

Partial Key Exposure Attacks on BIKE, Rainbow and NTRU

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Abstract. In a so-called partial key exposure attack one obtains some information about the secret key, e.g. via some side-channel leakage. This information might be a certain fraction of the secret key bits (erasure model) or some erroneous version of the secret key (error model). The goal is to recover the secret key from the leaked information.

There is a common belief that, as opposed to e.g. the RSA cryptosystem, most post-quantum cryptosystems are usually resistant against partial key exposure attacks. We strongly question this belief by constructing partial key exposure attacks on code-based, multivariate, and lattice-based schemes (BIKE, Rainbow and NTRU). Our attacks exploit the redundancy that modern PQ cryptosystems inherently use for efficiency reasons. The application and development of techniques from information set decoding plays a crucial role for achieving our results.

On the theoretical side, we show non-trivial information leakage bounds that allow for a polynomial time key recovery attack. As an example, for all schemes the knowledge of a constant fraction of the secret key bits suffices to reconstruct the full key in polynomial time.

Even if we no longer insist on polynomial time attacks, most of our attacks extend well and remain feasible up to large erasure and error rates. In the case of BIKE for example we obtain attack complexities around 60 bits when half of the secret key bits are erased, or a quarter of the secret key bits are faulty.

Our results show that even highly error-prone key leakage of modern PQ cryptosystems may lead to full secret key recoveries.

Keywords: Erasure/Error Model, Asymptotics, Cold Boot Key Recovery.

1 Introduction

Ideally, cryptographic schemes should enjoy robustness against key leakage in the following informal sense. If a scheme uses n -bit keys and $k < n$ bits of information

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are leaked, then the scheme should offer the security of $(n-k)$ -bit keys. The LWE problem is known to provide this *leakage robustness* property [15]. Therefore, it is widely believed that modern post-quantum schemes provide a good level of resistance against computing the secret key from partial information, i.e., against so-called *partial key exposure attacks*.

Notice that leakage robustness of a cryptographic problem does not imply any resistance against side-channel attacks, see e.g. [12]. It just tells us that the leakage of a certain amount of information does not completely destroy the problem's hardness. Moreover, a cryptographic scheme that relies on a leakage robust problem might not automatically inherit its leakage robustness, since the scheme may introduce weaknesses, e.g. via additional secret key redundancy.

As a main result, our work shows that a certain amount of side-channel information (wherever it may come from) suffices to fully recover the secret key in polynomial time – or from a more practical perspective in reasonable time, say 2^{60} operations – for the post-quantum cryptosystems BIKE, Rainbow, NTRU. We chose these schemes as representative candidates for code-, multivariate- and lattice-based cryptography. NTRU, respectively BIKE, is a NIST 3rd round finalist, respectively alternate, encryption scheme, and Rainbow is a finalist signature scheme.

Partial Key Exposure Attacks on RSA in the Erasure and Error Model. It is well-known that RSA does not enjoy leakage robustness. For instance, by a famous result of Coppersmith [9] an RSA modulus $N = pq$ can be factored in polynomial time given only half of the bits of p . Similar results have been shown for fully recovering the secret key d [7], the RSA plaintext m [9], and also RSA CRT-exponents [6] from partial knowledge in polynomial time.

All of these attacks are in what we call the *erasure model*, i.e., we obtain a certain fraction of the bits, and have to recover the remaining bits. Moreover, the above mentioned attacks usually require that the known as well as the unknown bits are in *consecutive positions*. An erasure model with *known bits in random positions* was first addressed by Heninger and Shacham [18].

The erasure model is from a theoretical perspective convenient, because it usually provides a good starting point for reasoning about algorithms that recover complete secret keys from incomplete information. In practice however, side-channel analysis often gives us full keys with some faults that stem from the side-channel's noisiness. This is what we call the *error model*, which might be further refined by its error type.

In the error model Henecka, May, Meurer [17] showed that an RSA secret key in which bits are randomly flipped with a certain error rate $r \ll \frac{1}{2}$ can be recovered in polynomial time. This was further refined by Paterson, Polychroniadou, Sibborn [23] introducing asymmetric bit-flip rates, where bits may flip from 1 to ground state 0 with large error rate p_1 , whereas the inverse direction has only small probability p_0 . Such an *asymmetric error* accurately models e.g. the side-channel obtained by *Cold Boot Attacks* from Halderman et al. [16].

Previous Work on PQC Partial Key Exposure Attacks. For post-quantum cryptography, in 2017 a first partial key exposure on NTRU was proposed by Paterson and Villanueva-Polanco [24], followed by two more attacks from Villanueva-Polanco on BLISS [27] and LUOV [28]. The PhD thesis of Villanueva-Polanco [25] contains a more systematic study of partial key exposure attacks also for Rainbow and McEliece.

However, the results achieved by Paterson and Villanueva-Polanco seem to support the strong belief in *leakage robustness* of post-quantum cryptosystems. For example considering NTRU, even in the asymmetric error setting their attacks experimentally cannot reach with good success probability rather small error probabilities $p_1 = 0.1$ and $p_0 = 0.001$. Similar for Rainbow, the attack in [25] only reaches error probabilities of $p_1 = 0.001$ and $p_0 = 0.001$ even for toy Rainbow parameters.

These results stand in quite sharp contrast to our attacks, that handle relatively large erasure/error rates, sometimes even in polynomial time. We see two main reasons for our substantial improvement over previous work.

First, we heavily use the key redundancy provided by many modern post-quantum systems to recover secret keys much more efficiently. Key redundancy has already been exploited by Albrecht, Deo, Paterson [1] by using the NTT representation of Kyber keys. However, [1] still only tolerates comparatively small error probabilities around 1%.

Second, we use and further develop more advanced techniques from information set decoding and lattices, thereby building on the work of Horlemann, Puchinger, Renner, Schamberger, Wachter-Zeh [19] for decoding with hints and the work of Dachman-Soled, Ducas, Gong, Rossi [10] for lattices with hints. Especially, our new decoding techniques might be of independent interest.

Our results with Polynomial Time Key Recovery. To the best of our knowledge, our work is the first that achieves polynomial time partial key exposure attacks on post-quantum cryptosystems for non-trivial erasure/error rates. Our results are summarized in Table 1.

Polynomial Attacks	key format	erasure	error
BIKE	standard	0.500	$\frac{\log n}{\sqrt{n}}$
	compact	0.092	$\frac{1}{\log^2 n}$
Rainbow	first layer	$\frac{n}{n+1}$	$\frac{\log n}{n}$
	full key	$\frac{1}{\sqrt{n}}$	$\frac{\log n}{n}$
NTRU	(un)packed	$n^{-\frac{2}{3}}$	$\frac{\sqrt{\log n}}{n}$
	"consecutive"	0.250	

Table 1: Summary of (asymptotic) bounds on erasure/error probability for polynomial-time key recovery.

Let us briefly discuss our results, what we mean by the different key formats, and how we exploit key redundancies.

BIKE For BIKE keys we achieve erasure rates of $p = \frac{1}{2}$ (standard) and $p = 0.092$ (compact). Let $(\mathbf{s}, \mathbf{e}) \in \mathbb{F}_2^{n/2} \times \mathbb{F}_2^{n/2}$ be a BIKE secret key in standard format, i.e., (\mathbf{s}, \mathbf{e}) is given as a bit-vector. Then half of the secret key bits suffice to recover the full secret key in polynomial time.

This might be surprising at first glance, but a BIKE secret key fulfills an LWE/LPN -relation $A\mathbf{s} = \mathbf{e}$. From this alone one can see that \mathbf{s} suffices to efficiently recover \mathbf{e} . Our attack now simply shows that any $n/2$ bits suffice. Thus, in comparison to LWE/LPN , BIKE secret keys are redundant, since they store the secret \mathbf{s} and the error \mathbf{e} . Both parts are required in BIKE for proper decryption (as opposed to LWE -type schemes).

If (\mathbf{s}, \mathbf{e}) is stored compactly, i.e., only the few non-zero positions of both vectors are encoded, then one can only recover the key efficiently given all but a 0.092-fraction of its bits.

In the error setting, our BIKE results tolerate roughly an $\frac{1}{\sqrt{n}}$ -error in the standard case, i.e. roughly \sqrt{n} error positions. However, notice that somewhat surprisingly the compact case allows for a huge number of $n/\log^2 n$ error positions.

We would like to point out that all of our BIKE results also hold identically for HQC [22] secret keys.

Rainbow For Rainbow keys, our partial key exposure attacks are even stronger. This stems from our main observation that a single row of Rainbow’s secret key matrix suffices to fully recover the first half of the key (labeled as “first layer” in Table 1). Here, in the erasure setting, we can tolerate rates that converge to 1. In other words, a linear fraction of the secret key matrix is already enough to recover this part of the key.

In order to recover the full key in polynomial time, slightly more information is needed, which leads to only \sqrt{n} manageable errors. However, a Rainbow secret key, inherently contains a (quadratic) redundancy factor, which is heavily exploited by our attacks.

For error recovery our results are significantly worse. Here, we can only tolerate $\log n$ error positions per key.

NTRU Eventually, for the NTRU cryptosystem we achieve for errors/erasures in random positions only small tolerable rates. The NTRU encryption scheme can be considered as a Ring-LWE instance. As explained for BIKE, the consequence is that NTRU secret keys provide less redundancy than BIKE secret keys, since NTRU does not store the LWE error. Thus, it is not surprising that we obtain weaker bounds for NTRU.

Yet, if we look into the setting of erasures in consecutive positions of an NTRU secret key, then we can recover the full secret key from only a 3/4-

fraction of all positions. This consecutive partial key exposure attack heavily exploits NTRU’s ring structure. We are not aware of any cryptanalytic results in the literature that exploit the ring structure with such a significant gain.

Concrete Parameters: The Erasure Case. While from a theoretical perspective it is desirable to understand for which erasure/error rates we can achieve polynomial time attacks, it might be even more interesting to see how our attacks perform on concrete parameter sets. Table 2 shows the results of our attacks on Category-1 parameter sets (equivalent to AES-128 security), when we allow for attack bit complexities of 45, 60 and 80 bit.⁴

Erasures	key format	bit complexity bound		
		45	60	80
BIKE	standard	0.570	0.650	0.730
	compact	0.410	0.425	0.445
Rainbow	full key	0.710	0.810	0.890
NTRU	unpacked	0.219	0.300	0.422
	packed	0.065	0.092	0.138

Table 2: Tolerable erasure rates for different key formats that allow for a key recovery with bit complexity less than 45, 60 and 80 on the Category-1 parameter sets.

Recall from Table 1 that polynomial time attacks on BIKE are feasible for erasure rates of 0.5 (standard key format), respectively roughly 0.1 (compact key format). We observe from Table 2 that the allowed errors in the standard format are significantly larger, namely in the interval $[0.57, 0.73]$, whereas in compact format we even improve to rates beyond 0.4. Hence, BIKE’s redundancy leads to efficient key recoveries in practice given roughly half of the secret key bits.

Rainbow with its large key redundancy tolerates even larger rates than BIKE for Category-1 parameters.⁵ Here, erasure rates in the interval $[0.71, 0.89]$ still allow for key recovery as shown in Table 2.

Asymptotically, NTRU has least key redundancy and therefore tolerates only small erasure rates. This is reflected by the results of Table 2, where we can recover erasure rates in the interval $[0.22, 0.42]$. However, compared to previous results from Paterson and Villanueva-Polanco [24], our results still improve by orders of magnitude. The reason for this improvement comes from using more involved lattice techniques than the simple key enumeration from [24]. Even

⁴ The code to rerun our experiments and bitcomplexity calculations is available at <https://github.com/Crypto-TII/partial-key-exposure-attacks>

⁵ For Rainbow Category-3 and -5 parameters tolerable rates are lower, as we discuss in Section 4.

for the least redundant *packed* key format, we still obtain erasure rates in the interval $[0.06, 0.14]$.

<u>Errors</u>	key format	bit complexity					
		45		60		80	
		asym.	sym.	asym.	sym.	asym.	sym.
BIKE	standard	0.050	0.050	0.150	0.120	0.300	0.200
	compact	0.175	0.030	0.240	0.060	0.275	0.080
Rainbow	full key	0.240	0.120	0.375	0.190	0.540	0.270
NTRU	unpacked	0.033	0.002	0.099	0.009	0.273	0.019
	packed	0.009	0.003	0.020	0.008	0.040	0.015

Table 3: Tolerable error rates for key recovery of Category-1 parameter sets with bit complexities bounded by 45, 60 and 80. In the asymmetric setting we fix $p_0 = 0.001$.

Concrete Parameters: The Error Case. Analogous to Table 2, we denote in Table 3 the error rates that we can recover for Category-1 parameter sets when using bit-complexities of 45, 60, and 80 bits.

Noteworthy, we achieve high error rates in the *asymmetric* error setting. For Rainbow, this again stems from the larger key redundancy. However, for BIKE and NTRU we exploit the partial key information to significantly lower the dimension of the underlying problems. This in turn speeds up our decoding/lattice reduction algorithms. Most impressive is maybe the error correction of unpacked NTRU keys with error rate $p_1 = 0.27$ within a complexity of 80 bit. Observe that our attack is not yet very effective for 45 bits (with error $p_1 = 0.03$), since it requires a large polynomial overhead.

Conclusion. As opposed to the common belief, current post-quantum schemes allow for effective partial key exposure attacks, both in the erasure and the error setting. We demonstrate this for representative post-quantum candidates from codes, multivariate and lattices. As a rule of thumb, the higher the key redundancy, the more effective are our attacks. But even the least redundant NTRU scheme still allows for quite impressive erasure/error rates.

Organization of the paper. We elaborate on our erasure/error model in Section 2, where we also recap the basics of information set decoding attacks. All our BIKE results, asymptotically and for concrete parameters, are given in Section 3. Our Rainbow results can be found in Section 4, and we conclude with the NTRU results in Section 5.

2 Preliminaries

We denote vectors and matrices as bold lower case and bold capital letters. For a matrix $\mathbf{M} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{k \times n}$ and a set $I \subseteq \{1, \dots, n\}$ we let \mathbf{M}_I be the matrix obtained by projecting \mathbf{M} onto the columns defined by I . We use the same notation for vectors. We refer by \mathbf{O} to the all-zero matrix. All logarithms are base 2 if not stated otherwise. We use standard Landau notation for complexity statements and call a probability p high if $p = 1 - o(1)$.

2.1 Key Exposure Models

Throughout this work we consider two different key exposure models – the *error* and the *erasure* model. In the error model one obtains knowledge of a faulty version of the full secret key, whereas in the erasure setting only certain parts of the secret key are known but guaranteed to be correct.

In our theoretical treatment we work with errors and erasures on the field level, while for practical considerations we work with errors and erasures on the bit level. This distinction allows us to keep the theoretical consideration (mostly) independent of the chosen key-representation. In our practical analysis we then analyze the performance of our attacks using specific key formats. Let us more formally define both models, starting with the field level.

Errors and erasures in fields For all schemes that we consider the private keys are either vectors (or matrices) over \mathbb{F}_q or polynomials with coefficients over \mathbb{F}_q , which are represented via their coefficient vector. Field erasures then correspond to a set of indices for which the corresponding coordinates or coefficients are unknown, while the rest is known.

Definition 1 (Erasures). Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $\mathbf{f} = (f_1, \dots, f_n) \in \mathbb{F}_q^n$ and $I \subseteq \{1, \dots, n\}$ denote the erasure positions. For \mathbf{u}_i denoting the i -th unit vector we let

$$\tilde{\mathbf{f}} := \sum_{i \notin I} f_i \mathbf{u}_i + \sum_{i \in I} y_i \mathbf{u}_i,$$

with $y_i \in \mathbb{F}_q$. In the erasure model I and $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ are known, while the y_i are unknown. Each coordinate of \mathbf{f} gets erased with probability $p := \Pr[i \in I]$, which we denote as \mathbb{F}_q -erasure probability. We call $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ a partially erased version of \mathbf{f} .

In a concrete attack scenario of Definition 1 \mathbf{f} would be the secret key, and the goal is to recover \mathbf{f} from the partially erased version $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$. We call such an attack a (*key recovery*) *attack in the erasure model*.

Let us analogously define the error model.

Definition 2 (Errors). Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $\mathbf{f} = (f_1, \dots, f_n) \in \mathbb{F}_q^n$. Further let $\mathbf{e} = (e_1, \dots, e_n) \in \mathbb{F}_q^n$ be an error vector. In the error model one is given

$$\tilde{\mathbf{f}} := (\tilde{f}_1, \dots, \tilde{f}_n) = \mathbf{f} + \mathbf{e} = (f_1 + e_1, \dots, f_n + e_n),$$

while the f_i and e_i are unknown. Every coordinate of the error is different from zero with probability $p := \Pr[e_i \neq 0]$, which we refer to as \mathbb{F}_q -error probability. If $e_i \neq 0$, then e_i is uniformly distributed in $\mathbb{F}_q \setminus \{0\}$, i.e., $\Pr[e_i = 0] = (1 - p)$ and $\Pr[e_i = k] = \frac{p}{q-1}$ for all $k \in \mathbb{F}_q \setminus \{0\}$. We call $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ an erroneous version of \mathbf{f} .

Again, in a partial key exposure scenario \mathbf{f} would be the secret key and $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ the known erroneous version of it. The goal is to recover \mathbf{f} from $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$. We call such an attack a (*key recovery*) *attack in the error model*.

Errors and erasures of bits For our practical analysis we switch from field to bit errors, i.e., every bit in the binary representation of the secret key is flipped (error model) or erased (erasure model) with a certain probability. One obtains a definition for the erasure and error model considering bit-errors / -erasure by letting \mathbf{f} of Definition 1 and 2 be the binary representation of the secret key and correspondingly setting $q = 2$. In these cases we might use the term *bit-error* and *bit-erasure* rather than \mathbb{F}_2 -error and \mathbb{F}_2 -erasure. Once it is known how the secret key is represented on the bit-level, one can relate the field- and bit-error/-erasure.

Speaking of the error model, in a practical scenario, which is often motivated via cold-boot attacks, we usually find asymmetric error probabilities, i.e., the probability p_0 of a zero flipping to one is different from the probability p_1 of a one becoming a zero. Let the binary representation of the secret key be $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{F}_2^n$ and the error be $\mathbf{e} \in \mathbb{F}_2^n$. An attack in the error model then asks to recover \mathbf{f} from $\tilde{\mathbf{f}} := \mathbf{f} + \mathbf{e}$. Therefore

$$p_0 := \Pr[e_i = 1 \mid f_i = 0] \text{ and } p_1 := \Pr[e_i = 1 \mid f_i = 1].$$

Usually one of the probabilities is rather small, since bits are more likely to flip to the ground state of the respective memory region to which all bits decay over time. Following the initial work of Halderman et al. [16] we assume in our analysis that all bits decay to the same ground state for simplification. Moreover we consider the ground state to be zero and adopt the choice of $p_0 = 10^{-3}$, experimentally observed in [16].

2.2 Decoding

Some of our attacks make use of information set decoding (ISD) algorithms to decode linear codes. A linear code \mathcal{C} is a k dimensional subspace of \mathbb{F}_q^n . We call n the *code length* and k the *code dimension*. Such a code can be represented via the kernel of a matrix $\mathbf{H} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{(n-k) \times n}$ of rank $n - k$, i.e., $\mathcal{C} := \{\mathbf{c} \in \mathbb{F}_q^n \mid \mathbf{H}\mathbf{c}^\top = \mathbf{0}\}$. Hence, recovering a codeword $\mathbf{c} \in \mathcal{C}$ from a given faulty string $\mathbf{y} = \mathbf{c} + \mathbf{f}$ is equivalent to recover \mathbf{f} from the *syndrome* $\mathbf{s} := \mathbf{H}\mathbf{y} = \mathbf{H}(\mathbf{c} + \mathbf{f}) = \mathbf{H}\mathbf{f}$.

Definition 3 (Syndrome Decoding Problem). *Let $n, k \in \mathbb{N}$. Given the parity check matrix $\mathbf{H} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{(n-k) \times n}$ of a linear code over \mathbb{F}_q , a syndrome $\mathbf{s} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{n-k}$ and an error-weight $\delta \in \mathbb{N}$, the syndrome decoding problem asks to find a vector*

$\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{F}_q^n$ of weight $\text{wt}(\mathbf{f}) = \delta$ satisfying $\mathbf{H}\mathbf{f} = \mathbf{s}$. We call $(\mathbf{H}, \mathbf{s}, \delta)$ an instance of the syndrome decoding problem and \mathbf{f} the solution.

The class of ISD algorithms, initiated by Prange in 1962 [26], allows to solve the syndrome decoding problem.

Prange's Information Set Decoding (ISD) For a permutation matrix $\mathbf{P} \in \mathbb{F}_2^{n \times n}$, $\mathbf{P}^{-1}\mathbf{f}$ forms a solution to the permuted syndrome decoding instance $(\mathbf{H}\mathbf{P}, \mathbf{s}, \delta)$. We let the permuted error be $\mathbf{P}^{-1}\mathbf{f} =: (\mathbf{f}_1, \mathbf{f}_2) \in \mathbb{F}_q^{n-k} \times \mathbb{F}_q^k$ and the permuted parity check matrix $\mathbf{H}\mathbf{P} := (\mathbf{H}_1 \mid \mathbf{H}_2)$ with $\mathbf{H}_1 \in \mathbb{F}_q^{(n-k) \times (n-k)}$. From $\mathbf{H}\mathbf{f} = \mathbf{s}$ it follows that

$$(\mathbf{H}_1)^{-1}(\mathbf{H}\mathbf{P})(\mathbf{P}^{-1}\mathbf{f}) = (\mathbf{I}_{n-k} \mid \mathbf{H}'_2)(\mathbf{f}_1, \mathbf{f}_2) = \mathbf{f}_1 + \mathbf{H}'_2\mathbf{f}_2 = (\mathbf{H}_1)^{-1}\mathbf{s} =: \mathbf{s}',$$

where $\mathbf{H}'_2 = (\mathbf{H}_1)^{-1}\mathbf{H}_2$. Let us further assume that the permutation distributes the weight on $(\mathbf{f}_1, \mathbf{f}_2)$ such that $\text{wt}(\mathbf{f}_2) = \gamma$ and, hence, $\text{wt}(\mathbf{f}_1) = \delta - \gamma$. Then finding a solution corresponds to finding an \mathbf{f}_2 of weight γ for which the corresponding $\mathbf{f}_1 = \mathbf{s}' - \mathbf{H}'_2\mathbf{f}_2$ has weight $\delta - \gamma$. In the following we call any selection of $n - k$ columns (defined by the permutation) that leads to an \mathbf{f}_1 of weight $\delta - \gamma$ an *information set*. Further for $\gamma = 0$ an information set contains the whole error. Prange's algorithm now chooses a random permutation matrix, computes \mathbf{H}'_2 and \mathbf{s}' and then enumerates all possible \mathbf{f}_2 of weight γ until it finds an \mathbf{f}_1 of weight $\delta - \gamma$. This process is repeated with fresh initial permutations until success. The expected complexity of Prange's algorithm (up to polynomial factors) is

$$T_{\text{Prange}} = \underbrace{\frac{\binom{n}{\delta}}{\binom{n-k}{\delta-\gamma}} \binom{k}{\gamma}}_{\text{Permutations}} \underbrace{(q-1)^\gamma}_{\text{Enumeration}} = \frac{(q-1)^\gamma \cdot \binom{n}{\delta}}{\binom{n-k}{\delta-\gamma}}. \quad (1)$$

Obviously, $\gamma = 0$ minimizes the running time. However, for large δ , namely for $\delta > n - k$, choosing γ equal to zero is not possible.

To derive our asymptotic bounds we show the following theorem, specifying a small error regime for which Prange's algorithm has polynomial complexity.

Theorem 1. *Let \mathbf{H} be the parity-check matrix of a code with length n and co-dimension $n - k = c \cdot n$, for constant c . Then a syndrome decoding instance $(\mathbf{H}, \mathbf{s}, \delta)$ with $\delta = \mathcal{O}(\log n)$ can be solved in polynomial time.*

Proof. The complexity of Prange's algorithm to solve such an instance is (up to polynomial factors) given by Eq. (1) as

$$\frac{\binom{n}{\delta}}{\binom{n-k}{\delta}} = \frac{\binom{n}{\delta}}{\binom{cn}{\delta}} = \prod_{i=0}^{\delta-1} \frac{n-i}{cn-i} = \prod_{i=0}^{\delta-1} \frac{1}{c - \frac{(c-1)i}{n-i}} = \left(\frac{1}{c - o(1)} \right)^\delta = n^{\mathcal{O}(1)}. \quad \square$$

3 BIKE

For BIKE the private key is the solution to a syndrome decoding instance $(\mathbf{H}, \mathbf{s}, \delta)$ over \mathbb{F}_2 , of code length n and dimension k , defined via the public key \mathbf{H} . Hence, the secret key is a vector $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{F}_2^n$. The scheme uses a code rate of $R = \frac{1}{2}$, i.e., $n = 2k$ and $\delta := \text{wt}(\mathbf{f}) = \Theta(\sqrt{n}) = \Theta(\sqrt{k})$.

We consider two different key formats in our analysis. The *standard key format* stores the secret key as bitstring of length n , while the *compact key format* stores only the δ one entries of \mathbf{f} .⁶ In a nutshell our attacks on both formats follow a similar strategy: Initially, we generate likely candidates for the one positions in the secret key based on the given key material. Then to obtain polynomial attacks we upper-bound the total number of candidates dependent on the error/erasure probability. In our practical attacks we consider constant error/erasure probabilities, which lead to a large set of candidates. Our attacks then speed up Prange’s ISD procedure by prioritizing the set of candidates.

3.1 Standard Format Keys

We say the secret key is stored in *standard* format or using *standard* representation when it stores the secret value $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{F}_2^n$ as a sequence of n bits.

The Erasure Model First let us investigate the erasure model. Since the parity-check matrix $H \in \mathbb{F}_2^{n/2 \times n}$ defines $n/2$ linear equations in \mathbf{f} , we can directly recover \mathbf{f} whenever the number of unknowns is at most $n/2$.

Theorem 2 (Polynomial Erasure Attack on Standard Format). *Let $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ be a given partially erased BIKE secret key in the standard format with \mathbb{F}_2 -erasure probability $p \leq \frac{1}{2}$. Then, the secret key $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{F}_2^n$ can be recovered in polynomial time with success probability at least $\frac{1}{2}$.*

Proof. Let X be a random variable for the number of erased coordinates of \mathbf{f} . Since X is binomially distributed with parameters n and $p \leq \frac{1}{2}$, we have

$$\Pr[X \leq n/2] = \sum_{i=0}^{n/2} \binom{n}{i} p^i (1-p)^{n-i} \geq 2^{-n} \sum_{i=0}^{n/2} \binom{n}{i} \geq \frac{1}{2}.$$

Thus, with probability at least $\frac{1}{2}$ we have at most $n/2$ unknowns. In this case, matrix H with rank $n/2$ provides $n/2$ linearly independent equations in at most $X \leq n/2$ unknowns. Therefore, we recover \mathbf{f} via Gaussian elimination in time $\mathcal{O}(n^3)$. \square

⁶ Both formats can be found in the NIST submission[4] or the implementation accompanying it.

The Error Model Next let us consider the error model for the standard key format. According to Section 2.1 this corresponds to a given syndrome decoding instance $(\mathbf{H}, \mathbf{s}, \delta)$ together with a faulty solution vector $\tilde{\mathbf{f}} = \mathbf{f} + \mathbf{e}$, where $\Pr[e_i = 1] = p$. Note that we can again easily transform such an instance into a different syndrome decoding instance with weight $\delta' = \text{wt}(\mathbf{e})$. Therefore we just let the new syndrome be $\mathbf{s}' := \mathbf{s} + \mathbf{H}\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$, since

$$\mathbf{s}' := \mathbf{s} + \mathbf{H}\tilde{\mathbf{f}} = \mathbf{H}\mathbf{f} + \mathbf{H}(\mathbf{f} + \mathbf{e}) = \mathbf{H}\mathbf{e}.$$

This gives a first improvement, whenever $\delta' < \delta$. However, intuitively as long as $p \neq \frac{1}{2}$ (which corresponds to a uniform error) the problem should become easier.

To obtain a speedup whenever $p < \frac{1}{2}$, we exploit that the distribution of the weight on the candidate $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ in this case carries information about the weight distribution of \mathbf{f} . Observe that the expected weight of $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ is

$$\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}} := \mathbb{E}[\text{wt}(\tilde{\mathbf{f}})] = (1-p)\delta + p(n-\delta),$$

where the first addend counts the ones of \mathbf{f} contributing to $\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}$, while the second counts the contribution from \mathbf{e} . Let γ_1 be the random variable counting the weight of \mathbf{f} restricted to the coordinates where $\tilde{f}_i = 1$, then it follows that $\mathbb{E}[\gamma_1] = \delta(1-p)$. Analogously, the rest of the weight, namely $\gamma_0 := \delta - \gamma_1$, must then distribute over the coordinates where $\tilde{f}_i = 0$.

In the following we adapt the choice of columns selected by Prange's algorithm for finding an information set based on the given key material. Put simple, if a higher fraction of the error-weight is located on the coordinates of $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ with $\tilde{f}_i = 1$ than on those with $\tilde{f}_i = 0$, overall more coordinates are taken from the one-associated coordinates and vice versa. More precisely, we introduce a parameter $\rho_1 \leq \delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}$ determining how many of the $n-k$ columns, belonging to the information set, are chosen from the block defined by the one-coordinates of $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$. Consequently, the remaining $\rho_0 := n-k-\rho_1$ are taken from the block defined by the zeros of $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$. The probability that $n-k$ columns selected this way form an information set that contains the whole error becomes

$$q := \frac{\binom{\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}-\gamma_1}{\rho_1-\gamma_1}}{\binom{\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}}{\rho_1}} \cdot \frac{\binom{n-\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}-\gamma_0}{\rho_0-\gamma_0}}{\binom{n-\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}}{\rho_0}} = \frac{\binom{\rho_1}{\gamma_1} \binom{\rho_0}{\gamma_0}}{\binom{\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}}{\gamma_1} \binom{n-\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}}{\gamma_0}}. \quad (2)$$

Let us assume that the binomially distributed random variable γ_1 stays below its expectation, which happens with constant probability. Then, we can bound the expected amount of sets to be selected until we find such an information set as

$$\mathbb{E}[q^{-1} \mid \gamma_1 \leq \mathbb{E}[\gamma_1]] \leq \frac{\binom{\rho_1}{(1-p)\delta} \binom{n-k-\rho_1}{p\delta}}{\binom{\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}}{(1-p)\delta} \binom{n-\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}}}{p\delta}}. \quad (3)$$

The following theorem states up to which error probability the expected attack complexity, i.e., Eq. (3), stays in the polynomial time regime, using Theorem 1.

Theorem 3 (Polynomial Error Attack on Standard Format). *Let $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ be a given erroneous BIKE secret key in the standard format with \mathbb{F}_2 -error probability $p = \mathcal{O}\left(\frac{\log n}{\sqrt{n}}\right)$. Then the secret key $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{F}_2^n$ can be recovered in polynomial time with constant probability.*

Proof. Given in the full version [14].

Note that the above attack can easily be adapted to asymmetric error probabilities. In this case the expected weight of $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ changes to $\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}} = \delta(1-p_1) + p_0(n-\delta)$. Again the first addend counts the number of ones contributed from \mathbf{f} , which lets the fraction of ones in $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ also present in \mathbf{f} become $\gamma_1 := \delta(1-p_1)$. Now the adaptation of the ISD algorithm works as before, where Eq. (2) yields the probability of success in each iteration.

3.2 Compact Format Keys

If the secret key is stored via δ integers encoding its one positions, we say the key is stored in *compact* format or representation. Since BIKE's secret key is balanced, i.e., it has weight $\frac{\delta}{2}$ on each half of the coordinates, every integer encoding a position requires $\log k$ bits. We find that the compact compared to standard format allows for improved asymptotic bounds in the error model, while giving a slight disadvantage in the erasure model.

To allow for a direct comparison between the error- and erasure-probabilities for both key formats we stay with bit-errors and -erasures, i.e., we treat the secret key in compact format as a sequence of $\delta \log k$ bits, where any bit might be erroneous or get erased, rather than as δ integers.

The Erasure Model Our strategy for key recovery in the erasure model is again to generate candidates for the one coordinates of the key, based on the given information, and include those candidates in the information set. As long as the amount of candidates stays smaller than the co-dimension, which is $n - k = k$ in the case of BIKE, we can recover the secret key in polynomial time via Gaussian elimination. We get a slightly worse bound than for the standard format because ε bit-erasures in any integer lead to 2^ε candidates, i.e., we have an exponential amplification in the amount of candidates.

Theorem 4 (Polynomial Erasure Attack on Compact Format). *Let $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ be a given partially erased BIKE secret key in the compact format with \mathbb{F}_2 -erasure probability $p \leq 0.092$. Then the secret key $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{F}_2^{\delta \log k}$ can be recovered in polynomial time with constant success probability.*

Proof. Given in the full version [14].

Overall this corresponds to a constant factor disadvantage to the standard key format.

The error model Interestingly, if we turn our focus to the error-model, the compact key representation allows for an asymptotic increase in the error probability while staying in the polynomial time regime. This is because the compact representation allows to derive more candidates than the standard format and, hence, exploit the full size of the information set.⁷ Therefore, we again generate candidates for each index of the secret key based on the given erroneous indices.

Theorem 5 (Polynomial Error Attack on Compact Format). *Let $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ be a given erroneous BIKE secret key with \mathbb{F}_2 -error probability $p = \mathcal{O}\left(\frac{1}{\log^{2+\kappa} k}\right)$ for a small constant $\kappa > 0$. Then the secret key $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{F}_2^{\delta \log k}$ can be recovered in polynomial time with high success probability.*

Proof. Given in the full version [14].

Summarizing, the compact key representation of BIKE allows for a polynomial time key recovery in the error setting up to an error rate of $p = \frac{1}{\log^{2+\kappa} k}$ for a small $\kappa > 0$ in comparison to the less compact variant which only allows for an error-rate of $\frac{\log k}{\sqrt{k}}$.

3.3 Practical Attacks on BIKE

The erasure model Our practical approach for key recovery in the standard format extends the idea from Section 3.1 in the following way. Let I be the set of erased coordinates and $\bar{I} := \{1, \dots, n\} \setminus I$, i.e., all coordinates of \mathbf{f}_I are unknown, while those of $\mathbf{f}_{\bar{I}}$ are known. Now from $\mathbf{H}\mathbf{f} = \mathbf{s}$ it follows that

$$\mathbf{H}_I \mathbf{f}_I = \mathbf{s} + \mathbf{H}_{\bar{I}} \mathbf{f}_{\bar{I}},$$

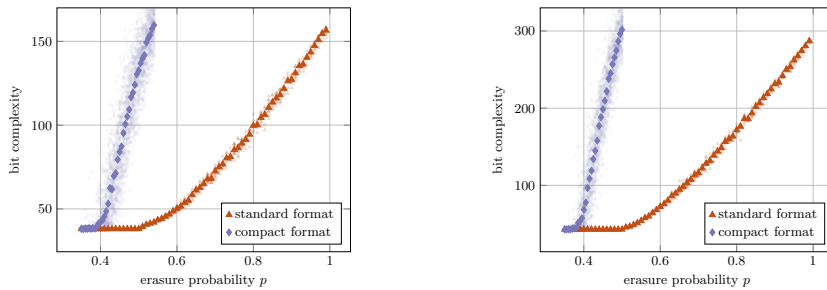
where only \mathbf{f}_I is unknown. Recovering \mathbf{f}_I now corresponds to solving a syndrome decoding instance with code length $n' := |I|$, unchanged co-dimension $n - k$ and error weight $\delta' := |\{i \in I \mid f_i = 1\}|$, which is the number of missing one coordinates of the secret key. Note that for $n' \leq n - k$ we can solve for \mathbf{f}_I via Gaussian Elimination again.

For the compact format we also slightly extend our previous approach from Section 3.2. Recall, that the secret key is represented as a vector of integers. We first check if there are erasure-free indices. Any of those decreases the searched error weight and the code length by one. Next, we generate a set of candidates for the remaining one positions of the secret key, i.e., whenever we find ε erasures in an index it contributes with 2^ε candidates. Any coordinate not identified as one in the first step and not appearing among the candidates must be zero, which shortens the code further. Finally this gives a syndrome decoding instance with code length \tilde{n} , which is the amount of distinct candidates, unchanged co-dimension $n - k$ and error weight $\tilde{\delta} := \delta - \beta$, where β denotes the number of erasure-free indices identified in the first step.

⁷ Recall, that for the standard format the most likely candidates are given by the one coordinates of the erroneous secret key, which are only $\delta_{\tilde{\mathbf{f}}} = o(n)$.

For our simulation we generate a BIKE secret key in the respective format and simulate the bit-erasures. Next we derive the parameters of the reduced syndrome decoding instances and use the *Syndrome Decoding Estimator* tool by Esser and Bellini [13] to obtain the bit complexity of Stern’s algorithm to solve the resulting instance.

In Fig. 1 we illustrate the averaged complexity (solid marks) of several experiments (transparent marks) as a function of the bit-erasure rate. Coherent to our theoretical analysis we find that attacks on the standard format are more efficient in the erasure model than attacks on the compact format. However, we also observe that for practical parameters in the compact format the point where the reduced code length \tilde{n} exceeds the co-dimension (which marks the transition to the non-polynomial regime) is $p \approx 0.38$, rather than the theoretically proven $p = 0.092$. The difference stems from the fact that in our theoretical analysis we neglected the possibility of collisions between candidates from different blocks.



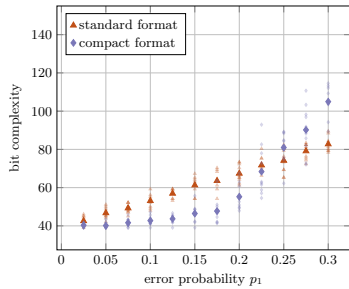
(a) Category 1: $(k, \delta) = (12323, 142)$

(b) Category 5: $(k, \delta) = (40973, 274)$

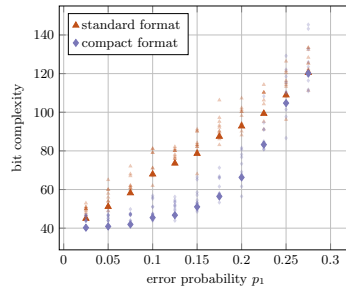
Fig. 1: Bit complexity of partial key exposure attack in the *erasure* model on the compact and standard key representations based on experiments.

The error model In our practical consideration we consider asymmetric error probabilities, again let those be p_0 and p_1 as defined in Section 2.1.

For the compact format, contrary to what the proof of Theorem 5 suggests, we do not take the error-weight as criterion to derive a list of candidate positions, rather we use a maximum-likelihood approach. Therefore let \tilde{I} with $|\tilde{I}| = \delta$ be the given set of erroneous (integer) indices. Then for every $i \in \tilde{I}$ we compute a set S_i containing those $x \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ for which the probability $p_x := \Pr[x \in I \mid i \in \tilde{I}]$ is maximized, where I is the set of coordinates representing the true secret key. More precisely, we define a threshold τ and only include those x with $p_x > \tau$. We then compute the union of the S_i as $S = \bigcup_i S_i$. Intuitively, S contains the most likely candidates for true secret key indices. Now, we are in a similar setting to the attack on the standard format, where the set S corresponds to a set of coordinates containing more weight than $\{1, \dots, n\} \setminus S$.



(a) Category 1: $(k, \delta) = (12323, 142)$



(b) Category 5: $(k, \delta) = (40973, 274)$

Fig. 2: Bit complexity of partial key exposure attacks on the compact and standard key representations based on experiments for $p_0 = 10^{-3}$.

We performed experiments for fixed p_0 and increasing p_1 to estimate the complexity of our attacks on both key formats. We first generate BIKE secret keys in the respective formats and then simulate the error to obtain an erroneous key. For the standard case we now calculate the complexity of an attack on the generated instance by using Eq. (2). For the compact case we proceed similarly, by first choosing a value for the threshold τ calculating the set S and finally calculating the complexity of the resulting attack via Eq. (2). Then we minimize over the choice of τ .

Fig. 2 illustrates the obtained bit complexities for the Category-1 and -5 parameter sets of BIKE. Each data point is averaged (solid marks) over ten experiments (transparent marks). Coherent to our analysis attacks on the compact key format perform exceptionally well for "small" error rates $p_1 \leq 0.225$. The attack on the compact format also scales well when increasing the parameters of the scheme, as shown in Fig. 2, where the break-even point is shifted to $p_1 \approx 0.3$.

We also applied the experiment for symmetric error probabilities. In this case the amount of candidates in the compact format increases drastically, which leads to an overall inferior attack on the compact format, as also reflected in Table 3.

4 Rainbow

We consider two *layers* Rainbow with parameters (q, v, o_1, o_2) . Let $n := v + o_1 + o_2$, $\mathbf{x} := (x_1, \dots, x_n)$ be a vector of unknowns, and $\mathbb{F}_q[\mathbf{x}]$ be the ring of polynomials with coefficients in \mathbb{F}_q .

A *Rainbow central map* is a quadratic map $\mathcal{F} = (f_1, \dots, f_{o_1+o_2}) \in (\mathbb{F}_q[\mathbf{x}])^{o_1+o_2}$, where the polynomials in (f_1, \dots, f_{o_1}) (resp. $(f_{o_1+1}, \dots, f_{o_1+o_2})$) are of the form $\sum_{i=1}^v \sum_{j=1}^{v+o_1} a_{i,j} x_i x_j$ (resp. $\sum_{i=1}^{v+o_1} \sum_{j=1}^n a_{i,j} x_i x_j$). The sequence (f_1, \dots, f_{o_1}) (resp. $(f_{o_1+1}, \dots, f_{o_1+o_2})$) is called the *first layer* (resp. *second layer*) of \mathcal{F} .

Public and secret keys: The public key is a sequence of quadratic polynomials

over $\mathbb{F}_q[\mathbf{x}]$ given by $(p_1, \dots, p_{o_1+o_2}) = \mathcal{S} \circ \mathcal{F} \circ \mathcal{T}$, where $\mathcal{S} : \mathbb{F}_q^{o_1+o_2} \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_q^{o_1+o_2}$, $\mathcal{T} : \mathbb{F}_q^n \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_q^n$ are linear maps. The secret key is given by $\mathcal{S}^{-1}, \mathcal{T}^{-1}$, and \mathcal{F} .

In order to reduce the size of the private key, Ding et al. [11] proposed to use \mathcal{S} and \mathcal{T} such that for all $\mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{o_1+o_2}$ and all $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{F}_q^n$ we have

$$\mathcal{S}^{-1}(\mathbf{y}) = \underbrace{\begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{I}_{o_1} & \mathbf{S}' \\ \mathbf{O} & \mathbf{I}_{o_2} \end{bmatrix}}_{:=\mathbf{S}^{-1}} \mathbf{y} \quad \text{and} \quad \mathcal{T}^{-1}(\mathbf{x}) = \underbrace{\begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{I}_v & \mathbf{T}^{(1)} & \mathbf{T}^{(4)} \\ \mathbf{O} & \mathbf{I}_{o_1} & \mathbf{T}^{(3)} \\ \mathbf{O} & \mathbf{O} & \mathbf{I}_{o_2} \end{bmatrix}}_{:=\mathbf{T}^{-1}} \mathbf{x}, \quad (4)$$

where $\mathbf{S}, \mathbf{T}^{(3)} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{o_1 \times o_2}$, $\mathbf{T}^{(4)} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{v \times o_2}$, and $\mathbf{T}^{(1)} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{v \times o_1}$. So far none of the known attacks on Rainbow can benefit from secret matrices \mathbf{S} and \mathbf{T} chosen as in Eq. (4).

Remark 1. Suppose that the secret maps \mathcal{S} and \mathcal{T} are homogeneous, and they are represented by the matrices \mathbf{S} and \mathbf{T} , respectively. Then, the polynomials of the public key and the central map \mathcal{F} are related by the equation $\sum_{j=1}^{o_1+o_2} s_{i,j} p_j(\mathbf{x}) = f_i(\mathbf{T}\mathbf{x})$, for $i = 1, \dots, o_1 + o_2$, where $\mathbf{S}^{-1} := [s_{i,j}]$.

We conclude the overview on Rainbow by stating the three suggested parameter sets, which are Rainbow-I ($q = 16, v = 36, o_1 = 32, o_2 = 32$), Rainbow-III ($q = 256, v = 68, o_1 = 32, o_2 = 48$) and Rainbow-V ($q = 256, v = 96, o_1 = 36, o_2 = 64$).

4.1 Attack Strategy

Our partial key exposure attacks exploit the structure of the maps \mathcal{S}^{-1} and \mathcal{T}^{-1} given in Eq. (4) and work in two steps. The first step consists in recovering the outer layer, corresponding to $\mathbf{S}', \mathbf{T}^{(3)}$ and $\mathbf{T}^{(4)}$ and the second step recovers the inner rainbow layer, i.e., the matrix $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$.

For the first step, we derive in Proposition 1 linear relations between some coefficients of polynomials in \mathcal{F} and coordinates of the matrix \mathbf{S}' . We then use the erroneous/ partially erased private key to find one complete row of \mathbf{S}' by either solving an instance of the syndrome decoding problem (in the error model) or enumerating the minimum amount of information so that we obtain one row by solving a linear system (in the erasure model). We finally observe that this single row of \mathbf{S}' is already sufficient to recover the full outer layer in polynomial time. In a second step, we recover a few columns of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ from the faulty / erased key material by enumeration. Eventually, we observe that these columns together with the outer layer suffice to recover the full matrix $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$.

Let us introduce the *vinegar part* of a homogeneous quadratic polynomial.

Definition 4 (vinegar part). Let p be a homogeneous quadratic polynomial in $\mathbb{F}_q[x_1, \dots, x_n]$. The vinegar part of p is the homogeneous quadratic polynomial $p^v \in \mathbb{F}_q[x_1, \dots, x_v]$ such that $p(x_1, \dots, x_n) - p^v(x_1, \dots, x_v)$ contains no monomials of the form $x_i x_j$ where $1 \leq i, j \leq v$.

We observe the following relation between the vinegar parts of the public polynomials and the polynomials in the hidden central map, which forms the basis of our attacks.

Proposition 1. *Let f_i be the i -th polynomial in the first layer of a Rainbow central map, that is, $i \leq o_1$. Let $(p_1, \dots, p_{o_1+o_2})$ be a Rainbow public key, where the corresponding secret maps \mathcal{S} and \mathcal{T} are homogeneous, and their matrix representations are as shown in Equation (4). Then, we have*

$$p_i^{\mathbf{v}}(x_1, \dots, x_v) + \sum_{j=o_1+1}^{o_1+o_2} s_{i,j} \cdot p_j^{\mathbf{v}}(x_1, \dots, x_v) = f_i^{\mathbf{v}}(x_1, \dots, x_v),$$

where $(s_{i,1}, \dots, s_{i,o_1+o_2})$ is the i -th row of \mathbf{S}^{-1} .

Proof. Given in the full version [14].

As a second key ingredient for our attacks, we show the following theorem, which allows us to recover the full Rainbow secret key in polynomial time from a single known row of \mathbf{S}' and a constant number of columns from $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$.

Theorem 6 (Rainbow Full Key Recovery). *Let (q, v, o_1, o_2) be a Rainbow parameter set, and \mathbf{S}' and \mathbf{T} as defined in Eq. (4). Then, (1) knowledge of any single row of \mathbf{S}' is sufficient to recover the secret matrices \mathbf{S}' , $\mathbf{T}^{(3)}$, and $\mathbf{T}^{(4)}$ in polynomial time in the input parameters. (2) The additional knowledge of any set of $\lfloor v/o_1 \rfloor$ columns of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ allows to recover the full matrix $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ in time polynomial in the input parameters q, v, o_1, o_2 .*

Proof. Given in the full version [14].

4.2 \mathbb{F}_q -errors and -erasures

All over this section we treat o_2 as the major security parameter by assuming that $o_1 = c_{o_1} o_2, v = c_v o_2, q = c_q o_2$, where c_{o_1}, c_v and c_q are considered constant. This allows us to state our results only as a function of o_2 .

The erasure model In the erasure model we use Proposition 1 together with the given partially erased information to derive linear equations in the unknown coordinates of a single row of \mathbf{S}' . We then proceed similar for $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ by deriving quadratic equations in the unknown coordinates of its columns.

Theorem 7 (Polynomial Erasure Attack). *Given a partially erased Rainbow secret key with \mathbb{F}_q -erasure probability $p = \mathcal{O}\left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{o_2}}\right)$. Then the secret key can be recovered in polynomial time with constant success probability.*

Proof. Let \mathbf{s}_i denote the i -th row of \mathbf{S}' from Eq. (4) and $f_i^{\mathbf{y}}$ be the vinegar part of polynomial f_i in the first layer. Denote by $I_{\mathbf{s}_i}$ the indices of erased coordinates of \mathbf{s}_i and by $I_{f_i^{\mathbf{y}}}$ the indices of unknown coefficients in $f_i^{\mathbf{y}}$. Note that there exists one i with $|I_{\mathbf{s}_i}| \leq p o_2$ and $|I_{f_i^{\mathbf{y}}}| \leq p \frac{v(v-1)}{2}$ with constant probability. Now, by Proposition 1, every coefficient of $f_i^{\mathbf{y}}$ is equal to a linear combination of the entries of the \mathbf{s}_i . Hence, every known coefficient of $f_i^{\mathbf{y}}$ leads to a linear equation in the $|I_{\mathbf{s}_i}| \leq p \cdot o_2$ unknown variables of \mathbf{s}_i . Thus, we expect to find the remaining unknown entries of \mathbf{s}_i whenever

$$p \cdot o_2 \leq (1-p) \frac{v(v-1)}{2} \Leftrightarrow p \leq \frac{1}{1 + \frac{2}{c_v v}} = \frac{1}{1 + o(1)}.$$

From the found row of \mathbf{S}' , we recover the full matrix \mathbf{S}' (Theorem 6) and can compute the polynomials $(f_1(\mathbf{T}\mathbf{x}), \dots, f_{o_1}(\mathbf{T}\mathbf{x}))$, where the f_i 's are the secret polynomials of the first layer.

We now recover the secret matrix $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$. Let $\mathbf{t} \in \mathbb{F}_q^v$ be any column of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$. Then with constant probability there are less than $p \cdot v = \mathcal{O}(\sqrt{o_2})$ erasures in \mathbf{t} . Since \mathbf{t} satisfies the quadratic equations $f_1(\mathbf{T}\mathbf{t}) = \dots = f_{o_1}(\mathbf{T}\mathbf{t}) = 0$, where $o_1 = \mathcal{O}(o_2)$, we can solve for the $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{o_2})$ erased coordinates in polynomial time. We repeat this process $\lceil v/o_2 \rceil = \mathcal{O}(1)$ many times and then use the obtained columns to recover $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ using Theorem 6. \square

Note that the proof of Theorem 7 shows that we can recover \mathbf{S}' , $\mathbf{T}^{(3)}$ and $\mathbf{T}^{(4)}$, corresponding to the first layer of Rainbow, even up to an erasure probability of $\frac{1}{1+o(1)}$ in polynomial time. In order to also recover $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ the probability bound then drops to $p = \mathcal{O}\left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{o_2}}\right)$. Note that the remaining inner layer of Rainbow forms a small instance of the unbalanced oil and vinegar (UOV) scheme [20]. This indicates that UOV is strictly less vulnerable against this kind of partial key exposure attack than Rainbow.

The error model For our attack in the error model, we first show a reduction from the recovery of the secret matrices \mathbf{S}' , $\mathbf{T}^{(3)}$, and $\mathbf{T}^{(4)}$ to the syndrome decoding problem. Then we study the complexity of solving the corresponding syndrome decoding instance. We give the reduction in the following lemma.

Lemma 1 (Reduction to Syndrome Decoding). *Recovering the Rainbow secret matrices \mathbf{S}' , $\mathbf{T}^{(3)}$, and $\mathbf{T}^{(4)}$ from a given erroneous candidate with \mathbb{F}_q -error probability p can polynomially be reduced to solving an instance of the syndrome decoding problem $(\mathbf{H}, \mathbf{b}, \delta_p)$, where $\mathbf{H} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{r \times (r+o_2)}$ and $\delta_p := p(r+o_2)$ and $1 \leq r \leq \frac{v(v-1)}{2}$.*

Proof. Given in the full version [14].

Next in Theorem 8, we describe a polynomial-time partial key exposure attack in the error model, that uses the previous reduction.

Theorem 8. *Given an erroneous Rainbow secret key with \mathbb{F}_q -error probability $p = \mathcal{O}\left(\frac{\log o_2}{o_2}\right)$. Then the secret key can be recovered in polynomial time with constant probability.*

Proof. Lemma 1 states that recovering any row of \mathbf{S}' from the given erroneous secret matrices \mathbf{S}' , $\mathbf{T}^{(3)}$, and $\mathbf{T}^{(4)}$ is equivalent to solving an instance of the syndrome decoding problem $(\mathbf{H}, \mathbf{b}, \delta_p)$, where $\mathbf{H} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{r \times (r+o_2)}$, $\mathbf{b} \in \mathbb{F}_q^r$ and $\delta_p = p(r+o_2)$. In the following we set $r = o_2$, which is a valid choice since according to Lemma 1 $r \leq \frac{v(v-1)}{2} = \mathcal{O}(o_2^2)$. For this choice we find $\delta_p \leq \log(o_2)$ with constant probability.

Note that the resulting syndrome decoding instance possesses a unique solution with high probability, since the expected amount of random solutions is

$$\frac{\binom{r+o_2}{\delta_p}(q-1)^{\delta_p}}{q^{o_2}} = \frac{\binom{2o_2}{\log o_2}(q-1)^{\log o_2}}{q^{o_2}} < \frac{(2o_2)^{\log o_2}}{q^{o_2 - \log o_2}} = o(1).$$

However, the searched row of \mathbf{S}' is a solution by construction. Now, by Theorem 1 we can find this unique solution in polynomial time.

Let us turn our focus to $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$. Any column of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ is error-free with probability

$$q := (1-p)^v = \left(1 - \frac{c_p \log o_2}{o_2}\right)^{c_v o_2} \xrightarrow{o_2 \rightarrow \infty} e^{-c_v c_p \log o_2} = o_2^{-c_v c_p \log e},$$

where $p = \frac{c_p \log o_2}{o_2}$. Note that the number of error-free columns is distributed binomially with parameter $o_1 = c_{o_1} o_2$ and probability q . It follows that the expected number of error-free columns is $v \cdot q = o_2^{1-c_v c_p \log e}$, where we can ensure $v \cdot q \geq \lceil v/o_1 \rceil$ by an appropriate choice of constant c_p . Now with constant probability we have at least $v \cdot q \geq \lceil v/o_1 \rceil$ error-free columns. Finally, we iterate over any combination of $\lceil v/o_1 \rceil = \mathcal{O}(1)$ columns until the recovery via Theorem 6 yields the correct $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$. □

4.3 Practical Attacks on Rainbow

In our Rainbow bit complexity estimations we assume a field multiplication to cost $\log^2 q$ bit operations.

The erasure model Our attack again splits in the two parts of recovering both layers of rainbow separately, starting with the first. Let again \mathbf{s}_i denote the i -th row of \mathbf{S}' , and let f_i denote the i -th polynomial in the first layer of the Rainbow central map. Recall, that our strategy to recover any row \mathbf{s}_i used in Theorem 7 requires to know $o_2 - k$ coordinates of the \mathbb{F}_q -vector representation of $f_i^{\mathbf{v}}$, where k is the number of known coordinates of the \mathbb{F}_q -vector representation of \mathbf{s}_i .

Our (S, F) -strategy to recover a row of \mathbf{S}' . For a fixed integer k , which is later optimized, let n_{b_i} for $i = 0, \dots, o_1$ be the minimum amount of bits we have to enumerate of (\mathbf{s}_i, f_i^Y) to obtain k coordinates from \mathbf{s}_i and $o_2 - k$ coefficients from f_i^Y . For each guess, we need to solve a linear system in the $o_2 - k$ unknowns over \mathbb{F}_q . Finally, we need to check if the derived solution leads to the correct Rainbow private key, which requires $(v + o_1 + o_2)^3$ field multiplications (for details we refer to the full version [14]). Therefore, the amount of field multiplications to recover one row of the secret matrix \mathbf{S}' is $2^{n_b} \cdot (o_2^3 + (v + o_1 + o_2)^3)$, where $n_b = \min_i \{n_{b_i}\}$.

Recovering $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ via partial enumeration. Note that after recovering the first layer Rainbow polynomials, we can recover $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ without any extra information in time

$$\mathcal{O}((v + o_1)^4 \cdot q^{v - o_1}),$$

using the Kipnis-Shamir attack [20]. In the case of the Rainbow-I parameter set this is already less than the complexity for the recovery of \mathbf{S}' . However, in the case of the Rainbow-V parameter set the Kipnis-Shamir attack becomes inefficient. Here, we make use of the given partial information to recover $\lceil v/o_1 \rceil$ columns of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$.

Recall that, once \mathbf{S}' is recovered, we can compute the first layer Rainbow polynomials, i.e., the polynomials $g_i := (f_i \circ \mathcal{T})$ for $i = 1, \dots, o_1$. Further, for any column \mathbf{t} of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ we have $g_i(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. Our attack now proceeds as follows: For an integer $k \leq o_1$, which has to be optimized, we enumerate the minimum amount of bits, namely n_b , so that we obtain all but k coordinates of one column \mathbf{t} of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$. Then, we solve the system $g_i(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for $i = 1, \dots, o_1$. Overall this yields a time complexity of $q^{n_b} \cdot \mathcal{S}$, where \mathcal{S} corresponds to the time complexity for solving a quadratic system with k unknowns and o_1 equations over \mathbb{F}_q . In our estimations, we use the *MQ-Estimator* of Bellini et al. [5] to estimate \mathcal{S} .

The resulting bit complexities of our key recovery attacks are shown in Fig. 3. For each p , we computed for ten randomly generated erased private keys the complexity of the key recovery (transparent marks), and the corresponding averaged complexity (solid marks). The attack on Category-1 parameters is dominated by our (S, F) strategy to recover the first layer, while the attack on Rainbow-V is dominated by the recovery of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$. We compare against naive enumeration strategies, which enumerate the least amount of erased bits to obtain one row of \mathbf{S}' (Rainbow-I) or $\lceil v/o_1 \rceil$ columns of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ (Rainbow-V).

Note that our strategies outperforms naive enumeration for both parameter sets and all values of p .

The error model We again start with the recovery of \mathbf{S}' to obtain the first layer Rainbow polynomials, after which we recover $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$.

Recovery of \mathbf{S}' . Our attack in the error model uses the reduction to the syndrome decoding problem given in Lemma 1. Here we assume that every field element is represented as a sequence of $\log q$ bits, relating the bit-error probability p and

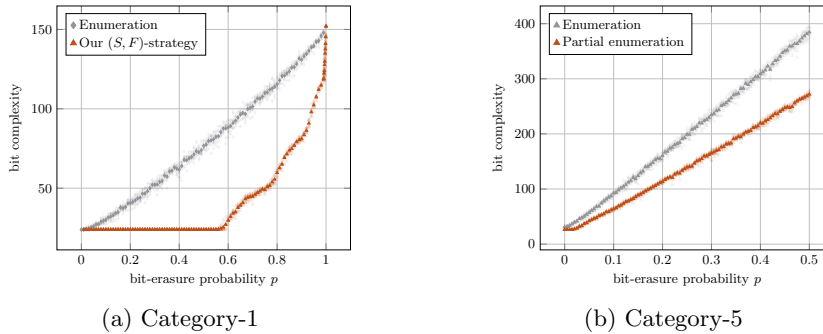


Fig. 3: Bit complexities of our partial key exposure attack in the erasure model on Rainbow.

the field error probability p_q via $p_q = 1 - (1 - p)^{\log q}$. More precisely, from a given faulty Rainbow secret key with bit-error rate p we derive a syndrome decoding instance $(\mathbf{H}, \mathbf{s}, \delta)$ where $\mathbf{H} \in \mathbb{F}_q^{r \times (r + o_2)}$, $\mathbf{s} \in \mathbb{F}_q^r$, and $\delta := (1 - (1 - p)^{\log q})(r + o_2)$ with $1 \leq r \leq \frac{v(v-1)}{2}$ for the respective value of v of the corresponding parameter set.

To solve the resulting syndrome decoding instance we then use an ISD algorithm. For deriving the concrete bit complexity we adapted the *Syndrome Decoding Estimator* by Esser and Bellini [13] to the \mathbb{F}_q case. In this adaptation we assume $\log^2 q$ bit operations per field multiplication. We finally minimize over the choice of r . In contrast to our theoretical analysis the choice of r might result in an instance with multiple solutions. As only a single of these solutions leads to the Rainbow secret key we need to reapply the ISD algorithm for each solution and finally check if it leads to the correct Rainbow private key. This check requires $(o_1 + o_2 + v)^3$ field multiplications. Now if there exist E solutions and the cost for finding all of them is T_{ISD} , then the total cost of our partial key exposure attack becomes $T = T_{\text{ISD}} + (o_1 + o_2 + v)^3 \cdot E$.

Recovering $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ by partial enumeration. Again, for the Rainbow-I parameter set we use the efficient Kipnis-Shamir modeling to recover $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ without using any extra information.

In the case of Rainbow-V, we use a similar strategy as in the erasure setting. Therefore, let \mathbf{t} be a given erroneous column of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ with ω erroneous \mathbb{F}_q coordinates. We treat a random choice of $k \leq o_1$ of the coordinates of \mathbf{t} as unknowns, and assume that among these k coordinates are δ faulty entries. Then, among the remaining $v - k$ coordinates we enumerate all possible choices for $\omega - \delta$ errors. For each choice of k unknowns and every guess for the remaining $\omega - \delta$ errors, we then solve the system $g_i(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for $i = 1, \dots, o_1$, where g_i are the already recovered first layer Rainbow polynomials. The time complexity then amounts

to

$$\frac{\binom{v}{\omega}}{\binom{k}{\delta} \binom{v-k}{\omega-\delta}} \binom{(v-k) \log q}{c} \cdot \mathcal{S},$$

where c is the maximum number of occurred bit errors over any choice of $\omega - \delta$ of the ω faulty \mathbb{F}_q coordinates of \mathbf{t} . Further, \mathcal{S} is the complexity to solve the quadratic system over \mathbb{F}_q . We repeat this strategy for each column for increasing values of c , to exploit the variance of the error.

In Fig. 4 we plot the computed bit complexity of our attacks for Rainbow-I and Rainbow-V parameters. Note that in the case of Rainbow-V the complexity of computing $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ dominates, while for Rainbow-I the recovery of \mathbf{S}' is more costly. For comparison we also give the complexity of a naive enumeration of the error on the initial row of \mathbf{S}' (Rainbow-I) and the complexity of a naive enumeration of the error on $\lceil v/o_1 \rceil$ columns of $\mathbf{T}^{(1)}$ (Rainbow-V). For Rainbow-V we sampled for each p twenty randomly generated erroneous private keys and computed the complexity of the key recovery (transparent marks), and the corresponding averaged complexity (solid marks). In the case of Rainbow-I we used the expected error weight to compute the bit complexity.

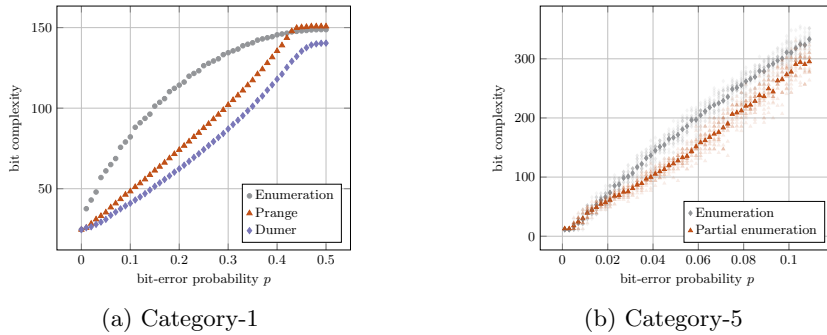


Fig. 4: Bit complexity of our key recovery attacks on Rainbow in the error model.

5 NTRU

Let n be an integer, $q > 3$ a prime number, and let the ternary field \mathbb{F}_3 be represented by the elements $\{-1, 0, 1\}$. We define the ring $R_q := \mathbb{F}_q[x]/\langle x^n - 1 \rangle$. During this section, we identify polynomials $v = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} v_i x^i \in R_q$ with their coefficient vector $\mathbf{v} = (v_{n-1}, v_{n-2}, \dots, v_0)^T$.

In NTRU, the secret key is given by a polynomial $f \in R_q \cap R_3$ that is invertible in R_q and in R_3 . A public $h \in R_q$ associated with f is given by $h = f^{-1} \cdot g \bmod q$, where $g \in R_q \cap R_3$. For efficiency reasons the current NTRU NIST submission [8] stores both f and f_3^{-1} as the private key. Therefore, we refer to (f, f^{-1}) as the

NTRU private key, where we drop for convenience the subscript 3 of f_3^{-1} . Note that an NTRU private key fulfills the two equations

$$f \cdot h = g \pmod q \text{ and } f \cdot f^{-1} = 1 \pmod 3.$$

5.1 \mathbb{F}_q -errors and -erasures

The results of this section heavily exploit the key redundancy from the second equation $f \cdot f^{-1} = 1 \pmod 3$. We first show how to recover in polynomial time $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n})$ erasures in *random* positions, and second that in the case of *consecutive* positions we can even recover $n/4$ erasures.

For the error setting, an application of Theorem 1 shows how to correct $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{\log n})$ errors.

The Erasure Model Let us start with a polynomial-time attack in the erasure model that exploits the second key equation, i.e., $f \cdot f^{-1} = 1 \pmod 3$.

Theorem 9. *Given a partially erased NTRU secret key $(\tilde{f}, \tilde{f}^{-1})$ with \mathbb{F}_q -erasure probability $p = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2n}}$. Then the secret key $(f, f^{-1}) \in R_q \times R_3$ can be recovered in polynomial time with high success probability.*

Proof. Let $I_f, I_{f^{-1}} \subset \{1, \dots, n\}$ denote the unknown indices in f, f^{-1} , i.e.,

$$f = \sum_{i \notin I_f} f_i x^i + \sum_{i \in I_f} y_i x^i \text{ and } f^{-1} = \sum_{i \notin I_{f^{-1}}} f_i^{-1} x^i + \sum_{i \in I_{f^{-1}}} z_i x^i.$$

Let us use the secret key equation $f \cdot f^{-1} = 1 \pmod 3$. This gives us n identities, where the k -th identity is

$$\sum_{i+j=k \pmod n} f_i \cdot f_j^{-1} = \delta_{k0}, \text{ where } \delta_{k0} = \begin{cases} 1 & k = 0 \\ 0 & \text{else} \end{cases}.$$

Let X_k be an indicator variable that takes value 1 iff the k -th identity is linear in the variables y, z . Notice that for any (i, j) with $i + j = k \pmod n$ we obtain a quadratic term $y_i z_j$ with probability $p^2 = \frac{1}{2n}$. A union bound shows that we obtain for any (i, j) a quadratic term with probability at most $np^2 = \frac{1}{2}$. Thus, $\mathbf{E}[X_k] \geq \frac{1}{2}$. Let $X = X_0 + \dots + X_{n-1}$ denote the number of linear equations. Then by linearity of expectation $\mathbf{E}[X] \geq \frac{n}{2}$.

Any secret key coefficient is unknown with probability p . Thus, we have an expected number of $2np = \sqrt{2n}$ unknowns. An application of Markov's equality shows that the number of linear equations exceeds the number of unknowns with high probability. Therefore, we can solve the resulting system of linear equations in time polynomial in n , thereby recovering all secret key coefficients. \square

Remark 2. Note that the expected number of linear equations $\mathbf{E}[X] \geq n(1 - np^2)$ drops to 0 when $p = \frac{1}{\sqrt{n}}$. This shows that our partial key exposure attack from Theorem 9 does not extend to larger error rates, even when we do not restrict to polynomial time.

Consecutive Erasure Attack In the following, instead of having coefficients of f and f^{-1} erased in random positions, we assume that the erasures appear in consecutive positions. Surprisingly, in this case the erasure rate for a polynomial-time attack increases significantly. While Theorem 9 allows on expectation $2np = \sqrt{2n}$ erasures, the following theorem can handle $n/4$ erasures.

Theorem 10. *Let $(\tilde{f}, \tilde{f}^{-1})$ be a partially erased NTRU secret key having $n/4$ \mathbb{F}_q -erasures in (cyclically) consecutive positions of both \tilde{f} and \tilde{f}^{-1} . Then the secret key $(f, f^{-1}) \in R_q \times R_3$ can be recovered in polynomial time.*

Proof. We assume without loss of generality that the erasures are in position $0, \dots, \frac{n}{4} - 1$, i.e., we obtain the coefficients of f and f^{-1} in positions $\frac{n}{4}, \dots, n-1$. By cyclicity, the following argument extends to all other (cyclically) consecutive positions. We have

$$f = \sum_{i=0}^{n/4-1} y_i x^i + \sum_{i=n/4}^{n-1} f_i x^i \text{ and } f^{-1} = \sum_{j=0}^{n/4-1} z_j x^j + \sum_{j=n/4}^{n-1} f_j^{-1} x^j.$$

The key identity $f \cdot f^{-1} = 1 \pmod 3$ gives n equations, where the k -th equation is

$$\sum_{i+j=k \pmod n} f_i f_j^{-1} = \delta_{k0} \text{ with } \delta_{k0} = \begin{cases} 1 & k = 0 \\ 0 & \text{else} \end{cases}.$$

Notice that we obtain quadratic terms $y_i z_j$ only if $0 \leq i+j \leq 2(\frac{n}{4} - 1)$. Thus, all equations with $2(\frac{n}{4} - 1) < k < n$ are linear. These are $n - 2(\frac{n}{4} - 2) > n/2$ linear equations. Thus, the number of linear equations exceeds the amount $\frac{n}{2}$ of unknowns y_i, z_j . Solving for the unknowns recovers the secret key in time polynomial in n . \square

Theorem 10 shows that we can recover 1/4 of the secret key bits, whenever the unknowns are in consecutive positions. The following remark shows that we can recover even up to a 1/3-fraction if certain (unrealistic) conditions are met.

Remark 3. Assume that $3|n$, and we obtain erasures y_i, z_j in positions $i, j \in \{0, 3, 6, \dots, n-3\}$. Then for all $k = i+j$ we have $3|k$. Thus, we obtain quadratic terms only in the k -th equation with $k \equiv 0 \pmod 3$. This in turn gives us $n - \frac{n}{3} = \frac{2}{3}n$ linear equations and also $\frac{2}{3}n$ unknowns.

The Error Model Next we give a polynomial-time attack in the error model, again exploiting the second key equation $f \cdot f^{-1} = 1 \pmod 3$.

Theorem 11. *Let $(\tilde{f}, \tilde{f}^{-1})$ be an erroneous NTRU secret key with \mathbb{F}_q -error probability $p = \mathcal{O}\left(\frac{\sqrt{\log n}}{n}\right)$. Then the secret key (f, f^{-1}) can be recovered in polynomial time with high success probability.*

Proof. Given in the full version [14].

5.2 Practical Attacks on NTRU

In Section 5.1, we exploited the key equation $f \cdot f^{-1} = 1 \pmod{3}$ to recover the secret key in polynomial time. However, Remark 2 already indicates limitations for scaling our strategy to larger error rates. Hence, in our practical attacks we devise a new strategy based on the key equation $h \cdot f = g$ instead. First we derive an LWE instance from the given partially erased or erroneous key material, whose complexity is then estimated using the LWE estimator [3] in combination with the asymptotic lattice reduction exponent of 0.3496 obtained in [2]. Second, we give a combinatorial attack that achieves the best complexities for a compact key representation.

Key Formats The NTRU documentation specifies two key formats, a *packed* and an *unpacked* format. The unpacked format stores each coefficient of a ternary polynomial via two bits. Therefore the values 0, 1 and -1 are represented in binary as 00, 01 and 10. This key format is used whenever the secret key is accessed, e.g., during decryption. The packed format is used to store the secret key in the meantime, by packing five ternary coefficients, with total information $5 \log 3 \approx 7.92$ bits, into 8 bits. Let us detail how we translate bit to field errors/erasures for the different key formats.

Unpacked format. For the unpacked format we observe that a single bit-erasure of the form ?1 and 1?, where "?" denotes an erased bit can directly be recovered to 01 and 10 coefficients. For every coefficient the probability of a single bit-erasure is $2p(1-p)$, while the probability for two bit-erasures is p^2 . Since the secret key is drawn randomly from all ternary polynomials, the probability that we can directly recover a single-bit affected coefficient is $1/3$.⁸ Thus, we can reduce the total amount of expected erasure-affected \mathbb{F}_3 -coefficients from $(2p - p^2)n$ to

$$(2p - p^2)n - \frac{2p(1-p)n}{3} = \frac{np}{3}(4-p),$$

or put differently obtain a field-erasure probability of $\frac{p}{3}(4-p)$.

For the translation of bit-*errors* to field-*errors* we proceed similar, treating a coefficient as erroneous as long as any bit in its binary representation is error-prone. Hence, a bit-error probability of p results in a field error probability of $1 - (1-p)^2 = 2p - p^2$.

Packed format. For the packed format an erased or erroneous bit in its binary representation might affect multiple coefficients of the polynomial in unpacked form. We determine the field-error and -erasure rates caused by a certain bit-error/-erasure by an exhaustive enumeration of all possibilities. We start with the erasure translation. We enumerate all possible 3^5 values for an 8-bit block in packed representation and all possible positions for i bit-erasures for $i =$

⁸ The secret key coefficient can take the values 01, 10 and 00 while only the two (out of 6) possible single-bit erasures ?1 and 1? can be recovered directly.

$1, \dots, 8$, to derive the proportion of i bit-erasures leading to j field-erasures. Essentially, for every combination of value and i erasure positions, we enumerate all possibilities for these i bits and transform for each guess to unpacked form. This results in five ternary coefficients. Now, those coefficients which are equal among all guesses are known, while those differing among at least two guesses are treated as erased. For a table with the derived proportions we refer to the full version of this work [14].

For the bit- to field- *error* translation we proceed similar by enumerating all possible value-error pairs and counting the errors caused in the unpacked representation. We give a table with the obtained frequencies in the full version of this work [14].

Practical Attack in the Erasure Model For our attack in the erasure model we derive a dimension-reduced small-secret LWE instance from the partially erased key material. Let \tilde{f} be a partially erased version of f , where I_f denotes the set of erased coefficients. The key equation gives $h \cdot f = g$ or equivalently $\mathbf{H}\mathbf{f} = \mathbf{g}$, where \mathbf{H} is the multiplication matrix of h and \mathbf{f}, \mathbf{g} are the coefficient vectors of f and g . By denoting the columns of \mathbf{H} as \mathbf{h}_i , we obtain

$$\mathbf{H}\mathbf{f} = \mathbf{g} \Leftrightarrow \sum_{i=1}^n \mathbf{h}_i f_i = \mathbf{g} \Leftrightarrow \sum_{i \in I_f} \mathbf{h}_i f_i - \mathbf{g} = - \sum_{i \notin I_f} \mathbf{h}_i f_i.$$

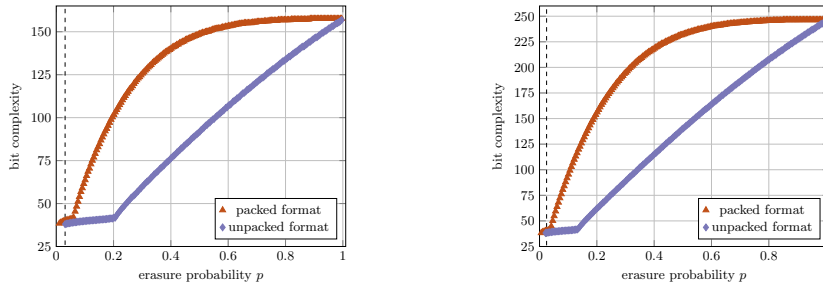
By letting $\hat{\mathbf{H}}$ denote the matrix containing the columns \mathbf{H} indexed by I_f , and analogously $\hat{\mathbf{f}}$ denote the vector containing the coordinates of \mathbf{f} indexed by I_f , we obtain $\hat{\mathbf{H}}\hat{\mathbf{f}} - \mathbf{g} = - \sum_{i \notin I_f} \mathbf{h}_i f_i$. Note that since the right hand side of the equation is known and \mathbf{g} is small by definition this yields an LWE instance with secret $\hat{\mathbf{f}}$ of dimension $|I_f|$, which is the number of erased \mathbb{F}_q coefficients.

To determine the bit complexity of the outlined attack for various erasure probabilities p , we proceed as follows. First, we relate the bit-erasure probability p to a field-erasure probability. For the unpacked format, as outlined in Section 5.2, we simply use the field-erasure probability $\frac{p}{3}(4-p)$. For the packed format we computed by exhaustive enumeration how to translate a certain number of bit-erasures in an 8-bit block to a certain number of field-erasures. For a table with the computed frequencies see the full version of this work [14].

We now first calculate the expected number N_i of blocks out of the total $n/5$ affected by i bit-erasures, $i = 1, \dots, 8$. Then we compute the number of expected field-erasures as $\sum_i N_i E_i$, where E_i is the expected number of field erasures observed in a block with i bit erasures.

From there we use the LWE estimator to determine the bit complexity for solving the derived LWE instances. Our results for both formats are depicted in Fig. 5. The vertical dashed line represents the erasure probability up to which our polynomial time attacks from Section 5.1 can be applied.

Practical Attack in the Error Model Our practical attack in the error model is quite similar to the attack in erasure model. Let us first outline the



(a) Category-1: $(n, q) = (509, 2048)$

(b) Category-3: $(n, q) = (821, 4096)$

Fig. 5: Bit complexity of our partial key exposure attack in the erasure model on NTRU.

attack for a symmetric error, which does not exploit any dimension reduction. In the error setting, we obtain a noisy version $\tilde{f} = f + e$ of f . Similar to before we have

$$\mathbf{H}\tilde{\mathbf{f}} = \mathbf{H}\mathbf{e} + \mathbf{H}\mathbf{f} = \mathbf{H}\mathbf{e} + \mathbf{g}, \quad (5)$$

which defines an LWE instance of dimension n and secret \mathbf{e} , where \mathbf{e} has expected $p_q \cdot n$ entries different from zero, where p_q is the field-error probability.

To derive the bit complexity of recovering the secret key for a given bit-error probability p we again first relate p to the field-error probability p_q . Then we use the LWE estimator to estimate the hardness of the above LWE instance.

For the unpacked format we have $p_q = 2p - p^2$ (compare to Section 5.2). For the packed format we again compute the number N_i of expected 8-bit blocks affected by $i = 1, \dots, 8$ errors. Then we derive the number of field-errors as $\sum_i N_i E_i$, where E_i is the expected number of field-errors caused by i bit-errors.

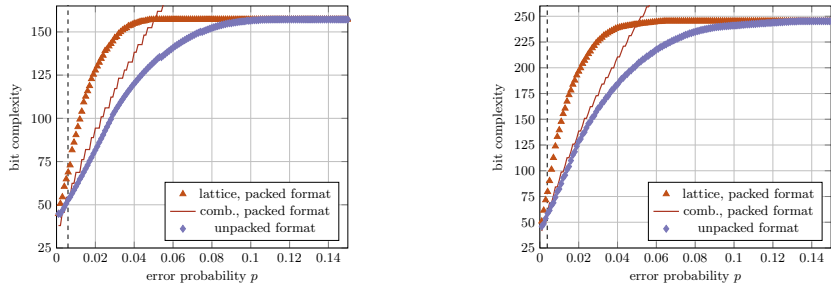
In Fig. 6 we plot the derived bit-complexity as a function of the error-probability p . Since already a few errors in packed representation often lead to multiple errors in the unpacked form, we see a steep incline for our attack in packed form. Therefore we give a second, combinatorial approach based on a meet-in-the-middle technique.

Combinatorial approach Imagine we guess the first $\ell < n$ coordinates of \mathbf{g} in Eq. (5). This gives an equation of the form $\mathbf{H}_\ell(\tilde{\mathbf{f}} - \mathbf{e}) = \mathbf{g}_\ell$, where \mathbf{H}_ℓ is the matrix formed by the first ℓ rows of \mathbf{H} and analogously \mathbf{g}_ℓ contains the first ℓ coordinates of \mathbf{g} .

From here we perform a meet-in-the-middle attack on \mathbf{e} . Therefore let $\mathbf{e} = (\mathbf{e}_1, \mathbf{e}_2) \in \mathbb{F}_3^{n/2} \times \mathbb{F}_3^{n/2}$, $\tilde{\mathbf{f}} = (\tilde{\mathbf{f}}_1, \tilde{\mathbf{f}}_2) \in \mathbb{F}_3^{n/2} \times \mathbb{F}_3^{n/2}$ and $\mathbf{H}_\ell = (\mathbf{H}_1 \mid \mathbf{H}_2)$, which gives

$$\mathbf{H}_1(\tilde{\mathbf{f}}_1 - \mathbf{e}_1) = \mathbf{g}_\ell - \mathbf{H}_2(\tilde{\mathbf{f}}_2 - \mathbf{e}_2).$$

Now we enumerate all possible values for \mathbf{e}_1 (*resp.* \mathbf{e}_2) and store the corresponding value of the right-hand side (*resp.* left-hand side) of the above equation in a



(a) Category-1: $(n, q) = (509, 2048)$

(b) Category-3: $(n, q) = (821, 4096)$

Fig. 6: Bit complexity of key recovery on NTRU in the symmetric error model.

list L_1 (*resp.* L_2). Then we search between those lists for equal elements, where by construction one matching pair reveals $\mathbf{e} = (\mathbf{e}_1, \mathbf{e}_2)$.

Note that the expected amount of matching pairs is $L := \frac{|L_1| \cdot |L_2|}{q^\ell}$ and that the matching can be performed in time $\mathcal{O}(\max\{|L|, |L_1|, |L_2|\})$. The list construction requires per element (after the first) roughly 2ℓ field multiplications, if a gray-code style enumeration for \mathbf{e}_1 and \mathbf{e}_2 is chosen. Moreover to check if an element of $\mathbf{x} \in L$ reveals the searched error we need to compute $\mathbf{H}_\ell \mathbf{x}$, which costs ℓn field multiplications. Thus by accounting for a single field multiplication $\log^2 q$ bit operations, and observing that $|L_1| = |L_2|$, we find a bit complexity of

$$\mathcal{O}(\max\{\ell n \cdot |L|, \ell \cdot |L_1|\} \cdot 3^\ell \log^2 q).^9$$

In the packed form, we enumerate the error first, subtract it from the respective part of the key material and then convert it to unpacked form. Thus, more precisely, the lists contain $\mathbf{H}_1 \cdot \text{unpack}(\tilde{\mathbf{f}}_1 - \mathbf{e}_1)$ and $\mathbf{g}_\ell - \mathbf{H}_2 \cdot \text{unpack}(\tilde{\mathbf{f}}_2 - \mathbf{e}_2)$ respectively. This is possible since every 8-bit block of the packed form can be converted to unpacked form independently.

In the packed form the bit length of $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ is roughly $\frac{8n}{5}$, hence the expected Hamming weight of the binary representation of \mathbf{e} is $\frac{8np}{5}$. Thus, in expectation we have $|L_1| = |L_2| = \mathcal{O}\left(\binom{4n/5}{4np/5}\right)$.

This combinatorial attack yields an improved key recovery attack on the packed format (see Fig. 6), because it benefits from the small bit length of $\tilde{\mathbf{f}}$ in packed representation.

In [21] May gives further advanced combinatorial attacks extending the here presented meet-in-the-middle by a search-tree approach and the representation technique. We leave it as an open research task to determine the gain of those advancements in our settings.

An improved practical attack when facing asymmetric error probabilities is given in the full version of this work [14].

⁹ The factor 3^ℓ can be slightly improved by guessing zero coordinates of \mathbf{g} instead of enumerating the first ℓ coordinates.

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