

Documentation Notes

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1 Introduction

The aim of the project is to develop what in cybersecurity and IoT is called a data diode, a unidirectional communication device for data exchange. The importance behind this project is that industrial data diodes are expensive devices, and implementing a high amount of them like for this specific use case is a very costly move, but with software implementations (firewalls) or hardware implementations (serial or optical communications) it is possible to have cheaper data diodes that are almost as functional for most use case scenario. The initial setup will include two Raspberry Pi model 3 with a specific configuration which we will highlight later, and a TTL-232R-3V3 cable without the RX pin being plugged in one of the raspberries.

2 Devices

2.1 Raspberry Pi

As far as the Raspberry Pi models, I have chosen to use the Raspberry Pi 3 as it's a nice midway point between performance and cost. This particular machine should be able to handle the data size we are planning to share (around 1Gb/day), at a cost that is much lower than that of a Raspberry Pi 4. The machines are configured as follows:

- Raspberry Pi 3 Model B Ver1.2:
 - Quad Core 1.2GHz Broadcom BCM2837 64bit CPU
 - 1GB RAM
 - BCM43438 wireless LAN and Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) on board
 - 100 Base Ethernet
 - 40-pin extended GPIO
 - 4 USB 2 ports
 - 4 Pole stereo output and composite video port
 - Full size HDMI
 - CSI camera port for connecting a Raspberry Pi camera
 - DSI display port for connecting a Raspberry Pi touchscreen display
 - Micro SD port for loading your operating system and storing data
 - Upgraded switched Micro USB power source up to 2.5A
 - Raspberry Pi OS Lite (latest version)
 - 16GB microSD card

Using the RPI-Imager tool I installed the latest Raspberry PI OS image. Upon first boot up, remember that raspberry pi login is username: pi, password: raspberry. As Raspberry Pi OS Lite is an OS without a desktop environment, we don't have a usual system setting manager, luckily we can use raspi-config to enable a series of features useful for testing software. We initialize raspi-config by using the command `sudo raspi-config` and then changing these specific settings:

- In the system options:
 - Enable WIFI for ssh purposes.
 - Change username and password if needed.
- In the interface options:
 - Enable SSH.
 - Enable Serial interface, remembering to disable login shell but enable serial interface.
- Run `sudo apt-get upgrade` to make sure all packages are up to date before using raspi-config.
- Disable bluetooth:
 - We won't be using bluetooth for the project, so we disable it, making the final product more secure.
 - We disable bluetooth by adding `'dtoverlay=disable-bt'` in `/boot/config.txt`.
- Troubleshooting
 - Check that UART is enabled in `/boot/config.txt` by adding `'enable_UART=1'`.
 - Check that serial console is disabled by removing `"console=serial0,115200"` (or `"console=ttyS0,115200"`) in `/boot/cmdline.txt`.
 - Check for permissions in the dialout group.
 - Check that `/dev/serial0` doesn't have a getty console running on it. In case it does, it can be disabled by using the commands: `sudo systemctl stop serial-getty@ttyS0.service` and `sudo systemctl disable serial-getty@ttyS0.service`.
- Additional software:
 - Run `sudo apt-get install python3` to install Python in it's latest version.
 - Run `sudo apt-get install python3-pip` to install Python's package manager.
 - Run `pip install pyserial` to install the serial library that we will be using to have the machines communicate.

2.2 UART Cable

As mentioned earlier, the serial communication will go through a TTL-232R-3V3 cable, which is USB to UART, with +3.3V TTL levels UART signals. The cable has 3-pins on one end, and USB on the other. Using GPIO14 pin on the RPi we can transmit data, using GPIO15 we receive data. As previously mentioned, GPIO15 can be removed after the initial tests are over, as the communication will be one-way. In appendix 1, there is an extract from the the documentation of the cable, and a pinout image showing the correct way to plug in the cable in the correct pins, make sure that GND pin is in any of the ground pins available on the raspberry GPIO,

and most of all remember that TX and RX are from the machine's point of view, thus they have to be plugged in the opposite way (GPIO14 with yellow and GPIO15 orange). With the cable plugged in we run the command `ls /dev/tty*` on both raspberry machines so we have an idea of what port we are using on each raspberry in the serial communication (For the port that's sending data it should be `/dev/ttyS0`, while for the other port it should be `USB0`). Raspian will always map the serial port to `/dev/serial0`, so it is suggested to use the alias in programming. In Appendix 2 is an image of how the two machines should look like once plugged in, with an idea of how they interact with the network.

3 Program versions

3.1 First test

The objective of this test is to see if the two RPi are connected correctly. Running the programs in the appendix should give you an output like the following appendix. In case this program won't run correctly, refer back to the troubleshooting section earlier. The code `sndtest.py` has to be run on the machine where the GPIO pins are being used, and `recvtest.py` has to be run on the machine where the USB is plugged in. It's suggested you start by running `recvtest.py` using the command `python3 recvtest.py`, and then run `python3 sndtest.py`. Below is an image of what it should look like. (Aggiungero' in futuro, sono sulle raspberry)

3.2 Data diode 0.1

In this initial implementation we switch from sending text to sending an actual file via serial communication. The improvements from this version to the next will be improved baudrate, meaning faster file transfer. In the next version SHA256 checksum will also be implemented to make sure file transfer is working correctly. The last improvement will be to include a handshake system via CTS/RTS signals. The code can be found in the appendix.

3.3 Data diode 0.2

This version of the program has improved transfer speeds, which can be further improved, although it seems to have capped at 115200 baudrate because of USB2.0 and UART limitations. So transfer speeds will be improved by changing the communication protocol. Code is in the appendix.

4 Appendix