



# ADGFUZZ: Assignment Dependency-Guided Fuzzing for Robotic Vehicles

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# Robotic Vehicle (RV) and Control Software

- Robotic Vehicles (RVs) refer to unmanned autonomous or semi-autonomous platforms (e.g., UAVs, UGVs) designed to perform complex physical tasks in diverse environments.
  - Key Roles: commercial aerial photography, formation performances



Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)



Unmanned Ground Vehicle (UGV)



Unmanned Surface Vehicle (USV)



# Robotic Vehicle (RV) and Control Software

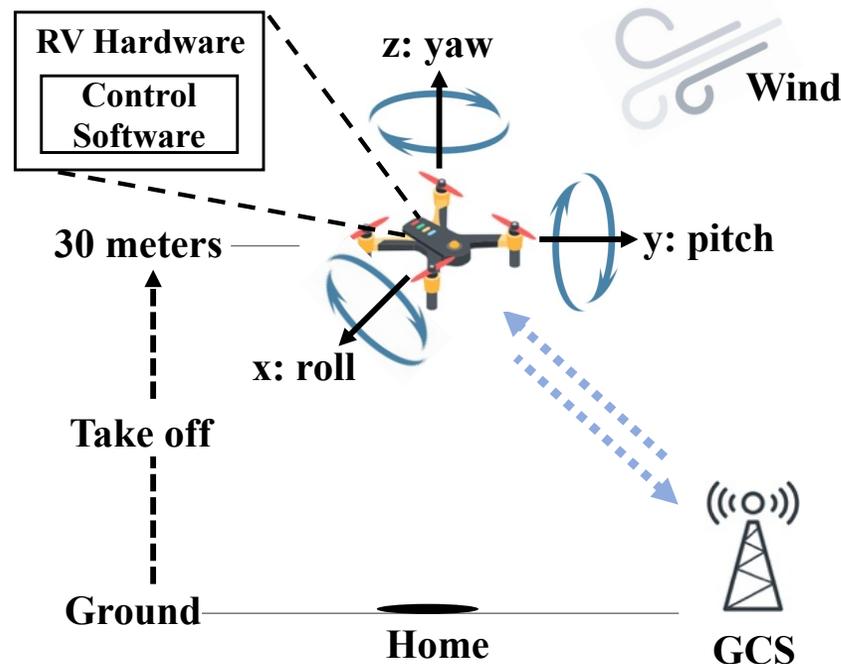
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- RV Control Software : The system ‘brain’

- Sensor Data Fusion
- State Estimation & Computing
- Stability & Attitude Control
- ... ..



# RVs - Security & Safety

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- RVs are critical cyber-physical systems with widespread deployment
- Control software bugs can cause crashes, mission failures, or loss of control
- Security Landscape of RVs: The Complexity Challenge
  - **Vast Input Space**: Thousands of params, 164 commands, and fluctuating environment data.
  - **State-Space Explosion**: Exponentially increasing combinations make exhaustive testing impossible.
  - **Undetected Deep Bugs**: Conventional fuzzers fail to reach deep functional logic errors.

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**Enabling focused testing by partitioning the massive input space into manageable RV-specific subspaces.**

# From Control Theory to Programmatic Realization

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**CPS + Control Theory**

RV control software acts as the bridge between  
**digital logic** and **physical dynamics**.

**Coding**

???  
**Control Software**

# From Control Theory to Programmatic Realization

## CPS + Control Theory

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## Coding

Control Software

- The Gap in Formula Implementation
  - Complex theoretical formulas (e.g., PID control) cannot be perfectly replicated in code.
  - Requires numerical approximations, discretization, and indirect assignments through auxiliary variables.

PID

$$u(x) = kp( err(t) + \frac{1}{T} \cdot \int err(t) dt + \frac{T_D}{dt} derr(t) )$$

$$U(k) = K_p ( err(k) + \frac{T}{T_i} \sum err(k) + \frac{T_D}{T} ( err(k) - err(k-1) ) )$$

```
error = setpoint - current_value;  
integral += error * dt;  
derivative = (error - previous_error) / dt;  
output = Kp * error + Ki * integral + Kd * derivative;
```

# From Control Theory to Programmatic Realization

## CPS + Control Theory

RV control software acts as the bridge between **digital logic** and **physical dynamics**.

## Coding

Control Software

- The Gap in Formula Implementation

- Complex theoretical formulas (e.g., PID control) cannot be perfectly replicated in code.
- Requires numerical approximations, discretization, and indirect assignments through auxiliary variables.

- Vulnerability

- Human Errors: Memory corruption, missing validation logic.
- Logic Flaws: Unintended interactions between conflicting inputs.
- Translation Gap: Incomplete mapping from physical models to code.

PID

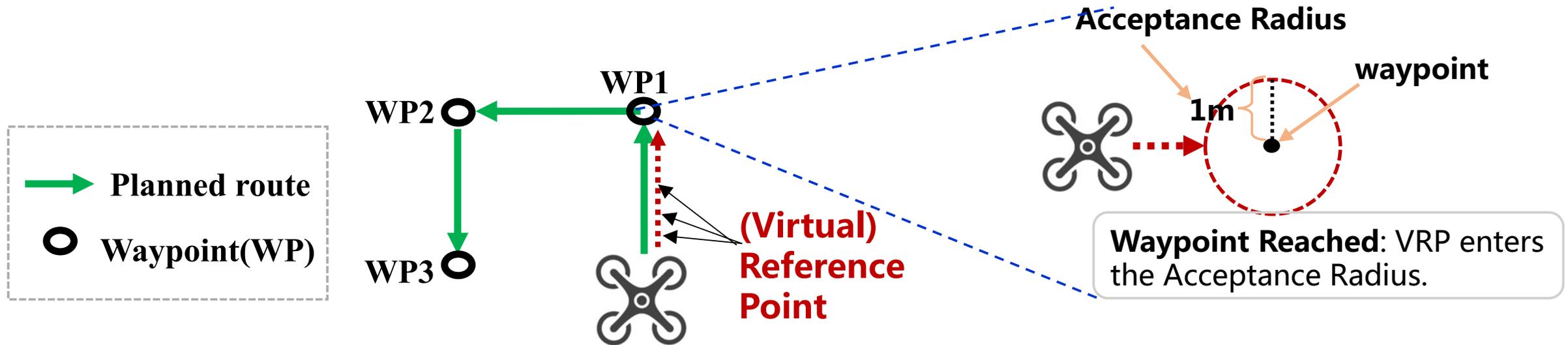
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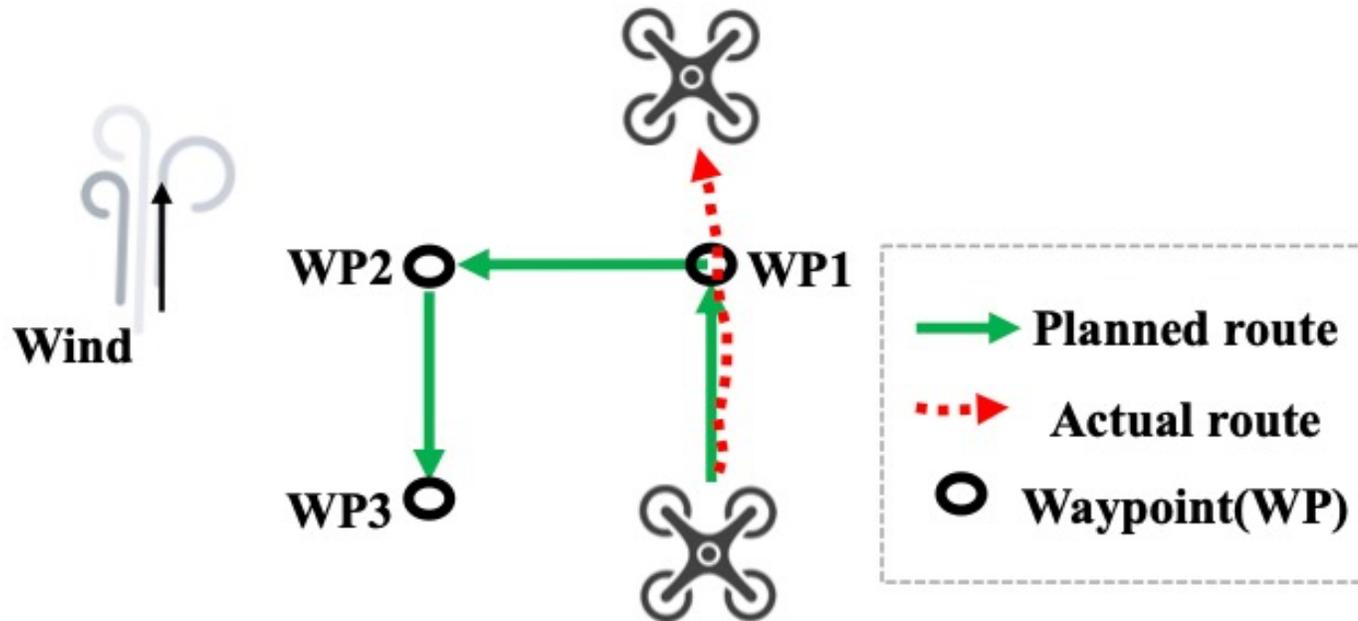
# Motivating Example

- Waypoint Navigation Task: Autonomous waypoint-to-waypoint flight via a predefined mission path.
- Path Following via VRP
  - The vehicle tracks the path by "chasing" a Virtual Reference Point (VRP).
  - e.g. ArduPilot: L1 Controller (L1 Point)
- VRP represent the sequence of desired positions along the flight path.



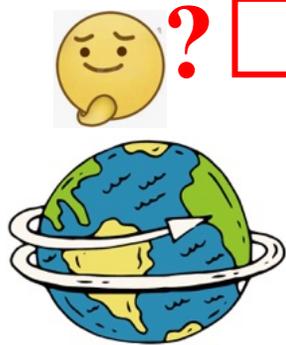
# Motivating Example

- Wind-Induced Trajectory Deviation
  - Planned Mission (**Green Line**): A precise rectangular mission passing through three waypoints (WP1, WP2 and WP3).
  - Actual Trajectory (**Red Line**): the copter drifts away from the waypoints

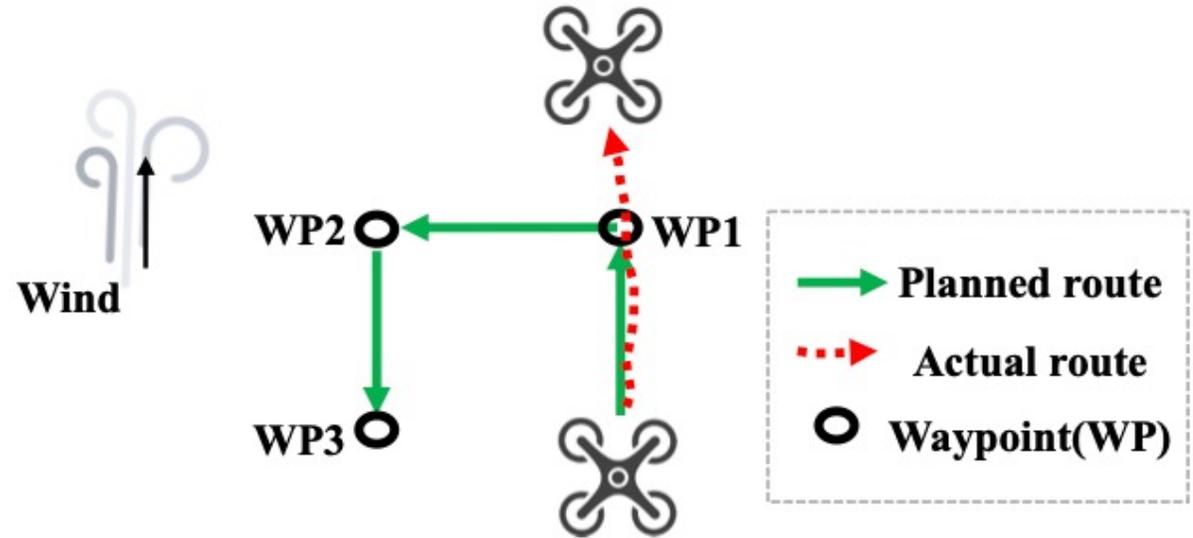


# Motivating Example

- False Waypoint Reaching
  - Copter keeps drifting away....
  - But: waypoint reached???



Log:  
[omitted]...  
Flying to WP2...  
**Reached WP2!**  
Flying to WP3...



# Motivating Example – Root Cause

- The trajectory tracking logic does not validate the Copter's actual position.
- The reference-point advancing speed is lower-bounded ( $\geq 0.1$ ), preventing it from stopping.

```
1 bool AC_WPNav::advance_wp_target_along_track(float dt) {
2     float track_error = _pos_control_error.dot(track_direction);
3     float track_velocity = _inav_velocity_neu.dot(track_direction);
4 - float track_scaler_dt = constrain_float(0.05f + (track_velocity - get_pos_kP() *
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6     float _track_scalar_dt += (track_scaler_dt - _track_scalar_dt) * (dt / track_scaler_tc);
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8     if (!_flags.reached_destination) { // check whether reached the waypoint
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11        //...(omitted). This means the change in angle is equivalent to the change in acceleration.

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# Assignment Statement Bugs

- Error Propagation in Control Logic
  - line 4 (track\_scaler\_dt) -> line 6 -> line 7 (s\_finished) -> ...

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}
```

How common are assignment bugs in real RV software?

# Exploratory Study

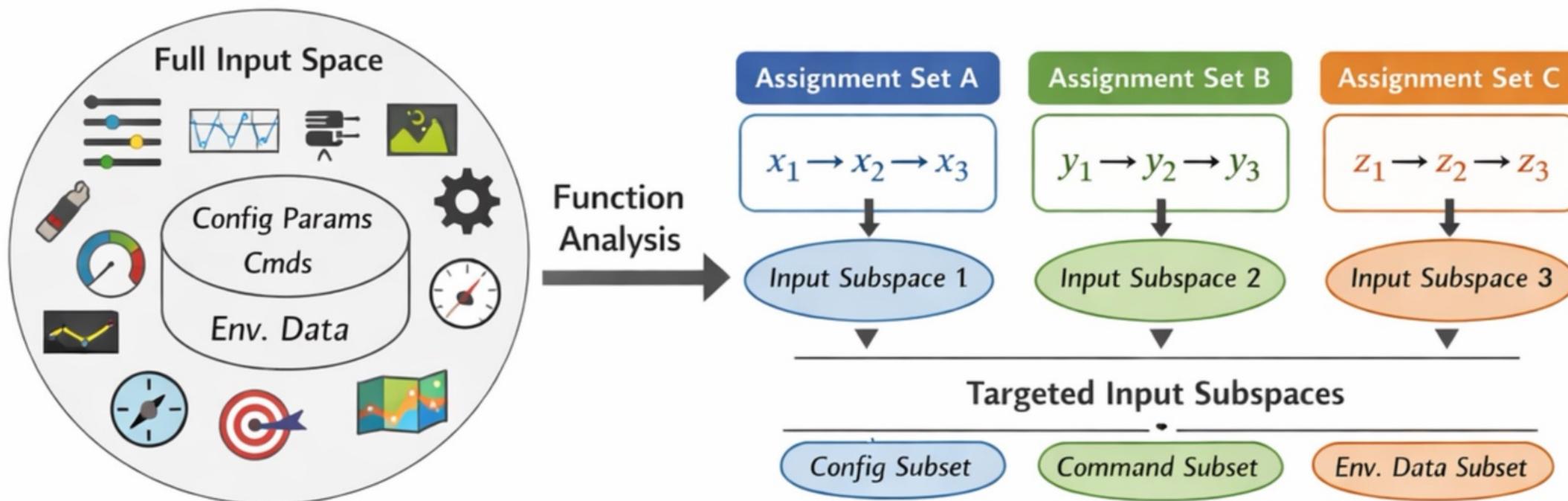
- ArduPilot issues ([https://github.com/ArduPilot/ardupilot/issues?q=is:issue label:BUG](https://github.com/ArduPilot/ardupilot/issues?q=is:issue+label:BUG))
  - From Jan. 2015 to Jan. 2025
  - 819 issues: label = ‘BUG’

*Table: Bug fix patterns in ‘BUG’-labeled ArduPilot issues and their categorization.*

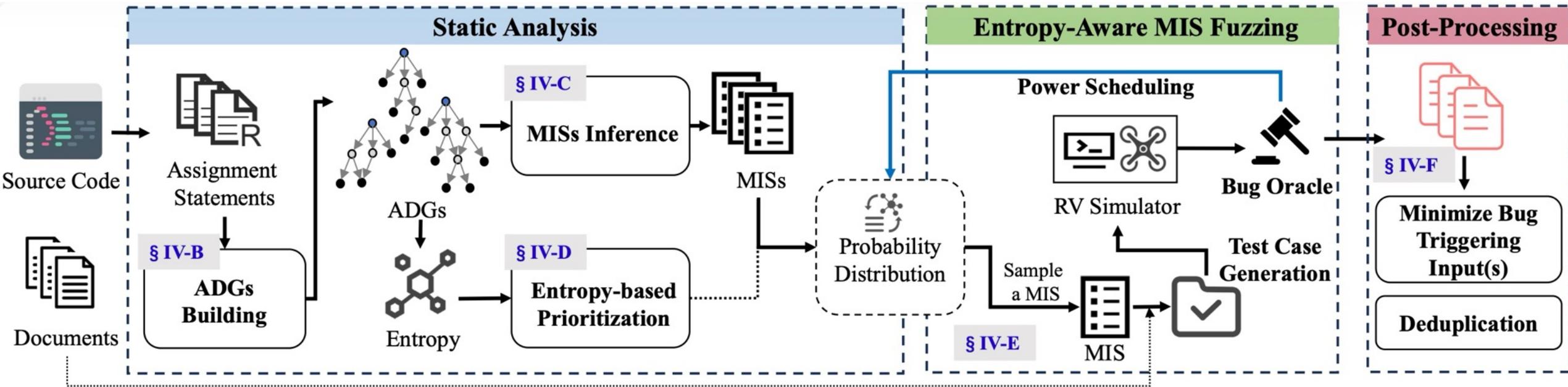
<b>Fixing code types</b>	<b># of issues</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
Assignment statement corrections	58	28.02
Logic additions or deletions	111	53.62
Function call modifications	16	7.74
Function return type or numerical unit changes	11	5.31
Default value adjustments	11	5.31

# Main Idea: Focused input space exploration

- Parse each function into independent **assignment sets**.
- Leverage variable **semantics** to link to **input space**.
- Extract multiple dependent assignment sets.



# Approach Overview - ADGFuzz



- Three main stages:
  - Static Analysis : (1) Extract dependency-aware assignment sets from source code and (2) map code variables to inputs (MIS).
  - Entropy-Aware MIS Fuzzing : Prioritize and fuzz MISs based on entropy.
  - Post-Processing : Analyze, minimize, and deduplicate fuzzing results to produce unique bug reports.

# Definition

- Assignment Statement (AS)
  - Each AS is modeled as a **triple**  $S = (y, X, O)$

$$\Rightarrow y := x_1 \oplus_1 x_2 \oplus_2 \dots \oplus_{n-1} x_n$$

$$\oplus_i \in \underbrace{\{+, -, \times, \div\}}_{\text{arithmetic}} \cup \underbrace{\{\wedge, \vee, \neg, =\}}_{\text{logical}}$$

- Assignment Dependency Graph (ADG)
  - A **Directed Acyclic Graph**  $G = (V, E)$ , constructed from interdependent AS within a specific function.
    - $V = V_{root} \cup V_{leaf} \cup V_{semi}$  is a set of nodes where:
$$V_{root} = \{v \mid \exists S_1 : v \in S_1.y \wedge \nexists S_2 : v \in S_2.X\}$$
$$V_{leaf} = \{v \mid \exists S_1 : v \in S_1.X \wedge \nexists S_2 : v \in S_2.y\}$$
$$V_{semi} = \{v \mid \exists S_1 \neq S_2 : v \in S_1.y \wedge v \in S_2.X\}$$
    - $E = E_{RL} \cup E_{RS} \cup E_{SL} \cup E_{SS}$

# ① ADGs Building

- Construct the ADG by performing **syntax analysis** on source code, **mapping functional semantics to specific variable names**.

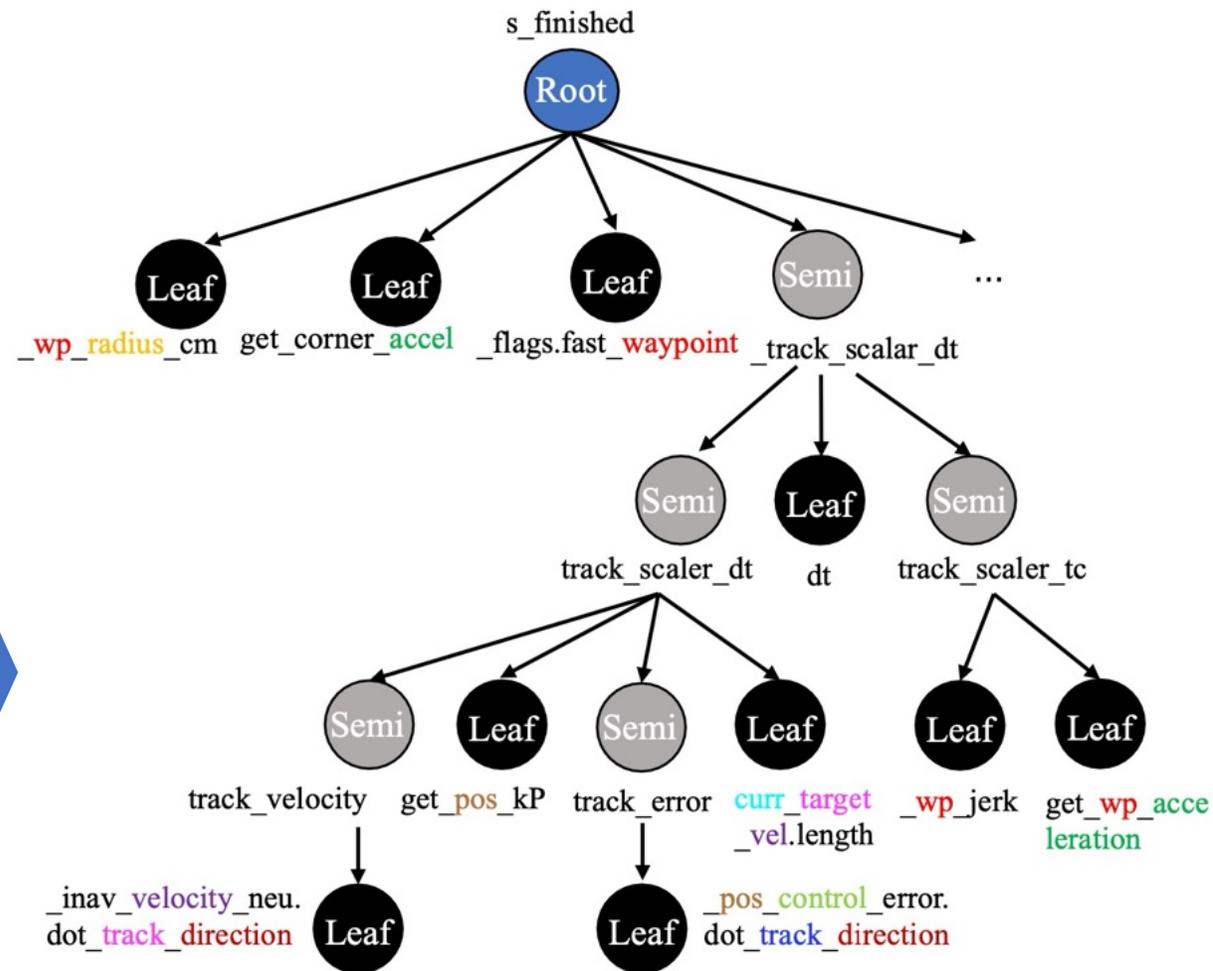
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```



- 1-Node: Variable Extraction & Attribution
  - grammar filtering & attribute assignment
- 2-Edge: Dependency-Based Graph Linkage
  - root → semi, root → leaf
  - semi → semi, semi → leaf



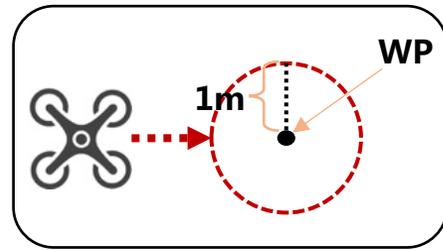
## ② MISs Inference

- Map ADG variables to multi-source inputs to construct **Matched Input Sets (MIS)**.

```
bool s_finished =  
_s_leg.advance_target_along_track(wp_radius_cm,  
get_corner_accel(), _flags.fast_waypoint,  
_track_scalar_dt * vel_scaler_dt * dt,  
target_pos, target_vel, target_accel);
```

`_wp_radius_cm`

- (1) **Variable:** Represents the tolerance radius of the waypoint



Tolerance/Acceptance Radius

### WPNAV\_RADIUS: Waypoint Radius

Defines the distance from a waypoint, that when crossed indicates the wp has been hit.

Increment	Range	Units
1	5 to 1000	centimeters

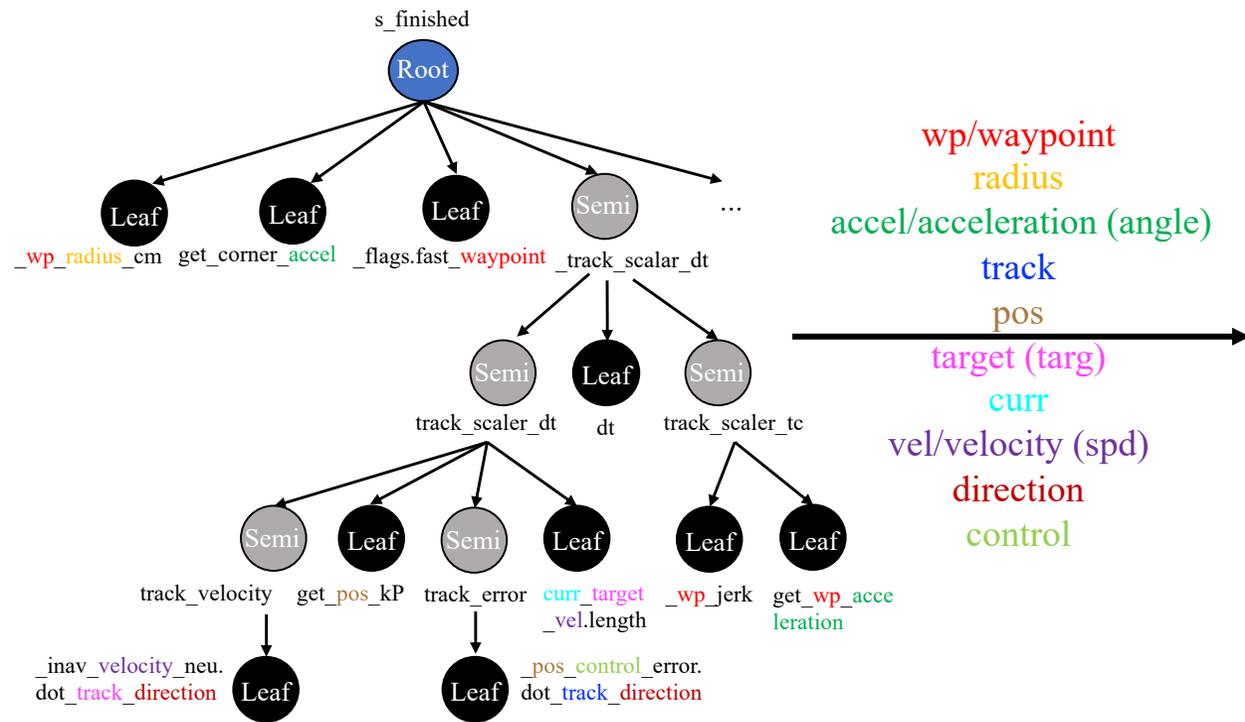
Input param **WPNAV\_RADIUS** : Used to set the tolerance radius for waypoints

```
8   if (!_flags.reached_destination) { // check whether reached the waypoint  
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```

(3) ...

## ② MISs Inference

- Leveraging **Terminology Similarity** to bridge the gap between **Program Variables** (internal) and **Multi-source Inputs** (external).



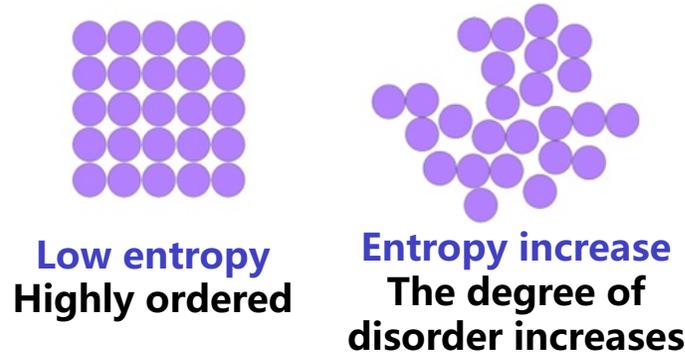
(a) ADG

WP_YAW_BEHAVIOR, WP_NAVALT_MIN, MAV_CMD_NAV_WAYPOINT, ...
ADSB_LIST_RADIUS, CIRCLE_RADIUS, FENCE_RADIUS, WPNAV_RADIUS, ...
AVOID_ACCEL_MAX, ATC_ACCEL_{R/P/Y}_MAX, INS_ACCEL_FILTER, WPNAV_ACCEL, ANGLE_MAX, AVOID_ANGLE_MAX, ATC_ANGLE_BOOST, ...
MAV_CMD_CAMERA_TRACK_POINT, MAV_CMD_CAMERA_TRACK_RECTANGLE
FLOW_POS_X, RNGFND{*}_POS_{X/Y/Z}, SIM_SONAR_POS_X, ...
AROT_FWD_SP_TARG, SIM_SB_ALT_TARG
MOT_BAT_CURR_TC, MOT_BAT_CURR_MAX, BATT_CURR_PIN, ...
EK2_VEL_I_GATE, EK3_VEL_I_GATE, AVOID_BACKUP_SPD, SIM_WIND_SPD, ...
ZIGZ_DIRECTION
MAV_CMD_DO_CONTROL_VIDEO, MAV_CMD_DO_MOUNT_CONTROL, ...

(b) MIS

### ③ Entropy-based Prioritization

- Randomly testing massive MIS is inefficient.
- Shannon Entropy <sup>[1]</sup>: High Uncertainty → High Unpredictability. → Higher Bug Potential <sup>?</sup>



- **Metric: Semantic Information Richness Entropy** measures each MIS.

$$E(\text{MIS}) = \log_2(|N| + 1) + \log_2 \left( 1 + \sum_{v \in V_{\text{leaf}}} \sum_{i=1}^k \frac{i}{T_i} \right)$$

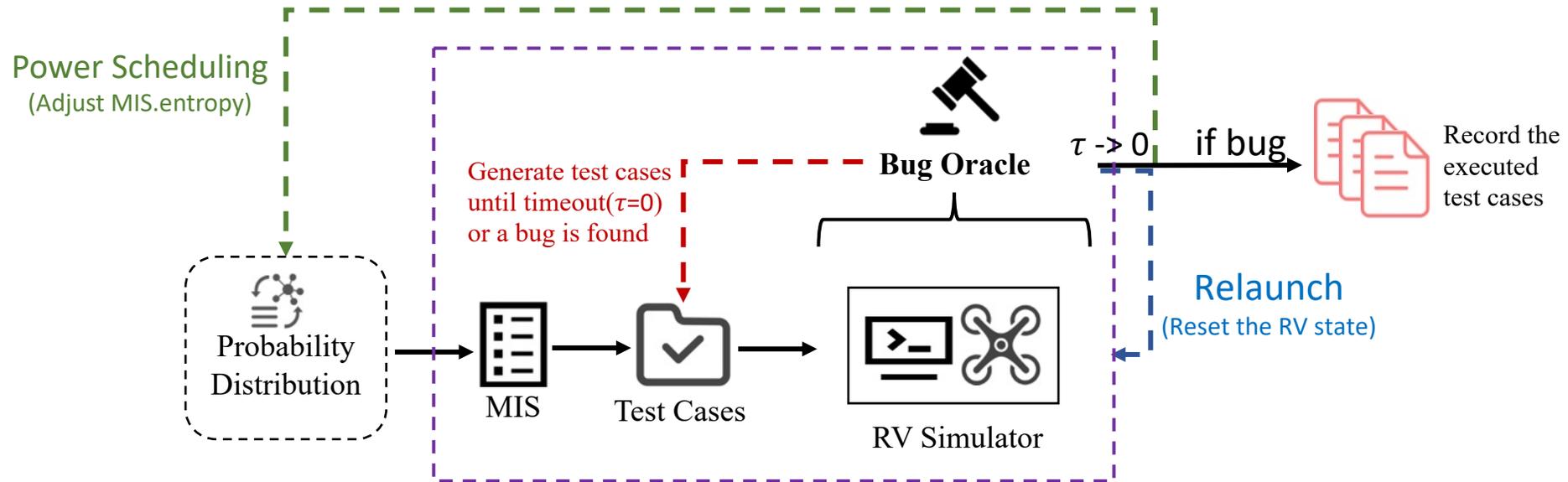
$$p(\text{MIS}) = \frac{E(\text{MIS})}{\sum_{L \in \text{MIS}_s} E(L)}$$

[1] Shannon CE. A mathematical theory of communication[J/OL]. SIGMOBILE Mob. Comput. Commun. Rev., 2001, 5(1): 3–55.

## ④ Entropy-Aware MIS Fuzzing

- Parallel Fuzzing Workflow

- **Simulation Module:** Spawns simulator instances and automates multi-stage navigation tasks.
- **Execution Module:** Samples MIS via entropy distribution and injects test cases during flight states.
- **Oracle Module:** Monitors anomalies in real-time, updates entropy weights, and triggers post-processing analysis.

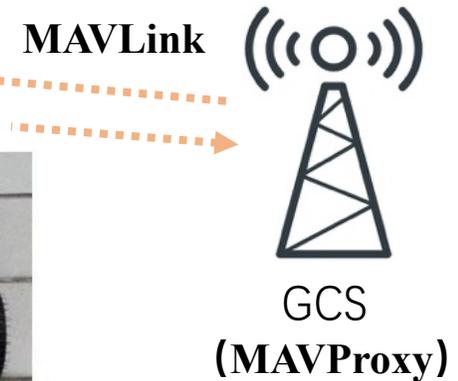


# Evaluation Setup

- Evaluated on the three most widely used RV types: Copter, Plane, and Rover.

- ➔ SITL (Software-in-the-Loop) simulation
- ➔ MAVProxy: Ground Control Station
- ➔ MAVLink: Communication protocol
- ➔ Test Duration: 24-hour
- ➔ Cross-verified on real-world RV

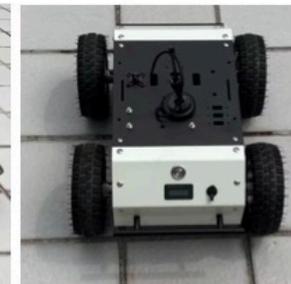
## Control Software: ArduPilot and PX4



(a) Copter



(b) Plane



(c) Rover



# Conclusion

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- Leverage Assignment Dependencies and Semantic Mapping to create targeted MIS for focused, high-efficiency testing.
- ADGFUZZ proves that Assignment Dependency is critical for uncovering RV logic bugs and is adaptable to other CPS.
- Open-source code and a pre-configured Ubuntu VM image are provided for reproducibility.

# Thank You!

## Q&A

**Contact:** Yuncheng Wang

**Email:** [wangyuncheng@iie.ac.cn](mailto:wangyuncheng@iie.ac.cn)

**Open-source:** <https://github.com/wyunc/ADGFuzz>



Source Code

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16956667>



Virtual Machine