



RISC-V External Debug Security Specification

Version v0.5.0, 2024-06-28: Draft

Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Preamble..... | 1 |
| Copyright and license information..... | 2 |
| Contributors..... | 3 |
| 1. Introduction..... | 4 |
| 1.1. Terminology..... | 4 |
| 2. External Debug Security Threat model..... | 6 |
| 3. Sdsec (ISA extension)..... | 7 |
| 3.1. External Debug..... | 7 |
| 3.1.1. Machine Mode Debug Control..... | 7 |
| 3.1.2. Supervisor Domain Debug Control..... | 8 |
| 3.1.3. Debug Access Privilege..... | 8 |
| Configuring dcsr for External Debugger Access Privileges..... | 8 |
| 3.1.4. Privilege Level Changing Instructions..... | 9 |
| 3.2. Trace..... | 9 |
| Machine Mode Trace Control..... | 9 |
| Supervisor Domain Trace Control..... | 10 |
| 3.3. Trigger (Sdtrig)..... | 10 |
| 3.3.1. Machine mode accessibility to dmode accessibility..... | 10 |
| 3.3.2. External triggers..... | 11 |
| 3.3.3. Trigger chain..... | 11 |
| 3.3.4. Sdtrig CSR..... | 11 |
| 3.4. Other CSR updates..... | 12 |
| 3.4.1. Debug Control and Status (dcsr)..... | 12 |
| 3.4.2. Debug PC (dpc) and Debug Scratch Register (dscratch0 and dscratch1)..... | 13 |
| 3.4.3. Sdsec CSR..... | 13 |
| 4. Debug Module Security Extension (non-ISA extension)..... | 14 |
| 4.1. External Debug Security Extensions Discovery..... | 14 |
| 4.2. Halt..... | 14 |
| 4.3. Reset..... | 14 |
| 4.4. Keepalive..... | 15 |
| 4.5. Abstract Commands..... | 15 |
| 4.5.1. Relaxed Permission Check relaxedpriv | 15 |
| 4.5.2. Address Translation aamvirtual | 15 |
| 4.6. System Bus Access..... | 15 |
| 4.7. Security Fault Error Reporting..... | 15 |
| 4.8. Update of Debug Module Status (dmstatus)..... | 16 |
| Appendix A: Theory of Operation..... | 17 |
| A.1. Debug Module security control..... | 17 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|----|
| A.2. Trace Encoder security control | 18 |
| Bibliography | 19 |

Preamble



This document is in the [Development state](#)

Expect potential changes. This draft specification is likely to evolve before it is accepted as a standard. Implementations based on this draft may not conform to the future standard.

Copyright and license information

This specification is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0). The full license text is available at creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Copyright 2023-2024 by RISC-V International.

Contributors

This RISC-V specification has been contributed to directly or indirectly by (in alphabetical order): Aote Jin (editor), Beeman Strong, Gokhan Kaplayan, Greg Favor, Iain Robertson, Joe Xie (editor), Ravi Sahita, Robert Chyla, Ved Shanbhogue, Vicky Goode

Chapter 1. Introduction

Debugging and tracing are essential tools utilized by developers to identify and rectify software and hardware issues, optimize performance, and ensure robust system functionality. The debugging and tracing extensions in RISC-V ecosystem play a pivotal role in enabling these capabilities, allowing developers to monitor and control the execution of programs during the development, testing and production phases. However, the current RISC-V Debug and trace specification grants the external debugger highest privilege in the system, regardless of the privilege level at which the target system is running. It leads to privilege escalation issues when multiple actors are present.

This specification defines non-ISA extension [Debug Module Security Extension \(non-ISA extension\)](#) and ISA extension [Sdsec \(ISA extension\)](#) to address the above security issues in the current *The RISC-V Debug Specification* [1] and trace specifications [2] [3].

Below list summarizes changes introduced by *RISC-V External Debug Security Specification*:

- **Per-Hart Debug Control:** Introduce per-hart control knobs to control whether external debug is allowed in machine mode and/or supervisor domains [4]
- **Debug Mode:** External debugger can only halt the hart and enter debug mode when debug is allowed in current privilege mode; all operations are executed with [debug access privilege](#) instead of machine mode privilege
- **Memory Access:** Memory access from a hart's point of view using a Program Buffer or the Abstract Command must be checked by the hart's memory protection mechanisms as if the hart is running at [debug access privilege](#); memory access from Debug Module using System Bus Access block without involving a hart must be checked by system memory protection mechanism, such as IOPMP or WorldGuard
- **Register Access:** Register access using Program Buffer or the Abstract Command works as if the hart is running in [debug access privilege](#) instead of machine mode privilege
- **Triggers:** Triggers (with action=1) can only fire or match when external debug is allowed in current privilege
- **Per-Hart Trace Control:** Introduce per-hart knobs to control whether tracing is allowed in machine mode and supervisor domains

1.1. Terminology

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Abstract command | A high-level command in Debug Module used to interact with and control harts |
| Debug Access Privilege | The privilege with which abstract commands or instructions in program buffers access hardware resources |
| Debug Mode | An additional privilege mode to support off-chip debugging |
| Hart | A RISC-V hardware thread |
| IOPMP | Input-Output Physical Memory Protection unit |
| Machine mode | The highest privileged mode in the RISC-V privilege model |

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PMA | Physical Memory Attributes |
| PMP | Physical Memory Protection unit |
| Program buffer | A buffer in Debug Module to execute arbitrary instructions on a hart |
| Supervisor domain | A isolated supervisor execution context defined in RISC-V Supervisor Domains Access Protection [4] |
| Trace encoder | A piece of hardware that takes in instruction execution information from a RISC-V hart and transforms it into trace packets |

Chapter 2. External Debug Security Threat model

Modern SoC development consists of several different actors who may not trust each other, resulting in the need to isolate actors' assets during the development and debugging phases. The current RISC-V Debug specification [1] grants external debuggers the highest privilege in the system regardless of the privilege level at which the target system is running. This leads to privilege escalation issues when multiple actors are present.

For example, the owner of a SoC, who needs to debug their machine mode firmware, may be able to use the external debugger to bypass PMP lock (pmpcfg.L=1) and attack Boot ROM (the SoC creator's asset).

Additionally, RISC-V privilege architecture supports multiple software entities or "supervisor domains" that do not trust each other. The supervisor domains are managed by secure monitor running in machine mode, they are isolated from each other by PMP/IOPMP and they may need different debug policies. The entity that owns secure monitor wants to disable external debug when shipping the secure monitor, however, the entity that owns the supervisor domain needs to enable external debug to develop the supervisor domain. Since the external debugger will be the granted highest privilege in the system, a malicious supervisor domain will be able to compromise machine mode secure monitor with the external debugger.

Chapter 3. Sdsec (ISA extension)

This chapter introduces Sdsec ISA extension, which enhances the Sdext of *The RISC-V Debug Specification* [1]. The Sdsec extension provides privilege based protection for debug operations and trigger behaviors [1]. furthermore, it constrains trace functionality [2] according to RISC-V privilege levels.

3.1. External Debug

Chapter 3 of *The RISC-V Debug Specification* [1] outlines all mandatory and optional debug operations. The operations listed below are affected by the Sdsec extension. In the context of this chapter, **debug operations** refer exclusively to those listed, and other operations remain unaffected by this specification.

Debug operations affected by Sdsec extension

- Halting the hart to enter debug mode
- Executing Program buffer
- Serving abstract commands (Access Register, Quick Access, Access Memory)

When the external debug is disallowed in running privilege level, the hart behaves as the following:

- Halt request (haltreq), single step into disallowed privilege or halt group that causes the hart to enter debug mode will be pending
- Triggers (with action=1) will not match or fire
- Abstract commands without halting (register access and quick access) will be dropped and set `cmderr` to 6

The subsequent subsections describe how external debug is authorized by [machine mode debug control](#) and [supervisor domain debug control](#) to corresponding privilege levels.



A pending request to enter debug mode can dynamically change from a disallowed state to an allowed state due to updates in debug controls. For example, once the software completes executing confidential code, it can grant debuggability for an external debugger. Afterwards, the software can enter a while(1) loop, waiting for the debugger to take control and break out of the loop.

3.1.1. Machine Mode Debug Control

An input port, named `mdbggen[i]`, is introduced to control the debuggability of machine mode for each hart `i`. This signal is propagated to the hart `i` and Debug Module. When `mdbggen[i]` is set to 1, the following rules apply:

- The [debug access privilege](#) for the hart can be configured to any privilege level
- The [debug operations](#) are permitted when hart `i` executes in all modes.
- If register access without halting the hart is supported, this access carries the privilege of

machine mode.

when `mdbgen[i]` is set to 0, the [debug operations](#) are disallowed and the [behaviros](#) applies when the hart runs in machine mode.



For a homogeneous computing system, the implementation can consolidate all `mdbgen[i]` into a single port to enforce unified debug policy across all harts.

3.1.2. Supervisor Domain Debug Control

The `Smsdedbg` extension introduces `sdedbgalw` field in CSR `msdcfg` to control debuggability of supervisor domains [4]. The `sdedbgalw` along with `mdbgen[i]` determines the debug allowed privilege levels, as illustrated in [Table 1](#). The [debug access privilege](#) can only be configured to debug allowed levels. It is implementation-specific whether to retain a legal value or trigger a security fault error (cmderr 6) when the [debug access privilege](#) is set to a disallowed privilege level.

Table 1. External debug allowed privilege levels per debug controls

| <code>mdbgen[i]</code> | <code>sdedbgalw</code> | Debug allowed privilege levels |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Don't care | All |
| 0 | 1 | All except M |
| 0 | 0 | None |

The [debug operations](#) are allowed when hart `i` executes in the supervisor domain only if the logical-OR of values in `sdedbgalw` and `mdbgen[i]` is 1. Otherwise, the [debug operations](#) and the hart follows the [behaviros](#) in all modes.

If register access without halting is supported, this access bears the privilege of supervisor mode to access the hart when `mdbgen[i]` is 0 and `sdedbgalw` is 1.

3.1.3. Debug Access Privilege

The **debug access privilege** is defined as the privilege with which abstract commands or instructions in program buffers access hardware resources such as registers and memory. This privilege operates independently of hart privilege levels and exclusively affects operations within Debug Mode. Memory and register access within Debug Mode are subject to the **debug access privilege**, with all hardware protections, including MMU, PMP, and PMA, checked against it. This privilege is represented by the `prv` and `v` fields in `dcsr`. The permissible privilege levels programmable to `dcsr` in Debug Mode are elaborated in subsequent sections.

In addition, the `mprv` and `mpp` fields take effect exclusively when the **debug access privilege** is machine mode.

Configuring `dcsr` for External Debugger Access Privileges

The `prv` and `v` fields in the `dcsr` CSR have been modified to authorize privilege for external debug accesses. Upon transitioning into Debug Mode, hardware updates `prv` and `v` to the privilege level that the hart is currently running. The external debugger can still configure `prv` and `v`, however, the

maximum debug privilege level that can be configured in `prv` and `v` is determined in Table 2. It is an implementation choice whether to ignore or raise a security fault error (`cmderr` 6) when the `prv` and `v` are configured to an illegal value. Illegal privilege levels include unsupported levels and any level higher than the maximum allowed debug privilege.

Table 2. Determining maximum debug access privilege with `mdbgen[i]` and `sdedbgalw`

| <code>mdbgen[i]</code> | <code>sdedbgalw</code> | Maximum debug privilege allowed |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | x | M |
| 0 | 1 | S(HS) |
| 0 | 0 | None |



As the `prv` and `v` fields in `dcsr` are Write Any Read Legal (WARL) fields, the debugger has two options to confirm the success of a prior write: either by reading back the attempted written value or by checking the `cmderr`, depending on the hardware implementation choice. The external debugger is able to read back the written value to determine the maximum debug privilege level.

Memory and CSR accesses initiated by abstract commands or from the program buffer will be treated as if they are at the privilege level held in `prv` and `v`. These accesses will undergo protections of PMA, PMP, MMU, and other mechanisms, and triggers traps if they violate corresponding rules.

3.1.4. Privilege Level Changing Instructions

The RISC-V Debug Specification [1] defines that the instructions that change the privilege mode have UNSPECIFIED behavior when executed within the Program Buffer, with exception of the `ebreak` instruction. In `Sdsec`, those instructions including `mret`, `sret`, `uret`, `ecall`, must either act as NOP or trigger an exception (stopping execution and setting `cmderr` to 3) in Program Buffer. Notably, these instructions retain their normal functionality during single stepping.

3.2. Trace

When `Sdsec` is supported, the optional sideband signal to trace encoder, `sec_check[i]` [2], must be implemented for each hart `i`, and this signal must be reset to 1. The `sec_check[i]` signal is only cleared when trace is allowed by [machine mode trace control](#) and/or [supervisor domain trace control](#).

Machine Mode Trace Control

For each hart `i`, an input port, `mtrcen[i]`, controls machine mode trace availability. Setting `mtrcen[i]` to 1 enables machine mode and supervisor domain trace by clearing the `sec_check[i]` signal to 0 across all privilege levels. Conversely, if `mtrcen[i]` is set to 0, the `sec_check[i]` signal cannot be cleared when the hart runs in machine mode.



For a homogeneous computing system, similarly to machine mode debug control, the implementation can consolidate all `mtrcen[i]` into a single port to constrain

trace capability across all harts.

Supervisor Domain Trace Control

The Smsdetrc extension introduces **sdetrcalw** field in CSR **msdcfg** within hart i. The **sec_check[i]** signal for hart i in supervisor domain is determined by the **sdetrcalw** field and **mtrcen[i]**. When the logical-OR of **sdetrcalw** and **mtrcen[i]** is 1, the **sec_check[i]** signal is cleared while the hart runs in supervisor domain.

When both **sdetrcalw** and **mtrcen[i]** are set to 0, the **sec_check[i]** signal cannot be cleared at all.

Table 3. Status of the **sec_check[i]** sideband signal across privilege levels

| mtrcen | sdetrcalw | Machine mode | Supervisor domain |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | x | sec_check[i] = 0 | sec_check[i] = 0 |
| 0 | 1 | sec_check[i] = 1 | sec_check[i] = 0 |
| 0 | 0 | sec_check[i] = 1 | sec_check[i] = 1 |



The **sec_check** signal serves as an additional signal for the trace module, indicating that trace output is prohibited due to security controls. Functionally, **sec_check** behaves identically to the halted signal. Both **sec_check** and halted signals cannot be active simultaneously. Reserved for future applications, the combined state of [**sec_check**, halted] as 0b11 remains unutilized. In cases where a trace module lacks support for the **sec_check** signal, the hart may alternatively toggle the halted signal to restrict trace output.

3.3. Trigger (Sdtrig)

The trigger configured to enter Debug Mode is checked by Sdsec extension. The trigger can fire or match in privilege modes when external debug is allowed, as outlined in Table 1.

The extension requires that all pending triggers intending to enter Debug Mode must match or fire before any hart mode switch to prevent privilege escalation.

3.3.1. Machine mode accessibility to **dmode** accessibility

The RISC-V Debug Specification [1] defines that the **dmode** field is accessible only in Debug Mode. When this field is set, the trigger is allocated exclusively to Debug Mode, and any write access from the hart are disregarded. The Sdsec extension relaxes the constraint to the **dmode**, allowing it to be R/W in machine mode when **mdbgcn[i]** is set to 0. When **mdbgcn[i]** is set to 1, it remains exclusively accessible within Debug Mode.



The Debug Mode exclusive trigger could potentially serve as an attack surface for unauthorized supervisor domains where debugging is forbidden. With Sdsec extension, machine mode software assumes responsibility for switching the trigger context according to the debug policy enforced for the supervisor domain. As a result, it maintains a clean trigger context for the supervisor domain.

3.3.2. External triggers

The external trigger outputs follow the same limitations as other triggers, ensuring they do not fire or match when the privilege level of the hart exceeds the ones specified in [Table 1](#).

The sources of external trigger input (such as machine mode performance counter overflow, interrupts, etc.) require protection to prevent information leakage. The external trigger inputs supported are platform-specific. Therefore, the platform is responsible for enforcing limitations on input sources. As a result, `tmexttrigger.intctl` and `tmexttrigger.select` should be restricted to legal values based on `mdbgen[i]` and `sdedbgalw`. Their definitions are provided in the [Table 6](#) below.

3.3.3. Trigger chain

The privilege level of the trigger chain is determined by the highest privilege level within the chain. The entire trigger chain cannot be modified if the chain privilege level exceeds the [debug access privilege](#).



This represents a balance between usability and hardware complexity. The integrity of the trigger chain set by the hart must be maintained when an external debugger intends to utilize triggers. There may be instances where the triggers are linked across different privilege levels (e.g., from supervisor mode to machine mode), while the external debugger may only have access to supervisor mode privilege. The external debugger should not alter the chain, because it could suppress or incorrectly raise breakpoint exceptions in machine mode.

3.3.4. Sdtrig CSR

The extension enforces access control in Debug Mode, which complicates trigger usage within Debug Mode. To mitigate these complications, certain trigger CSRs, `tselect`, `tdata1`, `tdata2`, `tdata3`, and `tinfo` are always permitted in Debug Mode, irrespective of the privileges granted to external debuggers. However, the remaining CSRs, `tcontrol`, `scontext`, `hcontext`, `mcontext`, and `mscontext` continue to adhere to the granted debug access privilege.

Table 4. Trigger CSR accessibility in Debug Mode

| Register | without Sdsec | with Sdsec |
|------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <code>tselect(0x7a0)</code> | Always | <code>mdbgen[i] == 1</code> <code>sdedbgalw == 1</code> |
| <code>tdata1(0x7a1)</code> | Always | <code>mdbgen[i] == 1</code> <code>sdedbgalw == 1</code> |
| <code>tdata2(0x7a2)</code> | Always | <code>mdbgen[i] == 1</code> <code>sdedbgalw == 1</code> |
| <code>tdata3(0x7a3)</code> | Always | <code>mdbgen[i] == 1</code> <code>sdedbgalw == 1</code> |
| <code>tinfo(0x7a4)</code> | Always | <code>mdbgen[i] == 1</code> <code>sdedbgalw == 1</code> |
| <code>tcontrol(0x7a5)</code> | Always | <code>mdbgen[i] == 1</code> |
| <code>scontext(0x5a8)</code> | Always | <code>mdbgen[i] == 1</code> <code>sdedbgalw == 1</code> |
| <code>hcontext(0x6a8)</code> | Always | <code>mdbgen[i] == 1</code> <code>sdedbgalw == 1</code> |
| <code>mcontext(0x7a8)</code> | Always | <code>mdbgen[i] == 1</code> |

| Register | without Sdsec | with Sdsec |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| mscontext(0x7aa) | Always | mdbggen[i] == 1 |

Beyond CSR level accessibility adjustments, the fields within mcontrol, mcontrol6, icount, ittrigger, ettrigger, and tmexttrigger (variants of tdata1 located at 0x7a1) are redefined to limit the effective scope of triggers as follows.

Table 5. Tdata1 fields accessibility against privilege granted to external debugger

| Field | Accessibility |
|-------|-----------------------------------|
| m | mdbggen[i] == 1 |
| s | mdbggen[i] == 1 sdedbgalw == 1 |
| u | mdbggen[i] == 1 sdedbgalw == 1 |
| vs | mdbggen[i] == 1 sdedbgalw == 1 |
| vu | mdbggen[i] == 1 sdedbgalw == 1 |

The **intctl** and **sselect** field within tmexttrigger are redefined as follows.

Table 6. Redefinition of field **intctl** and **sselect** within tmexttrigger

| Field | Description | Access | Reset |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| intctl | This optional bit, when set, causes this trigger to fire whenever an attached interrupt controller signals a trigger. the field is only configurable when mdbggen[i] is set to 1. | WLRL | 0 |
| sselect | Selects any combination of up to 16 Trigger Module external trigger inputs that cause this trigger to fire The legal value must be constrained by mdbggen[i] and sdedbgalw according to trigger input type. | WLRL | 0 |

3.4. Other CSR updates

3.4.1. Debug Control and Status (dcsr)

The access rule for field **prv** and **v** are addressed in subsection [Section 3.1.3.1](#). Beside **prv** and **v**, the fields in dcsr are further constrained based on their sphere of action. When a field is effective in machine mode, it is accessible only to debugger which is granted with machine mode privilege. The detailed accessibility is listed in the following table.

Table 7. Dcsr fields accessibility against privilege granted to external debugger

| Field | Accessibility |
|----------|-----------------------------------|
| ebreakvs | mdbggen[i] == 1 sdedbgalw == 1 |
| ebreakvu | mdbggen[i] == 1 sdedbgalw == 1 |
| ebreakm | mdbggen[i] == 1 |
| ebreaks | mdbggen[i] == 1 sdedbgalw == 1 |

| Field | Accessibility |
|----------|----------------------------------|
| ebreaku | mdbgen[i] == 1 sdedbgalw == 1 |
| stepie | mdbgen[i] == 1 |
| stoptime | mdbgen[i] == 1 |
| mprven | mdbgen[i] == 1 |
| nmip | mdbgen[i] == 1 |

3.4.2. Debug PC (dpc) and Debug Scratch Register (dscratch0 and dscratch1)

Debug PC (at 0x7b1) and Debug Scratch Register (at 0x7b2 and 0x7b3) are not restricted by [debug access privilege](#) and are always accessible in debug mode.

3.4.3. Sdsec CSR

The Sdsec extension does not introduce any new CSR. The CSR control knobs in [msdcfg](#) for supervisor domain debug and trace are specified in Smsdedbg and Smsdetrc extension respectively in *RISC-V Supervisor Domains Access Protection* [4]. The Smsdedbg and/or Smsdetrc extension must be implemented to support security control for debugging and/or tracing in supervisor domain.

Chapter 4. Debug Module Security Extension (non-ISA extension)

This chapter outlines the security enhancements defined for the Debug Module as non-ISA extension. The debug operations listed below are modified by the non-ISA extension. All features in this chapter must be implemented in Debug Module to achieve external debug security. If any hart in the system implements the Sdec extension, the Debug Module must also implement the non-ISA extension.

- Halt
- Reset
- Keepalive request
- Issuing abstract commands (Access Register, Quick Access, Access Memory)
- System bus access

4.1. External Debug Security Extensions Discovery

The ISA and non-ISA external debug security extensions impose security constraints and introduce non-backward-compatible changes. The presence of the extensions can be determined by polling the `allsecured` or/and `anysecured` bits in `dmstatus` [Table 8](#). If the field `allsecured` or `anysecured` is set to 1, it represents that all or any selected harts adopt the Sdsec extension. When any hart adopts the Sdsec extension, it indicates the Debug Module implements Debug Module Security Extension as described in this chapter.

4.2. Halt

The halt behavior for a hart is detailed in [Section 3.1](#). According to *The RISC-V Debug Specification* [1], a halt request must be responded within one second. However, this constraint must be eliminated as the request might be pending due to the situations where debugging is disallowed. Additionally, when machine mode is not permitted (`mdbgen[i]` set to 0) to engage in debugging, the halt-on-reset (`resethaltreq`) operation must fail and raise security fault error. The debugger could check the error by polling `allsecfault` or/and `anysecfault` fields in `dmstatus` for selected harts, as specified in [Table 8](#).

4.3. Reset

The `hartreset` operation resets selected harts. This operation must be prohibited when machine mode is not allowed to be debugged. The security fault error will be raised if the operation is issued when `mdbgen[i]` is 0. The debugger could monitor the error by polling `allsecfault` or/and `anysecfault` in `dmstatus`.

The `ndmreset` operation is a system-level reset not tied to hart privilege levels and reset the entire system (excluding the Debug Module). It can only be secured by the system. Thus, it must be de-featured. The debugger can determine support for the `ndmreset` operation by setting the field to 1

and subsequently verifying the returned value upon reading.

4.4. Keepalive

The keepalive operation serves as an optional request for the hart to remain available for debugger. It is only allowed when machine mode is permitted to debug. Otherwise, it causes a security fault error when `mdbgcn[i]` is 0, indicated by `allsecfault` or/and `anysecfault` bits in `dmstatus`.

4.5. Abstract Commands

The hart response to abstract commands is detailed in [Section 3.1](#). The following subsection delineates the constraints when the Debug Module issues the abstract commands.

4.5.1. Relaxed Permission Check `relaxedpriv`

The field `relaxedpriv` in `abstractcs` (at 0x16 in Debug Module) allows for relaxed permission checks, such as bypassing PMA, PMP, MMU, etc. However, this relaxation violates security requirements, and the extension mandates that `relaxedpriv` be hardwired to 0.

4.5.2. Address Translation `aamvirtual`

The field `aamvirtual` in command (at 0x17 in Debug Module) determines whether physical or virtual address translation is employed. When `mdbgcn[i]` is 0, the extension mandates that `aamvirtual` is hardwire to 1 and memory access addresses are processed as if initiated by the hart in [debug access privilege](#).

4.6. System Bus Access

System Bus Access enables direct reading/writing of memory space without involving the hart. It must always be checked by bus initiator protection mechanisms such as IOPMP [5], WorldGuard [6], etc. If these protections are not implemented or not deployed for Debug Module, System Bus Access must not be supported. Failed system bus access attempts result in a bus security fault error (`sberror` 6).



In scenarios where a Debug Module lacks System Bus Access, memory access by the debugger can be achieved through the use of abstract commands. These commands provide secure means to access memory.



Trusted entities like RoT should configure IOPMP or equivalent protection before granting debug access to machine mode. Similarly, machine mode should apply the protection before enabling supervisor domain debug.

4.7. Security Fault Error Reporting

A dedicated error code, security fault error (`cmderr` 6), is included in `cmderr` of `abstractcs` (at 0x16 in Debug Module). Misconfigurations of the `dcsr` and issuance of abstract commands under disallowed

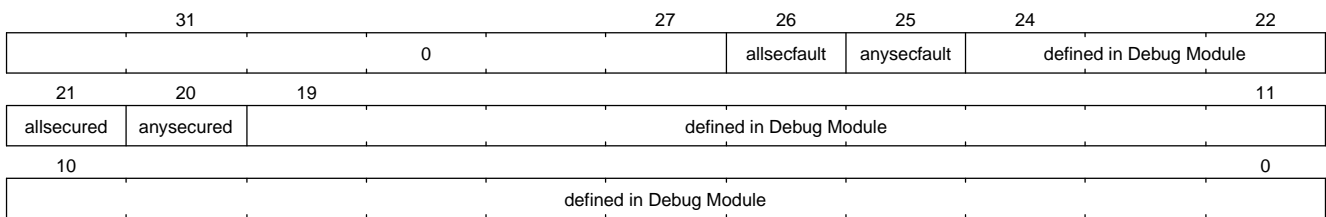
circumstance can signify such an error. Additionally, the bus security fault error (sberror 6) is introduced in **sberror** of sbcs (at 0x38 in Debug Module) to denote errors related to system bus access.

The error raised by resethaltreq, reset and keepalive can be identified through the fields **allsecfault** and **anysecfault** in dmstatus. The security fault errors must be detectable prior to any subsequent read of the register responsible for reporting the error. Error statuses are internally maintained for each hart, with the **allsecfault** and **anysecfault** fields indicating the error status of the currently selected harts. Any error indicated by **allsecfault** and **anysecfault** remains until updated through a successful resethaltreq, reset or keepalive operation.



While the resethaltreq, reset, and keepalive operations can potentially take a significant amount of time to complete depending on the implementation, the error status can be immediately reported via following read of **allsecfault/anysecfault** if the operation is prohibited. Therefore, if a read of **allsecfault/anysecfault** indicates no error, it suggests that the operation is allowed and either currently in progress or has been successfully executed.

4.8. Update of Debug Module Status (dmstatus)



Register 1: Newly introduced fields in dmstatus

Table 8. Details of newly introduced fields in dmstatus

| Field | Description | Access | Reset |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| allsecured | The field is 1 when all currently selected harts implement Sdsec extension | R | - |
| anysecured | The field is 1 when any currently selected hart implements Sdsec extension | R | - |
| allsecfault | The field is 1 when all currently selected harts have raised security fault due to reset or keepalive operation. | R | - |
| anysecfault | The field is 1 when any currently selected hart has raised security fault due to reset or keepalive operation. | R | - |

Appendix A: Theory of Operation

This chapter explains the theory of operation for the External Debug Security Extension. The subsequent diagram illustrates the reference implementation of security control for the Debug Module and trace encoder, respectively.

A.1. Debug Module security control

As outlined in the specification, the security control on the Debug Module can vary for each hart. The dedicated security policy for hart *i* is enforced by the input port `mdbggen[i]` and the `sdedbgalw` field inside CSR `msdcfg`. The security control logic examines all debug operations and triggers (with `action=1`) firing/matching based on `mdbggen[i]`, `sdedbgalw`, and the privilege level of the hart. The failed action will either be dropped or pending. Additionally, the platform-specific external trigger inputs must obey to platform constraints, which must be carefully handled by platform owner. The `mdbggen[i]` can be bundled in an MMIO (Memory-Mapped I/O) outside the hart, such as in the Debug Module, or implemented as fuses.

The privilege level of the hart is determined by code execution, while the debug requests are validated against the privilege level generated by the hart. This process involves two actors, which may lead to a potential Time-of-Check Time-of-Use (TOCTOU) issue. To mitigate this, the implementation must ensure that the inspection and execution of debug requests occur within the same privilege level of the hart. Failure to do so could result in debug requests bypassing access controls intended for higher privilege levels. If the accesses fail the security check, it must prompt an immediate termination of access to prevent any information leakage.

When the external debugger is stepping through an instruction that triggers a transition to a higher privilege level, the security control logic must verify against debug capability according to [Table 1](#) before entering Debug Mode. If debugging is permitted, the hart re-enters Debug Mode after executing the instruction. Otherwise, the hart continues executing with the pending single step request until it becomes debuggable and can re-enter Debug Mode. In scenarios where multiple supervisor domains are debuggable, the secure monitor in machine mode may switch the context during single stepping. In such cases, the debugger might stop in a different application than the original one. Users of the debugger should be mindful of this possibility.

Application-level debugging is primarily accomplished through self-hosted debugging, allowing the management of debug policies at the supervisor/hypervisor level. As a result, user-level debugging management is not addressed within this extension.



Figure 1. The security control on Debug Module

A.2. Trace Encoder security control

Similar to the Debug Module, the trace encoder is controlled by the `mtrcen[i]` and `sdetrca1w` in CSR `msdcfg` for each hart `i`. The halted sideband signal to the trace encoder is determined by [Table 3](#).

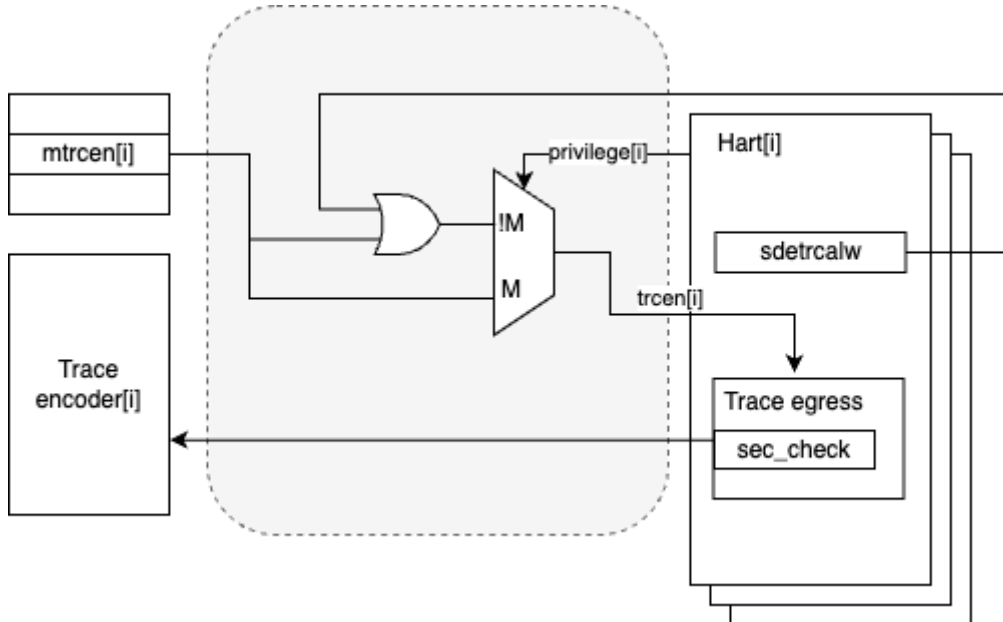


Figure 2. The security control on trace module

Bibliography

- [1] “RISC-V Debug Specification.” [Online]. Available: github.com/riscv/riscv-debug-spec.
- [2] “RISC-V Efficient Trace for RISC-V.” [Online]. Available: github.com/riscv-non-isa/riscv-trace-spec.
- [3] “RISC-V N-Trace (Nexus-based Trace) Specification.” [Online]. Available: github.com/riscv-non-isa/tg-nexus-trace.
- [4] “RISC-V Supervisor Domains Access Protection.” [Online]. Available: github.com/riscv/riscv-smmmtt.
- [5] “RISC-V IOPMP Architecture Specification.” [Online]. Available: github.com/riscv-non-isa/iopmp-spec/releases.
- [6] “WorldGuard Specification.” [Online]. Available: github.com/riscv-admin/security/blob/main/papers/worldguard%20proposal.pdf.