



# Introduction to Embedded Systems

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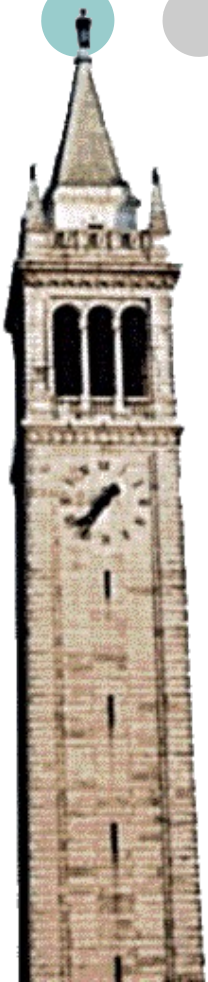
UC Berkeley

EECS 149/249A

Fall 2017

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Chapter 9: Memory Architectures



**These issues loom larger in embedded systems than in general-purpose computing.**

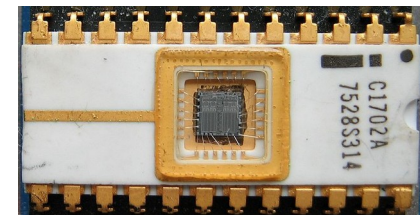
# Memory Architecture: Issues

- **Types of memory**
  - volatile vs. non-volatile, SRAM vs. DRAM
- **Memory maps**
  - Harvard architecture
  - Memory-mapped I/O
- **Memory organization**
  - statically allocated
  - stacks
  - heaps (allocation, fragmentation, garbage collection)
- **The memory model of C**
- **Memory hierarchies**
  - scratchpads, caches, virtual memory
- **Memory protection**
  - segmented spaces

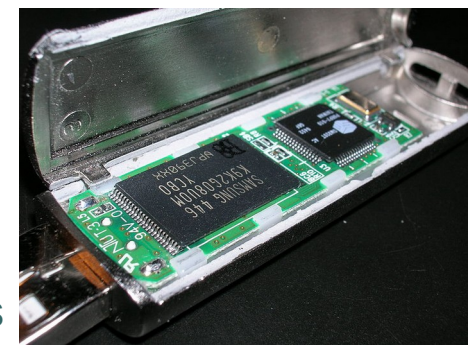
# Non-Volatile Memory

Preserves contents when power is off

- **EPROM: erasable programmable read only memory**
  - Invented by Dov Frohman of Intel in 1971
  - Erase by exposing the chip to strong UV light
- **EEPROM: electrically erasable programmable read-only memory**
  - Invented by George Perlegos at Intel in 1978
- **Flash memory**
  - Invented by Dr. Fujio Masuoka at Toshiba around 1980
  - Erased a “block” at a time
  - Limited number of program/erase cycles (~ 100,000)
  - Controllers can get quite complex
- **Disk drives**
  - Not as well suited for embedded systems



USB Drive



# Volatile Memory

Loses contents when power is off.

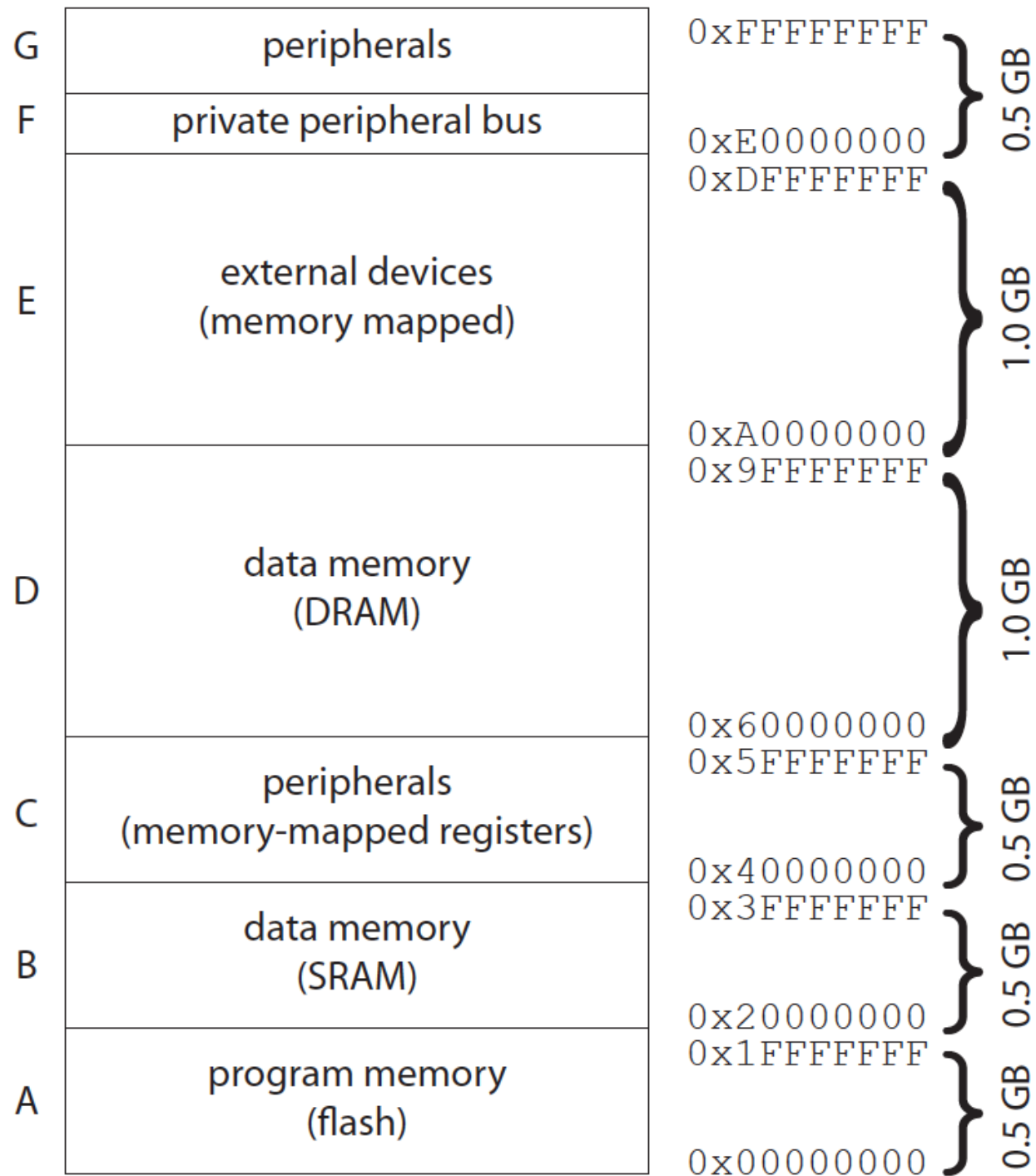
- **SRAM: static random-access memory**
  - Fast, deterministic access time
  - But more power hungry and less dense than DRAM
  - Used for caches, scratchpads, and small embedded memories
- **DRAM: dynamic random-access memory**
  - Slower than SRAM
  - Access time depends on the sequence of addresses
  - Denser than SRAM (higher capacity)
  - Requires periodic refresh (typically every 64msec)
  - Typically used for main memory
- **Boot loader**
  - On power up, transfers data from non-volatile to volatile memory.

# Memory Map of an ARM Cortex™ - M3 architecture

Defines the mapping of addresses to physical memory.

Why do this?

Note that this does not define how much physical memory there is!



## Another Example: AVR

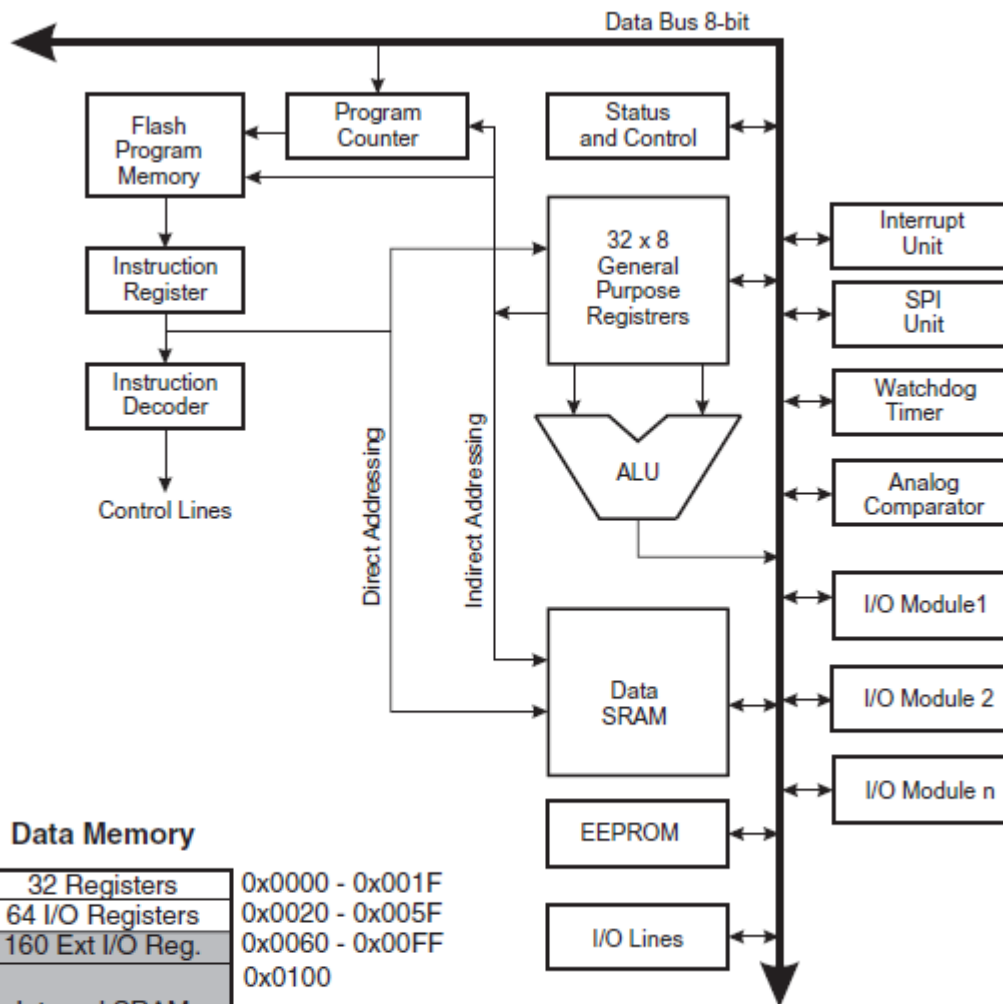
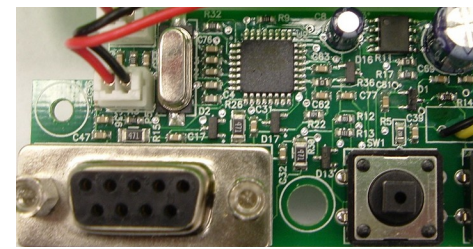


The AVR is an 8-bit single chip microcontroller first developed by Atmel in 1997. The AVR was one of the first microcontroller families to use on-chip flash memory for program storage. It has a modified Harvard architecture.<sup>1</sup>

AVR was conceived by two students at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (NTH) Alf-Egil Bogen and Vegard Wollan, who approached Atmel in Silicon Valley to produce it.

<sup>1</sup> A Harvard architecture uses separate memory spaces for program and data. It originated with the Harvard Mark I relay-based computer (used during World War II), which stored the program on punched tape (24 bits wide) and the data in electro-mechanical counters.

# ATMega 168: An 8-bit microcontroller with 16-bit addresses



## Data Memory

32 Registers	0x0000 - 0x001F
64 I/O Registers	0x0020 - 0x005F
160 Ext I/O Reg.	0x0060 - 0x00FF
	0x0100
Internal SRAM (512/1024/1024 x 8)	0x02FF/0x04FF/0x04FF

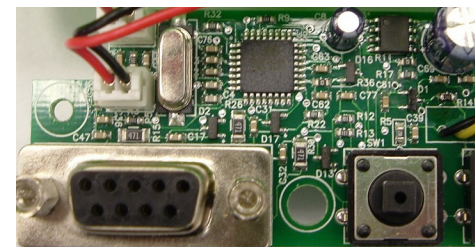
AVR microcontroller architecture used in iRobot command module.

Why is it called an 8-bit microcontroller?

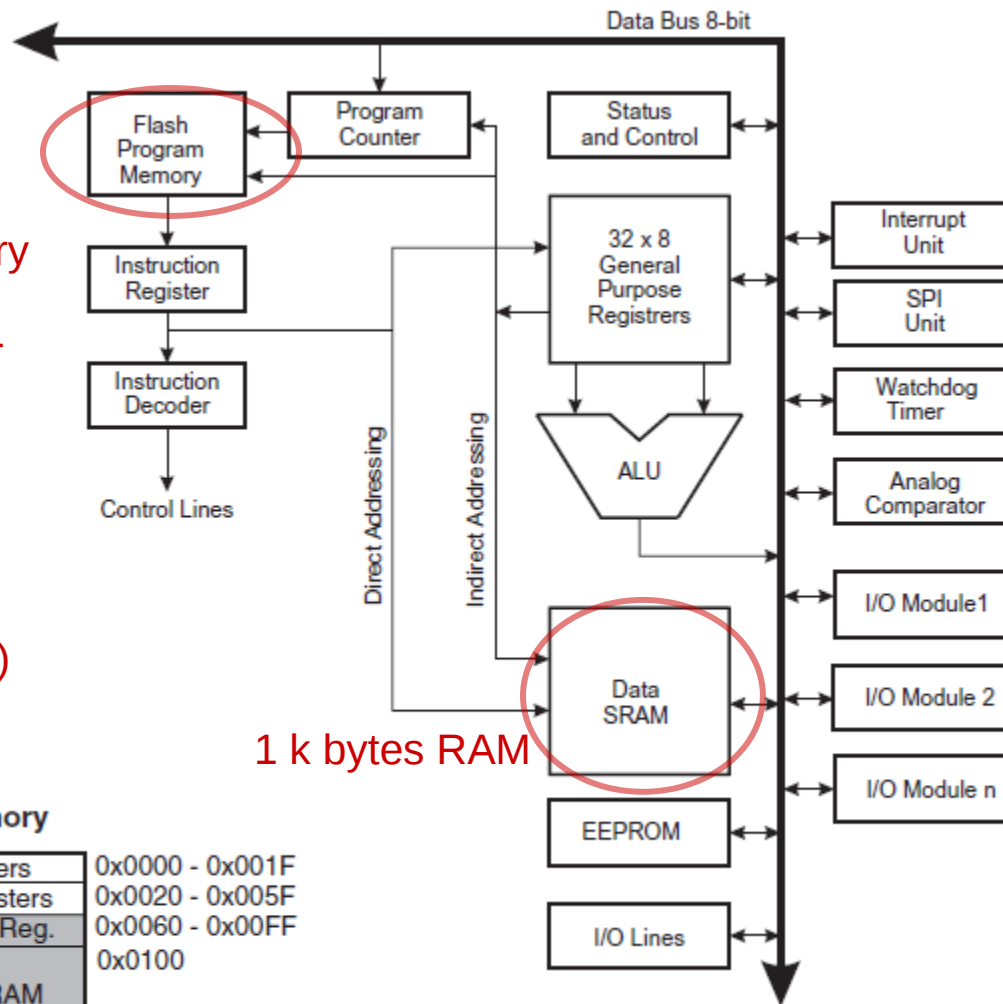


# ATMega 168 Memory Architecture

## An 8-bit microcontroller with 16-bit addresses



iRobot command module has 16K bytes flash memory (14,336 available for the user program. Includes interrupt vectors and boot loader.)



1 k bytes RAM

### Data Memory

32 Registers	0x0000 - 0x001F
64 I/O Registers	0x0020 - 0x005F
160 Ext I/O Reg.	0x0060 - 0x00FF
Internal SRAM (512/1024/1024 x 8)	0x0100 0x02FF/0x04FF/0x04FF

The “8-bit data” is why this is called an “8-bit microcontroller.”

Additional I/O on the command module:

- Two 8-bit timer/counters
- One 16-bit timer/counter
- 6 PWM channels
- 8-channel, 10-bit ADC
- One serial UART
- 2-wire serial interface



# Memory Organization for Programs

- **Statically-allocated memory**
  - Compiler chooses the address at which to store a variable.
- **Stack**
  - Dynamically allocated memory with a Last-in, First-out (LIFO) strategy
- **Heap**
  - Dynamically allocated memory

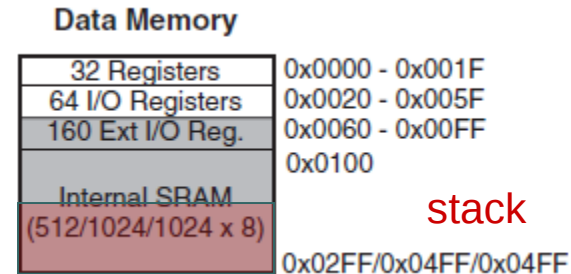
# Statically-Allocated Memory in C

```
char x;  
int main(void) {  
    x = 0x20;  
    ...  
}
```

Compiler chooses what address to use for `x`, and the variable is accessible across procedures. The variable's lifetime is the total duration of the program execution.

# Variables on the Stack ("automatic variables")

```
void foo(void) {  
    char x;  
    x = 0x20;  
    ...  
}
```



As nested procedures get called, the stack pointer moves to lower memory addresses. When these procedures, return, the pointer moves up.

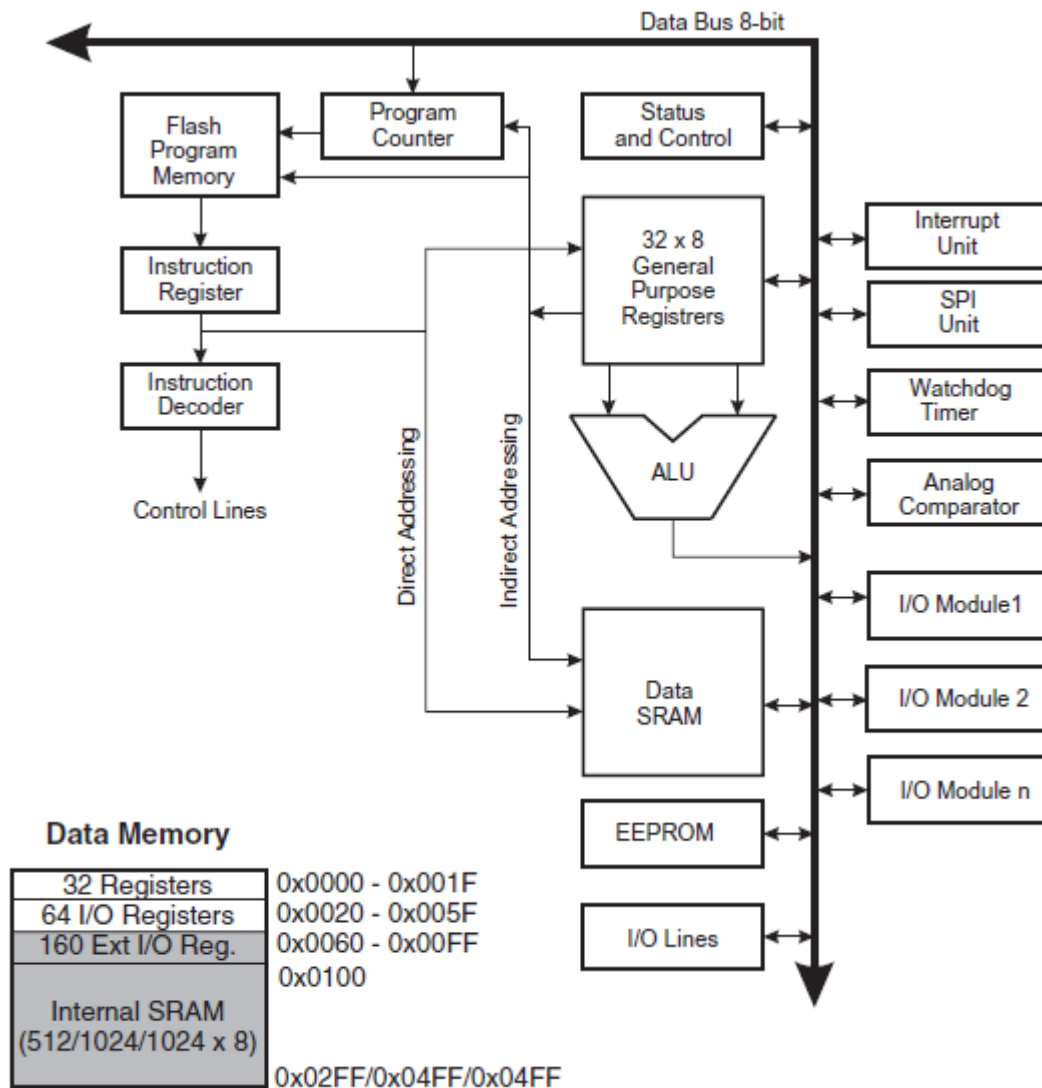
When the procedure is called, `x` is assigned an address on the stack (by decrementing the stack pointer). When the procedure returns, the memory is freed (by incrementing the stack pointer). The variable persists only for the duration of the call to `foo()`.

# Statically-Allocated Memory with Limited Scope

```
void foo(void) {  
    static char x;  
    x = 0x20;  
    ...  
}
```

Compiler chooses what address to use for `x`, but the variable is meant to be accessible only in `foo()`. The variable's lifetime is the total duration of the program execution (values persist across calls to `foo()`).

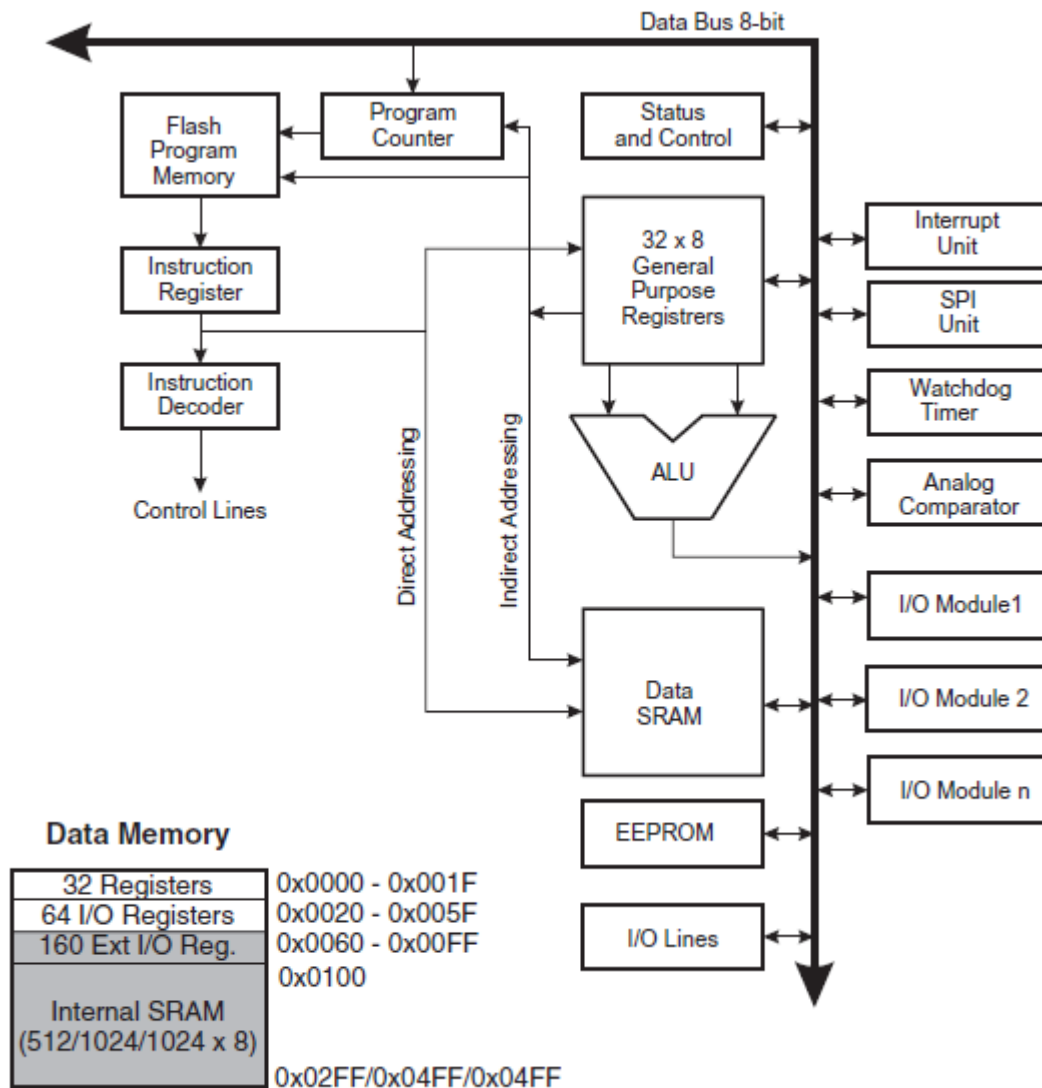
# Question 1



What is meant by the following C code:

```
char x;
void foo(void) {
    x = 0x20;
    ...
}
```

# Answer 1

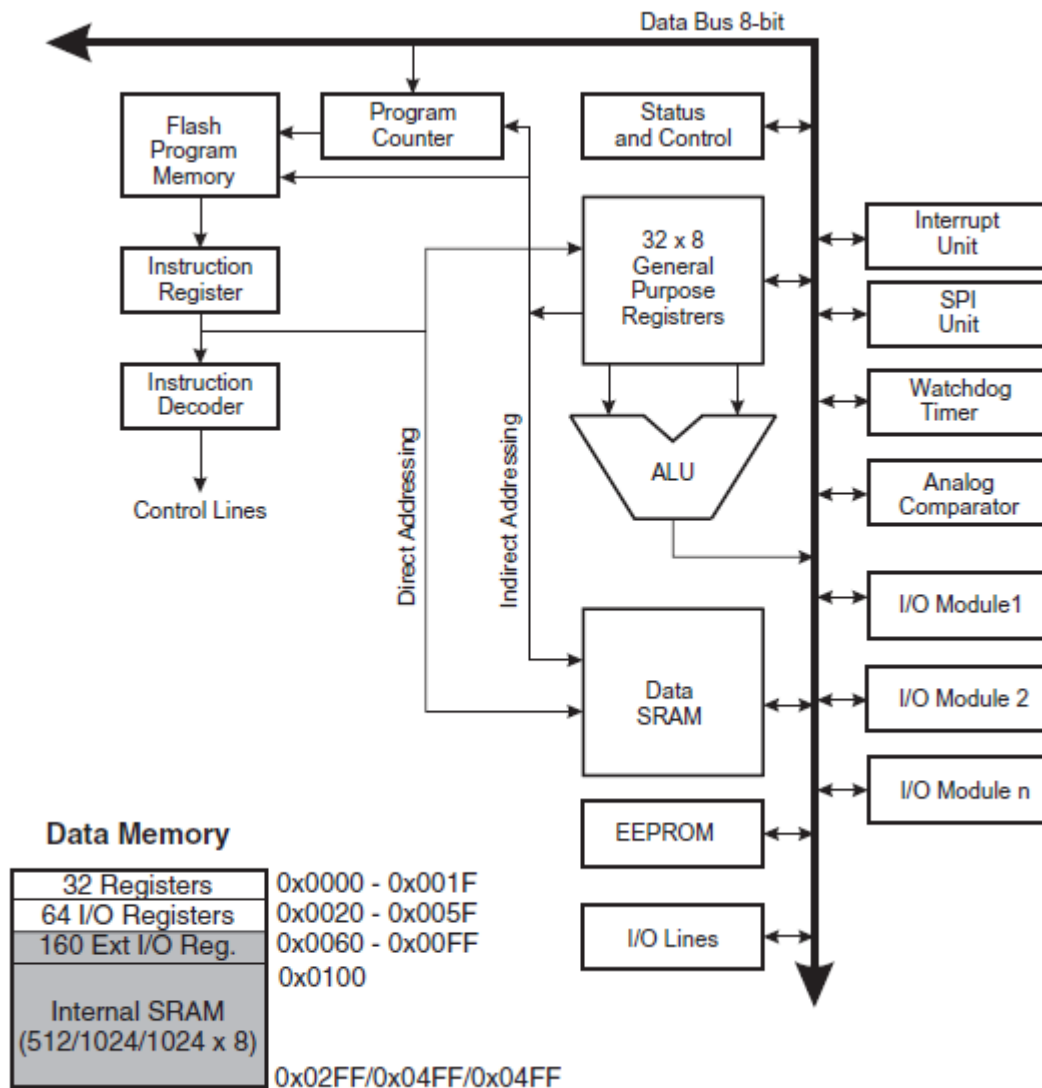


What is meant by the following C code:

```
char x;
void foo(void) {
    x = 0x20;
    ...
}
```

An 8-bit quantity (hex 0x20) is stored at an address in statically allocated memory in internal RAM determined by the compiler.

# Question 2

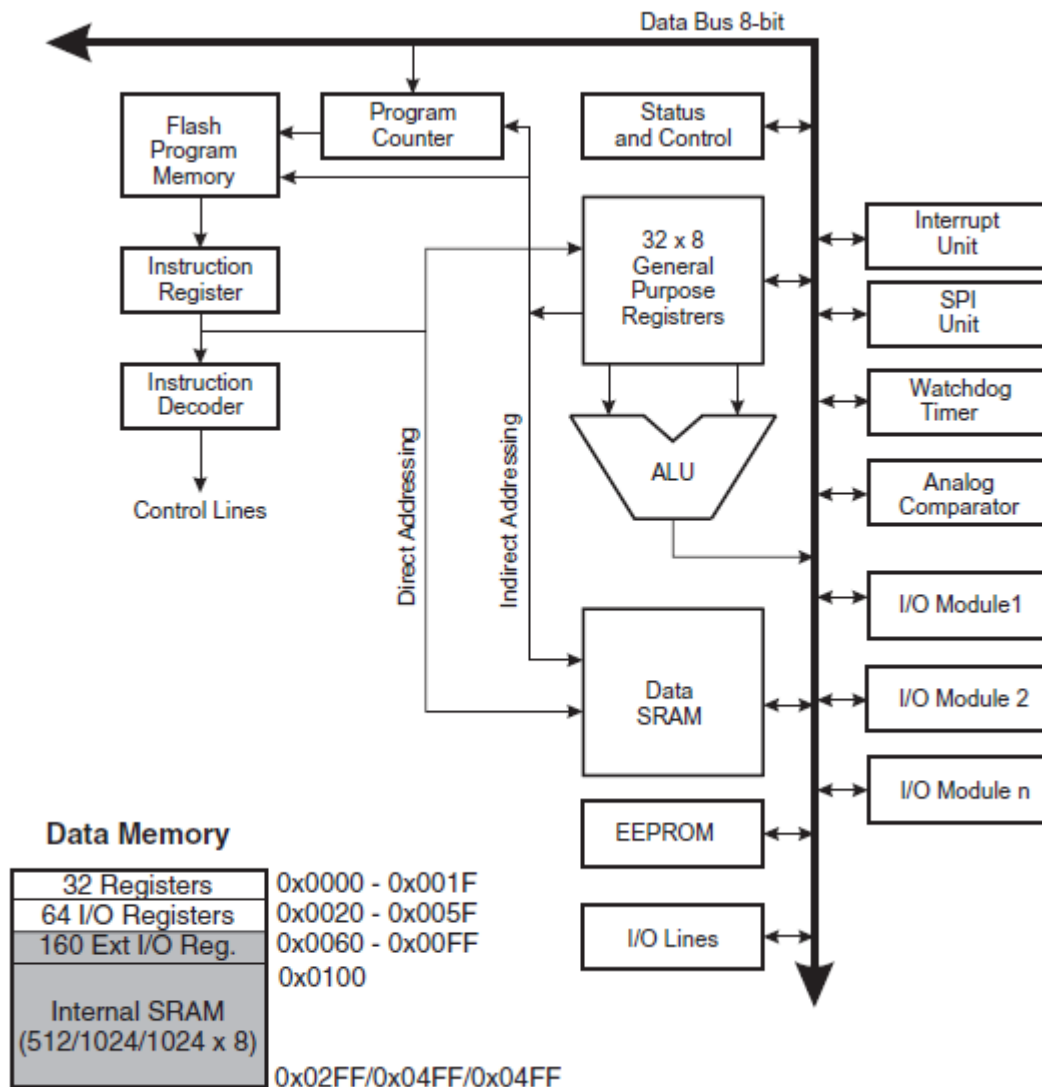


What is meant by the following C code:

```
char *x;
void foo(void) {
    x = 0x20;
    ...
}
```



# Answer 2

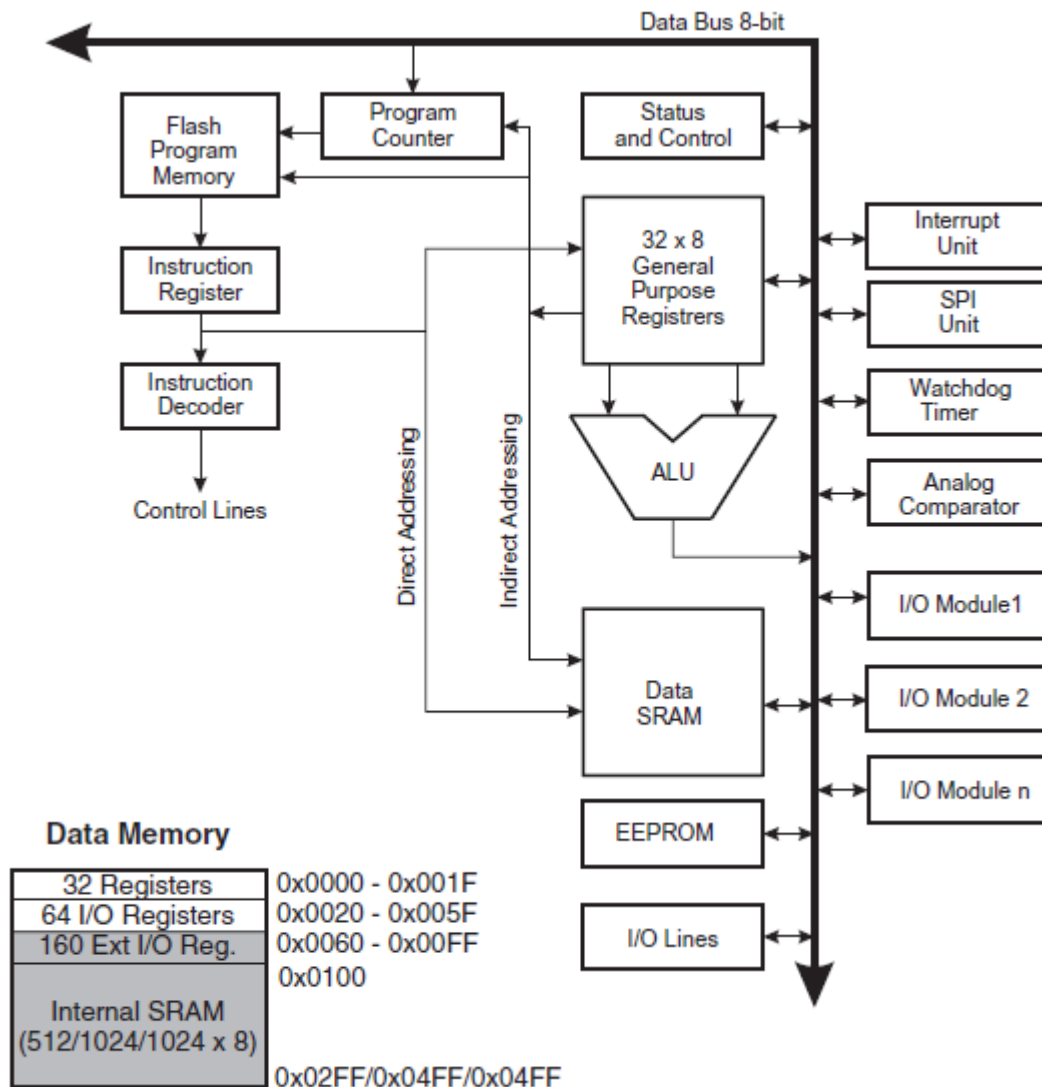


What is meant by the following C code:

```
char *x;
void foo(void) {
    x = 0x20;
    ...
}
```

An 16-bit quantity (hex 0x0020) is stored at an address in statically allocated memory in internal RAM determined by the compiler.

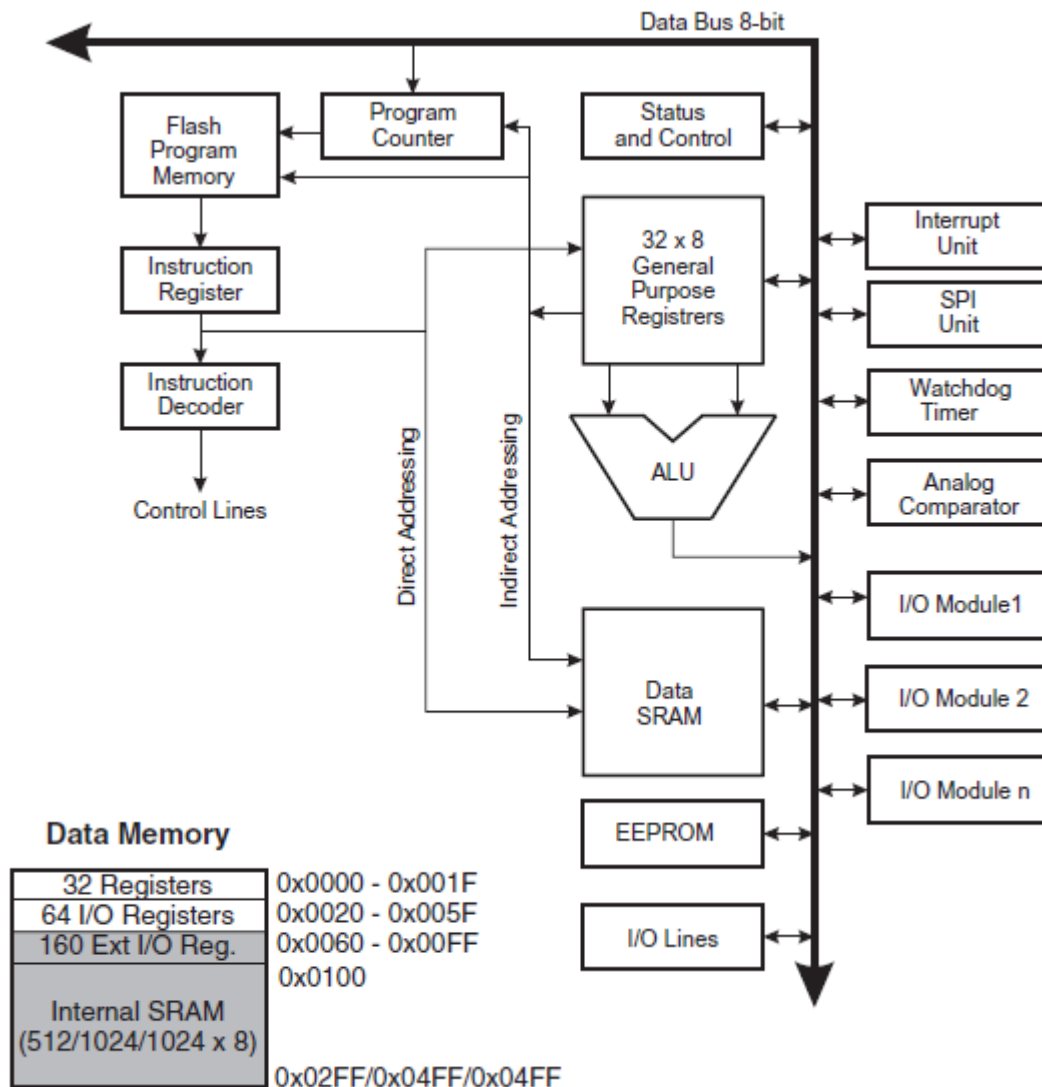
# Question 3



What is meant by the following C code:

```
char *x, y;
void foo(void) {
    x = 0x20;
    y = *x;
    ...
}
```

# Answer 3

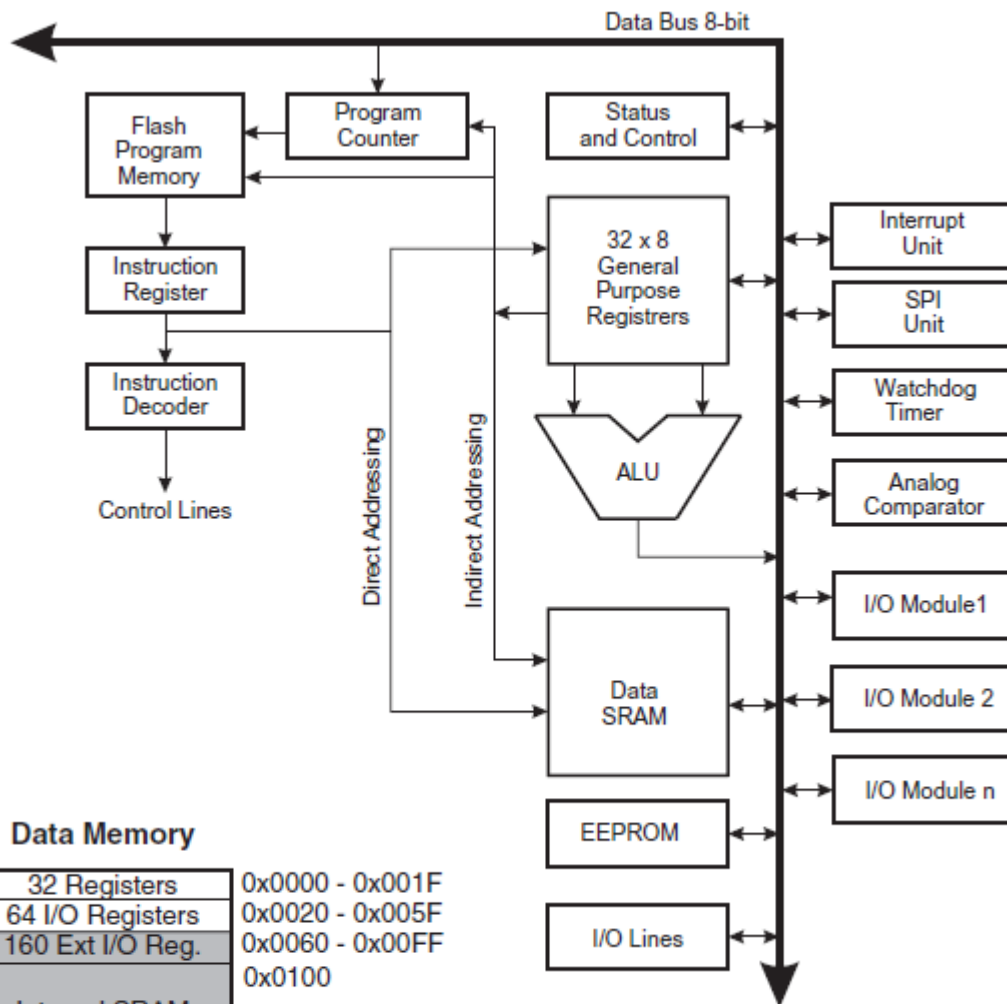


What is meant by the following C code:

```
char *x, y;
void foo(void) {
    x = 0x20;
    y = *x;
    ...
}
```

The 8-bit quantity in the I/O register at location 0x20 is loaded into y, which is at a location in internal SRAM determined by the compiler.

# Question 4



## Data Memory

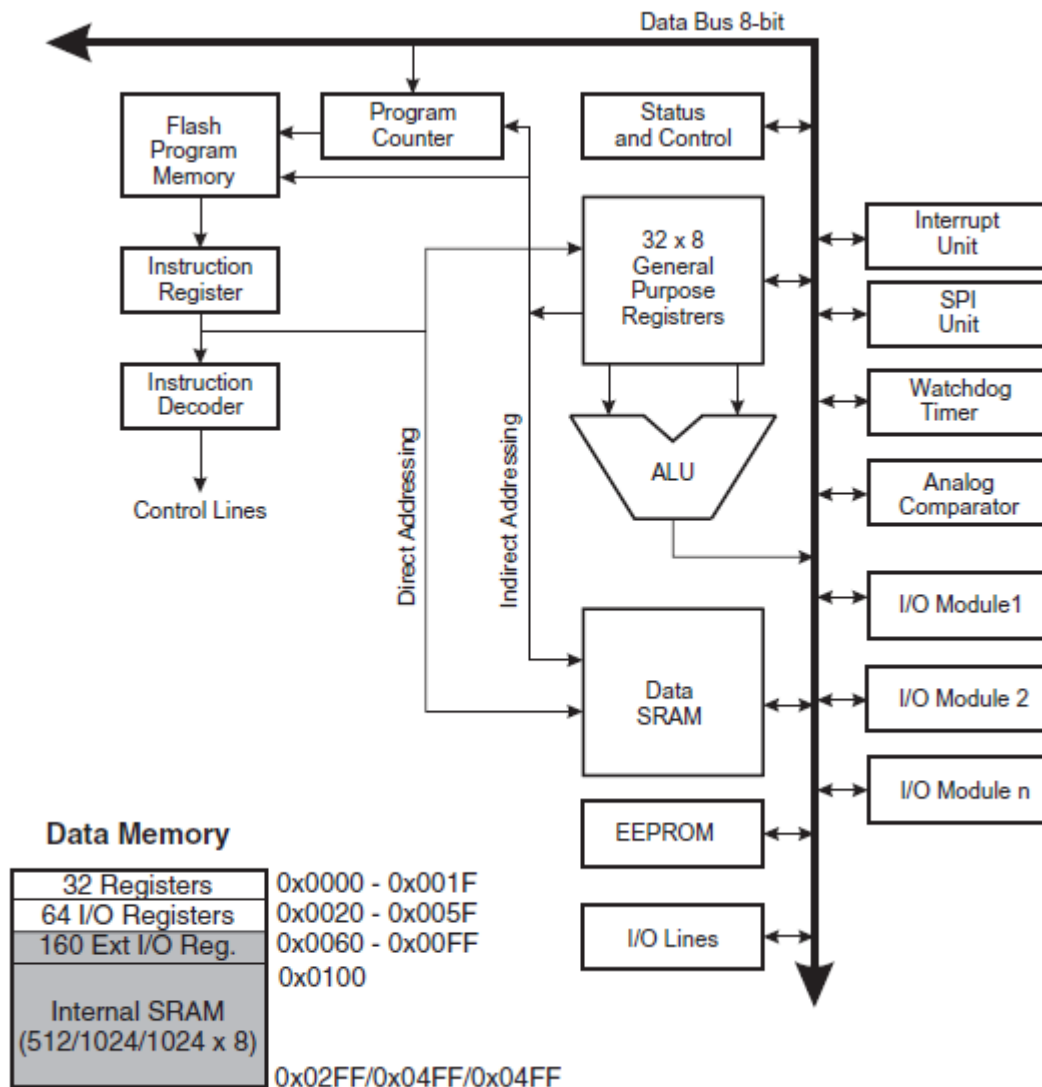
32 Registers	0x0000 - 0x001F
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160 Ext I/O Reg.	0x0060 - 0x00FF
	0x0100
Internal SRAM (512/1024/1024 x 8)	0x02FF/0x04FF/0x04FF

```
char foo() {
    char *x, y;
    x = 0x20;
    y = *x;
    return y;
}
```

```
char z;
int main(void) {
    z = foo();
    ...
}
```

Where are x, y, z in memory?

# Answer 4

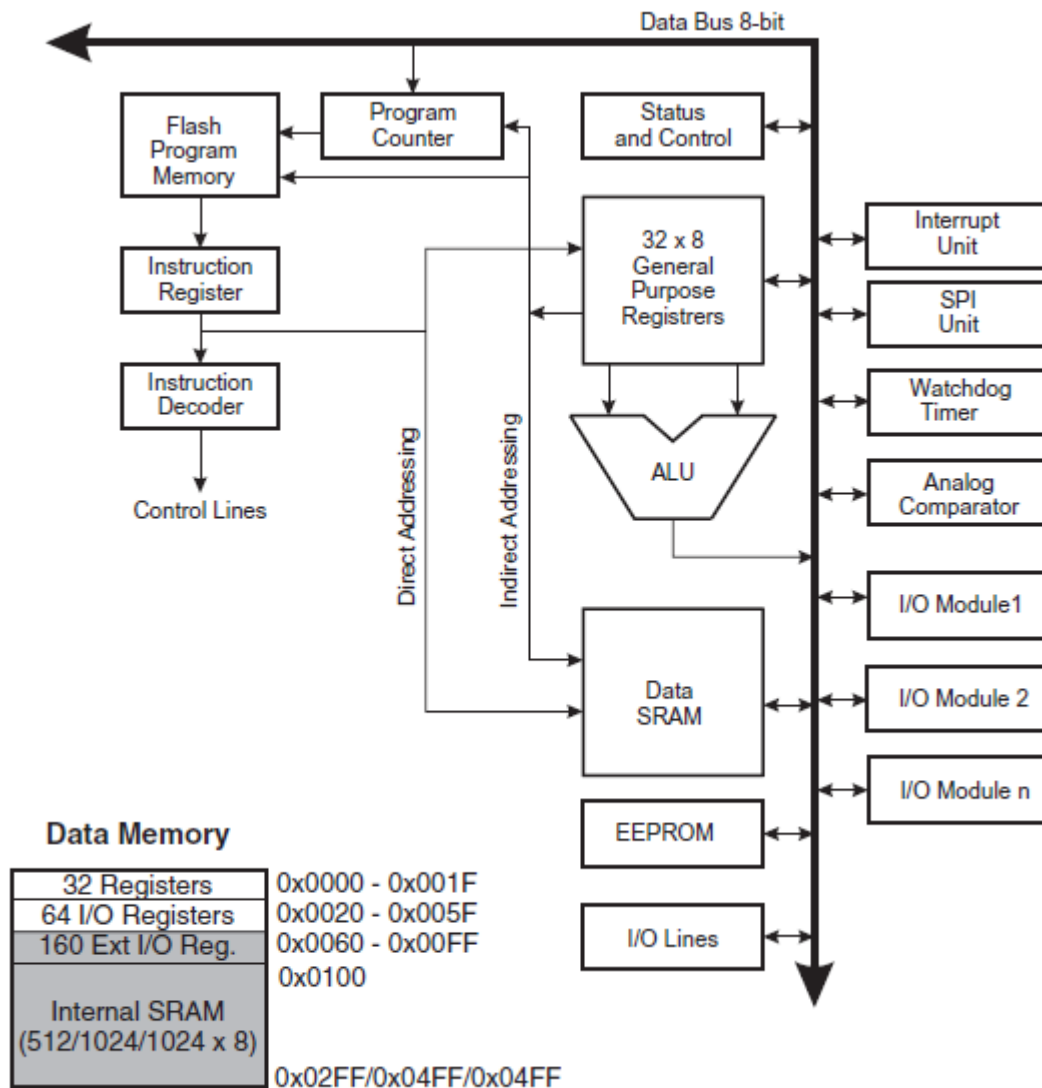


```
char foo() {
    char *x, y;
    x = 0x20;
    y = *x;
    return y;
}
```

```
char z;
int main(void) {
    z = foo();
    ...
}
```

**x occupies 2 bytes on the stack, y occupies 1 byte on the stack, and z occupies 1 byte in static memory.**

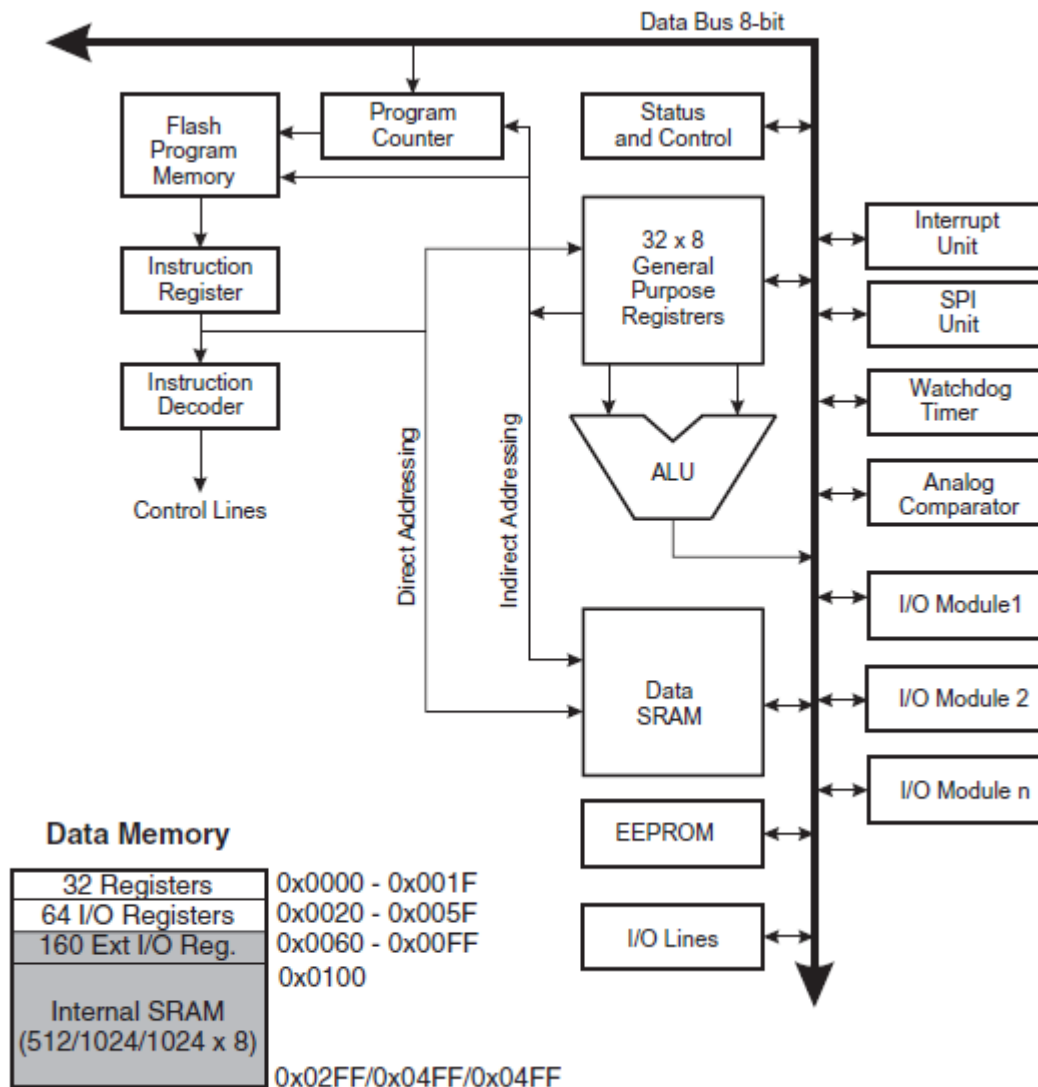
# Question 5



What is meant by the following C code:

```
void foo(void) {
    char *x, y;
    x = &y;
    *x = 0x20;
    ...
}
```

# Answer 5



What is meant by the following C code:

```
void foo(void) {
    char *x, y;
    x = &y;
    *x = 0x20;
    ...
}
```

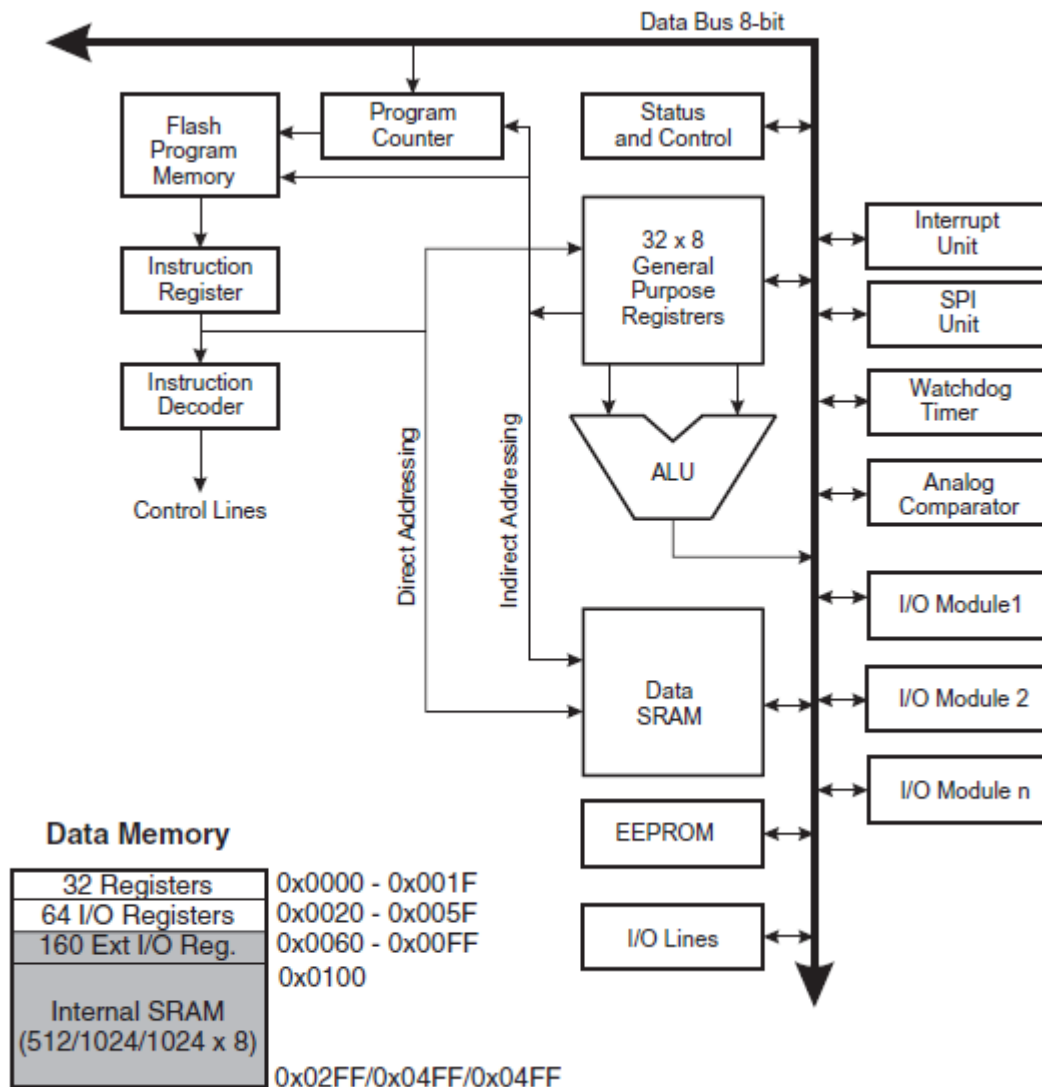
16 bits for x and 8 bits for y are allocated on the stack, then x is loaded with the address of y, and then y is loaded with the 8-bit quantity 0x20.



# Question 6

What goes into z in the following program:

```
char foo() {
    char y;
    uint16_t x;
    x = 0x20;
    y = *x;
    return y;
}
char z;
int main(void) {
    z = foo();
    ...
}
```

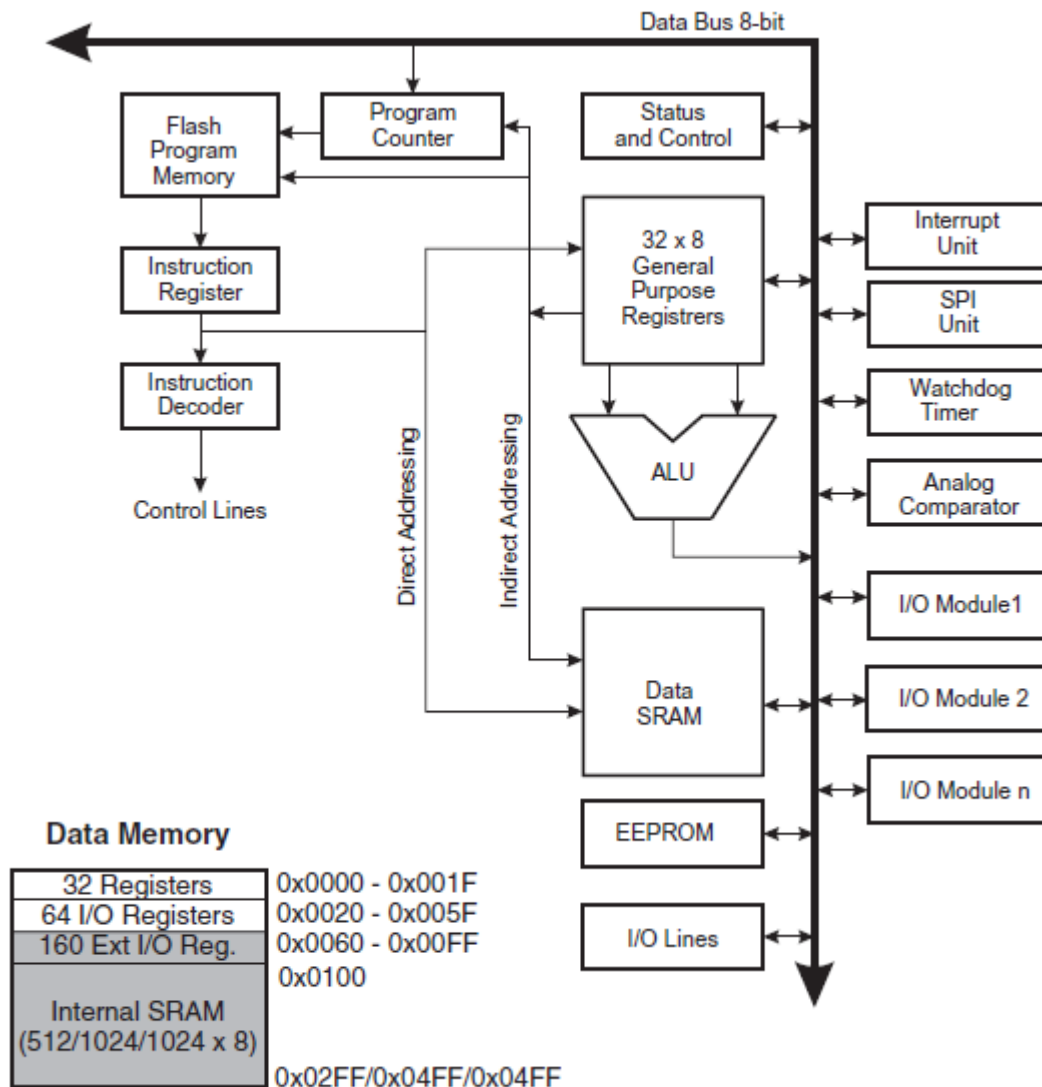


# Answer 6

What goes into z in the following program:

```
char foo() {
    char y;
    uint16_t x;
    x = 0x20;
    y = *x;
    return y;
}
char z;
int main(void) {
    z = foo();
    ...
}
```

z is loaded with the 8-bit quantity in the I/O register at location 0x20.



# Quiz: Find the flaw in this program

(begin by thinking about where each variable is allocated)

```
int x = 2;

int* foo(int y) {
    int z;
    z = y * x;
    return &z;
}

int main(void) {
    int* result = foo(10);
    ...
}
```

# Solution: Find the flaw in this program

```
int x = 2;
```

statically allocated: compiler assigns a memory location.

```
int* foo(int y) {
```

arguments on the stack

```
    int z;
```

automatic variables on the stack

```
    z = y * x;
```

```
    return &z;
```

```
}
```

```
int main(void) {
```

```
    int* result = foo(10);
```

```
    ...
```

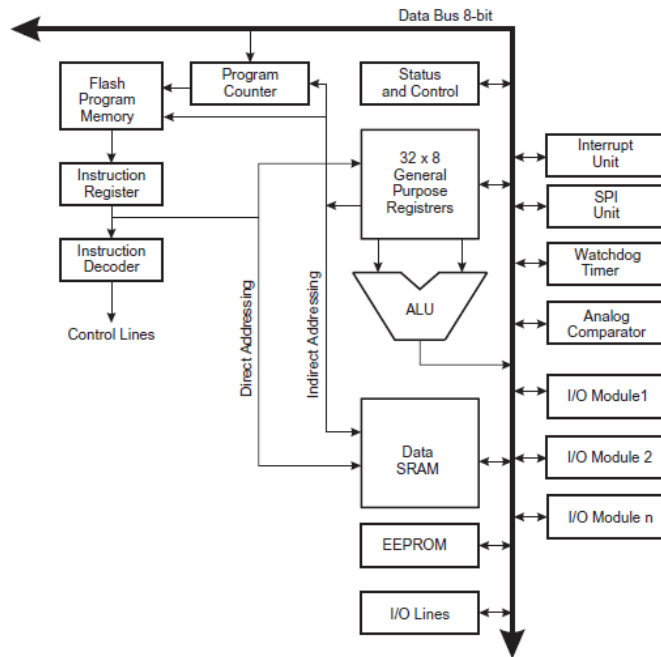
```
}
```

program counter, argument 10, and z go on the stack (and possibly more, depending on the compiler).

**The procedure foo() returns a pointer to a variable on the stack. What if another procedure call (or interrupt) occurs before the returned pointer is de-referenced?**

# Watch out for Recursion!!

Quiz: What is the Final Value of z?



```
void foo(uint16_t x) {  
    char y;  
    y = *x;  
    if (x > 0x100) {  
        foo(x - 1);  
    }  
}  
char z;  
void main(...) {  
    z = 0x10;  
    foo(0x04FF);  
    ...  
}
```

## Data Memory

32 Registers	0x0000 - 0x001F
64 I/O Registers	0x0020 - 0x005F
160 Ext I/O Reg.	0x0060 - 0x00FF
0x0100	
Internal SRAM (512/1024/1024 x 8)	
0x02FF/0x04FF/0x04FF	

# Dynamically-Allocated Memory

## The Heap

Data Memory	
32 Registers	0x0000 - 0x001F
64 I/O Registers	0x0020 - 0x005F
160 Ext I/O Reg.	0x0060 - 0x00FF
	0x0100
Internal SRAM (512/1024/1024 x 8)	0x02FF/0x04FF/0x04FF

An operating system typically offers a way to dynamically allocate memory on a “heap”.

Memory management (malloc() and free()) can lead to many problems with embedded systems:

- Memory leaks (allocated memory is never freed)
- Memory fragmentation (allocatable pieces get smaller)

Automatic techniques (“garbage collection”) often require stopping everything and reorganizing the allocated memory. This is deadly for real-time programs.

# Memory Hierarchies

- Memory hierarchy

- Cache:

- A subset of memory addresses is mapped to SRAM
    - Accessing an address not in SRAM results in *cache miss*
    - A miss is handled by copying contents of DRAM to SRAM

- Scratchpad:

- SRAM and DRAM occupy disjoint regions of memory space
    - Software manages what is stored where

- Segmentation

- Logical addresses are mapped to a subset of physical addresses
  - Permissions regulate which tasks can access which memory



## A Fact About the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Notion of Computing: Timing is not Part of Software Semantics

*Correct execution of a program in C, C#, Java, Haskell, OCaml, Esterel, etc. has nothing to do with how long it takes to do anything. Nearly all our computation and networking abstractions are built on this premise.*



Caches improve *performance* for a fixed cost, at the expense of making it very difficult to control timing.

# Conclusion

Understanding memory architectures is essential to programming embedded systems.