



# Linux Debugging Disassembling Reversing

## Practical Foundations Training Course

Dmitry Vostokov  
Software Diagnostics Services

# Linux Debugging, Disassembling, Reversing

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Practical Foundations: Training Course

Dmitry Vostokov  
Software Diagnostics Services

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## Preface

This training course is a Linux version of the previous “Practical Foundations of Windows Debugging, Disassembly, Reversing” (ISBN-13: 978-1908043948) book<sup>1</sup>. It also complements “Accelerated Linux Core Dump Analysis” (ISBN-13: 978-1908043979) training course<sup>2</sup>.

Although the book skeleton is the same as its Windows predecessor, the content was revised entirely because of a different operating system, debugger (GDB), toolchain (GCC, assembler, linker), application binary interface, and even an assembly language flavor, AT&T.

The course is useful for:

- Software technical support and escalation engineers
- Software engineers coming from JVM background
- Software testers
- Engineers coming from non-Linux environments, for example, Windows or Mac OS X
- Linux C/C++ software engineers without assembly language background
- Security researchers without assembly language background
- Beginners learning Linux software reverse engineering techniques

This book can also be used as an x64 assembly language and Linux debugging supplement for relevant undergraduate level courses.

If you encounter any error, please contact us using this form:

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<https://twitter.com/DumpAnalysis>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.patterndiagnostics.com/practical-foundations-windows-debugging-disassembling-reversing>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.patterndiagnostics.com/accelerated-linux-core-dump-analysis-book>

## About the Author

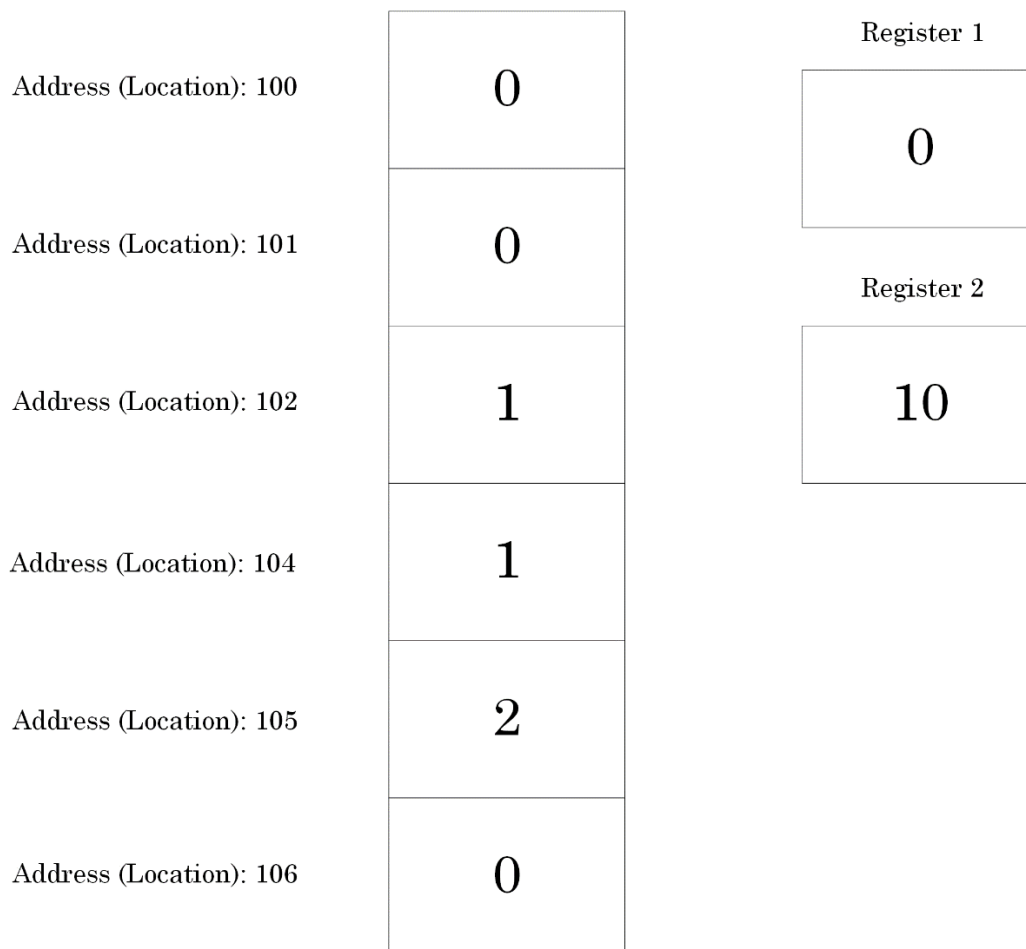


Dmitry Vostokov is an internationally recognized expert, speaker, educator, scientist, and author. He is the founder of the pattern-oriented software diagnostics, forensics, and prognostics discipline and Software Diagnostics Institute (DA+TA: DumpAnalysis.org + TraceAnalysis.org). Vostokov has also authored more than 50 books on software diagnostics, anomaly detection and analysis, software and memory forensics, root cause analysis and problem solving, memory dump analysis, debugging, software trace and log analysis, reverse engineering, and malware analysis. He has more than 25 years of experience in software architecture, design, development, and maintenance in various industries, including leadership, technical, and people management roles. Dmitry also founded Syndromatix, Anolog.io, BriteTrace, DiaThings, Logtellec, OpenTask Iterative and Incremental Publishing (OpenTask.com), Software Diagnostics Technology and Services (former Memory Dump Analysis Services) PatternDiagnostics.com, and Software Prognostics. In his spare time, he presents various topics on Debugging.TV and explores Software Narratology, its further development as Narratology of Things and Diagnostics of Things (DoT), and Software Pathology. His current interest areas are theoretical software diagnostics and its mathematical and computer science foundations, application of artificial intelligence, machine learning and data mining to diagnostics and anomaly detection, software diagnostics engineering and diagnostics-driven development, diagnostics workflow and interaction. Recent interest areas also include security, functional programming, and category theory applications to software development and big data.

## Chapter x64.1: Memory, Registers, and Simple Arithmetic

### Memory and Registers inside an Idealized Computer

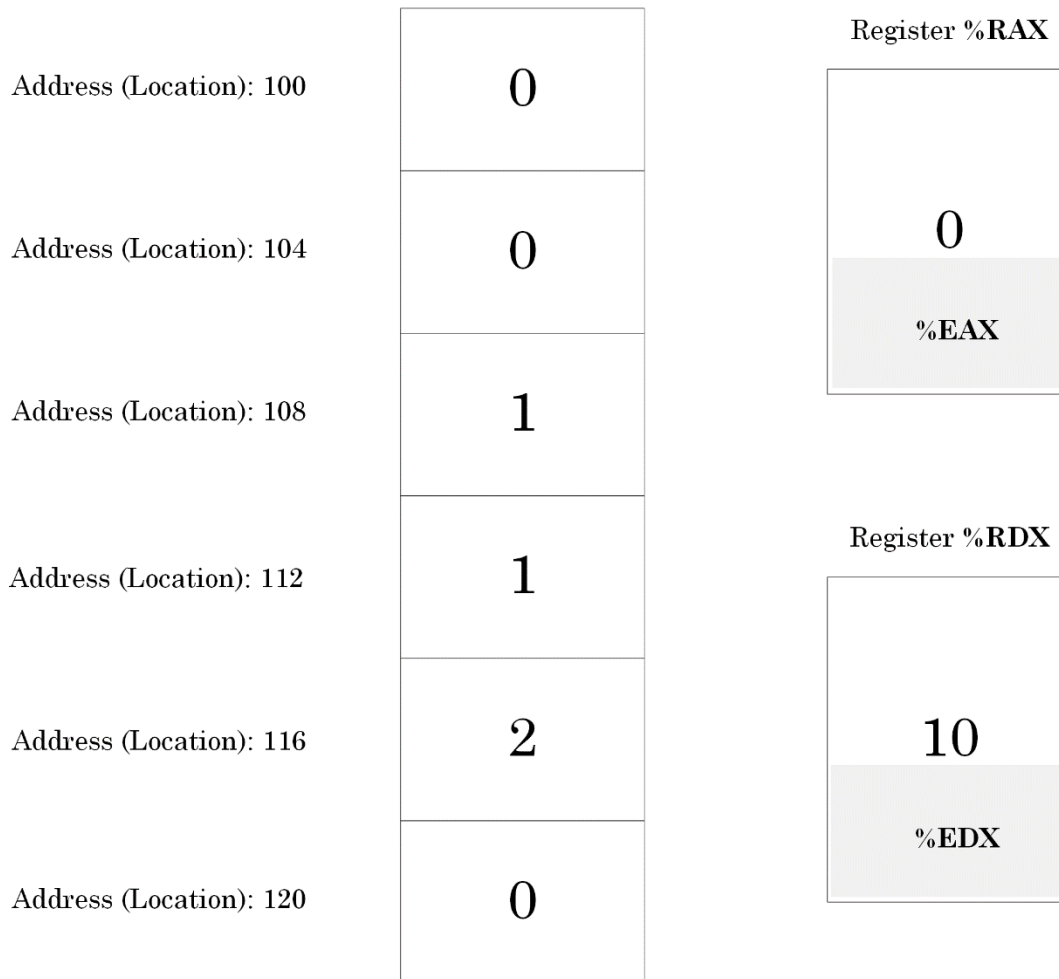
Computer memory consists of a sequence of memory cells, and each cell has a unique address (location). Every cell contains a “number”. We refer to these “numbers” as contents at addresses (locations). Because memory access is slower than arithmetic instructions, there are so-called registers to speed up complex operations that require memory to store temporary results. We can also think about them as standalone memory cells. The name of a register is its address.



Picture x64.1.1

## Memory and Registers inside Intel 64-bit PC

Here addresses for memory locations containing integer values usually differ by 4 or 8, and we also show 2 registers called `%RAX` and `%RDX`. The first halves of them are called `%EAX` and `%EDX`.



Picture x64.1.2

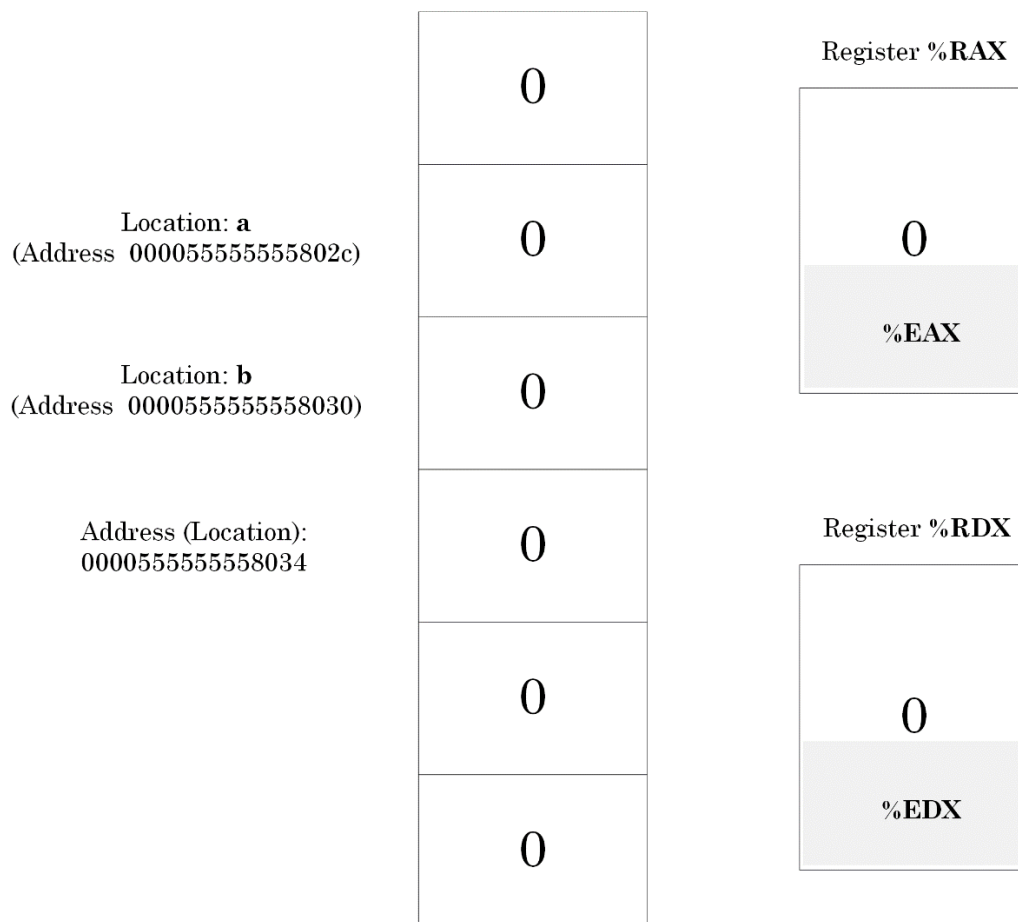
Because memory cells contain “numbers”, we start with simple arithmetic and ask a PC to compute the sum of two numbers to see how memory and registers change their values.

## “Arithmetic” Project: Memory Layout and Registers

For our project, we have two memory addresses (locations) that we call “a” and “b”. We can think about “a” and “b” as names of their respective addresses (locations). Now we introduce a special notation where (a) means contents at the memory address (location) “a”. If we use C or C++ language to write our project, we declare and define memory locations “a” and “b” as:

```
static int a, b;
```

By default, when we load a program, static memory locations are filled with zeroes, and we can depict our initial memory layout after loading the program, as shown in Picture x64.1.3.



Picture x64.1.3

## “Arithmetic” Project: A Computer Program

We can think of a computer program as a sequence of instructions for manipulation of contents of memory cells and registers. For example, addition operation: add the contents of memory cell №12 to the contents of memory cell №14. In our pseudo-code, we can write:

(14) + (12) -> (14)

Our first program in pseudo-code is shown on the left of the table:

<pre> 1 -&gt; (a) 1 -&gt; (b) (b) + (a) -&gt; (b) (a) + 1 -&gt; (a) (b) * (a) -&gt; (b) </pre>	<p>Here we put assembly instructions corresponding to pseudo-code.</p>
--	--

'->' means moving (assigning) the new value to the contents of a memory location (address). ';' is a comment sign, and the rest of the line is a comment. '=' shows the current value at a memory location (address).

To remind, a code written in a high-level programming language is translated to a machine language by a compiler. However, the machine language can be readable if its digital codes are represented in some mnemonic system called assembly language. For example, **INC a** is increment by one of what is stored at a memory location “a”.

## “Arithmetic” Project: Assigning Numbers to Memory Locations

We remind that “a” means location (address) of the memory cell, and it is also the name of the location (address) 000055555555802c (see Picture x64.1.3). (a) means the contents (number) stored at the address “a”.

If we use C or C++ language, “a” is called “the variable a”, and we write the assignment as:

```
a = 1;
```

In Intel assembly language, we write:

```
mov $1, a
```

In GDB disassembly output we see the following code where the variable “a” and address are shown in comments:

```
movl $0x1,0x2ef2(%rip) # 0x55555555802c <a>
```

We show the translation of our pseudo code into assembly language in the right column:

1 -> (a) ; (a) = 1	movl \$1, a
1 -> (b) ; (b) = 1	movl \$1, b
(b) + (a) -> (b)	
(a) + 1 -> (a)	
(b) * (a) -> (b)	

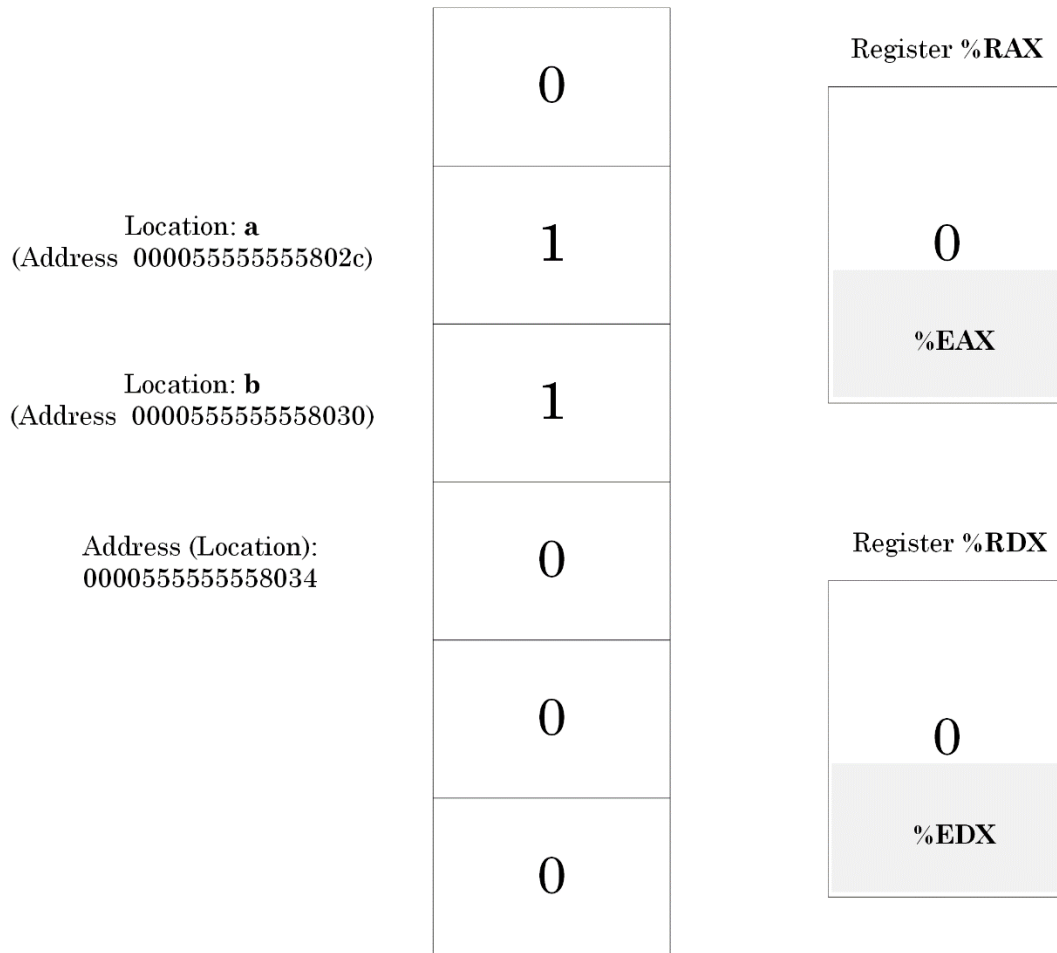
Notice **movl** instructions instead of **mov**. This is because “a” and “b” can point to both 32-bit (like %EAX or %EDX registers) and 64-bit memory cells (like %RAX and %RDX registers). In the registers' case, it is clear from their names whether we use 64-bit %RAX or 32-bit %EAX. But in the case of memory addresses “a” and “b”, it is not clear whether they refer to 64-bit or 32-bit cells. We use **movl** to disambiguate and show that we use 32-bit memory cells that are enough to hold integers from 0 to 4294967295.

0x2ef2(%rip) is how the compiler generates code to calculate the address “a” instead of specifying it directly. Such code requires less memory space. We explain this in later chapters.

Literal constants have \$ prefix, for example, \$0x1. 0x prefix means the following number is hexadecimal. The leading 4 zeroes of the address are also omitted in the comment. We explain such numbers in Chapter x64.3. Please also notice that the movement direction is the same in both disassembly output and the pseudo-code: from left to right.

After executing the first two assembly language instructions, we have the memory layout shown in Picture x64.1.4.

16 "Arithmetic" Project: Assigning Numbers to Memory Locations



Picture x64.1.4

## Assigning Numbers to Registers

This is similar to memory assignments. We can write in pseudo-code:

```
1 -> register
```

```
(a) -> register
```

Note that we do not use brackets when we refer to register contents. The latter instruction means assigning (copying) the number at the location (address) “a” to a register.

In assembly language we write:

```
mov $1, %eax      # 1 is copied to the first half of %RAX register
mov $1, %rax      # full contents of %RAX register are replaced with 1
mov a, %eax
mov a, %rax
```

In GDB disassembly output, we may see the following code:

```
mov $0x0,%eax
```

## “Arithmetic” Project: Adding Numbers to Memory Cells

Now let's look at the following pseudo-code statement in more detail:

```
(b) + (a) -> (b)
```

To recall, “a” and “b” mean the names of locations (addresses) 000055555555802c and 0000555555558030 respectively (see Picture x64.1.4). (a) and (b) mean contents at addresses “a” and “b” respectively, simply some numbers stored there.

In C or C++ language we write the following statement:

```
b = b + a;  
b += a;
```

In assembly language, we use the instruction ADD. Because of AMD64 and Intel EM64T architecture's limitations, we cannot use both memory addresses in one step (instruction), for example, **add a, b**. We can only use **add register, b** instruction to add the value stored in the **register** to the contents of the memory cell **b**. Recall that a register is like a temporary memory cell itself here:

```
(a) -> register  
(b) + register -> (b)
```

Alternatively, we can use two registers:

```
(a) -> register1  
(b) -> register2  
registersr2 + register1 -> registersr2  
register2 -> (b)
```

In assembly language, we write:

```
mov a, %eax  
add %eax, b
```

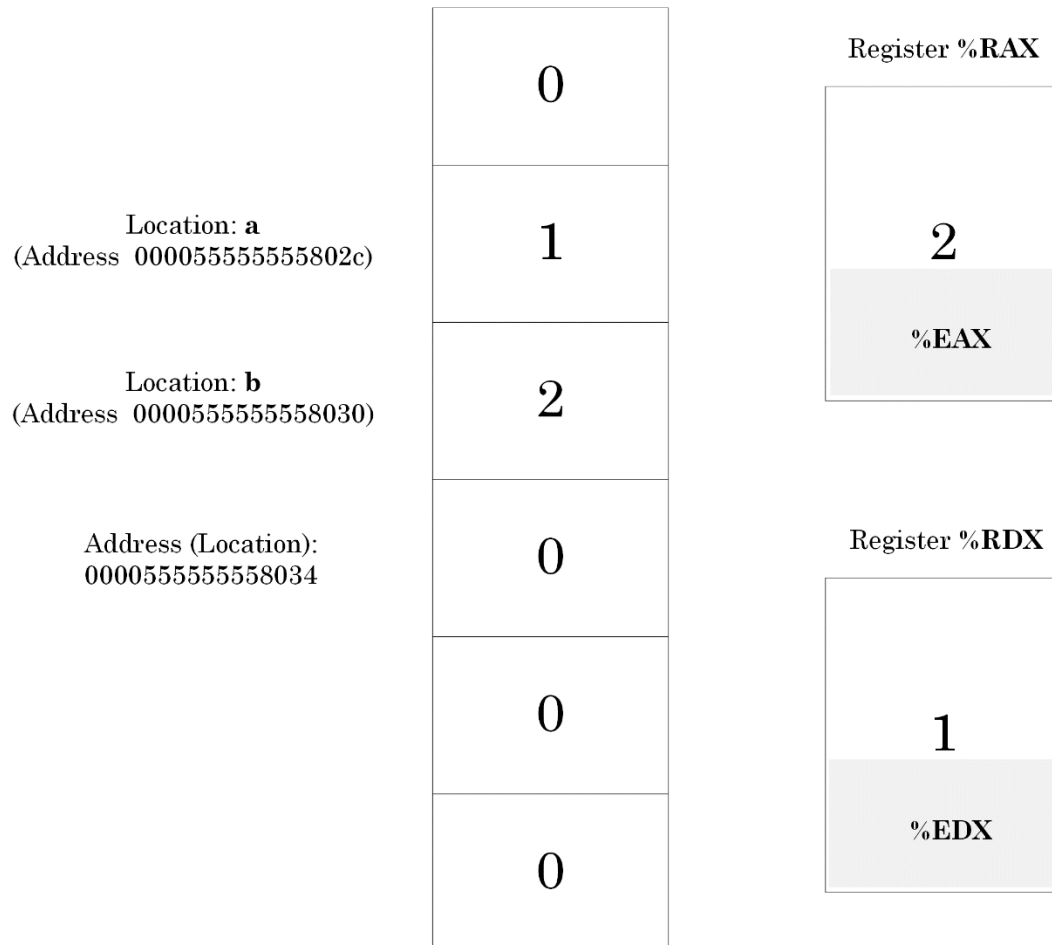
or we can add 2 registers and move the result to the memory cell **b**:

```
mov b, %edx  
mov a, %eax  
add %edx, %eax  
mov %eax, b
```



## 20 "Arithmetic" Project: Adding Numbers to Memory Cells

After the execution of ADD and MOV instructions, we have the memory layout illustrated in Picture x64.1.5.



Picture x64.1.5

## Incrementing/Decrementing Numbers in Memory and Registers

In pseudo-code, it looks simple and means increment (decrement) a number stored at the location (address) “a”:

```
(a) + 1 -> (a)
```

```
(a) - 1 -> (a)
```

In C or C++ language we can write this using three possible ways:

```
a = a + 1;
```

```
++a;
```

```
a++;
```

```
b = b - 1;
```

```
--b;
```

```
b--;
```

In assembly language, we use instructions INC and DEC, and write:

```
incl a
```

```
inc %eax
```

```
decl a
```

```
dec %eax
```

We use **incl** when we need to specify the 32-bit memory cell. It is ambiguous when we use “a”. However, using %eax implies using 32-bit values, so **inc** is unambiguous.

In GDB disassembly output, we may see the same instruction:

```
inc %eax
```

or

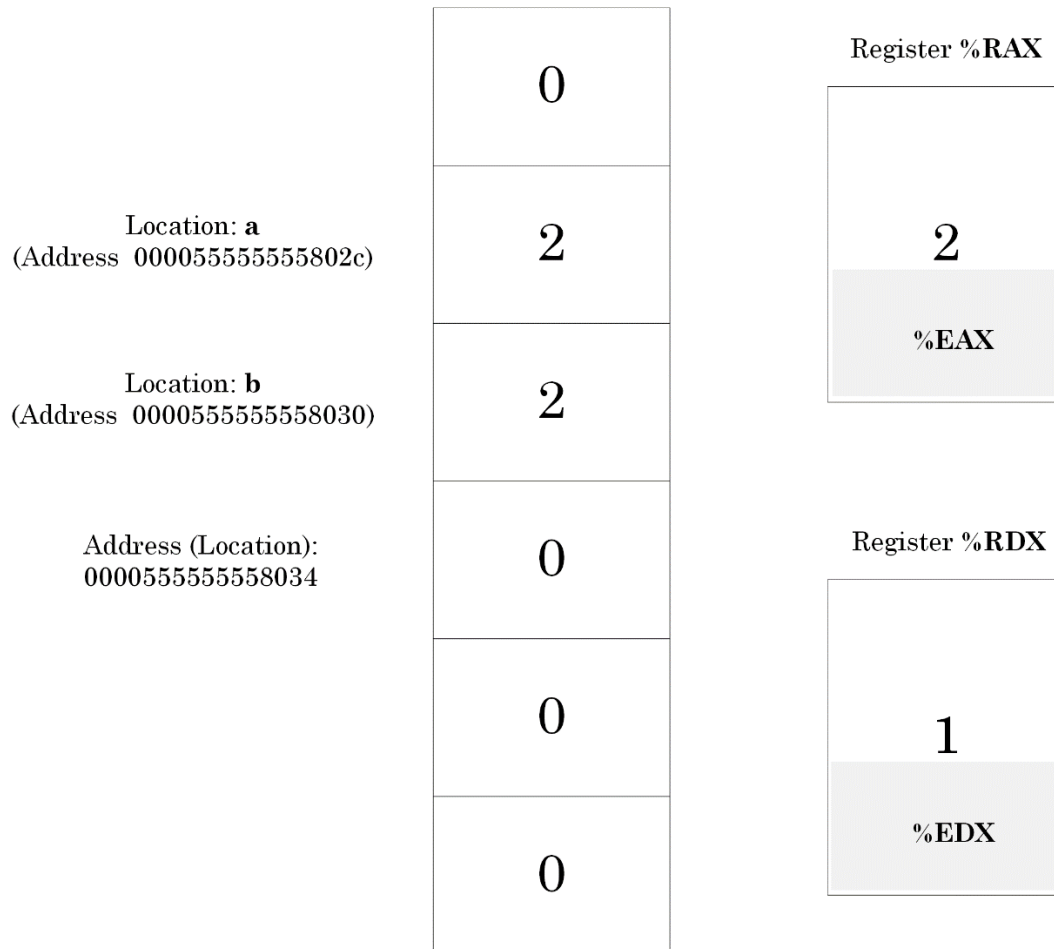
```
add $0x1,%eax # a compiler may decide to use ADD instead of INC
```

## 22 Incrementing/Decrementing Numbers in Memory and Registers

Now we add the assembly language translation of increment:

<pre>1 -&gt; (a)          ; (a) = 1 1 -&gt; (b)          ; (b) = 1 (b) + (a) -&gt; (b) ; %eax = 1                   ; %edx = 1                   ; %eax = 2                   ; (b) = 2 (a) + 1 -&gt; (a)    ; %eax = 1                   ; %eax = 2                   ; (a) = 2 (b) * (a) -&gt; (b)</pre>	<pre>movl \$1, a movl \$1, b mov  a, %eax mov  b, %edx add  %edx, %eax mov  %eax, b mov  a, %eax add  \$1, %eax mov  %eax, a</pre>
--	--

After the execution of INC or ADD instruction, we have the memory layout illustrated in Picture x64.1.6.



Picture x64.1.6

### Multiplying Numbers

In pseudo-code, we write:

```
(b) * (a) -> (b)
```

It means that we multiply the number at the location (address) "b" by the number at the location (address) "a".

In C or C++ language we can write that using two ways:

```
b = b * a;
```

```
b *= a;
```

In assembly language, we use instruction IMUL (Integer MULtipliy) and write:

```
mov a, %eax
```

```
imul b, %eax
```

```
mov %eax, b
```

The multiplication instruction means  $(b) * \%eax \rightarrow \%eax$ , and we must put the contents of "a" into %EAX. The multiplication result is put into the register %EAX, and its contents are saved at the location (address) "b". Alternatively, we may put all multiplication operands into registers:

```
mov a, %eax
```

```
mov b, %edx
```

```
imul %edx, %eax
```

```
mov %eax, b
```

In GDB disassembly output we may see the following code:

```
mov    0x2ec3(%rip),%edx    # 0x555555558030 <b>
```

```
mov    0x2eb9(%rip),%eax    # 0x55555555802c <a>
```

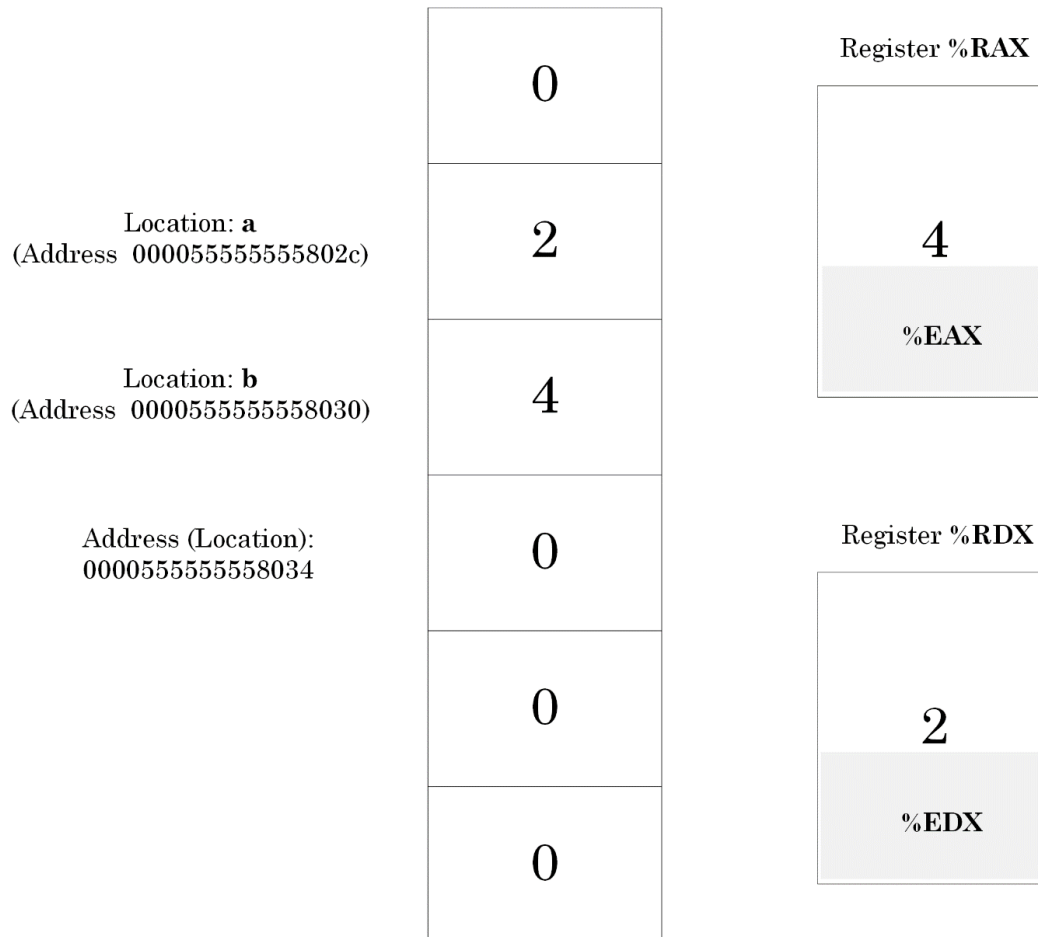
```
imul   %edx,%eax
```

```
mov    %eax,0x2eb4(%rip)    # 0x555555558030 <b>
```



## 26 Multiplying Numbers

After the execution of IMUL and MOV instructions, we have the memory layout illustrated in Picture x64.1.7.



Picture x64.1.7

## Chapter x64.2: Code Optimization

### “Arithmetic” Project: C/C++ Program

Let's rewrite our “Arithmetic” program in C/C++. Corresponding assembly language instructions are put in comments:

```
int a, b;

int main(int argc, char* argv[])
{
    a = 1;           // movl $1, a

    b = 1;           // movl $1, b

    b = b + a;       // mov  a, %eax
                    // mov  b, %edx
                    // add  %edx, %eax
                    // mov  %eax, b

    ++a;            // mov  a, %eax
                    // add  $1, %eax
                    // mov  %eax, a

    b = b * a;       // mov  b, %edx
                    // mov  a, %eax
                    // imul %edx, %eax
                    // mov  %eax, b

                    // results: (a) = 2 and (b) = 4

    return 0;
}
```

### Downloading GDB

We used WSL2 and "Debian GNU/Linux 10 (buster)" as a working environment. We chose Debian because we used it for the "Accelerated Linux Core Dump Analysis" training course<sup>3</sup>. After installing Debian, we need to install essential build tools and GDB:

```
sudo apt install build-essential
sudo apt install gdb
```

You may also need to download git to clone source code:

```
sudo apt install git
cd ~
git clone https://bitbucket.org/softwareiagnostics/pflddr
```

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dumpanalysis.org/accelerated-linux-core-dump-analysis-book>

## GDB Disassembly Output – No Optimization

The source code can be downloaded from the following location:

<https://bitbucket.org/softwareiagnostics/pflddr/src/master/x64/Chapter2/>

If we compile and link the program in no optimization mode (default):

```
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter2$ gcc ArithmeticProjectC.cpp -o
ArithmeticProjectC
```

we get the binary executable module we can load in GDB and inspect assembly code.

First, we run GDB with the program as a parameter:

```
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter2$ gdb ./ArithmeticProjectC
GNU gdb (Debian 8.2.1-2+b3) 8.2.1
Copyright (C) 2018 Free Software Foundation, Inc.
License GPLv3+: GNU GPL version 3 or later <http://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>
This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.
There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.
Type "show copying" and "show warranty" for details.
This GDB was configured as "x86_64-linux-gnu".
Type "show configuration" for configuration details.
For bug reporting instructions, please see:
<http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/bugs/>.
Find the GDB manual and other documentation resources online at:
  <http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/documentation/>.

For help, type "help".
Type "apropos word" to search for commands related to "word"...
Reading symbols from ./ArithmeticProjectC...(no debugging symbols found)...done.
(gdb)
```

Next, we put a breakpoint at our *main* C/C++ function to allow the program execution to stop at that point and give us a chance to inspect memory and registers. Symbolic names/function names like "main" can be used instead of code memory locations:

```
(gdb) break main
Breakpoint 1 at 0x1129
```

### 30 GDB Disassembly Output – No Optimization

Then we start execution of the program (let it **run**). The program then stops at the previously set breakpoint:

```
(gdb) run
Starting program: /home/coredump/pflddr/x64/Chapter2/ArithmeticProjectC

Breakpoint 1, 0x000055555555129 in main ()
```

Now we **disassemble** the *main* function:

```
(gdb) disass main
Dump of assembler code for function main:
   0x000055555555125 <+0>:    push   %rbp
   0x000055555555126 <+1>:    mov    %rsp,%rbp
=> 0x000055555555129 <+4>:    mov    %edi,-0x4(%rbp)
   0x00005555555512c <+7>:    mov    %rsi,-0x10(%rbp)
   0x000055555555130 <+11>:   movl   $0x1,0x2ef2(%rip)    # 0x55555555802c <a>
   0x00005555555513a <+21>:   movl   $0x1,0x2eec(%rip)    # 0x555555558030 <b>
   0x000055555555144 <+31>:   mov    0x2ee6(%rip),%edx    # 0x555555558030 <b>
   0x00005555555514a <+37>:   mov    0x2edc(%rip),%eax    # 0x55555555802c <a>
   0x000055555555150 <+43>:   add    %edx,%eax
   0x000055555555152 <+45>:   mov    %eax,0x2ed8(%rip)    # 0x555555558030 <b>
   0x000055555555158 <+51>:   mov    0x2ece(%rip),%eax    # 0x55555555802c <a>
   0x00005555555515e <+57>:   add    $0x1,%eax
   0x000055555555161 <+60>:   mov    %eax,0x2ec5(%rip)    # 0x55555555802c <a>
   0x000055555555167 <+66>:   mov    0x2ec3(%rip),%edx    # 0x555555558030 <b>
   0x00005555555516d <+72>:   mov    0x2eb9(%rip),%eax    # 0x55555555802c <a>
   0x000055555555173 <+78>:   imul  %edx,%eax
   0x000055555555176 <+81>:   mov    %eax,0x2eb4(%rip)    # 0x555555558030 <b>
   0x00005555555517c <+87>:   mov    $0x0,%eax
   0x000055555555181 <+92>:   pop    %rbp
   0x000055555555182 <+93>:   retq

End of assembler dump.
```

We repeat the part of the formatted disassembly output here that corresponds to our C/C++ code:

```

0x000055555555130 <+11>:  movl  $0x1,0x2ef2(%rip)      # 0x55555555802c <a>
0x00005555555513a <+21>:  movl  $0x1,0x2eec(%rip)      # 0x555555558030 <b>
0x000055555555144 <+31>:  mov   0x2ee6(%rip),%edx      # 0x555555558030 <b>
0x00005555555514a <+37>:  mov   0x2edc(%rip),%eax      # 0x55555555802c <a>
0x000055555555150 <+43>:  add   %edx,%eax
0x000055555555152 <+45>:  mov   %eax,0x2ed8(%rip)      # 0x555555558030 <b>
0x000055555555158 <+51>:  mov   0x2ece(%rip),%eax      # 0x55555555802c <a>
0x00005555555515e <+57>:  add   $0x1,%eax
0x000055555555161 <+60>:  mov   %eax,0x2ec5(%rip)      # 0x55555555802c <a>
0x000055555555167 <+66>:  mov   0x2ec3(%rip),%edx      # 0x555555558030 <b>
0x00005555555516d <+72>:  mov   0x2eb9(%rip),%eax      # 0x55555555802c <a>
0x000055555555173 <+78>:  imul  %edx,%eax
0x000055555555176 <+81>:  mov   %eax,0x2eb4(%rip)      # 0x555555558030 <b>

```

We can directly translate it to bare assembly code we used in the previous chapter and put corresponding pseudo-code in comments:

```

movl  $1, a          # 1 -> (a)
movl  $1, b          # 1 -> (b)
mov   b, %edx        # (b) + (a) -> (b)
mov   a, %eax
add   %edx, %eax
mov   %eax, b
mov   a, %eax        # (a) + 1 -> (a)
add   $1, %eax
mov   %eax, a
mov   b, %edx        # (b) * (a) -> (b)
mov   a, %eax
imul  %edx, %eax
mov   %eax, b

```

Now we can exit GDB:

```

(gdb) q
A debugging session is active.

        Inferior 1 [process 2249] will be killed.

Quit anyway? (y or n) y
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflDDR/x64/Chapter2$

```

## GDB Disassembly Output – Optimization

If we compile and link the program in optimization mode:

```
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflldr/x64/Chapter2$ gcc ArithmeticProjectC.cpp -O1 -o ArithmeticProjectC
```

and after repeating the same steps in GDB we get the following output:

```
(gdb) disass main
Dump of assembler code for function main:
=> 0x000055555555125 <+0>:    movl   $0x2,0x2f01(%rip)    # 0x5555555558030 <a>
    0x00005555555512f <+10>:   movl   $0x4,0x2ef3(%rip)    # 0x555555555802c <b>
    0x000055555555139 <+20>:   mov    $0x0,%eax
    0x00005555555513e <+25>:   retq
End of assembler dump.
```

This corresponds to the following pseudo-code:

```
mov $2, a    # 2 -> (a)
mov $4, b    # 4 -> (b)
```

Please note that the compiler also chose to put memory cell “b” first (0000555555555802c) and then memory cell “a” (00005555555558030).

What happened to all our assembly code in this executable? This code seems to be directly placing the end result into the “b” memory cell if we observe. Why is this happening? The answer lies in compiler optimization. When the code is compiled in optimization mode, the compiler can calculate the final result from the simple C/C++ source code itself and generate only the necessary code to update corresponding memory locations.

## Chapter x64.3: Number Representations

### Numbers and Their Representations

Imagine a herder in ancient times trying to count his sheep. He has a certain number of stones (twelve):



However, he can only count up to three and arranges the total into groups of three:



The last picture is a representation (a kind of notation) of the number of stones. We have one group of three groups of three stones plus a separate group of three stones. If he could count up to ten, we would see a different representation of the same number of stones. We would have one group of ten stones and another group of two stones.

## Decimal Representation (Base Ten)

Let's now see how twelve stones are represented in arithmetic notation if we can count up to ten. We have one group of ten numbers plus two:

$$12_{\text{dec}} = 1 * 10 + 2 \quad \text{or} \quad 1 * 10^1 + 2 * 10^0$$

Here is another exercise with one hundred and twenty three stones. We have **1** group of ten by ten stones, another group of **2** groups of ten stones and the last group of **3** stones:

$$123_{\text{dec}} = 1 * 10 * 10 + 2 * 10 + 3 \quad \text{or} \quad 1 * 10^2 + 2 * 10^1 + 3 * 10^0$$

We can formalize it in the following summation notation:

$$N_{\text{dec}} = a_n * 10^n + a_{n-1} * 10^{n-1} + \dots + a_2 * 10^2 + a_1 * 10^1 + a_0 * 10^0 \quad 0 \leq a_i \leq 9$$

Using the summation symbol we have this formula:

$$N_{\text{dec}} = \sum_{i=0}^n a_i * 10^i$$

## Ternary Representation (Base Three)

Now we come back to our herder's example of twelve stones. We have **1** group of three by three stones, **1** group of three stones, and an empty (**0**) group (which is not empty if we have one stone only or have thirteen stones instead of twelve). We can write down the number of groups sequentially: **110**. Therefore 110 is a ternary representation (notation) of twelve stones, and it is equivalent to 12 written in decimal notation:

$$12_{\text{dec}} = 1 \cdot 3^2 + 1 \cdot 3^1 + 0 \cdot 3^0$$

$$N_{\text{dec}} = a_n \cdot 3^n + a_{n-1} \cdot 3^{n-1} + \dots + a_2 \cdot 3^2 + a_1 \cdot 3^1 + a_0 \cdot 3^0 \quad a_i = 0 \text{ or } 1 \text{ or } 2$$

$$N_{\text{dec}} = \sum_{i=0}^n a_i \cdot 3^i$$

## Binary Representation (Base Two)

In the case of counting up to 2 we have more groups for twelve stones: **1100**. Therefore 1100 is a binary representation (notation) for 12 in decimal notation:

$$12_{\text{dec}} = 1 \cdot 2^3 + 1 \cdot 2^2 + 0 \cdot 2^1 + 0 \cdot 2^0$$

$$123_{\text{dec}} = 1 \cdot 2^6 + 1 \cdot 2^5 + 1 \cdot 2^4 + 1 \cdot 2^3 + 0 \cdot 2^2 + 1 \cdot 2^1 + 1 \cdot 2^0 \text{ or } 1111011_2$$

$$N_{\text{dec}} = a_n \cdot 2^n + a_{n-1} \cdot 2^{n-1} + \dots + a_2 \cdot 2^2 + a_1 \cdot 2^1 + a_0 \cdot 2^0 \quad a_i = 0 \text{ or } 1$$

$$N_{\text{dec}} = \sum_{i=0}^n a_i \cdot 2^i$$

## Hexadecimal Representation (Base Sixteen)

If we can count up to sixteen, twelve stones fit in one group but we need more symbols: A, B, C, D, E, and F for ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen respectively:

$12_{\text{dec}} = \text{C}$  in hexadecimal representation (notation)

$$123_{\text{dec}} = 7\text{B}_{\text{hex}}$$

$$123_{\text{dec}} = 7 \cdot 16^1 + 11 \cdot 16^0$$

$$N_{\text{dec}} = \sum_{i=0}^n a_i \cdot 16^i$$

## 38 Why are Hexadecimals used?

### Why are Hexadecimals used?

Consider this number written in binary notation:  $110001010011_2$ . Its equivalent in decimal notation is 3155:

$$3155_{\text{dec}} = 1 \cdot 2^{11} + 1 \cdot 2^{10} + 0 \cdot 2^9 + 0 \cdot 2^8 + 0 \cdot 2^7 + 1 \cdot 2^6 + 0 \cdot 2^5 + 1 \cdot 2^4 + 0 \cdot 2^3 + 0 \cdot 2^2 + 1 \cdot 2^1 + 1 \cdot 2^0$$

Now we divide the binary number digits into groups of four and write them down in decimal and hexadecimal notation:

**110001010011**

**12<sub>dec</sub> 5<sub>dec</sub> 3<sub>dec</sub>**

**C<sub>hex</sub> 5<sub>hex</sub> 3<sub>hex</sub>**

We see that hexadecimal notation is more compact because every four binary digit group number corresponds to one hexadecimal number. Table x64.3.1 lists hexadecimal equivalents for every four binary digit combination.

In GDB and other debuggers, memory addresses are displayed in hexadecimal notation.

Binary	Decimal	Hexadecimal
0000	0	0
0001	1	1
0010	2	2
0011	3	3
0100	4	4
0101	5	5
0110	6	6
0111	7	7
1000	8	8
1001	9	9
1010	10	A
1011	11	B
1100	12	C
1101	13	D
1110	14	E
1111	15	F

Table x64.3.1

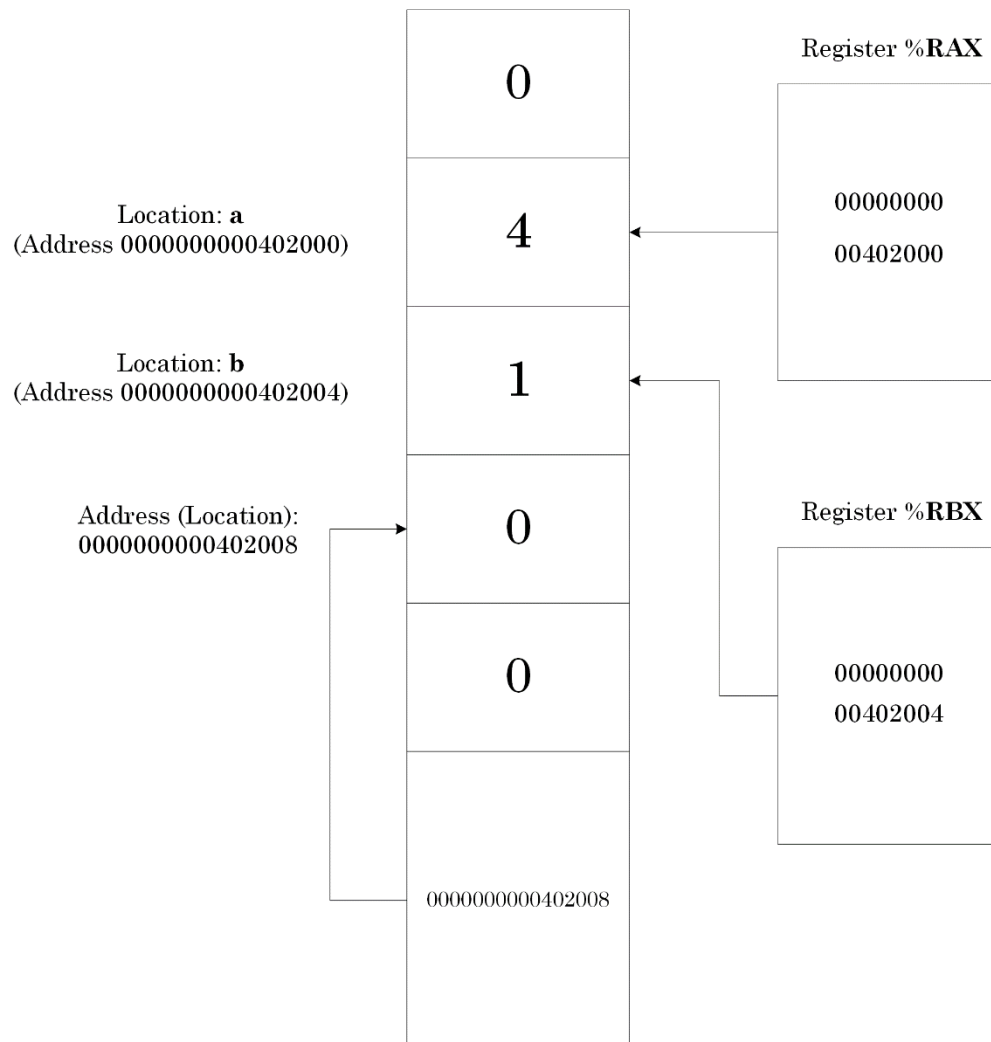
## 40 Why are Hexadecimals used?

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## Chapter x64.4: Pointers

### A Definition

The concept of a pointer is one of the most important to understand thoroughly to master Linux debugging. By definition, a pointer is a memory cell or a processor register that contains the address of another memory cell as shown in Picture x64.4.1. It has its own address as any memory cell. Sometimes, a pointer is called an indirect address (vs. a direct address, the address of a memory cell). Iteratively, we can define another level of indirection and introduce a pointer to a pointer as a memory cell or a processor register that contains the address of another memory cell that contains the address of another memory cell and so on.



Picture x64.4.1

## "Pointers" Project: Memory Layout and Registers

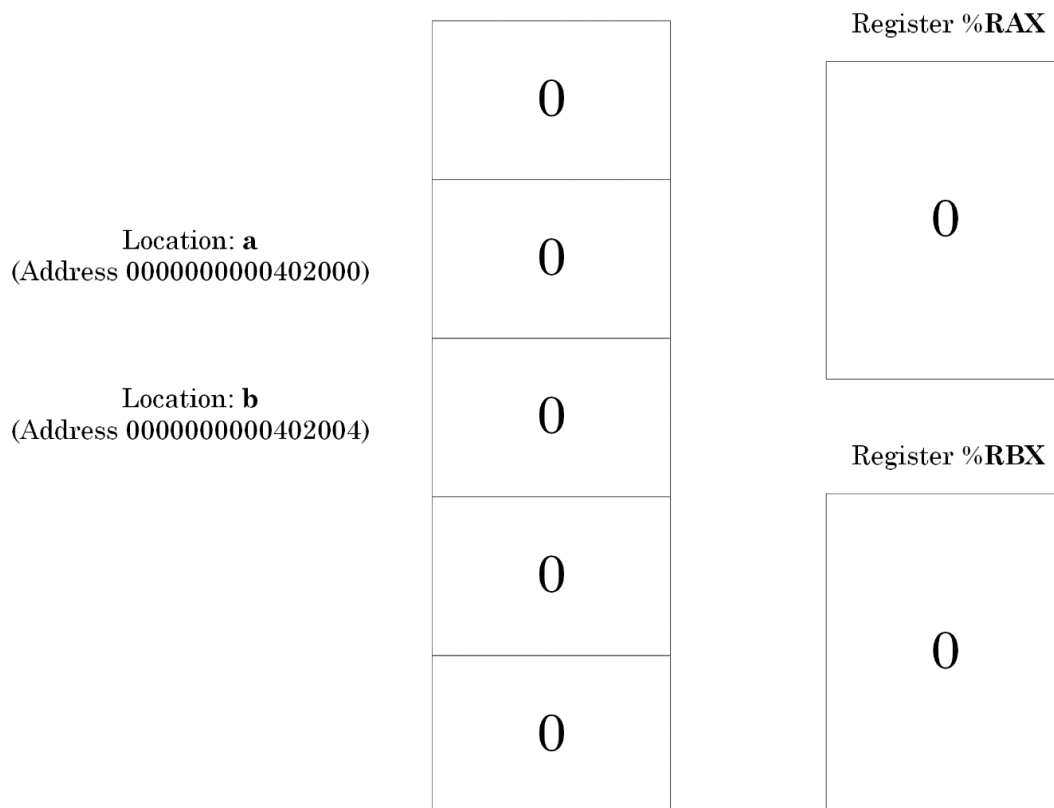
In our debugging project, we have two memory addresses (locations), "a" and "b". We can think about "a" and "b" as names of addresses (locations). We remind that notation (a) means contents at the memory address (location) "a".

We also have registers %RAX and %RBX as pointers to "a" and "b". These registers contain addresses of "a" and "b", respectively. The notation (%RAX) means the contents of a memory cell whose address is in the register %RAX.

In C and C++ languages, we declare and define pointers to "a" and "b" as:

```
int *a, *b;
```

Our project memory layout before program execution is shown in Picture x64.4.2. Addresses always occupy 64-bit memory cells or full 64-bit registers like %RAX or %RBX (they cannot fit in %EAX or %EBX or a 32-bit memory cell).



Picture x64.4.2

## “Pointers” Project: Calculations

In order to understand pointers better from low level assembly language perspective we perform our old arithmetic calculations from Chapter x64.1 using pointers to memory instead of direct memory addresses:

<pre>address a -&gt; rax 1 -&gt; (rax) address b -&gt; rbx 1 -&gt; (rbx) (rbx) + (rax) -&gt; (rbx) (rax) + 1 -&gt; (rax) (rbx) * (rax) -&gt; (rbx)</pre>	
--	--

## Using Pointers to Assign Numbers to Memory Cells

First, the following sequence of pseudo-code instructions means that we interpret the contents of %RAX register as the address of a memory cell and then assign a value to that memory cell:

```
address a -> rax
1 -> (rax)
```

In C and C++ languages, it is called “dereferencing a pointer” and we write:

```
int a;

int *pa = &a; // declaration and definition of a pointer

*pa = 1;      // get a memory cell (dereference a pointer)
              // and assign a value to it
```

In assembly language, we write:

```
lea  a, %rax      # load the address “a” into %rax
movl $1, (%rax)  # use %rax as a pointer
```

Again, we see **movl** instead of **mov** because integers occupy 32-bit memory cells, and we want to address only a 32-bit memory cell. This is how it is on x64 Linux: memory cells to contain integers are half the size of memory cells to contain addresses (32-bit vs. 64-bit).

In GDB disassembly output we see something like this:

```
0x000000000401000 <+0>:    lea    0x402000,%rax
0x000000000401008 <+8>:    movl   $0x1,(%rax)
```

The source code for this chapter can be downloaded from

<https://bitbucket.org/software-diagnostics/pflddr/src/master/x64/Chapter4/>

To illustrate some instructions and not to be dependent on how the compiler translates C/C++ code, we wrote the program in assembly language. We need to compile and link it first before loading it into GDB and disassemble its *main* function as described in Chapter x64.2.

```
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter4$ as PointersProject.asm -o
PointersProject.o
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter4$ ld PointersProject.o -o
PointersProject
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter4$ gdb ./PointersProject
GNU gdb (Debian 8.2.1-2+b3) 8.2.1
```

```

Copyright (C) 2018 Free Software Foundation, Inc.
License GPLv3+: GNU GPL version 3 or later <http://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>
This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.
There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.
Type "show copying" and "show warranty" for details.
This GDB was configured as "x86_64-linux-gnu".
Type "show configuration" for configuration details.
For bug reporting instructions, please see:
<http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/bugs/>.
Find the GDB manual and other documentation resources online at:
    <http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/documentation/>.

For help, type "help".
Type "apropos word" to search for commands related to "word"...
Reading symbols from ./PointersProject...(no debugging symbols found)...done.
(gdb)

```

We put a breakpoint on the *main* function, run the program until GDB breaks in, and then disassemble the *main* function:

```

(gdb) break main
Breakpoint 1 at 0x401000

(gdb) run
Starting program: /home/coredump/pf1ddr/x64/Chapter4/PointersProject

Breakpoint 1, 0x0000000000401000 in _start ()

```

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```
(gdb) disass main
Dump of assembler code for function _start:
=> 0x0000000000401000 <+0>:    lea    0x402000,%rax
    0x0000000000401008 <+8>:    movl   $0x1, (%rax)
    0x000000000040100e <+14>:   lea    0x402004,%rbx
    0x0000000000401016 <+22>:   movl   $0x1, (%rbx)
    0x000000000040101c <+28>:   mov    (%rax),%edx
    0x000000000040101e <+30>:   add    %edx, (%rbx)
    0x0000000000401020 <+32>:   incl  (%rax)
    0x0000000000401022 <+34>:   mov    (%rax),%eax
    0x0000000000401024 <+36>:   imul  (%rbx),%eax
    0x0000000000401027 <+39>:   mov    %eax, (%rbx)
    0x0000000000401029 <+41>:   mov    $0x3c,%rax
    0x0000000000401030 <+48>:   mov    $0x0,%rdi
    0x0000000000401037 <+55>:   syscall
End of assembler dump.
```

Now we examine variables “a” and “b” to verify memory layout shown previously in Picture x64.4.2 using **info variables** GDB command:

```
(gdb) info variables
All defined variables:

Non-debugging symbols:
0x0000000000402000  a
0x0000000000402004  b
0x0000000000402008  __bss_start
0x0000000000402008  _edata
0x0000000000402008  _end
```

We also verify that the values of %RAX and %RBX registers are in accordance with Picture x64.4.2:

```
(gdb) info registers rax rbx
rax          0x0          0
rbx          0x0          0
```

We instruct GDB to automatically display the current instruction to be executed, and the values of registers %RAX, %RBX, and the contents of variables “a”, “b”:

```
(gdb) display/i $rip
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401000 <_start>:  lea    0x402000,%rax

(gdb) display/x $rax
2: /x $rax = 0x0

(gdb) display/x $rbx
3: /x $rbx = 0x0

(gdb) display/x (int)a
4: /x (int)a = 0x0

(gdb) display/x (int)b
5: /x (int)b = 0x0
```

Now we execute the first four instructions that correspond to our pseudo-code using **stepi** GDB command or **si** (shorter command version):

<b>address a -&gt; rax</b>	<b>lea a, %rax</b>
<b>1 -&gt; (rax) ; (a) = 1</b>	<b>movl \$1, (%rax)</b>
<b>address b -&gt; rbx</b>	<b>lea b, %rbx</b>
<b>1 -&gt; (rbx) ; (b) = 1</b>	<b>movl \$1, (%rbx)</b>
<b>(rbx) + (rax) -&gt; (rbx)</b>	
<b>(rax) + 1 -&gt; (rax)</b>	
<b>(rbx) * (rax) -&gt; (rbx)</b>	

```
(gdb) si
0x0000000000401008 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401008 <_start+8>: movl  $0x1,(%rax)
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x0
4: /x (int)a = 0x0
```

## 48 Using Pointers to Assign Numbers to Memory Cells

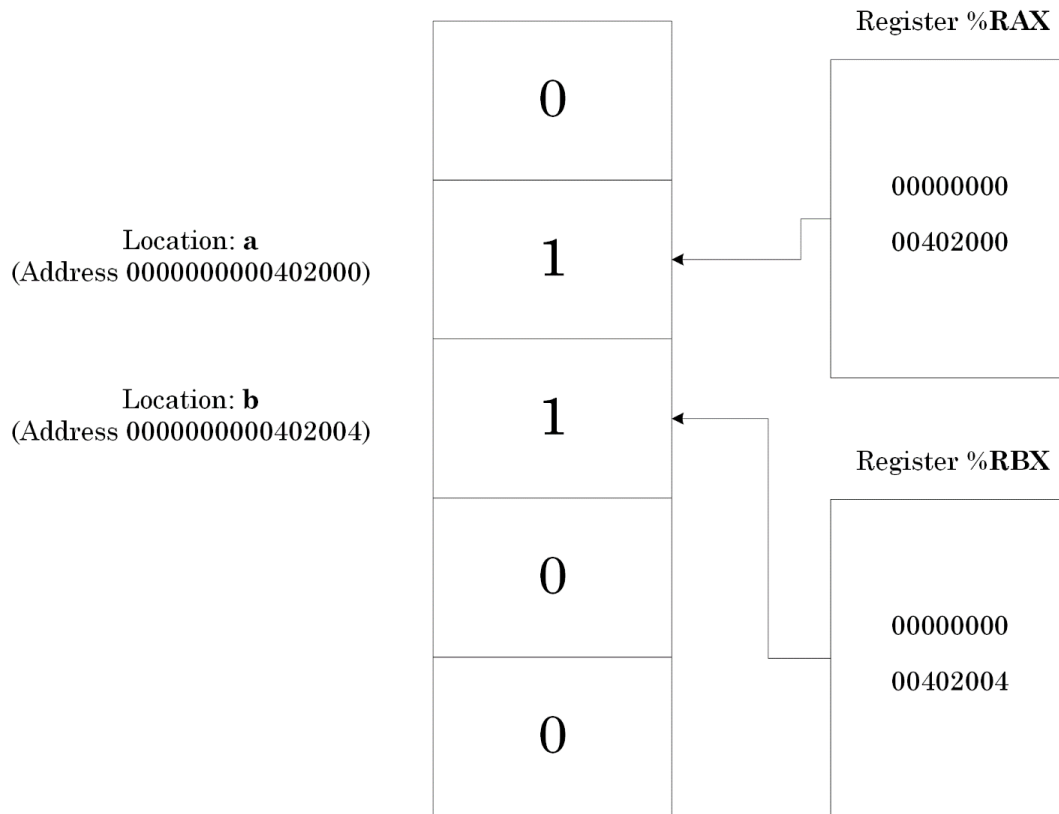
```
5: /x (int)b = 0x0

(gdb) si
0x000000000040100e in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x40100e <_start+14>:      lea    0x402004,%rbx
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x0
4: /x (int)a = 0x1
5: /x (int)b = 0x0

(gdb) si
0x0000000000401016 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401016 <_start+22>:      movl   $0x1,(%rbx)
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x1
5: /x (int)b = 0x0

(gdb) si
0x000000000040101c in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x40101c <_start+28>:      mov    (%rax),%edx
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x1
5: /x (int)b = 0x1
```

All this corresponds to a memory layout shown in Picture x64.4.3.



Picture x64.4.3

## Adding Numbers Using Pointers

Now we look at the next pseudo-code statement:

```
(rbx) + (rax) -> (rbx)
```

Recall that (rax) and (rbx) mean contents of memory cells whose addresses (locations) are stored in %RAX and %RBX CPU registers. The statement above is equivalent to the following C or C++ language expression where '\*' operator means to get memory contents pointed to by pa or pb pointer (also called pointer dereference):

```
*pb = *pb + *pa;
```

In assembly language, we use the instruction ADD for the '+' operator, but we cannot use both memory addresses in one step instruction (**addl** is used to add 32-bit integers):

```
addl (%rax), (%rbx)      # invalid instruction
```

We can only use one memory reference, and therefore, we need to employ another register as a temporary variable:

```
(rax) -> register
(rbx) + register -> (rbx)
```

In assembly language, we write this sequence of instructions:

```
mov (%rax), %edx
add %edx, (%rbx)
```

We use **add** instead of **addl** because using %EDX instead of %RDX implies adding a 32-bit integer.

In GDB disassembly output we see these instructions indeed:

```
0x000000000040101c <+28>:  mov    (%rax),%edx
0x000000000040101e <+30>:  add    %edx,(%rbx)
```

We add them to our pseudo-code table:

address a -> rax		lea a, %rax
1 -> (rax)	; (a) = 1	movl \$1, (%rax)
address b -> rbx		lea b, %rbx
1 -> (rbx)	; (b) = 1	movl \$1, (%rbx)
(rbx) + (rax) -> (rbx)	; %edx = 1	mov (%rax), %edx
	; (b) = 2	add %edx, (%rbx)
(rax) + 1 -> (rax)		
(rbx) * (rax) -> (rbx)		

Now we execute these two instructions (we remind that the output of **si** command shows the next instruction to be executed when we use **si** command again):

[From the previous output]

```
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x40101c <_start+28>:      mov    (%rax),%edx
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x1
5: /x (int)b = 0x1
```

(gdb) si

0x000000000040101e in \_start ()

```
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x40101e <_start+30>:    add    %edx,(%rbx)
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x1
5: /x (int)b = 0x1
```

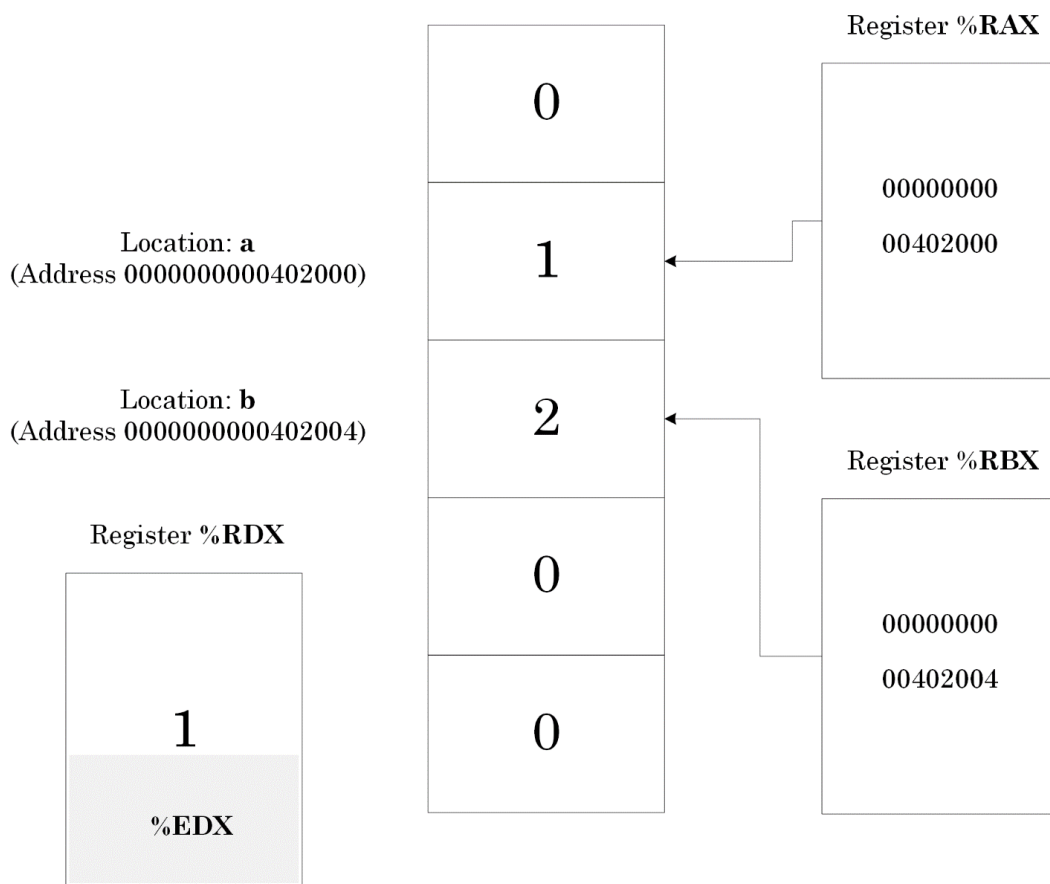
(gdb) info reg \$rdx

```
rdx          0x1          1
```

## 52 Adding Numbers Using Pointers

```
(gdb) si
0x000000000401020 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401020 <_start+32>:      incl    (%rax)
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x1
5: /x (int)b = 0x2
```

All this corresponds to a memory layout shown in Picture x64.4.4.



Picture x64.4.4

## Incrementing Numbers Using Pointers

In pseudo-code it means increment (decrement) a number stored at the memory location which address is stored in %RAX:

```
(rax) + 1 -> (rax)
```

In C or C++ language, we can write this using three possible ways:

```
*a = *a + 1;
++(*a);
(*a)++;
```

In assembly language, we use instruction INC and write:

```
incl (%rax)
```

We use **incl** when we need to specify the 32-bit memory cell to increment.

In GDB disassembly output, we see the same instruction:

```
incl (%rax)
```

or

```
addl $0x1,(%rax) # a compiler may decide to use ADD instead of INC
```

Now we add the assembly language translation of increment:

address a -> rax		lea a, %rax
1 -> (rax)	; (a) = 1	movl \$1, (%rax)
address b -> rbx		lea b, %rbx
1 -> (rbx)	; (b) = 1	movl \$1, (%rbx)
(rbx) + (rax) -> (rbx)	; %edx = 1	mov (%rax), %edx
	; (b) = 2	add %edx, (%rbx)
(rax) + 1 -> (rax)	; (a) = 2	<b>incl (%rax)</b>
(rbx) * (rax) -> (rbx)		

## 54 Incrementing Numbers Using Pointers

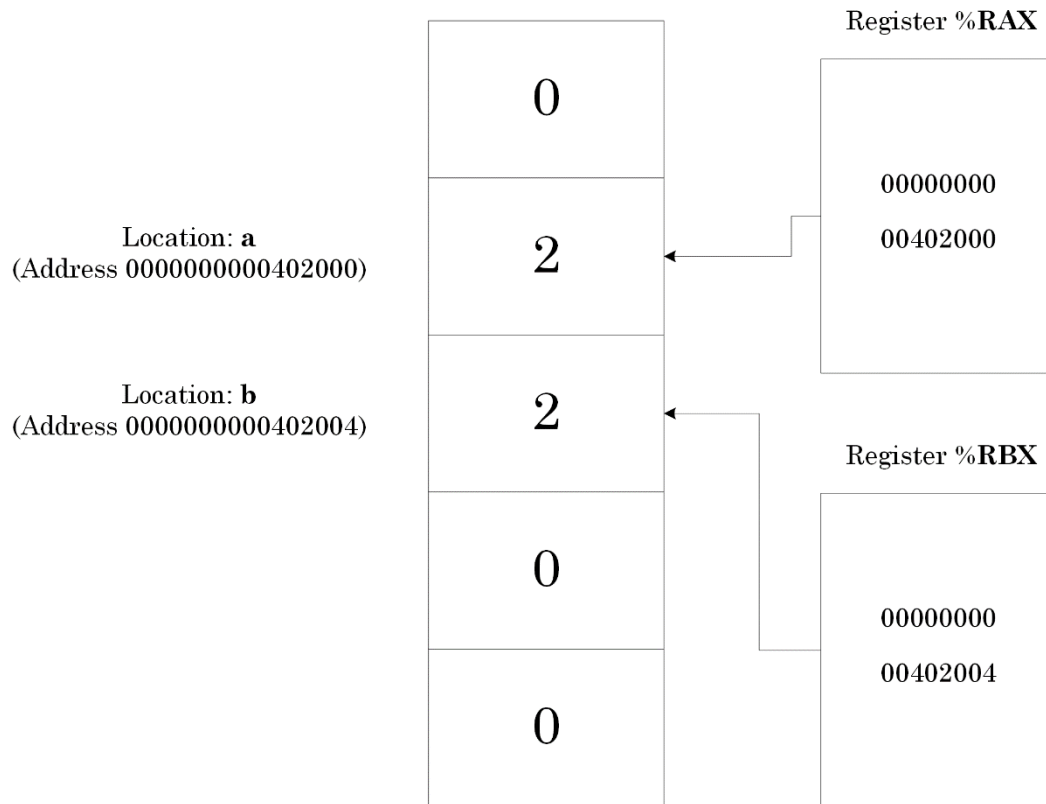
Now we execute this instruction (we remind that the output of **si** command shows the next instruction to be executed when we use **si** command again):

[From the previous output]

```
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401020 <_start+32>:      incl    (%rax)
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x1
5: /x (int)b = 0x2

(gdb) si
0x0000000000401022 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401022 <_start+34>:      mov     (%rax),%eax
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x2
5: /x (int)b = 0x2
```

After the execution of INC instruction, we have the memory layout illustrated in Picture x64.4.5.



Picture x64.4.5

## Multiplying Numbers Using Pointers

Our next pseudo-code statement does multiplication:

```
(rbx) * (rax) -> (rbx)
```

This statement means that we multiply the contents of the memory cell whose address is stored in the %RBX register by the value stored in the memory cell whose address is in the %RAX register. In C or C++ language, we write a similar expression as the addition statement we have seen in the previous sections (note that we have two distinct meanings of '\*' operator: pointer dereference and multiplication):

```
*pb = *pb * *pa;
```

```
*pb *= *pa;
```

The latter is a shorthand notation. In assembly language, we use instruction IMUL (Integer MULtiply):

```
mov (%rax), %eax
```

```
imul (%rbx), %eax
```

```
mov %eax, (%rbx)
```

Since **imul** instruction cannot reference two memory locations we need to put the contents of one location into a register. We reuse %RAX since we do not need its current value after that. This instruction is equivalent to the following pseudo-code:

```
(rax) -> rax
```

```
(rbx) * rax -> rax
```

```
rax -> (rbx)
```

In GDB disassembly output we see this:

```
0x000000000401022 <+34>:    mov    (%rax),%eax
```

```
0x000000000401024 <+36>:    imul  (%rbx),%eax
```

```
0x000000000401027 <+39>:    mov    %eax,(%rbx)
```

We add instructions to our pseudo-code table:

address a -> rax		lea a, %rax
1 -> (rax)	; (a) = 1	movl \$1, (%rax)
address b -> rbx		lea b, %rbx
1 -> (rbx)	; (b) = 1	movl \$1, (%rbx)
(rbx) + (rax) -> (rbx)	; %edx = 1	mov (%rax), %edx
	; (b) = 2	add %edx, (%rbx)
(rax) + 1 -> (rax)	; (a) = 2	incl (%rax)
(rbx) * (rax) -> (rbx)	; %eax = 2	mov (%rax), %eax
	; %eax = 4	imul (%rbx), %eax
	; (b) = 4	mov %eax, (%rbx)

Now we execute these three instructions (we remind that the output of `si` command shows the next instruction to be executed when we use `si` command again):

[From the previous output]

```
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401022 <_start+34>:      mov    (%rax),%eax
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x2
5: /x (int)b = 0x2

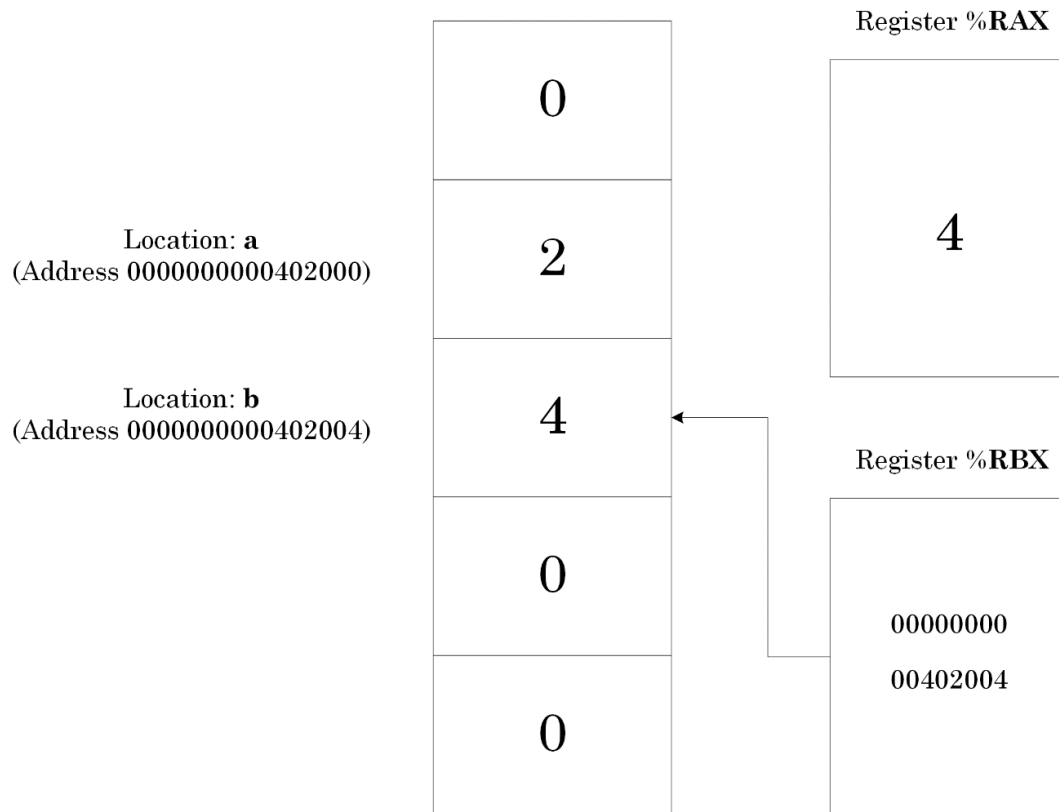
(gdb) si
0x0000000000401024 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401024 <_start+36>:      imul  (%rbx),%eax
2: /x $rax = 0x2
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x2
5: /x (int)b = 0x2
```

## 58 Multiplying Numbers Using Pointers

```
(gdb) si
0x000000000401027 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401027 <_start+39>:      mov    %eax,(%rbx)
2: /x $rax = 0x4
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x2
5: /x (int)b = 0x2

(gdb) si
0x000000000401029 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401029 <_start+41>:      mov    $0x3c,%rax
2: /x $rax = 0x4
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x (int)a = 0x2
5: /x (int)b = 0x4
```

All this corresponds to a memory layout shown in Picture x64.4.6.



Picture x64.4.6

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## Chapter x64.5: Bytes, Words, Double, and Quad Words

### Using Hexadecimal Numbers

If we want to use hexadecimal numbers in C/C++ language, we prefix them with **0x**, for example:

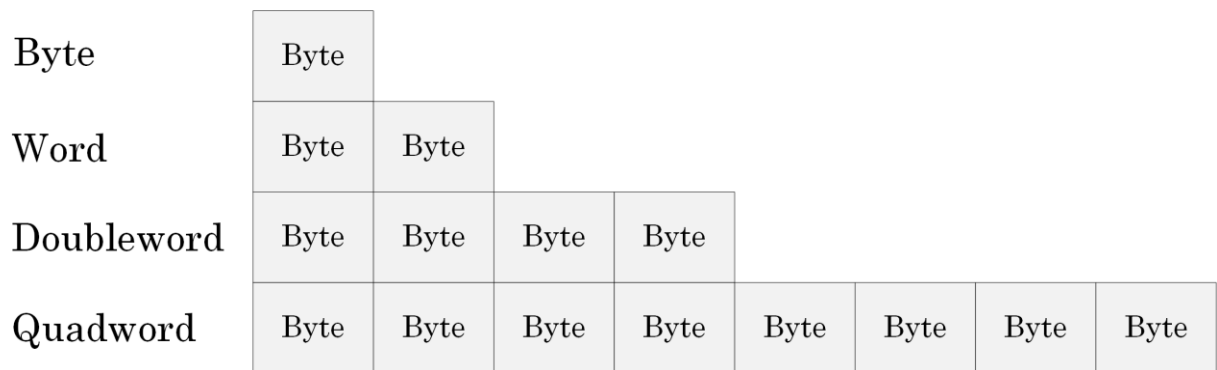
```
a = 12;    // 12dec  
a = 0xC;   // Chex
```

In GDB disassembly output, and when entering commands, numbers are interpreted as decimals by default. If we want a number to be interpreted as hexadecimal, we prefix it with **0x**, for example:

```
mov 12, a  
mov 0xC, a
```

## Byte Granularity

Picture x64.5.1 shows the difference between bytes, words, doublewords, and quadwords in terms of byte granularity. We see that each successive size is double the previous.



Picture x64.5.1

## Bit Granularity

Every byte consists of 8 bits. Every bit has a value of 0 or 1. Here are some examples of bytes, words, doublewords and quadwords shown as bit strings (we can also clearly see the correspondence between 4-bit sequences and hexadecimal numbers, Table x64.3.1):

- Byte

C / C++: unsigned char

8 bits

Values  $0_{\text{dec}}$  -  $255_{\text{dec}}$  or  $0_{\text{hex}}$  -  $\text{FF}_{\text{hex}}$

Example:  $12_{\text{dec}}$   $00001100_{\text{bin}}$   $0\text{C}_{\text{hex}}$

- Word

C / C++: unsigned short

16 bits

Values  $0_{\text{dec}}$  -  $65535_{\text{dec}}$  or  $0_{\text{hex}}$  -  $\text{FFFF}_{\text{hex}}$

Example:  $0000000000001100_{\text{bin}}$   $000\text{C}_{\text{hex}}$

- Doubleword

C / C++: unsigned int, unsigned

32 bits

Values  $0_{\text{dec}}$  -  $4294967295_{\text{dec}}$  or  $0_{\text{hex}}$  -  $\text{FFFFFFFF}_{\text{hex}}$

Example:  $0000000000000000000000001100_{\text{bin}}$

$0000000\text{C}_{\text{hex}}$

- Quadword

C / C++: long, unsigned long long

64 bits

Values  $0_{\text{dec}}$  -  $18446744073709551615_{\text{dec}}$  or

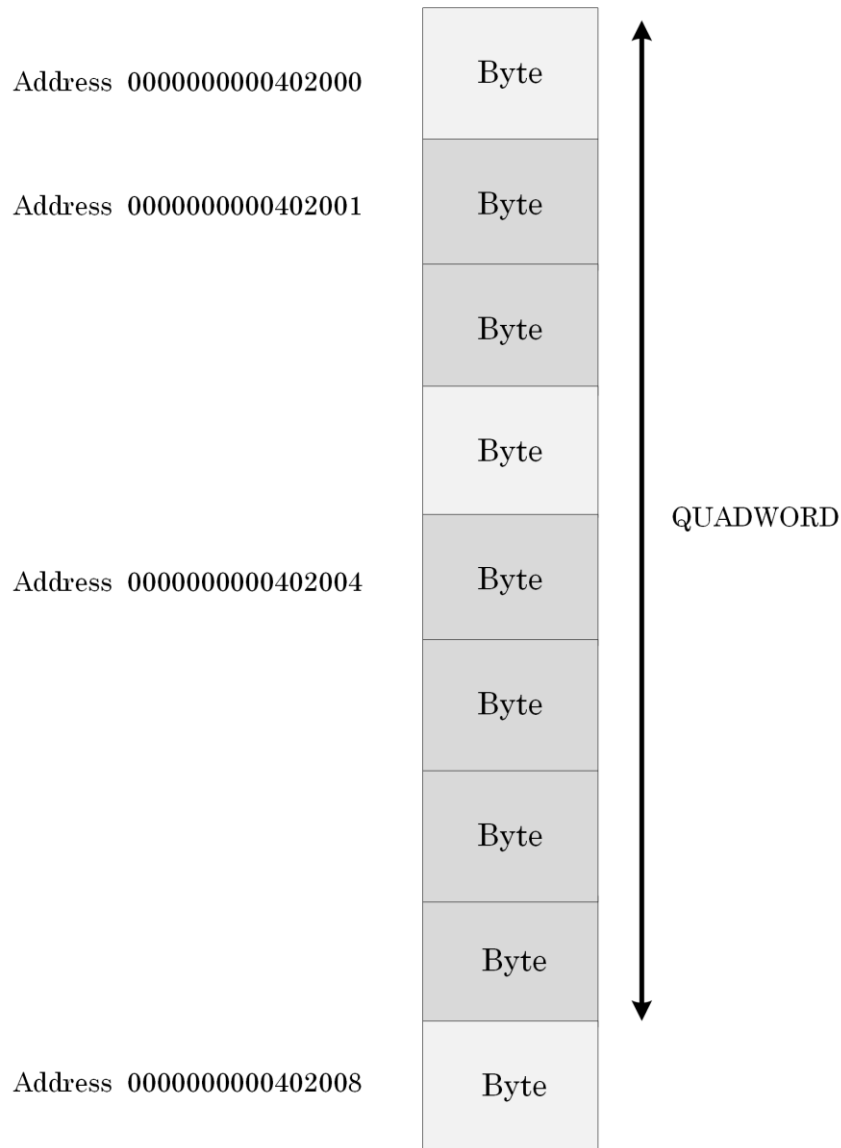
$0_{\text{hex}}$  -  $\text{FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF}_{\text{hex}}$

Example:  $001100_{\text{bin}}$

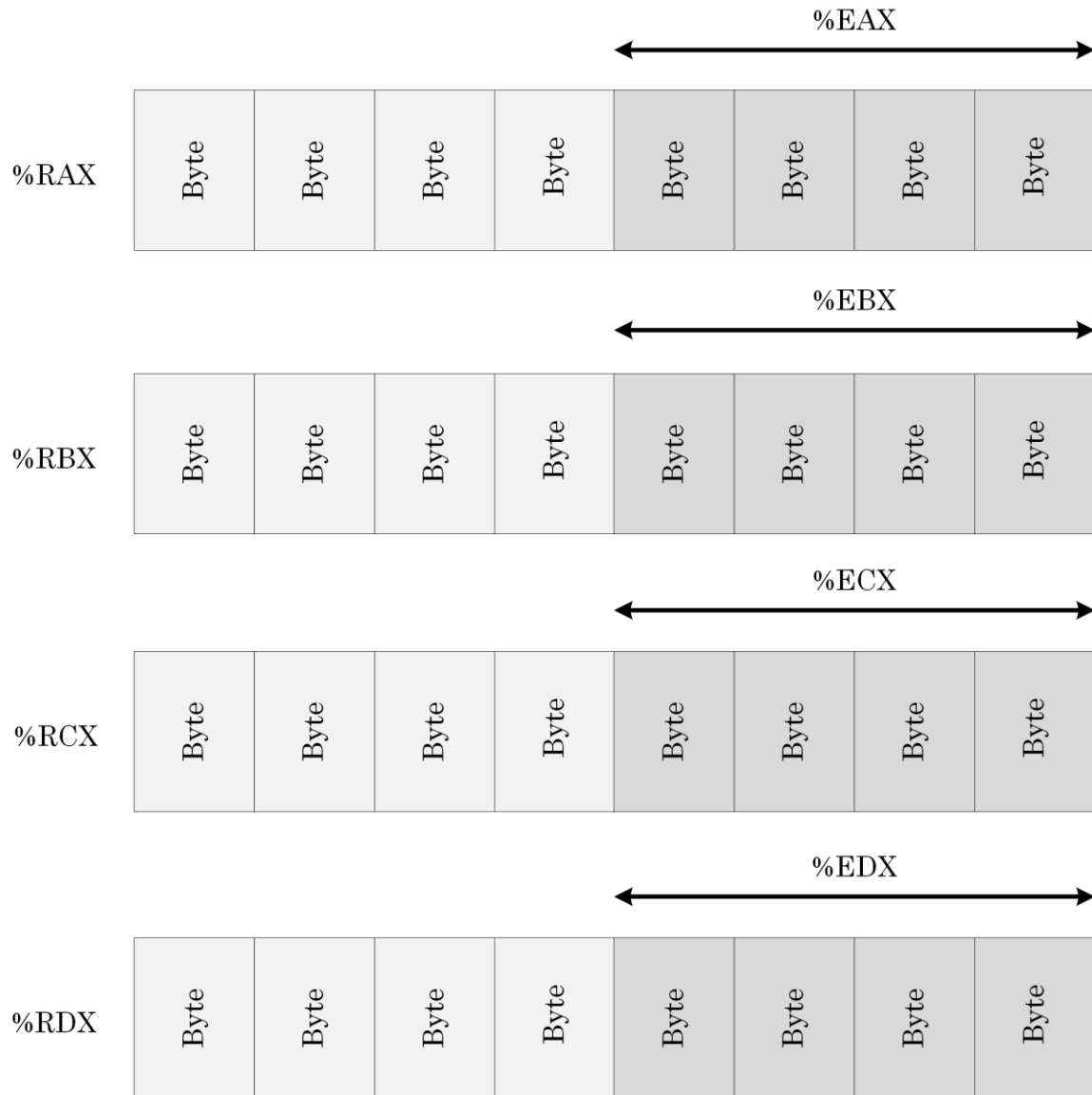
$000000000000000\text{C}_{\text{hex}}$

## Memory Layout

The minimum addressable element of memory is a byte. The maximum addressable element is a doubleword on 32-bit machines and a quadword on 64-bit machines. All general registers are 32-bit on 32-bit CPUs and can contain doubleword values. On 64-bit CPUs, all general registers are 64-bit and can contain quadword values. Picture x64.5.2 shows a typical memory layout, and Picture x64.5.3 shows the byte layout of some general CPU registers.



Picture x64.5.2



Picture x64.5.3

Remember that memory addresses are always 64-bit, and memory addresses to 32-bit memory cells like integers are also 64-bit.

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## Chapter x64.6: Pointers to Memory

### Pointers Revisited

The pointer is a memory cell or a register that contains the address of another memory cell. Memory pointers have their own addresses because they are memory cells too. On 32-bit Linux, pointers are 32-bit, and on 64-bit Linux, pointers are 64-bit.

## Addressing Types

As we have seen in Chapter x64.5, memory cells can be of one byte, word, doubleword, or quadword sizes. Therefore, we can have a pointer to a byte, a pointer to a word, a pointer to a doubleword, and a pointer to a quadword. GDB disassembly output in Chapter x64.4 has **l** suffixes in instructions involving pointers to memory that hold 32-bit (doubleword size) values.

Here are some illustrated examples:

```
movb $0xFF, (%rax)
```

The layout of memory before **movb** instruction execution is shown in Picture x64.6.1, and the layout of memory after execution is shown in Picture x64.6.2.

```
movw $0xFF, (%rax)
```

```
movl $0xFF, (%rax)
```

```
movq $0xFF, (%rax)
```

We need to prefix 0xFF with \$ to differentiate it from 0xFF as a memory address.

The layout of memory after the execution of **movl** instruction is shown in Picture x64.6.3. We can see that, although we specify just a byte value 0xFF as a source operand to **movl** instruction, it replaces all other 3 bytes of a doubleword in memory because we specify the destination as a pointer to 4 bytes and, 0xFF is 0x000000FF as a doubleword. So we need to specify **l** suffix to disambiguate moving a doubleword value from moving a byte value. The compiler complains if we forget and use **mov**:

```
Error: no instruction mnemonic suffix given and no register operands; can't size instruction
```

Because 64-bit (quadword) registers may point to quadword memory cells, we need to specify **q** to disambiguate moving a quadword value from moving a byte value even if we specify a constant with all leading zeroes:

```
movq $0x00000000000000FF, (%rax)
```

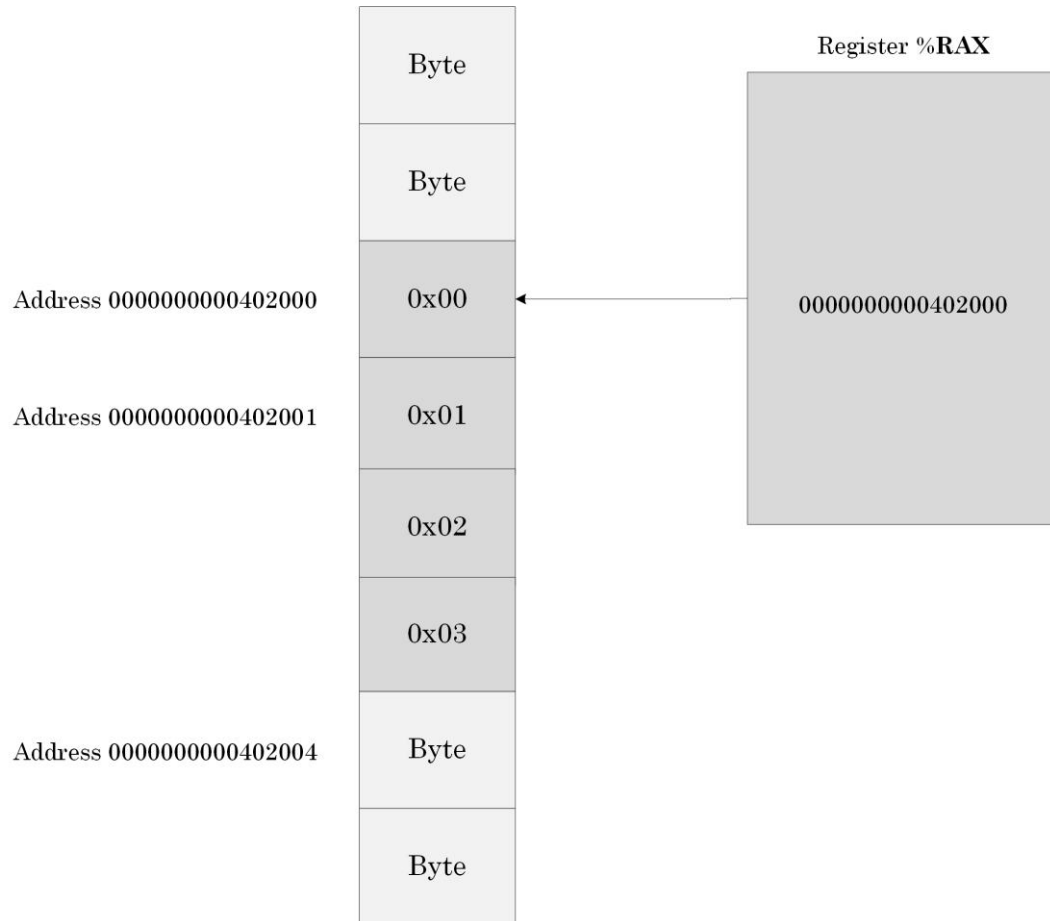
However, if we want to move a word value only, we need to specify the **w** suffix:

```
movw $0xFF, (%rax)
```

This is equivalent to:

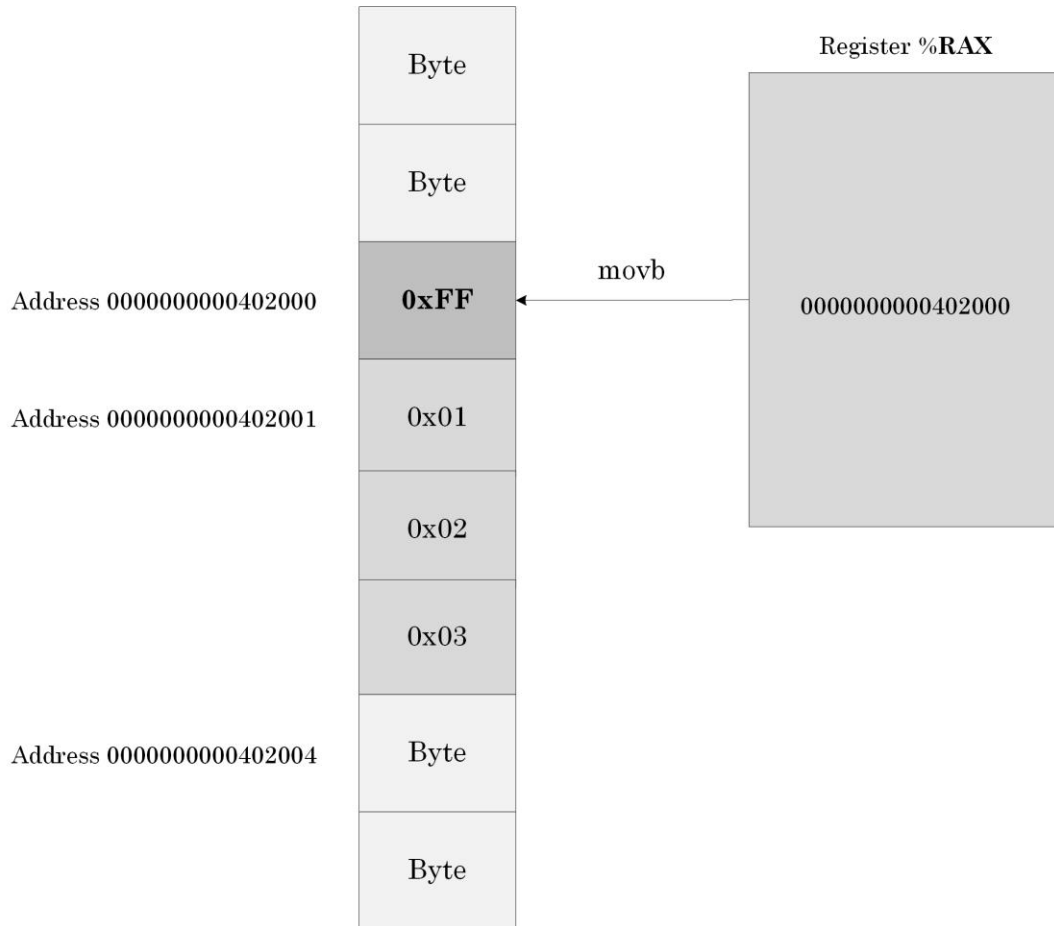
```
movw $0x00FF, (%rax)
```

Picture x64.6.4 shows a summary of various addressing modes.

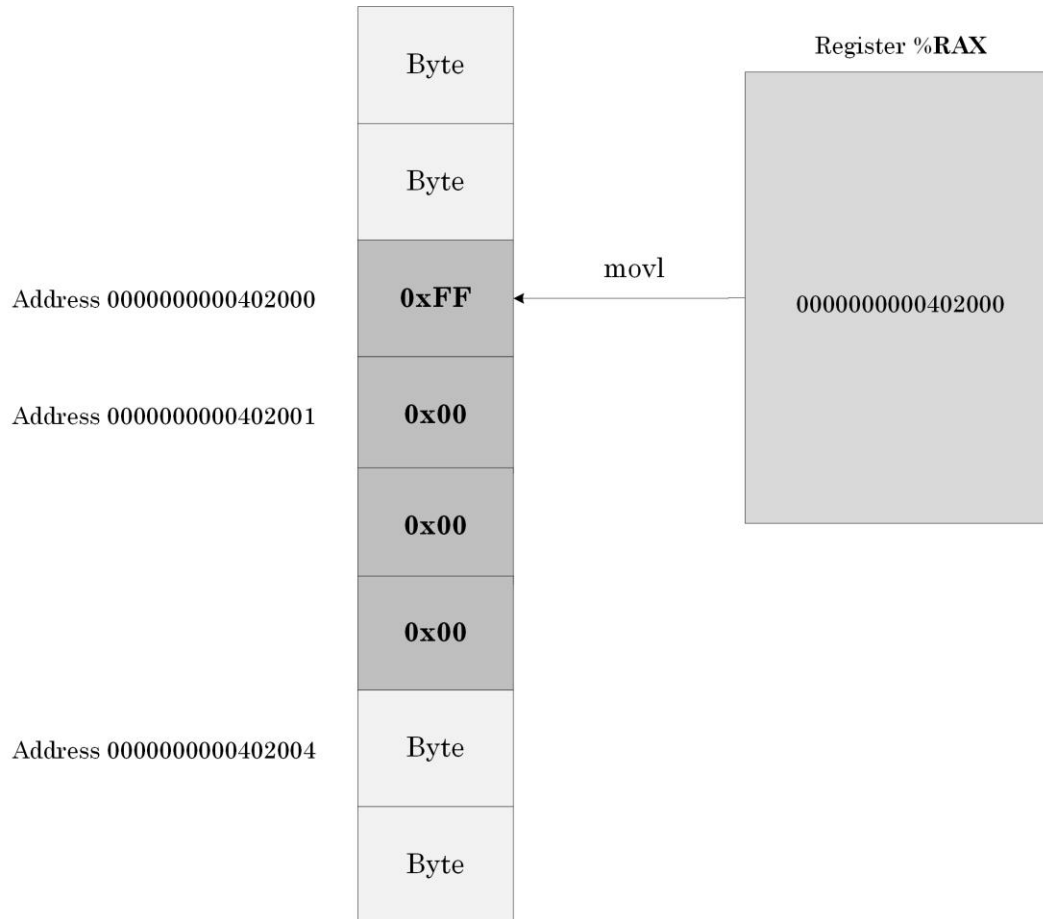


Picture x64.6.1

## 70 Addressing Types

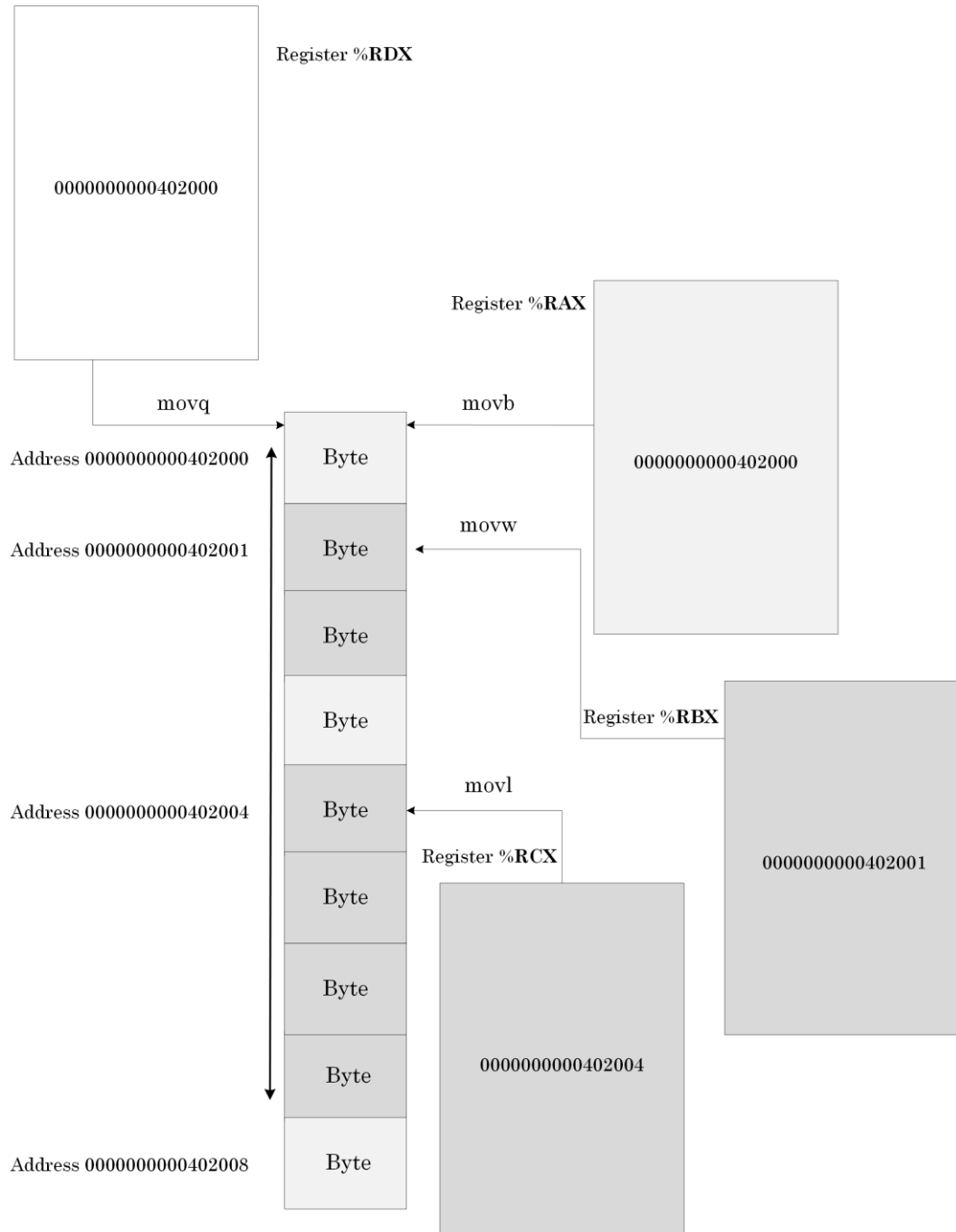


Picture x64.6.2



Picture x64.6.3

## 72 Addressing Types



Picture x64.6.4

## Registers Revisited

%RAX, %RBX, %RCX, %RDX 64-bit registers can be used as pointers to memory. They contain x86 32-bit registers %EAX, %EBX, %ECX, and %EDX. These 32-bit parts contain old 16-bit registers %AX, %BX, %CX, and %DX (each can hold a word). %CX register was often used as a loop counter, (Counter)X, in the assembly language corresponding to simple loops in C and C++ code

```
for (int i = 0; i < N ; ++i)
```

but modern C and C++ compilers may choose to use any other register or even a memory location for such a purpose.

## NULL Pointers

Addresses 0x0000000000000000 – 0x000000000000FFFF are specifically made inaccessible on Linux. The following code will force an application crash or kernel panic if executed inside a driver:

```
mov  $0xF, %rax
movb $1, (%rax) # Access violation
```

## Invalid Pointers

There are different kinds of invalid pointers that cause an access violation when we try to dereference them:

- NULL pointers
- Pointers to inaccessible memory
- Pointers to read-only memory when writing

Other pointers may or may not cause an access violation, and some of them are discussed in subsequent chapters:

- Pointers pointing to “random” memory
- Uninitialized pointers having random value inherited from past code execution
- Dangling pointers

The latter pointers are similar to pointers pointing to “random” memory locations and arise when we forget to set pointer variables to zero (NULL) after disposing of memory they point to. By nullifying pointers, we indicate that they no longer point to memory.

## Variables as Pointers

Suppose we have two memory addresses (locations) "a" and "b" declared and defined in C and C++ as:

```
int a, b;
```

These are normal variables "a" and "b". Also, we can have another two memory addresses (locations) "pa" and "pb" declared and defined in C and C++ as:

```
int *pa, *pb;
```

Here **pa** is a pointer to an int or, in other words, the memory cell **pa** contains the address of another memory cell that contains an integer value.

## Pointer Initialization

In order to have pointers to point to memory we need to initialize them with corresponding memory addresses. Here is typical C or C++ code that does what we need:

```
int a;           // uninitialized variable
int *pa;        // uninitialized pointer
pa = &a;        // (pa) now contains the address a
int b = 12;     // initialized variable
int *pb = &b;   // initialized pointer
```

We see that pointers are also variables and can change their values effectively pointing to different memory locations during program execution.

### Initialized and Uninitialized Data

Here is a bit of additional information about initialized and uninitialized variables that is useful to know: an executable program in Linux is divided into different sections. One is called **.data**, where all global and static variables (including pointers) are put.

Consider this C or C++ data definition:

```
int array[1000000]; // size 4,000,000 bytes or 3.8Mb
```

We would expect the size of an executable file to be about 4Mb. However, the program size on a disk is only 16Kb. It is because the uninitialized array contains only information about its size. When we launch the program, this array is recreated from its size information and filled with zeroes. The size of the program in memory becomes about 4Mb.

In the case of the initialized array the program size on disk is 4.01Mb:

```
int array[1000000] = { 12 };
```

This is because the array was put into a **.data** section and contains the following sequence of integers { 12, 0, 0, 0, 0 ... }.

## More Pseudo Notation

We remind that **(a)** means contents of memory at the address **a**, **(rax)** means contents of a 32-bit memory cell at the address stored in %RAX register (here %RAX is a pointer).

We also introduce an additional notation to employ in this and subsequent chapters: **\*(pa)** means contents at the address stored at the address **pa** and is called dereferencing a pointer whose address is **pa**. The corresponding C/C++ code is similar:

```
int *pa = &a;  
int b = *pa;
```

## “MemoryPointers” Project: Memory Layout

This project is very similar to the “Pointers” project from Chapter x64.4. We have this data declaration and definition in C or C++ language:

```
int a, b;
int *pa, *pb = &b;
```

The project code corresponds to the following pseudo-code and assembly language:

address a -> (pa)	lea a, %rax
	mov %rax, pa
1 -> *(pa) ; (a) = 1	mov pa, %rax
	movl \$1, (%rax)
1 -> *(pb) ; (b) = 1	mov pb, %rbx
	movl \$1, (%rbx)
*(pb) + *(pa) -> *(pb) ; (b) = 2	mov (%rax), %ecx
	add (%rbx), %ecx
	mov %ecx, (%rbx)

The source code for this chapter can be downloaded from:

<https://bitbucket.org/softwareiagnostics/pflddr/src/master/x64/Chapter6/>

We compile and link it, load the executable into GDB as described in Chapter x64.4. We get the following output:

```
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter6$ as MemoryPointers.asm -o
MemoryPointers.o
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter6$ ld MemoryPointers.o -o MemoryPointers
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter6$ gdb ./MemoryPointers
GNU gdb (Debian 8.2.1-2+b3) 8.2.1
Copyright (C) 2018 Free Software Foundation, Inc.
License GPLv3+: GNU GPL version 3 or later <http://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>
This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.
There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.
Type "show copying" and "show warranty" for details.
This GDB was configured as "x86_64-linux-gnu".
```

```
Type "show configuration" for configuration details.
For bug reporting instructions, please see:
<http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/bugs/>.
Find the GDB manual and other documentation resources online at:
  <http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/documentation/>.

For help, type "help".
Type "apropos word" to search for commands related to "word"...
Reading symbols from ./MemoryPointers...(no debugging symbols found)...done.
(gdb)
```

Then we put a breakpoint on the *main* function and run the program until GDB breaks in:

```
(gdb) break main
Breakpoint 1 at 0x401000

(gdb) run
Starting program: /home/coredump/pf1ddr/x64/Chapter6/MemoryPointers

Breakpoint 1, 0x0000000000401000 in _start ()
```

We disassemble the *main* function:

```
(gdb) disass main
Dump of assembler code for function _start:
=> 0x0000000000401000 <+0>:      lea    0x402000,%rax
      0x0000000000401008 <+8>:      mov    %rax,0x402008
      0x0000000000401010 <+16>:     mov    0x402008,%rax
      0x0000000000401018 <+24>:     movl   $0x1,(%rax)
      0x000000000040101e <+30>:     mov    0x402010,%rbx
      0x0000000000401026 <+38>:     movl   $0x1,(%rbx)
      0x000000000040102c <+44>:     mov    (%rax),%ecx
      0x000000000040102e <+46>:     add   (%rbx),%ecx
      0x0000000000401030 <+48>:     mov    %ecx,(%rbx)
      0x0000000000401032 <+50>:     mov    $0x3c,%rax
      0x0000000000401039 <+57>:     mov    $0x0,%rdi
      0x0000000000401040 <+64>:     syscall
End of assembler dump.
```

## 82 “MemoryPointers” Project: Memory Layout

Then we clear %RAX, %RBX, and %RCX registers to set up a memory layout that is easy to follow:

```
(gdb) set $rax = 0

(gdb) set $rbx = 0

(gdb) set $rcx = 0

(gdb) info registers $rax $rbx $rcx
rax          0x0          0
rbx          0x0          0
rcx          0x0          0
```

We also instruct GDB to automatically display the current instruction to be executed, the values of registers %RAX, %RBX, %RCX, and the contents of variables “a”, “b”, “pa”, “pb”:

```
(gdb) display/i $rip
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401000 <_start>:  lea    0x402000,%rax

(gdb) display/x $rax
2: /x $rax = 0x0

(gdb) display/x $rbx
3: /x $rbx = 0x0

(gdb) display/x $rcx
4: /x $rcx = 0x0

(gdb) display/x (int)a
5: /x (int)a = 0x0

(gdb) display/x (int)b
6: /x (int)b = 0x0

(gdb) display/x (long)pa
7: /x (long)pa = 0x0

(gdb) display/x (long)pb
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004
```

We see that **pb** variable contains the address 0x402004. We then check the addresses of (variables) memory locations “a”, “b”, “pa”, “pb”:

```
(gdb) print &a
$1 = (<data variable, no debug info> *) 0x402000

(gdb) print &b
$2 = (<data variable, no debug info> *) 0x402004

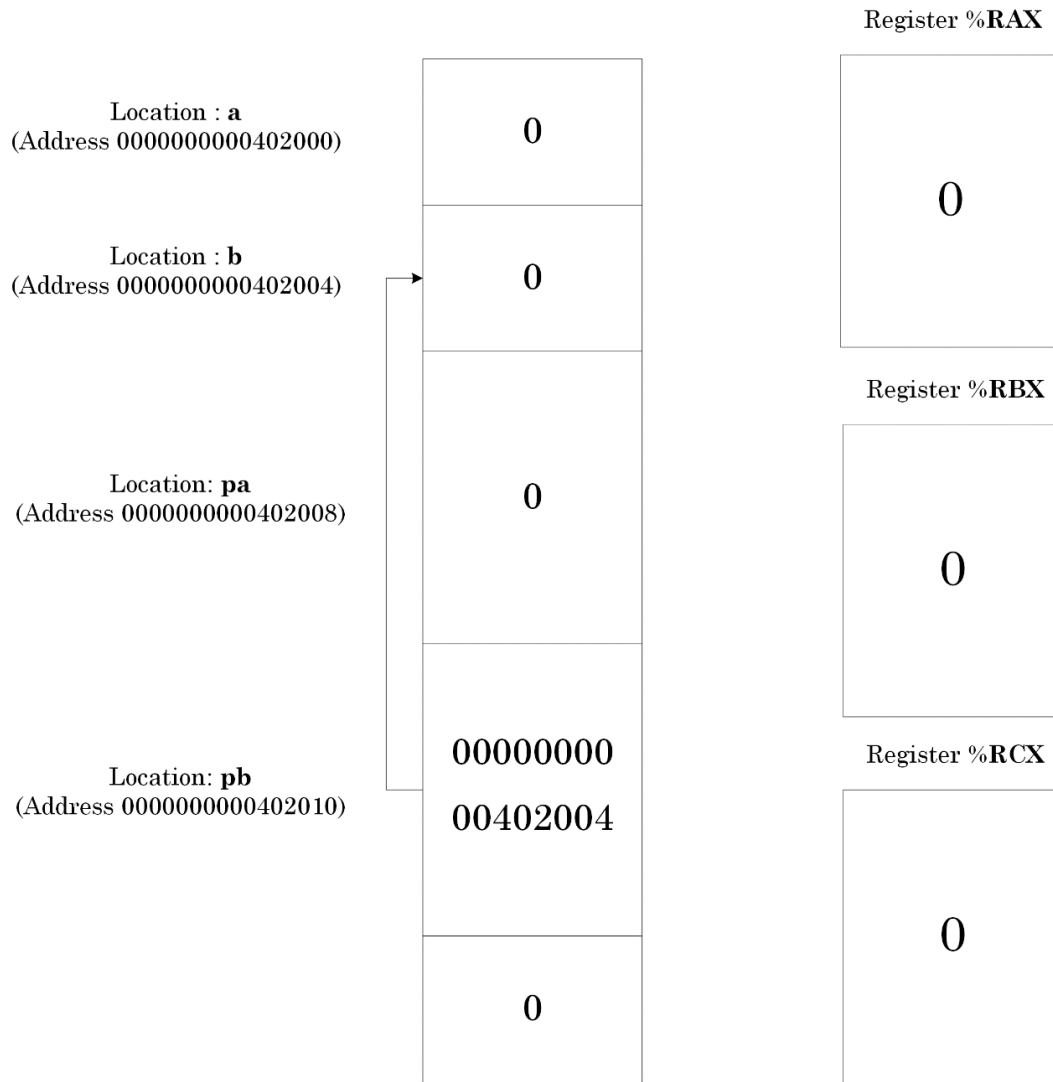
(gdb) print &pa
$3 = (<data variable, no debug info> *) 0x402008

(gdb) print &pb
$4 = (<data variable, no debug info> *) 0x402010
```

We also check the value stored at the address 0x402004 (value of **pb** that is the address of **b**):

```
(gdb) x 0x402004
0x402004:      0x00000000
```

This corresponds to the memory layout before executing the first LEA instruction, and it is shown in Picture x64.6.5.



Picture x64.6.5

We then execute our code step by step (changes are in bold):

```
(gdb) si
0x0000000000401008 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401008 <_start+8>: mov    %rax,0x402008
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x0
4: /x $rcx = 0x0
5: /x (int)a = 0x0
6: /x (int)b = 0x0
7: /x (long)pa = 0x0
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004

(gdb) si
0x0000000000401010 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401010 <_start+16>:      mov    0x402008,%rax
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x0
4: /x $rcx = 0x0
5: /x (int)a = 0x0
6: /x (int)b = 0x0
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004

(gdb) si
0x0000000000401018 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401018 <_start+24>:      movl   $0x1,(%rax)
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x0
4: /x $rcx = 0x0
5: /x (int)a = 0x0
6: /x (int)b = 0x0
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004
```

```
(gdb) si
0x00000000040101e in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x40101e <_start+30>:      mov    0x402010,%rbx
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x0
4: /x $rcx = 0x0
5: /x (int)a = 0x1
6: /x (int)b = 0x0
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004
```

```
(gdb) si
0x000000000401026 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401026 <_start+38>:      movl   $0x1,(%rbx)
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x $rcx = 0x0
5: /x (int)a = 0x1
6: /x (int)b = 0x0
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004
```

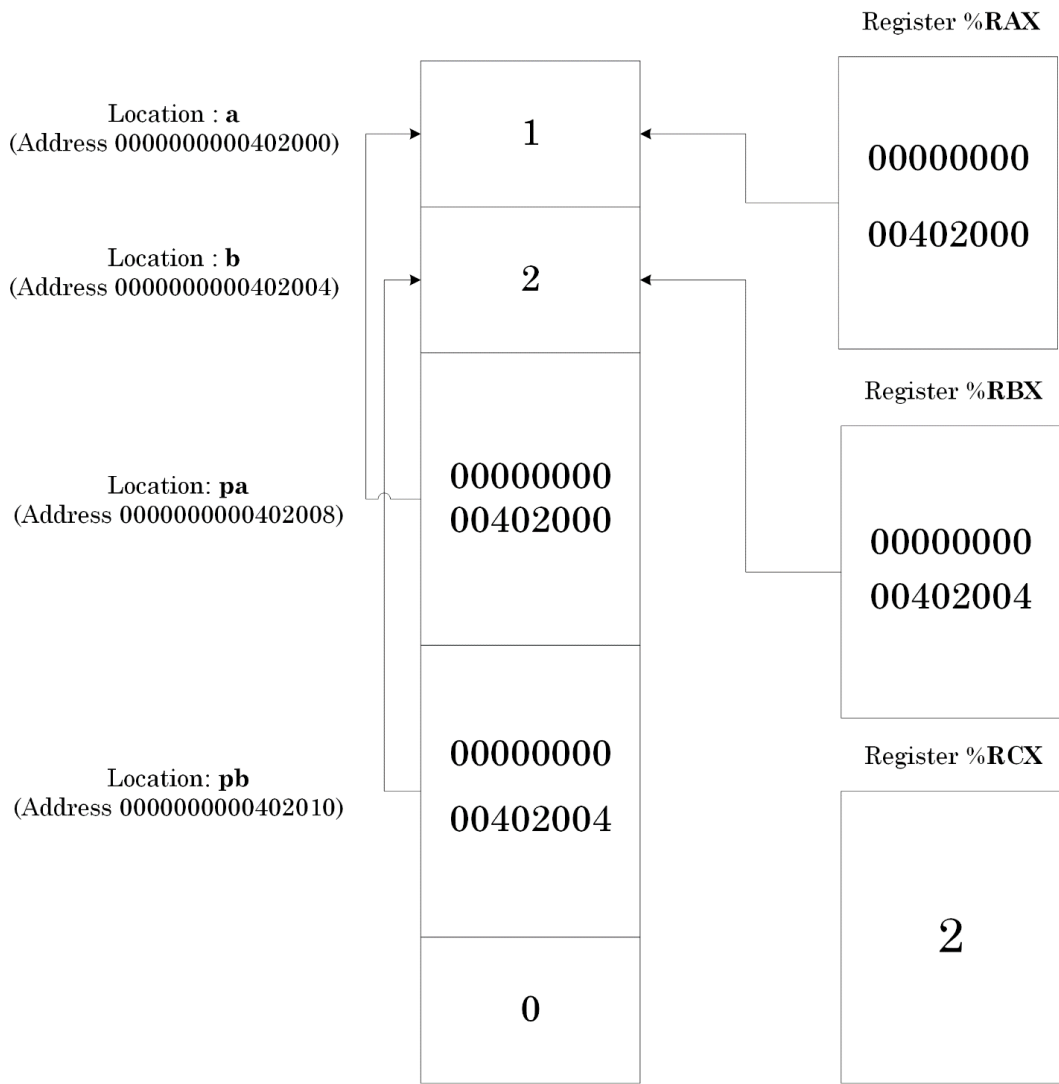
```
(gdb) si
0x00000000040102c in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x40102c <_start+44>:      mov    (%rax),%ecx
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x $rcx = 0x0
5: /x (int)a = 0x1
6: /x (int)b = 0x1
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004
```

```
(gdb) si
0x00000000040102e in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x40102e <_start+46>:      add    (%rbx),%ecx
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x $rcx = 0x1
5: /x (int)a = 0x1
6: /x (int)b = 0x1
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004
```

```
(gdb) si
0x000000000401030 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401030 <_start+48>:      mov    %ecx,(%rbx)
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x $rcx = 0x2
5: /x (int)a = 0x1
6: /x (int)b = 0x1
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004
```

```
(gdb) si
0x000000000401032 in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x401032 <_start+50>:      mov    $0x3c,%rax
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x $rcx = 0x2
5: /x (int)a = 0x1
6: /x (int)b = 0x2
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004
```

The final memory layout and registers are shown in Picture x64.6.6.



Picture x64.6.6

## Chapter x64.7: Logical Instructions and RIP

### Instruction Format

We have seen that assembly language instructions have uniform format:

```
Opcode operand
```

```
Opcode source_operand, destination_operand
```

Operands can be registers (reg), memory references (mem), or some numbers, called immediate values (imm). Typical notational examples:

```
inc mem/reg
```

```
dec mem/reg
```

```
add reg/imm, mem/reg
```

```
add mem/imm, reg
```

and some concrete assembly language examples:

```
inc (%rax)
```

```
decl a
```

```
addl $0x10, (%rax)
```

```
addq a, (%rax)
```

## Logical Shift Instructions

In addition to arithmetic instructions, there are so-called logical shift instructions that just shift a bit string to the left or the right.

Shift to the left:

```
11111111 -> 11111110 ; shift by 1
```

```
11111110 -> 11110000 ; shift by 3
```

```
shl imm/reg, mem/reg
```

```
shl $1, %rax
```

```
shlb $2, (%rax)
```

Shift to the right:

```
11111111 -> 01111111 ; shift by 1
```

```
01111111 -> 00001111 ; shift by 3
```

```
shr imm/reg, mem/reg
```

```
shr $1, %rax
```

```
shr $2, (%rax)
```

## Logical Operations

Here we recall logical operations and corresponding truth tables. We abbreviate True as T and False as F.

### AND

1 and 1 = 1    T and T = T

1 and 0 = 0    T and F = F

0 and 1 = 0    F and T = F

0 and 0 = 0    F and F = F

### OR

1 or 1 = 1    T or T = T

1 or 0 = 1    T or F = T

0 or 1 = 1    F or T = T

0 or 0 = 0    F or F = F

### Zeroing Memory or Registers

There are several ways to put a zero value into a register or a memory location:

1. Move a value:

```
mov $0, a
```

```
mov $0, %rax
```

```
mov $0, %eax
```

2. Use XOR (Exclusive OR) logical operation:

```
xor %rax, %rax
```

```
xor %eax, %eax
```

#### XOR

```
1 xor 1 = 0    T xor T = F
```

```
1 xor 0 = 1    T xor F = T
```

```
0 xor 1 = 1    F xor T = T
```

```
0 xor 0 = 0    F xor F = F
```

This operation clears its destination operand because the source operand is the same, and the same bits are cleared.

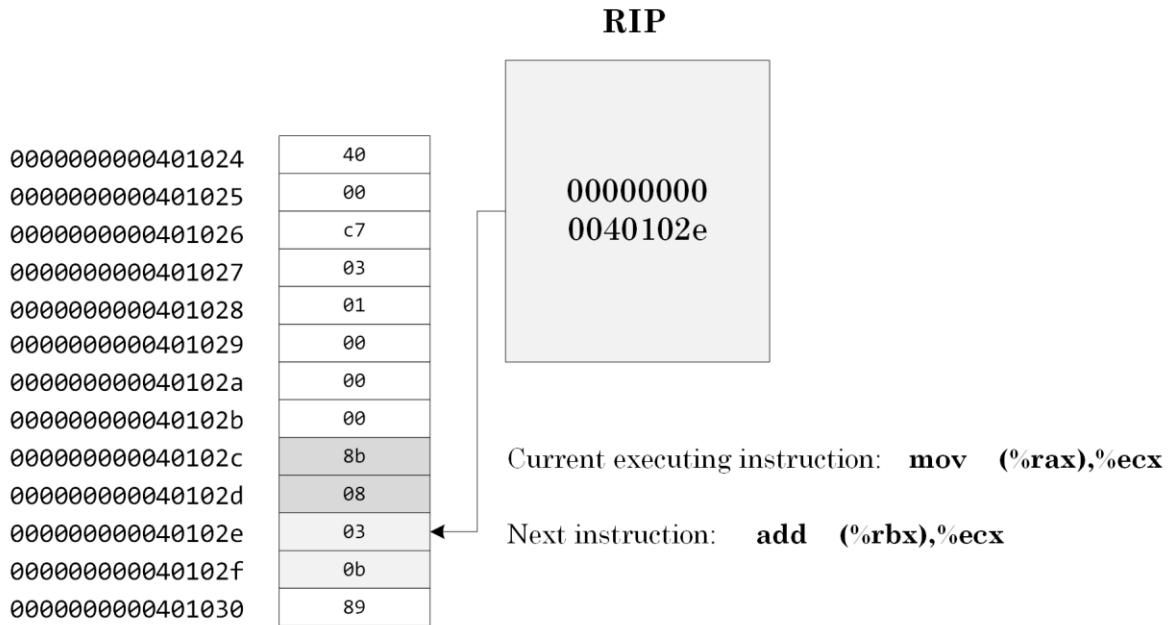
## Instruction Pointer

Consider these two execution steps from the previous chapter project:

```
(gdb) si
0x00000000040102c in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x40102c <_start+44>:      mov    (%rax),%ecx
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x $rcx = 0x0
5: /x (int)a = 0x1
6: /x (int)b = 0x1
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004

(gdb) si
0x00000000040102e in _start ()
1: x/i $rip
=> 0x40102e <_start+46>:      add    (%rbx),%ecx
2: /x $rax = 0x402000
3: /x $rbx = 0x402004
4: /x $rcx = 0x1
5: /x (int)a = 0x1
6: /x (int)b = 0x1
7: /x (long)pa = 0x402000
8: /x (long)pb = 0x402004
```

When MOV instruction at 00000000040102c address is being executed another CPU register %RIP points to the next instruction at 00000000040102e address to be executed. This is shown in Picture x64.7.1.



Picture x64.7.1

## Code Section

Recall that in Chapter x64.6 we discussed the **.data** section where program data is put. The program code is put into the **.text** section.

The following GDB command lists various program sections and their information:

```
(gdb) maintenance info sections
Exec file:
  `/home/coredump/pf1ddr/x64/Chapter6/MemoryPointers', file type elf64-x86-64.
[0]      0x00400120->0x00400140 at 0x00000120: .note.gnu.property ALLOC LOAD READONLY
DATA HAS_CONTENTS
[1]      0x00401000->0x00401042 at 0x00001000: .text ALLOC LOAD READONLY CODE
HAS_CONTENTS
[2]      0x00402000->0x00402018 at 0x00002000: .data ALLOC LOAD DATA HAS_CONTENTS
```

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## Chapter x64.8: Reconstructing a Program with Pointers

### Example of Disassembly Output: No Optimization

The ability to reconstruct approximate C or C++ code from code disassembly is essential in memory dump analysis and debugging.

The project for this chapter can be downloaded from:

<https://bitbucket.org/softwareiagnostics/pflddr/src/master/x64/Chapter8/>

We compile and link it, load executable into GDB, put a breakpoint on the *main* function, and run the program until GDB breaks in, then disassemble its *main* function:

```

coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter8$ gcc PointersAsVariables.cpp -o
PointersAsVariables
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter8$ gdb ./PointersAsVariables
GNU gdb (Debian 8.2.1-2+b3) 8.2.1
Copyright (C) 2018 Free Software Foundation, Inc.
License GPLv3+: GNU GPL version 3 or later <http://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>
This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.
There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.
Type "show copying" and "show warranty" for details.
This GDB was configured as "x86_64-linux-gnu".
Type "show configuration" for configuration details.
For bug reporting instructions, please see:
<http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/bugs/>.
Find the GDB manual and other documentation resources online at:
  <http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/documentation/>.

For help, type "help".
Type "apropos word" to search for commands related to "word"...
Reading symbols from ./PointersAsVariables...(no debugging symbols found)...done.

(gdb) break main
Breakpoint 1 at 0x1129

(gdb) run
Starting program: /home/coredump/pflddr/x64/Chapter8/PointersAsVariables

Breakpoint 1, 0x00005555555555129 in main ()

```

## 98 Example of Disassembly Output: No Optimization

```
(gdb) disass main
Dump of assembler code for function main:
   0x000055555555125 <+0>:   push   %rbp
   0x000055555555126 <+1>:   mov    %rsp,%rbp
=>  0x000055555555129 <+4>:   mov    %edi,-0x4(%rbp)
   0x00005555555512c <+7>:   mov    %rsi,-0x10(%rbp)
   0x000055555555130 <+11>:  lea   0x2ef9(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558030 <a>
   0x000055555555137 <+18>:  mov   %rax,0x2efa(%rip)     # 0x555555558038 <pa>
   0x00005555555513e <+25>:  lea   0x2eef(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558034 <b>
   0x000055555555145 <+32>:  mov   %rax,0x2ef4(%rip)     # 0x555555558040 <pb>
   0x00005555555514c <+39>:  mov   0x2ee5(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558038 <pa>
   0x000055555555153 <+46>:  movl  $0x1,(%rax)
   0x000055555555159 <+52>:  mov   0x2ee0(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558040 <pb>
   0x000055555555160 <+59>:  movl  $0x1,(%rax)
   0x000055555555166 <+65>:  mov   0x2ed3(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558040 <pb>
   0x00005555555516d <+72>:  mov   (%rax),%ecx
   0x00005555555516f <+74>:  mov   0x2ec2(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558038 <pa>
   0x000055555555176 <+81>:  mov   (%rax),%edx
   0x000055555555178 <+83>:  mov   0x2ec1(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558040 <pb>
   0x00005555555517f <+90>:  add   %ecx,%edx
   0x000055555555181 <+92>:  mov   %edx,(%rax)
   0x000055555555183 <+94>:  mov   0x2eae(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558038 <pa>
   0x00005555555518a <+101>: mov   (%rax),%edx
   0x00005555555518c <+103>: add   $0x1,%edx
   0x00005555555518f <+106>: mov   %edx,(%rax)
   0x000055555555191 <+108>: mov   0x2ea8(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558040 <pb>
   0x000055555555198 <+115>: mov   (%rax),%ecx
   0x00005555555519a <+117>: mov   0x2e97(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558038 <pa>
   0x0000555555551a1 <+124>: mov   (%rax),%edx
   0x0000555555551a3 <+126>: mov   0x2e96(%rip),%rax      # 0x555555558040 <pb>
   0x0000555555551aa <+133>: imul  %ecx,%edx
   0x0000555555551ad <+136>: mov   %edx,(%rax)
   0x0000555555551af <+138>: mov   $0x0,%eax
   0x0000555555551b4 <+143>: pop   %rbp
   0x0000555555551b5 <+144>: retq

End of assembler dump.
```

## Reconstructing C/C++ Code: Part 1

Now we go from instruction to instruction highlighted in bold on the previous page and try to reconstruct pseudo-code which is shown as comments to assembly language code.

```

lea    0x2ef9(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558030 <a>
# address a -> rax
mov    %rax,0x2efa(%rip)   # 0x555555558038 <pa>
# rax -> (pa)
lea    0x2eef(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558034 <b>
# address b -> rax
mov    %rax,0x2ef4(%rip)   # 0x555555558040 <pb>
# rax -> (pb)
mov    0x2ee5(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558038 <pa>
# (pa) -> rax
movl   $0x1,(%rax)
# 1 -> (rax)
mov    0x2ee0(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558040 <pb>
# (pb) -> rax
movl   $0x1,(%rax)
# 1 -> (rax)
mov    0x2ed3(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558040 <pb>
# (pb) -> rax
mov    (%rax),%ecx
# (rax) -> ecx
mov    0x2ec2(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558038 <pa>
# (pa) -> rax
mov    (%rax),%edx
# (rax) -> edx
mov    0x2ec1(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558040 <pb>
# (pb) -> rax
add    %ecx,%edx
# ecx + edx -> edx
mov    %edx,(%rax)
# edx -> (rax)
mov    0x2eae(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558038 <pa>
# (pa) -> rax
mov    (%rax),%edx
# (rax) -> edx

```

```
add    $0x1,%edx
# 1 + edx -> edx
mov    %edx,(%rax)
# edx -> (rax)
mov    0x2ea8(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558040 <pb>
# (pb) -> rax
mov    (%rax),%ecx
# (rax) -> ecx
mov    0x2e97(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558038 <pa>
# (pa) -> rax
mov    (%rax),%edx
# (rax) -> edx
mov    0x2e96(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558040 <pb>
# (pb) -> rax
imul  %ecx,%edx
# ecx * edx -> edx
mov    %edx,(%rax)
# edx -> (rax)
```

## Reconstructing C/C++ Code: Part 2

Now we group pseudo-code together with possible mixed C/C++ and assembly language equivalents:

```

address a -> rax      ; int a; int *pa;
rax -> (pa)          ; pa = &a;

address b -> rax      ; int b; int *pb;
rax -> (pb)          ; pb = &b;

(pa) -> rax          ; *pa = 1;
1 -> (rax)

(pb) -> rax          ; *pb = 1;
1 -> (rax)

(pb) -> rax          ; ecx = *pb;
(rax) -> ecx

(pa) -> rax          ; edx = *pa;
(rax) -> edx

(pb) -> rax
ecx + edx -> edx      ; edx = ecx + edx;
edx -> (rax)          ; *pb = edx;

(pa) -> rax          ; edx = *pa;
(rax) -> edx

1 + edx -> edx        ; edx = 1 + edx;
edx -> (rax)          ; *pa = edx;

(pb) -> rax          ; ecx = *pb;
(rax) -> ecx

(pa) -> rax          ; edx = *pa;
(rax) -> edx

```

```
(pb) -> rax  
ecx * edx -> edx      ; edx = ecx * edx;  
edx -> (rax)         ; *pb = edx;
```

## Reconstructing C/C++ Code: Part 3

Next we combine more mixed statements into C/C++ language code:

```
int a; int *pa;
pa = &a;

int b; int *pb;
pb = &b;

*pa = 1;
*pb = 1;

ecx = *pb;                ; *pb = *pb + *pa;
edx = *pa;
edx = ecx + edx;
*pb = edx;

edx = *pa;                ; *pa = 1 + *pa;
edx = 1 + edx;
*pa = edx;

ecx = *pb;                ; *pb = *pb * *pa;
edx = *pa;
edx = ecx * edx;
*pb = edx;
```

## Reconstructing C/C++ Code: C/C++ program

Finally, we have something that looks like a complete C/C++ code:

```
int a, b;
int *pa, *pb;

pa = &a;
pb = &b;

*pa = 1;
*pb = 1;

*pb = *pb + *pa;

++*pa;

*pb = *pb * *pa;
```

If we look at the project source code `PointersAsVariables.cpp`, we see the same code compiled into the executable file that we were disassembling.

## Example of Disassembly Output: Optimized Program

The optimized program (compiled with `-O2`) contains fewer CPU instructions:

```
(gdb) disass main
Dump of assembler code for function main:
=> 0x000055555555040 <+0>:    lea    0x2ffd(%rip),%rax    # 0x555555558044 <a>
   0x000055555555047 <+7>:    movl   $0x2,0x2ff3(%rip)   # 0x555555558044 <a>
   0x000055555555051 <+17>:   mov    %rax,0x2fe0(%rip)   # 0x555555558038 <pa>
   0x000055555555058 <+24>:   lea    0x2fe1(%rip),%rax   # 0x555555558040 <b>
   0x00005555555505f <+31>:   mov    %rax,0x2fca(%rip)   # 0x555555558030 <pb>
   0x000055555555066 <+38>:   xor    %eax,%eax
   0x000055555555068 <+40>:   movl   $0x4,0x2fce(%rip)   # 0x555555558040 <b>
   0x000055555555072 <+50>:   retq
End of assembler dump.
```

We see that the compiler was able to figure out the result of computation: `a = 2`; `b = 4`; However, one question remains, why did the compiler not optimize away the first instructions initializing `pa` and `pb` variables? The answer lies in the nature of a separate compilation model in C and C++. We can compile several compilation units (`.c` or `.cpp`) files separately and independently. Therefore, there is no guarantee that another compilation unit would not reference our globally declared and defined `pa` and `pb` variables.

We can also see that the compiler reordered instructions. It can be seen in pseudo-code:

```
address a -> rax
1 -> (a)
rax -> (pa)
```

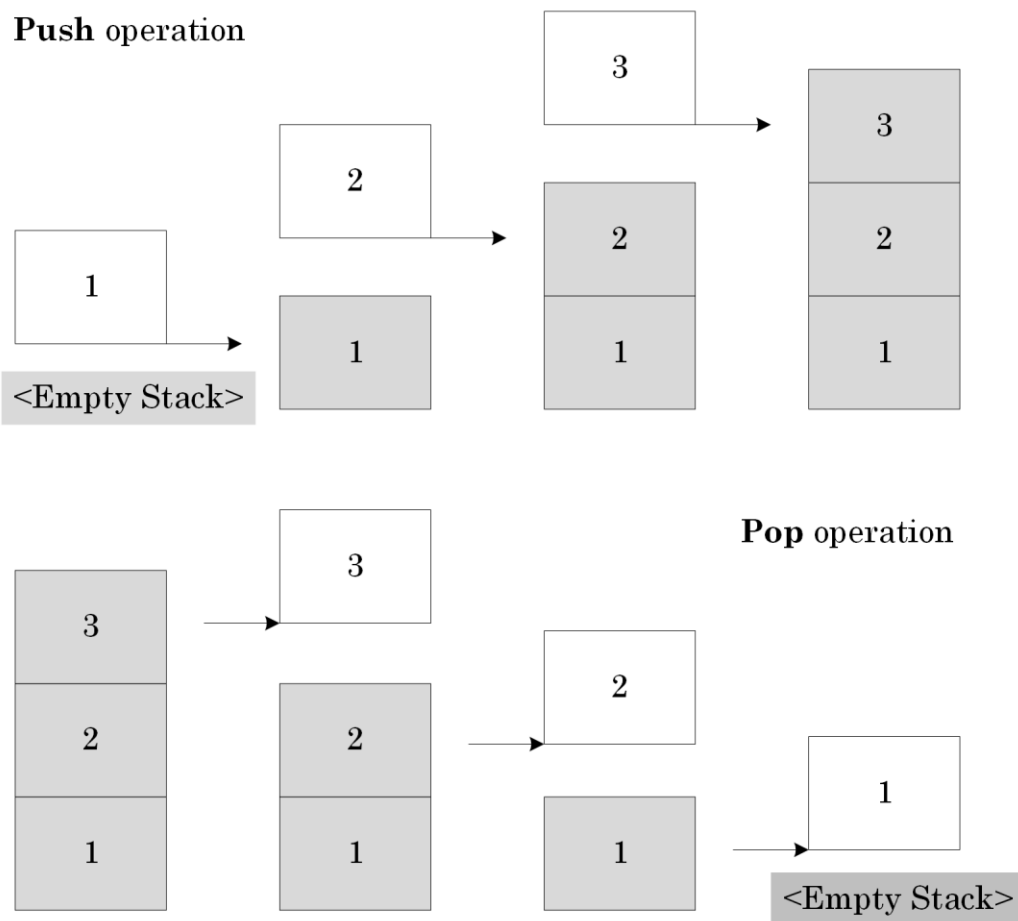
This is because `pa` initialization with the address of the variable `a` is independent of assigning 1 to the memory cell the variable `a` points to, and the reordered sequence of instructions could be executed faster on modern processors.

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## Chapter x64.9: Memory and Stacks

### Stack: A Definition

A stack is a simple computational device with two operations, push and pop, that allows us to pile up data to remember it in LIFO (Last In First Out) manner and quickly retrieve the last piled data item as shown in Picture x64.9.1.

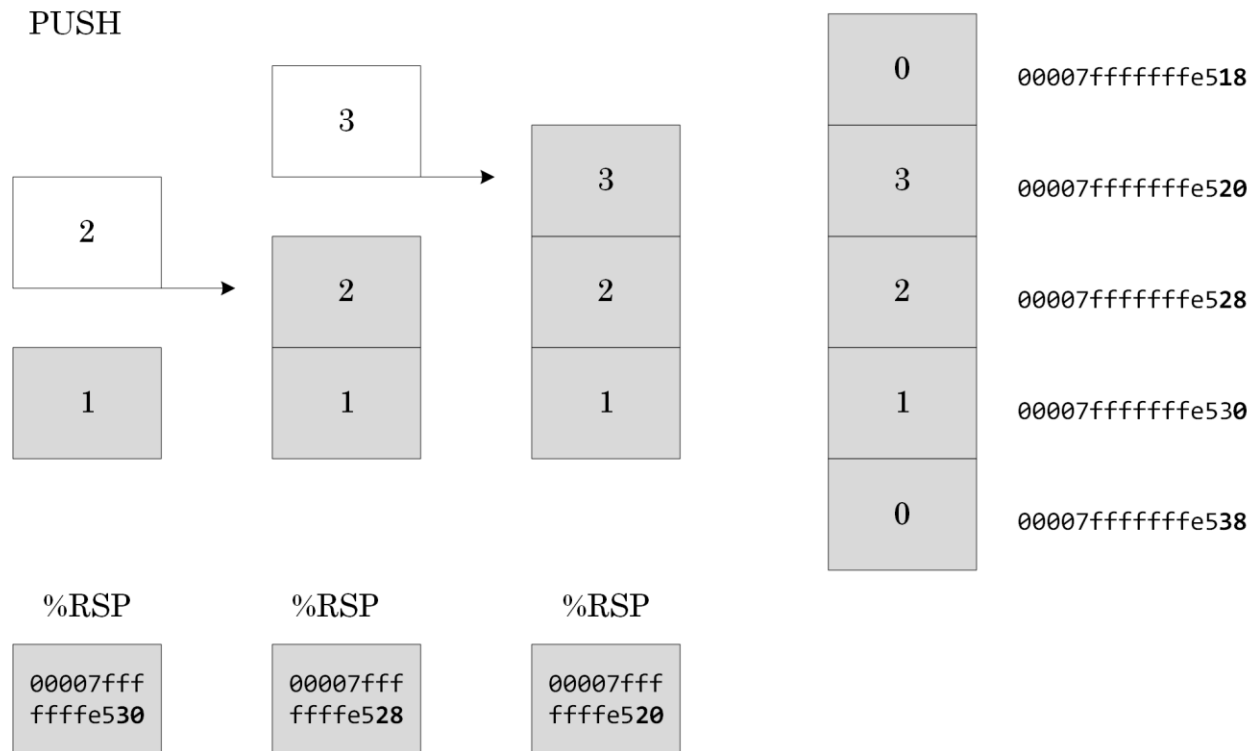


Picture x64.9.1

## Stack Implementation in Memory

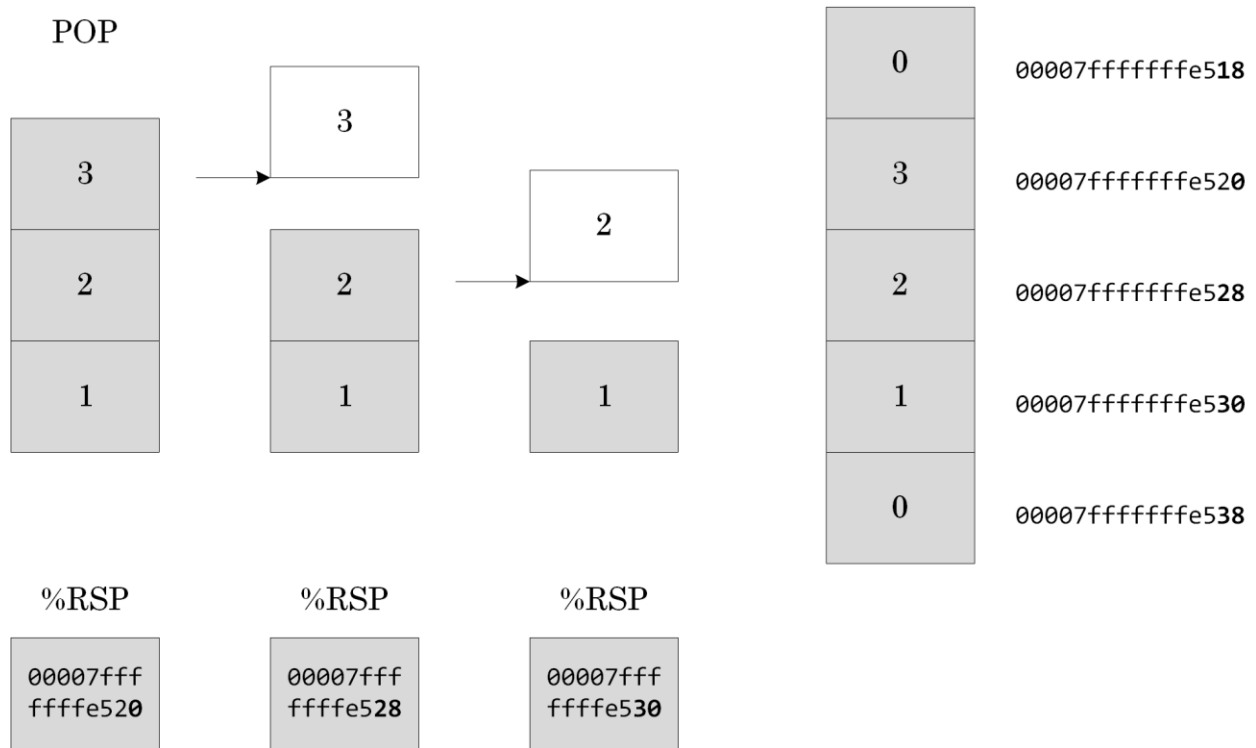
CPU %RSP register (Stack Pointer) points to the top of a stack. As shown in Picture x64.9.2, a stack grows towards lower memory addresses with every push instruction, and this is implemented as %RSP register decrement by 8. We can read the top stack value using the following instruction:

```
mov (%rsp), %rax
```



Picture x64.9.2

The opposite POP instruction increments the value of the %RSP register, as shown in Picture x64.9.3.



Picture x64.9.3

## Things to Remember

Here is the summary of what we have learned about stacks with the last 3 points covered in the subsequent chapters of this book:

- Stack operations are LIFO – Last In First Out
- The stack grows down in memory
- %RSP register points to the top of a stack
- Stacks are used for storing return address for CALL instructions
- Stacks are used for passing additional parameters to functions
- Stacks are used for storing function parameter values, local and temporary variables

## PUSH Instruction

We can push a value stored in a register, a value stored at a memory address, or constant (immediate operand):

```
PUSH r/mem/imm
```

Here is PUSH simplified pseudo-code adopted from the Intel manual:

```
IF OperandSize = 64
    THEN
        %RSP - 8 -> %RSP
        OperandValue -> (%RSP) ; quadword
    ELSE
        %RSP - 2 -> %RSP
        OperandValue -> (%RSP) ; word
FI
```

Examples:

```
push    %rax
pushw   (%rbx)
push    $0
```

## POP instruction

We can pop a value stored on the top of a stack to a register or a memory address:

**POP** *r/mem*

Here is POP simplified pseudo-code adopted from the Intel manual:

```
IF OperandSize = 64
    THEN
        (%RSP) -> OperandValue ; quadword
        %RSP + 8 -> %RSP
    ELSE
        (%RSP) -> OperandValue ; word
        %RSP + 2 -> %RSP
FI
```

Examples:

```
pop    %rax
```

```
popw   (%rbx)
```

## Register Review

So far, we have seen and used general-purpose CPU registers:

- %RAX (among its specific uses is to contain function return values)
- %RBX
- %RCX
- %RDX

We also have special purpose registers:

- %RIP (Instruction Pointer)
- %RSP (Stack Pointer)

AMD64 and Intel EM64T architectures introduced additional general purpose registers: %R8, %R9, %R10, %R11, %R12, %R13, %R14, %R15.

These additional registers are used a lot in the x64 code. More general-purpose registers allow faster code execution because temporary computation results can be stored there instead of memory locations. Here is a disassembly from the *read* function:

```
(gdb) disass read
Dump of assembler code for function __GI__libc_read:
   0x00007ffff7ef2450 <+0>:    lea    0xd6299(%rip),%rax        # 0x7ffff7fc86f0
<__libc_multiple_threads>
   0x00007ffff7ef2457 <+7>:    mov    (%rax),%eax
   0x00007ffff7ef2459 <+9>:    test   %eax,%eax
   0x00007ffff7ef245b <+11>:   jne    0x7ffff7ef2470 <__GI__libc_read+32>
   0x00007ffff7ef245d <+13>:   xor    %eax,%eax
   0x00007ffff7ef245f <+15>:   syscall
   0x00007ffff7ef2461 <+17>:   cmp    $0xffffffffffffffff000,%rax
   0x00007ffff7ef2467 <+23>:   ja     0x7ffff7ef24c0 <__GI__libc_read+112>
   0x00007ffff7ef2469 <+25>:   retq
   0x00007ffff7ef246a <+26>:   nopw  0x0(%rax,%rax,1)
   0x00007ffff7ef2470 <+32>:   push  %r12
   0x00007ffff7ef2472 <+34>:   mov   %rdx,%r12
   0x00007ffff7ef2475 <+37>:   push  %rbp
   0x00007ffff7ef2476 <+38>:   mov   %rsi,%rbp
   0x00007ffff7ef2479 <+41>:   push  %rbx
   0x00007ffff7ef247a <+42>:   mov   %edi,%ebx
   0x00007ffff7ef247c <+44>:   sub   $0x10,%rsp
   0x00007ffff7ef2480 <+48>:   callq 0x7ffff7f0e750 <__libc_enable_asynccancel>
```

```

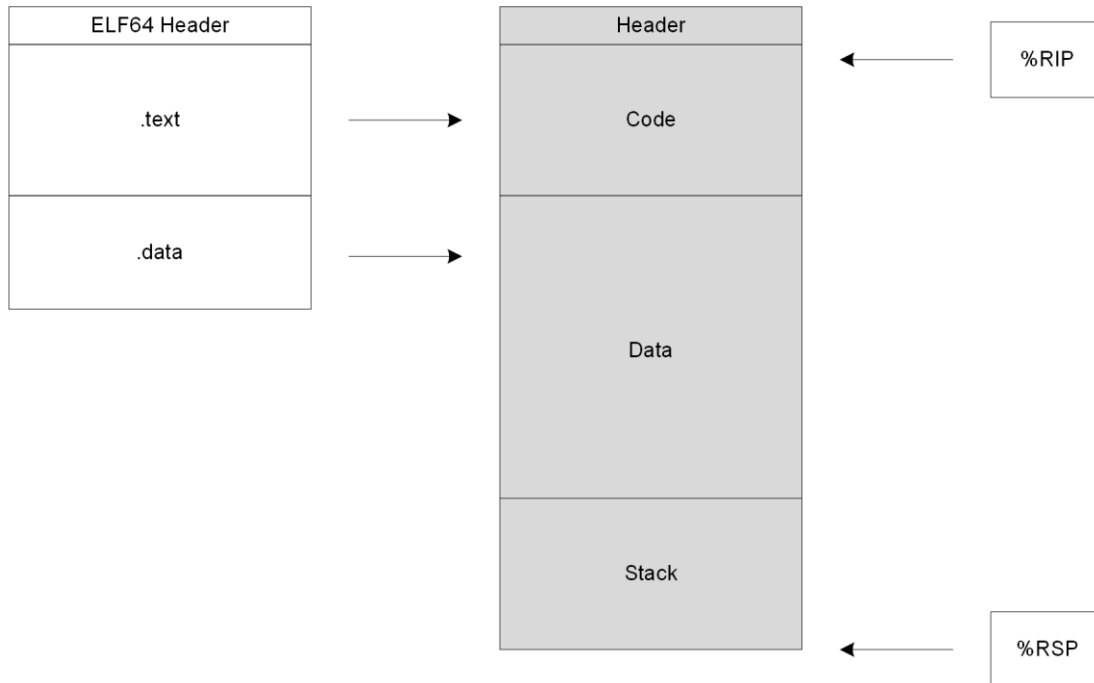
0x00007ffff7ef2485 <+53>:  mov    %r12,%rdx
0x00007ffff7ef2488 <+56>:  mov    %rbp,%rsi
0x00007ffff7ef248b <+59>:  mov    %ebx,%edi
0x00007ffff7ef248d <+61>:  mov    %eax,%r8d
0x00007ffff7ef2490 <+64>:  xor    %eax,%eax
0x00007ffff7ef2492 <+66>:  syscall
0x00007ffff7ef2494 <+68>:  cmp    $0xffffffffffff000,%rax
0x00007ffff7ef249a <+74>:  ja     0x7ffff7ef24d4 <__GI___libc_read+132>
0x00007ffff7ef249c <+76>:  mov    %r8d,%edi
0x00007ffff7ef249f <+79>:  mov    %rax,0x8(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7ef24a4 <+84>:  callq 0x7ffff7f0e7b0 <__libc_disable_asynccancel>
0x00007ffff7ef24a9 <+89>:  mov    0x8(%rsp),%rax
0x00007ffff7ef24ae <+94>:  add    $0x10,%rsp
0x00007ffff7ef24b2 <+98>:  pop    %rbx
0x00007ffff7ef24b3 <+99>:  pop    %rbp
0x00007ffff7ef24b4 <+100>: pop    %r12
0x00007ffff7ef24b6 <+102>: retq
0x00007ffff7ef24b7 <+103>: nopw  0x0(%rax,%rax,1)
0x00007ffff7ef24c0 <+112>: mov    0xd09a9(%rip),%rdx    # 0x7ffff7fc2e70
0x00007ffff7ef24c7 <+119>: neg    %eax
0x00007ffff7ef24c9 <+121>: mov    %eax,%fs:(%rdx)
0x00007ffff7ef24cc <+124>: mov    $0xffffffffffffffff,%rax
0x00007ffff7ef24d3 <+131>: retq
0x00007ffff7ef24d4 <+132>: mov    0xd0995(%rip),%rdx    # 0x7ffff7fc2e70
0x00007ffff7ef24db <+139>: neg    %eax
0x00007ffff7ef24dd <+141>: mov    %eax,%fs:(%rdx)
0x00007ffff7ef24e0 <+144>: mov    $0xffffffffffffffff,%rax
0x00007ffff7ef24e7 <+151>: jmp   0x7ffff7ef249c <__GI___libc_read+76>

```

End of assembler dump.

## Application Memory Simplified

When an executable file is loaded into memory, its header and sections are mapped to memory pages. Some data and code are copied unmodified, but some data is initialized and expanded. The first stack is also created at this stage. %RIP register is set to point to the first program instruction, and %RSP points to the top of the stack. This simplified process is shown in Picture x64.9.4.



Picture x64.9.4

## Stack Overflow

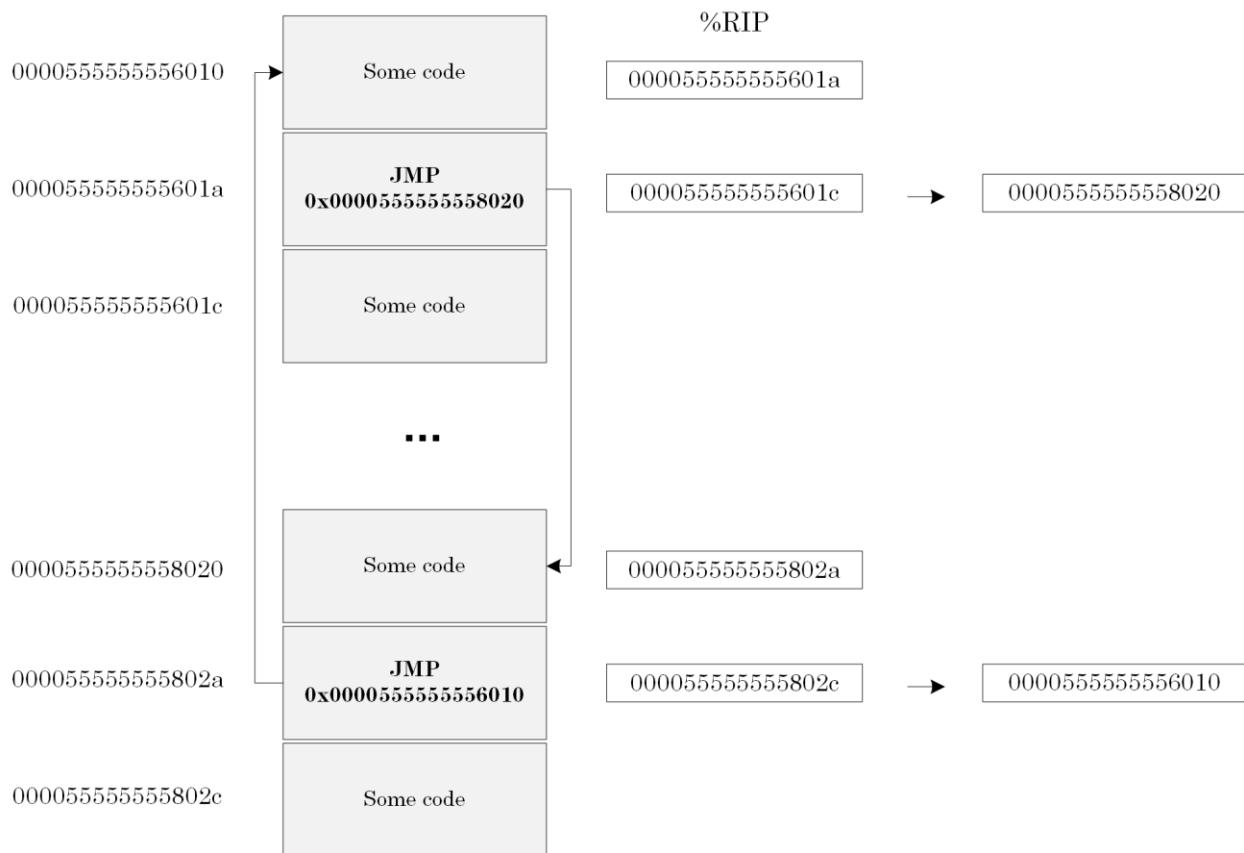
By default, the stack size is limited (system and limits dependent, and on our system, it is 8192Kb or 8388608 bytes). If a stack grows beyond the reserved limit, a stack overflow occurs (segmentation fault). It can be caused by an unlimited recursion, deep recursion, or very large local variables:

```
int func()
{
    func();
    return 0;
}

int func2()
{
    int array[10000000] = { 1 };
    printf("%d", array[10000000-1]);
}
```

## Jumps

Another instruction we need to know and understand before we look deeper into C/C++ functions is called JMP (Jump). Picture x64.9.5 shows instructions in memory and corresponding values of %RIP register.



Picture x64.9.5

We see that JMP instruction changes %RIP to point to another memory address, and the program execution continues from that location. The code shown in Picture x64.9.5 loops indefinitely: this can be considered a hang and CPU spike.

## 118 Jumps

Here is a pseudo-code for absolute JMP instructions adopted from Intel manuals and some examples:

```
; Format and arguments:
```

```
JMP r/mem64
```

```
; Pseudo-code:
```

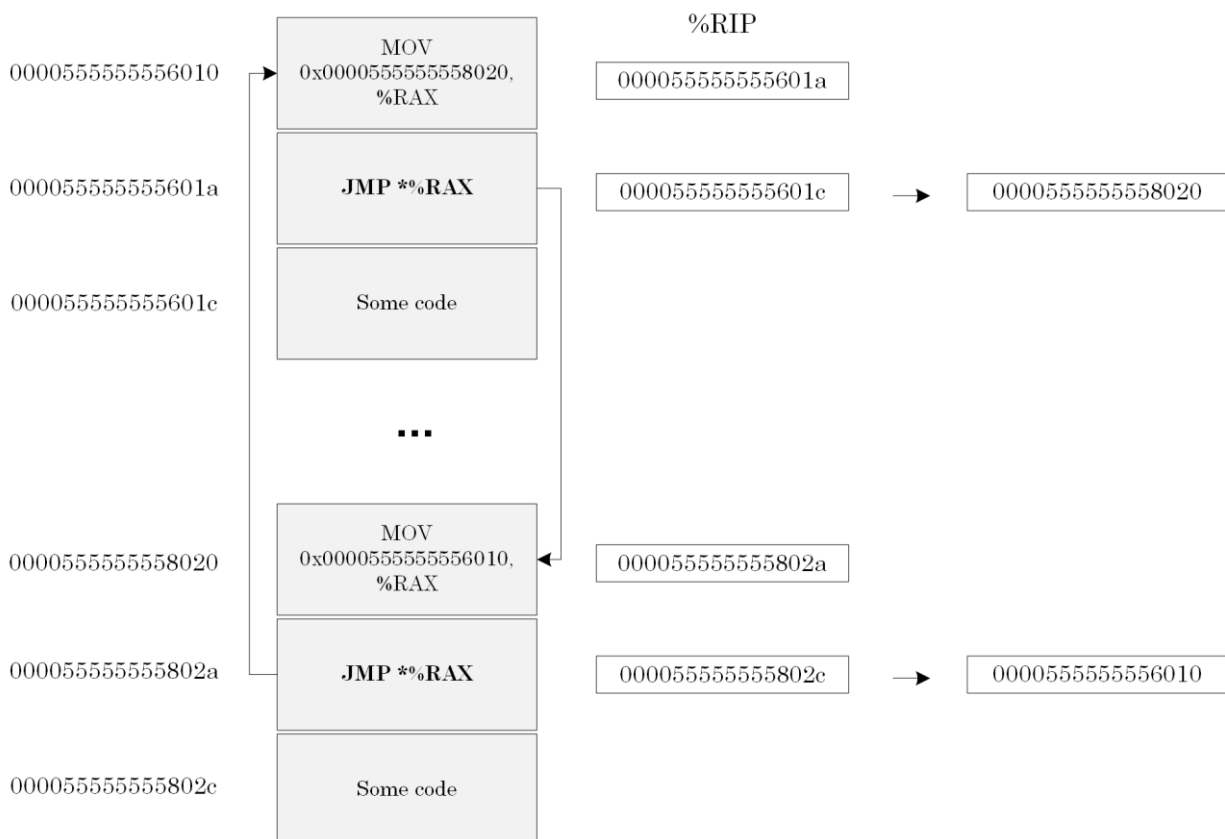
```
DEST -> RIP      ; new destination address for execution
```

```
; Examples:
```

```
JMP 0x555555558020
```

```
JMP *%RAX
```

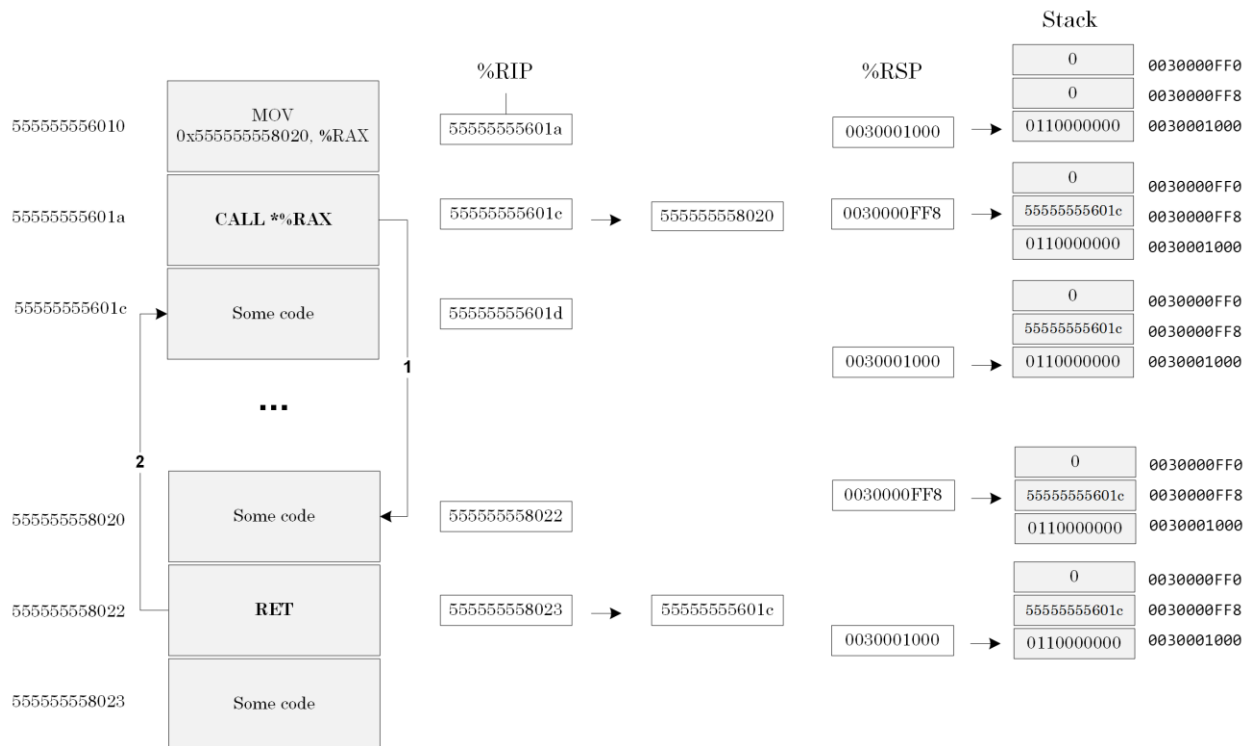
The jump is called absolute because we specify full memory addresses and not a relative +/- number to the current %RIP value. The latter jump is called relative. \*%RAX means an indirect jump to the address located in the %RAX register. It is illustrated in Picture x64.9.6.



Picture x64.9.6

## Calls

We discuss two essential instructions that make the implementation of C and C++ function calls. They are called CALL and RET. Picture x64.9.7 shows instructions in memory and corresponding values of %RIP and %RSP registers.



Picture x64.9.7

We see that CALL instruction pushes the current value of %RIP to the stack and changes %RIP to point to another memory address. Then the program execution continues from the new location. RET instruction pops the saved %RIP value from the stack to the %RIP register. Then the program execution resumes at the memory location after the CALL instruction.

## 120 Calls

Here is a pseudo-code for CALL instructions and some examples adopted from Intel manuals:

```
; Format and arguments:
```

```
CALL r/mem64
```

```
; Pseudo-code:
```

```
PUSH RIP
```

```
DEST -> RIP
```

```
; Examples:
```

```
CALL 0x555555558020
```

```
CALL *%RAX
```

Here is a pseudo-code for RET instruction adopted from Intel manuals:

```
; Format:
```

```
RET
```

```
; Pseudo-code:
```

```
POP() -> RIP
```

## Call Stack

If one function (the caller) calls another function (the callee) in C and C++, the resulting code is implemented using CALL instruction, and during its execution, the return address is saved on the stack. If the callee calls another function, the return address is also saved on the stack, and so on. Therefore, we have the so-called call stack of return addresses. Let us see this with a simple but a trimmed-down example.

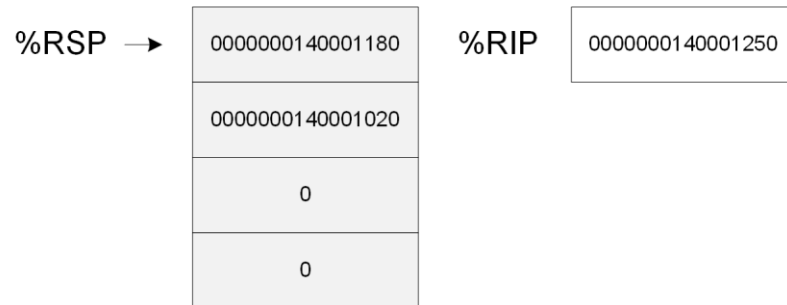
Suppose we have 3 functions with their code occupying the following addresses:

```
func  0000000140001000 - 0000000140001100
func2 0000000140001101 - 0000000140001200
func3 0000000140001201 - 0000000140001300
```

We also have the following code where *func* calls *func2*, and *func2* calls *func3*:

```
void func()
{
    func2();
}
void func2()
{
    func3();
}
```

When *func* calls *func2*, the caller's return address is pushed to the stack, and %RSP points to some value in the 0000000140001000 – 0000000140001100 range, say 0000000140001020. When *func2* calls *func3*, the caller's return address is also pushed to the stack, and %RSP points to some value in 0000000140001101 – 0000000140001200 range, say 0000000140001180. If we interrupt *func3* with a debugger and inspect %RIP, we would find its value in the range of 0000000140001201 – 0000000140001300, say 0000000140001250. Therefore, we have the following memory and register layout shown in Picture x64.9.8 (the usual function prolog is not shown: we learn about it in the next chapter).



Picture x64.9.8

The debugger examines the value of `%RIP` register and the values on top of the stack, and then reconstructs this call stack:

```
func3  
func2  
func
```

The debugger gets address ranges corresponding to *func*, *func2*, and *func3* from the so-called symbolic information, which may be either stored inside an executable file or in some external file that needs to be referenced explicitly.

## Exploring Stack in GDB

To see call stack in real action, we have a project called “SimpleStack”, and it can be downloaded from:

<https://bitbucket.org/softwareiagnostics/pflddr/src/master/x64/Chapter9/>

We compile the files and load the executable into GDB:

```

coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter9$ gcc SimpleStack.c func.c func2.c
func3.c -o SimpleStack
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter9$ gdb ./SimpleStack
GNU gdb (Debian 8.2.1-2+b3) 8.2.1
Copyright (C) 2018 Free Software Foundation, Inc.
License GPLv3+: GNU GPL version 3 or later <http://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>
This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.
There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.
Type "show copying" and "show warranty" for details.
This GDB was configured as "x86_64-linux-gnu".
Type "show configuration" for configuration details.
For bug reporting instructions, please see:
<http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/bugs/>.
Find the GDB manual and other documentation resources online at:
  <http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/documentation/>.

For help, type "help".
Type "apropos word" to search for commands related to "word"...
Reading symbols from ./SimpleStack...(no debugging symbols found)...done.

```

Then we put a breakpoint on the *main* function and run the program until GDB breaks in:

```

(gdb) run
Starting program: /home/coredump/pflddr/x64/Chapter9/SimpleStack

Breakpoint 1, 0x0000555555555129 in main ()

```

The function *func3* has a breakpoint instruction inside that allows a debugger to break in and stop the program execution to inspect its state. We resume our program execution from our breakpoint in the *main* function to allow the *main* function to call *func*, *func* to call *func2*, *func2* to call *func3*, and inside *func3* to execute the explicit breakpoint:

```
(gdb) continue
Continuing.

Program received signal SIGTRAP, Trace/breakpoint trap.
0x00005555555516c in func3 ()

(gdb) info registers $rip $rsp
rip            0x5555555516c      0x5555555516c <func3+5>
rsp            0x7fffffff500    0x7fffffff500

(gdb) x/i $rip
=> 0x5555555516c <func3+5>:  nop

(gdb) x/i $rip-1
0x5555555516b <func3+4>:  int3
```

We dump **\$rip-1** value because, when execution stops at `int3` instruction, `%RIP` points at the next instruction (**nop**).

Now we can inspect the top of the stack:

```
(gdb) x/10g $rsp
0x7fffffff500: 0x00007fffffff510      0x000055555555164
0x7fffffff510: 0x00007fffffff520      0x000055555555153
0x7fffffff520: 0x00007fffffff540      0x00005555555513e
0x7fffffff530: 0x00007fffffff628      0x0000000100000000
0x7fffffff540: 0x000055555555170      0x00007ffff7e2c09b
```

The data is meaningless for us and we use another command called to dump memory with corresponding symbols:

```
(gdb) x/10a $rsp
0x7fffffff500: 0x7fffffff510 0x55555555164 <func2+14>
0x7fffffff510: 0x7fffffff520 0x55555555153 <func+14>
0x7fffffff520: 0x7fffffff540 0x5555555513e <main+25>
0x7fffffff530: 0x7fffffff628 0x100000000
0x7fffffff540: 0x55555555170 <__libc_csu_init> 0x7ffff7e2c09b
<__libc_start_main+235>
```

The current value of `%RIP` points to `func3` and return addresses on the stack are shown in bold. GDB is able to reconstruct the following call stack, stack trace, or backtrace (bt):

```
(gdb) bt
#0  0x0000555555555516c in func3 ()
#1  0x00005555555555164 in func2 ()
#2  0x00005555555555153 in func ()
#3  0x0000555555555513e in main ()
```

[This page intentionally left blank]

## Chapter x64.10: Frame Pointer and Local Variables

### Stack Usage

In addition to storage for return addresses of CALL instructions, a stack is used to pass additional parameters to functions and store local variables. The stack is also used to save and restore values held in registers when we want to preserve them during some computation or across function calls. For example, suppose we want to do multiplication, but at the same time, we have other valuable data in registers %RAX and %RDX. The multiplication result will overwrite %RAX and %RDX values, and we temporarily put their values on stack:

```
mov    $10, %rax
mov    $20, %rdx
...
...
...           ; now we want to preserve %RAX and %RDX
push   %rax
push   %rdx
imul   %rdx    ; %RDX and %RAX contain the result of %RAX*%RDX
mov    %rax, result
pop    %rdx    ; pop in reverse order
pop    %rax    ; stack is LIFO
```

## Register Review

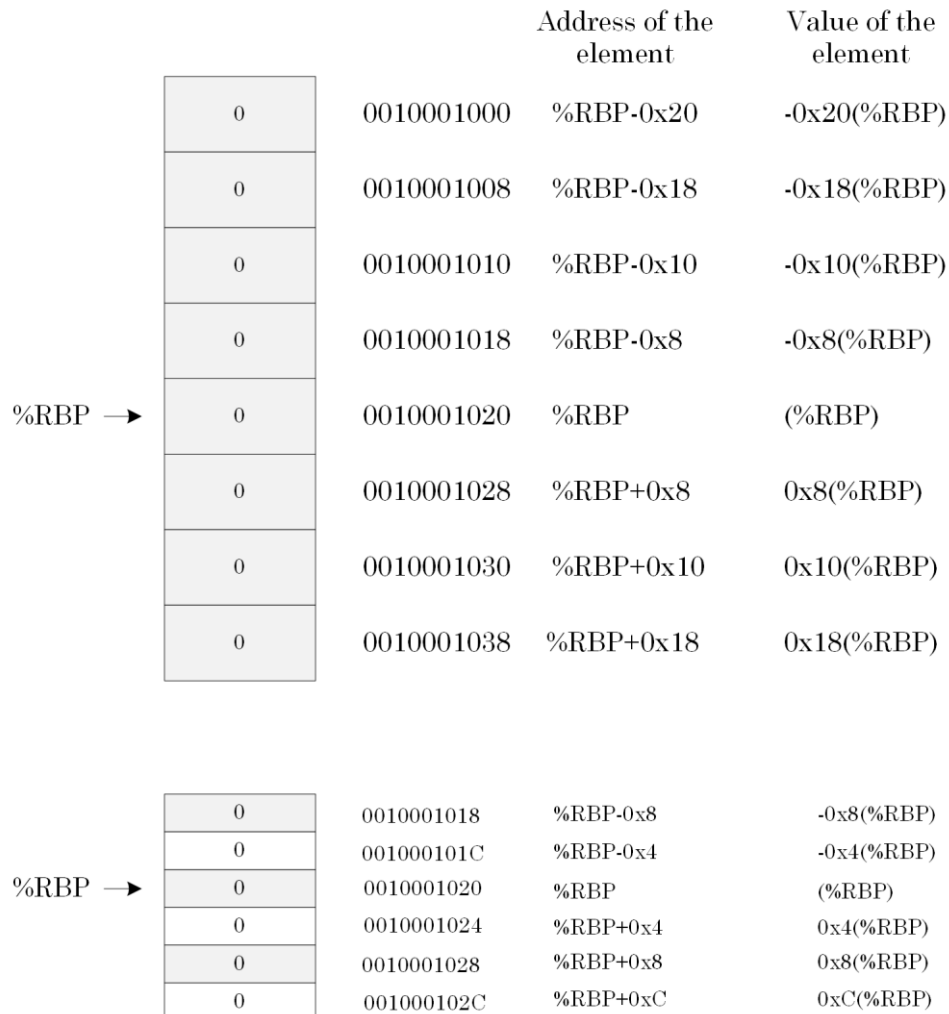
So far, we have encountered these general-purpose registers:

- %RAX (among its specific uses are to contain function return values and the lower part of a multiplication result)
- %RBX
- %RCX (among its specific uses is a loop counter)
- %RDX (among its specific uses is to contain the higher part of a multiplication result if it exceeds the maximum 64-bit value)
- %RIP (Instruction Pointer, points to the next instruction to be executed)
- %RSP (Stack Pointer, points to the top of the stack)

We come to the next important register on Linux platforms called Base Pointer register or sometimes as Stack Frame Pointer register %RBP.

## Addressing Array Elements

We can also consider stack memory as an array of memory cells, and often `%RBP` register is used to address stack memory elements in the way shown in Picture x64.10.1 where it slides into the frame of stack memory called a stack frame. The first diagram depicts 64-bit (quadword) memory cells, and the second depicts 32-bit (doubleword) memory cells.



Picture x64.10.1

## Stack Structure (No Function Parameters)

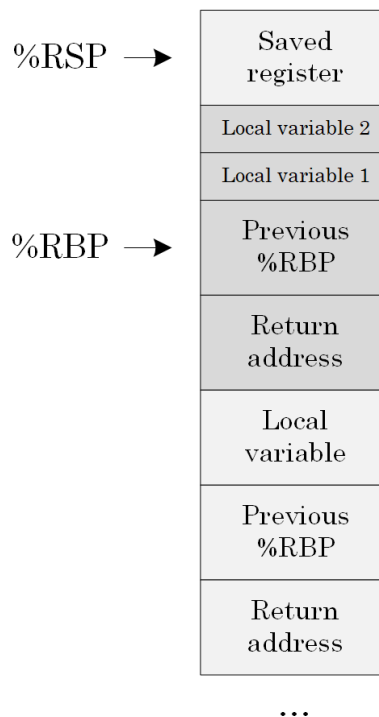
Suppose the following function is called:

```
void func()
{
    int var1, var2;
    // body code
    // ...
}
```

Before the function body code is executed, the following pointers are set up:

- (%RBP) contains previous %RBP value
- -0x4(%RBP) contains local variable var1 (doubleword)
- -0x8(%RBP) contains local variable var2 (doubleword)

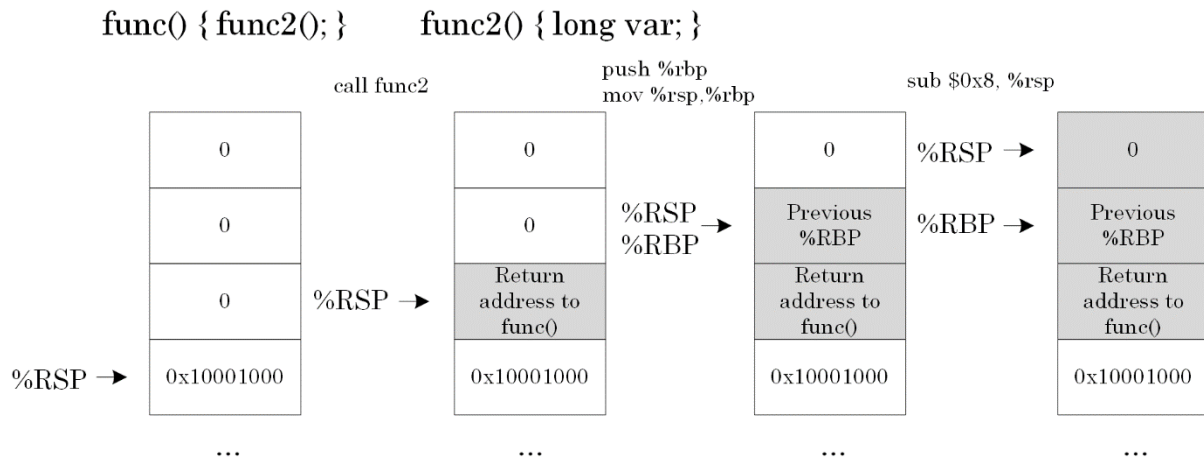
It is illustrated in Picture x64.10.2.



Picture x64.10.2

## Function Prolog

The sequence of instructions resulting in the initialization of `%RBP` register and making room for local variables is called function prolog. One example of it is Picture x64.10.3, where `func` calls `func2`, which has one local variable `var`. Sometimes saving necessary registers is also considered as part of a function prolog.



Picture x64.10.3

## Raw Stack (No Local Variables and Function Parameters)

Now we can understand additional data (the previous %RBP that was equal to the previous %RSP before the function call) that appear on the raw stack together with function return addresses that we saw in Chapter x64.9 project “SimpleStack”:

```
(gdb) info registers $rsp $rbp
rsp          0x7fffffff500      0x7fffffff500
rbp          0x7fffffff500      0x7fffffff500

(gdb) x/10a $rsp
0x7fffffff500: 0x7fffffff510  0x55555555164 <func2+14>
0x7fffffff510: 0x7fffffff520  0x55555555153 <func+14>
0x7fffffff520: 0x7fffffff540  0x5555555513e <main+25>
0x7fffffff530: 0x7fffffff628  0x100000000
0x7fffffff540: 0x55555555170 <__libc_csu_init>      0x7ffff7e2c09b
<__libc_start_main+235>

(gdb) disass func2
Dump of assembler code for function func2:
   0x000055555555156 <+0>:   push   %rbp
   0x000055555555157 <+1>:   mov    %rsp,%rbp
   0x00005555555515a <+4>:   mov    $0x0,%eax
   0x00005555555515f <+9>:   callq 0x55555555167 <func3>
   0x000055555555164 <+14>:  nop
   0x000055555555165 <+15>:  pop    %rbp
   0x000055555555166 <+16>:  retq

End of assembler dump.

(gdb) disass func
Dump of assembler code for function func:
   0x000055555555145 <+0>:   push   %rbp
   0x000055555555146 <+1>:   mov    %rsp,%rbp
   0x000055555555149 <+4>:   mov    $0x0,%eax
   0x00005555555514e <+9>:   callq 0x55555555156 <func2>
   0x000055555555153 <+14>:  nop
   0x000055555555154 <+15>:  pop    %rbp
   0x000055555555155 <+16>:  retq

End of assembler dump.
```

```
(gdb) disass main
```

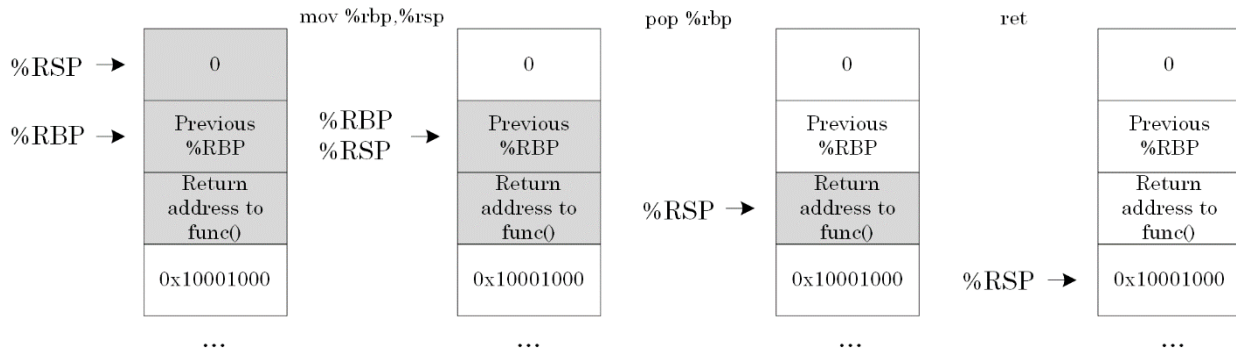
```
Dump of assembler code for function main:
```

```
0x000055555555125 <+0>:    push   %rbp
0x000055555555126 <+1>:    mov    %rsp,%rbp
0x000055555555129 <+4>:    sub   $0x10,%rsp
0x00005555555512d <+8>:    mov   %edi,-0x4(%rbp)
0x000055555555130 <+11>:   mov   %rsi,-0x10(%rbp)
0x000055555555134 <+15>:   mov   $0x0,%eax
0x000055555555139 <+20>:   callq 0x55555555145 <func>
0x00005555555513e <+25>:   mov   $0x0,%eax
0x000055555555143 <+30>:   leaveq
0x000055555555144 <+31>:   retq
```

```
End of assembler dump.
```

## Function Epilog

Before the function code returns to the caller, it must restore the previous values of `%RSP` and `%RBP` registers to allow the caller to resume its execution from the correct address, previously saved on the stack, and to continue addressing its own stack frame properly. This sequence of instructions is called function epilog, and it is shown in Picture x64.10.4.



Picture x64.10.4

Instead of `mov %rbp,%rsp` and `pop %rbp` sequence of instructions, we may see `leave` instruction, which does the same but occupies less code space.

## “Local Variables” Project

The project for this chapter can be downloaded from:

<https://bitbucket.org/softwareiagnostics/pflddr/src/master/x64/Chapter10/>

We compile the file and load the executable into GDB:

```

coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter10$ gcc LocalVariables.cpp -o
LocalVariables
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflddr/x64/Chapter10$ gdb ./LocalVariables
GNU gdb (Debian 8.2.1-2+b3) 8.2.1
Copyright (C) 2018 Free Software Foundation, Inc.
License GPLv3+: GNU GPL version 3 or later <http://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>
This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.
There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.
Type "show copying" and "show warranty" for details.
This GDB was configured as "x86_64-linux-gnu".
Type "show configuration" for configuration details.
For bug reporting instructions, please see:
<http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/bugs/>.
Find the GDB manual and other documentation resources online at:
  <http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/documentation/>.

For help, type "help".
Type "apropos word" to search for commands related to "word"...
Reading symbols from ./LocalVariables...(no debugging symbols found)...done.

```

Then we put a breakpoint to the *main* function and run the program until GDB breaks in:

```

(gdb) break main
Breakpoint 1 at 0x1129

(gdb) run
Starting program: /home/coredump/pflddr/x64/Chapter10/LocalVariables

Breakpoint 1, 0x00005555555555129 in main ()

```

Next we disassemble our *main* function:

```
(gdb) disass main
Dump of assembler code for function main:
   0x000055555555125 <+0>:    push   %rbp
   0x000055555555126 <+1>:    mov    %rsp,%rbp
=> 0x000055555555130 <+11>:   movl   $0x1,-0x4(%rbp)
   0x000055555555137 <+18>:   movl   $0x1,-0x8(%rbp)
   0x00005555555513e <+25>:   mov    -0x4(%rbp),%eax
   0x000055555555141 <+28>:   add    %eax,-0x8(%rbp)
   0x000055555555144 <+31>:   addl   $0x1,-0x4(%rbp)
   0x000055555555148 <+35>:   mov    -0x8(%rbp),%eax
   0x00005555555514b <+38>:   imul  -0x4(%rbp),%eax
   0x00005555555514f <+42>:   mov    %eax,-0x8(%rbp)
   0x000055555555152 <+45>:   mov    $0x0,%eax
   0x000055555555157 <+50>:   pop    %rbp
   0x000055555555158 <+51>:   retq

End of assembler dump.
```

Its source code is the following:

```
int main()
{
    int a, b;

    a = 1;
    b = 1;

    b = b + a;
    ++a;
    b = b * a;

    return 0;
}
```

Below is the same assembly language code but with comments showing operations in pseudo-code and highlighting function prolog and epilog:

```

0x000055555555125 <+0>:    push   %rbp           # establishing stack frame
0x000055555555126 <+1>:    mov    %rsp,%rbp
=> 0x000055555555130 <+11>:   movl   $0x1,-0x4(%rbp) # 1 -> (a)
0x000055555555137 <+18>:   movl   $0x1,-0x8(%rbp) # 1 -> (b)
0x00005555555513e <+25>:   mov    -0x4(%rbp),%eax # (a) -> eax
0x000055555555141 <+28>:   add    %eax,-0x8(%rbp) # eax + (b) -> (b)
0x000055555555144 <+31>:   addl   $0x1,-0x4(%rbp) # 1 + (a) -> (a)
0x000055555555148 <+35>:   mov    -0x8(%rbp),%eax # (b) -> eax
0x00005555555514b <+38>:   imul  -0x4(%rbp),%eax # (a) * eax -> eax
0x00005555555514f <+42>:   mov    %eax,-0x8(%rbp) # eax -> (b)
0x000055555555152 <+45>:   mov    $0x0,%eax      # 0 -> eax (return value)
0x000055555555157 <+50>:   pop    %rbp           # restoring previous frame
0x000055555555158 <+51>:   retq                      # return 0

```

The compiler didn't emit `mov %rbp,%rsp` instruction because %RSP didn't change: no functions were called and no registers saved.

## Disassembly of Optimized Executable

If we compile `LocalVariables.cpp` with `-O1` option we see very simple code that just returns 0:

```
(gdb) disass main
Dump of assembler code for function main:
=> 0x000055555555125 <+0>:    mov     $0x0,%eax
      0x00005555555512a <+5>:    retq
End of assembler dump.
```

Where is all the code we have seen in the previous version? It was optimized away by the compiler because the results of our calculation are never used. Variables **a** and **b** are local to the *main* function, and their values are not accessible outside when we return from the function.

## Chapter x64.11: Function Parameters

### “FunctionParameters” Project

This chapter teaches how a caller function passes its parameters via registers and how a callee (the called function) accesses them. We use the following project that can be downloaded from this link:

<https://bitbucket.org/softwareiagnostics/pflddr/src/master/x64/Chapter11/>

Here is the project source code:

```
// FunctionParameters.cpp
int arithmetic (int a, int b);

int main(int argc, char* argv[])
{
    int result = arithmetic (1, 1);

    return 0;
}

// Arithmetic.cpp
int arithmetic (int a, int b)
{
    b = b + a;
    ++a;
    b = b * a;

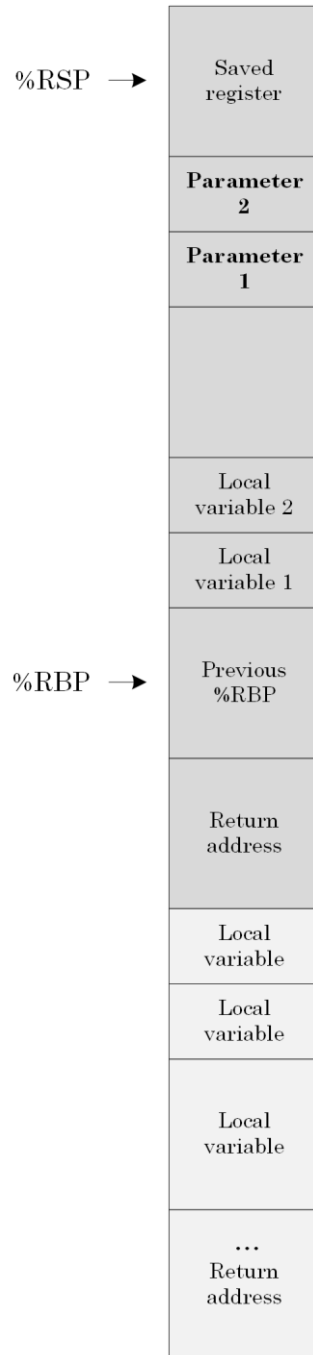
    return b;
}
```

## Stack Structure

Recall from the previous chapter that the %RBP register is used to address stack memory locations. It was illustrated in Picture x64.10.1. Here we provide a typical example of the stack memory layout for the following function:

```
void func(int Param1, int Param2)
{
    int var1, var2;
    // stack memory layout at this point
    // -0x18(%RBP) = Param2 (doubleword)
    // -0x14(%RBP) = Param1 (doubleword)
    // -0x8(%RBP) = var2 (doubleword)
    // -0x4(%RBP) = var1 (doubleword)
    // (%RBP) = previous %RBP (quadword)
    // 0x8(%RBP) = return address (quadword)
    // ...
}
```

The typical stack frame memory layout for the function with 2 arguments and 2 local variables is illustrated in Picture x64.11.1.

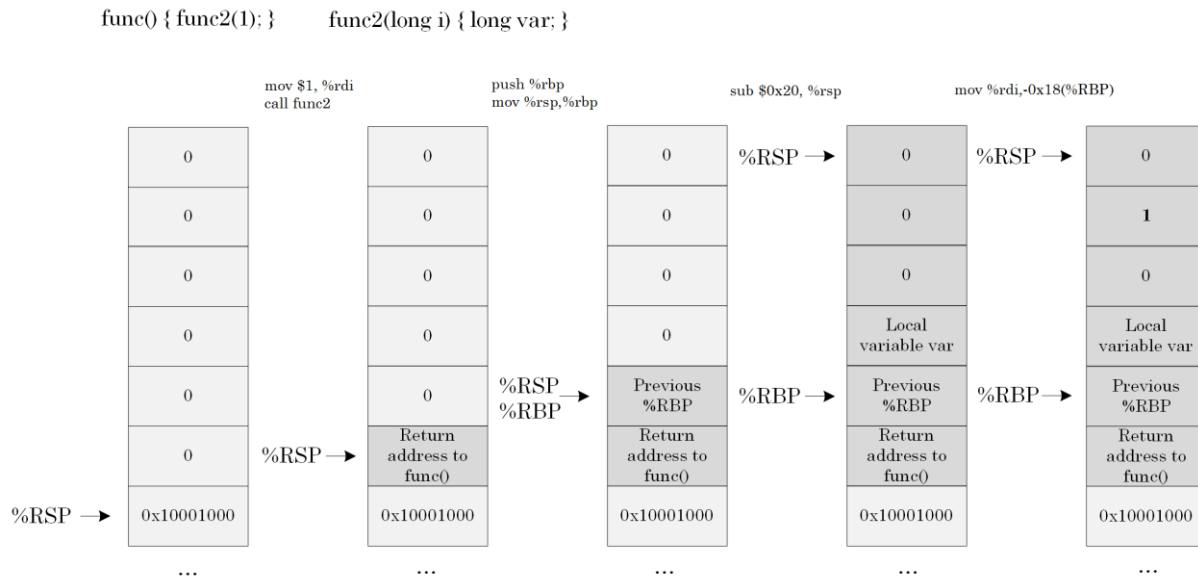


Picture x64.11.1

## Function Prolog and Epilog

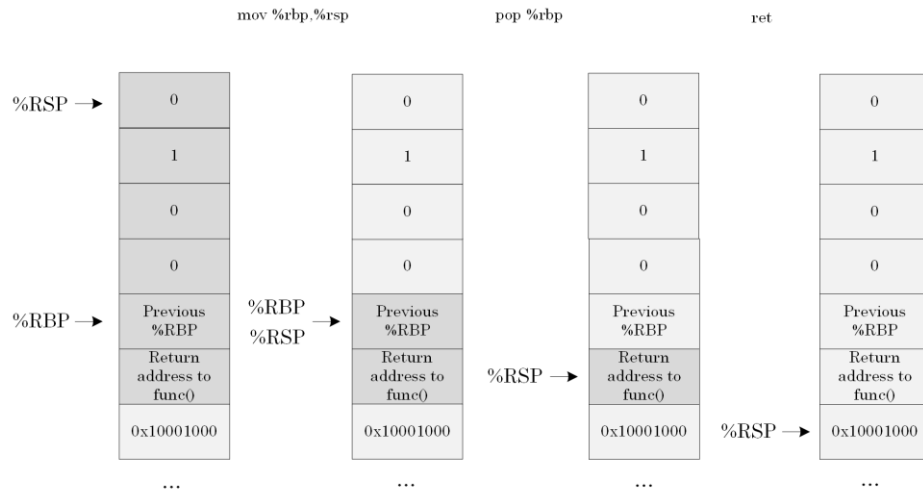
Now, before we try to make sense of the FunctionParameters project disassembly, we look at the simple case of one function parameter and one local variable to illustrate the standard function prolog and epilog sequence of instructions and corresponding stack memory changes.

Function prolog is illustrated in Picture x64.11.2, and function epilog is illustrated in Picture x64.11.3.



Picture x64.11.2

Here the function parameter is passed via the  $\%RDI$  register. It is saved on the stack because the register may be used later in calculations or function parameter passing to other functions. Generally, the function first 6 parameters are passed via  $\%RDI$ ,  $\%RSI$ ,  $\%RDX$ ,  $\%RCX$ ,  $\%R8$ , and  $\%R9$  registers from left to the right when parameters are quadwords like pointers or long values and via  $\%EDI$ ,  $\%ESI$ ,  $\%EDX$ ,  $\%ECX$ ,  $\%R8D$ , and  $\%R9D$  registers when parameters are doublewords like integers. Additional parameters are passed via the stack locations using PUSH instruction.



Picture x64.11.3

We also see that local variables are not initialized by default when their storage space is allocated via `SUB` instruction and not cleared during epilog. Whatever memory contents were there before allocation, it becomes the local variable values, the so-called garbage values.

## Project Disassembled Code with Comments

Here is commented code disassembly of *main* and *arithmetic* with memory addresses removed for visual clarity.

```

main:

push   %rbp                # establishing stack frame
mov    %rsp,%rbp
sub    $0x20,%rsp          # creating stack frame for local variables
                                and function parameters
mov    %edi,-0x14(%rbp)    # saving the first main parameter
mov    %rsi,-0x20(%rbp)    # saving the second main parameter
mov    $0x1,%esi          # setting the second parameter for
                                # arithmetic function
mov    $0x1,%edi          # setting the first parameter for arithmetic
                                # function
callq  0x5555555514d <_Z10arithmeticii>
mov    %eax,-0x4(%rbp)    # setting the result local variable
mov    $0x0,%eax          # main should return 0
leaveq                                # restoring the previous stack pointer
                                # and stack frame, equivalent to
                                # mov %rbp, %rsp
                                # pop %rbp
retq                                # return from main

arithmetic:

push   %rbp                # establishing stack frame
mov    %rsp,%rbp
mov    %edi,-0x4(%rbp)    # saving the first arithmetic parameter (a)
mov    %esi,-0x8(%rbp)    # saving the second arithmetic parameter (b)
mov    -0x4(%rbp),%eax    # (a) -> eax
add    %eax,-0x8(%rbp)    # eax + (b) -> (b)
addl   $0x1,-0x4(%rbp)    # 1 + (a) -> (a)
mov    -0x8(%rbp),%eax    # (b) -> eax
imul  -0x4(%rbp),%eax    # (a) * eax -> eax
mov    %eax,-0x8(%rbp)    # eax -> (b)
mov    -0x8(%rbp),%eax    # (b) -> eax

```

```

pop    %rbp                # restoring the previous stack frame
                        #   no need to restore stack pointer as
                        #   it didn't change
retq                   # result value is in eax

```

We can put a breakpoint on the first arithmetic calculations address and examine raw stack data pointed to by %RBP register:

```

coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflldr/x64/Chapter11$ gcc FunctionParameters.cpp
Arithmetic.cpp -o FunctionParameters
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflldr/x64/Chapter11$ gdb ./FunctionParameters
GNU gdb (Debian 8.2.1-2+b3) 8.2.1
Copyright (C) 2018 Free Software Foundation, Inc.
License GPLv3+: GNU GPL version 3 or later <http://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>
This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.
There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.
Type "show copying" and "show warranty" for details.
This GDB was configured as "x86_64-linux-gnu".
Type "show configuration" for configuration details.
For bug reporting instructions, please see:
<http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/bugs/>.
Find the GDB manual and other documentation resources online at:
    <http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/documentation/>.

For help, type "help".
Type "apropos word" to search for commands related to "word"...
Reading symbols from ./FunctionParameters...(no debugging symbols found)...done.

(gdb) break main
Breakpoint 1 at 0x1129

(gdb) run
Starting program: /home/coredump/pflldr/x64/Chapter11/FunctionParameters

Breakpoint 1, 0x00005555555555129 in main ()

```

```
(gdb) disass arithmetic
```

```
Dump of assembler code for function _Z10arithmeticii:
```

```
0x00005555555514d <+0>:    push   %rbp
0x00005555555514e <+1>:    mov    %rsp,%rbp
0x000055555555151 <+4>:    mov    %edi,-0x4(%rbp)
0x000055555555154 <+7>:    mov    %esi,-0x8(%rbp)
0x000055555555157 <+10>:   mov    -0x4(%rbp),%eax
0x00005555555515a <+13>:   add   %eax,-0x8(%rbp)
0x00005555555515d <+16>:   addl  $0x1,-0x4(%rbp)
0x000055555555161 <+20>:   mov    -0x8(%rbp),%eax
0x000055555555164 <+23>:   imul  -0x4(%rbp),%eax
0x000055555555168 <+27>:   mov    %eax,-0x8(%rbp)
0x00005555555516b <+30>:   mov    -0x8(%rbp),%eax
0x00005555555516e <+33>:   pop   %rbp
0x00005555555516f <+34>:   retq
```

```
End of assembler dump.
```

```
(gdb) break *0x000055555555157
```

```
Breakpoint 2 at 0x000055555555157
```

```
(gdb) continue
```

```
Continuing.
```

```
Breakpoint 2, 0x000055555555157 in arithmetic(int, int) ()
```

```
(gdb) info registers $rbp
```

```
rbp                0x7fffffff500      0x7fffffff500
```

```
(gdb) x/10a $rbp-0x20
```

```
0x7fffffff4e0: 0x1      0x7fff7eaaaf5 <handle_intel+197>
0x7fffffff4f0: 0x0      0x100000001 ; (b, a)
0x7fffffff500: 0x7fffffff530 0x55555555143 <main+30> ; saved $RBP, return address
0x7fffffff510: 0x7fffffff618 0x155555040
0x7fffffff520: 0x7fffffff610 0x0
```

```
(gdb) x/10w $rbp-0x20
```

```
0x7fffffff4e0: 0x1      0x0      0xffffffff7eaaaf5      0x7fff
0x7fffffff4f0: 0x0      0x0      0x1      0x1 ; (b), (a)
0x7fffffff500: 0xffffffff530      0x7fff
```

## Parameter Mismatch Problem

To illustrate the importance of understanding stack memory layout consider this typical binary interface mismatch problem. Function *main* calls *func* with two parameters:

```
// main.c
int main ()
{
    long locVar;
    func (1, 2);
    return 0;
}
```

The caller is expected the callee function *func* to see this stack memory layout and passes 1 in %RDI and 2 in %RSI :

```

    2
    1
    locVar
%RBP -> prev %RBP
    return address
```

However, the callee expects 3 parameters instead of 2:

```
// func.c
int func (int a, int b, int c)
{
    // code to use parameters
    return 0;
}
```

*func* code sees this stack memory layout:

```

    (c)
    (b)
    (a)
    locVar
%RBP -> prev %RBP
    return address
```

We see that the parameter *c* on the raw stack gets its value from some random value in %RDX that was never set by the caller. It is clearly a software defect (bug).

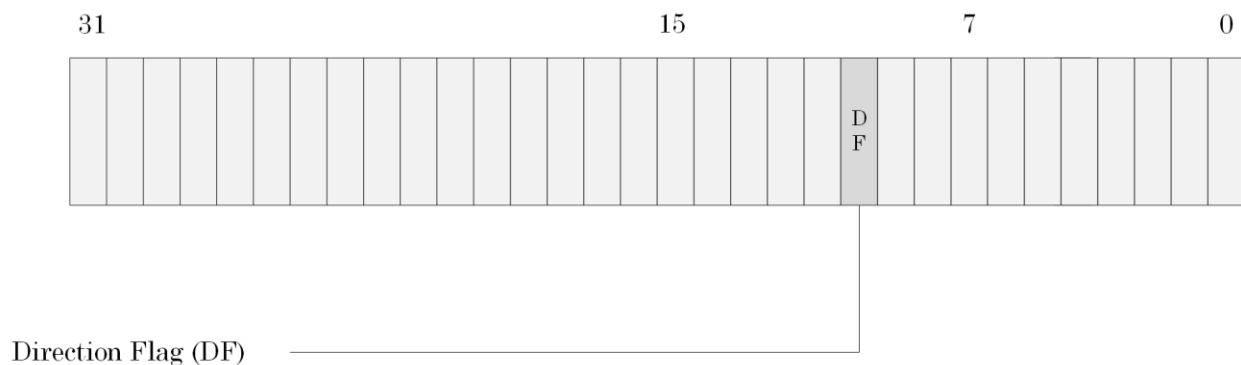
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## Chapter x64.12: More Instructions

### CPU Flags Register

In addition to registers, the CPU also contains a 64-bit %RFLAGS register where individual bits are set or cleared in response to arithmetic and other operations. Separate machine instructions can manipulate some bit values, and their values affect code execution.

For example, DF bit (Direction Flag) determines the direction of memory copy operations and can be set by `STD` and cleared by `CLD` instructions. It has the default value of 0, and its location is shown in Picture x64.12.1, where only the first 32 bits of 64-bit %RFLAGS are shown.



Picture x64.12.1

## The Fast Way to Fill Memory

It can be done by STOSQ instruction that stores a quadword value from %RAX into a memory location which address is in %RDI register (“D” means destination). After the value from %RAX is transferred to memory, the instruction increments %RDI by 8, and, if the DF flag is 0, %RDI now points to the next quadword in memory. If the DF flag is 1, then the %RDI value is decremented by 8, and the %RDI now points to the previous quadword in memory. There is an equivalent STOSL instruction that stores doublewords and increments or decrements %RDI by 4.

If we prefix any instruction with REP, it causes the instruction to be repeated until the %RCX register's value is decremented to 0. For example, we can write simple code that should theoretically zero “all memory” (practically, it traps because of access violation):

```
xor %rax, %rax           # fill with 0
mov $0, %rdi            # starting address or xor %rdi, %rdi
mov $0xffffffff / 4, %rcx  # 0xffffffff quad words
rep stosq
```

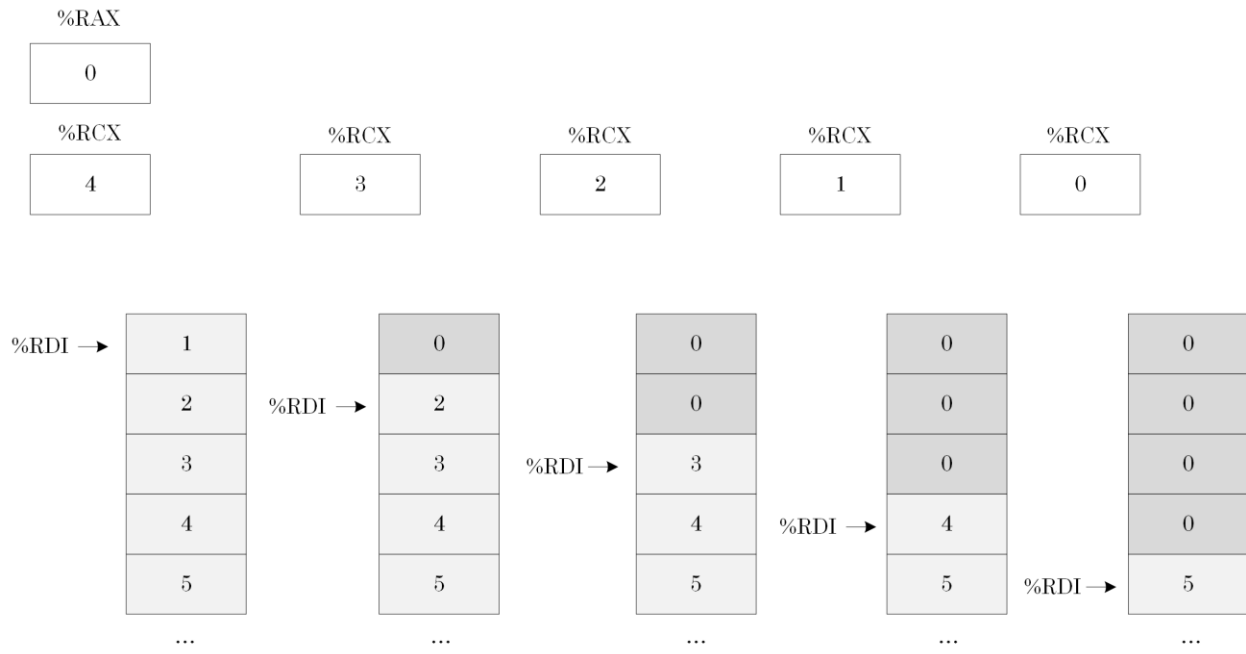
Here is REP STOSQ in pseudo-code:

```
WHILE (RCX != 0)
{
    RAX -> (RDI)

    IF DF = 0 THEN
        RDI + 8 -> RDI
    ELSE
        RDI - 8 -> RDI

    RCX - 1 -> RCX
}
```

A simple example of erasing 32 bytes (4x8) is shown in Picture x64.12.2.



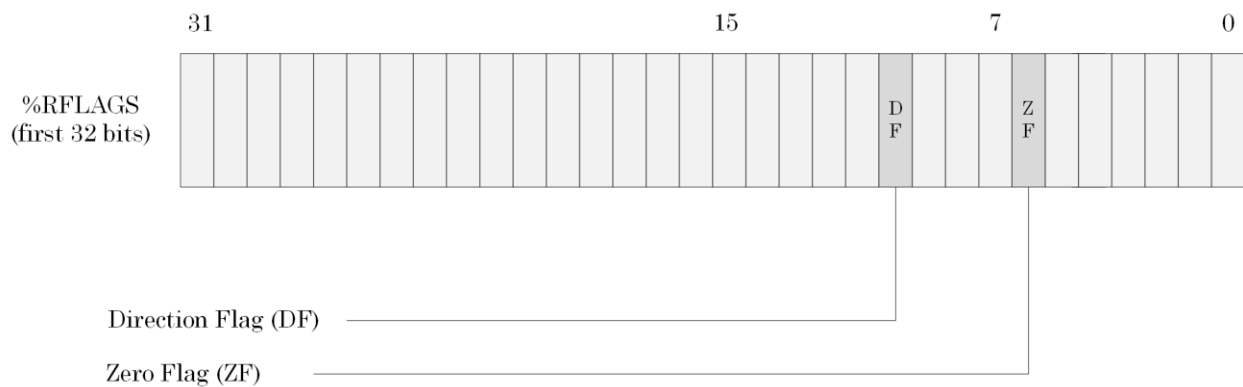
Picture x64.12.2

## Testing for 0

ZF bit in %RFLAGS register is set to 1 if the instruction result is 0 and cleared otherwise. This bit is affected by:

- Arithmetic instructions (for example, ADD, SUB, MUL)
- Logical compare instruction (TEST)
- “Arithmetical” compare instruction (CMP)

The location of the ZF bit is shown in Picture x64.12.3.



Picture x64.12.3

## TEST - Logical Compare

This instruction computes bit-wise logical AND between both operands and sets flags (including ZF) according to the computed result (which is discarded):

```
TEST reg/imm, reg/mem
```

Examples:

```
TEST %EDX, %EDX
```

Suppose %EDX register contains 4 ( $100_{\text{bin}}$ )

```
 $100_{\text{bin}} \text{ AND } 100_{\text{bin}} = 100_{\text{bin}} \quad \neq 0 \text{ (ZF is cleared)}$ 
```

```
TEST $1, %EDX
```

Suppose %EDX contains 0 ( $0_{\text{bin}}$ )

```
 $0_{\text{bin}} \text{ AND } 1_{\text{bin}} = 0_{\text{bin}} \quad == 0 \text{ (ZF is set)}$ 
```

Here is TEST instruction in pseudo-code (details not relevant to ZF bit are omitted):

```
TEMP := OPERAND1 AND OPERAND2
IF TEMP = 0 THEN
    1 -> ZF
ELSE
    0 -> ZF
```

## CMP – Compare Two Operands

This instruction compares the first operand with the second and sets flags (including ZF) according to the computed result (which is discarded). The comparison is performed by subtracting the first operand from the second (like SUB instruction: `sub $4, %eax`).

```
CMP reg/imm, reg/mem
```

```
CMP reg/mem/imm, reg
```

Examples:

```
CMP $0, %EDI
```

Suppose %EDI contains 0

```
0 - 0 == 0 (ZF is set)
```

```
CMP $0x16, %EAX
```

Suppose %EAX contains 4<sub>hex</sub>

```
4hex - 16hex = FFFFFFFEhex != 0 (ZF is cleared)
```

```
4dec - 22dec = -18dec
```

Here is CMP instruction in pseudo-code (details not relevant to ZF bit are omitted):

```
OPERAND2 - OPERAND1 -> TEMP
```

```
IF TEMP = 0 THEN
```

```
    1 -> ZF
```

```
ELSE
```

```
    0 -> ZF
```

CMP instruction is equivalent to this pseudo-code sequence:

```
OPERAND2 -> TEMP
```

```
SUB OPERAND1, TEMP
```

## TEST or CMP?

Both instructions are equivalent if we want to test for zero, but CMP instruction affects more flags than TEST:

```
TEST %EAX, %EAX
```

```
CMP $0, %EAX
```

CMP instruction is used to compare for inequality (TEST instruction cannot be used here):

```
CMP $0, %EAX    # > 0 or < 0 ?
```

TEST instruction is used to see if individual bits are set:

```
TEST $2, %EAX    # 2 == 0010bin or in C language: if (var & 0x2)
```

Examples where %EAX has the value of 2:

```
TEST $2, %EAX    # 0010bin AND 0100bin = 0000bin (ZF is set)
```

```
TEST $6, %EAX    # 0010bin AND 0110bin = 0010bin (ZF is cleared)
```

## Conditional Jumps

Consider these two C or C++ code fragments:

```

if (a == 0)          if (a != 0)
{
    ++a;
}
else
{
    --a;
}

```

CPU fetches instructions sequentially, so we must tell the CPU that we want to skip some instructions if some condition is (not) met, for example, if  $a \neq 0$ .

JNZ (jump if not zero) and JZ (jump if zero) test the ZF flag and change %RIP if the ZF bit is cleared for JNZ or set for JZ. The following assembly language code is equivalent to C/C++ code above:

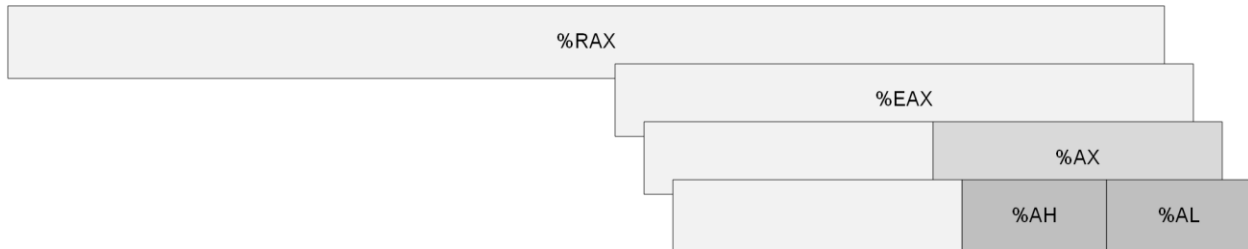
```

        CMP    $0, A          MOV    A, %EAX
        JNZ   label1         TEST   %EAX, %EAX
        INC   A              JZ     label1
        JMP   label2         INC    %EAX
label1: DEC   A              JMP   label2
label2:                    label1: DEC  %EAX
                          label2:

```

## The Structure of Registers

Some 64-bit registers have a legacy structure that allows us to address their lower 32-bit, 16-bit, and two 8-bit parts, as shown in Picture x64.12.4.



Picture x64.12.4

## Function Return Value

Many functions return values via %RAX register. For example:

```
long func();
```

Return value is in %RAX.

```
bool func();
```

The return value is in %EAX.

Although bool values occupy one byte in memory, the compiler may use %EAX instead of %AL.

## Using Byte Registers

Suppose we have a byte value in the %AL register, and we want to add this value to the %ECX register. However, we do not know what values other parts of the full %EAX register contain. We cannot use this instruction, for example:

```
MOV  %AL, %EBX    # operand size conflict
```

The proposed solution in pseudo-code:

```
AL -> EBX        or    AL -> EAX
ECX + EBX -> ECX    ECX + EAX -> ECX
```

We can only use MOV instructions that have the same operand size for both source and destination, for example:

```
MOV  %AL, %BL
MOV  %AL, b      # in C: static bool b = func()
```

For this task, there is a special MOVZX (Move with Zero eXtend) instruction that replaces the contents of the second operand with the contents of the first operand while filling the rest of bits with zeros:

```
MOVZX reg/mem, reg
```

Therefore, our solution for the task becomes very simple:

```
MOVZX %AL, %EBX
ADD  %EBX, %ECX
```

We can also reuse the %EAX register:

```
MOVZX %AL, %EAX
ADD  %EAX, %ECX
```

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## Chapter x64.13: Function Pointer Parameters

### “FunctionPointerParameters” Project

It is our final project, and it can be downloaded from:

<https://bitbucket.org/softwareiagnostics/pflddr/src/master/x64/Chapter13/>

A summary of the project source code:

```
// FunctionParameters.cpp
int main(int argc, char* argv[])
{
    int a, b;

    printf("Enter a and b: ");
    scanf("%d %d", &a, &b);

    if (arithmetic (a, &b))
    {
        printf("Result = %d", b);
    }

    return 0;
}

// Arithmetic.cpp
bool arithmetic (int a, int *b)
{
    if (!b)
    {
        return false;
    }

    *b = *b + a;
    ++a;
    *b = *b * a;

    return true;
}
```

## Commented Disassembly

Here is the commented disassembly we get after compiling the project and loading into GDB:

```
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflDDR/x64/Chapter13$ gcc FunctionParameters.cpp
Arithmetic.cpp -o FunctionParameters
coredump@DESKTOP-IS6V2L0:~/pflDDR/x64/Chapter13$ gdb ./FunctionParameters
GNU gdb (Debian 8.2.1-2+b3) 8.2.1
Copyright (C) 2018 Free Software Foundation, Inc.
License GPLv3+: GNU GPL version 3 or later <http://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>
This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.
There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.
Type "show copying" and "show warranty" for details.
This GDB was configured as "x86_64-linux-gnu".
Type "show configuration" for configuration details.
For bug reporting instructions, please see:
<http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/bugs/>.
Find the GDB manual and other documentation resources online at:
  <http://www.gnu.org/software/gdb/documentation/>.

For help, type "help".
Type "apropos word" to search for commands related to "word"...
Reading symbols from ./FunctionParameters...(no debugging symbols found)...done.

(gdb) break main
Breakpoint 1 at 0x1149

(gdb) run
Starting program: /home/coredump/pflDDR/x64/Chapter13/FunctionParameters

Breakpoint 1, 0x00005555555555149 in main ()
```

```
(gdb) disass main
Dump of assembler code for function main:
   0x000055555555145 <+0>:   push   %rbp
   0x000055555555146 <+1>:   mov    %rsp,%rbp
=> 0x000055555555149 <+4>:   sub    $0x20,%rsp
   0x00005555555514d <+8>:   mov    %edi,-0x14(%rbp)
   0x000055555555150 <+11>:  mov    %rsi,-0x20(%rbp)
   0x000055555555154 <+15>:  lea   0xea9(%rip),%rdi      # 0x555555556004
   0x00005555555515b <+22>:  mov    $0x0,%eax
   0x000055555555160 <+27>:  callq 0x55555555030 <printf@plt>
   0x000055555555165 <+32>:  lea   -0x8(%rbp),%rdx
   0x000055555555169 <+36>:  lea   -0x4(%rbp),%rax
   0x00005555555516d <+40>:  mov    %rax,%rsi
   0x000055555555170 <+43>:  lea   0xe9d(%rip),%rdi      # 0x555555556014
   0x000055555555177 <+50>:  mov    $0x0,%eax
   0x00005555555517c <+55>:  callq 0x55555555040 <scanf@plt>
   0x000055555555181 <+60>:  mov    -0x4(%rbp),%eax
   0x000055555555184 <+63>:  lea   -0x8(%rbp),%rdx
   0x000055555555188 <+67>:  mov    %rdx,%rsi
   0x00005555555518b <+70>:  mov    %eax,%edi
   0x00005555555518d <+72>:  callq 0x555555551b3 <_Z10arithmeticiPi>
   0x000055555555192 <+77>:  test   %al,%al
   0x000055555555194 <+79>:  je    0x555555551ac <main+103>
   0x000055555555196 <+81>:  mov    -0x8(%rbp),%eax
   0x000055555555199 <+84>:  mov    %eax,%esi
   0x00005555555519b <+86>:  lea   0xe78(%rip),%rdi      # 0x55555555601a
   0x0000555555551a2 <+93>:  mov    $0x0,%eax
   0x0000555555551a7 <+98>:  callq 0x55555555030 <printf@plt>
   0x0000555555551ac <+103>: mov    $0x0,%eax
   0x0000555555551b1 <+108>: leaveq
   0x0000555555551b2 <+109>: retq

End of assembler dump.
```

```
(gdb) x/s 0x555555556004
0x555555556004: "Enter a and b: "
```

```
(gdb) x/s 0x555555556014
0x555555556014: "%d %d"
```

```
(gdb) x/s 0x55555555601a
```

```
0x55555555601a: "Result = %d"
```

```
(gdb) disass arithmetic
```

```
Dump of assembler code for function _Z10arithmeticiPi:
```

```

0x0000555555551b3 <+0>:    push   %rbp
0x0000555555551b4 <+1>:    mov    %rsp,%rbp
0x0000555555551b7 <+4>:    mov    %edi,-0x4(%rbp)
0x0000555555551ba <+7>:    mov    %rsi,-0x10(%rbp)
0x0000555555551be <+11>:   cmpq   $0x0,-0x10(%rbp)
0x0000555555551c3 <+16>:   jne    0x555555551cc <_Z10arithmeticiPi+25>
0x0000555555551c5 <+18>:   mov    $0x0,%eax
0x0000555555551ca <+23>:   jmp    0x555555551f8 <_Z10arithmeticiPi+69>
0x0000555555551cc <+25>:   mov    -0x10(%rbp),%rax
0x0000555555551d0 <+29>:   mov    (%rax),%edx
0x0000555555551d2 <+31>:   mov    -0x4(%rbp),%eax
0x0000555555551d5 <+34>:   add    %eax,%edx
0x0000555555551d7 <+36>:   mov    -0x10(%rbp),%rax
0x0000555555551db <+40>:   mov    %edx,(%rax)
0x0000555555551dd <+42>:   addl   $0x1,-0x4(%rbp)
0x0000555555551e1 <+46>:   mov    -0x10(%rbp),%rax
0x0000555555551e5 <+50>:   mov    (%rax),%eax
0x0000555555551e7 <+52>:   imul  -0x4(%rbp),%eax
0x0000555555551eb <+56>:   mov    %eax,%edx
0x0000555555551ed <+58>:   mov    -0x10(%rbp),%rax
0x0000555555551f1 <+62>:   mov    %edx,(%rax)
0x0000555555551f3 <+64>:   mov    $0x1,%eax
0x0000555555551f8 <+69>:   pop    %rbp
0x0000555555551f9 <+70>:   retq

```

```
End of assembler dump.
```

```

main:

push  %rbp                # establishing stack frame
mov   %rsp,%rbp
sub   $0x20,%rsp          # creating stack frame for locals
                                # and main function parameters
mov   %edi,-0x14(%rbp)    # saving the first main parameter
mov   %rsi,-0x20(%rbp)    # saving the second main parameter
lea   0xea9(%rip),%rdi    # 0x555555556004 # the address of printf
                                # string parameter

mov   $0x0,%eax
callq 0x555555555030 <printf@plt> # printf("Enter a and b: ")
lea   -0x8(%rbp),%rdx     # address b -> rdx (3rd parameter)
lea   -0x4(%rbp),%rax     # address a -> rax
mov   %rax,%rsi          # rax -> rsi (2nd parameter)
lea   0xe9d(%rip),%rdi    # 0x555555556014 # the address of scanf string
                                # parameter (1st parameter)

mov   $0x0,%eax
callq 0x555555555040 <scanf@plt> # scanf("%d %d", &a, &b)
                                # parameters are passed via
                                # %rdi, %rsi, %rdx

mov   -0x4(%rbp),%eax     # (a) -> eax (value of a)
lea   -0x8(%rbp),%rdx     # address b -> rdx
mov   %rdx,%rsi          # rdx -> rsi (2nd parameter)
mov   %eax,%edi          # eax -> edi ((a), 1st parameter)
callq 0x5555555551b3 <_Z10arithmeticiPi> # arithmetic (a, &b)
test  %al,%al            # tesing for zero
                                # bool result from arithmetic

je    0x5555555551ac <main+103> # if = 0
                                # 0x00005555555551ac -> rip

mov   -0x8(%rbp),%eax     # (b) -> eax (value of b)
mov   %eax,%esi          # eax -> esi (2nd parameter)
lea   0xe78(%rip),%rdi    # 0x55555555601a # the address of printf
                                # string parameter

mov   $0x0,%eax
callq 0x555555555030 <printf@plt> # printf("Result = %d", b)
0x00005555555551ac <+103>:
mov   $0x0,%eax          # main should return 0
leaveq                                # restoring the previous

```

```

# stack pointer and
# stack frame, equivalent to
# mov %rbp, %rsp
# pop %rbp
retq # return from main

arithmetic:

push %rbp # establishing stack frame
mov %rsp,%rbp
mov %edi,-0x4(%rbp) # saving the first parameter (p1)
mov %rsi,-0x10(%rbp) # saving the second parameter (p2)
cmpq $0x0,-0x10(%rbp) # if p2 != 0
jne 0x555555551cc <_Z10arithmeticiPi+25> # goto 0x555555551cc
mov $0x0,%eax # return value 0
jmp 0x555555551f8 <_Z10arithmeticiPi+69> # goto epilog
0x0000555555551cc <+25>:
mov -0x10(%rbp),%rax # (p2) -> rax
mov (%rax),%edx # (rax) -> edx (*p2)
# p2 is a pointer since it
# contains the address of
# variable that we name b
# we also name p1 as a
mov -0x4(%rbp),%eax # (a) -> eax
add %eax,%edx # eax + edx -> edx
# (a) + (b) -> edx
mov -0x10(%rbp),%rax # address b -> rax
mov %edx,(%rax) # edx -> (b)
# (a) + (b) -> (b)
addl $0x1,-0x4(%rbp) # 1 + (a) -> (a)
mov -0x10(%rbp),%rax # address b -> rax
mov (%rax),%eax # (b) -> eax
imul -0x4(%rbp),%eax # (a) * (b) -> eax
mov %eax,%edx # eax -> edx
mov -0x10(%rbp),%rax # address b -> rax
mov %edx,(%rax) # edx -> (b)
# (a) * (b) -> (b)
mov $0x1,%eax # 1 -> eax (return value)
0x0000555555551f8 <+69>:

```

```
pop    %rbp                # restoring the previous stack frame
                                #   no need to restore
                                #   stack pointer as
                                #   it didn't change
retq   # result value is in eax
```

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## Chapter x64.14: Summary of Code Disassembly Patterns

This final chapter summarizes the various patterns we have encountered during the reading of this book.

### Function Prolog / Epilog

#### Function prolog

```
push  %rbp
mov   %rsp,%rbp
```

#### Function epilog

```
mov   %rbp,%rsp
pop   %rbp
ret
```

This is equivalent to:

```
leave
ret
```

Some code may omit to restore `%RSP` if it does not change:

```
pop   %rbp
ret
```

Knowing prolog can help in identifying situations when symbol files or function start addresses are not correct. For example, suppose we have the following backtrace:

```
func3+0x5F
func2+0x8F
func+0x20
```

If we disassemble the `func2` function and see that it does not start with prolog, we may assume that backtrace needs more attention:

```
(gdb) x/2i func2
0x55555555165 <main+32>:  lea    -0x8(%rbp),%rdx
0x55555555169 <main+36>:  lea    -0x4(%rbp),%rax
```

In optimized code, `%RSP` may be used to address local variables and parameters instead of `%RBP`. In such a case, prolog and epilog may be partially missing. Here is an example from the `printf` function:

```
(gdb) disass printf
```

```
Dump of assembler code for function __printf:
```

```

0x00007ffff7e60560 <+0>:      sub    $0xd8,%rsp
0x00007ffff7e60567 <+7>:      mov    %rsi,0x28(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e6056c <+12>:     mov    %rdx,0x30(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e60571 <+17>:     mov    %rcx,0x38(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e60576 <+22>:     mov    %r8,0x40(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e6057b <+27>:     mov    %r9,0x48(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e60580 <+32>:     test   %al,%al
0x00007ffff7e60582 <+34>:     je     0x7ffff7e605bb <__printf+91>
0x00007ffff7e60584 <+36>:     movaps %xmm0,0x50(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e60589 <+41>:     movaps %xmm1,0x60(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e6058e <+46>:     movaps %xmm2,0x70(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e60593 <+51>:     movaps %xmm3,0x80(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e6059b <+59>:     movaps %xmm4,0x90(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e605a3 <+67>:     movaps %xmm5,0xa0(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e605ab <+75>:     movaps %xmm6,0xb0(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e605b3 <+83>:     movaps %xmm7,0xc0(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e605bb <+91>:     mov    %fs:0x28,%rax
0x00007ffff7e605c4 <+100>:    mov    %rax,0x18(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e605c9 <+105>:    xor    %eax,%eax
0x00007ffff7e605cb <+107>:    lea   0xe0(%rsp),%rax
0x00007ffff7e605d3 <+115>:    mov    %rdi,%rsi
0x00007ffff7e605d6 <+118>:    mov    %rsp,%rdx
0x00007ffff7e605d9 <+121>:    mov    %rax,0x8(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e605de <+126>:    lea   0x20(%rsp),%rax
0x00007ffff7e605e3 <+131>:    mov    %rax,0x10(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e605e8 <+136>:    mov    0x162959(%rip),%rax      # 0x7ffff7fc2f48
0x00007ffff7e605ef <+143>:    movl  $0x8,(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e605f6 <+150>:    mov    (%rax),%rdi
0x00007ffff7e605f9 <+153>:    movl  $0x30,0x4(%rsp)
0x00007ffff7e60601 <+161>:    callq 0x7ffff7e579f0 <_IO_vfprintf_internal>
0x00007ffff7e60606 <+166>:    mov    0x18(%rsp),%rcx
0x00007ffff7e6060b <+171>:    xor    %fs:0x28,%rcx
0x00007ffff7e60614 <+180>:    jne   0x7ffff7e6061e <__printf+190>
0x00007ffff7e60616 <+182>:    add    $0xd8,%rsp
0x00007ffff7e6061d <+189>:    retq
0x00007ffff7e6061e <+190>:    callq 0x7ffff7f127b0 <__stack_chk_fail>

```

```
End of assembler dump.
```

## LEA (Load Effective Address)

The following instruction

```
lea    -0x8(%rbp),%rdx
```

is equivalent to the following arithmetic sequence:

```
mov    %rbp, %rdx  
add    -0x8, %rdx
```

The following instruction

```
lea    0xea9(%rip),%rdi
```

is equivalent to the following arithmetic sequence:

```
mov    %rip, %rdi  
add    0xea9, %rdx
```

## Passing Parameters

### The first 6 function parameters from left to right

`%RDI, %RSI, %RDX, %RCX, %R8, and %R9`

Note: although we haven't seen examples for more than 6 function parameters, they are passed via the stack, for example, via PUSH instruction.

### Static/global variable address (or string constant)

```
mov    $0x555555556004, reg
lea    0xe9d(%rip), reg
```

### Local variable value vs. local variable address

```
mov    -XXX(%rbp), reg        ; local variable value
call   func
```

```
lea    -XXX(%rbp), reg        ; local variable address
call   func
```

## Accessing Parameters and Local Variables

### Local variable value

```
mov -XXX(%rbp), reg
mov XXX(%rsp), reg      # optimized code
```

### Local variable address

```
lea -XXX(%rbp), reg
lea XXX(%rsp), reg      # optimized code
```

### Accessing a doubleword value

```
mov    -0x8(%rbp), %eax
add    $1, %eax
addl   $1, %rax
```

### Accessing a quadword value

```
mov    -0x8(%rbp), %rax
add    $1, %rax
```

### Accessing and dereferencing a pointer to a doubleword value

```
mov    -0x10(%rbp), %rax
mov    (%rax), %eax
add    $1, %eax
```

### Accessing and dereferencing a pointer to a quadword value

```
mov    -0x10(%rbp), %rax
mov    (%rax), %rax
add    $1, %rax
```

Optimized code may not use stack locations to address function parameters (use only registers through which the parameters were passed) as can be seen in the previous chapter example compiled with -O1 switch:

```
(gdb) disass arithmetic
Dump of assembler code for function _Z10arithmeticiPi:
0x0000555555551ab <+0>:    test   %rsi,%rsi
0x0000555555551ae <+3>:    je     0x555555551c2 <_Z10arithmeticiPi+23>
0x0000555555551b0 <+5>:    mov   %edi,%eax
0x0000555555551b2 <+7>:    add   (%rsi),%eax
0x0000555555551b4 <+9>:    add   $0x1,%edi
0x0000555555551b7 <+12>:   imul %eax,%edi
0x0000555555551ba <+15>:   mov   %edi,(%rsi)
0x0000555555551bc <+17>:   mov   $0x1,%eax
0x0000555555551c1 <+22>:   retq
0x0000555555551c2 <+23>:   mov   $0x0,%eax
0x0000555555551c7 <+28>:   retq
End of assembler dump.
```