

Serial Crypto Processor Using Zephyr

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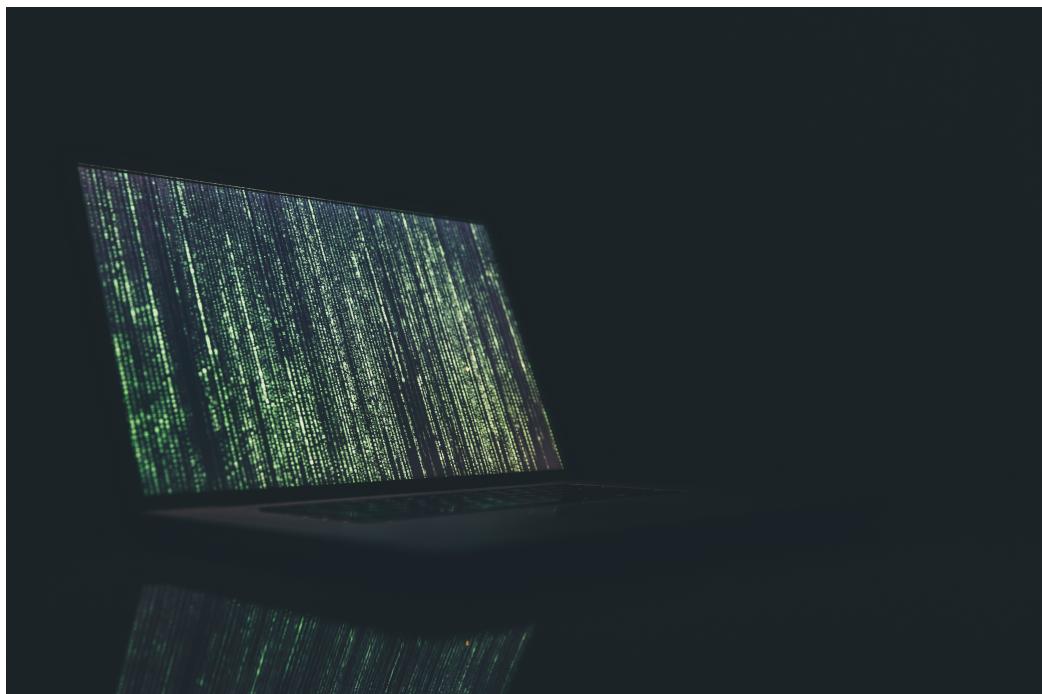


Figure 1: Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

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1 Project Requirements

The Goal of the Project is to create a Processor which can receive data, then encrypt or decrypt this data using AES-128 and then send it back via a Serial-Interface.

The Processor was developed using the [native_posix-Board](#). Using the [native_posix-Board](#) the Program can be compiled into a normal executable which can be run on the Host-System (e.g. Linux or Windows).

The [native_posix-Board](#) has one big limitation which is that Interrupts cannot be implemented. This means the Program had to be developed using non-blocking Calls.

The Serial-Interface is implemented using the UART-Interface which will connect to `/dev/pts/0` when the Board is started.

The Cryptographic Operations (AES-128 Encryption and Decryption) are implemented using the TinyCrypt-Crypto-Device.

The Crypto-Processor should run using a predefined StateMachine:

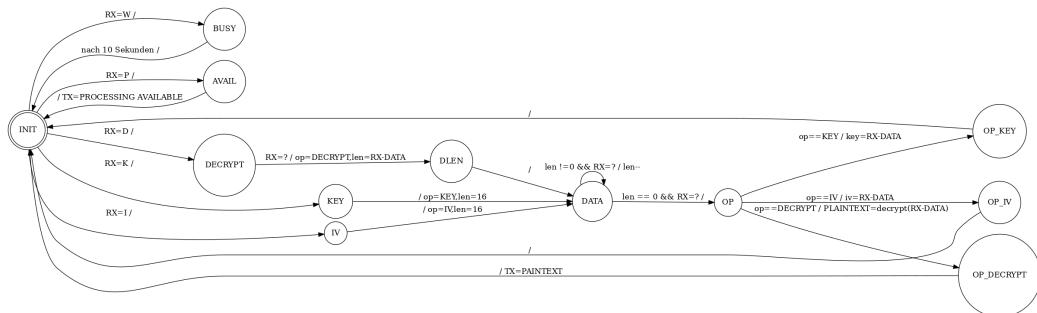


Figure 2: Statemachine

2 Used Technologies

2.1 Zephyr

Zephyr is a small real-time operating system for embedded devices with constraints on hardware resources which supports multiple different architectures developed by [The Linux Foundation](#).

Zephyr is released under the [Apache License 2.0](#).

Zephyr 2.4.0 was used for this Project. It was installed for WSL2 on Windows 10 using the [official Getting-Started-Guide from Zephyr](#)

2.1.1 KConfig

KConfig is a configuration system originally developed for the Linux-Kernel which can be used to enable or disable features or to select build-time-Options.

2.1.2 Device Tree

The Device Tree is a way of defining hardware and configuration Information for Zephyr-Boards.

It is used so Code can be dynamically included or excluded for every Board without hard-coding every device into the OS.

2.1.3 Threads

A Thread is a sequence of instruction which can be run independent of it's parent-process (the main-Thread in this case). This allows the CPU to work on seperate Jobs simultaniously.

2.1.4 Message-Queues

Message Queues are FIFO-Buffers (First-In-First-Out-Buffers). Buffers store data for later use and First-In-First-Out means that the data which came in first comes out first. FIFO-Buffers can deliver data between Threads in a safe manner.

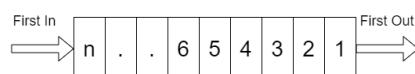


Figure 3: Message-Queue Example Diagram

2.2 West

[West](#) is Zephyr's Meta-Tool. [West](#) initializes, maintains and builds Zephyr-Workspaces using [Ninja](#) and [CMake](#).

2.2.1 Ninja

[Ninja](#) is a small build system that focusses on Speed.

2.2.2 CMake

[CMake](#) is a Tool to automate Building, Testing and Packaging in Software Projects.

It can also generate Ninja Files for faster Building.

2.3 Linux Pseudo-Terminals

[PTY](#)'s also called [Pseudo-Terminals](#) are bidirectional communication channels. They enable Programs to transfer Data between one another and appear as a normal File under /dev/pts/.

2.4 Tinycrypt

[Tinycrypt](#) is a small footprint cryptography library written in Assembler and implemented in Zephyr.

It is developed and maintained by [Intel's Open Souce Technlogy Center](#).

3 Project Execution

The Complete Codebase for the Project can be found on: [Github](#)

3.1 Block-Diagram

The Serial-Crypto Processor is split into four Threads:

- Main-Thread
Responsible for starting the other Threads
- UART-In-Thread
Responsible for incoming UART-Traffic and the Statemachine
- Processing Thread
Responsible for Crypto-Operations
- UART-Out-Thread
Responsible for outgoing UART-Traffic

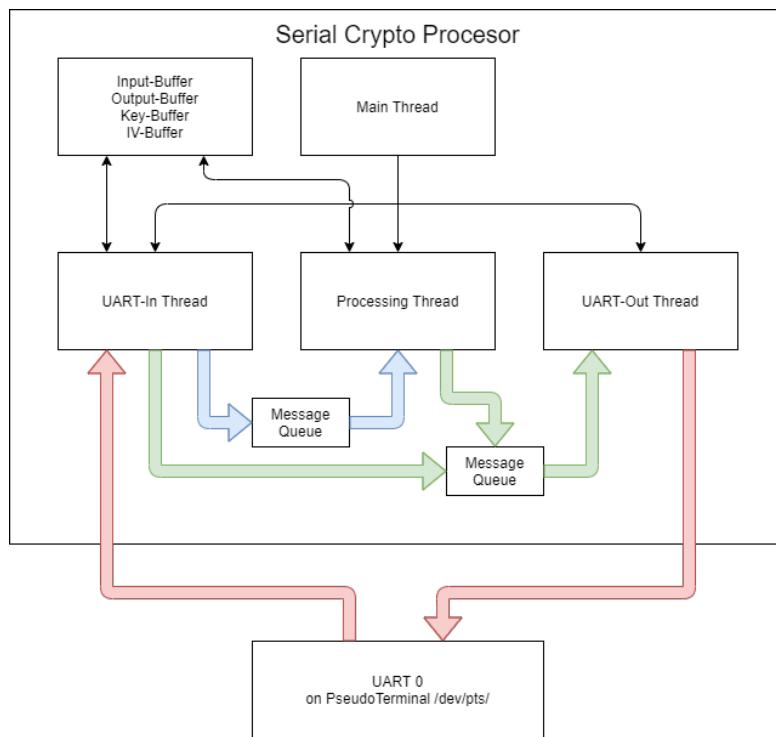


Figure 4: Serial Crypto Processor Block Diagram

3.2 Build-Settings

```

1 cmake_minimum_required(VERSION 3.13.1)
2
3 project(CRYPTO_UART)
4 find_package(Zephyr REQUIRED HINTS ${ENV{ZEPHYR_BASE}})
5
6 # Get all ".c"-Files in the src-Directory
7 FILE(GLOB MyCSources src/*.c)
8 target_sources(app PRIVATE ${MyCSources})

```

Listing 1: CMakelists.txt

Get Dependencies for the Serial UART-Device and the Crypto-Device according to [Zephyr KConfig Documentation](#)

```

1 # General config
2 CONFIG_NEWLIB_LIBC_NANO=n
3
4 # Configure Serial-Connection
5 CONFIG_SERIAL=y
6 CONFIG_UART_NATIVE_POSIX=y
7 CONFIG_NATIVE_UART_0_ON_own_PTY=y
8
9 # Configure Crypto Device Dependencies
10 CONFIG_CRYPTO=y
11 CONFIG_TINYCRYPT=y
12 CONFIG_TINYCRYPT_AES_CBC=y
13 CONFIG_CRYPTO_TINYCRYPT_SHIM=y

```

Listing 2: prj.conf

```

1 # This makefile builds the sample for a POSIX system, like Linux
2
3 eventfd: src/main.c
4     $(CC) $^ -o $@

```

Listing 3: Makefile posix

3.3 Initialisation

Initialisation consists of:

1. Message-Queue Initialisation
2. UART_0 Initialisation
3. Crypto-Device Initialisation
4. Thread Initialisation

3.3.1 Message-Queue Initialisation

The Message-Queues can be initialised using a Macro which is already defined by Zephyr :

```
1 K_MSGQ_DEFINE(<Name>, <Data-Size>, <Queue-Length>, <Queue-Timeout>);
```

Listing 4: Message Queue Initialisation

During Initialisation 2 Message-Queues are defined, one for the UART-Out-Thread and one for the Processing-Thread:

```
1 // Create Message-Queues using Macros created by Zephyr
2 K_MSGQ_DEFINE(message_queue, sizeof(struct uart_message *), 20, 1);
3 K_MSGQ_DEFINE(crypto_queue, sizeof(char *), 20, 1);
```

3.3.2 UART_0 Initialisation

The Initialisation of the UART_0-Device for the native_posix-Board solely consists of getting the Handle for it :

```
1 // Get Handle to the UART_0-Device
2 uart_dev = device_get_binding(UART_DRV_NAME);
3
4 // Check that the UART_0-Device-Handle is correct
5 if (!uart_dev) {
6     return -1;
7 }
```

Listing 5: UART 0 Initialisation

On the native_posix-Board the Configuration of the Connection Parameters for the UART can be ignored because Pseudo-Terminal are basically Buffers.

On other Boards the correct Connection Parameters need to be set, otherwise the Communication would not happen correctly:

```
1 // Create UART_Config
2 const struct uart_config uart_cfg = {
3     .baudrate = 115200,
4     .parity = UART_CFG_PARITY_NONE,
5     .stop_bits = UART_CFG_STOP_BITS_1,
6     .data_bits = UART_CFG_DATA_BITS_8,
7     .flow_ctrl = UART_CFG_FLOW_CTRL_NONE
8 };
9
10 // Configure UART_0—Device
11 if(!uart_configure(uart_dev, &uart_cfg)) {
12     return -1;
13 }
```

Listing 6: UART-0 Configuration

3.3.3 Crypto-Device Initialisation

The Initialisation of the Crypto-Device consists of getting the Device-Handle and ensuring that the Hardware supports the needed Capabilities for the Device:

```

1 // Get Handle to Crypto_Device
2 crypto_dev = device_get_binding(CRYPTO_DRV_NAME);
3
4 // Check that the Crypto—Device—Handle is correct
5 if (!crypto_dev) {
6     return -1;
7 }
8
9 // Ensure that the Crypto—Device has the neccessary Hardware
10 if (validate_hw_compatibility(crypto_dev)) {
11     return -1;
12 }
```

Listing 7: Crypto-Device Initialisation

```

1 // Create global Struct for Crypto—Hardware—Capability—Flags
2 static uint32_t cap_flags;
3
4 // Ensure that the Device has the Capabilities to encrypt using TinyCrypt
5 int validate_hw_compatibility(const struct device *dev) {
6
7     uint32_t flags = cipher_query_hwcaps(dev);
8     if ((flags & CAP_RAW_KEY) == 0U) {
9         return -1;
10    }
11    if ((flags & CAP_SYNC_OPS) == 0U) {
12        return -1;
13    }
14    if ((flags & CAP_SEPARATE_IO_BUFS) == 0U) {
15        return -1;
16    }
17    cap_flags = CAP_RAW_KEY | CAP_SYNC_OPS | CAP_SEPARATE_IO_BUFS;
18    return 0;
19 }
```

Listing 8: Crypto Hardware Capability Check

3.3.4 Thread Initialisation

Thread Initialisation happens in the Main-Thread. The Threads are started one after another and their Handles are stored in an Array:

```

1 // Create Array for Thread-Handles
2 pthread_t threads[NUM_THREADS];
3
4 int ret, i;
5 pthread_attr_t attr[NUM_THREADS] = {};
6 void *(*thread_routines[])(void *) = {uart_in_thread,uart_out_thread,process_thread};
7
8 for (i = 0; i < NUM_THREADS; i++) {
9     ret = pthread_create(&threads[i], &attr[i], thread_routines[i], INT_TO_POINTER(i));
10    if (ret != 0) {
11        return -1;
12    }
13 }
```

Listing 9: Thread Initialisation

3.4 UART-In-Thread

The UART-In-Thread works as the Brain of the whole Processor and is build like a State-Machine:

```

1 // Declare Enums for State Machine
2 enum states{
3     ST_INIT,ST_BUSY,ST_AVAIL,ST_ENCRYPT,ST_DECRYPT,
4     ST_DLEN,ST_DATA,ST_KEY,ST_IV,ST_OP_SEL,ST_OP_KEY,
5     ST_OP_IV,ST_OP_DECRYPT,ST_OP_ENCRYPT
6 };
7 enum operations{OP_INIT,OP_KEY,OP_IV,OP_ENCRYPT,OP_DECRYPT};
```

Listing 10: State Definitions

Upon Initialisation the Processor starts in the Initialisation-State which is basically the IDLE-State:

```

1 // Init Program States
2 static enum states prog_state = ST_INIT;
3 volatile static enum states processing_thread_state = ST_INIT;
4 static enum operations prog_operation = OP_INIT;
```

From there on out the UART-In-Thread receives the Serial-Data and handles them accordingly (Pseudo-Code) :

```
1 // Run until the Stop-Flag is set
2 while (!stop_flag) {
3     switch (prog_state) {
4         case ST_INIT:
5             // Wait for incoming Traffic
6             if(!uart_poll_in(uart_dev,&uart_in)){
7                 // Handle Read
8             }
9             case ST_DATA:
10                // Read Data and set Buffer
11                case ST_IV:
12                    // Override IV with Buffer
13                    case ST_KEY:
14                        // Override Key with Buffer
15                        case ST_DECRYPT:
16                            // Decrypt Data and send it via the UART
17                            case ST_ENCRYPT:
18                                // Encrypt Data and send it via the UART
19                                default:
20                                    // Reset Program State
21    }
22 }
```

Listing 11: State Machine Pseudo-Code

3.5 UART-Out-Thread

The UART-Out-Thread handles the Processors Serial-Output and ensures that each Message is sent one after another.

For this a Struct was created so the data can be sent in a universal Manner using a Pointer to a Sequence of Characters and the Length of the String which lies at the Pointer's Location:

```

1 struct uart_message{
2     unsigned char * message;
3     uint32_t len;
4 };

```

Listing 12: Message Struct Definition

The UART-Out-Thread basically sits in an Endless-Loop and waits for Messages to come in:

```

1 void * uart_out_thread(void * x) {
2
3     int iLauf = 0;
4     struct uart_message * message;
5
6     // Run until the Stop-Flag is set
7     while (!stop_flag) {
8         // Block until Data is available
9         if(!k_msgq_get(&message_queue,&message,K_NO_WAIT)) {
10             // Send out Message Char by Char
11             while(iLauf < (message->len)) {
12                 uart_poll_out(uart_dev,message->message[iLauf++]);
13             }
14             // Reset Counter
15             iLauf = 0;
16         }
17     }
18     return x;
19 }

```

Listing 13: UART Out Thread Pseudo-Code

3.6 Processing Thread

The Processing Thread is the Worker of the Processor and handles the Encryption and Decryption. It is controlled using Commands which are send via a Message-Queue :

```

1 unsigned char * message;
2 // Run until the Stop-Flag is set
3 while (!stop_flag) {
4     if(!k_msgq_get(&crypto_queue,&message,K_NO_WAIT)) {
5         switch (message[0]) {
6             case ENCRYPT_CHAR:
7                 // Encrypt Buffer and send via UART
8             case DECRYPT_CHAR:
9                 // Decrypt Buffer and send via UART
10            case PROCESSING_CHAR:
11                // Send "Processing Available"
12            case WAIT_CHAR:
13                sleep(10);
14            default:
15                break;
16        }
17    }
18 }
```

Listing 14: Processing Thread Pseudo-Code

3.7 Encryption and Decryption

3.7.1 Input and Output Buffers

The Parameters for Encryption and Decrytion are stored in static global Buffers so they can be accessed by all Threads when neccessary.

```

1 static uint8_t * g_in_buffer;
2 static uint8_t * g_out_buffer;
3 // Create global Buffer-Length-Variable
4 static uint16_t buffer_length;
5
6 // Create contiguous IV and Key with Default-Values "BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB"
7 // This is Pseudo-Code
8 static uint8_t g_iv_key[AES_IV_LEN + AES_KEY_LEN];
9 memset(g_iv_key, 'B', AES_IV_LEN + AES_KEY_LEN);
```

Listing 15: Global Buffers for Encryption and Decryption

To prevent Race-Conditions with these Buffers the UART-In-Thread can only access the Buffers when the Processing-Thread is not using them.

3.7.2 Implmentation

Encryption and Decryption are implemented in the same Funtion. The caller can choose wheter to encrypt or decrypt using the “en_decrypt“-Argument:

```

1 uint32_t cbc_mode(const struct device *dev, uint8_t en_decrypt) {
2
3     // Initialise Crypto Context using Key and Hardware Flags
4     struct cipher_ctx ini = {
5         .keylen = AES_KEY_LEN,
6         .key.bit_stream = g_key,
7         .flags = cap_flags,
8     };
9     // Create Buffers
10    struct cipher_pkt buffers = {
11        .in_buf = g_in_buffer,
12        .in_len = in_buffer_len,
13        .out_buf_max = out_buffer_len,
14        .out_buf = g_out_buffer,
15    };
16
17    // Create Cipher Session which could be reused
18    cipher_begin_session(crypto_dev,&ini,en_decrypt);
19
20    // Execute Cipher Operation
21    cipher_cbc_op(&ini,&buffers,);
22
23    // Free Crypto Context
24    cipher_free_session(dev, &ini);
25 }
```

Listing 16: Encryption and Decryption Pseudo-Code

After Encryption and Decrytion the Processing-Thread sends the Output-Buffer to the UART-Out-Thread so it can be sent back via UART_0. Once the Output-Buffer is sent, the Processing-Thread forfeits access of the Buffers so the UART-In-Thread can also modify them.