

# Attacking Hexagon: Security Analysis of Qualcomm's aDSP

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## \$ whoami

- Security Researcher at CENSUS S.A.
- Reverse Engineering, Exploitation, Code Audit
- I fight Androids



## Agenda

- Introduction to Hexagon and aDSP
- System Architecture
- FastRPC Framework
- Custom code on aDSP
- Attack Surface
- Fuzzing
- Conclusions



aDSP and Hexagon



## Qualcomm aDSP

- Low power, high performance DSP coprocessor
- Exists in all modern Qualcomm SoCs
- Hexagon Architecture
  - Same as Qualcomm baseband



### Qualcomm aDSP

- Runs its own OS, QuRT
  - Runs Hexagon ELF files
  - Again same as Qualcomm baseband
- Provides shared objects that can be called from Android userspace in an RPC manner
- Machine Learning, Computer Vision, Audio Decoding

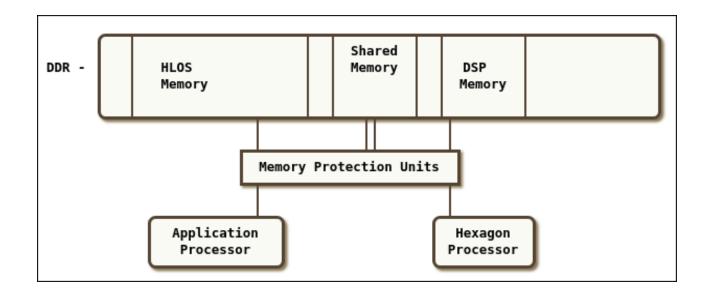


### Qualcomm aDSP

- Qualcomm Shared Memory Subsystem
  - Application Processor -> aDSP communication
  - Also used for other subsystems like baseband and Wi-Fi
- aDSP needs access to main system memory
  - Argument Passing
  - Results



## Qualcomm aDSP - Memory



HLOS = High Level OS (Android, Windows)

\* As shown in the Qualcomm SDK Documentation



## Qualcomm aDSP - Memory

- Memory Protection Unit
  - Makes sure aDSP can access only specific memory
- Internal aDSP MMU
  - QuRT provides page tables for address translation from virtual to physical
- Limited TLB Entries
  - Large Contiguous Buffers are preferred



## Qualcomm aDSP - Memory

- Memory Carveout
  - Android ION Allocator Contiguous
  - Specific ION Heap
  - ION buffers can be mapped to aDSP
- SMMU
  - System Memory Management Unit
  - Analogous to IOMMU in x86
  - Buffers only appear to be contiguous



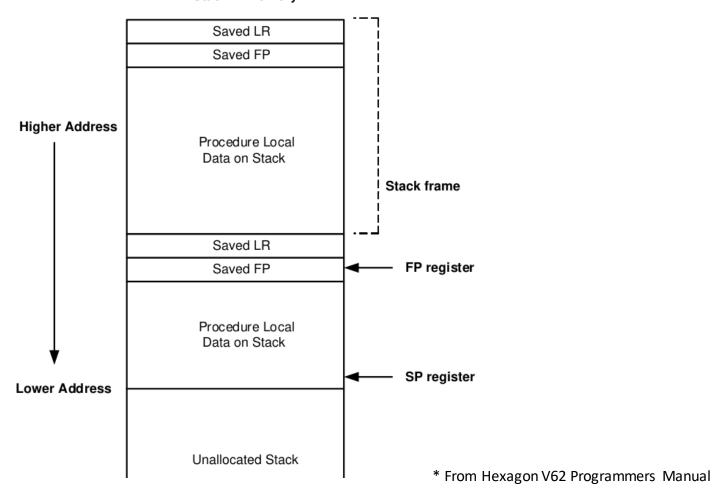
- Specifically designed for DSP use cases
- VLIW 32-bit Instruction Set
- Little-endian
- Instruction Packets, compound instructions
- 4 execution units



- Registers R0 R31
- Stack Pointer, Frame Pointer, Link Register
- Special hardware synchronization primitives
- Not your typical assembly language



#### Stack in Memory





```
💶 🚄 🖼
       @ START OF FUNCTION CHUNK FOR fastcvadsp skel invoke
       loc 1F940:
       { allocframe (#off 50) }
       { r5 = extractu (r1, #byte 4, #byte 4)
         r6 = extractu (r1, #byte_8, #byte_8)
         r3 = and (r1, #byte F)
         memd (r29 + \#dword \ 48) = r17:16 }
       { r4 = extractu (r1, #byte 8, #byte 10)
         r3 = add (r6, r3)
loc 1F95C:
  r16 = r0
 memd (r29 + \#byte 28) = r25:24}
 memd (sp + \#dword \ 40) = r19:18 \ ; memd \ (sp + \#byte \ 38) = r21:20 \ }
  r3 = r2; memd (sp + #byte 30) = r23:22 }
 p0 = cmp.gt (r5, #byte 7) ; if (p0.new) jump:nt loc 1F980
```

- Instruction packets are denoted in { ... }
  - Instructions are executed in parallel



## Hexagon Hardware Security Mitigations

- Only on Hexagon V61 and greater
- FRAMELIMIT Register
  - In frame allocation, if SP < FRAMELIMIT throw exception</li>
- FRAMEKEY Register
  - Return address XOR FRAMEKEY
  - Different for every hardware thread
  - Changes "regularly" as per documentation but no other information provided



#### QuRT

- Qualcomm Real Time OS
- Runs on aDSP and baseband
- Privilege modes:
  - QuRT OS
  - Guest OS (root)
  - User
- Scheduling, resource management, address translation



## QuRT Mitigations

- No ASLR
- Stack cookies
- W^X
  - Can't write to executable memory
  - Can't execute data memory
- Heap corruption protection



#### QuRT

- Binary can be found in TrustZone applets folder
  - /firmware/image/
- Files: adsp.mdt, adsp.b[0-9]
- Can be reassembled by https://github.com/laginimaineb/unify\_trustlet



FastRPC Framework

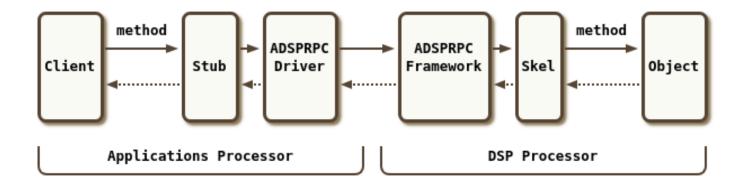


#### FastRPC

- Communication between APPS processor and aDSP
- Qualcomm Shared Memory Subsystem
- Intermediate Libraries
  - On the Android userpace Stub
  - On the aDSP Skel
- Kernel Driver



#### FastRPC



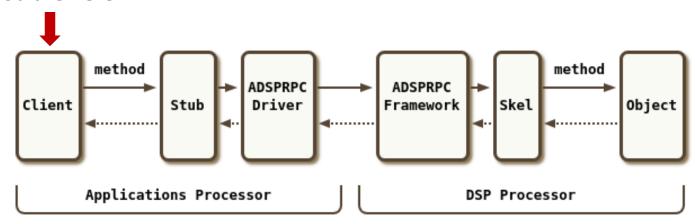
The diagram shows the "simplified version"!

\* From Hexagon DSK Documentation



#### FastRPC

You are here



- Say we want to use aDSP from an Android App
  - Windows on Arm would be pretty much the same
- Which libraries and functions can we call?



## FastRPC – Remote Filesystem

- /vendor/lib/rfsa/adsp
- Holds all libraries accessible for RPC
- Available libraries vary between vendors



#### FastRPC – Available Libraries

```
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root 1263616 2018-02-13 12:44 libfastcvadsp.so
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root
                        550172 2017-03-08 03:55 libfastcvadsp skel.so
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root
                      82272 2017-03-08 03:55 libobjectMattingApp skel.so
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root
                         99808 2017-03-08 03:55 libscveBlobDescriptor skel.so
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root
                        429140 2017-03-08 03:55 libscveCleverCapture skel.so
                        635648 2017-03-08 03:55 libscveFaceRecognition skel.so
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root
                       41780 2017-03-08 03:55 libscveObjectSegmentation skel.so
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root
                        399744 2017-03-08 03:55 libscveT2T skel.so
                       1487612 2017-03-08 03:55 libscveTextReco skel.so
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root
```

Libraries for computer vision, face recognition etc.



#### FastRPC – Available Libraries

- For every library libXXXXX.so
  - XXXXXX specifies the library *name*
  - libXXXXX\_skel.so
    - Unmarshalls parameters and calls actual implementation



## ▶ FastRPC – libadsprpc.so

- Use the library name to get a remote handle
- We can use the handle to invoke a function on aDSP
- libadsprpc.so
  - remote\_handle\_open("libname", &handle)
  - remote\_handle\_invoke(handle, sc, args)



## FastRPC – libadsprpc.so

- remote\_handle\_invoke(int handle, int sc, remote\_arg\_t\* args)
- Argument sc: 0xAABBCCDE
  - AA: Method index and attributes
  - BB: Number of input buffers
  - CC: Number of output buffers
  - D: Number of input handles
  - E: Number of output handles



## ▶ FastRPC – libadsprpc.so

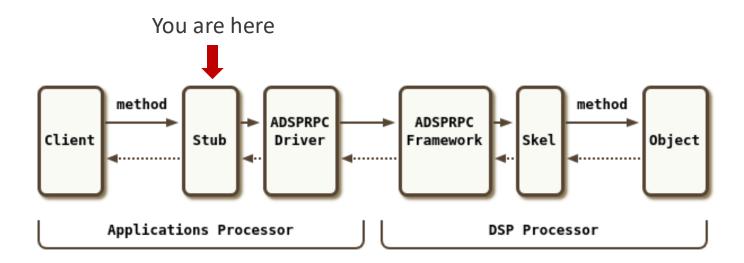
remote\_arg\_t\* args

## FastRPC – libadsprpc.so

- Eg. Remote\_handle\_invoke(handle, 0x11020100, args)
  - Call method with index 0x11
  - 2 Input arguments, 1 Output argument



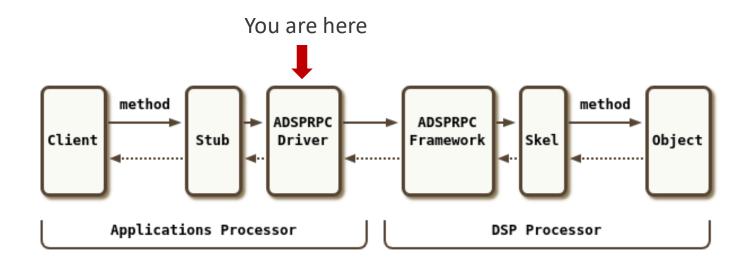
#### ▶ FastRPC – Stub



- Autogenerated 'stub' libraries call remote\_handle\_open/invoke from libadsprpc.so
- Transparent to userspace
- Remote\_handle\_open/invoke are ioctl wrappers



#### FastRPC - Kernel



- Kernel driver interface
  - /dev/adsprpc-smd
  - Protected by SELinux permissions
  - ioctl()



#### ▶ FastRPC – IOCTL interface

- FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INIT
- FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INVOKE
- FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_MMAP
- FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INVOKE\_FD
- FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_SETMODE



#### ▶ FastRPC – IOCTL interface

- FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INIT
- Load a user provided ELF to aDSP
  - ELF mapped to ION buffer
  - Pass ION pointer and file descriptor to ELF
  - Also pass memory buffer (?)
- libadsprpc loads '/dsp/fastrpc\_shell\_0'
- Lots of other Hexagon binaries under /dsp



## FastRPC – fastrpc\_shell\_0

- Hexagon ELF executable
  - Loads libXXXXX\_skell.so, libXXXXX.so
  - Delegates execution
  - Provides a few remote functions on its own
    - adsp\_ps Show processes running on aDSP



#### FastRPC – Kernel

- remote\_handle\_open() calls the following IOCTLs
  - FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INIT
    - Loads 'fastrpc\_shell\_0' unto aDSP
  - FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INVOKE
    - Invokes a remote function with a hardcoded handle!



#### FastRPC – Kernel

- FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INVOKE
  - remote\_handle\_invoke() is a thin wrapper for this
  - Same Arguments: handle, sc, remote\_args
  - Calls a remote function on aDSP



### FastRPC – Kernel

- FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INVOKE
  - Called during remote\_handle\_open()
  - With handle = 1
  - A handle for system functions of some sort
  - Transfers execution to aDSP in order to get a proper handle for the library
- Actually all IOCTLs lead to a FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INVOKE code with handle = 1 and different method index



### FastRPC – Kernel

- Finally, a valid library handle is returned
- We can now call
  - remote\_handle\_invoke(handle, sc, args)
    - FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INVOKE
  - Qualcomm Shared Memory Subsystem
  - But how are arguments passed to aDSP?

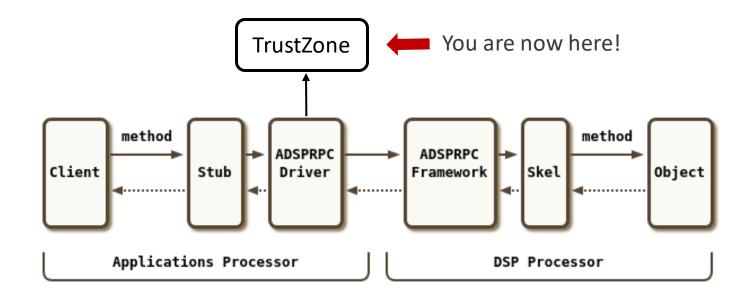


### FastRPC – Kernel

- FASTRPC\_IOCTL\_INVOKE
  - Maps remote\_args to Hexagon
  - fastrpc\_buf\_alloc -> hyp\_assign\_phys -> hyp\_assign\_table
  - Calling TrustZone with an SCM call



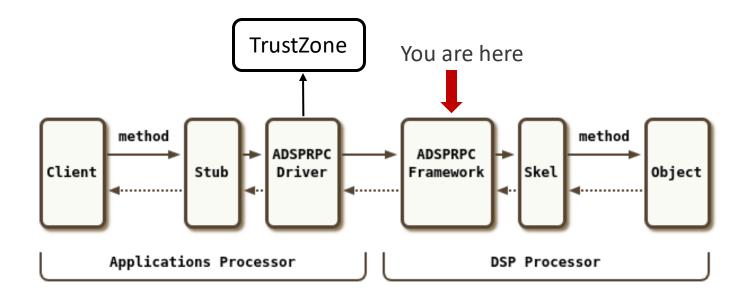
### ▶ FastRPC – TrustZone



- TrustZone
- Make argument memory accessible to aDSP
- MPU/SMMU Page Table Entries



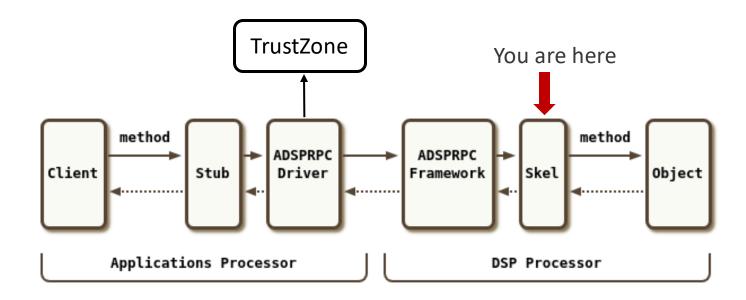
### FastRPC - QuRT



- QuRT passes execution to fastrpc\_shell\_0
- For the specific handle opened earlier, load skel library



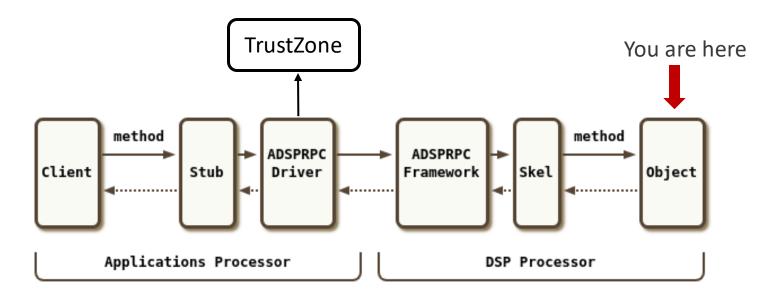
### FastRPC - Skel



- Skel library unmarshalls arguments
- Call actual function implementation based on method index



## FastRPC - Library



- Skel library unmarshalls arguments
- Call actual function implementation based on method index



#### ▶ FastRPC – Conclusion

- Now we know how to FastRPC works
- There are still many missing pieces
  - TrustZone maping memory to aDSP
  - How QuRT delegates execution to libraries
  - We also saw calls with handle = 3 from the libadsprpc.so library but we could also perform our tests without them





- Hexagon SDK
  - Based on LLVM
  - Full toolchain Compiler, readelf, objdump, simulator!
  - Utilities
  - Documentation



- Put our code in remote filesystem and call it from userspace
- Remote filesystem is read-only
  - Get root and remount
- Remote libraries must be signed
  - Bypass sign check ?
  - Development board



- Intrinsyc Open-Q 820
  - ARM Development Board
  - MSM 8996/Snapdragon 820 (same as Pixel)
  - Exposes JTAG pins
  - Debug Fuse is enabled!



- Debug Fuse
  - TrustZone
  - Enables execution of custom libraries on aDSP
- Create testsig.so and upload to remote filesystem
  - Generated by Hexagon SDK utilities
  - Needs device serial number
- And we can run our code on the development board



## Calculator Example

- Example code provided in Hexagon SDK
- Calculations performed on aDSP
- Python build script and custom makefiles
- Autogenerated stub/skel libraries



## Modified Example

```
int calculator_sum(int* vec, int vecLen, int64_t* out)
{
   *out = (int64_t)out;
   return 0;
}

msm8996:/vendor/bin # ./calculator

- starting calculator test
- ret = 55cf38
```

- We modify original calculator example
- We see aDSP's virtual address of 'out'



## Hardware Debugging

- Lauterbach32
  - Hardware Debugging
  - A few tens of thousands of \$
- OpenOCD and something like a Bus Blaster ?
  - No luck in my tests, but I am not the hardware type
  - There are some Lauterbach32 scripts that should be useful for bus offsets etc



## Software Debugging

- Hexagon SDK says debugging is supported on MSM8998 development boards
  - Not tested since I had MSM8996
- Qualcomm DIAG interface
  - Also used in baseband and Wi-Fi research
- Inject our own debugger in aDSP similar to "Exploring Qualcomm Baseband via ModKit" presentation





- Android Apps
  - stub libraries (marshalling)
- Kernel Driver
- aDSP
  - skel libraries (unmarshalling)
  - Implementation libraries



- Remotely, an attacker could send data that could be handled by aDSP/FastRPC code
  - Eg. Send audio/video that needs further processing
  - Browsers, messengers, etc
  - Attack on marshalling/unmarshaling libraries and implementation libraries on aDSP
- Locally, an attacker could also attack the kernel driver directly



- aDSP
  - A large number of libraries are exposed to userspace
  - Audio/video decoding, numerical calculations
    - Always a red flag for exploitation
  - System functions
- Open Question: Even after successful exploitation, do we cross a security boundary?



- Exploiting a library on aDSP, we are in QuRT userspace
  - QuRT privilege escalation ?
  - TrustZone communication ?
- MPU blocks aDSP from accessing the whole memory
  - Maybe that's more than enough?
- In newer SoCs, there are also cDSP and mDSP
  - Compute DSP, modem DSP
  - Offload work to baseband processor just like aDSP!



# Fuzzing



#### FastCV

- Computer Vision Library by Qualcomm
- Provides ARM, GPU and Hexagon implementations
- Present on many Qualcomm Android devices



#### FastCV

- 500+ available functions
  - Matrix multiplication
  - Hamming Distance
  - Allocate/deallocate structures
  - etc
- Available on aDSP through the "fastcvadsp" handle



### FastCV

- On remote filesystem:
  - Libfastcvadsp\_skel.so
    - Parameter unmarshall
  - Libfastcvadsp.so
    - Actual implementation
- Hexagon disassembler ?



## Hexagon Disassemblers

- IDA Pro and Ghidra do not support Hexagon natively
- hexagon-llvm-objdump
  - Provided by Hexagon SDK
  - Does NOT work for some binaries (?)
- https://github.com/programa-stic/hexag00n
  - Some immediate operands are decoded incorrectly
  - Ask me how I know



## Hexagon Disassemblers

- Radare2
  - Supported in newer versions including instruction packets
- Capstone internal build
  - Not public :(
- https://github.com/gsmk/hexagon
  - Less issues than the others
  - Register pairs are "different" than separate registers



## Ghidra Hexagon Support

- Ghidra makes adding support for new architecture easier
- SLEIGH Processor Specification Language
- Bonus: Decompiler
- I have implemented a few opcodes but there is a long way to go



## Ghidra Hexagon Support

```
define token instr(32)
    iclass = (28, 31)
    Rs = (16, 20)
    Rd = (0, 4)
    s16_lo = (5, 13)
    s16_hi = (21, 27)
;

:^ Rd = "add"(Rs, s16) is iclass=0b1011 & Rs & Rd
        & s16_hi & s16_lo [ s16 = (s16_hi << 9) + s16_lo; ]
{
    Rd = Rs + s16;
}</pre>
```

- Calculate immediate value, model instruction behavior inside braces
- Caret "^" denotes that Rd is not actually an instruction mnemonic
- Question to you: how to set "add" as the mnemonic ?



## Ghidra Hexagon Support

```
undefined std_toupper()
undefined r0:1 <RETURN>
std_toupper

0007e824 e2 73 e0 bf r2 = add(r0,0xff9f)
```

- Verified with gmsk/hexagon, radare2
- Still a long way to go

```
.globl fastcvadsp_skel_invoke
fastcvadsp_skel_invoke:

@ FUNCTION CHUNK AT LOAD:0001F940 SIZE 000001C4 BYTES
@ FUNCTION CHUNK AT LOAD:0001FB10 SIZE 00000218 BYTES

{ allocframe (#off_58) }

loc_1ED14:
{ immext (#0x62B80)
    r7 = add (pc, ##loc_62B94)
    r2 = r0 ; memd (sp + #off_50) = r17:16 } @ r2 = sc
{ r5 = extractu (r2, #byte_5, #byte_18) @ r5 = Method Index memd (sp + #dword_48) = r19:18 ; memd (sp + #dword_40) = r21:20 }
{ r6 = r1 ; memd (sp + #byte_38) = r23:22 } @ r1 = remote_args_ptr
```

- We use gmsk/hexagon plugin in IDA
- Every skel library has a skel\_invoke function
- R0 = sc, R1 = remote\_args pointer



```
loc_1ED44: @ 0x810c0
    r3 = memw (r7 + ##0xFFFFF814) }
{ p0 = cmp.gtu (r5, #byte_1F)
    immext (#0xFFFFF800)
    r4 = memw (r7 + ##0xFFFFF818) } @ = 0x810c4
{ immext (#0xFFFFF800)
    r16 = memw (r7 + ##0xFFFFF81C) @ = 0x810c8
    immext (#0xFFFFF800)
    r17 = memw (r7 + ##0xFFFFF820) } @ = 0x810cc
{ if (p0) jump loc_1F880 }
```

If method index > 0x1F return



- Else (if method index <= 0x1F):</p>
  - Get offset from PC + (method index << 2)</li>
  - Add offset to PC and jump
  - Let's take offset 0xFFFFBD0



```
loc_1F4A4: @ if number of arguments < 5 fail
p0 = cmp.gt (r4, #byte_5); if (!p0.new) jump:nt loc_1EDA0
```

Validate number of arguments is correct

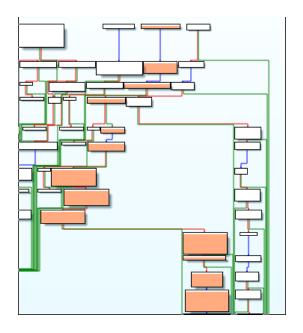


```
if (p0.new) r2 = memw (r6 + #byte_4) }
{ r4 = #byte_14      @ r2 = remote_args[0].len
    if (!cmp.gtu (r4.new, r2)) jump:t loc_1F4BC }
```

Check if length of first remote\_arg > 14



## FastCV Skel library



- More checks for argument lengths
- Unmarshalling parameters, arithmetic shifts, etc.
- A few basic blocks later ...



## FastCV Skel library

```
loc_1F5A0:
    r0 = r19
    r22 = memw (r6 + r3 << #byte_3)
    r20 = memw (r6 + #byte_10) }
{ r21 = memw (r6 + #byte_8) }
{ call sub_4B240 }
{ r5:4 = combine (r18, r19)
    r3:2 = combine (r17, r20)
    r1:0 = combine (r16, r21)
    r6 = add (r29, #off_20) }
{ call fastcvadsp_fcvCrossProduct3x1f320
    memw (sp + #byte_0) = r23 ; memw (sp + #byte_4) = r6 }
```

Finally call fastcvadsp\_fcvCrossProduct3x1f32Q



- We know how to call functions on the aDSP
- We analyzed how FastCV expects arguments
- A large number of complex functions are exposed
- Let's create the simplest fuzzer ever for FastCV



- Get a remote handle for FastCV
- Buffers with random data, but how many ? Method index?
  - For a sleepless night, parse FastCV header file, get expected number of argument, create a proper 'sc'
  - Reverse FastCV stub libraries and get 'sc' for each function



- We don't need any of this
- Skel library does not complain if we send more arguments than it expects!
- Try random method index (<= 0x1F) and hope for the best</p>



```
130|msm8996:/data/local/tmp # ./fastrpc-fuzz
[+] Got handle: 0xa9f0d530, ret: 0x0
[+] invoke function index: 170, sc: 0xa080800, ret: e
[+] invoke function index: 195, sc: 0x3080800, ret: 0
[+] invoke function index: 104, sc: 0x8080800, ret: e
[+] invoke function index: 185, sc: 0x19080800, ret: e
[+] invoke function index: 120, sc: 0x18080800, ret: e
[+] invoke function index: 40, sc: 0x8080800, ret: e
[+] invoke function index: 89, sc: 0x19080800, ret: e
[+] invoke function index: 4, sc: 0x4080800, ret: e
[+] invoke function index: 29, sc: 0x10808000, ret: 27
[+] invoke function index: 99, sc: 0x3080800, ret: 27
[+] invoke function index: 71, sc: 0x7080800, ret: 27
[+] invoke function index: 152, sc: 0x18080800, ret: 27
[+] invoke function index: 105, sc: 0x9080800, ret: 27
```

- After a few calls we get -1 as return value
- Then only 0x27 ???



- Kernel sets up SMMU for aDSP
- Sets fault handler for SMMU
- If fault return 0x27 = 39



## Fuzzing

- No luck in FastCV
- Let's try for the shrouded in mystery handle #1
- No need to remote\_handle\_open, we can invoke this handle directly just like the kernel!



#### Crashes

```
[1563109.065921] Fatal error on adsp!
[1563109.068361] adsp subsystem failure reason: :Excep :0:Exception detected:frpck_0_0.
[1563109.083902] L-Notify: Generel: 8
[1563109.195904] Kernel panic - not syncing: subsys-restart: Resetting the SoC - adsp crashed.
```

- System reboots on our development board with Android 7
- Tested on Pixel 3 with Snapdragon 845 (SD845) does not crash with latest firmware
- Evaluation
  - Analyze QuRT
  - Find function handler for handle = 1
  - Hexagon Simulator
  - Debug



### Conclusions

- aDSP is a very interesting exploitation target
- We can now fuzz libraries on aDSP
- Run our own code on aDSP for further investigation
- There is a lot of research waiting to be done here



#### Future Work

- Proper disassembler/decompiler
- Investigate security boundary
- Debug
- Modern SoCs offer subsystems similar to aDSP
  - Apple Neural Engine
  - Google Pixel Visual Core
  - Huawei Neural Processing Unit



### References

- 1. A Journey Into Hexagon Dissecting a Qualcomm Baseband, Seamus Burke DEF CON 26 2018
- Exploring Qualcomm Baseband via ModKit, Tencent Blade Team, CanSecWest 2018
- Baseband exploitation in 2013: Hexagon challenges, Ralf-Philipp Weinmann PacSec 2013



Thank you!

