Foundations of Computer Security
Lecture 69: PGP Key Management

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PGP makes use of four types of keys: one-time session symmetric keys, public keys, private keys, passphrase-based symmetric keys.

**Session keys:** used once and generated for each new message

**Public keys:** used in asymmetric encryption

**Private keys:** also used in asymmetric encryption

**Passphrase-based keys:** used to protect private keys

A single user can have multiple public/private key pairs.
Each session key is associated with a single message and used only once. Key size depends on the chosen encryption algorithm $E$; e.g. CAST-128: 128 bits, 3DES: 168-bits, etc.

The encryption algorithm $E$ is used to generate a new $n$-bit key from a previous session key and two $n/2$-bit blocks generated based on user keystrokes, including keystroke timing. The two blocks are encrypted using $E$ and the previous key, and combined to form the new key.
For new RSA keys, an odd number $n$ of sufficient size (usually $> 200$ bits) is generated and tested for primality. If it is not prime, then repeat with another randomly generated number, until a prime is found.

Primes appear in the neighborhood of $n$ about every $\ln(n) = \lg_e(n)$ numbers. Since we can exclude even numbers, to find a prime of around $200$ bits, it takes about $\ln(2^{200})/2 = 70$ tries.

This is an expensive operation, but performed relatively infrequently.
The private key is stored encrypted with a user-supplied passphrase:

1. The user selects a passphrase for encrypting private keys.
2. When a new public/private key pair is generated, the system asks for the passphrase. Using SHA-1, a 160-bit hash code is generated from the passphrase, which is discarded.
3. The private key is encrypted using CAST-128 with 128 bits of the hash code as key. The key is then discarded.

Whenever the user wants to access the private key, he must supply the passphrase.
• PGP uses four kinds of keys: session keys, public and private keys, and passphrase generated keys.

• Public / private key pairs are the most expensive to generate.

• Since the security of the system depends on protecting private keys, these are encrypted using a passphrase system.

Next lecture: PGP Key Management II