

An Approach for Encrypted Exchange of Information in Corporate Networks Based on Tcl/Tk

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Abstract: Ensuring information security is crucial for corporations with a complex, geographically distributed structure at many levels: large banks, multinational and state-owned companies. Often the corporate networks of such organizations are built with equipment from different generations and from different manufacturers, which significantly complicates the process of managing the IT system. The article presents the elements of the security system used to protect information in a distributed corporate network. Various elements (firewalls, cryptographic algorithms, anti-virus programs, etc.) and company products, which are the main units in building corporate security systems, are described. Special attention is paid to public key cryptography and a software implementation Coder 1.0 (developed on Tcl/Tk) is proposed, implementing encrypted data exchange inside of corporate networks and between corporate networks.

Keywords: *Tcl/Tk, Corporate networks, Cryptography, TCP/IP, Public Key Encryption, Coder 1.0*

1. Introduction

The use of corporate information systems as an active communication and service environment and a tool for business, services and production, requires security of information transmitted between local computer networks and its protection against destruction and unauthorized access.

Corporate security policy consists of developing and approving general and private security rules and procedures for individual users, departments and/or offices, as well as rules and mechanisms of interaction between them, including [1, 2]:

- Determining the accessible resources and services;
- Access control;
- Rules for local and remote identification and authentication;
- Use of cryptographic methods and devices for data protection and access control;
- Protection against viruses, etc.

The use of cryptographic methods and algorithms for data protection has a key role in building a security information system. New software products for encrypting information (letters, documents, databases, etc.) have been developed [3, 4]. They allow the secure storage of data on corporate computers, as well as data transmission by e-mail, TCP / IP or other transmission media [5, 6]. Various tools are also used to pre-model and simulate different security information systems [7].

The software solutions used are based on various standardized cryptographic algorithms described in detail in [8, 9, 10].

2. Elements of the security system of distributed corporate network

2.1. Identification methods

The identification methods are used to ensure strictly personalized access to the resources of the corporate network. This group includes: Touch memory, Smart cards, passwords, biometric data, etc. [14, 15].

The identification and authorization of a user by his physical characteristics (face, fingerprint, voice or iris) is used in corporate security systems. The advantage of these methods is the impossibility of duplicating the identification elements, but their mass application is still difficult, both due to the high prices of hardware and software and a number of unresolved legal and ethical issues.

2.2. Firewalls

Firewalls are an important element in building a security system in a corporate network. Their main function is to separate PCs from the Internet by monitoring data packets (both inbound and outbound) and determining whether to let them in or block them. They ensure that packets that meet certain security rules (defined by the user or administrator) are admitted to the computer. Firewalls work in both

directions, accepting or rejecting all messages based on lists of acceptable and unacceptable sources and ports [2].

2.3. Cryptographic algorithms and products

In general, cryptographic algorithms are divided into symmetric and asymmetric [8, 13].

➤ **Symmetric algorithms:**

- **DES (Data Encryption Standard)** - is the name of FIPS (Federal Information Processing Standard), describing the algorithm DEA (Data Encryption Algorithm). It was originally developed by IBM and was called Lucifer, later included NSA and NIST [11, 12, 13].

This algorithm has been the standard for about 20 years. The data is encrypted in 64-bit blocks, the key is 56-bit.

- **Triple DES** - Developed as a replacement for DES. Also considered insecure (because 56-bit keys are already vulnerable) [8, 13].
- - **Blowfish** - encryption algorithm with variable key length (from 32 to 488 bits). It was developed in 1993 by Bruce Schneier. It is faster than DES and IDEA [8].
- **IDEA (International Data Encryption Algorithm)**- encrypts 64-bit blocks with a 158-bit key. The decryption process involves eight complex stages [8].

It is designed for embedding in hardware and software. Its hardware application is more common.

- **AES-(Advanced Encryption Standard)** - it is based on the Rijndael block algorithm and was completed in October 2000. The key length varies from 128 bits, to 256 and higher. The standard is described in detail in [5, 8, 13].

The described algorithms are developed for embedding in hardware and software.

➤ **Asymmetric algorithms:**

- **RSA (Rivest–Shamir–Adleman)**-developed in 1977, it offers not only encryption but also user authentication. Like any asymmetric algorithm, it works with two keys (public and private). This allows any user to send an encrypted message, but only the owner of the correct private key will be able to decrypt it [8].
- **Elliptic-curve cryptography (ECC)** – elliptic-curve cryptosystems can be classified according to whether they are analogs of RSA or discrete logarithmic systems. They are analogous to existing public key systems, in which modular arithmetic has been replaced by operations defined on elliptic curves. Today, methods for calculating discrete elliptic curves

are less efficient than those based on discrete logarithms. As a result, shorter key lengths can achieve the security of conventional cryptosystems, leading to lower system requirements and improved performance [8].

Public key cryptography is based on asymmetric algorithms. A detailed comparison of the capabilities of the described algorithms is made in [10].

3. Public key cryptography

3.1. Main characteristics

Public key cryptography and related standards and techniques underlie the protection of many Internet-related products, including signed and encrypted e-mail, form signing, one-time password entry to access all available resources, and the SSL protocol (Secure Sockets Layer) [8].

All communications on the Internet use the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) protocol suite. This protocol allows information to be sent from one computer to another over multiple intermediate computers and different networks before reaching the recipient. The great flexibility and convenience of TCP / IP leads to its adoption worldwide as a basic protocol for communication on the Internet and Intranet. At the same time, the fact that TCP / IP allows information to pass through intermediate computers allows third parties to interfere with communications in the following ways [2, 9]:

- **Eavesdropping** – the information remains unchanged, but its confidentiality has been violated;
- **Forgery** – the information during the transport is changed or replaced and then sent to the recipient;
- **Pretending** – the information is transmitted to a recipient, who pretends to be the real recipient.

Usually, very sensitive personal and corporate communications on the Internet require caution, which is aimed at the threats mentioned above. Fortunately, many well-established techniques and standards (known as public key cryptography) make such precautions easy and convenient.

Public key cryptography has the following characteristics:

- **Encryption and decryption** - allows both communicating parties to hide the information they exchange;
- **Recognition of forged information** – allows the recipient of the information to check that it has not been altered during transport. Any attempt to change or replace data leads to the appearance of a message about the lack of authenticity of the information;

- **Authentication** – allows the recipient of the information to establish its source, i.e. to confirm the identity of the sender;
- **Non-rejection** – makes it impossible for the sender of the information to later claim that the information was not sent.

Encryption is a process of transforming information so that it becomes meaningless to everyone but the recipient for whom it is intended. Decryption is a process of transformation of encrypted information, in which it becomes understandable again. A cryptographic algorithm, also called a cipher, is a mathematical function used to encrypt or decrypt. In most cases, two interrelated functions are used, one for encryption and one for decryption [9, 16, 19].

In modern cryptography, the ability to keep encrypted information secret is based not on a cryptographic algorithm that is widely known, but on a number called a key that must be used in the algorithm to encrypt or decrypt information. Deciphering with the right key is easy and fast. Deciphering without the right key is very difficult and in some cases impossible for any practical purpose.

In cryptography, a message that will be kept secret will be encrypted using an algorithm. Messages that have been encrypted are called plain text, and messages that have been encrypted or are encrypted are called encrypted text. The process of converting plain text to ciphertext is called encryption, and the process of recovering plaintext from ciphertext is called decryption.

Encryption and decryption are functions of transformation between these sets. If the plaintext elements are denoted by M , the elements of the encrypted text are denoted by C , while for encryption the process is denoted by E , deciphered with the notation D . The mathematical notation of this process is [19]:

- Encryption: $E(M) = C$
- Decryption: $D(C) = D(E(M)) = M$

With a block diagram, the encryption and decryption process can be described as follows (Fig. 1):

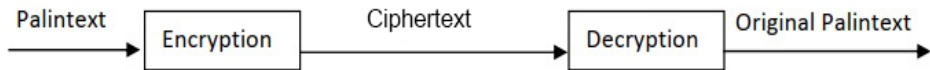


Fig. 1. Block Diagram Encryption and Decryption process [19]

Two types of encryptions are used:

- symmetric encryption,
- public key encryption.

In symmetric encryption, the encryption key can be calculated from the decryption key and vice versa. Most symmetric algorithms use the same

encryption and decryption key. It is effective only if the symmetric key is kept hidden by both parties involved in the communication. Detailed information is given in [20].

Public key encryption (also called asymmetric encryption) involves a pair of keys (public and private key) associated with a person who must verify their identity electronically or sign or encrypt data.

The asymmetric algorithm in the encryption and decryption process can be symbolized mathematically and is described as follows [19]:

- Encryption: $EK1(M) = C$
- Decryption: $DK2(C) = DK2(EK1(C)) = M$

The public key is denoted by $K1$ while the private key is denoted by $K2$. Each public key is published while its corresponding private key is kept hidden from the owner.

Figure 2 shows a simplified view of the operation of public key encryption.

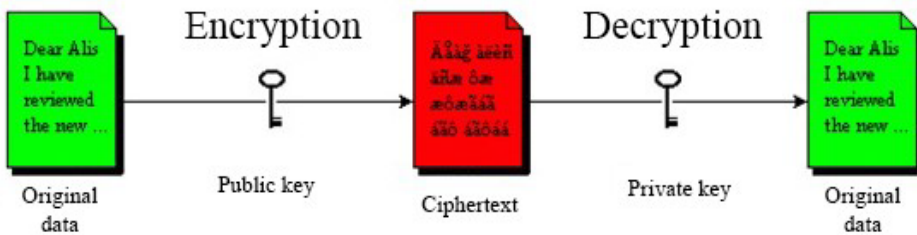


Fig. 2. Public key encryption

As can be seen from the figure, the public key can be known by everyone, but only the owner of the private key will be able to read the data encrypted with it. The most widely used public key encryption implementations are based on algorithms patented by RSA Data Security.

Compared to symmetric encryption, public key encryption requires more calculations and is therefore not always suitable for large amounts of data. However, it is possible to use public key encryption to send the symmetric key, which can be used to encrypt other data [12, 16].

3.2. Main characteristics

3.2.1 Option 1

Recently, experiments have been made in the field of merging software-defined networks (SDN) and Wi-Fi networks into software-defined wireless networks (SDWN). However, none of the proposed architectures allows protection of the wireless connection part of the network. In [4] a specialized EnDeC component

that can encrypt and decrypt wireless network traffic in SDWN using the WPA2 security standard is presented. It also communicates with an SDN controller to maintain centralized network management. The EnDeC component downloads an encryption feature and decrypts the wireless access point and improves network performance. Fig. 3 shows an example network.

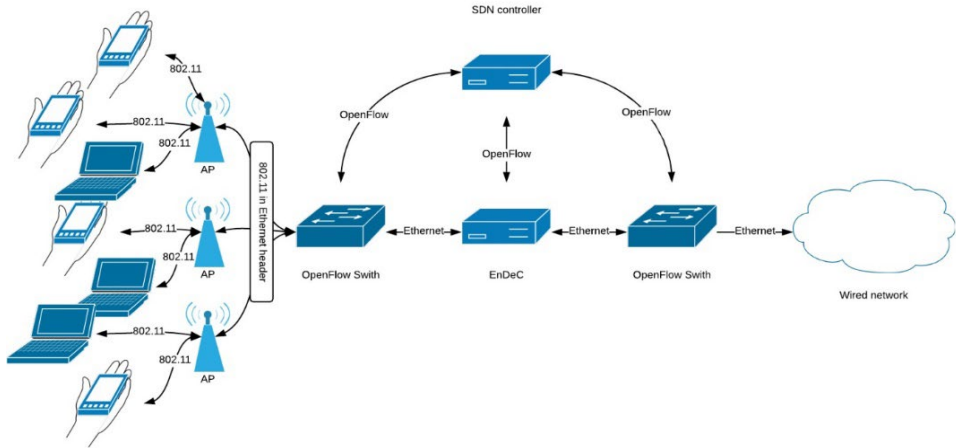


Fig. 3. EnDeC component in SDWN [4]

In order to understand this topic, we need to understand key technologies: SDN and Wi-Fi. SDN architecture enables centralized and agile control of the network by control plane with the SDN controller. This controller is managing the forwarding part of the network where data is transferred. Also connects the application layer via dedicated APIs [10]. Wi-Fi represents a wireless LAN based on the IEEE 802.11 standard protocol, which grants Internet resources to connected devices. It is developed by Wi-Fi alliance [4]. Following solutions of SDWN and their variations are the most popular in the topic of merging SDN and Wi-Fi.

3.2.2. Option 2

A Wireless Sensor Network (WSN) plays an important part in the growth of various applications such as healthcare, the military, industrial surveillance, etc. In this selforganized network, Sensor Nodes (SNs) with limited energy, storage and computational capabilities are randomly distributed. The SNs monitor different factors, which are wind, humidity, temperature, etc., and then forward the data to the Base Stations (BSs).

A blockchain-based encryption and trust assessment model is proposed in which the identities of aggregator nodes (ANs) and sensor nodes (SNs) are

preserved. The authentication of AN and SN is performed in public and private blockchains, respectively.

Fig. 4 shows a model of Option 2. The steps included in the proposed model are initialization, registration, authentication and trust evaluation of the nodes.

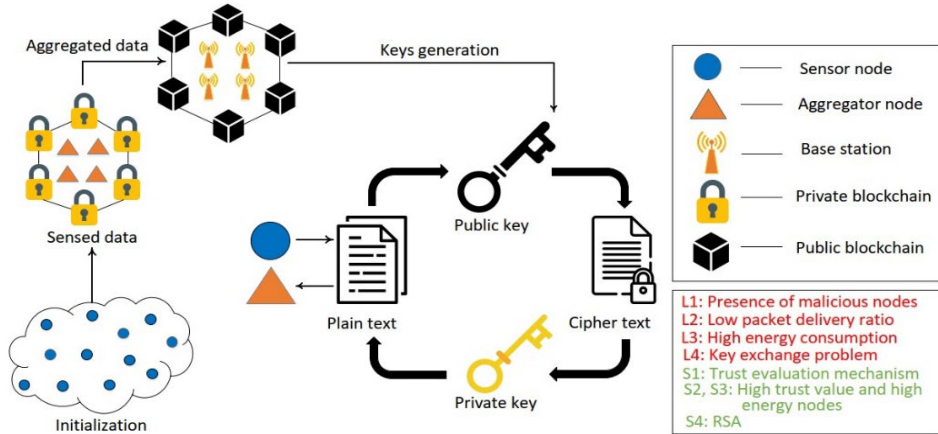


Fig. 4. Proposed system model [5]

The proposed secure blockchain routing mechanism for WSN is RSA-based and is used to encrypt and decrypt data packets for secure routing. A more detailed description of the technology is given in [5].

4. Software package for coded information exchange Coder 1.0

As part of research in the field of encrypted information exchange in corporate and sensor networks, a software package (Coder 1.0) was developed, with which experiments were performed within developed systems in the field of energy, laparoscopic surgery and data collection system sensors, which are described in [23, 24, 25].

For its development a scripting language was used, Tcl/Tk. The package is designed to encrypt / decrypt information contained in a user directory [20, 21, 22]. It supports the DES algorithm with a 64-bit encryption key and has built-in control to verify the integrity of the information [1]. The package can run under Operating Systems: Windows and Linux.

The internal presentation of the information is in hexadecimal format, which makes the output files convenient for transfer via TCP / IP. It supports user-friendly interface.

To transfer encrypted information, the program must be installed on the computers of the sender and recipient. It is necessary for the parties exchanging

information in advance to know the encryption / decryption key (which can be sent by e-mail or otherwise).

The encryption key is a 16-digit hexadecimal number (any combination from 0 to F). The control panel of the program contains three fields for entering information (From Directory, To Directory, Key) and two active buttons (Coding and Decoding). In addition to the three fields, the program also shows the decoding result, as shown in Fig. 5.

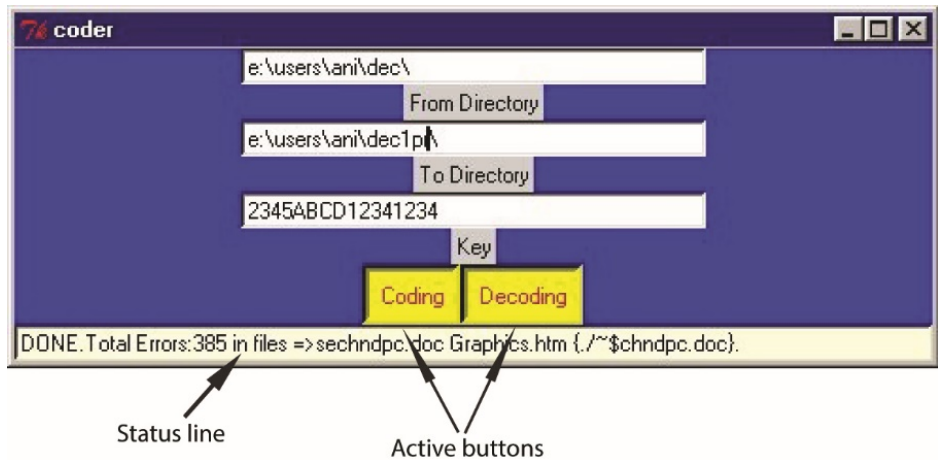


Fig. 5. Working screen of Coder 1.0

When encrypting information in a directory, the sender enters the name of the encryption directory in the From Directory field, and the name of the directory containing the encrypted files in the To Directory field. Enter the encryption key in the Key field and press the Coding key (Fig. 6). In this operation, each line of a file is encoded separately (up to CR).

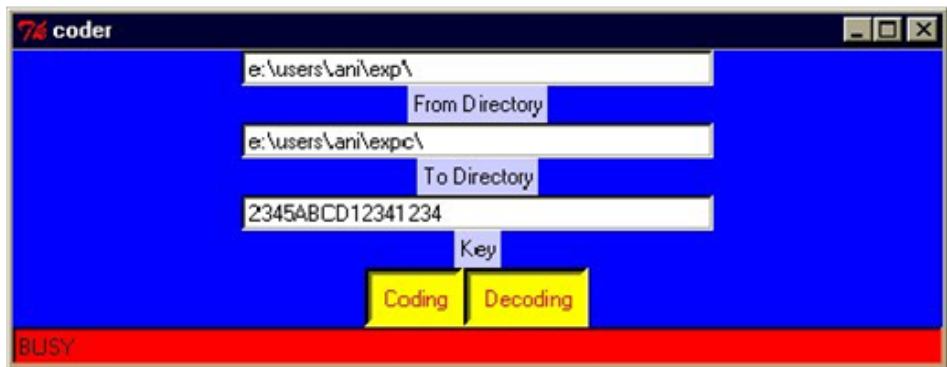


Fig. 6. Encryption operation

Fig. 7 shows the type of encrypted file with Coder 1.0. The sender's information encrypted in this way can be sent to the recipient by e-mail or directly via TCP/IP.

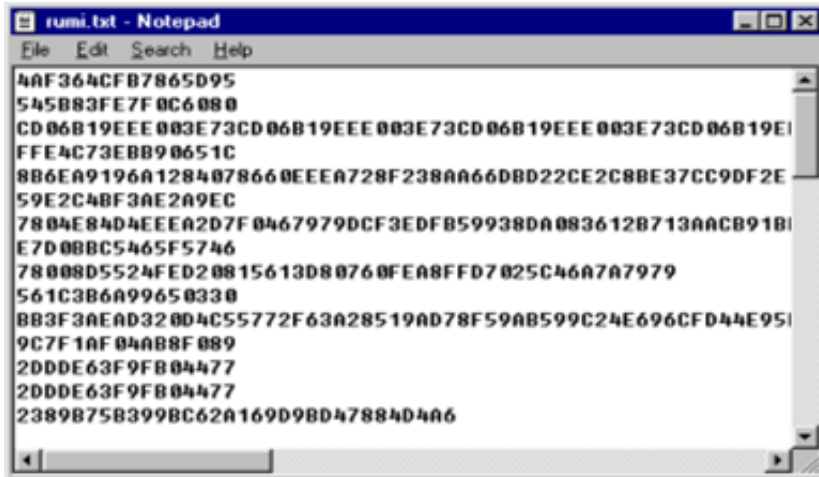


Fig. 7. Internal presentation of information encrypted with Coder 1.0

Upon receiving the encrypted information, the recipient enters the name of the received directory in the From directory field, and in the To Directory field indicates the directory in which it will be decoded (Fig. 6). Then in the Key field it is necessary to enter a valid key and activate the Decoding button. After decoding, information about the result of the performed operation appears in the status line (Fig. 6). If the key is invalid or an attempt is made to manipulate the information externally, a message is displayed in this field about the manipulated files and the number of incorrectly decoded lines (for each of them). An error message (CSError) is written to each incorrectly decoded line (on a given file).

An option for encoding / decoding a string (arbitrarily long line) as a Tcl command (SCRIPT) has also been implemented. This option is convenient for use in user programs (for encrypting texts with arbitrary content). The SCRIPT command can be used to encrypt files with *.txt, *.doc, *.html or *.html extensions, with no limit on the size of the file. When decoding the information, if there is a discrepancy with the coding key (or an attempt is made to manipulate the data), a Tcl error message is generated, which can be worked out with specialized operators (CATCH, etc.) in the language [18]. In this way, the integrity of the data is controlled.

5. Conducted experiments with the software package Coder 1.0

Two types of experiments were performed: with the Coder1.0 program and with the SCRIPT command (built into the software products described in [23, 24]).

Fig. 8 shows the experimental setup for testing the capabilities of Coder1.0.

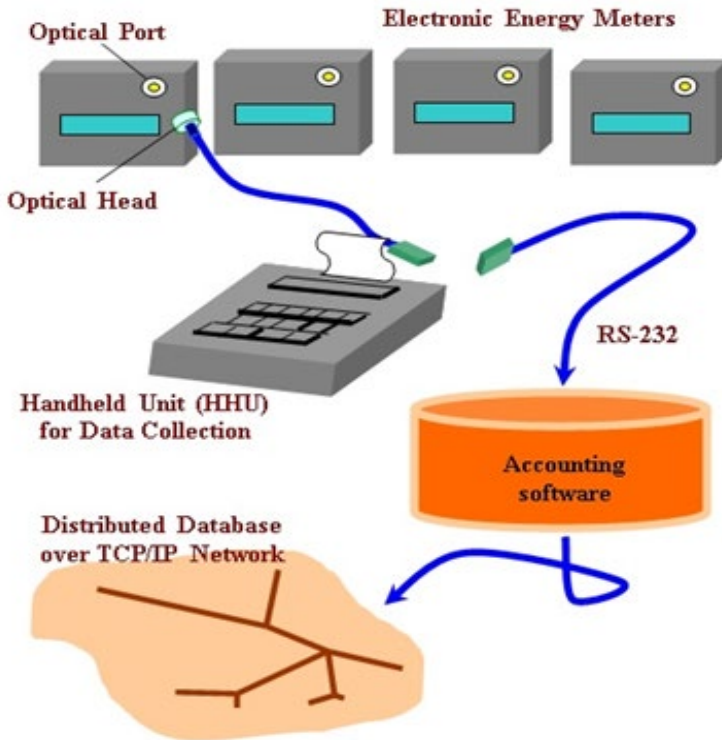


Fig. 8. Block diagram of the experimental setup [24]

The experiments were conducted within the “Information system for accounting, visualization and analysis of energy consumption” described in detail in [24].

The used algorithm DES (at the request of the applicant) implemented in Coder1.0 and built into the software package Accounting (developed on Tcl / Tk). Encrypted exchange is used when transferring TCP / IP information from local to the central server, as well as when storing it in local databases. The terminal has the ability to read and accumulate data for up to 2000 electric meters. The collected information is accumulated in local databases (in the local servers of the system) and transferred to a central server [24].

With Coder1.0, various experiments were performed to encrypt / decrypt without manipulation (with manipulation) of files with extensions *.txt and *

.html. Files in such formats have been selected, as the program was developed in order to protect the service and service information to the information systems Fig. [23, 24]. The experiments were performed under the Windows operating system.

Figures 9 (a, b) and 10 (a, b) show the results of an encryption operation on * .txt and * .html files. When decoding the files shown in Fig. 9 (b) and Fig. 10 (b) the original files are obtained (Fig. 9a and Fig. 10a).

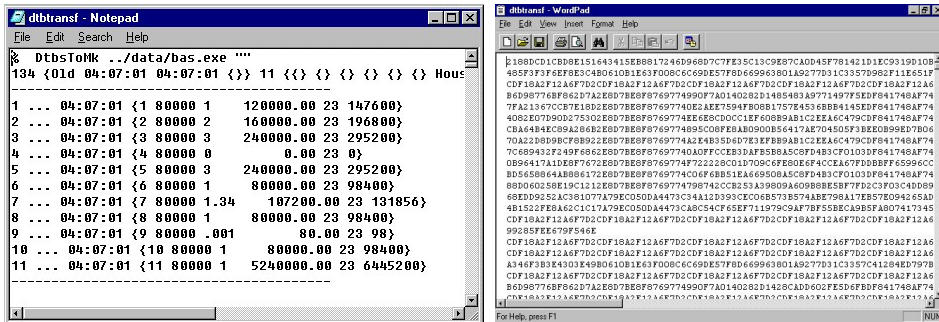


Fig. 9. Coder 1.0 software package:

a) Original text file (* .txt); b) Encrypted version of the same file

These files are encrypted and decrypted with the same key. Encrypted text files retain their extension and increase their size minimally. When encryption / decoding operations are performed on a personal computer, this must be done in different directories (due to the fact that the encrypted files retain their names and extensions).

Experiments have been conducted to encrypt / decrypt * .html files (due to the fact that part of the service documentation of the above information systems is in this format)

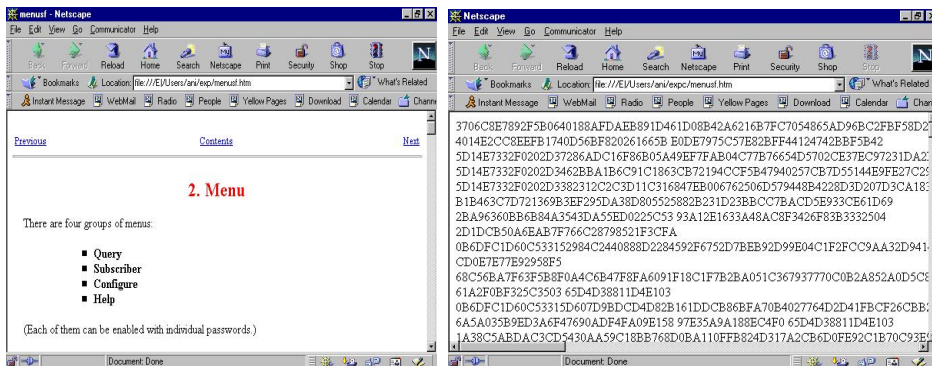


Fig. 10. Coder 1.0 software package:

a) Original HTML file (* .html); b) Encrypted version of the same file

When encoding *.html files, it should be borne in mind that the tested program Coder 1.0 does not support image encryption. If there is an image in an encrypted file (of this format), the links are saved when decrypting, and the image space remains empty as the program puts a symbol indicating the lack of expression. This type of file (in encrypted form) increases in size more (compared to text). With the Coder 1.0 program, experiments were performed to encrypt files (contained in a certain directory), with encryption performed with one key and decryption with another.

Fig. 11 shows the result of decrypting a directory (containing three files) with a key different from the one used in its encryption.

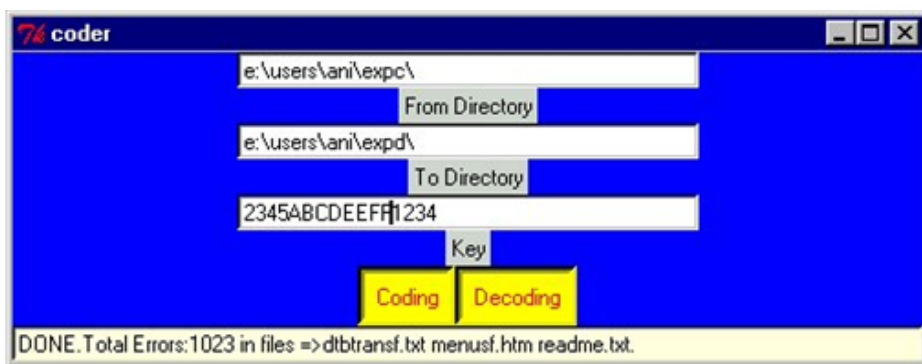


Fig. 11. Decoding with an invalid key

As can be seen from the figure, in this case during the decoding operation in the status line the message “Total Errors: 1023 in files” appears. Because the encryption is done line by line with this message, the program reports errors on all decoded lines. After this message, the names of the incorrectly decoded files are displayed in the same line. When open any file (from those decoded with an invalid key), sequential CSError messages appear on the screen, as shown in Fig. 12.

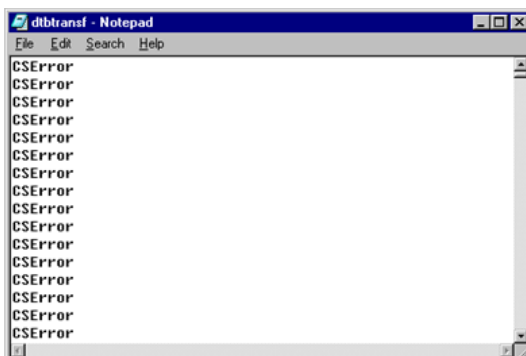


Fig. 12. Internal presentation of information in a file decoded with an invalid key

As can be seen from Fig. 11 and Fig. 12, the software package Coder 1.0 does not allow encryption of information with one key and decryption with another. This indicates that information encrypted in a program directory is only available to those who use a valid key to decrypt it. It is unreadable to everyone else.

Files decoded with an incorrect key are 1K in size. Experiments were performed with the presence of manipulated information in an encrypted directory with Coder 1.0. The purpose of the experiment is to prove the ability of the program to locate and declare the presence of files with manipulated information in a secure service or user directory. To this end, an additional line of information has been added to the dtbtransf.txt encrypted file. The result of its decryption is shown in Fig. 13 and Fig. 14



Fig. 13. Decoding a coded directory in the presence of a manipulated file in it

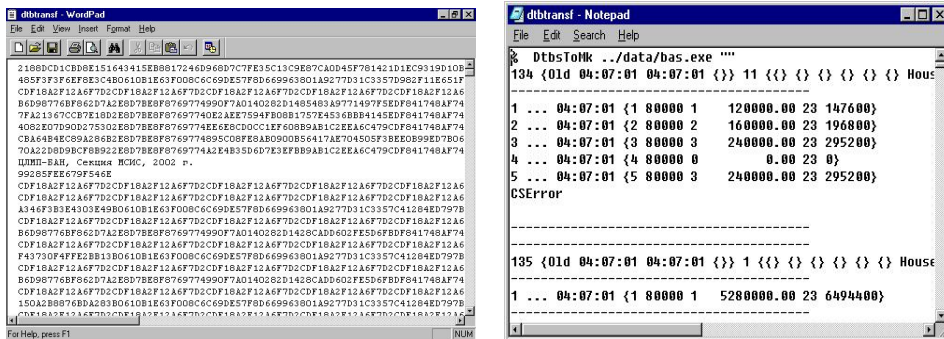


Fig. 14. Internal presentation of the information in a manipulated file
a) Encrypted file with additional text entered; b) Contents of the manipulated file after decoding

As can be seen from the figures when performing an operation to decode the pre-manipulated security file in the status line of the program appears the

message “Total errors: 1 in files => dtbtransf.txt”. In this way, the program reports an error in one line of the file. When you open it with a text reader, you can see that the message “CSError” is displayed in place of the added line (Fig. 14b). This message is a warning about the breach of confidentiality of protected information, i.e. the information in this file becomes invalid. In this case, it is necessary to perform a check to determine whether an attempt has been made to manipulate (by external or internal malicious persons) the protected file. The messages in Fig. 13 and Fig. 14 show that the developed software product has a built-in algorithm for monitoring possible attempts at malicious interference.

With the developed additional option SCRIPT (built into the software product described in [24]) experiments were performed to protect databases of the type MK4Tcl. The type of encrypted database is shown in Fig. 15.

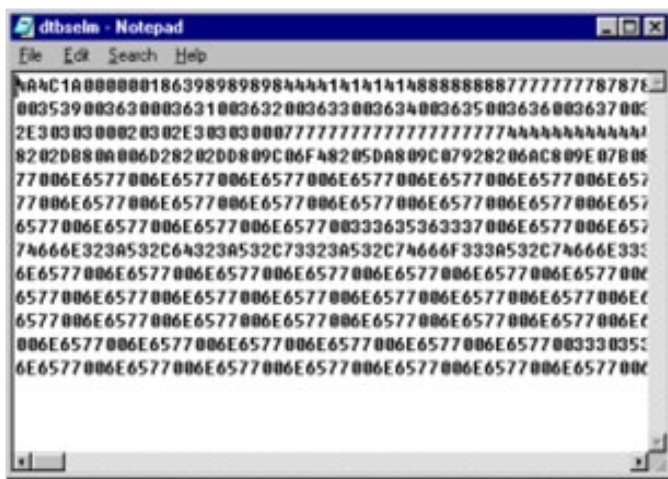


Fig. 15. Encrypted database of [24]

The implemented SCRIPT command is convenient for embedding in user programs, for encrypting files of the type: *.txt, *.doc, *.html, databases, etc.

The ability of the Tcl/Tk language to replace commands, i.e. each command can be replaced by a sequence of Tcl commands, which allows changing its operation under program control, creates opportunities for dynamic change of encryption algorithms. The EVAL command of the language allows the interpretation of any text as a Tcl program. It combined with SCRIPT gives the opportunity to encrypt not only data but also executable Tcl programs.

6. Conclusion

Information encryption tools are an important element in building a corporate security system. This fact is a consequence of the requirements set by today's

organizations and companies, their data to be protected both on their own machines and on the way to another destination.

The proposed software package for coded information exchange – Coder 1.0 has the following advantages:

- is designed to work under different operating environments;
- hardware requirements are minimal;
- encrypted information is in hexadecimal format, which makes the output files convenient for transfer via TCP / IP;
- the SCRIPT option implemented as a command is convenient for embedding in user programs, for encrypting files of the type: * .txt, * .doc, * .html, databases, etc.;
- can be used both as a standalone product and as an element, within a common security system of a distributed corporate network;
- the integration of the encryption algorithm in a user Tcl program provides additional opportunities for building an encrypted protocol that extends the network mechanisms (implemented in the language).

In connection with increasing the requirements for the reliability of information on corporate networks, work will continue with the study and use of other algorithms for encryption and development of software products for encrypting information in multimedia objects (images and sounds) using the capabilities of Tcl/Tk.

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