

A Beginner's Guide to Tracking Malware Infrastructure - Censys

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Building queries for malware infrastructure can be a valuable step in the security lifecycle. Sadly, there are few resources for how to get started and which indicators can be used to build queries from. Today we aim to fill this gap by demonstrating approachable and high value methods that can be used to hunt for malware infrastructure.

What Is Query Building For Malware Infrastructure?

Query building is the process of observing suspicious or known malicious infrastructure and creating queries to identify the configuration pattern that the creator of the infrastructure has used. Since threat actors often re-use the same or similar configuration across multiple deployed servers, there is often a pattern that can be used to identify multiple servers from a single initial indicator.

A well built query allows an analyst to identify additional servers related to the actor's infrastructure. The analyst can then proactively block, investigate or perform any additional actions needed to limit compromise and gather intelligence.

Why Build Queries On Malware Infrastructure?

Building queries on Malware Infrastructure can be a highly efficient means of obtaining IOC's for blocking and hunting.

Traditional means of listing malware infrastructure involves obtaining a large set of unique malware samples and extracting individual IOC's from each file.

This can be a highly tedious and technical process requiring a dedicated reverse engineer to deconstruct a sample, develop and test a Yara hunting rule, acquire new samples, and then develop and apply a configuration extractor to obtain individual IOCs.

This reverse engineering capability involves a significant amount of technical know-how which most teams outsource to threat intelligence feeds. Outsourcing to threat intelligence feeds can be effective and there are good paid feeds available, but they are often expensive and can vary significantly in quality and timeliness.

Benefits of Building Infrastructure Queries

By developing your own infrastructure queries for the purposes of hunting, you can establish a far greater list of malware IOCs with a significantly smaller set of malware samples, technical expertise, and overall cost. You can also leverage queries to expand on alerting from your own environment, allowing you to establish a list of IOCs related to known malware impacting your organisation.

Using the techniques shown in this post, you can potentially identify dozens of current malware IOCs and infrastructure with only a single available sample or alert.

What Are The Indicators That We Can Use?

A single malicious IP address contains a great deal of information that can be used to identify additional servers. This is due to unique patterns related to the software and configuration deployed by an actor.

Since threat actors often re-use the same software and configurations across multiple instances of malicious infrastructure, a single pattern can be used to identify other servers.

Some of the most common indicators that threat actors will re-use are:

- **Certificate Information** – Fields inside of TLS and SSL certificates. Hardcoded values are often re-used.
- **Server Headers** – Actors deploying custom software may forget to change default headers that contain indicators.
- **Data in HTTP Responses** – Custom software containing unique values in HTTP responses
- **Location, ASN and Hosting Providers** – Actors re-using hosting providers for infrastructure. Similar servers may be hosted at the same ASN.
- **JA3 Hashes** – Actors deploying uncommon software configurations can be fingerprinted by JA3 signatures.
- **Port Configurations** – Actors will often leave the same ports open [across infrastructure](#).
- **Regular Expressions** – Actors may deploy unique values with highly similar structure that can be captured with Regular Expressions.

Now that we've covered the key concepts, let's dive in with some examples.

Hunting Infrastructure with TLS Certificates

Threat actors and malware developers utilise TLS certificates to encrypt communications and establish connections between a target host and malicious infrastructure.

For many reasons, actors rarely deploy unique certificates for each deployed sample. This results in values within a single TLS certificate being present on numerous other servers, which introduces simple patterns that can be signed and queried.

Example 1: Hunting AsyncRAT with TLS Certificates

The malware family of [AsyncRAT](#) contains a hardcoded TLS certificate left by the [developer](#). This certificate contains the hardcoded subject common name value of **AsyncRAT Server**

Take for example an IP Address of **91.109.176[.]14**. Querying this IP in [Censys Search](#) confirms a subject common name (CN) value of **AsyncRAT Server** on port **8808**.


UNKNOWN 8808/TCP

01/28/2024 08:24 UTC

C2

Software

[VIEW ALL DATA](#)

 AsyncRAT 

Details

TLS

Handshake

Version Selected TLSv1_0

Cipher Selected TLS_ECDHE_RSA_WITH_AES_256_CBC_SHA

Certificate

Fingerprint f364cbce06d0d5452f0a81bb55d8d7b02c3bf3ae4570d8779b64f80b4017791f

Subject CN=AsyncRAT Server

Issuer CN=AsyncRAT Server

Fingerprint

JARM 22b22b00022b22b22b22b22b22b22b22bd3b67dd3674d9af9dd91c1955a35d0e9

JA3S bcf3a836c82d12ee988005fb0c011445

By expanding the host information and locating the exact field where the **AsyncRAT Server** value is stored `services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.subject_dn`, we can build a query to locate additional servers.

In this case, either the `subject_dn` or `issuer_dn` field can be used as they both contain the same hardcoded value.

<code>services.tls.certificates.leaf_fp_sha_256</code>	f364cbce06d0d5452f0a81bb55d8d7b02c3bf3ae4570d8779b64f80b4017791f
<code>services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.subject_dn</code>	CN=AsyncRAT Server
<code>services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.issuer_dn</code>	CN=AsyncRAT Server

By searching for **AsyncRAT Server** in either of these fields, we can locate an additional 110 servers with the same certificate value.

The screenshot shows a search interface with a search bar containing the query `services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.subject.common_name:'AsyncRAT Server'`. Below the search bar, there are navigation options like 'Report', 'Docs', and 'St'. The main content area displays search results under the heading 'Hosts'. Two host entries are visible:

- 82.65.19.134**: PROXAD (12322), Île-de-France, France. Tags: c2, 4443/UNKNOWN.
- 144.126.149.221 (vmi801325.contaboserver.net)**: Microsoft Windows, NL-811-40021 (40021), New York, United States. Tags: c2, remote-access, network-administration, file-sharing. Services: 135/DCERPC, 139/NETBIOS, 445/SMB, 3389/RDP, 5900/VNC, 5985/HTTP, 9999/UNKNOWN, 47001/HTTP.

Example 2: Hunting Cobalt Strike with TLS Certificates

The infamous [Cobalt Strike](#) toolkit can also be tracked using TLS Certificate values.

This is primarily due to a default subject common name of **Major Cobalt Strike**

Take for example the IP address **23.98.137[.].196** with the following certificate on port **50050**.

Certificate

Fingerprint	28cdd790f14ee1345c396f2cf4f48d1ebb25db817008a6d22f413a6b7a826591
Subject	C=Earth, ST=Cyberspace, L=Somewhere, O=cobaltstrike, OU=AdvancedPenTesting, CN=Major Cobalt Strike
Issuer	C=Earth, ST=Cyberspace, L=Somewhere, O=cobaltstrike, OU=AdvancedPenTesting, CN=Major Cobalt Strike

There are multiple hardcoded values here that can be utilised, but for the sake of simplicity we will leverage the issuer common name of **Major Cobalt Strike**.

We can expand the detailed host view again to determine the exact field name.

Services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.issuer.common_name.

services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.fingerprint	28cdd790f14ee1345c396f2cf4f48d1ebb25db817008a6d22f413a6b7a826591	Q
services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.issuer.common_name	Major Cobalt Strike	Q
services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.issuer.locality	Somewhere	Q

Querying this value returns **236** results. The chances of legitimate software containing “Major Cobalt Strike” is very low, so these are likely all active Cobalt Strike deployments.

The screenshot shows a search interface for Censys Hosts. The search query is 'services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.issuer.common_name="Major Cobalt Strike"'. The results are filtered to show two hosts:

- 149.50.211.216 (unn-149-50-211-216.datapacket.com)**: Linux, CDNEXT (212238), Singapore. Services include 22/SSH, 2443/HTTP, 4443/HTTP, and 50050/UNKNOWN. A 'remote-access' tag is present.
- 20.239.165.111**: Linux, MICROSOFT-CORP-MSN-AS-BLOCK (8075), Central and Western, Hong Kong. Services include 22/SSH, 806/COBALT_STRIKE, 4692/HTTP, and 50050/UNKNOWN. A 'c2' tag is present.

Hunting Infrastructure with HTTP Response Titles

Developers of malware control servers often leave unique and identifying strings in web page data.

Most commonly these can be found in the HTML Titles and HTTP Bodies.

It's useful to note that these values can be changed, but many actors do not go to this effort and leave the identifying strings intact.

Example 1: Mythic C2 Framework

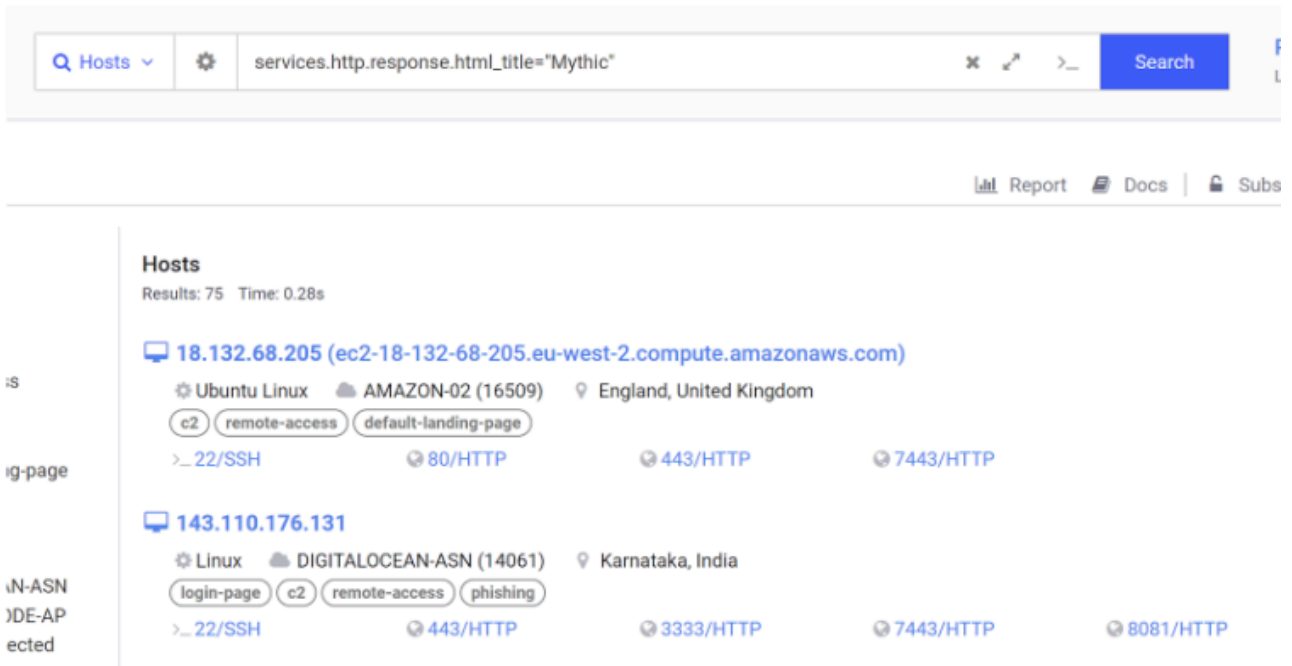
The [Mythic](#) C2 framework is often utilised by threat actors and contains a default HTML Title of **Mythic**.

Looking at the IP [89.223.66.\[.\]195](#), we can confirm the **Mythic** string present in the HTML title.

The screenshot shows the details for an HTTP 7443/TCP connection to IP 89.223.66.195 on 01/28/2024 at 10:39 UTC. The connection is tagged as 'C2'. The software section lists 'Mythic' and 'nginx 1.23.4'. The details section shows the URL 'https://89.223.66.195:7443/new/login' with a status of '200 OK'. The body hash is 'sha1:9ed5e666a48ee311aa3b4f76438029bf38fae682' and the HTML title is 'Mythic'. There is an 'EXPAND' button for the response body.

Querying for the **Mythic** string inside of **services.http.response.html_title**, we can locate a total of 75 servers.

Many of these servers have already been marked as C2 servers by the Censys platform. (You can locate other C2's with the query **labels:C2**)



Hunting Infrastructure with Service Banners

Threat actors and malware developers often leave identifying strings inside of service banners. These are often left intentionally by the author to limit misuse of the software.

These can be identified, queried, and tracked using similar methods to the HTML Titles.

Note that service banners may not be displayed by default, and you may need to open the detailed host view to see them.

Example 1: Havoc C2 Framework

Take for example the [Havoc](#) C2 framework. Havoc is an open source C2 framework developed by [C5pider](#) that has been leveraged by threat actors due to its high quality implementation of modern offensive techniques.

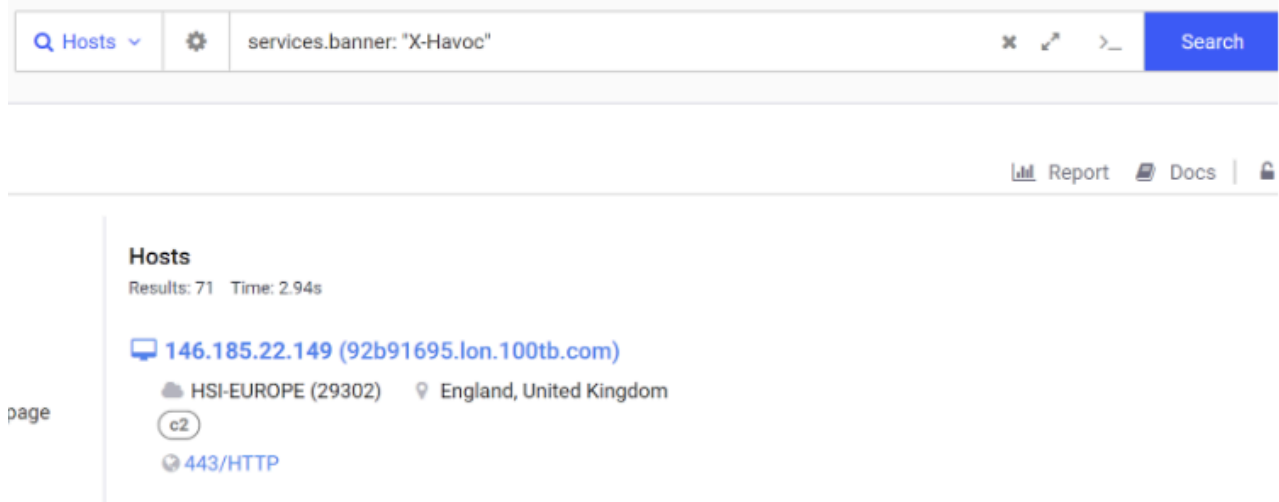
With *default* settings, the Havoc Team Server contains the **X-Havoc** string inside of the service banner. This has been left intentionally by the author to limit mis-use of the software.

443/HTTP TCP View Definition

Attribute	Value
services.banner	HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found\r\nContent-Type: text/html\r\nServer: nginx\r\nX-Havoc: true\r\nDate: <REDACTED>\r\nContent-Length: 1643\r\n
services.banner_hashes	sha256:a07ea90032d30ac0d24f7d9f94b1274f311e82f6b37d33da963e65a565dbecb0

Searching for **services.banner** with the **X-Havoc** string returns a total of 71 results.

A string like this is specific and unlikely to have false positives. So there is a strong chance that these are all active deployments of Havoc.



The screenshot shows a search interface with a search bar containing 'services.banner: "X-Havoc"'. Below the search bar, there are options for 'Report', 'Docs', and a lock icon. The main content area displays 'Hosts' with 'Results: 71' and 'Time: 2.94s'. A specific host is highlighted: '146.185.22.149 (92b91695.lon.100tb.com)'. Below the IP address, it shows 'HSI-EUROPE (29302)' and 'England, United Kingdom'. There are also tags for 'c2' and '443/HTTP'.

Example 2: Hunting DarkComet with Service Banners

A second example of hunting with service banners can be seen with [DarkComet](#) malware.

Looking at the IP address of **187.135.84[.]89**, we can observe a unique looking service banner of **BF7CAB464EFB** on port **2000**

DARKCOMET 2000/TCP

01/29/2024 19:55 UTC

C2

Details

VIEW ALL DATA

Banner BF7CAB464EFB

Version 5.1

We can search **services.banner** with the value **BF7CAB464EFB** to identify a total of 25 servers.

Hosts
Results: 25 Time: 0.09s

95.175.224.126 (pppoe-95.175.224.126.ttel.ru)

Microsoft Windows TENSOR-AS Yaroslavl branch (30881) Yaroslavl Oblast, Russia

c2 network-administration remote-access

1 Matched Service
294/DARKCOMET

5 Other Services
500/IKE 1701/L2TP 22228/RDP 33355/UNKNOWN 55554/HTTP

Summary – Hunting Infrastructure with Service Banners

Threat actors often work in a hurry and avoid changing default strings in custom or open source software. When investigating a host, be sure to check all service banners for unique or interesting strings.

These default strings are great indicators for building queries and you should absolutely use them to your advantage.

If you'd like to see for yourself, here is a prebuilt query for both [Havoc](#) and [DarkComet](#).

Hunting with Locations and ASN Providers

Threat actors often re-use the same hosting providers when deploying multiple servers for malicious purposes.

Often this is done to avoid takedowns and investigations. Other times it is done because hosting providers in an actor's home country are easier to obtain.

Regardless of the reasons, actors often re-use providers and we can use this to our advantage to locate malicious servers and to fine-tune existing queries on other indicators.

Example 1: Amadey Bot Servers

Let's look at the IP address of **185.215.113.J68** . This IP address has a relatively unique HTTP response body of **none**.

HTTP 80/TCP

01/30/2024 03:01 UTC

Software

nginx 1.18.0

[VIEW ALL DATA](#)

[GO](#)

Details

http://185.215.113.68/

Status 200 OK

Body Hash sha1:71f8e7976e4cbc4561c9d62fb283e7f788202acb

Response Body

[EXPAND](#)

none

Honing in with the query of `services.http.response.body="none"`, we have an initial result of 84 servers. Many of these servers are located in the United States and do not appear to be malicious in nature.

The screenshot shows a search interface with a search bar containing the query `services.http.response.body="none"`. Below the search bar, there is a section titled "Hosts" with the following details:

- Results: 84 Time: 0.79s
- Host: [3.208.0.2 \(ec2-3-208-0-2.compute-1.amazonaws.com\)](#)
- Location: [AMAZON-AES \(14618\)](#) [Virginia, United States](#)
- Matched Service: [1 Matched Service](#)
- Service: [443/HTTP](#)

Returning to the initial results on the host page for `185.215.113[.]68`, we can see that the server is hosted in Moscow with an [Autonomous System Number](#) of `51381`.

We can add this number as an additional filter to hone in our query results.

185.215.113.68

As of: Jan 30, 2024 3:01am UTC | Latest

- Summary
- History
- WHOIS
- Explore

Basic Information

Routing	185.215.113.0/24 via ELITETEAM-PEERING-AZ1 1337TEAM PEERING AZ1, SC (AS51381)
OS	Ubuntu Linux 20.04
Services (2)	22/SSH, 80/HTTP
Labels	REMOTE ACCESS

By adding **autonomous_system.asn=51381** to our search, we have now limited our search to only 4 results. Querying these results in Virustotal shows that they are all related to Amadey Bot malware.

The screenshot shows a search interface with a query: `services.http.response.body="none" and autonomous_system.asn="51381"`. The search results are displayed under the heading "Hosts" with "Results: 4" and "Time: 0.13s". The first result is for IP **185.215.113.46**, which has the OS "Ubuntu Linux 20.04", is located in "Moscow, Russia", and has a "remote-access" label. It also lists "1 Matched Service" (80/HTTP) and "1 Other Service" (>_ 22/SSH).

Summary – Hunting with Locations and Hosting Providers

Threat actors often utilise the same hosting providers when deploying infrastructure. The hosting provider is not necessarily an indicator in itself, but it can be combined with other indicators to produce a highly effective query.

When investigating an IOC and finding that you have too many search results. Try adding the physical location of the server or the ASN Number to hone in your search.

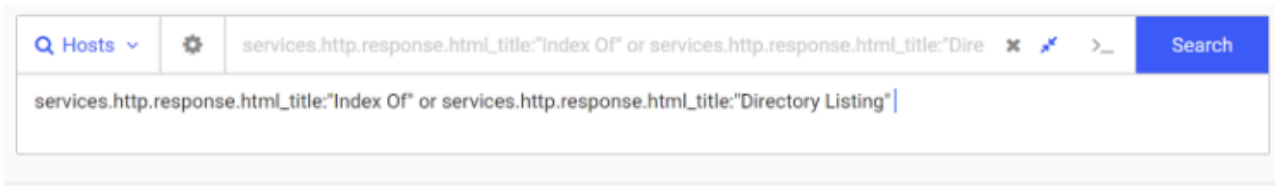
You can experiment with the Amadey example using this [prebuilt query](#).

Hunting Infrastructure with Open Directories

Threat actors will often host malware and supporting software on open directories which are exposed to the public internet. These directories are generally deployed so that malware can easily retrieve additional files to facilitate exploitation.

To locate open directories, we can search for common directory titles like **Directory Listing** or **Index Of**.

Alternatively we can search for [pre-labelled](#) servers with the **open-dir** tag provided by Censys.

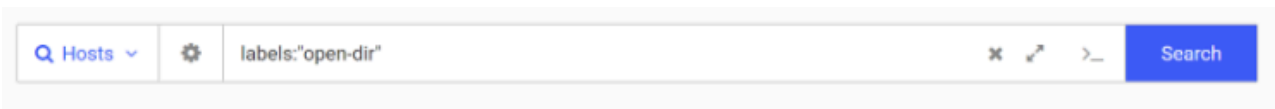


Hosts
Results: 391,451 Time: 0.48s

168.138.206.53
Ubuntu Linux 16.04 ORACLE-BMC-31898 (31898) Chiba, Japan
bootstrap default-landing-page open-dir remote-access file-sharing

3 Matched Services
7910/HTTP 7800/HTTP 7900/HTTP

7 Other Services
21/FTP >_22/SSH 80/HTTP 111/PORTMAP 443/HTTP
500/IKE 25500/HTTP



Hosts
Results: 446,334 Time: 0.12s

58.87.33.26
HMC-AS Hyundai Autoever Corp. (9524) Seoul, South Korea
open-dir
80/HTTP

Example 1: Hunting Open Directories with Common File Names

Searching for open directories alone can return hundreds of thousands of results. Many of which are benign and non-malicious.

To identify malicious cases, we can combine the search with a specific file name related to suspicious software.

Take for example **nc.exe** which is a common file name for the [netcat](#) tool.

✕
↗
>_

Search

Report

Hosts

Results: 12 Time: 0.43s

83.136.249.107

UPLOUD (202053) England, United Kingdom

open-dir

1 Matched Service

8000/HTTP

Investigating one of the first returned addresses of **123.57.56.[.]129**, we can observe an open directory containing **nc.exe** as well as references to **Hacktools** and a **.bat** script with foreign characters. This information is enough to assume that the IP is highly suspicious.

With these indicators identified we can attempt to retrieve the files to perform additional analysis and confirm malicious-ness, or we can use the new file names to refine the query and identify additional servers.

Details

VIEW ALL DATA

GO

<http://123.57.56.129:8080/>

Status 200 OK

Body Hash sha1:090a3aa8afc420d167b1263e4b1d718932ed6868

HTML Title Directory listing for /

Response Body

EXPAND

```
# Directory listing for /

* * *

* [fscan.dll](fscan.dll)
* [fscan.exe](fscan.exe)
* [Hacktools/](Hacktools/)
* [jdk1.8.0_291/](jdk1.8.0_291/)
* [nc.exe](nc.exe)
* [Python38/](Python38/)
* [ueditor.jpg](ueditor.jpg)
* [一键部署.bat](%E4%B8%80%E9%94%AE%9%83%A8%7%BD%B2.bat)
* [手动按需安装/](%E6%89%8B%E5%8A%A8%E6%8C%89%E9%9C%80%E5%AE%89%E8%A3%85/)

* * *
```

For example we can leverage the newly identified string of **hacktools** to create a new query.

We can do this with **labels:open-dir** and response bodies containing **hacktools**.

In this case only a single result is returned, but this demonstrates the concept of using initial results to establish new queries. This query could easily be re-run at a later date to identify new instances of the suspicious server.

The screenshot shows a search interface for Censys Hosts. The search bar contains the query: `labels:"open-dir" and services.http.response.body:"hacktools"`. The search results show a single host: **123.57.56.129**. The host information includes: **Microsoft Windows**, **ALIBABA-CN-NET Hangzhou Alibaba Advertising Co.,Ltd. (37963)**, and **Beijing, China**. The host has several labels: `open-dir`, `remote-access`, `database`, and `network-administration`. There is **1 Matched Service**: `8080/HTTP`. There are **5 Other Services**: `80/HTTP`, `135/DCERPC`, `139/NETBIOS`, `3306/MYSQL`, and `3389/RDP`.

Example 2: Open Directories Containing Procdump.exe

To demonstrate the concept further, we can search for open directories containing references to the process dumping tool **procdump.exe**.

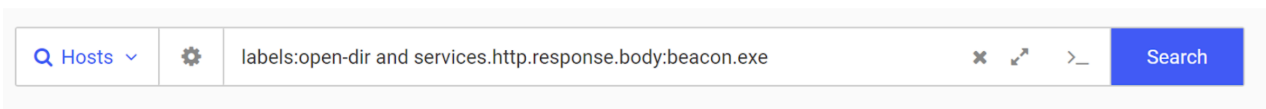
The screenshot shows the search bar of the Censys Hosts interface. The search query is: `labels:open-dir and services.http.response.body:procdump.exe`. The search button is labeled "Search".

One of the results is a server hosting **procdump.exe**, **beacon.exe** and **shell.exe**.

```
* [npc](npc)
* [npc.exe](npc.exe)
* [passnb.jpg](passnb.jpg)
* [passnb1.jpg](passnb1.jpg)
* [passnb2.jpg](passnb2.jpg)
* [passnb3.jpg](passnb3.jpg)
* [passnb4.jpg](passnb4.jpg)
* [passnb6.jpg](passnb6.jpg)
* [passnb7.jpg](passnb7.jpg)
* [pp.exe](pp.exe)
* [procdump.exe](procdump.exe)
* [qq.exe](qq.exe)
* [rce.xml](rce.xml)
* [redis/](redis/)
* [shell.exe](shell.exe)
* [shell1111.exe](shell1111.exe)
* [sss.jpg](sss.jpg)
* [windows_agent.exe](windows_agent.exe)
* [ws123.exe](ws123.exe)
* [yaml-payload-for-ruoyi-1.0-SNAPSHOT.jar](yaml-payload-for-ruoyi-1.0-SNAPSHOT.jar)
* [yc.jpg](yc.jpg)
* [yc1.jpg](yc1.jpg)
* [yc2.jpg](yc2.jpg)
* [yc3.jpg](yc3.jpg)

* * *
```

We can use these results to identify new strings and pivot to open directories containing **beacon.exe**.



This identifies a new server with IP **62.204.41[.]104** . This server contains references to `beacon.exe` but not the initial netcat or procdump. Highlighting the usefulness of building new queries based on initial results.

HTTP 9090/TCP

01/25/2024 21:13 UTC

OPEN DIR

Software

Python Software Foundation SimpleHTTP 0.6

VIEW ALL DATA

GO

Details

http://62.204.41.104:9090/

Status 200 OK

Body Hash sha1:db8e3ee3c383d7963086e1fb1ed7b8d3744bcf15

HTML Title Directory listing for /

Response Body EXPAND

```
# Directory listing for /  
  
* * *  
  
* [beacon.exe](beacon.exe)  
* [oci.dll](oci.dll)  
  
* * *
```

Summary – Hunting Open Directories

Open directory hunting can be a useful means to hunt for suspicious servers. This is particularly useful when dealing with Downloader malware that has called out to a server with an open directory.

When building queries, use the pre-built **open-dir** tag and leverage known file names. Then add new file names and strings based on your results.

We’ve included some prebuilt queries here for [beacon.exe](#), [procdump.exe](#) and [nc.exe](#).

Incorporating Regular Expressions Into Hunting Queries

Advanced threat actors will often avoid using hardcoded values across multiple servers.

When unique values are deployed, this is often done via scripting and automated programs. This means that even though the values are unique, the “structure” of the values is often repeated and can be signed using [regular expressions](#).

Let’s take a look at some examples of unique values that can be signed with regular expressions. **Note that Regular Expression searching is a paid feature of Censys Search.**

Example 1: Catching Qakbot Servers With Regular Expressions

A great example of unique values with the same structure is with [Qakbot](#).

Qakbot uses an automated system to deploy and refresh unique TLS certificate values across servers. But these values have a similar structure which can be queried with regular expressions.

We can see two such certificates in the below screenshots.

Certificate

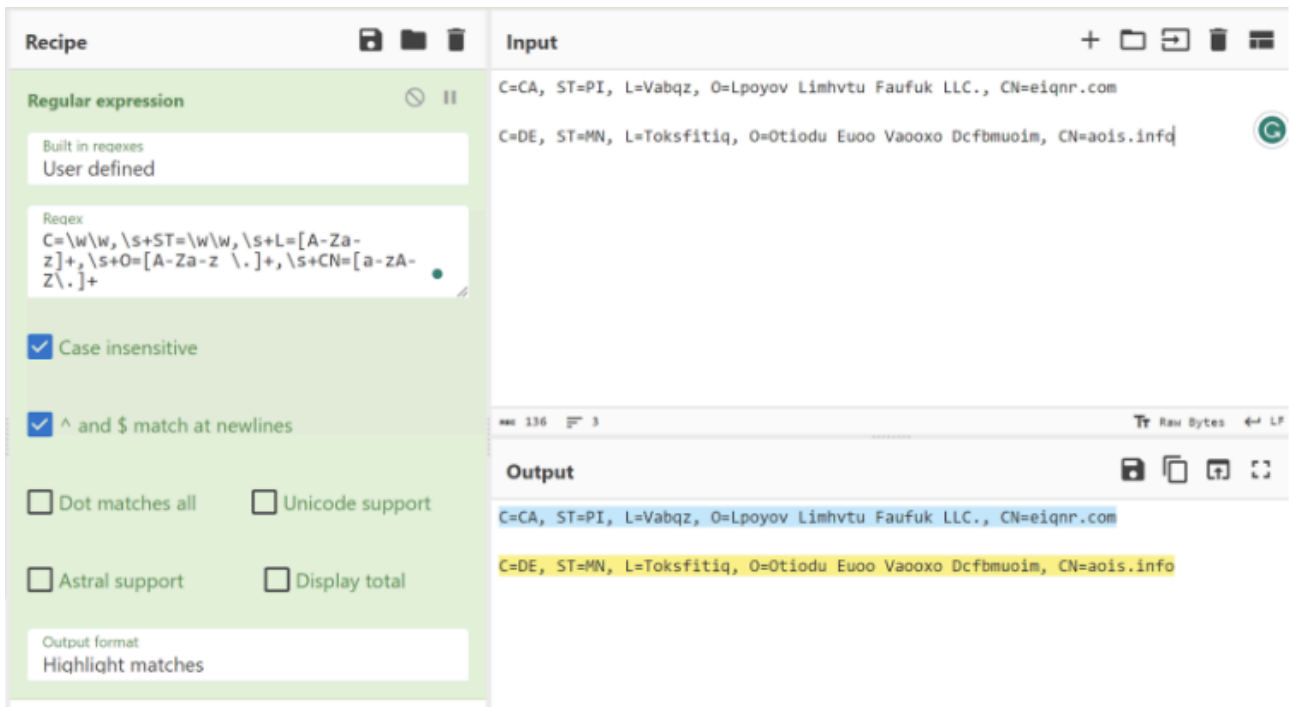
```
Fingerprint c461d529b1a2b95bf35e5e8e29076c6a54c50d71bd607a55fd9ffc26cfad347c
Subject C=CA, OU=Pqisjpi Eeya, CN=eiqnr.com
Issuer C=CA, ST=PI, L=Vabqz, O=Lpoyov Limhvtu Faufuk LLC., CN=eiqnr.com
Names eiqnr.com
```

Certificate

```
Fingerprint 63f7edb05fe8eda01cddc130b98b5832315b7f7ab60cf6df6342a7ba51c4ce9a
Subject C=DE, OU=Qfaw Awtwftqat, CN=aois.info
Issuer C=DE, ST=MN, L=Toksfitiq, O=Otiodu Euoo Vaooxo Dcfbmuoim, CN=aois.info
Names aois.info
```

Observing the two certificate values, we can see that they are wildly different in their values. However, they follow a similar pattern which can be caught with regular expressions.

We can verify this by copying out the values and bringing in Cyberchef. This allows us to prototype a regular expression and confirm that we can match on both values.



Repeating this process for both the **issuer** and **subject fields** of the TLS certificate, we can develop a query that catches a total of 64 servers.



To verify that the results are matching as intended, we can generate a Censys report on the returned results. This allows us to list all returned certificate values in an easy-to-read list.

Below is a short snippet of the results, confirming that the query is working as intended.

Report for Hosts

services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.subject_dn	services
CN=remote.kmsmachine.com	2 1.75%
C=AT, OU=Eelyzb Dqytutfees, CN=rdtpbohoacs.com	1 0.88%
C=AT, OU=Howi Khogtejiq, CN=nqxjewqexd.biz	1 0.88%
C=AT, OU=lwkultendp Ueootsdp Olzwoct, CN=uzauezol.org	1 0.88%
C=AT, OU=Wipotaekss Ngjzoev Liebuxekzo, CN=zedaugedki.net	1 0.88%
C=AU, OU=Eibosa, CN=qeoftu.biz	1 0.88%
C=AU, OU=Hjmxajofoud, CN=gpgeetpko.info	1 0.88%
C=AU, OU=Htdelewnjei Opyozwbyi, CN=eobtfzylt.mobi	1 0.88%
C=AU, OU=itaovuk Zeom lltf, CN=tapiyeo.us	1 0.88%
C=AU, OU=Notecakfax, CN=qkgadtolzoc.info	1 0.88%
C=AU, OU=Nuhr Ozdzoia Joomajswez, CN=malam.info	1 0.88%

Example 2: Catching BianLian Servers with Regular Expressions

The [BianLian](#) malware is another example of unique TLS certificate values containing identical structure and formatting.

Below we can observe two certificates. Both the **subject** and **issuer** contain only the “C”, “O” and “OU” fields. (This contrasts with a “typical” certificate, which would contain also contain the “ST” and “L” fields)

Each value contains exactly 16 characters with no spacing or use of special characters.

Certificate

```

.....
Fingerprint a5d9df fa09a10e19b4e61a2abef4465e1b335429f6186d91b3a3216108695a1f
.....
Subject C=oYU8X79VU603mcrd, O=sgUG3eezeeFh1az0, OU=WWZUbScgyoHpoHYv
.....
Issuer C=094ACLJZnOzjG1AI, O=ou1VD3W18DIC3cFX, OU=LNRmUVbK8iJErZ1v
.....

```

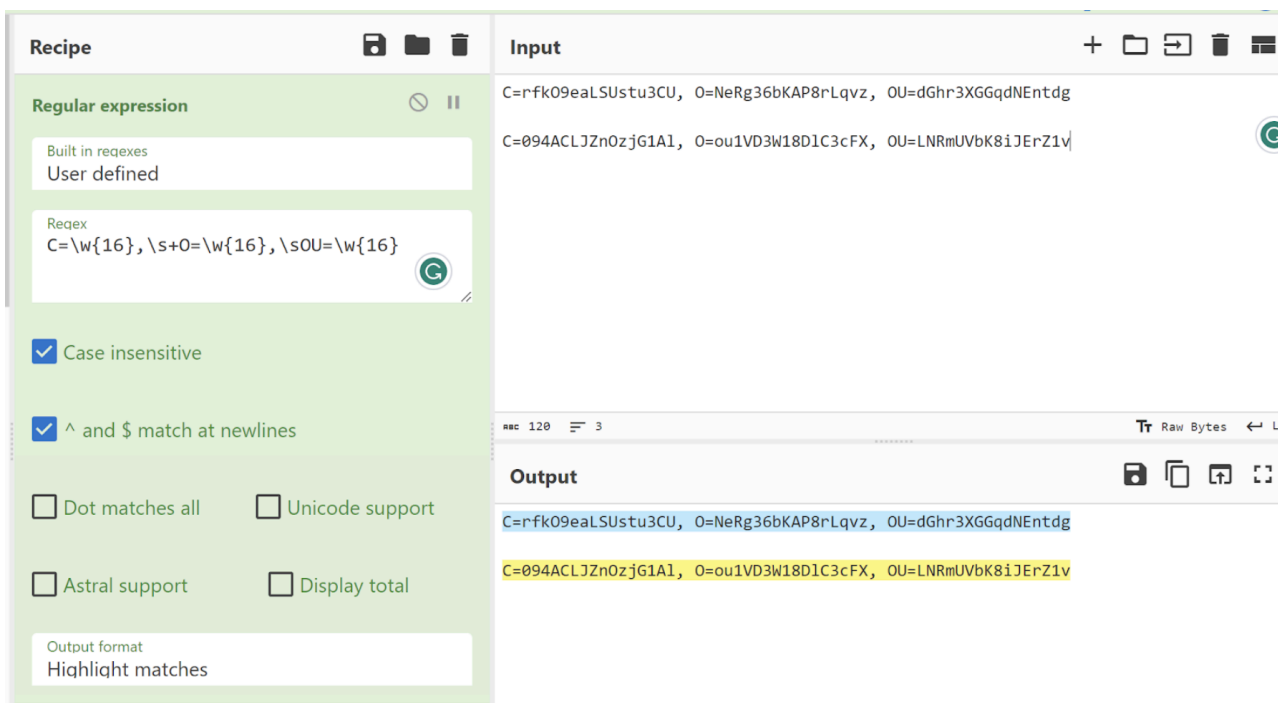
Certificate

```

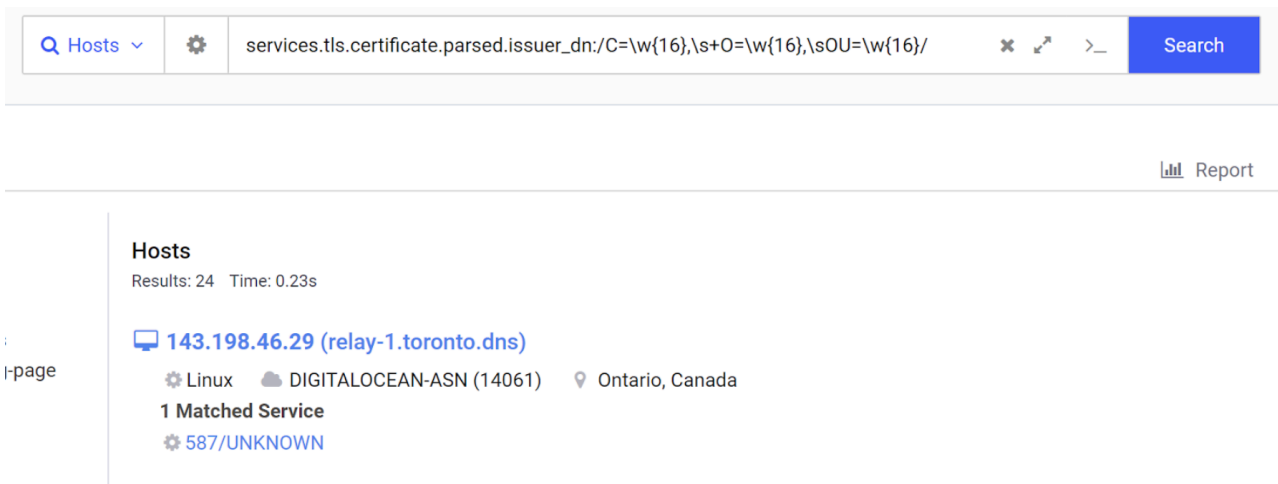
.....
Fingerprint cd3ed7f5f23859ca72dcba6df594e2535aa35941e8651d56cda5828d6811152f
.....
Subject C=cdYyG0sOqlzOmkla, O=8MzIX83oIloFQheF, OU=WNM2EIERING6OdJQ
.....
Issuer C=rfkO9eaLSUstu3CU, O=NeRg36bKAP8rLqvz, OU=dGhr3XGGqdNEntdg
.....

```

Bringing the two issuer values to [Cyberchef](#), we can prototype a regular expression that captures the values from both certificates.



We can now search on **services.tls.certificate.parsed.issuer_dn** with our regular expression. This returns a total of 24 servers.



We can go ahead and generate another search report on the **services.tls.certificate.parsed.issuer_dn** to confirm that the results are matching as intended.

Report for Hosts

services.tls.certificate.parsed.issuer_dn	services
C=US, O=Let's Encrypt, CN=R3	3 3.0%
C=US, O=Let's Encrypt, CN=Let's Encrypt Authority X3	2 2.0%
C=094ACLJZnOzjG1AI, O=ou1VD3W18DIC3cFX, OU=LNRmUVbK8iJE7Z1v	1 1.0%
C=2KkrOzBHepYxrbkp, O=AntfFMeepCkP8nJt, OU=rEEQ1P3AMWRFWQML	1 1.0%
C=2QFc9Rb5IfJhPJeh, O=rqbp6JEyhW0Bsa3B, OU=2jPhSdmtRzbwwcFN	1 1.0%
C=3ZKOxKCC7cOBI14g, O=BCZRdpf9U0WMgNqk, OU=drsboydsRdoKedmH	1 1.0%
C=3xUqggOLSNpJGPh3, O=akay9vQ4P6d2frrL, OU=jA10WJiuiXHG4zZn	1 1.0%
C=56Wbxj2fx8isgpNs, O=5UUPZwsL8YiwGes, OU=mABs3sa958Q5Rwvj	1 1.0%
C=5kRvuhlmaYNbwlKM, O=vCe7a9ukesWYkxfr, OU=c4pyKiCnqQBpWflj	1 1.0%
C=84BixK3ZM0h0o6Zb, O=tuFIPgYoc7xhB2h5, OU=PpjWino9qdmjzqT	1 1.0%
C=AHUZRFRFikuXGcthQ, O=43azCVfPSWJZiYIH, OU=nkt1ZcCx5v7TAYBP	1 1.0%

Example 3: Viper Servers with TLS Certificates and Regular Expressions

To demonstrate one more example, we can take a look at an IP of **139.155.90[.J81]** which was marked as [Viper](#) Malware on ThreatFox.

We can view the TLS certificate information in Censys. Showing **subject** and **issuer** fields that are exactly 8 characters in length and contain only lowercase letters and numbers.

TLS

Handshake

Version Selected TLSv1_2

Cipher Selected TLS_ECDHE_RSA_WITH_CHACHA20_POLY1305_SHA256

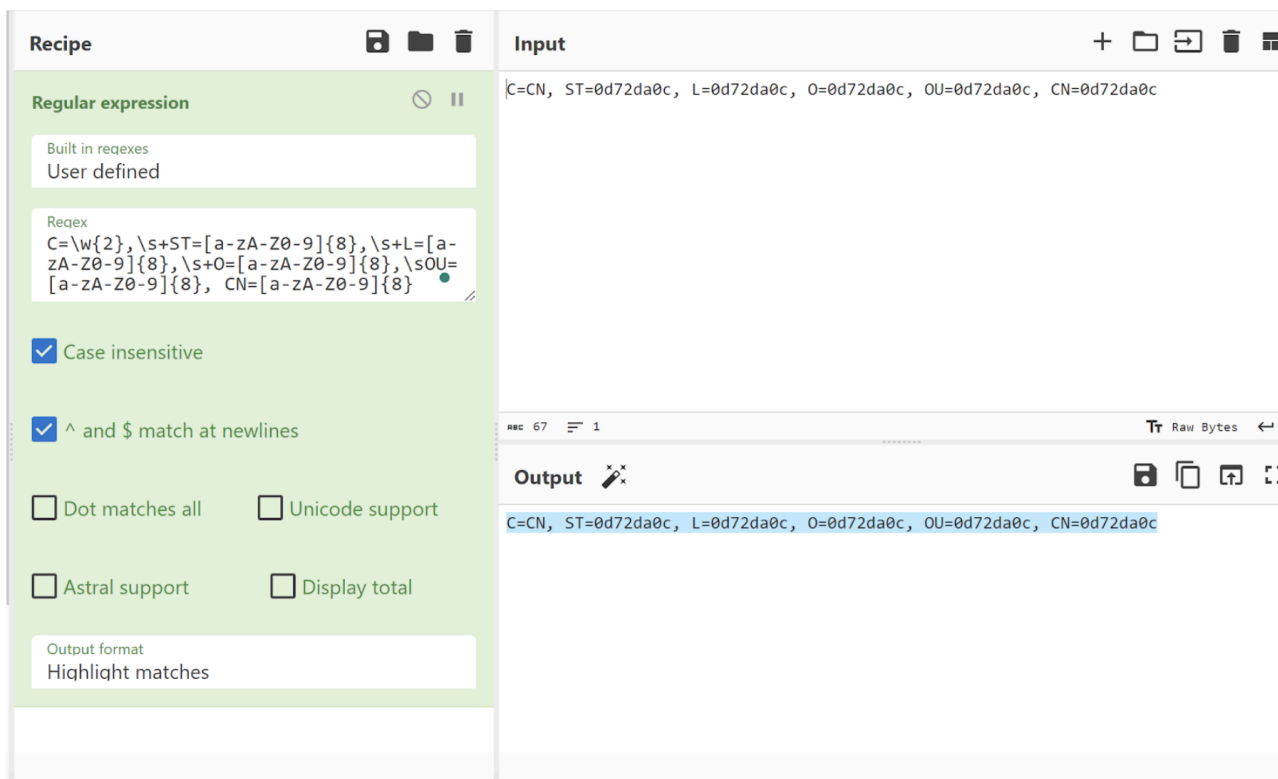
Certificate

Fingerprint 4de3278507c89d2242a12c20b74878e3f84970c463a924771f156a3da7d7b5a1

Subject C=CN, ST=d1d38ec9, L=d1d38ec9, O=d1d38ec9, OU=d1d38ec9, CN=d1d38ec9

Issuer C=CN, ST=0d72da0c, L=0d72da0c, O=0d72da0c, OU=0d72da0c, CN=0d72da0c

Bringing one of the values into Cyberchef, we can again prototype a regular expression to match on the identified structure.



We can then search for this regular expression in the **services.tls.certificates.leaf_data.issuer_dn** field. This returns a total of 1593 results.



Generating another search report verifies that many of these results contain the same TLS structure as the initial server.

C=CN, ST=00c8d2b8, L=00c8d2b8, O=00c8d2b8, OU=00c8d2b8, CN=00c8d2b8	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=047e8a74, L=047e8a74, O=047e8a74, OU=047e8a74, CN=047e8a74	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=0550a67c, L=0550a67c, O=0550a67c, OU=0550a67c, CN=0550a67c	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=09bf642b, L=09bf642b, O=09bf642b, OU=09bf642b, CN=09bf642b	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=14ed08de, L=14ed08de, O=14ed08de, OU=14ed08de, CN=14ed08de	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=297762af, L=297762af, O=297762af, OU=297762af, CN=297762af	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=363d6d9f, L=363d6d9f, O=363d6d9f, OU=363d6d9f, CN=363d6d9f	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=3eea653a, L=3eea653a, O=3eea653a, OU=3eea653a, CN=3eea653a	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=415d6028, L=415d6028, O=415d6028, OU=415d6028, CN=415d6028	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=5bd251a1, L=5bd251a1, O=5bd251a1, OU=5bd251a1, CN=5bd251a1	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=5e8651d1, L=5e8651d1, O=5e8651d1, OU=5e8651d1, CN=5e8651d1	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=5f04e43e, L=5f04e43e, O=5f04e43e, OU=5f04e43e, CN=5f04e43e	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=685ed9c2, L=685ed9c2, O=685ed9c2, OU=685ed9c2, CN=685ed9c2	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=6b68e6f7, L=6b68e6f7, O=6b68e6f7, OU=6b68e6f7, CN=6b68e6f7	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=6be9de02, L=6be9de02, O=6be9de02, OU=6be9de02, CN=6be9de02	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=6e87138f, L=6e87138f, O=6e87138f, OU=6e87138f, CN=6e87138f	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=87bb429a, L=87bb429a, O=87bb429a, OU=87bb429a, CN=87bb429a	1	0.02%
C=CN, ST=99625580, L=99625580, O=99625580, OU=99625580, CN=99625580	1	0.02%

Summary – Hunting Infrastructure with Regular Expressions

There will be cases where hardcoded values won't be enough to hunt infrastructure.

Many of these situations can be handled by identifying the structure of seemingly unique values and incorporating regular expressions into your queries.

If you're unfamiliar with regular expressions, there is a great free resource over at [regexone](#) that will help you get started.

How Can I Get Started?

All of the queries (excluding regular expressions) can be performed with a Censys Search Community account. You can [sign up today](#) and begin threat hunting, gathering intelligence, and building up lists of IOCs.

To obtain initial IOCs, we recommend using public IOC repositories like [ThreatFox](#) and [URLHaus](#) and starting your hunt from there. We can also recommend leveraging pre-built queries like those shared by [drb_ra](#) and [Michael Koczvara](#).

Conclusion

We've now looked at several indicators that can be used to identify malicious infrastructure. You can and should use all of these to your advantage when investigating an IP address or performing a threat hunt.

Threat actors vary in quality and sophistication, some will be more difficult to track than others. But in many cases you can track actors using only the techniques shown here today.



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Source: <https://censys.com/a-beginners-guide-to-tracking-malware-infrastructure/>