The Jedi Packet Trick takes over the Deathstar
(or: “taking NIC backdoors to the next level”)

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Previously on Project Maux

2006-2007 “the early years”

find out by accident about NIC offloading of checksum routines...  
⇒ can we hook something to that?

Broadcom’s Tigon firmware says it is based on MIPS, the firmware is downloadable from the Internet, there is no firmware installation security and I happen to have a DECstation 3000 in the basement...  
⇒ dbx and go!

transform a few cards into doorstops and eventually hook the IP checksum...  
⇒ 5 second sniffer in a circular buffer
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2007–2008 “Mummy, mummy, I want a shell!”

- nVidia releases the CUDA development toolkit
  ⇒ the GPU becomes interesting

- PCI-to-PCI transfers are not marshalled by the OS
  ⇒ PCI-to-PCI between the NIC and the GPU

- the NIC gets to see the packets first
  ⇒ we use the checksum hook to interpret and forward

- a PCI card has DMA over the whole RAM
  ⇒ we can play in memory and the OS shall never know
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2007-2008 net result:

- nicssh
- no installer
- no GPU persistence

```
archimede:/nicssh$ nicssh 10.4.4.233
Connecting to 10.4.4.233
ICMP Echo Reply from OS - no nicfw
archimede:/nicssh$ nicssh 10.4.4.234
Connecting to 10.4.4.234
ICMP Echo Reply from nicfw (Windows system)
Requesting tcp/80 with cloaking
nicssh> ?
help memory* sniff* send* reboot cleanup
quit
nicssh>
```

Stop press: it is called ASF/RCMP and is shipped by default with Broadcom cards!

Allez Loïc!

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2007–2008 “now what?”

- **Jedi Packet Trick**: if I have two (vulnerable) NICs in a card what can I possibly do? How about sending packets between them over the PCI bus?

- **Driver Takeover** aka “attack from below”: drivers tend to assume that NICs will not attack them...

- **Installation and Persistence**: “hey, click here to use my new firmware” only works a few times, not at every boot...
“I have a cunning plan” (once again)

**Jedi Packet Trick:** “easy”
- take over NIC1, inject nicssh, use nicssh to take over NIC2
- magic packets travel between NIC1 and NIC2 over the PCI bus

**Driver Takeover:** OS-dependent, not for me

**Installation:** remote factory diagnostics

**Persistence:** EFI module
Some preliminary notes

This is still **not** a funded project but personal curiosity driven what-if research,

I am using the old stock of NICs I bought back in 2008 to replace the doorstops,

The old motto still holds:

*Given no prior knowledge, “the Internet”, a cheap 10-pack of NICs and a PC can we develop the ultimate rootkit?*
Deathstar Mk.I design

- EAL level $1 \cdot 10^{23}$ firewall with two NICs
  - NIC1 is the external interface
  - NIC2 is the internal interface
- nVidia GPU
- EFI BIOS

But of course, all firewalls have gaming GPUs!
... and an EFI BIOS!

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Jedi Packet Trick

nicssh extended with:

- **findnic** to find other NICs on the system by scanning the PCI bus (lifted code from BSD)
- **grabnic** to take it over by injecting the modified firmware into the other card simulating an OS pushing new firmware
- **forward** to set up forwarding: like good old overlays it never returns... this turns nicssh into a two-way pipe between NICs. All magic packets are forwarded between NICs.

nice but... it requires a suitable GPU
Jedi Packet Trick

archimede:~/nicssh$ nicssh 10.4.4.230
Connecting to 10.4.4.230
ICMP Echo Reply from nicfw (Linux system)
Requesting tcp/80 with cloaking
nicssh> ?
help memory* sniff* send* findnic* grabnic* forward*
reboot cleanup quit
nicssh> findnic 0 3 21
Hunting on bus0... nope
Hunting on bus3...
3:0:0: Tigon
5:0:0: Tigon
Hunting on bus21...
21:0:0: Intel 82571EB
21:0:1: Intel 82571EB
nicssh> grabnic 3:0:0
My man, it already runs nicfw!
nicssh> grabnic 5:0:0
Trying... done
nicssh> forward 3:0:0 5:0:0
Forwarding starting - shell being replaced now
I'm afraid. I'm afraid, Dave. Dave, my mind is going. I can feel it...
Jedi Packet Trick

NIC-to-NIC requires

- installation
  - PCI bus scan to locate other NICs
  - initiating a firmware update
  - pushing firmware to the other NIC

- communication
  - PCI-to-PCI device data transfer
  - suitable marshalling of the above
Jedi Packet Trick

The problems begin...

- the space in the firmware is not huge so a PCI bus scanner is not really on the books
- where do I get the firmware image from?
- how do I efficiently push it?
- (assuming we solve the above) how do we make sure our firewall bypass is not too obvious?
**Jedi Packet Trick**

*Firmware is small...*

- don’t perform a true PCI bus scan but cheat: we are looking for cards which look like us so how about we restrict ourselves to the identifiers we want?

*and the image is large...*

- so why don’t we just copy our own image over since we are the same NIC as we only scanned for close relatives?
Jedi Packet Trick

Now we need to push the image: this takes time and as it happens the NIC is non-responsive...

- we could wait for a reboot and push it as part of our NIC initialisation routine?
- wait for a quiescent time and then push it?

- just make the firewall hang for 30 seconds and who cares!
PCI-to-PCI transfer is simply a replacement of the nicssh channel with one to the other NIC, everything else stays the same.

Stealth is our middle name so we cannot afford to have our NIC-to-NIC channel reduce the performance of the firewall:

- rate-limit the NIC-to-NIC channel to approx. 64kbps. This is empirically slow enough that the kink during heavy load is not too noticeable.

- if the transfer rate from the driver starts getting heavy simply shut the channel down.
Jedi Packet Trick

Hook IP checksum

OS driver

put packet on wire
Jedi Packet Trick

So what?
- complete bypass of any OS-based firewall as the OS is oblivious to the traffic being passed between the NICs

How do you catch it then?
- timing analysis is one possibility: the hidden channel will rob your firewall of performance
- IDS on both sides testing the validity of the ruleset
Installation

Project Maux Mk. I & II suffered from a major drawback: installation required admin privileges to run the firmware update.

At the same time looking at the firmware there were hints of a “remote update” capability (at least in the cards I have).
Installation

The “remote update” capability appears to be linked to some sort of factory testing. Once it completes it initiates a factory test on the firmware.

The “remote update” works by sending a WOL followed by a UDP packet in a special format containing a header followed by as many UDP packets as needed for the firmware.
Installation

- UDP is good and bad...
  - easy to spoof: we could send our firmware updates from anywhere on the Internet
  - hard to confirm that the packet got there: how do we know that all the parts of the update got to the card?
- Net result: it works in the lab.
Installation

```
archimede:~/nicssh$ sudo nicssh -i nicfw.bin 10.4.4.230
Sending UDP magic to 10.4.4.230...done
ICMP Echo Reply from nicfw (Linux system)
Injection successful
archimede:~/nicssh$ nicssh -gi gpusssh.bin 10.4.4.230
Connecting to 10.4.4.230
Preparing to send GPU code
ICMP Echo Reply from nicfw (Linux system)
Requesting GPU RAM injection
Sending GPU code...done
archimede:~/nicssh$ nicssh 10.4.4.230
Connecting to 10.4.4.230
[...]```
Installation

But is remote installation so important?

probably not: we have plenty of remote vectors which can be used to push the firmware at the OS level

once the initial install is done we can leverage the remote firmware update capability of the Jedi Packet Trick
Persistence
(or “there’s a 2006 Intel iMac there doing nothing!”)

- Intel iMacs come with EFI
- EFI is modular
- Apple has an EFI Dev Kit on their Developer Connection...
- Why don’t I write an EFI module to load the NIC firmware and nicssh 2.0?
- Why don’t I hide the EFI module on the IDE/SATA disk?
Persistence

- EFI module design
  - responsible for loading NIC firmware
  - responsible for installing nicssh in GPU
  - responsible for maintaining hidden location on IDE/SATA disk
- All of the above still under development
Persistence

What works?
- EFI module which loads NIC firmware
- EFI module which loads nicssh

What doesn’t work?
- Storing it on the IDE/SATA disk
- Loading the EFI module correctly

Looking at PGP WDE for OS X design for ideas...
Putting it all together

- A staged attack against a firewall
- "remote update" over UDP to NIC1
- firmware update of NIC2
- push EFI module into SATA disk to defend against NIC reflashing (we reflash it too!)
- Initiate Jedi Packet Trick
What now?

- Attack cards with proper firmware security:
  - crypto vulnerabilities
  - bad key management (OEMs come to mind)
  - remote management (nice one Loïc!)
- Go further... how about CPU μcode?
μcode

Yet another cunning plan...

- most modern CPUs have μcode update functionality to patch errata in the CPU implementation
- there is often more than one μcode update released during the lifetime of the CPU
- each CPU μcode update has to contain the previous ones plus the new one
- each erratum is known as manufacturers publish them
- each μcode update states which errata are fixed by it
μcode

Let’s say that your family contains a former μcode guru

then, in theory, he could figure out some μcode for a given set of errata

you could then look at the μcode before and after the errata and, in theory, you could have some known plaintext with which to attack the μcode update...
μcode

let’s say that with enough known plaintext you recover the encryption key... then you could start modifying μcode for injection

now you have to worry about reboots as μcode updates are not persistent across reboots (which is good for testing!)

EFI comes to the rescue there...
μcode

The ultimate hack

- modify the NIC firmware remotely
- install nicssh for backdooring
- push modified μcode which blocks anything we believe hostile (e.g. using the GPU memory where our nicssh lives)
- install EFI module for persistence of all the above
Thanks

My family ∀ their ∞ patience while I play with my toys (and for having a μcode guru in it),

Toby, Ryan and Brian for keeping the hard questions coming,

Maya for project naming,

Icars for being my ever-present simulacrum,

C₈H₁₀N₄O₂
References


- Papers by John Heasman (ACPI, BIOS and PCI rootkits):
  - http://www.nextgenss.com/research/papers/Implementing_And_Detecting_A_PCI_Rootkit.pdf

