An Alternative Flight Software Trigger Paradigm

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NASA Johnson Space Center
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Introduction

- Orion is scheduled to fly an orbital test flight, Exploration Flight Test-1 (EFT-1), in late 2014
- Mission Profile:
  - Launch from Kennedy Space Center aboard Delta-IV Heavy into LEO parking orbit
  - After 1 orbit, Delta IV-H upper stage injects the vehicle into an elliptical orbit which intersects the Earth
  - Orion flies high-speed guided entry, splashes down in Pacific Ocean west of Mexico
Once high-speed entry is complete, the vehicle must begin a parachute deployment sequence (PDS).

- Jettison Forward Bay Cover (FBC)
- Deploy Drogue Parachutes
- Deploy Main Parachutes
Flight Software Triggers

- Typically, triggers are normally simple checks against thresholds:
  
  ```
  if (altitude <= 24000)
      deploy_parachute();
  ```

- When required, additional conditions are added to increase the specificity of the trigger:
  
  ```
  if (altitude <= 24000 && gps_is_available)
      deploy_parachute();
  ```

- When adding new conditions, the number of additional code paths increases, increasing code complexity.
- Code complexity increases software testing costs.
- Therefore, to minimize costs, simple flight software triggers are desired.
Motivation

- By design, deploy drogue parachutes no lower than 24,000 feet altitude, using GPS.

- If both GPS and the backup barometric altimeters are unavailable, then the navigated altitude may have large errors.
Motivation, cont.

- If PDS is still triggered based on navigated altitude in this scenario, many cases deploy too low or too high.

- An alternative trigger must be developed which uses a less error-prone signal.
Introduction to Logistic Regression

• A statistical technique used for fitting a curve to classify data into separate classes.

• Simplest version is binary logistic regression (2 classes of data)

• Fit a logistic function, also known as a sigmoid function (S-curve), to these two classes of data
Logistic Function

\[ f(x) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-x}} \]
Introduction to Logistic Regression

- The value of the logistic function is bounded between 0 and 1.
- Interpret the value of the logistic function to be the probability that the data $x$ is in class $y = 1$.
- Fit a parameter vector $\theta$ to the training set to minimize model predictive error.
- Once converged, the model is ready to classify new data.

Hypothesis Function

$$P(y|x, \theta) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-\theta^T x}}$$
Logistic Regression Example

Fake Data: Size of Skin Mole vs. Malignancy

Malignant 1

0.75

0.5

0.25

Benign 0

Mole Size (millimeters)

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20

Disclaimer: This is not real data. Do not use for medical self-diagnosis.
Logistic Regression Example

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Applying Logistic Regression to Triggers

- It may be difficult to select a signal to trigger some action in software.

- Logistic regression can aid the designer in determining strong signals for triggers.

- Instead of guessing a trigger signal and tuning a threshold, let an algorithm determine the “best” trigger signals.
Implementation

• Gather training data & labels
  ▪ Training Data: Navigation output from Monte Carlo data
  ▪ Labels:
    – y=1 if truth altitude < 25,000 feet
    – y=0 if truth altitude >= 25,000 feet

• Normalize each dimension of the training data to lie within [-1 1] domain (for numerical reasons).

• Fit a logistic function using gradient descent optimization.

• Once converged, the classifier/trigger is ready for use.
Flight Software Implementation

- Store parameter vector as software parameter.

```plaintext
function h = logistic(double[] theta, double[] x) {
    double h = 1 / ( 1 + exp(-transpose(theta)*x) );
    return h;
}

function deploy_command = parachute(PARAM, navStates) {
    double h = logistic(PARAM.THETA, navStates);
    boolean deploy_command = h > PARAM.THRESHOLD;
}
```
Performance Analysis

• Identify strong signals
• Combine strong signals
  ▪ Multivariate Logistic Regression
• Performance Criteria:
  ▪ Minimize altitude spread at parachute deployment initiation
  ▪ Ensure minimum deployment altitude stays above 25,000 feet.
Results

Selected Navigation Parameters:

- Navigated altitude
- Navigated relative velocity magnitude
- Elapsed time since sensing 0.2Gs of aerodynamic acceleration
- Sensed aerodynamic acceleration
- Navigated Mach number
- Navigated dynamic pressure

Record altitude at trigger activation for each trajectory, varying activation thresholds.
Reduced total altitude spread by approximately 3,000 feet as compared to existing approach.
Lessons Learned

• Critical to monitor model fitting process
• May require variable transformations, requiring more designer insight.
• More challenging to understand why a particular trajectory state activated trigger.
• Provides insight into relative value of trigger parameters
Future Work

• Use Naïve Bayes Classifiers to develop triggers
  ▪ Inspired by use in email spam filters

• Preliminary results show large improvements over logistic regression approach.
Conclusion

- Logistic regression is a powerful tool for developing robust flight software triggers.

- Logistic regression can help designers understand the problem space for developing triggers.
An Alternative Flight Software Paradigm:

Applying Multivariate Logistic Regression to Sense Trigger Conditions using Inaccurate or Scarce Information

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  - Orion separates from upper stage after apogee
  - Orion flies high-speed guided entry, splashes down in Pacific Ocean west of Mexico
Introduction, cont.

- Once high-speed entry is complete, the vehicle must begin a sequence of parachute deployments.
  - Forward Bay Cover (FBC) Jettison
  - Drogue Parachutes
  - Main Parachutes
Motivation

• By design, the parachute deployment sequence (PDS) is to begin no lower than 24,000 feet altitude.
• When GPS is available, navigated altitude errors are small.
• If GPS is unavailable, navigation altitude will be informed by backup 3 barometric altimeters (less precise).
• If both GPS and the barometric altimeters are unavailable, then the navigated altitude may have large errors.
Motivation, cont.

• If navigated altitude contains large errors, the parachute deployment sequence (PDS) will not occur correctly.
• If PDS is still triggered based on navigated altitude in this scenario, many cases impact Earth before PDS.
• An alternative trigger must be developed which uses a less error-prone signal.
Flight Software Triggers

• Typically, triggers are normally simple checks against thresholds:
  o if (altitude <= 24000) { deploy_parachute(); }

• When required, additional conditions are added to increase the specificity of the trigger:
  o if (altitude <= 24000 && gps_is_available == true) {deploy_parachute(); }

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- Store parameter vector as software parameter.

- Flight software should contain some function to evaluate logistic function:

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