

CSE 484 / CSE M 584: Computer Security and Privacy

Software Security: Buffer Overflow Defenses

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Admin

- Assignments:
 - Homework 1: Due today at 11:59pm
 - Lab 1: Sign up, granting access ~once per day, see forum

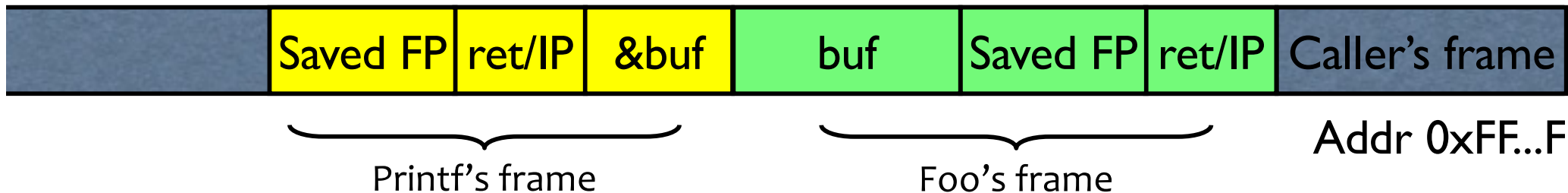
Summary of Printf Risks

- Printf takes a variable number of arguments
 - E.g., `printf(“Here’s an int: %d”, 10);`
- Assumptions about input can lead to trouble
 - E.g., `printf(buf)` when `buf=“Hello world”` versus when `buf=“Hello world %d”`
 - Can be used to advance printf’s internal stack pointer
 - Can read memory
 - E.g., `printf(“%x”)` will print in hex format whatever printf’s internal stack pointer is pointing to at the time
 - Can write memory
 - E.g., `printf(“Hello%n”);` will write “5” to the memory location specified by whatever printf’s internal SP is pointing to at the time

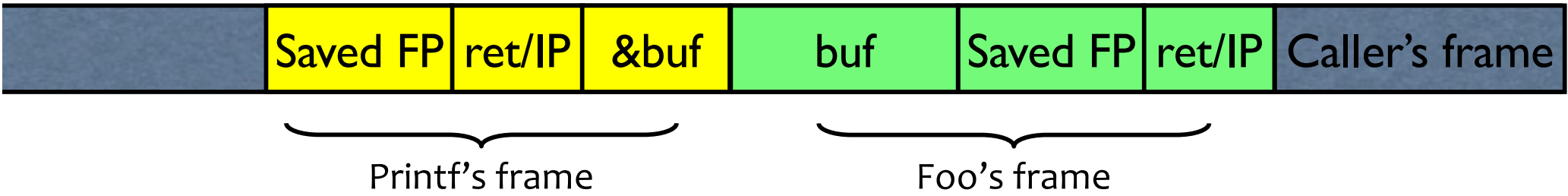
How Can We Attack This?

```
foo () {  
    char buf [...];  
    strncpy (buf, readUntrustedInput (), sizeof (buf));  
    printf (buf); //vulnerable  
}
```

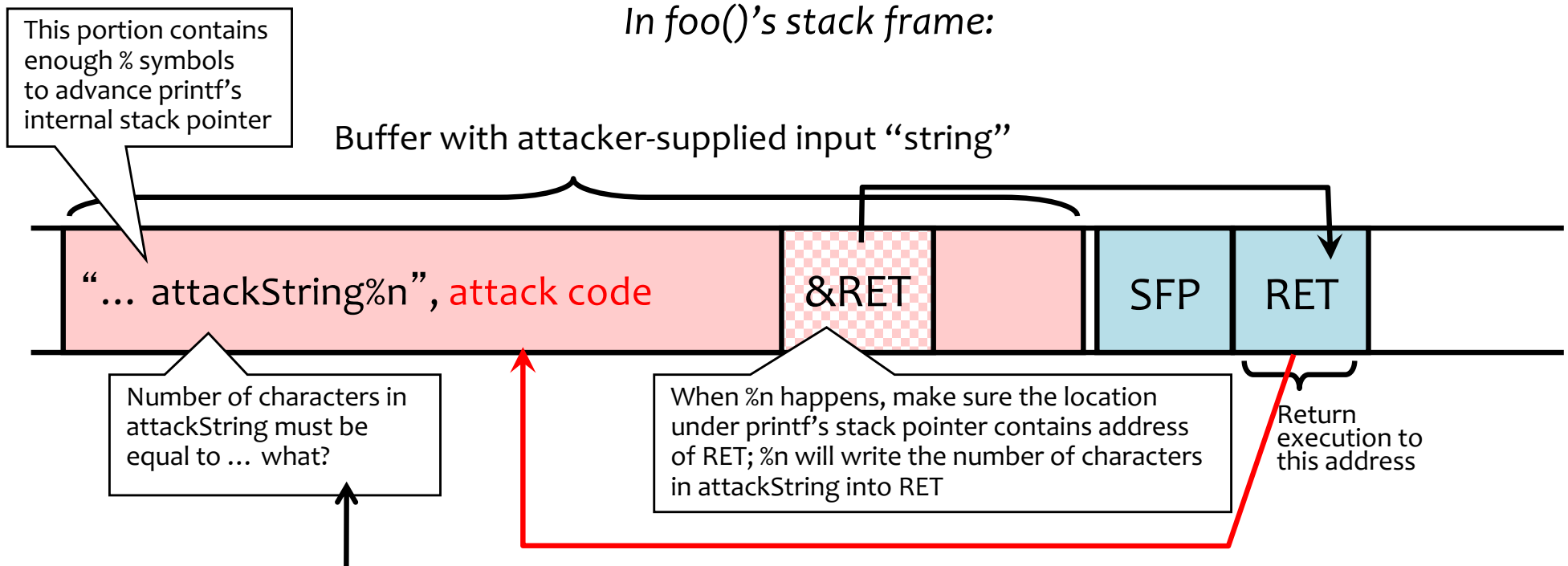
If format string contains % then
printf will expect to find
arguments here...



What should the string returned by readUntrustedInput() contain??



Using %n to Overwrite Return Address



C allows you to concisely specify the "width" to print, causing printf to pad by printing additional blank characters without reading anything else off the stack.

Example: `printf("%5d", 10)` will print three spaces followed by the integer: " 10"

That is, %n will print 5, not 2.

Key idea: do this 4 times with the right numbers to overwrite the return address byte-by-byte. (4x %n to write into &RET, &RET+1, &RET+2, &RET+3)

Recommended Reading

- It will be hard to do Lab 1 without:
 - Reading (see course schedule):
 - Smashing the Stack for Fun and Profit
 - Exploiting Format String Vulnerabilities
 - Attending section next week

Buffer Overflow: Causes and Cures

- Typical memory exploit involves **code injection**
 - Put malicious code at a predictable location in memory, usually masquerading as data
 - Trick vulnerable program into passing control to it
- Possible defenses:
 1. Prevent execution of untrusted code
 2. Stack “canaries”
 3. Encrypt pointers
 4. Address space layout randomization
 5. Code analysis
 6. ...

Executable Space Protection

- Mark all writeable memory locations as non-executable
 - Example: Microsoft's Data Execution Prevention (DEP)
 - **This blocks many code injection exploits**
- Hardware support
 - AMD "NX" bit (no-execute), Intel "XD" bit (executed disable) (in post-2004 CPUs)
 - Makes memory page non-executable
- Widely deployed
 - Windows XP SP2+ (2004), Linux since 2004 (check distribution), OS X 10.5+ (10.4 for stack but not heap), Android 2.3+

What Does “Executable Space Protection” Not Prevent?

- Can still corrupt stack ...
 - ... or function pointers
 - ... or critical data on the heap
- **As long as RET points into existing code, executable space protection will not block control transfer!**
 - return-to-libc exploits

return-to-libc

- Overwrite saved EIP with address of **any library routine**
 - Arrange stack to look like arguments
- Does not look like a huge threat
 - Attacker cannot execute arbitrary code
 - But ... ?
 - Can still call critical functions, like exec
- See lab 1, exploit 8 (extra credit)

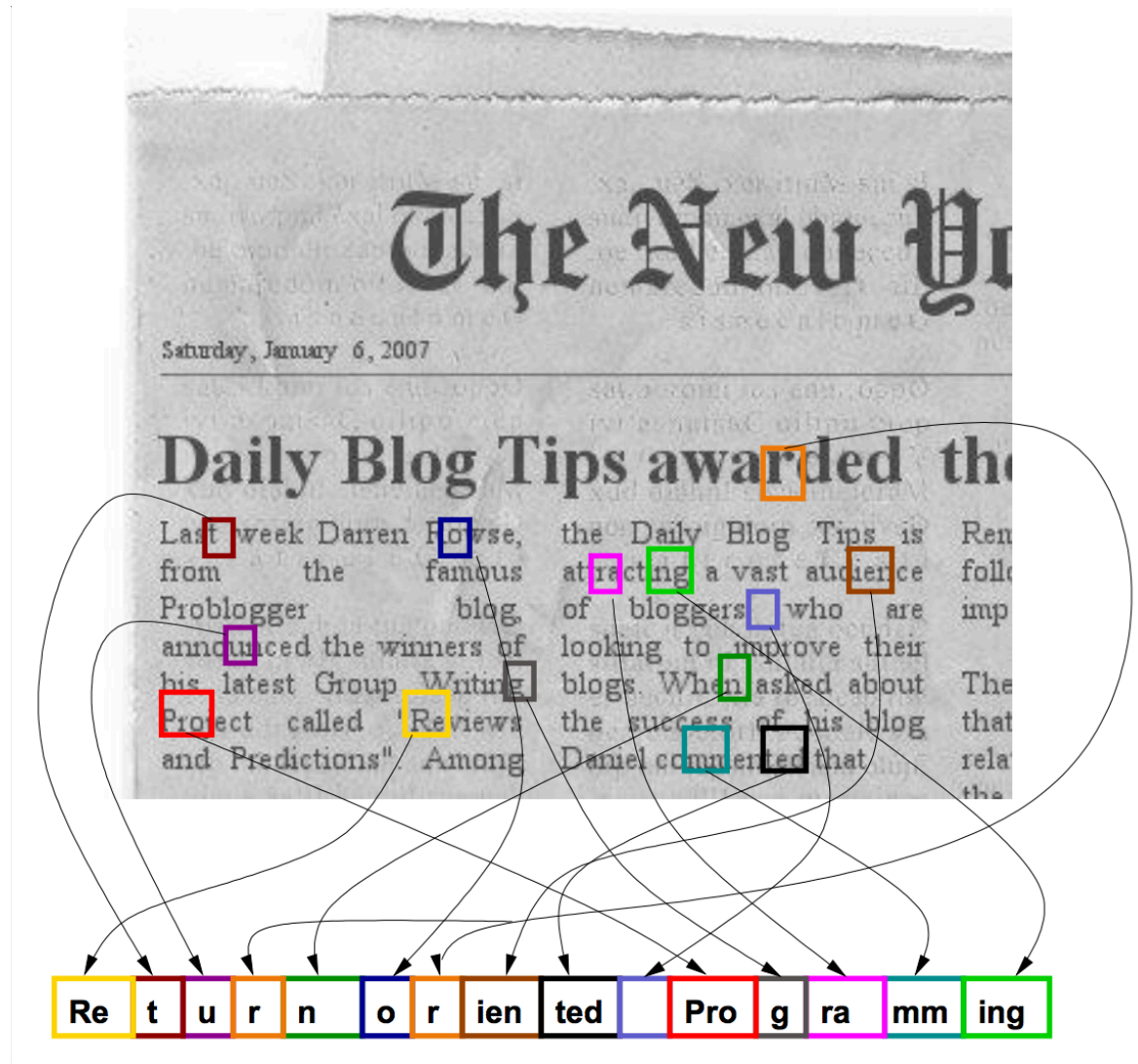
return-to-libc on Steroids

- Insight: Overwritten saved EIP need not point to the *beginning* of a library routine
- **Any** existing instruction in the code image is fine
 - Will execute the sequence starting from this instruction
- What if instruction sequence contains RET?
 - Execution will be transferred... to where?
 - Read the word pointed to by stack pointer (ESP)
 - Guess what? Its value is under attacker's control!
 - Use it as the new value for EIP
 - Now control is transferred to an address of attacker's choice!
 - Increment ESP to point to the next word on the stack

Chaining RETs for Fun and Profit

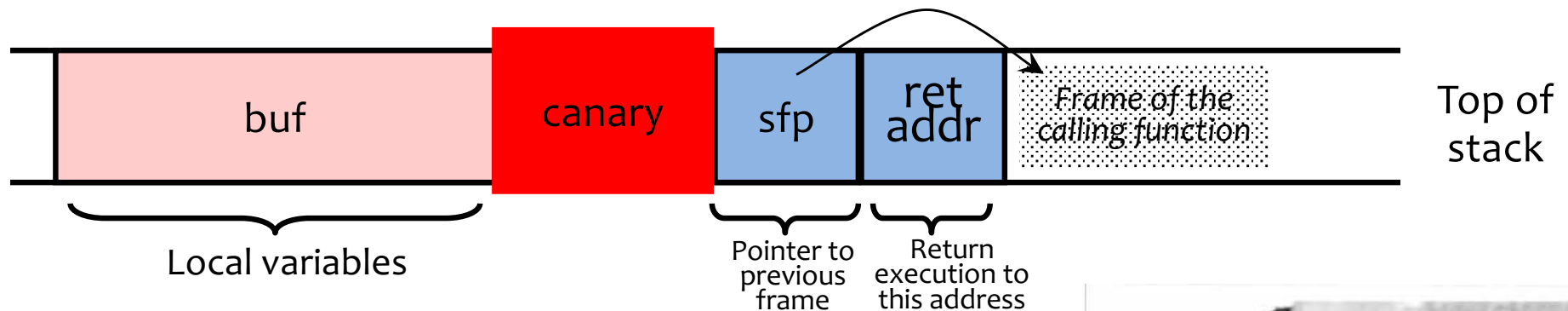
- Can chain together sequences ending in RET
 - Krahrmer, “x86-64 buffer overflow exploits and the borrowed code chunks exploitation technique” (2005)
- What is this good for?
- Answer [Shacham et al.]: **everything**
 - Turing-complete language
 - Build “gadgets” for load-store, arithmetic, logic, control flow, system calls
 - Attack can perform arbitrary computation using no injected code at all – **return-oriented programming**

Return-Oriented Programming



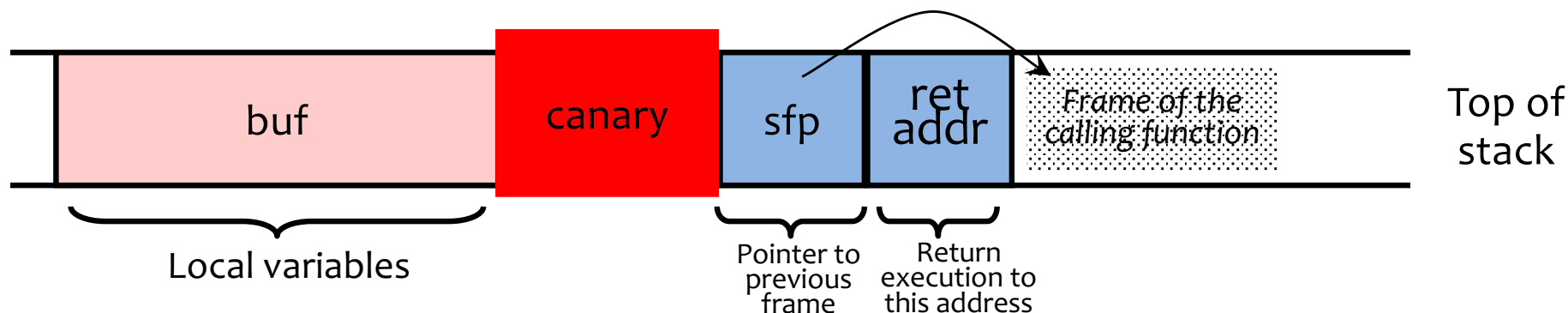
Run-Time Checking: StackGuard

- Embed “canaries” (stack cookies) in stack frames and verify their integrity prior to function return
 - Any overflow of local variables will damage the canary



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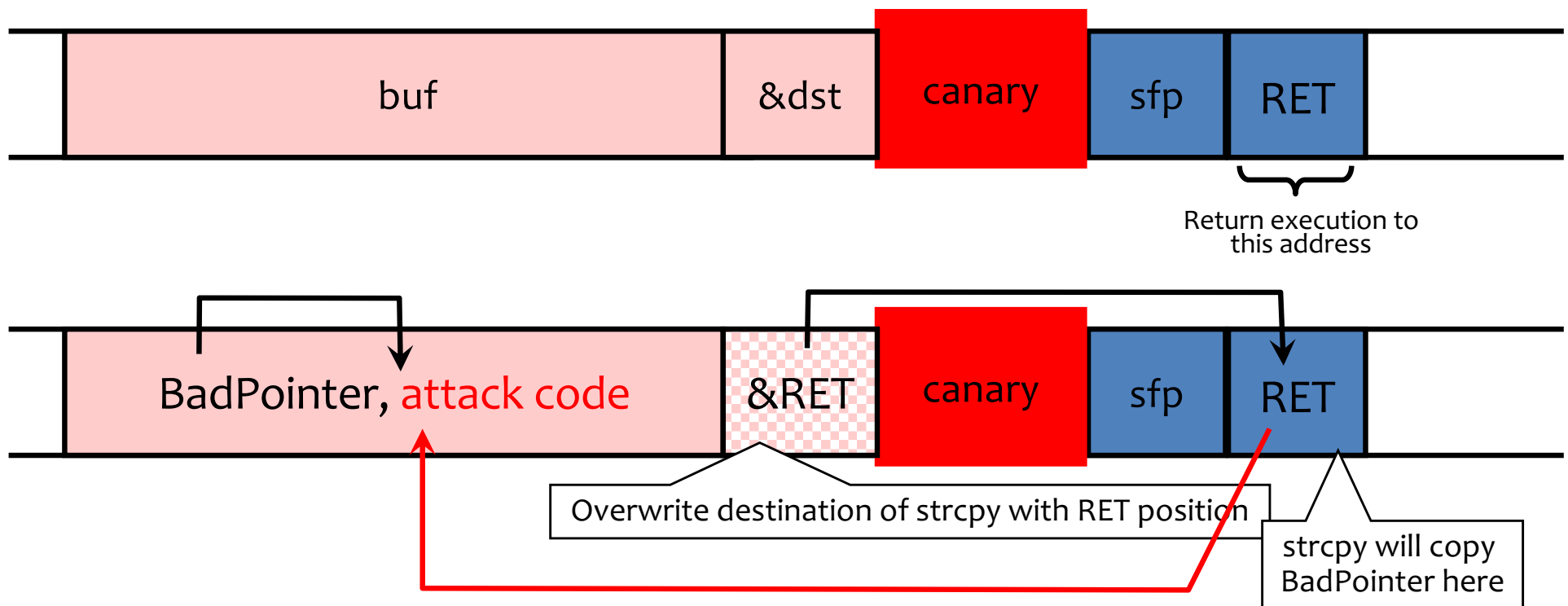
- Choose random canary string on program start
 - Attacker can't guess what the value of canary will be
- Terminator canary: “\0”, newline, linefeed, EOF
 - String functions like strcpy won't copy beyond “\0”

StackGuard Implementation

- StackGuard requires code recompilation
- Checking canary integrity prior to every function return causes a performance penalty
 - For example, 8% for Apache Web server at one point in time
- StackGuard can be defeated
 - A single memory write where the attacker controls both the value and the destination is sufficient

Defeating StackGuard

- Suppose program contains `strcpy(dst,buf)` where attacker controls both `dst` and `buf`
 - Example: `dst` is a local pointer variable



ASLR: Address Space Randomization

- Randomly arrange address space of key data areas for a process
 - Base of executable region
 - Position of stack
 - Position of heap
 - Position of libraries
- Introduced by Linux PaX project in 2001
- Adopted by OpenBSD in 2003
- Adopted by Linux in 2005

ASLR: Address Space Randomization

- Deployment (examples)
 - Linux kernel since 2.6.12 (2005+)
 - Android 4.0+
 - iOS 4.3+ ; OS X 10.5+
 - Microsoft since Windows Vista (2007)
- Attacker goal: Guess or figure out target address (or addresses)
- ASLR more effective on 64-bit architectures

Attacking ASLR

- **NOP slides and heap spraying** to increase likelihood for custom code (e.g., on heap)
- **Brute force attacks or memory disclosures** to map out memory on the fly
 - Disclosing a single address can reveal the location of all code within a library, depending on the ASLR implementation

Other Possible Solutions

- Use safe programming languages, e.g., **Java**
 - What about legacy C code?
 - (Though Java doesn't magically fix all security issues 😊)
- **Static analysis** of source code to find overflows
- **Dynamic testing**: “fuzzing”