

The Red Teamer's Guide To Deception

Building effective internal honeypots

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Agenda

Introduction

- Deception strategy
- Must-have AD honeypots
- Tool release: ADCS deception

Despite ample opportunities, our attacks are barely detected and responded to effectively



Balthasar Martin

- Red team lead @SRLabs
- Built a dedicated team for red, purple and TIBER
- Cool hacks between PowerPoint, Excel & Word



Niklas van Dornick

- Working student @SRLabs
- Builds and breaks protocols and authentication
- Watched too much Winnie-the-Pooh

Thanks, team!



Ali



Fabian



Jorge

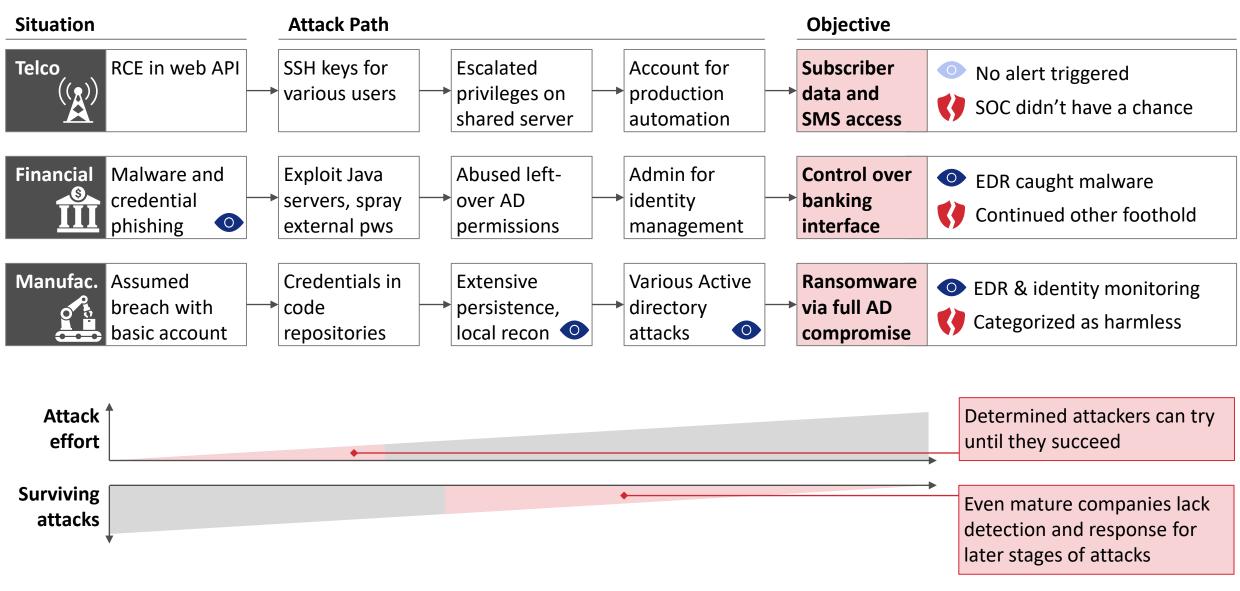
Root shell on targeted server

Balthasar's mistake

```
74945 ?
                Ss
                       0:00
 74958 ?
                Ss
                       0:00
 74973 pts/1
                       0:00
                     :/home/centos# ls [5:43 PM] Fabian Becker
oot@
s: cannot access '[5:43': No such file or directory
s: cannot access 'PM]': No such file or directory
s: cannot access 'Fabian': No such file or directory
s: cannot access 'Becker': No such file or directory
                     :/home/centos# cd /etc/systemd/system/
oot@
```

- As attackers, we are only human and make mistakes
- There is ample opportunity to detect us
- Nevertheless, we compromise most target environments

We need better detection and response for the few threats that make it past initial defenses



SOC is hard and corporations struggle to build effective monitoring and detections

Problem	Details	Consequences
Effort to achieve EDR and log coverage	 Requires much leg-work and communication Pareto principle: last 20% take 80% of work 	 Attackers with time or luck can find "that under- monitored system"
Complex corporate networks	 Large volume of alerts that is hard to tune "Weird" things happen regularly 	 Not every alert can be investigated in-depth True positive alerts are overseen or not followed-up upon with full response
Application- specific knowledge gap	 SOC has limited knowledge about applications Requires domain-expert support to write rules or evaluate alerts 	 Incorrect classification of alerts Example: alert for activity by built-in domain admin but analyst doesn't realize because it was renamed
Analyst Turnover	 Undesirable work style (shift work, factory style) Trained analysts leave for better positions 	 Lower analysis quality in general
Analysis	 Attackers with time/skill/luck trigger few alerts SOCs are designed to handle large volume with okay-ish coverage and investigation result precision 	 ■ Attack chains with e.g. few "medium" alerts have a realistic chance get through → Blue team needs a "smoke detector" to catch these cases just before the fire is out of control

Well-placed honeypots provide a high-quality detection signal for low costs

Definition	Internal honeypot (aka. canary, aka. deception tech): A strategically placed system, account, or vulnerability designed to mimic legitimate assets, serving as a trap for attackers	
Example	A pair of invalid credentials places on a server, triggering an alert when used	
Advantages	 1. Low roll-out complexity and maintenance Deploy once to a few easily-discovered locations Use existing technologies like a SIEM Low footprint, limited maintenance 	
	2. Low-noise detections	 Honeypots are not used by legitimate users They can be set up to only trigger on clearly malicious activity
	3. High-relevance alerts	 Are triggered during lateral movement and privilege escalation Honeypot exploitation likely indicates a significant threat Allows to trigger critical alerts, directly to a senior analyst
Strategic Impact	 Effective alerting that can prevent the worst in cases where initial infection stays undetected Great cost-benefit ratio for catching attackers Slowing down attackers by forcing them to second-guess their attacks 	

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Case study: deception is not solved with a shiny product roll-out

Environment



"Top-right quadrant" deception tool

- Rollout on all corporate laptops
- Various canaries per system, including fake credentials in LSASS
- Individualized AD accounts enable different configuration for each laptop

How it went



Deception was totally ineffective

- Coverage gap: we did not touch Laptop-focused honeypots
- Hard to trigger: EDR & LSASS protections made it hard to dump creds
- Over-engineered but not tailored to the environment

What we learned



"Simple and well-done" wins

- Custom-tailored: consciously integrate
 Deception into environment
- Collaboration: owned by deception team, but admins well involved
- Cost-effective: A nice tool doesn't hurt but you can do without it



Design Goal

Description

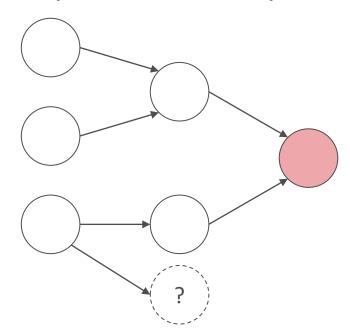
Example how to mess it up

Discoverability



- Easy for attackers to find
- Ensuring it serves its purpose as a trap
- Fake credential injected to memory
- Deployed to laptops only

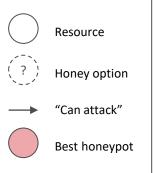
This is your network, where to place the honeypot?



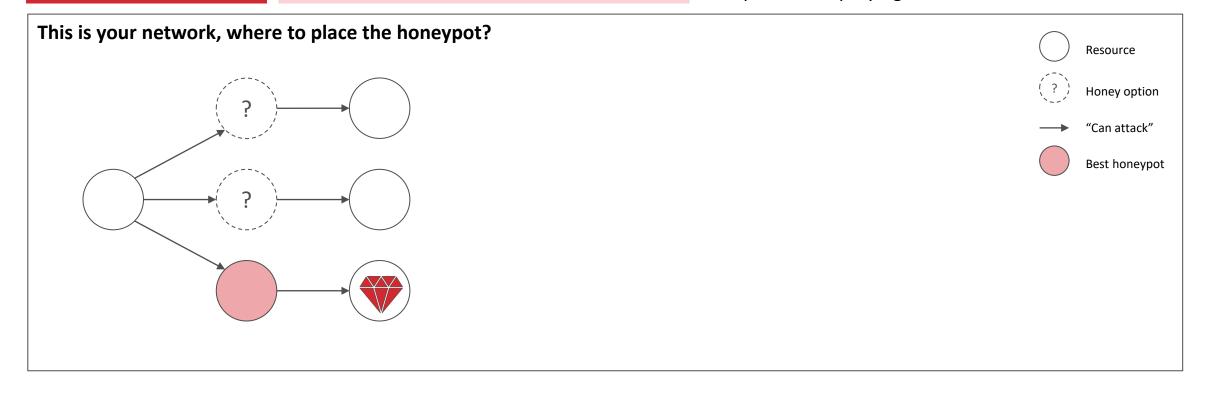
Defenders think in lists. Attackers think in graphs.

As long as this is true, attackers win.

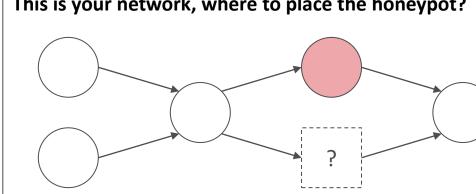
- John Lambert

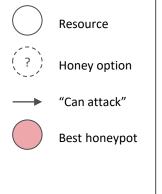


Design Goal Description Easy for attackers to find Ensuring it serves its purpose as a trap Deployed to laptops only Appeal to Attackers Attackers Attackers Attackers Description Fake credential injected to memory Deployed to laptops only Honey accounts seem like basic users But basic users can be obtained by external password spraying → not worth the risk



Example how to mess it up **Design Goal Description** Easy for attackers to find **Discoverability** Fake credential injected to memory Ensuring it serves its purpose as a trap Deployed to laptops only Appeal to **Appears valuable** to attackers Honey accounts seem like basic users **Attackers** Illusion of advancing access or privileges But basic users can be obtained by external password spraying \rightarrow not worth the risk Last logon long ago for "normal" user **Blends into the environment** realistically **Authenticity** More cached credentials on machine than Hard to identify as a honeypot CachedLogonsCount would allow This is your network, where to place the honeypot?





Design Goal	Description	Example how to mess it up
Discoverability !	 Easy for attackers to find Ensuring it serves its purpose as a trap 	Fake credential injected to memoryDeployed to laptops only
Appeal to Attackers	 Appears valuable to attackers Illusion of advancing access or privileges 	 Honey accounts seem like basic users But basic users can be obtained by external password spraying → not worth the risk
Authenticity	 Blends into the environment realistically Hard to identify as a honeypot 	 Last logon long ago for "normal" user More cached credentials on machine than CachedLogonsCount would allow
Safety	 Honeypot is not exploitable Limit risk of things going wrong 	 High privilege account with password in description but logon hours deny Admin changes logon hours for testing
Alert precision ————————————————————————————————————	 Strongly limit false positive alerts Logs should enable investigation 	 Normal users can find honey files Source IP who accessed honey account is hidden by gateway

Start small and test, then add more over time! But where to start?

Different types of deception vary in effectiveness

Туре	Description	Alert Mechanism	Examples	Pros / Cons Usage
Honey network services	 Imitate network service Containers, VMs or separate hardware 	 Alert on access Or based on attack patterns (high-interaction) 	 Web or SSH login that accepts all credentials SMB file share Many options on GitHub 	 + Insights on attacker behavior - Discoverability (effort for good coverage)
Honeytokens Files	Files that trigger alerts when opened	DNS requestFile open event in log	 PDF or office documents World-readable ssh keys 	+ Flexible location (O365, file system)- FPs and traceability
Auth secrets	Credentials or API tokens	 Alert upon attempted authentication 	AWS token in Github repoHardcoded pw in mobile app	+ Flexible, less FPs - Traceability for cloud
Active Directory honeypots	 AD object suggesting easy attack path 	Sysmon (or EDR)Monitor specific Event IDs in SIEM	 AD user credentials^[1] Kerberoastable user Group with fake RDP privileges 	+ Fit most attackers' toolset+ Easy and effective- Require AD admin

Prioritize your roll-out by deception effectiveness and implementation cost

Analysis Effect Type 4) Honey Useful as internet-connected honeypots for threat-intelligence network ■ Hard to discover for attackers in large networks, high roll-out effort for good coverage Often don't look very attractive services → Do this last or don't do it Honeytokens **Can flexibly cover many environments:** cloud, file shares, code repositories, local filesystems, ... Need to ensure a detection can be traced back to attacker. **3**) Files How much sense it makes depends a bit on your environment → Effective to set up with reasonable effort and cost using a SAAS product (2) Auth secrets 1) Active Most attack chains touch Active Directory at some point **Directory** Attacker tooling – especially of ransomware gangs – is optimized for it Requires Sysmon+SIEM, EDR or a solution like MDI to alert on AD events honeypots → Perfect location for deception – let's see what we can do here! **Pro-tip** Red team reports can provide inspiration for what honeypots to build

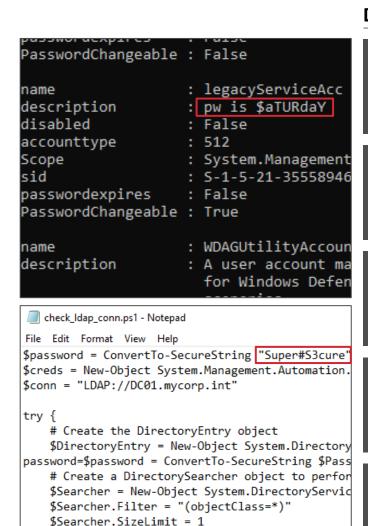


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Hiding credentials for attractive AD accounts is simple yet effective



Design Goal

Discoverability



Guidance

- Get creative where to hide fake credentials
- Description field in AD object, PowerShell script on SYSVOL, code repos, file of rolled out to endpoints

Appeal to attackers



- Should be a privileged account (or at least seem like it)
- Could be from group membership, permissions visible in LDAP, or naming scheme

Authenticity



- a. Active account with very rare failed logons
- **b.** Dedicated honey account by recycling old account for RID, lastlogon, BadPasswordTime, ...

Safety



- Password hint should be wrong
- We advise against real creds with logon hours deny

Alert precision

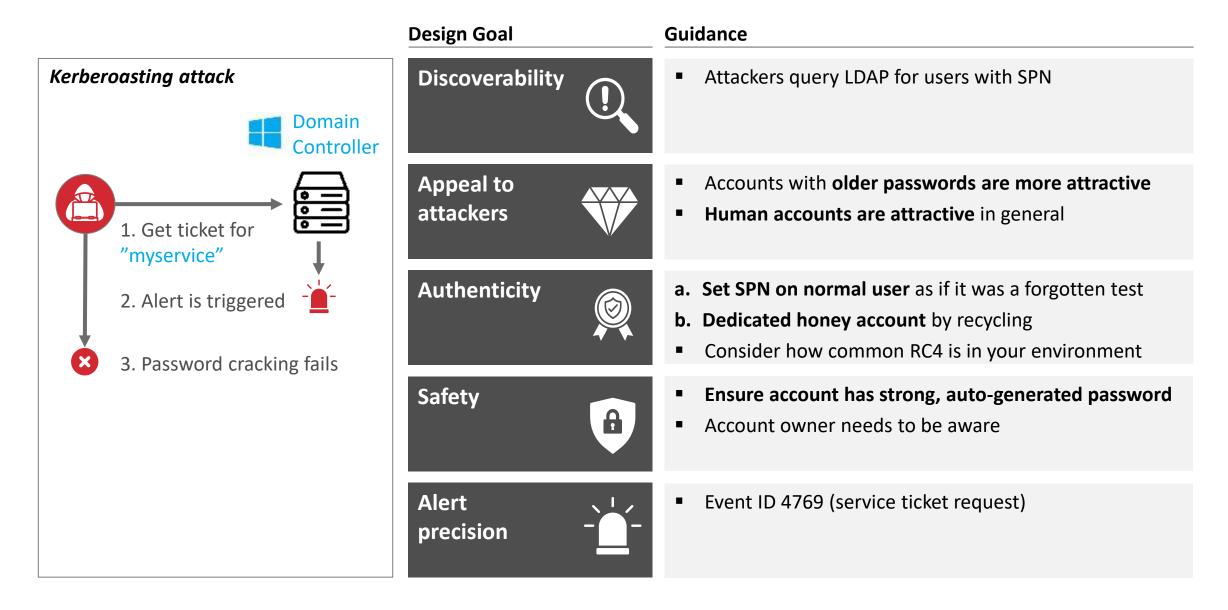


- Windows event ID 4625 (failed logon)
- Windows event ID 4768 (TGT request)
- SIEM can find suitable accounts with few failed logins

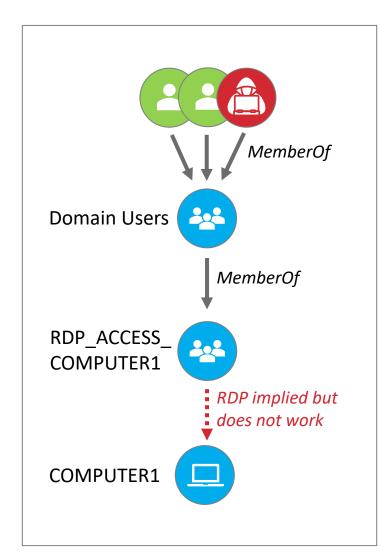


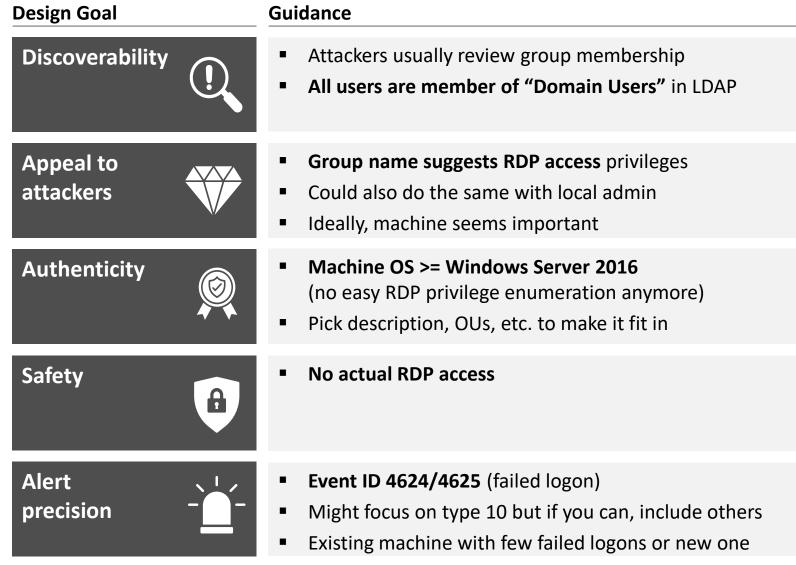
Perform the search operation

2 Kerberoasting honeypots appeal to a common attack vector



3 A group claiming to grant RDP privileges for all users is easy to find for attackers







You can do this with all types of failed login you can alert on with low noise (e.g. fake "VCENTER-ADMIN" group)

One more thing...

Agenda

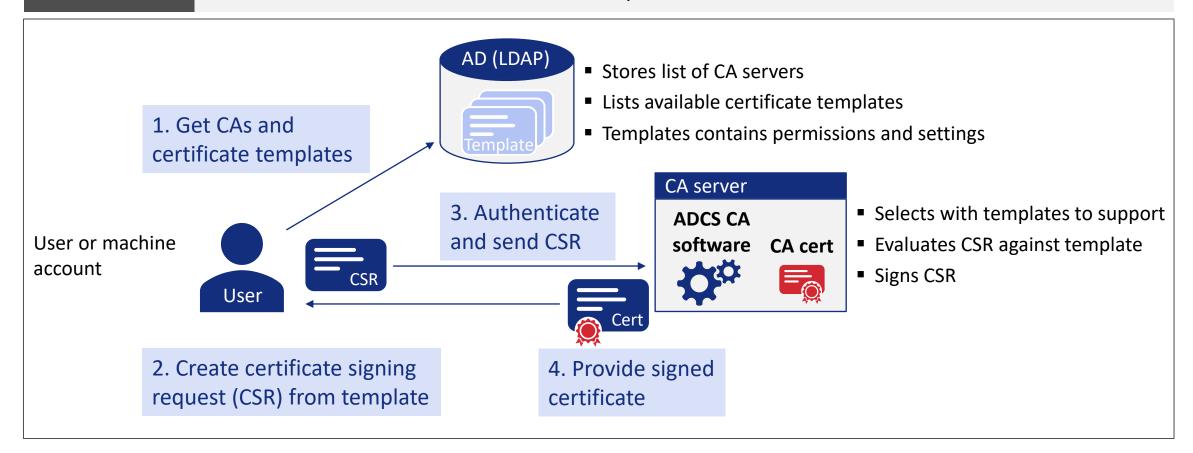
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Tool release: ADCS deception

Active Directory Certificate Services manages critical authentication

What is ADCS?

- Microsoft's solution for public key infrastructure (PKI)
- Creates certificates for authentication, code signing, email, server authentication, ...
- Used for device authentication, TLS certificates, smartcard authentication, ...
- Can create authentication certificates for everyone → Tier 0



ADCS is complex to configure, and mistakes have high impact

Common misconfigurations in ADCS

ESC-1	Certificate template allows enrolling user to specify who the certificate is valid for \rightarrow "Domain admin"
ESC-2	User certificate can be used to enroll new certificates
ESC-3	Create one for Domain Admin
ESC-4	User has write permission to certificate template → introduce ESC1
ESC-5	Compromise one of the ADCS objects in AD (computer object, container,)
ESC-6	CA-level setting that basically enables ESC1

ESC-7	Bypass manager approval on certificate templates that require it
ESC-8	No protection against relay attacks → Compromise
ESC-11	account when coercing authentication
ESC-9	Obtain certificate as any Domain user by modifying
ESC-10	the UPN of a controlled user
ESC-12	Chain of conditions and quite complicated, you
ESC-13	probably did not read this far → ignored on this slide

Misconfigurations we see the most

ESC 1-8: https://posts.specterops.io/certified-pre-owned-d95910965cd2

ESC 9-10: https://research.ifcr.dk/certipy-4-0-esc9-esc10-bloodhound-gui-new-authentication-and-request-methods-and-more-7237d88061f7

ESC 11: https://blog.compass-security.com/2022/11/relaying-to-ad-certificate-services-over-rpc/

ESC 12: https://pkiblog.knobloch.info/esc12-shell-access-to-adcs-ca-with-yubihsm



ADCS is a great location for a honeypot





- 1. Easy access (can be used by all domain users) • • • Discoverability (easily found from different points)
- 2. Complex configuration (hard to configure securely) Authenticity (occurs often in real environments)
- 3. Tooling available (run certipy to find vulns)

 Output

 Discoverability (in the playbook of most TIs)
- 4. Significant impact (full environment compromise)
 The Appeal to attackers (juicy to exploit)
- 5. Under-monitored (likely stay undetected) Appeal to attackers (attacker feels safe to exploit)

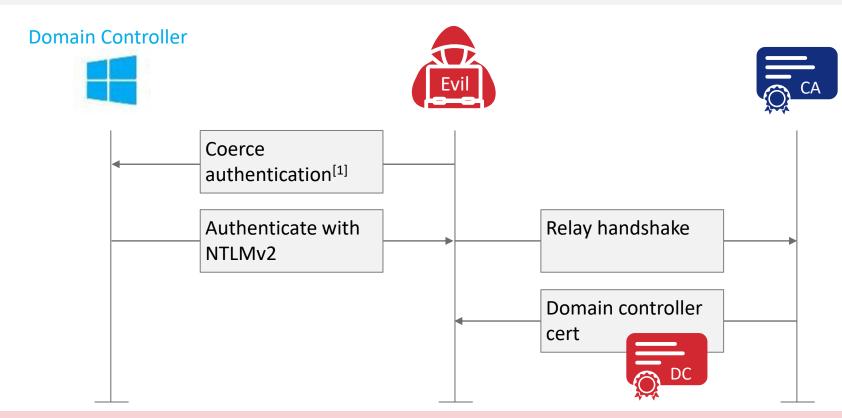
Why it would be a great honeypot

An ESC8 honeypot is feasible but was not effective enough for us

ESC8 issue

- CA server has web enrollment enabled and supports HTTP (or lacks EPA on HTTPS)
- → Attacker that receives NTLMv2 authentication handshake can relay it to receive an authentication certificate

Example attack **flow** against Domain Controller



Analysis

- Attacker tooling checks ESC8 by connecting to the CA on HTTP
- Honeypot feasible in a safe way by mocking parts of the CA web server
- Problem: relays and coercion can be tricky for attackers → not super easy to step into the trap
- Let's see if we can find a better option

ADCS policy modules can evaluate and block CSRs on the CA

We followed many paths for an ADCS honeypot

Mock web enrolment to fake ESC8

- Feasible and safe option
- Exploitation needs auth coercion (tricky)
- → Harder for hackers to step into trap

ESC3 with enrolment restrictions

- Place restrictions on second required cert
- Attacker still obtains enrolment certificate
- → Too risky

Auto-revocation

- Dangerous time window with valid cert
- An OCSP setup could work
- → We don't understand revocation enough

The TameMyCerts policy module saved the day

ADCS policy modules

- Receives and evaluate certificate requests
- Can issue or deny
- Implemented as a DLL on the CA

TameMyCerts^[1]

- Policy module developed and maintained by Uwe Gradenegger^[2]
- Developed for fine grained and automated certificate issuance checks
- Rules for evaluation are specified as XML



- [1] https://github.com/Sleepw4lker/TameMyCerts
- [2] https://www.gradenegger.eu/de/

TameMyCerts enables us to build a simple yet effective ESC1 honeypot

```
16
             <SubjectAlternativeName>
17
                     <SubjectRule>
                              <Field>sAMAccountName</Field>
18
19
                              <Mandatory>false</Mandatory>
20
                              <Patterns>
21
                                      <Pattern>
                                               <Expression>^.*$</Expression>
22
                                               <Action>Deny</Action>
23
                                      </Pattern>
24
                              </Patterns>
25
26
                     </SubjectRule>
             </SubjectAlternativeName>
27
```

- In ESC1, the certificate template has the CT_FLAG_ENROLLEE_SUPPLIES_SUBJECT flag set
- It allows the user to specify a subject alternative name (SAN) in the certificate request
- The TameMyCerts policy file above blocks the CSR if it includes a SAN
- This prevents malicious use while still allowing users to create certificates for themselves

We can differentiate between suspicious and clearly malicious use of the honeypot

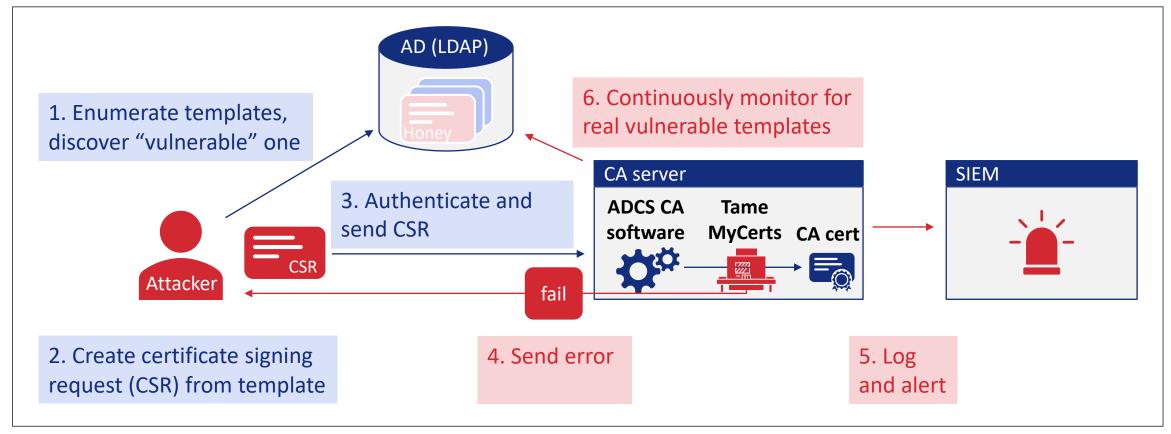
Event source	Event ID	Alerts
CA built-in ^[1]	4886 – Certificate enrollment requested	Medium Honey template used
	4887 – Certificate issued	Possible, but 4886 has more coverage
	4888 – Certificate request denied	 Possible, but less precise than TameMyCerts 6
TameMyCerts logging	6 – CSR denied due to policy violation	Critical Attempted exploitation
	Future plan – adapt events to honeypot use	

- SIGMA rules to be SIEM-agnostic
- Improvements planned or the future when supporting various honey templates

We release Certiception, our tooling to setup ADCS honeypots

Certiception automates your ADCS honeypot setup

- Set up a new CA, add a "vulnerable" ESC1 template and enable it only on the new CA
- Install and configure TameMyCerts to prevent issuance if CSR contains SAN
- Enable the extended audit log to get template names in CA event logs
- Print a SIGMA rule to set up alerting in your SIEM
- Set up continuous checks to catch any other CA enabling the vulnerable template



We release Certiception, our tooling to setup ADCS honeypots

Prerequisites

- Domain-joined Windows server for CA
- Machine with Ansible and WinRM connectivity to server
- Local admin the CA server
- Enterprise Admin account to create and register CA
- Basic Domain account without any privileges for Certify

Certiception setup flow

How to set up an ADCS honeypot

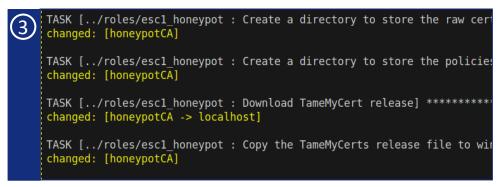
- 1 Choose unique parameters for your Honeypot
- (optional) Create EDR exception for future Certify location
- **3** Execute Certiception via Ansible
- 4 Connect event logs to your SIEM and configure alerts
- 5 Verify and manually test your setup

Security and safety

Disclaimer

- Use at your own risk you are responsible for what you set up with Certiception
- Read the code and understand what it does
- We expect potential for improvements after this release
- More on this topic: https://github.com/srlabs/Certiception

```
# parameters to customize your honeypot
host_name: honeypotCA
host_ip: 192.168.56.238
ca_name: honeypot-CA4
path: DC=mydomain, DC=local
computer_name: honeypotCA
computer_fqdn: honeypotCA.mydomain.local
computer_path: OU=Computers, DC=mydomain, DC=local
template_name: ESC1Template
template_display_name: ESC1Template4
vuln_detector_account_name: ServiceAccount
```





Demo Time!



Stealing credentials from LSASS

Asking a CA for a certificate

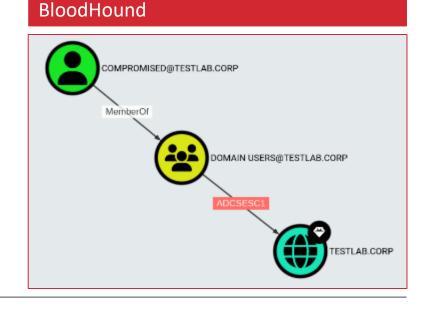


Stepping into an ADCS honeypot

Offensive security tooling recognizes Certiception as a vulnerable ESC1 template

Certify Vulnerable Certificates Templates : CA Name : ca.testlab.corp\honeypot-CA Template Name : ESC1 : 4 Schema Version Validity Period Renewal Period : 6 weeks **Discovery** : ENROLLEE SUPPLIES SUBJECT msPKI-Certificate-Name-Flag : INCLUDE SYMMETRIC ALGORITHMS mspki-enrollment-flag Authorized Signatures Required : 0 pkiextendedkeyusage : Client Authentication, Encry mspki-certificate-application-policy : Client Authentication, Encry Enrollment Permissions Enrollment Rights : TESTLAB\Domain Users 5-1 All Extended Rights S-1-: NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM TESTLAB\Domain Admins S-1-TESTLAB\Domain Admins Vulnerable Certificates Templates

```
Certipy
Permissions
  Enrollment Permissions
    Enrollment Rights
                               TESTLAB.CORP\Domain Users
  Object Control Permissions
    Full Control Principals
                               TESTLAB.CORP\Local System
    Write Owner Principals
                               TESTLAB.CORP\Local System
    Write Dacl Principals
                               TESTLAB.CORP\Local System
    Write Property Principals : TESTLAB.CORP\Local System
 [ ] Vulnerabilities
                              : 'TESTLAB.CORP\\Domain Users'
                                can enroll, enrollee supplies
                                subject and template allows
                                client authentication
      Vulnerabilities
```



```
v1.1.0
[*] Action: Request a Certificates
[*] Current user context : TESTLAB\compromised
[*] No subject name specified, using current context as subject.
[*] Template
                           : CN-compromised, CN-Users, DC-testlab, DC-corp
 *] AltName
                          : administrator
[*] Certificate Authority
                          : ca.testlab.corp\honeypot-CA
                            The submission failed: Denied by Policy Module
[1] CA Response
[!] Last status
The submission failed: Denied by Policy Module
0x800B0114
```

```
$certipy req -u compromised@testlab.corp -dc-ip
2.168.56.10 -target-ip 192.168.56.11 -ca honeypot-CA
template ESC1 -upn administrator
ertipy v4.8.2 - by Oliver Lyak (ly4k)
assword:
*| Requesting certificate via RPC
  Got error while trying to request certificate: cod
 0x800b0114 - CERT E INVALID NAME - The certificate
as an invalid name. The name is not included in the p
rmitted list or is explicitly excluded.
[*] Request ID is 17
ould you like to save the private key? (y/N)
-] Failed to request certificate
outh you like to save the bilvate
    Failed to request certificate
```

Not applicable

attempt

Exploitation

Future work

Us

- Support placing honey templates on existing CAs
- Implement other ESC misconfigurations
- Investigate additional hardening options
- Add less suspicious error message on denied CSR
- Setup with lower priv. accounts instead of enterprise admin

We need you

- Let community scrutinize safety of the honeypot
- Investigate and mitigate ways of fingerprinting

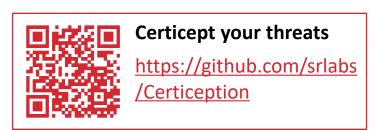
Takeaways

Honeypots provide meaningful high-relevance alerts for threats that make it past initial defenses

2 Custom-tailoring is necessary to make deception appealing to attackers

3 SRLabs' Certiception is the ADCS honeypot you always wanted

Questions?



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