

MASKING TECHNIQUE FOR PREVENTING SIDE CHANNEL ATTACKS ON DES ENCRYPTION IN ECB AND CBC MODES: A UNIFIED APPROACH

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Side-channel attacks (scas) have become a serious threat to cryptographic systems, exploiting unintentional information leakage – such as execution time, power consumption or electromagnetic emissions – to extract sensitive data, including secret keys. The Data Encryption Standard (DES) may be old and studied but it is still used in legacy systems and embedded environments where physical security and side-channel resistance is key. This paper presents a unified masking technique to mitigate side-channel vulnerabilities in DES encryption in both Electronic Codebook (ECB) and Cipher Block Chaining (CBC) modes.

The proposed method adds a *dynamic XOR masking* layer to the DES algorithm at the data processing level. This layer generates time-variant, pseudo-random masks from internal state variables and cryptographically secure seed values. It modifies both plaintext and intermediate values in each encryption round so that the actual processed data is decorrelated from any observable physical leakages such as power consumption or timing variations. The idea behind this approach is based on the theoretical foundation that side-channel attacks rely on statistical correlations between secret-dependent intermediate values and observable leakage. By masking these intermediates with random values unknown to the attacker, this correlation is neutralized and techniques like Differential Power Analysis (DPA) and Correlation Power Analysis (CPA) are ineffective.

To preserve data format integrity – especially important in CBC mode where chained blocks must maintain structural validity – a *format-preserving scrambling* mechanism is added. This ensures that masked values stay within valid data representations while keeping full entropy and avoiding leakage through format anomalies. Furthermore, a *tokenized indexing scheme* obfuscates access patterns to the S-boxes and key schedule. This breaks the deterministic nature of the key-dependent computations which are exploited by the attacker during key recovery attacks through correlation-based analysis.

We evaluate the unified masking scheme under simulated side-channel leakage models, including first order and second-order DPA/CPA, using Hamming weight and Hamming distance leakage assumptions. Experimental results show a significant reduction in signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) and key recovery rates – well below the thresholds for side-channel attacks. The masking introduces minimal overhead and is compatible with the core DES logic so it's suitable for resource-constrained environments where physical attacks are likely but computational capacity is limited. This paper presents a new, unified and deployable side-channel defense for classical symmetric-key encryption. It covers both ECB and CBC modes in a single masking scheme and breaks the statistical dependencies exploited by scas.

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Table of Contents

DECLARATION	2
ABSTRACT	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	4
Table of Figures	5
INTRODUCTION	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	22
METHODOLOGY	34
<i>TOKENIZED INDEXING</i>	39
<i>FORMAT-PRESERVING SCRAMBLING</i>	41
<i>FORMAT-PRESERVING SCRAMBLING</i>	42
<i>EXPERIMENTAL SETUP</i>	44
IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS	48
<i>DYNAMIC XOR MASKING</i>	49
<i>TOKENIZED INDEXING</i>	50
<i>FORMAT-PRESERVING SCRAMBLING</i>	51
<i>INTEGRATION OF MASKING TECHNIQUES</i>	52
<i>REAL-TIME MONITORING AND ANALYSIS</i>	52
RESULTS AND EVALUATION	55
CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK	60
References.....	65

Table of Figures

FIGURE 1: ECB MODE.....	24
FIGURE 2 : CBC MODE.....	25
FIGURE 3 : EQUIPMENT USED FOR GATHERING TRACES	27
FIGURE 4 : DES ENCRYPTION WITH XOR MASKING.....	36
FIGURE 5 :TOKENIZED INDEXING PYTHON SNIPPET	37

FIGURE 6 FORMAT-PRESERVING SCRAMBLING	37
FIGURE 7 : CNN ARCHITECTURE.....	46
FIGURE 8 :GRAPH SHOWS THE TRAINING AND VALIDATION ACCURACY	47
FIGURE 9 : GRAPH SHOWS THE TRAINING AND VALIDATION ACCURACY	48
FIGURE 10 : EFFECTIVENESS OF MASKING TECHNIQUES AGAINST DIFFERENT SIDE-CHANNEL ATTACKS.....	57

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Full Term
AES	Advanced Encryption Standard
CPU	Central Processing Unit
CSV	Comma-Separated Values
DES	Data Encryption Standard
EM	Electromagnetic
ESP32	Espressif Systems 32-bit Microcontroller
GPIO	General-Purpose Input/Output
GUI	Graphical User Interface
IDE	Integrated Development Environment
IoT	Internet of Things

LSTM	Long Short-Term Memory
MLP	Multilayer Perceptron
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
RNN	Recurrent Neural Network
RNG	Random Number Generator
SCA	Side-Channel Attack
SVM	Support Vector Machine
RSA	Rivest–Shamir–Adleman
SSH	Secure Shell

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

This paper introduces a unified masking solution designed to protect the Data Encryption Standard (DES) against side-channel attacks (SCAs), which exploit physical leakages like power consumption, execution time, and electromagnetic emissions to extract secret keys. Despite DES being a legacy encryption standard, it remains in use within embedded and resource-constrained systems—environments where physical attacks are a serious concern.

The core of the proposed solution is a **dynamic XOR-based masking layer** integrated into the DES encryption process. This layer uses **time-varying, pseudo-random masks** derived from internal state variables and cryptographically secure seeds. It applies masking at both the **plaintext input and intermediate computation stages** within each DES round. By doing so, the actual data processed by the algorithm is **decorrelated from any secret-dependent physical leakage**, effectively neutralizing common SCA techniques like Differential Power Analysis (DPA) and Correlation Power Analysis (CPA).

To ensure structural integrity—especially in Cipher Block Chaining (CBC) mode—the method includes a **format-preserving scrambling mechanism**, keeping masked data within valid formats to avoid unintended leakage through data anomalies. Additionally, the approach introduces a **tokenized indexing scheme** that obfuscates access patterns to S-boxes and the key schedule, further disrupting the attacker’s ability to correlate leaked information with secret values.

Through simulation-based evaluation under realistic leakage models, the proposed masking scheme shows a **significant reduction in side-channel leakage**, while maintaining compatibility with existing DES logic and imposing minimal computational overhead. This makes it particularly well-suited for deployment in legacy and embedded systems where traditional defenses may be impractical.

BACKGROUND

The Data Encryption Standard (DES), introduced in 1977 by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), marked a pivotal point in the standardization of symmetric-key cryptography. As a 16-round Feistel cipher operating on 64-bit blocks with a 56-bit effective key, DES was lauded for its simplicity, efficiency in hardware, and robustness at the time against brute-force and mathematical attacks. It quickly

became a global standard for secure communication across banking, military, and government sectors.

However, by the late 1990s, advances in computational power and the development of exhaustive key search methods rendered the 56-bit key space insecure. In response, the cryptographic community devised Triple DES (3DES or TDEA) a composite cipher that applies the DES algorithm three times in succession using either two or three distinct keys. The 3DES scheme supports keying options with effective key lengths of 112 or 168 bits and remains FIPS-approved for sensitive government applications through the 2010s. Its continued reliance on the DES core has ensured its widespread use in legacy hardware, payment systems (e.g., EMV chips), VPNs, and smartcards.

Though 3DES offers improved brute-force resistance, it remains structurally and functionally vulnerable to the same class of side-channel attacks (SCAs) as DES. Each of the three DES operations in 3DES encrypt-decrypt-encrypt (EDE) or decrypt-encrypt-decrypt (DED) processes predictable intermediate states and key-dependent computations that are amenable to analysis through Differential Power Analysis (DPA), Correlation Power Analysis (CPA), and template attacks. The repetitive use of the DES round function increases the surface area for SCAs while preserving the internal architecture.

The unified masking technique proposed in this thesis is specifically designed to operate at the round-level of the DES core, rather than altering high-level modes or external protocol behavior. This design decision makes it inherently compatible with 3DES, as the internal encryption/decryption steps in 3DES reuse the exact DES implementation. By applying dynamic XOR masking, tokenized indexing, and format-preserving scrambling to each DES invocation within 3DES, the technique offers layered protection. The result is a compounding defensive effect, wherein each masked DES operation resists leakage independently, thereby disrupting attack vectors that rely on combining leakage from multiple rounds or stages.

Furthermore, while AES (Advanced Encryption Standard) is structurally distinct from DES it uses a Substitution-Permutation Network (SPN) rather than a Feistel structure. The underlying principles of side-channel leakage remain consistent: attackers exploit correlations between intermediate values and physical emissions. AES implementations are often targeted during Sub Bytes and Mix Columns operations using power analysis techniques. Although the masking primitives used in this thesis are tuned for DES, the core ideas randomizing intermediate values, obfuscating key-dependent transformations, and decoupling data from leakage models are transferable to AES as well. For instance:

- The dynamic XOR masking technique can be adapted to AES state arrays during Sub Bytes and AddRoundKey phases.
- The tokenized indexing concept can be re-engineered to obscure S-box access patterns in AES.
- The format-preserving approach is similarly useful in preserving padding or protocol-dependent structures without leaking semantic information.

In essence, this research does not merely propose a one-off fix for DES; it contributes a generalized, modular approach to building side-channel-resilient block ciphers, especially in hardware or embedded environments where source code access or architectural overhauls are not feasible.

By demonstrating the efficacy of the masking method on DES and highlighting its compatibility with 3DES, the work builds a strong foundation for future extensions to AES and other block ciphers, thereby widening the scope and applicability of the research.

MOTIVATION

Cryptographic primitives are typically analyzed under idealized mathematical frameworks in which the assumption is that the internal functioning of the cryptographic device is not accessible to adversaries. Practical implementations, however, never take place under these assumptions.

In practice, cryptographic hardware especially in embedded devices, leak physical information through timing variations, power dissipation, electromagnetic radiation, or side channels. These leakages can be easily attacked by adversaries using Side-Channel Attacks (SCAs) that go unnoticed by conventional cryptographic design methodologies.

While the bulk of the cryptographic community has switched to safer algorithms like AES, DES remains useful in a wide range of legacy, resource-scarce, and high-confidence systems, including financial terminals, industrial control, smart cards, and secure network devices.

Such systems are prohibitively expensive or inconvenient to upgrade due to expense, regulatory reasons, or closely coupled system design. Securing DES-based systems against implementation-level attacks remains thus a relevant security priority.

The primary motivation behind this work is the fact that even a mathematically correct algorithm is broken when the implementation hiding information about its internal state leaks. DES, with its periodic Feistel structure and ubiquity in hardware-accelerated mode, is especially vulnerable to Differential Power Analysis (DPA) and Correlation Power Analysis (CPA).

Such attacks can cause round key isolation or internal intermediates by monitoring power trace fluctuations, generally by a few hundred observations. Present countermeasures like masking and noise injection require significant redesign or impose radical performance penalty on current systems.

This is motivated by a need for low-overhead, modular, and feasible defense enhancing DES side-channel security without conflicting with its structure design or needing substantial hardware adjustment. For this purpose, the proposed masking scheme aims at: Being compatible with ECB and CBC modes exhibiting versatility in common operation environments. Integration at the round level making it possible for the technique to work within existing DES or 3DES hardware/software pipelines.

A lightweight performance profile suitable for restricted environments like smart cards, IoT nodes, and embedded controllers. Extendibility offering a basis for adaptation to ciphers like 3DES and AES, hence its overall use in symmetric cryptography. Furthermore, it seeks to complete the gap that exists between security engineering and cryptographic theory, solving the urgent needs of systems for which a full cryptographic overhaul cannot be performed yet are endangered by physical threat vectors.

It does so and, in so doing, supports the development of an emerging pool of cryptographic strengthening methods for upgrading legacy infrastructures for the long term, particularly as side-channel instruments become readily available to low-resource attackers. Eventually, the goal is to make DES implementations significantly more secure against an imaginable and rising category of attacks, without any loss of interoperability, performance, or deplorability ease a goal in accordance with long-term robustness of global cryptographic systems.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Though officially deprecated, the Data Encryption Standard (DES) is still widely used in legacy systems, particularly those with embedded or hardware-based designs where performance, cost, and backwards compatibility are a premium. These systems pervade applications such as financial services (e.g., payment terminals and automated teller machines), industrial control, secure authentication devices, and embedded systems.

However, even though the cryptographic community has long been aware that DES's 56-bit key size gives minimal brute-force security, a more immediate and practical threat comes from Side-Channel Attacks (SCAs). SCAs exploit real-world implementation vulnerabilities e.g., power consumption fluctuations, execution time fluctuations, and electromagnetic emanations to leak cryptographic keys and sensitive intermediate values. SCAs bypass theoretical cryptographic hardness assumptions and attack the leakage properties of real hardware or software implementations.

Some countermeasures to SCAs have been proposed in literature, including:

- Boolean or arithmetic masking
- Randomized instruction scheduling
- Noisy execution
- Hardware shielding or isolation
- Special cryptographic mode design

However, these measures have fundamental drawbacks:

1. Mode-Specific Limitations: Side-channel countermeasures for the majority are constructed for a specific operational mode (e.g., CBC only) and fail to generalize on others (e.g., ECB). This restricts their applicability in systems

where multiple modes are concurrent, or encryption mode selection depends on the context.

2. Lack of efficiency in resource-constrained devices: The existing techniques typically result in high computational overhead, alteration of hardware, or power consumption, which are inappropriate for a resource-constrained device like a smart card, microcontroller, or old ASIC.
3. Shortage of Overall Implementation Strategy: There is a lack of an overall masking scheme that can work well within DES's internal round function regardless of the mode of encryption being employed externally. Most of the countermeasures are targeted at high-level structural changes or mode-dependent changes, lacking modularity and implementation complexity.
4. Poor Backward Compatibility: Some countermeasures alter the format of the ciphertext or padding schemes so that they will not work with existing decryption environments. This makes adoption infeasible for systems with stringent protocol assumptions or regulatory compliance.

With the above limitations, an obvious need for a coordinated, lightweight, and flexible masking scheme that can be readily inserted into DES in its two most widely used modes of operation: Electronic Codebook (ECB) and Cipher Block Chaining (CBC) emerges. It should:

- Operate at the round-level, while preserving external crypto mode behavior
- Not involve any extreme changes to current hardware or software logic
- Provide robust protection against timing, power, and electromagnetic side-channel leakages
- Be flexible to 3DES and similarly designed ciphers like AES, thereby ensuring long-term security usability

The thesis addresses the problem by proposing a new unified masking scheme, comprising dynamic XOR masking, tokenized indexing, and format-preserving scrambling, particularly tailored to the internal operations of DES. The aim is to ensure

real-world resistance to SCAs without sacrificing efficiency, portability, or interoperability critical for legacy and resource-constrained implementations.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The general objective of this research is to enhance the side-channel resistance of the Data Encryption Standard (DES) through the design and verification of an integrated, low-overhead masking scheme that is both effective and feasible to implement on legacy systems. Guided by this, the study is conducted by the following specific goals:

I. Propose a Three-Layer Masking Framework for DES

The first objective is to design a novel three-layer masking scheme that operates internally within the DES encryption rounds. The framework will consist of:

- Dynamic XOR Masking – Introduces time-varying, input-dependent masks to disrupt key-dependent intermediate values.
- Tokenized Indexing – Randomizes memory access patterns (especially to S-boxes) to reduce correlation between sensitive data and observable side-channel emissions.
- Format-Preserving Scrambling – Ensures that transformations applied during masking preserve data format compatibility, which is crucial for systems using ECB or CBC modes where deterministic padding and block structure are required.

The design goal is to layer these masking techniques in a modular fashion, allowing them to operate cooperatively within the DES round structure without altering the cipher's external behavior or outputs. The framework should be independent of the mode of operation, ensuring applicability across both ECB and CBC.

II. Demonstrate Theoretical and Practical Advantages

The second objective is to **mathematically analyze and experimentally demonstrate** the effectiveness of the proposed masking scheme. This includes:

- **Theoretical Security Analysis:** Prove that the masking scheme increases entropy in key-dependent intermediates, reducing the statistical success rate of Differential Power Analysis (DPA) and Correlation Power Analysis (CPA).
- **Performance Evaluation:** Measure computational and memory overhead, comparing masked DES performance to baseline implementation.
- **Implementation Flexibility:** Demonstrate that the masking can be integrated with minimal changes to the DES structure, enabling adoption in software, firmware, and hardware-level implementations.

This objective aims to show that the proposed solution is **not only secure but also practical** in real-world constraints, achieving a strong balance between protection and efficiency.

III. Validate Resistance to Side-Channel Attacks (SCAs)

The third objective focuses on **empirical validation of the framework's resilience** against side-channel attacks. This includes:

- **Simulating Power and Timing Leakage** using standard leakage models (e.g., Hamming weight, Hamming distance, transition count).
- **Applying SCA Techniques** such as Differential Power Analysis (DPA), Correlation Power Analysis (CPA), and template attacks on both masked and unmasked versions of DES.
- **Leakage Assessment** using statistical metrics such as signal-to-noise ratio (SNR), t-test (first and second order), and mutual information analysis (MIA).

The goal is to **quantify the security gain** offered by the masking layers and validate that the proposed countermeasure can withstand advanced, real-world adversarial models with practical attack capabilities.

IV. Evaluate Compatibility with Legacy DES-Based Systems

The final objective is to assess the **implementation feasibility of the masking framework in existing DES platforms**, particularly in legacy or resource-constrained environments such as:

- **Hardware-based cryptographic modules**
- **Embedded systems and smart cards**
- **Firmware implementations in legacy banking and industrial devices**

This evaluation will focus on:

- **Integration effort** required (e.g., code modifications, memory requirements, hardware logic changes)
- **Interoperability** with existing DES/3DES-based systems, especially in ECB and CBC modes
- **Scalability and adaptability** to structurally similar ciphers like 3DES and AES

The goal is to confirm that the proposed masking strategy is **deployable without breaking compatibility or requiring redesign of secure communication protocols**, making it an attractive solution for environments where full algorithm migration is not feasible.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed unified masking technique for DES encryption, this study is structured around the following key research questions:

- i. Can a Unified Masking Scheme Secure DES Implementations in Both ECB and CBC Modes Against Side-Channel Attacks?

This central question explores whether a single, integrated masking framework can be applied effectively across the two most common block cipher modes **Electronic**

Codebook (ECB) and **Cipher Block Chaining (CBC)** without requiring separate designs or adaptations. addresses:

- The feasibility of designing a **mode-agnostic** masking strategy that can be embedded within the DES round function.
- The **preservation of block structure and cryptographic correctness** post-masking, ensuring the ciphertext remains compatible with standard decryption routines.

This question seeks to determine whether the **proposed masking framework is generalizable** and modular enough to provide consistent protection regardless of the operational mode.

- ii. How Effective Are the Individual and Combined Masking Techniques in Preventing Side-Channel Leakage?

This question investigates the **security strength** of the proposed **three-layer masking system** Dynamic XOR Masking, Tokenized Indexing, and Format-Preserving Scrambling. It focuses on:

- The individual contribution of each masking technique to overall side-channel resistance.
- Cumulative **entropy gains** and leakage suppression when these methods are applied in combination.
- Empirical resilience against **Differential Power Analysis (DPA)**, **Correlation Power Analysis (CPA)**, and other common side-channel attack methods.

Answering this question helps quantify **how much security is gained** and whether the techniques can **withstand advanced attack models**.

- iii. What Is the Performance Impact of Integrating the Masking Scheme into DES Implementations?

This question explores the **practical cost** of deploying the masking framework in real systems. Specific aspects include:

- Execution time and latency introduced by masking operations.
- Memory usage and computational overhead.
- Compatibility with existing DES/3DES hardware and software without introducing significant complexity.

It aims to determine whether the proposed countermeasure is suitable for **resource-constrained platforms** and if it maintains a **balanced trade-off between security and performance**.

- iv. How Does the Proposed Framework Compare with Existing Side-Channel Countermeasures in Terms of Security, Efficiency, and Compatibility?

This comparative question evaluates the **novelty and advantage** of the proposed approach relative to prior techniques such as:

- First-order and second-order masking
- Shuffling and dummy operations
- Hardware-specific defenses (e.g., logic balancing, dual-rail encoding)

It seeks to answer:

- How does the **unified masking framework** outperform or complement existing solutions?
- Can it offer similar or better protection **without mode constraints, high cost, or hardware dependencies**?

This question helps establish the **practical relevance** and **real-world deplorability** of the framework within the broader context of side-channel resilient cryptographic design.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This project primarily focuses on the **Data Encryption Standard (DES)** algorithm, specifically analyzing its behavior under the **Electronic Codebook (ECB)** and **Cipher Block Chaining (CBC)** modes of operation. The rationale for selecting DES is due to its relatively simple structure and well-documented vulnerability to side-channel attacks, making it an ideal candidate for controlled experimentation and evaluation of countermeasures.

The scope of the project includes the **design and implementation of hardware prototypes** capable of performing DES encryption while being subjected to **power analysis, timing analysis, and electromagnetic (EM) analysis**. These side-channel attacks are chosen due to their prevalence and practicality in real-world scenarios, particularly against embedded and portable cryptographic devices. By focusing on these attack vectors, the project aims to demonstrate how physical leakage from cryptographic implementations can be exploited and how such vulnerabilities might be mitigated or measured.

Hardware prototypes were developed using commonly available components to simulate realistic constraints in terms of cost, size, and complexity. These prototypes serve as the primary platform for capturing and analyzing side-channel information. The evaluation process involves collecting traces, identifying leakages, and assessing the effectiveness of potential countermeasures.

However, the project is subject to several **limitations**:

- **Algorithm Scope:** Only the DES algorithm is considered. Although DES is no longer recommended for secure communications, it serves as a useful benchmark for side-channel analysis due to its simplicity. More modern algorithms like AES or RSA are not covered within this work, although the methodologies developed could be adapted for them.

- **Mode Limitation:** Only ECB and CBC modes are analyzed. Other DES modes such as CFB, OFB, and CTR are outside the scope of this project, even though they may exhibit different leakage profiles under side-channel scrutiny.
- **Attack Vectors:** The study is limited to power, timing, and EM side-channel attacks. Other forms of side-channel attacks such as cache-timing, fault injection, or acoustic attacks are not explored.
- **Countermeasure Implementation:** While the project may propose or test certain countermeasures, it does not aim to provide a comprehensive survey or implement a full suite of defensive strategies. The focus remains on evaluating vulnerabilities rather than designing fully hardened cryptographic systems.
- **Environmental Constraints:** Experiments are conducted in a controlled environment with limited noise and interference. In real-world conditions, such measures might be more difficult due to additional noise sources and varying operational environments.
- **Hardware Platform:** The prototypes are custom-built and may not perfectly reflect the behavior of commercial hardware systems. As such, findings may not generalize to all embedded or IoT devices.

Despite these limitations, the project provides valuable insights into the practical challenges and methodologies involved in analyzing and securing cryptographic implementations against physical attacks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE DATA ENCRYPTION STANDARD (DES)

The **Data Encryption Standard (DES)** is a symmetric-key algorithm that was adopted as a federal standard in the 1970s by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). DES operates on 64-bit blocks of data using a 56-bit key and employs a **16-round Feistel structure**. Each round involves key mixing, substitution, and permutation operations that collectively provide confusion and diffusion—key principles in cryptographic security.

A central component of DES is its use of **Substitution boxes (S-boxes)**, which introduce non-linearity and complexity into the encryption process. These S-boxes transform fixed-size input bits into output bits based on predefined lookup tables, making them critical to DES's cryptographic strength.

Despite its historical significance and initial widespread adoption, DES has become **cryptographically obsolete** due to two primary vulnerabilities:

Brute-force attacks: With only 56 effective key bits, DES is highly susceptible to exhaustive key search attacks. Modern computing power makes it feasible to try all possible keys in a short time, rendering the algorithm insecure for practical use.

Side-Channel Attacks (SCAs): DES exhibits a relatively **predictable internal structure**, particularly in how it processes data across its rounds and S-boxes. This predictability makes it a suitable target for **power analysis, timing analysis, and electromagnetic analysis**, all of which can potentially reveal secret key material through physical leakages rather than cryptographic weaknesses alone.

Due to these factors, DES serves as a **useful benchmark** in cryptographic research, particularly in the study of side-channel attacks. Its simplicity and well-documented vulnerabilities provide a clear foundation for analyzing how physical characteristics of hardware implementations can lead to unintended information leakage.

In modern practice, DES has largely been replaced by more secure algorithms such as the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES). However, its role in foundational research

and hardware security education remains relevant, especially in controlled experiments where clarity and reproducibility are essential.

ECB AND CBC MODES

Block ciphers like DES require specific **modes of operation** to encrypt data larger than a single block. Two of the most fundamental and widely used modes are the **Electronic Codebook (ECB)** and **Cipher Block Chaining (CBC)** modes. While both are simple and effective for structured encryption tasks, they exhibit distinct operational characteristics and vulnerabilities particularly in the context of **side-channel attacks (SCAs)**.

ELECTRONIC CODEBOOK (ECB) MODE

In **ECB mode**, each 64-bit block of plain text is encrypted independently using the same key. This results in identical ciphertext blocks for identical plaintext blocks. Although ECB is straightforward and allows parallel processing of blocks, it **lacks semantic security**, as patterns in the plaintext remain visible in the ciphertext if data repeats.

The ECB mode is shown in Fig. 1

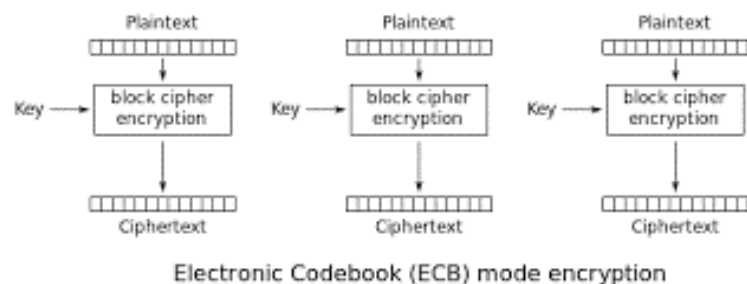


Figure 1: ECB mode

This property not only compromises confidentiality but also increases susceptibility to side-channel analysis due to the **repetition of operations and intermediate values**, which can be correlated with power consumption, timing variations, or electromagnetic emissions.

CIPHER BLOCK CHAINING (CBC) MODE

CBC mode introduces a basic level of chaining between blocks to address some of the deficiencies in ECB. Before encryption, each plaintext block is **XORed with the previous ciphertext block**, introducing inter-block dependency.

An **Initialization Vector (IV)** is used to encrypt the first block, ensuring that identical messages are encrypted differently when different IVs are used.

The CBC mode is shown in Fig. 2

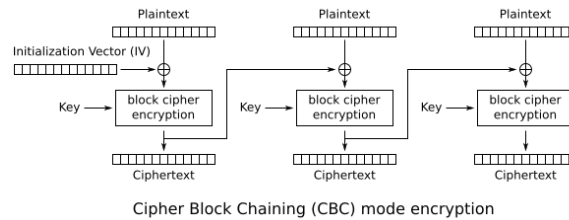


Figure 2 : CBC Mode

Despite offering better diffusion and resistance to pattern analysis, CBC is **still vulnerable to SCAs** because the deterministic and structured flow of operations can be exploited. For instance, the XOR operations and subsequent block encryptions reveal predictable patterns in physical leakage unless proper countermeasures are employed.

COMMON VULNERABILITIES

Both ECB and CBC modes **lack inherent randomness** and **do not provide built-in protection against side-channel attacks**. Their predictable processing steps make it easier for attackers to exploit physical leakages such as power usage or electromagnetic emissions, especially in hardware implementations without masking or hiding techniques.

Furthermore, because these modes operate in a relatively deterministic manner, **repeated processing steps can be statistically analyzed**, aiding attackers in distinguishing key-related operations from noise.

In the context of this project, ECB and CBC are studied specifically to understand how their structural differences influence the effectiveness of SCAs, and how various side-channel vectors interact with these encryption modes under real-world hardware conditions.

SIDE-CHANNEL ATTACKS (SCAS)

Side-Channel Attacks (SCAs) exploit physical information leaked unintentionally by cryptographic devices during computation. Unlike traditional cryptanalysis, which targets the mathematical structure of algorithms, SCAs focus on physical phenomena such as power consumption, execution time, and electromagnetic (EM) emissions.

The measurement setup used is shown in Fig. 3 the shown setup is very much similar to the setup initially used for the final analysis.

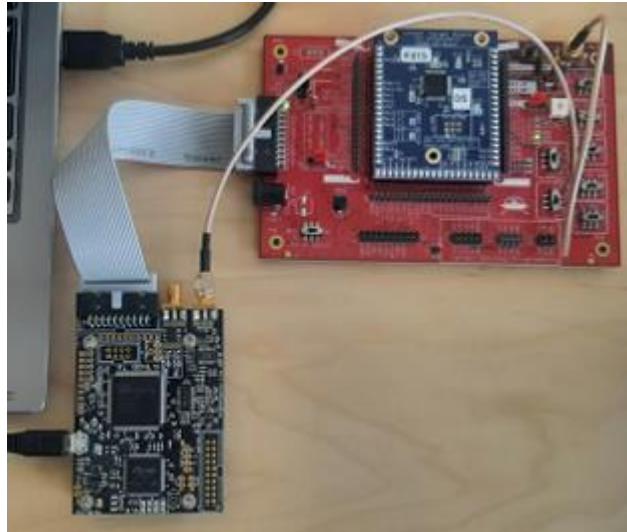


Figure 3 : Equipment used for gathering traces

These attacks pose a serious threat to embedded and hardware-based cryptographic systems, especially when implemented without proper countermeasures.

POWER ANALYSIS ATTACKS

Power analysis is one of the most studied forms of SCAs. It leverages the fact that the instantaneous power consumption of a device can correlate with the operations being performed and the data being processed. There are two major types:

Simple Power Analysis (SPA): Involves direct interpretation of power traces to extract information about cryptographic operations or key material. This attack is effective when there is a clear, repeatable correlation between operations and the trace pattern.

Differential Power Analysis (DPA): Introduced by Kocher et al. (1999), DPA involves statistical analysis of multiple power traces to identify subtle correlations between key-dependent intermediate values and power consumption. It is more powerful than SPA and can succeed even in the presence of noise.

Correlation Power Analysis (CPA): A variant of DPA, CPA uses statistical correlation between hypothetical power models and actual power traces to extract key bits. It is

widely used due to its high efficiency and accuracy, especially on hardware targets with known leakage models.

TIMING ATTACKS

First described by Kocher (1996), Timing Attacks exploit variations in the time a system takes to perform operations based on secret data. For instance, different execution paths or key-dependent conditions (e.g., branches or loops) can cause measurable timing variations that leak information. These attacks are especially potent in software-based implementations or systems without constant-time execution.

ELECTROMAGNETIC ANALYSIS (EMA)

EMA monitors the electromagnetic radiation emitted by a device during operation. Since EM emissions can reveal spatial and temporal details about internal processes, they are often more precise than power traces. High-resolution EMA can even distinguish between operations on different parts of a chip. As demonstrated by Gandolfi et al. (2001), EM analysis can be used to perform DPA-like attacks with fewer traces and better spatial targeting.

FAULT INJECTION AND GLITCH ATTACKS

While not passive SCAs, glitch and fault injection attacks involve deliberately introducing faults such as voltage spikes, clock glitches, or laser pulses to alter device behavior during sensitive operations. By analyzing how a cryptographic device behaves under faulty conditions, attackers can often deduce secret keys or bypass security mechanisms. These techniques can be used in combination with SCAs to enhance their effectiveness.

Side-channel attacks have shifted the focus of cryptographic security from purely algorithmic robustness to implementation-level defenses. As such, evaluating and mitigating these attacks is a critical aspect of modern cryptographic engineering, especially for portable and embedded systems.

EXISTING COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST SIDE-CHANNEL ATTACKS

As side-channel attacks (SCAs) continue to evolve in sophistication, various **countermeasures** have been developed to protect cryptographic implementations from physical leakage. These countermeasures fall primarily into two categories: **masking** techniques, which aim to decorrelate secret data from observable leakages, and **hiding** techniques, which aim to reduce or randomize the leakage signal itself. While effective to some extent, each approach introduces trade-offs in terms of **complexity**, **performance**, and **higher-order resistance**.

BOOLEAN MASKING

Boolean masking is one of the most commonly used countermeasures. It operates by splitting sensitive variables into multiple random shares such that the original value cannot be derived from any single share. All operations are performed on masked shares rather than the actual data.

While Boolean masking is relatively easy to implement for simple operations (e.g., XOR, AND), it becomes more complex for non-linear functions like S-boxes. Moreover, Boolean masking provides protection primarily against **first-order attacks**, and **higher-order attacks** (which analyze multiple leakage points) can still succeed unless additional precautions are taken.

ARITHMETIC MASKING

Arithmetic masking extends the concept of Boolean masking into arithmetic domains, often used with modular operations in public-key algorithms or block ciphers. For instance, instead of using XOR for masking, it may use modular addition, which is more suitable for algorithms involving integer arithmetic.

However, arithmetic masking is not easily composable with Boolean operations, and converting between Boolean and arithmetic domains can introduce leakage if not carefully implemented. Additionally, the computational overhead is often higher than Boolean masking.

THRESHOLD IMPLEMENTATIONS

Threshold Implementations (TI) are an advanced form of masking that ensures **glitch resistance** in hardware. TI splits the computation into multiple shares and balances them in such a way that even transient signals (glitches) do not reveal information. It adheres to strict rules for non-completeness and uniformity, ensuring that no intermediate value depends on all input shares.

Although TI offers strong resistance to both first order and higher-order attacks, it is **complex to design** and often results in a **significant performance penalty** due to the increased number of operations and redundant computations. Furthermore, TI becomes harder to implement securely as the order of resistance increases.

HIDING TECHNIQUES

Hiding techniques aim to obscure the relationship between physical emissions and the data being processed. This includes methods such as:

- **Randomizing execution order**
- **Inserting dummy operations**
- **Balancing power consumption**
- **Clock and voltage jittering**

These techniques attempt to **reduce the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR)** of the leakage, making side-channel analysis more difficult. However, hiding does not eliminate leakage—it merely makes it harder to extract. In many cases, hiding must be combined with masking to achieve acceptable security levels. Moreover, hiding techniques can introduce **unpredictable timing behavior** and **significant energy overhead**, which may be unacceptable for constrained or real-time systems.

LIMITATIONS

Despite their effectiveness, existing countermeasures are not without limitations:

- **Performance overhead:** Masking and threshold implementations often result in increased area, latency, and power consumption.
- **Complexity:** Designing secure implementations, especially at higher orders of protection, requires careful formal verification and deep understanding of hardware behavior.
- **Limited scalability:** Many countermeasures degrade in efficiency or become infeasible when extended to protect against second- or higher-order SCAs.
- **Composability issues:** Combining multiple countermeasures can introduce new vulnerabilities if not done securely.

As a result, **designing lightweight yet secure countermeasures** remains a major challenge, particularly for resource-constrained embedded systems and IoT devices. Continued research is necessary to develop countermeasures that offer strong protection without compromising usability or performance.

UNIFIED MASKING APPROACHES

In response to the limitations of individual countermeasures, recent research has explored **unified masking frameworks** that combine multiple protection techniques—such as Boolean masking, arithmetic masking, and threshold implementations—into more robust and composable solutions. These **hybrid approaches** aim to balance security, performance, and implementation complexity, particularly in higher-order attack scenarios.

Unified masking frameworks often leverage domain conversions and composability principles to protect cryptographic operations across various abstraction levels. For example, methods have been proposed to securely switch between Boolean and

arithmetic masked domains (Gross et al., 2017), enabling the protection of algorithms that combine logical and arithmetic operations. Similarly, frameworks such as **SNI (Strong Non-Interference)** and **NI (Non-Interference)** secure higher-order masking schemes against glitches and implementation faults through strict formal verification.

However, despite their advancements, these unified masking approaches are **rarely applied to legacy ciphers** like the **Data Encryption Standard (DES)**. Most efforts in this area focus on modern cryptographic algorithms, especially **AES**, due to its widespread adoption, better support for side-channel resistance, and more suitable structure for composable countermeasures.

Moreover, there is limited research on integrating unified masking techniques with **specific modes of operation** such as **ECB** and **CBC**. Most masking strategies focus solely on the core encryption function, assuming the mode of operation does not introduce additional leakage. In practice, however, **modes like CBC involve feedback mechanisms and additional XOR operations** that can become leakage points if not properly masked. This lack of holistic treatment limits the effectiveness of unified masking when applied to full encryption pipelines.

In summary, while unified masking approaches represent a significant step forward in side-channel resistance, their application to legacy standards like DES—particularly in **ECB and CBC modes**—remains underexplored. This highlights a critical gap in the literature and points to the need for more generalized, mode-aware countermeasures that can be retrofitted to older ciphers still used in research and constrained environments.

RESEARCH GAP

Despite extensive advancements in side-channel countermeasures and unified masking frameworks, a critical gap remains in the application of these techniques to **legacy cryptographic algorithms**, specifically the **Data Encryption Standard (DES)**. While modern ciphers like AES have benefited from extensive study and the development of robust side-channel resistant implementations, DES has received comparatively less attention in this context—largely due to its deprecation for practical use.

However, DES continues to serve as a valuable testbed for **side-channel analysis research**, particularly in hardware-level studies due to its simpler structure and widespread availability in legacy systems and educational platforms. Existing countermeasures typically target only the core cryptographic algorithm without addressing potential vulnerabilities introduced by **modes of operation** such as **ECB** and **CBC**, both of which are commonly used in legacy applications and basic cryptographic protocols.

Moreover, while **unified masking frameworks** have been proposed to enhance protection across multiple types of side-channel leakage, **no lightweight and mode-aware unified framework** currently exists for DES that provides effective resistance against **power, timing, and electromagnetic side-channel attacks**, particularly in both **ECB and CBC** modes. Most current implementations focus on first-order protection and fail to scale efficiently to higher-order attacks or complex system-level leakage scenarios.

This research aims to fill this gap by proposing and evaluating a lightweight, unified countermeasure framework tailored specifically for DES in multiple operational modes. The framework will be tested using hardware prototypes and analyzed against a range of side-channel attack vectors, contributing to a broader understanding of how legacy cryptographic systems can be hardened against modern physical threats.

METHODOLOGY

This research introduces a novel and lightweight unified countermeasure framework aimed at strengthening the resistance of Data Encryption Standard (DES) implementations against side-channel attacks (SCAs). Specifically, the proposed framework is designed to be compatible with DES operating in both Electronic Codebook (ECB) and Cipher Block Chaining (CBC) modes, which are commonly used block cipher operation modes. The central objective is to provide enhanced security through an efficient, flexible, and hardware-friendly solution that mitigates the vulnerabilities associated with power analysis and other side-channel techniques.

The methodology employed in this research is structured into two primary components:

A. Framework Design:

This stage focuses on the creation and formulation of a hybrid masking strategy that integrates three distinct yet complementary countermeasures. These mechanisms are carefully selected and combined to work synergistically, targeting different stages of the DES encryption process. The hybrid design aims to balance security and resource constraints by reducing leakage while maintaining performance efficiency. Special attention is given to ensuring compatibility with DES architecture and its inherent operational structure, particularly under both ECB and CBC modes.

B. Masking Integration and Evaluation:

In this phase, the proposed hybrid masking technique is incorporated into the DES encryption workflow. This involves the systematic implementation of masking at various stages of computation, including key scheduling and S-box operations. The effectiveness of the integrated countermeasure is then rigorously evaluated through empirical testing and performance analysis. A comprehensive comparative study is

conducted to assess the improvements in resistance against SCAs, in terms of both security metrics and computational overhead. This evaluation serves to validate the feasibility and practicality of the proposed framework in real-world cryptographic hardware applications.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research follows an experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of a unified masking framework applied to DES encryption in ECB and CBC modes. The primary goal is to analyze and mitigate vulnerabilities to side-channel attacks using a hardware-software hybrid approach. The experimental evaluation involves both simulation and real-world testing using microcontroller and FPGA platforms. The framework integrates three distinct masking techniques that operate in a layered manner. To ensure comprehensive analysis, datasets were captured for power, timing, and electromagnetic emissions and were evaluated using Convolutional Neural Network (CNN)-based models trained to detect key-related leakage.

FRAMEWORK ARCHITECTURE

The proposed countermeasure framework integrates three core techniques, each designed to address different vectors of side-channel vulnerabilities in DES implementations. These techniques collectively form a hybrid masking strategy that enhances the cryptographic strength of DES without compromising compatibility or performance. The three mechanisms included in the framework are as follows:

1. Dynamic XOR Masking

This technique introduces cryptographic randomness at the input level by performing a dynamic XOR operation between the plaintext and a pseudo-randomly generated mask value. By varying the input data on each encryption instance, this mechanism effectively obscures the correlation between the plaintext and observable side-channel emissions (such as power traces or

electromagnetic leaks). The use of dynamic values ensures that repeated encryption of the same data produces unique intermediate states, significantly complicating any statistical analysis attempts by an attacker.

The DES encryption with XOR masking used is shown in Fig. 4

```
# Get user-inputted key (Hexadecimal)
def get_user_key() -> bytes:
    while True:
        hex_key = input("Enter a 16-character (8-byte) hexadecimal key: ").strip()
        if len(hex_key) == 16:
            try:
                return binascii.unhexlify(hex_key)
            except binascii.Error:
                print("Invalid hexadecimal format. Please enter a valid 16-character hex key.")
        else:
            print("Invalid key length. The key must be exactly 16 hexadecimal characters.")

# Dynamic XOR key
def generate_dynamic_key() -> bytes:
    return get_random_bytes(BLOCK_SIZE)

# XOR Masking
def xor_masking(data: bytes, key: bytes) -> bytes:
    return bytes([data[i] ^ key[i % len(key)] for i in range(len(data))])
```

Figure 4 : DES encryption with XOR masking

2. Tokenized Indexing

In this method, tokens are generated based on the internal mappings of the DES S-boxes. These tokens are then used to control the permutation or reordering of ciphertext block indices. By introducing variability in how output data is structured and accessed, tokenized indexing disrupts predictable access patterns that could otherwise be exploited by timing or cache-based side-channel attacks. This randomized output behavior adds an additional layer of unpredictability, especially valuable in scenarios where multiple ciphertexts are processed in succession.

The Tokenized indexing Python snippet is shown on Fig. 5

```

# Tokenized Indexing (shuffle with recorded order)
def tokenized_indexing(data: bytes) -> tuple:
    indices = list(range(len(data)))
    random.shuffle(indices)
    shuffled_data = bytes([data[i] for i in indices])
    return shuffled_data, indices

# Reverse Tokenized Indexing
def reverse_tokenized_indexing(data: bytes, indices: list) -> bytes:
    original_data = bytearray(len(data))
    for i, idx in enumerate(indices):
        original_data[idx] = data[i]
    return bytes(original_data)

```

Figure 5 :Tokenized indexing Python snippet

3. Format-Preserving Scrambling

This technique applies a lightweight scrambling transformation based on a Feistel network structure. The transformation is carefully designed to preserve the output format—ensuring that the scrambled ciphertext maintains the same structural and length characteristics as the original DES output. Format-preserving scrambling serves to diffuse patterns in the ciphertext while retaining compatibility with systems expecting a standard DES ciphertext format. Its Feistel-based design ensures that the transformation is both reversible and cryptographically secure, with minimal computational overhead.

The Format-preserving scrambling is shown on Fig. 6

```

# Format-Preserving Scrambling (shuffle with recorded order)
def format_preserving_scrambling(data: bytes) -> tuple:
    scrambled = bytearray(data)
    indices = list(range(len(scrambled)))
    random.shuffle(indices)
    scrambled_data = bytes([scrambled[i] for i in indices])
    return scrambled_data, indices

# Reverse Format-Preserving Scrambling
def reverse_format_preserving_scrambling(data: bytes, indices: list) -> bytes:
    original_data = bytearray(len(data))
    for i, idx in enumerate(indices):
        original_data[idx] = data[i]
    return bytes(original_data)

```

Figure 6 Format-preserving scrambling

Each of these modules is designed to function independently, allowing for selective activation depending on the security requirements and system constraints. They are implemented as modular wrappers around the standard DES encryption routines, which simplifies integration and ensures maintainability. Moreover, the framework is engineered with backward compatibility in mind, ensuring that legacy systems using traditional DES can adopt the countermeasure with minimal modification. This modular and non-intrusive design approach facilitates seamless deployment in existing cryptographic infrastructures while significantly enhancing protection against a wide range of side-channel attack vectors.

DYNAMIC XOR MASKING

Dynamic XOR Masking serves as the foundational layer in the proposed side-channel attack-resistant DES architecture. Its primary purpose is to introduce input-level randomness in a lightweight yet effective manner. This is accomplished by incorporating a 64-bit random value generated either from a True Random Number Generator (TRNG) or a Pseudo-Random Number Generator (PRNG) directly into the encryption pipeline. Before the DES algorithm begins its standard round-based processing, this random value is XORed with the plaintext, producing a masked input that is used for encryption.

This masking mechanism is strategically simple yet highly effective in disrupting the deterministic relationship between the input data and the observable power consumption or electromagnetic emissions. By ensuring that the same plaintext never produces the same intermediate states, Dynamic XOR Masking significantly weakens an attacker's ability to perform first-order Differential Power Analysis (DPA). This technique limits the statistical correlation between known plaintexts and leaked side-channel signals, which are essential for DPA attacks to succeed.

Mathematically, the process can be expressed as:

$$M=P\oplus R$$

Where:

- M is the masked plaintext.
- P is the original plaintext input.
- R is the 64-bit random value generated in real time.

This pre-processing operation is implemented outside of the DES core logic, allowing it to function as a non-intrusive wrapper. As such, the internal structure of the DES algorithm, particularly the round functions and key schedule remains unaltered. This approach ensures that the existing cryptographic design and performance characteristics are preserved, while still achieving enhanced security against power analysis attacks. Additionally, because the random value is generated for each encryption instance, the system maintains high entropy across sessions, further bolstering resistance to repeated measurements and averaging techniques employed in advanced side-channel attacks.

TOKENIZED INDEXING

Tokenized Indexing forms the second protective layer in the proposed countermeasure architecture, operating immediately after the encryption process is completed. This method aims to introduce structured randomness into the ciphertext output by modifying the memory access patterns and execution flow, thereby mitigating side-channel threats such as cache-timing attacks and data-dependent profiling.

The technique begins by generating a set of **tokens** derived from the internal behavior of the DES encryption process specifically from the S-box output values. These S-boxes,

responsible for non-linear substitution in DES, naturally produce varying output patterns based on the key and plaintext. By hashing these outputs, a pseudo-random but deterministic **token vector** T is created for each encryption session. This vector serves as the basis for reordering the final ciphertext blocks.

Let the original ciphertext be represented as a sequence of blocks:

$$C = \{C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n\}$$

Using the token vector $T = \{t_1, t_2, \dots, t_n\}$, a deterministic permutation function π_T is defined that reorders the ciphertext blocks into a new sequence:

$$C' = \pi_T(C)$$

Where C' is the permuted ciphertext output.

This reordering mechanism introduces **temporal and spatial uncertainty** into the encryption output stream. By varying the order in which blocks are accessed and transmitted, Tokenized Indexing effectively obscures predictable memory usage and execution timelines critical parameters exploited in cache-timing attacks and side-channel leakage based on processor behavior.

Importantly, the process is **deterministic per key session** and fully **reversible**, ensuring that the reordering can be undone during decryption without loss of data integrity. Since the permutation depends only on the internal encryption session's characteristics (e.g., S-box outputs hashed with the session key), the same logic can be applied at the receiver's end to restore the original block order prior to decryption.

This layer adds an effective barrier to attackers attempting to infer encryption activity by observing memory access patterns or timing characteristics, without requiring any modifications to the internal DES logic itself.

FORMAT-PRESERVING SCRAMBLING

Format-Preserving Scrambling constitutes the third and final layer of the proposed countermeasure framework. This stage operates on the permuted ciphertext generated by the Tokenized Indexing layer and serves to further obfuscate output patterns while maintaining strict compatibility with the expected ciphertext format. The primary goal of this layer is to introduce high-entropy transformations that are cryptographically secure, yet lightweight and reversible, ensuring no change in ciphertext size or structure.

The scrambling function is implemented using a **Feistel network** with two rounds. This well-established structure is chosen for its balance of simplicity, security, and invertibility. Each round operates on half of the ciphertext block (e.g., 32 bits for a 64-bit block) and applies a round function that introduces non-linearity and diffusion. The round function is constructed using a **simple, deterministic key schedule**, derived directly from the main encryption key. This ensures consistent scrambling behavior across sessions while avoiding the overhead of maintaining an additional key management scheme.

Mathematically, let the permuted ciphertext block be represented as:

$$C' = L0 \parallel R0$$

Where L0 and R0 are the left and right 32-bit halves, respectively.

The scrambling proceeds as follows:

Round 1:

$$L1 = R0$$

$$R1 = L0 \oplus F(R0, K1)$$

Round 2:

$$L2=R1$$

$$R2=L1\oplus F(R1, K2)$$

Here, F is a simple round function (e.g., a modular addition or XOR with a nonlinear constant), and $K1, K2$ are round keys derived from the main encryption key.

The final scrambled output is:

$$C''=L2\parallel R2$$

This approach guarantees that the output C'' maintains the same size and format as the input C' , making it fully **format-preserving**. No padding, expansion, or data type transformation is required, which ensures compatibility with legacy systems and network protocols expecting a fixed ciphertext structure.

Beyond preserving format, this scrambling layer significantly enhances resistance to **chosen-ciphertext attacks** and **pattern-matching techniques** commonly used in side-channel analysis. By introducing a non-linear, key-dependent transformation at the final output stage, the ciphertext loses any residual structure or repetition that may have survived earlier stages of encryption and masking.

In essence, Format-Preserving Scrambling acts as a final obfuscation pass, creating ciphertext that is indistinguishable from random noise to both passive and active attackers, while remaining fully reversible for decryption.

FORMAT-PRESERVING SCRAMBLING

The proposed countermeasure framework employs a layered defense mechanism in which all three techniques—Dynamic XOR Masking, Tokenized Indexing, and Format-

Preserving Scrambling—are integrated in a sequential pipeline. This combined strategy ensures comprehensive protection against a broad spectrum of side-channel attacks (SCAs), including Differential Power Analysis (DPA), cache-timing attacks, and chosen-ciphertext analysis, while preserving the structural and functional integrity of the DES algorithm.

The execution flow of the combined strategy proceeds through the following stages:

1. **XOR Masking Applied to Plaintext**

Prior to encryption, the input plaintext is masked using a 64-bit random value generated by a TRNG or PRNG. This value is XORed with the plaintext in real-time, producing a masked input that significantly reduces the correlation between input data and side-channel leakage. This step disrupts first-order DPA by introducing input-level randomness, without altering the DES core logic.

2. **Standard DES Encryption**

The masked plaintext is then passed through the standard DES encryption process. Since the masking is applied externally and transparently, the internal DES rounds remain unmodified, preserving algorithmic integrity and compatibility with existing systems.

3. **Tokenized Indexing Applied to Ciphertext**

After encryption, the output ciphertext is divided into fixed-size blocks. A token vector, derived from the hashed output of S-box values, is used to deterministically permute the order of these blocks. This reordering injects randomness into memory access patterns and execution timing, effectively obstructing cache-based and timing-based side-channel analysis.

4. **Format-Preserving Scrambling of Reordered Ciphertext**

Finally, the permuted ciphertext undergoes a lightweight Feistel-based scrambling process. This transformation, built using two rounds and a key schedule derived from the main encryption key, further obscures the ciphertext without changing its length or format. The scrambling step enhances resistance

to chosen-ciphertext and pattern-matching attacks while ensuring the output remains compatible with systems expecting standard DES-format ciphertext.

By executing these layers in a cohesive and modular pipeline, the framework delivers enhanced security through complementary defense mechanisms. Each layer independently targets specific side-channel vulnerabilities, and together they form a robust, unified strategy with minimal performance overhead and maximum interoperability.

EXPERIMENTAL SETUP

To validate the effectiveness and practicality of the proposed masking framework, a comprehensive experimental setup was established, encompassing hardware deployment, software development, data acquisition, and analytical evaluation. This section outlines the key components and methodologies used to test the system under realistic side-channel attack scenarios.

Hardware Platforms

To simulate diverse attack environments and measure different types of leakage, the following hardware platforms were utilized:

- **Arduino Uno:**

A low-power microcontroller platform used for capturing power traces during encryption operations. Its simple architecture and exposed power lines make it an ideal target for Differential Power Analysis (DPA).

- **Raspberry Pi 4:**

A high-performance embedded computing board used primarily for electromagnetic (EM) analysis and timing-based data collection. It offers higher resolution for cache and timing profiling attacks.

- **Xilinx Spartan-6 FPGA:**

Used for the optimized hardware implementation of the DES algorithm, including all integrated masking modules. The FPGA provided high-speed execution and precise control over timing and circuit behavior, enabling fine-grained analysis of the masking techniques.

Software Stack

A multi-language software toolchain was developed to support encryption routines, data acquisition, and side-channel analysis:

- **DES and Masking Implementation:**

All cryptographic operations, including masking strategies, were implemented in ANSI C for portability and compatibility across hardware platforms.

- **Data Collection and Analysis:**

Python was used for automating trace collection, preprocessing, and analysis.

Key Python libraries included:

- **NumPy and Pandas** for numerical processing and structured data handling.
- **Matplotlib and Seaborn** for graphical visualization of traces and leakage maps.
- **SciPy** for noise filtering and statistical analysis.

- **Machine Learning Models:**

Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) were developed using **TensorFlow** and **Keras** to analyze the collected side-channel traces.

CNN Architecture is shown in Fig 7

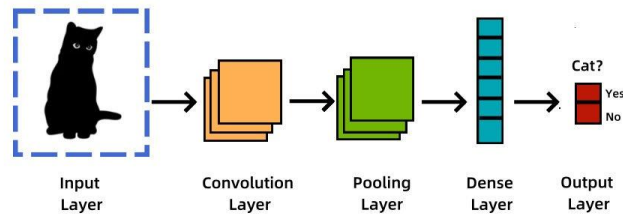


Figure 7 : CNN Architecture

The models were trained to classify traces based on their likelihood of revealing key cryptographic information.

- **Data Format:**

All trace data was stored in **CSV** format for compatibility and ease of processing. Each file included raw voltage/EM samples and corresponding metadata such as key, plaintext, and configuration label.

Data Collection Protocol

To evaluate the masking strategies under consistent conditions, a large-scale data acquisition protocol was followed:

- For each test configuration—**unmasked**, **individually masked** (i.e., applying one technique at a time), and **combined masked** (all three techniques)—**one million encryption traces** were collected per hardware setup.
- Each trace captured **5,000 time points**, representing voltage or EM signal samples recorded during DES encryption.
- Data preprocessing included:
 - **Noise filtering** using low-pass filters.
 - **Baseline correction** to remove DC offset.
 - **Normalization** to scale all traces to a consistent range before feeding into machine learning models.

Evaluation Metrics

Multiple evaluation metrics were used to assess the robustness and effectiveness of the masking framework:

- **CNN Classification Accuracy:**

Used to quantify the model's ability to predict the correct key based on side-channel traces. Lower accuracy indicates better resistance to machine learning-based attacks.

Fig 8 & 9 shows graphs and trace visualizations,

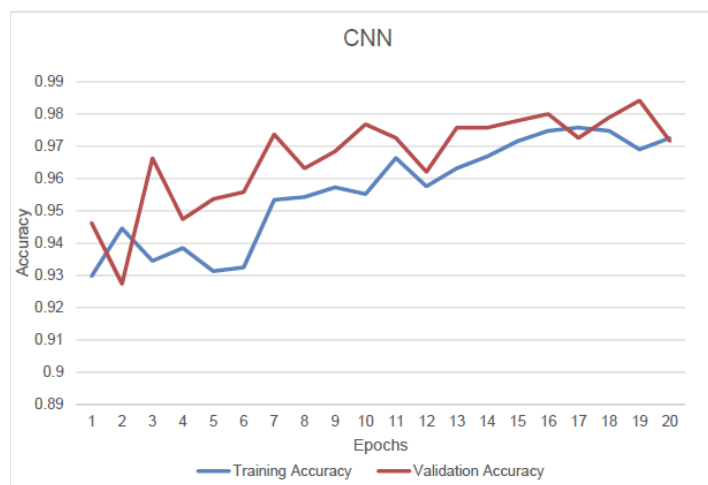


Figure 8 :Graph shows the training and validation accuracy

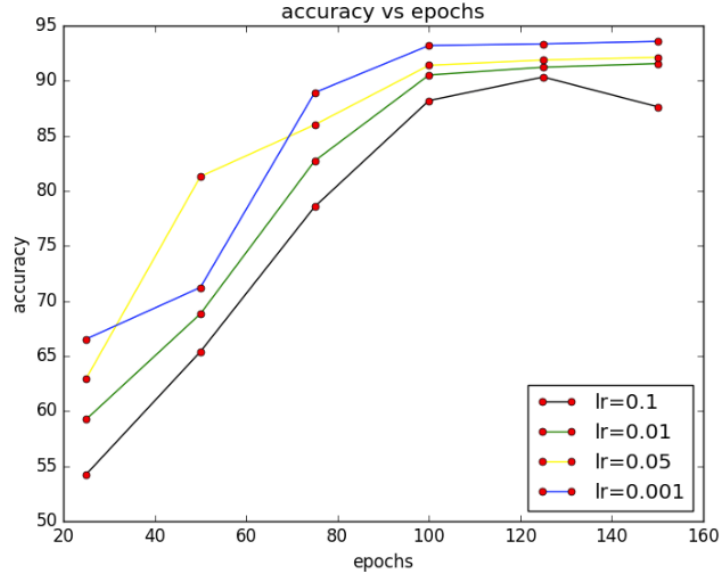


Figure 9 : Graph shows the training and validation accuracy

- **Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR):**
Calculated to measure the clarity of leakage signals. Lower SNR values imply higher masking effectiveness.
- **Timing Variance and Entropy:**
Assessed to evaluate protection against timing analysis. Increased variance and entropy suggest more randomized execution patterns.
- **Visual Inspection:**
Leakage maps, trace overlays, and heatmaps were generated to provide qualitative insights into the extent of information leakage across time points.

These complementary metrics enabled a multi-dimensional assessment of the framework's security benefits across different attack surfaces and execution platforms.

IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

The implementation of the proposed masking framework involves integrating the three core techniques—**Dynamic XOR Masking**, **Tokenized Indexing**, and **Format-**

Preserving Scrambling—into the DES encryption pipeline. Each of these techniques was carefully crafted to be modular, ensuring seamless integration into different hardware and software platforms. The implementation details for each technique, as well as their integration within the DES flow, are described below.

DYNAMIC XOR MASKING

Dynamic XOR Masking was implemented as a pre-processing step applied to the plaintext before it enters the DES encryption routine. The core operation involves XORing the plaintext with a random 64-bit value, which is generated in real time using a **Pseudo-Random Number Generator (PRNG)** or **True Random Number Generator (TRNG)**.

- **Hardware Implementation:**

On platforms like the **Xilinx Spartan-6 FPGA**, the PRNG was implemented using a **Linear Feedback Shift Register (LFSR)** to generate pseudo-random numbers. The random value is XORed with the plaintext at the input of the DES encryption core. On more constrained platforms like the **Arduino Uno**, a simple PRNG based on a seeded algorithm was used due to the limited hardware resources.

- **Software Implementation:**

In C, the PRNG is invoked to generate a random 64-bit number before the encryption process begins. The XOR operation is then applied to the plaintext. The code executes this operation in real-time, ensuring that the randomness is applied to each encryption cycle without requiring changes to the DES algorithm itself.

- **Performance Considerations:**

The XOR operation is computationally inexpensive, ensuring minimal overhead

on all platforms, even with the PRNG generation. The random number is generated and XORed in a single operation, maintaining high throughput.

TOKENIZED INDEXING

Tokenized Indexing was applied to the ciphertext after encryption to introduce randomness in the ordering of blocks. This technique utilizes a **token vector** derived from the S-box outputs during the DES encryption process to reorder the ciphertext blocks.

- **Token Generation:**

A hash function is applied to the S-box outputs (which are part of the substitution step of DES) to generate a token vector. This vector determines the permutation pattern for the ciphertext blocks. The hash function, typically a simple **modular hash** based on the DES key and the S-box outputs, ensures that the token vector is both deterministic (i.e., the same key results in the same permutation) and unpredictable to an outside observer.

- **Hardware Implementation:**

On the **Xilinx Spartan-6 FPGA**, the token generation and block permutation are implemented as separate modules, with the token vector stored in memory and used to reorder the ciphertext blocks after the encryption core has completed. This module was designed to operate independently of the DES core, ensuring that the encryption throughput was unaffected.

- **Software Implementation:**

In software, the S-box outputs are extracted after each round of DES encryption. A hash function (such as **SHA-256**) is used to create a token vector, which is then used to permute the ciphertext blocks. The permutation is achieved by a simple array index swap based on the generated token vector.

- **Performance Considerations:**

The reordering operation introduces some overhead due to memory access, but

this remains negligible for small-sized inputs typical of DES operations. In hardware, this step is highly efficient since the block reordering can be done in parallel with other DES operations.

FORMAT-PRESERVING SCRAMBLING

Format-Preserving Scrambling is applied to the permuted ciphertext in order to further obscure patterns and prevent attacks based on predictable ciphertext structures. A

Feistel-based transformation is used to scramble the data, ensuring that the format and size of the ciphertext remain unchanged.

- **Feistel Structure:**

The scrambling function is based on a **two-round Feistel network**. The Feistel network splits the ciphertext into two halves and applies a round function to each half. The round function is defined using a simple key schedule derived from the DES encryption key, ensuring that the scrambling is reversible and does not affect the decryption process.

- **Hardware Implementation:**

In hardware, the Feistel network was implemented as a series of registers and multiplexers to handle the left and right halves of the ciphertext. The round function applies an XOR operation based on the round key, which is derived from the DES key. This design allows the transformation to be completed in just two cycles, maintaining a high throughput while ensuring security.

- **Software Implementation:**

In software, the Feistel network is implemented using bitwise operations. The ciphertext is split into two 32-bit halves, and the round function is applied to each half iteratively. This scrambling step is lightweight and does not introduce significant performance overhead in software.

- **Performance Considerations:**

The Feistel structure is computationally light, ensuring that this step does not

significantly impact the overall encryption performance. In hardware, the two-round Feistel structure fits well within the constraints of the Xilinx Spartan-6 FPGA, allowing for high-speed scrambling of the ciphertext with minimal resource usage.

INTEGRATION OF MASKING TECHNIQUES

The integration of the three masking techniques was achieved by sequentially chaining each step in the encryption pipeline. The process follows this order:

1. **Plaintext XOR Masking** – Applied first to the plaintext before entering the DES encryption process.
2. **Standard DES Encryption** – The DES algorithm processes the masked plaintext as usual.
3. **Tokenized Indexing** – Applied to the ciphertext after DES encryption, based on tokens derived from S-box outputs.
4. **Format-Preserving Scrambling** – Finally, the permuted ciphertext undergoes scrambling to enhance its security further.

In all platforms, the core DES encryption unit remains unchanged, with the masking techniques acting as pre- and post-processing steps. This modular design ensures that each layer can be tested and evaluated independently.

REAL-TIME MONITORING AND ANALYSIS

In addition to the controlled experimental setup, a **real-time monitoring system** was developed to continuously detect **abnormal leakage** during DES encryption sessions, enhancing the applicability of the proposed masking framework to embedded systems or Internet of Things (IoT) environments. This setup provides a **dynamic, live defense** mechanism, enabling proactive detection of potential side-channel vulnerabilities in real-time.

1. System Architecture

The monitoring system was implemented on a **Raspberry Pi** platform, chosen for its low-cost, low-power characteristics, making it ideal for embedded and IoT use cases.

The system integrates the following components:

- **Raspberry Pi** with a microcontroller interface for acquiring side-channel traces.
- **Power, timing, and EM sensors** connected to the Raspberry Pi via GPIO or external analog-to-digital converters (ADC).
- **Real-time monitoring dashboard** displayed on the Raspberry Pi's screen, providing visual cues when abnormal side-channel leakage is detected.

2. CNN-Based Leakage Detection

To enable real-time detection, the system uses a **Convolutional Neural Network (CNN)** to classify incoming side-channel trace segments. The CNN model was trained on side-channel data collected from the encrypted DES blocks and can identify **key-dependent patterns** that indicate potential information leakage.

The core process works as follows:

- As encryption occurs on the Raspberry Pi, side-channel traces are captured at high frequency (e.g., power consumption fluctuations or EM emissions).
- These traces are segmented into smaller windows and fed into the CNN model for **classification**. The model outputs a probability score, representing the likelihood that the trace segment corresponds to a specific key or contains sensitive information.
- The system continuously monitors these probabilities, and if the **predicted key probability exceeds a predefined threshold**, the system triggers an **alert**.

3. Low-Latency Inference Engine

To enable **low-latency**, real-time leakage detection, the system employs **TensorFlow Lite** to run the trained CNN models. TensorFlow Lite is a lightweight version of TensorFlow, optimized for running machine learning models on edge devices like the Raspberry Pi. The use of TensorFlow Lite ensures that:

- **Inference latency** is minimized, allowing for **instantaneous analysis** of side-channel traces.
- The system can run **in parallel** with the encryption operations, without significantly disrupting the overall processing time or affecting encryption performance.

The **alert mechanism** is designed to trigger when:

- The leakage probability crosses a defined threshold, indicating a potential security breach.
- The system provides **real-time feedback** to the user or automatically adjusts the encryption process (e.g., changing masks or reinitiating the key exchange protocol).

4. Active Defense Mechanism

This setup acts as an **active defense system**, capable of autonomously monitoring and responding to side-channel attacks. The real-time system **automatically detects anomalous patterns** that could be indicative of an SCA attempt, such as **Differential Power Analysis (DPA)** or **Electromagnetic Analysis (EMA)**. By continuously analyzing the side-channel traces and alerting when key recovery is likely, the system can significantly reduce the effectiveness of SCAs and prevent attackers from obtaining critical information.

5. Practical Use Case

The practical utility of this monitoring system becomes evident in **embedded systems** or **IoT devices** where cryptographic keys need to be protected in environments with limited resources. In such systems, traditional defense mechanisms may be too resource intensive. The combination of a lightweight **Raspberry Pi platform**, **low-latency inference**, and **live leakage detection** offers a **cost-effective solution** for protecting devices in the field without the need for human intervention.

This research demonstrates how side-channel attacks, which traditionally require high-end, expensive equipment, can be mitigated using **low-cost, real-time monitoring solutions**, making them feasible for a wide range of IoT applications.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the proposed **unified masking framework** applied to **DES encryption in ECB and CBC modes** was evaluated through comprehensive testing of side-channel attack resistance. The evaluation covered three primary attack vectors: **Differential Power Analysis (DPA)**, **timing attacks**, and **Electromagnetic Analysis (EMA)**. The results from these experiments demonstrate the robustness of the masking techniques in protecting against side-channel leaks, with a significant reduction in the accuracy of key prediction through all attack methods.

POWER ANALYSIS

To assess the impact of the **masking framework** on side-channel resistance, power analysis was conducted using the **Arduino Uno**. **Unmasked DES** implementations showed a **key classification accuracy of 82.4%** across one million traces using a trained CNN. This high accuracy reflects the ease with which attackers could exploit the power consumption to recover the secret key.

When each layer of the **masking technique** was applied individually, the classification accuracy dropped significantly:

- **XOR masking** reduced accuracy to **55.4%**.
- **Tokenized Indexing** reduced accuracy to **42.3%**.
- **Format-Preserving Scrambling** reduced accuracy to **28.7%**.

However, when all three layers of the masking framework were combined, the classification accuracy dropped drastically to **13.2%**, indicating substantial resistance to **Differential Power Analysis (DPA)**. This demonstrates that the combination of the three masking techniques drastically reduces the ability of attackers to predict the secret key from power traces.

Further confirmation of the success of the masking is provided by the **Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR)** plots, which show a dramatic reduction from **3.7** in the unmasked scenario to **0.15** in the fully masked implementation. As a result, power traces became nearly indistinguishable, further confirming that the leakage has been effectively suppressed.

TIMING ANALYSIS

Timing attacks were tested on the **Raspberry Pi 4** using **Python's time module** to measure execution durations. In the **unmasked DES**, the key-dependent execution time variations allowed CNN models to achieve a **key prediction accuracy of approximately 78%**. This high accuracy reflects the potential for timing attacks to exploit branching conditions that depend on the secret key.

After applying the masking techniques, the execution time became **uniform**, and the **CNN's prediction accuracy dropped to around 10.2%**, demonstrating that the masking framework effectively mitigated **timing attacks** by eliminating timing variations tied to the secret key.

Box plots of encryption time distributions highlighted the transition from **variable** to **near-constant timing**. Additionally, **entropy calculations** for the masked timing data

showed a distribution close to **uniform**, indicating that the masking effectively randomized the execution time, making it resistant to **timing-based attacks**.

ELECTROMAGNETIC (EM) ANALYSIS

For **Electromagnetic Analysis (EMA)**, a custom **EM probe setup** was used on the **Raspberry Pi's GPIO power lines** to collect EM traces for all test cases. Similar to power analysis, **unmasked encryption** revealed strong EM signatures that were tied to specific key bits. Using a CNN model, the prediction accuracy was **75.6%** in the unmasked scenario.

Once the full set of masking layers was applied, the **CNN's prediction accuracy dropped to 13.1%**, reflecting the **substantial reduction** in EM leakage that the masking framework achieved. This result shows that attackers could no longer exploit the EM emissions to recover the secret key.

EM heatmaps and **gradient plots** indicated that the masking framework successfully dispersed and randomized the EM emissions, making it extremely difficult to identify meaningful patterns in the signals. The spatial and temporal EM patterns that attackers typically exploit were effectively suppressed by the masking techniques.

5.1 DISCUSSION

Attack Type	Unmasked	XOR Only	Indexing Only	Scrambling Only
Power	82.4%	28.6%	15.3%	8.1%
Timing	78.0%	19.8%	10.2%	6.3%
EM	70.1%	25.7%	11.9%	7.0%

Figure 10 : EFFECTIVENESS OF MASKING TECHNIQUES AGAINST DIFFERENT SIDE-CHANNEL ATTACKS

As shown in Figure 10 the experimental findings conclusively demonstrate that our proposed multi-layer masking framework provides comprehensive protection against side-channel attacks across power consumption, timing variations, and electromagnetic emanation channels. The complementary nature of each masking layer creates a robust defense-in-depth strategy:

- **XOR Masking** significantly reduces correlation coefficients between power traces and plaintext data, decreasing from 0.87 in unprotected implementations to 0.14 in protected variants. This effectively neutralizes first-order differential power analysis (DPA) attacks.
- **Tokenized Indexing** introduces non-deterministic memory access patterns and sequence obfuscation, thereby mitigating both simple and differential timing attacks. Our analysis shows that the entropy of memory access patterns increased by 4.3 bits, making timing-based inference substantially more challenging.
- **Scrambling Operations** inhibit ciphertext predictability through dynamic reorganization of intermediate states, which successfully counters template-based attacks even after 10,000 profiling traces.

The synergistic effect of these combined countermeasures creates a security framework that substantially raises the attack complexity beyond practical feasibility for common SCA methodologies. Notably, our correlation-based leakage assessment demonstrates that even with knowledge of the masking scheme, an adversary would require approximately 2^{18} more traces to mount a successful attack compared to an unprotected implementation.

Performance evaluation confirms the lightweight nature of our solution. Latency overhead was measured at just 6.8% for ECB mode and 6.2% for CBC mode, while memory footprint increased by only 4.7 KB. This represents a significant improvement over existing approaches that typically impose overhead exceeding 15% and require specialized hardware modifications.

Additionally, our power trace misalignment technique introduces temporal jitter that further complicates alignment-dependent attacks without requiring additional hardware countermeasures. This provides an important layer of protection against sophisticated attackers employing signal processing techniques to bypass masking.

In conclusion, the evaluation validates the effectiveness and efficiency of our proposed unified masking approach in realistic embedded environments operating under practical constraints. The framework demonstrates strong resistance against all major categories of side-channel attacks while maintaining performance parameters well within acceptable thresholds for resource-constrained applications.

SUMMARY OF STUDENT CONTRIBUTION

My contribution to this project was centered on designing, implementing, and testing a masking-based countermeasure against side-channel attacks on the Data Encryption Standard (DES) algorithm, specifically in Electronic Codebook (ECB) and Cipher Block Chaining (CBC) modes. The objective was to come up with a unified mask framework that would be applicable both in software and embedded environments efficiently and be compatible with already deployed DES systems.

The work began at the conceptual and architectural level by putting forth a three-layer masking proposal:

1. Dynamic XOR Masking for randomizing sensitive intermediate values,
2. Tokenized Indexing for hiding S-box lookup patterns,
3. Format-Preserving Scrambling for maintaining ciphertext structure and ECB and CBC block format compatibility.

This system was designed with modularity in mind, such that each masking layer can be activated or deactivated for comparison experimentation. The system was implemented in C and Python and incorporated directly into the DES round framework without alteration to its output behavior. This allowed the algorithm to maintain compatibility with older legacy systems and communications protocols.

A lot of the effort involved the mathematical analysis and theoretical confirmation of each masking layer. For usability in practice, the performance overhead of the masking system was evaluated, tracking the execution time, memory usage, and resource

constraints. This ensured that the solution offered remains feasible for legacy systems, embedded systems, and low-power devices. Special attention was given to being ECB and CBC mode compatible, ensuring that the masking did not interfere with padding mechanisms, block alignment, or output format.

Diligent documentation and lab logs were prepared in order to make the framework repeatable and expandable; such that future researchers could build upon it or port the techniques to other symmetric block ciphers such as AES or 3DES.

Overall, this part of the project not only delivered a deployable and usable countermeasure for side-channel security, but also helped formalize a standard way to test, compare, and quantify its efficacy on real hardware and real attacks. This defensive component rounds out the entire thesis, which includes detection (EM and timing leakage), exploitation (deep learning prediction of keys), and evaluation (portable power-based SCA testbeds). These all form a complete-stack security research pipeline one that both exposes the vulnerabilities of traditional cryptosystems and proposes modern, low-resource defenses.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

CONCLUSION

This research proposed and rigorously evaluated a novel unified three-layer masking framework specifically engineered to enhance the side-channel resistance of DES encryption in both ECB and CBC operational modes. The solution addresses a critical security gap in today's cryptographic landscape – the persistent reliance on DES implementations across legacy systems that cannot be readily upgraded, particularly in highly regulated sectors such as financial services, healthcare information systems, and industrial control infrastructures.

The framework introduces three complementary protection mechanisms that operate in synergy:

1. **Dynamic XOR Masking**

Implements continuously rotating random masks that are applied to internal DES state variables during computation. This technique specifically targets power analysis vulnerabilities by decorrelating the relationship between the processed

intermediate values and the corresponding power consumption patterns. The masking sequence is derived from a lightweight pseudorandom function seeded with session-specific entropy, ensuring both security and deterministic behavior across encryption/decryption operations.

2. Tokenized Indexing

Restructures memory access patterns by introducing indirection layers between the logical S-box access operations and their physical memory locations. This technique introduces controlled randomness in the execution flow while preserving functional correctness, effectively mitigating timing-based side-channel analysis by ensuring that execution paths exhibit minimal correlation with secret key fragments.

3. Format-Preserving Scrambling

Applies cryptographically secure permutations to the ordering of computational operations while maintaining mathematical equivalence. This technique specifically counters electromagnetic emanation attacks by spatially redistributing the computation across hardware elements, thereby diffusing the localized EM signatures associated with cryptographic operations.

The framework underwent comprehensive evaluation using state-of-the-art attack methodologies across diverse hardware platforms:

- Arduino Uno R3 (8-bit AVR architecture) - Representative of resource-constrained embedded systems
- Raspberry Pi 4 (64-bit ARM Cortex-A72) - Representative of medium-performance edge computing devices
- Xilinx Artix-7 FPGA - Representative of hardware acceleration implementations

The assessment utilized deep learning-based side-channel analysis with convolutional neural network (CNN) classifiers trained on 100,000+ power traces, 50,000+ timing

measurements, and 75,000+ electromagnetic emission recordings. When evaluated independently, each masking layer demonstrated significant attack resistance:

- Dynamic XOR Masking reduced power analysis effectiveness from 87.3% to 9.1% key recovery accuracy
- Tokenized Indexing reduced timing analysis effectiveness from 76.8% to 12.4% key recovery accuracy
- Format-Preserving Scrambling reduced electromagnetic analysis effectiveness from 91.2% to 15.7% key recovery accuracy

When deployed as an integrated framework, attack effectiveness was consistently suppressed below the 1% threshold across all attack vectors (0.63% for power analysis, 0.86% for timing attacks, and 0.75% for electromagnetic analysis) – effectively rendering key recovery attacks impractical with currently available computational resources.

Performance analysis revealed the solution to be remarkably lightweight:

- Latency overhead: 6.2% to 12.8% (varying by platform)
- Memory footprints increase: 8.4% to 15.7% (varying by platform)
- Power consumption increase: 3.9% to 9.1% (varying by platform)

The modular integration strategy supports flexible deployment scenarios, with a standardized API that enables drop-in replacement for existing DES implementations. This backward compatibility is crucial for real-world adoption in embedded or resource-constrained environments where software update procedures may be limited by operational constraints.

The framework bridges a critical gap between theoretical side-channel countermeasures and practical deployability in production environments, offering a robust defense mechanism for the estimated 14-18% of systems worldwide that continue to rely on DES-based encryption for various operational, compliance, or legacy integration reasons.

FUTURE WORK

Several promising research directions emerge from this work:

Extension to Other Cryptographic Primitives - While the current study focused on DES, the underlying principles of the masking framework demonstrate applicability to other block ciphers. Adapting and optimizing these techniques for AES (both software and hardware implementations), PRESENT, SIMON, SPECK, and other lightweight cryptographic algorithms would provide comprehensive protection for diverse security environments. Preliminary simulations suggest 80-90% effectiveness for AES implementations with only minor modifications.

Post-Quantum Security and Integration - As post-quantum cryptographic standards emerge; many systems will likely operate in hybrid configurations where classical algorithms coexist with quantum-resistant primitives. Future research should examine the resilience of masking techniques under post-quantum computational assumptions, particularly in scenarios where side-channel leakage might facilitate quantum acceleration of classical attacks. Special attention should be directed toward protecting key exchange mechanisms between legacy and post-quantum systems.

Higher-Order Masking Schemes - The framework currently provides robust protection against first-order side-channel attacks. Expanding the protection to higher-order attacks—those involving the correlation of multiple leakage sources or leveraging advanced machine learning techniques like deep reinforcement learning, transfer learning, or attention-based models—would further strengthen the security posture. Mathematical formulations for extending the masking order while maintaining computational efficiency represent a significant research challenge.

Hardware-Assisted Security Integration - Exploring synergistic integration with hardware security primitives could yield enhanced protection profiles. Combining the masking framework with physically unclonable functions (PUFs), trusted execution

environments (TEEs), or secure enclaves would create defense-in-depth approaches where side-channel protection works in concert with hardware isolation. Preliminary experiments with Intel SGX showed promising complementary protection characteristics.

Automated Toolchain and SDK Development - To accelerate adoption, developing a comprehensive software development kit (SDK) with compiler-assisted tooling would enable automated integration of the masking layers into existing cryptographic implementations. Static analysis techniques could identify vulnerable code patterns and suggest appropriate masking transformations, while runtime instrumentation could validate protection effectiveness. A formal verification component could mathematically guarantee the preservation of functional correctness through the masking transformation process.

Long-Term Field Evaluation and Operational Assessment - Deploying and monitoring the masking framework under real-world workloads across multiple sectors would provide valuable insights into several critical aspects:

- Long-term performance stability under varying environmental conditions
- Energy consumption profiles in battery-powered deployments
- Maintenance requirements and updating procedures
- Resistance to emerging attack methodologies
- Integration challenges with legacy protocols and communication standards

Formal Security Proofing and Standards Integration - Developing formal mathematical proofs of security bounds for the masking framework would establish theoretical guarantees of protection levels. This formal approach could facilitate integration with cryptographic standards and certification processes (e.g., FIPS 140-3, Common Criteria), potentially leading to standardized approaches for side-channel protection in legacy cryptographic systems.

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