

# iOS 10 - Kernel Heap Revisited

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- my talk about the iOS kernel heap was around time of iOS 5
- however many details have changed between iOS 5 and iOS 9
- there are a number of tweets/blog posts about some of these changes but not all (e.g. from Azimuth about iOS 7 page lists)
- some iOS kernel talks at BlackHat do not even mention that there were changes
- and no central talk trying to discuss all these changes

- when this talk was submitted **no iOS 10 beta was publicly available**
- it was expected that iOS 10 would again **slightly** change the heap
- expectation was wrong because 1st iOS 10 beta showed bigger changes
- however iOS 10 is still in beta so details might change until final release

• WARNING: because any kind of kernel research on iOS is harder than on OS X/ MacOS the preliminary analysis of new features was performed with debugging kernel extensions on MacOS and then manually compared to decompilation of iOS 10 kernel

- **Part I:** What is the iOS kernel heap?
- Part II: iOS kernel heap around iOS 5
- Part III: Changes to the iOS kernel heap between iOS 6 and 9
- Part IV: Upcoming changes to the iOS kernel heap in iOS 10



## Part I

#### What is the iOS Kernel Heap?



- most used heap allocator in kernel
- memory is divided into zones
- zones group allocations of same type/size together
- all allocations in one zone are same size



- caller decides what zone is allocated from / freed to
  - ptr = zalloc(zone)
  - zfree(zone, ptr)
- size of allocated block depends on zone
- no variable length allocations

#### List of Zones

#### \$ sudo zprint

Password:

. . .

	elem size	cur size	max size	cur #elts	max #elts	cur inuse	alloc size	alloc count	
zone name									
zones	288	 64K	54K	227	192	215	20K	71	
vm.objects	240	35280K	44286K	150528	188956	134502	4K	17	С
vm.object.hash.entries	40	4928K	5832K	126156	149299	120377	4K	102	С
maps	248	92K	90K	379	371	329	8K	33	
VM.map.entries	80	5832K	7776K	74649	99532	58296	20K	256	С
Reserved.VM.map.entries	80	356K	2560K	4556	32768	146	4K	51	
VM.map.copies	88	16K	24K	186	279	0	8K	93	С
VM.map.holes	32	236K	16K	7552	512	5750	4K	128	С
pmap	368	124K	144K	345	400	317	4K	11	С
<pre>pagetable.anchors</pre>	4096	1328K	1751K	332	437	317	4K	1	С
pv_list	48	21864K	27217K	466432	580648	466200	12K	256	С
vm.pages	64	127336K	0K	2037376	0	2034534	4K	64	XC
kalloc.16	16	1136K	1167K	72704	74733	52626	4K	256	С
kalloc.32	32	1348K	1751K	43136	56050	40037	4K	128	С
kalloc.48	48	3308K	3941K	70570	84075	59071	4K	85	С
kalloc.64	64	6128K	8867K	98048	141877	84972	4K	64	С
kalloc.80	80	1776K	1751K	22732	22420	21808	4K	51	С
kalloc.96	96	1748K	2335K	18645	24911	18276	8K	85	С
kalloc.128	128	5352K	5911K	42816	47292	32835	4K	32	С
kalloc.160	160	1340K	1556K	8576	9964	6495	8K	51	С
kalloc.256	256	9328K	13301K	37312	53204	24442	4K	16	С
kalloc.288	288	1660K	2594K	5902	9226	5563	20K	71	C
kalloc.512	512	19324K	19951K	38648	39903	35135	4K	8	C
kalloc.1024	1024	6024K	8867K	6024	8867	4945	4K	4	C
kalloc.1280	1280	480K	512K	384	410	186	20K	16	C
kalloc.2048	2048	6164K	8867K	3082	4433	2784	4K	2	C
kalloc.4096	4096	12968K	13301K	3242	3325	1768	4K	1	C
kalloc.8192	8192	6440K	7882K	805	985	412	8K	1	C
mem_obj_control	16	1956K	2187K	125184	139968	120377	<b>4K</b>	256	C



- kernel reserves a memory region called **zone\_map** for zone allocator
- default size of this region is 1/4 of the physical memory
- reserved very early on during kernel start



- pages from **zone\_map** are assigned to zones
- zones are grown by their **allocation size**
- kernel pages are **16kb** on new 64 bit device with lots of memory
- all other devices have **4kb** pages
- to waste less space zones use optimal allocation sizes >= 1 page



- zone allocator is not suited for dynamic length allocations
- but for dynamic length allocations various wrappers exist, e.g.:
  - kalloc(size) / kfree(ptr, size) wrapper around zalloc()
     dynamic length but caller must remember length
  - MALLOC(size) / FREE(ptr) wrapper around kalloc() dynamic length and uses meta data to remember length

## Kernel Heap Allocation Debugging (I)

- iOS has kernel boot arguments to enable heap allocation debugging
- for us the interesting boot arguments are
  - -zc selects zone corruption logging mode
  - zlog=<zonename> selects ONE zone to log
  - zrecs=<number> controls how many log entries should be kept
- because iOS does not allow to control kernel boot arguments these features need to be activated by means of a kernel exploit

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## Kernel Heap Allocation Debugging (II)

- kernel zone allocator corruption logging logs for all (de)allocations
  - if allocation or deallocation
  - **pointer** allocated / deallocated
  - kernel **backtrace** with up to **15** elements
- data is collected via **btlog** routines in kernel
- researcher need to create their own routine to extract data from kernel



#### Kernel Heap Allocation Debugging (III)



## Part II

#### iOS Kernel Heap around iOS 5



#### **Zone Structure**

```
    information
about a zone is
stored in zone
struct
```

```
    zone structs are
stored in heap
zone "zones"
```

```
struct zone {
   int
                       /* Number of elements used now */
           count;
   vm_offset_t free_elements;
   decl_lck_mtx_data(,lock)
                             /* zone lock */
   lck_mtx_ext_t lock_ext; /* placeholder for indirect mutex */
   lck_attr_t
                   lock_attr; /* zone lock attribute */
   lck grp t
                   lock grp; /* zone lock group */
   lck_grp_attr_t lock_grp_attr; /* zone lock group attribute */
   vm_size_t cur_size; /* current memory utilization */
   vm size t max size; /* how large can this zone grow */
   vm_size_t elem_size; /* size of an element */
   vm size t alloc size; /* size used for more memory */
   uint64 t
               sum count; /* count of allocs (life of zone) */
   unsigned int
   /* boolean_t */ exhaustible :1, /* (F) merely return if empty? */
   /* boolean_t */ collectable :1, /* (F) garbage collect empty pages */
   /* boolean_t */ expandable :1, /* (T) expand zone (with message)? */
   /* boolean_t */ allows_foreign :1,/* (F) allow non-zalloc space */
   /* boolean_t */ doing_alloc :1, /* is zone expanding now? */
   /* boolean_t */ waiting :1, /* is thread waiting for expansion? */
   /* boolean_t */ async_pending :1, /* asynchronous allocation pending? */
   /* boolean_t */ caller_acct: 1, /* do we account allocation/free to the caller? :
   /* boolean_t */ doing_gc :1,
                                 /* garbage collect in progress? */
   /* boolean_t */ noencrypt :1,
   /* boolean t */ no callout:1,
   /* boolean_t */ async_prio_refill:1;
                       /* index into zone_info arrays for this zone */
   int
           index;
   struct zone * next zone; /* Link for all-zones list */
   call_entry_data_t call_async_alloc; /* callout for asynchronous alloc */
   const char *zone name; /* a name for the zone */
   vm_size_t
               prio_refill_watermark;
   thread t
               zone replenish thread;
};
```

```
DISCLAIMER: this struct layout if taken from OS X 10.7.5 - the iOS 5 layout might have been slightly different
```



#### Free Memory Blocks

- free elements are kept in a single linked freelist per zone
- zone structure has free\_elements pointer to head of freelist
- free elements have a pointer to next free element in beginning
- there is **no pointer(-chain) back** to zone struct
  - not possible to know what zone an element (a page) belongs to
  - slow garbage collection





## Allocation (I)

- allocation returns next element from freelist
- when free list is empty zone grows by allocation size
- all elements in added pages are added to free list
- last element will be first in freelist (LIFO)

free\_elements



## Allocation (II)

- allocation returns next element from freelist
- when free list is empty zone grows by allocation size
- all elements in added pages are added to free list
- last element will be first in freelist (LIFO)





## Allocation (III)

- allocation returns next element from freelist
- when free list is empty zone grows by allocation size
- all elements in added pages are added to free list
- last element will be first in freelist (LIFO)



"new memory is returned in backward order by heap allocator"

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## Allocation (IV)

- allocation returns next element from freelist
- when free list is empty zone grows by allocation size
- all elements in added pages are added to free list
- last element will be first in freelist (LIFO)



"new memory is returned in backward order by heap allocator"

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#### **Dynamic Length Allocations - kalloc()**

- to handle dynamic lengths **kalloc()** registers multiple zones
- named kalloc.<number> kalloc.16 kalloc.32 e.g. kalloc.128 for 128 byte allocations kalloc.48 kalloc.64 kalloc.80 allocations will be put into the next larger zone kalloc.96 kalloc.128 e.g. 97 byte allocations in kalloc.128 (31 bytes waste) kalloc.160 kalloc.256 different iOS versions define different zones kalloc.288 kalloc.512 kalloc.1024 (also depending on 32 bit vs. 64 bit) kalloc.1280
- caller needs to remember allocation size so that
   *kfree(ptr, size)* can put it back into the right zone



kalloc.2048

kalloc.4096

kalloc.8192

#### **Dynamic Length Allocations - MALLOC()**

- to handle dynamic lengths **MALLOC()** stores the size as meta data
- internally uses kalloc() / kfree()
- stores the size infront of data



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#### • Heap-Feng-Shui

- exploit specific allocation and deallocation primitives (e.g. opening/closing NDRV sockets)
- generic allocation deallocation primitives via OSUnserializeXML (controlling memory layout via many IOKit API functions using XML - and filling it with objects and object pointers)

#### • Corruption Targets

- zone allocator freelist next\_ptr pointers
   (control ptr next allocation will return and overwrite with attacker controlled data)
- size fields of elements allocated via MALLOC() or a wrapper (tricks kfree() to put element into a zone that is for bigger elements - next allocation will result in a larger bufferoverflow)
- application data (control objects/vtable pointers, object pointers, size fields, ...)



## Part II

Changes to the iOS kernel heap between iOS 6 and 9





- Apple made some changes to **OSUnserializeXML** that had little impact on usability for heap feng shui
- location of **zone\_map** is **randomized** due to **KASLR**
- single linked freelist now protected by heap cookies/canaries
- small free memory blocks are now poisoned

#### iOS 6 Heap Cookies



- last bytes of a free element will be overwritten with: ptr ^ cookie
- allocation code will detect illegal cookie values and panic()
- protection against overflows and other **ptr** corruption



#### iOS 6 Heap Cookie Leak Protection



- both ptr and ptr^cookie get overwritten when block is allocated
- value Oxdeadbeef is written over sensitive values
- protects against potential information leak after memory block is returned



#### iOS 6 Heap Poisoning

- small blocks when freed get overwritten with **Oxdeadbeef**
- indicated by use of **zp\_poisoned\_cookie**
- on allocation **Oxdeadbeef** is verified **panic()** if modified



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#### • Heap-Feng-Shui

- with release of iOS 6 creating vm\_map\_copy\_t structures by sending mach messages with OOL data became heap-feng-shui method of choice
- previously used methods less often seen but still possible

#### • Corruption Targets

- because zone allocator freelist got protected all public exploits seem to target vm\_map\_copy\_t structure overwrites (could be used for arbitrary info leak and kfree() confusion)
- other size fields of e.g. **MALLOC**() and application data still targeted

- poisoning of larger blocks every **X** frees
- introduction of new **heap pagelist feature** (for easier GC)



#### iOS 7 Large Block Poisoning

- **zp\_factor** debugging feature (that already existed before) is now always activated
- randomly set once at boot time to the value **15** (25%), **16** (50%) or **17** (25%)
- controls after every how many frees in a zone a single block is poisoned (regardless of size)
- counter is zone specific in the **zp\_count** field of the zone structure





#### iOS 7 Zone Pagelist Feature

- iOS 7 introduces **new pagelist feature**
- activated via **bit** in zone struct (only <u>subset of zones</u> use new feature)
- adds meta data at end of all pages inside a zone
- keeps all pages in one of four double linked lists (queue)



#### iOS 7 Zone Page Meta Data



- backpointer to **zone**
- free elements in this page (page local freelist)
- forward and backward pointer to other pages
- alloc\_count max number of elements in page
- **free\_count -** number of free elements in page



- Allocator defines four queues for every zone
  - **any\_free\_foreign** for the few zones that allow foreign elements
  - intermediate for pages that are partially allocated at the moment
  - **all\_free** for pages that are completely free at the moment
  - **all\_used** for pages that are completely allocated at the moment
- during allocation or free the allocator ensures that page is always on right queue

#### iOS 7 Allocation under Page Lists

• allocation now traverses the page queues in the following order

- any\_free\_foreign
- intermediate
- all\_free
- first queue with a usable page is used
- then the first free element from this page's freelist is returned
- if no usable page found system adds an **all\_free** page and retries



#### iOS 7 Freeing under Page Lists

- freeing an **element** adds it to its page's **freelist**
- allocator ensures that page is still on **right queue**
- page could move
  - from intermediate to all\_free
  - from all\_used to intermediate



#### Impact of iOS7 Page Lists

- garbage collection now super easy
   (just give back all pages from the all\_free page queue)
- freeing of memory is **local to each page's freelist** (less interruption for heap-feng-shui)
- allocations are local to current front page (not really a change because compatible exploits always had to concentrate on staying in one page)
- meta data contained double linked list without any exploit mitigation (iOS 7 made heap overflows very easy to exploit)
- NEW ATTACK:

confusing allocator to free elements from page list zones in freelist zones

#### Was there a memory corruption? Yes? Continue!

- Apple added code that detects for page list zones if a corruption happened
- when they detect a corruption they try to repair it < NEVER EVER DO THAT!
- when they cannot repair they ignore that they detected a memory corruption <---- APPLE REALLY???

```
if (zone->use_page_list) {
   struct zone_page_metadata *page_meta = get_zone_page_metadata((struct zone_free_element *)addr);
    if (zone != page meta->zone) {
        /*
        * Something bad has happened. Someone tried to zfree a pointer but the metadata says it is from
         * a different zone (or maybe it's from a zone that doesn't use page free lists at all). We can repair
         * some cases of this, if:
        * 1) The specified zone had use_page_list, and the true zone also has use_page_list set. In that case
             we can swap the zone_t
        * 2) The specified zone had use_page_list, but the true zone does not. In this case page_meta is garbage,
              and dereferencing page_meta->zone might panic.
        * To distinguish the two, we enumerate the zone list to match it up.
         * We do not handle the case where an incorrect zone is passed that does not have use page list set,
         * even if the true zone did have this set.
         */
       zone_t fixed_zone = NULL;
       int fixed_i, max_zones;
        simple_lock(&all_zones_lock);
        max_zones = num_zones;
        fixed zone = first zone;
        simple_unlock(&all_zones_lock);
        for (fixed_i=0; fixed_i < max_zones; fixed_i++, fixed_zone = fixed_zone->next_zone) {
           if (fixed_zone == page_meta->zone && fixed_zone->use_page_list) {
                /* we can fix this */
                printf("Fixing incorrect zfree from zone %s to zone %s\n", zone->zone_name, fixed_zone->zone_name);
                zone = fixed zone;
                break;
            }
       }
    }
```

#### How attackers abused the iOS 7 Zone Allocator

- Heap-Feng-Shui
  - same methods as before were used
- Corruption Targets
  - all previously targeted areas still work
  - but double linked lists introduced by pagelist feature easiest target (target the next/prev pointers for arbitrary writes)



- pagelist queue hardening
- poisoning of larger blocks made less frequent (depending on size)



- iOS 8 adds safe unlink protection to its queue macros
- double linked lists added to iOS 7 heap are now protected
- heap overflows can no longer go after the queue pointers in metadata



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#### iOS 8 Less Frequent Large Block Poisoning

- introduction of **zp\_scale** feature with a default value of **4**
- poisoning of large blocks follows now the following formula
   zp\_factor + element\_size >> zp\_scale
- this means the larger element are in a zone the less often they are poisoned
- example: (15/16/17) + 256 >> 4 = (31/32/33)



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#### • Heap-Feng-Shui

- same methods as before were used
- Corruption Targets
  - targeting double linked lists (*pagelists*) not possible due to **safe\_unlink**
  - all other previously targeted areas still work



- vm\_map\_copy\_t "hardening"
- repositioning of page metadata
- randomization of initial freelist



- **vm\_map\_copy\_t** structure for kernel buffers was stripped down
  - data pointer removed because data should be after header
  - secondary **size field** removed because that is **headerlen + size**
- smaller structure **allows controlling** heap in **smaller zones**
- when overwritten can still lead to zone confusion and info leaks
- but info leaks are limited to 4k because hardcoded limit in code
- and removal of pointer removes possibility for arbitrary info leaks
- some places try to verify that size is not overwritten





iOS 9 moves the page meta data to the beginning of the page

possible reasoning: protect meta data against overflows



- when new memory is added to a zone elements within are freed one by one into the freelist
- starting with iOS 9.2 the elements are no longer added linear from first to last
- instead every time a next element is
   added a random decision is made if the
   first or last element should be added

free\_elements



- when new memory is added to a zone elements within are freed one by one into the freelist
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   added a random decision is made if the
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#### iOS 9.2 Initial Freelist Randomization (III)

- when new memory is added to a zone elements within are freed one by one into the freelist
- starting with iOS 9.2 the elements are no longer added linear from first to last
- instead every time a next element is added a random decision is made if the first or last element should be added



#### iOS 9.2 Initial Freelist Randomization (IV)





#### iOS 9.2 Initial Freelist Randomization (V)





#### iOS 9.2 Initial Freelist Randomization (VI)





#### iOS 9.2 Initial Freelist Randomization (VII)





#### • Heap-Feng-Shui

 same methods as before were used (vm\_map\_copy\_t after "hardening" still usable for heap-feng-shui)

#### • Corruption Targets

- targeting vm\_map\_copy\_t still allows zone confusion and limited info leaks (only larger info leaks and arbitrary pointer info leaks stopped by "hardening")
- all other previously targeted areas still work



## Part III

#### Upcoming changes to the iOS kernel heap in iOS 10





## Changes in upcoming iOS 10

- more vm\_map\_copy\_t "hardening"
- fixed zone structure array
- zone page metadata completely revamped
- page freelist pointer leak protection
- zalloc() wrappers add no inbound metadata anymore
- zone allocator debugging features revamped

#### iOS 10 Fixed Zonestructure Array

- zone structures are no longer allocated on zone allocator heap
- seems to be a bad idea because address of zone structure is now fixed (relative to kernelbase)

DATA:bss:FFFFF	FF007552170	public zone_metadata_re	gion_min
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552170 ;	zone_metadata_region_min	
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552170 zone metadata	region min dq 0	<pre>; DATA XREF: zone_element_size+19r</pre>
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552170		; get_zone_page_metadata+2Fr
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552178	public zone_metadata_re	gion_max
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552178 ;	zone_metadata_region_max	
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552178 zone metadata	region max dq 0	; DATA XREF: zone_init+F3w
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552180	public zone_array	—
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552180 ; zone zone_a	rray[256]	
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552180 zone_array	<pre>zone 100h dup(&lt;0&gt;)</pre>	; DATA XREF: panic_display_zprint+4Bo
DATA: bss:FFFFF	FF007552180		; zone_element_size+5Do

#### iOS 10 new zone\_metadata\_region

- in iOS 10 ALL zones make use of page metadata
- a new **zone\_metadata\_region** is utilised for that
- region is reserved in the **zone\_map**
- used to keep meta data for every single page in the **zone\_map**



\*elements from outside zone\_map store meta data at beginning of page

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#### iOS 10 page metadata

- **zindex** index of zone in zone\_array (instead of back pointer)
- page\_count number of pages in allocation size
- free\_count number of free elements in page
- **freelist\_offset** offset of first free element starting from this page's address
- real\_metadata\_offset of this secondary meta data from page 0 metadata



#### real\_metadata (page 0)

#### metadata for additional pages



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## iOS 10 page freelists

- page metadata does not contain pointer to **head of freelist** anymore
- instead **freelist\_offset** determines byte offset of first free element in page
- ptr to next free block is always XORed against nopoison\_cookie
- **backup ptr** is ptr value XORed against selected cookie (noposion/poisened)



#### iOS 10 Metadata vs. Wrong Zone Frees

- every zone uses the new metadata
- this allows determining correct zone by element
- freeing elements into the wrong zone can be reliably detected
- when this happens zfree() panics the kernel
- abuse seems not possible anymore



- new meta data can be used to determine size of elements on heap
- heap allocation wrappers like MALLOC() and kern\_os\_malloc() no longer need to store the size
- both become simpler wrappers around kalloc() and are therefore inlined in several places
- allocations are now only application data (more codepaths can now be used for heap layout control)

## iOS 10 Kernel Heap Allocation Debugging (I)

- kernel heap allocation logging was revamped
- no longer limited to a single zone
- code now limited to logging in max 5 zones
- zones selected by new kernel boot args

zlog1, zlog2, zlog3, zlog4, zlog5

usage: -zc zlog1=kalloc.128 zlog2=kalloc.256

## iOS 10 Kernel Heap Allocation Debugging (II)

- bitfield in zone struct contains new bit 15 to select if **zone\_logging**
- zone struct contains **zlog\_btlog** variable instead of global variable
- **btlog\_t** structure heavily modified
- log is no longer a simple list but a hash table

```
unsigned __int32 gzalloc_exempt : 1;
unsigned __int32 alignment_required : 1;
unsigned __int32 zone_logging : 1;
unsigned __int32 zone_replenishing : 1;
unsigned __int32 _reserved : 15;
int index;
const char *zone_name;
uint32_t_0 zleak_capture;
uint32_t_0 zp_count;
vm_size_t prio_refill_watermark;
thread_t zone_replenish_thread;
gzalloc_data_t gz;
btlog_t *zlog_btlog;
};
```



#### • Heap-Feng-Shui

- for simple feng-shui all previous methods should still be usable (beside continued hardening of vm\_map\_copy\_t)
- code paths that use MALLOC() are now also usable for heap-feng-shui (e.g. posix\_spawn())

#### Corruption Targets

- application data like object and mach port pointers very interesting
- BUT size field corruption to confuse free into wrong zone will trigger panic()

#### Time for questions...



# Questions...?

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