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Assessing the Effect of WiMAX System Parameter Settings on MAC-level Local DoS Vulnerability

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Abstract–The research community has established that WiMAX networks suffer from Denial of Service (DoS) vulnerabilities. In this paper, we analyze how WiMAX system parameter settings increase or decrease DoS vulnerabilities of WiMAX networks. The behavior of the WiMAX MAC level protocol is sensitive to the settings of core system parameters. Unlike traditional network-based DoS attacks, attacks resulting from parameter misconfiguration are difficult for network operators to detect. We focus on bandwidth contention resolution aspects of the WiMAX MAC protocol. Simulations are performed using the ns-2 simulator. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) techniques on the resulting simulation data identify which bandwidth contention resolution parameter combinations are crucial for configuring WiMAX to be less vulnerable to DoS attacks.

Keywords: *WiMAX, bandwidth contention resolution, Denial of Service (DoS), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), network simulator ns-2.*

1. Introduction

The IEEE 802.16 standards define the physical and MAC layers for a broadband wireless access system that supports both fixed and mobile stations. The acronym WiMAX, Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access, was coined by the WiMAX Forum and when accompanied by a release profile describes specific operating modes of the system. WiMAX networks deploy IEEE 802.16 standards. For the sake of simplicity and conforming to the common usage, we use the terms WiMAX and IEEE 802.16 interchangeably in this paper. Abundant research [1-13] has analyzed security vulnerabilities in IEEE 802.16 standards. Solutions have been proposed to fix many of them. Denial of Service (DoS) attacks on IEEE 802.16 standards have been discussed in [2, 9-13].

In this paper, we analyze DoS attacks that exploit WiMAX system parameter settings systems. This paper is the first to consider the relationship between DoS attacks and WiMAX system parameters settings. Our work is motivated by three facts:

1. Current literature analyzes DoS attacks that take advantage of message flows and message designs, such as in [2, 9, 11, 12]. Literature has ignored system parameter settings that can enable DoS attacks.
2. WiMAX has many parameters to configure. Our work provides guidelines for evaluating these parameters.

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3. Unlike other WiMAX DoS attacks, DoS attacks that exploit parameter settings are easy to implement, and likely to be adopted by attackers. Moreover, these attacks are difficult to detect, because attackers behave exactly like normal users, except for using different parameter values.

In this paper we concentrate on parameters concerning bandwidth contention resolution[1] in IEEE802.16 standards, since bandwidth contention could naturally be exploited by malicious clients to deny other clients access to the network. We consider how these parameter settings affect the ability of DoS attackers to monopolize network bandwidth. Simulations are run using the ns-2 network simulator. Reasons for using network simulations include:

1. First, most existing WiMAX implementations are proprietary. Access to those implementations is quite limited, typically requiring non-disclosure agreements.
2. Second, current implementations are usually hard wired and not easily modified.

We use analysis of variance (ANOVA) [14] of our simulation results to find which parameters or parameter combinations are most important for configuring WiMAX to be less vulnerable to DoS attacks. ANOVA analysis is used to find 1st, 2nd and 3rd order parameter effects on network performance. First order effects quantify how much individual parameters determine system vulnerability to attack. Second (third) order effects quantify the additional influence of combinations of 2 (3) parameters. We use a factorial experimental design [15] to determine the set of simulations to run. This allows us to isolate the influence and quantify the role of both individual parameters and combinations of parameters in making WiMAX systems vulnerable to DoS attacks. This same approach can be applied to other networking technologies as well.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses related work. This is followed by our problem definition in Section 3. In section 4, we describe the bandwidth contention resolution, associated parameters, and how these parameters can be exploited by DoS attackers. We describe our experiment design in detail in section 5. Section 6 presents ANOVA data analysis results. Our conclusions and suggestions for future research are presented in section 7.

2. Related Work

In this work, we consider wireless network performability as network resilience to intentional disturbance. Other works on wireless performability have considered mainly communications reliability [16,17] where disturbances are modeled as stochastic processes. Resilience to intentional attack is a more stringent metric. It is also not unrealistic, since DoS attacks are becoming increasingly common.

IEEE 802.16 standards are subject to many DoS attacks [2, 9-13]. Research in [13] examines whether known DoS attacks (e.g. replay attack, MAC address spoofing, deauthentication etc.) from IEEE 802.11 are applicable to IEEE 802.16. [13] also examines DoS vulnerabilities that are unique to IEEE 802.16 standards. These vulnerabilities include unprotected management messages. For example, one potential DoS attack exploits RNG-RSP message [2, 10, 13]. RNG-RSP stands for ranging response. It is sent by a Base Station (BS)

[1] The bandwidth contention resolution is defined in section 6.3.8 in IEEE 802.16 standards. We consider subscriber stations that are associated with Best Effort (BE) service in the network contend bandwidth for traffic transmission after they have joined the network.

in response to an RNG-REQ (ranging request) message from a Subscriber Station (SS). The BS includes in the message transmission power, SS uplink and downlink channel change, MAC re-initialization, etc. The message is neither authenticated nor encrypted. The SS accepts any RNG-RSP message that is correctly formatted as coming from the BS and acts accordingly. DoS attackers can fake RNG-RSP messages, telling the SS to transmit at minimum power [2]. The transmission power is then low enough that messages from the SS barely reach the BS, causing the SS to request ranging again and again, until it quits. Or an attacker can fool the SS to increase its power level to maximum to drain the SS battery [2]. DoS attackers can also change SS downlink channels to the wrong frequency to force the SS to re-scan and find the correct frequency. If the downlink channel is maliciously modified continually, the SS keeps re-scanning until it quits [10]. A DoS attack exploiting the RNG-RSP message is simulated in the ns-2 network simulator in [10]. The simulation showed that the DoS attack "is devastating to the overall service levels of the WiMAX network" [10]. Other known IEEE 802.16 specific DoS vulnerabilities include sending a large number of authentication requests [4] and the "scrambling attack" described in [11].

This paper is novel in studying the role of the bandwidth contention resolution parameters in making networks vulnerable to DoS events. We also find that the well-established experimental design and ANOVA analysis tools used here are too frequently used in the network performance analysis community [18, 21]. This paper also provides a useful example of how to perform empirical analysis of network protocol robustness to system abuse.

3. Problem Definition

To date, no one has examined how WiMAX system parameter settings can make the network more vulnerable to DoS attacks. Attackers may masquerade as normal subscribers but ignore the parameter values they are assigned. They can choose parameter values that degrade the QoS of other SSs. These attacks can be designed to appear random, making them hard to detect by network administrators. They also do not result in sudden, drastic performance degradation for specific SSs, making them difficult to differentiate from network noise. We explain in detail in section 4 how parameters concerning the bandwidth contention resolution in WiMAX network can be exploited by attackers. It is worth noting that, since WiMAX bandwidth contention resolution's upstream bandwidth allocation uses the same mechanism as DOCSIS-based cable access systems, the method used in this paper could also be applied to DOCSIS networks. It is also worth noting that this work studies implicitly how SS faults that cause them to vary from the correct parameter settings will affect performance. This is important for WiMAX system robustness.

There are many parameters DoS attackers can exploit. Our goal is to:

1. compare the effect of setting different values for a single parameter,
2. learn which parameter(s) are dominant,
3. compare the effect of important parameter interactions, and,
4. learn which parameter interactions are dominant.

In this paper, we use techniques from experimental design to steer our data collection [15] and ANOVA[14] techniques to quantify the importance of specific parameters in enabling DoS attacks. By determining which parameters are most important for robust network operation, we provide important information to network researchers as to where to concentrate attention for stopping future DoS events. Please note that we do not provide advice on the values to set for those parameters, rather our study determines the set of parameters whose settings most influence system vulnerability to DoS. This work could be extended to determine a response surface that would provide that information. In Section 7 we discuss how this can be done.

4. Exploiting Parameters in Bandwidth Contention Resolution in IEEE 802.16

In this section, we explain the bandwidth contention resolution portion of the IEEE 802.16 standards family (section 6.3.8) and how the resolution can be exploited by DoS attackers.

Background

A simple WiMAX network contains a single BS and multiple SSs. It uses a Point to Multi-Point (PMP) topology. The downlink direction is from the BS to SSs, while uplink is from SSs to BS. WiMAX networks can use either Time Division Duplex (TDD), in which downlink and uplink take turns to use the medium, or Frequency Division Duplex (FDD) where downlink and uplink use different frequencies. In this paper, unless specified, we consider WiMAX networks with TDD.

The BS is the only station transmitting in the downlink direction. Downlink is generally broadcast. SSs listen to downlink traffic and capture the packets intended for them. The uplink traffic is from SSs to BS. The medium is shared by all SSs in the network, and coordinated by the BS. BS broadcasts UL-MAP messages periodically to inform SSs of uplink bandwidth allocations in the near future. IEEE 802.16 also allows SSs to contend for uplink bandwidth. UL-MAP messages include Request Information Elements (Request IEs), which defines transmission opportunities for SSs to send their request to contend for bandwidth. Any SS wishing to join the contention process can grab the transmission opportunities and send its request. After receiving the request from a SS, the BS decides whether or not to grant bandwidth and how much bandwidth to grant to the SS. Since many SSs are using the same request transmission opportunities, it is likely that more than one SS is sending at the same, hence create a collision. The bandwidth contention resolution defined in IEEE 802.16 standards copes with such issues.

Bandwidth Contention Resolution

Bandwidth contention resolution uses truncated binary exponential backoff. Each SS in the network maintains an internal variable *window* with initial value *bw_backoff_start* and maximum value *bw_backoff_stop*. These values are specified in UCD messages, which are broadcast periodically by the BS to all SSs within the network. When an SS has data to send and wants to enter the bandwidth contention process, it sets its *window* to the *bw_backoff_start* defined in the UCD messages. The SS then randomly selects a number *r* within range [0, $2^{window}-1$]. This number *r* indicates the number of contention request transmission opportunities that the SS shall defer before transmitting its bandwidth request. These transmission opportunities are defined in Request IEs in UL-MAP messages. After transmitting its contention request, the SS waits for the grant from the BS to transmit data. If the grant is seen in the sub-sequential UL-MAP message, then the SS sends its data in the slots allocated to it. If the grant is not seen within a time period, then the contention request is considered transmission lost and the SS shall now increase its *window* by 1, as long as it is less than the *bw_backoff_stop*. The SS shall randomly select a number within the new range and repeat the above contention process. The retry process continues until the maximum number of retries *bw_maximum_retry* has been reached or the *window* reaches *bw_backoff_stop*. At this point, the SS should discard the data.

Parameters for Bandwidth Contention Resolution

The parameter *bw_backoff_start* is the initial *window* size. Its value should be determined based on the average number of SSs in the network. SSs in the network obtain this value from the UCD message broadcasted by the BS. If *bw_backoff_start* is too small, collisions are likely to occur, and force the *window* value to increase. Larger *window* values indicate longer request time for the SS. Request time is the time from SS starting contention process to SS receiving request transmission grant. Consider the extreme situation where all SSs in the network use *bw_backoff_start* =0 and all SSs sending a packet simultaneously. Collisions are bound to occur. It will take some time for SSs to time out and increase their *window* large enough to avoid collisions. If *window* is too large, collisions are less likely to occur but the request time for the SS will be large, reducing the throughput of the network. DoS attackers may choose not to use the *bw_backoff_start* specified by the BS and instead use a self-defined value, which we refer to as *dos_backoff_start* in this paper. When *dos_backoff_start* is smaller than *bw_backoff_start*, the DoS attackers are more likely to send requests before other SSs and win earlier bandwidth request transmission opportunities. This is exacerbated for SSs if either piggyback or concatenation is allowed.

bw_request_retry is the maximum number of bandwidth contention retries before SSs drop packets. Like *bw_backoff_start*, *bw_request_retry* is determined by the BS and broadcast in the UCD messages to every SS in the network. If *bw_request_retry* is too small, SSs discard packets more frequently. If *bw_request_retry* is large, the probability packets get dropped will be small, however, average request time will be long and throughput will decrease. DoS attackers can choose their own *dos_request_retry* value. They do not care about packet loss, but wish to consume as much bandwidth as much as possible. Therefore, a small *dos_request_retry* value benefits DoS attackers.

Other parameters exist that affect DoS attacks on bandwidth contention resolution. One obvious parameter is the number of DoS attackers in the network, which is denoted in this paper as *number_of_attackers*. This parameter is beyond the control of the network administrator. We also consider also another parameter, the duration of a frame, *frame_duration*. A frame is dependent on the physical layer specification. Longer *frame_duration* values increase the request time and lower the network throughput. DoS attackers have no control over this parameter.

5. Simulation Design

We simulate DoS attacks where attackers attempt to exploit the bandwidth contention resolution mechanism. In our WiMAX simulations legitimate SSs use the *bw_backoff_start* and *bw_request_retry* values broadcasted by the BS, while attackers choose their own values (denoted as *dos_backoff_start* and *dos_request_retry*). We also vary the *number_of_attackers* in the network as well as *frame_duration*. Our simulations analyze the influence of these six parameters on DoS attacks. Simulation code is available at http://www.clemson.edu/~rrb/WiMax/WiMaxDDoSTest.tgz.

Our simulations use the ns-2 network simulator [19] with the ns-2 IEEE 802.16 module from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) [20]. The simulation uses the WiMAX network in Fig.1. Within a square of size 1100 meter × 1100 meters, the BS is at position (550, 550). It is set to cover 500 meters. The bandwidth of the network is 10e+6HZ. A number of SSs, represented by ⊗ in Fig. 1,are placed on the circle with a radius of 150 meters centered at the BS. DoS attackers represented by ■ are placed on the same circle. The number of DoS attackers and SSs combined is fixed to 100. The BS is wired connected to a sink node placed at (50,50) in the topology. The link between the BS and the sink node has bandwidth 1000Mbps and delay 1ms. This large bandwidth avoids packet dropping on this link that may disturb our simulation. Each user (SS or DoS attacker) has a UDP agent with a Constant Bit Rate (CBR) traffic generator. The packet size of the UDP agents is set to 1500 bytes. Each CBR traffic generator sends a packet of size 1492 bytes to the sink node every 0.5 second. The traffic start time of the traffic generators follows a uniform distribution U(20.005, 21) to allow enough time for each user to perform the network entry process. The uniform distribution is used to avoid collisions caused by all users sending packet at the same time. All traffic generators stop at 120 seconds. SSs and attackers are all equally distant from the BS and configured with the same traffic is to eliminate unfairness and allow us to study the parameters of interest.

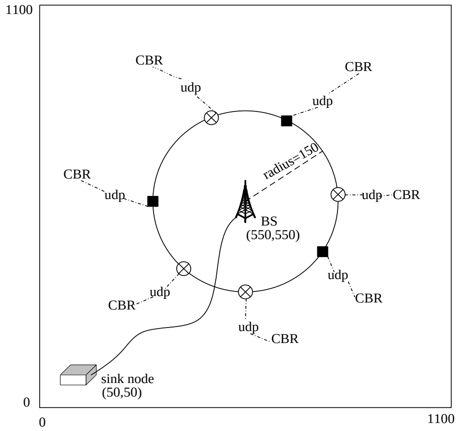

Fig.1: Network Topology

For each of the six parameters we chose 3 different values: low, medium and high. Table 1 shows the values used. In the NIST WiMAX module the value for *frame_duration* can be chosen from: 0.0025, 0.004, 0.005, 0.008, 0.01, 0.0125, or 0.02. We use 0.004, 0.01 and 0.02.

We used a factorial experiment design to collect data [15]. There are a total of 3^6=729 parameter combinations. For each combination we ran 7 replications[2], which gives a total of 729x7=5103 simulations. For each replication, we record the average traffic throughput and average traffic loss rate of all SSs, sincewe measuer the DoS vulnerability by either the traffic throughput or the traffic loss. By testing all combinations of factors, the factorial experimental design provides robust results. Since the tests for any one factor contain values collected for all settings of the other factors, this allows us to be certain that the results obtained are due to

[2] We use the operating characteristic curve in selecting the number of replications. Please refer to [15] for details. For our experiments, 7 replications generate the type II error of less than 0.01 and the power of more than 0.99.

that factor’s settings. In essence, the influence of the other factors is treated as noise [15].

6. Simulation Results and Analysis

Our goal is to find the parameters or parameter combinations that most affect DoS vulnerability. We use ANOVA to accomplish this. ANOVA is used extensively for statistical analysis in psychology, biology, medicine, economics, industrial design and other areas [18, 21]. In this section, we give a brief introduction to ANOVA, followed by a statistical ANOVA analysis of our experimental results.

Table 1. Parameter Values

Parameter	**Values**		
	Treatment 1	Treatment 2	Treatment 3
frame_duration	0.004	0.01	0.02
number_of_attackers/user	20/80	50/50	80/20
dos_backoff_start	1	3	5
dos_request_retry	2	6	10
bw_backoff_start	1	3	5
bw_request_retry	2	6	10

One-way ANOVA [15]

If response *y* is affected by a single parameter *A*, one-way ANOVA compares the effects of different treatments (levels) of parameter *A* on response *y*. Table 2 shows typical data from a single-parameter experiment. *A* has *m* treatments. For each treatment, *n* replicates of experiment are performed. y_{ij} is the observed response of replication *j* under treatment *i*. It is described with a statistical model:

Table 2. Data for a Single-Factor Experiment

Factor A Treatment levels	*Observations*
1	$y_{11}, y_{12} \cdots y_{1n}$
2	$y_{21}, y_{22} \cdots y_{2n}$
…	…
m	$y_{m1}, y_{m2} \cdots y_{mn}$

$$y_{ij} = \mu + \tau_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \qquad i = 1, 2 \cdots m; j = 1, 2 \cdots n \tag{1}$$

where μ is the true mean of all treatments, τ_i is a parameter unique to the *ith* treatment called the *ith* treatment effect, and ε_{ij} is a random error component. This uses the random effects model to describe the data, which makes no assumptions about how to model the influence of parameter *A*on *y*. We found this generalized regression approach more appropriate for this study than the more widely used linear regression which posits that factor influence can be described by linear functions [15]. All error components ε_{ij} are independent and follow a normal distribution with mean 0 and variance σ^2 . One-way ANOVA tests the equality of μ_i 's, or equivalently tests the hypothesis,

$$\begin{aligned} H_0 &: \quad \tau_1 = \tau_2 = \cdots = \tau_m = 0 \\ H_1 &: \quad \tau_i \neq 0 \quad \text{for at least one } i \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

To do the test,

1. first compute the total Sum of Square (SS);
2. decompose SS into $SS = SS_{Treatment} + SS_E$, where $SS_{Treatment}$ is the SS due to treatments and has a degree of freedom (DF) $m{-}1$, and SS_E is the SS due to error and has a DF $N-m$. $N = m \cdot n$ is the total number of observations;
3. compute Mean Square (MS);
4. compute F_0 ;

The hypothesis H_0 is rejected if $F_0 > F_{\alpha, m-1, N-m}$, where α is type I error control and usually it takes values of 5% or 10%.

Table 3 is the one-way ANOVA table used to summarize the above information. Please refer to [15] for details on how to do the test.

Table 3 One-way ANOVA Table

Source of Variation	SS	DF	Mean Square (MS)	F_0
Treatments	$SS_{Treatment}$	*m-1*	$MS_{Treatment} = \dfrac{SS_{Treatment}}{m-1}$	$F_0 = \dfrac{MS_{Treatment}}{MS_E}$
Error	SS_E	*N-m*	$MS_E = \dfrac{SS_E}{N-m}$	
Total	SS	*N-1*		

Two-way ANOVA and Multiple Factor [15]

Suppose response *y* is affected by two parameters *A* and *B*. *A* has m_1 treatments and *B* has m_2 . Two-way ANOVA compares the effects of treatments of each parameter and the effect of the parameter combinations. For each parameter combination, *n* replicates of the experiment are performed. y_{ijk} is the observed response when *A* takes the *ith* treatment, *B* takes the *jth* treatment for the *kth* replicate. y_{ijk} may be described by the statistical model:

$$y_{ijk} = \mu + \tau_i + \beta_j + (\tau\beta)_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ijk} \quad i = 1, \cdots, m_1;\ j = 1, \cdots m_2;\ k = 1, \cdots n \tag{3}$$

where μ is the overall true mean, τ_i is the *ith* treatment effect of parameter *A* and, β_j is the *jth* treatment effect of *B*, $(\tau\beta)_{ij}$ is the effect of interaction between τ_i and β_j , and ε_{ijk} is a random error component. All ε_{ijk} 's are independent and follow a normal distribution with mean 0 and variance σ^2 . Denote the mean of the response corresponding to the *ith*(*jth*) treatment of *A* (*B*) as μ_{Ai} (μ_{Bj}). Two-way ANOVA tests the equality of μ_{Ai} 's, the equality of μ_{Bj} 's, and whether *A* and *B* interact. Please refer to [15] for details.

The two-way ANOVA can be extended to *L* factors ($L \ge 3$). As you may expect, the ANOVA table for *L* factors will contain the rows for treatments of each factor, for 2nd order, 3rd order… $(L-1)th$ order factor interactions. Tools exist to do ANOVA. In this paper, we use the tools in Matlab.

In ANOVA, "R-SQUARE" is commonly used in data analysis. It is defined as

$$R^2 = \frac{SS_X}{SS_T} \tag{4}$$

and interpreted as the percent of variance in the data "explained" by the parameter X [15]. Factor X can be a parameter or parameter interaction.

It is important to mention that these equations make the basic assumption that all error factors have normal distributions. Since we confound readings from multiple factors, when any parameter significantly influences *y* then the ε values for the other factors are likely not to follow normal distributions. This may lower the significance of the test [15], increasing α the likelihood of a false negative, and possibly skewing specific values of τ found by regression. But, the *F*-test we use for determining the significance of the influence of individual factors is in practice robust to the normality assumption and only slightly affected.

Simulation Results and Analysis

The purpose of our analysis is to examine the effects of the 6 parameters and their combinations on system vulnerability to DoS attacks on bandwidth contention resolution mechanism. Each parameter has 3 treatments, as listed in Table 1. For each parameter combination, 7 replications are run. We measure the average throughput of the SSs in the simulated network in each replicate. Fig. 2 shows the probability density function (PDF) for the average throughput of the SSs from all the simulations. Note that the maximum value for the PDF is approximately 2.4×10^4 bits per second (bps) and that the PDF is skewed towards the higher throughput values.

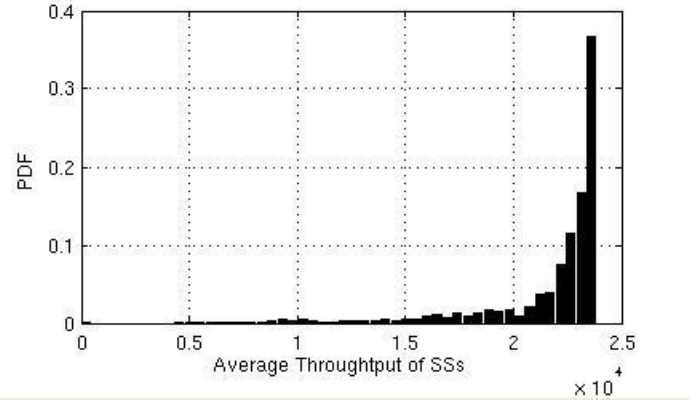

Fig.2:PDF for SS Throughput of All Replicates

Table 4 ANOVA Table for Average Throughput Data

Source	SS	DF	MS	F_0	F_α	Prob> F_0	R SQUARE
X1	1.143e10	2	5.713e9	11048.57	2.998	0	0.2169
X2	1.452e7	2	7.258e6	14.04	2.998	0	0.0003
X3	1.291e8	2	6.454e7	124.82	2.998	0	0.0025
X4	1.774e8	2	8.872e7	171.59	2.998	0	0.0034
X5	2.822e9	2	1.411e9	2728.55	2.998	0	0.0536
X6	1.650e10	2	8.250e9	15956.79	2.998	0	0.3133
X1*X2	7.108e6	4	1.777e6	3.44	2.374	0.008	0.0001
X1*X3	3.875e8	4	9.688e7	187.37	2.374	0	0.0074
X1*X4	1.720e8	4	4.301e7	83.18	2.374	0	0.0033
X1*X5	1.725e9	4	4.312e8	833.89	2.374	0	0.0328
X1*X6	9.545e9	4	2.386e9	4614.98	2.374	0	0.1812
X2*X3	3.016e7	4	7.541e6	14.58	2.374	0	0.0006
X2*X4	3.695e7	4	9.237e6	17.86	2.374	0	0.0007
X2*X5	6.092e7	4	1.523e7	29.45	2.374	0	0.0012
X2*X6	8.926e6	4	2.231e6	4.32	2.374	0.002	0.0002
X3*X4	1.168e8	4	2.920e7	56.48	2.374	0	0.0022
X3*X5	1.527e8	4	3.818e7	73.85	2.374	0	0.0029
X3*X6	5.286e8	4	1.321e8	255.57	2.374	0	0.0100
X4*X5	7.456e6	4	1.864e6	3.61	2.374	0.006	0.0001
X4*X6	1.066e8	4	2.665e7	51.54	2.374	0	0.0020
X5*X6	3.870e9	4	9.675e8	1871.14	2.374	0	0.0735
X1*X2*X3	1.031e8	8	1.289e7	24.94	1.940	0	0.0020
X1*X2*X4	4.540e7	8	5.675e6	10.98	1.940	0	0.0009
X1*X2*X5	9.147e7	8	1.143e7	22.11	1.940	0	0.0017
X1*X2*X6	3.623e7	8	4.528e6	8.76	1.940	0	0.0007
X1*X3*X4	9.952e7	8	1.244e7	24.06	1.940	0	0.0019
X1*X3*X5	4.797e7	8	5.997e6	11.6	1.940	0	0.0091
X1*X3*X6	1.982e8	8	2.478e7	47.92	1.940	0	0.0038
X1*X4*X5	8.019e6	8	1.002e6	1.94	1.940	0.050	0.0002
X1*X4*X6	7.409e7	8	9.262e6	17.91	1.940	0	0.0001
X1*X5*X6	9.344e8	8	1.168e8	225.9	1.940	0	0.0177
X2*X3*X4	3.879e7	8	4.849e6	9.38	1.940	0	0.0007
X2*X3*X5	4.518e7	8	5.647e6	10.92	1.940	0	0.0009
X2*X3*X6	1.395e8	8	1.744e7	33.73	1.940	0	0.0027
X2*X4*X5	4.854e6	8	6.068e5	1.17	1.940	0.311	0.0001
X2*X4*X6	2.430e7	8	3.038e6	5.88	1.940	0	0.0005
X2*X5*X6	6.429e7	8	8.036e6	15.54	1.940	0	0.0012
X3*X4*X5	1.009e7	8	1.261e6	2.44	1.940	0.013	0.0002
X3*X4*X6	5.806e7	8	7.257e6	14.04	1.940	0	0.0011
X3*X5*X6	2.901e8	8	3.626e7	70.13	1.940	0	0.0055
X4*X5*X6	1.107e7	8	1.384e6	2.68	1.940	0.006	0.0002
Error	2.518e9	4870	5.170e5				
Total	5.267e10	5102					

The Matlab ANOVA function was run on the throughput data returned by the simulations, giving the results in Table 4. We added the “R-Square” values and F_α values to the table[3]. We only considered interactions up to the 3rd order. For brevity, labels X1 to X6 are used to represent *frame_duration, number_of_attackers, dos_backoff_start, dos_request_retry, bw_backoff_start,* and *bw_request_retry.* The notation $\mathrm{Xi} * \mathrm{Xj} * \mathrm{Xk}$ in the “Source” column in the table represents the interactions of the three parameters. The “Prob>F” column gives the *p*-value for the *F*-test, which is the probability that a random process produces a value at least as extreme as the observed value. Since we are using a significance level of 95% ($\alpha = 0.05$), we would accept H_0 if this value is greater than 0.05.

For row “X1” to “X6” in Table 4, H_0 is the hypothesis that the average throughput of SSs corresponding to different treatments of a parameter are equal. For the rest rows, H_0 is the hypothesis that no parameter interaction exists.

First we look at the first order parameter effect, row “X1” to “X6” in Table 4[4]. The *p*-values for the individual parameters are all negligible, meaning that each parameter has a significant influence on the ability of the attackers to launch a DoS attack. The “R Square” column states which parameters are more critical. Parameter X1 (*frame_duration*) explains about 21% of the total variance, while parameter X6 (*bw_request_retry*) accounts for another 31% of the variance in all the tests. Of the other parameters, only parameter X5 (*bw_backoff_start*) accounts for more than 1% of the variance, and it only accounts for around 5% of the variance.

Consider 2nd order effects, row “X1∗X2” to “X5∗X6”[5]. We see that the *p*-values show all 2nd order effects to be significant. The most significant second order effect is the interaction between X1 and X6, which accounts for an additional 18% of the variance. The only other second order effect worth noting is the combination of X5 and X6 which accounts for about 7% of the variance. These results indicate that in our simulations parameters X1and X6 together explain over 70% of the total variability. Therefore, the average throughput of all SSs is determined mainly by these two parameters.

The set of 3rd order interactions finds that some 3rd order effects ($\mathrm{X1} * \mathrm{X4} * \mathrm{X5}$ and $\mathrm{X2} * \mathrm{X4} * \mathrm{X5}$) are not 95% significant, because their *p*-values are larger than 0.05. The only 3rd order effect that accounts for more than 1% of the variance is $\mathrm{X1} * \mathrm{X5} * \mathrm{X6}$, which is not surprising as these are the three parameters that are most influential. Adding X5, $\mathrm{X1} * \mathrm{X5}$, $\mathrm{X5} * \mathrm{X6}$, and $\mathrm{X1} * \mathrm{X5} * \mathrm{X6}$ could explain an additional 16% of the variance in the system.

We plot the influence of both X1 (*frame_duration*) and X6 (*bw_request_retry*) on throughput to show their impact on DoS vulnerability. Fig.3shows the average throughput versus X1(*frame_duration*). As *frame_duration* increases, throughput decreases because the bandwidth request rime for an SS increases as *frame_duration*. The decrease, as shown in Fig. 3, is not linear. To determine the exact functional relationship, more simulations needed to be done on different *frame_duration* values. In ns-2, possible values for the parameter are fixed,

[3] The output of Matlab ANOVA program does not include “R-SQUARE” and F_α values.

[4] In calculating the 1st order effect of a parameter, other parameters are treated as noise. For each value of that parameter, there are 5103/3=1701 experiment data points.

[5] In calculating the 2nd order effects of Xi*Xj, there are 9 possible values for the Xi*Xj. For each value, there are 5103/9=569 experiment data points.

which are 0.0025, 0.004, 0.005, 0.00e8, 0.01, 0.0125, and 0.02. Fig.4 shows the relationship between the throughput and X6 (*bw_request_retry*). As *bw_request_retry* increases, the throughput also increases. This is because large *bw_request_retry* causes the number of packet drops to decrease. The 2nd order effect of the interaction of X1 and X6 on the throughput is not negligible. The 3d plot in Fig.5 shows the relationship between the throughput and the interaction of X1 and X6. The most drastic throughput decrease happens when *frame_duration=0.02.* The best solution in our tests occurs when *frame_duration* is low and *bw_request_retry* is high.

In summary,

1. Parameters *frame_duration* and *bw_request_retry* affect throughput most strongly. The effects of other parameters, with the possible exception of *bw_backoff_start*, are relatively minor.
2. The parameters related to the DoS attackers, *number_of_attackers, dos_backoff_start*, *dos_request_retry* do not significantly affect the efficacy of the DoS attacks. Reasons are given in section 7.
3. In determining the values fo*r frame_duration,* the average throughput for all SSs in the simulated WiMAX network decreases dramatically when it takes the value of 0.02. Also as suggested in Fig. 4, smaller value o*f frame_duration*is preferable.
4. For *bw_request_retry*, the throughput increases drastically when *bw_request_retry* increase from 2 to 6. The increase is less sharp when *bw_request_retry* increases from 6 to 10.

We also examine how the parameters and their interactions affect the packet loss rate of the SSs in the simulated network. We get the similar results as the above.

This analysis uses the ns-2 network simulator and we are concerned that the physical layer models may not adequately represent real-world interactions, such as channel impairment etc. We are in the process of repeating these experiments using a software-defined radio testbed. Also, network performance may be sensitive to both implementation details and the environment where the system is deployed. It would be premature to make specific parameter setting suggestions without further testing. We do feel confident, however, in stating that the parameters given here are particularly important for making the network robust to DoS attacks.

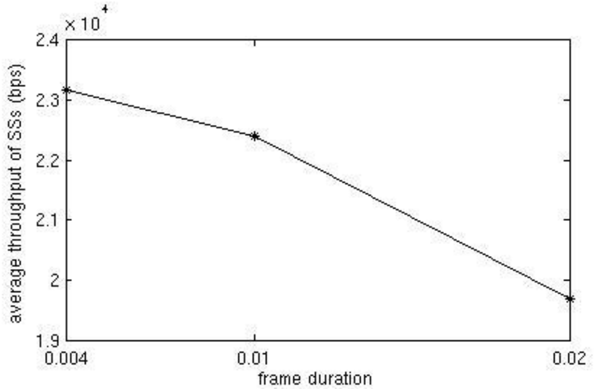

Fig.3: Relationship between Throughput and X1 (*frame_duration*)

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we analyzed DoS attacks that exploit the parameters in the bandwidth contention resolution specified in IEEE 802.16 standards. Six parameters were chosen. Simulations were performed in ns-2 to simulate the DoS attack. We used ANOVA on the simulation results to identify the effect of each parameter and parameter interactions on the DoS attack. We found that two of the parameters, *frame_duration* and *bw_request_retry*, and their interaction account for 70% of the variance of the system throughput during DoS events. If a third parameter, *bw_backoff_start*, is added, they account for over 86% of the system variance.

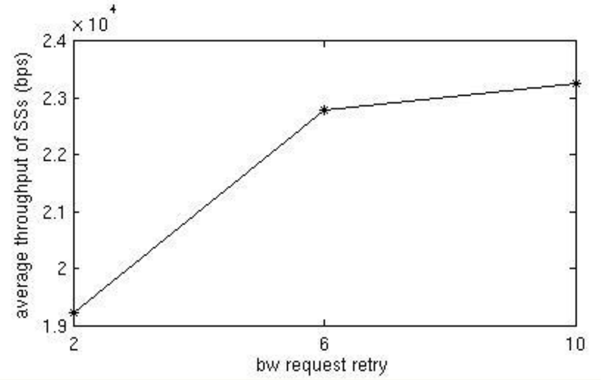

Fig.4: Relationship between Throughput and X6 (*bw_request_retry*)

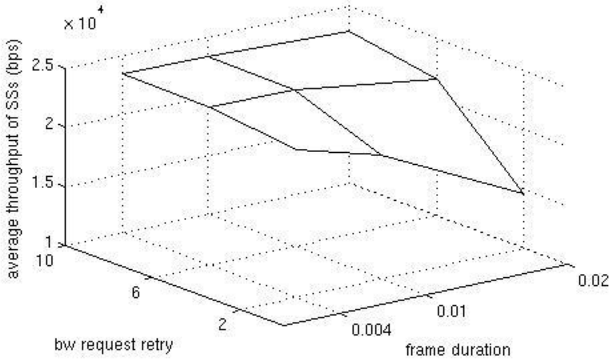

Fig.5: 3d Plot of (*frame_duration, bw_request_retry, throughput*)

It was interesting that the parameters defining the DoS attackers were not found to significantly affect throughput of SSs. There are many aspects to this finding. First, we note that in our simulation the total number of SSs and DoS attackers is set to 100 and they have exactly the same traffic. So the total volume of data for these simulations was fixed. Adding more attackers did not significantly increase the volume of traffic in the network. The aggregate workload generated by all the traffic generators in each simulation is approximately

2.4 Mbps[6], while the simulated network provides an upstream data rate of just greater than15Mbps[7]. So, the network is always less than 15% utilized. This is intentional, adding more traffic eventually results in a packet flooding DoS attack. Technical countermeasures to packet-flooding DoS are outside the scope of this paper.

The factors found to be most significant, *frame_duration* and *bw_request_retry* both directly influence SS throughput. Decreasing the *frame_duration* allows SS's to make retry requests more quickly when collisions occur. The request retry allows SS's to make a larger number of requests before timing out. It makes sense that these factors should be set appropriately low (*frame_duration*) and high (*bw_request_retry*) to allow SSs to compensate for the disturbances caused by attackers.

A third parameter, *bw_backoff_start*, was also significant. By allowing SS's to launch retry requests more quickly, its influence is consistent with the other two parameters. However, since the magnitude of its influence is so much less than *frame_duration* and *bw_request_retry*, we feel that it is more appropriate to concentrate DoS efforts on finding proper settings for the two parameters.

This general approach is well suited to analyzing other network protocols. In future work, we are verifying these results using a hardware-in-the-loop test environment. These tests are currently underway using the NSF-sponsored GENI next generation network testbed and a set of software defined SS's and BS's. These tests will serve both to verify these simulation results and act as a hardware verification of the ns-2 WiMAX modules.

Once verification of these results has been done using hardware-in-the-loop, we hope to do analysis to find a more complete response surface for the bandwidth contention resolution parameters that significantly influence DoS vulnerability. This information should be useful for protocol design teams, since it empirically determines the set of system parameters that make the system most vulnerable to attack. We suggest that the next round of standards attempt to make WiMAX more robust.

Finally, simulations are forced to model radio waves as propagating in a uniform media, ignoring many significant problems due to multi-path fading, shadowing, etc. that are primarily due to interactions with the local environment. It would be useful to run tests in a number of different physical settings to see if the results presented here are consistent with performance in commercial settings. The experimental design approach we use is particularly suited to this work, since these tools have been developed to allow experimenters to get significant information from a minimal number of test replications [15].

These results are useful for several reasons. They indicate for future versions of 802.16 that these bandwidth contention resolution parameters are most critical for system performance. Researchers should concentrate on issues related to their interactions. Also, this indicates how to make the system robust to errors in SS implementation. It will also be interesting in the future to compare the resistance of DOCSIS, 802.16 and LET networks, since a good deal of 802.16 was lifted from DOCSIS and a good deal of LTE is lifted from 802.16.

[6] In our simulation, there are 100 nodes. Each node has a UDP agent which sends packet of size 1500 bytes every 0.5 second. So, the aggregate work load is 100*1500*8*2=2.4Mbps. This is consistent with Figure 2. The simulation implies that well configured networks are very efficient.

[7] An effective data rate of 15 Mpbs represents the best possible channel conditions (i.e. utilizing 64QAM 3/4 coding) over a 10MHz channel that is evenly divided between upstream and downstream transmissions.

The discovery of DoS vulnerabilities is an important step in the creation of more secure protocols. This allows future versions to be developed in a way that removes these vulnerabilities. The publication of known vulnerabilities helps make 802.16 more secure, and may make it more secure than competing technologies.

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