

On a Linear Diophantine Equation, II

By

S. Chaładus

(Vorgelegt in der Sitzung der math.-nat. Klasse am 18. Jänner 2001
durch das k. M. Andrzej Schinzel)

Let for vectors $\mathbf{a} = [a_1, \dots, a_K] \in \mathbb{Z}^K$, $\mathbf{x} = [x_1, \dots, x_K] \in \mathbb{Z}^K$, $r(\mathbf{x}) = \prod_{i=1}^K \max\{1, |x_i|\}$, $\mathbf{a} \cdot \mathbf{x} = a_1x_1 + \dots + a_Kx_K$.

M. Drmota [2] has proved the following theorem.

For every $k \geq 1$ and $\mathbf{a} \in (\mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\})^{k+1}$ there exists a non-zero integral solution \mathbf{x} of the equation $\mathbf{a} \cdot \mathbf{x} = 0$ with

$$r(\mathbf{x}) \leq kr(\mathbf{a})^{1/k}.$$

A. Schinzel and the author [1] have proved that for every $k \geq 1$ there exist a positive constant $C(k)$ and vectors \mathbf{a} with arbitrarily large $r(\mathbf{a})$ such that for every $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{Z}^{k+1} \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}$ the equation $\mathbf{a} \cdot \mathbf{x} = 0$ implies

$$r(\mathbf{x}) \geq C(k)r(\mathbf{a})^{1/(k)}, \quad C(k) > 0.$$

It is natural to ask for the best value of the coefficient $C(k)$.

In this paper we shall consider the case $k=2$ and we shall answer this question by proving two theorems.

Theorem 1. *For every vector $\mathbf{a} \in \mathbb{Z}^3$, $1 \leq a_1 < a_2 < a_3$, $\mathbf{a} \neq [1, 2, 4]$ there exists a non-zero vector $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{Z}^3$ such that*

$$\mathbf{a} \cdot \mathbf{x} = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad r(\mathbf{x}) < \frac{1}{\sqrt[4]{5}} \sqrt{a_1 a_2 a_3}. \quad (1)$$

Theorem 2. For every $\varepsilon > 0$ there exist infinitely many vectors $\mathbf{a} \in \mathbb{Z}^3$ such that for every $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{Z}^3 \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}$ the equation $\mathbf{a} \cdot \mathbf{x} = 0$ implies

$$r(\mathbf{x}) > \left(\frac{1}{\sqrt[4]{5}} - \varepsilon \right) \sqrt{a_1 a_2 a_3}. \quad (2)$$

Proof of Theorem 1: Let $\alpha = \frac{a_3}{a_1 a_2}$, $\Pi = a_1 a_2 a_3$, $D = D(a_1, a_2, a_3) = \frac{1}{\sqrt[4]{5}} \sqrt{\Pi}$.

First of all let us consider two particular cases.

The first, $\mathbf{a} = [1, a_2, a_3]$.

If $\alpha > \sqrt{5}$, then $\mathbf{x} = [a_2, -1, 0]$,

if $1 < \alpha \leq 1.92$, then $\mathbf{x} = [a_3 - a_2, 1, -1]$,

if $1.58 \leq \alpha \leq 2.53$, then $\mathbf{x} = [a_3 - 2a_2, 2, -1]$.

The second, $\mathbf{a} = [2, a_2, a_3]$.

If a_2 or a_3 is even, e.g. $2 \mid a_2$, then for the vector $\mathbf{a}' = [1, a_2/2, a_3] \neq [1, 2, 4]$ there exists a vector $\mathbf{x}' = [x'_1, x'_2, x'_3]$ satisfying (1). And thus $\mathbf{x} = [x'_1, x'_2, 2x'_3]$ satisfies (1) for the vector $\mathbf{a} = [2, a_2, a_3]$.

Let thus a_2, a_3 be odd.

If $\alpha > \sqrt{5}$, then $\mathbf{x} = [a_2, -2, 0]$,

if $1/2 < \alpha < \sqrt{5}$, then $\mathbf{x} = [(a_3 - a_2)/2, 1, -1]$.

Now let us observe that the validity of Thm. 1 for $\mathbf{a} = [a_1, a_2, a_3]$ implies its validity for the vectors $[da_1, da_2, a_3]$, $[da_1, a_2, da_3]$, $[a_1, da_2, da_3]$, where $d \in \mathbb{N}$. Likewise, for $d > 1$ and the vectors $[d, 2d, 4]$, $[d, 2, 4d]$, $[1, 2d, 4d]$ Theorem 1 is fulfilled.

As a consequence, assume further on that

$$a_1 \geq 3, \quad (3)$$

and

$$(a_i, a_j) = 1, \quad i \neq j. \quad (4)$$

I. $\alpha > \sqrt{5}$.

Then $\mathbf{x} = [a_2, -a_1, 0]$ satisfies (1).

II. $\frac{1}{2} < \alpha < \sqrt{5}$.

By Minkowski's theorem on linear forms there exists a non-zero vector $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{Z}^3$ such that

$$\begin{cases} |a_1 x_1 + a_2 x_2 + a_3 x_3| < 1, \\ |a_2 x_2 + \frac{1}{2} a_3 x_3| \leq \frac{1}{2} a_1 a_2, \\ |x_3| < 2. \end{cases}$$

Hence choosing $x_3 \geq 0$,

$$\begin{cases} a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + a_3x_3 = 0, & (5) \\ |a_2x_2 + \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3| \leq \frac{1}{2}a_1a_2, & (6) \\ x_3 = 0 \text{ or } 1. \end{cases}$$

If we had $x_1x_2x_3 = 0$, then in virtue of (4) and (5) we should obtain a contradiction with (6).

Therefore, we have $|x_1| \geq 1$, $|x_2| \geq 1$, $x_3 = 1$.

(i) $x_1 \geq 1$, $x_2 \leq -1$. Then from (5) and (6) $x_1 = (-a_2x_2 - a_3x_3)/a_1 \geq 1$ and

$$-\frac{1}{2}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3 \leq a_2x_2 \leq \min \left\{ \frac{1}{2}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3, -a_3x_3 - a_1 \right\},$$

hence $\alpha < 1$ and

$$\begin{aligned} r(\mathbf{x}) &= \frac{(-a_2x_2 - a_3x_3)(-a_2x_2)}{a_1a_2} \\ &\leq \frac{(\frac{1}{2}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3)(\frac{1}{2}a_1a_2 + \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3)}{a_1a_2} = \frac{(a_1a_2)^2 - a_3^2}{4a_1a_2} \\ &= \frac{a_1a_2(1 - \alpha^2)}{4} = \frac{1 - \alpha^2}{4\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} < D. \end{aligned}$$

(ii) $x_1 \leq -1$, $x_2 \geq 1$. Then from (6)

$$\max \left\{ -\frac{1}{2}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3, a_2 \right\} \leq a_2x_2 \leq \frac{1}{2}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3,$$

hence $\alpha < 1$ and just as above we obtain $r(\mathbf{x}) < D$.

(iii) $x_1 \leq -1$, $x_2 \leq -1$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} r(\mathbf{x}) &= \frac{(a_2x_2 + a_3x_3)(-a_2x_2)}{a_1a_2} \leq \frac{a_3^2}{4a_1a_2} \\ &= \frac{\alpha^{\frac{3}{2}}}{4} \sqrt{\Pi} < D, \quad \text{for } \alpha < \alpha_0 = \sqrt[6]{51.2}. \end{aligned}$$

Further on, in this case, it is sufficient to assume that $\alpha_0 < \alpha < \sqrt{5}$.

Let

$$q_1 = \frac{-x_1}{a_2}, \quad q_2 = \frac{-x_2}{a_1}.$$

Then $q_1, q_2 > 0$, $q_1 + q_2 = \alpha$ and $\mathbf{x} = [x_1, x_2, 1] = [-q_1a_2, -q_2a_1, 1] = [-(\alpha - q_2)a_2, -q_2a_1, 1]$.

If \mathbf{x} does not satisfy (1), then for $\Delta = \alpha^2 - 4\sqrt{\alpha}/\sqrt[4]{5}$

$$q_2 \in \left(\frac{\alpha - \sqrt{\Delta}}{2}, \frac{\alpha + \sqrt{\Delta}}{2} \right) \subset \left(\frac{\alpha - 1}{2}, \frac{\alpha + 1}{2} \right),$$

because $\Delta < 1$.

a) $(\alpha - 1)/2 < q_2 \leq \alpha/2$. Let $\mathbf{y} = [-(\alpha - 1 - q_2)a_2, -(q_2 + 1)a_1, 1]$. Obviously, $\mathbf{y} = [x_1 + a_2, x_2 - a_1, 1] \in \mathbb{Z}^3$ and $\mathbf{a} \cdot \mathbf{y} = 0$. We shall show that \mathbf{y} satisfies (1).

a1) $q_2 > \alpha - 1$. Hence, $\alpha < 2$ and

$$\begin{aligned} r(\mathbf{y}) &= \frac{(-\alpha + 1 + q_2)(q_2 + 1)}{\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} \leq \frac{(1 - \frac{\alpha}{2})(1 + \frac{\alpha}{2})}{\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} \\ &= \frac{4 - \alpha^2}{4\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} < D, \quad \text{for } \alpha \geq 3/2. \end{aligned}$$

a2) $q_2 < \alpha - 1$. Hence, $\alpha > 1$ and

$$r(\mathbf{y}) = \frac{(\alpha - 1 - q_2)(q_2 + 1)}{\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} < \frac{\alpha^2 - 1}{4\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} < D.$$

a3) $q_2 = \alpha - 1$. Then $\mathbf{y} = [0, -\alpha a_1, 1] = [0, -a_3/a_2, 1]$, hence $a_3/a_2 \in \mathbb{Z}$, a contradiction with (4).

b) $\alpha/2 \leq q_2 < (\alpha + 1)/2$. Let $\mathbf{y} = [-(\alpha + 1 - q_2)a_2, -(q_2 - 1)a_1, 1]$. Obviously, $\mathbf{y} = [x_1 - a_2, x_2 + a_1, 1] \in \mathbb{Z}^3$ and $\mathbf{a} \cdot \mathbf{y} = 0$. We shall show that \mathbf{y} satisfies (1).

b1) $q_2 > 1$. Then

$$r(\mathbf{y}) = \frac{(\alpha + 1 - q_2)(q_2 - 1)}{\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} \leq \frac{\frac{\alpha+1}{2} \cdot \frac{\alpha-1}{2}}{\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} = \frac{\alpha^2 - 1}{4\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} < D.$$

b2) $q_2 < 1$. Hence $\alpha < 2$ and

$$\begin{aligned} r(\mathbf{y}) &= \frac{(\alpha + 1 - q_2)(1 - q_2)}{\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} \leq \frac{(1 + \frac{\alpha}{2})(1 - \frac{\alpha}{2})}{\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} \\ &= \frac{4 - \alpha^2}{4\sqrt{\alpha}} \sqrt{\Pi} < D, \end{aligned}$$

for $\alpha \geq 3/2$.

b3) $q_2 = 1$. Then $\mathbf{y} = [-\alpha a_2, 0, 1] = [-a_3/a_1, 0, 1]$, hence $a_3/a_1 \in \mathbb{Z}$, a contradiction with (3) and (4).

III. $\alpha < 1/7$.

Let $t \in \mathbb{R}$, $t \geq 2$. By Minkowski's theorem on linear forms there exists a non-zero vector $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{Z}^3$ such that $x_3 \geq 0$ and

$$\begin{cases} a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + a_3x_3 = 0, \\ |a_2x_2 + \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3| \leq \frac{1}{t}a_1a_2, \\ x_3 < t. \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

Just as in case II, we obtain that $x_1x_2x_3 \neq 0$,

(i) $x_1 \geq 1$, $x_2 \leq -1$. Then from (7)

$$-\frac{1}{t}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3 \leq a_2x_2 \leq \min \left\{ \frac{1}{t}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3, -a_3x_3 - a_1 \right\},$$

hence $\alpha x_3 < 2/t$ and

$$\begin{aligned} r(\mathbf{x}) &= \frac{(-a_2x_2 - a_3x_3)(-a_2x_2)a_3x_3}{\Pi} \\ &\leq \frac{(\frac{1}{t}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3)(\frac{1}{t}a_1a_2 + \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3)a_3x_3}{\Pi} \\ &= \frac{\left[\left(\frac{2}{t}\right)^2 - (\alpha x_3)^2 \right] \alpha x_3}{4\alpha^{3/2}} \sqrt{\Pi} \\ &\leq \frac{\left[\left(\frac{2}{t}\right)^2 - \frac{4}{3t^2} \right] \frac{2}{\sqrt{3}t}}{4\alpha^{3/2}} \sqrt{\Pi} = \frac{4}{3\sqrt{3}(\sqrt{\alpha}t)^3} \sqrt{\Pi}. \end{aligned}$$

(ii) $x_1 \leq -1$, $x_2 \geq 1$. Then from (7)

$$\max \left\{ -\frac{1}{t}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3, a_2 \right\} \leq a_2x_2 \leq \frac{1}{t}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3,$$

hence $\alpha x_3 < 2/t$ and

$$\begin{aligned} r(\mathbf{x}) &= \frac{(a_2x_2 + a_3x_3)a_2x_2a_3x_3}{\Pi} \\ &\leq \frac{(\frac{1}{t}a_1a_2 + \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3)(\frac{1}{t}a_1a_2 - \frac{1}{2}a_3x_3)a_3x_3}{\Pi} \\ &= \frac{\left[\left(\frac{2}{t}\right)^2 - (\alpha x_3)^2 \right] \alpha x_3}{4\alpha^{3/2}} \sqrt{\Pi} \leq \frac{4}{3\sqrt{3}(\sqrt{\alpha}t)^3} \sqrt{\Pi}. \end{aligned}$$

(iii) $x_1 \leq -1, x_2 \leq -1$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} r(\mathbf{x}) &= \frac{(a_2x_2 + a_3x_3)(-a_2x_2)a_3x_3}{\Pi} \leq \frac{(a_3x_3)^3}{4\Pi} \\ &= \frac{a_3^3x_3^3}{4\Pi^{3/2}}\sqrt{\Pi} = \frac{\alpha^{3/2} \cdot x_3^3}{4}\sqrt{\Pi} < \frac{(\sqrt{\alpha}t)^3}{4}\sqrt{\Pi}. \end{aligned}$$

Putting $t = \sqrt[6]{3}/\sqrt{\alpha}$ we obtain $t > 2$ and

$$r(\mathbf{x}) < D,$$

in every case (i), (ii), (iii).

The proof of Theorem 1 is complete.

The proof of Theorem 2 will be based on the Lemma below. Let $F_0 = 0, F_1 = 1, F_2 = 1, \dots, F_n$ be the Fibonacci sequence and let $\theta = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$.

Lemma. Let $[x, q] \in \mathbb{Z}^2$ and let M_n be the minimal non-zero value of the function

$$\begin{aligned} P_n(x, q) &= |F_{2n}x - F_{2n+1}q||F_{n-1}x - F_nq||x| \\ &= F_{2n+1}F_n \left| \frac{F_{2n}}{F_{2n+1}} - \frac{q}{x} \right| \left| \frac{F_{n-1}}{F_n} - \frac{q}{x} \right| |x|^3, \end{aligned}$$

where $n \geq 3$ is odd. Then

$$M_n = P_n(F_{n+2}, F_{n+1}) = F_{n-1}F_{n+2} = F_nF_{n+1} - 1.$$

Proof: For $n = 3$,

$$P_3(x, q) = |8x - 13q||x - 2q||x|,$$

hence $M_3 = P_3(1, 1) = P_3(5, 3) = 5 = F_5F_2$.

For $n \geq 5$ we may assume that $x > q > 0$. Let us observe that

$$0 = \frac{F_0}{F_1} < \frac{F_2}{F_3} < \frac{F_4}{F_5} < \dots < \frac{1}{\theta} < \dots < \frac{F_5}{F_6} < \frac{F_3}{F_4} < \frac{F_1}{F_2} = 1.$$

Let k be a positive odd integer.

If

$$\frac{F_{k-3}}{F_{k-2}} < \frac{q}{x} \leq \frac{F_{k-1}}{F_k}, \quad 3 \leq k \leq n-2,$$

then

$$\frac{F_{k-3}F_k}{F_{k-2}F_k} < \frac{q}{x} \leq \frac{F_{k-2}F_{k-1}}{F_{k-2}F_k} = \frac{F_{k-3}F_k + 1}{F_{k-2}F_k},$$

hence $x \geq F_k$ and

$$\begin{aligned} P_n(x, q) &\geq F_{2n+1}F_n \left| \frac{F_{2n}}{F_{2n+1}} - \frac{F_{k-1}}{F_k} \right| \left| \frac{F_{n-1}}{F_n} - \frac{F_{k-1}}{F_k} \right| F_k^3 \\ &= |F_{2n}F_k - F_{2n+1}F_{k-1}| |F_{n-1}F_k - F_nF_{k-1}| F_k \\ &= F_{2n-k+1}F_{n-k}F_k \geq F_{n+3}F_2F_{n-2} = F_{n+3}F_{n-2} > F_{n+2}F_{n-1}. \end{aligned}$$

If

$$\frac{F_{n-3}}{F_{n-2}} < \frac{q}{x} < \frac{F_{n-1}}{F_n},$$

then $P_n(x, q) > |F_{2n}F_n - F_{2n+1}F_{n-1}| F_n = F_{n+1}F_n$.

If

$$\frac{F_{n-1}}{F_n} < \frac{q}{x} < \frac{F_{n+1}}{F_{n+2}},$$

then $P_n(x, q) > |F_{2n}F_{n+2} - F_{2n+1}F_{n+1}| F_{n+2} = F_{n-1}F_{n+2}$.

If

$$\frac{q}{x} = \frac{F_{n+1}}{F_{n+2}},$$

then $P_n(x, q) \geq |F_{2n}F_{n+2} - F_{2n+1}F_{n+1}| |F_{n-1}F_{n+2} - F_nF_{n+1}| F_{n+2} = F_{n-1}F_{n+2}$.

If

$$\frac{F_{k-1}}{F_k} < \frac{q}{x} \leq \frac{F_{k+1}}{F_{k+2}}, \quad n+2 \leq k \leq 2n-3,$$

then $P_n(x, q) > |F_{2n}F_{k+2} - F_{2n+1}F_{k+1}| |F_{n-1}F_k - F_nF_{k-1}| F_{k+2} \frac{F_{k+2}}{F_k} > F_{2n-k-1}F_{k-n} \cdot 2F_{k+2} \geq F_{n-3}F_2 \cdot 2F_{n+4} = 2F_{n-3}F_{n+4} = 2(F_{n-1}F_{n+2} - 5) = F_{n-1}F_{n+2} + (F_{n-1}F_{n+2} - 10) > F_{n-1}F_{n+2}$.

If

$$\frac{F_{k-1}}{F_k} < \frac{q}{x} \leq \frac{F_{k+1}}{F_{k+2}}, \quad k \geq 2n-1, \quad \frac{q}{x} \neq \frac{F_{2n}}{F_{2n+1}},$$

then $P_n(x, q) > F_{2n+1} > F_{n-1}F_{n+2}$.

Let furthermore $\frac{q}{x} > \frac{1}{\theta}$. Now it is sufficient to distinguish just yet three cases. If

$$\frac{F_{k+2}}{F_{k+3}} \leq \frac{q}{x} < \frac{F_k}{F_{k+1}}, \quad 1 \leq k \leq n-4,$$

then $P_n(x, q) \geq |F_{2n}F_{k+3} - F_{2n+1}F_{k+2}| |F_{n-1}F_{k+3} - F_nF_{k+2}| F_{k+3} = F_{2n-k-2}F_{n-k-3}F_{k+3} \geq F_{n+2}F_{n-1}$.

If

$$\frac{F_{k+2}}{F_{k+3}} \leq \frac{q}{x} < \frac{F_k}{F_{k+1}}, \quad n-2 \leq k \leq 2n-3,$$

then $P_n(x, q) \geq |F_{2n}F_{k+3} - F_{2n+1}F_{k+2}| |F_{n-1}F_{k+3} - F_nF_{k+2}| F_{k+3} = F_{2n-k-2}F_{k+3-n}F_{k+3} \geq F_nF_{n+1}$.

If

$$\frac{F_{k+2}}{F_{k+3}} \leq \frac{q}{x} < \frac{F_k}{F_{k+1}}, \quad k \geq 2n - 1,$$

then $P_n(x, q) > F_{k+3} \geq F_{2n+2} > F_{n-1}F_{n+2}$.

The Lemma has been proved.

Proof of Theorem 2: For every $n \in \mathbb{N}$, the following formulas

$$\begin{aligned} (F_n + F_{n+2})F_n &= F_{2n} + (-1)^{n+1}, \\ (F_n + F_{n+2})F_{n+1} &= F_{2n+2} = F_{2n} + F_{2n+1}, \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

and

$$F_nF_{2n} = F_{n-1}F_{2n+1} + (-1)^{n+1}F_{n+1}, \quad (9)$$

are true. Therefore the equality

$$F_nx_1 + F_{n+1}x_2 + F_{2n+1}x_3 = 0, \quad (10)$$

takes, for n odd the form

$$x_1 + F_{2n}x_2 - F_{2n+1}q = 0,$$

where $q = -x_1 - x_2 - (F_n + F_{n+2})x_3$, i.e.

$$x_1 = -F_{2n}x_2 + F_{2n+1}q,$$

hence putting to (10) and using (9) we have

$$x_3 = F_{n-1}x_2 - F_nq.$$

As a consequence, for $\mathbf{a} = [F_n, F_{n+1}, F_{2n+1}]$, n odd, $\mathbf{x} = [x_1, x_2, x_3]$,

$$|x_1| |x_2| |x_3| = |F_{2n}x_2 - F_{2n+1}q| |F_{n-1}x_2 - F_nq| |x_2|.$$

Now, we apply the Lemma with $x = x_2$ and the proof of Theorem 2 is complete.

Acknowledgement

The author wishes to thank A. Schinzel for his attention to the work and his stimulating influence in the preparation of this article.

References

- [1] Chaładus, S., Schinzel, A.: On a linear Diophantine equation. *Sitzungsber. Akad. Wiss. math.-nat. Kl. Abt. II* **207**, 95–101 (1998).
- [2] Drmota, M.: On linear Diophantine equations and Fibonacci numbers. *J. Number Theory* **49**, 315–328 (1993).

Author's address: Dr. Stefan Chaładus, Michałowskiego 14 m. 8, PL-42-200 Częstochowa, Poland.