Automation of MitM Attack on Wi-Fi Networks

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BlindCopy BlindCopy BlindCopy https://mvondracek.github.io/wifimitm/

Abstract. Widely used network technologies and principles of wireless security suffer weaknesses that can be exploited to perform the Man-in-the-Middle attack, allowing to eavesdrop or to spoof the network communication. The work focuses on possibilities of automation of the attack with a utilization of available specialized tools. The outcome of the research is the wifimitm package and the wifimitmcli CLI tool, both implemented in Python. The package provides functionality for automated MitM attack and can be used by other software. The wifimitmcli tool is capable of performing a successful fully automated attack without any intervention from an investigator.

This research is intended to be used for automated penetration testing and to ease forensic investigation. Finally, a popularization of the fact that such severe attacks can be successfully automated should be used to raise the public awareness about the information security.

Key words: Man-in-the-Middle attack, accessing secured wireless networks, password cracking, dictionary personalization, tampering network topology, impersonation, phishing

1 Introduction

This paper aims at research concerning a security of wireless networks. It delivers a study of widely used network technologies and principles of wireless security. Analyzed technologies and security algorithms suffer weaknesses that can be exploited to perform the Man-in-the-Middle attack. A successful realization of this attack allows not only eavesdropping on all the victim's network traffic but also spoofing the communication [1], [16, pp. 101–120], [21, pp. 4–7].

The victim, in this case, is a suspect conducting his activity on a targeted network. The attacker is a law-enforcement agency investigator with appropriate legal authorization to intercept the communication and further more to perform a direct attack on the network. In some cases, the suspect might be aware of the possibility that his communication might be intercepted or can and do harden his network. For example, he uses any of overlay networking technologies, e.g., VPN implemented by L2TP, IPsec [9, pp. 09–10], PPTP in the traditional way to connect securely to some other entity, or anonymization network like Tor, I2P, etc., to create an encrypted tunnel configured on his gateway, for all external

communication. This concept is easy to implement and does not require any additional configuration on endpoint devices. The interception outside of suspect's LAN would not yield necessary evidence in comparison with the interception inside. On the one hand, this scheme is considered not secure [5, pp. 425-431], on the other, it is used by large vendors like $\operatorname{Cisco}[2]$ or $\operatorname{Microsoft}[19]$ for branch office deployment. In these cases, even when an investigator is legally permitted to carry out an attack, this kind of approach to get evidence is scarcely used, because it requires expert domain knowledge to be planned and exercise without any trace noticeable by the suspect. Thus, this process of evidence collection is very expensive and human resource demanding.

The aim of this research is to design, implement and test a tool able to automate the whole process of accessing a secured WLAN and to perform data interception. Further more, this tool will be able to tamper with the communication to provide more evidence by getting in the middle of the communication to access otherwise encrypted data in not encrypted form. This way, using the automated tool would not require any expert knowledge from the investigator. For the chosen implementation of the MitM attack (Figure 1), It is necessary for an investigator to obtain access to the WLAN used by the suspect. Therefore, this research focuses on exploitable weaknesses of particular security algorithms. Upon successful connection to the network, the investigator needs to adjust a network topology. For this purpose, weaknesses of several network technologies can be exploited. From the point when the investigator is connected to the network, and the topology is successfully modified, the investigator can start to intercept or to change all the suspect's network traffic.

Specialized tools focused on exploiting individual weaknesses in security algorithms currently used in WLANs are already available. There are also specialized tools focused on individual steps of the MitM attack. Tools that were researched and selected for incorporation are outlined in section 2.

Based on the acquired knowledge, referenced studies and practical experience from manual experiments, authors were able to create an attack strategy. The plan is composed of an appropriate set of available tools. The strategy is then able to select and manage individual steps which are the most suitable for a successful *MitM* attack on given *WLAN*. This strategy further includes ways of impersonation and phishing for cases, when the network is properly secured, and the weakest part of the security is the legitimate user.

The final solution was tested during experiments with an available set of equipment. Developed open source software, which could be incorporated into other tools, can perform a fully automated attack and requires zero knowledge. The use case of this software is found in automated penetration testing, forensic investigation, and education.

2 Security Weaknesses in WLAN Technologies

Following network technologies (Sections 2.1, 2.2), which find a significant utilization, unfortunately, suffer from security weaknesses in their protocols. These flaws can be used in the process of the *MitM* attack.

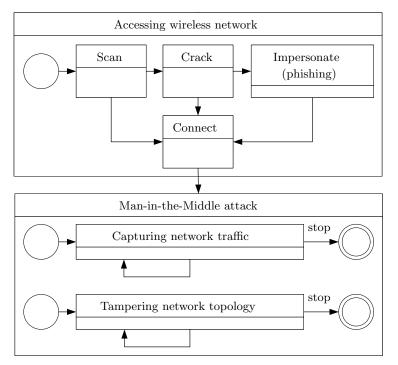


Fig. 1. During the first phase – $Accessing\ wireless\ network$, the tool is capable of an attack on $WEP\ OSA$, $WEP\ SKA$, $WPA\ PSK$ and $WPA2\ PSK$ secured WLANs. In a case of the dictionary attack on the device deployed by the UPC company, used dictionaries are personalized by the implicit passwords. In the case of properly secured WLAN, impersonation (phishing) can be employed. Using this method, an investigator impersonates the legitimate network to obtain the WLAN credentials from the user. For the second phase – $Tampering\ network\ topology$, $ARP\ Spoofing\$ technique was selected from the researched methods. This method proved itself with reasonable performance during experiments. During this phase, the tool needs to continuously work on keeping the network $stations\ (STAs)$ persuaded that the spoofed topology is the correct one. An investigator is now able to capture or modify the traffic. The successful MitM attack is established.

2.1 Wireless Security

Wired Equivalent Privacy (WEP) is a security algorithm introduced as a part of the IEEE 802.11 standard [6, p. 665], [8, pp. 1167–1169]. At this point, WEP

4 BlindCopy, BlindCopy, BlindCopy.

is deprecated and superseded by subsequent algorithms, but is still sometimes used, as can be seen from Table 1 available from $Wifileaks.cz^1$. WEP suffers from weaknesses and, therefore, it has been broken [4]. There are already implemented tools to provide access to wireless networks secured by WEP available [18]. Regarding WEP secured WLANs, authentication can be either $Open\ System\ Authentication\ (OSA)$ or $Shared\ Key\ Authentication\ (SKA)$ [8, pp. 1170–1174]. In the case of $WEP\ OSA$, any $station\ (STA)$ can successfully authenticate to the $Access\ Point\ (AP)$ [17, pp. 4–10]. $WEP\ SKA$ provides authentication and security of transferred communication using a shared key. Confidentiality of transferred data is ensured by encryption using the RC4 stream cipher. Methods used for cracking access to WEP secured networks are based on analysis of transferred data with corresponding $Initialization\ Vectors\ (IVs)$.

 $Wi\text{-}Fi\ Protected\ Access}^{\circledR}$ (WPA) was developed by the Wi-Fi Alliance $^{\circledR}$ as a reaction to increasing number of security flaws in WEP. The main flaw of WPA security algorithm can be identified at the beginning of client device's communication, where an unsecured exchange of confidential information is performed during the four-way handshake. An investigator can obtain this unsecured communication and use it for consecutive cracking of the $Pre\text{-}Shared\ Key\ (PSK)$.

Wi-Fi Protected Access® 2 (WPA2TM) is a successor of WPA, but security flaws of the WPA PSK algorithm remain significant also for the WPA2 PSK. Information exposed during the handshake can be used for the dictionary attack, which can be further improved by precomputing the Pairwise Master Keys (PMKs) [12, pp. 37–38], [13, p. 3]. Precomputed lookup tables are already available online².

Table 1. Following table summarizes WLAN statistics provided by Wifileaks.cz. Users of this service voluntarily scan and publish details about WLANs in the Czech Republic. Information in the table show that a significant number of WLANs still use deprecated security algorithms. The statistics consisting of 97 192 922 measurements of 2 548 054 WLANs were published on May 26, 2017.

Security	Count	Ratio
WPA2	$1\ 429\ 518$	56 %
WEP	393 579	15 %
WPA	375 984	15 %
open	67 388	
other	281 585	11 %

A critical security flaw in wireless networks secured by WPA or WPA2 is the functionality called $Wi\text{-}Fi\ Protected\ Setup^{TM}\ (WPS)$. This technology was introduced with an aim to provide a comfortable and secure way of connecting to the network. For a connection to the WLAN with WPS enabled, it is possible to use an individual PIN. However, the process of connecting to the properly

¹ http://www.wifileaks.cz/statistika/

² https://www.renderlab.net/projects/WPA-tables/

secured network by providing *PIN* is very prone to brute-force attacks [7]. Because *WPS* is a usual feature in today's access points and that *WPS* is usually turned on by default, *WPS* can be a very common security flaw even in networks secured by *WPA2* with a strong password. Currently, there are already available automated tools for exploiting *WPS* weaknesses, e.g., *Reaver Open Source*³.

Table 2. Results of wardriving in Bratislava and Brno focused on UPC vulnerabilities concerning default $WPA2\ PSK$ passwords [11]. Detailed article about these security flaws is available online [10].

Bratislava (capital of Slovakia) 2016-10-01	Count	Ratio
Total networks	$22\ 172$	
UPC networks		13.95 %
UPC networks, vulnerable	1 327	42.92 % UPC
Brno (city in the Czech Republic) 2016-02-10	Count	Ratio
Total networks	17 516	
UPC networks	2 868	16.37 %

Newly purchased access points usually use WPA2 security by default. Currently, many access points can be found using default passwords not only for wireless network access, but even for AP's web administration. In a case of possible access to the AP's administration, the investigator could focus on changing the network topology by tampering the network configuration. Access to the network management further allows the investigator to lower security levels, disable attack detections, reconfigure DHCP together with DNS and also clear AP's logs. There are already implemented tools, which exploit relations between SSIDs and default network passwords, e.g., upc_keys^4 by Peter Geissler.⁵ These tools could be used in an attack on the network with default SSID to improve dictionary attack using possible passwords. High severity of these security flaws is also proven by the fact that a significant amount of WLANs was found using unchanged passwords, as it is shown in Table 2.

2.2 Network Technologies Used in WLANs

DHCP is used to provide a network device with a suitable configuration without the need for intervention from the user [3]. ARP provides the mapping of IP address to the corresponding MAC address of the device in local area network based on IPv4 [14]. IPv6 utilizes features of ICMPv6 to map devices in the local

³ https://code.google.com/archive/p/reaver-wps/

⁴ https://haxx.in/upc-wifi/

⁵ UPC company is a major ISP in the Czech Republic, URL: https://www.upc.cz

network with Neighbor Discovery. IPv6 Neighbor Discovery provides similar functionality as ARP in IPv4 networks.

Tampering network topology could be performed at the moment when an investigator is successfully connected to the target wireless network. DHCP Spoofing generates fake DHCP communication. This attack can also be referred to as Roque DHCP. An investigator can perform this kind of attack to provide devices in the network with malicious configuration, most often a fake default gateway address or DNS address. A possible countermeasure, DHCP Snooping, is further described in the thesis [20]. A network attack called ARP Spoofing focuses on providing the network devices with fake ARP messages. Investigator's possibilities are in persuading the suspect that the investigator's MAC address is correctly mapped to some specific IP address. If the investigator's aim is to be in the MitM position, he can persuade the suspect about the mapping of default gateway's IP address to the investigator's MAC address. Possible defense against ARP Spoofing attack is analysis of ARP messages transmitted in the network – Dynamic ARP Inspection [20]. The absence of ARP in IPv6 does not guarantee immunity to the attacks based on a very similar principle as ARPSpoofing. An investigator can send a specially generated ICMPv6 neighbor advertisement message to the suspect. The main aim of the investigator is, in this case, the same as in the previous attack. The investigator wants to be in the position suitable for the MitM attack. Possible defense is a Neighbor Discovery Inspection, as described in the thesis [20].

2.3 Available Tools for Specific Phases of the MitM Attack on Wireless Networks

From perspective of the intended functionality of the implemented tool, the whole process of *MitM* attack on wireless networks can be divided into three main phases: *Accessing wireless network, Tampering network topology* and *Capturing network traffic*, as explained in Figure 1.

To access secured wireless networks, $Aircrack-ng\ suite^6$ is considered a reliable software solution. Considering the phase $Accessing\ wireless\ network$ (Figure 1), following tools were utilized. $Airmon-ng\ can\ manage\ modes$ of a wireless interface. $Aircdump-ng\ can\ be\ used to\ scan\ and\ detect\ attacked\ AP.\ Aircrack-ng$ together with aireplay-ng, $aircdump-ng\ and\ upc_keys\ can\ be\ utilized\ for\ cracking\ WEP\ OSA,\ WEP\ SKA,\ WPA\ PSK\ and\ WPA2\ PSK.$ The tool $wifiphisher^7\ can\ be\ used\ to\ perform\ impersonation\ and\ phishing.$ Connection to the wireless network can be established by $netctl^8$. $MITMf^9$ with its $Spoof\ plugin\ can\ be\ used\ during\ the\ Tampering\ network\ topology\ phase.\ Capturing\ traffic\ can\ be\ done\ by\ the\ tool\ dumpcap^{10}$, which is part of the $Wireshark^{11}\ distribution$. Behaviour,

⁶ http://www.aircrack-ng.org/

⁷ https://github.com/sophron/wifiphisher

⁸ https://www.archlinux.org/packages/core/any/netctl/

⁹ https://github.com/bvt3bl33d3r/MITMf

¹⁰ https://www.wireshark.org/docs/man-pages/dumpcap.html

¹¹ https://www.wireshark.org/

usage and success rate of individual tools, as well as possibilities of controlling them by the implemented tool, were analyzed. The software selected for individual tasks of the automated *MitM* attack were chosen from the researched variety of available tools based on performed manual experiments, further described in the thesis [20].

3 Attack Automation Using Developed wifimitm Package and wifimitmcli Tool

The implemented tool is currently intended to run on $Arch\ Linux^{12}$, but it could be used on other platforms which would satisfy specified dependencies. This distribution was selected because it is very flexible and lightweight. Python 3.5 was selected as a primary implementation language for the automated tool and Bash was chosen for supporting tasks, e.g., installation of dependencies on $Arch\ Linux$ and software wrappers.

The functionality implemented in the *wifimitm* package could be directly incorporated into other software products based on Python language. This way the package would work as a software library. Schema of the *wifimitm* package is in Figure 2.

The wifimitm package consists of following modules. The access module offers an automated process of cracking selected WLAN. It uses modules wep and wpa2, which implement attacks and cracking based on the used security algorithm. The wep module is capable of fake authentication with the AP, ARP replay attack (to speed up gathering of IVs) and cracking the key based on IVs. In the case of WPA2 secured network, the wpa2 module can perform a dictionary attack, personalize used dictionary and verify a password obtained by phishing. Verification of the password and dictionary attacks are done with a previously captured handshake. The common module contains functionality which could be used in various parts of the process for scanning and capturing wireless communication in monitor mode. The common module also offers a way to deauthenticate STAs from selected AP.

If a dictionary attack against a correctly secured network fails, a phishing attack can be managed by the $impersonation^{13}$ module. The topology module can be used to change network topology. It provides functionality for ARP Spoofing. The capture module focuses on capturing network traffic. It is intended to be used after the tool is successfully connected to the attacked network and network topology was successfully changed into the one suitable for MitM attack.

3.1 Attack Data

Various attacks executed against the selected AP require some information to be captured first. ARP request replay attack on WEP secured networks requires

¹² https://www.archlinux.org/

For details concerning individual phishing scenarios, please see wifiphisher's website. https://github.com/sophron/wifiphisher

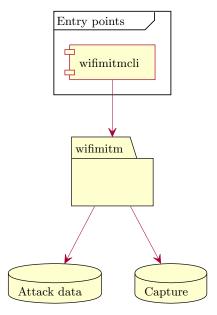


Fig. 2. This figure shows the basic structure of the developed application. The tool *wifimitmcli* uses a functionality offered by the package *wifimitm*. The package is also able to manipulate attack data useful for repeated attacks and capture files with intercepted traffic. Detailed structure of the package is described in section 3.

an ARP request to be obtained in order to start an attacking procedure. Fake authentication in WEP SKA secured network needs PRGA XOR obtained from a detected authentication. Dictionary attack against WPA PSK and WPA2 PSK secured networks requires a captured handshake. Finally, for the successful connection to a network, a correct key is required. When the required information is obtained, it can be saved for a later usage to speed up following or repetitive attacks. Data from successful attacks could be even shared between users of the implemented tool.

3.2 Dictionary Personalization

Weaknesses in default network passwords could be exploited to improve dictionary attacks against WPA PSK and WPA2 PSK security algorithms. The implemented tool incorporates upc_keys^{14} for generation of possible default passwords if the selected network matches the criteria. The upc_keys tool generates passwords, which are transferred to the cracking tool using pipes. With this approach, the implemented tool could be further improved for example to support localized dictionaries.

¹⁴ https://haxx.in/upc-wifi/

3.3 Requirements

The implemented automated tool depends on several other tools, which are being controlled. The Python package can be automatically installed by its setup including Python dependencies. Non-Python dependencies can be satisfied by installation scripts and wrappers, which are currently developed for *Arch Linux*.

MITMf has a number of dependencies. Therefore, the installation script also creates a virtual environment dedicated to MITMf. After installation, MITMf can be easily run encapsulated in its environment. Wifiphisher is also installed in its own environment and run using a wrapper. Tool upc_keys is compiled during installation. Some changes in wifiphisher's source code were implemented, the installation script therefore applies a software patch. Other software dependencies are installed using a package manager.

Due to the nature of concrete steps of the attack, a special hardware equipment is required. During the scanning and capturing of network traffic without being connected to the network, an attacking device needs a wireless network interface in monitor mode. For sending forged packets, the wireless network interface also needs to be capable of packet injection. To be able to perform a phishing attack, a second wireless interface capable of master (AP) mode has to be available. The user can check whether his hardware is capable of packet injection using the aireplay-ng tool. Managing monitor mode of interface is possible with the airmon-ng tool.

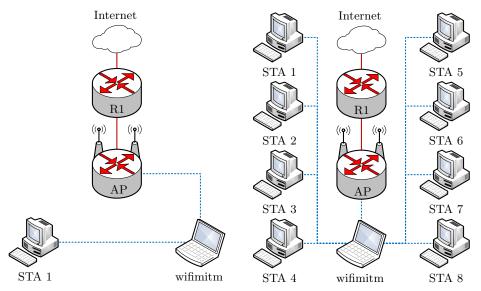


Fig. 3. This figure shows the network topology used for the first performance testing (Section 4) and success rate measurements (Section 5). Results of this performance testing are in Figure 5.

Fig. 4. This figure shows the network topology consisting of 8 *STA*s and 1 *AP* which was used for the second performance testing (Section 4). Results of this performance testing are in Figure 6.

4 Attack's Performance Impact

A scheme of the networks used for the experiments is shown in Figures 3 and 4. The STAs were correctly connected to the AP and they were successfully communicating with the Internet. The implemented wifimitmcli tool was then started and automatically attacked the network.

The performance impact of the *wifimitm* was compared using setups based on $SOHO^{15}$ environment. Both experiments were also evaluated based on the fact, whether the attack being performed was revealed or whether the users had any suspicion about the malicious transformation of their WLAN. Results of the testing are presented in Figures 5 and 6.

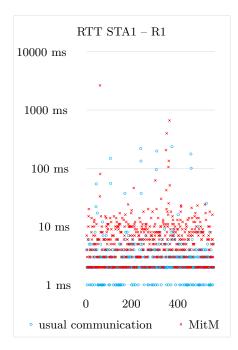


Fig. 5. The first WLAN for performance testing was the same as for the success rate measurements described in Section 5. Figure shows comparison of the measured RTT between STA1 and R1 during usual communication and during successful MitM attack. The results show the performance impact is not critical. Discussion with the users of the attacked network proved this attack unrecognizable.

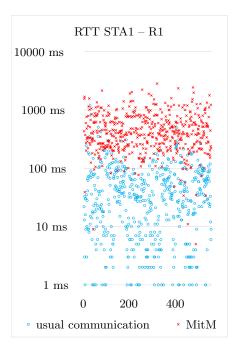


Fig. 6. The second performance testing consisted of 8 STAs and 1 AP connected to the Internet – streaming videos, downloading large files, etc. The figure compares the RTT between STA1 and R1 similarly. The performance impact is more severe than in Figure 5. Despite the performance impact, the users had no suspicion that they were under MitM attack. Instead, they blamed the amount of devices for network congestion.

 $[\]overline{^{15}}$ small office/home office

5 Experiments Concerning Various Network Configurations and Devices

The test was considered successful if the *wifimitmcli* was able to capture network traffic according to the concept of *MitM*. For the test to be correct, no intervention (help) from the investigator was allowed during the attack performed by *wifimitmcli*. Results of the success rate measurements are shown in Tables 3, 4.

Table 3. This table presents results of the success rate measurements. A successful attack is marked using a *checkmark* symbol (✓) and unsuccessful attack is marked using a *times* symbol (×). In the case when the attack was not fully successful, the question mark (?) is used. Such partially successful test (? symbol) can for example happen in situation where the suspect is sending only a portion of his traffic through the investigator. Some of the used STAs lack WEP SKA settings (□ symbol). Testing WPA PSK and WPA2 PSK networks were configured with password "12345678" and WEP secured networks used password "A_b#1".

		Lenovo	Lenovo	Dell	HTC	Apple
		G580,	G505s,	Latitude E6500,	Desire 500,	iPhone 4,
		Windows	Windows	Ubuntu	Android	iOS
		10	8.1	17.04	4.1.2	7.1.2
	open	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Linksys WRT610N	WEP OSA	√	✓	✓	✓	✓
	WEP SKA			✓	✓	✓
WILLOIDIN	WPA PSK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	WPA2 PSK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	open	✓	√	✓	✓	✓
Linkara	WEP OSA	✓	√	✓	✓	✓
Linksys WRT54G	WEP SKA			✓	✓	✓
W K I 54G	WPA PSK	√	√	√	√	√
	WPA2 PSK	√	√	√	√	✓
	open	√	√	√	√	√
Linksys WRP400	WEP OSA	√	√	✓	✓	✓
	WEP SKA			✓	✓	√
WAP400	WPA PSK	√	√	√	✓	✓
	WPA2 PSK	√	✓	✓	✓	✓
TP-LINK TL-WR841N	open	?	×	✓	√	√
	WEP OSA	?	×	✓	✓	×
	WEP SKA			✓	✓	×
	WPA PSK	?	×	✓	✓	×
	WPA2 PSK	?	×	✓	√	×
D-Link DVA-G3671B	open	√	√	√	√	√
	WEP OSA	√	√	√	√	√
	WEP SKA			√	✓	√
	WPA PSK	√	√	√	✓	✓
	WPA2 PSK	√	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 4. The following table shows the results of public experiments. Visitors of the Brno University of Technology, Faculty of Information Technology were invited to let their devices be attacked. Testing network utilized *Linksys WRP400* device as an AP. Symbols used in the table are the same as in Table 3.

Model	OS	Attack
HTC Desire 500	Android 4.1.2	✓
HTC Desire 820	Android 6.0.1	✓
Apple iPhone 6	iOS 10.3.1	✓
Apple iPhone 5s	iOS 10.2.1	✓
Apple iPhone 5		✓
Apple iPhone 5c	iOS 9.2.1	✓
Apple iPhone 4	iOS 7.1.2	✓

Results of experiments (Table 3, 4 and the thesis [20, pp. 42–43]) show, that open networks can be very easily attacked. WEP OSA and WEP SKA secured networks can be successfully attacked even if they use a random password. WPA PSK and WPA2 PSK secured networks suffer from weak passwords (dictionary attack), default passwords and mistakes of users (impersonation and phishing). As Figures 5, 6 and Tables 3, 4 show, MitM attack using the wifimitm is successfully feasible in the target environments.

6 Conclusions

The goal of this research was to implement a tool that would be able to automate all the necessary steps to perform the MitM attack on WLANs. The authors searched for and analyzed a range of software and methods focused on penetration testing, communication sniffing and spoofing, password cracking and hacking in general. To be able to design, implement and test the tool capable of such attack, knowledge of different widespread security approaches was essential. The authors further focused on possibilities of the MitM attack even in the case that given WLAN is secured correctly. Therefore, methods and tools for impersonation and phishing were researched and analyzed.

The authors' work and research resulted in a development of the wifimitm package implemented in the Python language. This package serves as a software library which provides functionality for automated MitM attack on WLANs. The developed package is, therefore, beneficial for others because it can be easily incorporated into other tools. The product of this research is also a tool which incorporates the functionality of the wifimitm package. This tool named wifimitmcli manages the individual steps of automated MitM attack and serves as a CLI. The implemented software comes with a range of additions for a convenient usage, e.g., requirements installation scripts for Arch Linux, requirements check, a Python package setup with wifimitmcli installation and of course a manual page.

The wifimitmcli tool, and therefore wifimitm as well, was tested during experiments with an available set of equipment. As the results show, the implemented software product is able to perform an automated MitM attack on WLANs successfully.

This research and its products could find a good utilization in combination with other security researches carried out at the Brno University of Technology, Faculty of Information Technology. It can serve in an investigation done by forensic researchers [15]. A software capable of automated *MitM* attack on *WLANs* can also be used to improve the security of networks by automatically detecting their vulnerabilities. This way, *wifimitmcli* can be considered an automated penetration testing tool.

In the future iterations of the development, the product could focus on exploiting the weaknesses of widely used WPS. Concerning the current state of the product, it does not focus on enterprise WLANs, which suffer their weaknesses as well.

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