

An Empirical Study of Pentesting IOS 9 Applications

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Abstract— The mobile has been changed since Apple has released their first iPhone in 2007. Mobile applications have become more powerful than ever, this evolution has created a sufficient range of attacks that can be used on apps and grab a credential data from users who starts making activities on their mobile devices while on the go instead of using it on their own computers. This paper sheds the light on pentesting tools and techniques that can be conducted on iOS applications on a physical iDevice running iOS 9 rather than an emulator.

Index Term— Pentesting Tools, Pentesting Techniques, iOS 9

I. INTRODUCTION

iOS is a mobile operating system created by Apple Inc. and assigned exclusively to iDevices (iPhone, iPod, iPad, TV, Apple Watch). iOS in a very simple way is an operating system that runs iPad, iPhone and many other devices that is worshiped by Apple. it's Unix based operating system that is derived from OS X and OS X shares its origin from the Darwin foundation. iOS is not an open source, however parts of the iOS typically taken from open source projects and need to probably be given back due to license constrains such as (CCTools, GDB, etc.) [1]. The only familiarity that iOS shares is when the users use the system; pretty much feel like any other Unix or Linux based system. All iOS devices are powered by processors based on ARM Architecture [2]. The ARM architecture is very different from X86 family which is used on PCs. The ARM architecture has its own assembly language, API's, Functions and arguments. Apple pushes major iOS update to users every year via iTunes or over the air.

The latest update of iOS is 9.2 that has been adopted by 50% of iDevices users while others are still using iOS 8 or older versions. Nowadays, Mobile phones have become a ubiquitous portable device used in our lives and according to Statista [3], there are more than 1.5 million approved apps available in the App Store. App Store provides a large variety of different applications include some free and others are paid apps. IOS Developers use Apple Xcode IDE for developing an application written in Objective-C [4] or Swift [5] programming language for iOS. With Xcode developers can test their application within iOS simulator that is already embedded in Xcode. iOS simulator compiles application into a low level language (local native) which is totally different than android emulator that is used to compile the application into ARM instructions. To test an application on real device, developers have to subscribe to iOS developer program that costs 100\$/year because iOS devices is only allowed to run Apple signed applications. Developers need to read and follow Apple Store Guidelines [7] to ensure that their application will successfully submitted into Apple Store. Applications can be submitted into the App Store by using iTunes Connect [8] and

developers should wait for Apple App Review “reviewing every app based on app reliability, and performance” that is usual took 8 days according to AppReviewTimes [9]. Jay Freeman (also known as “Saurik”) [10] has created a GUI application called Cydia [11] that is used to grant root access [12] into iOS device and allow developers to install any packages, applications, themes, and extensions without being signed/reviewed by Apple. Apple claims that jailbreaking an iOS device will remove security layers that are designed to protect user's personal information and cause instability, battery drain, and other issues [13].

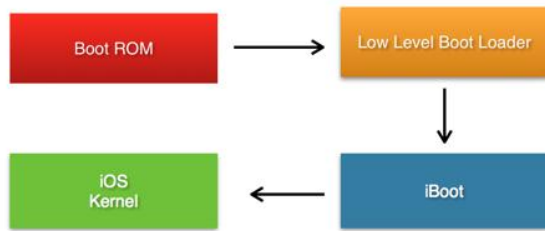
This paper will provide an overview of iOS security mechanism, techniques and tools that can be used to pentest an iOS app on iOS 9. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes iOS security measures. Section 3 presents the tools and techniques that the pentester needs in order to explore and modify iOS application. Finally, Section 4 presents our conclusions.

II. iOS Security

The security architecture of iOS is pretty much layered in such a way that is actually very difficult to break through it [1]. There is an encryption happening which starts right from the hardware level extends into the operating system, file system and applications. Also there are things such as data protection using encryption, application sandboxes, code signing and bunch of other things.

The whole boot process is very critical and important in operating systems. In PC's world a lot of boot levels (Trojan, Rootkit, etc.) have been around for quite some time which compromise the integrity of the operating system. Apple has come up with a solution to avoid PC's boot problems by creating a Secure Boot Chain that is loaded in a protected area inside the memory and cannot be tampered. Secure Boot Chain consists of (Boot Rom, Low Level Boot Loader, iBoot, and iOS kernel).

The Boot Rom contains Apple Root Certificate Authority “CA”, the Device Unique ID “UID” key, and Device Group ID key “GID”. The Boot Rom will verify the signature of low level boot loader “LLB” before loading and executing it and the LLB verification happens using the Apple Root CA key which is currently in the Boot Rom, and this will ensure that LLB is the one that sent by Apple. Now, the LLB intern boot the second stage of the boot loader called “iBoot” that will verify the iBoot to ensure that is signed by Apple. Finally, the iBoot will boot up the iOS kernel and it will verify again that the iOS kernel has been signed successfully by Apple. Fig.1. illustrates the secure boot chain of iOS devices.



The kernel is loaded into a protected area of memory to thwart it from being overwritten by apps or other parts of the OS and it is used to load up all different operating system’s components and processes. The kernel will verify that all applications that are running are signed by Apple and this process called “Code signing” as it shown in Fig.2.

All applications are running under user “Mobile” and all system processes are running under user “Root” as it shown in Fig.4.

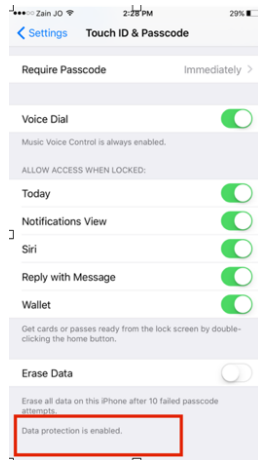


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    root@172.20.104.96 ~# ps aux
    mobile 103 0.0 0.2 718112 1632 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:11.04 /usr/sbin/ftServer
    mobile 99 0.0 0.3 710640 3808 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:05.22 /usr/libexec/sharingd
    mobile 97 0.0 0.2 707264 1596 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:05.95 /usr/libexec/timed
    mobile 95 0.0 0.0 706736 416 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.23 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Ask
    mobile 91 0.0 0.1 706400 952 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.53 /usr/sbin/wirelessproad
    root 87 0.0 0.1 683560 876 ?? Ss 20Dec15 1:31.77 /usr/sbin/syslogd
    mobile 85 0.0 0.3 731960 3104 ?? Ss 20Dec15 2:25.01 /System/Library/Frameworks/AssetsLibr
    root 83 0.0 0.0 682000 400 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.24 /System/Library/CoreServices/AppleID
    mobile 81 0.0 0.0 680496 296 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.10 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Tou
    mobile 77 0.0 0.4 716464 4444 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:24.23 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/IDS
    mobile 75 0.0 0.2 713248 1536 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:27.02 /usr/libexec/installd
    mobile 69 0.0 0.1 706556 992 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.34 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Fan
    root 65 0.0 0.0 682000 436 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:02.20 /usr/libexec/keybagd -t 15
    root 61 0.0 0.3 711824 2852 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:46.27 /usr/sbin/wifid
    mobile 57 0.0 0.2 711640 2172 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:07.94 /usr/libexec/atc
    root 53 0.0 0.1 706400 1364 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:26.64 /System/Library/CoreServices/power.b
    root 51 0.0 0.2 712384 2260 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:53.92 /usr/libexec/configd
    mobile 49 0.0 0.0 706528 384 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.15 /System/Library/Frameworks/HealthKit.
    mobile 47 0.0 0.1 680920 552 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.24 /usr/libexec/ssid
    mobile 45 0.0 0.1 708352 1236 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:01.24 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Med
    mobile 41 0.0 0.2 708800 1972 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:15.62 /usr/libexec/routined
    mobile 39 0.0 0.0 706256 396 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.00 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Fil
    mobile 37 0.0 0.2 722944 2396 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:05.22 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Ass
    root 35 0.0 0.1 683104 1424 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:10.90 /usr/libexec/sfeventsd
    root 23 0.0 0.0 680512 156 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.01 /usr/libexec/amfid
    root 1891 0.0 0.1 668736 612 s000 H+ 1:10PM 0:00.03 ps aux
    mobile 149 0.0 0.0 0 0 ?? Z 20Dec15 0:00.00 (MDSRestrictProcl
    mobile 1883 0.0 0.1 682520 936 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:00.00 /System/Library/Frameworks/UITKit.fram
    mobile 1880 0.0 0.2 687400 1724 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:00.10 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/AGX
    mobile 1877 0.0 0.1 662360 1200 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:00.05 /usr/libexec/gamecontrollerd
    mobile 1872 0.0 0.5 718920 4724 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:01.56 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Agg
    mobile 1863 0.0 0.1 547296 832 s000 Ss 1:10PM 0:00.05 -sh
    root 1858 0.0 0.1 548840 1240 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:00.23 sshd: root@tty000
    mobile 1852 0.0 0.1 681840 992 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:00.00 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Car
    mobile 1850 0.0 1.4 737952 13980 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:03.82 /Applications/Preferences.app/Prefer
    mobile 1804 0.0 0.4 855104 84192 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:13.12 /Applications/Cydia.app/Cydia
    mobile 1796 0.0 0.9 726816 9216 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:01.82 /Applications/MobileMail.app/MobileMa
    mobile 1784 0.0 0.5 719296 5452 ?? Ss 1:10PM 0:00.62 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Acc
    mobile 1693 0.0 0.1 713904 1496 ?? Ss 1:08PM 0:00.43 /usr/libexec/ptpd -t usb
    mobile 1553 0.0 0.1 745872 948 ?? Ss Sat10PM 0:00.20 /Applications/MobileSafari.app/safari
    mobile 1473 0.0 0.2 708496 2060 ?? Ss Sat10PM 0:01.30 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Ass
    root 1386 0.0 0.1 680784 992 ?? Tu#09AM 0:00.12 /usr/libexec/online-auth-agent
    mobile 959 0.0 0.1 743312 1176 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.43 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Car
    mobile 904 0.0 0.1 716912 672 ?? Ss 20Dec15 0:00.42 /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/Saf
    
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The application level security does not end at code signing; Applications itself are isolated using sandboxes, that means “Application 1” cannot access the data of “Application 2”, run time injection of one application into other or probably reading the other application directories is not allowed and not possible. Fig.3. illustrates iOS application sandboxing.

In addition to the system security, Apple offers File Data Protection and encryption to their iOS devices. File data protection is available for devices that offers hardware encryption starting from iPhone3GS or later, iPod touch (3rd generation or later), and all iPad models. The file data protection is used to protect data and files even when the iDevice has been stolen or compromised by generating 256-bit key for every file on the system. This service is enabled by default in iOS and users should enable it by enable a Touch ID which is fingering sensing system that makes secure access to the iOS device in a fast and easy way or Passcode on the iOS device. The passcode/Touch ID are integrated with UID to protect the iOS device from any password attack by using an iteration design that makes as it shown in Fig.5.



Most of the encryption techniques are depends on UID and GID Keys that is embedded into hardware. Apple claims that they don't know the UID and GID keys nor their suppliers. Every device could end up having a different encryption key which is used for file and data encryption that has different things associated with such as (Keychain, KeyBags, File based encryption).

Apple also provide support for secure data delivery over the network and it supports "SSL, TLS, VPN, Wi-Fi (EAP-TLS, PEAP, TTLS, etc.).

These restrictions have led Jay Freeman to find vulnerabilities in iOS that will lead to install application called Cydia "Jailbreak" that is used to provide freedom from all of these restrictions.

III. Penetration Test

In order to build an iOS pentesting environment, we need to Jailbreak an iOS device to get off Apple security restrictions to achieve reliable results.

This section will focus on iOS application instead of iOS software and we need to install a set of tools that are not signed by Apple and jailbreak an iOS device build our pentesting environment. To perform pentesting we will use iPad Air with iOS 9.0.2.

IV. Jailbreak

Every iOS version has its own jailbreak tool because apple used to patch a security hole that permits application to bypass code signing whenever they release a new update. Jailbreak tools for the iOS devices have always been free and users who are looking for a Jailbreak should be aware from scam websites who claims they offer a Jailbreak tool.

In order to pentest iOS application, we need to perform a jailbreak tool. This paper will use iPad Air running iOS 9.0.2 along with Pangu untethered Jailbreak tool for iOS 9 [14]. An untethered jailbreak tool, meaning that the iDevice does not

require to be connected to a computer each time when the device boot. Jailbreaking an iOS device is quite easy; download Pangu tool, install it on computer, connect your iDevice to computer using the cable that comes with the device, and follow the steps that Pangu tool prompt. Fig.6. illustrates a screenshot of Pangu tool running on Mac OS X.



After installing Cydia, the pentester will see a new app icon on the jailbroken device called Cydia; open the app and choose Developer Mode.

V. Penetration Test Tools

There are many unsigned Cydia apps, tweaks and packages that could help the pentester's job easy and enable them to work in an efficient way to do penetration test. This section will illustrate the pentesting tools were deemed so essential to be used in penetration iOS applications and can be listed hereunder.

OpenSSH: This tool is a console package Cydia tool that is used to secure remote access between an iOS device and a computer. The pentester should change the default root password of the iOS which is "alpine" to prevent the possibility of unsavory people remotely logging into device [15].

IMazing: This tool is the Swiss Army Knife of iOS devices that is used to explore (Apps, Messages, Contacts, Photo, Plist Files, etc.) in a simple and easy way instead of using iTunes. This tool is available on mac OS X and Windows operating systems [16].

TextWrangler: This tool is an open source text editor mac OS X tool that help the pentester to read/modify Plist [17].

Adv-cmds: This tool is a console package Cydia tool that will help the pentester to use set of advanced commands (ps aux, kill, etc.) when they are connected to iOS device via OpenSSH [18].

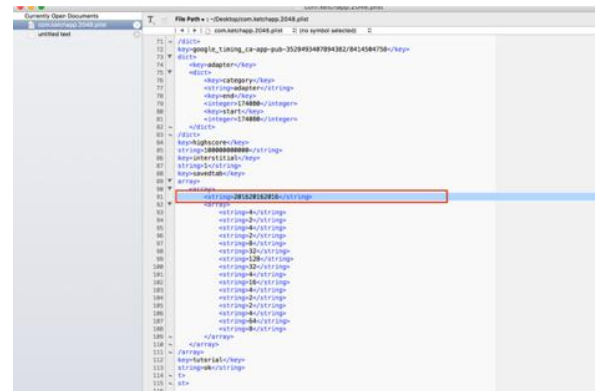
House Arrest Fix: This Cydia Tweak will allow the pentester to access app containers and explore the iOS device via USB on iOS 8.3 or later [19].

Cyberduck: This is an FTP, SFTP browsing tool that allow the pentester to browse the content of the iOS device easily and copy any type of file inside the iOS with the ability to set permission on files [20].

Keychain Dumper: This tool helps the pentester to dump “Internet Password” or “Generic Passwords” only [21].



The pentester should get a copy of Plist file into the desktop to see what kind of data can be by using a text editor such as TextWrangler as it shown in Fig.9.



VI. Play Around with PLIST Files

Plist is stand for Property List. Every iOS, OS X has its own Plist files that are often used to store user’s settings, application configuration and sometimes there are applications that used to store clear text sessions, usernames and passwords. Pentester may escalate the privilege to login into application as an administrator by changing Plist entry “Administrator =0 “to “Administrator=1” during the penetration test and open the app to see that your account has been escalated to administrator privilege.

iOS applications store Plist files inside the app container [Developer/Library/Preferences] and the pentester cannot access these files even if the device was jailbroken on iOS 9 and need to install the following tweak “House Arrest Fix “in order to access these Plist files. The extension of Plist file is “Plist”. IMazing is a tool that could help us in exploring and modifying Plist files. Below is an example of how to pentest an iOS application by modify Plist file that is associated with the application itself. We will demonstrate how to pentest an iPad game “2048” that stores the game score in Plist file under applications home directory by using IMazing tool. Fig.7. illustrates a screenshot of “2048” game in the Apple Store.

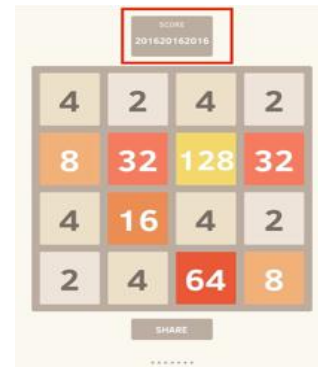


Fig. 7. Screenshot of “2048” game from the App Store

The Pentester should download and install IMazing tool and connect the iOS device to the computer via USB to start explore 2048 app and navigate through 2048 Developer —>Library —> Preferences Folder.

Fig.8. illustrates a screenshot of how apps are looking when the pentester open IMazing app

In our scenario, we will edit the high score of the game “2048” and then copy it back from desktop to the app container in order to apply the modification that we have made. The result of the modification can be shown in the Fig.10.



VII. Dumping Keychain

Keychain is a folder that implements SQLite database holds all passwords, identities, encryption keys, private keys, and certificates. This folder is used to be encrypted with a hardware specific key that is unique per device and cannot be extracted from the iOS device itself (AES 128 bit AES Algorithm) and that means that these data cannot be moved into another device. iOS applications store the user’s sensitive information in the keychain to issue clear authentication and to not to ask the user every time for login. iOS applications use

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