
Root Causes for Vulnerability

Overview

- **Vulnerability classes**
- **Memory corruption vulnerabilities**
- **Default or hardcoded credentials**
- **User enumeration**
- **Incorrect resource access**
- **Memory exhaustion attacks**
- **Storage exhaustion attacks**
- **CPU exhaustion attacks**
- **Format string vulnerabilities**
- **Command Injection**
- **SQL Injection**
- **Text-encoding character replacement**

Vulnerability classes

- **Remote Code Execution**
- Denial-of-Service
- Information Disclosure
- Authentication Bypass
- Authorization Bypass
 - Don't confuse authorization bypass with authentication bypass vulnerabilities.

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Vulnerability classes

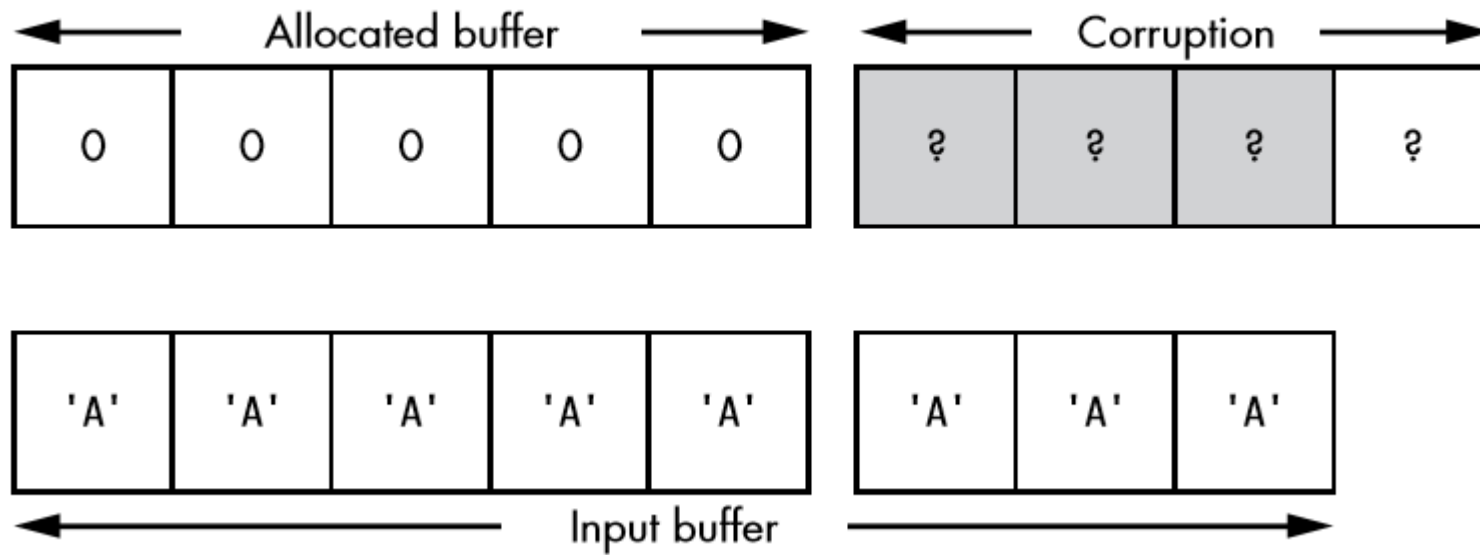
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Memory corruption vulnerabilities

- **Memory-Safe vs. Memory-Unsafe Programming Languages**
- **Memory Buffer Overflows**



Memory Buffer Overflows

- **Fixed-Length Buffer Overflows**

```
...  
char buf[BUFSIZE];  
gets(buf);  
...
```

```
...  
char buf[BUFSIZE];  
cin >> (buf);  
...
```

```
char *lccopy(const char *str) {  
    char buf[BUFSIZE];  
    char *p;  
  
    strcpy(buf, str);  
    for (p = buf; *p; p++) {  
        if (isupper(*p)) {  
            *p = tolower(*p);  
        }  
    }  
    return strdup(buf);  
}
```

Memory Buffer Overflows

- **Variable-Length Buffer Overflows**

```
def read_uint32_array()
{
    uint32 len;
    uint32[] buf;

    // Read the number of words from the network
    ❶ len = read_uint32();

    // Allocate memory buffer
    ❷ buf = malloc(len * sizeof(uint32));

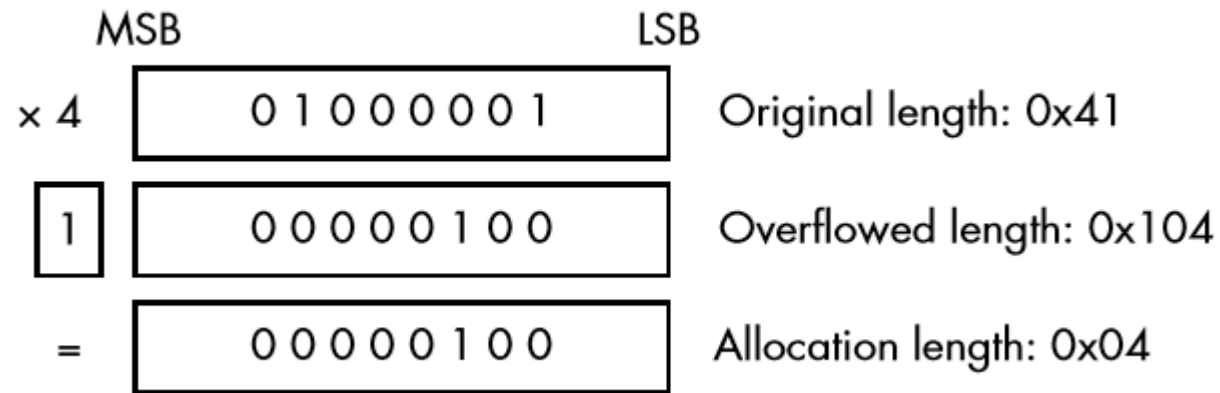
    // Read values
    for(uint32 i = 0; i < len; ++i)
    {
        ❸ buf[i] = read_uint32();
    }
    printf("Read in %d uint32 values\n", len);
}
```

Integer Overflows

- **Module Arithmetic**

- 8 bit integer example

- $65 * 4 = 260$



Integer Overflows

- **Out-of-Bounds Buffer Indexing**

```
❶ byte app_flags[32];

def update_flag_value()
{
❷ byte index = read_byte();
  byte value = read_byte();

  printf("Writing %d to index %d\n", value, index);

❸ app_flags[index] = value;
}
```

- **Dynamic Memory Allocation Failures**

Default or hardcoded credentials

- **Default Credentials**
- **Hardcoded Credentials**

```
def process_authentication()
{
❶ string username = read_string();
  string password = read_string();

  // Check for debug user, don't forget to remove this before release
❷ if(username == "debug")
  {
    return true;
  }
  else
  {
❸ return check_user_password(username, password);
  }
}
```

User enumeration

```
def process_authentication()
{
    string username = read_string();
    string password = read_string();

    ❶ if(user_exists(username) == false)
    {
        ❷ write_error("User " + username + " doesn't exist");
    }
    else
    {
        ❸ if(check_user_password(username, password))
        {
            write_success("User OK");
        }
        else
        {
            ❹ write_error("User " + username + " password incorrect");
        }
    }
}
```

Incorrect Resource Access

- **Canonicalization**

```
def send_file_to_client()
{
❶  string name = read_string();
    // Concatenate name from client with base path
❷  string fullPath = "/files" + name;

❸  int fd = open(fullPath, READONLY);

    // Read file to memory
❹  byte data[] read_to_end(fd);

    // Send to client
❺  write_bytes(data, len(data));
}
```

Incorrect Resource Access

- **Verbose Errors**

```
def send_file_to_client_with_error()
{
  ❶ string name = read_string();

  // Concatenate name from client with base path
  ❷ string fullPath = "/files" + name;

  ❸ if(!exist(fullPath))
  {
    ❹ write_error("File " + fullPath + " doesn't exist");
  }
  else
  {
    ❺ write_file_to_client(fullPath);
  }
}
```

Memory Exhaustion Attacks

```
def read_buffer()
{
    byte buf[];
    uint32 len;
    int i = 0;

    // Read the number of bytes from the network
    ❶ len = read_uint32();

    // Allocate memory buffer
    ❷ buf = malloc(len);

    // Allocate bytes from network
    ❸ read_bytes(buf, len);

    printf("Read in %d bytes\n", len);
}
```

Storage Exhaustion Attacks

- **Compact embedded systems**
- **Logging**

CPU Exhaustion Attacks

- **Algorithmic Complexity**

```
def bubble_sort(int[] buf)
{
    do
    {
        bool swapped = false;
        int N = len(buf);
        for(int i = 1; i < N - 1; ++i)
        {
            if(buf[i-1] > buf[i])
            {
                // Swap values
                swap( buf[i-1], buf[i] );
                swapped = true;
            }
        }
    } while(swapped == false);
}
```

Notation	Description
$O(1)$	Constant time; the algorithm always takes the same amount of time.
$O(\log N)$	Logarithmic; the worst case is proportional to the logarithm of the number of inputs.
$O(N)$	Linear time; the worst case is proportional to the number of inputs.
$O(N^2)$	Quadratic; the worst case is proportional to the square of the number of inputs.
$O(2^N)$	Exponential; the worst case is proportional to 2 raised to the power N .

CPU Exhaustion Attacks

- **Configurable Cryptography**

```
def process_authentication()
{
❶  string username = read_string();
   string password = read_string();
❷  int iterations = read_int();

   for(int i = 0; i < iterations; ++i)
   {
❸    password = hash_password(password);
   }

❹  return check_user_password(username, password);
}
```

Format String Vulnerabilities

```
def process_authentication()
{
    string username = read_string();
    string password = read_string();

    // Print username and password to terminal
    printf(username);
    printf(password);

    return check_user_password(username, password))
}
```

Format specifier	Description	Potential vulnerabilities
%d, %p, %u, %x	Prints integers	Can be used to disclose information from the stack if returned to an attacker
%s	Prints a zero terminated string	Can be used to disclose information from the stack if returned to an attacker or cause invalid memory accesses to occur, leading to denial-of-service
%n	Writes the current number of printed characters to a pointer specified in the arguments	Can be used to cause selective memory corruption or application crashes

Command Injection

```
def update_password(string username)
{
❶ string oldpassword = read_string();
   string newpassword = read_string();

   if(check_user_password(username, oldpassword))
   {
       // Invoke update_password command
       ❷ system("/sbin/update_password -u " + username + " -p " + newpassword);
   }
}
```

- *password; xcalc*

SQL Injection

```
def process_authentication()
{
❶  string username = read_string();
    string password = read_string();

❷  string sql = "SELECT password FROM user_table WHERE user = '" + username "'";

❸  return run_query(sql) == password;
}
```

Text-Encoding Character Replacement

- ASCII
- Unicode

```
def add_user()
{
❶ string username = read_unicode_string();

    // Ensure username doesn't contain any single quotes
❷ if(username.contains("'") == false)
    {
        // Add user, need to convert to ASCII for the shell
        ❸ system("/sbin/add_user '" + username.toascii() + "'");
    }
}
```

Summary

- **Many possible root causes**
- **Vulnerabilities appear in most surprise places**
- **Identifying vulnerabilities is complex**
 - Network protocols used
 - Third party libraries
 - Languages