

Software-based Microarchitectural Attacks: What do we learn from Meltdown and Spectre?

Daniel Gruss

March 26, 2019

Graz University of Technology

You realize it is something big when...



You realize it is something big when...

- it is in the **news**, all over the world











SECURITY FLAW REVEALED

Intel (Prev)		
45.26	-1.59	[-3.39%]

Intel (After Hours)		
44.85	-0.41	[-0.91%]

CAPITAL
CONNECTION

SHROUT: ISSUE NOT UNIQUE TO
INTEL, BUT IT'S AFFECTED THE MOST

 **CNBC**

AUS DER SERIE

Was bewegt

Daniel Gruss

Der Kernschmelzer

Daniel Gruss hat eine schwere Sicherheitslücke in Computerchips entdeckt. Warum gelingt dem Informatiker, woran die Hersteller scheitern?

Von **Jens Tönnemann**

7. März 2018, 16:48 Uhr / Editiert am 9. März 2018, 20:11 Uhr / [26 Kommentare](#)

AUS DER
ZEIT NR. 11/2018





You realize it is something big when...

- it is in the **news**, all over the world
- you get a **Wikipedia** article in multiple languages



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Kernel page-table isolation

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

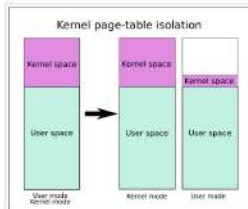
(Redirected from KAISER)

"KPTI" redirects here. For other uses, see KPTI (disambiguation).

Kernel page-table isolation (KPTI or PTI,^[1] previously called **KAISER**)^{[2][3]} is a Linux kernel feature that mitigates the Meltdown security vulnerability (affecting mainly Intel's x86 CPUs)^[4] and improves kernel hardening against attempts to bypass kernel address space layout randomization (KASLR). It works by better isolating user space and kernel space memory.^{[5][6]} KPTI was merged into Linux kernel version 4.15,^[7] and backported to Linux kernels 4.14.11, 4.9.75, 4.4.110,^{[8][9][10]} Windows^[11] and macOS^[12] released similar updates. KPTI does not address the related Spectre vulnerability.^[13]

Contents [hide]

- 1 Background on KAISER
- 2 Meltdown vulnerability and KPTI
- 3 Implementation
- 4 References



One set of page table for use in kernel mode.^[6] Includes both kernel-space and user-space. The second set of page table for use in user mode.



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Meltdown (security vulnerability)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Meltdown is a hardware [vulnerability](#) affecting [Intel x86 microprocessors](#) and some [ARM-based microprocessors](#).^{[1][2][3]} It allows a rogue process to read all [memory](#), even when it is not authorized to do so.

Meltdown affects a wide range of systems. At the time of disclosure, this included all devices running any but the most recent and [patched](#) versions of [iOS](#),^[4] [Linux](#)^{[5][6]}, [macOS](#),^[4] or [Windows](#). Accordingly, many servers and [cloud services](#) were impacted,^[7] as well as a potential majority of smart devices and [embedded devices](#) using ARM based processors (mobile devices, smart TVs and others), including a wide range of networking equipment. A purely software workaround to Meltdown has been assessed as slowing computers between 5 and 30 percent in certain specialized workloads,^[8] although companies responsible for software correction of the exploit are reporting minimal impact from general benchmark testing.^[9]

Meltdown was issued a [Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures](#) ID of [CVE-2017-5754](#)^[4], also known as *Rogue Data Cache Load*,^[2] in January 2018. It was disclosed in conjunction with another exploit, [Spectre](#), with which it shares some, but not all characteristics. The Meltdown and Spectre vulnerabilities are considered "catastrophic"



MELTDOWN

The logo used by the team that discovered the vulnerability



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Spectre (security vulnerability)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Spectre is a [vulnerability](#) that affects modern microprocessors that perform [branch prediction](#).^{[1][2][3]} On most processors, the [speculative execution](#) resulting from a branch misprediction may leave observable side effects that may reveal private data to attackers. For example, if the pattern of memory accesses performed by such speculative execution depends on private data, the resulting state of the data cache constitutes a [side channel](#) through which an attacker may be able to extract information about the private data using a [timing attack](#).^{[4][5][6]}

Two [Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures](#) IDs related to Spectre, [CVE-2017-5753](#)[ⓘ] (bounds check bypass) and [CVE-2017-5715](#)[ⓘ] (branch target injection), have been issued.^[7] [JIT engines](#) used for [JavaScript](#) were found vulnerable. A website can read data stored in the browser for another website, or the browser's memory itself.^[8]

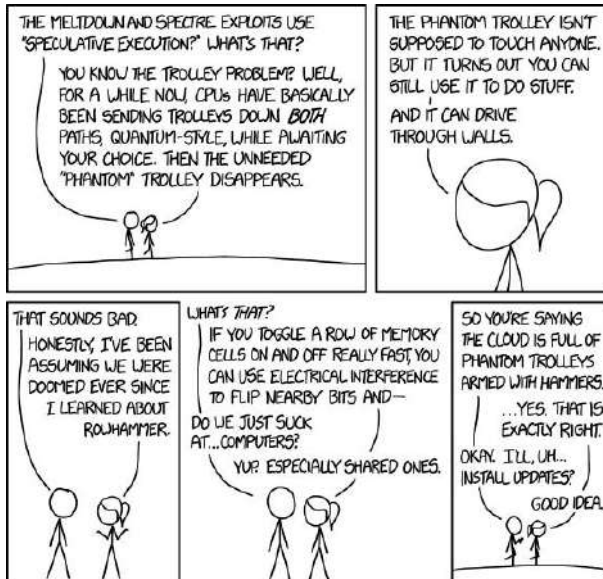
Several procedures to help protect home computers and related devices from the Spectre (and [Meltdown](#)) security vulnerabilities have been published.^{[9][10][11][12]} Spectre patches have been reported to significantly slow down performance, especially on older computers; on the newer 8th generation Core platforms, benchmark performance drops of 2–14 percent have been measured.^[13] Meltdown patches may also produce performance loss.^{[5][14][15]} On January 18, 2018, unwanted reboots, even for newer Intel chips, due to

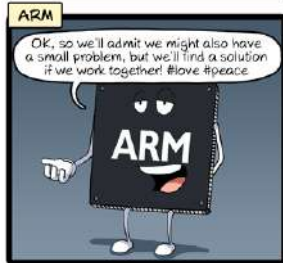
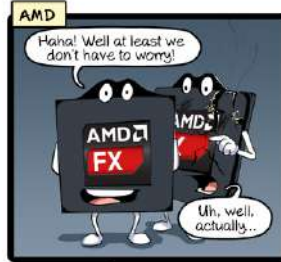
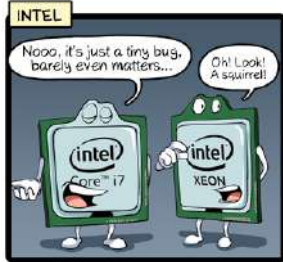




You realize it is something big when...

- it is in the **news**, all over the world
- you get a **Wikipedia** article in multiple languages
- there are **comics**, including xkcd



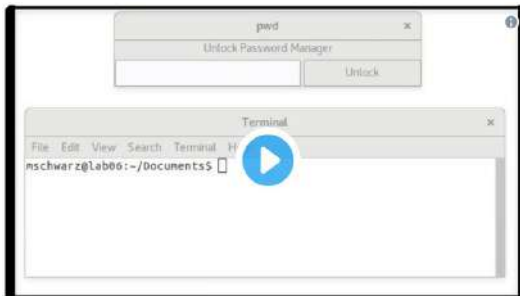


CommitStrip.com



You realize it is something big when...

- it is in the **news**, all over the world
- you get a **Wikipedia** article in multiple languages
- there are **comics**, including xkcd
- you get a lot of **Twitter** follower after Snowden mentioned you



Edward Snowden ✓

@Snowden



You may have heard about [@Intel's](#) horrific [#Meltdown](#) bug. But have you watched it in action? When your computer asks you to apply updates this month, don't click "not now." (via [spectreattack.com](#) & [@misc0110](#))

23:37 - 4. Jan. 2018



152



6.547



6.512









1337 4242

FOOD CACHE

Revolutionary concept!

Store your food at home,
never go to the grocery store
during cooking.

Can store **ALL** kinds of food.

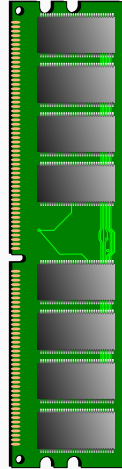
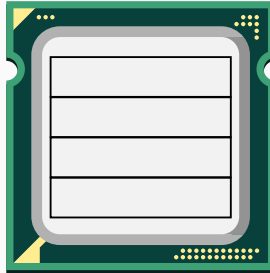
ONLY TODAY INSTEAD OF ~~\$1,300~~

\$1,299

ORDER VIA PHONE: +555 12345

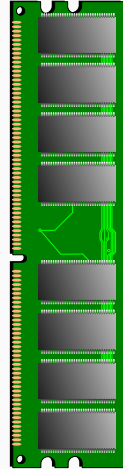
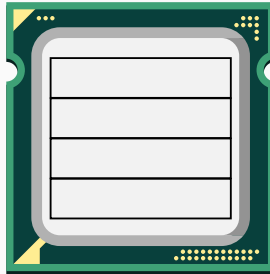


```
printf("%d", i);  
printf("%d", i);
```



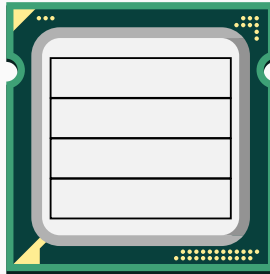
```
printf("%d", i);  
printf("%d", i);
```

Cache miss

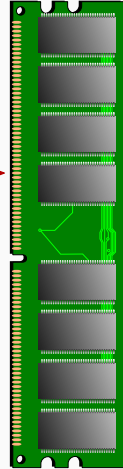



```
printf("%d", i);  
printf("%d", i);
```

Cache miss

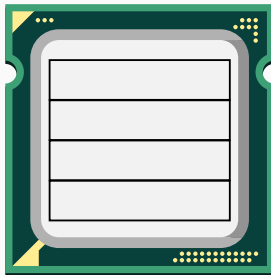


Request



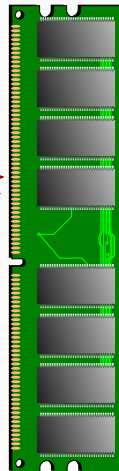
```
printf("%d", i);  
printf("%d", i);
```

Cache miss



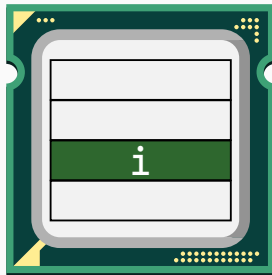
Request

Response



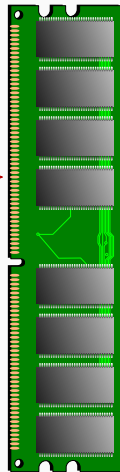
```
printf("%d", i);  
printf("%d", i);
```

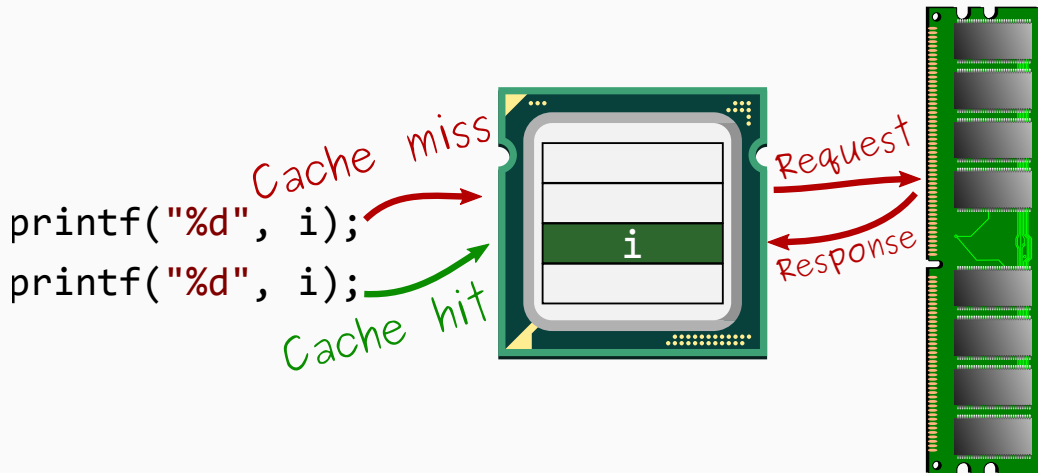
Cache miss



Request

Response



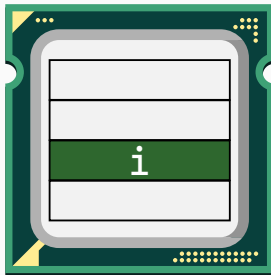


DRAM access,
slow

```
printf("%d", i);  
printf("%d", i);
```

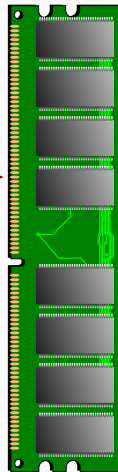
Cache miss

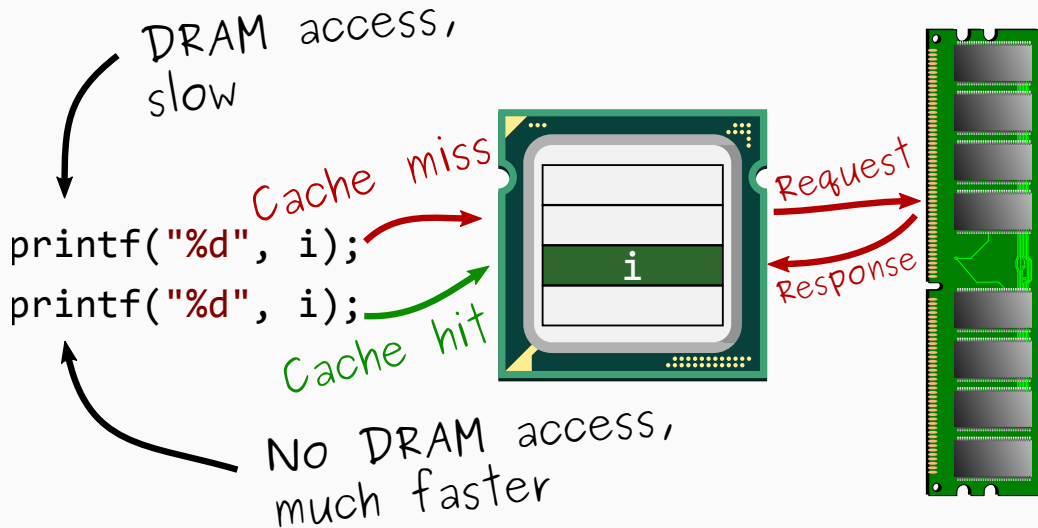
Cache hit



Request

Response

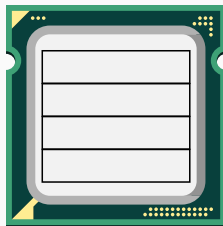




Shared Memory

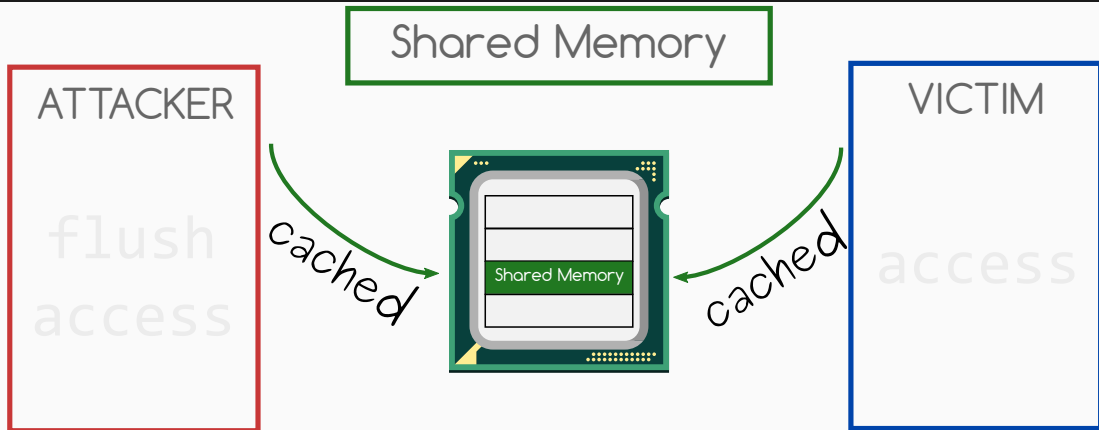
ATTACKER

flush
access



VICTIM

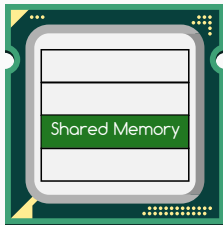
access



Shared Memory

ATTACKER

flush
access



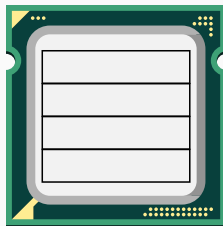
VICTIM

access

Shared Memory

ATTACKER

flush
access



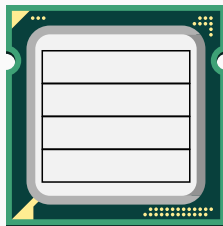
VICTIM

access

Shared Memory

ATTACKER

flush
access



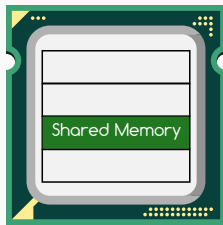
VICTIM

access

Shared Memory

ATTACKER

flush
access



VICTIM

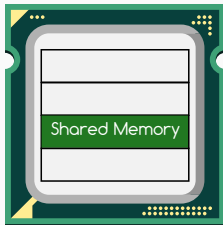
access



Shared Memory

ATTACKER

flush
access



VICTIM

access

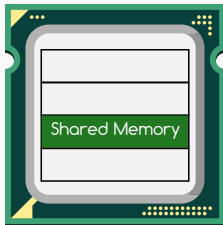
Shared Memory

ATTACKER

VICTIM

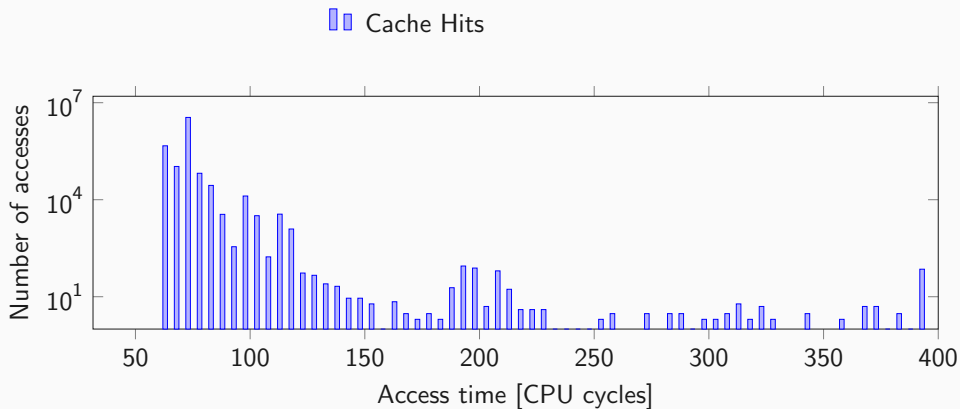
flush

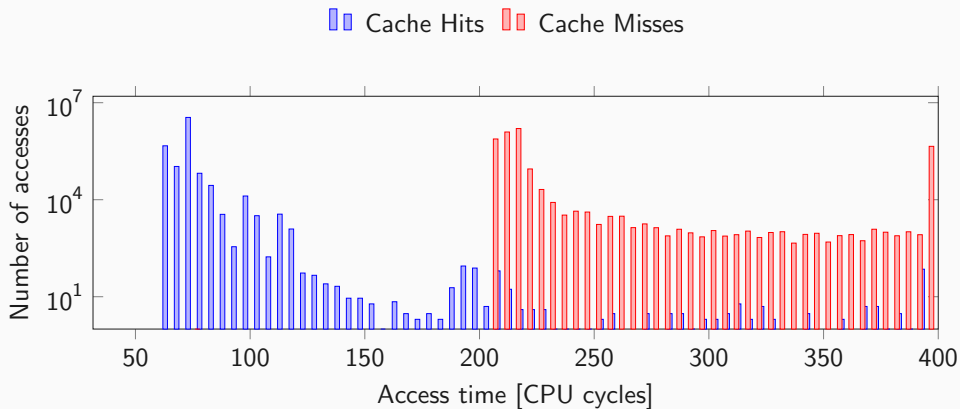
access



access

fast if victim accessed data,
slow otherwise






```
Terminal
File Edit View Search Terminal Help
% sleep 2; ./spy 300 7f05140a4000-7f051417b000 r-xp 0x20000 08:02 26
8050 /usr/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/gedit/libgedit.so
```

```
Terminal
File Edit View Search Terminal Help
shark% ./spy
```

```
Untitled Document 1
Open + Save - + x
1
I
Plain Text Tab Width: 2 Ln 1, Col 1 INS
```



```
File Edit View Bookmarks Settings Help
local -- Konsole
ssh -l root 172.31.31.32 -p 22
```

```
File Edit View Bookmarks Settings Help
root@172-31-31-32 ~ %
```

```
File Edit View Bookmarks Settings Help
-- alert 0.4.5 on ip-172-31-31-32 --
[... ASCII art ...]
Active Interface: eth0
Interface Speed: unknown
Current RX Speed: 0.01 KB/s
Graph Top RX Speed: 0.98 KB/s
Overall Top RX Speed: 0.98 KB/s
Received Packets: 64
Bytes Received: 0.045 MB
Errors on Receiving: 0
Current TX Speed: 0.33 KB/s
Graph Top TX Speed: 2.64 KB/s
Overall Top TX Speed: 2.64 KB/s
Transmitted Packets: 61
Bytes Transmitted: 0.039 MB
Errors on Transmission: 0
```

```
File Edit View Bookmarks Settings Help
root@172-31-31-32 ~ %
```

```
File Edit View Bookmarks Settings Help
-- alert 0.4.5 on ip-172-31-31-32 --
[... ASCII art ...]
Active Interface: eth0
Interface Speed: unknown
Current RX Speed: 0.65 KB/s
Graph Top RX Speed: 0.36 KB/s
Overall Top RX Speed: 0.36 KB/s
Received Packets: 36
Bytes Received: 0.003 MB
Errors on Receiving: 0
Current TX Speed: 0.29 KB/s
Graph Top TX Speed: 0.84 KB/s
Overall Top TX Speed: 0.84 KB/s
Transmitted Packets: 26
Bytes Transmitted: 0.010 MB
Errors on Transmission: 0
```

HELLO FROM THE OTHER SIDE (DEMO):
VIDEO STREAMING OVER CACHE COVERT CHANNEL



Back to Work

*6. Cook everything until
vegetables are soft*

*6. Cook everything until
vegetables are soft*

*7. Serve with cooked
and peeled potatoes*





Wait for an hour





Wait for an hour

LATENCY

1. Wash and cut
vegetables

2. Pick the basil leaves
and set aside

3. Heat 2 tablespoons of
oil in a pan

4. Fry vegetables until
golden and softened



Dependency

1. Wash and cut vegetables

2. Pick the basil leaves and set aside

3. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a pan

4. Fry vegetables until golden and softened

Parallelize



```
int width = 10, height = 5;

float diagonal = sqrt(width * width
                      + height * height);
int area = width * height;

printf("Area %d x %d = %d\n", width, height, area);
```

Dependency



```
int width = 10, height = 5;  
  
float diagonal = sqrt(width * width  
                      + height * height);  
  
int area = width * height;  
  
printf("Area %d x %d = %d\n", width, height, area);
```

Parallelize



```
char data = *(char*)0xffffffff81a000e0;  
printf("%c\n", data);
```





```
char data = *(char*)0xffffffff81a000e0;  
printf("%c\n", data);
```

```
segfault at ffffffff81a000e0 ip  
0000000000400535  
sp 00007ffce4a80610 error 5 in reader
```

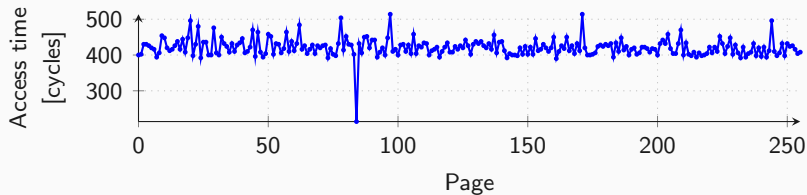


Adapted code

```
*(volatile char*)0;  
array[84 * 4096] = 0; // unreachable
```



Flush+Reload over all pages of the array





Flush+Reload over all pages of the array



This also works on AMD and ARM!



- Combine the two things

```
char data = *(char*)0xffffffff81a000e0;  
array[data * 4096] = 0;
```

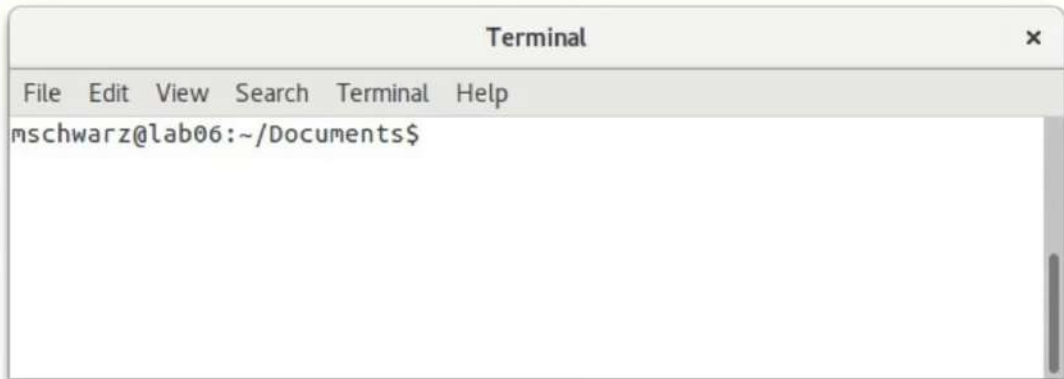
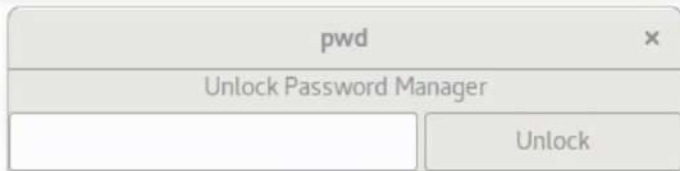
Flush+Reload again...



... Meltdown actually works.

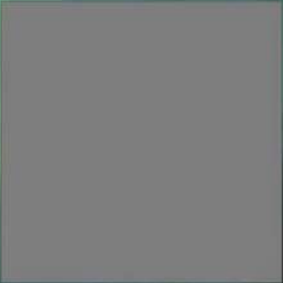
I SHIT YOU NOT

**THERE WAS KERNEL MEMORY ALL
OVER THE TERMINAL**



A man and a woman are shown in a close-up, looking off-camera with serious expressions. The scene is dimly lit with a blue tint. The woman is on the left, and the man is on the right. A red earplug is visible in the man's ear.

CAN YOU
ENHANCE THAT

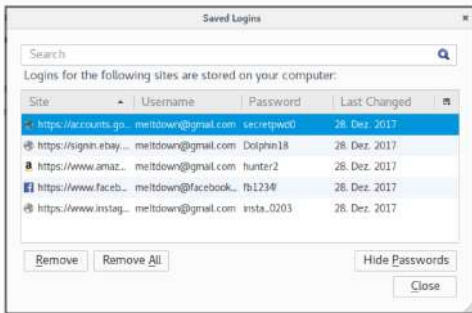


```
meltdown@meltdown ~/ppm2 % taskset 1 ./imgdump 0x375a00000 14919 > outp  
ut.flif
```

```
Reading from 0xffff880375a00000
```



I



```
f94b7690: e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 | .....|
f94b76a0: e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 | .....|
f94b76b0: 70 52 b8 0b 96 7f XX XX XX XX XX XX |p8.k.....|
f94b76c0: 09 XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b76d0: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b76e0: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b76f0: 12 XX e0 81 19 XX e0 81 44 6f 6c 70 69 6e 31 |.....Dolphin1|
f94b7700: 38 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 |8.....|
f94b7710: 70 52 b8 0b 96 7f XX XX XX XX XX XX XX |p8.k.....|
f94b7720: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b7730: XX XX XX XX 4a XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b7740: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b7750: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX e0 81 69 6e 73 74 |.....inst|
f94b7760: 61 5f 30 32 30 33 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 |a_0203.....|
f94b7770: 70 52 18 7d 28 7f XX XX XX XX XX XX XX |p8.).....|
f94b7780: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b7790: XX XX XX XX 5d XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b77a0: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b77b0: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b77c0: 65 74 70 77 64 30 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 |etpud0.....|
f94b77d0: 30 b4 18 7d 28 7f XX XX XX XX XX XX XX |0..)(.....|
f94b77e0: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b77f0: XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX XX | .....|
f94b7800: e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 e5 | .....|
f94b7810: 68 74 74 70 73 3a 2f 2f 61 64 64 6f 6e 73 2e 63 |https://addons.c|
f94b7820: 64 6e 2e 6d 6f 7a 69 6c 6c 61 2e 6e 65 74 2f 75 |dn.mozilla.net/u|
f94b7830: 73 65 72 2d 6d 65 64 69 61 2f 61 64 64 6f 6e 5f |ser-media/addon_|
f94b7840: 69 63 6f 6e 73 2f 33 35 34 2f 33 35 34 33 39 39 |icons/354/354399|
f94b7850: 2d 36 34 2e 70 6e 67 3f 6d 6f 64 69 6e 65 64 |-64.png?modified|
f94b7860: 3d 31 34 35 32 32 34 34 38 31 35 XX XX XX XX XX |e1452244815.....|
```

AND IN OTHER NEWS...



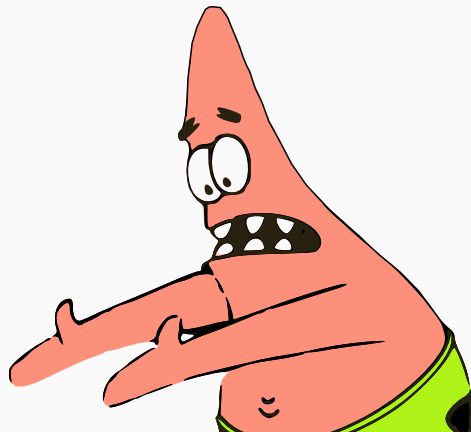
WE'RE ALL DOOMED, SANDRA.
HOW ABOUT THE WEATHER?



Not so fast...

- Kernel addresses in user space are a problem

- Kernel addresses in user space are a problem
- Why don't we take the kernel addresses...





- ...and remove them if not needed?



- ...and remove them if not needed?
- User accessible check in hardware is not reliable





Kernel **A**ddress **I**solation to have **S**ide channels **E**fficiently **R**emoved

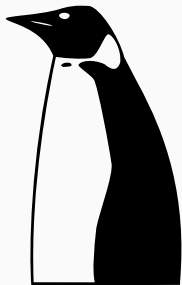
KAISER /'kAɪzə/

1. [german] Emperor, ruler of an empire
2. largest penguin, emperor penguin

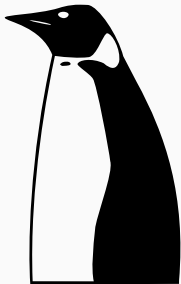


Kernel **A**ddress **I**solation to have **S**ide channels **E**fficiently **R**emoved

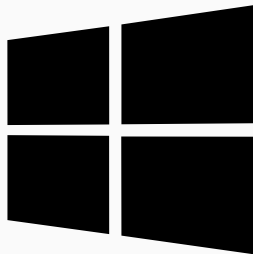




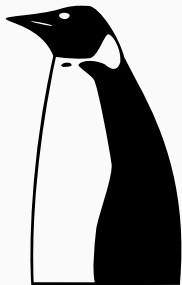
- Our patch
- Adopted in Linux



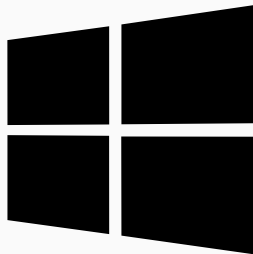
- Our patch
- Adopted in Linux



- Adopted in Windows



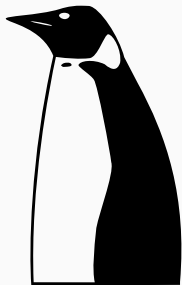
- Our patch
- Adopted in Linux



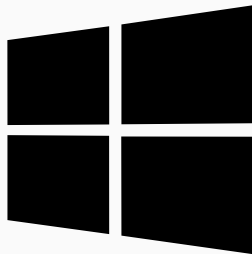
- Adopted in Windows



- Adopted in OSX/iOS



- Our patch
- Adopted in Linux



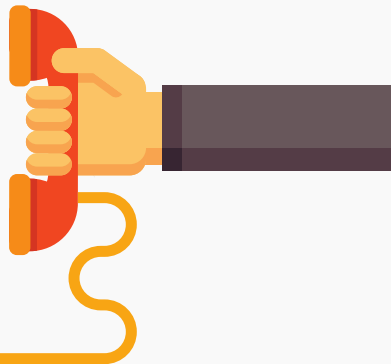
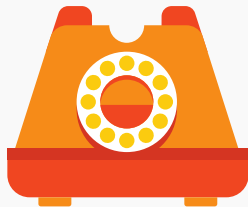
- Adopted in Windows



- Adopted in OSX/iOS

→ **now in every computer**

»A table for 6 please«





Speculative Cooking



»A table for 6 please«





PIZZA

SPECIAL RECIPES



SPECIAL RECIPES







```
index = 0;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then



else

LUT[data[index] * 4096]

0

```
index = 0;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then



Prediction

else

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```

```
0
```

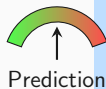
```
index = 0;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```



else

Speculate

0


```
index = 0;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

Execute

then

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```



Prediction

else

0

```
index = 1;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then



Prediction

else

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```

```
0
```

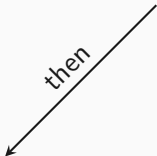
```
index = 1;
```



```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then

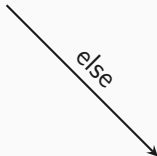


```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```



Prediction

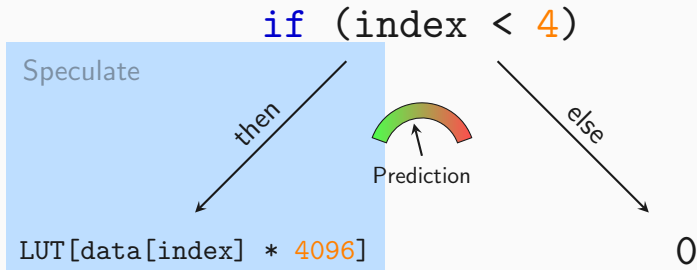
else

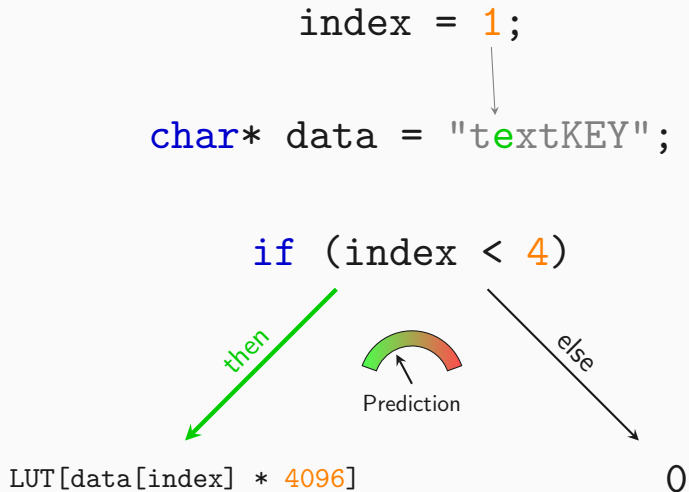


```
0
```

```
index = 1;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```





```
index = 2;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then



Prediction

else

LUT[data[index] * 4096]

0

```
index = 2;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```

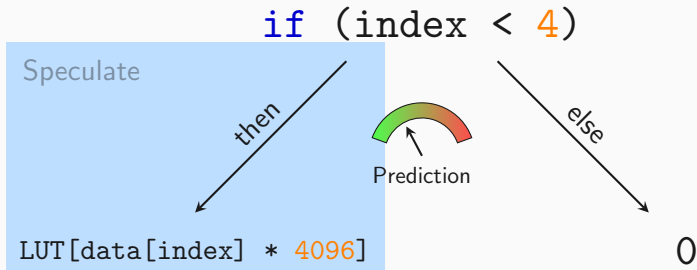


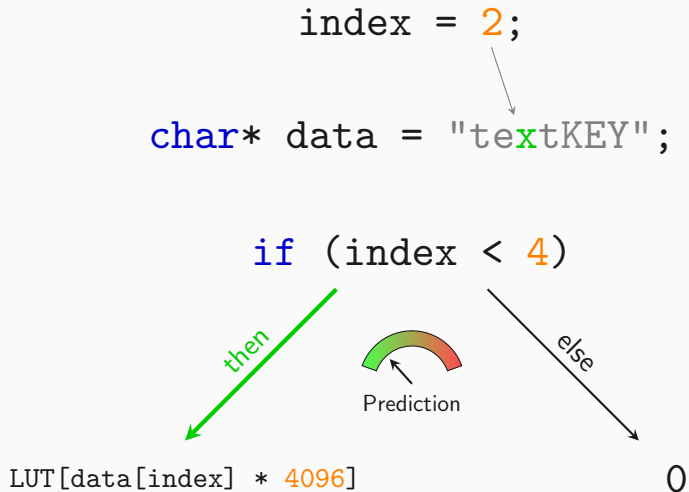
else

```
0
```

```
index = 2;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```





```
index = 3;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then



else

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```

```
0
```

```
index = 3;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```

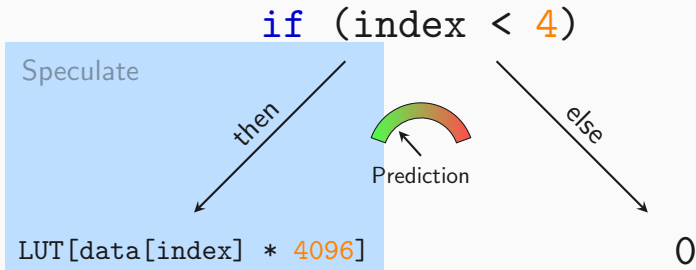


else

```
0
```

```
index = 3;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```



```
index = 3;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```



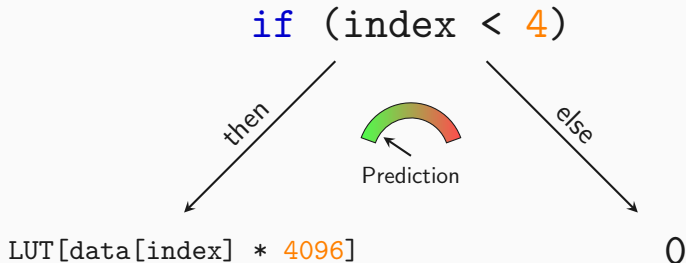
Prediction

else

```
0
```

```
index = 4;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```



```
index = 4;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```



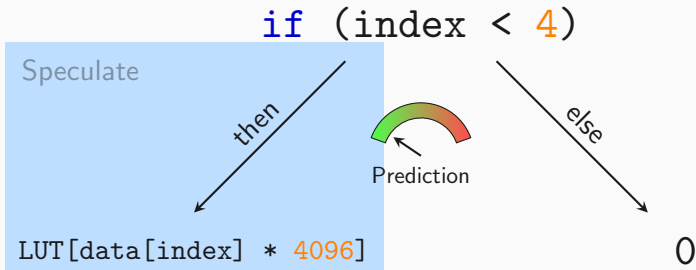
Prediction

else

```
0
```

```
index = 4;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```




```
index = 4;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```



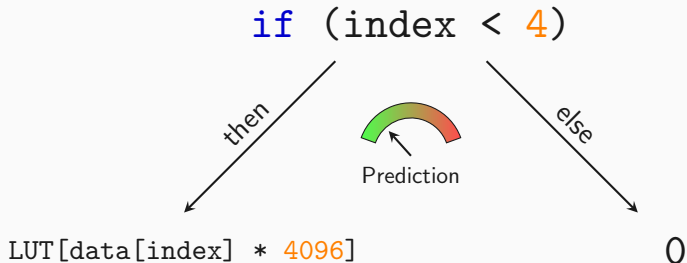
else

Execute

0

```
index = 5;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```



```
index = 5;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then



Prediction

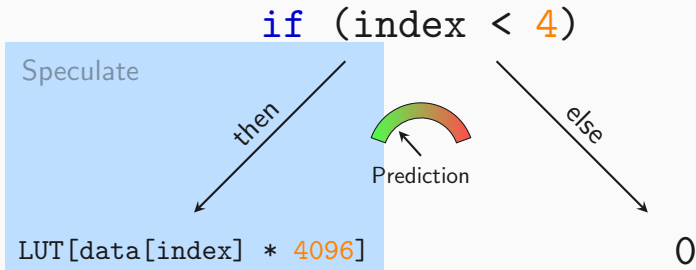
else

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```

```
0
```

```
index = 5;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```



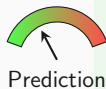
```
index = 5;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```



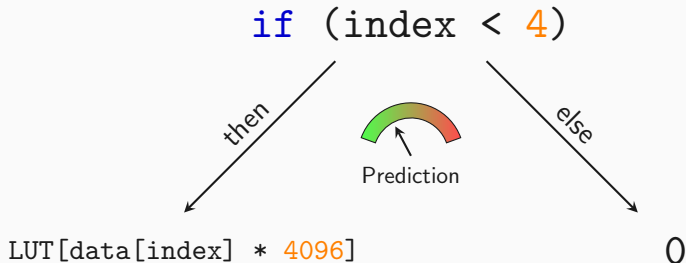
else

Execute

0

```
index = 6;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```



```
index = 6;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then



Prediction

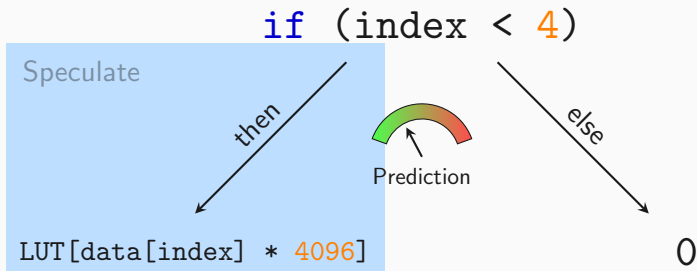
else

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```

```
0
```

```
index = 6;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```




```
index = 6;
```

```
char* data = "textKEY";
```

```
if (index < 4)
```

then

```
LUT[data[index] * 4096]
```



Prediction

else

Execute

0



BLOCKCHAIN

HHD
HISTORY.COM



Computer Architecture Today

Informing the broad computing community about current activities, advances and future directions in computer architecture.

Let's Keep it to Ourselves: Don't Disclose Vulnerabilities

by Gus Uht on Jan 31, 2019 | Tags: Opinion, Security



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Contribute to Computer
Architecture Today

We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:



We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:

- attacks on crypto



We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:

- attacks on crypto → “software should be fixed”





We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:

- attacks on crypto → “software should be fixed”
- attacks on ASLR



We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:

- attacks on crypto → “software should be fixed”
- attacks on ASLR → “ASLR is broken anyway”



We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:

- attacks on crypto → “software should be fixed”
- attacks on ASLR → “ASLR is broken anyway”
- attacks on SGX and TrustZone



We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:

- attacks on crypto → “software should be fixed”
- attacks on ASLR → “ASLR is broken anyway”
- attacks on SGX and TrustZone → “not part of the threat model”



We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:

- attacks on crypto → “software should be fixed”
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- attacks on SGX and TrustZone → “not part of the threat model”
- Rowhammer attacks



We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:

- attacks on crypto → “software should be fixed”
- attacks on ASLR → “ASLR is broken anyway”
- attacks on SGX and TrustZone → “not part of the threat model”
- Rowhammer attacks → “only affects cheap sub-standard modules”



We have ignored microarchitectural attacks for many many years:

- attacks on crypto → “software should be fixed”
- attacks on ASLR → “ASLR is broken anyway”
- attacks on SGX and TrustZone → “not part of the threat model”
- Rowhammer attacks → “only affects cheap sub-standard modules”

→ for years we solely optimized for performance



After learning about a side channel you realize:



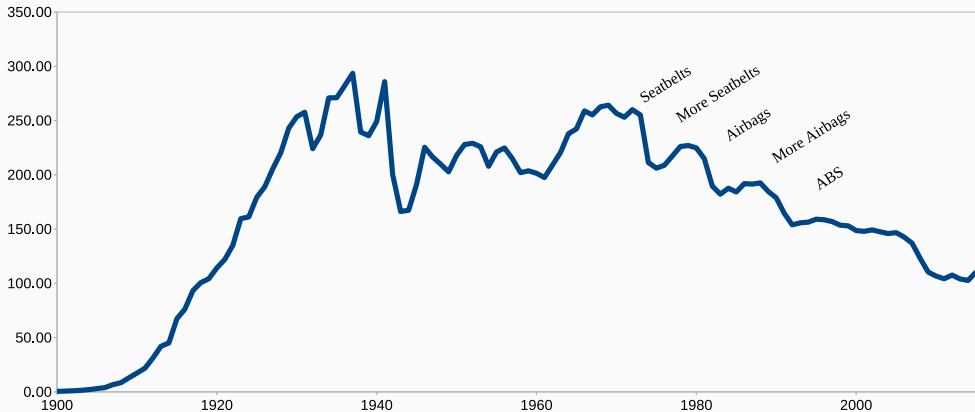
After learning about a side channel you realize:

- the side channels were documented in the Intel manual



After learning about a side channel you realize:

- the side channels were documented in the Intel manual
- only now we understand the implications



Motor Vehicle Deaths per Year (normalized by US population)



A unique chance to

- for the security industry and academia to grow up
- find good trade-offs between security and performance, efficiency, and complexity
- like the health sector, learn to cope with diseases

Software-based Microarchitectural Attacks: What do we learn from Meltdown and Spectre?

Daniel Gruss

March 26, 2019

Graz University of Technology