

# TIANJIN UNIVERSITY

# Host of Troubles Vulnerabilities

Author:

Qianyu Guo

Student Number:

1016216001

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# 1 Overview

Host-of-Troubles is a class of new vulnerabilities that affect a wide range of HTTP implementations. The problem is that deployed systems are generally incorrect (non-compliant with RFC 7230) and inconsistent in parsing and interpreting "Host" headers in HTTP requests. This problem can be exploited by carefully crafting HTTP requests with ambiguous host information, inducing inconsistent interpretations between two parties. Such inconsistency can lead to severe security consequences, such as HTTP cache poisoning and security policy bypass.

# 2 Multiple Host Ambiguities

In parsing and interpreting the HTTP semantics, one of the most important designations is what host is involved with the request, because Host is the key protocol field for resource locating, request routing, caching, etc. The problem of multiple host ambiguities arises when two parties (the downstream and upstream) in an HTTP processing-chain parse and interpret host in a crafted, adversarial request differently. Inconsistency of host between two parties often causes disastrous consequences because of its semantic importance.

— Host of Troubles: Multiple Host Ambiguities in HTTP Implementations

# 2.1 Multiple Host Headers

RFC 2616[1] states that a request with multiple same name headers is allowed only if the value of this header is defined as a single comma-separated list, which implies that a request with multiple Host headers is invalid. RFC 7230 [2] explicitly specifies that requests with multiple Host headers must be reject with 400 Bad Request.

— Host of Troubles: Multiple Host Ambiguities in HTTP Implementations

- 4.2 Multiple message-header fields with the same field-name MAY be present in a message if and only if the entire field-value for that header field is defined as a comma-separated list. It must be possible to combine the multiple header fields into one "field-name:field-value" pair, without changing the semantics of the message, by appending each subsequent field-value to the first, each separated by a comma. The order in which header fields with the same field-name are received is therefore significant to the interpretation of the combined field value, and thus a proxy MUST NOT change the order of these field values when a message is forwarded.
- 5.2 The exact resource identified by an Internet request is determined by examining both the Request-URI and the Host header field.

An origin server that does differentiate resources based on the host requested (sometimes referred to as virtual hosts or vanity host names) MUST use the following rules for determining the requested resource on an  $\rm HTTP/1.1$  request:

- If Request-URI is an absoluteURI, the host is part of the Request-URI. Any Host header field value in the request MUST be ignored.
- If the Request-URI is not an absoluteURI, and the request includes a Host header field, the host is determined by the Host header field value.
- 3. If the host as determined by rule 1 or 2 is not a valid host on the server, the response MUST be a 400 (Bad Request) error message.

Recipients of an HTTP/1.0 request that lacks a Host header field MAY attempt to use heuristics (e.g., examination of the URI path for something unique to a particular host) in order to determine what exact resource is being requested.

- 14.23 A client MUST include a Host header field in all HTTP/1.1 request messages . If the requested URI does not include an Internet host name for the service being requested, then the Host header field MUST be given with an empty value. An HTTP/1.1 proxy MUST ensure that any request message it forwards does contain an appropriate Host header field that identifies the service being requested by the proxy. All Internet-based HTTP/1.1 servers MUST respond with a 400 (Bad Request) status code to any HTTP/1.1 request message which lacks a Host header field.
- 19.6.1.1 It is extremely important that all implementations of HTTP (including updates to existing HTTP/1.0 applications) correctly implement these requirements:
  - Both clients and servers MUST support the Host request-header.
  - A client that sends an HTTP/1.1 request MUST send a Host header.
  - Servers MUST report a 400 (Bad Request) error if an HTTP/1.1 request does not include a Host request-header.
  - Servers MUST accept absolute URIs.

- **3.2.2** A sender MUST NOT generate multiple header fields with the same field name in a message unless either the entire field value for that header field is defined as a comma-separated list [i.e., #(values)] or the header field is a well-known exception.
- **5.4** A server MUST respond with a 400 (Bad Request) status code to any HTTP/1.1 request message that lacks a Host header field and to any request message that contains more than one Host header field or a Host header field with an invalid field-value.

# 2.2 Space-surrounded Host Header

## 2.2.1 The first header with preceding space

RFC 2616 does not have explicit text for this case. The syntax definition implies that systems should reject the request with a space preceding the first header. RFC 7230 suggests to either reject the request or ignore the header.

### RFC 2616

## **RFC 7230**

3. A sender MUST NOT send whitespace between the start-line and the first header field. A recipient that receives whitespace between the start-line and the first header field MUST either reject the message as invalid or consume each whitespace-preceded line without further processing of it (i.e., ignore the entire line, along with any subsequent lines preceded by whitespace, until a properly formed header field is received or the header section is terminated).

The presence of such whitespace in a request

might be an attempt to trick a server into ignoring that field or processing the line after it as a new request, either of which might result in a security vulnerability if other implementations within the request chain interpret the same message differently.

3.2.4 The field value does not include any leading or trailing whitespace: OWS occurring before the first non-whitespace octet of the field value or after the last non-whitespace octet of the field value ought to be excluded by parsers when extracting the field value from a header field.

## 2.2.2 Non-first header with preceding space

RFC 2616 states that a such header needs to be processed as folded line of its previous header: remove its preceding line break characters to concatenate with the previous header. Although RFC 7230 already obsoletes line folding, it still allows a proxy or a server to process as line folding for backward compatibility considerations.

— Host of Troubles: Multiple Host Ambiguities in HTTP Implementations

 $2.2~\mathrm{HTTP}/1.1~\mathrm{header}$  field values can be folded onto multiple lines if the continuation line begins with a space or horizontal tab. All linear white space, including folding,

has the same semantics as SP. A recipient MAY replace any linear white space with a single SP before interpreting the field value or forwarding the message downstream.

### **RFC 7230**

could be extended over multiple lines by preceding each extra line with at least one space or the message/http media type.

**3.2.4** Historically, HTTP header field values | horizontal tab (obs-fold). This specification deprecates such line folding except within

#### 2.2.3Headers with succeeding space

RFC 2616 does not have explicit text for this case. The syntax definition implies that systems should allow this request. The same situation is explicitly forbidden in RFC 7230.

### **RFC 2616**

### **RFC 7230**

**3.2.4** A field value might be preceded and/or followed by optional whitespace (OWS). The field value does not include any leading or trailin whitespace: **OWS occurring** before the first extracting the field value from a header field.

non-whitespace octet of the field value or after the last non-whitespace octet of the field value ought to be excluded by parsers when

#### 2.3Absolute-URI as Request-Target

Both RFC 2616 and RFC 7230 require server to accept absolute-URI as requesttarget, and to prefer host component of absolute-URI than Host header. RFC 7230 additionally requires requests with absolute-URI to have identical host component as Host header. Both of the two RFCs do not explicitly state which schema is allowed in the absolute-URI.

Implementation/ Specification		Space-preceded Host as first header	Other space- preceded Host header	Space-succeeded Host header	schema of absolute-URI
	Apache	Not recognize	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize HTTP, not others
	IIS	Recognize	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize HTTP/S, reject others
Server	Lighttpd	Reject	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize HTTP/S, not others
Bei vei	LiteSpeed	Reject	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize any schema
	Nginx	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize any schema
	Tomcat	Not recognize	Line folding	Not recognize	Recognize HTTP/S, reject others
Transparent	ATS	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize any
Cache	Squid	If no host before: recognize,	If no host before: recognize,	If no host before: reject,	Recognize HTTP, reject others
Cacne	Squid	else: not recognize	else: not recognize	else: recognize	Recognize HIIP, reject others
D 1	Apache	Not recognize	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize HTTP, reject others
Forward Proxy	IIS	Recognize	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize HTTP/S, reject others
Froxy	G	If no host before: recognize,	If no host before: recognize,	If no host before: reject,	D
	Squid	else: not recognize	else: not recognize	else: recognize	Recognize HTTP, reject others
	Apache	Not recognize	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize HTTP, not others
	IIS	Recognize	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize HTTP/S, reject others
Reverse	Lighttpd	Reject	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize HTTP/S, not others
Proxy	LiteSpeed	Reject	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize any schema
Froxy	Nginx	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize any schema
	Squid	If no host before: recognize,	If no host before: recognize,	If no host before: reject,	Recognize HTTP, reject others
		else: not recognize	else: not recognize	else: recognize	Recognize H11F, reject others
	Varnish	Reject	Line folding	Reject	Recognize HTTP, not others
	Akamai	If no host before: recognize,	If no host before: recognize,	Reject	Recognize HTTP/S, reject others
		else: not recognize	else: not recognize	Reject	Recognize H11F/5, reject others
	Alibaba	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize any schema
	Azure	Reject	Line folding	Recognize	Recognize HTTP/S, reject others
CDN	CloudFlare	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize any schema
	CloudFront	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize any schema
	Fastly	Reject	Line folding	Reject	Not recognize any schema
	Level3	Not recognize	Not recognize	Reject	Recognize HTTP/S, reject others
	Tencent	Recognize	Recognize	Recognize	Recognize HTTP, reject others
	Bitdefender	Recognize	Recognize	Recognize	Likely fail-open
	ESET	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize any schema
Firewall	Huawei	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize any schema
Firewall	Kaspersky	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize any schema
	OS X	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize any schema
	PAN	Not recognize	Not recognize	Not recognize	Recognize HTTP/S, not others
	Windows	Recognize	Recognize	Recognize	Recognize any
a .a	RFC 2616	Reject (implicit)	Line folding	Recognize	Not specified
Specification	RFC 7230	Reject or not recognize	Reject or line folding	Reject	Not specified
	1200				

Figure 1: Host parsing behaviors. Specifications and tested implementations ("recognize" means accepting as valid host field, "not recognize" means either ignoring or accepting as an unknown header field, "reject" means responding with 400 Bad Request).

**5.2** See the "RFC 2616" part in section 2.1.

### RFC 7230

5.5 Since the request-target often contains only part of the user agent's target URI, a server reconstructs the intended target as an "effective request URI" to properly service the request. This reconstruction involves both the server's local configuration and information communicated in the request-target, Host header field, and connection context.

For a user agent, the effective request URI is the target URI. If the request-target is in absolute-form, the effective request URI is the same as the request-target. Otherwise, the effective request URI is constructed as follows:

- 1. If the server's configuration (or outbound gateway) provides a fixed URI scheme, that scheme is used for the effective request URI. Otherwise, if the request is received over a TLS-secured TCP connection, the effective request URI's scheme is "https"; if not, the scheme is "http".
- 2. If the server's configuration (or outbound gateway) provides a fixed URI authority component, that authority is used for the effective request URI. If not,

- then if the request-target is in authorityform, the effective request URI's authority component is the same as requesttarget. If not, then if a Host header field is supplied with a non-empty field-value, the authority component is the same as the Host field-value. Otherwise, the authority component is assigned the default name configured for the server and, if the connection's incoming TCP port number differs from the default port for the effective request URI's scheme, then a colon (":") and the incoming port number are appended to the authority component.
- 3. If the request-target is in authority-form or asterisk-form, the effective request URI's combined path and query component is empty. Otherwise, the combined path and query component is the same as the request-target.

The components of the effective request URI, once determined as above, can be combined into absolute-URI form by concatenating the scheme, "://", authority, and combined path and query component.

# 3 Case Studies

# 3.1 Multiple Host Headers

Case 1 讨论当同一个 Request 中存在多个 Host 字段时,该如何解析和处理。

RFC 2616 Multiple message-header fields with the same field-name MAY be present in a message if and only if (隐晦地说明 Multiple Host 是不允许的) the entire field-value for that header field is defined as a commaseparated list. It MUST be possible to combine the multiple header fields into one "field-name: field-value" pair, without changing the semantics of the message, by appending each subsequent field-value to the first, each separated by a comma. (Page 22, 4.2, Meassage Headers)

RFC 7230 A sender MUST NOT generate multiple header fields with the same field name in a message unless either the entire field is defined as a comma-separated list ...

A recipient MAY combine multiple header fields with the same field name into one "field-name: field-value" pair, without changing the semantics of the message, by appending each subsequent field value to the combined field value in order, separated by a comma. (Page 24, 3.2.2, Field Order)

RFC 7230 A server MUST respond with a 400 (Bad Request) status code to any HTTP/1.1 request message that lacks a Host header field and to any request message that contains more than one Host header field or a Host header field with an invalid field-value. (Page 44, 5.4, Host)

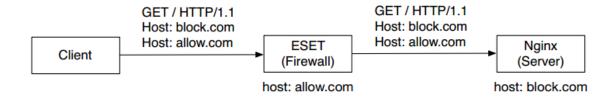


Figure 2: Preference of multiple Host headers.

首先,在同一个 Request 中出现多个 Host 本来就是非法的,而 ESET 和 Nginx 都允许这种情况出现。其次,面对多个 Host,二者选择的方式不一样,见下表:

Implementation	Preference	Request forwarding $\&$		
Implementation	for multiple Host	Host interpreting		
ESET	Last Host	原样转发		
Nginx	First Host			
RFC 2616	Reject			
RFC 7230	Reject	Absolute-URI 中的 Host 优先 为 Absolute-URI 新建一个 Host 字段 Host 字段其次		

Table 1: Case 1

Case 2 讨论如果 Request 中同时存在 Absolute-URI 和 Host 字段, 该如何解析和处理。

RFC 2616 An origin server that does differentiate resources based on the host requested MUST use the following rules for determining the requested resource on an  $\rm HTTP/1.1$  request:

- 1. If Request-URI is an absoluteURI, the host is part of the Request-URI. Any Host header field value in the request MUST be ignored.
- 2. If the Request-URI is not an absoluteURI, and the request includes a Host header field, the host is determined by the Host header field value.
- 3. If the host as determined by rule 1 or 2 is not a valid host on the server, the response MUST be a 400 (Bad Request) error message. (Page 25, 5.2, The Resource Identified by a Request)

# RFC 7230 有关如何解析 Host 和转发 Request

When a proxy receives a request with an absolute-form of request-target, the proxy MUST ignore the received Host header field (if any) and instead replace it with the host information of the request-target (Absolute-URI 中的 Host 信息优先). A proxy that forwards such a request MUST generate a new Host field-value based on the received request-target rather than forward the received Host field-value. (Page 44, 5.4, Host)

总结起来就是说:如果有 Absolute-URI,则取这里面的 Host, Host 字段中的值被忽略。如果没有 Absolute-URI,则以 Host 字段的值为准。否则,报错 400 Bad Request。

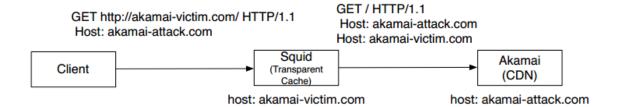


Figure 3: Absolute URI with Host headers.

Implementation		Prefer Absolute-URI			Preference	
_		vs. Prefer Host header		Request forwarding	for multiple	
/Specification		Preference	Consistency		Host	
			Optional	1.Generate a new		
	Transparent Cache	Absolute-URI		Host header		
				for Absolute-URI		
Squid				and select this one.	Prefer <b>first</b>	
				2.Forward		
				space-preceded		
				Host headers as-is		
Akamai	CDN	Host header	Optional		Prefer <b>first</b>	
Specification	RFC 2616	Absolute-URI	Not Specified		Reject	
Specification	RFC 7230	Absolute-URI	Must		Reject	

Table 2: Case 2

Case 3 讨论多 Host header,同时伴随前置空格 (preceding space)的情况。

RFC 7230 A field value might be preceded and/or followed by optional whitespace (OWS); a single SP preceding the field-value is preferred for consistent readability by humans. The field value does not include any leading or trailing whitespace: OWS occurring before the first non-whitespace octet of the field value or after the last non-whitespace octet of the field value ought to be excluded by parsers when extracting the field value from a header field. (Page 25, 3.2.4, Field Parsing) 隐约地说明 field value 最前头或最后头有空格是允许的!

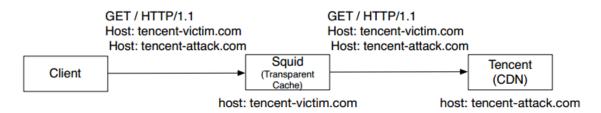


Figure 4: Multiple Host headers with preceding space.

Impleme	entation	Space-preceded Host	Other Space-preceded	Space-succeeded
/Specific	cation	as first Host header	Host header	Host header
	Transparent Cache	If no Host header	If no Host header	If no Host header
Squid		before:recognize	before:recognize	before:recognize
		Else: not recognize	Else: not recognize	Else: not recognize
Tencent	CDN	Recognize	Recognize	Recognize
Specification	RFC 2616	Reject	Line folding	Recognize
Specification	RFC 7230	Recognize	Recognize	Recognize

Table 3: Case 3-1, Recognize: accepting as valid host field, Reject: 400 Bad Requests, Reject: Not recognize: either ignoring or accepting as an unknown header field.

Implementa	tion/Specification	Preference for multiple Host	
Squid	Transparent Cache	Prefer first	
Tencent	CDN	Prefer last	
Specification	RFC 2616	Reject	
Specification	RFC 7230	Reject	

Table 4: Case 3-2

Case 4: 讨论 RFC Ambiguities 可能出现的地方

RFC 7230 A field value might be preceded and/or followed by optional whitespace (OWS) ...

A server that receives an obs-fold in a request message MUST either reject the message by sending a 400 (Bad Request) ... or replace each received obs-fold with one or more SP octets prior to interpreting the field value or forwarding the message downstream.(Page 25, 3.2.4, Field Parsing)

A proxy or gateway MUST either discard the message and replace it with a 502 (Bad Gateway) response or replace each received obs-fold with one or more SP octets prior to interpreting the field value or forwarding the message downstream. (Page 26, 3.2.4, Field Parsing)

# 4 Implementation

Intermediates	Source Code Website	Version	Category
			Transparent Cahce
Squid	http://www.squid-cache.org	3.5.12	Forward Proxy
			Reverse Proxy
			Server
Apache	https://httpd.apache.org		Forward Proxy
			Reverse Proxy

```
int HttpRequest::parseHeader(const char *parse_start, int len)
{
   const char *blk_start, *blk_end;
   if (!httpMsgIsolateHeaders(&parse_start, len, &blk_start, &blk_end))
   return 0;

   int result = header.parse(blk_start, blk_end);

   if (result)
   hdrCacheInit();
   return result;
}
```

squid/src/HttpRequest.cc line:339

```
int HttpHeader::parse(const char *header_start, const char *header_end)
{
    ...
    if ((e = HttpHeaderEntry::parse(field_start, field_end)) == NULL) //line 684
    ...
}
```

squid/src/HttpHeader.cc line:588

```
/* note: value_end == field_end */
     /* now we know we can parse it */
11
12
     /* is it a "known" field? */
13
14
     // Header ID
     http_hdr_type id = httpHeaderIdByName(field_start, name_len, Headers,
         HDR_ENUM_END);
     String name; // Header name
16
     String value; // Header value
17
     if (id < 0)
18
     id = HDR_OTHER;
19
     assert_eid(id);
20
21
     /* set field name */
22
     if (id == HDR_OTHER)
23
24
     name.limitInit(field_start, name_len);
25
26
     name = Headers [id].name;
27
     /* trim field value */
2.8
     while (value_start < field_end && xisspace(*value_start))</pre>
     ++value_start;
30
31
     while (value_start < field_end && xisspace(field_end[-1]))
32
     -field_end;
33
34
35
     /* set field value */
36
     value.limitInit(value_start, field_end - value_start);
38
     debugs(55, 9, "parsed HttpHeaderEntry: '" << name << ": " << value << "'");
39
40
      \begin{array}{lll} \textbf{return} & \textbf{new} & \textbf{HttpHeaderEntry(id} \;, \; \textbf{name.termedBuf()} \;, \; \textbf{value.termedBuf())} \;; \end{array} 
41
```

squid/src/HttpHeader.cc line:1620

```
/* Rewrite the URL in transparent or accelerator mode */
     /* NP: there are several cases to traverse here:
       - standard mode (forward proxy)
10
       - transparent mode (TPROXY)
11
       - transparent mode with failures
       - intercept mode (NAT)
       - intercept mode with failures
14
       - accelerator mode (reverse proxy)
15
       - internal URL
16
       - mixed combos of the above with internal URL
17
       - remote interception with PROXY protocol
       - remote reverse-proxy with PROXY protocol
2.0
     if (csd->transparent()) {
       /* intercept or transparent mode, properly working with no failures */
22
      prepareTransparentURL(csd, http, url, req_hdr);
23
24
     } else if (internalCheck(url)) {
       /* internal URL mode */
25
       /* prepend our name & port */
26
      http->uri = xstrdup(internalLocalUri(NULL, url));
27
      // We just re-wrote the URL. Must replace the Host: header.
2.8
      // But have not parsed there yet!! flag for local-only handling.
      http->flags.internal = true;
30
31
      } else if (csd->port->flags.accelSurrogate || csd->switchedToHttps()) {
32
       /* accelerator mode */
33
       prepareAcceleratedURL(csd\,,\ http\,,\ url\,,\ req\_hdr)\,;
34
35
36
  }
```

squid/src/client\_side.cc line:2152

```
15
       strlen (host);
       http->uri = (char *)xcalloc(url_sz, 1);
16
       \verb|snprintf(http->uri, url\_sz|, "\%s://\%s\%s", AnyP::UriScheme(conn->port->transport)|
17
            .protocol).c_str(), host, url);
       \label{eq:control_debugs} \mbox{(33, 5, "TRANSPARENT HOST REWRITE: '" << http->uri <<"'');}
18
19
20
     else
21
     {
       /* Put the local socket IP address as the hostname. */
22
       int url_sz = strlen(url) + 32 + Config.appendDomainLen;
23
       http->uri = (char *)xcalloc(url_sz, 1);
24
       http->getConn()->clientConnection->local.toHostStr(ipbuf,MAX_IPSTRLEN);
25
       {\tt snprintf(http-\!\!>\!uri\,,\,\,url\_sz\,,\,\,\,"\%s://\%s:\%d\%s"\,,}
26
       AnyP::UriScheme(http->getConn()->port->transport.protocol).c_str(),
       ipbuf, http->getConn()->clientConnection->local.port(), url);
28
       debugs(33, 5, "TRANSPARENT REWRITE: '" << http->uri << "'");
29
30
31
   }
```

# squid/src/client\_side.cc line:2110 prepareTransparentURL()

```
/* returns a pointer to a field-value of the first matching field-name */
char * mime_get_header(const char *mime, const char *name)
{
    return mime_get_header_field(mime, name, NULL);
}
```

# squid/src/mime\_header.cc line:89

```
* returns a pointer to a field-value of the first matching field-name where
   * field-value matches prefix if any
   char * mime_get_header_field(const char *mime, const char *name, const char *
        prefix)
   {
     LOCAL\_ARRAY(\begin{array}{c} char \end{array}, \begin{array}{c} header \end{array}, \begin{array}{c} GET\_HDR\_SZ) \end{array};
     const char *p = NULL;
     \begin{array}{ll} char & *q = NULL; \end{array}
     char got = 0;
     const int namelen = name ? strlen(name) : 0;
11
     const int preflen = prefix ? strlen(prefix) : 0;
     int 1;
      . . .
14
     for (p = mime; *p; p += strcspn(p, "\n\r")) {
15
        if (strcmp(p, "\r\n") = 0 \mid \mid strcmp(p, "\n") = 0)
16
```

```
17
         return NULL;
18
       //Squid表现: If no host before: recognize. Else not recognize.
19
       while (xisspace(*p)) //Space-preceded Host Host前方有空格的解析
20
21
         ++p;
22
23
       if (strncasecmp(p, name, namelen))
         continue;
24
       if (!xisspace(p[namelen]) && p[namelen] != ':')
25
         continue;
26
       l \, = \, strcspn \, (p \, , \, \, " \backslash n \backslash r \, ") \, + \, 1; \\
27
       if (1 > GET HDR SZ)
28
         1 = GET\_HDR\_SZ;
2.9
30
31
       xstrncpy(header, p, 1);
32
       q = header;
33
       q += namelen;
       if \ (*q = ':') \ \{
34
35
         ++q;
36
         got = 1;
37
       ///Squid表现: If no host before: reject. Else not recognize. 有矛盾?
39
       while (xisspace(*q)) { //Space-succeeded Host Host后方有空格的解析
40
         ++q;
41
         got = 1;
42
43
44
       if (got && prefix) {
45
         /* we could process list entries here if we had strcasestr(). */
46
         /* make sure we did not match a part of another field-value */
47
         got = !strncasecmp(q, prefix, preflen) \&\& !xisalpha(q[preflen]);
48
49
50
51
       if (got) {
         debugs(25, 5, "mime_get_header: returning '" << q << "'");
52
         return q;
       }
     }
55
     return NULL;
56
57
```

squid/src/mime\_header.cc line:22

# References

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