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# CYBERSHIELD

## An Approach to Defeat Malware in Edge Computers using Hardware Diversity

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The Second IFIP Workshop on Intelligent Vehicle Dependability and Security (IVDS)

*June 23-26, 2022 – Old Town Alexandria, VA, USA*



### University Team

**Dr. Brock J. LaMeres**

Professor, ECE

**Dr. Clem Izurieta**

Professor, CS

**Colter Barney**

Grad Student, EE

**Walker Ward**

Undergrad Student, CS

**Tristan Running Crane**

Grad Student, EE



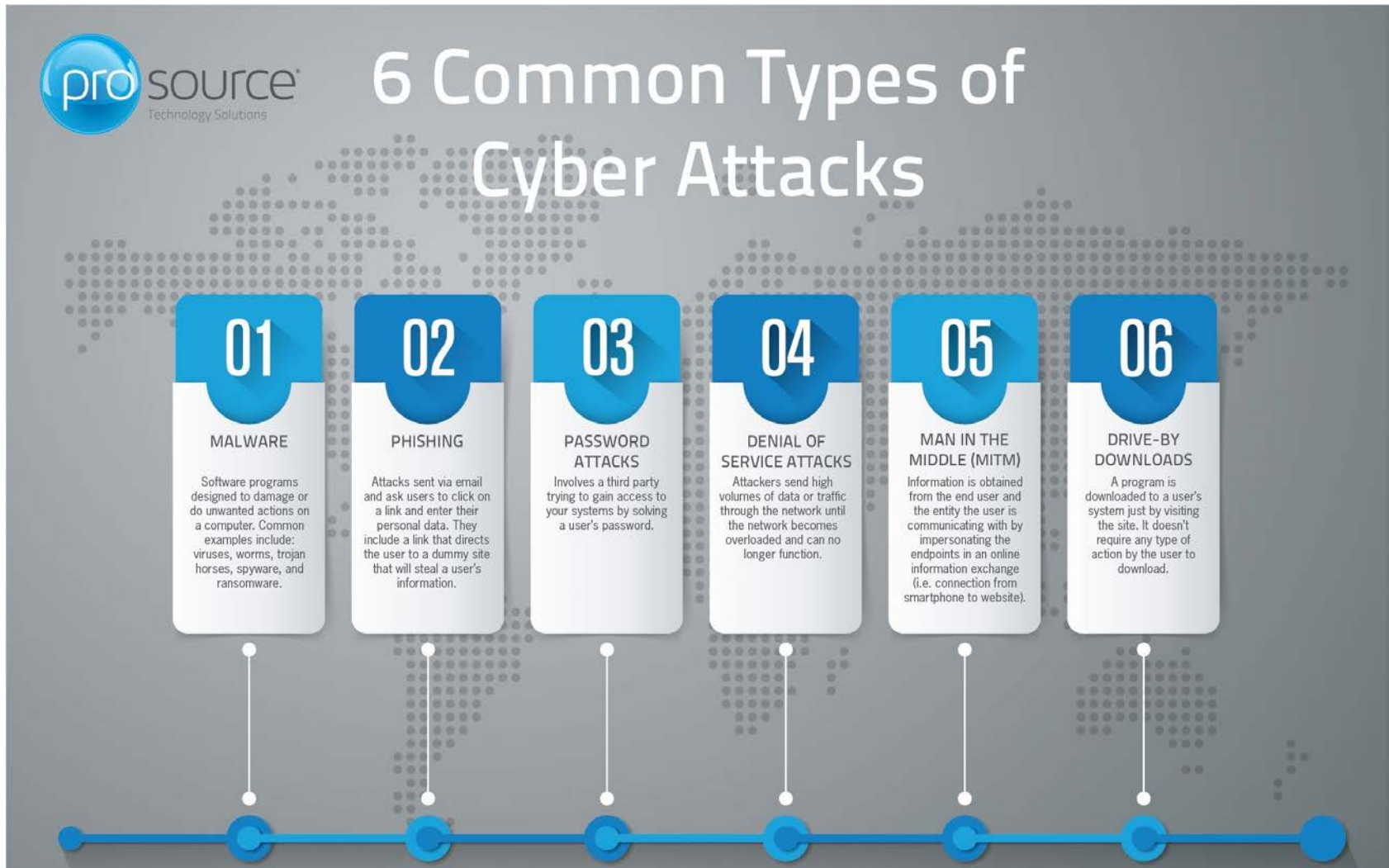
### Industry Mentor

**Dr. Jay Lala**

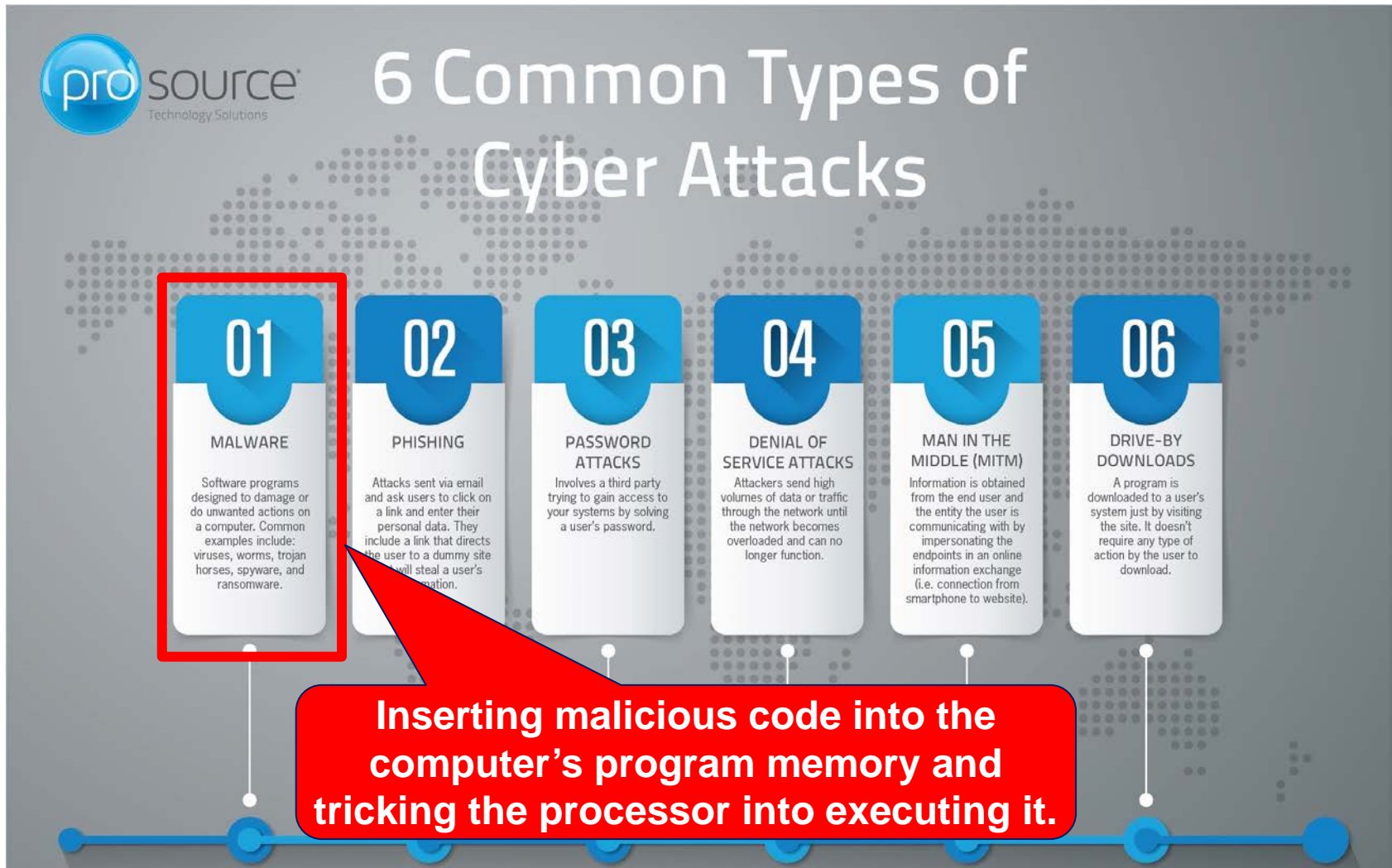
Cyber Tech Area Lead

Senior Principal Engineering Fellow

## Types of Cybersecurity Attacks

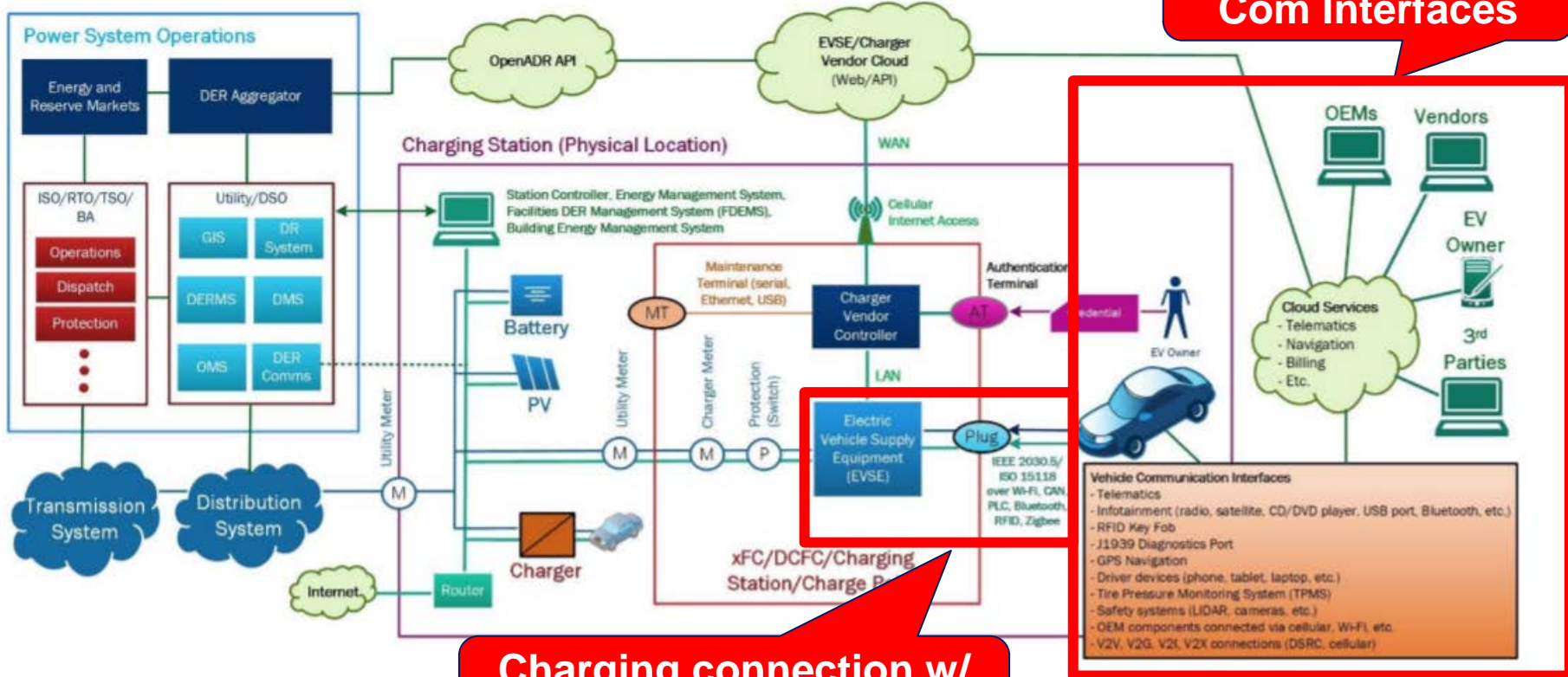


## Types of Cybersecurity Attacks



## Likely Malware Insertion Points in Future for Vehicles

**Vehicle Wireless Com Interfaces**



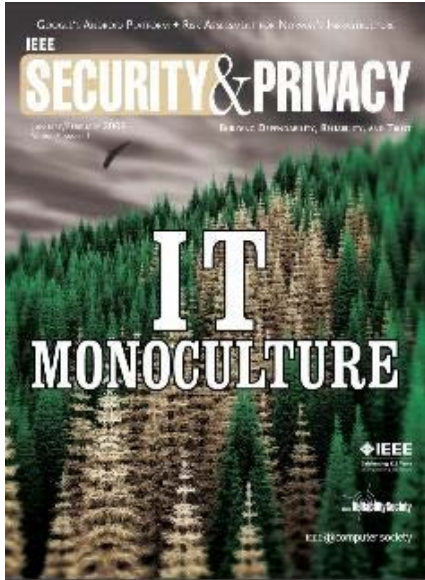
**Charging connection w/ wireless telemetry**



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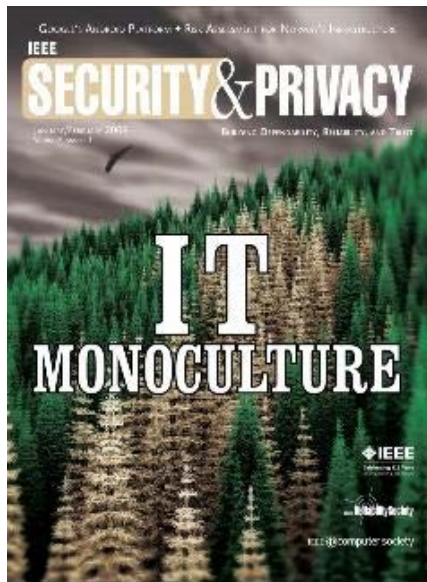
## The Malware Cybersecurity Challenge



- The nation's cyber infrastructure consists of a massive number of identical computer systems.
- This **homogeneity** is advantageous because a single piece of software can be deployed across millions of systems to increase capacity.



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- This **homogeneity** is advantageous because malware can be deployed across millions of systems.

However, this gives an attacker a significant advantage in terms of effort relative to system defenders by re-using their attack across numerous systems.



## The Attacker's Advantages Becomes Greater as we Move to Embedded Computing.



### Personal Computers

**400M** sold in 2018.



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### Smart Phones

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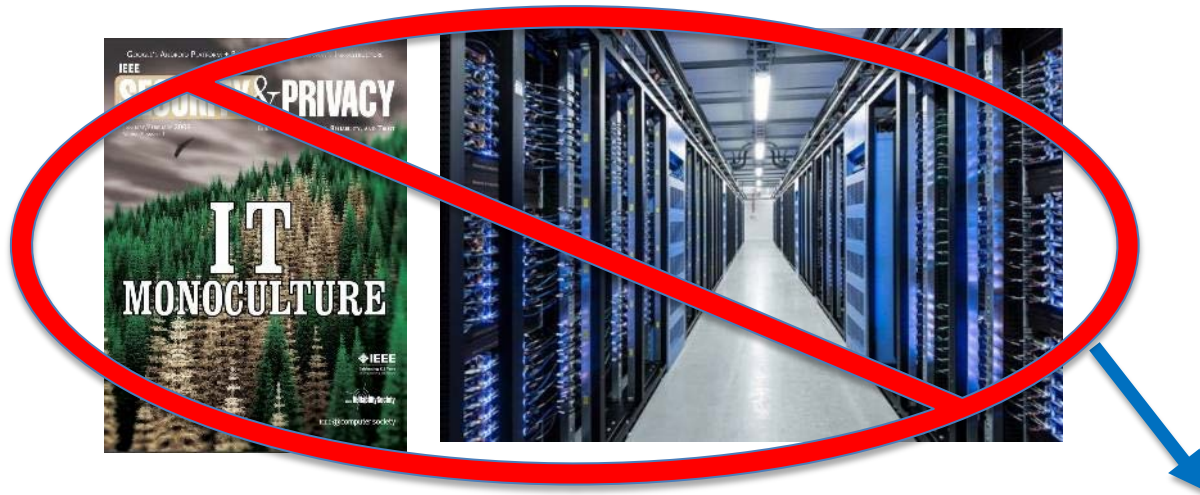


### Embedded Computers

**25B** sold in 2018.



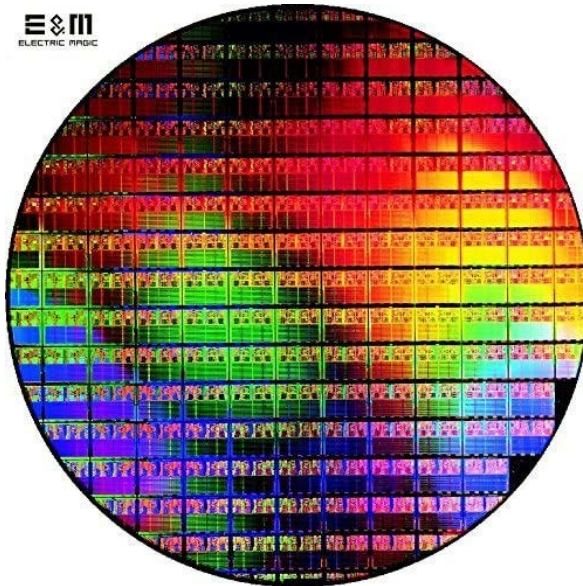
If Homogeneity gives the attacker an advantage, let's diversify the network.



Take Away the Attacker's Advantage  
by Randomizing the Hardware



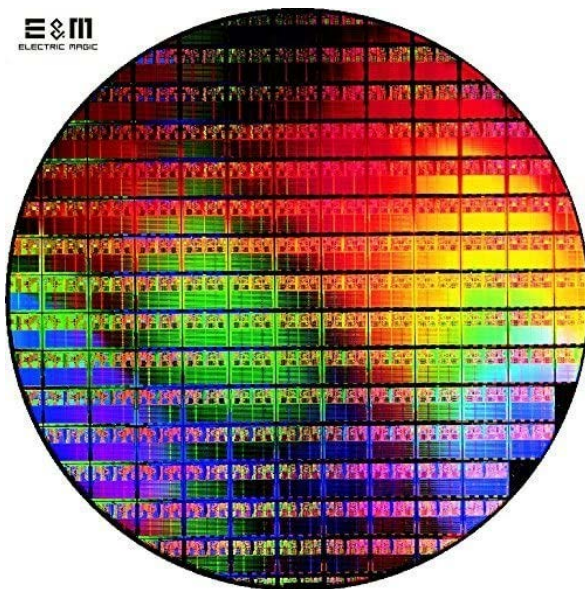
## But How Do You Diversify Hardware???



Hardware is fixed and takes months/years to fabricate.



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There has been some prior work in the area of randomization of instructions sets in **Virtual Machines**, with promising results.

**IT Monoculture**

### Randomized Instruction Sets and Runtime Environments

Past Research and Future Directions

Instruction set randomization offers a way to combat code-injection attacks by separating code from data (specifically, by randomizing legitimate code's execution environment). The author describes the motivation behind this approach and two application environments.



ANGELOS D. KIKIOTIS  
Columbia University

**C**ode-injection attacks are one of the most powerful vectors for compromising a system remotely. Attackers insert code of their choosing into a remote system and somehow induce its execution. This injected code then acts as a "beach head" through which, if undetected or otherwise unchecked, attackers can explore and use the system to their own ends. Although the remote insertion of new code into a target system can take many forms, the term *code injection* typically means that the code was surreptitiously added to an existing, running process or application (as opposed to, for example, a malicious executable received as an email attachment).

For many years, the most common method for code injection was via buffer overflow vulnerabilities. By exploiting weaknesses involving input validation and array-bounds-checking in C/C++ programs, an attacker could inject code to a remote process's address space and cause the program to code control to the injected code. In the simplest case, the return pointer of a specific function's stack frame is made to point to the injected code, causing the program to jump to the attack code upon returning from that function. More recently, different types of code-injection attacks have also started to appear, but they typically operate at a different level of abstraction and exploit completely different vulnerabilities. SQL-injection attacks, for example, involve inserting database commands into data sent to Web applications, allowing the attacker to extract or manipulate information in a Web site's back-end database. Cross-site scripting (XSS) attacks let intruders bypass modern Web browsers' security mechanisms by making their JavaScript code appear as if it were coming from a different, possibly trusted, site.

Researchers and practitioners have proposed several techniques to counter code-injection attacks, including safe languages, static code analysis, software hardening techniques, hardware extensions such as the No-eXecute (NX) feature in modern processors, attack detection and containment mechanisms, and so forth. One such technique is instruction set randomization (ISR). The basic idea behind this approach is that attackers don't know the language "spoken" by the runtime environment on which an application runs, so a code-injection attack will ultimately fail because the foreign code, however injected, is written in a different language. In contrast to other defense mechanisms, we can apply ISR against any type of code-injection attack, in any environment. Moreover, its use results in diversifying the runtime environment such that a successful attack against one process or host won't succeed verbatim against another. This is particularly useful in the context of self-propagating malware (such as worms), which depends on exploiting the same vulnerability in the same way across different systems, to compromise large numbers of systems.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally, we can't depend on the secrecy of the language or runtime environment for any significant time period in the presence of a determined attacker. Instead, following modern cryptography's lead, we should depend on robust algorithms for creating numerous different languages or runtime environments and then choose randomly from among them. Think of this random choice as a key: we can use it to

10 PUBLISHED BY THE IEEE COMPUTER SOCIETY ■ ISSN: 7886-5525/08 © 2008 IEEE ■ IEEE SECURITY & PRIVACY



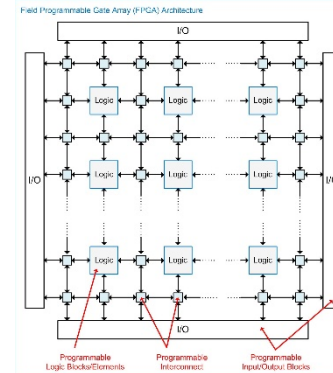
## Our Project Focuses on Diversifying Embedded Computers, not IT Infrastructure (*i.e., Servers*)

### Characteristics of an Embedded Computer

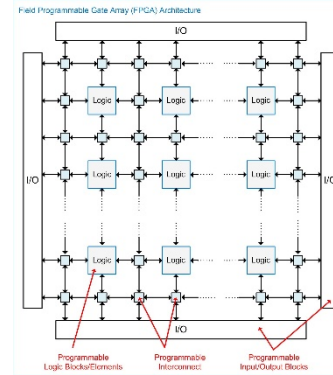
- Smaller (sometimes 8-pin packages)
- Lower Clock Frequencies (1MHz - 16MHz)
- Smaller memories (256k to 1M)
- Dedicated software, not general-purpose
- Often no OS other than real-time scheduler.



## We Exploit the Ability to Implement a Complete Embedded Computer on a *Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA)*



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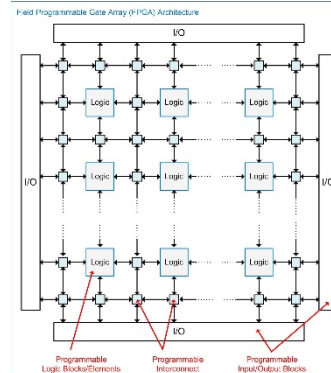
## Why is this important?

- *FPGA hardware is designed using a Hardware Description Language (i.e., text).*

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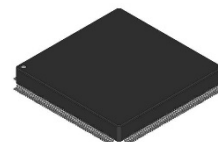
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HDL  
Generation  
Scripts

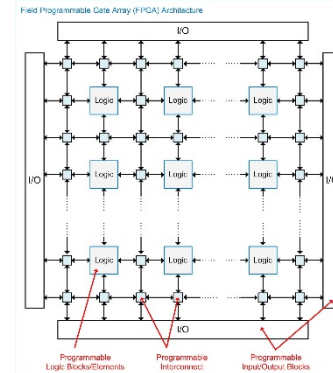
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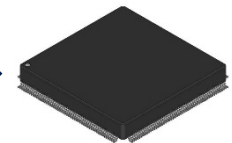


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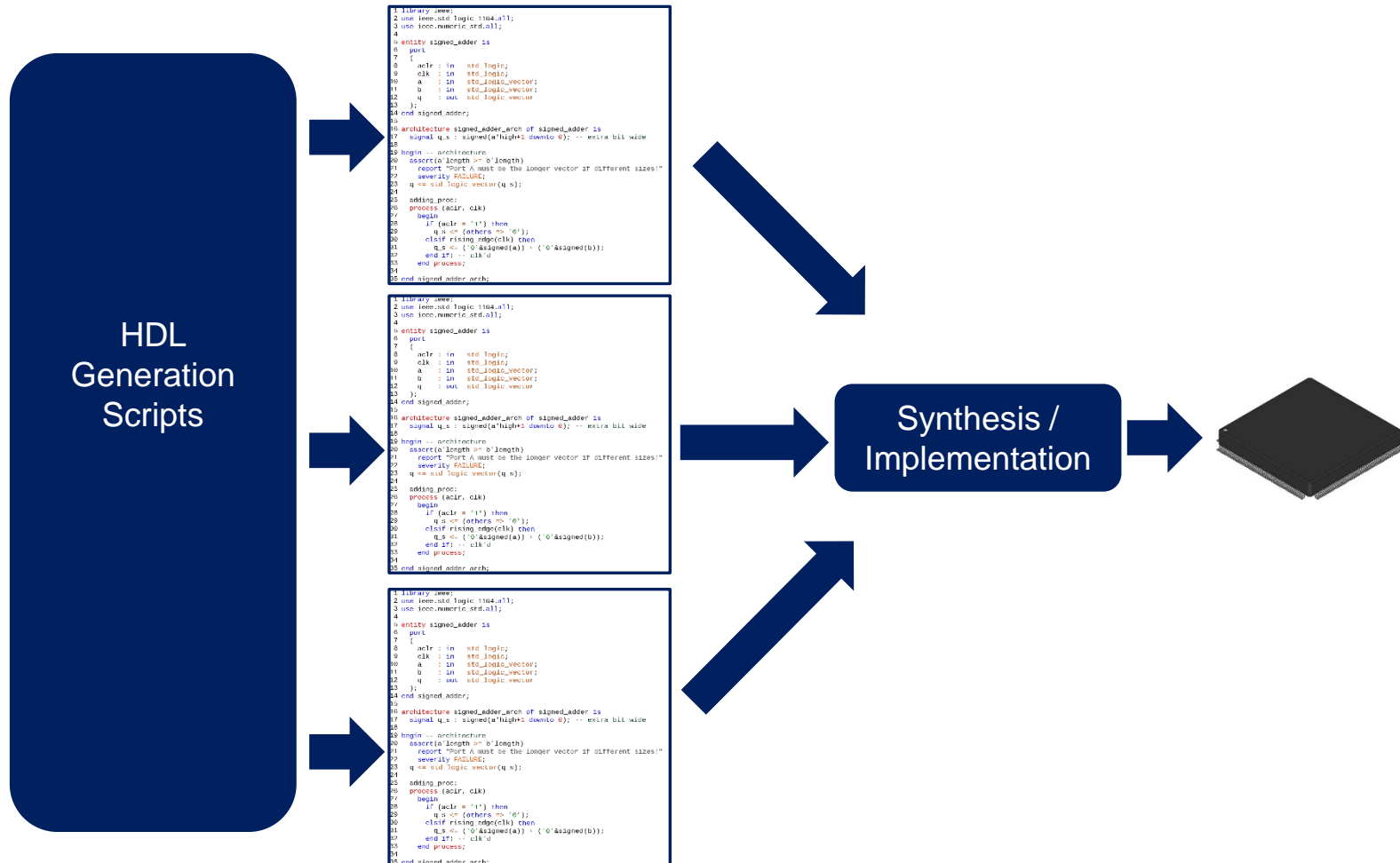
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- *The HDL can be created at compile-time.*



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- Original Processor
- Open-Source Doc
- Known Opcodes
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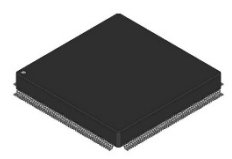
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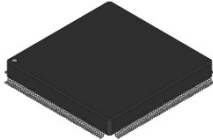
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We can create copies of the baseline computer with different instruction opcodes before synthesis.

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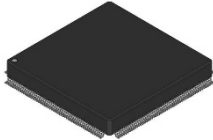
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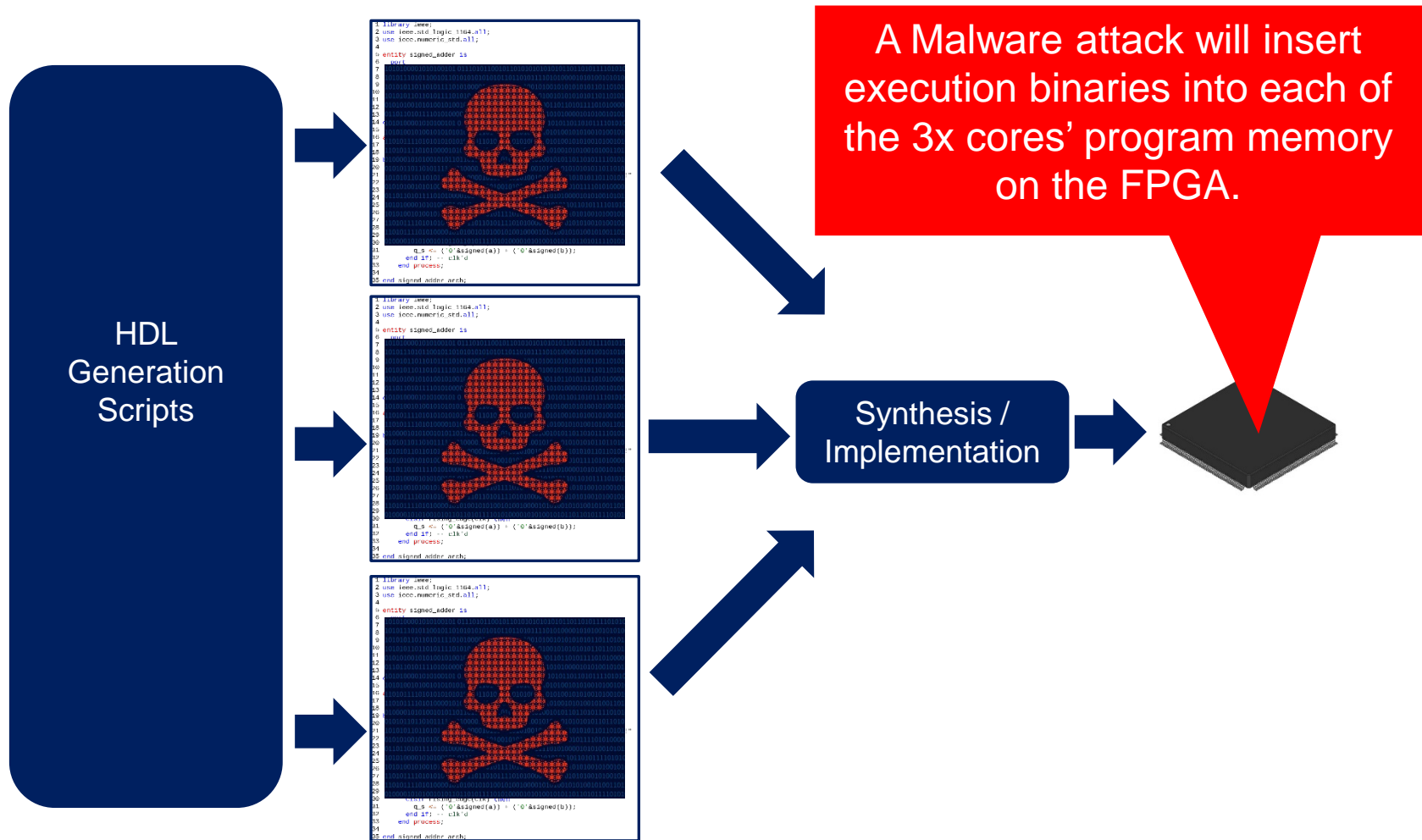
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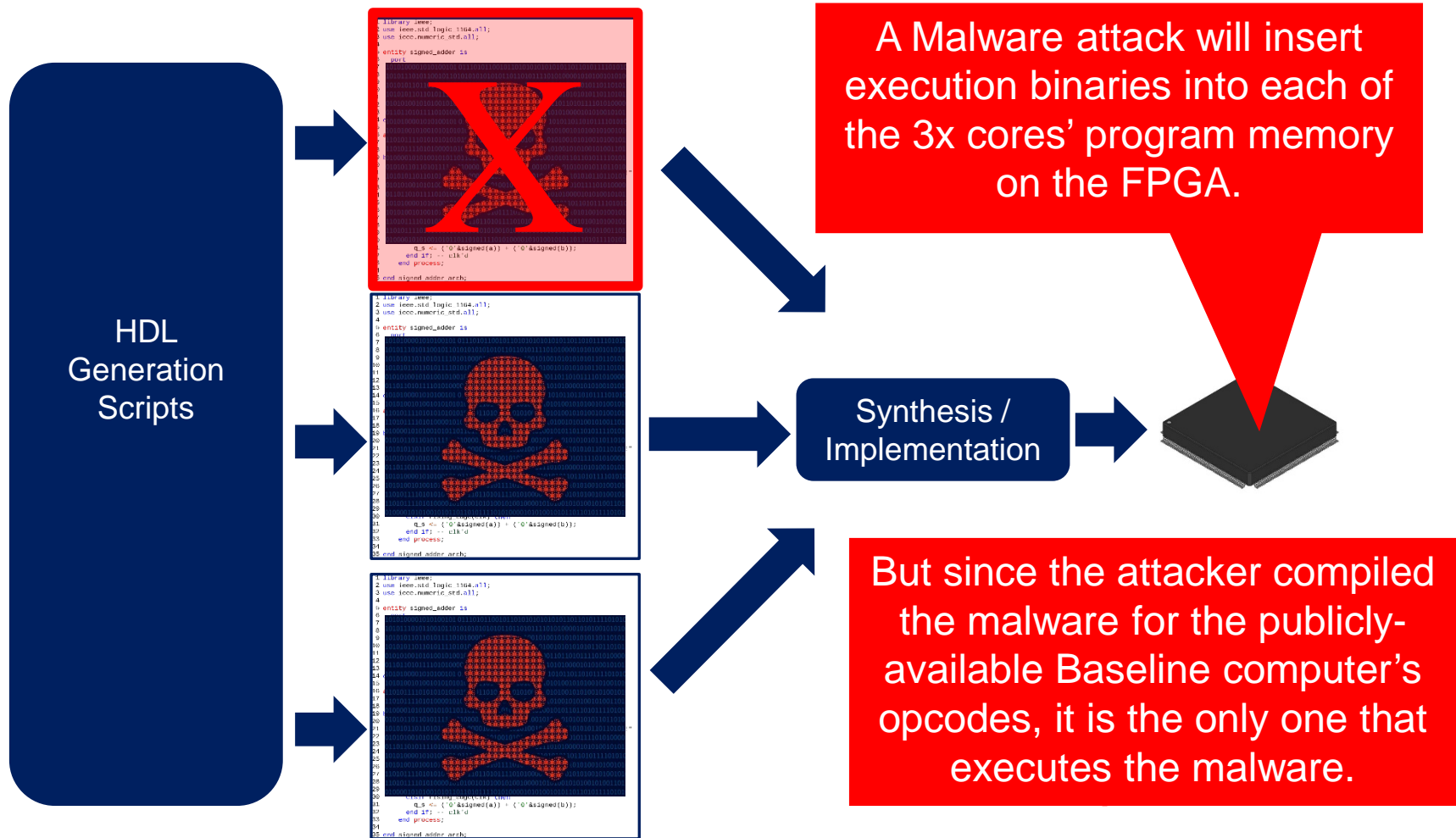
This results in “functionally equivalent, heterogeneous cores” on the FPGA that run as a redundant system.



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The computers with randomized opcodes don't recognize the malware.

We can either throw an exception or run a pre-defined routine to remove the malware.

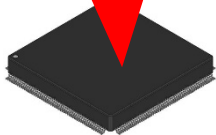
```
library ieee;
1 use ieee.std_logic_1164.all;
2 use ieee.numeric_std.all;
3
4 entity signed_adder is
5     port (
6         a : in  std_logic;
7         b : in  std_logic;
8         q : out std_logic;
9     );
10 end entity signed_adder;
11
12 architecture signed_adder_arch of signed_adder is
13     signal a_s : signed(7 downto 0);
14     signal b_s : signed(7 downto 0);
15     signal q_s : signed(7 downto 0);
16
17     q_s <= ('0' & assigned(a)) + ('0' & assigned(b));
18     and q_s <= 'x';
19 end architecture signed_adder_arch;
```

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3 use ieee.numeric_std.all;
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```

A Malware attack will insert execution binaries into each of the 3x cores' program memory on the FPGA.

Synthesis / Implementation



But since the attacker compiled the malware for the publicly-available Baseline computer's opcodes, it is the only one that executes the malware.



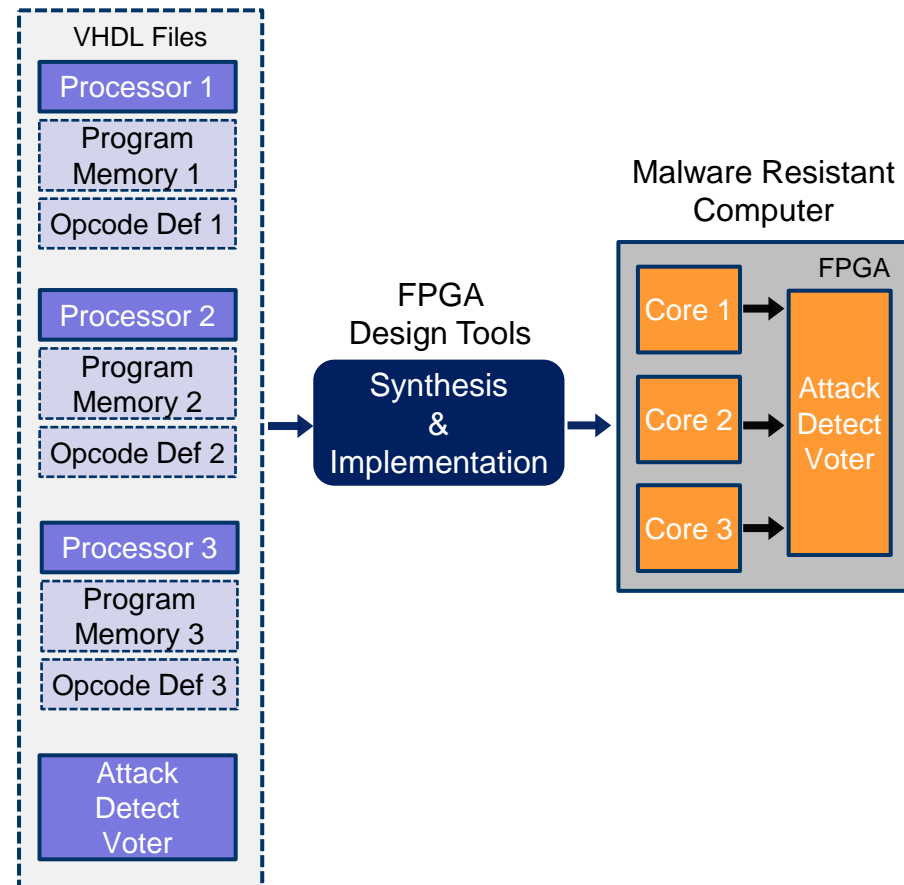


**But how do we map the original source code opcode assignments used by the compiler into the two heterogenous cores?**

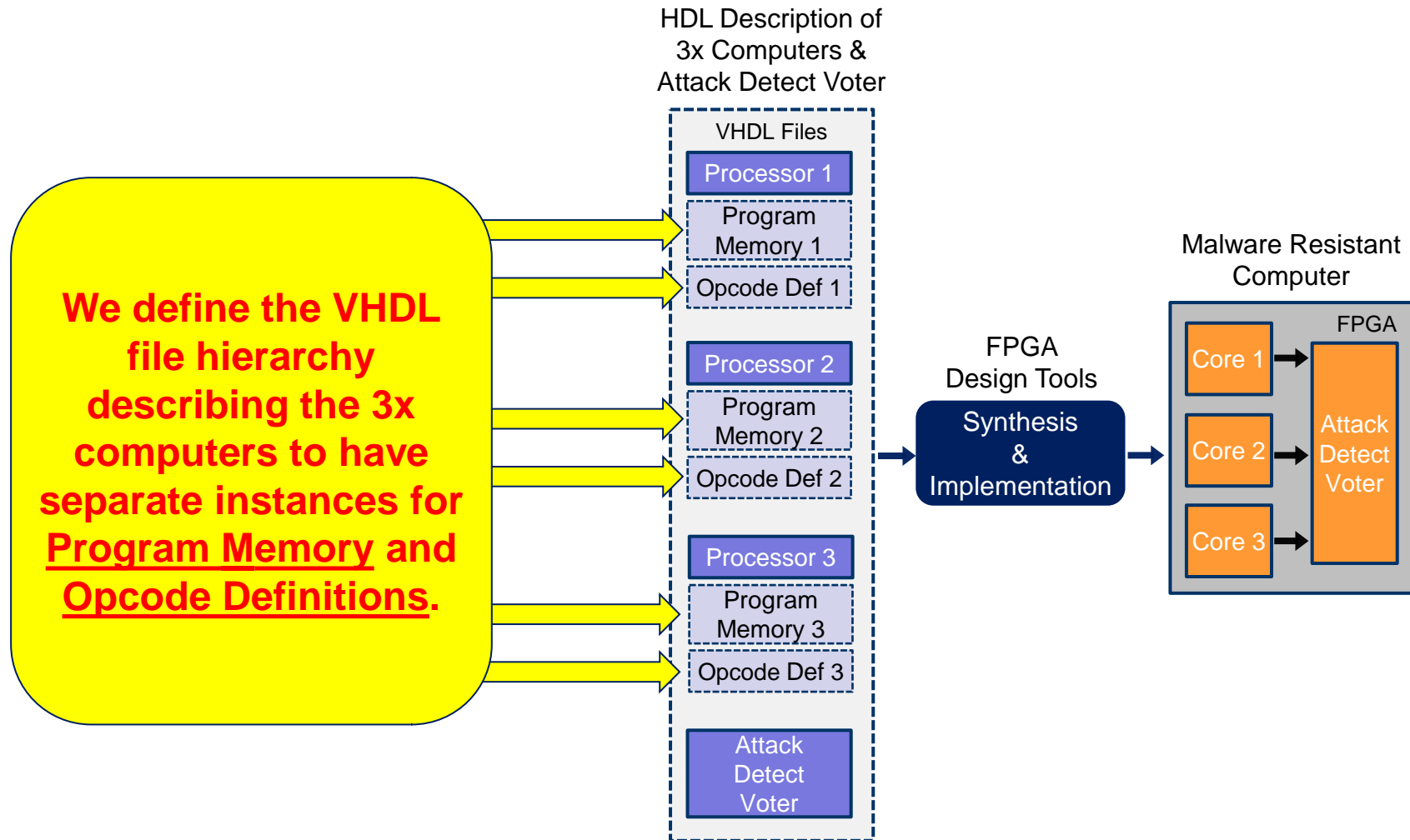


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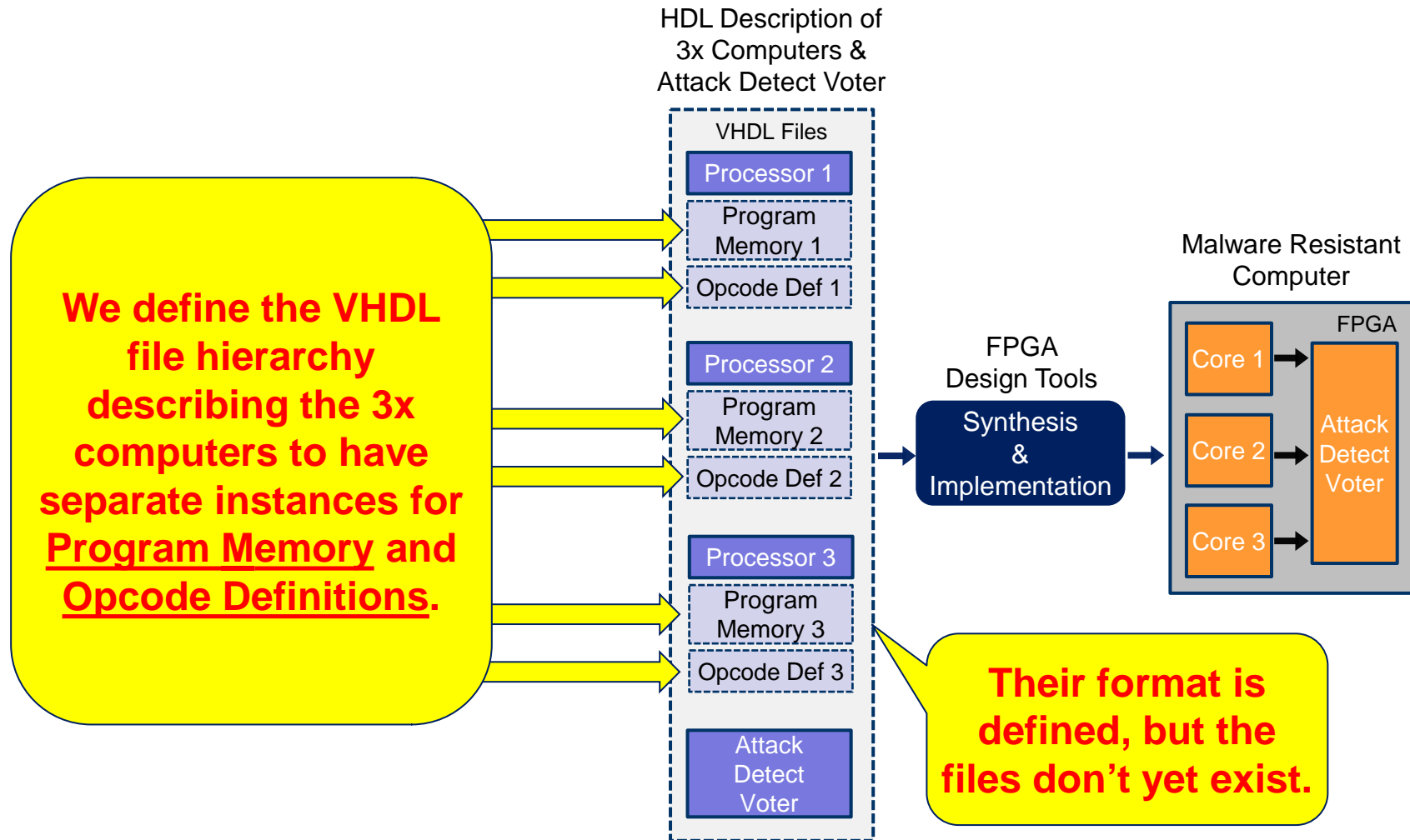
HDL Description of  
3x Computers &  
Attack Detect Voter



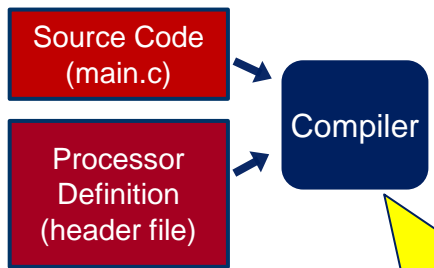
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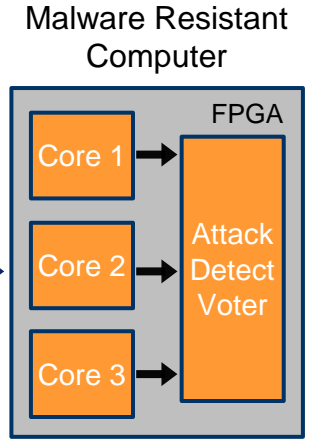
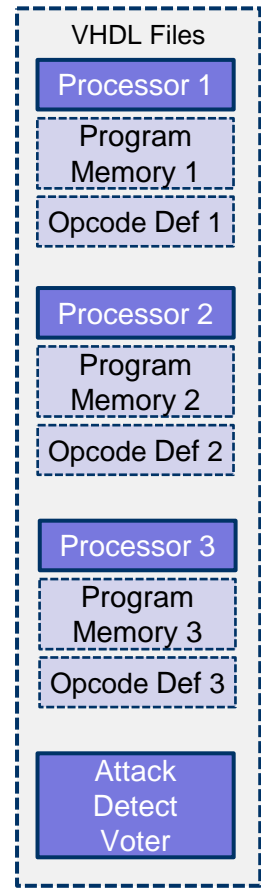


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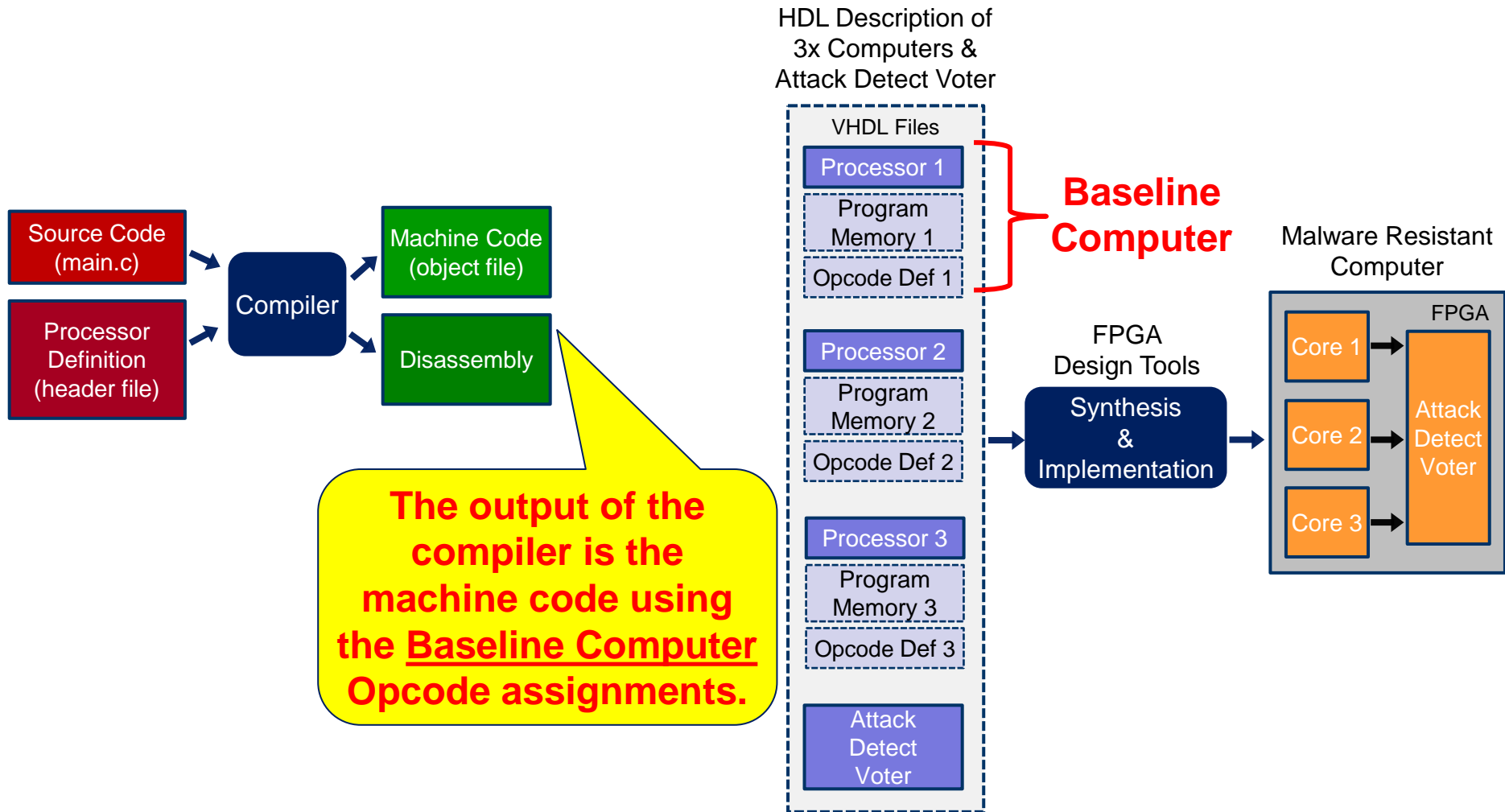


**We want to start the software development using a standard tool flow. (i.e., main.c, standard development environments)**

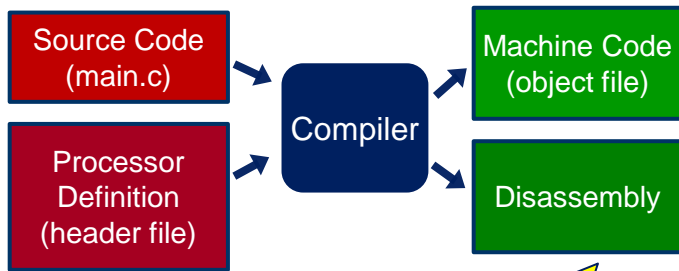
HDL Description of 3x Computers & Attack Detect Voter



## But how do we map the original source code opcode assignments used by the compiler into the two heterogenous cores?

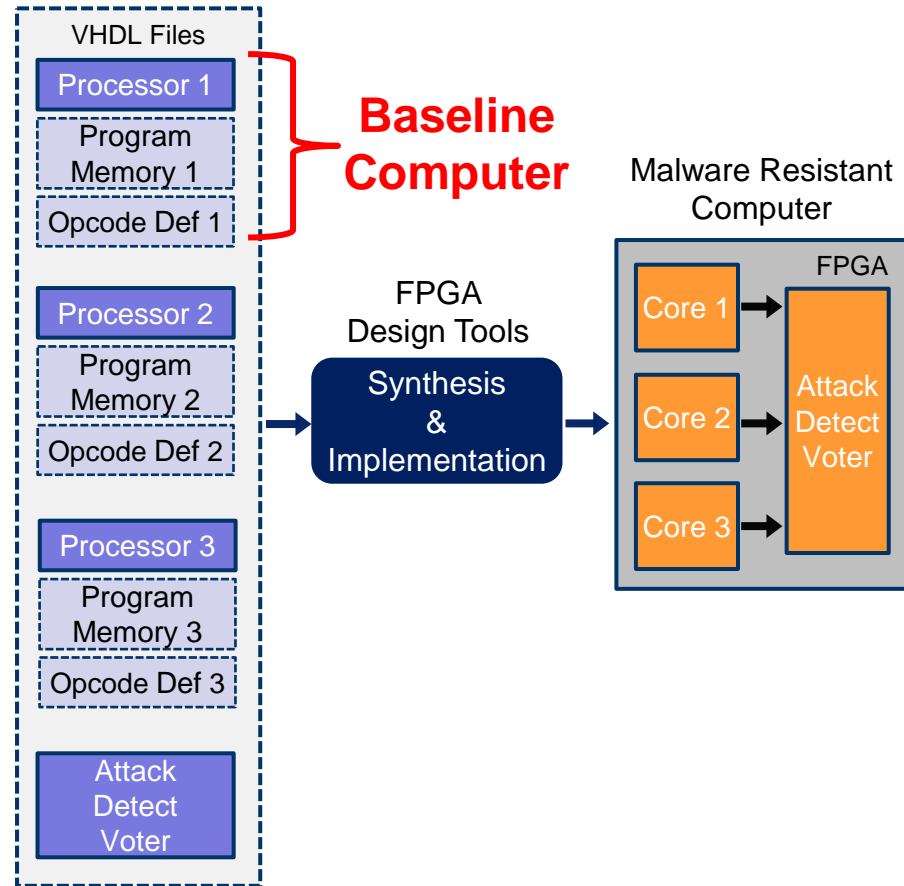


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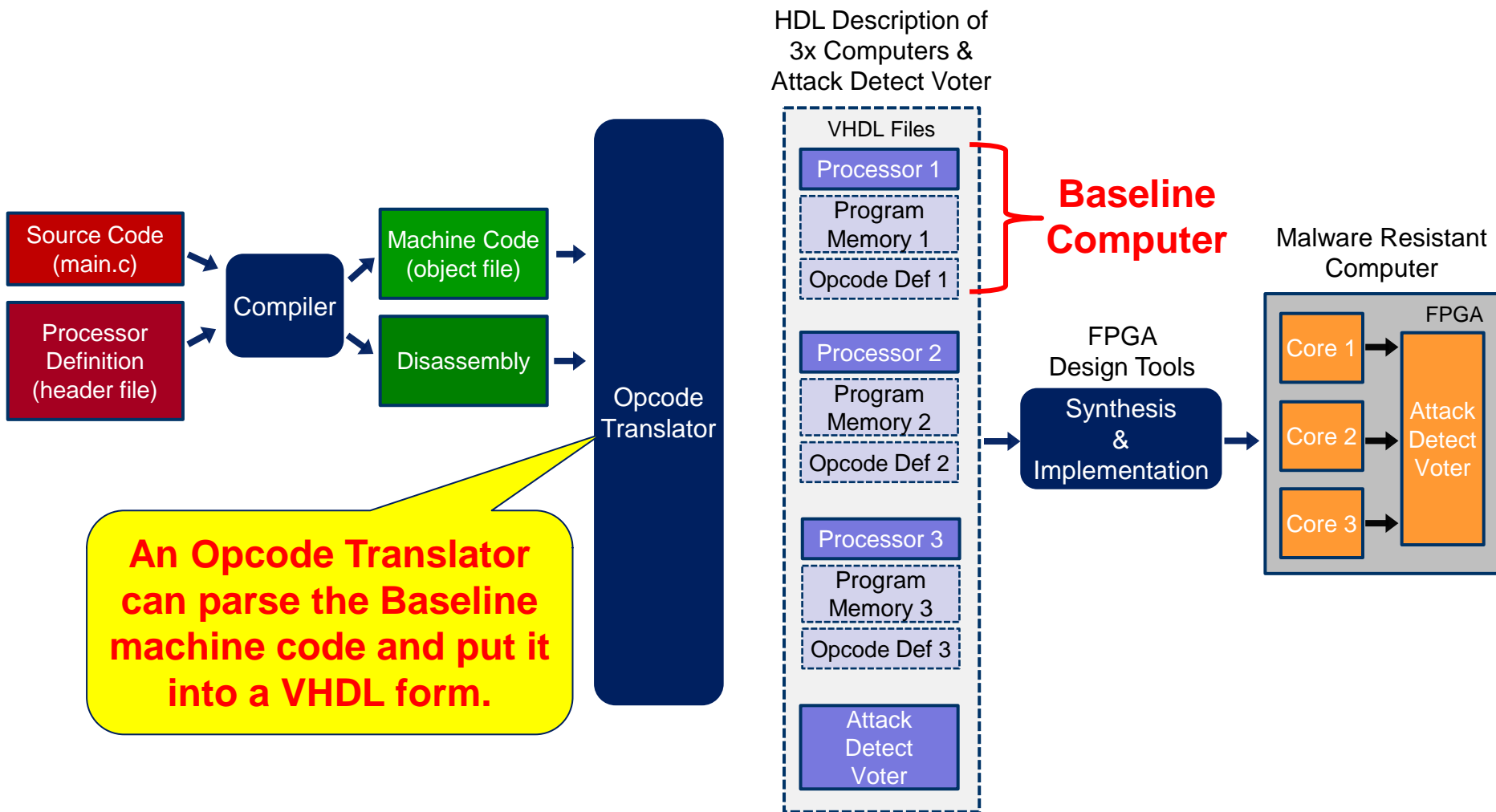


**The disassembly gives us details of which fields in the machine code are Opcodes vs. Operands.**

HDL Description of  
3x Computers &  
Attack Detect Voter

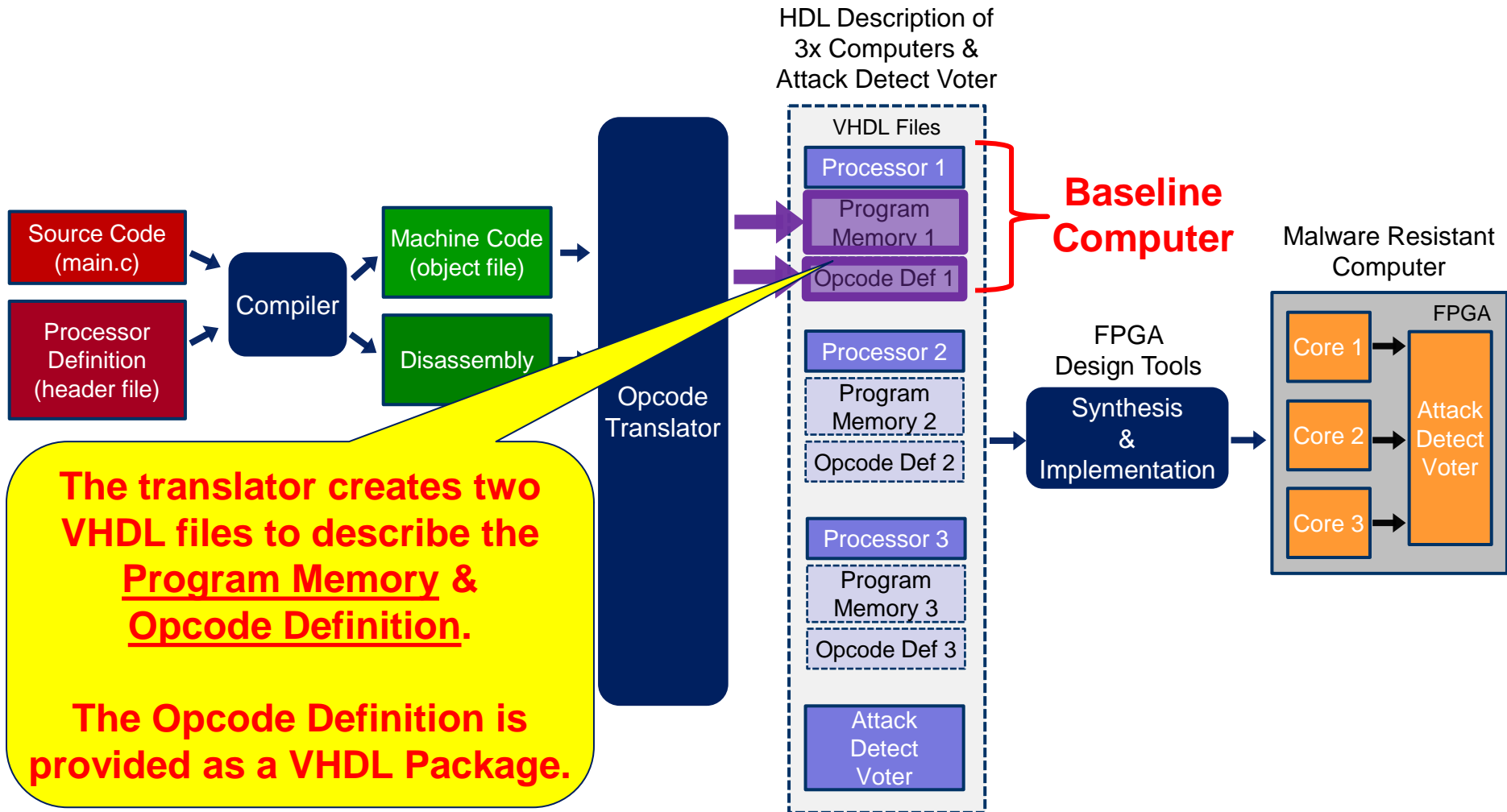


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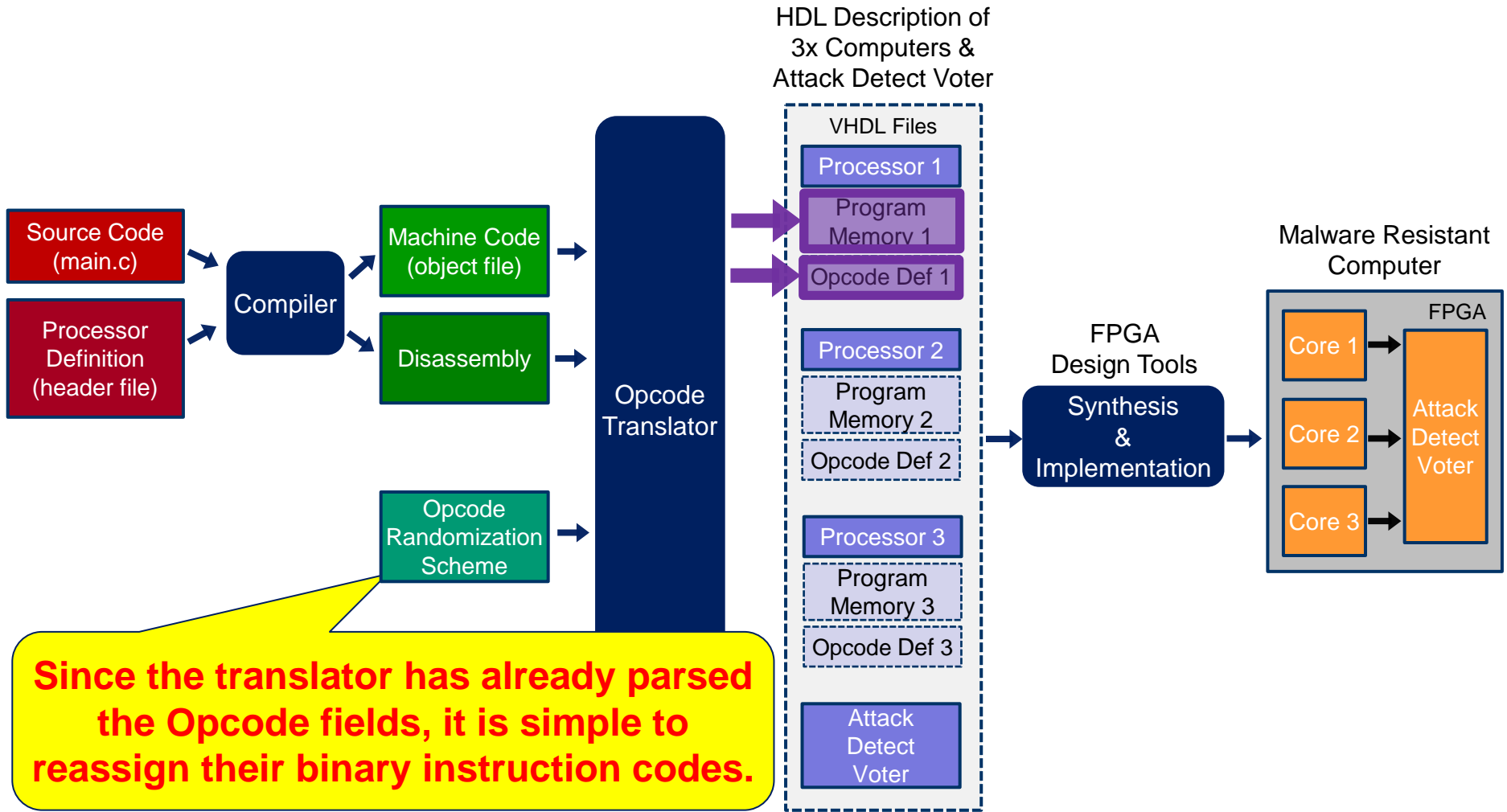




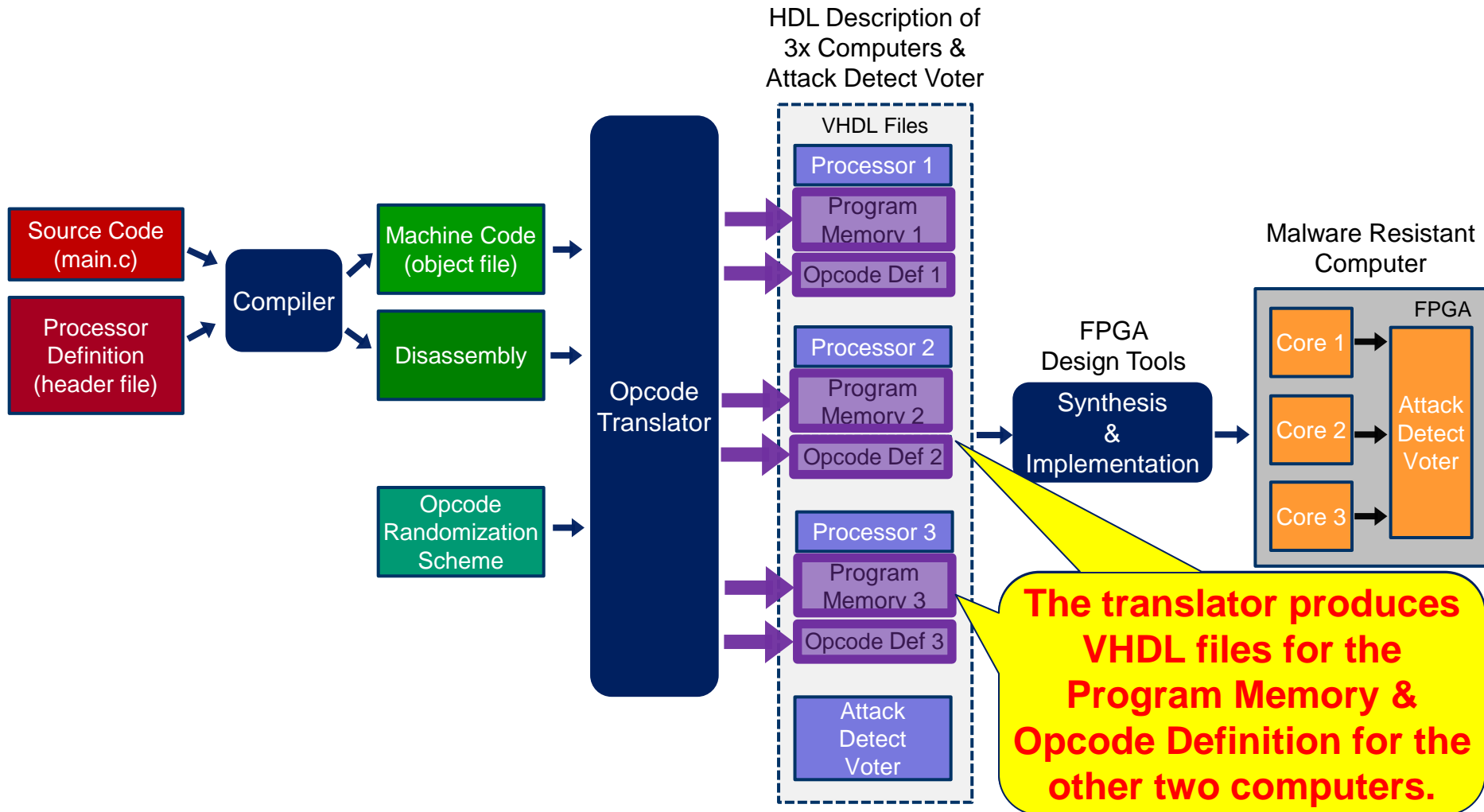
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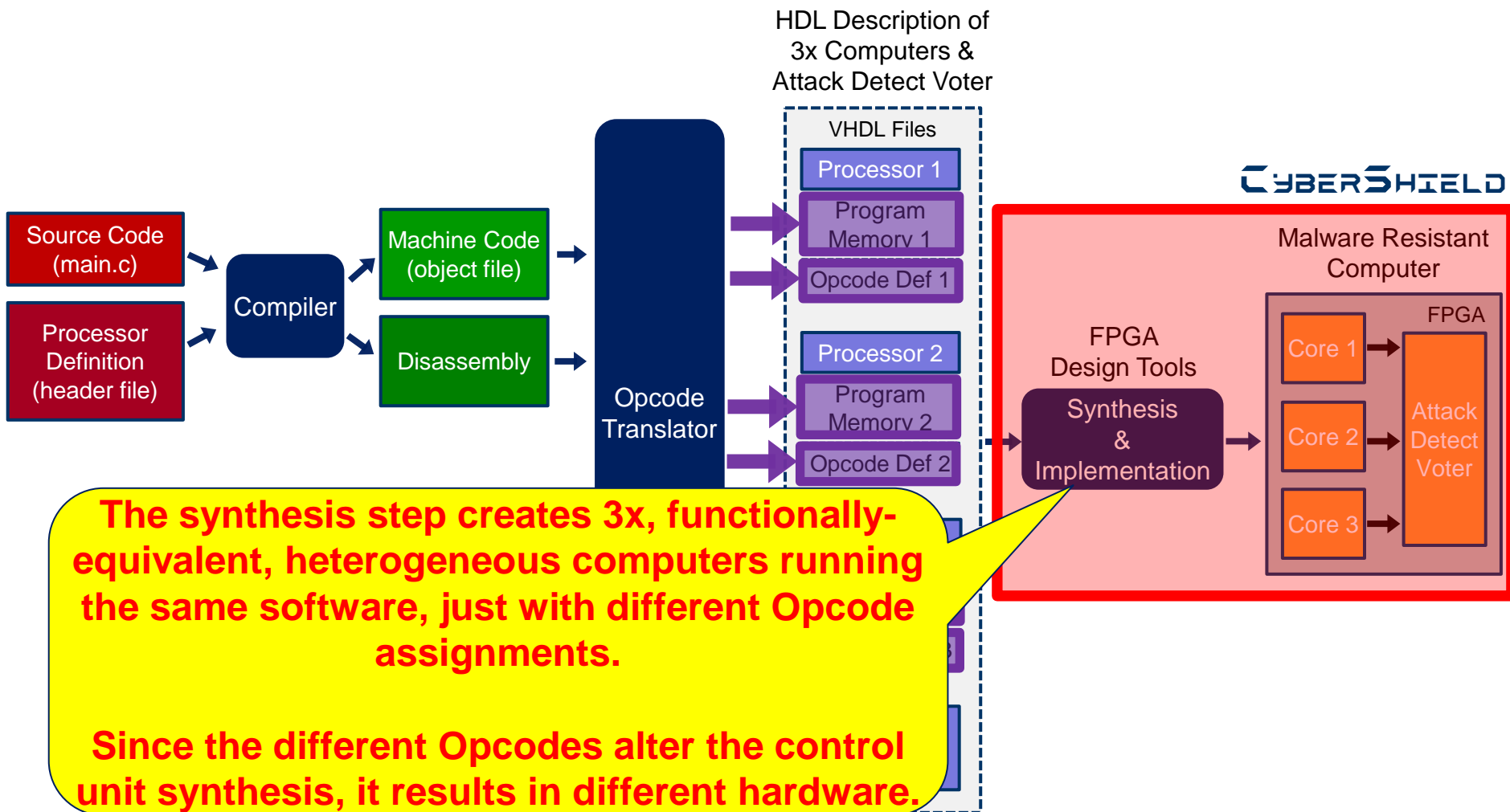
## But how do we map the original source code opcode assignments used by the compiler into the two heterogenous cores?

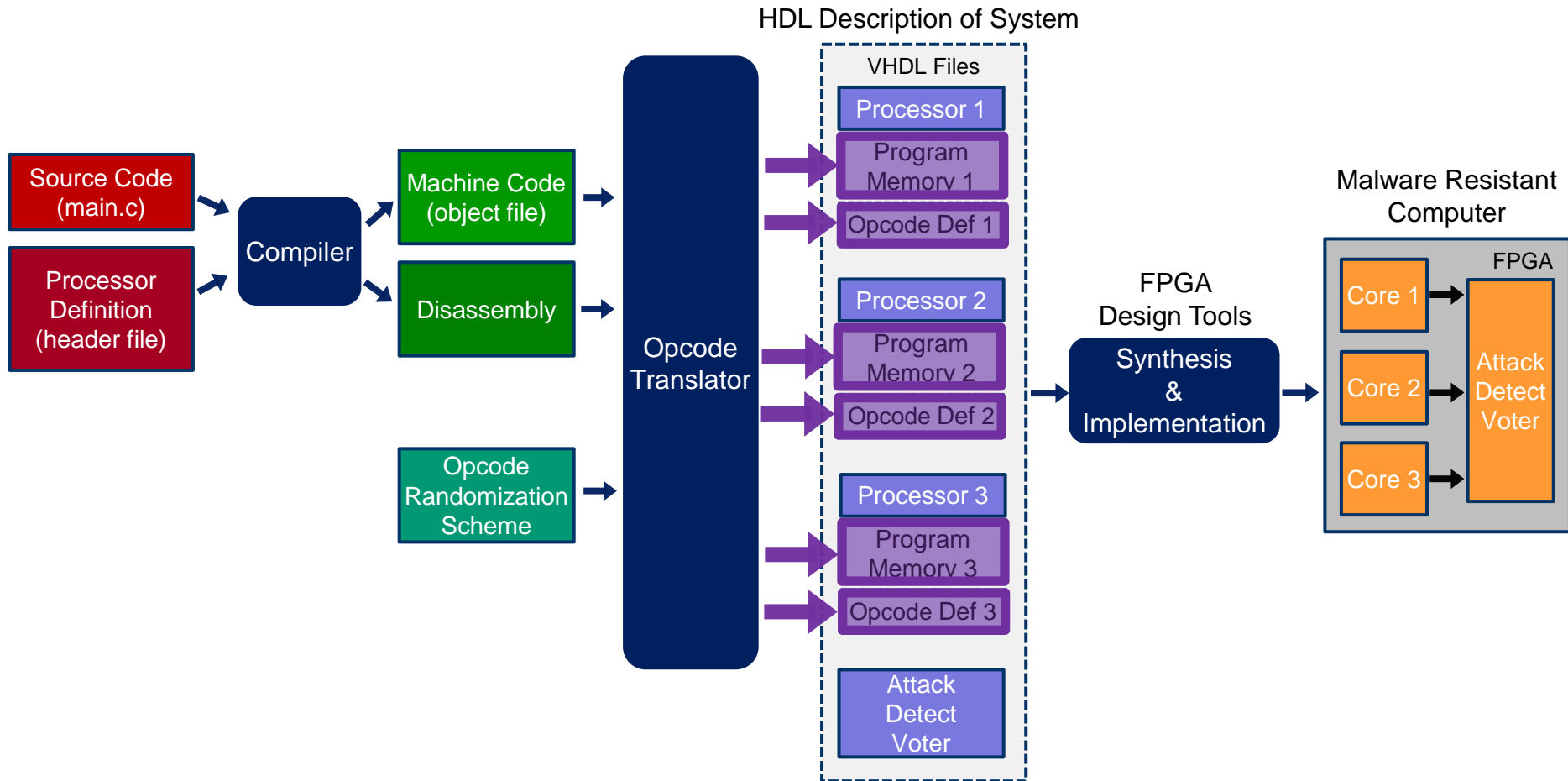


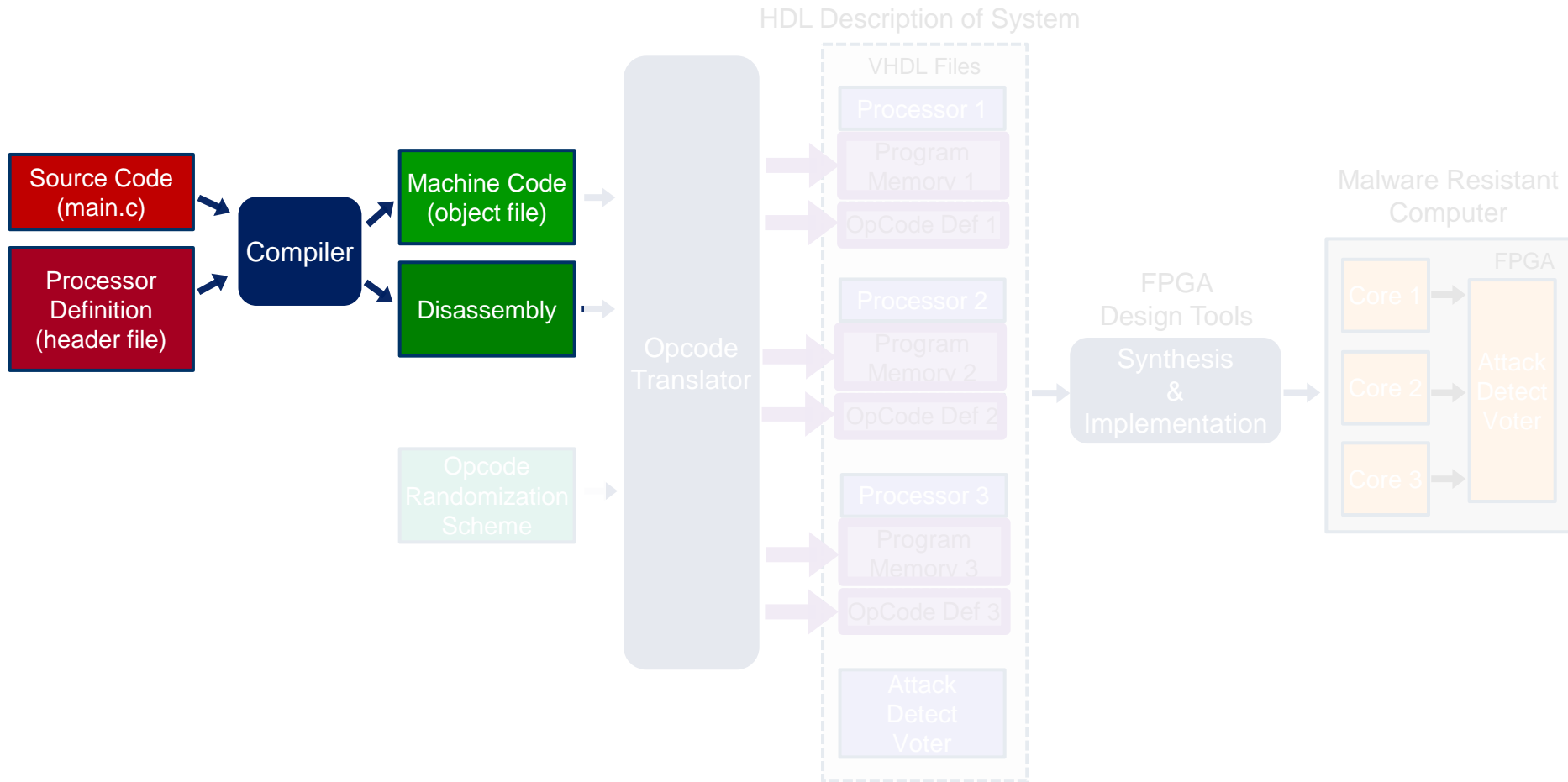
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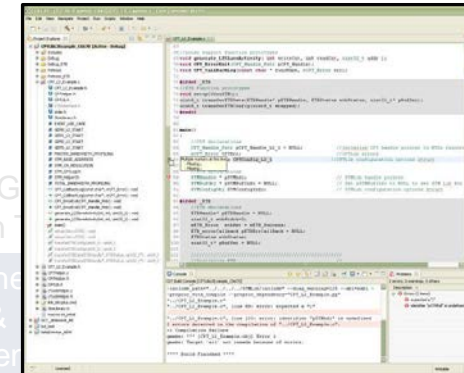
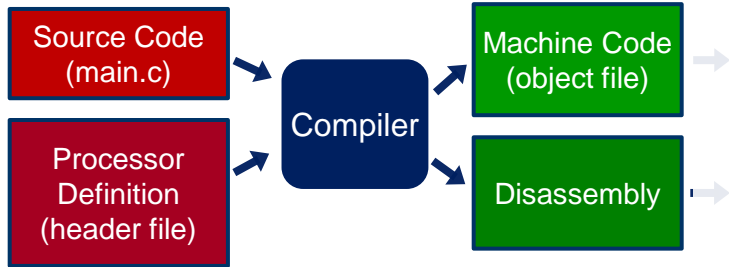




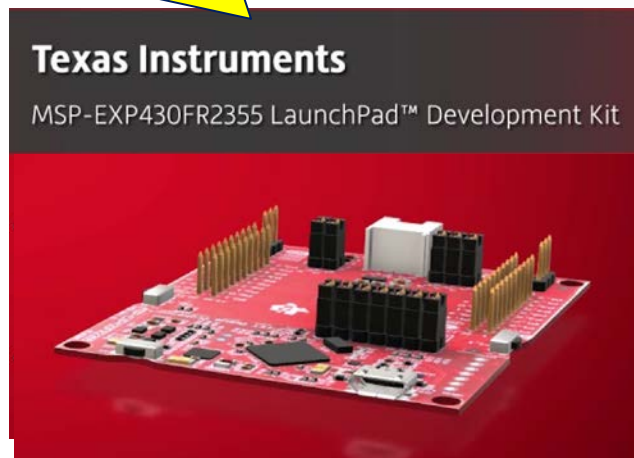


# Testbed for Demonstration

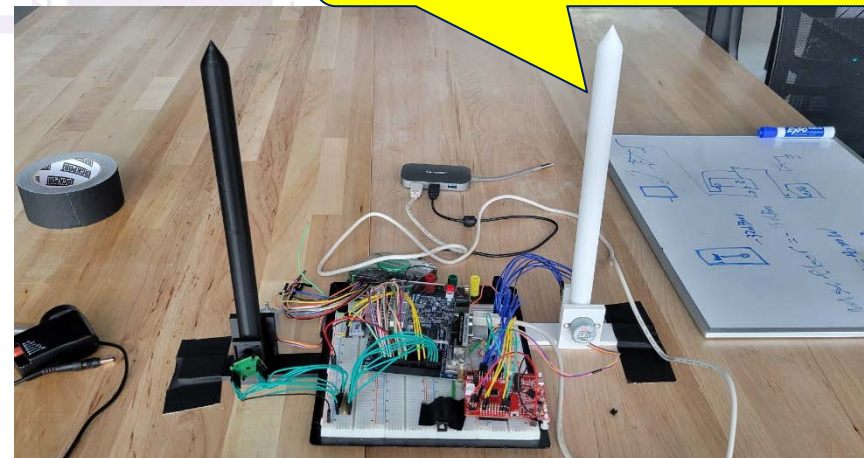
**Standard Eclipse Programming Environment Supporting C and Assembly.**

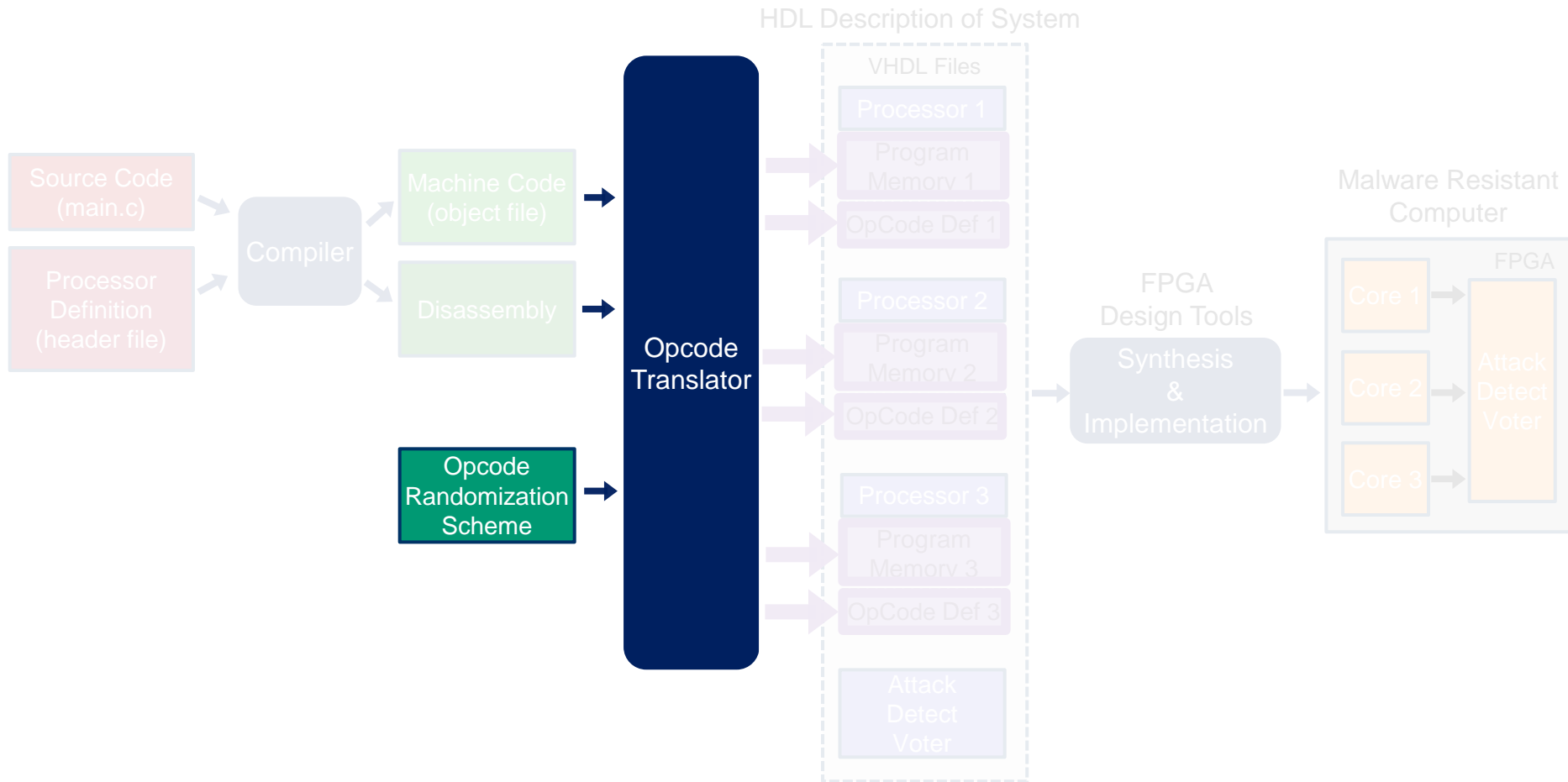


**Targeting a widely-used Microcontroller, the MSP430. A 16-bit RISC processor.**

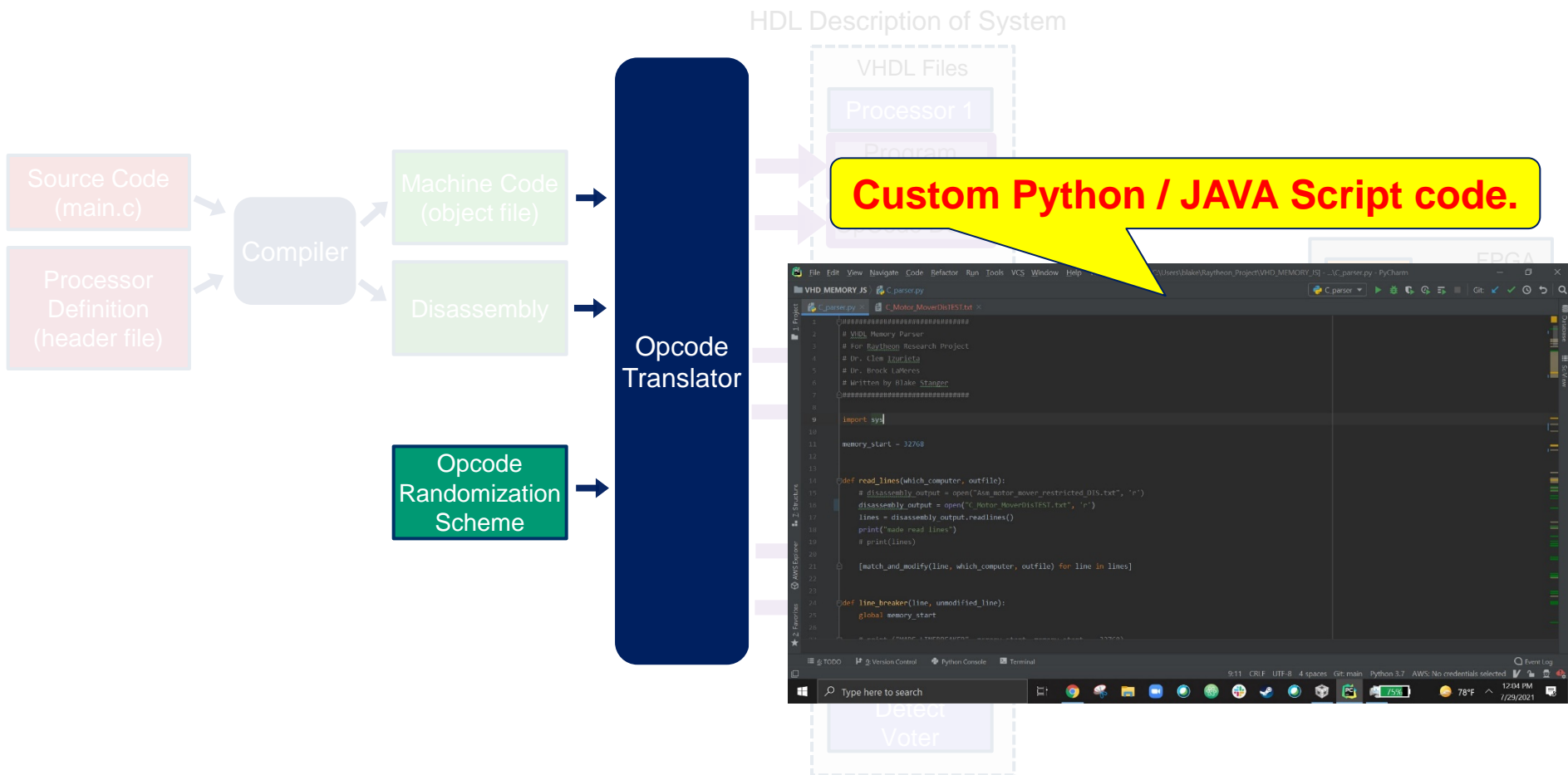


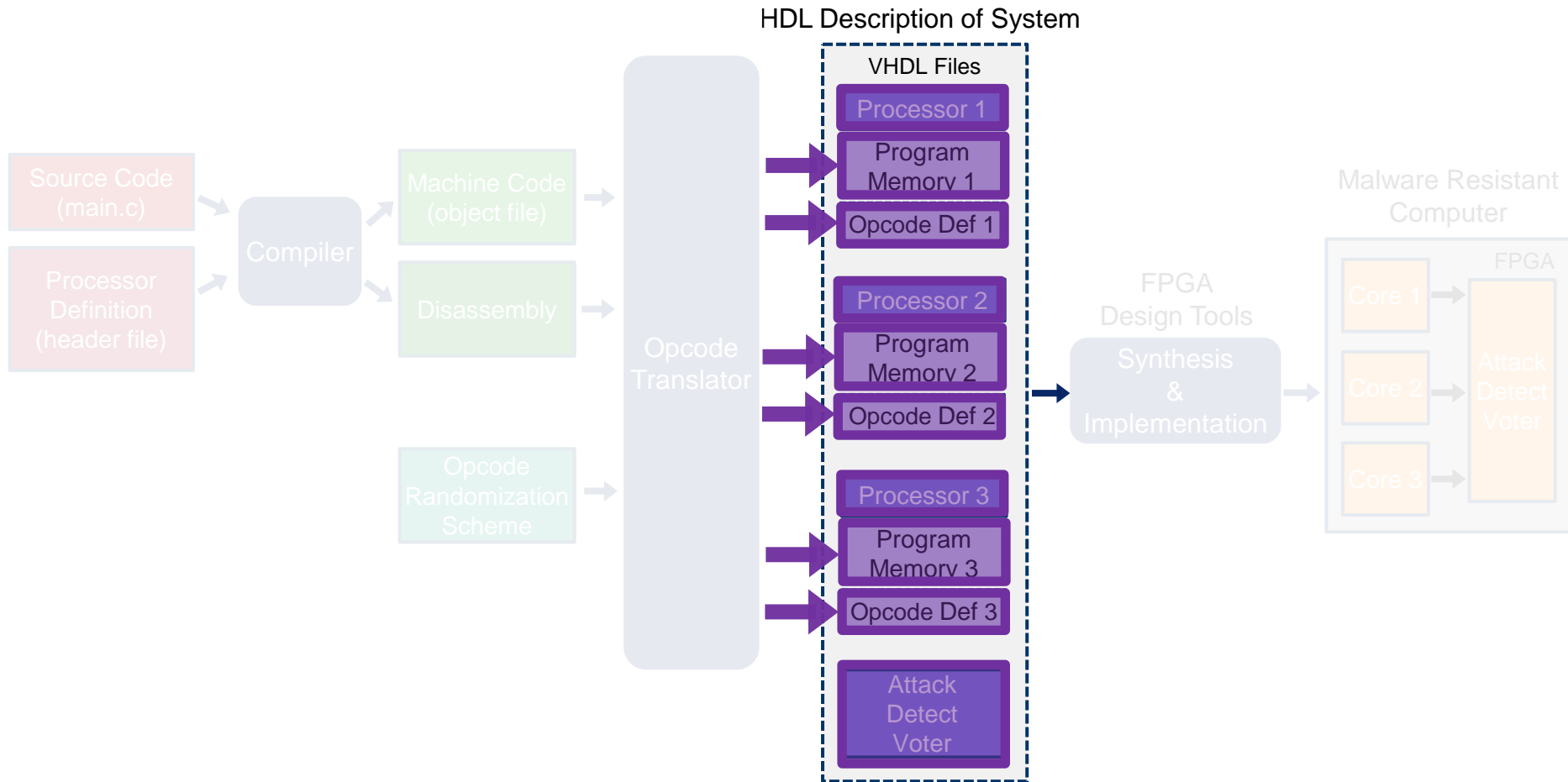
**Testbed program (main.c) to keep a missile upright**











# Testbed for Demonstration

**We built a fully functional MSP430 in VHDL from the TI datasheets.**

**MSP430FR4xx and MSP430FR2xx Family**

**User's Guide**

Literation Number: SLAU433J  
October 2014 - Revised May 2016

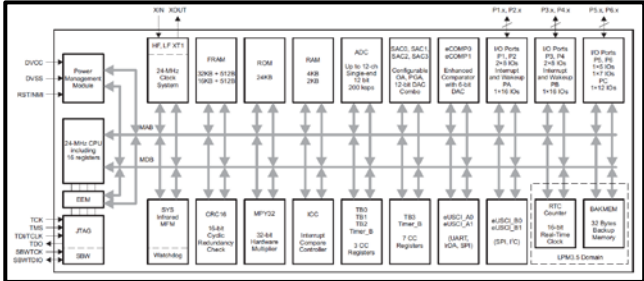
**MSP430FR215x, MSP430FR216x, MSP430FR215x, MSP430FR216x**

**MSP430FR215x, MSP430FR215x Mixed-Signal Microcontrollers**

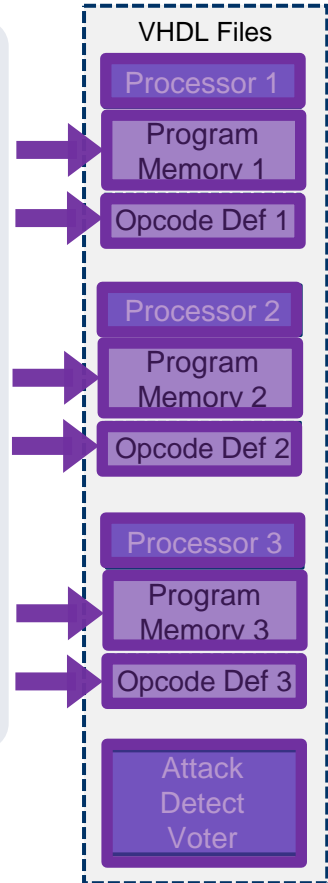
**1 Device Overview**

**1.1 Features**

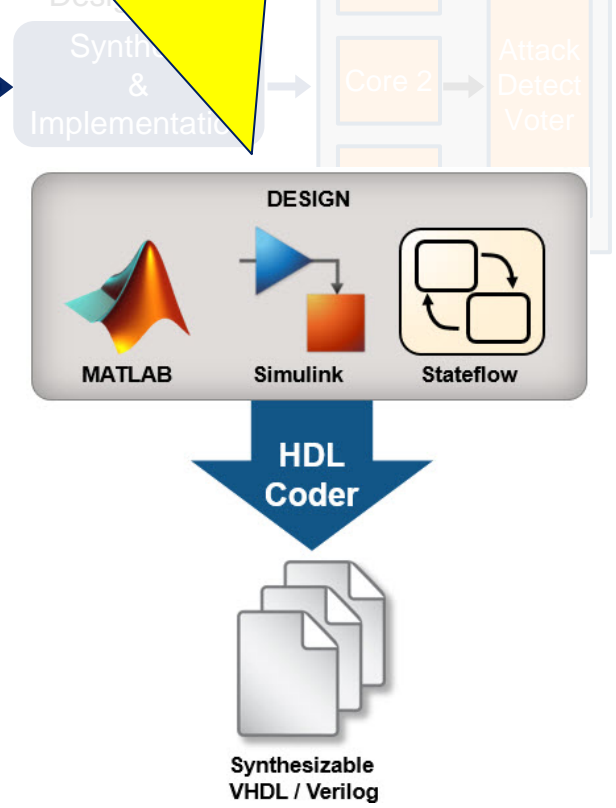
- Embedded Microcontroller
- 16-MHz RISC Architecture up to 24 MHz
- Extended Temperature: -40°C to 125°C
- Wide Supply Voltage Range From 1.8 V Down to 1.5 V (Operational Voltage is Restricted by I/O Levels. See "I/O and I/O-PM" in RAM)
- Optimized Low-Power Modes (at 3 V)
- Active Mode: 142 µA/MHz
- Standby
  - LPM0 With 32768-Hz Crystal: 1.43 µA (With 32.768-KHz)
  - LPM0 With 32768-Hz Crystal: 620 nA (With 32.768-KHz)
  - Standby (LPM1): 0.1 µA (With 32.768-KHz)
- Low-Power Flash Memory (FRAM)
- Up to 32 KB of Nonvolatile Memory
- Built-In Error Correction Code (ECC)
- Configurable Watchdog
- Unified Memory of Program, Constants, and Storage
- 10<sup>7</sup>-Cycle Endurance
- Radiation Resistant and Nonvolatile
- Ease of Use
  - 2005 ROM Library Includes Driver Libraries and FFT Libraries
- High-Performance Analog
  - One 12-Channel 10-bit Analog-to-Digital Converter (ADC)
  - Internal Shared Reference (1.5, 2.0, or 2.5 V)
  - Sample-and-Hold 200 nA
  - True Enhanced Comparators (eCOMP)
  - Integrated 0.8-bit Digital-to-Analog Converter (DAC) as Reference Voltage
- Programmable High-Power and Low-Power Modes
  - One With Fast 100-ns Response Time
  - One With Slow Response Time With 1.5-µs Low-Power
- Four Smart Analog Comparators (SACs)
- MSP430FR215x Device Only:
  - Subsystem General-Purpose Operational Amplifier (OPA)
  - Rail-to-Rail Input and Output
  - Multiple Input Slewdrivers
- Configurable High-Power and Low-Power Modes
- Configurable PGA Mode Supports
  - Noninverting Mode: +1, +2, +3, +5, +6, +10, +20, +33
  - Inverting Mode: +1, +2, +4, +6, +16, +32, +64
- Built-In 12-bit Reference DAC for Offset and Bias Settings
- 12.8-bit Voltage DAC Mode With Optional Subdivisions
- Intelligent Digital Peripherals
  - Three 16-bit Timers with:
    - Capture/Compare Registers (Timer\_0)
    - One 16-bit Timer With Seven Capture/Compare Registers (Timer\_1)
    - One 16-bit Counter/Real-Time Clock Counter (RTC)
  - 16-bit Counter/Real-Time Clock Counter (RTC)
  - Interrupt Controller (ICC) (Enabling Nested Hardware Interrupts)
  - 32-bit Hardware Multiplier (MPY32)
  - Master/Slave (MSP)
  - Enhanced Serial Communications
    - Two Enhanced UARTs (eUSCI\_A) Modules Support UART, SPI, and I2C
    - Two Enhanced I2C\_0, I2C\_1 Modules Support SPI and I2C
  - Clock System (CS)
  - On-Chip 32.768-KHz Oscillator (MSP)
  - On-Chip 24-MHz Digitally Controlled Oscillator (DCO) With Prescaler Locked Up to 1.1
  - ±1% Accuracy With On-Chip Reference at Room Temperature
  - On-Chip Very Low-Frequency Oscillator (VLO)
  - On-Chip High-Frequency Modulation Oscillator (MCO2)
  - External 32.4-MHz Crystal Oscillator (LPT1)
  - External High-Frequency Crystal Oscillator up to 24 MHz (MSP)
  - Programmable MCU Prescaler of 1 to 128
  - SBCX Control From MCU, With Programmable Prescaler of 1, 2, 4, or 8
  - LPM0 (5-Divisor)



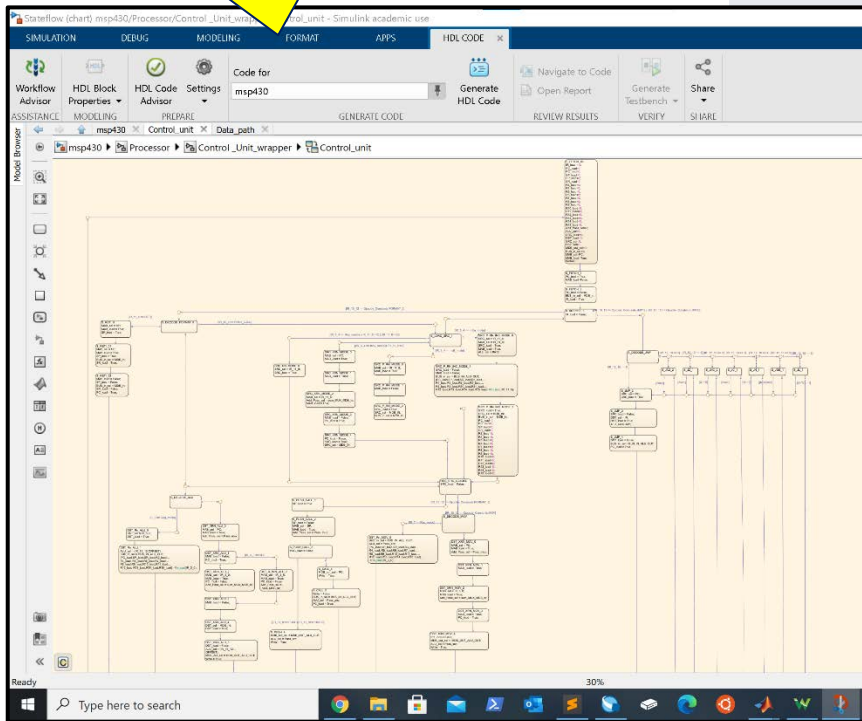
## HDL Description of System



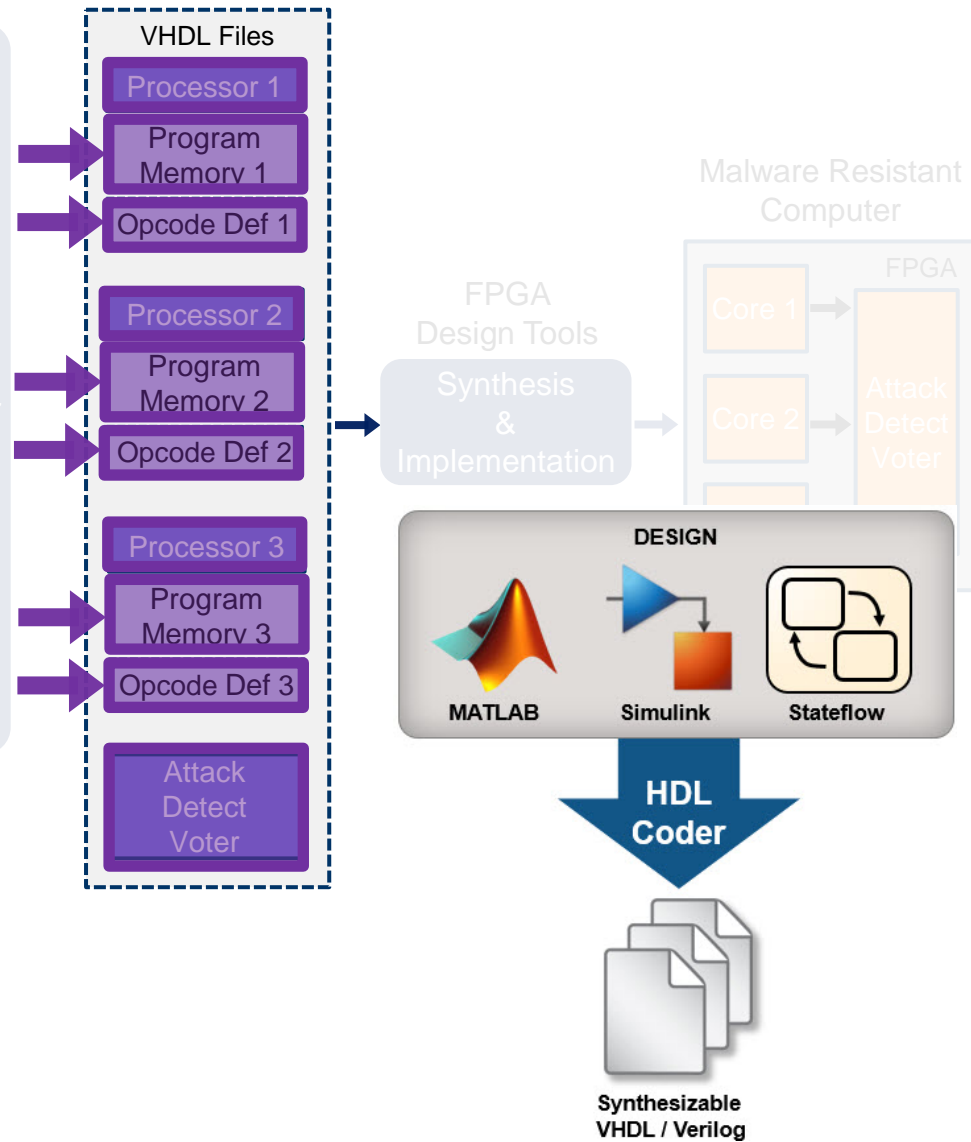
**We used Matlab Simulink HDL Coder to generate the VHDL from a graphical/functional description.**

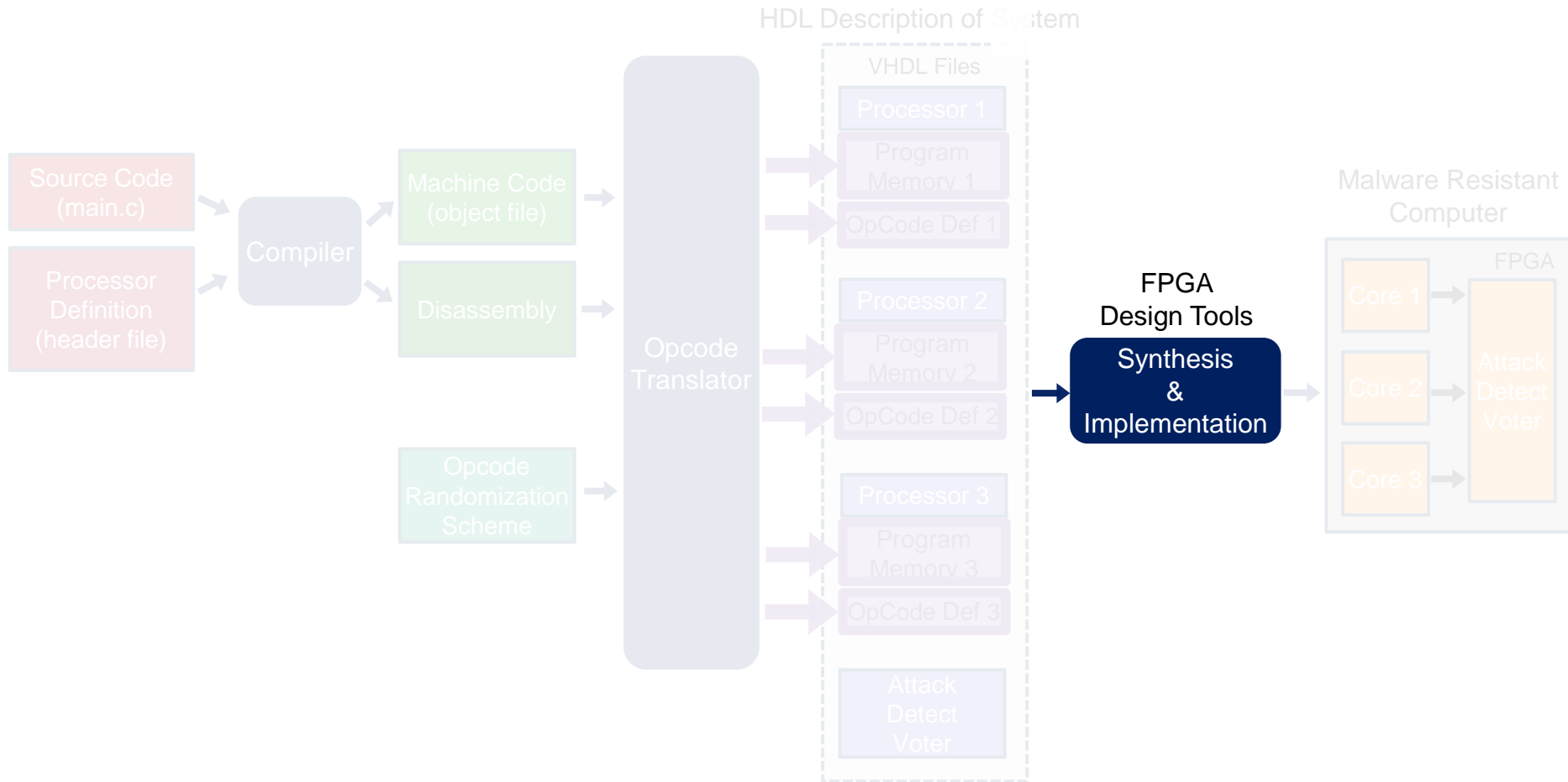


The entire control unit is described as a graph and then converted into VHDL by the HDL coder toolbox.



## HDL Description of System





# Testbed for Demonstration



We used the intel Quartus FPGA design tools.

HDL Description of System

VHDL Files

Processor 1

Processor 2

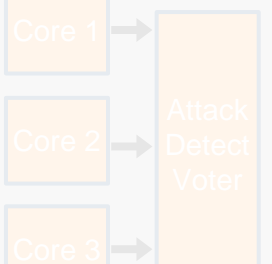
Program Memory 2

OpCode Def 2

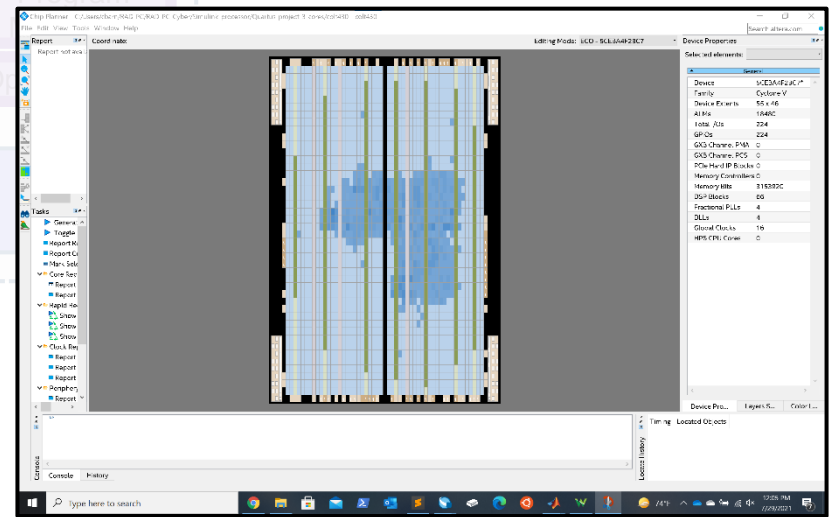
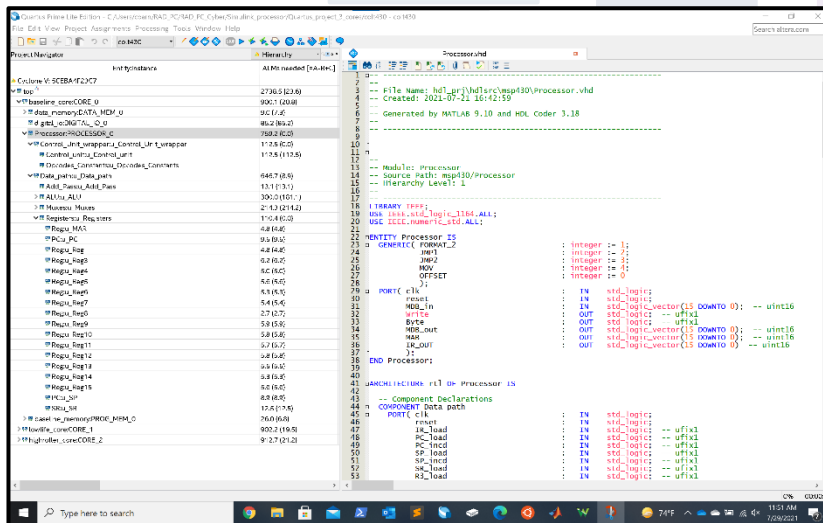
Processor 3

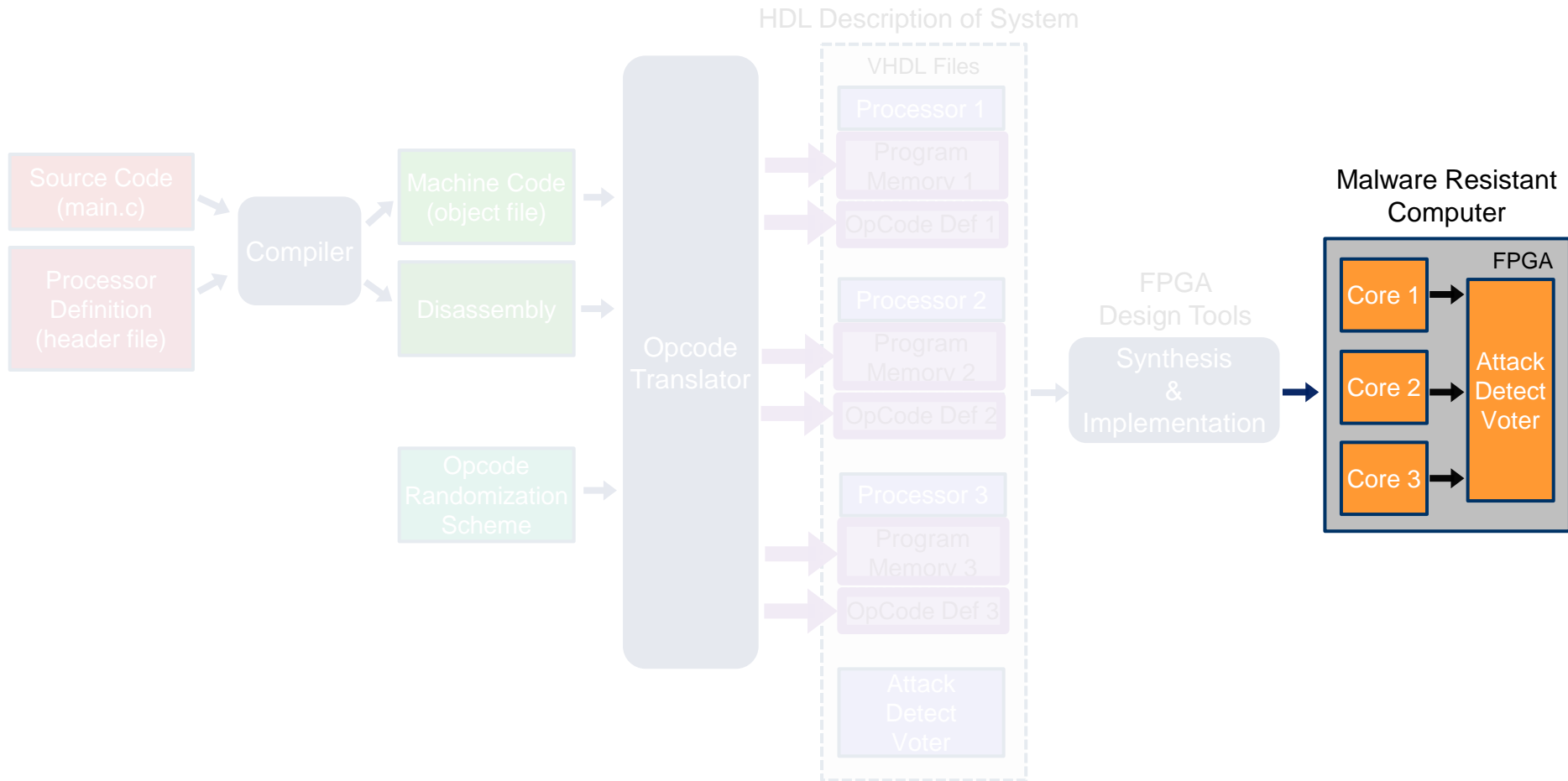
Program

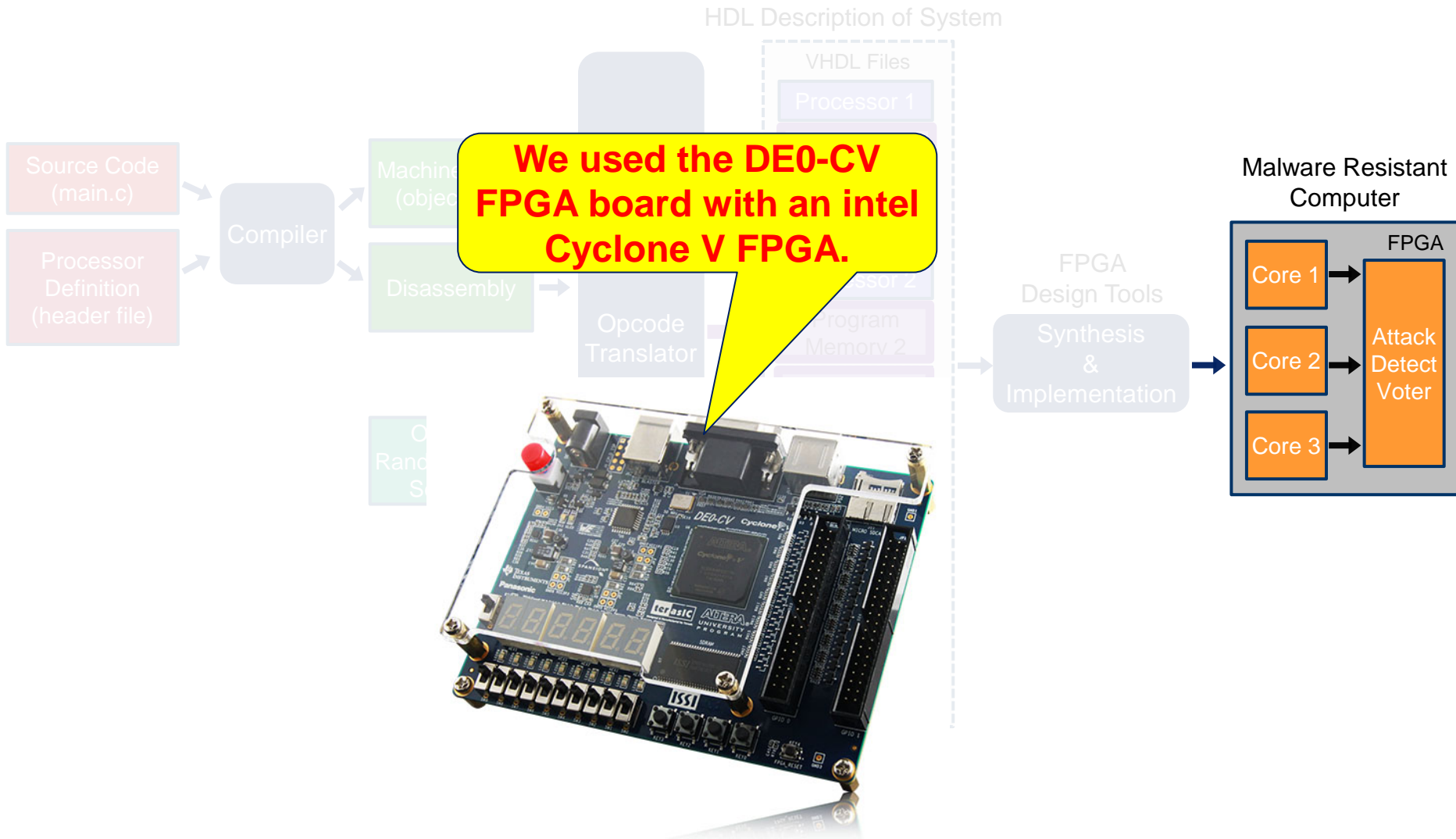
Malware Resistant Computer



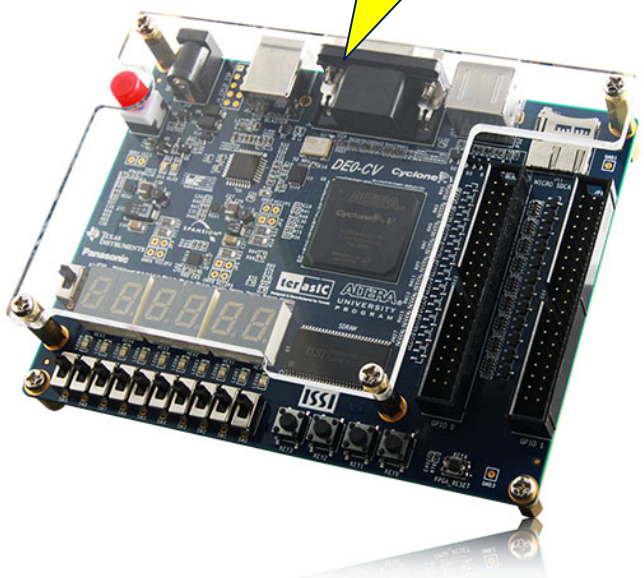
FPGA Design Tools  
Synthesis & Implementation







**We used the DE0-CV FPGA board with an intel Cyclone V FPGA.**





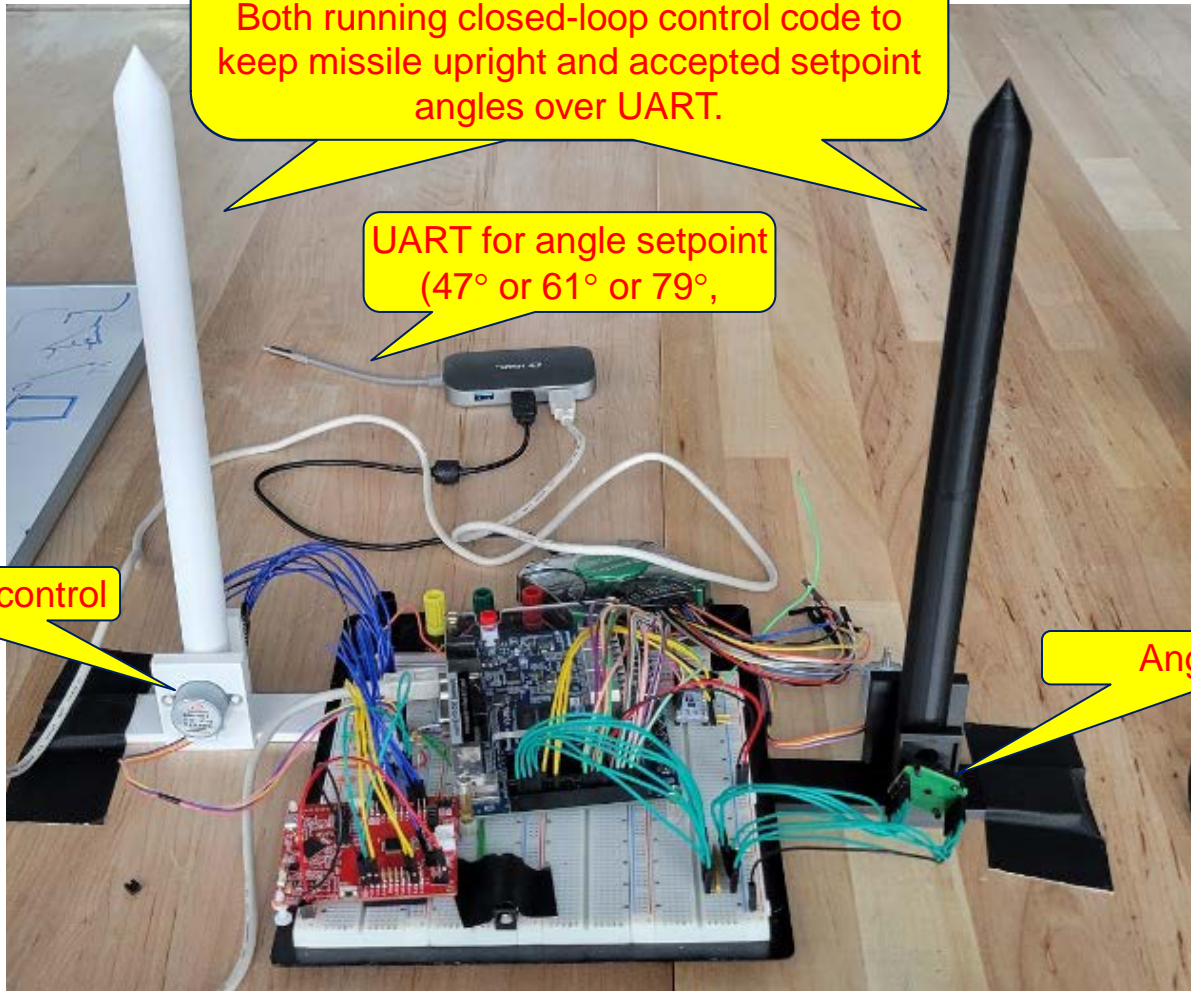
## Functionally Equivalent Systems "MSP430 vs. CyberShield"

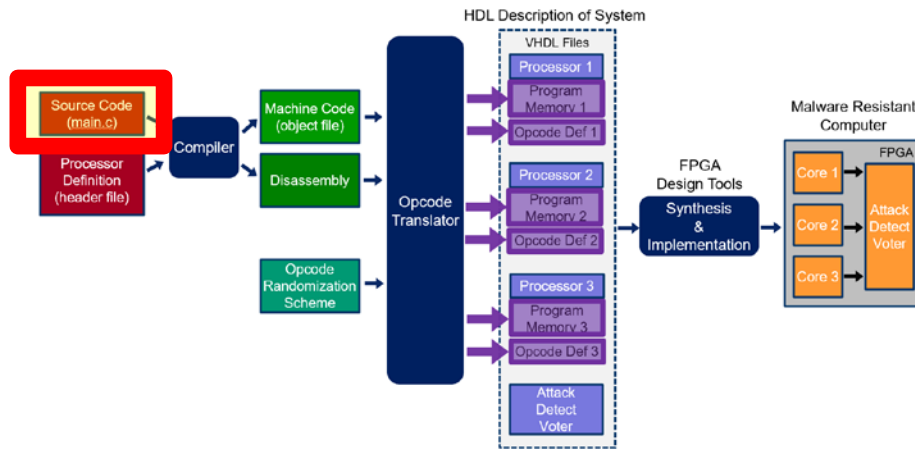
Both running closed-loop control code to keep missile upright and accepted setpoint angles over UART.

UART for angle setpoint  
(47° or 61° or 79°,

Stepper motor for control

Angle sensor





## Program Description

The computer periodically sends the stepper motor its setpoint angle. The send frequency is dictated by a timer that triggers and interrupt.

The computer continuously reads the actual angle of the missile from the sensor and compares it to the setpoints. It adjusts motor accordingly.

New setpoints are received asynchronously from a user over UART. A Rx on the UART link triggers an IRQ.



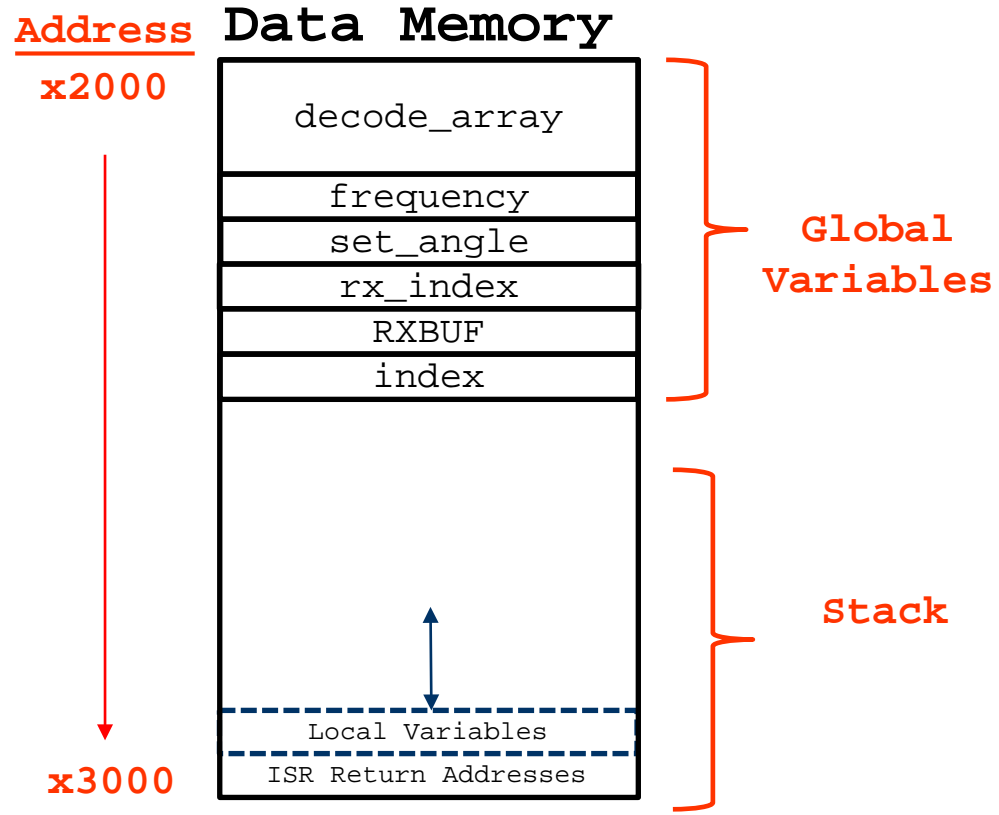
## Program Vulnerabilities (Classic Buffer Overflow Attack)

```
while(1){
  for(index=0xFFFF;index!=0;index--){
    _NOP();
  }
  temp = RXBUF[0];
  if(temp == '1'){
    set_angle = 47;
  }else if (temp=='2'){
    set_angle = 79;
  }else{
    set_angle = 61;
  }
  if(rx_index == 1){
    rx_index=0;
  }
  temp = decode_array[P1IN];

  if(temp<set_angle){
    P2OUT &=~(BIT2); //enable stepper motor
    P2OUT |= (BIT1); //set direction
    P2OUT &=~(BIT5); //set direction
    temp = set_angle-temp;
  }else if (temp>set_angle){
    P2OUT &=~(BIT2); //enable stepper motor
    P2OUT &=~(BIT1); //set direction
    P2OUT |= (BIT5); //set direction
    temp = temp-set_angle;
  }else{
    P2OUT |= BIT2; //Disable stepper motor
  }
  frequency = 4000 - 63*(temp);
}

#pragma vector = TIMER0_B0_VECTOR;
interrupt void Timer_ISR(){
  TB0CCR0+=frequency;
  P2OUT ^=BIT4;
  //frequency+=1;
  TB0CCTL0 &=~ CCIFG;
  // TB0CCTL0
}

// Service UART
#pragma vector = EUSCI_A1_VECTOR
__interrupt void ISR_EUSCI_A1(void) {
  RXBUF[rx_index++] =UCA1RXBUF;
  UCA1IFG &= ~UCRXIFG;
}
```



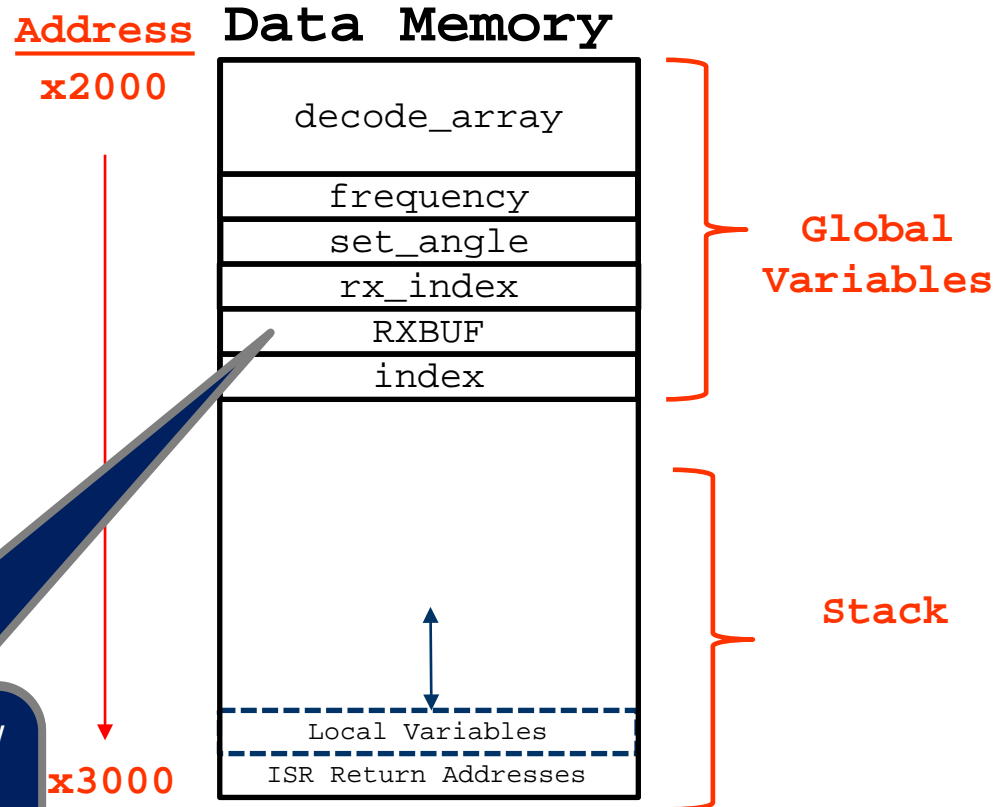
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}
```



1. When user sends new setpoint over UART, an IRQ triggers, stacks return address, and retrieves new value for RXBUF.



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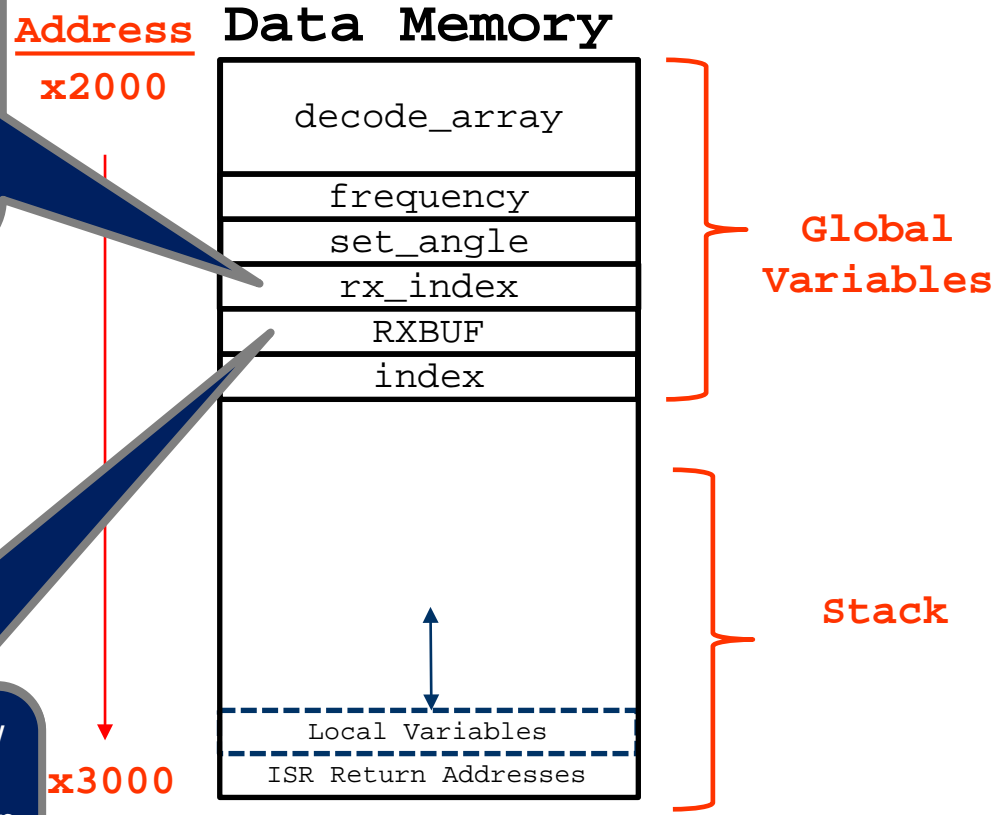
  if(temp<set_angle){
    P2OUT &~(BIT2); //enable
    P2OUT |= (BIT1); //set direction
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}
```

2. But the developer introduced a vulnerability by adding a delay loop in the main program to allow the UART to complete before resetting the input buffer size back to 0.

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    P2OUT |= (BIT1); //set d
    P2OUT &~(BIT5); //set dir
    temp = set_angle-temp;
  }else if (temp>set_angle){
    P2OUT &~(B
    P2OUT &=
    P2OUT |= (B
    temp = tem
  }else{
    P2OUT |= BI
  }
  frequency = 40
}

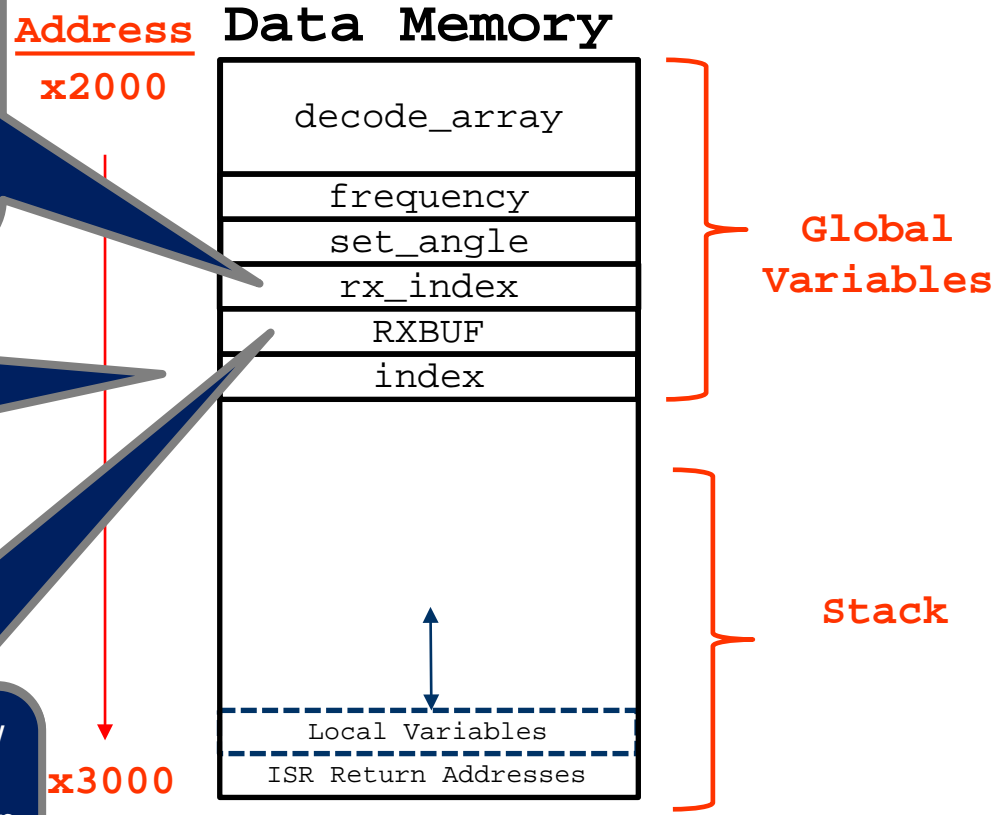
#pragma vector = TIMER
interrupt void Timer_I
  TB0CCR0+=frequency;
  P2OUT ^=BIT4;
  //frequency+=1;
  TB0CTL0 &~ CCIIFG;
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}

// Service UART
#pragma vector = EUSCI_A1_VECTOR
__interrupt void ISR_EUSCI_A1(void) {
  RXBUF[rx_index++] =UCA1RXBUF;
  UCA1IFG &= ~UCRXIFG;
}
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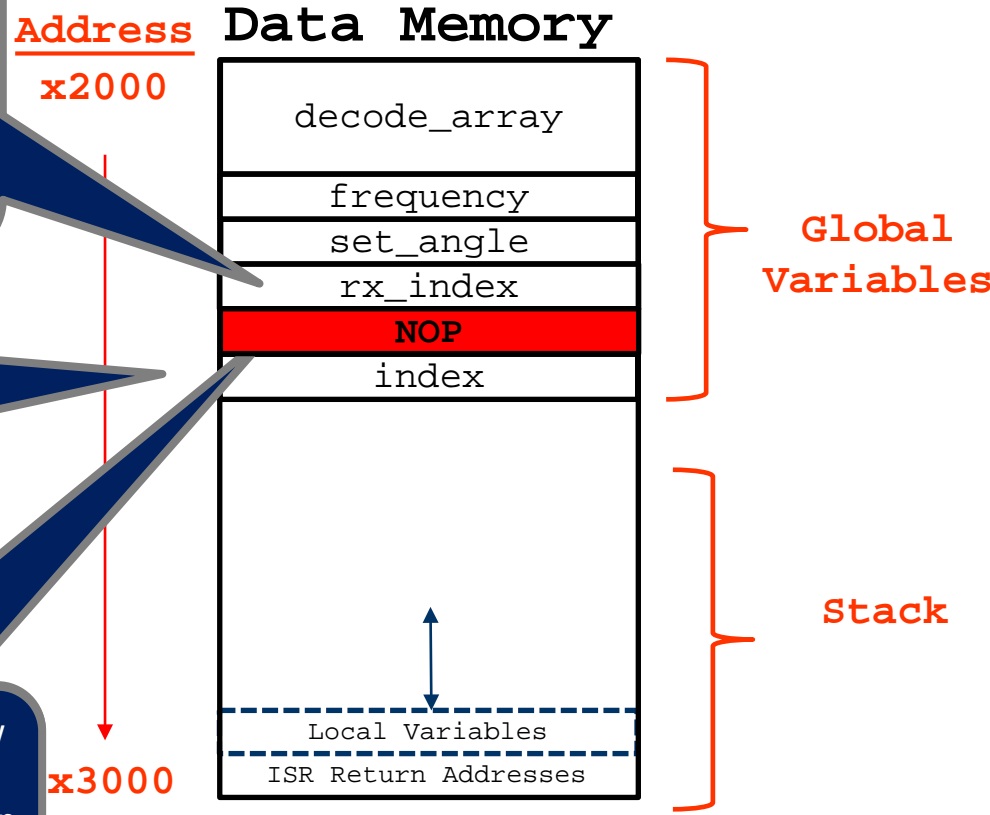
## Program Vulnerabilities (Classic Buffer Overflow Attack)

```
while(1){  
  for(index=0xFFFF;index!=0;index--){  
    _NOP();  
  }  
  temp = RXBUF[0];  
  if(temp == '1'){  
    set_angle = 47;  
  }else if (temp=='2'){  
    set_angle = 79;  
  }else{  
    set_angle = 61;  
  }  
  if(rx_index == 1){  
    rx_index=0;  
  }  
  temp = decode_array[P1IN];  
  
  if(temp<set_angle){  
    P2OUT &~(BIT2); //ena  
    P2OUT |= (BIT1); //set d  
    P2OUT &~(BIT5); //set dir  
    temp = set_angle-temp;  
  }else if (temp>set  
    P2OUT &~(B  
    P2OUT &=  
    P2OUT |= (B  
    temp = tem  
  }else{  
    P2OUT |=BI  
  }  
  frequency = 40  
}  
  
#pragma vector = TIMER  
interrupt void Timer_I  
  TB0CCR0+=frequency;  
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#pragma vector = EUSCI_A1_VECTOR  
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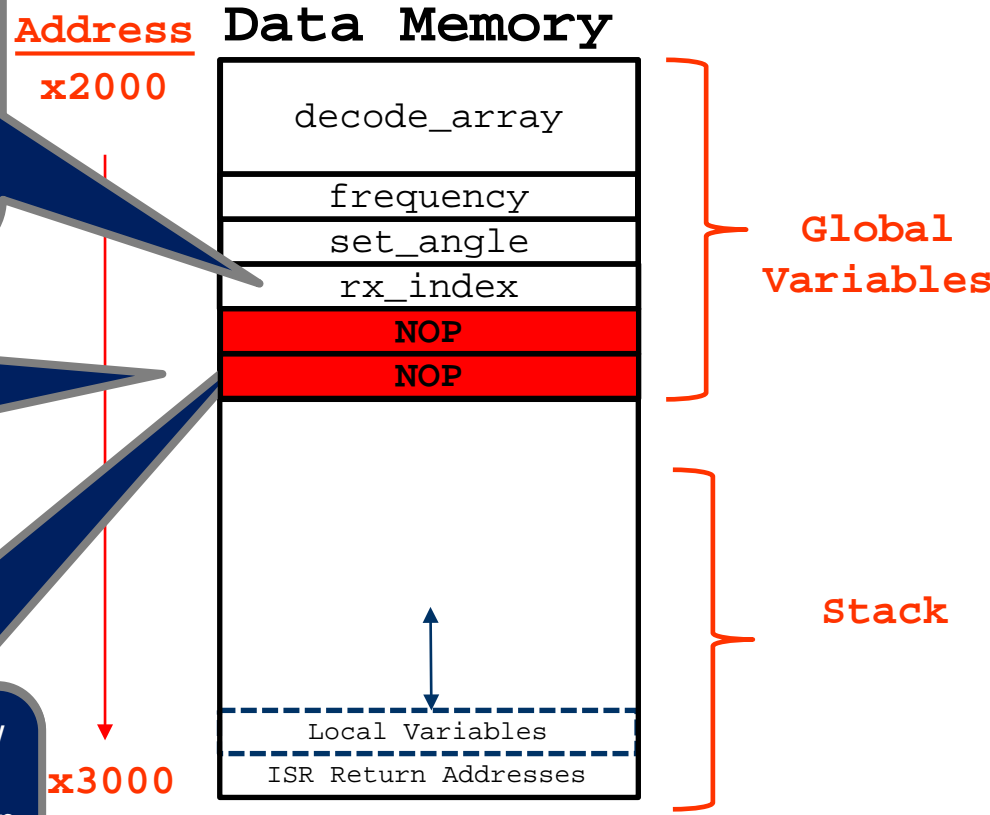
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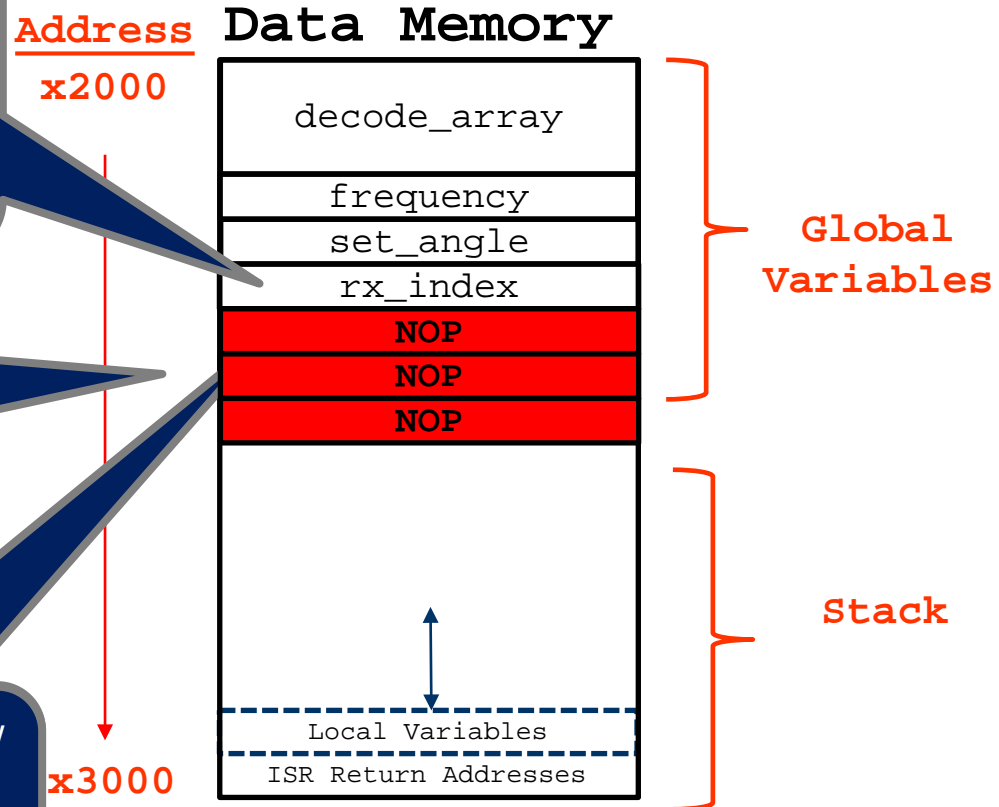
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  }
  frequency = 40
}

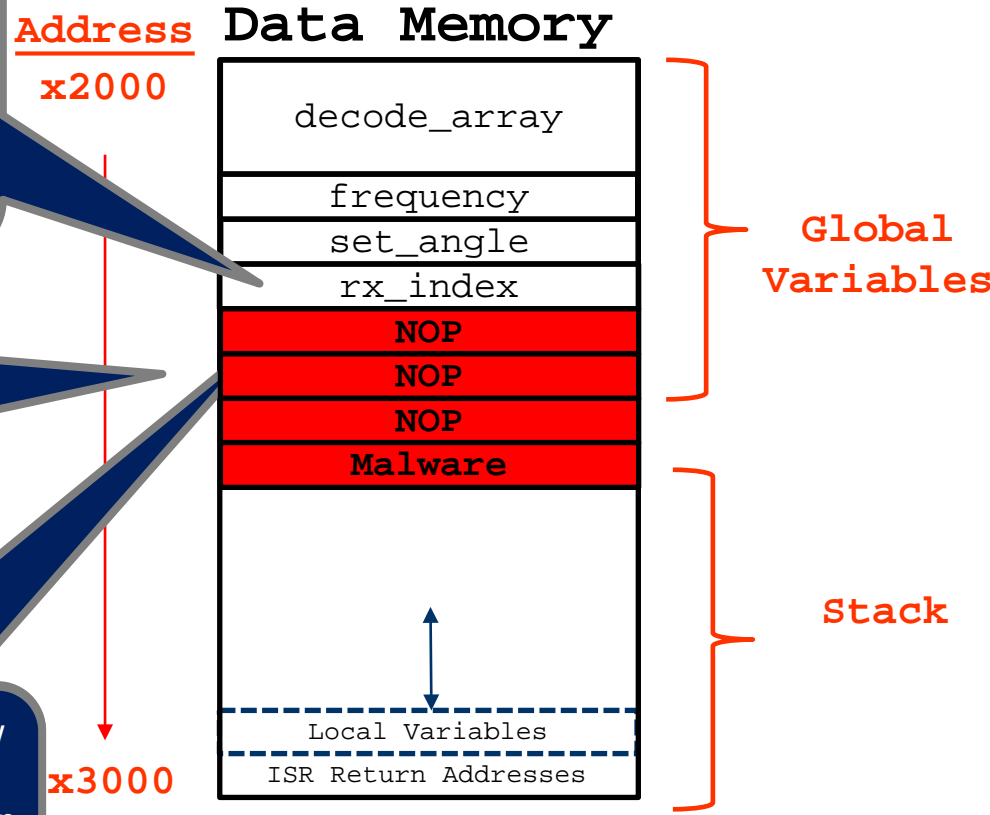
#pragma vector = TIMER
interrupt void Timer_I
  TB0CCR0+=frequency;
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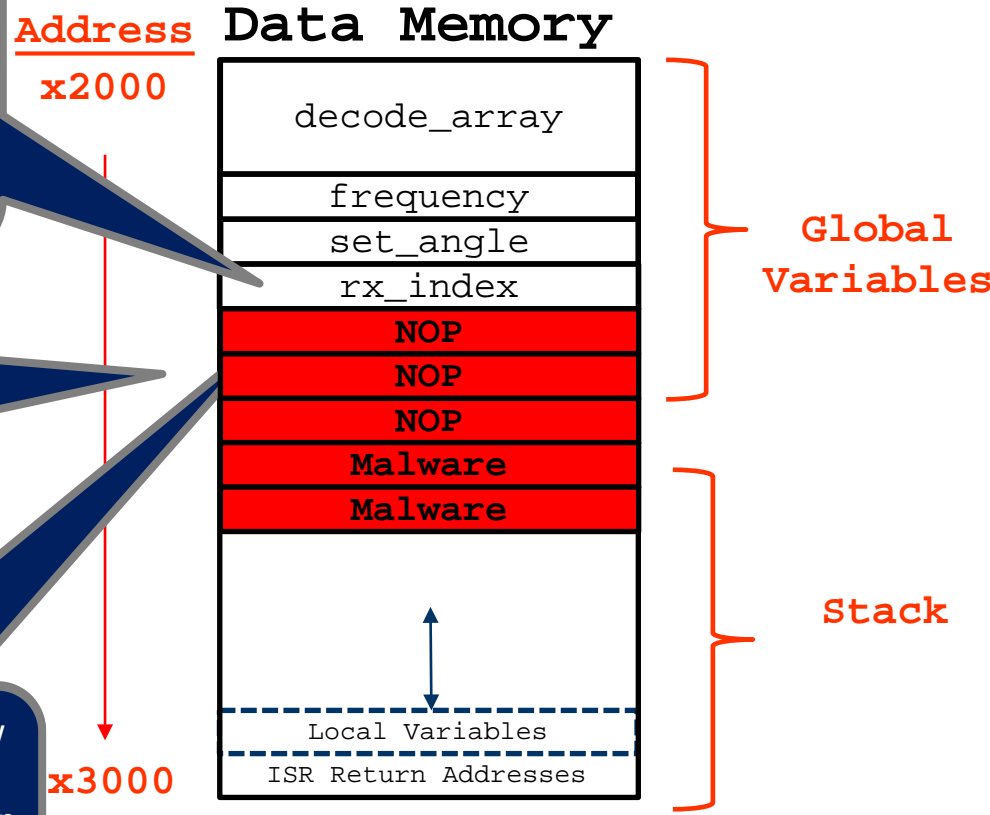
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interrupt void Timer_I
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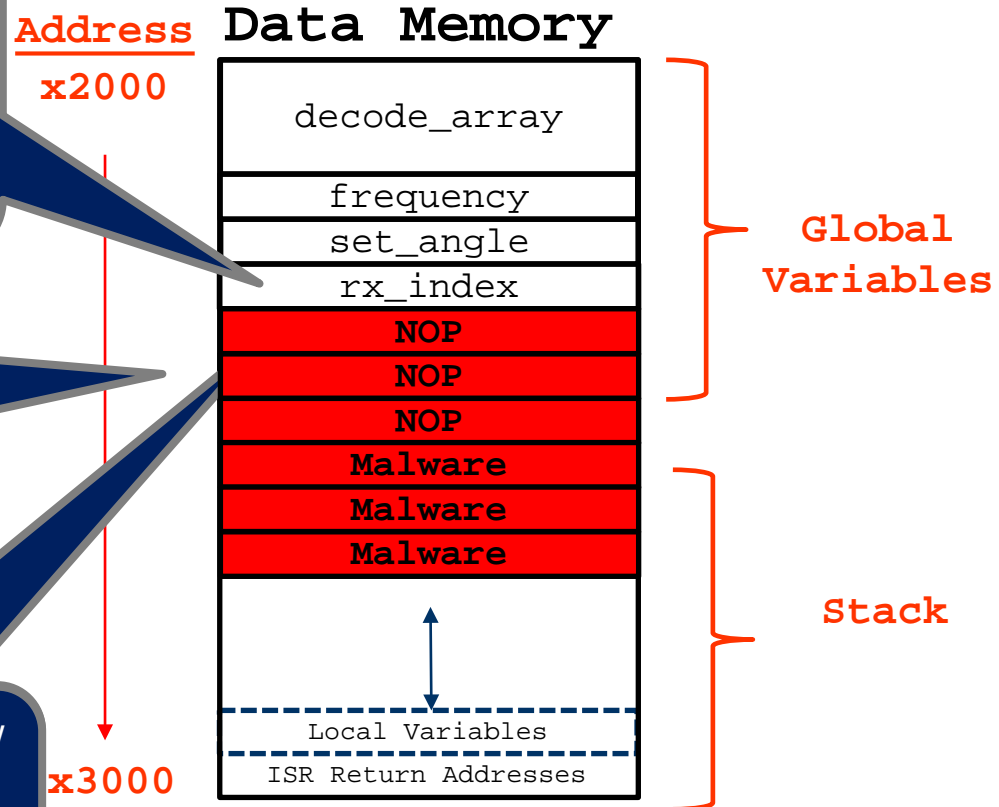
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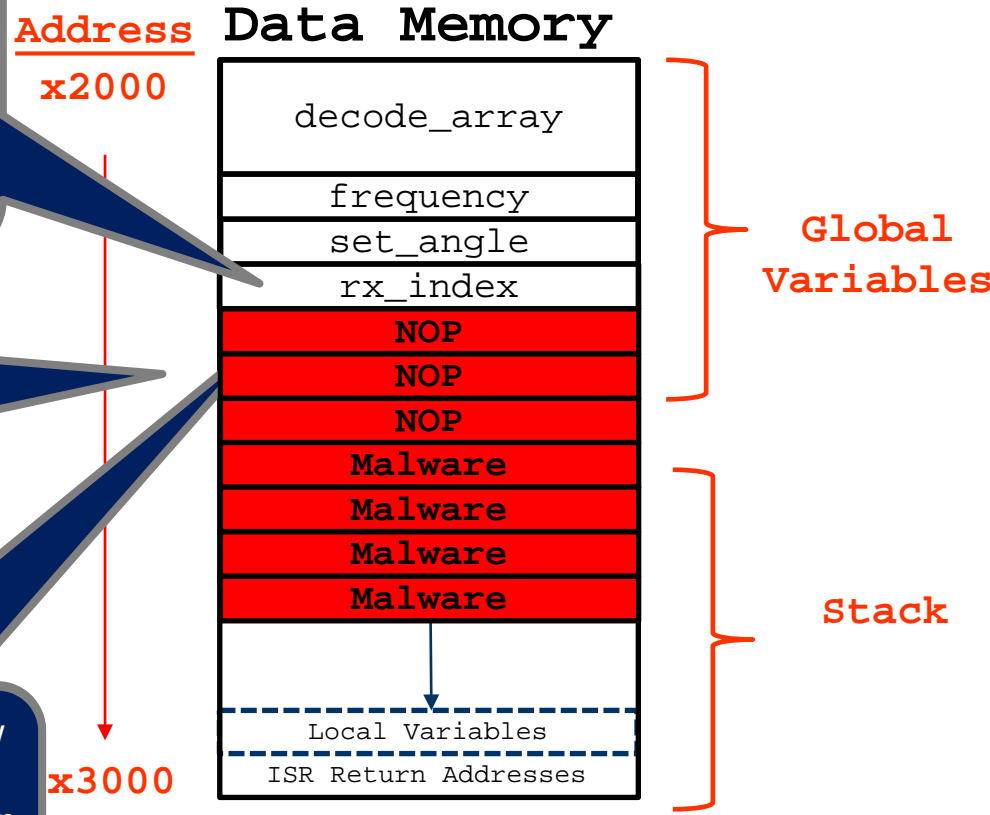
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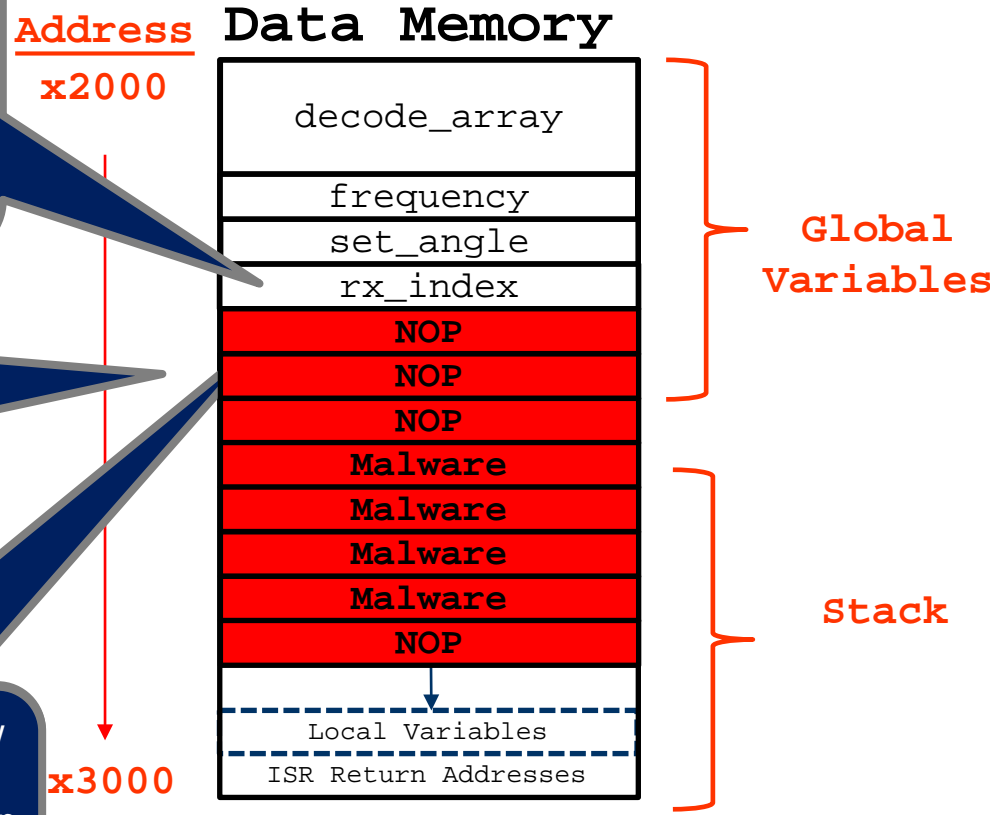
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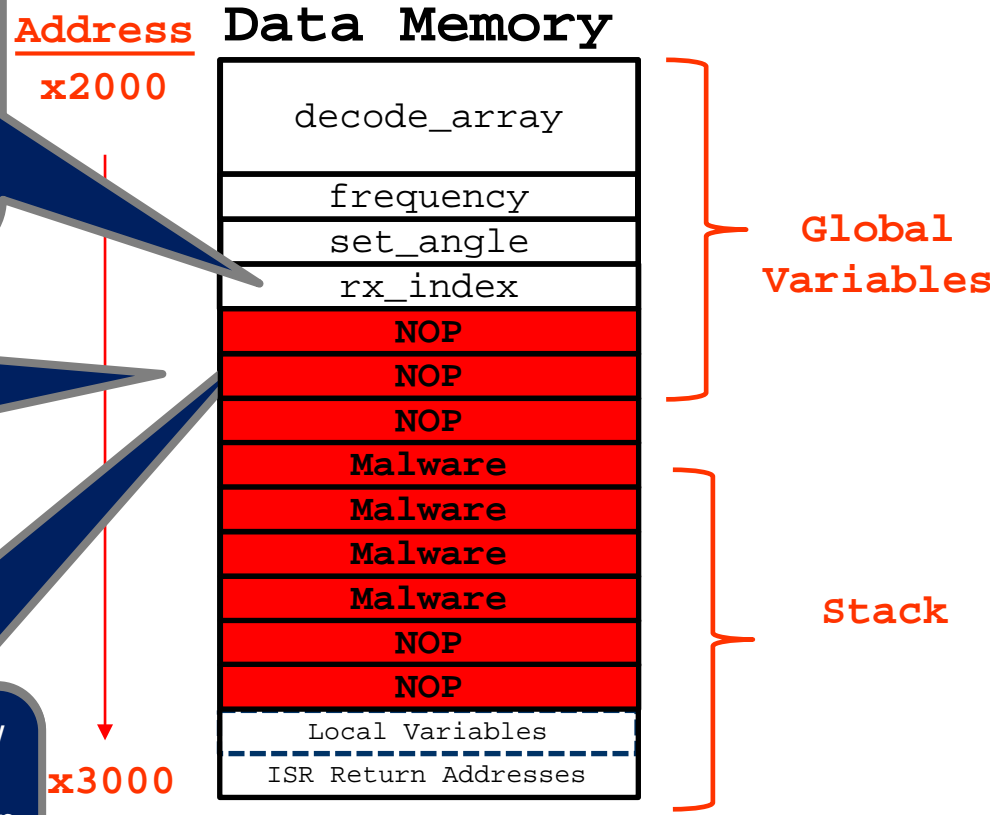
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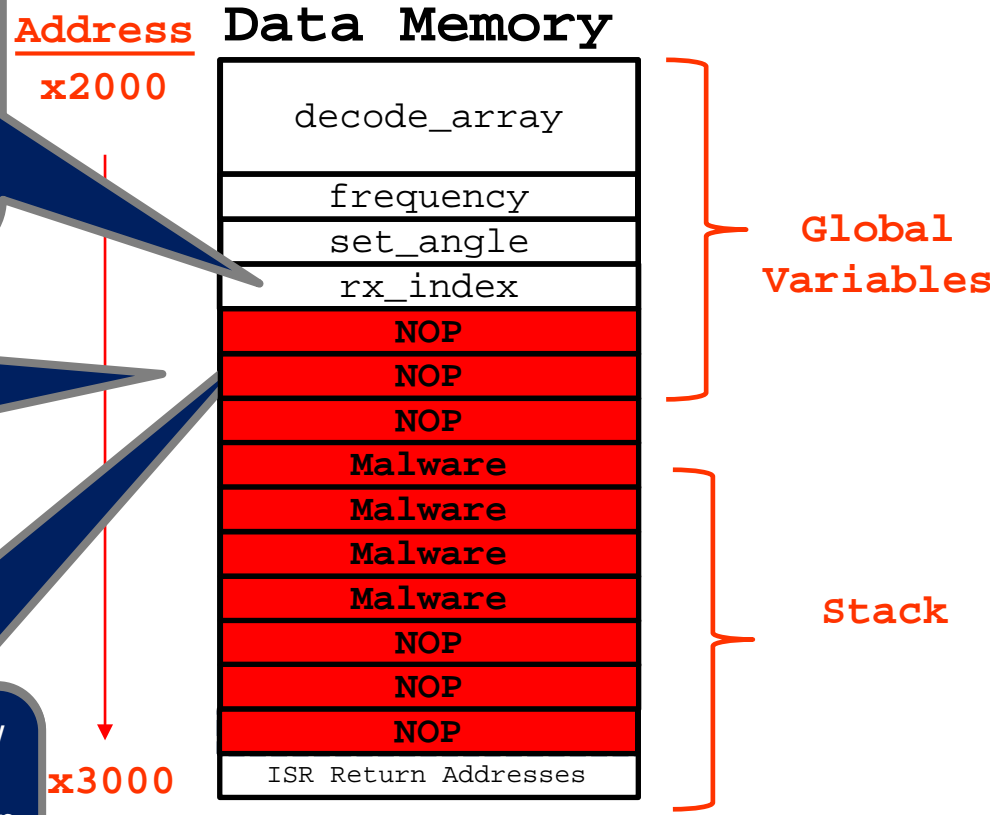
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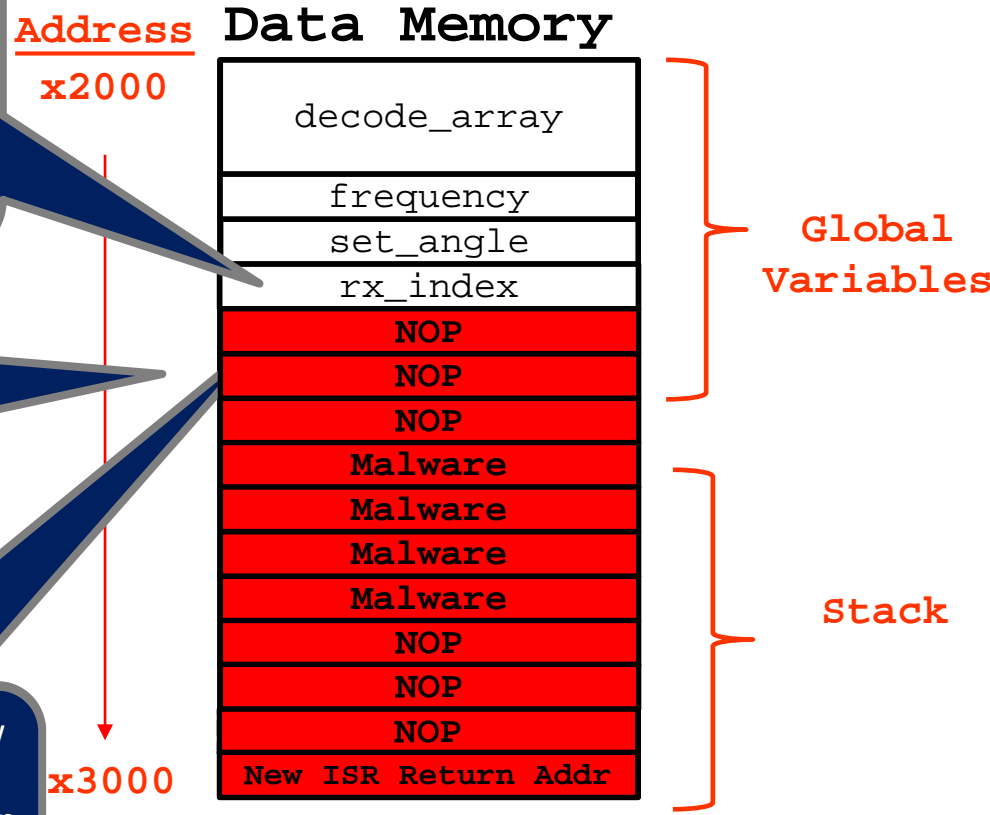
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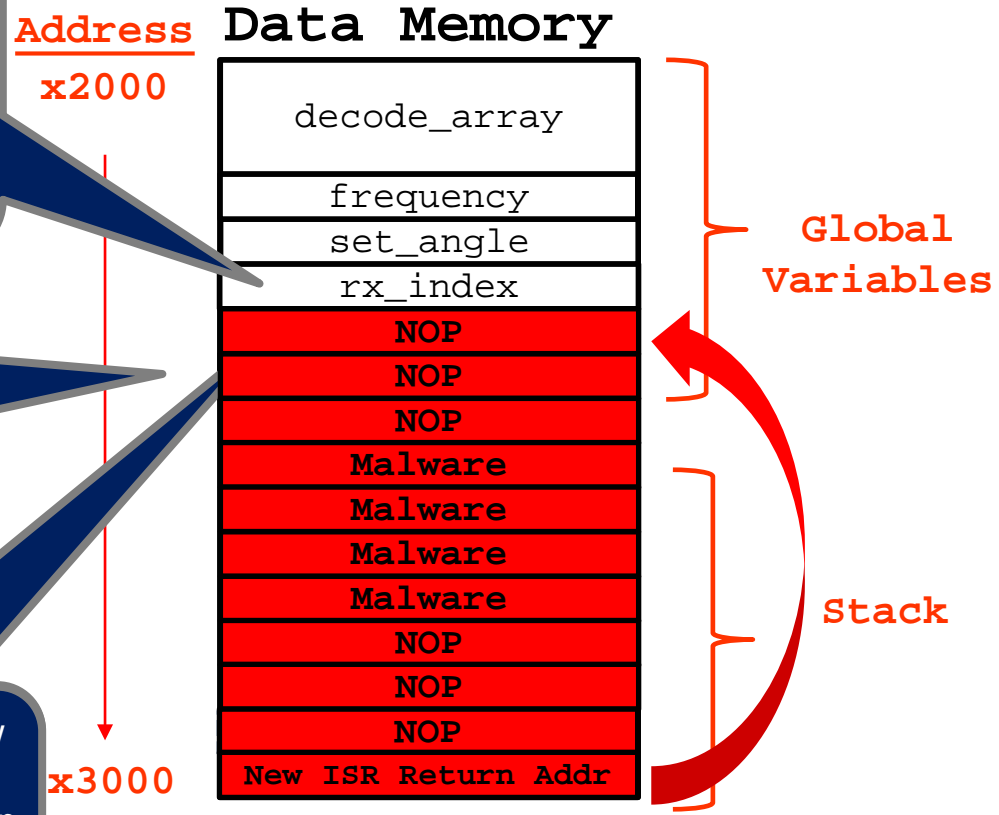
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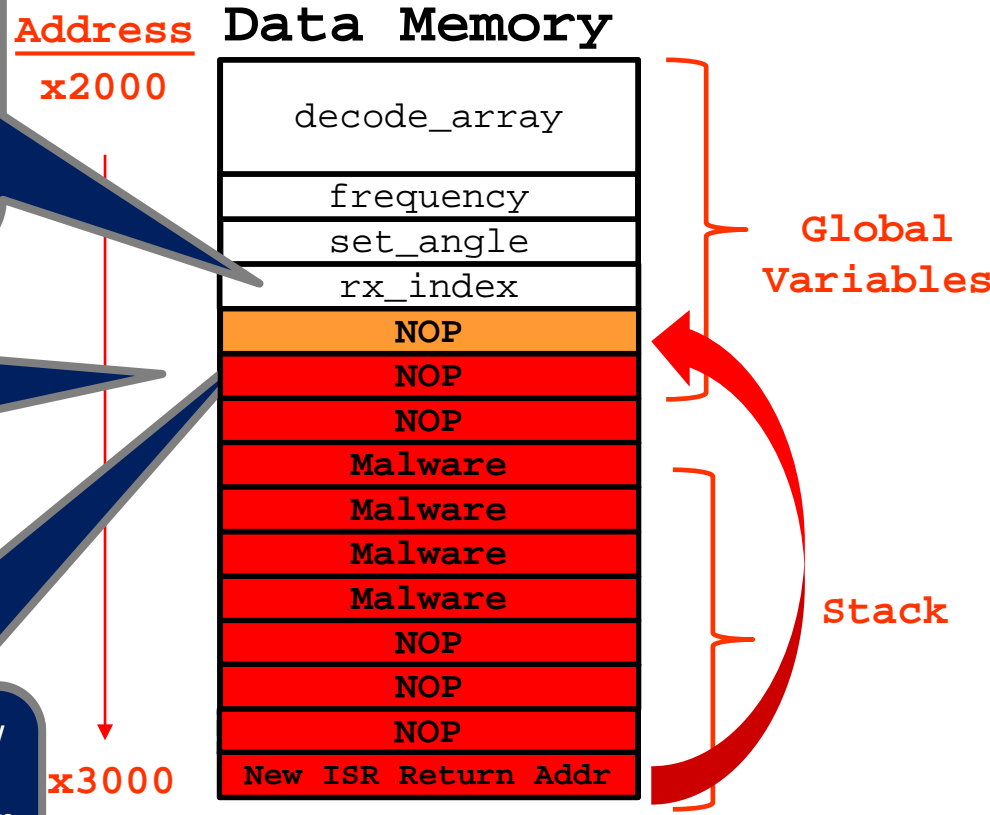
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    temp = set_angle-temp;
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  }
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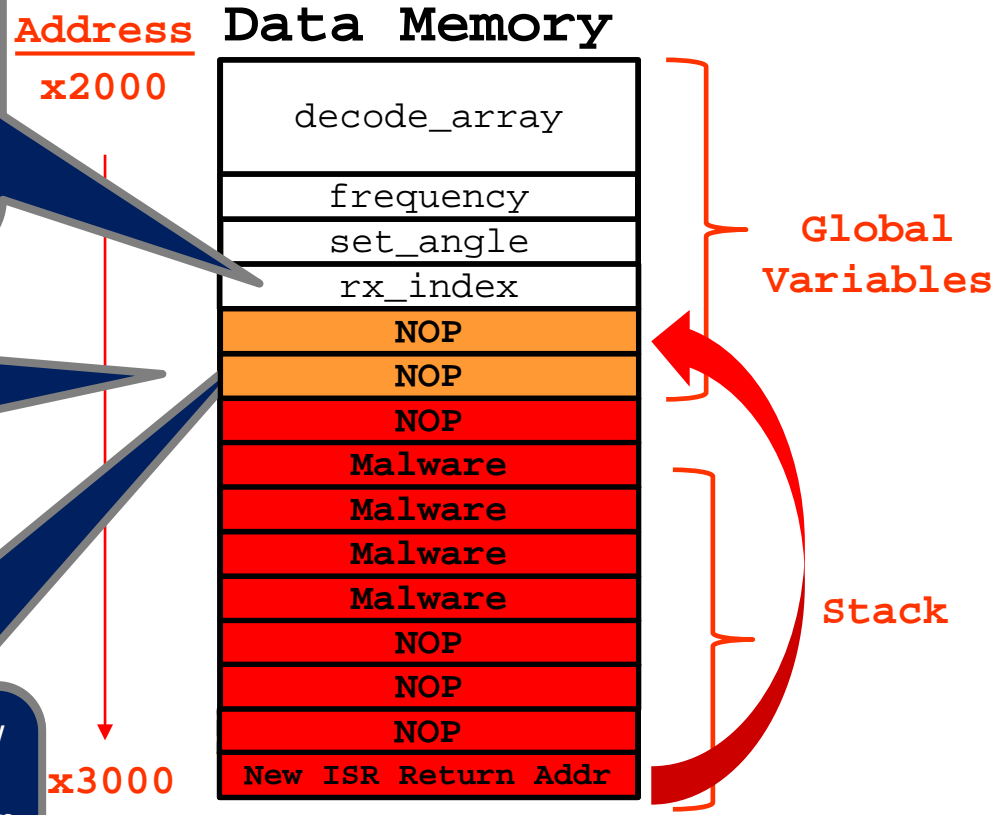
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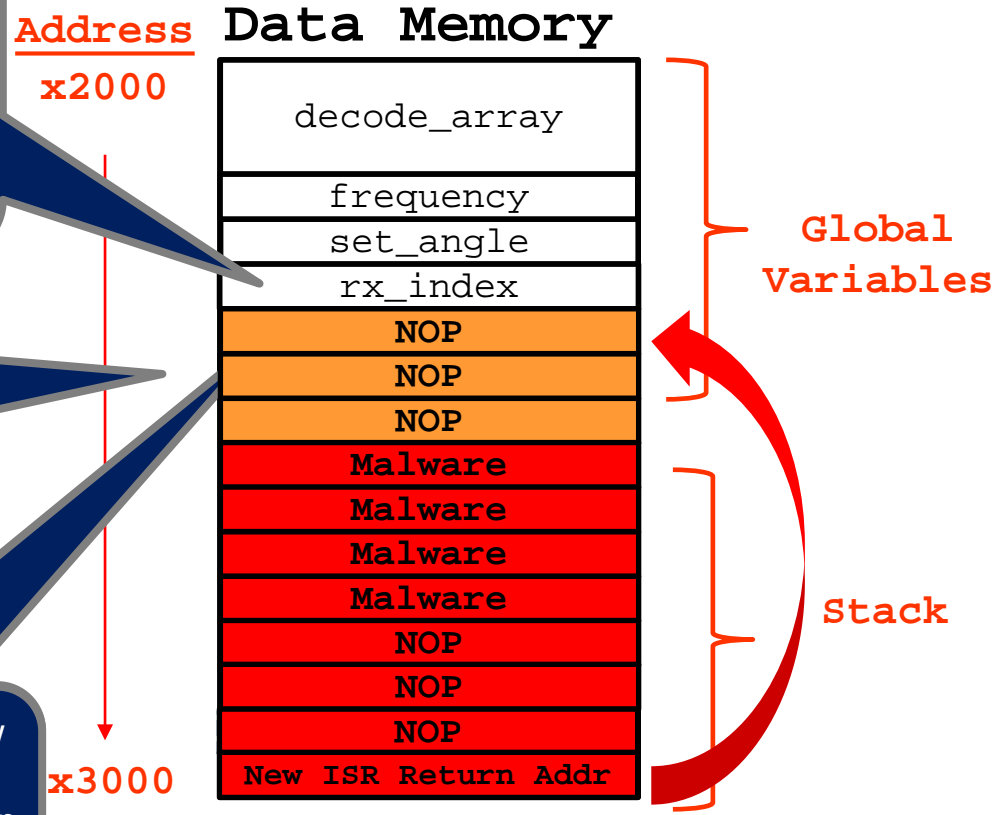
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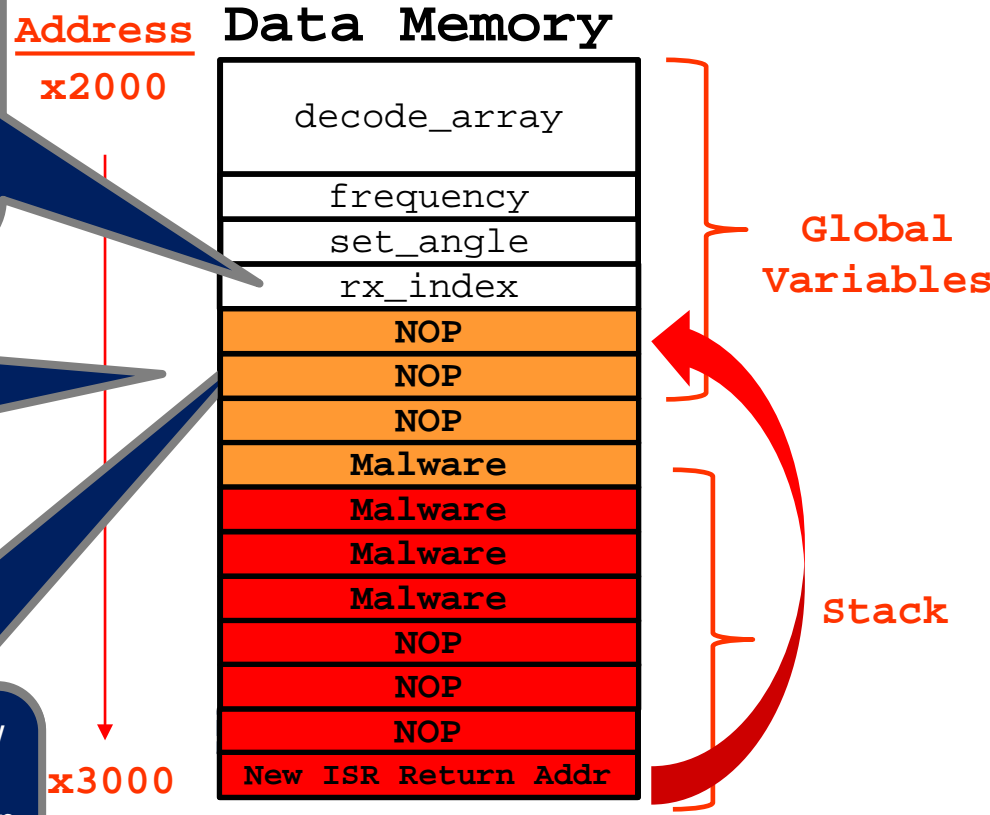
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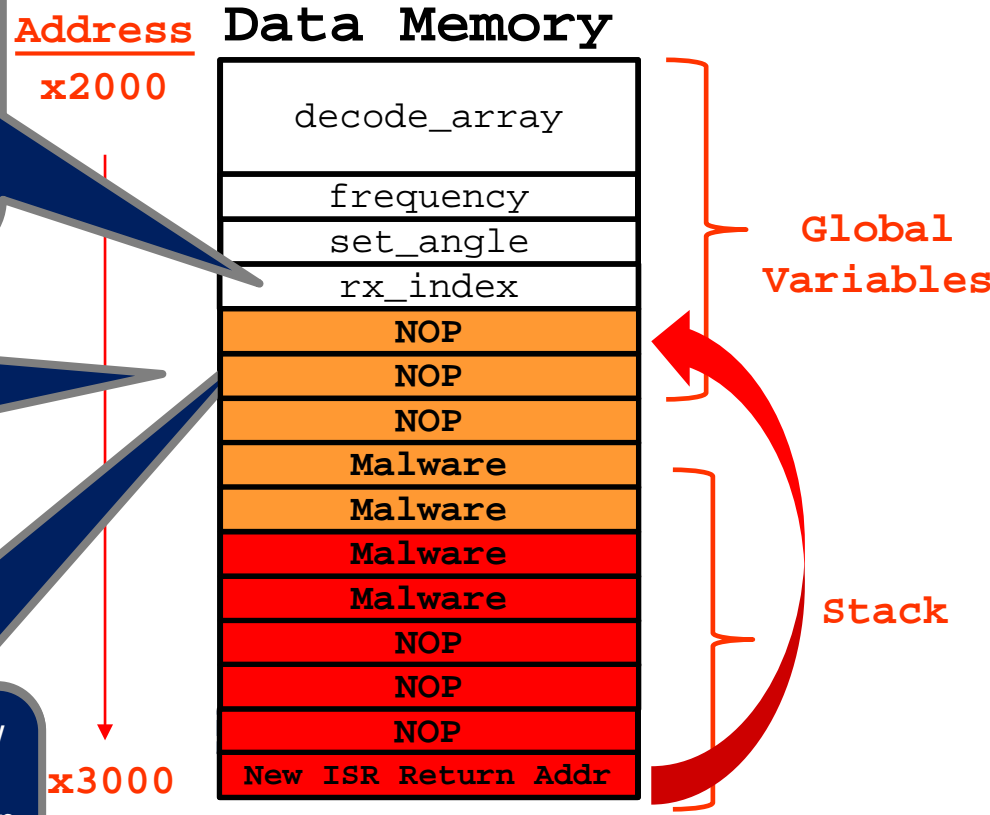
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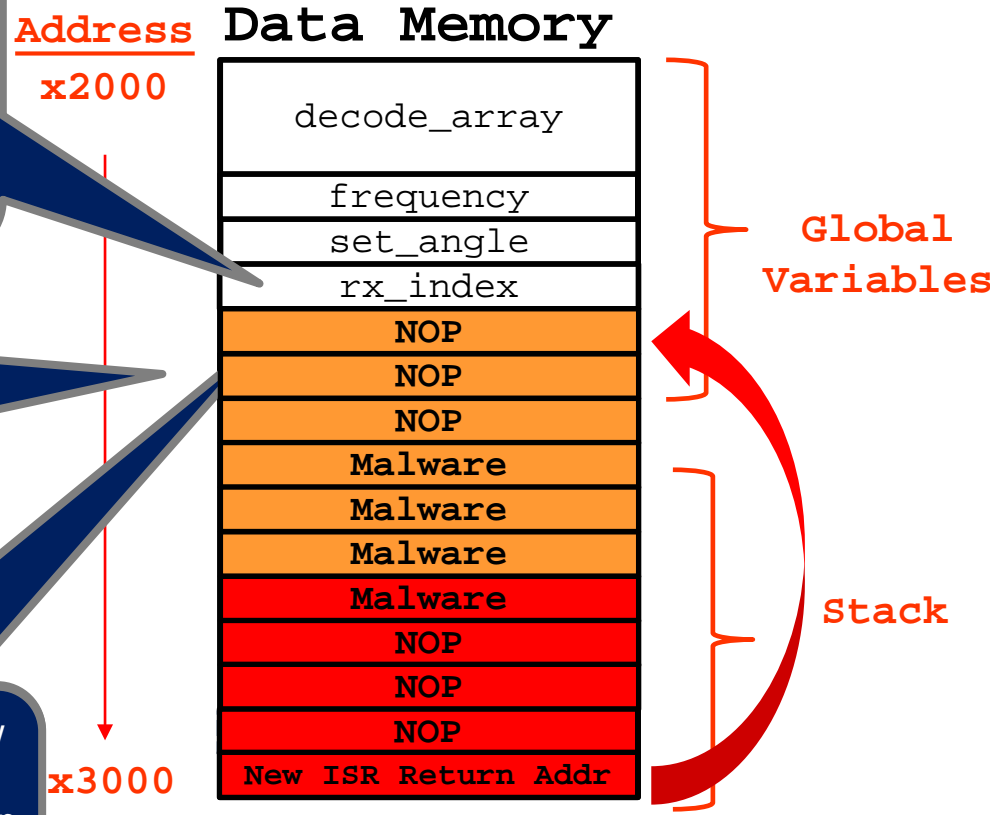
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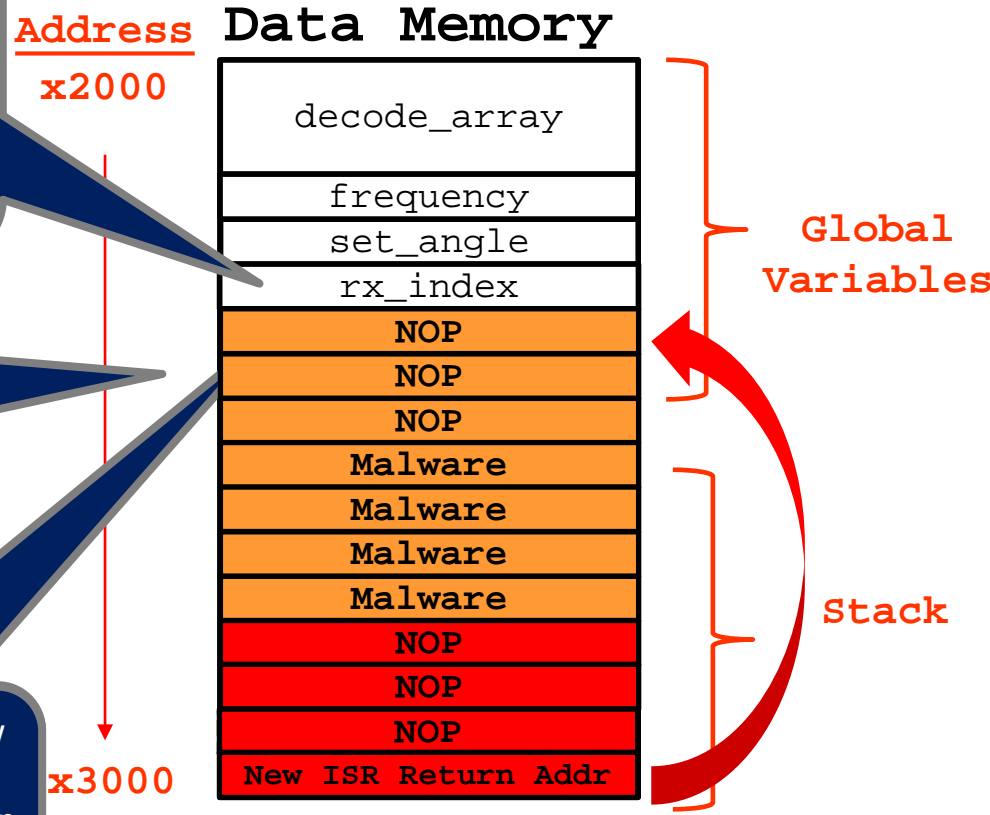
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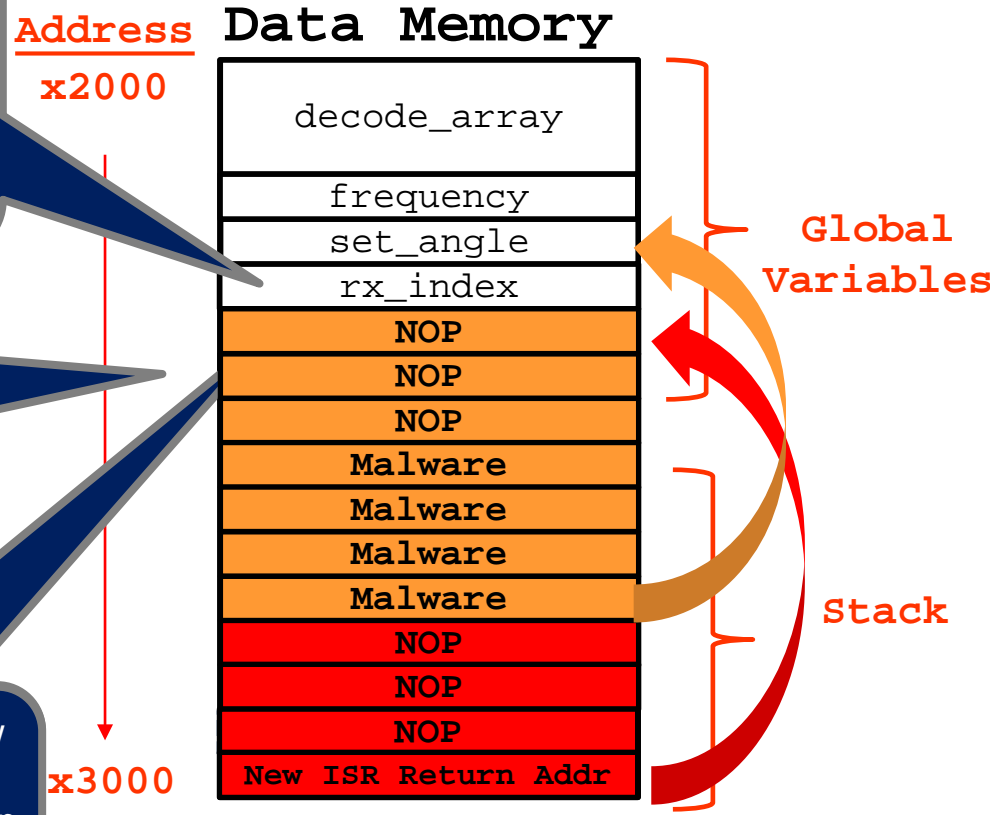
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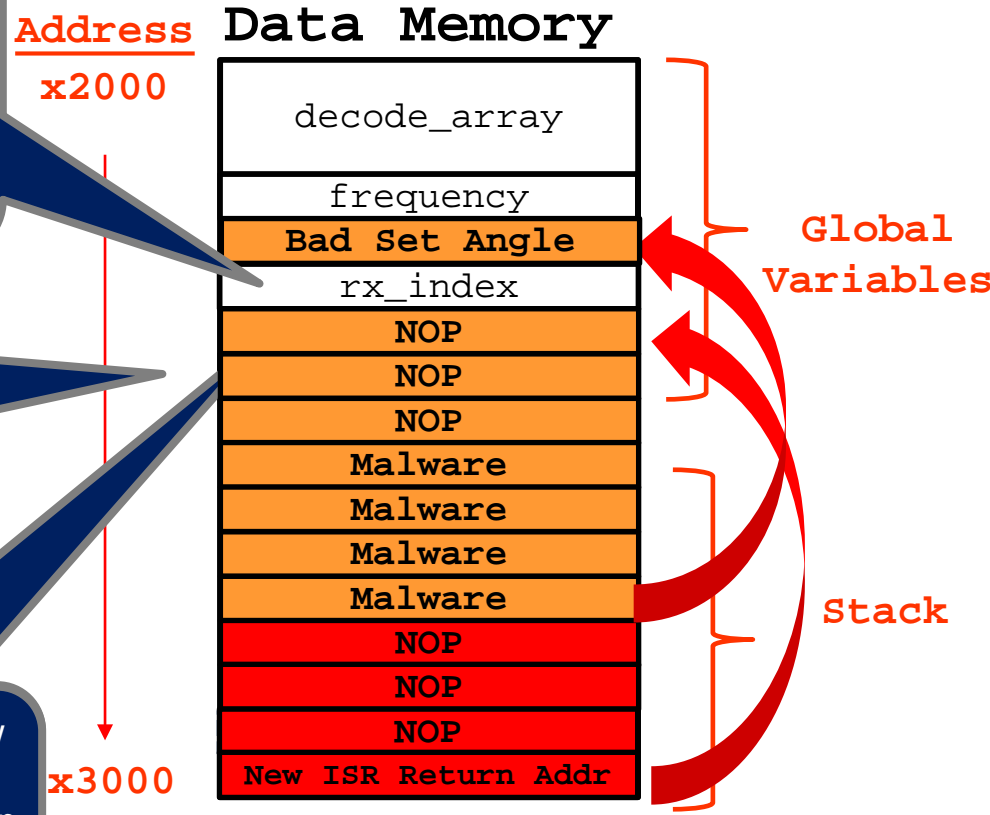
#pragma vector = TIMER
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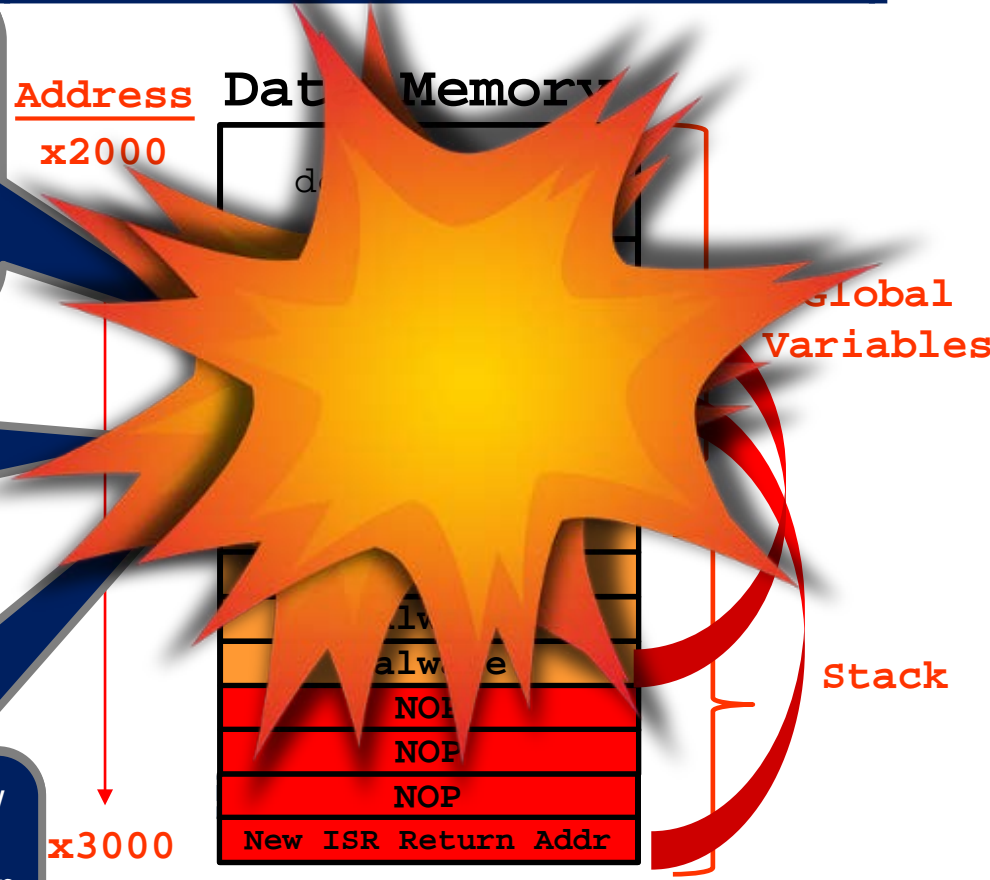
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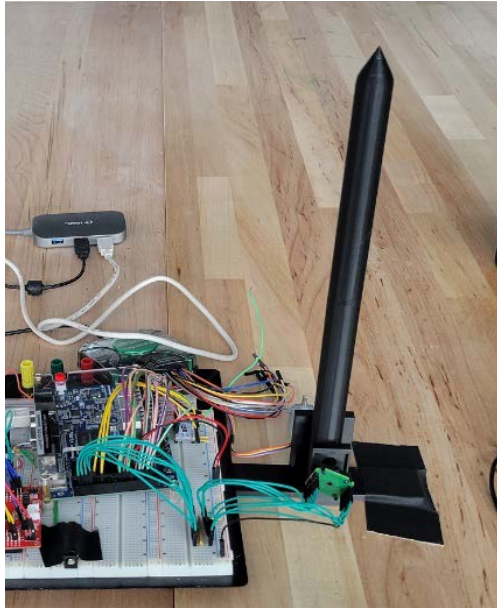




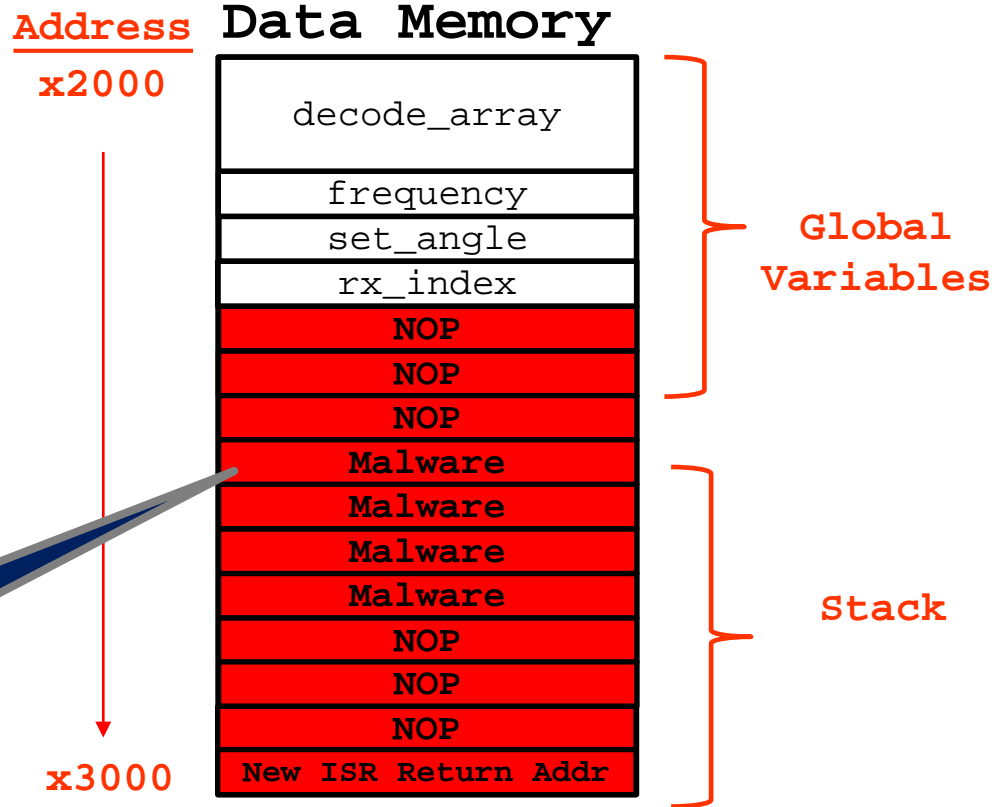




## The Same Attack is Made on CyberShield

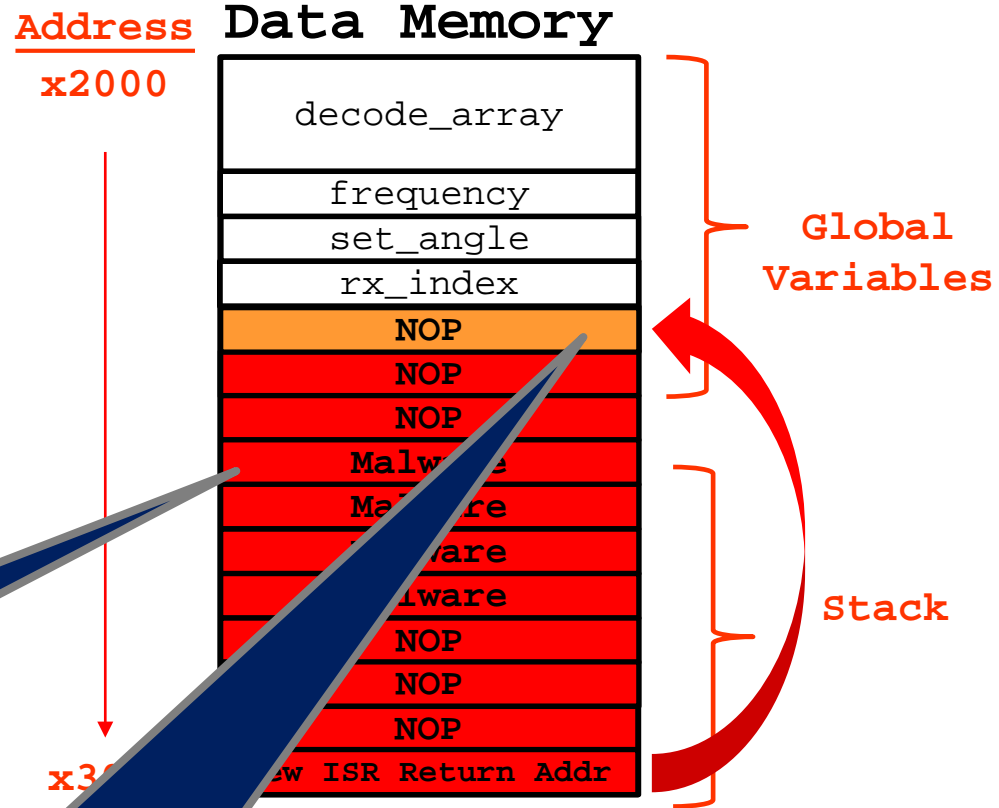
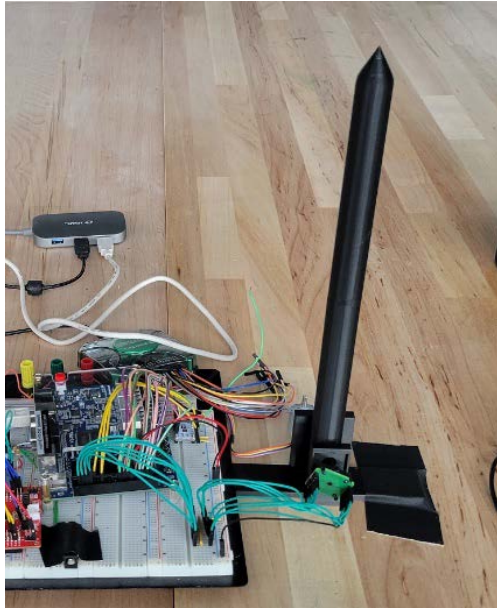


The Malware Still Gets Inserted via Buffer Overflow





## The Same Attack is Made on CyberShield









The Malware Still Gets Inserted via Buffer Overflow

But as soon as the starts reading the inserted code in the CPU, it detects that all opcodes are the same!!!

## The Same Attack is Made on CyberShield

We can see how CyberShield Responds by Measuring the Instruction Registers in the CPU with a Logic Analyzer.

All Opcodes are Different by Design

|              |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------------|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| + Lowlife    |  |  | h0 | h2 | hF | h2 | h7 | h0 | hF | h2 | h7 | h0 |
| + Baseline   |  |  | h0 | h4 | h1 | h4 | h9 | h2 | h1 | h4 | h9 | h2 |
| + Highroller |  |  | h0 | h6 | h3 | h6 | hB | h4 | h3 | h6 | hB | h4 |



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The attack is detected when all three CPUs see the same Opcode.

CyberShield Halts Operation and Initiates a Recovery Procedure.

|              |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| + Lowlife    | h7 | h0 | hB | h5 | h0 |
| + Baseline   | h9 | h2 | hD | h5 | h0 |
| + Highroller | hB | h4 | hF | h5 | h0 |



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After flushing out the malware, CyberShield resumes normal operation.

The rapid nature of hardware recovery allows low latency and the ability to operate-through-attack.

|              |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
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- CyberShield is an approach to defeating malware by introducing hardware diversity at the hardware level.
- This is enabled by real-time HDL generation at compile-time.
- A buffer insertion attack was used to test CyberShield.
- CyberShield was able to detect the malware, remove it, and continue operation while an MCU was not.



# Questions

