

# CROSS-X: Generalized and Stable Cross-Cache Attack on the Linux Kernel



ACM CCS'25

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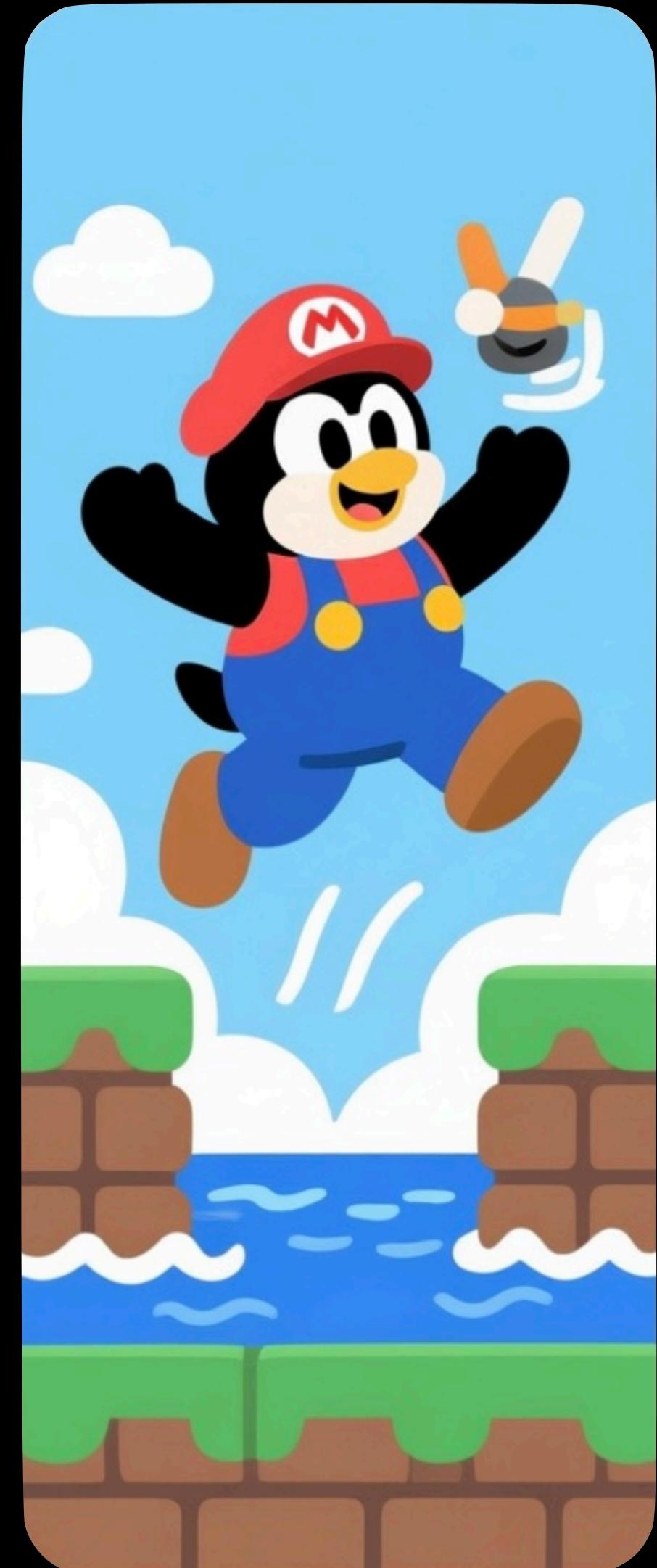
<sup>1</sup>ENKI Whitehat <sup>2</sup>KAIST



\*Both authors contributed equally.

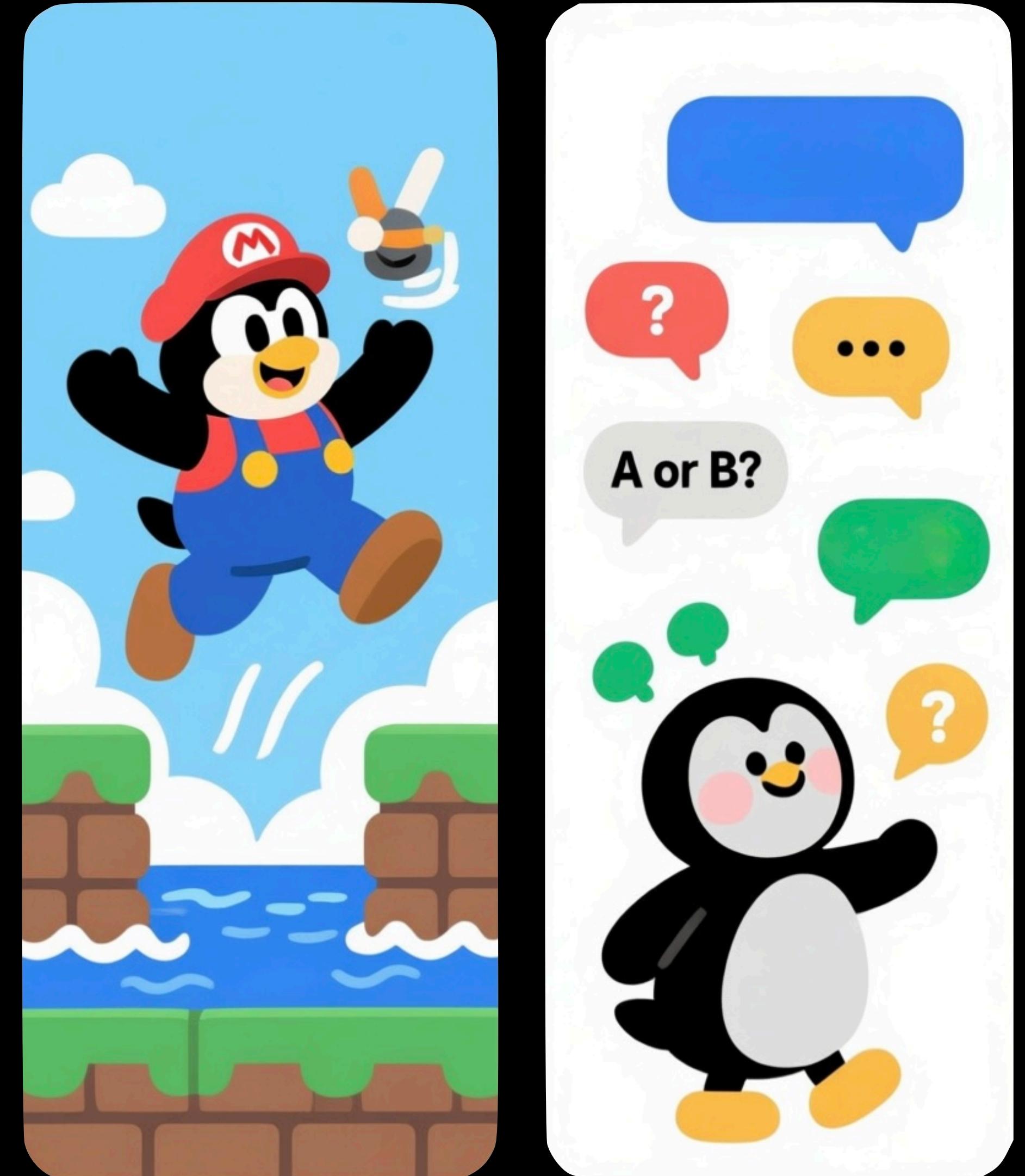
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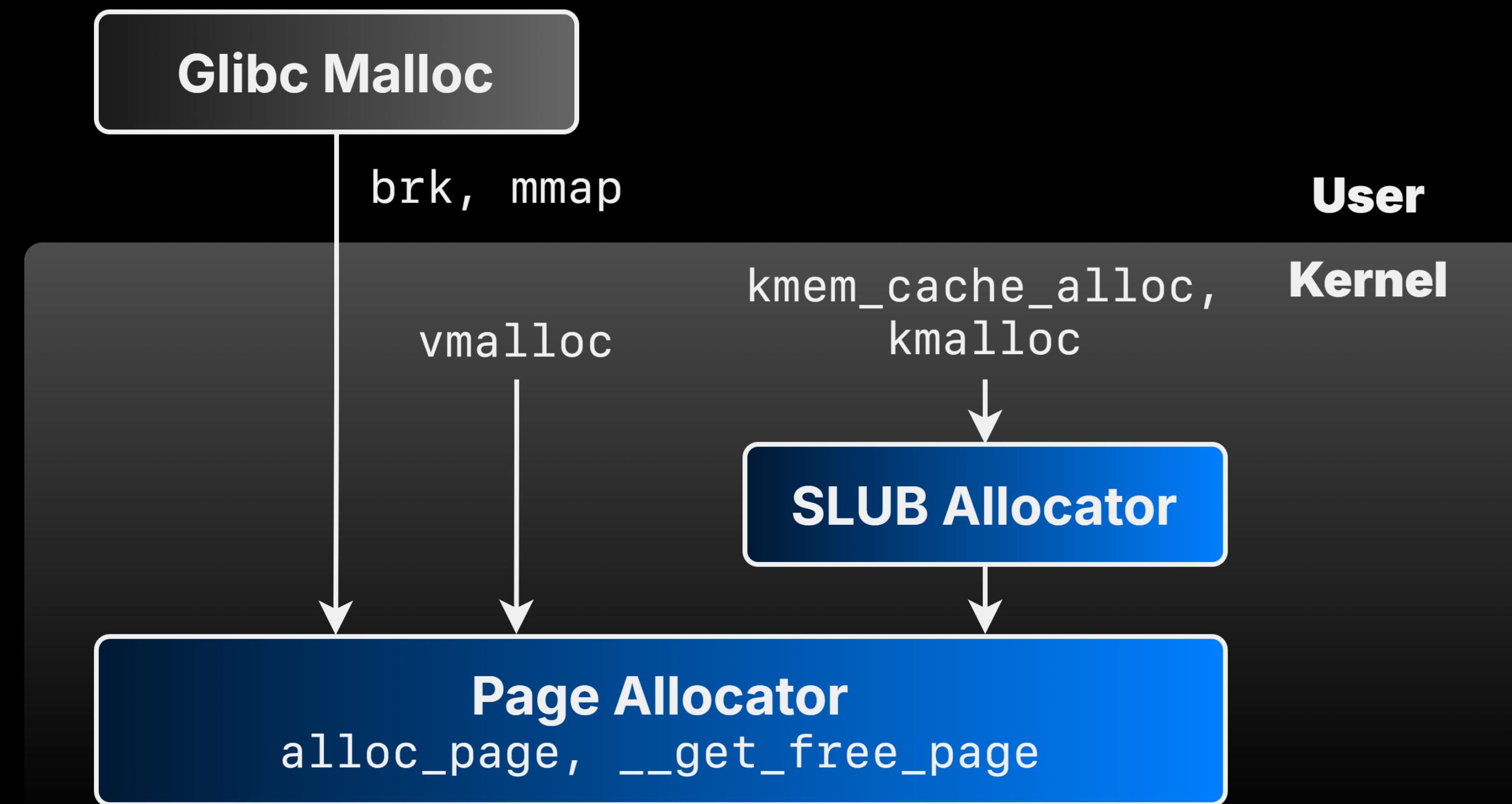
# About CROSS-X

- Cross-Cache Attack underpins modern Linux kernel exploits.
- There remains **uncertainty** around executing it effectively.
- Our work focuses on:
  1. **Robust strategies**
  2. **Automated target object identification**
  3. **Real-world validation**



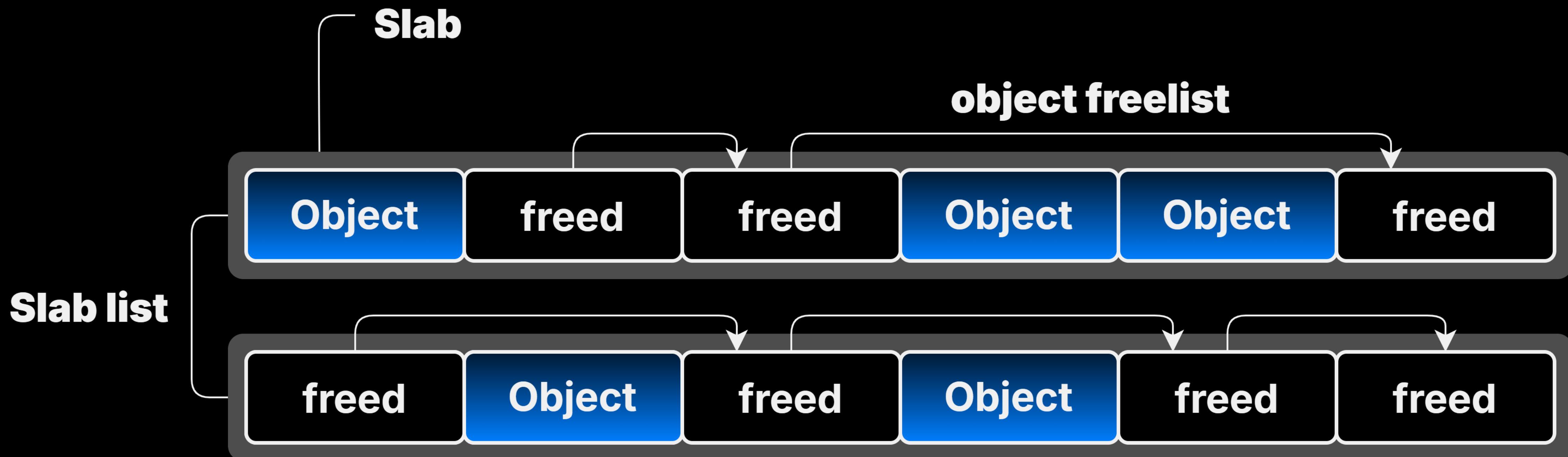
# Linux Memory Management

- Linux kernel manages memory using the **page allocator** and the **SLUB allocator**.
  - **Page allocator** provides physically contiguous pages to system components.
  - **SLUB allocator** handles object-level allocation for small memory requests.

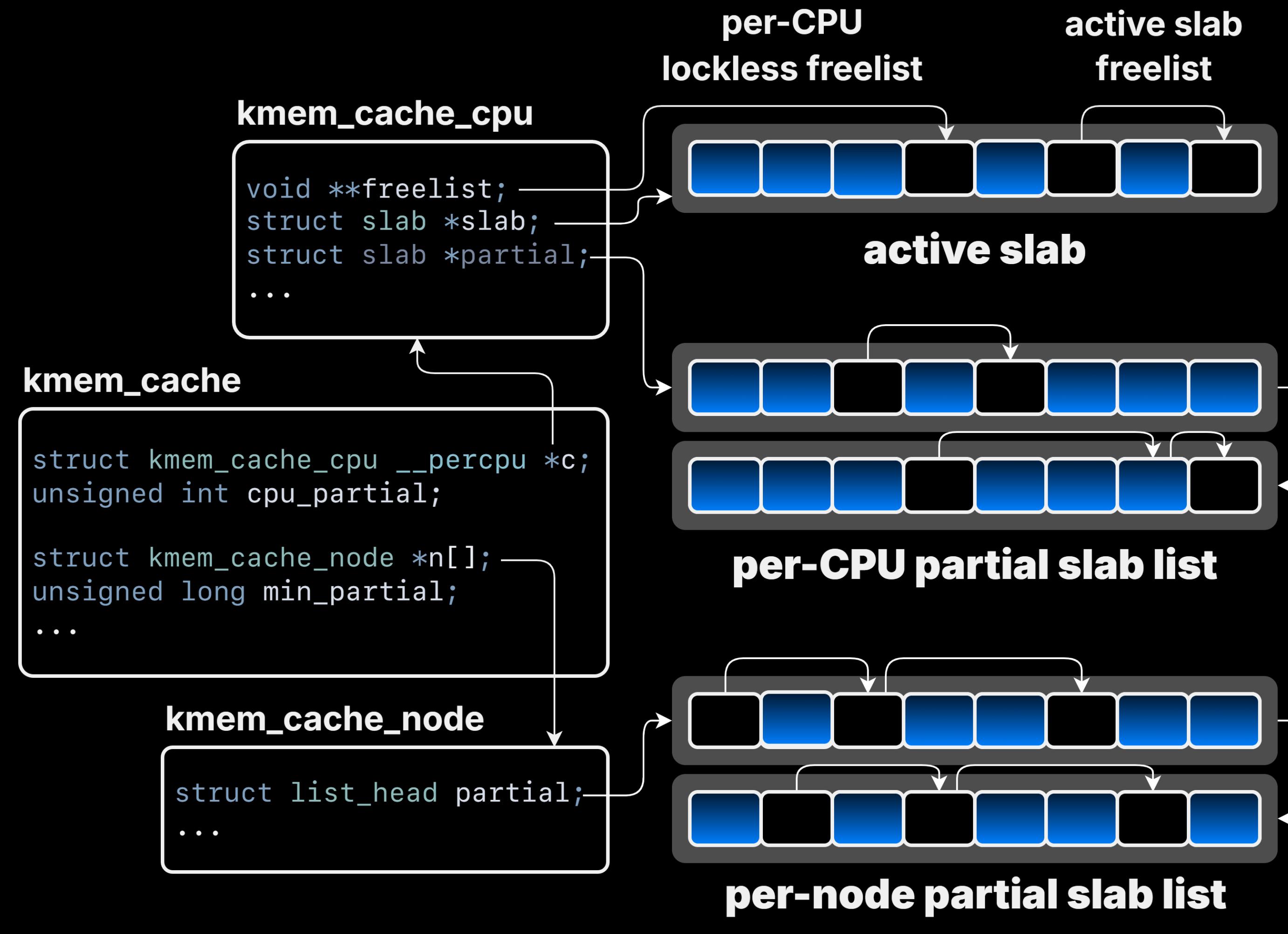


# SLUB allocator

- SLUB allocator maintains a **pre-allocated cache** of objects.
- SLUB operates on a **slab** basis — block of pages divided into uniform-sized slots.
  - Slab forms an **object freelist** to chain freed objects inside it.
  - Slabs could be also chained into slab lists.



# SLUB Cache Structure



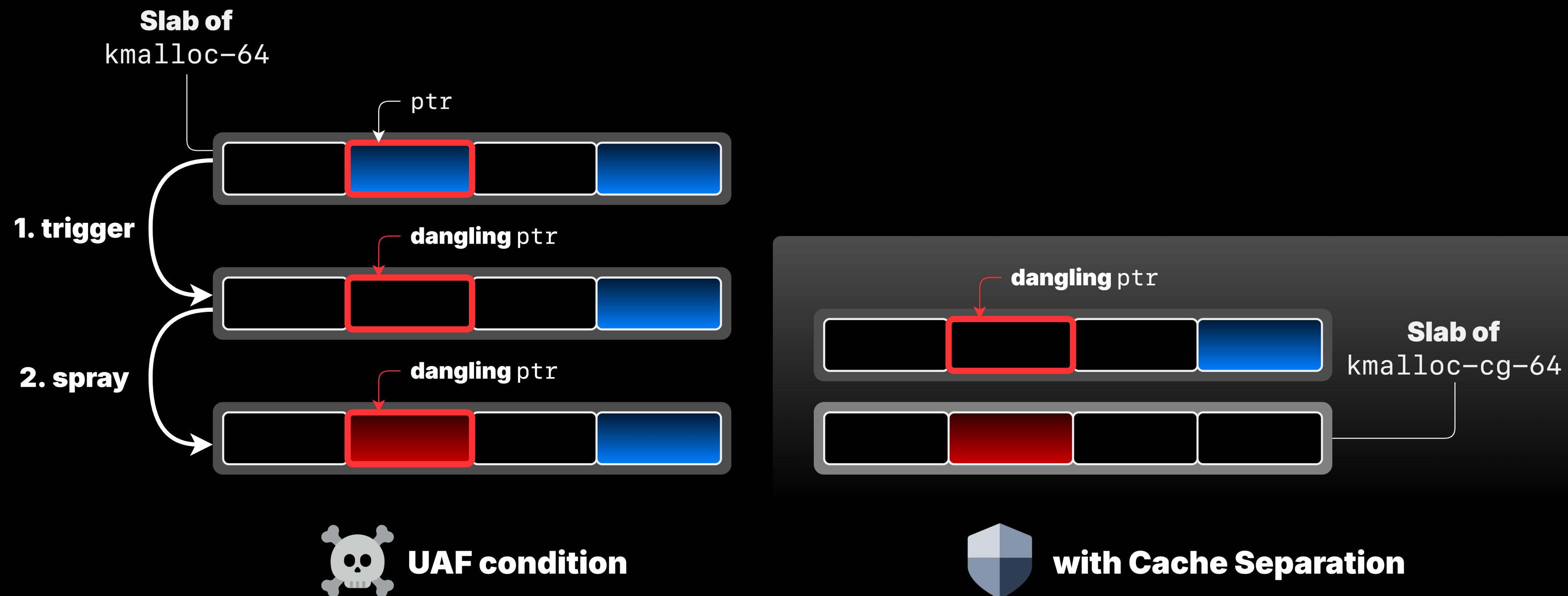
■ allocated object

■ freed object

■ slab

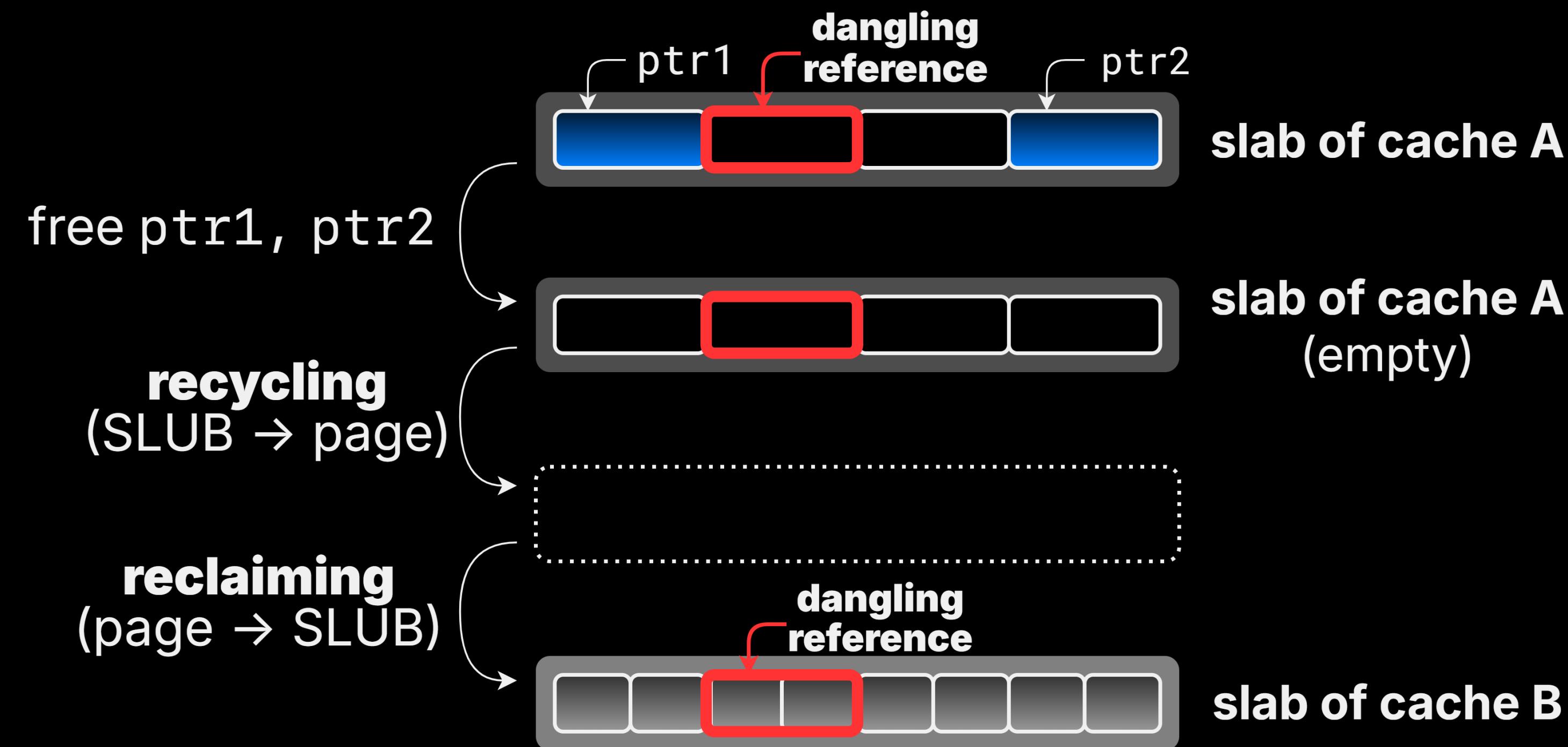
# Cache Separation

- In 2016, the kernel introduced **cache separation**.
- Key objects were moved to separate caches, disrupting many common exploits.
  - Made targeted object spraying significantly harder for attackers.



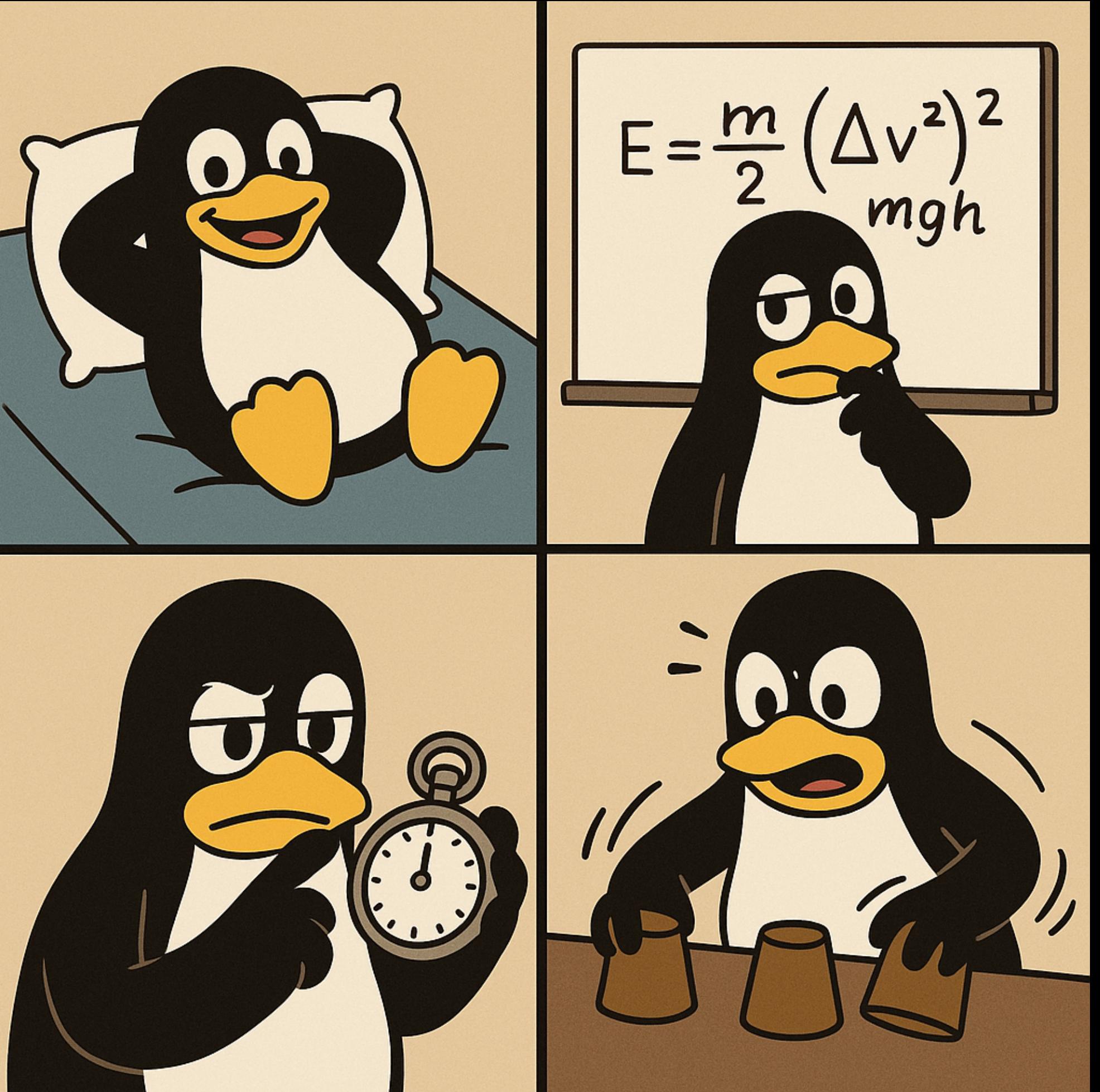
# Cross-Cache Attack

- SLUB discards slabs and allocates new ones from the page allocator.
- **Cross-Cache Attack** exploits this reuse to bypass cache separation.
  - **Recycling** phase forces SLUB to drop a vulnerable slab.
  - **Reclaiming** phase reuses that slab by spraying objects from a different cache.



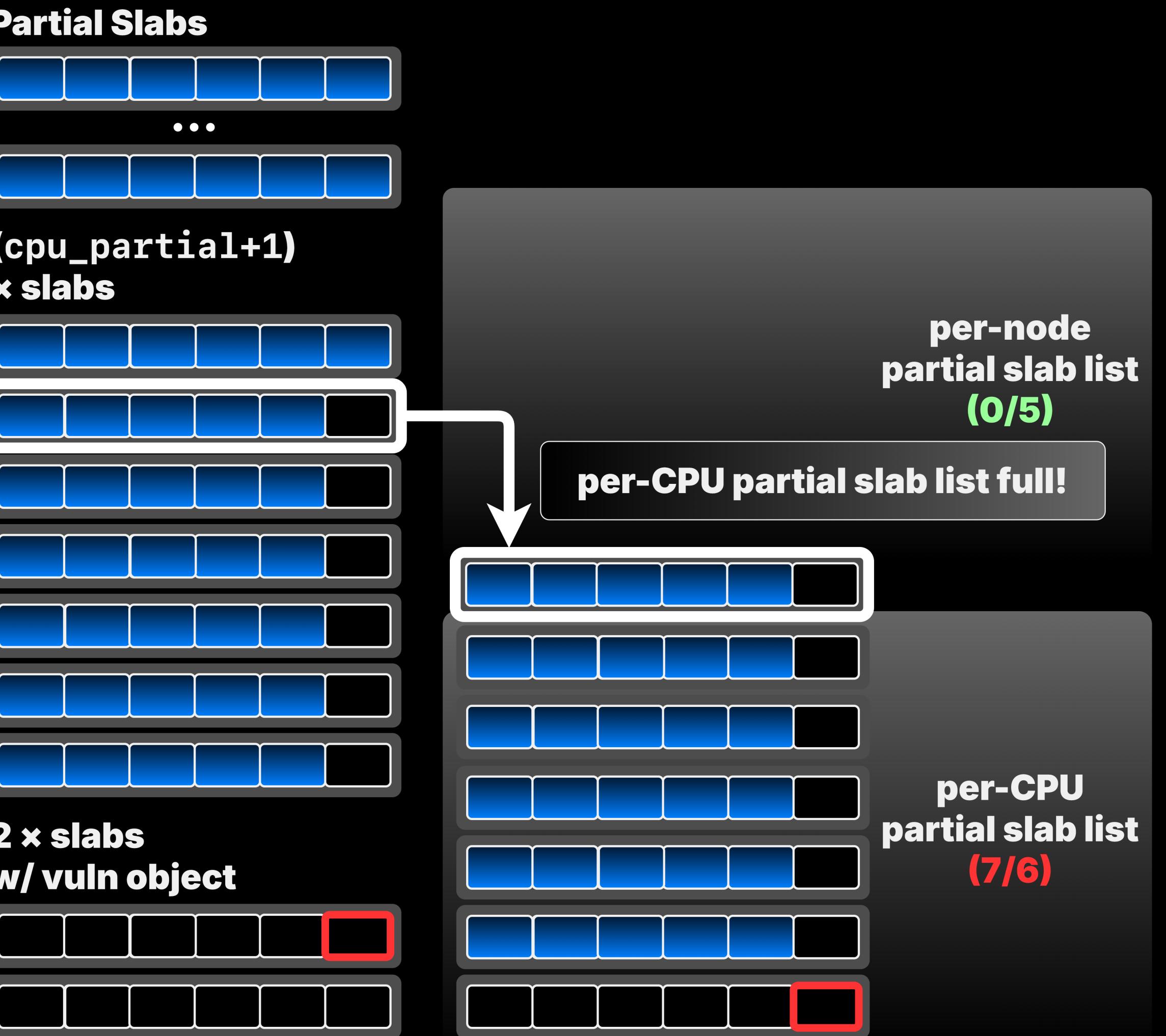
# Public Exploits Review

- We classified public strategies for recycling into:
  - **Naive**
  - **Partial Free**
  - **Timing Side-Channel (of SLUBStick)**
  - **Interleaving Cores**
- Due to time constraints, we will focus exclusively on Partial Free.



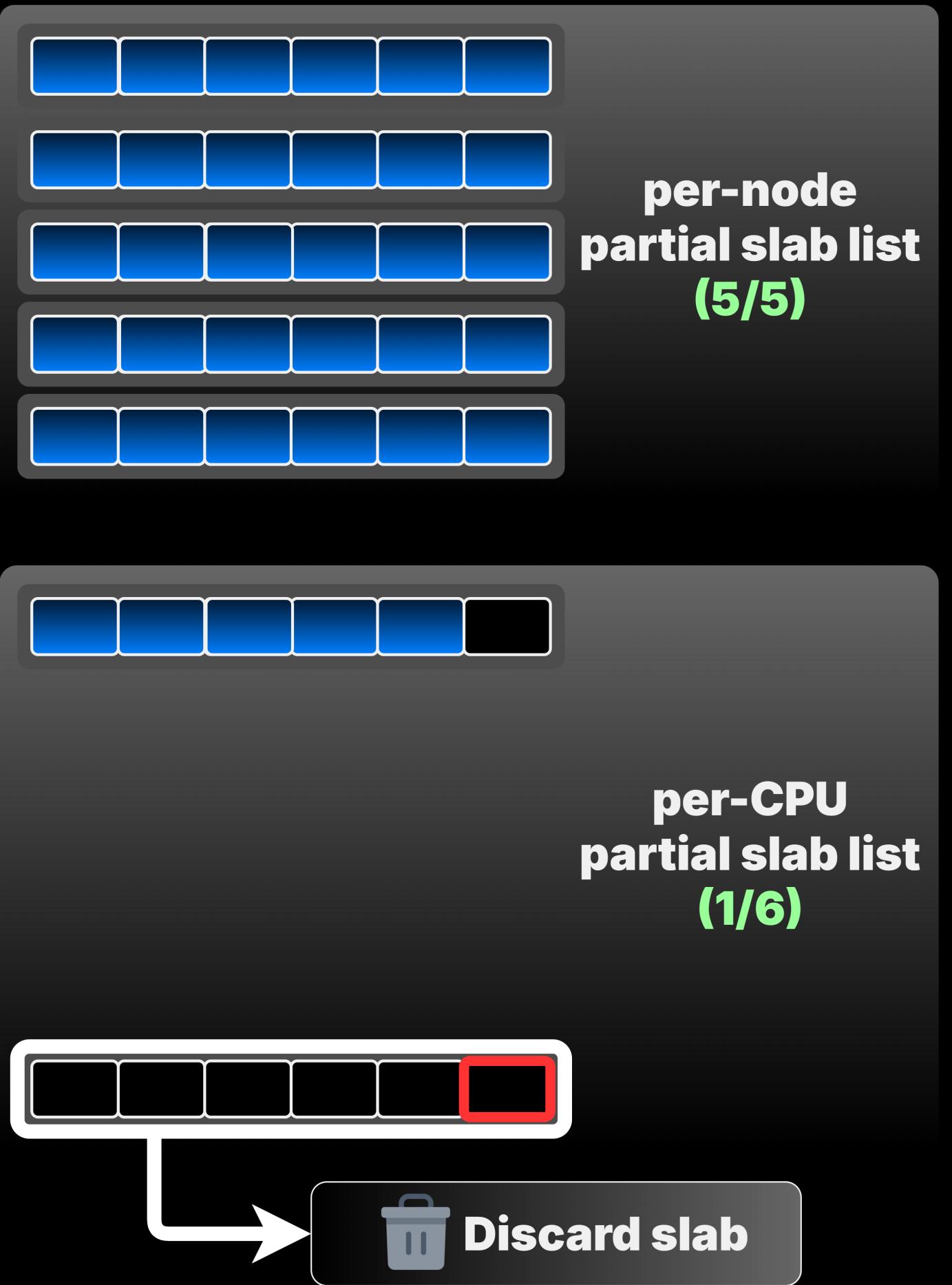
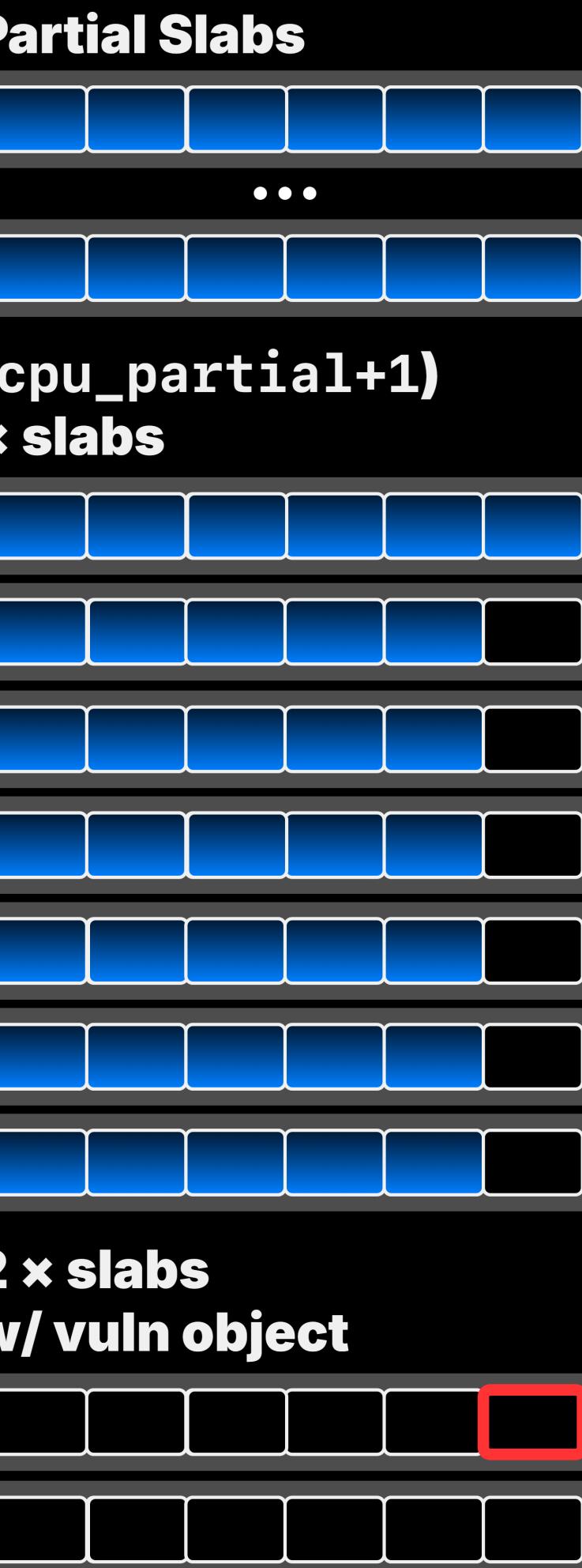
# Partial Free

- First generalizable technique by Jann Horn.
- **Strategy workflow:**
  1. Defragmentation
  2. Allocate  $(\text{cpu\_partial}+1)$  slabs
  3. Allocate 2 slabs with vulnerable object
  4. Free both slabs from step 3
  5. **Free one object per slab from step 4**



# Partial Free

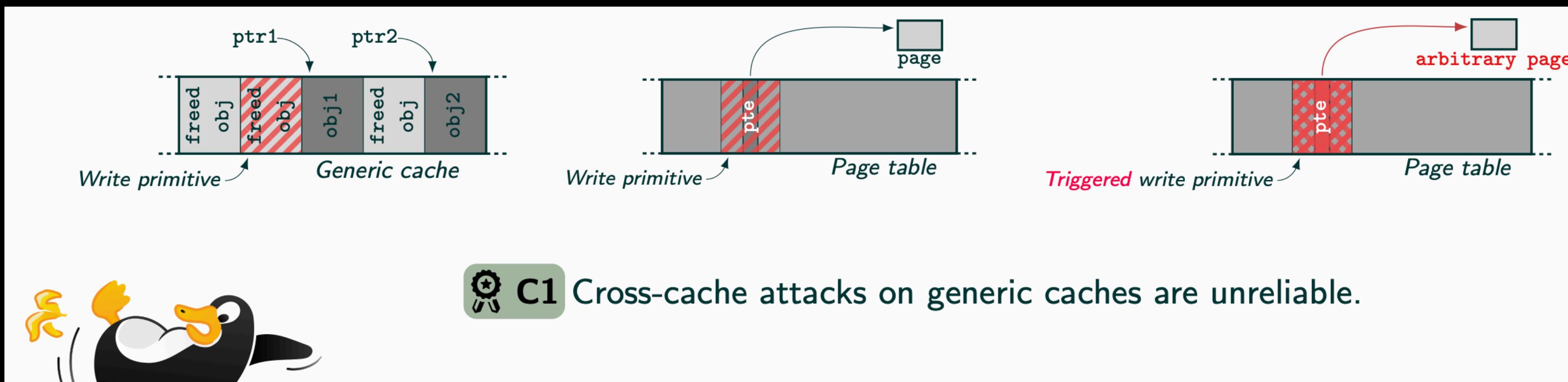
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**Discard slab**

# Partial Free Failure

- However, exploit writers are still blaming the **unreliability** of Cross-Cache Attacks.
  - Some introduced concepts like “overflow factors”, which we found to be misleading.
- So why would Partial Free have stopped working?



## Previous data-only attack: cross-cache challenge

- Cross-cache attack techniques vary by vulnerability type, e.g.,
- OOB: less reliable
- UAF: more reliable but not future-proof
- Cross-cache still a significant hurdle for exploits

```
count of objects to spray
= (OJJS_PER_SLAB * (CPU_PARTIAL + 1)) * OVERFLOW_FACTOR;
mt;
```

# Partial Free Failure

- We identified the root case as the **reversal** of the `cpu_partial` and `min_partial` size relationship.
- In this case, Partial Free **deterministically fails** with a 0% success rate.

Table 1: Comparison of `cpu_partial` and `min_partial` values in object caches for Linux kernel versions 5.15 and 6.1. Caches where `cpu_partial` fell below `min_partial` in v6.1 are marked †, and those below in both versions are marked ★.

Object Cache	<code>cpu_partial</code> vs. <code>min_partial</code> (v5.15 → v6.1)
<b>kmalloc-16</b> †	$(30 > 5) \rightarrow (1 < 5)$
<b>kmalloc-32</b> †	$(30 > 5) \rightarrow (2 < 5)$
<b>kmalloc-64</b> †	$(30 > 5) \rightarrow (4 < 5)$
kmalloc-96	$(30 > 5) \rightarrow (6 > 5)$
kmalloc-128	$(30 > 5) \rightarrow (8 > 5)$
kmalloc-192	$(30 > 5) \rightarrow (12 > 5)$
kmalloc-256	$(13 > 5) \rightarrow (7 > 5)$
kmalloc-512	$(13 > 5) \rightarrow (7 > 5)$
<b>kmalloc-1024</b> †	$(6 > 5) \rightarrow (3 < 5)$
<b>kmalloc-2048</b> †	$(6 > 5) \rightarrow (3 < 5)$
<b>kmalloc-4096</b> ★	$(2 < 6) \rightarrow (2 < 6)$

# Partial Free Failure

- We identified the root case as the **reversal** of the `cpu_partial` and `min_partial` size relationship.
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Consider the example where  $(\text{cpu\_partial}, \text{min\_partial}) = (3, 5)$ .

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# Partial Free Failure

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  1. Defragmentation
  2. Allocate  $(\text{cpu\_partial}+1)$  slabs
  3. Allocate 2 slabs with vulnerable object
  4. Free both slabs from step 3
  5. **Free one object per slab from step 4**
- **Slab discard failed!**



# Complete Free

- We propose an improved strategy, **Complete Free**, which:
  - Excludes defragmentation, heuristics, and SLUB misconceptions.
  - Considers per-node partial slab lists, effectively handling reversal scenarios.
- We also introduce a hybrid strategy, **Timing+Complete Free**:
  - Slab allocation is guided by **SLUBStick**'s timing side-channel, enhancing reliability.

# Complete Free

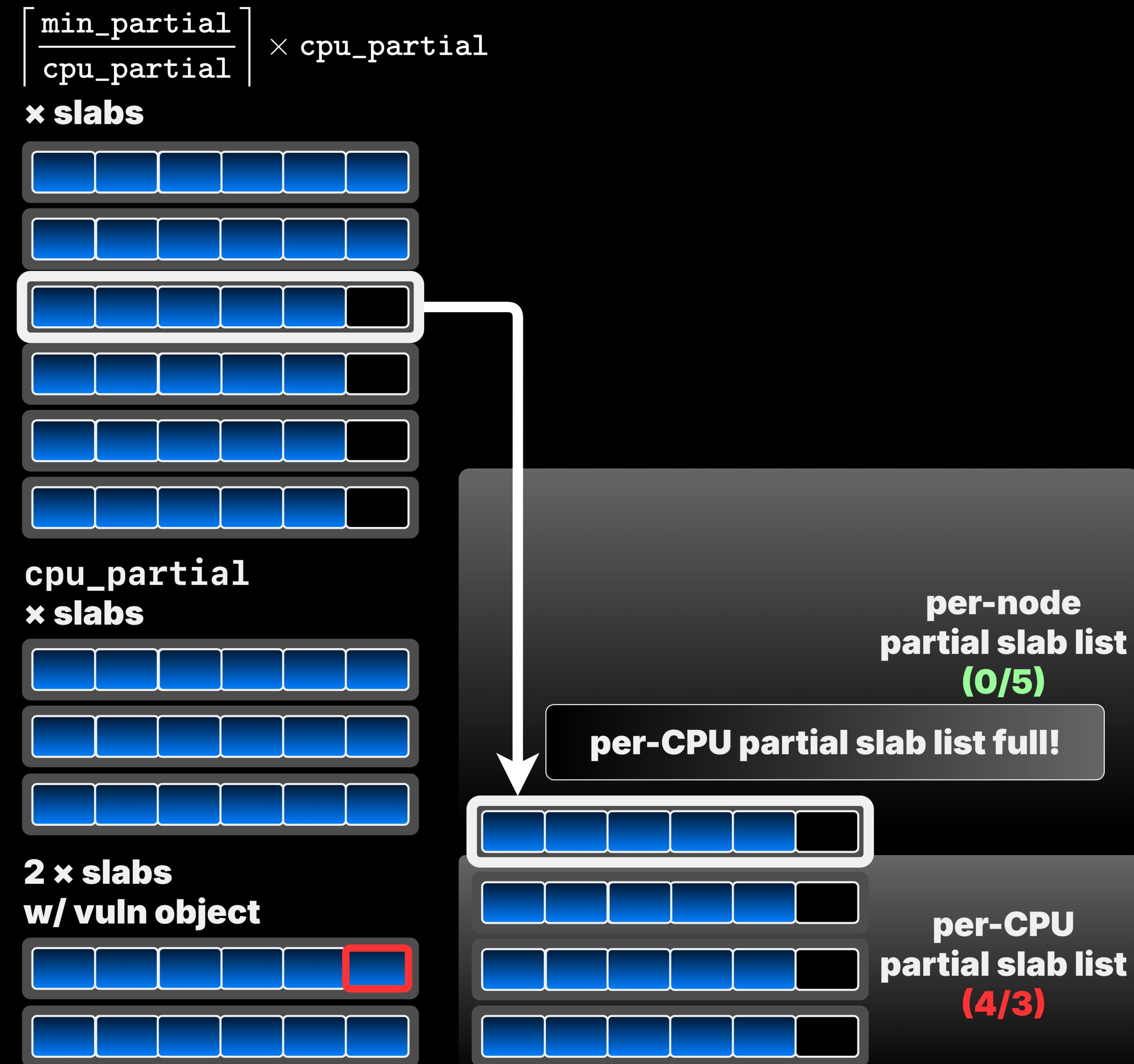
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  - Excludes defragmentation, heuristics, and SLUB misconceptions.
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Complete Free **works** in the previous example, unlike Partial Free.

# Complete Free

- **Strategy workflow:**

1. Allocate  $\left\lceil \frac{\text{min\_partial}}{\text{cpu\_partial}} \right\rceil \times \text{cpu\_partial}$  slabs
2. Allocate  $(\text{cpu\_partial}+1)$  slabs
3. Allocate 2 slabs with vulnerable object
- 4. Free one object per slab from step 1**



# Complete Free

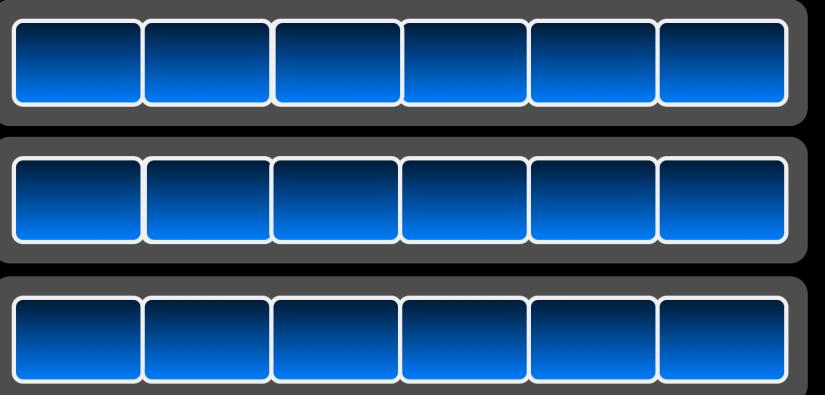
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$\left\lceil \frac{\text{min\_partial}}{\text{cpu\_partial}} \right\rceil \times \text{cpu\_partial}$   
**x slabs**



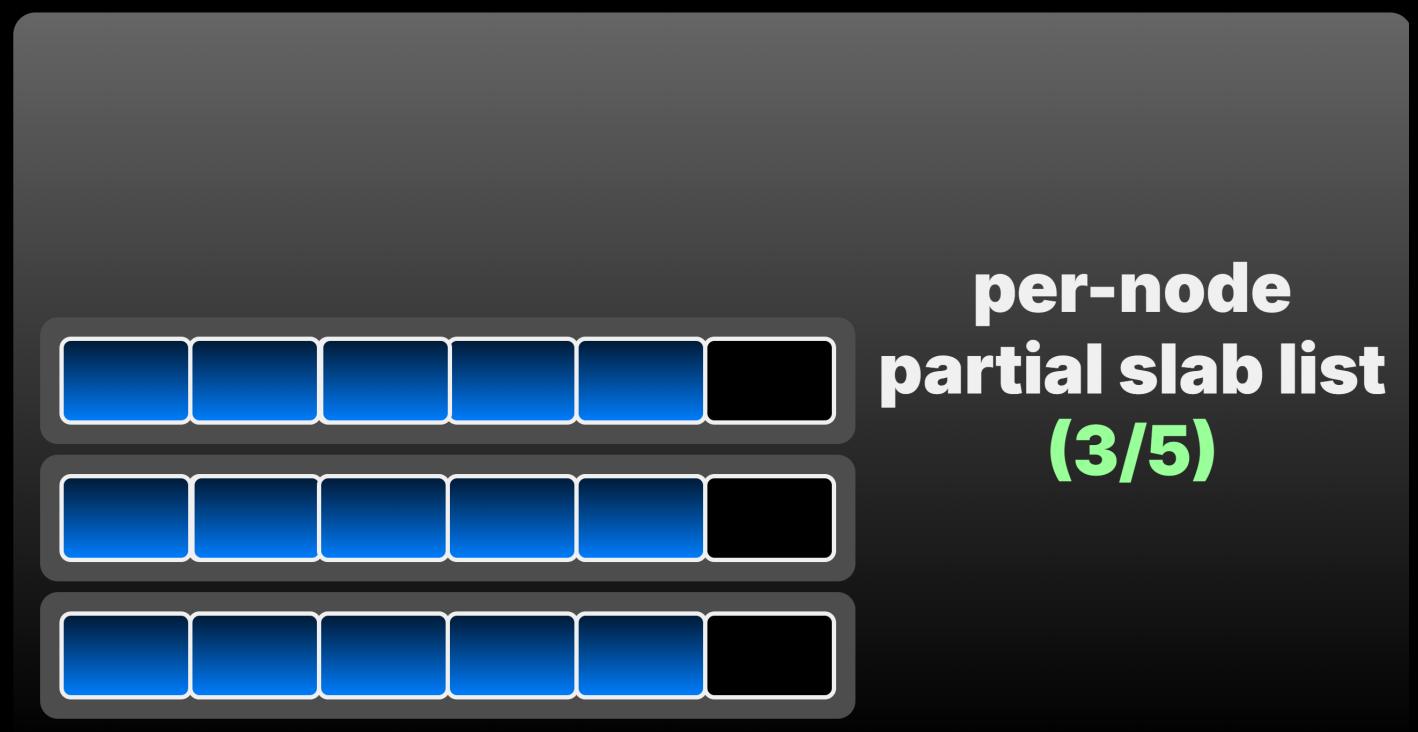
**cpu\_partial**  
**x slabs**



**2 x slabs**  
**w/ vuln object**



**per-node**  
**partial slab list**  
**(3/5)**



**per-CPU**  
**partial slab list**  
**(3/3)**



# Complete Free

- **Strategy workflow:**

1. Allocate  $\left\lceil \frac{\text{min\_partial}}{\text{cpu\_partial}} \right\rceil \times \text{cpu\_partial}$  slabs
2. Allocate  $(\text{cpu\_partial}+1)$  slabs
3. Allocate 2 slabs with vulnerable object
4. Free one object per slab from step 1
5. Free both slabs from step 3
6. **Free one object per slab from step 2**

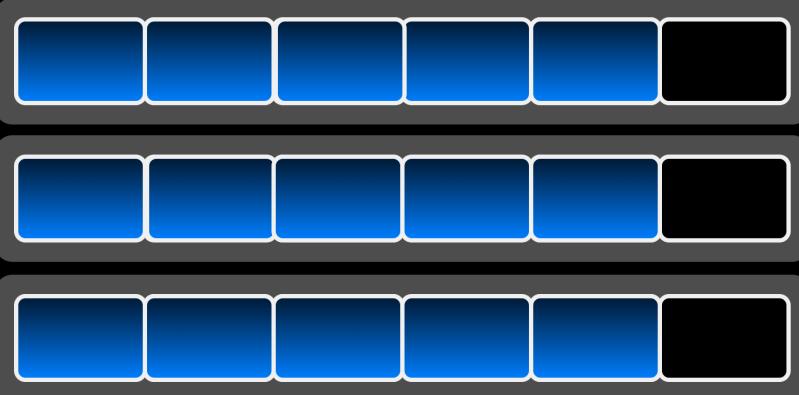
- **Successfully discarded slab!**

$$\left\lceil \frac{\text{min\_partial}}{\text{cpu\_partial}} \right\rceil \times \text{cpu\_partial}$$

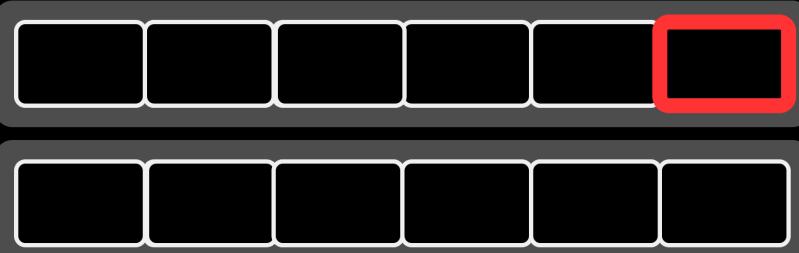
**x slabs**



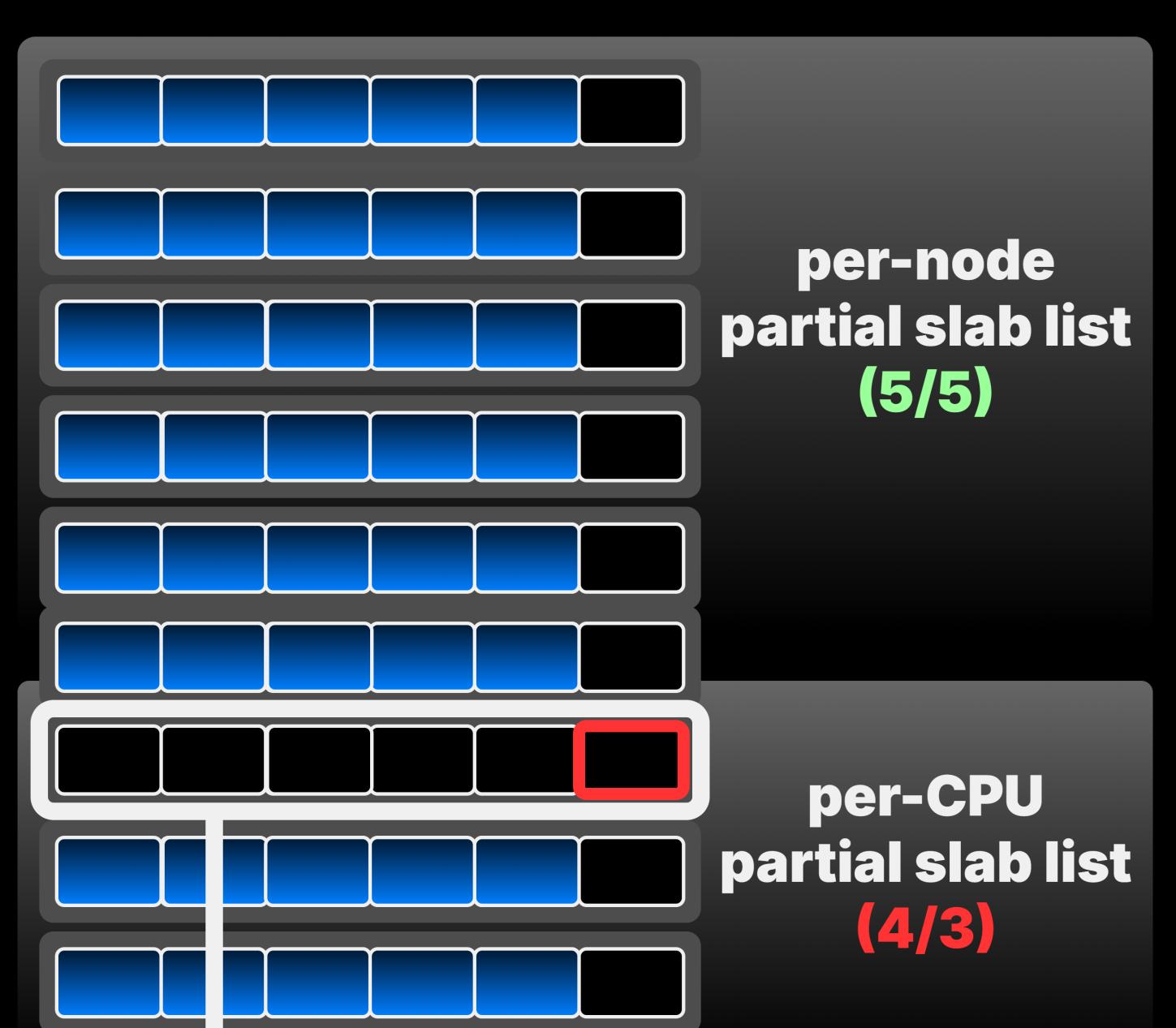
**cpu\_partial**  
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**2 x slabs**  
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**per-node**  
**partial slab list**  
**(5/5)**



**per-CPU**  
**partial slab list**  
**(4/3)**



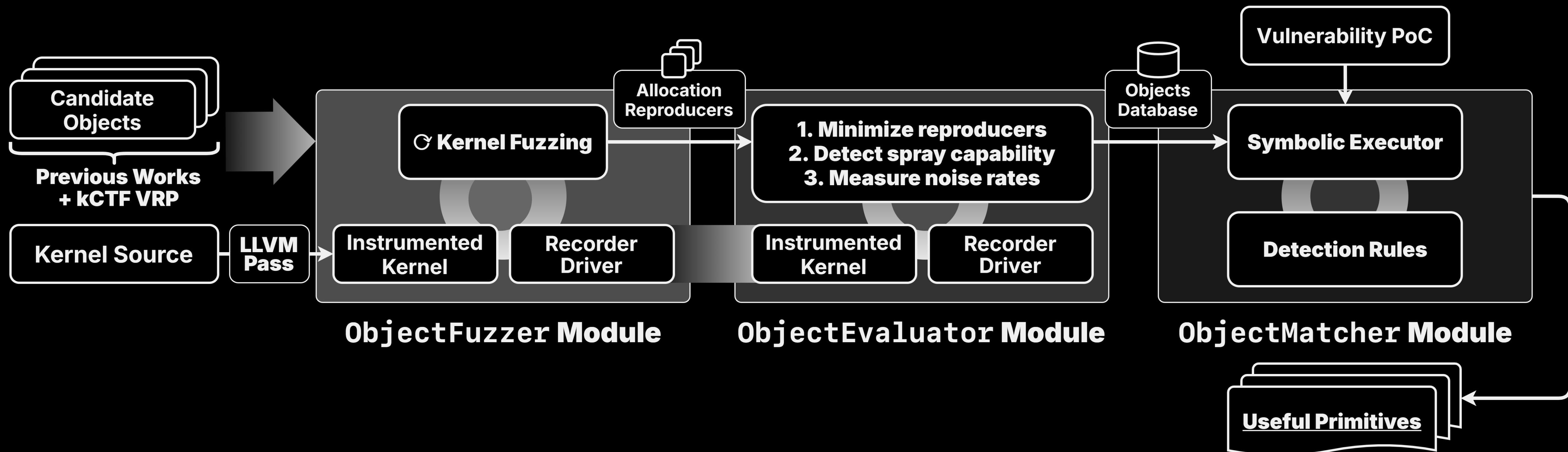
# Target Object Properties

- Not all objects identified in previous works are suitable for Cross-Cache Attacks.
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- Not all objects identified in previous works are suitable for Cross-Cache Attacks.
- What then qualifies as a versatile target objects?
  1. **Spray Capability**
  2. **Minimal Interferering Allocations**
    - **Interfering allocation:** Allocation of unrelated objects.
    - **Noise Rates:** Number of interfering allocation during single object allocation.
  3. **Useful Primitives**

# CROSS-X System



# Evaluation

- To evaluate our findings, we performed three experiments:
  1. **Stability experiment** using a synthetic vulnerability
  2. **Object identification** from a set of 346 candidate objects
  3. **Real-world exploitability experiment** extending the stability test across 9 CVEs

**Table 3: Performance of recycling strategies across various kernel versions and system workloads. For each object size and workload, the highest success rates are both bolded and underlined. The bottom row, marked with  $\ddagger$ , indicates the number of winning cases where each strategy outperforms the others. The highest count is underlined.**

(a) v5.15 in Idle State

Size	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
16	0.13%	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
32	80.03%	<b>100.00%</b>	93.33%	0.00%
64	40.07%	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
96	0.60%	95.97%	<b>96.67%</b>	46.63%
128	10.10%	93.33%	93.33%	<b>100.00%</b>
192	0.43%	80.00%	86.67%	<b>99.87%</b>
256	3.33%	86.67%	96.67%	<b>100.00%</b>
512	3.33%	73.33%	93.33%	<b>99.97%</b>
1024	30.40%	73.33%	86.67%	<b>90.03%</b>
2048	17.03%	<b>100.00%</b>	76.67%	43.40%
4096	0.00%	0.00%	60.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
$\ddagger$	0/11	<b>4/11</b>	<b>3/11</b>	<b>8/11</b>

(c) v6.1 in Idle State

Size	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
16	0.00%	0.00%	99.93%	<b>100.00%</b>
32	0.07%	0.00%	99.97%	<b>100.00%</b>
64	83.80%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
96	7.17%	99.70%	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
128	93.27%	86.67%	96.67%	<b>100.00%</b>
192	99.40%	96.67%	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
256	72.60%	96.67%	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
512	56.53%	96.67%	93.33%	<b>99.97%</b>
1024	81.30%	0.00%	96.67%	<b>100.00%</b>
2048	99.03%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
4096	0.00%	0.00%	96.67%	<b>99.97%</b>
$\ddagger$	0/11	<b>0/11</b>	<b>8/11</b>	<b>11/11</b>

(e) v6.6 in Idle State

Size	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
16	0.00%	0.00%	96.53%	<b>99.60%</b>
32	0.00%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>99.70%</b>
64	<b>99.97%</b>	0.00%	<b>99.97%</b>	<b>98.87%</b>
96	5.27%	93.30%	90.00%	<b>97.97%</b>
128	98.07%	86.67%	83.33%	<b>98.50%</b>
192	<b>98.33%</b>	83.33%	80.00%	<b>95.60%</b>
256	<b>99.90%</b>	86.67%	93.33%	<b>96.30%</b>
512	<b>99.90%</b>	93.33%	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>96.10%</b>
1024	96.87%	0.00%	86.67%	<b>97.37%</b>
2048	<b>99.10%</b>	0.00%	80.00%	<b>98.33%</b>
4096	0.00%	0.00%	86.67%	<b>97.70%</b>
$\ddagger$	<b>4/11</b>	<b>0/11</b>	<b>3/11</b>	<b>5/11</b>

(b) v5.15 in Busy State

Size	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
16	0.00%	84.63%	<b>91.13%</b>	0.00%
32	0.00%	<b>83.67%</b>	67.17%	0.27%
64	7.77%	93.20%	93.03%	<b>97.73%</b>
96	38.93%	96.37%	<b>97.90%</b>	39.57%
128	41.10%	96.10%	<b>96.93%</b>	96.57%
192	38.00%	79.60%	92.77%	<b>99.67%</b>
256	22.77%	72.27%	49.70%	<b>99.80%</b>
512	24.77%	75.90%	92.03%	<b>99.07%</b>
1024	38.50%	<b>59.97%</b>	43.73%	29.23%
2048	11.67%	<b>84.53%</b>	79.47%	14.77%
4096	0.00%	0.00%	85.87%	<b>98.27%</b>
$\ddagger$	0/11	<b>3/11</b>	<b>3/11</b>	<b>5/11</b>

(d) v6.1 in Busy State

Size	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
16	0.00%	0.00%	<b>85.83%</b>	0.00%
32	3.80%	1.37%	<b>33.20%</b>	6.27%
64	9.93%	0.03%	96.10%	<b>97.50%</b>
96	9.87%	80.30%	<b>97.53%</b>	97.20%
128	35.40%	88.83%	92.03%	<b>98.37%</b>
192	40.57%	<b>99.07%</b>	96.20%	98.67%
256	34.17%	92.73%	90.47%	<b>99.37%</b>
512	49.90%	84.90%	89.73%	<b>98.77%</b>
1024	62.50%	0.60%	<b>91.60%</b>	58.07%
2048	78.37%	0.00%	92.60%	<b>97.47%</b>
4096	0.00%	0.00%	89.63%	<b>98.60%</b>
$\ddagger$	0/11	<b>0/11</b>	<b>4/11</b>	<b>6/11</b>

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Size	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
16	0.00%	0.00%	52.27%	<b>79.40%</b>
32	66.60%	0.00%	81.10%	<b>85.27%</b>
64	66.93%	0.00%	<b>90.53%</b>	39.30%
96	54.53%	85.20%	<b>89.57%</b>	77.87%
128	16.10%	9.50%	<b>93.70%</b>	77.70%
192	33.33%	<b>80.53%</b>	75.27%	56.03%
256	31.83%	<b>87.57%</b>	15.87%	5.37%
512	0.73%	92.10%	<b>92.40%</b>	88.17%
1024	17.60%	0.00%	88.87%	<b>93.17%</b>
2048	0.17%	0.37%	75.13%	<b>94.00%</b>
4096	0.00%	0.00%	69.00%	<b>94.50%</b>
$\ddagger$	0/11	<b>2/11</b>	<b>4/11</b>	<b>5/11</b>

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96	5.27%	93.30%	90.00%	<b><u>97.97%</u></b>
128	98.07%	86.67%	83.33%	<b><u>98.50%</u></b>
192	<b><u>98.33%</u></b>	83.33%	80.00%	95.60%
256	<b><u>99.90%</u></b>	86.67%	93.33%	96.30%

We achieved **over 99%** (idle) and **85%** (busy) success across most caches.

(b) v5.15 in Busy State

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96	38.93%	96.37%	<b><u>97.90%</u></b>	39.57%
128	41.10%	96.10%	<b><u>96.93%</u></b>	96.57%
192	38.00%	79.60%	92.77%	<b><u>99.67%</u></b>
256	22.77%	72.27%	49.70%	<b><u>99.80%</u></b>
512	24.77%	75.90%	92.03%	<b><u>99.07%</u></b>
1024	38.50%	<b><u>59.97%</u></b>	43.73%	29.23%
2048	11.67%	<b><u>84.53%</u></b>	79.47%	14.77%
4096	0.00%	0.00%	85.87%	<b><u>98.27%</u></b>
$\ddagger$	0/11	3/11	3/11	<b><u>5/11</u></b>

(d) v6.1 in Busy State

Size	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
16	0.00%	0.00%	<b><u>85.83%</u></b>	0.00%
32	3.80%	1.37%	<b><u>33.20%</u></b>	6.27%
64	9.93%	0.03%	96.10%	<b><u>97.50%</u></b>
96	9.87%	80.30%	<b><u>97.53%</u></b>	97.20%
128	35.40%	88.83%	92.03%	<b><u>98.37%</u></b>
192	40.57%	<b><u>99.07%</u></b>	96.20%	98.67%
256	34.17%	92.73%	90.47%	<b><u>99.37%</u></b>
512	49.90%	84.90%	89.73%	<b><u>98.77%</u></b>
1024	62.50%	0.60%	<b><u>91.60%</u></b>	58.07%
2048	78.37%	0.00%	92.60%	<b><u>97.47%</u></b>
4096	0.00%	0.00%	89.63%	<b><u>98.60%</u></b>
$\ddagger$	0/11	0/11	<b><u>4/11</u></b>	<b><u>6/11</u></b>

(f) v6.6 in Busy State

Size	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
16	0.00%	0.00%	52.27%	<b><u>79.40%</u></b>
32	66.60%	0.00%	81.10%	<b><u>85.27%</u></b>
64	66.93%	0.00%	<b><u>90.53%</u></b>	39.30%
96	54.53%	85.20%	<b><u>89.57%</u></b>	77.87%
128	16.10%	9.50%	<b><u>93.70%</u></b>	77.70%
192	33.33%	<b><u>80.53%</u></b>	75.27%	56.03%
256	31.83%	<b><u>87.57%</u></b>	15.87%	5.37%
512	0.73%	92.10%	<b><u>92.40%</u></b>	88.17%
1024	17.60%	0.00%	88.87%	<b><u>93.17%</u></b>
2048	0.17%	0.37%	75.13%	<b><u>94.00%</u></b>
4096	0.00%	0.00%	69.00%	<b><u>94.50%</u></b>
$\ddagger$	0/11	2/11	<b><u>4/11</u></b>	<b><u>5/11</u></b>

**Table 4: Summary of Object Identification Results.** Each row builds on previous findings. For example, objects with high success rates are verified as sprayable.

Description	Number of Objects
Total Candidate Objects	346
→ Present in the Target Kernel	248
→ Allocation Reproducers Generated	53
→ <b>Confirmed Spray Capability</b>	11
→ <b>Exhibited High Success Rates</b>	7

**Table 5: Results of cross-cache experiments for sprayable objects.**  $NR_{SC}$ ,  $NR_{SO}$ , and  $NR_{DO}$  represent noise rates for objects in the same cache, same-order cache, and different-order cache, respectively. Objects shaded in gray exhibit low  $NR_{SC}$  and  $NR_{SO}$  values. ( $NR_{SC} = 0$ ,  $NR_{SO} < 3.5$ )

Object	$NR_{SC}$	$NR_{SO}$	$NR_{DO}$	Success Rate
sock_fprog_kern	1	52.3	366.52	0.0%
sk_security_struct	0	15.31	102.55	0.0%
snd_info_buffer	1	9.35	7.61	28.7%
kernfs_open_file	0	1.64	0.71	<u>99.7%</u>
timerfd_ctx	0	1.85	1.82	<u>99.8%</u>
io_ring_ctx	0	1.66	0.00	10.9%
msg_msg	0	0.15	0.35	<u>99.7%</u>
pipe_inode_info	0	3.42	9.98	<u>94.2%</u>
pipe_buffer	0	0.00	0.68	<u>99.9%</u>
fsnotify_group	0	2.20	3.16	<u>99.9%</u>
shmid_kernel	0	0.89	3.02	<u>99.8%</u>

**Table 4: Summary of Object Identification Results.** Each row builds on previous findings. For example, objects with high success rates are verified as sprayable.

CROSS-X identified **7 low-noise objects** under same-order allocations.

→ Present in the Target Kernel	248
→ Allocation Reproducers Generated	53
→ <b>Confirmed Spray Capability</b>	11
→ <b>Exhibited High Success Rates</b>	7

**Table 5: Results of cross-cache experiments for sprayable objects.**  $\text{NR}_{\text{SC}}$ ,  $\text{NR}_{\text{SO}}$ , and  $\text{NR}_{\text{DO}}$  represent noise rates for objects in the same cache, same-order cache, and different-order cache, respectively. Objects shaded in gray exhibit low  $\text{NR}_{\text{SC}}$  and  $\text{NR}_{\text{SO}}$  values. ( $\text{NR}_{\text{SC}} = 0$ ,  $\text{NR}_{\text{SO}} < 3.5$ )

Object	$\text{NR}_{\text{SC}}$	$\text{NR}_{\text{SO}}$	$\text{NR}_{\text{DO}}$	Success Rate
kernfs_open_file	0	1.64	0.71	<b>99.7%</b>
timerfd_ctx	0	1.85	1.82	<b>99.8%</b>
io_ring_ctx	0	1.66	0.00	10.9%
msg_msg	0	0.15	0.35	<b>99.7%</b>
pipe_inode_info	0	3.42	9.98	<b>94.2%</b>
pipe_buffer	0	0.00	0.68	<b>99.9%</b>
fsnotify_group	0	2.20	3.16	<b>99.9%</b>
shmid_kernel	0	0.89	3.02	<b>99.8%</b>

**Table 6: Results of real-world experiments. Gray-highlighted CVEs had limitations (e.g., no measurement, deferred free) in applying SLUBStick + Complete Free.**

**(a) In Idle State**

CVE	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
CVE-2023-20938	0.00%	36.67%	<b><u>38.00%</u></b>	19.33%
CVE-2023-3609	0.00%	94.67%	<b><u>95.33%</u></b>	<b><u>99.33%</u></b>
CVE-2023-5345	0.00%	85.33%	<b><u>86.67%</u></b>	83.00%
CVE-2020-29660	0.00%	75.67%	<b><u>77.00%</u></b>	N/A
CVE-2022-2588	28.67%	<b><u>92.67%</u></b>	91.00%	N/A
CVE-2022-32250	1.67%	<b><u>99.33%</u></b>	98.33%	N/A
CVE-2022-2585	99.67%	98.67%	<b><u>100.00%</u></b>	N/A
CVE-2023-3910	0.00%	<b><u>100.00%</u></b>	99.67%	N/A
CVE-2023-2235	99.67%	0.00%	<b><u>100.00%</u></b>	N/A

**(b) In Busy State**

CVE	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
CVE-2023-20938	0.00%	32.00%	<b><u>40.67%</u></b>	25.33%
CVE-2023-3609	0.00%	<b><u>98.00%</u></b>	97.67%	95.00%
CVE-2023-5345	0.00%	82.00%	<b><u>83.00%</u></b>	78.33%
CVE-2020-29660	0.00%	73.67%	<b><u>75.33%</u></b>	N/A
CVE-2022-2588	2.00%	21.33%	<b><u>34.67%</u></b>	N/A
CVE-2022-32250	19.00%	<b><u>63.67%</u></b>	60.33%	N/A
CVE-2022-2585	<b><u>23.00%</u></b>	10.33%	12.00%	N/A
CVE-2023-3910	1.33%	3.33%	<b><u>3.67%</u></b>	N/A
CVE-2023-2235	31.00%	0.00%	<b><u>98.67%</u></b>	N/A

**Table 6: Results of real-world experiments. Gray-highlighted CVEs had limitations (e.g., no measurement, deferred free) in applying SLUBStick + Complete Free.**

**(a) In Idle State**

CVE	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
CVE-2023-20938	0.00%	36.67%	<u>38.00%</u>	19.33%
CVE-2023-3609	0.00%	94.67%	<u>95.33%</u>	<u>99.33%</u>
CVE-2023-5345	0.00%	<u>85.33%</u>	<u>86.67%</u>	83.00%
CVE-2020-29660	0.00%	75.67%	<u>77.00%</u>	N/A
CVE-2022-2588	28.67%	<u>92.67%</u>	91.00%	N/A

Complete Free performed **reliably** and often ranked **best** across 9 real-world CVEs.

**(b) In Busy State**

CVE	Naïve	Partial Free	Complete Free	SLUBStick + C.F.
CVE-2023-20938	0.00%	32.00%	<u>40.67%</u>	25.33%
CVE-2023-3609	0.00%	<u>98.00%</u>	97.67%	95.00%
CVE-2023-5345	0.00%	82.00%	<u>83.00%</u>	78.33%
CVE-2020-29660	0.00%	73.67%	<u>75.33%</u>	N/A
CVE-2022-2588	2.00%	21.33%	<u>34.67%</u>	N/A
CVE-2022-32250	19.00%	<u>63.67%</u>	60.33%	N/A
CVE-2022-2585	<u>23.00%</u>	10.33%	12.00%	N/A
CVE-2023-3910	1.33%	3.33%	<u>3.67%</u>	N/A
CVE-2023-2235	31.00%	0.00%	<u>98.67%</u>	N/A

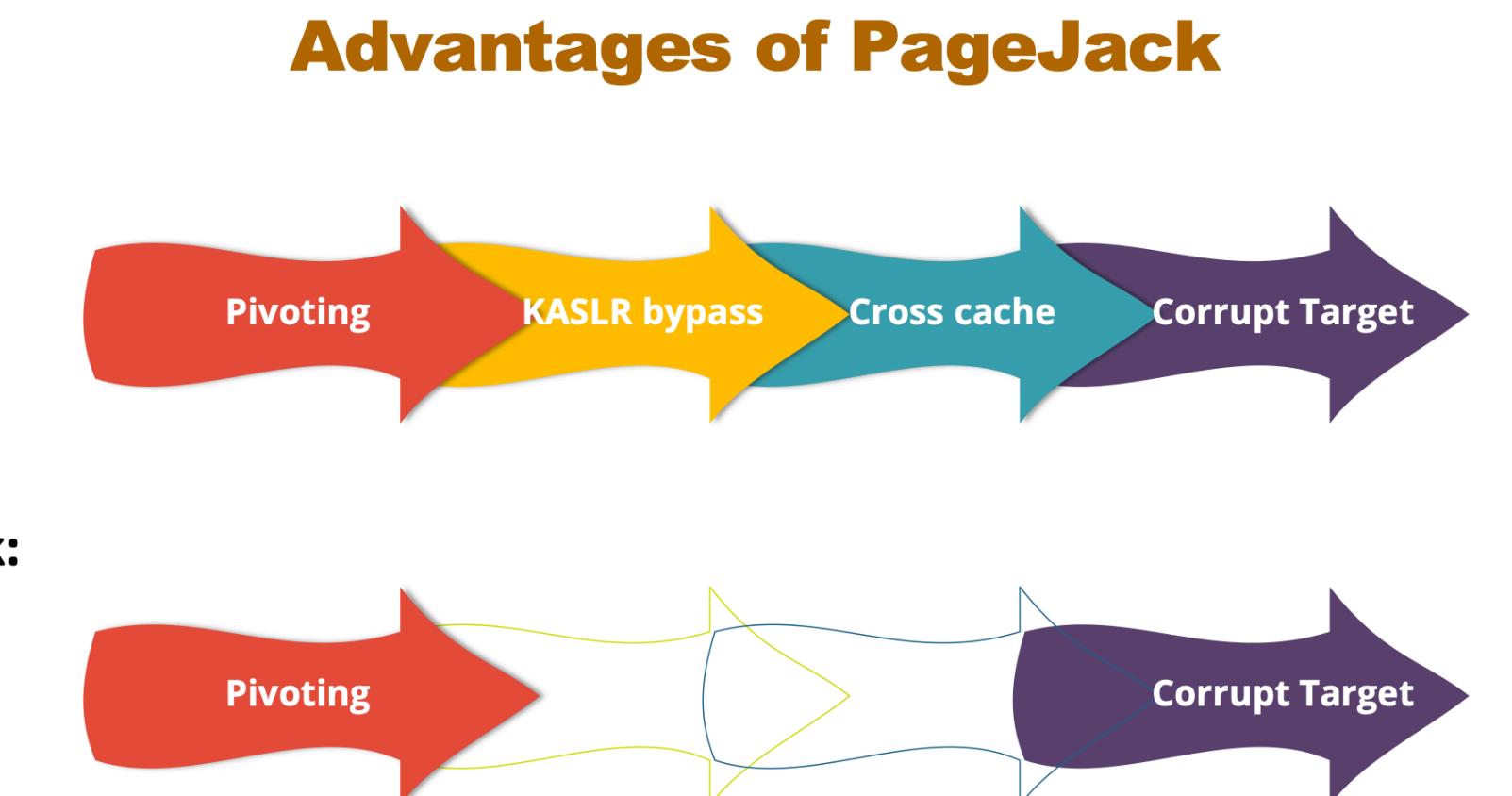
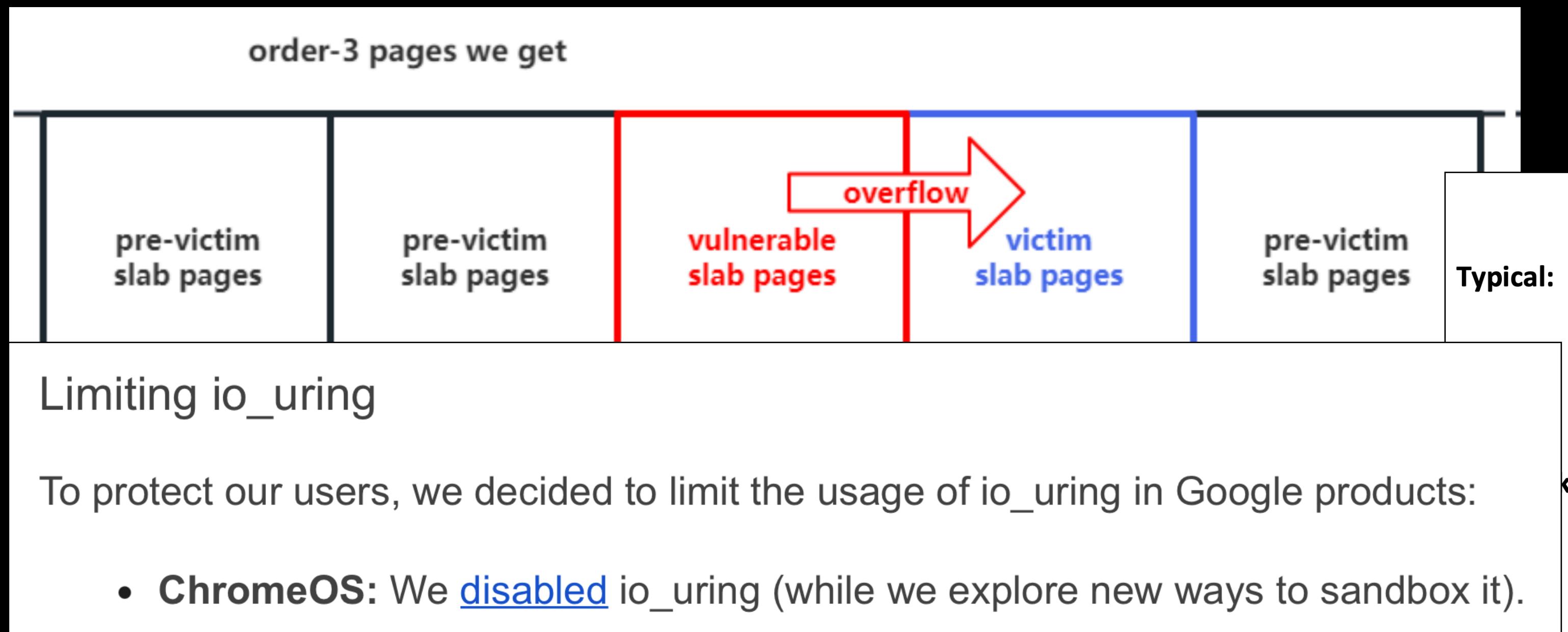
# Conclusion

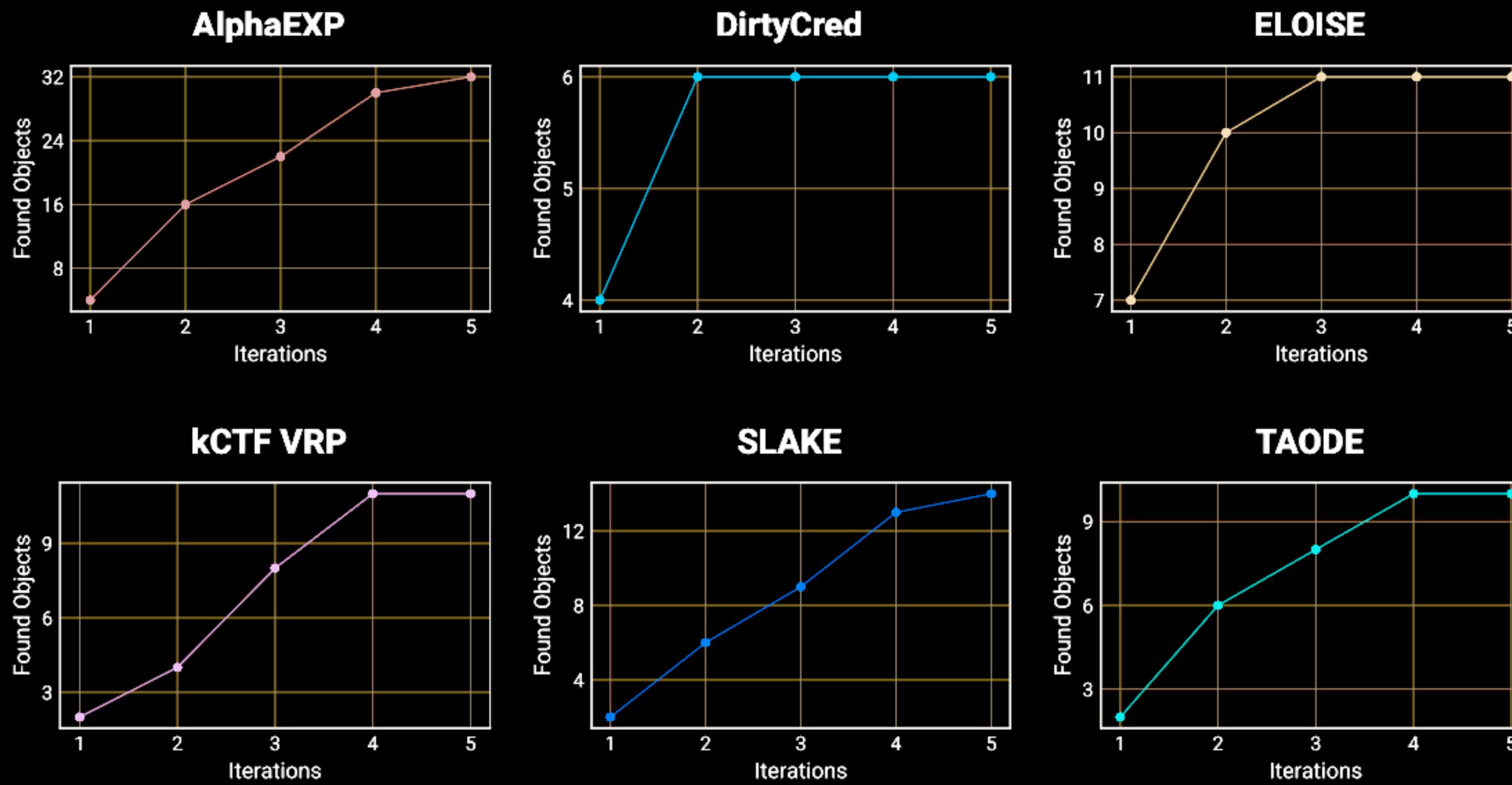
- Cross-Cache Attack reliability **has been limited** by incomplete understanding.
- We present new insights and propose **two optimized strategies** along with an **CROSS-X automated system**.
- We identified **7 suitable objects** and achieved **high stability** across various environments.

**thank you.**  
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# Discussion

- **Mitigations**
  - Slab freelist defenses and cache randomization **do not impact** Cross-Cache Attacks.
  - SLAB\_VIRTUAL mitigates Cross-Cache Attacks but is not widely adopted.
- **Cross-Cache Overflow** is also feasible but demands a clever **page fengshui** strategy.
- Other page reusing techniques exist but are more easily countered by targeted defenses.





**Figure 9: Accumulated number of discovered objects during preliminary testing of the ObjectFuzzer module. The module was run for 0.5 hours per iteration, repeated 5 times. Convergence was observed in 4 out of 6 object candidate sets (DirtyCred, ELOISE, kCTF VRP, TAODE), and near convergence in the remaining 2 (AlphaEXP, SLAKE).**

Table 1: Success rate of triggering the recycling and reclamation process for generic caches.

Generic Cache	#Pages	Success Rate		
		Idle	No CPU pinning	External noise
		%	%	%
kmalloc-8	1	99.9±0.1	99.9±0.1	99.6±0.7
kmalloc-16	1	99.4±0.6	98.9±1.2	99.9±0.4
kmalloc-32	1	99.4±0.9	99.7±0.5	99.9±0.3
kmalloc-64	1	99.2±1.3	99.2±0.9	81.0±6.4
kmalloc-96	1	99.9±0.4	99.9±0.1	99.8±0.6
kmalloc-128	1	99.9±0.4	99.8±0.5	99.9±0.3
kmalloc-192	1	99.9±0.4	99.8±0.4	99.3±1.2
kmalloc-256	1	99.9±0.3	99.9±0.3	99.7±0.7
kmalloc-512	2	90.2±5.4	87.2±3.1	65.2±2.8
kmalloc-1024	4	88.1±7.2	79.5±3.3	70.3±8.1
kmalloc-2048	8	83.1±9.2	70.5±16	57.8±5.7
kmalloc-4096	8	82.1±3.4	73.3±19	53.8±10

**Table 7: Results of stability experiments with SLUBStick.**

**(a) In Idle State**

Size	SLUBStick	Complete Free
16	86.40%	<u>100.00%</u>
32	93.03%	<u>100.00%</u>
64	96.03%	<u>99.13%</u>
96	97.40%	<u>100.00%</u>
128	<u>97.67%</u>	96.67%
192	<u>98.73%</u>	96.67%
256	<u>97.70%</u>	93.33%

**(b) In Busy State**

Size	SLUBStick	Complete Free
16	38.10%	<u>96.67%</u>
32	46.47%	<u>87.23%</u>
64	69.23%	<u>93.33%</u>
96	77.23%	<u>96.60%</u>
128	85.27%	<u>96.57%</u>
192	88.90%	<u>89.90%</u>
256	<u>90.40%</u>	87.10%

**Table 8: Detailed information on objects with confirmed spray capabilities from experiments. Objects with a grey background exhibited low NR<sub>SC</sub> and NR<sub>SO</sub>, while bolded objects represent the final confirmed suitable selections.**

Object	Slab Cache	Allocation Site	Allocation System Call
<b>sock_fprog_kern</b>	kmalloc-16	<b>bpf_prog_store_orig_filter</b> in net/core/filter.c	setsockopt
<b>sk_security_struct</b>	kmalloc-32	<b>selinux_sk_alloc_security</b> in security/selinux/hooks.c	io_uring_setup
<b>snd_info_buffer</b>	kmalloc-32	<b>snd_info_text_entry_open</b> in sound/core/info.c	openat
<b>kernfs_open_file</b>	kmalloc-192	<b>kernfs_fop_open</b> in fs/kernfs/file.c	openat
<b>timerfd_ctx</b>	kmalloc-256	<b>sys_timerfd_create</b> in fs/timerfd.c	timerfd_create
<b>io_ring_ctx</b>	kmalloc-2048	<b>io_ring_ctx_alloc</b> in io_uring/io_uring.c	io_uring_setup
<b>msg_msg</b>	kmalloc-cg-64 <sup>1</sup>	<b>alloc_msg</b> in ipc/msgutil.c	msgsnd
<b>pipe_inode_info</b>	kmalloc-cg-192	<b>alloc_pipe_info</b> in fs/pipe.c	pipe
<b>fsnotify_group</b>	kmalloc-cg-256	<b>inotify_new_group</b> in fs/notify/inotify/inotify_user.c	inotify_init
<b>shmid_kernel</b>	kmalloc-cg-256	<b>newseg</b> in ipc/shm.c	shmget
<b>pipe_buffer</b>	kmalloc-cg-1024	<b>alloc_pipe_info</b> in fs/pipe.c	pipe

<sup>1</sup> msg\_msg is indeed an elastic object that can grow up to 4,096 bytes in size. The above is merely based on ObjectFuzzer results.

**Table 9: Detailed environmental setup for each CVE evaluated in the real-world experiment. The Objective column specifies the critical operation whose successful execution indicates an effective exploit, accomplished through cross-cache attacks with objects listed in the Target Object column.**

CVE	Vulnerability Type	Vulnerable Cache	Deallocation	Target Object	Objective	SLUBStick+C.F. Availability
CVE-2023-20938	UAF	kmalloc-128	Direct	fsnotify_group	Kernel Heap Leak	✓
CVE-2023-3609	UAF	kmalloc-128	Direct	msg_msg	Control Flow Hijacking	✓
CVE-2023-5345	DF	kmalloc-128	Direct	msg_msg	Kernel Heap Leak	✓
CVE-2020-29660	UAF	pid <sup>1</sup>	Direct	page table entries	Page Table Corruption	✗ <sup>2</sup>
CVE-2022-2588	DF	kmalloc-192	Worker	msg_msg	Payload Delivery	✗
CVE-2022-32250	UAF	kmalloc-64	Worker	msg_msg	Kernel Heap Leak	✗
CVE-2022-2585	UAF	posix_timer_cache	RCU	msg_msg	Kernel Heap Leak	✗
CVE-2023-3910	UAF	filp	Worker	pipe buffer <sup>3</sup>	Kernel Base Leak	✗
CVE-2023-2235	UAF	perf_event	RCU	msg_msg	Kernel Heap Leak	✗

<sup>1</sup> This cache is merged with the seq\_file and eventpoll\_epi caches, enabling the use of seq\_file and epitem objects during exploitation.

<sup>2</sup> Despite not using deferred frees, we could not find a method to enable measurement primitives (immediate free within the same system call) for this exploit.

<sup>3</sup> For CVE-2023-3910, we used the page spraying technique employed in the original exploit.