

# Malicious Packer pkr\_ce1a

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 [malwarology.substack.com/p/malicious-packer-pkr\\_ce1a](https://malwarology.substack.com/p/malicious-packer-pkr_ce1a)

Malwarology LLC

## First Stage

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### Summary

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This packer has been observed delivering a wide variety of malware families including SmokeLoader and Vidar among many others. It has been observed in the wild going back a number of years potentially to 2017. The particular variant of the packer analyzed here contains two sets of bytes with no apparent use which occur on either side of values that are integral to the decoding and unpacking process. These two byte strings are stable across many months of observed samples of this packer. What follows is a detailed analysis of the first stage of one sample of this packer which delivers a SmokeLoader payload. Until a widely recognized name or identifier can be determined for this packer, it has the designation `pkr_ce1a`.

### Identification

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This sample has two known filenames. The first, `6523.exe`, is observed in the wild in the path component of the URL used to distribute the file.<sup>1</sup> The second, `povgwaoci.iwe`, is located in the `RT_VERSION` resource within the `VS_VERSIONINFO` structure in a field named `InternationalName`. This field along with others in the same `StringTable` structure are not parsed by Exiftool or Cerbero Suite. This indicates that the structure is malformed or non-standard.

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According to AV detection results, the correct identification of the unpacked file, *SmokeLoader*, does appear. There is also one detection based on dynamic analysis: *Zenpack*.

The import hash of this sample is shared by a group of other files.<sup>2</sup> However, the large majority of imported functions are called in dead code located after opaque predicates. Therefore, the usefulness of this import hash is almost nothing. Closer analysis of the opaque predicates in this sample can be found below.

### Behavioral and Code Analysis Findings

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## Build Analysis

According to the File Header, the timestamp of compilation is 2022-02-16T10:14:32Z. The linker version found in the PE32 Optional Header is 9.0.

```
00400108 /
00400108 struct PE32_Optional_Header __pe32_optional_header =
00400108 {
00400108     enum pe_magic magic = PE_32BIT
0040010a     uint8_t majorLinkerVersion = 0x9
0040010b     uint8_t minorLinkerVersion = 0x0
0040010c     uint32_t sizeOfCode = 0x16c00
00400110     uint32_t sizeOfInitializedData = 0x82c00
00400114     uint32_t sizeOfUninitializedData = 0x0
00400118     uint32_t addressOfEntryPoint = 0x7140
0040011c     uint32_t baseOfCode = 0x1000
00400120     uint32_t baseOfData = 0x18000
00400124     uint32_t imageBase = 0x400000
```

Linker Version 9.0

The compiler is identified as *Visual Studio 2008 Release* according to function signatures in Ghidra that match a number of library functions in the sample. One example of this detection for the `__security_init_cookie` function is shown in the figure below.

```
*****
* Library Function - Single Match                                     *
* __security_init_cookie                                           *
*                                                                     *
* Library: Visual Studio 2008 Release                               *
*****
void __cdecl __security_init_cookie(void)
<VOID> <RETURN>
undefined4 Stack[-0x8]:4 local_8 XREF [2]: 0040b093(RW),
0040b082 8b ff MOV EDI,EDI 0040b0bf(R)
undefined4 Stack[-0xc]:4 local_c XREF [3]: 0040b08f(RW),
0040b084 55 PUSH EBP 0040b0b5(*),
0040b085 8b ec MOV EBP,ESP 0040b0c2(R)
undefined4 Stack[-0x10]:4 local_10 XREF [1]: 0040b0e7(R)
undefined4 Stack[-0x14]:4 local_14 XREF [2]: 0040b0dd(*),
0040b082 8b ff MOV EDI,EDI 0040b0ea(R)
__security_init_cookie XREF [1]: entry:00407140(c)
0040b082 8b ff MOV EDI,EDI
0040b084 55 PUSH EBP
0040b085 8b ec MOV EBP,ESP
```

Compiler Detection: Visual Studio 2008 Release

The majority of the library functions found in the sample are from *Microsoft Visual C++ 9.0.21022*. This is identified in the sample's rich signature.

Analysis [Rich Signature]					
1	; Rich Signature				
2					
3	product id: 0x0084	minor build version:	21022	count:	44
4	product id: 0x0095	minor build version:	21022	count:	29
5	product id: 0x0083	minor build version:	21022	count:	141
6	product id: 0x007B	minor build version:	50727	count:	7
7	product id: 0x0001	minor build version:	0	count:	129
8	product id: 0x008A	minor build version:	21022	count:	1
9	product id: 0x0094	minor build version:	21022	count:	1
10	product id: 0x0091	minor build version:	21022	count:	1

Rich Signature: VC++ 9.0.21022

## Main Function

```

main:
00406569 a13ccc4100      mov     eax, dword [size_part1]
0040656e a314b24800     mov     dword [shellcode_size], eax
00406573 b83b2d0b00     mov     eax, 0xb2d3b // Size part 2
00406578 // Calculate shellcode size
00406578 010514b24800   add     dword [shellcode_size], eax
0040657e a19cbc4100     mov     eax, dword [scaddr_part1]
00406583 // lpLibFileName: kernel32.dll
00406583 68cc4b4000     push   kernel32_1 {"kernel32.dll"}
00406588 a318b24800     mov     dword [shellcode_addr_part1], eax
0040658d ff1534104000   call   dword [LoadLibraryW]
00406593 // lpProcName: LocalAlloc
00406593 68e84b4000     push   _LocalAlloc {"LocalAlloc"}
00406598 50             push   eax {_&kernel32} // hModule: kernel32
00406598 // hModule: kernel32
00406599 a3d0d54200     mov     dword [data_42d5d0], eax
0040659e ff1568104000   call   dword [GetProcAddress]
004065a4 // uBytes: 63072
004065a4 ff3514b24800   push   dword [shellcode_size] {uBytes}
004065aa a344d54200     mov     dword [data_42d544], eax
004065af 6a00          push   0x0 // uFlags: LMEM_FIXED
004065b1 ffd0          call   eax // LocalAlloc -> &shellcode
004065b3 a340d54200     mov     dword [_&shellcode], eax
004065b8 e80bf3ffff    call   change_protection
004065bd e8bbf3ffff    call   unpack_shellcode
004065c2 a140d54200     mov     eax, dword [_&shellcode]
004065c7 a3d4d54200     mov     dword [_&shellcode_oep], eax
004065cc ffd0          call   eax // Call &shellcode_oep
004065ce 33c0          xor     eax, eax {0x0}
004065d0 c21000       retn   0x10 {__return_addr}

```

### Main Function

The instructions highlighted in yellow in the figure above are examples of junk code insertion. These are dummy instructions that are placed between relevant instructions with the goal of making signature development more difficult. The instructions at the end of the function highlighted in white are not executed. These highlight colorings are used throughout the screenshots of this analysis.

The first instructions in the main function calculate the size of the encoded data that contains the shellcode which is the next stage of the packer. The first part is read from a constant in the `.data` section at address `0x41cc3c`. The second part is hardcoded in the main function at address `0x406573`. The size is calculated in the next instruction by adding the two parts together. The resulting size is written to a variable in the `.data` section. Highlighted in the figure below are the bytes before and after the first constant. These two sets of bytes are not read during the execution of the packer, and their purpose is unknown. However, they are stable across builds of this packer going back for months at least.

```

0041cc10  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
0041cc20  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
0041cc30  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-69 9a f9 74 .....i..t
    // Distance to encoded shellcode: 0x5c4
0041cc3c  int32_t size_part1 = -0xa36db

0041cc40  96 aa cb 46 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 ...F.....
0041cc50  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
0041cc60  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....

```

### Stable Surrounding Bytes

The address where the encoded data is located goes through a similar process. The first part is read from the `.data` section then written to a variable in the same section. The addition to the second part does not occur until later in the `unpack_shellcode` function. The bytes surrounding this part are shown in the figure below.

```

0041bc70  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
0041bc80  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
0041bc90  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-94 48 8d 6a .....H..j

0041bc9c  int32_t scaddr_part1 = 0x36a4c5

0041bca0  f2 16 0b 68 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 ...h.....
0041bcb0  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....
0041bcc0  00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....

```

### Stable Surrounding Bytes

The next set of instructions handles loading `kernel32.dll` and resolving the address of `LocalAlloc`. These instructions taken together are unique to this packer and shared across hundreds of variants. The stray instruction at address `0x406588` is part of the previous logical grouping of instructions. This is an example of interleaving code that is meant to make signature development more difficult.

```

00406583  68cc4b4000    push    kernel32_1 {"kernel32.dll"} // lpLibFileName: kernel32.dll
00406588  a318b24800    mov     dword [shellcode_addr_part1], eax
0040658d  ff1534104000    call   dword [LoadLibraryW]
00406593  68e84b4000    push    _LocalAlloc {"LocalAlloc"} // lpProcName: LocalAlloc
00406598  50            push    eax {&kernel32} // hModule: kernel32
00406598  // hModule: kernel32
00406599  a3d0d54200    mov     dword [data_42d5d0], eax
0040659e  ff1568104000    call   dword [GetProcAddress]

```

### Resolve `LocalAlloc`

The call to `LocalAlloc` is obfuscated by calling it from the `eax` register. This is a type of function call obfuscation. The `uBytes` parameter to the function is 63072 bytes which is the result of the calculation described above.

```
004065a4 ff3514b24800 push dword [shellcode_size] {uBytes} // uBytes: 63072
004065aa a344d54200 mov dword [data_42d544], eax
004065af 6a00 push 0x0 // uFlags: LMEM_FIXED
004065b1 ffd0 call eax // LocalAlloc -> &shellcode
004065b3 a340d54200 mov dword [_&shellcode], eax
```

Obfuscated Call to `LocalAlloc`

The final instructions in the main function are calls to other malicious functions and finally a call to the entry point of the decoded shellcode. The next stage of the packer starts after that call.

## Change Protection Function

---

```

change_protection:
004058c8 55          push     ebp {__saved_ebp}
004058c9 8bec       mov     ebp, esp {__saved_ebp}
004058cb 51          push     ecx {f1NewProtect}
004058cc 51          push     ecx {f1OldProtect}
004058cd // lpLibFileName: kernel32.dll
004058cd 68f0494000 push    kernel32_2 {"kernel32.dll"}
004058d2 ff1534104000 call   dword [LoadLibraryW]
004058d8 // lpProcName: VirtualProtect
004058d8 6860d34200 push    _VirtualProtect
004058dd 50          push     eax {&_kernel32} // hModule: kernel32
004058dd // hModule: kernel32
004058de a3d0d54200 mov     dword [data_42d5d0], eax
004058e3 c60560d3420056 mov     byte [_VirtualProtect], 0x56 // V
004058ea c60561d3420069 mov     byte [char_i], 0x69 // i
004058f1 c60562d3420072 mov     byte [char_r_1], 0x72 // r
004058f8 c60567d3420050 mov     byte [char_P], 0x50 // P
004058ff c6056dd3420074 mov     byte [char_t_1], 0x74 // t
00405906 c6056ed3420000 mov     byte [char_null], 0x0
0040590d c60563d3420074 mov     byte [char_t_2], 0x74 // t
00405914 c60564d3420075 mov     byte [char_u], 0x75 // u
0040591b c60565d3420061 mov     byte [char_a], 0x61 // a
00405922 c60566d342006c mov     byte [char_l], 0x6c // l
00405929 c60568d3420072 mov     byte [char_r_2], 0x72 // r
00405930 c60569d342006f mov     byte [char_o], 0x6f // o
00405937 c6056ad3420074 mov     byte [char_t_3], 0x74 // t
0040593e c6056bd3420065 mov     byte [char_e], 0x65 // e
00405945 c6056cd3420063 mov     byte [char_c], 0x63 // c
0040594c ff1568104000 call   dword [GetProcAddress]
00405952 a338d54200 mov     dword [_&VirtualProtect], eax
00405957 // f1NewProtect part 1
00405957 c745fc20000000 mov     dword [ebp-0x4 {f1NewProtect_part1}], 0x20
0040595e // f1NewProtect part 2
0040595e 8345fc20      add     dword [ebp-0x4], 0x20 {0x40}
00405962 8d45f8      lea    eax, [ebp-0x8 {f1OldProtect}]
00405965 // lpf1OldProtect: &f1OldProtect
00405965 50          push     eax {f1OldProtect} {&f1OldProtect}
00405965 // lpf1OldProtect: &f1OldProtect
00405966 // f1NewProtect: PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE
00405966 ff75fc      push    dword [ebp-0x4] {0x40}
00405969 // dwSize: 63072
00405969 ff3514b24800 push    dword [shellcode_size] {dwSize}
0040596f // lpAddress: &shellcode
0040596f ff3540d54200 push    dword [_&shellcode] {lpAddress}
00405975 // f1OldProtect -> PAGE_READWRITE
00405975 ff1538d54200 call   dword [_&VirtualProtect]
0040597b c9          leave   {__saved_ebp}
0040597c c3          retn   {__return_addr}

```

## Change Protection Function

This function is a wrapper around an obfuscated call to `VirtualProtect`. Starting at address `0x4058e3` and continuing until the call to `GetProcAddress`, the name of the function `VirtualProtect` is written character-by-character, out of order, to a variable in the `.data` section. Building the function name in this way is an example of variable recomposition. The address of this string is then used as the `lpProcName` parameter to `GetProcAddress`. Finally, a call is made to `VirtualProtect` to change the protection from `PAGE_READWRITE` (`0x4`) to `PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE` (`0x40`) thus enabling execution in the newly allocated memory.



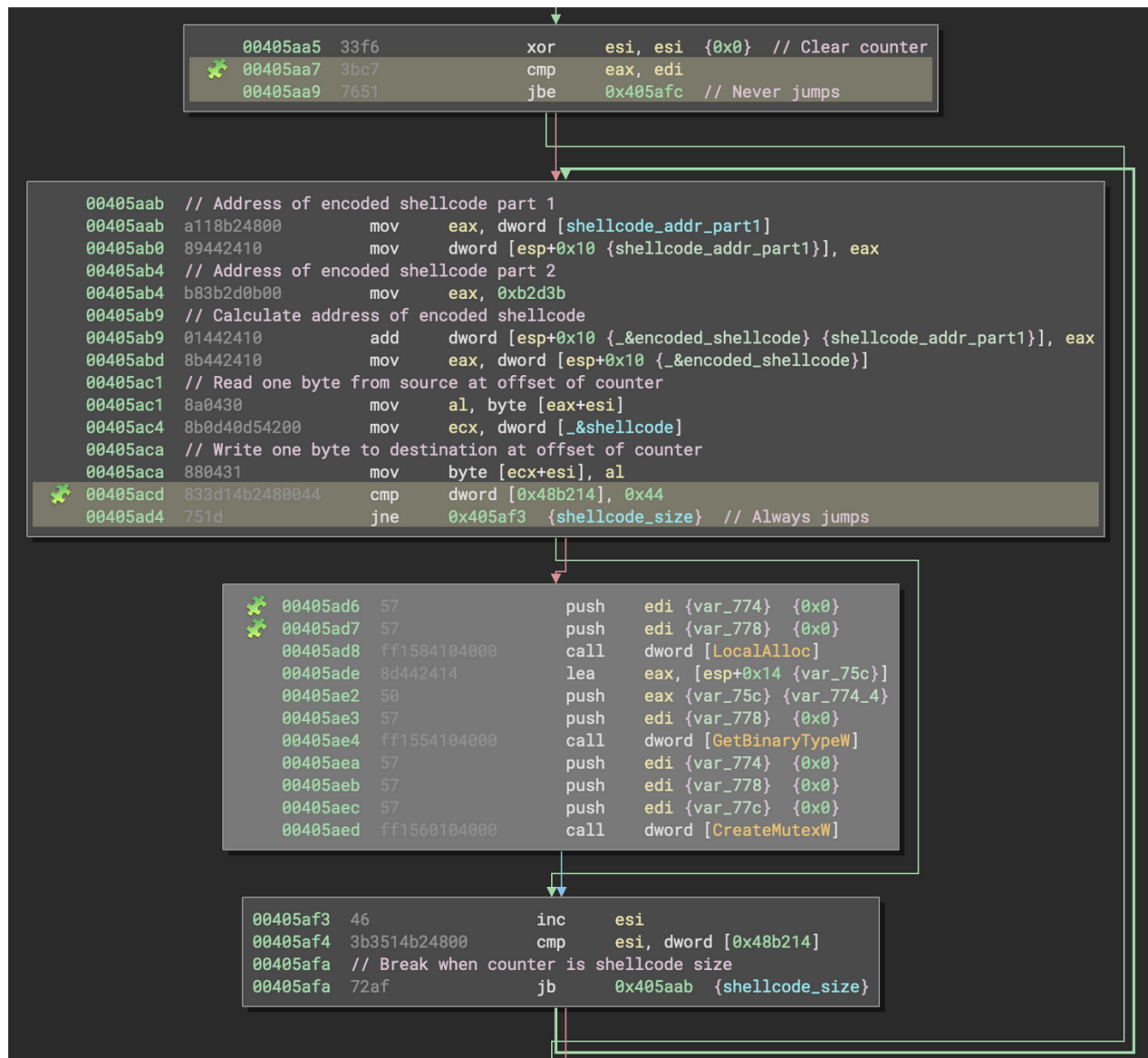
The `flNewProtect` parameter to the `VirtualProtect` function is also obfuscated by adding together `0x20` and `0x20`. This hides the `PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE` flag of `0x40` from being located near the call to `VirtualProtect`. This is a form of argument obfuscation.

```
00405957 c745fc20000000 mov dword [ebp-0x4 {flNewProtect_part1}], 0x20 // flNewProtect part 1
0040595e 8345fc20 add dword [ebp-0x4], 0x20 {0x40} // flNewProtect part 2
```

Obfuscated New Protect Value

## Unpack Shellcode Function

This function performs three actions that are interspersed with anti-analysis code. The first action is moving the encoded data from its starting location in the `.data` section to the newly allocated memory.

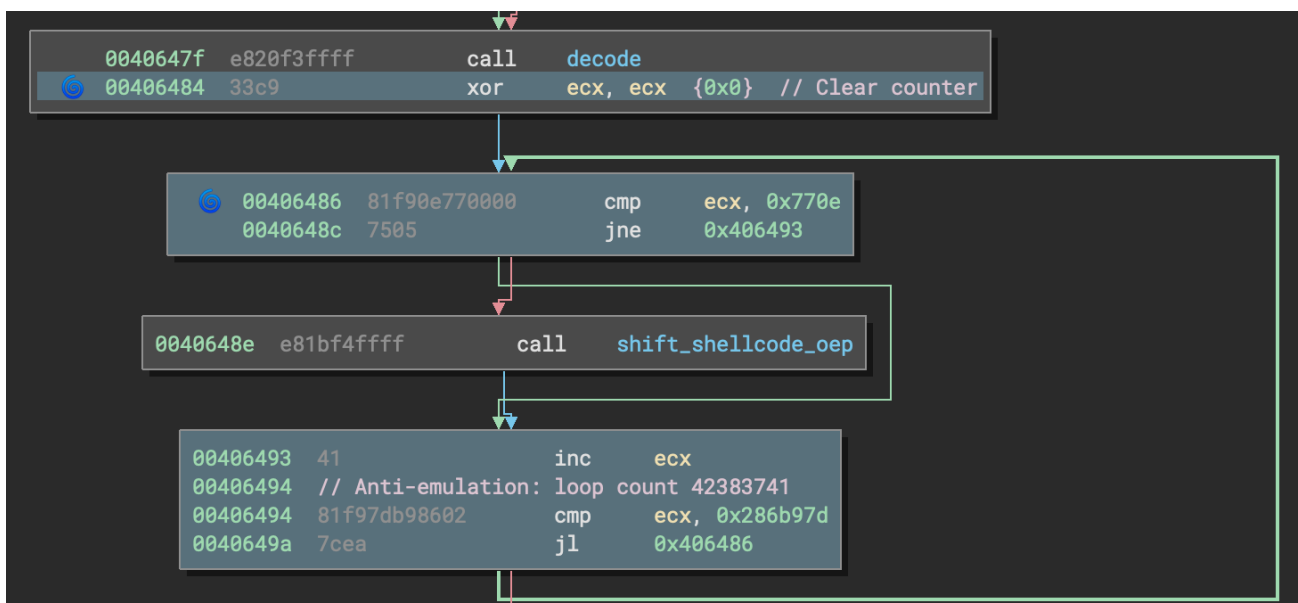


Move Encoded Data

Note the instructions at addresses `0x405aa7` and `0x405acd`. These are both opaque predicates. An opaque predicate appears to be a conditional jump, but the conditions can only be met in one way making the jump effectively unconditional. The one at the top is basically a fake: it never jumps. The one in the middle always jumps. This one additionally encloses a block of dead code. This packer very frequently couples dead code insertion with opaque predicates that always jump over the dead code. The function calls in the dead code are included in the import table making identification via import hash of little utility.

Later on in this function is the call to the `decode` function. After that is a call to a function which shifts the pointer to the decoded shellcode. The shift changes the offset from the start of this data to the location of the shellcode original execution point (OEP). Because the shellcode is position independent, this OEP is also offset zero of the shellcode. Both of these functions are analyzed in more detail below.

The `shift_shellcode_oeop` function is additionally wrapped in an anti-emulator loop which has a very high number of iterations. This slows processing in an emulator which can potentially cause a timeout and an analysis failure.



#### Decode and Shift Shellcode OEP Functions

Note the comparison instruction at address `0x406486`. During the anti-emulation loop, the call to `shift_shellcode_oeop` is made once when the counter reaches `0x770e`. This is a type of anti-emulation circumvention countermeasure. A basic method for circumventing extremely long loops that target emulators is to patch out the loop. Another is to detect the loop in the emulator and then modify the counter to leave the loop. Because the shift function is called once at a point in the loop, either of these circumventions could end up not executing this function and would leave the emulator unable to execute the shellcode correctly.



The `unpack_shellcode` function overall contains ten opaque predicates primarily of the same type shown above. One of them is slightly different in that it creates a dead end filled with dead code. The last instruction in the dead end is a call to `terminate`. Therefore, this appears to be a location where the execution of the packer ends.

```

00405a4f  a114b24800  mov     eax, dword [shellcode_size]
00405a54  83f80c      cmp     eax, 0xc
00405a57  754c        jne    0x405aa5 // Always jumps

00405a59  57          push   edi {var_774} {0x0}
00405a5a  ff15a8114000 call   dword [0leQueryLinkFromData]
00405a60  57          push   edi {var_774} {0x0}
00405a61  8d84245c030000 lea    eax, [esp+0x35c {var_418}]
00405a68  58          push   eax {var_418} {var_778_4}
00405a69  57          push   edi {var_77c} {0x0}
00405a6a  680c4a4000  push   data_404a0c {var_780} {"Vibigezof"}
00405a6f  57          push   edi {var_784} {0x0}
00405a70  ff158c104000 call   dword [FoldStringA]
00405a76  57          push   edi {var_774} {0x0}
00405a77  e8e40b0000  call   sub_406660
00405a7c  59          pop    ecx {var_774} {0x0}
00405a7d  57          push   edi {var_774} {0x0}
00405a7e  57          push   edi {var_778} {0x0}
00405a7f  e84e0d0000  call   sub_4067d2
00405a84  8bc4        mov    eax, esp {var_778}
00405a86  8938        mov    dword [eax {var_778}], edi {0x0}
00405a88  897804      mov    dword [eax+0x4 {var_774}], edi {0x0}
00405a8b  e8d7faffff  call   sub_405567
00405a90  ddb8        fstp   st0, st0
00405a92  57          push   edi {var_774} {0x0}
00405a93  e847110000  call   sub_406bdf
00405a98  59          pop    ecx {var_774} {0x0}
00405a99  57          push   edi {var_774} {0x0}
00405a9a  e81c0d0000  call   _atexit
00405a9f  59          pop    ecx {var_774} {0x0}
00405aa0  e8a5100000  call   terminate
{ Does not return }

```

### Opaque Predicate with Dead End

There are a total of four anti-emulation loops similar to the one analyzed above. Two of these wrap opaque predicates which in turn wrap inserted dead code. One, however, in addition to wrapping two opaque predicates, also contains two additional anti-emulator behaviors. Both of these are calls to unusual APIs: `GetGeoInfoA` and `GetSystemDefaultLangID`. During analysis, Qiling emulator halted with an exception because neither of these API calls have been implemented.

```

00406459  57          push   edi {var_774} {0x0}
0040645a  57          push   edi {var_778} {0x0}
0040645b  57          push   edi {var_77c} {0x0}
0040645c  57          push   edi {var_780} {0x0}
0040645d  57          push   edi {var_784} {0x0}
0040645e  ff1550104000 call   dword [GetGeoInfoA]
00406464  ff15ac104000 call   dword [GetSystemDefaultLangID]
0040646a  // Anti-emulation: loop count 18593349
0040646a  81fe45b61b01 cmp    esi, 0x11bb645
00406470  7f0d        jg     0x40647f

```

### Anti-Emulation: Unusual API Calls

In the very first code block of the `unpack_shellcode` function, a new and subsequently unused exception handler is registered. Chances are about even that this is an anti-emulation behavior or it is just junk code. If it is anti-emulation, it is targeting older emulators based on specific versions of Unicorn Engine which do not implement access to the

Windows Thread Information Block (TIB). Moving the contents of `fs:0x0` as happens at address `0x405983` would fail in that particular environment. This type of anti-emulation is an unimplemented opcode.

```
unpack_shellcode:
0040597d 55          push     ebp {__saved_ebp}
0040597e 8bec       mov     ebp, esp {__saved_ebp}
00405980 83e4f8     and     esp, 0xffffffff8
00405983 64a100000000 mov     eax, dword [fs:0x0] // Register SEH
00405989 6aff       push    0xffffffff {var_c} {0xffffffff}
0040598b 68f46a4100 push    SEH_416af4 {var_10}
00405990 50         push    eax {&SEH_Record}
00405991 6489250000000000 mov     dword [fs:0x0], esp {&SEH_Record}
00405998 81ec50070000 sub     esp, 0x750
0040599e 53         push    ebx {__saved_ebx} {__security_cookie}
0040599f 56         push    esi {__saved_esi}
004059a0 57         push    edi {__saved_edi}
004059a1 33ff       xor     edi, edi
004059a3 833d14b2480016 cmp     dword [0x48b214], 0x16
004059aa 0f859f000000 jne     0x405a4f {shellcode_size} // Always jumps
```

### Register New SEH

In the last block of the `unpack_shellcode` function, before the return, the SEH is reset back to the previous handler. This occurs right after a junk call to `LoadLibraryW` from which no functions are subsequently resolved.

```
00406549 // lpLibFileName: msimg32.dll
00406549 68b44b4000 push    msimg32 {var_774} {"msimg32.dll"}
0040654e ff1534104000 call   dword [LoadLibraryW]
00406554 8b8c245c070000 mov     ecx, dword [esp+0x75c {&SEH_Record}]
0040655b 5f         pop     edi {__saved_edi}
0040655c 5e         pop     esi {__saved_esi}
0040655d 64890d0000000000 mov     dword [fs:0x0], ecx
00406564 5b         pop     ebx {__saved_ebx} {__security_cookie}
00406565 8be5       mov     esp, ebp
00406567 5d         pop     ebp {__saved_ebp}
00406568 c3         retn   {__return_addr}
```

Last Block of `unpack_shellcode`

## Decode Function

---

```

decode:
004057a4 55          push    ebp {__saved_ebp}
004057a5 8bec       mov     ebp, esp {__saved_ebp}
004057a7 b81c140000 mov     eax, 0x141c // ___chkstk_ms: 5148 bytes
004057ac e85fb90000 call   __chkstk
004057b1 a114b24800 mov     eax, dword [shellcode_size]
004057b6 8b0d40d54200 mov     ecx, dword [_&shellcode]
004057bc 53         push   ebx {&chunk} {__security_cookie}
004057bd 56         push   esi {chunk_count}
004057be // Divide shellcode size by 8: 7884 (chunk_count)
004057be c1e803     shr     eax, 0x3
004057c1 33f6       xor     esi, esi
004057c3 57         push   edi {__saved_edi}
004057c4 3bc6       cmp     eax, esi
004057c6 0f86dd000000 jbe    0x4058a9 // Never jumps

? 004057cc 8b3d80104000 mov     edi, dword [WriteConsoleA]
004057d2 8b1d14104000 mov     ebx, dword [GetConsoleAliasA]
004057d8 894dfc     mov     dword [ebp-0x4 {&chunk}], ecx
004057db 8945f8     mov     dword [ebp-0x8 {chunk_count}], eax

004057de 833d14b248005d cmp     dword [0x48b214], 0x5d
004057e5 0f85a9000000 jne    0x405894 {shellcode_size} // Always jumps

004057eb 56         push   esi {var_14} {0x0}
004057ec 8d85e8fbffff lea    eax, [ebp-0x418 {var_41c}]
004057f2 58         push   eax {var_41c} {var_18}
004057f3 52         push   esi {var_1c} {0x0}
0040588d 56         push   esi {var_1c} {0x0}
0040588e ff152c104000 call   dword [EnumResourceTypesA]

00405894 ff75fc     push   dword [ebp-0x4 {&chunk}] {var_14}
00405897 e85bfdffff call   decode_chunk
0040589c // Shift pointer to next chunk
0040589c 8345fc08  add    dword [ebp-0x4 {&chunk}], 0x8
004058a0 ff4df8     dec    dword [ebp-0x8 {chunk_count}]
004058a3 0f8535ffff jne    0x4057de

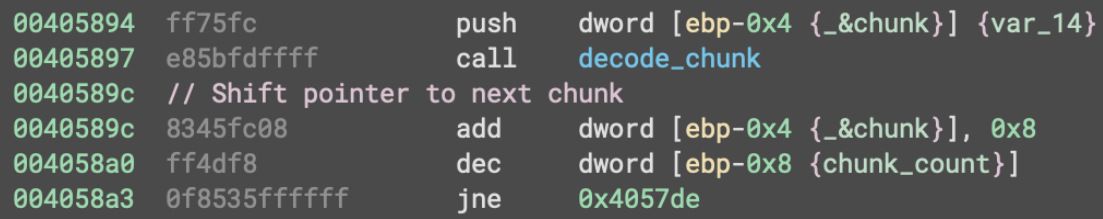
004058a9 5f         pop     edi {__saved_edi}
004058aa 5e         pop     esi {chunk_count}
004058ab 5b         pop     ebx {&chunk}
004058ac c9         leave  {__saved_ebp}
004058ad c3         retn  {__return_addr}

```

### Decode Function (Truncated)

The data is decoded in chunks. So this function has three basic purposes: convert the encoded shellcode size to a chunk count by dividing by 8, wrapping a loop around the call to the `decode_chunk` function, and then calling that function. In the middle of this function is a very large insertion of dead code wrapped by an opaque predicate. This is highlighted in white in the figure above. It has also been truncated for the screenshot. There are two locations in this function with junk code insertion which impedes signature development: at addresses `0x4057c1` and `0x4057cc`.

The chunks are 8 bytes long, therefore at the end of the loop after the call to `decode_chunk`, 8 is added to the chunk pointer then the chunk count is decremented by one.



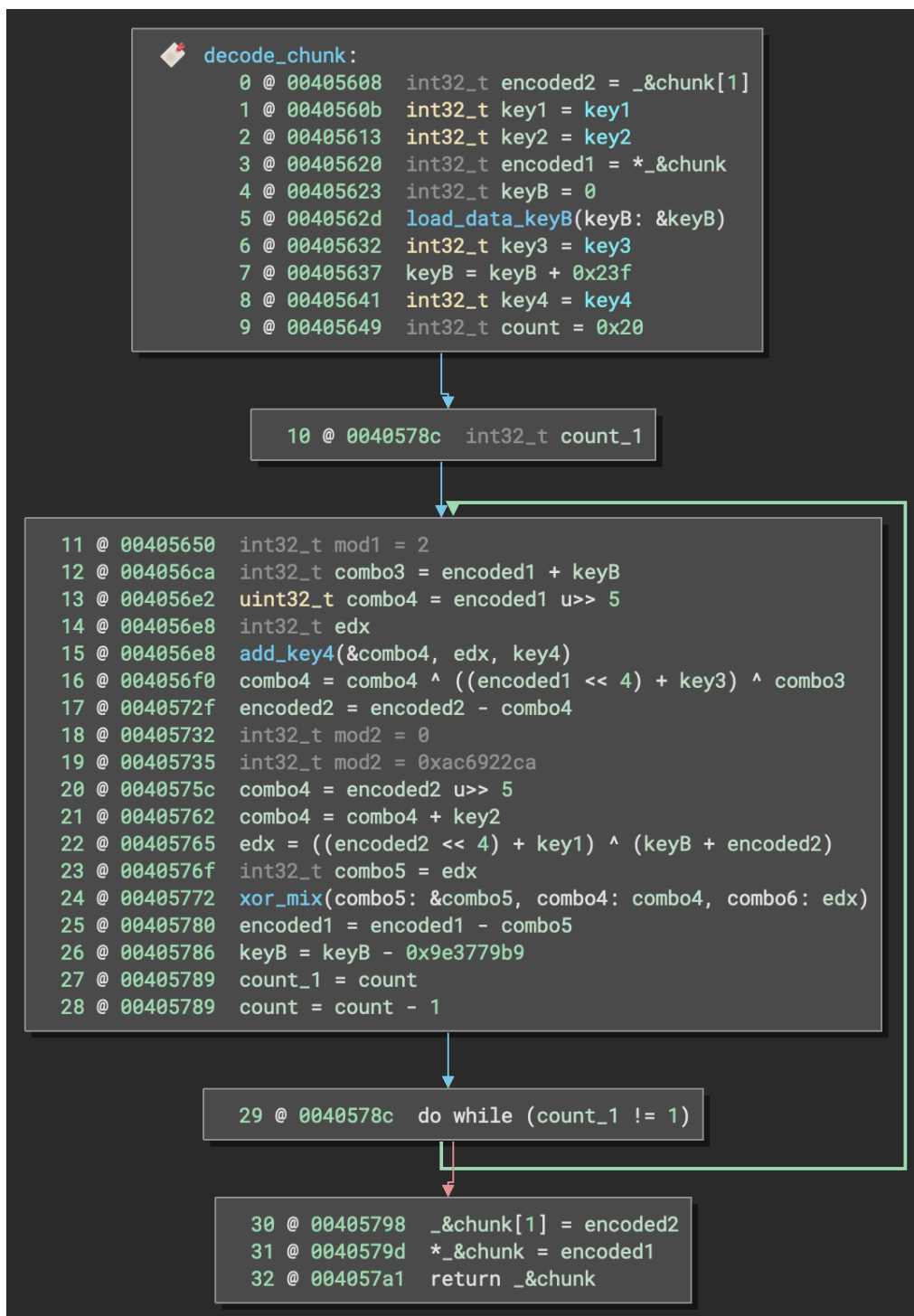
The image shows a snippet of assembly code in a dark-themed editor. A green arrow points to the first instruction. The code consists of six lines, each with a hex address, a hex value, an instruction, and a comment or operand. The instructions are: push, call, // Shift pointer to next chunk, add, dec, and jne.

```
00405894 ff75fc      push    dword [ebp-0x4 {&chunk}] {var_14}
00405897 e85bfdffff  call   decode_chunk
0040589c // Shift pointer to next chunk
0040589c 8345fc08   add    dword [ebp-0x4 {&chunk}], 0x8
004058a0 ff4df8   dec    dword [ebp-0x8 {chunk_count}]
004058a3 0f8535ffff  jne   0x4057de
```

Chunk Decode Loop Control

## Decode Chunk Function

---



### Decompiled Decode Chunk Function

The `decode_chunk` function has four opaque predicates that each wrap dead code, and there are two locations with junk code insertion. In addition to these, the logic of the function is quite convoluted. However, after patching out all of the opaque predicates, dead code, and junk code, a cleaner decompilation graph can be analyzed. The figure above is that graph, fully annotated and cleaned up.

There are three tiny functions called during the decoding algorithm: `load_data_keyB`, `add_key4`, and, `xor_mix`. These simply isolate small pieces of the algorithm to impede analysis and make signature development more difficult.

```
load_data_keyB:
004055ed // Load key B component 1
004055ed 8100e134efc6      add     dword [eax], 0xc6ef34e1
004055f3 c3                retn   {__return_addr}

add_key4:
004055f4 0108             add     dword [eax], ecx
004055f6 c3                retn   {__return_addr}

xor_mix:
004055d0 55              push   ebp {__saved_ebp}
004055d1 8bec           mov    ebp, esp {__saved_ebp}
004055d3 51              push   ecx {var_8}
004055d4 8365fc00       and    dword [ebp-0x4 {var_8_1}], 0x0
004055d8 8b450c         mov    eax, dword [ebp+0xc {combo6}]
004055db 8945fc         mov    dword [ebp-0x4 {combo6}], eax
004055de 8b4508         mov    eax, dword [ebp+0x8 {combo4}]
004055e1 3145fc         xor    dword [ebp-0x4 {combo7} {combo6}], eax
004055e4 8b45fc         mov    eax, dword [ebp-0x4 {combo7}]
004055e7 8901           mov    dword [ecx], eax
004055e9 c9              leave  {__saved_ebp}
004055ea c20800        retn   0x8 {__return_addr}
```

Algorithm Isolates

## Shift Shellcode OEP Function

```
shift_shellcode_oep:
004058ae 55              push   ebp {__saved_ebp}
004058af 8bec           mov    ebp, esp {__saved_ebp}
004058b1 51              push   ecx {var_8}
004058b2 8365fc00       and    dword [ebp-0x4 {oep_offset}], 0x0
004058b6 8145fcf13b0000 add    dword [ebp-0x4], 0x3bf1
004058bd 8b45fc         mov    eax, dword [ebp-0x4]
004058c0 // Shift shellcode pointer to oep
004058c0 010540d54200 add    dword [_&shellcode], eax
004058c6 c9              leave  {__saved_ebp}
004058c7 c3                retn   {__return_addr}
```

Shift Shellcode OEP Function

The `shift_shellcode_oep` function is very simple. It adds `0x3bf1` to the address of the start of the decoded shellcode in allocated memory. This shifts the pointer from the start of the decoded data to the offset of the OEP. This is the address that is called in the main function.



## Recommendations

---

This packer is polymorphic. Variants and builds share many of the same functionality, behavior, and code features. However, they are in different order with randomization of opaque predicates, junk code, and dead code. In spite of this, detection can be achieved by focusing on the two stretches of stable bytes which were identified above. The following two YARA rules match these bytes.

```
rule Packer_pkr_ce1a_ShellcodeSizePart
{
    meta:
        author = "Malwarology LLC"
        date = "2022-10-14"
        description = "Detects bytes surrounding the first part of the data size of
the second stage shellcode in Packer pkr_ce1a."
        reference = "https://malwarology.substack.com/p/malicious-packer-pkr_ce1a"
        sharing = "TLP:CLEAR"
        exemplar = "fc04e80d343f5929aea4aac77fb12485c7b07b3a3d2fc383d68912c9ad0666da"
        address = "0x41cc3c"
        packer = "pkr_ce1a"
    strings:
        $a = { 00699AF974[4]96AACB4600 }
    condition:
        $a and
        uint16(0) == 0x5A4D and
        uint32(uint32(0x3C)) == 0x00004550
}
```

```
rule Packer_pkr_ce1a_ShellcodeAddrPart
{
    meta:
        author = "Malwarology LLC"
        date = "2022-10-17"
        description = "Detects bytes surrounding the first part of the address of the
second stage shellcode in Packer pkr_ce1a."
        reference = "https://malwarology.substack.com/p/malicious-packer-pkr_ce1a"
        sharing = "TLP:CLEAR"
        exemplar = "fc04e80d343f5929aea4aac77fb12485c7b07b3a3d2fc383d68912c9ad0666da"
        address = "0x41bc9c"
        packer = "pkr_ce1a"
    strings:
        $a = { 0094488D6A[4]F2160B6800 }
    condition:
        $a and
        uint16(0) == 0x5A4D and
        uint32(uint32(0x3C)) == 0x00004550
}
```

## Supporting Data and IOCs

---

## File

---

- Filename: 6523.exe
- Filename: povgwaoci.iwe
- MD5: 5663a767ac9d9b9efde3244125509cf3
- SHA1: 84f383a3ddb9f073655e1f6383b9c1d015e26524
- SHA25:  
fc04e80d343f5929aea4aac77fb12485c7b07b3a3d2fc383d68912c9ad0666da
- Imphash: bc57832ec1fddf960b28fd6e06cc17ba
- Timestamp: 2022-02-16T10:14:32Z
- File Type: Win32 EXE
- Magic: PE32 executable (GUI) Intel 80386, for MS Windows
- Size: 238080
- First Seen: 2022-10-14T18:37:13Z [4](#)

## Distribution URL

---

[http://guluiiiimnstrannaer\[.\]net/dl/6523.exe](http://guluiiiimnstrannaer[.]net/dl/6523.exe)

## Malware Behavior Catalog

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- DEFENSE EVASION::Software Packing [F0001]
- ANTI-BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS::Emulator Evasion::Undocumented Opcodes [B0005.002]
- ANTI-BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS::Emulator Evasion::Unusual/Undocumented API Calls [B0005.003]
- ANTI-BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS::Emulator Evasion::Extra Loops/Time Locks [B0005.004]
- ANTI-STATIC ANALYSIS::Disassembler Evasion::Argument Obfuscation [B0012.001]
- ANTI-STATIC ANALYSIS::Disassembler Evasion::Variable Recomposition [B0012.004]

- ANTI-STATIC ANALYSIS::Executable Code Obfuscation::Dead Code Insertion [B0032.003]
- ANTI-STATIC ANALYSIS::Executable Code Obfuscation::Junk Code Insertion [B0032.007]
- ANTI-STATIC ANALYSIS::Executable Code Obfuscation::Interleaving Code [B0032.014]

## Malware Behavior Catalog Proposed Methods

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- ANTI-BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS::Emulator Evasion::Unimplemented Opcodes [B0005]
- ANTI-STATIC ANALYSIS::Executable Code Obfuscation::Opaque Predicate [B0032]
- ANTI-STATIC ANALYSIS::Executable Code Obfuscation::Function Call Obfuscation [B0032]

## Analyses

---

- Intezer
- UnpacMe

1

Sample downloaded from [hxxp\[://\]guluiiiimnstrannaer\[.\]net/dl/6523.exe](http://guluiiiimnstrannaer[.]net/dl/6523.exe)

2

Imphash: `bc57832ec1fddf960b28fd6e06cc17ba`

3

LocalAlloc function (winbase.h).

4

VirusTotal