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Simple Authentication Schemes for the ALC and NORM Protocols
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Abstract

This document introduces four schemes that provide per-packet authentication, integrity and anti-replay services in the context of the ALC and NORM protocols. The first scheme is based on digital signatures. The second scheme relies on the Elliptic Curve Digital Signature Algorithm (ECDSA). The third scheme relies on a group Message Authentication Code (MAC). Finally, the fourth scheme merges the digital signature and group group schemes. These schemes have different target use cases and they do not all provide the same service.

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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	4
1.1.	Scope of this Document	6
1.2.	Terminology, Notations and Definitions	6
2.	RSA Digital Signature Scheme	8
2.1.	Authentication Header Extension Format	8
2.2.	Parameters	9
2.3.	Processing	10
2.3.1.	Signature Processing	10
2.3.2.	Anti-Replay Processing	11
2.4.	In Practice	12
3.	Elliptic Curve Digital Signature Scheme	13
3.1.	Authentication Header Extension Format	13
3.2.	Parameters	14
3.3.	Processing	15
3.3.1.	Signature Processing	15
3.3.2.	Anti-Replay Processing	15
3.4.	In Practice	15
4.	Group Message Authentication Code (MAC) Scheme	17
4.1.	Authentication Header Extension Format	17
4.2.	Parameters	18
4.3.	Processing	19
4.3.1.	Signature Processing	19
4.3.2.	Anti-Replay Processing	19
4.4.	In Practice	19
5.	Combined Use of the RSA/ECC Digital Signatures and Group MAC Schemes	21
5.1.	Authentication Header Extension Format	21
5.2.	Parameters	22
5.3.	Processing	22
5.3.1.	Signature Processing	22
5.3.2.	Anti-Replay Processing	23
5.4.	In Practice	23
6.	IANA Considerations	25
7.	Security Considerations	26
7.1.	Dealing With DoS Attacks	26
7.2.	Dealing With Replay Attacks	26
7.2.1.	Impacts of Replay Attacks on the Simple Authentication Schemes	26
7.2.2.	Impacts of Replay Attacks on NORM	26
7.2.3.	Impacts of Replay Attacks on ALC	27
7.3.	Dealing With Attacks on the Parameters Sent Out-of-Band	28
8.	Acknowledgments	29
9.	References	30
9.1.	Normative References	30
9.2.	Informative References	30
	Author's Address	32

Roca

Expires January 9, 2012

[Page 3]

1. Introduction

Many applications using multicast and broadcast communications require that each receiver be able to authenticate the source of any packet it receives to check its integrity. For instance, ALC [[RFC5775](#)] and NORM [[RFC5740](#)] are two Content Delivery Protocols (CDP) designed to transfer reliably objects (e.g. files) between a session's sender and several receivers.

The NORM protocol is based on bidirectional transmissions. With NORM each receiver acknowledges data received or, in case of packet erasures, asks for retransmissions. On the opposite, the ALC protocol defines unidirectional transmissions. With ALC, reliability can be achieved by means of cyclic transmissions of the content within a carousel, or by the use of proactive Forward Error Correction codes (FEC), or by the joint use of these mechanisms. Being purely unidirectional, ALC is massively scalable, while NORM is intrinsically limited in terms of the number of receivers that can be handled in a session. Both protocols have in common the fact that they operate at application level, on top of an erasure channel (e.g. the Internet) where packets can be lost (erased) during the transmission.

With these CDP, an attacker might impersonate the ALC or NORM session sender and inject forged packets to the receivers, thereby corrupting the objects reconstructed by the receivers. An attacker might also impersonate a NORM session receiver and inject forged feedback packets to the NORM sender.

In case of group communications, several solutions exist to provide the receiver some guaranties on the integrity of the packets it receives and on the identity of the sender of these packets. These solutions have different features that make them more or less suited to a given use case:

- o digital signatures [[RFC4359](#)] (see [Section 2](#) and [Section 3](#)): this scheme is well suited to low data rate flows, when a packet sender authentication and packet integrity service is needed. However, digital signatures based on RSA asymmetric cryptography are limited by high computational costs and high transmission overheads. The use of ECC ("Elliptic Curve Cryptography") significantly relaxes these constraints. For instance, the following key lengths provide equivalent security: 1024 bit RSA key versus 160 bit ECC key, or 2048 bit RSA key versus 224 bit ECC key.
- o group Message Authentication Codes (MAC) (see [Section 4](#)): this scheme is well suited to high data rate flows, when transmission

Roca

Expires January 9, 2012

[Page 4]

overheads must be minimized. However this scheme cannot protect against attacks coming from inside the group, where a group member impersonates the sender and sends forged messages to other receivers.

- o TESLA (Timed Efficient Stream Loss-tolerant Authentication) [RFC4082][RFC5776]: this scheme is well suited to high data rate flows, when transmission overheads must be minimized, and when a packet sender authentication and packet integrity service is needed. The price to pay is an increased complexity, in particular the need to loosely synchronize the receivers and the sender, as well as the need to wait for the key to be disclosed before being able to authenticate a packet (i.e. the authentication check is delayed)

The following table summarizes the pros/cons of each authentication/integrity scheme used at application/transport level (where "-" means bad, "0" means neutral, and "+" means good):

	RSA Digital Signature	ECC Digital Signature	Group MAC	TESLA
Sender auth and packet integrity	Yes	Yes	No (group security)	Yes
Non delayed authentication	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Anti-replay protection	Opt	Opt	Opt	No
Processing load	-	0	+	+
Transmission overhead	-	0	+	+
Complexity	+	+	+	-

Several authentication schemes MAY be used in the same ALC or NORM session, even on the same communication path. Since all the above schemes make use of the same authentication header extension mechanism ([Section 2.1](#), [Section 4.1](#), [Section 5.1](#)) and [\[RFC5776\], section 5.1](#)), the same 4-bit "ASID" (Authentication Scheme Identifier) has been reserved in all the specifications. The association between the "ASID" value and the actual authentication scheme is defined at session startup and communicated to all the

group members by an out-of-band mechanism.

All the applications build on top of ALC and NORM directly benefit from the source authentication and packet integrity services defined in this document. For instance this is the case of the FLUTE application [[RMT-FLUTE](#)] built on top of ALC.

The current specification assumes that several parameters (like keying material) are communicated out-of-band, sometimes securely, between the sender and the receivers. This is detailed in [Section 2.2](#) and [Section 4.2](#).

[1.1](#). Scope of this Document

[RFC5776] explains how to use TESLA in the context of ALC and NORM protocols.

The current document specifies the use of the Digital Signature based on RSA asymmetric cryptography, the Elliptic Curve Digital Signature Algorithm (ECDSA) and Group MAC schemes. The current document also specifies the joint use of Digital Signature and Group MAC schemes.

Unlike the TESLA scheme, this specification considers the authentication/integrity of the packets generated by the session's sender as well as those generated by the receivers (NORM).

[1.2](#). Terminology, Notations and Definitions

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](#)].

The following notations and definitions are used throughout this document:

- o MAC is the Message Authentication Code;
- o HMAC is the Keyed-Hash Message Authentication Code;
- o sender denotes the sender of a packet that needs the authentication/integrity check service. It can be an ALC or NORM session sender, or a NORM session receiver in case of feedback traffic;
- o receiver denotes the receiver of a packet that needs the authentication/integrity check service. It can be an ALC or NORM session receiver, or a NORM session sender in case of feedback traffic;

Digital signature related definitions:

- o the public key used by a receiver to check a packet's signature. This key **MUST** be communicated to all receivers, before starting the session;
- o the private key used by a sender to generate a packet's signature;
- o the private key and public key length are expressed in bits. This is also the signature length, since those values are equal with digital signatures;

Group MAC related definitions:

- o the shared group key used by the senders and the receivers. This key **MUST** be communicated to all group members, confidentially, before starting the session;
- o the group key length is expressed in bits;
- o `n_m` is the length of the truncated output of the MAC [[RFC2104](#)]. Only the `n_m` left-most bits (most significant bits) of the MAC output are kept;

2. RSA Digital Signature Scheme

2.1. Authentication Header Extension Format

The integration of Digital Signatures is similar in ALC and NORM and relies on the header extension mechanism defined in both protocols. More precisely this document details the EXT_AUTH==1 header extension defined in [\[RFC5651\]](#).

Several fields are added in addition to the HET (Header Extension Type) and HEL (Header Extension Length) fields (Figure 1).

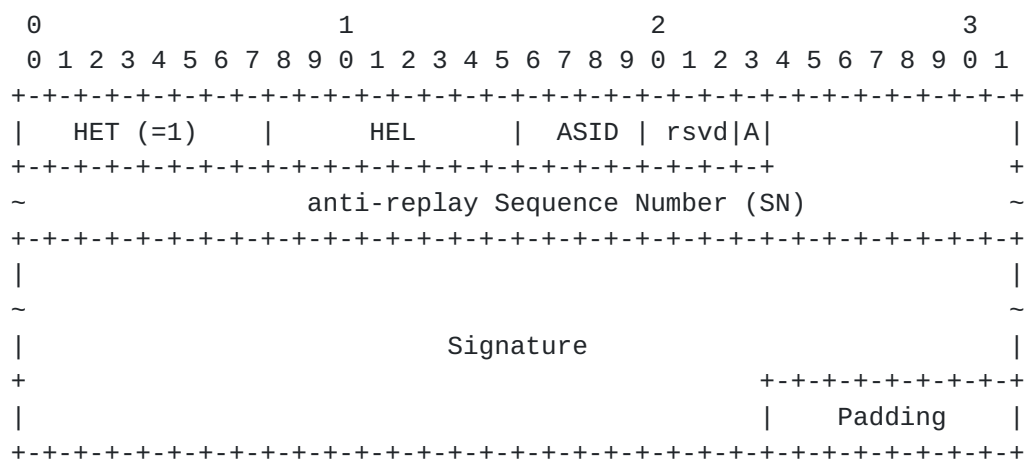


Figure 1: Format of the Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension.

The fields of the Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension are:

"ASID" (Authentication Scheme Identifier) field (4 bits):

The "ASID" identifies the source authentication scheme or protocol in use. The association between the "ASID" value and the actual authentication scheme is defined out-of-band, at session startup.

"Reserved" field (3 bits):

This is a reserved field that MUST be set to zero in this specification.

"A" (Anti-replay) field (1 bit):

The "AR" field, when set to 0, indicates that the anti-replay service is not used. When set to 1, it indicates that the anti-replay service is used.

"SN" (Sequence Number) field (8 or 40 bits):

The "SN" field contains an optional sequence number. When AR=0, this is an 8 bit field that MUST be set to zero. No anti-replay mechanism is used in that case. When AR=1, this is a 32+8=40 bit field and all of the 40 bits MUST be considered by the anti-replay mechanism.

"Signature" field (variable size, multiple of 32 bits):

The "Signature" field contains a digital signature of the message. If need be, this field is padded (with 0) up to a multiple of 32 bits.

2.2. Parameters

Several parameters MUST be initialized by an out-of-band mechanism. The sender or group controller:

- o MUST communicate his public key, for each receiver to be able to verify the signature of the packets received. As a side effect, the receivers also know the key length and the signature length, the two parameters being equal;
- o MAY communicate a certificate (which also means that a PKI has been setup), for each receiver to be able to check the sender's public key;
- o MUST communicate the Signature Encoding Algorithm. For instance, [\[RFC3447\]](#) defines the RSASSA-PKCS1-v1_5 and RSASSA-PSS algorithms that are usually used to that purpose;
- o MUST communicate the Signature Cryptographic Function, for instance SHA-1, SHA-224, SHA-256, SHA-384, or SHA-512. Because of security threats on SHA-1, the use of SHA-256 is RECOMMENDED;
- o MUST associate a value to the "ASID" field (Authentication Scheme Identifier) of the EXT_AUTH header extension ([Section 2.1](#));
- o MUST communicate whether the anti-replay service is used or not for this session;

These parameters MUST be communicated to all receivers before they can authenticate the incoming packets. For instance it can be communicated in the session description, or initialized in a static way on the receivers, or communicated by means of an appropriate protocol. The details of this out-of-band mechanism are out of the scope of this document.

2.3. Processing

2.3.1. Signature Processing

The computation of the digital signature, using the private key, MUST include the ALC or NORM header (with the various header extensions) and the payload when applicable. The UDP/IP/MAC headers MUST NOT be included. During this computation, the "Signature" field MUST be set to 0.

Several "Signature Encoding Algorithms" can be used, including RSASSA-PKCS1-v1_5 and RSASSA-PSS. With these encodings, several "Signature Cryptographic Function" can be used, like SHA-256.

First, let us consider a packet sender. More specifically, from [\[RFC4359\]](#): digital signature generation is performed as described in [\[RFC3447\], Section 8.2.1](#) for RSASSA-PKCS1-v1_5 and [Section 8.1.1](#) for RSASSA-PSS. The authenticated portion of the packet is used as the message M, which is passed to the signature generation function. The signer's RSA private key is passed as K. In summary (when SHA-256 is used), the signature generation process computes a SHA-256 hash of the authenticated packet bytes, signs the SHA-256 hash using the private key, and encodes the result with the specified RSA encoding type. This process results in a value S, which is the digital signature to be included in the packet.

With RSASSA-PKCS1-v1_5 and RSASSA-PSS signatures, the size of the signature is equal to the "RSA modulus", unless the "RSA modulus" is not a multiple of 8 bits. In that case, the signature MUST be prepended with between 1 and 7 bits set to zero such that the signature is a multiple of 8 bits [\[RFC4359\]](#). The key length, which in practice is also equal to the "RSA modulus", has major security implications. [\[RFC4359\]](#) explains how to choose this value depending on the maximum expected lifetime of the session. This choice is out of the scope of this document.

Now let us consider a receiver. From [\[RFC4359\]](#): Digital signature verification is performed as described in [\[RFC3447\], Section 8.2.2](#) (RSASSA-PKCS1-v1_5) and [\[RFC3447\], Section 8.1.2](#) (RSASSA-PSS). Upon receipt, the digital signature is passed to the verification function as S. The authenticated portion of the packet is used as the message M, and the RSA public key is passed as (n, e). In summary (when SHA-256 is used), the verification function computes a SHA-256 hash of the authenticated packet bytes, decrypts the SHA-256 hash in the packet using the sender's public key, and validates that the appropriate encoding was applied. The two SHA-256 hashes are compared and if they are identical the validation is successful.

2.3.2. Anti-Replay Processing

Let us assume the anti-replay service is used. The principles are similar to the Sequence Number mechanism described in [\[RFC4303\]](#), with the exception that the present document uses a 40 bit field that contains all the bits of the sequence number counter.

At the sender, the mechanism works as follows ([\[RFC4303\]](#), [section 2.2](#)). The sender's sequence number counter is initialized to 0 at session startup. The sender increments the Sequence Number counter for this session and inserts the value into the SN field. Thus, the first packet sent will contain a SN of 1.

The sender SHOULD ensure that the counter does not cycle before inserting the new value in the SN field. Failing to follow this rule would enable an attacker to replay a packet sent during the previous cycle, i.e., it would limit the anti-replay service to a single SN cycle. Since the sequence number is contained in a 40 bit field, it is expected that cycling will never happen in most situations. For instance, on a 10 Gbps network, with small (i.e., 64 byte long) packets, cycling will happen after slightly more than 15 hours.

At the receiver, the mechanism works as follows ([\[RFC4303\]](#), sections 3.4.3 and A2). 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 session. 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, because the integrity of the Sequence Number has not been verified at this point.

Duplicates are rejected through the use of a sliding receive window. The "right" edge of the window represents the highest, validated Sequence Number value received on this session. 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 (how this list is managed is a local, implementation based decision). This window limits how far out of order a packet can be, relative to the packet with the highest sequence number that has been authenticated so far.

If the received packet falls within the window and is not a duplicate, or if the packet is to the right of the window, then the receiver proceeds to integrity verification. If the integrity check fails, the receiver MUST discard the received packet as invalid, otherwise the receive window is updated and packet processing continues.

Roca

Expires January 9, 2012

[Page 11]

2.4. In Practice

Each packet sent MUST contain exactly one Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension. A receiver MUST drop all the packets that do not contain a Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension.

All receivers MUST recognize EXT_AUTH but MAY not be able to parse its content, for instance because they do not support digital signatures. In that case the Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension is ignored.

If the anti-replay mechanism is used, each packet sent MUST contain a valid sequence number. All the packets that fail to contain a valid sequence number MUST be immediately dropped.

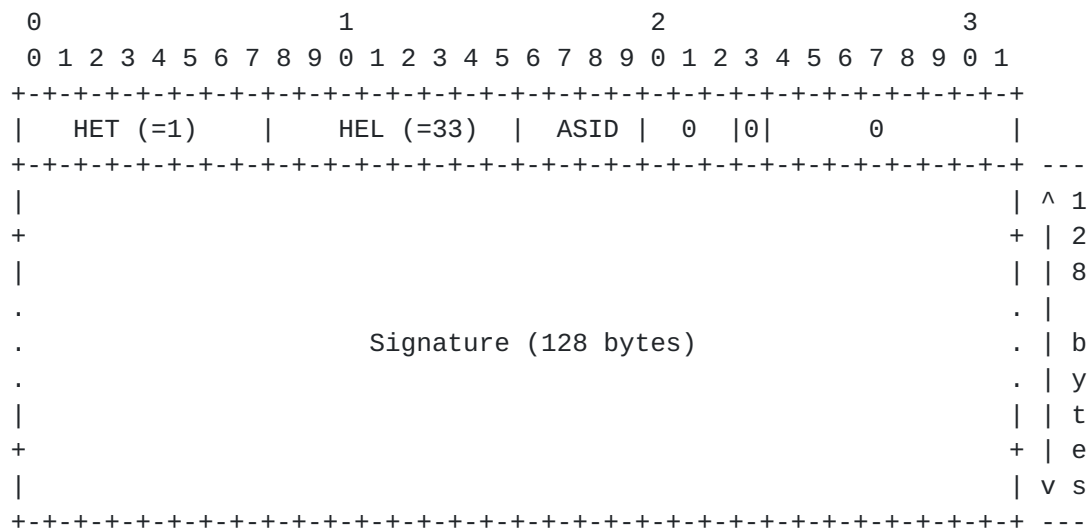


Figure 2: Example: Format of the Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension using 1024 bit signatures, without any anti-replay protection.

For instance Figure 2 shows the digital signature EXT_AUTH header extension when using 128 byte (1024 bit) key digital signatures (which also means that the signature field is 128 byte long). The Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension is then 132 byte long.

3. Elliptic Curve Digital Signature Scheme

3.1. Authentication Header Extension Format

The integration of ECC Digital Signatures is similar in ALC and NORM and relies on the header extension mechanism defined in both protocols. More precisely this document details the EXT_AUTH==1 header extension defined in [[RFC5651](#)].

Several fields are added in addition to the HET (Header Extension Type) and HEL (Header Extension Length) fields (Figure 1).

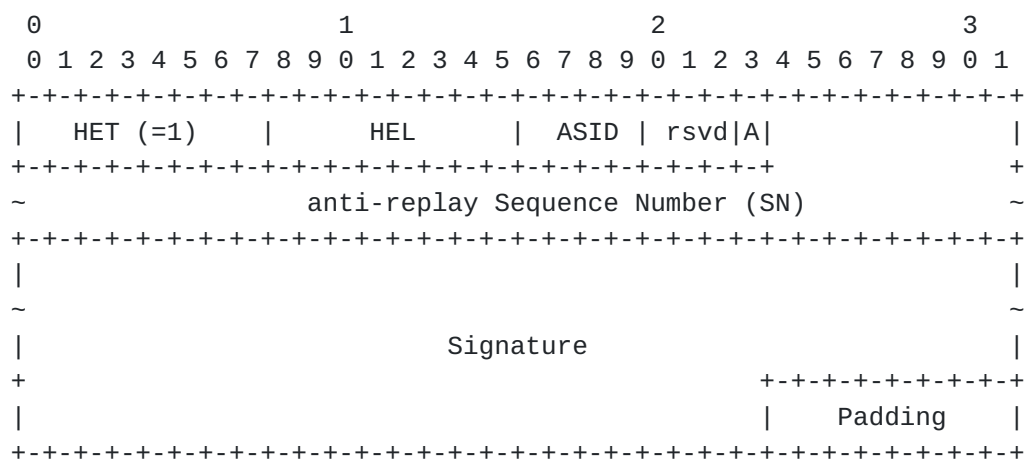


Figure 3: Format of the Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension.

The fields of the Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension are:

"ASID" (Authentication Scheme Identifier) field (4 bits):

The "ASID" identifies the source authentication scheme or protocol in use. The association between the "ASID" value and the actual authentication scheme is defined out-of-band, at session startup.

"Reserved" field (3 bits):

This is a reserved field that MUST be set to zero in this specification.

"A" (Anti-replay) field (1 bit):

The "AR" field, when set to 0, indicates that the anti-replay service is not used. When set to 1, it indicates that the anti-replay service is used.

"SN" (Sequence Number) field (8 or 40 bits):

The "SN" field contains an optional sequence number. When AR=0, this is an 8 bit field that MUST be set to zero. No anti-replay mechanism is used in that case. When AR=1, this is a 32+8=40 bit field and all of the 40 bits MUST be considered by the anti-replay mechanism.

"Signature" field (variable size, multiple of 32 bits):

The "Signature" field contains a digital signature of the message. If need be, this field is padded (with 0) up to a multiple of 32 bits.

3.2. Parameters

Several parameters MUST be initialized by an out-of-band mechanism. The sender or group controller:

- o MUST communicate his public key, for each receiver to be able to verify the signature of the packets received. As a side effect, the receivers also know the key length and the signature length, the two parameters being equal;
- o MAY communicate a certificate (which also means that a PKI has been setup), for each receiver to be able to check the sender's public key;
- o MUST communicate the Message Digest Algorithm;
- o MUST communicate the Elliptic Curve;
- o MUST associate a value to the "ASID" field (Authentication Scheme Identifier) of the EXT_AUTH header extension ([Section 2.1](#));
- o MUST communicate whether the anti-replay service is used or not for this session;

These parameters MUST be communicated to all receivers before they can authenticate the incoming packets. For instance it can be communicated in the session description, or initialized in a static way on the receivers, or communicated by means of an appropriate protocol. The details of this out-of-band mechanism are out of the scope of this document.

3.3. Processing

3.3.1. Signature Processing

The computation of the ECC digital signature, using the private key, MUST include the ALC or NORM header (with the various header extensions) and the payload when applicable. The UDP/IP/MAC headers MUST NOT be included. During this computation, the "Signature" field MUST be set to 0.

Several "Elliptic Curves" groups can be used, as well as several "Hash Algorithms". In practice both choices are related and there is a minimum hash algorithm size for any key length. Using a larger hash algorithm and then truncated the output is also feasible, however it consumes more processing power than is necessary. The following table lists the RECOMMENDED choices [RFC4754] [RFC5480].

Digital Signature Algorithm name [RFC4754]	Key Size	Message Digest Algorithm	Elliptic Curve
ECDSA-256	256	SHA-256	secp256r1
ECDSA-384	384	SHA-384	secp384r1
ECDSA-521	512	SHA-512	secp521r1

The ECDSA-256, ECDSA-384 and ECDSA-521 are designed to offer security comparable with AES-128, AES-192 and AES-256 respectively [RFC4754].

3.3.2. Anti-Replay Processing

The anti-replay processing follows the principles described in [Section 2.3.2](#).

3.4. In Practice

Each packet sent MUST contain exactly one ECC Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension. A receiver MUST drop all the packets that do not contain an ECC Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension.

All receivers MUST recognize EXT_AUTH but MAY not be able to parse its content, for instance because they do not support ECC digital signatures. In that case the Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension is ignored.

If the anti-replay mechanism is used, each packet sent MUST contain a

valid sequence number. All the packets that fail to contain a valid sequence number MUST be immediately dropped.

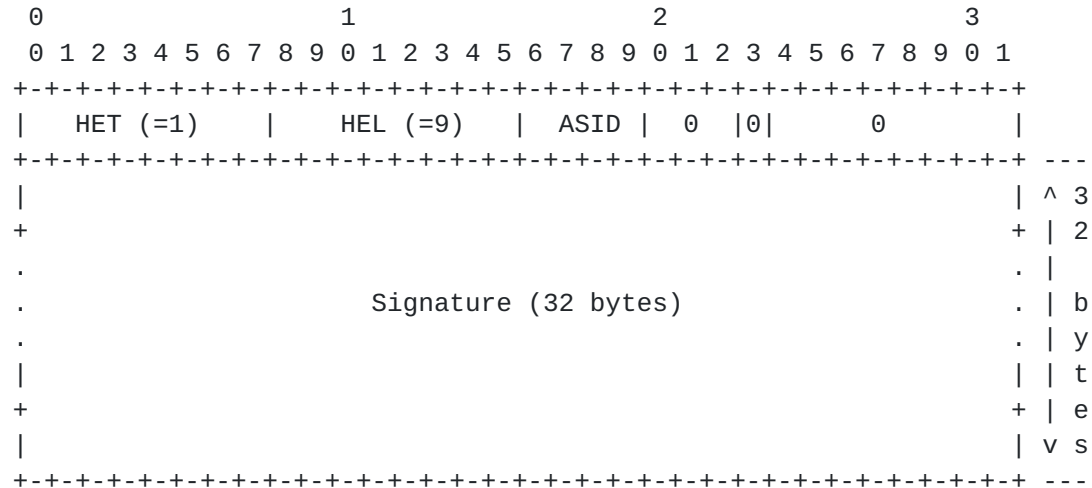


Figure 4: Example: Format of the ECC Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension using ECDSA-256 signatures, without any anti-replay protection.

For instance Figure 4 shows the digital signature EXT_AUTH header extension when using ECDSA-256 (256 bit) ECC digital signatures. The ECC Digital Signature EXT_AUTH header extension is then 36 byte long.

4. Group Message Authentication Code (MAC) Scheme

4.1. Authentication Header Extension Format

The integration of Group MAC is similar in ALC and NORM and relies on the header extension mechanism defined in both protocols. More precisely this document details the EXT_AUTH==1 header extension defined in [\[RFC5651\]](#).

Several fields are added in addition to the HET (Header Extension Type) and HEL (Header Extension Length) fields (Figure 5).

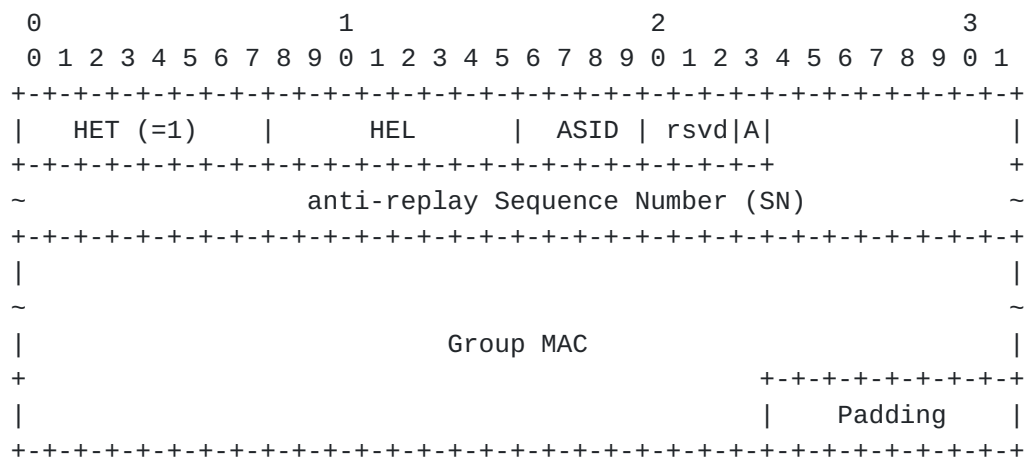


Figure 5: Format of the Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension.

The fields of the Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension are:

"ASID" (Authentication Scheme Identifier) field (4 bits):

The "ASID" identifies the source authentication scheme or protocol in use. The association between the "ASID" value and the actual authentication scheme is defined out-of-band, at session startup.

"Reserved" field (3 bits):

This is a reserved field that MUST be set to zero in this specification.

"A" (Anti-replay) field (1 bit):

The "AR" field, when set to 0, indicates that the anti-replay service is not used. When set to 1, it indicates that the anti-replay service is used.

"SN" (Sequence Number) field (8 or 40 bits):

The "SN" field contains an optional sequence number. When AR=0, this is an 8 bit field that MUST be set to zero. No anti-replay mechanism is used in that case. When AR=1, this is a 32+8=40 bit field and all of the 40 bits MUST be considered by the anti-replay mechanism.

"Group MAC" field (variable size, multiple of 32 bits):

The "Group MAC" field contains a truncated Group MAC of the message. If need be, this field is padded (with 0) up to a multiple of 32 bits.

4.2. Parameters

Several parameters MUST be initialized by an out-of-band mechanism. The sender or group controller:

- o MUST communicate the Cryptographic MAC Function, for instance, HMAC-SHA-1, HMAC-SHA-224, HMAC-SHA-256, HMAC-SHA-384, or HMAC-SHA-512. Because of security threats on SHA-1, the use of HMAC-SHA-256 is RECOMMENDED. As a side effect, the receivers also know the key length and the non truncated MAC output length;
- o MUST communicate the length of the truncated output of the MAC, n_m , which depends on the Cryptographic MAC Function chosen. Only the n_m left-most bits (most significant bits) of the MAC output are kept. Of course, n_m MUST be lower or equal to the key length;
- o MUST communicate the group key to the receivers, confidentially, before starting the session. This key might have to be periodically refreshed for improved robustness;
- o MUST associate a value to the "ASID" field (Authentication Scheme Identifier) of the EXT_AUTH header extension ([Section 4.1](#));
- o MUST communicate whether the anti-replay service is used or not for this session;

These parameters MUST be communicated to all receivers before they can authenticate the incoming packets. For instance it can be communicated in the session description, or initialized in a static way on the receivers, or communicated by means of an appropriate protocol (this will be often the case when periodic re-keying is required). The details of this out-of-band mechanism are out of the scope of this document.

4.3. Processing

4.3.1. Signature Processing

The computation of the Group MAC, using the group key, includes the ALC or NORM header (with the various header extensions) and the payload when applicable. The UDP/IP/MAC headers are not included. During this computation, the Weak Group MAC field **MUST** be set to 0. Then the sender truncates the MAC output to keep the *n_m* most significant bits and stores the result in the Group MAC Authentication header.

Upon receiving this packet, the receiver computes the Group MAC, using the group key, and compares it to the value carried in the packet. During this computation, the Group MAC field **MUST** also be set to 0. If the check fails, the packet **MUST** be immediately dropped.

[RFC2104] explains that it is current practice to truncate the MAC output, on condition that the truncated output length, *n_m* be not less than half the length of the hash and not less than 80 bits. However, this choice is out of the scope of this document.

4.3.2. Anti-Replay Processing

The anti-replay processing follows the principles described in [Section 2.3.2](#).

4.4. In Practice

Each packet sent **MUST** contain exactly one Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension. A receiver **MUST** drop packets that do not contain a Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension.

All receivers **MUST** recognize EXT_AUTH but **MAY** not be able to parse its content, for instance because they do not support Group MAC. In that case the Group MAC EXT_AUTH extension is ignored.

If the anti-replay mechanism is used, each packet sent **MUST** contain a valid sequence number. All the packets that fail to contain a valid sequence number **MUST** be immediately dropped.

5. Combined Use of the RSA/ECC Digital Signatures and Group MAC Schemes

5.1. Authentication Header Extension Format

The integration of combined RSA/ECC Digital Signature and Group MAC is similar in ALC and NORM and relies on the header extension mechanism defined in both protocols. More precisely this document details the EXT_AUTH==1 header extension defined in [\[RFC5651\]](#).

Several fields are added in addition to the HET (Header Extension Type) and HEL (Header Extension Length) fields (Figure 7).

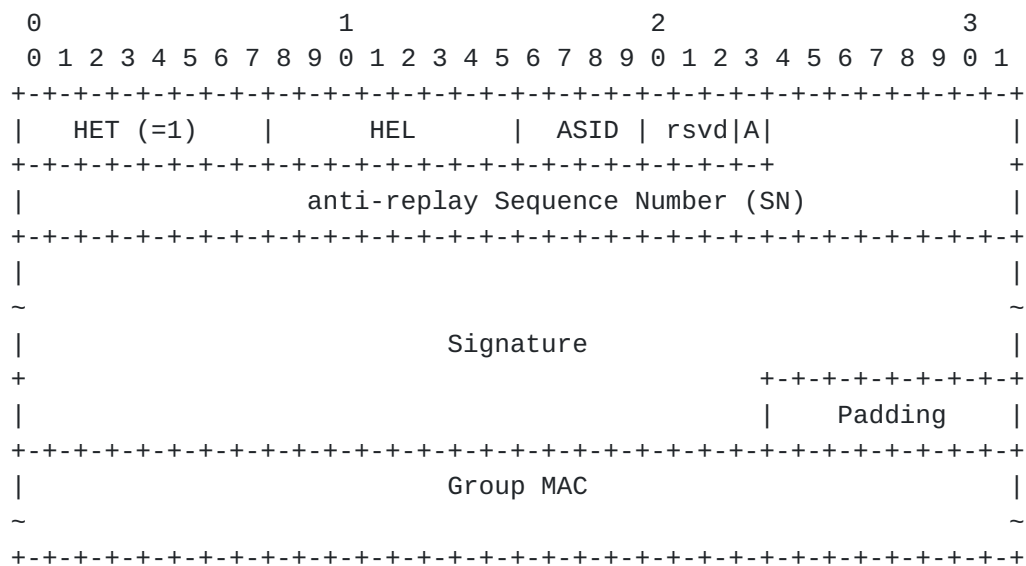


Figure 7: Format of the Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension.

The fields of the Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension are:

"ASID" (Authentication Scheme Identifier) field (4 bits):

The "ASID" identifies the source authentication scheme or protocol in use. The association between the "ASID" value and the actual authentication scheme is defined out-of-band, at session startup.

"Reserved" field (3 bits):

This is a reserved field that MUST be set to zero in this specification.

"A" (Anti-replay) field (1 bit):

The "AR" field MUST be set to 1 and it indicates that the anti-replay service is used (see [Section 5.3](#)).

"SN" (Sequence Number) field (8 or 40 bits):

The "SN" field contains a sequence number. Since AR=1, this is a $32+8=40$ bit field and all of the 40 bits MUST be considered by the anti-replay mechanism.

"Signature" field (variable size, multiple of 32 bits):

The "Signature" field contains a digital signature of the message. If need be, this field is padded (with 0) up to a multiple of 32 bits.

"Group MAC" field (variable size, multiple of 32 bits, by default 32 bits):

The "Group MAC" field contains a truncated Group MAC of the message.

5.2. Parameters

Several parameters MUST be initialized by an out-of-band mechanism, as defined in [Section 2.2](#), [Section 3.2](#) and [Section 4.2](#).

5.3. Processing

In some situations, it can be interesting to use both authentication schemes. The goal of the Group MAC is to mitigate DoS attacks coming from attackers that are not group members [[RFC4082](#)] by adding a light authentication scheme as a front-end. Here an anti-replay service MUST be used. Indeed, failing to enable anti-replay protection would facilitate DoS attacks, since all replayed (but otherwise valid) packets would pass the light authentication scheme.

5.3.1. Signature Processing

Before sending a message, the sender sets the Signature field and Group MAC field to zero. Then the sender computes the Signature as detailed in [Section 2.3](#) or in [Section 3.3](#) and stores the value in the Signature field. Then the sender computes the Group MAC as detailed in [Section 4.3](#) and stores the value in the Group MAC field. The (RSA or ECC) digital signature value is therefore protected by the Group MAC, which avoids DoS attacks where the attacker corrupts the digital signature itself.

Upon receiving the packet, the receiver first checks the Group MAC,

as detailed in [Section 4.3](#). If the check fails, the packet MUST be immediately dropped. Otherwise the receiver checks the Digital Signature, as detailed in [Section 2.3](#). If the check fails, the packet MUST be immediately dropped.

This scheme features a few limits:

- o the Group MAC is of no help if a group member (who knows the group key) impersonates the sender and sends forged messages to other receivers. DoS attacks are still feasible;
- o it requires an additional MAC computing for each packet, both at the sender and receiver sides;
- o it increases the size of the authentication headers. In order to limit this problem, the length of the truncated output of the MAC, n_m , SHOULD be kept small (see [\[RFC3711\] section 9.5](#)). In the current specification, n_m MUST be a multiple of 32 bits, and default value is 32 bits. As a side effect, with $n_m = 32$ bits, the authentication service is significantly weakened since the probability that any packet be successfully forged is one in 2^{32} . Since the Group MAC check is only a pre-check that is followed by the standard signature authentication check, this is not considered to be an issue.

For a given use-case, the benefits brought by the Group MAC must be balanced against these limitations.

[5.3.2. Anti-Replay Processing](#)

The anti-replay processing follows the principles described in [Section 2.3.2](#).

[5.4. In Practice](#)

Each packet sent MUST contain exactly one combined Digital Signature/Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension. A receiver MUST drop packets that do not contain a combined Digital Signature/Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension.

All receivers MUST recognize EXT_AUTH but MAY not be able to parse its content, for instance because they do not support combined Digital Signature/Group MAC. In that case the combined Digital Signature/Group MAC EXT_AUTH extension is ignored.

Since the anti-replay mechanism MUST be used, each packet sent MUST contain a valid sequence number. All the packets that fail to contain a valid sequence number MUST be immediately dropped.

It is RECOMMENDED that the `n_m` parameter of the group authentication scheme be small, and by default equal to 32 bits ([Section 5.3](#)).

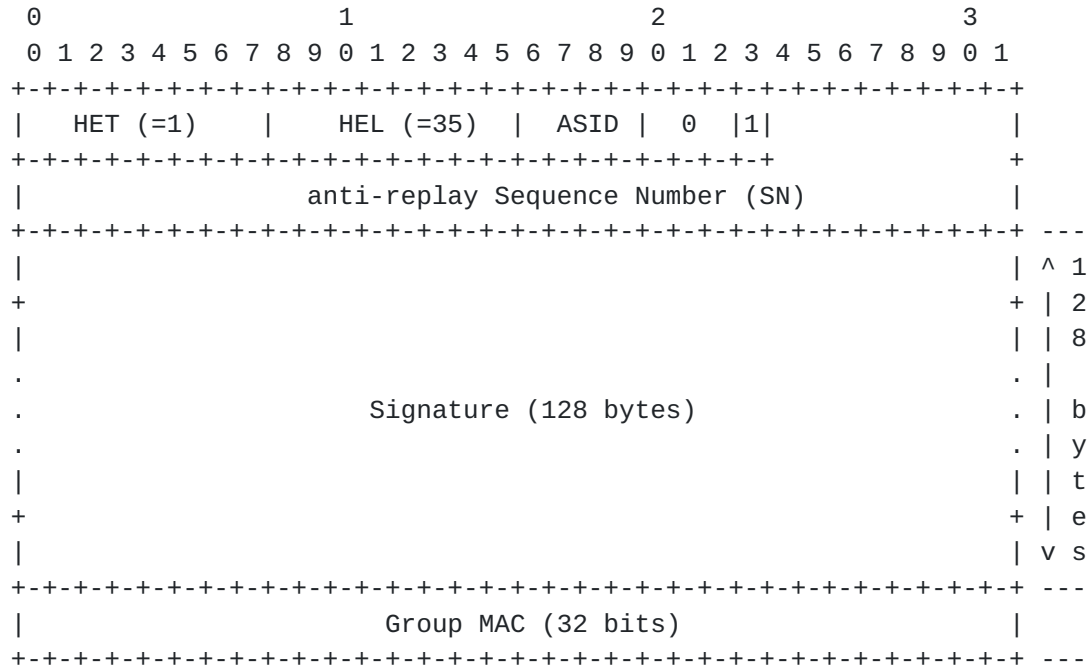


Figure 8: Example: Format of the combined RSA Digital Signature/Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension using 1024 bit signatures, with anti-replay protection.

For instance Figure 8 shows the combined Digital Signature/Group MAC EXT_AUTH header extension when using 128 byte (1024 bit) key RSA digital signatures (which also means that the signature field is 128 byte long). The EXT_AUTH header extension is then 140 byte long.

6. IANA Considerations

This document does not require any IANA registration.

7. Security Considerations

7.1. Dealing With DoS Attacks

Let us consider packets secured through the use of a digital signature scheme first. Because faked packets are easy to create but checking them requires to compute a costly digital signature, this scheme introduces new opportunities for an attacker to mount DoS attacks. More precisely an attacker can easily saturate the processing capabilities of the receiver.

In order to mitigate these attacks, it is RECOMMENDED to use the combined Digital Signature/Group MAC scheme ([Section 5.3](#)). However, no mitigation is possible if a group member acts as an attacker. Additionally, even if checking a Group MAC is significantly faster than checking a digital signature, there are practical limits on how many Group MAC can be checked per time unit. Therefore it is RECOMMENDED to limit the number of authentication checks per time unit when the number of incoming packets that fail the authentication check exceeds a given threshold (i.e., in case of a DoS attack).

The RECOMMENDATION to limit the number of checks per time unit under (presumed) attack situations can be extended to the other authentication schemes.

7.2. Dealing With Replay Attacks

Replay attacks consist for an attacker to store a valid message and to replay it later on. It is RECOMMENDED to use the anti-replay service defined in this document with the signature and group MAC solutions, and this anti-replay service MUST be used in case of a combined use of signature and group MAC.

The following section details some of the potential consequences of not using the anti-replay protection.

7.2.1. Impacts of Replay Attacks on the Simple Authentication Schemes

Since all the above authentication schemes are stateless, replay attacks have no impact on these schemes.

7.2.2. Impacts of Replay Attacks on NORM

We review here the potential impacts of a replay attack on the NORM component. Note that we do not consider here the protocols that could be used along with NORM, for instance the congestion control protocols.

First, let us consider replay attacks within a given NORM session. NORM being a stateful protocol, replaying a packet may have consequences.

NORM defines a "sequence" field that may be used to protect against replay attacks [\[RFC5740\]](#) within a given NORM session. This "sequence" field is a 16-bit value that is set by the message originator (sender or receiver) as a monotonically increasing number incremented with each NORM message transmitted. Using this field as an anti-replay protection would be possible if there is no wrapping to zero, i.e., would only be possible if at most 65535 packets are sent. This may be true for some use-cases but not for the general case. Using this field as an anti-replay protection would also be possible if the keying material is updated before wrapping to zero happens. This may be true for some use-cases but not for the general case.

Now let us consider replay attacks across several NORM sessions. A host participation in a NORM session is uniquely identified by the {"source_id"; "instance_id"} tuple. Therefore, when a given host participates in several NORM sessions, it is RECOMMENDED that the "instance_id" be changed for each NORM instance. It is also RECOMMENDED, when the Group MAC authentication/integrity check scheme is used, that the shared group key be changed across sessions. Therefore, NORM can be made robust in front of replay attacks across different sessions.

7.2.3. Impacts of Replay Attacks on ALC

We review here the potential impacts of a replay attack on the ALC component. Note that we do not consider here the protocols that could be used along with ALC, for instance the layered or wave based congestion control protocols.

First, let us consider replay attacks within a given ALC session:

- o replayed encoding symbol: a replayed encoding symbol (coming from a replayed data packet) is detected thanks to the object/block/symbol identifiers and is silently discarded.
- o replayed control information: more precisely:
 - * At the end of the session, a "close session" (A flag) packet is sent. Replaying a packet containing this flag has no impact since the receivers already left.
 - * Similarly, replaying a packet containing a "close object" (B flag) has no impact since this object is probably already

marked as closed by the receiver.

- * Timing information sent as part of an LCT EXT_TIME header extension [[RFC5651](#)] may be more sensitive to replay attacks. For instance replaying a packet containing an ERT (Expected Residual Time) may mislead a receiver to believe an object transmission will continue for some time whereas the transmission of symbols for this object is about to stop. Replaying a packet containing a SCT (Sender Current Time) is easily identified if the receiver verifies that time progresses upon receiving such EXT_TIME header extensions. Replaying a packet containing a SLC (Session Last Changed) is easily identified if the receiver verifies the chronology upon receiving such EXT_TIME header extensions.

This analysis shows that ALC MAY be, to a limited extent, sensitive to replay attacks within the same session if timing information is used. Otherwise ALC is robust in front of replay attacks within the same session.

Now let us consider replay attacks across several ALC sessions. An ALC session is uniquely identified by the {sender's IP address; Transport Session Identifier (TSI)} [[RFC5651](#)]. Therefore, when a given sender creates several sessions, it is RECOMMENDED that the TSI be changed for each ALC instance. It is also RECOMMENDED, when the Group MAC authentication/integrity check scheme is used, that the shared group key be changed across sessions. Therefore, ALC can be made robust in front of replay attacks across different sessions.

[7.3.](#) Dealing With Attacks on the Parameters Sent Out-of-Band

This specification requires several parameters to be communicated to the receiver(s) [Section 2.2](#) [Section 3.2](#) [Section 4.2](#) [Section 5.2](#) [[RFC5776](#)] via an out-of-band mechanism that is out of the scope of this document. This is in particular the case for the mapping between an ASID value and the associated authentication scheme [Section 1](#). Since this mapping is critical, it is REQUIRED that this information be carried in a secure way from the sender to the receiver(s).

8. Acknowledgments

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