April 26, 2021

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Dear Professor Oprea and Professor Holz:

We wish to withdraw our paper "On the Feasibility of Stealthily Introducing Vulnerabilities in Open-Source Software via Hypocrite Commits" from publication in the 42nd IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy.

We are making this decision because we realized that our study design was inappropriate: specifically, it involved conducting research on the Linux kernel community without obtaining appropriate consent and approval.

More specifically, we are withdrawing the paper for two reasons:

First, we made a mistake by not engaging in collaboration with the Linux kernel community before conducting our study. We now understand that it was inappropriate and hurtful to the community to make it a subject of our research, and to waste its effort reviewing these patches without its knowledge or permission. Instead, we now realize that the appropriate way to do this sort of work is to engage with community leaders beforehand so that they are aware of the work, approve its goals and methods, and can support the methods and results once the work is completed and published. Therefore, we are withdrawing the paper so that we do not benefit from an improperly conducted study.

Second, given the flaws in our methods, we do not want this paper to stand as a model for how research can be done in this community. On the contrary, we hope this episode will be a learning moment for our community, and that the resulting discussion and recommendations can serve as a guide for proper research in the future. Therefore, we are withdrawing the paper to prevent our misguided research method from being seen as a model for how to conduct studies in the future.

We sincerely apologize for any harm our research group did to the Linux kernel community, to the reputation of the IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy, our Department and University, and our community as a whole.

Sincerely,

Qiushi Wu and Kangjie Lu