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Completely Encrypting RTP Header Extensions and Contributing Sources

Abstract

While the Secure Real-time Transport Protocol (SRTP) provides confidentiality for the contents of a media packet, a significant amount of metadata is left unprotected, including RTP header extensions and contributing sources (CSRCs). However, this data can be moderately sensitive in many applications. While there have been previous attempts to protect this data, they have had limited deployment, due to complexity as well as technical limitations.

This document updates RFC 3711, the SRTP specification, and defines Cryptex as a new mechanism that completely encrypts header extensions and CSRCs and uses simpler Session Description Protocol (SDP) signaling with the goal of facilitating deployment.

Status of This Memo

This is an Internet Standards Track document.

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Information about the current status of this document, any errata, and how to provide feedback on it may be obtained at https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc9335.

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Acknowledgements Authors' Addresses

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Statement

The Secure Real-time Transport Protocol (SRTP) [RFC3711] mechanism provides message authentication for the entire RTP packet but only encrypts the RTP payload. This has not historically been a problem, as much of the information carried in the header has minimal sensitivity (e.g., RTP timestamp); in addition, certain fields need

to remain as cleartext because they are used for key scheduling (e.g., RTP synchronization source (SSRC) and sequence number).

However, as noted in [RFC6904], the security requirements can be different for information carried in RTP header extensions, including the per-packet sound levels defined in [RFC6464] and [RFC6465], which are specifically noted as being sensitive in the Security Considerations sections of those RFCs.

In addition to the contents of the header extensions, there are now enough header extensions in active use that the header extension identifiers themselves can provide meaningful information in terms of determining the identity of the endpoint and/or application. Accordingly, these identifiers can be considered a fingerprinting issue.

Finally, the CSRCs included in RTP packets can also be sensitive, potentially allowing a network eavesdropper to determine who was speaking and when during an otherwise secure conference call.

1.2. Previous Solutions

Encryption of Header Extensions in SRTP [RFC6904] was proposed in 2013 as a solution to the problem of unprotected header extension values. However, it has not seen significant adoption and has a few technical shortcomings.

First, the mechanism is complicated. Since it allows encryption to be negotiated on a per-extension basis, a fair amount of signaling logic is required. And in the SRTP layer, a somewhat complex transform is required to allow only the selected header extension values to be encrypted. One of the most popular SRTP implementations had a significant bug in this area that was not detected for five years.

Second, the mechanism only protects the header extension values and not their identifiers or lengths. It also does not protect the CSRCs. As noted above, this leaves a fair amount of potentially sensitive information exposed.

Third, the mechanism bloats the header extension space. Because each extension must be offered in both unencrypted and encrypted forms, twice as many header extensions must be offered, which will in many cases push implementations past the 14-extension limit for the use of one-byte extension headers defined in [RFC8285]. Accordingly, in many cases, implementations will need to use two-byte headers, which are not supported well by some existing implementations.

Finally, the header extension bloat combined with the need for backward compatibility results in additional wire overhead. Because two-byte extension headers may not be handled well by existing implementations, one-byte extension identifiers will need to be used for the unencrypted (backward-compatible) forms, and two-byte for the encrypted forms. Thus, deployment of encryption for header extensions [RFC6904] will typically result in multiple extra bytes in each RTP packet, compared to the present situation.

1.3. Goals

From the previous analysis, the desired properties of a solution are:

- * Built on the existing SRTP framework [RFC3711] (simple to understand)
- * Built on the existing header extension framework [RFC8285] (simple to implement)
- * Protection of header extension identifiers, lengths, and values
- * Protection of CSRCs when present
- * Simple signaling
- * Simple crypto transform and SRTP interactions
- * Backward compatibility with unencrypted endpoints, if desired
- * Backward compatibility with existing RTP tooling

The last point deserves further discussion. While other possible solutions that would have encrypted more of the RTP header (e.g., the number of CSRCs) were considered, the inability to parse the resultant packets with current tools and a generally higher level of complexity outweighed the slight improvement in confidentiality in these solutions. Hence, a more pragmatic approach was taken to solve the problem described in Section 1.1.

2. Terminology

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in BCP 14 [RFC2119] [RFC8174] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

3. Design

This specification proposes a mechanism to negotiate encryption of all RTP header extensions (ids, lengths, and values) as well as CSRC values. It reuses the existing SRTP framework, is accordingly simple to implement, and is backward compatible with existing RTP packet parsing code, even when support for the mechanism has been negotiated.

Except when explicitly stated otherwise, Cryptex reuses all the framework procedures, transforms, and considerations described in [RFC3711].

4. SDP Considerations

Cryptex support is indicated via a new "a=cryptex" SDP attribute defined in this specification.

The new "a=cryptex" attribute is a property attribute as defined in Section 5.13 of [RFC8866]; it therefore takes no value and can be used at the session level or media level.

The presence of the "a=cryptex" attribute in the SDP (in either an offer or an answer) indicates that the endpoint is capable of receiving RTP packets encrypted with Cryptex, as defined below.

Once each peer has verified that the other party supports receiving RTP packets encrypted with Cryptex, senders can unilaterally decide whether or not to use the Cryptex mechanism on a per-packet basis.

If BUNDLE is in use as per [RFC9143] and the "a=cryptex" attribute is present for a media line, it MUST be present for all RTP-based "m=" sections belonging to the same bundle group. This ensures that the encrypted Media Identifier (MID) header extensions can be processed, allowing RTP streams to be associated with the correct "m=" section in each BUNDLE group as specified in Section 9.2 of [RFC9143]. When used with BUNDLE, this attribute is assigned to the TRANSPORT category [RFC8859].

Both endpoints can change the Cryptex support status by modifying the session as specified in Section 8 of [RFC3264]. Generating subsequent SDP offers and answers MUST use the same procedures for including the "a=cryptex" attribute as the ones on the initial offer and answer.

5. RTP Header Processing

A General Mechanism for RTP Header Extensions [RFC8285] defines two values for the "defined by profile" field for carrying one-byte and two-byte header extensions. In order to allow a receiver to determine if an incoming RTP packet is using the encryption scheme in this specification, two new values are defined:

- * OxCODE for the encrypted version of the one-byte header extensions (instead of OxBEDE).
- * OxC2DE for the encrypted versions of the two-byte header extensions (instead of 0x100).

In the case of using two-byte header extensions, the extension identifier with value 256 MUST NOT be negotiated, as the value of this identifier is meant to be contained in the "appbits" of the "defined by profile" field, which are not available when using the values above.

Note that as per [RFC8285], it is not possible to mix one-byte and two-byte headers on the same RTP packet. Mixing one-byte and two-byte headers on the same RTP stream requires negotiation of the "extmap-allow-mixed" SDP attribute as defined in Section 6 of [RFC8285].

Peers MAY negotiate both Cryptex and the Encryption of Header Extensions mechanism defined in [RFC6904] via SDP offer/answer as

described in Section 4, and if both mechanisms are supported, either one can be used for any given packet. However, if a packet is encrypted with Cryptex, it MUST NOT also use header extension encryption [RFC6904], and vice versa.

If one of the peers has advertised the ability to receive both Cryptex and header extensions encrypted as per [RFC6904] in the SDP exchange, it is RECOMMENDED that the other peer use Cryptex rather than the mechanism in [RFC6904] when sending RTP packets so that all the header extensions and CSRCS are encrypted. However, if there is a compelling reason to use the mechanism in [RFC6904] (e.g., a need for some header extensions to be sent in the clear so that so they are processable by RTP middleboxes), the other peer SHOULD use the mechanism in [RFC6904] instead.

5.1. Sending

When the mechanism defined by this specification has been negotiated, sending an RTP packet that has any CSRCs or contains any header extensions [RFC8285] follows the steps below. This mechanism MUST NOT be used with header extensions other than the variety described in [RFC8285].

If the RTP packet contains one-byte headers, the 16-bit RTP header extension tag MUST be set to 0xC0DE to indicate that the encryption has been applied and the one-byte framing is being used. If the RTP packet contains two-byte headers, the header extension tag MUST be set to 0xC2DE to indicate encryption has been applied and the two-byte framing is being used.

If the packet contains CSRCs but no header extensions, an empty extension block consisting of the 0xC0DE tag and a 16-bit length field set to zero (explicitly permitted by [RFC3550]) MUST be appended, and the X bit MUST be set to 1 to indicate an extension block is present. This is necessary to provide the receiver an indication that the CSRCs in the packet are encrypted.

The RTP packet MUST then be encrypted as described in Section 6.2 ("Encryption Procedure").

5.2. Receiving

When receiving an RTP packet that contains header extensions, the "defined by profile" field MUST be checked to ensure the payload is formatted according to this specification. If the field does not match one of the values defined above, the implementation MUST instead handle it according to the specification that defines that value.

Alternatively, if the implementation considers the use of this specification mandatory and the "defined by profile" field does not match one of the values defined above, it MUST stop the processing of the RTP packet and report an error for the RTP stream.

If the RTP packet passes this check, it is then decrypted as described in Section 6.3 ("Decryption Procedure") and passed to the

next layer to process the packet and its extensions. In the event that a zero-length extension block was added as indicated above, it can be left as is and will be processed normally.

6. Encryption and Decryption

6.1. Packet Structure

When this mechanism is active, the SRTP packet is protected as follows:

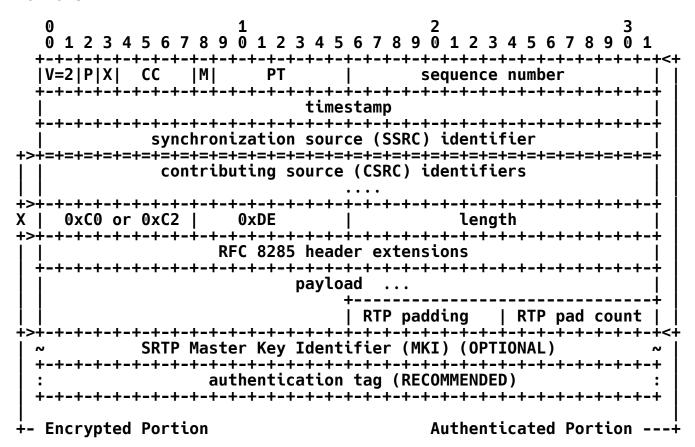


Figure 1: A Protected SRTP Packet

Note that, as required by [RFC8285], the 4 bytes at the start of the extension block are not encrypted.

Specifically, the Encrypted Portion MUST include any CSRC identifiers, any RTP header extension (except for the first 4 bytes), and the RTP payload.

6.2. Encryption Procedure

The encryption procedure is identical to that of [RFC3711] except for the Encrypted Portion of the SRTP packet. The plaintext input to the cipher is as follows:

Plaintext = CSRC identifiers (if used) || header extension data || RTP payload || RTP padding (if used) || RTP pad count (if used)

Here "header extension data" refers to the content of the RTP extension field, excluding the first four bytes (the extension header [RFC8285]). The first 4 * CSRC count (CC) bytes of the ciphertext are placed in the CSRC field of the RTP header. The remainder of the ciphertext is the RTP payload of the encrypted packet.

To minimize changes to surrounding code, the encryption mechanism can choose to replace a "defined by profile" field from [RFC8285] with its counterpart defined in Section 5 ("RTP Header Processing") and encrypt at the same time.

For Authenticated Encryption with Associated Data (AEAD) ciphers (e.g., AES-GCM), the 12-byte fixed header and the four-byte header extension header (the "defined by profile" field and the length) are considered additional authenticated data (AAD), even though they are non-contiguous in the packet if CSRCs are present.

Associated Data: fixed header || extension header (if X=1)

Here "fixed header" refers to the 12-byte fixed portion of the RTP header, and "extension header" refers to the four-byte extension header [RFC8285] ("defined by profile" and extension length).

Implementations can rearrange a packet so that the AAD and plaintext are contiguous by swapping the order of the extension header and the CSRC identifiers, resulting in an intermediate representation of the form shown in Figure 2. After encryption, the CSRCs (now encrypted) and extension header would need to be swapped back to their original positions. A similar operation can be done when decrypting to create contiguous ciphertext and AAD inputs.

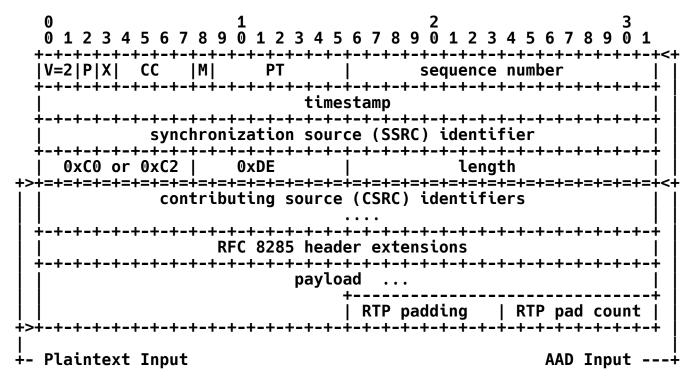


Figure 2: An RTP Packet Transformed to Make Cryptex Cipher Inputs Contiguous

Note that this intermediate representation is only displayed as reference for implementations and is not meant to be sent on the wire.

6.3. Decryption Procedure

The decryption procedure is identical to that of [RFC3711] except for the Encrypted Portion of the SRTP packet, which is as shown in the section above.

To minimize changes to surrounding code, the decryption mechanism can choose to replace the "defined by profile" field with its no-encryption counterpart from [RFC8285] and decrypt at the same time.

7. Backward Compatibility

This specification attempts to encrypt as much as possible without interfering with backward compatibility for systems that expect a certain structure from an RTPv2 packet, including systems that perform demultiplexing based on packet headers. Accordingly, the first two bytes of the RTP packet are not encrypted.

This specification also attempts to reuse the key scheduling from SRTP, which depends on the RTP packet sequence number and SSRC identifier. Accordingly, these values are also not encrypted.

8. Security Considerations

All security considerations in Section 9 of [RFC3711] are applicable to this specification; the exception is Section 9.4, because confidentiality of the RTP Header is the purpose of this specification.

The risks of using weak or NULL authentication with SRTP, described in Section 9.5 of [RFC3711], apply to encrypted header extensions as well.

This specification extends SRTP by expanding the Encrypted Portion of the RTP packet, as shown in Section 6.1 ("Packet Structure"). It does not change how SRTP authentication works in any way. Given that more of the packet is being encrypted than before, this is necessarily an improvement.

The RTP fields that are left unencrypted (see rationale above) are as follows:

- * RTP version
- * padding bit
- * extension bit
- * number of CSRCs
- * marker bit

- * payload type
- * sequence number
- * timestamp
- * SSRC identifier
- * number of header extensions [RFC8285]

These values contain a fixed set (i.e., one that won't be changed by extensions) of information that, at present, is observed to have low sensitivity. In the event any of these values need to be encrypted, SRTP is likely the wrong protocol to use and a fully encapsulating protocol such as DTLS is preferred (with its attendant per-packet overhead).

9. IANA Considerations

This document updates the "attribute-name (formerly "att-field")" subregistry of the "Session Description Protocol (SDP) Parameters" registry (see Section 8.2.4 of [RFC8866]). Specifically, it adds the SDP "a=cryptex" attribute for use at both the media level and the session level.

Contact name: IETF AVT Working Group or IESG if the AVT Working Group is closed

Contact email address: avt@ietf.org

Attribute name: cryptex

Attribute syntax: This attribute takes no values.

Attribute semantics: N/A

Attribute value: N/A

Usage level: session, media

Charset dependent: No

Purpose: The presence of this attribute in the SDP indicates that the endpoint is capable of receiving RTP packets encrypted with Cryptex as described in this document.

O/A procedures: SDP O/A procedures are described in Section 4 of this document.

Mux Category: TRANSPORT

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[RFC6904] Lennox, J., "Encryption of Header Extensions in the Secure
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DOI 10.17487/RFC6904, April 2013,
<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc6904>.

Appendix A. Test Vectors

All values are in hexadecimal and represented in network order (big endian).

A.1. AES-CTR

The following subsections list the test vectors for using Cryptex with AES-CTR as per [RFC3711].

Common values are organized as follows:

Rollover Counter: 00000000

Master Key: e1f97a0d3e018be0d64fa32c06de4139
Master Salt: 0ec675ad498afeebb6960b3aabe6

Crypto Suite: AES_CM_128_HMAC_SHA1_80

Session Key: c61e7a93744f39ee10734afe3ff7a087 Session Salt: 30cbbc08863d8c85d49db34a9ae1

Authentication Key: cebe321f6ff7716b6fd4ab49af256a156d38baa4

A.1.1. RTP Packet with One-Byte Header Extension

RTP Packet:

900f1235 decafbad cafebabe bede0001 51000200 abababab

abababab

abababab

abababab

Encrypted RTP Packet:

900f1235

decafbad cafebabe

c0de0001

eb923652

51c3e036

f8de27e9

```
c27ee3e0
       b4651d9f
       bc4218a7
       0244522f
       34a5
A.1.2.
        RTP Packet with Two-Byte Header Extension
   RTP Packet:
       900f1236
       decafbad
       cafebabe
       10000001
       05020002
       abababab
       abababab
       abababab
       abababab
   Encrypted RTP Packet:
       900f1236
       decafbad
       cafebabe
       c2de0001
       4ed9cc4e
       6a712b30
       96c5ca77
       339d4204
       ce0d7739
       6cab6958
       5fbce381
       94a5
A.1.3.
        RTP Packet with One-Byte Header Extension and CSRC Fields
   RTP Packet:
       920f1238
       decafbad
       cafebabe
       0001e240
       0000b26e
       bede0001
       51000200
       abababab
```

abababab abababab

920f1238 decafbad cafebabe

Encrypted RTP Packet:

```
8bb6e12b
5cff16dd
c0de0001
92838c8c
09e58393
e1de3a9a
74734d67
45671338
c3acf11d
a2df8423
bee0
```

A.1.4. RTP Packet with Two-Byte Header Extension and CSRC Fields

RTP Packet:

920f1239 decafbad cafebabe 0001e240 0000b26e 10000001 05020002 abababab abababab abababab

Encrypted RTP Packet:

920f1239 decafbad cafebabe f70e513e b90b9b25 c2de0001 bbed4848 faa64466 5f3d7f34 125914e9 f4d0ae92 3c6f479b 95a0f7b5 3133

A.1.5. RTP Packet with Empty One-Byte Header Extension and CSRC Fields

RTP Packet:

920f123a decafbad cafebabe 0001e240 0000b26e bede0000 abababab

```
abababab
abababab
abababab
```

Encrypted RTP Packet:

920f123a decafbad cafebabe 7130b6ab fe2ab0e3 c0de0000 e3d9f64b 25c9e74c b4cf8e43 fb92e378 1c2c0cea b6b3a499 a14c

A.1.6. RTP Packet with Empty Two-Byte Header Extension and CSRC Fields

RTP Packet:

920f123b decafbad cafebabe 0001e240 0000b26e 10000000 abababab abababab abababab

Encrypted RTP Packet:

920f123b decafbad cafebabe cbf24c12 4330e1c8 c2de0000 599dd45b c9d687b6 03e8b59d 771fd38e 88b170e0 cd31e125 eabe

A.2. AES-GCM

The following subsections list the test vectors for using Cryptex with AES-GCM as per [RFC7714].

Common values are organized as follows:

Rollover Counter: 00000000

Master Key: Master Salt: Crypto Suite: 000102030405060708090a0b0c0d0e0f

a0a1a2a3a4a5a6a7a8a9aaab

AEAD_AES_128_GCM

077c6143cb221bc355ff23d5f984a16e Session Key:

9af3e95364ebac9c99c5a7c4 Session Salt:

A.2.1. RTP Packet with One-Byte Header Extension

RTP Packet:

900f1235

decafbad

cafebabe

bede0001

51000200

abababab

abababab

abababab

abababab

Encrypted RTP Packet:

900f1235

decafbad

cafebabe

c0de0001

39972dc9

572c4d99

e8fc355d

e743fb2e

94f9d8ff

54e72f41

93bbc5c7

4ffab0fa

9fa0fbeb

A.2.2. RTP Packet with Two-Byte Header Extension

RTP Packet:

900f1236

decafbad

cafebabe

10000001

05020002

abababab

abababab

abababab

abababab

Encrypted RTP Packet:

900f1236

```
decafbad
       cafebabe
       c2de0001
       bb75a4c5
       45cd1f41
       3bdb7daa
       2b1e3263
       de313667
       c9632490
       81b35a65
       f5cb6c88
       b394235f
      RTP Packet with One-Byte Header Extension and CSRC Fields
A.2.3.
   RTP Packet:
       920f1238
       decafbad
```

Encrypted RTP Packet:

cafebabe 0001e240 0000b26e bede0001 51000200 abababab abababab abababab abababab

920f1238 decafbad cafebabe 63bbccc4 a7f695c4 c0de0001 8ad7c71f ac70a80c 92866b4c 6ba98546 ef913586 e95ffaaf fe956885 bb0647a8 bc094ac8

A.2.4. RTP Packet with Two-Byte Header Extension and CSRC Fields

RTP Packet:

920f1239 decafbad cafebabe 0001e240 0000b26e

```
10000001
05020002
abababab
abababab
abababab
```

Encrypted RTP Packet:

920f1239 decafbad cafebabe 3680524f 8d312b00 c2de0001 c78d1200 38422bc1 11a7187a 18246f98 0c059cc6 bc9df8b6 26394eca 344e4b05 d80fea83

A.2.5. RTP Packet with Empty One-Byte Header Extension and CSRC Fields

RTP Packet:

920f123a decafbad cafebabe 0001e240 0000b26e bede0000 abababab abababab abababab

Encrypted RTP Packet:

920f123a decafbad cafebabe 15b6bb43 37906fff c0de0000 b7b96453 7a2b03ab 7ba5389c e9331712 6b5d974d f30c6884 dcb651c5 e120c1da

A.2.6. RTP Packet with Empty Two-Byte Header Extension and CSRC Fields

RTP Packet:

920f123b decafbad cafebabe 0001e240 0000b26e 10000000 abababab abababab abababab

Encrypted RTP Packet:

920f123b decafbad cafebabe dcb38c9e 48bf95f4 c2de0000 61ee432c f9203170 76613258 d3ce4236 c06ac429 681ad084 13512dc9 8b5207d8

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