**In this project, you will need to write a survey on security of the Tetra protocol (including attacks on various subsystems of the protocol, used cryptographic primitives, protocol implementations). The survey should include an analysis of recently discovered vulnerabilities**

TETRA uses time-division multiple access (TDMA) with four 'slots' on a single carrier, with 25 kHz carrier spacing, voice and data can be secured by adding optional encryption . Tetra burst is a radio protocol designed with four different encryption algorithms. The cryptographic primitives used by Tetra are all stream ciphers. The TEA suite consists of four stream ciphers with 80-bit keys, where TEA1 and TEA4 were intended for commercial use and restricted export scenarios while TEA2 and TEA3 were intended for use by European and extra-European emergency services respectively. In addition, optional, vendor-specific end-to-end encryption (E2EE) solutions can be deployed on top of AIE.

. These encryption algorithms are allocated to different countries.

TEA1 (used by majority countries including not to export countries), TEA2 (reserved for the military), TEA3 (countries the European Union have some relations), TEA4 (no information is given on it hence it is assumed that it isn’t in current use).

In [2] discovered that there are five key vulnerabilities that they observed by reverse engineering the keystream received as shown in the table 1 [2]:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CVE | Vulnerability | Impact | Severity/Actor |
| CVE-2022-24400 | The Air Interface Encryption (AIE) keystream generator relies on the network time, which is publicly broadcast in an unauthenticated manner. This allows for decryption oracle attacks. | Loss of authenticity / partial loss of confidentiality | Low/Active |
| CVE-2022-24401 | The Air Interface Encryption (AIE) keystream generator relies on the network time, which is publicly broadcast in an unauthenticated manner. This allows for decryption oracle attacks | Loss of confidentiality / authenticity | Critical / Active |
| CVE-2022-24402 | The TEA1 algorithm has a backdoor that reduces the original 80-bit key to a key size which is trivially brute-forceable on consumer hardware in minutes. | Loss of confidentiality / authenticity | Critical  Passive / Active |
| CVE-2022-24403 | The cryptographic scheme used to obfuscate radio identities has a weak design that allows attackers to deanonymize and track users. | User deanonymization | High/Passive |
| CVE-2022-24404 | Lack of ciphertext authentication on AIE allows for malleability attacks. | loss of authenticity | High/Active |

TEA1 is what was broken.

Vulnerabilities that have been established based on research reviews from 2020 to 2024

About the security of tetra [2]:

The Protocols in public standard, primitives not recovered. All TAxx are based on HURDLE\* cipher, which is a 16-round Feistel cipher with 64-bit blocks and 128-bit key. All TBx based on XOR / addition and some blocks identical / related such as TA11 & TA41, TA12 &TA22 and TA11 &21 (which was reversed engineered).

All KeyStream Generators have similar structure and is used for air interface encryption. It uses “key initialization” function, while reducing 80-bit key into 32-bit register allowing Intercept comms and Injecting data (SCADA WAN!) possible

One major problem of the protocol is seen in the improper implementation of the stream cipher; without the randomization of the initialization vector (IV) and the use of some properties of the frame such as current time and sequence number to generate the IV [3,youtube review-see github wiki].

Another area is, the system is vulnerable to sequence replay attack: -An attacker can replay a previous sequence number and the system resets to such point, something the system shouldn’t be doing, hence forcing the system to reset to that initialization vector (system assumes went wrong), this will allow an attacker can review information/carry out another malicious act because of the re-use of the IV [1,2].

Another issue is the actual implementation of the cryptographic algorithm which are hand crafted crypto and not public for scrutiny as the weak key system would have been pointed out if it were publicly scrutinized [3,youtube review-see github wiki].

The key TEA1 uses is 80bits, but select 32bits from the 80bits. Hence it is brute-forced since the key used is only 32bits- 232 attempts. The way the trunking (find out the way it was done) of the key from 80bits to 32bits was done allows for reconstruction of the original 80bits. The authors also mentioned a small x-box whose activities have not been determine which could be a backdoor is a problem in of its self

One thing that is known about crypto is that it has to be open for scrutiny, but replacing the unsecure encryption algorithm with another set of propriety algorithms as have been done goes again to show that there are likely vulnerabilities with the new set of encryption algorithms and the fear of such discovery.

Depending on infrastructure and device configurations, these vulnerabilities allow for real time decryption, harvest-now-decrypt-later attacks, message injection, user deanonymization, or session key pinning

Propriety encryption algorithms are not secure

[1] discusses the vulnerabilities of TETRA authentication protocol namely the lack of perfect forward secrecy and unlinkability of mobile radio subscribers. Lack of user unlinkability lets the attacker track the physical movement of users which is highly undesirable specially in military operations seen in the authentication protocol between the mobile terminals and authentication server (SwMI). They further showed the vulnerabilities of TETRA authentication protocol including linkability attack against TETRA

[1] reported that in [2] TETRA authentication protocol has been verified by Scyther analysis tool and shown that the integrity of the exchanged messages can be manipulated to violate the key agreement of the protocol. According to [1] it has been shown that the location privacy and dependability of TETRA can be weakened, as it can be localized by means of antenna arrays and direction-finding techniques on the physical layer.

Lack of perfect forward secrecy lets the attacker to discover the previous session keys given the long-term key k. it suffices for the attacker to get the transmitted RS in a previous session. Using algorithm TEA1, he/she can compute session key KS by having the long-term key k and the intercepted RS [1].

Despite the use of temporary identities ATSI to avoid the linkability of TETRA subscribers, the execution of the authentication protocol paves the way for the attackers to trace TETRA subscribers, an active attacker is able to intercept the authentication triplet (Rs, RAND1, RES1) sent and received by the SwMI respectively to the victim mobile station MSv. The intercepted authentication challenge (RS,RAND1) is sent later by the attacker to a number of MSs to find the original MSv. Due to the fact that the output of TA12 depends on (RAND1,K,RS) the attacker is able to distinguish any mobile station from the one the authentication challenge was originally sent to (MSv). Upon reception of the replayed (RS,RAND1) the victim mobile station, MSv will give the same RES1 as the one given before, while other MSs give different values for RES1 due to the different pre-shared keys they have. The implementation of few false base stations would then allow an attacker to trace the movements of a victim mobile station, resulting in a breach of the subscriber untraceability [1]

[1] propose not to send challenges RAND1, RS explicitly. Instead, they should be computed secretly by both parties using a Random Generating Function (RGF) seeded from the common pre-shared key k i.e. (RS, Rand1, Rand2) =RGF(k) for the first session. For the next sessions the RGF produces the new challenges (Rs’, Rand1’, Rand2’) seeded from the previous challenges namely Rand1, Rand2 i.e. (Rs’, Rand1’, Rand2’) = RGF (Rand1, Rand2). (RAND2 is used for the authentication of SwMI by MS). As before SwMI computes XRES1 by itself using algorithm TA21 to compare it with received RES1. Upon the equality of the two terms, the MS is authenticated and SwMI sends R1 (True) to MS. The same scenario holds for the mutual authentication of MS and SwMI. In this case, challenges such as RAND1, RAND2, RS are not transmitted in the protocol.

Our observation Key draw:

* generating a shared random generating function does not handle the issue of session key replay attack, which was the first problem in the first instance provided in their review of [2].
* Here are some potential vulnerabilities associated with TETRA:
* Eavesdropping: Despite encryption features in TETRA, if encryption keys are compromised or if outdated encryption algorithms are used, attackers could potentially eavesdrop on TETRA communications.
* Denial of Service (DoS): TETRA systems may be vulnerable to DoS attacks, where an attacker floods the system with illegitimate requests or traffic, causing it to become overwhelmed and unavailable to legitimate users.
* Man-in-the-Middle (MitM) Attacks: If attackers can intercept and manipulate TETRA traffic, they could potentially insert themselves as a middleman between communicating parties, eavesdropping on or altering the communication.
* Weaknesses in Encryption: If TETRA systems are not properly configured or if outdated encryption algorithms are used, it could lead to vulnerabilities in the encryption mechanism, allowing attackers to decrypt intercepted communications.
* Physical Security: TETRA infrastructure components such as base stations and control centers need to be physically secure. Unauthorized access to these components could compromise the entire system's security.
* Radio Interference: TETRA operates in radio frequency bands, which could be subject to interference from other radio devices or intentional jamming by attackers, affecting communication reliability.
* Insider Threats: Insider threats pose a risk to TETRA systems. Malicious insiders with access to system components could abuse their privileges to compromise the integrity, confidentiality, or availability of the system.
* Lack of Security Updates: Failure to regularly update TETRA infrastructure with security patches and firmware updates could leave systems vulnerable to known exploits and vulnerabilities.
* Social Engineering: Attackers could exploit human vulnerabilities through social engineering techniques to gain unauthorized access to TETRA systems or sensitive information.
* Backdoor Exploitation: Undocumented or overlooked backdoors in TETRA equipment or software could be exploited by attackers to gain unauthorized access or control over the system.

Analysis of Risks and Determination of the Potential Impact of the reported vulnerabilities

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Vulnerability | | devices, the data and network traffic where it has been deployed | the level of cryptanalysis and attack that can be done on transmitted data | potential risk- which will be based on these factors | | | | |
| Ease of exploitability | Discoverability of the security weakness | Reproducibility of threats (some threats are one-time and some are  continuous) | Prevalence of the threat in the industry or similar companies | Historical security incidents |
| CVE-2022-24400 | The Air Interface Encryption (AIE) keystream generator relies on the network time, which is publicly broadcast in an unauthenticated manner. This allows for decryption oracle attacks. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CVE-2022-24401 | The Air Interface Encryption (AIE) keystream generator relies on the network time, which is publicly broadcast in an unauthenticated manner. This allows for decryption oracle attacks |  | Attacker can overpower infrastructure and alter MS perception of time •MS will then use keystream that fits the attacker specified network time •Works regardless of TEA used, regardless of ‘network authentication’ |  |  |  |  |  |
| CVE-2022-24402 | The TEA1 algorithm has a backdoor that reduces the original 80-bit key to a key size which is trivially brute-forceable on consumer hardware in minutes. |  | Trivial passive brute force  MAC header is unencrypted | The researchers found that they were able to decrypt messages from this, using a very high powered graphics card in about a minute. Making vulnerable if you happen to be an expert and have some pretty reasonable equipment | LLC header and further payload gets encrypted by TEAx keystream generator (KSG)  •TETRA messages have no cryptographic auth/integrity guarantee :  − CRC16 on lower MAC layer  − Optional CRC32 on LLC layer | TEAx keystream generators depend on key and on network time − Need to guarantee different keystream is used each time •Network time broadcast in unencrypted, unauthenticated manner − SYNC and SYSINFO frames •As mentioned; no further cryptographic integrity checks − Any encrypted data is taken at face value |  |  |
| CVE-2022-24403 | The cryptographic scheme used to obfuscate radio identities has a weak design that allows attackers to deanonymize and track users. | Attacker can exploit easily TA61 (the primitive responsible for identity encryption) , allowing attackers to deanonymize traffic (passive attack) by identifying three pairs identities with their encrypted equivalent, which can be obtained by observing unencrypted authentication in which both encrypted and unencrypted identities are used (pass the ifrom their only need 3 identity [4] | − Counter-intelligence (unmask covert surveillance units) − Early warning (of e.g. police intervention | Correlate identities with observed units − Identity ranges allocated to user groups | Part of TAA1, called TA61Encrypts 24-bit TETRA addresses and the Encrypted identities change only when network key changes. TA61 is vulnerable to meet-in-the-middle attack − Recovers value of 𝑐 − Complexity: 248 with 3 identity pairs leading to instant deanonymization | Raspberry Pi + RTL-SDR dongle can be spread for geographic coverage − Fully passive, so stealthy! | With the use of tetra protocol by so many countries and organizations, there is a high level of risk if attackers can trace the devices.  Since these devices that can you tetra protocol are specific, discovery of these devices can lead to exploitation of those network |  |
| CVE-2022-24404 | Lack of ciphertext authentication on AIE allows for malleability attacks. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

References

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