

Summer School on real-world crypto and privacy 2023



Practical Side-Channel Attacks on Real-World ECDSA Implementations

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CRoCS

Centre for Research on
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About us

- CROCS, Masaryk University
- Ján Jančár
 - PhD Candidate @ CROCS
 - <https://neuromancer.sk/>
- Łukasz Chmielewski
 - Assistant Professor @ CROCS
 - Interested in practical aspects of SCA and FI



Thank you to Milan Šorf for help!

Main Goals

- Give you an impression of the attack surface on the Elliptic Curve Digital Signature (ECDSA) algorithm with respect to Side-Channel Analysis and Fault Injection (FI)
- Give you practical experience on nonce-related attacks on ECDSA.
- Describe the Minerva vulnerability and show how to exploit
 - Exercises!
- **Disclaimer:** there will be a lot of technical details so it OK not to grasp everything
 - This is NOT a tutorial on ECC, ChipWhisperer, generic SCA...

Outline

- A (very) brief introduction to:
 - Side-Channel Analysis (SCA) and Fault Injection (FI)
 - Elliptic Curve Cryptography (ECC)
- ECDSA & (Selected) Attacks on ECDSA
- Practical Exercises
 - Did everyone install the tooling / VM?
- Countermeasures & Conclusions

(VERY BRIEF) INTRO TO SIDE-CHANNEL ANALYSIS AND FAULT INJECTION

Why Is Hardware Security Important?

Card / Money Theft



Identity Theft



- **Premium Content**



Phone / Money Theft



Impersonation



Recent Practical Attacks

November 13, 2019



May 28, 2020

LadderLeak: Side-channel security flaws exploited to break ECDSA cryptography



SCA Titan: January 7, 2021



October 3, 2019

Researchers Discover ECDSA Key Recovery Method

October 3, 2019 - Add Comment - by Emma Davis



December 12, 2019

Intel's SGX coughs up crypto keys when scientists tweak CPU voltage

Install fixes when they become available. Until then, don't sweat it.

DAN GOODIN - 12/10/2019, 11:41 PM





Introduction:

Side Channel Analysis



Side Channels

- Time
- Power
- Electro Magnetic Emanations
- Light
- Sound
- Temperature
- ...

Passive vs Active Side Channels

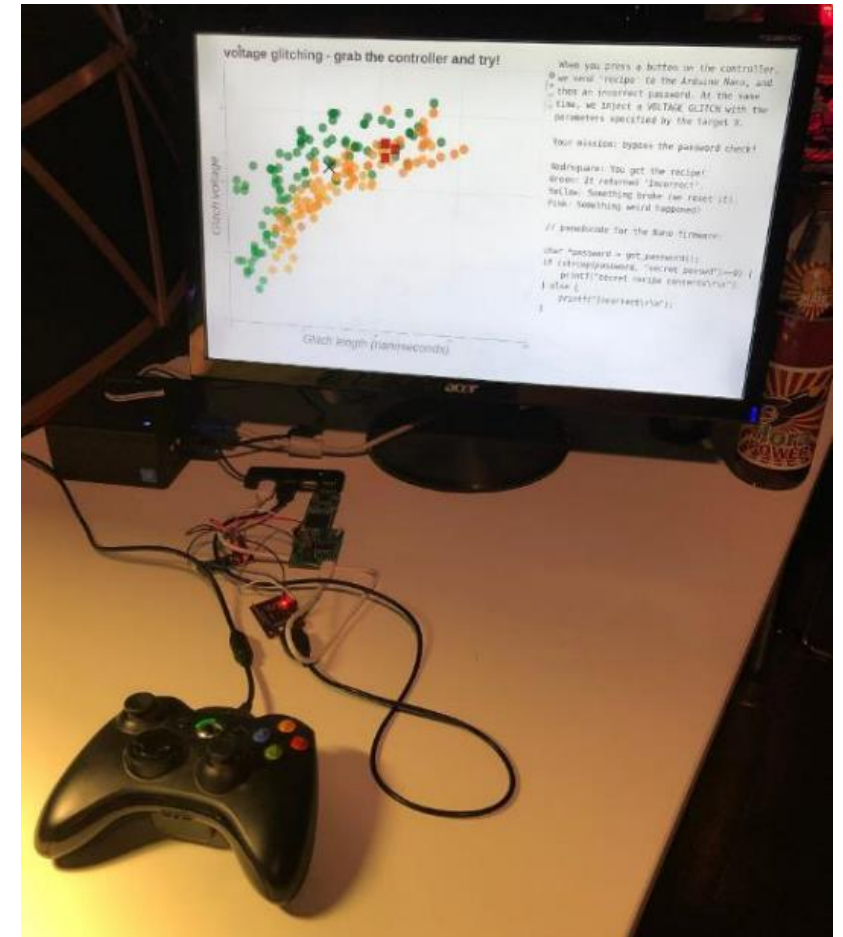
Passive: analyze device behavior

Active: change device behavior



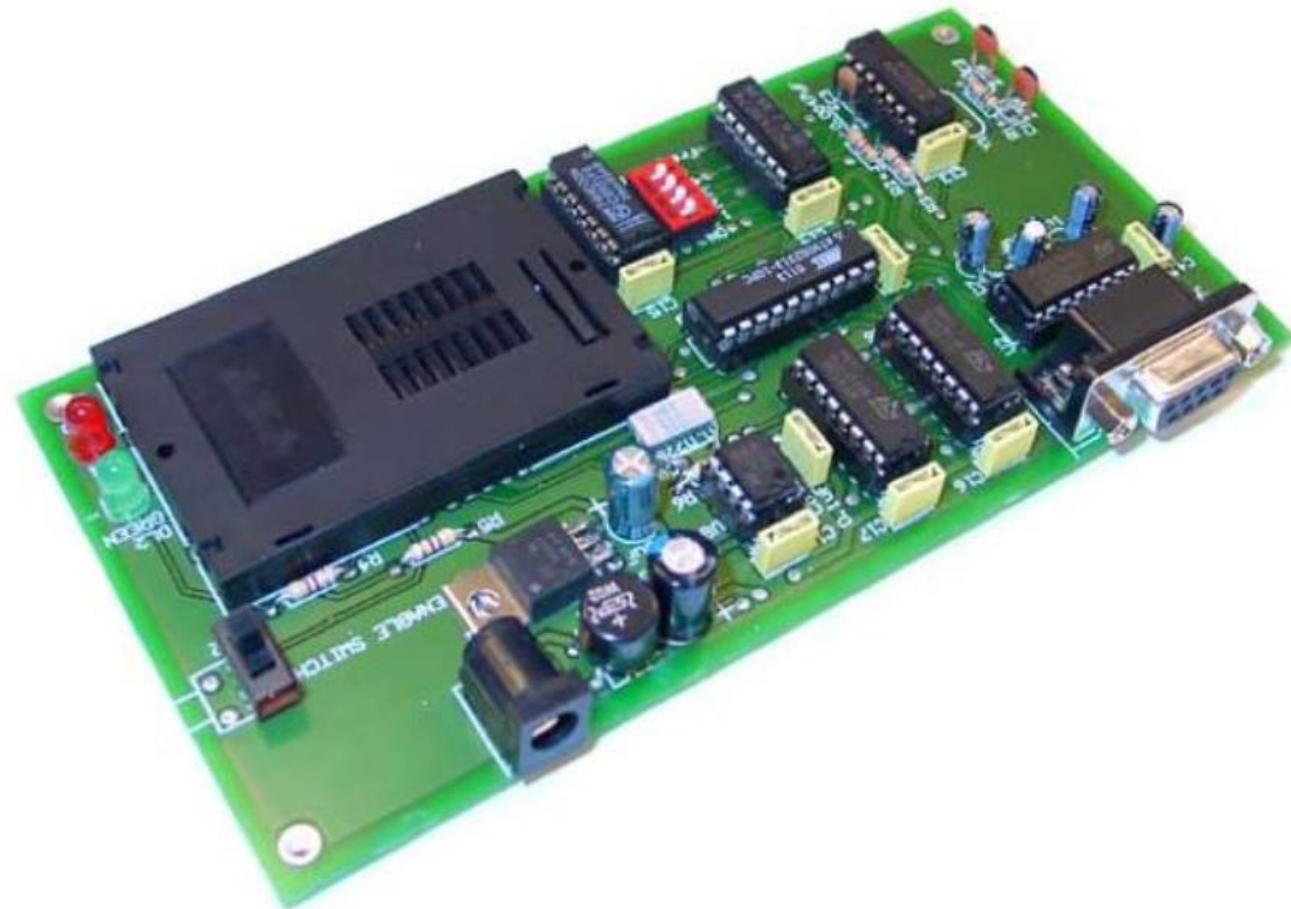
<https://escoptics.com/blogs/news/world-space-week-02-lasers>

Some Practical Side-Channel Setups



“Commercial” Example: the “unlooper” device

```
1 void entry() {
2     void* start = 0x80000000;
3     void* length = 0x00400000;
4
5     serial_puts("Start Secure Boot...\n");
6
7     loadOSFromHardDrive(start);
8
9     if (! authenticateOS(start,length) )
10        do {} while(1);
11
12    serial_puts("Run OS\n");
13
14    boot_next_stage(start);
15    //starts executing at the address start
16 }
```

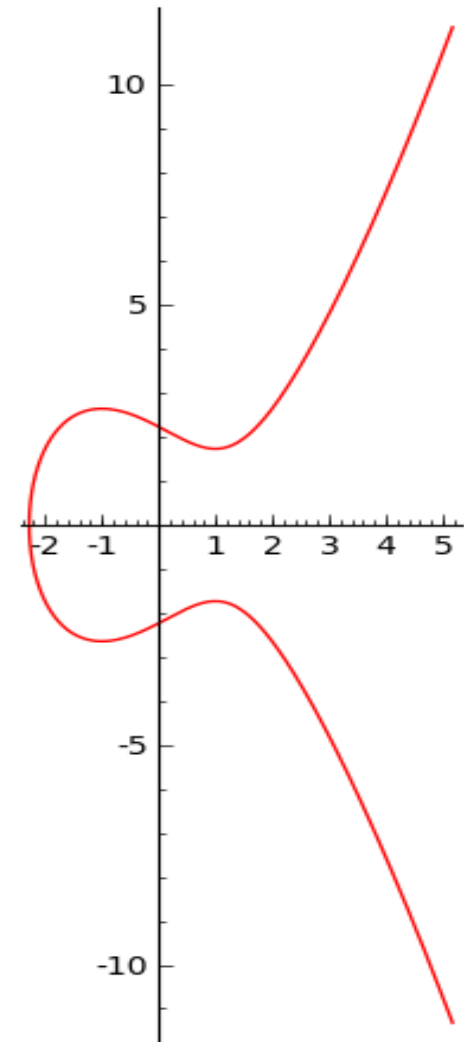
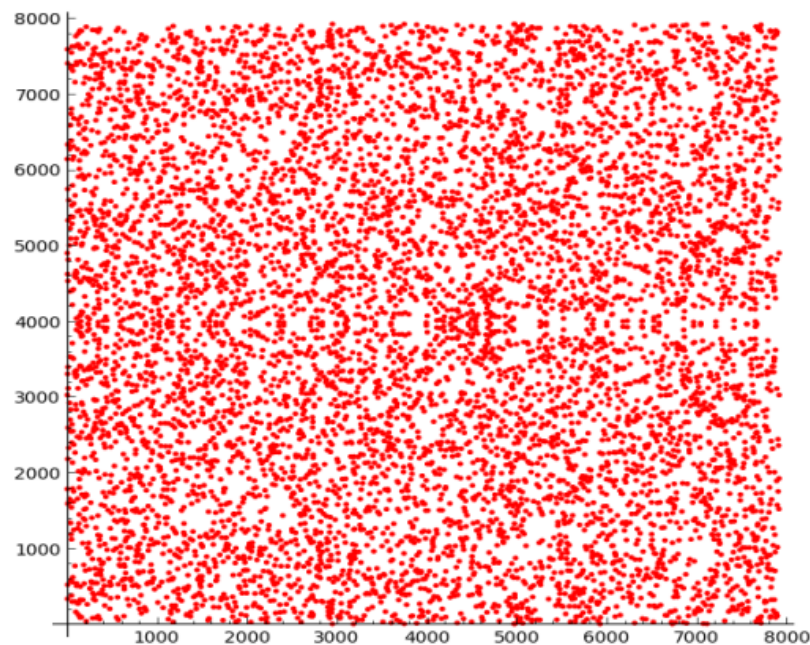


(VERY BRIEF) INTRO TO ELLIPTIC CURVE CRYPTOGRAPHY

Elliptic curves

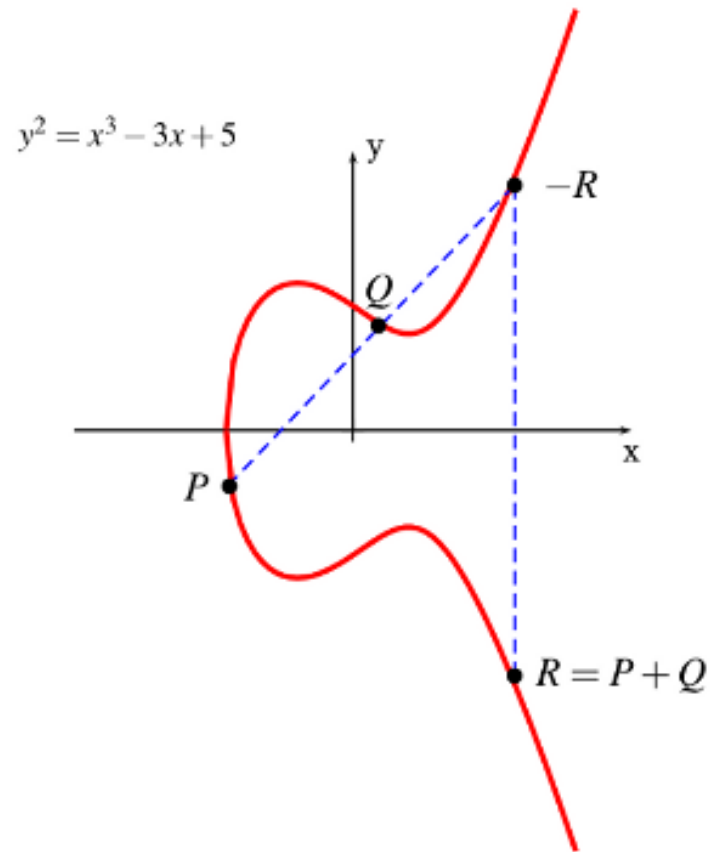
- Example
 - $y^2 = x^3 - 3x^2 + 5$
 - How would it look: *mod* 7919?

(x, y)

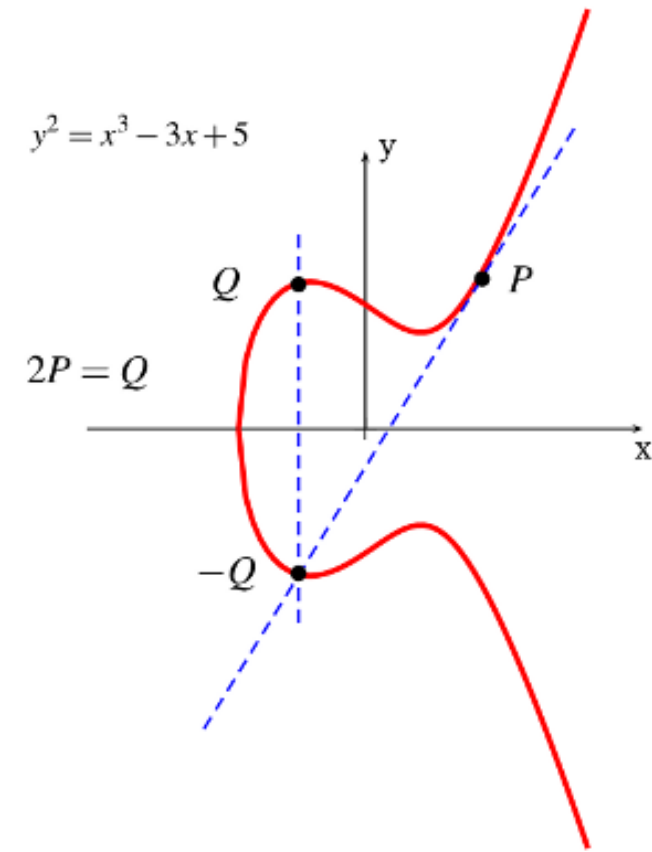


Elliptic curve arithmetic - an abelian group

Addition



Doubling



Scalar multiplication by k

- Group = points on the curve + special point ∞
- Add a point to itself k times: $Q = [k]P$
- Analogous to modular exponentiation
 - square-and-multiply = double-and-add
- Many (equivalent) algorithms
 - LTR, RTL, Window, Comb, Ladders, ...

```

x =  $\infty$ 
for j = |k| - 1 to 0 {
    x = DBL(x)
    if kj = 1
        x = ADD(x, P)
return x0

```

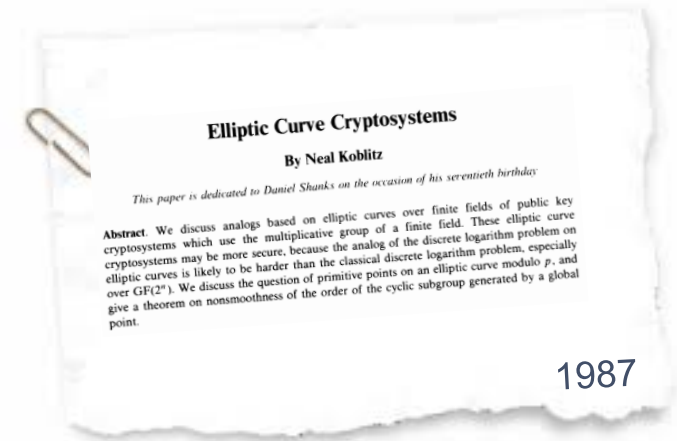
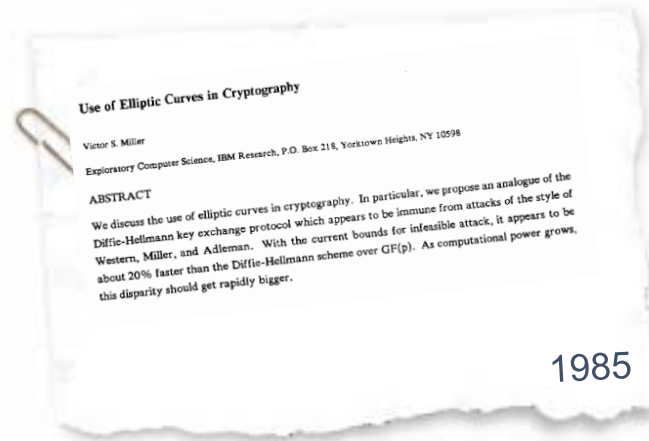
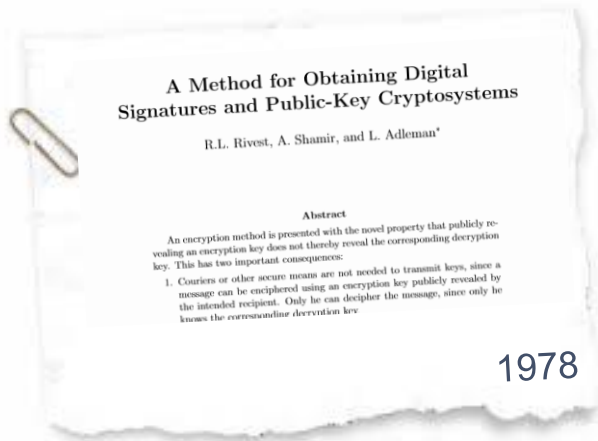
```

(0xb1011) = 11
x =  $\infty$ 
j = 3
    x = DBL( $\infty$ )
    x = ADD( $\infty$ , P)
j = 2
    x = DBL(P)
j = 1
    x = DBL(2P)
    x = ADD(4P, P)
j = 0
    x = DBL(5P)
    x = ADD(10P, P) = 11P

```

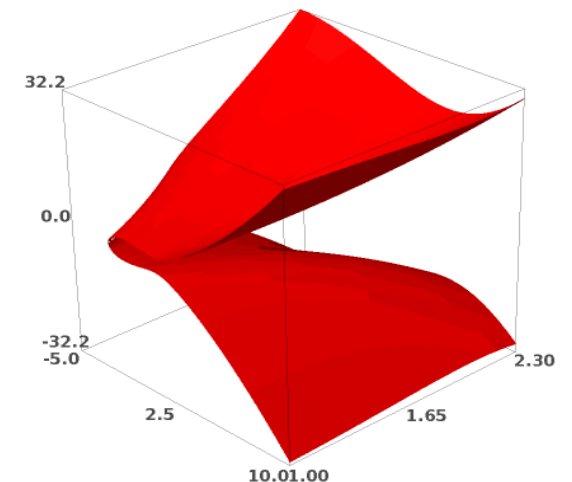
RSA \approx ECC

- RSA is based on modular exponentiation
- exponentiation \approx scalar multiplication
 - $m = c^d \bmod n \approx Q = [k]P$
- multiplication \approx points addition
- squaring \approx point doubling




Implementation Considerations

- Some curves are more common than others:
 - NIST curves (p256), Curve25519, or secp256k1
- Many security properties
 - Curves classification wrt. security: <http://safecurves.cr.yp.to/>
- Are there powerful fault attacks against ECDSA?
 - Invalid point attacks
 - Attacks against deterministic ECDSA
- The classical (x,y) representation is rarely used
 - For transport points compression is often used (note that x defines y)
 - For efficiency reasons it is better to represent a point in more dimensions (e.g., (x,y,z))



What are the applications of ECC?

- Cryptocurrencies 
- Signatures: ECDSA and deterministic variants
- Key Exchange: ECDH
- Encryption: ECIES

- In this tutorial we concentrate on ECDSA

“CLASSICAL” SCA ON SCALAR MULTIPLICATION

Simple Power Analysis (SPA) on ECC (scalarmult)

```
ScalarMult(P) {
```

```
  A = ∞
```

```
  for (i = n-1; i0; i)
```

```
    A = DOUBLE(A)
```

```
    if (ki == 1)
```

```
      A = ADD(A,P)
```

```
    end if
```

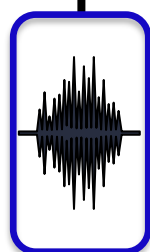
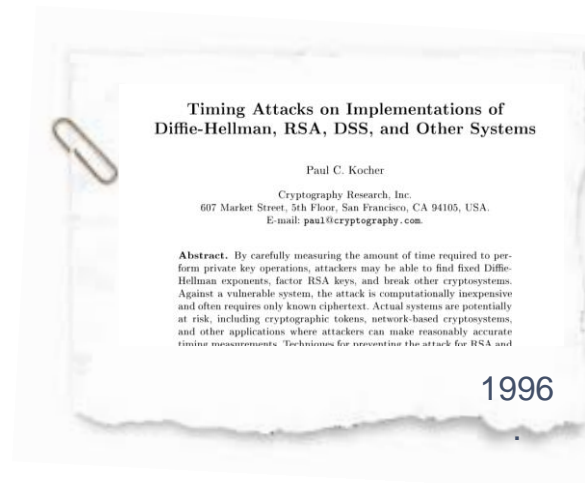
```
  end for
```

```
  Return A = [k]P
```

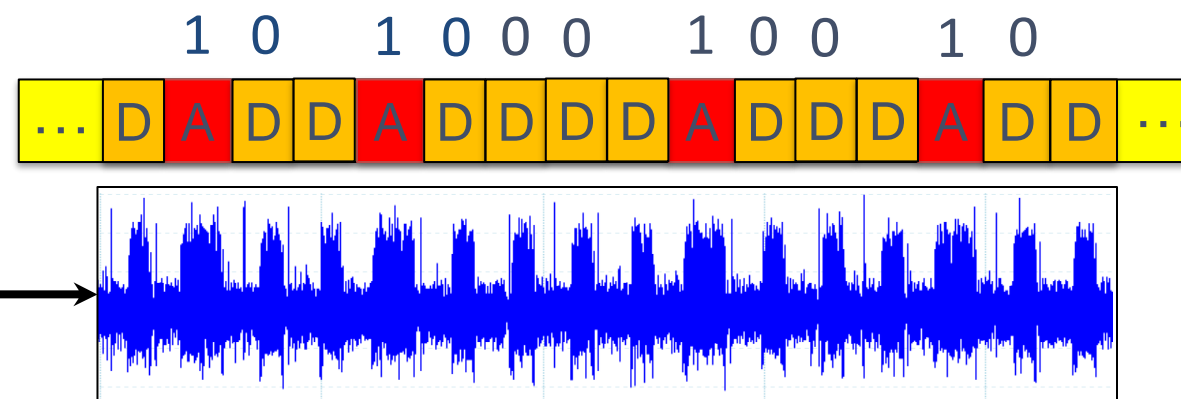
```
}
```

D

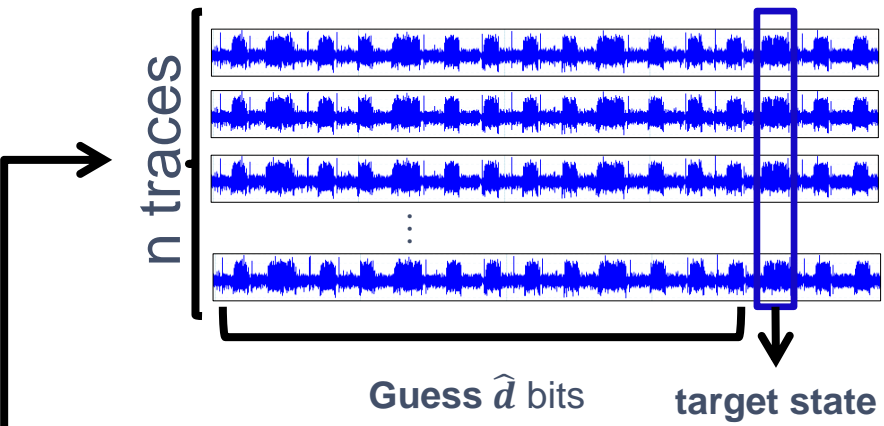
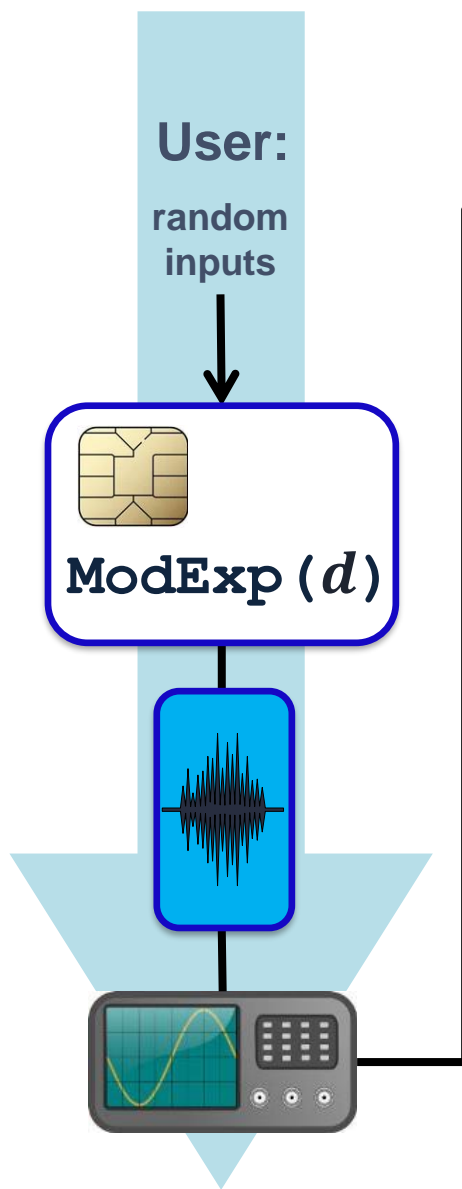
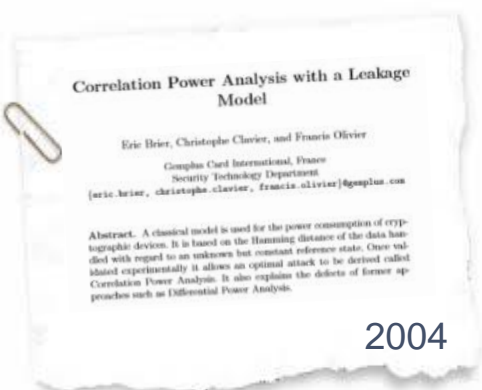
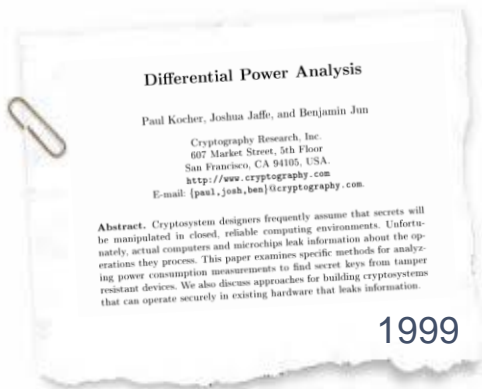
A



Probe



Correlation Power Analysis on RSA/ECC



$f_i = \text{Selection Function}(\text{random inputs}, \hat{d}, \text{target state})$

- HW of a state in a register
- HD between current and previous register state
- ID model: value of a register
- Most significant bit:

$$f_i = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } HW \leq 16 \\ 1 & \text{if } HW > 16 \end{cases} \quad f_i = HW(\text{reg_state})$$

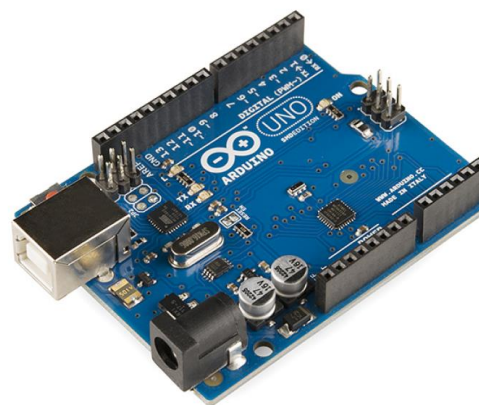
DPA = Difference of Means

CPA = Pearson correlation

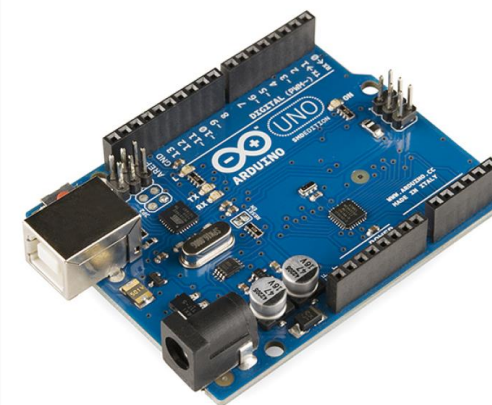
Profiled Attacks

- Problems with the above approaches:
 - can we attack the key directly?
 - we often do not get many traces with the same secret
 - can we use an unprotected device of the same model?
- (Possible) Solution:
 - We profile, i.e. template the unprotected device
 - We use the profile to break the protected device
- Procedure:
 1. Choose a model that describes the power consumption
 2. Profile the unprotected device to create the template (Template Building)
 3. Use the template to break the protected device (Template Matching)
- The same steps are always performed but the model can be different.
 - So often we will not learn the secret but the hamming weight of the secret.
- Neural Networks can be used instead of Template Attacks

Controlled
unprotected device



Attacked
protected device



ECDSA

Introduction

- A variant of the Digital Signature Algorithm (DSA)
- Signature Algorithm based on ECC used, among others, for:
 - Cryptocurrencies,
 - Secure boot
- Problems:
 - Backdoors (?), technical issues (hard to implement), quantum computers
- Libraries:
 - Bouncy Castle, mbed TLS, Microsoft CryptoAPI, OpenSSL, wolfCrypt, and many more...
- We omit analysis of key generation:
 - Alice creates a key pair:
 - a private key: random integer x from $[1, q-1]$, where q is the curve order and
 - a public key curve point $Q = [d]P$, where P is a group generator (constant).

ECDSA Algorithm

- Signature Generation (secret: x , input: m ; output: r, s)
 1. A random number k , $1 \leq k \leq q-1$ is chosen
 2. Compute $[k]P = (x_1, y_1)$ is computed.
 3. Next, $r = x_1 \bmod q$ is computed.
 4. We then compute $k^{-1} \bmod q$
 5. $s = k^{-1}(H(m) + \underline{d} * r) \bmod n$
- Signature Verification (input: m, r, s ; output: True/False)
 1. Verify r and s are in $[1, q-1]$ for the signature to be valid.
 2. Compute $u_1 = H(m) * s^{-1} \bmod q$ and $u_2 = r * s^{-1} \bmod q$.
 3. Compute $(x_1, y_1) = [u_1]G + [u_2]Q$.
 4. The signature is valid if $r = x_1 \bmod q$, invalid otherwise.

But what to
attack?

Functional:
Randomness
needs to be
good!!!

Lattice
attacks on
the nonces.
More about
that later.

ECDSA Algorithm – Passive SCA

- Signature Generation (secret: x ; input: m ; output: r, s)
 1. A random number $k, 1 \leq k \leq q-1$ is chosen
 2. Compute $[k]P = (x_1, y_1)$ is computed.
 3. Next, $r = x_1 \bmod q$ is computed.
 4. We then compute $k^{-1} \bmod q$
 5. $s = k^{-1}(H(m) + \underline{d} * r) \bmod n$
- Signature Verification (input: m, r, s ; output: True/False)
 1. Verify r and s are in $[1, q-1]$ for the signature to be valid.
 2. Compute $u_1 = H(m) * s^{-1} \bmod q$ and $u_2 = r * s^{-1} \bmod q$.
 3. Compute $(x_1, y_1) = [u_1]G + [u_2]Q$.
 4. The signature is valid if $r = x_1 \bmod q$, invalid otherwise.

+ Lattice attacks on the nonces.

ECDSA Algorithm – Fault Injection

- Signature Generation (secret: s , input: m ; output: r, s)
 1. A random number $k, 1 \leq k \leq q-1$ is chosen
 2. Compute $[k]P = (x_1, y_1)$ is computed.
 3. Next, $r = x_1 \bmod q$ is computed.
 4. We then compute $s = k^{-1}(H(m) + g)$
 5. $s = k^{-1}(H(m) + g)$
- Signature Verification
 1. Verify r and s are in the range $[1, q-1]$
 2. Compute $u_1 = H(m)$
 3. Compute (x_1, y_1)
 4. The signature is valid if $r = x_1 \bmod q$

To avoid randomness issues,
can ECDSA be done without
randomness?

Yes, but it has its own risks...

+ Lattice
attacks on
the nonces.

ECDSA AND NONCES

MINERVA

EXERCISES

COUNTERMEASURES/MITIGATIONS

SUMMARY

Generic protection techniques

1. Do not leak
 - Constant-time crypto, bitslicing...
2. Shielding - preventing leakage outside
 - Acoustic shielding, noisy environment
3. Creating additional “noise”
 - Parallel software load, noisy power consumption circuits
4. Compensating for leakage
 - Perform inverse computation/storage
5. Prevent leaking exploitability
 - Ciphertext and key blinding, key regeneration, masking of the operations

Specific protection techniques

$$M = [s]P = [s](X, Y) = [s](x, y, 1)$$

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. $M = [s](x, z, y, z, z)$ | coordinate blinding |
| 2. $s_r = s + r * E $ | scalar blinding |
| 3. $M_r = [s_r](x, z, y, z, z)$ | blinded scalar mult. |
| 4. | no unblinding |

The sequence of operations (D, A) is related to the scalar bits.

However:

- If s is random: the sequence of scalar bits changes for every scalar multiplication execution
- If P is random: Intermediate data is random (masked) -> hardly predicted!

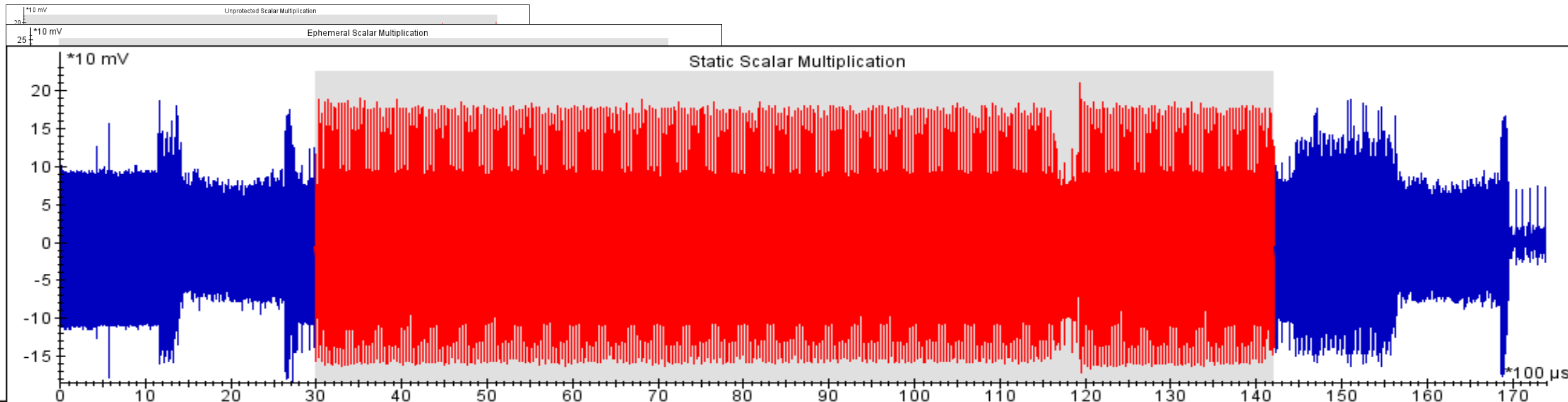
DPA is based on the prediction of intermediate data. We hope that: any side-channel attack requiring multiple traces is repelled by message and exponent blinding.

Point blinding is also possible to prevent zero-point attacks but not presented above.

There are many more similar countermeasures, e.g. scalar splitting.

Scalar Multiplication Countermeasures

- No public (open source) protected library for ECDSA
 - There are partially protected libraries
- For ECDH situation is a bit better, for example:
 - [BCHSP2023] L. Batina, Ł. Chmielewski, B. Haase, N. Samwel, and P. Schwabe: SoK: SCA-secure ECC in software – mission impossible? CHES 2023




Differences between ECDH and ECDSA scalar mult.

- Can secure ECDH Implementation be used for ECDSA scalar multiplication? What could be the problem?

```

379 int crypto_scalarmult_curve25519(uint8_t *r, const uint8_t *s,
380                                 const uint8_t *p) {
381     ST_curve25519ladderstepWorkingState state;
382     uint8_t i;
383     volatile uint8_t retval = -1;
384     // Fault injection detection counter ### alg. step 1 ###
385     volatile uint32_t fid_counter = 0;
386
387     // Initialize return value with random bits ### alg. step 2 ###
388     randombytes(r, 32);
389
390     // Prepare the scalar within the working state buffer.
391     for (i = 0; i < 32; i++) {
392         state.s.as_uint8_t[i] = s[i];
393     }
394
395     // Copy the affine x-coordinate of the base point to the state.
396     fe25519_unpack(&state.x0, p);
397
398     fe25519_setone(&state.xq);
399     fe25519_setzero(&state.zq);
400     fe25519_cpy(&state.xp, &state.x0);
401     fe25519_setone(&state.zp);
402
403     // Clamp scalar ### alg. step 3 ###
404     state.s.as_uint8_t[31] &= 127;
405     state.s.as_uint8_t[31] |= 64;
406
407     // ### alg. step 4 ###
408     shiftRightOne(&state.s);
409     shiftRightOne(&state.s);

```



Additional ECDSA countermeasures

1. Blind modular multiplication $x * r$ (in $s = k^{-1} * (H(m) + x*r) \bmod q$)
 - Multiplicative blinding
2. Protect Inversion
 - Use the Bernstein-Yang inversion constant-time inversion algorithm
 - Multiplicative blinding
3. Protect most significant bits:
 - Scalar randomization or deterministic way:
 - Conditionally adding the group order q or $2q$ to the scalar k until the resulting scalar has a fixed length.
4. Point blinding
5. Still blind the nonce!
6. Add generic protections against FI:
 - Redundancy, control flow protections ...

And much more...

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

- ECDSA is vulnerable to attacks on nonces, in particular lattice attacks.
 - Minerva was discovered on certified products.
- Protecting ECDSA against SCA and FI is hard
- Good randomness is crucial! Protect the nonces!

Questions ?



MUNI
FI

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June 9, 2023

Practical part: ECDSA and nonces

Jan Jancar
Łukasz Chmielewski

ECDSA nonce k

- Needs to be unpredictable & unknown to an attacker
- ? What happens if it is not?
 - Nonce (full) leak
 - Nonce reuse
 - Nonce bias
 - Nonce (partial) leak

$$k \xleftarrow{\$} \mathbb{Z}_n^*$$

ECDSA nonce k

- Needs to be unpredictable & unknown to an attacker
- ? What happens if it is not?
 - Nonce (full) leak
 - Nonce reuse
 - Nonce bias
 - Nonce (partial) leak
- ! Answer: Private key recovery
 - Number of signatures required $2 \dots 2^{32}$

$$k \xleftarrow{\$} \mathbb{Z}_n^*$$

Nonce leak

- (r, s) is the signature, m is the message
- Knowing k , we can compute x
- Why would this happen?

1 signature

$$r \equiv ([k]G)_x \pmod{n}$$

$$s \equiv k^{-1}(H(m) + rx) \pmod{n}$$

$$x \equiv (ks - H(m))r^{-1}$$

Nonce leak

- (r, s) is the signature, m is the message
- Knowing k , we can compute x
- Why would this happen?
 - Clueless developer?

1 signature

$$r \equiv ([k]G)_x \pmod{n}$$

$$s \equiv k^{-1}(H(m) + rx) \pmod{n}$$

$$x \equiv (ks - H(m))r^{-1}$$

Nonce reuse

- Subtract $s_1 - s_2$, obtain k
- From there get x as before
- Why would this happen?

2 signatures

$$r \equiv ([k]G)_x$$

$$s_1 \equiv k^{-1}(H(m_1) + rx)$$

$$s_2 \equiv k^{-1}(H(m_2) + rx)$$

$$s_1 - s_2 \equiv k^{-1}(H(m_1) - H(m_2))$$

$$k \equiv \frac{H(m_1) - H(m_2)}{s_1 - s_2}$$

Nonce reuse

- Subtract $s_1 - s_2$, obtain k
- From there get x as before
- Why would this happen?
 - Clueless developer?
 - Static nonce? (PlayStation 3) [1]
 - Bad RNG?

2 signatures

$$r \equiv ([k]G)_x$$

$$s_1 \equiv k^{-1}(H(m_1) + rx)$$

$$s_2 \equiv k^{-1}(H(m_2) + rx)$$

$$s_1 - s_2 \equiv k^{-1}(H(m_1) - H(m_2))$$

$$k \equiv \frac{H(m_1) - H(m_2)}{s_1 - s_2}$$

Nonce bias \approx partial leak

- Some bias is like an information leak
- 2 attacks
 - Lattice reduction (HNP)
 - “Bleichenbacher”
- Why would this happen?

$2 \dots 2^{32}$ signatures

$$k < n/2^l$$

$$k \equiv 5 \pmod{8}$$

Nonce bias \approx partial leak

- Some bias is like an information leak
- 2 attacks
 - Lattice reduction (HNP)
 - “Bleichenbacher”
- Why would this happen?
 - Bad RNG? [2]
 - Bad constant-timeness fix?
 - Side-channel leak?

$2 \dots 2^{32}$ signatures

$$k < n/2^l$$

$$k \equiv 5 \pmod{8}$$

Nonce bias \approx partial leak

Lattice reduction (HNP)

- Hidden Number Problem
- ≥ 2 bits of info
- Small number of signatures
- Transforms into CVP or SVP
- [3,4,5]

Bleichenbacher

- Bias amplification + search
- Even 1 bit of info
- Large number of signatures
- [6]

Leaky loops

Ingredients: Athena IDProtect,
Ligandrol, SunEC, wAFSSA,
MuhmSSI. May contain traces
of bees



Ján Jančár
Vladimír Sedláček
Petr Svenda
Marek Šýs




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Minerva



Leaky loops



- ASN.1 parsing 


Minerva

Discovery: ECDSA testing

- ASN.1 parsing 
- Signature malleability 





Minerva

Discovery: ECDSA testing

- ASN.1 parsing 
- Signature malleability 
- Test-vectors 





Minerva

Discovery: ECDSA testing

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- Nonce randomness 

Minerva

Discovery: ECDSA testing

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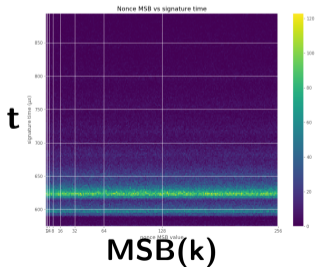
Let's test timing as well!

Minerva

Discovery: ECDSA testing





- ASN.1 parsing ✓
- Signature malleability ✓
- Test-vectors ~
- Nonce randomness ✓

Let's test timing as well!

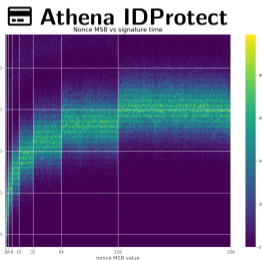
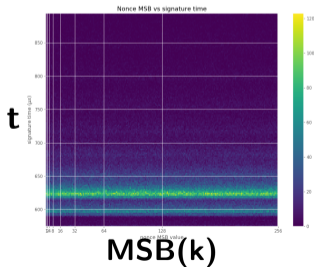


Minerva

Discovery: ECDSA testing





- ASN.1 parsing 
- Signature malleability 
- Test-vectors 
- Nonce randomness 

Let's test timing as well!

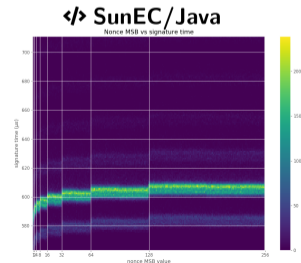
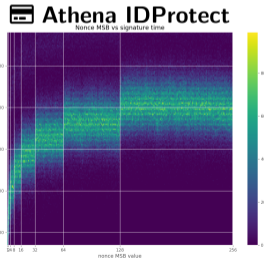
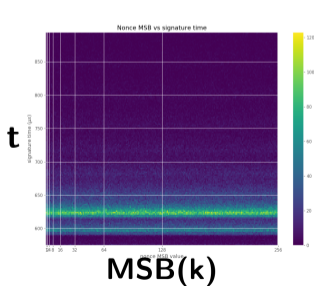


Minerva

Discovery: ECDSA testing





- ASN.1 parsing 
- Signature malleability 
- Test-vectors 
- Nonce randomness 

Let's test timing as well!

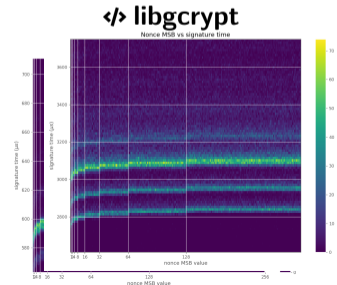
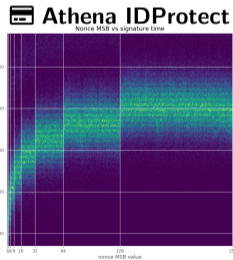
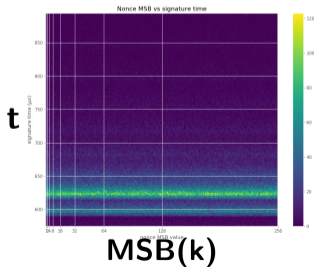


Minerva

Discovery: ECDSA testing

- ASN.1 parsing 
- Signature malleability 
- Test-vectors 
- Nonce randomness 

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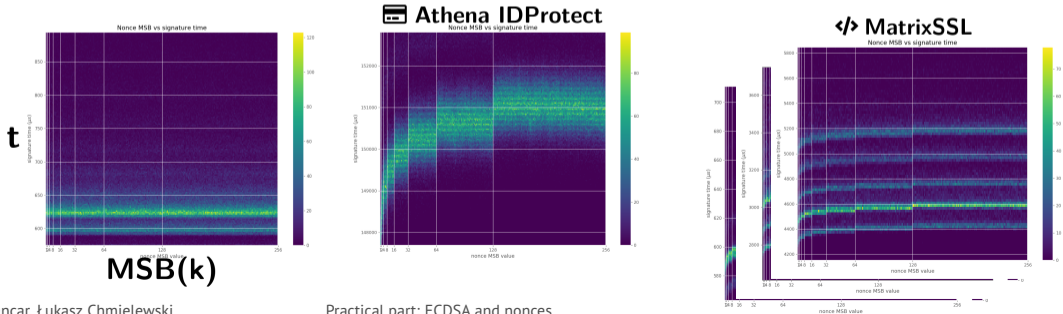


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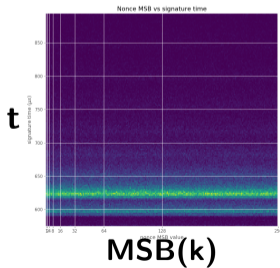


Minerva

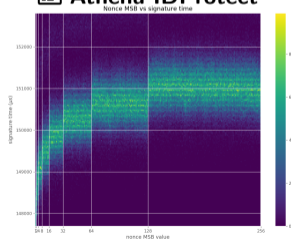
Discovery: ECDSA testing

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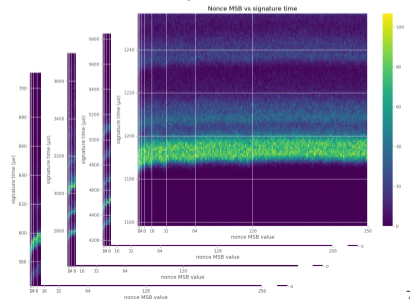
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Athena IDProtect



WolfSSL

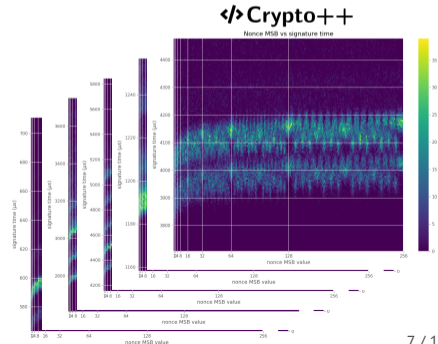
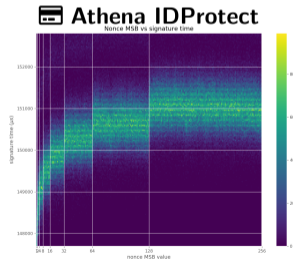
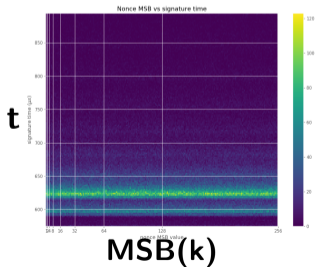


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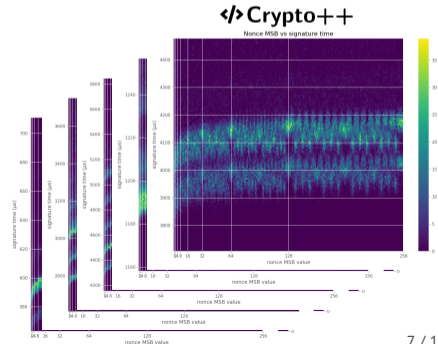
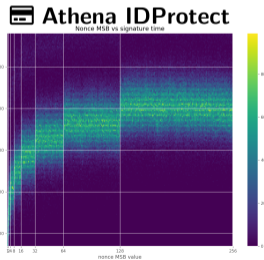
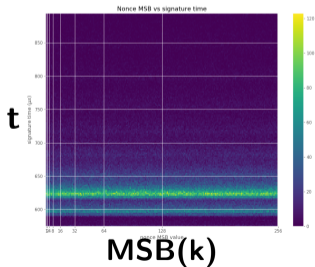
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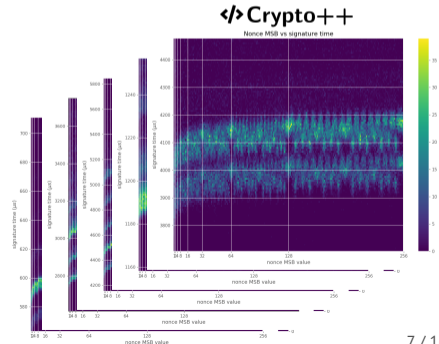
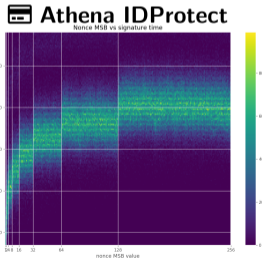
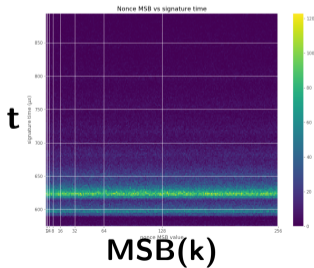
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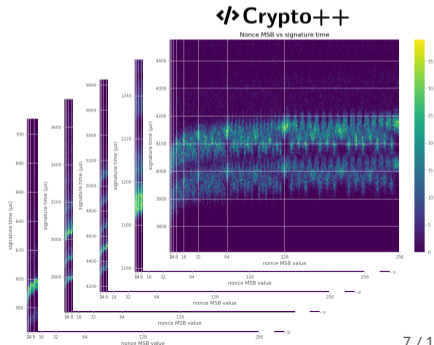
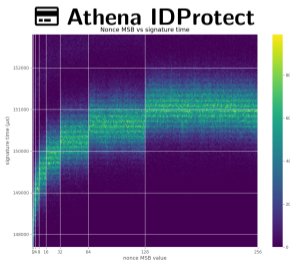
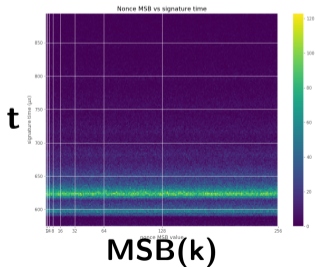
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1

2



Minerva

Discovery: ECDSA testing

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1

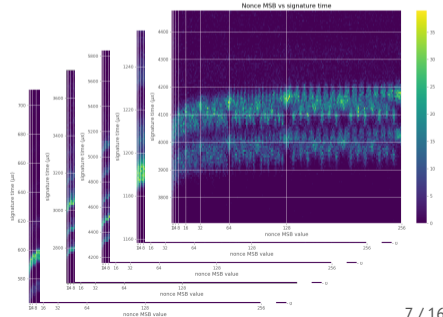
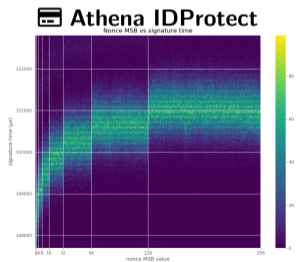
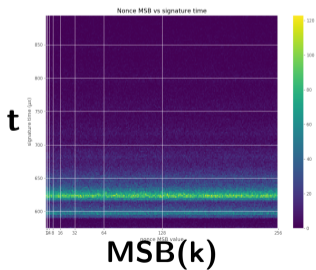
Déjà Vu

1

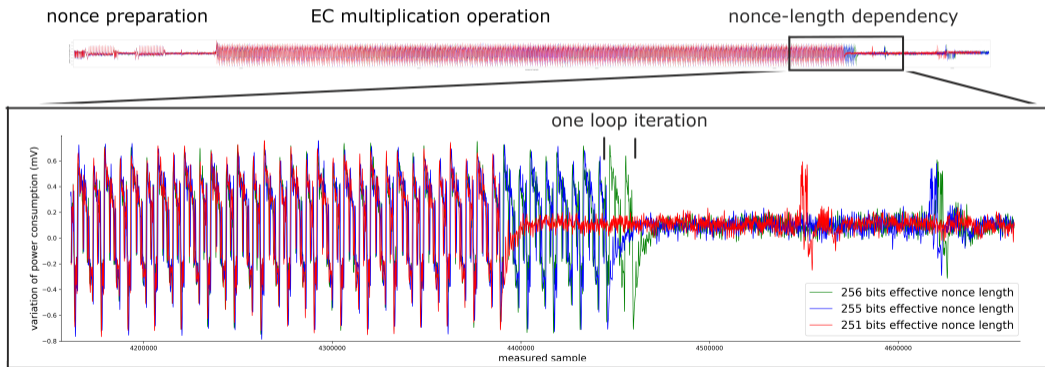
2

...

Crypto++



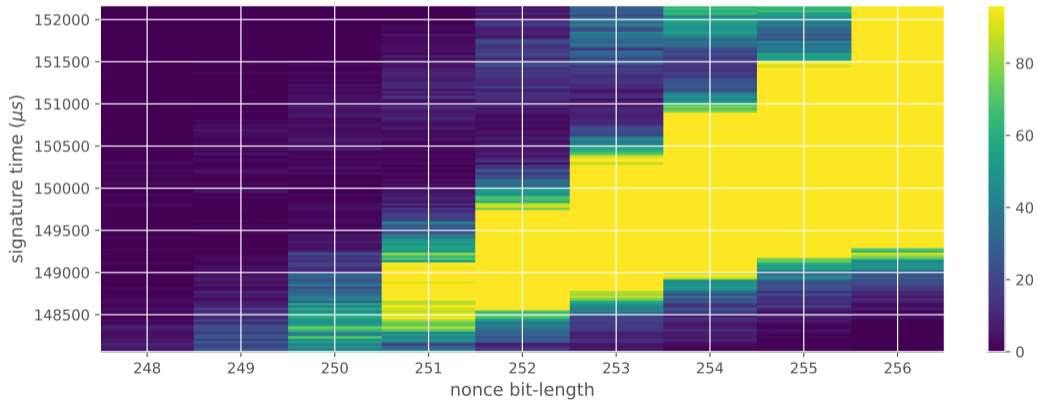
[k]G



Discovery

Leak

[k]G



Exploitation

Hidden Number Problem

- Average 1 LZB per signature
- There is noise

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Hardness of Computing the Most Significant Bits of Secret Keys in Diffie-Hellman and Related Schemes

(Extended Abstract)

[7]

DAN BONEH¹
Princeton University

RAMARATHNAM VENKATESAN²
Bellcore

Exploitation

Hidden Number Problem

- Average 1 LZB per signature
- There is noise

Hidden Number Problem (HNP) [1]

Given an oracle computing:

$$\mathcal{O}_{b,t}() = \text{MSB}_l(at + b \bmod n)$$

with t u.i.d. in \mathbb{Z}_n^* , find a .

Exploitation

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Hidden Number Problem (HNP) [1]

Given an oracle computing:

$$\mathcal{O}_{r,s}() = \text{MSB}_l(k \bmod n)$$

Exploitation

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- Average 1 LZB per signature
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Hidden Number Problem (HNP) [1]

Given an oracle computing:

$$\mathcal{O}_{r,s}() = \text{MSB}_l(xs^{-1}r + H(m)s^{-1} \bmod n)$$

find x .

Exploitation

Basic attack [8]

- Collect N signatures, take d of the fastest

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$$\mathbf{B} = \begin{pmatrix} 2^{l_1}n & 0 & 0 & \dots & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 2^{l_2}n & 0 & \dots & 0 & 0 \\ & \vdots & & & \vdots & \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & \dots & 2^{l_d}n & 0 \\ 2^{l_1}t_1 & 2^{l_2}t_2 & 2^{l_3}t_3 & \dots & 2^{l_d}t_d & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

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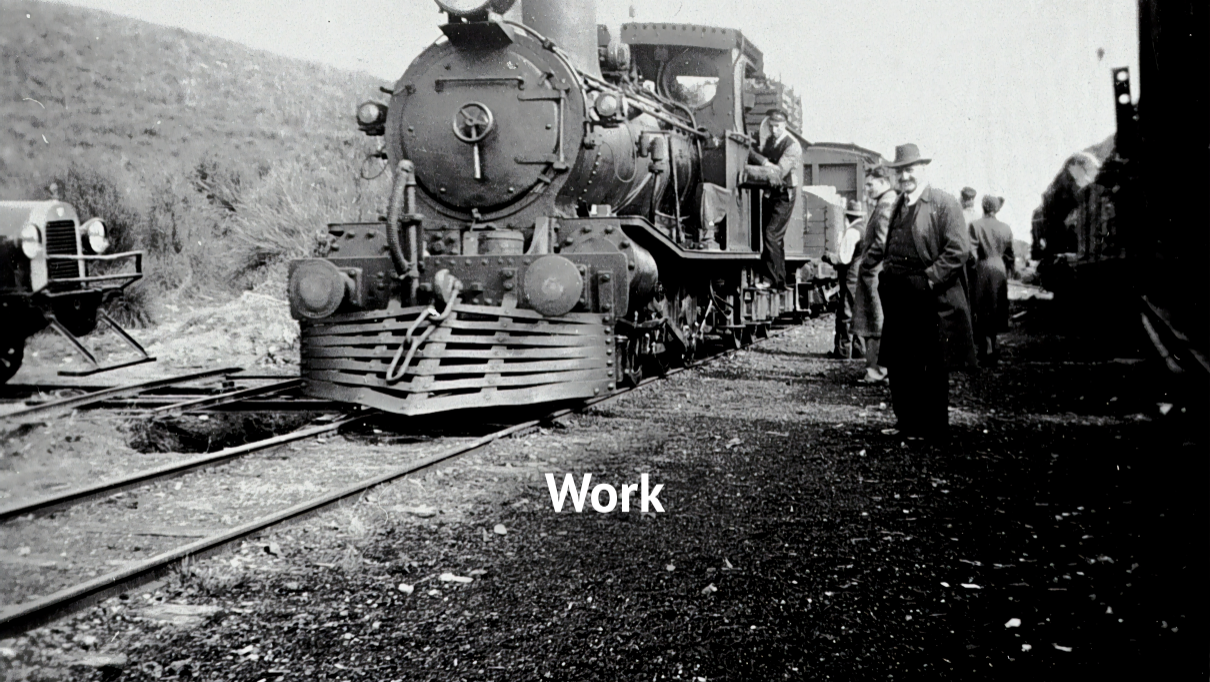
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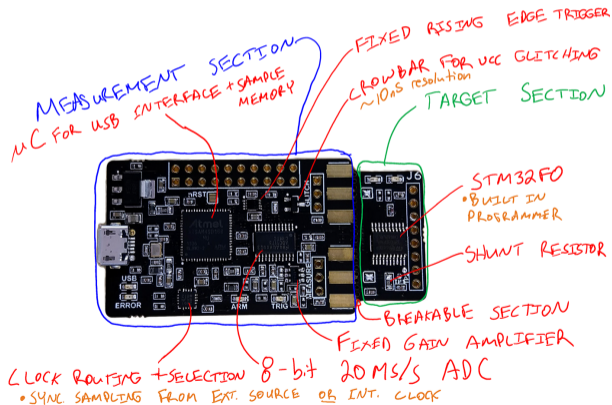
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- Because $\forall i: (xt_j - u_i) \bmod n$ is small



Work

Practical part

You will mount several side-channel attacks on a modified micro-ecc ECDSA implementation running on a ChipWhisperer-Nano board.



pyecsca

Practical part

Prerequisites

Clone the repository <https://github.com/J08nY/cwnano-micro-ecc>

Have setup ready (see [installation.md](#))

- 1 Building the target implementation
- 2 Interacting with the target
- 3 Running the nonce-reuse attack
- 4 Running the nonce-bitlength-leak attack
 - 1 With timing
 - 2 With powertraces

Practical part

- Work in groups of 2-3, only 19 devices
- Potentially share the devices
- Instructions in [tutorial.md](#)
- Consult [troubleshooting.md](#) in case of issues

Practical part

Hopeful fix

```
pip install -U ipython pyzmq  
And reboot VM
```









Thanks!

 J08nY |  neuromancer.sk |  jan@neuromancer.sk
crocs.fi.muni.cz

Icons from  **Noun Project** &  **Font Awesome**

Photos from  **Unsplash**

References

- 1  failOverflow; **Console Hacking 2010: PS3 Epic Fail**
- 2  Joachim Breitner, Nadia Heninger; **Biased Nonce Sense: Lattice Attacks against Weak ECDSA Signatures in Cryptocurrencies**
- 3  Jan Jancar, Vladimir Sedlacek, Petr Svenda, Marek Sys; **Minerva: The curse of ECDSA nonces (Systematic analysis of lattice attacks on noisy leakage of bit-length of ECDSA nonces)**
- 4  Martin R. Albrecht, Nadia Heninger; **On Bounded Distance Decoding with Predicate: Breaking the "Lattice Barrier" for the Hidden Number Problem**
- 5  Chao Sun, Thomas Espitau, Mehdi Tibouchi, Masayuki Abe; **Guessing Bits: Improved Lattice Attacks on (EC)DSA**
- 6  Daniel Bleichenbacher; **On the generation of one-time keys in DL signature schemes**
- 7  Dan Boneh, Ramarathnam Venkatesan; **Hardness of Computing the Most Significant Bits of Secret Keys in Diffie-Hellman and Related Schemes**
- 8  Billy Bob Brumley, Nicola Tuveri; **Remote Timing Attacks are Still Practical**