**General purpose CPU**
- Highest level functionality
- Administrative interface
- System control
- Overall management functions
- Routing protocols

**Embedded processor**
- Intermediate functionality
- Higher-layer protocols
- Control of I/O processors
- Exception and error handling
- High-level ingress (e.g., reassembly)
- High-level egress (e.g., traffic shaping)

**I/O processor**
- Basic packet processing
- Classification
- Forwarding
- Low-level ingress operations
- Low-level egress operations