Malicious software

- Shortened to Mal...ware
- Software whose inherent goal is malicious
  - Not just used for bad purposes
- Strong adversary
- High visibility
- Many types

Trojan (horse)

- Looks benign, has secret malicious functionality
- Key technique: fool users into installing/running
- Concern dates back to 1970s, MLS

(Computer) viruses

- Attaches itself to other software
- Propagates when that program runs
- Once upon a time: floppy disks
- More modern: macro viruses
- Have declined in relative importance

Worms

- Completely automatic self-propagation
- Requires remote security holes
- Classic example: 1988 Morris worm
  - “Golden age” in early 2000s
- Internet-level threat seems to have declined
### Fast worm propagation
- Initial hit-list
  - Pre-scan list of likely targets
  - Accelerate cold-start phase
- Permutation-based sampling
  - Systematic but not obviously patterned
  - Pseudorandom permutation
- Approximate time: 15 minutes
  - “Warhol worm”
  - Too fast for human-in-the-loop response

### Getting underneath
- Lower-level/higher-privilege code can deceive normal code
- Rootkit: hide malware by changing kernel behavior
- MBR virus: take control early in boot
- Blue-pill attack: malware is a VMM running your system

### Malware motivation
- Once upon a time: curiosity, fame
- Now predominates: money
  - Modest-size industry
  - Competition and specialization
- Also significant: nation-states
  - Industrial espionage
  - Stuxnet (not officially acknowledged)

### User-based monetization
- Adware, mild spyware
- Keyloggers, stealing financial credentials
- Ransomware
  - Application of public-key encryption
  - Malware encrypts user files
  - Only $300 for decryption key

### Bots and botnets
- Bot: program under control of remote attacker
- Botnet: large group of bot-infected computers with common “master”
- Command & control network protocol
  - Once upon a time: IRC
  - Now more likely custom and obfuscated
  - Centralized → peer-to-peer
  - Gradually learning crypto and protocol lessons

### Bot monetization
- Click (ad) fraud
- Distributed DoS (next section)
- Bitcoin mining
- Pay-per-install (subcontracting)
- Spam sending
Malware/anti-virus arms race

- "Anti-virus" (AV) systems are really general anti-malware
- Clear need, but hard to do well
- No clear distinction between benign and malicious
- Endless possibilities for deception

Signature-based AV

- Similar idea to signature-based IDS
- Would work well if malware were static
- In reality:
  - Large, changing database
  - Frequent updated from analysts
  - Not just software, a subscription
  - Malware stays enough ahead to survive

Emulation and AV

- Simple idea: run sample, see if it does something evil
- Obvious limitation: how long do you wait?
- Simple version can be applied online
- More sophisticated emulators/VMs used in backend analysis

Polymorphism

- Attacker makes many variants of starting malware
- Different code sequences, same behavior
- One estimate: 30 million samples observed in 2012
- But could create more if needed

Packing

- Sounds like compression, but real goal is obfuscation
- Static code creates real code on the fly
- Or, obfuscated bytecode interpreter
- Outsourced to independent “protection” tools

Fake anti-virus

- Major monetization strategy recently
- Your system is infected, pay $19.95 for cleanup tool
- For user, not fundamentally distinguishable from real AV
Outline

Malware and the network
Announcements intermission
Denial of service and the network

Exercise set 3: CCEA1/2

Intent: not a Caesar cipher, just has 8-bit block
What’s the largest possible key space size?
Collision dangers with block ciphers?
Chosen-plaintext attack against block cipher

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DoS versus other vulnerabilities

Effect: normal operations merely become impossible
Software example: crash as opposed to code injection
Less power that complete compromise, but practical severity can vary widely
  - Airplane control DoS, etc.

When is it DoS?

Very common for users to affect others’ performance
Focus is on unexpected and unintended effects
Unexpected channel or magnitude

Algorithmic complexity attacks

Can an adversary make your algorithm have worst-case behavior?
$O(n^2)$ quicksort
Hash table with all entries in one bucket
Exponential backtracking in regex matching
**XML entity expansion**

- XML entities (c.f. HTML &lt) are like C macros

```c
#define B (A+A+A+A+A)
#define C (B+B+B+B+B)
#define D (C+C+C+C+C)
#define E (D+D+D+D+D)
#define F (E+E+E+E+E)
```

**Compression DoS**

- Some formats allow very high compression ratios
  - Simple attack: compress very large input
  - More powerful: nested archives
  - Also possible: “zip file quine” decompresses to itself

**DoS against network services**

- Common example: keep legitimate users from viewing a web site
- Easy case: pre-forked server supports 100 simultaneous connections
- Fill them with very very slow downloads

**Tiny bit of queueing theory**

- Mathematical theory of waiting in line
- Simple case: random arrival, sequential fixed-time service
  - M/D/1
- If arrival rate \( \geq \) service rate, expected queue length grows without bound

**SYN flooding**

- SYN is first of three packets to set up new connection
- Traditional implementation allocates space for control data
- However much you allow, attacker fills with unfinished connections
- Early limits were very low (10-100)

**SYN cookies**

- Change server behavior to stateless approach
- Embed small amount of needed information in fields that will be echoed in third packet
  - MAC-like construction
- Other disadvantages, so usual implementations used only under attack
DoS against network links
- Try to use all available bandwidth, crowd out real traffic
- Brute force but still potentially effective
- Baseline attacker power measured by packet sending rate

Traffic multipliers
- Third party networks (not attacker or victim)
- One input packet causes $n$ output packets
- Commonly, victim’s address is forged source, multiply replies
- Misuse of debugging features

“Smurf” broadcast ping
- ICMP echo request with forged source
- Sent to a network broadcast address
- Every recipient sends reply
- Now mostly fixed by disabling this feature

Distributed DoS
- Many attacker machines, one victim
- Easy if you own a botnet
- Impractical to stop bots one-by-one
- May prefer legitimate-looking traffic over weird attacks
  - Main consideration is difficulty to filter

Next time
- Network anonymity with overlay networks