

#### ACL Steganography: Permissions to Hide Your Porn by Michael Perklin

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- Security Professional
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- Digital Forensic Examiner

Computer Geek + Legal Support hybrid

#### In This Talk...

What is Steganography?

- Historical examples of physical and digital forms
- How do they work?
- ACL Steganography a new scheme
  - Demo
  - How It Works

## What Is Steganography?

Greek origin and means "concealed writing"

- steganos (στεγανός) meaning
   "covered or protected"
- graphei (γραφή) meaning "writing"
- The term was first coined in 1499, but there are many earlier examples
- Basically, hiding something in plain sight

# Classical Examples

#### Classical Example: Tattoo

- Tattoo under hair
  - Encoder tattoos a slave's scalp
  - Decoder shaves the messenger's hair
- Problem: The message must be delayed to allow time for hair regrowth
  - Also...



#### Tattoos Are Permanent



• Oops

#### Classical Example: Morse

- Stitch morse code into a sweater/jacket worn by a messenger
- Messenger hand-delivers one message while actually delivering two

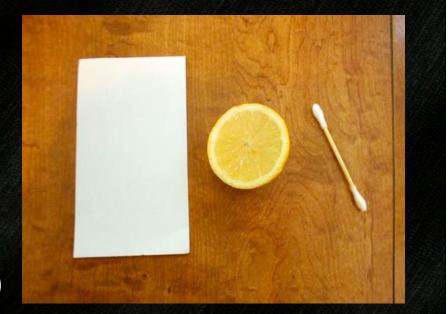




# Classical Example: Invisible Ink

- Write secrets with lemon juice
- Allow to dry

 Decode with heat (candle, match, hair dryer, iron)



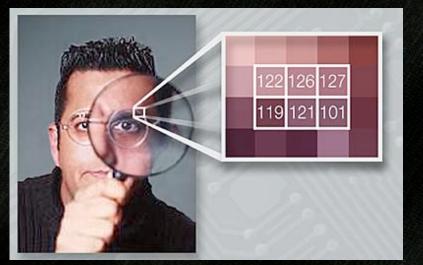
## Decode With Heat



# Digital Steganographic Methods

## Digital Example: Photos

- Files can be encoded as colour information embedded in a photo
- Most common type of digital steganography
- Based on the fact that only super-humans can tell the difference between
   Chartreuse and Lemon



#### Photo Steganography

- Each pixel is assigned a colour with an RGB colour code
- The last bit of this 8-bit code is overwritten with encoded data
- #DFFF00 is chartreuse
- #DFFF01 is... one of the yellows
- 8 adjacent pixels with 8 slightly-adjusted colours allows
   1 byte of encoded information

## Audio Steganography

- Same principle as photographic steganography, but with audio
- Humans can't easily tell the difference between 400hz and 401hz, especially if the note isn't sustained
- Alter each frame of audio with 1 bit of encoded information

## Digital Example: x86 Ops

Information can be encoded in x86 op codes

- NOP No Operation
- ADD / SUB Addition and Subtraction
- PE files (standard .exe programs) have many other areas that can hold arbitrary data

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00000030h:	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	00	;		
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000000b0h:	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	;		
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000001d0h:	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	;		
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000001f0h:	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	43	4F	44	45	00	00	00	00	;	CODE	
00000200h:	88	9E	02	00	00	10	00	00	00	AO	02	00	00	04	00	00	;	^ ž	SECTION
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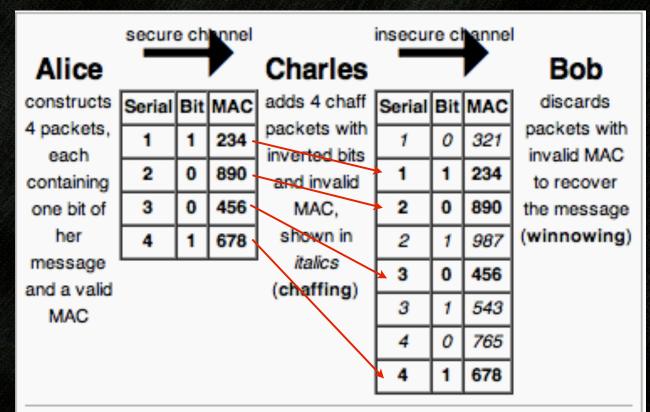
# Digital Example: Chaffing and Winnowing

- Conceived by Ron Rivest in 1998 (the R in RSA, as well as RC4 and others)
- Not quite steganography
- Not quite encryption
- Has properties of both stego and encryption

#### Chaffing and Winnowing

- Sender issues 'real' messages and 'chaff' messages
- Listeners don't know which messages are real
- Real chunks of the message pass a parity check
  - Message Authentication Code (MAC)
- Receiver calculates MACs on every packet
  - Discards packets whose MACs aren't valid
  - Reassembles all packets with valid MACs

# Chaffing and Winnowing



In this example, Alice wishes to send the message "1001" to Bob. For simplicity, assume that all even MAC are valid and odd ones are invalid.

Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

#### Steganography Breakdown

- All types of steganography require three things:
  - A medium of arbitrary information
  - A key or legend for encoding information
  - A way to differentiate 'encoded' and 'medium' info

#### ACL Steganography

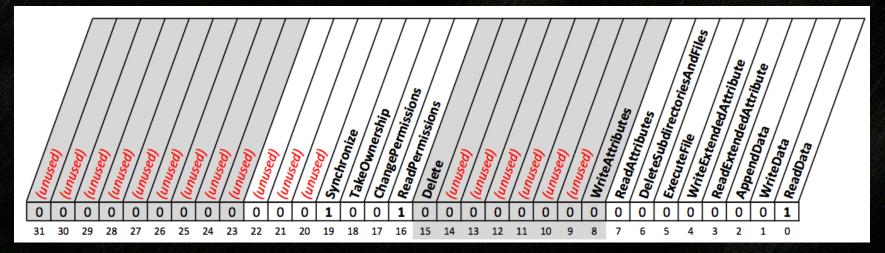
- A way to encode files as Access Control Entries within Access Control Lists of files stored on an NTFS volume
  - Medium: All files on an NTFS volume
  - Key: Security Identifiers in ACEs
  - Differentiator: ACEs with an unlikely combination of permissions

# Background: NTFS Security

filelist.txt Properties								
General Security Summary	🗏 Computer Management							
Group or user names: Administrator (DEVXP\Administrator)	■ File Action View Window Help       ■ ■ ×         ← →       ●							
Image: System       Michael (DEVXP\Michael)         Image: System       Image: System         Ima	Computer Management (Local)       Name       Full Name       Description         System Tools       Administrator       Built-in account for administering the ASP.I         Shared Folders       ASPNET       ASP.NET Machine Account       Account used for running the ASP.I         Shared Folders       Guest       Built-in account for guest access to         Users       Storage       Tuternet Guest Account       Account for Providing Remote Assis         IWAM_MICH       Launch IIS Process Account       Built-in account for Internet Inform         IWAM_MICH       CN=Microsoft Corporation       This is a vendor's account for the H							
Modify       Image: Constraint of the second section is a constraint of the second second section is a con	Disk Defragmenter Disk Management Services and Applications							
OK Cancel Apply								

#### **NTFS** Permissions

- Entries correspond to system users
- There are 22 unique permissions available, stored in 14 bits of a 32-bit field
- Many more granular permissions exist than "Read, Write, Execute"



## Simple and Advanced Views

filelist.txt Properties		? 🔀
General Security Summary		
Group or user names:		
🖸 🙎 Administrator (DEVXP\Admini	istrator)	
Administrators (DEVXP\Admin	nistrators)	
Michael (DEVXP\Michael)		
SYSTEM     SYSTEM     S     Users (DEVXP\Users)		
	Add	Remove
Permissions for Michael	Allow	Deny
Full Control		
Modify		
Read & Execute Read		
Write		
Special Permissions		
For special permissions or for adva	nced settings	Adversed
click Advanced.		Advanced
ОК	Cancel	Apply

Permission Entry for filelist.txt			<u>?</u> ×
Object			
Name: Michael Perklin (DEVXP\Mic Apply onto: This object only Permissions:	hael) Allow	Change. Denv	
Full Control	AIIOW	Dony	
Traverse Folder / Execute File List Folder / Read Data Read Attributes Read Extended Attributes Create Files / Write Data Create Folders / Append Data Write Attributes Write Extended Attributes Delete Read Permissions Change Permissions Take Ownership			
Apply these permissions to objects containers within this container only		Clear A	
(	ОК	Car	ncel

#### NTFS Permissions

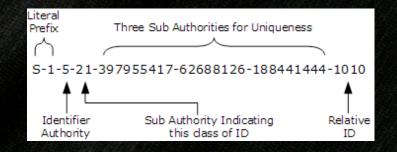
- Permission entries are stored using Security Identifier (S-ID)
- If the user is removed, the OS can't look up the friendly name

Photo shows same file after
 "Michael" is removed from OS

elist.txt Prop	erties		? 🗙
ieneral Security	Summary		
Group or user na	mes:		
🖗 Account U	nknown(S-1-5-21-83)	9522115-74613	7067-68200
	or (DEVXP\Administr	-	
	ors (DEVXP\Adminis	trators)	
SYSTEM			
🕵 Users (DEV	XP\Users)		
		Add	Bemove
Permissions for A	ccount		Remove
Unknown(S-1-5-)	21-839522115-74	Allow	Deny
Full Control			
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Read & Execu	ite	<b>~</b>	
Read		<b>~</b>	
Write			
Special Permi	ssions		
	ssions or for advanc	ed settings, 🔽	Advanced
click Advanced.			
	ОК	Cancel	Apply

## NTFS Security Identifiers

- Maximum Size: 68-bytes
- 1st byte is the revision (Always 1)



- 2nd byte is the count of SubAuthorities in this SID (Maximum 15 SubAuthorities per SID)
- 6 bytes used for the Identifier Authority (Always 000004)
- 60 bytes store the content of the SubAuthorities and the Relative ID

#### Acronym Review (AR)

Access Control List (ACL)

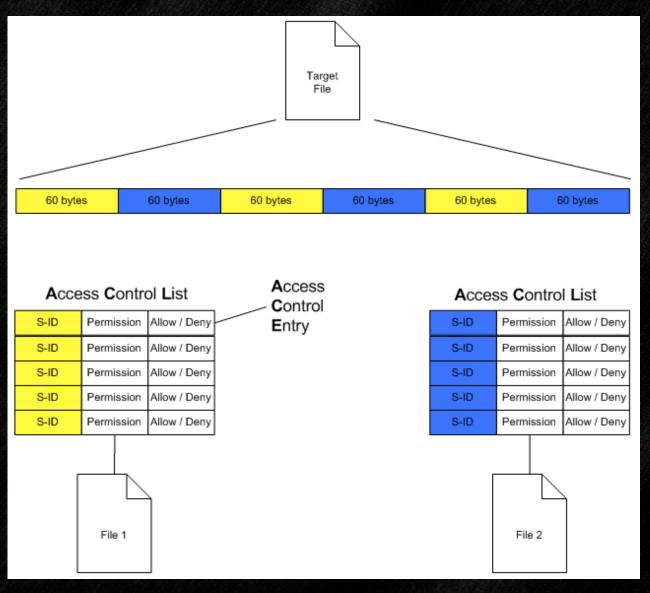
- A list of Access Control Entries
- Access Control Entry (ACE)
  - A permission rule (allow or deny) pertaining to a SID
- Security Identifier (SID)
  - A unique identifier for a user or group of a Windows system

#### Demonstration

- A folder full of files
- A filelist.txt with these files
- A .tc volume with cool stuff in it
- Encoding the volume
- Showing the ACEs on the files
- Decoding the volume

## ACL Steganography

- A file is split up into 60-byte chunks
- Each chunk
   becomes a SID

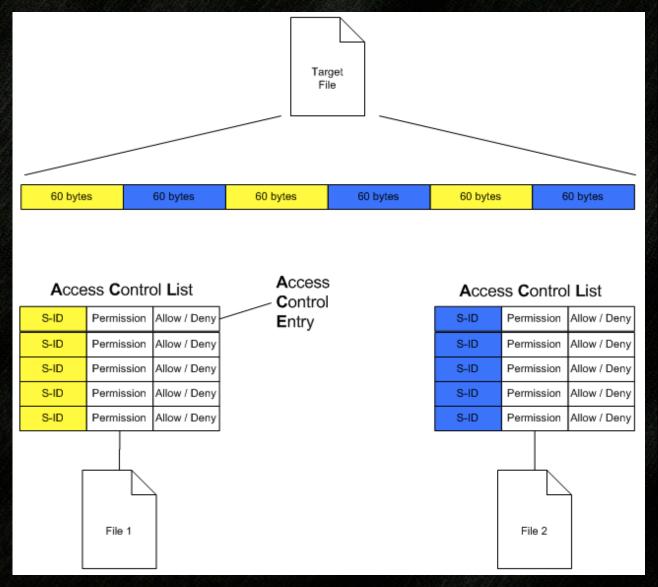


#### Two files in the FileList.txt

## ACL Steganography

 ACEs are created with "Allow"
 permissions for each of these SIDs

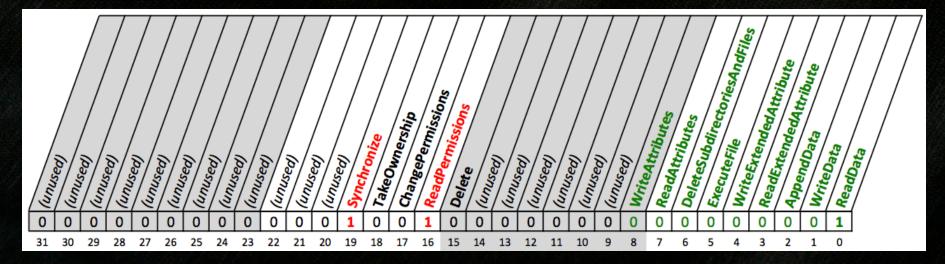
 ACEs are added to the ACLs of multiple files



#### ACLEncoding Details

Two bits are set for all ACLEncoded entries:

- Synchronize + ReadPermissions
- Synchronize cannot be set within the Windows UI
- The 9 least significant bits are used as a counter from 0-512



#### ACLEncode Details

- The FileList becomes a kind of symmetric key between the encoder and decoder
- The list identifies:
  - Which files have ACLEncoded entries
  - The order in which those entries are encoded

#### Limitations

- An ACL can be no bigger than 64kB per file
- Maximum ACE size is 76 bytes (68 for SID + 8 byte header)
- This produces a theoretical maximum of 862 ACEs per file
  - I've imposed a limit of 512 entries per file
  - This leaves room for legitimate permissions

#### Limitations

The largest possible file to be encoded:

- NumFilesInList \* 512 \* 60bytes
- or about 30KB per file
- Need to store a larger file? Use a longer file list.

#### **\$SECURE File Limitation**

The \$SECURE file is a hidden file on every NTFS volume
All ACLs for all files are stored in this one file

- Each time a new SID is encountered, it's added to this file
  - This way, future permission operations for that user can use the existing reference without duplicating it

# **\$SECURE File Limitation**

- NTFS does \*NOT\* remove old/unused SIDs from the \$SECURE file
- The \$SECURE file is designed only to grow in size and never shrink
- This means, every ACLEncoded chunk from every run of ACLEncode will persist here forever

# A Forensic Review

- I conducted a test:
  - 2GB USB Key, formatted as NTFS
  - AccessData FTK 4.0.2.33
  - Guidance EnCase Forensic 6.19.6

# Forensic Test - File List

ACLTest				- D ×				
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☆ Favorites	Name 🔶	Date modified	Type Siz	e 🛛				
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Downloads	file02.txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
Recent Places	📄 file03.txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
🔚 Libraries	📄 file04.txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
Documents	file05.txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
J Music	file06.txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
Pictures	file07.txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
Videos	file08.txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
	file09.txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
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NTFS_TEST (E:)	📄 file 11. txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
	📄 file 12. txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
年 Network	📄 file 13. txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
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	ile 16. txt	7/5/2013 3:06 PM	Text Document	0 KB				
file01.txt Date modified: 7/5/2013 3:06 PM Date created: 7/5/2013 3:39 PM Text Document Size: 0 bytes								

📕 filelist.txt - Notepad	
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1	

# Forensic Test - Input File

 DEFCONXXI repeated over and over

• 4 KB

File Edit Format View Help

DEFCONXXI.txt - Notepad

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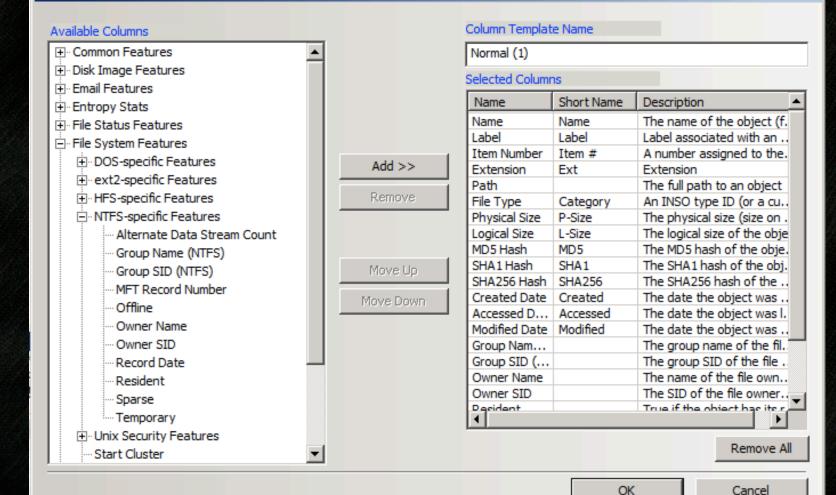
# AccessData FTK 4

🚥 AccessData Forensic Toolkit Version: 4.0.2.33 Database: localhost Case: ACLTest	
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Evidence	
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standard for the standa	
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E Ele Content Info	<u> </u>
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file01.txt 93042 0 B 0 B S-1-5-21-2565687063-2636845177-2300264073-513 S-1-5-21-2565687063-2636845177-2300264073-10	000
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#### Forensic Test - FTK4

#### Column Settings

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#### Forensic Test - FTK4

FTK4 has no way to show Access Control Lists of files

- Contacted their tech support
- Discussed on their user forum
- "Use another tool"

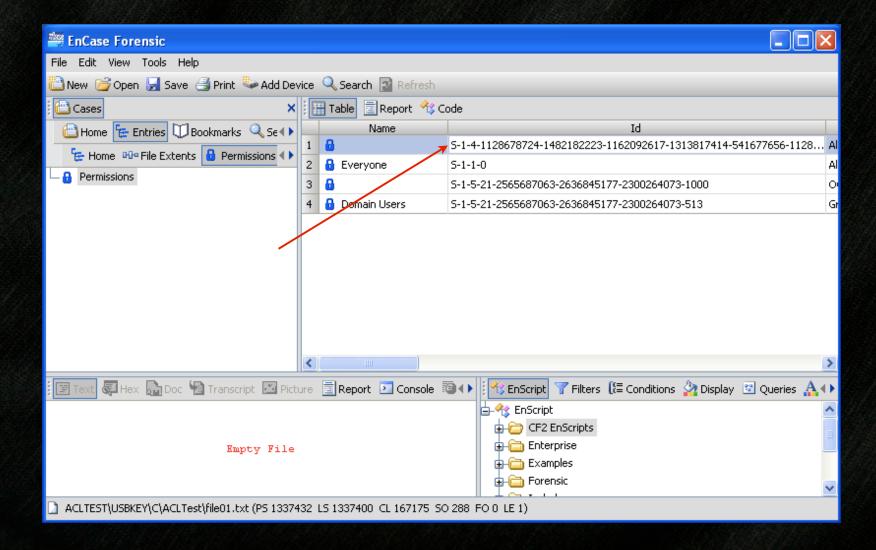
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# Guidance EnCase Forensic 6

# Forensic Test - EnCase 6

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### Forensic Test - EnCase 6



# Forensic Test - EnCase 6

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#### Forensic Detection of ACLEncoding

- Detection of ACLEncoded entries is a manual process
  - (using the most popular forensic tools)
- Detection can be automated with the creation of EnScripts (EnCase's scripting language) and other purpose-built tools
- Unfortunately not enough time to go over these today

#### Questions and Answers

If you have questions, see me in the Speaker Q&A room

- Thanks to Josh, Nick, Joel, Reesh, Kyle for their help with testing
- Thanks to my family, my friends, my colleagues, and my employer for providing me the time for this research
- Thanks to Eugene Filipowitz for seeding the thought in my mind:
   *"How can you hide data on a drive without detection?"*

# ACLEncode

#### **Source Code**

#### **Latest Slides**



DEFCON 21 Michael Perklin



http://www.perklin.ca/~defcon21/ACLEncode.zip

http://www.perklin.ca/~defcon21/aclsteganography.pdf

#### References

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- http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc962011.aspx
- http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-CA/library/ms229078(v=vs.85).aspx
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