



# RSA Incident Response: Threat Detection Techniques -Backoff Point of Sale Malware

**RSA Security** 

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# **Table of Contents**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. ECAT DETECTION	4
3. SECURITY ANALYTICS DETECTION	6
3.1 MALWARE DETECTION	
3.2 LATERAL MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES	
3.3 EXFILTRATION TECHNIQUES	
4. CONCLUSION	12
5. APPENDIX A	13
5.1 ECAT SCORES ON VARIANTS	13
5.2 SA MALWARE APPLIANCE SCORE ON VARIANTS	13
Figure 1: ECAT malicious process detection	
Figure 2: ECAT detection of malicious service	
Figure 3: ECAT detection of tools being used maliciously	5
Figure 4: Security Analytics File Summary	
Figure 5: Top 10 Event Indicators of Compromise – Static Analysis	
Figure 6: Security Analytics PsExec Detection	
Figure 7: Security Analytics PsExec Detail	
Figure 8: Security Analytics FTP Detection	11
Table 1: Sample list	
Table 2: ECAT results	
Table 3: SA Malware Appliance analysis results	13

## 1. Executive Summary

"Backoff" is part of a recently discovered InfoStealer malware family aimed at Point of Sale systems. RSA has identified that this malware family has been documented in three variants:

- ➤ 1.4,
- ➤ 1.55 (also known as "Backoff", "Goo", "MAY", "net"),
- > 1.56 (also known as "LAST").

The first record of a Backoff variant infection occurred in October 2013. In total, the malware is characterized by the following four capabilities:

- Memory scraping for tracking and collecting data
- Stub injection into explorer.exe process
- Keylogging
- Command & control (C2) communication

The oldest variant (1.4) does not include keylogging capabilities and version 1.55 does not include the explorer.exe stub injector that is used to ensure persistence even if the malware main process crashes.

The goal of Backoff is to identify and steal credit card and transaction data through traditional memory scraping mechanisms also seen in other POS malware such as Alina, BlackPOS and Dexter. As usual, the malware uploads collected data to a hardcoded C2 that can also command the malware to update itself or download and install other malware. Backoff has been studied by several research companies and US CERT published an Advisory on July 31, 2014:

https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/alerts/TA14-212A

This report will not delve into the technical artifacts of the malware, but simply show how RSA tools like Security Analytics and ECAT would have alerted an organization about this type of infection, leading to expedited response time, reduced exposure, and subsequently helping stop the attack before any data theft occurred. Included along with this report is content that can be deployed to RSA products to detect different aspects of this attack.

RSA has tested the following samples:

Sample	File Type	Variant	MD5
484841d4a3dadd95552c278a41072ebec1eda 9a9bbd93d29be4215df595b016d	EXE	V1.4	6A0E49C5E332DF3AF78823CA4A655AE8
3a40b3fcb0707e9b5ae6dd9c7b4370b101c37c 0b48fa56a602a39e6d7d5d0de5	EXE	1.55 "GOO"	17E1173F6FC7E920405F8DBDE8C9ECAC
a88573c55b3901e5e40502ac9146449c1b21b 9c8fdfafd249c6760be2aa947ae	EXE	1.55 "BACKOFF"	CA4D58C61D463F35576C58F25916F258
d9ba782016e834bab365d72071a66c54aa3b6 821d957908b2da316cc5b66a8bd	EXE	1.55 "NET" -	0607CE9793EEA0A42819957528D92B02
11591204155db5eb5e9c5a3adbb23e99a75c3 b25207d07d7e52a6407c7ad0165	EXE	V1.56	12C9C0BC18FDF98189457A9D112EEBFC

Table 1: Sample list

The accompanying digital appendix includes Yara Signatures that can be used by an organization to determine if they currently have these types of malicious files present in their enterprise.

Also available in the digital appendix is a Blacklist that can be imported into ECAT to help an organization quickly identify and categorize known files.





## 2. ECAT Detection

The central component of every POS malware, Backoff included, is the memory scraper. This means that the malware is configured to "hook" into payment application binaries working on a victim system. These applications are responsible for processing authorization data, which includes the <u>full magnetic stripe data</u> (TRACK 1 and TRACK 2). When authorization data is processed, the payment application will decrypt the transaction on the POS system, and store the authorization data in RAM, as the data needs to be decrypted in order for the authorization to be completed. Backoff, as with other POS malware, exploits the weakness in POS transaction flow by collecting the transaction data when is stored in RAM.

To successfully collect transactions I/O from the victim system, the malware should keep itself resident and active in memory, which also provides for identification of the malware on a POS terminal. To monitor transactions the malware remains active in the Victim computer as a System process. Backoff, based on behavioral analysis, uses the process name "mswinhost.exe". During testing, ECAT was able to detect the malware, even before RSA IR had created specific content for this variant of memory scraping malware.

**Error! Reference source not found.** illustrates that ECAT detected an unknown process, providing context that the activity is related to the "MSWINHOST.EXE" service running on the machine.

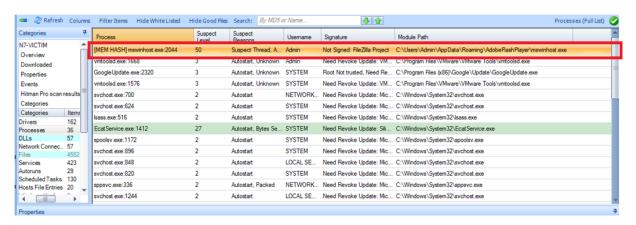


Figure 1: ECAT malicious process detection

**Error! Reference source not found.** highlights the malicious service that was started by the Backoff malware. Using ECAT to conduct daily interval scanning to detect malicious processes and services will allow the ECAT administrator to review the Module Info box, highlighted in **Error! Reference source not found.** to see how many machines are running the process.

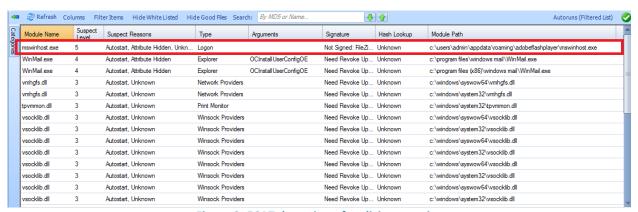


Figure 2: ECAT detection of malicious service

Figure 3 further demonstrates ECAT's inherent ability to detect and identify files that can be used maliciously in environments.





Applying a Blacklist on the malicious Backoff process, we have been able to check the presence of the process and it's files in other systems managed by ECAT.

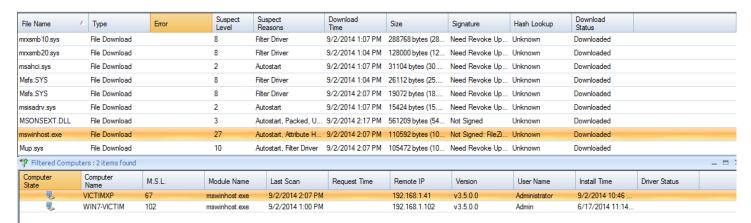


Figure 3: ECAT detection of tools being used maliciously

In presence of a packer executable an analyst could also perform an integrity check between the original malware file and it's process in memory. In our case the malware was not encrypted.

The above results within ECAT have been confirmed valid on every Backoff POS variant (1.4 to 1.56) analyzed.

All samples have presented the same behavior in ECAT and had a similar suspect level, between 67 and 106, as reported in Appendix A.





## 3. Security Analytics Detection

#### 3.1 Malware Detection

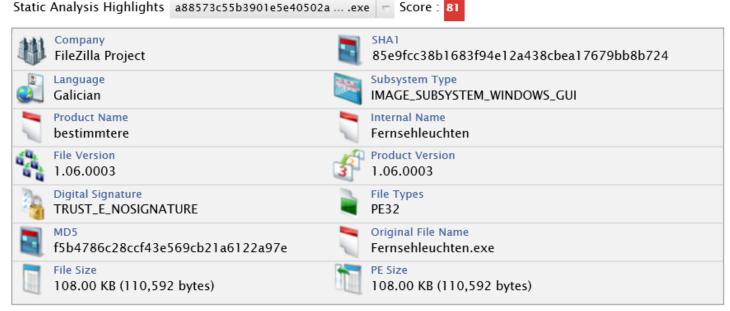
The Security Analytics Malware Analysis engine is an automated malware analysis processor designed to analyze certain types of file objects (for example, Windows PE, PDF, and MS Office) to assess the likelihood that a file is malicious. Using the Malware Analysis engine, an analyst can prioritize the massive number of files captured in order to focus efforts on the files that are most likely to be malicious.

Security Analytics Malware Analysis detects indicators of compromise using four distinct analysis methodologies:

- » Network Session Analysis (network)
- » Static File Analysis (static)
- » Dynamic File Analysis (sandbox)
- » Security Community Analysis (community)

Each of the four distinct analysis methodologies is designed to compensate for inherent weaknesses in the others. For example, Dynamic File Analysis can compensate for Zero-Day attacks that are not detected during the Security Community Analysis phase. By avoiding malware analysis that strictly focuses on one methodology, the analyst is more likely to be shielded from false negative results.

Configuration of the Malware Engine is extremely flexible allowing for the selective use of community and external Sandbox services to help limit exposure of sensitive information in certain situations. Figure 4 shows the initial summary of analysis performed by the Malware Engine. In this example, the analyst did not submit to the community or use an AV engine to analyze the malware.



**Figure 4: Security Analytics File Summary** 

Based on the analysis performed by the Malware Engine, the Backoff binary has been easily determined as malicious. Figure 5 below shows the Top 10 Indicators of Compromise (IoC) collected from Backoff malware static analysis.





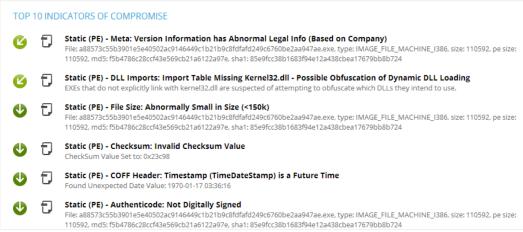


Figure 5: Top 10 Event Indicators of Compromise – Static Analysis

#### 3.2 Network streams detection

POS malware, as with Trojans in general, are prone to generate communication streams that could be easily detected, once the analyst knows the malware behavior. Backoff POS malware falls in this category, as it has a simple yet easily identifiable HTTP string that it uses during communication with its C2. The HTTP string contains a number of parameters that are included when this malware makes a request to the C2 server. A typical string is as follows:



Figure 6: Typical Backoff POS communication stream

#### The values are:

op: Static value of '1'

id: randomly generated 7 character string

ui : Victim username/hostnamewv : Version of Microsoft Windows

gr (Not seen in version 1.4): Malware-specific identifier

bv : Malware version

data (optional): Base64-encoded/RC4-encrypted data





Due to the above conditions, it is easy to develop a specific query in Security Analytics that highlights the presence of Backoff POS streams in a network. The query could be:

```
action = 'put' && query contains '&op=1&id='
```

or:

```
service = '80' && query contains '&op=1&id=' && query contains '&wv='
```

If we apply the query, we are able to identify Backoff streams to the C2 as follows:

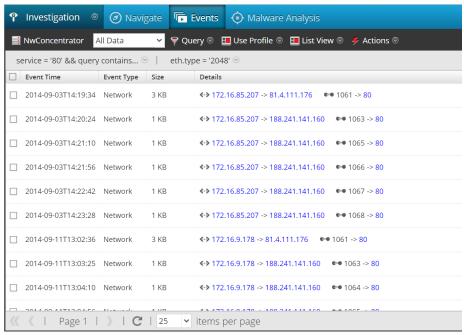


Figure 7: Query result in Security Analytics

An additional IoC can be used as a confirmation of the presence of Backoff POS on a host machine. The 'id' parameter seen in network stream is also stored, in the Software registry hive, in the following location:

### HKCU\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\identifier

### 3.3 Lateral Movement Techniques

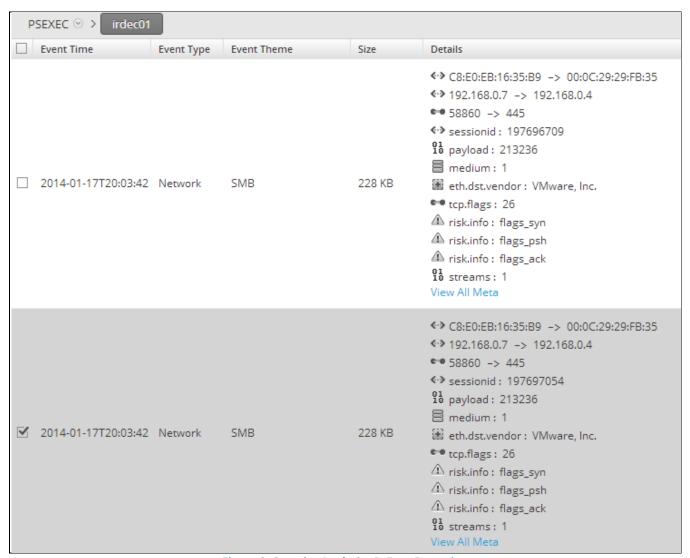
In POS system breaches, attackers often penetrate the network from vulnerable web facing servers, navigating through the network, until they are able to reach the POS systems. This type of lateral movement can easily be detected using Security Analytics before the attackers even reach their intended targets.





Using the Windows "net" commands, scheduling tasks using the AT command, and using freely available system administration tools like PsExec are common practices that are successfully employed by attackers. This type of traffic is easily recognized by Security Analytics. Customized alerts can be created through the Security Analytics reporting function to warn organizations when/if this type of activity occurs.

Figure 8 depicts how Security Analytics is adept at characterizing traffic like potential adversarial lateral movement. The traffic shown depicts multiple SMB sessions between two internal systems. This is just one of the many ways Security Analytics can break traffic down into easily digestible parts allowing traffic to be reviewed from multiple viewpoints.

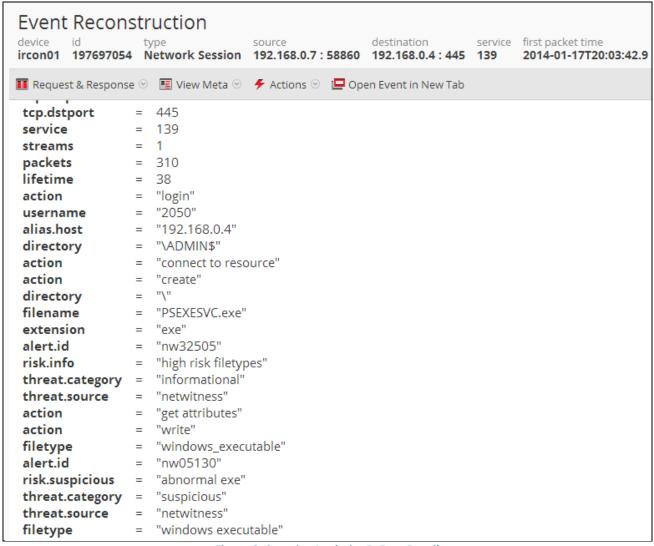


**Figure 8: Security Analytics PsExec Detection** 

Figure 9 further details the PsExec traffic, allowing an organization to quickly triage the traffic to determine if it's malicious. It shows a connection to the Windows ADMIN\$ share in which a file called PSEXESVC.exe is transferred. The PSEXESVC.exe is started as a service by PsExec using the Windows Service Control Manager API on the remote system. Once started, PsExec can execute commands on the remote system through the named pipe psexecsvc. This traffic is just one example of how Security Analytics could have alerted an organization during the early stages of an attack.







**Figure 9: Security Analytics PsExec Detail** 

### 3.4 Exfiltration Techniques

In POS attacks and other intrusions, attackers will often use FTP, as a method of exfiltrating data from a network. Figure 10 is an illustration of how Security Analytics detects and displays this type of traffic. Security Analytics can be customized to alert an organization if this type of traffic is occurring with non-approved IP Addresses.







Figure 10: Security Analytics FTP Detection





## 4. Conclusion

Using tools such as Security Analytics and ECAT in an enterprise can help identify incidents early, before sensitive data has actually been accessed or stolen. Decreasing the time to detection is critical when dealing with sensitive data, and having this situational awareness can initiate a quicker incident response and reduce exposure. Security Analytics and ECAT provide corporations with the capability to discover and mitigate attacks before they become major incidents. The complimenting strengths of the two toolsets not only help analysts locate common problems but assist in sifting through the fog to identify what would have otherwise gone undetected. Focusing on broad and early detection of malicious activity in the enterprise should always be a high priority to organizations.





# 5. Appendix A

#### **5.1 ECAT scores on variants**

The following table shows scores obtained by running the samples in different Windows hosts (Windows XP and Windows 7) where ECAT Agent has been deployed:

Sample	Variant	ECAT SCORE	
484841d4a3dadd95552c278a41072ebec1eda9a9bbd93d29be4215df5 95b016d	V1.4	From 95 to 102	
3a40b3fcb0707e9b5ae6dd9c7b4370b101c37c0b48fa56a602a39e6d7d 5d0de5	1.55 "GOO"	From 80 to 93	
a88573c55b3901e5e40502ac9146449c1b21b9c8fdfafd249c6760be2a a947ae	1.55 "BACKOFF"	From 67 to 102	
d9ba782016e834bab365d72071a66c54aa3b6821d957908b2da316cc5 b66a8bd	1.55 "NET" -	104	
11591204155db5eb5e9c5a3adbb23e99a75c3b25207d07d7e52a6407c 7ad0165	V1.56	From 97 to 106	

**Table 2: ECAT results** 

## 5.2 SA Malware Appliance score on variants

The table below illustrates the results of the submitted samples in SA Malware Appliance, with results taken from Static Analysis and Threatgrid Sandbox:

Sample	Variant	SA Malware Appliance SCORE	
Sample		STATIC	SANDBOX
484841d4a3dadd95552c278a41072ebec1eda9a9bbd93d29b e4215df595b016d	V1.4	84	90
3a40b3fcb0707e9b5ae6dd9c7b4370b101c37c0b48fa56a602a 39e6d7d5d0de5	1.55 "GOO"	23	90
a88573c55b3901e5e40502ac9146449c1b21b9c8fdfafd249c6 760be2aa947ae	1.55 "BACKOFF"	81	90
d9ba782016e834bab365d72071a66c54aa3b6821d957908b2 da316cc5b66a8bd	1.55 "NET" -	81	90
11591204155db5eb5e9c5a3adbb23e99a75c3b25207d07d7e 52a6407c7ad0165	V1.56	74	90

**Table 3: SA Malware Appliance analysis results** 

The low result of the Static analysis on 1.55 "GOO" variant is due to the use of encryption (Custom Packer) on the malware file.



Figure 11 - SA Malware Appliance results







# The Security Division of EMC



