Quick reference for manual unpacking

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FireEye, USA Editor: Helen Martin Abstract

By packing their malicious executables, malware authors can be sure that when they are opened in a disassembler they will not show the correct sequence of instructions, thus making malware analysis a more lengthy and difficult process. Abhishek Singh provides a quick reference guide for unpacking malware from some of the most commonly used packers.

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Malware authors utilize packers to make it difficult for their malware to be reversed – the packers encode the original instructions. By packing a malicious executable, its author can be sure that when it is opened in a disassembler it will not show the correct sequence of instructions. Packers add some instructions at the top of the binary to unpack the executable. The process of decryption is performed in memory at run time, and the state of the application is restored. Since packers work on a compiled executable, the unpacking module must be independent of the original application.

One of the methods that can be used to locate the original entry point (OEP) of the file is to apply break points on the following APIs:

GetLoadLibraryA GetVersionExA GetEnvironmentA LoadLibraryA GetProcAddress IniHeap

These APIs are called by the packers' start-up routines in order to set up the execution environment. When a breakpoint is applied to these routines, we are close to the OEP. When the break point triggers, we can use step-by-step tracing to locate the initialization of the stack frame. The start of the function can be recognized by the initialization of the stack frame.

push ebp mov ebp, esp

The instructions shown above denote the start of the stack frame. Once these instructions are located, the debugged process can be dumped to obtain the unpacked version of the file.

In the following sections we describe some common packers and the assembly instructions that can be used to locate the OEP.

Manual unpacking

The purpose of this section is to provide a quick reference guide that will assist malware analysts in the unpacking of malware and reduce the response time for malware analysis – the full technical details of each packer have therefore been omitted.

ASPack

ASPack is an advanced *Windows 32* executable compressor capable of reducing the file size of 32-bit *Windows* (*95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003/Vista/7*) programs by as much as 70%. It is also used by some hackers to protect their programs.

To unpack ASPack, follow the first jmp, and follow JMP EAX. Later in the code you will find the following instructions:

mov eax,1
retn 0C
push 0
retn

Once these instructions have been identified, as shown in **Figure 1**, a break point should be put on RETN. When the break point triggers, we are at the OEP. The process can be dumped at this stage, leaving us with the unpacked executable.

00388415 00388416	61	POPAD Cracke_1.003
00399 00 5420	88 01000000 C2 0C00 68 00000000 C3	NOU ERX, 1 RETN OC PUSH 0 RETN
0038B426 0038B42C 0038B432 0038B433 0038B434 0038B434 0038B434 0038B434 0038B440 0038B446 0038B447 0038B445 0038B453 0038B453	8080 A1040000 51 50 FF95 A50F0000 8085 B1050000 8085 A0040000 50 FF95 A00F0000 8080 B8040000 8080 B8040000 50 50	LEA ECX, DWORD PTR SS: [PUSH ECX PUSH EAX CALL DWORD PTR SS: [EBP MOU DWORD PTR SS: [EBP+ LEA EAX, DWORD PTR SS: [EBP+ USH EAX CALL DWORD PTR SS: [EBP+ LEA ECX, DWORD PTR SS: [EBP+ LEA ECX, DWORD PTR SS: [PUSH ECX PUSH EAX
AARRASR	FF95 ASAFAAAA	CALL DHORD PTR SS: FERP

Figure 1. Instructions before the code is unpacked.

OllyScript code for the automatic unpacking of ASPack is shown in **Figure 2**. The instruction 'findop eip, #6800000000#' locates the PUSH 0 instruction in a debugged process packed with ASPack. Once this instruction is located, the debugger steps once to reach the RETN instruction. The debugger then steps again to reach the OEP instruction. Once the OEP instruction is located the debugger steps once more to reach the OEP. The debugged process can now be dumped to get the unpacked version of the file.

```
findop eip, #680000000#
go $RESULT
sti
sti
msg "OEP is found for ASPack "
run
```

Figure 2. OllyScript code used to locate the OEP for ASPack.

KKrunchy

KKrunchy [1] is a small executable packer intended for 64k intros. It does not try to pack DLLs and cannot handle exports or TLS. It performs a transform on the input code to allow it to compress better. It will fill uninitialized data sections with zeros and then pack them together with the rest of the code. KKrunchy is often used by malware authors to prevent AV analysts from reversing their code.

In order to unpack KKrunchy, put a break point on LoadLibraryA. When the break point triggers, step the debugger and search for the initialization of the stack frame. Once the stack frame initialization is complete, dump the debugged process. The dumped process is the unpacked version of the executable.

PECompact v2.x

PECompact [2] is fully compatible with DEP and code signing, and provides support for *Windows 7* and *Windows 2008*. It provides a good compression ratio compared to other compressors such as ASPack. The PECompact [3] loader consists of three components. The first is the SEH entry, which transfers control to the second component, the loader decoder. The loader decoder decodes the code and invokes the third component, the primary loader. The loader decoder is stored in the last section (or the second-to-last section if relocations have been preserved). The primary loader exists in uncompressed form at runtime in dynamically allocated memory. To hide the transfer of control, an SEH frame is set up and there is an exception. The exception handler then modifies the code at the exception address to a JMP and continues execution.

Figure 3 shows PECompact's exception handler. The instruction sequence 'PUSH EAX, PUSH DWORD PTR FS:[0], MOV DWORD PTR FS:[0], ESP' sets up the SEH frame. The instruction 'XOR EAX, EAX' sets the value in EAX to zero. The instruction 'MOV DWORD PTR DS:[EAX], ECX' triggers the exception.

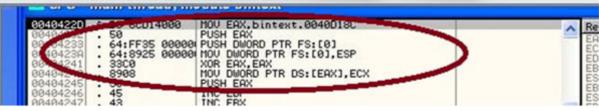


Figure 3. The PECompact exception handler.

To unpack PECompact, follow the exception and step through the code until the instructions shown in **Figure 4** are observed. JMP EAX is the jump to the OEP.

0400246 8824 0400249 58 0440249 55 0440248 55 0440248 59 0400240 58 0400240 58 0400240 50 0400246 50	MOU EAX, ESI POP EDX POP ESI POP EDI POP ECX POP EBX POP EBP JMP EAX	bintext. <modulee< th=""><th>Registen ERX 0044 ECX 0004 EDX 7C94 EBX 0044 ESP 0014 ESP 0044 ESP 0044</th></modulee<>	Registen ERX 0044 ECX 0004 EDX 7C94 EBX 0044 ESP 0014 ESP 0044 ESP 0044
18480258 20 42488888 18480255 8888	AND BYTE PTR DS: (FRX1.8)		EDI 0033

Figure 4. PECompact instructions before unpacking.

Set a break point on JMP EAX, step once, and observe the initialization of the stack frame as shown in **Figure 5**. Dump the process. The dumped process will be the unpacked executable.

0,0		ann annoada, an	odule bintext		
00404220 0040422E 00404230	2.044	55 8BEC 68 FF	PUSH EBP MOU EBP, ESP PUSH -1	^	Regi EAX
00404232 00404237 0040423C 0040423C		68 00624000 68 84434000 64:R1 0000000	PUSH bintext.00406200 PUSH bintext.00404384 MOV ERX,DWORD PTR FS:[0] PUSH ERX	JMP to msvort	EDX EBX ESP

Figure 5. Initialization of the stack frame.

The logic shown in **Figure 4** can be converted into script such as that shown in **Figure 6** (the script is available from Open RCE [4]).

```
sto
sto
sto
sto
sto
sto
esto
find eip, #8BC65A5E5F595B5DFFE0#
add $RESULT.08
bp $RESULT
run
bc $RESULT
sto
cmt eip,"This is a OEP!"
msg "OEP found, Dumped and fix IAT now!"
ret
```

Figure 6. OllyScript for PECompact.

The instruction 'find eip, #8BC65A5E5F595B5DFFE0#' locates the instructions 'MOV EAX ESI, POP EDX, POP ESI, POP EDI, POP ECX, POP EBX, POP EBP, JMP EAX'. Once these are located, the script steps once at the JMP instruction and the debugger is at the OEP. The debugged process now can be dumped to obtain the unpacked version of the file.

NSPack

NSPack [5] is capable of compressing EXE, DLL, OCX and SCR files. It also has the ability to compress 64bit executables. It provides support to compress files packed by other packers such as UPX, ASPack and PECompact. It supports direct compression of directories or multiple files. This packer is quite commonly used by malware authors.

As shown in Figure 7, the packer starts with the instructions PUSHFD, PUSHAD.

uneau. n	man and a second s	
1000100	PUSHED PUSHAD CALL Unpack M. 051655AB	
07 5CFCFFFF 01 42020000	SUB EBP,7 LEA ECX,DWORD PTR SS:[EBP-3A4] CHP BYTE PTR DS:[ECX],1 JE Unpack_M.00465800 HOLL BYTE PTR DS:[ECX] 1	

Figure 7. The starting instructions for NSPack.

Check for equivalent POPAD and POPFD instructions, as shown in **Figure 8**. The JMP instruction follows. Put a break point on the JMP instruction. When the break point triggers, step once and dump the process to obtain the unpacked file.

CPU - main thread	modulo Llopack_M	
0044 44 61 004 415 90 50 0596FEFF 00465818 8885 E8F0TT	POPAD POPFD JMP_Unpack_M.0044EEC0	

Figure 8. NSPack instructions before unpacking.

The abovementioned logic can be converted into the OllyScript shown in **Figure 9**. The instruction 'find eip, #619DE9#' locates the instruction POPAD, followed by POPFD, followed by a JMP instruction. Once these are located, the code is debugged, step by step, until the JMP instruction is executed – the debugger has then reached the OEP instruction. By using a plug-in like OllyDump, the process can be dumped to obtain the unpacked version of the file.

```
sti
find eip, #619DE9#
go $RESULT
sto
sto
sto
sto
msg "OEP for NSPack "
```

Figure 9. OllyScript used to locate the OEP for NSPack.

FSG 1.33

FSG stands for Fast Small and Good, and is currently used to pack various malware. It was originally created to pack assembly demos. Since it has a small loader, it is one of the most desirable packers for small executables.

In order to obtain the unpacked executable file for FSG 1.33, put a break point on the LoadLibraryA function, as shown in **Figure 10**.

7C801D78 88FF 7C801D7D 55 7C801D7D 55 7C801D7E 88EC 7C801D80 837D 08 00 7C801D84 53 7C801D85 56 7C801D86 ~74 14 7C801D89 68 50E1807C 7C801D80 FF75 08 7C801D90 FF15 A813807C 7C801D90 FF15 A813807C 7C801D98 59 7C801D98 59 7C801D99 59 7C801D99 59 7C801D99 ~74 12	TEST EAX,EAX POP ECX POP ECX JE SHORT kernel32.7C801DAE	ASCII "tw ntdllst
7C801D9C 6A 00 7C801D9E 6A 00 7C801D9E 6A 00 7C801D9E 5B 7C801D9B 7C801D9B 5B 7C801D9B 7C801D9B 5B 7C801D9A 7C801D9B 5B 7C801D9A 7C801D9B 5C 9400	PUSH 0 PUSH 0 PUSH 0 PUSH DWORD PTR SS:[EBP+8] CALL kernel32.LoadLibraryExA POP ESI POP EBX POP EBP RETN 4	

Figure 10. The LoadLibraryA function in FSG 1.33.

When the break point triggers, step a few instructions below until the following instructions are seen:

dec byte ptr [esi]
jz xxxxxxx
PUSH ESI
PUSH EDP
CALL DWORD PIR D5:[EBX=4]

When JE Address triggers, we can observe the initialization of the stack frame. We are at the OEP, so dump the process to get the unpacked version of the file.

00478046 ^75 FB 00478048 FE0E 00478048 ^74 F0 0047804C ~79 05 0047804E 46 0047804F AD 0047804F AD 00478050 50	JNZ SHORT unpackme.00478043 DEC BYTE PTR DS:[ESI] JE SHORT unpackme.0047803C JNS SHORT unpackme.00478053 INC ESI LODS DWORD PTR DS:[ESI] PUSH ERX
00478051 ~EB 09 00478053 -0F84 A582FCFF 00478058 56 00478050 55 00478050 55 00478050 FF53 04 00478060 HB	DEC BYTE PTR DS:[ESI] JE unpackme.00440300 PUSH ESI PUSH EBP CALL DWORD PTR DS:[EBX+4] STOS DWORD PTR ES:[ED]]
00478061 ^EB E0 00478063 33C9 00478065 41 00478066 FF13 00478066 FF13	XOR ECX,ECX INC ECX CALL DWORD PTR DS:[EBX]

Figure 11. Instructions denoting the end of FSG.

FSG 2.0

For version 2.0 of the FSG packer, the instructions that indicate the end of the FSG stub are as follows:

```
move eax (edi)
inc eax
js address
jnz address
jmp dword ptr [ebx+0Ch]
```

In order to manually unpack a file packed with FSG 2.0, put a break point on LoadLibraryA and execute the compressed file. When it breaks, clear the break point and execute until return (Ctrl -f9). Step through the debugged application until the instructions shown in **Figure 12** are reached.

004001C3 97 004001C4 AD	LODS DWORD PTR DS:[ESI]	^	Registers (FPU) EAX 00000000
004001C5 50 004001C6 FF53 10 004001C9 95	PUSH EAX CALL DWORD PTR DS: [EBX+10]	100	ECX 7C917DE9 ntdll.7C917DE9 EDX 7C97B178 ntdll.7C97B178
004001C9 25 004001C9 20 004001C0 40 00400 CD ^78 F3 00400 CD ^78 F3 004001C1 75 03	MOU EAX, DWORD PTR DS:[EDI] INC EAX JS SHORT bintext.004001C2 JNZ SHORT bintext.004001D4 JMP DWORD PTR DS:[EBX+C]		FBX 00411358 bintext.00411358 ESF 5212FFC4 EBP 77050000 msvort.77010000 ESI 004 5294 bintext.00406294 FSI 00405114 bintext.00405114
004001D4 50 004001D5 55 004001D6 FF53 14 004001D9 AB 004001D8 ^EB EE 004001DC 33C9 004001DE 41 004001DF FF13	PUSH EBP CALL DWORD PTR DS:[EBX+14] STOS DWORD PTR ES:[EDI] JMP SHORT bintext.004001CA XOR ECX,ECX INC ECX CALL DWORD PTR DS:[EBX]		EIP 004001D1 bintext.004001D1 C 0 ES 0023 32bit 0(FFFFFFF P 1 CS 001B 32bit 0(FFFFFFFF A 1 SS 0023 32bit 0(FFFFFFFF Z 1 DS 0023 32bit 0(FFFFFFFF S 0 FS 003B 32bit 7FFDD000(F T 0 GS 0000 NULL
004001E1 13C9 004001E3 FF13 004001E5 ^72 F8	ADC ECX,ECX CALL DWORD PTR DS:[EBX] JB_SHORT bintext.004001DF		0 0 LastErr ERROR_MOD_NOT_F(EFL 00000256 (NO,NB,E,BE,NS,F

Figure 12. Instructions reached before unpacking FSG 2.0.

Here, 'JMP DWORD PTR DS: PTR [ebx+0Ch]' is the jump to OEP. Once the JMP instruction is executed, dump the process to get the unpacked version of the file.

UPX

UPX [6] stands for Ultimate Packer for eXecutables. It offers an excellent compression ratio which is better than WinZip, Zip and GZIP. It also maintains a checksum for both compressed and uncompressed files. It uses compression algorithms like UCL [7]. UCL has the inherent advantage that the decompressor can be implemented in a few hundred bytes of code. Many malware families such as Qakbot are packed using UPX. It offers very fast compression and decompression speeds: ~10MB/s on a *Pentium* 133. It also offers support for LZMA compression and has support for BSD. LZMA decompression is disabled on the 16-bit platform due to the slow decompression speed on older platforms. It also provides support for two types of decompression routines. The first is the in-place technique, which decompresses the executable in memory. In-place decompression is possible only for some platforms. The extraction of a temporary file, even though it uses extra overhead, allows any executable file format to be packed.

In order to unpack UPX using a manual approach, the end of the UPX routine must be identified. The end of the UPX routine can be identified by the instructions CALL, POPAD and JMP, as shown in **Figure 13**. Put a break point on the JMP instruction. The JMP instruction will lead to initialization of the stack frame. After the JMP instruction has executed, dump the process by using a plug-in such as OllyDump, and the program is unpacked.

	e-e-mend -	و الس
40889F .∽74 07 4088A1 . 8903 4088A3 . 83C3 04 4088A6 .^EB 51	JE SHORT tnnbtib.004088A8 MOV DWORD PTR DS:[EBX],EAX ADD EBX,4	Registers (FPU) EAX 00000000 ECX 0012FFB0
102000 2 FF96 94800000 388AE > 61 388AFE9 1789FFFF 10355 00	CALL DWORD PTR DS: LESI+807. POPAD JMP tnnbtib.004011CB	EDX 7C90E4F4 ntdll.K EBX 7FFDC000 ESP 0012FFC4 EBP 0012FFF0 ESI FFFFFFF
408885 00	DR 00	EDI 7C910208 ntdll.7

Figure 13. UPX end of routine instructions.

```
var BPforPOPAD
var BPforJMP
findop eip, #61#
mov BPforPOPAD, SRESULT
bp BPforPOPAD
run
findop eip, #E9??????#
mov BPforJMP, SRESULT
bp BPforJMP
run
sti
msg "OEP for UPX. Dump the Process"
```

Figure 14. The OllyScript used to unpack UPX.

The script shown in **Figure 14** is the implementation of the logic used to locate the OEP. The instruction 'findop eip, #61#' locates the assembly instruction POPAD, sets a break point on it, and then executes the code packed with UPX. Once the break point is triggered, the instruction 'findop eip, #E9??????#' locates the JMP instruction and sets a break point on it. When the break point triggers, the debugger steps once in the code and is at the OEP. The debugged process can be dumped to get the unpacked version of the file.

PEDiminisher

PEDiminisher is a simple PE packer. It uses the aplib compression/decompression library. Many AV engines have the ability to unpack files packed with PEDiminisher to check for malicious content.

The end routine for PEDiminisher is shown below:

 pop
 EBP

 POP
 EDI

 POP
 ESI

 POP
 EDX

 POP
 ECX

 POP
 EBX

 JMP
 EAX

For unpacking, the end instructions must first be located in the packed file (as shown in **Figure 15**). JMP EAX is the jump to the OEP. Set a break point at the JMP instruction, step once and then dump the process to get the unpacked version of the file.

00440805C 3023 00440805E 8003 AA 00440805E 8003 AA 004408065 8660 004408065 8660 00408065 43 00408065 42 00408065 8260 00408065 43 00408065 827 08 00408067 83C7 08 00408075 FE8D 99334000 00408076 FE8 16000000 00408077 B885 95334000 00408085 8890 9A334000 00408085 8590 9A334000 00408085 55 00408085 55 00408085 55 00408085 55 00408085 55 00408085 56 00408085 55 00408090 50 00408091 59 00408091 59 00408091 59 00408090 58 00408090 59 00408090 59	XOR BYTE PTR DS:[EBX],AH ADD BYTE PTR DS:[EBX],0AA ROL AX,3 XCHG AL,AH INC EBX LOOPD SHORT PEDimini.00408067 CALL PEDimini.0040816E ADD EDI,8 DEC BYTE PTR SS:[EBP+403399] JNZ SHORT PEDimini.00408036 CALL PEDimini.00408095 MOV EAX,DWORD PTR SS:[EBP+403395] MOV EAX,DWORD PTR SS:[EBP+40339A] HOU EBX,DWORD PTR SS:[EBP+40339A] HOU EAX,DWORD PTR SS:[EBP+40339A] POP EBP POP EDI POP EDI POP EDX POP ECX POP EBX	
08408095 8895 94554000 88855 F6334000 80408041 33FF 80408043 03F2	JMP EAX MOU ESI, DWORD FIR SS:[EBP+40339A] MOU ESI, DWORD FIR SS:[EBP+4033F6] XOR EDI,EDI ADD ESI.EDX	PEDimini.00401000

Figure 15. The end instruction for PEDiminisher.

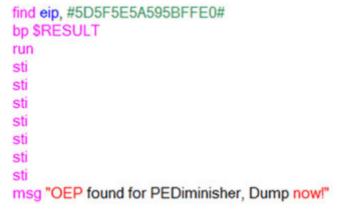


Figure 16. The OllyScript used to unpack PEDiminisher.

The instruction 'find eip, #5D5F5E5A95BFFE0#' locates the instructions 'POP EBP, POP EDI, POP ESI, POP EDX, POP ECX, POP EBX, JMP EAX'. The script then steps through the debugger until it reaches JMP EAX. Once it is at JMP EAX, the code steps once and is at the OEP. The OllyDump plug-in can be used to dump the process and we are left with the unpacked version of the executable file.

MEW

MEW [8] is an executable tool which was designed to handle small files. It works on 32-bit workstations and uses the LZMA algorithm. It strips reloc tables, Delphi resources, and unused resources. Even though it was designed to handle small files, it can compress large files as well.

The last instruction in the MEW stub, as shown in **Figure 17**, is RETN. After this instruction a jump to the OEP takes place. Set a break point on the RETN instruction. When the break point is triggered, as shown in **Figure 17**, step once and then dump the process to get the unpacked version of the file.

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004001E6 40 004001E7 59 004001E8 ~74 004001E8 ~79 004001E8 ~79 004001EC AC 004001EC AC 004001EF 3C 004001EF 75 004001F1 91 004001F2 40 004001F3 50	INC EAX POP ECX JE SHORT XORSearc.004001D6 JNS SHORT XORSearc.004001F3 LODS BYTE PTR DS:[ESI] CMP AL,0 JNZ SHORT XORSearc.004001EC XCHG EAX,ECX INC EAX PUSH EAX	
004001F4 55 004001F8 AB 04001F8 AB 04001F9 85C0 064001F9 475 E5 004001FU 475 E5	CALL DWORD PTR DS:[EBX-C] STOS DWORD PTR ES:[EDI] TEST EAX.EAX JNZ SHORT XORSearc.004001E2 RETN	>
004001FE 0000 00400200 0000 00400202 0000 00400202 0000 00400202 0000 00400204 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400208 0000 00400214 0000	ADD BYTE PTR DS: LEHX], AL ADD BYTE PTR DS: LEAX], AL	

Figure 17. The last instructions for the MEW packer.

The logic used to locate the OEP for MEW is shown in **Figure 18**. The code 'findop eip, #C3#' locates the RETN instruction in the debugged process packed with the MEW packer. Once the RETN instruction is located, the debugger steps once and is at the OEP. The OllyDump plug-in can be used to dump the process and we are left with the unpacked version of the executable file.

sti findop eip, #C3# go \$RESULT sto sto msg "OEP found for MEW"

Figure 18. The OllyScript used to unpack MEW.

Conclusion

Reducing the time it takes to perform malware analysis is very important. For static analysis of malware it is important that the malware is unpacked. There are many approaches to unpacking a piece of malware – for example, it can be executed in a virtual environment and then we can capture a memory snapshot of the executing malware. Once we get the snapshot, we can dump the unpacked malware directly from memory. However, it is possible that not all of the code of the unpacked malware will be in memory, so dumping a process from memory might not be an effective unpacking method. Loading a packed malicious executable and executing step by step instructions in a debugger is one of the best ways to locate the OEP and execute the malware. In this article we have provided assembly instructions for the most commonly used packers which can be used to quickly unpack malware. We have also provided OllyScripts for the logic to manually unpack the malware. This can further aid in reducing response time for malware analysis.

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```
About us (/about-vb/about-us/)
Contact us (/about-vb/contact-us/)
Advisory board (/about-vb/advisory-board/)
Press information (/about-vb/press/)
Security events calendar (/resources/calendar/)
Security jobs (/resources/jobs/)
Testing (/testing/)
VB100 (/testing/vb100/)
VBSpam (/testing/vbspam/)
VBWeb (/testing/vbweb/)
Consultancy services (/testing/consultancy-services/)
Spammers' Compendium (/resources/spammerscompendium/)
VB2016 (Denver) (/conference/vb2016/)
VB2015 (Prague) (/conference/vb2015/)
VB2014 (Seattle) (/conference/vb2014/)
VB2013 (Berlin) (/conference/vb2013/)
VB2012 (Dallas) (/conference/vb2012/)
Older conferences (/conference/vb-conference-archive/)
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.6827080883932) (https://www.facebook.com/virusbulletin) (https://www.youtube.com/user/virusbtn)

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