SecuriNets Quals CTF 2023 Submission

Fits under Misc, Codenamed Couch Potato

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Contents

1 Introduction

This is a writeup for the Securinets Quals CTF 2023 possible challenge, which fits under the Misc category with a touch of OSINT. The challenge could be named Couch Potato by adm.

1.1 Description

It's past one, I was probably sleeping in front of my screen, I'm not even sure if I was awake for a bit or not, I'm not even sure if I'm dreaming or not… All I know is that I left the device on my favorite channel and that piece of crap failed me. Agh I need to fix it now. It is no longer responding to the commands I give it, and it is no longer showing my favorite channel! I hate my life, can you help me fix it?

I am looking for three stuff: - *What nonsense was I watching the night the device failed me? - I might need the Up and Down key codes? - The expiration date of my IPTV subscription.*

The flag should be: **Securinets{show_name_upkeycode_downkeycode_YYYYMMDD}** Thanks!

Score: 500 points I guess. Solves: TBA.

1.2 Attachment

A file called `dump.bin` was provided in a zip. Weighing 8 MB. Dating back to February the 1st, 2020. 1:07 AM.

Another file is what seems to be an updated firmware for the device, `Firmware.bin` weighing 4 MB. And dating back to August the 25th, 2020.

2 Analysis

A Couch potato is a lazy guy that sits in front of the TV screen, indicating that we are dealing with a console, set-top-box STB or Digital Video Recorder DVR and not a PCI card satellite/Tuner card or a computer. The user mentioned that he was watching his favorite channel when he fall asleep which make it more likely an STB, or a receiver for simplicity. This also means that the show name we are looking for was broadcasted in his favorite channel.

The user also mentioned that the device failed him, which means that the device is not responding to the commands he is sending to it. Kind of talking about a control unit, or that's clearly a remote control that has some keys malfunctioning, specifically the UP and DOWN arrow keys as we know.

On other hand, the user is suspecting that the IPTV subscription was the thing behind the interruption of his channel. This means that the IPTV subscription was a service provided by the device itself or maybe a third party service. This also means that the STB we're dealing with is a hybrid device, meaning that it can receive satellite signals and also IPTV, making it a 2nd generation STB and there are plenty in the market today, for third world countries.

However, the user could be mistaken as the channels that you can shortlist in the favorites are more likely to be satellite channels, hence the IPTV subscription is not the reason behind the interruption of his favorite channel rather than the satellite signal itself or the cardsharing service he is using.

Note for the readers: I can switch the last part of the flag to cardsharing expiration date instead of IPTV subscription expiration date.

With all that in mind, we can start our information gathering phase.

2.1 Information Gathering

TL;DR.

The thing is devices like this are hard to find in UK, Europe and the US. Unlike Africa and Asia. That's because in European countries and the US, they are mostly banned due to the fact that they are used for cardsharing and IPTV piracy. However, in Africa and Asia, they are still widely used and sold.

So where to look? These devices are not open source nor they have some kind of documentation is to where to look in their ROMs. Satellite forums, subreddits, and Facebook groups are good resources and some deep search would yield some useful tools and details to deal with dump. We kind of need to know how the memory is splitted. The file is indeed a ROM/EEPROM snapshot, so it has a mapping of the memory. We just need to know where the information part is, channel list is, and applications or services are.

The mapping generally includes the following:

- Bootloader
- Kernel or maincode
- User data
- Menu
- …

Each at specific offsets and specific lengths. The user data is the most important part as it contains the channel list.

Keep in mind that if the IPTV subscription was provided by the device itself, then the expiration date could be stored in the device itself or their renewal website. If the IPTV subscription was provided by a third party service, then the expiration date is stored in the third party service database or user panel. In both cases, we need to find the device serial number or MAC address to be able to identify the device and the user. I believe that how they are likely to be stored in the memory dump rather than a plain expiration date.

2.2 Resources

- https://www.satellites.co.uk/forums/
- https://www.reddit.com/r/satellite/
- https://www.tunisia-sat.com/forums/
- https://sat-universe.com/

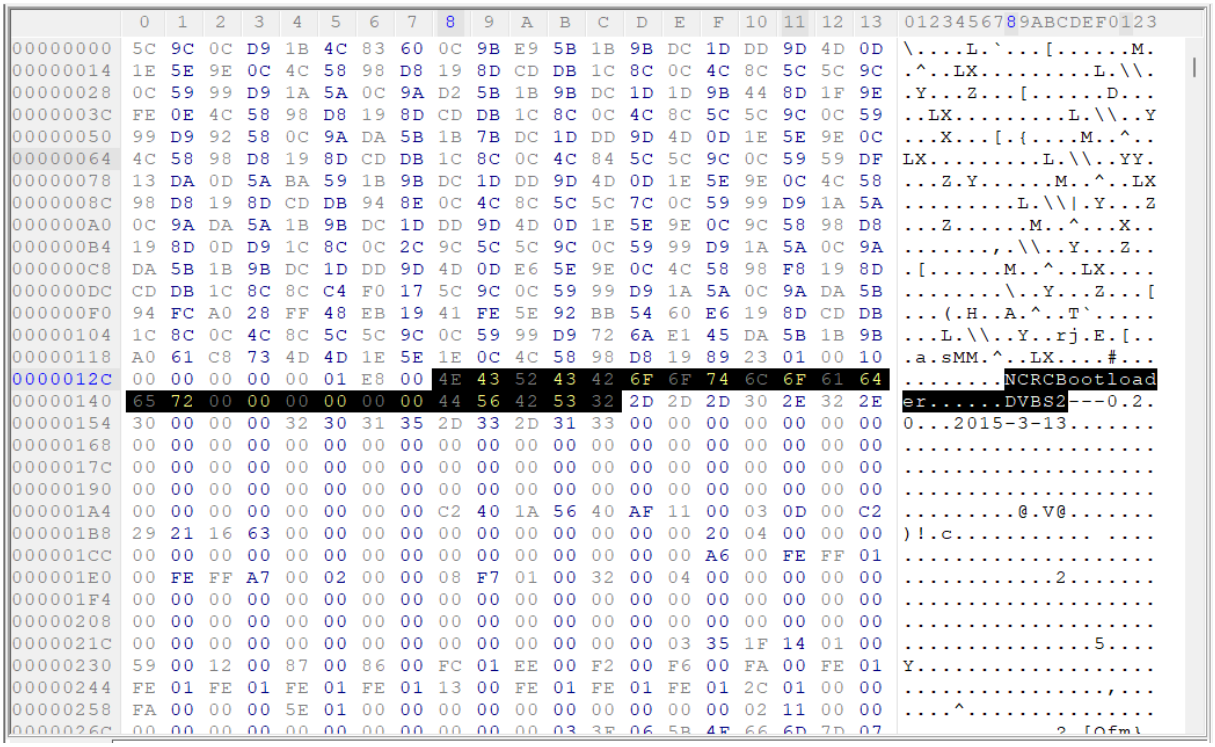
2.3 Tools

HexWorkshop / HxD Editor is a good tool to start with. It is a hex editor that can be used to view and edit files in hexadecimal and binary formats. It is a good tool to start with as it can be used to view the memory dump and search for strings. It can also be used to search for patterns and hex values.

2.4 Writeup

First, let's investigate the dump file.

NCRCBootloader is the start point, which is the bootloader used for these chipsets as indicated in the Hex Editor screen: - ALI3329 - ALI3606 - ALI3601 - ALI3511 - ALI3510 - ALI3516 - ALI3618 - ALI3821



Devices with those chipset have these brands *Starsat, Sunplus, Tiger, StarMax, Geant, Mediastar, QMAX, AzAmerica, Samsat and many more…*

And all of their built-in subscriptions are part of **Gosat**.

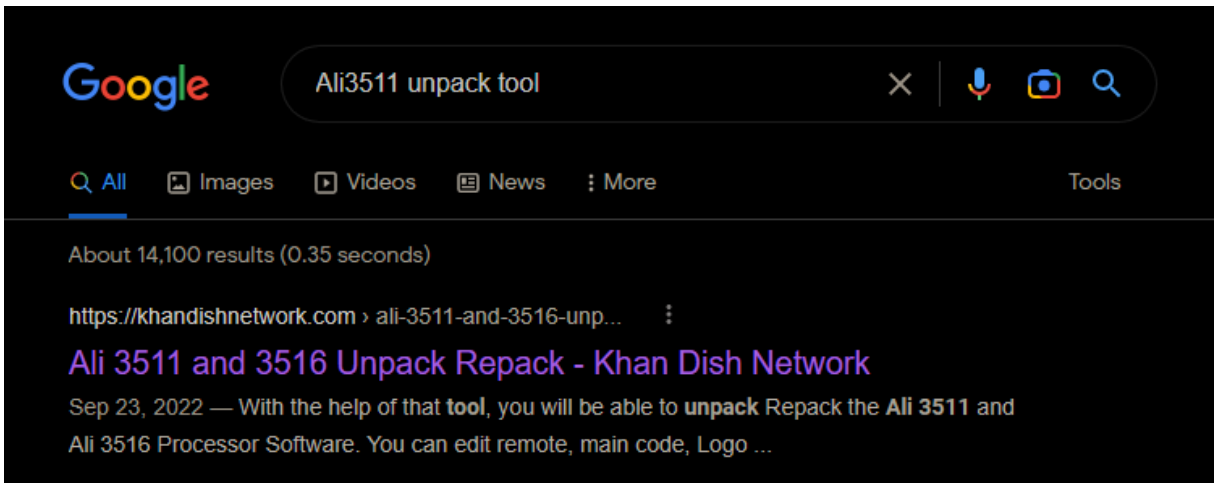
Now, to actually find the specific brand and model, we need to inspect the firmware update file.

To clear things up, the memory dump serves for user data mainly the channels and services as I said while the firmware update file will indicate the remote control being used.

The memory dump is a mapping and can be splitted manually and further investigated. However the firmware is encrypted, you can tell by a first glance, no strings or something in there, and can't help us much to delve into the remote control unit in use.

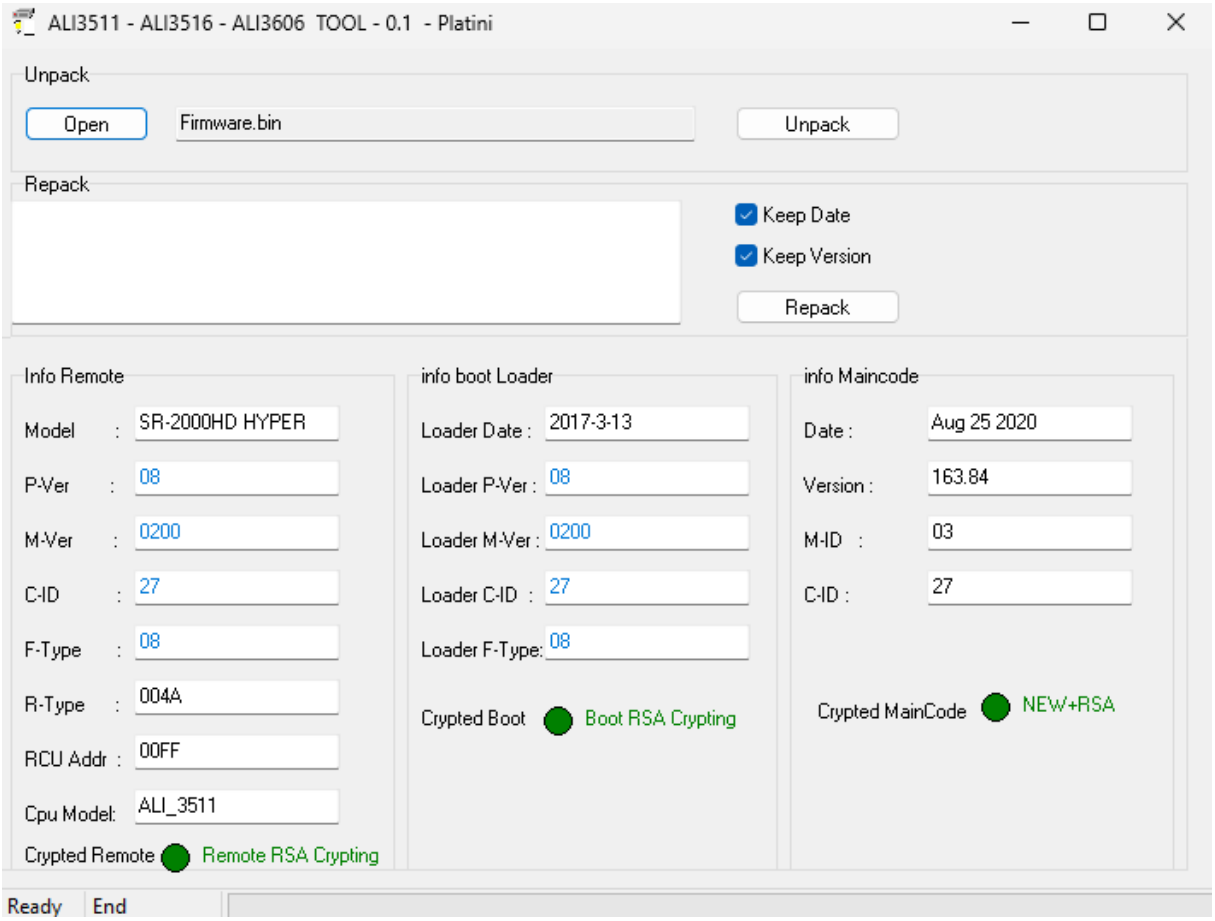
Time to google for a way to decrypt such chipset firmware. Let's use the keyword `ALI3329` or `ALI3511` as they are the most common chipset used in these devices and combine the search with decrypt or unpack tool.

For example:



And in Arabic:

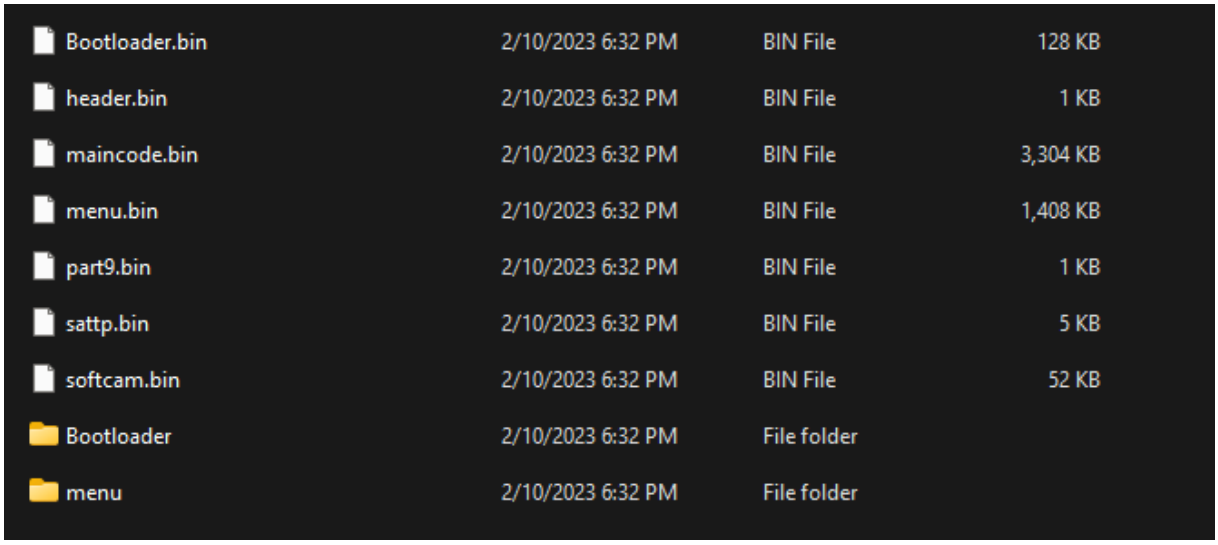
Using the tool, we determine that the model is SR-2000HD HYPER and the remote control is SR-2000HD HYPER. Hence the brand is Starsat.



The unpack and repack features are used to decrypt and extract parts of the firmware like the bootloader, maincode, user data if any was supplied by the manufacturer, the menu, the remote, and sometimes a softcam (that's out of our scope today, maybe in another challenge!). And the repack to insert modified parts and RSA encrypt the whole thing again. Like for instance, we can insert the main menu (including themes and applications) or the remote control unit of a different model or brand and repack it to be used with the device we have, as long as they are using the very same chipset. Well this time, rest assured it is the Hyper remote control and when we talk about key code we mean the IR Infrared key code.

So the whole memory dump thing and the firmware kind of contain similar stuff at least, one being encrypted and the other not.

See here, the content of the folder when unpacked.

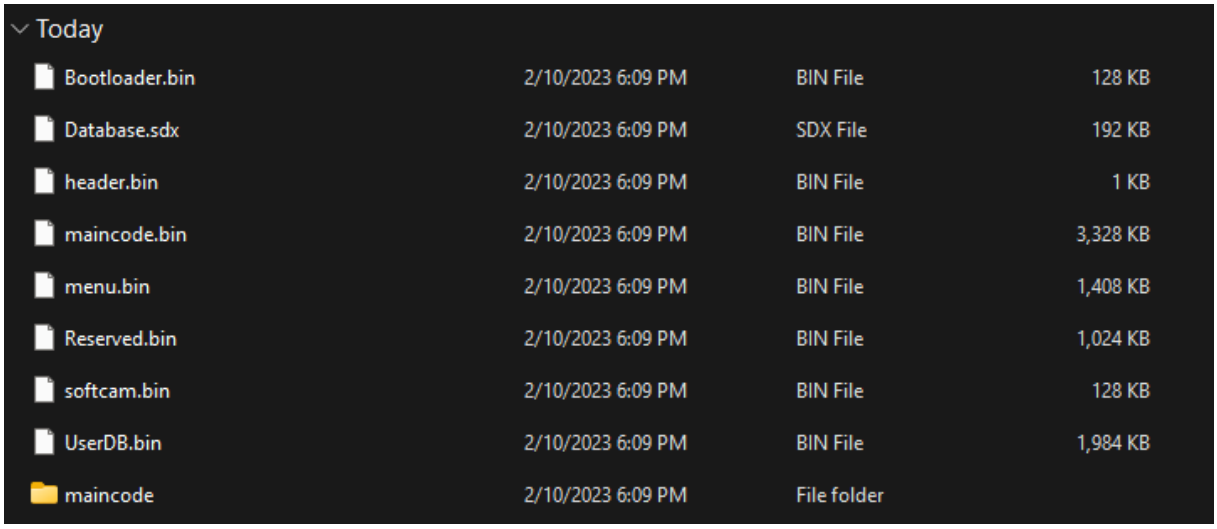


Bootloader.bin	2/10/2023 6:32 PM	BIN File	128 KB
header.bin	2/10/2023 6:32 PM	BIN File	1 KB
maincode.bin	2/10/2023 6:32 PM	BIN File	3,304 KB
menu.bin	2/10/2023 6:32 PM	BIN File	1,408 KB
part9.bin	2/10/2023 6:32 PM	BIN File	1 KB
sattp.bin	2/10/2023 6:32 PM	BIN File	5 KB
softcam.bin	2/10/2023 6:32 PM	BIN File	52 KB
Bootloader	2/10/2023 6:32 PM	File folder	
menu	2/10/2023 6:32 PM	File folder	

So why not, giving the dump a try and unpack it as well, we are chasing the user data part anyway. And the tool might very much help. Otherwise I will show how to proceed manually knowing the offsets and lengths found on a forum.

2.4.1 Finding the show

As I said before, we can deal with this part either using the tool or manually. Well, the tool was able to yield this:



Today

Bootloader.bin	2/10/2023 6:09 PM	BIN File	128 KB
Database.sdx	2/10/2023 6:09 PM	SDX File	192 KB
header.bin	2/10/2023 6:09 PM	BIN File	1 KB
maincode.bin	2/10/2023 6:09 PM	BIN File	3,328 KB
menu.bin	2/10/2023 6:09 PM	BIN File	1,408 KB
Reserved.bin	2/10/2023 6:09 PM	BIN File	1,024 KB
softcam.bin	2/10/2023 6:09 PM	BIN File	128 KB
UserDB.bin	2/10/2023 6:09 PM	BIN File	1,984 KB
maincode	2/10/2023 6:09 PM	File folder	

Very nice, I can see `database.sdx` file there!

Well, to proceed manullay you need to know the offsets and lengths beforehand. This is what I meant:

++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

```
Name : Bootloader.bin
SIZE : 128,00 KB
CRC : 0x00AF7F6C
offset : 0x00000128
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
Name : maincode.bin
SIZE : 3,25 MB
CRC : 0x19E8C348
offset : 0x00020128
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
Name : menu.bin
SIZE : 1,38 MB
CRC : 0x10934143
offset : 0x00360128
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
Name : Database.sdx
SIZE : 9,80 KB
CRC : 0x00146C71
offset : 0x004C0128
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
Name : softcam.bin
SIZE : 42,38 KB
CRC : 0x008D5F15
offset : 0x004C2860
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
Name : sattp.bin
SIZE : 12,54 KB
CRC : 0x00097FDA
offset : 0x004CD1E8
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
Name : Padding.bin
SIZE : 522,06 KB
```

```
CRC : 0x040E1F6B
offset : 0x004D040C
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
```

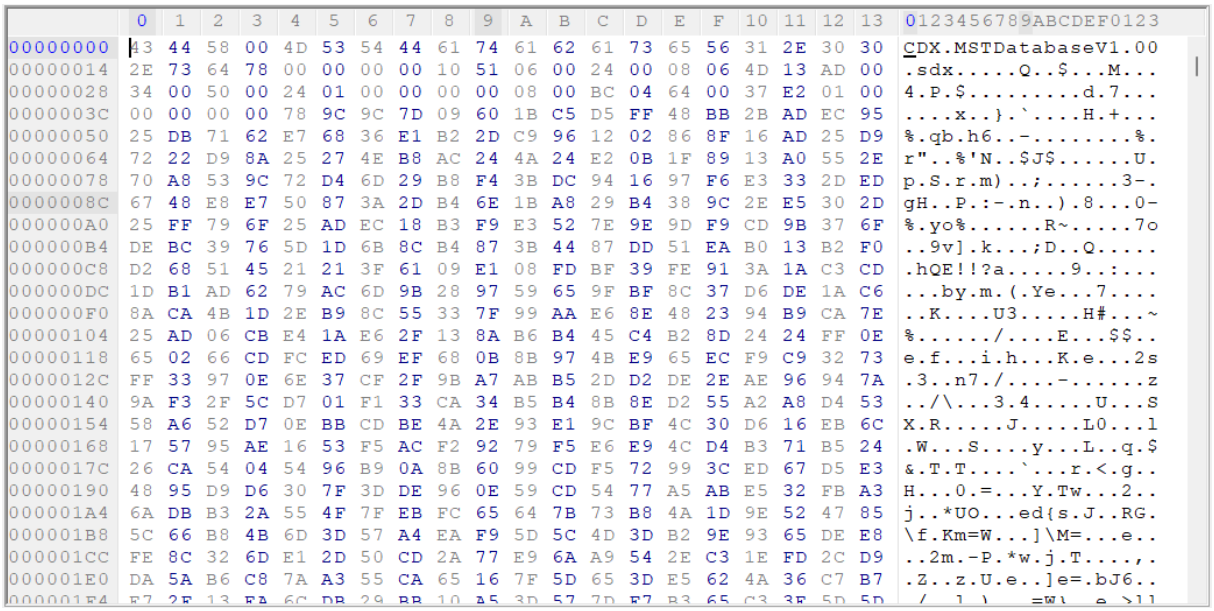
Found here: https://www.tunisia-sat.com/forums/threads/3242761/page-47

We know `database.sdx` holds the user data meaning the channels. sattp is another file that holds the different satellites and their frequencies aka transponders.

When we open the file in a hex editor, We can't read any useful information out of it. This means that there should be a tool in place to view and edit the channels for the specific chipset family we are dealing with as the file seems highly compressed.

Here's a view from hex editor first.

Starts off like this



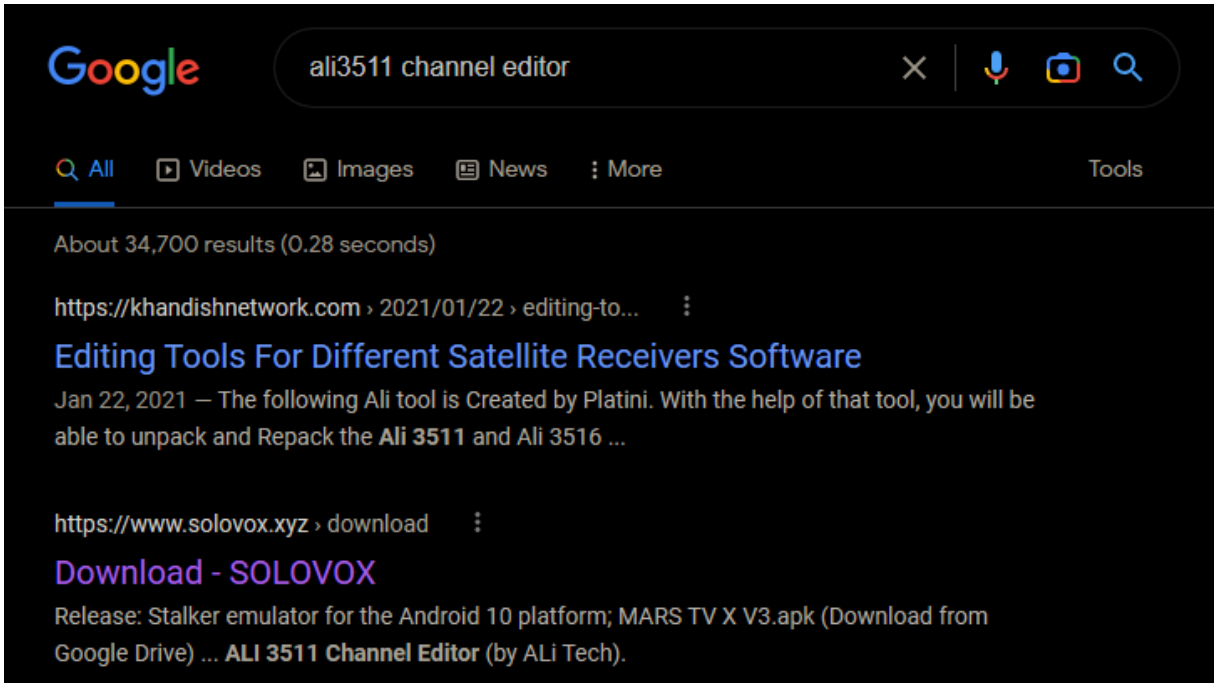
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A	B	C	D	E	F	10	11	12	13	0123456789ABCDEF0123
00000000	43	44	58	00	4D	53	54	44	61	74	61	62	61	73	65	56	31	2E	30	30	CDX.MSTDatabaseV1.00
00000014	2E	73	64	78	00	00	00	00	10	51	06	00	24	00	08	06	4D	13	AD	00	.sdx.....Q..$...M...
00000028	34	00	50	00	24	01	00	00	00	00	08	00	BC	04	64	00	37	E2	01	00	4.P.$.........d.7...
0000003C	00	00	00	00	78	9C	9C	7D	09	60	1B	C5	D5	FF	48	BB	2B	AD	EC	95	....x..}.`....H.+...
00000050	25	DB	71	62	E7	68	36	E1	B2	2D	C9	96	12	02	86	8F	16	AD	25	D9	%.qb.h6..-........%.
00000064	72	22	D9	8A	25	27	4E	B8	AC	24	4A	24	E2	0B	1F	89	13	A0	55	2E	r"..%'N..J......U.
00000078	70	A8	53	9C	72	D4	6D	29	B8	F4	3B	DC	94	16	97	F6	E3	33	2D	ED	p.S.r.m)..;......3-.
0000008C	67	48	E8	E7	50	87	3A	2D	B4	6E	1B	A8	29	B4	38	9C	2E	E5	30	2D	gH..P.:-.n..).8...0-
000000A0	25	FF	79	6F	25	AD	EC	18	B3	F9	E3	52	7E	9E	9D	F9	CD	9B	37	6F	%.yo%......R~.....7o
000000B4	DE	BC	39	76	5D	1D	6B	8C	B4	87	3B	44	87	DD	51	EA	B0	13	B2	F0	..9v].k...;D..Q.....
000000C8	D2	68	51	45	21	21	3F	61	09	E1	08	FD	BF	39	FE	91	3A	1A	C3	CD	.hQE!!?a.....9..:...
000000DC	1D	B1	AD	62	79	AC	6D	9B	28	97	59	65	9F	BF	8C	37	D6	DE	1A	C6	...by.m.(.Ye...7....
000000F0	8A	CA	4B	1D	2E	B9	8C	55	33	7F	99	AA	E6	8E	48	23	94	B9	CA	7E	..K....U3.....H#...~
00000104	25	AD	06	CB	E4	1A	E6	2F	13	8A	B6	B4	45	C4	B2	8D	24	24	FF	0E	%....../....E...$$..
00000118	65	02	66	CD	FC	ED	69	EF	68	0B	8B	97	4B	E9	65	EC	F9	C9	32	73	e.f...i.h...K.e...2s
0000012C	FF	33	97	0E	6E	37	CF	2F	9B	A7	AB	B5	2D	D2	DE	2E	AE	96	94	7A	.3..n7./....-......z
00000140	9A	F3	2F	5C	D7	01	F1	33	CA	34	B5	B4	8B	8E	D2	55	A2	A8	D4	53	../\...3.4.....U...S
00000154	58	A6	52	D7	0E	BB	CD	BE	4A	2E	93	E1	9C	BF	4C	30	D6	16	EB	6C	X.R.....J.....L0...l
00000168	17	57	95	AE	16	53	F5	AC	F2	92	79	F5	E6	E9	4C	D4	B3	71	B5	24	.W...S....y...L..q.$
0000017C	26	CA	54	04	54	96	B9	0A	8B	60	99	CD	F5	72	99	3C	ED	67	D5	E3	&.T.T....`...r.<.g..
00000190	48	95	D9	D6	30	7F	3D	DE	96	0E	59	CD	54	77	A5	AB	E5	32	FB	A3	H...0.=...Y.Tw...2..
000001A4	6A	DB	B3	2A	55	4F	7F	EB	FC	65	64	7B	73	B8	4A	1D	9E	52	47	85	j..*UO...ed{s.J..RG.
000001B8	5C	66	B8	4B	6D	3D	57	A4	EA	F9	5D	5C	4D	3D	B2	9E	93	65	DE	E8	\f.Km=W...]\M=...e..
000001CC	FE	8C	32	6D	E1	2D	50	CD	2A	77	E9	6A	A9	54	2E	C3	1E	FD	2C	D9	..2m.-P.*w.j.T....,.
000001E0	DA	5A	B6	C8	7A	A3	55	CA	65	16	7F	5D	65	3D	E5	62	4A	36	C7	B7	.Z..z.U.e..]e=.bJ6..
000001F4	E7	2F	13	EA	6C	DB	29	BB	10	A5	3D	57	7D	E7	B3	65	C3	3E	5D	5D	./..l.)...=W}..e.>]]

And ends padded with 0xFF

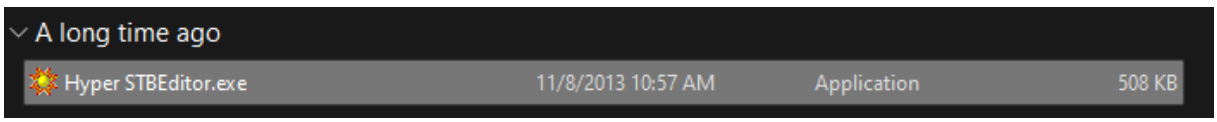
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A	B	C	D	E	F	10	11	12	13	0123456789ABCDEF0123
0002FE2C	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FE40	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FE54	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FE68	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FE7C	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FE90	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FEA4	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FEB8	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FECC	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FEE0	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FEF4	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FF08	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FF1C	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FF30	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FF44	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FF58	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FF6C	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FF80	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FF94	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FFA8	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FFBC	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FFD0	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FFE4	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	.....
0002FFF8	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF	FF													.....

Database.sdx

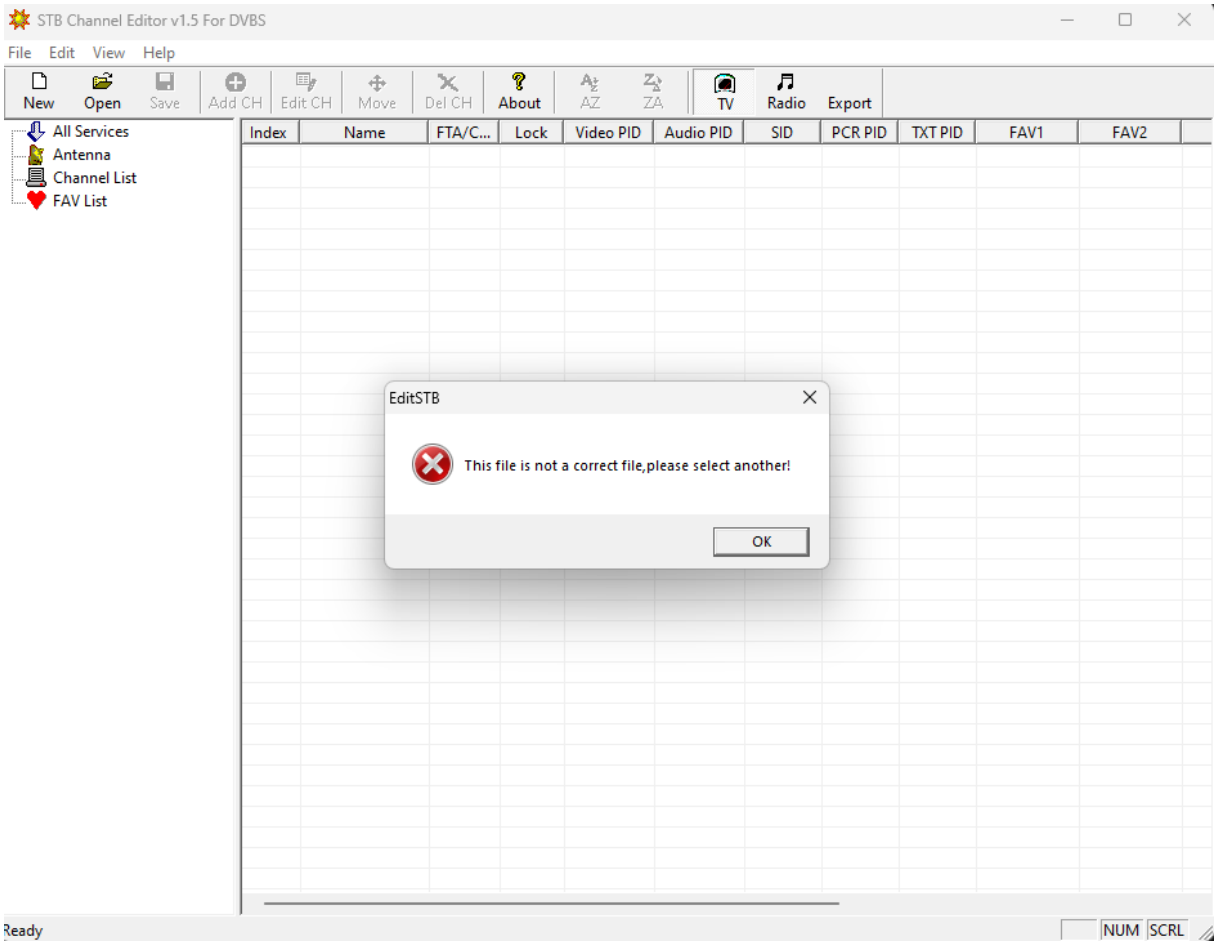
Let's google a bit…



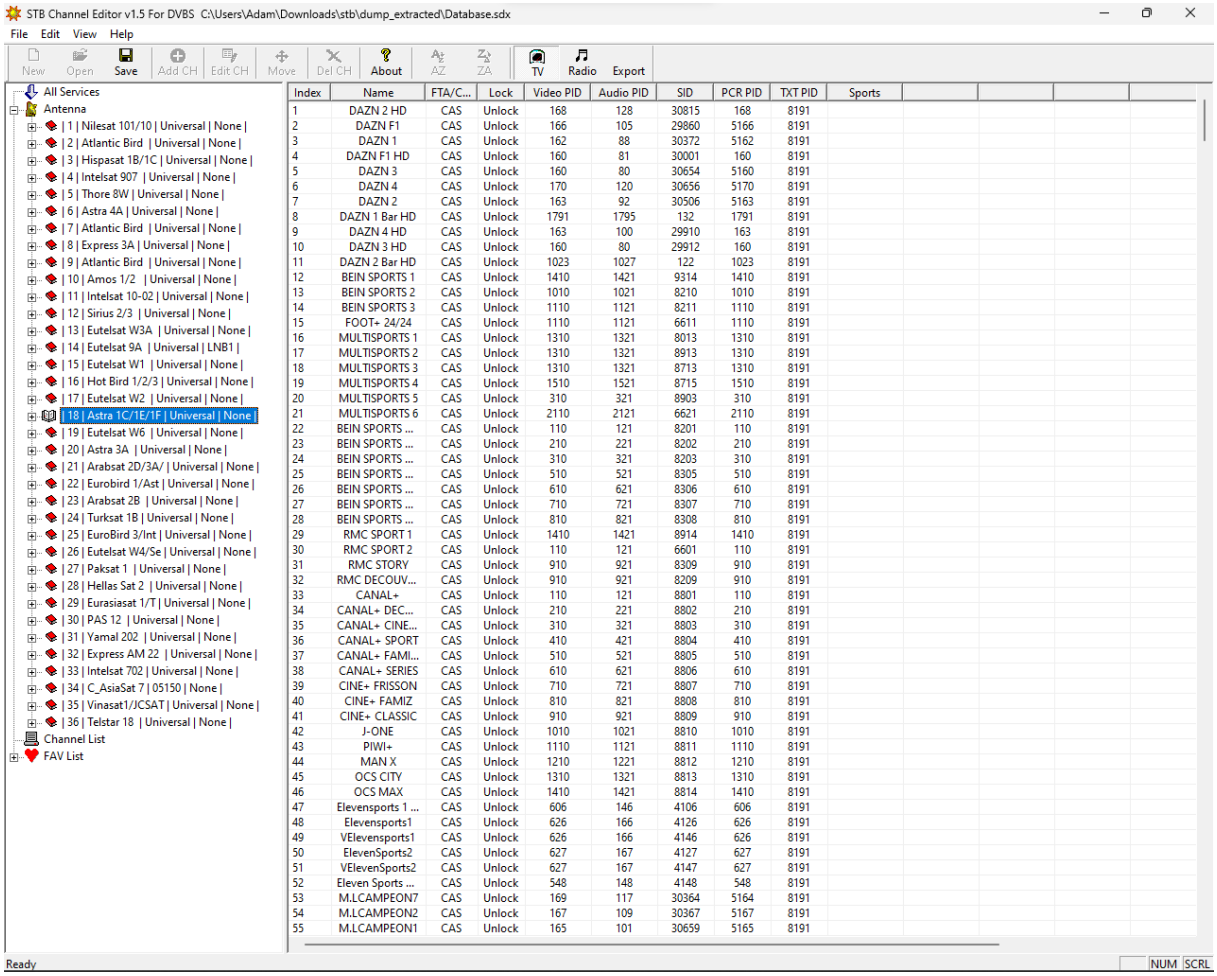
I got this



When trying to first open the database, I got this error message

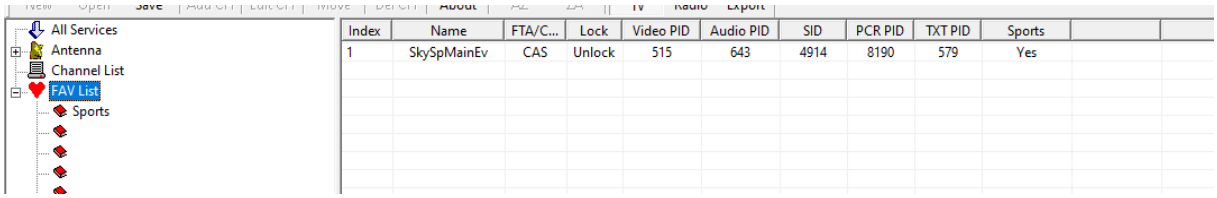


And the issue is that the Userdata has a static size as indicated before. As the receiver's capacity fits a maximum of 6100 channels. So the database file is padded with 0xFF to reach the maximum size. Let's get rid of the padded data and try again..



Now, it's working like charm, and I already see some familiar TV channels on Astra 1 (19.2 East).

Let's expand the favorites section



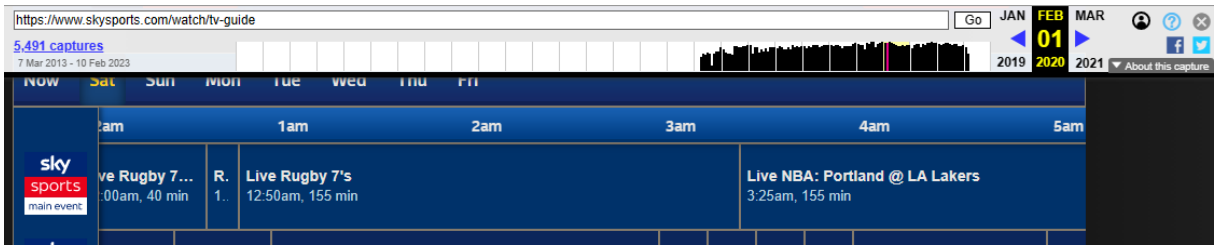
And there is Sky Sports Main Event, UK-based sports channel that is part of BSkyB or Sky Group, pay-television channel and availble for satellite subsribers via Eurobird 1, Astra 2 (28.2 East). Sky Sports Main Event broadcasts the biggest events of sports in the UK.

Now, great work to reach this point, but we are not done yet. We need to find the right show at that past date, meaning at 1:07 AM on February the 1st, 2020.

Well, Sky TV Guide won't keep such data for more than a week or two, so we need to find another way.

I guess you know what I mean, what else than the way back machine!

Head over to archive.org and submit the link for the Sky TV Guide and try to narrow your search to a date that's equal or close to the date in question, as shown below!



And that is the first part of the flag: `live_rugby_7's` or `live_rugby_7s`

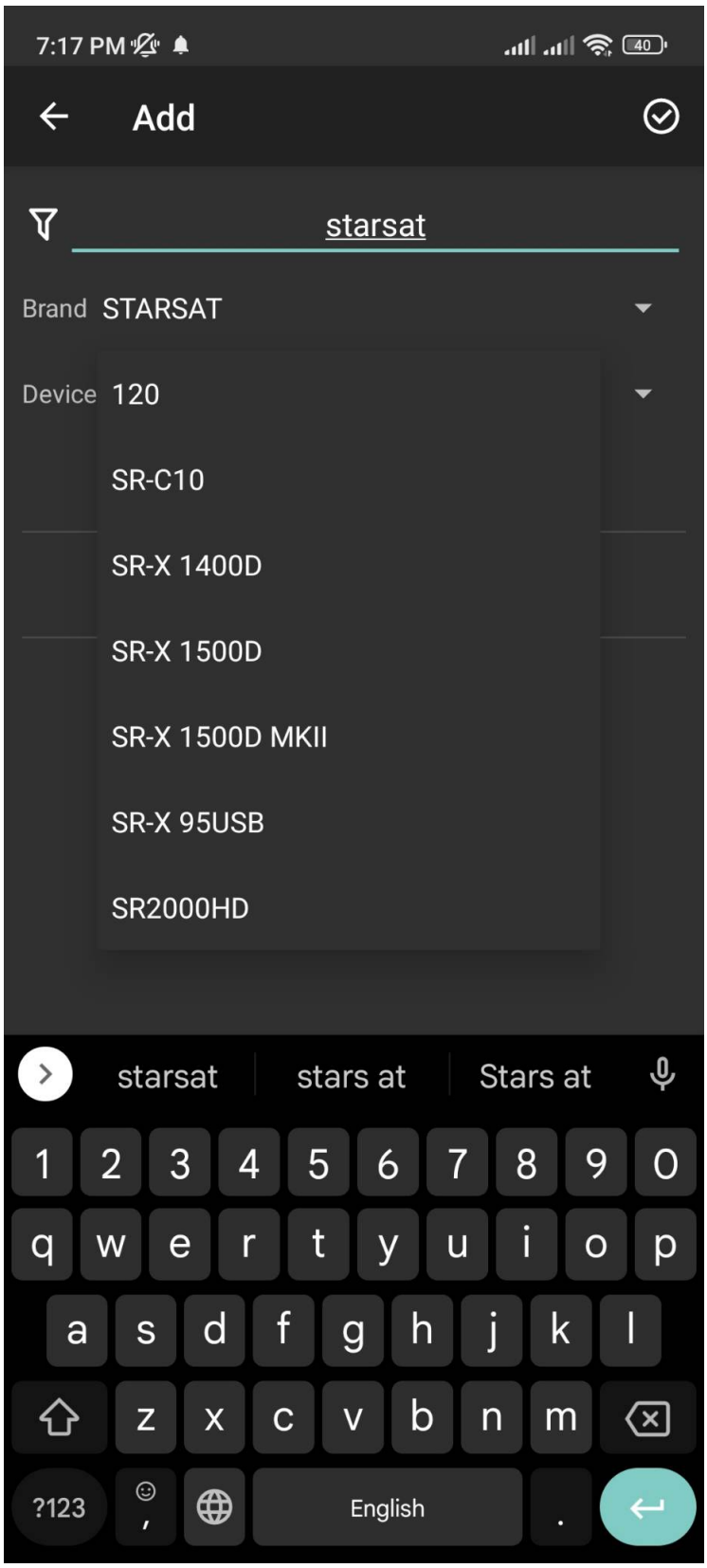
2.4.2 Finding the keycodes

We know it is Starsat SR-2000HD Hyper's remote control, well unless you have the same remote control or probably a remote of the same brand and an Arduino card embedded with an IR receiver, you will need to improvise! Like check online there GitHub repos that keep track of IR key codes for different remotes. Or you can use a forum like https://www.remotecentral.com/ to find the key codes for the remote control.

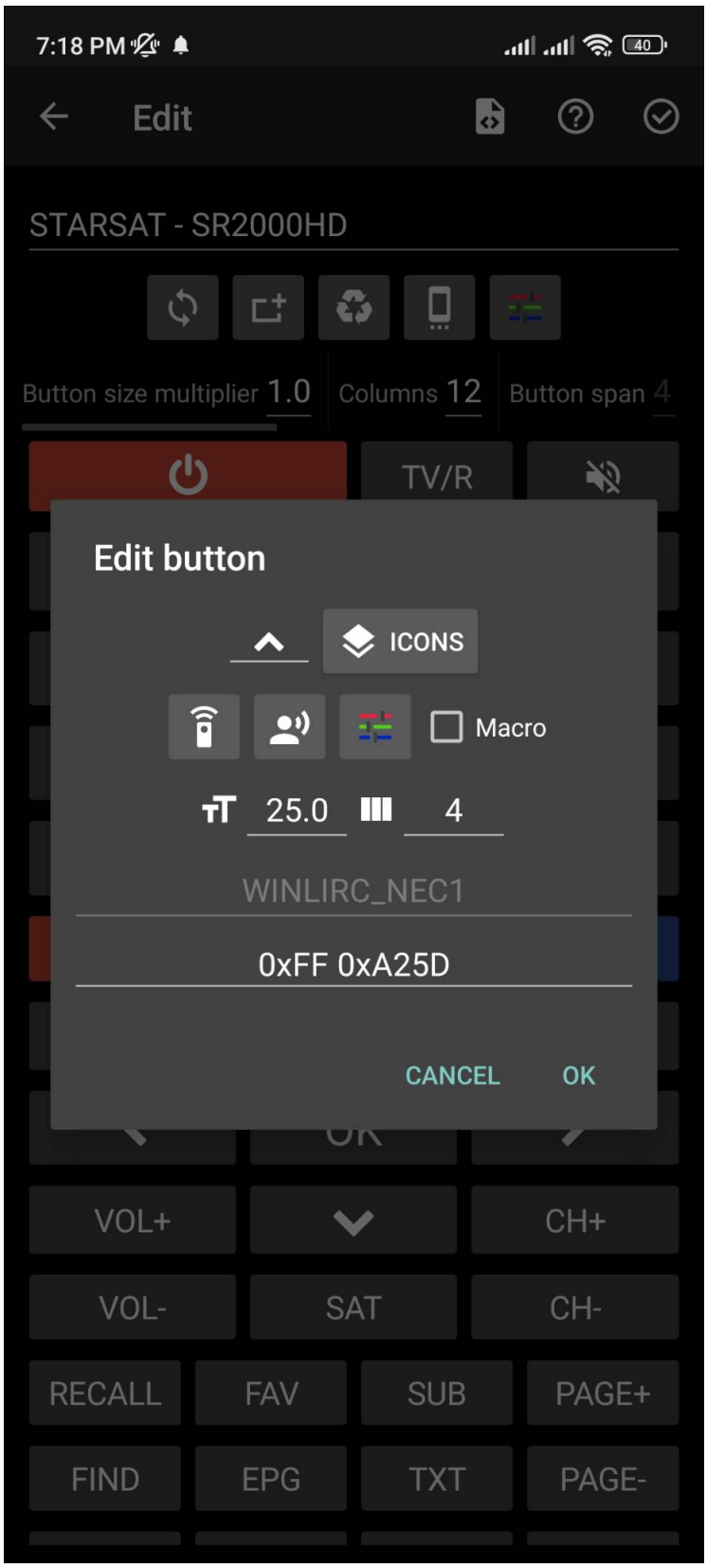
However for this part, I will use an Android app like IRplus or any alternatives and pick the device in question from the list then head over to check the keys, I will provide screenshots for what I've found.

net.binarymode.android.irplus

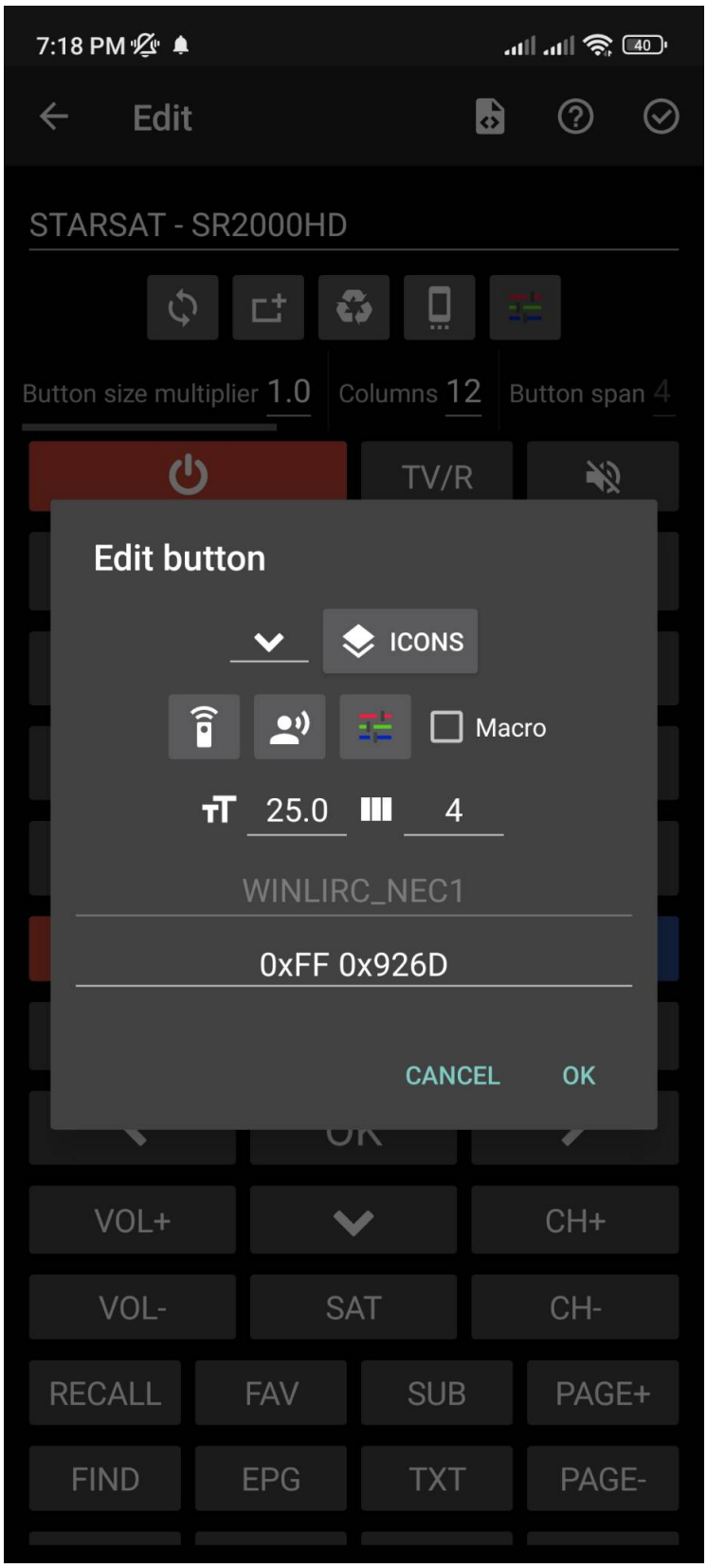
1. Selecting the remote control from the list:


7:17 PM
Add
starsat
Brand STARSAT
Device 120
SR-C10
SR-X 1400D
SR-X 1500D
SR-X 1500D MKII
SR-X 95USB
SR2000HD
starsat
stars at
Stars at
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
q w e r t y u i o p
a s d f g h j k l
z x c v b n m
?123
English

2. Editing the remote and checking the Up arrow


7:18 PM
Edit
STARSAT - SR2000HD
Button size multiplier 1.0
Columns 12
Button span 4
TV/R
Edit button
ICONS
Macro
25.0
4
WINLIRC_NEC1
0xFF 0xA25D
CANCEL
OK
VOL+
CH+
VOL-
SAT
CH-
RECALL
FAV
SUB
PAGE+
FIND
EPG
TXT
PAGE-

3. Checking the Down arrow


7:18 PM
Edit
STARSAT - SR2000HD
Button size multiplier 1.0
Columns 12
Button span 4
TV/R
Edit button
ICONS
Macro
25.0
4
WINLIRC_NEC1
0xFF 0x926D
CANCEL
OK
VOL+
CH+
VOL-
SAT
CH-
RECALL
FAV
SUB
PAGE+
FIND
EPG
TXT
PAGE-

And that is the second part of the flag: `0xffa25d_0xff926d`

2.4.3 Finding the expiration date

Now for the fun part, if you dig around the web about Starsat 2000 Hyper you will end up with one official built in service, Apollo that offers IPTV as well as VOD Video on Demand.

And there is an online service to renew and check your current subscription by just providing the serial number.

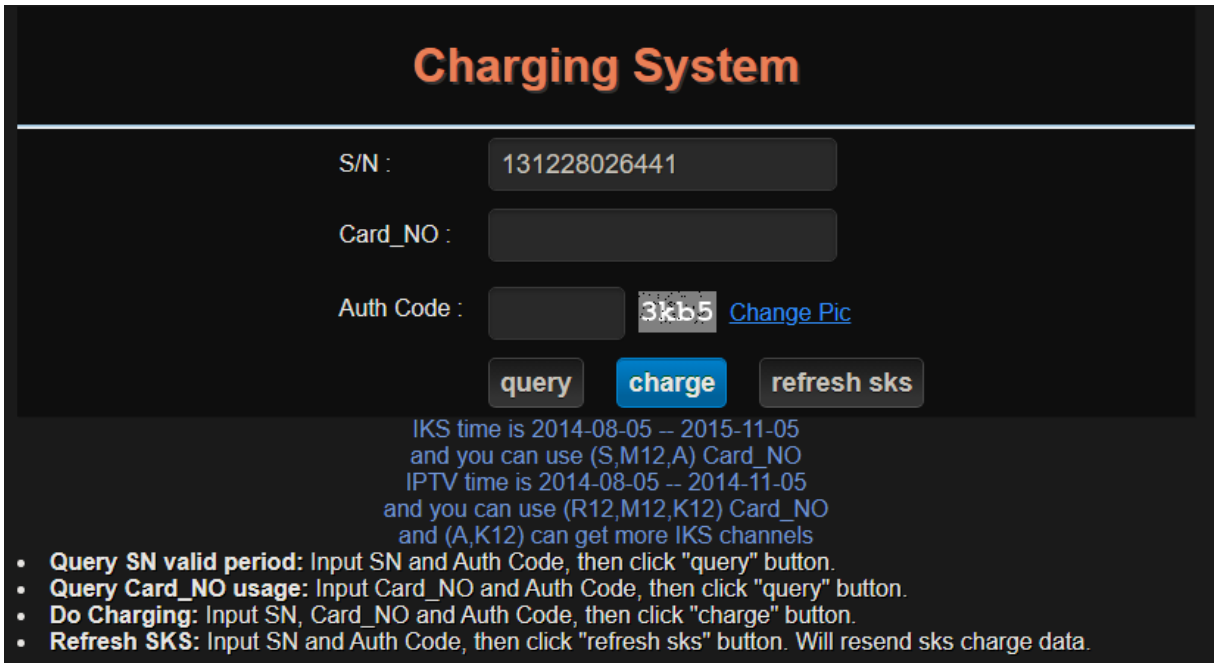
www.renewbox.net

The serial number in most cases is a long number like consists of maybe more than 10 digits. And it can't be in the firmware since it is released to the public to update their devices. So it must be within the memory of the device itself.

Let's grep that easily!

```
/mnt/c/Users/Adam/Downloads/stb ❯ strings dump.bin | grep -oP '\d{10,}'
0000000000000000
131228026441
```

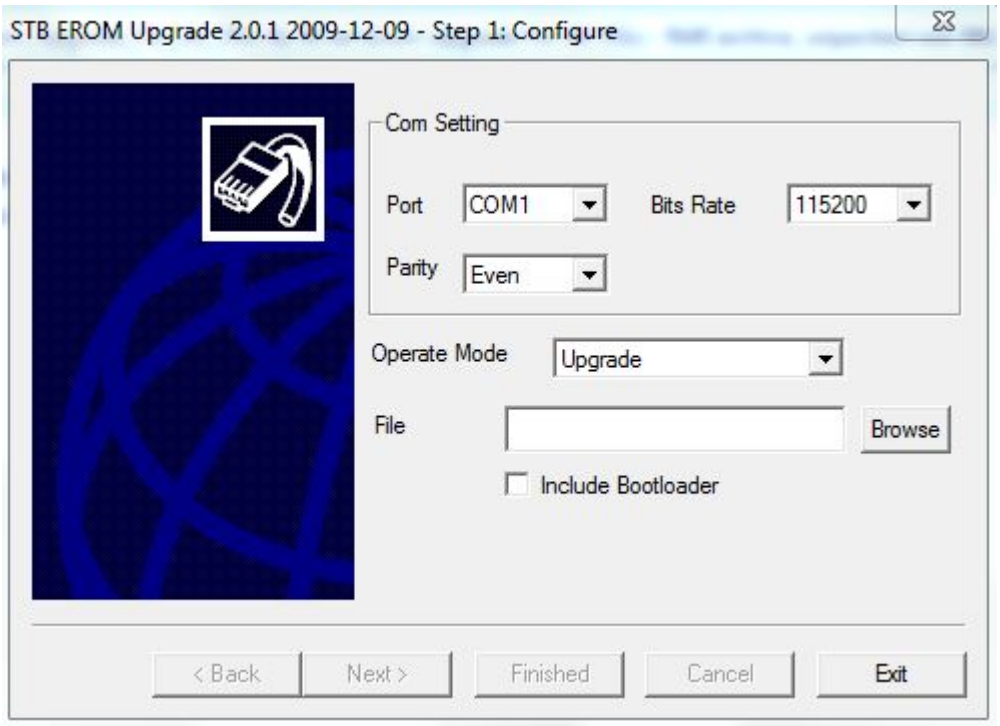
And there it is, the serial number, let's query the IPTV validity.



And the last part of the flag is `20141105`

3 The Idea

To do such challenge, you need to have the device first, a Serial cable RS232, a USB to RS232 converter if needed, and a loader utility. The loader is used to pull the memory as well as to pass another memory dump or even firmware to the device. The loader itself allows you to select what parts to dump, like just the userdata or the whole memory.



4 Final Words

First here is the flag: **Securinets{live_rugby_7s_0xffa25d_0xff926d_20141105}**

This is a proposed draft Misc challenge for the Securinets Quals CTF 2023. I must disclouse that I take no responsibility in loading/flashing this whole dump to a similar device to the one in the challenge as it was customized to fit my needs. I also don't publicly support TV shows piracy, cardsharing and IPTVs. I am open to any feedback and suggestions that could help improve this challenge. I hope you enjoyed reading this writeup. Feel free to let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Please keep in mind that this is a draft and that the challenge is not yet released. I will update this writeup if any changes are made to the challenge. Furthermore, it is a proprietary and confidential challenge, so please do not share it with anyone. Thank you for your understanding.

4.1 Acknowledgements

Ahmed T., Rachad A., and Ayoub B.: Highly skilled custom firmware developers and porting specialists. Tunisia-sat forum member.

Nacef: My cousin, for introducing me to such stuff at an early age.

Thanks for reading!