Basic CFI principle

- Each indirect jump should only go to a programmer-intended (or compiler-intended) target
- I.e., enforce call graph
- Often: identify disjoint target sets

Approximating the call graph

- One set: all legal indirect targets
- Two sets: indirect calls and return points
- \( n \) sets: needs possibly-difficult points-to analysis

Target checking: classic

- Identifier is a unique 32-bit value
- Can embed in effectively-nop instruction
- Check value at target before jump
- Optionally add shadow stack

Outline

- Control-flow integrity (CFI)
- More modern exploit techniques
- Shellcoding for BCECHO
- Saltzer & Schroeder’s principles
- Announcements intermission
- More secure design principles
- Software engineering for security
- Secure use of the OS

Basic CFI principle

```
cmp [ecx], 12345678h
jne error_label
lea ecx, [ecx+4]
jmp ecx
```
Challenge 1: performance

- In CCS’05 paper: 16% avg., 45% max.
  - Widely varying by program
  - Probably too much for on-by-default
- Improved in later research
  - Common alternative: use tables of legal targets

Challenge 2: compatibility

- Compilation information required
- Must transform entire program together
- Can’t inter-operate with untransformed code

Recent advances: COTS

- Commercial off-the-shelf binaries
- CCFIR (Berkeley+PKU, Oakland’13): Windows
  - Use Windows ASLR information to find targets
- CFI for COTS Binaries (Stony Brook, USENIX’13): Linux
  - Keep copy of original binary, build translation table

Control-Flow Guard

- CFI-style defense now in latest Windows systems
- Compiler generates tables of legal targets
- At runtime, table managed by kernel, read-only to user-space

Coarse-grained counter-attack

- "Out of Control" paper, Oakland’14
- Limit to gadgets allowed by coarse policy
  - Indirect call to function entry
  - Return to point after call site ("call-preceded")
- Use existing direct calls to VirtualProtect
- Also used against kBouncer

Control-flow bending counter-attack

- Control-flow attacks that still respect the CFG
- Especially easy without a shadow stack
- Printf-oriented programming generalizes format-string attacks
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Target #1: web browsers
- Widely used on desktop and mobile platforms
- Easily exposed to malicious code
- JavaScript is useful for constructing fancy attacks

Heap spraying
- How to take advantage of uncontrolled jump?
- Maximize proportion of memory that is a target
- Generalize NOP sled idea, using benign allocator
- Under W\text{6}X, can’t be code directly

JIT spraying
- Can we use a JIT compiler to make our sleds?
- Exploit unaligned execution:
  - Benign but weird high-level code (bitwise ops. with constants)
  - Benign but predictable JITted code
  - Becomes sled + exploit when entered unaligned

JIT spray example
\begin{verbatim}
25 90 90 90 3c and $0x3c909090, %eax
25 90 90 90 3c and $0x3c909090, %eax
25 90 90 90 3c and $0x3c909090, %eax
25 90 90 90 3c and $0x3c909090, %eax
90 nop
90 nop
90 nop
3c 25 cmp $0x25, %al
90 nop
90 nop
90 nop
3c 25 cmp $0x25, %al
\end{verbatim}
Use-after-free
- Low-level memory error of choice in web browsers
- Not as easily audited as buffer overflows
- Can lurk in attacker-controlled corner cases
- JavaScript and Document Object Model (DOM)

Sandboxes and escape
- Chrome NaCl: run untrusted native code with SFI
  - Extra instruction-level checks somewhat like CFI
- Each web page rendered in own, less-trusted process
- But not easy to make sandboxes secure
  - While allowing functionality

Chained bugs in Pwnium 1
- Google-run contest for complete Chrome exploits
  - First edition in spring 2012
- Winner 1: 6 vulnerabilities
- Winner 2: 14 bugs and "missed hardening opportunities"
- Each got $60k, bugs promptly fixed

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Attacker techniques
- Overwriting a system file, /etc/passwd
- `\_0-free shellcoding`
- Shellcode in an environment variable

Shellcode concept
```c
fd = open("/etc/passwd", O_WRONLY|O_APPEND);
write(fd, "pwned\n", 6);
```
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Economy of mechanism
- Security mechanisms should be as simple as possible
- Good for all software, but security software needs special scrutiny

Fail-safe defaults
- When in doubt, don’t give permission
- Whitelist, don’t blacklist
- Obvious reason: if you must fail, fail safe
- More subtle reason: incentives

Complete mediation
- Every mode of access must be checked
  - Not just regular accesses: startup, maintenance, etc.
- Checks cannot be bypassed
  - E.g., web app must validate on server, not just client

Open design
- Security must not depend on the design being secret
- If anything is secret, a minimal key
  - Design is hard to keep secret anyway
  - Key must be easily changeable if revealed
  - Design cannot be easily changed

Open design: strong version
- “The design should not be secret”
- If the design is fixed, keeping it secret can’t help attackers
- But an unscrutinized design is less likely to be secure
Separation of privilege

- Real world: two-person principle
- Direct implementation: separation of duty
- Multiple mechanisms can help if they are both required
  - Password and wheel group in Unix

Least privilege

- Programs and users should have the most limited set of powers needed to do their job
- Presupposes that privileges are suitably divisible
  - Contrast: Unix root

Least privilege: privilege separation

- Programs must also be divisible to avoid excess privilege
- Classic example: multi-process OpenSSH server
- N.B.: Separation of privilege ≠ privilege separation

Least common mechanism

- Minimize the code that all users must depend on for security
- Related term: minimize the Trusted Computing Base (TCB)
- E.g.: prefer library to system call; microkernel OS

Psychological acceptability

- A system must be easy to use, if users are to apply it correctly
- Make the system’s model similar to the user’s mental model to minimize mistakes

Sometimes: work factor

- Cost of circumvention should match attacker and resource protected
  - E.g., length of password
  - But, many attacks are easy when you know the bug
Sometimes: compromise recording

- Recording a security failure can be almost as good as preventing it
- But, few things in software can’t be erased by root

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Alternative Saltzer & Schroeder

- Not a replacement for reading the real thing, but:
  - Security Principles of Saltzer and Schroeder, illustrated with scenes from Star Wars (Adam Shostack)

Deadlines reminder

- Exercise set 1: Thursday night
- HA1 week 3: Friday night
- Project progress reports: week from today

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Pop quiz

- What’s the type of the return value of `getchar`?
- Why?
Separate the control plane

- Keep metadata and code separate from untrusted data
- Bad: format string vulnerability
- Bad: old telephone systems

Defense in depth

- Multiple levels of protection can be better than one
- Especially if none is perfect
- But, many weak security mechanisms don’t add up

Canonicalize names

- Use unique representations of objects
- E.g. in paths, remove ., .., extra slashes, symlinks
- E.g., use IP address instead of DNS name

Fail-safe / fail-stop

- If something goes wrong, behave in a way that’s safe
- Often better to stop execution than continue in corrupted state
- E.g., better segfault than code injection

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Modularity

- Divide software into pieces with well-defined functionality
- Isolate security-critical code
  - Minimize TCB, facilitate privilege separation
  - Improve auditability
Minimize interfaces

- Hallmark of good modularity: clean interface
- Particularly difficult:
  - Safely implementing an interface for malicious users
  - Safely using an interface with a malicious implementation

Appropriate paranoia

- Many security problems come down to missing checks
- But, it isn't possible to check everything continuously
- How do you know when to check what?

Invariant

- A fact about the state of a program that should always be maintained
- Assumed in one place to guarantee in another
- Compare: proof by induction

Pre- and postconditions

- Invariants before and after execution of a function
- Precondition: should be true before call
- Postcondition: should be true after return

Dividing responsibility

- Program must ensure nothing unsafe happens
- Pre- and postconditions help divide that responsibility without gaps

When to check

- At least once before any unsafe operation
- If the check is fast
- If you know what to do when the check fails
- If you don't trust
  - your caller to obey a precondition
  - your callee to satisfy a postcondition
  - yourself to maintain an invariant
Sometimes you can’t check

- Check that \( p \) points to a null-terminated string
- Check that \( fp \) is a valid function pointer
- Check that \( x \) was not chosen by an attacker

Error handling

- Every error must be handled
  - i.e., program must take an appropriate response action
- Errors can indicate bugs, precondition violations, or situations in the environment

Error codes

- Commonly, return value indicates error if any
- Bad: may overlap with regular result
- Bad: goes away if ignored

Exceptions

- Separate from data, triggers jump to handler
- Good: avoid need for manual copying, not dropped
- May support: automatic cleanup (finally)
- Bad: non-local control flow can be surprising

Testing and security

- “Testing shows the presence, not the absence of bugs” – Dijkstra
- Easy versions of some bugs can be found by targeted tests:
  - Buffer overflows: long strings
  - Integer overflows: large numbers
  - Format string vulnerabilities: ‘\%x

Fuzz testing

- Random testing can also sometimes reveal bugs
- Original ‘fuzz’ (Miller): program <\dev/urandom
- Modern: small random changes to a benign input
Avoid special privileges
- Require users to have appropriate permissions
- Rather than putting trust in programs
- Anti-pattern 1: setuid/setgid program
- Anti-pattern 2: privileged daemon
- But, sometimes unavoidable (e.g., email)

Don’t use shells or Tcl
- ... in security-sensitive applications
- String interpretation and re-parsing are very hard to do safely
- Eternal Unix code bug: path names with spaces

Prefer absolute paths
- Use full paths (starting with /) for programs and files
- $PATH under local user control
- Initial working directory under local user control
- But FD-like, so can be used in place of openat if missing

One slide on setuid/setgid
- Unix users and process have a user id number (UID) as well as one or more group IDs
- Normally, process has the IDs of the use who starts it
- A setuid program instead takes the UID of the program binary

Prefer file descriptors
- Maintain references to files by keeping them open and using file descriptors, rather than by name
- References same contents despite file system changes
- Use openat, etc., variants to use FD instead of directory paths

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Prefer fully trusted paths

- Each directory component in a path must be write protected
- Read-only file in read-only directory can be changed if a parent directory is modified

Don’t separate check from use

- Avoid pattern of e.g., access then open
- Instead, just handle failure of open
  - You have to do this anyway
- Multiple references allow races
  - And access also has a history of bugs

Be careful with temporary files

- Create files exclusively with tight permissions and never reopen them
  - See detailed recommendations in Wheeler
- Not quite good enough: reopen and check matching device and inode
  - Fails with sufficiently patient attack

Give up privileges

- Using appropriate combinations of set*id functions
  - Alas, details differ between Unix variants
- Best: give up permanently
- Second best: give up temporarily
- Detailed recommendations: Setuid Demystified (USENIX’02)

Whitelist environment variables

- Can change the behavior of called program in unexpected ways
- Decide which ones are necessary
  - As few as possible
- Save these, remove any others

Next time

- Recommendations from the author of qmail
- A variety of isolation mechanisms