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Network security isn't all fun and games: An analysis of information transmitted while playing Team Fortress 2

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Abstract

In the world of online gaming, information is exchanged as a matter of course. What information is exchanged behind the scenes is something that is not obvious to the casual user. People who play these games trust that the applications they are using are securely written and in this case, communicate securely. This paper looks at the traffic that is transmitted by the game Team Fortress 2 and incidentally the supporting authentication traffic of the Steam network. It was discovered through packet analysis that there is quite a lot of information which should be kept private being broadcast in the clear. Information discovered as a result of traffic capture and analysis included users IDs, and of greater concern, the remote console password. While this information may seem trivial, discovery of such information may lead to compromise of the game server, leaving it open to be controlled by someone with malicious intent.

Keywords

Network security, Team Fortress 2, packet analysis

INTRODUCTION

Team Fortress 2 (TF2) is a popular online, multiplayer game created by VALVe Software and distributed over their content delivery system, Steam (VALVe, 2008a). While TF2, currently with over 14,000 concurrent players today is not as popular as some of their other Steam offerings, such as Counter Strike: Source (CSS), with a peak today of over 95,000 concurrent players, it is still a significant number of users and a rich target vector. By any stretch of the imagination, Steam is a successful platform with currently over 1.3 million concurrent users at the time of writing (VALVe, 2008a).

TF2 is played over a network, most commonly over the Internet and uses the internet protocol (IP) suite (TCP/IP). Public servers are hosted by many different communities and can be open to the public or kept private through the use of passwords (Steam_Support). These games require Steam to authenticate with the online authentication servers before they can be played. Although a high speed network connection is required for full game-play, anyone can download a TF2 client for either Linux or Windows for free and setup their own internet server that anyone can connect to (VALVe 2008b).

Although the idea of playing games or investigating game security may seem frivolous at first glance, there are some very real security implications if the traffic exchanged between client and server is not secure. For example, it is common for commercial organisations that host game servers to site multiple instances on the one physical server (Gameservers, 2008). As a consequence of this practice of server hosting, it is necessary to give game server administrators remote access to the server. It is also common practice to make multiple regular users of a game server what is known as administrator privileges to allow them to reset the game, or to evict players who do not comply with any stated rules or regulations. Password reuse, ie the practice of using the same password for multiple systems, is a significant security issue (Ives *et al*, 2004). If the password is sent in clear text by the game, this does present a risk to network security, as it may be used to compromise a server, and not just the game service.

There is also a financial incentive to want to hijack a users account, or to steal their online identity. There have been numerous reports of virtual property theft which resulted in real financial loss (Chen *et al*, 2004).

It is the aim of this paper to analyse the IP traffic involved in the playing of TF and investigate the possible impacts of the contents of this traffic on network security. The traffic will also be investigated to determine whether there is any information that may allow for identity theft or other such malicious activity.

METHOD

The process Steam games go through to enable game play requires communication between many servers other than just the client and game server. To ensure all authentication and game data was captured the following scenario was devised. A server running the Vista Service Pack 1 was used as a platform. A dedicated Windows version of Team Fortress 2 server, whish is based on the HalfLife dedicated server (HLDS), was then installed and configured for internet use. Wireshark was installed on both client and server and was used to capture the network data. The data capture was performed on the client during the Steam authentication process and then again once TF2 was started until the game was finished. The server data was captured from when the TF2 server was started until when the process was terminated. This allowed all traffic from all hosts, including third party hosts, associated with playing TF2 to be captured. The client procedure was then replicated on a separate, live machine belonging to a genuine player of TF2 on Windows XP Service Pack 2. This second client connected to a live internet based server while wireshark was again used to capture the network data so the results could be validated.

RESULTS

The obvious information that can be seen in the packet headers is the IP addresses of the hosts involved (Figure 1). This isn't anything surprising but it does provide a target. Once the Steam client is started, initial communications are established. At this point something a little more interesting happens in that the host name of the computer being used is sent in clear text (Figure 2). This is all common information that could be gleaned after listening to a host for long enough but could be used for careful selection of a target.

```
2080 23.251284 72.165.61.185 10.77.25.128
UDP Source port: 27017 Destination port: 50910

Figure 1: Packet header captured during authentication process.
```

```
0000
        00 00 5e 00 01 03 00 1a 6b 4e 25 ef 08 00 45 00
                                                                ..^....kN%...E.
0010
        00 4b 4f 54 00 00 80 11 00 00 0a 4d 19 80 8b e6
                                                                .KOT.....M....
0020
        52 3c fd d1 00 35 00 37 02 38 31
                                             23 01 00 00 01
                                                                R<...5.7.81#....
0030
        00 00 00 00 00 00 0e 63 73 30 30 31 61 36 62 34
                                                                 .....<mark>cs001a6b4</mark>
0040
        65 32 35 65 66 03 61 64 73 03 65 63 75 03 65 64
0050
        75 02 61 75 00 00 01 00 01
                                                                <mark>u.au</mark>....
         Figure 2: Packet data payload containing hostname sent during authentication process
```

1 igure 2. I deket data payroad containing nostname sent during addienteation process

Once a connection is established, the authentication process begins. While these packets are encrypted they appear to be easily identifiable by the first 4 bytes of the data payload, VS01, which is highlighted in yellow in the illustrated captured packet (Figure 3.) These packets are passed not only during the authentication process but also all the while the game is being played. While they are readily identifiable by their data header and the host they are associated with IP address 69.28.145.172. While this IP address does not resolve to a domain name, whois reports this back as a limelight server belonging to and with a technical contact email at VALVe Software (Figure 4.) Little else is obvious in these packets.

```
0000
       00 la 6b 4e 25 ef 00 80 2d 29 f2 08 08 00 45 00
                                                              ..kN%...-)....E.
0010
       00 48
              63
                 4e 00 00
                           6d 11 40 2c 48 a5
                                               3d b9
                                                      0a 4d
                                                              .HcN..m.@,H.=..M
0020
       19
          80
              69
                 89 c6
                        de 00 34
                                 c0 13 56 53
                                               30 31
                                                      08 00
                                                              ..i....4...<mark>VS01</mark>..
0030
                       00 00 02 00 00 01 00 00 00 01 00
       02 00
             0.0
                 00 00
                                                              . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
0040
       00
          00
              00
                 00
                    00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 8a 61
                                                              .....a
       3e f7 09 00 00 00
0050
                                                              > . . . .
```

Figure 3: Authentication data packet beginning with the "VS01" double word.

What is surprising is that the steam user name, the name used to identify the legitimate user (as opposed to the user's screen name or tag) is sent in clear text (Figure 4). The server this is sent to resolves to a Qwest server which whois once again clearly identifies as belonging to and operated by VALVe Software, located in Washington State, USA. (Figure 5).

```
1215
      13.216494
                   10.77.25.128
                                       72.165.61.141
                                                          TCP
                                                                 53733 > 27039
[PSH, ACK] Seq=14 Ack=6 Win=65692 [TCP CHECKSUM INCORRECT] Len=35
0000
       00 00 5e 00 01 03 00 1a 6b 4e 25 ef 08 00 45 00
                                                             ..^....kN%...E.
0010
       00 4b 51 56 40 00 80 06 00 00 0a 4d 19 80 48 a5
                                                             .KQV@....M..H.
                           1a 84 87 e2 de 73 ff ba 50 18
0020
       3d 8d d1 e5 69 9f
                                                            =...i....s..P.
0030
       40 27
              aa 3c 00 00
                          00 00 00 1f 02 00 0d 73 73 30
                                                            @'.<<u>....</u>...<mark>ss0</mark>
       31 38 38 30 30 31 70 63 32 39 00 0d 73 73 30 31
                                                                       ..<mark>ss01</mark>
0040
                                                            188
0050
       38 38 30 30 31 70 63 32 39
```

Figure 4: Steam user name passed to VALVe server in clear text.

Whois: 72.165.61.141 OrgName: VALVE CORPORATION VALVE-2 OrgID: Address: 6101 S. 180TH STREET City: TUKWILA StateProv: WA PostalCode: 98188 Country: US NetRange: 72.165.61.128 - 72.165.61.191 CIDE: 72.165.61.128/26 Figure 5: whois data

Once you load up TF2 and enter the server browser, your "favourites" list is updated. Every server you have in any of your steam "favourite" lists is updated in clear text. This means every favourite list from every steam game you have played is updated despite the fact you are playing TF2. From this information it can be seen what game preferences the user has other than simply TF2 (Figure 6). In this case we can see from the illustrated captured packets that this user also plays CSS (Figure 7) and the Left 4 Dead demo (Figure 8). Apart from the IP address of the server the user plays on in the packet header, the server name can be seen in red, the current map name in green, the steam game name in cyan, the game long name in yellow and the server flags in blue.

```
0000
       00 11 11 75 94 da 00 04 ed 38 09 c4 08 00 45 00
0010
       00 8c 00 00 40 00 3b 11 49 86 ca 48 bf 8b ca 48
                                                              ....@.;.I..H...H
0020
       al be 69 87 12 04 00 78 e9 74 ff ff ff
                                                  ff 49 0e
                                                              ..i....x.t....I.
                           20 2d 20 54 46 32 20
0030
       33 46 4c 20 57
                        41
                                                  23 30 31
                                                              3FL WA -
                                                               2fort only -
       20 32
              66 6f
                     72
                        74
                           20 6f 6e
                                     6c 79 20
0040
                                               2d
                                                  20 49 6e
0050
       73 74 61 53 70
                       61
                           77 6e 21 00 63 74 66 5f
                                                      32 66
                                                                aSpawn!.<mark>ctf</mark>
                                                              ort.tf.Team Fort
0060
       6f 72 74 00 74 66 00 54 65 61 6d 20 46 6f 72 74
0070
       72 65 73 73 00 b8 01 00 18 00 64 6c 00 01 31 2e
                                                              ress .... ... dl ... 1.
0080
       30 2e 34 2e 32 00 a0 87 69
                                     63 74 66 2c 72 65
                                                              0.4.2...<mark>ictf,res</mark>
              77 6e 74 69 6d 65 73
0090
       70 61
                                     00
                                                              pawntimes.
                  Figure 6: Team Fortress 2 "favourite" server update packet
0000
       00 11 11 75 94 da 00 04 ed 38 09 c4 08 00 45 00
                                                              ...u....8....E.
0010
       00 80 00 00 40 00 3c 11 a1 f5 cb 18 65 58 ca 48
                                                              ....@.<....eX.H
0020
       al be 69 87 12 04 00 6c 60 47 ff ff ff ff 49 07
                                                              ..i....l`G....I.
0030
       45 47 4e 20 43 53 53 23 30 38 20 5b 44 75 73 74
0040
       32 5d 20 52 61 6e 6b 65 64 20 28 31
                                               30 30 54 69
0050
       63
          6b 29 00 64 65 5f
                              64
                                  75
                                     73 74 32
                                               00
                                                   63
                                                      73
                                                         74
                                                                 .de_dust2.cst
0060
           69
                 65
                     00
                        43 6f
                               75
                                  бе
                                     74 65
                                            72
                                               2d
                                                   53
                                                      74 72
                                                               <mark>rike</mark>.<mark>Counter-Str</mark>
       72
              6b
0070
       69
          6b 65
                 3a
                     20
                       53 6f
                               75
                                  72
                                     63 65 00
                                               f0
                                                   00
                                                      18 18
                                                              ike: Source....
                                                               .dl..1.0.0.34.
0800
       00 64 6c 00
                    01 31 2e 30 2e 30 2e 33 34 00
                      Figure 7: CSS "favourite" server update packet
```

```
0000
        00 11 11 75 94
                         da 00 04 ed 38 09 c4
                                                 80
                                                     00 45 00
                                                                ...u....8....E.
0010
        00 cf
              75
                  2c
                     00
                         00
                            7c
                               11
                                   2c
                                       75
                                          cb
                                                 65
                                                     5d
                                                        ca 48
                                             18
                                                                ..u,..|.,u..e].H
              69 87
                            00 bb
                                   fe 59
0020
       al be
                         04
                                          ff
                                             ff
                                                 ff
                                                     ff
                                                        49 24
                     12
                                                                 ..i.....Y....I$
0030
              4e 20 57
        45 47
                         41
                            20
                               4c 34
                                      44 23 32
                                                    5b
                                                        65 67
                                                                 GN WA L4D#
                                                                    om.au].14d de
0040
        6e 2e 63 6f 6d
                         2e 61
                               75
                                   5d 00 6c 34
                                                 64
                                                     5f
                                                        64
                                                           65
                                                                m hospital01 apa
0050
        6d 5f
              68
                  6f
                     73
                         70
                            69
                                74
                                   61
                                       6c
                                          30
                                              31
                                                 5f
                                                     61
                                                        70
                                                           61
                                                                rtment.left4dead
0060
        72
           74
              6d
                  65
                     6e
                         74
                            00
                               6c
                                   65
                                       66
                                          74
                                              34
                                                 64
                                                     65
                                                        61
                                                           64
                                                                .L4D - Co-op -
0070
        00 4c
                  44
                     20
                         2d
                            20
                               43
                                   6f
                                             70
                                                        20
              34
                                      2d 6f
                                                 20
                                                     2d
                                                           48
                                                                ard.....dw..1.0
0080
        61 72
              64 00
                     12
                         02
                            00
                               04 00
                                          77
                                             00
                                       64
                                                 01
                                                     31 2e 30
                                                                .0.0...<mark>iempty,re</mark>
servable,key36,S
0090
        2e 30
                  30
                     0.0
                         a0
                            87
                               69
                                      6d 70
                                             74
                                                 79
                                                        72 65
              2e
                                   65
                                                     2c
00a0
                                              79
        73
           65
              72
                  76
                     61
                         62
                            6c
                                65
                                   2c
                                       6b
                                          65
                                                 33
                                                     36
                                                        2c 53
          72
                               72
                                                 72
                                                                 rver Browser Jo
00b0
        65
              76 65
                     72
                         2.0
                                   6f
                                      77
                                          73
                                             65
                                                    20 4a 6f
                            42
00c0
        69 6e 20 45 6e 61 62 6c 65
                                      64 2c 73 76
                                                    5f 73 65
                                                                in Enabled, sv
00d0
        61 72 63 68 5f 6b 65 79 5f 33 36 2c 00
                                                                 arch key 36,.
```

Figure 8: Left 4 Dead "favourite" server update packet

When joining a server, part of the information transmitted in clear text is the users screen name or tag and the contents of the password variable (Figure 9). This is the field used to access password restricted servers. More interesting is the remote console (rcon) password. The rcon password is used to authenticate a user authorized to control and issue commands to a remote game server. This password is also sent in clear text preceding any rcon command. In the illustrated packets (Figure 10) the rcon password for the test server, wibble, is seen in the packet immediately preceding the issued rcon command. (Steam_Support) In this case the command was a simple status command. In game the data is either encrypted or in raw binary as it makes no readily apparent sense when viewed as ASCII. When the test runs were done, the user used the in game chat and team chat to leave easily identifiable messages. The packets were searched for these text strings but were not found in any

```
0000
       00 04 ed 38 09 c4 00 11 11 75 94 da 08 00 45 00
                                                           ...8....u...E.
0010
       03 1c a3 01 00 00 80 11 9e f4 ca 48 a1 be ca 48
                                                           0020
       bf 8b 69 7d 69 87
                          03 08 cf d7 ff ff ff
                                                   6b 0e
                                                           ..i}i.....k.
       00 00 00
                03 00 00
                          00 ae e8 20
                                      Of 54 4f 47
                                                   20 7c
0030
                                                           0040
       20 4e 69
                   68 74
                             69
                                72 65
                                      00 69 72
                                                   6e 76
                                                           N
                67
                          66
                                                6f
                                                                    <mark>e</mark>.ironv
0050
       бf
          бс
             74
                00 d4
                       02
                          2a
                             00 00 00
                                      14 00
                                            00
                                                00
                                                   f0
                                                      fa
                                                           <mark>olt</mark>...*......
0060
          25
             90
                58 16
                       72
                          66
                             ff
                                02 00
                                      01
                                         00
                                             10
                                                01
                                                   9d 10
                                                           a%.X.rf......
       61
0070
       15 49
             00
                01 00 80 b5
                             e0 3b 55 1d d6
                                             01
                                                77
                                                   15 35
                                                           .I....;U...w.5
          Figure 9: Screen name and server password variable being passed to the server.
```

```
00 la 6b 4e 25 91 00 la 6b 4e 25 ef
0000
                                                00
                                                   45 00
                                             0.8
                                                           ..kN%...kN%...E.
0010
         3d 0a f8
                   40 00
                         80 06 a8 22 0a 4d 19
                                               80
                                                   0a 4d
                                                           .=..@....".M...M
0020
                44 69 87
                         0a a2 3b 41 dc f5 23 ee
             Сб
                                                   50 18
                                                           ...Di...;A..#.P.
0030
       40
         2.9
             54
                £7
                   00 00 11 00 00 00 02 00 00 00 03 00
                                                          @)T.....
0040
       00 00 77
                69 62 62 6c 65 00 32 00
                                                           ..wibble.2.
0000
       00 la 6b 4e 25 91 00 la 6b 4e 25 ef 08 00 45 00
                                                           ..kN%...kN%...E.
0010
       0.0
          3с
             0a f9
                   40
                      00
                         80 06 a8
                                   22 0a 4d 19 80
                                                   0a 4d
                                                           .<..@....".M...M
0020
                44 69
                                3b
                                   56 dc f5 23 ee
                                                   50 18
          87
             C6
                      87
                          0a a2
                                                          ...Di...;V..#.P.
0030
       40
          29
             54
                ea 00
                      00
                         10 00 00
                                   00 00 00 00 00 02 00
                                                          @)T.....
0040
       00 00 73 74 61 74 75 73 00 00
                                                           ..<mark>status</mark>..
```

Figure 10: rcon password and rcon "status" command being passed in clear text.

clear text form.

Once the game was done and the process exited steam had one more set of useful clear text to offer. This final packet is uploaded from the client to 67.132.200.140. This IP address resolves to 67-132-200-140.valvesoftware.com, a server once again on Qwest's network and owned by VALVe Software. In this packet (Figure 11) we can see the srcid that corresponds to the PseudoUUID registry key, both marked in yellow. The CPU type and speed is marked in red, the graphics card type in blue, the graphics card driver version in green and the DirectX version in magenta. Finally the Steam application ID, coloured in dark red, which corresponds to the Apps registry key (Steam_Support, 2008).

```
0000
        00 04 ed 38 09 c4 00 11 11 75 94 da 08 00
                                                          45
                                                             0.0
                                                                   ...8....u...E.
0010
        01 9a a8 40 40 00 80 06 d9 05 ca 48 a1 be
                                                          43
                                                             84
                                                                   ...@@.....H...C.
                  13 69
0020
        c8 8c 12
                         87
                              03
                                 28 90 2d 63 b9 59 a3
                                                          50
                                                              18
                                                                   ....i..(.-c.Y.P.
0030
        ff
           fd
               79
                   a4 00
                         00
                              22
                                 67
                                     61
                                        6d
                                            65
                                               73 74
                                                      61
                                                          74
                                                              73
                                                                   ..y... "gamestats
0040
        2.2
           Оa
               7b
                   0a 09
                          22
                              76
                                 65
                                    72
                                        73
                                            69
                                               6f
                                                   бе
                                                      22
                                                          09
                                                              09
                                                                      .. "version"..
0050
           31
                      09
                          22
                              73
                                 72
                                     63
                                            64
                                                22
                                                   09
                                                       09
                                                          22
                                                              31
                                                                      ..<mark>"srcid"..."1</mark>
        22
               22
                   0a
                                        69
0060
        33
           37
               61
                   32
                      33
                          66
                              32
                                 38
                                     38
                                        64
                                            63
                                               39
                                                   64
                                                       34
                                                          30
                                                              22
0070
        0a 09
               22
                   43
                      50
                          55
                              49
                                 44
                                     22
                                        09
                                            09
                                               22
                                                   47
                                                       65
                                                          бе
                                                              75
                                                                   ineIntel".."CPUG
                          74
                                                   43
0800
                   49
                                     22
                                                              47
        69
           бе
               65
                      бе
                              65
                                 бс
                                        0a
                                            09
                                               22
                                                       50
                                                          55
                                                                       .."3.200217"
0090
           7a
                   09
                      09
                          22
                                 2e
                                            30
                                                       37
        68
               2.2
                             33
                                     32
                                        30
                                               32
                                                   31
                                                          2.2
                                                              0a
00a0
           22
               4e
                   75
                      6d 43
                              бf
                                 72
                                     65
                                        73
                                            22
                                               09
                                                  09
                                                              2.2
00b0
        0a 09
               22
                      50
                         55
                              44
                                 72
                                    76
                                        22
                                            09
                                               09
                                                              49
                                                                   .. "GPUDrv"..
                   47
                                                   22
00c0
        44
           49
               41
                   20
                      47 65
                             46
                                 6f
                                    72
                                       63
                                            65
                                               20
                                                   38
                                                      38
                                                          30
                                                             30
                                                                   DIA GeForce 8800
00d0
        2.0
           47
               54
                   53 22
                         0a
                              09
                                 22 47
                                        50
                                            55
                                               56
                                                   65
                                                          64
                                                              бf
                                                                    GTS".."GPUVendo
                                                      бе
                                                                   r".."4318".."GPU
           22
                                            0a
                                                              55
00e0
        72
               09
                   09
                      22
                          34
                              33
                                 31
                                     38
                                        22
                                               09
                                                   22
                                                       47
                                                          50
00f0
        44
           65
               76
                   69
                      63
                          65
                              49
                                 44
                                     22
                                        09
                                            09
                                                22
                                                   34
                                                       30
                                                          33
                                                              22
                                                                   DeviceID".."403"
               22
                                                                   .. "GPUDriverVers
0100
        0a
           09
                   47
                      50
                          55
                              44
                                 72
                                     69
                                        76
                                            65
                                                72
                                                   56
                                                       65
                                                          72
                                                              73
0110
        69
           бf
               бе
                   22
                      09
                          09
                              22
                                 33
                                     39
                                        33
                                            32
                                                33
                                                   30
                                                       2e
                                                          37
                                                              32
                                                                   ion".."393230.
                                                                   8415"<mark>..<mark>"DxLvl</mark></mark>
           34
                                        78
                      22
                                 22
                                                              09
0120
        38
               31
                   35
                          0a
                              09
                                     44
                                            4c
                                               76
                                                   бс
                                                       22
                                                          09
                                                                   <mark>"95"</mark>.."width".."
           39
                              22
                                 77
                                                              22
0130
        22
               35
                   22
                      0a 09
                                     69
                                        64
                                            74
                                               68
                                                   22
                                                       09
                                                          09
           36
                                                                   1680".."height"
0140
        31
               38
                   30
                      22
                         0a
                             09
                                 22 68
                                        65
                                            69
                                               67
                                                   68
                                                       74
                                                          22
                                                              09
                                                                   ."1050"..<mark>"appid"</mark>
0150
           22
               31
                   30 35 30
                              22
                                 0a 09
                                        22
                                            61
                                               70 70
                                                      69
                                                          64
                                                              22
                                                                     <u>"440"..</u>"playti
        09 09
                   34 34 30 22
                                 0a 09
0160
               2.2
                                        22
                                            70
                                               6c 61
                                                                   me"..{..."TotalL
0170
        6d 65
               22
                  0a 09 7b 0a 09 09 22 54
                                               6f 74
                                                          6c 4c
                                                                   evelTime".."22".
        65 76 65
                  6c 54 69 6d 65 22 09 09
                                                      32
                                                          22 0a
0180
                                               22 32
0190
        09 09 22 4e 75 6d 4c 65 76 65 6c 73 22 09
                                                                   .."NumLevels".."
           22 0a 09 7d 0a 7d 0a
01a0
                                                                   1"..}.}.
HKEY USERS\<User SID>\Software\Valve\Steam\PseudoUUID REG SZ 137
HKEY USERS\<User SID>\Software\Valve\Steam\Apps\440
```

Figure 11: "gamestats" update packet payload

DISCUSSION

Whilst game designers certainly take security into consideration security from the perspective of preventing cheating (Knuttson *et al*, 2004), there appears to be little consideration given to overall network security in the form of protecting the exchange between client and server.

The data that is transmitted through the Internet while playing TF2, viewed individually may seem trivial. When they are put together however, there is a significant amount of personal information that can be gathered. A source IP address and a host name by themselves appear harmless. However if the names returned by a DNS query on the source IP address don't match the hostname in the TF2 packets, this may be an indicator that the host the user is playing the game on is behind a NAT device.

The server browser automatically updating the user's favourite servers in all their Steam games may seem to be pure convenience, but this provides a profile of the user's activities and preferences. It also provides avenues and opportunities for further intelligence gathering on hosts that the user has been known to frequent and is likely to visit again. It is possible that one of the user's favourite servers is easier to compromise, providing possible attack vectors.

Sending the user's screen name is not significant since this is easily found in game and is simple to copy. There is nothing preventing another user taking an already used tag or even impersonating the original user of that screen name. Sending the password variable contents in clear text is unusual though. This would allow a malicious user to join password protected servers that they would otherwise not have access to. This does not allow control over anything but can allow a "griefer" to impersonate a player and then proceed to destroy the user's reputation or generally cause annoyance. A griefer is a player who derives enjoyment from causing distress, annoyance or the disruption of other people who are playing a game (Lin & Sun, 2005). There are a large number of players that for a variety of reasons, their on-line persona is important (Yee, 2006). For them to lose that persona through someone stealing it and having it banned, or have it defamed through someone else using it, can cause psychological distress (Wan & Chiou, 2006).

Of more concern is the roon password. This allows a player to send commands to the game process and otherwise control it as if they were on the machine and owned it. This ranges from changing maps, changing environment settings through to anything the process will allow them to otherwise do. Further research could be

done into determine if the HLDS process (the executable that runs the TF2 game server process) allows shell access. If so, this could be a potentially serious compromise vector on the part of the server.

By themselves these pieces have varying points of significance; together they reveal a good deal of information. The more information that can be gathered, the better an attempt at internet identity theft can be made, as has been seen already in Steam games (sgtbane, 2007). A simple impersonation could be accomplished by assuming the user's screen name frequenting the user's known servers. Armed with passwords, knowledge of personal computer specifications and the steam account name, this would provide someone familiar with this social environment with a very good opportunity to pass themselves off as the impersonated user. If this is achieved, close friends of the user may reveal information as a result of carefully crafted stories (such as an account password).

The final packet sent to 67-132-200-140.valvesoftware.com after TF2 has exited contains some interesting information. It is obviously data mining on the part of VALVe, determining the general hardware and software environment the game is running on, the game that was played and how long was spent playing it. Some of these statistics can be seen in the player's Steam profile. To an individual of malign intent, this could be valuable intelligence. Specific hardware details could well help evaluate a target's desirability, or point to specific vulnerabilities. Specific driver versions made by particular manufacturers could be vulnerable and expose specific attack vectors. (Rapid7, 2006) The srcid is a semi-unique ID that appears to be unique from installation to installation. This could have some relation to authorization to use certain software.

Finally the Steam ID, transmitted in clear text. This is one half of the authentication process. With one half of the puzzle solved all that is needed from here is a password and this user could lose their steam account. Since a steam account is free to begin with this may not seem like a large issue to some, until one realises that Steam is a digital content delivery system. The Steam account is how VALVe associates a user with valid purchases and authorization to use specific products. Once this is compromised, it can be difficult to reclaim. In the case of a stolen account being used to cheat and subsequently banned by the VALVe Anti Cheat system (VAC), the account will permanently be banned from VAC public servers for that product (Steam_Support, 2007). Of greater concern from a network security point of view is that if the game server traffic is sending passwords clear text, thus revealing a password used by a user of the game system, capture of this password may allow for privilege escalation and compromise of the game server. Further issues arising from the compromise of a server are that it could be used to launch spam or even coordinate a DDoS attack.

CONCLUSION

While the difficulty of intercepting this sort of traffic should be acknowledged, it should also be noted that it is far from impossible. Any number of techniques could be used to gain this information from Trojan viruses on the users own machine to compromised network infrastructure through which the traffic passes. It is obvious that some of this information is already obscured in some aspect since the Steam account password and the in game chat messages were not found in clear text in the data captures. The significance of the information that can be seen in clear text should not be underestimated. A general, unsuspecting user will have no knowledge of the exact data that leaves their computer while they play TF2 and trusts that it is appropriately secured. While a user might have that trust and believe trapping data off the wire is too difficult a task for anyone to either do or do to them, it does not change the fact that it can be done.

As discussed, what is easily readable can easily lead to several malicious outcomes such as griefing, identity theft, stolen Steam accounts and even the compromise of a server should an rcon password be used. Being aware of these risks allows an individual to take appropriate measures such as changing passwords on a regular basis. If an individual has control of a server, they may be able to protect themselves by adding further layers of defence such as VPN encryption but this is unfeasible for playing on general public servers. The only entity that can definitively address this issue is VALVe Software. Ultimately VALVe must address this issue or the average user will remain at risk. Since most rcon users are general users many will not even be aware of what measures they could be taking, let alone should.

Since this is the first in a proposed series of game traffic analysis, it is hard to say if VALVe are doing anything better or worse than the general game community, or if the security they have in place is standard for the game development community. All that can be said is that in general, Steam traffic is reasonably secure but there is room for improvement and most definitely a reason to be concerned.

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