



## MSc thesis

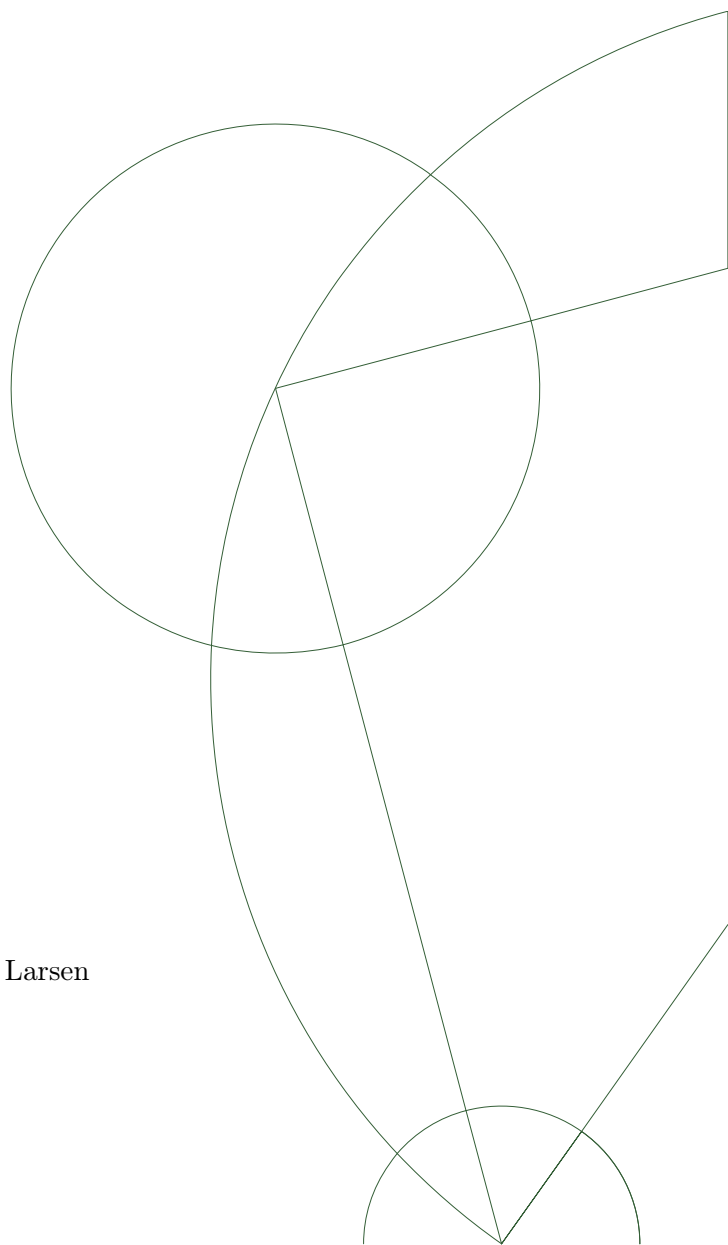
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# Lightweight Crypto in Reverse

Exploring lightweight cryptography in the context of reversible computing

Academic advisor: Michael Kirkedal Thomsen, Ken Friis Larsen

Submitted: August 6, 2018





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## Abstract

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# Introduction

# 1

Cryptography has been with us for decades now, yet only recently we figured out how to reliably code and verify an actual implementation with the F\*/HACL work [15]. A similar approach takes the Vale project [8], designing a new language that utilizes either Dafny or F\* for verification. These solutions verify not only the correctness of the code, but also prove the lack of state-based information leakage, and in the case of Vale, even timing-based leakage. These two are possibly the easiest side-channel vulnerabilities to exploit, especially given the fact that physical access to the computer is not necessary. Both of them can get difficult to control for since the compiler often provides no guarantees on the generated machine code. Similarly, general high-level programming languages do not provide semantics on low enough level to account for registers, caches and execution timing. Vale provides for these, which allows it to formally verify the required cryptographic properties.

Our work aims for exploiting reversible computing to reason about state-based leakage. Informally, a reversible program has to follow a clearly defined path that transforms the input data to output data without losing information. Because of that lack of information loss, it can be described as an injective function. Encryption algorithms are bijective functions, implying they can be directly encoded in a reversible setting. In a formal description, we have

$$\llbracket enc \rrbracket(k, p) = (k, c).$$

The plaintext  $p$  is directly transformed to a ciphertext  $c$ , while key  $k$  remains the same. Note that the key cannot be omitted: either such the function would not be injective, thus irreversible, or the ciphertext would somehow contain the key, which would make the encryption useless by making the key public.

In Janus we enforce this scheme by offloading any other data (*e.g.* algorithm-specific magic constants or iterators) into temporary local variables. These variables are declared and defined at the top of a function and undeclared at the bottom, with their final value specified. This final value is necessary for reversibility: without it, such reversed function would have undefined initial values. Secondly, because we know the final value of each variable, that value can be subtracted from the variable, thus clearing it. This implies that local data, not part of the input and output, will be cleared and thus no state-based leakage is possible. We demonstrate this by translating a Janus program to C and executing it within a virtual environment that tracks secret data (see chapter 5).

Furthermore, thanks to reversibility we implement only the encryption functions. The decryption is then obtained by reversing the encryption. This de-

creases time spent on development, debugging, testing and showing the duality of encryption and decryption functions.

Our conclusion is that reversibility is a handy tool for developing not only cryptographic code, but also other injective functions. It gives no guarantees on avoiding timing vulnerabilities like Vale does, however it comes at a much lower cost of development. We also take note of the difficulty to learn and use Vale due to the sheer breadth of details the programmer has to consider, instead of leaving it to the compiler.

## 1.1 Goals

Our aim is to explore the combination of reversibility and cryptography. Irreversible implementations of crypto algorithms often either suffer from insufficiencies from the security perspective or are difficult to implement correctly. Due to performance being also critical, programmers have to actively fight compilers to make sure their code is safe. Our main goal is to alleviate that in at least some way. Reversible code is limited in how it manages memory - no erasure is allowed, and so deallocations have to be preceded by proper cleanup. Reversible algorithms can follow a much cleaner formal definition that does not leak memory contents outside the scope of those functions.

The second goal is to exploit the bijectivity of crypto algorithms. Decryption is just an inverse function to encryption, so only one of them needs coding. This lowers the implementation and debugging time demands.

The third goal is getting some practical experience with Janus, finding its strenghts and weaknesses and suggesting improvements.

## 1.2 Problem statement

Classic irreversible implementations of encryption schemes suffer from human errors making them vulnerable to side-channel exploits. Reversible implementation removes one type of side-channel and has potential to alleviate the cost of development and debugging.

## 1.3 Overview of the chapters

Apart from the Introduction, these are the chapters and their short summaries this thesis builds upon:

**Analysis** Presents short introduction to cryptography, discusses the practical problems with side-channel vulnerabilities, and explores reversible computing and its implications in the context of cryptography.

**Design** Talks about how we approach the problem with a selection of algorithms, their expected behaviour and how we can verify a lack of state leakage.

**Implementation** This chapter focuses on writing the selected algorithms in Janus and the practical experience of it.

**Evaluation** Here we discuss how we verify our claims, then suggest and perform some experiments to do that. We also look at how we can work around the problem of not having a fully reversible platform. \_\_\_\_\_

do the last sentence

**Reflection and future work** We reflect on how well our solution can work in practice, and what else needs to or should be done. \_\_\_\_\_

do so

# Analysis

# 2

## 2.1 Symmetric and asymmetric cryptography

Cryptographic algorithms can be defined as functions that take two parameters, a key and some data, perform either encryption or decryption and return the key and the modified data. Normally the key in the result would be omitted, however it is useful to recognize the fact that the key is not altered in any way. This will become useful later on.

Symmetric cryptography differs from the asymmetric kind by its use of only a single key for both encryption and decryption. These are the classic algorithms like AES, RC5 and Chacha20. They also tend to be much more efficient performance-wise than their asymmetric siblings. This efficiency also lead to establishing the subarea of *lightweight cryptography*. Algorithms classified as *lightweight* are generally good candidates for use in *Internet of Things (IoT)* devices, which often have low computational performance, need to limit power usage, have strict memory requirements, or even may be required to react quickly. A special kind of symmetric cryptographic algorithms are stream ciphers, which only generate seemingly random output which is then combined with the input data (plaintext or ciphertext) using some self-inverting operation, typically XOR. Therefore stream ciphers only implement this "random" output and not individual encryption and decryption functions, since they are trivial and equivalent.

Asymmetric cryptography, also known as *Public Key Cryptography (PKI)*, uses one key for encryption (a *public key*) and another for decryption (a *private key*). Its security relies on some hard mathematical problems like integer factorization in the case of RSA. If that could somehow be performed as fast as the factor multiplication, it would render the whole algorithm broken. It does not achieve the same levels of performance [2] and for that reason it is not considered lightweight. It can, however, be used for so-called hybrid encryption schemes, where PKI is used to exchange the secret key for some symmetric algorithm.

### Definition

Formally we use the following notation to describe a function  $enc_S$  and its inverse  $dec_S$  that fits the description above:

$$enc_S(k, p) = (k, c)$$

$$dec_S(k, c) = (k, p)$$

This suffices to describe symmetric cryptographic algorithms including stream ciphers where  $enc = dec$ .

For asymmetric algorithms we have to differentiate between public and private keys:

$$enc_A(k_{\text{public}}, p) = (k_{\text{public}}, c)$$

$$dec_A(k_{\text{private}}, c) = (k_{\text{private}}, p)$$

However, notice one major difference between the encryption functions  $enc_S$  and  $enc_A$ : the resulting pair  $(k, c)$  of  $enc_S$  contains all necessary information to decrypt the ciphertext back using  $dec_S$ . That is not the case with  $enc_A$ : having access to  $(k_{\text{public}}, c)$  does not suffice for decryption, since we are missing the private key  $k_{\text{private}}$ . This is an important distinction that we will explore later in 2.3. In short, the implication is that the definition of  $enc_A$  is not as complete as  $enc_S$ .

## 2.2 Vulnerabilities in cryptographic code

The mathematical basis upon which cryptographic algorithms are built is only one half of the story when it comes to evaluating data security. The other half are their implementations, which have a long history of hidden vulnerabilities in various forms. These are often split into two groups<sup>1</sup>: incorrect implementation (software bugs, state-based leakages) and so-called *side-channel vulnerabilities*, *side-channel information leakages* or just *side-channels* for short. The first group consists of attacks on weaknesses in the software implementation, mostly state information leakage via registers and/or memory, *i.e.* not clearing memory containing sensitive data [9]. The second group is classified into several subgroups depending on the type of the attack, *e.g.* power consumption and electromagnetic radiation analyses [17]. A timing-based attack exploits different running times of the algorithm depending on its inputs. Arguably, this kind of attack could be classified as both a software bug, since it can be often circumvented in code, but the source of the problem often lies within the processor itself (instructions themselves being timing-sensitive based on input [11]).

The easiest (in terms of required prerequisites) are state-based and timing-based leakages, since they can be performed remotely and do not require any specialized hardware. Because of that, they tend to be the focus of contemporary research in the area [8] [?].

---

<sup>1</sup>A word on the classification: the grouping provided here follows other sources. From a second perspective, state-based leakages can also be considered a side-channel, since the mathematical concept of cryptography does not deal with how memory is handled. We can counter such argument by saying that the state, especially the key and the plaintext, should remain secret no matter the code. Nevertheless, the classification is only secondary for our purposes.

## Examples

The common issue with state-based information leakage is that either the programmer does not clear the memory that contains the sensitive data (*e.g.* a password) and simply deallocates it, or that they do clear it in the code, but the compiler removes that code because it is considered a dead (ineffective) code.

```
int login()
{
    int ret = 0;
    char *password = ask_for_password();
    //ret = ... use the password
    memset(password, 0, strlen(password));
    return ret;
}
```

In the above example, the memory pointed to by the `password` variable is supposed to be cleared out using the `memset` function, but since the memory is not being used anymore, optimizing compilers remove that call completely [?].

An example of a timing vulnerability is in the case of the RC5 algorithm [11], which uses bitwise rotation, where the number of bits rotated depends on the input data. The vulnerability exists only on some platforms, which differ from the others in the implementation of the rotation instruction. The rotation can be performed in two ways:

1. perform one rotation by  $n$  bits,
2. perform  $n$  rotations by 1 bit.

This minor change can have drastic effects on security.

## Avoidance

There are multiple ways for avoiding side-channel vulnerabilities, but most (if not all) of them require some extra work on the programmer's side. The most time consuming and also error-prone method for avoiding state leakage would be manually clearing memory. Just tracking the used memory would be exhausting. Naturally, the programmer could create a *memory pool*, *i.e.* a block of memory, where the algorithm would store its data. This block would then be erased altogether after the algorithm has finished. Along with that, the programmer would also need to erase the stack and processor registers. A reliable way of doing that is extending a compiler, which is described in [16] and which we also use (see section 3.4 and later 5).

Avoiding a timing side-channel is significantly harder, since it depends on the processor instruction semantics and may depend on the algorithm. There has been some progress with this, and we discuss this in 3.4. Every side-channel is specific, however, and requires specific countermeasures. In case of the power analysis, for example, the actual device has to be designed from the ground up to be resilient.

## 2.3 Reversibility and its implications

Reversibility is the ability of a program to be executed both forwards and backwards deterministically. Although discussed earlier, first major research

was done by Landauer [13]. Bennett [10] and others continued the research and a first logically reversible language Janus was born ([14], [19]).

## Definitions

Consider a reversible program  $p$  and some values  $x$  and  $y$ . Then  $\llbracket p \rrbracket(x) = (y)$  represents<sup>2</sup> the execution of program  $p$  with  $x$  as a given parameter and  $y$  being the result. So in the case of encryption we have:

$$\llbracket enc \rrbracket(k, p) = (k, c).$$

Note that before  $enc$  represented a function in a mathematical sense, but in this case it is a program composed of some instructions. The  $\llbracket \cdot \rrbracket$  operator stands for the forward interpretation of the given program. For backward interpretation we use the inversion operator  $\mathcal{I}(\cdot)$ , which takes a program and inverts it, so that  $\llbracket \mathcal{I}(\cdot) \rrbracket$  runs the given program backwards. Now we clearly get that:

$$\llbracket \mathcal{I}(p) \rrbracket(\llbracket p \rrbracket(x)) = x.$$

## Cryptography as a reversible embedding

Some cryptographic functions are partial functions, but we can always limit their domains to valid inputs. We will also assume these functions are injective. Altogether, we can assume to work with bijective functions. With this assumption, we can already make one interesting observation:

$$\begin{aligned}\llbracket enc \rrbracket(k, p) &= (k, c) \\ \llbracket dec \rrbracket(k, c) &= \llbracket \mathcal{I}(enc) \rrbracket(k, c) = (k, p).\end{aligned}$$

The implication of that is that we can avoid implementing the decryption functions after having implemented the encryption ones (and vice-versa). In practical experience, this fact is easily observable and immensely useful. It has several advantages:

1. time saved on implementing the inverse function,
2. time saved on debugging it and making sure it actually is the correct inverse
3. easier maintenance and changes
4. smaller source files (and potentially even binary files)

We can see examples in the code developed alongside this thesis; no algorithm required separate encryption/decryption functions.

---

<sup>2</sup>Here we are using the notation from [12].

## Expressive power

Bennett has formalized [10] a reversible Turing machine using deterministic and reversible operations. Quite clearly the expressive power of the reversible Turing machine is not larger than of the irreversible one; irreversibility allows for information erasure, it does not require it. Similarly, the power is not smaller. This can be shown by having the irreversible machine keep a log of its operations and intermediate values, run its algorithm to finish to compute the output, copy the output (without logging) and then run all its operations backwards using the log. The complete proof was also shown by Bennett [10].

Below is a simple example for addition:

```
state: x = 3, y = 5, z = 0, output = 0 // initial state
log: empty
z = (x + y) // original algorithm
state: x = 3, y = 5, z = 8, output = 0 // forward run finished
log: set z to (x + y), was 0
output = z // copy result to a safe location, log ignored
state: x = 3, y = 5, z = 8, output = 8 // copy saved
log: set z to (x + y), was 0
z = 0 // run original algorithm backwards
state: x = 3, y = 5, z = 0, output = 8 // final state with initial input values,
// correct result and no intermediate values
log: empty
```

## Reversing asymmetric cryptography

When we formally defined functions  $enc_S$  and  $enc_A$ , we noticed the distinction in what information they give as a result. After looking at reversibility and seeing what it provides for symmetric cryptography, naturally it may seem like reversibility breaks asymmetric cryptography since an attacker knows both values, the public key and the ciphertext. We also know that reversibility does not increase expressive power of a language, it is just as powerful as a general Turing machine. So where is the problem?

The problem is that our definition was not complete. If the pair of the public key and the ciphertext contained all the information, then the algorithm would not provide any security. The security is exactly in the fact that the attacker has to search for some hidden information that is not available to them. One way of looking at this is simply considering multiplication: multiplying 3 and 4 has only one result, but if we know the result is 12, we do not know what the factors were. If we knew one of them was 3, then we would have all the information and could just calculate the other one. With irreversible setting this is not a problem, we delete information all the time, but that is not an option with reversible languages.

The correct and complete definition of  $enc_A$  would then be:

$$enc_A(k_{\text{public}}, p) = (k_{\text{public}}, p, c)$$

Of course the plaintext is not transmitted or shared, only the ciphertext is. This definition avoids information loss and can be directly reversed by simply



uncalculating<sup>3</sup> the ciphertext. In the case of the RSA algorithm, the public key has two components which are combined with the plaintext input in a loss-ful way. How this operation works is well-understood, out-of-scope of this thesis and the details are not important for us here.

## Data transformation

Going back to section 2.3, the second mentioned advantage of the duality of encryption and decryption functions, and similarly with other bijective functions that can be reversed like this, should not be underestimated. The world of programming languages is constantly trying to improve to make the job easier for programmers. Just like some languages are more useful (or at least more common) in certain fields (*e.g.* C for low-level systems, Haskell for parsing, pure computer science and language development, C++ for performance-hungry video games and Java for enterprise applications), reversible languages could create a new such field. Algorithms that perform some kind of data transformation - mathematically bijective or at least injective function application - would be a good fit. The reversibility would then assist with error recovery, for example; it could prove useful in transactional systems, which require the ability to roll back aborted transactions.

## Bennett's tricks

In section 2.3 we have already seen the first trick for converting irreversible programs into reversible ones. The trick is fairly simple: to get a result of any function that may create and destroy any number of bits of information, simply provide temporary storage for those bits, run the function without erasing anything until completion, copy out the result and finally run the function backwards, uncomputing the temporary values in the process. This trick was used several times in the cryptographic code developed for this thesis. The *Speck* algorithm is a good example of that, as it requires to perform a fairly complicated key expansion process. There are a few other places where this trick was used, but always only in cases where making a more direct reversible code - that would be equivalent to the originally intended meaning - was either impossible or too difficult.

There also exists a second trick that is not immediately obvious. Having a reversible program  $p$  and some input  $x$  and corresponding output  $y$ , the following holds:

$$\llbracket p \rrbracket(x) = y \llbracket \mathcal{I}(p) \rrbracket(y) = x$$

This is just the definition of reversibility. However, the trick is in how this is used: suppose the reversible program  $p$  computes its input into output without loss of information. We can store  $x$  and  $y$  at different memory locations, so that the information within  $x$  is duplicated in  $y$ . If  $x$  is not needed anymore, we can uncompute it by executing the inverse of  $p$  with  $y$  as its input and  $x$  as its output. This method is also described in [10].

---

<sup>3</sup>By "uncalculating" we mean reversing the program execution, thus going from the output back to the input. See also Bennett's tricks later in this chapter.

```

state:  $a = 3, b = 0, p(x, y) = \lambda x. \lambda y. y + = (x + 5)$ 
 $\llbracket p \rrbracket(a, b)$ 
state:  $a = 3, b = 8, \mathcal{I}(p)(x, y) = \lambda x. \lambda y. y - = (x - 5)$ 
 $\llbracket \mathcal{I}(p) \rrbracket(y, x)$ 
state:  $a = 0, b = 8$ 

```

This second trick was used only in the Salsa20 algorithm in the `quarterround` procedure.

## Reversible languages

There have been several reversible languages designed (a short summary is provided at the end of [19]), but so far *Janus* has proven most useful. It has an actively developed interpreter in Haskell, another interpreter in JavaScript, which enables running code in a web browser and it was also extended several times [?]. Janus is a (semi-)high-level C-like language, which makes it a fit for comparing implementations with actual C code. Author also has to acknowledge the fact that one of the supervisors is the developer of the interpreter in Haskell, and our cooperation has brought many patches, updates and extensions to it.

Another language that has been considered for this work was RFun, a reversible functional language. However, at the time of writing, RFun was very limited in its abilities, especially when dealing with numbers. Cryptographical code almost always uses some form of bitwise operations and those are not available under Peano number arithmetics; secondly, most of such code is also imperative, not functional. Furthermore, a new development of this language was just under way, so it made sense to stick to a more stable and workable tool.

# Design

# 3

## 3.1 Avoiding state information leakage

Clearly, reversible code cannot delete information since the output would not be reversible back into its corresponding input. Similarly, no information can be "created", since that would be information deletion when reversed. Information can be duplicated and de-duplicated; one is the inverse of the other, so it is consistent with reversibility. In theory, we can apply this in our bijective crypto algorithms so that for every bit of input information, we output exactly one bit of output information. So assuming the key and plaintext memory locations are taken care of properly with regards to security, then any implementation can avoid leaking information by using only these safe memory locations and uncalculating anything else.

## 3.2 Example algorithms

Let us select some algorithms to work with. We will start with one of the simplest and still practical encryption algorithms, then move on to some more well known.

Note that these algorithms fit in the **ARX** group as they are based on three operations: **A**ddition, **R**otation and **X**OR operation. This makes them somewhat similar, but they are still different enough to validate our choices; from very simple to complex, block and stream ciphers, old and new. The advantage is that all these three operations are trivially reversible.

### TEA

The *Tiny Encryption Algorithm* (TEA) [18] is, per its name, incredibly simple and small. It is so simple that we can even show the complete code for it here; however, since decryption is just a reversal of encryption, we are showing only the encryption procedure:

```
void encrypt (uint32_t* v, uint32_t* k) {
    uint32_t v0=v[0], v1=v[1], sum=0, i;          /* set up */
    uint32_t delta=0x9e3779b9;                     /* a key schedule constant */
    uint32_t k0=k[0], k1=k[1], k2=k[2], k3=k[3];  /* cache key */
    for (i=0; i < 32; i++) {                       /* basic cycle start */
        sum += delta;
        v0 += ((v1<<4) + k0) ^ (v1 + sum) ^ ((v1>>5) + k1);
        v1 += ((v0<<4) + k2) ^ (v0 + sum) ^ ((v0>>5) + k3);
    }                                               /* end cycle */
    v[0]=v0; v[1]=v1;
}
```

```
}
```

Source: Wikipedia

The decryption procedure is analogous. Both procedures take two arguments, a key and some data, and perform the necessary operations; if we avoided using the local variables `v0`, `v1`, `k0` and `k1` and replaced them by what they actually refer to, *i.e.* `v[0]`, `v[1]`, `k[0]` and `k[1]`, the changes would be performed in-place, thus avoiding spilling any secrets anywhere else in memory, except for processor registers.

There are two subsequent extensions, named *XTEA* and *XXTEA*, which improve the cryptographic security. XTEA performs slightly different updates of those `v*` variables, but is the same otherwise. XXTEA finally encrypts a whole block of data instead of just two words. It also uses a few more local variables, but the general approach is identical. We discuss XXTEA in more detail in section 4.1.

## RC5

A somewhat more complicated algorithm is *RC5*, which was a candidate for the *AES*. Unlike TEA, RC5 already performs something called *key expansion*. Key expansion often extends the key to a larger data stream; in the case of RC5, the number of encryption rounds is the defining factor in that length. Additionally, some further mathematical operations are applied to it, increasing randomization of key bit distribution. This expansion is performed once for a single key and then re-used, since it only depends on the key and some predefined constants. The encryption itself can then be much simpler, as is the case here. Let us look at RC5 more closely:

```
void RC5_ENCRYPT(uint32_t *v, uint32_t *S, int rounds)
{
    uint32_t i, A = v[0] + S[0], B = v[1] + S[1];

    for(i = 1; i <= r; i++)
    {
        A = ROTL(A ^ B, B) + S[2*i];
        B = ROTL(B ^ A, A) + S[2*i + 1];
    }
    v[0] = A; v[1] = B;
}
```

Sources: Wikipedia, RC5 paper

Just like with TEA, the encryption can be performed in-place. Unlike TEA, the procedure technically asks for a third parameter, a number of rounds; of course that can be removed by using a fixed constant. Also note that the `S` variable represents the expanded key, which brings us to the expansion itself, which is finally interesting (presenting it in a pseudocode for clarity):

```
# w - The length of a word in bits, typically 16, 32 or 64.
# u - The length of a word in bytes.
# b - The length of the key in bytes.
# K[] - The key, considered as an array of bytes (using 0-based indexing).
# c - The length of the key in words (or 1, if b = 0).
# L[] - A temporary working array used during key scheduling. initialized to the key in words.
# r - The number of rounds to use when encrypting data.
```

```

# t = 2(r+1) - the number of round subkeys required.
# S[] - The round subkey words.

# Break K into words
u = w / 8
c = ceiling( max(b, 1) / u )
# L is initially a c-length list of 0-valued w-length words
for i = b-1 down to 0 do:
    L[i/u] = (L[i/u] << 8) + K[i]

# Initialize key-independent pseudorandom S array
# S is initially a t=2(r+1) length list of undefined w-length words
S[0] = P_w
for i = 1 to t-1 do:
    S[i] = S[i-1] + Q_w

# The main key scheduling loop
i = j = 0
A = B = 0
do 3 * max(t, c) times:
    A = S[i] = (S[i] + A + B) <<< 3
    B = L[j] = (L[j] + A + B) <<< (A + B)
    i = (i + 1) % t
    j = (j + 1) % c

# return S

```

Source: Wikipedia

The first loop only makes sure the key is represented in little-endian form. The second loop is just an initialization of the buffer containing the expanded key. The important randomization occurs in the last loop, which seems slightly complicated at first glance. The iteration itself does not use a single variable, but instead uses both *i* and *j*, since both are used as an index for different arrays that may have different lengths. Furthermore, the number of loops is also not set by a single value - it is selected as a maximum of two values. And last but not least, the *A* and *B* variables are being re-set on every loop. No wonder that when we look at the paper establishing RC5, we find this note:

*„The key-expansion function has a certain amount of “one-wayness”: it is not so easy to determine *K* from *S*.“*

For our purpose, which is re-writing the procedure in a reversible language, that does not sound encouraging. On the other hand, we know that we can make anything reversible using a Bennett’s trick at worst. The solution is simple: these statements are actually not mutually-exclusive: the fact is that *S* is not the only result of the expansion function, because both *S* and *L* get updated so that they are dependent on each other. So it is true that getting *K* from *S* is not easy, but it is easy to get *K* from both *S* and *L*.

## Salsa20 and Chacha20

Salsa20 and Chacha20 are relatively new algorithms. Unlike previous algorithms, they are *stream ciphers*, meaning they do not take the plaintext as an argument, but they generate a stream of random bits, which is then combined (e.g. using XOR) with the plaintext. Chacha20 is based on Salsa20 and has improved both performance and security. Code complexity is comparable to

RC5, but it is more synoptic with Chacha20 being even more so than Salsa20 - this becomes clear when reading the Janus code.

Interestingly, both documents for Salsa20 and Chacha20 mention invertibility unlike other documents. Invertibility referred to the mathematical property of bijectivity rather than reversibility as in our case. Even though invertibility is explicitly mentioned (and required), the code is not reversible directly, as they require some manipulation through a temporary local variable. That is caused by the lack of proper feature of the Janus language rather than some deeper reason. Details, including a suggestion for improvement of Janus, are discussed in section 4.1.

## Simon and Speck

Finally we discuss two ciphers designed by NSA, the American intelligence agency. We wanted to see whether reversibility has any potential to reveal crypto algorithm weaknesses. Nothing specific was discovered except a general sense of difficulty implementing them. Although Simon is simpler than its companion, Speck contains multiple uses of Bennett's tricks due to complications with reversing some of the calculations. Even when compared to Salsa20 and Chacha20, which both have more lines of code than Speck, both were easier to write. That experience may be explained with more precise documentation. The fact that both Salsa20 and Chacha20 contain fewer and „*less weird*”<sup>4</sup> occurrences of Bennett's tricks, however, cannot.

## 3.3 Defining inputs, outputs and expected behaviour

Thanks to assumed bijectivity, we can define two inputs and two outputs for each of our algorithms.

even RC5?

Also stream ciphers, watch out

## 3.4 Verification methods

To verify whether our code fits our formal expectations, we have several options to choose from. We will split them into two groups based on user involvement and discuss these separately.

### Manual methods

Among the simplest, most demanding and least dependable is experimental behaviour observation and/or testing. We will experimentally show our code cleans up memory after usage.

The second way is showing that cleanup processing using a debugger. That way we can directly point to location in the code where that cleanup occurs. We will use *gdb* to demonstrate memory getting zeroed out.

The third way is manually analysing the actual generated machine code. We will isolate and analyse the instructions related to memory cleanup.

---

<sup>4</sup>From purely personal experience. I cannot offer formal quantification.

## Automatic methods

There are some ways to verify different properties automatically; or to enforce them. Methods like theorem provers, however, tend to be difficult to employ. They often require non-trivial amount of skilled work just to formally prove correctness can be as high or even higher than implementing the algorithm in the first place. We will not be using this method.

citation needed

On a related note, there has been some research made into and real-world application of language-based safe code recently: notably,  $F^*$  and its derivative  $Low^*$  [7], and the related language *Vale* [3].  $Low^*$  has been used in the *HACL* project, which has been integrated into Mozilla Firefox as a crypto library. *Vale* is a language dedicated to writing verifiable low-level code; its authors also implemented some crypto algorithms, successfully verified their resistance to state-based and timing-based information leakage and even showed some performance gains. *Vale* has a huge potential, but at the time of writing it also lacks stability, documentation, examples and manuals. Only an unsuccessful attempt to use *Vale* was made. Details will be discussed later.

discuss later

Another approach is turning the compiler into an ally rather an obstacle that has to be worked-around. Such approach was taken by the authors in a very recent paper [16]. They have implemented an extension to the LLVM/-Clang compiler that adds the ability clearing out registers and stack, and to make a selection between two values in constant time. The C11 standard also added `memset_s`, which the compiler is supposed to guarantee to never remove and so it can be used for clearing out heap memory. We will be using this method in combination with the manual methods to verify results.

Lastly, there are projects that offer tracking of sensitive data (or rather taints) when moved around in memory. These are *taintgrind* and its derivative *secretgrind*, with the latter being specifically designed for crypto algorithms. We will be using *secretgrind* to track tainted data. This will be in combination with the register and stack clearing method, described above, to make sure nothing of the secret computation is preserved.

taints? is this even the right word?

# Implementation

## 4

In this chapter we show our Janus code for the selected algorithms and discuss it. We talk about the conversion from irreversible to reversible and even come up with improvements to Jana, the Janus interpreter.

### 4.1 Algorithms

#### TEA

TEA translates to Janus almost directly like in any language, only the local variable allocation and deallocation is Janus-specific.

```
procedure TEA_encipher(u32 data[], u32 key[])
  local u32 delta = 2654435769
  local u32 sum = 0
  iterate int i = 1 by 1 to 32
    sum += delta
    data[0] += ((data[1] * 16) + key[0]) ^ (data[1] + sum) ^ ((data[1] / 32) + key[1])
    data[1] += ((data[0] * 16) + key[2]) ^ (data[0] + sum) ^ ((data[0] / 32) + key[3])
  end
  delocal u32 sum = 32*delta
  delocal u32 delta = 2654435769
```

XTEA is just as easy to translate. With XXTEA, we need to carefully update some local variables. Let us look at the code, starting with C:

```
#define MX ((z>>5^y<<2) + (y>>3^z<<4) ^ (sum^y) + (k[p&3^e]^z))

long xxtea(unsigned long* v, unsigned long n, long* k) {
  unsigned long z = v[n-1], y = v[0], sum = 0, e, delta = 0x9e3779b9;
  long p, q;
  q = 6 + 52/n;
  while (q-- > 0) {
    sum += delta;
    e = (sum >> 2) & 3;
    for (p=0; p<n-1; p++) {
      y = v[p+1];
      z = v[p] += MX;
    }
    y = v[0];
    z = v[n-1] += MX;
  }
  return 0;
}
```



Source: Wikipedia, edited

Note that the code is readable thanks to the `MX` macro, which is not available with Janus<sup>5</sup>.

The problematic parts are the `e`, `y` and `z` variables. They are being reset repeatedly, erasing information. Furthermore, `z` is being set to a value that is dependent on itself and that is not allowed in Janus. Since `e` is set to values dependent only on the variable `sum`, which is altered only at the beginning of the main loop, and then some constants, we know we can recalculate `e` at the end of the loop again. So to update `e` reversibly, we simply subtract the same value it has at the end of the loop.

The problem with `y` and `z` is their dependency on each other<sup>6</sup>. The easy way to overcome this is to use a Bennett's trick. The harder way is figuring out what is actually being updated and with what values. In the case of XXTEA this is still fairly manageable, so let us practice. The first thing we realize is that we can safely replace `y` with whatever data it was set to. We see that it is being set to the value of `v[p+1]`, so we replace all occurrences of `y` with that. Along with that we also have to partially unroll the inner loop to make sure that the indexed access is within bounds. Then, when we remove `y`, we notice that we don't have to set `z` as nothing but the `MX` macro depends on it, and in that case it simply has the value of the data at the previous index `p`. Again, we replace all occurrences of `z` with `v[p-1]` and pay attention to array bounds.

Finally, the variable `p` also needs care when resetting, but that is straightforward to do according to the inner loop exit.

The resulting Janus code follows the above description:

```
procedure XXTEA_encipher(u32 data[], u32 key[])
  local u32 delta = 2654435769
  local int n = 4 //size(data)
  local u32 sum = 0
  local u32 e = 0
  local int p = 1
  local int q = 6 + 52/n
  from q = 6 + 52/n loop
    sum += delta
    e += (sum / 4) & 3
    data[0] += (((data[n-1] / 32) ^ (data[1] * 4)) + ((data[1] / 8) ^ (data[n-1] * 16))) ^ ((sum ^ da
  from p = 1 loop
    data[p] += (((data[p-1] / 32) ^ (data[p+1] * 4)) + ((data[p+1] / 8) ^ (data[p-1] * 16))) ^ ((
    p += 1
  until p = n-1
  data[n-1] += (((data[n-2] / 32) ^ (data[0] * 4)) + ((data[0] / 8) ^ (data[n-2] * 16))) ^ ((sum ^
  p -= (n-2)
  e -= (sum / 4) & 3
  q -= 1
until q = 0
delocal int q = 0
delocal int p = 1
delocal u32 e = 0
delocal u32 sum = (6+52 / (u32)n)*delta
delocal int n = 4 //size(data)
delocal u32 delta = 2654435769
```

---

<sup>5</sup>We could use some preprocessor like `m4` or `cpre` like C does, but the Janus interpreter would not translate that into C without recognizing (or ignoring) it itself. It is, therefore, a good suggestion for Jana improvement.

<sup>6</sup>This dependency is eventual with `y` and immediate with `z`.

## RC5

Translating RC5 into Janus was difficult and required extra work in designing the reversible code. The encryption function is simple, but the key expansion function has grown considerably during translation even when partially altered - the last loop has a simplified exit condition.

polish RC5. L is not initialized because of the missing first loop. encryption function has wrong api, it should do changes in-place

## Salsa20 and Chacha20

In case of Salsa20, we are not taking existing C code or pseudocode and translating it into Janus. We are following a precise mathematical formulation that is presented in the specification [?]. As a result, we do not compare our implementation with C code anymore. We focus solely on Janus instead.

The first issue appeared with the quarterround function. Initially, a misunderstanding of the specification resulted in applying the second Bennett's trick like this:

```
procedure quarterround(u32 seq[4])
  local u32 tmp_seq[4]
  call quarterround_bt(seq, tmp_seq)
  seq[0] <=> tmp_seq[0]
  seq[1] <=> tmp_seq[1]
  seq[2] <=> tmp_seq[2]
  seq[3] <=> tmp_seq[3]
  uncall quarterround_bt(seq, tmp_seq) // 2nd Bennett's trick
  delocal u32 tmp_seq[4]
```

Noticing the error, the `quarterround` procedure was reimplemented to make its computations in-place. Now only one temporary variable is required, and that is only due to the feature lacking within the Janus language. The suggestion is to implement functions, *i.e.* procedures that return a value. Let us consider this extension with an example:

```
// classic Janus
procedure multiply_proc(int a, int b, int c)
  c += a * b

// Proposed extension
function multiply_func(int a, int b)
  return a * b

// Usage of the procedure, computes result += a * b * c
procedure multiply_three(int a, int b, int c, int result)
  local int tmp = 0
  call multiply_proc(a, b, tmp)
  call multiply_proc(tmp, c, result)
  uncall multiply_proc(a, b, tmp)
  delocal int tmp = 0
```

```
// Usage of the function
procedure multiply_three(int a, int b, int c, int result)
    result += call multiply_func(call multiply_func(a, b), c)
```

Obviously the procedure `multiply_three` would also be a function, but we disregard that for this example.

These functions would be just a syntactic sugar compared to what the programmers does with procedures. The extension then would follow these steps:

1. automatically allocate a hidden temporary variable, local to the caller, for storing the returned value
2. add that variable as another parameter
3. replace the `return` statement with adding the value to the new parameter (using the `+=` operator)
4. add corresponding `uncall` for clearing that hidden variable in the caller

Note that with these steps followed, the syntactic sugar would in fact unroll into this:

```
// Usage of the procedure, computes result += a * b * c
procedure multiply_three(int a, int b, int c, int result)
    local int hidden_tmp1 = 0
    local int hidden_tmp2 = 0
    call multiply_proc(a, b, hidden_tmp1)
    call multiply_proc(hidden_tmp1, c, hidden_tmp2)
    result += hidden_tmp2
    uncall multiply_proc(hidden_tmp1, c, hidden_tmp2)
    uncall multiply_proc(a, b, tmp)
    delocal int hidden_tmp2 = 0
    delocal int hidden_tmp1 = 0
```

This code is not as efficient as the hand-written equivalent above, however, in the case of the `quarterround` function in Salsa20, there would be no performance loss. Consider this piece of code, with both the hand-written form and the one with the suggested extension:

```
// z1 = y1 ^ ((y0 + y3) <<< 7)
tmp += seq[0] + seq[3]
call rotate_left_u32(tmp, 7)
seq[1] ^= tmp
uncall rotate_left_u32(tmp, 7)
tmp -= (seq[0] + seq[3])

// z1 = y1 ^ ((y0 + y3) <<< 7)
seq[1] ^= call rotate_left_u32(seq[0] + seq[3], 7)
```

Following the steps above, the automatically unrolled code would be the same as the hand-written code. This extension would allow for replacing the 22-line procedure with a 5-line function with the same semantics and much better readability.

**Chacha20** Chacha20, being only a minor update to Salsa20, does not differ dramatically much from its predecessor. The differences consist of different operation ordering and are in the `doublround` and the `quarterround` procedures.

## 4.2 Lack of leakage and translation

# Evaluation

## 5

In this chapter we attempt to test for the properties discussed in section 1.1. These are the goals again:

1. show lack of state information leakage,
2. exploit the duality of encryption and decryption in a reversible setting,
3. gain practical experience with programming in a reversible language.

We have demonstrated reaching the last goal in previous chapter, where we discussed how we implemented some crypto algorithms, showed some examples and even gave suggestions for improving the Janus language. At the same time, we also reached the second goal, as we implemented only encryption functions. The reader can execute our programs which also include basic keys and data. Uncalling the encryption function is equivalent to calling the decryption function.

The first goal remains and we deal with it here.

### 5.1 Design

We already mentioned some options for verifying our claim in section 3.4. The best tool for the job would be Vale, but that turned out to be more of a trouble instead of help. There is no doubt Vale can be highly useful, but at the time of writing the maturity of the project is just not at the required level. Even the installation was problematic; we encountered issues that are not usually expected, like folder tree structure incompatibility and case sensitivity in file naming. There were also other, more common difficulties, like dependencies being required at specific version and package management issues. When the installation finally succeeded, the problems did not disappear. The biggest problems are related to the usability: there is very little documentation, there are practically no examples and even the source code seems hardly readable<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, it seems that to take full advantage of the language, the user also needs to understand the target language (in our case Dafny) and perhaps how the translation is performed. Last but not least, the language is extremely complicated and the effort in learning Vale and implementing an algorithm in it might not be any lower than just using a more classic language and using already established tools and methods for debugging and tuning.

---

<sup>7</sup>Subjective assessment, the source code for the Vale tool is dense and not commented.

Since we cannot use Vale, the next best option is taint tracking in combination with automatic cleanup of registers and stack memory. Ideally we could use both at the same time, but experiments have shown there is a clash between them. The reason is not perfectly clear, but suspicion lies with how *secretgrind* tracks *libc* calls and the fact that *zerostack* links with *musl-libc*. It should be possible to remove this problem in a production scenario without too much effort. Since *secretgrind* also tracks stack, though, we do not necessarily require this for the evaluation.

For the evaluation we suggest performing an experiment on selected algorithms to approach describing the reality of state leakage. Let us describe the experiment in steps:

**Step 1: Translation** We start by translating Janus code into C/C++ code. The translation is performed by the Jana interpreter when invoked with the `-c` option. On its own, the C/C++ code can be compiled and executed and performs equivalently to its Janus counterpart. There is no input from outside the program, however.

**Step 2: Reference** We take a reference implementation of the same algorithm and adjust both the reference and the translated code to read and process data the same way. The reference should form a baseline for our comparison.

**Step 3: Taint tracking** We compile both programs the same way and input the same data. We compare their execution using *secretgrind* and evaluate their scores in number of bytes potentially leaked.

**Step 4: Zerostack substitution** *Secretgrind* traces the source of the leaks (taints), and so we can examine them. We then recompile the programs with *zerostack* and re-evaluate the situation.

## 5.2 implementations

## 5.3 Experiments

### Step 1: Translation

The code is translated using Jana. There are no manual modifications to make the code compile. We use the older version of translation due to added complexity in recent Jana versions. Originally Jana used a direct translation to C-style arrays, that was substituted by `std::array` for a short time and then by `std::vector`. Reason for the replacement of C-style arrays was keeping some record of the size of the array. Janus interpreter has a keyword `size`, which returns the size of the array, since it is always known as it does not change. C, on the other hand, uses simple pointers to memory and does not track the size of the allocated block<sup>8</sup>. The reason to stick to the original translation is simplicity in tracking memory using *secretgrind* and the immaturity of the recent changes to Jana.

<sup>8</sup>Not related to heap allocations, which do need to track that information internally.

explain edits to translated code and reference chacha implementation

## Step 2: Reference

To have something to check our code against, we download reference implementations from the Internet. We also add some boilerplate code to create executable self-standing programs instead of libraries, and we also add a function for reading from a file. This function uses the `read()` function, since that is simple enough to avoid confusion and complexity when tracked by *secretgrind*. For the same reason we also disable code that prints out the contents of arrays - prior experiments have shown that functions like `scanf` manipulate and taint more memory.

## Step 3: Taint tracking

### XXTEA

XXTEA is the first algorithm for us to examine. While we already talked about TEA and XTEA, they are somewhat simpler and perform their operations in-place, which limits potential leakage. XXTEA, on the other hand, required some work to make the updates in-place. That makes it interesting to compare to classic irreversible implementation.

For the testing, we are using the `TEA.janus` file, containing all three TEA-family algorithms; we only comment out the TEA and XTEA invocations. For the reference implementation, we make minor edits to the version on Wikipedia. For input, we load both key and data for encryption from a file, that will be marked as tainted by *secretgrind*. Note that both the key and the data block take up 16 bytes of memory, so a non-leaking implementation should see exactly 32 bytes in total of tainted memory. Let us look at the *secretgrind* output for the reference code:

[cite or hyperref?](#)

```
*** (2) (stack) range [0xffefffdcc - 0xffefffdcfc] (4 bytes) is tainted
> (stack) [0xffefffdcc - 0xffefffdcfc] (4 bytes): XXTEA-C.c:51:@0xffefffdcc:y
    tainted      at 0x400ABF: xtea_dec (XXTEA-C.c:62)
                  by 0x400C68: main (XXTEA-C.c:96)

*** (1) (stack) range [0xffefffdd4 - 0xffefffdd7] (4 bytes) is tainted
> (stack) [0xffefffdd4 - 0xffefffdd7] (4 bytes): XXTEA-C.c:51:@0xffefffdd4:z
    tainted      at 0x400A55: xtea_dec (XXTEA-C.c:61)
                  by 0x400C68: main (XXTEA-C.c:96)

*** (1) (stack) range [0xffeffffe10 - 0xffeffffe2f] (32 bytes) is tainted
> (stack) [0xffeffffe10 - 0xffeffffe1f] (16 bytes): XXTEA-C.c:90:@0xffeffffe10:key
    tainted      at 0x4F196B0: __read_nocancel (syscall-template.S:81)
                  by 0x400B63: read_data_binary (XXTEA-C.c:77)
                  by 0x400C3E: main (XXTEA-C.c:93)
> (stack) [0xffeffffe20 - 0xffeffffe23] (4 bytes): XXTEA-C.c:91:@0xffeffffe20:more_dat
    tainted      at 0x400AB7: xtea_dec (XXTEA-C.c:62)
                  by 0x400C68: main (XXTEA-C.c:96)
> (stack) [0xffeffffe24 - 0xffeffffe27] (4 bytes): XXTEA-C.c:91:@0xffeffffe24:more_dat
    tainted      at 0x400A29: xtea_dec (XXTEA-C.c:59)
                  by 0x400C68: main (XXTEA-C.c:96)
> (stack) [0xffeffffe28 - 0xffeffffe2b] (4 bytes): XXTEA-C.c:91:@0xffeffffe28:more_dat
```

```

    tainted    at 0x400A29: xxtea_dec (XXTEA-C.c:59)
               by 0x400C68: main (XXTEA-C.c:96)
> (stack) [0xffefffe2c - 0xffefffe2f] (4 bytes): XXTEA-C.c:91:@0xffefffe2c:more_data[3]
    tainted    at 0x400A29: xxtea_dec (XXTEA-C.c:59)
               by 0x400C68: main (XXTEA-C.c:96)

```

Total bytes tainted: 40

The printout details three stack ranges. The first two are caused by the `y` and `z` variables, while the last one makes up the actual input for the algorithm, that is the key and the data. The leak is therefore 8 bytes over the expected 32 bytes.

Because our Janus implementation had to avoid these local erasable variables, and thus perform the updates in-place, there are no extra leaks:

```

***(1) (stack) range [0xffefffe20 - 0xffefffe3f] (32 bytes) is tainted
> (stack) [0xffefffe20 - 0xffefffe2f] (16 bytes): TEA-translated.cpp:150:@0xffefffe20:key
    tainted    at 0x4F196B0: __read_nocancel (syscall-template.S:81)
               by 0x4015F6: read_data_binary(unsigned int*, unsigned long, unsigned int*)
               by 0x4016F9: main (TEA-translated.cpp:167)
> (stack) [0xffefffe30 - 0xffefffe33] (4 bytes): TEA-translated.cpp:152:@0xffefffe30:more_
    tainted    at 0x401450: XXTEA_encipher_reverse(unsigned int*, unsigned int*) (TEA-tr
               by 0x40171F: main (TEA-translated.cpp:180)
> (stack) [0xffefffe34 - 0xffefffe37] (4 bytes): TEA-translated.cpp:152:@0xffefffe34:more_
    tainted    at 0x40137F: XXTEA_encipher_reverse(unsigned int*, unsigned int*) (TEA-tr
               by 0x40171F: main (TEA-translated.cpp:180)
> (stack) [0xffefffe38 - 0xffefffe3b] (4 bytes): TEA-translated.cpp:152:@0xffefffe38:more_
    tainted    at 0x40137F: XXTEA_encipher_reverse(unsigned int*, unsigned int*) (TEA-tr
               by 0x40171F: main (TEA-translated.cpp:180)
> (stack) [0xffefffe3c - 0xffefffe3f] (4 bytes): TEA-translated.cpp:152:@0xffefffe3c:more_
    tainted    at 0x40124E: XXTEA_encipher_reverse(unsigned int*, unsigned int*) (TEA-tr
               by 0x40171F: main (TEA-translated.cpp:180)

```

Total bytes tainted: 32

It has to be pointed out that the leakage-free result could be achieved the same way originally. The difference is that the opposite is not true: reversible programming does not allow the leaking version. Still this is a fairly simple algorithm, so let us move on.

## Chacha20

missing description  
here, posting just  
the results for now.

Expected bytes tainted: 64 (16\*4)

In the reference version, there is one stack range for all the data. We only show an excerpt from the output with the total number of bytes tainted at the bottom:

```

log_chacha-ref-nokey.txt:11: ***(1) (stack) range [0xffefffd40 - 0xffefffdff]
(192 bytes) is tainted
Total bytes tainted: 192

```



Our Janus-to-C translated version is more modest: only the expected 64 bytes are marked as tainted. For some reason, *secretgrind* split the data array into 3 sections, but on inspection they do reside right after each other in memory.

```
*** (1) (stack) range [0xffefffdc0 - 0xffeffdff] (64 bytes) is tainted
> (stack) [0xffefffdc0 - 0xffefffdc3] (4 bytes): Chacha20.janus.3.cpp:702:@0xffefff
    tainted at 0x403743: Chacha20_encrypt_forward(unsigned int*, unsigned int*)
              by 0x403C31: main (Chacha20.janus.3.cpp:726)
> (stack) [0xffefffdc4 - 0xffefffdc7] (4 bytes): Chacha20.janus.3.cpp:702:@0xffefff
    tainted at 0x403743: Chacha20_encrypt_forward(unsigned int*, unsigned int*)
              by 0x403C03: main (Chacha20.janus.3.cpp:723)
> (stack) [0xffefffdc8 - 0xffeffdff] (56 bytes): Chacha20.janus.3.cpp:702:@0xffefff
    tainted at 0x4F196B0: __read_nocancel (syscall-template.S:81)
              by 0x403A05: read_data_binary(unsigned int*, unsigned long, unsigned)
              by 0x403B78: main (Chacha20.janus.3.cpp:711)
```

Total bytes tainted: 64

#### Step 4: Zerostack substitution

Since I can't get zerostack and secretgrind working together, I want to show how zerostack zeroes out memory (e.g. the instructions injected, their location and what it erases) and compare it to the non-erasing binary that we run under secretgrind. I can manually show that zerostack would erase those leaking memory locations.

what about mem-set\_s? could I use it with secretgrind? it would also be simpler to add to Jana's output

# Reflections

## 6

Evaluation of our solution in a broader context, usability in practice and viability of real-world implementation

add what's required  
for usability: random  
number generators,  
nonce generators

## Related Work

7

obvious

# Conclusion

8

Discussion of results.

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**The extra**

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