

# DNSSEC and DNSCurve

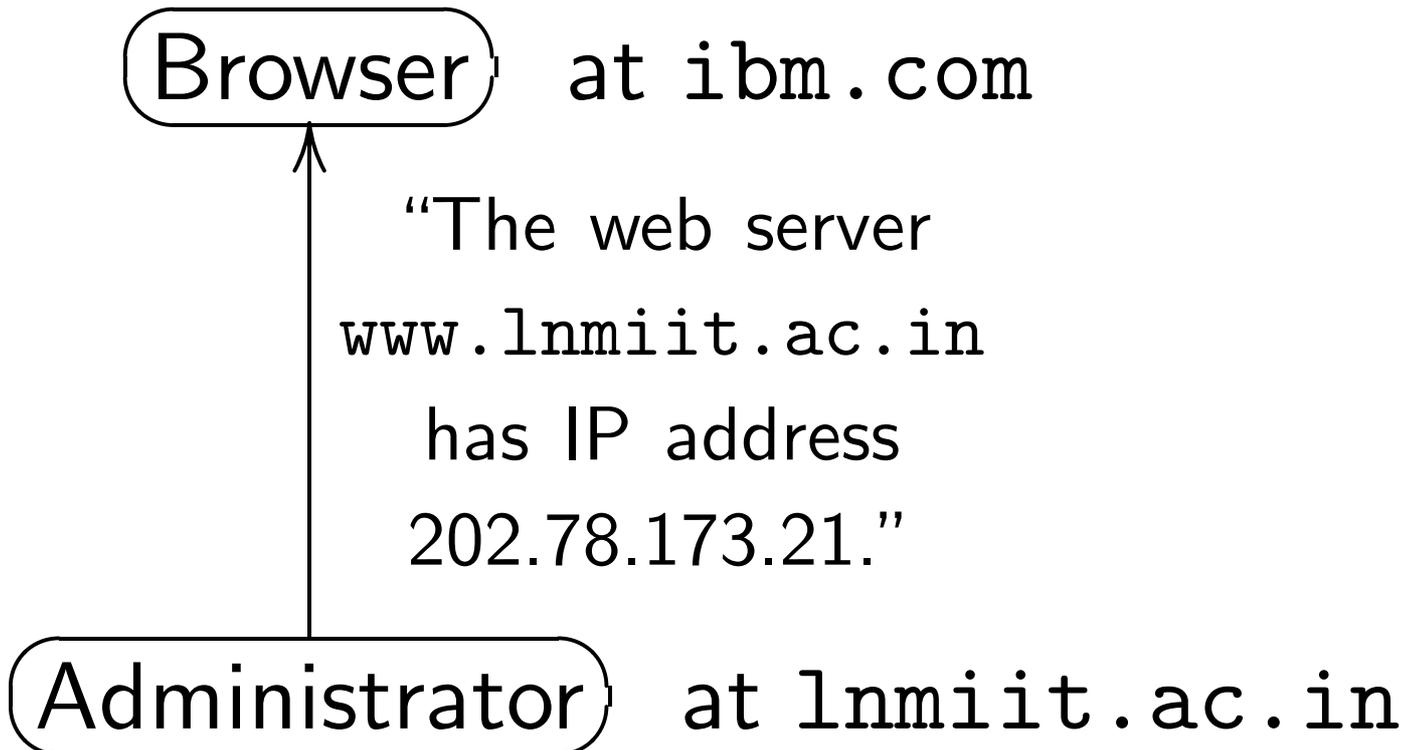
D. J. Bernstein

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# The Domain Name System

ibm.com wants to see

`http://www.lnmiit.ac.in.`



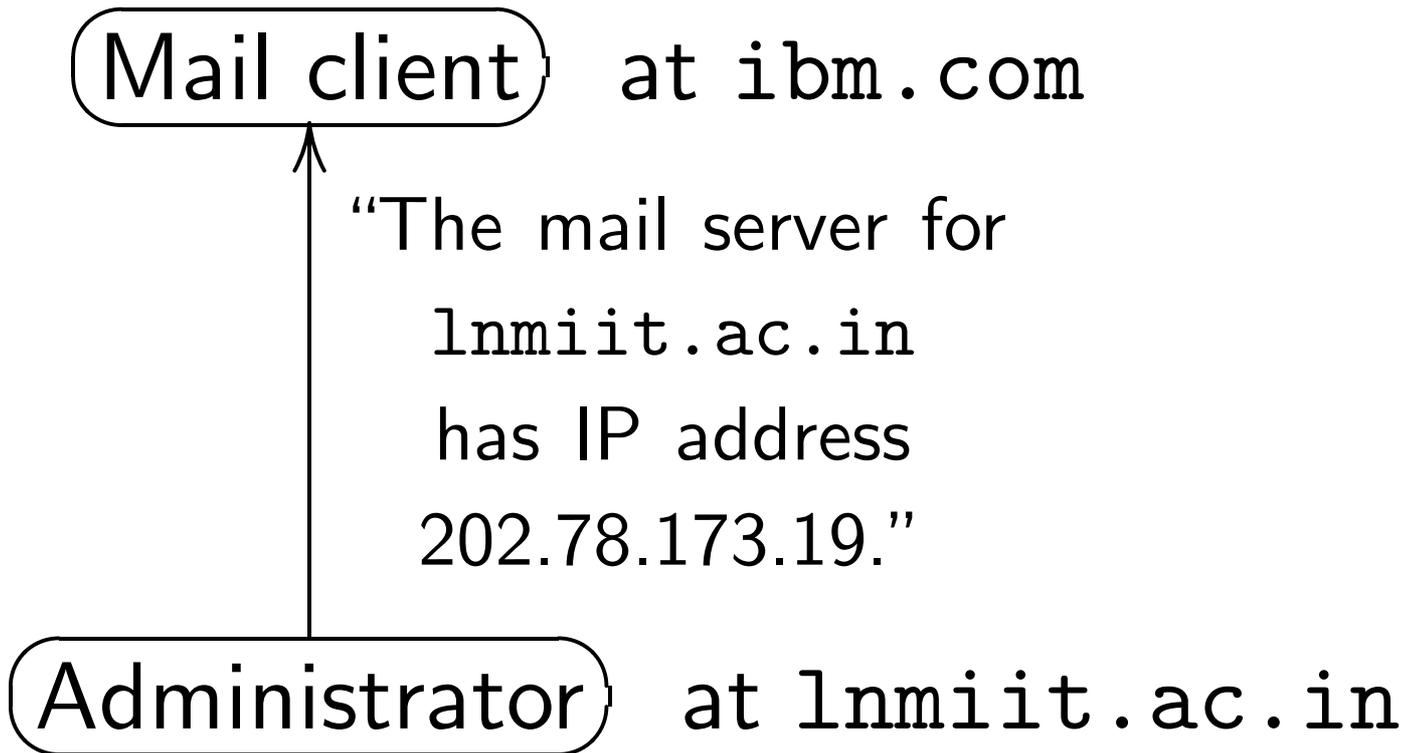
Now `ibm.com`

retrieves web page from

IP address `202.78.173.21.`

Same for Internet mail.

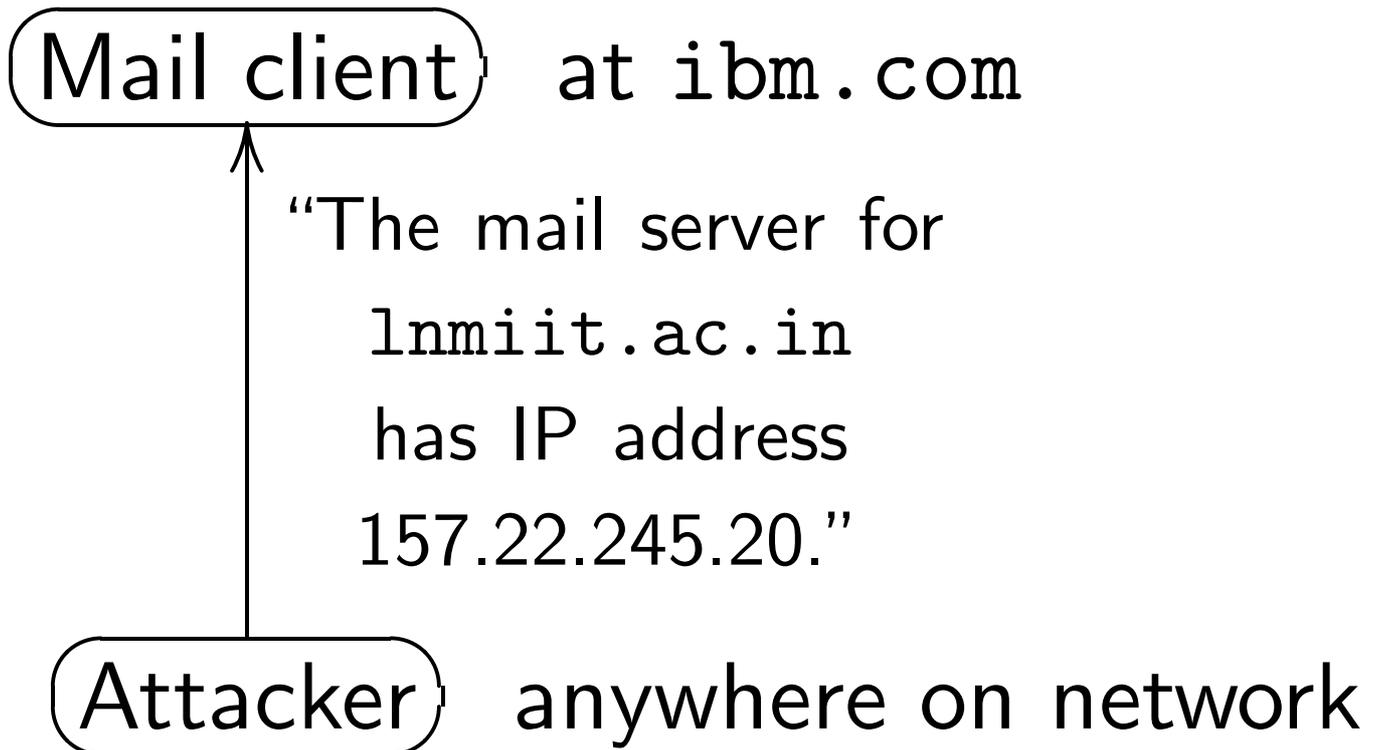
ibm.com has mail to deliver to  
someone@lnmiit.ac.in.



Now ibm.com  
delivers mail to  
IP address 202.78.173.19.

# Forging DNS packets

ibm.com has mail to deliver to  
someone@lnmiit.ac.in.



Now ibm.com  
delivers mail to  
IP address 157.22.245.20,  
actually the attacker's machine.

Actually: Client sends query;  
attacker has to repeat  
some bits from the query.

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“No sniffers on *my* network!”  
... so a blind attacker  
guesses the bits to repeat,  
eventually gets lucky.

After analysis, optimization:  
blind forgery is about as easy  
as downloading a movie.

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“The Internet does use cryptography! I just made an SSL connection to my bank.”

Indeed, many connections use SSL, Skype, etc.

But *most* connections don't.

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In fact, attackers are forging packets *and* exploiting buffer overflows *and* doing much more. Users want *all* of these problems fixed.

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“It’s too easy to write Internet software that exchanges data without any cryptographic protection. Most Internet clients and servers don’t know how to make cryptographic connections.”

True for most protocols.

But let’s focus on HTTP.

Most HTTP servers and browsers (Apache, Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.) support SSL.

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“Have you ever tried to set up SSL? Do you want to go through all these extra Apache configuration steps? Do you want to pay for a certificate? Do you want to annoy your web-site visitors with self-signed certificates?”

Indeed, usability is a major issue. Only  $\approx 1\%$  of the Apache servers on the Internet have SSL enabled.

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Google uses SSL for

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If you connect to  
`https://www.google.com`,  
Google redirects your browser to  
`http://www.google.com`.

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Many companies sell  
SSL-acceleration hardware,  
but that costs money too.

Why are cryptographic computations so expensive?

Can crypto be faster, without being easy to break?

Can crypto be fast enough to solidly protect all of Google's communications?

Can crypto be fast enough to protect every Internet packet?

Can universal crypto be *usable*?

## What cryptography can do

Cryptography can stop sniffing attackers by scrambling legitimate packets.

Cryptography is often described as protecting confidentiality: attackers can't understand the scrambled packets.

Can also protect integrity: attackers can't figure out a properly scrambled forgery.

Traditional cryptography requires each legitimate client-server pair to share a secret key.

Public-key cryptography has much lower requirements. (1976 Diffie–Hellman; many subsequent refinements)

Each party has one public key. Two parties can communicate securely if each party knows the other party's public key.

1993: IETF begins “DNSSEC” project to add public-key signatures to DNS.

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how successful is DNSSEC?

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Surveys by DNSSEC developers,  
last updated 2009.03.12,  
have found 253 \*.com  
names with DNSSEC signatures.  
116 on 2008.08.20; 253 > 116.

## Why is nobody using DNSSEC?

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

DNSSEC tries to minimize server-side costs by *precomputing* signatures of DNS records.

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 through choice of crypto primitive.

DNSSEC RFCs

say DSA is "10 to 40 times as slow for verification" as RSA; recommend RSA "as the preferred algorithm" for DNSSEC; suggest RSA key size of only 1024 bits for "leaf nodes in the DNS."

I say:

1024-bit RSA is irresponsible.

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

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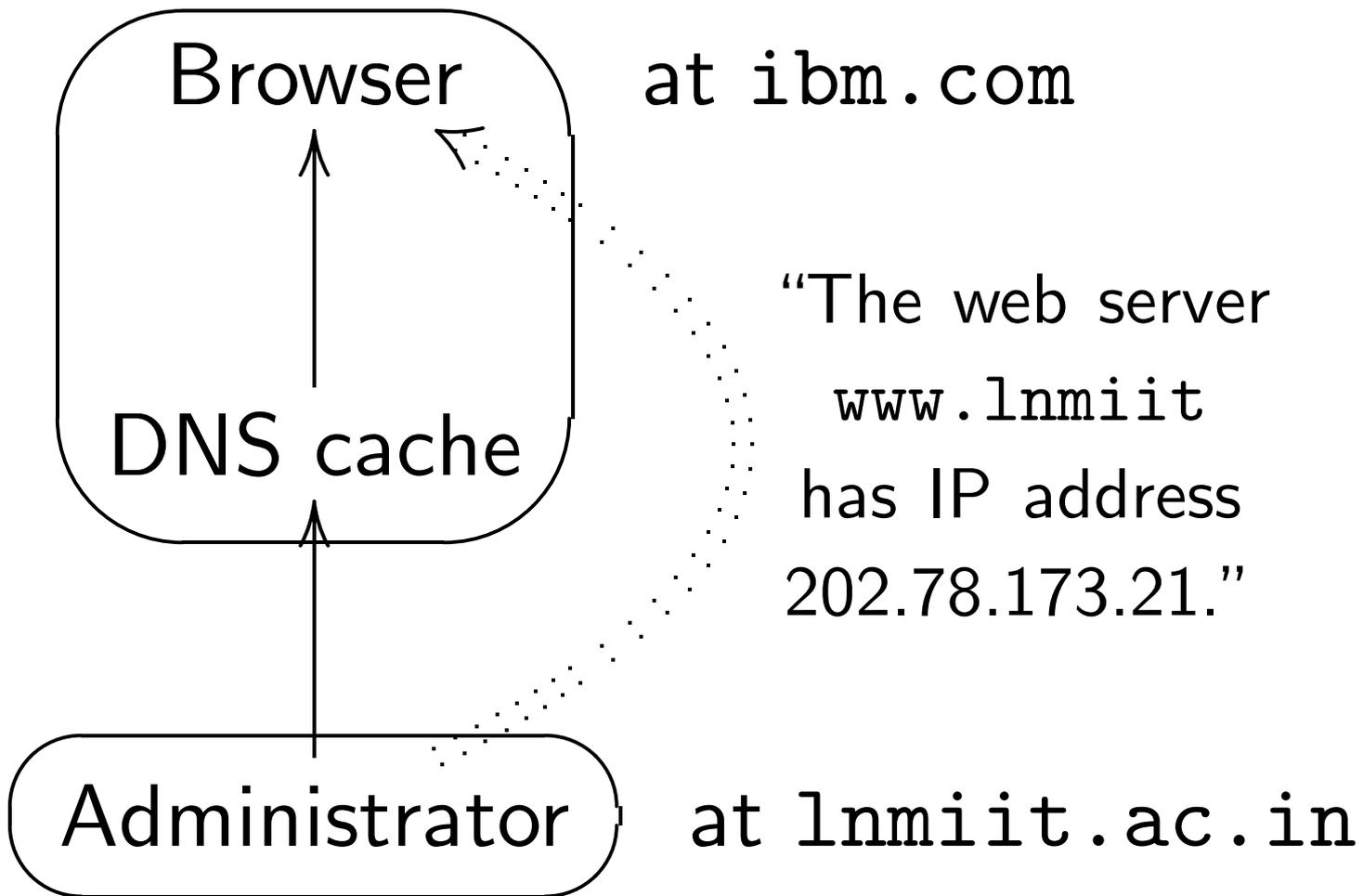
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*But most users don't know this.*

Why aren't they using DNSSEC?

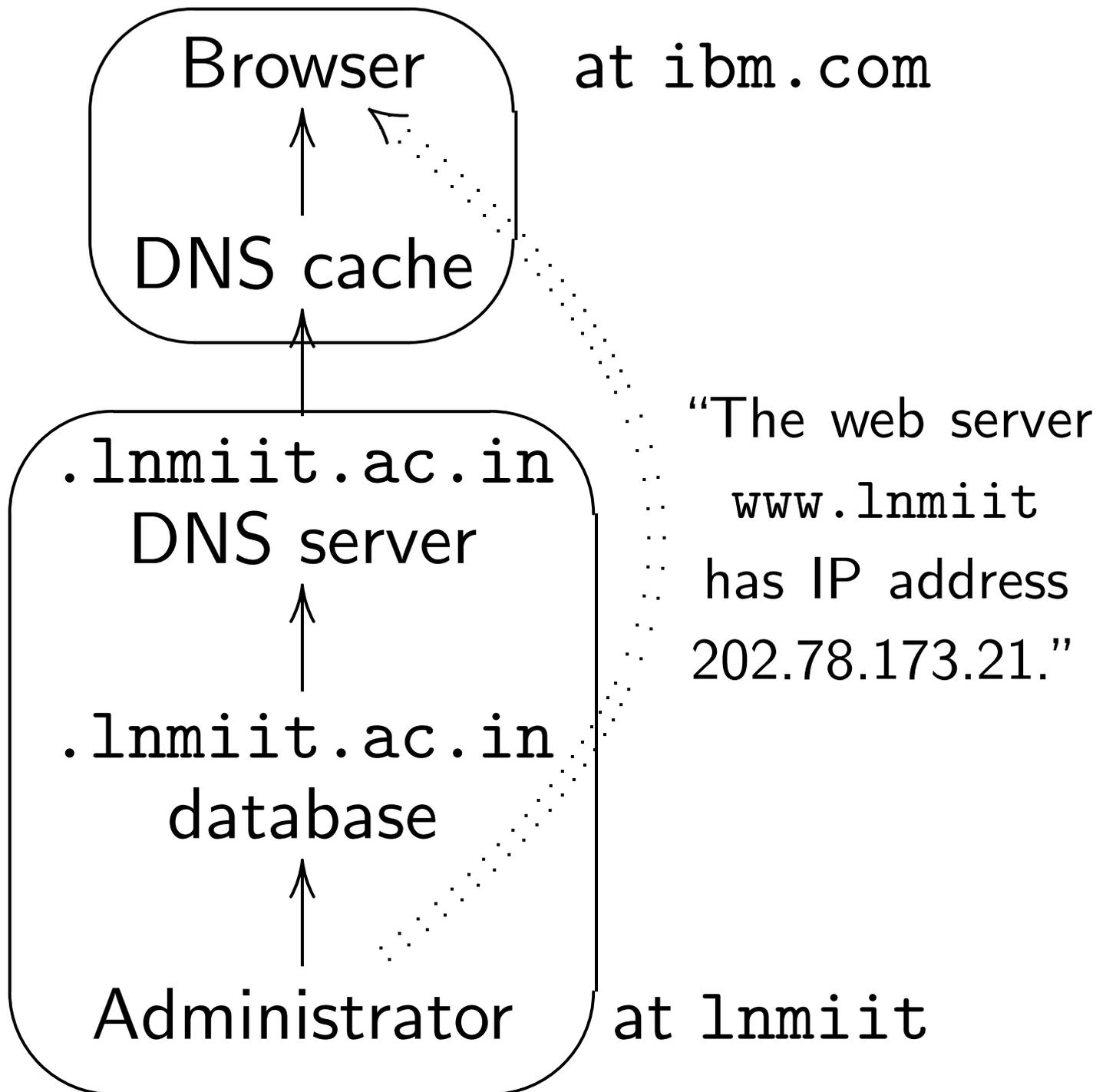
# DNS architecture

Browser pulls data from  
DNS cache at `ibm.com`:

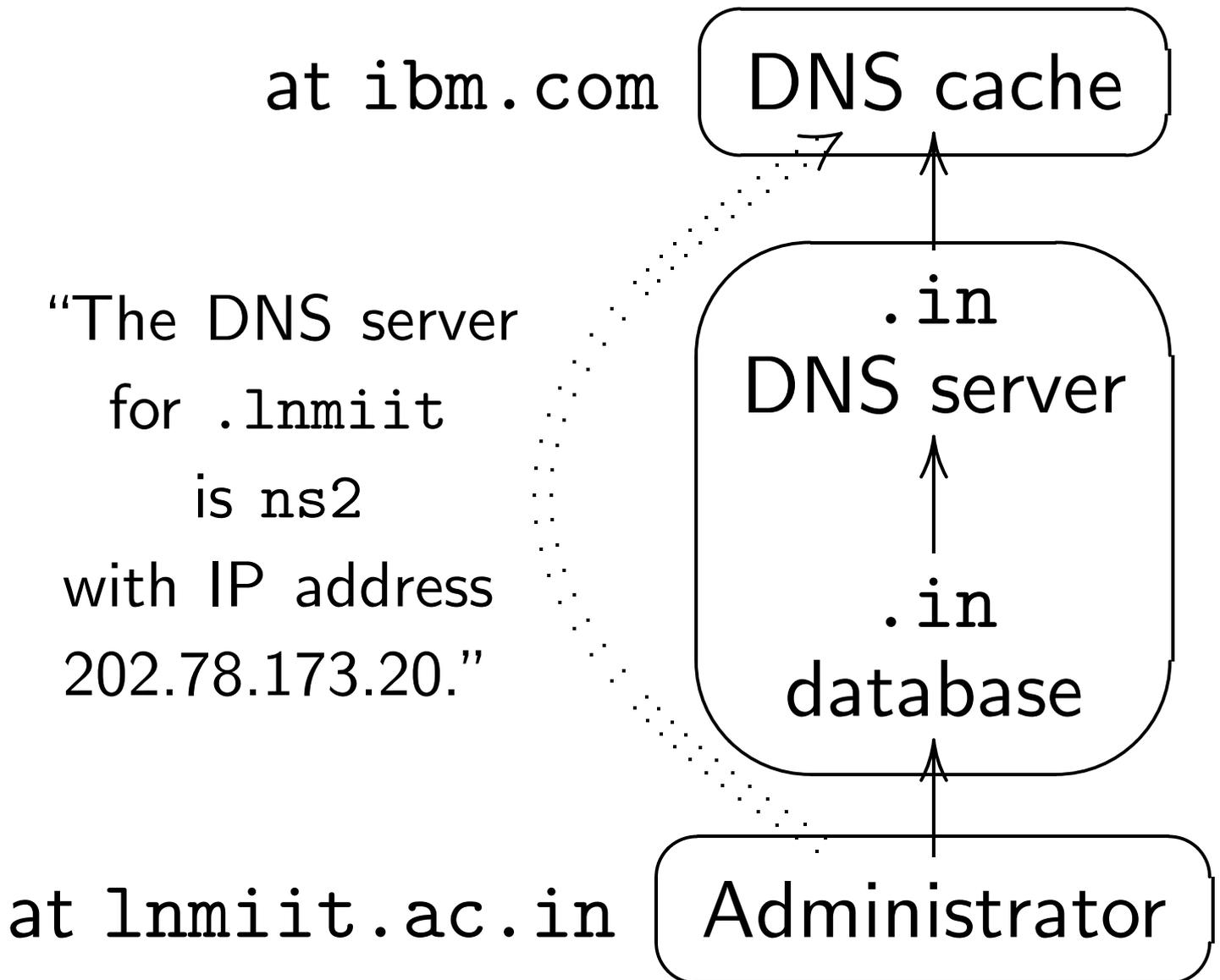


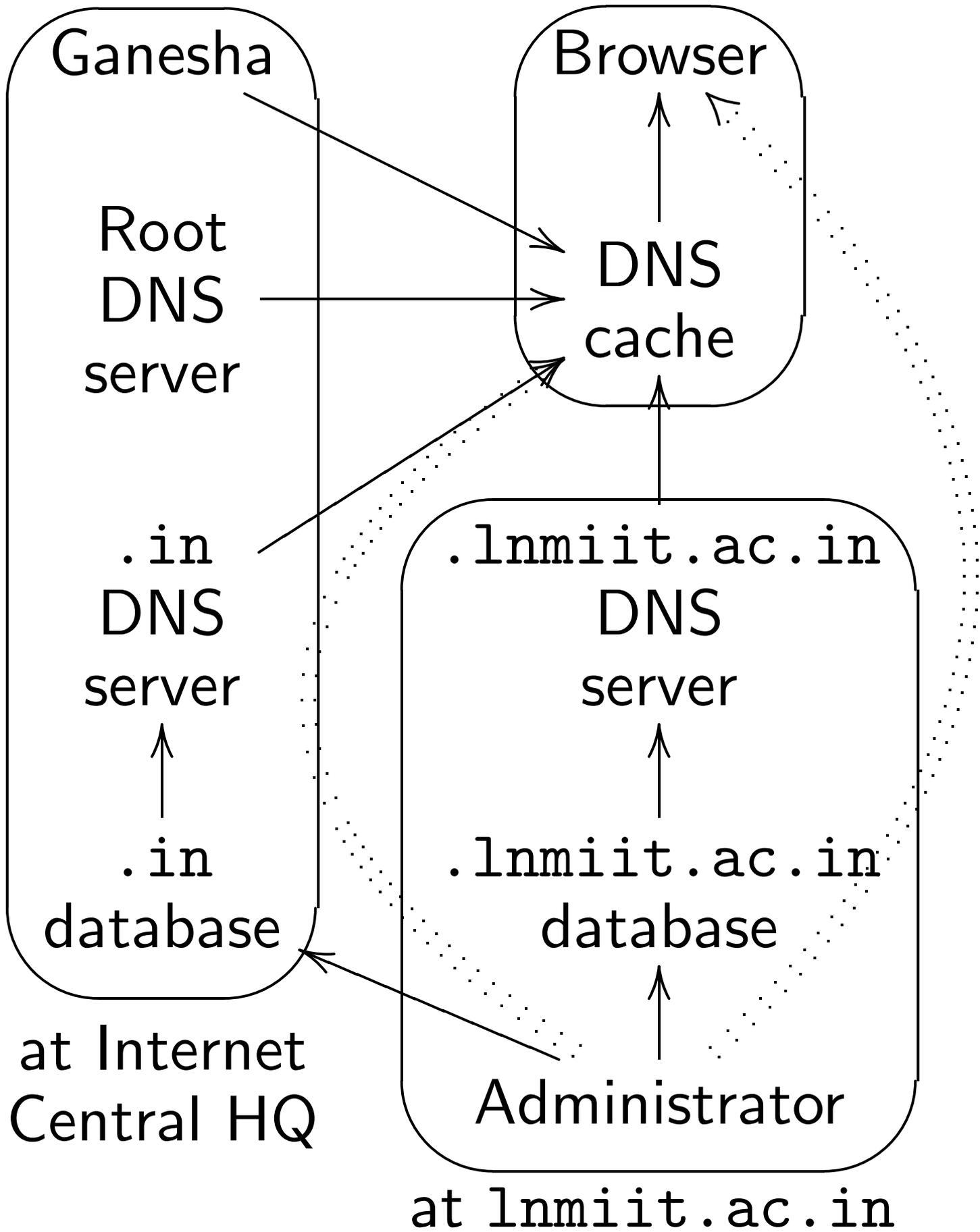
Cache pulls data from  
administrator if it  
doesn't already have the data.

Administrator pushes data  
through local database into  
.lnmiit.ac.in DNS server:



DNS cache learns location of  
.lnmiit.ac.in DNS server from  
.in DNS server:





DNS server software listed in Wikipedia: BIND, Microsoft DNS, djbdns, Dnsmasq, Simple DNS Plus, NSD, PowerDNS, MaraDNS, ANS, Posadis, Secure64 DNS.

DNS database-management tools listed by 2008 Salomon: BPP, DNS Boss, DNSStool, gencidrzone, h2n, makezones, NSC, nsupdate, SENDS, updatehosts, Utah Tools, webdns, zsu. Plus hundreds of homegrown tools written by DNS registrars etc.

DNSSEC requires 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 2GB database can produce 10GB database (2005 NIST study).

Tool reading database into RAM probably has to be reengineered.

Because of engineering costs and redeployment costs, very few database-management tools have added DNSSEC support.

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2008 slideshow “DNSSEC in six minutes” (79 pages): “Any time you modify a zone . . . you must re-run `dnssec-signzone`.”

Administrator also has to send public key to `.in`.

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

Big zones such as `.com` refuse to sign complete database. Full DNSSEC signing would be much too slow and much too big.

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

Often many more packets than original DNS.

Higher latency for user.

More frequent failures.

Also, much easier for attacker to deny service.

> 100× amplification!

Official DNSSEC response,

RFC 4033: “DNSSEC

provides no protection

against denial of service attacks.”

# Replay attack on DNSSEC:

Attacker inspects DNSSEC signatures from `lnmiit.ac.in`.

`lnmiit.ac.in` changes location, acquires new IP addresses, changes DNS records.

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Attacker buys the old addresses, forges DNS responses with the *old* DNS records and the *old* signatures.

Passes signature verification.

Successfully steals mail!

DNSSEC has a partial defense.

Signature has an expiration date,  
normally signing date + 30 days.

Not very good security:

replay attack continues to work  
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Also a major administrative  
hassle: administrator must  
generate new signatures  
before old signatures expire.

If administrator forgets,  
domain is destroyed.

“DNSSEC suicide.”

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Install HTTPSEC software.

Set up a public key.

After every web-page update,  
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Replay attacks work for 30 days.

Have to run `httpsec-signpages`

again before 30-day expiration or

your web pages are destroyed.

But wait, there's more!

NXDOMAIN attack on DNSSEC:

Attacker forges DNS response  
from google.com saying that  
citronella.google.com  
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Cache can't accept this without a signature: otherwise attacker can knock names off the Internet.

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Cache can't accept this without a signature: otherwise attacker can knock names off the Internet.

When is the signature precomputed? Does Google precompute signatures for *all* possible names? Too many!

DNSSEC solution: Sign multi-NXDOMAIN such as “there are no names between `chrome.google.com` and `code.google.com`.”

DNSSEC server issues this signed data in response to any name between `chrome` and `code`.

Tricky definition of “between”; theoretically implementable.

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Consequence: If you deploy DNSSEC then you are exposing *all* of your DNS names!

Newest DNSSEC variant:

“NSEC3” (2008 Laurie),  
exposing *hashes* of DNS names.  
Hash is 150 SHA-1 iterations.

Hash-enumeration attack:

Attacker guesses many names,  
computes their hashes,  
compares to the hashes  
exposed by DNSSEC+NSEC3.

Small 10-computer cluster:

$\approx 2^{44}$  guesses/year.

Large company or botnet:

$\approx 2^{64}$  guesses/year.

Without DNSSEC,  
attacker has to send query  
for each guessed name.

Flooding a 4Mbps connection:  
 $\approx 2^{37}$  guesses/year.

Compared to normal DNS,  
DNSSEC+NSEC3  
makes guessing *silent* and  
makes it *millions of times faster*  
for a well-equipped attacker.

DNSSEC+NSEC3 is advertised  
as being better than DNSSEC;  
but it still loses privacy  
compared to normal DNS.

Precomputation impact summary:

DNSSEC is pain for implementors.

Hundreds of DNS programs—

all caches, all servers,

and all management tools—

need to be modified to

precompute and store signatures.

DNSSEC is pain for

administrators, far beyond a

simple upgrade.

DNSSEC hurts privacy.

DNSSEC hurts reliability.

DNSSEC aids denial of service.

## Rethinking signatures

Conventional wisdom:

DNSSEC's precomputation,  
sacrificing security while  
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is necessary for speed.

Can we achieve adequate speed  
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Let's change the design.

# Rethinking signatures

Conventional wisdom:

DNSSEC's precomputation, sacrificing security while creating severe usability problems, is necessary for speed.

Can we achieve adequate speed *without* precomputation?

Let's change the design.

## **1. Add encryption.**

Want to protect against sabotage *and* against espionage.

So use public-key signatures *and* public-key encryption.

## 2. Merge signing with encryption.

“Public-key signcryption” protects against forgery and eavesdropping in one step.

“Public-key authenticated encryption” is even faster.

No need to partition the algorithms into an encryption component and an authentication component. Combined algorithms are faster.

### **3. Merge public-key operations across multiple messages.**

It's silly for a sender to authcrypt two messages to the same recipient.

“Hybrid cryptography” is much faster.

Example: Sender generates a random AES key, authcrypts the AES key, uses the AES key to encrypt and authenticate both messages.

## **4. Choose sensible primitives.**

256-bit elliptic-curve cryptography  
using public-domain software:

489069 Core 2 cycles to handle a  
new communication partner.

5355 cycles to encrypt and  
authenticate a 510-byte message.

6786 cycles to verify and decrypt  
a legitimate 510-byte message.

3465 cycles to reject a forged  
510-byte message.

A 2.5GHz Intel Core 2 Quad Q9300 CPU costs US\$225.

Complete computer: \$400.

This CPU has 4 cores.

Each core carries out  
2.5 billion cycles/second.

On this computer,  
the same software takes just  
49 seconds to handle 1000000  
new communication partners,  
and just 12 seconds to handle  
10000000 incoming packets *and*  
10000000 outgoing packets.

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Verisign says that it wants to be  
prepared for 4 trillion packets/day.

Cryptographic cost of  
4 trillion partners/day with this  
software: < 3000 computers.

# What is this software?

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Actually done three months ago. Subsequent time has been QA.

NaCl is now released:

<http://nacl.cace-project.eu>

## The DNSCurve project

DNSCurve uses NaCl  
to add heavy-duty integrity  
(RSA-1024 has 80-bit security;  
DNSCurve has 128-bit security)  
*and* some confidentiality  
*and* availability  
to the Domain Name System.

Despite all this security,  
DNSCurve is very easy for DNS  
software authors to implement  
and very easy for  
administrators to deploy.

Administrator has to change the `lnmmit.ac.in` server to support DNSCurve, *or* install a DNSCurve forwarder alongside the server.

Administrator does *not* need to change database software, does *not* need to store signatures, does *not* need new procedures for updating DNS records, and does *not* risk DNSSEC suicide.

Administrator changes  
server name such as ns2  
to a server name that encodes  
the DNSCurve public key.

The `.in` server  
and database software  
and web interface  
already support  
`Inmiit.ac.in` server names  
selected by the  
`Inmiit.ac.in` administrator!

Cache has to be upgraded to support DNSCurve.

Cache naturally sees the encoded DNSCurve public key.

Cache encrypts and authenticates DNS packets sent to that server.

Cache verifies and decrypts DNS packets received from that server.

No extra packets.

Forged packets are very efficiently discarded.

Denial of service becomes much more difficult.

Does DNSCurve mean that  
DNSSEC is completely useless?

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Analogy: HTTPSEC, unlike HTTPS, can protect against compromise of HTTP servers if administrator signs web pages on another machine.

But does this justify the pain of DNSSEC+HTTPSEC?

More information on DNSCurve:

See <http://dnscurve.org>.

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Thinking beyond networking:  
When people sacrifice security  
and usability for the sake of  
performance, are they really  
improving performance?

