



# check\_passphrase

```
int check_passphrase(const char *versus) {  
    int i = 0;  
    while (passphrase[i] == versus[i] &&  
           passphrase[i]) {  
        i += 1;  
    }  
    return (passphrase[i] == versus[i]);  
}
```

number of iterations = number matching characters

leaks information about passphrase, oops!

# exploiting check\_passphrase (1)

guess	measured time
aaaa	$100 \pm 5$
baaa	$103 \pm 4$
caaa	$102 \pm 6$
daaa	$111 \pm 5$
aaaa	$99 \pm 6$
faaa	$101 \pm 7$
gaaa	$104 \pm 4$
...	...

## exploiting check\_passphrase (2)

guess	measured time
daaa	$102 \pm 5$
dbaa	$99 \pm 4$
dcaa	$104 \pm 4$
ddaa	$100 \pm 6$
deaa	$102 \pm 4$
dfaa	$109 \pm 7$
dgaa	$103 \pm 4$
...	...

# timing and cryptography

lots of asymmetric cryptography uses big-integer math

example: multiplying 500+ bit numbers together

how do you implement that?

# big integer multiplication

say we have two 64-bit integers  $x, y$

and want to 128-bit product, but our multiply instruction only does 64-bit products

one way to multiply:

divide  $x, y$  into 32-bit parts:  $x = x_1 \cdot 2^{32} + x_0$  and  $y = y_1 \cdot 2^{32} + y_0$

then  $xy = x_1y_12^{64} + x_1y_0 \cdot 2^{32} + x_0y_1 \cdot 2^{32} + x_0y_0$

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then  $xy = x_1y_12^{64} + x_1y_0 \cdot 2^{32} + x_0y_1 \cdot 2^{32} + x_0y_0$

can extend this idea to arbitrarily large numbers

number of smaller multiplies depends on size of numbers!

# big integers and cryptography

naive multiplication idea:

number of steps depends on size of numbers

problem: sometimes the value of the number is a secret

e.g. part of the private key

oops! revealed through timing



# big integer timing attacks in practice (1)

early versions of OpenSSL (TLS implementation) had timing attack

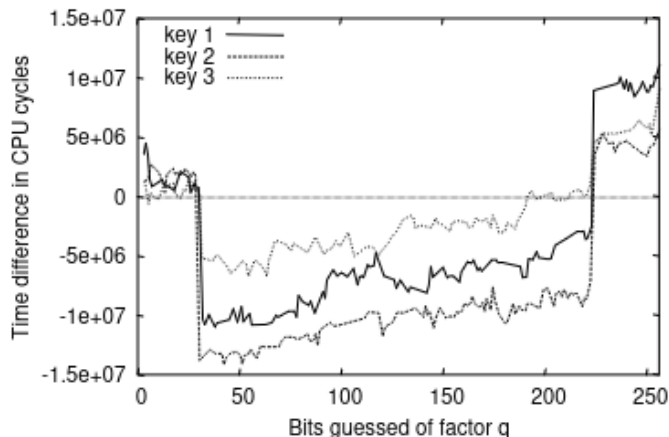
Brumley and Boneh, "Remote Timing Attacks are Practical" (Usenix Security '03)

attacker could figure out bits of private key from timing

why? variable-time multiplication and modulus operations

got faster/slower depending on how input was related to private key

## big integer timing attacks in practice (2)



(a) The zero-one gap  $T_g - T_{g_{hi}}$  indicates that we can distinguish between bits that are 0 and 1 of the RSA factor  $q$  for 3 different randomly-generated keys. For clarity, bits of  $q$  that are 1 are omitted, as the  $x$ -axis can be used for reference for this case.

# browsers and website leakage

web browsers run code from untrusted webpages

one goal: can't tell what other webpages you visit

# some webpage leakage (1)

...as you can see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) ...

convenient feature 1: browser marks visited links

```
<script>
var the_color = window.getComputedStyle(
    document.querySelector('a[href=~"foo.com"]')
).color
if (color == ...) { ... }
</script>
```

convenient feature 2: scripts can query current color of something

# some webpage leakage (1)

...as you can see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) ...

convenient feature 1: browser marks visited links

```
<script>
var the_color = window.getComputedStyle(
    document.querySelector('a[href=~"foo.com"]')
).color
if (color == ...) { ... }
</script>
```

~~convenient feature 2: scripts can query current color of something~~

fix 1: `getComputedStyle` lies about the color

fix 2: limited styling options for visited links

## some webpage leakage (2)

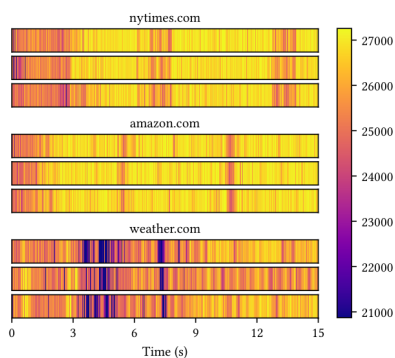
one idea: script in webpage times loop that writes big array

variation in timing depends on other things running on machine

## some webpage leakage (2)

one idea: script in webpage times loop that writes big array

variation in timing depends on **other things running on machine**



turns out, other webpages  
create distinct “signatures”

Figure from Cook et al, “There’s Always a Bigger Fish: Clarifying Analysis of Machine-Learning-Assisted Side-Channel Attack” (ISCA ’22)

**Figure 3: Example loop-counting traces collected over 15 seconds. Darker shades indicate smaller counter values and lower instruction throughput.**

# inferring cache accesses (1)

suppose I time accesses to array of chars:

reading array[0]: 3 cycles

reading array[64]: 4 cycles

reading array[128]: 4 cycles

reading array[192]: 20 cycles

reading array[256]: 4 cycles

reading array[288]: 4 cycles

...

what could cause this difference?

array[192] not in some cache, but others were



## inferring cache accesses (2)

some psuedocode:

```
char array[CACHE_SIZE];  
AccessAllOf(array);  
*other_address += 1;  
TimeAccessingArray();
```

suppose during these accesses I discover that `array[128]` is slower to access

probably because `*other_address` loaded into cache + evicted it

what do we know about `other_address`? (select all that apply)

- A. same cache tag    B. same cache index    C. same cache offset
- D. diff. cache tag    E. diff. cache index    F. diff. cache offset

## some complications

caches often use physical, not virtual addresses

- (and need to know about physical address to compare index bits)

- (but can infer physical addresses with measurements/asking OS)

- (and often OS allocates contiguous physical addresses esp. w/ 'large pages')

storing/processing timings evicts things in the cache

- (but can compare timing with/without access of interest to check for this)

processor "pre-fetching" may load things into cache before access is timed

- (but can arrange accesses to avoid triggering prefetcher and make sure to measure with memory barriers)

some L3 caches use a simple hash function to select index instead of index bits

## exercise: inferring cache accesses (1)

```
char *array;  
array = AllocateAlignedPhysicalMemory(CACHE_SIZE);  
LoadIntoCache(array, CACHE_SIZE);  
if (mystery) {  
    *pointer += 1;  
}  
if (TimeAccessTo(&array[index]) > THRESHOLD) {  
    /* pointer accessed */  
}
```

suppose pointer is 0x1000188

and cache (of interest) is direct-mapped, 32768 ( $2^{15}$ ) byte, 64-byte blocks

what array index should we check?

## aside

```
array = AllocateAlignedPhysicalMemory(CACHE_SIZE);  
LoadIntoCache(array, CACHE_SIZE);  
if (mystery) { *pointer += 1; }  
if (TimeAccessTo(&array[index]) > THRESHOLD) {  
    /* pointer accessed */  
}
```

will this detect when pointer accessed? yes

will this detect if mystery is true? not quite

...because branch prediction could started cache access

## exercise: inferring cache accesses (2)

```
char *other_array = ...;
char *array;
array = AllocateAlignedPhysicalMemory(CACHE_SIZE);
LoadIntoCache(array, CACHE_SIZE);
other_array[mystery] += 1;
for (int i = 0; i < CACHE_SIZE; i += BLOCK_SIZE) {
    if (TimeAccessTo(&array[i]) > THRESHOLD) {
        /* found something interesting */
    }
}
```

other\_array at 0x200400, and interesting index is  $i=0x800$ , then what was mystery?

## exercise: inferring cache accesses (2)

```
char *array;  
posix_memalign(&array, CACHE_SIZE, CACHE_SIZE);  
LoadIntoCache(array, CACHE_SIZE);  
if (mystery) {  
    *pointer = 1;  
}  
if (TimeAccessTo(&array[index1]) > THRESHOLD ||  
    TimeAccessTo(&array[index2]) > THRESHOLD) {  
    /* pointer accessed */  
}
```

pointer is 0x1000188

cache is 2-way, 32768 ( $2^{15}$ ) byte, 64-byte blocks, ??? replacement

what array indexes should we check?

# PRIME+PROBE

name in literature: PRIME + PROBE

PRIME: fill cache (or part of it) with values

do thing that uses cache

PROBE: access those values again and see if it's slow

(one of several ways to measure how cache is used)

coined in attacks on AES encryption

## example: AES (1)

from Osvik, Shamir, and Tromer, “Cache Attacks and Countermeasures: the Case of AES” (2004)

early AES implementation used lookup tables

goal: detect index into lookup table

index depended on key + data being encrypted

tricks they did to make this work

vary data being encrypted

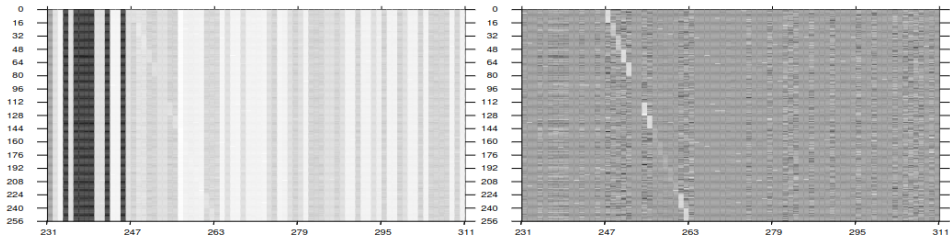
subtract average time to look for what changes

lots of measurements



## example: AES (2)

from Osvik, Shamir, and Tromer, “Cache Attacks and Countermeasures: the Case of AES” (2004)



**Fig. 5.** Prime+Probe attack using 30,000 encryption calls on a 2GHz Athlon 64, attacking Linux 2.6.11 `dm-crypt`. The horizontal axis is the evicted cache set (i.e.,  $\langle y \rangle$  plus an offset due to the table's location) and the vertical axis is  $p_0$ . Left: raw timings (lighter is slower). Right: after subtraction of the average timing of the cache set. The bright diagonal reveals the high nibble of  $p_0 = 0x00$ .

## reading a value

```
char *array;
posix_memalign(&array, CACHE_SIZE, CACHE_SIZE);
AccessAllOf(array);
other_array[mystery * BLOCK_SIZE] += 1;
for (int i = 0; i < CACHE_SIZE; i += BLOCK_SIZE) {
    if (CheckIfSlowToAccess(&array[i])) {
        ...
    }
}
```

with 32KB direct-mapped cache

suppose we find out that `array[0x400]` is slow to access

and `other_array` starts at address `0x100000`

what was `mystery`?

## revisiting an earlier example (1)

```
char *array;  
posix_memalign(&array, CACHE_SIZE, CACHE_SIZE);  
LoadIntoCache(array, CACHE_SIZE);  
if (mystery) {  
    *pointer += 1;  
}  
if (TimeAccessTo(&array[index]) > THRESHOLD) {  
    /* pointer accessed */  
}
```

what if mystery is false *but* branch mispredicted?

## revisiting an earlier example (2)

	cycle #	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<code>movq mystery, %rax</code>		F	D	R	I	E	E	E	W	C			
<code>test %rax, %rax</code>		F	D	R					I	E	W	C	
<code>jz skip (mispred.)</code>			F	D	R					I	E	W	C
<code>mov pointer, %rax</code>		F	D	R	I	E	E	E	W				
<code>mov (%rax), %r8</code>			F	D	R					I	E	W	
<code>add \$1, %r8</code>			F	D	R								
<code>mov %r8, %rax</code>				F	D	R							
...													
<code>skip: ...</code>									F	D	R		

# avoiding/triggering this problem

```
if (something false) {  
    access *pointer;  
}
```

what can we do to make access more/less likely to happen?

# reading a value without really reading it

```
char *array;
posix_memalign(&array, CACHE_SIZE, CACHE_SIZE);
AccessAllOf(array);
if (something false) {
    other_array[mystery * BLOCK_SIZE] += 1;
}
for (int i = 0; i < CACHE_SIZE; i += BLOCK_SIZE) {
    if (CheckIfSlowToAccess(&array[i])) {
        ...
    }
}
```

if branch mispredicted, cache access may **still happen**

can find the value of `mystery`

# seeing past a segfault? (1)

```
Prime();  
if (something false) {  
    triggerSegfault();  
    Use(*pointer);  
}  
Probe();
```

could cache access for `*pointer` still happen?

yes, if:

- branch for if statement mispredicted, and
- `*pointer` starts before segfault detected

## seeing past a segfault? (2)

operations in virtual memory lookup:

- translate virtual to physical address

- check if access is permitted by permission bits

Intel processors: looks like these were separate steps, so...

```
Prime();
```

```
if (something false) {
```

```
    int value = 3ReadMemoryMarkedNonReadableInPageTable();@@
```

```
    access other_array[value 4* ...@];@
```

```
}
```

```
Probe();
```



## seeing past a segfault? (2)

operations in virtual memory lookup:

- translate virtual to physical address

- check if access is permitted by permission bits

Intel processors: looks like these were separate steps, so...

```
Prime();
```

```
if (something false) {
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```
    int value = 3ReadMemoryMarkedNonReadableInPageTable();@@
```

```
    access other_array[value 4* ...@];@
```

```
}
```

```
Probe();
```

## seeing past a segfault? (2)

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Prime();
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if (something false) {
```

```
    int value = 3ReadMemoryMarkedNonReadableInPageTable();@@
```

```
    access other_array[value 4* ...@];@
```

```
}
```

```
Probe();
```

## seeing past a segfault? (2)

operations in virtual memory lookup:

- translate virtual to physical address

- check if access is permitted by permission bits

Intel processors: looks like these were separate steps, so...

```
Prime();
```

```
if (something false) {
```

```
    int value = 3ReadMemoryMarkedNonReadableInPageTable();@@
```

```
    access other_array[value 4* ...@];@
```

```
}
```

```
Probe();
```

# Meltdown

from Lipp et al, "Meltdown: Reading Kernel Memory from User Space"

```
// %rcx = kernel address  
// %rbx = array to load from to cause eviction  
xor %rax, %rax      // rax <- 0  
retry:  
  // rax <- memory[kernel address] (segfaults)  
  // but check for segfault done out-of-order on Intel  
movb (%rcx), %al  
  // rax <- memory[kernel address] * 4096 [speculated]  
  shl $0xC, %rax  
  jz retry           // not-taken branch  
  // access array[memory[kernel address] * 4096]  
  mov (%rbx, %rax), %rbx
```

# Meltdown

from Lipp et al, "Meltdown: Reading Kernel Memory from User Space"

```
// %rcx = kernel address
// %rbx = array base address
xor %rax, %rax
retry:
    // rax ← memory[kernel address] (segfaults)
    // but check for segfault done out-of-order on Intel
    movb (%rcx), %al
    // rax ← memory[kernel address] * 4096 [speculated]
    shl $0xC, %rax
    jz retry
    // access array[memory[kernel address] * 4096]
    mov (%rbx, %rax), %rbx
```

space out accesses by 4096  
ensure separate cache sets and  
avoid triggering prefetcher

viction

# Meltdown

from Lipp et al, "Meltdown: Reading Kernel Memory from User Space"

```
// %rcx repeat access if zero
// %rbx apparently value of zero speculatively read on
xor %rax, %rax when real value not yet available
retry:
// rax <- memory[kernel address] (segfaults)
// but check for segfault done out-of-order on Intel
movb (%rcx), %al
// rax <- memory[kernel address] * 4096 [speculated]
shl $0xC, %rax
jz retry // not-taken branch
// access array[memory[kernel address] * 4096]
mov (%rbx, %rax), %rbx
```

# Meltdown

from Lipp et al, "Meltdown: Reading Kernel Memory from User Space"

```
// %rcx access cache to allow measurement later
// %rbx in paper not with FLUSH+RELOAD instead of PRIME+PROBE technique
xor %rax, %rax
retry:
// rax <- memory[kernel address] (segfaults)
// but check for segfault done out-of-order on Intel
movb (%rcx), %al
// rax <- memory[kernel address] * 4096 [speculated]
shl $0xC, %rax
jz retry // not-taken branch
// access array[memory[kernel address] * 4096]
mov (%rbx, %rax), %rbx
```

# Meltdown

from Lipp et al, "Meltdown: Reading Kernel Memory from User Space"

segfault actually happens eventually

option 1: okay, just start a new process every time

option 2: way of suppressing exception (transactional memory support)

```
// rax <- memory[kernel address] (segfaults)  
// but check for segfault done out-of-order on Intel  
movb (%rcx), %al  
// rax <- memory[kernel address] * 4096 [speculated]  
shl $0xC, %rax  
jz retry // not-taken branch  
// access array[memory[kernel address] * 4096]  
mov (%rbx, %rax), %rbx
```



# Meltdown fix

- HW: permissions check done with/before physical address lookup
  - was already done by AMD, ARM apparently?
  - now done by Intel
- SW: separate page tables for kernel and user space
  - don't have sensitive kernel memory pointed to by page table when user-mode code running
  - unfortunate performance problem
  - exceptions start with code that switches page tables

# reading a value without really reading it

```
char *array;
posix_memalign(&array, CACHE_SIZE, CACHE_SIZE);
AccessAllOf(array);
if (something false) {
    other_array[mystery * BLOCK_SIZE] += 1;
}
for (int i = 0; i < CACHE_SIZE; i += BLOCK_SIZE) {
    if (CheckIfSlowToAccess(&array[i])) {
        ...
    }
}
```

if branch mispredicted, cache access may **still happen**

can find the value of `mystery`

## mistraining branch predictor?

```
if (something) {  
    CodeToRunSpeculatively()  
}
```

how can we have 'something' be false, but predicted as true

run lots of times with something true

then do actually run with something false

# contrived(?) vulnerable code (1)

suppose this C code is run with extra privileges

(e.g. in system call handler, library called from JavaScript in webpage, etc.)

assume x chosen by attacker

(example from original Spectre paper)

```
if (x < array1_size)
    y = array2[array1[x] * 4096];
```

## the out-of-bounds access (1)

```
char array1[...];
```

```
...
```

```
int secret;
```

```
...
```

```
y = array2[array1[x] * 4096];
```

suppose array1 is at 0x10000000 and

secret is at 0x103F0003;

what x do we choose to make array1[x] access first byte of secret?

## the out-of-bounds access (2)

```
char array1[...];
```

```
...
```

```
int secret;
```

```
...
```

```
y = array2[array1[x] * 4096];
```

suppose our cache has 64-byte blocks and 8192 sets

and `array2[0]` is stored in cache set 0

if the above evicts something in cache set 128,  
then what do we know about `array1[x]`?

## the out-of-bounds access (2)

```
char array1[...];
```

```
...
```

```
int secret;
```

```
...
```

```
y = array2[array1[x] * 4096];
```

suppose our cache has 64-byte blocks and 8192 sets

and `array2[0]` is stored in cache set 0

if the above evicts something in cache set 128,  
then what do we know about `array1[x]`?

is 2 or 130

# exploit with contrived(?) code

```
/* in kernel: */  
int systemCallHandler(int x) {  
    if (x < array1_size)  
        y = array2[array1[x] * 4096];  
    return y;  
}
```

---

```
/* exploiting code */  
/* step 1: mistrain branch predictor */  
for (a lot) {  
    systemCallHandler(0 /* less than array1_size */);  
}  
  
/* step 2: evict from cache using misprediction */  
Prime();  
systemCallHandler(targetAddress - array1Address);  
int evictedSet = ProbeAndFindEviction();  
int targetValue = (evictedSet - array2StartSet) / setsPer4K;
```



# really contrived?

```
char *array1; char *array2;  
if (x < array1_size)  
    y = array2[array1[x] * 4096];
```

times 4096 shifts so we can get lower bits of target value  
so all bits effect what cache block is used

---

## really contrived?

```
char *array1; char *array2;  
if (x < array1_size)  
    y = array2[array1[x] * 4096];
```

times 4096 shifts so we can get lower bits of target value  
so all bits effect what cache block is used

---

```
int *array1; int *array2;  
if (x < array1_size)  
    y = array2[array1[x]];
```

will still get *upper* bits of array1[x] (can tell from cache set)

can still read arbitrary memory!

want memory at 0x10000?

upper bits of 4-byte integer at 0x3FFFE

# bounds check in kernel

```
if (x < array1_size) {  
    y = array2[array1[x]];  
}
```

our template

```
void SomeSystemCallHandler(int index) {  
    if (index > some_table_size)  
        return ERROR;  
    int kind = table[index];  
    switch (other_table[kind].foo) {  
        ...  
    }  
}
```

actual code

# bounds check in kernel

```
if (x < array1_size) {  
    y = array2[array1[x]];  
}
```

our template

```
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        ...  
    }  
}
```

actual code

# bounds check in kernel

```
if (x < array1_size) {  
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}
```

our template

```
void SomeSystemCallHandler(int index) {  
    if (index > some_table_size)  
        return ERROR;  
    int kind = table[index];  
    switch (other_table[kind].foo) {  
        ...  
    }  
}
```

actual code

# privilege levels?

vulnerable code runs with higher privileges

so far: higher privileges = kernel mode

but other common cases of higher privileges

example: scripts in web browsers

# JavaScript

JavaScript: scripts in webpages

not supposed to be able to read arbitrary memory, but...

can access arrays to examine caches

and could take advantage of some browser function being vulnerable



# JavaScript

JavaScript: scripts in webpages

not supposed to be able to read arbitrary memory, but...

can access arrays to examine caches

and could take advantage of some browser function being vulnerable

or — doesn't even need browser to supply vulnerable code itself!

# just-in-time compilation?

for performance, compiled to machine code, run in browser

not supposed to be access arbitrary browser memory

example JavaScript code from paper:

```
if (index < simpleByteArray.length) {  
    index = simpleByteArray[index | 0];  
    index = (((index * 4096) | 0) & (32*1024*1024-1)) | 0;  
    localJunk ^= probeTable[index|0]|0;  
}
```

web page runs a lot to train branch predictor

then does run with out-of-bounds index

examines what's evicted by probeTable access

# supplying own attack code?

JavaScript: could supply own attack code

turns out also possible with kernel mode scenario

trick: don't need to *actually run* code

...just need branch predictor to fetch it!

## other misprediction

so far: talking about mispredicting direction of branch

what about mispredicting target of branch in, e.g.:

```
// possibly from C code like:  
//    (*function_pointer)();  
jmp *%rax
```

```
// possibly from C code like:  
//    switch(rcx) { ... }  
jmp *(%rax,%rcx,8)
```

# an idea for predicting indirect jumps

for jumps like `jmp *%rax` predict target with cache:

bottom 12 bits of jmp address	last seen target
-------------------------------	------------------

0x0-0x7	0x200000
---------	----------

0x8-0xF	0x440004
---------	----------

0x10-0x18	0x4CD894
-----------	----------

0x18-0x20	0x510194
-----------	----------

0x20-0x28	0x4FF194
-----------	----------

...

...

0xFF8-0xFFFF	0x3F8403
--------------	----------

Intel Haswell CPU did something similar to this

uses bits of last several jumps, not just last one

can mistrain this branch predictor

# using mispredicted jump

- 1: find some kernel function with `jmp *%rax`
- 2: mistrain branch target predictor for it to jump to chosen code  
use code at address that conflicts in “recent jumps cache”
- 3: have chosen code be attack code (e.g. array access)  
either write special code OR  
find suitable instructions (e.g. array access) in existing kernel code

# Spectre variants

showed Spectre variant 1 (array bounds), 2 (indirect jump)  
from original paper

other possible variations:

- could cause other things to be mispredicted

  - prediction of where functions return to?

  - values instead of which code is executed?

- could use side-channel other than data cache changes

  - instruction cache

  - cache of pending stores not yet committed

  - contention for resources on multi-threaded CPU core

  - branch prediction changes

  - ...

# some Linux kernel mitigations (1)

replace `array[x]` with  
`array[x & ComputeMask(x, size)]`

...where `ComputeMask()` returns

0 if  $x > \text{size}$

0xFFFF...F if  $x \leq \text{size}$

...and `ComputeMask()` does not use jumps:

```
mov x, %r8
mov size, %r9
cmp %r9, %r8
sbb %rax, %rax // sbb = subtract with borrow
                // either 0 or -1
```



# some Linux kernel mitigations (2)

for indirect branches:

with hardware help:

- separate indirect (computed) branch prediction for kernel v user mode
- other branch predictor changes to isolate better

without hardware help:

- transform `jmp *(%rax)`, etc. into code that will only be predicted to jump to safe locations (by writing assembly very carefully)

# only safe prediction

as replacement for `jmp *(%rax)`

code from Intel's "Retpoline: A Branch Target Injection Mitigation"

```
    call load_label
capture_ret_spec:                /* <-- want prediction to go here
    pause
    lfence
    jmp capture_ret_spec
load_label:
    mov %rax, (%rsp)
    ret
```

**backup slides**

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