



SAPIENZA
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BlueTracer: a Robust API Tracer for Evasive Malware

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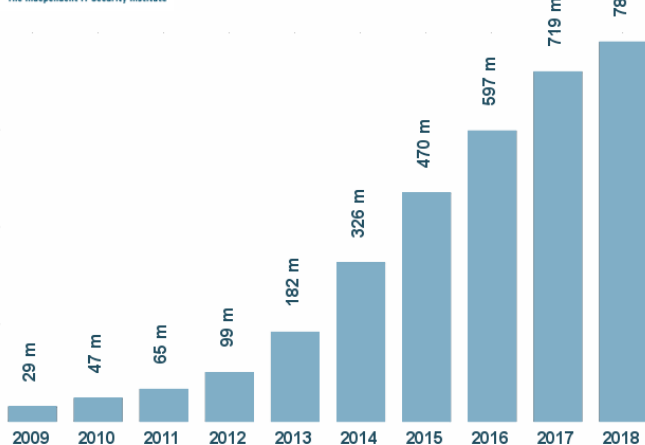
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Malware: an increasingly significant problem

Total malware



Malware Analysis



Two main types:

- **Static Analysis:**
involves the inspection of the different data and code sections of a binary
- **Dynamic Analysis:**
the malware sample is executed and the actions it performs on the environment are observed

Dynamic analysis strongly favoured as it allows to dodge code obfuscations and deal with a large number of samples

Function call monitoring

Functions can abstract implementation details providing a semantically richer representation of some functionality.

Example:

`[2, 4, 1, 3, 5] → sort() → [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]`

The abstractions embodied by **system calls** and **library calls** can be used to grasp the visible behavior of a malicious sample

Implementation of function call monitoring

API Hooking

The interception of function calls provided by dynamically linked libraries (DLLs)

Three broad categories:

- Binary Rewriting
 - Call Redirection
 - Function Rewriting
- Virtual Machine Introspection (VMI)
- **Dynamic Binary Instrumentation (DBI)**



Dynamic Binary Instrumentation (DBI)

A dynamic binary analysis technique in which the behaviour of an application is inspected at run-time via the injection of analysis code.

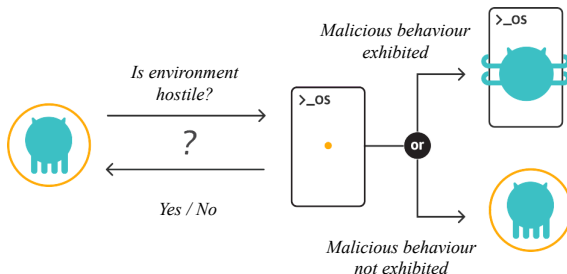
```
record(libcall, arg1)  
retval = libcall(arg1, &arg2)  
record(retval, *arg2)
```

Problem 1: existing products have limited logging capabilities

The threat posed by evasive malware

Evasive malware

Malware that conceals its harmful behaviour when detecting a hostile environment, such as a well-known sandbox solution



Problem 2: API hooking techniques in literature are not coupled with mechanisms to hide their presence from evasive malware

Our solution: BlueTracer

BlueTracer is a robust library and system call tracer for Windows programs specialized in evasive malware

Implementation details:

- Based on the **Intel Pin** DBI framework
- Integrated with the **BluePill** stealthy execution framework
- Combines reliable external sources of prototypes information

Key features:

- Undetected tracing of input parameters, output buffers and return values of over 17 000 system calls and library calls
- Logging of asynchronous events
- Resolution of named constants

Why Intel Pin ?

Characteristics:

- **User-friendliness**
- **Portability**
- **Transparency**
- **Efficiency**



Analysis routines: embody the code to be inserted during the application's execution

Instrumentation routines: determine where the analysis code has to be placed

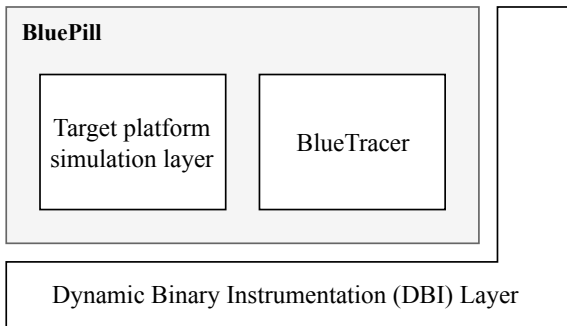
Different analysis and instrumentation granularities

- Instruction, trace, routine and image

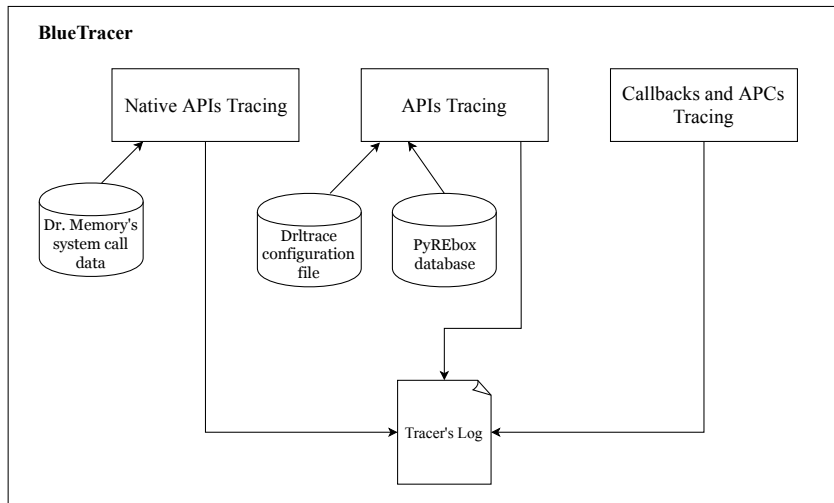
Integration with BluePill

BluePill is a software toolkit which:

- Allows the simulation of a real production environment a specific malware sample was intended for
- Conceals any virtualization artifacts and software setup which might set off evasion



BlueTracer's architecture



Evaluation with AI-Khaser

AI-Khaser is an open-source application which performs common checks employed by malware families to determine if they are being executed in an analysis environment.

Checks divided in categories:

- **Anti-Debugging**
- **Timing-based**
- **Human Interaction Detection**
- **Anti-Virtualization**
- **Anti-Analysis**



BlueTracer was undetected with respect to all the checks!

Example of tracked evasion check

File system artifacts can be checked in order to uncover the presence of a virtualized environment.

```
~~3160~~ 24980 KERNELBASE.dll!GetFileAttributesW
24980  arg 0: C:Windows\system32\drivers\VBoxMouse.sys
        (name=lpFileName, type=wchar_t*, size=0x2)
24980      executed KERNELBASE.dll!GetFileAttributesW =>
24980  retval: 0xffffffff (name=Return value, type=DWORD, size=0x4)
```

Evaluation with evasive malware samples

Five highly evasive samples collected by Joe Security:

ID	MD5	Name
1	0af4ef5069f47a371a0caf22ae2006a6	<i>trojan/banker</i>
2	9437eabf2fe5d32101e3fbf9f6027880	<i>dropper</i>
3	cbdda646a20d95f078393506ecdc0796	<i>trojan</i>
4	cfdd16225e67471f5ef54cab9b3a5558	Olympic
5	ef694b89ad7addb9a16bb6f26f1efaf7	CCleaner

The logs collected by BlueTracer reveal behaviors consistent with the analysis reports authored by Joe Security

Conclusions

Contribution:

Design and implementation of **BlueTracer**, a robust library and system call tracer for Windows programs specialized in evasive malware.

Future Developments:

- Test with a larger set of highly evasive malware samples
- Improve logging capabilities
- Adopt log filtering techniques

Thank you for your attention!