Cryptography Report
Davies-Meyer Construction for Compression Functions and Time-Space TradeOff Attacks on Hash Functions

Kshitij Vaidya : Roll No 22B1829
Ishan Pandit : Roll No 22B2141

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Abstract

This report explores the **Davies-Meyer construction**, a foundational technique for deriving cryptographic hash functions from block ciphers, and investigates its susceptibility to **time-space tradeoff attacks**. As one of the most widely utilized frameworks for hash function design, the Davies-Meyer construction offers a balance of efficiency and security across various cryptographic applications. However, the evolving landscape of cryptographic threats necessitates a deeper examination of its resilience to sophisticated attack strategies.

Time-space tradeoff attacks, a prominent class of cryptanalytic techniques, exploit the interplay between computational power and memory resources to undermine cryptographic defenses. These attacks, which leverage precomputed data to reduce the time required for cryptanalysis, reveal a critical tension between theoretical security guarantees and real-world vulnerabilities. By examining these techniques, particularly **Rainbow Table** and **Distinguished Points** attacks, this report highlights their reliance on precomputed tables and the inherent tradeoff between time efficiency and memory usage.

The report further discusses mitigation strategies, such as **salting** and **HMACs** (Hash-Based Message Authentication Codes), which are employed to fortify hash functions against these vulnerabilities. By analyzing both the mechanics of time-space tradeoff attacks and the effectiveness of countermeasures, this study underscores the ongoing need to adapt cryptographic designs to emerging threats, ensuring the long-term security of modern hash functions.

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1. Introduction

Cryptographic hash functions are a cornerstone of modern information security, ensuring data integrity, authentication, and secure communication. They are used in diverse applications, from digital signatures and password hashing to blockchain technologies. Among the various methods for constructing hash functions, the Davies-Meyer construction holds a significant place due to its efficiency and robust design.

The Davies-Meyer construction, introduced in the early 1980s, is a technique that transforms block ciphers into cryptographic hash functions. Its simplicity and reliance on established block cipher properties have made it a foundational framework in cryptography. However, evolving cryptanalytic techniques have raised questions about its resilience and adaptability, necessitating a deeper understanding of its properties and vulnerabilities.

Time-space tradeoff attacks on hash functions represent a critical area of study in cryptography, addressing the balance between computational effort and memory usage in compromising hash security. These attacks exploit precomputed data structures, such as rainbow tables, to reduce the time required to reverse hashes or find collisions, posing a significant threat to traditional hash-based security mechanisms. With the increasing computational power available to attackers, understanding and mitigating these attacks is essential for maintaining robust cryptographic systems.

This report provides a comprehensive introduction to the Davies-Meyer construction and its role in cryptographic hash function design. It begins with an overview of the fundamental principles of cryptographic hash functions, followed by a discussion of the motivation for studying the Davies-Meyer framework. Additionally, the report encompasses the theoretical foundations, security analysis, and implications of the Davies-Meyer construction in the broader context of cryptographic research.

1.1. Background on Cryptographic Hash Functions

Hash functions are mathematical algorithms that take an input of arbitrary size and produce a fixed-size output, commonly referred to as a hash value or digest. These functions are designed to meet three critical properties:

1. **Collision Resistance:** It should be computationally infeasible to find two distinct inputs that produce the same hash value.

2. **Preimage Resistance:** Given a hash value, it should be computationally infeasible to retrieve the original input.

3. **Second-Preimage Resistance:** Given an input and its hash, it should be infeasible to find another input that produces the same hash.

1.2. Overview of the Davies-Meyer Construction

The Davies-Meyer construction transforms a block cipher into a hash function by combining the block cipher's encryption process with a chaining mechanism. Specifically, it uses the formula:

$$H_{i+1} = E_{M_i}(H_i) \oplus H_i$$

where H_i is the current hash state, M_i is the input block, and E_{H_i} represents encryption using the block cipher. This design ensures that the security of the hash function inherits the strength of the block cipher.

1.3. Overview of Time-Space Tradeoff Attacks

Time-space tradeoff attacks leverage precomputed hash tables to bypass the need for exhaustive on-the-fly computations. By storing precomputed chains of hashes, attackers reduce the time needed to find inputs that match given hash values at the cost of increased memory usage. The most notable implementations of these attacks include:

1. **Rainbow Table Attacks:** Utilize hash-reduction chains and optimized table structures to crack unsalted hashes efficiently.
2. **Distinguished Point Attacks:** Store specific points in hash chains, minimizing storage requirements while preserving search efficiency.

The mathematical basis of these attacks involves the relationship:

$$t \cdot s \approx k$$

where t is the time required for an attack, s is the space used for precomputation, and k represents the overall computational effort.

1.4. Motivation for Study

1.4.1. Davies-Meyer Construction

Despite its simplicity and elegance, the Davies-Meyer construction faces challenges from advanced cryptanalytic methods, including time-space tradeoff attacks and weaknesses in block cipher choices. Understanding these vulnerabilities is crucial for evaluating its applicability in modern cryptography and ensuring the continued security of systems built upon it.

1.4.2. Time-Space Tradeoff Attacks

Time-space tradeoff attacks pose a growing threat as computational resources become more accessible, allowing attackers to generate and utilize large-scale precomputed tables. These attacks challenge the practical security of unsalted hash functions and older algorithms like MD5 and SHA-1. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of modern cryptographic systems necessitates a deeper understanding of such vulnerabilities.

2. Cryptographic Hash Functions

Cryptographic hash functions are essential primitives in modern cryptography. They serve a wide range of purposes, including ensuring data integrity, digital signatures, message authentication codes, and more. This chapter explores the fundamental properties, definitions, and role of hash functions in cryptography, accompanied by the necessary mathematical formulations.

2.1. Definitions and Properties

A cryptographic hash function H is a mathematical function that maps an input x of arbitrary finite length to a fixed-length output y:

$$H : \{0,1\}^* \to \{0,1\}^n,$$

where $\{0,1\}^*$ represents the set of all binary strings of finite length, and n is a fixed positive integer, typically representing the hash output length.

2.1.1. Collision Resistance

A cryptographic hash function is said to be collision-resistant if it is computationally infeasible to find two distinct inputs x_1, x_2 such that:

$$H(x_1) = H(x_2),$$

where $x_1 \neq x_2$. This property ensures that no two different inputs map to the same hash value, safeguarding against forgery and data manipulation.

2.1.2. Preimage Resistance

A hash function H is preimage-resistant if, given a hash output $y \in \{0,1\}^n$, it is computationally infeasible to find any input $x \in \{0,1\}^*$ such that:

$$H(x) = y.$$

This property prevents adversaries from reversing the hash function to retrieve the original input.

2.1.3. Second-Preimage Resistance

Second-preimage resistance ensures that, given an input x_1 and its hash value $H(x_1)$, it is computationally infeasible to find another input $x_2 \neq x_1$ such that:

$$H(x_2) = H(x_1).$$

This property is particularly important in contexts where data integrity is critical.

2.2. Interdependencies of Resistance Properties

1. **Collision Resistance Implies Second Preimage Resistance**

   If it is infeasible to find any two inputs x_1 and x_2 such that $H(x_1) = H(x_2)$ (collision resistance), it is also infeasible to find a specific x_2 for a given x_1 such that $H(x_1) = H(x_2)$ (second preimage resistance).

   Reason: Finding a second preimage is essentially finding a specific type of collision.

2. **Second Preimage Resistance Does Not Imply Collision Resistance**

   Even if it is hard to find a second input x_2 for a specific x_1, there might still exist some other pair of inputs x_3 and x_4 such that $H(x_3) = H(x_4)$.

   Reason: Second preimage resistance deals with a specific input, whereas collision resistance applies to any two inputs. Second preimage resistance is a special case of collision resistance and does not cover it completely.

3. **Preimage Resistance is Independent of the Other Two**

   Preimage resistance focuses on reversing a hash to find the original input, while the other properties deal with hash values matching for two inputs.

   Reason: A hash function could be difficult to reverse (preimage resistance) but still allow collisions (lack of collision resistance).

2.2.1. Summary of Dependency

1. Collision resistance implies second preimage resistance, as finding any collision inherently includes finding a second input for a specific first input.

2. Second preimage resistance does not imply collision resistance, as protecting specific inputs does not guarantee protection against general collisions.

3. Preimage resistance is independent, as it targets a different aspect of security (irreversibility of hashes) unrelated to matching hash values for two inputs.

2.3. Role of Compression Functions in Hash Function Design

Cryptographic hash functions often rely on compression functions f as building blocks. A compression function f maps a fixed-length input to a shorter fixed-length output:

$$f : \{0,1\}^a \to \{0,1\}^b, \quad \text{where } a > b.$$

In the context of hash functions, a compression function is iteratively applied to process the input, transforming it into a fixed-length output.

2.3.1. Merkle-Damgård Construction

One widely used method for building hash functions from compression functions is the Merkle-Damgård construction. Let $f : \{0,1\}^{n+m} \to \{0,1\}^n$ be a compression function.

The input message M is divided into t fixed-size blocks $M_1, M_2, \ldots, M_t$, and processed iteratively as:

$$H_i = f(H_{i-1}, M_i),$$

where:

1. H_0 is the initialization vector (IV),
2. H_t is the final hash value.

To ensure that the hash function works with arbitrary-length inputs, padding is applied to make the input length a multiple of the block size.

2.4. Hash Function Security and the Random Oracle Model

In theoretical cryptography, hash functions are often analyzed under the Random Oracle Model (ROM). In this model, a hash function H is treated as a truly random function that maps every possible input to a random fixed-length output. While practical hash functions cannot achieve the idealized behavior of a random oracle, they are designed to approximate it as closely as possible.

2.4.1. Hash Function Applications

Cryptographic hash functions are utilized in a variety of applications:

1. **Data Integrity:** Hashes verify that data has not been tampered with during transmission or storage.
2. **Digital Signatures:** Hash functions are used to produce compact representations of messages for signing.
3. **Password Storage:** Hashing ensures secure storage of passwords by obfuscating their plaintext values.
4. **Blockchain:** Cryptographic hashes enable secure and efficient management of blockchain data structures.

2.5. Equations and Mathematical Formulations

2.5.1. Hash Value Computation

Given an input message M and a hash function H, the hash value is computed as:

$$H(M) = f(f(\ldots f(H_0, M_1), M_2), \ldots, M_t),$$

where H_0 is the initial state and M_i are the input message blocks.

2.5.2. Avalanche Effect

The avalanche effect is a critical property of cryptographic hash functions. A small change in the input ΔM should produce a significant change in the hash output ΔH:

$$\text{Hamming Weight}(\Delta H) \approx \frac{n}{2},$$

where n is the output length in bits. Here the Hamming weight is a measure of the number of non-zero bits in a binary string. Mathematically, the Hamming weight $H(m)$ and $H(m')$ between two strings m and m' is defined as:

$$\Delta H = H(m) \oplus H(m')$$

The above defintion makes it obvious that we would want a high Hamming weight for the hash functions to be secure.

3. The Davies-Meyer Construction

The Davies-Meyer construction is a foundational method for building cryptographic hash functions using block ciphers. Its simplicity, efficiency, and reliance on well-established block cipher designs make it a widely studied and implemented framework in cryptography. This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the Davies-Meyer construction, including its mathematical formulation, properties, and illustrative examples.

3.1. Historical Development

The Davies-Meyer construction was introduced in the early 1980s as part of the research into designing cryptographic hash functions from block ciphers. At a time when dedicated hash function designs were limited, reusing the robust and extensively studied properties of block ciphers provided a practical and secure solution. Over the decades, the construction has been adapted and extended in various ways to meet the growing demands of cryptographic applications.

3.2. Mathematical Representation

The Davies-Meyer construction transforms a block cipher into a compression function suitable for use in hash function design. Given a block cipher $E_k(x)$, where:

1. k is the encryption key,
2. x is the plaintext,
3. $E_k(x)$ is the ciphertext,

the compression function f is defined as:

$$f(H_i, M_i) = E_{M_i}(H_i) \oplus H_i,$$

where:

1. H_i is the chaining value (intermediate hash state),
2. M_i is the current message block,
3. $\oplus$ denotes the bitwise XOR operation.

The final hash value is derived after processing all message blocks:

$$H_{i+1} = f(H_i, M_i),$$

where H_0 is an initialization vector (IV) chosen as part of the hash function specification.

3.2.1. Iterative Application

Given a message M divided into t blocks $M_1, M_2, \ldots, M_t$, the hash value is computed iteratively:

$$H_1 = f(H_0, M_1),$$
$$H_2 = f(H_1, M_2),$$
$$\vdots$$
$$H_t = f(H_{t-1}, M_t),$$

where H_t is the final hash value.

3.3. Properties of Davies-Meyer Construction

The security and utility of the Davies-Meyer construction rely on several critical properties:

3.3.1. Preimage Resistance

If the underlying block cipher $E_k(x)$ is secure, finding a preimage for the Davies-Meyer compression function is as hard as breaking the block cipher. Given the hash H_{i+1}, an adversary must solve:

$$E_{M_i}(H_i) \oplus H_i = H_{i+1}.$$

3.3.2. Second-Preimage Resistance

Second-preimage resistance stems from the dependence on the chaining value H_i. Given H_i and M_i, producing a different input $M_i' \neq M_i$ that results in the same output requires an adversary to manipulate both the block cipher and the XOR operation, a computationally hard task.

3.3.3. Collision Resistance

The Davies-Meyer construction inherits its collision resistance from the block cipher's strength. Collisions occur if:

$$E_{M_i}(H_i) \oplus H_i = E_{M_i'}(H_i') \oplus H_i',$$

where $H_i \neq H_i'$ or $M_i \neq M_i'$. Finding such collisions is as hard as finding collisions in the underlying block cipher.

3.4. Strengths and Weaknesses

3.4.1. Strengths

1. Simple and efficient to implement.
2. Relies on the well-studied security of block ciphers.
3. Compatible with the iterative design of modern hash functions.

3.4.2. Weaknesses

1. Vulnerable to weaknesses in the block cipher.
2. Does not inherently defend against length-extension attacks without padding mechanisms.

4. Security Analysis of the Davies-Meyer Construction

In this section, we present proofs to demonstrate the security properties of the Davies-Meyer construction. Specifically, we show that:

1. The security of the Davies-Meyer construction is implied by the security of the underlying block cipher.
2. The second-preimage resistance of the Davies-Meyer construction is implied by its preimage resistance.

4.1. Security of the Davies-Meyer Construction from Block Cipher Security

Let $E_k(x)$ be the block cipher used in the Davies-Meyer construction, where k is the key and x is the plaintext. The compression function f is defined as:

$$f(H_i, M_i) = E_{H_i}(M_i) \oplus H_i.$$

To prove that the security of f follows from the security of $E_k(x)$, we analyze the preimage and collision resistance of f.

4.1.1. Preimage Resistance

Given $H_{i+1} = f(H_i, M_i)$, finding a preimage involves solving for H_i and M_i such that:

$$H_{i+1} = E_{H_i}(M_i) \oplus H_i.$$

Rewriting this equation, we obtain:

$$E_{H_i}(M_i) = H_{i+1} \oplus H_i.$$

1. $E_k(x)$ is a secure block cipher, meaning that for a given output, it is computationally infeasible to determine both k (the key, which corresponds to H_i) and x (the input, which corresponds to M_i).
2. To find a preimage, an adversary must compute H_i and M_i such that the equation holds. This is as hard as breaking the block cipher $E_k(x)$, which is assumed to be computationally infeasible under the security model of $E_k(x)$.

Thus, the Davies-Meyer construction inherits preimage resistance from the block cipher.

4.1.2. Collision Resistance

A collision occurs if there exist $(H_i, M_i) \neq (H_i', M_i')$ such that:

$$f(H_i, M_i) = f(H_i', M_i').$$

Expanding the definition of f, this implies:

$$E_{H_i}(M_i) \oplus H_i = E_{H_i'}(M_i') \oplus H_i'.$$

To solve this equation, an adversary must produce two distinct pairs (H_i, M_i) and (H_i', M_i') such that:

$$E_{H_i}(M_i) = E_{H_i'}(M_i') \oplus (H_i \oplus H_i').$$

1. The security of the block cipher ensures that it is infeasible to find such pairs unless the underlying block cipher is compromised.
2. Therefore, finding collisions in the Davies-Meyer construction is at least as hard as finding collisions in the block cipher.

4.2. Relationship Between Preimage Resistance and Second Preimage Resistance

The *Davies-Meyer construction* defines a cryptographic hash function H using a block cipher E as follows:

$$H_{i+1} = E(M_{i+1}, H_i) \oplus H_i$$

where:

1. E is a secure block cipher.
2. H_i is the intermediate hash value at step i, with an initial value H_0.
3. M_{i+1} is the message block at step $i + 1$.
4. H_{i+1} is the updated hash after processing the block.

The relationship between **preimage resistance** and **second preimage resistance** in this construction is as follows:

4.2.1. Preimage Resistance

1. **Definition:** Given a hash value H_{i+1}, it should be computationally infeasible to find any input pair (H_i, M_{i+1}) such that:

$$H_{i+1} = E(M_{i+1}, H_i) \oplus H_i$$

2. This resistance relies on the difficulty of inverting the block cipher E and finding a valid H_i and M_{i+1}.
3. A secure block cipher ensures that preimage resistance holds, as E acts as a pseudorandom function.

4.2.2. Second Preimage Resistance

1. **Definition:** Given a specific input (H_i, M_{i+1}), it should be computationally infeasible to find another input pair (H'_i, M'_{i+1}) such that:

$$H_{i+1} = E(M_{i+1}, H_i) \oplus H_i = E(M'_{i+1}, H'_i) \oplus H'_i$$

2. Second preimage resistance is generally harder to achieve than preimage resistance, as the attacker is constrained to start with a specific H_i and M_{i+1}.

3. This property is critical for preventing forgery attacks where an attacker tries to generate a second valid message with the same hash value.

4.2.3. Key Insights

1. **Dependence:** Second preimage resistance relies on preimage resistance but requires additional constraints, making it a stricter security property.

2. **Construction Strength:** The Davies-Meyer construction ensures both preimage and second preimage resistance if the block cipher E is secure.

3. **Practical Implications:** The complexity of a second preimage attack is higher due to the need to satisfy specific input-output relationships across the hash chain.

5. Time-Space Tradeoff Attacks on Hash Functions

5.1. Introduction

Time-space tradeoff attacks are cryptographic attack methods that balance computational effort (time) and memory usage (space) to reverse hash functions or find collisions. These attacks exploit precomputed data structures to speed up the process of matching hash values to their original inputs. Unlike brute-force attacks, which compute hashes on-the-fly, time-space tradeoff attacks store intermediate results to reduce lookup times. This chapter delves into the principles, mechanisms, and significance of these attacks in the context of cryptographic hash functions.

5.2. Mechanism of Time-Space Tradeoff

Time-space tradeoff attacks rely on precomputing and storing partial results to reduce computational time at the expense of increased memory usage.

5.2.1. Basic Principle

The relationship between time (t) and space (s) is mathematically expressed as:

$$t \cdot s \approx k$$

where k is a constant representing the total computational work required for the attack.

5.2.2. Tradeoff

1. **Brute-force approach:** Minimal space ($s = 1$), maximum time ($t = |P|$), where $|P|$ is the size of the password space.
2. **Time-space optimized approach:** By precomputing partial results, s is increased while t decreases, achieving faster lookups at the cost of memory.

5.3. Applications

Time-space tradeoff attacks are effective against unsalted hash functions and are used in:

1. **Password Cracking:** Exploiting predictable passwords in stored hash databases.
2. **Hash Collisions:** Locating two inputs that hash to the same output.
3. **Legacy Systems:** Targeting older systems using weak hash functions like MD5 or SHA-1.

5.4. Strengths and Weaknesses

5.4.1. Strengths

1. Significantly faster than brute-force for large password spaces.
2. Effective for weak or unsalted hash functions.

5.4.2. Weaknesses

1. Requires significant storage for precomputed tables.
2. Ineffective against salted hashes or advanced algorithms like bcrypt.

6. Rainbow Table and Distinguished Point Attacks

6.1. Introduction

Rainbow Table Attacks and Distinguished Point Attacks are advanced time-space trade-off techniques that leverage precomputed hash chains to reverse hash functions or find collisions efficiently. These attacks target cryptographic hash functions by reducing computational effort during the attack phase, relying instead on memory-intensive precomputation.

6.2. Reduction Functions

Reduction functions are a core component of both attacks, mapping hash outputs back to plausible inputs to generate hash chains.

6.2.1. Mechanism

A reduction function converts a hash value into a format that matches the input space, such as converting a hash into an alphanumeric string for passwords. For example, given a hash $H(x)$ applied on an 8-byte password x, the reduction function $R(H(x))$ might output a string of 8 bytes using a modular operation, so that this new output can act as an input for the hash function, i.e., an 8-byte password. Reduction functions in distinguished point attacks generate specific points with recognizable characteristics, such as a hash starting with a fixed number of zeros.

6.2.2. Importance of Using Different Reduction Functions

In a rainbow table, each link in the chain applies a different reduction function $(R_1, R_2, R_3, \dots)$ rather than repeatedly applying the same function. The reason for this is that if two chains encounter the same intermediate hash value at a certain step (e.g., a common password hashed by coincidence), applying the same reduction function would make the chains identical from that point onward. This redundancy causes the two chains to "merge," reducing the coverage of the table and wasting computational effort.

$$P_{11} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{11}) \xrightarrow{r} P_{12} \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow H(P_{1n})$$
$$P_{21} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{21}) \xrightarrow{r} P_{22} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{22}) \xrightarrow{r} P_{23} \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow H(P_{2n})$$

For example, if $P_{12} = P_{23}$, i.e., the second password of the first hash chain equals the third password of the second hash chain, then all subsequent passwords in the second

hash chain will be present in the first hash chain: $P_{13} = P_{24}$, $P_{14} = P_{25}$, and so on, up to $P_{1(n-1)} = P_{2n}$. This renders the second hash chain completely void and useless.

By using unique reduction functions at each step, the hash values diverge even after encountering the same intermediate hash. This ensures better coverage of the hash space and minimizes overlap between chains.

6.3. Computation of Tables

The precomputation phase involves generating and storing hash chains for later use, allowing us to search these tables for the required passwords and obtain their hashes.

6.3.1. Rainbow Tables

Chain Generation: Chains start from a random plaintext input (e.g., a password). The input is repeatedly hashed and reduced using a series of reduction functions, forming a chain of hash values of a fixed length (say n). Only the chain's starting plaintext and final hash (endpoint) are stored.

Table Construction: A single table may contain millions of chains, covering a significant portion of the input space. Reduction functions ensure diversity, minimizing overlapping chains.

Given:

1. H : Hash Functions
2. P_{ij} : Password
3. R : Reduction Function

Process:

$$
\begin{aligned}
&P_{11} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{11}) \xrightarrow{R_1} R_1(H(P_{11})) = P_{12} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{12}) \xrightarrow{R_2} R_2(H(P_{12})) = P_{13} \xrightarrow{H} \cdots H(P_{1m}) \\
&P_{21} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{21}) \xrightarrow{R_1} R_1(H(P_{21})) = P_{22} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{22}) \xrightarrow{R_2} R_2(H(P_{22})) = P_{23} \xrightarrow{H} \cdots H(P_{2m}) \\
&\quad \vdots \\
&P_{n1} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{n1}) \xrightarrow{R_1} R_1(H(P_{n1})) = P_{n2} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{n2}) \xrightarrow{R_2} R_2(H(P_{n2})) = P_{n3} \xrightarrow{H} \cdots H(P_{nm})
\end{aligned}
$$

Finally, the stored table would look like: $\{(p_{start1}, h_{end1}), (p_{start2}, h_{end2}) \cdots\}$.

6.3.2. Distinguished Point Tables

Chain Generation: Chains are created similarly but stop when a distinguished point is reached (e.g., a hash with a particular number of leading zeroes). This approach is used to limit the search scope during password retrieval; instead of searching for each password in the table, we can check only those passwords that meet the distinguishing criteria. This method results in variable-length chains, unlike rainbow tables.

Table Construction: Only distinguished points and their corresponding starting inputs are stored.

Given:

1. H : Hash Functions
2. P_{ij} : Password
3. R : Reduction Function
4. $n_1 \neq n_2 \cdots n_m$: Variable Chain Lengths

Process:

$$P_{11} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{11}) \xrightarrow{R_1} R_1(H(P_{11})) = P_{12} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{12}) \xrightarrow{R_2} R_2(H(P_{12})) = P_{13} \xrightarrow{H} \cdots H(P_{1n_1})$$
$$P_{21} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{21}) \xrightarrow{R_1} R_1(H(P_{21})) = P_{22} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{22}) \xrightarrow{R_2} R_2(H(P_{22})) = P_{23} \xrightarrow{H} \cdots H(P_{2n_2})$$
$$\vdots$$
$$P_{m1} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{m1}) \xrightarrow{R_1} R_1(H(P_{m1})) = P_{m2} \xrightarrow{H} H(P_{m2}) \xrightarrow{R_2} R_2(H(P_{m2})) = P_{m3} \xrightarrow{H} \cdots H(P_{mn_m})$$

Finally, the stored table would look like: $\{(p_{start1}, h_{end1}), (p_{start2}, h_{end2}) \cdots\}$.

6.4. Mechanism of Attack

6.4.1. Rainbow Table Attacks

Search Phase: Given a target hash h_0, the attacker checks if it matches any chain endpoint in the table. If not, the attacker iterates through possible hash-reduction steps to reconstruct the chain and locate the original plaintext input.

Chain Traversal: If a match is found, the attacker regenerates the chain from the starting input to verify the target hash and recover the corresponding plaintext.

6.4.2. Distinguished Point Attacks

Search Phase: The target hash is hashed and reduced repeatedly until it reaches a distinguished point. If the distinguished point matches an entry in the table, the attacker uses the corresponding starting input to regenerate the chain and locate the original input.

Iterative Approach: If no match is found, the attacker starts a new chain from the target hash, repeating the process until a match is found or all options are exhausted.

6.4.3. Example Scenario

Scenario: Precomputed table stores hash chains with reduction functions $R_1, R_2, \ldots, R_n$ applied in sequence to hash outputs. Given a target hash h_0, the goal is to find the original plaintext p_0 such that $H(p_0) = h_0$. Each hash chain stores: $(p_{\text{start}}, h_{\text{end}})$. For a set of hash chains given as : $(p_{\text{start},1}, H(R_n(\cdots H(R_1(p_{\text{start},1})))))$

The stored table: $\{(p_{start1}, h_{end1}), (p_{start2}, h_{end2}) \cdots\}$.

6.4.4. Step-by-Step Attack Mechanism

Iterative Reduction: Begin with the target hash h_0. Apply reduction and hashing iteratively:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Step 1:} \quad & p'_1 = R_1(h_0), \quad h_1 = H(p'_1) \\ \text{Step 2:} \quad & p'_2 = R_2(h_1), \quad h_2 = H(p'_2) \\ \text{Step 3:} \quad & p'_3 = R_3(h_2), \quad h_3 = H(p'_3) \\ & \vdots \\ \text{Repeat until:} \quad & h_n = H(p'_n) \end{aligned}$$

If h_n matches any h_{end} in the table, proceed to the next step.

Matching in Table: Suppose $h_n = h_{\text{end},2}$. From the table, retrieve $p_{\text{start},2} = p_2$.

Regenerating Chain: Regenerate the chain from p_2 to locate h_0 within the chain:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Step 1:} \quad & h_{1,\text{new}} = H(p_2), \quad p_{1,\text{new}} = R_1(h_{1,\text{new}}) \\ \text{Step 2:} \quad & h_{2,\text{new}} = H(p_{1,\text{new}}), \quad p_{2,\text{new}} = R_2(h_{2,\text{new}}) \\ & \vdots \\ \text{Continue until:} \quad & h_0 = H(p_{k,\text{new}}) \end{aligned}$$

Plaintext Recovery: If $h_0 = H(p_{k,\text{new}})$, the corresponding plaintext is $p_0 = p_{k,\text{new}}$.

Conclusion: The attack succeeds if h_0 is located within the reconstructed chain of a stored endpoint. Increasing the length of the hash chains improves the attack's success probability. If h_n does not match any h_{end}, we can increase n and continue iterating.

6.5. Advantages and Disadvantages

6.5.1. Rainbow Table Attacks

Advantages:

1. Faster lookups compared to brute-force attacks.
2. Optimized storage using chain endpoints.
3. Effective for unsalted hash functions.

Disadvantages:

1. High memory requirement for large precomputed tables.
2. Ineffective against salted hashes, as each salt requires a new table.

6.5.2. Distinguished Point Attacks

Advantages:

1. Lower storage requirements compared to rainbow tables.
2. Can be distributed across multiple systems for efficient table generation.

Disadvantages:

1. Slower lookups due to the iterative search for distinguished points.
2. Limited effectiveness for large or complex hash spaces.
3. Vulnerable to salting and advanced hashing methods.

Conclusion: Both rainbow table and distinguished point attacks highlight the vulnerabilities of unsalted hash functions. These methods underscore the importance of salting and advanced hash designs to counter time-space tradeoff attacks and ensure cryptographic security.

6.6. Mathematically Representing Time-Space Tradeoff

6.6.1. Mathematical Foundations

The time-space tradeoff in cryptographic attacks is governed by the equation:

$$t \cdot s \approx k$$

where:

1. t: Time required to compute hashes during an attack.
2. s: Space or memory allocated for precomputed tables.
3. k: Total computational effort (constant).

6.6.2. Lookup Time for Rainbow Tables

Rainbow tables optimize lookup by storing chain endpoints:

$$t = \frac{|P|}{N}$$

where:

1. $|P|$: Size of the password space.
2. N: Number of chains in the table.

Longer chains reduce the number of chains required but increase the lookup time t. More number of chains increase the likelihood of finding a match, reducing the lookup time.

6.6.3. Storage Requirements

The storage s for a rainbow table is determined as:

$$s = N$$

Where N is the number of chains in the table. The total number of chains is determined by the size of the password space and the chain length.

$$N = \frac{|P|}{L}$$

Thus, if all hash chains together cover all possible cases (i.e. the entire message space), the storage can be expressed as

$$s = \frac{|P|}{L}$$

where:

1. Shorter Chains (L) increase the number of chains (N), requiring more storage
2. Longer Chains (L) reduce the number of chains (N) but increase the lookup time

6.6.4. Distinguished Point Efficiency

For distinguished point attacks, storage is further optimized:

$$s' = s \cdot \frac{1}{k}$$

where k is the reduction in storage factor.

6.6.5. Mathematical Summary

1. Storage: $s = \frac{|P|}{L}$
2. Time: $t = \frac{|P|}{N}$
3. Tradeoff Constant: $t \cdot s \approx |P|$

6.6.6. Insights

Time-space tradeoff methods balance resources for efficiency. Mathematical representation highlights the relationship between t, s, and $|P|$. Strong hashing methods, such as salting, disrupt these relationships, mitigating attacks.

Dependence on L and N

1. The chain length (L) and the number of chains (N) directly affect both storage (s) and lookup time (t).
2. The number of chains (N) determines the space required to store the table.

Balancing t and s

1. Longer chains reduce the number of chains needed, optimizing storage but increasing time.
2. Shorter chains reduce time but increase storage requirements due to the increased number of chains needed.

7. Mitigating Strategies for Time-Space Tradeoff Attacks

Time-space tradeoff attacks, such as rainbow table and distinguished point attacks, exploit precomputed hash chains to efficiently reverse cryptographic hash functions. These attacks heavily rely on predictable hashing mechanisms, making them particularly effective against weak or unsalted hash functions. Mitigation strategies aim to disrupt the balance of time and space in these attacks, rendering them impractical. This chapter explores key mitigation techniques: salting and HMAC (Hash-Based Message Authentication Codes), which significantly enhance the security of hash functions and counter time-space tradeoff attacks.

7.1. Salting Hashes

7.1.1. What is Salting?

Salting involves appending a unique, random value (called a "salt") to each input before hashing it. This ensures that even if two users have the same password, their hashed values will differ due to the unique salts applied. Salting prevents attackers from relying on precomputed tables, as every hash now depends on its corresponding salt. Key considerations:

1. Salts must be randomly generated and sufficiently long (16 bytes or more).
2. Salts should be stored alongside their corresponding hashes for future verification.

7.1.2. Mechanism

The salted hash H_{salted} is computed as:

$$H_{\text{salted}} = H(\text{salt} \,||\, \text{password}) \quad \text{or} \quad H_{\text{salted}} = H(\text{salt} \,||\, H(\text{password}))$$

Where:

1. salt: A random value unique to each input.
2. password: The plaintext password or input.
3. H: The cryptographic hash function.

The choice of which version to use depends on specific requirements and computational resources.

7.1.3. Benefits of Salting

1. **Prevents Precomputed Attacks:** Salts make each hash unique, invalidating precomputed tables like rainbow tables.
2. **Protects Against Reused Passwords:** Ensures that identical passwords across users result in different hashes.
3. **Expands Search Space:** Increases the computational effort required by attackers, as tables must be recomputed for each salt.

7.1.4. Example

Consider two users with the same password:

$$\text{User 1:} \quad \text{Password} = \text{"password123"}, \ \text{Salt} = \text{"abc123"}$$
$$H(\text{"abc123password123"}) = \text{hash}_1$$
$$\text{User 2:} \quad \text{Password} = \text{"password123"}, \ \text{Salt} = \text{"xyz789"}$$
$$H(\text{"xyz789password123"}) = \text{hash}_2$$

Even though both passwords are identical, the hashes are different due to unique salts, rendering precomputed tables ineffective.

7.2. HMAC (Hash-Based Message Authentication Codes)

7.2.1. What is HMAC?

HMACs enhance hash function security by incorporating a secret key into the hashing process, making the output dependent on both the input and the key. Precomputed attacks like rainbow tables are ineffective unless the secret key is known. Key considerations:

1. Keys should be securely generated and kept secret.
2. Use strong cryptographic hash functions like SHA-256 or SHA-3.
3. HMACs can be combined with salting for layered protection.

7.2.2. Mechanism

An HMAC is computed as:

$$\text{HMAC}(K, M) = H((K' \oplus \text{opad}) || H((K' \oplus \text{ipad}) || M))$$

Where:

1. K: The secret key.
2. M: The message or input.
3. H: The cryptographic hash function.
4. opad and ipad: Outer and inner padding constants.

We define K' as follows:

$$K' = \begin{cases} K & \text{if } |K| \leq \text{block size} \\ H(K) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

7.2.3. Benefits of HMAC

1. **Prevents Precomputed Attacks:** The hash output depends on the secret key K, making precomputed tables useless without K.
2. **Enhances Security:** Even if the hash function has weaknesses, the secret key mitigates exploitation.
3. **Verifiable Integrity:** HMACs authenticate messages, ensuring data integrity during transmission.

7.2.4. Example

Given:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Secret key } K &= \text{"securekey"} \\ \text{Message } M &= \text{"password123"} \\ \text{Compute HMAC}(K, M) \text{ using SHA-256} &\Rightarrow H(K, M) = \text{a5f3c6} \ldots \end{aligned}$$

Without K, attackers cannot regenerate the hash, making precomputed attacks futile.

7.3. Combining Strategies

To maximize security, salting and HMACs can be used together:

1. **Salt the input** to ensure uniqueness.
2. **Apply HMAC** with a secret key for added resilience.

For example:

$$\text{Final Hash} = \text{HMAC}(K, \text{salt}||\text{password})$$

This layered approach effectively neutralizes time-space tradeoff attacks.

7.4. Conclusion

Salting and HMACs are powerful tools for mitigating time-space tradeoff attacks. While salting ensures uniqueness and disrupts precomputed tables, HMACs introduce a secret-key dependency, preventing easy hash regeneration. Combined, these strategies significantly enhance cryptographic security, protecting sensitive data against evolving threats.