### ECE590 Computer and Information Security

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#### Malware

Tyler Bletsch Duke University

## Malware

[SOUP13] defines malware as: "a program that is inserted into a system, usually covertly, with the intent of compromising the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of the victim's data, applications, or operating system or otherwise annoying or disrupting the victim."



Name	Description	
Advanced persistent threat	Cybercrime directed at business and political targets, using a wide variety of intrusion technologies and malware, applied persistently and effectively to specific targets over an extended period, often attributed to state-sponsored organizations.	
Adware	Advertising that is integrated into software. It can result in pop-up ads o redirection of a browser to a commercial site.	
Attack Kit	Set of tools for generating new malware automatically using a variety of supplied propagation and payload mechanisms.	
Auto-rooter	Malicious hacker tools used to break into new machines remotely.	
Backdoor (trapdoor)	Any mechanisms that bypasses a normal security check; it may allow unauthorized access to functionality in a program, or onto a compromised system.	
Downloaders	Code that installs other items on a machine that is under attack. It is normally included in the malware code first inserted on to a compromised system to then import a larger malware package.	
Drive-by download	An attack using code in a compromised web site that exploits a browser vulnerability to attack a client system when the site is viewed.	
Exploits	Code specific to a single vulnerability or set of vulnerabilities.	
Flooders (DoS client)	Used to generate a large volume of data to attack networked computer systems, by carrying out some form of denial-of-service (DoS) attack.	
Keyloggers	Captures keystrokes on a compromised system.	
Logic bomb	Code inserted into malware by an intruder. A logic bomb lies dormant until a predefined condition is met; the code then triggers an unauthorized act.	
Macro Virus	A type of virus that uses macro or scripting code, typically embedded in a document, and triggered when the document is viewed or edited, to run and replicate itself into other such documents.	
Mobile Code	Software (e.g., script, macro, or other portable instruction) that can be shipped unchanged to a heterogeneous collection of platforms and execute with identical semantics.	
Rootkit	Set of hacker tools used after attacker has broken into a computer system and gained root-level access.	
Spammer Programs	Used to send large volumes of unwanted e-mail.	
Spyware	Software that collects information from a computer and transmits it to another system by monitoring keystrokes, screen data and/or network traffic; or by scanning files on the system for sensitive information.	

Trojan horse	A computer program that appears to have a useful function, but also has a hidden and potentially malicious function that evades security mechanisms, sometimes by exploiting legitimate authorizations of a system entity that invokes the Trojan horse program.
Virus	Malware that, when executed, tries to replicate itself into other executable machine or script code; when it succeeds the code is said to be infected. When the infected code is executed, the virus also executes.
Worm	A computer program that can run independently and can propagate a complete working version of itself onto other hosts on a network, usually by exploiting software vulnerabilities in the target system.
Zombie, bot	Program activated on an infected machine that is activated to launch attacks on other machines.

### Table 6.1 Malware Terminology



## Types of Malicious Software (Malware)

#### Propagation mechanisms include:

- Infection of existing content by viruses that is subsequently spread to other systems
- Exploit of software vulnerabilities by worms or drive-bydownloads to allow the malware to replicate
- Social engineering attacks that convince users to bypass security mechanisms to install Trojans or to respond to phishing attacks

#### Payload actions performed by malware once it reaches a target system can include:

- Corruption of system or data files
- Theft of service/make the system a zombie agent of attack as part of a botnet
- Theft of information from the system/keylogging
- Stealthing/hiding its presence on the system

#### Sidebar



## Attack Kits

- Initially the development and deployment of malware required considerable technical skill by software authors
  - The development of virus-creation toolkits in the early 1990s and then more general attack kits in the 2000s greatly assisted in the development and deployment of malware

#### Toolkits are often known as "crimeware"

- Include a variety of propagation mechanisms and payload modules that even novices can deploy
- Variants that can be generated by attackers using these toolkits creates a significant problem for those defending systems against them
- Widely used toolkits include:
  - o Zeus
  - o Blackhole
  - o Sakura
  - o Phoenix

## **Attack Sources**

 Another significant malware development is the change from attackers being individuals often motivated to demonstrate their technical competence to their peers to more organized and dangerous attack sources such as:

Politically motivated Criminals attackers

Organized crime Organizations that sell their services to companies and nations

National government agencies

 This has significantly changed the resources available and motivation behind the rise of malware and has led to development of a large underground economy involving the sale of attack kits, access to compromised hosts, and to stolen information

## Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs)

- Well-resourced, persistent application of a wide variety of intrusion technologies and malware to selected targets (usually business or political)
- Typically attributed to state-sponsored organizations and criminal enterprises
- Differ from other types of attack by their careful target selection and stealthy intrusion efforts over extended periods
- High profile attacks include Aurora, RSA, APT1, and Stuxnet

## **APT Characteristics**

#### Advanced

- Used by the attackers of a wide variety of intrusion technologies and malware including the development of custom malware if required
- The individual components may not necessarily be technically advanced but are carefully selected to suit the chosen target

#### Persistent

- Determined application of the attacks over an extended period against the chosen target in order to maximize the chance of success
- A variety of attacks may be progressively applied until the target is compromised

#### Threats

- Threats to the selected targets as a result of the organized, capable, and well-funded attackers intent to compromise the specifically chosen targets
- The active involvement of people in the process greatly raises the threat level from that due to automated attacks tools, and also the likelihood of successful attacks

## APT Attacks

#### • Aim:

 Varies from theft of intellectual property or security and infrastructure related data to the physical disruption of infrastructure

#### Techniques used:

- Social engineering
- Spear-phishing email
- Drive-by-downloads from selected compromised websites likely to be visited by personnel in the target organization

#### Intent:

- To infect the target with sophisticated malware with multiple propagation mechanisms and payloads
- Once they have gained initial access to systems in the target organization a further range of attack tools are used to maintain and extend their access

### **Classical malware categories**

- Viruses: Infect executables to spread
- Worms: Infect <u>machines</u> to spread
  - Via exploits or automated social attacks
- **Trojan**: Infect <u>machines</u> if you're dumb enough to run them
- **Rootkit**: Infect <u>kernels</u> to avoid detection/removal
  - Requires root access (or privilege escalation exploit to achieve root access)





### Viruses



- $\circ$   $\,$  Modifies them to include a copy of the virus
- Replicates and goes on to infect other content
- Easily spread through network environments
- When attached to an executable program a virus can do anything that the program is permitted to do
  - Executes secretly when the host program is run
- Specific to operating system and hardware
  - Takes advantage of their details and weaknesses

## Virus Components

#### **Infection mechanism**

- Means by which a virus spreads or propagates
- Also referred to as the infection vector

#### Trigger

- Event or condition that determines when the payload is activated or delivered
- Sometimes known as a logic bomb

#### Payload

- What the virus does (besides spreading)
- May involve damage or benign but noticeable activity

## Virus Phases

**Dormant phase** Not all viruses have this Will eventually be activated Virus is idle by some event stage **Triggering phase** Virus is activated to perform the function for Can be caused by a variety of system which it was intended events **Propagation phase** Each infected program will now Virus places a copy of itself into contain a clone of the virus May not be identical to the other programs or into certain which will itself enter a propagating version system areas on the disk propagation phase **Execution phase** Function is performed May be harmless or damaging

## Virus Structure

program CV

123/1567.



1254507,	123+307,
<pre>procedure attach-to-program; begin repeat file := get-random-program; until first-program-line ≠ 1234567; prepend V to file; end;</pre>	procedure attach-to-program; begin repeat file := get-random-program; until first-program-line $\neq$ 1234567; compress file; (* t <sub>1</sub> *) prepend CV to file; (* t <sub>2</sub> *)
<pre>procedure execute-payload; begin (* perform payload actions *) end; procedure trigger-condition; begin (* return true if trigger condition is true *) end;</pre>	<pre>end; begin (* main action block *) attach-to-program; uncompress rest of this file into tempfile; (* t<sub>3</sub> *) execute tempfile; (* t<sub>4</sub> *) end;</pre>
<pre>begin (* main action block *)   attach-to-program;   if trigger-condition then execute-payload;   goto main; end:</pre>	

(a) A simple virus

program V

1234567.

(b) A compression virus

#### Figure 6.1 Example Virus Logic



Figure 6.2 A Compression Virus

# Virus Classifications

### Classification by target

#### • Boot sector infector

- Infects a master boot record or boot record and spreads when a system is booted from the disk containing the virus
- File infector
  - Infects files that the operating system or shell considers to be executable
- Macro virus
  - Infects files with macro or scripting code that is interpreted by an application
- Multipartite virus
  - Infects files in multiple ways

## Classification by concealment strategy

- Encrypted virus
  - A portion of the virus creates a random encryption key and encrypts the remainder of the virus
- Stealth virus
  - A form of virus explicitly designed to hide itself from detection by anti-virus software
- Polymorphic virus
  - A virus that mutates with every infection
- Metamorphic virus
  - A virus that mutates and rewrites itself completely at each iteration and may change behavior as well as appearance

## Macro and Scripting Viruses

#### Very common in mid-1990s

- Platform independent
- Infect documents (not executable portions of code)
- Easily spread

#### Exploit macro capability of MS Office applications

- More recent releases of products include protection
- Various anti-virus programs have been developed so these are no longer the predominant virus threat



### Worms

- Program that actively seeks out more machines to infect and each infected machine serves as an automated launching pad for attacks on other machines
- Exploits software vulnerabilities in client or server programs
- Can use network connections to spread from system to system
- Spreads through shared media (USB drives, CD, DVD data disks)
- E-mail worms spread in macro or script code included in attachments and instant messenger file transfers
- Upon activation the worm may replicate and propagate again
- Usually carries some form of payload
- First known implementation was done in Xerox Palo Alto Labs in the early 1980s



# Worm Replication

Electronic mail or instant messenger facility	<ul> <li>Worm e-mails a copy of itself to other systems</li> <li>Sends itself as an attachment via an instant message service</li> </ul>	
File sharing	<ul> <li>Creates a copy of itself or infects a file as a virus on removable media</li> </ul>	
Remote execution capability	<ul> <li>Worm executes a copy of itself on another system</li> </ul>	
Remote file access or transfer capability	• Worm uses a remote file access or transfer service to copy itself from one system to the other	
Remote login capability	• Worm logs onto a remote system as a user and then uses commands to copy itself from one system to the other	

# Target Discovery

#### • Scanning (or fingerprinting)

- First function in the propagation phase for a network worm
- Searches for other systems to infect

#### Scanning strategies that a worm can use: •Random

- Each compromised host probes random addresses in the IP address space using a different seed
- This produces a high volume of Internet traffic which may cause generalized disruption even before the actual attack is launched

#### •Hit-list

- The attacker first compiles a long list of potential vulnerable machines
- Once the list is compiled the attacker begins infecting machines on the list
- Each infected machine is provided with a portion of the list to scan
- This results in a very short scanning period which may make it difficult to detect that infection is taking place

#### Topological

• This method uses information contained on an infected victim machine to find more hosts to scan

#### •Local subnet

- If a host can be infected behind a firewall that host then looks for targets in its own local network
- The host uses the subnet address structure to find other hosts that would otherwise be protected by the firewall



## Morris Worm



- Earliest significant worm infection
- Released by Robert Morris in 1988
- Designed to spread on UNIX systems
  - Attempted to crack local password file to use login/password to logon to other systems
  - Exploited a bug in the finger protocol which reports the whereabouts of a remote user
  - Exploited a trapdoor in the debug option of the remote process that receives and sends mail
- Successful attacks achieved communication with the operating system command interpreter
  - Sent interpreter a bootstrap program to copy worm over

### Morris Worm, continued

- Not supposed to cause damage
  - Had an intentional 1 in 7 chance of reinfecting an infected system in case the already-infected detector had been fooled
  - This was dumb due to math
  - Damage due to re-infection choking system with thousands of worm processes
- Internet was literally segmented during cleanup
- First conviction under the 1986
   Computer Fraud and Abuse Act
  - Probation, community service, and \$10k fine



### Recent Worm Attacks

Melissa	1998	e-mail worm first to include virus, worm and Trojan in one package
Code Red	July 2001	exploited Microsoft IIS bug probes random IP addresses consumes significant Internet capacity when active
Code Red II	August 2001	also targeted Microsoft IIS installs a backdoor for access
Nimda	September 2001	had worm, virus and mobile code characteristics spread using e-mail, Windows shares, Web servers, Web clients, backdoors
SQL Slammer	Early 2003	exploited a buffer overflow vulnerability in SQL server compact and spread rapidly
Sobig.F	Late 2003	exploited open proxy servers to turn infected machines into spam engines
Mydoom	2004	mass-mailing e-mail worm installed a backdoor in infected machines
Warezov	2006	creates executables in system directories sends itself as an e-mail attachment can disable security related products
Conficker (Downadup)	November 2008	exploits a Windows buffer overflow vulnerability most widespread infection since SQL Slammer
Stuxnet	2010	restricted rate of spread to reduce chance of detection targeted industrial control systems

## Portable Code

- Programs that can be shipped unchanged to a variety of platforms
- Transmitted from a remote system to a local system and then executed on the local system
- Often acts as a mechanism for a virus, worm, or Trojan horse
- Takes advantage of vulnerabilities to perform its own exploits
- Popular vehicles include Java applets, ActiveX, JavaScript and VBScript

## Mobile Phone Worms

- First discovery was Cabir worm in 2004
- Then Lasco and CommWarrior in 2005
- Communicate through Bluetooth wireless connections or MMS
- Target is the smartphone
- Can completely disable the phone, delete data on the phone, or force the device to send costly messages
- CommWarrior replicates by means of Bluetooth to other phones, sends itself as an MMS file to contacts and as an auto reply to incoming text messages

# Drive-By-Downloads

- Exploits browser vulnerabilities to download and installs malware on the system when the user views a Web page controlled by the attacker
- In most cases does not actively propagate
- Spreads when users visit the malicious Web page



### **Drive-by download**

• Why is this attack so common that it has its own special name?



# Clickjacking

- Also known as a userinterface (UI) redress attack
- Using a similar technique, keystrokes can also be hijacked
  - A user can be led to believe they are typing in the password to their email or bank account, but are instead typing into an invisible frame controlled by the attacker

- Vulnerability used by an attacker to collect an infected user's clicks
  - The attacker can force the user to do a variety of things from adjusting the user's computer setters to unwittingly sending the user to Web sites that might have malicious code
  - By taking advantage of Adobe Flash or JavaScript an attacker could even place a button under or over a legitimate button making it difficult for users to detect
  - A typical attack uses multiple transparent or opaque layers to trick a user into clicking on a button or link on another page when they were intending to click on the top level page
  - The attacker is hijacking clicks meant for one page and routing them to another page

### **Clickjacking demo**

- Simple web click harvesting:
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mk0RySeNsU
- A more personalized example:
  - http://people.duke.edu/~tkb13/courses/ece590-sec/resources/clickjackdemo.html
- This is why the browser waits before it lets you say yes to certain things

# Social Engineering

 "Tricking" users to assist in the compromise of their own systems

Spam	Trojan horse	Mobile phone trojans	
Unsolicited bulk e-mail Significant carrier of	Program or utility containing harmful hidden code	First appeared in 2004 (Skuller)	
malware Used for phishing attacks	Used to accomplish functions that the attacker could not accomplish directly	Target is the smartphone	

### Payloads

- "Classic"
  - System corruption
  - Attack bots
  - Information theft
- "Modern"
  - Ransomware
  - Scams
  - Adware
  - Pre-attack research

## Payload System Corruption

#### Chernobyl virus

- First seen in 1998
- Windows 95 and 98 virus
- Infects executable files and corrupts the entire file system when a trigger date is reached

#### Klez

- Mass mailing worm infecting Windows 95 to XP systems
- On trigger date causes files on the hard drive to become empty

#### Ransomware

- Encrypts the user's data and demands payment in order to access the key needed to recover the information
- PC Cyborg Trojan (1989)
- Gpcode Trojan (2006

## Payload System Corruption

### Real-world damage

- Causes damage to physical equipment
  - Chernobyl virus rewrites BIOS code
- Stuxnet worm
  - o Targets specific industrial control system software
- There are concerns about using sophisticated targeted malware for industrial sabotage

### • Logic bomb

• Code embedded in the malware that is set to "explode" when certain conditions are met

## Payload – Attack Agents Bots

- Takes over another Internet attached computer and uses that computer to launch or manage attacks
- Botnet collection of bots capable of acting in a coordinated manner
- Uses:
  - Distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks
  - Spamming
  - Sniffing traffic
  - Keylogging
  - Spreading new malware
  - Installing advertisement add-ons and browser helper objects (BHOs)
  - Attacking IRC chat networks
  - Manipulating online polls/games



# Remote Control Facility

- Distinguishes a bot from a worm
  - Worm propagates itself and activates itself
  - Bot is initially controlled from some central facility
- Typical means of implementing the remote control facility is on an IRC server
  - Bots join a specific channel on this server and treat incoming messages as commands
  - More recent botnets use covert communication channels via protocols such as HTTP
  - Distributed control mechanisms use peer-to-peer protocols to avoid a single point of failure

## Payload – Information Theft Keyloggers and Spyware

### Keylogger

- Captures keystrokes to allow attacker to monitor sensitive information
- Typically uses some form of filtering mechanism that only returns information close to keywords ("login", "password")

### Spyware

- Subverts the compromised machine to allow monitoring of a wide range of activity on the system
  - Monitoring history and content of browsing activity
  - Redirecting certain Web page requests to fake sites
  - Dynamically modifying data exchanged between the browser and certain Web sites of interest

## Payload – Information Theft Phishing

- Exploits social engineering to leverage the user's trust by masquerading as communication from a trusted source
  - Include a URL in a spam email that links to a fake Web site that mimics the login page of a banking, gaming, or similar site
  - Suggests that urgent action is required by the user to authenticate their account
  - Attacker exploits the account using the captured credentials

- Spear-phishing
  - Recipients are carefully researched by the attacker
  - E-mail is crafted to specifically suit its recipient, often quoting a range of information to convince them of its authenticity

## Worm Countermeasures

- Considerable overlap in techniques for dealing with viruses and worms
- Once a worm is resident on a machine anti-virus software can be used to detect and possibly remove it
- Perimeter network activity and usage monitoring can form the basis of a worm defense
- Worm defense approaches include:
  - Signature-based worm scan filtering
  - Filter-based worm containment
  - Payload-classification-based worm containment
  - Threshold random walk (TRW) scan detection
  - o Rate limiting
  - Rate halting



### Payload – Stealthing Backdoor

- Also known as a trapdoor
- Secret entry point into a program allowing the attacker to gain access and bypass the security access procedures
- Maintenance hook is a backdoor used by Programmers to debug and test programs
- Difficult to implement operating system controls for backdoors in applications



### Payload - Stealthing Rootkit

- Set of hidden programs installed on a system to maintain covert access to that system
- Hides by subverting the mechanisms that monitor and report on the processes, files, and registries on a computer
- Gives administrator (or root) privileges to attacker
  - Can add or change programs and files, monitor processes, send and receive network traffic, and get backdoor access on demand

### Rootkit Classification Characteristics







(a) Normal kernel memory layout

(b) After nkark install

Figure 6.4 System Call Table Modification by Rootkit

### Rootkit "demo"

#### Screenshot in case of difficulties:

🗲 -bash		_ 0	х
tkblets	C@engr-ras-101:~ \$ ps -A   head ·	-30	
PID T	TY TIME CMD		
1 ?	00:00:01 init		
2 ?	00:00:00 kthreadd		
3 ?	00:00:00 migration/0		
4 :			
57	00:00:00 stopper/0		
7 2	00:00:00 watchdog/0		
8 2	00:00:00 events/0		
9 ?	00:00:00 events long/0		
10 ?	00:00:00 events_power_ef		
11 ?	00:00:00 cgroup		
12 ?	00:00:00 khelper		
13 ?	00:00:00 netns		
14 ?	00:00:00 async/mgr		
15 ?	00:00:00 pm		
16 ?	00:00:00 sync_supers		
17 ?	00:00:00 bdi-default		
	00:00:00 kintegrityd/0		
19 ?	00:00:04 kblockd/0		
20 2	00:00:00 kacpid		
	00:00:00 kacpi_notity		
22 :	00:00:00 ata aux		
24 7	00:00:17 ata sff/0		
25 2	00:00:00 ksuspend usbd		
26 ?	00:00:00 khubd		
27 ?	00:00:00 kseriod		
28 ?	00:00:00 md/0		
29 ?	00:00:00 md_misc/0		
tkblets	@engr-ras-101:~ \$ . infect		
tkblets	C@engr-ras-101:~ \$ ps -A   head ·	-30	
1	? 00:00:00 top		
2	2 00:00:00 ps		
4 2			
16	2 00:00:00 if		
32	2 00:00:00 you		
64	? 00:00:00 think		
128	? 00:00:00 this		
256	? 00:00:00 process		
512	? 00:00:00 list		
1024	? 00:00:00 is		
2048	? 00:00:00 remotely		
4096	? 00:00:00 valid.		
8192	? 00:00:00 you		
16384	? 00:00:00 got		
32/68	2 00:00:00 owned		
121072	2 00:00:00 by		
262144	2 00:00:00 havors		
524288	2 00:00:00 ns		
1048576	? 00:00:00 grep		
tkblets	c@engr-ras-101:~ \$		:

## Malware Countermeasure Approaches

Ideal solution to the threat of malware is prevention

Four main elements of prevention:

- Policy
- Awareness
- Vulnerability mitigation
- Threat mitigation
- If prevention fails, technical mechanisms can be used to support the following threat mitigation options:
  - Detection
  - Identification
  - Removal

### Generations of Anti-Virus Software

#### First generation: simple scanners

- Requires a malware signature to identify the malware
- Limited to the detection of known malware

#### Second generation: heuristic scanners

- Uses heuristic rules to search for probable malware instances
- Another approach is integrity checking

#### Third generation: activity traps

• Memory-resident programs that identify malware by its actions rather than its structure in an infected program

#### Fourth generation: full-featured protection

- Packages consisting of a variety of anti-virus techniques used in conjunction
- Include scanning and activity trap components and access control capability

### An alternative take on anti-virus software (1)

- Many security researchers believe modern anti-virus is near useless, and possibly harmful
- Antivirus software must:
  - Hook in at kernel level
  - Parse and process every piece of code and data you see using a wide variety techniques (lots of code)
- Translation:
  - High value target (kernel control)
  - Large attack surface (lots of code)
- Modern "endpoint security" gets worse...
  - Installs root CA to intentionally MITM all SSL traffic to "scan" it

### An alternative take on anti-virus software (2)

- Perverse incentives have made large players in this space adopt troubling practices
- Push software into pre-installed market with limited "subscription" to updates, fleece buyers into paying for subscription
  - Basically, extortion
- Software quality from some providers is usually not great
- The core idea of signature-based detection is useless against modern threats (trivially easy to defeat)
- Unfortunately, "have antivirus" is in enough contracts and standards that its almost unavoidable even when illogical

# Generic Decryption (GD)

- Enables the anti-virus program to easily detect complex polymorphic viruses and other malware while maintaining fast scanning speeds
- Executable files are run through a GD scanner which contains the following elements:
  - CPU emulator
  - Virus signature scanner
  - Emulation control module
- The most difficult design issue with a GD scanner is to determine how long to run each interpretation

### Host-Based Behavior-Blocking Software

- Integrates with the operating system of a host computer and monitors program behavior in real time for malicious action
  - Blocks potentially malicious actions before they have a chance to affect the system
  - Blocks software in real time so it has an advantage over anti-virus detection techniques such as fingerprinting or heuristics

#### Limitations

• Because malicious code must run on the target machine before all its behaviors can be identified, it can cause harm before it has been detected and blocked

## Perimeter Scanning Approaches

- Anti-virus software typically included in e-mail and Web proxy services running on an organization's firewall and IDS
- May also be included in the traffic analysis component of an IDS
- May include intrusion prevention measures, blocking the flow of any suspicious traffic
- Approach is limited to scanning malware

### Ingress monitors

Located at the border between the enterprise network and the Internet

One technique is to look for incoming traffic to unused local IP addresses

### Egress monitors

Located at the egress point of individual LANs as well as at the border between the enterprise network and the Internet

Monitors outgoing traffic for signs of scanning or other suspicious behavior

Two types of monitoring software

## Summary

- Types of malicious software (malware)
- Advanced persistent threat

#### • Propagation

- Infected content
  - viruses
- Vulnerability exploit
  - worms
- Social engineering
  - spam
  - e-mail
  - Trojans



- Payload
  - System corruption
  - o Attack agent
    - Zombie
    - Bots
  - o Information theft
    - Keyloggers
    - Phishing
    - Spyware
  - o Stealthing
- Countermeasures