

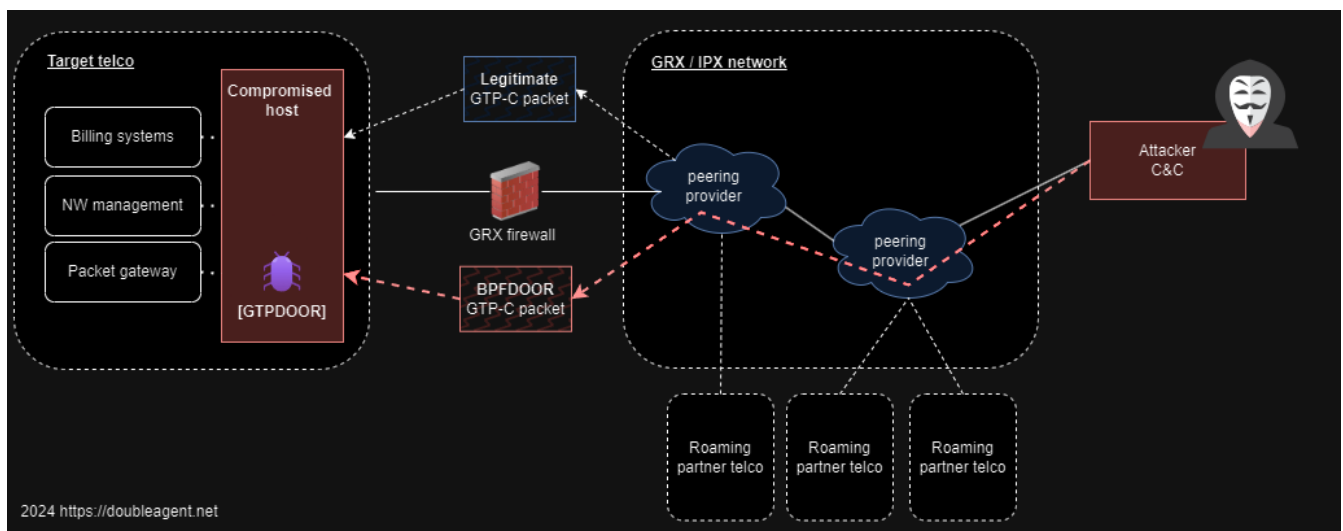
GTPDOOR - A novel backdoor tailored for covert access over the roaming exchange

🕒 11 minute read

Introduction

GTPDOOR is the name of Linux based malware that is intended to be deployed on systems in telco networks adjacent to the GRX (GRPS eXchange Network) with the novel feature of communicating C2 traffic over GTP-C (GPRS Tunnelling Protocol (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GPRS_Tunnelling_Protocol) - Control Plane) signalling messages. This allows the C2 traffic to blend in with normal traffic and to reuse already permitted ports that maybe open and exposed to the GRX network (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GPRS_roaming_exchange).

The following diagram illustrates a forseen use of GTPDOOR. Here the actor already has established persistence on the roaming exchange network and access a compromised host by sending GTP-C Echo Request messages with a malicious payload:



(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/1.png>)

In addition to remote code execution capability, GTPDOOR can be beacons by sending arbitrary TCP packets to a host the implant resides on. Supporting it's stealth capability, the beacon response message hides particular information in a TCP header flag.

Naming

I have given this malware the name GTPDOOR as it uses a similar "port knocking / magic packet" technique as BPFDOOR as described [here \(https://sandflysecurity.com/blog/bpfdoor-an-evasive-](https://sandflysecurity.com/blog/bpfdoor-an-evasive-)

[linux-backdoor-technical-analysis/](#)) and [here](https://www.elastic.co/security-labs/a-peek-behind-the-bpfdoor) (<https://www.elastic.co/security-labs/a-peek-behind-the-bpfdoor>). Both use raw sockets to intercept packets on the network interface. Unlike BPDDOOR, GTPDOOR explicitly uses GTP-C echo request/response messages and does not utilize BFP / pcap filters, but rather filters on UDP and GTP header values through simple `cmp` instructions. At the time of writing, I am not aware of this malware being documented anywhere else.

Attribution

GTPDOOR is likely attributed to UNC1945 ([Mandiant](https://www.mandiant.com/resources/blog/live-off-the-land-an-overview-of-unc1945) (<https://www.mandiant.com/resources/blog/live-off-the-land-an-overview-of-unc1945>)) / LightBasin ([CrowdStrike](https://www.crowdstrike.com/blog/an-analysis-of-lightbasin-telecommunications-attacks/) (<https://www.crowdstrike.com/blog/an-analysis-of-lightbasin-telecommunications-attacks/>))

As described in the [CrowdStrike article](https://www.crowdstrike.com/blog/an-analysis-of-lightbasin-telecommunications-attacks/) (<https://www.crowdstrike.com/blog/an-analysis-of-lightbasin-telecommunications-attacks/>) this threat actor has been documented to use the GTP protocol for encapsulating tinysHELL traffic in a valid PDP context session by employing an SGSN emulator to tunnel traffic to an external GGSN in another operator network. Here, GTPDOOR is leveraging not off a PDP context (GTP-U, userplane) but specific GTP-C signalling messages with it's own extended message structure.

As we will see below, both binaries contain the name of the original c source file, `dnsc.c`. A google search links to a [presentation](https://www.bsidesdub.ie/past/media/2023/Stuart_Davis_LightBasin.pdf) (https://www.bsidesdub.ie/past/media/2023/Stuart_Davis_LightBasin.pdf) by CrowdStrike about this threat actor that contains text from a process listing originating from what looks like a Solaris machine. In that listing is a process with the name `dnsc` :

```
root 25828 0.0 0.0 2760 1936 ? S Nov 25 8:31 ./dnsc e1000g1
MANPATH=:/usr/share/man:/usr/sunvts/man:/opt/SUNWexplo/man:/opt/SUNWsneep/m
an:/opt/CTEact/man LC_MONETARY=en US.ISO8859-1 TERM=xterm
```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/21.png>)

If the attribution is correct, then given the discovery of this screenshot, it is likely that in addition to the two Linux binaries documented in this blog post, a third version exists which targets Sun Solaris systems.

Background information

In order to provide connectivity between telecommunication network operators around the globe, a “closed” network exists that provides interconnectivity between various systems. These network elements / functions need to have direct connectivity to the GRX network in order to route / forward roaming related signalling and user plane traffic. Examples of these systems are:

- eDNS - External DNS to resolve APN names, select packet gateway for routing the subscribers traffic
- SGSN, GGSN - 2G/3G packet core network elements for packet switched data
- P-GW (Packet Data Network Gateway) - 4G version of the GGSN
- STP - Signalling gateways for circuit switched routing (e.g. authentication to HLR/HSS) - specifically for SS7 signalling.
- DRA (Diameter Routing Agent) - 4G version of the STP, rather than SS7, the signalling traffic is over diameter.

These functions are listed as to give examples of **where** GTPDOOR could be placed as they may require direct connectivity to the GRX network. That is - providing opportunity for direct access into a telco's core network. It is more likely that it would be placed on systems that support GTP-C over GRX, such as SGSN, GGSN, PGW (which don't run some esoteric operating system). That said, if the GRX firewall is not configured right, there would be opportunities to place this type of implant elsewhere, or even within the internal core network.

A GSMA document called the IR.21 is used for network providers to publish the details of these systems such as the GT (global titles), IP addresses, APNs etc. This list is used for other companies that have roaming agreements to configure their network accordingly. Alternatively, they may exchange this information directly.

Summary of functionality

GTPDOOR supports the following:

- Listens for “magic” wakeup packet, a GTP-C echo request message (GTP type 0x01). The host does not need to have a listening sockets / listening services active, as all UDP packets are received into the user space via opening a raw socket
- Executes a command on the host which is specified in the magic packet and returns the output to the remote host, supporting a “reverse shell” type functionality. Both request/ responses are GTP_ECHO_REQUEST / GTP_ECHO_RESPONSE messages accordingly.
- Can be covertly probed from an external network to illicit a response by sending a TCP packet to any port number. If the implant is active a crafted empty TCP packet is returned along with information if the destination port was open/responding on the host.
- Authenticates and encrypts contents of magic GTP packet messages using a simple XOR cipher.
- At runtime can be instructed to change it’s authentication + encryption key (rekeying). This prevents the default key hardcoded in the binary to be used by other actors
- Blend in to environment by changing it’s process name to look like syslog process invoked as a kernel thread
- Does not require ingress firewall changes if the target host is allowed to communicate over the GTP-C port.

Versions

At the time of writing two versions have been identified on Virustotal:

Version	Filename	Architecture	Hash
1	dbus-echo	x86-64	827f41fc1a6f8a4c8a8575b3e2349aeaba0dfc2c9390ef1ccceef1bb85c34161
2	pickup	i386	5cbafa2d562be0f5fa690f8d551cdb0bee9fc299959b749b99d44ae3fda782e4

pickup has additional enhancements/features to dbus-echo , and hence is assigned a higher version number.

At the time of writing, both samples have been uploaded to Virustotal in late 2023.

Version 1 ([https://www.virustotal.com/gui/file/](https://www.virustotal.com/gui/file/827f41fc1a6f8a4c8a8575b3e2349aeaba0dfc2c9390ef1ccceef1bb85c34161)

[827f41fc1a6f8a4c8a8575b3e2349aeaba0dfc2c9390ef1ccceef1bb85c34161](https://www.virustotal.com/gui/file/827f41fc1a6f8a4c8a8575b3e2349aeaba0dfc2c9390ef1ccceef1bb85c34161)) - 1 detection

The screenshot shows the VirusTotal analysis page for the file 'dbus-echo'. On the left, there is a circular badge with the number '1' and '/ 63' below it. The main content area displays a warning: '1 security vendor and no sandboxes flagged this file as malicious'. Below this, there are action buttons: 'Follow', 'Reanalyze', 'Download', 'Similar', and 'More'. The file details section shows the hash '827f41fc1a6f8a4c8a8575b3e2349aeaba0dfc2c9390ef1cc...', the filename 'dbus-echo', a size of '13.29 KB', and a last analysis date of '4 months ago'. There is also an ELF icon in the bottom right corner.

elf 64bits

Community Score

DETECTION DETAILS BEHAVIOR CONTENT **TELEMETRY** COMMUNITY

First seen ⓘ
🇮🇹 ITALY
2023-06-14 10:33:42 UTC

Last seen ⓘ
🇮🇹 ITALY
2023-06-14 10:33:42 UTC

Distinct submitters ⓘ
1

Total submissions ⓘ
1

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/3.png>)

Version 2 ([https://www.virustotal.com/gui/file/](https://www.virustotal.com/gui/file/827f41fc1a6f8a4c8a8575b3e2349aeaba0dfc2c9390ef1cceeef1bb85c34161)

[827f41fc1a6f8a4c8a8575b3e2349aeaba0dfc2c9390ef1cceeef1bb85c34161](https://www.virustotal.com/gui/file/827f41fc1a6f8a4c8a8575b3e2349aeaba0dfc2c9390ef1cceeef1bb85c34161)) - 0 detections

0 / 63

Community Score

✔ No security vendors and no sandboxes flagged this file as malicious

🔔 Follow 🔄 Reanalyze ⬇ Download ⌵ ⚙ Similar ⌵ More ⌵

5cbafa2d562be0f5fa690f8d551cdb0bee9fc299959b749b... | Size 18.63 KB | Last Analysis Date 5 months ago

pickup

elf detect-debug-environment

DETECTION DETAILS RELATIONS BEHAVIOR CONTENT **TELEMETRY** COMMUNITY

First seen ⓘ
🇨🇳 CHINA
2023-09-29 02:10:47 UTC

Last seen ⓘ
🇨🇳 CHINA
2023-09-29 02:10:47 UTC

Distinct submitters ⓘ
1

Total submissions ⓘ
1

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/2.png>)

Both binaries were targeted for a particularly old Linux distribution, “Red Hat Linux 4.1”. This is the equivalent to RHEL 5.x. The GCC date is marked 2008. It is quite likely the target network operator of this implant had quite poor patch / lifecycle management.

```
$ file samples/dbus-echo
samples/dbus-echo: ELF 64-bit LSB executable, x86-64, version 1 (SYSV), dynamically
linked, interpreter /lib64/ld-linux-x86-64.so.2, for GNU/Linux 2.6.9, not stripped
$
$ file samples/pickup
samples/pickup: ELF 32-bit LSB executable, Intel 80386, version 1 (SYSV), dynamical
ly linked, interpreter /lib/ld-linux.so.2, for GNU/Linux 2.6.9, not stripped
$
$ strings samples/dbus-echo | grep GCC | sort -u
GCC: (GNU) 4.1.2 20080704 (Red Hat 4.1.2-55)
$
$ strings samples/pickup | grep GCC | sort -u
GCC: (GNU) 4.1.2 20080704 (Red Hat 4.1.2-55)
$
```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/4.png>)

As the binaries are not stripped, source code's original filename was likely `dnsd.c` :

```

$ readelf --syms samples/dbus-echo | grep FILE
 27: 0000000000000000      0 FILE   LOCAL  DEFAULT  ABS crtstuff.c
 35: 0000000000000000      0 FILE   LOCAL  DEFAULT  ABS crtstuff.c
 40: 0000000000000000      0 FILE   LOCAL  DEFAULT  ABS dnsd.c

$ readelf --syms samples/pickup | grep FILE
 27: 00000000      0 FILE   LOCAL  DEFAULT  ABS crtstuff.c
 35: 00000000      0 FILE   LOCAL  DEFAULT  ABS crtstuff.c
 40: 00000000      0 FILE   LOCAL  DEFAULT  ABS dnsd.c

```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/5.png>)

Technical Details

GTP magic packet message types

The command instruction is sent in the GTP Echo Request message along with the associated data. As summarized:

GTPDOOR v1

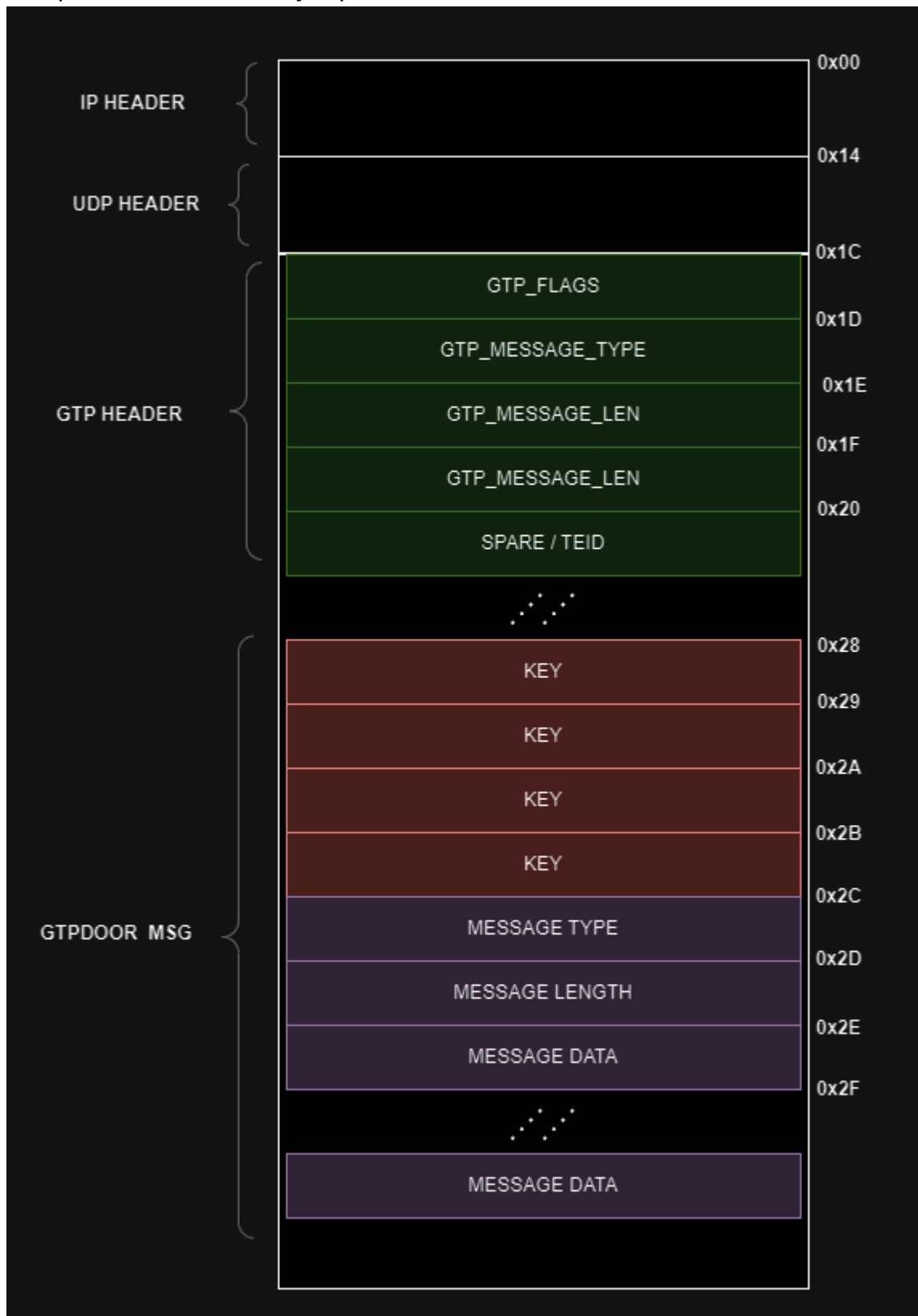
Message Type	Function	Payload
0x01	Set new encryption key	New key
0x02	Write data to system.conf	File content
0x03 - 0xFF	Execute command and return output	Shell command to run

GTPDOOR v2

Message Type	Function	Payload
0x01	Set new encryption key	New key value
0x02	Write arbitrary data to system.conf	File content
0x03 , 0x04 , 0x08 - 0xFF	Execute command and return output	Shell command to run
0x05	IP address or subnet to access control list.	Multiple subnets or single IPs (/32) can be separated by a comma, e.g. 192.168.0.1/24,10.0.0.1
0x06	Return ACL list	
0x07	Clear ACL	

Magic packet format

The packet can be visually represented as followed:



(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/15.png>)

As a "c-like struct":

```

struct gtp_header
{
    uint8_t flags;
    uint8_t type;
    uint16_t length;
    uint32_t tei; // technically labelled spare if type == GTP_ECHO
};

struct gtpdoor_header
{
    uint8_t pad[5];
    int32_t key1;
    uint8_t cmdMsgType;
    uint16_t cmdLength;
};

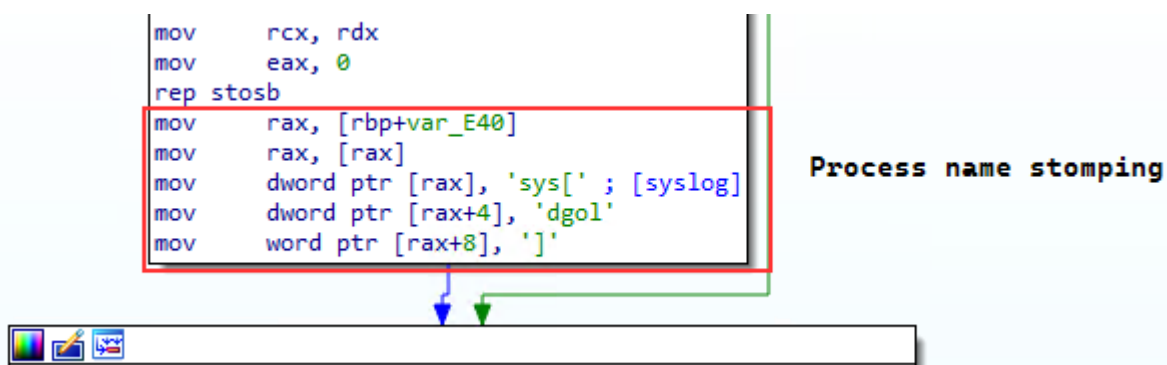
struct gtpdoor_packet
{
    ip_header iph;
    udp_header udph;
    gtp_header gtph;
    gtpdoor_header gtpdoorh;
    uint8_t payload[2020];
};

```

Operational detail

Version 1 + 2:

- Checks if the length of it's filename is greater then 8 characters, and if so, process name stomps itself to become [syslog] by overwriting argv . The length check is to ensure it does not corrupt the stack.
- Tells the parent process to ignore signals from it's child process be setting SIG_IGN for the SIGCHLD signal
- Creates a raw socket listening for UDP packets on port 2123 (GTP-C)




```

loc_400C4A:          ; SIG_IGN
mov     esi, 1
mov     edi, 11h     ; SIGCHILD
call   __sysv_signal
mov     edx, 11h     ; protocol: AF_INET
mov     esi, 3       ; type: SOCK_RAW
mov     edi, 2       ; domain: IPPROTO_UDP
call   _socket      ; socket(AF_INET, SOCK_RAW, IPPROTO_UDP)
mov     [rbp+fd], eax
cmp     [rbp+fd], -1
jnz    short loc_400C9E ; socket failure

```

Signal handler

Raw (UDP) socket

(https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/6.png)

- Accepts UDP packets on destination port 2123 with a GTP header field type value of GTP_ECHO_REQUEST

```

lea    rax, [rbp+packet]
mov    [rbp+var_30], rax
mov    [rbp+header_offset], 20 ; UDP header (iphdr == 20)
mov    eax, [rbp+header_offset]
cdq
mov    rdx, rax
lea    rax, [rbp+packet]
add    rax, rdx
mov    [rbp+var_20], rax
mov    rax, [rbp+var_20]
movzx  eax, word ptr [rax+2]
movzx  edi, ax      ; ntohs
call   _ntohs
cmp    ax, 2123    ; UDP 2123 == GTP-C
jnz    short loc_400CD7

```

match UDP packets with dst port 2123

```

mov    eax, [rbp+header_offset]
add    eax, 8      ; GTP header (iphdr+udphdr == 20+8)
mov    [rbp+header_offset], eax
mov    eax, [rbp+header_offset]
cdq
mov    rdx, rax
lea    rax, [rbp+packet]
add    rax, rdx
mov    [rbp+gtpHeader], rax
mov    eax, [rbp+header_offset]
add    eax, 0Ch
mov    [rbp+header_offset], eax
mov    rax, [rbp+gtpHeader]
movzx  eax, byte ptr [rax+1] ; second byte is TYPE
cmp    al, 1      ; GTP_ECHO_REQUEST
jnz    loc_400CD7

```

match GTP packets with GTP_ECHO_REQUEST type

(https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/7.png)

- Checks that the 32 bit symmetric key is correct in order to authenticate the message. The hardcoded value in the binary is 135798642, representative of someone typing odd numbers up the length of a keyboard even numbers back down again:

```

mov    eax, [ebp+header_offset]

```

check auth key is correct

```
mov     edx, eax
lea     eax, [ebp+s]
add     eax, edx
mov     [ebp+var_18], eax
mov     [ebp+var_838], 0
mov     eax, [ebp+var_18]
add     eax, 5
lea     edx, [ebp+var_838]
mov     eax, [eax]
mov     [edx], eax
mov     edx, [ebp+var_838]
mov     eax, idkey ; integer: 135798642
cmp     edx, eax
jz     short loc_8049266
```

```
mov     eax, idkey
mov     edx, [ebp+var_838]
mov     [esp+8], eax
mov     [esp+4], edx
mov     dword ptr [esp], offset aIdkeyNotCorrec ; "idkey not correct,%d!=%d\n"
call    _printf
jmp     loc_8049139
```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/8.png>)

- Decrypts payload in GTP message using the same authentication key using a simple XOR at fixed blocks of the key size.

```
1 int64 __fastcall myDecryptFun(uint8_t key[4], unsigned __int8
2 {
3     unsigned __int8 keyIdx; // [rsp+33h] [rbp-5h]
4     int i; // [rsp+34h] [rbp-4h]
5
6     keyIdx = 0;
7     for ( i = 0; msgSize > i; ++i )
8     {
9         if ( keyIdx >= keySize )
10            keyIdx = 0;
11         payloadStart[i] = key[keyIdx++] ^ aaa[i];
12     }
13     return msgSize;
14 }
```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/18.png>)

An equivalent implementation of the decryption routine in python:

```

def decrypt(key, ciphertext):
    key_idx = 0
    strlen = len(ciphertext)
    plaintext = bytearray(strlen)
    for i in range(strlen):
        if key_idx >= len(key):
            key_idx = 0
        plaintext[i] = key[key_idx] ^ ciphertext[i]
        key_idx += 1
    return plaintext

```

- Executes a function specified message type with the primary function to execute a shell command and return the result to the remote client via a GTP_ECHO_RESPONSE message

If the message type number is not explicitly defined, the action will fall back to the remote code execution function:

```

76     if ( !fork() )
77     {
78         memset(s, 0, 1500uLL);
79         v16 = remoteExec((const char *)gtpKeyMsg->data, s); // calls popen() to exec
80         printf("excute result is %s\n", s);
81         v17 = sendResult2Peer(fd, &packet, v10, (__int64)s, v16);
82         printf("send %d\n", v17);
83         exit(0);
84     }
85 }
86 if ( gtpKeyMsg->cmdMsgType == 1 )
87 {
88     *(_DWORD *)idkey = *(_DWORD *)gtpKeyMsg->data;
89     memset(s, 0, 0x32uLL);
90     sendResult2Peer(fd, &packet, v10, (__int64)s, strlen(s));
91 }

```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/9.png>)

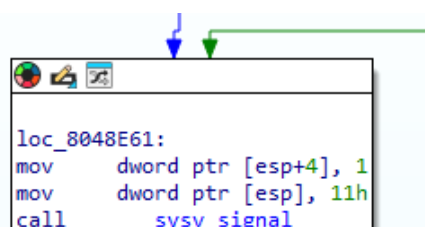
The above image also shows the approximate code for the “rekeying” message type.

- Can write arbitrary contents to a file, system.conf . It’s exact purpose is unknown.

Specific to version 2:

- Multithreaded (GTP magic packet handler and TCP probe beacon handler)

As the binary was not stripped and debug symbols left in, we can see the original function names tcpMethod and gtpMethod which run in two pthreads:



```

call    already_running
test    eax, eax
jz      short loc_8048E96

```

```

set aDaemonAlreadyR ; "daemon already_running!"

```

```

loc_8048E96:
mov     dword ptr [esp+4], 0
mov     dword ptr [esp], offset mut_accept_addr_list
call    pthread_mutex_init
mov     dword ptr [esp+0Ch], 0
mov     dword ptr [esp+8], offset tcpMethod
mov     dword ptr [esp+4], 0
lea     eax, [ebp+var_10]
mov     [esp], eax
call    _pthread_create
mov     dword ptr [esp+0Ch], 0
mov     dword ptr [esp+8], offset gtpMethod
mov     dword ptr [esp+4], 0
lea     eax, [ebp+var_14]
mov     [esp], eax
call    pthread_create
mov     eax, [ebp+var_10]
mov     dword ptr [esp+4], 0
mov     [esp], eax
call    _pthread_join
mov     eax, [ebp+var_14]
mov     dword ptr [esp+4], 0
mov     [esp], eax
call    _pthread_join
mov     [ebp+var_1C], 0

```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/9.png>)

- Creates a mutex `/var/run/daemon.pid` to prevent more than once instance running. The mutex file contains the PID of the process
- Acknowledge it is alive by responding to any TCP packet on any port number with an empty TCP packet with both the RST and ACK flags set.

On “remote command execution”, the process is `forked()` and `popen()` is utilized to execute a subprocess on the host.

```

76     if ( !fork() )
77     {
78         memset(s, 0, 1500uLL);
79         v16 = remoteExec((const char *)gtpKeyMsg->data, s); // calls popen() to exec
80         printf("excute result is %s\n", s);
81         v17 = sendResult2Peer(fd, &packet, v10, (__int64)s, v16);
82         printf("send %d\n", v17);
83         exit(0);
84     }
85 }
86 if ( gtpKeyMsg->cmdMsgType == 1 )
87 {
88     *(_DWORD *)idkey = *(_DWORD *)gtpKeyMsg->data;
89     memset(s, 0, 0x32uLL);
90     sendResult2Peer(fd, &packet, v10, (__int64)s, strlen(s));
91 }

```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/20.png>)

```

75     printf("receive %d, cmd type is %d and cmdl is %d\n", v13, gtpdoor->cmdMsgType, gtpdoor->cmdLength);
76     myDecryptFun(&idkey, 4u, gtpdoor->data, gtpdoor->cmdLength, gtpdoor->data);
77     if ( gtpdoor->cmdMsgType )
78         break:

```

```

79 LABEL_32:
80     printf("cmd is %s\n", gtpdoor->data);
81     if ( !fork() )
82     {
83         memset(dest, 0, sizeof(dest));
84         v19 = remoteExec(gtpdoor->data, dest);
85         printf("excute result is %s\n", dest);
86         v20 = sendResult2Peer(fd, &s, v13, dest, v19);
87         printf("send %d\n", v20);
88         exit(0);
89     }
90 }
91 switch ( gtpdoor->cmdMsgType )
92 {
93     case 1u:
94         idkey = *gtpdoor->data;

```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/10.png>)

All printf() statements such as those observed above are emitted to stdout . As such it is likely GTPDOOR would be invoked similar to the following (redirecting stdin and stderr to /dev/null and detaching from the parent process):

```
nohup ./gtpdoor 2>&1 2>/dev/null &
```

More on the probing feature

The TCP probe is a feature that allows an external host to probe the GRX listening address for TCP packets. A subnet filter is checked against the source IP address of the “client” and if it does **NOT** match, a reply message is sent to the client. A response packet to a probe would indicate the implant is running. No service needs to listen the TCP beaconing port: as with the GTP message handler, a raw socket is used to “intercept” all TCP packets. Hence, the beacon response packet that is sent back to the probing host is manually assembled, copying the incoming packet’s relevant IP and TCP header fields into the outgoing beacon packet.

The client that sends the probe TCP packet can differentiate if the port/service was open on the destination port as the urgent pointer flag in the TCP header is set accordingly:

```

48 hostlong = ntohl(tcpPktIn->ack_seq);
49 tcpPktOut->source = tcpPktIn->dest;
50 tcpPktOut->dest = tcpPktIn->source;
51 if ( *(tcpPktIn + 13) == 16 ) // TCP ACK
52 {
53     v24 = ntohs(ipPktIncoming->id);
54     pktCopy->id = htons(v24);
55     v3 = htonl(hostlong);
56     tcpPktOut->seq = v3;
57     v4 = htonl(incomingPktSeqNumber);
58     tcpPktOut->ack_seq = v4;
59     tcpPktOut->urg_ptr = htons(1u);
60 }
61 else if ( *(tcpPktIn + 13) == 2 ) // TCP SYN
62 {
63     tcpPktOut->seq = htonl(0);
64     v5 = htonl(incomingPktSeqNumber + 1);
65     tcpPktOut->ack_seq = v5;
66     tcpPktOut->urg_ptr = htons(0);
67 }
68 *(tcpPktOut + 12) &= 0xF0u;

```

if tcp port is open, urgent flag will be set

```

69 | *(tcpPktOut + 12) = *(tcpPktOut + 12) & 0xF | 0x50;
70 | *(tcpPktOut + 13) = 0x14; // TCP ACK/RST flags
71 | tcpPktOut->window = htons(0);
72 | pktIncomingDstAddr = ipPktIncoming->daddr;

```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtppdoor/11.png>)

The probe response packets will always have the ACK/RST flags set and the urgent pointer flags set according to if an TCP ACK was observed. This is a covert way of encoding messages by bit manipulation in the TCP header.

We can observe the differences in a tcpdump. In the following a TCP connect() from the probe “client” on a non existing port 22222 has a probe response RST/ACK with the urgent pointer flat set to 0 :

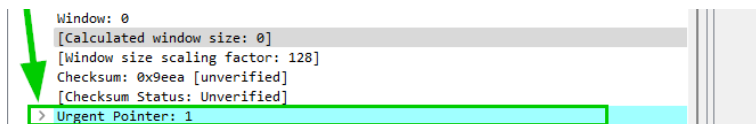
The screenshot shows a packet capture entry for a TCP RST/ACK packet. The source is 192.168.80.5 and the destination is 192.168.80.1. The packet details are as follows:

- Transmission Control Protocol, Src Port: 2222, Dst Port: 35248, Seq: 1, Ack: 1, Len=0
- Source Port: 2222
- Destination Port: 35248
- [Stream index: 0]
- [Conversation completeness: Incomplete (37)]
- [TCP Segment Len: 0]
- Sequence Number: 1 (relative sequence number)
- Sequence Number (raw): 0
- [Next Sequence Number: 1 (relative sequence number)]
- Acknowledgment Number: 1 (relative ack number)
- Acknowledgment number (raw): 3165324348
- 0101 = Header Length: 20 bytes (5)
- Flags: 0x014 (RST, ACK)
- 000. = Reserved: Not set
- ...0 = Accurate ECN: Not set
- ... 0... = Congestion Window Reduced: Not set
-0.. = ECN-Echo: Not set
-0. = Urgent: Not set
-1 = Acknowledgment: Set
-0.. = Push: Not set
- >1.. = Reset: Set
-0. = Syn: Not set
-0. = Fin: Not set
- [TCP Flags:A.R..]
- Window: 0
- [Calculated window size: 0]
- [Window size scaling factor: -1 (unknown)]
- Checksum: 0x3b33 [unverified]
- [Checksum Status: Unverified]
- Urgent Pointer: 0

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtppdoor/12.png>) On the other hand, when the client connects to an open port 22 (SSH) , the probe response includes a RST/ACK but this time with the urgent pointer set to 1

The screenshot shows a packet capture entry for a TCP RST/ACK packet. The source is 192.168.80.5 and the destination is 192.168.80.1. The packet details are as follows:

- No. 89 5.273680 192.168.80.5 192.168.80.1 TCP 66 22 → 43758 [RST, ACK] Seq=1 Ack=1 Win=0 Len=0
- 89 5.273680 192.168.80.5 192.168.80.1 SSH 92 Server: Protocol (SSH-2.0-OpenSSH_4.3)
- 90 5.273691 192.168.80.1 192.168.80.5 TCP 60 43758 → 22 [RST] Seq=6 Win=0 Len=0
- 91 5.280284 192.168.80.5 192.168.80.1 SSH 91 Server: Encrypted packet (len=19)
- 92 5.280291 192.168.80.1 192.168.80.5 TCP 60 43758 → 22 [RST] Seq=6 Win=0 Len=0
- Transmission Control Protocol, Src Port: 22, Dst Port: 43758, Seq: 1, Ack: 1, Len=0
- Source Port: 22
- Destination Port: 43758
- [Stream index: 0]
- [Conversation completeness: Complete, WITH_DATA (63)]
- [TCP Segment Len: 0]
- Sequence Number: 1 (relative sequence number)
- Sequence Number (raw): 3764022986
- [Next Sequence Number: 1 (relative sequence number)]
- Acknowledgment Number: 1 (relative ack number)
- Acknowledgment number (raw): 898351064
- 0101 = Header Length: 20 bytes (5)
- Flags: 0x014 (RST, ACK)
- 000. = Reserved: Not set
- ...0 = Accurate ECN: Not set
- ... 0... = Congestion Window Reduced: Not set
-0.. = ECN-Echo: Not set
-0. = Urgent: Not set
-1 = Acknowledgment: Set
-0.. = Push: Not set
- >1.. = Reset: Set
-0. = Syn: Not set
-0. = Fin: Not set
- [TCP Flags:A.R..]



(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/13.png>)

It is not known if the ACL is intended to be a deny list or allow list - there are pros and cons of explicitly denying IP subnets from probing:

- Avoid keeping threat actor C2 infrastructure network/IPs resident in memory
- Specify internal victim networks or IPs to prevent causing traffic disruption from reply TCP messages or by being detected due to these abnormal messages

On the other hand, any host on the GRX network can scan network operator IP addresses by sending TCP SYN packets on non-standard port numbers to determine which systems have been infected.

Based on analysis of the samples alone, the author assumes this behaviour is intentional. The threat actor can change their C2 infrastructure or intermediate transit hosts without losing the ability to send probe messages.

An approximation of the ACL filtering. Note the ! on line 118 :

```
94  if ( pktIncomingDstAddr == local_grx_addr ) // set when GTP magic packet recieved prior
95  {
96  if ( *(tcpPacketIncoming + 13) == 0x10 || (tmp = *(tcpPacketIncoming + 13), tmp == 2) )// TCP SYN or SYN/ACK
97  {
98  ipInSubnet = 0;
99  pthread_mutex_lock(&mut_accept_addr_list);
100  for ( i = 0; i <= 4; ++i )
101  {
102  if ( !acceptiplist[2 * i] )
103  {
104  if ( !i )
105  ipInSubnet = 1; // no address set in ACL
106  break;
107  }
108  acceptNetmask = -1 << (32 - maskArray[2 * i]);
109  acceptIplistMasked = acceptNetmask & acceptiplist[2 * i];
110  srcAddressAndMask = acceptNetmask & matchSrcAddr;
111  if ( acceptIplistMasked == (acceptNetmask & matchSrcAddr) )// packet src address is in ACL net
112  {
113  ipInSubnet = 1;
114  break;
115  }
116  }
117  tmp = pthread_mutex_unlock(&mut_accept_addr_list);
118  if ( !ipInSubnet ) // do not send probe response as IP in ACL
119  {
120  printf("send ret message to addr : %s\n", pktSrcAddr);
121  tmp = sendto(sockfd, pktOutgoing, 0x28u, 0, &addr, n);
122  prResult = tmp;
123  if ( tmp > 0 )
124  tmp = printf("send ret message reply ok,ret_1 is %d\n", prResult);
125  }
126  }
127 }
```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/14.png>)

Notably one condition before TCP packets are “intercepted” by the process is the global variable `local_grx_addr` must be set first. This is set based on the destination IP address in

any GTP-C packet that is received.

Another condition is that the ACL must have at least one subnet or IP defined for the probe feature to be operational.

Detection

- GTPDOOR can be identified by listing raw sockets open on the system, e.g. via `lsof`, looking for `SOCK_RAW`.
- Process name stomped files that are disguised as kernel threads can be identified by their parent process ID not being `2`
- The presence of the mutex `/var/run/daemon.pid` could be an indicator.
- The presence of the file `system.conf` could be an indicator.

Yara rule for threat hunting:

```
rule Linux_Malware_GTPD00R_v1v2
{
    meta:
        description = "Detects GTPD00R"
        author = "@haxrob"
        data = "28/02/2024"
        reference = "https://doubleagent.net/telecommunications/backdoor/gtp/2024/02/27/GTPD00R-COVERT-TELC0-BACKD00R"
        hash1 =
"827f41fc1a6f8a4c8a8575b3e2349aeaba0dfc2c9390ef1cceeef1bb85c34161"
        hash2 =
"5cbafa2d562be0f5fa690f8d551cdb0bee9fc299959b749b99d44ae3fda782e4"
        strings:
            $s1 = "excute result is" ascii fullword
            $s2 = "idkey not correct" ascii fullword
            $s3 = "send ret message" ascii fullword
        condition:
            uint16(0) == 0x457f and
            2 of them and
            filesize < 20KB
}
```

Defence

GTP Firewall

GPTDOOR handles malformed GTP packets. In the following test, the GTP protocol type of 0 (GTP prime - charging related) is set in custom client. GTP' does not work over the GTP-C port. Additionally the extension header is corrupt. The GTPDOOR message encrypted payload is appended on the GTP message. As such, a GTP capable firewall may detect and drop abnormal packets like this.

No.	Time	Source	Destination	Protocol	Length	Info
1	0.000000	192.168.80.1	192.168.80.5	GTP	74	Echo request[Malformed Packet]
2	19.252402	192.168.80.1	192.168.80.5	GTP	74	Echo request[Malformed Packet]
3	19.254712	192.168.80.5	192.168.80.1	GTP	164	Echo response
4	19.254817	192.168.80.1	192.168.80.5	GTP	86	Echo request
5	19.255481	192.168.80.5	192.168.80.1	GTP	86	Echo response

```

> Frame 4: 86 bytes on wire (688 bits), 86 bytes captured (688 bits)
> Linux cooked capture v2
> Internet Protocol Version 4, Src: 192.168.80.1, Dst: 192.168.80.5
> User Datagram Protocol, Src Port: 35251, Dst Port: 2123
  GPRS Tunneling Protocol Prime
    Flags: 0x00
    000. .... = Version: 0
    ...0 .... = Protocol type: GTP' (0)
    .... 000. = Reserved: 0
    .... ...0 = Header length: 20-Octet Header
    Message Type: Echo request (0x01)
    Length: 41633
    Sequence number: 0xa4a3 (42147)
    Dummy octets: 0000a5a6a7a8a901020304721f18
    Reordering required: True
    Recovery: 0
  Unknown extension header
    [Expert Info (Warning/Protocol): Unknown extension header]
    [Unknown extension header]
    [Severity level: Warning]
    [Group: Protocol]
  [Response In: 5]
  
```

(<https://undefined/assets/images/gtpdoor/16.png>)

Firewalling

- The inbound UDP port is required to be open for systems that require it on the GRX network. Firewall rules should be explicit enough to drop these packets inbound for any system that does not use the GTP protocol
- Aggressive rules to block inbound TCP connections via the GRX - There is not alot that actually needs to be open
- Probe TCP packets with RST/ACK flag set could be dropped on the GRX firewall

📅 Updated: February 27, 2024