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# The Continuing Arms Race: A Journey in the World of Runtime Exploits and Defenses

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# **Special Session Announcement**

- Secure IoT: Utopia, Alchemy, or Possible Future?
  - Organizers: Ahmad-Reza Sadeghi (TU Darmstadt) and Yier Jin (Univ. of Central Florida)
  - Chair: Anand Rajan (Intel Corp.)
  - Co-Chair: Saverio Fazzari (Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc.)
- THURSDAY June 09, 10:30am 12:00pm | 18AB
- Talks
  - Things, Trouble, Trust: On Building Trust in IoT Systems
  - Exploring risk and mapping the Internet of Things with Autonomous Drones
  - Can IoT be Secured: Emerging Challenges in Connecting the Unconnected

# **Motivating Problem**



- Software increasingly sophisticated and complex
- Various developers involved
- Native Code
- Many program bugs

Large attack surface for runtime exploits on diverse platforms

# Introduction

- Vulnerabilities
  - Programs continuously suffer from program bugs, e.g., a buffer overflow
  - Memory errors
  - CVE statistics; zero-day

Focus in this tutorial

- Runtime Attack
  - Exploitation of program vulnerabilities to perform malicious program actions
  - Control-flow attack; runtime exploit

# **Three Decades of Runtime Attacks**



## Are these attacks relevant?



## **Recent Attacks**

#### **Stagefright** [Drake, BlackHat 2015] *These issues in Stagefright code critically expose 95% of Android devices, an estimated 950 million devices*

#### **Cisco Router Exploit** [2016]

Million CISCO ASA Firewalls potentially vulnerable to attacks





# **Relevance and Impact**

#### **High Impact of Attacks**

- Web browsers repeatedly exploited in pwn2own contests
- Zero-day issues exploited in Stuxnet/Duqu [Microsoft, BH 2012]
- iOS jailbreak

#### **Industry Efforts on Defenses**

- Microsoft EMET (Enhanced Mitigation Experience Toolkit) includes a ROP detection engine
- Microsoft Control Flow Guard (CFG) in Windows 10
- Google's compiler extension VTV (vitual table verification)

#### Hot Topic of Research

• A large body of recent literature on attacks and defenses

# But runtime exploits have also some "good" side-effects



# Apple iPhone Jailbreak

Disable signature verification and escalate privileges to root



Request http://www.jailbreakme.com/\_ /iPhone3,1\_4.0.pdf



1) Exploit PDF Viewer Vulnerability by means of **Return-Oriented Programming** 

- 2) Start Jailbreak
- 3) Download required system files
- 4) Jailbreak Done

# **Tutorial Outline**

- 1. Lecture on Runtime Exploits
  - Introduction
  - Selected Background on ARM
  - Code Injection
  - Code-Reuse Attacks
  - Modern Defense Techniques and Their Limitations
  - Hardware-Assisted Protection Schemes
- 2. Hands-on Lab (Runtime attacks against Android-ARM)

# BASICS What is a runtime attack ?



## **Big Picture: Program Compilation**



# **Big Picture: Program Execution**

**MEMORY - RAM** 

Executable binary



Initialize buffer[8] Get usr\_input



# **Big Picture: Program Execution**

**MEMORY - RAM** 



# **Big Picture: Program Execution**

**MEMORY - RAM** 

Executable binary



Initialize buffer[8]		
Get usr_input		
COPY (buffer[8], *usr_input)		
CODE		
DATA		
POINTER:	2222222	
buffer[4-7]:	BBBBBBBB	
buffer[0-3]:	ΑΑΑΑΑΑΑ	
usr_input[8-11]:	СССССССС	
usr_input[4-7]:	BBBBBBBB	
usr_input[0-3]:	ΑΑΑΑΑΑΑ	

# Observations

- There are several observations
  - A programming error leads to a program-flow deviation
  - 2. Missing bounds checking
    - Languages like C, C++, or assembler do not automatically enforce bounds checking on data inputs
  - 3. An adversary can provide inputs that influence the program flow
- What are the consequences?



#### **General Principle of Code Reuse Attacks** Basic Block (BBL) A **Control-Flow** Graph (CFG) **ENTRY** asm\_ins, 💒 **Buffer overflow** 1 **EXIT** A C B BBL B 2 **ENTRY** Control-flow asm\_ins, ... Data flows deviation EXIT Program flows

# **Code Injection vs. Code Reuse**

- Code Injection Adding a new node to the CFG
  - Adversary can execute arbitrary malicious code
    - open a remote console (classical shellcode)
    - exploit further vulnerabilities in the OS kernel to install a virus or a backdoor
- Code Reuse Adding a new path to the CFG
  - Adversary is limited to the code nodes that are available in the CFG
  - Requires reverse-engineering and static analysis of the code base of a program

# BASICS Code injection is more powerful; so why are attacks today typically using code reuse?

# **Data Execution Prevention (DEP)**

Prevent execution from a writeable memory (data) area



# Data Execution Prevention (DEP) cntd.

- Implementations
  - Modern OSes enable DEP by default (Windows, Linux, iOS, Android, Mac OSX)
  - Intel, AMD, and ARM feature a special No-Execute bit to facilitate deployment of DEP
- Side Note
  - There are other notions referring to the same principle
    - W  $\bigoplus$  X Writeable XOR eXecutable
    - Non-executable memory

# **Hybrid Exploits**

Today's attacks combine code reuse with code injection



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# Selected background on ARM registers, stack layout, and calling convention

# **ARM Overview**

- ARM stands for Advanced RISC Machine
- Main application area: Mobile phones, smartphones (Apple iPhone, Google Android), music players, tablets, and some netbooks
- Advantage: Low power consumption
- Follows RISC design
  - Mostly single-cycle execution
  - Fixed instruction length
  - Dedicated load and store instructions
- ARM features XN (eXecute Never) Bit

# **ARM Overview**

- Some features of ARM
  - Conditional Execution
  - Two Instruction Sets
    - ARM (32-Bit)
      - The traditional instruction set
    - THUMB (16-Bit)
      - Suitable for devices that provide limited memory space
    - The processor can exchange the instruction set on-the-fly
    - Both instruction sets may occur in a single program
  - 3-Register-Instruction Set
    - instruction destination, source, source



# **ARM Registers**

- ARM's 32 Bit processor features 16 registers
- All registers r0 to r15 are directly accessible



## **ARM Stack Layout**



\* Note that a subroutine does not always store all callee-save registers (r4 to r11); instead it stores those registers that it really uses/changes

# **The Stack and Stack Frame Elements**

- Stack is a last in, first out (LIFO) memory area where the Stack Pointer points to the last stored element on the stack
- The stack can be accessed by two basic operations
  - 1. **PUSH** elements onto the stack (SP is decremented)
  - 2. **POP** elements off the stack (SP is incremented)
- Stack is divided into individual stack frames
  - Each function call sets up a new stack frame on top of the stack
  - 1. Function arguments
    - Arguments provided by the caller of the function
  - 2. Callee-save Registers
    - Registers that a subroutine (callee) needs to reset before returning to the caller of the subroutine
  - 3. Return address
    - Upon function return control transfers to the code pointed to by the return address (i.e., control transfers back to the caller of the function)
  - 4. Saved Frame Pointer/Saved Base Pointer
    - Frame pointer/Base pointer of the calling function
    - Variables and arguments are accessed via an offset to the frame pointer/base pointer
    - Provided in register r11 (ARM code), r7 (THUMB code), or EBP (x86 code)
  - 5. Local variables
    - Variables that the called function uses internally

# **Function Calls on ARM**

#### Branch with Link

### BL addr

- Branches to addr, and stores the return address in link register lr/r14
- The return address is simply the address that follows the BL instruction

Branch with Link and eXchange instruction set

BLX addr | reg

- Branches to addr reg, and stores the return address in lr/r14
- This instruction allows the exchange between ARM and THUMB
  - ARM->THUMB: LSB=1
  - THUMB->ARM: LSB=0

# **Function Returns on ARM**

Branch with eXchange instruction set

#### **BX** lr

- Branches to the return address stored in the link register lr
- Register-based return for leaf functions

## POP {pc}

- Pops top of the stack into the program counter pc/r15
- Stack-based return for non-leaf functions

# **THUMB Example for Calling Convention**

- Function Call: BL Function\_A
  - The BL instruction automatically loads the return address into the link register Ir
- Function Prologue 1: PUSH {r4,r7,lr}
  - Stores callee-save register r4, the frame pointer r7, and the return address Ir on the stack
- Function Prologue 2: SUB sp,sp,#16
  - Allocates 16 Bytes for local variables on the stack
- Function Body: Instructions, ...
- Function Epilogue 2: ADD sp,sp,#16
  - Reallocates the space for local variables
- Function Epilogue 2: POP {r4,r7,pc}
  - The POP instruction pops the callee-save register r4, the saved frame pointer r7, and the return address off the stack which is loaded it into the program counter pc
  - Hence, the execution will continue in the main function



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#### Let's go back to runtime attacks

# **Running Example**

```
#include <stdio.h>
void echo()
   char buffer [80];
   gets (buffer);
   puts(buffer);
    main ()
int
   echo();
   printf("Done");
   return 0;
```

# Launching a code injection attack against the vulnerable program

#### **Code Injection Attack on ARM**





#### **Code Injection Attack on ARM**



#### **Code Injection Attack on ARM**





**Program Memory** 

## **Code-Reuse Attacks**

# It started with return-into-libc

[Solar Designer, http://insecure.org/sploits/linux.libc.return.lpr.sploit.html 1997]

- Basic idea of return-into-libc
  - Redirect execution to functions in shared libraries
  - Main target is UNIX C library libc
    - Libc is linked to nearly every Unix program
    - Defines system calls and other basic facilities such as open(), malloc(), printf(), system(), execve(), etc.
  - Attack example: system ("/bin/sh"), exit()

## Limitations

- No branching, i.e., no arbitrary code execution
- Critical functions can be eliminated or wrapped

Generalization of return-into-libc attacks: return-oriented programming (ROP) [Shacham, ACM CCS 2007]

## **The Big Picture**



# **ROP Adversary Model/Assumption**













# Summary of Basic Idea

- Perform arbitrary computation with return-into-libc techniques
- Approach
  - Use small instruction sequences (e.g., of libc) instead of using whole functions
  - Instruction sequences range from 2 to 5 instructions
  - All sequences end with a return (POP{PC}) instruction
  - Instruction sequences are chained together to a gadget
  - A gadget performs a particular task (e.g., load, store, xor, or branch)
  - Afterwards, the adversary enforces his desired actions by combining the gadgets

## **Special Aspects of ROP**

#### **Code Base and Turing-Completeness**



#### **Code Base and Turing-Completeness**



# **Gadget Space on Different Architectures**

Architectures with no memory alignment, e.g., Intel x86 Architectures with memory alignment, e.g., SPARC, ARM



## **Stack Pivot**

[Zovi, RSA Conference 2010]

- Stack pointer plays an important role
  - It operates as an instruction pointer in ROP attacks
- Challenge
  - In order to launch a ROP exploit based on a heap overflow, we need to set the stack pointer to point to the heap
  - This is achieved by a stack pivot

## **Stack Pivot in Detail**



\*REG1 is controlled by the adversary and holds beginning of ROP payload

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## **ROP Variants**

- Motivation: return address protection (shadow stack)
  - Validate every return (intended and unintended) against valid copies of return addresses
     [Davi et al., AsiaCCS 2011]
- Exploit indirect jumps and calls
  - ROP without returns
     [Checkoway et al., ACM CCS 2010]

### **CURRENT RESEARCH**



## **Our Work & Involvement**

#### Attacks

- Return-Oriented Programming without Returns [CCS 2010]
- Privilege Escalation Attacks on Android [ISC 2010]
- Just-In-Time Return-oriented Programming (JIT-ROP) [IEEE S&P 2013, Best Student Paper] & [BlackHat USA 2013]
- Stitching the Gadgets [USENIX Security 2014] & [BlackHat USA 2014]
- COOP [IEEE Security & Privacy 2015]
- Losing Control [CCS 2015]

#### **Detection & Prevention**

- ROPdefender [AsiaCCS 2011]
- Mobile Control-Flow Integrity (MoCFI) [NDSS 2012]
- XIFER: Fine-Grained ASLR [AsiaCCS 2013]
- Filtering ROP Payloads [RAID 2013]
- Isomeron [NDSS 2015]
- Readactor [IEEE Security & Privacy 2015, CCS 2015]
- HAFIX: Fine-Grained CFI in Hardware [DAC 2014, DAC 2015, DAC 2016]
- Readactor++ [CCS 2015]

In this tutorial

# Main Defense Techniques

#### (Fine-grained) Code Randomization

[Cohen 1993 & Larsen et al., SoK IEEE S&P 2014]



Control-Flow Integrity (CFI)

> [Abadi et al., CCS 2005 & TISSEC 2009]



# Main Defense Techniques

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#### **ASLR – Address Space Layout Randomization**



# **Basics of Memory Randomization**

ASLR randomizes the base address of code/data segments


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### **Fine-Grained ASLR**



- **ORP** [Pappas et al., IEEE S&P 2012]: Instruction reordering/substitution within a BBL
- ILR [Hiser et al., IEEE S&P 2012]: Randomizing each instruction's location
- STIR [Wartell et al., ACM CCS 2012] &
   XIFER [Davi et al., AsiaCCS 2013]: Permutation of BBLs

#### Does Fine-Grained ASLR Provide a Viable Defense in the Long Run?



Just-In-Time Code Reuse: On the Effectiveness of Fine-Grained Address Space Layout Randomization

IEEE Security and Privacy Best Student Paper 2013

Kevin Z. Snow (UNC Chapel Hill), Lucas Davi, Alexandra Dmitrienko, Christopher Liebchen, Fabian Monrose (UNC Chapel Hill), Ahmad-Reza Sadeghi

### **High-Level Idea**







### **Code Randomization: Lessons Learned**

- 1. Memory disclosure attacks are far more damaging than previously believed
  - → A single address-instruction mapping leads to many leaks of code pages
- 2. Fine-grained ASLR can be bypassed with JIT-ROP
  - → Enforce execute-only memory
     Software-based [Backes et al., CCS 2014]
     Hardware-based: Readactor(++) [with Crane et al.,
     IEEE S&P 2015 & CCS 2015]
  - → Combine code- and execution randomization Isomeron [with Liebchen et al., NDSS 2015]
  - $\rightarrow$  Mitigating memory disclosure

# **Control-Flow Integrity (CFI)**

[Abadi et al., CCS 2005 & TISSEC 2009]

A general defense against code-reuse attacks



# Label Granularity: Trade-Offs (1/2)

 Many CFI checks are required if unique labels are assigned per node



# Label Granularity: Trade-Offs (2/2)

- Optimization step: Merge labels to allow single CFI check
- However, this allows for unintended control-flow paths



### **Label Problem for Returns**

 Static CFI label checking leads to coarse-grained protection for returns





# Shadow Stack / Return Address Stack

 Shadow stack allows for fine-grained return address protection but incurs higher overhead



#### **CFI: Benefits and Limitations**



### Hot Research Topic: "Practical" (coarse-grained) Control Flow Integrity (CFI)

Recently, many solutions proposed



**Open Question:** Practical and secure mitigation of code reuse attacks

Turing-completeness of return-oriented programming

Negative Result: All current (published) coarse-grained CFI solutions can be bypassed

### **Big Picture**



### 1. Systematic Security Analysis of Coarse-Grained CFI

#### **Coarse-grained CFI leads to CFG imprecision**

Allowed paths:  $1 \rightarrow 2$  and  $2 \rightarrow 1$ 



# **Main Coarse-Grained CFI Policies**

- CFI Policy 1: Call-Preceded Sequences
  - Returns need to target a callpreceded instruction
  - No shadow stack required



 CFI Policy 2: Behavioral-Based Heuristics

> Threshold Setting kBouncer: (N=8; S<=20) ROPecker: (N=11; S<=6)



### **Coarse-Grained CFI Proposals**



# **Deriving a Combined CFI Policy**

CFI Policy	<b>kBouncer</b> [USENIX Sec. 2013]	<b>ROPecker</b> [NDSS 2014]	<b>ROPGuard</b> [Microsoft EMET]	<b>CFI for COTS</b> <b>Binaries</b> [USENIX Sec. 2013]	Combined CFI Policy
<b>CFI Policy 1</b> <i>Call-Preceded Sequences</i>	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$
<b>CFI Policy 2</b> Behavioral-Based Heuristics	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$
Time of CFI Check	WinAPI	2 Page Sliding Window/ Critical Functions	WinAPI/ Critical Functions	Indirect Branch	Any Time

😑 No Restriction 🛛 🗸 🗸

CFI Policy

Here only the core policies shown. However, we consider all other deployed policies in our analysis.

### 2. Gadget Analysis

### Methodology



#### (Excerpt of) Turing-Complete Gadget Set in CFI-Protected kernel32.dll

Gadget Type	CALL-Preceded Sequence ending in a RET instruction
LOAD Register	<pre>EBP := pop ebp ESI := pop esi; pop ebp EDI := pop edi; leave ECX := pop ecx; leave EBX := pop edi; pop esi; pop ebx; pop ebp EAX := mov eax,edi; pop edi; leave EDX := mov eax,[ebp-8]; mov edx,[ebp-4]; pop edi; leave</pre>
LOAD/STORE Memory	<pre>LD(EAX) := mov eax,[ebp+8]; pop ebp ST(EAX) := mov [esi],eax; xor eax,eax; pop esi; pop ebp ST(ESI) := mov [ebp-20h],esi ST(EDI) := mov [ebp-20h],edi</pre>
Arithmetic/ Logical	<pre>ADD/SUB := sub eax,esi; pop esi; pop ebp XOR := xor eax,edi; pop edi; pop esi; pop ebp</pre>
Branches	<pre>unconditional branch 1 := leave unconditional branch 2 := add esp,0Ch; pop ebp conditional LD(EAX) := neg eax; sbb eax,eax; and eax,[ebp-4] leave</pre>

### Long-NOP Gadget



#### **3. Exploit Development**



### **Coarse-Grained CFI: Lessons Learned**

- **1.** Too many call sites available
  - → Restrict returns to their actual caller (shadow stack)
- 2. Heuristics are ad-hoc and ineffective
  - $\rightarrow$  Adjusted sequence length leads to high false positive
- 3. Too many indirect jump and call targets
  - Resolving indirect jumps and calls is non-trivial
  - $\rightarrow$  Compromise: Compiler support

### CURRENT RESEARCH What's next?

#### **Hardware-Assisted CFI**

#### HAFIX: Hardware Flow Integrity Extensions

[O. Arias, L. Davi, M. Hanreich, Y. Jin, P. Koeberl, D. Paul, A.-R. Sadeghi, D. Sullivan, DAC 2015, Best Paper]



#### **Design Decisions: Why CFI Processor Support?**

CFI Processor Support based on Instruction set architecture (ISA) extensions

**Dedicated CFI instructions** 

No offline training phase

Instant attack detection

CFI control state

Binding of CFI data to CFI state and instructions

#### **Big Picture**



**Example Policy** *Returns can only target call sites of functions that are currently executing* 

### **HAFIX State Model**



### Remarks

- Implementation on Intel Siskiyou Peak and SPARC-LEON3
- High efficiency 1-2%
- Current prototype supports different levels of CFG precision [visit our DAC'16 talk on Thursday, June 09, 3:30pm - 5:30pm | 19AB ]

## Conclusion

- Code-reuse attacks are prevalent
  - Google and Microsoft take these attacks seriously
  - Many real-world exploits
  - Existing solutions can be bypassed
- Good News
  - Many innovative defense techniques have been proposed
- Promising new directions
  - Memory safety based on code-pointer integrity [Kuznetsov et al., OSDI 2014]
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