           Using an Autonomic Control Plane for Stable Connectivity of
            Network Operations, Administration, and Maintenance (OAM)

Abstract

   Operations, Administration, and Maintenance (OAM), as per BCP 161,
   for data networks is often subject to the problem of circular
   dependencies when relying on connectivity provided by the network to
   be managed for the OAM purposes.

   Provisioning while bringing up devices and networks tends to be more
   difficult to automate than service provisioning later on. Changes in
   core network functions impacting reachability cannot be automated
   because of ongoing connectivity requirements for the OAM equipment
   itself, and widely used OAM protocols are not secure enough to be
   carried across the network without security concerns.

   This document describes how to integrate OAM processes with an
   autonomic control plane in order to provide stable and secure
   connectivity for those OAM processes. This connectivity is not
   subject to the aforementioned circular dependencies.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Self-Dependent OAM Connectivity

   Operations, Administration, and Maintenance (OAM), as per BCP 161
   [RFC6291], for data networks is often subject to the problem of
   circular dependencies when relying on the connectivity service
   provided by the network to be managed. OAM can easily but
   unintentionally break the connectivity required for its own
   operations. Avoiding these problems can lead to complexity in OAM.
   This document describes this problem and how to use an autonomic
   control plane to solve it without further OAM complexity.

   The ability to perform OAM on a network device requires first the
   execution of OAM necessary to create network connectivity to that
   device in all intervening devices. This typically leads to
   sequential "expanding ring configuration" from a Network Operations
   Center (NOC). It also leads to tight dependencies between
   provisioning tools and security enrollment of devices. Any process
   that wants to enroll multiple devices along a newly deployed network
   topology needs to tightly interlock with the provisioning process
   that creates connectivity before the enrollment can move on to the
   next device.

   Likewise, when performing change operations on a network, it is
   necessary to understand at any step of that process that there is no
   interruption of connectivity that could lead to removal of
   connectivity to remote devices. This includes especially change
   provisioning of routing, forwarding, security, and addressing
   policies in the network that often occur through mergers and
   acquisitions, the introduction of IPv6, or other major overhauls of
   the infrastructure design. Examples include change of an IGP or
   area, change from Provider Aggregatable (PA) to Provider Independent
   (PI) addressing, or systematic topology changes (such as Layer 2 to
   Layer 3 changes).

   All these circular dependencies make OAM complex and potentially
   fragile. When automation is being used (for example, through
   provisioning systems), this complexity extends into that automation
   software.

1.2. Data Communication Networks (DCNs)

   In the late 1990s and early 2000, IP networks became the method of
   choice to build separate OAM networks for the communications
   infrastructure within Network Providers. This concept was
   standardized in ITU-T G.7712/Y.1703 [ITUT_G7712] and called "Data
   Communications Networks" (DCNs). These were (and still are)

physically separate IP or IP/MPLS networks that provide access to OAM
interfaces of all equipment that had to be managed, from Public
Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) switches over optical equipment to
nowadays Ethernet and IP/MPLS production network equipment.

Such DCNs provide stable connectivity not subject to the
aforementioned problems because they are a separate network entirely,
so change configuration of the production IP network is done via the
DCN but never affects the DCN configuration. Of course, this
approach comes at a cost of buying and operating a separate network,
and this cost is not feasible for many providers -- most notably,
smaller providers, most enterprises, and typical Internet of Things
(IoT) networks.

1.3. Leveraging a Generalized Autonomic Control Plane

One of the goals of the IETF ANIMA (Autonomic Networking Integrated
Model and Approach) Working Group is the specification of a secure
and automatically built in-band management plane that provides stable
connectivity similar to a DCN, but without having to build a separate
DCN. It is clear that such an "in-band" approach can never fully
achieve the same level of separation, but the goal is to get as close
to it as possible.

This document discusses how such an in-band management plane can be
used to support the DCN-like OAM use case, how to leverage its stable
connectivity, and what the options are for deploying it incrementally
in the short and long term.

The ANIMA Working Group's evolving specification [ACP] calls this in-
band management plane the "Autonomic Control Plane" (ACP). The
discussions in this document are not dependent on the specification
of that ACP, but only on a set of high-level constraints listed
below, which were decided upon early during the work on the ACP.
Except when being specific about details of the ACP, this document
uses the term "Generalized ACP" (GACP) and is applicable to any
designs that meet the high-level constraints -- for example, the
variations of the ACP protocol choices.

2. GACP Requirements

   The high-level constraints of a GACP assumed and discussed in this
   document are as follows:

   VRF isolation: The GACP is a virtual network (Virtual Routing and
      Forwarding (VRF)) across network devices; its routing and
      forwarding are separate from other routing and forwarding in the
      network devices. Non-GACP routing/forwarding is called the "data
      plane".

   IPv6-only addressing: The GACP provides only IPv6 reachability. It
      uses Unique Local Addresses (ULAs) [RFC4193] that are routed in a
      location-independent fashion, for example, through a subnet prefix
      for each network device. Therefore, automatic addressing in the
      GACP is simple and stable: it does not require allocation by
      address registries, addresses are identifiers, they do not change
      when devices move, and no engineering of the address space to the
      network topology is necessary.

   NOC connectivity: NOC equipment (controlling OAM operations) either
      has access to the GACP directly or has an IP subnet connection to
      a GACP edge device.

   Closed Group Security: GACP devices have cryptographic credentials
      to mutually authenticate each other as members of a GACP. Traffic
      across the GACP is authenticated with these credentials and then
      encrypted.

   GACP connect (interface): The only traffic permitted in and out of
      the GACP that is not authenticated by GACP cryptographic
      credentials is through explicit configuration for the traffic
      from/to the aforementioned non-GACP NOC equipment with subnet
      connections to a GACP edge device (as a transition method).

   The GACP must be built to be autonomic and its function must not be
   able to be disrupted by operator or automated configuration/
   provisioning actions (i.e., Network Management System (NMS) or
   Software-Defined Networking (SDN)). Those actions are allowed to
   impact only the data plane. This document does not cover those
   aspects; instead, it focuses on the impact of the above constraints:
   IPv6 only, dual connectivity, and security.

3. Solutions

3.1. Stable Connectivity for Centralized OAM

   The ANI is the Autonomic Networking Infrastructure consisting of
   secure zero-touch bootstrap (BRSKI [BRSKI]), the GeneRic Autonomic
   Signaling Protocol (GRASP [GRASP]), and Autonomic Control Plane (ACP
   [ACP]). Refer to the reference model [REF_MODEL] for an overview of
   the ANI and how its components interact and [RFC7575] for concepts
   and terminology of ANI and autonomic networks.

   This section describes stable connectivity for centralized OAM via
   the GACP, for example, via the ACP with or without a complete ANI,
   starting with the option that we expect to be the most easy to deploy
   in the short term. It then describes limitations and challenges of
   that approach and the corresponding solutions and workarounds; it
   finishes with the preferred target option of autonomic NOC devices in
   Section 3.1.6.

   This order was chosen because it helps to explain how simple initial
   use of a GACP can be and how difficult workarounds can become (and
   therefore what to avoid). Also, one very promising long-term
   solution is exactly like the most easy short-term solution, only
   virtualized and automated.

   In the most common case, OAM will be performed by one or more
   applications running on a variety of centralized NOC systems that
   communicate with network devices. This document describes approaches
   to leverage a GACP for stable connectivity, from simple to complex,
   depending on the capabilities and limitations of the equipment used.

   Three stages can be considered:

   o There are simple options described in Sections 3.1.1 through 3.1.3
      that we consider to be good starting points to operationalize the
      use of a GACP for stable connectivity today. These options
      require only network and OAM/NOC device configuration.

   o The are workarounds to connect a GACP to non-IPv6-capable NOC
      devices through the use of IPv4/IPv6 NAT (Network Address
      Translation) as described in Section 3.1.4. These workarounds are
      not recommended; however, if non-IPv6-capable NOC devices need to
      be used longer term, then the workarounds are the only way to
      connect them to a GACP.

   o Options for the near to long term can provide all the desired
      operational, zero-touch, and security benefits of an autonomic
      network, but a range of details for this still have to be worked
      out, and development work on NOC/OAM equipment is necessary.
      These options are discussed in Sections 3.1.5 through 3.1.8.

3.1.1. Simple Connectivity for Non-GACP-Capable NMS Hosts

   In the most simple candidate deployment case, the GACP extends all
   the way into the NOC via one or more GACP edge devices. See also
   Section 6.1 of [ACP]. These devices "leak" the (otherwise encrypted)
   GACP natively to NMS hosts. They act as the default routers to those
   NMS hosts and provide them with IPv6 connectivity into the GACP. NMS
   hosts with this setup need to support IPv6 (e.g., see [RFC6434]) but
   require no other modifications to leverage the GACP.

   Note that even though the GACP only uses IPv6, it can of course
   support OAM for any type of network deployment as long as the network
   devices support the GACP: The data plane can be IPv4 only, dual
   stack, or IPv6 only. It is always separate from the GACP; therefore,
   there is no dependency between the GACP and the IP version(s) used in
   the data plane.

   This setup is sufficient for troubleshooting mechanisms such as SSH
   into network devices, NMS that performs SNMP read operations for
   status checking, software downloads onto autonomic devices,
   provisioning of devices via NETCONF, and so on. In conjunction with
   otherwise unmodified OAM via separate NMS hosts, this setup can
   provide a good subset of the stable connectivity goals. The
   limitations of this approach are discussed in the next section.

   Because the GACP provides "only" for IPv6 connectivity, and because
   addressing provided by the GACP does not include any topological
   addressing structure that a NOC often relies on to recognize where
   devices are on the network, it is likely highly desirable to set up
   the Domain Name System (DNS; see [RFC1034]) so that the GACP IPv6
   addresses of autonomic devices are known via domain names that
   include the desired structure. For example, if DNS in the network
   were set up with names for network devices as
   devicename.noc.example.com, and if the well-known structure of the
   data-plane IPv4 address space were used by operators to infer the
   region where a device is located, then the GACP address of that
   device could be set up as devicename_<region>.acp.noc.example.com,
   and devicename.acp.noc.example.com could be a CNAME to
   devicename_<region>.acp.noc.example.com. Note that many networks
   already use names for network equipment where topological information
   is included, even without a GACP.

3.1.2. Challenges and Limitations of Simple Connectivity

   This simple connectivity of non-autonomic NMS hosts suffers from a
   range of challenges (that is, operators may not be able to do it this
   way) and limitations (that is, operators cannot achieve desired goals
   with this setup). The following list summarizes these challenges and
   limitations, and the following sections describe additional
   mechanisms to overcome them.

   Note that these challenges and limitations exist because GACP is
   primarily designed to support distributed Autonomic Service Agent
   (ASA), a piece of autonomic software, in the most lightweight
   fashion. GACP is not required to support the additional mechanisms
   needed for centralized NOC systems. It is this document that
   describes additional (short-term) workarounds and (long-term)
   extensions.

   1. (Limitation) NMS hosts cannot directly probe whether the desired
       so-called "data-plane" network connectivity works because they do
       not directly have access to it. This problem is similar to
       probing connectivity for other services (such as VPN services)
       that they do not have direct access to, so the NOC may already
       employ appropriate mechanisms to deal with this issue (probing
       proxies). See Section 3.1.3 for candidate solutions.

   2. (Challenge) NMS hosts need to support IPv6, and this often is
       still not possible in enterprise networks. See Section 3.1.4 for
       some workarounds.

   3. (Limitation) Performance of the GACP may be limited versus normal
       "data-plane" connectivity. The setup of the GACP will often
       support only forwarding that is not hardware accelerated.
       Running a large amount of traffic through the GACP, especially
       for tasks where it is not necessary, will reduce its performance
       and effectiveness for those operations where it is necessary or
       highly desirable. See Section 3.1.5 for candidate solutions.

   4. (Limitation) Security of the GACP is reduced by exposing the GACP
       natively (and unencrypted) in a subnet in the NOC where the NOC
       devices are attached to it. See Section 3.1.7 for candidate
       solutions.

   These four problems can be tackled independently of each other by
   solution improvements. Combining some of these improvements together
   can lead towards a candidate long-term solution.

3.1.3. Simultaneous GACP and Data-Plane Connectivity

   Simultaneous connectivity to both the GACP and data plane can be
   achieved in a variety of ways. If the data plane is IPv4 only, then
   any method for dual-stack attachment of the NOC device/application
   will suffice: IPv6 connectivity from the NOC provides access via the
   GACP; IPv4 provides access via the data plane. If, as explained
   above in the simple case, an autonomic device supports native
   attachment to the GACP, and the existing NOC setup is IPv4 only, then
   it could be sufficient to attach the GACP device(s) as the IPv6
   default router to the NOC subnet and keep the existing IPv4 default
   router setup unchanged.

   If the data plane of the network is also supporting IPv6, then the
   most compatible setup for NOC devices is to have two IPv6 interfaces
   -- one virtual (e.g., via IEEE 802.1Q [IEEE.802.1Q]) or physical
   interface connecting to a data-plane subnet, and another connecting
   into a GACP connect subnet. See Section 8.1 of [ACP] for more
   details. That document also specifies how a NOC device can receive
   autoconfigured addressing and routes towards the ACP connect subnet
   if it supports default address selection as specified in [RFC6724]
   and default router preferences as specified in [RFC4191].

   Configuring a second interface on a NOC host may be impossible or
   seen as undesired complexity. In that case, the GACP edge device
   needs to provide support for a "combined ACP and data-plane
   interface" as described in Section 8.1 of [ACP]. This setup may not
   work with autoconfiguration and all NOC host network stacks due to
   limitations in those network stacks. They need to be able to perform
   Rule 5.5 of [RFC6724] regarding source address selection, including
   caching of next-hop information.

   For security reasons, it is not considered appropriate to connect a
   non-GACP router to a GACP connect interface. The reason is that the
   GACP is a secured network domain, and all NOC devices connecting via
   GACP connect interfaces are also part of that secure domain. The
   main difference is that the physical links between the GACP edge
   device and the NOC devices are not authenticated or encrypted and,
   therefore, need to be physically secured. If the secure GACP was
   extendable via untrusted routers, then it would be a lot more
   difficult to verify the secure domain assertion. Therefore, the GACP
   edge devices are not supposed to redistribute routes from non-GACP
   routers into the GACP.

3.1.4. IPv4-Only NMS Hosts

   One architectural expectation for the GACP as described in
   Section 1.3 is that all devices that want to use the GACP (including
   NMS hosts) support IPv6. Note that this expectation does not imply
   any requirements for the data plane, especially it does not imply
   that IPv6 must be supported in it. The data plane could be IPv4
   only, IPv6 only, dual stack, or it may not need to have any IP host
   stack on the network devices.

   The implication of this architectural decision is the potential need
   for short-term workarounds when the operational practices in a
   network do not yet meet these target expectations. This section
   explains when and why these workarounds may be operationally
   necessary and describes them. However, the long-term goal is to
   upgrade all NMS hosts to native IPv6, so the workarounds described in
   this section should not be considered permanent.

   Most network equipment today supports IPv6, but it is very far from
   being ubiquitously supported in NOC backend solutions (hardware or
   software) or in the product space for enterprises. Even when it is
   supported, there are often additional limitations or issues using it
   in a dual-stack setup, or the operator mandates (for simplicity)
   single stack for all operations. For these reasons, an IPv4-only
   management plane is still required and common practice in many
   enterprises. Without the desire to leverage the GACP, this required
   and common practice is not a problem for those enterprises even when
   they run dual stack in the network. We discuss these workarounds
   here because it is a short-term deployment challenge specific to the
   operations of a GACP.

   To connect IPv4-only management-plane devices/applications with a
   GACP, some form of IP/ICMP translation of packets between IPv4 and
   IPv6 is necessary. The basic mechanisms for this are in [RFC7915],
   which describes the Stateless IP/ICMP Translation Algorithm (SIIT).
   There are multiple solutions using this mechanism. To understand the
   possible solutions, we consider the requirements:

   1. NMS hosts need to be able to initiate connections to any GACP
       device for management purposes. Examples include provisioning
       via NETCONF, SNMP poll operations, or just diagnostics via SSH
       connections from operators. Every GACP device/function that
       needs to be reachable from NMS hosts needs to have a separate
       IPv4 address.

   2. GACP devices need to be able to initiate connections to NMS
       hosts, for example, to initiate NTP or RADIUS/Diameter
       connections, send syslog or SNMP trap, or initiate NETCONF Call
       Home connections after bootstrap. Every NMS host needs to have a
       separate IPv6 address reachable from the GACP. When a connection
       from a GACP device is made to an NMS host, the IPv4 source
       address of the connection (as seen by the NMS host) must be
       unique per GACP device and must be the same address as in (1) to
       maintain addressing simplicity similar to a native IPv4
       deployment. For example in syslog, the source IP address of a
       logging device is used to identify it, and if the device shows
       problems, an operator might want to SSH into the device to
       diagnose it.

   Because of these requirements, the necessary and sufficient set of
   solutions are those that provide 1:1 mapping of IPv6 GACP addresses
   into IPv4 space and 1:1 mapping of IPv4 NMS host space into IPv6 (for
   use in the GACP). This means that SIIT-based solutions are
   sufficient and preferred.

   Note that GACP devices may use multiple IPv6 addresses in the GACP.
   For example, Section 6.10 of [ACP] defines multiple useful addressing
   sub-schemes supporting this option. All those addresses may then
   need to be reachable through IPv6/IPv4 address translation.

   The need to allocate for every GACP device one or multiple IPv4
   addresses should not be a problem if -- as we assume -- the NMS hosts
   can use private IPv4 address space ([RFC1918]). Nevertheless, even
   with private IPv4 address space, it is important that the GACP IPv6
   addresses can be mapped efficiently into IPv4 address space without
   too much waste.

   Currently, the most flexible mapping scheme to achieve this is
   [RFC7757] because it allows configured IPv4 <-> IPv6 prefix mapping.
   Assume the GACP uses the ACP Zone Addressing Sub-Scheme and there are
   3 registrars. In the ACP Zone Addressing Sub-Scheme, for each
   registrar, there is a constant /112 prefix for which an Explicit
   Address Mapping (EAM), as defined in RFC 7757, to a /16 prefix can be
   configured (e.g., in the private IPv4 address space described in
   [RFC1918]). Within the registrar's /112 prefix, Device-Numbers for
   devices are sequentially assigned: with the V bit (Virtualization
   bit) effectively two numbers are assigned per GACP device. This also
   means that if IPv4 address space is even more constrained, and it is
   known that a registrar will never need the full /15 extent of Device-
   Numbers, then a prefix longer than a /112 can be configured into the
   EAM in order to use less IPv4 space.

When using the ACP Vlong Addressing Sub-Scheme, it is unlikely that
one wants or needs to translate the full /8 or /16 of addressing
space per GACP device into IPv4. In this case, the EAM rules of
dropping trailing bits can be used to map only N bits of the V bits
into IPv4. However, this does imply that only addresses that differ
in those high-order N V bits can be distinguished on the IPv4 side.

Likewise, the IPv4 address space used for NMS hosts can easily be
mapped into an address prefix assigned to a GACP connect interface.

A full specification of a solution to perform SIIT in conjunction
with GACP connect following the considerations below is outside the
scope of this document.

To be in compliance with security expectations, SIIT has to happen on
the GACP edge device itself so that GACP security considerations can
be taken into account. For example, IPv4-only NMS hosts can be dealt
with exactly like IPv6 hosts connected to a GACP connect interface.

Note that prior solutions such as NAT64 ([RFC6146]) may equally be
useable to translate between GACP IPv6 address space and NMS hosts'
IPv4 address space. As a workaround, this can also be done on non-
GACP Edge Devices connected to a GACP connect interface. The details
vary depending on implementation because the options to configure
address mappings vary widely. Outside of EAM, there are no
standardized solutions that allow for mapping of prefixes, so it will
most likely be necessary to explicitly map every individual (/128)
GACP device address to an IPv4 address. Such an approach should use
automation/scripting where these address translation entries are
created dynamically whenever a GACP device is enrolled or first
connected to the GACP network.

The NAT methods described here are not specific to a GACP. Instead,
they are similar to what would be necessary when some parts of a
network only support IPv6, but the NOC equipment does not support
IPv6. Whether it is more appropriate to wait until the NOC equipment
supports IPv6 or to use NAT beforehand depends in large part on how
long the former will take and how easy the latter will be when using
products that support the NAT options described to operationalize the
above recommendations.

3.1.5. Path Selection Policies

As mentioned above, a GACP is not expected to have high performance
because its primary goal is connectivity and security. For existing
network device platforms, this often means that it is a lot more
effort to implement that additional connectivity with hardware

acceleration than without -- especially because of the desire to
support full encryption across the GACP to achieve the desired
security.

Some of these issues may go away in the future with further adoption
of a GACP and network device designs that better tend to the needs of
a separate OAM plane, but it is wise to plan for long-term designs of
the solution that do NOT depend on high performance of the GACP.
This is the opposite of the expectations that future NMS hosts will
have IPv6 and that any considerations for IPv4/NAT in this solution
are temporary.

To solve the expected performance limitations of the GACP, we do
expect to have the above-described dual connectivity via both GACP
and data plane between NOC application devices and devices with GACP.
The GACP connectivity is expected to always be there (as soon as a
device is enrolled), but the data-plane connectivity is only present
under normal operations and will not be present during, e.g., early
stages of device bootstrap, failures, provisioning mistakes, or
network configuration changes.

The desired policy is therefore as follows: In the absence of further
security considerations (see below), traffic between NMS hosts and
GACP devices should prefer data-plane connectivity and resort only to
using the GACP when necessary. The exception is an operation known
to be covered by the use cases where the GACP is necessary, so that
it makes no sense to try using the data plane. An example is an SSH
connection from the NOC to a network device to troubleshoot network
connectivity. This could easily always rely on the GACP. Likewise,
if an NMS host is known to transmit large amounts of data, and it
uses the GACP, then its data rate needs to be controlled so that it
will not overload the GACP path. Typical examples of this are
software downloads.

There is a wide range of methods to build up these policies. We
describe a few below.

Ideally, a NOC system would learn and keep track of all addresses of
a device (GACP and the various data-plane addresses). Every action
of the NOC system would indicate via a "path-policy" what type of
connection it needs (e.g., only data-plane, GACP only, default to
data plane, fallback to GACP, etc.). A connection policy manager
would then build connection to the target using the right
address(es). Shorter term, a common practice is to identify
different paths to a device via different names (e.g., loopback vs.
interface addresses). This approach can be expanded to GACP uses,
whether it uses the DNS or names local to the NOC system. Below, we
describe example schemes using DNS.

DNS can be used to set up names for the same network devices but with
different addresses assigned:

o One name (name.noc.example.com) with only the data-plane
   address(es) (IPv4 and/or IPv6) to be used for probing connectivity
   or performing routine software downloads that may stall/fail when
   there are connectivity issues.

o One name (name-acp.noc.example.com) with only the GACP reachable
   address of the device for troubleshooting and probing/discovery
   that is desired to always only use the GACP.

o One name (name-both.noc.example.com) with data-plane and GACP
   addresses.

Traffic policing and/or shaping at the GACP edge in the NOC can be
used to throttle applications such as software download into the
GACP.

Using different names that map to different addresses (or subsets of
addresses) can be difficult to set up and maintain, especially
because data-plane addresses may change due to reconfiguration or
relocation of devices. The name-based approach alone cannot strongly
support policies for existing applications and long-lived flows to
automatically switch between the ACP and data plane in the face of
data-plane failure and recovery. A solution would be host transport
stacks on GACP nodes that support the following requirements:

1. Only the GACP addresses of the responder must be required by the
    initiator for the initial setup of a connection/flow across the
    GACP.

2. Responder and Initiator must be able to exchange their data-plane
    addresses through the GACP, and then -- if needed by policy --
    build an additional flow across the data plane.

3. For unmodified application, the following policies should be
    configurable on at least a per-application basis for its TCP
    connections with GACP peers:

    Fallback (to GACP): An additional data-plane flow is built and
       used exclusively to send data whenever the data plane is
       operational. When the additional flow cannot be built during
       connection setup or when it fails later, traffic is sent
       across the GACP flow. This could be a default policy for most
       OAM applications using the GACP.

Suspend/Fail: Like the Fallback policy, except that traffic will
   not use the GACP flow; instead, it will be suspended until a
   data-plane flow is operational or until a policy-configurable
   timeout indicates a connection failure to the application.
   This policy would be appropriate for large-volume background
   or scavenger-class OAM applications such as firmware downloads
   or telemetry/diagnostic uploads -- applications that would
   otherwise easily overrun performance-limited GACP
   implementations.

GACP (only): No additional data-plane flow is built, traffic is
   only sent via the GACP flow. This can just be a TCP
   connection. This policy would be most appropriate for OAM
   operations known to change the data plane in a way that could
   impact connectivity through it (at least temporarily).

4. In the presence of responders or initiators not supporting these
    host stack functions, the Fallback and GACP policies must result
    in a TCP connection across the GACP. For Suspend/Fail, presence
    of TCP-only peers should result in failure during connection
    setup.

5. In case of Fallback and Suspend/Fail, a failed data-plane
    connection should automatically be rebuilt when the data plane
    recovers, including when the data-plane address of one side or
    both sides may have changed -- for example, because of
    reconfiguration or device repositioning.

6. Additional data-plane flows created by these host transport stack
    functions must be end-to-end authenticated by these host
    transport stack functions with the GACP domain credentials and
    encrypted. This maintains the expectation that connections from
    GACP addresses to GACP addresses are authenticated and encrypted.
    This may be skipped if the application already provides for end-
    to-end encryption.

7. For enhanced applications, the host stack may support application
    control to select the policy on a per-connection basis, or even
    more explicit control for building of the flows and which flow
    should pass traffic.

Protocols like Multipath TCP (MPTCP; see [RFC6824]) and the Stream
Control Transmission Protocol (SCTP; see [RFC4960]) can already
support part of these requirements. MPTCP, for example, supports
signaling of addresses in a TCP backward-compatible fashion,
establishing additional flows (called subflows in MPTCP), and having
primary and fallback subflows via MP_PRIO signaling. The details of
how MPTCP, SCTP, and/or other approaches (potentially with extensions

and/or (shim) layers on top of them) can best provide a complete
solution for the above requirements need further work and are outside
the scope of this document.

3.1.6. Autonomic NOC Device/Applications

Setting up connectivity between the NOC and autonomic devices when
the NOC device itself is non-autonomic is a security issue, as
mentioned at the beginning of this document. It also results in a
range of connectivity considerations (discussed in Section 3.1.5),
some of which may be quite undesirable or complex to operationalize.

Making NMS hosts autonomic and having them participate in the GACP is
therefore not only a highly desirable solution to the security
issues, but can also provide a likely easier operationalization of
the GACP because it minimizes special edge considerations for the
NOC. The GACP is simply built all the way automatically, even inside
the NOC, and it is only authorizes and authenticates NOC devices/
applications that will have access to it.

According to [ACP], supporting the ACP all the way into an
application device requires implementing the following aspects in it:
AN bootstrap/enrollment mechanisms, the secure channel for the ACP
and at least the host side of IPv6 routing setup for the ACP.
Minimally, this could all be implemented as an application and be
made available to the host OS via, e.g., a TAP driver to make the ACP
show up as another IPv6-enabled interface.

Having said this: If the structure of NMS hosts is transformed
through virtualization anyhow, then it may be considered equally
secure and appropriate to construct a (physical) NMS host system by
combining a virtual GACP-enabled router with non-GACP-enabled Virtual
Machines (VMs) for NOC applications via a hypervisor. This would
leverage the configuration options described in the previous sections
but just virtualize them.

3.1.7. Encryption of Data-Plane Connections

When combining GACP and data-plane connectivity for availability and
performance reasons, this too has an impact on security: When using
the GACP, most traffic will be encryption protected, especially when
considering the above-described use of application devices with GACP.
If, instead, the data plane is used, then this is not the case
anymore unless it is done by the application.

The simplest solution for this problem exists when using GACP-capable
NMS hosts, because in that case the communicating GACP-capable NMS
host and the GACP network device have credentials they can mutually

trust (same GACP domain). As a result, data-plane connectivity that
does support this can simply leverage TLS [RFC5246] or DTLS [RFC6347]
with those GACP credentials for mutual authentication -- and this
does not incur new key management.

If this automatic security benefit is seen as most important, but a
"full" GACP stack into the NMS host is unfeasible, then it would
still be possible to design a stripped-down version of GACP
functionality for such NOC hosts that only provides enrollment of the
NOC host with the GACP cryptographic credentials and does not
directly participate in the GACP encryption method. Instead, the
host would just leverage TLS/DTLS using its GACP credentials via the
data plane with GACP network devices as well as indirectly via the
GACP connect interface with the above-mentioned GACP connect
interface into the GACP.

When using the GACP itself, TLS/DTLS for the transport layer between
NMS hosts and network device is somewhat of a double price to pay
(GACP also encrypts) and could potentially be optimized away;
however, given the assumed lower performance of the GACP, it seems
that this is an unnecessary optimization.

3.1.8. Long-Term Direction of the Solution

If we consider what potentially could be the most lightweight and
autonomic long-term solution based on the technologies described
above, we see the following direction:

1. NMS hosts should at least support IPv6. IPv4/IPv6 NAT in the
    network to enable use of a GACP is undesirable in the long term.
    Having IPv4-only applications automatically leverage IPv6
    connectivity via host-stack translation may be an option, but
    this has not been investigated yet.

2. Build the GACP as a lightweight application for NMS hosts so GACP
    extends all the way into the actual NMS hosts.

3. Leverage and (as necessary) enhance host transport stacks with
    automatic GACP with multipath connectivity and data plane as
    outlined in Section 3.1.5.

4. Consider how to best map NMS host desires to underlying transport
    mechanisms: The three points above do not cover all options.
    Depending on the OAM, one may still want only GACP, want only
    data plane, automatically prefer one over the other, and/or want
    to use the GACP with low performance or high performance (for
    emergency OAM such as countering DDoS). As of today, it is not
    clear what the simplest set of tools is to explicitly enable the

choice of desired behavior of each OAM. The use of the above-
mentioned DNS and multipath mechanisms is a start, but this will
require additional work. This is likely a specific case of the
more generic scope of TAPS.

3.2. Stable Connectivity for Distributed Network/OAM

Today, many distributed protocols implement their own unique security
mechanisms.

Keying and Authentication for Routing Protocols (KARP; see [RFC6518])
has tried to start to provide common directions and therefore reduce
the reinvention of at least some of the security aspects, but it only
covers routing protocols and it is unclear how applicable it is to a
wider range of network distributed agents such as those performing
distributed OAM. The common security of a GACP can help in those
cases.

Furthermore, a GRASP instance ([GRASP]) can run on top of a GACP as a
security and transport substrate and provide common local and remote
neighbor discovery and peer negotiation mechanisms; this would allow
unifying and reusing future protocol designs.

4. Architectural Considerations

4.1. No IPv4 for GACP

The GACP is intended to be IPv6 only, and the prior explanations in
this document show that this can lead to some complexity when having
to connect IPv4-only NOC solutions, and that it will be impossible to
leverage the GACP when the OAM agents on a GACP network device do not
support IPv6. Therefore, the question was raised whether the GACP
should optionally also support IPv4.

The decision not to include IPv4 for GACP in the use cases in this
document was made for the following reasons:

In service provider networks that have started to support IPv6, often
the next planned step is to consider moving IPv4 from a native
transport to just a service on the edge. There is no benefit or need
for multiple parallel transport families within the network, and
standardizing on one reduces operating expenses and improves
reliability. This evolution in the data plane makes it highly
unlikely that investing development cycles into IPv4 support for GACP
will have a longer term benefit or enough critical short-term use
cases. Support for IPv6-only for GACP is purely a strategic choice
to focus on the known important long-term goals.

   In other types of networks as well, we think that efforts to support
   autonomic networking are better spent in ensuring that one address
   family will be supported so all use cases will work with it in the
   long term, instead of duplicating effort with IPv4. Also, auto-
   addressing for the GACP with IPv4 would be more complex than in IPv6
   due to the IPv4 addressing space.

5. Security Considerations

   In this section, we discuss only security considerations not covered
   in the appropriate subsections of the solutions described.

   Even though GACPs are meant to be isolated, explicit operator
   misconfiguration to connect to insecure OAM equipment and/or bugs in
   GACP devices may cause leakage into places where it is not expected.
   Mergers and acquisitions and other complex network reconfigurations
   affecting the NOC are typical examples.

   GACP addresses are ULAs. Using these addresses also for NOC devices,
   as proposed in this document, is not only necessary for the simple
   routing functionality explained above, but it is also more secure
   than global IPv6 addresses. ULAs are not routed in the global
   Internet and will therefore be subject to more filtering even in
   places where specific ULAs are being used. Packets are therefore
   less likely to leak and less likely to be successfully injected into
   the isolated GACP environment.

   The random nature of a ULA prefix provides strong protection against
   address collision even though there is no central assignment
   authority. This is helped by the expectation that GACPs will never
   connect all together, and that only a few GACPs may ever need to
   connect together, e.g., when mergers and acquisitions occur.

   Note that the GACP constraints demand that only packets from
   connected subnet prefixes are permitted from GACP connect interfaces,
   limiting the scope of non-cryptographically secured transport to a
   subnet within a NOC that instead has to rely on physical security
   (i.e., only connect trusted NOC devices to it).

   To help diagnose packets that unexpectedly leaked, for example, from
   another GACP (that was meant to be deployed separately), it can be
   useful to voluntarily list your own ULA GACP prefixes on some sites
   on the Internet and hope that other users of GACPs do the same so
   that you can look up unknown ULA prefix packets seen in your network.
   Note that this does not constitute registration.
   <https://www.sixxs.net/tools/grh/ula/> was a site to list ULA

prefixes, but it has not been open for new listings since mid-2017.
The authors are not aware of other active Internet sites to list ULA
use.

Note that there is a provision in [RFC4193] for address space that is
not locally assigned (L bit = 0), but there is no existing
standardization for this, so these ULA prefixes must not be used.

According to Section 4.4 of [RFC4193], PTR records for ULA addresses
should not be installed into the global DNS (no guaranteed
ownership). Hence, there is also the need to rely on voluntary lists
(as mentioned above) to make the use of an ULA prefix globally known.

Nevertheless, some legacy OAM applications running across the GACP
may rely on reverse DNS lookup for authentication of requests (e.g.,
TFTP for download of network firmware, configuration, or software).
Therefore, operators may need to use a private DNS setup for the GACP
ULAs. This is the same setup that would be necessary for using RFC
1918 addresses in DNS. For example, see the last paragraph of
Section 5 of [RFC1918]. In Section 4 of [RFC6950], these setups are
discussed in more detail.

Any current and future protocols must rely on secure end-to-end
communications (TLS/DTLS) and identification and authentication via
the certificates assigned to both ends. This is enabled by the
cryptographic credential mechanisms of the GACP.

If DNS and especially reverse DNS are set up, then they should be set
up in an automated fashion when the GACP address for devices are
assigned. In the case of the ACP, DNS resource record creation can
be linked to the autonomic registrar backend so that the DNS and
reverse DNS records are actually derived from the subject name
elements of the ACP device certificates in the same way as the
autonomic devices themselves will derive their ULAs from their
certificates to ensure correct and consistent DNS entries.

If an operator feels that reverse DNS records are beneficial to its
own operations, but that they should not be made available publicly
for "security" by concealment reasons, then GACP DNS entries are
probably one of the least problematic use cases for split DNS: The
GACP DNS names are only needed for the NMS hosts intending to use the
GACP -- but not network wide across the enterprise.

6. IANA Considerations

   This document has no IANA actions.

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Authors' Addresses

   Toerless Eckert (editor)
   Huawei USA
   2330 Central Expy
   Santa Clara 95050
   United States of America

   Email: tte+ietf@cs.fau.de, toerless.eckert@huawei.com

   Michael H. Behringer

   Email: michael.h.behringer@gmail.com