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Technology

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Nvidia's Tegra ARM chips heading to supercomputers in Barcelona

November 14, 2011 | 2:59 pm



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In Case You Missed It...



Nvidia is entering the supercomputer market and launching a challenge to Intel's processor dominance.

The Santa Clara company announced Monday that it was providing a new line of its [Tegra ARM processors](#) for supercomputers at the [Barcelona Supercomputing Center](#), a government funded research center in Spain.

At this point, you might be wondering: what is an ARM processor?

ARM processors are CPUs (central processing units) that use what is known as Advanced RISC Machine architecture -- a processor design that is simpler than earlier generations of computer chips, enabling high processing power in lower-energy devices such as smartphones and tablet computers (which is where most ARM processors are currently found).

Nvidia said in a [statement](#) that its Tegra ARM should consume about 15 to 30 times less power than the center's current setup.

An English company known as [ARM Holdings](#) licenses the ARM processor architecture to a growing number of companies looking to develop their own low-power ARM chips. For example, the A5 chip found in the iPhone 4S and iPad 2 is an Apple-designed ARM processor.

[Intel](#), the world's largest producer of processors, hasn't built an ARM chip of its own, but offerings from competitors such as Nvidia are seen as a challenge to the tech stalwart's business and its efforts to grow into more mobile devices.

Nvidia, known more for building graphics processors than CPUs, has found an opportunity in pushing its Tegra processors into [smartphones and tablets](#), along with rivals such as Qualcomm, Samsung, Sony and Texas Instruments. And now the company is looking to produce the same growth with Tegra ARM processors for supercomputers.

The Barcelona center has dubbed its move to Nvidia's Tegra ARM processors, along with Nvidia's [Cuda](#) graphics processors, the Mont-Blanc Project.

"In most current systems, CPUs alone consume the lion's share of the energy, often 40% or more,"



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said Alex Ramirez, leader of the Mont-Blanc Project, in a statement. "By comparison, the Mont-Blanc architecture will rely on energy-efficient computer accelerators and ARM processors used in embedded and mobile devices to achieve a four- to 10-times increase in energy efficiency by 2014."

[**Updated** Nov. 15, 8:21 p.m.: An earlier version of this post incorrectly stated that Intel had developed an ARM processor of its own. The post has been corrected.]

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-- Nathan Olivarez-Giles

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Image: A screen shot of the Nvidia Tegra processor Web page. Nvidia is taking its Tegra ARM processors from mobile phones and tablets to supercomputers. Credit: Nvidia

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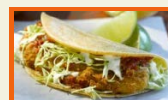
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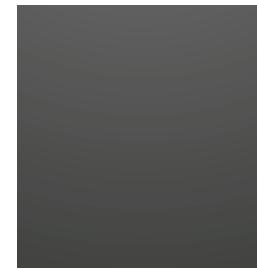
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