

Network Working Group
Internet Draft
[draft-ietf-ipsec-esp-v3-01.txt](#)
Expires May 2002

S. Kent
BBN Technologies
November 2001

IP Encapsulating Security Payload (ESP)

Status of This Memo

This document is an Internet Draft and is subject to all provisions of [Section 10 of RFC2026](#). Internet Drafts are working documents of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), its areas, and its working groups. Note that other groups may also distribute working documents as Internet Drafts

Internet Drafts are draft documents valid for a maximum of 6 months and may be updated, replaced, or obsoleted by other documents at any time. It is inappropriate to use Internet Drafts as reference material or to cite them other than as a "work in progress".

The list of current Internet Drafts can be accessed at
<http://www.ietf.org/lid-abstracts.html>

The list of Internet Draft Shadow Directories can be accessed at
<http://www.ietf.org/shadow.html>

Copyright (C) The Internet Society (2001). All Rights Reserved.

Abstract

This memo describes an updated version of the Encapsulating Security Payload (ESP) protocol, which is designed to provide a mix of security services in IPv4 and Ipv6. ESP is used to provide confidentiality, data origin authentication, connectionless integrity, an anti-replay service (a form of partial sequence integrity), and limited traffic flow confidentiality. This document is based upon [RFC 2406](#) (November 1998). [Section 7](#) provides a brief review of the differences between this document and [RFC 2406](#).

Comments should be sent to Stephen Kent (kent@bbn.com).

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	4
2.	Encapsulating Security Payload Packet Format.....	6
2.1	Security Parameters Index.....	10
2.2	Sequence Number	11
2.2.1	Extended Sequence Number.....	12
2.3	Payload Data.....	12
2.4	Padding (for Encryption).....	13
2.5	Pad Length.....	14
2.6	Next Header.....	14
2.7	Traffic Flow Confidentiality (TFC) Padding.....	15
2.8	Integrity Check Value (ICV).....	16
3.	Encapsulating Security Protocol Processing.....	16
3.1	ESP Header Location.....	16
3.1.1	Transport Mode Processing.....	16
3.1.2	Tunnel Mode Processing.....	18
3.2	Algorithms.....	19
3.2.1	Encryption Algorithms.....	19
3.2.2	Integrity Algorithms.....	20
3.2.3	Combined Mode Algorithms.....	20
3.3	Outbound Packet Processing.....	21
3.3.1	Security Association Lookup.....	21
3.3.2	Packet Encryption and Integrity Check Value (ICV) Calculation.....	21
3.3.2.1	Separate Confidentiality and Integrity Algorithms.....	22
3.3.2.2	Combined Mode Algorithms.....	23
3.3.3	Sequence Number Generation.....	24
3.3.4	Fragmentation.....	25
3.4	Inbound Packet Processing.....	25
3.4.1	Reassembly.....	25
3.4.2	Security Association Lookup.....	26
3.4.3	Sequence Number Verification.....	26
3.4.4	Integrity Check Value Verification and Packet Decryption.....	28
3.4.4.1	Separate Confidentiality and Integrity Algorithms.....	28
3.4.4.2	Combined Mode Algorithms	30
4.	Auditing.....	31
5.	Conformance Requirements.....	32
6.	Security Considerations.....	33
7.	Differences from RFC 2406.....	33
	Acknowledgements.....	34
	References.....	34
	Disclaimer.....	34
	Author Information.....	35

Appendix -- Extended Sequence Number.....	36
Full Copyright Statement.....	37

1. Introduction

The Encapsulating Security Payload (ESP) header is designed to provide a mix of security services in IPv4 and IPv6. ESP may be applied alone, in combination with the IP Authentication Header (AH) [[KA98b](#)], or in a nested fashion, e.g., through the use of tunnel mode (see "Security Architecture for the Internet Protocol" [[KA98a](#)], hereafter referred to as the Security Architecture document). Security services can be provided between a pair of communicating hosts, between a pair of communicating security gateways, or between a security gateway and a host. For more details on how to use ESP and AH in various network environments, see the Security Architecture document [[KA98a](#)].

The ESP header is inserted after the IP header and before the upper layer protocol header (transport mode) or before an encapsulated IP header (tunnel mode). These modes are described in more detail below.

ESP can be used to provide confidentiality, data origin authentication, connectionless integrity, an anti-replay service (a form of partial sequence integrity), and (limited) traffic flow confidentiality. The set of services provided depends on options selected at the time of Security Association (SA) establishment and on the location of the implementation in a network topology.

An implementation MAY offer confidentiality independent of all other services. Use of confidentiality without integrity (either in ESP or separately in AH) may subject traffic to certain forms of active attacks that could undermine the confidentiality service (see [[Bel96](#)]). ESP allows confidentiality-only SAs because this may offer considerably better performance and still provide adequate security, e.g., when higher layer authentication/integrity protection is offered independently. However, this standard does not require all ESP implementations to offer this service separately.

Data origin authentication and connectionless integrity are joint services, hereafter referred to jointly as "integrity." (This term is employed because, on a per-packet basis, the computation being performed provides connectionless integrity directly; data origin authentication is provided indirectly as a result of binding the key used to verify the integrity to the identity of the IPsec peer. Typically this binding is effected through the use of a shared, symmetric key, but an asymmetric cryptographic algorithm also may be employed, e.g. to sign a hash.) Integrity-only ESP MUST be offered as a service selection option, e.g., it must be negotiable in SA management protocols and MUST be configurable via management interfaces. Integrity-only ESP is an attractive alternative to AH in

many contexts, e.g., because it is faster to process and more amenable to pipelining in many implementations.

Although confidentiality and integrity can be offered independently, most ESP use typically will employ both services, i.e., packets will be protected with regard to confidentiality and integrity. Thus there are three possible ESP security service combinations involving these services:

- confidentiality-only (SHOULD be supported)
- integrity-only (MUST be supported)
- confidentiality and integrity (MUST be supported)

The anti-replay service may be selected for an SA only if the integrity service is selected for that SA. The selection of this service is solely at the discretion of the receiver and thus need not be negotiated. However, to make use of a new, extended sequence number feature in an interoperable fashion, ESP does impose a requirement on SA management protocols to be able to negotiate this new feature (see [Section 2.2.1](#) below).

The traffic flow confidentiality (TFC) service generally is effective only if ESP is employed in tunnel mode between security gateways, and only if sufficient traffic flows between these gateways to conceal the characteristics of specific, individual subscriber traffic flows. (ESP may be employed as part of a higher layer TFC system, e.g., Onion Routing [Syverson], but such systems are outside the scope of this standard.) New TFC features present in ESP facilitate efficient generation and discarding of dummy traffic and better padding of real traffic, in a backwards compatible fashion.

It is assumed that the reader is familiar with the terms and concepts described in the Security Architecture document. In particular, the reader should be familiar with the definitions of security services offered by ESP and AH, the concept of Security Associations, the ways in which ESP can be used in conjunction with the Authentication Header (AH), and the different key management options available for ESP and AH.

The keywords MUST, MUST NOT, REQUIRED, SHALL, SHALL NOT, SHOULD, SHOULD NOT, RECOMMENDED, MAY, and OPTIONAL, when they appear in this document, are to be interpreted as described in [RFC 2119](#) [[Bra97](#)].

2. Encapsulating Security Payload Packet Format

The (outer) protocol header (IPv4, IPv6, or Extension) that immediately precedes the ESP header SHALL contain the value 50 in its Protocol (IPv4) or Next Header (IPv6, Extension) field (see IANA web page at <http://www.iana.org/assignments/protocol-numbers>). Figure 1 illustrates the top level format of an ESP packet. The packet begins with two 4-byte fields (SPI and Sequence Number). Following these fields is the Payload Data, which has substructure that depends on the choice of encryption algorithm and mode, and on the use of TFC padding, which is examined in more detail later. Following the Payload Data are Padding and Pad Length fields, and the Next Header field. The optional Integrity Check Value (ICV) field completes the packet.

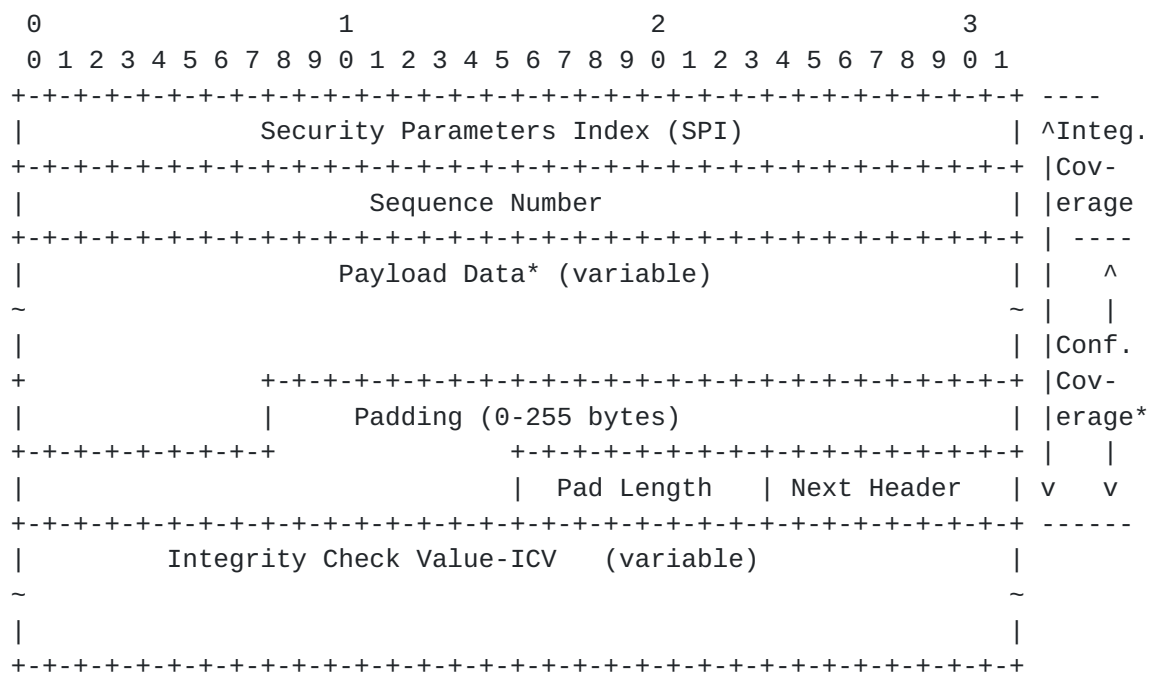


Figure 1. Top Level Format of an ESP Packet

- * If included in the Payload field, cryptographic synchronization data, e.g., an Initialization Vector (IV, see [Section 2.3](#)), usually is not encrypted per se, although it often is referred to as being part of the ciphertext.

The (transmitted) ESP Trailer consists of the Padding, Pad Length, and Next Header fields. Additional, implicit ESP Trailer data (which is not transmitted) is included in the integrity computation, as described below.

If the integrity service is selected, the integrity computation encompasses the SPI, Sequence Number, Payload Data, and the ESP Trailer (explicit and implicit).

If the confidentiality service is selected, the ciphertext consists of the Payload Data (except for any cryptographic synchronization data that may be included) and the (explicit) ESP Trailer.

As noted above, the Payload Data may have substructure. An encryption algorithm that requires an explicit Initialization Vector (IV), e.g., CBC mode, often prefixes the Payload Data to be protected with that value. Some algorithm modes combine encryption and integrity into a single operation; this document refers to such algorithm modes as "combined mode algorithms." Accommodation of combined mode algorithms requires changes to ESP processing sequences and thus is not as simple as adding a new encryption or integrity algorithm.

Some combined mode algorithms provide integrity only for data that is encrypted, while others can provide integrity for some additional data, data that is not encrypted for transmission. Since the SPI and Sequence Number fields require integrity as part of the integrity service, and they are not encrypted, it is necessary to ensure that they are afforded integrity whenever the service is selected, regardless of the style of combined algorithm mode employed.

When any combined mode algorithm is employed, the algorithm itself is expected to return both decrypted plaintext and a pass/fail indication for the integrity check. For combined mode algorithms, the ICV that would normally appear at the end of the ESP packet (when integrity is selected) is omitted. It is the responsibility of the combined mode algorithm to encode within the payload data an ICV-equivalent means of verifying the integrity of the packet.

If a combined mode algorithm offers integrity only to data that is encrypted, it will be necessary to replicate the SPI and Sequence Number as part of the Payload Data.

Finally, a new provision is made to insert padding for traffic flow confidentiality after the Payload Data and before the ESP trailer. Figure 2 illustrates this substructure for Payload Data.

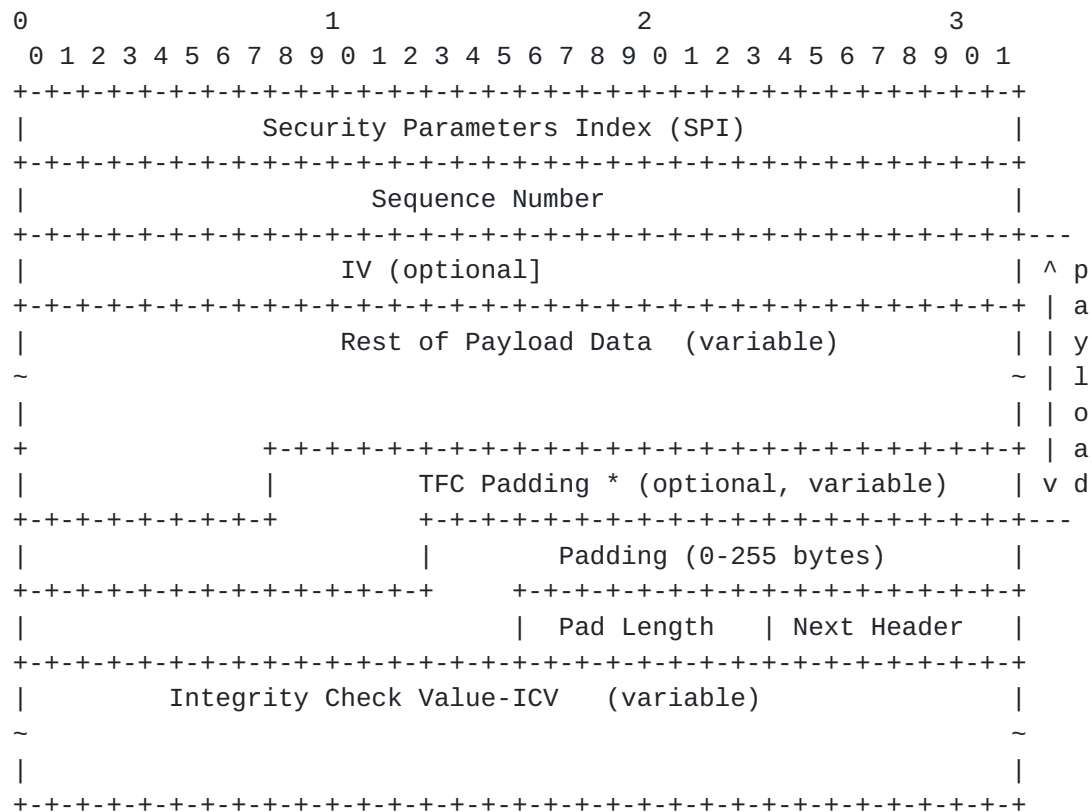


Figure 2. Substructure of Payload Data

- * If tunnel mode is being used, then the IPsec implementation can add Traffic Flow Confidentiality (TFC) padding (see [Section 2.4](#)) after the Payload Data and before the Padding (0-255 bytes) field.

If a combined algorithm mode is employed, the explicit ICV shown in Figures 1 and 2 is omitted (see Section ?? below). Since algorithms and modes are fixed when an SA is established, the detailed format of ESP packets for a given SA (including the Payload Data substructure) is fixed, for all traffic on the SA.

The tables below refer to the fields in the preceding Figures and illustrate how several categories of algorithmic options, each with a different processing model, affect the fields noted above. The processing details are described in later sections.

Table 1. Separate Encryption and Integrity Algorithms

	# of bytes	Requ'd [1]	What Encrypt Covers	What Integ Covers	What is Xmtd	
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	
SPI	4	M		Y	plain	
Seq# (low order bits)	4	M		Y	plain	p
						----- a
IV	variable	O		Y	plain	y
IP datagram [2]	variable	M or D	Y	Y	cipher[3]	-l
TFC padding [4]	variable	O	Y	Y	cipher[3]	o
						----- a
Padding	0-255	M	Y	Y	cipher[3]	d
Pad Length	1	M	Y	Y	cipher[3]	
Next Header	1	M	Y	Y	cipher[3]	
Seq# (high order bits)	4	if ESN [5]		Y	not xmtd	
ICV Padding	variable	if need		Y	not xmtd	
ICV	variable	M [6]			plain	

[1] M = mandatory; O = optional; D = dummy

[2] If tunnel mode -> IP datagram

 If transport mode -> next header and data

[3] ciphertext if encryption has been selected

[4] Can be used only if payload specifies its "real" length

[5] See [section 2.2.1](#)

[6] mandatory if a separate integrity algorithm is used

Table 2. Combined Mode Algorithms

	# of bytes	Requ'd [1]	What Encrypt Covers	What Integ Covers	What is Xmtd
SPI	4	M			plain
Seq# (low order bits)	4	M			plain p
					--- a
IV	variable	O		Y	plain y
IP datagram [2]	variable	M or D	Y	Y	cipher -l
TFC padding [3]	variable	O	Y	Y	cipher o
					--- a
Padding	0-255	M	Y	Y	cipher d
Pad Length	1	M	Y	Y	cipher
Next Header	1	M	Y	Y	cipher
Seq# (high order bits)	4	if ESN [4]		Y	[5]
ICV Padding	variable	if need		Y	[5]
ICV	omitted when this mode is employed				

[1] M = mandatory; O = optional; D = dummy

[2] If tunnel mode -> IP datagram

If transport mode -> next header and data

[3] Can be used only if payload specifies its "real" length

[4] See [section 2.2.1](#)

[5] The algorithm choices determines whether these are transmitted, but in either case, the result is invisible to ESP

The following subsections describe the fields in the header format. "Optional" means that the field is omitted if the option is not selected, i.e., it is present in neither the packet as transmitted nor as formatted for computation of an Integrity Check Value (ICV, see [Section 2.7](#)). Whether or not an option is selected is determined as part of Security Association (SA) establishment. Thus the format of ESP packets for a given SA is fixed, for the duration of the SA. In contrast, "mandatory" fields are always present in the ESP packet format, for all SAs.

2.1 Security Parameters Index

The SPI is an arbitrary 32-bit value that is used by a receiver to identify the SA to which an incoming packet is bound. The SPI field is mandatory.

For a unicast SA, the SPI can be used by itself to specify an SA, or it may be used in conjunction with the IPsec protocol type (in this

case ESP). Since the SPI value is generated by the receiver, whether the value is sufficient to identify an SA by itself, or whether it must be used in conjunction with the IPsec protocol value is a local matter.

For multicast SAs, the SPI (and optionally the protocol ID) in combination with the destination address is used to select an SA. This is because multicast SAs are defined by a multicast controller, not by each IPsec receiver. (See the Security Architecture document for more details.)

The set of SPI values in the range 1 through 255 are reserved by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) for future use; a reserved SPI value will not normally be assigned by IANA unless the use of the assigned SPI value is specified in an RFC. The SPI value of zero (0) is reserved for local, implementation-specific use and MUST NOT be sent on the wire. (For example, a key management implementation might use the zero SPI value to mean "No Security Association Exists" during the period when the IPsec implementation has requested that its key management entity establish a new SA, but the SA has not yet been established.)

2.2 Sequence Number

This unsigned 32-bit field contains a counter value that increases by one for each packet sent, i.e., a per-SA packet sequence number. For a unicast SA or a single-sender multicast SA, the sender MUST increment this field for every transmitted packet. Sharing an SA among multiple senders is deprecated, since there is no general means of synchronizing packet counters among the senders or meaningfully managing a receiver packet counter and window in the context of multiple senders.

The field is mandatory and MUST always be present even if the receiver does not elect to enable the anti-replay service for a specific SA. Processing of the Sequence Number field is at the discretion of the receiver, but all ESP implementations MUST be capable of performing the Sequence Number processing described in Sections [3.3.3](#) and [3.4.3](#). Thus the sender MUST always transmit this field, but the receiver need not act upon it (see the discussion of Sequence Number Verification in the "Inbound Packet Processing" section (3.4.3) below).

The sender's counter and the receiver's counter are initialized to 0 when an SA is established. (The first packet sent using a given SA will have a Sequence Number of 1; see [Section 3.3.3](#) for more details

on how the Sequence Number is generated.) If anti-replay is enabled (the default), the transmitted Sequence Number must never be allowed to cycle. Thus, the sender's counter and the receiver's counter MUST be reset (by establishing a new SA and thus a new key) prior to the transmission of the 2³²nd packet on an SA.

2.2.1 Extended Sequence Number

To support high-speed IPsec implementations, a new option for sequence numbers SHOULD be offered, as an extension to the current, 32-bit sequence number field. Use of an Extended Sequence Number (ESN) SHOULD be negotiated by an SA management protocol, although it could also be part of the configuration data for a manually configured SA.

The ESN facility allows use of a 64-bit sequence number for an SA. (See "Managing 64-bit Sequence Numbers" (See Appendix for details.) Only the low order 32 bits of the sequence number are transmitted in the plaintext ESP header of each packet, thus minimizing packet overhead. The high order 32 bits are maintained as part of the sequence number counter by both transmitter and receiver and are included in the computation of the ICV (if the integrity service is selected). If a separate integrity algorithm is employed, the high order bits are included in the implicit ESP trailer, but are not transmitted, analogous to integrity algorithm padding bits. If a combined mode algorithm is employed, the algorithm choice determines whether the high order ESN bits are transmitted, or are included implicitly in the computation. See Section ?? for processing details.

2.3 Payload Data

Payload Data is a variable-length field containing data (from the original IP packet) described by the Next Header field. The Payload Data field is mandatory and is an integral number of bytes in length. If the algorithm used to encrypt the payload requires cryptographic synchronization data, e.g., an Initialization Vector (IV), then this data is carried explicitly in the Payload field, but it is not called out as a separate field in ESP, i.e., the transmission of an explicit IV is invisible to ESP. (See Figure 2.) Any encryption algorithm that requires such explicit, per-packet synchronization data MUST indicate the length, any structure for such data, and the location of this data as part of an RFC specifying how the algorithm is used with ESP. (Typically the IV immediately precedes the ciphertext. See Figure 2.) If such synchronization data is implicit, the algorithm for deriving the data MUST be part of the algorithm definition RFC. (If included in the Payload field, cryptographic synchronization

data, e.g., an Initialization Vector (IV), usually is not encrypted per se (see Tables 1 and 2), although it sometimes is referred to as being part of the ciphertext.)

Note that the beginning of the transport header (transport mode) or the beginning of the encapsulated IP datagram (tunnel mode) MUST be aligned relative to the beginning of the ESP header as follows. For IPv4, this alignment is a multiple of 4 bytes. For IPv6, the alignment is a multiple of 8 bytes.

With regard to ensuring the alignment of the (real) ciphertext in the presence of an IV, note the following:

- o For some IV-based modes of operation, the receiver treats the IV as the start of the ciphertext, feeding it into the algorithm directly. In these modes, alignment of the start of the (real) ciphertext is not an issue at the receiver.
- o In some cases, the receiver reads the IV in separately from the ciphertext. In these cases, the algorithm specification MUST address how alignment of the (real) ciphertext is to be achieved.

2.4 Padding (for Encryption)

Three factors require or motivate use of the Padding field.

- o If an encryption algorithm is employed that requires the plaintext to be a multiple of some number of bytes, e.g., the block size of a block cipher, the Padding field is used to fill the plaintext (consisting of the Payload Data, Padding, Pad Length and Next Header fields) to the size required by the algorithm.
- o Padding also may be required, irrespective of encryption algorithm requirements, to ensure that the resulting ciphertext terminates on a 4-byte boundary. Specifically, the Pad Length and Next Header fields must be right aligned within a 4-byte word, as illustrated in the ESP packet format figures above, to ensure that the ICV field (if present) is aligned on a 4-byte boundary.
- o Padding beyond that required for the algorithm or alignment reasons cited above, may be used to conceal the actual length of the payload, in support of TFC. The padding field described here offers limited opportunity for concealing the length of the plaintext and thus a new, separate mechanism is described below for use when TFC is required (see [Section 2.7](#)).

The sender MAY add 0 to 255 bytes of padding. Inclusion of the Padding field in an ESP packet is optional, subject to the requirements noted above, but all implementations MUST support generation and consumption of padding.

- o For the purpose of ensuring that the bits to be encrypted are a multiple of the algorithm's blocksize (first bullet above), the padding computation applies to the Payload Data exclusive of any IV, but including the ESP trailer fields. If a combined algorithm mode requires transmission of the SPI and Sequence Number to effect integrity, then these data items, and any associated, ICV-equivalent data, are included in the computation of the pad length. (If the ESN option is selected, the high order 32 bits of the ESN also would enter into the computation, if the combined mode algorithm requires their transmission for integrity.)
- o For the purposes of ensuring that the ICV is aligned on a 4-byte boundary (second bullet above), the padding computation applies to the Payload Data inclusive of the IV, the Pad Length, and Next Header fields. If a combined mode algorithm is used, any replicated data and ICV-equivalent data are included in the Payload Data covered by the padding computation.

If an encryption or combined mode algorithm imposes constraints on the values of the bytes used for padding they MUST be specified by the RFC defining how the algorithm is employed with ESP. If the algorithm requires checking of the values of the bytes used for padding, this too MUST be specified in that RFC.

2.5 Pad Length

The Pad Length field indicates the number of pad bytes immediately preceding it in the Padding field. The range of valid values is 0 to 255, where a value of zero indicates that no Padding bytes are present. As noted above, this does not include any TFC padding bytes. The Pad Length field is mandatory.

2.6 Next Header

The Next Header is a mandatory, 8-bit field that identifies the type of data contained in the Payload Data field, e.g., an IPv4 or IPv6 packet, or an upper layer header and data. The value of this field is chosen from the set of IP Protocol Numbers defined on the web page of the IANA, e.g., a value of 4 indicates IPv4, a value of 41

indicates IPv6 and a value of 6 indicates TCP.

To facilitate the rapid generation and discarding of the padding traffic in support of traffic flow confidentiality (see 2.4), the protocol value 59 (which means "no next header") MUST be used to designate a "dummy" packet. A transmitter MUST be capable of generating dummy packets marked with this value in the next protocol field, and a receiver MUST be prepared to discard such packets, without indicating an error. All other ESP header and trailer fields (SPI, Sequence number, Padding, Pad Length, Next Header, and ICV) MUST be present in dummy packets, but the plaintext portion of the payload, other than this Next Header field, need not be well-formed, e.g., the rest of the Payload Data may consist of only random bytes. Dummy packets are discarded without prejudice.

2.7 Traffic Flow Confidentiality (TFC) Padding

As noted above, the Padding field is limited to 255 bytes in length. This generally will not be adequate to hide traffic characteristics relative to traffic flow confidentiality requirements. A new field, within the payload data, has been added specifically to address the TFC requirement.

An IPsec implementation SHOULD be capable of padding traffic by adding bytes after the end of the Payload Data, prior to the beginning of the Padding field. However, this padding (hereafter referred to as TFC padding) can be added only if the "Payload Data" field contains a specification of the length of the IP datagram, e.g., if tunnel mode is employed. This information will enable the receiver to discard the TFC padding, because the true length of the Payload Data will be known. (ESP trailer fields are located by counting back from the end of the ESP packet.) Accordingly, if TFC padding is added, the field containing the specification of the length of the IP datagram MUST NOT be modified to reflect this padding. No requirements for the value of this padding are established by this standard.

TFC padding takes advantage of an intrinsic feature of IP, i.e., other data may be present in a buffer delivered to an IP interface, beyond the packet length indicated by the IP total length field. Thus, in tunnel mode, a compliant IP stack at a receiver should ignore this padding. In this sense, existing IPsec implementations could have made use of this capability previously, in a transparent fashion. However, because receivers may not have been prepared to deal with this padding, the SA management protocol MUST negotiate this service prior to a transmitter employing it, to ensure backward compatibility. Combined with the convention described in [section 2.6](#)

above, about the use of protocol ID 59, an ESP implementation is capable of generating dummy and real packets that exhibit much greater length variability, in support of TFC.

In transport mode, this facility generally will not be available, consistent with the earlier admonition that effective TFC service in IPsec generally requires use of tunnel mode between security gateways.

2.8 Integrity Check Value (ICV)

The Integrity Check Value is a variable-length field computed over the ESP header, Payload, and ESP trailer fields. Implicit ESP trailer fields (integrity padding and high order ESN bits, if applicable) are included in the ICV computation. The ICV field is optional; it is present only if the integrity service is selected and a separate (not combined mode) integrity algorithm is employed. The length of the field is specified by the integrity algorithm selected and associated with the SA. The integrity algorithm specification **MUST** specify the length of the ICV and the comparison rules and processing steps for validation.

3. Encapsulating Security Protocol Processing

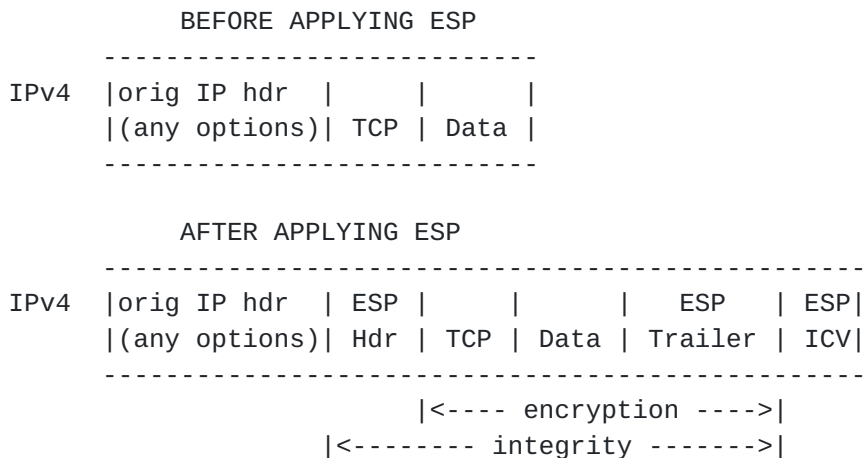
3.1 ESP Header Location

ESP may be employed in two ways: transport mode or tunnel mode. The former mode is applicable to host implementations and provides protection for upper layer protocols, but not the IP header. (In this mode, note that for "bump-in-the-stack" or "bump-in-the-wire" implementations, as defined in the Security Architecture document, inbound and outbound IP fragments may require an IPsec implementation to perform extra IP reassembly/fragmentation in order to both conform to this specification and provide transparent IPsec support. Special care is required to perform such operations within these implementations when multiple interfaces are in use.)

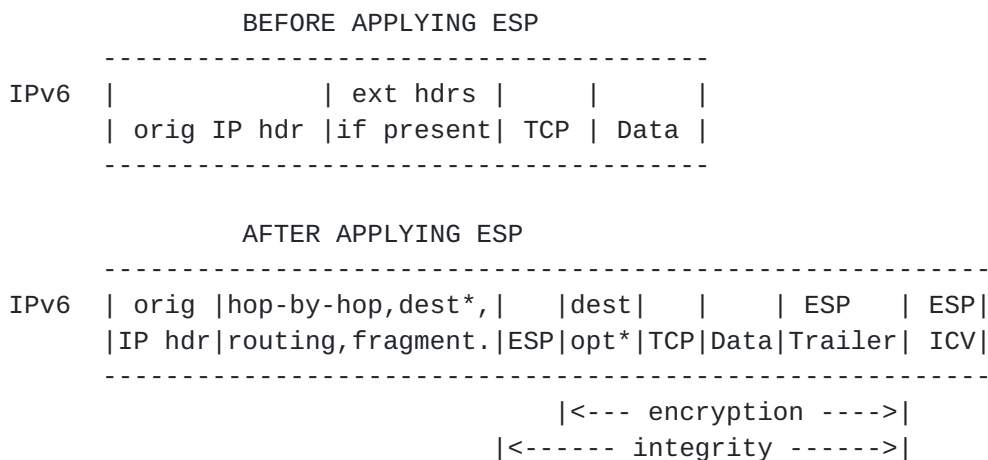
3.1.1 Transport Mode Processing

In transport mode, ESP is inserted after the IP header and before an upper layer protocol, e.g., TCP, UDP, ICMP, etc. In the context of IPv4, this translates to placing ESP after the IP header (and any options that it contains), but before the upper layer protocol. (If AH is also applied to a packet, it is applied to the ESP header, Payload, ESP Trailer and ICV, if present.) (Note that the term "transport" mode should not be misconstrued as restricting its use to

TCP and UDP. For example, an ICMP message MAY be sent using either "transport" mode or "tunnel" mode.) The following diagram illustrates ESP transport mode positioning for a typical IPv4 packet, on a "before and after" basis. (This and subsequent diagrams in this section show the ICV field, the presence of which is a function of the security services and the algorithm/mode selected.)



In the IPv6 context, ESP is viewed as an end-to-end payload, and thus should appear after hop-by-hop, routing, and fragmentation extension headers. Destination options extension header(s) could appear before, after, or both before and after the ESP header depending on the semantics desired. However, since ESP protects only fields after the ESP header, it generally will be desirable to place the destination options header(s) after the ESP header. The following diagram illustrates ESP transport mode positioning for a typical IPv6 packet.



* = if present, could be before ESP, after ESP, or both

3.1.2 Tunnel Mode Processing

Tunnel mode ESP may be employed in either hosts or security gateways. When ESP is implemented in a security gateway to protect subscriber transit traffic, tunnel mode **MUST** be used. (Transport mode **MAY** be used to protect management or similar traffic terminating at a security gateway.) In tunnel mode, the "inner" IP header carries the ultimate source and destination addresses, while an "outer" IP header contains the addresses of the IPsec peers. In tunnel mode, ESP protects the entire inner IP packet, including the entire inner IP header. The position of ESP in tunnel mode, relative to the outer IP header, is the same as for ESP in transport mode. The following diagram illustrates ESP tunnel mode positioning for typical IPv4 and IPv6 packets.

BEFORE APPLYING ESP

```

-----
IPv4 |orig IP hdr |   |   |
    |(any options)| TCP | Data |
-----

```

AFTER APPLYING ESP

```

-----
IPv4 | new IP hdr* |   | orig IP hdr* |   |   | ESP | ESP |
    |(any options)| ESP | (any options) |TCP|Data|Trailer| ICV|
-----
                |<----- encryption ----->|
                |<----- integrity ----->|

```

BEFORE APPLYING ESP

```

-----
IPv6 |   | ext hdrs |   |   |
    | orig IP hdr |if present| TCP | Data |
-----

```

AFTER APPLYING ESP

```

-----
IPv6 | new* |new ext |   | orig*|orig ext |   |   | ESP | ESP |
    |IP hdr| hdrs* |ESP|IP hdr| hdrs * |TCP|Data|Trailer| ICV|
-----
                |<----- encryption ----->|
                |<----- integrity ----->|

```

* = if present, construction of outer IP hdr/extensions and modification of inner IP hdr/extensions is discussed in the Security Architecture document.

3.2 Algorithms

The mandatory-to-implement algorithms are described in [Section 5](#), "Conformance Requirements." Other algorithms MAY be supported. Note that although both confidentiality and integrity are optional, at least one of these services MUST be selected hence both algorithms MUST NOT be simultaneously NULL.

3.2.1 Encryption Algorithms

The (symmetric) encryption algorithm employed to protect an ESP packet is specified by the SA via which the packet is

transmitted/received. Because IP packets may arrive out of order, and not all packets may arrive (packet loss) each packet must carry any data required to allow the receiver to establish cryptographic synchronization for decryption. This data may be carried explicitly in the payload field, e.g., as an IV (as described above), or the data may be derived from the plaintext portions of the (outer IP or ESP) packet header. (Note that if plaintext header information is used to derive an IV, that information may become security critical and thus the protection boundary associated with the encryption process may grow. For example, if one were to use the ESP Sequence Number to derive an IV, the Sequence Number generation logic (hardware or software) would have to be evaluated as part of the encryption algorithm implementation. In the case of FIPS 140-x, this could significantly extend the scope of a cryptographic module evaluation.) Since ESP makes provision for padding of the plaintext, encryption algorithms employed with ESP may exhibit either block or stream mode characteristics. Note that since encryption (confidentiality) is an optional service (e.g., integrity-only ESP), this algorithm may be "NULL" [[KA98a](#)]

To allow an ESP implementation to compute the encryption padding required by a block mode encryption algorithm, and to determine the MTU impact of the algorithm, the RFC for each encryption algorithm used with ESP must specify the padding modulus for the algorithm.

[3.2.2](#) Integrity Algorithms

The integrity algorithm employed for the ICV computation is specified by the SA via which the packet is transmitted/received. As was the case for encryption algorithms, any integrity algorithm employed with ESP must make provisions to permit processing of packets that arrive out of order and to accommodate packet loss. The same admonition noted above applies to use of any plaintext data to facilitate receiver synchronization of integrity algorithms. Note that since the integrity service MAY be optional, this algorithm may be "NULL".

To allow an ESP implementation to compute any implicit integrity algorithm padding required, the RFC for each algorithm used with ESP must specify the padding modulus for the algorithm.

[3.2.3](#) Combined Mode Algorithms

If a combined mode algorithm is employed, both confidentiality and integrity services are provided. As was the case for encryption algorithms, a combined mode algorithm must make provisions for per-packet cryptographic synchronization, to permit decryption of packets that arrive out of order and to accommodate packet loss. The means by

which a combined mode algorithm provides integrity for the payload, and for the SPI and (Extended) Sequence Number fields, may vary for different algorithm choices. In order to provide a uniform, algorithm independent approach to invocation of combined mode algorithms, no payload substructure is defined. For example, the SPI and Sequence Number fields might be replicated within the ciphertext envelope and an ICV may be appended to the ESP Trailer. None of these details should be observable externally.

To allow an ESP implementation to determine the MTU impact of a combined mode algorithm, the RFC for each algorithm used with ESP must specify a (simple) formula that yields encrypted payload size, as a function of the plaintext payload and sequence number sizes.

3.3 Outbound Packet Processing

In transport mode, the sender encapsulates the upper layer protocol information between the ESP header and the ESP trailer fields, and retains the specified IP header (and any IP extension headers in the IPv6 context). In tunnel mode, the outer and inner IP header/extensions can be inter-related in a variety of ways. The construction of the outer IP header/extensions during the encapsulation process is described in the Security Architecture document. If more than one IPsec header/extension is required by security policy, the order of the application of the security headers MUST be defined by security policy.

3.3.1 Security Association Lookup

ESP is applied to an outbound packet only after an IPsec implementation determines that the packet is associated with an SA that calls for ESP processing. The process of determining what, if any, IPsec processing is applied to outbound traffic is described in the Security Architecture document.

3.3.2 Packet Encryption and Integrity Check Value (ICV) Calculation

In this section, we speak in terms of encryption always being applied because of the formatting implications. This is done with the understanding that "no confidentiality" is offered by using the NULL encryption algorithm ([RFC 2410](#)). There are several algorithmic options.

3.3.2.1 Separate Confidentiality and Integrity Algorithms

If separate confidentiality and integrity algorithms are employed, the sender:

1. encapsulates (into the ESP Payload field):
 - for transport mode -- just the original upper layer protocol information.
 - for tunnel mode -- the entire original IP datagram.
2. adds any necessary padding & Optional TFC padding and (encryption) Padding
3. encrypts the result using the key, encryption algorithm, and algorithm mode specified for the SA and using any required cryptographic synchronization data.
 - If explicit cryptographic synchronization data, e.g., an IV, is indicated, it is input to the encryption algorithm per the algorithm specification and placed in the Payload field.
 - If implicit cryptographic synchronization data is employed, it is constructed and input to the encryption algorithm as per the algorithm specification.
 - If integrity is selected, encryption is performed first, before the integrity algorithm is applied, and the encryption does not encompass the ICV field. This order of processing facilitates rapid detection and rejection of replayed or bogus packets by the receiver, prior to decrypting the packet, hence potentially reducing the impact of denial of service attacks. It also allows for the possibility of parallel processing of packets at the receiver, i.e., decryption can take place in parallel with integrity checking. Note that since the ICV is not protected by encryption, a keyed integrity algorithm must be employed to compute the ICV.
4. computes the ICV over the ESP packet minus the ICV field. Thus the ICV computation encompasses the SPI, Sequence Number, Payload Data, Padding (if present), Pad Length, and Next Header. (Note that the last 4 fields will be in ciphertext form, since encryption is performed first.) If the ESN option is enabled for the SA, the high-order 32 bits of the Sequence Number are appended after the Next Header field for purposes of this computation, but are not transmitted.

For some integrity algorithms, the byte string over which the ICV computation is performed must be a multiple of a block size specified by the algorithm. If the length of ESP packet (as described above) does not match the block size requirements for the algorithm, implicit padding MUST be appended to the end of the ESP packet. (This padding is added after the Next Header field, or after the high-order 32 bits of the Sequence Number, if ESN is selected.) The padding octets MUST have a value of zero. The block size (and hence the length of the padding) is specified by the integrity algorithm specification. This padding is not transmitted with the packet. Note that MD5 and SHA-1 are viewed as having a 1-byte block size because of their internal padding conventions.

3.3.2.2 Combined Confidentiality and Integrity Algorithms

If a combined confidentiality/integrity algorithm is employed, the sender:

1. encapsulates into the ESP Payload Data field:
 - for transport mode -- just the original upper layer protocol information.
 - for tunnel mode -- the entire original IP datagram.
2. adds any necessary padding--includes optional TFC padding and Padding.
3. encrypts and integrity protects the result using the key and combined mode algorithm specified for the SA and using any required cryptographic synchronization data.
 - If explicit cryptographic synchronization data, e.g., an IV, is indicated, it is input to the combined mode algorithm per the algorithm specification and placed in the Payload field.
 - If implicit cryptographic synchronization data is employed, it is constructed and input to the encryption algorithm as per the algorithm specification.
 - The Sequence Number (or Extended Sequence Number, as appropriate) and the SPI are inputs to the algorithm, as they must be included in the integrity check computation. The means by which these values are included in this computation are a function of the combined mode algorithm employed and thus not specified in this standard.
 - The (explicit) ICV field is NOT part of the ESP packet format when a combined mode algorithm is employed, although an analogous field usually will a part of

the ciphertext payload. The location of any integrity fields, and the means by which the Sequence Number and SPI are included in the integrity computation MUST be defined in an RFC that defines the use of the combined mode algorithm with ESP.

3.3.3 Sequence Number Generation

The sender's counter is initialized to 0 when an SA is established. The sender increments the Sequence Number (or ESN) for this SA and inserts the low-order 32 bits of the value into the Sequence Number field. Thus the first packet sent using a given SA will contain a Sequence Number of 1.

If anti-replay is enabled (the default), the sender checks to ensure that the counter has not cycled before inserting the new value in the Sequence Number field. In other words, the sender MUST NOT send a packet on an SA if doing so would cause the Sequence Number to cycle. An attempt to transmit a packet that would result in Sequence Number overflow is an auditable event. The audit log entry for this event SHOULD include the SPI value, current date/time, Source Address, Destination Address, and (in IPv6) the cleartext Flow ID.

The sender assumes anti-replay is enabled as a default, unless otherwise notified by the receiver (see 3.4.3) or if the SA was configured using manual key management. Thus typical behavior of an ESP implementation calls for the sender to establish a new SA when the Sequence Number (or ESN) cycles, or in anticipation of this value cycling.

If anti-replay is disabled (as noted above), the sender does not need to monitor or reset the counter, e.g., in the case of manual key management (see [Section 5](#)). However, the sender still increments the counter and when it reaches the maximum value, the counter rolls over back to zero.

If ESN (see Appendix) is selected, only the low order 32 bits of the sequence number are transmitted in the Sequence Number field, although both sender and receiver maintain full 64-bit ESN counters. The high order 32 bits are included in the integrity check in an algorithm/mode-specific fashion, e.g., the high order 32 bits may be appended after the Next Header field when a separate integrity algorithm is employed.

3.3.4 Fragmentation

If necessary, fragmentation is performed after ESP processing within an IPsec implementation. Thus, transport mode ESP is applied only to whole IP datagrams (not to IP fragments). An IP packet to which ESP has been applied may itself be fragmented by routers en route, and such fragments must be reassembled prior to ESP processing at a receiver. In tunnel mode, ESP is applied to an IP packet, which may be a fragment of an IP datagram. For example, a security gateway or a "bump-in-the-stack" or "bump-in-the-wire" IPsec implementation (as defined in the Security Architecture document) may apply tunnel mode ESP to such fragments.

NOTE: For transport mode -- As mentioned at the beginning of [Section 3.1](#), bump-in-the-stack and bump-in-the-wire implementations may have to first reassemble a packet fragmented by the local IP layer, then apply IPsec, and then fragment the resulting packet.

NOTE: For IPv6 -- For bump-in-the-stack and bump-in-the-wire implementations, it will be necessary to examine all the extension headers to determine if there is a fragmentation header and hence that the packet needs reassembling prior to IPsec processing.

Fragmentation, whether performed by an IPsec implementation or by routers along the path between IPsec peers, significantly reduces performance. Moreover, the requirement for an ESP receiver to accept fragments for reassembly creates denial of service vulnerabilities. Thus an ESP implementation MAY choose to not support fragmentation and may mark transmitted packets with the DF bit, to facilitate PMTU discovery. In any case, an ESP implementation MUST support generation of ICMP PMTU messages (or equivalent internal signaling for native host implementations) to minimize the likelihood of fragmentation. Details of the support required for MTU management are contained in the Security Architecture document.

3.4 Inbound Packet Processing

3.4.1 Reassembly

If required, reassembly is performed prior to ESP processing. If a packet offered to ESP for processing appears to be an IP fragment, i.e., the OFFSET field is non-zero or the MORE FRAGMENTS flag is set, the receiver MUST discard the packet; this is an auditable event. The audit log entry for this event SHOULD include the SPI value, date/time received, Source Address, Destination Address, Sequence Number, and (in IPv6) the Flow ID.

NOTE: For packet reassembly, the current IPv4 spec does NOT require either the zeroing of the OFFSET field or the clearing of the MORE FRAGMENTS flag. In order for a reassembled packet to be processed by IPsec (as opposed to discarded as an apparent fragment), the IP code must do these two things after it reassembles a packet.

3.4.2 Security Association Lookup

Upon receipt of a packet containing an ESP Header, the receiver determines the appropriate (unidirectional) SA, based on the SPI alone (unicast) or SPI combined with destination IP address (multicast). (This process is described in more detail in the Security Architecture document.) The SA indicates whether the Sequence Number field will be checked and whether 32 or 64-bit Sequence Numbers are employed for the SA, whether the (explicit) ICV field should be present (and if so, its size), and it will specify the algorithms and keys to be employed for decryption and ICV computations (if applicable).

If no valid Security Association exists for this session (for example, the receiver has no key), the receiver MUST discard the packet; this is an auditable event. The audit log entry for this event SHOULD include the SPI value, date/time received, Source Address, Destination Address, Sequence Number, and (in IPv6) the cleartext Flow ID.

Note that SA management traffic does not need to be processed based on SPI, i.e., one can demultiplex this traffic separately, e.g., based on Next Protocol and Port fields.

3.4.3 Sequence Number Verification

All ESP implementations MUST support the anti-replay service, though its use may be enabled or disabled by the receiver on a per-SA basis. This service MUST NOT be enabled unless the ESP integrity service also is enabled for the SA, since otherwise the Sequence Number field has not been integrity protected. (Note that there are no provisions for managing transmitted Sequence Number values among multiple senders directing traffic to a single SA, irrespective of whether the destination address is unicast, broadcast, or multicast. Thus the anti-replay service SHOULD NOT be used in a multi-sender environment that employs a single SA.)

If the receiver does not enable anti-replay for an SA, no inbound checks are performed on the Sequence Number. However, from the perspective of the sender, the default is to assume that anti-replay is enabled at the receiver. To avoid having the sender do unnecessary

sequence number monitoring and SA setup (see [section 3.3.3](#)), if an SA establishment protocol is employed, the receiver SHOULD notify the sender, during SA establishment, if the receiver will not provide anti-replay protection.

If the receiver has enabled the anti-replay service for this SA, the receive packet counter for the SA MUST be initialized to zero when the SA is established. For each received packet, the receiver MUST verify that the packet contains a Sequence Number that does not duplicate the Sequence Number of any other packets received during the life of this SA. This SHOULD be the first ESP check applied to a packet after it has been matched to an SA, to speed rejection of duplicate packets.

ESP permits two-stage verification of packet sequence numbers. This capability is important whenever an ESP implementation (typically the cryptographic module portion thereof) is not capable of performing decryption and/or integrity checking at the same rate as the interface(s) to unprotected networks. If the implementation is capable of such "line rate" operation, then it is not necessary to perform the preliminary verification stage described below.

The preliminary Sequence Number check is effected utilizing the Sequence Number value in the ESP Header and is performed prior to integrity checking and decryption. If this preliminary check fails, the packet is discarded, thus avoiding the need for any cryptographic operations by the receiver. If the preliminary check is successful, the receiver cannot yet modify its local counter, since the integrity of the Sequence Number has not been verified at this point.

Duplicates are rejected through the use of a sliding receive window. How the window is implemented is a local matter, but the following text describes the functionality that the implementation must exhibit.

The "right" edge of the window represents the highest, validated Sequence Number value received on this SA. Packets that contain Sequence Numbers lower than the "left" edge of the window are rejected. Packets falling within the window are checked against a list of received packets within the window. If the ESN option is selected for an SA, only the low-order 32 bits of the sequence number are explicitly transmitted, but the receiver employs the full sequence number computed using the high-order 32 bits for the indicated SA (from his local counter) when checking the received Sequence Number against the receive window. In constructing the full sequence number, if the low order 32 bits carried in the packet are lower in value than the low order 32 bits of the receiver's sequence

number, the receiver assumes that the high order 32 bits have been incremented, moving to a new sequence number subspace. (This algorithm accommodates gaps in reception for a single SA as large as $2^{32}-1$ packets. If a larger gap occurs, additional, heuristic checks for resynchronization of the receiver sequence number counter MAY be employed, as described in the Appendix.)

If the received packet falls within the window and is not a duplicate, or if the packet is to the right of the window, and if a separate integrity algorithm is employed, then the receiver proceeds to integrity verification. If a combined mode algorithm is employed, the integrity check is performed along with decryption. In either case, if the integrity check fails, the receiver MUST discard the received IP datagram as invalid; this is an auditable event. The audit log entry for this event SHOULD include the SPI value, date/time received, Source Address, Destination Address, the Sequence Number, and (in IPv6) the Flow ID. The receive window is updated only if the integrity verification succeeds. (If a combined mode algorithm is being used, then the integrity protected Sequence Number must also match the Sequence Number used for anti-replay protection.)

A minimum window size of 32 packets MUST be supported when 32-bit sequence numbers are employed; a window size of 64 is preferred and SHOULD be employed as the default. Another window size (larger than the minimum) MAY be chosen by the receiver. (The receiver does NOT notify the sender of the window size.) The receive window size should be increased for higher speed environments, irrespective of assurance issues. Values for minimum and recommended receive window sizes for very high speed (e.g., multi-gigabit/second) devices are not specified by this standard.

3.4.4 Integrity Check Value Verification

As with outbound processing, there are several options for inbound processing, based on features of the algorithms employed.

3.4.4.1 Separate Confidentiality and Integrity Algorithms

If separate confidentiality and integrity algorithms are employed,

1. if integrity has been selected, the receiver computes the ICV over the ESP packet minus the ICV, using the specified integrity algorithm and verifies that it is the same as the ICV carried in the packet. Details of the computation are provided below.

If the computed and received ICV's match, then the datagram is valid, and it is accepted. If the test fails, then the

receiver MUST discard the received IP datagram as invalid; this is an auditable event. The log data SHOULD include the SPI value, date/time received, Source Address, Destination Address, the Sequence Number, and (for IPv6) the cleartext Flow ID.

DISCUSSION:

Begin by removing and saving the ICV field. Next check the overall length of the ESP packet minus the ICV field. If implicit padding is required, based on the blocksize of the integrity algorithm, append zero-filled bytes to the end of the ESP packet directly after the Next Header field. Perform the ICV computation and compare the result with the saved value, using the comparison rules defined by the algorithm specification.

2. the receiver decrypts the ESP Payload Data, Padding, Pad Length, and Next Header using the key, encryption algorithm, algorithm mode, and cryptographic synchronization data (if any), indicated by the SA. As in [section 3.3.2](#), we speak here in terms of encryption always being applied because of the formatting implications. This is done with the understanding that "no confidentiality" is offered by using the NULL encryption algorithm ([RFC 2410](#)).
 - If explicit cryptographic synchronization data, e.g., an IV, is indicated, it is taken from the Payload field and input to the decryption algorithm as per the algorithm specification.
 - If implicit cryptographic synchronization data is indicated, a local version of the IV is constructed and input to the decryption algorithm as per the algorithm specification.
3. the receiver processes any Padding as specified in the encryption algorithm specification. If the default padding scheme (see [Section 2.4](#)) has been employed, the receiver SHOULD inspect the Padding field before removing the padding prior to passing the decrypted data to the next layer.
4. the receiver checks the Next Header field. If the value is "59" (no next header), the (dummy) packet is discarded without further processing.

5. the receiver reconstructs the original IP datagram from:
 - for transport mode -- original IP header plus the original upper layer protocol information in the ESP Payload field
 - for tunnel mode -- tunnel IP header + the entire IP datagram in the ESP Payload field.

The exact steps for reconstructing the original datagram depend on the mode (transport or tunnel) and are described in the Security Architecture document. At a minimum, in an IPv6 context, the receiver SHOULD ensure that the decrypted data is 8-byte aligned, to facilitate processing by the protocol identified in the Next Header field. This processing "discards" any (optional) TFC padding that has been added for traffic flow confidentiality. (If present, this will have been inserted after the IP datagram (or transport-layer frame) and before the Padding field (see [section 2.4](#)).)

If integrity checking and encryption are performed in parallel, integrity checking MUST be completed before the decrypted packet is passed on for further processing. This order of processing facilitates rapid detection and rejection of replayed or bogus packets by the receiver, prior to decrypting the packet, hence potentially reducing the impact of denial of service attacks.

Note: If the receiver performs decryption in parallel with integrity checking, care must be taken to avoid possible race conditions with regard to packet access and extraction of the decrypted packet.

[3.4.4.2](#) Combined Mode Algorithms

If a combined confidentiality and integrity algorithm is employed, then the receiver:

1. decrypts and integrity checks the ESP Payload Data, Padding, Pad Length, and Next Header, using the key, algorithm, algorithm mode, and cryptographic synchronization data (if any), indicated by the SA. The SPI from the ESP header, and the (receiver) packet counter value (adjusted as required from the processing described in [Section 3.4.3](#)) are inputs to this algorithm, as they are required for the integrity check.
 - If explicit cryptographic synchronization data, e.g., an IV, is indicated, it is taken from the

Payload field and input to the decryption algorithm as per the algorithm specification.

- If implicit cryptographic synchronization data, e.g., an IV, is indicated, a local version of the IV is constructed and input to the decryption algorithm as per the algorithm specification.
2. if the integrity check performed by the combined mode algorithm fails, the receiver MUST discard the received IP datagram as invalid; this is an auditable event. The log data SHOULD include the SPI value, date/time received, Source Address, Destination Address, the Sequence Number, and (in IPv6) the cleartext Flow ID.
 3. processes any Padding as specified in the encryption algorithm specification, if the algorithm has not already done so.
 4. the receiver checks the Next Header field. If the value is "59" (no next header), the (dummy) packet is discarded without further processing.
 5. extracts the original IP datagram (tunnel mode) or transport-layer frame (transport mode) from the ESP Payload Data field. This implicitly discards any (optional) padding that has been added for traffic flow confidentiality. (If present, the TFC padding will have been inserted after the IP payload and before the Padding field (see [section 2.4](#)).)

4. Auditing

Not all systems that implement ESP will implement auditing. However, if ESP is incorporated into a system that supports auditing, then the ESP implementation MUST also support auditing and MUST allow a system administrator to enable or disable auditing for ESP. For the most part, the granularity of auditing is a local matter. However, several auditable events are identified in this specification and for each of these events a minimum set of information that SHOULD be included in an audit log is defined.

- No valid Security Association exists for a session. The audit log entry for this event SHOULD include the SPI value, date/time received, Source Address, Destination Address, Sequence Number, and (for IPv6) the cleartext Flow ID.

- A packet offered to ESP for processing appears to be an IP fragment, i.e., the OFFSET field is non-zero or the MORE FRAGMENTS flag is set. The audit log entry for this event SHOULD include the SPI value, date/time received, Source Address, Destination Address, Sequence Number, and (in IPv6) the Flow ID.
- Attempt to transmit a packet that would result in Sequence Number overflow. The audit log entry for this event SHOULD include the SPI value, current date/time, Source Address, Destination Address, Sequence Number, and (for IPv6) the cleartext Flow ID.
- The received packet fails the anti-replay checks. The audit log entry for this event SHOULD include the SPI value, date/time received, Source Address, Destination Address, the Sequence Number, and (in IPv6) the Flow ID.
- The integrity check fails. The audit log entry for this event SHOULD include the SPI value, date/time received, Source Address, Destination Address, the Sequence Number, and (for IPv6) the Flow ID.

Additional information also MAY be included in the audit log for each of these events, and additional events, not explicitly called out in this specification, also MAY result in audit log entries. There is no requirement for the receiver to transmit any message to the purported sender in response to the detection of an auditable event, because of the potential to induce denial of service via such action.

5. Conformance Requirements

Implementations that claim conformance or compliance with this specification MUST implement the ESP syntax and processing described here and MUST comply with all additional packet processing requirements levied by the Security Architecture document [[KA98a](#)]. If the key used to compute an ICV is manually distributed, correct provision of the anti-replay service would require correct maintenance of the counter state at the sender, until the key is replaced, and there likely would be no automated recovery provision if counter overflow were imminent. Thus a compliant implementation SHOULD NOT provide anti-replay service in conjunction with SAs that are manually keyed. A compliant ESP implementation MUST support the following mandatory-to-implement algorithms:

- AES in CBC mode
- HMAC with MD5 [[MG98a](#)]

- HMAC with SHA-1 [[MG98b](#)]
- NULL Encryption algorithm ([RFC 2410](#))

Since use of encryption in ESP is optional, support for the "NULL" encryption algorithm is required to maintain consistency with the way ESP services are negotiated. Support for the confidentiality-only service version of ESP is optional. If an implementation offers this service, it MUST also support the negotiation of the NULL integrity algorithm. NOTE that while integrity and encryption may each be "NULL" under the circumstances noted above, they MUST NOT both be "NULL".

6. Security Considerations

Security is central to the design of this protocol, and thus security considerations permeate the specification. Additional security-relevant aspects of using the IPsec protocol are discussed in the Security Architecture document.

7. Differences from [RFC 2406](#)

This document differs from [RFC 2406](#) in a number of significant ways.

- o Confidentiality-only service -- now a SHOULD, not a MUST.
- o SPI -- modified to better reflect the differences between unicast and multicast SA lookups. For unicast, the SPI may be used alone to select an SA; for multicast, the SPI is combined with destination address to select an SA.
- o Sequence number -- added a new option for a 64-bit sequence number for very high-speed communications.
- o Payload data -- broadened model to accommodate combined mode algorithms.
- o Padding for improved traffic flow confidentiality -- added requirement to be able to add bytes after the end of the IP Payload, prior to the beginning of the Padding field.
- o Next Header -- added requirement to be able to generate and discard dummy padding packets (Next Header = 59)
- o ICV -- broadened model to accommodate combined mode algorithms.
- o Algorithms -- Added combined confidentiality mode algorithms.
- o Inbound and Outbound packet processing -- there are now two paths -- (1) separate confidentiality and integrity algorithms, (2) combined confidentiality mode algorithms. Because of the addition of combined mode algorithms, the encryption/decryption and integrity sections have been combined for both inbound and outbound packet processing.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the contributions of Ran Atkinson, who played a critical role in initial IPsec activities, and who authored the first series of IPsec standards: RFCs 1825-1827. Karen Seo deserves special thanks for providing help in the editing of this and the previous version of this specification. The author also would like to thank the members of the IPsec working group.

References

- [Bel96] Steven M. Bellovin, "Problem Areas for the IP Security Protocols", Proceedings of the Sixth Usenix Unix Security Symposium, July, 1996.
- [Bra97] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Level", [BCP 14](#), [RFC 2119](#), March 1997.
- [HC98] Harkins, D., and D. Carrel, "The Internet Key Exchange (IKE)", [RFC 2409](#), November 1998.
- [KA98a] Kent, S., and R. Atkinson, "Security Architecture for the Internet Protocol", [RFC 2401](#), November 1998.
- [KA98b] Kent, S., and R. Atkinson, "IP Authentication Header", [RFC 2402](#), November 1998.
- [MD98] Madson, C., and N. Doraswamy, "The ESP DES-CBC Cipher Algorithm With Explicit IV", [RFC 2405](#), November 1998.
- [MG98a] Madson, C., and R. Glenn, "The Use of HMAC-MD5-96 within ESP and AH", [RFC 2403](#), November 1998.
- [MG98b] Madson, C., and R. Glenn, "The Use of HMAC-SHA-1-96 within ESP and AH", [RFC 2404](#), November 1998.

Disclaimer

The views and specification here are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of their employers. The authors and their employers specifically disclaim responsibility for any problems arising from correct or incorrect implementation or use of this specification.

Author Information

Stephen Kent
BBN Technologies
10 Moulton Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
USA

Phone: +1 (617) 873-3988
EMail: kent@bbn.com

Appendix -- Extended Sequence Numbers

TO BE ADDED -- This appendix describes a sequence number scheme which uses a 64-bit sequence number, but transmits only the low order 32 bits.

Full Copyright Statement

Copyright (C) The Internet Society (2001). All Rights Reserved.

This document and translations of it may be copied and furnished to others, and derivative works that comment on or otherwise explain it or assist in its implementation may be prepared, copied, published and distributed, in whole or in part, without restriction of any kind, provided that the above copyright notice and this paragraph are included on all such copies and derivative works. However, this document itself may not be modified in any way, such as by removing the copyright notice or references to the Internet Society or other Internet organizations, except as needed for the purpose of developing Internet standards in which case the procedures for copyrights defined in the Internet Standards process must be followed, or as required to translate it into languages other than English.

The limited permissions granted above are perpetual and will not be revoked by the Internet Society or its successors or assigns.

This document and the information contained herein is provided on an "AS IS" basis and THE INTERNET SOCIETY AND THE INTERNET ENGINEERING TASK FORCE DISCLAIMS ALL WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO ANY WARRANTY THAT THE USE OF THE INFORMATION HEREIN WILL NOT INFRINGE ANY RIGHTS OR ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

Expires May 2002

