

NEXOS¹ Project #1 – Booting up and Interacting with Embedded XINU Operating System

CSE321: Embedded and Realtime Operating Systems

Fall 2010

Due date: 10/1/2009 (you need to demo it by then by attending recitations)

1. Objectives and overview of the project:

Prepare a simple hardware system and embed in it a minimal operating system. The minimal operating system will be enhanced in the subsequent projects by other features. We will use WRT54GL the wireless router from Linksys [1] and Embedded XINU operating system [2] for this purpose. Students will

- (i) study the architecture of WRT54GL wireless router,
- (ii) modify the WRT54GL hardware to upload embedded XINU (EXINU) operating systems, and
- (iii) test the embedded operating system using simple C programs.
- (iv) modify the EXINU code to add new shell commands.

2. Project Environment

2.1 Operating system XINU

XINU ("Xinu Is Not Unix") is a small, academic operating system developed at Purdue University by Dr. Douglas E. Comer in the early 1980s for the LSI-11 platform; it has now been ported to a variety of platforms. Embedded XINU is an update of this project which attempts to modernize the code base (to ANSI-compliant C) and port the system to a modern architecture (specifically the MIPS architecture).

2.2 Hardware WRT54GL

We will use wireless router WRT54GL as a host for the software we will develop for enhancing the features of an embedded operating system. WRT54GL has a very interesting history the details of which can be found at [3]. The WRT54G is notable for being the first consumer-level network device that had its firmware source code released to satisfy the obligations of the GNU GPL. This allows programmers to modify the firmware to change or add functionality to the device. WRT54GL features a Broadcom MIPS processor BCM5352 (200-250Mhz), a four port Ethernet switch, 802.11b and 802.11g wireless LAN support, a Web interface for configuration of the router, 16Mbytes of SDRAM and 4Mbytes of flash memory. Any modification to the router function itself has to be done by updating the firmware on the flash memory. However we will load the embedded XINU image that we create in the SDRAM. See [4] more details on the memory layout of the SDRAM.

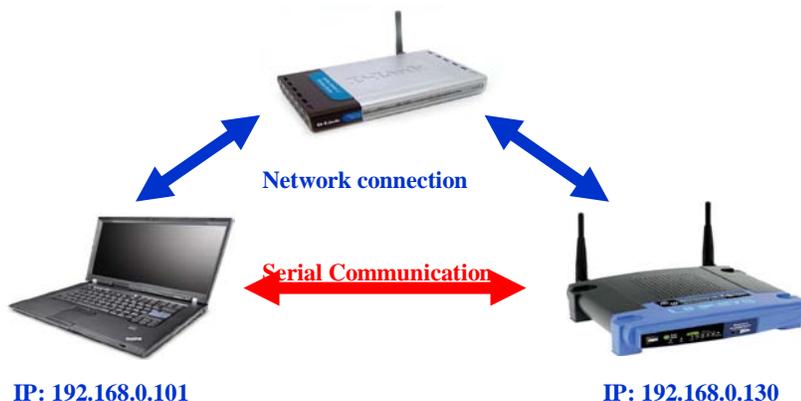


Figure 1 Basic NEXOS Network to Upload Embedded XINU to WRT54GL

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2.3 Basic NEXOS Test Environment

The lab environment will be supported by other hardware and software components to provide cross-compiling and networking support. In order to compile Embedded MIPS kernels on a workstation that is not itself a MIPS processor, it is necessary to build and install an appropriate cross compiler. Any time you modify the embedded XINU, the recompiled software will have to be reloaded into the WRT54GL system you are working on. A simple and basic network configuration allocating IP address to the host with the cross-compiler, the wireless router that will host the embedded XINU and a common router that forms the network are shown in Figure 1.

The Common Firmware Environment (CFE) [5] is the firmware developed by Broadcom for the BCM947xx SoC platform (among others). It is the first code that runs when the router boots and performs functions:

- Initializes the system
- Sets up a basic environment in which code can run
- Optionally provides a command line interface non-standard usage
- Loads and executes a kernel image

So, in normal operation, a user will not see CFE working at all; it will load the LinkSys kernel and send it on its merry way without hesitation. For us, however, CFE is crucial, because it provides us with the ability to load an image over the network using TFTP [6].

2.4 Expanded NEXOS Test Environment

The WRT54G can be used alone at any workstation with a serial port and a network connection. This configuration may be suitable for very small laboratory installations concerned only with hardware systems assignments, but to take maximum advantage of the power of our platform it is far more useful to collect many WRT54G's as a pool of *backends* doled out by a central server. Particularly in the context of more advanced courses in networking, it is best that this pool of backends be managed on a private network, isolated from the production network by a gateway.

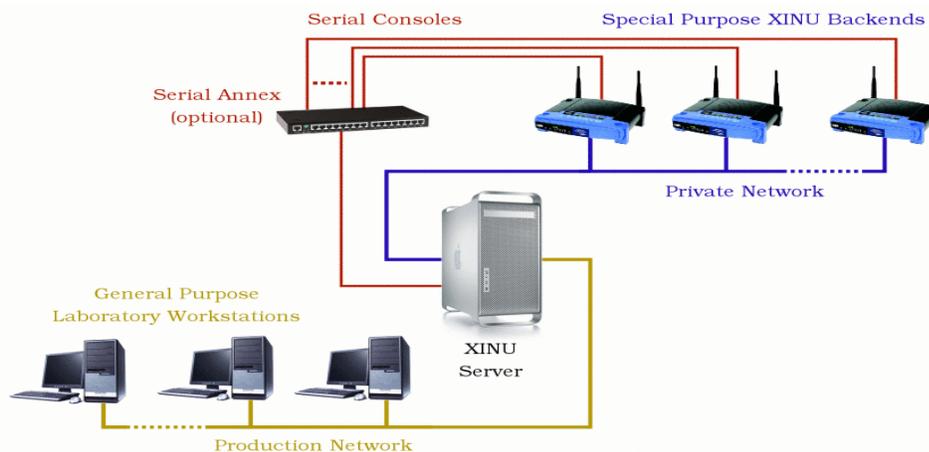


Figure 2 Expanded NEXOS environment with a central server

Figure 2 outlines the typical layout first used at Purdue and later nicknamed the *warzone* by the TinkerNet Project. A cadre of dedicated target machines resides on the private network (warzone) where students may load and run experimental kernels on demand. These dedicated, backend machines load a new O/S image from the central server across the network each time they reboot, allowing students to refresh the image frequently as they build their system.

3. What to do?

3.1 Prepare Hardware

1. Study the various components of the environment discussed above.
2. Modify the Linksys WRT54GL hardware as follows: Obtain the parts as given in the list. Parts list:

Quantity	Part Name	Details	Part / Model Number
1	LinkSys WRT54GL Router	802.11b/g wireless broadband router	Linksys WRT54GL
1	Ribbon cable	28 AWG, 10 conductor, 25'	Jameco 643508CM
1	IDC socket connector	0.1", 10 conductor	Jameco 32491CM
1	IDC shrouded header	0.1", 10 conductor	Jameco 67811CM
1	RS232 Transmitter/Receiver	IC 2DVR/2RCVR RS232 5V 20-DIP	DigiKey MAX233CPP-ND
1	DB9 Female	22AWG,SOLDER CUP	Jameco 15771CM
1	DB9 Male	22AWG,SOLDER CUP	Jameco 15747CM

3. Open the router.
 4. Attach the serial header.
 5. Wire serial header to MAX233A RS232 receiver/transmitter.
 6. Wire the DB9 connectors to MAX233A.
- Make sure you solder the socket before mounting the chip itself.

3.2 Prepare software

1. Download and cross-compile the embedded XINU code.
2. Download TFTP for loading compiled XINU into the router via CFE.
3. Study the XINU code in the subdirectories.
4. Connect the serial port UART0 to the host (laptop/computer) with embedded XINU code and load it.
5. Configure the serial communication software.
6. Power-up the router.
7. Access the CFE and upload the embedded XINU.

3.3 Test the setup

Build and deploy XINU and examine the commands available. Write a simple test program "Hello World" and test the setup.

3.4 Study Embedded XINU files

Download the Embedded XINU bundle (tarball) from <http://xinu.mscs.mu.edu> and untar it. Examine the directory structure and understand the purpose of various directories. Specifically, study these files in the directories:

- **include (header files):** shell.h, device.h, gpio.h, interrupt.h, shell.h, tty.h, uart.h
- **shell (shell command files):** shell.c, xsh_led.c, xsh_help.c
- **system (system operations):** devtable.c, getc.c, putc.c, read.c, write.c, initialize.c, kprintf.c, open.c, close.c, startup.S
- **all the files in tty and uart directories.**

3.5 Write simple shell commands

The XINU shell is a subsystem designed as an interface for interacting with the operating system. The shell relies on the TTY driver to receive user input and provide output to the user. When XINU starts, a shell process is spawned for each serial port (or TTY). TTY operates on the UART driver. Study the steps given in <http://xinu.mscs.mu.edu/Shell> to understand how to create a shell command. Add three commands:

- (i) **eval exp** that evaluates the expression exp and prints the result: for example
 - **eval 4+ 5*2**
 - **14**
 - **eval 16-7/2**
 - **13**
- (ii) **ledLoop args** that flashes leds on WRT54GL in a loop according to the args given; use your imagination for the args and for the usage of the command; and
- (iii) **quote** of the day command, randomly chooses one of the quotes already stored inside the system. For example
 - **quote**
 - **“Believe in yourself”**

4. References

- [1] WRT54GL: <http://www.linuxelectronics.com/features/howto/consolidated-hacking-guide-linksys-wrt54gl/print>
- [2] EXINU: <http://xinu.mscs.mu.edu>
- [3] WRT4GL : <http://www.wi-fiplanet.com/tutorials/article.php/3562391>
- [4] EXINU memory: http://xinu.mscs.mu.edu/HOWTO:Deploy_Xinu
- [5] CFE: <http://xinu.mscs.mu.edu/CFE>
- [6] TFTP: http://www.tftp-server.com/tftp_server_overview.html