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Analysis of Password Protected Documents Using Statistical Approaches on High Performance Computing



Ajeet Singh, Vikas Tiwari, Allu Swamy Naidu, Appala Naidu Tentu, K. Surjan Raju, and Ashutosh Saxena

Abstract Password-based validation frameworks are as yet the most regularly utilized components for ensuring the data regardless of being helpless against dictionary reference-based attacks. Password breaking is the way towards speculating or recuperating a secret key from put away areas or from an information transmission framework. Best state-of-the-art password analysing methods like HashCat, John the Ripper and rainbow crack empower clients to check billions of passwords each second against the secret key hashes. This paper discusses various techniques including traditional, probabilistic and statistical methods for cracking the password protected files. Further, experimental evaluation, rationale and performance analysis on some sample password protected files are presented in this paper. The findings in this paper will also help understanding of both password-composition policies and metrics for quantifying password security.

Keywords Privacy · Password cracking · Dictionary attack · Brute-force attack · Personally identifiable information · Learned patterns

1 Introduction

Despite significant progress in attackers' abilities to crack passwords, text-based passwords remain the most used validation approach in computer-based systems. There are a wide range of approaches to validate clients of a framework; for example, a client can introduce a physical article like a key card, demonstrate character utilizing an individual trademark like a fingerprint or use something that solitary the client

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knows. Passwords [1, 2] are one of the methods designed to provide authentication [3–5]. As opposed to different methodologies recorded, an essential advantage of utilizing confirmation through a password [6] is that if your password becomes compromised it very well may be effortlessly changed. In this paper, we discuss about general view of password cracking, methodologies for password cracking [7] at the point when an attacker can sign in to the framework by giving a client name and password pair, methods [8, 9] when an attacker approaches how passwords are put away on the framework. Figure 1 represents some scenarios attempts with which password cracking can occur. Figure 2 gives an overview of password hash salting flow.

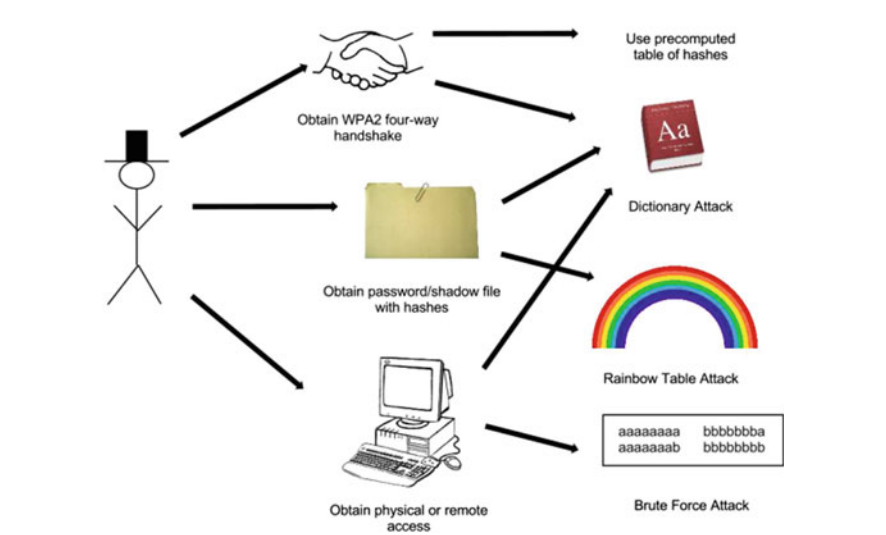


Fig. 1 Various techniques for password cracking

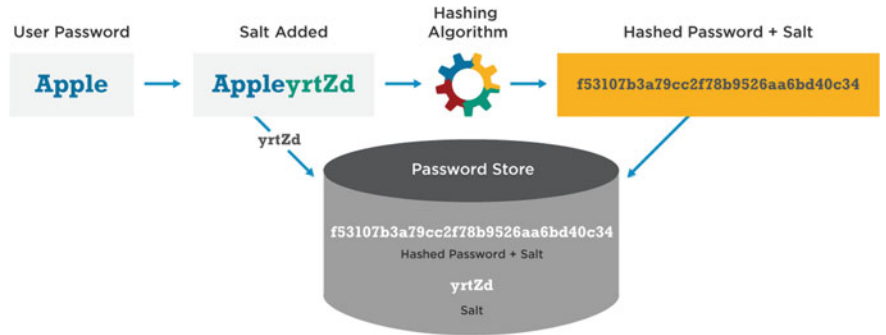


Fig. 2 Password hash salting flow

1.1 Contribution Highlights

Our contribution in this paper is summarized as follows:

- Various techniques including traditional, probabilistic and statistical methods for cracking the password protected files are discussed.
- Experimental evaluation, rationale, computational features and performance analysis on some sample password protected files are presented in this paper.
- Dictionary wordlist creation is performed based on statistical patterns observation by state-of-the-art tools such as *Flex*, *pydictor* and *crunch*.
- Integrated our generated dictionaries with Elcomsoft software tool [10]. Further, tested the functionality for password protected MS-Word input files up to 6-characters length.

1.2 Background and Related Work

This section covers various methods and frameworks developed for password guessing over past years. Kedem et al. [11] discussed the strategy of brute force attack on the Unix passwords in the perspective of SIMD architecture computer. Hitaj et al. [12] given a deep learning methodology for password guessing. Chou [13] given a framework and strategy for password breaking dependent on learned designs from unveiled passwords. Dell et al. [14] and Drmuth et al. [15] proposed a faster platform of password guessing exploiting an ordered Markov enumerator. Juels et al. [16] and Ma et al. [17] given the most occurring passwords and an investigation of probabilistic secret word models. Yampolskiy et al. [18] given an strategy for the dissecting user password selection behaviour for the reduction of certain password space. Weir et al. [19] discussed the attack procedure for password cracking exploiting probabilistic context-free grammars. Kelley et al. [20] discussed techniques for measuring passwords strength measure by resembling password cracking procedures. Bonneau et al. [21] discussed strong passwords choosing strategies, furthermore the development of flawed confirmation over the years.

Wang [22], in his thesis, discussed the key issues in password security. Ma et al. [23] performed the study of probabilistic password models. Narayanan et al. [24] surveyed fast dictionary-oriented attacks on passwords exploiting time-space trade-off technique. Weir et al. [25] presented framework for password cracking exploiting probabilistic context-free grammars. Veras et al. [26] discussed semantic examples of passwords and their corresponding security impact. Melicher et al. [27] proposed a fast and efficient procedure for modelling password guessability using neural networks. Aggarwal et al. [28] did the survey of different modern technologies in password cracking techniques. Tirado et al. [29] presented another dispersed brute force secret phrase breaking method. Hitaj et al. [30] presented a deep learning-oriented methodology for password guessing. Ji et al. [31] given a massive-scale empirical concentrate on the crackability, relationship and security of passwords. Li et al. [32]

given a huge scope observational investigation of Chinese Web passwords. Yampolskiy [33], in their work, analysed client secret phrase determination conduct for decrease of password space. Gong-Shen et al. [34] performed the password weakness evaluation and recuperation dependent on rules mined from enormous data.

Das et al. [35] identified a couple of basic strategies clients frequently utilize to change an essential password between destinations which can be utilized by an aggressor to make password speculating endlessly simpler. Li et al. [36] given an investigation of individual data in human-picked passwords and their security suggestions. Merhav et al. [37] performed attacks. Lu et al. [38] given an estimation investigation of validation rate-restricting components of present day sites. Pal et al. [39] presented a password similarity model using neural networks. Guri et al. [40] analysed the individual data spillage during secret word recuperation of Internet providers. Bailey et al. [41] given the insights on password re-use and versatile strength for monetary records. Emin Islam [42] presented an strategy to crack more password hashes with specific patterns. Stobert et al. [43] talk about the general password life cycle and client conduct in overseeing passwords. Kelley et al. [44] performed measuring password strength by mimicking secret key breaking calculations. Shay et al. [45] discussed the effect of direction and criticism on password creation conduct. Wang et al. [46] given a framework to analyse the passwords of specific Chinese Web end-users.

1.3 Organization of the Paper

Section 2 covers a brief summary on password storage. Various methods of password cracking and other findings are discussed in Sect. 3. Section 4 covers the theoretical password cracking model using Elcomsoft attack tool. Experimental evaluation, computational features, results discussion and performance analysis are presented in Sect. 5, and conclusions are given in Sect. 6.

2 Password Storage

This section provides a short discussion about how the passwords [47, 48] are stored in the system. Putting away client names and comparing passwords in plaintext is not any more an adequate arrangement. Endeavouring to shroud passwords put away as plaintext (e.g. putting the secret phrase record somewhere down in a tangled registry chain of importance) would add up to security through obscurity which would likewise be inadmissible. The Unix arrangement of record the executives, on the other hand, is superior: one of the agreements. Beginning adaptations of Multics (the forerunner to Unix) put away the secret phrase record in clear content, yet just perceptible with superuser consents. This arrangement likewise attacked when a

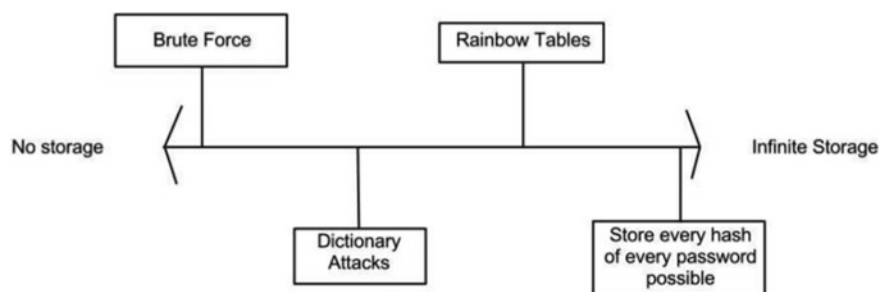


Fig. 3 Variation with respect to storage

bug exchanged some impermanent documents around and the secret key record (in plaintext) was printed for each client upon login [49].

Unix, rather, stores the hashed estimation of passwords in the secret key record rather than the genuine passwords [50, 51]. At that point when a client inputs their secret key, the framework can essentially take the hash of the info and contrast it with the put away hash esteem [52, 53]. Variety regarding capacity is appeared as Fig. 3.

- In a large portion of the Unix-based record frameworks, the secret key document is situated at */and so on/password*. Each line in this record contains data around one record on the framework. The record itself is lucid by all clients, however, is just writable with superuser benefits.
- The secret key document for Windows, known as the security accounts manager (SAM) record, contains seven colon delimited fields: the client name, client number, scrambled secret phrase, hashed secret word, hashed secret phrase under an alternate calculation, complete name of client and lastly home registry. Rather than the Unix secret key record, the Windows SAM document isn't meaningful once the working framework has booted.
- Many sites and online administrations expect clients to sign in with a common secret word plot. This requires the capacity of secret word data. Be that as it may, online administrations normally store passwords for their framework in a non-normalized way, and these frameworks are not generally planned by engineers with foundations in protection or security.

3 Various Methodologies and Findings

This section discusses various methodologies for cracking the password protected files along with some interesting findings.

Table 1 Size of rainbow table and extent of key space covered

Char set	Plaintext length	Key space	Table size (GB)
ascii-32-95	1–7	2^{46}	52
ascii-32-95	1–8	$2^{52.5}$	460
Mix-alpha-numeric	1–8	$2^{47.65}$	127
Mix-alpha-numeric	1–9	$2^{53.6}$	690
Lower-alpha-numeric	1–9	$2^{46.5}$	65
Lower-alpha-numeric	1–10	$2^{51.8}$	316

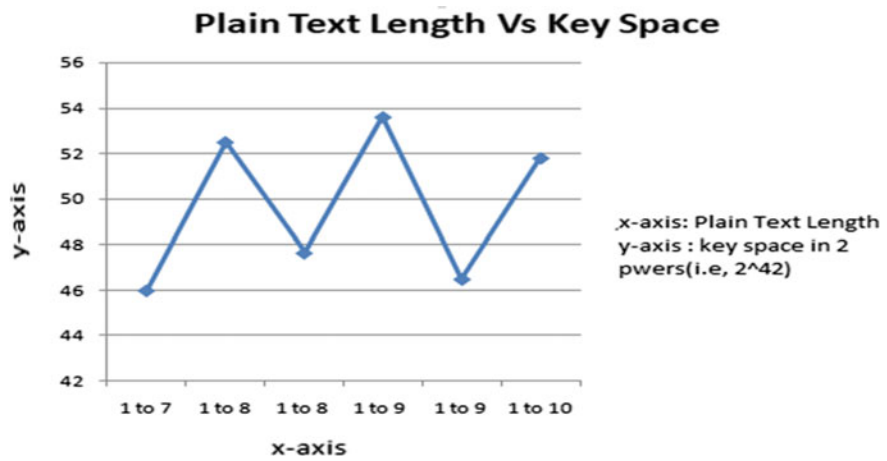


Fig. 4 Variation of plaintext length versus key space covered

3.1 Rainbow Tools for Password Recovery

Here, the strategy is straightforward, i.e. by precomputing some part to the issue (regularly either by explaining subproblems or by discovering normal arrangements), the time cost of taking care of the issue all in all is diminished, while the space necessities are considerably not as much as what might be expected to completely precompute the solution.

3.1.1 RainbowCrack

RainbowCrack [54] is a computer program that was developed by Zhu Shuanglei. It cracks hashes exploiting rainbow tables and recovers the plaintext. Table 1 and graph (shown in Fig. 4) represent the size of rainbow table and extent of key space covered for different character types having different lengths.

Table 2 Sizes of rainbow tables for different Hash algorithms

Char set	Plaintext length	Key space	Table size		
			NTLM (GB)	SHA-1 and MySQLSHA1 (GB)	MD5 (GB)
All-space	1–7	$2^{42.7}$	–	–	–
Alpha-space	1–9	$2^{42.86}$	35	–	23
Lower-alpha-numeric-space	1–9	2^{47}	–	108	108
Mix-alpha-numeric	1–9	$2^{53.7}$	1000	504	1000
Mix-alpha-numeric-space	1–7	$2^{41.9}$	17	–	17

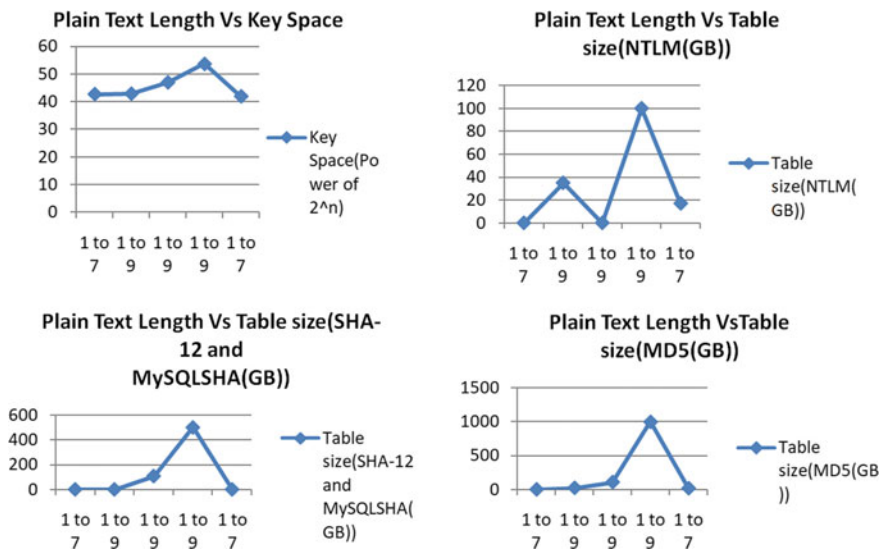


Fig. 5 Comparison between the plaintext lengths and key space, NTLM, MD5, SHA-1 and MySQL-SHA1

3.1.2 Rainbow Tables Generation

Rainbow tables generation is a free software application currently available in English, and it was last updated on 2010 and downloadable. Table 2 gives the sizes of rainbow tables for different hash algorithms.

The graph (shown in Fig. 5) gives comparison between the plain text lengths and key space, NTLM, MD5, SHA-1 and MySQLSHA1.

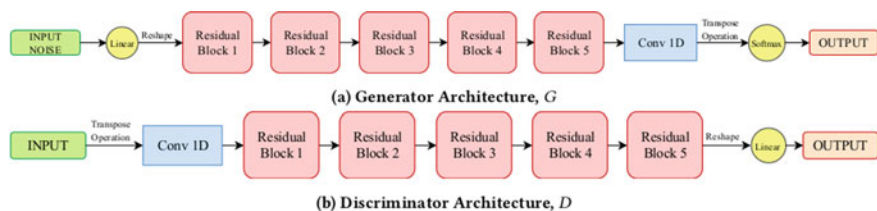


Fig. 6 PassGAN's architecture

Rcracki_mt can be used to perform a rainbow table attack on password hashes. *GUIRainbowCrack* is extended version of RainbowCrack in GUI. GUI RainbowCrack is a new way to crack password using pre-computed password hash table (PCPH). It substantially improves the speed of standard password cracking.

3.2 *PassGAN: Generative Adversarial Networks Architecture Based Password Guessing*

PassGAN [12] replaces human-generated password rules with theory-grounded machine learning algorithms. PassGAN architecture view is shown in Fig. 6.

3.2.1 Architecture Overview

Figure 6 represents PassGAN's architecture. There are two components named as generator and discriminator.

It utilizes—*matplotlib*—2.1.1, *numpy*—1.13.3, *Tensorflow*—1.4.1, *Tensorflow-gpu*—1.4.1.

4 Password Cracking Using Elcomsoft Attack Tool

The rationale and various attacks provided by Elcomsoft password recovery tool [10] are summarized as follows.

4.1 Rationale

- It supports all versions of Microsoft Office 2.0 to Microsoft Office 2019 and PDF form as password protected input file.

- Dictionary, such as, exploitation of rockyou.txt [55] and brute force attacks with user-defined masks and templates. User can add his own created dictionary of any size in the tool then execute the attack.
- Supports multiple language dictionaries.
- Supports GPU acceleration with state-of-the-art NVIDIA cards.
- Hardware acceleration reduces password recovery time by a factor of ≈ 50 .
- Supports 64 CPUs and up to 8 GPUs.

5 Experimental Evaluation and Performance Analysis

This section presents experimental set-up, simulation environment, obtained results in various test case scenarios and performance analysis in terms of CPU and GPU utilization.

5.1 Set-Up and Simulation Environment

Our high performance computing workstation set-up and simulation environment consist of following software and hardware specifications: Operating system as Windows 10, Intel Core i7-8750H processor, RAM size 32 Gb, NVIDIA Quadro P600 graphics card having 384 NVIDIA CUDA Cores and Python 3.7 installed.

5.2 Obtained Results

The input in the experiments is in the form of password protected word documents. The obtained results in various test case scenarios are given in Table 3. The time to recover password is judged based on attack scenarios, i.e. password character length, chars combination, search space and attack type. Various experimental test cases of 4, 5, 6 characters are taken into consideration.

Performance analysis is done based on CPU and GPU utilization (representation is given as Figs. 7 and 8).

6 Conclusive Discussion

This paper discusses various techniques including traditional, probabilistic and statistical methods for cracking the password protected files. Experimental evaluation, rationale, computational features and performance analysis on some sample password protected files are also presented in this paper.

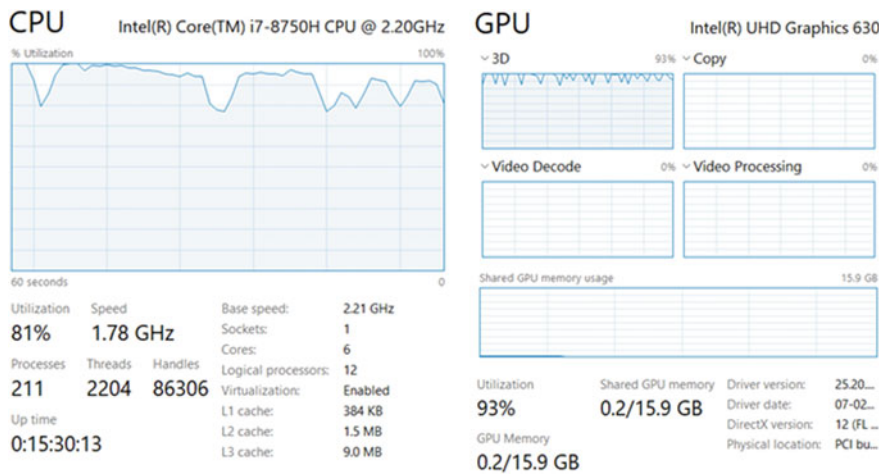


Fig. 7 CPU and GPU utilization

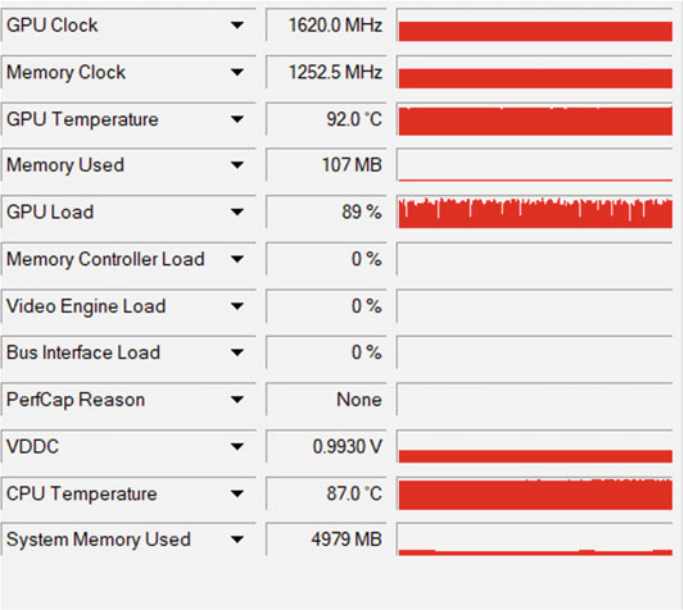


Fig. 8 Sensors view of NVIDIA Quadro P600 graphics card

Table 3 Tabular representation of the obtained results in various test scenarios

Char len	Combination	Search space	Attack type	Time to recover password
4	< a...z > < 0...9 >	36^4	Brute force attack	≈65 s
5	< a...z > < 0...9 >	36^5	Dictionary attack	≈110 s
6	< a...z > < A...Z > < 0...9 >	62^6	Dictionary attack	≈154 s
6	< a...z > < A...Z > < 0...9 >	62^6	Dictionary attack	≈1500 s
6	< a...z > < A...Z > < 0...9 >	62^6	Dictionary attack	≈1140 s
6	< a...z > < A...Z > < 0...9 >	62^6	Dictionary attack	≈240 s
6	< a...z > < A...Z > < 0...9 >	62^6	Dictionary attack	≈618 s
6	< a...z > < A...Z > < 0...9 >	62^6	Dictionary attack	≈1862 s

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