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Clarifications for when to use the name-addr production in SIP messages
[draft-ietf-sipcore-name-addr-guidance-02](#)

Abstract

[RFC3261](#) constrained several SIP header fields whose grammar contains the "name-addr / addr-spec" alternative to use name-addr when certain characters appear. Unfortunately it expressed the constraints with prose copied into each header field definition, and at least one header field was missed. Further, the constraint has not been copied into documents defining extension headers whose grammar contains the alternative.

This document updates [RFC3261](#) to state the constraint generically, and clarifies that the constraint applies to all SIP header fields where there is a choice between using name-addr or addr-spec. It also updates the RFCs that define extension SIP header fields using the alternative to clarify that the constraint applies (RFCs 3325, 3515, 3892, 4508, 5002, 5318, 5360, and 5502).

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[1.](#) Introduction

[RFC3261] defines several header fields that contain URIs to allow both a form that contains the bare URI (addr-spec) and one that provides a name and the URI (name-addr). This subset, taken from the ABNF [[RFC5234](#)] specified in [[RFC3261](#)] shows the relevant part of the definition of the syntax of the "From" header field:

```

From           = ( "From" / "f" ) HCOLON from-spec
from-spec      = ( name-addr / addr-spec )
                *( SEMI from-param )
name-addr      = [ display-name ] LAQUOT addr-spec RAQUOT
addr-spec      = SIP-URI / SIPS-URI / absoluteURI

```

The prose in [section 20.20 of \[RFC3261\]](#), which discusses the "From"

header field, constrains how the production may be used by saying:

Even if the "display-name" is empty, the "name-addr" form MUST be used if the "addr-spec" contains a comma, question mark, or semicolon.

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[Section 20.39](#), which discusses the "To" header field contains no such constraining text.

This constraint is specified slightly differently, but with the same intent, in the introduction to [section 20](#):

The Contact, From, and To header fields contain a URI. If the URI contains a comma, question mark or semicolon, the URI MUST be enclosed in angle brackets (< and >).

Unfortunately, this can be read to only apply to the Contact, From, and To header fields, making it necessary to provide the constraint explicitly in the prose discussing any other header field using the name-addr or addr-spec alternative.

As extension header fields were standardized, the specifications sometimes failed to include the constraint. Many errata have been entered to correct this omission. When the constraint was called out, the form has not been consistent.

This memo updates the specifications of SIP and its extensions to clarify that the constraint to use the name-addr form applies anywhere there is a choice between the name-addr and addr-spec production rules in the grammar for SIP header fields.

It is important to note that a message formed without honoring the constraint will still be syntactically valid, but would very likely be interpreted differently. The characters after the comma, question mark, or semicolon will, in most cases, be interpreted as header field parameters or additional header field values as discussed in [section 7.3.1 of \[RFC3261\]](#). (An exception is the degenerate case of a URL like sip:10.0.0.1,@10.0.0.0 where it is possible to parse the comma via the 'user' production).

[2. Terminology](#)

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [BCP 14](#) [[RFC2119](#)] [[RFC8174](#)] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

3. Updates to [RFC3261](#)

This text from the introduction to [section 20 of \[RFC3261\]](#):

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The Contact, From, and To header fields contain a URI. If the URI contains a comma, question mark or semicolon, the URI MUST be enclosed in angle brackets (< and >). Any URI parameters are contained within these brackets. If the URI is not enclosed in angle brackets, any semicolon-delimited parameters are header-parameters, not URI parameters.

is replaced with:

When constructing the value of any SIP header field whose grammar allows choosing between name-addr and addr-spec, such as those that use the form '(name-addr / addr-spec)', the "addr-spec" form MUST NOT be used if its value would contain a comma, semicolon, or question mark.

When a URI appears in such a header field, any URI parameters MUST be contained within angle brackets (< and >). If the URI is not enclosed in angle brackets, any semicolon-delimited parameters are header-parameters, not URI parameters.

The header fields defined in this specification that allow this choice are "To", "From", "Contact", and "Reply-To".

4. Updates to RFCs defining SIP Extension header fields

The following standards track RFCs: [[RFC3515](#)], [[RFC3892](#)], [[RFC4508](#)], and [[RFC5360](#)]

and the following informational RFCs: [[RFC3325](#)], [[RFC5002](#)],

[[RFC5318](#)], and [[RFC5502](#)]

are updated to include:

This RFC contains the definition of one or more SIP header fields that allow choosing between `addr-spec` and `name-addr` when constructing header field values. As specified in RFCxxxx, the "`addr-spec`" form MUST NOT be used if its value would contain a comma, semicolon, or question mark.

The status of the Informational RFCs remains Informational.

[5.](#) IANA Considerations

This memo has no considerations for IANA.

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[6.](#) Security Considerations

The updates specified in this memo clarify a constraint on the grammar for producing SIP messages. It introduces no new security considerations. One pre-existing consideration is worth reiterating: messages produced without honoring the constraint will very likely be mis-interpreted by the receiving element.

[7.](#) Acknowledgments

Brett Tate identified this issue in several extension documents, submitted several corresponding errata, and drove the discussion that led to this memo. Substantive comments leading to this text were provided by Paul Kyzivat, Gonzalo Camarillo, Dale Worley, and Yehoshua Gev.

[8.](#) Instructions to the RFC Editor

Please remove this section in its entirety before publication as an RFC.

Please replace any instances of RFCxxxx with the RFC number assigned

to this memo.

This memo, if it is approved, obviates Errata 3744, 3894, and 4648-4652 inclusive.

9. Normative References

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[RFC5318] Hautakorpi, J. and G. Camarillo, "The Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) P-Refused-URI-List Private-Header (P-Header)", [RFC 5318](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC5318, December 2008, <<http://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc5318>>.

[RFC5502] van Elburg, J., "The SIP P-Served-User Private-Header (P-Header) for the 3GPP IP Multimedia (IM) Core Network (CN) Subsystem", [RFC 5502](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC5502, April 2009, <<http://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc5502>>.

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