

Security in automobiles: vulnerability and protection of the on-board diagnostics port (OBD-II)

Michiel Willems

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Promotor:

Prof. dr. Bruno Crispo

Begeleiders:

Mahmoud Ammar
Hassan Janjua

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Contents

List of Figures and Tables	iii
List of Abbreviations and Symbols	v
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Motivation	1
1.2 Challenges	2
1.3 Context	3
1.4 Contributions	3
2 Background	5
2.1 Intra Vehicle Networks	5
2.1.1 Sub-Networks	5
2.1.2 Example: ABS	7
2.2 CAN	8
2.2.1 Brief History	8
2.2.2 Architecture	9
2.2.3 CAN Frames	9
2.2.4 Data Transmission	10
2.2.5 Message Arbitration	11
2.2.6 Layering	11
2.2.7 Security Issues	11
2.3 OBD-II	12
2.3.1 Design Goals	12
2.3.2 Brief History	13
2.3.3 DLC	14
2.3.4 PID's	14
2.3.5 Security Issues	15
3 Related work	17
3.1 OBD-II Access Control	17
3.1.1 Discussion	18
3.2 Other attack vectors	18
3.2.1 Indirect physical access	19
3.2.2 Short-range wireless access	19
3.2.3 Long-range wireless access	20
3.2.4 Future Systems	21

3.3	Internal Vehicle Security	22
3.3.1	VulCAN	23
3.3.2	CANCrypt	24
3.3.3	VatiCAN	24
4	Problem Statement	25
4.1	Current State	25
4.1.1	Example attacks	25
4.1.2	Impact	27
4.2	Attacker model	27
4.2.1	Informal Model	28
4.2.2	Formal Model	30
5	Preliminaries	33
5.1	ECU Microcontrollers	33
5.2	Role-Base Access Control	34
5.3	Public Key Cryptography	35
5.4	Key Exchange	36
5.5	Authentication	36
5.5.1	Hash functions	37
5.5.2	Digital Signatures	37
5.5.3	MAC's	37
5.6	Authenticated Key Agreement	38
5.7	Security Level	38
5.8	Chosen Security Systems	38
5.8.1	Elliptic Curve Cryptography	38
5.8.2	SHA	41
5.8.3	HMAC	42
	Bibliography	43

List of Figures and Tables

List of Figures

2.1	Typical intra vehicle network infrastructure [1]	6
2.2	An overview of different network technologies and their characteristics [44].	7
2.3	Mapping of traffic types to network technologies [44].	8
2.4	Type A female connector [56]	14
2.5	Type B female connector [56]	14
4.1	OBD-II System Topography	26
4.2	Attacker with physical access.	28
4.3	Attacker hijacking another OBD-II session.	29
5.1	An elliptic curve. [17]	40
5.2	ECDHE_ECDSA	41

List of Tables

2.1	base frame format [48]	10
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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

Abbreviations

ACK	Acknowledgement
AK	Authenticated Key Agreement
AKC	Authenticated Key Agreement with key Conformation
AI	Artificial Intelligence
API	Application Programming Interface
CAN	Controller Area Network
CAR	California Air Resources Board
CHAP	Challenge-Handshake Authentication Protocol
CLC	Cyclic Redundancy Check
CPU	Central Processing Unit
DAC	Discretionary Access Control
DLC	Data Link Connector
DLC	Date Length Code
DoS	Denial of Service
DTC	Diagnostic Trouble Code
ENISA	European Union Agency For Network And Information Security
ECC	Elliptic Curve Cryptography
ECDH	Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman
ECDHE	Ephemeral Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman
ECDLP	Elliptic Curve Discrete Logarithm Problem
ECDSA	Elliptic Curve Digital Signature algorithm
ECU	Electronic Control Unit
EOF	End Of Frame
HMAC	Hash-Based Message Authentication code
Hz	Hertz
ID	Identifier
IDE	Identifier Extension Bit
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
LIDAR	Light Detection And Ranging
LIN	Local Interconnect Network
MAC	Mandatory Acces Control
MAC	Message Authentication Code
MOST	Media Oriented Systems Transport
PATS	Passive Anti-Theft System
RAM	Random Access Memory
RBAC	Role-Based Access Control
RKE	Remote Keyless Entry

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivation

The automotive industry is rapidly evolving over the years, since the introduction of the Ford Model T in 1917. Although the main purpose of these machines remains the same (e.g. getting someone from point A to B swiftly), the relative comfort, speed, safety, and efficiency has been improved dramatically. Primarily due to the introduction of electronic computers into the vehicle's architecture. The modern vehicle has been appropriately called a "Computer on wheels" [25], since each one contains up to 100 millions lines of code, spread out over tens of Electronic Control Units (ECUs) [36]. Each ECU is an embedded computer that is designed to perform a specific function (e.g. braking, opening the door, speed control, etc.). In addition to having this wide variety of embedded devices, a modern vehicle will also employ a data bus that allows all ECU's inside a vehicle to communicate with each other. There are multiple standards that are employed even within a single vehicle, but the CAN (Controller Area Network) protocol is the most widely used one [45], Hence we focus on it in this paper.

Alongside internal communication networks, many modern models of vehicles also support some way of performing external communications. This can range from vehicle-to-infrastructure (V2I) (e.g. wireless gas payment at a gas station, wireless diagnostics at a repair shop or even virtual traffic lights), vehicle-to-vehicle communications (V2V) (e.g. automatically following another vehicle), vehicle-to-network (V2N) (connecting your vehicle to an already existing network, like the cellular communications network for example) and vehicle-to-pedestrian (V2P) [23][40][3]. All of the extended functionality introduced greatly improves the vehicle's flexibility, comfort and safety. This however also makes them increasingly vulnerable to a wide variety of cyber attacks through the various interfaces that can communicate with the external world, exemplified by abusing remote keyless entry (RKE) systems to gain access to a car [16][29], remotely causing a vehicle to think it is having a tire problem by interfering with the tire pressure monitoring system (TPMS) [29] or even compromising a vehicle through the Bluetooth interface [26][13]. The On-board

Diagnostics (OBD-II) port is one of the potential attack vectors. OBD-II systems are widely deployed in auto-mobiles as a way of getting diagnostics information from the vehicle. OBD-II introduces a physical interface into the vehicle (usually under the steering wheel) called the Data Link Connector (DLC). This physical interface allows full access to the internal network. It has been repeatedly shown [29][61][30][28] that a set of messages or signals could be injected on a car's CAN bus to control key components (e.g. lights, locks, brakes, and engine) as well as injecting code into key ECUs. The focus of this thesis will be to try and mitigate this kind of illegal access by introducing access control to the OBD-II interface.

1.2 Challenges

The main challenge of this research topic is to introduce a solution that ports well to the kind of hardware that is found in modern vehicles. Introducing new components into the internal vehicle network would surely simplify things (if this were the case the solution could consist of introducing a small component that acts as a firewall for the OBD-II interface). However this implies that any potential real-world implementation requires the installation of this component into millions of currently in-use vehicles, which (being a very costly endeavour) would deter any manufacturers from doing so. Therefore, a software-based approach is required. It is easy to deploy such a solution on the currently in-use cars without any hardware modification or excessive expenses. However, This approach introduces it's own challenges, namely the limitations of ECU micro controllers. Indeed, any solution that isn't portable to the network (because of memory limitations, limited processing power, incompatible architectures, etc.) is rendered useless. It is worth noting that the solution proposed here is not intended to (and will not) protect against attacks using other attack vectors (e.g. TPMS, Bluetooth, etc.) as well as physical attacks. Indeed any attacker gaining physical access to the vehicle has to ability to directly interface with the vehicle network (e.g. by physically tapping into the CAN bus). Typically only the owner of the vehicle has this privilege, and it is safe to assume this person is reluctant to compromise the safety of his or her own vehicle. unauthorised physical access should be mitigated by different means (e.g. car alarms, safe RKE systems, the authorities, etc.). The main challenges of this thesis paper are summarized as follows:

- **portability:** The solution should port well to existing vehicle networks.
- **Security:** The solution should be sufficiently secure according to current computer safety standards.
- **Speed:** The solution should not impede the operation of other processes running on the same network.

1.3 Context

As mentioned before, the goal of this paper is to secure the OBD-II interface in modern cars. Before we move on it is interesting to take a look at some other issues regarding internal vehicle networks, as well as some proposed solutions to these problems. Aside from the OBD-II interface there are numerous points of entry to the internal vehicle network, both physical (Breaking into the vehicle and directly connecting to the network) or remote (Bluetooth, TPMS or Tire Pressure Monitoring System, Radio system, etc.) [29]. Take Bluetooth for example: many cars include Bluetooth functionality to allow users to connect their phones and play music. The Bluetooth protocol has a large protocol-stack and has been known to have problems in the past [29] like discoverability, bluejacking, bluesnarfing and backdoor attacks [15]. By exploiting the vulnerabilities of a car's Bluetooth interface, a malicious agent is able to interfere with the internal network remotely (using his/her mobile phone). Another problem is that it is easy for a phone to get compromised (visiting a malicious website) [61]. This problem would be solved by using a more secure version that does not contain the aforementioned vulnerabilities.

Another approach is to secure the protocol that is used for communication within the network. As mentioned before, the CAN protocol is probably the most popular one since almost every new passenger car manufactured in Europe is equipped with at least one CAN network [21]. CAN in itself is a simple bus protocol that allows nodes on a network to send and receive messages. However CAN is a low-level protocol and does not natively support any security features. A number of secure CAN variations have been proposed: Leia [37], VatiCAN [45], VulCAN [32] and CANopen [35].

1.4 Contributions

The contribution of this thesis can be summarized as follows:

- Overcoming the security limitation identified by the unauthorised access to the vehicle CAN network via the OBD-II port by designing and developing a role-based access control model based on public key cryptography.
- Advancing the security of OBD-II ports by bringing it closer to reality through a proper implementation on CAN-enabled resource-constrained ECU that is used in various automotive models. Furthermore, we evaluate and show that our approach is secure, feasible and lightweight in terms of memory footprint and runtime overhead.

Chapter 2

Background

”Today, CAN has established itself worldwide as the backbone for the networking of embedded systems, and this not only in automotive technology”

Dr. Siegfried Dais, Prof. Dr. Uwe Kiencke, Martin Litschel

2.1 Intra Vehicle Networks

Today’s automobiles contain a series of different electronic components networked together to be responsible for monitoring and controlling the state of the vehicle. Each component can communicate with all other components on the same sub-network. The safety of the vehicle relies on near real time communication between these various ECUs. While communicating with each other, ECU’s are responsible for predicting crashes, detecting skids, performing anti-lock braking (ABS), etc. [61]. There are only a couple of operations that are performed without using computer control (with the parking brake and steering being the last holdouts) [13].

2.1.1 Sub-Networks

In most real architectures a series of domains are defined that correspond to different features of the car, often corresponding to dedicated sub-networks (i.e. Powertrain Control Module) within a single vehicle. The European Union Agency For Network And Information Security (ENISA) distinguishes between 6 different domains[1], as is illustrated in figure 2.1.1. These are:

- **Powertrain Control Module (PCM):** Consists of engine control Units that control a set of actuators on the internal combustion engine, as well as transmission control units that change the gears to ensure optimal engine performance.

2. BACKGROUND

- **Chassis Control:** Ensures control of the vehicle with regard to it's surroundings (e.g. steering, airbag, braking, etc.)
- **Body Control:** Compromises all ECU's that perform functions within the context of the passenger's compartment and/or trunk (e.g. dashboard, doors, windows and seatbelt, etc.).
- **Infotainment Control:** This domain includes navigational services (i.e. GPS), communications (i.e. Cellular) and entertainment (i.e. Radio).
- **Communications Control:** Unlike all previous modules this one does not compromise a single sub-network but rather a series of communication features offered by a telematics control unit (e.g. Wifi).
- **Diagnostic and Maintenance systems** This concerns all the various diagnostics and maintenance solutions that can be connected to the OBD-II port.

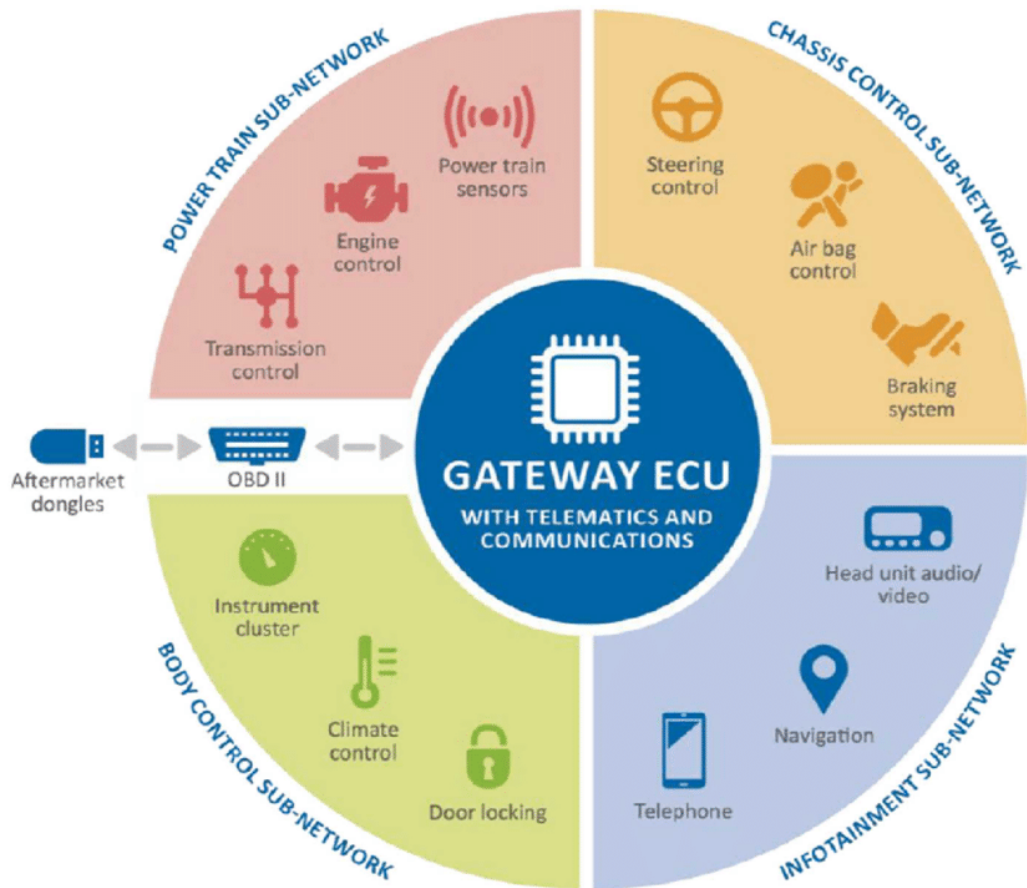


FIGURE 2.1: Typical intra vehicle network infrastructure [1]

On top of their functional differences, these sub-networks often implement different network communications protocols. This means that there are multiple communication standards that are employed even within a single vehicle. The most common ones are: Controller Area Network (CAN), Local Interconnect Network (LIN), Media Oriented Systems Transport (MOST), FlexRay and LVDS[44]. Each of these protocols specifies how messages are exchanged within the appropriate sub-network and are chosen to best service the needs of a specific domain, as is illustrated in figure 2.1.1 and 2.1.1.

Protocol	Bitrate	Medium	Protocol
LIN	19.2 Kbps	Single Wire	Serial
CAN	1 Mbps	Twisted Pair	CSMA/CR
FlexRay	20 Mbps	Twisted Pair/Optical Fibre	TDMA
MOST	150 Mbps	Optical Fibre	TDMA
LVDS	655 Mbps	Twisted Pair	Serial/Parallel

FIGURE 2.2: An overview of different network technologies and their characteristics [44].

A critical component in these types of networks (the presence of sub-networks with different communication protocols) is the Gateway ECU. This component performs a frame or signal mapping function between two communication systems, thereby allowing ECU's on different sub-networks using distinct communication protocols to exchange messages nonetheless. On top of acting as an intermediate between the different sub-networks of the vehicle, the Gateway also acts as an entry point for OBD-II messages. Any message sent via the OBD-II DLC will be translated and forwarded by the Gateway to the appropriate sub-network. It comes as no surprise that this component will play a crucial role when introducing access control to the OBD-II interface.

2.1.2 Example: ABS

Let's take a closer look at ABS to get a sense of how the intra vehicle network operates. ABS was designed to keep the wheels from locking up during braking. It consists of 3 main components: wheel speed sensors, a pump and a controller. Here's how it works[46]:

- The controller monitors the wheel speed sensors constantly (So each speed sensor periodically sends a message to the Controller).
- The controller will recognize a wheel locking whenever it detects a rapid deceleration.

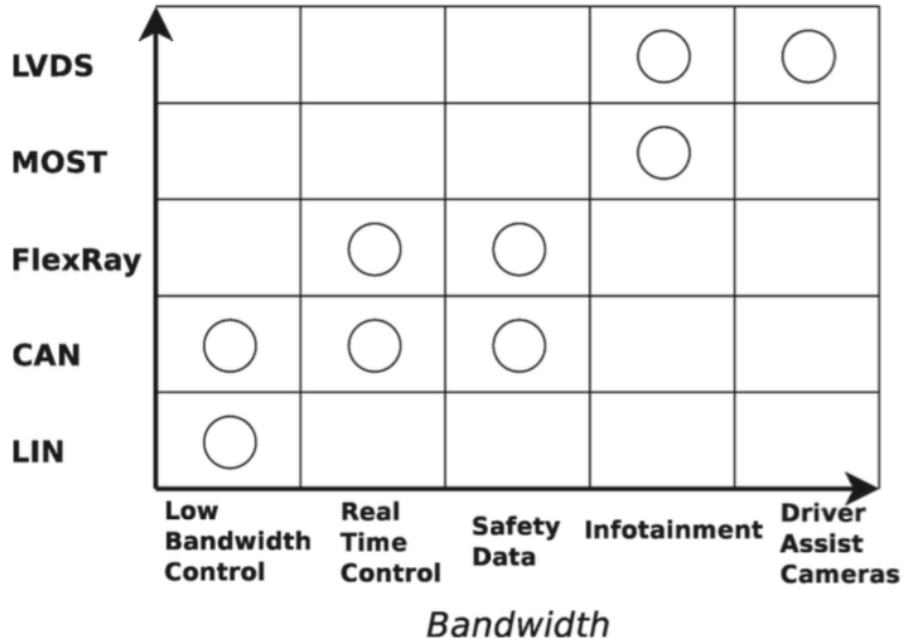


FIGURE 2.3: Mapping of traffic types to network technologies [44].

- Whenever it does detect a wheel locking up, it will use the pump (again by sending a message over the network) to regulate the pressure on the brake of that particular wheel, thereby keeping it from locking up.

2.2 CAN

The CAN protocol has become a ubiquitous part of the automotive industry. In the context of internal vehicle networks, CAN messages have multiple purposes: First, there are informative messages that are designed to transmit data from and to ECU's (e.g. the Anti-Lock System (ABS) broadcasting the speed of each wheel). Second, there are action messages that are designed to request another ECU to perform an action (e.g. adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) module requesting the brakes to be applied). Third, there are the diagnostic messages defined by the OBD-II protocol. [30] Naturally the last type of message is the focus of this paper. The following paragraphs are dedicated to the CAN protocol.

2.2.1 Brief History

The history of CAN starts in 1983 when a couple of engineers at Bosch (soon aided by engineers from Mercedes-Benz and Intel) start developing a new serial bus system for use in the automobile industry. It wasn't long before CAN was officially introduced

at the SAE congress in Detroit as: 'Automotive Serial Controller Area Network'. The main characteristics of this protocol were:

- An arbitration method that allows bus access to the message with the highest priority without delays.
- No master CAN node that is in charge of the bus.
- Transmitted messages are identified by their content, not by their destination or origin.
- This identification also determines the priority of the message within the network.

It didn't take long before the first CAN controller chips were developed in 1987 (by Intel and Philips respectively) and the first official CAN specifications were standardised in the 90's, effectively paving the way for the CAN protocol to become an industry staple as it is today. To this day Bosch has been making sure that all CAN chips comply with their proposed standards in order to avoid incompatible implementations. ¹.

2.2.2 Architecture

A typical CAN network consists of a series of nodes (with a minimal of 2 in order for the network to be functional) connected by a two-wire bus. It is important to note that there are 2 physical CAN specifications: high speed CAN (see [22]) and low speed (or fault tolerant) CAN (see [2]). Every CAN node consists of:

- CPU: effectively the 'brain' of the node, deciding what messages are sent and taking the appropriate course of action whenever a message is received.
- Controller: in charge of reading and writing bits to and from the CAN bus.
- Transceiver: acts as an intermediate between the bus and the controller, thereby translating between different signal levels.

This architecture specifies the minimum requirements of a CAN node. More often than not these nodes will include other components (e.g. sensors, actuators) that are connected to the CPU. It should be clear from this specification that this architecture applies to any common vehicle network (e.g. ECU's act as CAN nodes).

2.2.3 CAN Frames

Since CAN is a message based protocol, it facilitates communication by transmitting short bursts of data called CAN frames. There are four different types of CAN frames:

¹ For a comprehensive history of the CAN protocol confer [21]

2. BACKGROUND

name	size (bits)	purpose
start-of-frame	1	Denote start of transmission
identifier (ID)	11	Unique identifier + determines priority
remote transmission request (RTR)	1	must be 1 for remote frames
identifier extension bit (IDE)	1	must be 1 for extended frames
reserved bit	1	reserved for future use
data length code (DLC)	4	length of data field
data field	64	data to be transmitted
cyclic redundancy check (CLC)	15	check for errors ²
CRC delimiter	1	must be 1
acknowledgement slot (ACK)	1	used for message acknowledgement
ACK delimiter	1	must be 1
end-of-frame (EOF)	7	must be 1

TABLE 2.1: base frame format [48]

- Data frame: used to transmit data with a specific identifier.
- Remote frame: used to request the transmission of data with a specific identifier.
- Error frame: transmitted whenever a node detects an error on the bus.
- Overload frame: transmitted by a node to include a delay between data or remote frame.

There are 2 frame formats: base frame format and the extended frame format. The only difference being that the extended frame format uses a 29 identifier bits and the base frame format only uses 11. Table 2.1 lists all the fields of a base format data frame. The extended frame format is the same except for an additional identifier field (18 bits) right after the identifier extension bit (IDE) field.

2.2.4 Data Transmission

The operation of the CAN protocol is pretty straightforward: a node transmits a message with a specific ID on the bus. Any node that is connected to the same bus is able to receive the message (broadcast), but only the nodes that are listening for this specific ID will take action. It is worth noting that the ID is used to identify the content, not the sender or receiver. As a matter of fact CAN does not provide any way of authenticating the sender or receiver, which results in various security related difficulties (see ??) . Aside from identifying the content, this ID is also used to solve the issue of message arbitration. CAN is a carrier sense multiple access protocol, whereby each nodes observes the bus before transmitting data on it, if it detects that

² A cyclic redundancy check is a way of detecting accidental changes to transmitted data (e.g. due to noise, interference, etc). For more information on cyclic redundancy checking see [51].

the bus is in use it waits for some time before trying again. This does not prevent nodes from starting a data transfer at the same time, this is where bit wise message arbitration provides a solution. [4].

2.2.5 Message Arbitration

Whenever 2 (or more) nodes initiate a transmission on the bus at the same time, bit wise message arbitration is performed. Every bit of the message ID can be either 1 or 0. The CAN specifications use the term dominant (logical 0) and recessive (logical 1). These terms originate from the fact that whenever more than one bit is simultaneously written to the bus, and one of these is dominant, the dominant bit 'wins', meaning a logical 0 will be seen on the bus. Whenever a node transmits a logical 1 but sees a logical 0, it realizes that there is a contention and re-queues its message for later transmission. Since the identifier is transmitted at the start of the CAN frame, the node with the numerically lowest identifier transmits more zeros at the start of the frame, and that is the node that wins the arbitration. Concisely put we can say that messages with lower ID's have priority over messages with higher ID's. The decision to identify messages by their content (instead of their sender or receiver) is motivated by the fact that certain very important types of messages (e.g. errors) can be given a very low id, thereby ensuring they are less prone to be delayed. This approach does introduce some issues when it comes to security (see ??).

2.2.6 Layering

In line with most networking protocols, it is common practice to decompose them into different abstract layers. This is done to simplify the design and make modularisation easier [57]. In the case of CAN the layers are:

- **Application layer:** OBD-II, CANOpen, VulCAN etc.
- **Object layer:** message filtering and status handling.
- **Transfer layer:** error detection, message arbitration, bit timing, etc.
- **Physical layer:** signal voltages, pin-out configuration, etc.

2.2.7 Security Issues

The CAN protocol has a number of inherent vulnerabilities that are common to any implementation. The most obvious and important ones are:

- **Broadcast nature:** CAN frames are both physically and logically (no destination address) broadcasted on the network. This means that a malicious node on the bus can snoop on all communications or even worse: send packets to any other node on the network [13].

- **No authentication:** CAN frames do not have source identifier fields, so there is no way for any node to be aware of the source of any messages it receives. This means that any compromised component (or any other form of unsanctioned access to the CAN bus for that matter) can inject arbitrary messages. Whereas the system has no way of knowing these messages were not sent by the appropriate component [13][11].
- **No encryption:** We've mentioned that speed and timing are deemed more important to the safety and performance of the vehicle than data security. A clear result of this is the decision to omit any encryption capabilities. This is because the limited computational power of ECU's makes it difficult to implement robust cryptographic algorithms. [11].
- **Susceptibility to Denial of Service (DoS):** This problem arises mainly from the protocol's message arbitration method. Any malicious node can effectively spam the bus with high priority messages (only zeroes as ID) causing all other nodes to back off (no protection against "babbling idiots"[36])[13].
- **Not Byzantine fault tolerant:** In most distributed systems, malicious attacks and software errors can cause a node to exhibit Byzantine (i.e. arbitrary) behaviour[12]. Because of the distributed nature of any CAN system, there is imperfect information on whether a component has failed (or has been compromised by attack) or not. This could result in situations where entire system services fail since a common consensus cannot be reached[47]. ³.

For more information on the CAN protocol see [22] and [2].

2.3 OBD-II

2.3.1 Design Goals

OBD-II (On Board Diagnostics) is a specification that was introduced to allow for self diagnostic and reporting functionality for ECU's inside a vehicle, and has been mandatory in every car produced in the united states since 1996. [56]. It allows users (testers, developers, repairmen, etc) to query ECU's about diagnostics information in order to perform a detailed analysis of the vehicles internal systems. Specifically the goals of OBD-II upon introduction were:

- **Standardisation:** information is communicated in a standardized format to allow for 1 tool to be used on many vehicles.
- **Certification:** Every vehicle manufacturer required to submit certification application for review and approval, which includes a detailed description of how the OBD-II protocol was implemented.
- **Help lowering emissions** by identifying emission controls in need of repair.

³ For more information on Byzantine faults, and how it is tolerated in a system see [12] and [47].

The system can also be very useful in a number of other situations: A repairman looking for a specific component that is to be repaired, an employee at the factory testing all components before the vehicle is ready to be sold, a policeman analysing a vehicle after a crash to determine what caused the accident, a software developer testing the operation of a newly developed ECU, etc.

2.3.2 Brief History

There were a lot of different proprietary diagnostics systems introduced over the years, before a standard arrived with the introduction of OBD-II. This brief history cited from [43] does a decent job of concisely explaining how OBD-II came to be:

The origins of OBD-II actually date back to 1982 in California, when the California Air Resources Board (ARB) began developing regulations that would require all vehicles sold in that state starting in 1988 to have an onboard diagnostic system to detect emission failures. The original onboard diagnostic system (which has since become known as OBD-I) was relatively simple and only monitored the oxygen sensor, exhaust gas circulation system, fuel delivery system and engine control module.

OBD-I was a step in the right direction, but lacked any requirement for standardization between different makes and models of vehicles. You still had to have different adapters to work on different vehicles, and some systems could only be accessed with costly "dealer" scan tools. So when ARB set about to develop standards for the current OBDII system, standardization was a priority: a standardized 16-pin data link connector (DLC) with specific pins assigned specific functions, standardized electronic protocols, standardized diagnostic trouble codes (DTCs), and standardized terminology.

Another limitation of OBD-I was that it couldn't detect certain kinds of problems such as a dead catalytic converter or one that had been removed. Nor could it detect ignition misfires or evaporative emission problems. Furthermore, OBD-I systems would only illuminate the MIL light after a failure had occurred. It had no way of monitoring progressive deterioration of emissions-related components. So it became apparent that a more sophisticated system would be required. The California Air Resources Board eventually developed standards for the next generation OBD system, which were proposed in 1989 and became known as OBD-II. The new standards required a phase-in starting in 1994. The auto makers were given until the 1996 model year to complete the phase-in for their California vehicles.

Similar standards were incorporated into the federal Clean Air Act in 1990 which also required all 49-state vehicles to be OBD-II equipped by 1996 – with one loophole. The OBD-II systems would not have to be

fully compliant until 1999. So some 1996 OBD-II systems may lack one of the features normally required to meet the OBD-II specs, such as the evaporative emissions purge test.

2.3.3 DLC

In order to allow a user to communicate with the vehicle's internal network, OBD-II introduces the data link connector (DLC). The DLC is a 16-pin hardware interface (although only 9 pins are specified by the standard) that is generally found close to the steering wheel (by law it is required to be installed within 0.61 m of the steering wheel) [56]. There are 2 basic types of connectors: Type A as seen in figure 2.3.3 (using a 12V power supply) and Type B as seen in figure 2.3.3 (using a 24V power supply). the design of the two connector types prevents the insertion of a type A male plug into a type B female socket.

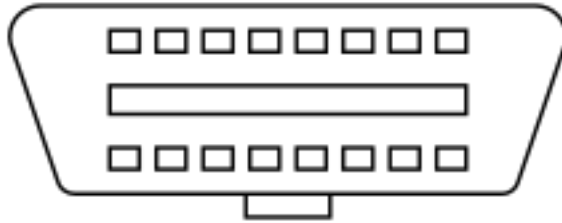


FIGURE 2.4: Type A female connector [56]

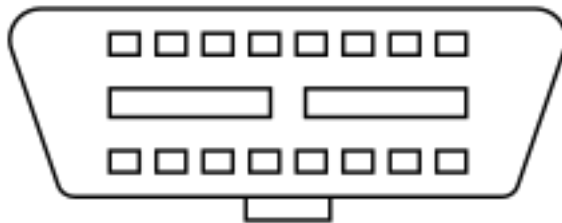


FIGURE 2.5: Type B female connector [56]

2.3.4 PID's

OBD-II introduces parameter PID's, which are codes used to identify and query specific data. The protocol is designed to work with multiple signalling protocols (the messaging protocol that is used to request and receive data from the network) but the CAN protocol is mostly implemented (Since 2008 all new vehicles sold in the us implement this signalling protocol[42]).

There are multiple ways for a user to interact with this interface:

- Standard Diagnostic scanning tool: a dedicated device that consists of a small hand-held module (equipped with a small screen and some buttons) connected to a male DLC-connector (The DLC inside the vehicle is always female).
- An advanced Diagnostic scanning tool that includes a DLC-connector with wifi/Bluetooth compatibility, allowing for remote diagnostics using a smart-phone.
- A DLC-connector with a usb adapter allowing access via dedicated software on a pc. Since 2014 all new cars in the US support the SAE J2534 "PassThru" standard, which is a Windows API (Application Programming Interface) that provides a standard way to communicate with a car's internal buses [13].⁴
- A data logger, which is designed to capture real-time data while the vehicle is in operation.

Typically the OBD-II is used like this (CAN as signalling protocol): First, the user enters the PID of the data he/she wants to query into a diagnostic tool. Second, this data is packaged in a CAN frame and sent on the CAN-bus. Third, the ECU that is responsible for the data identified by the PID in the message recognizes it as it's own, and transmits a CAN frame containing the requested data. Fourth, the diagnostic tool recognizes the response and displays the data to the user [55]. Aside from this, the OBD-II port can then be used to upgrade the ECU's firmware or to perform a myriad of diagnostic tasks.

2.3.5 Security Issues

It is a well-known fact that the automotive industry has always considered safety a critical engineering concern (especially since the public awareness around lethal accidents has only increased over the years). Unfortunately it is unclear whether developers (especially concerning the internal network) have considered the security in their design. However it seems this is not the case because of three reasons. First, there is no inherent support for addressing, encryption or authentication [30]. Second, most of the networks and ECU's were designed when access to the bus required physical access to the vehicle, therefore security was not a primary concern. Third, speed and timing are deemed more important to the safety and performance of the vehicle than data security [25]. This vulnerability is worsened by the fact that the attack surface for modern automobiles is growing swiftly as more sophisticated services and communications features are incorporated into vehicles [13]. The OBD-II specification is one of these since the interface it introduces provides direct access to the internal vehicle network. This allows malicious agents to easily construct and insert CAN messages to alter the vehicle's behaviour, as has been frequently demonstrated by Charlie Miller and Chris Valasek's exploits [29][30][28]. The goal of this research paper is to design a solution that prevents malicious agents from

⁴ For more information on SAE J2534, see the full API reference at: https://tunertools.com/prodimages/DrewTech/Manuals/PassThru_API-1.pdf

2. BACKGROUND

mounting attacks via the OBD-II interface, while still allowing for the system (i.e. performing diagnostics and maintenance) to function properly. This problem will be more suitably defined in the next chapter, where the problem statement is presented.

Chapter 3

Related work

Before moving on to our proposed solution let's take a look at some papers that are relevant to this subject. A lot of these, while not really tackling the same problem as proposed here, were a vital influence on this paper. A closer look at the contributions they provided is definitely in order. First, we discuss a paper that attempts to meet one of the challenges of this paper, namely by introducing access control to the OBD-II interface. Second, some of the possible attack vectors that haven't been discussed so far are introduced, as well as the papers that surveyed them. Third, a summary is made of different proposed application layer CAN protocols that were designed to remedy CAN's inherent security issues. Fourth, another summary of security solutions is presented, but this time regarding external instead of internal vehicle security. Last, we mention some proposed security frameworks and assurance levels that were proposed for the automobile industry.

3.1 OBD-II Access Control

The paper discussed here (see [61]) is relevant since it, like this paper does, states that the OBD-II interface in modern cars exposes the internal system to a myriad of different attacks (see ?? for some examples). On top of sharing this insight, the paper also proposes to improve on a solution that was deemed insufficiently secure (the seed key algorithm), as well as implementing them in a small demo. These solutions will be discussed next.

Seed key algorithm The seed key algorithm (like the name implies) applies a secret key value to calculate the response key from a randomly generated seed. Only the person with the correct secret key can gain access to the diagnostic service of a specific ECU. The idea is that a dedicated and trusted device would be distributed, this device would contain the secret key, and allow authenticated diagnostic sessions with the ECU's inside the vehicle. This solution was stipulated by another paper (see [6]) and has already been implemented in a lot of vehicles (see ??, diagnostic session). The problem with this algorithm is the fact the same ECU in different cars will have the same secret key. Another problem is that the secret key material

is often stored in unprotected memory. If enough keys are made public this would undermine the security of the entire algorithm.

Two-Way authentication method This algorithm is an extension of the seed-key algorithm. In addition to requiring possession of the secret key, a message will be sent to the client of the vehicle whenever access is requested (Cellular or via Internet). Without acknowledgement from the user the seed is dropped and access is denied. The above process adds a layer of safety as a result of keeping the client informed at every stage.

Timer Method The timer method is again an extension of the Two-Way authentication method. It Exploits the time brute force methods and other algorithms take to crack a 16-bit long seed key, as well as giving more autonomy the car owner by giving the global seed directly to the client, who in turn must enter the key to complete the authentication process. As soon as a security access request is sent by the tester, the timer will be started. As soon as the timer runs out, a message or a notification alert is sent to the client informing about the malicious activity, as well as aborting the authentication process.

3.1.1 Discussion

The two extensions offered by this paper do not actually help prevent most of the original algorithms shortcomings. The key oversight that is made here is that the added security comes from a dedicated device that is tasked with performing the additional authentication procedures (e.g. sending a message for the two-way authentication method and starting a timer for the timer method). There is nothing preventing anyone from circumventing these by using anything other than this dedicated device to gain access to the system (e.g. computer connected directly to the OBD-II port).

3.2 Other attack vectors

A couple of possible attack vectors have been discussed already (OBD-II in section 3.1, Bluetooth in the context paragraph of section 1). Let's take the time to look at some other attack vectors that were proposed. We will follow the same general classification of these attack vectors as in [13]: indirect physical access (those that require physical access to the vehicle or via an intermediate), short-range wireless and long range wireless.¹

¹ It should be clear that the OBD-II interface belongs to the indirect physical access class of attack vectors, while Bluetooth is considered a short-range wireless kind of access.

3.2.1 Indirect physical access

Entertainment: Disk, USB and iPod

It is hard to find any new vehicle that does not include the ability to play an audio cd, plug in a usb audio device, or directly connect with an Apple iPod or Iphone in order to play music. It is not unthinkable for a someone to encode malicious input onto a CD, and distributing them to non-suspecting targets. To go from a CD or USB drive to an audio stream, the input must interact with many hundreds of thousands of lines of code throughout a stack of software components, which could contain vulnerabilities that could be exploited to take control of the system[36]. Corrupting a vehicle's CD-player might be considered a fairly innocent attack, but these are often connected with other, more safety-crucial systems. This is the reason why entertainment systems should be seriously considered when potential attack vectors are surveyed.

3.2.2 Short-range wireless access

Remote Keyless Entry

Today, almost all automobiles shipped in the U.S. use RF-based remote keyless entry (RKE) systems to remotely open doors, activate alarms, flash lights and, in some cases, even start the ignition[13]. In these systems the radio transmitter sends encrypted data containing identifying information from which the ECU can determine if the key is valid[29]. mounting attacks with regards to remote code execution in this way is infeasible. However it has been shown that in some cases it is possible to unlock/start the car without the proper key fob (see [16]), which would result in unauthorised access being granted.

RFID car keys

A Radio-frequency identifier (RFID) immobilizer, also called passive anti-theft system (PATS), is a chip embedded in the top part of an ignition key. This chip sends out an encrypted string of radio-frequency signals when the driver inserts it into the ignition-key slot. Without this code, the car either won't start or won't activate the fuel pump. So even if someone hotwires the car or copies an ignition key, the car is not going to start because it hasn't received the proper radio-frequency code[27]. As with RKE, this does not provide a significant attack surface.[29]

TPMS

The tire pressure monitoring system (TPMS) are designed to alert drivers about under or over inflated tires. The most common form of such systems uses rotating sensors constantly measuring the tire pressure and transmitting real time data to an ECU (frequently in similar bands as RKEs)[13]. While the attack surface is also small here, It is has been shown that it is possible to perform some actions against the TPMS, such as causing the vehicle to think it is having a tire problem[39] or in

some cases even crashing the ECU that the data is sent to[29]. Alternatively TPMS could be used to track the car from a distance[39]. These problems could be solved by introducing some detection mechanism to raise an alarm when detecting frequent conflicting information, as well as encrypting and authenticating the TPM packets sent by the sensors[39].

V2V, V2I and V2N

While the technology is fairly new, a lot have car manufacturers have started to introduce more external connectivity to the vehicles they produce. This can take on many forms[3]. First, vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) connections are mainly introduced in the context of self driving cars who communicate with each other to avoid collisions (see [1]). Second, there are vehicle-to-infrastructure connections. Think of a car automatically paying for gas without the need for the driver to do so. Or a repair shop diagnosing a car from a distance (see [24]). Third, there's vehicle-to-network communication. There is a considerable amount of literature that attempts to address the concern around this newly emerging technology, for more information on the subject we refer the reader to these (see [23][40][38][8]).

3.2.3 Long-range wireless access

A distinction can be made between two types of long-range wireless access methods. First, there are addressable channels, which are specifically directed towards an automobile. Second, there are broadcast channels, where typically an automobile "tunes in" on demand. A prime example of the latter is GPS.

GPS

Global positioning systems (GPS) are used in automobiles to accurately determine it's position as well as guiding them to user specified locations. GPS does not provide a significant remote attack surface, since GPS signals are predominantly processed by custom hardware[13]. However some attacks have been successfully proposed. First, there's GPS jamming where cheap device (approximately 20 dollars) is used to jam all GPS signals in the area. This could be used by a car thief to prevent a car's anti theft system of knowing where the vehicle is. ² Second, There's GPS spoofing, where normal GPS signals are replicated, providing false locations. These could again be used to counter location based anti theft systems [34]. Multiple mitigation techniques are presented in [14] and back-office countermeasures to counter GPS jamming and spoofing are presented in [20] and [19].

Radio

Another broadcast channel is radio signals, these can either be standard AM/FM radio (Digital Radio) or satellite radio. These signals are simply converted to audio

² In these types of systems a message is sent to the owner of the car whenever a location change is detected by the GPS system and the owner is not present in the vehicle.

output upon reception, so they are not likely to contain exploitable vulnerabilities. However, the Radio Data System data that is used to send information along with FM analogue signals (or the equivalent on satellite radio) can be a vulnerability. Since the radio unit is often connected to the in-vehicle network and because radio data needs to be parsed and displayed (think of artist and songtitle data). These vulnerability could be fixed by ridding the radio data code of any bugs that could be exploited, as well as introducing input validation and sanitation on any data that is received³. [29][31][13].

Vehicle Telematics

Vehicle telematics is a broad term, that encompasses nearly all addressable communication channels of a vehicle. They typically use cellular voice and data systems to provide continuous communication with the vehicle (e.g. General Motor's On-Star system, Toyota's SafetyConnect, Lexus' Enform, BMW's BMW Assist, and Mercedes-Benz' mbrace). These systems provide a broad range of features like crash reporting, diagnostics (reporting a mechanical issue to the owner) and anti-theft (location based anti theft systems)[13]. Due to it's characteristics (long distance, high bandwidth, addressable, etc) these systems are considered the holy grail of automotive attacks[29]. In 2015 an article was published in Wired magazine (see [18]) documenting the work of 2 researchers (Charlie Miller and Chris Valasek) and their attempt at remotely hacking into a 2014 Jeep Cherokee exploiting it's telematics system (UConnect). They were able to remotely disable the brakes, honk the horn, jerk the seatbelt and even take control of the steering wheel[18]. The number of vehicles that were vulnerable were in the hundreds of thousands and it forced a 1.4 million vehicle recall by Fiat-Chrysler (who also own the Jeep automotive brand).⁴

3.2.4 Future Systems

What should be considered is that the automotive industry is rapidly evolving. what is considered a critical safety concern today might be nullified by a new innovation. But more importantly these new innovations might come with their own safety critical concerns. One example of this is discussed here (Intelligent transportation systems), however it should come as no surprise that there are many other future designs that will have to be researched.

ITS

Intelligent transportation systems (ITS) or in this case more commonly referred to as self-driving cars are automated vehicles that require barely any user interaction while moving. they are based on communication of data among vehicles (V2V) and/or between vehicles and the infrastructure (V2I/I2V) to provide this new functionality.

³ Input validation consists of checking if the received information meets a particular set of criteria. Input sanitation on the other hand consist of modifying this information to ensure it meets these criteria

⁴ for more information on this famous exploit see [31].

Although innovative and potentially a solution to a couple of serious transportation-related issues (e.g. congestion, accidents, etc) it has been shown in [34] that this also introduces a couple of interesting new attack vectors:

- **infrastructure signs:** Any decent ITS should be able to recognise and interpret road signs in order for them to adhere to local traffic regulations. However, can these systems make the distinction between an official road sign, and a fake one made by a malicious agent in an attempt to cause mayhem.[34]
- **Video Image Processing** Besides detecting and interpreting road signs the ITS should be able to correctly interpret it's surroundings (e.g. width of the road, speed bumps, other vehicles, pedestrians, etc). This technology will probably be provided by artificial intelligence (AI) systems (also called machine vision) that are trained to detect certain objects. Any vulnerabilities found in these systems could be exploited, again causing significant chaos (e.g. painting an image on the road that tricks automated vehicles into thinking someone's crossing the road).[34]
- **GPS** It should be obvious that any ITS will rely heavily on GPS to automatically navigate. A GPS jamming/spoofing device in the wrong hands would be a powerful tool allowing them to influence the navigation of all automated vehicles within the action radius of the device.[34]
- **Acoustic Sensors** These could be used by an ITS to detect a known signal (e.g. a car crashing). Again it opens up the possibility for attackers to look for vulnerabilities in how these signals are processed. This would allow them to falsely trigger events (e.g. playing a modulated crashing sound on a stereo causing the airbag to be triggered and brakes to be engaged), as well as using jammers to block the sensors from correctly interpreting any sounds.[34]
- **Radar and Lidar** Because of the shortcomings of video image processing discussed earlier, it should be possible for the vehicle to detect physical objects. Radar and Lidar (Using light instead of sound to detect objects) could be used here. Again jamming/spoofing devices could be developed that interfere with the detection systems.[34]

3.3 Internal Vehicle Security

In the previous section (see 3.2) the most important attack vectors of modern automobiles are discussed. Defending against these requires a specific measure per vector, meaning no solution will confidently prevent attacks over all surfaces. Take TPMS for example, the solution here is to define a way of communicating between the tire pressure sensors and the TPMS ECU that cannot be spoofed or interfered with. This approach is fine but it doesn't address a greater issue with in-vehicle networks. Namely, once access to the network is attained, an attacker is unbounded in which ECU's it can communicate with and what messages it sends to them (if

no additional security measures are implemented of course). This vulnerability is an inherent flaw of the network communications protocol (CAN in our case). In section 2.2 (Layering) the layered nature of the CAN protocol was discussed. What if an application layer extension of the protocol was introduced that alleviates the aforementioned security issues? This would mean that even if access is attained, this breach will be confined to the ECU that was used as an attack vector, severely limiting the scope of the attack. Fortunately these solutions have been proposed and a selection of them will be discussed next.

3.3.1 VulCAN

VulCAN is a generic design for vehicular message authentication, software component attestation and isolation. This solution is distinguished from previous work (e.g. CANcrypt[35], VatiCAN[45] and Leia[37]) by relying on trusted hardware and a minimal trusted computing Base (TCB). This TCB relies heavily on the SANCUS[33] security architecture. the goal of SANCUS is to provide network embedded systems with remote attestation and strong integrity and authenticity guarantees with a minimal hardware TCB. Figure ?? shows the SANCUS system model. The infrastructure provider (IP) provides a number of nodes (Ni) on which software providers (SPi) can deploy software modules SMj,k. This model is applicable to many ICT systems today (in the case of VulCAN this system of course a CAN network).[33] VulCAN uses SANCUS to compartmentalise every ECU into a small group of trustworthy authenticated software components. It does so by introducing the following security features:

- **Message Authentication:** The system uses MAC's (message authentication codes) to prove the message was indeed sent by a trusted sender component.[32]
- **Lightweight Cryptography:** Lightweight cryptography is a must because of strict timing constraints and because of the computational limitations of the embedded devices.[32]
- **Replay Attack Resistance:** the authentication scheme is immune to replay attacks (a malicious agent injecting a previously sent message in the hope of it being falsely authenticated). This is ensured by using short term session keys, and a monotonically increasing counter or nonce as a source of freshness in the MAC computation.[32]
- **Backwards Compatibility:** Legacy unmodified applications without authenticated communication should continue to function. To this end the system broadcasts the authenticated message in plain text, and afterwards constructs and transmits authentication data on a different CAN identifier, effectively decoupling the authentication metadata from the original message.[32]

3.3.2 CANCrypt

CANcrypt uses a CAN feature that allows two devices to exchange a hidden bit that is not visible to other CAN devices. This allows generating pairing keys that only the two devices know. CANcrypt uses a dynamic 64-bit key to cover the longest possible secure data block, 8 bytes. From this key, a pseudo one-time pad is generated and changes frequently. CANcrypt does not protect against DOS attacks.[\[35\]](#).

3.3.3 VatiCAN

VatiCAN is a framework for embedded controllers connected to the CAN bus, which allows both senders and receivers to authenticate exchanged data. It introduces some the same features that VulCAN does: MAC's for message authentication, nonces to prevent replay attacks and backward compatibility. However, it also introduces a new feature, namely spoof detection and prevention. spoofed messages are detected by monitoring messages with its own sender identification (remember that CAN messages are broadcasted over the entire network). If a component detects a message with its own sender ID, it must be a spoofed message. Once spoofing is detected it can still be prevented (the ID is the first thing that is sent over the bus). This is done by writing dominant bits (zeros) to the bus, effectively invalidating the CRC bits while the spoofed CAN frame is still being processed.[\[45\]](#)

Chapter 4

Problem Statement

From the discussion in chapter 4 it follows that the use of CAN as signalling protocol for performing OBD-II operations, thereby inheriting all of CAN's security related shortcomings, attributes to a system that is inherently insecure. This chapter serves as a description of the security related problems that arise from the OBD-II specification, as well as providing a series of examples illustrating these problems.

4.1 Current State

Figure 4.1 shows the typical topography of the OBD-II system. The user interacts with the intra vehicle network via the OBD-II interface using some computerised device (see section 2.3.4). The central gateway receives and interprets all messages issued by this device, before forwarding them to the appropriate sub-networks. Optionally, upon reception by the intended ECU, a response could be issued and forwarded back to the user. All of this happens concurrently with the normal operation of the intra vehicle network, i.e. messages are exchanged by ECU's over the entire intra vehicle network to guarantee the optimal operation of the vehicle. The problem of this system is the indiscriminate nature at which the gateway forwards the messages it receives from the OBD-II interface. It does not discern between a normal message and a potentially harmful one. This results in an interface that is rendered wide open to any message that the gateway understands. While in theory, it was designed solely for diagnostic and maintenance purposes. This discrepancy between the intention of the OBD-II design and the wide open nature of it's implementation is apparent. As a result of this, the OBD-II interface can be used to mount a series of attacks. To get a sense of the scope, difficulty and impact of these attacks, a couple of real examples are discussed next.

4.1.1 Example attacks

The exploits that are presented here were performed by Charlie Miller and Chris Valasek, in an effort to raise awareness about the issue, as well as allowing car manufacturers to build safer cars in the future. They accomplished this by not only

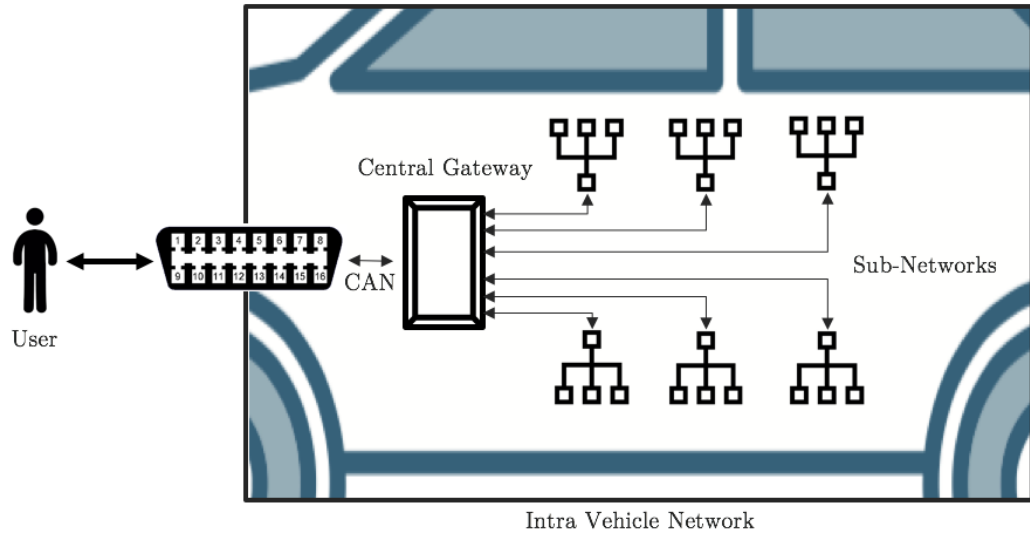


FIGURE 4.1: OBD-II System Topography

finding and exploiting various vulnerabilities in extant vehicles, but also sharing any software that made these exploits possible. An example of this is EcomCat, which is software written to aid in the reading and writing of data to the CAN bus through one or more Ecom cables [28]. The Ecom cable is then used to connect a laptop to the OBD-II DLC, allowing the researchers to use their EcomCat software to inject their own CAN messages onto the internal bus. Although seemingly straightforward there are many potential problems in attempting to make the vehicle perform actions by injecting packets on the CAN bus. First, not everything can be controlled via the CAN bus (e.g. cruise control). Second, if a specific type of CAN packet is found to be a request (An ECU asking for another ECU to perform an action) replaying a fake copy does not guarantee that the message is accepted. This is because the original message is still sent, possibly confusing the ECU with conflicting information. Third, It is also possible that fake messages are ignored because of built-in security features inside the ECU. Despite these difficulties, these researchers did manage to mount a series of interesting exploits, two of which are presented here.

Speedometer

In this example ,performed on a 2010 Toyota Prius, the researchers managed to identify the messages that are sent to the speedometer to display the current velocity of the vehicle. Replaying this message with custom data fields allowed them to display any arbitrary speed on the speedometer display.

Denial of Service

Here the researches cleverly take advantage of how the CAN protocol works. Remember from 2.2 that CAN uses priority scheduling over the ID's of the messages

that are sent on the bus. This means that spamming a high priority message would prevent all other messages from being transmitted. This vulnerability is exploited here by flooding the bus with CAN messages with an ID of 0. This flooding of the CAN bus halts the engine from being turned on, as well as putting the system in an all out state of disarray.

Diagnostic session

The aforementioned examples used injection of messages that are normally sent from ECU to ECU, thereby erroneously invoking certain actions. Another approach is to trick the vehicle network into starting a diagnostic session. These are used in normal circumstances by a technician at a garage. It allows them to test the function of an ECU without having to take the vehicle on the road, as well as recalibrating them. Starting a diagnostic session does require circumventing an authentication procedure (see 3.1) but this proved rather easy (they did this by reverse engineering an official authentication device and extracting the keys). Once a diagnostic session was established it opened up a wide array of possible attacks: Killing the engine, disabling the brakes, honking the horn, unlocking/locking doors, and even reprogramming of certain ECU's (see [28] for a detailed description of the attacks).

4.1.2 Impact

It is clear that the level of control that is obtainable via the OBD-II port is worrying. Especially if we consider that there exist OBD-II devices with Bluetooth or Wifi capabilities, allowing attacks to be mounted from a distance (imagine a DoS attack being mounted while driving a car at high speed). It is these scenarios that elevate the concern from mere vehicular integrity, to concern over the physical safety of the driver and his/her passengers. Sure it could be stated that this danger originates from a malicious agent gaining illegal access to the vehicle, rather than the security of the internal vehicle system. But this assertion would gloss over the fact that the OBD-II interface was designed to be used only by repairman, testers, policemen, etc. Therefore it is only logical that this privileged use is enforced by the system, rather than being merely implied.

4.2 Attacker model

To further characterize the security issues of OBD-II it is useful to specify an attacker model. This model serves as a survey of the attacker's capabilities and motives, thus defining a set of criteria on which potential countermeasures can be judged. A typical attacker will not necessarily conform to all these characteristics, but the idea is that any countermeasure would have to address them nonetheless. First a general overview of a typical attack is discussed, after which a more formal classification is given.

4.2.1 Informal Model

From the discussion in section 4.1 it follows that the OBD-II DLC is a wide open interface, allowing various attacks to be mounted. The inherent vulnerabilities this interface introduces are apparent. The scope of these vulnerabilities, i.e. what type of attacks are possible and how attackers are able to perform these remains unclear. This topic is discussed first, after which the types of attackers and their motives are presented.

Type of Attack

All the attacks presented in section 4.1.1 were leveraged by gaining physical access to the vehicle. This situation is illustrated in figure 4.2.1. Physical access is ideally only granted to the owner of the vehicle, and it's safe to assume that he or she is not intent on mounting an attack on their own vehicle. It is not unthinkable however, for an attacker to gain access illegally (e.g. car theft) or by abusing privileges that were bestowed on them by the owner (e.g. a repairman). While physical access is the most evident way of mounting an attack via the OBD-II interface, another alternative is certainly worth examining. In this approach an attacker would abuse the connection of an extant OBD-II communications by hijacking the session. When the extant session is physical in nature, i.e. a user directly interfacing with the OBD-II system via a hand-held device, this scenario is unlikely since the user would be aware of any malicious third parties hijacking the session. When we consider that the session can be wireless however, like the DLC connector with wifi/Bluetooth capabilities discussed in section 2.3.4, this scenario becomes increasingly likely. Especially since the wireless capabilities of diagnostics systems will only increase in the future, as is discussed in [24]. This situation is illustrated in figure 4.2.1.

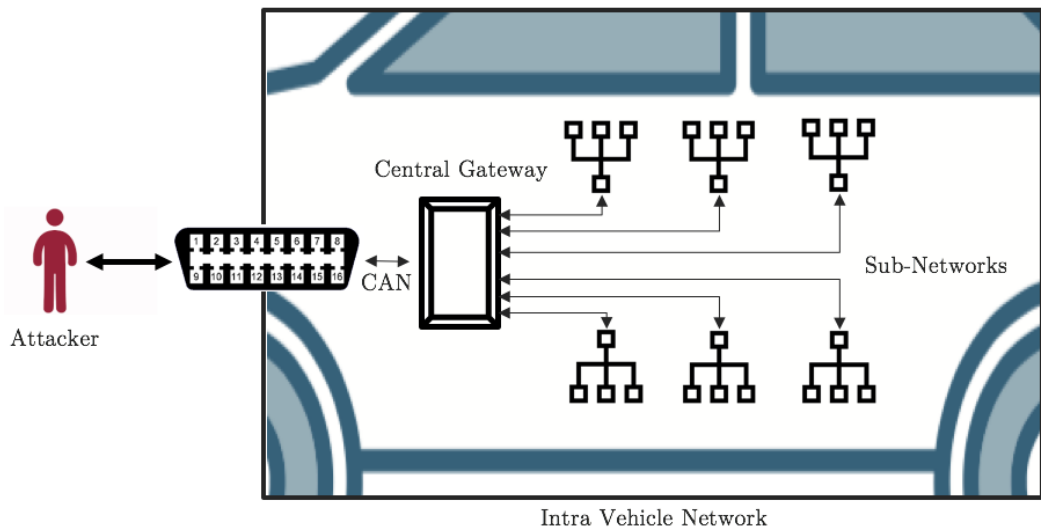


FIGURE 4.2: Attacker with physical access.

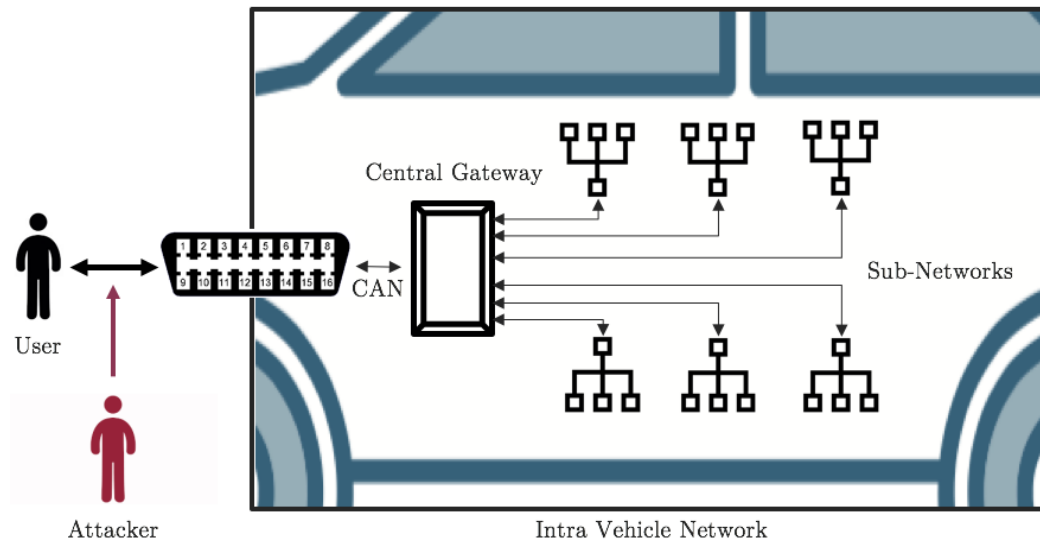


FIGURE 4.3: Attacker hijacking another OBD-II session.

Type of Attacker

Aside from the type of attacks that are possible, it is valuable to define which type of attackers would be interested in attempting them and why. The European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) defines 4 types of cyberattacks on smart cars in [1]:

- **Attacks targeting driver/passenger safety:** This is probably the most serious and harmful type of attacks, since they directly involve the safety of the passengers. Why anyone would be motivated to jeopardize the well-being of another person can vary: Extortion, financial gain, rivalries, etc. In the context of OBD-II it is the second attack scenario (i.e. remote OBD-II session hijacking) that is especially relevant here, since these would allow an adversary to initiate the attack while the vehicle is on the road. However, it is not entirely unlikely that someone would compromise the vehicle via the OBD-II interface beforehand, with the intention of compromising drivers/passenger in the future.
- **Persistent vehicle alteration by legitimate users:** Most car owners will never concern themselves with the OBD-II interface, and might not even know it exists. Others however, albeit out of sheer curiosity, might take an interest and discover all the possibilities that the OBD-II has to offer. These 'automotive network adventurers' could inadvertently compromise the integrity of the network, thereby endangering themselves and all their passengers. Another incentive for people to alter the behaviour of their own vehicle is personal gain: lowering the internal odometer value before selling the vehicle, clearing recent crash data to fool insurance companies, recalibrating sensors to pass emissions tests, improving the performance of the engine, etc.

- **Surveillance:** The DLC connectors with wifi/Bluetooth capabilities presented in section 2.3.4 enable adversaries to remotely monitor the position of the vehicle, and by extension the driver and passengers. This could be taken even further if the GPS system could be remotely compromised. There are many reasons why an adversary or an organisation would be interested in collecting vehicle locations. These depend on the type of surveillance:
 - **Targeted Surveillance:** Where an individual is tracked using a vulnerability in its vehicle systems. The effort and cost involved in such an operation hints at the following motives: espionage, crime, terrorism, or business intelligence.
 - **Mass surveillance:** where a great number of individuals are tracked by exploiting some common vulnerability. Because of the scope these types of attacks, it is likely they are issued by government agencies and criminal organisations.
- **Theft:** While exploiting remote keyless entry (RKE) vulnerabilities (see section 3.2.2) and replaying Radio Frequency identification (RFID) signals (see section 3.2.2) are more common ways of stealing cars, it is not entirely unlikely for the OBD-II interface to be exploited as well. For example: a resourceful adversary could inject a series of messages, via the OBD-II interface, that tricks the vehicle into starting the ignition.

4.2.2 Formal Model

In this section a more formal attacker model is presented. A similar classification as [38] and [34] is followed:

- **Insider or outsider:** The insider is considered an interactive member of the network, meaning he/she can communicate with other members freely. The outsider however is limited in the diversity of attacks he/she can mount.

Classification: **outsider**, since the attacker is not part of the CAN bus. It is worth noting however that when the attacker uses the OBD port to mount an attack, he/she can communicate with the other nodes on the bus. This however is treated by this paper as part of a successful attack, not as an a priori capability of the attacker.

- **Malicious or rational:** A malicious attacker exploits the system for reasons other than personal gain, making them more unpredictable since their motives and resources can vary. A rational attacker however is motivated solely by personal profit, be it money or fame, making them more predictable.

Classification: **both**, since an attacker using the OBD port as attack vector could be both malicious (e.g. Endangering the life of a rival) and rational (e.g. lowering the internal odometer value before selling the vehicle).

- **Active or passive:** An active attacker is able to generate and transmit messages, whereas a passive attacker is constrained to eavesdropping.

Classification: **active**, since we know the attacker can have access to tools (e.g. PassThru) that grant him/her active capabilities.

- **Local or extended:** This criterion is based on the scope of the attacker. A local attacker has only limited attack vectors, whereas an extended attacker has access to lots.

Classification: **local**, since a comprehensive analysis of multiple attack vectors, although touched upon in section 3.2, is considered out of scope for this paper (c.f. [36][23][40][29][34][13][26][7]).

Chapter 5

Preliminaries

This section serves as a technical primer to all the security related software solutions that are employed in this paper. An in-depth discussion of these topics is considered out of scope. First, the main characteristics of microcontrollers are presented. Second, the concept of role-based access control is introduced. Third, the reader is familiarised with public key cryptography, and what sets it apart from symmetric cryptography. Fourth, we will take a look at how secret keys (asymmetric or symmetric) are established between two parties. Fifth, we will explain how public key cryptography can be used in the context of authentication. Sixth, the concept of hashing and why it is useful is explained. Seventh, the concept of security level is concisely explained. The last chapter of this section gives an overview of all the specific implementations that were selected by the researchers of this paper, as well as motivating these decisions. The reader should keep in mind that the selection of algorithms and systems selected here is far from comprehensive, only those that are relevant to the solution presented in this paper (see section ??) are discussed.

5.1 ECU Microcontrollers

As discussed before, an ECU is an embedded computer that is designed to perform a specific function. The core of any ECU is a small computer on an integrated circuit called a microcontroller. A microcontroller consists of one or more central processing units (CPUs) along with memory and programmable input/output peripherals. There are a couple of characteristics of microcontrollers that are touched upon in the course of this paper, so a description of these characteristics is given next:

- **Word size:** The word size of a microcontroller (or any computer for that matter) is the natural unit of data used by a particular processor. A word is a fixed-sized piece of data handled as a single unit by the instruction set or the hardware of the processor. The number of bits in a word, called the word size, is an important characteristic of any microcontroller. Within the context of ECU's, word sizes of 8 bits (e.g. driver information), 16 bits (e.g. vehicle control) and 32 bits (power train) are most common.[5]

- **Clock rate:** The clock rate of a CPU refers to the rate at which it processes words of data. It is used as an indicator of the processor's speed. It is measured in clock cycles per second or hertz (Hz).
- **Memory:** There are two basic types of memory: data memory and program memory.
 - **Data Memory:** Data memory is where variables and all intermediate calculations are stored by the CPU. It is generally implemented by RAM¹. This data is often volatile, meaning the data is lost when power is removed.
 - **Program memory:** Program memory is where the application is stored, i.e. the code itself. This type of memory is implemented using non-volatile storage technologies like ROM², EPROM³, EEPROM⁴ or Flash Memory⁵.
- **Serial Communications Interfaces:** Serial communications is a way of communication in computer networks where bits are transmitted one bit at a time (e.g. CAN). This is in contrast to parallel communications where a link is used with several parallel channels, allowing multiple bits to be sent at the same time (e.g. USB). Most microcontrollers offer dedicated hardware allowing for easy communication with other devices (e.g. CAN controller).
- **Others:** Most microcontrollers offer various other hardware like: a timer, an analog-to-digital convertor (ADC) that allows for an analog signal (like the output of a sensor) to be transformed into a digital signal, a clock generator, etc.

5.2 Role-Based Access Control

Role-based access control (RBAC) is a well-defined way of restricting system access to authorized users. It is especially useful in large enterprises where roles are created for various job functions. Each role is assigned the necessary permissions to interact with a secured system (e.g. the company database, the local private network, development software, etc). The idea is that a worker is assigned a role based on what he/she requires to do his/her job, and nothing more. This way it is avoided that workers are granted permissions they do not require. There are two basic types of RBAC[58]:

¹ random access memory (RAM) is a type of memory where individual data can be read or written in almost the same amount of time irrespective of the physical location of data inside the memory.

² Read-only memory (ROM) is a type of non-volatile memory where the data stored can not be modified (or where it is considered very difficult to do so).

³ erasable programmable read-only memory (EPROM) is a non-volatile type of memory that can be erased (by exposing the chip the ultraviolet light) and reprogrammed.

⁴ Electrically erasable programmable read-only Memory (EEPROM) is a type of non-volatile memory that can be erased and reprogrammed electronically.

⁵ Flash memory is type of EEPROM that can be electrically erased and reprogrammed much faster than regular EEPROM chips by using large erase blocks.

- **Mandatory Access Control:** In a system where mandatory access control (MAC) is enforced, only the administrator of the system is able to create and assign roles. This is done by defining a security policy that users are unable to override or alter. The administrator of the system is called the security policy administrator.
- **Discretionary Access Control:** When discretionary access control (DAC) is enforced, it is up to the users themselves to make policy decisions and/or assign security attributes.

5.3 Public Key Cryptography

Cryptography The primary goal of cryptography in general is to allow for secure communication between two parties. This means that protocols are designed that prevent third parties or the public in general from reading private messages. This is done by encrypting the message, which consists of converting the information from a readable state to apparent nonsense. Only the intended recipient should be able to restore the information to its original form, which is called decryption. To allow for this to work, the procedure of encryption and decryption should only be possible by the sender and the receiver respectively. Generally this procedure consists of two parts. First, there is the cypher, which is the algorithm that does the actual conversion. Second, there's the secret key, which is used by the cipher together with the input (plaintext) to create the encrypted output (ciphertext). The main advantage of this architecture is that the chosen cipher can be made public, as long as the key is kept secret. The receiver of the secret message, who is in possession of the same secret key, runs the same cipher in reverse with the secret key and the ciphertext as inputs, yielding the original plaintext.[\[50\]](#)

Symmetric vs Asymmetric The procedure outlined above is called symmetric key cryptography since both parties are in possession of the same secret key. The disadvantage here is that these keys need to be securely exchanged beforehand (e.g. via a secure channel) to allow for secure communications. Asymmetric (or public key) cryptography offers a solution to this problem. In this case a key pair is created where each one serves a specific function. The first one is called the private key, which is meant to be kept secret at all times by the owner. The second one is called the public key, which is disseminated widely to the public. The idea is that if someone wants to send an encrypted message to the owner of the private key, he/she looks up the corresponding public key (generally found online), uses it to encrypt a message, and sends this message to the owner. Since only the owner is in possession of the corresponding private key, he/she is able to decrypt the message.

5.4 Key Exchange

The specifications of symmetric and asymmetric encryption are sound. However they both rely on both parties being in possession of the right key. In the case of asymmetric encryption this is easy: The owner generates a new public/private key pair, stores the private key in a safe location, and distributes the corresponding public key on the internet. Anyone wanting to securely communicate with the owner only has to look up the corresponding public key. This procedure does not apply to symmetric encryption however, since only the sender and receiver should be in possession of the secret key. One way of safely distributing the key is to use a secure communications channel. Examples of this are: a text message, a phone call, physically handing over the key, sending a letter, etc. It is clear however that in most situations this method simply will not do, since it requires significant effort before a secure communication session can be established. Two more realistic alternatives exist: using asymmetric keys to establish a session key and key exchange algorithms. Both will be discussed in turn next.

Session Keys In this solution the free distribution of public keys is leveraged to establish a new temporary shared key, also called a session key. If Alice has an asymmetric key pair already established, and Bob wishes to establish a shared secret key with Alice. Bob only has to look up Alice's public key, generate a new session key, encrypt the new session key using Bob's public key and send it to Alice. Alice can then decrypt the session key using her private key. In the end both parties are in possession of the new session key, and a secure communication can be established. Now, the reader might wonder why it is necessary to establish a session key, since secure communications could also be performed using asymmetric keys (granted they both have an asymmetric key pair)? Well, this is mainly due to performance. Asymmetric encryption requires significantly longer keys to guarantee the same level of security, and the corresponding procedures (e.g. encryption, decryption, signing, etc.) take significantly longer to perform. Therefore, it is often beneficial to establish a session key and using these, instead of repeatedly using asymmetric keys.

Key Exchange Algorithms Key exchange algorithms allow two parties that have no prior knowledge of each other to establish a shared secret key over an insecure channel. The most famous example of such an algorithm is the Diffie-Hellman key exchange method (for more information on Diffie-Hellman see [52]). These algorithms typically rely on computationally hard to solve mathematical problems such as the discrete logarithm.

5.5 Authentication

Besides protecting messages from being read by a third party, the recipient of the message might also want certainty on who sent it in the first place, as well as knowing that the message has not been tampered with. In other words the recipient wants

to guarantee the integrity of the message, as well as to authenticate the sender. Fortunately asymmetric and symmetric cryptography offer solutions in the form of digital signatures and message authentication codes respectively. Before going into this however, it is necessary to first take a look at hash functions.

5.5.1 Hash functions

A hash function is used to map data of arbitrary size to data of a fixed size. The values returned by a hash function are called hash values, hash codes, digests, or simply hashes⁶. For a hash function to be useful in cryptography (also called a cryptographic hash function) it has to possess the following properties[49]:

- The same message always results in the same hash value.
- The hash function does not take long to perform.
- It is infeasible to reconstruct the original message from the hash value.
- Two similar messages have widely varying hash values.
- it is infeasible to find two different messages with the same hash value.

5.5.2 Digital Signatures

A digital signature is used to verify the authenticity of digital messages. The principle is simple: If Alice wants to send an authenticated message to Bob, she will first sign the message using her private key. She then sends the message, together with the generated signature to Bob. Bob can then check the authenticity of the message by verifying the signature using Alice's public key. If the verification was successful Bob can safely assume 2 things: the message was sent by Alice (since only she is in possession of the corresponding private key) and the message was not tampered with in transit (since in that case the signature would no longer match the message, resulting in a failed verification) 2 additional algorithms are required: a signing algorithm and a signature verification algorithm. Ideally the signing algorithm would produce a signature of the same size, regardless of the size of the original message. This is where cryptographic hash functions come in, since they possess this property. Generally the message will first be hashed to a fixed size, before being processed by the signing algorithm. Besides guaranteeing a fixed sized output, this also improves the overall efficiency.[53]

5.5.3 MAC's

a message authentication code (MAC) serves the same function as a digital signature algorithm. Namely, guaranteeing the authenticity and integrity of a transmitted message. The main difference is that MAC's are based on symmetric keys rather than asymmetric keys.

⁶ We will be using the term hash values when referring to the output of a hash function

5.6 Authenticated Key Agreement

As will become apparent in section ?? it is generally advised to combine authentication and shared secret establishment into a single procedure. This is called authenticated key agreement (AK). In AK systems both parties are mutually authenticated while a shared secret is established. It is only assured that both parties are able to generate the shared secret, not that this secret was actually computed. A protocol that also guarantee to both parties that the other party actually computed the secret is called authenticated key agreement with key confirmation (AKC).[10]

5.7 Security Level

The security level of a cryptographic primitive (e.g. a hash function, a key, a cipher) refers to the difficulty for any attacker to break it. The security level is usually expressed in bits, where n -bit security means that an attacker would have to perform (at least) 2^n operations to effectively crack the cryptographic primitive. It is very useful when comparing between different algorithms (e.g. RSA vs ECC), which will be done frequently during the course of this paper.

5.8 Chosen Security Systems

Previously an attempt was made to explain the basic principles behind the security systems that will be implemented in this paper. A multitude of various approaches to these systems exist however. The difference between them is mostly down to the mathematical structure of the approach, as well as the effect this has on efficiency and performance when they are implemented. This section will give an overview of which approaches were chosen for this paper, as well as a motivating why this decision was made. Again, it should be noted that this is not a detailed description of these algorithms, which is considered out of scope for this paper.

5.8.1 Elliptic Curve Cryptography

There exist a couple of well-known public key systems. The basic principle behind all of them is the use of functions that are easy to perform in one direction, but where the inverse is far more difficult (these are called trapdoor functions). take multiplication for example: if we take two prime numbers p and q , it is quite easy to calculate the product $n = pq$. However the factorisation of n into p and q is far more difficult, especially when these numbers are significantly large. This is called the factoring problem and is the backbone of RSA (Rivest Shamir Adleman), which is one of the most famous cryptosystems around. This property is then leveraged to make it difficult to calculate the private key from the public key, while calculating the public key from a random private key is rendered trivial. The problem with RSA however is that it requires very long key sizes (currently the minimal recommended key size is 2048 bit)[59], and the corresponding procedures are very slow. This

wouldn't be a problem if the enough processing capacity were available. However, for the typical microcontroller found in ECU's this is not the case. It has been shown that using the RSA signing operation (with a key size of 2048 bit) in a typical 8-bit microcontroller (the ATmega328, which has a clock speed of 16 MHz, 2 kB of RAM, and 32 kB of flash memory), takes roughly 26 minutes to complete[41]. Luckily elliptic curve cryptography offers a solution to this.

ECC Elliptic curve cryptography (ECC) is an approach to public-key cryptography based on the algebraic structure of elliptic curves over finite fields instead of plain Galois fields like most other non-EC based algorithms. Where RSA was based on the difficulty of the factorisation problem, ECC is based on the discrete logarithm of a random elliptic curve element with respect to a publicly known base point, which is called the elliptic curve discrete logarithm problem (ECDLP)[54]. an elliptic curve consists of the points satisfying the equation $y^2 = x^3 + ax + b$, where a and b are called the domain parameters of the curve. Elliptic curves have an interesting property: if you draw a line through two points on the curve, it will always intersect a third point on the curve. This is illustrated in figure 5.8.1 where the line through points P and Q intersect with the curve in point R . We'll call this operation "dot" where $P \text{ dot } Q = R$. This property is leveraged to create a trapdoor function by taking an initial point G (called the base point) and repeatedly dotting it with itself n times to get another point P . It turns out that finding out n when you only know the final point P and the first point G is very hard. The private key is the number of repeated dot operations n , and the public key is the base point G dotted with itself n times P . Computing the private key from the public key is the ECDLP, which is the trapdoor function of ECC. The advantage of ECDLP is that it is way more difficult to solve than the factorisation problem of RSA. This means that for the same key size, ECC is more secure than RSA. In other words, when using ECC we can use smaller key sizes, while still guaranteeing the same level of security. Running the elliptic curve digital signature algorithm (ECDSA) on the same microcontroller as before, with a curve that guarantees the same level of safety as an RSA 2048 bit key, takes roughly 6 seconds to complete. This is way better than the 26 minutes of RSA [41].

ECDSA

The elliptic curve digital signature algorithm (ECDSA) is the default elliptic curve variant of digital signatures. Like the standard digital signature algorithm (DSA), each signature with length l guarantees a security level of $l/4$ (e.g. a signature of 512 bits would guarantee a security level of 128 bits).

ECDH

Besides using ECC for digital signatures with ECDSA, another ECC based protocol that is chosen in this paper is elliptic curve Diffie-Hellman (ECDH). like normal Diffie-Hellman it is used when two communicating parties wish to establish a shared

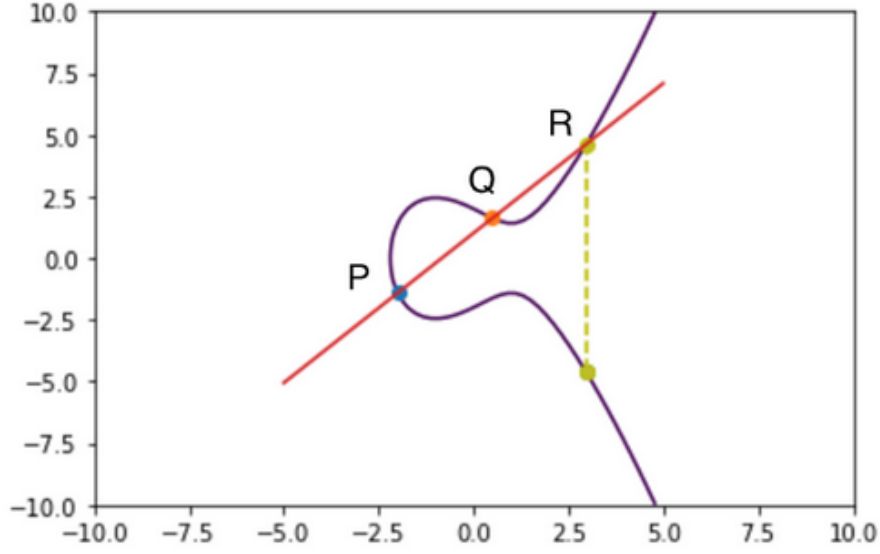


FIGURE 5.1: An elliptic curve. [17]

secret (or session key) over an insecure channel. First the two communication parties (Alice and Bob) agree on a base point G and domain parameters a and b of the curve they will use. Second they both generate an ECC key pair: (P_a, n_a) and (P_b, n_b) where $P = nG$ (the base point dotted with itself n times). Third they exchange their public keys P_a and P_b . In the last step Alice calculates $S = n_a P_b$ and Bob calculates $S = n_b P_a$. It's important to note that S is the same for both Alice and Bob since $S = n_a P_b = n_a(n_b G) = n_b(n_a G) = n_b P_a$. S is the newly created session key that is shared by both parties. Any third party listening on the channel only knows P_a and P_b , which are not enough to easily calculate S since they would have to solve the ECDLP.

ECDHE_ECDSA

As mentioned in section 5.6 and illustrated in section ?? it is common practice to combine authentication and shared secret establishment into a single procedure. In [9] multiple methods are proposed that perform ECDH, while also providing authentication using elliptic curve digital signatures. One of these methods is called ECDHE_ECDSA and is illustrated in figure 5.2. The extra E in ECDHE comes from the fact that this procedure uses "ephemeral" (i.e. temporary) keys. Two communicating parties (Alice and Bob) are both in possession of an elliptic curve private/public key pair: Pb_a, Pr_a (Alice) and Pb_b, Pr_b (Bob). Alice signals to Bob that she wishes to initiate a ECDHE_ECDSA sequence by sending a 'hello' message to Bob. Bob then creates a new ephemeral elliptic curve key pair: Pb_{bE}, Pr_{bE} , signs

the new ephemeral public key using his own private key: $\text{Sig}(Pb_{bE}, Pr_b)$, and sends this to Alice. She will first verify the signature: $\text{Ver}(\text{Sig}, Pb_b)$, thus authenticating Bob to Alice. After which she will also generate her own ephemeral key pair using the same curve as Bob: $\text{KGen}(Pb_{aE}, Pr_{aE})$, before signing the new public key and sending it to Bob: $\text{Sig}(Pb_{aE}, Pr_a)$. Bob will then in turn verify the signature using Alice's public key: $\text{Ver}(\text{Sig}, Pb_a)$. Alice and Bob are now both in possession resources (e.g. each others ephemeral public keys) to use ECDH to generate a shared secret: $K = \text{ECDH}(Pr_{aE}, Pb_{bE})$ for Alice and $K = \text{ECDH}(Pr_{bE}, Pb_{aE})$ for Bob. The attentive reader might wonder why these ephemeral key pairs are generated at all. why not use the pre-existing key pairs Pb_a, Pr_a and Pb_b, Pr_b to generate the shared secret. This is because introducing these ephemeral keys guarantees perfect forward secrecy (PFS)⁷. This is because an attacker in possession of either Pr_a or Pr_b is still not able to obtain the shared secret.

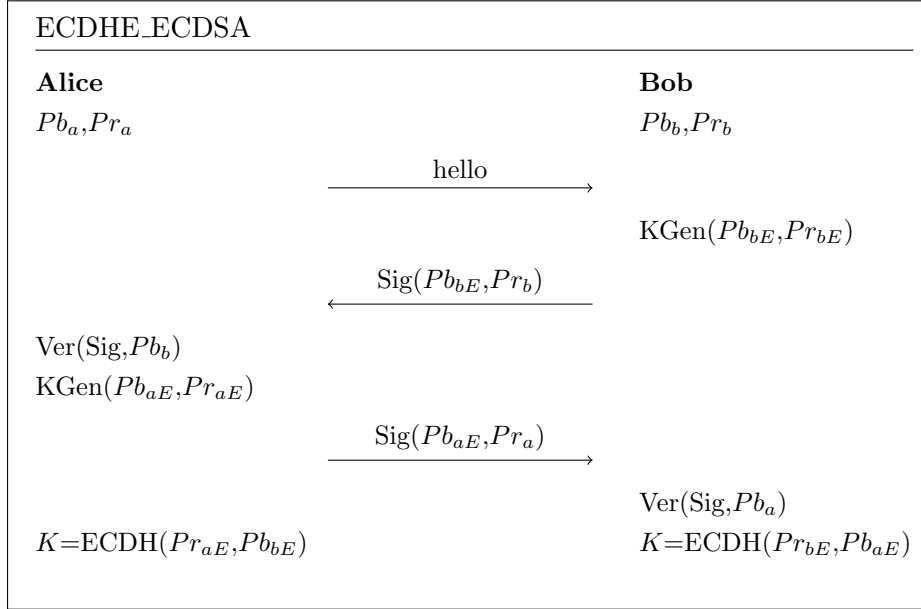


FIGURE 5.2: ECDHE_ECDSA

5.8.2 SHA

A lot of cryptographic procedures require the data to be hashed first, and the implementation of this research paper is certainly no exception. The choice was made to use the secure hash algorithm (SHA) family of hash functions. SHA constitutes a large set of cryptographic hash functions that were designed by the United States National Security Institute (NSA). There exist 4 distinct sets of SHA[60]:

⁷ Perfect forward secrecy is guaranteed when a posteriori leak of one of the used private keys (e.g. Pr_a and Pr_b in figure 5.2) does not result in the communication session being compromised.

- **SHA-0:** Published in 1993, was withdrawn shortly after publication because of a significant flaw.
- **SHA-1:** Published in 1995 as a replacement to SHA-0. Has been considered insufficiently secure since 2005.
- **SHA-2:** Published in 2001, consists of six hash functions with hash values that are 224, 256, 384 or 512 bits: SHA-224, SHA-256, SHA-384, SHA-512, SHA-512/224, SHA-512/256.
- **SHA-3:** Published in 2015, subset of the broader cryptographic primitive family Keccak. Consists of the following hash functions: SHA3-224, SHA3-256, SHA3-384 and SHA3-512.

While the SHA-3 hash functions were an obvious candidate, simply because they are newer and deemed more secure, the choice was made to work with the SHA-2 hash functions instead. This is because secure SHA-2 libraries are more readily available for the architecture that was used in our implementation. Another reason is that the MAC function that was chosen also employs SHA-256 as its cryptographic hash function.

5.8.3 HMAC

Once a session key is established between two parties this can be used to authenticate the messages they sent to each other. Since this configuration is symmetric, i.e. they both share the same secret, this is done by using a message authentication code (MAC). The choice was made to work with a hash-based message authentication code (HMAC). HMAC is a specific type of message authentication code (MAC) that uses a cryptographic hash function as well as a secret cryptographic key (in our case the session key established using ECDH). More specifically HMAC-256 (HMAC using SHA-256) was used since it is sufficiently secure, as well as there being a library function readily available for our chosen architecture.

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Fiche masterproef

Student: Michiel Willems

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Promotor: Prof. dr. Bruno Crispo

Assessor:

Begeleiders: Mahmoud Ammar
Hassan Janjua