

SETTING USER MODE BREAK POINTS FROM KD AKA .PROCESS /I VS
.PROCESS /R /P

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1 Introduction

When performing KD(Kernel Debugging) in Windows with Windbg if you have to set a break point in a user mode process we should always use `.process /i address; g; .reload /user`. Lot of good content is written on the internet on this command, but nothing seemed to explain why this command should be used instead of the familiar `.process /r /p address`. I would like to shed some light on this. Before reading any further I would strongly encourage you to read about it from above link. In this article I assume some basic knowledge on how kernel debugging is done with Windbg. Also, I would like to start with the following question.

If the debugger has read/write access to the user mode process via `.process /r /p` why cannot it insert int 3 in user mode process when performing KD? Why do we have to make the user mode process the current process context by running `.process /i` ?

To explain this we need to quickly understand how break points work.

2 How do break points work in user mode debugging

How do break points work in user mode debugging Below are the steps involved for a break point to work in debugging a user mode process.

1. `bp address` you are just instructing the debugger to make a note of address and replace the byte at that address with `0xcc` (int 3) when target resumes to execute
2. `g` when you hit `g` the debugger replaces the byte with `0xcc` and stores the original byte with it
3. After execution when processor execute the modified byte (`0xcc`) this causes the debugger to break in and debugger puts back the original byte as if nothing has happened to the program
4. More details: <http://vineelkumarreddy.com/2016/09/04/how-does-breakpoints-work-in-debuggers/>

3 User mode break points from KD

When debugging a user mode process from KD the steps works exactly same as above but with a slight twist.

1. Lets assume during KD, when the debugger broke, the processor is executing a process named `multihasher.exe`(see note below)
2. When you switch the windbgs view to a different process(`fscapture.exe`) by `.process /r /p jfs-capture address_i`, you are not changing the underlying execution of the processor. `!process -1 0` still shows `multihasher.exe`
 - (a) With `/r /p` you now have read/write access to the `fscapture` process. This confirms the first part of the question
3. `bp address` same as above, you are instructing the debugger to make a note of address and replace the byte at that address with `0xcc` (int 3) when target resumes to execute
4. when you hit `g` the debugger replaces the byte at address with `0xcc` in the currently executing process which happens to be `multihasher.exe` not `fscapture.exe`!

5.

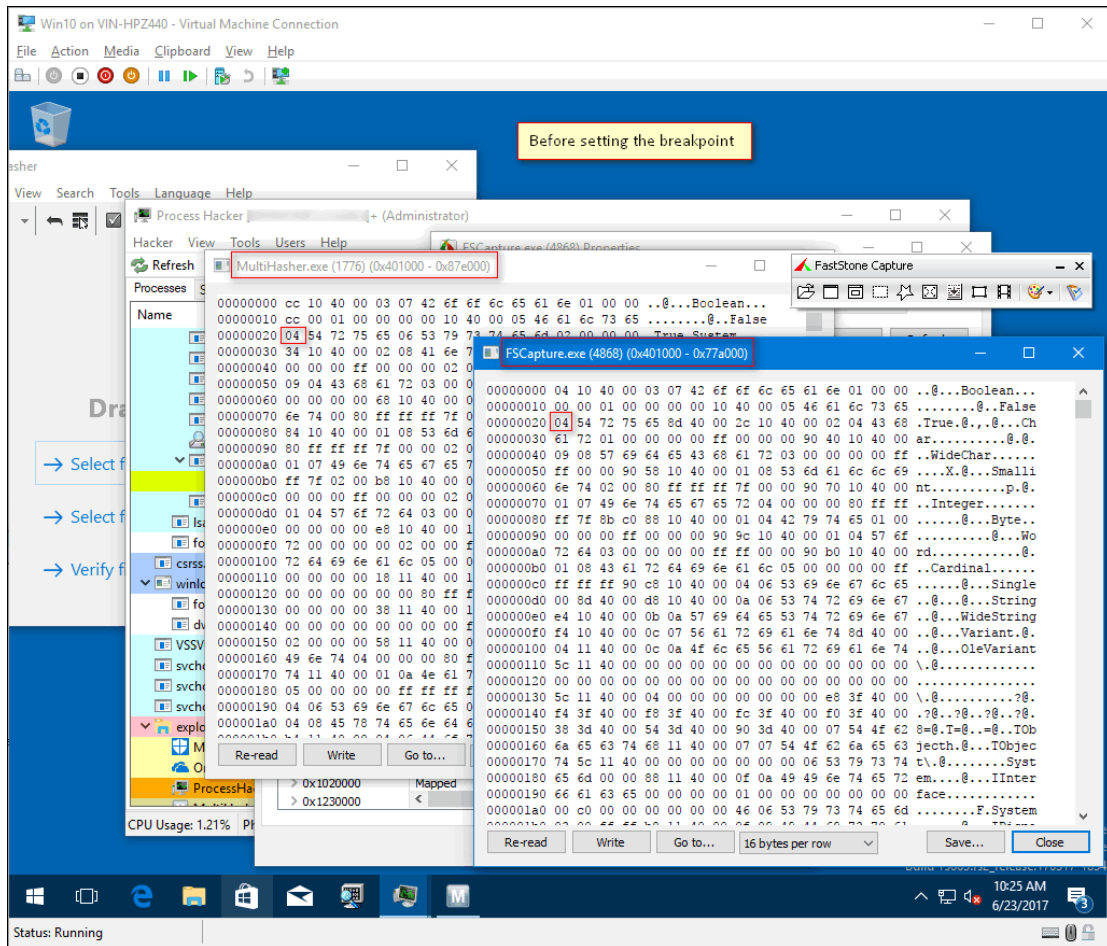


Figure 1: Before break point getting updated

```
Command
1: kd> .process /i ffff958727d8b080;g;
You need to continue execution (press 'g' <enter>) for the context
to be switched. When the debugger breaks in again, you will be in
the new process context.
Break instruction exception - code 80000003 (first chance)
nt!DbgBreakPointWithStatus:
ffff803`ea000a40 cc          int     3
1: kd> !process -1 0
PROCESS ffff958727d8b080
  SessionId: 1  Cid: 06f0  Peb: 00346000  ParentCid: 0fb8
  DirBase: 2e167000  ObjectTable: ffff83059058a700  HandleCount: 258.
  Image: MultiHasher.exe
1: kd> .process /r /p ffff958726322080
Implicit process is now ffff9587`26322080
.cache forcedecodeuser done
Loading User Symbols
****
*** WARNING: Unable to verify timestamp for FSCapture.exe
*** ERROR: Module load completed but symbols could not be loaded for FSCapture.exe
6. 1: kd> bp 0x401020
1: kd> g

*BUSY* | Debuggee is running...
```

Figure 2: Setting the break point

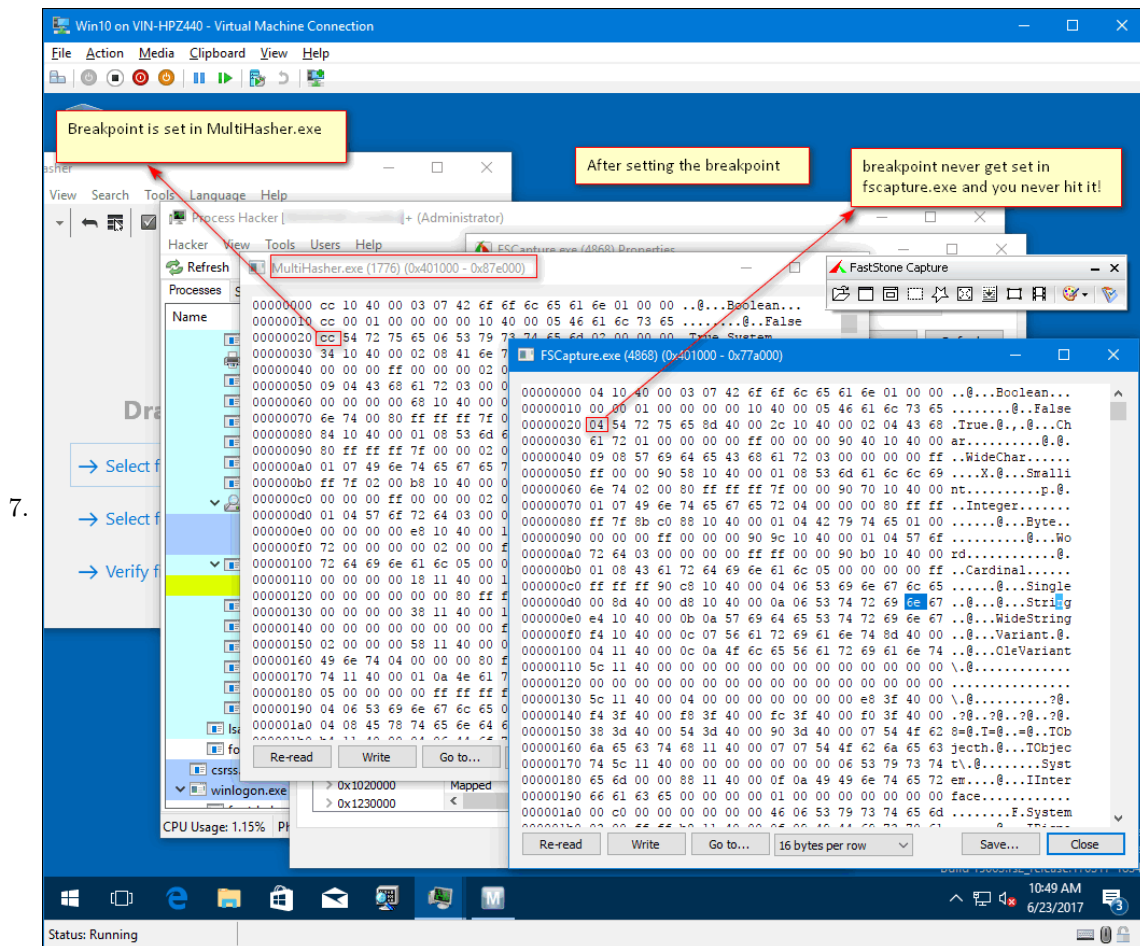


Figure 3: After break point is updated

8. This means, g command used to resume the target is the culprit(may be it is by design). This answers the second part of the question
9. So by using `.process /i jaddress;g`; windbg will break under your process context(how?). After which setting a break point and hitting g will cause the debugger to actually put int 3 in your process not somewhere else

NOTE: I initially made multihasher.exe the process context by using `.process /i jmultihasher address;g`;

4 Setting breakpoints in system dlls

This `.process /i` is not required if you are putting breakpoints in system dlls like kernelbase, ntdll etc because these dlls are loaded at the same virtual address in all the user mode processes and they have a single copy in the physical memory. So once a break point set in a process the break point is visible in all other processes which uses that system dll. Below we illustrate this by setting a break point in ntdll.dll. (Even here just make sure when you broke initially you are not in System process as it will not have ntdll!)

```
Command
0: kd> !process 0 0 explorer.exe
PROCESS fffff95872ab7d3c0
  SessionId: 1 Cid: 0fb8 Peb: 00279000 ParentCid: 0f98
  DirBase: 5b5e8000 ObjectTable: fffff830590d6de80 HandleCount: 1872.
  Image: explorer.exe

0: kd> .process /i fffff95872ab7d3c0:g
You need to continue execution (press 'g' <enter>) for the context
to be switched. When the debugger breaks in again, you will be in
the new process context.
Break instruction exception - code 80000003 (first chance)
nt!DbgBreakPointWithStatus:
fffff803`ea000a40 cc          int     3

2: kd> !process -1 0
PROCESS fffff95872ab7d3c0
  SessionId: 1 Cid: 0fb8 Peb: 00279000 ParentCid: 0f98
  DirBase: 5b5e8000 ObjectTable: fffff830590d6de80 HandleCount: 1872.
  Image: explorer.exe

1. 2: kd> x ntdll!BaseGetNamedObjectDirectory
00007ffd`3e01ba4c ntdll!BaseGetNamedObjectDirectory (void **)
2: kd> bp ntdll!BaseGetNamedObjectDirectory
breakpoint 4 redefined
2: kd> g

*BUSY* | Debuggee is running...
```

Figure 4: Break point is set only in ntdll of explorer process

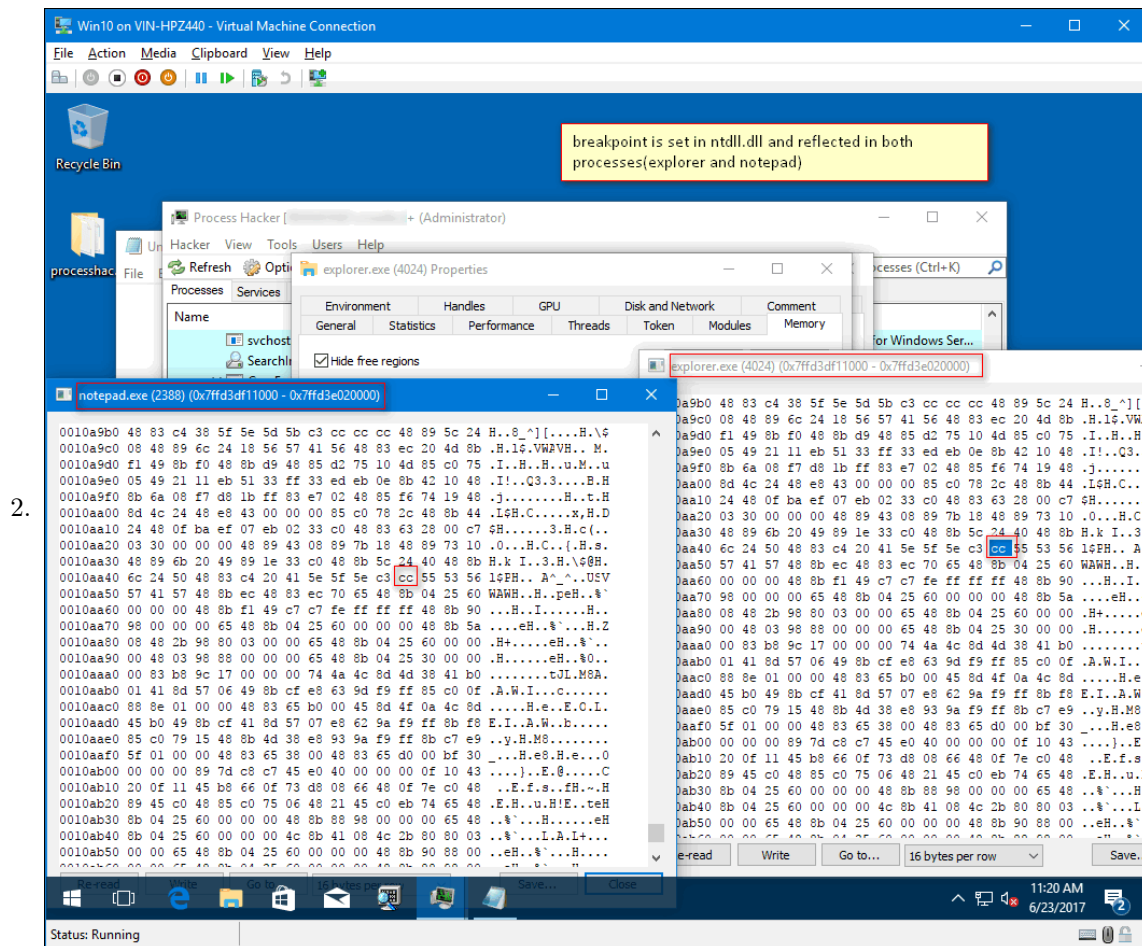


Figure 5: Break point set in ntdll of explorer gets reflected in ntdll of notepad also

5 References

1. [Analyst's Perspective: Analyzing User Mode State from a Kernel Connection](#)
2. [How Windows Debuggers Work?](#)