XEP-0027: Current Jabber OpenPGP Usage

Thomas Muldowney
mailto:temas@jabber.org
xmpp:temas@jabber.org

2014-03-14
Version 1.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Short Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obsolete</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>openpgp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This document outlines the current usage of OpenPGP for messaging and presence.
Legal

Copyright

This XMPP Extension Protocol is copyright © 1999 – 2020 by the XMPP Standards Foundation (XSF).

Permissions

Permission is hereby granted, free of charge, to any person obtaining a copy of this specification (the "Specification"), to make use of the Specification without restriction, including without limitation the rights to implement the Specification in a software program, deploy the Specification in a network service, and copy, modify, merge, publish, translate, distribute, sublicense, or sell copies of the Specification, and to permit persons to whom the Specification is furnished to do so, subject to the condition that the foregoing copyright notice and this permission notice shall be included in all copies or substantial portions of the Specification. Unless separate permission is granted, modified works that are redistributed shall not contain misleading information regarding the authors, title, number, or publisher of the Specification, and shall not claim endorsement of the modified works by the authors, any organization or project to which the authors belong, or the XMPP Standards Foundation.

Warranty

## NOTE WELL: This Specification is provided on an "AS IS" BASIS, WITHOUT WARRANTIES OR CONDITIONS OF ANY KIND, express or implied, including, without limitation, any warranties or conditions of TITLE, NON-INFRINGEMENT, MERCHANTABILITY, or FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. ##

Liability

In no event and under no legal theory, whether in tort (including negligence), contract, or otherwise, unless required by applicable law (such as deliberate and grossly negligent acts) or agreed to in writing, shall the XMPP Standards Foundation or any author of this Specification be liable for damages, including any direct, indirect, special, incidental, or consequential damages of any character arising from, out of, or in connection with the Specification or the implementation, deployment, or other use of the Specification (including but not limited to damages for loss of goodwill, work stoppage, computer failure or malfunction, or any and all other commercial damages or losses), even if the XMPP Standards Foundation or such author has been advised of the possibility of such damages.

Conformance

This XMPP Extension Protocol has been contributed in full conformance with the XSF’s Intellectual Property Rights Policy (a copy of which can be found at [https://xmpp.org/about/xsf/ipr-policy](https://xmpp.org/about/xsf/ipr-policy) or obtained by writing to XMPP Standards Foundation, P.O. Box 787, Parker, CO 80134 USA).
Contents

1 Introduction ............................................. 1
2 Signing .................................................. 1
3 Encrypting .............................................. 1
4 Security Considerations ............................. 2
5 Other Known Issues .................................. 3
6 IANA Considerations ................................. 3
7 XMPP Registrar Considerations .................. 3
8 XML Schemas .......................................... 4
    8.1 jabber:x:encrypted ............................... 4
    8.2 jabber:x:signed ................................. 4
1 Introduction

The Jabber community has long acknowledged the need for privacy and security features in a well-rounded instant messaging system. Unfortunately, finding a consensus solution to the problem of end-to-end encryption during the community’s younger days was not easy. Eventually, early contributors created a quick solution using OpenPGP (RFC 4880). This specification documents the OpenPGP solution as it is used today, so that others may interoperate with clients that support it. This document is not intended to present a standard, because more complete solutions are being investigated.

All operations described here are done with standard OpenPGP software such as GnuPG. All program output is US-ASCII armored output with the headers removed. This allows for easy transportation of the program output directly in the XML. All keys are exchanged using OpenPGP key servers, and usually are retrieved when a signed <presence/> stanza is received (key retrieval does not happen in-band).

2 Signing

Signing enables a sender to verify that they sent a certain block of text. In Jabber, signing uses the 'jabber:x:signed' namespace, and is primarily used with <presence/>, but may also be used with <message/>. The text that is signed MAY be the empty string. When signing presence, the sender SHOULD sign the XML character data of the <status> element. The sender SHOULD sign presence using the private key whose KeyID corresponds to the public key to be used in encrypting messages (see below).

Listing 1: A signed presence stanza

```
<presence from='pgmillard@jabber.org/wj_dev2' to='jer@jabber.org'>
  <status>Online</status>
  <x xmlns='jabber:x:signed'>
    iQA/AgUB0jU5dno13d88qZ77EPI2JACfRngLJ045brNnaCX78yKNUZaTIoAoPHI
    2uJxPMGR73EBIVpcv0LRSy+
    =45f8
  </x>
</presence>
```

3 Encrypting

Encryption enables the sender to encrypt a message to a specific recipient. This is accomplished using the 'jabber:x:encrypted' namespace in conjunction with <message/> stanzas. Because a block of text is necessary in order to have something to encrypt, <message/> stanzas intended to be encrypted have the same restrictions as signing (see above). The data

---

encrypted MUST be the XML character data of the <body> element. The sender SHOULD encrypt the message body using the public key whose KeyID corresponds to the private key used in signing presence (see above).

Listing 2: An encrypted message stanza

```xml
<message to='reatmon@jabber.org/jarl' from='pgmillard@jabber.org/wj_dev2'>
  <body>This message is encrypted.</body>
  <x xmlns='jabber:x:encrypted'>
    qANQR1DBwU4DX7jmYzncmcUQB/9KwKBddzQH+tZ1zYwK0yHKnq57kWq+RFTqCdJ
    WdpWPR0uQsuJe7+v23NWNn59/gTc5MD1X8dS9p0ovStmCnlyLhxVgmqS8ZKhsb1Veu
    lP08JgavABqibJo1c38KrvTtVv11igK1X/N7P18RTY1K18toaMDhDEfBHRzO/XB0+P
    AQhY1RjNacGs2khXqNjK5V4-tu0APy2n1Q8UUrHbUd0g+xJ9Bm0G0LZXyvCWyK
    kuNEHFq1LuCY6i1v0myq6i6X6tuHehZlFSH80b5Vv9tNlwnR5Eeqz1k1xMhohgJOA
    w7R61cCpT8Ksd8Vc18K+StqOMZ5wkhosVjUqveE8uJ9RupdpB/4me9E3gOQZCBSmq
    0s14/jJhn2w1fYYwdqkbKNmuYoKcnwr1mn6i+wX7Z2p0R8Ttv8peNCW9BETL/XS
    mhn4bCxoUKcITv3k8a+Jdvbov9ucedUSFucBq4/10fpHmPffHjqFofxamAWeFF
    619NxyYyCfo0LtMwkZ2AaTHVcjtKdf1WmcTa0vFf8BuHkdah6kJJi7w/yNwae/E
    06CMymuZTr/LpckKwWTc+SERxqmq8ekPI870nWmXZBYAa70J1rXWKNgL9pdNTI
    824Mf0mXj7q5N1eMHvX1QEOkLAdA/Ae3TTEevOyeUK1DEgvxfM2Kriz1Rzu+XtIE
    My/bJk7Ecaw8P/0QyewN10i1fxP58 VE6GB8NCPQOYn/LKh1+0+c20ZNPFPFM4bNV
    XA4hB4UtF7F7Aa0kpd1UrQdKyw41EtmmdemYQ6+iIIVPEarW19PxOMY90KAnZrSaq
    bt9uRY/1rPge1RaWb1MKvxpGR08+++Y8vJdeyGgM0x0iE851V72ftGskXbDh8mW
    TgYJ3p2aATmBp31agQ1COKG/S/xupovT5AQPA3RzbCxVc6s6eGYKmVQVj5vmsJ1
    WUlad5MB9Kt1DzCm6F05Y063nWGBYYMWiejRvGLp01j4eAnjQot7r7Wmgv3RkYF
    0in0V0oh7Ac
    =CvnG
  </x>
</message>
```

It is considered polite to include an unencrypted message <body/> explaining that the actual message body is encrypted. This helps if the client experiences an error while decrypting the message, or if the user’s client does not support encryption (although generally this should not happen, since the signed presence can be used to indicate that a client accepts encrypted messages).

## 4 Security Considerations

The method defined herein has the following security issues:

- Key exchange relies on the web of trust model used on the OpenPGP keys network.
- There is no mechanism for checking a fingerprint or ownership of a key other than checking the user IDs on a key.
7 XMPP Registrar Considerations

• When the recipient is not mentioned in the encrypted body, replay attacks are possible on messages.
• Replay of the signed <presence/> status is possible.
• It relies on signing or encryption of XML character data; therefore, it does not support signing or encryption of <iq/> stanzas, and it allows signing of the presence <status/> element and encryption of the message <body/> element only. Thus the method is not acceptable when signing or encryption of full stanzas is required.
• It does not enable both signing and encryption of a stanza, only signing of the presence status and encryption of the message body.

5 Other Known Issues

In addition to the security considerations listed above, there are several other known issues with this method:

• It is limited to PGP keys and does not support X.509 certificates, Kerberos, RSA keys, etc.
• It does not include feature negotiation; instead, signed <presence/> is used as an indicator of support. Because of the lack of negotiation it is possible for encrypted <message/> elements to be stored offline and then read by a client that cannot support them.
• It is verbose (the example encrypted <message/> is "Hi").

6 IANA Considerations

This document requires no interaction with the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA).

7 XMPP Registrar Considerations

The XMPP Registrar shall register the 'jabber:x:encrypted' and 'jabber:x:signed' namespaces as a result of this document.

2The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) is the central coordinator for the assignment of unique parameter values for Internet protocols, such as port numbers and URI schemes. For further information, see <http://www.iana.org/>.
3The XMPP Registrar maintains a list of reserved protocol namespaces as well as registries of parameters used in the context of XMPP extension protocols approved by the XMPP Standards Foundation. For further information, see <https://xmpp.org/registrar/>.
8 XML Schemas

8.1 jabber:x:encrypted

```xml
<?xml version='1.0' encoding='UTF-8'?>
<xs:schema
    xmlns:xs='http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema'
    targetNamespace='jabber:x:encrypted'
    xmlns='jabber:x:encrypted'
    elementFormDefault='qualified'>

    <xs:annotation>
        <xs:documentation>
            The protocol documented by this schema is defined in
            XEP-0027: http://www.xmpp.org/extensions/xep-0027.html
        </xs:documentation>
    </xs:annotation>

    <xs:element name='x' type='xs:string'/>

</xs:schema>
```

8.2 jabber:x:signed

```xml
<?xml version='1.0' encoding='UTF-8'?>
<xs:schema
    xmlns:xs='http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema'
    targetNamespace='jabber:x:signed'
    xmlns='jabber:x:signed'
    elementFormDefault='qualified'>

    <xs:annotation>
        <xs:documentation>
            The protocol documented by this schema is defined in
            XEP-0027: http://www.xmpp.org/extensions/xep-0027.html
        </xs:documentation>
    </xs:annotation>

    <xs:element name='x' type='xs:string'/>

</xs:schema>
```