

Reverse engineering final assignment - Iyar Gross

Hello and welcome back!

Today we are analyzing operationlion.exe.

Before diving into IDA, let's gather some initial information about the file using OSINT techniques.

Pre investigation-

I opened the file in CFF Explorer to gather basic information.

This is the file's hash. I searched for it in VirusTotal.

MD5	3F4CEA2F61E5AD1386C91CC79E7E70EC
SHA-1	23DE42125BC646F2C28A44ED535834DB1E85E1FA

The screenshot shows the VirusTotal analysis page for the file d16f2a1a9065edb23315fdc2c222cb5ebf0dabb184c1a723836b3333a91f8a4. It displays a community score of 6/72, indicating 6 out of 72 security vendors flagged the file as malicious. The file is identified as OperationLion.exe. The analysis details include its size (33.00 KB) and last analysis date (5 days ago). The file type is EXE. Below this, there are tabs for DETECTION, DETAILS, RELATIONS, BEHAVIOR, and COMMUNITY. The SECURITY VENDORS' ANALYSIS section lists detections from various sources:

Source	Detection	Details
Bkav Pro	W32.AIDetectMalware	CrowdStrike Falcon
Elastic	Malicious (high Confidence)	MaxSecure
SecureAge	Malicious	Symantec

At the bottom, there is a link to "Join our Community" and a "Do you want to automate checks?" button.

VirusTotal recognized the file and gave it a rating of 6.

CryptCreateHash	x	implicit	-	0x0000885A	0x0000885A	ADVAPI32.dll
CryptHashData	x	implicit	-	0x0000884A	0x0000884A	ADVAPI32.dll
CryptDestroyHash	x	implicit	-	0x00008836	0x00008836	ADVAPI32.dll
CryptGetHashParam	x	implicit	-	0x00008822	0x00008822	ADVAPI32.dll
CryptReleaseContext	x	implicit	-	0x0000880C	0x0000880C	ADVAPI32.dll
CryptAcquireContextA	x	implicit	-	0x0000886C	0x0000886C	ADVAPI32.dll

In PE Studio, I identified that the file imports encryption functions.

Step 1 – Tls callback

```
!!!!!!!!!!!! Barak Gonen !!!!!!!!!

Stage 1: You are a special operations expert.
Your mission is to protect our pilots. Disable the anti aircraft system
Oh, intelligence report says the enemy spread decoys, find the real target, fast!
```

Let's disable the anti aircraft.

After that message the program is shutting off. Let's see why.

The screenshot shows the PEStudio interface with a dialog box titled "Choose an entry point". The table lists two entries:

Name	Address	Ordinal
TlsCallback_0	006519D0	
start	00651F16	[main entry]

As we can see tls callback is running before the main.

```
mov     eax, [ebp+var_10]
mov     ecx, funcs_401A39[eax*4]
call    ecx ; sub_6518E0
jmp    short loc_651A20
```

.data:00659040 ; DWORD nSize
.data:00659040 nSize dd 10h ; Di
.data:00659044 funcs_401A39 dd offset sub_6518E0 ; Di
.data:00659048 dd offset sub_651900
.data:0065904C ; DWORD pdwDataLen
.data:0065904C pdwDataLen dd 10h ; Di
.data:0065904C : si

Here we have a dispatcher .

A function table (funcs_401A39) is used.

A loop runs twice, calling the first two functions in the table before main executes.

The second function hashes the collected data with MD5 (CryptHashData) and stores the digits in memory (byte_6593D4).

```
push   ebp
mov    ebp, esp
sub    esp, 18h
mov    [ebp+var_8], offset pbData
mov    eax, [ebp+var_8]
add    eax, 1
mov    [ebp+var_14], eax
```

loc_651916:
mov ecx, [ebp+var_8]
mov dl, [ecx]
mov [ebp+var_1], dl
add [ebp+var_8], 1
cmp [ebp+var_1], 0

The TLS loop converts the 16-byte digits to a 32-character uppercase hex string in a buffer.

So in conclusion we are dealing with a buffer.

Let's see who calls and uses this buffer.

Step 2 – Print function

I traced the program to see where this buffer is used for printing.

Following the imports and xref graph, I identified the first call to the print function.

```
3108 ; DATA XREF: sub_6!
310C ; int (__cdecl *__stdio_common_vsprintf)(unsigned __int64 O|
310C         extrn __stdio_common_vsprintf:dword
310C                                     ; CODE XREF: sub_6!
310C                                     ; DATA XREF: sub_6!
3110
3110
```

By analyzing buffer usage, I found which function prints the initial output we see.

Step 4 – File Check & Obfuscation

Now we got into the function that prints out our beloved message.

```
push    esi
push    edi
mov     [ebp+var_28], 43h ; 'C'
mov     [ebp+var_27], 3Ah ; '.'
mov     [ebp+var_26], 5Ch ; '\'
mov     [ebp+var_25], 52h ; 'R'
mov     [ebp+var_24], 65h ; 'e'
mov     [ebp+var_23], 76h ; 'v'
mov     [ebp+var_22], 65h ; 'e'
mov     [ebp+var_21], 72h ; 'r'
mov     [ebp+var_20], 73h ; 's'
mov     [ebp+var_1F], 69h ; 'i'
mov     [ebp+var_1E], 6Eh ; 'n'
mov     [ebp+var_1D], 67h ; 'g'
mov     [ebp+var_1C], 43h ; 'C'
mov     [ebp+var_1B], 54h ; 'T'
mov     [ebp+var_1A], 46h ; 'F'
mov     [ebp+var_19], 5Ch ; '\'
mov     [ebp+var_18], 0
mov     [ebp+var_14], 44h ; 'D'
mov     [ebp+var_13], 72h ; 'r'
mov     [ebp+var_12], 6Fh ; 'o'
mov     [ebp+var_11], 6Eh ; 'n'
mov     [ebp+var_10], 65h ; 'e'
mov     [ebp+var_F], 41h ; 'A'
mov     [ebp+var_E], 74h ; 't'
mov     [ebp+var_D], 74h ; 't'

// padding byte
_BYTE var_28;
_BYTE var_27;
_BYTE var_26;
_BYTE var_25;
_BYTE var_24;
_BYTE var_23;
_BYTE var_22;
_BYTE var_21;
_BYTE var_20;
_BYTE var_1F;
_BYTE var_1E;
_BYTE var_1D;
_BYTE var_1C;
_BYTE var_1B;
_BYTE var_1A;
_BYTE var_19;
_BYTE var_18;
// padding byte
// padding byte
// padding byte
_BYTE var_14;
_BYTE var_13;
_BYTE var_12;
_BYTE var_11;
_BYTE var_10;
_BYTE var_F;
_BYTE var_E;
_BYTE var_D;
_BYTE var_C;
_BYTE var_B;
```

This is an obfuscation.

The string -C:\ReversingCTF\DroneAttack.txt

Is being obfuscated ,just a technique to harden our understanding.

```
mov    edi, [ebp+var_2B8]
mov    esi, [ebp+var_2D0]
mov    eax, [ebp+var_2D4]
mov    ecx, eax
shr    ecx, 2
rep    movsd
mov    ecx, eax
and    ecx, 3
rep    movsb
lea    ecx, [ebp+FindFileData]
push   ecx          ; lpFindFileData
lea    edx, [ebp+FileName]
push   edx          ; lpFileName
call   ds:FindFirstFileA
mov    [ebp+hFindFile], eax
cmp    [ebp+hFindFile], 0xFFFFFFFFh
jz     loc_65177A
```

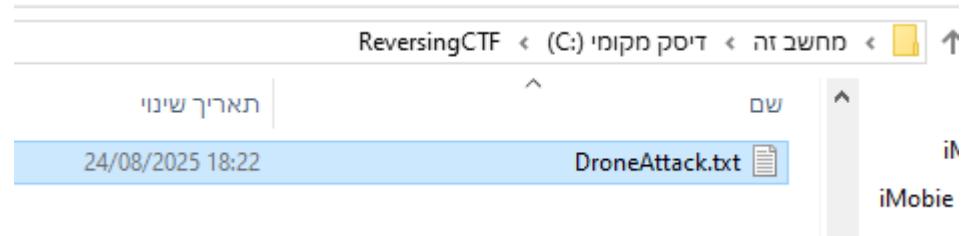
The program checks for the existence of a file.

```
loc_65177A:      ; dwMilliseconds
push  7D0h
call  ds:Sleep
push offset aDangerAntiAirc_0 ; "Danger! Anti aircraft system is still o"...
call  sub_651290
add   esp, 4
```

If the file exists → we continues the operation

If not → jumps to a crash (loc_65177A)

The crash occurs because the program tries to continue without an open file (because the file doesn't exist)



I created the expected file in the target directory (C:\ReversingCTF\DroneAttack.txt) to bypass this crash.

```
Stage 1: You are a special operations expert.  
Your mission is to protect our pilots. Disable the anti aircraft system  
Oh, intelligence report says the enemy spread decoys, find the real target, fast!  
  
Anti aircraft system located  
Initiating disable sequence  
  
Great job. Anti aircraft system is disabled  
  
Stage 2: You are a jet fighter pilot. The sky is clear. Your mission: release bombs on IRGC headquarters  
To find them, use the cyber intelligence  
53 65 00 E8 01 FB FF FF 83  $0e.hpSe.....
```

Hurray!

level 2:-Dropped DLL Analysis

בחירה	פתיחת	חדש	ארגון	העתק נטיב	הדק קיצור דרך
בחירה	פתיחת	חדש	ארגון	העתק נטיב	הדק קיצור דרך
הפר בחרה	הפר היסטוריה	מיפויים	גישה נוכחית	מחק	העלאת
אל תבחר	ערוך	חדש	שנה	אל	העבר
הפר בחרה	הפר היסטוריה	מיפויים	תיקיה	מחק	העלאת
בחירה	פתיחת	חדש	ארגון	העתק נטיב	הדק קיצור דרך

When operationLion ran it dropped a new DLL- AttackIRGC.dll
And added to our text file a hex dump.

קובץ עריכה עיצוב תצוגה עדנה
EE75 95EA FB06 8EDE 5030 D1DB 7049 E944

Step 1 -pre investigation

FILE TIME	invalid
DOS date	23/01/2069
DOS time	22:17:46
DOS time, R1 date	invalid

I opened the DLL in DIE-

In this picture we can see that somebody messed up the dos header(it's a bit suspicious).

And as I see , the dropped DLL is either encrypted or warped.

I located the function responsible for extracting and writing the DLL:

```
mov    edi, [ebp+var_140]
mov    esi, [ebp+var_14C]
mov    eax, [ebp+var_150]
mov    ecx, eax
shr    ecx, 2
rep movsd
mov    ecx, eax
and    ecx, 3
rep movsb
push   offset Mode      ; "wb"
lea    ecx, [ebp+FileName]
push   ecx             ; FileName
lea    edx, [ebp+Stream]
push   edx             ; Stream
call   ds:fopen_s
add    esp, 0Ch
mov    [ebp+var_154], eax
cmp    [ebp+var_154], 0
jnz    short loc_651275

mov    eax, [ebp+Stream]
push   eax             ; Stream
push   200h             ; ElementCount
push   1                ; ElementSize
push   offset unk_655480 ; Buffer
call   ds:fwrite
add    esp, 10h
mov    [ebp+var_15C], eax
mov    ecx, [ebp+Stream]
push   ecx             ; Stream
call   ds:fclose
add    esp, 4
```

sub_651080 Function:

Extracts a blob from our exe (unk_655480)

Writes it to a file: AttackIRGC.dll

Step 2– Decrypting the DLL

Offset(h)	00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 0A 0B 0C 0D 0E 0F	Decoded text
00000000	0F 15 DD 42 41 4F 4D 42 46 4F 4D 42 BD B0 4D 42	..□BAOMBOMB□MB
00000010	FA 4F 4D 42 42 4F 4D 42 02 4F 4D 42 42 4F 4D 42	nOMBOMB.OMBOMB
00000020	42 4F 4D 42 42 4F 4D 42 42 4F 4D 42 42 4F 4D 42	BOMBOMBOMBOMBOMB
00000030	42 4F 4D 42 42 4F 4D 42 42 4F 4D 42 42 4E 4D 42	BOMBOMBOMBBNMB
00000040	4C 50 F7 4C 42 FB 44 8F 63 F7 4C 0E 8F 6E 49 74	LPrLBOD.cPL..nIt
00000050	20 73 68 6F 75 6C 64 20 6E 6F 74 20 62 65 20 70	should not be p
00000060	6F 73 73 69 62 6C 65 20 74 6F 20 72 65 61 64 20	ossible to read
00000070	74 68 69 73 6C 42 40 48 66 4F 4D 42 42 4F 4D 42	thisLB@HfOMBOMB
00000080	7F F3 71 FD 3B 92 1F AE 3B 92 1F AE 3B 92 1F AE	.qq.''.@;'.@;'.@
00000090	32 EA 8C AE 3D 92 1F AE 9F EC 1E AF 39 92 1F AE	9-.@.=@.T2'.@
000000A0	9F EC 1A AF 31 92 1F AE 9F EC 1B AF 31 92 1F AE	.1-.@.'1-.@'.@
000000B0	9F EC 1C AF 3A 92 1F AE E8 E0 1E AF 38 92 1F AE	.8-.@;.';-.-@'.@
000000C0	3B 92 1E AE 13 92 1F AE 2F ED 16 AF 3A 92 1F AE	;'.@;'.@/o.-';'.@

I opened the DLL in hex editor , I noticed that the DLL did not start with MZ which confirms that there is an encryption

I noticed that there are repeated occurrences of the word "BOMB" when usually in hex there are lots of "0" .

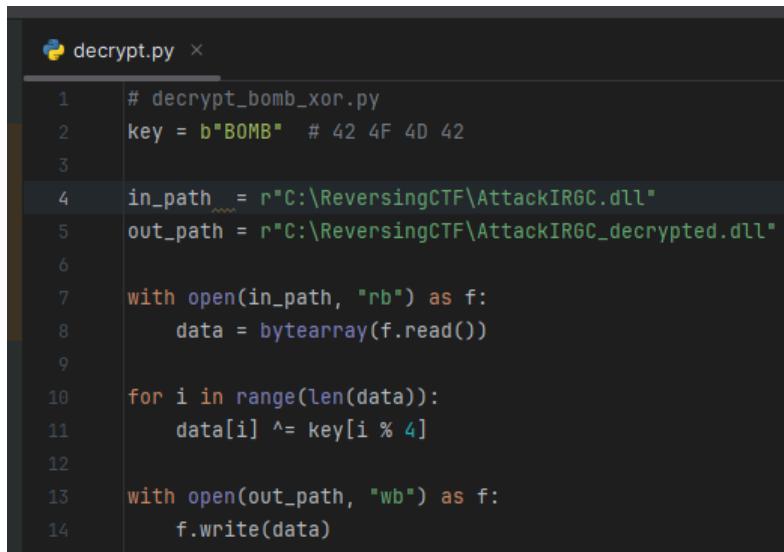
I started to suspect that the encryption is XOR, a known and commonly used encryption . According to my theory if "BOMB" is supposed to be 0 then the key is "BOMB" because only a xor a=0 .

I wanted to check if my theory is correct by trying to decrypt the first bytes of the DLL which are supposed to be 4D 5A- MZ

```
' M' = 4D : 0F ^ k0 = 4D → k0 = 0F ^ 4D = 42 → 'B '
' Z' = 5A : 15 ^ k1 = 5A → k1 = 15 ^ 5A = 4F → 'O '
```

As I saw this I understood my theory was verified .

XOR key: "BOMB" is used to encrypt/decrypt the DLL so that the first bytes produce the proper MZ header.



```
# decrypt_bomb_xor.py
key = b"BOMB" # 42 4F 4D 42

in_path___ = r"C:\ReversingCTF\AttackIRGC.dll"
out_path = r"C:\ReversingCTF\AttackIRGC_decrypted.dll"

with open(in_path, "rb") as f:
    data = bytearray(f.read())

for i in range(len(data)):
    data[i] ^= key[i % 4]

with open(out_path, "wb") as f:
    f.write(data)
```

I Wrote a Python script to decrypt the file.

I successfully obtained the decrypted DLL/

ReversingCTF < דיסק מקומי (C:) < בזה			
שם	תאריך שינוי	סוג	גודל
AttackIRGC.dll	24/08/2025 18:24	הרחבת יישום	11 KB
AttackIRGC_decrypted.dll	25/08/2025 12:53	הרחבת יישום	11 KB

Offset(h)	Decoded text
00000000	MZ.....□□.
00000010	B8 00 00 00 00 00 40 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00

Now the decrypted DLL begins with MZ and now we can analyze it in IDA

[file > type](#) dynamic-link-library, 32-bit, console

The DLL is 32-bit .

The DLL cannot run by itself therefore it requires a loader.

I adapted a simple DLL loader that we learned in class to execute the decrypted DLL.

```
loader.cpp  X  Project32  (Global Scope)
1 #include <Windows.h>
2 #include <iostream>
3 #define LIBRARY "C:\\\\ReversingCTF\\\\decrypted_dll.dll"
4 typedef void(*PFunc)(int);
5 int main()
6 {
7     HMODULE hModule = LoadLibraryA(LIBRARY);
8     if (NULL == hModule) {
9         printf("Failed to load DLL\\n");
10    return 0;
11 }
12 PFunc pFunc = (PFunc)GetProcAddress(hModule, "hack_security");
13 if (NULL != pFunc) {
14     (*pFunc)(0x2008);
15 } else {
16     printf("Failed to load function\\n");
17 }
18 return 0;
19 }
```

I modified the code so it'll fit our DLL .

I Checked in the decrypted DLL exports to look for the function that our exe is calling.

-hack_security

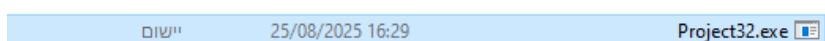
And I noticed that hack_security is expecting a number -2008

Name	Address	Ordinal
hack_security	10001470	1
DllEntryPoint	10001940	[main entry]

```
var_4= dword ptr -4
arg_0= dword ptr 8

push    ebp
mov     ebp, esp
sub     esp, 34h
mov     eax, __security_cookie
xor     eax, ebp
mov     [ebp+var_4], eax
cmp     [ebp+arg_0], 2008h
jz      short loc_100014A3
```

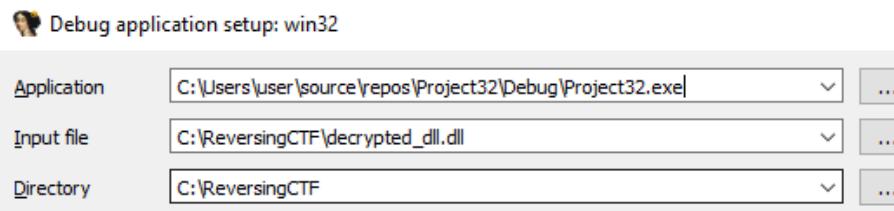
I compiled my program by visual studio to an exe file .



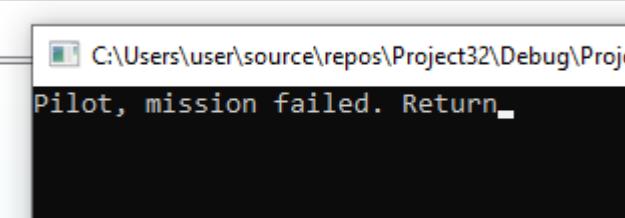
This is what happens when we run the loader.exe by itself.

```
Microsoft Visual Studio Debug Console
Pilot, mission failed. Return to base
C:\Users\user\source\repos\Project32\Debug\Project32.exe (process 21608) exited with code 0.
To automatically close the console when debugging stops, enable Tools->Options->Debugging->Automatically close when debugging stops.
Press any key to close this window . . .
```

I loaded the loader to ida .



Now we have the same message as before but now the program is crashing.

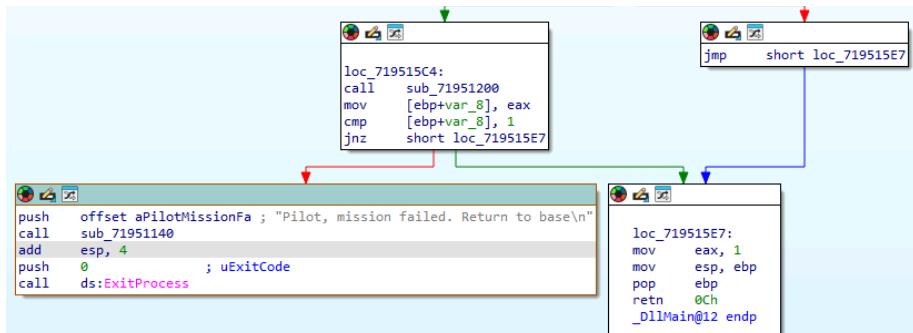


Let's understand why.

I looked for the specific message that I'm getting in ida.

```
.rdata:71953453          db 0Ah,0
.rdata:71953455          align 4
.rdata:71953458 aPilotMissionFa db 'Pilot, mission failed. Return to base',0Ah,0
.rdata:71953458          ; DATA XREF: DllMain(x,x,x)+22↑o
.rdata:71953458          align 10h
.rdata:71953480 __load_config_used dd 0C0h           ; Size
.rdata:71953484          dd 0                         ; Time stamp
```

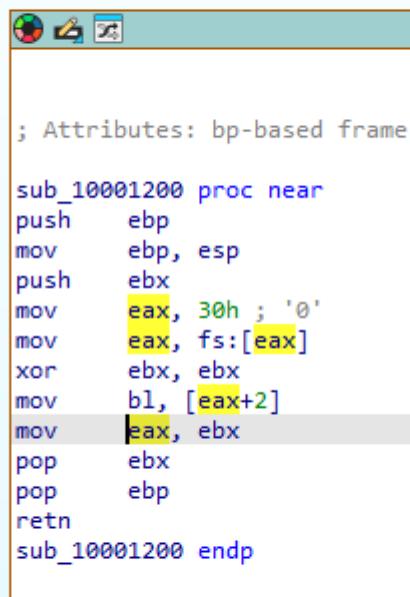
I went to the function that calls our string (by xref)



Hello buddy!

I've found an anti debug:)

The output of sub_71951200 is what determines if the process is finished.

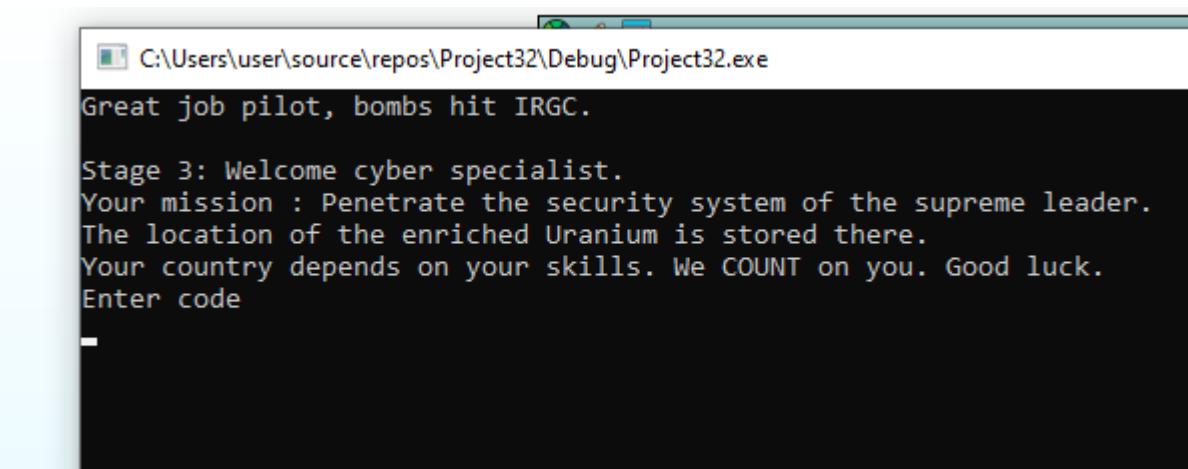


```
; Attributes: bp-based frame

sub_10001200 proc near
push    ebp
mov     ebp, esp
push    ebx
mov     eax, 30h ; '0'
mov     eax, fs:[eax]
xor     ebx, ebx
mov     bl, [eax+2]
mov     eax, ebx
pop     ebx
pop     ebp
retn
sub_10001200 endp
```

I patched the program so that the anti debug is diffused.

```
mov    bl, [eax+2]
xor    eax, eax
pop    ebx
pop    ebp
```



```
C:\Users\user\source\repos\Project32\Debug\Project32.exe
Great job pilot, bombs hit IRGC.

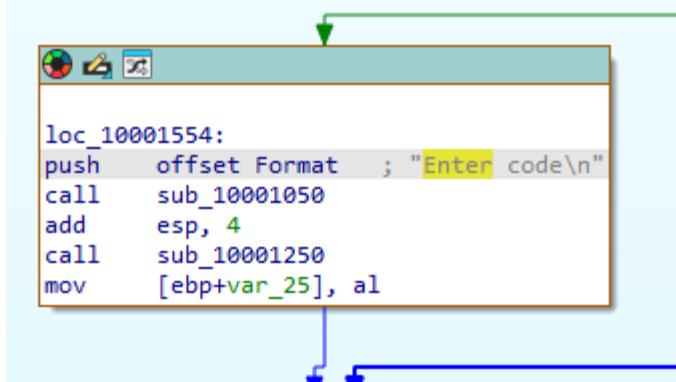
Stage 3: Welcome cyber specialist.
Your mission : Penetrate the security system of the supreme leader.
The location of the enriched Uranium is stored there.
Your country depends on your skills. We COUNT on you. Good luck.
Enter code
```

Hurray!

level 3:

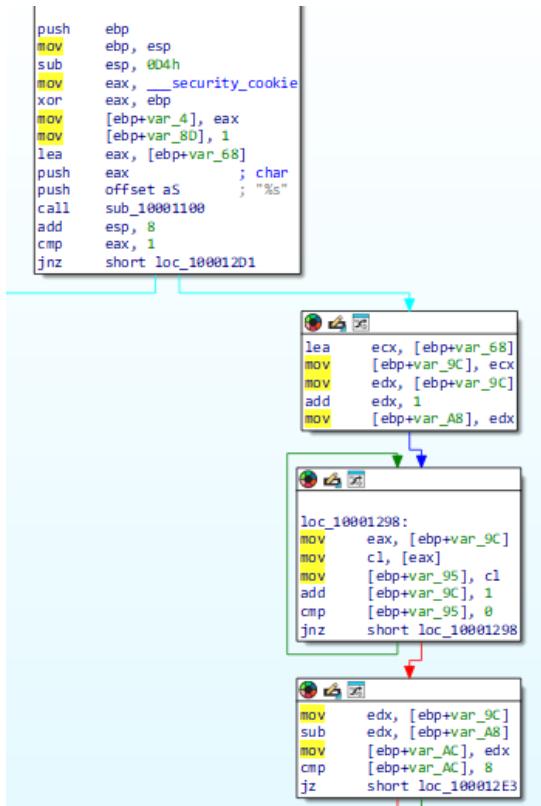
Now we have a code to find , let's explore ☺

I've searched where in the file there is a use of the word Enter.

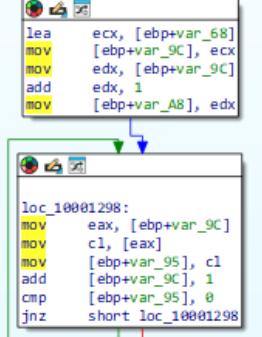


```
loc_10001554:
push    offset Format      ; "Enter code\n"
call    sub_10001050
add     esp, 4
call    sub_10001250
mov     [ebp+var_25], al
```

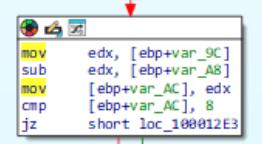
This is our message and a call for print, but what does sub_10001250 do ?



```
push    ebp
mov     ebp, esp
sub    esp, 004h
mov    eax, __security_cookie
xor    eax, ebp
mov    [ebp+var_4], eax
mov    [ebp+var_80], 1
lea    eax, [ebp+var_68]
push   eax          ; char
push   offset as      ; "%s"
call   sub_10001100
add    esp, 8
cmp    eax, 1
jnz    short loc_10001201
```



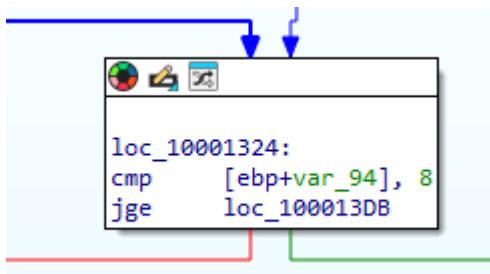
```
lea    ecx, [ebp+var_68]
mov    [ebp+var_9C], ecx
mov    edx, [ebp+var_9C]
add    edx, 1
mov    [ebp+var_A8], edx
```



```
loc_10001298:
mov    eax, [ebp+var_9C]
mov    cl, [eax]
mov    [ebp+var_95], cl
add    [ebp+var_9C], 1
cmp    [ebp+var_95], 0
jnz    short loc_10001298

loc_100012E3:
mov    edx, [ebp+var_9C]
sub    edx, [ebp+var_A8]
mov    [ebp+var_AC], edx
cmp    [ebp+var_AC], 8
jz     short loc_100012E3
```

In this part we can see that the function is looking for an input that is 8 numbers long.

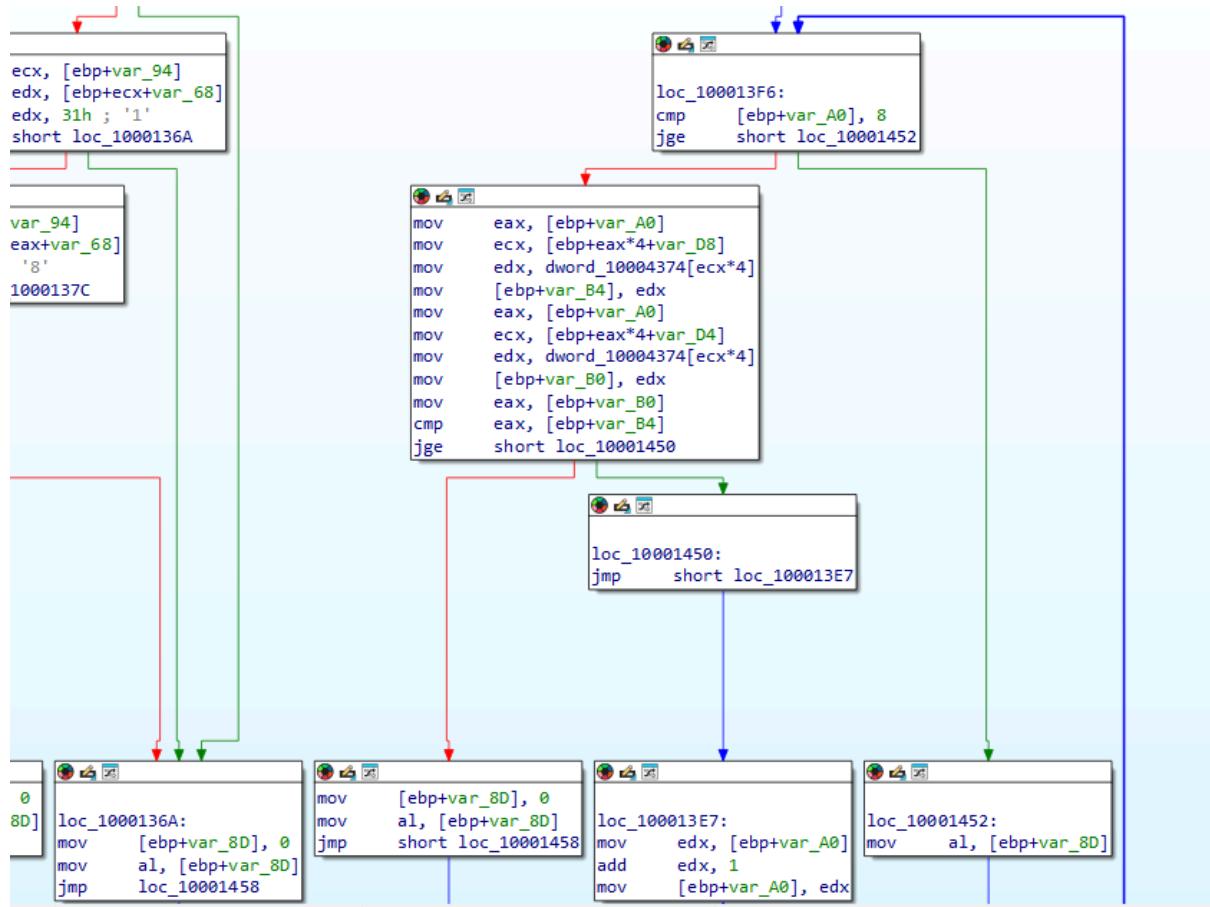


```
loc_10001324:
cmp    [ebp+var_94], 8
jge    loc_100013DB
```

Our function goes over our 8 numbers with var_94 and checks if each number is between 1-8

After each of our inputted numbers are verified there is another verification.

Each of the numbers we entered were an index for the hex dump that we got from level 2
In the file dorneAttack.txt.



I added a breakpoint to the function and cautiously calculated the order of the indexes where the numbers were organized in ascending order. (in the function B0 and B4 ,we always check if B0>=B4)

we check in this function if we have 8 digit string-> each of them supposed to be a number->each number is between 1-8 -> that we don't have doubles

each number indicates an index of dword_10001450 where there are numbers that we need to organize by ascending order(according to B0 B4)

* ללא שם - פנקום

קובץ עריכה עיצוב

11

9

9

10

4

10

6

7

57823461

```
Great job pilot, bombs hit IRGC.  
3  
3Stage 3: Welcome cyber specialist.  
3Your mission : Penetrate the security system of the supreme leader.  
3The location of the enriched Uranium is stored there.  
3Your country depends on your skills. We COUNT on you. Good luck.  
3Enter code  
357823461  
3Great work hero, you hacked the system. Prepare for a message from your instructor  
3  
3Dear student, You reached the end. I am proud of you. Not many can do that.  
3This was only a game, but parts of the real operation were based on the knowledge that you learned.  
3I believe that you are part of the technological edge that keeps us here  
3I wish that you do great things in security, economy, technology and education  
3  
3  
3  
3
```

Hurray!

(I didn't use any of the clues in the moodle)

Thank you:)