'REcruitment' Challenge Write-Up

Tools Used

- Radare2: Utilised for static and dynamic binary analysis
- Python: Used to reverse the XOR encryption

Note: Although the brief recommended Ghidra and GDB, I chose Radare2 for its streamlined workflow (and my extensive experience with its comprehensive features). While I am also proficient with Ghidra and GDB, I find Radare2 more effective for simpler challenges that don't require extensive patching.

The Write-Up

Using radare2 we open up the binary in both write and debug mode. This allows us to both statically and dynamically analyse the binary, as well as patch it if necessary.

The command is r2 -w -d ./REcruitment

We then run aa to analyse the functions in the binary, and then afl to list them:

```
[master@myguy:~$ r2 -w -d ./REcruitment
WARN: Relocs has not been applied. Please use '-e bin.relocs.apply=true' or '-e bin.cache=true' next time
  -- Save your projects with 'Ps <project-filename>' and restore then with 'Po <project-filename>'
[[0x7c847f639540]> aa
INFO: Analyze all flags starting with sym. and entry0 (aa)
INFO: Analyze imports (af@@@i)
INFO: Analyze entrypoint (af@ entry0)
INFO: Analyze symbols (af@@@s)
INFO: Recovering variables (afva@@@F)
INFO: Analyze all functions arguments/locals (afva@@@F)
                  9540]> afl
0x5b4db89b5100 1 11 sym.imp.putchar

0x5b4db89b5100 1 11 sym.imp.localtime

0x5b4db89b5100 1 11 sym.imp.puts

0x5b4db89b5110 1 11 sym.imp.strlen

0x5b4db89b5120 1 11 sym.imp.__stack_ct

0x5b4db89b5130 1 11 sym.imp.printf
                                  11 sym.imp.__stack_chk_fail
                                 11 sym.imp.uname
11 sym.imp.fgets
0x5b4db89b5140
0x5b4db89b5150
                                11 sym.imp.time
11 sym.imp.sprintf
46 entry0
0x5b4db89b5160
0x5b4db89b5170
0x5b4db89b5180 1 46 entry0

0x5b4db89b7fe0 1 4129 reloc.__libc_start_main

0x5b4db89b5457 6 596 main

0x5b4db89b5260 5 60 entry.init0

0x5b4db89b5220 5 54 entry.fini0
                                60 entry.init0
54 entry.fini0
0x5b4db89b50d0 1 11 fcn.5b4db89b50d0
0x5b4db89b51b0 4 34 fcn.5b4db89b51b0
```

There are a number of interesting function names here that give clues about the functionality of the binary, however we start with the main. You can run s main to 'seek' the main function and run pdd which will decompile the function (as long as you have r2dec installed). You can also run pddf which will decompile all the functions.

See the main function below in radare2:

```
/* name: main @ 0x1457 */
int32_t main (void) {
   time_t timer;
   tm* var_270h;
   int64_t var_268h;
   char * format;
   int64_t var_260h;
   int64_t var_25ch;
   int64_t var_258h;
   int64_t var_250h;
   int64_t var_248h;
   int64_t var_240h;
   int64_t var_230h;
   int64_t var_a0h;
   int64_t var_9ch;
   int64_t var_9ah;
   int64_t var_96h;
   int64_t var_94h;
   int64_t var_90h;
   int64_t var_8eh;
   int64_t var_8ah;
   int64_t var_88h;
   char * var_87h;
   char * s;
   int64_t var_78h;
   int64_t var_70h;
   int64_t var_60h;
   int64_t canary;
   rax = *(fs:0x28);
   *((rbp - 0x18)) = rax;
   eax = 0;
   *((rbp - 0x80)) = 0;
   *((rbp - 0x78)) = 0;
   *((rbp - 0x70)) = 0;
   puts ("This is a flag encryption program, it makes flags safe. Enter your flag:");
   rax = rbp - 0x80;
   fgets (rax, 0x11, *(obj.stdin));
   rax = rbp - 0x80;
   rax = strlen (rax);
   if (rax != 0x10) {
        puts ("Your flag must be 16 chars long for security or something");
        eax = 0;
   } else {
       *((rbp - 0x8e)) = 0;
       *((rbp - 0x8a)) = 0;
       *((rbp - 0x88)) = 0;
       *((rbp - 0xa0)) = 0;
       *((rbp - 0x9c)) = 0;
       *((rbp - 0x9a)) = 0;
       *((rbp - 0x96)) = 0;
       rax = rbp - 0x80;
        fcn_000012c8 (rax, rbp - 0x8e, rbp - 0xa0, rbp - 0x9a);
       *((rbp - 0x94)) = 0x6f6f6373;
       *((rbp - 0x90)) = 0x70;
        rax = rbp - 0x94;
        fcn_00001269 (rax, 5, rbp - 0x9a);
        rax = rbp - 0x230;
       rdi = rax;
       uname ();
        rax = rbp - 0x230;
        fcn_00001269 (rax, 5, rbp - 0xa0);
        rax = time (0);
        *((rbp - 0x278)) = rax;
        rax = rbp - 0x278;
        rax = localtime (rax);
        rcx = *(rax);
       rbx = *((rax + 8));
       *((rbp - 0x270)) = rcx;
       *((rbp - 0x268)) = rbx;
        rcx = *((rax + 0x10));
        rbx = *((rax + 0x18));
       *((rbp - 0x260)) = rcx;
       *((rbp - 0x258)) = rbx;
        rcx = *((rax + 0x20));
        rbx = *((rax + 0x28));
```

```
*((rbp - 0x250)) = rcx;
    *((rbp - 0x248)) = rbx;
    rax = *((rax + 0x30));
    *((rbp - 0x240)) = rax;
    esi = *((rbp - 0x264));
    eax = *((rbp - 0x260));
    ecx = rax + 1;
    edx = *((rbp - 0x25c));
    rax = (int64_t) edx;
    rax *= 0x51eb851f;
    rax >>= 0x20;
    edi = eax;
    edi >>= 5;
    eax = edx;
    eax >>= 0x1f;
    edi -= eax;
    eax = edi;
    eax *= 0x64;
    edx -= eax;
    eax = edx;
    r8d = esi;
    eax = 0;
    sprintf (rbp - 0x87, "%d%02d%02d", eax);
    rax = rbp - 0x87;
    fcn_00001269 (rax, 6, rbp - 0x8e);
    rcx = rbp - 0x60;
    rax = rbp - 0x87;
    fcn_00001376 (rax, rcx, rbp - 0x94);
    eax = 0:
rbx = *((rbp - 0x18));
rbx ^= *(fs:0x28);
if (edx != 0) {
    stack_chk_fail ();
return rax;
```

Looking at the above pseudo C code, following the buffer and canary initialisation, we can see that the program uses <code>puts()</code> to ask for a flag in order to encrypt it. Following the request, it does the following:

```
rax = rbp - 0x80;
    fgets (rax, 0x11, *(obj.stdin));
    rax = rbp - 0x80;
    rax = strlen (rax);
```

It initialises memory space for RAX which is a register that holds return values for functions. Then fgets() is run which takes in user input (i.e. the flag). This value is then saved in RAX. RAX is then set to the beginning of the buffer of the string, and strlen(rax) is run to check the length of the data. The length is then saved to RAX.

It reads 0x11 bytes of data, which is 17 characters, however the 17th character would just be a null terminator.

```
if (rax != 0x10) {
     puts ("Your flag must be 16 chars long for security or
something");
    eax = 0;}
```

If the length is not equal to 16 characters (0×10 in hex is 16), then eax is set to 0 and the program presumably exits. I tested this, and it works as expected.

```
else {
    *((rbp - 0x8e)) = 0;
    *((rbp - 0x8a)) = 0;
    *((rbp - 0x88)) = 0;
    *((rbp - 0x88)) = 0;
    *((rbp - 0xa0)) = 0;
    *((rbp - 0x9c)) = 0;
    *((rbp - 0x9a)) = 0;
    *((rbp - 0x96)) = 0;
    rax = rbp - 0x80; //RAX is reset to the original flag
    fcn_000012c8 (rax, rbp - 0x8e, rbp - 0xa0, rbp - 0x9a);
```

If the number of characters is indeed 16 characters, it then starts the encryption process. Initially it zeroes some local buffers, and then it calls fcn.000012c8 to split the 16 bytes into three parts.

See the decompiled version of fcn.000012c8 below, I've added some comments for readability:

```
int64_t fcn_000012c8 (char * arg1, int64_t arg2, int64_t arg3, int64_t
arg4) {
   int64_t var_30h;
    int64_t var_28h;
    int64_t var_20h;
    char * var_18h;
    signed int64_t var_4h;
    rdi = arg1; //RAX is passed as arg1 (ie the original flag)
    rsi = arg2;
    rdx = arg3;
    rcx = arg4;
   *((rbp - 0x18)) = rdi;
   *((rbp - 0x20)) = rsi;
   *((rbp - 0x28)) = rdx;
   *((rbp - 0x30)) = rcx;
   *((rbp - 4)) = 0; //initialise loop counter to 0
   while (*((rbp - 4)) \leftarrow 0xf) \{ //loops up to 0xf which is 15 \}
        if (*((rbp - 4)) \le 5) { //for the first 5 bytes copy to arg2
            eax = *((rbp - 4));
            rdx = (int64_t) eax;
            rax = *((rbp - 0x18));
```

```
rax += rdx;
            edx = *((rbp - 4));
            rcx = (int64_t) edx;
            rdx = *((rbp - 0x20));
            rdx += rcx:
            eax = *(rax);
            *(rdx) = al;
        } else {
            if (*((rbp - 4)) > 5) {
                 if (*((rbp - 4)) \leftarrow 0xa) \{ // \text{ for bytes 6 to 0xa which is} \}
10, copy to arg3
                     eax = *((rbp - 4));
                     rdx = (int64_t) eax;
                     rax = *((rbp - 0x18));
                     rax += rdx; //increments rax address to loop through
                     edx = *((rbp - 4));
                     rdx = (int64_t) edx;
                     rcx = rdx - 6:
                     rdx = *((rbp - 0x28));
                     rdx += rcx;
                     eax = *(rax);
                     *(rdx) = al;
            } else { // copy the remaining (ie counter 11-15) to arg4
                 eax = *((rbp - 4));
                 rdx = (int64_t) eax;
                 rax = *((rbp - 0x18));
                 rax += rdx;
                 edx = *((rbp - 4));
                 rdx = (int64 t) edx;
                 rcx = rdx - 0xb;
                 rdx = *((rbp - 0x30));
                 rdx += rcx;
                 eax = *(rax);
                *(rdx) = al;
            }
        }
        *((rbp - 4))++;
    }
    return rax;
}
```

Once the function has been returned, we now have three parts. Part 1 has 6 bytes, part 2 has 5 bytes, and part 3 also has 5 bytes, making a total of 16 bytes.

We can see where the program stores these parts via the function call:

```
fcn_000012c8 (rax, rbp - 0x8e, rbp - 0xa0, rbp - 0x9a);
```

Part 1: rbp - 0x8e Part 2: rbp - 0xa0 Part 3: rbp - 0x9a

Back to the main function, see the next part below:

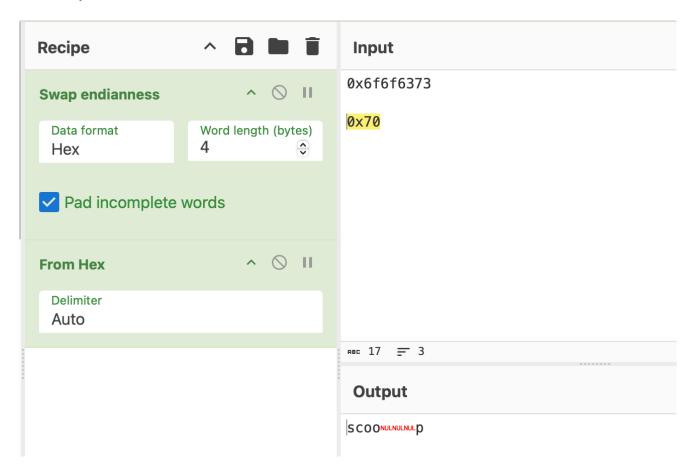
```
*((rbp - 0x94)) = 0x6f6f6373;

*((rbp - 0x90)) = 0x70;

rax = rbp - 0x94;

fcn_00001269 (rax, 5, rbp - 0x9a);
```

 0×61616373 and 0×70 are the string scoop in little endianness. We can quickly confirm this on cyberchef:



Therefore rbp - 0x94 to rbp - 0x90 now holds the string scoop.

We can also confirm this with live debugging on radare2. I set a breakpoint on fcn_00001269 and when it hit I ran px 6 @ rbp-0x94:

```
[> px 6 @ rbp-0x94

- offset - 5C5D 5E5F 6061 6263 6465 6667 6869 6A6B CDEF0123456789AB

0x7fffbc11525c 7363 6f6f 7000 scoop.
```

As you can see, the string scoop is stored as expected with a null terminator to confirm the end of the string.

Then we see that the function fcn_00001269 (rax, 5, rbp - 0x9a); is called.

RAX passes in the string scoop. The length is set to 5, and rbp - 0x9a is part 3 of the flag.

This is the function implementation shown by r2dec, with my added comments to aid understanding:

```
/* name: fcn.00001269 @ 0x1269 */
int64_t fcn_00001269 (char * arg1, signed int64_t arg2, int64_t arg3) {
    int64_t var_28h;
    signed int64_t var_1ch;
    char * var_18h;
    int64 t var 4h;
    rdi = arg1;
    rsi = arg2;
    rdx = arg3;
    *((rbp - 0x18)) = rdi; //arg1
    *((rbp - 0x1c)) = esi; //arg2
    *((rbp - 0x28)) = rdx; //arg3
    *((rbp - 4)) = 0;
   while (eax < *((rbp - 0x1c))) { //loops up to arg2 (i.e. 5)
        eax = *((rbp - 4));
        rdx = (int64_t) eax;
        rax = *((rbp - 0x18)); // loads 'scoop'
        rax += rdx;
        esi = *(rax);
        eax = *((rbp - 4));
        rdx = (int64_t) eax;
        rax = *((rbp - 0x28)); //loads part 3 of the flag.
        rax += rdx; //increments pointer to address to allow for looping
        ecx = *(rax);
        eax = *((rbp - 4));
        rdx = (int64_t) eax;
        rax = *((rbp - 0x18));
        rax += rdx;
        esi ^= ecx; // bitwise XOR operation
        edx = esi;
        *(rax) = dl; //writes dl (lower 8 bits of EDX) back to arg1 (i.e
replaces 'scoop' with the XOR result)
        *((rbp - 4))++;
        eax = *((rbp - 4));
    }
```

```
return rax;
}
```

So the function bitwise XORs each byte in scoop with each byte in part three of the flag. (This just means converting each to binary, and comparing each byte to ensure at least one of them is 1). It then stores the result in rbp - 0x94 to rbp - 0x90 which now holds scoop XOR part 3.

Going back to the main, this is the next part:

```
rax = rbp - 0x230;
rdi = rax;
uname ();
rax = rbp - 0x230;
fcn_00001269 (rax, 5, rbp - 0xa0);
```

This calls uname() which fills RDI (which points to rbp - 0x230). This returns strings related to the operating system. In the challenge, we're given a clue that the binary was found on one of our Linux devices. Given that uname() typically gives strings like sysname which is often Linux, we could possibly guess that the string being pointed to by the RAX register is Linux.

However, it's better to debug the program and check:

As we can see the string is Linux (with a null terminator to confirm the end of the string). In order to get this, you should wait until the breakpoint at $fcn_00001269$ is hit a **second** time, and then run px 6 @ rbp_0x230.

The function $fcn_{00001269}$ (rax, 5, rbp - 0xa0); is then called again but this time with different arguments. This time it XORs the string Linux (pointed to by RAX), and part 2 of the flag which is stored in rbp - 0x230. The result then replaces the string Linux just as it did previously with scoop.

Continuing with the main function:

```
rax = time (0); // get the current time in seconds since Unix epoch
*((rbp - 0x278)) = rax;
rax = rbp - 0x278;
rax = localtime (rax); //then converts it to a localtime struct
rcx = *(rax);
rbx = *((rax + 8));
*((rbp - 0x270)) = rcx;
*((rbp - 0x268)) = rbx;
rcx = *((rax + 0x10));
```

```
rbx = *((rax + 0x18));
*((rbp - 0x260)) = rcx; // store month
*((rbp - 0x258)) = rbx; // store day
rcx = *((rax + 0x20));
rbx = *((rax + 0x28));
*((rbp - 0x250)) = rcx;
*((rbp - 0x248)) = rbx; // store year
rax = *((rax + 0x30));
*((rbp - 0x240)) = rax;
esi = *((rbp - 0x264));
eax = *((rbp - 0x260));
ecx = rax + 1;
edx = *((rbp - 0x25c));
rax = (int64 t) edx;
rax *= 0x51eb851f; // multiply by magic number constant
rax >>= 0x20; // shift right by 32 bits (division part)
edi = eax;
edi >>= 5; // shift the answer of the division right by 5 bits (divide by
32)
eax = edx;
eax >>= 0x1f; // extract sign bit
edi -= eax;
eax = edi;
eax *= 0x64; // multiply by 100
edx -= eax; // get the remainder
eax = edx; // now holds remainder of the division used below to format the
time
r8d = esi;
eax = 0;
sprintf (rbp - 0x87, "%d%02d%02d", eax); //formats a date string into rbp
- 0x87
rax = rbp - 0x87;
fcn 00001269 (rax, 6, rbp - 0x8e); //passes date string to the XOR
function
```

The easiest way to confirm the exact date format is to view it during live debugging. I set a breakpoint on fcn_00001269 (using radare2) and entered dc three times in order to continue the flow till we reach fcn_00001269 for the **third** time. At this point, I simply inspect rbp - 0x87 to view the exact date format:

```
[> px 7 @ rbp-0x87

- offset - C9CA CBCC CDCE CFD0 D1D2 D3D4 D5D6 D7D8 9ABCDEF012345678

0x7ffc8ef5aec9 3235 3031 3233 00 250123.
```

As we can see the date format is YYMMDD. This is important as it helps us to understand exactly how the data is XOR'd. The last byte is a null terminator ensuring we have the full date.

As before, RAX points to the string that is used to XOR the flag. It is passed in and this time bitwise XOR'd with part 1 of the flag stored in rbp - 0x8e. It returns and replaces the date with the XOR'd data in rbp - 0x87.

These are the addresses for the encrypted flag parts:

```
Part 1: rbp - 0x94 (5 bytes)
Part 2: rbp - 0x230 (5 bytes)
Part 3: rbp - 0x87 (6 bytes)
```

All that is left now is to print them out!

```
rcx = rbp - 0x60;
rax = rbp - 0x87;
fcn_00001376 (rax, rcx, rbp - 0x94);
eax = 0;
```

Part1 and Part3 are passed to the function which prints them out, however the 5 bytes at part2 are printed out from rbp - 0x60, but the encrypted bytes are held in rbp - 0x230. I suspect this could be an obfuscation technique to stop the flag being brute-forced perhaps, (but it could also be passed onto the function for printing in another way that I haven't seen). Part3 is passed first, then part2, then part1. This means that the first 6 bytes of the flag are dependant on the correct time.

```
/* name: fcn.00001376 @ 0x1376 */
int64_t fcn_00001376 (char * arg1, int64_t arg2, int64_t arg3) {
    int64_t var_28h;
        int64_t var_20h;
        char * var_18h;
        signed int64_t var_ch;
        signed int64_t var_8h;
        signed int64_t var_4h;
        rdi = arg1;
        rsi = arg2;
        rdx = arg3;
        *((rbp - 0x18)) = rdi;
        *((rbp - 0x20)) = rsi;
        *((rbp - 0x28)) = rdx;
        eax = 0;
        printf ("flag:"); // print the hardcoded string "flag:"
        *((rbp - 0xc)) = 0;
    while (*((rbp - 0xc)) \le 5) { //prints the 6 bytes from arg1 in hex
                eax = *((rbp - 0xc));
                rdx = (int64_t) eax;
                rax = *((rbp - 0x18));
                rax += rdx;
```

```
eax = *(rax);
                eax = (int32 t) al;
                esi = eax;
                eax = 0;
                printf ("%02x"); //prints in 2 digit hex pattern
                *((rbp - 0xc))++;
    }
    *((rbp - 8)) = 0;
        while (*((rbp - 8)) \leftarrow 4)  { //prints the 5 bytes from arg2 in hex
        eax = *((rbp - 8));
                rdx = (int64_t) eax;
                rax = *((rbp - 0x20));
                rax += rdx;
                eax = *(rax);
                eax = (int32_t) al;
                esi = eax;
                eax = 0;
                printf ("%02x"); // prints in 2 digit hex pattern
                *((rbp - 8))++;
    }
    *((rbp - 4)) = 0;
        while (*((rbp - 4)) \leftarrow 4)  { //prints the 5 bytes from arg3 in hex
                eax = *((rbp - 4));
                rdx = (int64_t) eax;
                rax = *((rbp - 0x28));
                rax += rdx;
                eax = *(rax);
                eax = (int32 t) al;
                esi = eax;
                eax = 0;
                printf ("%02x"); // prints in 2 digit hex pattern
                *((rbp - 4))++;
    }
    putchar (0xa);
    return rax;
}
```

The code above loops through the three encrypted flag parts and prints them out in hex, giving us our encrypted flag.

Now in order to reverse this process, we can write a python script:

```
#!/usr/bin/env python3
import binascii
def xor_bytes(data, key):
return bytes(a ^ b for a, b in zip(data, key)) # XOR each byte in the data
with the corresponding byte in the key. Zip is used to pair the bytes
together.
# The encrypted data in hex:
encrypted hex = "6b5744775d5f38010b073e4325030e17"
encrypted_bytes = binascii.unhexlify(encrypted_hex)
dateStringKey = b"220630" # Matches the date format (YYMMDD)
unameStringKey = b"Linux" # Matches the uname output
scoopStringKey = b"scoop" # Matches the scoop string
# Split the flag into 6 bytes, 5 bytes, and 5 bytes
part1 = encrypted_bytes[0:6]
part2 = encrypted bytes[6:11]
part3 = encrypted_bytes[11:16]
# XOR each part with its corresponding key
decoded1 = xor_bytes(part1, dateStringKey)
decoded2 = xor bytes(part2, unameStringKey)
decoded3 = xor_bytes(part3, scoopStringKey)
# Combine and print the original flag
original_flag = decoded1 + decoded2 + decoded3
print("Decoded:", original_flag.decode("utf-8"))
```

The output gives us:

Decoded: YetAnotherF0Flag

So the flag is YetAnotherF0Flag

However if we try to insert the discovered flag back into the program, we don't get the original encrypted string given in the challenge. This is due to the fact that the date is used to encrypt the flag.

So the easiest way to check this would be to alter the memory, and change the date to 220630.

By pressing v in Radare2, you can see the live debugger:

We set a breakpoint just before the XOR function in the main, with the aim of tapping into the memory and altering the date:

```
[> dc
This is a flag encryption program, it makes flags safe. Enter your flag:
[YetAnotherF0Flag
INFO: hit breakpoint at: 0x5a3327a4b663
[> px 7 @ rbp-0x87
- offset - C9CA CBCC CDCE CFD0 D1D2 D3D4 D5D6 D7D8 9ABCDEF012345678
0x7ffc8ef5aec9 3235 3031 3233 00 250123.
[> wx 32 32 30 36 33 30 00 @ rbp-0x87
[> px 7 @ rbp-0x87
- offset - C9CA CBCC CDCE CFD0 D1D2 D3D4 D5D6 D7D8 9ABCDEF012345678
0x7ffc8ef5aec9 3232 3036 3330 00 220630.
```

As you can see I have altered the date to 220630. We continue execution and wait for the XOR function to run. I set a breakpoint just before the print function:

Encrypted flag: 6b5744775d5f38010b073e4325030e17

As you can see above, we now have the encrypted flag again in Hex. This confirms our discovered flag!

Additional Observation:

If we try to print out the flag, part 2 of the outputted flag is always f0f0000006b:

```
[> dc
flag: 6b5744775d5f0f0000006b4325030e17
(9442) Process exited with status=0x0
```

It seems that the print function uses rbp - 0x60 rather than rbp - 0x230. This might be an obfuscation attempt to prevent brute-force techniques to get the flag. While patching the print function so that it reads from rbp - 0x230 would likely restore the binary's complete functionality, it is not needed to solve the challenge.