Lightweight emulation based IoC extraction for Gafgyt botnets

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VB2020 localhost

Outline

- Background
- Gafgyt C2 loop
- Emulating initConnection() to get C2
- Analyzing Mirai code in Gafgyt

About Gafgyt

- firstly emerged in 2014
- also known as Qbot, BASHLITE, LizardStresser
- an earlier IoT botnets than Mirai
- A IRC like C2 protocol is used

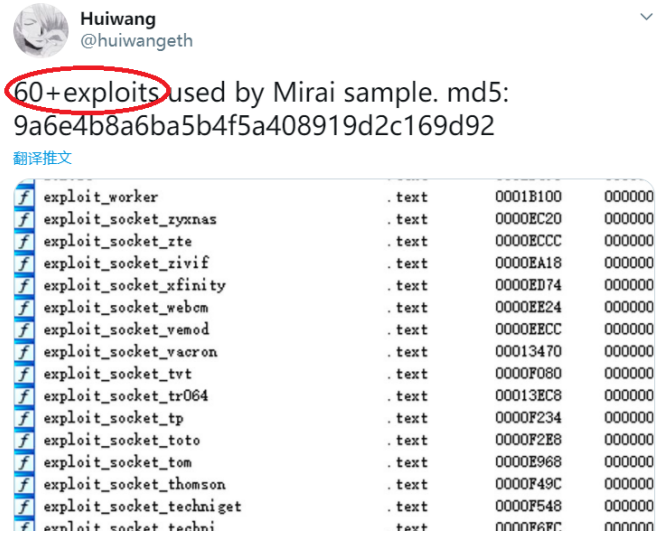
```
BUILD DESTRUCTION LOL - 150 - POO POO IN YA CEREAL
PING
P
!* SCANNER ON
```

register

command

```
aJunkIpPortTime db 'JUNK <ip> <port> <time>',0
```

Why so many Gafgyt variants?



Developing a new Gafgyt variant is just a process of "Ctrl+c" and "Ctrl+v".

Fast emerging while short living

time	yara	md5	down_server	filename
20-04-15 05:11:48+08:00	vbot_v1	2a141cd2930536f74f51fb57adbb0236	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS
20-04-15 05:11:53+08:00	vbot_v1	8717baf17660d8e96813ccd99f32c0be	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS
20-04-15 05:12:00+08:00	vbot_v1	cc559b487e1ec18727f37006bd3395e0	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS
20-04-15 05:12:09+08:00	vbot_v1	f666c3398601cd1b017f8d4556cabbbc	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS
20-04-15 05:12:18+08:00	vbot_v1	6fb6aaa253c165636ee63a4fdcdb1b9e	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS
20-04-15 05:12:18+08:00	vbot_v1	f422707ac869240bfeea648b6f9b90ad	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS
20-04-15 05:12:28+08:00	vbot_v1	36997fd129a5ff09311da94c3814379c	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS
20-04-15 05:12:28+08:00	vbot_v1	790ae71c097662bf6efba92d2d633076	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS
20-04-15 05:12:39+08:00	vbot_v1	e420df68941cc7ce2d8dd4ba92fd360e	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS
20-04-15 05:12:49+08:00	vbot_v1	3e36440871a6e39ee87e6d7d1a42155a	185.225.19.200	RHOMBUS

vbot v1

- It kept active from mid-April to mid-June
- 2 versions have been found
- **31** campaigns were detected, with **572** samples captured from **12** download servers
- **13** C2 servers were found

20-04-16 17:27:37+08:00	vbot_v2	efabd7e734490b9ad12812982347f237	185.225.19.200	Slsmodsd
20-04-16 17:27:43+08:00	vbot_v2	614581bba324c3550a18268a8cb9c221	185.225.19.200	Slsmodsd
20-04-16 17:27:51+08:00	vbot_v2	86310b514c55d31db288a2bb2c1e6114	185.225.19.200	zte

vbot v2

IoC extraction

- Quick IoC extraction would play an important role in fighting Gafgyt like fast emerging while short living threats
- Current solutions include sandbox based and static analysis based
- Issues of sandbox based IoC extraction:
  - deploying sandboxes of multiple CPU architectures
  - needing to know fixed patterns of C2 messages in advance
  - potentially impacting other systems due to scans initialized by samples
- Static analysis based solution has the issue of signature explosion

About lightweight emulation

- LWE: Lightweight Emulation

	Sandbox	LWE
Is dynamic analysis?	yes	yes
Targets	PE、ELF、DOC、…	code snippet
Instruction-level instrumentation	Not necessary	MUST
Are syscalls provided?	MUST	No, or partially provided
Time	a few minutes	a few seconds
Output	behavior reports, PCAPs	logs of executed instructions, CPU registers and memory snapshots

2 prerequisites for LWE based extractions

1. Fixed behavior patterns can be concluded from interested code
   - C2 communication code
2. The target code can be located in an automatic manner
   - Such locating must be independent of static patterns
   - CFG patterns are recommended

LWE engine

Unicorn

The ultimate CPU emulator

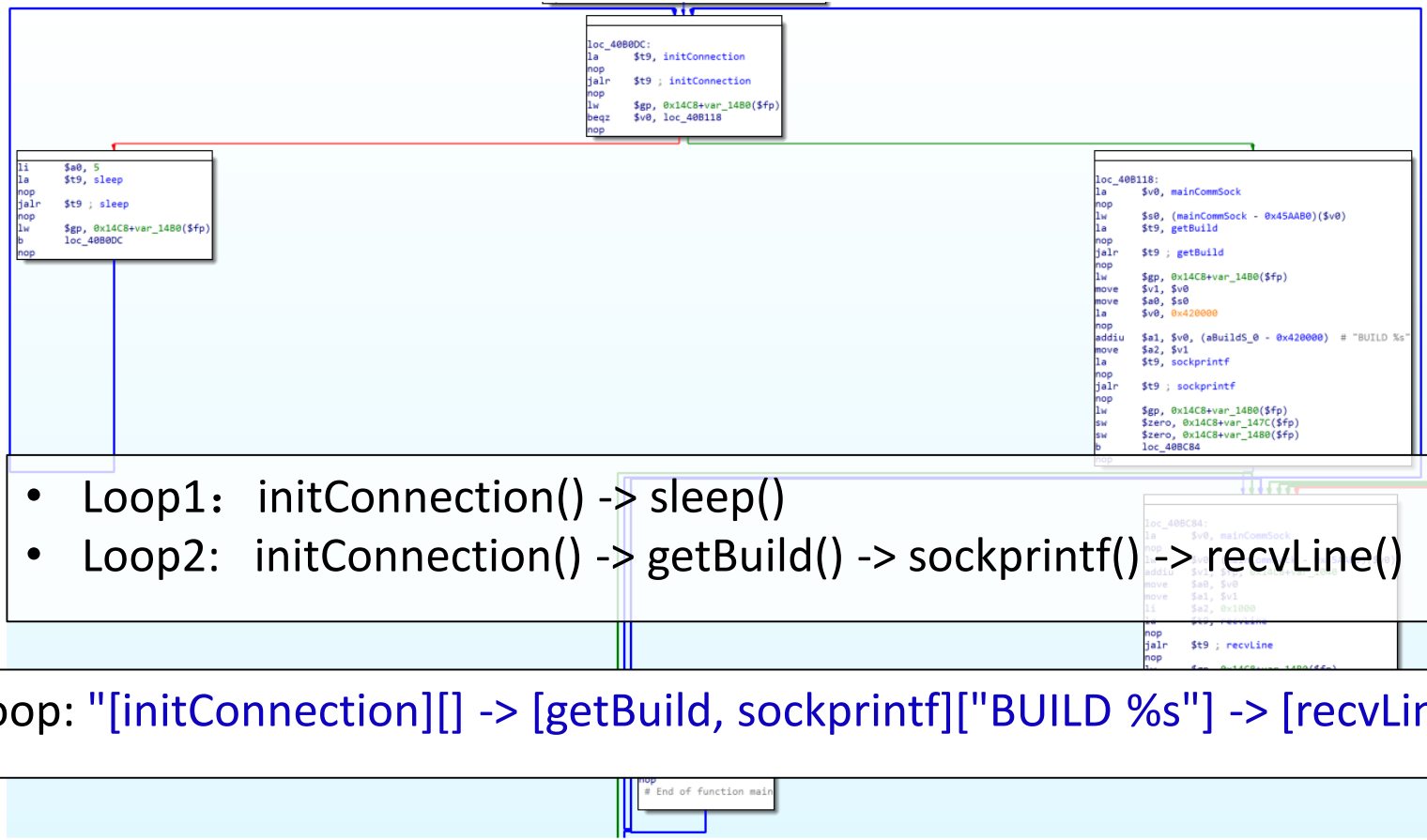
Highlight features:

- Multi-architectures: Arm, Arm64 (Armv8), M68K, Mips, Sparc, & X86 (include X86_64).
- Clean/simple/lightweight/intuitive architecture-neutral API.
- Implemented in pure C language, with bindings for Pharo, Crystal, Clojure, Visual Basic, Perl, Rust, Haskell, Ruby, Python, Java, Go, .NET, Delphi/Pascal & MSVC available.
- Native support for Windows & *nix (with Mac OSX, Linux, *BSD & Solaris confirmed).
- High performance by using Just-In-Time compiler technique.
- Support fine-grained instrumentation at various levels.
- Thread-safe by design.
- Distributed under free software license GPLv2.

https://www.unicorn-engine.org/

Gafgyt C2 loop

C2 loop in main()



- Loop1： initConnection() -> sleep()
- Loop2： initConnection() -> getBuild() -> sockprintf() -> recvLine()

C2 loop: "[initConnection][] -> [getBuild, sockprintf]["BUILD %s"] -> [recvLine][] -> [][]"

A summary of C2 loop

- It’ s characteristic enough to be used to distinguish Gafgyt from other families, e.g., Mirai
- With C2 loop, we can:
  - directly get the register message template string
  - find the **initConnection()** function for further emulation to get C2
    - This function is responsible for establishing C2 connection
- It can be found by traversing control flow graph (CFG) of the main() function with IDA Python or radare2
  - graph algorithms, e.g., depth-first-search, are used

C2 loops vs variants

- C2 loops also vary across variants

"[initConnection][] --> [jprintf]["arch %s", "unknown"] --> [recvLine][] --> [][] "
"[initConnection][] --> [][] --> [recvLine][] --> [][] "
"[ec hoconnection][] --> [][] --> [recvLine][] --> [][] "
"[initConnection][] --> [sprintf, sockprintf]["fftt:%s"] --> [recvLine][] --> [][] "
"[Connection, botkiller, recv_buf][] "

- Common C2 loops can be summarized into 6 types according to their CFG patterns
  - block number
  - called functions
  - referenced strings

Examples of type 1~3

type 1

"[initConnection][] -> [sockprintf]["3", "BUILD %s"] -> [recvLine][] -> [][]"
"[initConnection][] -> [getBuild, sockprintf][" 0i&", "BUILD %s"] -> [recvLine][]"

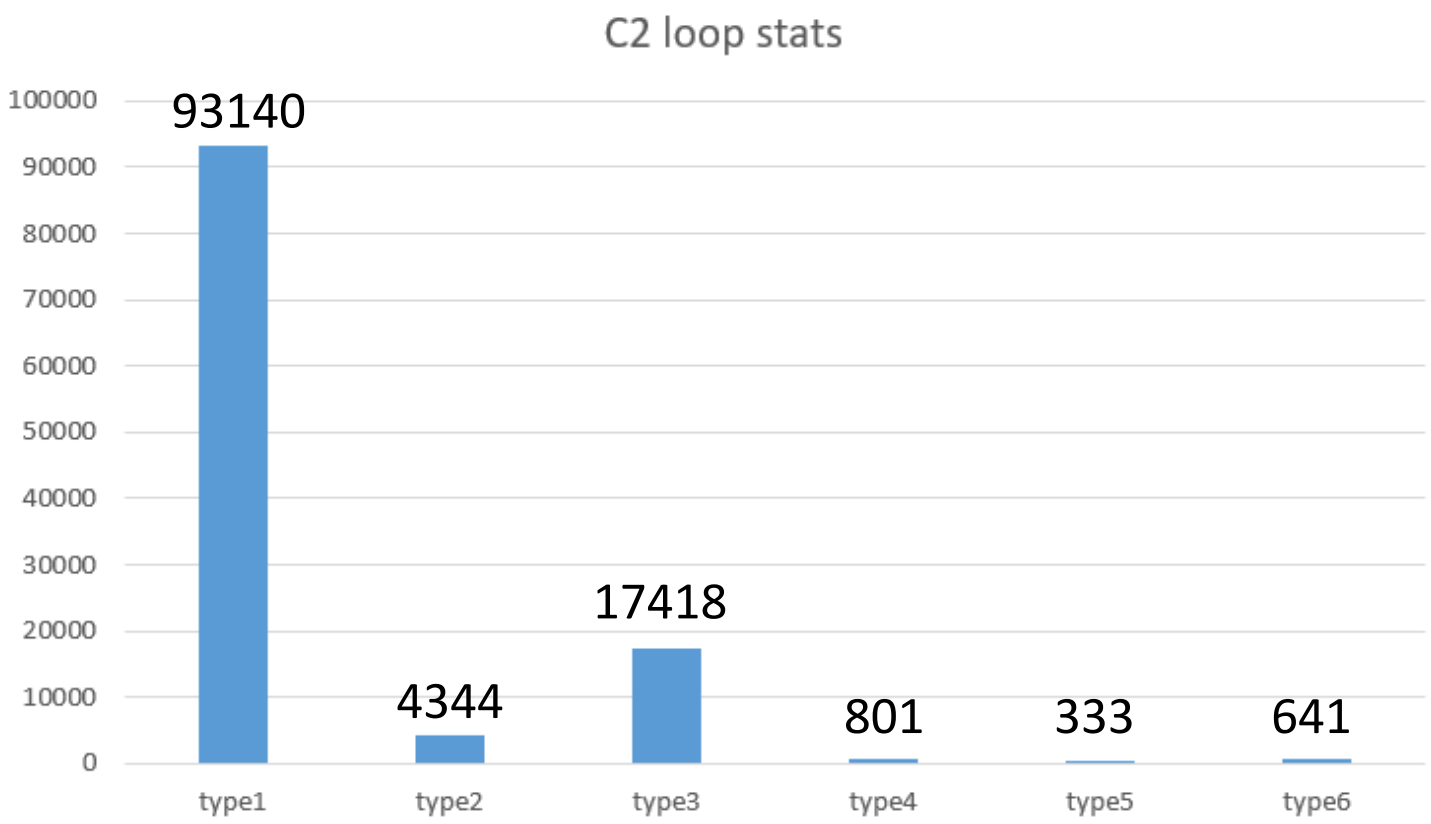
type 2

"[echoconnection][] -> [][] -> [recvLine][] -> [puts]["UPDATING", "ECHOBOT"]"
"[echoconnection][] -> [][] -> [recvLine][] -> [][]"

type 3

"[recvLine][] -> [initConnection][] -> [sockprintf]["BUILD %s", "DONGS"]"
"[viron][] -> [initConnection][] -> [sleep][]"

C2 loop stats on 116,677 samples



About register message template

- It’ s used to generate the register message with sprintf()
- Hundreds of template strings have been found

```
BUILD ART OF WAR
BUILD BLACKCULT %s
BUILD BOT : %s : %s
BUILD HERAV1 %s
BUILD Pussy Destroyer v911
BUILD [%s:%s:%d]
BUILD [[35m%s[37m] [[31m%s[37m]
```

```
[ %s CONNECTED ] [ %s: ] [ Arch Type: %s ]
[ BOT ] [ KETASHI ] ---> Bot Joined
[ SUPREME ]-->[%s]-->[%s]-->[%s]-->[%s]-->[%s]
[!] KATURA [!]  ~> [%s] ~> [%s] ~> [%s] ~> [%s] ~> [%s] ~> [%s]
[!] device connected [%s:%s:%s]
[+] Bot Connected - %s - Architecture %s
[+] Joined Hacker!: %s
```

- They are useful to detect Gafgyt C2 communication from network traffic
- Therefore template string is one of the extraction goals

Lightweight emulating initConnection()

Extracting C2 from initConnection()

```
_BOOL4 initConnection()
{
  int v0; // eax
  int v2; // [esp+24h] [ebp-1004h]
  int v3; // [esp+1024h] [ebp-4h]

  memset(&v2, 0, 4096);
  if ( mainCommSock )
  {
    close(mainCommSock);
    mainCommSock = 0;
  }
  if ( currentServer )
    ++currentServer;
  else
    currentServer = 0;
  strcpy(&v2, (&commServer)[currentServer]);
  v3 = 23;
  if ( strchr(&v2, 58) )
  {
    v0 = strchr(&v2, 58);
    v3 = atol(v0 + 1);
    *(_BYTE *)strchr(&v2, 5
  }
  mainCommSock = socket(2, 1, 0);
  return connectTimeout(mainCommSock, (int)&v2, v3, 30) == 0;
}
```

```
commServer:     .globl commServer
                .word a45_67_14_16513    # DATA XREF: initConnection+F4↑o
                                         # .got:commServer_ptr↓o
                                         # "45.67.14.165:13371"
```

The key is to intercept the call to ***strcpy()*** to get its argument of ***commServer***

Emulation steps

1. Initialization
   - Setting CPU arch and initializing registers
   - Mapping ELF file including code and data
   - Installing hooks of UC_HOOK_CODE and UC_HOOK_MEM_WRITE
2. Emulating initConnection() from its starting address
3. Post analysis
   - Parsing logged events: call and memory write
   - Reading C2 from global memory with parsed address

Instruction level instrumentation

- It is done through unicorn hook of UC_HOOK_CODE
- When encountering a call instruction, it will:
  - log the PC together with its arguments for post analysis
  - set return value, e.g., EAX in x86 CPU, to zero or a valid memory addr
  - skip to next instruction

    "call", pc=0x0804dc4f, (0x0124eff8, 0, 0x1000, 0)
- When detecting ending address or an address beyond emulation range, it will stop the emulation

Hooking memory writes

- It’s done through unicorn hook of UC_HOOK_MEM_WRITE
- Only writes to global memory are logged
  - to ignore writes to stack memory
- For each event, the logged information includes PC, write address, size, and value

  "write", pc=0x0804dc8a, (0x080591b0, 0x00000004, 0x00000000)

Post analysis

```
_BOOL4 initConnection()
{
  int v0; // eax
  int v2; // [esp+24h] [ebp-1004h]
  int v3; // [esp+1024h] [ebp-4h]

  memset(&v2, 0, 4096);
  if ( mainCommSock )
  {
    close(mainCommSock);
    mainCommSock = 0;
  }
  if ( currentServer )
    ++currentServer;
  else
    currentServer = 0;
  strcpy(&v2, (&commServer)[currentServer]);
  v3 = 23;
  if ( strchr(&v2, 58) )
  {
    v0 = strchr(&v2, 58);
    v3 = atol(v0 + 1);
    *(_BYTE *)strchr(&v2, 58) = 0;
  }
  mainCommSock = socket(2, 1, 0);
  return connectTimeout(mainCommSock, (int)&v2, v3, 30) == 0;
}
```

memset()
'call", (0x0124eff8, 0, 0x1000, 0)

#currentserver
'write", (0x080591b0, 0x00000004, 0x00000000)

#strcpy() & strchr()
'call", (0x0124eff8, **0x0805544d**)
'call", (0x0124eff8, 0x3a)

#socket () & connectTimeout()
'call", (2, 1, 0)
'write", (0x08059540, 0x00000004, 0x00000000)
'call", (0x00000000, 0x0124eff8, 0x17, 0x1e)

Another version of initConnection()

```
memset(&server, 0LL, 4096LL);
if ( KHcommSOCK )
{
  close((unsigned int)KHcommSOCK);
  KHcommSOCK = 0;
}
if ( KHserverHACKER == 3 )
  KHserverHACKER = 0;
else
  ++KHserverHACKER;
szprintf(
  &server,
  "%d.%d.%d.%d",
  (unsigned int)hacks[KHserverHACKER],
  (unsigned int)hacks2[KHserverHACKER],
  (unsigned int)hacks3[KHserverHACKER],
  (unsigned int)hacks4[KHserverHACKER]);
port = hakai_bp;
if ( strchr(&server, 58LL) )
{
  v0 = strchr(&server, 58LL);
  port = atoi(v0 + 1);
  *(_BYTE *)strchr(&server, 58LL) = 0;
}
KHcommSOCK = socket(2LL, 1LL, 0LL);
return (unsigned int)connectTimeout(KHcommSOCK, &server, port, 30) == 0;
}
```

#memset
"call", (0x0124efe8, 0x00000000, 0x00001000, 0x10101010)

KHserverHACKER
"write", (0x0051a640, 0x00000004, 0x00000000)

#sprintf
"call", (0x0124efe8, 0x00417f10, 0xc6, 0x90, 0xb5, 0x11)

strchr
"call", (0x0124efe8, 0x0000003a, 0x10101010, 0x00000090)

socket() & connectTimeout()
"call", (0x00000002, 0x00000001, 0x00000000, 0x00000090)
"write", (0x0051aba0, 0x00000004, 0x00000000)
"call", (0x00000000, 0x0124efe8, 0x00000e4f, 0x0000001e)

Behavior patterns and extraction rules

- IoC extraction is actually done in post analysis stage
  - applying specific behavior patterns on logged events
  - if matched, the extraction rules will be used to get the C2s
- In total, 6 types of initConnection() are concluded
- For each type a extraction rule is defined
  - Simplified pattern: for quick matching
  - Behavior pattern: for detailed matching
  - Extraction rules: actions to execute if matched successfully

An example extraction rule

Type 1

MD5= 00432f33fb3f5cc5377266a5439567bf, x86

Simplified pattern: “cw4cccw4c”

c: call
w4: 4-byte-write
w2: 2-byte-write

Behavior pattern: “call_memset, w4, call_strcpy, call_strchr, call_socket, w4, call_connectTimeout”

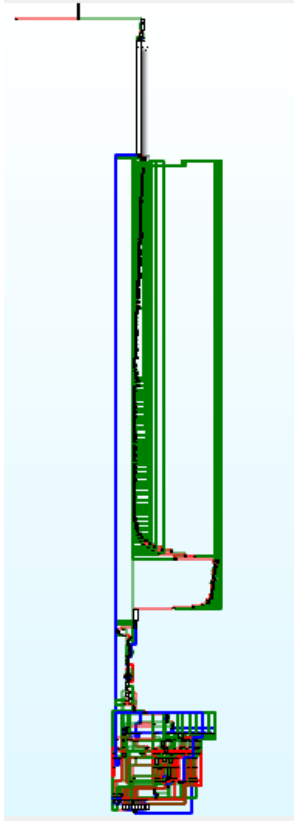
Static pattern: blocs=11, edges=14, called_functions=7, strs=["198.134.120.150:23"]

Extraction rules:

Reading global memory pointed by arg2 of strcpy() to get the string format of “C2:port”

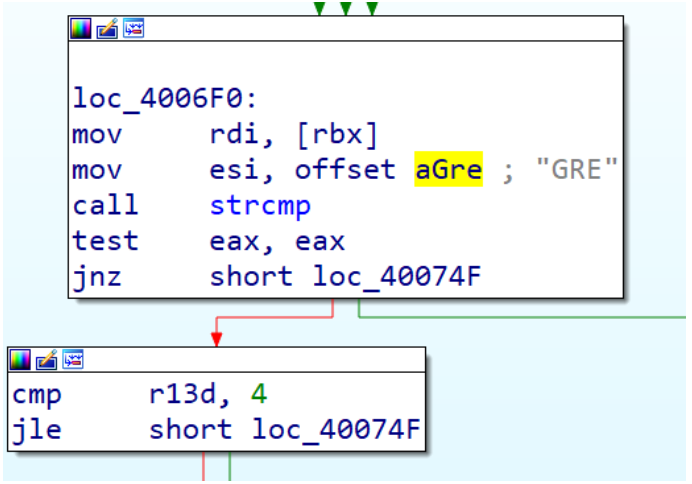
Mirai code in Gafgyt

Variants of Gafgyt + Mirai



scanner_init()

MD5= 00c183e4661881402f3dc90fd9f99c57



processCmd()

MD5= 05af2f5a37f3840ef7441c0f607a390a

Mirai's Achilles heel

- A custom encrypted configuration db is heavily used in Mirai

```
table_unlock_val(TABLE_CNC_DOMAIN);
entries = resolv_lookup(table_retrieve_val(TABLE_CNC_DOMAIN, NULL));
table_lock_val(TABLE_CNC_DOMAIN);
```

- It's usually copied together with the borrowed code
  - The original design is not bad
  - Its connections with other modules are too tight to be easily cut
  - The authors are lazy, or just don't know how to cut it
- Therefore it's possible to analyze Gafgyt+Mirai variants by analyzing their configurations

About configuration extraction

- It ‘s also based on LWE, and was presented on VB2018
  - https://www.virusbulletin.com/virusbulletin/2018/12/vb2018-paper-tracking-mirai-variants/

```
void table_init(void)
{
    add_entry(TABLE_CNC_DOMAIN, "\x41\x4C\x41\x0C\x41\x4A\x43\x4C\
    add_entry(TABLE_CNC_PORT, "\x22\x35", 2);    // 23

    add_entry(TABLE_SCAN_CB_DOMAIN, "\x50\x47\x52\x4D\x50\x56\x0C\
    add_entry(TABLE_SCAN_CB_PORT, "\x99\xC7", 2);          // 48101
```

Gafgyt variant of vbot

https://blog.netlab.360.com/the-gafgyt-variant-vbot-and-its-31-campaigns/

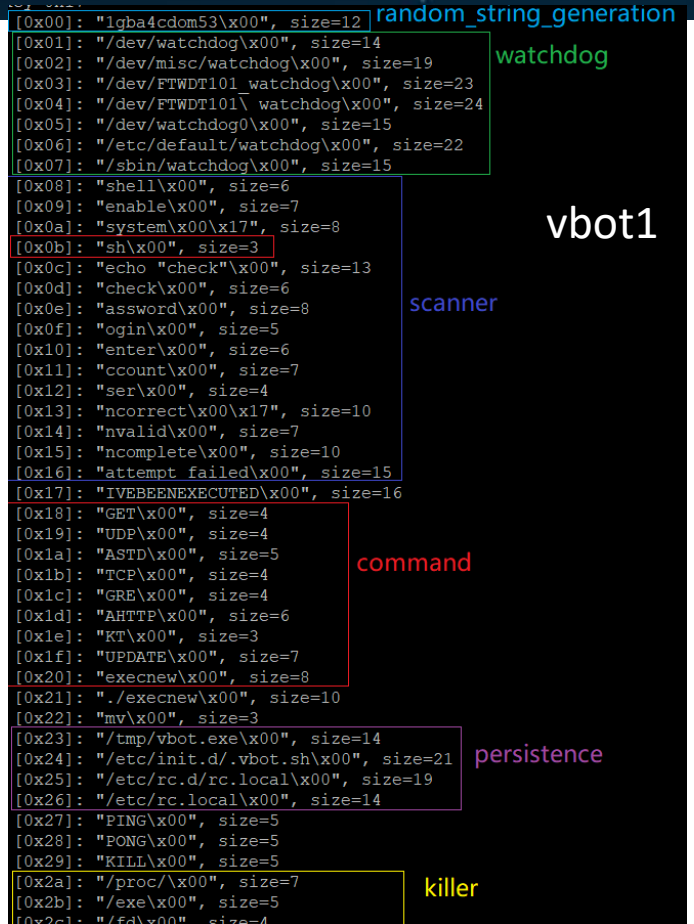
```
loc_9DBC
LDR      R1, =botarch
LDR      R12, [R1]
LDM      R11, {R2,R3}
STR      R12, [SP,#0x4D0+var_4CC]
LDR      R12, =bottype
LDR      R1, =aVerFSD      ; "ver:%f:%s:%d"
MOV      R0, R6
STR      R12, [SP,#0x4D0+var_4D0]
BL       sprintf
MOV      R1, R6
LDR      R0, [R5]
BL       sockprintf
MOV      R1, #0x3FC
MOV      R0, R6
ADD      R1, R1, #3
BL       util_zero
```

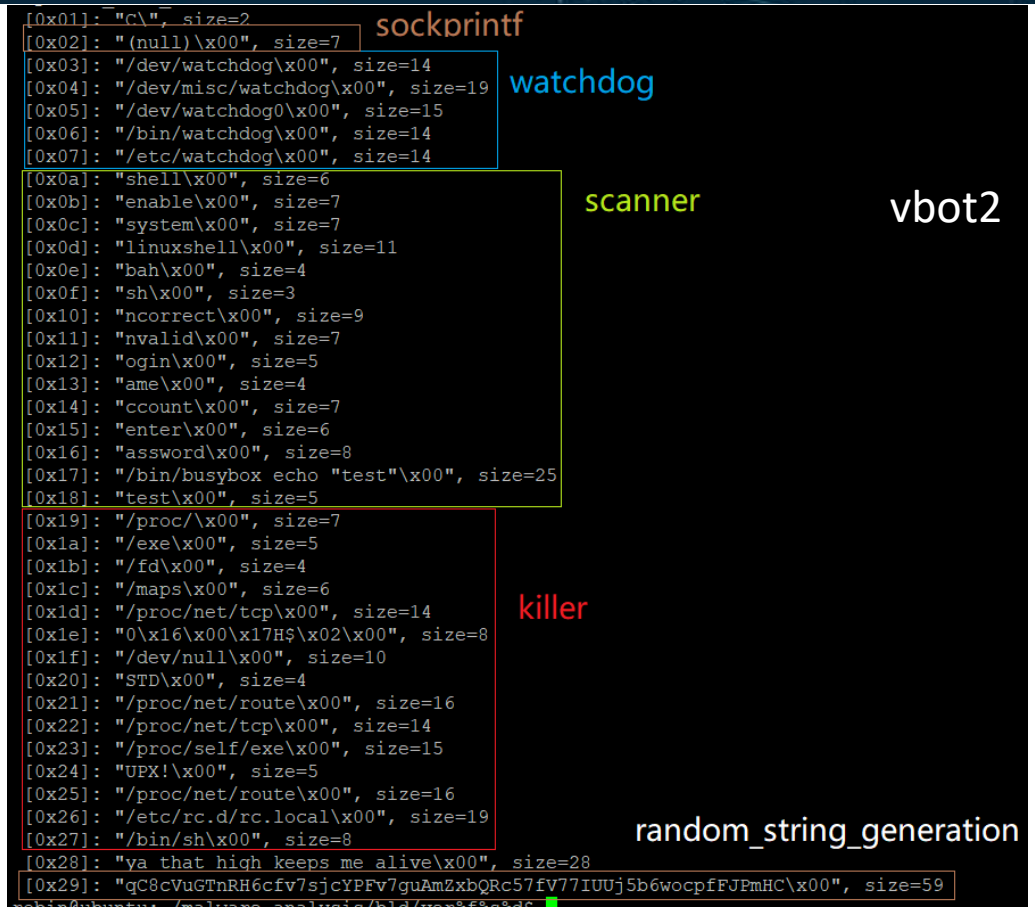
vbot1

```
REGISTRATION:
push     eax
push     eax
mov      eax, ds:dword_80615C4
push     eax
push     offset unk_80615E0
mov      eax, dword_805B044
push     eax
mov      ebp, dword_805B040
push     ebp
push     offset aVerFSD  ; "ver:%f:%s:%d"
lea      edx, [esp+12A8h+var_268]
push     edx
call     sprintf
add      esp, 1Ch
lea      eax, [esp+1290h+var_268]
push     eax
push     offset aS       ; "%s"
mov      edi, ds:fd
push     edi
call     sockprintf
add      esp, 10h
```

vbot2

Configuration comparison





Some conclusions on vbot

- Although they shared the same registration code, they were obviously derived from different code bases

- Since the registration code is characteristic enough, both versions should have come from the same authors

- The authors have multiple sets of code bases

A summary of extracted configurations

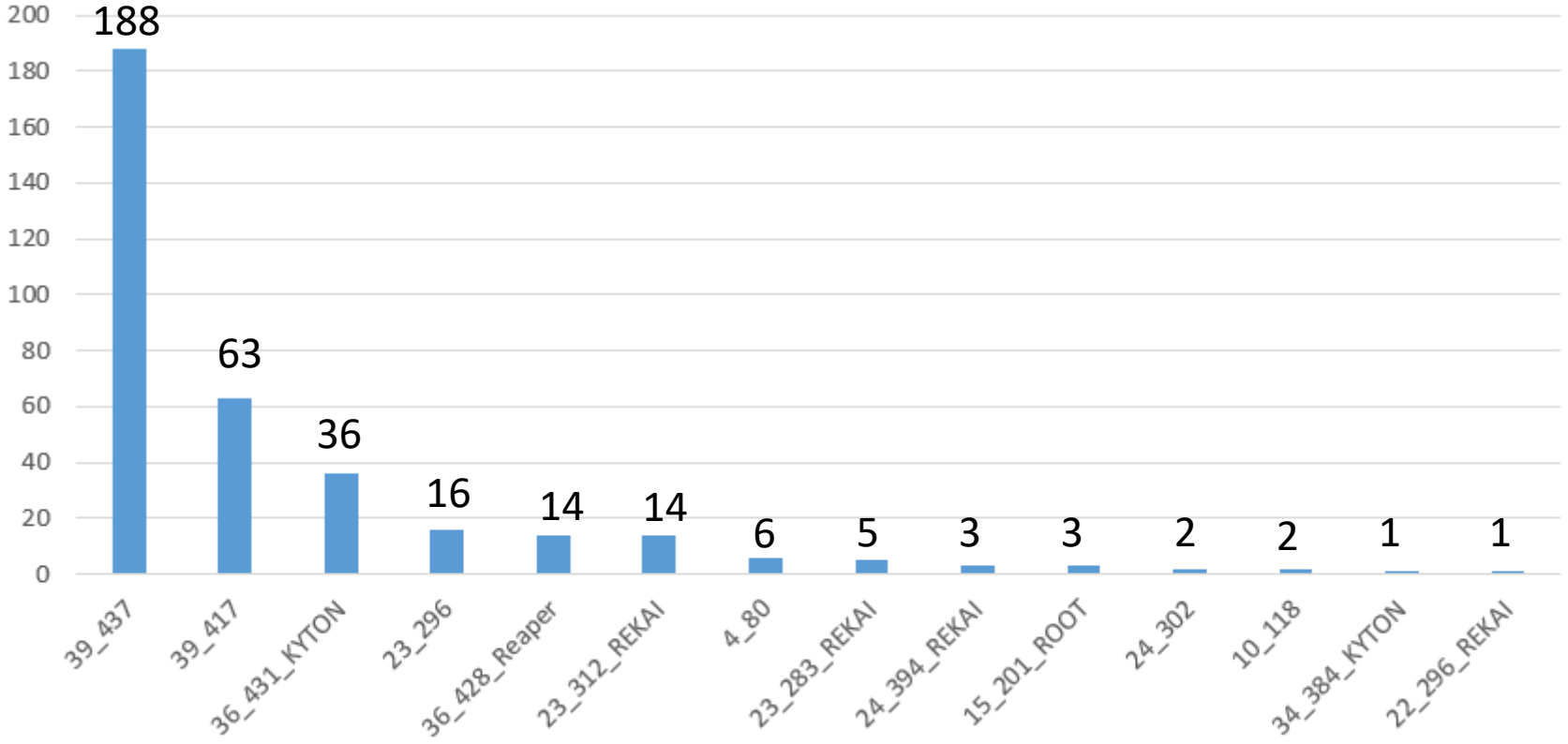
- In total Mirai **16** configurations have been successfully extracted from **3,700** Gafgyt samples
- With the extracted configurations those samples can be well grouped
  - Each group of sample share the same configuration usage patterns
  - In most cases they can be classified as the same variant
- Similar configurations hint potential code sharing

The most common configuration

```
[0x01]: "C\", addr=0x00000001, size=2
[0x02]: "(null)\x00", addr=0x00000002, size=7
[0x03]: "/dev/watchdog\x00", addr=0x00000003, size=14
[0x04]: "/dev/misc/watchdog\x00", addr=0x00000004, size=19
[0x05]: "/dev/watchdog0\x00", addr=0x00000005, size=15
[0x06]: "/bin/watchdog\x00", addr=0x00000006, size=14
[0x07]: "/etc/watchdog\x00", addr=0x00000007, size=14
[0x0a]: "shell\x00", addr=0x0000000a, size=6
[0x0b]: "enable\x00", addr=0x0000000b, size=7
[0x0c]: "system\x00", addr=0x0000000c, size=7
[0x0d]: "linuxshell\x00", addr=0x0000000d, size=11
[0x0e]: "\xe2\xe1\xe8\x80", addr=0x0000000e, size=4
[0x0f]: "sh\x00", addr=0x0000000f, size=3
[0x10]: "ncorrect\x00", addr=0x00000010, size=9
[0x11]: "ogin\x00", addr=0x00000011, size=5
[0x12]: "enter\x00", addr=0x00000012, size=6
[0x13]: "assword\x00", addr=0x00000013, size=8
[0x14]: "/bin/busybox KYTON\x00", addr=0x00000014, size=19
[0x15]: "KYTON: applet not found\x00", addr=0x00000015, size=24
[0x16]: "/proc/\x00", addr=0x00000016, size=7
[0x17]: "/exe\x00", addr=0x00000017, size=5
[0x18]: "/fd\x00", addr=0x00000018, size=4
[0x19]: "/maps\x00", addr=0x00000019, size=6
[0x1a]: "/proc/net/tcp\x00", addr=0x0000001a, size=14
[0x1b]: "0\x16\x00\x17H$\x02\x00", addr=0x0000001b, size=8
[0x1c]: "/dev/null\x00", addr=0x0000001c, size=10
[0x1d]: "STD\x00", addr=0x0000001d, size=4
[0x1e]: "/proc/net/route\x00", addr=0x0000001e, size=16
[0x1f]: "/proc/net/tcp\x00", addr=0x0000001f, size=14
[0x20]: "/proc/self/exe\x00", addr=0x00000020, size=15
[0x21]: "UPX!\x00", addr=0x00000021, size=5
[0x22]: "/proc/net/route\x00", addr=0x00000022, size=16
[0x23]: "/etc/rc.d/rc.local\x00", addr=0x00000023, size=19
[0x24]: "/bin/sh\x00", addr=0x00000024, size=8
[0x25]: "-\x0a\x02\x01\x07\x10\x01\x00", addr=0x00000025, size=8
[0x26]: "qC8cVuGTnRH6cfv7sjcYPFv7guAmZxbQRc57fV77IUUj5b6wocpfFJPmHC\x00", addr=0x00000026, size=59
```

- It covers **3,347** samples
- Renamed as 36_412_KYTON
  - 36 items
  - Total size is 412
  - Branch name is KYTON
- Some similar ones
  - 39_437 , 39_417, 36_431_KYTON, 36_428_Reaper

Stats on other 15 configurations



Conclusions

- Gafgtyt variants can be recognized with their characteristic C2 loops
- With C2 loops, both register message template and initConnection() function can be obtained
- C2 information can be got by lightweight emulating initConnection() together with the concluded behavior patterns
- Gafgyt + Mirai variants can be well analyzed with Mirai characteristic configurations


Thank you
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