# DEFEATING ENCRYPTION BY USING UNICORN ENGINE WORKSHOP



MANTRA INFORMATION SECURITY

**Balázs Bucsay** 

Founder & CEO of Mantra Information Security

https://mantrainfosec.com



# **BIO / BALÁZS BUCSAY**

- Trainer of this course
- Originally from Hungary, living in London
- Over two decades of offensive security experience
- Started learning assembly at the age of 13
- Software Reverse Engineer
- 15 years of research and consultancy
- Certifications: OSCE, OSCP, OSWP; Prev: GIAC GPEN, CREST CCT Inf

# **BIO / BALÁZS BUCSAY**

- Previously developed:
  - Exploits for Windows and Linux applications
  - Shellcode payloads for multiple architectures
  - Kernel driver exploits
- Frequent speaker on IT-Security conferences:
  - US Washington DC, Atlanta, Honolulu
  - Europe UK, Belgium, Norway, Austria, Hungary...
  - APAC Australia, Singapore, Philippines



# **BIO / BALÁZS BUCSAY**

- Hobbies:
  - Travelling (been to 75+ countries)
  - Hiking, kayaking, cycling
  - IT Security
- Love to learn from others
- Kayaked the length of the Thames (300km)
- Twitter: @xoreipeip
- Mantra on Twitter: @mantrainfosec
- Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/in/bucsayb/



# **MANTRA INFORMATION SECURITY**



- Boutique consultancy approach
- Decades of experience and excellence
  - Training delivery (Software Reverse Engineering training)
  - Cloud, CI/CD, Kubernetes reviews
  - Red Teaming, EASM, Infrastructure testing
  - Web application and API assessments
  - Reverse-engineering, embedded devices and exploit development
  - **•** ...
- Full stack consultancy from finding a bug until it gets fixed

https://mantrainfosec.com



# **GROUND RULES**

- Please silence your phones
- Take phone calls outside of the room and preferably in breaks
- Interaction is encouraged, please ask as many questions as you'd like
- The workshop might be heavy at some points, let's stop and recap what is missing



# **INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP**

- We are going to learn:
  - A bit of theory behind Unicorn Engine
  - How to script the API
  - How to execute code platform independently
  - How to map memory
  - How to pass parameters to functions
  - How to debug issues with our scripts



# **INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP**

- Prerequisite
  - Proficiency in coding in a programming language
  - Familiarity with Assembly language
  - Competence in using Linux operating systems
  - A computer capable of x64 virtualization
  - VMWare Player installed on their computer



# **SOFTWARE REVERSE ENGINEER COURSES**

- In case you are interested in the full training:
  - Software Reverse Engineering training
- Multiple courses (pick your level):
  - Day 01-03: Beginner level (from scratch)
  - Day 04-05: Intermediate level
  - Day 06-10: Advanced level
- Find me after the workshop



# SETUP

- Install VMWare Player
  - Distributed with other materials
  - Next, next, finish install MS VC Redistributable if required
  - Reboot if required
  - Select FREE option Non-commercial use only
- Open Virtual Machine in VMWare Player
- Select Linux and click on "Play virtual machine"
- Make sure you have the slides in PDF format
- Make sure you click on COPIED not moved if VMWare Player asks



# UBUNTU LINUX VM

- Ubuntu Desktop VM, FOSS
- All necessary tools installed for this workshop
- Challenges and solutions are also on the VM
- Feel free to use this VM after the course for as long as you want



#### VIRTUAL MACHINE SECURITY

- Credentials to log into the VMs:
  - Username: training
  - Password: training
- Feel free to change the password make sure you remember it
- The network interface is set to NAT no incoming connections
- Vanilla configuration, not hardened, might need security updates as well
- Please do not update during the workshop could block you



# **UNDERSTANDING AND FOLLOWING THE MATERIAL**

- Reverse Engineering is a complex skill that requires low-level knowledge
- Don't worry if you don't get everything for the first time
- Lots of back and forth
- Check the slides if you need to clear-up something
- Feel free to ask questions instead of lagging behind



# **UNICORN ENGINE**

- Quick theory and then we start with the real deal
- Including:
  - Learning the capabilities of the Unicorn API (Python)
  - Loading and running code
  - Calling functions
  - Hooking execution
  - Passing function parameters
  - etc.

# QEMU

- QEMU is a generic and open-source machine emulator and virtualizer<sup>™</sup>
- Stands for Quick EMUlator
- It is capable to emulate multiple other architectures including:
  - x86/x64
  - ARM
  - PowerPC
  - RISC-V
  - •••
- User-mode emulation: runs a binary, emulates with minimal environment
- System emulation: emulates a whole system including peripherals
- Supports Windows, macOS, Linux and other UNIX operating systems



## **UNICORN ENGINE**

- Next Generation CPU Emulator
- Based on QEMU
- It is capable to emulate code (multiple architecture)
- Provides an API for programming languages to create an environment and run code
  - Supports: C, Python, Java, Go, .NET, Rust, ...
- Easy way to execute and debug code



# UNICORN ENGINE AS A SOLUTION

- Think of a scenario where you have a specific machine code
- This might be part of a program or just a snippet of code
- Without having the right hardware, how would you execute it?
- Without having a skeleton program, how would you execute it?
- Unicorn Engine allows to execute snippets on \*any\* architecture



# TOOLS TO USE:

- Text editor (recommended Sublime)
- Terminal (recommended Terminator)
- Disassembler/Decompiler (recommended Ghidra)
- That is all we need



- Execute the script: python3 ~/training/00start/00start.py
- Read the code in Sublime
- It creates an x86 environment and executes two instructions
- At the end, it prints the register values
- Let's take a look line by line



• Imports Unicorn Engine and x86 constants

from unicorn import \*
from unicorn.x86\_const import \*



- Creates a binary string with two bytes
- These two bytes are x86 (Intel/AMD) machine code
- INC ECX and DEC EDX

 $X86\_CODE32 = b'' \times 41 \times 4a'' # INC ecx; DEC edx$ 



• Creates a variable, which will be used later as base address

 $ADDRESS = 0 \times 1000000$ 

• Just a "random" address



- This is where the interesting part starts
- x86 architecture emulation is initialised
- 2 Megabyte memory is mapped at base address

uc = Uc(UC\_ARCH\_X86, UC\_MODE\_32) uc.mem\_map(ADDRESS, 2 \* 1024 \* 1024)



- The two instructions are written to the base address
- ECX register is set to 0x1234
- EDX register is set to 0x7890

uc.mem\_write(ADDRESS, X86\_C0DE32)

uc.reg\_write(UC\_X86\_REG\_ECX, 0x1234)
uc.reg\_write(UC\_X86\_REG\_EDX, 0x7890)



• Emulation starts at base address

uc.emu\_start(ADDRESS, ADDRESS + len(X86\_C0DE32))

• Emulation stops at the end of the code (2 bytes later)



• Registers are saved and printed in Python

r\_ecx = uc.reg\_read(UC\_X86\_REG\_ECX)
r\_edx = uc.reg\_read(UC\_X86\_REG\_EDX)

print(">>> ECX = 0x%x" %r\_ecx)
print(">>> EDX = 0x%x" %r\_edx)



# **UNICORN ENGINE INTRO**

- The two instructions executed
- The results were printed
- It did not need a skeleton program to execute the instructions
- We could write machine code directly in Python and execute it right away
- This might not seem to be useful, but Unicorn can do so much more!



- Execute ~/training/01caesar/01caesar
- It prints the original and encoded string
- Use Ghidra to take a look at the decompiled code
  - Execute: ~/training/tools/ghidra\_11.1.2\_PUBLIC/ghidraRun
- Option 1: You could RE the **caesar\_cipher()** function
- Option 2: You could look up what Caesar cipher is (and you should)
- Option 3: You could execute this function via Unicorn engine
- Let's go for the option 3

#### • Open the binary in Ghidra

Import /home/training/training/01caesar/01caesar 📃 🗆 🗙				
Format:	Executable and Linking Format (ELF)	<b>v</b> 0		
Language:	x86:LE:64:default:gcc			
Destination Folder:	delme:/			
Program Name:	01caesar			
		Options		
O <u>K</u> <u>C</u> ancel				



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• Architecture: AMD64/Intel x64



• Analyze the code with Ghidra

		Analyze?		-		×	
01caesar has not been analyzed. Would you like to analyze it now?							
	Yes	No	No (Do	on't as	k agaii	n)	

• Find the function and check the decompiled code:

```
🌠 🏭 Ro 🗌 📭
  Decompile: caesar_cipher - (01caesar)
1
 2 void caesar_cipher(long param_1,int param_2,int param_3)
 3
 4 {
 5
    int iVarl;
 6
    int local c;
7
8
    for (local c = 0; local c < param 3; local c = local c + 1) {
      if ((*(char *)(param 1 + local c) < 'A') || ('Z' < *(char *)(param 1 + local c))) {
9
        if (('`' < *(char *)(param 1 + local c)) && (*(char *)(param 1 + local c) < '{')) {
10
11
           iVarl = param 2 + *(char *)(param 1 + local c) + -0x61;
12
           *(char *)(param 1 + local c) = (char)iVar1 + (char)(iVar1 / 0x1a) * -0x1a + 'a';
13
        }
14
      }
15
      else {
16
        iVarl = param 2 + *(char *)(param 1 + local c) + -0x41;
        *(char *)(param 1 + local c) = (char)iVar1 + (char)(iVar1 / 0xla) * -0xla + 'A';
17
18
       }
19
    }
20
    return;
21 }
22
```



• Compare it to the source code ~/training/01caesar/01caesar.c

```
17
     void caesar cipher(char *str, int offset, int length)
18
         for (int i = 0; i < length; ++i)
19
20
             if (str[i] >= 'A' && str[i] <= 'Z')
21
22
                 str[i] = (str[i] - 'A' + offset) % 26 + 'A';
23
24
         else if (str[i] >= 'a' && str[i] <= 'z')
25
26
                 str[i] = (str[i] - 'a' + offset) % 26 + 'a';
27
28
29
30
```





	caesar_cipher	
00101189 <mark>f3 Of</mark> le f	a ENDBR64	
0010118d <mark>55</mark>	PUSH	RBP
0010118e <mark>48 89 e5</mark>	MOV	RBP, RSP
00101191 <mark>48 89 7d</mark> e	8 MOV	qword ptr [RBP + local_20],RDI
00101195 <mark>89 75 e4</mark>	MOV	dword ptr [RBP + local_24],ESI
00101198 <mark>89 55 e0</mark>	MOV	dword ptr [RBP + local_28],EDX
0010119b c7 45 fc	MOV	dword ptr [RBP + local_c],0x0
00 00 00 0	00	
001011a2 <mark>e9 f6 00</mark>	JMP	LAB_0010129d
00 00		—

#### • Make a note of the function's end address:



dword ptr [RBP + local c], 0x1 00101299 83 45 fc 01 ADD LAB 0010129d EAX, dword ptr [RBP + local c] 0010129d 8b 45 fc MOV EAX, dword ptr [RBP + local\_28] 001012a0 3b 45 e0 CMP LAB 001011a7 001012a3 Of 8c fe JL fe ff ff 001012a9 90 NOP 001012aa 90 NOP 001012ab 5d POP RBP 001012ac c3 RET



- Open the following source in Sublime: ~/training/01caesar/01skeleton.py
- Identify the [HERE] insertion points that you need to figure out
- When properly configured, the code will run and print the same as the program does
- You can execute the script by: <a href="https://www.nytraining/01caesar/01skeleton.py">python3 ~/training/01caesar/01skeleton.py</a>



- The insertion points should be filled out in logical order
- This might not be sequential at all
- First the binary needs to be read into memory
  - The path of the binary needs to be specified at line 6
- Then set a base address at line 10
  - This address can be anything, but it's better to have space before and after
  - Let's stick to 0x100000
- Let's think about the memory layout
- We need to load the executable into memory
  - How big is the program?
  - Make a note of the size in Kb
- We need some memory for stack operations
  - Do we need a stack?
  - Check Ghidra, does the assembly interact with the stack?
  - Any ESP/RSP references? PUSH/POP?
- We need some memory for heap
  - We need to pass a pointer to the function
  - The pointer should point to a string in memory
  - Where do you want to put that string?





• Filesize to be loaded

```
training@unicorn:~/training/01caesar$ ls -la
total 36
drwxrwxr-x 2 training training 4096 Oct 1 15:01 .
drwxrwxr-x 8 training training 4096 Sep 8 19:42 ..
-rwxrwxr-x 1 training training 16088 Sep 8 17:40 01caesar
-rw-rw-r-- 1 training training 1097 Sep 6 11:12 01caesar.c
-rw-rw-r-- 1 training training 1340 Sep 8 17:49 secret.txt
```



#### • Stack usage (POP/PUSH; RSP, RBP references)





• The memory layout that we build, should look like something like this MANTRA

Address	Region
0x0100000	Program code starts
[]	
0x0103FFF	Program ends starts
0x0104000	Heap <sup>*</sup> starts
[]	
0x0104FFF	Heap <sup>*</sup> ends
0x0105000	Stack starts
[]	
0x0105FFF	Stack ends



- Allocate/map more memory than you need (line 16)
  - Calculate it in bytes, 2Mb should be enough
- Write the string argument to the heap, calculate address (line 25)
- Use the same address to read at the end of the program (line 37)
- Look up the corresponding calling convention
  - What is used for the first argument? (line 26)
  - What is used for the second argument? (line 27)
  - What is used for the third argument? (line 28)
- Set the arguments (pointer for string, value for integers) (line 26, 27, 28)

#### • Calling Convention: System V AMD64 ABI

Argument register overview		
Argument type	Registers	
Integer/pointer arguments 1-6	RDI, RSI, RDX, RCX, R8, R9	
Floating point arguments 1-8	XMM0 - XMM7	
Excess arguments	Stack	
Static chain pointer	R10	





- Calculate the address for **stack** and set the right register (line 30)
- Look up the start and end addresses from Ghidra
  - Find the first instruction of the function (line 34)
  - Find the last instruction of the function (line 34)
- Note: Stack grows and shrinks by instruction
  - It might happen that a reference points outside of stack (eg. EBP-0x10)
- Protip: Set ESP/RSP in the middle of the stack memory range



- Run your script, did it print the right string?
- Change your input string to something else
- You can run the function standalone without modifying the binary!
- This comes really handy if you do not want to reimplement the code



• All done? Well done!

training@unicorn:~/training/01caesar\$ python3 01caesar.py
Encoded string: Khoor Xqlfruq!
training@unicorn:~/training/01caesar\$ cat secret.txt
Jxkqox Fkclojxqflk Pbzrofqv

- Now, try to decode the content of secret.txt
- Any issues? Let's solve them together!



## **UNICORN ENGINE ERRORS**

- Unicorn Engine might throw an error depending the issue we have
- In case we dereference memory that was not mapped to the application:
  - Invalid memory write (UC\_ERR\_WRITE\_UNMAPPED)
  - Invalid memory read (UC\_ERR\_READ\_UNMAPPED)
  - Invalid memory fetch (UC\_ERR\_FETCH\_UNMAPPED)
- Make sure:
  - Enough memory was mapped
  - Right address was used



#### **UNICORN ENGINE HOOKS**

- Hooks are special functions that can be registered before execution
- These functions are called at different scenarios:
  - UC\_HOOK\_CODE Every instruction in a range
  - UC\_HOOK\_MEM\_\* Memory related action
  - UC\_HOOK\_BLOCK New block
  - UC\_HOOK\_INSN Particular instruction
  - UC\_HOOK\_INTR Interrupts and syscalls

# **UNICORN ENGINE HOOKS**

- Hooks need to be added before **emu\_start()** is called
- Every hook has a specific format:
  - UC\_HOOK\_BLOCK and UC\_HOOK\_CODE:

def hook\_func(uc, address, size, user\_data)

- Where:
  - uc: initialized instance
  - address: current address
  - **size**: instruction or data size
  - user\_data: optional user data





# **UNICORN ENGINE HOOKS**

- Memory hooking format:
  - UC\_HOOK\_MEM\_\*:

def hook\_mem\_access(uc, access, address, size, value, user\_data)

- Where:
  - ••••
  - access: access type (READ/WRITE/...)
  - value: data value



## LAB: UNICORN ENGINE MEMORY HOOK

- Let's add a memory hook that prints the access type and address
- Add this code before emulation starts:

uc.hook\_add(UC\_HOOK\_MEM\_WRITE, hook\_mem\_access)
uc.hook\_add(UC\_HOOK\_MEM\_READ, hook\_mem\_access)

• Add this function to the beginning of the file:

def hook\_mem\_access(uc, access, address, size, value, user\_data):
 print("[\*] Memory access: {} at 0x{}, data size = {}, data value = 0x{}"
 .format(access, address, size, value))



## LAB: UNICORN ENGINE MEMORY HOOK

#### • Output:

[\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1064973, data size = 1, data value = 0x0 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1069044, data size = 4, data value = 0x0 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1069024, data size = 8, data value = 0x0 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1064973, data size = 1, data value = 0x0 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1069044, data size = 4, data value = 0x0 [\*] Memory access: 17 at 0x1069044, data size = 4, data value = 0x14 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1069044, data size = 4, data value = 0x14 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1069044, data size = 4, data value = 0x0 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1069044, data size = 4, data value = 0x0 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1069044, data size = 4, data value = 0x0 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1069048, data size = 8, data value = 0x0 [\*] Memory access: 16 at 0x1069048, data size = 8, data value = 0x0



## LAB: UNICORN ENGINE CODE HOOK

- Let's add a code hook that prints the EIP/RIP at every instruction
- Add this code before emulation starts:

uc.hook\_add(UC\_HOOK\_CODE, hook\_code, None, ADDRESS + 0x1189, ADDRESS + 0x12AC)

• Add this function to the beginning of the file:

def hook\_code(uc, address, size, user\_data):
 print("[\*] Current RIP: 0x{}, instruction size = 0x{}"
 .format(address, size))

# LAB: UNICORN ENGINE CODE HOOK



#### • Output:

[\*] Current RIP: 0x1053230, instruction size = 0x3 [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053233, instruction size = 0x2 [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053235, instruction size = 0x4 [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053337, instruction size = 0x4 [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053341, instruction size = 0x3 [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053344, instruction size = 0x3 [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053347, instruction size = 0x6 [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053353, instruction size = 0x1 [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053354, instruction size = 0x1 [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053355, instruction size = 0x1



## LAB: UNICORN ENGINE BASICS

- We are capable to:
  - Create a Python script to use Unicorn Engine
  - Set and read registers values
  - Execute selected parts of code
  - Hook the code
  - Debug our own script



# LAB: UNICORN ENGINE 02CIPHER

- Let's tackle a new challenge!
- This time, it's a substitution cipher
- Execute the binary: ~/training/02cipher/02cipher
- Load it into Ghidra and analyze it!
- If you're curious, check out the source code: ~/training/02cipher/02cipher.c



#### LAB: UNICORN ENGINE 02CIPHER

- Find and decompile the main() function
- Retype uStack\_78 (name might differ) to char[100]
- Make a note of the strings and copy them



## LAB: UNICORN ENGINE O2CIPHER

- Find the substitutionCiper() function
  - How many arguments does it have?
  - What is the start and end address?
  - Does it use stack? Heap?
- Repeat this for the substitutionDecipher() as well



## LAB: UNICORN ENGINE 02CIPHER

- Now that we have all the details we need, try to:
  - create a script for substitutionCiper() and the first string
  - print the output and compare it to the binary's output
  - create another script for substitutionDeciper() and 2nd string
- Feel free to use 02skeleton.py!



- Let's tackle another new challenge!
- This time, it's AES encryption (OpenSSL)
- Execute the binary: ~/training/03encrypt/03encrypt testfile
- It generated and printed its AES key and created the following file:
  - output\_file.encrypted
  - Check its content with xxd!



- Our task is to decrypt the secret.enc file
- To speed up the process:
  - We can read the encryptor's source: 03encrypt.c
  - We can modify the O3skeleton.py source (generate key)
  - We can modify the O3decrypt-skeleton.c source (decrypt file)



- The encrypted file's content looks like this:
  - byte 0..7 seed
  - byte 8..X encrypted content
- The seed is used to generate the key
- Let's find the key generation function



• Make a note of the IV:

```
argc_local = argc;
argv_local = argv;
local_20 = *(long *)(in_FS_OFFSET + 0x28);
keySize = 0x10,
iv = "AAAABBBEECCCCDDDD";
local_30 = 0x1;
```



• Function used to generate the key:

```
puVar3 = aesKey;
keySize_00 = keySize;
seed = seed_00;
*(undefined8 *)((long)pppcVar10 + .0x18) = 0x10184a;
generateAESKey(seed_00,puVar3,keySize_00);
"(undefined8 ")((tong)pppcVar10 + .0x18) = 0x10185e;
printf("Generated AES Key: ");
```



- Find the generateAESKey() function
  - How many arguments does it have?
  - What is the start and end address?
  - Does it use stack? Heap?
- What is the size of the binary?



- Now that we have all the details we need, try to:
  - use skeleton script for generateAESKey()
  - seed should come from the encrypted file
  - print the key after the function returned



- After the key is generated:
  - use the O3decrypt-skeleton.c source to write your decryptor
  - specify the IV and the key in the source
  - compile it according to the instruction in the file header

// compile: gcc 03decrypt-skeleton.c -o 03decrypt -lssl -lcrypto



#### FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

- Tutorial for Unicorn
- Unicorn Engine Notes
- Unicorn Engine tutorial
- Unicorn Engine Reference (Unofficial)



## **AFTER THE WORKSHOP**

- Well done! You've successfully covered the workshop material
- If you'd like to take your learning further:
  - Continue with the following slides and explore more challenges
  - Join us for the full SRE training: Software Reverse Engineering Training
  - Follow us on twitter: @MantraInfoSec



- Can you create a disassembler?
- Sounds more complex than it is
- Capstone is a lightweight multi-architecture disassembly framework
- API for C, Python, Java, PowerShell, Rust, etc...
- Combining it with Unicorn Engine makes it really powerful
- Use O1caesar and O1caesar.py for this



• First capstone needs to be imported:

from capstone import \*

A Capstone instance needs to be created:
 capmd = Cs(CS\_ARCH\_X86, CS\_MODE\_64)



• The following function needs to be added and the hook replaced:

```
def disas_single(data, address):
    for i in capmd.disasm(data, address):
        print("0x%x:\t%s\t%s" % (i.address, i.mnemonic, i.op_str))
def hook_code(uc, address, size, user_data):
    print("[*] Current RIP: 0x{}, instruction size = 0x{}".
        format(address, size))
    mem = uc.mem_read(address, size)
    disas_single(bytes(mem), address)
```

#### • Output:

[\*] Current RIP: 0x1053217, instruction size = 0x3 mov eax, dword ptr [rbp - 4] 0x101221: [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053220, instruction size = 0x3 0x101224: movsxd rdx, eax [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053223, instruction size = 0x4 rax, gword ptr [rbp - 0x18] 0x101227: mov [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053227, instruction size = 0x3 add rax, rdx 0x10122b: [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053230, instruction size = 0x3 movzx eax, byte ptr [rax] 0x10122e: [\*] Current RIP: 0x1053233, instruction size = 0x2




## LAB: OBFUSCATED CIPHER: UNICORN

- Find your target under: ~/training/extra/05cipher-unicorn/05cipher-unicorn
- Executable deciphers a ciphered message
- Create a Unicorn script that deciphers the message from decipher.this
- External function might cause an issue
- Patch them from Unicorn!
- Use **mem\_write()** and assemblers to create machine code

## Join us for the full SRE training: Software Reverse Engineering Training

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