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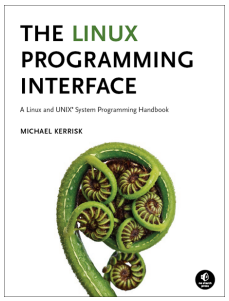
Training and Consulting

Linux Security and Isolation APIs

Course code: M7D-SECISOL02

This course provides a deep understanding of the low-level Linux features–set-UID/set-GID programs, capabilities, namespaces, cgroups (control groups), and seccomp–used to implement privileged applications and build container, virtualization, and sandboxing technologies. Detailed presentations coupled with carefully designed practical exercises provide participants with the knowledge needed to understand, design, develop, and administer such applications. (The course does *not* cover administering container systems such as Docker and LXC, but provides participants with a good understanding of the underlying implementation and operation of such systems.)



Audience and prerequisites

The primary audience comprises designers and programmers building privileged applications, container applications, and sandboxing applications. Systems administrators who manage such applications will also find the course of benefit.

Participants should have working knowledge of the fundamental system programming topics covered in the *Linux System Programming Essentials* (M7D-SPESS01) course. This includes file descriptors and file I/O, signals, and the process lifecycle (*fork()*, *exec()*, *wait()*, *exit()*).

Participants should have a good reading knowledge of the C programming language and some programming experience in a language such as C or Go. (Note, however, that most of the course exercises do not require writing programs.)

Related courses

This course is also available as a number of smaller pieces:

- *Linux Capabilities and Namespaces*, M7D-CAPNS01
- *Linux Control Groups (Cgroups)*, M7D-CGROUPS02
- *Linux Secure Computing (Seccomp)*, M7D-SECCOMP01

Course materials

- Course books (written by the trainer) that include all slides and exercises presented in the course
- An electronic copy of the trainer's book, *The Linux Programming Interface*
- Numerous example programs written by the course trainer

Course duration and format

Four days, with around 40% of the course time devoted to practical sessions.

Course inquiries and bookings

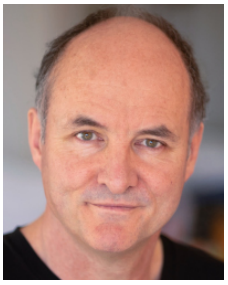
For inquiries about courses and consulting, you can contact us in the following ways:

- Email: training@man7.org
- Phone: +49 (89) 2488 6180 (German landline)

Prices, dates, and further details

For course prices, upcoming course dates, and further information about the course, please visit the course web page, `http://man7.org/training/secisol/`.

About the trainer



Michael Kerrisk has a unique set of qualifications and experience that ensure that course participants receive training of a very high standard:

- He has been programming on UNIX systems since 1987 and began teaching UNIX system programming courses in 1989.
- He is the author of *The Linux Programming Interface*, a 1550-page book acclaimed as the definitive work on Linux system programming.
- He has been actively involved in Linux development, working with kernel developers on testing, review, and design of new Linux kernel–user-space APIs.
- Since 2000, he has been the involved in the Linux *man-pages* project, which provides the manual pages documenting Linux system calls and C library APIs, and was the project maintainer from 2004 to 2021.

Linux Security and Isolation APIs: course contents in detail

Topics marked with an asterisk (*) may be covered, if time permits.

1. **Course Introduction**
2. **Security and Isolation APIs Overview (*)**
   - Sandboxing
   - Containers
3. **Classical Privileged Programs**
   - A simple set-user-ID program
   - Saved set-user-ID and and saved set-group-ID
   - Changing process credentials
   - A few guidelines for writing privileged programs
4. **Capabilities**
   - Process and file capabilities
   - Permitted and effective capabilities
   - Setting and viewing file capabilities
   - Capabilities-dumb and capabilities-aware applications
   - Text-form capabilities
5. **Capabilities and *execve()***
   - Capabilities and *execve()*
   - The capability bounding set
   - Inheritable capabilities
   - Summary of process capability sets (so far)
   - Problems with inheritable capabilities
   - Ambient capabilities
   - An alternative summary of process capability sets
   - Summary remarks
6. **Capabilities and UID 0**
   - Capabilities and UID transitions
   - Capabilities, UID 0, and *execve()*
   - Making a capabilities-only environment: securebits (*)
7. **Programming with capabilities (*)**
   - Programming with capabilities
8. **Namespaces**
   - An example: UTS namespaces
   - Namespaces commands
   - Namespaces demonstration (UTS namespaces)
   - Namespace types and APIs
   - Namespaces, containers, and virtualization
9. **Mount Namespaces and Shared Subtrees**
   - Mount namespaces
   - Shared subtrees
   - Bind mounts
10. **Mount Namespaces: Further Details (*)**
    - Peer groups
    - Private mounts
    - Slave mounts
    - Unbindable mounts
    - Mounting a container filesystem
11. **PID Namespaces**
    - PID namespaces
12. **Other Namespaces**
    - IPC namespaces
    - Time namespaces
    - Cgroup namespaces
    - Network namespaces
13. **Namespaces APIs**
    - API Overview
    - Creating a child process in new namespaces: *clone()*
    - `/proc/PID/ns`
    - Entering a namespace: *setns()*
    - Creating a namespace: *unshare()*
    - PID namespaces idiosyncrasies
    - Namespace lifetime (*)
14. **User Namespaces**
    - Overview of user namespaces
    - Creating and joining a user namespace
    - User namespaces: UID and GID mappings
    - Accessing files (and other objects with UIDs/GIDs)
    - Security issues
    - Combining user namespaces with other namespaces
    - Use cases
15. **User namespaces, *execve()*, and user ID 0**
    - User namespaces, *execve()*, and user ID 0
16. **User Namespaces and Capabilities**
    - User namespaces and capabilities
    - What does it mean to be superuser in a namespace?
    - Discovering namespace relationships
    - File-related capabilities (*)
17. **User Namespaces and Privileged Programs (*)**
    - User namespace "set-UID-root" programs
    - Namespaced file capabilities
18. **Seccomp**
    - Seccomp filtering and BPF
    - The BPF virtual machine and BPF instructions
    - BPF filter return values
    - Installing a BPF program
    - BPF program examples
    - Checking the architecture
    - Productivity aids (*libseccomp* and other tools)
    - Performance considerations
    - Applications and further information
19. **Seccomp: Further Details (*)**
    - Caveats
    - Discovering the system calls made by a program
    - Installing multiple filters
    - Interaction with *fork()* and *execve()*
    - Extended BPF (eBPF)
    - Other filter return actions
    - Further details on BPF programs
    - Recent seccomp features
    - Audit logging of filter actions
20. **Cgroups: Introduction**
    - Preamble
    - What are control groups?
    - An example: the `pids` controller
    - Creating and destroying cgroups
    - Populating a cgroup
    - Enabling and disabling controllers
21. **Cgroups: A Survey of the Controllers**
    - The `cpu`, `memory`, `freezer`, and `pids` controllers
    - Other controllers
22. **Cgroups: Advanced Features**
    - Cgroup namespaces
    - Release notification (`cgroup.events` file)
    - Delegation
23. **Cgroups: Thread Mode (*)**
    - Overview of thread mode
    - Creating and using a threaded subtree
24. **Cgroups Version 1 (*)**
    - Cgroups v1: hierarchies and controllers
    - Cgroups v1: populating a cgroup
    - Cgroups v1: release notification
    - Cgroups v1: delegation
    - Problems with cgroups v1; rationale for v2
25. **Linux containers in 100 lines of shell (*)**
    - Building a container from the shell
    - The container root filesystem (OverlayFS)
    - Isolating the container: namespaces
    - Isolating the container: cgroups
    - Container set-up stage 1: cgroups + namespaces
    - Container set-up stage 2: mounts and *pivot_root()*
    - Starting up the container
    - Namespaces inside the container
    - Superuser inside a container
    - Cgroups inside the container
    - Networking inside the container
    - One more thing...
    - Postscript: ID-mapped mounts