XKEYSCORE

25 Feb 2008
xkeyscore@nsa
What is XKEYSCORE?

1. DNI Exploitation System/Analytic Framework
2. Performs strong (e.g. email) and soft (content) selection
3. Provides real-time target activity (tipping)
4. “Rolling Buffer” of ~3 days of ALL unfiltered data seen by XKEYSCORE:
   - Stores full-take data at the collection site – indexed by meta-data
   - Provides a series of viewers for common data types

1. Federated Query system – one query scans all sites
   - Performing full-take allows analysts to find targets that were previously unknown by mining the meta-data
Methodology

- Small, focused team
- Work closely with the analysts
- Evolutionary development cycle (deploy early, deploy often)
- React to mission requirements
- Support staff integrated with developers
- Sometimes a delicate balance of mission and research
System Details

- Massive distributed Linux cluster
- Over 500 servers distributed around the world
- System can scale linearly – simply add a new server to the cluster
- Federated Query Mechanism
Where is X-KEYSCORE?

Approximately 150 sites
Over 700 servers
What is unique about XKEYSCORE?
General Capability

Processing Speed

Processing Depth

TURMOIL/TURBULENCE

XKEYSCORE

TOP SECRET//COMINT//REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL
• Can look at more data

• XKEYSCORE can also be configured to go shallow if the data rate is too high
- Strong Selection itself give us only a very limited capability

- A large amount of time spent on the web is performing actions that are anonymous

- We can use this traffic to detect anomalies which can lead us to intelligence by itself, or strong selectors for traditional tasking
What XKS does with the Sessions

Plug-ins extract and index metadata into tables

[sessions] → [processing engine] → (database) ← (user queries)

Database

phone numbers
email addresses
log ins
user activity

TOP SECRET//COMINT//REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plug-in</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-mail Addresses</td>
<td>Indexes every E-mail address seen in a session by both username and domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracted Files</td>
<td>Indexes every file seen in a session by both filename and extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Log</td>
<td>Indexes every DNI session collected. Data is indexed by the standard N-tuple (IP, Port, Casenotation etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTTP Parser</td>
<td>Indexes the client-side HTTP traffic (examples to follow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Number</td>
<td>Indexes every phone number seen in a session (e.g. address book entries or signature block)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Activity</td>
<td>Indexes the Webmail and Chat activity to include username, buddylist, machine specific cookies etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Can Be Stored?

- Anything you wish to extract
- Choose your metadata
- Customizable storage times
- Ex: HTTP Parser

GET /search?hl=en&q=islamabad&meta= HTTP/1.0
Accept: image/gif, image/x-xbitmap, image/jpeg, image/pjpeg, application/vnd.ms-
application/msword, application/x-shockwave-flash, */*
Referer: http://www.google.com.pk/
Accept-Language: en-us
User-Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 6.0; Windows NT 5.1)
Host: www.google.com.pk

Connection: keep-alive
What can you do with XKEYSCORE?
Finding Targets

- How do I find a strong-selector for a known target?

- How do I find a cell of terrorists that has no connection to known strong-selectors?

- Answer: Look for anomalous events
  - E.g. Someone whose language is out of place for the region they are in
  - Someone who is using encryption
  - Someone searching the web for suspicious stuff
Encryption

- Show me all the encrypted word documents from Iran
- Show me all PGP usage in Iran
- Once again – data volume too high so forwarding these back is not possible
- No strong-selector
- Can perform this kind of retrospective query, then simply pull content of interest from site as required
- Show me all the VPN startups in country X, and give me the data so I can decrypt and discover the users

- These events are easily browsable in XKEYSCORE
  - No strong-selector

- XKEYSCORE extracts and stores authoring information for many major document types – can perform a retrospective survey to trace the document origin since metadata is typically kept for up to 30 days

- No other system performs this on raw unselected bulk traffic, data volumes prohibit forwarding
Traditionally triggered by a strong-selector event, but it doesn’t have to be this way.

Reverse PSC – from anomalous event back to a strong selector. You cannot perform this kind of analysis when the data has first been strong selected.

Tie in with Marina – allow PSC collection after the event.
• My target speaks German but is in Pakistan – how can I find him?

• XKEYSCORE’s HTTP Activity plugin extracts and stores all HTML language tags which can then be searched

• Not possible in any other system but XKEYSCORE, nor could it be –
  • volumes are too great to forward
  • No strong-selector
Google Maps

- My target uses Google Maps to scope target locations – can I use this information to determine his email address? What about the web-searches – do any stand out and look suspicious?

- XKEYSCORE extracts and databases these events including all web-based searches which can be retrospectively queried
- No strong-selector
- Data volume too high to forward
I have a Jihadist document that has been passed around through numerous people, who wrote this and where were they?
Show me all the Microsoft Excel spreadsheets containing MAC addresses coming out of Iraq so I can perform network mapping

- New extractor allows different dictionaries to run on document/email bodies – these more complex dictionaries can generate and database this information
- No strong-selector
- Data volume is high
- Multiple dictionaries targeted at specific data types
• Show me all the exploitable machines in country X

• Fingerprints from TAO are loaded into XKEYSCORE’s application/fingerprintID engine
• Data is tagged and databased
• No strong-selector
• Complex boolean tasking and regular expressions required
Discovery of new target web services

- New web services every day
- Scanning content for the userid rather than performing strong selection means we may detect activity for applications we previously had no idea about
• Have technology (thanks to R6) – for English, Arabic and Chinese
• Allow queries like:
• Show me all the word documents with references to IAEA
• Show me all documents that reference Osama Bin Laden
• Will allow a ‘show me more like this’ capability
Over 300 terrorists captured using intelligence generated from XKEYSCORE
Innovation

- High Speed Selection
- Toolbar
- Integration with Marina
- GPRS, WLAN integration
- SSO CRDB
- Workflows
- Multi-level Dictionaries
Future

- High speeds yet again (algorithmic and Cell Processor (R4))
- Better presentation
- Entity Extraction
- VoIP
- More networking protocols
- Additional metadata
  - Expand on google-earth capability
  - EXIF tags
  - Integration of all CES-AppProcs
- Easier to install/maintain/upgrade