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**BGPsec Protocol Specification**  
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Abstract

This document describes BGPsec, an extension to the Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) that provides security for the path of autonomous systems through which a BGP update message passes. BGPsec is implemented via an optional non-transitive BGP path attribute that carries a digital signature produced by each autonomous system that propagates the update message.

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## [1.](#) Introduction

This document describes BGPsec, a mechanism for providing path security for Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) [[RFC4271](#)] route advertisements. That is, a BGP speaker who receives a valid BGPsec update has cryptographic assurance that the advertised route has the following property: Every AS on the path of ASes listed in the update message has explicitly authorized the advertisement of the route to the subsequent AS in the path.



This document specifies an optional (non-transitive) BGP path attribute, BGPsec\_Path. It also describes how a BGPsec-compliant BGP speaker (referred to hereafter as a BGPsec speaker) can generate, propagate, and validate BGP update messages containing this attribute to obtain the above assurances.

BGPsec is intended to be used to supplement BGP Origin Validation [[RFC6483](#)][RFC6811] and when used in conjunction with origin validation, it is possible to prevent a wide variety of route hijacking attacks against BGP.

BGPsec relies on the Resource Public Key Infrastructure (RPKI) certificates that attest to the allocation of AS number and IP address resources. (For more information on the RPKI, see [RFC 6480](#) [[RFC6480](#)] and the documents referenced therein.) Any BGPsec speaker who wishes to send, to external (eBGP) peers, BGP update messages containing the BGPsec\_Path needs to possess a private key associated with an RPKI router certificate [[I-D.ietf-sidr-bgpsec-pki-profiles](#)] that corresponds to the BGPsec speaker's AS number. Note, however, that a BGPsec speaker does not need such a certificate in order to validate received update messages containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute (see [Section 5.2](#)).

### **[1.1.](#) Requirements Language**

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC 2119](#) [[RFC2119](#)].

## **[2.](#) BGPsec Negotiation**

This document defines a BGP capability [[RFC5492](#)] that allows a BGP speaker to advertise to a neighbor the ability to send or to receive BGPsec update messages (i.e., update messages containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute).

### **[2.1.](#) The BGPsec Capability**

This capability has capability code : TBD

The capability length for this capability MUST be set to 3.

The three octets of the capability format are specified in Figure 1.



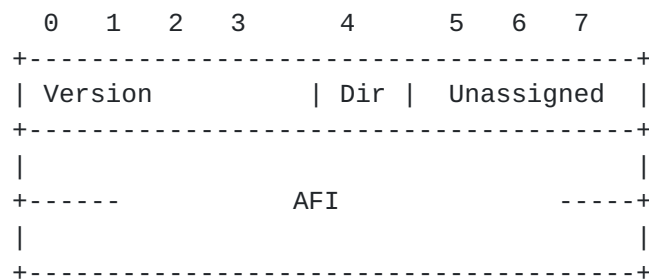


Figure 1: BGPsec Capability format.

The first four bits of the first octet indicate the version of BGPsec for which the BGP speaker is advertising support. This document defines only BGPsec version 0 (all four bits set to zero). Other versions of BGPsec may be defined in future documents. A BGPsec speaker MAY advertise support for multiple versions of BGPsec by including multiple versions of the BGPsec capability in its BGP OPEN message.

The fifth bit of the first octet is a direction bit which indicates whether the BGP speaker is advertising the capability to send BGPsec update messages or receive BGPsec update messages. The BGP speaker sets this bit to 0 to indicate the capability to receive BGPsec update messages. The BGP speaker sets this bit to 1 to indicate the capability to send BGPsec update messages.

The remaining three bits of the first octet are unassigned and for future use. These bits are set to zero by the sender of the capability and ignored by the receiver of the capability.

The second and third octets contain the 16-bit Address Family Identifier (AFI) which indicates the address family for which the BGPsec speaker is advertising support for BGPsec. This document only specifies BGPsec for use with two address families, IPv4 and IPv6, AFI values 1 and 2 respectively. BGPsec for use with other address families may be specified in future documents.

## 2.2. Negotiating BGPsec Support

In order to indicate that a BGP speaker is willing to send BGPsec update messages (for a particular address family), a BGP speaker sends the BGPsec Capability (see [Section 2.1](#)) with the Direction bit (the fifth bit of the first octet) set to 1. In order to indicate that the speaker is willing to receive BGP update messages containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute (for a particular address family), a BGP speaker sends the BGPsec capability with the Direction bit set to 0. In order to advertise the capability to both send and receive BGPsec update messages, the BGP speaker sends two copies of the BGPsec



capability (one with the direction bit set to 0 and one with the direction bit set to 1).

Similarly, if a BGP speaker wishes to use BGPsec with two different address families (i.e., IPv4 and IPv6) over the same BGP session, then the speaker includes two instances of this capability (one for each address family) in the BGP OPEN message. A BGP speaker MAY announce BGPsec capability only if it supports the BGP multiprotocol extension [[RFC4760](#)]. Additionally, a BGP speaker MUST NOT advertise the capability of BGPsec support for a particular AFI unless it has also advertised the multiprotocol extension capability for the same AFI [[RFC4760](#)].

In a BGPsec peering session, a peer is permitted to send update messages containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute if, and only if:

- o The given peer sent the BGPsec capability for a particular version of BGPsec and a particular address family with the Direction bit set to 1; and
- o The other (receiving) peer sent the BGPsec capability for the same version of BGPsec and the same address family with the Direction bit set to 0.

In such a session, it can be said that the use of the particular version of BGPsec has been negotiated for a particular address family. BGP update messages without the BGPsec\_Path attribute MAY be sent within a session regardless of whether or not the use of BGPsec is successfully negotiated. However, if BGPsec is not successfully negotiated, then BGP update messages containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute MUST NOT be sent.

This document defines the behavior of implementations in the case where BGPsec version zero is the only version that has been successfully negotiated. Any future document which specifies additional versions of BGPsec will need to specify behavior in the case that support for multiple versions is negotiated.

BGPsec cannot provide meaningful security guarantees without support for four-byte AS numbers. Therefore, any BGP speaker that announces the BGPsec capability, MUST also announce the capability for four-byte AS support [[RFC6793](#)]. If a BGP speaker sends the BGPsec capability but not the four-byte AS support capability then BGPsec has not been successfully negotiated, and update messages containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute MUST NOT be sent within such a session.

Note that BGPsec update messages can be quite large, therefore any BGPsec speaker announcing the capability to receive BGPsec messages





SHOULD also announce support for the capability to receive BGP extended messages [[I-D.ietf-idr-bgp-extended-messages](#)].

### **3. The BGPsec\_Path Attribute**

The BGPsec\_Path attribute is an optional non-transitive BGP path attribute.

This document registers an attribute type code for this attribute: BGPsec\_Path (see [Section 9](#)).

The BGPsec\_Path attribute carries the secured information regarding the path of ASes through which an update message passes. This includes the digital signatures used to protect the path information. The update messages that contain the BGPsec\_Path attribute are referred to as "BGPsec Update messages". The BGPsec\_Path attribute replaces the AS\_PATH attribute in a BGPsec update message. That is, update messages that contain the BGPsec\_Path attribute MUST NOT contain the AS\_PATH attribute, and vice versa.

The BGPsec\_Path attribute is made up of several parts. The high-level diagram in Figure 2 provides an overview of the structure of the BGPsec\_Path attribute.



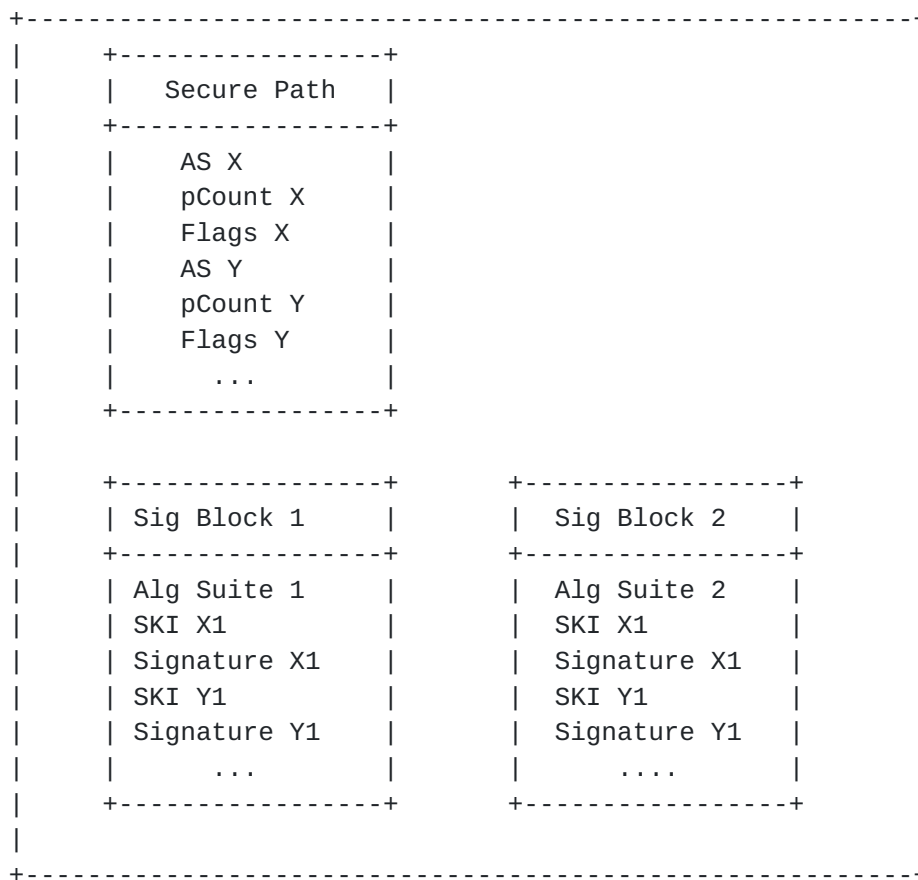


Figure 2: High-level diagram of the BGPsec\_Path attribute.

Figure 3 provides the specification of the format for the BGPsec\_Path attribute.

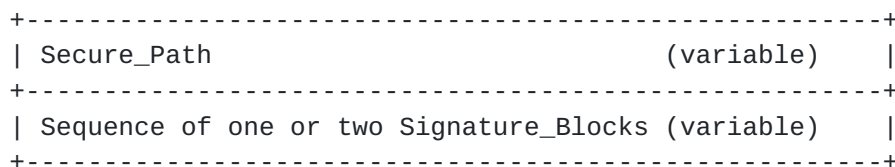


Figure 3: BGPsec\_Path attribute format.

The Secure\_Path contains AS path information for the BGPsec update message. This is logically equivalent to the information that is contained in a non-BGPsec AS\_PATH attribute. The information in Secure\_Path is used by BGPsec speakers in the same way that information from the AS\_PATH is used by non-BGPsec speakers. The format of the Secure\_Path is described below in [Section 3.1](#).



The BGPsec\_Path attribute will contain one or two Signature\_Blocks, each of which corresponds to a different algorithm suite. Each of the Signature\_Blocks will contain a signature segment for each AS number (i.e., Secure\_Path segment) in the Secure\_Path. In the most common case, the BGPsec\_Path attribute will contain only a single Signature\_Block. However, in order to enable a transition from an old algorithm suite to a new algorithm suite (without a flag day), it will be necessary to include two Signature\_Blocks (one for the old algorithm suite and one for the new algorithm suite) during the transition period. (See [Section 6.1](#) for more discussion of algorithm transitions.) The format of the Signature\_Blocks is described below in [Section 3.2](#).

### 3.1. Secure\_Path

A detailed description of the Secure\_Path information in the BGPsec\_Path attribute is provided here.

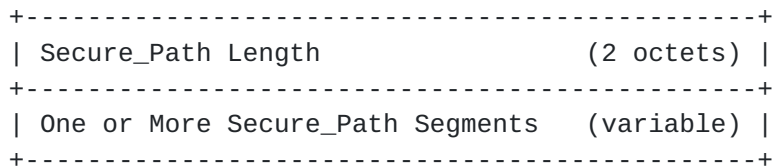


Figure 4: Secure\_Path format.

The specification for the Secure\_Path field is provided in Figure 4 and Figure 5. The Secure\_Path Length contains the length (in octets) of the entire Secure\_Path (including the two octets used to express this length field). As explained below, each Secure\_Path segment is six octets long. Note that this means the Secure\_Path Length is two greater than six times the number Secure\_Path Segments (i.e., the number of AS numbers in the path).

The Secure\_Path contains one Secure\_Path Segment (see Figure 5) for each Autonomous System in the path to the originating AS of the prefix specified in the update message. (Note: Repeated Autonomous Systems are compressed out using the pCount field as discussed below).



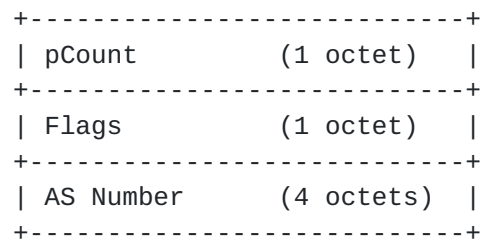


Figure 5: Secure\_Path Segment format.

The AS Number (in Figure 5) is the AS number of the BGP speaker that added this Secure\_Path segment to the BGPsec\_Path attribute. (See [Section 4](#) for more information on populating this field.)

The pCount field contains the number of repetitions of the associated autonomous system number that the signature covers. This field enables a BGPsec speaker to mimic the semantics of prepending multiple copies of their AS to the AS\_PATH without requiring the speaker to generate multiple signatures. Note that [Section 9.1.2.2](#) ("Breaking Ties") in [\[RFC4271\]](#) mentions "number of AS numbers" in the AS\_PATH attribute that is used in the route selection process. This metric (number of AS numbers) is the same as the AS path length obtained in BGPsec by summing the pCount values in the BGPsec\_Path attribute. The pCount field is also useful in managing route servers (see [Section 4.2](#)) and AS Number migrations, see [\[I-D.ietf-sidr-as-migration\]](#) for details.

The left most (i.e. the most significant) bit of the Flags field in Figure 5 is the Confed\_Segment flag. The Confed\_Segment flag is set to one to indicate that the BGPsec speaker that constructed this Secure\_Path segment is sending the update message to a peer AS within the same Autonomous System confederation [\[RFC5065\]](#). (That is, the Confed\_Segment flag is set in a BGPsec update message whenever, in a non-BGPsec update message, the BGP speaker's AS would appear in a AS\_PATH segment of type AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE.) In all other cases the Confed\_Segment flag is set to zero.

The remaining seven bits of the Flags are unassigned and MUST be set to zero by the sender, and ignored by the receiver. Note, however, that the signature is computed over all eight bits of the flags field.

### 3.2. Signature\_Block

A detailed description of the Signature\_Blocks in the BGPsec\_Path attribute is provided here using Figure 6 and Figure 7.





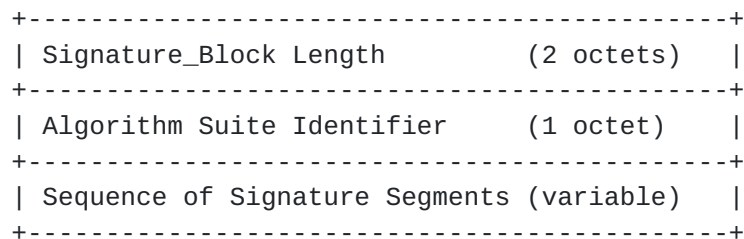


Figure 6: Signature\_Block format.

The Signature\_Block Length in Figure 6 is the total number of octets in the Signature\_Block (including the two octets used to express this length field).

The Algorithm Suite Identifier is a one-octet identifier specifying the digest algorithm and digital signature algorithm used to produce the digital signature in each Signature Segment. An IANA registry of algorithm identifiers for use in BGPsec is specified in the BGPsec algorithms document [[I-D.ietf-sidr-bgpsec-algs](#)].

A Signature\_Block in Figure 6 has exactly one Signature Segment (see Figure 7) for each Secure\_Path Segment in the Secure\_Path portion of the BGPsec\_Path Attribute. (That is, one Signature Segment for each distinct AS on the path for the prefix in the Update message.)

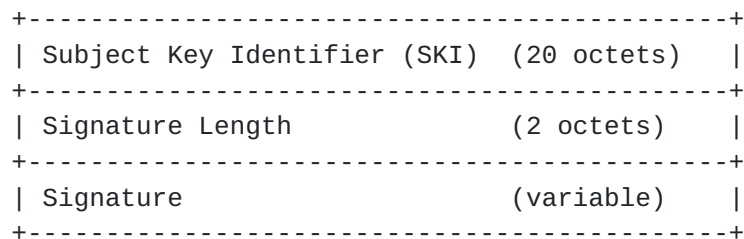


Figure 7: Signature Segment format.

The Subject Key Identifier (SKI) field in Figure 7 contains the value in the Subject Key Identifier extension of the RPKI router certificate [[I-D.ietf-sidr-bgpsec-pki-profiles](#)] that is used to verify the signature (see [Section 5](#) for details on validity of BGPsec update messages).

The Signature Length field contains the size (in octets) of the value in the Signature field of the Signature Segment.

The Signature in Figure 7 contains a digital signature that protects the prefix and the BGPsec\_Path attribute (see [Section 4](#) and [Section 5](#) for details on signature generation and validation, respectively).



## **4. BGPsec Update Messages**

[Section 4.1](#) provides general guidance on the creation of BGPsec Update Messages -- that is, update messages containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute.

[Section 4.2](#) specifies how a BGPsec speaker generates the BGPsec\_Path attribute to include in a BGPsec Update message.

[Section 4.3](#) contains special processing instructions for members of an autonomous system confederation [[RFC5065](#)]. A BGPsec speaker that is not a member of such a confederation MUST NOT set the Confed\_Segment flag in its Secure\_Path Segment (i.e. leave the flag bit at default value zero) in all BGPsec update messages it sends.

[Section 4.4](#) contains instructions for reconstructing the AS\_PATH attribute in cases where a BGPsec speaker receives an update message with a BGPsec\_Path attribute and wishes to propagate the update message to a peer who does not support BGPsec.

### **4.1. General Guidance**

The information protected by the signature on a BGPsec update message includes the AS number of the peer to whom the update message is being sent. Therefore, if a BGPsec speaker wishes to send a BGPsec update to multiple BGP peers, it must generate a separate BGPsec update message for each unique peer AS to whom the update message is sent.

A BGPsec update message MUST advertise a route to only a single prefix. This is because a BGPsec speaker receiving an update message with multiple prefixes would be unable to construct a valid BGPsec update message (i.e., valid path signatures) containing a subset of the prefixes in the received update. If a BGPsec speaker wishes to advertise routes to multiple prefixes, then it MUST generate a separate BGPsec update message for each prefix. Additionally, a BGPsec update message MUST use the MP\_REACH\_NLRI [[RFC4760](#)] attribute to encode the prefix.

The BGPsec\_Path attribute and the AS\_PATH attribute are mutually exclusive. That is, any update message containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute MUST NOT contain the AS\_PATH attribute. The information that would be contained in the AS\_PATH attribute is instead conveyed in the Secure\_Path portion of the BGPsec\_Path attribute.

In order to create or add a new signature to a BGPsec update message with a given algorithm suite, the BGPsec speaker must possess a private key suitable for generating signatures for this algorithm



suite. Additionally, this private key must correspond to the public key in a valid Resource PKI end-entity certificate whose AS number resource extension includes the BGPsec speaker's AS number [[I-D.ietf-sidr-bgpsec-pki-profiles](#)]. Note also that new signatures are only added to a BGPsec update message when a BGPsec speaker is generating an update message to send to an external peer (i.e., when the AS number of the peer is not equal to the BGPsec speaker's own AS number). Therefore, a BGPsec speaker who only sends BGPsec update messages to peers within its own AS does not need to possess any private signature keys.

The Resource PKI enables the legitimate holder of IP address prefix(es) to issue a signed object, called a Route Origination Authorization (ROA), that authorizes a given AS to originate routes to a given set of prefixes (see [RFC 6482](#) [[RFC6482](#)]). It is expected that most relying parties will utilize BGPsec in tandem with origin validation (see [RFC 6483](#) [[RFC6483](#)] and [RFC 6811](#) [[RFC6811](#)]). Therefore, it is RECOMMENDED that a BGPsec speaker only originate a BGPsec update advertising a route for a given prefix if there exists a valid ROA authorizing the BGPsec speaker's AS to originate routes to this prefix.

If a BGPsec router has received only a non-BGPsec update message (without the BGPsec\_Path attribute), containing the AS\_PATH attribute, from a peer for a given prefix then it MUST NOT attach a BGPsec\_Path attribute when it propagates the update message. (Note that a BGPsec router may also receive a non-BGPsec update message from an internal peer without the AS\_PATH attribute, i.e., with just the NLRI in it. In that case, the prefix is originating from that AS, and if it is selected for advertisement, the BGPsec speaker SHOULD attach a BGPsec\_Path attribute and send a signed route (for that prefix) to its external BGPsec-speaking peers.)

Conversely, if a BGPsec router has received a BGPsec update message (with the BGPsec\_Path attribute) from a peer for a given prefix and it chooses to propagate that peer's route for the prefix, then it SHOULD propagate the route as a BGPsec update message containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute.

Note that removing BGPsec signatures (i.e., propagating a route advertisement without the BGPsec\_Path attribute) has significant security ramifications. (See [Section 8](#) for discussion of the security ramifications of removing BGPsec signatures.) Therefore, when a route advertisement is received via a BGPsec update message, propagating the route advertisement without the BGPsec\_Path attribute is NOT RECOMMENDED, unless the message is sent to a peer that did not advertise the capability to receive BGPsec update messages (see [Section 4.4](#)).



Furthermore, note that when a BGPsec speaker propagates a route advertisement with the BGPsec\_Path attribute it is not attesting to the validation state of the update message it received. (See [Section 8](#) for more discussion of the security semantics of BGPsec signatures.)

If the BGPsec speaker is producing an update message which would, in the absence of BGPsec, contain an AS\_SET (e.g., the BGPsec speaker is performing proxy aggregation), then the BGPsec speaker MUST NOT include the BGPsec\_Path attribute. In such a case, the BGPsec speaker must remove any existing BGPsec\_Path in the received advertisement(s) for this prefix and produce a traditional (non-BGPsec) update message. It should be noted that [BCP 172](#) [[RFC6472](#)] recommends against the use of AS\_SET and AS\_CONFED\_SET in the AS\_PATH of BGP updates.

The case where the BGPsec speaker sends a BGPsec update message to an internal (iBGP) peer is quite simple. When originating a new route advertisement and sending it to an internal peer, the BGPsec speaker omits the BGPsec\_Path attribute. When a BGPsec speaker chooses to forward a BGPsec update message to an iBGP peer, the BGPsec\_Path attribute SHOULD NOT be removed, unless the peer doesn't support BGPsec. In the case when an iBGP peer doesn't support BGPsec, then the BGPsec update is reconstructed to a BGP update with AS\_PATH and then forwarded (see [Section 4.4](#)). In particular, when forwarding to a BGPsec capable iBGP peer, the BGPsec\_Path attribute SHOULD NOT be removed even in the case where the BGPsec update message has not been successfully validated. (See [Section 5](#) for more information on validation, and [Section 8](#) for the security ramifications of removing BGPsec signatures.)

#### **[4.2.](#) Constructing the BGPsec\_Path Attribute**

When a BGPsec speaker receives a BGPsec update message containing a BGPsec\_Path attribute (with one or more signatures) from an (internal or external) peer, it may choose to propagate the route advertisement by sending it to its other (internal or external) peers. When sending said route advertisement to an internal BGPsec-speaking peer, the BGPsec\_Path attribute SHALL NOT be modified. When sending said route advertisement to an external BGPsec-speaking peer, the following procedures are used to form or update the BGPsec\_Path attribute.

To generate the BGPsec\_Path attribute on the outgoing update message, the BGPsec speaker first generates a new Secure\_Path Segment. Note that if the BGPsec speaker is not the origin AS and there is an existing BGPsec\_Path attribute, then the BGPsec speaker prepends its





new Secure\_Path Segment (places in first position) onto the existing Secure\_Path.

The AS number in this Secure\_Path segment MUST match the AS number in the Subject field of the Resource PKI router certificate that will be used to verify the digital signature constructed by this BGPsec speaker (see Section 3.1.1.1 in [[I-D.ietf-sidr-bgpsec-pki-profiles](#)] and [RFC 6487](#) [[RFC6487](#)]).

The pCount field of the Secure\_Path Segment is typically set to the value 1. However, a BGPsec speaker may set the pCount field to a value greater than 1. Setting the pCount field to a value greater than one has the same semantics as repeating an AS number multiple times in the AS\_PATH of a non-BGPsec update message (e.g., for traffic engineering purposes).

To prevent unnecessary processing load in the validation of BGPsec signatures, a BGPsec speaker SHOULD NOT produce multiple consecutive Secure\_Path Segments with the same AS number. This means that to achieve the semantics of prepending the same AS number k times, a BGPsec speaker SHOULD produce a single Secure\_Path Segment -- with pCount of k -- and a single corresponding Signature Segment.

A route server that participates in the BGP control plane, but does not act as a transit AS in the data plane, may choose to set pCount to 0. This option enables the route server to participate in BGPsec and obtain the associated security guarantees without increasing the length of the AS path. (Note that BGPsec speakers compute the length of the AS path by summing the pCount values in the BGPsec\_Path attribute, see [Section 5](#).) However, when a route server sets the pCount value to 0, it still inserts its AS number into the Secure\_Path segment, as this information is needed to validate the signature added by the route server. (See [[I-D.ietf-sidr-as-migration](#)] for a discussion of setting pCount to 0 to facilitate AS Number Migration.) BGPsec speakers SHOULD drop incoming update messages with pCount set to zero in cases where the BGPsec speaker does not expect its peer to set pCount to zero. (That is, pCount is only to be set to zero in cases such as route servers or AS Number Migration where the BGPsec speaker's peer expects pCount to be set to zero.)

Next, the BGPsec speaker generates one or two Signature\_Blocks. Typically, a BGPsec speaker will use only a single algorithm suite, and thus create only a single Signature\_Block in the BGPsec\_Path attribute. However, to ensure backwards compatibility during a period of transition from a 'current' algorithm suite to a 'new' algorithm suite, it will be necessary to originate update messages



that contain a Signature\_Block for both the 'current' and the 'new' algorithm suites (see [Section 6.1](#)).

If the received BGPsec update message contains two Signature\_Blocks and the BGPsec speaker supports both of the corresponding algorithm suites, then the new update message generated by the BGPsec speaker MUST include both of the Signature\_Blocks. If the received BGPsec update message contains two Signature\_Blocks and the BGPsec speaker only supports one of the two corresponding algorithm suites, then the BGPsec speaker MUST remove the Signature\_Block corresponding to the algorithm suite that it does not understand. If the BGPsec speaker does not support the algorithm suites in any of the Signature\_Blocks contained in the received update message, then the BGPsec speaker MUST NOT propagate the route advertisement with the BGPsec\_Path attribute. (That is, if it chooses to propagate this route advertisement at all, it must do so as an unsigned BGP update message. See [Section 4.4](#) for more information on converting to an unsigned BGP message.)

Note that in the case where the BGPsec\_Path has two Signature\_Blocks (corresponding to different algorithm suites), the validation algorithm (see [Section 5.2](#)) deems a BGPsec update message to be 'Valid' if there is at least one supported algorithm suite (and corresponding Signature\_Block) that is deemed 'Valid'. This means that a 'Valid' BGPsec update message may contain a Signature\_Block which is not deemed 'Valid' (e.g., contains signatures that BGPsec does not successfully verify). Nonetheless, such Signature\_Blocks MUST NOT be removed. (See [Section 8](#) for a discussion of the security ramifications of this design choice.)

For each Signature\_Block corresponding to an algorithm suite that the BGPsec speaker does support, the BGPsec speaker MUST add a new Signature Segment to the Signature\_Block. This Signature Segment is prepended to the list of Signature Segments (placed in the first position) so that the list of Signature Segments appears in the same order as the corresponding Secure\_Path segments. The BGPsec speaker populates the fields of this new signature segment as follows.

The Subject Key Identifier field in the new segment is populated with the identifier contained in the Subject Key Identifier extension of the RPKI router certificate corresponding to the BGPsec speaker [[I-D.ietf-sidr-bgpsec-pki-profiles](#)]. This Subject Key Identifier will be used by recipients of the route advertisement to identify the proper certificate to use in verifying the signature.

The Signature field in the new segment contains a digital signature that binds the prefix and BGPsec\_Path attribute to the RPKI router



certificate corresponding to the BGPsec speaker. The digital signature is computed as follows:

- o For clarity, let us number the Secure\_Path and corresponding Signature Segments from 1 to N as follows. Let Secure\_Path Segment 1 and Signature Segment 1 be the segments produced by the origin AS. Let Secure\_Path Segment 2 and Signature Segment 2 be the segments added by the next AS after the origin. Continue this method of numbering and ultimately let Secure\_Path Segment N and Signature Segment N be those that are being added by the current AS. The current AS (Nth AS) is signing and forwarding the update to the next AS (i.e. (N+1)th AS) in the chain of ASes that form the AS path.
- o In order to construct the digital signature for Signature Segment N (the signature segment being produced by the current AS), first construct the sequence of octets to be hashed as shown in Figure 8. (Note: This sequence of octets includes all the data that the Nth AS attests to by adding its digital signature in the update which is being forwarded to a BGPsec speaker in the (N+1)th AS.)

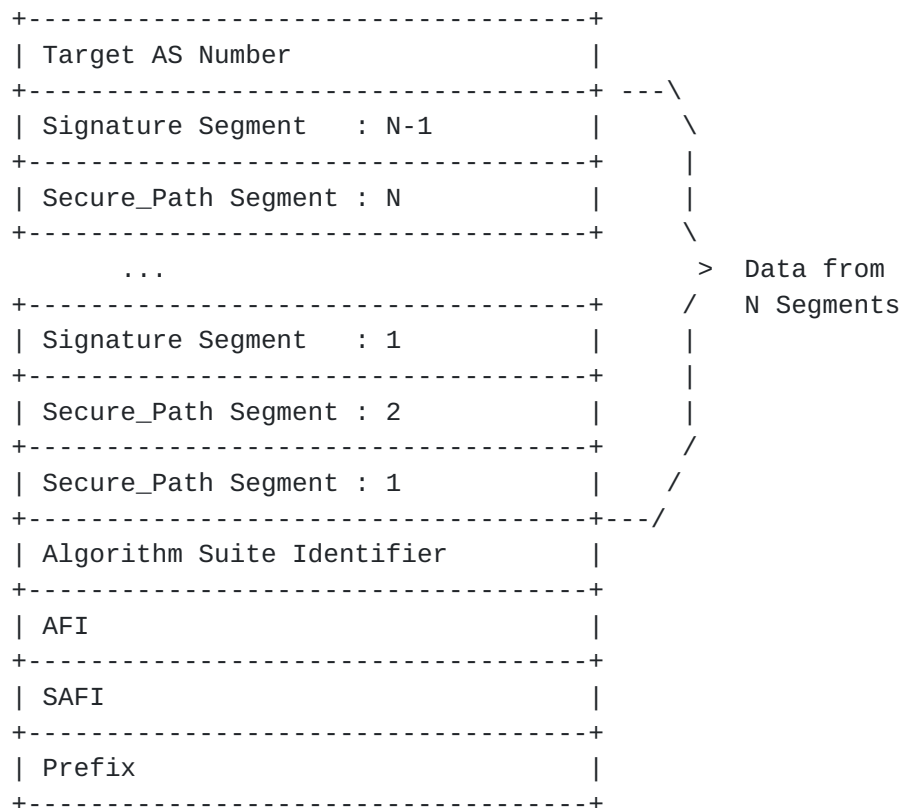


Figure 8: Sequence of octets to be hashed.



The elements in this sequence (Figure 8) MUST be ordered exactly as shown. The 'Target AS Number' is the AS to whom the BGPsec speaker intends to send the update message. (Note that the 'Target AS Number' is the AS number announced by the peer in the OPEN message of the BGP session within which the update is sent.) The Secure\_Path and Signature Segments (1 through N-1) are obtained from the BGPsec\_Path attribute. Finally, the Address Family Identifier (AFI), Subsequent Address Family Identifier (SAFI), and Prefix fields are obtained from the MP\_REACH\_NLRI attribute. Additionally, in the Prefix field all of the trailing bits MUST be set to zero when constructing this sequence.

- o Apply to this octet sequence (in Figure 8) the digest algorithm (for the algorithm suite of this Signature\_Block) to obtain a digest value.
- o Apply to this digest value the signature algorithm, (for the algorithm suite of this Signature\_Block) to obtain the digital signature. Then populate the Signature Field (in Figure 7) with this digital signature.

The Signature Length field (in Figure 7) is populated with the length (in octets) of the value in the Signature field.

#### **4.3. Processing Instructions for Confederation Members**

Members of autonomous system confederations [[RFC5065](#)] MUST additionally follow the instructions in this section for processing BGPsec update messages.

When a confederation member sends a BGPsec update message to a peer that is a member of the same Member-AS, the confederation member SHALL NOT modify the BGPsec\_Path attribute. When a confederation member sends a BGPsec update message to a peer that is a member of the same confederation but is a different Member-AS, the confederation member puts its (private) Member-AS Number (as opposed to the public AS Confederation Identifier) in the AS Number field of the Secure\_Path Segment that it adds to the BGPsec update message. Additionally, in this case, the confederation member that generates the Secure\_Path Segment sets the Confed\_Segment flag to one. This means that in a BGPsec update message, an AS number appears in a Secure\_Path Segment with the Confed\_Segment flag set whenever, in a non-BGPsec update message, the AS number would appear in a segment of type AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE.

Within a confederation, the verification of BGPsec signatures added by other members of the confederation is optional. If a confederation chooses not to have its members verify signatures added





by other confederation members, then when sending a BGPsec update message to a peer that is a member of the same confederation, the confederation members MAY set the Signature field within the Signature Segment that it generates to be zero (in lieu of calculating the correct digital signature as described in [Section 4.2](#)). Note that if a confederation chooses not to verify digital signatures within the confederation, then BGPsec is able to provide no assurances about the integrity of the (private) Member-AS Numbers placed in Secure\_Path segments where the Confed\_Segment flag is set to one.

When a confederation member receives a BGPsec update message from a peer within the confederation and propagates it to a peer outside the confederation, it needs to remove all of the Secure\_Path Segments added by confederation members as well as the corresponding Signature Segments. To do this, the confederation member propagating the route outside the confederation does the following:

- o First, starting with the most recently added Secure\_Path segment, remove all of the consecutive Secure\_Path segments that have the Confed\_Segment flag set to one. Stop this process once a Secure\_Path segment is reached which has its Confed\_Segment flag set to zero. Keep a count of the number of segments removed in this fashion.
- o Second, starting with the most recently added Signature Segment, remove a number of Signature Segments equal to the number of Secure\_Path Segments removed in the previous step. (That is, remove the K most recently added signature segments, where K is the number of Secure\_Path Segments removed in the previous step.)
- o Finally, add a Secure\_Path Segment containing, in the AS field, the AS Confederation Identifier (the public AS number of the confederation) as well as a corresponding Signature Segment. Note that all fields other than the AS field are populated as per [Section 4.2](#).

When validating a received BGPsec update message, confederation members need to make the following adjustment to the algorithm presented in [Section 5.2](#). When a confederation member processes (validates) a Signature Segment and its corresponding Secure\_Path Segment, the confederation member must note the following. For a signature produced by a peer BGPsec speaker outside of a confederation, the 'Target AS Number' will always be the AS Confederation Identifier (the public AS number of the confederation) as opposed to the Member-AS Number.



To handle this case, when a BGPsec speaker (that is a confederation member) processes a current Secure\_Path Segment that has the Confed\_Segment flag set to zero, if the next most recently added Secure\_Path segment has the Confed\_Segment flag set to one then, when computing the digest for the current Secure\_Path segment, the BGPsec speaker takes the 'Target AS Number' to be the AS Confederation Identifier of the validating BGPsec speaker's own confederation. (Note that the algorithm in [Section 5.2](#) processes Secure\_Path Segments in order from most recently added to least recently added, therefore, this special case will apply to the first Secure\_Path segment that the algorithm encounters that has the Confed\_Segment flag set to zero.)

Finally, as discussed above, an AS confederation may optionally decide that its members will not verify digital signatures added by members. In such a federation, when a confederation member runs the algorithm in [Section 5.2](#), the confederation member, during the process of error checking, first checks whether the Confed\_Segment flag in the corresponding Secure\_Path segment is set to one. If the Confed\_Segment flag is set to one in the corresponding Secure\_Path segment, the confederation member does not perform any further checks on the Signature Segment and immediately moves on to the next Signature Segment (and checks its corresponding Secure\_Path segment). Note that as specified in [Section 5.2](#), it is an error when a BGPsec speaker receives from a peer, who is not in the same AS confederation, a BGPsec update containing a Confed\_Segment flag set to one.

#### **[4.4.](#) Reconstructing the AS\_PATH Attribute**

BGPsec update messages do not contain the AS\_PATH attribute. However, the AS\_PATH attribute can be reconstructed from the BGPsec\_Path attribute. This is necessary in the case where a route advertisement is received via a BGPsec update message and then propagated to a peer via a non-BGPsec update message (e.g., because the latter peer does not support BGPsec). Note that there may be additional cases where an implementation finds it useful to perform this reconstruction. Before attempting to reconstruct an AS\_PATH for the purpose of forwarding an unsigned (non-BGPsec) update to a peer, a BGPsec speaker MUST perform the basic integrity checks listed in [Section 5.2](#) to ensure that the received BGPsec update is properly formed.

The AS\_PATH attribute can be constructed from the BGPsec\_Path attribute as follows. Starting with an empty AS\_PATH attribute, process the Secure\_Path segments in order from least-recently added (corresponding to the origin) to most-recently added. For each Secure\_Path segment perform the following steps:



1. If the Confed\_Segment flag in the Secure\_Path segment is set to one, then look at the most-recently added segment in the AS\_PATH.
  - \* In the case where the AS\_PATH is empty or in the case where the most-recently added segment is of type AS\_SEQUENCE then add (prepend to the AS\_PATH) a new AS\_PATH segment of type AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE. This segment of type AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE shall contain a number of elements equal to the pCount field in the current Secure\_Path segment. Each of these elements shall be the AS number contained in the current Secure\_Path segment. (That is, if the pCount field is X, then the segment of type AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE contains X copies of the Secure\_Path segment's AS Number field.)
  - \* In the case where the most-recently added segment in the AS\_PATH is of type AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE then add (prepend to the segment) a number of elements equal to the pCount field in the current Secure\_Path segment. The value of each of these elements shall be the AS number contained in the current Secure\_Path segment. (That is, if the pCount field is X, then add X copies of the Secure\_Path segment's AS Number field to the existing AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE.)
2. If the Confed\_Segment flag in the Secure\_Path segment is set to zero, then look at the most-recently added segment in the AS\_PATH.
  - \* In the case where the AS\_PATH is empty, and the pCount field in the Secure\_Path segment is greater than zero, add (prepend to the AS\_PATH) a new AS\_PATH segment of type AS\_SEQUENCE. This segment of type AS\_SEQUENCE shall contain a number of elements equal to the pCount field in the current Secure\_Path segment. Each of these elements shall be the AS number contained in the current Secure\_Path segment. (That is, if the pCount field is X, then the segment of type AS\_SEQUENCE contains X copies of the Secure\_Path segment's AS Number field.)
  - \* In the case where the most recently added segment in the AS\_PATH is of type AS\_SEQUENCE then add (prepend to the segment) a number of elements equal to the pCount field in the current Secure\_Path segment. The value of each of these elements shall be the AS number contained in the current Secure\_Path segment. (That is, if the pCount field is X, then add X copies of the Secure\_Path segment's AS Number field to the existing AS\_SEQUENCE.)



As part of the above described procedure, the following additional actions are performed in order not to exceed the size limitations of AS\_SEQUENCE and AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE. While adding the next Secure\_Path segment (with its prepends, if any) to the AS\_PATH being assembled, if it would cause the AS\_SEQUENCE (or AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE) at hand to exceed the 255 ASN per segment limit [[RFC4271](#)] [[RFC5065](#)], then the BGPsec speaker would follow the recommendations in [RFC 4271](#) [[RFC4271](#)] and [RFC 5065](#) [[RFC5065](#)] of creating another segment of the same type (AS\_SEQUENCE or AS\_CONFED\_SEQUENCE) and continue filling that.

## 5. Processing a Received BGPsec Update

Upon receiving a BGPsec update message from an external (eBGP) peer, a BGPsec speaker SHOULD validate the message to determine the authenticity of the path information contained in the BGPsec\_Path attribute. Typically, a BGPsec speaker will also wish to perform origin validation (see [RFC 6483](#) [[RFC6483](#)] and [RFC 6811](#) [[RFC6811](#)]) on an incoming BGPsec update message, but such validation is independent of the validation described in this section.

[Section 5.1](#) provides an overview of BGPsec validation and [Section 5.2](#) provides a specific algorithm for performing such validation. (Note that an implementation need not follow the specific algorithm in [Section 5.2](#) as long as the input/output behavior of the validation is identical to that of the algorithm in [Section 5.2](#).) During exceptional conditions (e.g., the BGPsec speaker receives an incredibly large number of update messages at once) a BGPsec speaker MAY temporarily defer validation of incoming BGPsec update messages. The treatment of such BGPsec update messages, whose validation has been deferred, is a matter of local policy. However, an implementation SHOULD ensure that deferment of validation and status of deferred messages is visible to the operator.

The validity of BGPsec update messages is a function of the current RPKI state. When a BGPsec speaker learns that RPKI state has changed (e.g., from an RPKI validating cache via the RPKI-to-Router protocol [[I-D.ietf-sidr-rpki-rtr-rfc6810-bis](#)]), the BGPsec speaker MUST re-run validation on all affected update messages stored in its Adj-RIB-In. For example, when a given RPKI certificate ceases to be valid (e.g., it expires or is revoked), all update messages containing a signature whose SKI matches the SKI in the given certificate must be re-assessed to determine if they are still valid. If this reassessment determines that the validity state of an update has changed then, depending on local policy, it may be necessary to re-run best path selection.





BGPsec update messages do not contain an AS\_PATH attribute. The Secure\_Path contains AS path information for the BGPsec update message. Therefore, a BGPsec speaker MUST utilize the AS path information in the Secure\_Path in all cases where it would otherwise use the AS path information in the AS\_PATH attribute. The only exception to this rule is when AS path information must be updated in order to propagate a route to a peer (in which case the BGPsec speaker follows the instructions in [Section 4](#)). [Section 4.4](#) provides an algorithm for constructing an AS\_PATH attribute from a BGPsec\_Path attribute. Whenever the use of AS path information is called for (e.g., loop detection, or use of AS path length in best path selection) the externally visible behavior of the implementation shall be the same as if the implementation had run the algorithm in [Section 4.4](#) and used the resulting AS\_PATH attribute as it would for a non-BGPsec update message.

### **5.1. Overview of BGPsec Validation**

Validation of a BGPsec update messages makes use of data from RPKI certificates. In particular, it is necessary that the recipient have access to the following data obtained from valid RPKI certificates: the AS Number, Public Key and Subject Key Identifier from each valid RPKI router certificate.

Note that the BGPsec speaker could perform the validation of RPKI certificates on its own and extract the required data, or it could receive the same data from a trusted cache that performs RPKI validation on behalf of (some set of) BGPsec speakers. (For example, the trusted cache could deliver the necessary validity information to the BGPsec speaker using the router key PDU for the RPKI-to-Router protocol [[I-D.ietf-sidr-rpki-rtr-rfc6810-bis](#)].)

To validate a BGPsec update message containing the BGPsec\_Path attribute, the recipient performs the validation steps specified in [Section 5.2](#). The validation procedure results in one of two states: 'Valid' and 'Not Valid'.

It is expected that the output of the validation procedure will be used as an input to BGP route selection. That said, BGP route selection, and thus the handling of the validation states is a matter of local policy, and is handled using local policy mechanisms. Implementations SHOULD enable operators to set such local policy on a per-session basis. (That is, it is expected that some operators will choose to treat BGPsec validation status differently for update messages received over different BGP sessions.)

BGPsec validation needs only be performed at the eBGP edge. The validation status of a BGP signed/unsigned update MAY be conveyed via



iBGP from an ingress edge router to an egress edge router via some mechanism, according to local policy within an AS. As discussed in [Section 4](#), when a BGPsec speaker chooses to forward a (syntactically correct) BGPsec update message, it should be forwarded with its BGPsec\_Path attribute intact (regardless of the validation state of the update message). Based entirely on local policy, an egress router receiving a BGPsec update message from within its own AS MAY choose to perform its own validation.

## **5.2. Validation Algorithm**

This section specifies an algorithm for validation of BGPsec update messages. A conformant implementation MUST include a BGPsec update validation algorithm that is functionally equivalent to the externally visible behavior of this algorithm.

First, the recipient of a BGPsec update message performs a check to ensure that the message is properly formed. Both syntactical and protocol violation errors are checked. The error checks specified in [Section 6.3 of \[RFC4271\]](#) are performed, except that for BGPsec updates the checks on the AS\_PATH attribute do not apply and instead the following checks on BGPsec\_Path attribute are performed:

1. Check to ensure that the entire BGPsec\_Path attribute is syntactically correct (conforms to the specification in this document).
2. Check that AS number in the most recently added Secure\_Path segment (i.e. the one corresponding to the peer from which the update message was received) matches the AS number of that peer (as specified in the BGP OPEN message).
3. Check that each Signature\_Block contains one Signature segment for each Secure\_Path segment in the Secure\_Path portion of the BGPsec\_Path attribute. (Note that the entirety of each Signature\_Block must be checked to ensure that it is well formed, even though the validation process may terminate before all signatures are cryptographically verified.)
4. Check that the update message does not contain an AS\_PATH attribute.
5. If the update message was received from an BGPsec peer that is not a member of the BGPsec speaker's AS confederation, check to ensure that none of the Secure\_Path segments contain a Flags field with the Confed\_Segment flag set to one.



6. If the update message was received from a BGPsec peer that is a member of the BGPsec speaker's AS confederation, check to ensure that the Secure\_Path segment corresponding to that peer contains a Flags field with the Confed\_Segment flag set to one.
7. If the update message was received from a peer that is not expected to set pCount equal to zero (see [Section 4.2](#)) then check to ensure that the pCount field in the most-recently added Secure\_Path segment is not equal to zero.

If any of these checks fail, it is an error in the BGPsec\_Path attribute. BGPsec speakers MUST handle any syntactical or protocol errors in the BGPsec\_Path attribute using the "treat-as-withdraw" approach as defined in [RFC 7606](#) [[RFC7606](#)].

Next, the BGPsec speaker examines the Signature\_Blocks in the BGPsec\_Path attribute. A Signature\_Block corresponding to an algorithm suite that the BGPsec speaker does not support is not considered in validation. If there is no Signature\_Block corresponding to an algorithm suite that the BGPsec speaker supports, then in order to consider the update in the route selection process, the BGPsec speaker MUST strip the Signature\_Block(s), reconstruct the AS\_PATH from the Secure\_Path (see [Section 4.4](#)), and treat the update as if it was received as an unsigned BGP update.

For each remaining Signature\_Block (corresponding to an algorithm suite supported by the BGPsec speaker), the BGPsec speaker iterates through the Signature segments in the Signature\_Block, starting with the most recently added segment (and concluding with the least recently added segment). Note that there is a one-to-one correspondence between Signature segments and Secure\_Path segments within the BGPsec\_Path attribute. The following steps make use of this correspondence.

- o (Step 1): Let there be K AS hops in a received BGPsec\_Path attribute that is to be validated. Let AS(1), AS(2), ..., AS(K+1) denote the sequence of AS numbers from the origin AS to the validating AS. Let Secure\_Path Segment N and Signature Segment N in the BGPsec\_Path attribute refer to those corresponding to AS(N) (where N = 1, 2, ..., K). The BGPsec speaker that is processing and validating the BGPsec\_Path attribute resides in AS(K+1). Let Signature Segment N be the Signature Segment that is currently being verified.
- o (Step 2): Locate the public key needed to verify the signature (in the current Signature segment). To do this, consult the valid RPKI router certificate data and look up all valid (AS, SKI, Public Key) triples in which the AS matches the AS number in the



corresponding Secure\_Path segment. Of these triples that match the AS number, check whether there is an SKI that matches the value in the Subject Key Identifier field of the Signature segment. If this check finds no such matching SKI value, then mark the entire Signature\_Block as 'Not Valid' and proceed to the next Signature\_Block.

- o (Step 3): Compute the digest function (for the given algorithm suite) on the appropriate data.

In order to verify the digital signature in Signature Segment N, construct the sequence of octets to be hashed as shown in Figure 9 (using the notations defined in Step 1). (Note that this sequence is the same sequence that was used by AS(N) that created the Signature Segment N (see [Section 4.2](#) and Figure 8).)

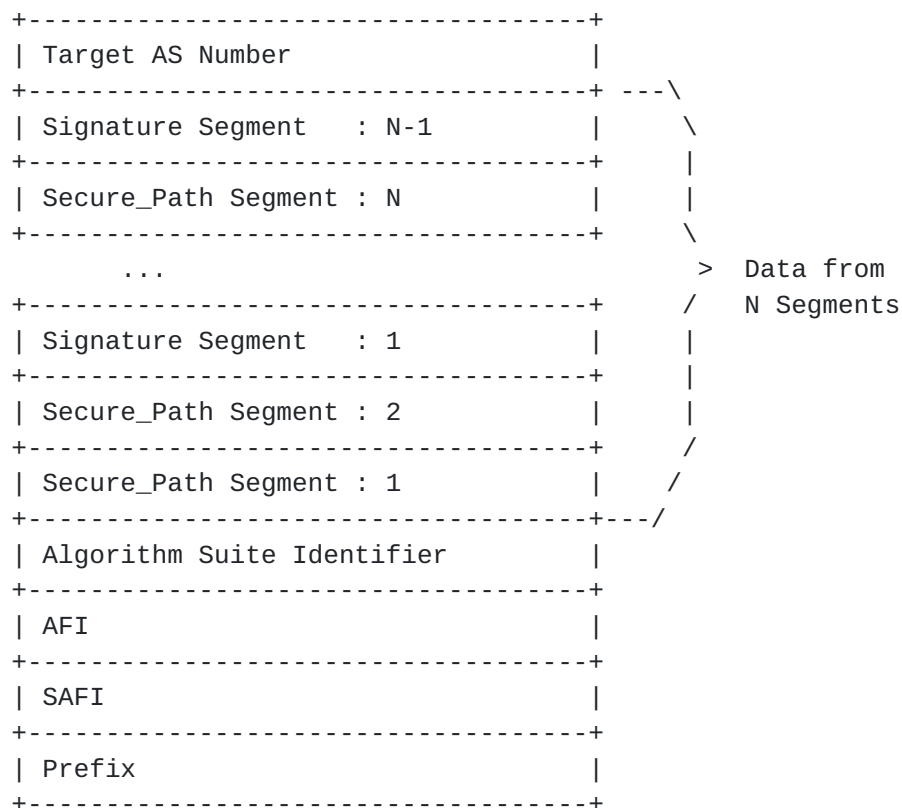


Figure 9: The Sequence of octets to be hashed for signature verification of Signature Segment N; N = 1,2, ..., K, where K is the number of AS hops in the BGPsec\_Path attribute.

The elements in this sequence (Figure 9) MUST be ordered exactly as shown. For the first segment to be processed (the most recently added segment (i.e. N = K) given that there are K hops





in the Secure\_Path), the 'Target AS Number' is AS(K+1), the AS number of the BGPsec speaker validating the update message. Note that if a BGPsec speaker uses multiple AS Numbers (e.g., the BGPsec speaker is a member of a confederation), the AS number used here MUST be the AS number announced in the OPEN message for the BGP session over which the BGPsec update was received.

For each other Signature Segment (N smaller than K), the 'Target AS Number' is AS(N+1), the AS number in the Secure\_Path segment that corresponds to the Signature Segment added immediately after the one being processed. (That is, in the Secure\_Path segment that corresponds to the Signature segment that the validator just finished processing.)

The Secure\_Path and Signature Segment are obtained from the BGPsec\_Path attribute. The Address Family Identifier (AFI), Subsequent Address Family Identifier (SAFI), and Prefix fields are obtained from the MP\_REACH\_NLRI attribute. Additionally, in the Prefix field all of the trailing bits MUST be set to zero when constructing this sequence.

- o (Step 4): Use the signature validation algorithm (for the given algorithm suite) to verify the signature in the current segment. That is, invoke the signature validation algorithm on the following three inputs: the value of the Signature field in the current segment; the digest value computed in Step 3 above; and the public key obtained from the valid RPKI data in Step 2 above. If the signature validation algorithm determines that the signature is invalid, then mark the entire Signature\_Block as 'Not Valid' and proceed to the next Signature\_Block. If the signature validation algorithm determines that the signature is valid, then continue processing Signature Segments (within the current Signature\_Block).

If all Signature Segments within a Signature\_Block pass validation (i.e., all segments are processed and the Signature\_Block has not yet been marked 'Not Valid'), then the Signature\_Block is marked as 'Valid'.

If at least one Signature\_Block is marked as 'Valid', then the validation algorithm terminates and the BGPsec update message is deemed to be 'Valid'. (That is, if a BGPsec update message contains two Signature\_Blocks then the update message is deemed 'Valid' if the first Signature\_Block is marked 'Valid' OR the second Signature\_Block is marked 'Valid'.)



## **6. Algorithms and Extensibility**

### **6.1. Algorithm Suite Considerations**

Note that there is currently no support for bilateral negotiation (using BGP capabilities) between BGPsec peers to use a particular (digest and signature) algorithm suite. This is because the algorithm suite used by the sender of a BGPsec update message must be understood not only by the peer to whom it is directly sending the message, but also by all BGPsec speakers to whom the route advertisement is eventually propagated. Therefore, selection of an algorithm suite cannot be a local matter negotiated by BGP peers, but instead must be coordinated throughout the Internet.

To this end, a mandatory algorithm suites document exists which specifies a mandatory-to-use 'current' algorithm suite for use by all BGPsec speakers [[I-D.ietf-sidr-bgpsec-algs](#)].

It is anticipated that, in the future, the mandatory algorithm suites document will be updated to specify a transition from the 'current' algorithm suite to a 'new' algorithm suite. During the period of transition (likely a small number of years), all BGPsec update messages SHOULD simultaneously use both the 'current' algorithm suite and the 'new' algorithm suite. (Note that [Section 3](#) and [Section 4](#) specify how the BGPsec\_Path attribute can contain signatures, in parallel, for two algorithm suites.) Once the transition is complete, use of the old 'current' algorithm will be deprecated, use of the 'new' algorithm will be mandatory, and a subsequent 'even newer' algorithm suite may be specified as recommended to implement. Once the transition has successfully been completed in this manner, BGPsec speakers SHOULD include only a single Signature\_Block (corresponding to the 'new' algorithm).

### **6.2. Extensibility Considerations**

This section discusses potential changes to BGPsec that would require substantial changes to the processing of the BGPsec\_Path and thus necessitate a new version of BGPsec. Examples of such changes include:

- o A new type of signature algorithm that produces signatures of variable length
- o A new type of signature algorithm for which the number of signatures in the Signature\_Block is not equal to the number of ASes in the Secure\_Path (e.g., aggregate signatures)



- o Changes to the data that is protected by the BGPsec signatures (e.g., attributes other than the AS path)

In the case that such a change to BGPsec were deemed desirable, it is expected that a subsequent version of BGPsec would be created and that this version of BGPsec would specify a new BGP path attribute, let's call it BGPsec\_Path\_Two, which is designed to accommodate the desired changes to BGPsec. In such a case, the mandatory algorithm suites document would be updated to specify algorithm suites appropriate for the new version of BGPsec.

At this point a transition would begin which is analogous to the algorithm transition discussed in [Section 6.1](#). During the transition period all BGPsec speakers should simultaneously include both the BGPsec\_Path attribute and the new BGPsec\_Path\_Two attribute. Once the transition is complete, the use of BGPsec\_Path could then be deprecated, at which point BGPsec speakers should include only the new BGPsec\_Path\_Two attribute. Such a process could facilitate a transition to a new BGPsec semantics in a backwards compatible fashion.

## **7. Operations and Management Considerations**

Some operations and management issues that are closely relevant to BGPsec protocol specification and its deployment are highlighted here. The Best Current Practice concerning operational deployment of BGPsec is provided in [[I-D.ietf-sidr-bgpsec-ops](#)].

[Section 2.2](#) describes the negotiation required to establish a BGPsec-capable peering session. Not only must the BGPsec capability be exchanged (and agreed on), but the BGP multiprotocol extension [[RFC4760](#)] for the same AFI and the four-byte AS capability [[RFC6793](#)] must also be exchanged. Failure to properly negotiate a BGPsec session, due to a missing capability, for example, may still result in the exchange of BGP (unsigned) updates. While the BGP chain of ASNs is not broken, the security can be reduced and a contiguous set of BGPsec peers may not exist anymore. It is RECOMMENDED that an implementation log the failure to properly negotiate a BGPsec session if the local BGP speaker is configured for it. Also, an implementation MUST have ability to prevent a BGP session from being established if configured for only BGPsec use.

A peer that is an Internet Exchange Point (IXP) (i.e. Route Server) with a transparent AS is expected to set pCount = 0 in its Secure\_Path segment while forwarding an update to a peer (see [Section 4.2](#)). Clearly, such an IXP SHOULD configure itself to set its own pCount = 0. As stated in [Section 4.2](#), "BGPsec speakers SHOULD drop incoming update messages with pCount set to zero in cases



where the BGPsec speaker does not expect its peer to set pCount to zero." This means that a BGPsec speaker SHOULD be configured so that it permits pCount = 0 from an IXP peer and never permits pCount = 0 from a peer that is not an IXP.

During the validation of a BGPsec update, route processor performance speedup can be achieved by incorporating the following observations. An update is deemed 'Valid' if at least one of the Signature\_Blocks is marked as 'Valid' (see [Section 5.2](#)). Therefore, if an update contains two Signature\_Blocks and the first one verified is found 'Valid', then the second Signature\_Block does not have to be verified. And if the update were chosen for best path, then the BGPsec speaker adds its signature (generated with the respective algorithm) to each of the two Signature\_Blocks and forwards the update. Also, a BGPsec update is deemed 'Not Valid' if at least one signature in each of the Signature\_Blocks is invalid. This principle can also be used for route processor workload savings, i.e. the verification for a Signature\_Block terminates early when the first invalid signature is encountered.

Many signature algorithms are non-deterministic. That is, many signature algorithms will produce different signatures each time they are run (even when they are signing the same data with the same key). Therefore, if a BGPsec router receives a BGPsec update from a peer and later receives a second BGPsec update message from the same peer for the same prefix with the same Secure\_Path and SKIs, the second update will differ from the first update in the signature fields (for a non-deterministic signature algorithm). For a deterministic signature algorithm, the signature fields will also be identical between the two updates. On the basis of these observations, an implementation may incorporate optimizations in update validation processing.

In [Section 2.2](#), it was stated that a BGPsec speaker SHOULD announce support for the capability to receive BGP extended messages. Lack of negotiation of this capability is not expected to pose a problem in the early years of BGPsec deployment. However, as BGPsec is deployed more and more, the BGPsec update messages would grow in size and some messages may be dropped due to their size exceeding the current 4K bytes limit. Therefore, it is strongly RECOMMENDED that all BGPsec speakers negotiate the extended message capability within a reasonable period of time after initial deployment of BGPsec.

How will migration from BGP to BGPsec look like? What are the benefits for the first adopters? Initially small groups of contiguous ASes would be doing BGPsec. There would be possibly one or more such groups in different geographic regions of the global Internet. Only the routes originated within each group and





propagated within its borders would get the benefits of cryptographic AS path protection. As BGPsec adoption grows, each group grows in size and eventually they join together to form even larger BGPsec capable groups of contiguous ASes. The benefit for early adopters starts with AS path security within the contiguous-AS regions spanned by their respective groups. Over time they would see those contiguous-AS regions grow much larger.

## 8. Security Considerations

For a discussion of the BGPsec threat model and related security considerations, please see [RFC 7132](#) [[RFC7132](#)].

### 8.1. Security Guarantees

When used in conjunction with Origin Validation (see [RFC 6483](#) [[RFC6483](#)] and [RFC 6811](#) [[RFC6811](#)]), a BGPsec speaker who receives a valid BGPsec update message, containing a route advertisement for a given prefix, is provided with the following security guarantees:

- o The origin AS number corresponds to an autonomous system that has been authorized, in the RPKI, by the IP address space holder to originate route advertisements for the given prefix.
- o For each AS in the path, a BGPsec speaker authorized by the holder of the AS number intentionally chose (in accordance with local policy) to propagate the route advertisement to the subsequent AS in the path.

That is, the recipient of a valid BGPsec update message is assured that the update propagated via the sequence of ASes listed in the Secure\_Path portion of the BGPsec\_Path attribute. (It should be noted that BGPsec does not offer any guarantee that the data packets would flow along the indicated path; it only guarantees that the BGP update conveying the path indeed propagated along the indicated path.) Furthermore, the recipient is assured that this path terminates in an autonomous system that has been authorized by the IP address space holder as a legitimate destination for traffic to the given prefix.

Note that although BGPsec provides a mechanism for an AS to validate that a received update message has certain security properties, the use of such a mechanism to influence route selection is completely a matter of local policy. Therefore, a BGPsec speaker can make no assumptions about the validity of a route received from an external BGPsec peer. That is, a compliant BGPsec peer may (depending on the local policy of the peer) send update messages that fail the validity test in [Section 5](#). Thus, a BGPsec speaker MUST completely validate



all BGPsec update messages received from external peers. (Validation of update messages received from internal peers is a matter of local policy, see [Section 5](#)).

## **8.2. On the Removal of BGPsec Signatures**

There may be cases where a BGPsec speaker deems 'Valid' (as per the validation algorithm in [Section 5.2](#)) a BGPsec update message that contains both a 'Valid' and a 'Not Valid' Signature\_Block. That is, the update message contains two sets of signatures corresponding to two algorithm suites, and one set of signatures verifies correctly and the other set of signatures fails to verify. In this case, the protocol specifies that a BGPsec speaker choosing to propagate the route advertisement in such an update message should add its signature to each of the Signature\_Blocks (see [Section 4.2](#)). Thus the BGPsec speaker creates a signature using both algorithm suites and creates a new update message that contains both the 'Valid' and the 'Not Valid' set of signatures (from its own vantage point).

To understand the reason for such a design decision, consider the case where the BGPsec speaker receives an update message with both a set of algorithm A signatures which are 'Valid' and a set of algorithm B signatures which are 'Not Valid'. In such a case it is possible (perhaps even likely, depending on the state of the algorithm transition) that some of the BGPsec speaker's peers (or other entities further 'downstream' in the BGP topology) do not support algorithm A. Therefore, if the BGPsec speaker were to remove the 'Not Valid' set of signatures corresponding to algorithm B, such entities would treat the message as though it were unsigned. By including the 'Not Valid' set of signatures when propagating a route advertisement, the BGPsec speaker ensures that 'downstream' entities have as much information as possible to make an informed opinion about the validation status of a BGPsec update.

Note also that during a period of partial BGPsec deployment, a 'downstream' entity might reasonably treat unsigned messages differently from BGPsec updates that contain a single set of 'Not Valid' signatures. That is, by removing the set of 'Not Valid' signatures the BGPsec speaker might actually cause a downstream entity to 'upgrade' the status of a route advertisement from 'Not Valid' to unsigned. Finally, note that in the above scenario, the BGPsec speaker might have deemed algorithm A signatures 'Valid' only because of some issue with RPKI state local to its AS (for example, its AS might not yet have obtained a CRL indicating that a key used to verify an algorithm A signature belongs to a newly revoked certificate). In such a case, it is highly desirable for a downstream entity to treat the update as 'Not Valid' (due to the



revocation) and not as 'unsigned' (which would happen if the 'Not Valid' Signature\_Blocks were removed).

A similar argument applies to the case where a BGPsec speaker (for some reason such as lack of viable alternatives) selects as its best path (to a given prefix) a route obtained via a 'Not Valid' BGPsec update message. In such a case, the BGPsec speaker should propagate a signed BGPsec update message, adding its signature to the 'Not Valid' signatures that already exist. Again, this is to ensure that 'downstream' entities are able to make an informed decision and not erroneously treat the route as unsigned. It should also be noted that due to possible differences in RPKI data observed at different vantage points in the network, a BGPsec update deemed 'Not Valid' at an upstream BGPsec speaker may be deemed 'Valid' by another BGP speaker downstream.

Indeed, when a BGPsec speaker signs an outgoing update message, it is not attesting to a belief that all signatures prior to its are valid. Instead it is merely asserting that:

- o The BGPsec speaker received the given route advertisement with the indicated prefix, AFI, SAFI, and Secure\_Path; and
- o The BGPsec speaker chose to propagate an advertisement for this route to the peer (implicitly) indicated by the 'Target AS Number'.

### **8.3. Mitigation of Denial of Service Attacks**

The BGPsec update validation procedure is a potential target for denial of service attacks against a BGPsec speaker. The mitigation of denial of service attacks that are specific to the BGPsec protocol is considered here.

To mitigate the effectiveness of such denial of service attacks, BGPsec speakers should implement an update validation algorithm that performs expensive checks (e.g., signature verification) after performing less expensive checks (e.g., syntax checks). The validation algorithm specified in [Section 5.2](#) was chosen so as to perform checks which are likely to be expensive after checks that are likely to be inexpensive. However, the relative cost of performing required validation steps may vary between implementations, and thus the algorithm specified in [Section 5.2](#) may not provide the best denial of service protection for all implementations.

Additionally, sending update messages with very long AS paths (and hence a large number of signatures) is a potential mechanism to conduct denial of service attacks. For this reason, it is important



that an implementation of the validation algorithm stops attempting to verify signatures as soon as an invalid signature is found. (This ensures that long sequences of invalid signatures cannot be used for denial of service attacks.) Furthermore, implementations can mitigate such attacks by only performing validation on update messages that, if valid, would be selected as the best path. That is, if an update message contains a route that would lose out in best path selection for other reasons (e.g., a very long AS path) then it is not necessary to determine the BGPsec-validity status of the route.

#### **8.4. Additional Security Considerations**

The mechanism of setting the pCount field to zero is included in this specification to enable route servers in the control path to participate in BGPsec without increasing the length of the AS path. However, entities other than route servers could conceivably use this mechanism (set the pCount to zero) to attract traffic (by reducing the length of the AS path) illegitimately. This risk is largely mitigated if every BGPsec speaker drops incoming update messages that set pCount to zero but come from a peer that is not a route server. However, note that a recipient of a BGPsec update message within which an upstream entity two or more hops away has set pCount to zero is unable to verify for themselves whether pCount was set to zero legitimately.

There is a possibility of passing a BGPsec update via tunneling between colluding ASes. For example, say, AS-X does not peer with AS-Y, but colludes with AS-Y, signs and sends a BGPsec update to AS-Y by tunneling. AS-Y can then further sign and propagate the BGPsec update to its peers. It is beyond the scope of the BGPsec protocol to detect this form of malicious behavior. BGPsec is designed to protect messages sent within BGP (i.e. within the control plane) - not when the control plane is bypassed.

A variant of the collusion by tunneling mentioned above can happen in the context of AS confederations. When a BGPsec router (outside of a confederation) is forwarding an update to a member of the confederation, it signs the update to the public ASN of the confederation and not to the member's ASN (see [Section 4.3](#)). Said member can tunnel the signed update to another member as is (i.e. without adding a signature). The update can then be propagated using BGPsec to other confederation members or to BGPsec neighbors outside of the confederation. This kind of operation is possible, but no grave security or reachability compromise is feared due to the following reasons: (1) The confederation members belong to one organization and strong internal trust is expected; and (2) Recall that the signatures that are internal to the confederation must be





removed prior to forwarding the update to an outside BGPsec router (see [Section 4.3](#)).

BGPsec does not provide protection against attacks at the transport layer. As with any BGP session, an adversary on the path between a BGPsec speaker and its peer is able to perform attacks such as modifying valid BGPsec updates to cause them to fail validation, injecting (unsigned) BGP update messages without BGPsec\_Path attributes, injecting BGPsec update messages with BGPsec\_Path attributes that fail validation, or causing the peer to tear-down the BGP session. The use of BGPsec does nothing to increase the power of an on-path adversary -- in particular, even an on-path adversary cannot cause a BGPsec speaker to believe a BGPsec-invalid route is valid. However, as with any BGP session, BGPsec sessions SHOULD be protected by appropriate transport security mechanisms (see the Security Considerations section in [\[RFC4271\]](#)).

There is a possibility of replay attacks which are defined as follows. In the context of BGPsec, a replay attack occurs when a malicious BGPsec speaker in the AS path suppresses a prefix withdrawal (implicit or explicit). Further, a replay attack is said to occur also when a malicious BGPsec speaker replays a previously received BGPsec announcement for a prefix that has since been withdrawn. The mitigation strategy for replay attacks involves router certificate rollover; please see [\[I-D.ietf-sidr-bgpsec-rollover\]](#) for details.

## 9. IANA Considerations

IANA is requested to register a new BGP capability from [Section 2.1](#) in the BGP Capabilities Code registry's "IETF Review" range. The description for the new capability is "BGPsec Capability". The reference for the new capability is this document (i.e. the RFC that replaces [draft-ietf-sidr-bgpsec-protocol](#)).

IANA is also requested to register a new path attribute from [Section 3](#) in the BGP Path Attributes registry. The code for this new attribute is "BGPsec\_Path". The reference for the new capability is this document (i.e. the RFC that replaces [draft-ietf-sidr-bgpsec-protocol](#)).

IANA is requested to define the "BGPsec Capability" registry in the Resource Public Key Infrastructure (RPKI) group. The registry is as shown in Figure 10 with values assigned from [Section 2.1](#):



Bits	Field	Reference
0-3	Version	[This RFC]
	Value = 0x0	[This RFC]
4	Direction	[This RFC]
5-7	Unassigned	[This RFC]

Figure 10: IANA registry for BGPsec Capability.

Future Version values and future values of the Unassigned bits are assigned using the "Standards Action" registration procedures defined in [RFC 5226](#) [[RFC5226](#)].

IANA is requested to define the "BGPsec\_Path Flags" registry in the RPKI group. The registry is as shown in Figure 11 with one value assigned from [Section 3.1](#):

Flag	Description	Reference
0	Confed_Segment	[This RFC]
1-7	Unassigned (set to zeros)	

Figure 11: IANA registry for BGPsec\_Path Flags field.

Future values of the Unassigned bits are assigned using the "Standards Action" registration procedures defined in [RFC 5226](#) [[RFC5226](#)].

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