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(54) **TECHNIQUES FOR SECURING VIRTUAL CLOUD ASSETS AT REST AGAINST CYBER THREATS**

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G06F 9/455 (2018.01)
G06F 16/11 (2019.01)
G06F 11/14 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
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USPC 726/25
See application file for complete search history.

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NPL Search Terms (Year: 2021).*

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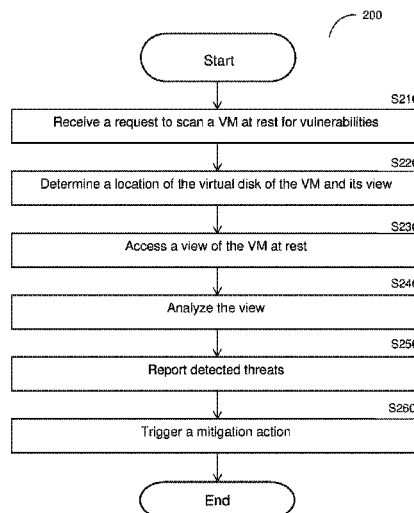
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method and system for securing virtual cloud assets at rest against cyber threats. The method comprises determining a location of a view of at least one virtual disk of a protected virtual cloud asset, wherein the virtual cloud asset is at rest and, when activated, instantiated in the cloud computing environment; accessing the view of the virtual disk based on the determined location; analyzing the view of the protected virtual cloud asset to detect potential cyber threats risking the protected virtual cloud asset, wherein the virtual cloud asset is inactive during the analysis; and alerting detected potential cyber threats based on a determined priority.

16 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



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Exhibit 2183
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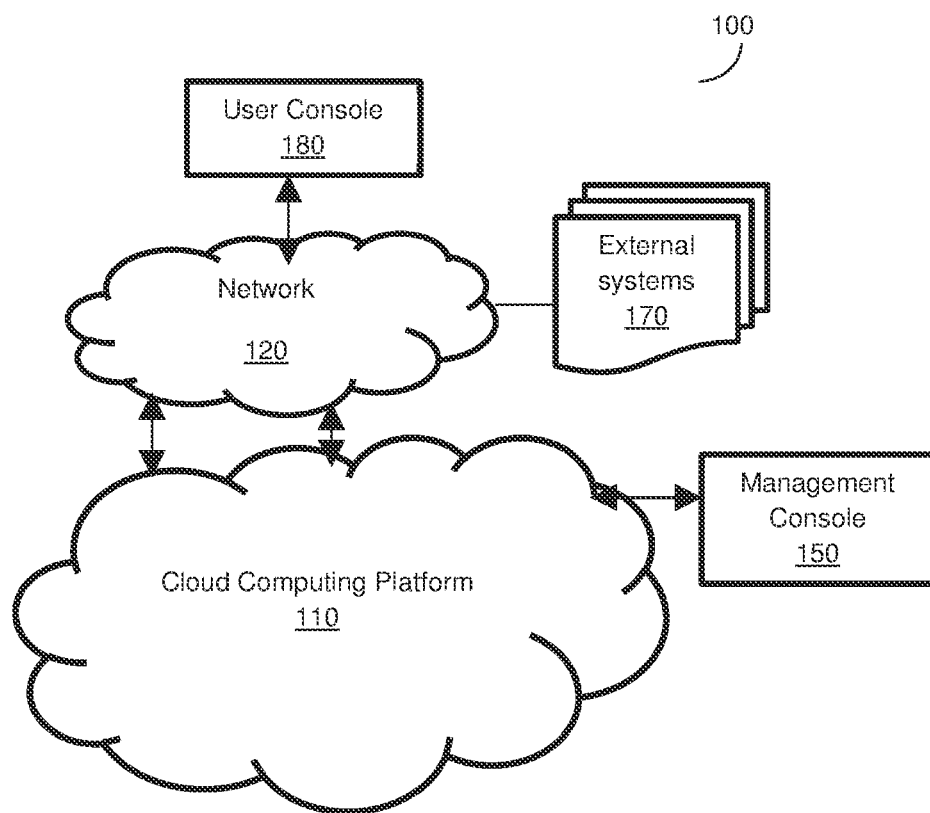


FIG. 1A

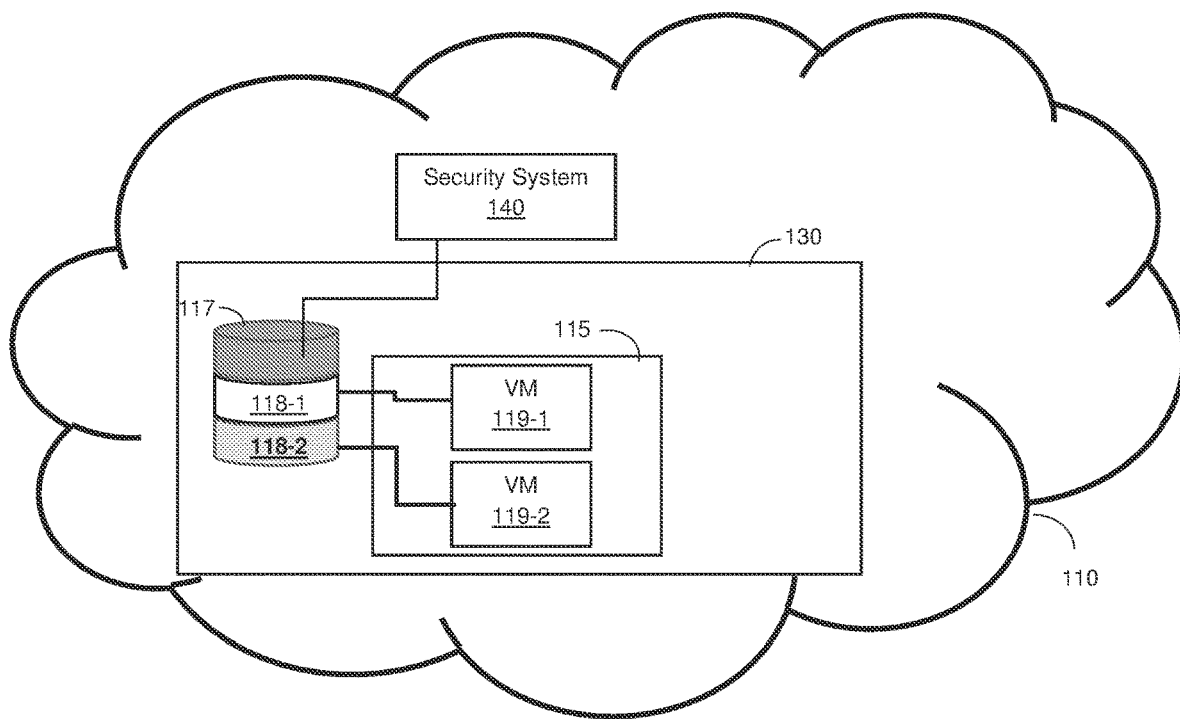


FIG. 1B

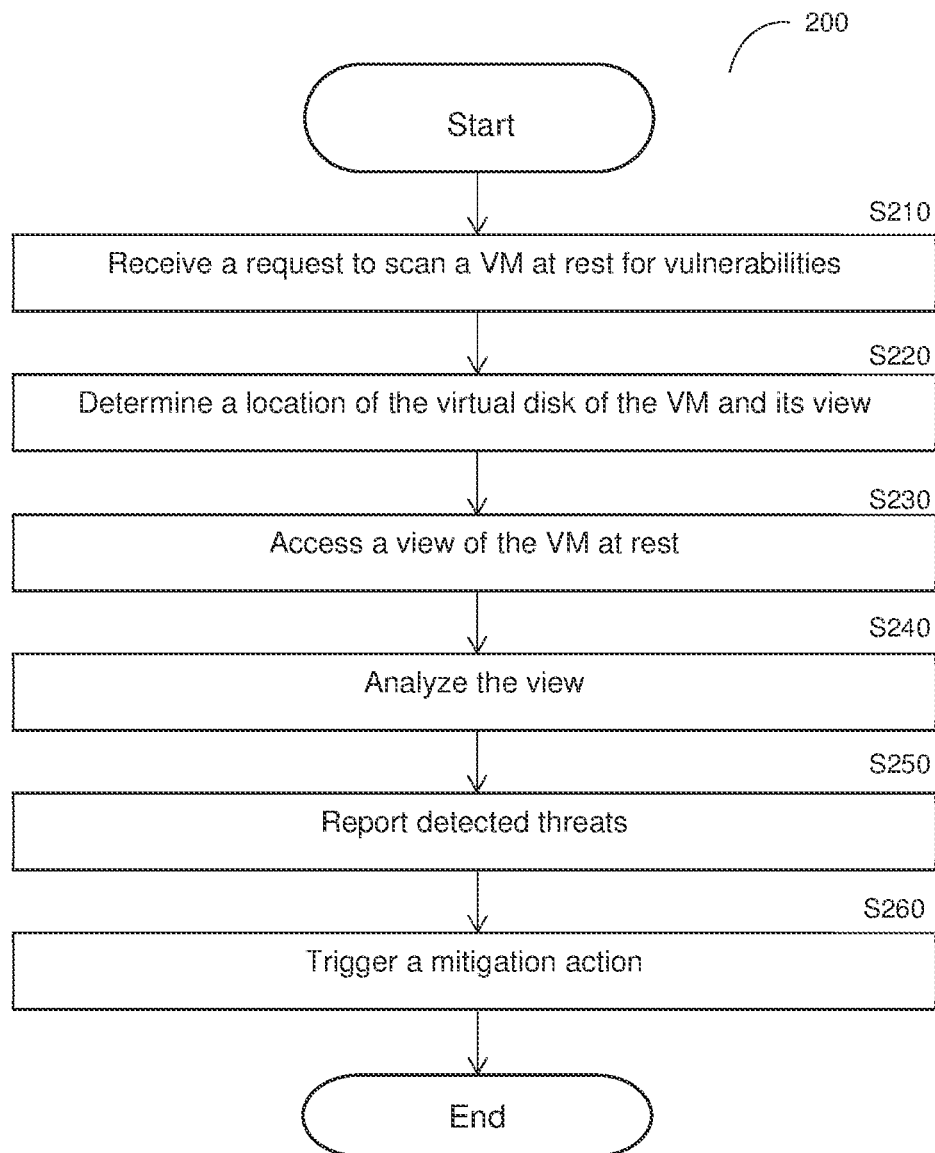


FIG. 2

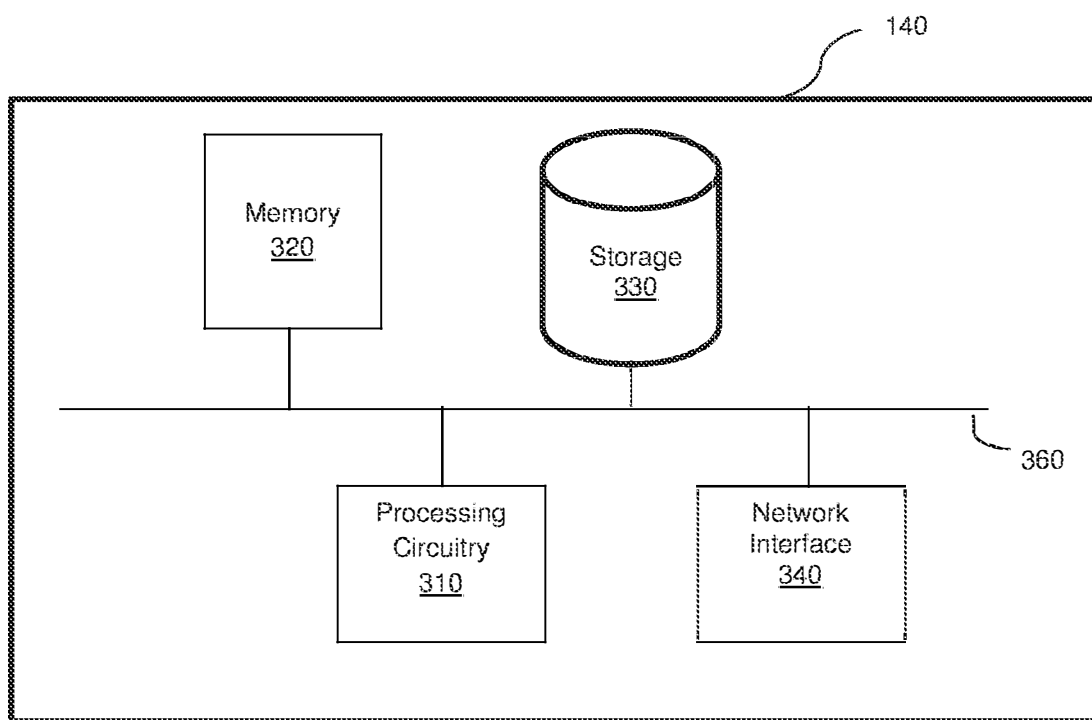


FIG. 3

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TECHNIQUES FOR SECURING VIRTUAL CLOUD ASSETS AT REST AGAINST CYBER THREATS

This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 16/750,556, filed Jan. 23, 2020, now pending, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 62/797,718 filed on Jan. 28, 2019. Each of the above referenced applications are incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This disclosure relates generally to cyber-security systems and, more specifically, to techniques for securing virtual machines.

BACKGROUND

Organizations have increasingly adapted their applications to be run from multiple cloud computing platforms. Some leading public cloud service providers include Amazon®, Microsoft®, Google®, and the like.

Virtualization plays a key role in a cloud computing, allowing multiple applications and users to share the same cloud computing infrastructure. For example, a cloud storage service can maintain data of multiple different users.

In one instance, virtualization can be achieved by means of virtual machines. A virtual machine emulates a number of “computers” or instances, all within a single physical device. In more detail, virtual machines provide the ability to emulate a separate operating system (OS), also referred to as a guest OS, and, therefore, a separate computer, from an existing OS (the host). This independent instance is typically isolated as a completely standalone environment.

Modern virtualization technologies are also adapted by cloud computing platforms. Examples for such technologies include virtual machines, software containers, and serverless functions. With their computing advantages, applications and virtual machines running on top of virtualization technologies are also vulnerable to some cyber threats. For example, virtual machines can execute vulnerable software applications or infected operating systems.

Protection of a cloud computing infrastructure, and, particularly, of virtual machines, can be achieved via inspection of traffic. Traditionally, traffic inspection is performed by a network device connected between a client and a server (deployed in a cloud computing platform or a data center) hosting virtual machines. Traffic inspection may not provide an accurate indication of the security status of the server due to inherent limitations, such as encryption and whether the necessary data is exposed in the communication.

Furthermore, inspection of computing infrastructure may be performed by a network scanner deployed out of path. The scanner queries the server to determine if the server executes an application that possess a security threat, such as vulnerability in the application. The disadvantage of such a scanner is that the server may not respond to all queries by the scanner or that the server may not expose the necessary data in the response. Further, the network scanner usually communicates with the server, and the network configuration may prevent such communication. In addition, some types of queries may require credentials to access the server. Such credentials may not be available to the scanner.

Traffic inspection may also be performed by a traffic monitor that listens to traffic flows between clients and the server. The traffic monitor can detect some cyber threats,

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e.g., based on the volume of traffic. However, the monitor can detect threats only based on the monitored traffic. For example, misconfiguration of the server may not be detected by the traffic monitor. As such, traffic monitoring would not allow for detection of vulnerabilities in software executed by the server.

To overcome the limitations of traffic inspection solutions, some cyber-security solutions, such as vulnerability management and security assessment solutions, are based on agents installed in each server in a cloud computing platform or data center. Using agents is a cumbersome solution for a number of reasons, including IT resource management, governance, and performance. For example, installing agents in a large data center may take months.

Further, traffic monitoring does not allow detection of vulnerabilities in data at rest. Data at rest, in information technology, means inactive data that is stored physically in any digital form. Data at rest may include data, services, and/or services that are inactive but can be accessed or executed as needed. Similarly, in cloud computing, some machines (e.g., virtual machines) may also be at rest. Some machines are configured with applications or services which are infrequently executed. For example, such a machine may be utilized during one month of the year and remain inactive for the rest in the year. While at rest, the machines are powered off, and are not inspected for vulnerabilities, simply because scanners and/or installed monitoring agents cannot operate on a powered-off machine.

Another attempt would be to scan a machine at rest when the machine is powered on and preserving a log of its latest status. However, this would require keeping an updated log of the machine’s configurations and all its applications. Further, as threats constantly evolve, scanning based on past information may not be relevant. As such, when data or a machine at rest becomes active, undetected vulnerabilities can pose cyber threats.

It would therefore be advantageous to provide a security solution that would overcome the deficiencies noted above.

SUMMARY

A summary of several example embodiments of the disclosure follows. This summary is provided for the convenience of the reader to provide a basic understanding of such embodiments and does not wholly define the breadth of the disclosure. This summary is not an extensive overview of all contemplated embodiments, and is intended to neither identify key or critical elements of all embodiments nor to delineate the scope of any or all aspects. Its sole purpose is to present some concepts of one or more embodiments in a simplified form as a prelude to the more detailed description that is presented later. For convenience, the term “some embodiments” or “certain embodiments” may be used herein to refer to a single embodiment or multiple embodiments of the disclosure.

Certain embodiments disclosed herein include a method for securing virtual cloud assets at rest against cyber threats. The method comprises determining a location of a view of at least one virtual disk of a protected virtual cloud asset, wherein the virtual cloud asset is at rest and, when activated, instantiated in the cloud computing environment; accessing the view of the virtual disk based on the determined location; analyzing the view of the protected virtual cloud asset to detect potential cyber threats risking the protected virtual cloud asset, wherein the virtual cloud asset is inactive during the analysis; and alerting detected potential cyber threats based on a determined priority.

Certain embodiments disclosed herein also include a system for securing virtual cloud assets at rest against cyber threats, comprising: a processing circuitry; and a memory, the memory containing instructions that, when executed by the processing circuitry, configure the system to: determine a location of a view of at least one virtual disk of a protected virtual cloud asset, wherein the virtual cloud asset is at rest and, when activated, instantiated in a cloud computing environment; access the view of the virtual disk based on the determined location; analyze the view of the protected virtual cloud asset to detect potential cyber threats risking the protected virtual cloud asset, wherein the virtual cloud asset is inactive during the analysis; and alert detected potential cyber threats based on a determined priority.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The subject matter disclosed herein is particularly pointed out and distinctly claimed in the claims at the conclusion of the specification. The foregoing and other objects, features, and advantages of the disclosed embodiments will be apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

FIGS. 1A and 1B are network diagrams utilized to describe the various embodiments.

FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating a method detecting cyber threats, including potential vulnerabilities in virtual machines executed in a cloud computing platform according to some embodiments.

FIG. 3 is an example block diagram of the security system according to an embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

It is important to note that the embodiments disclosed herein are only examples of the many advantageous uses of the innovative teachings herein. In general, statements made in the specification of the present application do not necessarily limit any of the various claimed embodiments. Moreover, some statements may apply to some inventive features but not to others. In general, unless otherwise indicated, singular elements may be in plural and vice versa with no loss of generality. In the drawings, like numerals refer to like parts through several views.

Various techniques disclosed herein include techniques for securing data at rest or machines at rest (collectively referred to as “machines at rest”). Data at rest may include inactive data that is stored physically in any digital form. Machines at rest may include a virtual machine configured service(s) and/or application(s) that are inactive but can be accessed or executed as needed. The applications and/or services in such machines at rest are infrequently executed. The disclosed techniques are utilized to scan for embedded vulnerabilities in machines at rest, when the machine is powered off. For example, a machine at rest may be utilized during one month of the year and remain inactive for the rest in the year. According to the disclosed embodiments, the machine is scanned for vulnerabilities when it is in its inactive step.

FIGS. 1A and 1B show an example network diagram 100 utilized to describe the various embodiments. A cloud computing platform 110 is communicably connected to a network 120. Examples of the cloud computing platform 110 may include a public cloud, a private cloud, a hybrid cloud, and the like. Examples of a public cloud include, but are not limited to, AWS® by Amazon®, Microsoft Azure®, Google Cloud®, and the like. In some configurations, the disclosed

embodiments may be operable in on-premises virtual machine environments. The network 120 may be the Internet, the world-wide-web (WWW), a local area network (LAN), a wide area network (WAN), and other networks.

The arrangement of the example cloud computing platform 110 is shown in FIG. 1B. As illustrated, the platform 110 includes a server 115 and a storage 117, serving as the storage space for the server 115. The server 115 is a physical device hosting one or more virtual machines (VMs). In the example FIG. 1B, two VMs 119-1 and 119-2 are shown, and both are protected entities. It should be noted that such a protected entity may be any virtual cloud asset including, but not limited to, a software container, a micro-service, a serverless function, and the like. For the sake of the discussion and without limiting the scope of the disclosed embodiments, VM-119-1 is an active machine and VM 119-2 is a machine at rest. That is, VM 119-2 is mostly in an inactive state (e.g., being execute a day in a month, a month in a year, and remains inactive otherwise).

The storage 117 emulates virtual discs for the VMs 119-1 and 119-2 executed in by the server 115. The storage 117 is typically connected to the server 115 through a high-speed connection, such as optical fiber, allowing fast retrieval of data. In other configurations, the storage 117 may be part of the server 115. In this example, illustrated in FIG. 1B, a virtual disk 118-1 is allocated for the VM 119-1 and the virtual disk 118-2 is allocated for the VM 119-2. The server 115, and, hence, the VMs 119-1 and 119-2, may be executed in a client environment 130 within the platform 110.

The client environment 130 is an environment within the cloud computing platform 110 utilized to execute cloud-hosted applications of the client. A client may belong to a specific tenant. In some example embodiments, the client environment 130 may be part of a virtualized environment or on-premises virtualization environment, such as a VMware® based solution.

Also deployed in the cloud computing platform 110 is a security system 140 configured to perform the various disclosed embodiments. In some embodiments, the system 140 may be part of the client environment 130. In an embodiment, the security system 140 may be realized as a physical machine configured to execute a plurality of virtual instances, such as, but not limited to virtual machines executed by a host server. In yet another embodiment, the security system 140 may be realized as a virtual machine executed by a host server. Such a host server is a physical machine (device) and may be either the server 115, a dedicated server, a different shared server, or another virtualization-based computing entity, such as a serverless function.

In an embodiment, the interface between the client environment 130 and the security system 140 can be realized using APIs or services provided by the cloud computing platform 110. For example, in AWS, a cross account policy service can be utilized to allow interfacing the client environment 130 with the security system 140.

In the deployment, illustrated in FIGS. 1A and 1B, the configuration of resources of the cloud computing platform 110 is performed by means of the management console 150. As such, the management console 150 may be queried on the current deployment and settings of resources in the cloud computing platform 110. Specifically, the management console 150 may be queried, by the security system 140, about the location (e.g., virtual address) of the virtual disk 118-1 in the storage 117. The system 140 is configured to interface with the management console 150 through, for example, an API.

In some example embodiments, the security system **140** may further interface with the cloud computing platform **110** and external systems **170**. The external systems may include intelligence systems, security information and event management (SIEM) systems, and mitigation tools. The external intelligence systems may include common vulnerabilities and exposures (CVE®) databases, reputation services, security systems (providing feeds on discovered threats), and so on. The information provided by the intelligence systems may detect certain known vulnerabilities identified in, for example, a CVE database.

In an embodiment, the security system **140** is configured to detect vulnerabilities and other cyber threats related to the execution VM **119-1**. The detection is performed while the VM **119-1** is live, without using any agent installed in the server **115** or the VM **119-1**, and without relying on cooperation from the guest OS of the VM **119-1**.

According to another embodiment, the security system **140** is configured to detect vulnerabilities and other cyber threats related to the execution VM **119-2**, i.e., the machine at rest. The detection is performed while the VM **119-2** is powered off.

In both embodiments, the security system **140** can scan and detect vulnerable software, non-secure configurations, exploitation attempts, compromised assets, data leaks, data mining, and so on. The security system **140** may be further utilized to provide security services, such as incident response, anti-ransomware, and cyber-insurance, by accessing the security posture.

In some embodiments, the security system **140** is configured to query the cloud management console **150** for the address of the virtual disks **118-1** and **118-2**, respectively serving the VM **119-1**, VM **119-2**, and a location of the snapshot. A VM's snapshot is a copy of the machine's virtual disk (or disk file) at a given point in time. Snapshots provide a change log for the virtual disk and are used to restore a VM to a particular point in time when a failure error occurs. Typically, any data that was writable on a VM becomes read-only when the snapshot is taken. Multiple snapshots of a VM can be created at multiple possible point-in-time restore points. When a VM reverts to a snapshot, current disk and memory states are deleted and the snapshot becomes the new parent snapshot for that VM.

In an embodiment, a view, or a materialized view, of the virtual disk **118-2** associated with the VM **119-2** is accessed. A view is a stored query that consumes limited-to-no space, consuming only the space required to store the text of the query in the data dictionary. A materialized view is a both a stored query and a segment. That is, a stored query is executed, and the results are materialized into the segment. For the sake of simplicity, but without limiting the scope of the disclosed embodiments, the inspection of VM (VM **119-2**) is based on a view stored in the virtual disk **118-2**, while the inspection of the active (VM **119-1**) is based on a snapshot stored in the virtual disk **118-1**.

The snapshot of the VM **119-1** is located and may be saved from the virtual disk **118-1** for access by the security system **140**. In an embodiment, the VM's **119-1** snapshot may be copied to the system **140**. If such a snapshot does not exist, the system **140** may take a new snapshot or request such an action. The snapshots may be taken on a predefined schedule or upon predefined events (e.g., a network event or abnormal event). Further, the snapshots may be accessed or copied on a predefined schedule or upon predefined events. It should be noted that when the snapshot is taken or copied, the VM **119** still runs.

The view of the VM **119-2** is located and may be saved from the virtual disk **118-2** for access by the system **140**. In an embodiment, the VM's **119-2** view may be copied to the system **140**. If such a view does not exist, the system **140** may generate a query to create a new VM **119-2**. The view may be taken when the VM **119-2** is about to transition into an inactive state or when the same VM **119-2** is at rest. It should be noted that when the view is taken or copied, the VM **119-2** may be at rest (i.e., inactive and powered off).

It should be noted that the snapshots and/or views of the virtual disk **118-1** and/or **118-2** may not necessarily be stored in the storage **117**, but, for ease of discussion, it is assumed that the snapshot is saved in the storage **117**. It should be further noted that the snapshots and/or views are accessed without cooperation of the guest, virtual OS of the virtual machine.

The snapshot is parsed and analyzed by the security system **140** to detect vulnerabilities. This analysis of the snapshot does not require any interaction and/or information from the VM **119-1**. As further demonstrated herein, the analysis of the snapshot by the system **140** does not require any agent installed on the server **115** or VM **119-1**.

Further, the view is parsed and analyzed by the security system **140** to detect vulnerabilities. This analysis of the views does not require any interaction and/or information from the VM **119-2**. In fact, the VM **119-2** is in its inactive state (at rest) during the analysis. As further demonstrated herein, the analysis of the view by the system **140** does not require any agent installed on the server **115** or VM **119-2**.

Various techniques can be utilized to analyze the views and snapshots, depending on the type of vulnerability and cyber threats to be detected. Following are some example embodiments for techniques that may be implemented by the security system **140**.

In an embodiment, the security system **140** is configured to detect whether there is vulnerable code executed by the VMs **119-1** and **119-2**. In an embodiment, the VM **119-2** being analyzed is shut down, being, therefore, at rest. The VM **119-1** may be running or paused. In an embodiment, to detect vulnerabilities existing in the VM **119-2**, the security system **140** is configured to match installed application lists, with their respective versions, to a known list of vulnerable applications. Further, the security system **140** may be configured to match the application files, either directly, using binary comparison, or by computing a cryptographic hash against database of files in vulnerable applications. The matching may be also on sub-modules of an application. Alternatively, the security system **140** may read installation logs of package managers used to install the packages of the application.

In yet another embodiment, the security system **140** is configured to verify whether the vulnerability is relevant to the VM **119-2**. For example, if there is a vulnerable version or module not in use, the priority of that issue is reduced dramatically.

To this end, the security system **140** may be configured to check the configuration files of the applications and operating system of the VM **119-2** to verify access times to files by the operating system and/or to analyze the application and/or system logs in order to deduce what applications and modules are running.

In yet another embodiment, the security system **140** may instantiate a copy of the VM **119-2** and/or a subset of applications of the VM **119-2** on the server **115** or a separate server and monitor all activity performed by the instance of the VM. The execution of the instance of the VM is an isolated sandbox, which can be a full VM or subset of it,

such as a software container (e.g., Docker® container) or another virtualized instance. The monitored activity may be further analyzed to determine abnormality. Such analysis may include monitoring of API activity, process creation, file activity, network communication, registry changes, and active probing of said subset in order to assess its security posture. This may include, but is not limited to, actively communicating with the VM 119-2 and using either legitimate communication and/or attack attempts to assess posture and, by that, deriving the security posture of the entire VM 119-2.

In order to determine if the vulnerability is relevant to the VM 119-2, the security system 140 is configured to analyze the machine memory, as reflected in the page file. The page file is saved in the snapshot and extends how much system-committed memory (also known as “virtual memory”) a system can back. In an embodiment, analyzing the page file allows deduction of running applications and modules by the VM 119-2. It should be noted that analyzing pages would be available only when VM 119-2 hibernates.

In yet another embodiment, the security system 140 is configured to detect cyber threats that do not represent vulnerabilities. For example, the security system 140 may detect and alert on sensitive data not being encrypted on the logical disk, private keys found on the disks, system credentials stored clearly on the disk, risky application features (e.g., support of weak cipher suites or authentication methods), weak passwords, weak encryption schemes, a disabled address space layout randomization (ASLR) feature, suspicious manipulation to a boot record, suspicious PATH, LD_LIBRARY_PATH, or LD_PRELOAD definitions, services running on startup, and the like.

In an embodiment, the security system 140 may further monitor changes in sensitive machine areas, and alert on unexpected changes, such as added or changed application files without installation. In an example embodiment, this can be achieved by computing a cryptographic hash of the sensitive areas in the virtual disk and checking for differences over time.

In some embodiments, the detected cyber threats (including vulnerabilities) are reported to a user console 180 and/or a security information and event management (SEM) system (not shown). The reported cyber threats may be filtered or prioritized based, in part, on their determined risk. Further, the reported cyber threats may be filtered or prioritized based, in part, on the risk level of the machine. This also reduces the number of alerts reported to the user.

In an embodiment, any detected cyber threats related to sensitive data, including personally identifiable information, or PII, is reported at a higher priority. In an embodiment, such data is determined by searching for the PII, analyzing the application logs to determine whether the machine accessed PH/PH-containing servers, or whether the logs themselves contain PII, and searching the machine memory, as reflected in the page file, for PII.

In an embodiment, the security system 140 may determine the risk of the VM 119 based on communication with an untrusted network. This can be achieved by analyzing the VM’s 119-2 logs as saved in the virtual disk, and can be derived from the view.

In an example embodiment, the security system 140 may cause an execution of one or more mitigation actions. Examples for such actions may include disabling the VM 119-2 from execution, updating the VM 119-2 with recent patches, and so on.

The above examples for detecting vulnerabilities may be applicable also for a VM 119-1 and may be performed when

the VM 119-1 will be started later on. For the active VM 119-1 the mitigation actions may include blocking traffic from untrusted networks, halting the operation of the VM, quarantining an infected VM, and the like. The mitigation actions may be performed by a mitigation tool and not the system 140.

It should be noted that the example implementation shown in FIG. 1 is described with respect to a single cloud computing platform 110 hosting two VMs 119-1 and 119-2 in a single server 115, merely for simplicity purposes and without limitation on the disclosed embodiments. Typically, virtual machines are deployed and executed in a single cloud computing platform, a virtualized environment, or data center and can be protected without departing from the scope of the disclosure. It should be further noted that the disclosed embodiments can operate using multiple security systems 140, each of which may operate in a different client environment.

FIG. 2 shows an example flowchart 200 illustrating a method for detecting cyber threats including potential vulnerabilities in virtual machines at rest, according to some embodiments. The method may be performed by the security system 140.

At S210, a request, for example, to scan a VM, at rest, for vulnerabilities, is received. A VM at rest is a machine that is currently powered off, i.e., not in an operational state. A VM at rest is executed at predefined time period but remains inactive (powered off) when not executed. The request, received at S210, may be received, or otherwise triggered, at every predefined time interval or upon detection of an external event. An external event may be a preconfigured event, such as a network event or abnormal event including, without limitation, requests to run the VM 119-2 not according to a schedule, access by an authorized user, and the like. The request may at least designate an identifier of the VM to be scanned.

At S220, a location of a view of the VM, at rest, to be scanned is determined. In an embodiment, S220 may include determining the virtual disk allocated for the VM, prior to determining the location of the view. As noted above, this can be achieved by querying a cloud management console. In an embodiment, a snapshot of the VM, at rest, is accessed. At S230, a snapshot of the virtual disk is accessed, or otherwise copied.

At S240, the view is analyzed to detect cyber threats and potential vulnerabilities. S240 may also include detecting cyber threats that do not represent vulnerabilities. Examples for cyber threats and vulnerabilities are provided above.

In an embodiment, S240 may include comparing the view to some baseline, which may include, but is not limited to, a copy of the image used to create the VM, (e.g., lists of applications, previous snapshots), cryptographic hashes gathered in the previous scan, analyzing logs of the VMs, instantiating a copy of the VM and executing the instance or applications executed by the VM in a sandbox, analyzing the machine memory, as reflected in the page file, or any combination of these techniques. Some example embodiments for analyzing the snapshots and the types of detected vulnerabilities and threats are provided above.

At S250, the detected cyber threats and/or vulnerabilities are reported, for example, as alerts. In an embodiment, S250 may include filtering and prioritizing the reported alerts. In an embodiment, the prioritization is based, in part, on the risk level of a vulnerable machine. The filtering and prioritizing allow for reduction of the number of alerts reported to the user. The filtering can be performed on external intelligence on the likelihood of this vulnerability being exploited,

analyzing the machine configuration in order to deduce the vulnerability relevancy, and correlating the vulnerability with the network location and by weighting the risk of this machine being taken over by the attacker by taking into consideration the criticality of the machine in the organization based on the contents stored or on other assets accessible from the VM.

At optional S260, a mitigation action may be triggered to mitigate a detected threat or vulnerability. A mitigation action may be executed by a mitigation tool and triggered by the system 140. Such an action may include blocking traffic from untrusted networks, halting the operation of the VM, quarantining an infected VM, preventing its launch and the like.

FIG. 3 is an example block diagram of the security system 140 according to an embodiment. The security system 140 includes a processing circuitry 310 coupled to a memory 320, a storage 330, and a network interface 340. In an embodiment, the components of the security system 140 may be communicatively connected via a bus 360.

The processing circuitry 310 may be realized as one or more hardware logic components and circuits. For example, and without limitation, illustrative types of hardware logic components that can be used include field programmable gate arrays (FPGAs), application-specific integrated circuits (ASICs), application-specific standard products (ASSPs), system-on-a-chip systems (SOCs), general-purpose microprocessors, microcontrollers, digital signal processors (DSPs), and the like, or any other hardware logic components that can perform calculations or other manipulations of information.

The memory 320 may be volatile (e.g., RAM, etc.), non-volatile (e.g., ROM, flash memory, etc.), or a combination thereof. In one configuration, computer readable instructions to implement one or more embodiments disclosed herein may be stored in the storage 330.

In another embodiment, the memory 320 is configured to store software. Software shall be construed broadly to mean any type of instructions, whether referred to as software, firmware, middleware, microcode, hardware description language, or otherwise. Instructions may include code (e.g., in source code format, binary code format, executable code format, or any other suitable format of code). The instructions, when executed by the one or more processors, cause the processing circuitry 310 to perform the various processes described herein. Specifically, the instructions, when executed, cause the processing circuitry 310 to determine over-privileged role vulnerabilities in serverless functions.

The storage 330 may be magnetic storage, optical storage, and the like, and may be realized, for example, as flash memory or as another other memory technology, as CD-ROMs, Digital Versatile Disks (DVDs), hard-drives, SSDs, or any other medium which can be used to store the desired information. The storage 330 may store communication consumption patterns associated with one or more communications devices.

The network interface 340 allows the security system 140 to communicate with the external systems, such as intelligence systems, SIEM systems, mitigation systems, a cloud management console, a user console, and the like.

It should be understood that the embodiments described herein are not limited to the specific architecture illustrated in FIG. 3, and other architectures may be equally used without departing from the scope of the disclosed embodiments.

The various embodiments disclosed herein can be implemented as hardware, firmware, software, or any combination

thereof. Moreover, the software is preferably implemented as an application program tangibly embodied on a program storage unit or computer readable medium consisting of parts, or of certain devices and/or a combination of devices.

The application program may be uploaded to, and executed by, a machine comprising any suitable architecture. Preferably, the machine is implemented on a computer platform having hardware such as one or more central processing units ("CPUs"), a memory, and input/output interfaces. The computer platform may also include an operating system and microinstruction code. The various processes and functions described herein may be either part of the microinstruction code or part of the application program, or any combination thereof, which may be executed by a CPU, whether or not such a computer or processor is explicitly shown. In addition, various other peripheral units may be connected to the computer platform such as an additional data storage unit and a printing unit. Furthermore, a non-transitory computer readable medium is any computer readable medium except for a transitory propagating signal.

As used herein, the phrase "at least one of" followed by a listing of items means that any of the listed items can be utilized individually, or any combination of two or more of the listed items can be utilized. For example, if a system is described as including "at least one of A, B, and C," the system can include A alone; B alone; C alone; A and B in combination; B and C in combination; A and C in combination; or A, B, and C in combination.

All examples and conditional language recited herein are intended for pedagogical purposes to aid the reader in understanding the principles of the disclosed embodiment and the concepts contributed by the inventor to furthering the art, and are to be construed as being without limitation to such specifically recited examples and conditions. Moreover, all statements herein reciting principles, aspects, and embodiments of the disclosed embodiments, as well as specific examples thereof, are intended to encompass both structural and functional equivalents thereof. Additionally, it is intended that such equivalents include both currently known equivalents as well as equivalents developed in the future, i.e., any elements developed that perform the same function, regardless of structure.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for inspecting data, the system comprising: at least one processor configured to:
 - establish an interface between a client environment and security components;
 - using the interface, utilize cloud computing platform APIs to identify virtual disks of a virtual machine in the client environment;
 - use the computing platform APIs to query a location of at least one of the identified virtual disks;
 - receive an identification of the location of the virtual disks of the virtual machine;
 - perform at least one of: (i) taking at least one snapshot, and (ii) requesting taking at least one snapshot of the virtual machine at rest, wherein the at least one snapshot represents a copy of the virtual disks of the virtual machine at a point in time;
 - analyze the at least one snapshot to detect vulnerabilities, wherein during the detection of the vulnerabilities by analyzing the at least one snapshot, the virtual machine is inactive; and
 - report the detected vulnerabilities as alerts.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein reporting the detected vulnerabilities as alerts includes indicating priority levels associated with the detected vulnerabilities.

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3. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one processor is further configured to implement a remedial action for at least one of the detected vulnerabilities.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the identification of the location of the virtual disks of the virtual machine includes a virtual address of at least one of the virtual disks.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one snapshot includes a change log of at least one of the virtual disks configured to restore the virtual machine to a particular point in time.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the snapshot includes a page file of memory associated with the virtual machine, the page file being configured to allow deduction of one or more applications running on the virtual machine.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one snapshot includes a plurality of snapshots, and the at least one processor is configured to generate the plurality of snapshots according to a predetermined schedule.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one processor is configured to generate the at least one snapshot in response to a predetermined trigger event.

9. A computer-implemented method for inspecting data, the method comprising:

establishing an interface between a client environment and security components;

using the interface to utilize cloud computing platform APIs to identify virtual disks of a virtual machine in the client environment;

using the computing platform APIs to query a location of at least one of the identified virtual disks;

receiving an identification of the location of the virtual disks of the virtual machine;

emulating the virtual disks for the virtual machine;

performing at least one of: (i) taking at least one snapshot, and (ii) requesting taking at least one snapshot of the virtual machine at rest, wherein the at least one snapshot represents a copy of the virtual disks of the virtual machine at a point in time;

analyzing the at least one snapshot to detect vulnerabilities, wherein during the detection of the vulnerabilities by analyzing the at least one snapshot, the virtual machine is inactive; and

reporting the detected vulnerabilities as alerts.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein reporting the detected vulnerabilities as alerts includes providing indications of the

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detected vulnerabilities based on priority levels associated with the detected vulnerabilities.

11. The method of claim 9, further comprising implementing a remedial action for at least one of the detected vulnerabilities.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein the identification of the location of the virtual disks of the virtual machine includes a virtual address of at least one of the virtual disks.

13. The method of claim 9, wherein the at least one snapshot includes a change log of at least one of the virtual disks configured to restore the virtual machine to a particular point in time.

14. The method of claim 9, wherein the snapshot includes a page file of memory associated with the virtual machine, the page file being configured to allow deduction of one or more applications running on the virtual machine.

15. The method of claim 9, wherein the at least one snapshot includes a plurality of snapshots and wherein the method further includes generating the plurality of snapshots based on a predetermined schedule.

16. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions, which, when executed by at least one processor, cause a computing device to:

establish an interface between a client environment and security components;

using the interface, utilize cloud computing platform APIs to identify virtual disks of a virtual machine in the client environment;

use the computing platform APIs to query a location of at least one of the identified virtual disks;

receive an identification of the location of the virtual disks of the virtual machine;

emulate the virtual disks for the virtual machine;

perform at least one of: (i) taking at least one snapshot, and (ii) requesting taking at least one snapshot of the virtual machine at rest, wherein the at least one snapshot represents a copy of the virtual disks of the virtual machine at a point in time;

analyze the at least one snapshot to detect vulnerabilities, wherein during the detection of the vulnerabilities by analyzing the at least one snapshot, the virtual machine is inactive; and

report the detected vulnerabilities as alerts.

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