

Remote Video Eavesdropping Using a Software Defined Radio Platform

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Declaration

I Martin Marinov of St Edmund's College, being a candidate for the M.Phil in Advanced Computer Science, hereby declare that this report and the work described in it are my own work, unaided except as may be specified below, and that the report does not contain material that has already been used to any substantial extent for a comparable purpose.

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Abstract

This dissertation presents a software toolkit for remotely eavesdropping video monitors using a Software Defined Radio (SDR) receiver. It exploits compromising emanations from cables carrying video signals. Analogue video is usually transmitted one line of pixels at a time encoded as a varying current. This generates a wideband electromagnetic wave that can be picked up by an SDR receiver. The presented software can map the received field strength of each pixel to a grayscale value in order to show a real-time false colour estimate of the original video signal.

The software significantly lowers the costs required for undertaking a practical attack compared to existing solutions. Furthermore, it allows for an additional digital post-processing which can aid in analysing and improving the results. It also provides mobility for a potential adversary, requiring only a commodity laptop and an USB SDR dongle. The attacker does not need to have any prior knowledge about the victim's video display. All parameters such as resolution and refresh rate can be estimated with the aid of the software.

The software comprises of a library written in C, a collection of plug-ins for various Software Define Radio (SDR) frontends and a Java based Graphical User Interface (GUI). It is designed to be a multi-platform application. All native libraries can be pre-compiled and packed into a single Java jar file which allows the toolkit to run on any supported operating system.

This report documents the digital processing techniques that have been employed in order to extract, detect and lock to a video signal. It also explains the architecture of the software system and the techniques used in order to achieve low latency and real-time interactivity. It demonstrates the usage of the system by performing a practical attack. It then gives some ideas about what could be improved further and some analysis of data that was collected during the development of the software.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Related Work	1
2	Background	3
2.1	Electronic Emanations	3
2.2	IQ sampling	3
3	Methodology	5
4	Practical attack	7
4.1	The Setup	7
4.2	Preparation	8
5	Implementation	9
5.1	Hardware	10
5.2	Architecture	10
5.2.1	Main Library	10
5.2.2	JavaGUI	10
5.3	Digital Signal Processing	10
5.3.1	Overview	10
5.3.2	Signal Reconstruction	10
5.3.3	Frame Synchronization	10
5.3.4	Resolution Detection	10
5.3.5	Extended Bandwidth	10
5.3.6	Testing and Benchmarking	10
6	Summary and Conclusions	11

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Related Work

[Related work and critique]

[1]

Chapter 2

Background

2.1 Electronic Emanations

2.2 IQ sampling

Chapter 3

Methodology

[Explain how the whole system works in high level]

[TODO! Explain how resolution and framerate detection works]

[TODO! Explain how bandwidth relates to resolution $\text{width} \times \text{height} \times \text{framerate}$
= samplerate]

Chapter 4

Practical attack

Before explaining how the software works internally, let's present a demonstration of a practical video eavesdropping attack. Its main aim is to show the ease with which such an attack could happen. In the meantime this will give an opportunity to explain the characteristics of the received signal and how they are exploited.

As in the real world, we will start with no knowledge of the victim's system. We will estimate the frequency at which the emission strength has the best Signal to Noise Ratio (SNR). We will then analyse the signal to detect the resolution and refresh rate of the screen. We will afterwards lock onto the signal and try to recover the original video. We will also discuss some techniques that could be utilized to improve the quality of the image.

4.1 The Setup

The choice for a SDR front-end for this demonstration is a USRP B200¹. Depending on the particular requirements, an attacker might prefer mobility over accuracy and choose the smaller FlexiTV™MSi3101 SDR USB Dongle. However, for this demonstration we will attempt to

¹Refer to 5.1 Hardware for discussion on currently available SDR devices.

4.2 Preparation

Chapter 5

Implementation

5.1 Hardware

5.2 Architecture

5.2.1 Main Library

5.2.2 JavaGUI

Multiplatform

Graphical Interface

Visualisation

5.3 Digital Signal Processing

5.3.1 Overview

5.3.2 Signal Reconstruction

Multithreading

10

Demodulation

Re-sampling

Auto-GUI

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusions

[Summarize results]

[potential future work]

Bibliography

- [1] Markus G Kuhn. Compromising emanations: eavesdropping risks of computer displays. *University of Cambridge Computer Laboratory, Technical Report, UCAM-CL-TR-577*, 2003.