



AUGUST 10-11, 2022

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BRIEFINGS

# TruEMU: an extensible, open-source, whole-system iOS emulator

Speaker: Trung Nguyen

Team members: Antonio Binachi, Kyungtae Kim, Dave Jing Tian



## whoami

- Trung Nguyen Hoang - @ntrung03
- Undergraduate CS student at Purdue University
- Focus on macOS/iOS research
- Used to blog about CTF challenges
  - <https://trungnguyen1909.github.io/blog/>



# Agenda

- Current state of iOS Research
- TruEmu's design goal
- Implementing TruEmu
- Using TruEmu for Research
- TruEmu's Future and Roadmap





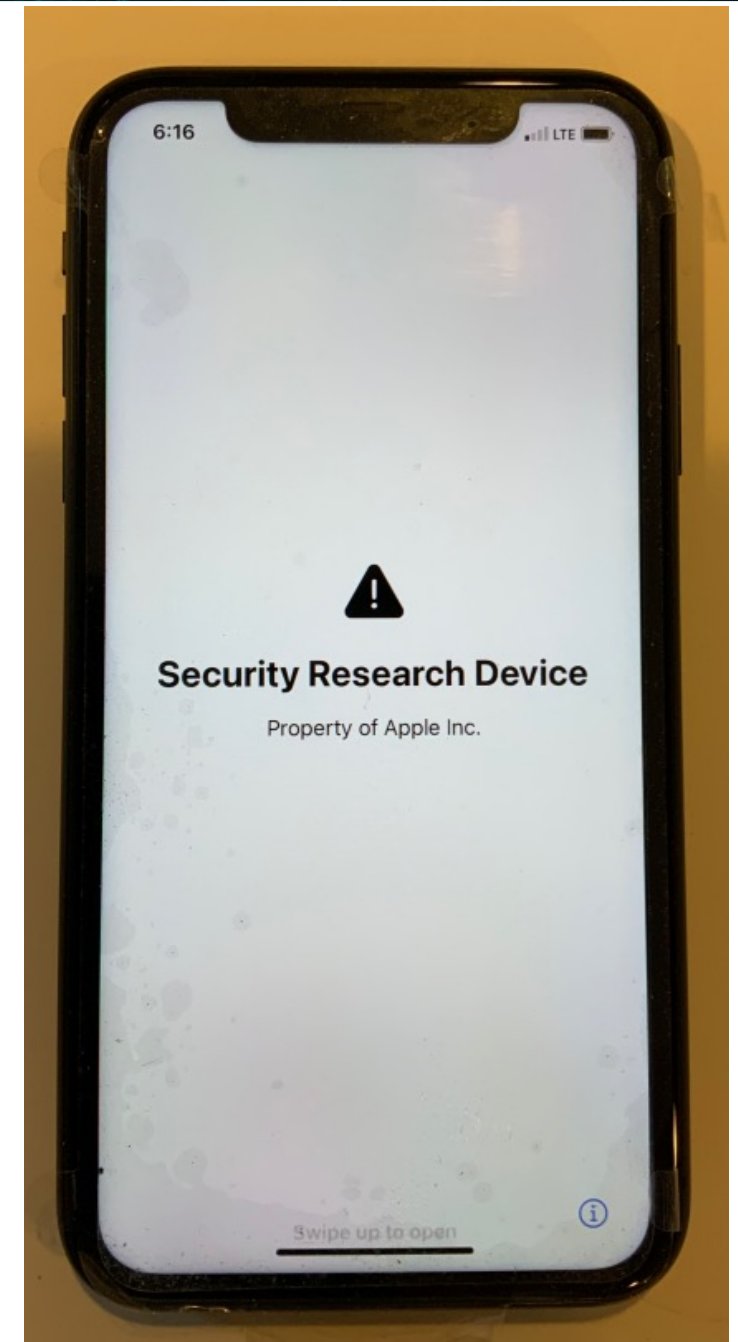
**We need to talk about iOS research**



# How current iOS research is done

## Using real devices

- Security Research Device Program by Apple





# How current iOS research is done

## Using real devices





# How current iOS research is done

## Using real devices

- Security Research Device Program by Apple
- Apple Internal devices (dev-fused devices)
- Off-the-shelf jailbroken devices



## Using real devices

📌 Pinned Tweet



**axi0mX** @axi0mX · 9/27/19

EPIC JAILBREAK: Introducing checkm8 (read "checkmate"), a permanent unpatchable bootrom exploit for hundreds of millions of iOS devices.

Most generations of iPhones and iPads are vulnerable: from iPhone 4S (A5 chip) to iPhone 8 and iPhone X (A11 chip).

### axi0mX/ipwndfu

open-source jailbreaking tool for many iOS devices



2

Contributors

144

Issues

7k

Stars

2k

Forks



github.com

GitHub - axi0mX/ipwndfu: open-source jailbreaking tool for many iOS devices

982

7,870

15.7K





# How current iOS research is done

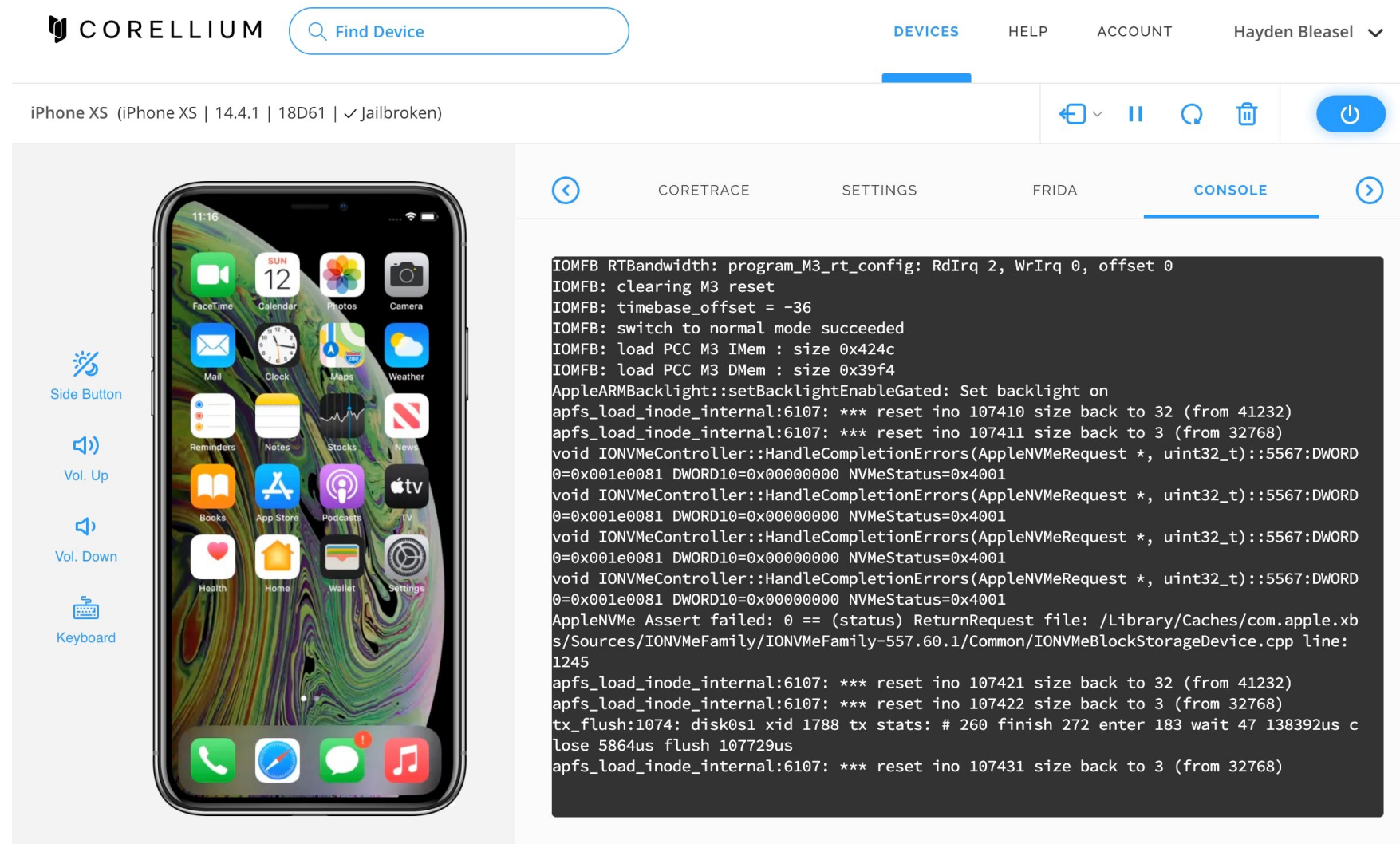
## Using real devices

- Security Research Device Program by Apple
- Apple Internal devices (dev-fused devices)
- Off-the-shelf jailbroken devices
- Off-the-shelf non-jailbroken devices
- ARM Macs

# How current iOS research is done

## Emulation comes to the rescue

- Third party commercial iOS emulator

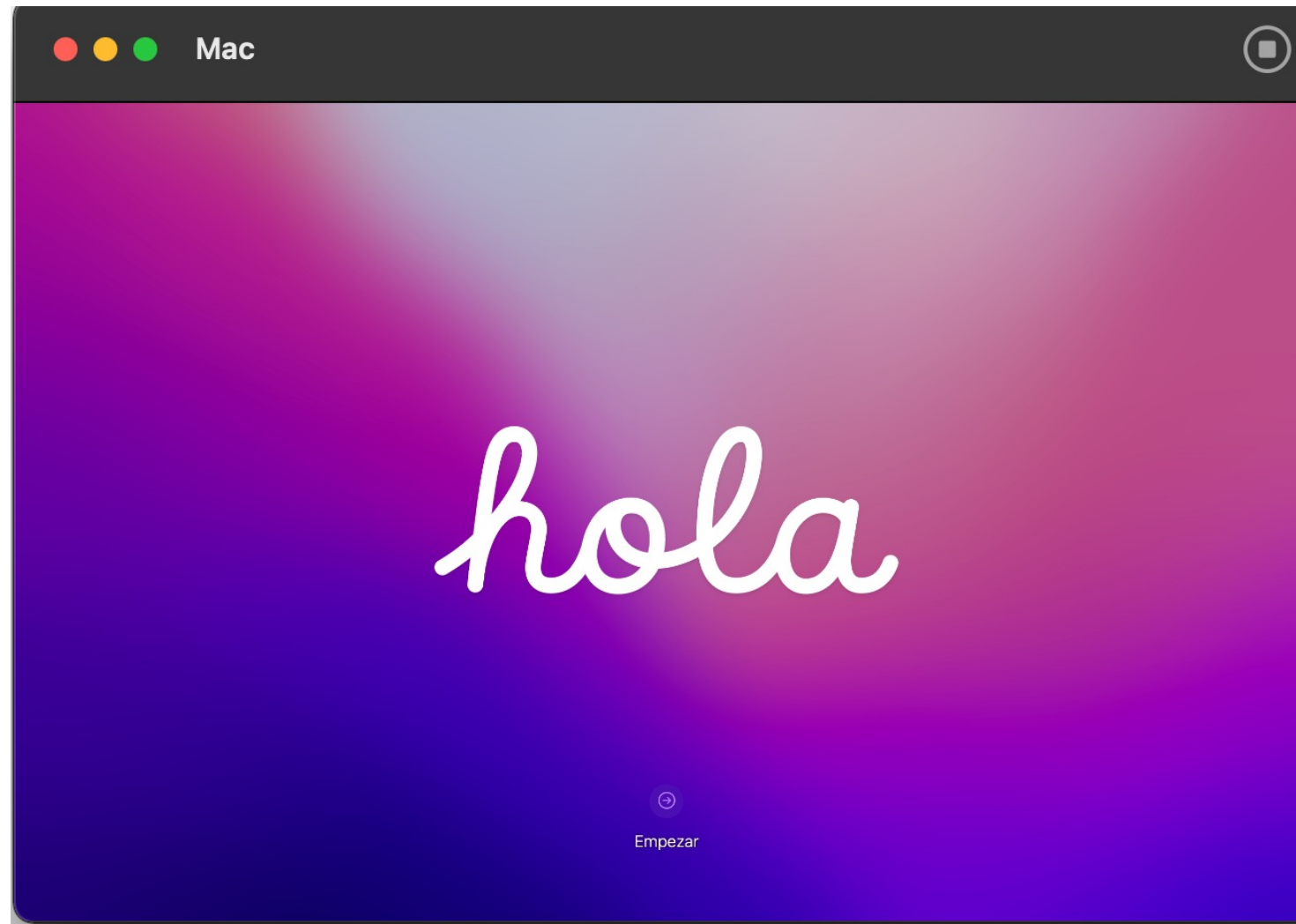




# How current iOS research is done

## Emulation comes to the rescue

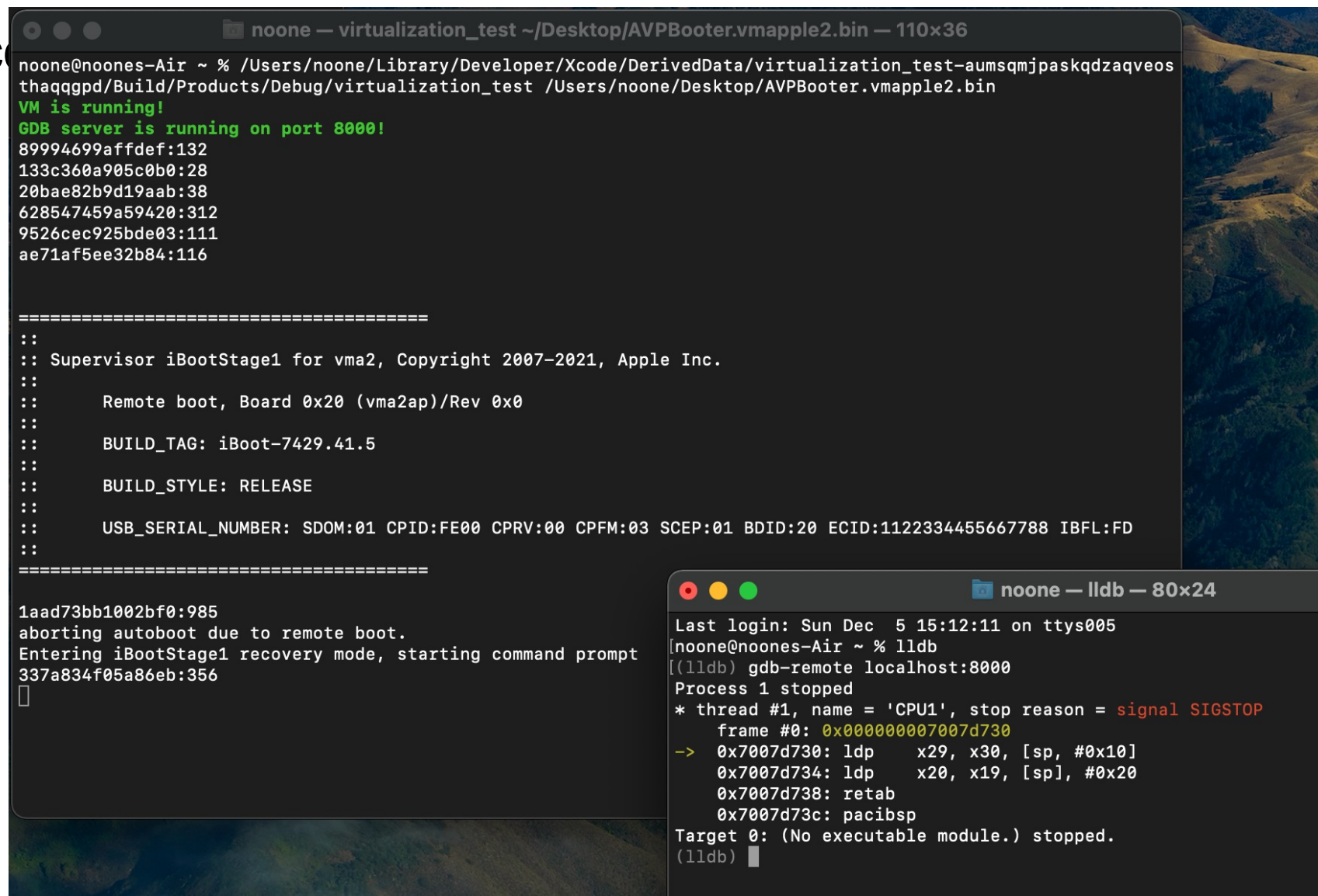
- Third party commercial iOS emulator
- VMApple



# How current iOS research is done

## Emulation comes to the rescue

- Third party c
- VMApple



```
noone — virtualization_test ~/Desktop/AVPBooter.vmapple2.bin — 110x36
noone@noones-Air ~ % /Users/noone/Library/Developer/Xcode/DerivedData/virtualization_test-aumsqjnpaskqdzaveos
thaqqgpd/Build/Products/Debug/virtualization_test /Users/noone/Desktop/AVPBooter.vmapple2.bin
VM is running!
GDB server is running on port 8000!
89994699affdef:132
133c360a905c0b0:28
20bae82b9d19aab:38
628547459a59420:312
9526cec925bde03:111
ae71af5ee32b84:116

=====
::
:: Supervisor iBootStage1 for vma2, Copyright 2007-2021, Apple Inc.
::
:: Remote boot, Board 0x20 (vma2ap)/Rev 0x0
::
:: BUILD_TAG: iBoot-7429.41.5
::
:: BUILD_STYLE: RELEASE
::
:: USB_SERIAL_NUMBER: SDOM:01 CPID:FE00 CPRV:00 CPM:03 SCEP:01 BDID:20 ECID:1122334455667788 IBFL:FD
::
=====

1aad73bb1002bf0:985
aborting autoboot due to remote boot.
Entering iBootStage1 recovery mode, starting command prompt
337a834f05a86eb:356
[]

noone — lldb — 80x24
Last login: Sun Dec 5 15:12:11 on ttys005
[noone@noones-Air ~ % lldb
(lldb) gdb-remote localhost:8000
Process 1 stopped
* thread #1, name = 'CPU1', stop reason = signal SIGSTOP
frame #0: 0x000000007007d730
-> 0x7007d730: ldp x29, x30, [sp, #0x10]
0x7007d734: ldp x20, x19, [sp], #0x20
0x7007d738: retab
0x7007d73c: pacibsp
Target 0: (No executable module.) stopped.
(lldb) []
```



## Emulation comes to the rescue

- Third party commercial iOS emulator
- VMApple
- Aleph Security's xnu-qemu-arm64





## Shortcomings of Aleph Security's xnu-qemu-arm64

- Supports only 2 iOS version
- Limited hardware support
- Hard to maintain and also abandoned





**TruEmu came to the rescue**

# TruEmu came to the rescue

## TruEmu's design goal

- Free-to-use iOS emulator for security research
- Out-of-box support for a wide range of iOS versions
- Easy to debug
- Can be used for fuzzing



# TruEmu came to the rescue

## TruEmu's notable features

- Model actual hardware
- Support from iOS 14 to the latest iOS 16
- iPhone 6S SecureROM
- Out-of-box Kernel debugging support
- USB support (with Firmware Restore)
- Apple's custom CPU features (SPRR/GXF, custom PAC)
- We are Open source
  - <http://github.com/TrungNguyen1909/qemu-t8030>

# Implementing TruEmu



## How does a new device get modeled

1. Look for information from the device tree
2. Build a stub model and log MMIO accesses
3. A mix of dynamic and static reverse engineering the protocol
4. Write code to emulate needed responses
5. Profit

## 1. Reading the device tree

- Can be found in iOS IPSW
- Contains a rich amount of peripherals information for iOS
- Used to match driver



## 1. Reading the device tree

- Contains a rich amount of peripherals information for iOS
- Used to match driver

```
~/Projects/iOSQEMU
> ./dt/dt Firmware/all_flash/DeviceTree.n104ap.im4p.out gpio
#interrupt-cells          0x00000002
interrupt-controller      ||
compatible                67 70 69 6f 2c 74 38 30 33 30 00 67 70 69 6f 2c |gpio,t8030.gpio,|
                          73 35 6c 38 39 36 30 78 00 |s5l8960x.|
interrupt-parent          0x0000001a
interrupts                83 00 00 00 84 00 00 00 85 00 00 00 86 00 00 00 |.....|
                          87 00 00 00 88 00 00 00 89 00 00 00 |.....|
#gpio-int-groups          0x00000007
reg                       00 00 10 3c 00 00 00 00 00 00 10 00 00 00 00 00 |...<.....|
#gpio-pins                0x000000d4
AAPL,phandle              0x00000023
device_type               interrupt-controller
#address-cells            0x00000000
role                      AP
name                      gpio
```

## 2. Building the stub model

- Map a dummy memory region to the MMIO address
- Log accesses and back trace, disassemble the related code
- Try driving the interrupt lines to see how iOS responses

```
disp0: base_reg_write @ 0x00000000000050030 value: 0x00000000016c0000
stacktrace: pc: 0xffffffff00977b740 tid: 0xffffffe19b6a9d10
0xffffffff00977b740,0xffffffff00977b6a8,0xffffffff00977b6a8,0xffffffff00975973c,0xffffffff00975bd90,0xffffffff0097473a8,0xffffffff0097b8528,0xffffffff0097bb3a4,0xffffffff0096f830c,0xffff
ffff008050900,0xffffffff0096f7b4c,0xffffffff0096f6be4,0xffffffff0096df594,0xffffffff0096e213c,0xffffffff00808cb78,0xffffffff0096e14e0,0xffffffff00809a98c,0xffffffff007b25190,0xffffffff0
07a30e9c,0xffffffff007a021d8,0xffffffff007a1d810,0xffffffff007b4a434,0xffffffff007b57094,0xffffffff00811c5f4,

disp0: base_reg_write @ 0x00000000000050040 value: 0x0000000001c70000
stacktrace: pc: 0xffffffff00977b740 tid: 0xffffffe19b6a9d10
0xffffffff00977b740,0xffffffff00977b6a8,0xffffffff00977b6a8,0xffffffff00975975c,0xffffffff00975bd90,0xffffffff0097473a8,0xffffffff0097b8528,0xffffffff0097bb3a4,0xffffffff0096f830c,0xffff
ffff008050900,0xffffffff0096f7b4c,0xffffffff0096f6be4,0xffffffff0096df594,0xffffffff0096e213c,0xffffffff00808cb78,0xffffffff0096e14e0,0xffffffff00809a98c,0xffffffff007b25190,0xffffffff0
07a30e9c,0xffffffff007a021d8,0xffffffff007a1d810,0xffffffff007b4a434,0xffffffff007b57094,0xffffffff00977b740,0xffffffff00977b6a8,0xffffffff00977b6a8,0xffffffff0097597a0,0xffffffff00975bd90
,0xffffffff0097473a8,0xffffffff0097b8528,0xffffffff0097bb3a4,0xffffffff0096f830c,0xffffffff008050900,0xffffffff0096f7b4c,0xffffffff0096f6be4,0xffffffff0096df594,0xffffffff0096e213c,0xff
ffff00808cb78,0xffffffff0096e14e0,0xffffffff00809a98c,0xffffffff007b25190,0xffffffff007a30e9c,0xffffffff007a021d8,0xffffffff007a1d810,0xffffffff007b4a434,0xffffffff007b57094,0xffffffff
00811c5f4,
```



# TruEmu's implementation

## SPRR/GXF

- Used in both iOS kernel and browser
- Apple's custom privilege-level
- New levels are created laterally from ARM's



# Implementing TruEmu

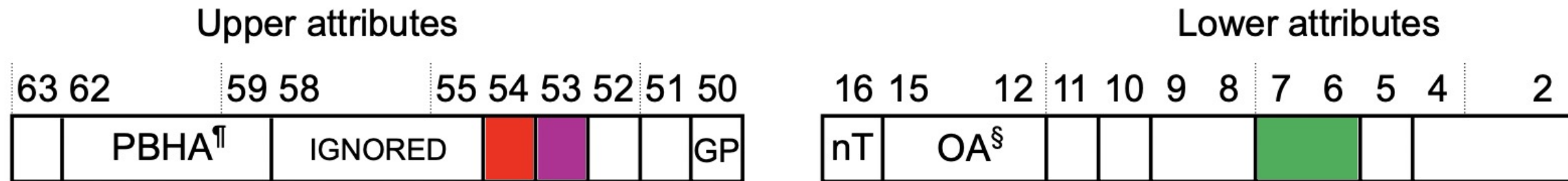
## SPRR/GXF

- Used in both iOS kernel and browser
- Apple's custom privilege-level
- New levels are created laterally from ARM's
- GXF: Guarded eXecution Feature
- GENTER: ELx to GLx
- GEXIT: GLx to ELx
- Guarded mode can have different page permission





Attribute fields for VMSAv8-64 stage 1 Block and Page descriptors



Index: 0bNNNN

Permission  
register:

15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
----	----	----	----	----	----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Permission: 0bGGEE

Permission bits on page table becomes index in a system register

Permission: 0bGGEE

- Jumping to GLx code from ELx code causes a GXF abort
- Except: No write in ELx if exec in GLx

0b00	---
0b01	r-x
0b10	r--
0b11	rw-



## Page Protection Layer

- PPL: Page Protection Layer
- Security-sensitive code (Page table, TrustCache) are in PPL
- Normal kernel code (`__TEXT`, `__TEXT_EXEC`): 0x24ac000 bytes ( $\approx 37\text{MiB}$ )
- PPL kernel code (`__PPLTEXT`): 0x19844 bytes ( $\approx 102\text{KiB}$ ) (368x smaller)
- PPL runs in Guarded mode
- PPL can jump to normal kernel code, but not the other way around

## Bulletproof JIT

- Browsers use JIT to compile JavaScript code into native code to speed up execution
- It creates a page that is both writable and executable to store the result and execute



## Problem with normal JIT

- JIT pages constantly need to change between write and execute mode
- Changing permission would normally require trapping to kernel and some TLB flushes
- Those are slow and hurt performance

## SPRR comes to the rescue

- Just flip the permission bit from userspace
- pthread\_jit\_write\_protect\_np:

Read-Execute

```

movk x0, 0xc118
movk x0, 0xffff, lsl 16
movk x0, 0xf, lsl 32
movk x0, 0, lsl 48
ldr x0, [x0] ; 0xd8
msr s3_6_c15_c1_5, x0
isb
movk x1, 0xc118
movk x1, 0xffff, lsl 16
movk x1, 0xf, lsl 32
movk x1, 0, lsl 48
ldr x8, [x1] ; 0xd9
mrs x9, s3_6_c15_c1_5
bics xzr, x8, x9
b.eq 0x24d0

```

Read-Write

```

movk x0, 0xc110
movk x0, 0xffff, lsl 16
movk x0, 0xf, lsl 32
movk x0, 0, lsl 48
ldr x0, [x0] ; 0xd8
msr s3_6_c15_c1_5, x0
isb
movk x1, 0xc110
movk x1, 0xffff, lsl 16
movk x1, 0xf, lsl 32
movk x1, 0, lsl 48
ldr x8, [x1] ; 0xd9
mrs x9, s3_6_c15_c1_5
b 0x24c8

```



# Implementing TruEmu

## SPRR/GXF

- We implemented these custom CPU logics in TCG
- New instructions need to be decoded
- Page table permission logic needs to be modified
- Limitation: Changes to permission register requires an expensive TLB flush due to QEMU TLB's limitation

## Why we want USB Emulation?

- Restoring: We can now install iOS like a real device
- Networking: SSH?
- Connect to Xcode: Install and run apps (not yet)



## Challenges of USB Emulation

- Problem 1: iOS only has drivers for Synopsys USB controllers

## DesignWare Hi-Speed USB 2.0 On-the-Go Controller

The DesignWare® Hi-Speed USB 2.0 On-The-Go (HS OTG) Controller provides designers with high-quality USB IP for the most demanding USB 2.0 peripherals. The controller performs as a standard Hi-Speed Dual-Role Device (DRD), operating as either a USB 2.0 Hi-Speed peripheral, or Hi-Speed USB 2.0 Host. Based on Synopsys' success in building and deploying Hi-Speed USB 2.0 Host, Device and PHY designs, the DesignWare USB 2.0 HS OTG Controller incorporates Synopsys expertise in Reuse Methodology, Constrained Random Verification, and USB PHY interoperability to deliver flexible, quality IP in Verilog source. The controller is optimized for area- and power-sensitive markets such as Internet of Things (IoT).

 [DesignWare IP Prototyping Kit for USB 2.0 HS OTG](#)

 [DesignWare IP Prototyping Kits](#)

 [DesignWare USB 2.0 Controller IP](#)



# SYNOPSYS

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## DesignWa

The DesignWare®  
USB IP for the mos  
Role Device (DRD),  
Synopsys' success  
DesignWare USB 2  
Constrained Rand  
source. The contr

 [DesignWare IP F](#)

 [DesignWare IP F](#)

 [DesignWare USI](#)

## SolvNetPlus

### Sign In

 Username



 Please enter a username

 Password



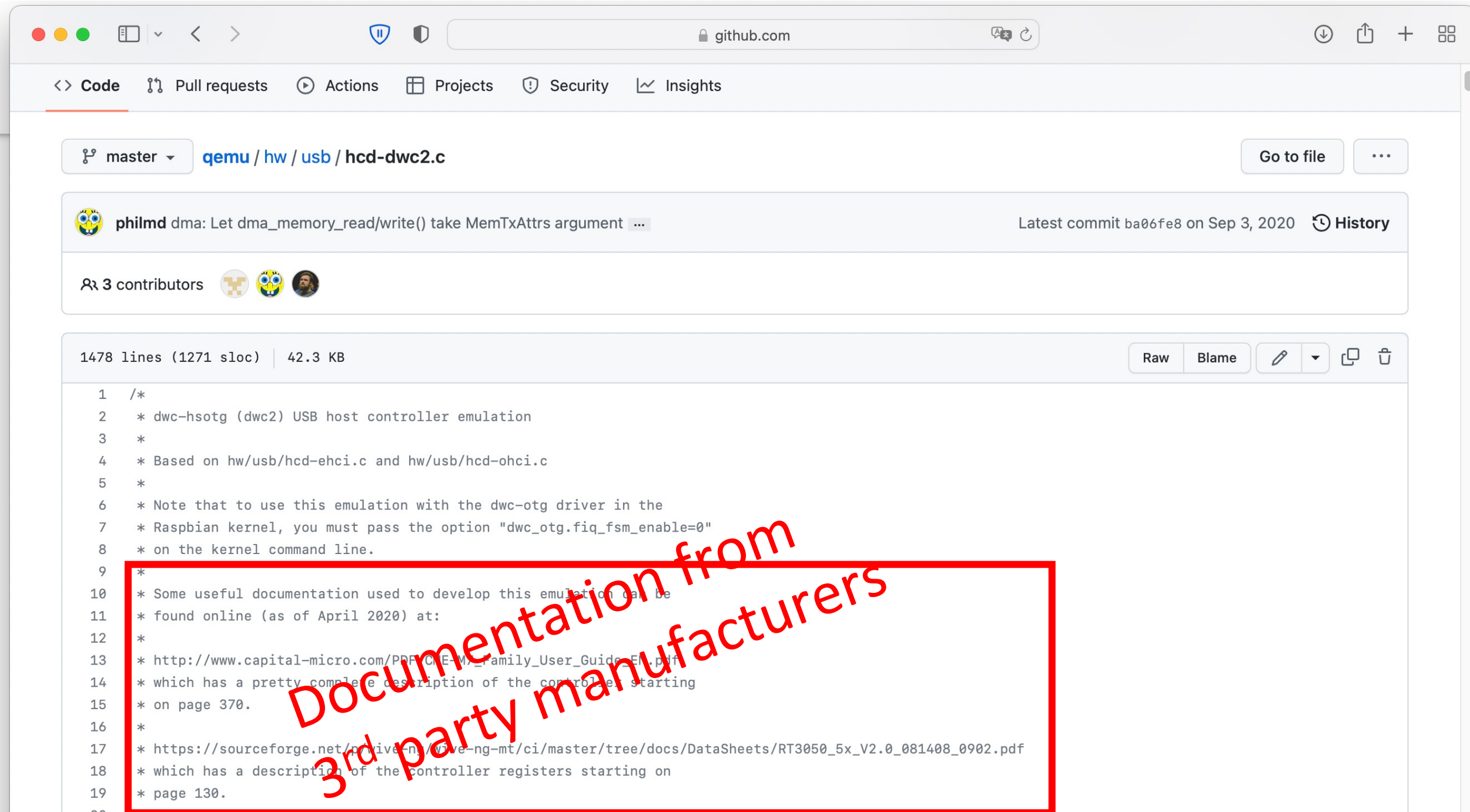
Sign In

Need help signing in?

REGISTER - CREATE ACCOUNT

FORGOT PASSWORD

# Implementing TruEmu



The screenshot shows a GitHub web interface for the file `hcd-dwc2.c` in the `qemu / hw / usb` directory. The repository is owned by `philmd`. The commit history shows the latest commit `ba06fe8` on September 3, 2020. The file size is 42.3 KB and it contains 1478 lines of code (1271 sloc). The code is a C file for USB host controller emulation. A red box highlights a comment block containing references to external documentation. A large red watermark is overlaid on the image.

```
1  /*
2   * dwc-hsotg (dwc2) USB host controller emulation
3   *
4   * Based on hw/usb/hcd-ehci.c and hw/usb/hcd-ohci.c
5   *
6   * Note that to use this emulation with the dwc-otg driver in the
7   * Raspbian kernel, you must pass the option "dwc_otg.fiq_fsm_enable=0"
8   * on the kernel command line.
9   *
10  * Some useful documentation used to develop this emulation can be
11  * found online (as of April 2020) at:
12  *
13  * http://www.capital-micro.com/PDF/CME-M7_Family_User_Guide_EN.pdf
14  * which has a pretty complete description of the controller starting
15  * on page 370.
16  *
17  * https://sourceforge.net/projects/wive-ng-mt/ci/master/tree/docs/DataSheets/RT3050_5x_V2.0_081408_0902.pdf
18  * which has a description of the controller registers starting on
19  * page 130.
```

Documentation from  
3rd party manufacturers



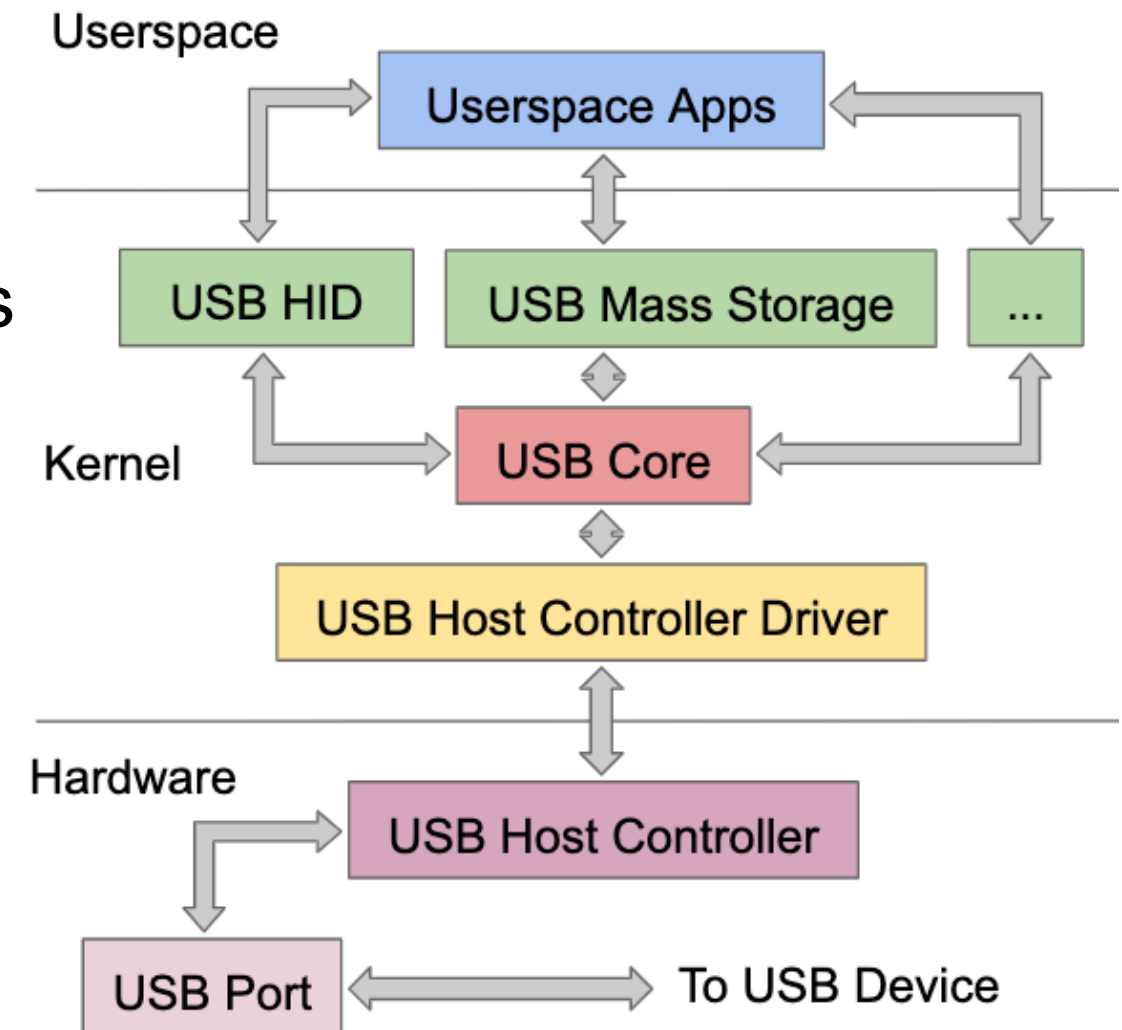
## Challenges of USB Emulation

- Problem 1: But iOS only has drivers for Synopsys USB controllers
- Problem 2: Actual iPhone 11 uses newer Synopsys Dual-Role-Device, but documents are sparse for those
  - → We used to modify device tree to make iOS loads old drivers for Synopsys OTG
- We eventually implemented the new Synopsys USB controller

# Implementing TruEmu

## USB bus

- There are 2 USB sides: host and device
- iOS supports both
- iOS uses device mode to connect with PCs
- QEMU does not support device mode

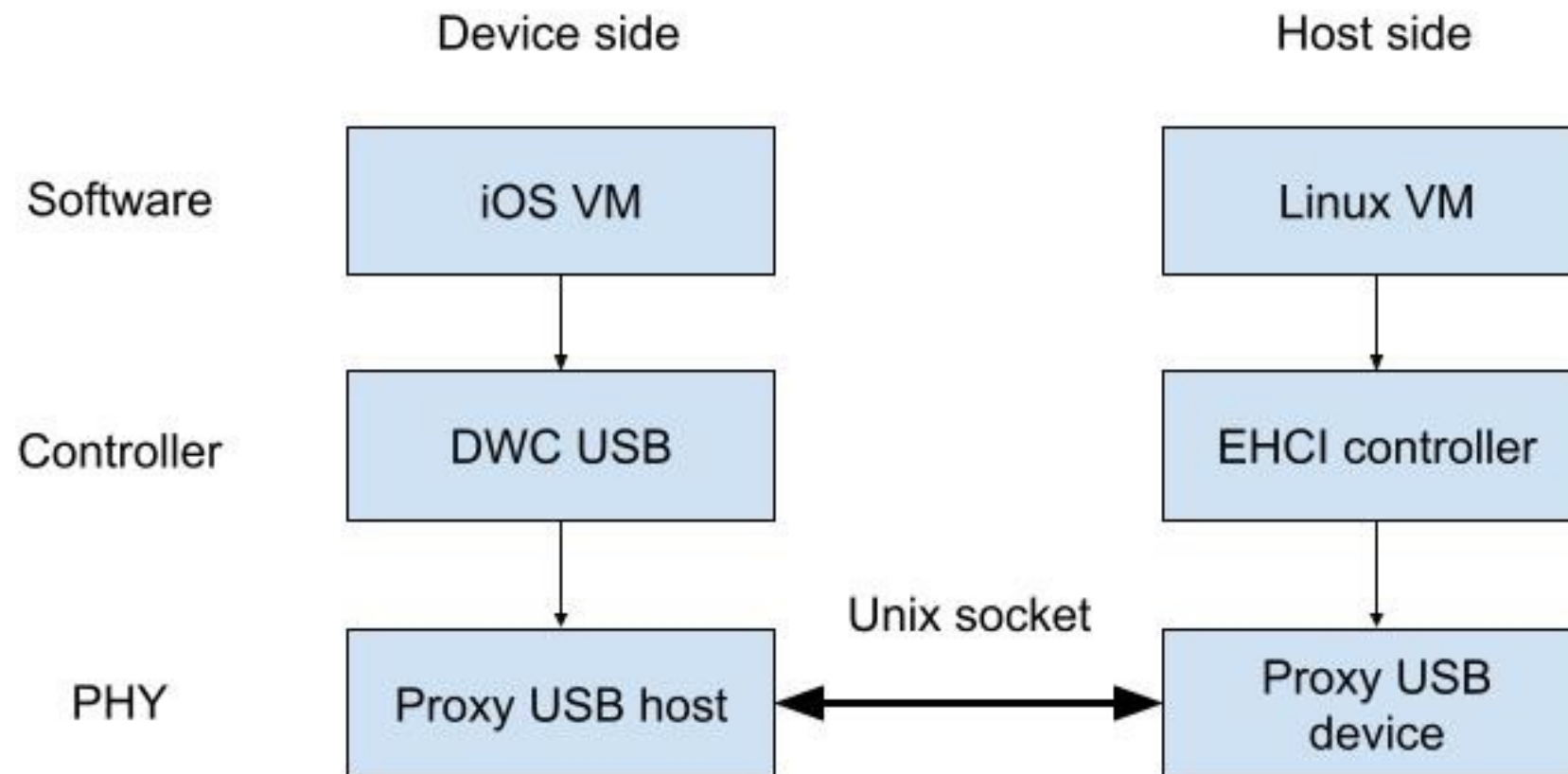




# Implementing TruEmu

## USB bus

- We connect the iOS VM to a Linux VM using UNIX pipes



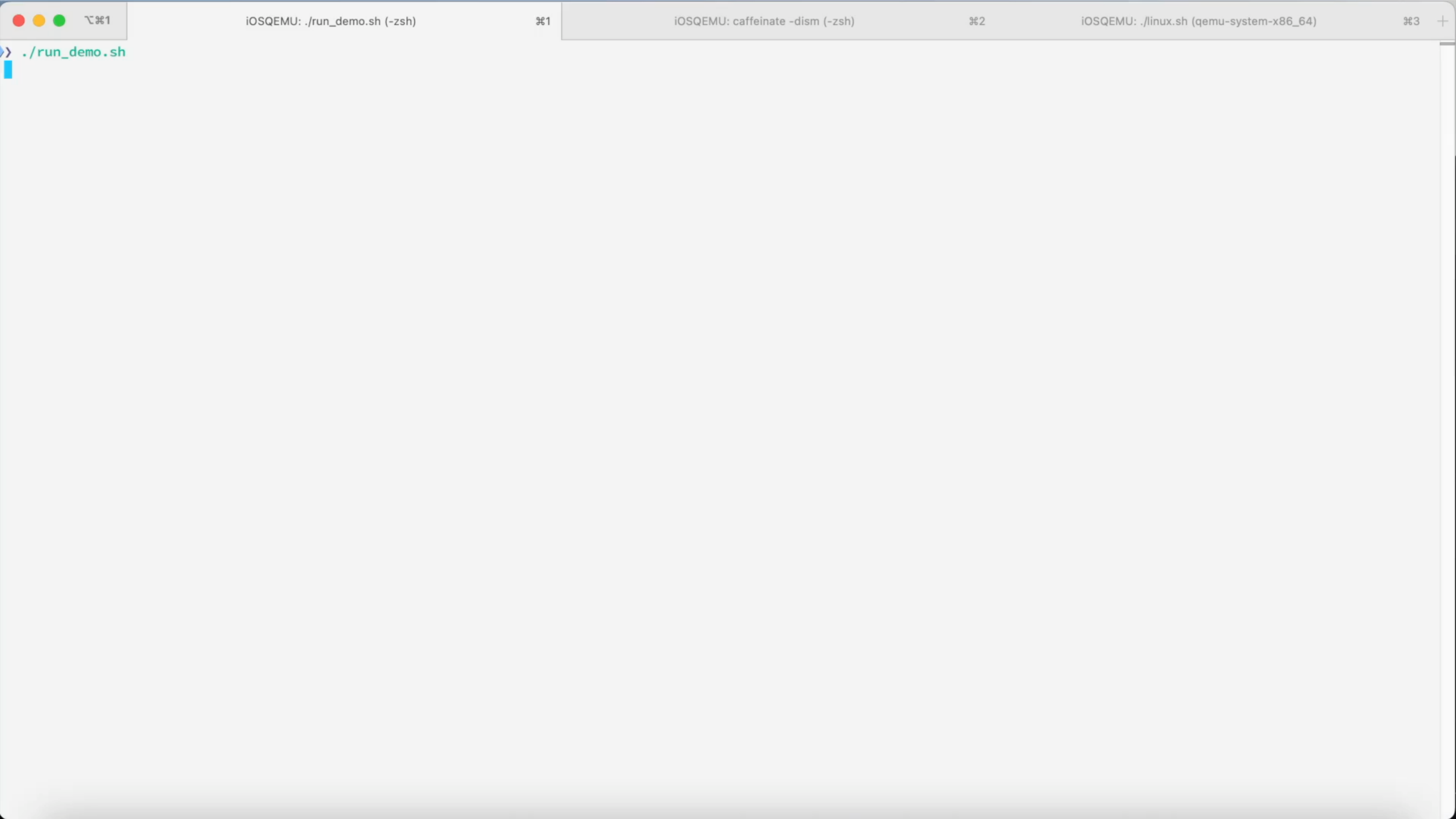


# Using TruEmu for research



# Using TruEmu for research

## Emulation - Demo



iOSQEMU: ./run\_demo.sh (-zsh)

⌘1

iOSQEMU: caffeinate -dism (-zsh)

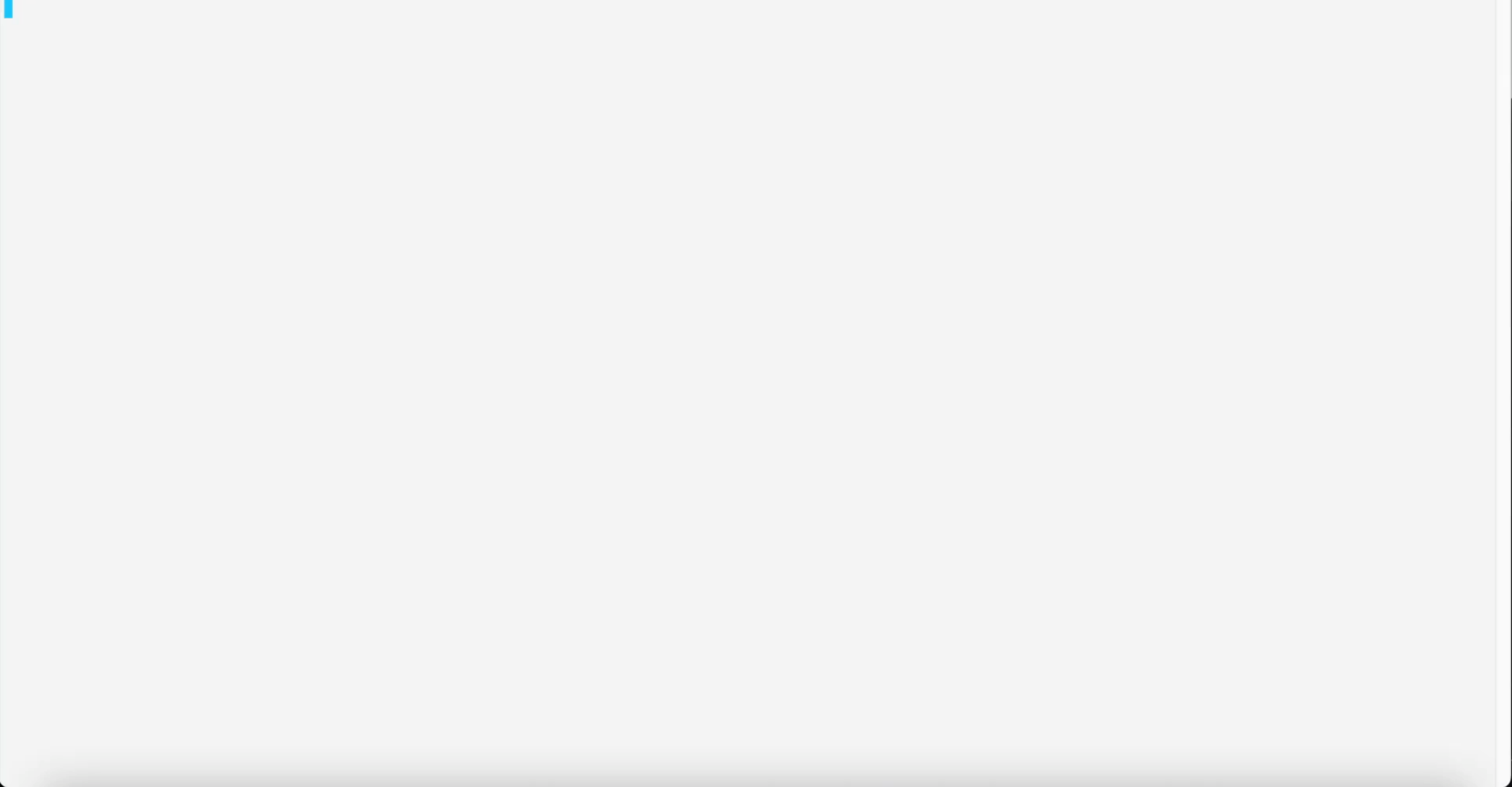
⌘2

iOSQEMU: ./linux.sh (qemu-system-x86\_64)

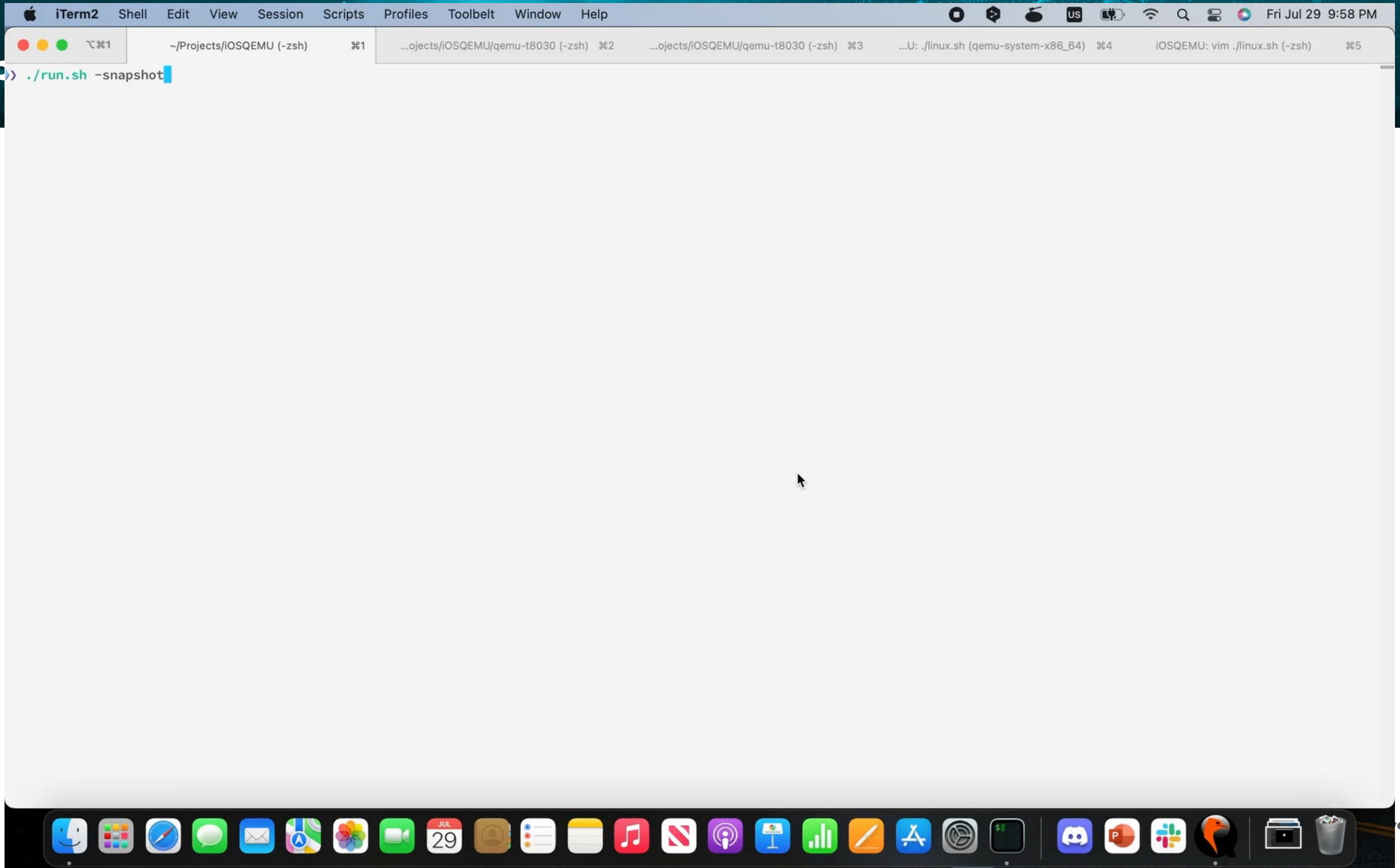
⌘3



>> ./run\_demo.sh







# Using TruEmu for research

## Emulation - Demo

- We went through the Restore process of iOS
- We got a bash shell and explored iOS using various commands
- We SSHed into our iOS machine



# Using TruEmu for research

## Reverse Engineer - Demo

# Using TruEmu for research

## Reverse Engineer - Demo

- We set breakpoints, stepping, and exploring SecureROM memory
- We also found a bug in SecureROM that prevents it from resetting on panic



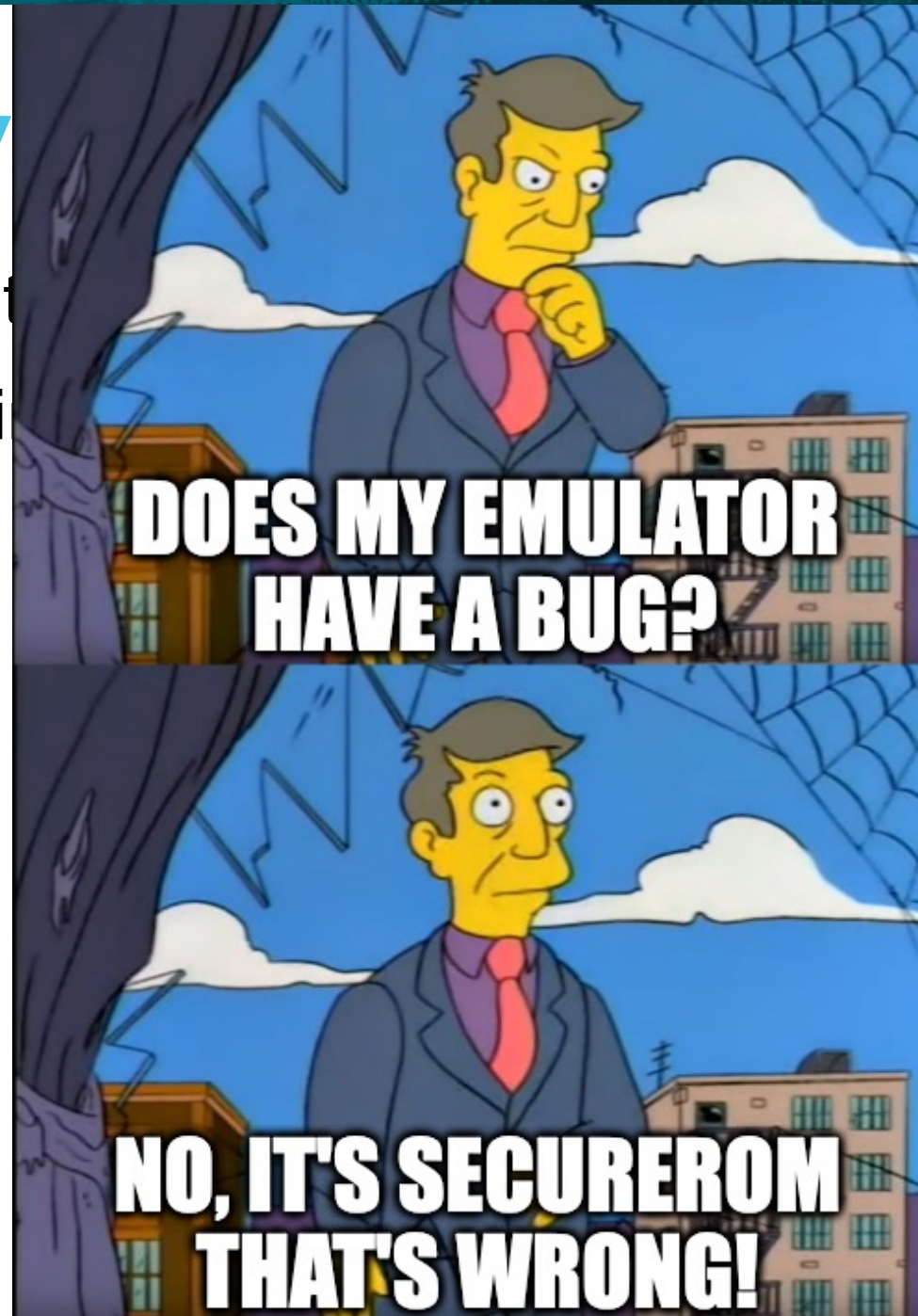
# Using TruEmu for research

Rev

- We set breakpoints, st
- We also found a bug i

emo

ROM memory  
from resetting on panic



# Using TruEmu for greybox fuzzing

## Snapshot

- Our iOS boot time is great (5s), but still not good enough for fuzzing
- Using VM snapshots to start at the fuzzable state immediately (0.5s / cycle)



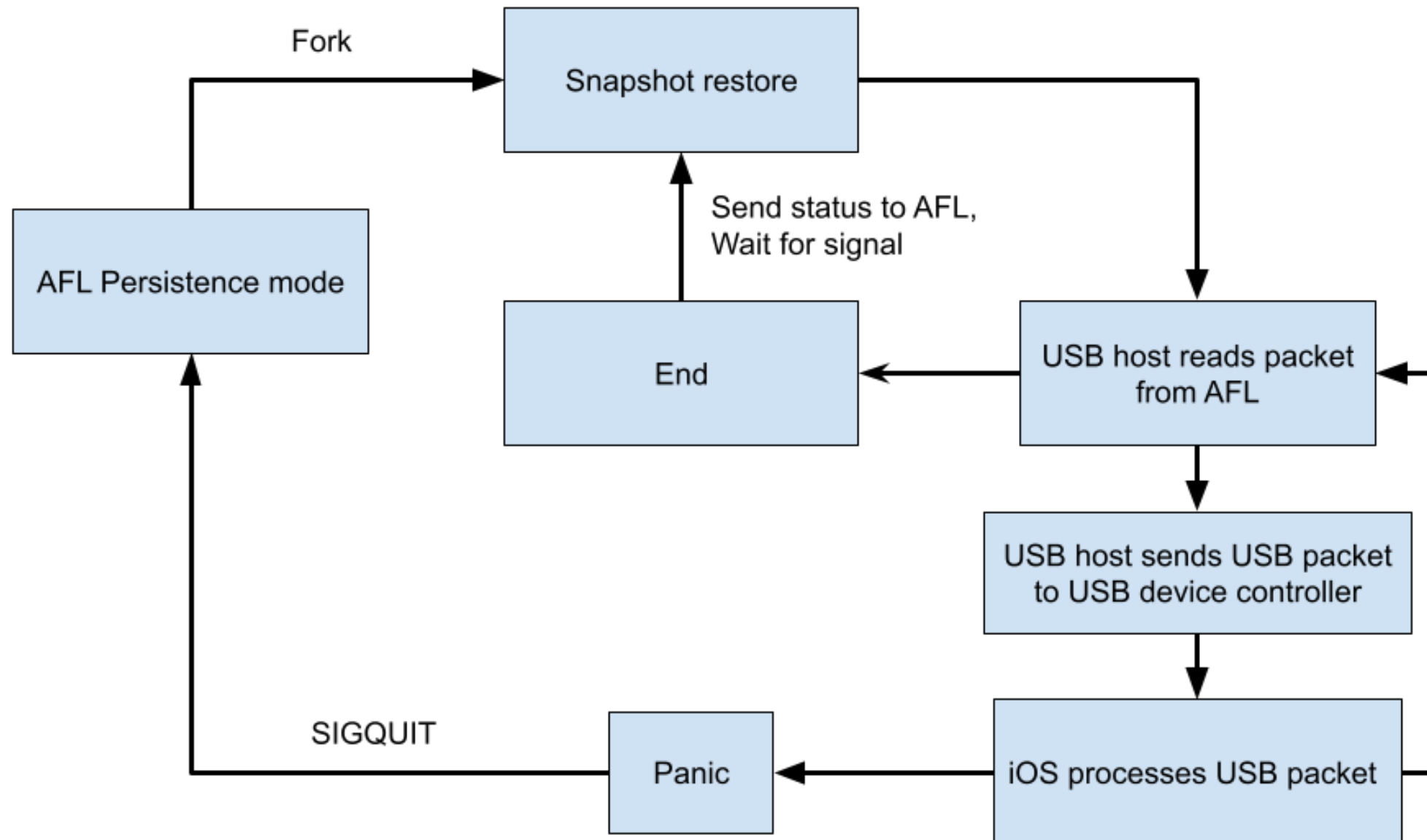
# Using TruEmu for greybox fuzzing

## Code coverage

- AFL uses code coverage to maximize the number of paths reached
- We are running emulation using TCG, which is a JIT compiler
- TCG compiles emulated code into basic blocks
- → Records coverage when a block is being executed

# Using TruEmu for greybox fuzzing

## USB fuzzing





# Using TruEmu for greybox fuzzing

## USB fuzzing

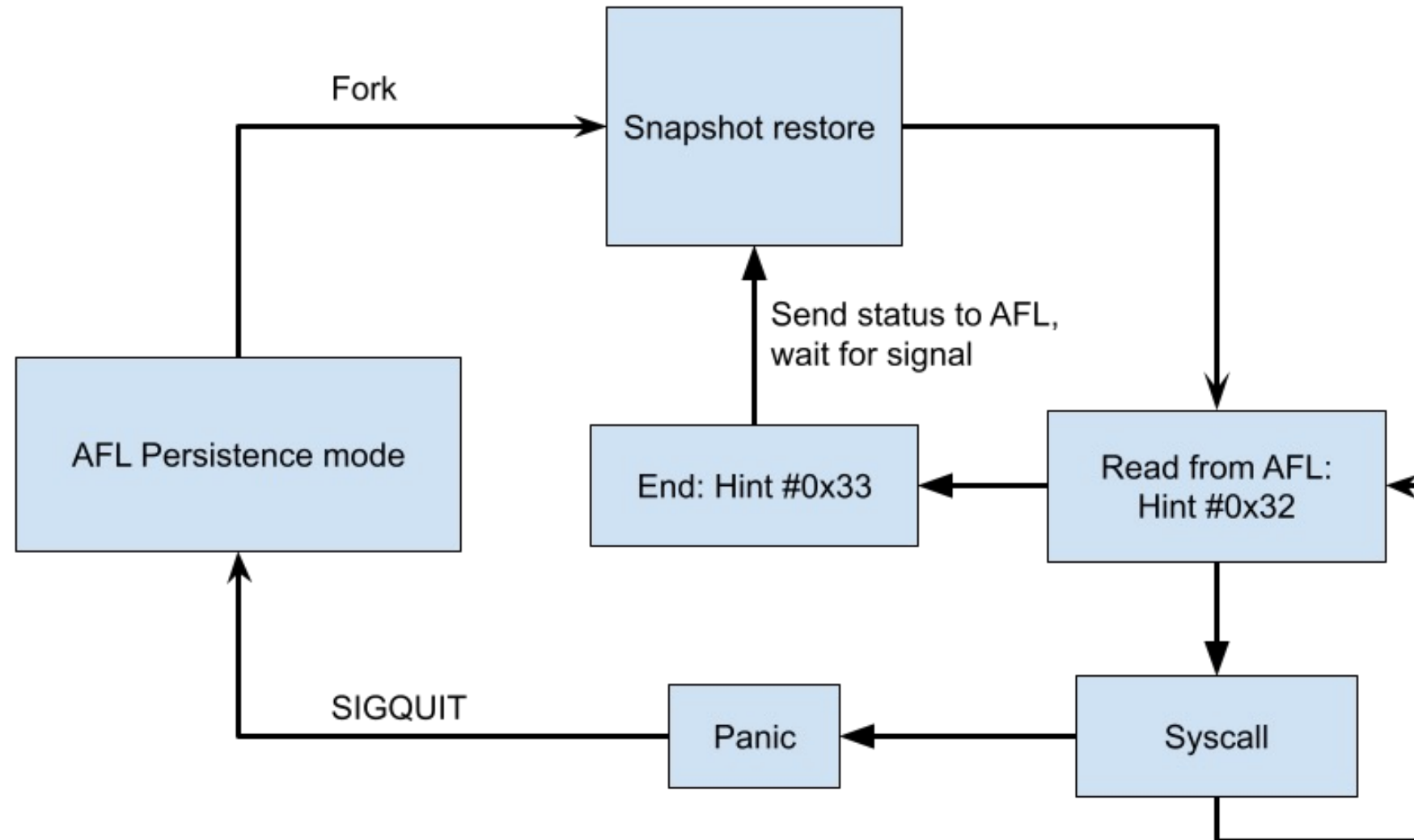
american fuzzy lop 2.57b (qemu-system-aarch64)

process timing	overall results
run time : 0 days, 12 hrs, 32 min, 24 sec	cycles done : 0
last new path : 0 days, 0 hrs, 10 min, 52 sec	total paths : 276
last uniq crash : none seen yet	uniq crashes : 0
last uniq hang : 0 days, 4 hrs, 25 min, 7 sec	uniq hangs : 26
cycle progress	map coverage
now processing : 0 (0.00%)	map density : 2.27% / 3.45%
paths timed out : 0 (0.00%)	count coverage : 3.62 bits/tuple
stage progress	findings in depth
now trying : bitflip 4/1	avored paths : 1 (0.36%)
stage execs : 5802/10.6k (54.75%)	new edges on : 85 (30.80%)
total execs : 30.1k	total crashes : 0 (0 unique)
exec speed : 0.32/sec (zzzz...)	total tmouts : 253 (26 unique)
fuzzing strategy yields	path geometry
bit flips : 241/10.6k, 30/10.6k, 0/0	levels : 2
byte flips : 0/0, 0/0, 0/0	pending : 276
arithmetics : 0/0, 0/0, 0/0	pend fav : 1
known ints : 0/0, 0/0, 0/0	own finds : 275
dictionary : 0/0, 0/0, 0/0	imported : n/a
havoc : 0/0, 0/0	stability : 99.34%
trim : 0.00%/649, n/a	

[cpu000: 5%]

# Using TruEmu for greybox fuzzing

## Syscall fuzzing





# Using TruEmu for greybox fuzzing

## Syscall fuzzing

american fuzzy lop 2.57b (qemu-system-aarch64)

<b>process timing</b> run time : 1 days, 22 hrs, 12 min, 15 sec last new path : 0 days, 0 hrs, 20 min, 46 sec last uniq crash : none seen yet last uniq hang : 0 days, 4 hrs, 50 min, 25 sec		<b>overall results</b> cycles done : 0 total paths : 250 uniq crashes : 0 uniq hangs : 86
<b>cycle progress</b> now processing : 39 (15.60%) paths timed out : 10 (4.00%)	<b>map coverage</b> map density : 2.91% / 11.21% count coverage : 1.91 bits/tuple	
<b>stage progress</b> now trying : arith 8/8 stage execs : 1446/5727 (25.25%) total execs : 211k exec speed : 2.79/sec (zzzz...)	<b>findings in depth</b> favored paths : 111 (44.40%) new edges on : 146 (58.40%) total crashes : 0 (0 unique) total tmouts : 18.9k (86 unique)	
<b>fuzzing strategy yields</b> bit flips : 84/9544, 19/9531, 18/9505 byte flips : 5/1193, 3/1180, 2/1154 arithmetics : 66/61.9k, 7/67.2k, 0/8165 known ints : 2/416, 2/1725, 2/3205 dictionary : 0/0, 0/0, 2/599 havoc : 36/3251, 0/0 trim : 3.40%/436, 0.00%		<b>path geometry</b> levels : 3 pending : 238 pend fav : 102 own finds : 249 imported : n/a stability : 94.80%
		[cpu000: 5%]

## Current challenges

- Problem 1: Timer interrupts interfere with coverage result
  - Partial Solution: Mask all interrupts
  - However, our thread is the only one running, so only simple bugs can be found
- Problem 2: Apple does not provide KASAN builds for iOS
  - Potential solution: Hooks allocator's functions?



# **TruEmu's future and roadmap**



# TruEmu's future and roadmap

## Future features

- Framebuffer
- Touch screen
- Working GUI
- SEP
- GPU?
- Fuzzer

# TruEmu's future and roadmap

## We need you!

- Our code is open-sourced at:
  - <http://github.com/TrungNguyen1909/qemu-t8030>
- Aid our reverse engineering process through direct/indirect ways
- Contribute to our repo
- Support Linux on ARM Macs efforts



## Projects that were helpful for us

- Asahi Linux – Linux on Apple Silicon: <https://asahilinux.org>
- Corellium – Linux Sandcastle, Linux M1 (abandoned): <http://github.com/corellium>
- Aleph Security – xnu-qemu-arm64 (abandoned):
  - <http://github.com/alephsecurity/xnu-qemu-arm64>
- National Science Foundation (NSF) under Award Number CNS-2145744

# Takeaways

- iOS full emulation is hard, but it is possible!
- iOS devices' hardware internals and their emulation in a QEMU-based system.
- How TruEMU can be used to enable multiple security applications
- We hope to lower the entry barrier to iOS security research!