Finding SolarWinds / SUNBURST backdoors with Zeek, Suricata, and Corelight
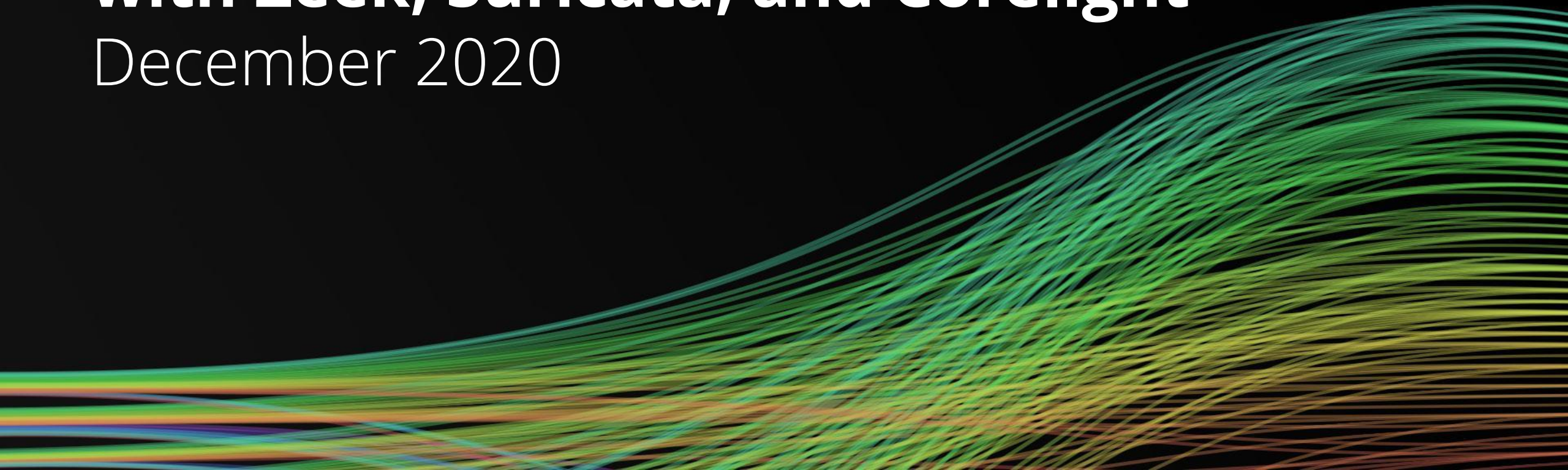
December 2020

Today's speakers

Aaron Soto
Director of Learning

corelight

Alex Kirk
Global Principal, Suricata

corelight

Agenda

1. A brief landscape
2. What we know & how we know it
3. Reviewing Suricata rules
4. Importing Suricata rulesets from public repositories
5. Applying future knowledge to past Zeek data
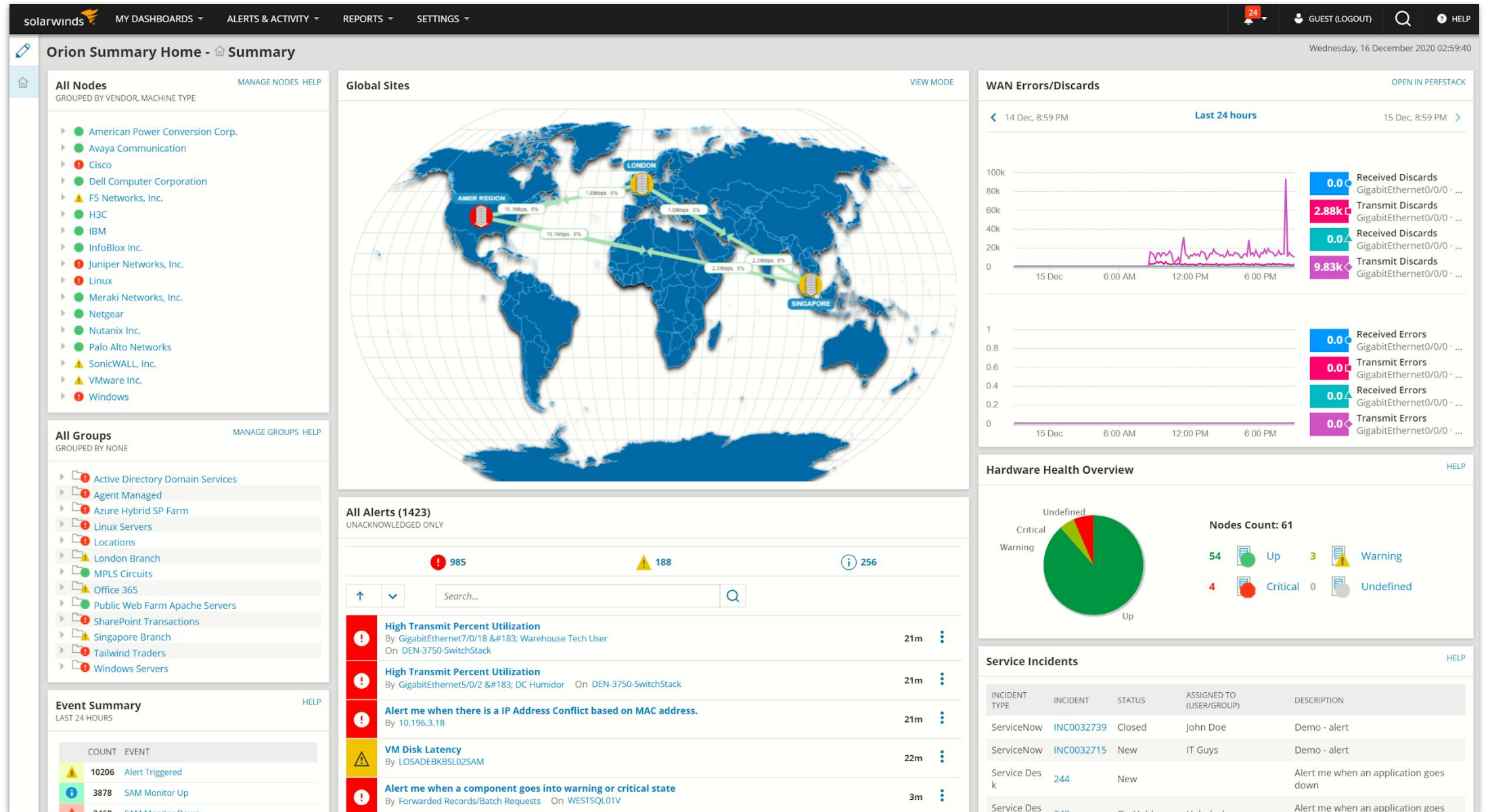6. Searching through Zeek/Corelight data for IOCs

Landscape

Landscape

1. What is an NMS? (Hint: not an NSM)
2. Who is SolarWinds? What is Orion?
3. Who uses it?
4. What is a supply chain attack?
5. How might a supply chain attack against an NMS affect me?
6. How can Suricata IDS rules protect me?
7. How does Corelight/Zeek data protect me?

What is an NMS?

- **Network Management Systems** automate the monitoring of individual resources and respond to outages immediately.

- Originally, NMS relied on basic SNMP polls and traps.

- Today, NMS involves credentialed access to virtual and cloud environments, network hardware, and critical servers.

Who is SolarWinds? What is Orion?

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Who uses SolarWinds Orion?

Company

- About SolarWinds
- Investors
- Newsroom
- **Customers**
- Careers
- Management
- Contact Us

SolarWinds' Customers

SolarWinds' comprehensive products and services are used by more than 300,000 customers worldwide, including military, Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and education institutions. Our customer list includes:

- More than 425 of the US Fortune 500
- All ten of the top ten US telecommunications companies
- All five branches of the US Military
- The US Pentagon, State Department, NASA, NSA, Postal Service, NOAA, Department of Justice, and the Office of the President of the United States
- All five of the top five US accounting firms
- Hundreds of universities and colleges worldwide

Partial customer listing:

Acxiom	General Dynamics	Sabre
Ameritrade	Gillette Deutschland GmbH	Saks
AT&T;	GTE	San Francisco Intl. Airport
Bellsouth Telecommunications	H&R; Block	Siemens
Best Western Intl.	Harvard University	Smart City Networks
Blue Cross Blue Shield	Hertz Corporation	Smith Barney
Booz Allen Hamilton	ING Direct	Smithsonian Institute
Boston Consulting	IntelSat	Sparkasse Hagen
Cable & Wireless	J.D. Byrider	Sprint
Cablecom Media AG	Johns Hopkins University	St. John's University
Cablevision	Kennedy Space Center	Staples
CBS	Kodak	Subaru
Charter Communications	Korea Telecom	Supervalu
Cisco	Leggett and Platt	Swisscom AG
CitiFinancial	Level 3 Communications	Symantec

Who uses SolarWinds Orion?

What is a supply chain attack?

- Attacks on external dependencies (eg. libraries and packages)
- Attacks against build infrastructure
- Attacks against trusted/purchased hardware
- Attacks on a vendor's infrastructure

Previous examples:
- Typo-squatting colorama in PyPi repository
- Takeover of bb-builder NPM package to steal passwords
- SuperMicro hardware network backdoor (2015)
- Attacks against vendor infrasture (eg. Target)

How might an NMS supply chain attack affect me?

When you deploy an NMS, there are generally some base assumptions:
- NMS requires regular access a wide range of resources
- NMS requires credentials to perform in-depth monitoring
- NMS requires privileges to restart hosts/services

In short:
- An NMS is extremely difficult to lock down or monitor.
- Compromise of the NMS provides direct access to credentials and a launching point for direct and invasive attacks.

How might an NMS supply chain attack affect me?

CAUSE
Anti Virus can cause file locking and application related issues such as polling related problems and web console issues.

RESOLUTION
For SolarWinds products, to prevent possible application related issues, unexpected behaviour and performance related problems, at minimum you would need to consider excluding the following items from antivirus or security software that you install on your SolarWinds Primary, Additional, HA backup polling engines and any web servers that you run.

Directories

- Exclude whole folders, including subdirectories,
- Check the correct syntax for the above that your security software supports as not all may be *.
- `Volume:\` is the volume you originally installed the product to.

Windows Server OS - 2019, 2016 (and 2012 R2 for old versions).

- `Volume:\Inetpub\SolarWinds\*`
- `Volume:\ProgramData\SolarWinds\*`
- `Volume:\Program Files (x86)\Common Files\SolarWinds\*`
- `Volume:\Program Files (x86)\SolarWinds\*`
- `Volume:\Windows\Temp\SolarWinds\*`
- `Volume:\ProgramData\Microsoft\Crypto\RSA\MachineKeys\*`

How can Suricata IDS rules protect me?

Suricata rulesets are quick to update, often automated, allowing indicators of compromise (IOCs) to be widely distributed and quickly flagged, helping you find the needle in the haystack:

- IP Addresses
- Domains
- HTTP headers and data (eg. POST data contents)
- Payload data (HTML strings, JavaScript commands, etc.)

IDS rules protect you from today, moving forward.

How does Corelight/Zeek data protect me?

Corelight/Zeek provides comprehensive historical network metadata:

- Non-judgemental - it's a flight recorder.
- Easy to search, index, archive, and store.
- Directly linked to Suricata alerts for full context in a single-pivot.
- Gives you hindsight where IDS alerts cannot.

What we know and
how we know it

Sources

1. **FireEye** initial breach: https://www.fireeye.com/blog/threat-research/2020/12/unauthorized-access-of-fireeye-red-team-tools.html

2. **FireEye** blog: https://www.fireeye.com/blog/threat-research/2020/12/evasive-attacker-leverages-solarwinds-supply-chain-compromises-with-sunburst-backdoor.html

3. **FireEye** IOCs: https://github.com/fireeye/sunburst_countermeasures

4. **Washington Post**: Russian government hackers are behind a broad espionage campaign that has compromised U.S. agencies, including Treasury and Commerce

5. **Bambenek** IOCs: https://github.com/bambenek/research/

6. **Volexity** blog: https://www.volexity.com/blog/2020/12/14/dark-halo-leverages-solarwinds-compromise-to-breach-organizations/

7. **SolarWinds** SEC Filing: https://www.sec.gov/ix?doc=/Archives/edgar/data/1739942/000162828020017451/swi-20201214.htm

Informal sources

Richard Blumenthal ✓
@SenBlumenthal

Stunning. Today's classified briefing on Russia's cyberattack left me deeply alarmed, in fact downright scared. Americans deserve to know what's going on. Declassify what's known & unknown.

5:20 PM · Dec 15, 2020 · Twitter Web App

A little socialism, as a treat
@srunnels

Replying to @srunnels

We leveraged a *lot* of tech and this investigation only solidified my belief that an NSM stack isn't complete without Zeek. Obfuscatory attacker actions had a hard time hiding from all the research done by the folks at @corelight_inc

10:48 PM · Dec 13, 2020 · Twitter Web App

Timeline

March - June 2020: "compromise of the Orion software build system" affecting Orion products downloaded/updated during this time. Less than 18k of 33k customers affected. (Source: Solarwinds SEC filing)

December 8, 2020: FireEye announces they'd been hacked. Red Team tools stolen, but no zero-day exploits or unknown techniques. Releases IOCs.

December 13, 2020: US CISA releases emergency directive to begin forensic analysis and "immediately disconnect or power down SolarWinds Orion products."

December 14, 2020: FireEye posts details with IOCs and attributes UNC2452
December 14, 2020: Reuters, Washington Post reveal that US Treasury, Commerce breached, along with "consulting, technology, telecom, and oil and gas companies." Attributed to Russian SVR (aka APT29 / Cozy Bear)

December 15, 2020: SolarWinds expected to release hotfix.

Attacker Techniques

Commonly used techniques:

- Domain Generation Algorithms (DGA)
- Scalable and shared cloud-based infrastructure
- Cobalt Strike beacons

Uncommon / Novel techniques:

- Compromise of SolarWinds certificate used to build Orion updates (but how?)
- Blending in with naming conventions used by the development team
- Attacker changed hostnames to match those within victim environment
- Avoiding detection and analysis using payload delays (12-14 days) and IP exclusions for local sinkholes and Microsoft-owned IP ranges

Detection Opportunities

IP addresses tied to the victim's home country to remove obvious detections

Still presents an opportunity for "time travel" detection

Legitimate credential owner accesses a remote service from City A…

Attacker uses the same credentials from City B 10 minutes later…

But City A & City B are hours apart

Detection Opportunities

Leaked in RDP SSL certificate data **on servers outside the victim IP range**

FEYE recommendation to search (Shodan) scan data for RDP systems with hostnames from victim environment

Zeek logs this detail for all monitored RDP sessions - but also can easily track outbound RDP destinations

Domain IOCs

	FireEye	EmergingThreats	Volexity
avsvmcloud.com	X	X	X
digitalcollege.org	X	X	X
freescanonline.com	X	X	X
thedoccloud.com	X	X	X
deftsecurity.com	X	X	
virtualdataserver.com	X	X	
incomeupdate.com	X	X	
zupertech.com	X	X	
databasegalore.com	X	X	
panhardware.com	X	X	
highdatabase.com	X	X	
websitetheme.com	X	X	
webcodez.com			X
virtualwebdata.com			X
seobundlekit.com			X
lcomputers.com			X
solartrackingsystem.net			X
kubecloud.com			X
globalnetworkissues.com			X

Where do I get the Suricata rules?

Emerging Threats feed

All signatures released by FireEye were imported into the ET Open set within < 24 hours of each public drop

SIDs 2031264-2031270, 2031273-2031297, 2031299-2031308 - FEYE red team tools

SIDs 2031321-2031370 - Sunburst

Came with notable performance/accuracy improvements over FireEye GitHub

Raw signature imports

Possible to import signatures directly from GitHub - get files as plaintext to start

SID management is your responsibility! Some of the FireEye rules overlapped with Talos

For those using suricata-update, the "--local <path>" option can be pointed to the downloaded file

Rules files are plain text, so public sources can be manually integrated with any other process

Reviewing Suricata rules

Hostname detail signatures

```
alert tcp any any <> any 443 (msg:"Backdoor.SUNBURST"; content:"|16
03|"; depth:2; content:"avsvmcloud.com"; distance:0; sid:77600845;
rev:1;)

alert tls $EXTERNAL_NET any -> $HOME_NET any (msg:"ET MALWARE [Fireeye]
Backdoor.SUNBURST SSL Cert Inbound (avsvmcloud .com)";
flow:established,to_client; tls.cert_subject; dotprefix;
content:".avsvmcloud.com"; endswith; fast_pattern;
reference:[...]; classtype:trojan-activity; sid:2031341; rev:2;
metadata:[...];)
```

Similar HTTP rules published by FEYE (with similar upgrades from ET)

ET added DNS lookup rules as well

URL structure signatures

```
alert http $HOME_NET any -> $EXTERNAL_NET any (msg:"ET MALWARE
[Fireeye] Backdoor.SUNBURST M2"; flow:established,to_server;
http.uri; content:"/swip/upd/SolarWinds.CortexPlugin.Components.xml";
http.host; content:!".solarwinds.com"; endswith;
reference:[...]; classtype:trojan-activity; sid:2031337; rev:2;
metadata:[...];)
```

Specific URL structure used by updates for my tool, going to a host not owned by the vendor

Proactive potential: what URLs do my tools legitimately use today? Can I detect those structures being sent to unusual hosts?

Beacon content signatures - headers

```
alert http $HOME_NET any -> $EXTERNAL_NET any (msg:"ET MALWARE
[Fireeye] Backdoor.BEACON M1"; flow:established,to_server;

http.method; content:"POST";

http.request_body; content:"name=|22|"; content:"|22 3b|filename=|22|";
content:"|22 0a|Content-Type|3a|"; fast_pattern;

reference:[...]; classtype:trojan-activity; sid:2031323; rev:2;
metadata:[...])
```

Beacon content signatures - payloads

```
alert http $EXTERNAL_NET any -> $HOME_NET any (msg:"ET MALWARE
[Fireeye] Backdoor.BEACON M3"; flow:established,from_server;

file.data; content:"<title>Woman-Five-How-To-Why-Your-Celebrating-
Learn-Brand</title>"

reference:[...]; classtype:trojan-activity; sid:2031356; rev:2;
metadata:[...])
```

Applying future knowledge to past data

Applying future knowledge to past data

Attackers have already had a chance to clean up

Attackers with good tradecraft clean up as soon as possible

This is (yet again) why it is important to retain months of network forensic data

Don't expect the more specific indicators to have any real longevity

Searching through Zeek/Corelight data for IOCs

IOCs

In order of confidence, here are the IOCs to focus on:
- Domain names
- HTTP requests
- X.509 Certificates
- IP addresses
- File hashes

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splunk>enterprise   App: Search & Reporting ▾

Search   Analytics   Datasets   Reports   Alerts   Dashboards

New Search

```
path=dns query="avsvmcloud.com" OR query="*.avsvmcloud.com"
```

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Search   Analytics   Datasets   Reports   Alerts   Dashboards

New Search

```
path=http | spath host | where host="avsvmcloud.com" OR host="*.avsvmcloud.com"
```

IOCs

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- **HTTP requests**
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splunk>enterprise   App: Search & Reporting ▾

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New Search

```
path=http method=POST post_body="name=\"*\";filename=\"*\"Content-Type:*"
```

IOCs

In order of confidence, here are the IOCs to focus on:
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- IP addresses
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New Search

```
path=x509 "certificate.subject"="CN=*incomeupdate.com*"
```

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- **X.509 Certificates**
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New Search

```
path=x509 "certificate.serial"=0fe973752022a606adf2a36e345dc0ed
```

IOCs

In order of confidence, here are the IOCs to focus on:
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- HTTP requests
- X.509 Certificates
- **IP addresses**
- File hashes

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New Search

```
path=conn ts>2020-01-01 ts<2020-12-31 "id.resp_h"=8.18.145.150
```

IOCs

In order of confidence, here are the IOCs to focus on:
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- HTTP requests
- X.509 Certificates
- **IP addresses**
- File hashes

splunk>enterprise   App: Search & Reporting ▼

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New Search

```
path=conn ts>2020-01-01 ts<2020-12-31 "id.resp_h"=2a0d:5600:9::12cd:14bb:2dad
```

IOCs

In order of confidence, here are the IOCs to focus on:
- Domain names
- HTTP requests
- X.509 Certificates
- IP addresses
- **File hashes**

splunk>enterprise   App: Search & Reporting ▼

Search   Analytics   Datasets   Reports   Alerts   Dashboards

New Search

```
path=files sha256=d0d626deb3f9484e649294a8dfa814c5568f846d5aa02d4cdad5d041a29d5600
```

Do I have SolarWinds?

Potential queries to determine if you have SolarWinds products:
- HTTP User-Agent of "SolarWindsOrionImprovementClient/*"
- DNS resolution of "api.solarwinds.com" or "downloads.solarwinds.com" (daily) "licensestatusserver.solarwinds.com"or "licenseserver.solarwinds.com" (intermittent)

(This will likely return results for other SolarWinds products other than Orion)

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path=http user_agent="SolarWindsOrionImprovementClient/*"
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New Search

```
path=dns query="api.solarwinds.com" OR query="downloads.solarwinds.com"
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(This will likely return results for other SolarWinds products other than Orion)

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New Search

```
path=dns query="licensestatusserver.solarwinds.com" OR query="licenseserver.solarwinds.com"
```

Resources

Watch these sources for updates!

- FireEye IOCs: https://github.com/fireeye/sunburst_countermeasures

- ET Rules: https://rules.emergingthreats.net/open/suricata-5.0/

- Sigma Rules: https://socprime.com/blog/sunburst-backdoor-detection-solarwinds-supply-chain-attack-on-fireeye-and-us-agencies/

- Corelight Blog: https://corelight.blog/tag/solarigate/

Q+A

(… and one more thing …)

Searching Corelight data for Solarigate IOCs

	Confidence	Source	Log	Fields	Splunk Query
1	Confidence	Source	Log	Fields	Splunk Query
2	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	uri, host	path="http" uri="/swip/Events" | spath host | where host!="*.solarwinds.com"
3	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	uri, host	path="http" uri="/swip/upd/SolarWinds.CortexPlugin.Components.xml*" | spath host | where host!="*.solarwinds.com"
4	Medium	FireEye HXIOC	http	uri, host	path="http" uri="/swip/SystemDescription" | spath host | where host!="*.solarwinds.com"
5	Medium	FireEye Hashes	files	md5	path="files" md5=02af7cec58b9a5da1c542b5a32151ba1
6	Medium	FireEye Hashes	files	md5	path="files" md5=08e35543d6110ed11fdf558bb093d401
7	High	FireEye Hashes	files	md5	path="files" md5=2c4a910a1299cdae2a4e55988a2f102e
8	High	FireEye Hashes	files	md5	path="files" md5=846e27a652a5e1bfbd0ddd38a16dc865
9	High	FireEye Hashes	files	md5	path="files" md5=b91ce2fa41029f6955bff20079468448
10	High	FireEye Hashes	files	md5	path="files" md5=4f2eb62fa529c0283b28d05ddd311fae
11	High	FireEye Hashes	files	md5	path="files" md5=56ceb6d0011d87b6e4d7023d7ef85676
12	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	uri, host	path="http" uri="*swip/Upload.ashx" | spath host | where host!="*.solarwinds.com"
13	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	uri, host	path="http" uri="/swip/upd/*" | spath host | where host!="*.solarwinds.com"
14	High	FireEye Snort Rules	dns	query	path="dns" query="avsvmcloud.com" OR query="*.avsvmcloud.com"
15	High	FireEye Snort Rules	dns	query	path="dns" query="digitalcollege.org" OR query="*.digitalcollege.org"
16	High	FireEye Snort Rules	dns	query	path="dns" query="freescanonline.com" OR query="*.freescanonline.com"
17	High	FireEye Snort Rules	dns	query	path="dns" query="deftsecurity.com" OR query="*.deftsecurity.com"
18	High	FireEye Snort Rules	dns	query	path="dns" query="thedoccloud.com" OR query="*.thedoccloud.com"
19	High	FireEye Snort Rules	dns	query	path="dns" query="virtualdataserver.com" OR query="*.virtualdataserver.com"
20	High		dns	query	path="dns" query="incomeupdate.com" OR query="*.incomeupdate.com"
21	High		dns	query	path="dns" query="zupertech.com" OR query="*.zupertech.com"
22	High		dns	query	path="dns" query="databasegalore.com" OR query="*.databasegalore.com"
23	High		dns	query	path="dns" query="panhardware.com" OR query="*.panhardware.com"
24	Medium	FireEye NBIs	dns	query	path="dns" query="highdatabase.com" OR query="*.highdatabase.com"
25	Medium	FireEye NBIs	dns	query	path="dns" query="websitetheme.com" OR query="*.websitetheme.com"
26	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	host	path="http" | spath host | where host="avsvmcloud.com" OR host="*.avsvmcloud.com"
27	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	host	path="http" | spath host | where host="digitalcollege.org" OR host="*.digitalcollege.org"
28	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	host	path="http" | spath host | where host="freescanonline.com" OR host="*.freescanonline.com"
29	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	host	path="http" | spath host | where host="deftsecurity.com" OR host="*.deftsecurity.com"
30	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	host	path="http" | spath host | where host="thedoccloud.com" OR host="*.thedoccloud.com"
31	High	FireEye Snort Rules	http	host	path="http" | spath host | where host="virtualdataserver.com" OR host="*.virtualdataserver.com"
32	High		http	host	path="http" | spath host | where host="incomeupdate.com" OR host="*.incomeupdate.com"

https://solarigate.training.corelight.io

Caveats:
- These IOCs come from the community (FireEye, Volexity, John Bambenek, SANS)
- Splunk queries use JSON, are written to be overly broad, and may tax your cluster
- Zeek-Cut queries are more prone to error (both false positives and false negatives)

Q+A

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www.corelight.com

Watch our blog post for updates:
https://corelight.blog/2020/12/15/finding-sunburst-backdoor-with-zeek-logs-and-corelight/

We will post recording, slide deck and Corelight / Zeek IOCs URL shortly.