

Meltdown and Spectre Samples

Written in Assembly

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

TBD

1.2 Conventions

1.2.1 Introduction

In this section we define some convention that are specific for this document.

1.2.2 Data Sections

The data is divided into three parts: read-only data, initialized data and uninitialized data. Code chunks with this type of data will all have defined suffices.

Definition 1 *Read-only data is data that is not modified during program execution. The suffix for read-only data is **-rodata**.*

Definition 2 *Initialized data is data that is changeable during program execution. The data is already initialized with data when the program starts. The suffix for initialized data is **-idata**.*

Definition 3 *Uninitialized data is data that is changeable during program execution. The data is not initialized. The suffix for uninitialized data is **-udata**.*

1.3 Nasm

TBD

5 `<preamble 5>≡` (12c 20 33)
`bits 64`

`<license 78>`

```
global      _start
pagesize    equ 4096
```

Defines:

`_start`, used in chunks 9c, 14c, and 21.

`pagesize`, used in chunks 9, 13, 14, 18b, 21, 22, 25–27, and 33.

2 Cache Access Timing

2.1 Introduction

TBD

2.2 Detect Cache Access Time

2.2.1 High Resolution Timer

First we need a high resolution timer to determine the cache access time. For this we use the time stamp counter. The time stamp counter is monotonically incrementing. When reading the time stamp counter (with `rdtsc`) the result is delivered back in the registers `EDX` and `EAX` forming a 64bit value. The time stamp counter is not an absolute value but a relative value, meaning that you cannot (easily) calculate from the time stamp counter to some time units (e.g. ns). But this is no problem as we only want to measure relative times.

To retrieve a 64bit value for the time we shift the value in `EDX` 32 bits to the left and add the value of `EAX` to this.

7 $\langle tsc-64bit \ 7 \rangle \equiv$ (8)

```
rdtsc
shl    RDX,32
add    RAX,RDX
```

2.2.2 Cache Access Time Routine

Next we need a routine that calculates the cache access time for us.

First we have to ensure in this routine that the speculative execution of the processor does not interfere with our time measurement. For this we use the instruction `lfence` which ensures that all previous reads are done before executing the next instructions.

Next we access a memory location with the address `RDI` by loading this into `RCX` and measure the time before and after the access.

The command `lfence` before reading the time stamp counter is needed because we have to ensure that all reads before the time measurements are done.

At last we calculate the relative time needed to access the memory location. In theory we should see a difference whether the memory location is accessed before or not.

Parameters

`RDI` the address of the memory which is loaded either from the cache or from memory

Return

`RAX` the relative time of the cache access

```
8  <calculate-cache-access-time 8>≡ (12c 20 33)
    _calccachetime:
        lfence
        <tsc-64bit 7>
        mov     R8,RAX
        mov     RCX,[RDI]
        lfence
        <tsc-64bit 7>
        sub     RAX,R8
        ret
```

Defines:

 _calccachetime, used in chunks 10e, 11e, 15c, and 24.

2.3 Measure Cache Access Time

2.3.1 Setup

To measure the cache timing we create a standalone program that shows us the time for a cached and for an uncached memory access.

First we need some area in memory with data which we can later read from. This data area goes into the area `.bss` which contains uninitialized data. We align the data at a page boundary and reserve one pages for our data.

```
9a  <data-udata 9a>≡ (12c 20 33)
      alignb      pagesize
      data:      resb pagesize
```

Defines:

`data`, used in chunks 9–11, 14d, 18c, 19c, 21, 22c, 26c, 32c, and 33.

Uses `pagesize` 5.

From time to time we need a small scratch area so we define an area with 32 bytes.

```
9b  <scratch-udata 9b>≡ (12c 20)
      scratch:      resb 32
```

Defines:

`scratch`, used in chunks 11c, 12a, 19, 24, 28c, 29c, and 31.

The program begins with the label `_start`.

```
9c  <cachetiming-program 9c>≡ (12c) 10b>
      _start:
```

Uses `_start` 5.

Now we start with initialising the `data` area with some random data. For this we load RDI with the address of the `data` area.

```
9d  <init-random-data 9d>≡ (10b 14c) 9e>
      mov      RDI,data
```

Uses `data` 9a.

Next we load the number of bytes to fill into RSI. For this we load the `pagesize` into RSI.

```
9e  <init-random-data 9d>+≡ (10b 14c) <9d 9f>
      mov      RSI,pagesize
```

Uses `pagesize` 5.

At last we load EDX with some random seed. For this we use `rdtsc` and only use the lower 32 bit of the value.

```
9f  <init-random-data 9d>+≡ (10b 14c) <9e 10a>
      rdtsc
      mov      EDX,EAX
```

2 Cache Access Timing

Now we call `_xorshift` to fill the `data` area.

```
10a  <init-random-data 9d>+≡ (10b 14c) <9f>
      call    _xorshift
      Uses _xorshift 38a.
```

Now we add this `data` initialization to our program.

```
10b  <cachetiming-program 9c>+≡ (12c) <9c 10c>
      <init-random-data 9d>
```

2.3.2 Measure Time

Now that we have setup our `data` area we can now cache data from the first page by loading it into a register which also loads this into the cache.

For this we load `RDI` with the address of the `data` area.

```
10c  <cachetiming-program 9c>+≡ (12c) <10b 10d>
      mov     RDI,data
      Uses data 9a.
```

Before we load the data into a register now we will clear the cache lines with the given address. For this we use the instruction `clflush`. After flushing the cache line we ensure (with `lfence`) that all reads from memory are finished before we load the data into a register again (and filling the cache).

```
10d  <cachetiming-program 9c>+≡ (12c) <10c 10e>
      clflush [RDI]
      lfence
      mov     RCX,[RDI]
```

Now we can determine the time that is needed to load this data once again. We do not need to load `RDI` again because it has not changed.

```
10e  <cachetiming-program 9c>+≡ (12c) <10d 11b>
      call    _calccachetime
      Uses _calccachetime 8.
```

Now we have the relative cache access time in register `RAX`. We store this value to the stack and print out an explaining text.

For this we define the text to print.

```
10f  <cachetiming-rodata 10f>≡ (12c) 11f>
      <common-rodata 11a>
      scached:      db "Cached Access Time: ",0x00
      Defines:
      scached, used in chunk 11b.
```

Additionally we define some helper data, in this case `line feed (LF)`.

```
11a <common-rodata 11a>≡ (10f 20 28a)
    slf:                db 0x0a
```

Defines:

`slf`, used in chunks 11d, 12a, 19, 24, and 32a.

Now we can store `RAX` and print the text.

```
11b <cachetiming-program 9c>+≡ (12c) <10e 11c>
    push    RAX
    mov     RDI,scached
    call    _print
```

Uses `_print` 40a and `scached` 10f.

We now restore the value and print the measured time to `stdout`.

```
11c <cachetiming-program 9c>+≡ (12c) <11b 11d>
    pop     RDI
    mov     RSI,scratch
    call    _printdu64bit
```

Uses `_printdu64bit` 41a and `scratch` 9b.

At last we append a `LF` to the output.

```
11d <cachetiming-program 9c>+≡ (12c) <11c 11e>
    mov     RSI,slf
    mov     RDI,1
    call    _nprint
```

Uses `_nprint` 39b and `slf` 11a.

Now we do the same with an uncached value. The difference is that we do not load the value before.

```
11e <cachetiming-program 9c>+≡ (12c) <11d 12a>
    mov     RDI,data
    clflush [RDI]
    lfence
    call    _calccachetime
```

Uses `_calccachetime` 8 and `data` 9a.

Now we have the time of the uncached data access in `RAX` and can print it out with some explaining text.

```
11f <cachetiming-rodata 10f>+≡ (12c) <10f
    suncached:          db "Uncached Access Time: ",0x00
```

Defines:

`suncached`, used in chunk 12a.

2 Cache Access Timing

12a $\langle \text{cachetiming-program } 9c \rangle + \equiv$ (12c) $\triangleleft 11e \text{ } 12b \triangleright$

```
    push    RAX
    mov     RDI, suncached
    call    _print
    pop     RDI
    mov     RSI, scratch
    call    _printdu64bit
    mov     RSI, slf
    mov     RDI, 1
    call    _nprint
```

Uses `_nprint` 39b, `_print` 40a, `_printdu64bit` 41a, `scratch` 9b, `slf` 11a, and `suncached` 11f.

At last we exit the program.

12b $\langle \text{cachetiming-program } 9c \rangle + \equiv$ (12c) $\triangleleft 12a$

$\langle \text{exitProgram } 37b \rangle$

Now we can put everything together and have our `cachetiming` program that we can now execute.

12c $\langle \text{cachetiming.asm } 12c \rangle \equiv$

$\langle \text{preamble } 5 \rangle$

```
section .rodata
 $\langle \text{cachetiming-rodata } 10f \rangle$ 

section .bss
 $\langle \text{data-udata } 9a \rangle$ 
 $\langle \text{scratch-udata } 9b \rangle$ 

section .text
 $\langle \text{cachetiming-program } 9c \rangle$ 

 $\langle \text{calculate-cache-access-time } 8 \rangle$ 

 $\langle \text{xorshift-prng } 38a \rangle$ 

 $\langle \text{utilities } 37a \rangle$ 
```

The program source is placed in `asm/`. With `make` in the folder we can create an executable which is moved to `bin/`. There we can execute this program.

```
$ bin/cachetiming
Cached Access Time: 72
Uncached Access Time: 372
$
```

2.4 Read Byte via Cache Access Time

2.4.1 Introduction

We have seen that we can determine if the content of a memory address is in the cache or not (see [2.3 Measure Cache Access Time](#)).

So next we try to read a single byte from the memory by only detecting the cache access time.

2.4.2 Clear Cache for Measurement

Before we can determine the cache access times we need to clear the cache. We define a subroutine for this.

Parameters

RDI the address of the probe memory

RSI the step size in the probe memory

13a $\langle \text{clearcache } 13a \rangle \equiv$ (20)

```
_clearcache:
    mov     RCX,256
    cld
.nextflush:
    clflush [RDI]
    add     RDI,RSI
    loop    .nextflush
    lfence
    ret
```

Defines:

`_clearcache`, used in chunks [13b](#) and [26b](#).

Now we add this to our program.

13b $\langle \text{cachereadbyte-program } 13b \rangle \equiv$ (20) 14c▷

```
mov     RDI,probe
mov     RSI,pagesize
call    _clearcache
```

Uses `_clearcache` [13a](#) [23](#), `pagesize` [5](#), and `probe` [14a](#) [22a](#).

2.4.3 Indexed Array Access

To read the value of a byte via the cache we use the byte to index into a probe array and then determine the cache access times of this probe array.

For this we will first create a `probe` array.

```
14a  <probe-udata 14a>≡ (20)
      alignb      pagesize
      probe      times 256 resb pagesize
```

Defines:

`probe`, used in chunks 13, 14, 18b, 22, 26, and 27a.

Uses `pagesize` 5.

Next we will fill this `probe` array with some random data (similar to the chunks for `data` 9d, 9e, 9f and 10a).

```
14b  <init-random-probe 14b>≡ (14c)
      mov      RDI,probe
      mov      RSI,pagesize
      shl      RSI,8
      rdtsc
      mov      EDX,EAX
      call     _xorshift
```

Uses `_xorshift` 38a, `pagesize` 5, and `probe` 14a 22a.

Now we add the initialization of the `data` and `probe` area to the program.

```
14c  <cachereadbyte-program 13b>+≡ (20) <13b 14d>
      _start:
      <init-random-data 9d>
      <init-random-probe 14b>
```

Uses `_start` 5.

Now we can read a byte from `data` into AL.

```
14d  <cachereadbyte-program 13b>+≡ (20) <14c 14e>
      mov      RDI,data
      xor      RAX,RAX
      mov      AL,[RDI]
```

Uses `data` 9a.

We use the value in RAX to access the probe array.

```
14e  <cachereadbyte-program 13b>+≡ (20) <14d 18b>
      mov      RDX,pagesize
      mul      RDX
      mov      RSI,probe
      mov      RAX,[RSI+RAX]
```

Uses `pagesize` 5 and `probe` 14a 22a.

Now we read the datum back via the cache access times. For this we create subroutines.

2.4.4 Read a Byte from the Cache

First we create a subroutine to read the cache access timings for the probe area.

Parameters

RDI the address of the probe memory

RSI the step size in the probe memory

RDX an area to keep the detected cache access times (256 * 8 bytes)

```
15a  <readcachetiming 15a>≡ (20) 15b>
      _readcachetiming:
      <enterstackframe 37c>
```

Defines:

 _readcachetiming, used in chunk 18b.

Now we create space on the stack to keep the variables. Next we save the parameters to the stack space created.

```
15b  <readcachetiming 15a>+≡ (20) <15a 15c>
      sub     RSP,32
      mov     [RBP-8],RDI
      mov     [RBP-16],RSI
      mov     [RBP-24],RDX
```

Now we can start detecting the cache access times.

```
15c  <readcachetiming 15a>+≡ (20) <15b 16>
      mov     RCX,256
      .nextcacheread:
      mov     [RBP-32],RCX
      call    _calccachetime
      mov     RDX,[RBP-24]
      mov     [RDX],RAX
      add     RDX,8
      mov     [RBP-24],RDX
      mov     RDI,[RBP-8]
      add     RDI,[RBP-16]
      mov     [RBP-8],RDI
      mov     RCX,[RBP-32]
      loop    .nextcacheread
```

Uses _calccachetime 8.

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At the end we clean up the stack again and return to the caller.

```
16  <readcachetiming 15a>+≡ (20) <15c  
    <leavestackframe 37d>  
    ret
```


After we determined all cache access times we can now find the lowest access time and with this the possible byte. We return two results from this subroutine, in **AL** the byte with the lowest cache access time and in **AH** the count of the lowest cache access time. Only if **AH** is 1 then the value in **AL** is valid.

Parameters

RDI the area with the detected cache access times (256 * 8 bytes)

Return

AL the read byte (in **AL**) with the lowest cache access time

AH the number of bytes read with the lowest cache access time

```

17  <analyzecachemintiming 17>≡ (20)
    _analyzecachemintiming:
        push    RDI
        mov     R8,0xffffffffffffffff
        xor     R9,R9
        xor     RCX,RCX
        mov     RSI,RDI
    .nexttry:
        lodsq
        cmp     RAX,R8
        ja      .nohit
        mov     R8,RAX
        mov     R9,RCX
    .nohit:
        inc     RCX
        cmp     RCX,256
        jb      .nexttry
        xor     RCX,RCX
        pop     RSI
    .nextcount:
        lodsq
        cmp     RAX,R8
        ja      .nomin
        inc     R10
    .nomin:
        inc     RCX
        cmp     RCX,256
        jb      .nextcount
        mov     RAX,R10
        shl     RAX,8

```

2 Cache Access Timing

```
    mov     AL,R9b
    ret
```

2.4.5 The Whole Program to Read a Byte from Cache

Before we can start using our new subroutine `_readcachetiming` we need to define a data area for the cache access times.

```
18a  <timings-udata 18a>≡ (20)
      timings      resq 256
```

Now we have all subroutines together we now can start implementing the main program and output the byte read.

```
18b  <cachereadbyte-program 13b>+≡ (20) <14e 18d>
      mov     RDI,probe
      mov     RSI,pagesize
      mov     RDX,timings
      call    _readcachetiming
      mov     RDI,timings
      call    _analyzecachemintiming
```

Uses `_readcachetiming` 15a, `pagesize` 5, and `probe` 14a 22a.

Now we define a string to output for the read byte and the expected byte.

```
18c  <cachereadbyte-rodata 18c>≡ (20)
      sreadbyte:  db "Byte read via cache access:      ",0x00
      ssountbyte: db "Count of bytes with min timing: ",0x00
      sexpectedbyte: db "Expected byte from data:      ",0x00
```

Uses `data` 9a.

We save the value from `RAX` (only `AL` is interesting to us) to the stack and print out the text.

```
18d  <cachereadbyte-program 13b>+≡ (20) <18b 19a>
      push    RAX
      mov     RDI,sreadbyte
      call    _print
```

Uses `_print` 40a.

Now we print the read byte and end the line with a LF.

```
19a  <cachereadbyte-program 13b>+≡ (20) <18d 19b>
      pop      RDI
      push     RDI
      and      RDI,0xff
      mov      RSI,scratch
      call     _printh8bit
      mov      RDI,1
      mov      RSI,slf
      call     _nprint
```

Uses `_nprint 39b`, `_printh8bit 44a`, `scratch 9b`, and `slf 11a`.

Next we print (for information) the number of bytes read with the minimum cache access timing.

```
19b  <cachereadbyte-program 13b>+≡ (20) <19a 19c>
      mov      RDI,ssountbyte
      call     _print
      pop      RDI
      shr      RDI,8
      and      RDI,0xff
      mov      RSI,scratch
      call     _printdu64bit
      mov      RDI,1
      mov      RSI,slf
      call     _nprint
```

Uses `_nprint 39b`, `_print 40a`, `_printdu64bit 41a`, `scratch 9b`, and `slf 11a`.

Now we read the byte from the original data array and print this also.

```
19c  <cachereadbyte-program 13b>+≡ (20) <19b 19d>
      mov      RDI,sexpectedbyte
      call     _print
      mov      RSI,data
      xor      RAX,RAX
      mov      AL,[RSI]
      mov      RDI,RAX
      mov      RSI,scratch
      call     _printh8bit
      mov      RDI,1
      mov      RSI,slf
      call     _nprint
```

Uses `_nprint 39b`, `_print 40a`, `_printh8bit 44a`, `data 9a`, `scratch 9b`, and `slf 11a`.

At last we exit the program.

```
19d  <cachereadbyte-program 13b>+≡ (20) <19c>
      <exitProgram 37b>
```

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Now we put all together to get the program `cachereadbyte` that we can execute.

```
20  <cachereadbyte.asm 20>≡
    <preamble 5>

    section .rodata
    <common-rodata 11a>
    <cachereadbyte-rodata 18c>

    section .bss
    <data-udata 9a>
    <probe-udata 14a>
    <scratch-udata 9b>
    <timings-udata 18a>

    section .text
    <cachereadbyte-program 13b>

    <clearcache 13a>

    <calculate-cache-access-time 8>

    <readcachetiming 15a>

    <analyzecachemintiming 17>

    <xorshift-prng 38a>

    <utilities 37a>
```

2.4.6 Improve Cache Access Time Analysis

As we can see – when running the program `cachereadbyte` – the result is not always as clear as it could be. Simply getting the lowest cache access time is not enough.

Sample outputs of the program are

```
$ bin/cachereadbyte
Byte read via cache access:    2b
Count of bytes with min timing: 1
Expected byte from data:      2b
$ bin/cachereadbyte
Byte read via cache access:    ff
Count of bytes with min timing: 11
Expected byte from data:      b3
$ bin/cachereadbyte
Byte read via cache access:    2f
Count of bytes with min timing: 1
Expected byte from data:      87
$
```

2.5 Read Array via Cache Access Time

2.5.1 Introduction

Now that we have seen that we can determine if a value was in the cache or not (see [2.3 Measure Cache Access Time](#)) we will read a complete array of data by only measuring the cache access time.

2.5.2 Setup

For this we start with some `data` area that we can read later as defined before.

So start with the program and fill the `data` area with some random data.

```
21  <cacheread-program 21>≡ (33) 22b▷
    _start:
        mov     RDI,data
        mov     RSI,pagesize
        rdtsc
        mov     EDX,EAX
        call    _xorshift
```

Uses `_start 5`, `_xorshift 38a`, `data 9a`, and `pagesize 5`.

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Next we will create a probe area that is $256 * \text{pagesize}$. We only access the first byte of each page but we divide the data over such a large area (1 MiB) to ensure that the cache lines that we use do not interfere each other.

22a $\langle \text{cacheread-udata } 22a \rangle \equiv$ (33) 25b▷
`probe: times 256 resb pagesize`

Defines:

`probe`, used in chunks 13, 14, 18b, 22, 26, and 27a.

Uses `pagesize` 5.

Next we fill this area also with some random data.

22b $\langle \text{cacheread-program } 21 \rangle + \equiv$ (33) ◀21 27d▷
`mov RDI,probe`
`mov RAX,pagesize`
`mov RCX,256`
`mul RCX`
`mov RSI,RCX`
`rdtsc`
`mov EDX,EAX`
`call _xorshift`

Uses `_xorshift` 38a, `pagesize` 5, and probe 14a 22a.

2.5.3 Reading Bytes via Cache

As we saw we can determine if a memory datum is in cache or not. For reading a complete byte we have to do a little bit more. Basically we use the byte accessed to index a different `probe` area. Because the memory is not cached byte by byte but in so called cache lines we cannot use a simple 256 bytes sized probe array but must at least have a space between the accessed bytes that is larger than a cache line size. This is the reason why we use a probe array of $256 * \text{pagesize}$ bytes of size.

Basically we use the following code to access the data. We load the content of the address we want to probe into a register. Then we multiply the register with some arbitrary value (we use `pagesize`) and then access the probe area with the calculated offset. We can then test the cache which page was cached and have our value from the `data`.

22c $\langle \text{cacheread-sample } 22c \rangle \equiv$
`mov RAX,[data]`
`mul RAX,pagesize`
`mov RBX,[probe+RAX]`

Uses `data` 9a, `pagesize` 5, and probe 14a 22a.

First we write a subroutine to clear the cache lines from data from our `probe` area. We assume that we use 256 values (0...255) for the indexing into the probe array. Also the `probe` area must be at least $256 * \text{RSI}$ bytes in size.

Parameters

RDI the address of the probe array

RSI the interval between the probe addresses used

23 $\langle \text{clear-cache } 23 \rangle \equiv$ (33)
 `_clearcache:`
 `cld`
 `mov RCX,256`
 `xor RAX,RAX`
 `.clear_next:`
 `clflush [RDI+RAX]`
 `add RAX,RSI`
 `loop .clear_next`
 `lfence`
 `ret`

Defines:

`_clearcache`, used in chunks 13b and 26b.

2 Cache Access Timing

Next we need a subroutine that determines the cache line access times for the data in the `probe` area. So we create a subroutine that loops similar to the `_clearcache` subroutine over all addresses and measures the cache access time for each page.

Parameters

RDI the address of the probe array

RSI the interval between the probe addresses used

RDX the address of the results of the cache measurements. The area needs to be 256 * 8 bytes in size

24 $\langle \text{detect-cache-area-time } 24 \rangle \equiv$ (33)

```
_calcareacachetime:
    xor     RCX,RCX
.next_timing:
    push    RCX
    push    RDX
    push    RDI
    push    RSI
    call    _calccachetime
    push    RAX
    mov     RDI,RAX
    mov     RSI,scratch
    call    _printdu64bit
    mov     RDI,1
    mov     RSI,slf
    call    _nprint
    pop     RAX
    pop     RSI
    pop     RDI
    pop     RDX
    pop     RCX
    mov     [RDX+8*RCX],RAX
    add     RDI,RSI
    inc     RCX
    cmp     RCX,256
    jb     .next_timing
    ret
```

Defines:

`_calcareacachetime`, used in chunk 25a.

Uses `_calccachetime` 8, `_nprint` 39b, `_printdu64bit` 41a, `scratch` 9b, and `slf` 11a.

We now can determine the cache line with the lowest access time. This is the cache line that was cached before.

Parameters

RDI	the address of the probe array
RSI	the interval between the probe addresses used
RDX	the address of the results of the cache measurements. The area needs to be 256 * 8 bytes in size

Return

RAX	the byte (in AL) which is found by cache timing analysis
-----	--

TBD

25a $\langle \text{detect-byte 25a} \rangle \equiv$ (33)

```

_detectbytebycl:
    push    RDI
    call    _calcareacachetime
    pop     RDI
    mov     RSI,RDX
    xor     RCX,RCX
    mov     R8,0xffffffffffffffff
    xor     R9,R9
.nextbyte:
    mov     RAX,[RDI+8*RCX]
    cmp     RAX,R8
    jb     .foundbyte
    inc     RCX
    cmp     RCX,256
    jae     .done
    jmp     .nextbyte
.foundbyte:
    mov     R8,RAX
    mov     R9,RCX
    jmp     .nextbyte
.done:
    mov     RAX,R9
    ret

```

Uses `_calcareacachetime` 24.

Now we need some area to store all the data. Once we use an area for the timing data and another area for the read memory data.

25b $\langle \text{cacheread-udata 22a} \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\langle 22a \ 28c \rangle$

```

    result:    resb    pagesize
    timing:    resq    256

```

Uses `pagesize` 5.

2 Cache Access Timing

Now we have the base for reading a complete memory area via a cache covert channel.

We now create a subroutine to loop over the memory we want to read and read the values back via the cache access time.

First we create a area where we can store the read bytes.

26a $\langle \text{readback-udata 26a} \rangle \equiv$ (33)

```
;    readback:    align pagesize, resb pagesize
```

Defines:

readback, never used.

Uses **pagesize** 5.

Now we create the subroutine that reads the bytes from the source array **data** and writes the results from the cache access time into **readback**.

First we setup a counter in R8 and clear the cache.

26b $\langle \text{cache-readback 26b} \rangle \equiv$ (33) 26c>

```
_cachereadback:
```

```
    xor        R8,R8
```

```
.nextbyte:
```

```
    push       R8
```

```
    mov        RDI,probe
```

```
    mov        RSI,pagesize
```

```
    call       _clearcache
```

```
    pop        R8
```

Defines:

_cachereadback, used in chunk 27d.

Uses **_clearcache** 13a 23, **pagesize** 5, and **probe** 14a 22a.

Next we read in the data from the array.

26c $\langle \text{cache-readback 26b} \rangle + \equiv$ (33) <26b 26d>

```
    mov        RSI,data
```

```
    xor        RAX,RAX
```

```
    mov        AL,[RSI+R8]
```

Uses **data** 9a.

Next we use the read byte to index into our probe array.

26d $\langle \text{cache-readback 26b} \rangle + \equiv$ (33) <26c 27a>

```
    mov        RDX,pagesize
```

```
    mul        RDX
```

```
    mov        RSI,probe
```

```
    mov        AL,[RSI+RAX]
```

Uses **pagesize** 5 and **probe** 14a 22a.

2.5 Read Array via Cache Access Time

Now we have put data into the cache that depends on the value read from `data`. Next we will read the cache access times to determine the data read.

27a $\langle \text{cache-readback 26b} \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\langle 26d \ 27b \rangle$

```
    mov     RDI,probe
    mov     RSI,pagesize
    mov     RDX,timing
    push    R8
    call    _detectbytebycl
    pop     R8
```

Uses `pagesize 5` and `probe 14a 22a`.

Next we store the read byte into our result array.

27b $\langle \text{cache-readback 26b} \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\langle 27a \ 27c \rangle$

```
    mov     RDI,result
    mov     [RDI+R8],AL
```

Now we can increment our counter and check if there are more bytes to read. If no more bytes need to be read we leave our subroutine.

27c $\langle \text{cache-readback 26b} \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\langle 27b \rangle$

```
    inc     R8
    cmp     R8,pagesize
    jb     .nextbyte
    ret
```

Uses `pagesize 5`.

After all we can now call this new subroutine and read our data by detecting the cache access times.

27d $\langle \text{cacheread-program 21} \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\langle 22b \ 32c \rangle$

```
    call    _cachereadback
```

Uses `_cachereadback 26b`.

2.5.4 Printing the Results

Now we want to see the results so we now read a byte from the origin ([data](#)) and from our read back data ([readback](#)).

First we define some helpful data for colorizing the output.

```
28a  <cacheread-rodata 28a>≡ (33)
      <common-rodata 11a>
          sbgred:          db 0x1b,"[1;41m",0x00
          sresetstyle:     db 0x1b,"[0m",0x00
          sseparator:      db "- ",0x00
          sblank:          db " "
          emptybyte:       db " ",0x00
```

Defines:

`sbgred`, used in chunk 31.

`sblank`, used in chunks 29c and 31.

`sresetstyle`, used in chunks 31 and 32a.

`sseparator`, used in chunk 30b.

First we define a subroutine which prints out up to 16 bytes each side by side on the screen. If two bytes in the arrays are different then the value at the right side (from the second array) will be printed with read background.

Parameters

RDI the address of the first array

RSI the address of the second array

RDX number of bytes to print (up to 16). If the value is above 16 then nothing is printed out

```
28b  <print-comparision16 28b>≡ (33) 29a>
      _printcompare16:
```

Defines:

`_printcompare16`, used in chunk 32b.

Additionally we need some scratch area for the printing.

```
28c  <cacheread-udata 22a>+≡ (33) <25b
      scratch:             resb 64
      Uses scratch 9b.
```

At the start of the subroutine we prepare a stack frame for further operations as we will need to save and restore the registers RDI, RSI, RDX and RCX multiple times. Additionally we store R12 to the stack to use this register as scratch register.

```
29a <print-comparision16 28b>+≡ (33) <28b 29b>
    push    RBP
    mov     RBP,RSP
    sub     RSP,32
    mov     [RBP-8],RDI
    mov     [RBP-16],RSI
    mov     [RBP-24],RDX
    push    R12
```

Now we first start and check that no more than 16 bytes should be printed, otherwise we will end the subroutine immediately.

```
29b <print-comparision16 28b>+≡ (33) <29a 29c>
    cmp     RDX,0x10
    ja      .done
```

Next we can start and handle the "left" side of the output. We output up to 16 bytes and then continue at `.leftbytesdone` (30a).

```
29c <print-comparision16 28b>+≡ (33) <29b 30a>
    xor     RCX,RCX
    .nextbyteleft:
    cmp     RCX,RDX
    mov     [RBP-32],RCX
    jae     .leftbytesdone
    mov     AL,[RDI+RCX]
    xor     AH,AH
    mov     DI,AX
    mov     RSI,scratch
    call    _printh8bit
    mov     RDI,1
    mov     RSI,sblank
    call    _nprint
    mov     RDI,[RBP-8]
    mov     RDX,[RBP-24]
    mov     RCX,[RBP-32]
    inc     RCX
    jmp     .nextbyteleft
```

Uses `_nprint` 39b, `_printh8bit` 44a, `sblank` 28a, and `scratch` 9b.

2 Cache Access Timing

Now we fill up the space so that the space of 16 bytes is occupied.

30a $\langle \text{print-comparison16 } 28b \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\langle 29c \ 30b \rangle$

```
.leftbytesdone:
    cmp     RCX,0x10
    jae     .leftdone
    mov     RDI,semptybyte
    call    _print
    inc     RCX
    jmp     .leftbytesdone
.leftdone:
```

Uses `_print` 40a.

Next we print out the separator between the two compare block.

30b $\langle \text{print-comparison16 } 28b \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\langle 30a \ 30c \rangle$

```
mov     RDI,sseparator
call    _print
```

Uses `_print` 40a and `sseparator` 28a.

To print the second half (for comparison) we restore the values of the parameters first.

30c $\langle \text{print-comparison16 } 28b \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\langle 30b \ 31 \rangle$

```
mov     RDI,[RBP-8]
mov     RSI,[RBP-16]
mov     RDX,[RBP-24]
```

Now we compare each byte with the original value first and then print it out. If the value differs from the original value we additionally mark the byte.

```

31  <print-comparision16 28b>+≡ (33) <30c 32a>
    xor     RCX,RCX
    .nextbyteright:
        mov     [RBP-32],RCX
        cmp     RCX,RDX
        jae     .rightbytesdone
        mov     AL,[RSI+RCX]
        mov     AH,[RDI+RCX]
        mov     R12W,AX
        cmp     AH,AL
        je      .printplain
        mov     RDI,sbgred
        call    _print
    .printplain:
        xor     RDI,RDI
        mov     AX,R12W
        xor     AH,AH
        mov     DI,AX
        mov     RSI,scratch
        call    _printh8bit
        mov     AX,R12W
        cmp     AH,AL
        je      .prindtdone
        mov     RDI,sresetstyle
        call    _print
    .prindtdone:
        mov     RDI,1
        mov     RSI,sblank
        call    _nprint
        mov     RDI,[RBP-8]
        mov     RSI,[RBP-16]
        mov     RDX,[RBP-24]
        mov     RCX,[RBP-32]
        inc     RCX
        jmp     .nextbyteright
    .rightbytesdone:

```

Uses `_nprint` 39b, `_print` 40a, `_printh8bit` 44a, `sbged` 28a, `sblank` 28a, `scratch` 9b, and `sresetstyle` 28a.

2 Cache Access Timing

32a $\langle \text{print-comparision16 } 28b \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\triangleleft 31$

```

    cmp     RCX,0x10
    jae     .rightdone
    inc     RCX
    jmp     .rightbytesdone
.rightdone:
.done:
    mov     RDI,sresetstyle
    call    _print
    mov     RDI,1
    mov     RSI,slf
    call    _nprint
    pop     R12
    mov     RSP,RBP
    pop     RBP
    ret

```

Uses `_nprint` 39b, `_print` 40a, `slf` 11a, and `sresetstyle` 28a.

TBD

Parameters

RDI the address of the first array

RSI the address of the second array

RDX number of bytes to print. In each line 16 bytes from the first and 16 bytes from the right side are printed

32b $\langle \text{print-comparision } 32b \rangle \equiv$ (33)

```

_printcompare:
    mov     RDX,16
    call    _printcompare16
    ret

```

Defines:

`_printcompare`, used in chunk 32c.

Uses `_printcompare16` 28b.

TBD

32c $\langle \text{cacheread-program } 21 \rangle + \equiv$ (33) $\triangleleft 27d$

```

    mov     RDI,data
    mov     RSI,result
    call    _printcompare

```

Uses `_printcompare` 32b and `data` 9a.


```

33  <cacheread.asm 33>≡
    <preamble 5>

    section .bss
        align      pagesize
    <data-udata 9a>
    <cacheread-udata 22a>
    <readback-udata 26a>

    section .data
    <cacheread-rodata 28a>

    section .text
    <cacheread-program 21>

    <exitProgram 37b>

    <print-comparision 32b>

    <print-comparision16 28b>

    <cache-readback 26b>

    <clear-cache 23>

    <calculate-cache-access-time 8>

    <detect-cache-area-time 24>

    <detect-byte 25a>

    <xorshift-prng 38a>

    <utilities 37a>
    Uses data 9a and pagesize 5.

```


3 Signals

3.1 Basics

TBD

3.2 Detecting Signals

TBD

3.3 Handling Signals

TBD

4 Utilities

4.1 Introduction

TBD

37a $\langle utilities\ 37a \rangle \equiv$ (12c 20 33)
 $\langle nprint\ 39b \rangle$

 $\langle print\ 40a \rangle$

 $\langle printdu64bit\ 41a \rangle$

 $\langle printh8bit\ 44a \rangle$

4.2 Common Chunks

4.2.1 Exit Program

This chunk ends the program with exit code 0.

37b $\langle exitProgram\ 37b \rangle \equiv$ (12b 19d 33)
 xor RDI,RDI
 mov RAX,60
 syscall

4.2.2 Stack Frame

A chunk to create a stack frame.

37c $\langle enterstackframe\ 37c \rangle \equiv$ (15a)
 push RBP
 mov RBP,RSP

A chunk to clean up the created stack frame.

37d $\langle leavestackframe\ 37d \rangle \equiv$ (16)
 mov RSP,RBP
 pop RBP

4.3 Random Number Generator

To initialize the data a [random number generator \(RNG\)](#) is used. The sample programs use [xorshift](#)¹ as [RNG](#).

First we clear the direction flag to ensure that we are incrementing the data pointer RDI.

Next we move the number of values to be generated to RCX (which is a counter in [x86](#) processors) and divide it by 4 (because we use a 32bit [RNG](#)). Additionally we move the seed to EAX.

Parameters

RDI	the address of the memory which is to be filled with random numbers
RSI	the number of bytes that are filled with random numbers. This must be a multiple of 4
EDX	the seed of the RNG

```

38a  <xorshift-prng 38a>≡ (12c 20 33) 38b>
      _xorshift:
          cld
          mov     RCX,RSI
          shr     RCX,2
          mov     EAX,EDX

```

Defines:

`_xorshift`, used in chunks [10a](#), [14b](#), [21](#), and [22b](#).

Now we can generate the next 32bit random number.

```

38b  <xorshift-prng 38a>+≡ (12c 20 33) <38a 39a>
      .next_random:
          mov     EBX,EAX
          shl     EAX,13
          xor     EAX,EBX
          mov     EBX,EAX
          shr     EAX,17
          xor     EAX,EBX
          mov     EBX,EAX
          shl     EAX,5
          xor     EAX,EBX

```

¹<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xorshift>

Because we want to generate multiple random numbers we store the value of `EAX` to `[RDI]` and loop for the next random number.

```
39a  <xorshift-prng 38a>+≡ (12c 20 33) <38b
      stosd
      loop    .next_random
      ret
```

4.4 Printing Strings

4.4.1 Printing Strings with Length

The routine `_nprint` prints a string with the given length to `stdout`.

We move the number of bytes to print to `RDX` which is the 3rd parameter to the systemcall. Next we move the address of the bytes to print to `RSI` which is the 2nd parameter to the systemcall. The 1st argument (in `RDI`) to the systemcall is the file descriptor (1 is `stdout`). Additionally the number of the systemcall (1) is passed in `RAX`. The systemcall (`syscall`) now prints `RDX` bytes from `[RSI]` to the file descriptor `RDI`.

At the end we return to the caller.

Parameters

`RDI` the number of bytes to print to `stdout`

`RSI` the address to the bytes to print to `stdout`

```
39b  <nprint 39b>≡ (37a)
      _nprint:
      mov     RDX,RDI
      mov     RDI,1
      mov     RAX,1
      syscall
      ret
```

Defines:

`_nprint`, used in chunks 11d, 12a, 19, 24, 29c, 31, 32a, 40d, 43b, and 44c.

4.4.2 Printing C-Strings

The routine `_print` prints a null-terminated string to `stdout`.

First we clear the direction flag to increment the address in `RDI` while scanning the data.

Next we start with clearing `AL` (setting it to null) and saving the address of the string to `RSI`. We're using `RSI` because we later need the address to calculate the length of the string.

Parameters

RDI the address to the null-terminated bytes to print to **stdout**

40a $\langle \textit{print } 40a \rangle \equiv$ (37a) 40b \triangleright

```

    _print:
        cld
        xor     AL,AL
        mov     RSI,RDI

```

Defines:

`_print`, used in chunks 11b, 12a, 18, 19, and 30–32.

Next we search for the terminating **null** (`'\0'`) character. For this we use the instruction **scasb** (scan string byte) which compares the byte at the address **[RDI]** with the value in **AL** and sets the flags accordingly. When the byte at **[RDI]** is not the value of **AL** the next instruction (**jne**) jumps to the given label (`.next_char` in this case).

scasb additionally increments **RDI** so that we go through the string until `'\0'` is found.

40b $\langle \textit{print } 40a \rangle + \equiv$ (37a) \triangleleft 40a 40c \triangleright

```

    .next_char:
        scasb
        jne     .next_char

```

After we have found the string termination we calculate the number of bytes that the string has. In **RSI** we now have the starting address of the bytes to print and in **RDI** we have the end address of the bytes to print. After that we calculate the number of bytes to print.

40c $\langle \textit{print } 40a \rangle + \equiv$ (37a) \triangleleft 40b 40d \triangleright

```

        sub     RDI,RSI

```

Now we have the address of the string in **RDI** and the length of the string in **RSI** which are the 1st and 2nd argument in the call of `_nprint`.

40d $\langle \textit{print } 40a \rangle + \equiv$ (37a) \triangleleft 40c

```

        call    _nprint
        ret

```

Uses `_nprint` 39b.

4.5 Printing Numbers

4.5.1 Printing a Decimal 64bit Unsigned Integer

The routine `_printdu64bit` prints a given 64bit integer as unsigned decimal number to `stdout`.

To print a decimal number we have to divide the number by 10 and get the remainder for printing (from right to left). For this we move the divisor to a register and the dividend to `RAX`. We have to use `RAX` because this is the only register we can use for division.

Additionally we need the address of the scratch area in `RDI` for storing the result. We also save the address of the scratch area to `R8` for later use.

To increment the address during the processing we clear the direction flag.

Parameters

`RDI` the number number to print to `stdout`

`RSI` the address of a scratch area with a size of at least 20 bytes

```
41a  <printdu64bit 41a>≡ (37a) 41b>
    _printdu64bit:
        mov     RAX,RDI
        mov     RDI,RSI
        mov     R8,RDI
        mov     RCX,10
        cld
```

Defines:

`_printdu64bit`, used in chunks 11c, 12a, 19b, and 24.

Now we define a label to jump back when we see that there are still more digits to print. Then we test `RAX` for 0 and end the processing of the digits.

```
41b  <printdu64bit 41a>+≡ (37a) <41a 41c>
    .next:
        cmp     RAX,0
        je      .done
```

Next we divide `RAX` by `RCX`. For this we have to clear `RDX` because this is the higher value of the dividend. The result is then placed into `RAX` and the remainder into `RDX`.

```
41c  <printdu64bit 41a>+≡ (37a) <41b 42a>
        xor     RDX,RDX
        div     RCX
```

4 Utilities

We now exchange the result and the remainder because we now need the remainder in RAX (or AL) for further processing. Now we can add the [ASCII](#) character '0' to AL and have the correct [ASCII](#) value in AL. Now we can store the [ASCII](#) character to the scratch area.

```
42a  <printdu64bit 41a>+≡ (37a) <41c 42b>
      xchg      RDX,RAX
      add       AL,'0'
      stosb
```

Now we restore RAX (which we saved to RDX) to go into the next round.

```
42b  <printdu64bit 41a>+≡ (37a) <42a 42c>
      mov       RAX,RDX
      jmp       .next
```

Now that we have all the numbers as [ASCII](#) characters we are nearly done. We now have to reverse the number in memory because the number saved at the lowest address is the digit with the least significance.

We now start with checking if we have written any character. If not then we write the [ASCII](#) character '0' into the memory. We use the instruction `stosb` for this to adjust the address in RDI at the same time.

```
42c  <printdu64bit 41a>+≡ (37a) <42b 42d>
      .done:
      cmp       RDI,RSI
      jne       .printout
      mov       AL,'0'
      stosb
      .printout:
```

Next we calculate the number of digits that the number has. For this we move the address of the last digit to RDX and subtract the start of the scratch area from this. Next we adjust RDI because it points to the first address after the number.

```
42d  <printdu64bit 41a>+≡ (37a) <42c 43a>
      mov       RDX,RDI
      sub       RDX,RSI
      dec       RDI
```

We now have `RSI` with the address of the start of the number and `RDI` with the address of the end. We now have to exchange the digits from the front and the end to get the right number. For this we increment `RSI` and decrement `RDI` after each exchange and when the addresses pass each other we are done.

```
43a  <printdu64bit 41a>+≡ (37a) <42d 43b>
      .reverse:
      mov     AL,[RSI]
      mov     AH,[RDI]
      mov     [RSI],AH
      mov     [RDI],AL
      dec     RDI
      inc     RSI
      cmp     RSI,RDI
      jb      .reverse
```

Now we restore the address of the scratch area to `RSI` and move the number of digits (which we stored in `RDY`) to `RDI` and can the call `_nprint` to print the number.

```
43b  <printdu64bit 41a>+≡ (37a) <43a
      mov     RSI,R8
      mov     RDI,RDX
      call    _nprint
      ret
```

Uses `_nprint` 39b.

4.5.2 Printing a Hexadecimal 8bit Integer

The routine `_printh8bit` prints a given 8bit integer as hexadecimal number to `stdout`.

To print a hexadecimal number we mask a nibble (4bit) and have the number to print.

First we clear the register `RAX` and move the number to `AX` for further processing and clear the higher 8bit (`AH`). Additionally we move it to `R8` for later restore.

Additionally we need the address of the scratch area in `RDI` for storing the result.

To increment the address during the processing we clear the direction flag.

Parameters

`DI` the number number to print to `stdout`. Only the lower 8bit are used.

`RSI` the address of a scratch area with a size of at least 2 bytes

```
44a  <printh8bit 44a>≡ (37a) 44b>
      _printh8bit:
          xor     RAX,RAX
          mov     AX,DI
          xor     AH,AH
          mov     R8,RAX
          mov     RDI,RSI
          cld
```

Defines:

`_printh8bit`, used in chunks 19, 29c, and 31.

Now we mask the higher 4 bit of `AL` by shifting it 4 bits to the right and mask out all but the lower 4 bit. Next we call the internal method `printh8bit.printh4bit` to print out this nibble.

```
44b  <printh8bit 44a>+= (37a) <44a 44c>
          shr     AL,4
          and     AL,0x0f
          call    .printh4bit
```

Next we restore the number and print out the lower 4 bits.

```
44c  <printh8bit 44a>+= (37a) <44b
          mov     RAX,R8
          and     AL,0x0f
          call    .printh4bit
          mov     RDI,2
          call    _nprint
          ret
      <printh8bit.printh4bit 45a>
```

Uses `_nprint` 39b.

Now we define the internal method to print a hexadecimal digit.

First we test if the digit is above or equal to 10. In this case we have to print out a character between 'a' and 'f' else we print out a decimal digit (between '0' and '9').

Parameters (internal)

AL the lower 4 bit contain the hexadecimal digit print to `stdout`

RDI the address of a scratch area

```
45a  <printh8bit.printh4bit 45a>≡ (44c) 45b>
      .printh4bit:
          cmp     AL,10
          jae     .printa2f
```

Defines:

`printh8bit.printh4bit`, never used.

Now we add '0' to get the code for the digit between '0' and '9'.

```
45b  <printh8bit.printh4bit 45a>+≡ (44c) <45a 45c>
      add     AL,'0'
      jmp     .printout
```

Else we print a digit between 'a' and 'f'. We first subtract 10 because the value in AL is now between 10 and 15.

```
45c  <printh8bit.printh4bit 45a>+≡ (44c) <45b 45d>
      .printa2f:
          sub     AL,10
          add     AL,'a'
```

Now we store the character into the storage area.

```
45d  <printh8bit.printh4bit 45a>+≡ (44c) <45c
      .printout:
          stosb
          ret
```


A Glossary

x86 x86 denotes a microprocessor architecture based on the 8086/8088 [38](#)

B Acronyms

ASCII American Standard Code for Information Interchange [42](#)

LF line feed [11](#), [19](#)

RNG random number generator [38](#)

C x86-Instructions

`clflush` Flush Cache Line, introduced with Intel[®] Pentium[®] 4 [10](#)

`lfence` Load Fence, introduced with Intel[®] Pentium[®] 4 [8](#), [10](#)

`rdtsc` Read Time Stamp Counter, introduced with Intel[®] Pentium[®] [7](#), [9](#)

D Code Chunks

<analyzecachemintiming 17>
<cache-readback 26b>
<cacheread-program 21>
<cacheread-rodata 28a>
<cacheread-sample 22c>
<cacheread-udata 22a>
<cacheread.asm 33>
<cachereadbyte-program 13b>
<cachereadbyte-rodata 18c>
<cachereadbyte.asm 20>
<cachetiming-program 9c>
<cachetiming-rodata 10f>
<cachetiming.asm 12c>
<calculate-cache-access-time 8>
<clear-cache 23>
<clearcache 13a>
<common-rodata 11a>
<data-udata 9a>
<detect-byte 25a>
<detect-cache-area-time 24>
<enterstackframe 37c>
<exitProgram 37b>
<init-random-data 9d>
<init-random-probe 14b>
<leavestackframe 37d>
<license 78>
<nprint 39b>
<preamble 5>
<print 40a>
<print-comparision 32b>
<print-comparision16 28b>
<printdu64bit 41a>
<printh8bit 44a>
<printh8bit.printh4bit 45a>
<probe-udata 14a>
<readback-udata 26a>
<readcachetiming 15a>

D Code Chunks

<scratch-udata 9b>
<timings-udata 18a>
<tsc-64bit 7>
<utilities 37a>
<xorshift-prng 38a>

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