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 - When listing two or more works by one author, use --- (20xx), such as after Kohl (1997), use --- (2001), etc, in chronologically ascending order.
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SECURING E-COMMERCE WEBSITES THROUGH SSL/TLS

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ABSTRACT

Since the Web came into usage, more and more organizations are looking forward for providing services 24 by7 and 365 days to their users or customers. Updating the information as and when necessary has become need of the hour. Now a day's all the different transactions can be done online without much delay. Due to which, security has become a concern for the organizations that are providing services to the customer's online using e-commerce websites. But, as more and more options are coming up, websites are becoming vulnerable to attacks by eavesdropper, hackers whose main motive is to collect the information and tampering with the data, which leads to loss in business. Organizations are investing billions of money in securing their businesses. This paper gives an insight about how security could be provided to the E-commerce websites using different security techniques like SSL, basic concepts of SSL working and the existence of TLS for better security

KEYWORDS

Web, Eavesdropper, Hackers, E-commerce, SSL.

INTRODUCTION

The basic prerequisite of successful E-commerce website is the security it provides. And to prevent important information of users such as credit card number and transaction information from stealing and modifying on the internet, the security mechanisms like SSL or TLS have been adopted in present E-commerce websites. The reason for using such security techniques are, that there are many threats to the E-commerce application which takes place each time data is entered. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL), are cryptographic protocols that provide communication security over the Internet. TLS and SSL encrypt the segments of network connections at the Transport Layer, using asymmetric cryptography for key exchange, symmetric encryption for privacy, and message authentication codes for message integrity.

1. LIFE ON THE WEB WITHOUT SSL

Let us compare communications between computers on the Internet and communications between people over the telephone. Without SSL, your computer-to-computer communications suffer from the same security problems from which your telephone communications suffer:

- ➔ **Who are you talking to?** In a phone conversation, how can you be sure that the person who picks up the phone at the other end is really the person you are trying to call (especially if you have never spoken to them before)? What if your phone call was intercepted or re-routed, or what if someone else is answering your call recipient's phone? There really is no way to be sure you have reached the right person, especially if they are actively trying to fool you.
- ➔ **Eavesdropping?** As you are aware of from watching TV or reading, it is very easy to tap phone lines: the police and spies do this all the time to covertly gather information. It is not easy to detect if your lines are tapped. The same applies with communications over the Internet — how can you be sure that your communications are not being "tapped" and recorded? This is especially problematic in public wifi hotspots.

This results in two very real security issues for communications over the Internet:

1. Knowing for sure that you are connecting to the right servers (i.e. those at your bank and not those at a hacker's or phisher's web site).
2. Knowing that your data is safe from prying eyes during transit to those computers. This is where SSL comes in

2. HOW SSL CAME INTO EXISTENCE

SSL is a Netscape protocol created in 1992, which is basically used to exchange information securely between client browser and the server machine. It is a solution which is provided to implement security over the network to the users who are accessing the web. This is a protocol which sits between the transport layer and the application layer. There are two approaches to implement this protocol. Firstly, it could be provided as part of the underlying protocol suite and therefore be transparent to applications. Secondly, SSL can be embedded in specific packages.

2.1 UNDERSTANDING SSL

Varied options are available to access the Internet, as there exists dozens of independent systems. Due to easy availability unauthorized users can steal credit card numbers, PIN numbers, personal data, and other confidential information.

The Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) protocol was developed to transfer information privately and securely across the Internet. SSL is layered beneath application protocols such as HTTP, SMTP, and FTP and above the connection protocol TCP/IP. It is used by the HTTPS access method. Transport Layer Security (TLS) is the successor of Secure Sockets Layer (SSL); they are both cryptographic protocols that provide secure communications on the Internet for such things as web browsing, e-mail, Internet faxing, instant messaging, and other data transfers.

SSL uses public/private keys to provide a flexible encryption scheme that can be setup at the time of the secure transaction.

In typical encryption schemes the client and server would be required to use a secret key that has been preconfigured in the client and the server machines. In such a scheme, the client would use the secret key to encrypt the data. The server would use the same secret key to decrypt the data. Same logic applies in the server to client direction. These types of preconfigured secret keys are not suitable for Web based secure services that involve millions of users who have no prior secret key arrangement with the secure server.

SSL solves this problem by using asymmetric keys. These keys are defined in pairs of public and private keys. As the name suggests the public key is freely available to anybody. The private key is known only to the server. The keys have two important properties:

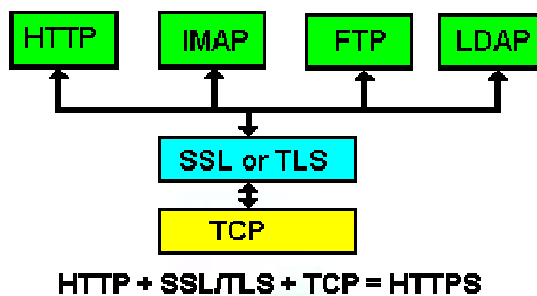
- (1) Data encrypted by the client using the public key can be decrypted only by the server's private key. Due to this property of the keys, the client is able to send secure data that can be understood only by the server.
- (2) Data encrypted to by the server's private key can only be decrypted using the public key. This property is useful in a client level authentication of the server. If the server sends a known message (say the name of the server), the client can be sure that it is talking to the authentic server and not an imposter if it is successfully able to decrypt the message using the public key.

Note that property (1) allows us to use conventional secret keys. A secret key can be sent by the client as data that has been encrypted using the public key. This secret key can be decrypted only by the server. Once the server gets the key, the client and the server are able to communicate using this secret key.

The public/private key based encryption is used only for handshaking and secret key exchange. Once the keys have been exchanged the symmetric secret keys are used. This is done for two reasons:

- (1) Public/private key based encryption techniques are computationally very expensive thus their use should be minimized.
- (2) The secret key mechanism is needed for server to client communication.

SSL/TLS runs on top of TCP but below the end user protocol that it secures such as HTTP or IMAP as shown in following Figure:



2.2 HOW SSL WORKS

The working of the SSL requires a client machine in the form of web server and web site server. The client side initiates the transaction and the server responds to the request for the transaction. During the request- response process SSL follows three different steps.

1. A session is initialised between the client and the server by Handshake protocol.
2. When the server authenticates the handshake protocol, data is transferred under the Record Protocol phase.
3. Alert protocol describes the severity of the message and description of the alert. If there are any alarms during the session, the alert is attached to the questionable packet and handled according to the alert protocol.

The four protocol layers of the SSL protocol (Record Layer, ChangeCipherSpec Protocol, Alert Protocol, and Handshake Protocol) encapsulate all communication between the client machine and the server.

2.2.1 RECORD LAYER

The record layer formats the Alert, ChangeCipherSpec, Handshake and application protocol messages. This formatting provides a header for each message, and a hash, generated from a Message Authentication Code (MAC) at the end. The fields that comprise the five-byte header of the Record Layer are: Protocol Definition (1byte), Protocol Version (2 bytes) and the Length (2 bytes). The protocol messages that follow the header cannot be longer than 16,384 bytes, as specified by the SSL protocol. (Thomas, 70)

2.2.2 CHANGECIPHERSPEC PROTOCOL

The ChangeCipherSpec layer is composed of one message that signals the beginning of secure communications between the client and server. Though the ChangeCipherSpec Protocol uses the Record Layer format, the actual ChangeCipherSpec message is only one byte long, and signals the change in communications protocol by having a value of '1'.

2.2.3 ALERT PROTOCOL

This protocol sends errors, problems or warnings about the connection between the two parties. This layer is formed with two fields: the Severity Level and Alert Description.

- **Severity Level**

The Severity Level sends messages with a '1' or '2' value, depending on the level of concern. A message with a value of '1' is a cautionary or warning message, suggesting that the parties discontinue their session and reconnect using a new handshake. A message with a value of '2' is a fatal alert message, and requires that the parties discontinue their session.

- **Alert Description**

The Alert Description field indicates the specific error that caused the Alert Message to be sent from a party. This field is one byte, mapped to one of twelve specific numbers, and can take on one of the following meanings. Those descriptions that always follow a "fatal" alert message are underlined>. (Thomas, 73)

CloseNotify	UnexpectedMessage	BadRecordMAC	DecompressionFailure
HandshakeFailure	NoCertificate	BadCertificate	UnsupportedCertificate
CertificateRevoked	CertificateExpired	CertificateUnknown	IllegalParamete

2.2.4 SSL HANDSHAKE

The client always authenticates the server, and the server has the option of also authenticating the client. In general, Web servers do not authenticate the client during the Handshake Protocol because the server has other ways to verify the client other than SSL. For e-commerce, the Web-site server can verify the credit card number externally from the SSL session. In this way, the server can reserve precious processing resources for encrypted transactions.

During the Handshake Protocol, the following important steps take place: the session capabilities are negotiated, meaning the encryption (ciphers) algorithms are negotiated; and the server is authenticated to the client.

SSL uses symmetric cryptography for the bulk data encryption during the transfer phase; however, asymmetric cryptography, (that is, PKI) is used to negotiate the key used for that symmetric encryption. This exchange is critical to the Handshake Protocol. Note that the server may optionally ask the client to authenticate itself. However, it is not necessary to the protocol.

1. The handshake begins when a client connects to an SSL-enabled server, requests a secure connection, and presents a list of supported ciphers and versions.
2. From this list, the server picks the strongest cipher and hash function that it also supports and notifies the client of the decision.
3. Additionally, the server sends back its identification in the form of a digital certificate. The certificate usually contains the server name, the trusted certificate authority (CA), and the server's public encryption key. The server may require client authentication via a signed certificate as well (required for some on-line banking operations); however, many organizations choose not to widely deploy client-side certificates due to the overhead involved in managing a public key infrastructure (PKI).
4. The client verifies that the certificate is valid and that a Certificate Authority (CA) listed in the client's list of trusted CAs issued it. These CA certificates are typically locally configured.
5. If it determines that the certificate is valid, the client generates a master secret, encrypts it with the server's public key, and sends the result to the server. When the server receives the master secret, it decrypts it with its private key. Only the server can decrypt it using its private key.
6. The client and server then convert the master secret to a set of symmetric keys called a key ring or the session keys. These symmetric keys are common keys that the server and browser can use to encrypt and decrypt data. This is the one fact that makes the keys hidden from third parties, since only the server and the client have access to the private keys.
7. This concludes the handshake and begins the secured connection allowing the bulk data transfer, which is encrypted and decrypted with the keys until the connection closes. If any one of the above steps fails, the SSL handshake fails, and the connection is not created.

Though the authentication and encryption process may seem rather involved, it happens in less than a second. Generally, the user does not even know it is taking place. However, the user is able to tell when the secure tunnel has been established since most SSL-enabled web browsers display a small closed lock at the bottom (or top) of their screen when the connection is secure. Users can also identify secure web sites by looking at the web site address; a secure web site's address begins with https rather than the usual http.

4. SSL CRYPTO ALGORITHMS

SSL supports variety of cryptographic algorithms or ciphers.

- Key exchange algorithm: The asymmetric key algorithm used to exchange the symmetric key. RSA and Diffie Hellman are common examples.
- Public key algorithm: The asymmetric key algorithm used for authentication. This decides the type of certificates used. RSA and DSA are common examples.
- Bulk encryption algorithm: The symmetric algorithm used for encrypting data. RC4, AES, and Triple-DES are common examples.
- Message digest algorithm: The algorithm used to perform integrity checks. MD5 and SHA-1 are common examples.

5. SSL VERSIONS

SSL brought different versions like SSLv2.0, SSLv3.0 but these protocols suffered from various vulnerabilities.

The SSLv2.0 protocol suffers from

- Re-usage of key material (message authentication and encryption) thus, in case of EXPORT ciphers unnecessarily weakening the MAC (not required by export restrictions)
- Ciphers marked as "Export" have an arbitrary small key size and can be cracked easily with today's hardware.
- weak MAC construction and supports only MD5 hash function
- padding length field is unauthenticated
- Downgrade attack – an attacker may downgrade the encryption to the lowest available and after doing so crack the keys.
- Truncation attacks – The attacker may reset the TCP connection.

Then the SSLv3.0 came into existence. In the:

1. SSL Version 3.0 handshake protocol flows are different than SSL Version 2.0 handshake flows.
2. SSL Version 3.0 uses the BSAFE 3.0 implementation from RSA Data Security, Inc. BSAFE 3.0 includes a number of timing attack fixes and the SHA-1 hashing algorithm. The SHA-1 hashing algorithm is considered to be more secure than the MD5 hashing algorithm. Having SHA-1 allows SSL Version 3.0 to support additional cipher suites which use SHA-1 instead of MD5.
3. SSL Version 3.0 protocol reduces man-in-the-middle (MITM) type of attacks from occurring during SSL handshake processing. In SSL Version 2.0, it was possible, though unlikely, that a MITM attack could accomplish cipher specification weakening. Weakening the cipher could possibly allow an unauthorized person to break the SSL session key since the secret material within the generate secret key would be considerable shorter.

Differences between SSLv3 and SSLv2

- Key material is no longer reused in both Message authentication and encryption making suites marked as EXPORT, "stronger".
- MAC construction enhanced and support for SHA1 added
- SSLv3 adds protection of the Handshake, server-side can detect downgrade attacks
- SSLv3 adds support for a closure alert.

Both SSL2 and SSL3 have 16-bit (two-byte) version number fields. SSL2 interprets this as a single 16-bit integer, and the official number is 2, e.g. 0x0002. SSL3 interprets two-byte version numbers as a one byte "major" number and a one byte "minor" (or fractional) number. So the value 0x0002 is interpreted by SSL3 as version

Differences between TLS v1 and SSLv3

0.2, not 2.0.

After SSL, TLS came into existence which supersedes SSL. SSL v3.0 was actually renamed into TLS. SSL version 3.0 and its designated successor protocol Transport Layer Security (TLS) 1.0, which the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) published for the first time in 1999 [RFC2246]. The IETF published the most recent Internet-Draft for TLS 1.1 in Oct. 2002 [TLS]. The TLS 1.0 specification described itself as being similar to but not backwards compatible with the SSL 3.0 specification. It did include a fallback mechanism for SSL 3.0 if TLS was not available. The IETF made some small changes and clarifications and published RFC4346 in 2006 detailing TLS 1.1. There is currently a working draft for TLS 1.2 (RFC Draft 4346) which expired in September 2007. Then came different versions of TLS and every new version is loaded with more security parameters providing safe data transfer over web.

Differences between TLS v1 and SSLv3

- Expansion of cryptographic keys from the initially exchanged secret was improved
- MAC construction mechanism modified into an HMAC
- Mandatory support for Diffie-Hellman key exchange, the Digital Signature Standard, and Triple-DES encryption

Differences between TLS v1.1 and TLS v1.3

- The implicit Initialization Vector (IV) is replaced with an explicit IV to protect against CBC attacks⁴
- Handling of padding errors is changed to use the bad_record_mac
- Alert rather than the decryption_failed alert to protect against CBC attacks
- IANA registries are defined for protocol parameters.
- Premature closes no longer cause a session to be nonresumable.
- Additional informational notes were added for various new attacks on TLS

Differences between TLSv1.2 and TLSv1.1.5

- SHA-256 is the default digest method
- Several new cipher suites use SHA-256
- It has better ways to negotiate what signature algorithms the client supports
- Alerts are mandatory now be sent in many cases
- After a certificate_request, if no certificates are available, clients now MUST send an empty certificate list
- TLS_RSA_WITH_AES_128_CBC_SHA is now the mandatory to implement cipher suite
- Added HMAC-SHA256 cipher suites
- Removed IDEA and DES cipher suites, they are now deprecated.
- Support for the SSLv2 backward-compatible is now optional only.

RECOMMENDATION

After studying about SSL and TLS, it has been seen in paper that TLS provides better security measures for the websites which provides transactions and minimize the risk of tampering the data by the hackers, eavesdropper.

6. CONCLUSION

Security has always been a concern to the organizations which are dealing with the transactions at bulk. And to provide security they are looking for different security techniques which are successful in E-commerce websites. This paper highlights how SSL worked and the algorithms being used and how TLS takes the place and supersedes SSL and provide better security measures before the final transactions take place.

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