

The DNS security mess

D. J. Bernstein

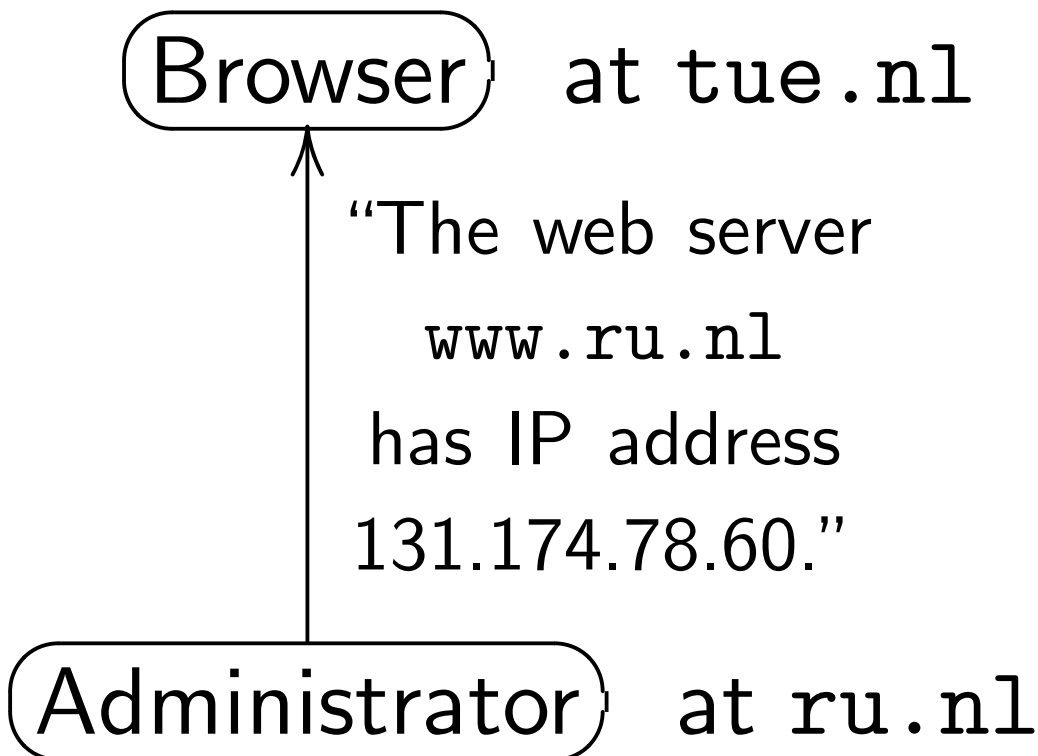
University of Illinois at Chicago;

Technische Universiteit Eindhoven

The Domain Name System

tue.nl wants to see

http://www.ru.nl.



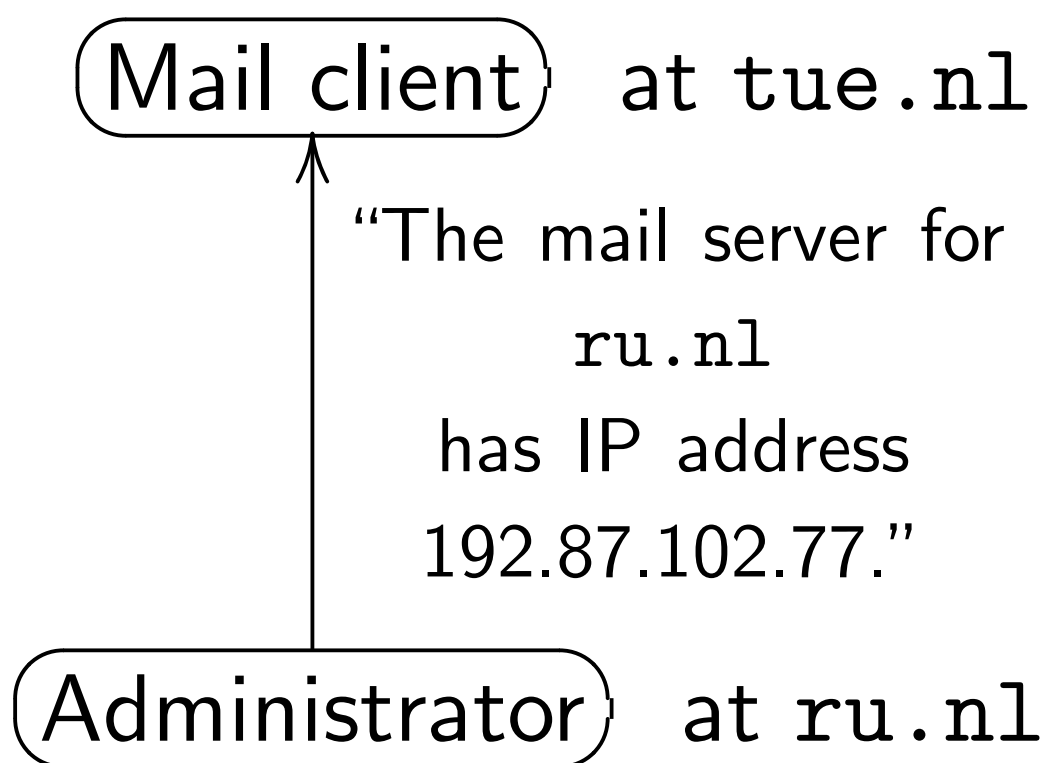
Now tue.nl

retrieves web page from

IP address 131.174.78.60.

Same for Internet mail.

tue.nl has mail to deliver to
someone@ru.nl.



Now tue.nl
delivers mail to
IP address 192.87.102.77.

Forging DNS packets

tue.nl has mail to deliver to
someone@ru.nl.

Mail client at tue.nl

“The mail server for
ru.nl
has IP address
204.13.202.78.”

Attacker anywhere on network

Now tue.nl
delivers mail to
IP address 204.13.202.78,
actually the attacker's machine.

How forgery really works

Client sends query.

Attacker has to repeat
some parts of the query.

Attacker must match

- the name: `ru.nl`.
- the query type: `mail`. (“MX”.)
- \approx the query time,
so client sees forgery
before legitimate answer.
- the query UDP port.
- the query ID.

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for attackers to do this:

Control name, type, time
by triggering client.

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they're poorly randomized).

16-bit port, 16-bit ID.

If guess fails, try again.

After analysis, optimization:
this is about as much traffic
as downloading a movie.

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for attackers to do this:

1. Break into a computer on the same network.

2. Using that computer, sniff network to see the client's query.

Immediately forge answer.

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Sometimes skip step 1:

the network *is* the attacker.

e.g. DNS forgery by hotels,

Iranian government, et al.

Security theater

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Security researchers
can't publish easy attacks.

June 2009: exciting news!

“.ORG becomes the first open TLD to sign their zone with DNSSEC . . . Today we reached a significant milestone in our effort to bolster online security for the .ORG community. We are the first open generic Top-Level Domain to successfully sign our zone with Domain Name Security Extensions (DNSSEC). To date, the .ORG zone is the largest domain registry to implement this needed security measure.”

“What does it mean that the .ORG Zone is ‘signed’?”

Signing our zone is the first part of our DNSSEC test phase.

We are now cryptographically signing the authoritative data within the .ORG zone file.

This process adds new records to the zone, which allows verification of the origin authenticity and integrity of data.”

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Verification! Authenticity!
Integrity! Sounds great!

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Now I simply configure
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Because the .org servers
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... or is it?

December 2015: reality

Let's find a .org server:

```
$ dig +short ns org
```

```
d0.org.afilias-nst.org.
```

```
a0.org.afilias-nst.info.
```

```
c0.org.afilias-nst.info.
```

```
b2.org.afilias-nst.org.
```

```
a2.org.afilias-nst.info.
```

```
b0.org.afilias-nst.org.
```

```
$ dig +short \
```

```
    b0.org.afilias-nst.org
```

```
199.19.54.1
```

Look up `greenpeace.org`:

```
$ dig \
  www.greenpeace.org \
  @199.19.54.1
```

Everything looks normal:

```
;; AUTHORITY SECTION:
greenpeace.org.
  86400 IN NS
  ns-emea.greenpeace.org.
;; ADDITIONAL SECTION:
ns-emea.greenpeace.org.
  86400 IN A
  37.48.104.54
```

Where's the crypto?

Have to ask for signatures:

```
$ dig +dnssec \  
  www.greenpeace.org \  
  @199.19.54.1
```

Old answer + four new lines:

```
h9p7u7tr2u91d0v0ljs9l1gid  
np90u3h.org. 86400 IN NSE  
C3 1 1 1 D399EAAB H9PARR6  
69T6U801GSG9E1LMITK4DEMOT  
  NS SOA RRSIG DNSKEY NSEC  
3PARAM  
  
h9p7u7tr2u91d0v0ljs9l1gid
```

np90u3h.org. 86400 IN RRS
IG NSEC3 7 2 86400 201601
06023715 20151216013715 1
448 org. 0GLyaFRtHdR6UBeq
EZ1/mnvAG8NJ2z5nBi5ALpYtE
UJRUAfKVCzaWJjZ rpgB6WgcF
TczyRmM8iYvBNwzmUxoPzgkv
ALtRDom1rdpsVDxGveMJu6 pE
80Jdf2sbfXmZd1viiz+RXRvNI
YBNTujz2NPadBATP1UNr0sbQj
Cota iBk=

bgca0g0ug0p6o7425emkt9ue4
qng3p2f.org. 86400 IN NSE
C3 1 1 1 D399EAAB BGDM7MS

F9V1T1JFVI8FA211MH4JD7UJ7

A RRSIG

bgca0g0ug0p6o7425emkt9ue4

qng3p2f.org. 86400 IN RRS

IG NSEC3 7 2 86400 201512

30150037 20151209140037 1

448 org. Wg2ha2mg0DnjiVN1

P7sk04Y/nSp+sR5uhChRWyzqH

Vn/Q4DEXqftVYeh v/x7Cmz2Q

Ork7bZ/K+v0+5m0Myao6Fod8+

fevV8t4ZmWrS+NLjNfx/y1 So

StsWztJ50oxdmZw1Ew0ALH/5g

sK+PUKaB6dx2BoE0iFn1p1PSf

ggs9 MB0=

Wow, that's a lot of data.

Must be strong cryptography!

```
$ tcpdump -n -e \  
    host 199.19.54.1 &
```

shows packet sizes:

dig sends 89-byte IP packet
to the .org DNS server,
receives 696-byte IP packet.

See more DNSSEC data:

```
$ dig +dnssec any \  
    org @199.19.54.1
```

Sends 89-byte IP packet,
receives two IP fragments
totalling 2362 bytes.

Interlude: the attacker's view

What happens if we aim
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Let's see what DNSSEC can do
as an amplification tool for
denial-of-service attacks.

Download DNSSEC zone list:

```
wget -m -k -I / \
    secspider.cs.ucla.edu
cd secspider.cs.ucla.edu
awk '
    /GREEN.*GREEN.*GREEN.*Yes/ {
        split($0,x,/<TD>/)
        sub(/<\|/TD>/,"",x[5])
        print x[5]
    }
' /*--zone.html \
| sort -u | wc -l
```

Make list of DNSSEC names:

```
( cd secspider.cs.ucla.edu
  echo /*--zone.html \
  | xargs awk '
    /^Zone <STRONG>/ { z = $2
      sub(/<STRONG>/, "", z)
      sub(/<\//STRONG>/, "", z)
    }
    /GREEN.*GREEN.*GREEN.*Yes/ {
      split($0,x,/<TD>/)
      sub(/<\//TD>/, "", x[5])
      print x[5],z,rand()
    }
  '
) | sort -k3n \
| awk '{print $1,$2}' > SERVERS
```

For each domain: Try query,
estimate DNSSEC amplification.

```
while read ip z
```

```
do
```

```
  dig +dnssec +ignore +tries=1 \
```

```
  +time=1 any "$z" "$ip" | \
```

```
  awk -v "z=$z" -v "ip=$ip" '{
```

```
    if ($1 != ";;") next
```

```
    if ($2 != "MSG") next
```

```
    if ($3 != "SIZE") next
```

```
    if ($4 != "rcvd:") next
```

```
    est = (22+$5)/(40+length(z))
```

```
    print est,ip,z
```

```
  }'
```

```
done < SERVERS > AMP
```

For each DNSSEC server,
find domain estimated to have
maximum DNSSEC amplification:

```
sort -nr AMP | awk '{
    if (seen[$2]) next
    if ($1 < 30) next
    print $1,$2,$3
    seen[$2] = 1
}' > MAXAMP
head -1 MAXAMP
wc -l MAXAMP
```

Output (last time I tried it):

```
95.6279 156.154.102.26 fi.
2326 MAXAMP
```

Can that really be true?

>2000 DNSSEC servers

around the Internet, each

providing $>30\times$ amplification

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Let's verify this.

Choose quiet test machines
on two different networks
(without egress filters).

e.g. Sender: 1.2.3.4.

Receiver: 5.6.7.8.

Run network-traffic monitors
on 1.2.3.4 and 5.6.7.8.

On 1.2.3.4, set response
address to 5.6.7.8,
and send 1 query/second:

```
ifconfig eth0:1 \  
    5.6.7.8 \  
    netmask 255.255.255.255  
while read est ip z  
do  
    dig -b 5.6.7.8 \  
    +dnssec +ignore +tries=1 \  
    +time=1 any "$z" "@$ip"  
done < MAXAMP >/dev/null 2>&1
```

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Attacker sending 10Mbps can trigger 500Mbps flood from the DNSSEC drone pool, taking down typical site.

Attacker sending 200Mbps can trigger 10Gbps flood, taking down very large site.

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total DNSSEC server bandwidth.
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2536 IP addresses worldwide.

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Exercise: Collect+publish data.

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Exercise: investigate

other types of DoS attacks.

e.g. DNSSEC advertising says zero server-CPU-time cost.

How much server CPU time can attackers actually consume?

Back to integrity

Let's pretend we don't care about availability.

This is not an attack:



All we care about is integrity:

SURF
NET



HARDENING THE INTERNET

The impact and importance of DNSSEC

The .org signatures
are 1024-bit RSA signatures.

2003: Shamir–Tromer et al.
concluded that 1024-bit RSA
was already breakable by
large companies and botnets.

\$10 million: 1 key/year.

\$120 million: 1 key/month.

2003: RSA Laboratories
recommended a transition to
2048-bit keys “over the remainder
of this decade.” 2007: NIST
made the same recommendation.

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What about serious attackers
using many more computers?
e.g. botnet operators?

I say:

Using RSA-1024 is irresponsible.

But that's not the big problem
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Suppose an attacker forges a DNS packet from `.org`, including exactly the same DNSSEC signatures but *changing the NS+A records* to point to the attacker's servers.

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Suppose an attacker forges a DNS packet from `.org`, including exactly the same DNSSEC signatures but *changing the NS+A records* to point to the attacker's servers.

Fact: DNSSEC “**verification**” won't notice the change.

The signatures say *nothing* about the NS+A records.

The forgery will be accepted.

Here's what .org signed,
translated into English:

“.org might have data
with hashes between

h9p7u7tr2u91d0v0ljs9l1gidnp90u3h ,

h9parr669t6u8o1gsg9e1lmitk4dem0t

but has not signed any of
that data.”

Can check that greenpeace.org
has a hash in that range.

.org now has thousands
of these useless signatures.

This is .org “implementing”
a “needed security measure.”

“DNSSEC: Built, not plugged in.”

SURF
NET



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What went wrong?

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1993.11 Galvin: “The DNS Security design team of the DNS working group met for one morning at the Houston IETF.”

1994.02 Eastlake–Kaufman, after months of discussions on `dns-security` mailing list: “DNSSEC” protocol specification.

Millions of dollars
of U.S. government grants: e.g.,
DISA to BIND company;
NSF to UCLA; DHS to
Secure64 Software Corporation.

Continuing cycle of
DNSSEC implementations,
IETF DNSSEC discussions,
protocol updates, revised
software implementations, etc.

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Compatibility trap? No.
Several DNSSEC updates
have broken compatibility
with older implementations.

The performance trap

Some of the Internet's DNS servers are extremely busy: e.g., the root servers, the .com servers, the google.com servers.

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The critical design decision in DNSSEC: *precompute* signatures of DNS records.

“Per-query crypto is bad.”

Signature is computed once; saved; sent to many clients.

Hopefully the server can afford to sign each DNS record once.

Clients don't share the work of *verifying* a signature.

DNSSEC tries to reduce client-side costs (and precomputation costs) through choice of crypto primitive.

Many DNSSEC crypto options:
640-bit RSA, original specs;
768-bit RSA, many docs;
1024-bit RSA, current RFCs
(for “leaf nodes in the DNS”);
DSA, “10 to 40 times as slow
for verification” but faster for
signatures.

DNSSEC made breakable choices such as 640-bit RSA for no reason other than fear of overload.

DNSSEC needed more options to survive the inevitable breaks. More complexity \Rightarrow more bugs, including security holes.

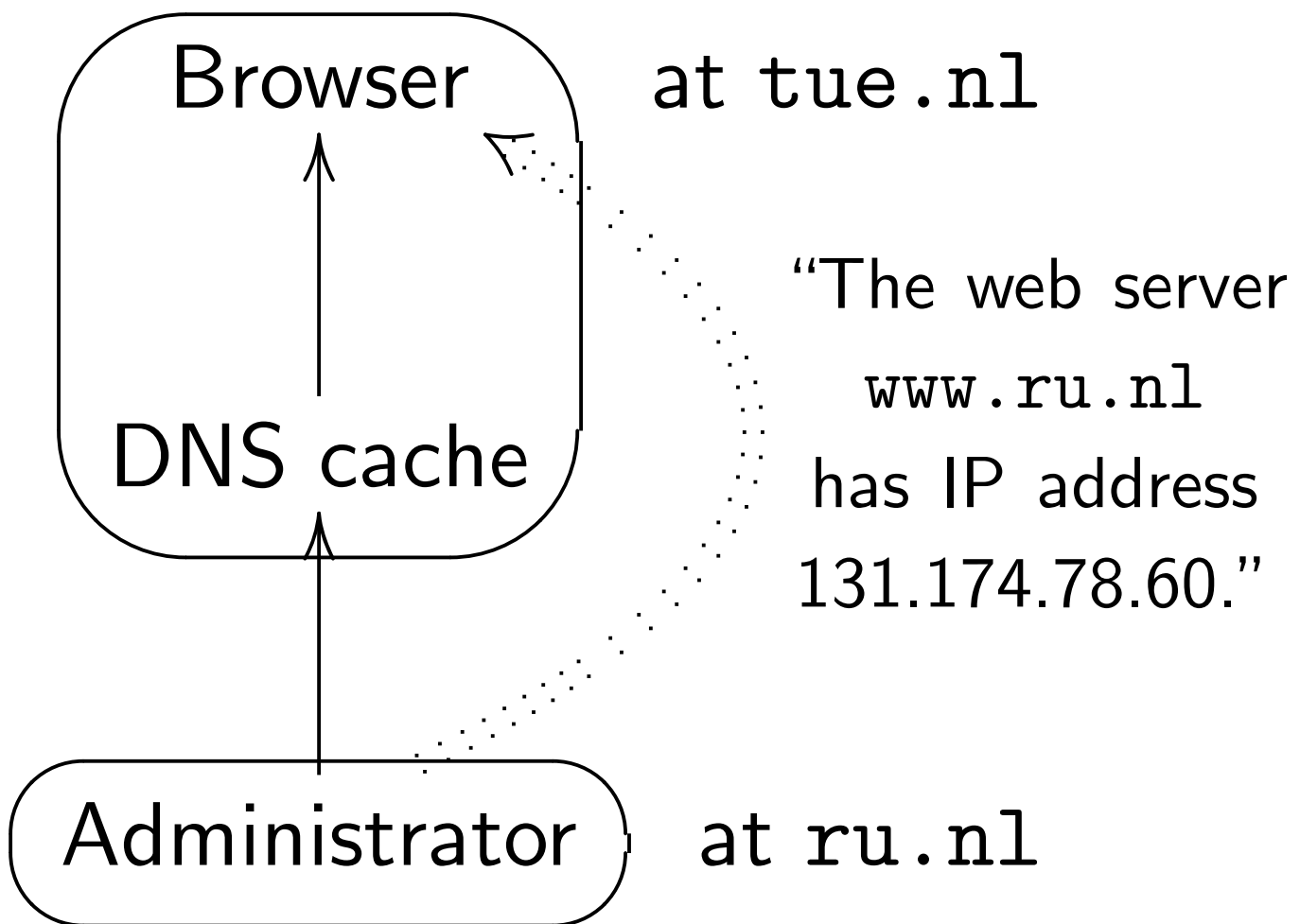
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Looking beyond the crypto: Precomputation forced DNSSEC down a path of unreliability, insecurity, and unusability. Let's see how this happened.

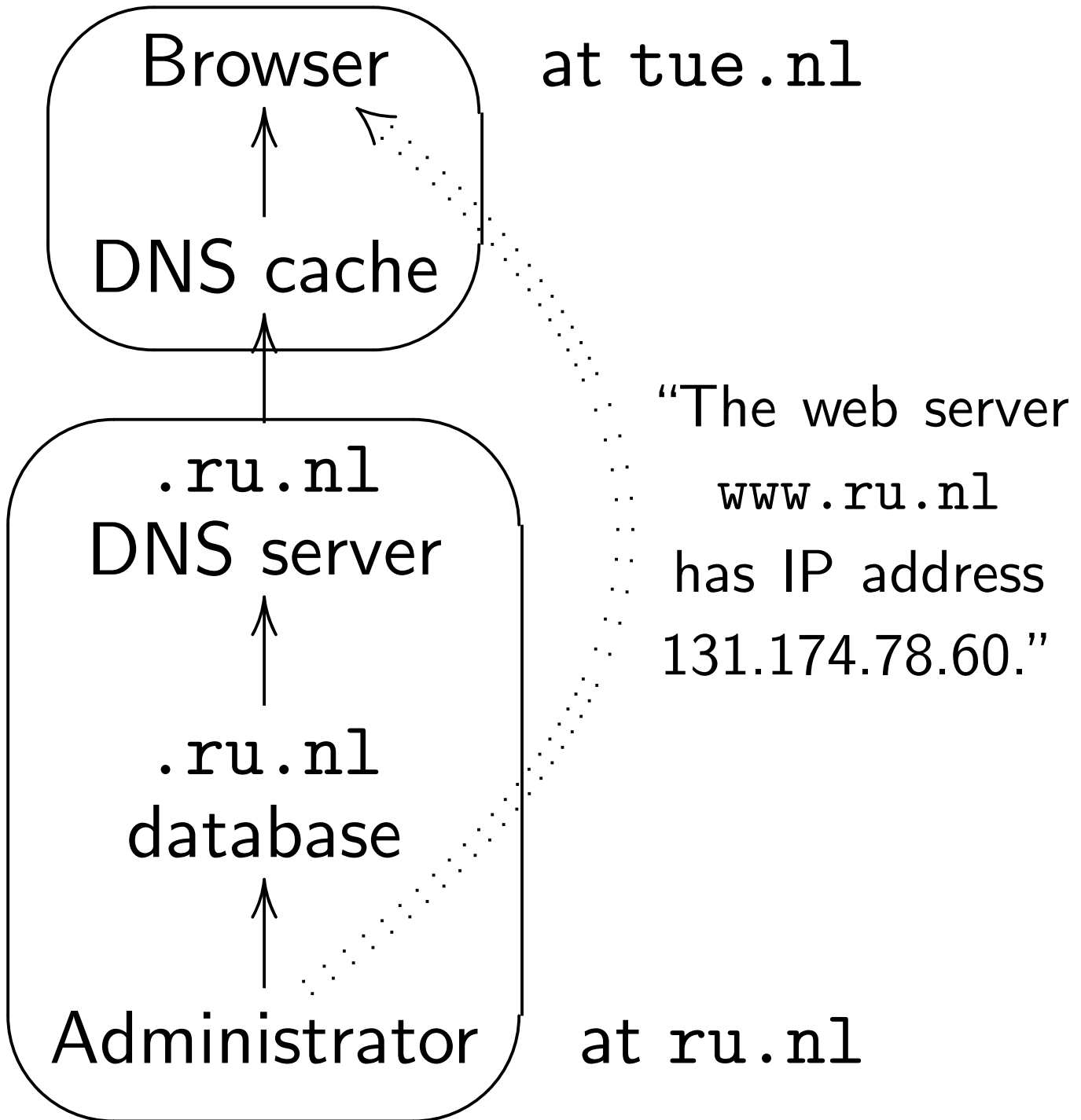
DNS architecture

Browser pulls data from
DNS cache at `tue.nl`:

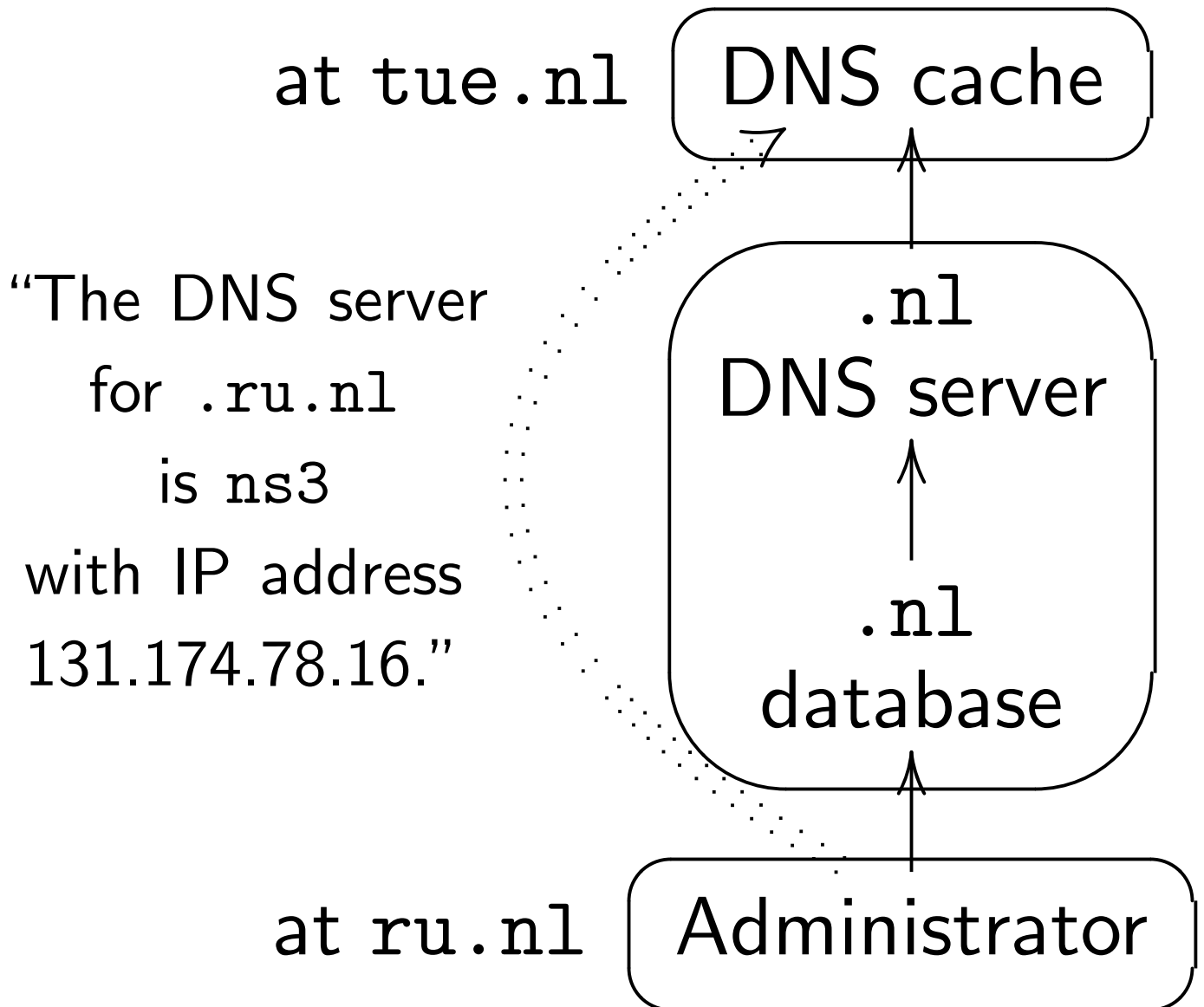


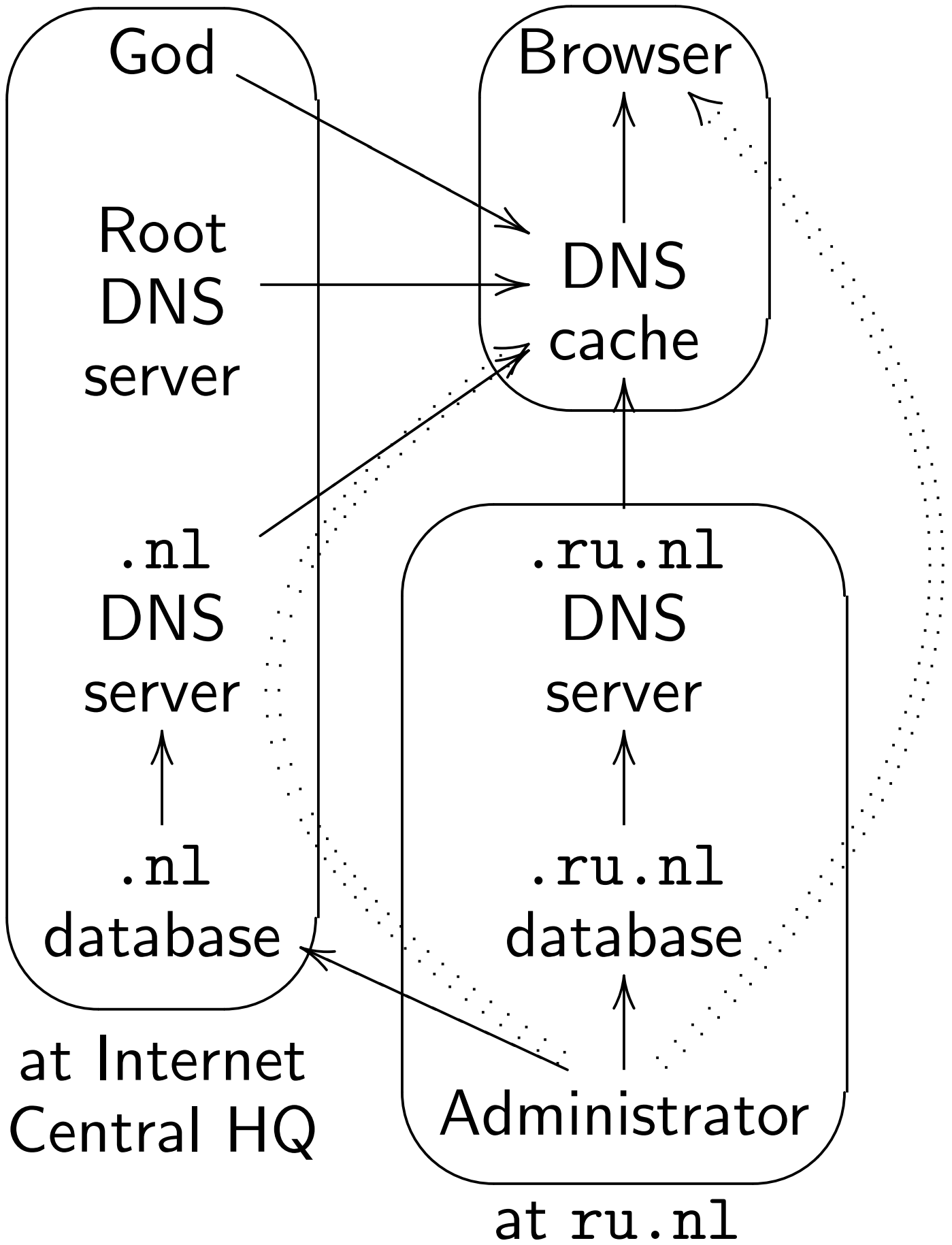
Cache pulls data from
administrator if it
doesn't already have the data.

Administrator pushes data
through local database into
.ru.nl DNS server:



DNS cache learns location of
.ru.n1 DNS server from
.n1 DNS server:





DNS server software listed in Wikipedia: BIND, Microsoft DNS, djbdns, Dnsmasq, Simple DNS Plus, NSD, Knot DNS, PowerDNS, MaraDNS, pdnsd, Nominum ANS, Nominum Vantio, Posadis, Unbound, Cisco Network Registrar, dnrd, gdnsd, YADIFA, yaku-ns, DNS Blast.

Much wider variety of DNS database-management tools, plus hundreds of homegrown tools written by DNS registrars etc.

DNSSEC changes everything

DNSSEC demands new code in every DNS-management tool.

Whenever a tool adds or changes a DNS record, also has to precompute and store a DNSSEC signature for the new record.

Often considerable effort for the tool programmers.

Example: Signing 3GB database can produce 20GB database.

Tool reading database into RAM probably has to be reengineered.

Nijmegen administrator also has to send public key to .nl.

The .nl server
and database software
and web interface
need to be updated
to accept these public keys
and to sign everything.

DNS cache needs new software
to fetch keys, fetch signatures,
and verify signatures.

Tons of pain for implementors.

Original DNSSEC protocols would have required .org to sign its whole database: millions of records.

Conceptually simple but much too slow, much too big.

So the DNSSEC protocol added complicated options allowing .org to sign a small number of records, and to sign “might have data but has not signed any of it” covering the other records.

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Often they automatically
adjust list of addresses
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DNSSEC purists say “**Answers
should always be static**” .

Even in “static” DNS,
each response packet is
dynamically assembled
from several answers:
MX answer, NS answer, etc.

DNSSEC precomputes
a signature for each answer,
not for each packet.

⇒ One DNSSEC packet
includes several signatures.
Massive bloat on the wire.

That’s why DNSSEC allows
so much amplification.

What about *old* DNS data?

Are the signatures still valid?

Can an attacker replay
obsolete signed data?

e.g. You move IP addresses.

Attacker grabs old address,
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If clocks are synchronized
then signatures can

include expiration times.

But frequent re-signing

is an administrative disaster.

A few DNSSEC suicide examples:

2010.09.02: .us killed itself.

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2015.01.25: `opendnssec.org`
killed itself.

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Many more: see `ianix.com`
`/pub/dnssec-outages.html`.

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etc.?

Crazy! Obvious approach:

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and don’t sign anything else.”

User asks for nonexistent name.

Receives *unsigned* answer

saying the name doesn’t exist.

Has no choice but to trust it.

User asks for `www.google.com`.

Receives unsigned answer,

a packet forged by attacker,

saying the name doesn't exist.

Has no choice but to trust it.

Clearly a violation of availability.

Sometimes a violation of integrity.

This is not a good approach.

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Receives unsigned answer,
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Alternative: DNSSEC's "NSEC".
e.g. `nonex.clegg.com` query
returns "There are no names
between `nick.clegg.com` and
`start.clegg.com`" + signature.

Try foo.clegg.com etc.

After several queries have
complete clegg.com list:

_jabber._tcp, _xmpp-
server._tcp, alan, alvis,
andrew, brian, calendar, dlv,
googleffffffffffe91126e7,
home, imogene, jennifer,
localhost, mail, wiki, www.

Try `foo.clegg.com` etc.

After several queries have complete `clegg.com` list:

`_jabber._tcp, _xmpp-server._tcp, alan, alvis, andrew, brian, calendar, dlv, googleffffffffffe91126e7, home, imogene, jennifer, localhost, mail, wiki, www.`

The `clegg.com` administrator disabled DNS “zone transfers” — but then leaked the same data by installing DNSSEC.

(This was a real example.)

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DNSSEC purists disagree:

“It is part of the design philosophy of the DNS that the data in it is public.”

But this notion is so extreme that it became a public-relations problem.

New DNSSEC approach:

1. “NSEC3” technology:

Use a “one-way hash function”
such as (iterated salted) SHA-1.

Reveal *hashes* of names

instead of revealing names.

“There are no names with
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2. Marketing:

Pretend that NSEC3 is
less damaging than NSEC.

ISC: “NSEC3 does not allow
enumeration of the zone.”

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4Mbps flood of queries is under 500 million noisy guesses/day.

NSEC3 allows typical attackers 1000000 million to 10000000000 million silent guesses/day.

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Store a signature next to
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Recompute and store signature
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Any failure: HTTPSEC suicide.

Dynamic content? Give up.

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Replay attacks work for 30 days.

Filename guessing is much faster.

Nothing is encrypted.

Denial of service is trivial.

Does DNS security matter?

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There *are* some IP addresses signed with DNSSEC, and some caches checking signatures.

Never mind all the problems.

Do these signatures accomplish anything?

Occasionally these caches are on client machines, so attacker can't simply forge packets from cache . . . so attacker intercepts and forges all the subsequent packets: web pages, email, etc.

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DNSSEC precomputes signatures.
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But DNSSEC is not signing
any of the user’s data!

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PGP-signed web pages and email are protected against misbehaving servers, and against network attackers.

With PGP, what attack is stopped by DNSSEC?

With HTTPS but not PGP, what attack is stopped by DNSSEC?

With neither HTTPS nor PGP, what attack is stopped by DNSSEC?

Getting out of the mess

State-of-the-art ECC

is fast enough to
authenticate and encrypt
every packet.

Deployed: DNSCurve protects
DNS packets, server→cache.

Deployed: DNSCrypt protects
DNS packets, cache→client.

Work in progress: HTTPCurve
protects HTTP packets.

Crypto is at edge of network,
handled by simple proxy.

Administrator puts public key
into name of server.

Need new DNS cache software
but no need to change
server software,
database-management software,
web interfaces, etc.

Easy to implement,
easy to deploy.

No precomputation.

No precomputation.

No problems with
dynamic data.

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old data: all results
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Packets are small.

Smaller amplification
than existing protocols.

DNSCurve and DNSCrypt
and HTTPCurve and SMTPCurve
add real security even to
PGP-signed web pages, email.

Improved confidentiality:
e.g., is the user accessing
`firstaid.webmd.com` or
`diabetes.webmd.com`?

Improved integrity:
e.g., freshness.

Improved availability:
attacker forging a packet
doesn't break connections.