

MS degree in Computer Engineering
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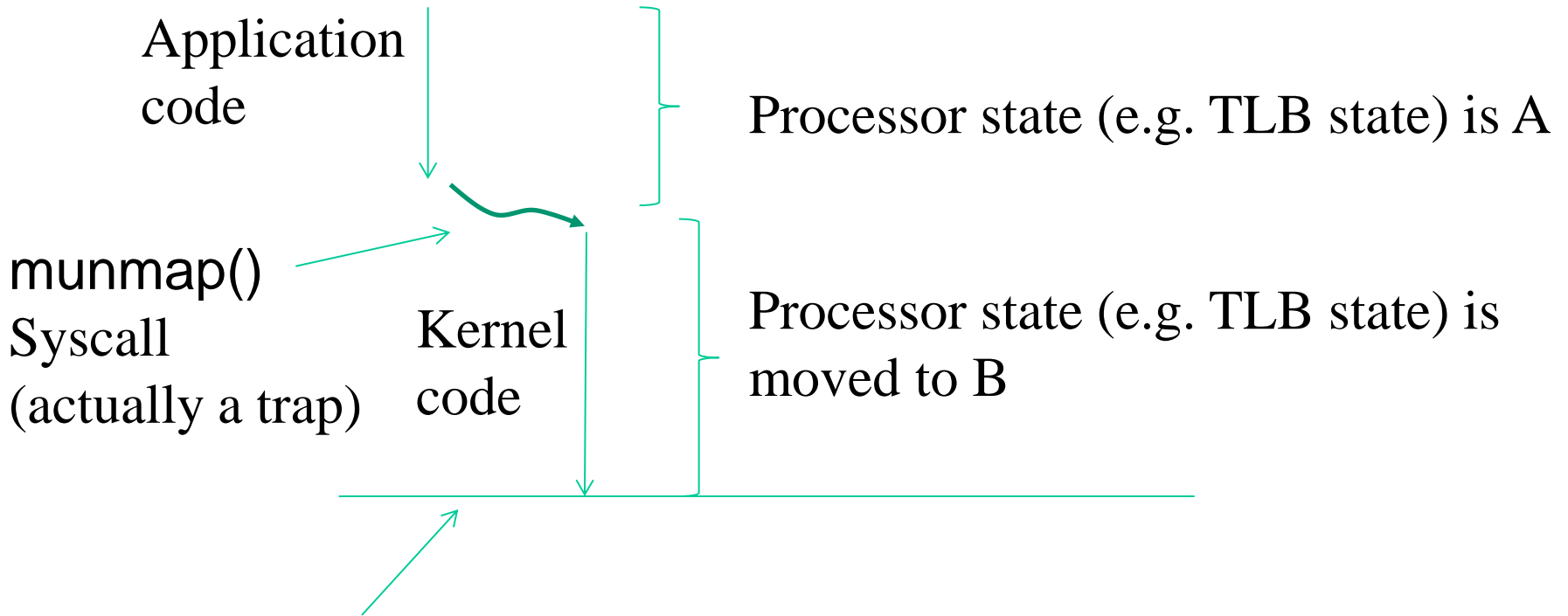
Topics:

1. Advanced trap/interrupt architectures
2. Case study on Linux

Single-core traditional concepts

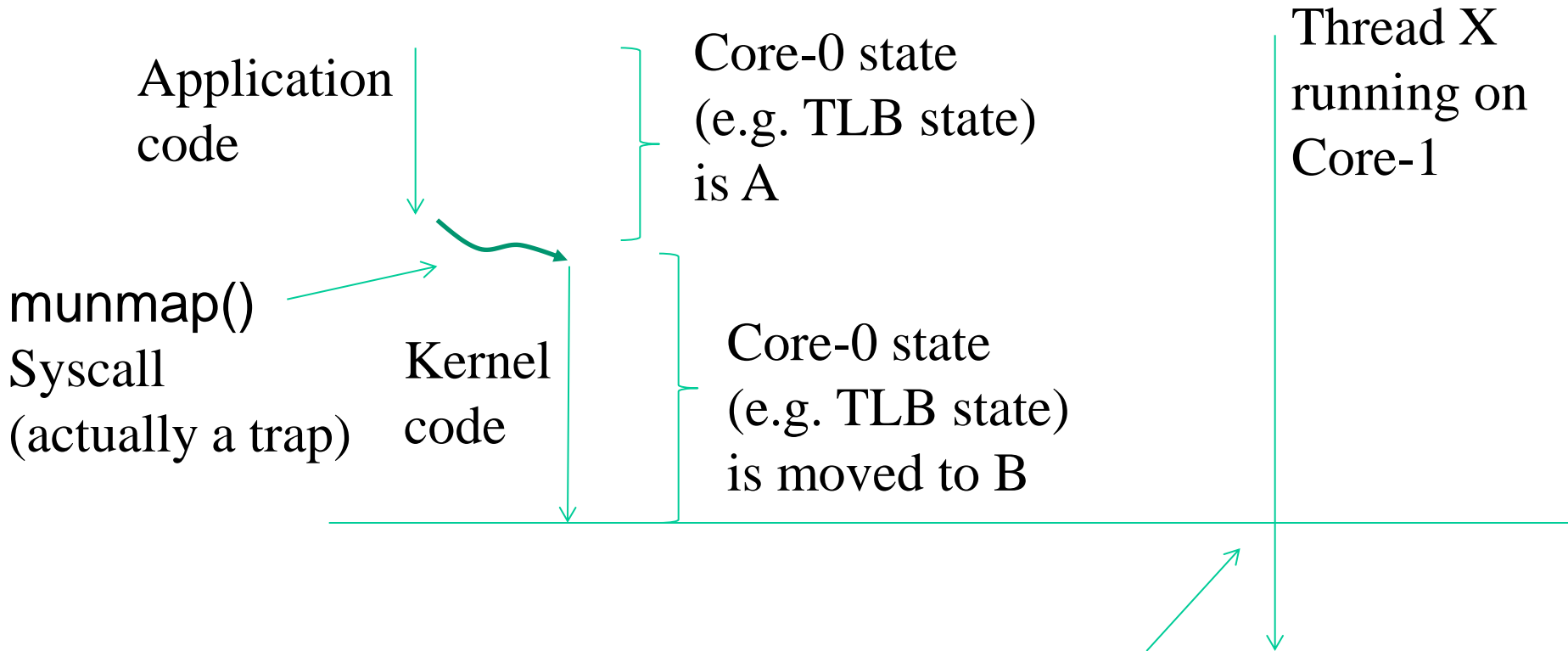
- Traditional single-core machines only relied on
 - Traps (synchronous events wrt software execution)
 - Interrupts from external devices (asynchronous events)
- The classical way of handling the event has been based on running operating system code on the **unique CPU-core** in the system (single core systems) upon event acceptance
- This has been enough (in terms of consistency) even for individual concurrent (multi-thread) applications given that the state of the hardware was time-shared across threads

An example



from this point any time-shared thread sees the correct final state as determined by trap handling

Moving to multi-core systems



This thread does not see state B – what if the TLB on Core-1 caches the same page table (the same state portion) as the one of Core-0??

Core issues

- If the system state is distributed/replicated within in the architecture we need mechanisms for allowing state changes by traps/interrupts to be propagated
- As an example, a trap on Core-0 needs to be propagated on Core-1 etc.
- In some cases this is addressed by pure firmware protocols (such as when the event **is bound to deterministic handling**)
- Otherwise we need mechanisms to propagate and handle the event at the operating system (software) level

The IPI (Inter Processor Interrupt) support

- IPI is a third type of event (beyond traps and classical interrupts) that may trigger the execution of specific operating system software on any CPU-core
- An IPI is a synchronous event at the sender CPU-core and an asynchronous one at the recipient CPU-core
- On the other hand, IPI is typically used to put in place cross CPU-core activities (e.g. request/reply protocols) allowing, e.g., a specific CPU-core to trigger a change in the state of another one

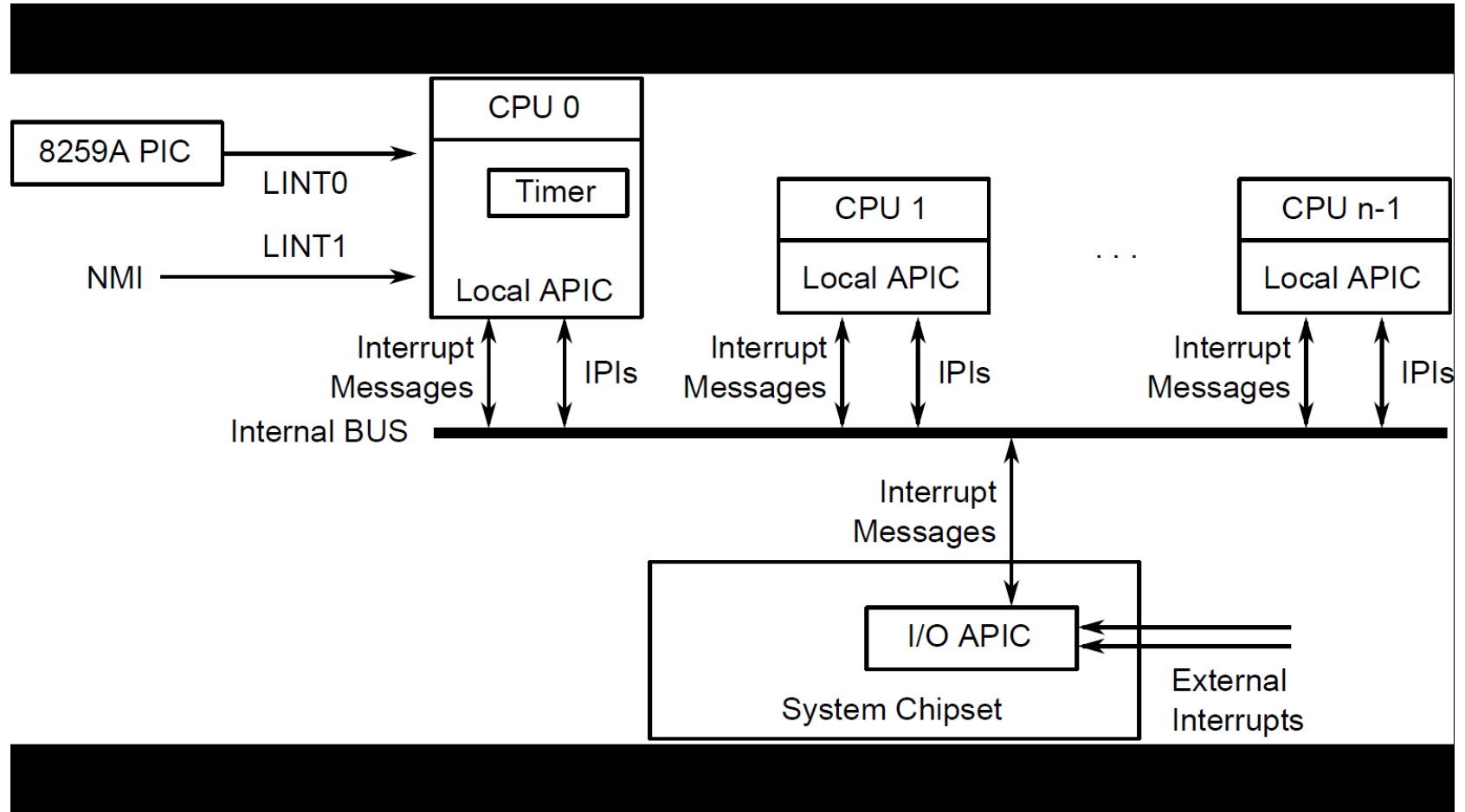
Priorities

- IPIs are generated via firmware support, but are finally processed at software level
- Classically, at least two priority levels are admitted
 - ✓ High
 - ✓ Low
- High priority leads to immediate processing of the IPI at the recipient (a single IPI is accepted and stands out at any point in time)
- Low priority generally leads to queue the requests and process them via sequentialization

Actual support in x86 machines

- In x86 processors, the basic firmware support for interrupts is the so called APIC (Advanced Programmable Interrupt Controller)
- This offers a local instance to any CPU-core (called LAPIC – Local APIC)
- As an example, LAPIC offers a CPU-core local programmable timer (for time tracking and time-sharing purposes)
- It also offers pseudo-registers to be used for posting IPI requests in the system
- IPI requests travel along an ad-hoc APIC bus

The architectural scheme



Core data structures: the IDT

- It is a table of entries that are used to describe the entry point (the GATE) for the handling of any interrupt
- x86 machines have IDTs formed by 256 entries
- The actual size and structure of the entries depends on the type of machine we are working on (say 32 vs 64 bit machines)
- Here is a high level view of the actual usage of the entries

IDT entries binding

Back here in
a while



Vector range

Use

0-19 (0x0-0x13)

Nonmaskable interrupts and
exceptions

20-31 (0x14-0x1f)

Intel-reserved

32-127 (0x20-0x7f)

External interrupts (IRQs)

128 (0x80)

Programmed exception for
system calls (segmented
style)

129-238 (0x81-0xee)

External interrupts (IRQs)

239 (0xef)

Local APIC timer interrupt

240-250 (0xf0-0xfa)

Reserved by Linux for future
use

251-255 (0xfb-0xff)

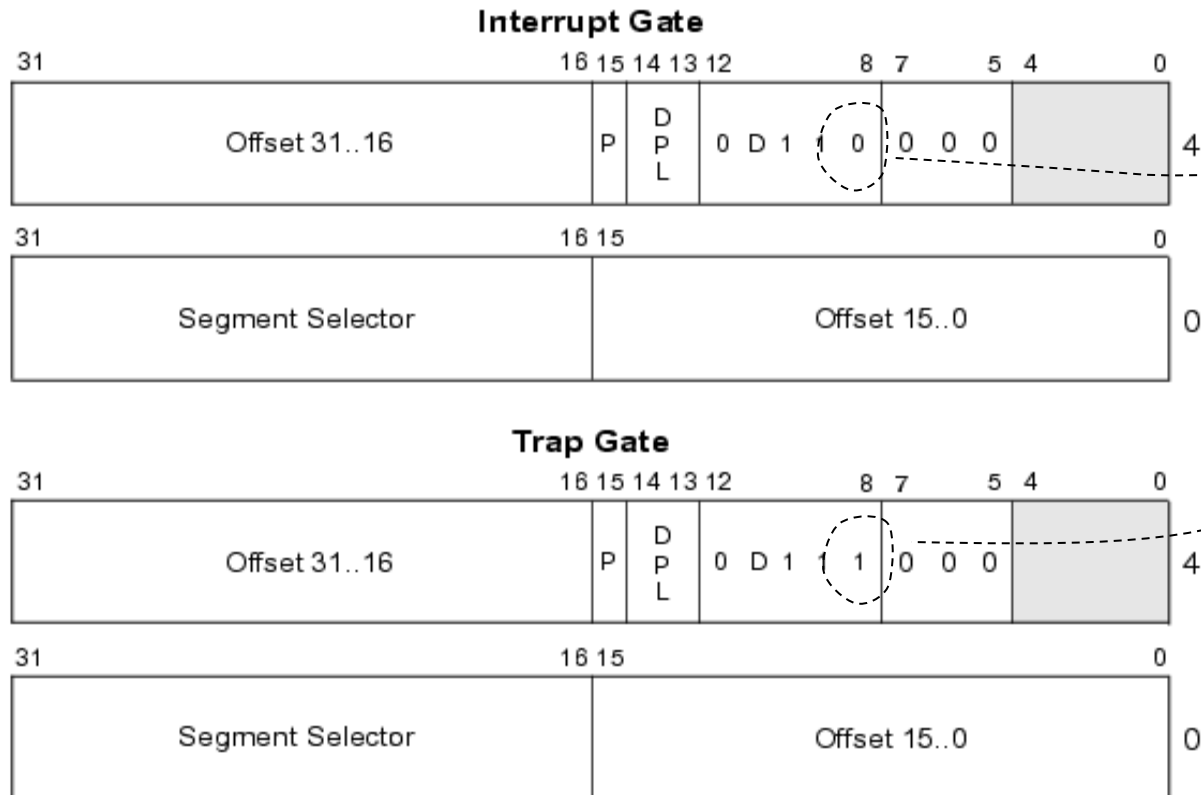
Inter-processor interrupts

The case of 32 bits machines


- The trap/interrupt table gets initialized via the functions `trap_init()` and `init_IRQ()` belonging, respectively, to `arch/i386/traps.c` and `arch/i386/kernel/i8259.c`
- The **idtr** register (interrupt descriptor table register) keeps the corresponding virtual address
- Such an address is associated with the `idt_table` identifier, which is declared in `arch/i386/traps.c`
- It references an array of **256 elements of type** `struct desc_struct` defined in `include/asm-i386/desc.h` as

```
struct desc_struct {  
    unsigned long a,b;  
}
```

Structure of the i386 IDT entry



difference

DPL	Descriptor Privilege Level
Offset	Offset to procedure entry point
P	Segment Present flag
Selector	Segment Selector for destination code segment
D	Size of gate: 1 = 32 bits; 0 = 16 bits
	Reserved

Relations with the GDT

- The segment identifier/selector allows accessing the entry of the GDT where we can find the base value for the target segment
- **NOTE:**
 - As we already know, there are 4 valid data/code segments, all mapped to base 0x0
 - This is done in order to make **LINUX portable on architectures offering no segmentation support** (i.e. only offering paging)
 - This is one reason why
 - ✓ Protection meta-data are also kept within page table entries
 - ✓ Setting up the offset for a GATE requires a **displacement referring to 0x0**, which can be denoted to the linker by the & operator

The case of x86-64

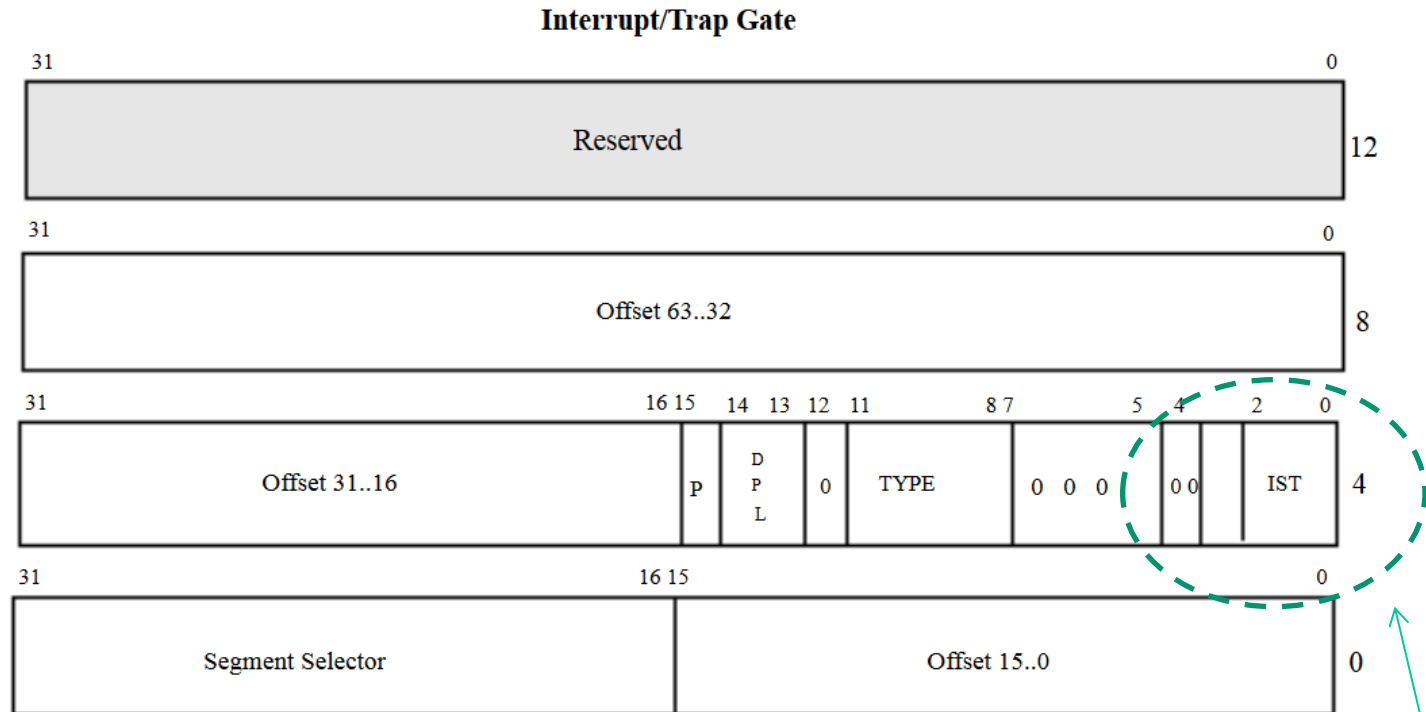
```
/* idt.c */
#include "x86_64.h"
#include <inttypes.h>

struct idt_t {
    uint16_t offset_0_15;
    uint16_t selector;
    unsigned ist : 3 ;
    unsigned reserved0 : 5;
    unsigned type : 4;
    unsigned zero : 1;
    unsigned dpl : 2;
    unsigned p : 1;
    uint16_t offset_16_31;
    uint32_t offset_63_32;
    uint32_t reserved1;
}
```

IDT entry, Interrupt Gates

Name	Bit	Full Name	Description																				
Offset	48..63	Offset 16..31	Higher part of the offset.																				
P	47	Present	can be set to 0 for unused interrupts or for Paging .																				
DPL	45,46	Descriptor Privilege Level	Gate call protection. Specifies which privilege Level the calling Descriptor minimum should have. So hardware and CPU interrupts can be protected from being called out of userspace.																				
S	44	Storage Segment	= 0 for interrupt gates.																				
Type	40..43	Gate Type 0..3	<p>Possible IDT gate types :</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>0b0101</td><td>0x5</td><td>5</td><td>80386 32 bit Task gate</td></tr> <tr> <td>0b0110</td><td>0x6</td><td>6</td><td>80286 16-bit interrupt gate</td></tr> <tr> <td>0b0111</td><td>0x7</td><td>7</td><td>80286 16-bit trap gate</td></tr> <tr> <td>0b1110</td><td>0xE</td><td>14</td><td>80386 32-bit interrupt gate</td></tr> <tr> <td>0b1111</td><td>0xF</td><td>15</td><td>80386 32-bit trap gate</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	0b0101	0x5	5	80386 32 bit Task gate	0b0110	0x6	6	80286 16-bit interrupt gate	0b0111	0x7	7	80286 16-bit trap gate	0b1110	0xE	14	80386 32-bit interrupt gate	0b1111	0xF	15	80386 32-bit trap gate
0b0101	0x5	5	80386 32 bit Task gate																				
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0b0111	0x7	7	80286 16-bit trap gate																				
0b1110	0xE	14	80386 32-bit interrupt gate																				
0b1111	0xF	15	80386 32-bit trap gate																				
0	32..39	Unused 0..7	Have to be 0 .																				
Selector	16..31	Selector 0..15	Selector of the interrupt function (to make sense - the kernel's selector). The selector's descriptor's DPL field has to be 0 .																				
Offset	0..15	Offset 0..15	Lower part of the interrupt function's offset address (also known as pointer).																				

Long mode IDT entry structure



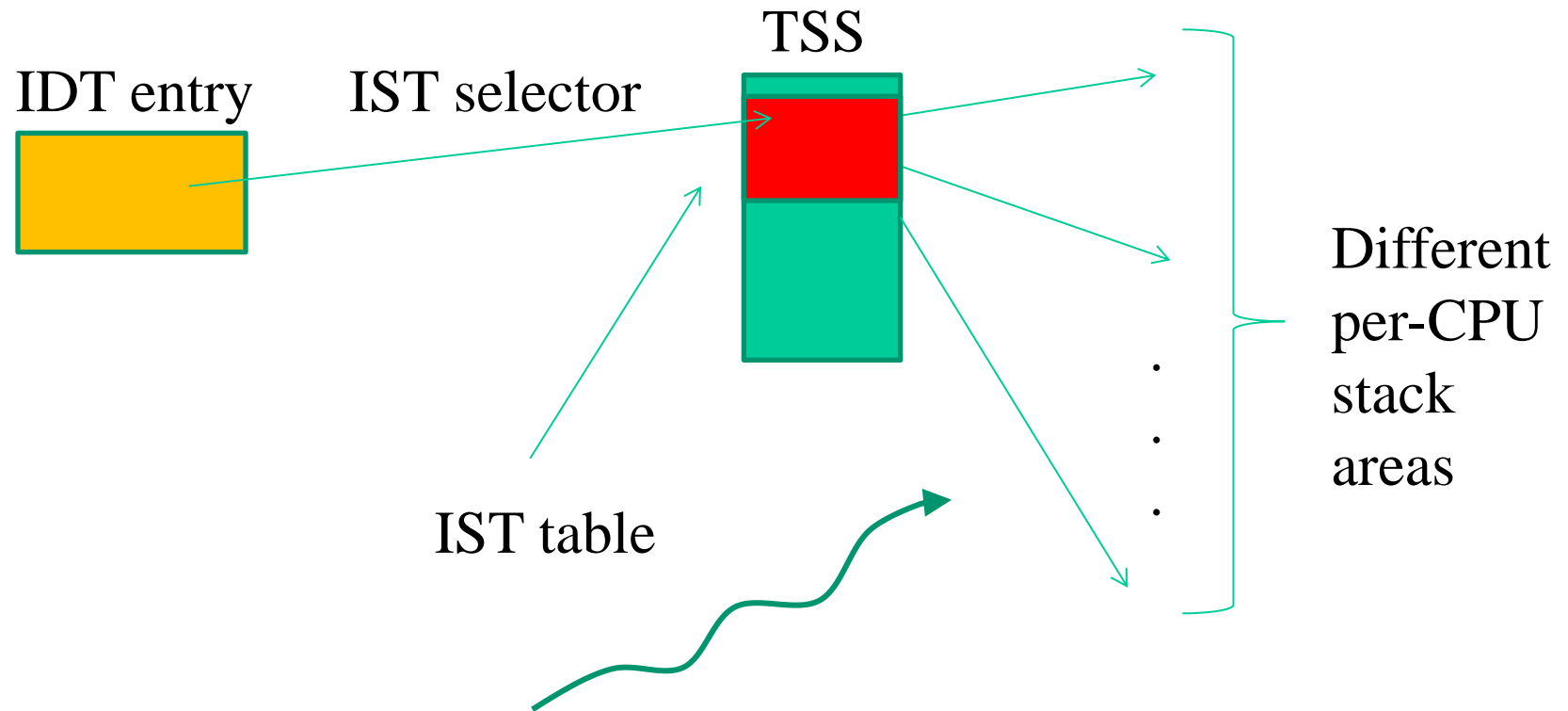
DPL	Descriptor Privilege Level
Offset	Offset to procedure entry point
P	Segment Present flag
Selector	Segment Selector for destination code segment
IST	Interrupt Stack Table

Fully new

New concepts: IST

- The **Interrupt Stack Table (IST)** is available as an alternative to handle stack switch upon traps/interrupts
- This mechanism unconditionally switches stacks when it is enabled on each individual interrupt-vector basis using a field in the IDT entry
- This means that some interrupt vectors can selectively use the IST mechanism
- IST provides a method for specific interrupts (such as NMI, double-fault, and machine-check) to always execute on a known good stack
- The IST mechanism provides **up to seven IST pointers** in the TSS

A scheme



These are typically the primary stacks (possibly of different size) for processing a given trap/interrupts

Software will then switch to the classical kernel level stack of the running task if nothing prevents it (e.g. a double fault)

Macros for setting IDT entries (i386)

Within the `arch/i386/kernel/traps.c` file we can find the declaration of the following macros that can be used for setting up one entry of the IDT

- `set_trap_gate(displacement, &symbol_name)`
- `set_intr_gate(displacement, &symbol_name)`
- `set_system_gate(displacement, &symbol_name)`

- `displacement` indicates the target entry of the IDT
- `&symbol_name` identifies the segment displacement (starting from 0x0) which determines the address of the software module to be invoked for handling the trap or the interrupt

Main differences among the modules

- The `set_trap_gate()` function initializes one IDT entry such in away to define the value 0 as the privilege level admitted for accessing the GATE via software
- Therefore we cannot rely on the `INT` assembly instruction unless we are already executing in kernel mode
- The `set_intr_gate()` function looks similar, however the handler activation relies on interrupt masking
- `set_system_gate()` is similar to `set_trap_gate()` however it defines the value 3 as the level of privilege admitted for accessing the GATE

Variants for 64 bit machines

CODE SNIPPET FROM desc.h

```
409 /*
410  * This routine sets up an interrupt gate at directory privilege level 3.
411  */
412 static inline void set_system_intr_gate(unsigned int n, void *addr)
413 {
414     BUG_ON((unsigned)n > 0xFF);
415     _set_gate(n, GATE_INTERRUPT, addr, 0x3, 0, __KERNEL_CS);
416 }
417
418 static inline void set_system_trap_gate(unsigned int n, void *addr)
419 {
420     BUG_ON((unsigned)n > 0xFF);
421     _set_gate(n, GATE_TRAP, addr, 0x3, 0, __KERNEL_CS);
422 }
423
424 static inline void set_trap_gate(unsigned int n, void *addr)
425 {
426     BUG_ON((unsigned)n > 0xFF);
427     _set_gate(n, GATE_TRAP, addr, 0, 0, __KERNEL_CS);
428 }
```

i386/kernel-2.4 examples

Handler managing division errors

set_trap_gate(0,÷_error)

Handler for non-maskable interrupts

set_intr_gate(2,&nmi)

Handler used for dispatching system calls

set_system_gate(SYSCALL_VECTOR,&system_call)

Reserved vs available IDT entries

- The entries from 0 to 31 are reserved for handlers that are used to manage specific (predefined) events/conditions (such as divide by 0 or page fault) or are already planned for future use
- This is based on hardware design/requirements
- All the other entries are available for system programming purposes
- As an example, the entry at displacement 0x80 has been traditionally used for kernel level access via system calls
- We note that for some of the reserved entries, microcode tasks generate a so called error-code to be passed to the handler

Reserved vs available IDT entries

- If needed, the handler needs to be structured such in a way to be aware of the production of the error-code;
- Particularly, beyond exploiting the error-code value, it needs to remove it from, e.g., the stack right before returning from trap/interrupt (IRET)
- Non-reserved entries area managed by the microcode with no generation of any error-code value

Modular handler management: i386 case

- Trap/interrupt handlers are typically defined via ASM code within `arch/i386/kernel/entry.S` (this file also keeps the specification of the system call dispatcher, which is a trap handler)
- All the handlers associated with predetermined trap/interrupts (namely those from 0 to 31) are managed via an additional dispatcher
- Initially, each handler logs a null-value into the stack in case no error-code is generated in relation to the specific trap/interrupt
- Then it logs into the stack the address of the actual handler-function (typically written in C)

Modular handler management: i386 case

- After, an assembly module, operating the dispatching, is activated
- This logs the CPU context and gives control to the handler via a conventional call
- Given that the input parameters are passed via the stack, the handlers will need to be compiled with `asm linkage` directives (or more modern `dotrap linkage`)
- ... in more modern Linux kernel flavors, the layering is a bit more articulated, but the basic concepts are the same
- One thing which is death with explicitly is IST an the stack frame redirection

The actual scheme

trap/interrupt

Logs the pointer to the handler
(and sometimes also the value 0) onto the stack



handler

jump

Logs the CPU context onto
the stack



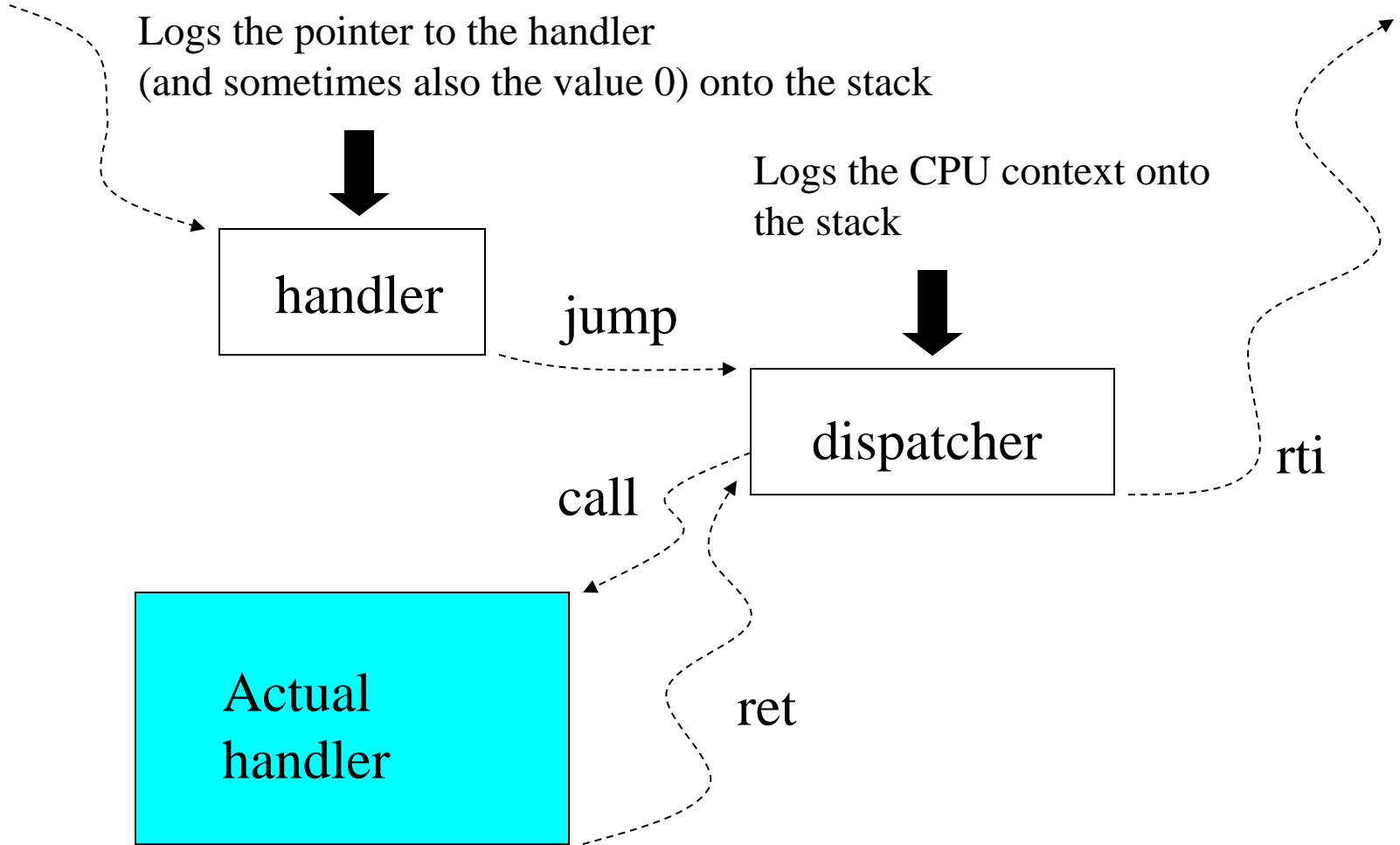
dispatcher

rti

call

Actual
handler

ret



Examples

ENTRY(overflow)

pushl \$0

pushl \$ SYMBOL_NAME(do_overflow)

jmp error_code

No error code by firmware



ENTRY(general_protection)

pushl \$ SYMBOL_NAME(do_general_protection)

jmp error_code

ENTRY(page_fault)

pushl \$ SYMBOL_NAME(do_page_fault)

jmp error_code

Error code already posted
firmware



The `error_code` block (still i386 case)

- The assembler code block called `error_code` is in charge of logging the CPU context into the stack
- This is done by aligning the stack content with the following data structure defined in `include/asm-i386/ptrace.h`

```
struct pt_regs {  
    long ebx;    long ecx;  
    long edx;    long esi;  
    long edi;    long ebp;  
    long eax;    int  xds; int  xes;  
    long orig_eax; long eip; int  xcs;  
    long eflags; long esp;  int  xss;  
}
```

- The actual handler can take as input a `pt_regs*` pointer and, if needed, an unsigned `long` representing the error-code

struct pt_regs for x86-64

```
struct pt_regs {
    unsigned long r15; ... unsigned long r12;
    unsigned long bp;
    unsigned long bx; /* arguments: non interrupts/non
tracing syscalls only save up to here*/
    unsigned long r11; ... unsigned long r8;
    unsigned long ax;
    unsigned long cx;
    unsigned long dx;
    unsigned long si;
    unsigned long di;
    unsigned long orig_ax; /* end of arguments */ /* cpu
exception frame or undefined */
    unsigned long ip;
    unsigned long cs;
    unsigned long flags;
    unsigned long sp;
    unsigned long ss; /* top of stack page */
}
```

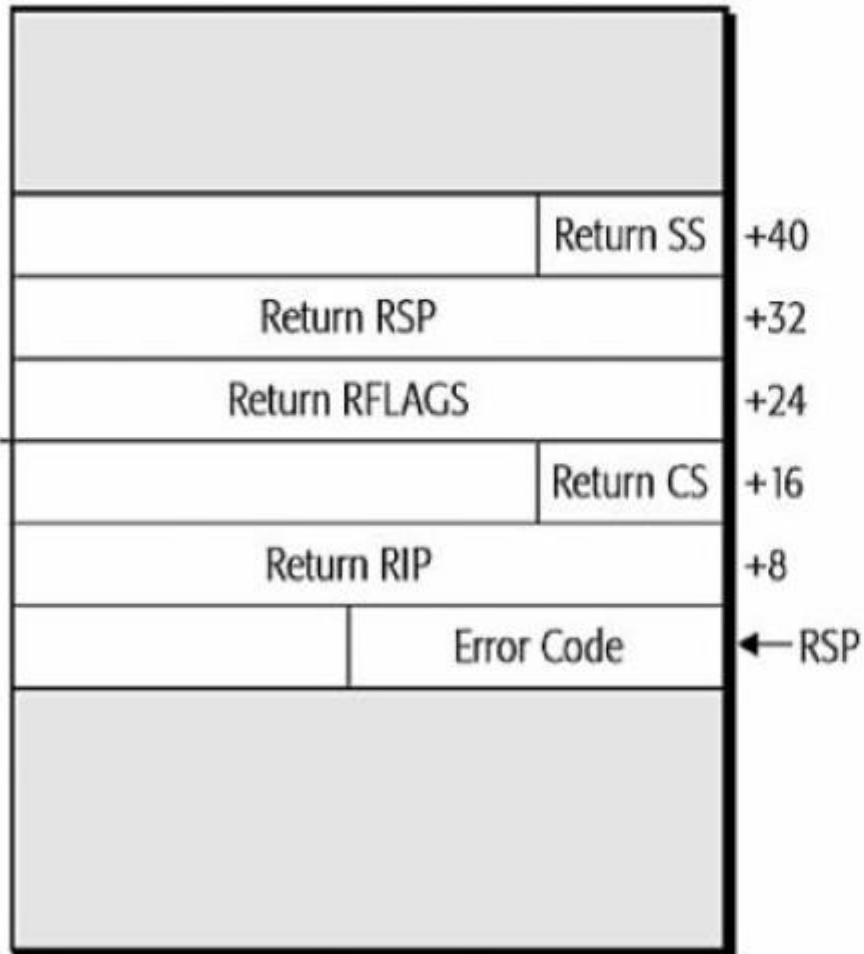
The page fault handler: main features

- The page fault handler is `do_page_fault(struct pt_regs *regs, unsigned long error_code)` and is defined in `linux/arch/x86/mm/fault.c`
- It takes as input the error-code determining the type of the occurred fault, which needs to be handled
- The fault type is specified via the three least significant bits of `error_code` according to the following rules
 - **bit 0 == 0 means no page found, 1 means protection fault**
 - **bit 1 == 0 means read, 1 means write**
 - **bit 2 == 0 means kernel, 1 means user-mode**

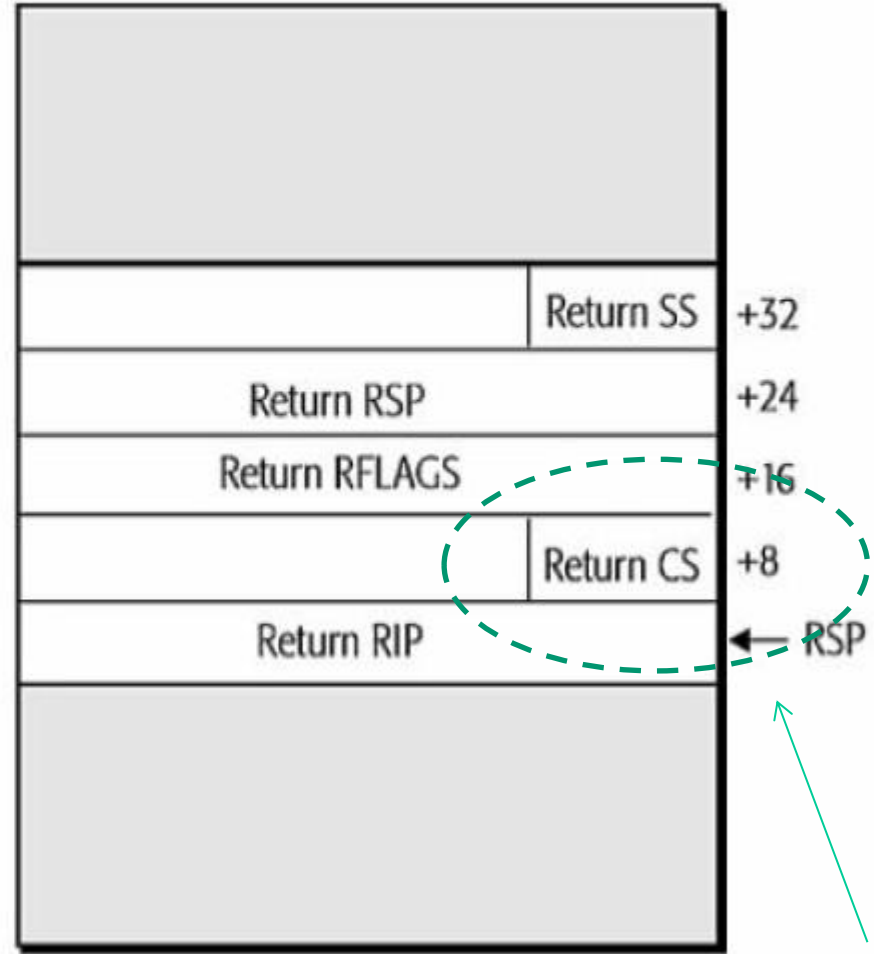
x86-64 early trap/interrupt stack layout details

Interrupt-Handler Stack

With Error Code



With No Error Code



Coming from where?

Back to IPI

- Immediate handling is allowed for the case in which there are no data structures that are shared across CPU-cores that need to be accessed for the handling (kind of stateless scenarios)
- An example is the system-halt (e.g. upon panic)
- Other usages of IPI are
 - ✓ Execution on a same function across all the CPU-cores (exactly like the halt)
 - ✓ Change of the state of hardware components across multiple CPU-cores in the system (e.g. the TLB state)

Actual IPI usage in Linux: a few examples

CALL_FUNCTION_VECTOR (*vector* 0xfb)

Sent to all CPUs but the sender, forcing those CPUs to run a function passed by the sender. The corresponding interrupt handler is named `call_function_interrupt()`. Usually this interrupt is sent to all CPUs except the CPU executing the calling function by means of the `smp_call_function()` facility function.

RESCHEDULE_VECTOR (*vector* 0xfc) W

When a CPU receives this type of interrupt, the corresponding handler, named `reschedule_interrupt()`, limits itself to acknowledge the interrupt.

INVALIDATE_TLB_VECTOR (*vector* 0xfd)

Sent to all CPUs but the sender, forcing them to invalidate their Translation Lookaside Buffers. The corresponding handler, named `invalidate_interrupt()`

Actual IPI API

`send_IPI_all()`

Sends an IPI to all CPUs (including the sender)

`send_IPI_allbutself()`

Sends an IPI to all CPUs except the sender

`send_IPI_self()`

Sends an IPI to the sender CPU

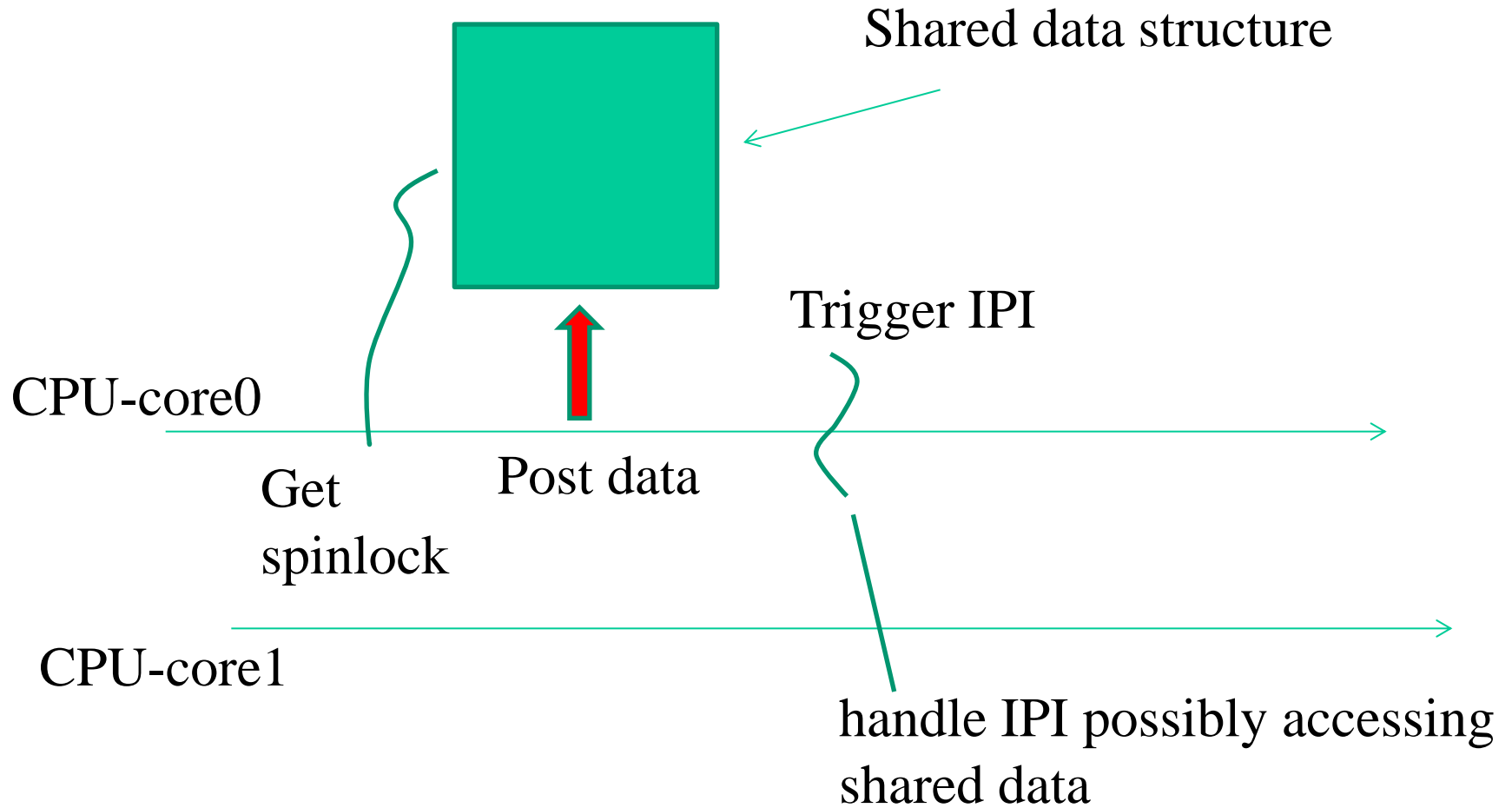
`send_IPI_mask()`

Sends an IPI to a group of CPUs specified by a bit mask

Sequentialization of IPI management

- The sequentializing approach is used in case the IPI requires managing a shared data structure across the threads
- This is the typical case of IPI that require specific parameters for correct management
- These parameters are in fact passed into predetermined memory locations accessible to all the CPU-cores, whose position in memory is predetermined
- The classical case is the one of smp-call-function, whose function pointer and parameter are both passed into a global table

The scheme



```
207 int smp_call_function(void (*_func)(void *_info), void *_info, int wait)
208 {
```

```
.....
215  /* Can deadlock when called with interrupts disabled */
```

```
216  WARN_ON(irqs_disabled());
```

```
217
```

```
218     spin_lock_bh(&call_lock);
```

```
219     atomic_set(&scf_started, 0);
```

```
220     atomic_set(&scf_finished, 0);
```

```
221     func = _func;
```

```
222     info = _info;
```

```
223
```

```
224     for_each_online_cpu(i)
```

```
225         os_write_file(cpu_data[i].ipi_pipe[1], "C", 1);
```

```
226
```

```
227     while (atomic_read(&scf_started) != cpus)
```

```
228         barrier();
```

```
229
```

```
230     if (wait)
```

```
231         while (atomic_read(&scf_finished) != cpus)
```

```
232             barrier();
```

```
233
```

```
234     spin_unlock_bh(&call_lock);
```

```
235     return 0;
```

← Beware this!!

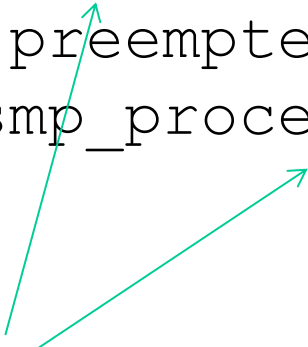
IPI additional effects

- As noted before, one IPI used by Linux is the **reschedule** one
- This may lead to preemption of the task running on the CPU-core targeted by the IPI
- This may have effects on both
 - ✓ Correctness/consistency
 - ✓ Performance

Consistency aspects

- What about running a piece of code which is CPU-specific and preemption occur??
- One example

```
struct _the_struct v[NR_CPUS];  
v[smp_processor_id()] = some_value; /* task  
is preempted here... */ something =  
v[smp_processor_id()];
```



We may be targeting different entries

Performance aspects

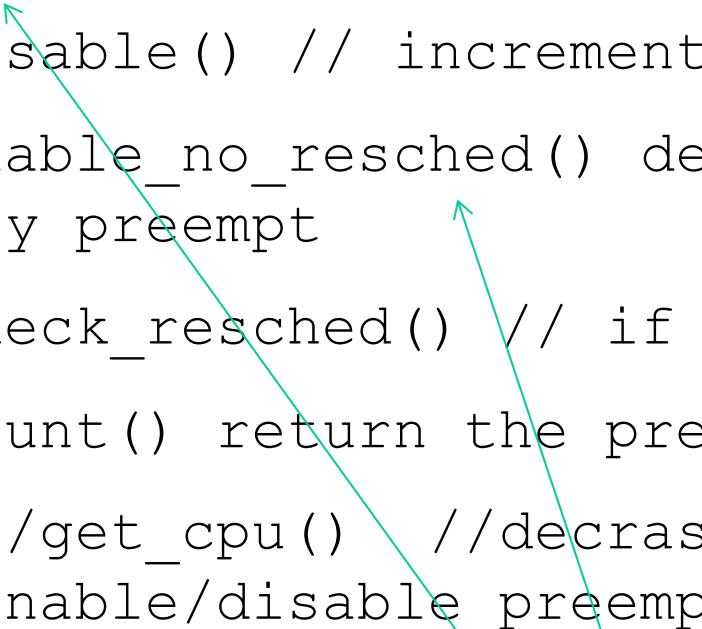
- `smp_call_function()` typically runs with interrupts allowed ... just remember the deadlock issue!!
- But we cannot risk to have some `smp_call_function()` runner getting context switched off the CPU
- Otherwise the release of the `smp_call_function()` resources (e.g. the spinlock) might be delayed
- and we might even deadlock anyhow!!

How to run with interrupts but no actual preemption

- We use per-CPU atomic counters
- If the counter is not zero then no preemption will take place (although we can be targeted by interrupts)
- The check is clearly done via software upon attempting to process the preemption interrupt
- Beware managing the preemption counter explicitly if required!!

Preemption enabling/disabling API

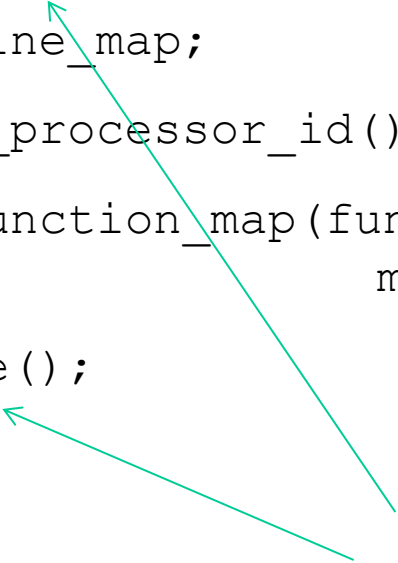
```
preempt_enable() // decrement the preempt counter  
preempt_disable() // increment the preempt counter  
preempt_enable_no_resched() decrement, but do not  
immediately preempt  
preempt_check_resched() // if needed, reschedule  
preempt_count() return the preempt counter  
put_cpu() /get_cpu() //decrease/increase the  
counter (enable/disable preemption)
```



Variants of each other

Preemption vs SMP function calls

```
int smp_call_function(void (*func) (void *info), void *info, int
nonatomic, int wait) {
    cpumask_t map;
    preempt_disable();
    map = cpu_online_map;
    cpu_clear(smp_processor_id(), map);
    __smp_call_function_map(func, info, nonatomic, wait,
                           map);
    preempt_enable();
    return 0;
}
```



Internal structure with
preemption awareness

Be careful

- IPI is an extremely powerful technology
- However you need to consider scalability aspects
- This leads to conclude that IPI schemes involving large counts of CPU-cores need to be used only when mandatorily needed
- The classical example is when patching the kernel on line, e.g. upon mounting a module