



SmartDIMM: In-Memory Acceleration of Upper Layer Protocols

Neel Patel

Amin Mamandipoor

Mohammad Nouri

Mohammad Alian

University of Kansas

{nmpatel,amin.mamandi, mohammadnouri,alian}@ku.edu

Abstract—There has been significant focus on offloading upper-layer network protocols (ULPs) to accelerators located on CPUs and SmartNICs. However, restricting accelerator placement to these locations limits both the variety of ULPs that can be accelerated and the overall performance. In particular, it overlooks the opportunity to accelerate ULPs running atop a stateful transport protocol in the face of high cache contention. That is, at high network rates, the frequent DRAM accesses and SmartNIC-CPU synchronizations outweigh the benefits of hardware acceleration. This work introduces SmartDIMM, which unlocks the opportunity for accelerating ULPs running atop stateful transport protocols that primarily operate on data stored in DRAM. We prototyped SmartDIMM using Samsung’s AxDIMM and implemented end-to-end offloading of (de/en)cryption and (de)compression—two ULPs widely employed in datacenters. We then compared the performance of SmartDIMM with accelerator placements on the CPU, SmartNIC, and PCIe cards. Our results demonstrate that ULP offloading on SmartDIMM outperforms CPU, SmartNIC and PCIe-based offload configurations. In comparison to a server executing (de/en)cryption and (de)compression on the CPU, SmartDIMM achieves 21.0% to 10.28 \times higher requests per second and 36.3% to 88.9% lower memory bandwidth utilization.

I. INTRODUCTION

Upper Layer Network Protocols (ULPs) are widely deployed at scale for data protection via encryption [1–3], facilitating communication in heterogeneous software deployments via serialization [4–7], and reducing data transfer times via compression [8, 9]. Such operations, often referred to as datacenter taxes, consume a significant number of datacenter cycles [10, 11], with (de)compression and (de/en)cryption consuming up to 14% and 23% of datacenter cycles for top Google and Meta services [12–14].

With the effective end of Dennard’s scaling and the exponential increase in network bandwidth requirements in datacenters [15], supplying the compute demand of ULPs is only possible through hardware acceleration. Current platforms for accelerating (de/en)cryption and (de)compression include SmartNICs [16–19], PCIe cards [20–22], and CPU chips [23, 24]. However, these accelerator placements are sub-optimal for accelerating ULPs operating atop the layered network software stack, which can exhibit several hundred milliseconds of latency between software layers. That is, the excessive data movement over PCIe and DDR channels [25] and frequent SmartNIC-CPU synchronizations [26] diminishes the benefits of hardware acceleration.

Figure 1a shows a sub-optimal configuration in which the CPU is responsible for ULP processing. In this example, a

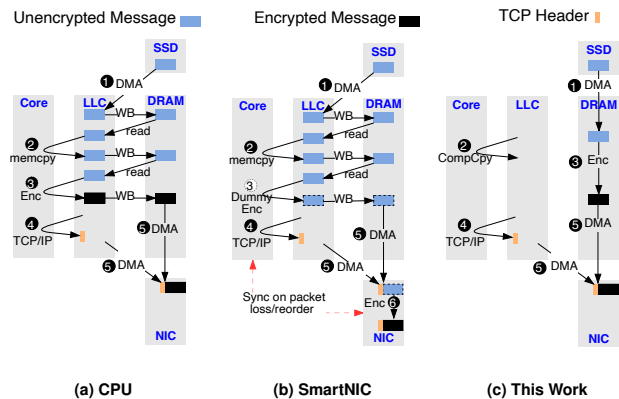


Fig. 1. System-level data movement in a web server that encrypts web pages stored on a storage device before packetizing them and sending them over TCP connections to clients. At high request rates, (a) on-chip encryption acceleration is hindered by frequent DRAM accesses, and (b) autonomous NIC offloading [26] of encryption is limited by both CPU side memory copies as well as costly synchronizations between the NIC and CPU during packet reorderings and losses. (c) SmartDIMM unleashes the full potential of ULP acceleration by minimizing system-level data movement, without disrupting the layered storage and network software stack.

web-server application encrypts websites before sending them through TCP connections to clients. Owing to the streaming nature of data serving, the large working set of the web server, and the asynchronicity between the storage stack, encryption-layer protocol, and TCP/IP packet processing, data read from storage frequently exhibits a ping-pong access pattern between on-chip caches and DRAM before being sent over the network. Fig.1b demonstrates the offloading of encryption to a SmartNIC, where the encryption of TCP payloads is postponed until the payload reaches the SmartNIC accelerator, while the TCP header is constructed using the TCP/IP stack on the CPU. Although SmartNIC offloading can free CPU cycles, it may still be subject to the ping-pong data movement between caches and DRAM, as well as synchronization overheads between the CPU and SmartNIC following packet reordering or losses [26].

In this work, we introduce SmartDIMM that enables fine-grain, adaptive offloading of ULP processing to memory. SmartDIMM implements a domain-specific accelerator on the buffer device of a Dual In-line Memory Module (DIMM) and synchronously transforms data as it traverses the DDR channel. Additionally, SmartDIMM’s software stack dynamically probes the LLC contention and adaptively enables or disables

offloading of ULP processing to memory. Fig.1c illustrates how SmartDIMM eliminates cache thrashing by rerouting outbound network data to directly pass through DRAM, while the unmodified TCP/IP stack operates on the CPU.

Adaptively offloading computation to memory Requires (R1) sharing the address space between the CPU and SmartDIMM, (R2) operating SmartDIMM as a regular DIMM when ULPs are processed on the CPU, and (R3) implementing a lightweight synchronization mechanism between the CPU and near-memory processors. Meeting requirements R1 and R2 is challenging with JEDEC-compliant DDR-attached DIMMs, as only one memory controller can be used to maintain the status of each DRAM bank [27–29]. Fulfilling R3 through conventional polling or interrupt mechanisms introduces significant overhead. Although prior work [30] eliminates the notification overhead by performing computation synchronously with memory accesses, it does not share the address space and tends to use memory modules more as accelerators than as memory devices.

To meet the aforementioned requirements, we introduce the concept of Compute Copy (CompCpy). CompCpy is an API that transforms data within SmartDIMM while concurrently copying it from a source buffer to a destination buffer. This approach enables ULP offloading without requiring extensive code changes in existing software stacks and ULP frameworks. As offloads are performed synchronously, the software does not need to depend on polling or interrupts to synchronize with the near-memory processor, thus satisfying requirement R3.

We developed a SmartDIMM prototype capable of offloading Transport Layer Security (TLS) processing using Samsung’s AxDIMM [31]. To facilitate application-layer access to SmartDIMM, we implemented an OpenSSL engine [32] which utilizes the CompCpy API to skip the library’s on-CPU (de/en)cryption routines and instead pass (un)encrypted TLS messages to the (de/en)cryption engine on SmartDIMM.

Offloading (de/en)cryption and (de)compression as representative ULPs to SmartDIMM results in 21.0%-10.28 \times and 11.9%-50.3% higher requests per second, respectively, compared to a server executing them on the CPU and SmartNIC. Additionally, SmartDIMM achieves 36.3%-88.9% and 7.6%-59.9% lower memory bandwidth utilization, respectively, compared with CPU and SmartNIC implementations.

In this work we make the following contributions:

- Identify that DRAM is on the processing path of ULPs running atop the layered software stack in the era of high-throughput network devices.
- Introduce SmartDIMM, a bump-in-the-DDR near-memory processing architecture for in-line acceleration of ULPs.
- Utilize the on-chip caches to implement a novel self-recycling mechanism, autonomously recycling a near-memory scratchpad.
- Introduce CompCpy API that transforms data within memory while concurrently copying it from a source buffer to a destination buffer.
- Prototype SmartDIMM on Samsung’s AxDIMM to accelerate two widely used ULPs, (de/en)cryption and (de)compression, without modifying the cost-sensitive

DRAM devices, the CPU memory controller, or the synchronous JEDEC-compliant DDR interface.

II. BACKGROUND

Upper-layer protocols (ULPs) – also known as layer-5 network protocols – are widespread, seeing use across the Internet and in production environments. They often reside on top of the TCP/IP layer, providing additional services to applications. (de/en)cryption and (de)compression are two important ULPs that consume a significant number of cycles in datacenters [14]. In this section we provide background on these two ULPs.

(De/en)cryption. The Transport Layer Security (TLS) [33] protocol provides privacy over a reliable, yet insecure, network connection between two clients. TLS is often added on top of TCP/IP, with messages being encrypted or decrypted before they are sent to or received from the TCP layer.

AES-GCM [34] is an authenticated encryption algorithm, widely adopted as the block cipher in TLS 1.2 and TLS 1.3. It encrypts plaintext messages by performing bitwise XOR operations with an encrypted stream. This stream is generated by incrementing and encrypting a counter value, which is initially combined with an initialization vector (IV). To provide authentication, a GHASH function is applied, and its result is appended to the TLS record as an authentication tag. AES-GCM is widely used due to its performance, as it can be effectively pipelined in hardware and parallelized.

(De)compression. Dictionary-based compression algorithms, such as Deflate [35], are employed to compress HTTP responses from clients [36]. Deflate operates in two stages: compression and encoding. Initially, the data stream is processed using the dictionary-based LZ77 algorithm [37]. In this phase, input data is compared with entries in a dynamically updated dictionary, based on the contents of a sliding history window. When a match is found in the dictionary, the matching data is replaced with an LZ symbol that indicates the length of the duplicate string and the distance from its previous occurrence. Following the LZ77 match-finding phase, the data undergoes Huffman encoding [38], where input symbols are replaced with shorter-length codes.

System-level Data Movement with ULPs. As illustrated in Fig.1, before a network message is processed by a ULP, it is cloned into another buffer designated to hold the ULP’s result (e.g., encrypted text). In addition to ULP processing, there are at least two more data copies in an optimized software stack related to the DMA transactions from NIC and storage devices. Modern CPUs implement Direct Cache Access technology (e.g., Intel DDIO [39] and ARM Cache Stashing [40]), routing DMA data through the Last-Level Cache (LLC) to minimize memory bandwidth usage. However, if the usage distance of the DMA data is long – which is often the case for ULP processing as the software stack and DMA accesses are asynchronous – the DMA data may leak to DRAM before the CPU utilizes it [41, 42].

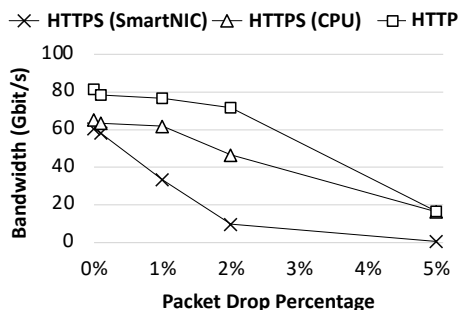


Fig. 2. Achievable bandwidth over an encrypted connection for SmartNIC and CPU under packet drops.

III. MOTIVATION

In this section, we discuss several observations that informed SmartDIMM’s design. The observations are either generally-accepted design decisions discussed in previous studies or made by experimental data we collected.

Observation 1: ULP offload on SmartNIC can be sub-optimal. Ethernet is the backbone of datacenter networks, where packet loss and reordering are expected. It is the job of the TCP protocol to recover from these events and provide reliability to the upper layers. ULP processing takes place before/after TCP processing on the TX/RX path, while the SmartNIC sees TX/RX data after/before it is processed by the TCP stack. Offloading a ULP to a SmartNIC without also offloading TCP/IP processing limits the types of data transformations that can be performed. In particular, SmartNICs require that the ULP preserves the payload size as shrinking or expanding the payload interferes with the TCP state machine. This makes it challenging to offload non-size preserving ULPs such as (de)compression to a SmartNIC [26].

NVIDIA SmartNICs implement autonomous TLS offloading, which speculatively offloads symmetric cipher computations to the NIC while running the TCP/IP stack on the CPU [16, 26]. As shown in Fig.1b, autonomous SmartNIC ULP offloading requires the ULP library to skip performing the offloaded operation in software, passing the plaintext payload down the network stack before the NIC performs the accelerated computation. The SmartNIC driver performs hardware re-synchronization and falls back to CPU computation in the presence of packet reordering or loss. Using an NVIDIA ConnectX-6 SmartNIC, we offload TLS computation of an HTTPS stream to the NIC and inject packet drops using a programmable switch. For detailed information on our experimental methodology, refer to Sec.VI. Surprisingly, as shown in Fig.2, we see the same, or even lower, throughput when offloading TLS to the SmartNIC. We suspect that this is due to the performance improvement of AES-NI in Xeon CPUs [43]¹. More importantly, the benefits of SmartNIC offloading fade away as soon as there are packet drops.

¹Bluefield 2 SmartNIC and Intel Xeon Gold CPU we tested on were launched the same year (2020)

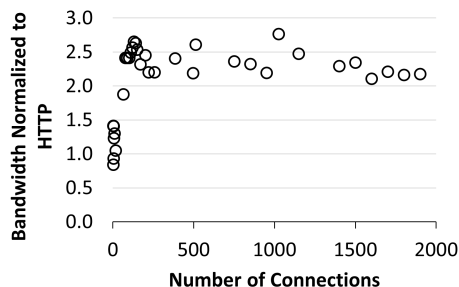


Fig. 3. HTTPS memory bandwidth utilization normalized to HTTP for different numbers of concurrent connections.

Observation 2: PCIe-based offload is suitable for latency-insensitive, coarse-grain offloads. PCIe accelerators, such as Intel QuickAssist[44], can offload costly key derivations using RSA [45] and ECDH [46], as well as symmetric encryption and decryption operations, from the host CPU. However, the need for frequent PCIe transactions to transfer data and notifications between the accelerator and the CPU renders PCIe accelerators less appealing for latency-sensitive data transformations, especially when the offload size is small. Additionally, the notification mechanism between the CPU and accelerator, whether interrupt or polling, significantly bottlenecks PCIe-attached acceleration [47, 48]. Due to these overheads, various techniques and system configurations have been proposed to minimize PCIe traversals [11, 49–53].

Observation 3: DIMM is on the path of ULP processing at high LLC contention. Direct Cache Access technology does not always eliminate DRAM access, and during LLC contention, DRAM accesses become inevitable [41, 42, 54, 55]. This issue is further compounded by the presence of ULPs. Since buffers are DMAed to/from the LLC without being immediately consumed, they are at risk of being evicted back to DRAM [25].

Fig.3 compares the memory bandwidth utilization of HTTP and HTTPS web servers with varying numbers of concurrent connections. As the number of connections increases, the memory bandwidth utilization of the HTTPS web server significantly rises, showing up to a 2.5× increase compared to a server performing equivalent encrypted file transfers. The cache thrashing caused by ULP processing not only reduces the packet processing rate but also causes interference with co-running applications and generates unnecessary DRAM bandwidth.

Observation 4: ULPs are often incrementally computable. Many ULP data transformations can be computed over arbitrary byte ranges of a message as it is sequentially received or transmitted from or to the network. For example, the AES-GCM cipher can encrypt or decrypt messages without performing cipher block-chaining operations. Any range of bytes can be XORed with a pre-generated stream to produce the (de/en)rypted message data. In the case of (de)compression, the LZ77-based deflate algorithm consumes or emits an input or output stream byte by byte, allowing streaming (de)compression

operations over any sequentially received or transmitted portion of a ULP message.

This property enables ULP processing to commence even before the complete ULP message has transitioned from or to the application layer of the network stack, as is often the case when a single message is encapsulated across multiple TCP segments.

The Case for In-Memory Acceleration of ULPs. Leveraging the commercial availability of DIMM-based near-memory processing products [31], we introduce SmartDIMM. This innovation enables the use of DIMMs as an alternative location for ULP computation. SmartDIMM embodies a bump-in-the-DDR architecture that can be dynamically configured to perform ULP computations within the buffer device of DIMMs as data traverses through the DDR channels.

The following section details how we implement SmartDIMM through a co-design of hardware and software.

IV. SMARTDIMM ARCHITECTURE

We design SmartDIMM for accelerating ULPs with the following goals in mind:

- *Adaptive, per message offload:* SmartDIMM enables the software stack to adaptively switch between offloading ULPs to the near-memory accelerator or on-loading ULP processing to the CPU based on the current LLC miss rate at the granularity of 4KB OS pages.
- *Inline offload:* SmartDIMM removes the need for a synchronization mechanism between the CPU and near-memory accelerator in the common case.
- *Minimized data movement:* SmartDIMM does not introduce extra memory copies when processing ULPs and piggybacks on the existing memory copies in the software stack to perform the offload.
- *Application readiness:* SmartDIMM does not require new programming interfaces and leverages the existing programming style and Linux APIs.
- *Preserved processing order:* SmartDIMM preserves the processing order within the network stack and non-speculatively offloads ULPs to the near-memory accelerator.
- *Minimal changes to the processor and DRAM architecture:* SmartDIMM works with current CPU architectures without requiring hardware support. Additionally, SmartDIMM leaves the DRAM devices unmodified, isolating changes to the DIMM’s buffer device.
- *Preservation of host accesses to DRAM:* SmartDIMM minimizes changes to the datapath for reads and writes from the host, preserving performance for regular accesses.

We design SmartDIMM to satisfy the above goals by implementing the Compute Copy (CompCpy) API. In this section, we first explain the offload model of CompCpy and then explain the hardware and software architecture of SmartDIMM that realizes CompCpy.

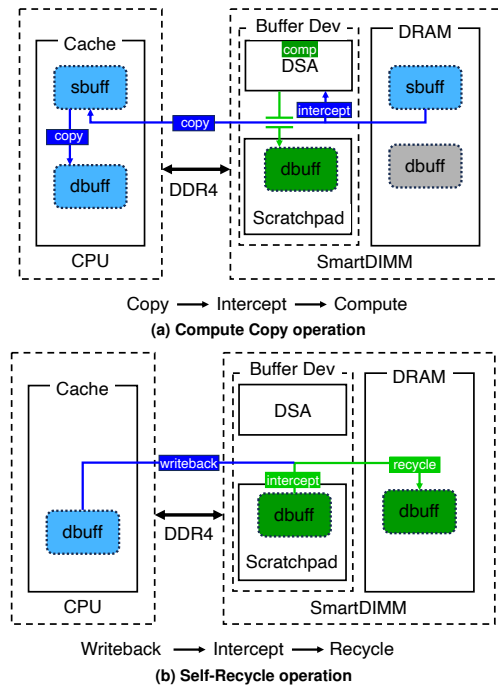


Fig. 4. CompCpy inline offload model.

A. Offload Model

At a high level, as a source buffer (sbuffer) is copied to a destination buffer (dbuff), sbuffer is fed to a Domain-Specific Accelerator (DSA), and the result is stored on SmartDIMM’s buffer device. We introduce CompCpy, a modified memory copy API that performs the above sequence of actions and hides the hardware implementation details from the user.

Before starting an offload, the user must register both sbuffer and dbuff to SmartDIMM as acceleration ranges and flush sbuffer to DRAM. SmartDIMM registers a range at 4KB OS page granularity. SmartDIMM only performs computation on the data accessed within the acceleration range; otherwise, SmartDIMM will operate in non-acceleration mode like a regular DIMM. Note that the software stack periodically measures the LLC contention and enables SmartDIMM offload on-demand. Therefore, when SmartDIMM offload is enabled, sbuffer is likely to be in DRAM and the overhead of the cache flush is minimal. Our experimental results show that flushing 4KB data is 50% faster when the data is already in DRAM. While registering the addresses, the application also writes any configuration and context (e.g., the key and initialization vector for TLS offload) required for computation to SmartDIMM.

Next, the CompCpy API will copy sbuffer to dbuff (Fig.4a). As sbuffer is read from DRAM, SmartDIMM intercepts the data that passes through the DIMM buffer device and sends it to the DSA. Since the CPU memory controller synchronously controls SmartDIMM’s local DRAM devices, we cannot write the output of the DSA directly to DRAM. Thus, the DSA stores the results in a temporary on-chip memory called the Scratchpad. This staging buffer is essential to avoid an

Algorithm 1: Force-Recycle method reads the list of pending pages from SmartDIMM’s MMIO config space and explicitly flushes those addresses to DRAM. This method is rarely called.

```

1 Force-Recycle(requiredToBeFree)
2 pendingList = readPendingList(SmartDIMMConfig)
3 for page in pendingList do
4   flush(page, 4KB)
5   freed += 1
6   if freed > requiredToBeFree then
7     break
8   end
9 end

```

additional DIMM-side memory controller.

Letting the CPU memory controller manage SmartDIMM’s address space provides four **Benefits**: (B1) the OS can manage SmartDIMM’s address space like any regular DIMM, (B2) SmartDIMM’s capacity counts towards the total system memory, (B3) memory access latency to the non-acceleration range is not increased, and (B4) the hardware complexity of the buffer device is reduced by precluding an additional DIMM-side memory controller and CPU-DIMM synchronization mechanisms.

B. Scratchpad Recycling: Self- vs. Force-Recycling

The offload model, as explained in Sec.IV-A, introduces a challenge: the *Scratchpad* space is limited and requires frequent recycling. To recycle a page in the *Scratchpad*, its contents must be written back to the corresponding addresses in DRAM. The offload model of SmartDIMM capitalizes on an opportunity to automatically recycle buffers by utilizing the inevitable writeback of *dbuf* cachelines to DRAM, as shown in Fig.4a. Specifically, when a write Column Address Strobe (*wrCAS*) to a cacheline stored in *Scratchpad* is received at the buffer device (triggered by an LLC writeback), SmartDIMM replaces the *wrCAS* data with the data stored in the *Scratchpad* and invalidates the corresponding cacheline in the *Scratchpad*. Once all the cachelines of a page are written back to DRAM (i.e., invalidated), the *Scratchpad* page is freed and becomes available for another offload. This automatic recycling of the *Scratchpad* is referred to as *Self-Recycle*.

While LLC writebacks can opportunistically recycle *Scratchpad* buffers, there is no guarantee that the buffers will be recycled in time. In the rare instance that the *Scratchpad* is full during a new offload attempt, a *Force-Recycle* function is invoked by *CompCpy*. As detailed in Algorithm 1, the *Force-Recycle* method reads the addresses of pending pages from SmartDIMM and explicitly issues write-requests to the physical address ranges of those pending pages. Sec.VII-A presents experimental evidence showing that calls to *Force-Recycle* are infrequent. This low frequency is due to SmartDIMM being utilized primarily when LLC contention is high.

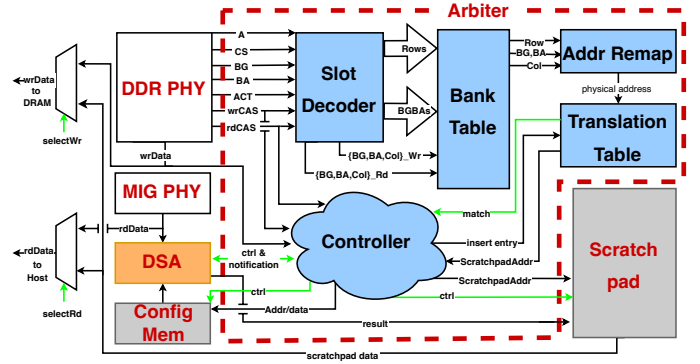


Fig. 5. SmartDIMM’s buffer device architecture.

C. Hardware Architecture

SmartDIMM is solely controlled by read (i.e., read Column Address Strobe (*rdCAS*)) and write (i.e., write Column Address Strobe (*wrCAS*)) commands received at the DIMM’s buffer device. SmartDIMM integrates the following logic within the buffer device: an Arbiter, *Scratchpad*, DSA, Config Memory, DDR PHY, and MIG PHY. These components are highlighted in red in Fig.5. The Arbiter decodes *rdCAS* and *wrCAS* commands from DDR PHY, determines whether the commands target SmartDIMM’s MMIO config space or acceleration range, and coordinates near-memory computation and recycling of *Scratchpad*. Fig.6 summarizes the decision-making process of the arbiter logic upon receiving a CAS command. The flowchart in Fig.6 is referenced while discussing the hardware and software architecture of SmartDIMM in this section and in Sec.IV-D.

DDR PHY and MIG PHY provide high-speed physical interfaces to the host memory controller and SDRAM, respectively. The DDR PHY buffers 512-bit data bursts received from the host memory controller and forwards them to the Arbiter. The MIG PHY then relays the DDR4 signals from the DDR PHY to the DRAM chips to perform memory accesses. Similar to Samsung’s AxDIMM [56], SmartDIMM’s buffer device operates at one-fourth the DRAM clock frequency. Consequently, the DDR PHY encodes four DRAM commands within a single SmartDIMM clock cycle, while the MIG PHY serially issues them on consecutive DDR4 clock cycles to the DRAM chips. Therefore, each clock cycle contains four slots, each decoding a different DDR command [57]. The command in slot 0 is issued to the DRAM chips first, followed sequentially up to the command in slot 3.

As illustrated in Fig.5, DDR PHY sends Address (A), Chip Select (CS), Bank Group (BG), and Bank Address (BA) signals to the Slot Decoder. The Slot Decoder then decodes the commands within each slot, generates Row, BA, and BG for each respective slot, and forwards them to the Bank Table.

The Bank Table is a memory array consisting of N entries, where N represents the total number of banks in each SmartDIMM rank. Each entry in the Bank Table records the ID of the active row within its corresponding bank. The contents of the Bank Table are updated upon receiving a

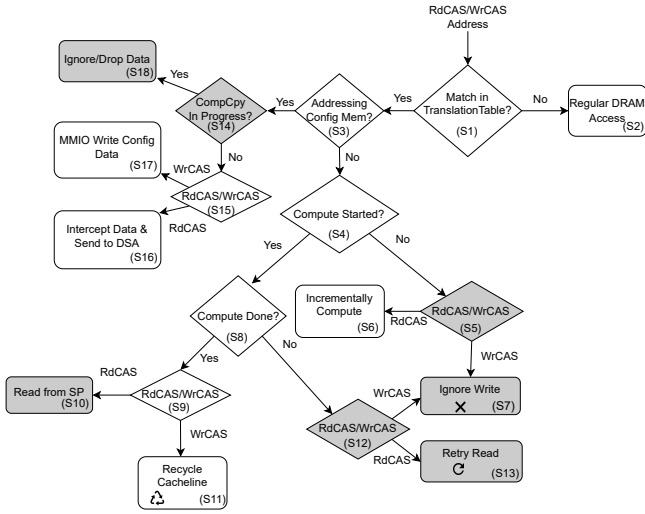


Fig. 6. Arbitrator logic operation. The gray symbols show the unlikely states. A read or write command to a cacheline with pending computation is ignored (S7 and S13). S13 utilizes the ALERT_N signal to inform the memory controller to retry the rdCAS.

RAS command (to activate a row) or a Precharge command (to close a row). For example, if a RAS command targeting BGBA 8 with Row ID 10 is received, the value 10 will be recorded in the eighth row of the Bank Table.

When a rdCAS or wrCAS command is received from DDR PHY, the SmartDIMM must determine whether the CAS command targets an acceleration range (S1 in Fig.6). To achieve this, the Row ID from the CAS is retrieved from the Bank Table and provided to an Addr Remap module, along with BG, BA, and Col information, to regenerate the physical address of the CAS command. Knowing the physical address is essential because it is impossible to determine the range of addresses within an OS page solely with knowledge of BG, BA, Row, and Col. The physical address is then input into a Translation Table. If a match is found in the Translation Table, it returns a mapping to an offset within a Config Memory (S3→Yes in Fig.6) or Scratchpad (S3→No in Fig.6).

The size of the Translation Table is contingent on the number of pages and entries in the Scratchpad and Config Memory. We have configured the Scratchpad and Config Memory sizes to minimize the occurrence of Force-Recycle method calls. Our experimental results indicate that sizing the Scratchpad and Config Memory to 2048 pages effectively leads to nearly zero Force-Recycle method calls (§VII-A). The Translation Table operates at page granularity for mapping memory addresses, thus requiring 4096 translation entries to cover both the Config Memory and Scratchpad. It is important to note that a single Translation Table is utilized to maintain mappings for both the Scratchpad and Config Memory, differentiated by a single-bit flag.

A naive implementation for the Translation Table involves using a Content Addressable Memory (CAM) to

match physical page numbers in a single cycle. However, CAMs are expensive and power-hungry [58], and given that the Translation Table is accessed every clock cycle, a CAM implementation could exceed the power and thermal limits of the buffer device in the DIMM. Instead, we implement the Translation Table as a 3-ary cuckoo hash table [59], utilizing three distinct hash functions for indexing. It has been experimentally demonstrated that at low occupancy (less than 50%), a 3-ary cuckoo hash table typically inserts a translation either on the first attempt or with a single displacement. Furthermore, at an occupancy of less than 50%, the probability of insertion failure is effectively zero [60]. To ensure low occupancy, we size the Translation Table to be three times larger than the total required entries (i.e., 12K entries), maintaining the occupancy of the cuckoo hash table below 33% and thereby reducing the probability of displacement. Additionally, we incorporate an 8-entry CAM array for immediate mapping insertions and execute cuckoo hash table insertions outside the critical path.

A new entry is inserted into the Translation Table when the user registers new source and destination pages for acceleration (S17 in Fig.6). SmartDIMM features an MMIO register designed to capture the source page number, destination page number, and any additional context required for the offload, all within a 64-byte MMIO write. Upon receiving a write to the MMIO register, the SmartDIMM registers both the source and destination pages by creating translation entries in the Translation Table for each. The translation entry for the source page includes the address of the destination page (or multiple pages if the computation does not preserve size) and an offset in Config Memory where the context for processing the source page is stored. Software can further write additional context into Config Memory using the same mechanism. The translation entry for the destination page specifies a Scratchpad offset where the DSA’s output (results) will be stored.

The Scratchpad is a local SRAM implemented in SmartDIMM to temporarily store DSA’s output on the buffer device without writing it back to the DRAM chips. This design allows the CPU to manage the entire SmartDIMM address space, akin to a regular DIMM. The Scratchpad is organized as a 64-byte addressable memory array and allocated at 4KB page granularity. Config Memory is also a 64-byte addressable block memory that holds a fixed context space for each source page (sbuff) upon which the DSA operates. The size of the context is dependent on the application; for instance, the context size for TLS offloading is 1KB per source page (Sec.V-A).

D. Software Architecture

Algorithm 2 outlines the high-level implementation of CompCpy. CompCpy extends the standard memory copy API. Beyond merely copying a source buffer (sbuff) to a destination buffer (dbuf), CompCpy also configures SmartDIMM to process the data from the source buffer before saving it to the dbuff’s physical DRAM addresses. Prior to initiating inline acceleration, CompCpy must verify whether the limited space of

Algorithm 2: CompCpy inline acceleration.

```
1 global variable: freePages = -1
2 CompCpy(uint8_t * dbuff, uint8_t * sbuff, uint16_t size, uint8_t
   *context, bool ordered)
3 // Check to ensure data and dbuff are 4KB page aligned
4 if !PageAligned(dbuff) OR !PageAligned(sbuff) then
5 |   return "Not Aligned"
6 end
7 lock.lock()
8 if freePages <= (size / 4KB) then
9 |   freePages = SmartDIMMConfig[0]
10 |   // Unlikely condition
11 |   if unlikely(freePages <= (size / 4KB)) then
12 | |   Force-Recycle(size)
13 |   end
14 end
15 // reserve the required pages
16 freePages -= (1 + size / 4KB)
17 lock.release()
18 // flush sbuff to DRAM
19 flush(sbuff, size)
20 // register both sbuff and dbuff address ranges in acceleration range
21 for pages in sbuff and dbuff do
22 |   register(sbuff, dbuff, context)
23 end
24 if ordered then
25 |   for i in (0, (size / 64)) do
26 | |   memcpy(dbuff, sbuff, 64)
27 | |   membar()
28 |   end
29 else
30 |   memcpy(dbuff, sbuff, size)
31 end
32 USE(uint8_t* dbuff)
33 flush(dbuff)
34 return dbuff
```

the Scratchpad would preclude SmartDIMM from accepting a new offload.

CompCpy monitors the available Scratchpad space using a global variable (`freePages` in Algorithm 2), which is protected by a lock. CompCpy lazily updates the `freePages` variable only when the number of pages needed for an offload exceeds the current value of `freePages` (lines 8–9). Due to the Self-Recycling facilitated by LLC writebacks (see Sec.IV-B), our experiments indicate that the Scratchpad rarely runs out of space. On the rare occasion that there is not enough space in the Scratchpad, CompCpy invokes the Force-Recycle method to free up some pages in the Scratchpad (see Algorithm 1). After securing the necessary number of pages in the Scratchpad, CompCpy registers the pages spanned by `sbuff` and `dbuff` as acceleration ranges by writing their page numbers and the required context for offloading into the MMIO config register (lines 21–22).

SmartDIMM receives memory read and write requests at a 64-byte granularity from the CPU. Typically, the CPU memory controller reorders these requests before dispatching them to DRAM. If DSA needs to process data in the order it was generated by the application, then CompCpy must insert a memory fence between each 64-byte segment during the memory copy to SmartDIMM. The `if` condition on line 24 of Algorithm 2 checks for the ordering requirement specified as

an argument to CompCpy and, if necessary, breaks the memory copy into 64-byte segments, inserting a memory barrier between each (lines 25–28).

DSA processes 64-byte data chunks as they are read from DRAM (S6 in Fig.6) and stores the results in the Scratchpad. Before an application can read the result, it must ensure that DSA has completed the computation. A straightforward, yet naive, approach would require applications to poll the `dbuff` to confirm completion. However, we observed that the time lag between the first read command from `sbuff` and the first write command to `dbuff` usually provides enough buffer to allow for the completion of a ULP operation on a 64-byte cacheline. This slack arises from the batching of write requests in the memory controller, the intricacies of the cache coherency protocol, and the overhead of toggling DDR channels between read and write modes. Our measurements using Samsung’s AxDIMM on an Intel Broadwell server indicate this time budget exceeds $1\mu\text{s}$. Consequently, rather than resorting to polling, we optimistically assume that SmartDIMM completes the computation on a cacheline before its consumption (i.e., before being read by the CPU). In the rare instance that the computation is not finished, SmartDIMM employs the ALERT_N signal from the DDR standard [61] to prompt the memory controller to retry the read request (S13 in Fig.6).

The gray-shaded states in Fig.6 represent scenarios that are unlikely to occur. One such unlikely event is if a cacheline in `dbuff` is written back before DSA completes its computation. In this situation, the `wrCAS` command is disregarded, and the cacheline in the Scratchpad is not recycled (S7 in Fig.6). Consequently, the computed cacheline must be read from the Scratchpad when the `dbuff` is subsequently accessed (S10 in Fig.6).

E. Discussion

The offload model described and implemented in this section is meticulously designed to be compatible with off-the-shelf CPU and DRAM components. Given the opportunity to modify the memory controller and introduce new DDR commands, it would be possible to devise a more optimized offload model that could eliminate cache pollution entirely. Referring to Fig.4a, a DDR command that directs DRAM data solely to DSA—without bringing data to the CPU memory controller—could conserve DDR data bandwidth and avoid populating the on-chip caches. In such a setup, the memory controller would maintain the addresses of the currently offloaded memory in a hardware table (akin to extended directories [62]), assigning a timer value for eventual eviction back to DRAM. This eviction would entail issuing a special DDR command to SmartDIMM, prompting the writeback of the Scratchpad’s data to DRAM.

The current CompCpy API supports offloading ULPs that do not utilize a zero-copy software stack. While zero-copy software stacks can enhance performance, they often complicate buffer recycling within the kernel, disrupt the separate development of ULPs and applications, and pose security risks for communication [63–65]. Nonetheless, CompCpy could be expanded to incorporate near-memory acceleration on DMA

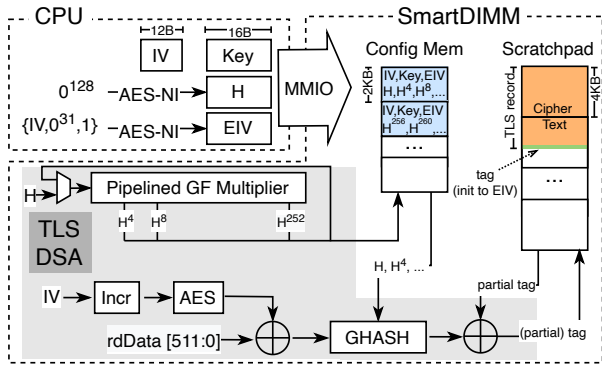


Fig. 7. Encryption offload of an example TLS record smaller than 8KB and larger than 4KB to SmartDIMM. We use the same notations as explained in [66].

accesses. For instance, a CompCpy augmented with *Compute DMA* support could transform data while an I/O device is DMAing data to or from SmartDIMM.

Overall, SmartDIMM is well-suited for accelerating operations involving memory-resident data and exhibiting poor cache behavior, such as streaming operations. The current incarnation of SmartDIMM provides an end-to-end near-memory acceleration framework compatible with unmodified, commodity hardware and software stacks. Introducing new DDR commands to allow SmartDIMM direct access to DRAM and expanding interfaces beyond the CompCpy API detailed in this work would broaden the potential application domains for SmartDIMM.

V. TLS & COMPRESSION OFFLOAD ON SMARTDIMM

The CompCpy offload model imposes the following requirements on the design of the DSA and its corresponding offload software: Firstly, the latency of DSA should align with the time constraints of consecutive rdCAS and wrCAS commands to the same cacheline, to minimize notification overhead (§IV-D). Secondly, each CompCpy call must be stateless, with any necessary context or state transmitted to the DSA by the CPU via MMIO writes prior to the commencement of an offload. Thirdly, the required state for each offload should be contained within a single Config Memory page. This section explains the process of offloading TLS (de/en)cryption and (de)compression to SmartDIMM, adhering to the aforementioned stipulations. It is important to note that our prototype of SmartDIMM is based on Samsung’s AxDIMM, which operates in a single channel mode. Consequently, in Sec.V-A and Sec.V-B, we presume that 4KB of physical addresses are sequentially allocated to a single SmartDIMM. Sec.V-D discusses the effects of fine-grain memory channel interleaving on SmartDIMM’s offload scheme.

A. Transport Layer Security (TLS) Protocol

The physical proximity of the the CPU to SmartDIMM enables a fine-grain division of operations between CPU and SmartDIMM. Fig.7 illustrates the DSA architecture and the interactions between the CPU and SmartDIMM when

offloading TLS. As illustrated in the figure, the hash subkey (H) and encrypted initialization vector (EIV) are computed on the CPU and provided to the TLS DSA via an MMIO write to the Config Memory page associated with the sbuff pages. This is a crucial design decision since offloading the computation of H and EIV to SmartDIMM complicates the DSA design and provides no benefit. This is because the CPU can compute H and EIV by executing a single AES-NI instruction operating on an immediate value without any data dependencies. Since rdCAS commands of a sbuff range can be received out of order at SmartDIMM, the DSA pre-computes the i^{th} powers of H in strides of 4 to remove the dependency chain between GHASH calculations of different 64-byte cachelines within the sbuff range.

The pre-calculation of powers of H for the binary Galois Field of 2^{128} elements (GF Multiplier) starts as soon as the sbuff is registered as an acceleration range. The powers of H are stored in the Config Memory and are later read by the GHASH module to calculate the partial authentication tag. The final tag should be stored in the trailer of the TLS record. On each rdCAS from the sbuff range, the TLS DSA reads the partial tag from the Scratchpad and XORs it with the output of the GHASH module before storing the result back to the Scratchpad. The final value of tag will be stored in the trailer after the entire sbuff is encrypted.

B. Layer-5 (De)Compression Protocol

The implementation of the Deflate compression algorithm in SmartDIMM is a specialized adaptation of the fully pipelined hardware implementation as explained in [67]. SmartDIMM utilizes Config Memory to store candidates for matching substrings. This Config Memory is designed as an 8-bank memory array, each equipped with eight read and write ports. As described in prior work [67], deflate compression can be parallelized by executing the algorithm on consecutive bytes within a contiguous parallelization window. We have configured this window to 8 bytes. Although increasing the size of the parallelization window marginally improves the compression ratio and bandwidth, it also exponentially raises the memory requirements and the logic complexity of the Deflate DSA [68].

In each clock cycle, SmartDIMM compresses 64 bytes of data in a best-effort manner. This means that if bank conflicts occur in the Config Memory, the candidate substrings from the affected bank will be discarded. Additionally, as CompCpy primarily focuses on small-sized ULP message offloads, we have designed the Config Memory to accommodate a hash table covering a 4KB window. When a new substring candidate is inserted and the hash table is full, the oldest substring gets replaced. Such design choices may slightly reduce the compression ratio but are intended to simplify the design and guarantee deterministic latency for the Deflate DSA. Even with a moderate compression ratio, the Deflate DSA in SmartDIMM can significantly mitigate data movement overhead in transmission-intensive network applications, thereby saving on DRAM, PCIe, and Ethernet bandwidth.

C. Software Stack

Figure 8 illustrates the software stack that facilitates adaptive TLS offloading on SmartDIMM. SmartDIMM includes a driver that initializes a character device and maps the physical memory space of SmartDIMM to kernel virtual addresses. These virtual addresses can then be allocated to userspace applications as needed. In our implementation, the userspace library manually allocates and deallocates ranges of addresses on SmartDIMM from the driver. Ideally, SmartDIMM’s address space would be managed by the OS memory manager, and the allocated addresses would be utilized by the application to perform CompCpy.

As depicted in Figure 8, we have modified the OpenSSL AES-GCM engine to selectively offload TLS to SmartDIMM or process it on the CPU based on the level of LLC contention. LLC contention is assessed by frequently sampling the miss rate of the LLC, with the contention threshold set as a configurable parameter. Cache partitioning could affect this threshold, and service providers are advised to adjust it according to their specific system configurations.

Compression is made more complex by the fact that the compressed size is not predetermined. Consequently, we register the same number of pages for the destination buffer as for the source buffer. To further streamline the software stack and reduce the complexity of the Deflate DSA, we compress exclusively at 4KB page granularity. This approach necessitates multiple CompCpy calls for messages larger than 4KB, with each compressed page being individually written to the TCP socket. Given that the maximum transmission unit size of TCP is smaller than 4KB, this design choice does not adversely affect the TCP layer’s performance.

Although we have discussed TLS offloading within the context of the userspace OpenSSL framework, the addition of in-kernel TLS (e.g., Linux kTLS [69]), allows SmartDIMM to perform offloading in kernel space as well.

The existing TCP ULP infrastructure [70] in the Linux kernel facilitates the verification of TLS offloading prior to copying received packets into userspace, offering an entry for offloading to accelerators in addition to SmartNIC. Furthermore, TCP ULP is invoked before and after the TCP layer during transmission and reception, respectively. This makes it suitable for SmartDIMM acceleration to be initiated before or after the packet is transferred to the remaining network stack or userspace.

D. Memory Channel Interleaving

Multi-channel memory systems in modern servers typically utilize fine-grain interleaving, with only 1-4 consecutive cachelines mapped to the same DIMM [71]. Such memory channel interleaving results in internally fragmented ULP messages for non-size preserving ULPs, potentially impairing the performance of data transformations that depend on the state generated from previously processed data (e.g., LZ77 dictionary-based (de)compression used in the Deflate algorithm). To mitigate this, 4KB OS pages corresponding to source and destination buffers for such ULPs can be

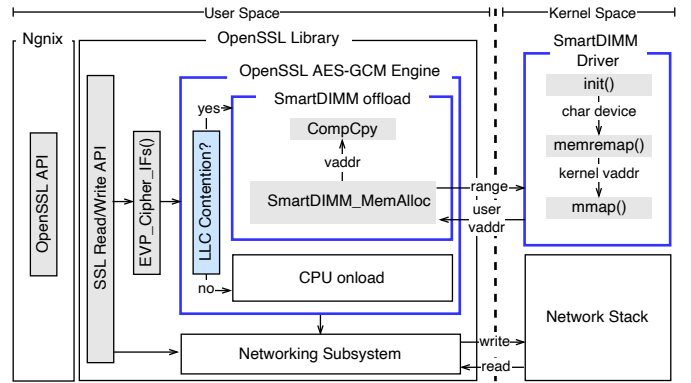


Fig. 8. Software stack for adaptive TLS offloading to SmartDIMM. Modifications and additions to the default software stack are highlighted in blue.

mapped to a single memory channel. This can be achieved by operating SmartDIMM in single channel mode, flex channel mode [72], or by utilizing a memory channel interleaving-aware memory mapping in the software stack [73, 74]. Hardware schemes that enable information sharing between DIMMs across channels [75, 76] may also be employed in these scenarios.

SmartDIMM remains resilient to fine-grain memory channel interleaving for size-preserving ULPs. The only additional requirement is for each SmartDIMM to have its own copy of the configuration data, such as keys and IVs for TLS. We address this requirement by writing the configuration data to each SmartDIMM during the source buffer registration step.

VI. METHODOLOGY

To evaluate SmartDIMM, we take two approaches: an actual FPGA implementation and emulation. For the actual FPGA implementation, we use AxDIMM [31], a DIMM-based near-memory processing product from Samsung. We implement SmartDIMM as explained in Sec.IV on the AxDIMM FPGA and integrate the DSA discussed in Sec.V to support TLS and compression offloads. We hypothesize that the performance of TLS offload on SmartDIMM is equal to performing a CompCpy (without actual implementation of SmartDIMM in hardware) and commenting out the software functionalities to be offloaded. We validate this assumption using our AxDIMM prototype by showing that the TLS offload hardware can sustain the DDR line rate. Pismenny et al. [26] used a similar methodology for evaluating the performance of ULP offload on a SmartNIC. We implement the complete software stack in our emulation methodology, including the SmartDIMM kernel driver to support userspace offloads, page registration in CompCpy, lock acquisition, and cache flushes. In our experimental setup, we use two servers equipped with Intel Xeon Scalable Gold 6242 CPUs, 6× DIMMs of 16 GB memory at 3200 MHz (96 GB) connected using NVIDIA/Mellanox BlueField-2 ConnectX-6 100Gbe DPUs.

We compare the performance of SmartDIMM against three configurations when running an Nginx [77] web server with

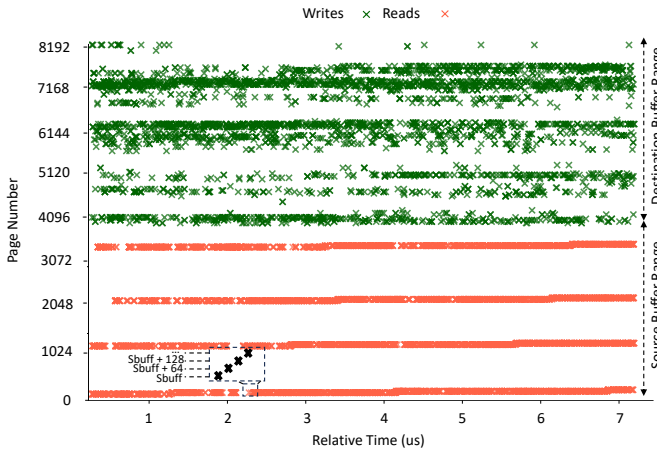


Fig. 9. Memory traces collected from SmartDIMM when having 4 cores concurrently offloading computation to memory. The read commands belong to the source addresses in the current CompCpy and write commands belong to self-recycle of destination buffer addresses accessed earlier.

ten threads: a *CPU* configuration that executes ULPs on the CPU², a *QuickAssist* configuration that offloads the ULP to an Intel QuickAssist 8970 PCIe Adapter [44], and a *SmartNIC* configuration that offloads TLS to an NVIDIA ConnectX-6 SmartNIC [79]. Note that the *SmartNIC* configuration cannot offload (de)compression because these operations are non-size preserving. We experimentally find 10 threads to be the minimum number required to saturate the link with unencrypted HTTP responses. We therefore attribute any performance degradation to TLS encryption operations performed by the design under test. The workload generator runs the wrk [80] traffic generator, maintaining 1024 persistent connections to make HTTP requests.

Unless stated otherwise, we use the following configuration parameters for SmartDIMM: 8MB Scratchpad size, 8MB Config Memory, 4KB page size, and 12288 number of entries in the Translation Table (3-ary cuckoo hash table with 3× more entries). In the experiments, we consider scenarios with high LLC contention (i.e., a large number of connections and high network rates); otherwise, it is optimal to run ULPs to the CPU.

VII. EVALUATION

A. Effectiveness of the Offload Model

Figure 9 presents the rdCAS and wrCAS traces collected from the SmartDIMM prototype when four cores concurrently execute CompCpy calls. Each red and green dot represents a 64-byte read or write request from/to DRAM, respectively. Due to the sparsity of the addresses in each CompCpy call (spaced 32MB apart), it is not immediately apparent that the addresses are incrementally increasing. A magnified section of the trace shows the monotonic address increase throughout a CompCpy call.

²CPU configuration uses Intel Advanced Encryption Standard New Instructions (AES-NI) [78] to accelerate encryption

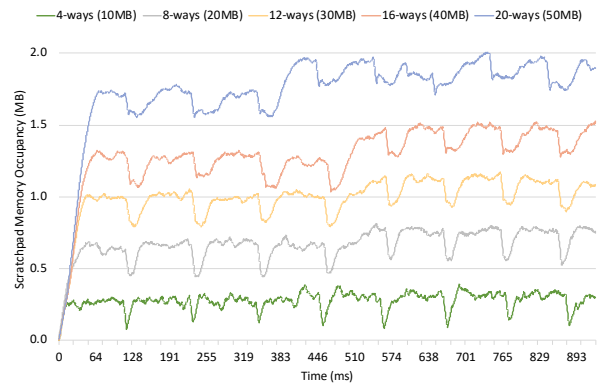


Fig. 10. Scratchpad utilization for different LLC provisioningings. In each configuration shown, Scratchpad utilization reaches an equilibrium state in which writebacks from the LLC recycle pages in the Scratchpad, freeing space for new offloads. The equilibrium state is reached at a lower occupancy when LLC is more contended.

Figure 10 illustrates the Scratchpad occupancy in MB during the trace collection as shown in Fig.9. We employ Cache Allocation Technology (CAT) [81] to reduce the size of the LLC by limiting the number of ways utilized by CompCpy. As illustrated, Scratchpad utilization quickly stabilizes at an equilibrium after the start of the offload, where writebacks from the LLC recycle pages in the Scratchpad, thereby freeing space for new offloads. As outlined in Sec.IV-B, Force-Recycles become rare once this equilibrium is achieved, with writebacks efficiently managing the self-recycle operations.

As anticipated, reducing the size of the LLC results in a proportional decrease in Scratchpad occupancy due to increased LLC contention. For instance, with a contended 50MB and 10MB LLC, the occupancy of the Scratchpad remains below 2MB, and 500KB, respectively.

B. Performance Comparison

Figure 11 shows the requests per second (RPS), CPU utilization, and memory bandwidth utilization of an Nginx HTTP server providing web pages to clients over a secure connection (i.e., uses TLS), where TLS is executed on *SmartNIC*, *QuickAssist*, and SmartDIMM. All the data points are normalized to the *CPU* configuration.

As shown in the figure, SmartDIMM delivers 21.0% and 35.8% higher RPS than the *CPU* configuration for TLS offload of 4KB and 16KB message sizes, respectively. At the same time, SmartDIMM reduces the CPU and memory bandwidth utilization of the server by 21.8% and 49.1% for 4KB TLS message offloading. Such reduction in the memory bandwidth utilization is due to moving the computation to memory and preventing the cache thrashing caused by processing TLS on the CPU. *SmartNIC* and *QuickAssist* configurations both fail to provide any RPS improvement for 4KB messages due to high overhead for initializing the offload. For example, *QuickAssist* fails to deliver comparable RPS to other configurations because the overhead of setting up a PCIe offload overshadows all the benefits of hardware acceleration for fine-grain kernel launches.

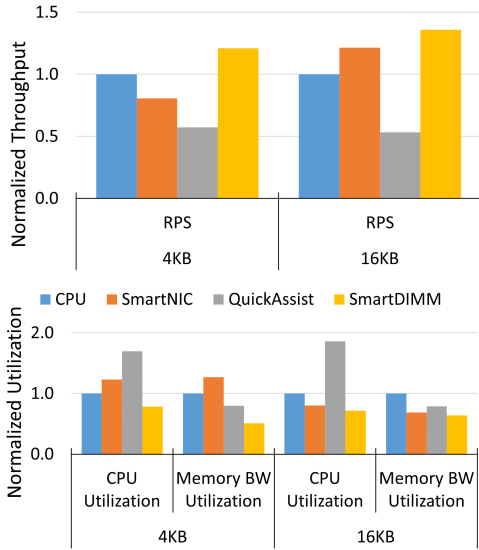


Fig. 11. Performance of Nginx when executing TLS on different configurations with 4KB and 16KB message sizes. Higher is better for RPS and lower is better for CPU and memory utilization. All the results are normalized to that of the CPU configuration.

The *SmartNIC* configuration does outperform the CPU baseline for 16KB message sizes as opposed to shorter 4KB messages. We also note that even for a 64KB message size, *SmartDIMM* is capable of maintaining 11.9% higher RPS at 10.8% lower CPU utilization and 7.6% lower memory bandwidth utilization than that of a *SmartNIC*.

Figure 12 compares *SmartDIMM* performance with CPU and *QuickAssist* for offloading compression. Since compression is non-size preserving and cannot be autonomously offloaded to *SmartNIC*, we do not compare against a *SmartNIC* configuration. The RPS benefits of offloading compression to hardware are higher than TLS offload, as the AES-NI instructions significantly improve CPU performance for symmetric encryption. Offloading compression of 4KB and 16KB Nginx HTTP responses to *SmartDIMM* yields $6.09\times$ and $11.28\times$ higher RPS compared to CPU baseline while reducing the CPU and memory bandwidth utilization by 88.9% and 23.6%, respectively. As expected, *QuickAssist* is unsuitable for fine-grain offloading of small messages and does not provide RPS improvements. It also increases memory and CPU utilization due to high notification and memory copy overheads.

C. Performance Isolation

In this subsection, we compare the performance of *SmartDIMM* with other configurations when co-running secure Nginx and a cache-intensive application. Table I compares the average

Table I. Slow down of co-running scenario. The Nginx slowdown in each column is normalized to the solo run of the same configuration.

Application	CPU	SmartNIC	QuickAssist	SmartDIMM
Nginx	15.8%	7.3%	28.7%	9.5%
505.mcf	15.5%	8.7%	37.9%	10.3%

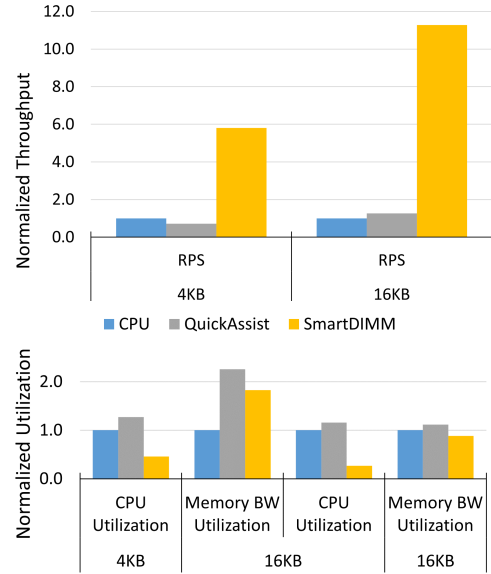


Fig. 12. Performance of Nginx when executing compression on different configurations with 4KB and 16KB message sizes. Higher is better for RPS and lower is better for CPU and memory utilization. All the results are normalized to that of the CPU configuration.

slowdown of Nginx’s RPS and the mcf workload from the SPEC2017 benchmark suite [82] when co-running them on two separate cores (as a baseline we run Nginx and mcf on the server individually). We co-run 10 mcf instances with an Nginx server utilizing 10 threads pinned to 10 separate physical cores. As shown, offloading TLS to *SmartDIMM* reduces the interference for both Nginx and mcf by 9.5% and 10.3%.

Note that although *SmartDIMM* experiences 2.2 percentage points higher slowdown for Nginx compared with *SmartNIC*, the absolute requests per second when co-running Nginx is still higher for *SmartDIMM*: 569609 vs. 377879. The higher absolute requests per second for *SmartDIMM* results in slightly higher interference for mcf compared with the *SmartNIC* configuration.

D. Area and Power

We use Xilinx Vivado 2019.2 Power analyzer [83] for estimating the power of *SmartDIMM*. Our FPGA prototype consumes 4.78 Watts of dynamic power when *SmartDIMM* is fully utilized, meaning that the DDR channel reaches its full capacity. Our experimental results show less than 30% of memory channel utilization when offloading TLS for different applications. On average, across all three benchmarks operating at maximum sustainable load, *SmartDIMM* increases the power consumption of AxDIMM by ~ 0.92 Watts. Implementing the TLS offload on *SmartDIMM* takes $\sim 21.8\%$ of the FPGA resources.

VIII. DISCUSSION

In the current landscape of ULP acceleration, *SmartDIMM* demonstrates robust performance amidst contended LLC, maintains efficiency despite network packet losses, and adapts to

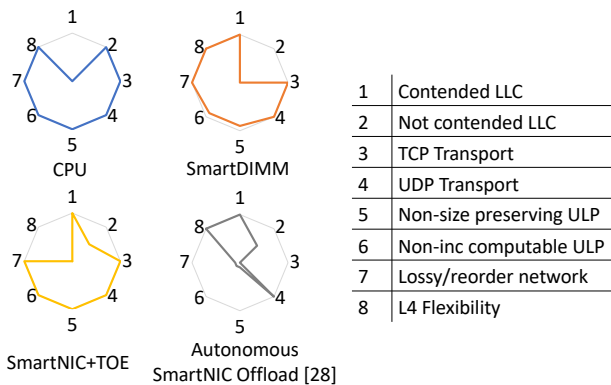


Fig. 13. Comparison of the current ULP processing design space. The relative performance of each processing option is compared with respect to the following metrics: performance in the face of low or high LLC contention, compatibility with underlying transport protocols (TCP and UDP), ability to target diverse (non-size preserving and non-incrementally computable) ULPs, resistance to performance degradation when packets are lost or reordered, and the flexibility of the layer-4 transport protocol.

various underlying transport layer protocols. This performance is depicted in Fig.13, where different ULP processing options are compared across various criteria.

We note that a SmartNIC offering autonomous ULP offload with an optimized (zero copy) software stack shares many benefits, particularly when the underlying transport layer, such as UDP, does not guarantee reliable delivery of ULP messages and experiences minimal packet drops. However, previous SmartNICs that accelerate processing via TCP Offload Engines (TOEs) bypass out-of-order network stack processing by offloading both TCP/IP and ULP tasks to the SmartNIC. As illustrated in Fig.13, this approach can limit optimizations at the transport layer software and efforts to address emerging vulnerabilities [84, 85].

While the CPU provides the flexibility to offload any ULP in conjunction with any software or network stack, it comes at the cost of increased LLC contention and limited on-chip resources. This, in turn, adversely affects applications that depend on ULP processing.

ULP acceleration represents a dynamic and evolving design space. Employing an accelerator requires system designers to carefully consider its placement, ensuring alignment with the application needs and network transport protocol characteristics. SmartDIMM represents an alternative option in the future of compute-everywhere data centers.

IX. RELATED WORK

Accelerating data transformations. Accelerating I/O-related datacenter taxes is becoming a priority for datacenter service providers. This has sparked the development of hardware accelerators for ULPs and microservices accessible via RPCs. Previous works have evaluated different solutions for accelerating data transformations.

Pourhabibi et al. [52, 53] designed hardware accelerators for serialization frameworks like Google’s protobuf, proposing solutions for accelerating data transformations on-chip and

on SmartNIC. Karandikar et al. [51] also designed an on-chip accelerator for accelerating (de)serialization related to Google’s protobuf. Hu et al. [86] construct an asynchronous framework for event-driven web services (e.g., Nginx) by creating an OpenSSL engine that utilizes asynchronous communication with Intel’s QuickAssist PCIe accelerators. Pismenny et al. [26] implement inline TLS encryption/decryption and NVMe-TCP acceleration on Mellanox ConnectX6 NICs without offloading layers 4 and below. Lazarev et al. [50] introduce a reconfigurable FPGA accelerator to offload the entire RPC stack using fast memory interconnects. SmartDIMM complements these works by providing an alternative location to process ULPs inside the memory, preventing cache thrashing at high loads, and enabling hardware offload for a larger range of ULPs.

Near-memory processing. There are a myriad of prior works on various near-memory processing architectures [73, 75, 76, 87–97]. SmartDIMM is unique because it removes the need for a synchronization mechanism between the CPU and near-memory accelerator, does not require a separate memory controller for the near-memory accelerator, and implements an API to reuse the existing software stack and programming models.

X. CONCLUSION

Restricting accelerator placement for ULPs to CPUs and SmartNICs limits both the variety of ULPs that can be accelerated and the overall performance. Specifically, such placements do not take into account the opportunity to accelerate ULPs operating on top of a stateful transport protocol, especially in scenarios with high cache contention. At high network rates, the frequent DRAM accesses and SmartNIC-CPU synchronization outweigh the benefits of hardware acceleration. In this work, we introduce SmartDIMM, an architecture and programming model designed for accelerating ULPs near the memory. SmartDIMM enables accelerator placement on the buffer device of commodity DIMMs, thereby unleashing the potential to accelerate ULPs that operate on stateful transport protocols and suffer from poor cache performance. We have prototyped SmartDIMM using Samsung’s AxDIMM and evaluated its effectiveness with two important ULPs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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APPENDIX

A. Abstract

This artifact appendix describes how to use the publicly available scripts to reproduce the sensitivity analysis and evaluations in Section 7 of this paper. We use a publicly

available HTTP web server (Nginx), compression corpora, and software compression algorithms available online. Results reproduced will include web server and system performance for different accelerator and CPU configurations offloading ULPs including compression and encryption.

B. Artifact check-list (meta-information)

- **Algorithm:** SmartDIMM
- **Program:** Nginx, SmartDIMM-compatible nginx compression module (source provided)
- **Compilation:** gcc 8.4.0 (Ubuntu 8.4.0-3ubuntu2)
- **Run-time environment:** Tested on Ubuntu 20.04
- **Hardware:** Intel c6250 Server
- **Experiments:** As described in Sec. VII-B.
- **Publicly available?:** https://github.com/architecture-research-group/SmartDIMM_ArtifactEvaluation.git
- **Code licenses (if publicly available?):** MIT
- **Archived (provide DOI?):** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10278844>

C. Description

1) How to access

See github link above.

2) Hardware dependencies

Some experiments depend on access to two servers. They can be multi-core servers allocated as r650 nodes available through cloudlab. This hardware is sufficient to reproduce CPU and SmartNIC results.

3) Software dependencies

See github link above.

D. Installation

Obtain the code and sub-modules from github and run corresponding fetch and run scripts. Instructions for each experiment are provided in each subdirectory of the repository. Scripts for running each experiment are provided as bash shell scripts.

E. Experiment workflow and expected results

Use build scripts (e.g., build.sh) to compile various nginx versions, and acquire any required dependencies. Use shell scripts (e.g., compressed_http_run.sh and tls_http_run.sh) to generate needed server's files and reproduce results. Normalize and plot them using gnuplot scripts. (Experiment-specific instructions provided in the Github repository provided above).

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