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INVESTIGATING THE NETWORK TRAFFIC USING THE COMMAND-LINE PACKETS SNIFFER TCPDUMP IN KALI LINUX

Petar Kr. Boyanov

COMMUNICATION AND COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES, FACULTY OF TECHNICAL SCIENCES, KONSTANTIN PRESLAVSKY UNIVERSITY OF SHUMEN, SHUMEN 9712,115, UNIVERSITETSKA STR.,
E-MAIL: peshoaikido@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: *In this scientific article a comprehensive investigation of the network traffic using the command-line packets sniffer Tcpdump in kali Linux is made.*

KEY WORDS: *Analyzing, Connection, Command-line, Flag, Investigation, Kali Linux, Monitoring, Packet, Port, Scanning, Security, Sniffer, TCP, Traffic, UDP.*

1. Introduction

In the modern computer practice, various types of network programs are used to analyze and monitor the network packets that are sent between the individual hosts in a local and global computer networks. Most of the network packet analysis and monitoring programs are made so that the system administrator enters commands with options and parameters in the command line (terminal) [1,4,5,7,9,10,13,18,19,20,21]. Another part of them with a graphical user interface are made. In this scientific article a research about the capabilities of the Tcpdump network packet analyzer will be conducted. In its essence, it is a command-line network program through which the user can real-time inspect, sniff and monitor the incoming and outgoing network traffic, investigate the sending of each network packet, and the entire result of the achieved scan and trace to a text file can be saved. After that it can be in more detail analyzed and reviewed [8,10,16,17,18,21]. The special feature of this scientific article is that the different network states of the bits (flags) in the header of the TCP protocol will be considered. The flags that are used in the TCP protocol header are the following [1,2,3,4,5,6,11,12,14,15,20,21]:

- Flag SYN (SYNchronisation) with bit number in Tcpdump – 2.
- Flag ACK (ACKnowledgement) with bit number in Tcpdump – 16.
- Flag FIN (FINished) with bit number in Tcpdump – 1.

- Flag RST (Reset) with bit number in Tcpdump – 4.
- Flag PSH (Push) with bit number in Tcpdump – 8.
- Flag URG (Urgent Pointer) with bit number in Tcpdump – 32.

One or combinations of several flags define the function and task of each incoming and outgoing network packet. In this regard, once it is understood which flags in the package are enabled, the system administrator will be able to analyze and determine whether the package is normal (not dangerous) or is being used to perform scanning and exploitation of the resources of the respective operating system [8,9,13,14,15,20,21].

The performed network traffic analysis, sniffing and monitoring without the host's permission is considered as a crime and, if proven, is punishable to the full extent of the law of the respective country [2,3,8,11,12,13,15]. Everything illustrated and explained in this scientific article is only for research work and educational purposes and the author is not responsible in cases of abuse.

2. Experiment

In this article the scientific experiments and research works in a specialized computer network laboratory in the Faculty of Technical Sciences of the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen are conducted.

The installed operating system for the two hosts used in Local Area Network is respectively Kali Linux - 6.0.0-kali6-amd64 #1 SMP PREEMPT_DYNAMIC Debian 6.0.12-1kali1 (2022-12-19) x86_64 GNU/Linux.

A local computer network of two hosts is built. The IPv4 address of the first host is 192.168.80.130 and IPv4 address of the second host is 192.168.80.132. The network mask is 24-bit.

After starting the terminal, the command “Tcpdump -D” is entered. The function of this command is to determine which network interface will be analyzed and sniff. This is shown on fig. 1.

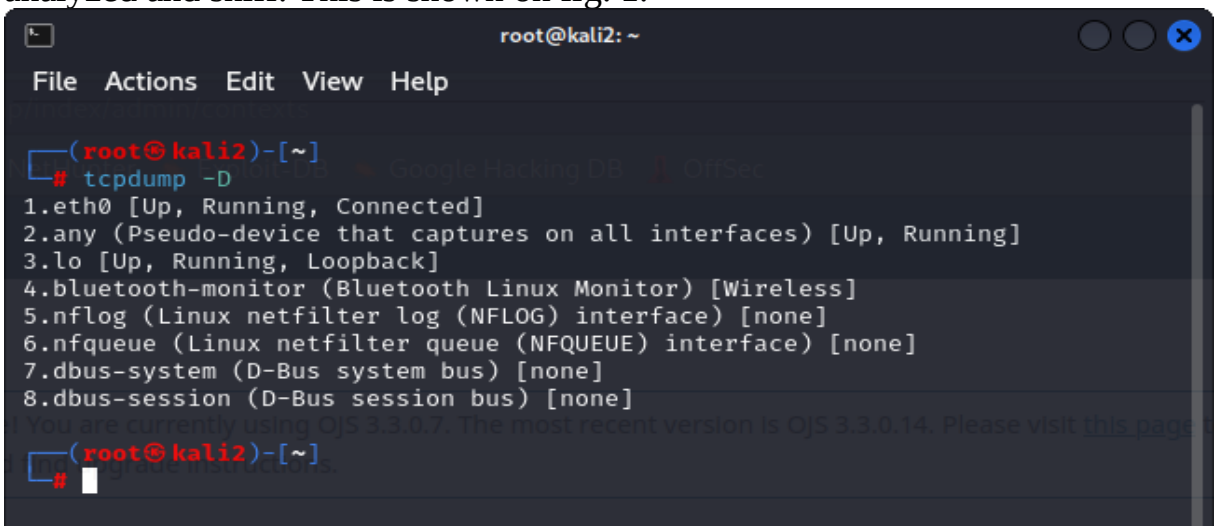

Fig. 1. The result of the executed command “Tcpdump -D”

The network interfaces that can be monitored are respectively:

- eth0 - [up, running and connected network state].
- any (Pseudo-device that captures on all interfaces) [up and running state].
- lo (Localhost) [up and running network state].
- bluetooth-monitor [wireless network interface].
- nflog (Linux netfilter log network interface) [wireless network interface].
- nfqueue (Linux netfilter queue network interface) [none network state].
- dbus-system (D-Bus system bus) [none network state].
- dbus-session [D-Bus session bus) [none network state].

In this scientific article only network interface "eth0" for both hosts will be used. Fig. 2 shows that the host with IPv4 address 192.168.80.130 executed the command "tcpdump -i eth0 -v". The option "-v" for showing detailed network information is used.

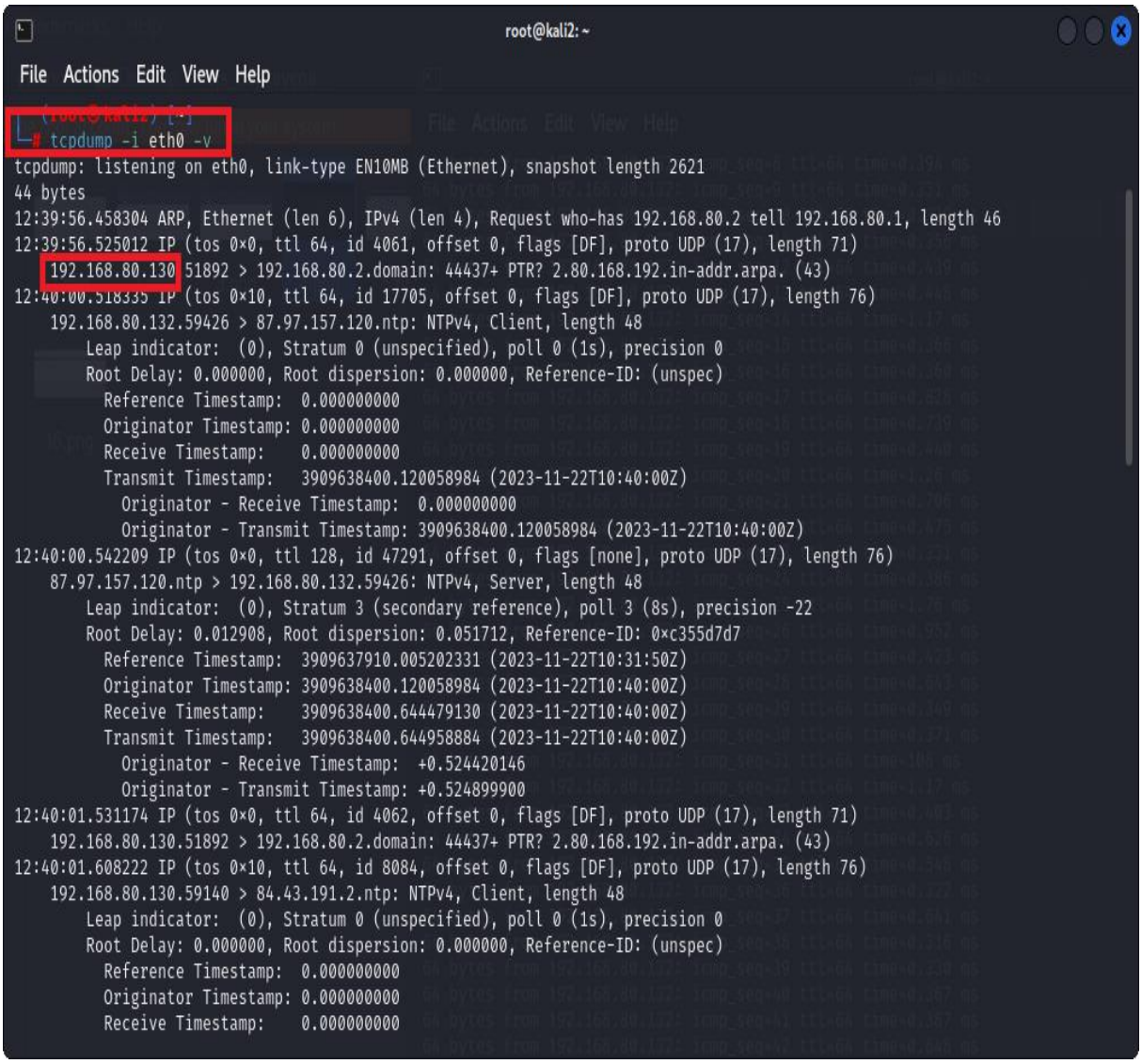

Fig. 2. Selection for network interface "eth0"

3. Results

Fig. 3 shows the host with address 192.168.80.130 receive the actual time and date from host with IP address 84.43.191.2 via Network Time Protocol (NTP). Additionally, fig. 3 presents that host with IP address 192.168.80.132 sends ICMP echo request to the other host with IP address 192.168.80.132. From his side it returns ICMP echo reply to host with IP address 192.168.80.130.

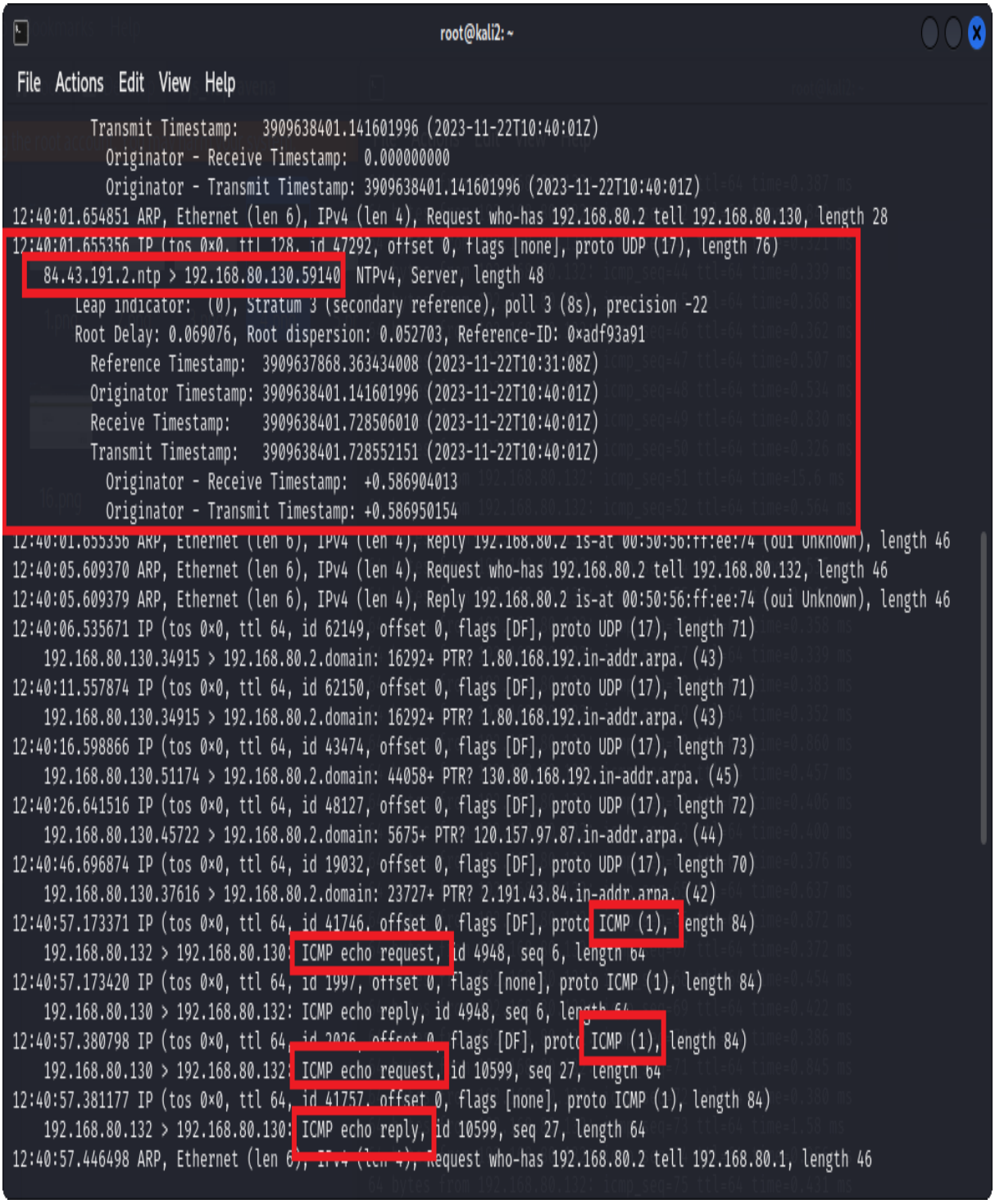

Fig. 3. Results showing the functions of the NTP and ICMP protocols

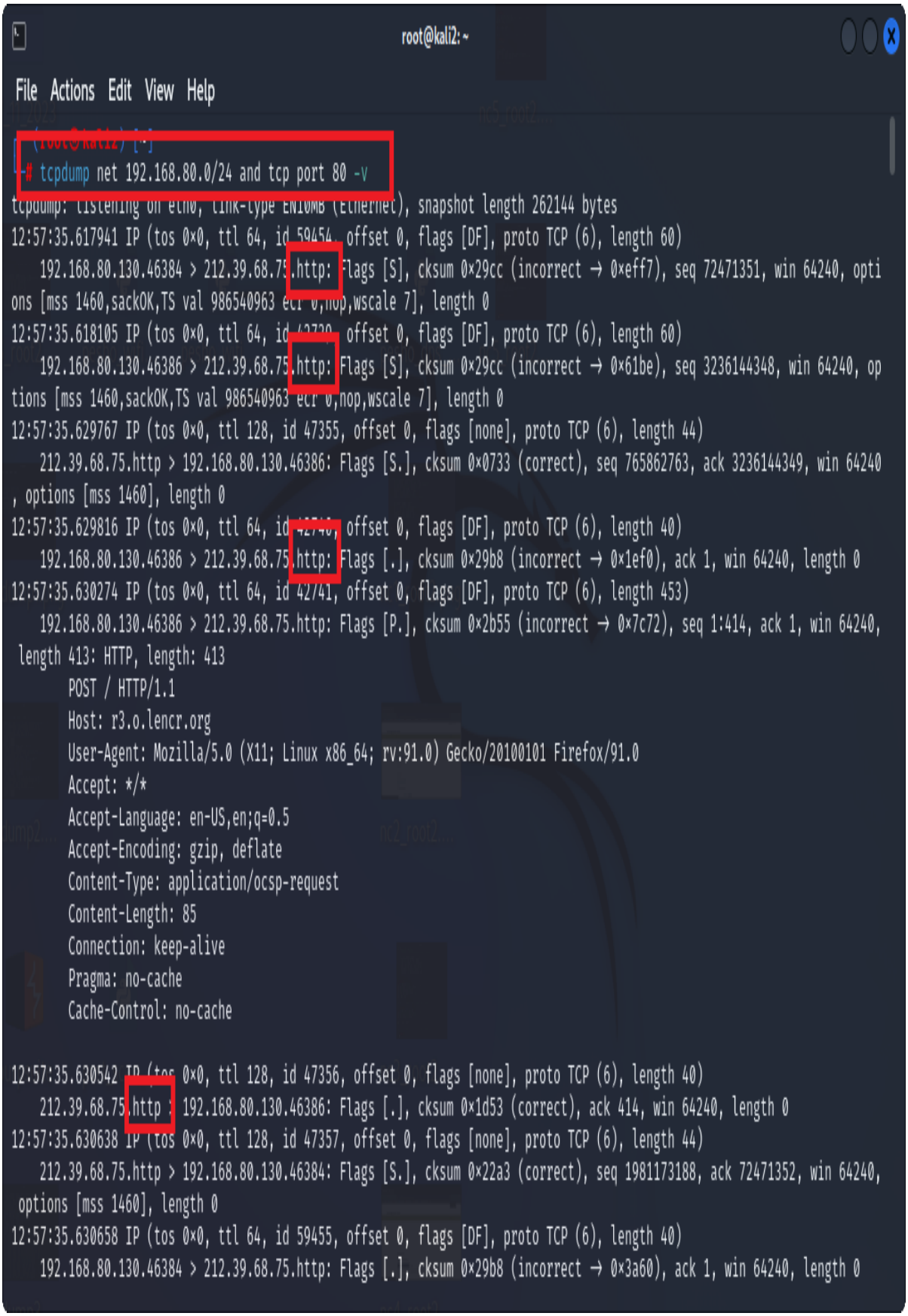

Fig. 4. Results of the executed command “tcpdump net 192.168.80.0/24 and tcp port 80 -v“

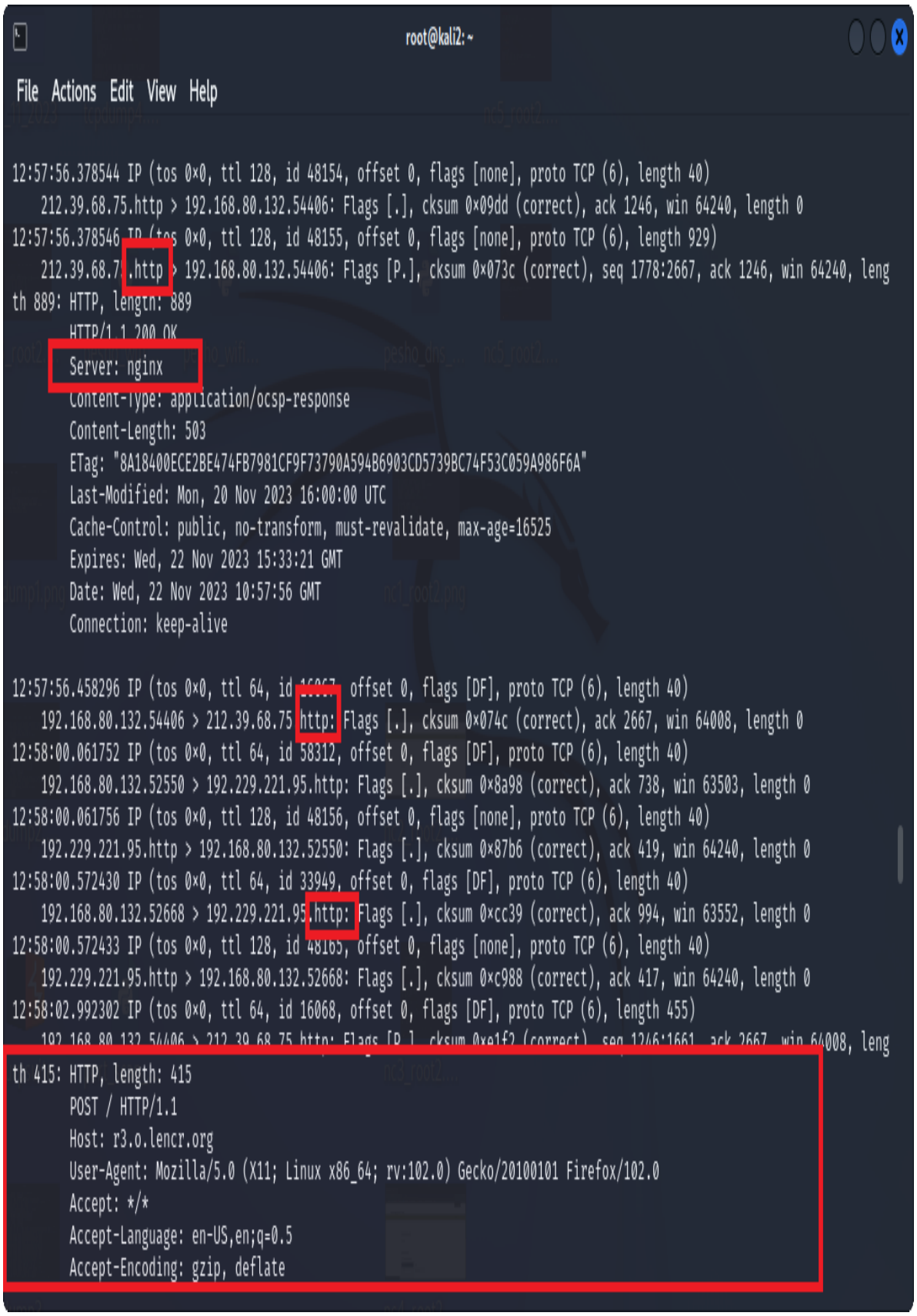

Fig. 5. Results of the executed command “tcpdump net 192.168.80.0/24 and tcp port 80 -v“

Fig. 4 and 5 show the achieved results after execution the command "tcpdump net 192.168.80.0/24 and tcp port 80 -v". After executing this command, only network packets that use the protocol HTTP are displayed and filtered [3,4,12,13,15,16,19]. If the system administrator wants to receive only network information about the HTTPS protocol, then instead of port 80, it must be written port 443.

It was additionally Open Journal System (OJS) version 3.3.0.7 on the host with IP address 192.168.80.130 installed and configured. The purpose is to show that there is an apache server and database platform installed. The direct URL link to the platform is "127.0.0.1/index.php/shumen/login". This is shown on fig.6. The IPv4 address 127.0.0.1 is called "localhost" and in this regard the following command "tcpdump -i lo" is executed (shown on fig.7). This command only scans the network traffic that passes through the interface loopback (localhost). On this localhost interface FTP, MAIL, HTTP, DNS servers can be installed and configured. Another important function for this address is to verify that the device's network card is working properly.

Fig. 7 shows the sniffed network traffic via loopback interface. The flags "[S]", [S.]" and "[.]" indicates that the three-way handshake connection is successfully established.

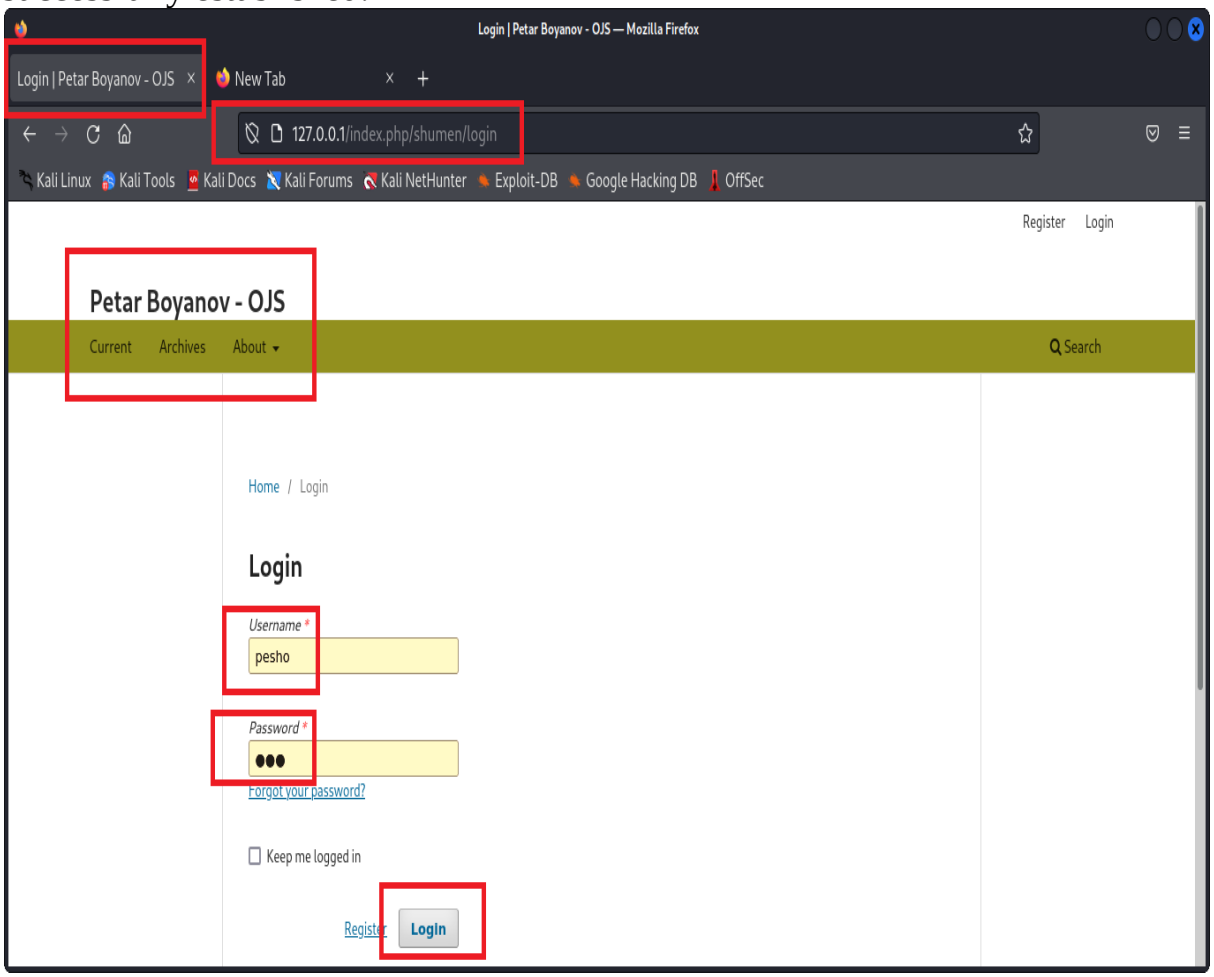

Fig. 6. The login form page for the custom OJS platform

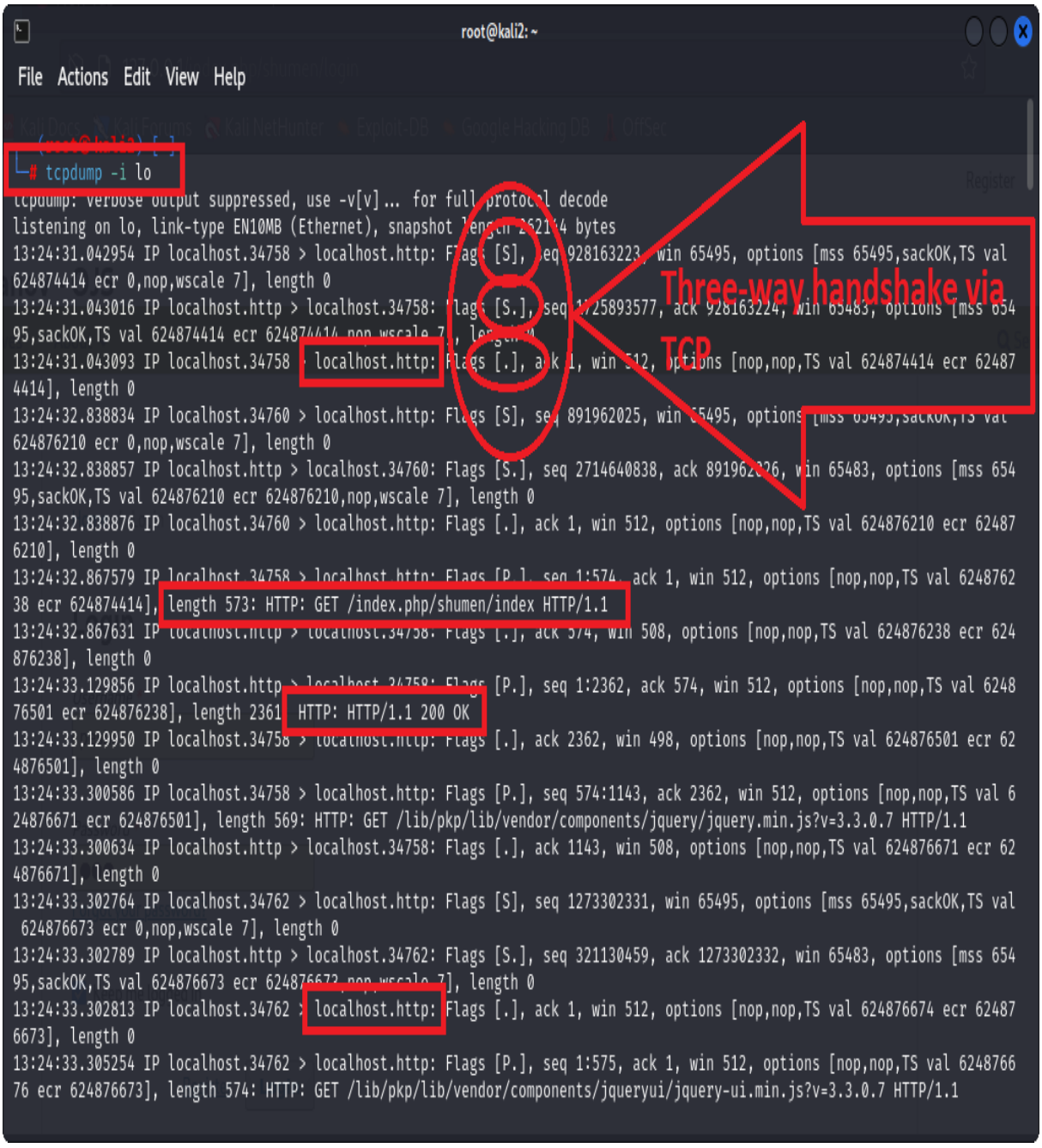

Fig. 7. Successfully established three-way handshake

The command “tcpdump host 192.168.80.130 and 'tcp[13] & 2 !=0' -v” filters and sniffs only TCP connections with activated SYN bit (flag) in verbose mode. This is shown on fig. 8.

The command “tcpdump -i lo 'tcp[13] & 18 !=0'” filters and sniffs only TCP connections with activated both SYN-ACK bits (flags) on the loopback interface. In this case localhost:34830 (192.168.80.130) sends SYN flag to host localhost:http (OJS platform). After that the localhost:http sends SYN-ACK flags to the host localhost:34830 [3,4,5,6,15,16,17]. Finally, localhost:34830

sends ACK flag to the host localhost:http in order to finish the establishment of three-way handshake between the hosts. This is shown on fig. 9.

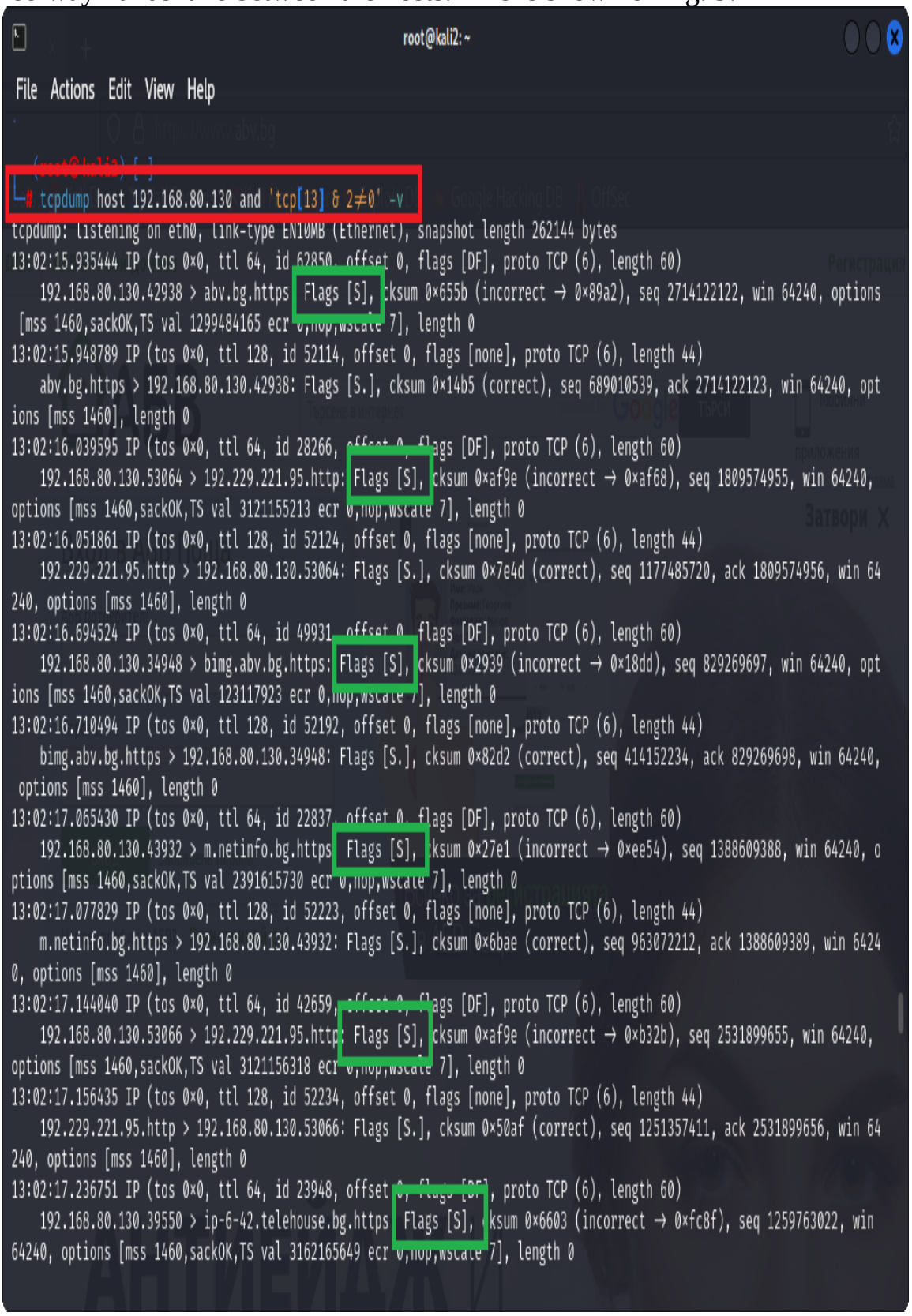

Fig. 8. Results of the executed command “tcpdump host 192.168.80.130 and 'tcp[13] & 2 !=0' -v”

Fig. 9. Results of the executed command “tcpdump -i lo 'tcp[13] & 18 !=0'”

Fig. 10 shows the IPv4 address (194.153.145.104) of the DNS records for the Bulgarian mail server „abv.bg“. This information thanks to the website NsLookup.io is revealed [1,2,3,4,15,17,20]. The command “tcpdump portrange 1-79” filters the network connections from port 1 to 79. On fig. 11 the IPv4 address of the mail server “abv.bg” is fetched and additionally all other interrelated network connections with the domain “abv.bg” are filtered and illustrated.

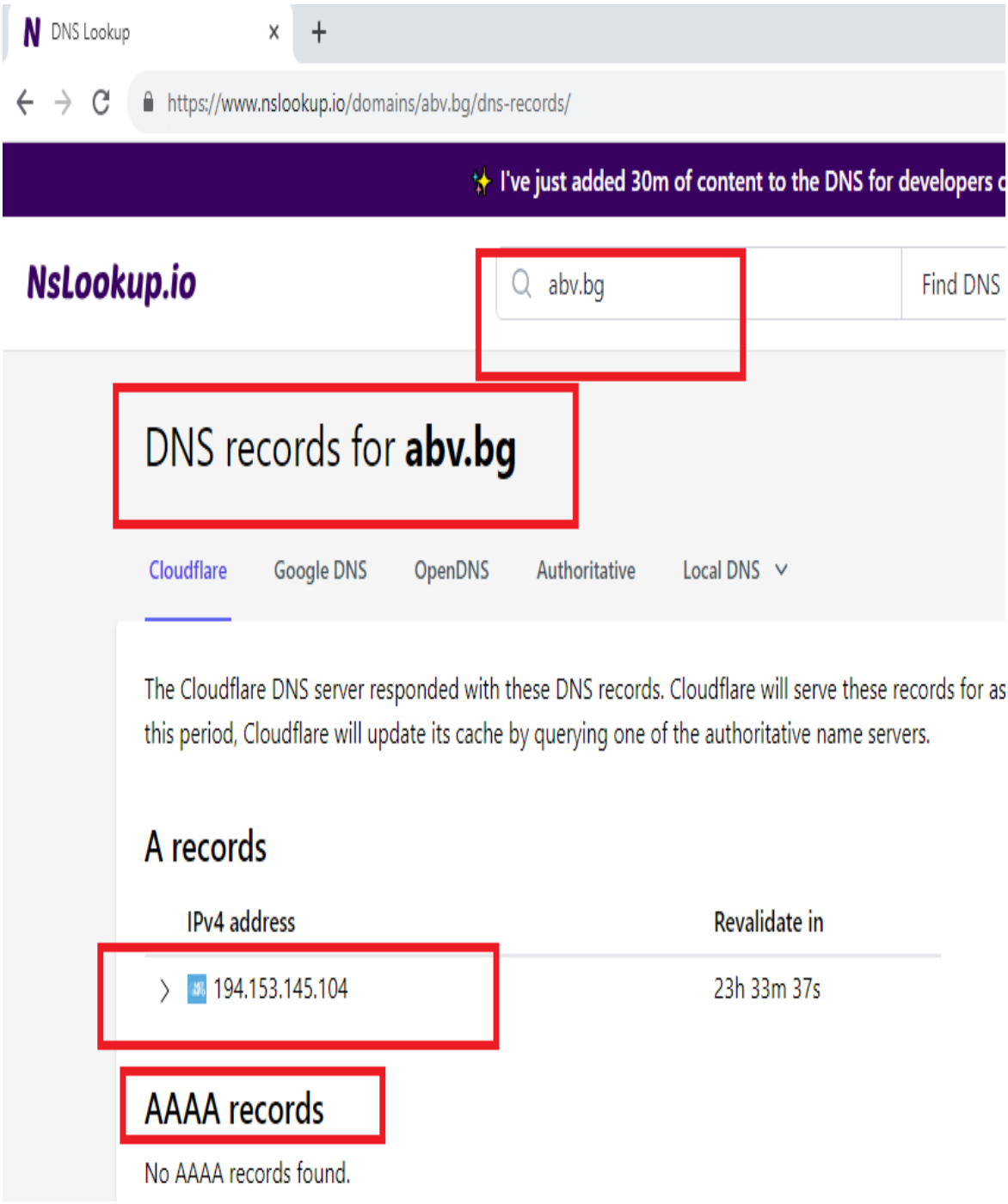

Fig. 10. DNS records for the mail server „abv.bg“

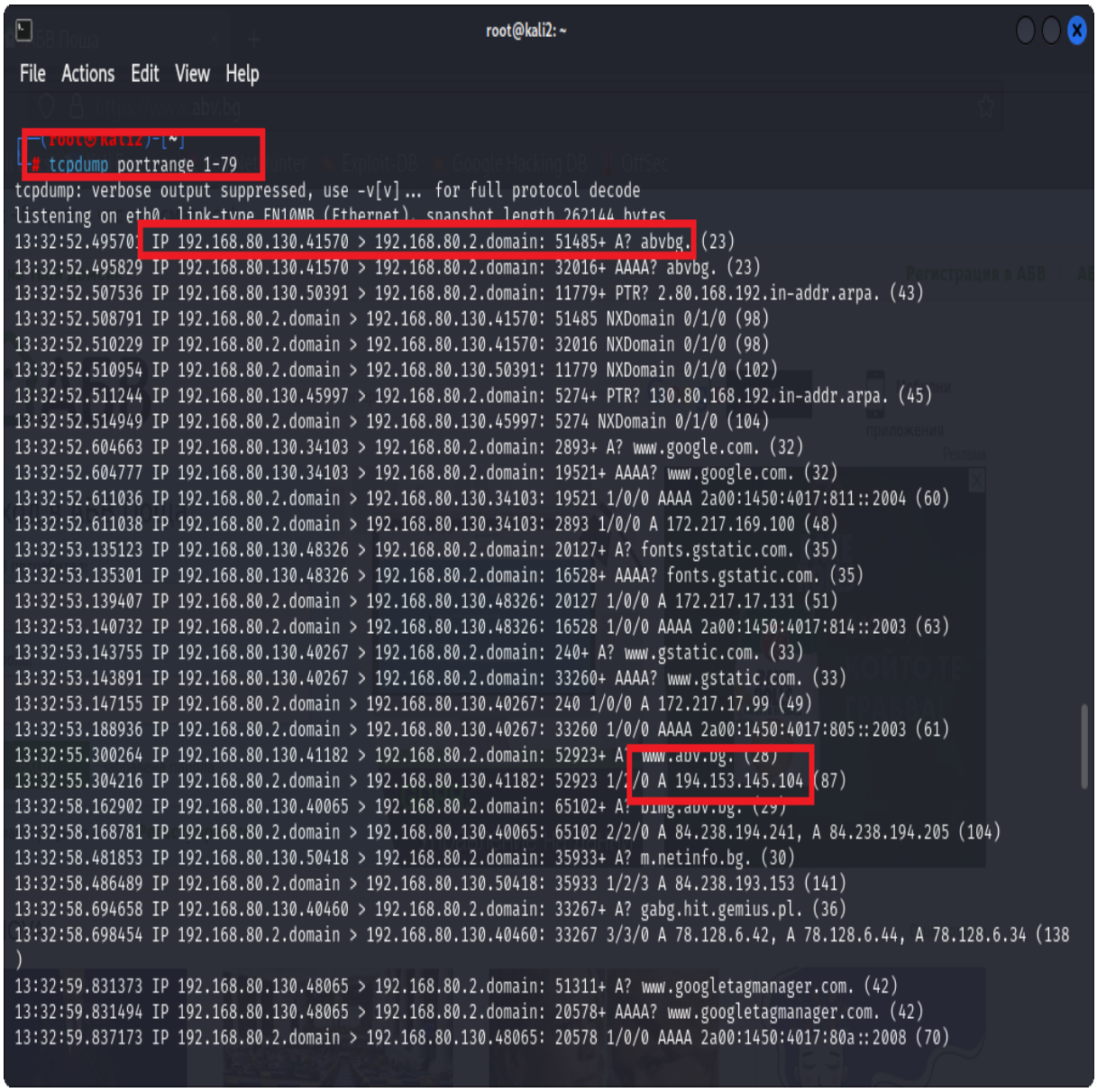

Fig. 11. Results of the executed command “tcpdump portrange 1-79”

4. Conclusion

The program Tcpdump is very similar in functionality and working way to the network analyzer Wireshark. Thanks to this network analyzer, the system administrator can filter the network connections by port, protocol, source and destination address of the network packet, network interface, TCP flags, network number, etc. After the filtering and interception of the network packets is done, all this information in a text file can be saved in order to be analyzed in detail for network anomalies and suspicious network activity the selected computer network. In this regard the exceptionally well-equipped laboratories at the Faculty of Technical Sciences at the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen give great opportunities to students majoring in "Communication and Information Systems", "Computer Technologies in Automated Manufacturing"

and "Signal Security Systems and Technologies" to gain extensive theoretical and practical experience in the work with the network command-line network tool - Tcpdump.

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