

6tisch secure join using 6top
[draft-richardson-6tisch--security-6top-04](#)

Abstract

This document details a security architecture that permits a new 6tisch compliant node to join an 802.15.4e network. The process bootstraps the new node authenticating the node to the network, and the network to the node, and configuring the new node with the required 6tisch schedule. Any resemblance to WirelessHART/IEC62591 is entirely intentional.

Requirements Language

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 [RFC 2119](#) [[RFC2119](#)].

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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	3
1.1.	Assumptions	4
2.	Terminology and Roles	4
3.	Architectural requirements of join protocol	6
3.1.	Entities involves in the join processions	6
3.2.	Join Protocol deliverables	6
3.3.	Join Protocol connection setup	7
3.4.	End to End considerations for Join Protocol	8
3.4.1.	Security Considerations: alternatives to source routes	9
3.5.	Join node discovery mechanism	10
3.5.1.	prefixes to use for join traffic	12
4.	security requirements	12
4.1.	threat model	12
4.1.1.	threats to the joining node	12
4.1.2.	threats to the resources of the network	13
4.1.3.	threats to other joining nodes	14
4.2.	implementation cost	14
4.3.	denial of service	14
5.	protocol requirements/constraints/assumptions	14
5.1.	inline/offline	14
6.	time sequence diagram	14
6.1.	explanation of each step	15
6.1.1.	step (1): enhanced beacon	15
6.1.2.	step (1B): send router solicitation	16
6.1.3.	step (1C): receive router advertisement	16
6.1.4.	step (2): certificate cache load	16
6.1.5.	step (3): receive certificate cache	16
6.1.6.	step (4): join request	16
6.1.7.	step (5): NS duplicate address request (DAR)	16
6.1.8.	step (7): 6LBR informs JCE of new node	17
6.1.9.	step (8): JCE informs/acks to 6LBR of new node	17
6.1.10.	step (9): NS duplicate address confirmation (DAC)	17
6.1.11.	step (10): JCE initiates connection to joining node	17
6.1.12.	step (11): Join Assistant forwards packet to joining node	17

Richardson

Expires May 15, 2015

[Page 2]

6.1.13.	step (12): Joining node replies	17
6.1.14.	step (13): Join Assistant forwards reply to JCE	17
6.2.	size of each packet	18
7.	resulting security properties obtained from this process . .	18
8.	deployment scenarios underlying protocol requirements	18
9.	device identification	18
9.1.	PCE/Proxy vs Node identification	18
9.2.	Time source authentication / time validation	18
9.3.	description of certificate contents	18
9.4.	privacy aspects	18
10.	slotframes to be used during join	18
11.	configuration aspects	18
12.	authorization aspects	19
12.1.	how to determine a proxy/PCE from a end node	19
12.2.	security considerations	19
13.	security architecture	19
14.	Posture Maintenance	19
15.	Security Considerations	19
16.	Other Related Protocols	19
17.	IANA Considerations	19
18.	Acknowledgements	19
19.	References	19
19.1.	Normative references	19
19.2.	Informative references	21
Author's Address	21

[1.](#) Introduction

A challenging part with constructing an LLN with nodes from multiple vendors is providing enough security context to each node such that the network communication can form and remain secure. Most LLNs are small and have no operator interfaces at all, and even if they have debug interfaces (such as JTAG) with personnel trained to use that, doing any kind of interaction involving electrical connections in a dirty environment such as a factory or refinery is hopeless.

It is necessary to have a way to introduce new nodes into a 6tisch network that does not involve any direct manipulation of the nodes themselves. This act has been called "zero-touch" provisioning, and it does not occur by chance, but requires coordination between the manufacturer of the node, the service operator running the LLN, and the installers actually taking the devices out of the shipping boxes.

1.1. Assumptions

For the process described in this document to work, some assumptions about available infrastructure are made. These are perhaps more than assumptions, but rather architectural requirements; the exact operation of said infrastructure to be defined in a subsequent document.

In the diagrams and text that follows entities are named (and defined in the terminology section). Unless otherwise stated these are roles, not actual machines/systems. The roles are separated by network protocols in order that they roles can be performed by different systems, not because they have to be. Different deployments will have different scaling requirements for those entities. Smaller deployments might co-located many roles together into a single ruggedized platform, while other deployments might operate all of the roles on distinct, multiply-redundant server classes located in a fully equipped datacentre.

2. Terminology and Roles

Most terminology should be taken from [[I-D.ietf-6tisch-architecture](#)] and from [[I-D.ietf-6tisch-6top-interface](#)] and [[I-D.wang-6tisch-6top-sublayer](#)]. As well, many terms are taken from [[RFC6775](#)].

The following roles/things are defined:

PCE	the Path Computation Engine. This entity reaches out to each of the nodes in the LLN, and configures an appropriate schedule using 6top.
Authz Server/ACE	the Authorization Server. This offloads calculation of access control lists and other access control decisions for constrained nodes. See [I-D.seitz-ace-problem-description]
6top	the 6top protocol is defined abstractly in [I-D.ietf-6tisch-6top-interface] and mapped to run over CoAP in [I-D.ietf-6tisch-coap]. The 6top protocol is defined primarily to provision the 6TiSCH schedule; this document proposes to extend it for also provisioning of layer-2 security parameters.
JCE	the Join Coordination Entity. This acronym is chosen to parallel the PCE.

joining node	The newly unboxed constrained node that needs to join a network.
join protocol	the protocol which secures initial communication between the joining node and the JCE
join assistant	A constrained node near the joining node that will act as it's first 6LR, and will relay traffic to/from the joining node.
join network	A 802.15.4e network whose encryption and authentication key is "JOIN6TISCH".
unique join key	a key shared between a newly joining node, and the JCE
production network	A 802.15.4e network whose encryption/ authentication keys are determined by some algorithm. There may have network-wide group keys, or per-link keys.
production network key	A shared L2-key known by all authorized nodes. This key can be used to derive other keys.
per-peer L2 key	a key that results from an exchange (such as MLE) that creates a pair-wise L2 key which is known only to the two nodes involved, [I-D.piro-6tisch-security-issues] calls this a LinkKey

The following terms are used in this document and come from other documents:

DevID	[IEEE.802.1AR] defines the secure DEvice IDentifier as a device identifier that is cryptographically bound to the device and is composed of the Secure Device Identifier Secret and the Secure Device Identifier Credential.
IDevID	The Initial secure DEvice IDentifier (IDevID) is the Device Identifier which was installed on the device by the manufacturer.
LDevID	A Locally significant secure DEvice IDentifiers (LDevIDs) is a Secure Device Identifier credential that is unique in the local administrative domain in which the device is

used. The LDevID is usually a new certificate provisioned by some local means, such as the 6top mechanism defined in this document.

CoAP	The CoAP protocol, defined in [RFC7252] is an HTTP-like resource access protocol. CoAP runs over UDP.
DTLS	The datagram version of TLS, defined in [RFC6347], and which can be used to secure CoAP in the same way that TLS secures HTTP.
ARO	[RFC6775] defines a number of new Neighbor Discovery options including the Address Registration Option
DAR/DAC	[RFC6775] defines the Duplicate Address Request and Duplicate Address Confirmation options to turn the multicasted Duplicate Address Detection protocol into a client/server process
EARO	[I-D.thubert-6lo-rfc6775-update-reqs] extends the ARO option to include some additional fields necessary to distinguish duplicate addresses from nodes that have moved networks when there are multiple LLNs linked over a backbone.

3. Architectural requirements of join protocol

3.1. Entities involved in the join processions

The following actors are involved: there is a new joining node. It is (radio) adjacent to the join assistant. The join assistant is part of the production network, and participates in one or more DODAGs, such that it is reachable from the 6LBR, and the JCE.

3.2. Join Protocol deliverables

This section works from the ultimate goal, and goes backwards to prerequisite actions. ([Section 6](#) presents the protocol from beginning to end order)

The ultimate goal of the join protocol is to provide a new node with a locally significant security credentials that it is able to take part in the network directly. The credentials may vary by deployment. They can be one of:

- 1) a network-wide shared symmetric key (this is the production network key, or MasterKey)
- 2) a locally significant (one-level only) 802.11AR type LDevID certificate (which allows it to negotiate a pair-wise keys)

One of these two items is delivered by JCE to the joining node using the 6top protocol. That is, the JCE provisions using a secure "northbound" interface. The authentication of this interface the subject of the Join Protocol as explained below.

The above credential are used for authentication to generate per-peer L2, using a key exchange protocol. The choice of key exchange protocol, and what kind of link and multicast keying needs to be done is also provisioned by the JCE. There are a number of options for doing this, such as:

- 1) Mesh Link Exchange [[I-D.kelsey-intarea-mesh-link-establishment](#)] (IMPORTANT, a good option. Uses certificates from common CA)
- 2) work in 802.15.9 (uses certificates from common CA)
- 3) Security Framework and Key Management Protocol Requirements for 6TiSCH [[I-D.ohba-6tisch-security](#)] (this document provides the phase 0 required, using the network-wide shared key)
- 4) Layer-2 security aspects for the IEEE 802.15.4e MAC [[I-D.piro-6tisch-security-issues](#)]: the MasterKey is used to derive per-peer L2 keys

Per-peer L2 keying is critical when doing peer-2-peer schedule negotiation over 15.4 Information Elements. Therefore a network-wide layer-2 key is inappropriate for the self-organizing networks, and a protocol (MLE, 802.15.9) SHOULD be used to derive per-peer L2 keys.

For networks where there is a PCE present and it will do all schedule computation, then the only trust relationship necessary is between the individual node and the PCE, and it MAY be acceptable to have a network-wide L2 key derived in ways such as [[I-D.piro-6tisch-security-issues](#)] describes in section ?. The trust relationship between the PCE and the joining node flows from the LDevID certificate loaded by the JCE. When the PCE and JCE are co-located, the existing 6top/DTLS security association could be reused.

3.3. Join Protocol connection setup

The intermediate level goal of the join protocol is to enable a Join Coordination Entity (JCE) to reach out to the new node, and install

the credentials detailed above. The JCE must authenticate itself to the joining node so that the joining node will know that it has joined the correct network, and the joining node must authenticate itself to the JCE so that the JCE will know that this node belongs in the network. This two way authentication occurs in the 6top/CoAP/DTLS session that is established between the JCE and the joining node.

[I-D.ietf-6tisch-6top-interface] presents a way to interface to a 6top information model (defined in YANG). [\[I-D.ietf-6tisch-coap\]](#) explains how to access that information model using CoAP. This information model will include security attributes for the network. The JCE would therefore reach out to the joining node and simply provision appropriate security properties into the joining node, much like the PCE will provision schedules.

This 6top-based secure join protocol has defined a push model for security provisioning by the JCE. This has been done for three reasons:

- 1) 6tisch nodes already have to have a 6top CoAP server for schedule provisioning
- 2) this permits the JCE to manage how many nodes are trying to join at the same time, and limit how much bandwidth/energy is used for the join operation, and also for the JCE to prioritize the join order for nodes.
- 3) making the JCE initiate the DTLS connection significantly simplifies the certificate chains that must be exchanged as the most constrained side (the joining node) provides it's credentials first, and lets the less constrained JCE figure out what kind of certificate chain will be required to authenticate the JCE to the joining node. In EAP-TLS/802.1x situations, the TLS channel is created in the opposite direction, and it would have to complete in a tentative way, and then further authorization occur in-band.

[3.4.](#) End to End considerations for Join Protocol

In order for a 6top/DTLS/CoAP connection to occur between the JCE and the joining node, there needs to be end-to-end IPv6 connectivity between those two entities. The joining node will not participate in the route-over RPL mesh, but rather will be seen by the network as being a 6lowpan only leaf-node.

The joining node sends traffic to the join assistant, which forwards it using the normal RPL DODAG upwards routes, and which will reach the JCE using regular routing.

The challenge is getting connectivity from the JCE to the joining node, as the DODAG will have no information about this node. Instead, the JCE will use loose-source routes to address packets first to the Join Assistant, which will then forward to the joining node. This has an interaction with the (strict) source routes used by non-storing DODAGs which would be used by the 6LBR to reach the Join Assistant.

There are some alternatives to having full end to end connectivity which are discussed in the security considerations section.

3.4.1. Security Considerations: alternatives to source routes

This goes into security-considerations section

A number of alternatives were considered for creating end to end connectivity between the joining node and the JCE, but were rejected.

- (1) IPIP tunnel between Join Assistant and JCE
- (2) using straight RPL routing: the Join Assistant sends a DAO
- (3) using a separate RPL DODAG for join traffic
- (4) establishing a specific multi-hop 6tisch track for join traffic for each Join Assistant

3.4.1.1. IPIP tunnel

This mechanism requires 40 bytes overhead per packet, and may require specific state to be created on the Join Assistant, or may open the network up to a resource exhaustion by malicious join nodes.

This mechanism was rejected on due to byte count, because it would require code only needed for join, and because doing it securely may require a per-tunnel state to be maintained on the join assistant.

3.4.1.2. join existing DODAG

This mechanism is to just have the new node join the DODAG as a leaf node. The join assistant would issue a DAO for the new node. If a storing DODAG was used, this would directly cost state in all parent nodes of the Join Assistant, subjecting the lower-rank parts of the network to significant denial of service attacks.

On a non-storing DODAG the situation is significantly better: no state is created by the presence of the leaf node except in the 6LBR, where available resources may be higher.

This mechanism was rejected in favour of the loose source routed option as this the loose source routed option always works even for storing DODAGs, and is otherwise exactly equivalent in terms of network bandwidth cost.

3.4.1.3. join a DODAG for joining

One option to deal with the problem of resource consumption in the storing DODAG case is to use a second DODAG.

This mechanism was rejected as it consumes resources in all nodes for the second DODAG, and many implementations support on a single DODAG. While storing DODAGs have a lighter network impact than non-storing ones (due to the lack of source routes), the PCE can control how much network bandwidth can be wasted by malicious join nodes using the regular 6tisch mechanisms, and this can be tuned. A second DODAG would be a sunk cost with no tuning possible.

3.4.1.4. create 6tisch track to form mesh-under

This mechanism would use 6tisch tracks so that traffic from the JCE would be switched from 6LBR to join node. A track would be required to each join assistant. This is an optimized form of source routing.

This mechanism was not rejected, rather it was observed that it may be applied to any mechanism that uses source routing, and is an optimization; it has a certain cost in the form of intermediary node state, but that this state is not created by a malicious join node, rather it is created by the PCE.

3.5. Join node discovery mechanism

Continuing to work backwards, in order the JCE reach out to provision the Joining Node, it needs to know that the new node is present. This is done by taking advantage of the 6lowPAN Address Resolution Option (ARO) ([section 4.1 \[RFC6775\]](#)). The ARO causes the new address to also be sent up to the 6LBR for duplicate detection using the DAR/DAC mechanism. The 6LBR simply needs to tell the JCE about this. A new protocol may be required for the situation where the JCE, PCE and 6LBR are not co-located; it may be that this protocol could be simply a DAR in some encapsulation. The details of this are currently out of scope for the architecture, as they affect interoperability between different vendors of JCE/6LBR/PCE rather than interoperability between the assistance/offload infrastructure, and the constrained nodes. Future work may specify this part.

In addition to needing to know the joining devices address from the DAR/NS, the JCE also needs to know the joining node's IDevID. This is to determine if the node should even get any attention. At this point, the IDevID can be forged, it will be authenticated during the setup of the 6top control protocol in the DTLS certificate exchange. If the serialNumber attribute of the IDevID is less than 64 bits, then it is possible that it could be placed into the EUI-64 option of the ARO, or the OUI of the [[I-D.thubert-6lo-rfc6775-update-reqs](#)] EARO. The JCE needs to know the joining node's serialNumber to know if this is device that it should even attempt to provision; and if so, it may need to retrieve an appropriate certificate chain (see [[I-D.richardson-6tisch-idevid-cert](#)]) from the Factory in order for the JCE to prove it is the legitimate owner of the joining node.

Neither 802.1AR nor [[RFC5280](#)] provide any structure for the serialNumber, except that they are positive integers of up-to 20 octets in size (numbers up to 2^{160}). This specification would require that the serialNumber encoded in the IDevID be the same as the EUI-64 used by the device. Some consideration needs to be given as to whether there are privacy considerations to doing this: any observer that can see the join traffic, can also see the source MAC address of the node as well.

Prior to being able to announce itself in a NS, the joining node needs to find the Join Network. This is done by listening to an extended beacon which are broadcast in designated slotframes by Join Assistants. The Extended Beacon provides a way for the Joining Node to synchronize itself to the overall timeslot schedule and provides an Aloha period in which the Joining Node can send a Router Solicitation, and receive an appropriate Router Advertisement giving the Joining Node a prefix and default route to which to send join traffic.

Richardson

Expires May 15, 2015

[Page 11]

It may be possible to eliminate a message exchange if space for a Router Advertisement can be found as part of the Join Network Extended Beacon. This Enhanced Beacon would be distinct to the Join Network, and would be encrypted with the well-known Join Network key.

3.5.1. prefixes to use for join traffic

What prefix would the joining node use for communication? There are three options:

- (1) just use link-local addresses (this may require that some traffic between 6LBR and JCE be IPIP tunneled)
- (2) use a prefix specifically for join traffic (may be easier with a join-only DODAG)
- (3) use the same prefix as the rest of the traffic (may require more complex ACLs, and leaks information to attackers)

The simplest method is to use the link-local addresses for the 6top connection, and the cost of an IPIP tunnel between the unconstrained 6LBR and the JCE is not considered significant.

4. security requirements

4.1. threat model

There are three kinds of threats that a join process must deal with: threats to the joining node, threats to the resources of the network, and threats to other joining nodes.

4.1.1. threats to the joining node

A node may be taken out of its box by a malicious entity and powered on. This could happen during shipping, while being stored in a warehouse. The device may be subject to physical theft, or the goal of the attacker may be to turn the device into a trojan horse of some kind. Physical protection of the device is out of scope for this document; this document will henceforth assume that the device is sealed in some tamper-evident way and this document deals with attacks over the network.

An attacker may attempt to convince the joining node that it is the legitimate Production Network; this is done by putting up a legitimate looking Join Network, and following the protocol as described in this document. The Joining Node can not know if it has the correct Production Network until steps 11-13, when it attempts to validate the ClientCertificate provided by the JCE.

When the joining node determines that this is the incorrect network, it must remember the PANID of the network that it has attempted to join, and then look for another network to try. It SHOULD have some limit as the number of times it will try before going back to sleep, or shutting down, and it SHOULD take care not to consume more than some specified percentage of any battery it might have.

Should a malicious production network be present at the same time/place as the legitimate production network, a the malicious agent could intercept and replay various packets from the proper join network, but ultimately this either results in a jamming-like denial of service, and/or the the ClientCertificate will not validate.

It is a legitimate situation for there to be multiple possible join networks, and the joining node may have to try each one before it finds the network that it the right one for it. The incorrect, but non-malicious networks will not attempt the 6top provisioning step, and SHOULD return a negative result in steps 8/9, refusing the node's NS. Those incorrect networks will be recognize that the node does not belong to them, because they will be able to see the Joining Node's IDevID in the ARO of step 4.

4.1.2. threats to the resources of the network

The production network has two important resources that may be attacked by malicious Joining nodes: 1) energy/bandwidth, 2) memory for routing entries.

A malicious joining node could send many NS messages to the Join Assistant (from many made up addresses), which would send many NS/DAR messages to the 6LBR, and this would consume bandwidth, and therefore energy from the members of the mesh along the path to the 6LBR. This can be mitigated by limited the total bandwidth available for joining.

A malicious joining node could send many NS messages, and if the 6LBR agreed to accept the new node (by IDevID), then the Join Assistant would MAY inject routing information into mesh for the Joining node. Non-storing DODAGs store are routing information in the DODAG Root (probably the 6LBR), which is generally not a constrained node. Storing DODAGs store routing entries at all nodes up to the DODAG, and those are constrained nodes. Using a separate Join DODAG, and having that DODAG be non-storing will reduce any impact on intermediate nodes, but it does cause resources to be used for the second DODAG, and it may have a code impact if the nodes otherwise would not implement non-storing RPL.

4.1.3. threats to other joining nodes

A joining node (or the nodes of a malicious network, co-located near the legitimate production network) may mount attacks on legitimate nodes which have not yet joined.

The malicious nodes may attempt to perform 6top operations against the joining node to keep it from being able to respond to the legitimate 6top session from the legitimate JCE. During the Join phase, the Joining node **MUST** have all other resources and protocols turned off, even if they would normally be accessible as read-only unauthenticated CoAP resources.

Malicious nodes could use the Join Network to mount various DTLS based attacks against the joining node, such as sending very long certificate chains to validate. One might think to limit the length of such chains, but as shown in [[I-D.richardson-6tisch-idevid-cert](#)] the chain may as long as the supplier chain, plus may include additional certificates due to resales of plants/equipment/etc. Validating from a trusted certificate down to the specific certificate which proves ownership would eliminate random certificate chains, but the attacker could just feed the joining node legitimate chains that it observed (and replayed) from the legitimate JCE. This does no good; the Joining node finds that the DTLS connection is invalid, but it may significantly run batteries down.

4.2. implementation cost

(storage of security material, computational cost)

4.3. denial of service

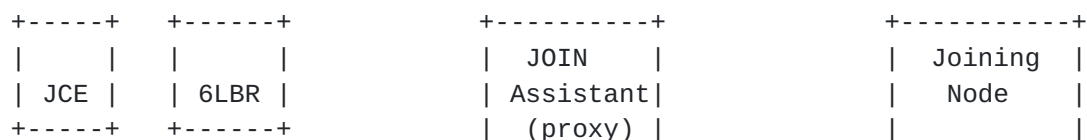
other communication impacts of security protocol mechanics

5. protocol requirements/constraints/assumptions

5.1. inline/offline

dependencies on centralized or external functionality, inline and offline

6. time sequence diagram



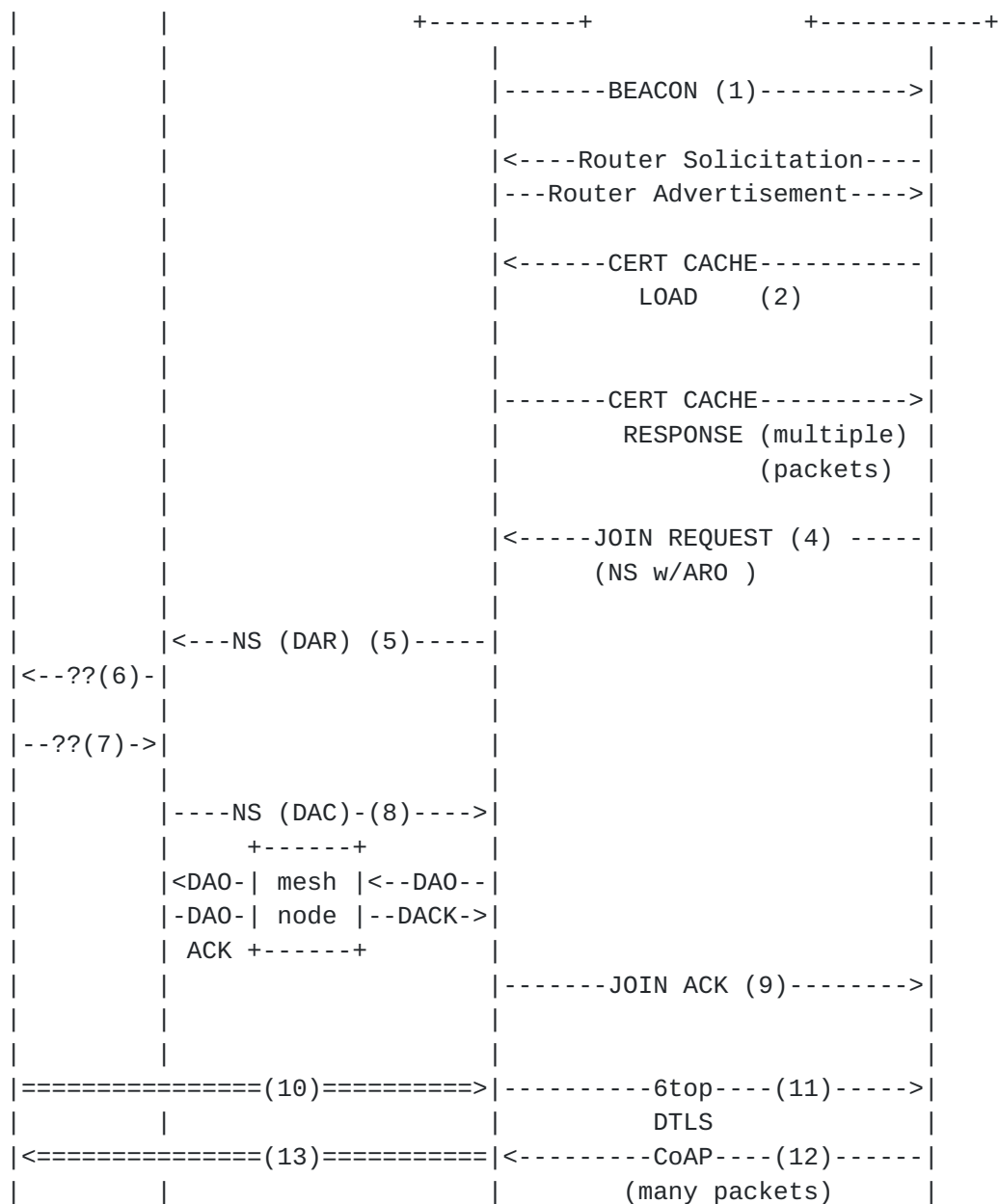


Figure 1: Message sequence for JOIN message

6.1. explanation of each step

6.1.1. step (1): enhanced beacon

A 6tisch join/synchronization beacon is broadcast periodically, and is authenticated with a symmetric "beacon key":

well known JOIN key, such "JOIN6TISCH"

another key, provisioned in advance (OOB)

a shared symmetric key derived from public part of top level certificate (a closely held "secret")

The purpose of this key is not to provide a high level of assurance, but rather to filter out 6tisch traffic from another random traffic that may be sharing the same radio frequencies.

These beacons are used for JOIN purpose only, and are not related to the Enhanced Beacons used in the rest of 6tisch.

6.1.2. step (1B): send router solicitation

The joining node sends a router solicitation during the Aloha period of the beacon.

6.1.3. step (1C): receive router advertisement

The joining node receives a router advertisement from the Join Assistant. It could include 6CO options to help compress packets, and should contain a prefix appropriate for join traffic.

6.1.4. step (2): certificate cache load

At step 10, the JCE will need to present a certificate chain anchored at a trusted CA built into the joining node. It has been speculated that a significant amount of traffic could be avoided at step (10) if the common parts of the certificate chains could be cached in the join assistant.

This optional step involves the joining node asking for certificates from the join assistant.

6.1.5. step (3): receive certificate cache

the proxy neighbour sends requested cached certificates to the joining node

6.1.6. step (4): join request

A regular Neighbour Solicitation is sent. This should contain an ARO (or EARO) option containing the Joining Nodes' IDevID. The ARO/EARO will be proxied by the Join Assistant as part of normal 6LowPAN processing for leaf nodes (non-RPL nodes) upwards to the 6LBR

6.1.7. step (5): NS duplicate address request (DAR)

[6.1.8.](#) step (7): 6LBR informs JCE of new node**[6.1.9.](#) step (8): JCE informs/acks to 6LBR of new node**

The JCE could reply in the negative, and this would cause a DAC failure, TBD

[6.1.10.](#) step (9): NS duplicate address confirmation (DAC)**[6.1.11.](#) step (10): JCE initiates connection to joining node**

The double lines indicate that an IPIP tunnel operation may be required. If a straight DAO or separate Join DODAG is used, then this is just a straight forwarding root to leaf node forwarding operation, and involves either using source routes (non-storing), or just forwarding for storing DODAGs.

A specific bandwidth allocation would be used for this join traffic

The production network encryption keys would be used for the join traffic

[6.1.12.](#) step (11): Join Assistant forwards packet to joining node

The JOIN Assistant would forward traffic to the Joining Node. Recognizing that this traffic the JOIN Network, the JOIN Assistant would use the JOIN Network key.

[6.1.13.](#) step (12): Joining node replies

The joining node replies, using JOIN Network key.

[6.1.14.](#) step (13): Join Assistant forwards reply to JCE

The JOIN Assistant, recognizing that the traffic came from the JOIN Network, restricts the destination that can be reached to the the JCE only. It can do this in a stateless way, and it does NOT need to track the traffic at (10) to open pinhole, etc.

Recognizing that the traffic came from the JOIN Network, the traffic would be placed into a bandwidth allocation (track?) that allows such traffic.

6.2. size of each packet

and number of frames needed to contain it.

7. resulting security properties obtained from this process

An end to end IPv6 CoAP/DTLS connection is created between the JCE and the Joining Node. This connection carries 6top commands to update security parameters. This results in either deployment of a single-level, locally relevant certificate (LDevID), or deployment of a network-wide symmetric "Master Key"

8. deployment scenarios underlying protocol requirements

9. device identification

The JCE authenticates the joining node using a certificate chain provided inline during the DTLS negotiation. The certificate chain is rooted in a vendor certificate that the JCE must have preloaded, and is a statement as to the node's 802.1AR IDevID. The joining node authenticates the

9.1. PCE/Proxy vs Node identification

9.2. Time source authentication / time validation

Note: RPL Root authentication is a chartered item

9.3. description of certificate contents

9.4. privacy aspects

The EUI-64 of the Joining node is transmitted using a Well Known layer-2 encryption key. Within the ARO/EARO of the Neighbour Solicitation is an OUI, which may be identical to the EUI-64 of the Joining node, or it might be an unrelated IDevID.

An eavesdropper can therefore learn something about the manufacturer of every device as it joins.

10. slotframes to be used during join

how is this communicated in the (extended) beacon.

11. configuration aspects

(allocation of slotframes after join, network statistics, neighboetc.)

12. authorization aspects

lifecycle (key management, trust management)

12.1. how to determine a proxy/PCE from a end node

12.2. security considerations

what prevents a node from transmitting when it is not their turn
(part one: jamming)

can a node successfully communicate with a peer at a time when not
supposed to, may be tied to link layer security, or will it be
policed by receiver?

13. security architecture

security architecture and fit of e.g. join protocol and provisioning
into this

14. Posture Maintenance

(SACM related work)

15. Security Considerations

16. Other Related Protocols

17. IANA Considerations

18. Acknowledgements

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