



SIMPLIFY PENTEST WORKFLOWS USING CERNO

Chris Traynor

1



\$ whoami

Chris Traynor

- Pentester at Black Hills InfoSec
- Owner of Ridgeback InfoSec, LLC
- Antisyphon Author/Instructor
 - Offensive Tooling Foundations
 - Offensive Tooling for Operators
 - BOTH now available via On-Demand**
- Certs: GSEC, GCIH, GWAPT, & GPEN
- @cstraynor





Modern Nessus Review & Security Tool

Orchestration

- By Ridgeback InfoSec
- Open Source CLI/TUI Tool
- github.com/ridgebackinfosec/cerno

A TUI tool for reviewing Nessus scan findings and orchestrating security tools (nmap, NetExec, custom commands). Import .nessus files into a SQLite database for organized, persistent vulnerability verification and exploitation.

Key capabilities:

- 🔍 Interactive TUI for browsing/reviewing vulnerability findings
- 💾 SQLite-backed persistence (cross-scan tracking, session resume)
- ⚡ One-command tool launches (nmap NSE scripts, NetExec, custom workflows)
- 📊 CVE extraction, Metasploit module search, host comparison
- 🔗 NetExec database integration (correlate credentials with findings)



The Problem

The Manual Nessus Review/Verification

Struggle

- Thousands of findings across hundreds of hosts
- Context switching between Nessus UI and terminal tools
- No persistent tracking of reviewed findings
- Copy-paste IP addresses and ports for each tool command
- Lost progress when terminals close or sessions end

Sev ▼	Name ▲	Count ▼
CRITICAL	Cisco IOS XE Unauthenticated Remote Command Execution (CVE-2023-20198) (Direct Check)	2
CRITICAL	Samba 'AndX' Request Heap-Based Buffer Overflow	1
CRITICAL	NFS Exported Share Information Disclosure	11
CRITICAL	Plex Media Server 1.41.7.x < 1.42.1 Undisclosed Vulnerability	1
CRITICAL	Canonical Ubuntu Linux SEoL (16.04.x)	12
CRITICAL	Microsoft SQL Server Unsupported Version Detection (remote check)	12
CRITICAL	Debian Linux SEoL (7.x)	4
CRITICAL	Python Unsupported Version Detection	4
CRITICAL	Canonical Ubuntu Linux SEoL (14.04.x)	3
CRITICAL	Unsupported Web Server Detection	3

Plugin Output

172.16.0.14 (tcp/2049/rpc-nfs_acl)

The following shares have no access restrictions :
/Public *

172.16.0.60 (tcp/2049/rpc-nfs)

The following shares have no access restrictions :
/volume1/SYNSSD *

172.16.3.152 (tcp/2049/rpc-nfs_acl)

The following shares have no access restrictions :
/exports/oe *

172.16.6.1 (tcp/2049/rpc-nfs_acl)

The following shares have no access restrictions :
/Public *
/ISO_Images *



The Solution

Cerno: Discern What Matters

- Import .nessus files into SQLite database (single source of truth)
- Interactive TUI with keyboard-driven navigation
- One-command tool launches against exact hosts/ports
- Persistent session tracking (resume where you left off)
- Cross-scan analysis and host tracking

```
Usage: cerno [OPTIONS] COMMAND [ARGS]...
```

```
cerno - faster review & tooling runner for vulnerability scans
```

Options

<code>--version</code>	<code>-v</code>	Show version and exit
<code>--install-completion</code>		Install completion for the current shell.
<code>--show-completion</code>		Show completion for the current shell, to copy it or customize the installation.
<code>--help</code>		Show this message and exit.

Commands

<code>review</code>	Interactive review of findings.
<code>import</code>	Import data from various sources into cerno
<code>scan</code>	Scan management - list and delete imported scans
<code>config</code>	Configuration management - view and modify settings
<code>workflow</code>	Workflow management - list and view available workflows



Feature Overview

Key Capabilities

- Interactive Rich-based TUI with color-coded severity levels
- Tool orchestration: nmap (NSE profiles), NetExec, Metasploit, custom commands
- CVE extraction and Metasploit module search
- Host comparison and overlapping findings analysis
- NetExec database integration (credential correlation) [Beta]
- Custom workflow mappings for plugin-specific verification

```
Demo_Scan > Critical > Findings
Welcome to Cerno Review | Press [?] for help

Unreviewed findings (41) | Filter: '*'
Sort: Plugin ID ↑ (next: Name A↑Z) | [REDACTED] Page **1/2** (41 total) | Session: 3m 19s
```

#	Severity	Plugin ID	Name	Hosts
1	Crit	20007	SSL Version 2 and 3 Protocol Detection	37
2	Crit	34460	Unsupported Web Server Detection	2
3	Crit	56997	VMware ESX / ESXi Unsupported Version Detection	2
4	Crit	58327	Samba 'AndX' Request Heap-Based Buffer Overflow	1
5	Crit	73756	Microsoft SQL Server Unsupported Version Detection (remote check)	11
6	Crit	93650	Dropbear SSH Server < 2016.72 Multiple Vulnerabilities	1
7	Crit	97991	Cisco IOS Cluster Management Protocol Telnet Option Handling RCE (cisco-sa-20170317-cmp)	1
8	Crit	106559	Jenkins < 2.89.2 / 2.95 Multiple Vulnerabilities	1
9	Crit	108722	Cisco IOS Software Smart Install Remote Code Execution Vulnerability	1
10	Crit	108802	Microsoft Exchange Server Unsupported Version Detection (Unauthenticated)	1
11	Crit	119780	Netatalk OpenSession Remote Code Execution	2
12	Crit	128148	Flexera FlexNet Publisher < 11.16.2 Multiple Vulnerabilities	1
13	Crit	136890	Telnetd - Remote Code Execution (CVE-2020-10188)	1
14	Crit	148367	Python Unsupported Version Detection	4
15	Crit	154894	Jenkins LTS < 2.303.3 / Jenkins weekly < 2.319 Multiple Vulnerabilities	2
16	Crit	158900	Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.53 Multiple Vulnerabilities	5
17	Crit	161948	Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.54 Multiple Vulnerabilities	5
18	Crit	163258	Jenkins LTS < 2.332.4 / Jenkins weekly < 2.356 Multiple Vulnerabilities	3
19	Crit	163259	Jenkins plugins Multiple Vulnerabilities (2022-06-22)	1
20	Crit	165766	Jenkins weekly < 2.370 Multiple Vulnerabilities	1
21	Crit	170113	Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.55 Multiple Vulnerabilities	5
22	Crit	171351	Apache Tomcat SEoL (7.0.x)	1
23	Crit	171929	Jenkins plugins Multiple Vulnerabilities (2023-01-24)	1
24	Crit	172085	Jenkins plugins Multiple Vulnerabilities (2022-10-19)	1
25	Crit	172186	Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.56 Multiple Vulnerabilities	5

```
~ 16 more findings available (press N for next page)
[Enter] Open first match / [B] Back / [?] Help
[R] Reviewed / [H] Compare / [O] Overlapping
[E] CVEs (41) / [M] Mark reviewed (41)
Choose a file number, or action:

[F] Filter / [C] Clear filter / [S] Sort: Plugin ID
[N] Next page / [P] Prev page
```



Database-First Design

SQLite as Single Source of

Truth

- Location: ~/.cerno/cerno.db (global, cross-scan)
- Fully normalized schema with foreign key constraints
- Computed statistics via SQL views (no redundant data)
- Foundation tables: severity_levels, artifact_types, hosts, ports
- Cross-scan tracking: "show all findings for host X across all scans"

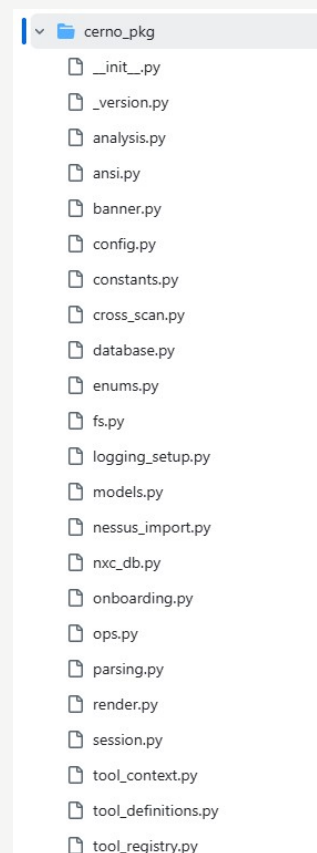
Name
▼ Tables (14)
▶ artifact_types
▶ artifacts
▶ audit_log
▶ finding_affected_hosts
▶ findings
▶ hosts
▶ plugins
▶ ports
▶ scans
▶ sessions
▶ severity_levels
▶ sqlite_sequence
▶ tool_executions
▶ workflow_executions
▼ Indices (24)
▶ idx_artifacts_execution
▶ idx_artifacts_type
▶ idx_audit_changed_at
▶ idx_audit_table_record
▶ idx_fah_finding
▶ idx_fah_host
▶ idx_fah_port
▶ idx_findings_plugin
▶ idx_findings_review_state
▶ idx_findings_scan
▶ idx_findings_scan_plugin
▶ idx_hosts_fqdn
▶ idx_hosts_ip
▶ idx_hosts_netbios
▶ idx_hosts_target
▶ idx_hosts_target_type
▶ idx_plugins_metasploit
▶ idx_plugins_severity



Module Architecture

Clean Separation of Concerns

- cerno.py - CLI entry point (Typer commands)
- nessus_import.py - XML parsing and database import
- render.py - Rich UI tables, panels, menus
- tui.py - Interactive navigation and action handlers
- tools.py - Command builders and tool orchestration
- analysis.py - Host comparison, superset detection





Data Flow

From Nessus to Verified

Finding

- Import: .nessus XML parsed, hosts/ports normalized into database
- Review: Query findings by severity, display in Rich tables
- Tool Execution: Pass host/port data to nmap/NetExec/MSF
- Track Results: Tool executions and artifacts logged in database
- Resume: Session state persists across terminal closures

Session Statistics

Metric	Count
Session Duration	1m 44s
Findings Reviewed (not marked)	0
Findings Marked Complete	8
Findings Skipped (empty)	0
Total Findings Processed	8

```
$cerno import nessus cerno_webcast.nessus
Using scan name: Demo_Scan
```

```
Importing scan to database
✓ Importing cerno_webcast.nessus... 0:00:02
```

```
Importing scan to database
✓ Import complete: 524 findings
```

Severity Breakdown:

Severity	Plugins
Critical	47
High	105
Medium	94
Low	14
Info	264



Interactive TUI

Keyboard-Driven Review

Interface

- Severity selection: 1-5 for levels, M for Metasploit, W for workflows
- Finding list: N/P pagination, F filter, S sort, H host compare
- Detail view: V view hosts, E CVEs, T tools, W workflow, M mark reviewed
- Responsive layouts adapt to terminal width
- Press ? for context-sensitive help anywhere

```
Scan Overview — Demo_Scan
Findings: 524 total | Reviewed: 8 (1.5%)

Host & Port Analysis

Metric      Value
-----
Unique Hosts  912
└─ IPv4      234
└─ IPv6       0
Unique Ports 1526

Top 5 Ports

Port    Occurrences
-----
80      444
445     393
139     377
135     362
3389    344
```



Severity Filtering

Prioritize What Matters

- Color-coded: Critical (red), High (yellow), Medium (blue), Low (green), Info (cyan)
- Review progress tracking per severity level
- Special filters: [M] Metasploit modules, [W] Workflow mapped
- Sort modes: Severity, Plugin ID, Name, Host count
- Text filtering with partial matching

Demo_Scan > Choose severity

#	Severity	Unreviewed (%)	Reviewed (%)	Total
1	Critical	47 (100%)	0 (0%)	47
2	High	105 (100%)	0 (0%)	105
3	Medium	94 (100%)	0 (0%)	94
4	Low	14 (100%)	0 (0%)	14
5	Info	264 (100%)	0 (0%)	264
Special Filters				
M	Metasploit Module	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	8
W	Workflow Mapped	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	9

>> [H] Host search / [B] Back
Tip: Use numbers (1-5), M, W, or combine (e.g., 1-3,M)
Choose:



Finding Review

Get To Verifying - Level-Up Your Workflow

- Focus on specific findings
- Affected hosts, Nessus output details, CVE info, & MORE!
- Get flags for existing Metasploit modules & mapped Workflows

```
SNMP Agent Default Community Name (public)
Nessus Plugin ID: 41028
Severity: High
Unique hosts: 11 across 1 port(s) (161)
Example: 10.0.0.101:161
Workflow Available: SNMP Default Community Strings
```

```
>>
[I] Finding Info / [D] Finding Details
[V] View host(s) / [E] CVE info
[W] Workflow
[T] Run tool
[M] Mark reviewed
[B] Back
Choose action:
```

Verification Workflow: SNMP Default Community Strings

Plugin ID(s): 41028

Description: Default SNMP community string usage could allow for configuration read through SNMP queries and possibly a full SNMP MIB tree walk.

Step 1

Enumerate SNMP info against the internal scope

```
sudo nmap -sU -sV -p161 -T4 --script "snmp* and not snmp-brute"
IP_address
```

Step 2

Specifically use snmp-brute to verify this issue and to check for additional commonly used SNMP community strings

```
sudo nmap -sU -sV -p161 -T4 --script snmp-brute IP_address
```

Step 3

Also available to use...

```
msfconsole -q -x 'use auxiliary/scanner/snmp/snmp_login'
https://github.com/trailofbits/onesixtyone
https://github.com/net-snmp/net-snmp
```

References:

- <https://www.tenable.com/plugins/nessus/41028>
- <https://www.blackhillsinfosec.com/snmp-strings-attached/>
- <https://github.com/trailofbits/onesixtyone>
- <https://github.com/net-snmp/net-snmp>

[Press Enter to continue]



Tool Orchestration - nmap

One-Command Tool

Launches

- NSE Profiles: Crypto, SSH, SMB, SNMP, IPMI
- Custom scripts addable alongside profiles
- UDP support for SNMP/IPMI (automatic)
- Pre-flight summary: targets, scripts, output directory
- Results saved: ~/.cerno/artifacts/<scan>/<severity>/<plugin>/

nmap Configuration

NSE Profile: **Crypto**

Scripts: ssl-enum-ciphers, ssl-cert, ssl-date

Custom Scripts: None

UDP Scan: No

>>

[P] Select NSE Profile / [S] Add/Edit Custom Scripts

[U] Toggle UDP (OFF) / [Enter] Continue

[B] Back/Cancel

Choose ():

✓ Configuration saved: 3 script(s), UDP=No

Command Review

Execution Summary

Tool: **nmap**

Targets: **37 host(s)**

Output directory:

/home/telchar/.cerno/artifacts/Demo_Scan/Critical/20007_SSL_Version_2_and_3_Protocol_Detection

Command:

sudo nmap -A --script=ssl-enum-ciphers,ssl-cert,ssl-date -iL /tmp/nph_work_cq4a90td/tcp_ips.list -p 25,443,444,465,1433,4084,4085,5002,8006,8172,9933,9955,21344 -oA /home/telchar/.cerno/artifacts/Demo_Scan/Critical/20007_SSL_Version_2_and_3_Protocol_Detection/run-20260129-090901

>>

[1] Run now / [2] Copy to clipboard

[B] Back

Choose: █



NetExec & Custom Tools

Beyond nmap – NetExec, Metasploit, Custom

- NetExec: Protocol selection (smb, ssh, rdp, etc.), auto-populates targets
- Metasploit: Module search by CVE/description, launch msfconsole
- Custom: Placeholder substitution for flexible templating
- Placeholders: {TCP_IPS}, {UDP_IPS}, {TCP_HOST_PORTS}, {PORTS}
- All executions logged with exit code, duration, sudo usage

```
Metasploit Module Information
Found 1 Metasploit module(s):
  1. MS09-050 Microsoft SRV2.SYS SMB Negotiate ProcessID Function Table Dereference

>> Available commands:
  1. msfconsole -q -x 'search MS09-050 Microsoft SRV2.SYS SMB Negotiate ProcessID Function Table Dereference; exit'
  2. msfconsole -q -x 'search CVE-2009-2532; exit'
  3. msfconsole -q -x 'search CVE-2009-3103; exit'

Run which command? (number or [N] None) (n): 1
```

NetExec: choose protocol

```
[1] mssql
[2] smb
[3] ftp
[4] ldap
[5] nfs
[6] rdp
[7] ssh
[8] vnc
[9] winrm
[10] wmi
>> [8] Back
(Press Enter for 'smb')
Choose protocol (smb):
```

Command Review

Execution Summary

```
Tool: netexec
Targets: 37 host(s)
Output directory:
/home/telchar/.cerno/artifacts/Demo_Scan/Critical/20007_SSL_Version_2_and_
3_Protocol_Detection
```

Command:

```
nxc smb /tmp/nph_work_cq4a90td/tcp_ips.list --gen-relay-list /home/telchar/.ce
rno/artifacts/Demo_Scan/Critical/20007_SSL_Version_2_and_3_Protocol_Detection/
run-20260129-091303.SMB_Signing_not_required_targets.txt --shares --log /home/
telchar/.cerno/artifacts/Demo_Scan/Critical/20007_SSL_Version_2_and_3_Protocol
_Detection/run-20260129-091303.nxc.smb.log
```

>>

```
[1] Run now / [2] Copy to clipboard
[8] Back
Choose:
```



NetExec DB [Beta]

Beyond nmap - NetExec, Metasploit,

Custom

- Credential correlation - Shows which NetExec-discovered credentials have access to affected hosts
- Share access - Displays SMB share read/write permissions across hosts
- Security flags - Highlights SMB signing disabled, Zeroologon, PetitPotam vulnerabilities
- Per-host breakdown - Press [N] in finding view for detailed per-host NetExec context

```
----- SMB Signing not required -----  
Nessus Plugin ID: 57608  
Severity: Medium  
Unique hosts: 2 across 1 port(s) (445)  
Example: 192.168.56.22:445  
  
----- Workflow Available: SMB Signing Not Required -----  
----- NetExec Context -----  
Protocols: SMB | 2/2 hosts have NXC data  
  
Credentials (2 unique):  
[SMB] north.sevenkingdoms.local\robb.stark (plaintext) on 1 host  
[SMB] essos.local\robb.stark (plaintext) on 1 host  
  
Flags: SMB signing disabled (2), SMBv1 (1)  
  
Press [N] for per-host breakdown
```




Host Comparison

Find Patterns Across Findings

- [H] Compare Hosts: Groups findings with identical host:port combinations
- [O] Overlapping: Identifies superset relationships
- Group filtering: Focus on related findings
- Use case: "5 findings affect same 3 hosts" - review together
- Reduces duplicate work across plugins

Filtered Files: Overlapping Findings Analysis
Files analyzed: 24

Overlapping Findings Groups

#	Root Finding	Covers	Covered findings (sample)
1	Plugin 241984: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.64 Multiple Vulnerabilities	14	Plugin 158900: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.53 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 161948: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.54 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 170113: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.55 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 172186: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.56 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 183391: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.58 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 192923: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.59 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 193419: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.58 Out-of-Bounds Read (CVE-2023-31122) Plugin 193420: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.54 Out-Of-Bounds Read (CVE-2022-28330) ... (+6 more)

Filtered Files: Host/Port Comparison
Files compared: 24

Found 6 groups with identical host:port combinations

What this means: Findings in the same group affect the exact same systems.
You might want to review them together or choose one as representative.

Identical Host:Port Groups

#	Count	Findings (sample)
1	14	Plugin 158900: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.53 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 161948: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.54 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 170113: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.55 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 172186: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.56 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 183391: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.58 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 192923: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.59 Multiple Vulnerabilities Plugin 193419: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.58 Out-of-Bounds Read (CVE-2023-31122) Plugin 193420: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.54 Out-Of-Bounds Read (CVE-2022-28330)
		Showing 8 of 14 findings - Press [D] to view all
2	4	Plugin 180192: Apache Tomcat 8.5.0 < 8.5.93 Plugin 182811: Apache Tomcat 8.5.0 < 8.5.94 multiple vulnerabilities Plugin 186364: Apache Tomcat 8.5.0 < 8.5.96 Plugin 192043: Apache Tomcat 8.5.0 < 8.5.99 multiple vulnerabilities
3	3	Plugin 147163: Apache Tomcat 7.0.0 < 7.0.108 multiple vulnerabilities Plugin 148405: Apache Tomcat 7.0.0 < 7.0.107 Plugin 171351: Apache Tomcat SEOL (7.0.x)
4	1	Plugin 12085: Apache Tomcat Default Files
5	1	Plugin 88098: Apache Server ETag Header Information Disclosure
6	1	Plugin 241984: Apache 2.4.x < 2.4.64 Multiple Vulnerabilities

Press [D] for full group details, or [Enter] to continue ():



Session Persistence

Never Lose Your Progress

- Sessions auto-save to database (start time, scan context)
- Resume prompt on startup shows session details
- Review states: Unreviewed or Reviewed
- Undo capability: [U] restores completed to pending
- Session statistics: duration, per-severity breakdown

Available Scans

#	Scan Name	Last Reviewed
1	Demo_Scan	1 min ago

>> [Q] Quit
Choose scan:

Demo_Scan > Choose severity

#	Severity	Unreviewed (%)	Reviewed (%)	Total
1	Critical	40 (85%)	7 (15%)	47
2	High	95 (90%)	10 (10%)	105
3	Medium	87 (93%)	7 (7%)	94
4	Low	14 (100%)	0 (0%)	14
5	Info	264 (100%)	0 (0%)	264

Special Filters

M	Metasploit Module	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	8
W	Workflow Mapped	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	9

>> [H] Host search / [B] Back

Tip: Use numbers (1-5), M, W, or combine (e.g., 1-3,M)
Choose:



Configuration

Customize Your Workflow

- Config file: ~/.cerno/config.yaml (auto-created)
- Commands: cerno config show/set/reset
- Custom workflows: YAML mapping plugin IDs to verification steps
- NetExec: Configure workspace path

```
$cerno config show
```

Current Configuration

Config file: /home/telchar/.cerno/config.yaml

Configuration Values

Setting	Value	Description	Status
custom_workflows_path	(not set)	Path to custom workflows YAML	Default
debug_logging	False	Enable DEBUG logs	Default
default_netexec_protocol	smb	Default: smb/ssh/ftp/etc	Default
default_page_size	auto	Items per page in lists	Default
default_tool	(not set)	Pre-select: nmap/netexec/custom	Default
log_path	/home/telchar/.cerno/cerno.log	Log file location	Default
nmap_default_profile	(not set)	NSE profile name	Default
no_color	False	Disable ANSI colors	Default
nxc_enrichment_enabled	True	Show NetExec context in findings	Default
nxc_workspace_path	~/ .nxc/workspaces/default/	NetExec workspace directory	Default
results_root	/home/telchar/.cerno/artifacts	Directory for tool output	Default
term_override	(not set)	Force terminal type	Default
top_ports_count	5	Top ports to show	Default



DEMO

Getting Started



```
# Install with pipx (recommended)
pipx install git+https://github.com/ridgebackinfosec/cerno.git

# Import a Nessus scan
cerno import nessus scan.nessus

# Review findings interactively
cerno review
```

Usage: cerno [OPTIONS] COMMAND [ARGS]...

cerno – faster review & tooling runner for vulnerability scans

Options

<code>--version</code>	<code>-v</code>	Show version and exit
<code>--install-completion</code>		Install completion for the current shell.
<code>--show-completion</code>		Show completion for the current shell, to copy it or customize the installation.
<code>--help</code>		Show this message and exit.

Commands

<code>review</code>	Interactive review of findings.
<code>import</code>	Import data from various sources into cerno
<code>scan</code>	Scan management - list and delete imported scans
<code>config</code>	Configuration management - view and modify settings
<code>workflow</code>	Workflow management - list and view available workflows



Questions?

- GitHub: github.com/ridgebackinfosec/cerno
- Issues: github.com/ridgebackinfosec/cerno/issues
- Docs: docs/ folder in repository





THANK YOU

FOR ATTENDING

Chris Traynor

blackhillsinfosec.com

antisyphontraining.com

ridgebackinfosec.com

FREE LABS!

<https://tinyurl.com/freelabsfree>

