

DNS-Based Authentication of Named Entities (DANE)  
Internet-Draft  
Intended status: Standards Track  
Expires: December 12, 2014

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June 10, 2014

Using DNS-Based Authentication of Named Entities (DANE) TLSA Records  
with SRV Records  
draft-ietf-dane-srv-06

## Abstract

The DANE specification ([RFC 6698](#)) describes how to use TLSA resource records in the DNS to associate a server's host name with its TLS certificate, where the association is secured with DNSSEC. However, application protocols that use SRV records ([RFC 2782](#)) to indirectly name the target server host names for a service domain cannot apply the rules from [RFC 6698](#). Therefore this document provides guidelines that enable such protocols to locate and use TLSA records.

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Internet-Draft

TLSA and SRV

June 2014

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## Table of Contents

<a href="#">1.</a>	Introduction . . . . .	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">2.</a>	Terminology . . . . .	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">3.</a>	DNS Checks . . . . .	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">3.1.</a>	SRV Query . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">3.2.</a>	Address Queries . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">3.3.</a>	TLSA Queries . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">3.4.</a>	Impact on TLS Usage . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">4.</a>	TLS Checks . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">4.1.</a>	SRV Records Only . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">4.2.</a>	TLSA Records . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">5.</a>	Guidance for Application Protocols . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">6.</a>	Guidance for Server Operators . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">7.</a>	Internationalization Considerations . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">8.</a>	IANA Considerations . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">9.</a>	Security Considerations . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">9.1.</a>	Mixed Security Status . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">9.2.</a>	A Service Domain Trusts its Servers . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">9.3.</a>	Certificate Subject Name Matching . . . . .	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">10.</a>	Acknowledgements . . . . .	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">11.</a>	References . . . . .	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">11.1.</a>	Normative References . . . . .	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">11.2.</a>	Informative References . . . . .	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Appendix A.</a>	Examples . . . . .	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">A.1.</a>	IMAP . . . . .	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">A.2.</a>	XMPP . . . . .	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Appendix B.</a>	Rationale . . . . .	<a href="#">12</a>
	Authors' Addresses . . . . .	<a href="#">13</a>

[1.](#) Introduction

The base DANE specification [[RFC6698](#)] describes how to use TLSA resource records in the DNS to associate a server's host name with its TLS certificate, where the association is secured using DNSSEC. That document "only relates to securely associating certificates for

TLS and DTLS with host names" (see the last paragraph of [section 1.2 of \[RFC6698\]](#)).

Some application protocols do not use host names directly; instead, they use a service domain, and the relevant target server host names

are located indirectly via SRV records [[RFC2782](#)]. Because of this intermediate resolution step, the normal DANE rules specified in [[RFC6698](#)] cannot be applied to protocols that use SRV records. (Rules for SMTP [[RFC5321](#)], which uses MX records instead of SRV records, are described in [[I-D.ietf-dane-smtp-with-dane](#)].)

This document describes how to use DANE TLSA records with SRV records. To summarize:

- o We rely on DNSSEC to secure the association between the service domain and the target server host names (i.e., the host names that are discovered by the SRV query).
- o The TLSA records are located using the port, protocol, and target server host name fields (not the service domain).
- o Clients always use TLS when connecting to servers with TLSA records.
- o Assuming that the association is secure, the server's certificate is expected to authenticate the target server host name, rather than the service domain.

Note: The "CertID" specification [[RFC6125](#)] does not use the terms "service domain" and "target server host name", but refers to the same entities with the terms "source domain" and "derived domain".

## [2.](#) Terminology

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this memo are to be interpreted as described in [[RFC2119](#)].

This draft uses the definitions for "secure", "insecure", "bogus", and "indeterminate" from [[RFC4033](#)]. This draft uses the acronyms

from [\[RFC7218\]](#) for the values of TLSA fields where appropriate.

### 3. DNS Checks

To expedite connection to the intended service, where possible the queries described in the following sections SHOULD be performed in parallel (this is similar to the "happy eyeballs" approach for IPv4 and IPv6 connections described in [\[RFC6555\]](#)).

Finch, et al.

Expires December 12, 2014

[Page 3]

---

Internet-Draft

TLSA and SRV

June 2014

#### 3.1. SRV Query

When the client makes an SRV query, a successful result will typically be a list of one or more SRV records (or possibly a chain of CNAME / DNAME aliases leading to such a list).

For this specification to apply, the entire DNS RRset that is returned MUST be "secure" according to DNSSEC validation ([\[RFC4033 section 5\]](#)). In the case of aliases, the whole chain of CNAME and DNAME RRsets MUST be secure as well. This corresponds to the AD bit being set in the response(s); see [\[RFC4035 section 3.2.3\]](#).

If the the entire RRset is not secure, this protocol has not been correctly deployed. The client SHOULD fall back to its non-DNSSEC, non-DANE behavior (this corresponds to the AD bit being unset).

If a particular response is "bogus" or "indeterminate" according to DNSSEC validation, the client MUST ignore that target server host name.

In the successful case, the client now has an authentic list of target server host names with weight and priority values. It performs server ordering and selection using the weight and priority values without regard to the presence or absence of DNSSEC or TLSA records. It also takes note of the DNSSEC validation status of the SRV response for use when checking certificate names (see [Section 4](#)). The client can now proceed to making address queries on the target server host names as described in the next section.

### [3.2.](#) Address Queries

For each SRV target server host name, the client makes A / AAAA queries, performs DNSSEC validation on the address (A, AAAA) response, and continues as follows based on the results:

- o If the response is "secure" and usable, the client MUST perform a TLSA query for that target server host name as described in the next section.
- o If the response is "insecure", the client MUST NOT perform a TLSA query for that target server host name; the TLSA query will most likely fail.
- o If the response is "bogus" or "indeterminate", the client MUST NOT connect to this target server; instead it uses the next most appropriate SRV target.

### [3.3.](#) TLSA Queries

The client SHALL construct the TLSA query name as described in [\[RFC6698\] section 3](#), based on fields from the SRV record: the port from the SRV RDATA, the protocol from the SRV query name, and the TLSA base domain set to the SRV target server host name.

For example, the following SRV record for IMAP (see [\[RFC6186\]](#)) leads to the TLSA query shown below:

```
_imap._tcp.example.com. 86400 IN SRV 10 0 9143 imap.example.net.  
_9143._tcp.imap.example.net. IN TLSA ?
```

### [3.4.](#) Impact on TLS Usage

The client SHALL determine if the TLSA record(s) returned in the previous step are usable according to [section 4.1 of \[RFC6698\]](#). This affects the use TLS as follows:

- o If the TLSA response is "secure" and usable, then the client MUST use TLS when connecting to the target server. The TLSA records

are used when validating the server's certificate as described under [Section 4](#).

- o If the TLSA response is "insecure", then the client SHALL proceed as if the target server had no TLSA records. It MAY connect to the target server with or without TLS, subject to the policies of the application protocol or client implementation.
- o If the TLSA response is "bogus" or "indeterminate", then the client MUST NOT connect to the target server (the client can still use other SRV targets).

#### [4](#). TLS Checks

When connecting to a server, the client MUST use TLS if the responses to the SRV and TLSA queries were "secure" as described above. The rules described in the next two sections apply.

##### [4.1](#). SRV Records Only

If the client received zero usable TLSA certificate associations, it SHALL validate the server's TLS certificate using the normal PKIX rules [[RFC5280](#)] or protocol-specific rules (e.g., following [[RFC6125](#)]) without further input from the TLSA records.

In this case, the client uses the information in the server certificate and the DNSSEC validation status of the SRV query in its authentication checks. It SHOULD use the Server Name Indication extension (TLS SNI) [[RFC6066](#)] or its functional equivalent in the relevant application protocol (e.g., in XMPP [[RFC6120](#)] this is the 'to' address of the initial stream header). The preferred name SHALL be chosen as follows, and the client SHALL verify the identity asserted by the server's certificate according to [section 6 of \[RFC6125\]](#), using a list of reference identifiers constructed as follows (note again that in [RFC 6125](#) the terms "source domain" and "derived domain" refer to the same things as "service domain" and "target server host name" in this document). The examples below assume a service domain of "im.example.com" and a target server host name of "xmpp23.hosting.example.net".

SRV is insecure: The reference identifiers SHALL include the service domain and MUST NOT include the SRV target server host name (e.g., include "im.example.com" but not "xmpp23.hosting.example.net"). The service domain is the preferred name for TLS SNI or its equivalent.

SRV is secure: The reference identifiers SHALL include both the service domain and the SRV target server host name (e.g., include both "im.example.com" and "xmpp23.hosting.example.net"). The target server host name is the preferred name for TLS SNI or its equivalent.

In the latter case, the client will accept either identity to ensure compatibility with servers that support this specification as well as servers that do not support this specification.

#### [4.2.](#) TLSA Records

If the client received one or more usable TLSA certificate associations, it SHALL process them as described in [section 2.1 of \[RFC6698\]](#).

If the TLS server's certificate -- or the public key of the server's certificate -- matches a usable TLSA record with Certificate Usage "DANE-EE", the client MUST consider the server to be authenticated. Because the information in such a TLSA record supersedes the non-key information in the certificate, all other [\[RFC5280\]](#) and [\[RFC6125\]](#) authentication checks (e.g., reference identifier, key usage, expiration, issuance) MUST be ignored or omitted.

#### [5.](#) Guidance for Application Protocols

This document describes how to use DANE with application protocols in which target servers are discovered via SRV records. Although this document attempts to provide generic guidance applying to all such protocols, additional documents for particular application protocols could cover related topics, such as:

- o Fallback logic in the event that a client is unable to connect securely to a target server by following the procedures defined in this document.
- o How clients ought to behave if they do not support SRV lookups, or if clients that support SRV lookups encounter service domains that do not offer SRV records.
- o Whether the application protocol has a functional equivalent for TLS SNI that is preferred within that protocol.

For example, [[I-D.ietf-xmpp-dna](#)] covers such topics for the Extensible Messaging and Presence Protocol (XMPP).

## 6. Guidance for Server Operators

To conform to this specification, the published SRV records and subsequent address (A, AAAA) records **MUST** be secured with DNSSEC. There **SHOULD** also be at least one TLSA record published that authenticates the server's certificate.

When using TLSA records with Certificate Usage "DANE-EE", it is not necessary for the deployed certificate to contain an identifier for either the source domain or target server host name. However, servers that rely solely on validation using Certificate Usage "DANE-EE" TLSA records might prevent clients that do not support this specification from successfully connecting with TLS.

For TLSA records with Certificate Usage types other than "DANE-EE", the certificate(s) **MUST** contain an identifier that matches:

- o the service domain name (the "source domain" in [[RFC6125](#)] terms, which is the SRV query domain); and/or
- o the target server host name (the "derived domain" in [[RFC6125](#)] terms, which is the SRV target).

Servers that support multiple service domains (i.e., so-called "multi-tenanted environments") can implement the Transport Layer Security Server Name Indication (TLS SNI) [[RFC6066](#)] or its functional

equivalent to determine which certificate to offer. Clients that do



not support this specification will indicate a preference for the service domain name, while clients that support this specification will indicate the target server host name. However, the server determines what certificate to present in the TLS handshake; e.g., the presented certificate might only authenticate the target server host name.

## 7. Internationalization Considerations

If any of the DNS queries are for an internationalized domain name, then they need to use the A-label form [[RFC5890](#)].

## 8. IANA Considerations

No IANA action is required.

## 9. Security Considerations

### 9.1. Mixed Security Status

We do not specify that clients checking all of a service domain's target server host names are consistent in whether they have or do not have TLSA records. This is so that partial or incremental deployment does not break the service. Different levels of deployment are likely if a service domain has a third-party fallback server, for example.

The SRV sorting rules are unchanged; in particular they have not been altered in order to prioritize secure servers over insecure servers. If a site wants to be secure it needs to deploy this protocol completely; a partial deployment is not secure and we make no special effort to support it.

### 9.2. A Service Domain Trusts its Servers

By signing their zone with DNSSEC, service domain operators implicitly instruct their clients to check their server TLSA records. This implies another point in the trust relationship between service domain holders and their server operators. Most of the setup requirements for this protocol fall on the server operator: installing a TLS certificate with the correct name (where necessary), and publishing a TLSA record for that certificate. If these are not correct then connections from TLSA-aware clients might fail.

### [9.3.](#) Certificate Subject Name Matching

[Section 4](#) of the TLSA specification [[RFC6698](#)] leaves the details of checking names in certificates to higher level application protocols, though it suggests the use of [[RFC6125](#)].

Name checks are not necessary if the matching TLSA record is of Certificate Usage "DANE-EE". Because such a record identifies the specific certificate (or public key of the certificate), additional checks are superfluous and potentially conflicting.

Otherwise, while DNSSEC provides a secure binding between the server name and the TLSA record, and the TLSA record provides a binding to a certificate, this latter step can be indirect via a chain of certificates. For example, a Certificate Usage "PKIX-TA" TLSA record only authenticates the CA that issued the certificate, and third parties can obtain certificates from the same CA. Therefore, clients need to check whether the server's certificate matches one of the expected reference identifiers to ensure that the certificate was issued by the CA to the server the client expects.

## [10.](#) Acknowledgements

Thanks to Mark Andrews for arguing that authenticating the target server host name is the right thing, and that we ought to rely on DNSSEC to secure the SRV lookup. Thanks to James Cloos, Viktor Dukhovni, Ned Freed, Olafur Gudmundsson, Paul Hoffman, Phil Pennock, Hector Santos, Jonas Schneider, and Alessandro Vesely for helpful suggestions.

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Finch, et al.

Expires December 12, 2014

[Page 9]

---

Internet-Draft

TLSA and SRV

June 2014

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Finch, et al.

Expires December 12, 2014

[Page 10]

---

Internet-Draft

TLSA and SRV

June 2014

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## [Appendix A](#). Examples

In the following, most of the DNS resource data is elided for simplicity.

### [A.1](#). IMAP

```
; mail domain
_ldap._tcp.example.com. SRV 10 0 9143 ldap.example.net.
example.com.           RRSIG  SRV ...

; target server host name
ldap.example.net.      A      192.0.2.1
ldap.example.net.      RRSIG  A ...

ldap.example.net.      AAAA   2001:db8:212:8::e:1
ldap.example.net.      RRSIG  ...

; TLSA resource record
_9143._tcp.ldap.example.net. TLSA  ...
_9143._tcp.ldap.example.net. RRSIG TLSA ...
```

Mail messages submitted for addresses at example.com are sent via IMAP to ldap.example.net. Connections to ldap.example.net port 9143 that use STARTTLS will get a server certificate that authenticates the name ldap.example.net.

### [A.2](#). XMPP

```
; XMPP domain
_xmpp-client.example.com. SRV      1 0 5222 im.example.net.
_xmpp-client.example.com. RRSIG    SRV ...

; target server host name
im.example.net.           A        192.0.2.3
im.example.net.           RRSIG   A ...

im.example.net.           AAAA    2001:db8:212:8::e:4
im.example.net.           RRSIG  AAAA ...

; TLSA resource record
_5222._tcp.im.example.net. TLSA     ...
_5222._tcp.im.example.net. RRSIG   TLSA ...
```

XMPP sessions for addresses at example.com are established at im.example.net. Connections to im.example.net port 5222 that use STARTTLS will get a server certificate that authenticates the name im.example.net.

## [Appendix B](#). Rationale

The long-term goal of this specification is to settle on TLS certificates that verify the target server host name rather than the service domain, since this is more convenient for servers hosting multiple domains (so-called "multi-tenanted environments") and scales up more easily to larger numbers of service domains.

There are a number of other reasons for doing it this way:

- o The certificate is part of the server configuration, so it makes sense to associate it with the server host name rather than the service domain.
- o In the absence of TLS SNI, if the certificate identifies the host name then it does not need to list all the possible service domains.
- o When the server certificate is replaced it is much easier if there is one part of the DNS that needs updating to match, instead of an

unbounded number of hosted service domains.

- o The same TLSA records work with this specification, and with direct connections to the host name in the style of [[RFC6698](#)].
- o Some application protocols, such as SMTP, allow a client to perform transactions with multiple service domains in the same connection. It is not in general feasible for the client to specify the service domain using TLS SNI when the connection is established, and the server might not be able to present a certificate that authenticates all possible service domains. See [[I-D.ietf-dane-smtp-with-dane](#)] for details.
- o It is common for SMTP servers to act in multiple roles, for example as outgoing relays or as incoming MX servers, depending on the client identity. It is simpler if the server can present the same certificate regardless of the role in which it is to act. Sometimes the server does not know its role until the client has authenticated, which usually occurs after TLS has been established. See [[I-D.ietf-dane-smtp-with-dane](#)] for details.

This specification does not provide an option to put TLSA records under the service domain because that would add complexity without

providing any benefit, and security protocols are best kept simple. As described above, there are real-world cases where authenticating the service domain cannot be made to work, so there would be complicated criteria for when service domain TLSA records might be used and when they cannot. This is all avoided by putting the TLSA records under the target server host name.

The disadvantage is that clients which do not complete DNSSEC validation must, according to [[RFC6125](#)] rules, check the server certificate against the service domain, since they have no other way to authenticate the server. This means that SNI support or its functional equivalent is necessary for backward compatibility.

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