Memory Corruption

Basic Memory Corruption Attacks

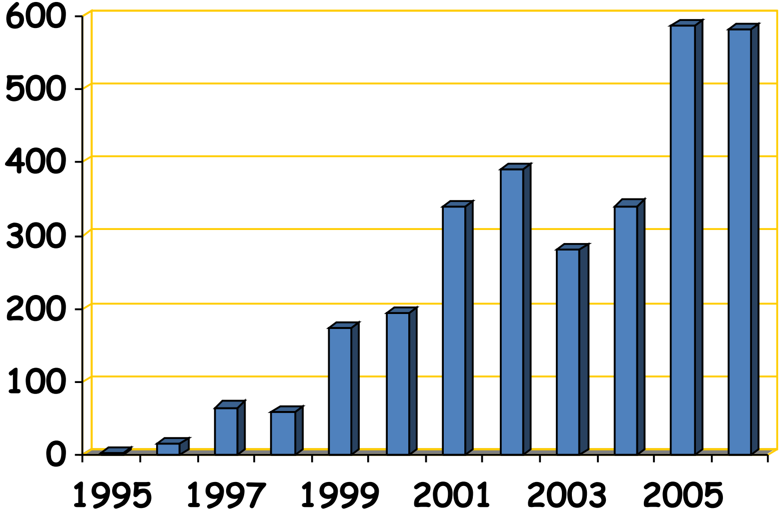
Original slides were created by Prof. Dan Boneh

Memory corruption attacks

- Attacker's goal:
  - Take over target machine (e.g. web server)
    - Execute arbitrary code on target by hijacking application control flow leveraging memory corruption
- Examples.
  - Buffer overflow attacks
  - Integer overflow attacks
  - Format string vulnerabilities

Example 1: buffer overflows

- Extremely common bug in C/C++ programs.
  - First major exploit: 1988 Internet Worm. fingerd.



≈20% of all vuln.

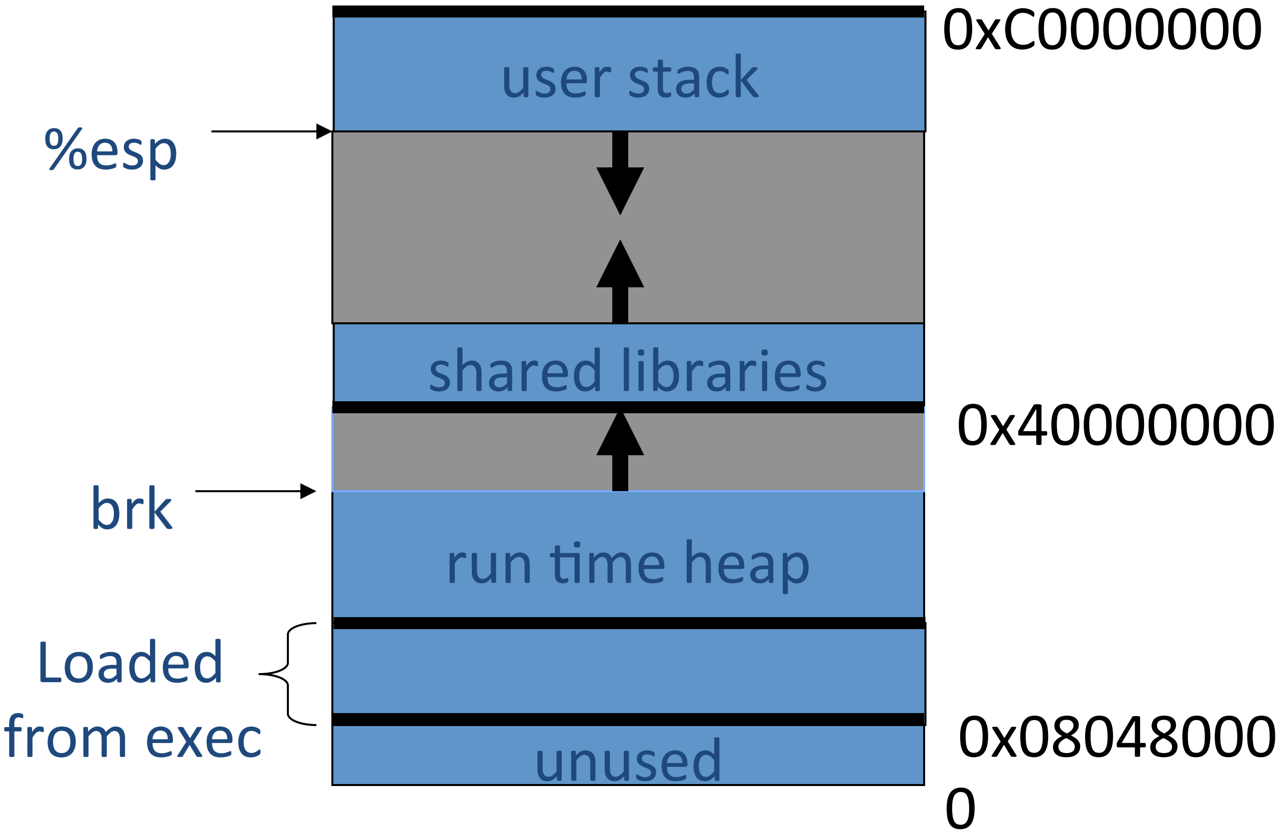
Source: NVD/CVE

What is needed

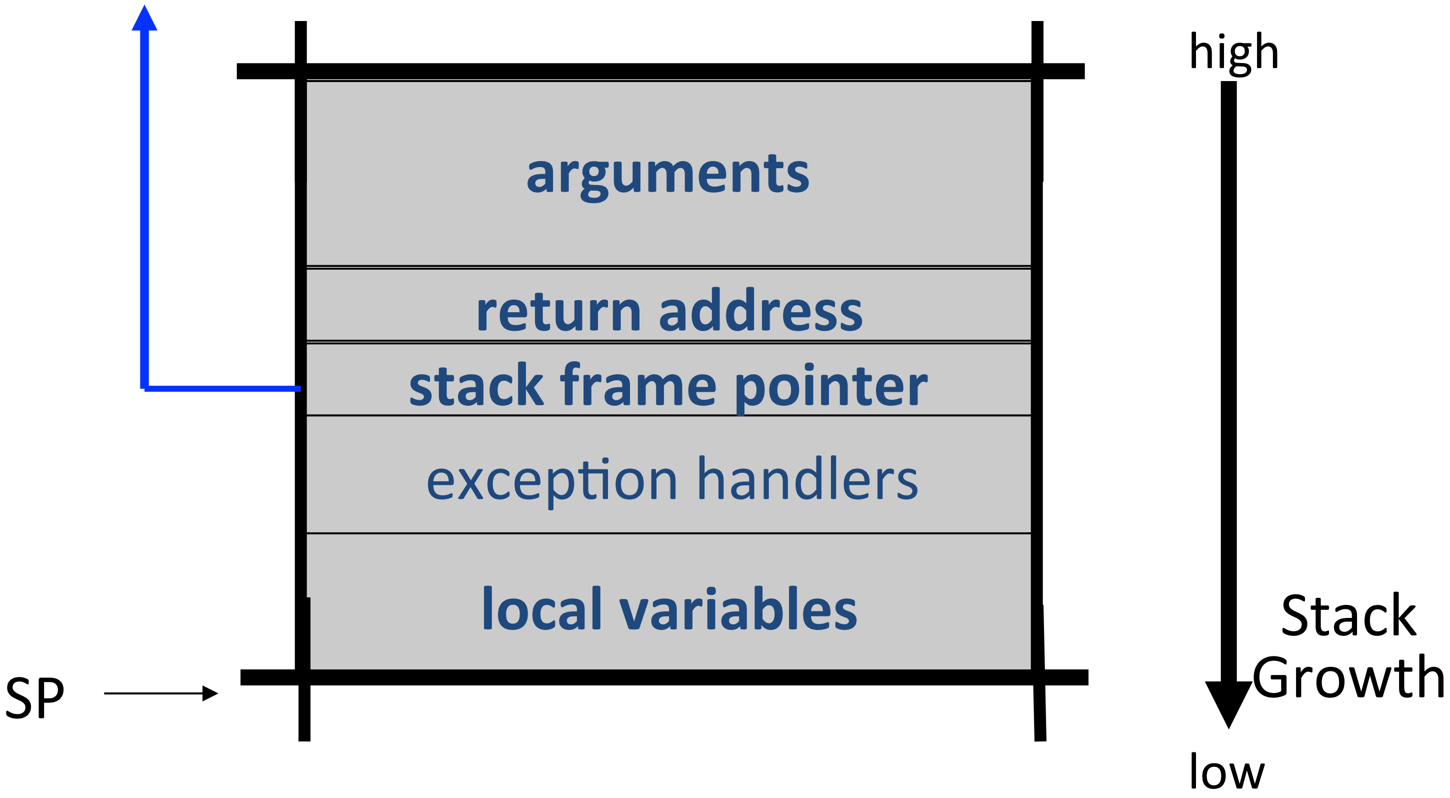
- Understanding C functions, the stack, and the heap.
- Know how system calls are made
- The exec() system call

- Attacker needs to know which CPU and OS used on the target machine:
  - Our examples are for x86 running Linux or Windows
  - Details vary slightly between CPUs and OSs:
    - Little endian vs. big endian (x86 vs. Motorola)
    - Stack Frame structure (Unix vs. Windows)

Linux process memory layout



Stack Frame



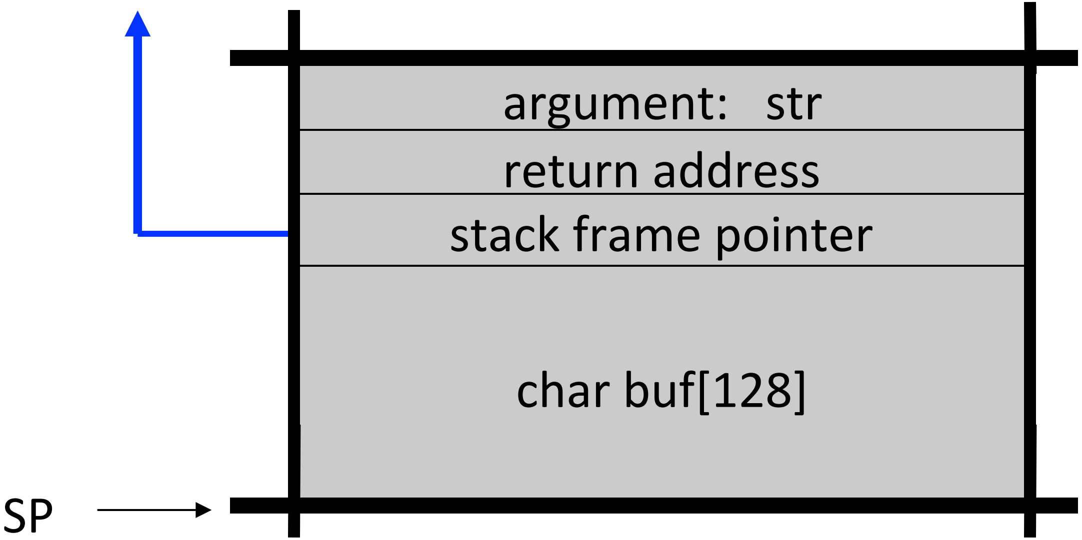
high
arguments
return address
stack frame pointer
exception handlers
local variables
SP
Stack Growth
low

What are buffer overflows?

Suppose a web server contains a function:

```
void func(char *str) {
    char buf[128];

    strcpy(buf, str);
    do-something(buf);
}
```

When func() is called stack looks like:

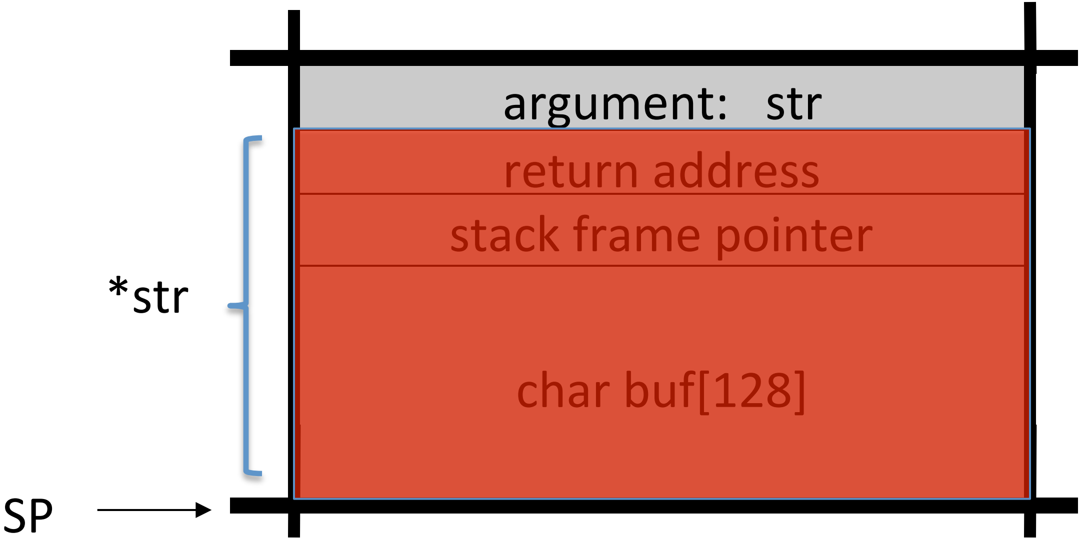


What are buffer overflows?

What if `*str` is 136 bytes long?

After `strcpy`:

```
void func(char *str) {
    char buf[128];

    strcpy(buf, str);
    do-something(buf);
}
```



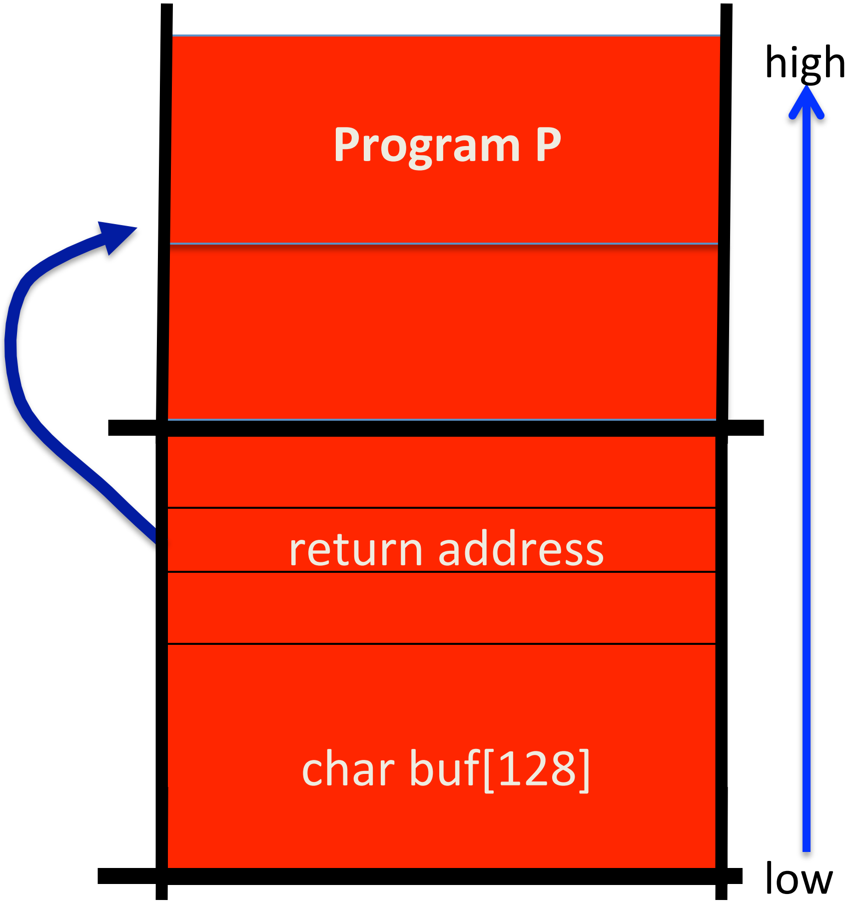
Problem:

no length checking in strcpy()

Basic stack exploit

Suppose *str is such that after strcpy stack looks like:

Program P: exec("/bin/sh")



When func() exits, the user gets shell !

Note: attack code P runs *in stack*.

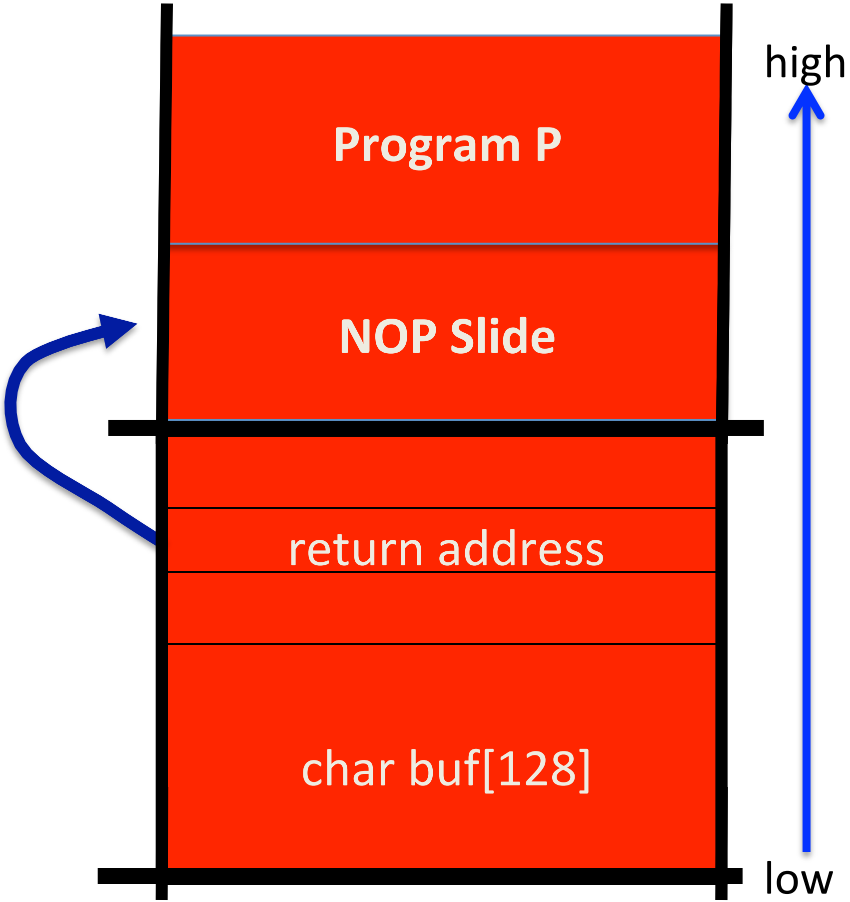
The NOP slide

Problem: how does attacker determine ret-address?

Solution: NOP slide

- Guess approximate stack state when func() is called
- Insert many NOPs before program P:

  nop, xor eax,eax, inc ax



Details and examples

- Some complications:
  - Program P should not contain the '\0' character.
  - Overflow should not crash program before func() exists.

- (in)Famous remote stack smashing overflows:
  - (2007) Overflow in Windows animated cursors (ANI). LoadAniIcon()
  - (2005) Overflow in Symantec Virus Detection

test.GetPrivateProfileString "file", **[long string]**

Many unsafe libc functions

strcpy (char *dest, const char *src)

strcat (char *dest, const char *src)

gets (char *s)

scanf (const char *format, …)   and many more.

- “Safe” libc versions strncpy(), strncat() are misleading
  - e.g. strncpy()   may leave string unterminated.

- Windows C run time (CRT):
  - strcpy_s (*dest, DestSize, *src):   ensures proper termination

Buffer overflow opportunities

- Exception handlers: (Windows SEH attacks)
  - Overwrite the address of an exception handler in stack frame.

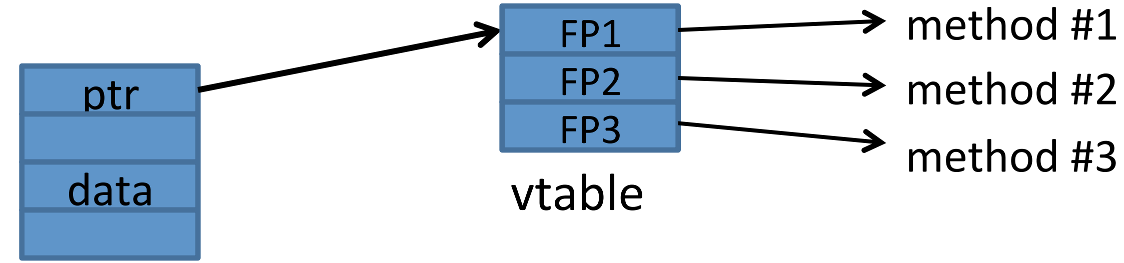
- Function pointers: (e.g. PHP 4.0.2, MS MediaPlayer Bitmaps)

  - Overflowing buf will override function pointer.

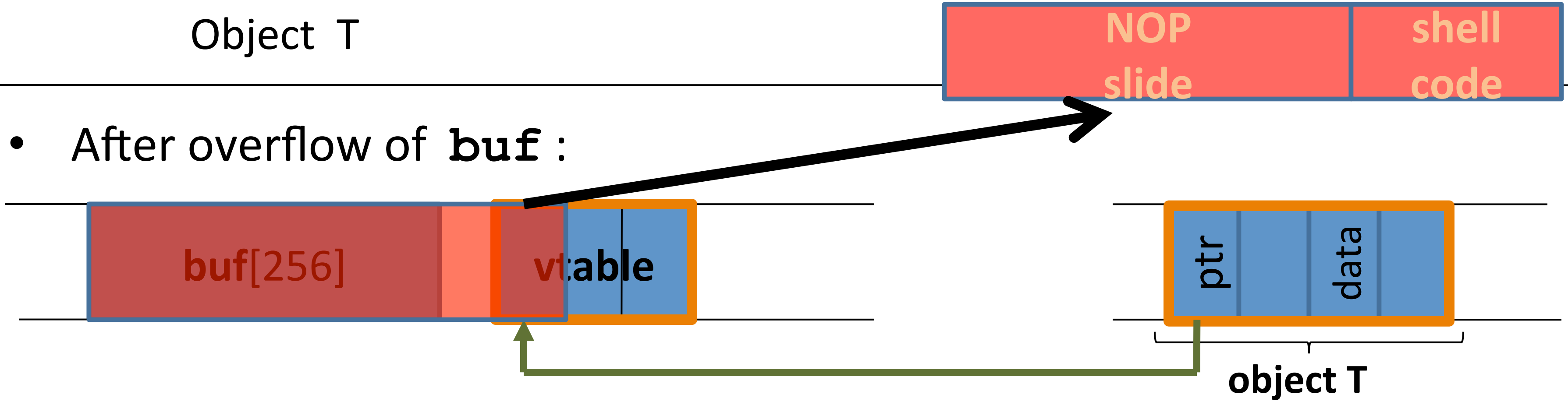
- Longjmp buffers: longjmp(pos) (e.g. Perl 5.003)
  - Overflowing buf next to pos overrides value of pos.

Corrupting method pointers

- Compiler generated function pointers (e.g. C++ code)



- After overflow of **`buf`** :



Finding buffer overflows

- To find overflow:
  - Run web server on local machine
  - Issue malformed requests (ending with "$$$$$")
    - Many automated tools exist (fuzzers, symbolic/concolic execution)
  - If web server crashes,
    search core dump for "$$$$$" to find overflow location
- Construct exploit (not easy given latest defenses)

Memory Corruption

More Memory Corruption Attacks

More Corruption Opportunities

- **Integer overflows:** (e.g. MS DirectX MIDI Lib)
- **Double free:** double free space on heap
  - Can cause memory mgr to write data to specific location
  - Examples: CVS server
- **Use after free:** using memory after it is freed
- **Format string vulnerabilities**

Integer Overflows (see Phrack 60)

Problem: what happens when int exceeds max value?

int m; (32 bits) **short s; (16 bits)** **char c; (8 bits)**

c = 0x80 + 0x80 = 128 + 128 ⇒ c = 0

s = 0xff80 + 0x80 ⇒ s = 0

m = 0xffffff80 + 0x80 ⇒ m = 0

Can this be exploited?

An example

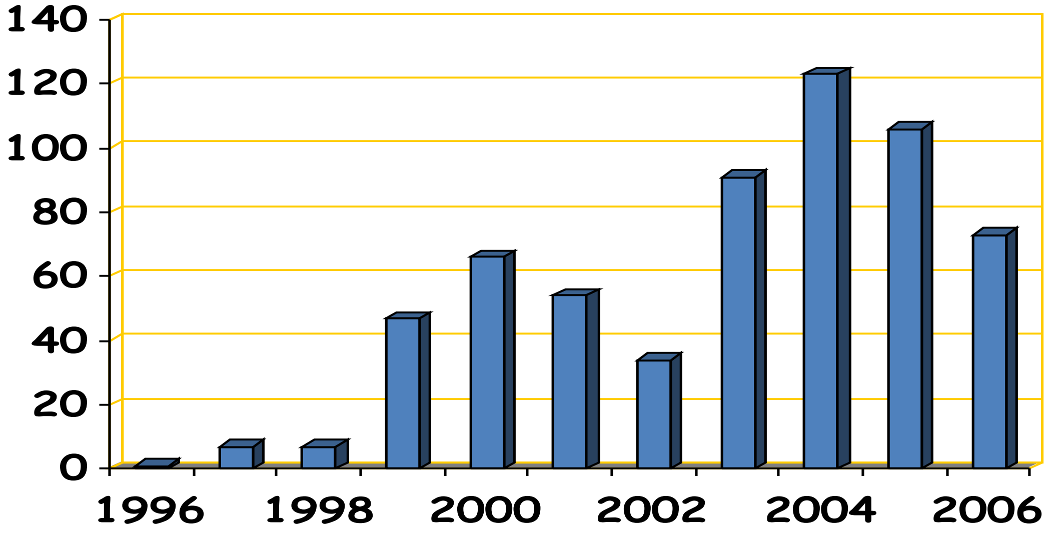
```
void  func( char *buf1, *buf2,    unsigned int len1, len2) {
      char temp[256];
      if  (len1 + len2 > 256)  {return -1}           // length check
      memcpy(temp, buf1, len1);                      // cat buffers
      memcpy(temp+len1, buf2, len2);
      do-something(temp);                            // do stuff
}
```

What if **len1 = 0x80, len2 = 0xffffff80** ?

⇒ len1+len2 = 0

Second memcpy() will overflow heap !!

Integer overflow exploit stats



Source: NVD/CVE

Format string bugs

Format string problem

```
int func(char *user)   {
   fprintf( stderr, user);
}
```

Problem: what if *user = “%s%s%s%s%s%s%s” ??

- Most likely program will crash: DoS.
- If not, program will print memory contents. Privacy?
- Full exploit using user = “%n“

Correct form: `fprintf( stdout, “%s”, user);`

Vulnerable functions

Any function using a format string.

Printing:

- printf, fprintf, sprintf, …
- vprintf, vfprintf, vsprintf, …

Logging:

- syslog, err, warn

Exploit

- Dumping arbitrary memory:
  - Walk up stack until desired pointer is found.
  - printf(“%08x.%08x.%08x.%08x|%s|”)

- Writing to arbitrary memory:
  - printf(“hello %n”, &temp) -- writes ‘6’ into temp.
  - printf(“%08x.%08x.%08x.%08x.%n”)

Memory Corruption

Platform Defenses

Preventing hijacking attacks

1. Fix bugs:
   - Audit software
     - Automated tools: Coverity, Prefast/Prefix.
   - Rewrite software in a type safe languange (Java, ML)
     - Difficult for existing (legacy) code …

2. Concede overflow, but prevent code execution

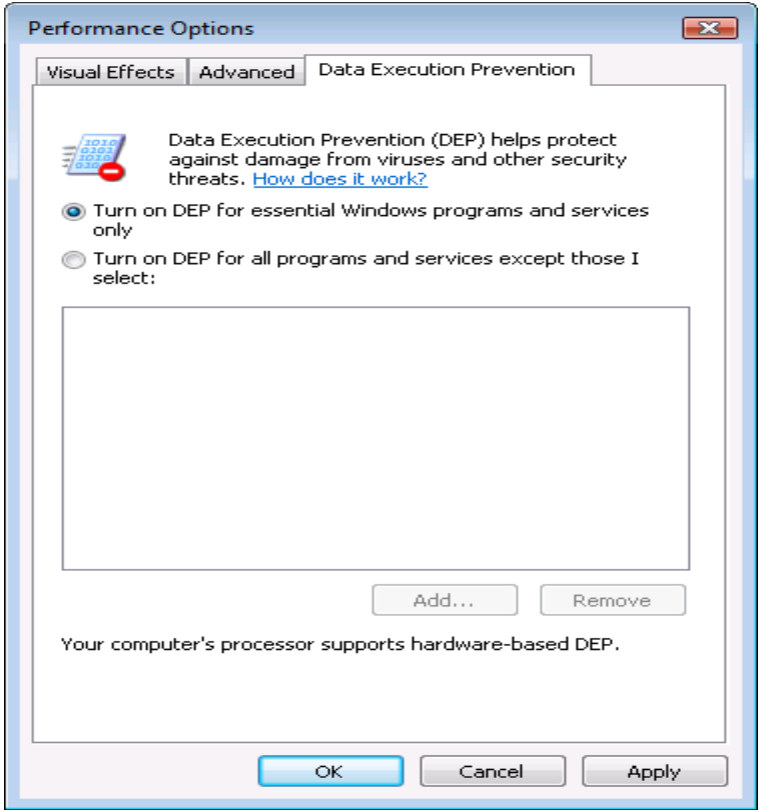
3. Add runtime code to detect overflows exploits
   - Halt process when overflow exploit detected
   - StackGuard, LibSafe, …

Marking memory as non-execute (W^X)

Prevent attack code execution by marking stack and heap as **non-executable**

- NX-bit on AMD Athlon 64, XD-bit on Intel P4 Prescott
  - NX bit in every Page Table Entry (PTE)
- Deployment:
  - Linux (via PaX project); OpenBSD
  - Windows: since XP SP2 (DEP)
    - Visual Studio: **/NXCompat[:NO]**
- Limitations:
  - Some apps need executable heap (e.g. JITs).
  - Does not defend against `**Return Oriented Programming**' exploits

Examples: DEP controls in Windows



Data Execution Prevention (DEP) helps protect against damage from viruses and other security threats. How does it work?

● Turn on DEP for essential Windows programs and services only

○ Turn on DEP for all programs and services except those I select:

Your computer's processor supports hardware-based DEP.

To help protect your computer, Windows has closed this program.

Name: **Windows Explorer**

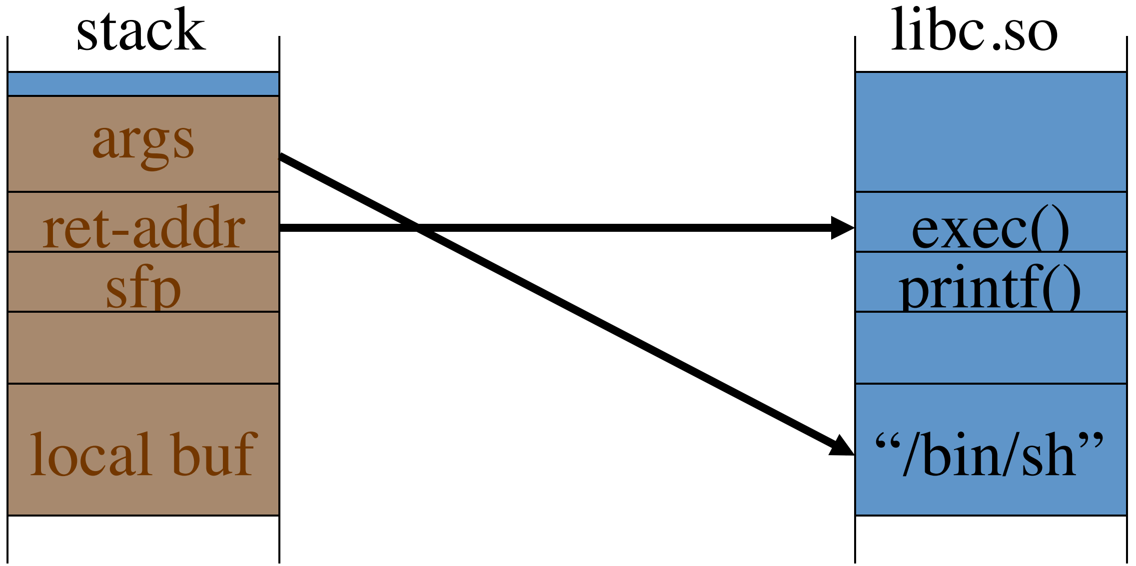
Publisher: Microsoft Corporation

Data Execution Prevention helps protect against damage from viruses and other security threats. What should I do?

DEP terminating a program

Attack: Return Oriented Programming (ROP)

- Control hijacking without executing custom code



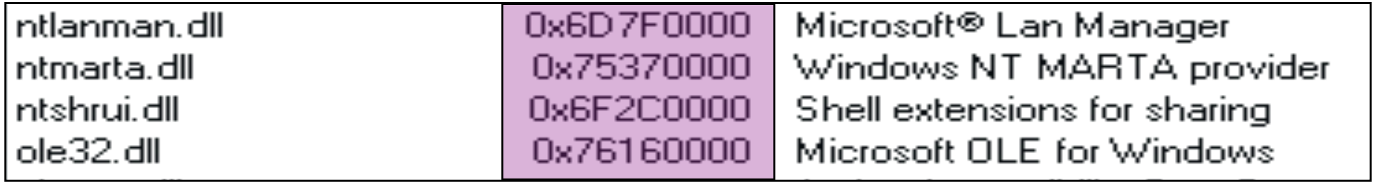
Response: randomization

- <u>**ASLR**</u>: (Address Space Layout Randomization)
  - Map shared libraries to rand location in process memory

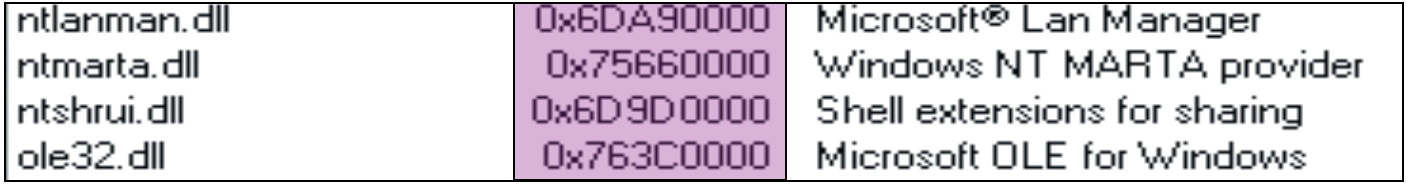
    ⇒ Attacker cannot jump directly to exec function
  - <u>Deployment</u>: (/DynamicBase)
    - **Windows 7**: 8 bits of randomness for DLLs
      - aligned to 64K page in a 16MB region ⇒ 256 choices
    - **Windows 8:** 24 bits of randomness on 64-bit processors
- <u>Other randomization methods</u>:
  - Sys-call randomization: randomize sys-call id’s
  - Instruction Set Randomization (ISR)

ASLR Example

Booting twice loads libraries into different locations:



ntlanman.dll	0x6D7F0000	Microsoft® Lan Manager
ntmarta.dll	0x75370000	Windows NT MARTA provider
ntshrui.dll	0x6F2C0000	Shell extensions for sharing
ole32.dll	0x76160000	Microsoft OLE for Windows



ntlanman.dll	0x6DA90000	Microsoft® Lan Manager
ntmarta.dll	0x75660000	Windows NT MARTA provider
ntshrui.dll	0x6D9D0000	Shell extensions for sharing
ole32.dll	0x763C0000	Microsoft OLE for Windows

Note: everything in process memory must be randomized

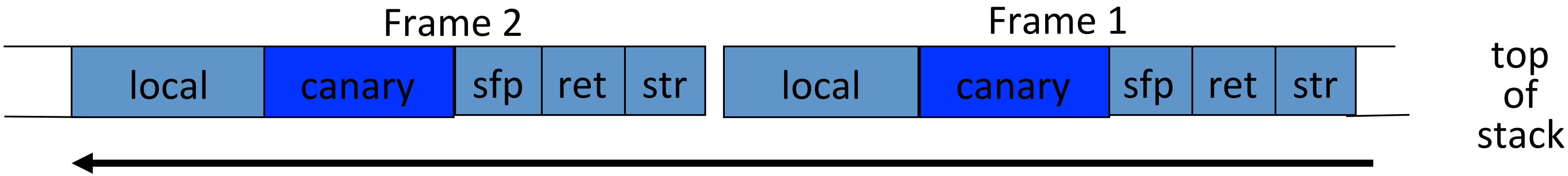
stack, heap, shared libs, base image

- Win 8 **Force ASLR**: ensures all loaded modules use ASLR

Defenses: Canary

- Many run-time checking techniques …
  - we only discuss methods relevant to overflow protection

- Solution 1: StackGuard
  - Run time tests for stack integrity.
  - Embed “canaries” in stack frames and verify their integrity prior to function return.



Canary Types

- Random canary:
  - Random string chosen at program startup.
  - Insert canary string into every stack frame.
  - Verify canary before returning from function.
    - Exit program if canary changed. Turns potential exploit into DoS.
  - To corrupt, attacker must learn current random string.

- Terminator canary: Canary = {0, newline, linefeed, EOF}
  - String functions will not copy beyond terminator.
  - Attacker cannot use string functions to corrupt stack.

Canaries are not full proof

- Canaries are an important defense tool, but do not prevent all control hijacking attacks:
  - Heap-based attacks still possible
  - Integer overflow attacks still possible
  - May not (depends on the implementation) prevent Exception Handling attacks

More methods …

- **StackShield**
  - At function prologue, copy return address RET and SFP to “safe” location (beginning of data segment)
  - Upon return, check that RET and SFP is equal to copy.
  - Implemented as assembler file processor (GCC)
- **Control Flow Integrity** (CFI)
  - A combination of static and dynamic checking
    - Statically determine program control flow
    - Dynamically enforce control flow integrity

Memory Corruption

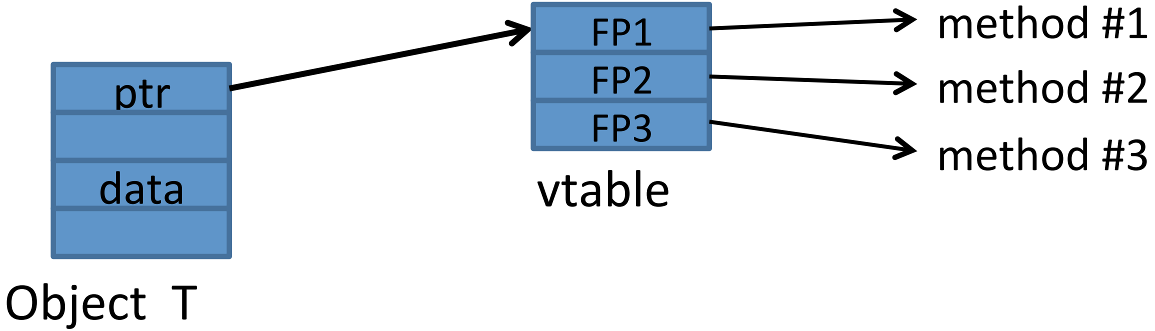
Advanced Attacks

Heap Spray Attacks

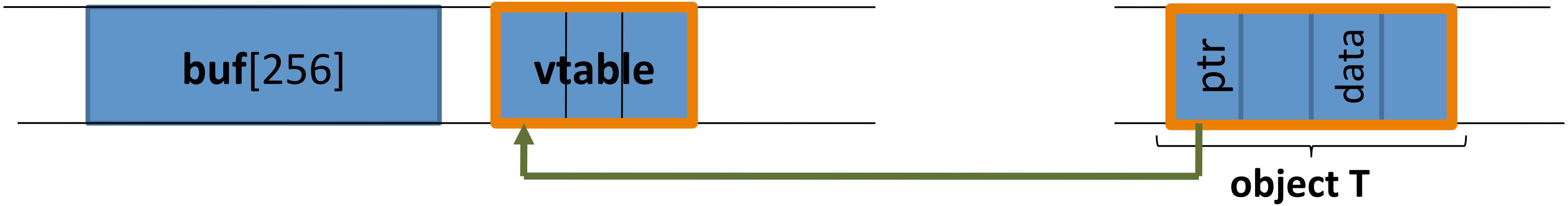
A reliable method for exploiting heap overflows

Heap-based control hijacking

- Compiler generated function pointers (e.g. C++ code)

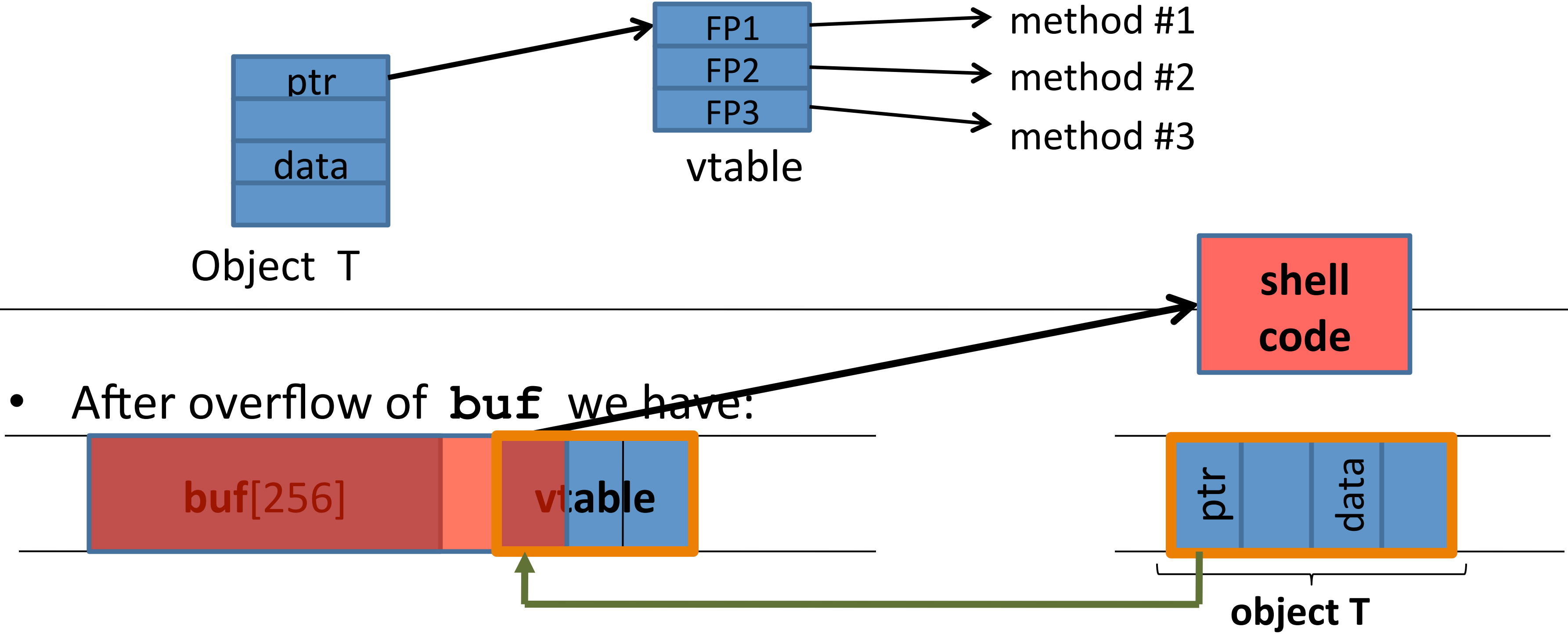


- Suppose vtable is on the heap next to a string object:



Heap-based control hijacking

- Compiler generated function pointers (e.g. C++ code)

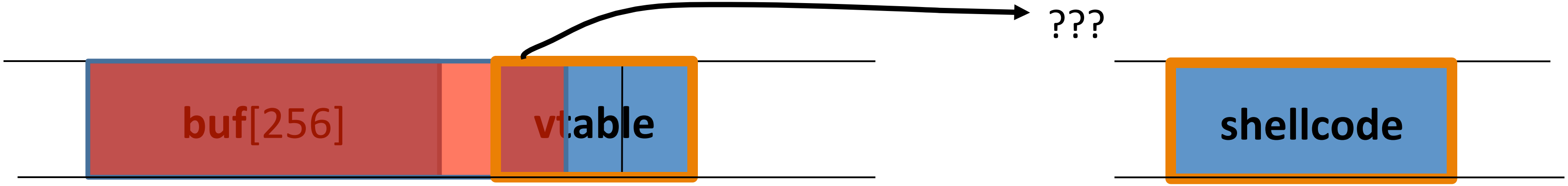


- After overflow of `buf` we have:

A reliable exploit?

```
<SCRIPT language="text/javascript">
 shellcode = unescape("%u4343%u4343%...");
overflow-string = unescape(“%u2332%u4276%...”);
cause-overflow( overflow-string );       // overflow  buf[ ]
</SCRIPT>
```

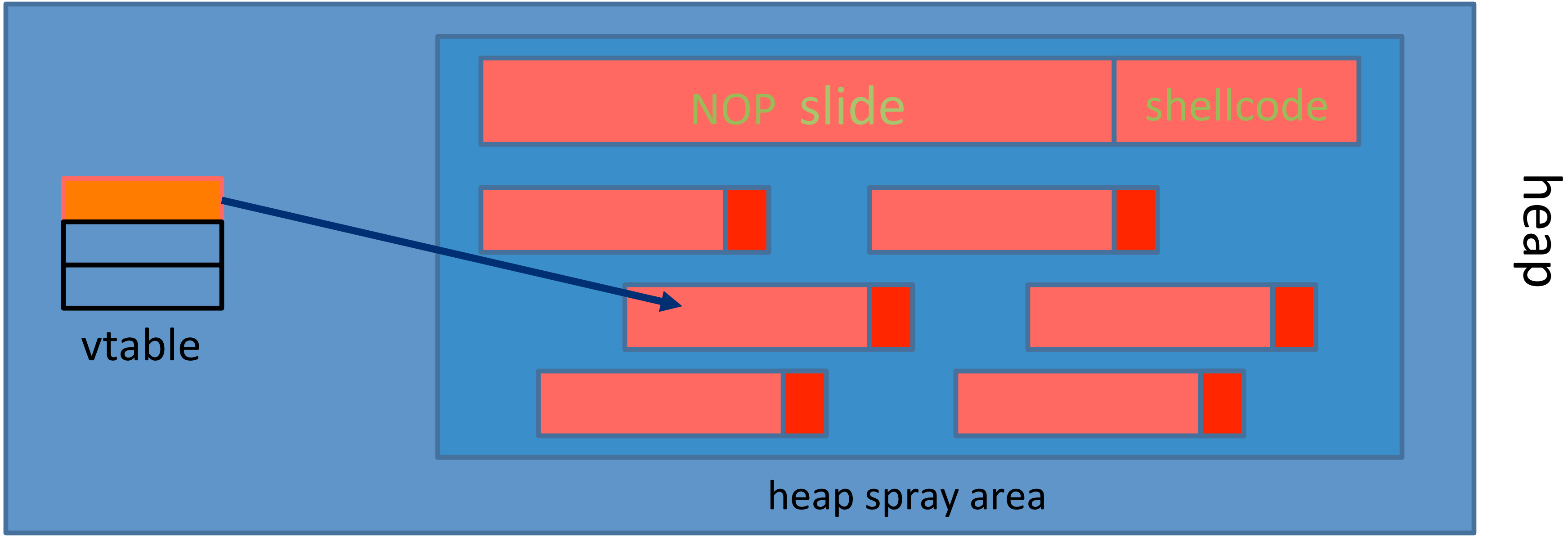
Problem: attacker does not know where browser places **shellcode** on the heap



Heap Spraying [SkyLined 2004]

Idea:

1. use Javascript to spray heap with shellcode (and NOP slides)
2. then point vtable ptr anywhere in spray area



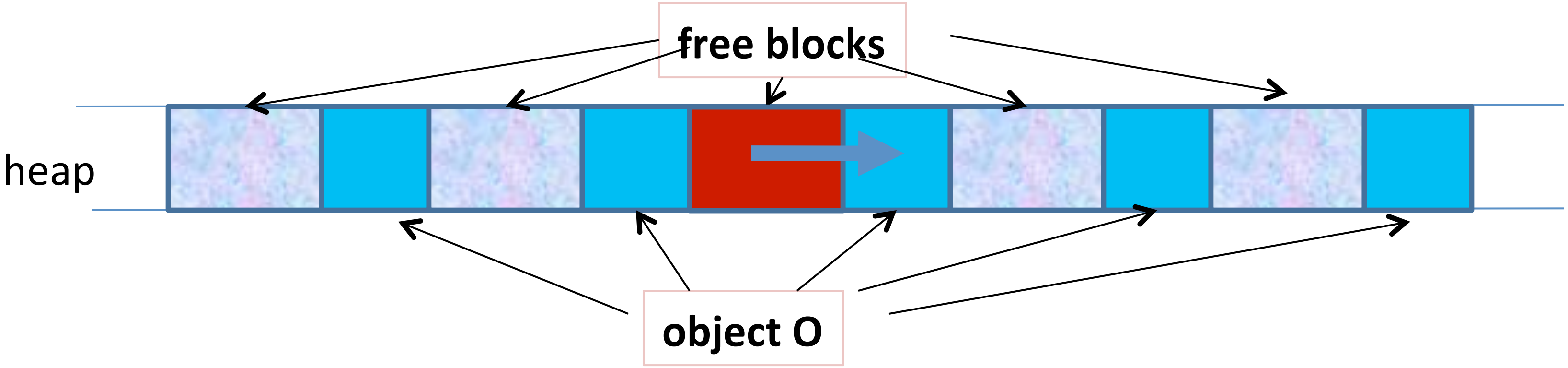
Javascript heap spraying

```
var  nop = unescape(“%u9090%u9090”)
while (nop.length < 0x100000)  nop += nop

var shellcode = unescape("%u4343%u4343%...");

var x = new Array ()
for (i=0;  i<1000;  i++) {
        x[i] = nop + shellcode;
}
```

- Pointing func-ptr almost anywhere in heap will cause shellcode to execute.

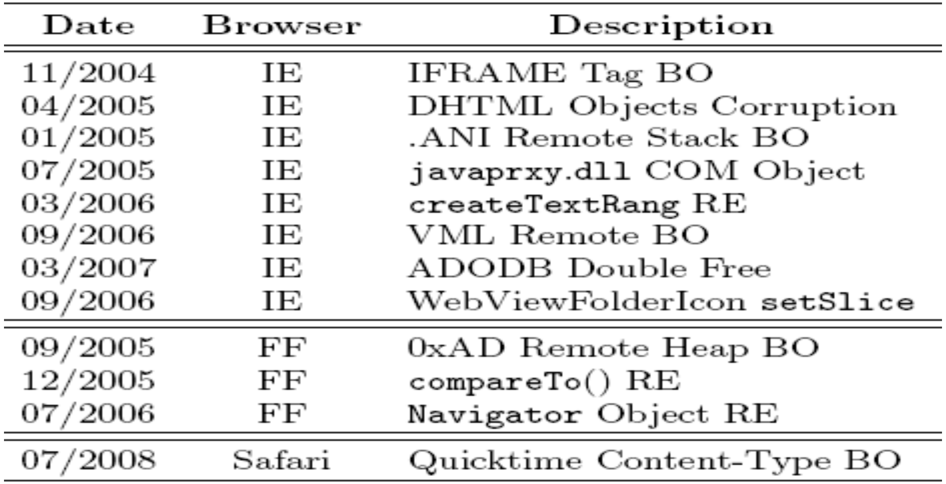
Vulnerable buffer placement

- Placing vulnerable **`buf[256]`** next to object O:
  - By sequence of Javascript allocations and frees make heap look as follows:



  - Allocate vuln. buffer in Javascript and cause overflow
  - Successfully used against a Safari PCRE overflow [DHM'08]

Many heap spray exploits



Date	Browser	Description
11/2004	IE	IFRAME Tag BO
04/2005	IE	DHTML Objects Corruption
01/2005	IE	.ANI Remote Stack BO
07/2005	IE	javaprxy.dll COM Object
03/2006	IE	createTextRang RE
09/2006	IE	VML Remote BO
03/2007	IE	ADODB Double Free
09/2006	IE	WebViewFolderIcon setSlice
09/2005	FF	0xAD Remote Heap BO
12/2005	FF	compareTo() RE
07/2006	FF	Navigator Object RE
07/2008	Safari	Quicktime Content-Type BO

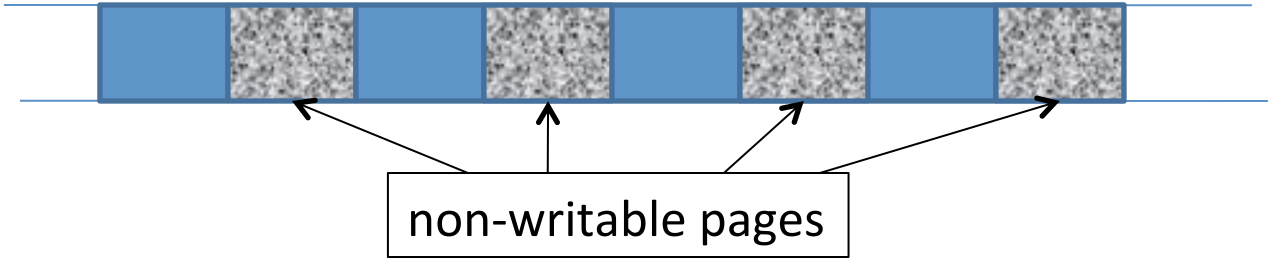
[RLZ’08]

- Improvements: Heap Feng Shui [S’07]
  - Reliable heap exploits **on IE** without spraying
  - Gives attacker full control of IE heap from Javascript

(partial) Defenses

- Protect heap function pointers
- Better browser architecture:
  - Store JavaScript strings in a separate heap from browser heap

- OpenBSD heap overflow protection:



non-writable pages

prevents cross-page overflows

- Nozzle [RLZ'08] : detect sprays by prevalence of code on heap

References on heap spraying

[1] **Heap Feng Shui in Javascript,**
by A. Sotirov, *Blackhat Europe* 2007

[2] **Engineering Heap Overflow Exploits with JavaScript**
M. Daniel, J. Honoroff, and C. Miller, *WooT* 2008

[3] **Nozzle: A Defense Against Heap-spraying Code Injection Attacks,**
by P. Ratanaworabhan, B. Livshits, and B. Zorn

[4] **Interpreter Exploitation: Pointer inference and JiT spraying,**
by Dion Blazakis