

VX Reversing III - Yellow Fever (Griyo 29a)

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Abstract

This article provides an in-depth analysis of the I-Worm "win32.YellowFever", by "Griyo\29A". This is a proof of concept virus, meaning it has very sophisticated features which are very hard to find in the wild. Our analysis includes: a step-by-step guide to debug it and the construction of a bait file, which we use to run it under a controlled environment. Since the virus has not been spread there is no similar description published by the Anti-Virus companies.

Keywords: Reverse Engineering, Computer Virus, Debugger, Self-Mailing, System Services

1. Introduction

"Win32.Dengue" by "Griyo\29A", called "YellowFever" at "29A e-zine #6", is an advanced i-worm with some really interesting features. In fact, this old i-worm is much more sophisticated than many of the 15-minute-fame ones we can see now in the wild. As you will see, nothing to be with Sasser [1] and others. In spite of its innovative techniques and quite complex programming, "YellowFever" has not received much attention at the Anti-Virus companies. This is simply because the virus has not been spread in the wild. Therefore, it is difficult to find even a few lines about it at the Anti-Virus home pages, for example [2, 3].

Our analysis shows how to do an step-by-step analysis of the virus and its techniques. Another interesting feature is the use of a home-made application, which we code with the only purpose of deceiving the worm. This paper is a natural step after [1, 4].

Short virus description: the worm installs itself as a system service. On startup, it enumerates all running applications looking for its target (Outlook). The infection procedure is very interesting: the virus has a small built-in debugger that uses to attach to the host. Next, it impersonates the host and, using its own "SMTP" engine, e-mails itself. "YellowFever" is not polymorphic but it it would be possible to add a poly-engine to it. The virus can bypass many of the user level firewalls, but it has not been coded for spreading. Of course, it has been fully written in Assembly.

Reading this article requires knowing the basics of: assembly programming, user-level debuggers and the "SMTP" protocol. See MSDN [5] and the Winsock FAQ [6] for further references.

2 Installing the Virus

We load the virus in the debugger and here we are:

Note that, without decryption, there are some readable strings in the data area:

```
004020A0 00 FF FF FF FF 5B 20 59 65 6C 6C 6F 77 20 46 65 [ Yellow Fe 004020B0 76 65 72 20 42 69 6F 43 6F 64 65 64 20 62 79 20 ver BioCoded by 004020C0 47 72 69 59 6F 20 2F 20 32 39 41 20 5D 5B 20 44 Griyo / 29A ][ D 004020D0 69 73 63 6C 61 69 6D 65 72 3A 20 54 68 69 73 20 isclaimer: This ...
```

An anti-virus might use them to identify YellowFever. Hopefully they do not. This constants could be easily modified by some script-kiddy. The routine "401C4Dh" decrypts the virus code. "Edi" points to the offset where the plaintext will be put:

```
00401C4D CLD ;
00401C4E MOV ECX,100 ; length
00401C53 MOV EDI,YELLOW.00402481 ;
... ;
00401C72 LOOPD SHORT YELLOW.00401C58 ;
00401C74 RETN ; return from call
```

2.1 Imports Reconstruction for the virus: APIs from kernel32

Typically (see [4]), one of the first things to do in a virus is to get all the APIs it needs to interact with the system. The algorithm used in this case is a standard one, with exports table scanning and "CRC32s" for each imported API:

```
00401017 MOV DWORD PTR [4023E9],EAX ; save image base of kernel32 
0040101C MOV EBX,EAX ; image base of kernel32 
0040101E MOV ECX,24 ; number of imported APIs 
00401023 MOV ESI,YELLOW.00402189 ; crc32 of the api names 
00401028 MOV EDI,YELLOW.004023ED ; buffer to place the retrieved addresses 
0040102D CALL YELLOW.00401D44 ; call FindApis
```

Have a look at the value pointed by "esi" before entering in the (so called) FindApis procedure:

```
00402189 6F 00 7A B8 9B 3A 7E 02 04 3A D1 3D 6A 13 D7 7E 00402199 C4 D7 94 D0 F2 D6 07 03 BA 70 57 D1 D4 73 01 B0
```

They look totally random, right? This is because they are the "CRC32s" of the different APIs the virus needs to import. Debug into the call and you will find some of the constants (check issue "#1") having to be with the imports rebuilding method:

```
00401D47 MOV EAX,DWORD PTR [EBX+3C] ; 3Ch
00401D4A MOV EDX,DWORD PTR [EAX+EBX+78] ; 78h
```

Taking a closer look at the (so called) FindApis procedure we have:

```
00401D5D PUSH ESI ; push offset "ActivateActCtx" 00401D5E CALL YELLOW.00401C92 ; call CRC32String ...
00401D68 CMP EAX,EDX ; found? 
00401D6A JE SHORT YELLOW.00401D73 ; yes 
...
00401D73 PUSH EBX ; hModule 
00401D74 CALL <JMP.&KERNEL32.GetProcAddress> ; get API address
```

List of APIs from kernel32

Then, it will be enough to set a bpx on "GetProcAddress" and another one somewhere after the imports reconstruction to get the full list. Mind setting the later bpx, otherwise you will run the whole virus. This is the commented full list of APIs from "kernel32":

- 1. File search: "FindFirstFileA", "FindNextFileA", "FindClose", "WriteFile".
- 2. File handling: "CopyFileA", "CreateFileA", "CreateFileMappingA", "MapViewOfFile", "UnmapViewOfFile", "CloseHandle" and "GetModuleFileNameA".
- 3. User-level debugger construction: "DebugActiveProcess", "ContinueDebugEvent", "WaitForDebugEvent", "GetCurrentProcessID", "FlushInstructionCache", "ReadProcessMemory", "WriteProcessMemory", "GetThreadContext" and "SetThreadContext".
- 4. Thread manipulation: "CreateThreadA", "WaitForSingleObject", "Sleep" and "ExitThread".
- 5. Memory allocation: "VirtualAlloc" and "VirtualFree".
- 6. Retrieve information about the current system: "GetCommandLineA", "GetComputerNameA", "GetSystemDirectoryA" and "GetVersionExA".
- 7. Loading a DLL: "LoadLibraryA" and "FreeLibrary".
- 8. Other APIs: "CreateProcessA", "DuplicateHandle", "ExitProcess" and "GetCurrentProcess".

Observe the virus has imported a group of APIs which is common in user-level debuggers implementation. The rest of APIs are very standard.

2.2 Getting system information

The next step for the virus is to get some basic information about the system it lives in:

```
00401AA1
          CALL DWORD PTR [402449]
                                      ; kernel32.GetVersionExA
00401ABA
         PUSH 0
                                         (path to the file which created this
process)
          CALL DWORD PTR [40243D]
                                      ; kernel32.GetModuleFileNameA
00401ABC
00401AD8
          CALL DWORD PTR [402431]
                                      ; kernel32.GetComputerNameA
00401AED
          CALL DWORD PTR [402441]
                                      ; kernel32.GetSystemDirectoryA
```

The virus behaviour depends on the system version, for example:

- 1. "Win9x": to be run on each startup, the virus adds itself to the registry key "HKLM\...\CurrentVersion\Run\".
- 2. "WinNT": it installs itself as a system service. This guarantees being run on each startup and also having more privileges than normal applications. Indeed, there is an Anti-virus which cannot kill "YellowFever" in memory. Amazing.

We will only concentrate on its "WinNT" variant, but the article should be a good guide for those still working under "Win9x".

2.3 Imports Reconstruction for the virus: other DLLs

When the virus has loaded all APIs from "kernel32" and knows where it lives, it can import the rest of APIs from other DLLs. Note that the loaded APIs depend on the system version. The method to load DLLs different from "kernel32" is rather unusual:

- 1. Create the string ""*.DLL"" dynamically. Normally, strings are kept encrypted and decrypted on the fly.
- 2. Enumerate all files in the system directory ending on ""DLL"".
- 3. For each DLL found: compute a "CRC32" of its name and compare it to a list of pre-stored values. If it matches, load the DLL and retrieve its APIs by means of FindApis (see above).

Note: you will see that the virus plays with the system directory name and does some strange comparisons. Do not pay attention on them. They will make a sense in the next section. As we mentioned, the virus first enumerates all DLLs in the system directory:

```
00401CB5 MOV EAX,YELLOW.00402A25 ; ASCII "C:\WINDOWS\System32\*.DLL" 00401CBA PUSH EAX ; WINDOWS\System32\*.DLL" ; kernel32.FindFirstFileA
```

The virus has stored the "CRC32s" of the DLLs it looks for and compares them to the "CRC32" of current one. Note that the DLL name is always converted to capital cases before to compute the "CRC32", just in case:

This is how it goes through all dlls:

```
...

00401CE1 | CMP EDX,DWORD PTR [402A21] ; dll found?

00401CE7 | JE SHORT YELLOW.00401D05 ; yes

...

00401CF5 | CALL DWORD PTR [402421] ; No. Try next (call kernel32.FindNextFileA)

00401CFB | OR EAX,EAX ; end of search?

00401CFD | \JNZ SHORT YELLOW.00401CC ; nop, continue searching for more dlls

00401CFF POP EDI ; end of search, restore registers and return

00401D00 POP ESI

00401D01 POP ECX
```

Why all this sophistication for loading a dll? Possibly, Griyo wants to avoid having to store the names of the DLLs into the virus. This way, he only has to go to the system directory and search until it finds a DLL matching one of the pre-computed "CRC32s". Sometimes, AVs are able to look for the encrypted strings or the encryption algorithms. Not this time.

We have to set two breakpoints: one at the end of the search, "401CFFh", and the other at the "yes found", "401D05h". When the virus finds an interesting DLL it appends its name to the system directory path and calls "LoadLibraryA":

```
00401D21 CALL DWORD PTR [40244D] ; kernel32.LoadLibraryA
```

Next, it searches all interesting APIs at the DLLs Exports Table. The procedure to locate the APIs is the same we saw above (FindApis).

List of APIs from user32 and wsock32

As we did for "kernel32", here is the list of APIs from both DLLs. Knowing them in advance almost provides a description of the virus.

- 1. APIs from "user32.dll":
 - a. "EnumWindows": enumerate all GUI-based applications.
 - b. "GetClassNameA": get the class name of the window for a given one.
 - c. "GetWindowThreadProcessId": get the process Id of the application owning a given window.
- 2. APIs "wsock32.dll":
 - a. "send": send bytes through a connected socket.
 - b. "recv": receive bytes from a connected socket.
 - c. "WSAStartup": communications initialisation.
 - d. "WSACleanup": closing communications.
 - e. "ioctlsocket": controls some features of a socket, for example the maximum number of bytes it can send or receive.

Some comments about the possible use of this APIs:

- "user32" APIs: as you can see, all those APIs focus on locating an application by the name of
 its window class. This trick is sometimes used by VXers to find AV products and kill them.
 The windows message system is flawed, meaning Windows does not check who sends a given
 message, and this can be used to kill applications. In this case, Griyo will only use these APIs
 to find his target.
- 2. "Winsock" APIs: the virus has an internal "SMTP" engine that provides self-mailing capabilities.

Before to continue getting APIs from "advapi32", the virus makes sure that the correct version of "Winsock" is available in the current machine. If not, the virus could not be e-mailed and it does not make any sense to stick trying to infect this machine:

```
      00401BB2
      PUSH YELLOW.00403C54
      ; pointer to data

      00401BB7
      PUSH 101
      ; version requested

      00401BBC
      CALL DWORD PTR [4029D5]
      ; WS2_32.WSAStartup

      00401BC2
      OR EAX,EAX
      ; version supported?

      00401BC4
      JNZ SHORT YELLOW.00401C13
      ; nope
```

List of APIs from advapi32

Finally, it retrieves the following APIs from "advapi32.dll":

- 1. "CloseServiceHandle"
- 2. "CreateServiceA"
- 3. "OpenSCManagerA"
- 4. "OpenServiceA"
- 5. "RegisterServiceControlHandlerA"
- 6. "SetServiceStatus StartServiceA"
- 7. "StartServiceCtrlDispatcherA"

Observe the API list. The virus will add itself as a system service. Services are run on each startup and, apart from it, normal applications cannot kill them. Two interesting features for a virus. Some other viruses use this trick as well.

2.4 Adding the new "service" to the current machine

Again, you will see some string manipulation. Let us postpone it for a while; it shall be much easier later. After it, the virus will try to copy itself to the system directory, where services need to be placed:

If the computer is already infected the call fails and the virus terminates. This explains why we have "FailIfExists = TRUE". The name of the virus is not constant, it can also be "nk32", "mj32" and others.

As we commented above, the virus has imported from "Advapi32" procedures to add a new service to the system. A service is, in plain words, a resident program that responds to different inquires from the user.

The steps for starting a new service are well documented: first in all, open the "ServiceControlManager":

```
004010B3 PUSH 2 ; SC_MANAGER_ALL_ACCESS
004010B5 PUSH 0 ; ServiceActive database
004010B7 PUSH 0 ; local machine
004010B9 CALL DWORD PTR [4029A1] ; ADVAPI32.OpenSCManagerA
004010BF MOV DWORD PTR [4029F9], EAX ; save returned handle
```

Now, open the service. Note that the access we request needs to match the one in the previous call. On the other hand, the name of the service is the one of the file you have copied to the system directory:

```
004010CC PUSH 0F01FF ; fdwDesiredAccess = SERVICE_ALL_ACCESS 004010D1 MOV EDI,YELLOW.00402A11 ; ASCII "io32", name of the service 004010D6 PUSH EDI ; 004010D7 PUSH EAX ; handle returned by OpenSCManagerA 004010D8 CALL DWORD PTR [4029A5] ; ADVAPI32.OpenServiceA
```

This will start the virus as a service. The virus still needs to define the parameters of the new service, for example it needs to tell the "SCM" (Service Control Manager) that this service has to be run at startup. The set-up of the service is done by "CreateService":

```
...
00401108 CALL DWORD PTR [40299D] ; CreateServiceA
```

This API has many parameters (see "Win32.hlp"), but we are only interested in:

- 1. "ServiceName = io32": name of the file into the system directory.
- 2. "lpDisplayName = NULL": name of the service that the user will see (for example, in "TaskManager").
- 3. "DesiredAccess = SERVICE_ALL_ACCESS".
- 4. "ServiceType = SERVICE_WIN32_SHARE_PROCESS|SERVICE_INTERACTIVE_PROCESS": The second flag is to let the service to interact with the desktop.
- 5. "StartType = SERVICE_AUTO_START": the service will be started at system startup.

Finally, the virus starts execution of the service. We will run the service later, under a controlled environment. Therefore, replace the call by an "add esp, 0Ch" and let us see what happens next:

2.5 Shutting down

Job done!. The virus closes all handles, frees DLLs and exits:

Our next step is to see what the new "service" does. For this, we have two alternatives:

- 1. Attach to the virus after rebooting the machine. In this case, you would better patch the virus so it gets into an infinite loop at the very beginning.
- 2. Start the copy of the virus at the system directory with a debugger and try to fool it. Mind the virus believes it is a service.

The second way is the best one. Hands on.

3. Manually "starting" the service

Service installation has required adding some keys to the registry (use regedit to find them) and copying the virus to the system directory. Remember to get rid of these all after studying the virus.

The service does not run in ring-0 and therefore has not any special privilege we do not have as admin. Note that the we are going to debug the copy of the virus at the system directory. Thus, there are not so many differences to care about. Let us start:

Now, as we know, comes the imports reconstruction and some calls to get information about the system: system version, computer name, path to the file which created this process and system directory. Everything goes exactly as we saw above. In the previous section, we omitted some string manipulations arguing they would be easier to understand now. Let us see what we meant:

```
00401053 MOV ESI,nk32.00402D95 ; ASCII "C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\nk32.EXE"
00401058 MOV EDI,nk32.00402881 ; ASCII "C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\ADVAPI32.DLL"
0040105D PUSH EDI ;
0040105E CALL nk32.00401D86 ;
...
00401081 CMP EAX,EDX ; compare CRC32 of both paths
00401083 JE nk32.004011D6 ;
```

The virus takes the path to the current program and compares it to the path to the service, which is constructed concatenating the name of the service to the system directory. If they agree then it runs as a service. After checking whether it is a service or not, the virus will retrieve the command line:

```
004011E4 CALL DWORD PTR [40242D] ; kernel32.GetCommandLineA

And later it will start the service dispatcher:

0040121F CALL DWORD PTR [4029B5] ; ADVAPI32.StartServiceCtrlDispatcherA
```

The only parameter of "StartServiceCtrlDispatcherA" is a pointer to the Service Table, which describes the service. In this case we have "pServiceTable = 402A10h", pointing to:

```
dd 402A11
dd 401232
dd 0
dd 0
```

If you review "win32.hlp" you will see that this is a "NULL" terminated array of "SERVICE_TABLE_ENTRY" elements, each one has two fields:

- 1. "lpServiceName": pointer to the service name, "io32" in this case.
- 2. "lpServiceProc": pointer to the service procedure. The service procedure is similar to the "EntryPoint" of a DLL.

In our case, the name of the service is "io32" and the entry point of the handler "401232h". The simplest thing to do here is to substitute the call to "StartServiceCtrlDispatcherA" by a call to the dispatcher itself. This way, we can run its code and analyse it:

```
0040121F CALL DWORD PTR [4029B5] ; replace by call 401232
```

Note that this is possible because the virus does not run at "ring-0". A very different problem would be to debug a kernel-driver virus. Anyway, we are at the start of the service:

```
00401232 pushad
00401233 mov eax,io32.00401260
```

The service saves all registers and then calls "RegisterServiceCtrlHandlerA". This registers its own handler, which should be later called by the applications requesting some service from it:

```
00401239 MOV EAX,io32.00402A11 ; ASCII "io32" (name of service)
0040123E PUSH EAX ; address of handler
0040123F CALL DWORD PTR [4029A9] ; ADVAPI32.RegisterServiceCtrlHandlerA
```

Substitute the previous call by an "add esp, 8". This equilibrates the stack and let us to continue. Note: this is the same than emulators do with known calls. The service name is "io32" and the address of the handler is "401260h". This handler only consists of two instructions:

```
00401260 ADD ESP,4
00401263 RETN
```

Therefore, a do nothing handler. The service simply returns when is called. In fact, the service will not be called by any program, because the virus does not worry about it and the rest of applications do not know its existence. Now the service informs the system that it is active and can be called:

```
00401249 PUSH io32.00402089 ; status information 
0040124E PUSH EAX ; handle returned by RegisterServiceCtrlHandlerA 
0040124F CALL DWORD PTR [4029AD] ; ADVAPI32.SetServiceStatus
```

Note: again, substitute the previous call by "add esp, 8".

As we said, this service consists of a do-nothing procedure which will not be called by any application. This guarantees that the service will run until the system is shut down. On the other hand, the "main" of the service works independently of the handler. Its work is to infect the system:

```
00401259 CALL io32.00401298 ; call InfectSystem
```

4. Finding the target

This is the beginning of the so called "InfectSystem" procedure. The first instructions only get the pointer to the PE header for "wsock32". Later, we will see that it needs this value to hook the APIs in the target process:

```
...
00401298 MOV EAX,DWORD PTR [4029C9] ; image base of wsock32
0040129D MOV ESI,DWORD PTR [EAX+3C]
004012A0 ADD ESI,EAX
```

The virus is going to send itself by e-mail. Therefore, it needs to manipulate (encode) a copy of itself in memory that will be attached to the mails:

```
...
004012C4 PUSH io32.00402C91 ; FileName = "C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\io32.EXE"
004012C9 CALL DWORD PTR [4023F9] ; CreateFileA
...
004012DF PUSH EAX ; hFile
004012E0 CALL DWORD PTR [4023FD] ; CreateFileMappingA
...
004012F4 PUSH EAX ; hMapObject
004012F5 CALL DWORD PTR [402451] ; MapViewOfFile
```

Now, the virus allocates some memory and overwrites it with the word "0DA0h" (this is "CTRL-F", used to format lines into "SMTP" protocols):

```
...
00401313 CALL DWORD PTR [402465] ; VirtualAlloc
...
0040132A MOV AX, 0A0D ; Fill with CTRL-F
0040132E REP STOS WORD PTR [EDI] ;

00401332 call mj32.00401877 ; EncodeVirus
```

As you can see, the virus has allocated a buffer, filled it with "CTRL-F" and encoded there the virus body ("edi" points to the "MZ" header before the call). The encoding algorithm is, most likely, "BASE64". We know it because: first, this is a common algorithm used to send mails. Second and last, the next string was visible in the data section at the very beginning, before the first decryption:

Exactly 64 different characters, the ones appearing in the encoded virus. After this, the virus closes all unnecessary handles:

```
00401337 CALL DWORD PTR [402461] ; UnmapViewOfFile 0040133D CALL DWORD PTR [4023ED] ; CloseHandle 00401343 CALL DWORD PTR [4023ED] ; CloseHandle
```

Here begins the real fun: the virus creates a new thread. This does not mean this is a multi-threaded application. In fact, threads are used only to never stop looking for its target. The new thread will be in charge of locating, debugging and hooking the victim:

```
0040136C push eax ; ThreadFunction = 4013AA ... ; 
0040136F call dword ptr [402405] ; CreateThread
```

The thread creation is included in the following loop:

```
00401349  /xor eax,eax
0040134B  |mov dword ptr [402FC5],eax
...
0040136F  |call dword ptr [402405] ; CreateThread
...
0040137C  |call dword ptr [402471] ; WaitForSingleObject
00401382  |jmp short io32.00401349
```

We simply set a bpx at the beginning of the thread, "4013AAh", and let the virus run. Sooner or later the debugger will be prompted there. Then, you can patch the main thread so it does not interfere with more calls to "CreateThread".

As we are going to see, the thread is going to enumerate all windows in the desktop. The virus compares the hash of the class name of each found window with a pre-stored value. Thus, it is impossible to know in advance what it is looking for. There are two alternatives:

- 1. Patch the virus so it admits any application having some characteristics (for a start, it should be able to send mails).
- 2. Try our luck: most likely, the virus is looking for "IExplorer", "Eudora", "Outlook"... Fire them up and see what happens.

The second approach makes easy to identify the target: Outlook. Let us have a look at how the windows enumeration works. The method is interesting because is also present in some anti-cracking protections:

```
004013BA push eax ; |Callback => io32.0040194B
004013BB call dword ptr [402989] ; \EnumWindows
```

"EnumWindows" defines a recursive procedure, see the parameter "callback", which is called until no more windows are found. The "callback" receives a handle to the current window and, after checking it, has to decide whether it continues the enumeration or stops. To cover all cases, we set a bpx at the start of the "callback" procedure and another one after the call to "EnumWindows":

```
0040194B mov eax,dword ptr [esp+4] ; start of CallBack procedure 0040194F push ebx
```

The "CallBack" procedure gets the class name, hashes it and compares the hash to a given value. If they are not equal then it continues with the enumeration. Otherwise, it gets the "Process Id" of the current application and terminates:

```
push eax 0040195E call
                                            ; hWnd
           call dword ptr [40298D]
                                            ; GetClassNameA
00401968 call mj32.00401C92
                                            ; compute hash
         cmp edx,0CFA7A89
0040196D
                                            ; compare to target
00401973
          jnz short mj32.0040198E
; if found, get pId and return
          push eax
0040197A
                                            ; /pProcessID => mj32.00402FC5
         push edi
0040197B
                                            ; | hWnd
0040197C
           call dword ptr [402991]
                                            ; \GetWindowThreadProcessId
00401982 mov dword ptr [402FC9],eax
```

5. Deceiving the virus

What we are going to do is to create a small windows based application which hijacks the windows class name of Outlook. This way, the virus will detect our application and will try to infect it. Note that there is no need to have the actual target running, which could be very dangerous. The only inconvenient is that we need to send mails, because the virus is a self-mailing one.

The class name the virus looks for is "Outlook Express Browser Class". To know the class name of an application run it under Olly and see the list of windows. The code of our fake Outlook, with explanations, has been included in the Appendix. Have a look at it before the next section.

6. Hooking the target

The virus is going to attach to our fake Outlook. This provides it a lot of information about it: loaded DLLs, existing threads, exceptions,\dots. If you have never debugged a debugger this is a nice chance to start. Please, note this is not a tutorial on how to build a user level debugger, consult "win32.hlp" for details.

The first step, given the "ProcessId", is to call "DebugActiveProcess". This attaches to the target application:

```
004013D8 push esi ; /ProcessId = 3CC 004013D9 call dword ptr [402409] ; \DebugActiveProcess
```

Now, you have to enter into an infinite loop that awaits for the debug events and replies accordingly:

```
004013F2 call dword ptr [40246D] ; WaitForDebugEvent
```

Well, let us have a look at what the virus does for each debug event. Consult "win32.hlp" and you will see the following events defined:

```
EXCEPTION_DEBUG_EVENT
                                      eau 1
CREATE_THREAD_DEBUG_EVENT
                                      equ 2
CREATE_PROCESS_DEBUG_EVENT
                                      equ 3
EXIT_THREAD_DEBUG_EVENT
                                      equ 4
EXIT_PROCESS_DEBUG_EVENT
                                      equ 5
LOAD_DLL_DEBUG_EVENT
                                      equ 6
UNLOAD_DLL_DEBUG_EVENT
                                      equ 7
OUTPUT_DEBUG_STRING_EVENT
                                      equ 8
RIP_EVENT
                                      equ 9
```

Some of this cases are distinguished in a switch inside the virus:

```
00401402 cmp eax,1

00401405 je mj32.0040153D

0040140B cmp eax,2

0040140E je mj32.0040149C

00401414 cmp eax,3
```

The first debug event we receive is a "CREATE_PROCESS_DEBUG_EVENT". This is always received, therefore not very interesting for a virus. In this case, YellowFever duplicates the handle to the main thread of the target application, manipulates a list and continues. To continue the debuggee one always has to call "ContinueDebugEvent" and go to await another event:

Now, we receive a "LOAD_DLL_DEBUG_EVENT". This informs the debugger about a new loaded DLL. The virus reads the image base of the DLL, which is sent to the debuggee in the information associated to the debug event, and compares it to the one of Wsock32. If they do not match, it simply goes to await another event:

```
004019A4 mov ebx,eax ; ntdll.77F40000
004019A6 cmp ebx,dword ptr [4029C9] ; WSOCK32.#1139
004019AC jnz short mj32.00401A0E ;
```

You will see several more DLLs until "wsock32" is loaded. Then, it reads "e_lfanew" at the "PE-header" of the target process:

```
...
00401A4C push eax ; |pBaseAddress = 71A5003C
00401A4D push dword ptr [402FCD] ; |hProcess = 0000006C
00401A53 call dword ptr [402455] ; \ReadProcessMemory
```

And, with this information, moves to read a piece of the "IMAGE_OPTIONAL_HEADER32":

Actually, "wsock32" is always loaded at the same image base in all processes in the same Operating System. Thus, retrieving this information is a loss of time. Anyway, this would let to generalise this hooking procedure for other DLLs:

"71A31AF4h" is the address of "WS2_32.send", the API to send information through a communication socket. To hook this API, the virus only needs to overwrite its first byte with an "int3". This way, every time the API is called the virus will receive an "EXCEPTION_DEBUG_EVENT":

```
00401A73 call dword ptr [402479] ; WriteProcessMemory
```

After hooking the API, the virus awaits the next event. It receives more events corresponding to loaded DLLs and also a "CREATE_THREAD_DEBUG_EVENT", which corresponds to the creation of the primary thread. This event is not interesting at all. We want to know what the virus does when it receives the "int3" above.

7. Self-mailing

In this last part of the virus analysis we will try to understand how the self-mailing mechanism works. For now, the virus has attached to the target process and has hooked the entry point of the API "WS2_32.send", which is used to send information through a socket. Please, review the basics of Winsock programming in case you need it.

Finally, we receive the first "EXCEPTION_DEBUG_EVENT". Note that this exception is always at "NTDLL.DebugBreak", because the application is being debugged. Thus, the user-level debugger needs to discard those "int3" not taking place at the "EntryPoint" of the hooked API. The following switch checks the exception code:

```
0040153D
            mov eax, dword ptr [esi+8]
                                        ; read exception code
00401540
            cmp eax,80000004
                                        ; STATUS_SINGLE_STEP
00401545
            je short io32.00401558
00401547
            cmp eax,80000003
                                        ; STATUS_BREAKPOINT
0040154C
            je short io32.004015A0
0040154E
           mov ecx,80010001
                                        ; DBG_EXCEPTION_NOT_HANDLED
            jmp io32.00401436
00401553
```

So, the virus handles "int1", "int3" and unhandled exceptions. Why so many ones?. We will see it in a few minutes.

Now, the virus enters into the case "int3" and checks the address where the exception has taken place. If this is not the "EntryPoint" of "WS2_32.send" the exception is ignored and it waits for the next one::

```
004015A6 mov edi,dword ptr [esi+14] ; ntdll.DbgBreakPoint
004015A9 cmp edi,dword ptr [4029CD] ; WS2_32.send
004015AF jnz short mj32.004015D5
```

Note: here you will receive an "EXIT_THREAD_DEBUG_EVENT". This is totally irrelevant. We omit it for not to make a mess with the rest of the analysis.

The virus receives another "int3", but this time it has taken place at "WS2_32.send" and it will be handled. Let us see the steps the virus takes when this happens:

1. Read the context of the thread in the target which has provoked the exception:

```
004015C9 call dword ptr [402445] ; GetThreadContext
```

2. Reads the value of "Cx_Esp" from the context of the offending thread. This lets the virus to know the parameters of the call:

```
      0040183C
      mov eax,dword ptr [edi+C4]
      ; address in target (Cx_Esp)

      00401842
      mov ecx,14
      ; number of bytes to read

      00401847
      mov esi,mj32.0040385A
      ; buffer

      0040184C
      call mj32.00401A42
      ; ReadTargetMemory
```

Note: see the context structure at "windows.inc" to check that "Cx_Esp" is actually at displacement "0C4h".

3. Read the data sent by the target application. As you can see, the second parameter of "WS2_32.send" is a pointer to the buffer containing the data. This can be found at "[esp+8]", its length is at "[esp+0Ch]":

```
00401855
             mov ecx,dword ptr [esi+C]
                                             ; read length of data
00401858
             jecxz short mj32.00401874
                                             ; check length
0040185A
            cmp ecx,100
             jnb short mj32.00401874
00401860
           mov eax,dword ptr [esi+8]
00401862
                                            ; read pointer to data
           mov esi,mj32.00403B54
00401865
                                            ; buffer to store the data
0040186A
           call mj32.00401A42
                                             ; ReadTargetMemory
```

The virus knows now what the virus is sending. The next step is to modify the message so it contains a copy of the worm as attachment. At this point, it is recommendable to read the "RFC" of the "SMTP" protocol.

The virus computes a hash of the first "dword" of the data to some magic values:

```
004015EC call mj32.00401C75 ; hash
...

004015F3 cmp edx,D15EC8BC

004015F9 je short mj32.00401637

004015FB cmp edx,6A304C39

00401601 je short mj32.00401656

00401603 cmp edx,3DDCB44E

00401609 je short mj32.00401675
```

This three cases need to be common headers sent along the "SMTP" protocol. Our fake Outlook sends a complete mail and, therefore, the virus should happily find all cases now. As you can well imagine, the virus will modify the protocol adding the "MIME" headers and the "BASE64"-encoded virus body.

If non of the previous cases is detected the virus sets the trap flag and makes "Cx_Eip" to go back one instruction:

```
0040160D dec dword ptr [edi+B8] ; move Cx_Eip to WS2_32.send 00401613 or dword ptr [edi+C0],100 ; set trap flag ; 0040161F call dword ptr [402459] ; kernel32.SetThreadContext
```

Next, it replaces the int3 with the original instruction:

00401625	mov edi,dword ptr [4029CD]	;	write to WS2_32.send
0040162B	mov esi,mj32.00402FE9	;	read from
00401630	call mj32.00401A32	;	WriteTargetMemory

Therefore, the original instruction will be run and then the virus will receive an "EXCEPTION_SINGLE_STEP". Then, the virus can take advantage to hook again the API, overwriting its first instruction with an int3. Apart from it, the virus has to clear the trap flag so execution can continue. Note that, without this trick, we would loose the hook in the first API call.

```
00401558
             mov edi, dword ptr [4029CD]
                                                 ; WS2_32.send
0040155E
             call mj32.00401A1B
                                                 ; hook API (writes an int3)
0040157E
          push esı
call dword ptr [402445]
                                                 ; hThread
0040157F
                                                 ; \GetThreadContext
00401589
             and dword ptr [edi+C0],FFFFFEFF
                                                ; clear TF
             call dword ptr [402459]
00401595
                                                 ; SetThreadContext
00401443
             call dword ptr [4023F1]
                                                 ; ContinueDebugEvent
```

The target sends the data through the socket and moves to send the next part of the mail. Therefore, the virus will be eventually called. The next piece of the mail that the fake Outlook sends is:

This matches the first case of the switch above:

```
004015F3 cmp edx, D15EC8BC ; FROM 004015F9 je short mj32.00401637
```

The virus copies all the data ""FROM:<...>"" to a buffer and proceeds to set the trap flag and let the target to continue. Next, the target sends:

```
00403B54 52 43 50 54 20 54 4F 3A 20 3C 65 6C 61 62 69 72 RCPT TO: <elabir 00403B64 40 68 6F 74 6D 61 69 6C 2E 63 6F 6D 3E 0F 0A @hotmail.com>
```

This matches this case:

```
004015FB cmp edx, 6A304C39 ; RCPT TO 00401601 je short mj32.00401656
```

Again, the data is copied to another buffer and the virus sets the trap flag and so on. After this, the target sends the "DATA" header of the message, which is not handled, and finally the terminating "DOT", which matches the following case:

```
00401603 cmp edx, 3DDCB44E
00401609 je short mj32.00401675
```

Now, the behaviour is rather different: the virus duplicates the handle to the socket used by the target. Then, it can use this fake handle to impersonate the target and call "WS2_32.send" on its behalf. Note that the handle to the socket in the target process was one of the parameters of "WS2_32.send":

In this last call, the virus has sent the terminating " 0Dh, 0Ah, 2Eh, 0Dh, 0Ah", which marks the end of a mail. Next, the virus sends a second mail having itself as the attachment. Note that this is only a "proof of concept" virus. In real life one can do more suitable things, for example: adjust the language of the mail, add some picture, add random message bodies,... The virus needs to adjust some parameters of the socket before to call "WS2_32.send", for example the maximum number of bytes to send. This stuff can be controlled by means of the API "ioctlsocket". Observe that, either the virus has a bug or "win32.hlp" is wrong (the second one, i am afraid), because otherwise the next comparison would lead to an infinite loop:

```
004017FE call dword ptr [4029DD] ; call ioctlsocket 00401804 cmp dword ptr [403DE4],0 ; 0040180B je short mj32.004017E4 ; ???
```

So, change the conditional jump and continue. After this, there is a call to "WS2_32.recv", which receives the reply from the server. Of course, we will not have any reply. Change the return, "eax", to the number of bytes received so the virus thinks everything is ok. Right after this the virus sends a second mail with the added attachment. This is what it sends:

```
0040394C 4D 41 49 4C 20 46 52 4F 4D 3A 20 3C 59 65 6C 6C MAIL FROM: <Yell
0040395C 6F 77 46 65 76 65 72 40 32 39 41 2E 63 6F 6D 3E owFever@29A.com>
0040396C OF 0A
00403A50 52 43 50 54 20 54 4F 3A 20 3C 65 6C 61 62 69 72
                                                          RCPT TO: <elabir@hotm
00403A60 40 68 6F 74 6D 61 69 6C 2E 63 6F 6D 3E 0F 0A
                                                          ail.com>.
00402269 44 41 54 41 0D 0A
                                                         DATA..
00403951 46 52 4F 4D 3A 20 3C 59 65 6C 6C 6F 77 46 65 76 FROM: <YellowFev
00403961 65 72 40 32 39 41 2E 63 6F 6D 3E 0F 0A
                                                         er@29A.com>.
00403A55 \, 54 4F 3A 20 3C 65 6C 61 62 69 72 40 68 6F 74 6D \, TO: <elabir@hotm
00403A65 61 69 6C 2E 63 6F 6D 3E 0F 0A
                                                         ail.com>.
; now comes a block declaring the attachment
0040226F 53 75 62 6A 65 63 74 3A 20 70 69 63 2E 67 69 66 Subject: pic.gif
0040227F 20 20 ...
00402370
                        20 20 2E 73 63 72 0D 0A 4D 49 4D
                                                                .scr..MIM
00402380 45 2D 56 65 72 73 69 6F 6E 3A 20 31 2E 30 0D 0A E-Version: 1.0..
00402390 43 6F 6E 74 65 6E 74 2D 54 79 70 65 3A 20 69 6D Content-Type: im
004023A0 61 67 65 2F 67 69 66 3B 20 63 68 61 72 73 65 74 age/gif; charset
004023B0 3D 75 73 2D 61 73 63 69 69 0D 0A 43 6F 6E 74 65 004023C0 6E 74 2D 54 72 61 6E 73 66 65 72 2D 45 6E 63 6F
                                                         =us-ascii..Conte
                                                         nt-Transfer-Enco
004023D0 64 69 6E 67 3A 20 62 61 73 65 36 34 0D 0A 0D 0A ding: base64....
; finally, the encoded virus
003C0000 54 56 70 51 41 41 49 41 41 41 45 41 41 38 41 TVPQAAIAAAEAA8A
003C0010 2F 2F 38 41 41 4C 67 41 41 41 41 41 41 41 41 41
                                                         //8AALqAAAAAAAA
```

After sending itself, the virus sets again the trap flag at the "EntryPoint" of "WS2_32.send", restores the original instruction and the story starts again. This completes our analysis of "Win32.Dengue".

7. Summary

Let us do a small summary of all new concepts we have learnt so far:

- 1. Dynamic data: the virus avoids having stored or encrypted information. Instead, it builds its data dynamically. This is a good weapon again static analysers.
- 2. User-level debuggers: the virus contains a user-level debugger that it uses to attach to the host. This provides important information, which can be used for hooking APIs and interfering with the "SMTP" protocol. We needed to review user-level debuggers and devise a method to extract information from only the debugger (we did not have information from the debuggee).
- 3. "SMTP" protocol: nowadays, most viruses implement an internal "SMTP" engine which they use to e-mail themselves. In this article, we have review this protocol and built a small application that we used to deceive the virus.
- 4. System services: the virus uses the Service Control Manager to install itself as a system service. Therefore, we also need a method to debug an application which is loaded before the debugger. Fortunately, the virus does not make extensive use of services features, making our job much easier.

To defeat the virus, we have debugged into each one of its parts and constructed a small application to use as bait file. This file has been coded after having collected a minimum information about the virus. Of course, one needs to update its bait file as he finds out more characteristics of the software to analyse.

8. Conclusions

"Win32.YellowFever" shows that conceptual complexity of current i-worms in the wild is well far from what can be done. Analysis of "Win32.YellowFever" has required understanding user-level debuggers and basic knowledge of the "SMTP" protocol, which we implemented in a small "Anti-YellowFever" application. On the other hand, we have seen there is no need of buying expensive software or using sophisticated tools to reverse malware.

References

- 1. Labir, E., *VX-Reversing II*, *Sasser.B.* CBJ, 2004. **1**(1).
- 2. Symantec, *Symantec Antivirus Software and Information*. http://www.symantec.com, 2005.
- 3. F-Prot, *F-Prot Antivirus Software*. http://www.f-prot.com, 2005.
- 4. Labir, E., *VX-Reversing I, the Basics*. CBJ, 2004. **1**(1).
- 5. Microsoft, MSDN Microsoft Development Network. http://www.msdn.com, 2005.
- 6. Socket-Internet, Winsock Programmers FAQ. http://www.socket.com, 2005.

Appendix: AntiYellow.asm

```
.model flat,stdcall
option casemap:none
includes
 include \masm32\include\windows.inc
 include \masm32\include\user32.inc
 include \masm32\include\kernel32.inc
 include \masm32\include\wsock32.inc
 includelib \masm32\lib\user32.lib
 includelib \masm32\lib\kernel32.lib
 includelib \masm32\lib\wsock32.lib
 WinMain proto :DWORD,:DWORD,:DWORD,:DWORD
; my own constants and stuff
              EQU 0202h ; no need to request such a high version EQU 0100007FH ; 127.0.0.1
SOCKET_VERSION
              EQU 0202h
LOCAL_HOST
                    data section
;....,
.data
zsClassName db "Outlook Express Browser Class", 0 ; target class
zsAppName db "Hello YelloFever", 0
                                             ; title of window
zsWsockError db 'Winsock Error',0
; Constants for the mini-SMTP engine.
           db 'HELO <hotmail.com>', ODh, OAh
zsHelo
zsMailFrom db 'MAIL FROM: <YellowFever@29A.com>', ODh, OAh
zsRcptTo db 'RCPT TO: <elabir@hotmail.com>', 0Dh, 0Ah
           db 'DATA', ODh, OAh
db 'regards', ODh, OAh
zsData
zsMsgBody
           db 0Dh, 0Ah, '.', 0Dh, 0Ah
zsDot.
           db 'QUIT', ODh, OAh
zsQuit
; for working with WSOCK
LocalAddr sockaddr_in <0>
mySocketOut SOCKET 0
mySocketIn
             SOCKET 0
SocketData WSADATA <0>
; some general variables
hInstance HINSTANCE 0
CommandLine dd 0
buffer
        dd 0
          dd 0
ThreadID
hfile
         dd 0
```

```
hmap
         dd 0
LOG_SIZE
         dd 10000h
                        ; size of buffer to create
AntiYellow code
;......
; Description: The application keeps a log of all sent mails. Then
; it creates a window with the same class name than outlook and also
; a new thread. The thread is an infinite loop that sends a mail
; ONLY when it is debugged (because YellowFever will debug it).
.code
start:
     create the window (see iczelion homepage for details)
     invoke GetModuleHandle, NULL
   mov hInstance, eax
   invoke GetCommandLine
        CommandLine, eax
   invoke WinMain, hInstance, NULL, CommandLine, SW_SHOWDEFAULT
   invoke ExitProcess, eax
WinMain proc hInst:HINSTANCE, hPrevInst:HINSTANCE, CmdLine:LPSTR, CmdShow:DWORD
   LOCAL wc:WNDCLASSEX
   LOCAL msg:MSG
   LOCAL hwnd: HWND
       wc.cbSize,SIZEOF WNDCLASSEX
   mov
        wc.style, CS_HREDRAW or CS_VREDRAW
   mov
        wc.lpfnWndProc, OFFSET WndProc
   mov
        wc.cbClsExtra,NULL
        wc.cbWndExtra,NULL
   mov
   push hInstance
        wc.hInstance
        wc.hbrBackground,COLOR_WINDOW+1
   mov
        wc.lpszMenuName,NULL
        wc.lpszClassName,OFFSET zsClassName ; Outlook class name (above)
   mov
; load the icon
   invoke LoadIcon, NULL, IDI_APPLICATION
   mov wc.hIcon.eax
   mov
        wc.hlconSm,eax
; load the cursor
   invoke LoadCursor,NULL,IDC_ARROW
   mov wc.hCursor,eax
; register our window class
   invoke RegisterClassEx, addr wc
; create window
   INVOKE CreateWindowEx, NULL, ADDR zsClassName, ADDR zsAppName, \
         WS_OVERLAPPEDWINDOW, CW_USEDEFAULT, \
```

```
CW_USEDEFAULT,CW_USEDEFAULT,NULL,NULL,\
       hInst, NULL
     mov hwnd, eax
; show and update the window
   invoke ShowWindow, hwnd, SW_SHOWNORMAL
  invoke UpdateWindow, hwnd
start a new thread for sending the messages
mov eax, OFFSET ThreadProc
  xor ebx, ebx
   invoke CreateThread,\
                      ; security attributes
        ebx,\
                      ; stack size
        ebx,\
        eax,\
                      ; start address
                      ; parameter for thread
        ebx,\
        ebx,\
                      ; creation flags
                      ; storage for thread id
        ADDR ThreadID
; message loop
   .WHILE TRUE
           invoke GetMessage, ADDR msg, NULL, 0, 0
      .BREAK .IF (!eax)
     invoke TranslateMessage, ADDR msg
     invoke DispatchMessage, ADDR msg
   FNDW
  mov
       eax, msg.wParam
  ret
WinMain endp
;......
                Window Procedure
WndProc proc hWnd:HWND, uMsg:UINT, wParam:WPARAM, lParam:LPARAM
   .IF uMsg==WM_DESTROY
     invoke PostQuitMessage, NULL
   .ELSE
     invoke DefWindowProc, hWnd, uMsg, wParam, lParam
     ret
   .ENDIF
  xor eax, eax
  ret
WndProc endp
My thread to send messages to the server
ThreadProc proc
             lpParam:DWORD
; initialize winsock
```

```
invoke WSAStartup, SOCKET_VERSION, ADDR SocketData
    .if eax != NULL
        jmp @@ErrorWinsock
    .endif
; create an origin socket (to send data from)
    invoke socket, PF_INET, SOCK_RAW, IPPROTO_IP
    mov mySocketIn, eax
    .if eax == INVALID_SOCKET
        jmp @@ErrorWinsock
    .endif
; create a destination socket (to send data to)
    invoke socket, PF_INET, SOCK_RAW, IPPROTO_IP
    mov mySocketOut, eax
    .if eax == INVALID_SOCKET
        jmp @@ErrorWinsock
    .endif
; fill the local address to bind the destination socket to it
    mov LocalAddr.sin_family, PF_INET
    mov LocalAddr.sin_addr, LOCAL_HOST
                                              ; 127.0.0.1
    invoke htons, IPPORT_ECHO
                                              ; this is the port for "pings"
    mov LocalAddr.sin_port, ax
; bind the output socket to the local address
    invoke bind, mySocketOut, ADDR LocalAddr, SIZEOF sockaddr
    .if eax != NULL
        jmp @@ErrorWinsock
    .endif
; connect the input socket to the local address
    invoke connect, mySocketIn, ADDR LocalAddr, SIZEOF sockaddr
    .if eax != NULL
        jmp @@ErrorWinsock
    .endif
; Send messages to the local address. We only do this when we are debugged, meaning
; the virus is trying to hook our calls. All mails we send, an only one, are
logged.
    .WHILE (TRUE)
          invoke IsDebuggerPresent
          .if eax != 0
                                                            , 18+2, 0
                invoke send, mySocketIn, ADDR zsHelo
                invoke send, mySocketIn, ADDR zsMailFrom , 32+2, 0
                invoke send, mySocketIn, ADDR zsRcptTo , 29+2, 0
                invoke send, mySocketIn, ADDR zsData
invoke send, mySocketIn, ADDR zsMsgBody
                                                            , 4+2 , 0
, 7+2 , 0
                invoke send, mySocketIn, ADDR zsDot
                                                            , 1+2 , 0
                invoke send, mySocketIn, ADDR zsDot , 1+2 , 0 invoke send, mySocketIn, ADDR zsQuit , 4+2 , 0
                invoke ExitProcess, 0
```

.endif
.ENDW
@@ErrorWinsock:
 invoke MessageBoxA, 0,0, ADDR zsWsockError, 0
 ret
ThreadProc endp
end start