link/ether' | awk '{print $2}' | cut -c 9-17 | awk '{print "XX:XX:"$0}'
                                                                                                             #Command to obtain Mac address and
12
13
14
15
      echo
                                                                                                             #Blank line
          echo 'Your top 5 processes CPU usage by percentage are'
                                                                                                             #Writing String
          ps aux --sort=-%cpu | head -n6
                                                                                                             #Command to obtain Processess
                                                                                                             #Blank line
          echo 'Here are the details of your memory usage'
17
18
                                                                                                             #Writing String
                                                                                                             #Command to obtain System Usage
          cat /proc/meminfo | grep Mem
19
                                                                                                             #Blank line
                                                                                                             #Writing String
          echo 'Here are your top 10 files from the /home directory'
21
22
          find /home -type f -exec du -b {} + | sort -nr | head -n10
                                                                                                             #Command to obtain Disk Usage
     echo
                                                                                                             #Blank line
          echo 'Display the active system services and status'
                                                                                                             #Writing String
          systemctl list-units --type=service --state=active
                                                                                                             #Command to obtain active system
```

Discussion

In this chapter, I will be evaluating the results from the commands used in the previous section. This section will also highlight limitations and challenges faced when using the commands stated previously.

1) Identifying the system's public IP



curl: This is a command-line used to download or retrieve data from URLs.

-s: This flag for curl informs curl to only output the downloaded content itself, without any of the additional information.

ifconfig.io: This is the URL of a web service that provides information about my internet connection.

Limitations:

ifconfig.io is a service provider that provides the public IP address. Like all online services, ifconfig.io may experience downtime or be temporarily unavailable due to numerous reasons like technical issues or high traffic volumes.

2) Identify the private IP address assigned to the system's network interface



Ifconfig: This command is a tool for configuring and displaying information about network interfaces on your system. It interacts with your operating system's network settings, which primarily deal with internal addressing within your local network. When executed without arguments, it gives the following output.

```
-(kali⊕kali)-[~]
eth0: flags=4163<UP,BROADCAST,RUNNING,MULTICAST> mtu 1500
       inet 192.168.31.130 netmask 255.255.255.0 broadcast 192.168.31.255
       inet6 fe80::8733:ee70:bf26:6586 prefixlen 64 scopeid 0×20<link>
                    :44:a7:e5 txqueuelen 1000 (Ethernet)
       ether
       RX packets 1062 bytes 144699 (141.3 KiB)
       RX errors 0 dropped 0 overruns 0 frame 0
       TX packets 276 bytes 25000 (24.4 KiB)
       TX errors 0 dropped 0 overruns 0 carrier 0 collisions 0
lo: flags=73<UP,LOOPBACK,RUNNING> mtu 65536
       inet 127.0.0.1 netmask 255.0.0.0
       inet6 ::1 prefixlen 128 scopeid 0×10<host>
       loop txqueuelen 1000 (Local Loopback)
       RX packets 4 bytes 240 (240.0 B)
       RX errors 0 dropped 0 overruns 0
       TX packets 4 bytes 240 (240.0 B)
       TX errors 0 dropped 0 overruns 0 carrier 0 collisions 0
```

|: Piping, which redirects the output of one command as the input for another command. grep broadcast: grep is used for searching text data, allowing you to narrow down to a specific pattern of text. In this instance "broadcast" was chosen as it was the unique word present in the line which has the internal IP address. Typing ifconfig | grep broadcast gives the following output

```
(kali⊕ kali)-[~]

$ ifconfig | grep broadcast

inet 192.168.31.130 netmask 255.255.255.0 broadcast 192.168.31.255
```

awk: filters the given data based on certain criteria.

'{print \$2}': The curly brackets instructs awk on how to process each line of output. Print informs awk to print something to the output. Whereas \$2 refers to the second field in the current line of input. In this case, the numbers "192.168.31.130", our internal IP address. This is depicted in the following picture, where each " or space separates each field/column.

```
      (kali⊗ kali)-[~]

      $ ifconfig | grep broadcast inet 192.168.31.130 netmask 255.255.255.0 broadcast 192.168.31.255

      1
      2
      3
      4
      5
      6
```

Which gives the final result

3) Display the MAC address (masking sensitive portions for security)

```
ip addr | grep 'link/ether' | awk '{print $2}' | cut -c 9-17 | awk '{print "XX:XX:"$0}'
```

Display the MAC address (masking sensitive portions for security)

Ip addr: Similar to ifconfig, it displays information about my network interfaces. Output is given below

|: Piping: which redirects the output of one command as the input for another command. Grep 'link/ether': as mentioned above, narrows down the output into lines containing the string 'link/ether'.

awk: filters the given data based on certain criteria

'{print \$2}': The curly brackets instructs awk on how to process each line of output. Print informs awk to print something to the output. Whereas \$2 refers to the second field in the current line of input. In this case, the output is the unfiltered MAC address. As given below.

```
(kali® kali)-[~]
$ ip addr | grep 'link/ether' | awk '{print $2}'
:44:a7:e5
```

cut -c 9-17: Here the cut command extracts specific characters or sections. In this case, the 9th to 17th position. This results in the output as displayed below.

Awk: explained above.

Awk '{print "XX:XX:XX" \$0}': This prints the input XX:XX:XX in front of the cut mac address.

```
(kali@ kali)-[~]
$ ip addr | grep 'link/ether' | awk '{print $2}' | cut -c 9-17 | awk '{print "XX:XX:XX"$0}'
XX:XX:XX:44:a7:e5
```

Limitations

A) Permissions

In some Linux systems, ip addr might require root privileges to access all network interface details.

B) Interface identification

Information is displayed for all network interfaces in the system. If one has multiple interfaces like Wi-fi and Ethernet, one needs to identify the correct one based on its name to find the correct MAC address.

4) Display the top 5 processes' CPU usage(percentage)

```
ps aux --sort=-%cpu | head -n6
```

- ps:The process status command used to view information about running processes
- a: Shows all processes, including those of other users
- u: shows detailed information about each process, including the user who owns it, and the percentage of CP its using among other things.
- includes processes that don't have controlling terminal (daemon processes/background processes)
- --sort=-%cpu: This sorts the output based on the CPU usage (%cpu). The "-" sign indicates sorting by descending order with the highest CPU usage listed first.
 |: piping as explained previously
- head -n6: This display the top 6 rows in the output. Head -n6 is chosen instead of head-n5 as the headers as also included in the output.

```
-(kali⊕kali)-[~]
            PID %CPU %MEM
                                    RSS TTY
                                                 STAT START
                                                              TIME COMMAND
root
            996 0.7
                      7.4 482196 150276 tty7
                                                 Ssl+ 07:14
                                                              1:16 /usr/lib/xorg/Xorg
kali
            1403
                      2.0 215952 41276 ?
                                                 sl
                                                      07:19
                                                              1:12 /usr/bin/vmtoolsd
kali
            1342
                      1.4 342216 29868 ?
                                                 sl
                                                      07:19
                                                              0:51 /usr/lib/x86 64-lin
                      4.9 460536 100404 ?
                                                              0:28 /usr/bin/gterminal
kali
            2310
                 0.2
                                                 Rl
                                                      07:20
                 0.2 6.2 1273484 125680 ?
                                                              0:24 xfwm4
kali
            1282
```

In a cybersecurity context, a high amount of CPU usage can be linked to underlying security threats like Malware, Spyware or even trojans. Such threats run taxing processes in the background contributing to high CPU usage (ReasonLabs, no date).

Limitations:

Ps aux provides only a snapshot of cpu usage at the time the command is executed. In reality, the actual CPU usage dynamically changes overtime as processes change their CPU consumption.

5) Display the Memory Usage, Free and Used

```
cat /proc/meminfo | grep Mem
```

cat: This command is used to display the contents of a file

/proc/meminfo: This is a special file in the /proc pseudo-filesystem which provides information about the system's memory usage

|: Explained previously

grep Mem: narrows down output to the case sensitive string "Mem".

```
(kali@ kali)-[/proc]
$ cat /proc/meminfo | grep Mem
MemTotal: 2015124 kB
MemFree: 796492 kB
MemAvailable: 1176968 kB
```

Case sensitivity is important as using grep with "mem" gives the following information

```
(kali⊕ kali)-[/proc]
$ cat /proc/meminfo | grep mem

Shmem: 20488 kB

ShmemHugePages: 0 kB

ShmemPmdMapped: 0 kB
```

Having quick access to a system's memory plays an important role in memory forensics for incident reporting. By capturing the memory of the device quickly, we are able to identify potential malware (Neil, 2022).

Limitations

Similar to the previous section. The command used only provides a snapshot of memory usage of the machine. It also does not provide detailed history of memory usage in the machine.

6) Display the top 10 files (size) from the /home directory

```
find /home -type f -exec du -b {} + | sort -nr | head -n10
```

find: This command searches for files within a directory

/home: This specifies the directory to search in (in this case /home)

-type f: This option tells find to only search for files (not directories)

-exec: This option allows executing a command based on the files find discovers du -b {} +: Here, du -b calculates the size of each file in bytes (-b flag), and {} represents a placeholder for each found file. The + tells du to process all found files at once.

|: Piping explained earlier

sort: Command sorts the piped data (in this case via file size)

-n: this option sorts based on numeric values

-r: This option sorts in reverse order (from big to smallest)

|: piping

head -n10: Command displays the beginning of the piped data, with -n10 flag specifying the number of lines to display.

Limitations

The find command might not have access to all directories within /home if the user running the command lacks permissions.

In an example, the file is moved to another user's folder

```
(kali@ kali)-[~/Desktop]
$ sudo mv geany-2.0.tar /home/jeremiah/geany-2.0.tar
```

The following error is shown as we are unable to access the folder.

7) Display the active system services and status

```
systemctl list-units --type=service --state=active
```

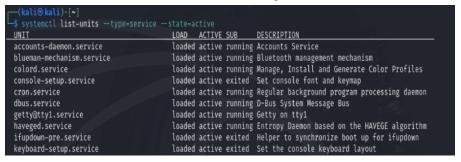
systemctl: This is the program name used to interact with systemd, the system service manager used by most modern Linux distributions

list-units: The subcommand of systemctl that instructs it to list information about systemd units. A unit can be a service, a device, a mount point, a target, or another type of system entity managed by systemd

--type=service: This is an option that filters the output to only show units of the type "service". Services are programs that run in the background and perform specific tasks on the system.

--state=active: This is another option that further filters the output to only show services that are currently in the "active" state. An active service is a service that is currently running.

In summary, this command lists all units, filters the list to show only units of type "service" and further filters to show only those in the active status.



Conclusion

Despite achieving the objective of gathering required information, there were potential limitations faced upon further investigation of the script. Some of the issues were due to the user or the command's lack of authorisation permissions, while others involved the static nature of the command itself. The following chapter will address said issues and provide recommendations for improvement.

Recommendations

- Limitation of service providers of external service providers
 As previously mentioned, ifconfig.io is a service provider that could experience downtime or be temporarily unavailable due to numerous reasons like technical issues or high traffic volumes. Alternative service providers include ifconfig.co, ifconfig.me, ifconfig.il and icanhazip.com.
- 2) Limitation of interface identification when obtaining MAC address. The script written assumes that the machine only has one network interface. In some instances where there are two separate network interfaces, (Wired Ethernet Adapter and Wi-Fi) there will be 2 instances of 'link/ether' that may be displayed, which may lead to inaccurate information regarding the MAC address.

In such circumstances, if a specific MAC address (Ethernet or Wifi) is known, the following command can be used to replace ip addr.

```
__(kali⊕kali)-[~]

$ ip addr show eth0
```

Ip addr show eth0 can be used for wired ethernet adapter, whereas wlan0 can be used for Wi-Fi.

The full result command would be as follows:

```
(kali@ kali)-[~]
$ ip addr show eth0 | grep link/ether | awk '{print $2}' | cut -c 9-17 | awk '{print "XX:XX:XX:"$0}'
XX:XX:XX::44:a7:e5
```

3) Limitations of "ps" and "cat /proc/meminfo" in obtaining dynamic CPU and memory usage.

The commands "ps" and "cat /proc/meminfo" only provide a snapshot of the respective information. In reality, CPU and memory usage is constantly changing in a machine. Hence in such cases, the command "top" can be used to provide more information.

"Top" command when used automatically sorts with the highest %CPU being used

```
1 user,
                                     load average: 0.07, 0.12, 0.09
Tasks: 202 total,
                    1 running, 201 sleeping,
                                                • stopped.
%Cpu(s): 0.1 us, 0.2 sy,
                            0.0 ni, 99.6 id,
                                               0.0 wa, 0.0 hi, 0.2 si, 0.0 st
                             787.4 free,
            1967.9 total,
MiB Mem :
                                             720.3 used.
                                                            608.6 buff/cache
MiB Swap:
            1024.0 total,
                             1024.0 free,
                                               0.0 used.
                                                            1247.6 avail Mem
    PID USER
                                            SHR S
                                                   %CPU %MEM
                                                                   TIME+ COMMAND
                  PR
                      NI
                             VIRT
                                     RES
    606 root
                           242120
                                                                 0:01.56 vmtoolsd
    970 root
                  20
                          373104
                                   94492
                                                    0.3
                                                                 0:03.47 Xorg
                       0
                                          52380
                                                           4.7
   1302 kali
                  20
                       0
                          342216
                                          20804
                                                S
                                                    0.3
                                                           1.4
                                                                 0:03.40 panel-15-genmon
   1353 kali
                          216492
                                   41540
                                          30260
                                                    0.3
                                                           2.1
                                                                 0:01.91 vmtoolsd
                            11740
                                                                 0:01.44 top
   9404 kali
                  20
                       a
                                    5760
                                           3584 R
                                                    0.3
                                                           0.3
                                                           0.0
  11830 root
                                                    0
                                                                 0:00.30 kworker/0:0-events
```

Pressing "M" will sort by the highest memory usage.

```
top - 06:38:11 up 25 min, 1 user, load average: 0.10, 0.13, 0.09
Tasks: 202 total, 1 running, 201 sleeping, 0 stopped, 0 zombie %Cpu(s): 0.0 us, 0.3 sy, 0.0 ni, 99.7 id, 0.0 wa, 0.0 hi, 0.0 si, MiB Mem: 1967.9 total, 791.7 free, 716.8 used, 606.9 buff/ca
                                                                                    0.0 st
                                                                   606.9 buff/cache
              1024.0 total,
MiB Swap:
                                                                   1251.1 avail Mem
                                1024.0 free,
                                                     0.0 used.
     PID USER
                     PR NI
                                VIRT
                                                  SHR S %CPU %MEM
                                                                            TIME+ COMMAND
    1242 kali
                                                                          0:01.25 xfwm4
   1626 kali
                                                                         0:01.43 gterminal
                                                                  4.9
                     20
                          0 456880
                                       97888
                                                82836 S
                                                           0.0
    970 root
                          a-
                              373104
                                       94492
                                                52380 S
                                                           0.0
                                                                         0:03.42 Xorg
   1293 kali
                          0
                              483640
                                       62584
                                                36908 S
                                                           0.0
                                                                         0:00.74 xfdesktop
   1341 kali
                     20
                              449656
                                       54036
                                                30720 S
                                                                         0:00.43 blueman-applet
                                                           0.0
   1376 kali
                              625480
                                       50588
                                                37592
                                                           0.0
                                                                         0:00.16 nm-applet
   1297 kali
                              466096
                                                34400
                                                                         0:00.29 panel-1-whisker
                    20
                                                           0.0
                                                                  2.4
                     20
                          0
                              467156
                                                34704 S
                                                           0.0
                                                                         0:00.39 xfce4-panel
   1282 kali
                                       47068
                                                                  2.3
   1305 kali
                     20
                              391692
                                       44800
                                                32668
                                                       s
                                                           0.0
                                                                  2.2
                                                                         0:00.27 panel-18-power-
   1304 kali
                     20
                              464868
                                                32304
                                                           0.0
                                                                   2.2
                                                                         0:00.14 panel-17-notifi
   1303 kali
                     20
                              462076
                                                34900
                                                           0.0
                                                                  2.2
                                                                         0:00.18 panel-16-pulsea
```

4) Unable to access the top 10 files in /home directory

As previously mentioned, after moving the file "geany-2.0.tar" from kali to another user's folder, the command was unable to identify that it was the largest file in the /home directory because it did not have the necessary permissions to view all the files in the /home directory. Hence, adding "sudo" into the front of the command allows it to have a higher level of permissions to obtain access to the files.

```
-(kali⊕kali)-[~]
-$ sudo find /home
                   -type f -exec du -b {} + | sort -nr | head -n10
34539520
                /home/jeremiah/geany-2.0.tar
                /home/kali/Desktop/geany-2.0/src/.libs/libgeany.so.0.0.0
32226288
31295634
                /home/kali/Desktop/geany-2.0/scintilla/.libs/libscintilla.a
                /home/kali/Desktop/geany-2.0/scintilla/.libs/liblexilla.a
25222444
9552244 /home/kali/Desktop/geany-2.0/src/tagmanager/.libs/libtagmanager.a
9142336 /home/kali/Desktop/geany-2.0/ctags/.libs/libctags.a
9037352 /home/kali/.cache/mozilla/firefox/lcd129e4.default-esr/startupCache/scriptCache.bin
7417591 /home/kali/.cache/mozilla/firefox/lcd129e4.default-esr/startupCache/startupCache.8.little
5242880 /home/kali/.mozilla/firefox/lcd129e4.default-esr/places.sqlite
5242880 /home/kali/.mozilla/firefox/lcd129e4.default-esr/favicons.sqlite
```

References

Fox, N. (2022) *Memory forensics for incident response*, *Varonis*. Available at: https://www.varonis.com/blog/memory-forensics (Accessed: 14 April 2024).

ReasonLabs (no date) What is high CPU usage?, What is High CPU Usage? The Significance of CPU Usage in Cybersecurity. Available at: https://cyberpedia.reasonlabs.com/EN/high%20cpu%20usage.html (Accessed: 14 April 2024).