

Internet Engineering Task Force
Internet-Draft
Updates: [4462](#) (if approved)
Intended status: Standards Track
Expires: July 6, 2019

S. Sorce
H. Kario
Red Hat, Inc.
Jan 2, 2019

GSS-API Key Exchange with SHA2
draft-ietf-curdle-gss-keyex-sha2-08

Abstract

This document specifies additions and amendments to [RFC4462](#). It defines a new key exchange method that uses SHA-2 for integrity and deprecates weak DH groups. The purpose of this specification is to modernize the cryptographic primitives used by GSS Key Exchanges.

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[1.](#) Introduction

SSH GSS-API Methods [[RFC4462](#)] allows the use of GSSAPI for authentication and key exchange in SSH. It defines three exchange methods all based on DH groups and SHA-1. This document updates [RFC4462](#) with new methods intended to support environments that desire to use the SHA-2 cryptographic hash functions.

[2.](#) Rationale

Due to security concerns with SHA-1 [[RFC6194](#)] and with MODP groups with less than 2048 bits [[NIST-SP-800-131Ar1](#)] we propose the use of the SHA-2 [[RFC6234](#)] based hashes with DH group14, group15, group16, group17 and group18 [[RFC3526](#)]. Additionally we add support for key exchange based on Elliptic Curve Diffie Hellman with the NIST P-256, P-384 and P-521 as well as the X25519 and X448 curves. Following the rationale of [[RFC8268](#)] only SHA-256 and SHA-512 hashes are used for DH groups. For NIST curves the same curve-to-hashing algorithm pairing used in [[RFC5656](#)] is adopted for consistency.

[3.](#) Document Conventions

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this

document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC 2119](#) [[RFC2119](#)].

[4.](#) New Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange methods

This document adopts the same naming convention defined in [[RFC4462](#)] to define families of methods that cover any GSS-API mechanism used with a specific Diffie-Hellman group and SHA-2 Hash combination.

The following new key exchange algorithms are defined:

Key Exchange Method Name	Implementation Recommendations
gss-group14-sha256-*	SHOULD/RECOMMENDED
gss-group15-sha512-*	MAY/OPTIONAL
gss-group16-sha512-*	SHOULD/RECOMMENDED
gss-group17-sha512-*	MAY/OPTIONAL
gss-group18-sha512-*	MAY/OPTIONAL

Each key exchange method is implicitly registered by this document. The IESG is considered to be the owner of all these key exchange methods; this does NOT imply that the IESG is considered to be the owner of the underlying GSS-API mechanism.

Each method in any family of methods specifies GSS-API-authenticated Diffie-Hellman key exchanges as described in [Section 2.1 of \[RFC4462\]](#). The method name for each method is the concatenation of the family method name with the Base64 encoding of the MD5 hash [[RFC1321](#)] of the ASN.1 DER encoding [[ISO-IEC-8825-1](#)] of the underlying GSS-API mechanism's OID. Base64 encoding is described in [Section 6.8 of \[RFC2045\]](#).

Family method references

Family Name prefix	Hash Function	Group	Reference
--------------------	---------------	-------	-----------

gss-group14-sha256-	SHA-256	2048-bit MODP	Section 3 of [RFC3526]
gss-group15-sha512-	SHA-512	3072-bit MODP	Section 4 of [RFC3526]
gss-group16-sha512-	SHA-512	4096-bit MODP	Section 5 of [RFC3526]
gss-group17-sha512-	SHA-512	6144-bit MODP	Section 6 of [RFC3526]
gss-group18-sha512-	SHA-512	8192-bit MODP	Section 7 of [RFC3526]

5. New Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange methods

In [\[RFC5656\]](#) new SSH key exchange algorithms based on Elliptic Curve Cryptography are introduced. We reuse much of [section 4](#) to define GSS-API-authenticated ECDH Key Exchanges.

Additionally we utilize also the curves defined in [\[I-D.ietf-curdle-ssh-curves\]](#) to complement the 3 classic NIST defined curves required by [\[RFC5656\]](#).

5.1. Generic GSS-API Key Exchange with ECDH

This section reuses much of the scheme defined in [Section 2.1 of \[RFC4462\]](#) and combines it with the scheme defined in [Section 4 of \[RFC5656\]](#); in particular, all checks and verification steps prescribed in [Section 4 of \[RFC5656\]](#) apply here as well.

Key-agreement schemes ECDHE-Curve25519 and ECDHE-Curve448 perform the Diffie-Helman protocol using the functions X25519 and X448, respectively. Implementations SHOULD compute these functions using the algorithms described in [\[RFC7748\]](#). When they do so, implementations MUST check whether the computed Diffie-Hellman shared secret is the all-zero value and abort if so, as described in [Section 6 of \[RFC7748\]](#). Alternative implementations of these functions SHOULD abort when either input forces the shared secret to one of a small set of values, as discussed in [Section 7 of \[RFC7748\]](#).

This section defers to [\[RFC7546\]](#) as the source of information on GSS-API context establishment operations, [Section 3](#) being the most

relevant. All Security Considerations described in [\[RFC7546\]](#) apply here too.

The parties generate each an ephemeral key pair, according to Section 3.2.1 of [\[SEC1v2\]](#). Keys are verified upon receipt by the parties according to Section 3.2.3.1 of [\[SEC1v2\]](#).

For NIST Curves keys use uncompressed point representation and must be converted using the algorithm in Section 2.3.4 of [\[SEC1v2\]](#). If the conversion fails or the point is transmitted using compressed representation, the key exchange MUST fail.

A GSS Context is established according to [Section 4 of \[RFC5656\]](#); The client initiates the establishment using `GSS_Init_sec_context()` and the server completes it using `GSS_Accept_sec_context()`. For the negotiation, the client MUST set `mutual_req_flag` and `integ_req_flag` to "true". In addition, `deleg_req_flag` MAY be set to "true" to request access delegation, if requested by the user. Since the key exchange process authenticates only the host, the setting of

`anon_req_flag` is immaterial to this process. If the client does not support the "gssapi-keyex" user authentication method described in [Section 4 of \[RFC4462\]](#), or does not intend to use that method in conjunction with the GSS-API context established during key exchange, then `anon_req_flag` SHOULD be set to "true". Otherwise, this flag MAY be set to true if the client wishes to hide its identity. This key exchange process will exchange only a single token once the context has been established, therefore the `replay_det_req_flag` and `sequence_req_flag` SHOULD be set to "false".

The client MUST include its public key with the first message it sends to the server during this process; if the server receives more than one key or none at all, the key exchange MUST fail.

During GSS Context establishment multiple tokens may be exchanged by the client and the server. When the GSS Context is established (`major_status` is `GSS_S_COMPLETE`) the parties check that `mutual_state` and `integ_avail` are both "true". If not the key exchange MUST fail.

Once a party receives the peer's public key it proceeds to compute a shared secret K. For NIST Curves the computation is done according to Section 3.3.1 of [\[SEC1v2\]](#) and the resulting value z is converted

to the octet string K using the conversion defined in Section 2.3.5 of [SEC1v2]. For curve25519 and curve448 the algorithm in [Section 6 of \[RFC7748\]](#) is used instead.

To verify the integrity of the handshake, peers use the Hash Function defined by the selected Key Exchange method to calculate H:

$$H = \text{hash}(V_C \parallel V_S \parallel I_C \parallel I_S \parallel K_S \parallel Q_C \parallel Q_S \parallel K).$$

The GSS_GetMIC() call is used by the server with H as the payload and generates a MIC. The GSS_VerifyMIC() call is used by the client to verify the MIC.

If any GSS_Init_sec_context() or GSS_Accept_sec_context() returns a major_status other than GSS_S_COMPLETE or GSS_S_CONTINUE_NEEDED, or any other GSS-API call returns a major_status other than GSS_S_COMPLETE, the key exchange MUST fail. The same recommendations expressed in [Section 2.1 of \[RFC4462\]](#) are followed with regards to error reporting.

The following is an overview of the key exchange process:

Client	Server
-----	-----
Generate ephemeral key pair.	
Calls GSS_Init_sec_context().	
SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_INIT ----->	
	Verify received key is valid.
(Optional)	<----- SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_HOSTKEY
(Loop)	
	Calls GSS_Accept_sec_context().
	<----- SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_CONTINUE
	Calls GSS_Init_sec_context().
	SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_CONTINUE ----->

```
        Calls GSS_Accept_sec_context().
        Generate ephemeral key pair.
        Compute shared secret.
        Computes hash H.
        Calls GSS_GetMIC( H ) = MIC.
<----- SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_COMPLETE
```

```
Verify received key is valid.
Compute shared secret.
Compute hash = H
Calls GSS_VerifyMIC( MIC, H )
```

This is implemented with the following messages:

The client sends:

```
byte      SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_INIT
string     output_token (from GSS_Init_sec_context())
string     Q_C, client's ephemeral public key octet string
```

The server may responds with:

```
byte      SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_HOSTKEY
string     server public host key and certificates (K_S)
```

The server sends:

```
byte      SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_CONTINUE
string     output_token (from GSS_Accept_sec_context())
```

Each time the client receives the message described above, it makes another call to GSS_Init_sec_context().

The client sends:

```
byte      SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_CONTINUE
string     output_token (from GSS_Init_sec_context())
```

As the final message the server sends either:

```
byte      SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_COMPLETE
```

string	Q_S, server's ephemeral public key octet string
string	mic_token (MIC of H)
boolean	TRUE
string	output_token (from GSS_Accept_sec_context())

Or the following if no output_token is available:

byte	SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_COMPLETE
string	Q_S, server's ephemeral public key octet string
string	mic_token (MIC of H)
boolean	FALSE

The hash H is computed as the HASH hash of the concatenation of the following:

string	V_C, the client's version string (CR, NL excluded)
string	V_S, server's version string (CR, NL excluded)
string	I_C, payload of the client's SSH_MSG_KEXINIT
string	I_S, payload of the server's SSH_MSG_KEXINIT
string	K_S, server's public host key
string	Q_C, client's ephemeral public key octet string
string	Q_S, server's ephemeral public key octet string
mpint	K, shared secret

This value is called the exchange hash, and it is used to authenticate the key exchange. The exchange hash SHOULD be kept secret. If no SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_HOSTKEY message has been sent by the server or received by the client, then the empty string is used in place of K_S when computing the exchange hash.

Since this key exchange method does not require the host key to be used for any encryption operations, the SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_HOSTKEY message is OPTIONAL. If the "null" host key algorithm described in [Section 5 of \[RFC4462\]](#) is used, this message MUST NOT be sent.

If the client receives a SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_CONTINUE message after a call to GSS_Init_sec_context() has returned a major_status code of GSS_S_COMPLETE, a protocol error has occurred and the key exchange MUST fail.

If the client receives a SSH_MSG_KEXGSS_COMPLETE message and a call

to `GSS_Init_sec_context()` does not result in a `major_status` code of `GSS_S_COMPLETE`, a protocol error has occurred and the key exchange MUST fail.

[5.2.](#) ECDH Key Exchange Methods

The following new key exchange methods are defined:

Key Exchange Method Name	Implementation Recommendations
<code>gss-nistp256-sha256-*</code>	SHOULD/RECOMMENDED
<code>gss-nistp384-sha384-*</code>	MAY/OPTIONAL
<code>gss-nistp521-sha512-*</code>	MAY/OPTIONAL
<code>gss-curve25519-sha256-*</code>	SHOULD/RECOMMENDED
<code>gss-curve448-sha512-*</code>	MAY/OPTIONAL

Each key exchange method is implicitly registered by this document. The IESG is considered to be the owner of all these key exchange methods; this does NOT imply that the IESG is considered to be the owner of the underlying GSS-API mechanism.

Each method in any family of methods specifies GSS-API-authenticated Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman key exchanges as described in [Section 5.1](#). The method name for each method is the concatenation of the family method name with the Base64 encoding of the MD5 hash [[RFC1321](#)] of the ASN.1 DER encoding [[ISO-IEC-8825-1](#)] of the underlying GSS-API mechanism's OID. Base64 encoding is described in [Section 6.8 of \[RFC2045\]](#).

Family method references

Family Name prefix	Hash Function	Parameters / Function Name	Definition
gss-nistp256-sha256-	SHA-256	secp256r1	Section 2.4.2 of [SEC2v2]
gss-nistp384-sha384-	SHA-384	secp384r1	Section 2.5.1 of [SEC2v2]
gss-nistp521-sha512-	SHA-512	secp521r1	Section 2.6.1 of [SEC2v2]
gss-curve25519-sha256-	SHA-256	X25519	Section 5 of [RFC7748]
gss-curve448-sha512-	SHA-512	X448	Section 5 of [RFC7748]

6. IANA Considerations

This document augments the SSH Key Exchange Method Names in [\[RFC4462\]](#).

IANA is requested to update the SSH Protocol Parameters [\[IANA-KEX-NAMES\]](#) registry with the following entries:

Key Exchange Method Name	Reference	Implementation Support
gss-group14-sha256-*	This draft	SHOULD
gss-group15-sha512-*	This draft	MAY
gss-group16-sha512-*	This draft	SHOULD
gss-group17-sha512-*	This draft	MAY
gss-group18-sha512-*	This draft	MAY
gss-nistp256-sha256-*	This draft	SHOULD
gss-nistp384-sha384-*	This draft	MAY
gss-nistp521-sha512-*	This draft	MAY
gss-curve25519-sha256-*	This draft	SHOULD
gss-curve448-sha512-*	This draft	MAY

7. Security Considerations

7.1. New Finite Field DH mechanisms

Except for the use of a different secure hash function and larger DH

groups, no significant changes has been made to the protocol

described by [[RFC4462](#)]; therefore all the original Security Considerations apply.

[7.2.](#) New Elliptic Curve DH mechanisms

Although a new cryptographic primitive is used with these methods the actual key exchange closely follows the key exchange defined in [[RFC5656](#)]; therefore all the original Security Considerations as well as those expressed in [[RFC5656](#)] apply.

[7.3.](#) GSSAPI Delegation

Some GSSAPI mechanisms can optionally delegate credentials to the target host by setting the `deleg_ret_flag`. In this case extra care must be taken to ensure that the acceptor being authenticated matches the target the user intended. Some mechanisms implementations (like commonly used `krb5` libraries) may use insecure DNS resolution to canonicalize the target name; in these cases spoofing a DNS response that points to an attacker-controlled machine may results in the user silently delegating credentials to the attacker, who can then impersonate the user at will.

[8.](#) References

[8.1.](#) Normative References

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8.2. Informative References

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Authors' Addresses

Simo Sorce
Red Hat, Inc.
140 Broadway
24th Floor
New York, NY 10025
USA

Email: simo@redhat.com

Hubert Kario
Red Hat, Inc.
Purkynova 115
Brno 612 00
Czech Republic

Email: hkario@redhat.com