

# Threat Hunting Techniques at Scale

Dhia Mahjoub, PhD Head of Security Research, Cisco Umbrella (OpenDNS)



Tuesday, June 26th, 2018

# Agenda

Intelligence cycle at scale

Big data challenges

Spike detection and classification

Co-occurrences

Tracking Malspam: combining techniques

SSL Data mining

Conclusion

## Contributors

Dhia Mahjoub, Head of Security Research, @DhiaLite PhD graph theory, network security, threat intel

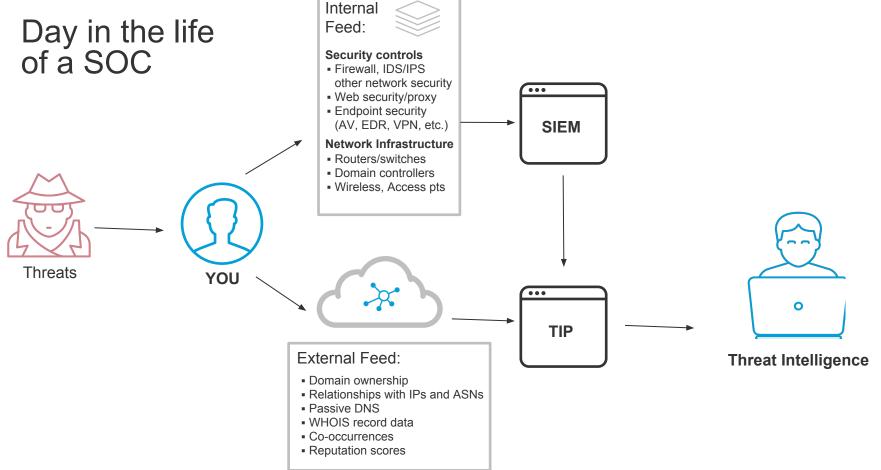
Thomas Mathew, Senior Security Researcher

MS Computer Science, signal analysis, machine learning

Scott Sitar, Technical Leader

MS Applied Math, big data engineering, algorithms

David Rodriguez, Senior Security Researcher
MA Mathematics, statistics, machine learning



# Umbrella Investigate Intel Production Cycle

#### **Feedback**

Protected customers, actionable use cases with Investigate

### Requirements

Detect and block domains/IPs to protect customers and provide insight and context around domains/IPs

#### Dissemination

Domains, IPs into block list Investigate UI and API

#### Collection

Retrieve raw DNS, IP, BGP, SSL, whois, hash, crawled web data, etc. at scale



# DGA r

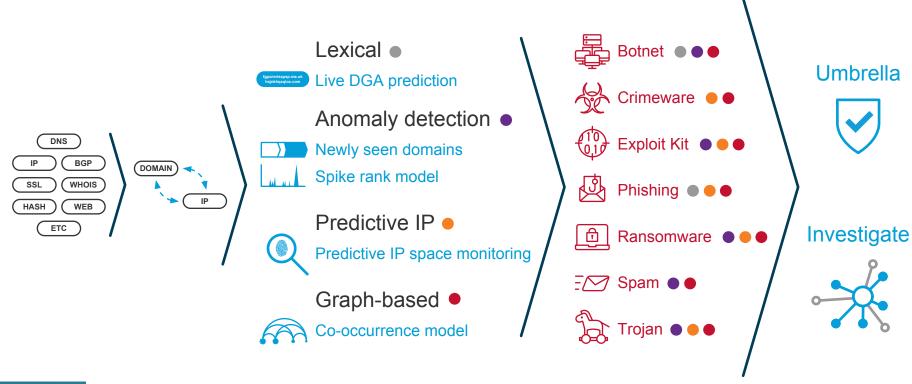
#### **Analysis**

Threat detection and reputation scores using ML & graph models, human domain expertise

#### **Processing**

Caching, indexing, enriching, summarizing data at scale

## What makes us different





Malspam/Hancitor

Cybercrime sites

Criminal hosting space

## Path of a malspam attack

Phishing email sent from delta@performanceair.com



6 Infection on device & positioned for data extraction



Victims click on malicious URLs

myhearthstonehomes.org ourrealtyguy.info ourrealtyguy.org ourrealtyguy.us package2china.com

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mebelucci.com.ua uneventrendi.com lycasofrep.com rinbetarrab.com



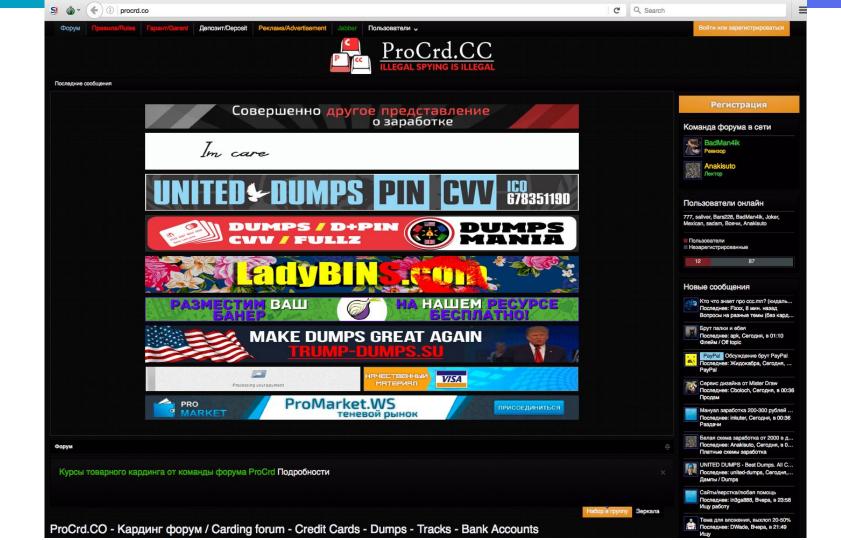
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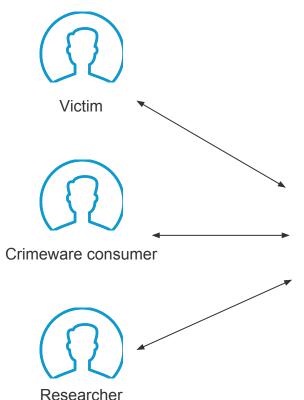
uneventrendi.com ketofonerof.ru thettertrefbab.ru





Introduced at Black Hat 2014, Botconf 2014, Defcon 2017

Zbot Fast Flux BPH operation



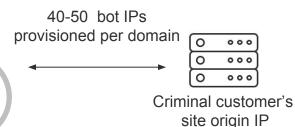


Actor(s) grow and maintain FF network \*FF service offered in underground forums



Zbot Fast Flux Proxy Network Aka Fluxxy, Darkcloud

Botnet comprised of 30-40K compromised residential IPs, mainly in UA, RU



#### Content delivered

Short lifetime: malware, ransomware

Medium lifetime: phishing

Long lifetime: carding, cybercrime forums

# Data Collection



## Working with Big Data

Challenges and Uses

- Large datasets give researchers possibility to uncover widespread network threats
- When working with large data sets traditional threat-hunting methods have to be modified
- We will explore:
  - Pivoting
  - Classification

## Working with Big Data

Pivoting

- Pivoting is useful for analysts when given seeds of information
- Want to convert some seed information into further information about a malicious campaign
  - Difficult to connect multiple data sets together
  - Scale of data can make look-ups difficult

## Working with Big Data

### Classification

- Classification is the most self-explanatory challenge
- Revolves around sifting through a dataset and classifying threats
- Challenges arise when dealing with scale and class-imbalance problem
  - For example, at Cisco Umbrella we produce around 4 TB of hourly data that needs to be processed in near real-time
  - Class-imbalance refers to the percentage of benign to malicious domains that can be found

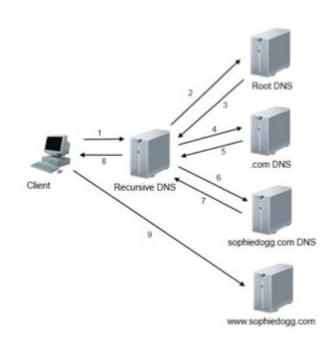
## Case-Studies

 We will be examining some successful use-cases we worked on on dayjob involving classifier design, and designing a platform for pivoting

- Two datasets:
  - Recursive Layer DNS Traffic
  - IPv4 SSL scans

## Cisco Umbrella Datasets

- 28 data centers worldwide
- ~150 billion queries a day
- Translates to around 24 TB a day
- Valuable client query information



## Cisco Umbrella data center locations



## Open source Datasets

SSL Data

- SSL data collected from internet wide scan of IPv4 space
- Store and retrieve over 2 TB of total data
  - Scalability
  - Speed
  - Flexibility
- Primary source of data (scans.io)
  - Secondary active scanning

# Processing



# Challenges Working at Cisco Umbrella Scale

- 1. Logs are big:
  - We've peaked at over 150 billion user queries per day and growing
- 2. Interesting algorithms are slow:
  - Always worse than linear, and sometimes far worse
- Event horizons move:
  - the data you need to make your new idea work is always one day past the current retention window

## **Lessons Learned**

- Currently somewhere between the 4th and 5th iteration of our systems
- Algorithms are always improving and systems are always getting faster, but...

The most cost effective way to improve your search performance is almost always to reduce the size of your search space

## The Internet Is...

# **Noisy**

- People doing scans and scraping expeditions
- Misconfigured search domains
- Infrastructure chattering away
- Low value/inconsequential entities fighting each other

## The Internet Is...

# Repetitive

- Content distribution networks everyone needs to download that latest javascript framework
- Low TTLs to aid fault tolerance mean clients need to constantly ask the same questions
- The incessant push to move everything to "the cloud"

The Internet Is...

# Boring (for the most part)

- Typically, only 5-10% of our raw logs are useful for threat hunting purposes
- Need to strike a balance between cost effective scaling and losing a small amount of signal

# Analysis



# Spike Detection

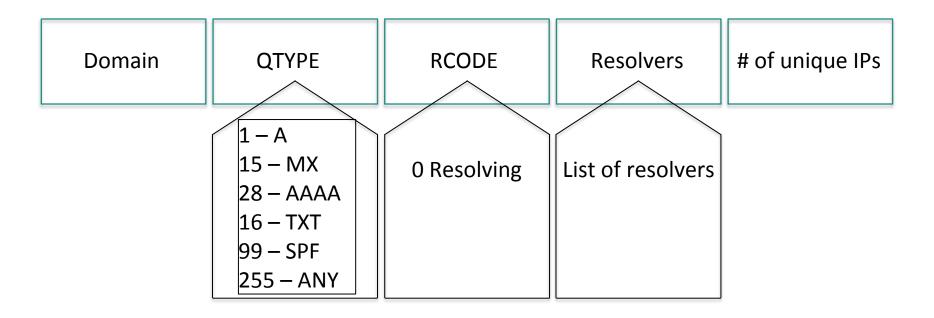


## **Datasets**

Goals - Recursive DNS Data

- Can we identify exploit kit and ransomware domains from DNS client traffic?
- Examine traffic logs for possible signals

## **Datasets**



## **DNS Features Taxonomy**

# Assigned

- -Lexical
- -DGA setup
- -Hosting
- -Registration

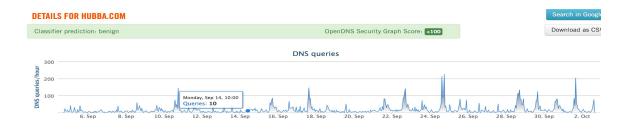
## Inherent

- -DNS query trends
- -Diversity of clients across geography and IP space
- -DNS query volume
- -Query types
- -Number of querying IPs
- -Distribution of queries across resolvers

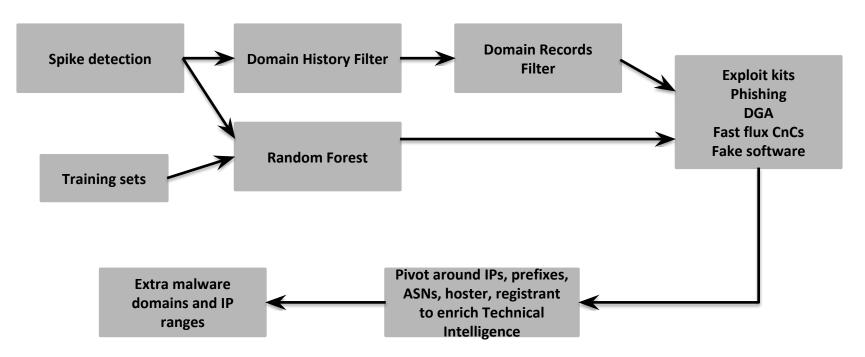
Harder to obfuscate and change by actors at global scale

- Classify domains based on two sets of features:
  - Spike DNS data
  - Historical query volume patterns
- Spike DNS data
  - Qtype distributions
  - Resolver distributions
- Historical query data:
  - Volatility
  - Sparsity





## Spike Detection pipeline

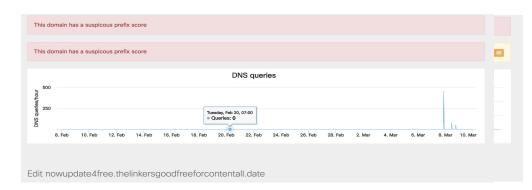


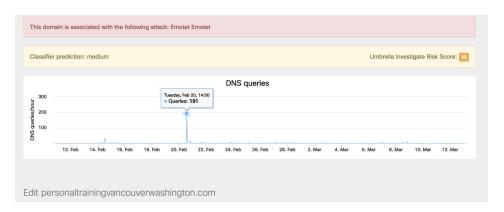
Random Forests

- Use random forest for classification step
  - Random forests parallelize easily
  - Non-parametric model
  - Handle non-linear boundaries
- Feed in spike domain feature vectors hourly to classify spiked domains
- Out-of-bag error at 3%

## Results

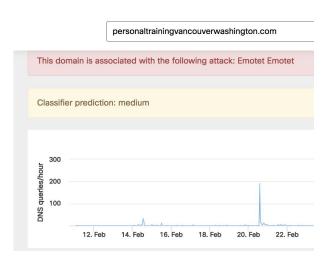
- Two types of domains caught:
  - Dedicated
  - Compromised
- Have different time series for the two classes
- Compromised domains more difficult to detect due to the presence of additional noise
- 'nowupdate4free.thelinkersgoodfreeforcontentall.date'
- 'vancouverwashingtonpersonaltraining.com'





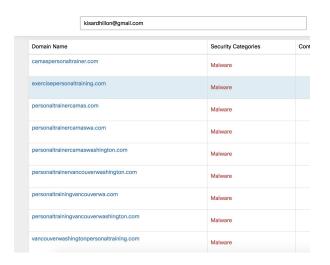
### Results

- Layering of signals post initial classification
- Good method for identifying compromised domains



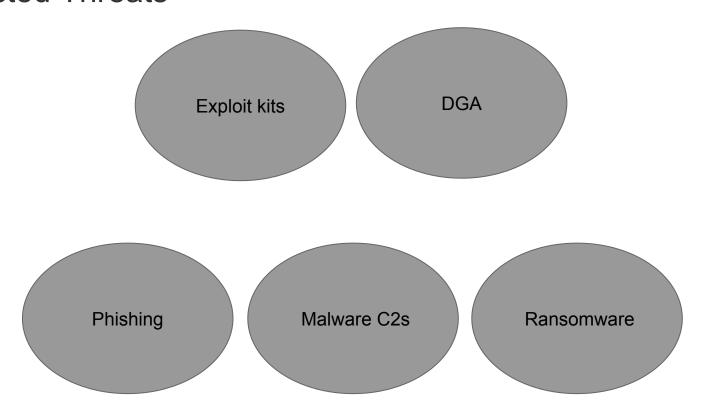
### Results

- Use available WHOIS data to pivot
  - Search through other registrant domains
  - Look for similar signal patterns
- Pivoting done through a combination of manual and automated work
- A whole set of compromised domains are found
  - Able to block these compromised domains ahead of going live



personal	trainingvancouverwashington.com	
popularity_3month		
popularity_week		
tld_score		
WHOIS Record Data  Registrar Name: GODADDY.CO		
Created: January, 15, 2016	Updated: January, 15, 2016	Expi
Email Address	Associated Domains	
kisardhillon@gmail.com	/ issociated Bollianic	

#### **Detected Threats**



# Track Malspam; Combining techniques

#### Path of a malspam attack

Phishing email sent from delta@performanceair.com



Infection on device & positioned for data extraction



Victims click on malicious URLs

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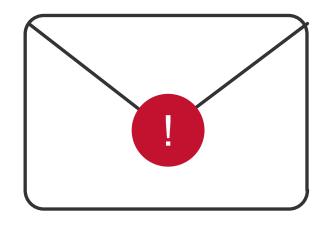


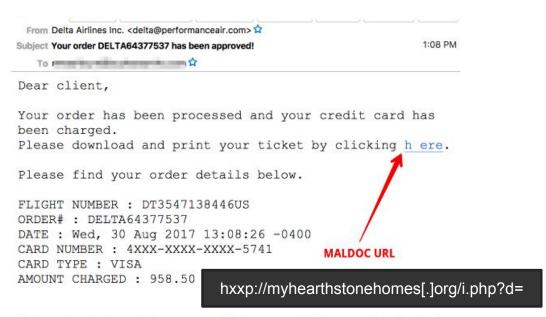
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#### Malicious malspam campaign



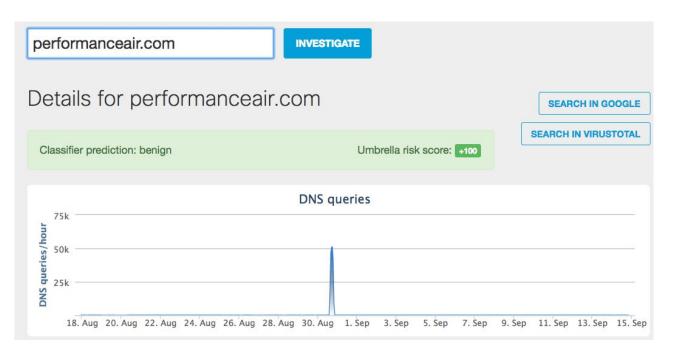


For more information regarding your order, contact us by visitng http://www.delta.com.

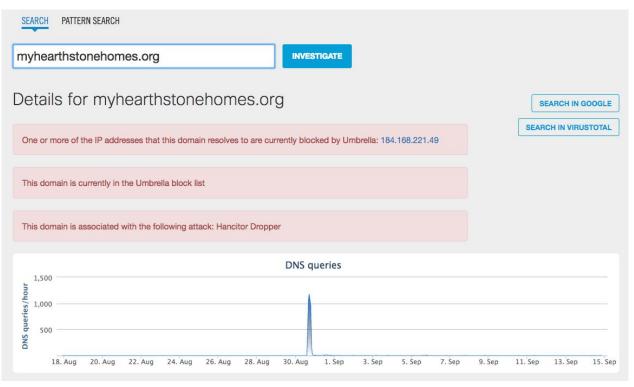
Thank you for flying with us Delta Airlines

#### performanceair.com

Spoofed email used in mailspam attack

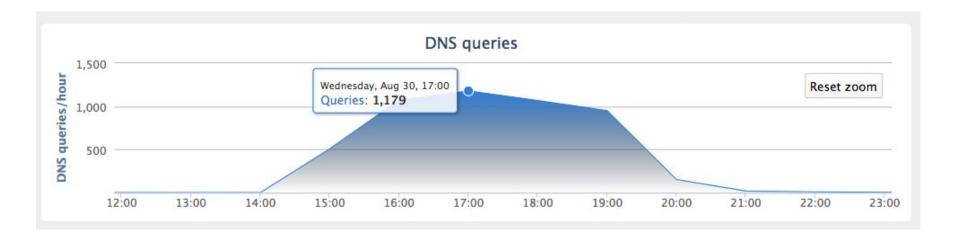


#### August 30: Peak of malicious redirect



#### Duration: 7 hour period

Attack took place between 14:00-21:00 UTC



#### Insight into the IP network

myhearthstonehomes.org

INVESTIGATE

#### IP Addresses

First seen	Last seen	IPs
9/14/17	9/14/17	184.168.221.49 (TTL: )
8/31/17	9/13/17	184.168.221.49 (TTL: 600)
8/30/17	8/30/17	52.14.244.225 (TTL: 600)

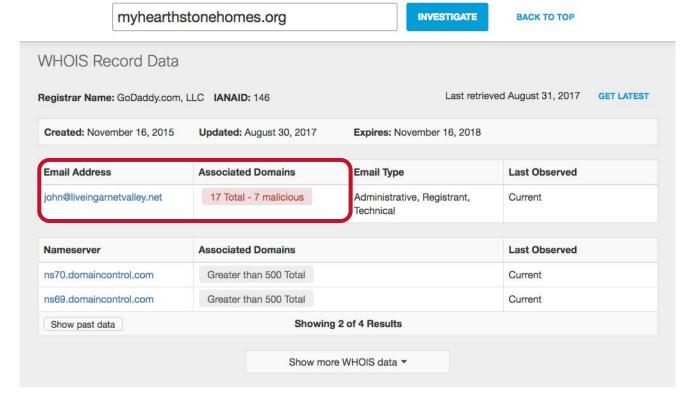
#### Known malicious domains on the same IP

#### Known domains hosted by 52.14.244.225

agentssellingtips.info antoineandmuse.com apadriana.com brookestonehousevalue.info centralfihousevalue.info heymamaradio.com imap.antoineandmuse.com imap.centralfihousevalue.info imap.vetstuff.com myoutdoorchild.com rexahunter.com susannahope.com thechristianblog.com verumpharmaceuticals.com whymovenow.info writerbloggers.com www.heymamaradio.com www.zashealth.com zaspharma.com zassys.com accuratewindermerehousevalue.info greathomesellingtips.info newwestorangehomes.info package2china.com realestatetruth.info vetstuff.com wgopodcastbooking.com writerblogger.com www.agentssellingtips.info zasbiopharmaceuticals.com zasproperties.com zasbiopharm.com zashealthsystems.com zasholdings.com zashealth.com lovelyfirealestate.com ourrealtyguy.org protectorsuperhero.com www.lovelyfirealestate.com www.realestatetruth.info www.zasholdings.com www.zasproperties.com myhearthstonehomes.info myhearthstonehomes.net myhearthstonehomes.org ourrealtyguy.info ourrealtyguy.net ourrealtyguy.us www.myhearthstonehomes.info www.ourrealtyguy.org

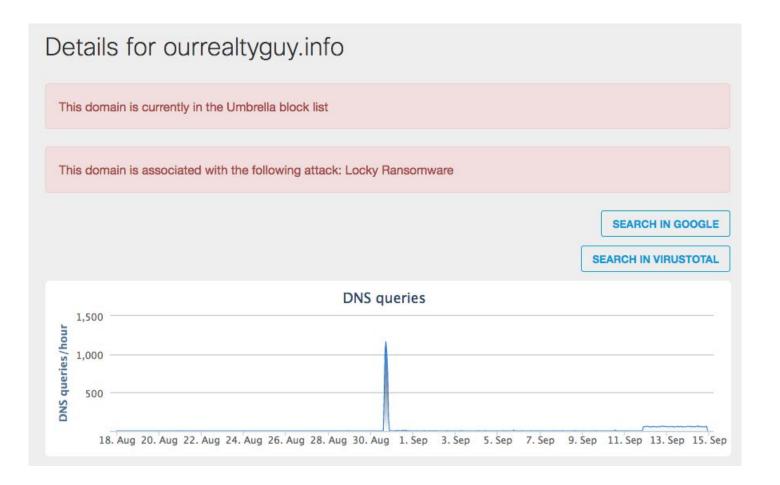
heymamaradio.com INVESTIGATE **BACK TO TOP** This domain is associated with the following attack: Hancitor Dropper This domain has a suspicious prefix score This domain has a suspicious RIP score Classifier prediction: suspicious Umbrella risk score: -83 **DNS** queries DNS queries/hour 18. Aug 20. Aug 22. Aug 24. Aug 26. Aug 28. Aug 30. Aug 1. Sep 3. Sep 5. Sep 7. Sep 9. Sep 11. Sep 13. Sep 15. Sep

#### WHOIS information of myhearthstronehomes.org



#### Domains Associated with john@liveingarnetvalley.net

Domain Name	Security Categories	Conte
myhearthstonehomes.info	Malware	
myhearthstonehomes.net	Malware	
myhearthstonehomes.org	Malware	
ourrealtyguy.info	Malware	
ourrealtyguy.net	Malware	
ourrealtyguy.org	Malware	
ourrealtyguy.us	Malware	



#### Co-occurring domains tied to the same malspam campaign

myhearthstonehomes.org

INVESTIGATE

**BACK TO TOP** 

#### Co-occurrences

```
www.delta.com (18) a1.verisigndns.com (14) performanceair.com (11) a3.verisigndns.com (10) a.dnspod.com (10) a2.verisigndns.com (10) b.dnspod.com (9) c.dnspod.com (9) mx00.1and1.com (4) mx01.1and1.com (4) myhearthstonehomes.net (4) ourrealtyguy.net (4) ourrealtyguy.org (3)
```

#### Co-occurrences

- Find domains queried by clients in close temporal proximity
- Data is one hour of querylog traffic 2TB of raw data
- Identify domains looked up by same clients within one minute window of one another
- Output {domain: [List of Domains]}
- Example:100luimg.361lu.com. -> {"ucsec1.ucweb.com":3.0,"d2.avgc.us":3.0,"home.1100lu.info":4.0}

## Machines **Domains IP IP**

Time window

#### Co-occurrences

Edge in the co-occurrence graph

- The closer in time, the higher the co-occurrence score
- The more clients exhibiting this behavior, the higher the score

#### Co-occurrences

- Domains having similar topic, e.g. security sites, hacking, carding sites
   Visited by users with related interest
- Example: <u>first.org</u>

#### Co-occurrences

nakedsecurity.sophos.com (92.14) www.bleepingcomputer.com (7.86)

- Botnet CnC domains, e.g. DGAs
- Infection chains: compromised sites -> Exploit kit landing domains

#### Scaling Up co-occurrence detection algorithms

Before	After	
job ran daily	job runs hourly	
job used heavily sampled logs	no sampling apart from initial "algorithm relevant" cleaning	
heuristics used to further cut down data size to help catch initial compromise/infection	no further data size reduction necessary	

#### Path of malspam attack

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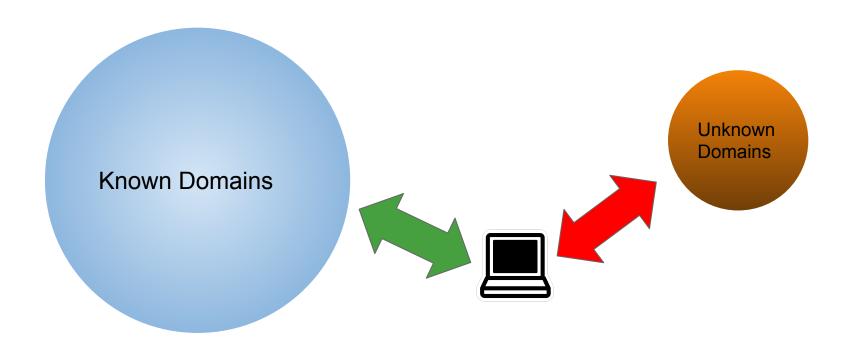
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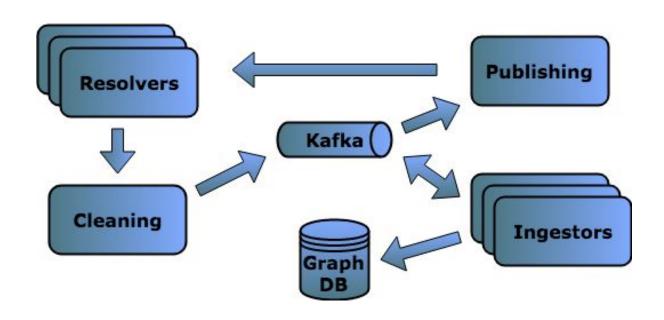


Newly seen domains

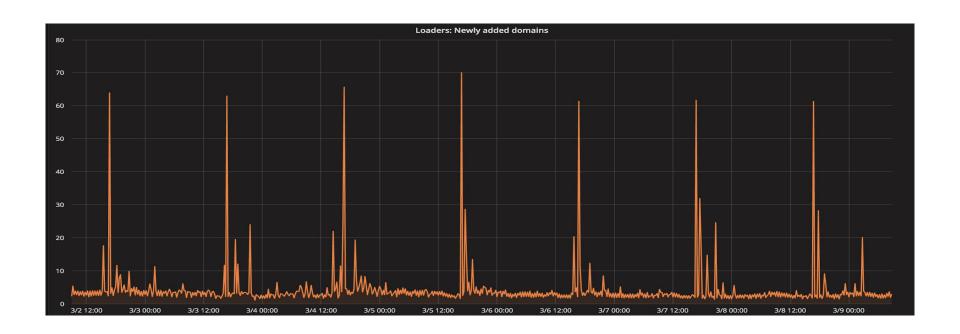
#### Newly Seen Domains: A real-time Stream



#### Overview of Newly Seen Domains System



#### Clear Patterns Emerge



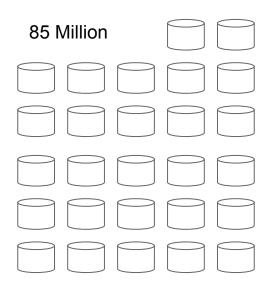
## Cybercrime sites

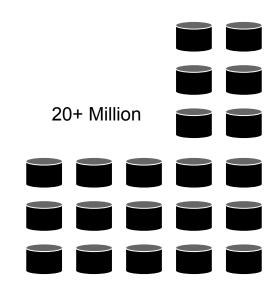


Client IP

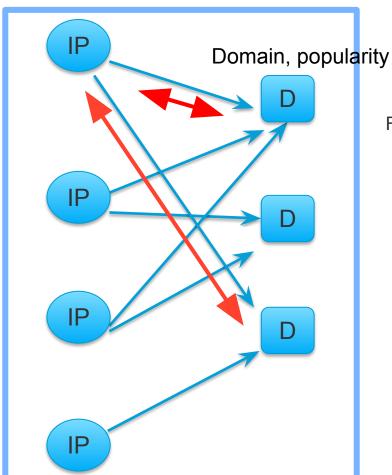


Hosting IP





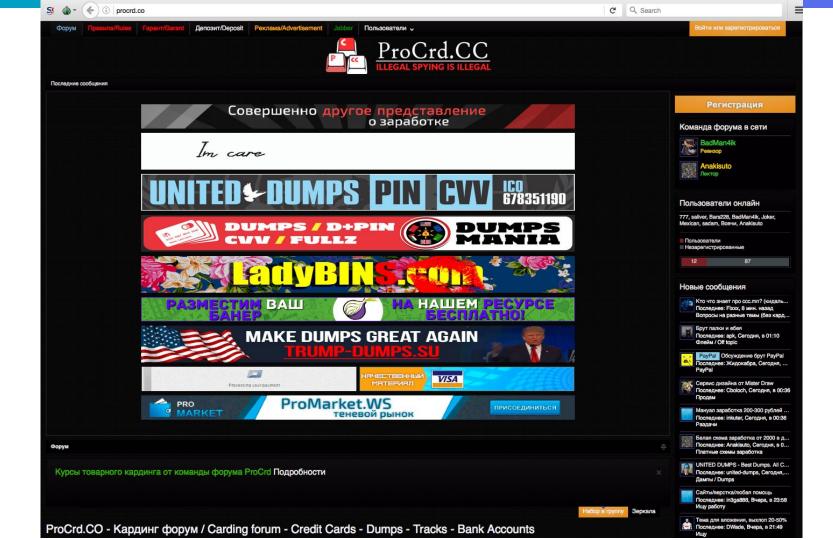
#### Machine, chattiness



#### Amplify through signals using seeds

For every 1 hour of traffic, we define:

- Chattiness: # unique domains a machine queries
- Popularity: # unique machines that gueried the domain
- amplify dom domain chattiness popularity nbhourspast level
- Pivot through domains and machines by keeping a threshold of chattiness and popularity



#### Amplify through signals using seeds

Pivot from procrd.co -> other crimeware sites

amplify.sh dom domain chattiness popularity nbhourspast level amplify.sh dom procrd.co 10 10 120 2

Carding/dump shops: carder007.org, carder.site, cardx.biz, mastercvv.in, trump-dumps.ru

Crimeware forums: fuckav.ru

Jabber/chat servers used by criminals: jabber.ru, blah.im

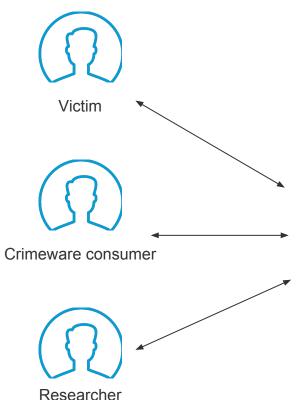
Anonymous, vpn, proxy, socks: doublevpn.com, hidemevpn.de, vpmmonster.ru, hidevpn.me

Stolen accounts, shell, RDP: dedicrdp.ru

## Criminal hosting space

Introduced at Black Hat 2014, Botconf 2014, Defcon 2017

Zbot Fast Flux BPH operation



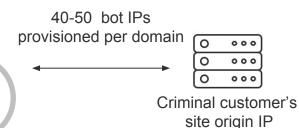


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## SSL Data mining



#### SSL Goals

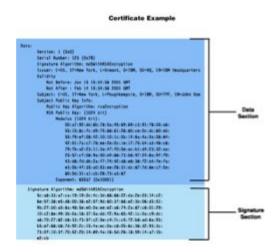
- What questions will we ask?
  - How can we connect domain, IP data with SSL
- IPv4 SSL scans: 2TB of data a few million IPs and a few million SHAs

#### SSL Backend Architecture - Data Format

- Two separate data formats
  - x509 certificate
  - IP  $\leftarrow$  → SSL SHA mappings

- Require different forms of indexing
  - Document store
  - Key/Value store

Communication between data stores

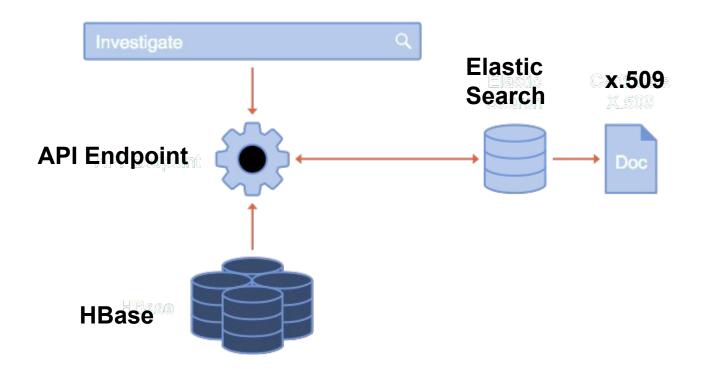


#### SSL Backend Architecture

Data Challenges

- Different data stores for different data types
  - Documents don't store well in traditional RDBMS
  - X509 certs are sparse documents
- Combination of big data technologies
  - HBASE
  - ElasticSearch

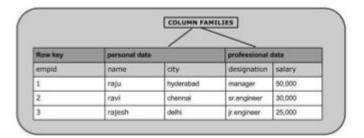
#### SSL Backend Architecture



#### SSL Backend Architecture

#### HBase and Elastic Search Table Design

- 4 HBase major components:
  - Rowkey
  - Column Family
  - Column Qualifier
  - Cell
- Design of the rowkey most important
  - Use RK to match SHAs to IP spaces
- Elasticsearch stores parsed x509 docs
  - Indexed on fields; e.g. search on CNs



#### Reveal origin IP of domains hiding behind reverse proxies

• darkmoney.cc, a cybercrime forum hides behind Cloudflare

```
darkmoney.cc. 299 IN A 104.31.1.166 darkmoney.cc. 299 IN A 104.31.0.166
```

- Search CN=darkmoney.cc in SSL data base
   33b64e11a6e8529d9b719bf9e91bf8b9fd0ad6fa,darkmoney.cc
- Search the sha in SSL data base
   33b64e11a6e8529d9b719bf9e91bf8b9fd0ad6fa 2016-06-27 181.174.164.101
- Confirm content is hosted on the hidden IP

curl --header 'Host: darkmoney.cc' <a href="http://181.174.164.101">http://181.174.164.101</a>

#### Conclusion

Dealing with large scale threat intel problems, you need to:

- Know your requirements: what are you looking for?
- Know what to collect
- Know how to store and process the data at scale
- Know what analysis to apply: human or machine based at scale or a combination
- What is your final product: discrete IOCs, or trends and TTPs

#### Some of our related work

- Hack in the Box 2018 https://youtu.be/co2cvi 5Flc
- SANS CTI Summit 2018
   <a href="https://www.sans.org/summit-archives/file/summit-archive-1517343456.pdf">https://www.sans.org/summit-archives/file/summit-archive-1517343456.pdf</a>
- Flocon 2018 <a href="https://schd.ws/hosted-files/flocon2018/d7/2.%20FloCon%202018">https://schd.ws/hosted-files/flocon2018/d7/2.%20FloCon%202018</a> .pdf
- https://schd.ws/hosted\_files/flocon2018/16/2.%20Flocon\_2018\_Thomas\_Dhia\_Jan\_10.pdf
- Virus Bulletin 2017 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbzvZ8ChTiU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbzvZ8ChTiU</a>
- Defcon 2017 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbJCOVLQbjs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbJCOVLQbjs</a>
- Black Hat 2017 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGTTRN6Vs-Y&feature=youtu.be">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGTTRN6Vs-Y&feature=youtu.be</a>
- Usenix Enigma 2017 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ep2qHQqjYTs&t=818s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ep2qHQqjYTs&t=818s</a>
- Black Hat 2016 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9yqnwuqdSk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9yqnwuqdSk</a>
- RSA 2016 <a href="https://www.rsaconference.com/events/us16/agenda/sessions/2336/using-large-scale-data-to-provide-attacker">https://www.rsaconference.com/events/us16/agenda/sessions/2336/using-large-scale-data-to-provide-attacker</a>
- BruCon 2015 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8edBqoHXnwq">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8edBqoHXnwq</a>
- Virus Bulletin 2014 <a href="https://www.virusbtn.com/conference/vb2014/abstracts/Mahjoub.xml">https://www.virusbtn.com/conference/vb2014/abstracts/Mahjoub.xml</a>
- Black Hat 2014 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UG4ZUaWDXSs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UG4ZUaWDXSs</a>

### Thank you

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