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SIP WG
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SIP: Session Initiation Protocol – Locating SIP Servers

Status of this Memo

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Abstract

This document describes how a SIP client locates a SIP server based on the Request-URI or a preconfigured outbound proxy server. This document updates the process described in RFC 2543.

1 Introduction

This document updates Sections 1.3 and 1.4.2 and supersedes Appendix D of RFC 2543 [1]. Inter alia, it defines the term outbound proxy and replaces references to the obsoleted RFC 2052 with current references to RFC 2782.

1.1 Terminology

In this document, the key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" are to be interpreted as described in RFC 2119 [2] and indicate requirement levels for compliant SIP implementations.

1.2 Definitions

Outbound proxy: A *proxy* that is located near the originator of requests. It receives all outgoing requests **from** a particular UAC, including those requests whose Request-URIs identify a host other than the outbound proxy. The outbound proxy sends these requests, after any local processing, to the address indicated in the Request-URI. (All other proxy servers are simply referred as proxies, not *inbound* proxies.)

2 Locating a SIP Server

When a client wishes to send a request, the client either sends it to a locally configured SIP proxy server, the so-called *outbound proxy*, independent of the Request-URI, or sends it to the IP address and port corresponding to the Request-URI. The outbound proxy can be configured by any mechanism, including DHCP [3] and can be specified either as a set of parameters such as network address or host name, protocol port and transport protocol, or as a SIP URI.

If the Request-URI is used, the client needs to determine the protocol, port and IP address of a server to which to send the request. A client SHOULD follow the steps below to obtain this information.

UACs and stateful proxies SHOULD determine the destination address once per transaction rather than for each request, i.e., requests within the same transaction SHOULD be sent to the same network address. However, a stateless proxy MUST always select the same destination within the set of hosts with the same SRV priority. This can be accomplished, for example, by using the modulo N of a hash of the Call-ID value or some other combination of transaction-identifying headers as the uniform random number described in the weighting algorithm of RFC 2782. Here, N is the sum of weights within the priority class.

A client SHOULD be able to interpret explicit network notifications (such as ICMP messages) which indicate that a server is not reachable, rather than relying solely on timeouts. (For socket-based programs: For TCP, `connect()` returns `ECONNREFUSED` if the client could not connect to a server at that address. For UDP, the socket needs to be bound to the destination address using `connect()` rather than `sendto()` or similar so that a second `write()` or `send()` fails with `ECONNREFUSED` if there is no server listening) If the client finds the server is not reachable at a particular address, it SHOULD behave as if it had received a 400-class error response to that request.

The client tries to find one or more addresses for the SIP server by querying DNS. If a step elicits no addresses, the client continues to the next step. However if a step elicits one or more addresses, but no SIP server at any of those addresses responds, then the client concludes the server is down and does not continue on to the next step.

If the client is configured with the address of an outbound proxy, the parameters of the outbound proxy, including transport protocol and port, become the *destination* used below.

If there is no outbound proxy, the destination is the Request-URI. The destination address is the maddr parameter if it exists and the host element if not. The transport protocol is the transport parameter.

The service identifier for DNS SRV records [4] is "_sip".

1. If the destination address is a numeric IP address, the client contacts the server at the given address and the port number specified in the SIP-URI or, if not specified, the default port (5060).

   If the destination specifies a protocol, the client contacts the server using that protocol. If no protocol is specified, the client first tries UDP. If attempt fails, or if the client does not support UDP but supports other protocols, it tries those protocols in some implementation-defined order.

   The client then skips the remaining steps.

2. If the destination specifies no port number or port number 5060, the transport protocol determines the use of one of the following three rules:

   - If the destination does not specify a transport protocol, DNS SRV records are retrieved according to RFC 2782 [4]. The results of the query or queries are merged and ordered based on priority, keeping only records with transport protocols that the client supports. Then, the searching technique outlined in RFC 2782 [4] is used to select servers in order. Server selection across requests

is independent of previous choices, except as noted above for stateless proxies. Message length or other request properties do not influence the server selection. The client attempts to contact each server in the order listed, at the port number specified in the SRV record. If none of the servers can be contacted, the client gives up. If there are no SRV records (with any transport protocol), DNS address records are used, as described below.

- If a transport protocol is specified and this protocol is supported by the client, the procedure in the paragraph above is used, limited to DNS resource records with the transport protocol specified in the SIP-URI.
- If the transport protocol specified is not supported by the client, the client gives up.

If there are no SRV records, the next step applies.

3. If the destination specifies a port number other than 5060 or if there are no SRV records, the client queries the DNS server for address records for the destination address. Address records include A RR's, AAAA RR's, or other similar records, chosen according to the client's network protocol capabilities.

   If the DNS server returns no address records, the client gives up. If there are address records, the same rules as in step 2 apply.

Clients MUST NOT cache query results except according to the rules in RFC 1035 [5].

3 Security Considerations

The security considerations in RFC 2543 [1] apply.

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