

Memory Hole: Cryptographic protection for e-mail headers

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Leaky metadata in encrypted mail

From: Alice <alice@example.com>
To: Bob <bob@example.net>
Subject: Retirement plans
Date: Fri, 20 Mar 2015 08:11:06 -0500
Content-Type: multipart/encrypted;
 protocol="application/pgp-encrypted"; boundary=xxxxx

--xxxxx

Content-Type: application/pgp-encrypted

Version: 1

--xxxxx

Content-Type: application/octet-stream; charset=UTF-8

-----BEGIN PGP MESSAGE-----

WETyIXVbSZ4VWTBoxqJtQtszIfRmcJjq74QBRVXVjjbjZKH5uVrcn5EK
FiUeZ5V+5qkXqfYVziZWPAZDs6K6qV9kvDGs+v/ZZNS4aSf0Sx5FiGmf

...

Unsigned context for signed mail

From: Charles <charles@example.com>

To: Diane <diane@example.com>

Subject: The Jones Account

Content-Type: multipart/signed; micalg=pgp-sha256;
protocol="application/pgp-signature"; boundary="xxxxx"

--xxxxx

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=us-ascii

It's a go. Please bill them!

--xxxxx

Content-Type: application/pgp-signature;
name="signature.asc"

-----BEGIN PGP SIGNATURE-----

nWlpkpARYEyQswgLQkr/6/pMtyLhpMownAZBIZXLFc4upcKihpdZMmy
[...]

Not just Subject :

- Message - Id :
- References : , In - Reply - To :
- User - Agent :
- From :
- To :
- Date :
- Cc :
- ...

Why is this an issue?

- Encryption:
 - Violates "end-to-end" goal of message encryption
 - Graph analysis on metadata is effective!
- Signing:
 - Header-replacement on signed messages is easy
- Difficult security property to explain

We can fix it

Content-Type: text/rfc822-headers

(RFC 6522 §4, currently only for DSN)

- Deployable now by improving sending MUAs
- Existing receiving MUAs OK
- Improves with updated receiving MUAs
- Improves more with compatible MTAs
- Designed with current spam abatement (DMARC, DKIM, SPF) in mind
- Currently OpenPGP-focused, some S/MIME demand

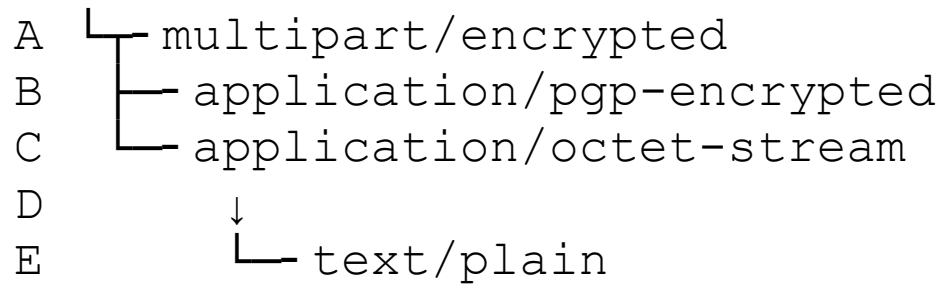
Signed Messages

A ┌ multipart/signed
B │ ┌ text/plain
C │ └ application/pgp-signature

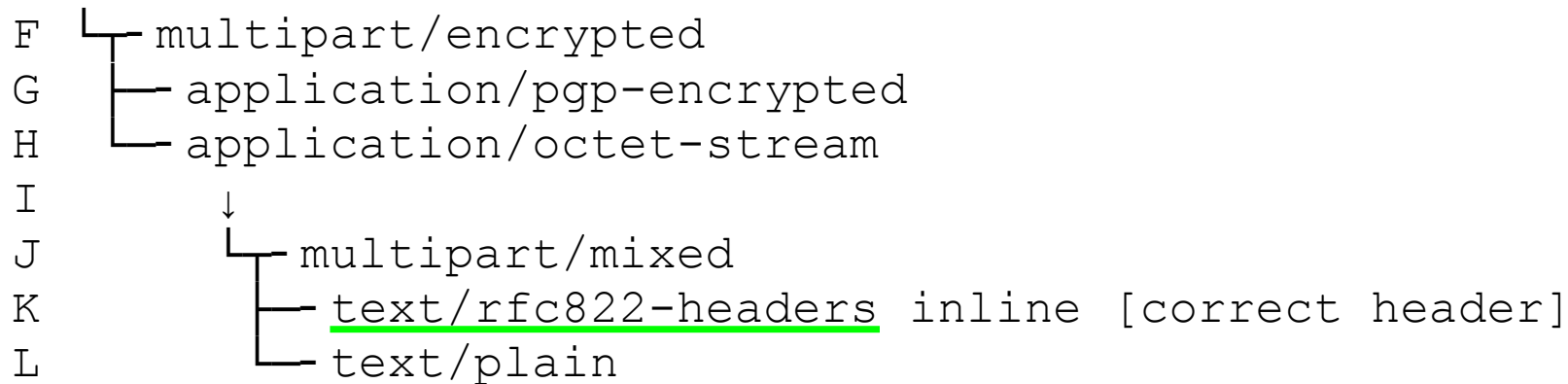
becomes:

D ┌ multipart/signed
E │ ┌ multipart/mixed
F │ │ ┌ text/rfc822-headers inline
G │ │ └ text/plain
H │ └ application/pgp-signature

Encrypted Messages



becomes:



With dummy header on outside!

Phased deployment

- Sending, Encrypting MUAs
- Sending, Signing MUAs
- Receiving MUAs
- MTAs

Signalling

- Per-message?
 - Don't need? Detect by presence of `text/rfc822-header` part in the right place
- Per-recipient?
 - How do we know recipient prefers memory-hole messages? Should we just send them anyway?

Followup

- Discussion currently happening on:
 - <openpgp@ietf.org>
 - moved there from <gnupg-devel@gnu.org>