





SRv6 in the Linux kernel

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Who I am?



- M.Sc degree in Computer Science and PhD in Electronic Engineering at University of Rome "Tor Vergata";
- Cooperates as a research engineer with:
 - CNIT (National Inter-University Consortium for Telecommunications);
 - University of Rome "Tor Vergata";
 - ➤ COMMON NET (Italian Internet Service Provider and Cloud Service Provider);
- Main interests focus on Linux kernel networking stack, IPv6 Segment Routing (SRv6), eBPF/XDP networking, Software Defined Networking (SDN);
- Developer and contributor to the SRv6 subsystem of the Linux kernel.

Quick agenda



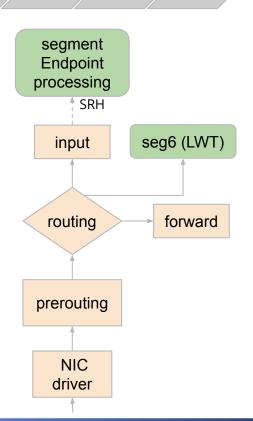
- Quick journey through the evolution of SRv6 in the Linux kernel:
 - ➤ SRv6 initial support (v4.10 ~ v4.18);
 - > Our contributions from v5.0 up to now;
 - ➤ Kernel space/User space (i.e., iproute2).
- What's next?
- Conclusions.





4.10

- Support for SRv6 appears in Linux kernel v4.10;
- Implement minimal support for processing of SR-enabled packets:
 - Add SRH encapsulation and insertion (seg6 LWT);
 - segment Endpoints processing (require SRH and DA = local):
 - Advance the next segment and re-routing;
 - Egress for encap packets: remove of outer IPv6 and SRH;
 - ➤ HMAC support.
- Endpoint enabled through per-netns sysctl knobs:
 - net.ipv6.conf.default.seg6_enabled
 net.ipv6.conf.<ifname>.seg6_enabled





4.10

- iproute2 extended to:
 - Support for SRv6 encapsulation (T.Encaps)* and insertion (T.Inserts) **;
 - Set the source tunnel address;
 - Handle the HMAC.
- Some examples:
 - To encapsulate an IPv6 packet into an outer IPv6 + SRH:

```
$ ip ro add 2001:db8::1 encap seg6 mode encap segs fc00::1,fc00::2 dev eth0

Dst of packets that will be encap LWT Segments belonging to the SID List
```

To set the SRv6 tunnel source address (once per network namespace):

```
$ ip sr tunsrc set 2001:2::1
```

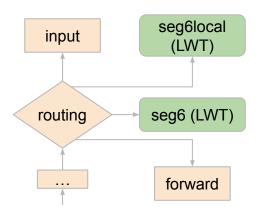
(*) T.Encaps changed in H.Encaps; (**) T.Inserts has been removed from RFC 8986





4.10 > 4.14

- SRv6 subsystem has been considerably improved, e.g.,:
 - Support SR-encap of IPv4 packets and L2 ethernet frames (*) in IPv6 + SRH;
- Add support for advanced local segment processing (seg6local LWT):
 - Implement several "local behaviors" (actions) such as: SRv6 End.X, End.T, End.DX4, etc;
 - A local behavior can be configured with different (mandatory) parameters/attributes;
 - i Packets to be processed *must have* IPv6 DA != local;
 - Some behaviors do not require SRH at all!



(*) Only support ethernet frames with IPv4/IPv6 as L3 proto.

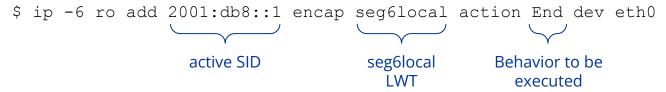


4.10 \ 4.14

- iproute2 extended to support advanced local segment processing:
 - set up/destroy local behavior instances;
 - > show instantiated behaviors with all the user-provided parameters/attributes.

Few examples:

Instantiate the SRv6 End behavior for the given SID:



Instantiate the SRv6 End.T behavior for the given SID:

\$ ip -6 ro add 2001:db8::1 encap seg6local action End.T table main dev eth0

attribute table, valorized with main



4.10 > 4.14 > 4.16

- IPv6 Segment Routing Header (SRH) support for Netfilter:
 - Provided as a kernel module;
 - iptables CLI integration to set matching rules.
- It allows matching packets based on SRH;
 - Supported match options include:
 - Next header, Header Extension Length, Segment Left, Last Entry, Tag.
- It can be combined with other Netfilter extensions to design complex filtering chains and actions:
 - > e.g., implementing SRv6 network packet loss monitoring, delay monitoring, etc.



(1/2)

4.10 > 4.14 > 4.16 > 4.18

- SRv6 local processing enhanced with the new End.BPF action by:
 - ➤ A new BPF program type (BPF PROG TYPE LWT SEG6LOCAL);
 - BPF helpers to read/write some fields of the SRH (flags, tag and TLVs)
- End.BPF works like the SRv6 End:
 - SRH must be present;
 - Advance the next segment.
- End.BPF provides an hook for attaching an eBPF program:
 - It can **not** make arbitrary reads/writes directly into the packet;
 - Only some fields of the SRH (flags, tag and TLVs) can be altered through the helper functions.



- 4.10 \ 4.14 \ 4.16 \ 4.18
- iproute2 extended to load&attach an eBPF program to End.BPF;
- ❖ A file object can contains multiple eBPF programs in different sections:
 - Only one program can be attached to an End.BPF instance.
- For example:
 - ➤ Load&attach eBPF program "prog1" contained in "foo_obj.o" for the given SID:

```
$ ip -6 route add 2001:db8::6 encap seg6local action End.BPF endpoint \
object foo-obj.o section prog1 dev eth0

File object eBPF program in section prog1

foo-obj.o section prog1
```

SRv6 support in Linux kernel v5.5 and v5.9



- 4.10 4.14 4.16 4.18 5.5 5.9
- Support for local delivery of decap packets in SRv6 End.DT6 (*);
- The Virtual Routing and Forwarding (VRF) subsystem is an enabling key for implementing new SRv6 behaviors (**);
- The VRF is extended by supporting the new "Strict mode":
 - ➤ It imposes a one-to-one mapping between a VRF and the associated Routing Table;
 - Network-namespace aware;
 - It can be turned on/off by acting on the "strict_mode" sysctl knob:
 - net.vrf.strict_mode (disabled by default for legacy purposes).



(1/3)



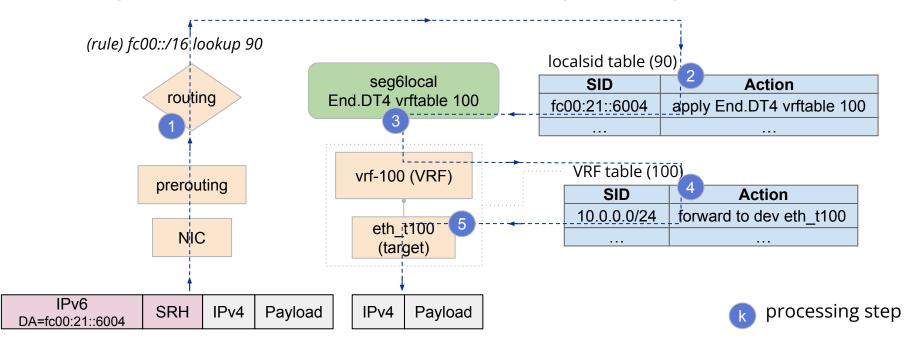
- Local processing of SRv6 (seg6local) subjected to heavy lifting:
 - Improved the management of behavior attributes;
 - Added support for optional attributes used by behaviors;
 - Added callbacks for customizing creation/destruction of behaviors.
- Add support for SRv6 End.DT4 behavior:
 - ➤ It decaps inner IPv4 packets and performs lookup into a given Routing Table (RT):
 - Does not strictly require SRH.
 - > It leverages the **VRF** to force the routing lookup into the associated RT:
 - VRF "strict_mode" must be turned on!
- Enhance the SRv6 End.DT6 operating mode:
 - Legacy mode (providing RT) or using a VRF as in the End.DT4 case.



(2/3)



A high-level view on SRv6 End.DT4 behavior processing:





(3/3)

- 4.10 4.14 4.16 4.18 5.5 5.9 5.11
- iproute2 extended to support both SRv6 End.DT4 and End.DT6 (VRF mode);
- iproute2 does not require any change to support optional attributes for SRv6 local behaviors;
- For example, to instantiate an SRv6 End.DT4 behavior for a given SID:

```
$ sysctl -wq net.vrf.strict_mode=1
$ ip link add name vrf-100 type vrf table 100
[...] set the target device of the VRF connecting with the host [...]
$ ip -6 r a 2001:db8::d4 encap seg6local action End.DT4 vrftable 100 dev vrf-100

RT associated with VRF vrf-100
```



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- Add counters support for SRv6 local processing;
- For each local behavior instance they count:
 - Total number of correctly processed packets;
 - Total amount of traffic (in bytes) correctly processed;
 - > Total number of packets **NOT** correctly processed.
- Counters are very interesting for:
 - Network monitoring purposes;
 - Checking whether a behavior is triggered, works as expected or not;
 - Troubleshooting purposes.
- Counters can be enabled on a behavior instance during the setup phase.



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- By extending iproute2, each SRv6 behavior instance can be configured to make use of counters;
- SRv6 counters supported for any SRv6 local behavior (seg6local) as follows:
 - Add a new SRv6 End behavior instance with the given SID and counters turned on:

 \$ ip -6 route add 2001:db8::1 encap seg6local action End count dev eth0

 count is an optional attribute
 - Per-behavior counters can be shown by adding "-s" to the iproute2 CLI, e.g.:
 \$ ip -s -6 route show 2001:db8::1
 2001:db8::1 encap seg6local action End packets 0 bytes 0 errors 0 dev eth0
 counters (aka statistics)



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- Add support for SRv6 End.DT46 behavior:
 - ➤ With End.DT4 and End.DT6 is **not** possible to create SRv6 tunnel carrying both IPv4 and IPv6.
- End.DT46 decaps both IPv4/IPv6 traffic and routes traffic using a VRF:
 - It reuses the core implementation of End.DT4 and End.DT6 (VRF mode);
 - The VRF "strict_mode" must be enabled.
- Performance tests show no degradation in performance when DT46 is used w.r.t. End.DT4/6:
 - End.DT46 greatly simplifies the setup and operations of SRv6 VPNs.
- iproute2 updated to support the new SRv6 End.DT46 behavior:
 - similar CLI and configuration required for setting End.DT4 and End.DT6 (VRF mode).



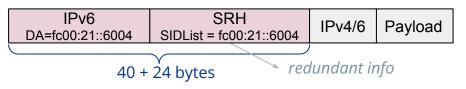
- 4.10
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- Add optional Netfilter hooks to SRv6 processing;
- Netfilter hooks useful to track (*conntrack*) both outer flows and inner flows, i.e., flows carried by SRv6 packets.
- By default, Netfilter hooks for SRv6 are disabled:
 - It can impact on performance when turned on;
 - sysctl (system-wide) toggle for enabling LWT tunnel netfilter hooks:
 - net.netfilter.nf hooks lwtunnel
 - > NOTE: Disabling the nf hooks lwtunnel requires kernel reboot.



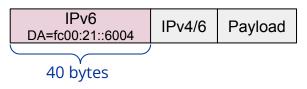


- Add support for SRv6 Headend Reduced:
 - ➤ H.Encaps.Red reduced version of H.Encaps.
 - ➤ H.L2Encaps.Red reduced version of H.L2Encaps.
- The H.(L2)Encaps.Red reduces the length of the SRH by:
 - Excluding the first segment (SID) from the SID List carried by SRH;
 - ➤ Pushing the excluded SID directly into the IPv6 DA.
- The H.(L2)Encaps.Red can avoid the SRH at all if the SRv6 policy contains only one SID.

H.Encaps (policy with 1 SID - no other info in SRH)



H.Encaps.Red (policy with 1 SID)





(2/2)

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 - iproute2 updated to support both H.Encaps.Red and H.L2Encaps.Red;
 - ❖ Two new mode are available to encap seg6 in iproute2 CLI:
 - encap.red for SRv6 H.Encaps.Red behavior;
 - > 12encap.red for SRv6 H.L2Encaps behavior.
 - Same iproute2 CLI syntax to perform reduced encaps, for example:
 - Perform a reduced encapsulation of an IPv4 packet into an outer IPv6 + SRH

```
$ ip -4 ro a 10.0.0.2 \
    encap seg6 mode encap.red segs fc00::1,fc00::2 dev eth0

H.Encaps.Red SID List is transparently reduced by the Linux kernel
```

(1/2)



- 4.10 \ 4.14 \ 4.16 \ 4.18 \ 5.5 \ 5.9 \ 5.11 \ 5.13 \ 5.14 \ 5.15 \ 6.0 \ 6.1
 - Some SRv6 scenarios may require large number of SIDs;
 - Reducing the size of a SID List is useful to:
 - Minimize the impact on MTU; enable SRv6 on legacy HW with limited processing power.
 - Kernel v6.1 introduces the NEXT-C-SID (aka uSID) [1] mechanism for SRv6:
 - Efficient representation (compression) of the SID List;
 - Several SRv6 segments can be encoded within a single 128-bit SID.
 - > NEXT-C-SID mechanism relies on the "flavors" framework (RFC 8986):
 - Additional operations that can modify/extend existing behaviors.
 - SRv6 End behavior is extended with the NEXT-C-SID flavor support.

[1] - https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/html/draft-ietf-spring-srv6-srh-compression







- iproute2 extended to support flavors framework;
- New "flavors" attribute to set up NEXT-C-SID compression on SRv6 End:
 - > Nested **sub-flavors** attributes are allowed to further configure the behavior;
- NEXT-C-SID flavor for SRv6 End behavior can be configured using optional user-provided sub-flavors attributes:
 - ➤ lblen, i.e., attribute for Locator-Block length in bits (>0 and evenly div by 8);
 - > nflen, i.e., attribute for Locator-Node Function length in bits (> 0 and evenly div by 8).
- For example: Locator-Block Locator-Node Function







- In some SRv6 scenarios we would like to:
 - > Remove the SRv6 policy (i.e., the SID List) as we do not need it anymore;
 - ➤ Keep the IPv{4,6}-in-IPv6 encapsulation for traffic to be processed;
- Removing the SRH when all the SIDs have been processed aims to:
 - Reduce the MTU at some point in the network; enabling legacy HW with limited processing power;
- Kernel v6.3 introduces the Penultimate Segment Pop (PSP) flavor:
 - The PSP reuses the "flavor" framework introduced with NEXT-C-SID patchset;
 - The PSP flavor allows an SRv6 End* behavior to **pop** the SRH on the penultimate SR Endpoint node listed in the SID List.
- SRv6 End behavior is extended with the PSP flavor support.

(2/2)





- No need to further extend iproute2 to support the PSP flavor;
 - > PSP flavor capability was already introduced with the NEXT-C-SID patchset;
- Reuse the "flavors" attribute to set up the PSP flavor on SRv6 End;
- For example:

```
$ ip -6 ro a 2001:db8::1 encap seg6local action End \
flavors psp dev eth0
```

- ❖ A PSP-enabled SRv6 End behavior instance applies:
 - > PSP processing only when deployed on the SR penultimate node (Segment Left = 1).
 - "standard" End processing (ignoring the PSP flavor at all) in all other cases.







- In some SRv6 scenarios with large number of SIDs, we would like to:
 - Leverage the compressed SID List (NEXT-C-SID mechanism);
 - > Forward processed packet using given L3 adjacencies (like End.X).
- NEXT-C-SID is combined with End.X, this enables arbitrary TE paths in SRv6 domains also when using compressed SID lists
- Kernel v6.6 introduces the NEXT-C-SID flavor for End.X behavior:
 - > Reuse the "flavor" framework introduced with NEXT-C-SID patchset;
 - ➤ Enable the End.X behavior to use the NEXT-C-SID compression mechanism.
- SRv6 End.X behavior is extended with the NEXT-C-SID flavor support.







- No need to extend iproute2 to support the NEXT-C-SID flavor in End.X;
 - > The flavor capability was already introduced with the NEXT-C-SID patchset.
- The "flavors" attribute is reused to set up the NEXT-C-SID on SRv6 End.X;
 - > Nested **sub-flavors** attributes are allowed to further configure the behavior.
- For example:
 - > \$ ip -6 ro a 2001:db8::1 encap seg6local action End.X nh6 fd00::1 \
 flavors next-csid lblen 48 nflen 16 eth0
- ❖ A NEXT-C-SID-enabled SRv6 End.X behavior:
 - > if the uSID list is not empty: uSID "next" processing and forward to an L3 adjacency;
 - if the uSID list is empty: "standard" End.X processing.

What's next?



- We are still working to:
 - Introduce new SRv6 features into the kernel;
 - Cooperate maintaining the SRv6 subsystem, e.g. bug fixing, performance tests, etc.
- (Some of) Upcoming "desidered" features will:
 - Improve Observability:
 - Update the SRv6 subsystem to inform the user of the reasons why a packet has been dropped, e.g. kfree_skb_dreason();
 - Add counters support to SRv6 HeadEnd behaviors (i.e.: seg6).
 - > Enhanced Capabilities:
 - enable user-provided Traffic Class, Hop Limit in the outer IPv6 header on H.Encaps:
 - ✓ Or ... decide when Traffic Class should be inherited from inner Packet!
 - ✓ Useful to propagate ECN bits from inner packets to outer IPv6 + SRH.
 - Set the tunnel source address (outer IPv6 SA) on a per-tunnel basis (H.Encaps).

Conclusions



- SRv6 support enhanced considerably across the Linux kernel releases;
 - > We heavily **contributed** to add new features and fix bugs.
- We extended the VRF and SRv6 subsystems by adding key features, e.g.:
 - "Strict mode" to 1:1 map between a VRF with its RT, used by SRv6 End.DT* behaviors;
 - Optional attributes to make possible complex SRv6 behavior configurations;
 - Observability with SRv6 counters.
- Our work was/is driven by both research and real use-cases needs:
 - Providing solution for Multi-tenant IPv4/IPv6 VPNs, e.g.: End.DT4/6/46:
 - > Optimizing DC network utilization Traffic Engineering for AI distributed training;
 - Avoiding SRH overhead whenever possible, e.g.: with reduced encaps;
 - > SID compression for supporting SRv6 legacy HW and reducing overhead, i.e., NEXT-C-SID.
- Very active on SRv6: for suggestions/ideas, please drop us a message!

Thank you for your attention!

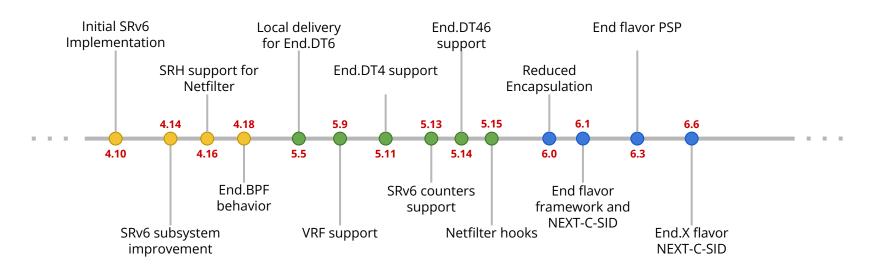
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(some) Gaps and Limitations in SRv6 Linux subsystem

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The evolution of SRv6 Networking Model





A lot of work has been done, but there are still problems and limits in using SRv6 in Linux.



- SRv6 End.X behavior:
 - SRv6 instantiation of an Adjacency SID [1], main purpose is for traffic-engineering policies.
 - > A node has N link with its neighbours and traffic needs to be steered on a specific link.
- Currently SRv6 End.X implementation presents a limit (by design):
 - Cannot use link-local addresses to steer traffic on a specific link.
 - During the years, people complains about this limitation (mailing list/private inbox).
- ❖ A initial solution to this issue was proposed years ago [2]:
 - Add to the End.X behavior a user-provided outgoing interface (oif);
 - **Always** consider the outgoing interface (oif) while looking up the nexthop.
 - Unfortunately, this change broke perfect legitimate configurations!
- Patch [2] was not applicable at that time. So, what can we do nowadays?

^{[1] -} https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/html/rfc8986#name-endx-l3-cross-connect

^{[2] - &}lt;a href="https://patchwork.kernel.org/project/netdevbpf/patch/20201015082119.68287-1-rejithomas@juniper.net/">https://patchwork.kernel.org/project/netdevbpf/patch/20201015082119.68287-1-rejithomas@juniper.net/



- With the support for optional attributes in the SRv6 Endpoints:
 - Differentiation between mandatory attributes and optional ones;
 - > A behavior could be configured in different ways, depending on provided attributes;
- SRv6 End.X implementation limit could be overcome:
 - Considering what has been proposed in (rejected) patch [2], but with some changes, e.g.:
 - oif is an optional attribute BUT is considered mandatory when next-hop address
 (nh6) is a link-local one;
 - oif, if provided, can also be used for non link-local addresses (forcing lookup to consider also that interface);
 - When oif is **not** provided, End.X processing logic is left unchanged (legacy support).
- The same approach could used for the other End DX4/DX6.

^{[1] -} https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/html/rfc8986#name-endx-l3-cross-connect

^{[2] - &}lt;a href="https://patchwork.kernel.org/project/netdevbpf/patch/20201015082119.68287-1-rejithomas@juniper.net/">https://patchwork.kernel.org/project/netdevbpf/patch/20201015082119.68287-1-rejithomas@juniper.net/



- SRv6 End* processes (in some way) packets and then routes them;
- End/.X/.T and End.DX6/DT6 route packet w.r.t. the outer/inner IPv6 DA:
 - ➤ They all rely on the same routing "helper" function e.g., seg6_nexthop_lookup();
- End.DX4/End.DT4 routes (decap) packet considering the inner IPv4:
 - They all rely on the same routing "helper" function e.g., ip_route_input();
- However... depending on the Endpoint and the processed protocol, routing errors are handled differently...
 - ➤ IPv4 routing issues are immediately handled and SRv6 processing stops returning an error to the SRv6 subsystem :-)
 - > IPv6 routing errors are not directly handled :-(
 - Instead, processing continues and dst_input() is called: dst->input() callback will decide the fate of the packet;
 - In case of routing error, packet are dropped but dst->input() returns 0: consumed!



- Uneven routing error handling (by design) in End* lead to some issues:
 - hides routing only IPv6 failures from the SRv6 network subsystem;
 - preventing aggregation of statistics on routing errors and per-behavior increasing error counters (again only for IPv6).
- We need to change the routing error handling design:
 - SRv6 End* dealing with IPv6 routing errors should return error codes to the SR subsystem;
 - > Release resources as soon as the routing error is happened, e.g.: release the skb
- We would improve the SRv6 route error handling:
 - > By checking the return code of seg6_lookup_nexthop(). When an error is returned:
 - Release the skb
 - Report the code to the SRv6 subsystem
 - Visibility of routing issues (for IPv6) in behaviors counter statistics.
- We have a patch ready to be sent for improving all of this!



- SRv6 behaviors alter packets depending on business logic:
 - > encap/decap logic "exposes" the IPv{4,6} address on which routing lookup is performed;
 - Such addresses could "trigger" other cascading SRv6 behaviors!
 - Processing is carried out through special LWT types called seg6 and seg6local.
- A (wrong) SRv6 config leading to kernel stack overflow was recently reported in the mailing list [1]:
 - It breaks the SRv6 programming model, where a SID provides both topological and service information;
- Such config is flawed, but presents a pathological issue worth noting:
 - > It essentially creates a loop between two (different) LWTs input processing functions calling each other!
 - > You can find my detailed explanation in [2].

^{[1] -} https://lore.kernel.org/netdev/2bc9e2079e864a9290561894d2a602d6@akamai.com/T/

^{[2] - &}lt;a href="https://lore.kernel.org/netdev/20241120181201.594aab6da28ec54d263c9177@uniroma2.it/">https://lore.kernel.org/netdev/20241120181201.594aab6da28ec54d263c9177@uniroma2.it/

Flawed SRv6 config leading to stack overflow







- In the same host:
 - A plain IPv4 packet with DA=x is encapsulated into an SRv6 packet with IPv6 DA=**Y**, e.g.:
 - \$ ip ro add X encap seg6 mode encap segs Y dev eth0 vrf vrf9
 - The produced SRv6 packet (DA=Y) is then decapsulated (within the same VRF), retrieving back the carried out plain IPv4 packet with DA=X, e.g.:
 - \$ ip ro add Y encap seg6local action End.DT4 vrftable 1009 dev vrf9 (table 1009 is bound to vrf9)
- And here we have a loop:
 - (2) will call (1), which in turn will call (2), and so on.
- We have no control over a misconfigured system, but how can we work to mitigate this situation?



- We've come up with some ideas on how to deal with the "loop" issue:
 - All fundamentally based on tracking (e.g., count) how many times a packet is handled by a LWT tunnel processing function (no matter of LWT type);
 - > LWT processing counter operates on a per-packet basis;
 - ➤ When the counter exceeds a given value, the packet is dropped avoiding the stack overflow.
- How can we (try to) overcome this issue?
 - ➤ Different approaches to relate a LWT processing counter with a packet:
 - Store the counter in skb->cb[];
 - Store a counter in the skb directly;
 - Create a new type of skb extensions to store the counter.
 - ➤ We have implemented a PoC using a new skb extension for counting how many times a packet has been processed by LWT input/output functions.
- All have pros and cons, discuss about them together!



- What is SRv6 H.L2Encaps?
 - Encapsulates Ethernet frames within SRv6 packets;
 - Facilitates Layer 2 Ethernet VPN (EVPN);
 - Used in combination with SRv6 Endpoint Decapsulation of L2 and X-connect (DX2);
- Implemented in Linux by leveraging Lightweight Tunnel (LWT seg6):
 - LWTs are bound to Layer 3 protocols as IPv4 or IPv6!
- But... we need to encapsulate a generic Ethernet frame !?
 - H.L2Encaps can not encapsulate ethernet frames with generic ethernet type protocols;
 - ... and even in the case of IPv4 and IPv6 layers, need some tricks to make it "work", e.g.:
 - "playing" with static ARP/NDP;
 - using bridge and dummy interfaces to emulate a quasi-pseudo-wire interface on encap node
 - spoofing the destination mac address on encap node or rewrite che mac address in the encap and decap nodes accordingly.



- How can we overcome H.L2Encaps limitation (build upon LWT)?
- Probability creating a pseudo-wire virtual ethernet device...
 - ➤ A new network device type "seg6" which is capable of encapsulating ethernet frames:
 - Add outer IPv6 + SRH (or performs a reduced encapsulation);
 - SID List to be pushed defined during the device setup;
- And what about the decap?
 - ➤ We can "re-use" the End.DX2 for decapsulating and forwarding packets;
 - > It's worth noting that SID are usually not bound to any local address/interface:
 - We cannot leverage the input datapath;
 - We could intercept IPv6 + SRH traffic using netfilter callbacks and then process the inner L2 frame accordingly.
- But...what about creating a new TC action for implementing the SRv6 H.L2Encaps :-)?