

Sound the Alarm

A Survey of Modern Intrusion Detection Methodologies

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ABSTRACT

1. INTRODUCTION

Intrusion detection is the process of detecting unauthorized use of a system and alerting the proper authorities of such misuse. Intrusion detection systems (IDS) are the systems used to detect these misuses and aid in their defense.

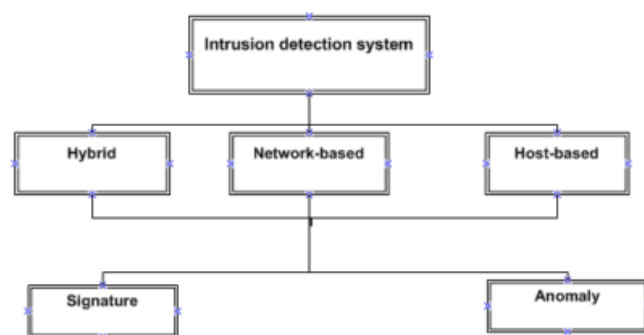


Figure 1: A general breakdown of IDSs by Audit System and Event Analysis. Image taken from [2]

1.1 Audit Systems

This section will breakdown IDSs by their audit system, which describes the source of the data that they analyse for intrusions. There are three main types of audit systems: *Host-Based*, *Network-Based*, and *Application-Based*.

1.1.1 Host-Based

Host-Based IDSs (HIDS) are characterized by having detection sensors on each individual machine within a network. These types of systems monitor an individual computer's system logs to detect attacks. HIDSs are able to detect attacks with much more specificity than network-based systems because they are able to monitor individual processes on an particular machine for malicious activity.

There are many advantages to using a HIDS. First, and fore most, they are able to detect attacks that network-based sensors cannot, because they are running on the host machine. Next, unlike network-based sensors, they are fully functional within both switched, and encrypted networks because their audit source is independent of network traffic, and they are able to use host resources to decrypt traffic before analysis.

1.1.2 Network-Based

Network-based IDSs (NIDS) are characterized by having detection sensors placed at network hubs, such as routers, rather than on each individual machine in a network. These types of systems work by monitoring network traffic looking for patterns in flow or analyzing packet headers for trends. These are the most commonly used types of systems today.

NIDSs have many advantages over a host-based system, mainly that fewer sensors are required to cover the entire network, which also means less installation time and maintenance. These types of systems also have little to no impact on network performance, because they are sensors that traffic is simply routed through. As they are their own independent system residing on the network, they can be set up in such a way that they are invisible to outsiders. This hidden nature also makes them very insulated from attack themselves, which is a large advantage for network administrators.

However, these systems are not without their drawbacks. It has been shown that in periods of high network load, these systems performance drops due to an inability to process all incoming packets. As such, they could fail to detect an attack that was launched during one of these periods. The effectiveness of these types of systems also drops in switched networks, because switches subdivide network traffic such that a NIDS can no longer monitor all traffic on the network because much of it is hidden behind a switches. Finally, NIDSs are unable to analyse encrypted traffic. This incapability is a major drawback, especially in this day in age, as more and more traffic is being moved to encrypted channels of communication.

1.1.3 Application-Based

1.2 Event Analysis

This section will further subdivide and discuss IDSs by event analysis, which describes the method of detection used, given

a particular audit source of data. These detection methods fall into two major categories: *Signature Detection* and *Anomaly Detection*. Signature based methods are much more common in practice, but anomaly detection is an area of much research and promise. A summary of both strategies can be found in 2.

1.2.1 Signature Detection

Signature detection systems operate on an extremely basic principle: attacks that have been detected before should be recognizable after initially being discovered, given that whatever unique feature(s) that identify them are written down and matched against.

1.2.2 Anomaly Detection

Anomaly detecting systems work by constructing a system profile of "normal" behavior, and use that profile to then detect abnormal behavior. The idea is that attacks are a subset of abnormal behavior, which will allow these types of systems to detect them. Most of these systems use some complex statistical analysis to determine when activity differs from the system profile. The major draw to these types of systems is that, unlike signature detection methods, these systems can detect not only variations on known attacks, but completely novel attacks as well. The problem with this functionality is that it is predicated on having an effective system profile, which is by no means trivial to produce. They require extensive training sets to learn from, of which few exist. In practice, these types of systems produce large numbers of false positives that require manual inspection to effectively classify as an attack or not. For this reason, few existing systems use this type of detection. Instead IDSs using this type of detection mechanism are more an open area of research than production level systems.

Method	Detection time	Reliability	Detect new attacks	False Positive	Requirements
Signature	Fast	Yes	No	Very low	Well-known signature
Anomaly	vary	Yes	Yes	High	Trained data

Figure 2: Summary of Event Analysis systems. Image taken from [2]

2. RELATED WORK

2.1 Probes

This section will discuss various approaches to detecting Probe attacks. Probes have been classified as any passive information gathering intrusion. The most common form of probe attack, one which will be discussed at length, is the port scan. The motivation for detecting these types of scans is that any intelligent attacker wishing to launch a successful attack will gather background information about the victims system before launching his or her attack. Their primary means of gathering information is by first launching a port scan.

There are 65,536 standardly defined ports on a given machine. These are broken down into three large categories:

a. Well-known ports(0-1,023), *b.* Registered ports (1,024-49,151), *c.* Dynamic and/or private ports (49,152-65,536) [Matiti, P Lecture notes from Surveying Port Scans Methodologies]. Essentially, a port scan consists of sending a message to each of these ports and analyzing the response message to gain information about what services the victim machine is running. For this reason, TCP ports are the most often scanned because TCP is a connection-oriented protocol, meaning that its response messages are more useful. Added to this, it is easy to block/detect UDP traffic at the firewall level [5]. In general, like most attacks, port scans can be broken down into to high level categories: single source, and distributed source. Within these categories, [?]

2.2 Privilege Escalation

Privilege Escalation attacks are described in two general categories in this paper: Remote to User Attacks and User to Root Attacks. In the broadest sense, Remote to User Attacks are when an attacker seeks to gain local user access to a machine that they have network access to. A User to Root Attack, as one may infer from its name, is when an attacker who already possesses local user access seeks to escalate their privileges to those of a root user, IE gain root user access. In the following sections, both types of attacks are explained in detail.

2.2.1 Remote to User

A Remote to User attack is when an attacker who has network access to a system but does not have an account on that machine exploits a vulnerability on the system to gain unauthorized local access as a user of the target system. These types of attacks come in many forms, and can be as simple as getting valid user authentication information through guessing a user's password with a dictionary attack. However, just as common are attacks that exploit a vulnerability in a common and innocuous system service, such as FTP to gain local user access. These exploits can change system settings to allow an attacker remote access, but they can also trigger buffer overflows, which in many circumstances allow an attacker to execute arbitrary code on the remote host (which is often used to gain root access, as we will discuss later).

2.2.2 User to Root

A User to Root attack is when an attacker who has no access or local user access to a system escalates their privileges to those of a root user. As with Remote to User attacks, User to Root attacks can come in a wide variety of formats. However, most of them tend to be some form of vulnerability exploit that either allows temporary root access (which is enough for any attacker to establish a backdoor for themselves for root access in the future), or triggers a buffer overflow, which can be used by a clever attacker to execute arbitrary code to gain root access.

2.3 Denial of Service

3. METHODS

4. EVALUATION

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Training Sets

5.2 Effective Defense

5.3 Open Problems

6. CONCLUSIONS

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