

# Linux Containers: Future or Fantasy?

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**DEF CON 23**



Infosec, pentesting, Neg9/CTF

iSEC Partners for 5.5 years

NCC Group for 0.1 years

Hacking Samsung Smart TVs @ BH USA 2013, Toorcon, etc

Macs in the age of the APT @ BH USA 2011, Source, etc

# Disclaimer



These slides are not intended to be consumed without the corresponding presentation or whitepaper. The information contained within is designed for presenting and not 100% completeness with regards to risks, recommendations, findings, etc.



# Story One: *The Server*



# Once Upon a Time



Bob's Ruby on Rails **app gets popped**  
or his SQL database **server is compromised**  
or his Wordpress plugin gives **RCE**  
or ....

He wants to **add security**... But **how**?

# Chroot ?

## OLD

The tried and true still used today

Broken if you have root

```
mkdir("ncc");  
chroot("ncc");  
chdir("../.."); ← oh no...  
chroot(".");
```



nccgroup<sup>®</sup>

# SELinux ?



NSA made it

Complex type system for MLS systems

Good support on RHEL

# SELinux (and other MAC) ☹️

Complexity

Linus Torvalds problem

The **setenforce 0** problem

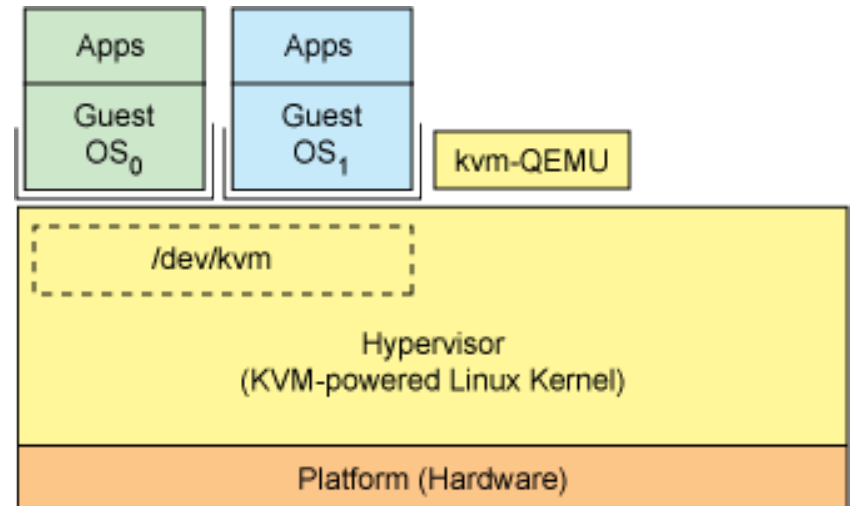
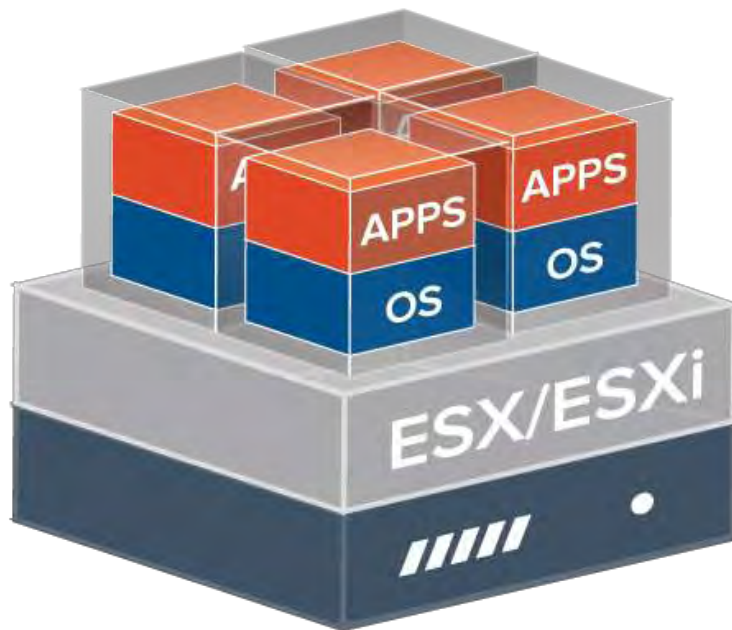
Kernel enforces it: *Kernel gotta kernel*

# OK, No MAC but grsecurity!



Well you've protected the kernel, apps and helped prevent memory corruption and hardened against other attacks but...

# Full Virtual Machines?



# Full Virtual Machines ☹️

QEMU, KVM or ESX escapes

Recent Xen/QEMU  
updates anyone?

VM for single process?  
**Nope.**



# Story Two: *The Client*



# Once Upon a Time

"Gulenn" talks to a potential source named "citizenfour"

He can't use a Chromebook because he is paranoid of Google



# Hey, just use Linux!

"Malware is just for Windows"

"OSX sucks, it's insecure"

Linux is like... super sakure right?

aaaaannnnddd broken...



He's one webkit or gekco bug away from a TBB compromise. **What app sandboxes?**

Pidgin and libpurple don't have a great track record

LiveCDs are stale code by definition

# Story Three: The Embedded



# Once Upon a Time



Margaret is in charge of embedded security at D-LINK, Belkin, <insert IoT company>

She wants to add isolation between the web app, wpa\_supPLICANT and DLNA stack

Tired of having **CSRF-able arbitrary code execution** via buggy input validation

# Margret isn't alone!

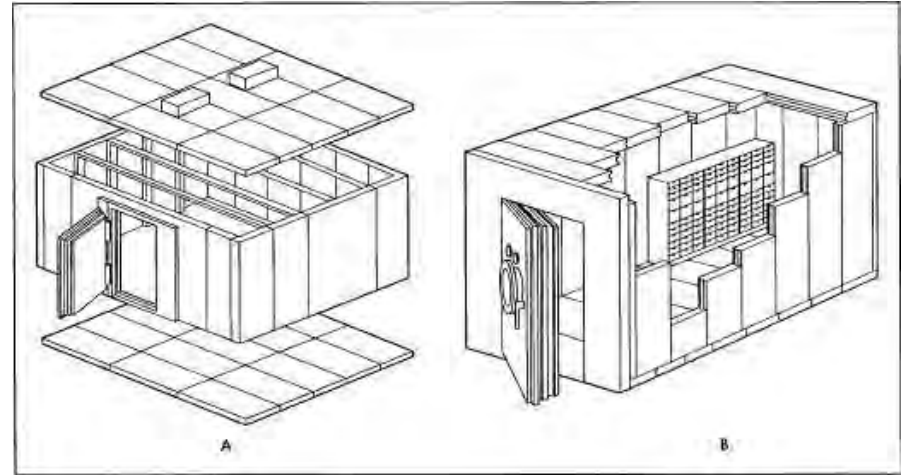


Everything runs as root

No security is added (because \$\$\$)

You can't easily virtualize or segment ARM/MIPS within a router, but is there nothing we can do to improve IoT?

# What do these stories have in common?



# What do these stories have in common?



**Attack surface matters** *almost* more than anything else

**Sandboxes and containers** at least let us pick our battles: they **should be the rule not the exception** ( Props to Google Chrome Browser, Adobe Reader X, Apple Seatbelt, Google ChromeOS, etc)

How can we work to improve server, desktop and embedded security for Linux ?

**We have to try something new**





**Paul Smecker:** They exited out the front door. They had no idea what they were in for. **Now they're staring at six men with guns drawn.** It was a fucking ambush.



**Paul Smecker:** This was a fucking bomb dropping on Beaver Cleaverville. **For a few seconds, this place was Armageddon!**





**Officer Greenly:** What if  
it was just **one guy with  
six guns?**

**Paul Smecker:** Why don't you let me do the thinking, huh, **genius?**



**But Greenly was right... it was "il Duce"**





What if it wasn't **one cpu with multiple kernels**, but  
**one kernel with multiple userlands?**

Linux Vservers

OpenVZ

FreeBSD Jails

OpenBSD/NetBSD Sysjail

Solaris Zones

HP UX Containers

AIX Workload Partitions

## A little bit about OS Virtualization

*Fundamentally* less secure than hardware virtualization





# OS vs Hardware Virtualization

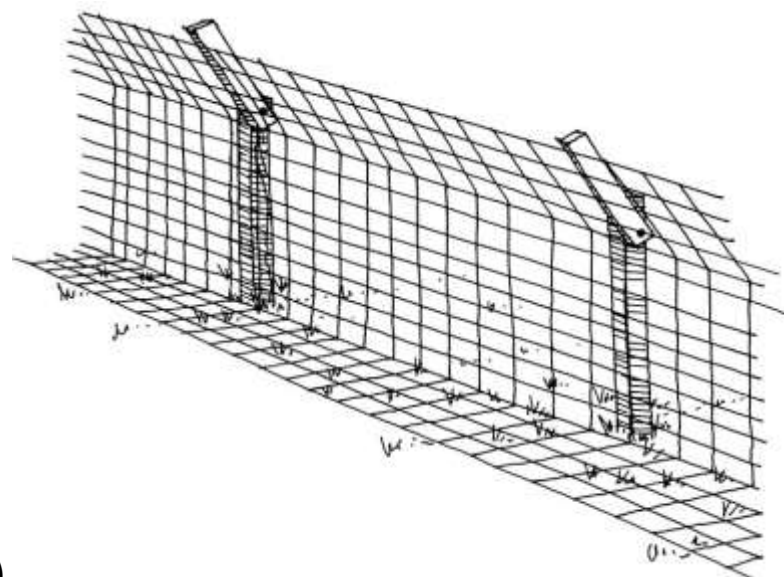


Hardware virtualization creates software emulation for pretty much everything

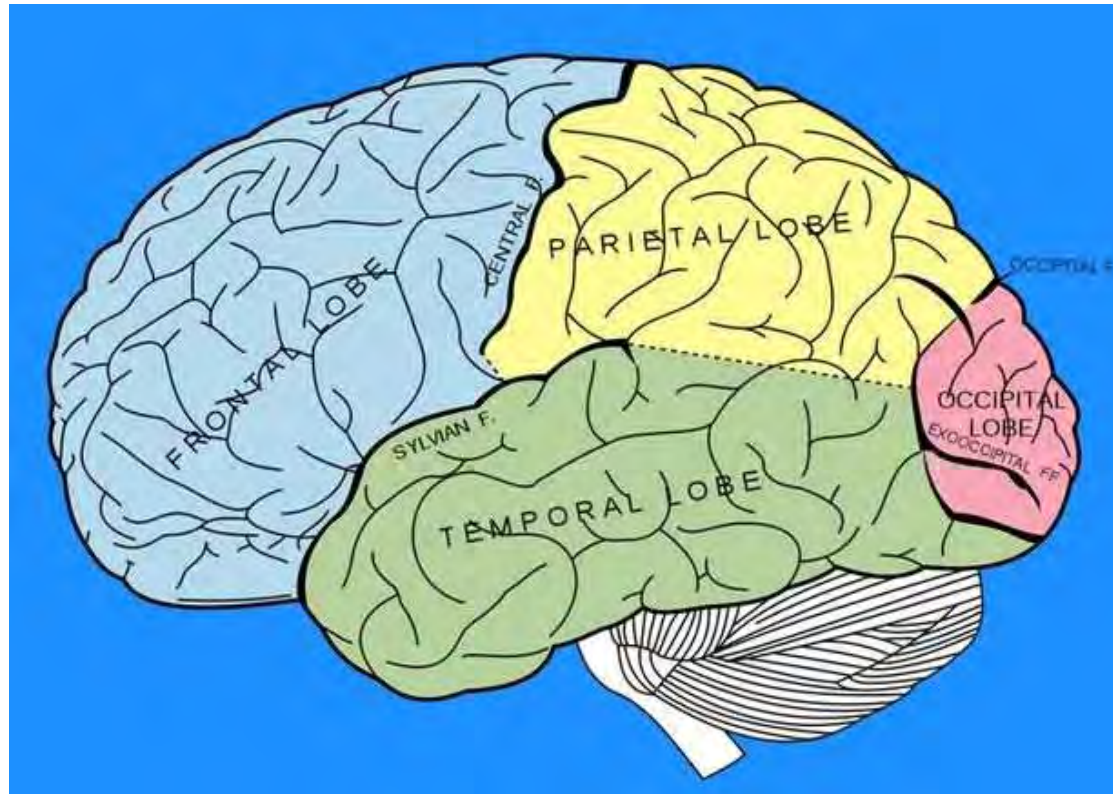
Software or OS virtualization partitions a single kernel and attempts to restrict or control access to hardware

But we don't want to depend on a **single method** for security ...

Hardware virtualization is  
even fundamentally less  
secure than physically  
different hardware...  
(surrounded by guys with guns and fences)



# Namespaces



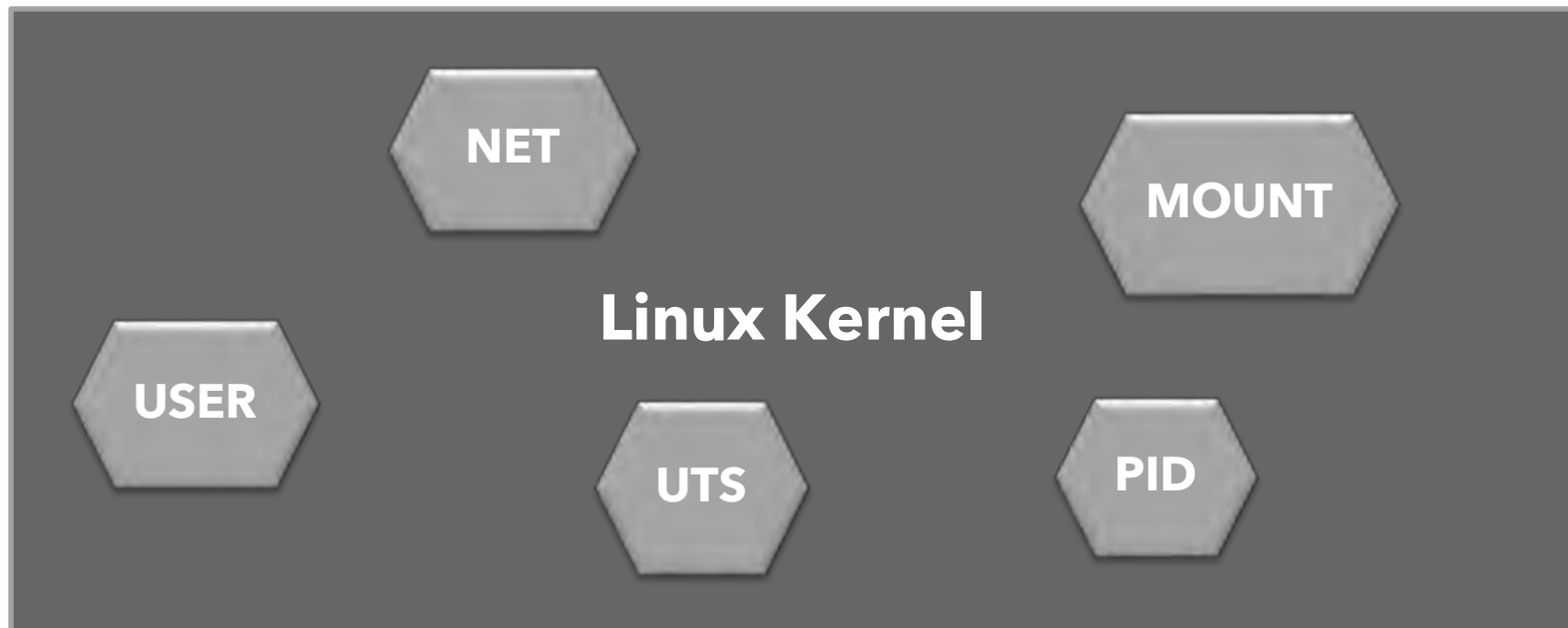
# Namespaces

## Plan9



<http://www.cs.bell-labs.com/sys/doc/names.html>

# Namespaces



# It all starts with a CLONE(2)



**clone(2)**

"Kernel Execution Context"

**set\_ns(2)**

**unshare(2)**

# MOUNT Namespace



**CLONE\_NEWNS:** Added in 2.4.19 kernel

Per user / via PAM

Per process view of files, disks, NFS

# IPC Namespace



**CLONE\_NEWIPC:** Added in 2.6.19

"System 4 IPC objects"



# UTS Namespace



**CLONE\_NEWUTS:** Added in 2.6.19

**uname(2), setdomainname(2),  
sethostname(2)**

# PID Namespace



**CLONE\_NEWPID:** Added in 2.6.24

Process IDs start at 1

Can be nested

# PID NS example



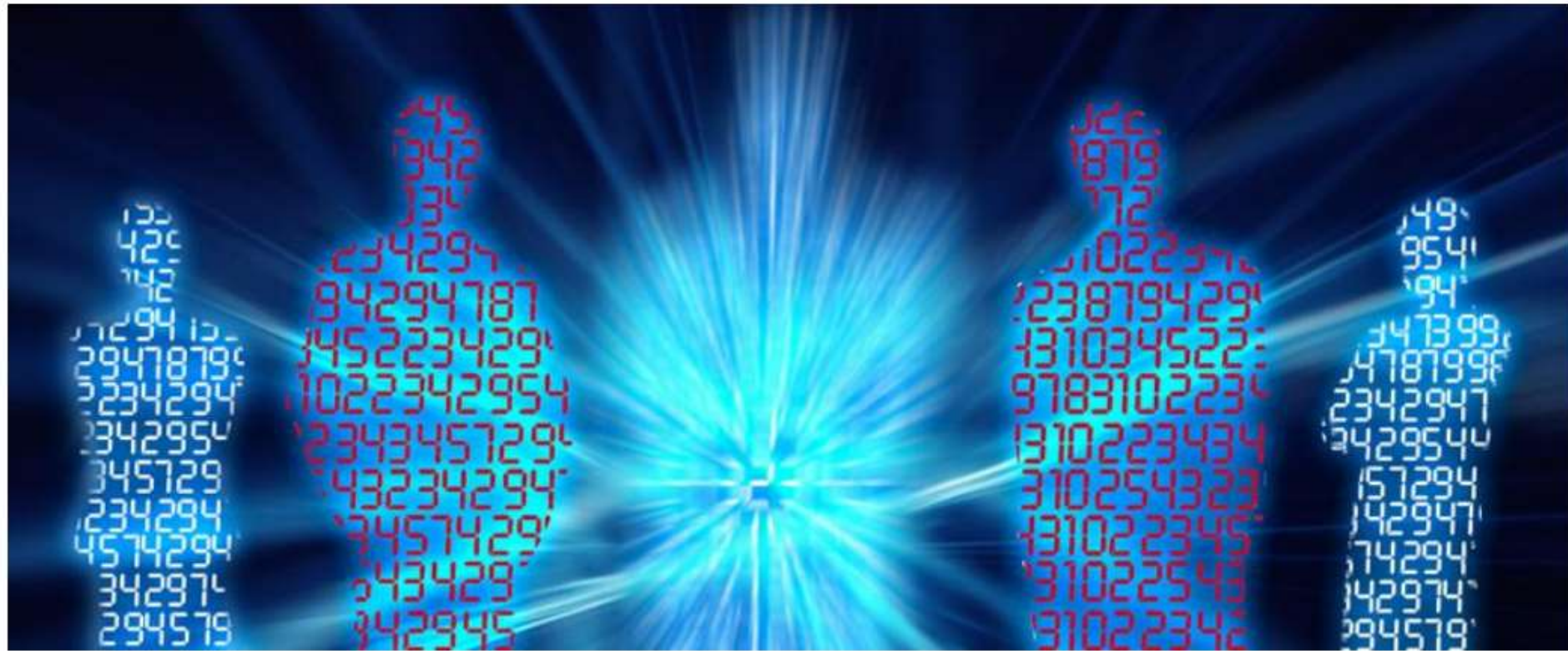
```
$ lxc-create -t busybox -n foo ; lxc-start -n foo
```

```
$ lxc-attach -n foo -- ps
```

PID	USER	COMMAND
1	root	init
5	root	/bin/sh
10	root	ps

# Unisys Stealth Solution Suite

**You can't hack what you can't see. Changing the Security Paradigm.**



# NETWORK Namespace



**CLONE\_NEWNET:** Added in 2.6.24

Separate network device, IP, MAC,  
routing table, firewall

# USER Namespace

**CLONE\_NEWUSER:** Added in 2.6.23  
but finished 3.8

Important for actually securing  
containers

... also a high risk area of the kernel :/

# USER NS example



```
$ lxc-attach -n foo -- sh
```

```
BusyBox v1.21.1 (Ubuntu 1:1.21.0-1ubuntu1) built-in shell  
(ash) ...
```

```
$ id
```

```
uid=0(root) gid=0(root)
```

```
$ sleep 1337
```

```
100000 17110 0.0 0.0 2184 260 pts/14 S+ 12:03 0:00 sleep 1337
```

# Capabilities



# TECHNOLOGY

The cause of, and solution to, all of life's problems.



CAP\_NET\_RAW

CAP\_WAKE\_ALARM

CAP\_SETGID

CAP\_NET\_ADMIN

CAP\_MAC\_ADMIN

CAP\_SYS\_CHROOT

CAP\_SYS\_PTRACE

CAP\_SYS\_RAWIO

CAP\_SETUID

**root**

CAP\_SYS\_PCAP

CAP\_SYS\_BOOT

CAP\_AUDIT\_WRITE

CAP\_SYSLOG

CAP\_SYS\_ADMIN

CAP\_SYS\_MODULE

CAP\_NET\_BIND\_SERVICE

CAP\_DAC\_READ\_SEARCH

CAP\_SYS\_TIME

CAP\_MKNOD

# Capabilities

**Pros:** Kernel devs adding them 😊

**Cons:** Busy (and lazy) kernel devs ☹️

**Result:** Semi-working capabilities model!

# Examples of Capabilities



**CAP\_NET\_ADMIN**

**CAP\_NET\_RAW**

**CAP\_NET\_BIND\_SERVICE**

**CAP\_SYS\_RESOURCE**

**CAP\_SYS\_PTRACE**

**CAP\_SYS\_RAWIO**

**CAP\_KILL**

# Dropping Capabilities

What should be dropped ?

**Everything!**

What if I leave just "CAP\_FOO" enabled?

**It depends...**

# Fixing ping



```
$ ls -l /bin/ping
```

```
-rwsr-xr-x 1 root root 44168 May 7 2014 /bin/ping
```

```
$ cp /bin/ping /tmp ; ls -l /tmp/ping
```

```
-rwxr-xr-x 1 root root 44168 Mar 18 11:02 /tmp/ping
```

```
$ /tmp/ping localhost
```

```
ping: icmp open socket: Operation not permitted
```

# Fixing ping



```
$ sudo setcap cap_net_raw=p /tmp/ping
```

```
$ getcap /tmp/ping
```

```
/tmp/ping = cap_net_raw+p
```

```
$ /tmp/ping localhost
```

```
PING localhost (127.0.0.1) 56(84) bytes of data
```

```
64 bytes from localhost (127.0.0.1): icmp_seq ...
```

# Some Dangerous Capabilities



**SYS\_CHROOT**

**SYS\_MODULE**

**SYS\_RAWIO**

**SYS\_PTRACE**

**MAC\_ADMIN**

**MAC\_OVERRIDE**

**DAC\_READ\_SEARCH**

**NET\_RAW**

**NET\_ADMIN**

**CAP\_MKNOD**

# CAP\_SYS\_ADMIN == root



- \* Perform a range of system administration operations including: quotactl(2), mount(2), umount(2), swapon(2), swapoff(2), sethostname(2), and setdomainname(2);
- \* perform privileged syslog(2) operations (since Linux 2.6.37, CAP\_SYSLOG should be used to permit such operations);
- \* perform VM86\_REQUEST\_IRQ vm86(2) command;
- \* perform IPC\_SET and IPC\_RMID operations on arbitrary System V IPC objects;
- \* perform operations on trusted and security Extended Attributes (see attr(5));
- \* use lookup\_dcookie(2);
- \* use ioprio\_set(2) to assign IOPRIO\_CLASS\_RT and (before Linux 2.6.25) IOPRIO\_CLASS\_IDLE I/O scheduling classes;
- \* forge UID when passing socket credentials;
- \* perform administrative operations on many device drivers.
- \* exceed /proc/sys/fs/file-max, the system-wide limit on the number of open files, in system calls that open files (e.g., accept(2), execve(2), open(2), pipe(2));
- \* employ CLONE\_\* flags that create new namespaces with clone(2) and unshare(2);
- \* call perf\_event\_open(2);
- \* access privileged perf event information;
- \* call setns(2);
- \* call fanotify\_init(2);
- \* perform KEYCTL\_CHOWN and KEYCTL\_SETPERM keyctl(2) operations;
- \* perform madvise(2) MADV\_HWPOISON operation;
- \* employ the TIOCSTI ioctl(2) to insert characters into the input queue of a terminal other than the caller's controlling terminal.
- \* employ the obsolete nfservctl(2) system call;
- \* employ the obsolete bdflush(2) system call;
- \* perform various privileged block-device ioctl(2) operations;
- \* perform various privileged filesystem ioctl(2) operations;

**See False Boundaries and Arbitrary Code Execution post by Spender**

<https://forums.grsecurity.net/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=2522>



# Control groups



Hierarchical and inheritable

Controls different subsystems  
(Dev, CPU, Mem, I/O, Network)

ulimit on steroids

**Controlling access** to resources  
based on subgroups:

devices, CPU, I/O, Mem, ...

Filling **some gaps** of namespaces

Controlling cgroups is typically performed via a virtual filesystem:

**/sys/fs/cgroup**

Main configuration (besides container configs):

**/etc/cgrules.conf,  
/etc/cgconfig.conf**

**cgroups**

nccgroup<sup>e</sup>

cgexec

cgmanager

Container platforms make it easy

## Putting that all together...



# Putting it all together...



**Namespaces** logically isolate kernel elements

**Capabilities** help enforce namespaces and reduce undesired privileges

**Cgroups** limit hardware resources

**Enter: Containers** (LXC, Docker, CoreOS rkt, Heroku, Flockport, Kubernetes, Joyant, etc)



# Linux Containers

## Better than chroot!

## Still not virtualization...



# Mount options

Beyond ro, nodev, noexec, nosuid

Bind, Overlay, Union, CoW,  
Versioning, even sshfs

# **Namespaces, Capabilities and Cgroups: where are they now on Linux servers?**



Self-hosted PaaS systems

Amazon EC2

Google App Engine

Rackspace, Heroku

# Namespaces, Capabilities and Cgroups: where are they now on Linux *clients*?



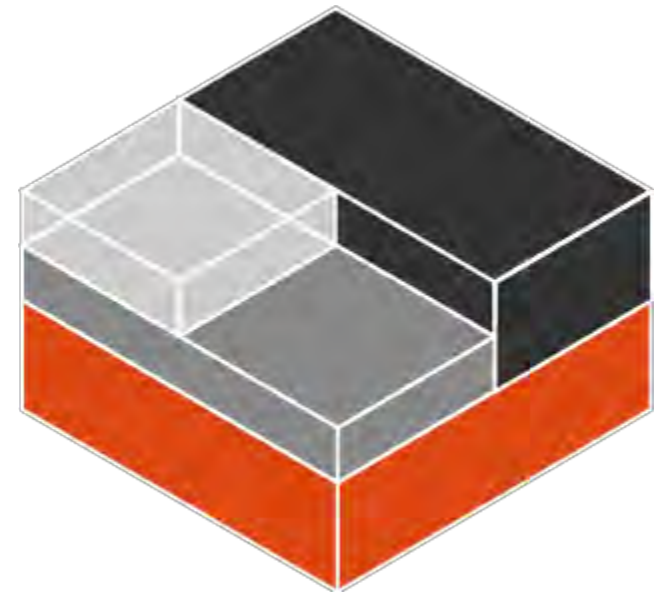
ChromeOS and the Chrome browser

Limited use in Android

Some Linux distros

Sandboxing tools: minijail, mbox

# Linux Containers: **LXC**



# LXC: Template: Basics



```
lxc.rootfs = /var/lib/lxc/defcon-ctf/rootfs
lxc.utsname = isec
lxc.start.auto = 1
lxc.mount.entry = /lib lib none ro,bind,nodev 0 0
lxc.mount.entry = /lib64 lib64 none ro,bind,noexec 0 0
```

# LXC: Template: Cgroups



```
lxc.cgroup.tasks.limit = 256  
lxc.cgroup.devices.deny = a  
lxc.cgroup.devices.allow = b 9:0 r  
lxc.cgroup.memory.limit_in_bytes = 4000000
```

# LXC: Template: Other Security



```
lxc.cap.keep = sys_time sys_nice  
lxc.aa_profile = lxc-container-default  
lxc.seccomp = /path/to/seccomp.rules
```

## Recent Advancements





# Unprivileged Containers



Non-root users can now create/start containers  
**and be "root" inside the container**

Weird things can obviously happen

More work and auditing to be done

# What about that kernel attack surface?

There are **190 syscalls** in Linux **2.2**

There are **337 syscalls** in Linux **2.6**

There are **340 syscalls** in Linux **4.1**

How many does your app *really* need?

## SECure COMPuting

Filtering the kernel (yet again)

**"System call filtering isn't a sandbox.** It provides a clearly defined **mechanism for minimizing the exposed kernel surface.**" – Will @redpig Drewry, Google

Syscall arguments can also be filtered (mostly)

Large number of filters = performance hit

Only really supports x86 and x86\_64 (for now)

**You'll need LXC, Minijail or Mbox**

(Docker /contrib now, release branch soon (1.8?))

# Seccomp-bpf



**prctl(2)** – operations on a process

**PR\_SET\_SECCOMP:**

**SECCOMP\_MODE\_STRICT (old)**

**SECCOMP\_MODE\_FILTER (new hotness)**

# Seccomp-bpf



```
struct sock_filter filter[] = {  
    BPF_STMT(BPF_LD+BPF_W+BPF_ABS, syscall_nr),  
    BPF_JUMP(BPF_JMP+BPF_JEQ+BPF_K, __NR_ptrace, 1, 0),  
    BPF_STMT(BPF_RET+BPF_K, SECCOMP_RET_ALLOW),  
    BPF_STMT(BPF_RET+BPF_K, SECCOMP_RET_KILL)  
};  
  
struct sock_fprog prog = {(unsigned short) (sizeof(filter) /  
sizeof(filter[0])), filter };  
  
prctl(PR_SET_NO_NEW_PRIVS, 1, 0, 0, 0);  
prctl(PR_SET_SECCOMP, SECCOMP_MODE_FILTER,  
&prog);
```

# Berkeley Packet Filter



```
# tcpdump -p -nqi wlan0 -d 'tcp and port 80'
(000) ldh      [12]
(001) jeq      #0x86dd      jt 2 jf 8
(002) ldb      [20]
(003) jeq      #0x6         jt 4 jf 19
(004) ldh      [54]
(005) jeq      #0x50      jt 18    jf 6
(006) ldh      [56]
(007) jeq      #0x50      jt 18    jf 19
(008) jeq      #0x800     jt 9 jf 19
(009) ldb      [23]
. . . . .
```

# Seccomp-bpf: where

ChromeOS / Google Chrome  
Firejail OpenSSH  
Capsicum Tor  
Mbox vsftpd BIND  
LXC QEMU  
Opera Browser  
Docker (/contrib)



# So who is implementing and supporting containers?



Docker

CoreOS

Flockport

Sandstorm.io

RancherOS

Heroku (ish)

Joyent

Amazon

VMware

Google/Kubernetes

... and many more

# Lets talk about the big two



Core OS



# What is the “big deal”



Packaging and deployment focused -  
*one app per container*

Devs and Ops, DevOps, DevCyberOps,  
DevSecOps, BlackOps, etc

Developing PaaS

Makes it **easy**

**So Docker is just LXC? Nope.**



libcontainer, libchan, libswarm, etc

Written in go

REST API

Running docker daemon (as root)

# Docker Ecosystem



## Docker **images**:

```
$ docker run --name mynginx -v \
/opt/content:/usr/share/nginx/html:ro -d nginx
```

## Docker **Hub**:

```
$ sudo docker run ubuntu:14.04 /bin/echo 'Hello world'
Hello world
```

## Orchestration, Communication, Management



Core OS

Minimal OS for hosting containers

Launching the rkt and app container spec

App container spec picked up by VMware Photon

Separation from Docker and LXC



# Why Docker, Rocket, etc?



Takes **some** of the configuration away

FreeBSD::OSX → LXC::Docker

Additional packaged tools | features

# Why Docker, Rocket, etc?



**LXC:** *You want to run a containerized OS or single app. **Hard mode with the most flexibility.***

**Docker:** *You want to run a single app per container. **Easy mode with some costs.***

**CoreOS:** *You want to host Docker containers or try and use rkt. **So much bleeding it's rated R.***

# Going on the attack



Free-File Download - Resolution 5000/2750px - [www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com)

# Lets think about this....



Container to other container

Container to itself

Container to host

Container to support infrastructure

Container to local network

Container to ...

# Starting at the top

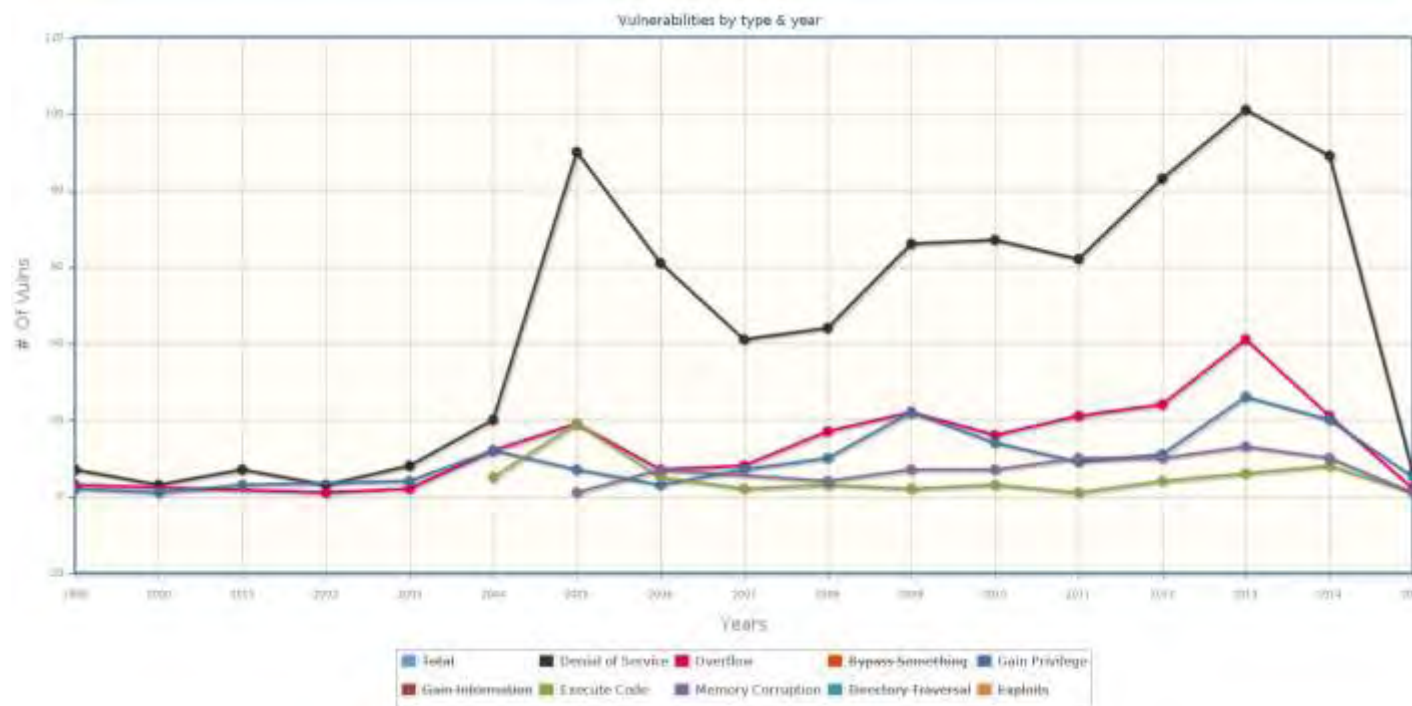


# Starting at the top



# Kernel who?

Lots of drivers, old code, weird filesystems,  
old syscalls, platform specific problems  
strange or unused network protocols



# Not.... Dropping caps



If you don't drop the right ones: **game over**

Not dropping caps also allows kernel code  
exec... CAP\_NET\_ADMIN (CVE-2013-4588, CVE-2011-  
2517, CVE-2011-1019, ...)



# Not.... Dropping caps

Speaking of dropping capabilities, a  
Docker shocker: **CAP\_DAC\_READ\_SEARCH**

“Invoke **open\_by\_handle\_at(2)**”

Brute force the inode of **/etc/shadow**

Props to Stealth aka Sebastian Kramer

# Not.... Dropping caps

Without a MAC system, capability dropping and the user namespace are your *only line of defense*

# Not.... Limiting access

Procs:        /proc/kcore,  
              /proc/sys/modprobe,  
              /proc/sys/kernel/sysrq

Sysfs:                /sys

Cgroups does not limit: mknod

Kernel ring buffer: dmesg

Network access: br0

Unintended devfs: /dev, /dev/shm

# Not... Limiting resources

Forkbomb! `:(){ :|:& };;:`

Memory, disk, entropy...

# When good containers go stale



When was the **last time you updated OpenSSL** in your Docker container?

How do you deal with *updates in place* if apt-get upgrade is a "no-no"?

# Lack of MAC (Mandatory Access Controls)



*"The flawed assumption of modern computing environments"*

Eggs in one (kernel) basket

AppArmor does a decent job

**Bad defaults:** Capability dropping,  
networking,

Unprivileged containers finished-ish

A few security fixes have lagged :/





# Docker Weaknesses



Capability dropping: a shocker

Root daemon plus root to use it

Weak REST API authentication defaults

Docker "github all the way down"

# Docker Weaknesses



Does not drop all capabilities by default, drops all except "those needed" (still includes some dangerous capabilities  
CAP\_NET\_RAW, CAP\_FOWNER, CAP\_MKNOD, ...)

Docker binds container port maps to all interfaces *by default*

Base images are huge... apt-get is hungry

Docker networking defaults allow cross-container networking and access to Docker host

# Docker Weaknesses



Giving low rights users access to Docker means giving them root on the Docker host

Currently missing support for key security features: seccomp-bpf and the User Namespace

Exposing the socket/REST API inside a container for introspection <- don't do that

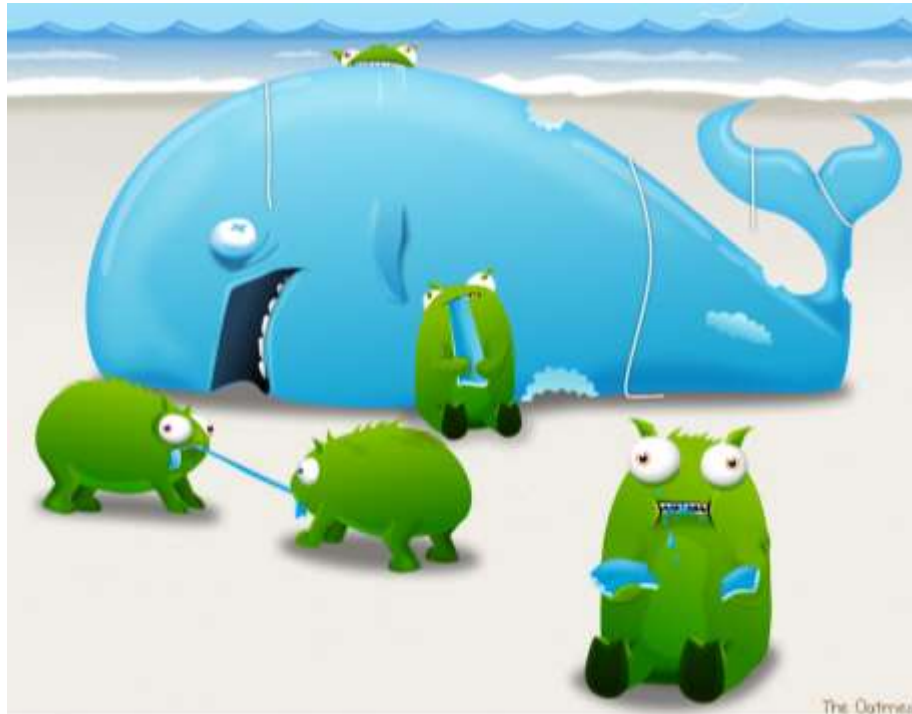
# Docker Weaknesses



About that lack of User namespace....:

Hi all, **I'm a maintainer of Docker.** As others already indicated this doesn't work on 1.0. But it could have. Please remember that at this time, **we don't claim Docker out-of-the-box is suitable for containing untrusted programs with root privileges.** So if you're thinking "pfew, good thing we upgraded to 1.0 or we were toast", you need to change your underlying configuration now. Add apparmor or selinux containment, map trust groups to separate machines, or ideally don't grant root access to the application. **Docker will soon support user namespaces,** which is a great additional security layer but also not a silver bullet! **When we feel comfortable saying that Docker out-of-the-box can safely contain untrusted uid0 programs, we will say so clearly.**

**Posted one year ago :/**





# CoreOS "rkt" Weaknesses

Rocket (rkt) is extremely new



No root daemon but rkt still requires root...

# CoreOS "rkt" Weaknesses

Rocket does **not drop many dangerous Capabilities** or support the **User namespace**





# CoreOS “rkt” Weaknesses



Seccomp ? **Nope.**

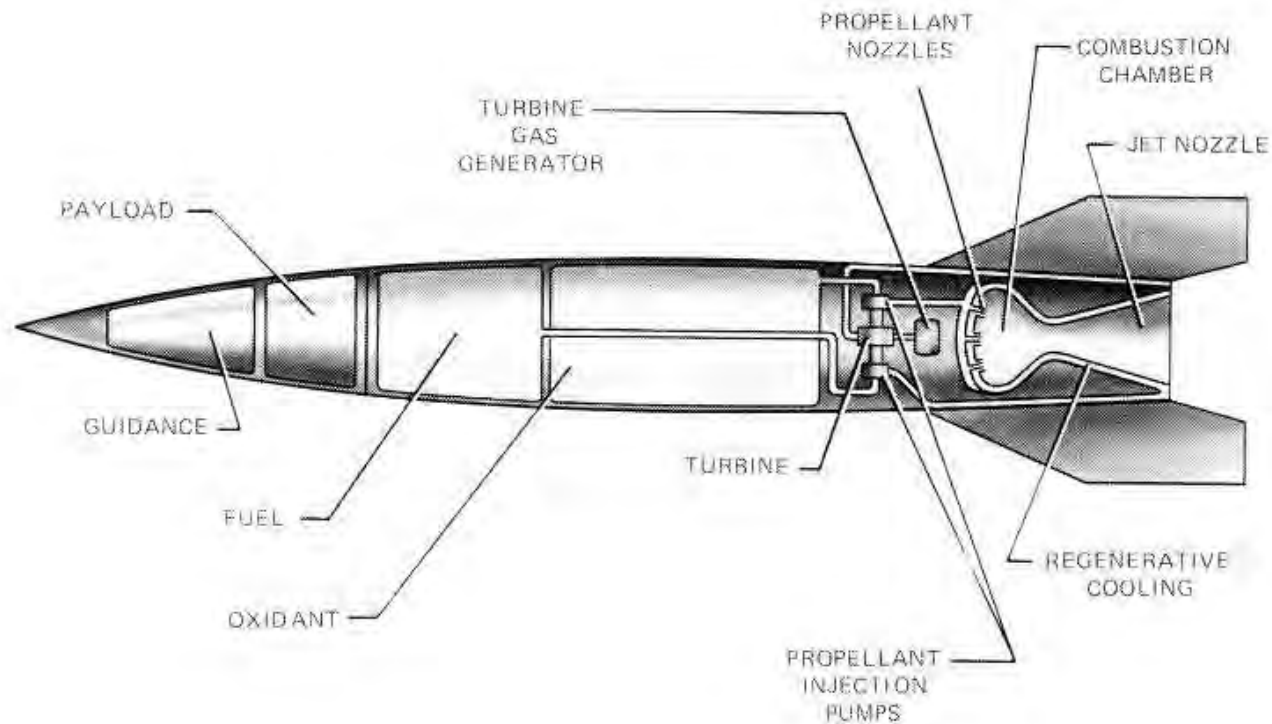
Apparmor ? **Nope.**

SELinux? **Kinda.**

Root inside container? **Yep.**

/proc, /proc/sys limits? **Nope.**

# The Dream



# The Implementation

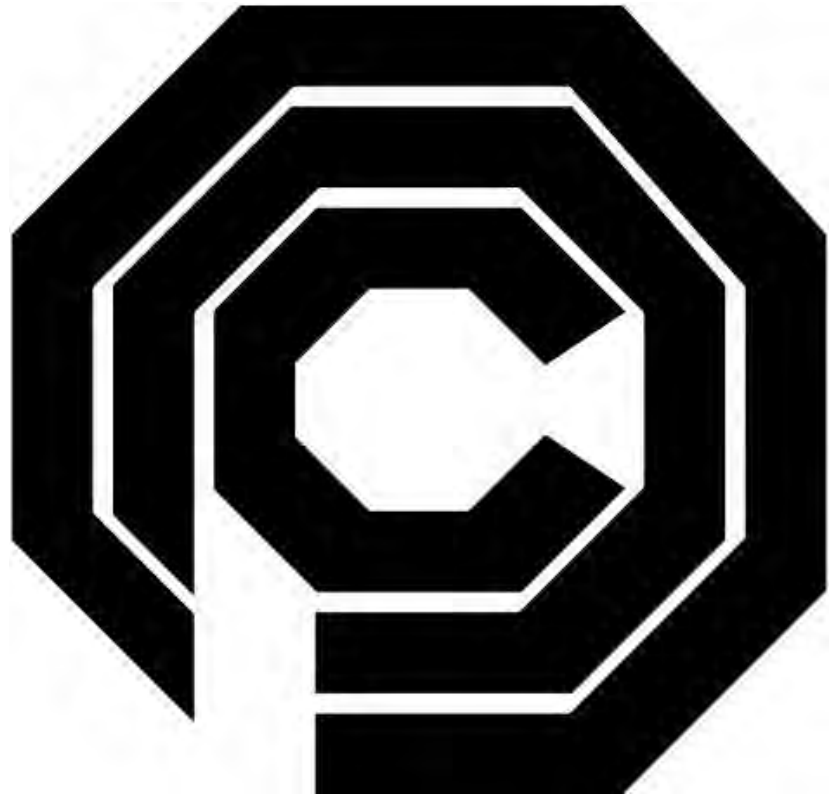


# Open Container Project (OCP)



**Robert 'Bob' Morton:** At Security Concepts, we're projecting the end of crime in Old Detroit within forty days.

There's a new guy in town.  
His name is **RoboCop**.



# Open Container Initiative (OCI?)



Working on a joint specification (OCF) for containers

Launched **runc**. An OCF implementation using libcontainer from Docker.

Unfortunately still not working on **RoboCop**.

**That all sounds bad/easy to mess up**  
**... and how to make it better**

# Recommendations







# Kernel Hardening



Grsecurity/PaX is the only serious kernel hardening patchset. **Just do it**

Typical sysctl hardening

Minimal kernel modules

# Dropping all the Capabilities



Gotta drop them all!

Design for the smallest set

Assume the worst

# Adding a MAC Layer



AppArmor

Grsecurity RBAC

SMACK

SELinux

Defaults to enabled for LXC and Docker!

Can be nested!

Path based, but hey it works

# Docker Specific Hardening



Don't allow access to docker user or group

Don't run privileged or root containers

Drop additional capabilities

Upgrade to 1.8 when released (or use /contrib now) which has seccomp-bpf and User namespace support, w00t!

Checkout docker-bench-security and other solid work by Docker Security team

Use small base images

**Use a whitelist** if you can but a blacklist will do *OK*

Docker is exploring a "high", "med", "low" default for 1.8+ but what is really needed is profiles for each Containerized app.

# Normal System Hardening



Mount security, Extended filesystem attributes,  
Access controls, Permissions, Logging,  
Firewalls, Auditing, Hardened  
Toolchain, Safe languages, Attack  
surface reduction, Least privileges,  
Least Access, Resource Limits, 2FA,  
Reduced Complexity, Pentesting

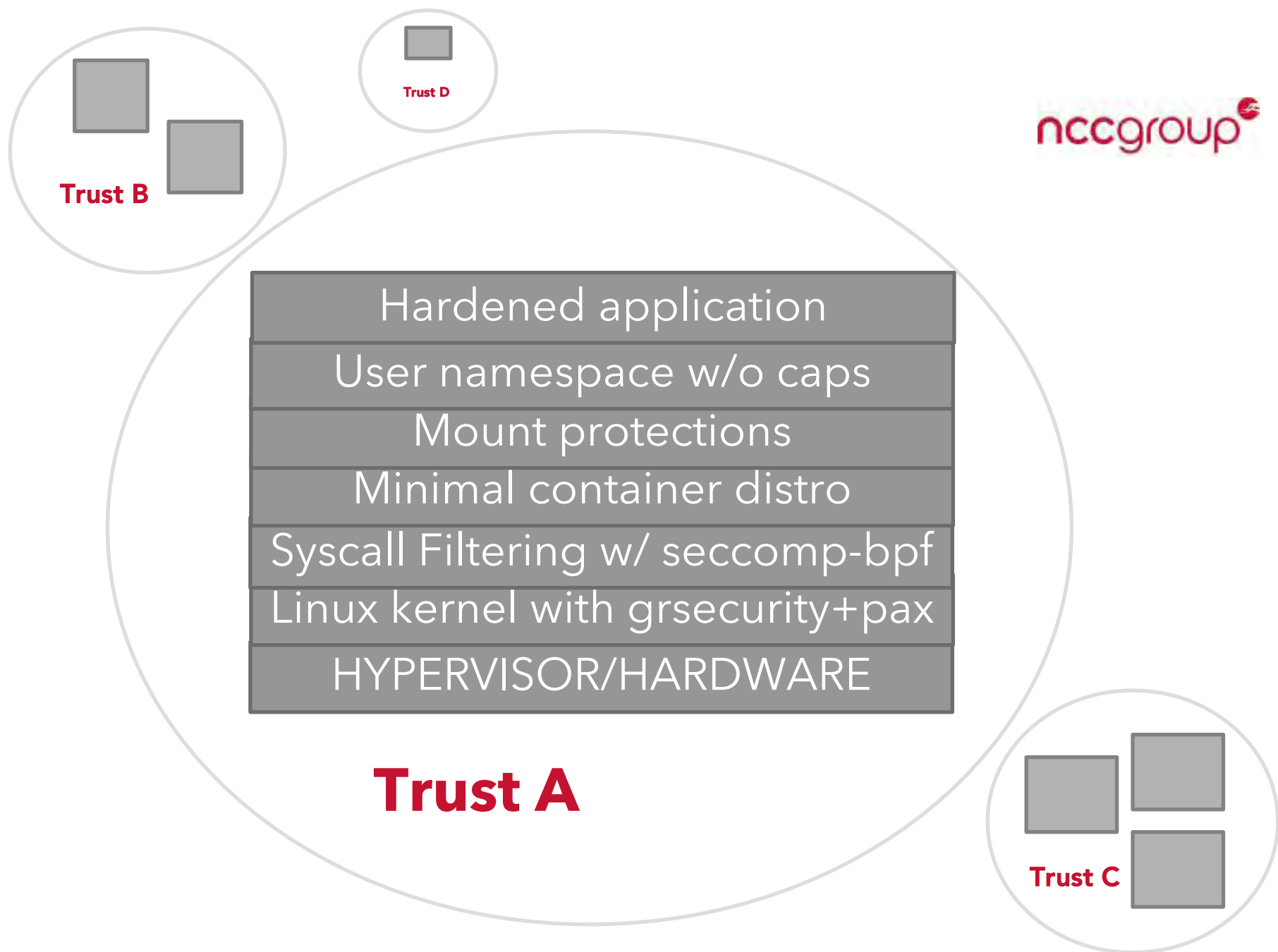
# Network Hardening



Listening on "all interfaces"  
(includes docker0/lxcbr0)

Containers are great for network  
auditing/traceflow!





# Where do we go from here?

# Where do we go from here?



More namespaces (proc, dev)

Minimal hypervisors (ClearContainers)

Minimal container distros

Android or other non-x86 that needs app/system segmentation/sandboxing

# Where do we go from here?



“Desktop” applications in containers

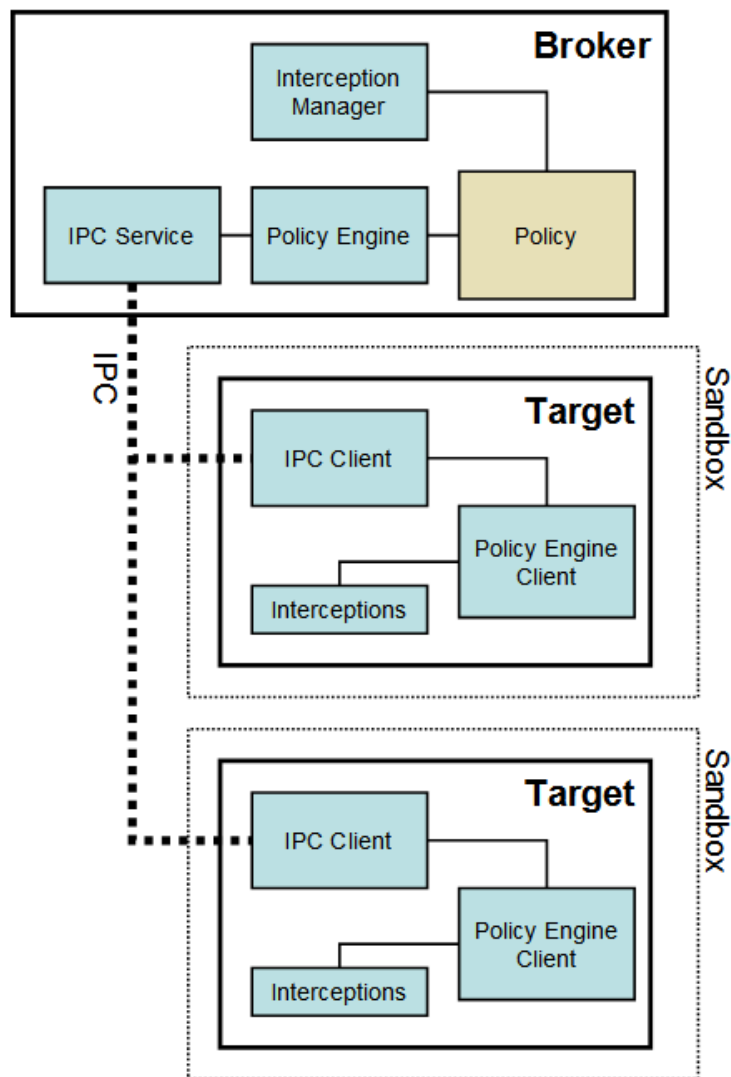
Improved seccomp-bpf argument filtering

Hopefully more granular capabilities

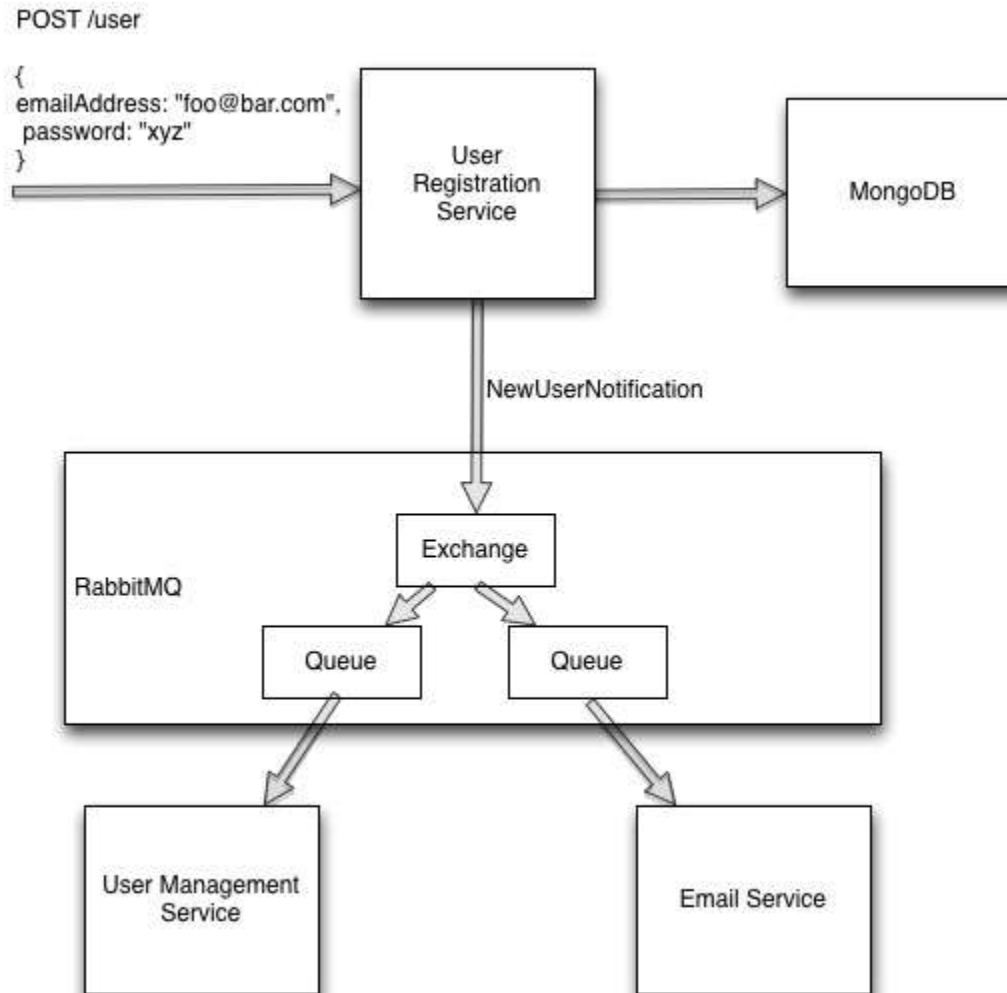
..... more vulnerabilities too! :/

# Where do we go from here?

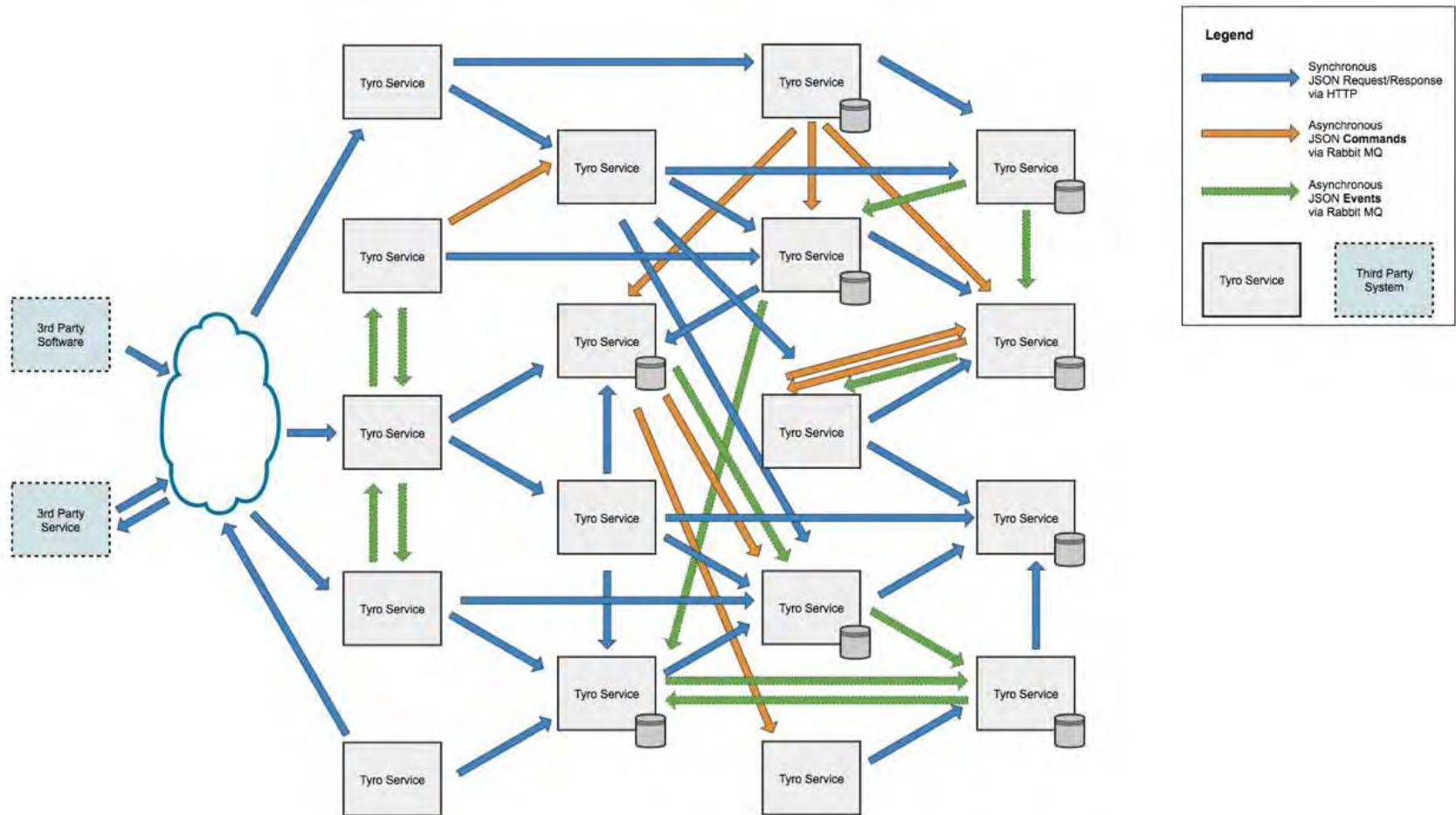
Microservices



# Where do we go from here?



# Where do we go from here?



# Conclusion





# In closing



**It's not about perfect security** but improving the current state and making attackers work harder

The technologies to support containers can be used to help **secure existing non-container Linux systems**

**Microservices architecture** fits a least-privilege and least-access container/security model

Physically **separate critical security** barriers and **isolate by trust**

# Coming soon!



My whitepaper: **"Understanding and Hardening Linux Containers"...**

Covers everything here in muuuch **more depth!**

(background, namespaces, all the capabilities, cgroups, explores MAC, seccomp-bpf, past container attacks, overall and specific weaknesses, security recommendations for LXC, Docker, rkt deployments)

# Coming soon!



**When** will the whitepaper be released ?

Hopefully in the **next few weeks!**

**How** can I make sure I get it?

Email me! or follow me on Twitter! **@dyn\_\_\_** (totally not a ploy for more followers)

**Thanks!**



Any Questions/Comments?

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