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Clearance Attribute and Authority Clearance Constraints
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Abstract

This document defines the syntax and semantics for the Clearance attribute and the Authority Clearance Constraints extension in X.509 certificates. The Clearance attribute is used to indicate the clearance held by the subject. The Clearance attribute may appear in

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the subject directory attributes extension of a public key certificate or in the attributes field of an attribute certificate. The Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension values in a Trust Anchor (TA), CA public key certificates, and an Attribute Authority (AA) public key certificate in a public key certification path constrain the effective Clearance of the subject.

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[1.](#) Introduction

Organizations that have implemented a security policy can issue certificates that include an indication of the clearance values held by the subject. The Clearance attribute indicates the security policy, the clearance levels held by the subject, and additional authorization information held by the subject. This specification makes use of the ASN.1 syntax for clearance from [\[3281bis\]](#).

Clearance attribute may be placed in the Subject Directory extension of a PKC or may be placed in a separate attribute certificate (AC).

The placement of Clearance attribute in PKCs is desirable when the credentials such as PKCs need to be revoked when the clearance information changes or when clearance information is relatively

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static, and clearance information can be verified as part of PKC issuance process (e.g., using local databases). The placement of Clearance attribute in PKCs may also be made to simplify the infrastructure, to reduce the infrastructure design cost, or to reduce the infrastructure operations cost. An example of placement of Clearance attribute in PKCs in operational PKI is the Defense Messaging Service. An example of placement of attributes in PKCs is Qualified Certificates [[RFC3739](#)].

The placement of Clearance attribute in ACs is desirable when the clearance information is relatively dynamic and changes in the clearance information does not require revocation of credentials such as PKCs, or the clearance information can not be verified as part of PKC issuance process.

Since [[RFC3281](#)] does not permit chain of ACs, the Authority Clearance Constraints extension may only appear in the PKCs of CA or AA. The Authority Clearance Constraints extension may also appear in a TA or may be associated with a TA.

Some organizations have multiple TAs, CAs, and/or AAs and these organizations may wish to indicate to relying parties which clearance values from a particular TA, CA, or AA should be accepted. For example, consider the security policies described in [[RFC3114](#)], where a security policy has been defined for Amoco with three security classification values (HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL, CONFIDENTIAL, and GENERAL). To constrain a CA for just one security classification, the Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension would be included in the CA's PKC.

Cross-certified domains can also make use of the Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension to indicate which clearance values should be acceptable to relying parties.

[1.1](#). Terminology

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 [[RFC2119](#)].

[1.2](#). ASN.1 Syntax Notation

All X.509 PKC [[RFC5280](#)] extensions are defined using ASN.1 [[X.680](#)].
All X.509 AC [[RFC3281](#)] extensions are defined using ASN.1 [[X.680](#)].

[2](#). Clearance Attribute

The Clearance attribute in a certificate indicates the clearances held by the subject. It uses the clearance attribute syntax from Section 4.4.6 of [[3281bis](#)], which is included below for convenience, in the Attributes field. A certificate MUST include either zero or one instance of the Clearance attribute. If the Clearance attribute is present, it must contain a single value.

The following object identifier identifies the Clearance attribute (either in the subject directory attributes extension of a PKC or in the Attributes field of an AC):

```
id-at-clearance OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { joint-iso-ccitt(2)
    ds(5) module(1) selected-attribute-types(5) clearance(55) }
```

The ASN.1 syntax for the Clearance attribute is as follows [[PKI-ASN](#)]:

```
Clearance ::= SEQUENCE {
    policyId          OBJECT IDENTIFIER,
    classList         ClassList DEFAULT {unclassified},
    securityCategories SET OF SecurityCategory OPTIONAL
}
```

```
ClassList ::= BIT STRING {
    unmarked          (0),
    unclassified       (1),
    restricted         (2),
    confidential       (3),
    secret             (4),
    topSecret          (5)
}
```

SECURITY-CATEGORY ::= TYPE-IDENTIFIER

```
SecurityCategory ::= SEQUENCE {  
    type [0]  
        TYPE-IDENTIFIER.&id({SupportedSecurityCategories}),  
    value [1]  
        EXPLICIT TYPE-IDENTIFIER.&Type  
            ({SupportedSecurityCategories}{@type})  
}
```

The Clearance attribute takes its meaning from [Section 4.4.6 of \[RFC3281\]](#), which is repeated here for convenience:

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- policyId identifies the security policy to which the clearance relates. The policyId indicates the semantics of the classList and securityCategory fields.
- classlist identifies the security classifications. Six basic values are defined in bit positions 0 through 5 and more may be defined by an organizational security policy.
- securityCategories provides additional authorization information.

If a trust anchor's public key is used directly, then the Clearance associated with the trust anchor, if any, should be used as the effective clearance (also defined as effective-clearance for a certification path).

[3.](#) Authority Clearance Constraints Certificate Extension

The Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension indicates to the relying party what clearances should be acceptable for the subject of the AC or the subject of the last certificate in a PKC certification path. It is only meaningful in trust anchor, CA PKCs, or AA PKCs. A trust anchor, CA PKC, or AA PKC MUST include either zero or one instance of the Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension. The Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension MAY be critical or non-critical.

Absence of this certificate extension in a TA, in a CA PKC, or in an AA PKC indicates that clearance of the subject of the AC or the

subject of the last certificate in a PKC certification path containing the TA, the CA or the AA is not constrained by the respective TA, CA or AA.

The following object identifier identifies the Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension:

```
id-ce-authorityClearanceConstraints OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= {  
    id-TBSL }
```

The ASN.1 syntax for the Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension is as follows:

```
AuthorityClearanceConstraints ::= SEQUENCE SIZE (1..MAX) OF  
    Clearance
```

The syntax for Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension contains Clearance values that the CA or the AA asserts. The sequence MUST NOT include more than one entry with the same policyId.

This constraint is enforced during Clearance and Authority Clearance Constraints Processing described below. If more than one entry with the same policyId is present in AuthorityClearanceConstraints certificate extension, the certification path is rejected. In addition, each Clearance attribute in the SEQUENCE must not contain more than one value.

[4.](#) Clearance and Authority Clearance Constraints Processing in PKC

This section describes the processing of certification path when Clearance is asserted in PKC.

Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension and Clearance attribute processing determines the effective clearance (henceforth called effective-clearance) for the end PKC. Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension in the TA and in each PKC up to but not including the end PKC in a PKC certification path impact the effective-clearance. If there is more than one path to the end-entity PKC, each path is processed independently. The process involves two steps:

- 1) collecting the Authority Clearance Constraints; and

- 2) using Authority Clearance Constraints in the certification path and the Clearance in the end PKC to determine the effective-clearance for the subject of the end PKC.

Assuming a certification path consisting of n PKCs, the effective-clearance for the subject of the end PKC is the intersection of Clearance attribute in the subject PKC, Authority Clearance Constraints, if present, in trust anchor and all Authority Clearance Constraints present in intermediate PKCs. Any effective-clearance calculation algorithm that performs this calculation and provides the same outcome as the one from the algorithm described herein is considered compliant with the requirements of this RFC.

When processing a certification path, Authority Clearance Constraints are maintained in one state variable: permitted-clearances. When processing begins, permitted-clearances is initialized to the special value all-clearances if Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension is not present in or associated with the trust anchor, otherwise this value is initialized to Authority Clearance Constraints associated with the trust anchor. The permitted-clearances state variable is updated each time an intermediate PKC that contains an Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension in the path is processed.

When processing the end PKC, the value in the Clearance attribute in the end PKC is intersected with the permitted-clearances state variable.

The output of Clearance attribute and Authority Clearance Constraint certificate extensions processing is the effective-clearance, which could also be an empty list; and success or failure with reason code for failure.

[4.1](#). Collecting Constraints

Authority Clearance Constraints are collected from the trust anchor and the intermediate PKCs in a certification path.

[4.1.1](#). Certification Path Processing

When processing Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension for the purposes of validating Clearance attribute in the end PKC,

the processing described in this section or an equivalent algorithm MUST be included in the certification path validation. The processing is presented as additions to the certification path validation algorithm described in [section 6 of \[RFC5280\]](#).

[4.1.1.1](#). Inputs

Trust anchor information may include the AuthorityClearanceConstraints structure to specify Authority Clearance Constraints for the trust anchor. The trust anchor may be constrained or unconstrained.

[4.1.1.2](#). Initialization

Examine the trust anchor information and verify that it does not contain more than one instance of AuthorityClearanceConstraints extension. If the trust anchor information contains more than one instance of AuthorityClearanceConstraints extension, set effective-clearance to an empty list, set error code to "multiple extension instances", and exit with failure.

If any of the Clearance attributes in the AuthorityClearanceConstraints extension contains more than one value, set effective-clearance to an empty list, set error code to "multiple values", and exit with failure.

Create a state variable named permitted-clearances. If the trust anchor contains an AuthorityClearanceConstraints extension, then the

initial value of permitted-clearances is the AuthorityClearanceConstraints extension from the trust anchor.

Examine the permitted-clearances for the same Policy ID appearing more than once. If a policyID appears more than once in the permitted-clearances state variable, set effective-clearance to an empty list, set error code to "multiple instances of same clearance", and exit with failure.

If the trust anchor does not contain an AuthorityClearanceConstraints extension, the permitted-clearances variable is assigned the special value all-clearances.

4.1.1.3. Basic Certificate Processing

If the PKC is the last PKC (i.e., certificate n), skip the steps listed in this section.

Examine the PKC and verify that it does not contain more than one instance of AuthorityClearanceConstraints extension. If the PKC contains more than one instance of AuthorityClearanceConstraints extension, set effective-clearance to an empty list, set error code to "multiple extension instances", and exit with failure.

If any of the Clearance attributes in the AuthorityClearanceConstraints extension contains more than one value, set effective-clearance to an empty list, set error code to "multiple values", and exit with failure.

If the AuthorityClearanceConstraints certificate extension is not present in the PKC, no action is taken, and the permitted-clearances value is unchanged.

If the AuthorityClearanceConstraints certificate extension is present in the PKC, set the variable temp-clearances to AuthorityClearanceConstraints certificate extension. Examine the temp-clearances for the same Policy ID appearing more than once. If a policyID appears more than once in the temp-clearances state variable, set effective-clearance to an empty list, set error code to "multiple instances of same clearance", and exit with failure.

If the AuthorityClearanceConstraints certificate extension is present in the PKC and permitted-clearances contains the all-clearances special value, then assign permitted-clearances the value of the temp-clearances.

If the AuthorityClearanceConstraints certificate extension is present in the PKC and permitted-clearances does not contain the all-clearances special value, take the intersection of temp-clearances and permitted-clearances by repeating the following steps for each clearance in the permitted-clearances state variable:

- If the policyID associated with the clearance is absent in the temp-clearances, delete the clearance structure associated with

the policyID from the permitted-clearances state variable.

- If the policyID is present in the temp-clearances:
 - For every classList bit, assign the classList bit a value of one (1) for the policyID in permitted-clearances state variable if the bit is one (1) in both the permitted-clearances state variable and the temp-clearances for that policyID; otherwise assign the bit a value of zero (0).
 - If no bits are one (1) for the classList, delete the clearance structure associated with the policyID from the permitted-clearances state variable and skip the next step of processing securityCategories.
 - For the policyID in permitted-clearances, set the securityCategories to the intersection of securityCategories for the policyID in permitted-clearances and in temp-clearances using the algorithm described in [Section 6](#). Note that an empty SET is represented by simply omitting the SET.

[4.1.1.4](#). Preparation for Certificate i+1

No additional action associated with the Clearance attribute or AuthorityClearanceConstraints certificate extensions is taken during this phase of certification path validation as described in [section 6 of \[RFC5280\]](#).

[4.1.1.5](#). Wrap-up Procedure

To complete the processing, perform the following steps for the last PKC (i.e., certificate n).

Examine the PKC and verify that it does not contain more than one instance of Clearance attribute. If the PKC contains more than one instance of Clearance attribute, set effective-clearance to an empty list, set error code to "multiple instances of an attribute", and exit with failure.

If the Clearance attribute is not present in the end PKC, set effective-clearance to an empty list and exit with success.

Set effective-clearance to the Clearance attribute in the end PKC.

[4.1.1.5.1](#). Wrap Up Clearance

Examine effective-clearance and verify that it does not contain more than one value. If effective-clearance contains more than one value, set effective-clearance to an empty list, set error code to "multiple values", and exit with failure.

Let us say policyID in effective-clearance is X.

If permitted-clearances is an empty list, set effective-clearance to an empty list and exit with success.

If the permitted-clearances has special value of all-clearances, exit with success.

If the policyID X in effective-clearance is absent from the permitted-clearances, set effective-clearance to an empty list and exit with success.

Assign those classList bits in effective-clearance a value of one (1) that have a value of one (1) both in effective-clearance and in the clearance structure in permitted-clearances associated with policyID X. Assign all other classList bits in effective-clearance a value of zero (0).

If none of the classList bits have a value of one (1) in effective-clearance, set effective-clearance to an empty list and exit with success.

Set the securityCategories in effective-clearance to the intersection of securityCategories in effective-clearance and in permitted-clearances using the algorithm described in [Section 6](#). Note that empty an SET is represented by simply omitting the SET.

Exit with Success

[4.1.1.6](#). Outputs

If certification path validation processing succeeds, effective-clearance contains the effective clearance for the subject of the certification path. Processing also returns success or failure indication and reason for failure, if applicable.

5. Clearance and Authority Clearance Constraints Processing in AC

This section describes the processing of certification path when Clearance is asserted in an AC. Relevant to processing are: one TA; 0 or more CA PKCs; 0 or 1 AA PKC; and 1 AC.

Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension and Clearance attribute processing determines the effective clearance (henceforth called effective-clearance) for the AC. Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension in the TA and in each PKC up to and including the AA PKC in a certification path impact the effective-clearance. If there is more than one path to the AA PKC, each path is processed independently. The process involves two steps:

- 1) collecting the Authority Clearance Constraints; and
- 2) using Authority Clearance Constraints in the PKC certification path and the Clearance in the AC to determine the effective-clearance for the subject of the AC.

The effective-clearance for the subject of the AC is the intersection of Clearance in the subject AC, Authority Clearance Constraints, if present, in trust anchor and all Authority Clearance Constraints present in PKC certification path from the TA to the AA. Any effective-clearance calculation algorithm that performs this calculation and provides the same outcome as the one from the algorithm described herein is considered compliant with the requirements of this RFC.

Authority Clearance Constraints is maintained in one state variable: permitted-clearances. When processing begins, permitted-clearances is initialized to the special value all-clearances if Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension is not present in or associated with the trust anchor, otherwise this value is initialized to Authority Clearance Constraints associated with the trust anchor. The permitted-clearances state variable is updated each time a PKC (other than AC holder PKC) that contains an Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension in the path is processed.

When processing the AC, the value in the Clearance attribute in the AC is intersected with the permitted-clearances state variable.

The output of Clearance and Authority Clearance Constraint certificate extensions processing is the effective-clearance, which could also be an empty list; and success or failure with reason code for failure.

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[5.1.](#) Collecting Constraints

Authority Clearance Constraints are collected from the trust anchor and all the PKCs in a PKC certification path.

[5.1.1.](#) Certification Path Processing

When processing Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension for the purposes of validating Clearance in the AC, the processing described in this section or an equivalent algorithm **MUST** be included in the certification path validation. The processing is presented as additions to the PKC certification path validation algorithm described in [section 6 of \[RFC5280\]](#) for the AA PKC certification path and the algorithm described in [section 5 of \[RFC3281\]](#) for the AC validation.

[5.1.1.1.](#) Inputs

Same as [Section 4.1.1.1.](#)

In addition, let us assume that the PKC certification path for the AA consists of n certificates.

[5.1.1.2.](#) Initialization

Same as [Section 4.1.1.2.](#)

[5.1.1.3.](#) Basic PKC Processing

Same as [Section 4.1.1.3.](#) except that the logic is applied to all n PKCs.

[5.1.1.4.](#) Preparation for Certificate $i+1$

Same as [Section 4.1.1.4.](#)

[5.1.1.5.](#) Wrap-up Procedure

To complete the processing, perform the following steps for the AC.

Examine the AC and verify that it does not contain more than one instance of Clearance attribute. If the AC contains more than one instance of Clearance attribute, set effective-clearance to an empty

list, set error code to "multiple instances of an attribute", and exit with failure.

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If the Clearance attribute is not present in the AC, set effective-clearance to an empty list and exit with success.

Set effective-clearance to the Clearance attribute in the AC.

[5.1.1.5.1](#). Wrap Up Clearance

Same as [Section 4.1.1.5.1](#).

[5.1.1.6](#). Outputs

Same as [Section 4.1.1.6](#).

In addition, apply AC processing rules described in [Section 5 of \[RFC3281\]](#).

[6](#). Computing Intersection of securityCategories

This section describes how to compute the intersection of securityCategories A and B. It uses the state variable temp-set.

Set the SET temp-set to empty.

If SET A is empty (i.e., securityCategories is absent), return temp-set.

If SET B is empty (i.e., securityCategories is absent), return temp-set.

For every element (i.e., securityCategory) in the SET A carry out the following steps:

1. If there is no element in SET B with the same Type OID as the type OID in the element from SET A, go to step 6.
2. If there is an element in SET B with the same Type OID and value as in the element in SET A, carry out the following steps:

- a) Add an element containing the Type OID and the value to the SET temp-set.
- b) Delete all elements with the same Type OID and the same value from the SET B.
- c) Go to step 6.

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3. If the processing semantics of Type OID in the element in SET A is not known, go to step 6.
4. Perform Type OID specific intersection of the value in the element in SET A with the values in the applicable elements in SET B with the same Type OID.
5. If the intersection is not empty, add an element containing the Type OID and intersection result as value to temp-set.
6. If more elements remain in SET A, process the next element starting with step 1.

Return temp-set.

[7.](#) Recommended securityCategories

This RFC also include a recommended securityCategories as follows:

```
SecurityCategory ::= SEQUENCE {  
    type  [0]  OID id-TBSL,  
    value [1]  BIT STRING  
}
```

Note that Type specific intersection of two values for this Type will be simply setting the bits that are set in both values. If the resulting intersection has none of the bits set, the intersection is considered empty.

[8.](#) Security Considerations

Certificate issuers must recognize that absence of the AuthorityClearanceConstraints in a CA or AA certificate means that in

terms of the clearance, the subject Authority is not constrained.

Absence of Clearance attribute in a certificate means that the subject has not been assigned any clearance.

If there is no Clearance associated with a TA, it means that the TA has not been assigned any clearance.

If the local security policy considers the clearance held by a subject or those supported by a CA or AA to be sensitive, then the Clearance attribute or Authority Clearance Constraints should only be included if the subject's and Authority's certificate can be privacy protected. Also in this case, distribution of trust anchors and

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associated Authority Clearance Constraints extension or Clearance must also be privacy protected.

[9.](#) IANA Considerations

None. Please remove this section prior to publication as an RFC.

[10.](#) References

[10.1.](#) Normative References

- [PKI-ASN] Hoffman, P., and J. Schaad, "New ASN.1 Modules for PKIX", [draft-ietf-pkix-new-asn1](#), work-in-progress.
- [RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", [BCP 14](#), [RFC 2119](#), March 1997.
- [RFC3281] Farrell, S., and Housley, R., "An Internet Attribute Certificate Profile for Authorization", [RFC 3281](#), April 2002.
- [3281bis] Farrell, S., Housely, R., and S. Turner, "An Internet Attribute Certificate Profile for Authorization: Update", [draft-ietf-pkix-3281update-01](#), work-in-progress.
- [RFC5280] Cooper, D. et. al., "Internet X.509 Public Key Infrastructure Certificate and Certification Revocation List (CRL) Profile", [RFC 5280](#), May 2008.

[X.680] ITU-T Recommendation X.680 (2004) | ISO/IEC 8824-1:2004.
Information Technology - Abstract Syntax Notation One.

[10.2](#). Informative References

- [RFC3114] Nicolls, W., "Implementing Company Classification Policy with S/MIME Security Label", [RFC3114](#), May 2002.
- [RFC3739] Santesson, S. et. al., "Internet X.509 Public Key Infrastructure: Qualified Certificate Profile", [RFC 3739](#), March 2004.

[Appendix A](#). ASN.1 Module

This appendix provides the normative ASN.1 definitions for the structures described in this specification using ASN.1 as defined in X.680.

```
Clearance-AuthorityClearanceConstraints93 { id-TBSL }
```

```
DEFINITIONS IMPLICIT TAGS ::=
```

```
BEGIN
```

```
-- EXPORTS ALL --
```

```
IMPORTS
```

```
-- IMPORTS from [PKI-ASN]
```

```
id-at-clearance, Clearance
FROM PKIXAttributeCertificate
{ iso(1) identified-organization(3) dod(6) internet(1)
  security(5) mechanisms(5) pkix(7) id-mod(0)
  id-mod-attribute-cert(12)
```

```

    }

-- IMPORTS from [PKI-ASN]

EXTENSION
    FROM PKIX-CommonTypes
    { iso(1) identified-organization(3) dod(6) internet(1)
      security(5) mechanisms(5) pkix(7) id-mod(0)
      id-mod-pkixCommon(43)
    }
;

-- Clearance attribute OID and syntax

-- The following is a '93 version for clearance.
-- It is included for convenience.

-- id-at-clearance OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::=
-- { joint-iso-ccitt(2) ds(5) module(1) selected-attribute-types(5)
--   clearance (55)
-- }

```

```

-- Clearance ::= SEQUENCE {
--   policyId          OBJECT IDENTIFIER,
--   classList         ClassList DEFAULT {unclassified},
--   securityCategories SET OF SecurityCategory OPTIONAL
-- }

-- ClassList ::= BIT STRING {
--   unmarked          (0),
--   unclassified      (1),
--   restricted        (2),
--   confidential      (3),
--   secret            (4),
--   topSecret         (5)
-- }

-- SECURITY-CATEGORY ::= TYPE-IDENTIFIER

-- SecurityCategory ::= SEQUENCE {

```

```

--  type  [0]
--      TYPE-IDENTIFIER.&id({SupportedSecurityCategories}),
--  value [1]
--      EXPLICIT TYPE-IDENTIFIER.&Type
--                                  ({SupportedSecurityCategories}{@type})
--  }

-- Authority Clearance Constraints certificate extension OID
-- and syntax

id-ce-authorityClearanceConstraints OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { id-TBSL }

authorityClearanceConstraints EXTENSION ::= {
    SYNTAX          AuthorityClearanceConstraints
    IDENTIFIED BY   id-ce-AuthorityClearanceConstraints
}

AuthorityClearanceConstraints ::= SEQUENCE SIZE (1..MAX) OF Clearance

END

```

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