

RTC-Web Security Considerations

RTC-Web Interim (June 2011)

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The Browser Threat Model

Core Web Security Guarantee: “users can safely visit arbitrary web sites and execute scripts provided by those sites.” [HCB⁺10]

- This includes sites which are hosting malicious scripts!
- Basic Web security technique is isolation/sandboxing
 - Protect your computer from malicious scripts
 - Protect content from site A from content hosted at site B
 - Protect site A from content hosted at site B
- In this case we’re primarily concerned with JavaScript running in the browser

The browser acts as a trusted computing base for the site

Threat Model

Web Attacker: Operates a malicious Web site.

- Can convince you to go there
- Cannot impersonate some other site.

Network Attacker: Controls your network

- Conventional Internet threat model
- Defended against with cryptographic protocols
 - * Unfortunately not universally deployed

Background: The Same Origin Policy (SOP)

- A page's security properties are determined by its *origin* [Bar10b]
 - This includes: protocol (HTTP or HTTPS), host, and port
 - All these must match for two pages to be from the same origin
- Each origin is associated with its own security context
 - Scripts in origin A have only very limited access to resources in origin B
- *Important:* the origin is associated with the page, *not* where the script came from
 - Scripts loaded via `<script src="">` tags are associated with the origin of the page, not the URL for the script!

Background: Same Origin Policy for Page Data

- Scripts can only access page data from their own origin
 - Contents of the DOM
 - JavaScript variables
 - Cookies
 - Important exception: JavaScript pointer leakage [BWS09]
- Scripts can access any other page data from their origin
 - Includes other windows and IFRAMEs
- Frame can navigate their own children
 - This is used for cross-site communication (e.g., FaceBook Connect)

Background: Same Origin Policy for HTTP Requests

- JavaScript can be used to make fairly controllable HTTP requests with `XMLHttpRequest()` API
 - But only to the same origin
- Origin A can make partly controllable requests to origin B via HTML forms
 - But cannot read the response
 - *Cross-Site Request Forgery* (CSRF) defenses depend on this
- Origin A can read scripts from origin B
 - But they run in A's context
 - This is done all the time (e.g., Google analytics)

Browser Security Invariants

- Don't add features that allow the browser to mount new attacks
 - Even against poorly secured systems
- Avoid in-flow “click here to screw yourself” dialogs [Bar10a]
 - Users routinely click through these [SEA⁺09]
- Default to secure operation
 - Users don't check security indicators [SDOF07]

List of Issues to Consider for RTC-Web

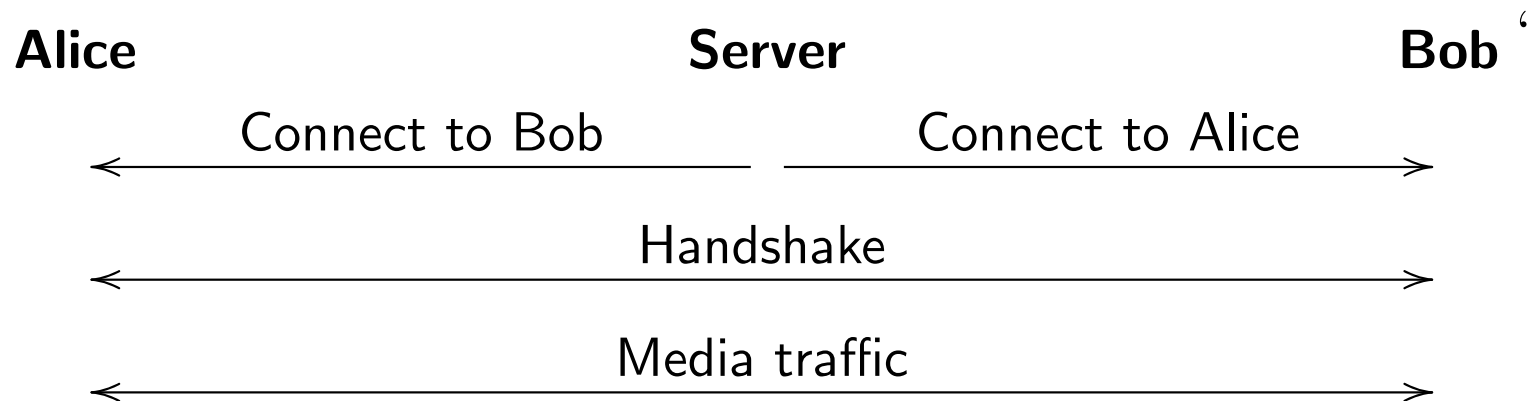
- Consent to communications
- Access to local devices
- Communications security

Consent for real-time peer-to-peer communication

- Need to be able to send data between two browsers
 - Unless you want to relay everything
- But this is unsafe (and violates SOP)
 - Not OK to let browsers send TCP and UDP to arbitrary locations
- General principle: verify consent
 - Before sending traffic from a script to recipient, verify recipient wants to receive it from the sender
 - Familiar paradigm from CORS [vK10] and WebSockets[Fet11]

How to verify communications consent for RTC-Web

- Can't trust the server (see above)
 - Needs to be enforced by the browser
- Browser does a handshake with target peer to verify connectivity



- This should look familiar from ICE [Ros10]

Implementing Communications Consent Securely

- Remember: we don't trust the JS
- Restrict pre-handshake communications
 - Restrict communications to an endpoint until handshake completes
 - Minimize application control of ICE packets (extensions, etc.)
 - Rate-limit ICE checks
- Browser **must not** let application see STUN transaction ID
 - Prevents forgery of STUN responses by the server
- What about cross-protocol attacks?
 - Not really an issue for UDP
 - TCP **must** use masking

Access to Local Devices

- Making phone (and video) calls requires that your voice be transmitted to other side
 - But the *other side* is controlled by some site you visit
 - What if you visit `http://bugmyphone.example.com`?
 - All this takes is a web attacker!
- Somehow we need to get the user's consent
 - But to what?
 - And when?
- Approval **must** be scoped to site origin [Bar10b, JB08]

How to get user approval (not totally an IETF issue)

- Remember: need to avoid in-flow dialogs
 - Consent cannot be obtained for each call
- Most likely need to get approval ahead of time
 - E.g., via an application “install” experience for each site
- Browsers **should** have clear indicators that you are in a call
 - **Should not** be maskable by web application
 - E.g., part of browser chrome
 - But remember users mostly won't check
- Once a site is approved you need to mostly trust it

Local Device Access and Network Attackers

- Say I have approved device access for `http://www.example.com/`
 - I visit `http://www.example.com/` over an insecure network
 - Attacker injects his own code and initiates a call to himself
 - This attack can persist even after I change networks (“origin infection”)
- Sites **should** offer RTC-Web only over HTTPS
 - HTTP and HTTPS are different origins
- Browsers **should** forbid RTC-Web access in mixed content settings
 - ... when consent is for HTTPS but some JS is fetched via HTTP

What about communications security?

- **Must** provide security against message recovery and message modification
 - For both media (voice/video) and data
 - All the usual protocols work fine for this part
- What about threats by the calling service itself?
 - Controls nearly all the UI
 - Direct interaction with the browser difficult [Bar10a]
- Potential attacks by the calling service
 - Retrospective:* The calling service is non-malicious during a call but is subsequently compromised (preventable)
 - During-call:* The calling service is compromised during the call it wishes to attack (hard to prevent)

Protecting Against Retrospective Attack

- Assume attacker has access to encrypted media stream
- If calling service has access to traffic keys, attack is trivial
 - Even worse in Web contexts because of extensive logging
 - Hard to believe service can adequately “forget” keys it has seen
 - * Most sites log requests at many different locations
- Right approach: asymmetric key-based exchange between the endpoints
 - Secure against retrospective attack even if mediated by calling service
 - APIs **must not** allow calling service to subsequently extract traffic keys
 - Best if it provides perfect forward secrecy (PFS)

Protecting Against During-Call Attack

- Need to have asymmetric key exchange
 - Otherwise passive attack is trivial...
 - Defeating asymmetric key exchange requires MITM attack
- Defenses against MITM
 - Keying material verification
 - * Third-party authentication service (we know this won't work)
 - * Out-of-band fingerprint exchange
 - * Short authentication string
 - Key continuity
 - * Verify that the same key is used for each call

Key Continuity

- Memorize keying material on first call to Bob
 - Generate an error/warning on any change
- False positives
 - Users change browsers regularly
 - This will generate a lot of errors (warning fatigue)
- False negatives
 - Remember, application is under control of the server
 - Application says it is calling B0b instead of Bob
 - * Looks like a call to a new peer, not a changed key

Short Authentication String/Key Fingerprints

- Fingerprint: out-of-band exchange of hash of peer's key
 - Secure but requires out-of-band secure channel
- SAS: compute shared value from key exchange; read over voice channel
 - Susceptible to impersonation/voice conversion attacks [KM01, FEH]
 - Doesn't work with unknown speakers
- Both schemes rely on users checking
 - Which they won't [WT99]
- No known good way to prevent MITM by the calling service for average users

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