

Developments in Cisco IOS Forensics

Felix 'FX' Lindner BlackHat Briefings Washington DC, Feb. 2008

Agenda

```
addiu 1sp, -0x18
sw 1rs, 0x18+var_4(1sp)
sw 1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp)
lui 11, 3
ja1 sub_2DAB8
lw 1a0, dword_35A6c
lui 11, 3
lw 1t7, dword_35A6c
lw 1t6, dword_35A70
subu 1t8, 1t6, 1t7
```

- IP Routing Infrastructure and Cisco IOS
- Cisco IOS Internals
- Debugging and Post Mortem Analysis Today
- A New Analysis Approach
 - Proposal
 - Features
 - Challenges
- Initial Public Offer
- Future Work



IP Routing Infrastructure

- The Internet and corporate networks almost exclusively run on the Internet Protocol
 - IP Version 4 is still prevalent protocol
 - IP Version 6 coming up very slowly
- The design of IP requires intelligent nodes in the network to make routing decisions
 - This is a design principle of the protocol and cannot be changed
 - "Flat" networks have their own issues

IP Infrastructure & Security

- All security protocols on top of IP share common design goals:
 - Guarantee end-to-end integrity (some also confidentiality) of the traffic
 - Detect modification, replay, injection and holding back of traffic
 - Inform the upper protocol layers
- None of them can recover from attacks rooted in the routing infrastructure
 - Security protocols cannot influence routing

Infrastructure Monoculture

- Cisco Systems' routing platforms form the single largest population of networking equipment today
 - Equivalently distributed in the Internet core, government and corporate networks
 - Many different hardware platforms with different CPUs
 - Large investment sums bound to the equipment
 - Hard to replace
 - All run basically the same operating system
- Protecting this infrastructure is critical
- Therefore, in-depth analysis and diagnostics are of paramount importance

Cisco IOS

```
addiu 1sp, -0x18
sw 1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp
sw 1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp
Tui 11, 3
ja1 sub_2DAB8
Tw 1a0, dword_35A6C
Tui 11, 3
Tw 1t7, dword_35A6C
Tw 1t6, dword_35A70
subu 1t8, 1t6, 1t7
```

- Cisco® Internetwork Operating System®
- Monolithic operating system
- Compile-time linked functionality –
 the 3 dimensional complexity of IOS
 - Platform dependent code
 - Feature-set dependent code
 - Major, Minor and Release version dependent code
- Several tens of thousands different IOS images used in today's networks
 - Over 10.000 still officially supported

Inside Cisco IOS

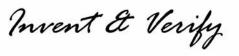
```
addiu Ssp. -0x18
sw Sra. 0x18+var_4(Ssp
sw SaO. 0x18+var_4(Ssp
Tui S1. 3
jaT sub_2DAB8
Tw SaO. dword_35A6C
Tui S1. 3
Tw St7. dword_35A6C
Tw St6. dword_35A70
subu St8. St6. St7
addin St8. St6. St7
```

- One large ELF binary
- Essentially a large, statically linked UNIX program
 - Loaded by ROMMON, a kind-of BIOS
- Runs directly on the router's main CPU
 - If the CPU provides virtual memory and privilege separation (for example Supervisor and User mode on MIPS), it will not be used

Inside Cisco IOS

```
addiu 1sp, -0x18
sw 1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp)
sw 1a0, 0x18+var_4(1sp)
Tui 11, 3
ja1 sub_2DAB8
Tw 1a0, dword_35A6C
Tui 11, 3
Tw 1t7, dword_35A6C
Tw 1t6, dword_35A70
subu 1t8, 1t6, 1t7
```

- Processes are rather like threads
 - No virtual memory mapping per process
- Run-to-completion, cooperative multitasking
 - Interrupt driven handling of critical events
- System-wide global data structures
 - Common heap
 - Very little abstraction around the data structures
 - No way to force abstraction



The IOS Code Security Issue

- 12.4(16a) with enterprise base feature set consists of 25.316.780 bytes binary code!
 - This is a 2600 with PowerPC CPU
 - Not including 505.900 bytes firmware for E1T1 and initialization
- All written in plain C
- Sharing the same address space
- Sharing the same heap
- Sharing the same data structures
- Sharing millions of pointers



The IOS Code Security Issue

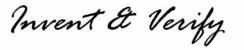
- A single mistake in the most unimportant piece of code can influence anything on the system, including kernel, security subsystems and cryptographic code.
- Therefore, everything on IOS is a good target for remote code execution exploits in kernel context.





Isn't Cisco aware of that?

- Cisco recently started the distribution of the next generation IOS-XR
 - Commercial QNX microkernel
 - Real processes (memory protection?)
 - Concurrent scheduling
 - Significantly higher hardware requirements
- People never use the latest IOS
 - Production corporate networks usually run on 12.1 or 12.2, which 12.5 is already available
 - Not even Cisco's own engineers would recommend the latest IOS release to a customer
 - That only covers people actively maintaining their network, not everyone running one





Just, how often are routers hacked?

- addiu 1sp, -0x18 sw 1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp) sw 1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp) iwi 11, 3 jal sub_2DAB8 iw 1a0, dword_35A6C iwi 11, 3 iw 1t7, dword_35A6C iwi 1t6, dword_35A70
- Keynote speaker Jerry Dixon mentioned not updated routers as a cause for concern
 - Do you know how expensive that is?
- Old vulnerabilities like the HTTP level 16 bug are still actively scanned for
 - The router is used as a jump pad for further attacks
- TCL backdoors are commonly used
- Patched images are not rare
 - IOS images cost money
 - People will use images from anywhere
 - Patching images is not hard
- Lawful Interception is its own can of worms
 - The router's operator is not supposed to know that LI is performed
 - Who watches the watchers?

And the future?

```
addiu 1sp, -0x18

sw 1rs, 0x18+var_4(1sp)

sw 1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp)

Tuf 11, 3

fal sub_2DAB8

Tw 1a0, dword_35A6c

Tuf 11, 3

Tw 1t7, dword_35A6c

Tw 1t6, dword_35A70

subu 1t8, 1t6, 1t7
```

- Ever noticed attackers take on the target with the lowest efforts required and the highest return of invest?
 - Windows became just a lot harder
 - UNIXes are hardened, even OS X
 - Infected PCs leave obvious traces
- The question is not: "Will routers become a target?"
- The question should be: "Do we want to know when they did?"

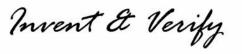




Summary - Part I

- addiu 1sp, -0x18
 sw 1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp)
 sw 1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp)
 Tui 11, 3
 jai sub_2DAB8
 Tw 1a0, dword_35A6C
 Tui 11, 3
 Tw 1t7, dword_35A6C
 Tw 1t6, dword_35A70
 subu 1t8, 1t6, 1t7
- A significant share of the Internet, governmental and corporate networks runs on:
 - one out of several tens of thousands of builds
 - of more or less the same code base
 - in a single process environment
 - ... and we cannot bypass it, even if we could tell that it's compromised

Next question: How can we even tell?





Error Handling and Recovery

- The software architecture of IOS dictates how exception handling has to be done
 - Remember, IOS is like a large UNIX process
 - What happens when a UNIX process segfaults?
- Upon an exception, IOS can only restart the entire system
 - Even on-board, scheduled diagnostic processes can only forcefully crash the system

Crash Cause Evidence

- Reboot is a clean recovery method
- Reboot destroys all volatile evidence of the crash cause
 - Everything on the router is volatile!
 - Exception: startup configuration and IOS image
- Later IOS releases write an information file called "crashinfo"
 - Crashinfo contains very little information
 - Contents depend on what IOS thought was the cause of the crash

Runtime Evidence

```
addiu 1sp. -0x18

sw 1ra. 0x18+var_4(1sp)

sw 1a0. 0x18+arg_0(1sp)

Tui 11. 3

jal sub_2DAB8

Tw 1a0. dword_35A6c

Tui 11. 3

Tw 1t7. dword_35A6c

Tw 1t6. dword_35A70

subu 1t8. 1t6. 1t7
```

- Crashinfo is only written upon device crashes
- Successful attacks don't cause device crashes
- The available methods are:
 - Show commands
 - Debug commands
 - SNMP monitoring
 - Syslog monitoring





Show Commands

```
addiu Ssp. -0x18
sw Sra. 0x18+var_4(Ssp)
sw SaO. 0x18+arg_0(Ssp)
Tui S1. 3
jal sub_2DAB8
Tw SaO. dword_35A6C
Tui S1. 3
Tw St7. dword_35A6C
Tw St6. dword_35A70
subu St8. St6. St7
```

- IOS offers a plethora of inspection commands known as the "show" commands
 - Requires access to the command line interface
- Geared towards network engineers
- Thousands of different options and versions
- Almost no access to code
 - 12.4 even limits memory show commands





Debug Commands

- Sep, -0x18
 fra, 0x18+var_4(1ep)
 fa0, 0x18+arg_0(1ep)
 f1, 3
 sub_2DAB8
 fa0, dword_35A6C
 f1, 3
 fr7, dword_35A6C
 fr6, dword_35A6C
- "debug" enables in-code debugging output
- Debug output has scheduler precedence
 - Too much debug output halts the router
 - Not an option in production environments
- Enabling the right debug output is an art
 - Turn on the wrong ones and you see very little
 - Turn on too many and the router stops working
 - Commands depend on the IOS version
- For debug commands to be useful, you have to know what you are looking for before it happens
 - Not very useful for security analysis

SNMP and Syslog Monitoring

- Commonly accepted method for monitoring networking equipment
- SNMP depending on the implemented MIB
 - Geared towards networking functionality
 - Very little process related information
- Syslog is about as useful for security monitoring on IOS as it is on UNIX systems
- Both generate continuous network traffic
- Both consume system resources on the router
- Then again, someone has to read the logs.





Summary - Part II

```
addiu 1sp, -0x18
sw 1rs, 0x18+var_4(1sp)
sw 1a0, 0x18+var_4(1sp)
Tui 21, 3
ja1 sub_2DAB8
Tw 1a0, dword_35A6C
Tui 11, 3
Tw 1t7, dword_35A6C
Tw 1t6, dword_35A70
subu 1t8, 1t6, 1t7
```

- Identifying compromised routers using today's tools and methods is hard, if not impossible.
- There is not enough data to perform any post mortem analysis of router crashes, security related or not.
- We cannot distinguish between a functional problem, an attempted attack and a successful attack on infrastructure running IOS.

A (not so) New Approach

- We need the maximum amount of evidence
 - A full snapshot of the device is just enough
- We don't need it continuously
 - We need it on-demand
 - We need it when the device crashes
- We need an independent and solid analysis framework to process the evidence
 - We need to be able to extend and adjust it





Getting the Evidence

1sp, -0x18 fra, 0x18+var_4(1sp) fa0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp) f1, 3 sub_2DAB8 fa0, dword_35AGC f1, 3 ft7, dword_35AGC

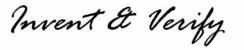
- Cisco IOS can write complete core dumps
 - Memory dump of the main memory
 - Memory dump of the IO memory
 - Memory dump of the PCI memory (if applicable)
- Core dumps are written in two cases
 - The device crashes
 - The user issues the "write core" command





Core Dump Destinations

- IOS supports various destinations
 - TFTP server (bug!)
 - FTP server
 - RCP server
 - Flash file system (later IOS releases)
- Core dumps are enabled by configuration
 - Configuration commands do not differ between IOS versions
 - Configuration change has no effect on the router's operation or performance





Core Dump Enabled Infrastructure

- u 1sp, -0x18 1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp) 1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp) 11, 3 sub_2DAB8 1a0, dword_35A6C 11, 3 1t7, dword_35A6C 1t6, dword_35A7O
- Configure all IOS devices to dump core onto one or more centrally located FTP servers
 - Minimizes required monitoring of devices: A router crashed if you find a core dump on the FTP server
 - Preserves evidence
 - Allows crash correlation between different routers
- Why wasn't it used before?
 - Core dumps were useless, except for Cisco developers and exploit writers.

Analyzing Core Dumps 1. 1 dword 25/460

Disclaimer:

- Any of the following methods can be implemented in whatever your preferred programming language is.
- This presentation will be centric to our implementation: Recurity Labs CIR.

```
Tw SaO, dword_35A6C
jaT sub_XDAD4
addiu SaI, $v0, 0x10
beqxT $v0, Toc_XDA44
move $v0, $0
Ta $1, dword_35A6C
Tw $t1, dword_35A6C
Tw $t0, 0($1)
subu $t2, $t0, $t1
sra $t3, $t2, 2
sTT $t4, $t3, 2
addu $t5, $v0, $t4
sw $t5, 0($1)
```





Core Dump Analyzer Requirements

addiu 1sp. -0x18
sw 1ra. 0x18+var_4(1sp)
sw 1a0. 0x18+arg_0(1sp)
lui 11. 3
jal sub_2DAB8
lw 1a0. dword_35A6C
lui 11. 3
w 1c7. dword_35A6C
ruf 11. 3

- Must be 100% independent
 - No Cisco code
 - No disassembly based analysis
- Must gradually recover abstraction
 - No assumptions about anything
 - Ability to cope with massively corrupted data
- Should not be exploitable itself
 - Preferably not written in C



The Image Blueprint

Ssp. -0x18 Sra. 0x18+var_4(fsp) SaO. 0x18+arg_0(fsp) S1. 3 sub_2DAB8 SaO. dword_3SAGC S1. 3 St7. dword_3SAGC St6. St6. St7

- The IOS image (ELF file) contains all required information about the memory mapping on the router.
 - The image serves as the memory layout blueprint, to be applied to the core files
- Using a known-to-be-good image also allows verification of the code and read-only data segments
 - Now we can easily and reliably detect runtime patched images

Heap Reconstruction

\$\$p, -0x18
\$ra, 0x18+var_4(\$sp)
\$a0, 0x18+arg_0(\$sp)
\$1, 3
\$sub_2DAB8
\$a0, dword_35A6C
\$1, 3
\$t7, dword_35A6C
\$16, dword_35A70

- IOS uses one large heap
- The IOS heap contains plenty of meta-data for debugging purposes
 - 40 bytes overhead per heap block in IOS up to 12.3
 - 48 bytes overhead per heap block in IOS 12.4
- Reconstructing the entire heap allows extensive integrity and validity checks
 - Exceeding by far the on-board checks IOS performs during runtime





Heap Verification

addiu Ssp. -Ox18
sw Sra. Ox18+var_4(Ssp
sw SaO. Ox18+arg_O(Ssp
Tuf S1. 3
jal sub_2DAB8
Tw SaO. dword_35A6c
Tuf S1. 3
Tw St7. dword_35A6c
Tw St6. dword_35A70
subu St8. St6. St7

- Full functionality of "CheckHeaps"
 - Verify the integrity of the allocated and free heap block doubly linked lists
- Find holes in addressable heap
 - Invisible to CheckHeaps
- Identify heap overflow footprints
 - Values not verified by CheckHeaps
- Map heap blocks to referencing processes
- Identify formerly allocated heap blocks
 - Catches memory usage peaks from the recent past



Process List

```
addiu 1sp, -0x18
sw 1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp
sw 1a0, 0x18+var_4(1sp
Twi 11, 3
ja7 sub_2DAB8
Tw 1a0, dword_35A6C
Twi 11, 3
Tw 1t7, dword_35A6C
Twi 1t6, dword_35A70
swbu 1t8, 1t6, 1t7
```

- Extraction of the IOS Process List
 - Identify the processes' stack block
 - Create individual, per process back-traces
 - Identify return address overwrites
 - Obtain the processes' scheduling state
 - Obtain the processes' CPU usage history
 - Obtain the processes' CPU context
- Almost any post mortem analysis method known can be applied, given the two reconstructed data structures.

TCL Backdoor Detection

- TCL scripting is available on later Cisco IOS versions
- TCL scripts listening on TCP sockets
 - Well known method
 - Used to simplify automated administration
 - Used to silently keep privileged access to routers
 - Known bug: not terminated when the VTY session ends (fixed)
 - Simple TCL backdoor scripts published
- CIR can extract all TCP script chunks from IOS heap and dump them for further analysis

Your Wishes Please

1sp, -0x18
1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp)
1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp)
11, 3
sub_2DAB8
1a0, dword_35AGC
11, 3
1t7, dword_35AGC
116, dword_35AGC

- Interface tables
- Static routing
- Router processes
- VLAN tables
- VPN context
 - Keys
 - User
- IPv6 tables
- ARP tables
- Dialer tables

- CDP tables
- Spanning tree
- Access Lists
- CEF Tree
- User sessions
- Listening ports
 - Callback code for incoming connections
 - Verification that it is located in .TEXT

IOS Packet Forwarding Memory

170 1sp, -0x18 1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp) 1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp) 1 1, 3 1 sub_2DAB8 1 2a0, dword_35AGC 1 1, 3 177, dword_35AGC 106, dword_35A70 10 1t8, 1t6, 1t7

- IOS performs routing either as:
 - Process switching
 - Fast switching
 - Particle systems
 - Hardware accelerated switching
- Except hardware switching, all use IO memory
 - IO memory is written as separate code dump
 - By default, about 6% of the router's memory is dedicated as IO memory
 - In real world installations, it is common to increase the percentage to speed up forwarding
- Hardware switched packets use PCI memory
 - PCI memory is written as separate core dump



10 Memory Buffers

1sp, -0x18 1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp) 1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp) 11, 3 sub_2DAB8 1a0, dword_35AGC 11, 3 1t7, dword_35AGC 1t6, dword_35A70 1t8, 1t6, 1t7

- Routing (switching) ring buffers are grouped by packet size
 - Small
 - Medium
 - Big
 - Huge
- Interfaces have their own buffers for locally handled traffic
- IOS tries really hard to not copy packets around in memory
- New traffic does not automatically erase older traffic in a linear way

Traffic Extraction

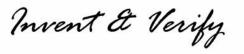
1sp, -0x18 1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp) 1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp) 11, 3 sub_2bAB8 1a0, dword_35A6C 11, 3 1t7, dword_35A6C 1t6, dword_35A70

- CIR dumps packets that were process switched by the router from IO memory into a PCAP file
 - Traffic addressed to and from the router itself
 - Traffic that was process switching inspected
 - Access List matching
 - QoS routed traffic
- CIR could dump packets that were forwarded through the router too
 - Reconstruction of packet fragments possible
 - Is it desirable?



Advanced Traffic Extraction

- Writing core to a remote server uses IO memory
 - Overwrites part of the traffic evidence
- CIR can use a GDB link instead of a core dump
 - Serial GDB protocol allows direct access to router memory via the console
 - Uses Zynamics GDB debug link
- Disconnecting all network interfaces preserves IO and PCI memory contents
 - Using GDB halts the router
- All data is preserved useful for emergency inspections





Traffic Extraction Applications

- Identification of attack jump pad routers
- Oday identification against systems on segmented network interfaces
 - If you got the packet, you got the Oday
- Spoofing attack backtracking
 - One hop at the time, obviously
- LE detection





Challenges

- The analysis framework has to handle the complexity of the Cisco IOS landscape
 - Hardware platforms
 - Image versions
 - Any-to-Any relation!
- CIR is currently IOS feature set independent
- CIR successfully tested against IOS 12.0 12.5
- CIR currently supports
 - Cisco 1700
 - Cisco 2600
 - Cisco 3600 (upcoming)
 - Cisco 7200 (upcoming)
- Your wishes decide the course.



Summary - Part III

fsp, -0x18
fra, 0x18+var_4(fsp)
fa0, 0x18+arg_0(fsp)
f1, 3
sub_2DAB8
fa0, dword_35A6C
f1, 3
ft7, dword_35A6C
f1, 3
ft7, dword_35A70
f18, ft6, ft7

- Writing core dumps is a viable method for obtaining IOS evidence when it is needed.
 - The evidence includes forwarded and received packets.
- An independent analysis framework can distinguish between bugs and attacks, enabling real forensics on IOS routers.
- Recurity Labs' CIR already reliably identifies many types of attacks and IOS backdoors.
 - CIR is work-in-progress
 - CIR's future depends on the feedback we receive from the community.

Initial Public Offer

1sp, -0x18
1ra, 0x18+var_4(1sp)
1a0, 0x18+arg_0(1sp)
21, 3
sub_2pagg
1a0, dword_35AGC
11, 3
1t7, dword_35AGC
1t6, dword_35AGC
1t8, 1t6, 1t7

- An analysis framework's quality is directly related to the amount of cases it has seen
 - CIR needs a lot more food to grow up
 - We want to provide it to everyone while constantly developing and improving it
- Free Service: http://cir.recurity-labs.com
 - Processing on our servers
 - Always using the latest version
 - lacktriangle Please be gentle, it's the lpha version
- Given enough interest, there will be a professional tool in the future

At the end, it's all up to you!

- We think CIR could be useful
 - For the networking engineer
 - For the forensics professional
 - To finally know the state of our infrastructure
- We can think of way too many things
 - Platforms
 - Features
 - Reports
- Please help ©





cir.recurity-labs.com

addiu 1sp, -0x18
sw 1rs, 0x18+vsr_4(1sp)
sw 1a0, 0x18+srq_0(1sp)
lui 11, 3
sub_ZDAB8
lui 21, 3
sub_ZDAB8
lui 11, 3
lw 1t7, dword_35A6c
lw 1t6, dword_35A6c
lw 1t6, dword_35A70
subu 1t8, 1t7
addiu 1t9, 1tc, 4
situ 11, 2v0, 5t9
hegz 11, loc_ZDAZ4



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Head

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Tw SaO, dword_35A60
jaT sub_ZDAD4
addiu Sa3, 2v0, 0x30
begzT Sv0, Toc_ZDA44
move Sv0, 20
Ta S1, dword_35A60
Tw St1, dword_35A60
Tw St0, G(S1)
subu St2, St0, St1
sra St3, St2, 2
sTT St4, St3, 2
addu St5, Sv0, St4
sw St5, G(S1)
sw Sv0, dword_35A60

