Code: analysis, bugs, and security

supported by Bitdefender

Assembly Language

Marius Minea

marius@cs.upt.ro

5 October 2016

Computing is about abstraction

Many high-level languages with scores of features

Processor hardware: much simpler, less variation

Compiler must bridge this gap

Towards assembly: three-address code

Expressions can be arbitrarily complex

Most often, we have simple expressions like:
`x = 2 * y` or `z = x + y`
two operands, one result

three-address code:
(at most) three addresses (variables, pointers) in instruction

Can do source-to-source transformation of C to three-address code

Why registers

Is this enough?

Processor instructions could have an opcode (for basic operations) + (at most) three addresses.

You might do this for a virtual machine in a compiler class project
Why not in a real processor?

Why registers

Is this enough?

Processor instructions could have an opcode (for basic operations) + (at most) three addresses.

You might do this for a virtual machine in a compiler class project
Why not in a real processor?

speed: memory access is slow

code *size*: three arbitrary addresses make a long instruction

Instruction set design

From early simple processors to CISC to RISC

Complex Instruction Set Computer

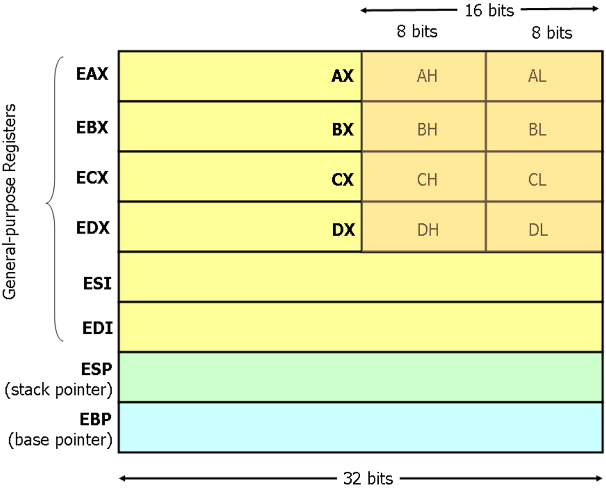
powerful instructions, complex addressing modes
multi-step operations in same instruction

Reduced Instruction Set Computer

uniform short instructions (one word)
general-purpose registers (with same role)
simple addressing, load/store architecture
(separate memory access and arithmetic)

ultimately, seems microarchitecture is more relevant

x86 Architecture: Registers



On 64-bit architectures: extended registers: rax, rbx, etc.

http://www.cs.virginia.edu/~evans/cs216/guides/x86.html

Opcodes and operands

Instructions have 1 to several bytes

Opcode: says what instruction does
  1-byte instructions: `ret`, `push`/`pop`/`incdec` *reg*

Operands:
  register (8, 16 or 32-bit) + 64
  constant (8, 16 or 32-bit) + 64
  (contents of) memory address

Size directives

For a memory access, must indicate amount of data read/written
  1, 2, 4, 8 bytes

In C, given by the type of the pointer: `char *`, `int16_t *`, etc.

In assembly, must specify explicitly ⇒ different instructions

```
mov BYTE PTR [ebx], 7
mov WORD PTR [ebx], 7
mov DWORD PTR [ebx], 7
```

Stack: push and pop

Simplest memory transfer instructions

push: first decrement, then put value on stack

```
sp -= 4        // for 32-bit arch
[sp] = value
```

pop: take value from stack pointer, then increment

```
value = [sp]
sp += 4       // for 32-bit arch
```

Memory transfer (data movement) instructions

```
mov eax, [ebx]    ; [ ] = contents of address w/ given value
mov [var], ebx    ; var = 32-bit const addr
mov eax, [esi-4]
mov [esi+eax], cl ; register cl = one byte
mov edx, [esi+4*ebx]
```

Examples: `http://www.cs.virginia.edu/~evans/cs216/guides/x86.html`

Basic Arithmetic & Bitwise ops

Arithmetic:

`add, sub, mul, div`
`imul`, `idiv` (signed)
`inc`, `dec`

Logical (bitwise): `and`, `or`, `xor`, `not`

`xor bx, bx` // short way to zero a register

Shifting: by constant bitcount, or value or reg `cl`
`shl [mem], 3`
`shr dx, cl`

All of these affect *flags*

The Flags Register

CF (carry): set when *unsigned* result does not fit

OF (overflow): set when *signed* result does not fit

SF (sign): arithmetic / logic result is negative

ZF (zerox): arithmetic / logic result is zero

AC (auxiliary carry): from bit 3 to bit 4 in 8-bit operand

PF (parity): of low-order byte: 1 if even number of 1 bits

Calling conventions

When calling a function, several options to consider:

Where to pass arguments ? (stack or registers?)

Argument passing order (from left or from right)?

Who cleans up the stack? (caller or callee)

Who saves registers? (caller or callee)

`cdecl` convention

32-bit x86, many compilers, Unix-like systems

args passed on stack, right to left (allows varargs)

result returned in `eax`

caller saves `eax`, `ecx`, `edx`, callee saves rest

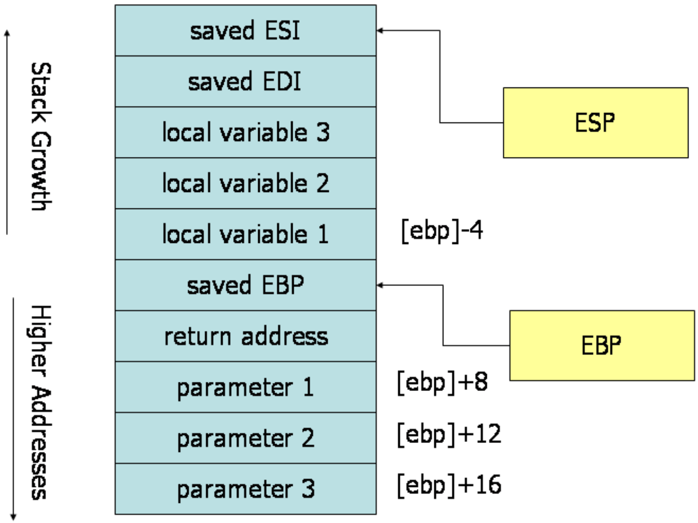
caller cleans up stack

Compile to assembly (`cc` could be `gcc`, `clang`, etc.)

```
cc -S -masm=intel file.c
```

Extra options: `-O2` to optimize

`-m32` compiles to 32 bits on 64-bit system



http://www.cs.virginia.edu/~evans/cs216/guides/x86.html

Other calling conventions

`stdcall`: Microsoft

args also right to left, *callee* cleans up stack

cannot have variable-length arguments

`syscall`

like `cdecl` but does not save AX, CX, DX

x86-64 calling conventions

64-bit arch has 8 more registers ⇒ can use to pass values

System V AMD64 ABI

first 6 args passed in `rdi`, `rsi`, `rdx`, `rcx`, `r8`, `r9`

return value in `rax` and `rdx`

Recognizing function prologues / epilogues

Important in reverse engineering

May not know all entry points

May not be able to follow all function calls
  e.g. indirect calls, through pointers in a table

Standard prologues/epilogues help disassembler detect functions

Control flow: jumps and calls

`jmp` *address*
`call` *address*

Should *address* be absolute or relative to the progam counter?

Control flow: jumps and calls

`jmp` *address*
`call` *address*

Should *address* be absolute or relative to the progam counter?

relative: important to have *relocatable code*
(can load at any address in memory)

Absolute jump / call instructions also exist.

Comparison operators

`cmp` *op1*, *op2*

like (signed) subtraction, but does not change left operand

`test` *op1*, *op2*

like bitwise AND, but does not change left operand

both set flags ⇒use for *conditional jumps*

Conditional jumps

Based on a variety of flags (set by `cmp` / `test`)

JA (above)	CF = 0 and ZF = 0
JB (below)	CF = 1
JC (carry)	CF = 1 (same as JB)
JE (equal)	ZF = 1
JG (greater)	ZF = 0 and SF = OF
JL (less)	SF != OF
JO (overflow)	OF = 1
JS (sign)	SF = 1
JZ (zero)	ZF = 1

also negations (JNA, JNB, etc.) + nonstrict cmp (JLE, JGE, etc)
some mnemonics mean same thing: JNGE = JL

Make common case fast

conditional jumps have near versions with 8-bit offset

Indirect jumps. Jump tables

from compilation of **switch** statement

```
typedef enum { ADD, SUB, MUL, DIV, MOD, AND, OR, XOR } op_t;

int calc(int op, int a, int b) {
  switch(op) {
  case ADD: return a + b;
  case SUB: return a - b;
  case MUL: return a * b;
  case DIV: return a / b;
  case MOD: return a % b;
  case AND: return a & b;
  case OR: return a | b;
  case XOR: return a ^ b;
  }
  return 0;
}
```

Indirect calls (pointer table)

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>

typedef int (*intfn_t)(int, int);   // type of function pointer

int add(int a, int b) { return a + b; }
int sub(int a, int b) { return a - b; }
int mul(int a, int b) { return a * b; }
int idiv(int a, int b) { return a / b; }

intfn_t fntab[] = { add, sub, mul, idiv };

int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
  if (argc != 2) return 1;
  unsigned op = atoi(argv[1]);
  if (op < 4) printf("%d\n", fntab[op](7, 3));
}
```

Pointers to pointers

```
typedef struct ilst *intlist_t;

struct ilst {
  intlist_t nxt;
  int el;
};

intlist_t insert_last(intlist_t lst, int val)
{
  intlist_t *adr;     // pointer to cell pointer
  for (adr = &lst; *adr; adr = &(*adr)->nxt);
  // now adr is address of nxt field in last cell
  if ((*adr = malloc(sizeof(intlist_t)))) {
    (*adr)->el = val;
    (*adr)->nxt = NULL;
  }
  return lst;
}
```