

# System Tracer Tool: Design and Operation Document

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## Abstract

This document outlines the goal, design, and usage instructions for the system tracer tool developed.

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## Purpose

The purpose of this tool is to monitor the operation of a Windows or Linux system and provide detailed information to the user. It runs in the background, recording all system calls made and software libraries used during a specified time interval. This information is then output to file in a readable format for review by the user. This will allow for the identification of errant or unexpected activity and allow users to take action to rectify the issue.

## Acknowledgements

In the development of this tool we would like to acknowledge the use of external software and tools and the authors of said software. Python, is used as the underlying platform for both the Windows and Linux distributions. Procmon is a Windows process monitoring tool used to retrieve information on running processes and the activities of said processes. Listdlls, as the name implies, lists all the dlls in use on a Windows system and is used to retrieve that information to link them to the processes that call them. Strace is a command line tool for Linux systems that monitors a single process and records the system calls made. This tool is used to monitor all processes running on a Linux system and extract the information to a readable format.

## System Requirements

### Windows

- A system running Windows XP x32, Windows 7 x64, or Windows 10 x64
- Python 3.6 or 3.7
- Microsoft Visual Redistributable Package
- psutil – a required Python module not included by default
- pandas – a required Python module not included by default
- Administrative privileges

### Linux

- Theoretically any Linux distribution able to run python 3, strace and the timeout console command but it has only been tested on an Ubuntu 18.4 system
- Python 3
- Strace
- Timeout 8.28
- Administrative privileges

## Components and Design

This tool is designed to capture the system calls and DLL usage made during a given period of time on both Windows and Linux systems. The code consists of two separate components, the Linux code package and the Windows package, as well as a base launcher. The base launcher, 'multiplayer.py', is a simple python script used to determine whether the tool is being run on a Windows or Linux system and then calls the appropriate package.

All components of the Windows distribution are found in the win 32 folder and consists of 'tracemon.py', 'Procmon.exe', 'config.pmc', and 'Listdlls.exe'. The main controller of the Windows distribution is 'tracemon.py' which runs the program, sorts the output, and performs the statistical analysis. 'Procmon.exe', otherwise known as Windows Process Monitor, is run in a minimal mode, as opposed to the usual GUI operation, and is used to capture all the system calls made by the system.

This tool was found to be the most efficient way to gather this information with solutions such as NTtrace, straceNT, and DrMemory either not working, crashing, or tracing only one process while causing the machine to hang until finished. Furthermore, due to time constraints it was unreasonable to build a tool that was able to capture all of the desired information from the ground up but with more time it may be possible. It also requires the configuration file 'config.pmc' for its operation. The 'Listdll.exe' executable is a command line program also written by Microsoft and SysInternals. It outputs all the DLLs being used on the Windows system it is operating on and the output is extracted by 'tracemon.py' for display and statistical analysis. Unfortunately, due to a misstep in the design it has been found that 'Listdlls.exe' only checks DLL usage at the start of the applications runtime. This means that it may miss DLLs used in an extended run but due to time constraints there was no way to find an alternate solution.

The Linux distribution consists entirely of 'tracer.py' utilising the Strace tool to monitor the calls made by each process during the runtime. It first ensures that the program is being run with suitable privileges and that strace is installed, both of which are required for proper operation. It then creates a list of all pids, finds all the shared objects of the processes by grabbing the linked shared objects from the map files in the proc folder, and builds the command to trace all the processes based on the time interval provided. The program then runs strace on all process ID's it has found and any child processes they spawn during the runtime and then waits for the specified runtime. After completion, the raw data is analysed, compiled into a human readable format, and output to 'TraceCallSummary.txt' and 'MapSummary.txt'.

## Installation and Usage

### Windows

#### Installation

1. Install Python 3.7: Included as part of the package is the 'python-3.7.1-amd64.exe' file. This should be installed if your system does not already have Python 3 installed as seen in figure 1.1. Unless you wish to customise your path or alter the options, use the 'Install Now' feature. It is also recommended you check the 'Add Python 3.7 to PATH' for easier use.  
*Please note that the executable required is for x64 versions of Windows and is not suitable for x86 variants. If you are using an x86 version please visit <https://www.python.org/downloads/> for more information.*
2. If your system does not have the Microsoft Visual Redistributable Package installed the error seen in figure 1.2 will occur when trying to run Python. To fix this, run the included "vc\_redist.x86.exe" included as part of the package.
3. The tool also requires the installation of the "psutil" and "pandas" Python modules. From the Windows command line interface run:
  - > python -m pip install psutil
  - > python -m pip install pandas

If successful, the output should be similar to figure 1.3. If, upon attempting to run the tool, an error similar to figure 1.4 is shown it means the installation of the "psutil" or "pandas" module was unsuccessful and will need to be repeated.

#### Usage

1. Open a Windows Command Prompt in the project folder ensuring that it is run as administrator.
2. Run multiplayer.py

- a. If your python 3 executable path was set during installation simply use 'python multiplayer.py' or 'python3 multiplayer.py'. The difference is dependent on your individual PATH setup.
  - b. If the path was not set during installation use you must point toward the python 3 executable manually. For example, "'C:\Program Files x86\Python 3\python.exe" multiplayer.py'. The location required may differ if you altered the installation location during setup.
  - c. If you wish to provide a custom run-time use 'python multiplayer.py 30'. This will set the program to run for 30 seconds. The time interval can be altered if desired.
3. Once the application has finished, as seen in figure 2.1, the information captured can be found in the output files which are found in the win32\working folder. Inside the working folder they are further sorted into folders in an ISO 8601-style standard (YEAR-MONTH-DAY-HOUR-MINUTE-SECOND) making it easy to find the latest output.
4. Each folder contains the files 'raw.pml', 'output.csv', and 'statistics.txt'.
  - a. The file 'raw.pml' contains the unreadable raw data which is captured by the tool
  - b. 'output.csv' separates the captured data into a comma separated value style output as seen in figure 2.2. The columns are separated into 'Date & Time', 'PID', 'Process Name', 'Operation', 'Command Line', 'Result', 'Detail', and 'User'
  - c. The 'statistics.txt' file separates each process that has been monitored, lists the system calls it made, the number of times it made that call, and the DLLs it used. An example of this can be seen in figure 2.3 and 2.4.

## Linux

### Installation

1. Install Python 3.7 with 'sudo apt-get install python3.7' as seen in figure 3.1
2. Install strace with 'apt-get install strace'
3. Ensure the timeout command from the coreutils package is available on your system.

### Usage

1. Open a terminal console
2. Use the command 'sudo multiplayer.py [TIME]' where [TIME] is the desired runtime in seconds.
3. Once the program has terminated the output can be found in 'TraceCallSummary.txt'. An example of the output can be seen in figure 4.1.

## Known Issues

- On Windows 10 machines the ListDLLs process may hang on occasion for an unknown reason. An example of this can be seen in figure 5.1. The executable "debug-killme.exe" can be used to stop the process if this occurs.
- As seen in figure 5.2 Windows systems occasionally warns that part of the output is corrupt. However, this does not seem to have any actual effect on the output or the program running
- On a fresh machine install there is a chance that a license agreement popup may appear on Windows machines as seen in figure 5.3 despite the use of the "/accepteula" command-line switch. Press "Accept" to continue with operation.
- Due to a misstep in the design the DLLusage is only being checked at the start of the applications runtime instead of throughout its operation as initially planned on the Windows version.

- The statistics output is not currently sorted by PID and is instead ordered by the order it appears in the 'raw.pkl' and 'output.csv' files.
- If the Linux program crashes before completing the created temp files will not be deleted.

## Appendix



Figure 1.1: Windows x64 installer for Python 3.7

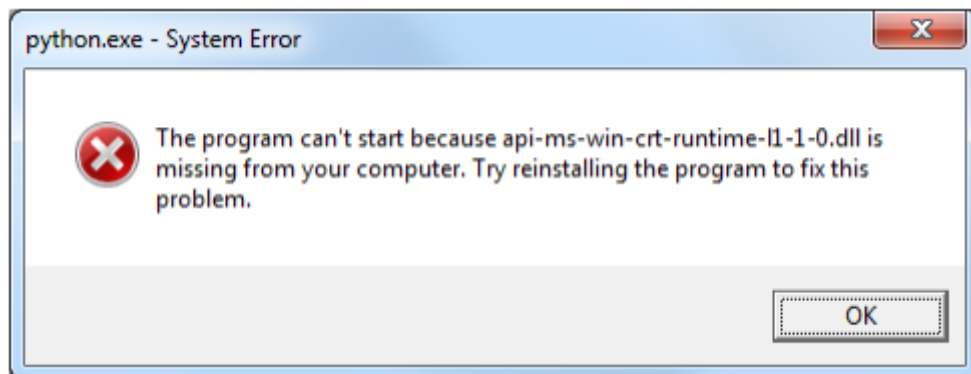


Figure 1.2: Error message that occurs when attempting to run Python without the Microsoft Visual Redistributable Package installed

```
C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe

C:\Python\Python37>python -m pip install psutil
C:\Python\Python37>python.exe: No module named pip

C:\Python\Python37>python -m pip install psutil
Collecting psutil
  Downloading https://files.pythonhosted.org/packages/50/00/ae52663b879333aa5c65fc9a87ddc24169f8fdd1831762a1ba9c9be7740d/psutil-5.4.8-cp37-cp37m-win_amd64.whl (226kB)
    100% |#####| 235kB ...
Installing collected packages: psutil
Successfully installed psutil-5.4.8
You are using pip version 10.0.1, however version 18.1 is available.
You should consider upgrading via the 'python -m pip install --upgrade pip' command.

C:\Python\Python37>python -m pip install pandas
Collecting pandas
  Downloading https://files.pythonhosted.org/packages/58/a8/03e5fe0edbc522e46cb27df2abfb4266814129253d8462f38bc704a76a2a/pandas-0.23.4-cp37-cp37m-win_amd64.whl (7.9MB)
    100% |#####| 7.9MB 3.3MB/s
Collecting numpy>=1.9.0 (from pandas)
  Downloading https://files.pythonhosted.org/packages/f7/f0/62f520cbefdb6f398dc05115bb83e97196d7601ebf1ca75e9a02145bf7b2f/numpy-1.15.3-cp37-none-win_amd64.whl (13.5MB)
    100% |#####| 13.5MB 3.3MB/s
Collecting python-dateutil>=2.5.0 (from pandas)
  Downloading https://files.pythonhosted.org/packages/74/68/d87d9b36af36f44254a8d512cbfc48369103a3b9e474be9bdf536abfc45/python_dateutil-2.7.5-py2.py3-none-any.whl (225kB)
    100% |#####| 235kB ...
Collecting pytz>=2011k (from pandas)
  Downloading https://files.pythonhosted.org/packages/f8/0e/2365ddc010afb3d79147f1dd544e5ee24bf4ece58ab99b16fbb465ce6dc0/pytz-2018.7-py2.py3-none-any.whl (506kB)
    100% |#####| 512kB 6.6MB/s
Collecting six>=1.5 (from python-dateutil>=2.5.0->pandas)
  Downloading https://files.pythonhosted.org/packages/67/4b/141a581104b1f6397bfa78ac9d43d8ad29a7ca43ea90a2d863fe3056e86a/six-1.11.0-py2.py3-none-any.whl
Installing collected packages: numpy, six, python-dateutil, pytz, pandas
Successfully installed numpy-1.15.3 pandas-0.23.4 python-dateutil-2.7.5 pytz-2018.7 six-1.11.0
You are using pip version 10.0.1, however version 18.1 is available.
You should consider upgrading via the 'python -m pip install --upgrade pip' command.

C:\Python\Python37>
```

Figure 1.3: Successful installation of the psutil and pandas Python modules

```
C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe

C:\Users\ADMIN\Desktop\proj\win32>python tracermon.py 10
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "tracermon.py", line 9, in <module>
    import psutil
ModuleNotFoundError: No module named 'psutil'

C:\Users\ADMIN\Desktop\proj\win32>
```

Figure 1.4: The error that occurs if the tracing program is run on a Windows system without the psutil Python module installed

```

tyProject-master>python multiplayer.py
Windows
No custom timeframe set, defaulting to 10 seconds.
Current date and time: 20181107121247
Capturing all calls...

Converting raw output to CSV...
(Depending on time run and programs open, it may take a while)

Sorting statistics...
Writing statistics to file

```

Figure 2.1: Windows runtime output

Date & Time	PID	Process Name	Operation	Command Line	Result	Detail	User
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegQueryValue	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Type: REG_BINARY, Length: 184, Data: 01 00 04 80 14 00 00 00 24 00 00 00 01	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	4	System	Thread Create		SUCCESS	Thread ID: 1924	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	Thread Create	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Thread ID: 13000	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	Thread Create	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Thread ID: 8784	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	Thread Create	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Thread ID: 1512	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	Thread Create	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Thread ID: 12208	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegOpenKey	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Desired Access: Read	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	Thread Create	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Thread ID: 15620	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegQueryValue	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Type: REG_DWORD, Length: 4, Data: 2904	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	Thread Create	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Thread ID: 13848	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegCloseKey	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS		LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	Thread Exit	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Thread ID: 12208, User Time: 0.0000000, Kernel Time: 0.0000000	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegOpenKey	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	REPARSE	Desired Access: Read, Maximum Allowed	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegOpenKey	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Desired Access: Read, Maximum Allowed	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegQueryValue	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Type: REG_DWORD, Length: 4, Data: 4294966816	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegQueryValue	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Type: REG_SZ, Length: 32, Data: @tzres.dll,-612	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegQueryValue	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Type: REG_DWORD, Length: 4, Data: 0	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegQueryValue	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Type: REG_BINARY, Length: 16, Data: 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegQueryValue	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Type: REG_SZ, Length: 32, Data: @tzres.dll,-611	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegQueryValue	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Type: REG_DWORD, Length: 4, Data: 4294967236	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	15576	Procmon64.exe	RegQueryValue	"C:\Users\jacob\AppData\Local\Temp\	SUCCESS	Type: REG_BINARY, Length: 16, Data: 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
7/11/2018 12:12	4952	Explorer.EXE	IRP_MJ_READ	C:\WINDOWS\Explorer.EXE	SUCCESS	Offset: 2.608.128, Length: 15.872, I/O Flags: Non-cached, Paging I/O, Sync	LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob

Figure 2.2: Sample Windows CSV output



```

PID: 4952
Name: Explorer.EXE
User: LAPTOP-9HVJCEH7\jacob
-----
Times Called | System Call Name
-----
137 : IRP_MJ_READ
1885 : IRP_MJ_CREATE
723 : FASTIO_NETWORK_QUERY_OPEN
30428 : RegQueryKey
23307 : RegOpenKey
12060 : RegQueryValue
7513 : RegCloseKey
1786 : FASTIO_QUERY_INFORMATION
1599 : IRP_MJ_CLEANUP
1580 : IRP_MJ_CLOSE
85 : IRP_MJ_QUERY_EA
323 : FASTIO_ACQUIRE_FOR_SECTION_SYNCHRONIZATION
323 : FASTIO_RELEASE_FOR_SECTION_SYNCHRONIZATION
147 : IRP_MJ_QUERY_VOLUME_INFORMATION
242 : RegSetInfoKey
315 : IRP_MJ_QUERY_INFORMATION
25 : Thread Create
96 : IRP_MN_QUERY_INFORMATION
261 : IRP_MJ_DIRECTORY_CONTROL
223 : RegEnumKey
333 : RegCreateKey
3 : RegQueryKeySecurity
225 : IRP_MJ_FILE_SYSTEM_CONTROL
73 : IRP_MJ_QUERY_SECURITY
128 : RegEnumValue
146 : IRP_MJ_DEVICE_CONTROL
167 : RegSetValue
1 : FASTIO_ACQUIRE_FOR_CC_FLUSH
1 : FASTIO_RELEASE_FOR_CC_FLUSH
2 : IRP_MJ_SET_INFORMATION

```

Figure 2.3: Windows system call statistics

DLLs used:

Base	Size	Path
0x00000000260f0000	0x3bd000	C:\WINDOWS\Explorer.EXE
0x00000000c6100000	0x1e1000	C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\ntdll.dll
0x00000000c4610000	0xb2000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\KERNEL32.DLL
0x00000000c2580000	0x273000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\KERNELBASE.dll
0x00000000c37a0000	0x9e000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\msvcrt.dll
0x00000000c5da0000	0x323000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\combase.dll
0x00000000c31d0000	0xfa000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\ucrtbase.dll
0x00000000c38a0000	0x124000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\RPCRT4.dll
0x00000000c3150000	0x7a000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\bcryptPrimitives.dll
0x00000000c5b20000	0xc2000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\OLEAUT32.dll
0x00000000c32d0000	0x9f000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\msvc_p_win.dll
0x00000000c4300000	0xa9000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\shcore.dll
0x00000000c5bf0000	0xa1000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\advapi32.dll
0x00000000c5d40000	0x5b000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\sechost.dll
0x00000000c2480000	0x4c000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\powrprof.dll
0x00000000c3610000	0x190000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\user32.dll
0x00000000c33d0000	0x20000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\win32u.dll
0x00000000c3f50000	0x28000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\GDI32.dll
0x00000000c33f0000	0x192000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\gdi32full.dll
0x00000000c3f80000	0x51000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\shlwapi.dll
0x00000000c2a40000	0x70d000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\windows.storage.dll
0x00000000c2410000	0x11000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\kernel.appcore.dll
0x00000000c2440000	0x1f000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\profapi.dll
0x00000000c2430000	0xa000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\FLTLib.DLL
0x00000000c46d0000	0x143f000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\SHELL32.dll
0x00000000c29f0000	0x49000	C:\WINDOWS\System32\cfgmgr32.dll
0x00000000be040000	0x1b4000	C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\PROPSYS.dll
0x00000000c0100000	0x23000	C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\winmm.dll
0x00000000abbf0000	0x46f000	C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\WININET.dll
0x00000000c0b60000	0x29000	C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\dwmapi.dll
0x00000000c0830000	0x98000	C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\UxTheme.dll
0x00000000c2340000	0x30000	C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\SspiCli.dll
0x00000000c2310000	0x28000	C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\USERENV.dll
0x00000000c0c10000	0x1b8000	C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\twinapi.appcore.dll

Figure 2.4: List of DLLs used by a process

```

sudo apt-get install python3.7
Reading package lists... Done
Building dependency tree
Reading state information... Done
The following package was automatically installed and is no longer required:
  libfreetype6
Use 'sudo apt autoremove' to remove it.
The following additional packages will be installed:
  libpython3.7-minimal libpython3.7-stdlib python3.7-distutils python3.7-lib2to3
  python3.7-minimal
Suggested packages:
  python3.7-venv python3.7-doc binutils binfmt-support
The following NEW packages will be installed:
  libpython3.7-minimal libpython3.7-stdlib python3.7 python3.7-distutils
  python3.7-lib2to3 python3.7-minimal
0 upgraded, 6 newly installed, 0 to remove and 115 not upgraded.
Need to get 4,802 kB of archives.
After this operation, 24.2 MB of additional disk space will be used.
Do you want to continue? [Y/n] y
Get:1 http://ppa.launchpad.net/deadsnakes/ppa/ubuntu xenial/main amd64 libpython3.7
-minimal amd64 3.7.1-1+xenial1 [594 kB]
Get:2 http://ppa.launchpad.net/deadsnakes/ppa/ubuntu xenial/main amd64 python3.7-mi
nimal amd64 3.7.1-1+xenial1 [1,803 kB]
Get:3 http://ppa.launchpad.net/deadsnakes/ppa/ubuntu xenial/main amd64 libpython3.7
-stdlib amd64 3.7.1-1+xenial1 [1,778 kB]
Get:4 http://ppa.launchpad.net/deadsnakes/ppa/ubuntu xenial/main amd64 python3.7-li
b2to3 all 3.7.1-1+xenial1 [121 kB]
Get:5 http://ppa.launchpad.net/deadsnakes/ppa/ubuntu xenial/main amd64 python3.7-di
stutils all 3.7.1-1+xenial1 [190 kB]
Get:6 http://ppa.launchpad.net/deadsnakes/ppa/ubuntu xenial/main amd64 python3.7 am
d64 3.7.1-1+xenial1 [315 kB]
Fetched 4,802 kB in 41s (115 kB/s)
Selecting previously unselected package libpython3.7-minimal:amd64.
(Reading database ... 25577 files and directories currently installed.)
Preparing to unpack .../libpython3.7-minimal_3.7.1-1+xenial1_amd64.deb ...
Unpacking libpython3.7-minimal:amd64 (3.7.1-1+xenial1) ...
Selecting previously unselected package python3.7-minimal.
Preparing to unpack .../python3.7-minimal_3.7.1-1+xenial1_amd64.deb ...
Unpacking python3.7-minimal (3.7.1-1+xenial1) ...

```

Figure 3.1: Installation of Python 3.7 on Ubuntu

Figure 4.1: Sample output of the Linux operation

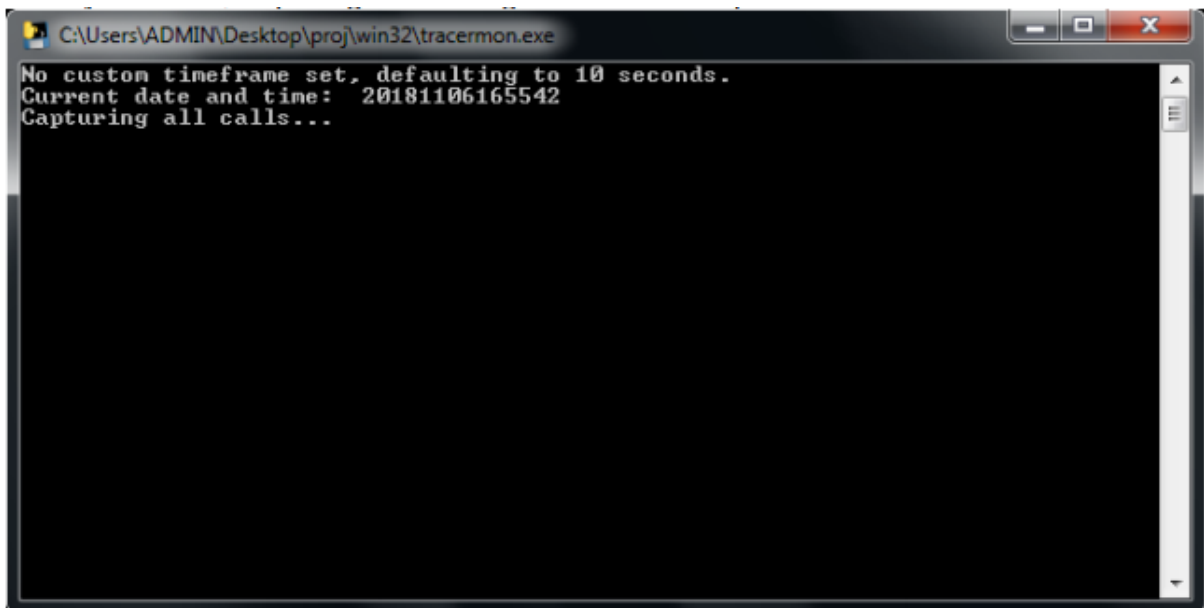


Figure 5.1: The Windows program may hang while attempting to run the ListDLLs process

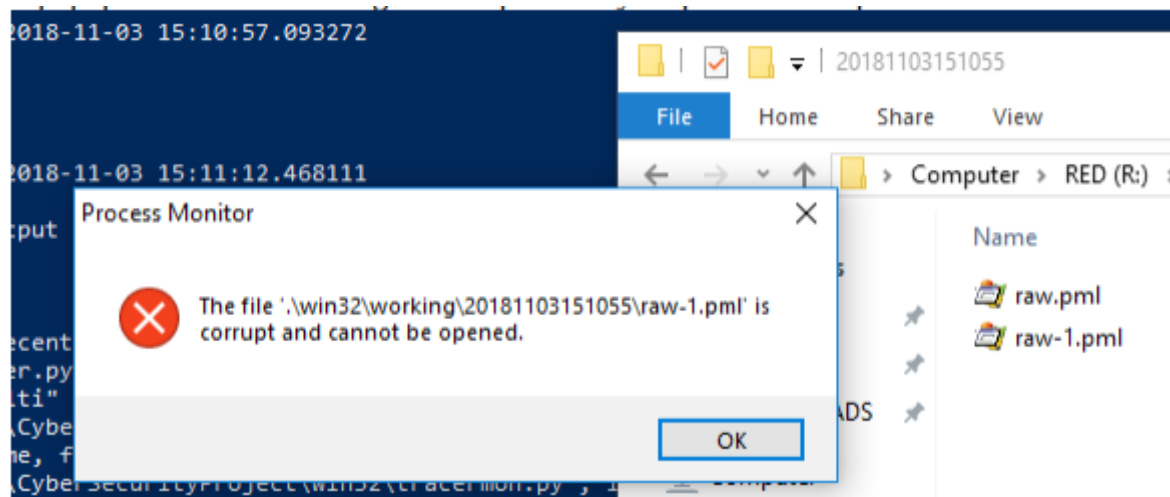


Figure 5.2: Occasionally the system warns part of the output is corrupted. However, this does not seem to have any actual affect

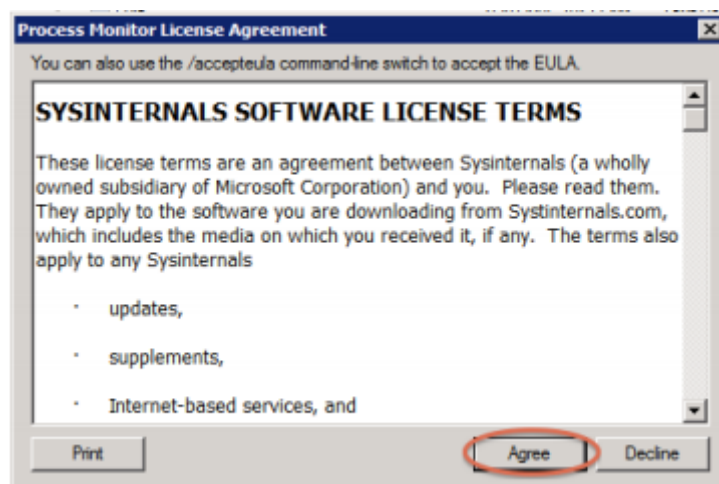


Figure 5.3: Despite the use of the “/accepteula” switch this popup may still occasionally appear on the Windows distribution