Rehosting and coverage guided fuzzing of embedded network services

Marc Heuse <marc@srlabs.de>

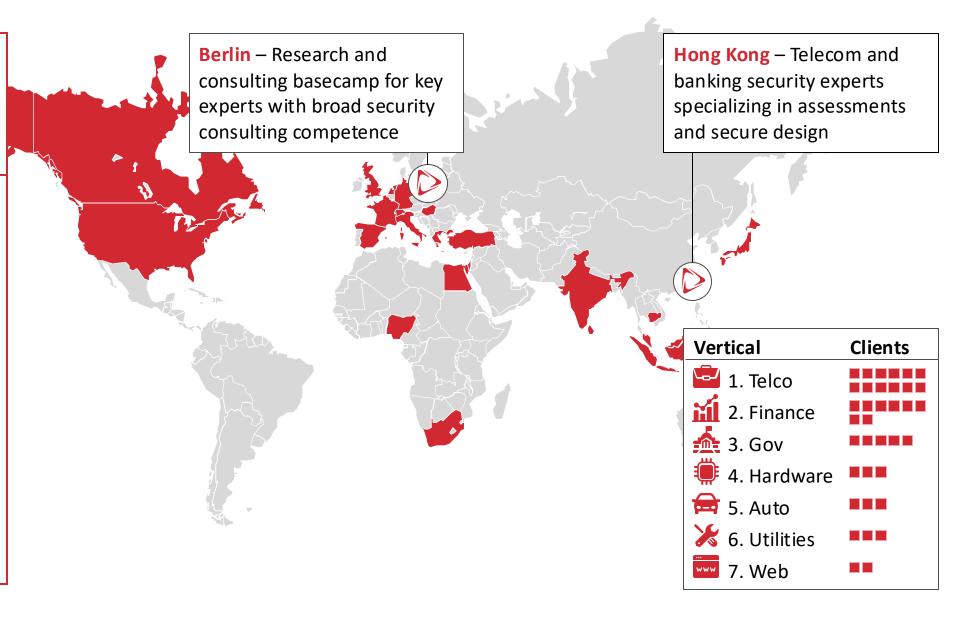


I lead complex code audits at Security Research Labs



Marc "vanHauser" Heuse Team Lead

- 25 years IT security industry in-depth experience
- Author of AFL++, hydra, thc-ipv6, amap, THC-Scan, SuSEfirewall2, etc.
- Focus on complex system analysis, embedded device analysis, reverse engineering, fuzzing, source code audits



Agenda

- A Workshop introduction
- B Workshop preparation
- **C** From firmware to fuzzing

Continuously providing randomly malformed data to a target is a highly efficient way to find bugs

Definition

fuzz testing

noun /fʌz ˈtɛstɪŋ/

A software testing technique that involves automatically feeding a program with large volumes of invalid, unexpected, or random data ("fuzz") to detect bugs, crashes, memory leaks, or security vulnerabilities.

Impact

Google's free fuzzing platform OSS-Fuzz has found

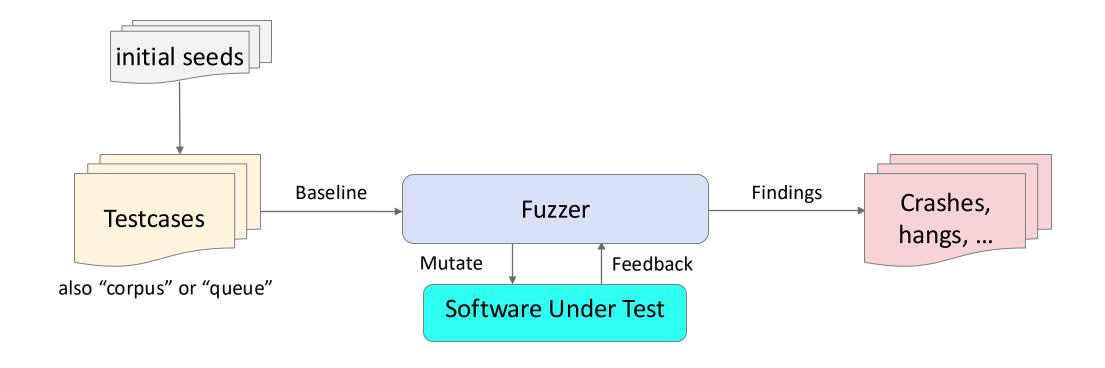
- more than 8,800 vulnerabilities and
- 28,000 bugs in 850 critical open-source projects since 2016

In this workshop you learn how to rehost network services from embedded systems for fuzzing



- We assume basic fuzzing knowledge
- Some AFL++ experience is a prerequisite
- Use Linux (Ubuntu 24.04 preferred) MacOS at your own risk only

There are not many components to a fuzzer



Fuzzing network services on embedded devices is important, effective – and difficult

Fuzzing embedded devices is important

- Besides manual testing and reverse engineering binaries, fuzzing is one of the most effective techniques to identify vulnerabilities in an embedded device.
- It can uncover memory corruption issues that an attacker could exploit to compromise the target.

Embedded fuzzing is often very difficult though

To be able to fuzz an embedded services we face many issues:

- Target service and its execution environment required
- On-device testing difficult due CPU & RAM limits and security restrictions
- Target service has often complex device and process dependencies

We show you an approach that often works – and is "easy"

We successfully fuzz embedded network services by:

- 1. Copying over the embedded filesystem (rehosting)
- 2. Running the service rehosted and on the device to identify required process and device interactions
- 3. Mock/Patch process and device interactions
- 4. Fuzz the service!

Fuzzing a rehosted embedded network service on a dedicated machine has multiple advantages

Speed	 A laptop/server has more CPU and RAM, leading to faster executions and more parallel fuzzing instances
Coverage	 Through emulation we obtain coverage information on our fuzzing efforts helping to perform in-depth testing
Mocking	 By preloading, patching or emulation modifications, limitations on fuzzing can be circumnavigated

Agenda

- A Workshop introduction
- **B** Workshop preparation
- **C** From firmware to fuzzing



Prerequisite 1/2: Get the docker container that has all required files and tools

	Get the	docker pull vanhauser/workshop
7	workshop	
	docker	
	container	

Run the workshop docker container

docker run -ti -v /tmp:/share --privileged vanhauser/workshop

Prerequisite 2/2: Have a binary reverse engineering tool of your choice available

Ghidra	<pre>wget https://github.com/NationalSecurityAgency/ghidra/releases/downloa d/Ghidra_11.4_build/ghidra_11.4_PUBLIC_20250620.zip</pre>	
Binary Ninja	firefox https://binary.ninja/free/	

Agenda

- A Workshop introduction
- B Workshop preparation
- **C** From firmware to fuzzing

Our target for this workshop: ASUS ExpertWiFi EBM68



We fuzz our target in five steps

Obtain FW

Either:

- Copy from target
- Download from vendor
- Get from forums

Analyze FW

Identify architecture and **GLIBC** version

Cross-compile

Cross compile same GLIBC version for the architecture of the target

Set-up & test

Rehost the target service and test it modifying the environment until it runs

Fuzz!

Select the fuzzing technique, prepare the target – and fuzz!

1 Obtain the firmware

Browse to https://www.asus.com/de/supportonly/ebm68/helpdesk bios/ and select a firmware update to download.

Utilities



https://dlcdnets.asus.com/pub/ASUS/wireless/EBM68/FW_EBM68_300610244384.zip?model=EBM68

You can find it in the workshop docker container as FW EBM68 300610244384.zip

2 Unpack the firmware, then identify the architecture and GLIBC version

```
Unzip FW
          unzip FW EBM68 300610244384.zip
Binwalk
          binwalk -e --run-as=root EBM68 3.0.0.6 102 44384 -g304340a 370-
extracts FW
          g24e51 sec nand squashfs.pkgtb
binary data
Go to the
          cd EBM68 3.0.0.6 102 44384 -g304340a 370-
extracted file
          g24e51 sec nand squashfs.pkgtb.extracted
system
           cd squashfs-root
Identify arch
          file lib/libc.so*
and GLIBC
           strings lib/libc.so* | grep GLIBC | tail
lib/libc.so.6: ELF 32-bit LSB shared object, ARM, EABI5 version 1 (SYSV), ...
GLIBC 2.30
```

If in your future research binwalk fails – well bad for you :-)



3 Cross-compile a compatible GLIBC to the target architecture

```
Unpack
          # wget https://ftp.gnu.org/gnu/glibc/glibc-2.30.tar.gz #
GLIBC
          tar xzf glibc-2.30.tar.qz
          cd glibc-2.30
Create a
          mkdir build
build
          cd build
directory and
          ../configure --host=arm-linux-gnueabi \
configure for
            --build=x86 64-linux-gnu CC=arm-linux-gnueabi-gcc-9 \
ARM
            CXX=arm-linux-qnueabi-q++-9 AR=arm-linux-qnueabi-ar \
            AS=arm-linux-qnueabi-as LD=arm-linux-qnueabi-ld \
            RANLIB=arm-linux-qnueabi-ranlib \
            STRIP=arm-linux-gnueabi-strip \
            --prefix=`pwd`/local install
```

Build GLIBC for ARM

make -j4

Install locally

make install # this is installed to \$PWD/local install

3 Cross-compile a compatible GLIBC – compiling for the target

```
Use the repository script
```

```
cross-compile.sh -o target.so target.c
```

```
Or cross-
compile by
hand for the
ARM target
with GLIBC
2.30
```

```
arm-linux-gnueabi-gcc-9 -mfloat-abi=soft -nostdlib \
   -Wl,--dynamic-linker=/lib/ld-linux.so.3 \
   -Wl,-rpath=/lib \
   -I./glibc-2.30/build/local_install/include \
   -L./glibc-2.30/build/local_install/lib \
   -shared -fPIC \
   -o target.so target.c
```

4 Obtain the binary, its libraries and other necessary files

In our setup we do not need this step as we have a full copy of the filesystem (preferred!).

4 Obtain the binary, its libraries and other necessary files – then test the target

Our target is	Our target is usr/sbin/httpd — a self written HTTP server by Asus.		
Enter the target root	cd /path/to/squashfs-root		
Be root (port bind!)	sudo bash		
Test the target – fix any issues!	qemu-arm -L `pwd` usr/sbin/httpd		

5 Carefully choose how to fuzz the target

Fuzzing technique	Advantages	Disadvantages
Blind via TCP/IP (we do not care for this basic approach in this workshop ©)	Easiest setupMany tools available	Unknown coverageHard to find bugs
Overage-guided via TCP/IP	CoverageMinimal target modification	Slow
Coverage-guided with desocketing	CoverageMinimal target modificationFast	Desocketing can be very difficult
• Coverage-guided persistent	CoverageSuper fast	 Some/huge target modification required No state allowed in the fuzzed functionality Sometimes impossible

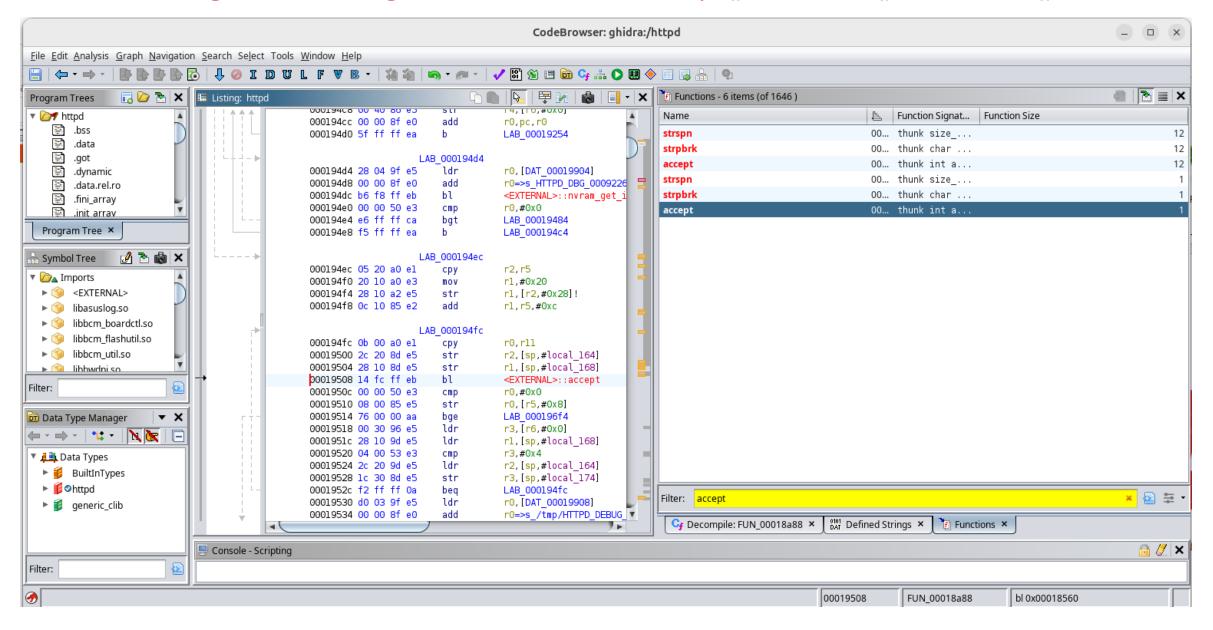
Coverage guided fuzzing considerations – fuzzing happens in a loop

The fuzzing process in the target	What we need to do	
1. The fuzzing loop starts from forkserver	Find the optimal entry address	
2. The target reads the fuzzing input	TCP/IP, desocketing, in-process	
3. The targets processes the input		
4. The target must exit after processing the input	patch in _exit()/return	



5 a

Reverse engineer the target — where does it accept() and close()/shutdown()?



5 How to make the target exit

How to force an exit

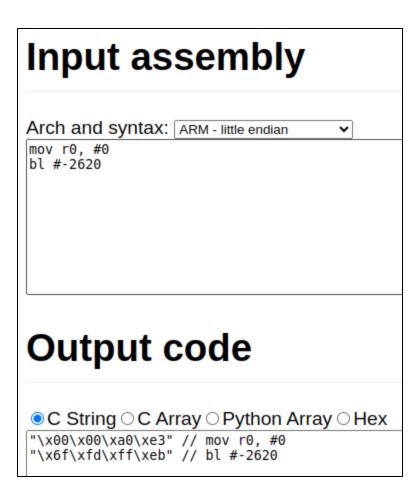
- **1. Binary patch.** Use your binary reverser to modify the import for shutdown() to _exit()
- 2. LD_PRELOAD. Preload a library that hooks shutdown() and calls _exit()
- 3. AFL_EXITPOINT. Define the address for qemuafl when to exit.

 (features needs still to be implemented ©)

Key takeaway:

Always use the fastest/easiest solution.

Time to fuzz is important, not a perfect solution!



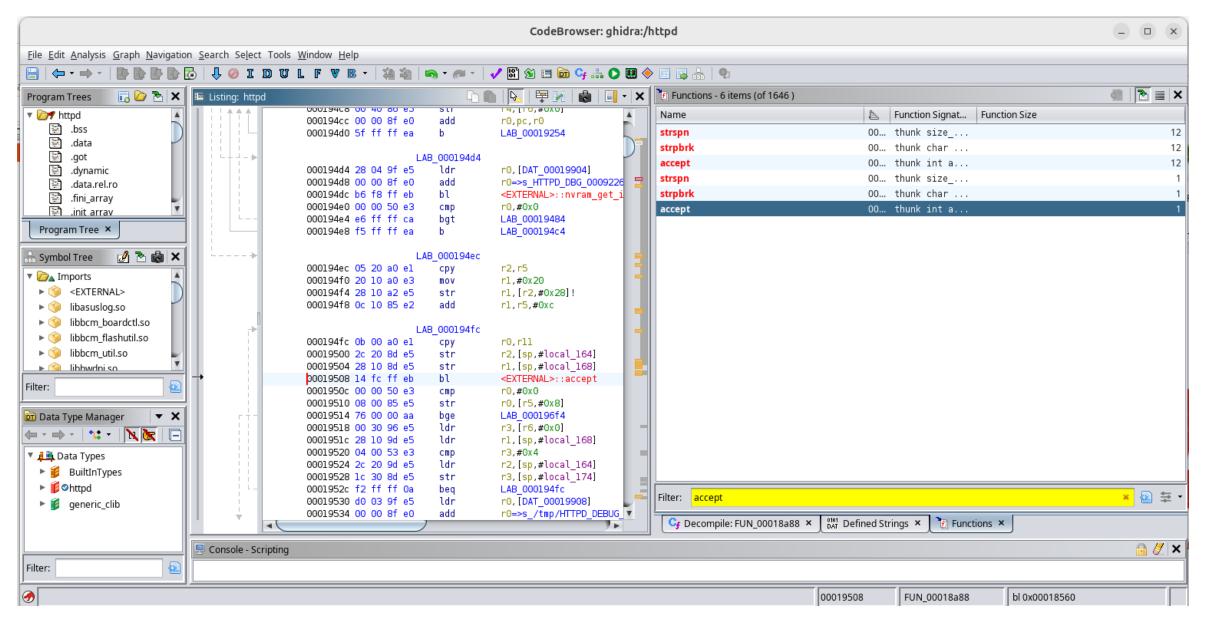
We use AFL++'s custom mutator for TCP send (that is already compiled).

```
export CUSTOM SEND IP=127.0.0.1
Setup
environment
          export CUSTOM SEND PORT=80
for our TCP
          export AFL CUSTOM MUTATOR LIBRARY=
module
            /afl++/custom mutators/custom send tcp/custom send tcp.so
          export AFL CUSTOM MUTATOR LATE SEND=1
          export QEMU LD PREFIX=`pwd`
Preload
          export AFL PRELOAD=./lib-fuzz-tcp.so
shutdown()
          afl-fuzz -Q -i in -o out -c 0 -- usr/sbin/httpd
Fuzz!
```

Security Research Labs

5 a

Reverse engineer the target – where should we set the forkserver? (for more speed)



Fuzz coverage-guided via the TCP/IP

Add for speed

export AFL ENTRYPOINT=0x190c4

Speed without forkserver

1230 exec/s

Speed with forkserver

1885 exec/s +50%!

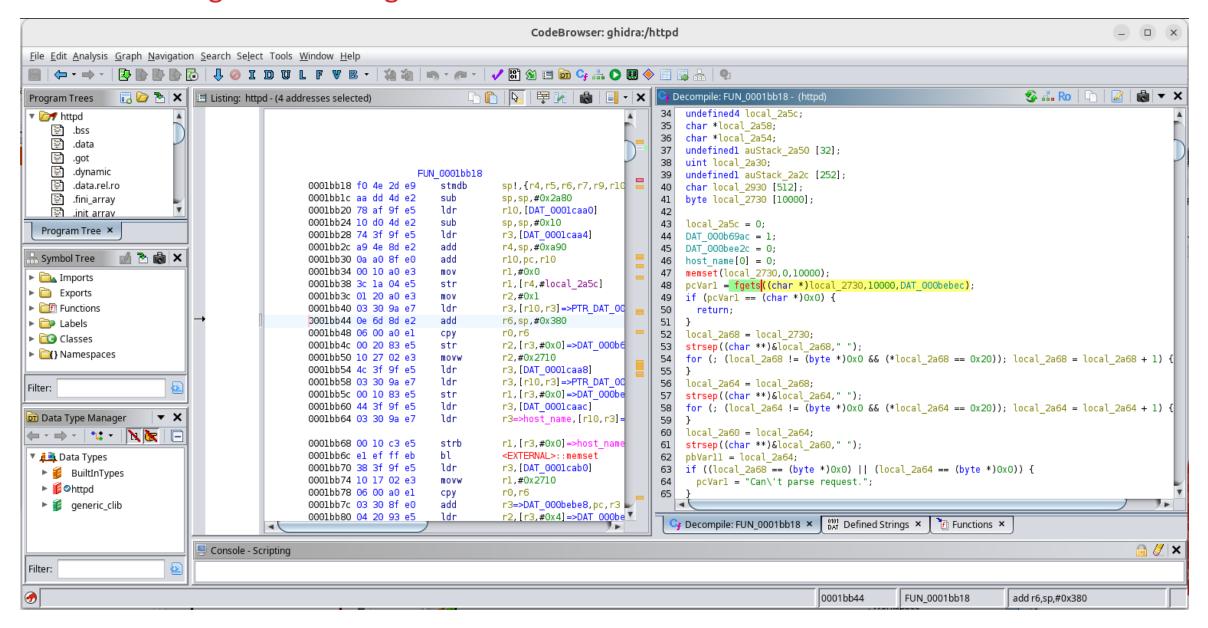


Run as many instances as you want – with network namespaces (if run not in docker)

```
#!/bin/bash
set -e
NS NAME="$1"
ip netns add "$NS NAME"
ip netns exec "$NS NAME" ip link set lo up
ip netns exec "$NS NAME" -- afl-fuzz -S "$NS NAME" -Q ...
ip netns delete "$NS NAME"
```

5b

Reverse engineer the target – how does it interact with the TCP socket?



Fuzz coverage-guided via desocketing

Desocketing explained

Transform the TCP/IP messaging of the target applicated to **stdin** reading/writing by modifying the target.

The usual solution is to AFL_PRELOAD a library that intercepts the accept() call and return file descriptor 0.

- https://github.com/zardus/preeny => desock and desock2
- https://github.com/fkie-cad/libdesock
- https://github.com/zyingp/desockmulti
- https://github.com/vanhauser-thc/network-emulator (fork)

Fuzz coverage-guided via desocketing can be very difficult

Common issue

Statically compiled targets

Complex network libraries (e.g. boost, Rust)

Potential solution is not feasible

Solution path

Binary modification (e.g. with Ghidra) of the function that handles accept()

AFL_PRELOAD the necessary exported functions (which is difficult and messy)

Modify gemuafl to intercept the right accept/read/write

syscalls

Tool hint

Ghidra

https://github.com/NationalSecurityAgency/g hidra/releases

QEMUAFL

https://github.com/AFLplusplus/qemuafl



Fuzz coverage-guided via desocketing

Find the right desocket library and modify it for your target (e.g. handling getsockopt/setsockopt etc.)

```
export AFL PRELOAD=./lib-fuzz-desock.so
Preload
desocketing
          export QEMU LD PREFIX=`pwd`
```

Fuzz! afl-fuzz -Q -i in -o out -c 0 -- usr/sbin/httpd

Fuzz coverage-guided via the desocketing

Add for speed

export AFL ENTRYPOINT=0x1bb84

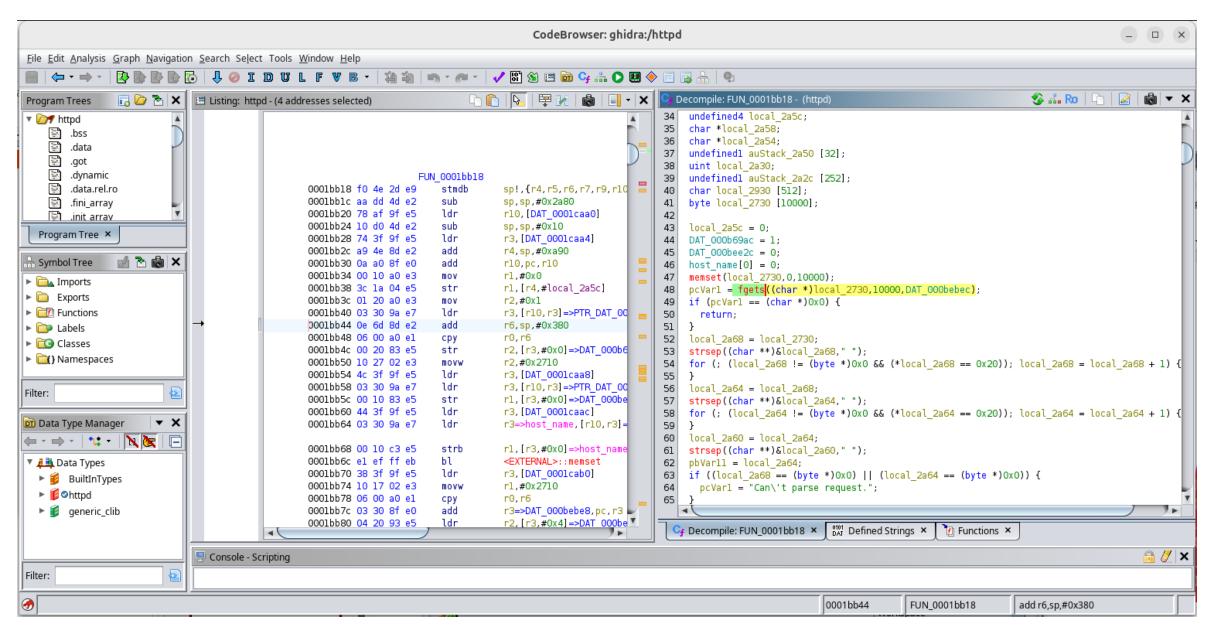
Speed without forkserver

1125 exec/s

Speed with forkserver

1930 exec/s +70%!

Fuzz persistent – how could we fuzz persistently? (start/end loop!)



Fuzz persistent – what we need

What we need

Start & end point of target functionality in one function

- Can be in the middle
- Can call other functions

Stateless functionality: Our target should not keep state

Input path:

We need to be able to easily provide our fuzz input

What we do

- Follow normal program flow functionality if initialization is required
- export function with LIEF if no setup required

We look for globals being set in the call tree

Examine how the data is read. Use afl++/utils/qemu persistent hook to inject data if it is possible

How it is in our target

We can do both:

- export FUN 0001bb18
- patch the binary for select/accept/...
- Use the desocketing library ©

Looks good!

Multiple calls to fgets(), with the FILE pointer being set in main(). Solvable with fmemopen() and overwriting the FILE pointer => super messy.

=> Keep stdin solution!



5 Fuzz persistent

```
Set the persistent loop export AFL_QEMU_PERSISTENT_ADDR=0x195dc export AFL_QEMU_PERSISTENT_RET=0x19688 export AFL_QEMU_PERSISTENT_GPR=1 export QEMU_LD_PREFIX=`pwd` export AFL_PRELOAD=./lib-fuzz-desock.so
```

Fuzz!

afl-fuzz -Q -i in -o out -c 0 -- usr/sbin/httpd

Speed!!! ☺

14235 exec/s

Add a target dictionary for better coverage

Workshop material: You can find everything (including slides) in the repository

Clone workshop repository

Git clone https://github.com/srlabs/rehosting-fuzzing-workshop/
cd rehosting-fuzzing-workshop/

Copy-paste commands

less COMMANDS.md

Any final questions?

