

Hacking the Packer

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[Introduction](#)

I was checking out a packed file and came across a cool way to resolve Kernel32 exports. This led to an interest in detecting packer-specific signatures, which in turn led to a fun registration-process hacking exercise.

Observing Code Obscurities

The code below is from the entry point of the packed file. It derives the base address of its own image with formula:

```
ImageBase = AddrLastInstruction - (AddrEntryPoint +  
OffsetToLastInstruction)
```

For example, with values filled in:

```
0x00400000 = 0x004FC01D - (0x000FC000 + 0x1D)
```

The formula may not work for executables packed or compiled differently...but lucky for this piece of code, it doesn't have to worry about any others besides its own.

```
.crt:004FC017 code_begin:  
.crt:004FC017         push    ebp  
.crt:004FC018         call   $+5  
.crt:004FC01D         pop    ebp  
.crt:004FC01E         sub    ebp, 1Dh  
.crt:004FC024         mov    eax, ebp  
.crt:004FC026         push  ebp  
.crt:004FC027         pusha  
.crt:004FC028         pushf  
.crt:004FC029         sub    eax, [ebp+7FCh]  
.crt:004FC02F         mov    [ebp+7E8h], eax
```

Starting at the ImageBase in memory, it starts to scan for values at known offsets, based on the PE header format. In particular, it locates the array of IMAGE_IMPORT_DESCRIPTOR structures and loops through reading the value of the Name1 member (pointer to ASCII name of DLL to import). For each result, it compares that ASCII string with "kernel32.dll" (non-case sensitive). If it encounters a match, it saves the base address of the IMAGE_IMPORT_DESCRIPTOR structure that referenced the string and re-uses it to access the FirstThunk member.

After the PE loading process, the FirstThunk member becomes a component Import Address Table and the program works with this information to resolve the rest of the required functions.

Stripping Down Shell Code

The code appears to be written in straight-up assembly and also has a strange function convention that returns true/false by setting or clearing the CPU's carry flag. Return values are checked with `jb` instructions, which jump if the flag is set. This is a cool way to lighten up the size of code. For example, rather than what I've recently been seeing, which takes at least 18 bytes...

```
call function
cmp eax,0
jn/z short condition_false
function:
    // do something
    mov eax,0
    retn
```

```
char sc[] =
"\xE8\x07\x00\x00\x00\x3D\x00\x00\x00\x00\x75\x06\xB8\x00\x00\x00\x00\xC3"
```

...the observed method from this packed file only takes 9 bytes:

```
call_function
jb short condition_false
function:
    // do something
    clc
    retn
```

```
char sc = "\xE8\x02\x00\x00\x00\x72\x02\xF8\xC3"
```

Although the code might not work well as shell code (because of the NULL bytes), it reduces the size in bytes by 50% while maintaining the same type of functionality. This was pretty interesting and made me want to figure out if this procedure is custom or the result of a commercial file packer.

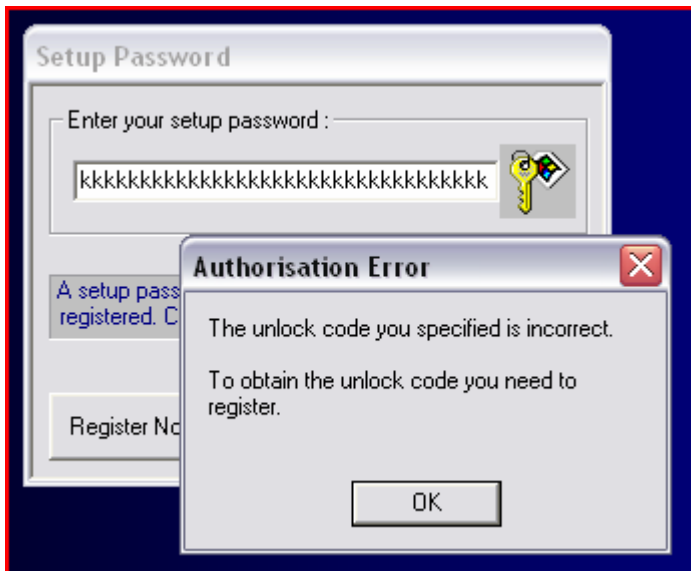
Hacking the Packer

A subtle string from the packed executable identified a suspect product, however the company's website is offline and their utility is pretty rare. To be sure it wasn't just a meaningless string; I wanted to pack a file using the identified product and compare results.

A copy turned up archived on a Polish FTP server, as located by Google. The only problem was that the installation required a password to even unlock the 30 day trial. Since passwords only come via email after registering, and registering cannot be done since the website is offline, the only chance at using this program in the next few minutes is to hack it.



The first thing to do is find out where the user's input ends up after entering a password. I typed 255 'k' characters and let the program reach its denial stage, at which point the process was still running.

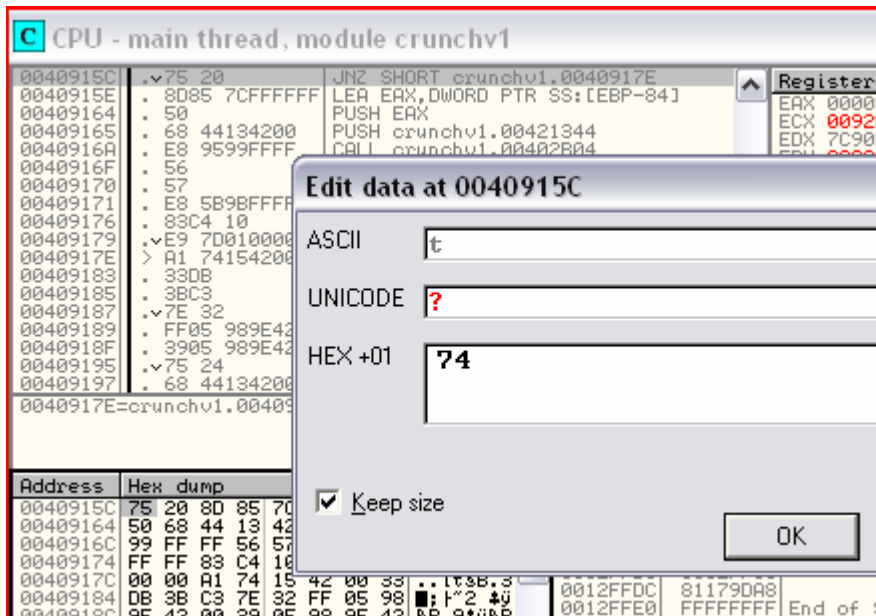



```

.text:0040912A GetPasswordFromUser:
.text:0040912A     lea     eax, [ebp+Data]
.text:00409130     push   80h                ; nMaxCount
.text:00409135     push   eax
.text:00409136     push   410h
.text:0040913B     push   edi
.text:0040913C     call   ds:GetDlgItemTextA
.text:00409142     test   eax, eax
.text:00409144     jz     short error_condition
.text:00409146     lea   eax, [ebp+Data]
.text:0040914C     push   eax
.text:0040914D     push   dword_4290B8
.text:00409153     call   process_password()
.text:00409158     pop    ecx
.text:00409159     test   eax, eax
.text:0040915B     pop    ecx
.text:0040915C     jnz   short error_condition ; want to bypass
.text:0040915E     lea   eax, [ebp+Data]
.text:00409164     push   eax
.text:00409165     push   offset aUnlock ; "unlock"
.text:0040916A     call   sub_402B04

```

Here is a screen shot of modifying the jnz to a jz. Once this is done, regardless of the password entered, installation is allowed to proceed.



So I was considering ways to permanently patch the installer. First, I could find the raw offset to the jnz and overwrite it with a jz using a hex editor. That seemed easiest, except the program has a built-in CRC check and won't run if its own binary has been modified. That would be just as easy to crack, but I'd rather finally use the tool and produce a packed executable for analysis since that was my whole purpose in the first place.

Producing Packed Samples

It turns out that even after getting the 30-day demo installed; the program writes protected versions of packed executables (they don't run) until it is registered. This is OK since I'm not using it to produce any packed executables that I expect to run. All I want to see are signatures around the packed executable's entry point, and that can be done without running it. Along the way to creating some samples, I noticed that there is a threshold between when the packer is efficient and when it actually increases the output file size. Note the smaller file at 36kb grew to 48kb when packed. However, the 548kb sample was reduced to 269kb.

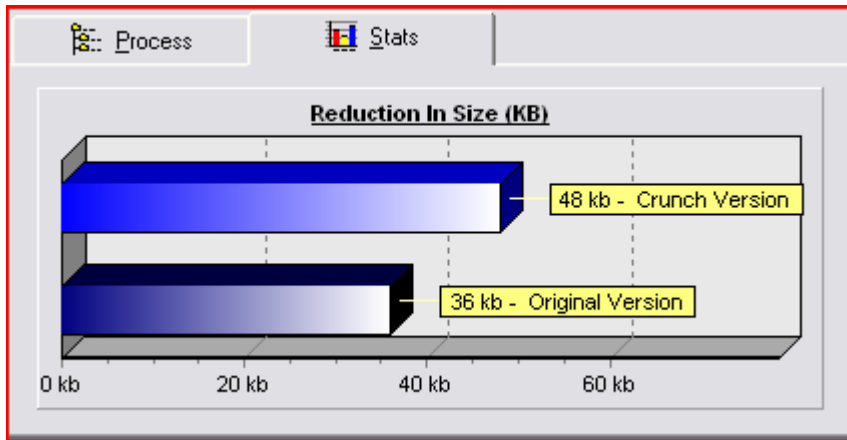


Figure 1: packing a 36kb file.

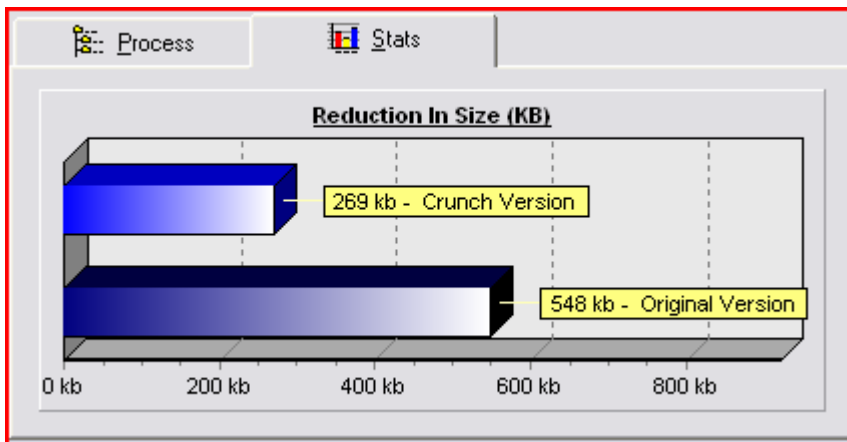


Figure 2: packing a 548kb file.

Possible Signature Set

A (not-necessarily unique) correlation can be made at this point between the new file and the original one. Note the similarity in code at the entry point:

```
Section:004BD000 start          proc near
Section:004BD000                push    ebp
Section:004BD001                call    $+5
Section:004BD006                pop     ebp
Section:004BD007                sub     ebp, 6
Section:004BD00A                mov     eax, ebp
Section:004BD00C                push   ebp
Section:004BD00D                pusha
Section:004BD00E                mov     [ebp+3410h], ebp
Section:004BD014                sub     eax, [ebp+33EBh]
Section:004BD01A                mov     [ebp+249Fh], eax
```

The exact bytes around the entry point of programs packed with this tool will differ, because the section sizes and offsets will change. The instructions and registers would likely remain the same across most versions of the packing tool. It is also likely that a longer, more accurate signature can be derived for this packer.

Extended Kernel32 Resolution

```
.crt:004FC404 ; ||||| S U B R O U T I N E |||||
.crt:004FC404
.crt:004FC404 find_kernel32_import proc near
.crt:004FC404     mov     eax, [ebp+7E8h] ; ImageBase
.crt:004FC40A     mov     edi, [eax+3Ch]
.crt:004FC40D     add     edi, eax
.crt:004FC40F     mov     edx, [edi+80h]
.crt:004FC415     add     edx, eax
.crt:004FC417
.crt:004FC417 top_loop:
.crt:004FC417     cmp     dword ptr [edx+0Ch], 0
.crt:004FC41B     jz     short loc_4FC47D
.crt:004FC41D     mov     ebx, [edx+0Ch]
.crt:004FC420     add     ebx, eax
.crt:004FC422     cmp     byte ptr [ebx], 'k'
.crt:004FC425     jz     short loc_4FC42E
.crt:004FC427     cmp     byte ptr [ebx], 'K'
.crt:004FC42A     jz     short loc_4FC42E
.crt:004FC42C     jmp     short increment_ptr_and_cont
.crt:004FC42E ; -----
.crt:004FC42E
.crt:004FC42E loc_4FC42E:
.crt:004FC42E     cmp     dword ptr [ebx+1], 'enre'
.crt:004FC435     jz     short loc_4FC442
.crt:004FC437     cmp     dword ptr [ebx+1], 'ENRE'
.crt:004FC43E     jz     short loc_4FC442
.crt:004FC440     jmp     short increment_ptr_and_cont
.crt:004FC442 ; -----
.crt:004FC442
.crt:004FC442 loc_4FC442:
.crt:004FC442
.crt:004FC442     cmp     dword ptr [ebx+5], '.231'
.crt:004FC449     jz     short loc_4FC456
.crt:004FC44B     cmp     dword ptr [ebx+5], '.23L'
.crt:004FC452     jz     short loc_4FC456
.crt:004FC454     jmp     short increment_ptr_and_cont
.crt:004FC456 ; -----
.crt:004FC456
.crt:004FC456 loc_4FC456:
.crt:004FC456
.crt:004FC456     cmp     byte ptr [ebx+0Ch], 0
.crt:004FC45A     jz     short found_kernel
.crt:004FC45C
.crt:004FC45C increment_ptr_and_cont:
.crt:004FC45C
.crt:004FC45C     add     edx, 14h
.crt:004FC45F     jmp     short top_loop
.crt:004FC461 ; -----
```

C Representation of Resolver

This mimics a function in the original packed sample, except its input source comes from a binary on disk rather than the RAM space of a running image and it is written in C rather than assembly. This code compiled would be huge compared to the straight-up assembly version. Also, this version scans for symbols starting at FILE_BEGIN of the binary, whereas the packed version starts at the ImageBase virtual address. The desired result will appear like this:

```
Examining c:\putty.exe

/* Locate Import Directory Table */

DOS magic: 0x5a4d @ [raw:0x0000]
PE header offset: 0xf8 @ [raw:0x003C]
PE magic: 0x4550 @ [raw:0x00f8]
Address of entry point: 0x4265f [raw:0x120]
Raw size difference: 0x0
Import Directory offset: 0x60dd8 @ [raw:0x60dd8]

/* Loop through the Name1 member of all existing
   IMAGE_IMPORT_DESCRIPTOR structures and find the one
   which corresponds to kernel32.dll */

Dissing ADVAPI32.dll @ [raw:0x61380]
Dissing COMCTL32.dll @ [raw:0x6138e]
Dissing comdlg32.dll @ [raw:0x613e2]
Dissing GDI32.dll @ [raw:0x616cc]
Dissing IMM32.dll @ [raw:0x6174a]
Dissing SHELL32.dll @ [raw:0x61764]
Dissing USER32.dll @ [raw:0x61e58]
Dissing WINMM.dll @ [raw:0x61e72]
Dissing WINSPOOL.DRV @ [raw:0x61f06]
Found Kernel32 @ [raw:0x62540]
Saving [raw:0x60e8c] as structure base for Kernel32 import

/* Locate the FirstThunk member of Kernel32's
   IMAGE_IMPORT_DESCRIPTOR structure for a pointer
   to the Import Address Table entry */

Kernel32 FirstThunk: [raw:0x60e9c] -> [raw:0x4b100]
Address of imported function: 0x62516 @ [raw:0x4b100]
find_kernel_32_import returned 0x62516
```

It shows the raw (on disk) offset and current value of the 32-bit field that will later be overwritten by a PE loader to contain the virtual address of the first imported function from kernel32.dll. The assembly version would go on to use this information in order to call LoadLibrary(). If the target binary is packed or the entry point RVA is otherwise not aligned with the entry point raw, you will need to set bFixRawSizes to true and manually set the dwRawSizeDiff formula.

```

#include<stdio.h>
#include<windows.h>
#include<string.h>

#define bFixRawSizes false
#define MAX_IMPORTS 0x14

DWORD find_kernel32_import(LPCSTR lpBin);

int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    DWORD dwAddress = 0;
    LPVOID lpLoadLibrary = 0;
    char bin[0x10] = "c:\\\\putty.exe";
    fprintf(stdout, "\nExamining %s\n", bin);
    dwAddress = find_kernel32_import(bin);
    fprintf(stdout, "function returned 0x%x\n", dwAddress);
    return true;
}

DWORD find_kernel32_import(LPCSTR lpBin) {
    char aImportedDLL[0xD] = "";
    unsigned int nIterations = 0x0;
    WORD wMagic_DOS = 0x00;
    WORD wMagic_PE = 0x00;
    DWORD dwNumberOfBytesRead = 0,
          dwOffsetToPEHeader = 0,
          dwOffsetToImportStructs = 0,
          dwOffsetToDLLName = 0,
          dwOffsetToFirstThunk = 0,
          dwAddressOfEntryPoint = 0,
          dwRawSizeDiff = 0,
          dwFirstThunkData = 0,
          dwOriginalFirstThunk = 0,
          dwVirtualAddress = 0,
          dwRetValue = 0,
          dwWhateverValue = 0;
    HANDLE hFile;
    BOOL bResult;

    hFile = CreateFile(lpBin, GENERIC_READ, \
        FILE_SHARE_READ, NULL, OPEN_EXISTING, FILE_ATTRIBUTE_NORMAL, NULL);
    if (hFile == INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
        return 0x2;

    fprintf(stdout, "\n/* Locate Import Directory Table */\n\n");

    // query and validate the MS-DOS header
    if (SetFilePointer(hFile, NULL, NULL, FILE_BEGIN) == \
        (DWORD)INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
        return 0x3;
    if (!ReadFile(hFile, &wMagic_DOS, 0x2, &dwNumberOfBytesRead, NULL) \
        || wMagic_DOS != 0x5a4d)
        return 0x4;

    fprintf(stdout, "DOS magic: 0x%x @ [raw:0x0000]\n", wMagic_DOS);
}

```

```

// query for the raw offset to PE header
if (SetFilePointer(hFile,0x3C,NULL,FILE_BEGIN) == \
(DWORD)INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
    return 0x5;
if (!ReadFile(hFile,&dwOffsetToPEHeader,0x4, \
&dwNumberOfBytesRead,NULL))
    return 0x6;

fprintf(stdout,"PE header offset: 0x%x @ \
[raw:0x003C]\n",dwOffsetToPEHeader);

// query and validate the PE header
if (SetFilePointer(hFile,dwOffsetToPEHeader,NULL,FILE_BEGIN) \
== (DWORD)INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
    return 0x7;
if (!ReadFile(hFile,&wMagic_PE,0x2,&dwNumberOfBytesRead,NULL) \
|| wMagic_PE != 0x4550)
    return 0x8;

fprintf(stdout,"PE magic: 0x%x @ \
[raw:0x00%x]\n",wMagic_PE,dwOffsetToPEHeader);

if (SetFilePointer(hFile,dwOffsetToPEHeader+0x28,NULL, \
FILE_BEGIN) == (DWORD)INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
    return 0x99;
if (!ReadFile(hFile,&dwAddressOfEntryPoint,0x4, \
&dwNumberOfBytesRead,NULL))
    return 0x98;
fprintf(stdout,"Address of entry point: 0x%x \
[raw:0x%x]\n",dwAddressOfEntryPoint,dwOffsetToPEHeader+0x28);

if (bFixRawSizes) { // when rva and raw are not aligned
    dwRawSizeDiff = dwAddressOfEntryPoint - 0x3E00;
}
else dwRawSizeDiff = 0x0; // rva and raw are aligned
fprintf(stdout,"Raw size difference: 0x%0x\n",dwRawSizeDiff);

// query for raw offset of import directory
if (SetFilePointer(hFile,dwOffsetToPEHeader+0x80,NULL, \
FILE_BEGIN) == (DWORD)INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
    return 0x9;
if (!ReadFile(hFile,&dwOffsetToImportStructs,0x4, \
&dwNumberOfBytesRead,NULL))
    return 0x10;

fprintf(stdout,"Import Directory offset: 0x%x @ \
[raw:0x%x]\n",dwOffsetToImportStructs, \
dwOffsetToImportStructs-dwRawSizeDiff);

dwOffsetToImportStructs = dwOffsetToImportStructs - \
dwRawSizeDiff;

fprintf(stdout,"\n/* Loop through the Name1 member \
of all existing\n");
fprintf(stdout,"    IMAGE_IMPORT_DESCRIPTOR structures \
and find the one\n");
fprintf(stdout,"    which corresponds to kernel32.dll */\n\n");

```

```

// loop through the Name1 member of
// IMAGE_IMPORT_DESCRIPTOR structures for kernel32.dll
for(;;) {
    nIterations++;
    if (nIterations > MAX_IMPORTS) {
        fprintf(stdout,"Past max imports...\n");
        break;
    }
    dwOffsetToDLLName = dwOffsetToImportStructs + 0xC;
    if (SetFilePointer(hFile,dwOffsetToDLLName, \
        NULL,FILE_BEGIN) == (DWORD)INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
        return 0x11;
    if (!ReadFile(hFile,&dwOffsetToDLLName,0xC, \
        &dwNumberOfBytesRead,NULL))
        return 0x12;
    dwOffsetToDLLName -= dwRawSizeDiff;
    if (SetFilePointer(hFile,dwOffsetToDLLName, \
        NULL,FILE_BEGIN) == (DWORD)INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
        return 0x13;
    if (!ReadFile(hFile,aImportedDLL,0xC, \
        &dwNumberOfBytesRead,NULL))
        return 0x14;
    if (strcmp(aImportedDLL,"KERNEL32.dll") == 0) {
        fprintf(stdout,"Found Kernel32 @ \
            [raw:0x%x]\n",dwOffsetToDLLName);
        fprintf(stdout,"Saving [raw:0x%x] as \
            structure base for Kernel32 import\n",
            dwOffsetToImportStructs);
        break;
    }
    fprintf(stdout,"Dissing %s @ [raw:0x%x]\n", \
        aImportedDLL,dwOffsetToDLLName);
    dwOffsetToImportStructs += 0x14; }

fprintf(stdout,"\n/* Locate the FirstThunk member of \
Kernel32's\n");
fprintf(stdout,"    IMAGE_IMPORT_DESCRIPTOR structure \
for a pointer\n");
fprintf(stdout,"    to the Import Address Table entry */\n\n");

// query for FirstThunk member of IMAGE_IMPORT_DESCRIPTOR
dwOffsetToFirstThunk = dwOffsetToImportStructs + 0x10;
if (SetFilePointer(hFile,dwOffsetToFirstThunk,NULL,FILE_BEGIN) \
== (DWORD)INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
    return 0x15;
if (!ReadFile(hFile,&dwFirstThunkData,0x4, \
&dwNumberOfBytesRead,NULL))
    return 0x16;

fprintf(stdout,"Kernel32 FirstThunk: [raw:0x%x] -> [raw:0x%x]\n",
    dwOffsetToFirstThunk,dwFirstThunkData-dwRawSizeDiff);

/* scan to offset pointed to by the FirstThunk which should
be the virtual address of the first imported function
from kernel32.dll as resolved by the PE loader at runtime */
if (SetFilePointer(hFile,dwFirstThunkData,NULL,FILE_BEGIN) \

```

```
== (DWORD)INVALID_HANDLE_VALUE)
    return 0x17;
if (!ReadFile(hFile,&dwVirtualAddress,0x4, \
&dwNumberOfBytesRead,NULL))
    return 0x18;

fprintf(stdout,"Address of imported function: \
0x%x @ [raw:0x%x]\n", dwVirtualAddress, \
dwFirstThunkData-dwRawSizeDiff);

return dwVirtualAddress;
}
```