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| JOSE Working Group | M. Jones |
| Internet-Draft | Microsoft |
| Intended status: Standards Track | J. Bradley |
| Expires: January 7, 2013 | independent |
| | N. Sakimura |
| | Nomura Research Institute |
| | July 6, 2012 |

JSON Web Signature JSON Serialization (JWS-JS) draft-jones-json-web-signature-json-serialization-02

Abstract

The JSON Web Signature JSON Serialization (JWS-JS) is a means of representing content secured with digital signatures or Hash-based Message Authentication Codes (HMACs) using JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) data structures. This specification describes a means of representing secured content as a JSON data object (as opposed to the JWS specification, which uses a compact serialization with a URL-safe representation). It enables multiple digital signatures and/or HMACs to be applied to the same content (unlike JWS). Cryptographic algorithms and identifiers used with this specification are described in the separate JSON Web Algorithms (JWA) specification. The JSON Serialization for related encryption functionality is described in the separate JSON Web Encryption JSON Serialization (JWE-JS) specification.

Status of this Memo

This Internet-Draft is submitted in full conformance with the provisions of BCP 78 and BCP 79.

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Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction**
 - 1.1. Notational Conventions**
- 2. Terminology**
- 3. JSON Serialization**
- 4. Example JWS-JS**
- 5. IANA Considerations**

- [6. Security Considerations](#)
- [7. Open Issues](#)
- [8. References](#)
 - [8.1. Normative References](#)
 - [8.2. Informative References](#)
- [Appendix A. Acknowledgements](#)
- [Appendix B. Document History](#)
- [§ Authors' Addresses](#)

1. Introduction

TOC

The JSON Web Signature JSON Serialization (JWS-JS) is a format for representing content secured with digital signatures or Hash-based Message Authentication Codes (HMACs) as a JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) [\[RFC4627\]](#) object. It enables multiple digital signatures and/or HMACs to be applied to the same content (unlike JWS [\[JWS\]](#)). The digital signature and HMAC mechanisms used are independent of the type of content being secured, allowing arbitrary content to be secured. Cryptographic algorithms and identifiers used with this specification are described in the separate JSON Web Algorithms (JWA) [\[JWA\]](#) specification. The JSON Serialization for related encryption functionality is described in the separate JSON Web Encryption JSON Serialization (JWE-JS) [\[JWE-JS\]](#) specification.

1.1. Notational Conventions

TOC

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels [\[RFC2119\]](#).

2. Terminology

TOC

This specification uses the same terminology as the JSON Web Signature (JWS) [\[JWS\]](#) specification.

3. JSON Serialization

TOC

The JSON Serialization represents secured content as a JSON object with members for each of three constituent parts: a `headers` member whose value is a non-empty array of Encoded JWS Header values, a `payload` member whose value is an Encoded JWS Payload value, and a `signatures` member whose value is a non-empty array of Encoded JWS Signature values, where the number of elements in both arrays is the same.

Unlike the compact serialization used by JWSs, content using the JSON Serialization MAY be secured with more than one digital signature and/or HMAC value. Each is represented as an Encoded JWS Signature in the `signatures` member array. For each, there is a corresponding `headers` member array element that is an Encoded JWS Header specifying the digital signature or HMAC applied to the Encoded JWS Header value and the Encoded JWS Payload value to create the JWS Signature value. Therefore, the syntax is:

```
{
  "headers": ["<header 1 contents>", ..., "<header N contents>"],
  "payload": "<payload contents>",
  "signatures": ["<signature 1 contents>", ..., "<signature N contents>"]
}
```

The contents of the Encoded JWS Header, Encoded JWS Payload, and Encoded JWS Signature

values are exactly as specified in JSON Web Signature (JWS) [JWS]. They are interpreted and validated in the same manner, with each corresponding `headers` and `signatures` value being created or validated together. The arrays MUST have the same number of elements.

The *i*'th JWS Signature value is computed on the JWS Secured Input corresponding to the concatenation of the *i*'th Encoded JWS Header, a period ('.') character, and the Encoded JWS Payload in the same manner described in the JWS specification. This has the desirable result that each Encoded JWS signature value in the `signatures` array is identical to the value that would be used for the same header and payload in a JWS.

4. Example JWS-JS

TOC

This section contains an example using the JWS JSON Serialization. This example demonstrates the capability for conveying multiple digital signatures and/or HMACs for the same payload.

The Encoded JWS Payload used in this example is the same as used in the examples in Appendix A of JWS (with line breaks for display purposes only):

```
eyJpc3MiOiJqb2UiLA0KICJleHAiOjEzMDA4MTkzODAsDQogImh0dHA6Ly9leGFtcGxlLmNvbS9pc19yb290Ijp0cnV1fQ
```

Two digital signatures are used in this example: an RSA SHA-256 signature, for which the header and signature values are the same as in Appendix A.2 of JWS, and an ECDSA P-256 SHA-256 signature, for which the header and signature values are the same as in Appendix A.3 of JWS. The two Decoded JWS Header Segments used are:

```
{"alg": "RS256"}
```

and:

```
{"alg": "ES256"}
```

Since the computations of the JWS Header and JWS Signature values are the same as in Appendix A.2 and Appendix A.3 of JWS, they are not repeated here.

The complete JSON Web Signature JSON Serialization (JWS-JS) for these values is as follows (with line breaks for display purposes only):

```
{"headers": [
  "eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9",
  "eyJhbGciOiJFUzI1NiJ9"],
  "payload": "eyJpc3MiOiJqb2UiLA0KICJleHAiOjEzMDA4MTkzODAsDQogImh0dHA6Ly9leGFtcGxlLmNvbS9pc19yb290Ijp0cnV1fQ",
  "signatures": [
    "cC4hiUPoj9Eetdgtv3hF80EGrhuB__dzERat0XF9g2VtQgr9PJbu3X0iZj5RZ
    mh7AAuHI4Bh-0Qc_lF5YKt_08w2Fp5jujGbdS9uJdbF9CUAr7t1dnZcAcQjbKBY
    NX4BAynRFdiuB--f_nZLgrnbyTyWz075vRK5h6xBARLIARNPvkSjtQBMH1b1L07Q
    e7K0GarZrMB_eSN9383Lc0Ln6_d0--xi12jzDwusc-e0kHWEsqtfZESc6BfI7no0
    PqvhJ1phCnvWh6IeYI2w9Q0YEUipUTI8np6LbgGY9Fs98rqVt5AXLIhWkWywlvmt
    VrBp0igcN_IoypGLUPQGe77Rw",
    "DtEhU3ljbEg8L38VwAUAq0yKAM6-Xx-F4GawxaepmXFCgfTjDxw5djxLa8IS
    lSApmWQxfKTUJqPP3-Kg6NU1Q"]
}
```

TOC

5. IANA Considerations

TOC

This specification makes no requests of IANA.

6. Security Considerations

TOC

The security considerations for this specification are the same as those for the JSON Web Signature (JWS) **[JWS]** specification.

7. Open Issues

TOC

[[to be removed by the RFC editor before publication as an RFC]]

The following items remain to be considered or done in this draft:

- Track changes that occur in the JWS spec.
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8. References

TOC

8.1. Normative References

TOC

- [JWA]** [Jones, M., "JSON Web Algorithms \(JWA\),"](#) July 2012.
- [JWS]** [Jones, M., Bradley, J., and N. Sakimura, "JSON Web Signature \(JWS\),"](#) July 2012.
- [RFC2119]** [Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels,"](#) BCP 14, RFC 2119, March 1997 ([TXT](#), [HTML](#), [XML](#)).
- [RFC4627]** Crockford, D., "[The application/json Media Type for JavaScript Object Notation \(JSON\)](#)," RFC 4627, July 2006 ([TXT](#)).
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8.2. Informative References

TOC

- [JSS]** Bradley, J. and N. Sakimura (editor), "[JSON Simple Sign](#)," September 2010.
- [JWE-JS]** [Jones, M., "JSON Web Encryption JSON Serialization \(JWE-JS\),"](#) July 2012.
- [MagicSignatures]** Panzer (editor), J., Laurie, B., and D. Balfanz, "[Magic Signatures](#)," January 2011.
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Appendix A. Acknowledgements

TOC

JSON serializations for secured content were previously explored by **Magic Signatures** [MagicSignatures] and **JSON Simple Sign** [JSS].

Appendix B. Document History

TOC

[[to be removed by the RFC editor before publication as an RFC]]

-02

- Tracked editorial changes made to the JWS spec.

-01

- Corrected the Magic Signatures reference.

- Created the initial version incorporating JOSE working group input and drawing from the JSON Serialization previously proposed in draft-jones-json-web-token-01.

Authors' Addresses

TOC

Michael B. Jones
Microsoft

Email: mbj@microsoft.com

URI: <http://self-issued.info/>

John Bradley
independent

Email: ve7jtb@ve7jtb.com

Nat Sakimura
Nomura Research Institute

Email: n-sakimura@nri.co.jp