TELNET Authentication Using DSA

Status of this Memo

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Abstract

This document defines a telnet authentication mechanism using the Digital Signature Algorithm (DSA) [FIPS186]. It relies on the Telnet Authentication Option [RFC2941].

1. Command Names and Codes

AUTHENTICATION 37

Authentication Commands:

IS 0
SEND 1
REPLY 2
NAME 3

Authentication Types:

DSS 14

Modifiers:

AUTH_WHO_MASK 1
AUTH_CLIENT_TO_SERVER 0
AUTH_SERVER_TO_CLIENT 1
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AUTH_HOW_MASK            2
AUTH_HOW_ONE_WAY         0
AUTH_HOW_MUTUAL          2

ENCRYPT_MASK            20
ENCRYPT_OFF              0
ENCRYPT_USING_TEOPT     4
ENCRYPT_AFTER_EXCHANGE  16
ENCRYPT_RESERVED        20

INI_CRED_FWD_MASK        8
INI_CRED_FWD_OFF         0
INI_CRED_FWD_ON          8

Sub-option Commands:

DSS_INITIALIZE           1
DSS_TOKENBA              2
DSS_CERTA_TOKENAB        3
DSS_CERTB_TOKENBA2       4

2. TELNET Security Extensions

TELNET, as a protocol, has no concept of security. Without negotiated options, it merely passes characters back and forth between the NVTs represented by the two TELNET processes. In its most common usage as a protocol for remote terminal access (TCP port 23), TELNET connects to a server that requires user-level authentication through a user name and password in the clear; the server does not authenticate itself to the user.

The TELNET Authentication Option provides for user authentication and server authentication. User authentication replaces or augments the normal host password mechanism. Server authentication is normally done in conjunction with user authentication.

In order to support these security services, the two TELNET entities must first negotiate their willingness to support the TELNET Authentication Option. Upon agreeing to support this option, the parties are then able to perform sub-option negotiations to the authentication protocol to be used, and possibly the remote user name to be used for authorization checking.

Authentication and parameter negotiation occur within an unbounded series of exchanges. The server proposes a preference-ordered list of authentication types (mechanisms) which it supports. In addition to listing the mechanisms it supports, the server qualifies each mechanism with a modifier that specifies whether the authentication
is to be one-way or mutual, and in which direction the authentication is to be performed. The client selects one mechanism from the list and responds to the server indicating its choice and the first set of authentication data needed for the selected authentication type. The server and the client then proceed through whatever number of iterations are required to arrive at the requested authentication.

3. Use of Digital Signature Algorithm (DSA)

DSA is also known as the Digital Signature Standard (DSS), and the names are used interchangeably. This paper specifies a method in which DSA may be used to achieve certain security services when used in conjunction with the TELNET Authentication Option. SHA-1 [FIPS180-1] is used with DSA [FIPS186].

DSA may provide either unilateral or mutual authentication. Due to TELNET’s character-by-character nature, it is not well-suited to the application of integrity-only services, therefore use of the DSA profile provides authentication but it does not provide session integrity. This specification follows the token and exchanges defined in NIST FIPS PUB 196 [FIPS196], Standard for Public Key Cryptographic Entity Authentication Mechanisms including Appendix A on ASN.1 encoding of messages and tokens. All data that is covered by a digital signature must be encoded using the Distinguished Encoding Rules (DER). However, other data may use either the Basic Encoding Rules (BER) or DER [X.208].

3.1. Unilateral Authentication with DSA

Unilateral authentication must be done client-to-server. What follows are the protocol steps necessary to perform DSA authentication as specified in FIPS PUB 196 under the TELNET Authentication Option framework. Where failure modes are encountered, the return codes follow those specified in the TELNET Authentication Option. They are not enumerated here, as they are invariant among the mechanisms used. FIPS PUB 196 employs a set of exchanges that are transferred to provide authentication. Each exchange employs various fields and tokens, some of which are optional. In addition, each token has several subfields that are optional. A conformant subset of the fields and subfields have been selected. The tokens are ASN.1 encoded as defined in Appendix A of FIPS PUB 196, and each token is named to indicate the direction in which it flows (e.g., TokenBA flows from Party B to Party A). All data that is covered by a digital signature must be encoded using the
Distinguished Encoding Rules (DER). Data that is not covered by a
digital signature may use either the Basic Encoding Rules (BER) or
DER [X.208]. Figure 1 illustrates the exchanges for unilateral
authentication.

During authentication, the client may provide the user name to the
server by using the authentication name sub-option. If the name
sub-option is not used, the server will generally prompt for a name
and password in the clear. The name sub-option must be sent after
the server sends the list of authentication types supported and
before the client finishes the authentication exchange, this ensures
that the server will not prompt for a user name and password. In
figure 1, the name sub-option is sent immediately after the server
presents the list of authentication types supported.

For one-way DSS authentication, the two-octet authentication type
pair is DSS AUTH_CLIENT_TO_SERVER | AUTH_HOW_ONE_WAY | ENCRYPT_OFF |
INI_CRED_FWD_OFF. This indicates that the DSS authentication
mechanism will be used to authenticate the client to the server and
that no encryption will be performed.

CertA is the client’s certificate. Both certificates are X.509
certificates that contain DSS public keys[RFC2459]. The client must
validate the server’s certificate before using the DSA public key it
contains.

Within the unbounded authentication exchange, implementation is
greatly simplified if each portion of the exchange carries a unique
identifier. For this reason, a single octet sub-option identifier is
carried immediately after the two-octet authentication type pair.

The exchanges detailed in Figure 1 below presume knowledge of FIPS
PUB 196 and the TELNET Authentication Option. The client is Party A,
while the server is Party B. At the end of the exchanges, the client
is authenticated to the server.
Client (Party A)                   Server (Party B)

<-- IAC DO AUTHENTICATION

IAC WILL AUTHENTICATION  -->

<-- IAC SB AUTHENTICATION SEND
  <list of authentication options>
  IAC SE

IAC SB AUTHENTICATION
NAME <user name>  -->

IAC SB AUTHENTICATION IS
DSS
AUTH_CLIENT_TO_SERVER |
  AUTH_HOW_ONE_WAY |
  ENCRYPT_OFF |
  INI_CRED_FWD_OFF
DSS_INITIALIZE
IAC SE     -->

<-- IAC SB AUTHENTICATION REPLY
DSS
AUTH_CLIENT_TO_SERVER |
  AUTH_HOW_ONE_WAY |
  ENCRYPT_OFF |
  INI_CRED_FWD_OFF
DSS_TOKENBA
Sequence( TokenID, TokenBA )
IAC SE

IAC SB AUTHENTICATION IS
DSS
AUTH_CLIENT_TO_SERVER |
  AUTH_HOW_ONE_WAY |
  ENCRYPT_OFF |
  INI_CRED_FWD_OFF
DSS_CERTA_TOKENAB
Sequence( TokenID, CertA, TokenAB )
IAC SE     -->

------------------------------------------------------------------

Figure 1
### 3.2. Mutual Authentication with DSA

Mutual authentication is slightly more complex. Figure 2 illustrates the exchanges.

For mutual DSS authentication, the two-octet authentication type pair is `DSS AUTH_CLIENT_TO_SERVER | AUTH_HOW_MUTUAL | ENCRYPT_OFF | INI_CRED_FWD_OFF`. This indicates that the DSS authentication mechanism will be used to mutually authenticate the client and the server and that no encryption will be performed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client (Party A)</th>
<th>Server (Party B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IAC WILL AUTHENTICATION</strong></td>
<td>--&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IAC SB AUTHENTICATION SEND</strong></td>
<td>&lt;--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IAC SB AUTHENTICATION NAME</strong></td>
<td>&lt;user name&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUTH_CLIENT_TO_SERVER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. ASN.1 Syntax

As stated earlier, a conformant subset of the defined fields and subfields from FIPS PUB 196 have been selected. This section provides the ASN.1 syntax for that conformant subset.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 include representations of the structures defined in this section. Implementors should refer to the following table to determine the ASN.1 definitions that match the figure references:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1</th>
<th>Sequence( TokenID, TokenBA )</th>
<th>MessageBA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sequence( TokenID, CertA, TokenAB )</td>
<td>MessageAB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2</th>
<th>Sequence( TokenID, TokenBA )</th>
<th>MessageBA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sequence( TokenID, CertA, TokenAB )</td>
<td>MessageAB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sequence( TokenID, CertB, TokenBA2 )</td>
<td>MessageBA2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following ASN.1 definitions specify the conformant subset of FIPS 196. For simplicity, no optional fields or subfields are included.

The ASN.1 definition for CertificationPath is imported from CCITT Recommendation X.509 [X.509], and The ASN.1 definition for Name is imported from CCITT Recommendation X.501 [X.501]. These ASN.1
definitions are not repeated here. All DSA signature values are
coded as a sequence of two integers, employing the same conventions
specified in RFC 2459, section 7.2.2.

MessageBA ::= SEQUENCE {
  tokenId       [0] TokenId,
  tokenBA       TokenBA  }

TokenBA ::= SEQUENCE {
  ranB          RandomNumber,
  timestampB    TimeStamp  }

MessageAB ::= SEQUENCE {
  tokenId       [0] TokenId,
  certA         [1] CertData,
  tokenAB       TokenAB  }

TokenAB ::= SEQUENCE {
  ranA          RandomNumber,
  ranB          RandomNumber,
  entityB       EntityName,
  timestampB    TimeStamp,
  absigValue    OCTET STRING  }

MessageBA2 ::= SEQUENCE {
  tokenId       [0] TokenId,
  certB         [1] CertData,
  tokenBA2      TokenBA2  }

TokenBA2 ::= SEQUENCE {
  ranB         [0] RandomNumber,
  ranA         [1] RandomNumber,
  entityA      EntityName,
  timestampB2  TimeStamp,
  ba2sigValue  OCTET STRING  }

CertData ::= SEQUENCE {
  certPath      [0] CertificationPath } -- see X.509

EntityName ::= SEQUENCE OF CHOICE {
  directoryName [4] Name } -- only allow one!

RandomNumber ::= INTEGER -- 20 octets
TokenId ::= SEQUENCE {
  tokenType       INTEGER,              -- see table below
  protoVerNo      INTEGER  }            -- always 0x0001

TimeStamp ::= GeneralizedTime

The TokenId.TokenType is used to distinguish the message type and the
authentication type (either unilateral or mutual). The following
table provides the values needed to implement this specification:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message Type</th>
<th>Authentication Type</th>
<th>TokenId.TokenType</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MessageBA</td>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>0x0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual</td>
<td>0x0011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MessageAB</td>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>0x0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual</td>
<td>0x0012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MessageBA</td>
<td>Mutual</td>
<td>0x0013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Security Considerations

This entire memo is about security mechanisms. For DSA to provide
the authentication discussed, the implementation must protect the
private key from disclosure.

Implementations must randomly generate DSS private keys, ‘k’ values
used in DSS signatures, and nonces. The use of inadequate pseudo-
random number generators (PRNGs) to generate cryptographic values can
result in little or no security. An attacker may find it much easier
to reproduce the PRNG environment that produced the values, searching
the resulting small set of possibilities, rather than using a brute
force search. The generation of quality random numbers is difficult.

RFC 1750 [RFC1750] offers important guidance in this area, and
Appendix 3 of FIPS PUB 186 [FIPS186] provides one quality PRNG
technique.

6. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank William Nace for support during implementation
of this specification.
7. IANA Considerations

The authentication type DSS and its associated suboption values are registered with IANA. Any suboption values used to extend the protocol as described in this document must be registered with IANA before use. IANA is instructed not to issue new suboption values without submission of documentation of their use.

8. References


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