CSE 490K

Network Security

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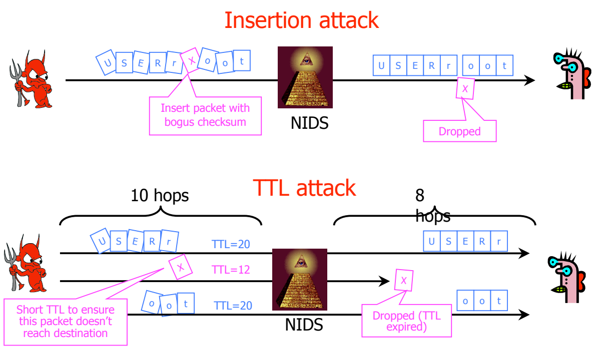
Some slides based on Vitaly Shmatikov's

Detecting Attack Strings Is Hard

- Want to detect "USER root" in packet stream
- Scanning for it in every packet is not enough
  - Attacker can split attack string into several packets; this will defeat stateless NIDS
- Recording previous packet's text is not enough
  - Attacker can send packets out of order
- Full reassembly of TCP state is not enough
  - Attacker can use TCP tricks so that certain packets are seen by NIDS but dropped by the receiving application
    - Manipulate checksums, TTL (time-to-live), fragmentation

TCP Attacks on NIDS



Anomaly Detection with NIDS

- Advantage: can recognize new attacks and new versions of old attacks
- Disadvantages
  - High false positive rate
  - Must be trained on known good data
    - Training is hard because network traffic is very diverse
  - Protocols are finite-state machines, but current state of a connection is difficult to see from the network
  - Definition of "normal" constantly evolves
    - What's the difference between a flash crowd and a denial of service attack?

Intrusion Detection Problems

- Lack of training data with real attacks
  - But lots of "normal" network traffic, system call data
- Data drift
  - Statistical methods detect changes in behavior
  - Attacker can attack gradually and incrementally
- Main characteristics not well understood
  - By many measures, attack may be within bounds of "normal" range of activities
- False identifications are very costly
  - Sysadm will spend many hours examining evidence

Intrusion Detection Errors

- False negatives: attack is not detected
  - Big problem in signature-based misuse detection
- False positives: harmless behavior is classified as an attack
  - Big problem in statistical anomaly detection
- Both types of IDS suffer from both error types
- Which is a bigger problem?
  - Attacks are fairly rare events

Conditional Probability

- Suppose two events A and B occur with probability Pr(A) and Pr(B), respectively
- Let Pr(AB) be probability that both A and B occur
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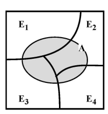
$$\Pr(A \mid B) = \frac{\Pr(AB)}{\Pr(B)}$$

Bayes' Theorem

- Suppose mutually exclusive events $E_1, \ldots, E_n$ together cover the entire set of possibilities
- Then probability of any event A occurring is

  $\Pr(A) = \Sigma_{1 \le i \le n} \Pr(A \mid E_i) \bullet \Pr(E_i)$

  – Intuition: since $E_1, \ldots, E_n$ cover entire probability space, whenever A occurs, some event E_i must have occurred



- Can rewrite this formula as

$$\Pr(E_i \mid A) = \frac{\Pr(A \mid E_i) \bullet \Pr(E_i)}{\Pr(A)}$$

Base-Rate Fallacy

- 1% of traffic is SYN floods; IDS accuracy is 90%
  - IDS classifies a SYN flood as attack with prob. 90%, classifies a valid connection as attack with prob. 10%
- What is the probability that a connection flagged by IDS as a SYN flood is actually valid traffic?

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$$= \frac{0.10 \cdot 0.99}{0.10 \cdot 0.99 + 0.90 \cdot 0.01}$$

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$$= \frac{0.10 \cdot 0.99}{0.10 \cdot 0.99 + 0.90 \cdot 0.01}$$

= 92% chance raised alarm is false!!!

Network Telescopes and Honeypots

- Monitor a cross-section of Internet address space
  - Especially useful if includes unused "dark space"
- Attacks in far corners of the Internet may produce traffic directed at your addresses
  - "Backscatter": responses of DoS victims to randomly spoofed IP addresses
  - Random scanning by worms
- Can combine with "honeypots"
  - Any outbound connection from a "honeypot" behind an otherwise unused IP address means infection (why?)
  - Can use this to extract worm signatures (how?)

Anonymity

Privacy on Public Networks

- Internet is designed as a public network
  - Machines on your LAN may see your traffic, network routers see all traffic that passes through them
- Routing information is public
  - IP packet headers identify source and destination
  - Even a passive observer can easily figure out who is talking to whom
- Encryption does not hide identities
  - Encryption hides payload, but not routing information
  - Even IP-level encryption (tunnel-mode IPSec/ESP) reveals IP addresses of IPSec gateways

Applications of Anonymity (I)

- Privacy
  - Hide online transactions, Web browsing, etc. from intrusive governments, marketers and archivists
- Untraceable electronic mail
  - Corporate whistle-blowers
  - Political dissidents
  - Socially sensitive communications (online AA meeting)
  - Confidential business negotiations
- Law enforcement and intelligence
  - Sting operations and honeypots
  - Secret communications on a public network

Applications of Anonymity (II)

- Digital cash
  - Electronic currency with properties of paper money (online purchases unlinkable to buyer's identity)
- Anonymous electronic voting
- Censorship-resistant publishing

What is Anonymity?

- Anonymity is the state of being not identifiable within a set of subjects
  - You cannot be anonymous by yourself!
    - Big difference between anonymity and confidentiality
  - Hide your activities among others' similar activities
- Unlinkability of action and identity
  - For example, sender and his email are no more related after observing communication than they were before
- Unobservability (hard to achieve)
  - Any item of interest (message, event, action) is indistinguishable from any other item of interest

Attacks on Anonymity

- Passive traffic analysis
  - Infer from network traffic who is talking to whom
  - To hide your traffic, must carry other people's traffic!
- Active traffic analysis
  - Inject packets or put a timing signature on packet flow
- Compromise of network nodes
  - Attacker may compromise some routers
  - It is not obvious which nodes have been compromised
    - Attacker may be passively logging traffic
  - Better not to trust any individual router
    - Assume that some fraction of routers is good, don't know which

Chaum's Mix

- Early proposal for anonymous email
  - David Chaum. "Untraceable electronic mail, return addresses, and digital pseudonyms". Communications of the ACM, February 1981.
- Public key crypto + trusted re-mailer (Mix)
  - Untrusted communication medium
  - Public keys used as persistent pseudonyms
- Modern anonymity systems use Mix as the basic building block

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  Before spam, people thought anonymous email was a good idea ☺
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Basic Mix Design

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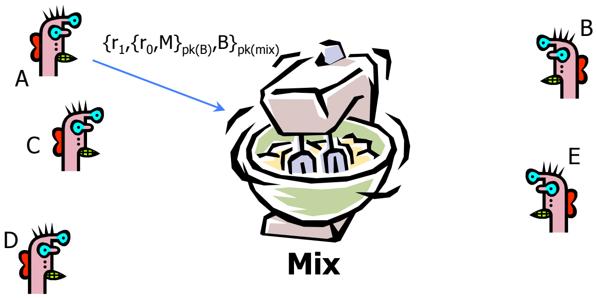

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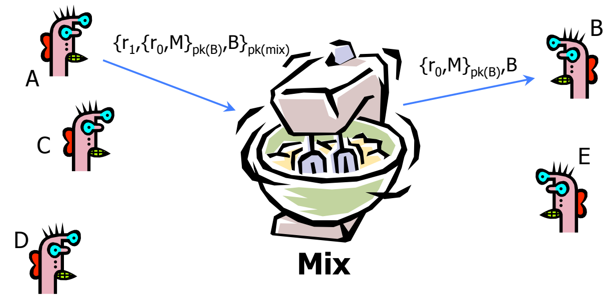

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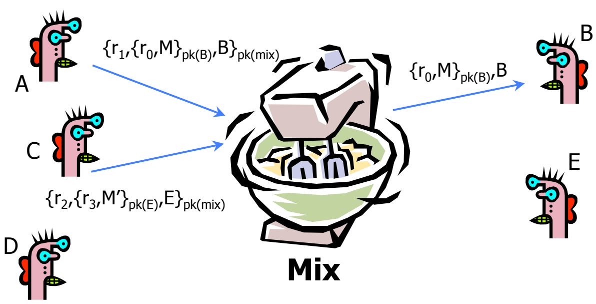

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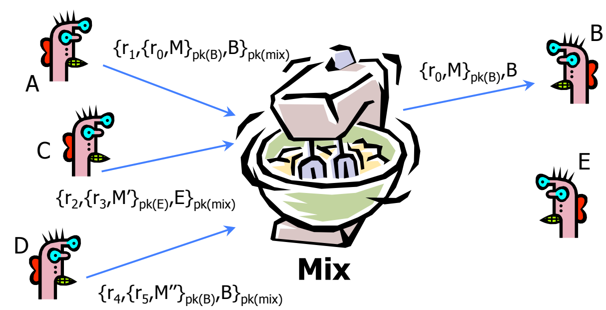

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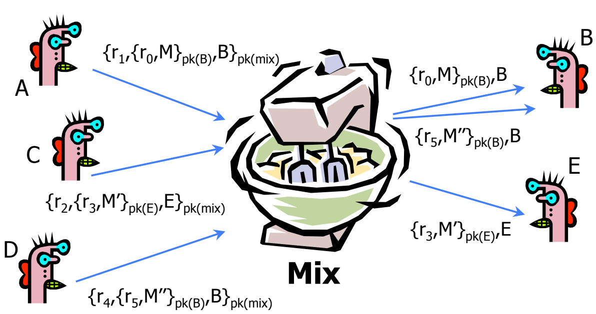

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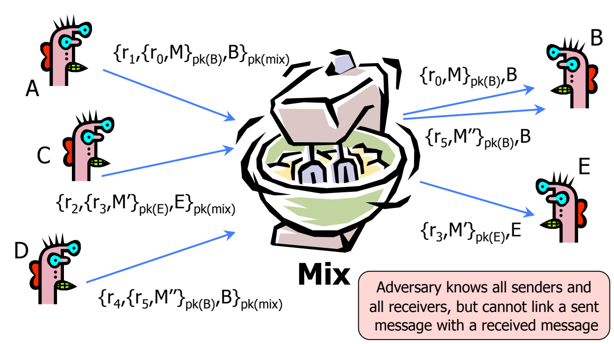
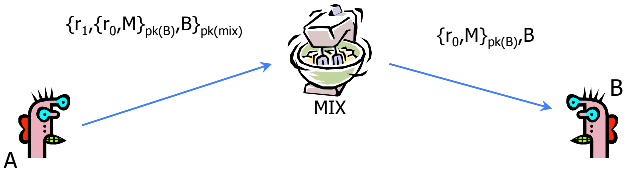


Anonymous Return Addresses



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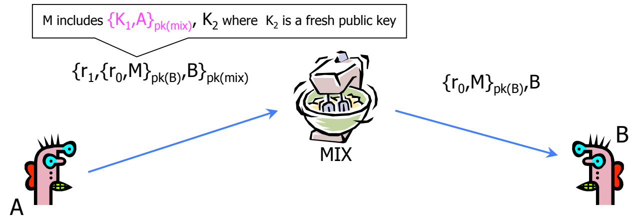

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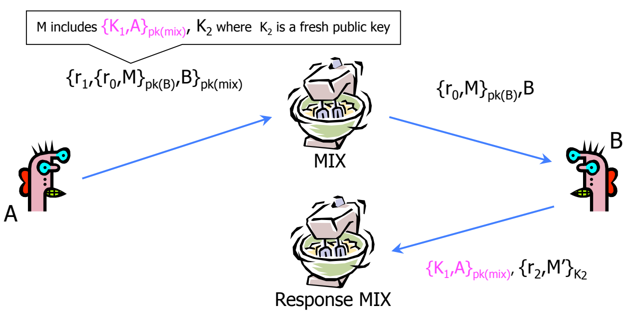

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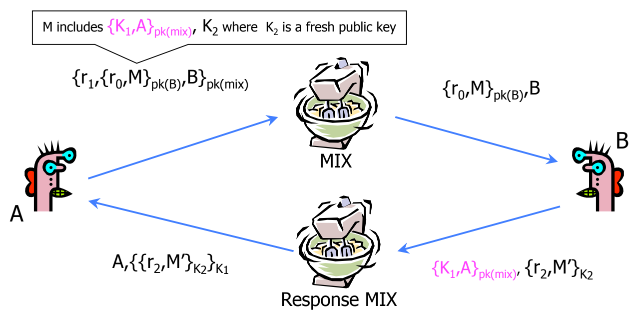
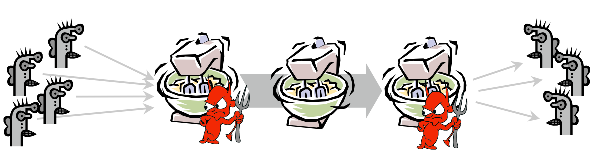


Mix Cascade

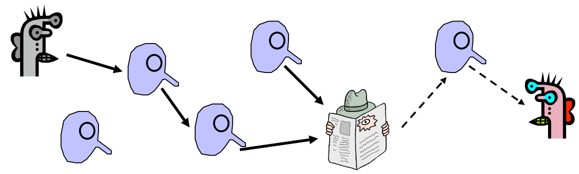


- Messages are sent through a sequence of mixes
  - Can also form an arbitrary network of mixes ("mixnet")
- Some of the mixes may be controlled by attacker, but even a single good mix guarantees anonymity
- Pad and buffer traffic to foil correlation attacks

Disadvantages of Basic Mixnets

- Public-key encryption and decryption at each mix are computationally expensive
- Basic mixnets have high latency
  - Ok for email, not Ok for anonymous Web browsing
- Challenge: low-latency anonymity network
  - Use public-key cryptography to establish a "circuit" with pairwise symmetric keys between hops on the circuit
  - Then use symmetric decryption and re-encryption to move data messages along the established circuits
  - Each node behaves like a mix; anonymity is preserved even if some nodes are compromised

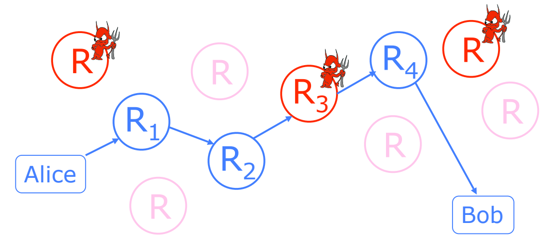
Another Idea: Randomized Routing



- Hide message source by routing it randomly
  - Popular technique: Crowds, Freenet, Onion routing
- Routers don't know for sure if the apparent source of a message is the true sender or another router

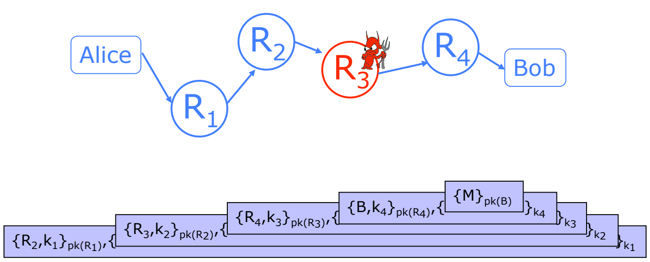
Onion Routing

[Reed, Syverson, Goldschlag '97]



- Sender chooses a random sequence of routers
  - Some routers are honest, some controlled by attacker
  - Sender controls the length of the path

Route Establishment



- Routing info for each link encrypted with router's public key
- Each router learns only the identity of the next router

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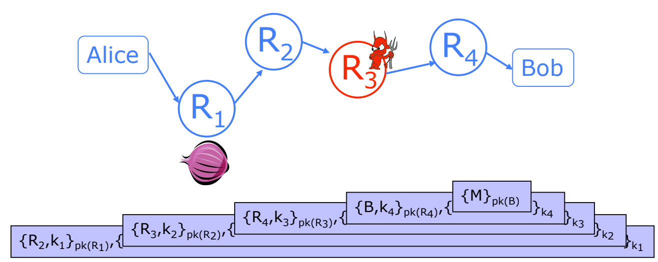

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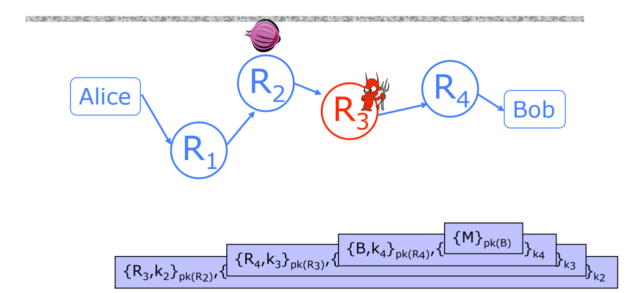

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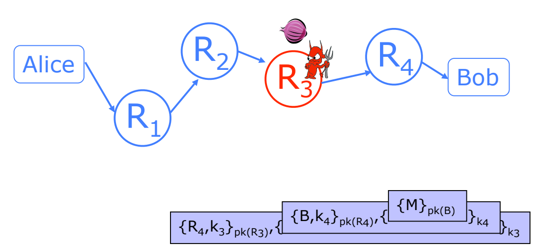

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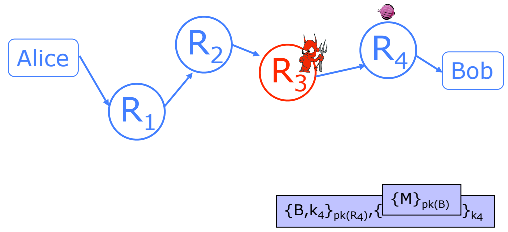

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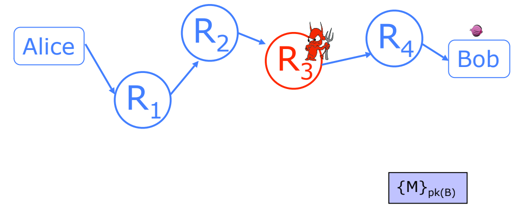

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Tor

- Second-generation onion routing network
  - http://tor.eff.org
  - Developed by Roger Dingledine, Nick Mathewson and Paul Syverson
  - Specifically designed for low-latency anonymous Internet communications
- Running since October 2003
- 100 nodes on four continents, thousands of users
- "Easy-to-use" client proxy
  - Freely available, can use it for anonymous browsing

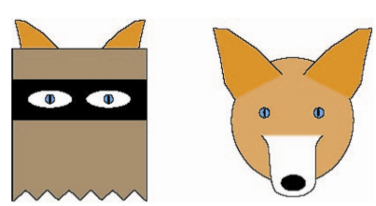
Tor Management Issues

- Many applications can share one circuit
  - Multiple TCP streams over one anonymous connection
- Tor router doesn't need root privileges
  - Encourages people to set up their own routers
  - More participants = better anonymity for everyone
- Directory servers
  - Maintain lists of active onion routers, their locations, current public keys, etc.
  - Control how new routers join the network
    - "Sybil attack": attacker creates a large number of routers
  - Directory servers' keys ship with Tor code

Deployed Anonymity Systems

- Free Haven project has an excellent bibliography on anonymity
  - http://freehaven.net
- Tor (http://tor.eff.org)
  - Overlay circuit-based anonymity network
  - Best for low-latency applications such as anonymous Web browsing
- Mixminion (http://www.mixminion.net)
  - Network of mixes
  - Best for high-latency applications such as anonymous email

FoxTor, Images from http://cups.cs.cmu.edu/foxtor/



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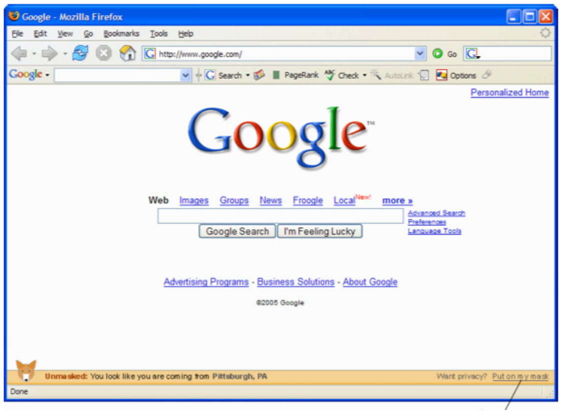

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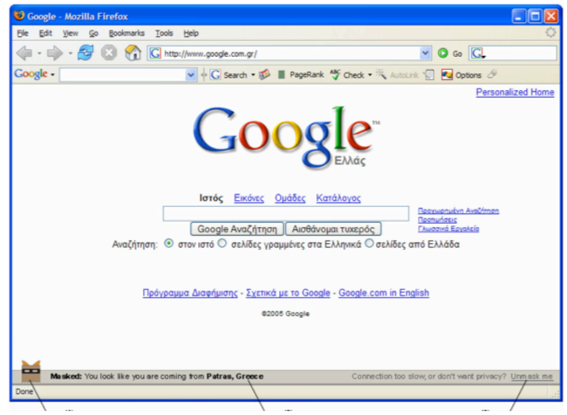


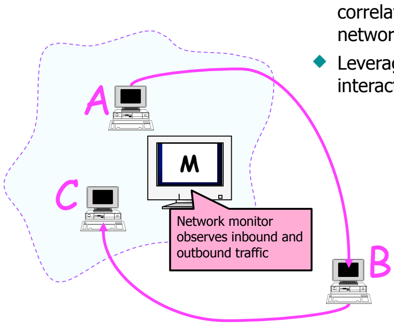
Information Leakage

Stepping Stones (courtesy of Yin Zhang)

- IP traceback helps discover machines from which attack packets originate
  - These often have remote-controlled zombie daemons
  - Analysis of zombies can help trace back to masters
- Compromised host often has a root backdoor
  - E.g., attacker runs TFN masters through root shell
  - Standard service on a non-standard port or standard port associated with a different service
  - Attacker connects from yet another machine
- Stepping stone: compromised intermediary host used by attacker to hide his identity

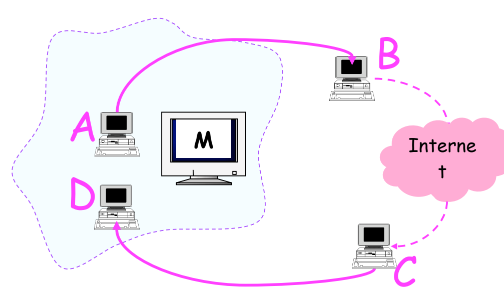
General Principle

- Find invariant or at least highly correlated characteristics of network links used by attacker
- Leverage particulars of how interactive traffic behaves

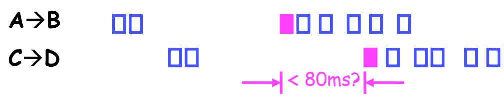


Indirect Stepping Stones

- Indirect stepping stone: "A-B … C-D" vs. "A-B-C"



Timing Correlation of Idle Periods



- Idle period = no activity for ≥ 0.5 sec
  - Consider only when idle periods end to reduce analysis possibilities
- Two idle periods are considered correlated if their ending times differ by < 80ms
  - Works even on encrypted traffic!
- Detection criteria
  - # of coincidences / # of idle periods
  - # of consecutive coincidences
  - # of consecutive coincidences / # of idle periods

Failures

- Large number of legitimate stepping stones
- Very small stepping stones evade detection
  - Limits attackers to a few keystrokes
- Message broadcast applications lead to correlations that are not stepping stones
  - Can filter these out
- Phase-drift in periodic traffic leads to false coincidences
  - Can filter these out, too