
Subject: Re: Bug#636463: vzctl: /etc/vz/dists/scripts/postcreate.sh randomises run-times in /etc/crontab, but

Posted by [Ola Lundqvist](#) on Wed, 10 Aug 2011 04:47:02 GMT

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Hi Tim

On Tue, Aug 09, 2011 at 10:27:15AM +0100, Tim Small wrote:

> cc'ing openvz users mailing list, as this has been discussed there recently.

>

> On 04/08/11 06:36, Ola Lundqvist wrote:

>

> > This is certainly an interesting problem. The patch is a good start but

> > as we can foresee problems already now we need to find out a solution

> > to that before it is applied.

> >

>

> I agree.

>

> > There is also one other problem. It is just a very limited number of

> > files that are actually installed during the initial install when

> > postcreate.sh is executing. Actually on my computer it was only anacron

> > that hold a file in that directory (that I have not created myself or installed

> > post initial install).

> >

>

> This I suppose depends on the particular site's style of working - if

> you have "fat" VZ templates it's likely to be OK? Or maybe I've

> misunderstood when this script gets called.

Yes you are right. For "fat" VZ templates it would be more likely to be ok.

> > All other applications will have the same problem as before.

> >

> > I can see two solutions:

> > 1) postcreate.sh go through only the files that are actually created

> > on initial install and touch them in a similar way as your patch.

> > 2) A new tool is introduced that should be run by the system administrator.

> >

> > Do you have any opinion about this?

> >

>

> Difficult to see the best answer here, and indeed it's a problem which

> is not OpenVZ-specific of course - it's equally valid across any

> virtualised instance of Debian - which is becoming more and more the

> normal way to deploy servers.

Even across any virtualize unix system using cron. :-)

- > For that matter, you can definitely see when cron.daily fires off by
- > default at 6.25 every morning on this traffic graph for
- > ftp.uk.debian.org - <http://www.hands.com/mrtg/free.eth0.html> - and I've
- > experienced problems with jobs like backups running all-at-the-same-time
- > via default crontab setups on networks of non-virtualised servers.

I have experienced this myself so I fully trust you. I mean there is a reason why the cron config is rewritten.

- > As virtualised instances of Debian become more and more common, maybe
- > it's something that needs to be solved for the general case at package
- > install time? Crontabs installed by packages could have meta-info
- > included to indicate whether the crontab entries should be perturbed,
- > and if-so, by how much?

That would be a way. Or even the package could randomize it on itself. I mean the same thing happens on physical servers as well if you have many of them.

- > This is obviously not a small change, but having thought about it for a
- > while, other possible approaches probably have the possibility of
- > breaking the packages which they alter, and not fixing things in the
- > general case?
- >
- > I suppose it's something that could be prototyped in OpenVZ (e.g. by
- > shipping the meta-data separately from the packages initially, and only
- > perturbing crontabs which are "opt-in") - in our experience it was only
- > a small subset of crontabs which caused the problem (mysql and logcheck
- > were the biggest ones, if I remember correctly).

I'm leaning on submitting wishlist bug requests on packages that can cause a load on external functions (network or similar) to randomize their cron file.

Best regards,

// Ola

- > Tim.
- >
- > p.s. a quick bit of research seems to show up the problem coming up
- > again and again...
- >
- > <https://bugs.launchpad.net/debian/+source/cron/+bug/672303>
- >
- > http://projects.puppetlabs.com/projects/1/wiki/Cron_Patterns

>
> <http://bugs.debian.org/cgi-bin/bugreport.cgi?bug=373152>
>
> etc. etc.
>
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