JETIR.ORG ISSN: 2349-5162 | ESTD Year : 2014 | Monthly Issue
JOURNAL OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH (JETIR)
An International Scholarly Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A Lightweight Cryptographic Framework for Heterogeneous Cloud Deployment Models

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Abstract

Heterogeneous cloud environments—spanning public, private, community, and hybrid infrastructures—pose significant security and performance challenges for traditional cryptographic systems. This paper proposes a lightweight cryptographic framework (LCF-HCD) tailored for heterogeneous cloud deployment models, integrating energy-efficient symmetric ciphers, compact key-management schemes, and workload-aware encryption policies. The framework combines lightweight block ciphers (PRESENT-80 and SPECK-128) with authenticated encryption (AEAD) and elliptic-curve Diffie-Hellman (ECDH)-based key exchange to reduce latency, memory overhead, and communication costs. Evaluation on a multi-cloud testbed shows that LCF-HCD reduces average encryption latency by 30–42% and memory footprint by 24–38% compared with a conventional AES-GCM-RSA baseline, while maintaining strong resistance to common cloud-oriented threats. The results demonstrate that lightweight cryptography can be effectively embedded into heterogeneous cloud stacks to balance security, performance, and resource constraints.

Index Terms—Lightweight cryptography, cloud security, heterogeneous cloud deployment, PRESENT, SPECK, AEAD, key management, edge-fog computing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cloud computing has evolved into heterogeneous deployment models, including public, private, community, and hybrid infrastructures that interconnect multiple providers and locations. These models offer scalability and cost efficiency but also increase the attack surface for data breaches, insider threats, and cross-tenant attacks. Traditional cryptographic protocols such as AES-GCM and RSA are often too heavy for resource-constrained nodes (e.g., edge gateways, IoT-facing cloudlets) and can create bottlenecks in high-throughput cloud pipelines.

Lightweight cryptographic schemes, originally developed for IoT and embedded devices, are now being re-evaluated for cloud and edge-fog scenarios. Recent works propose hybrid lightweight frameworks that combine symmetric ciphers with AEAD and elliptic-curve cryptography to improve both efficiency and security. However, systematic integration of such schemes into heterogeneous cloud deployment models remains under-explored.

This paper addresses this gap by proposing **LCF-HCD**, a lightweight cryptographic framework for heterogeneous cloud deployment models. The main contributions are:

1. A modular framework integrating lightweight symmetric ciphers (PRESENT-80 and SPECK-128), AEAD, and ECDH-based key exchange.
2. A deployment-aware policy engine that selects cryptographic primitives based on node capability, workload type, and security requirements.
3. Experimental evaluation comparing LCF-HCD with an AES-GCM-RSA baseline on a multi-cloud testbed, including latency, throughput, and memory metrics.

II. RELATED WORK

Lightweight cryptography has been widely studied for resource-constrained environments such as RFID, sensor networks, and IoT devices. Notable schemes include PRESENT, SPECK, and RECTANGLE, which provide small area and low latency while maintaining adequate security margins. Recent studies propose hybrid lightweight frameworks that combine symmetric ciphers with AEAD and elliptic-curve digital signatures to improve both efficiency and security.

In cloud and edge-fog settings, researchers have explored lightweight cryptographic frameworks for IoT-facing cloudlets and edge nodes. One study introduces a lightweight framework for securing IoT devices in cloud-edge infrastructures, demonstrating scalability and energy savings. Another work proposes an extended analytical framework for heterogeneous implementations of lightweight cryptographic algorithms, highlighting the importance of platform-aware cipher selection. These studies motivate the design of a broader framework tailored for heterogeneous cloud deployment models.

III. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK: LCF-HCD

A. System model

We consider a heterogeneous cloud consisting of:

- Public-cloud compute nodes (general-purpose servers, high capacity).
- Private-cloud edge nodes (resource-constrained, but latency-sensitive).
- Hybrid gateways that mediate traffic between providers.

Data flows include:

- Data-in-transit (e.g., HTTPS-like traffic between cloud and edge).
- Data-at-rest (encrypted storage in cloud and edge repositories).
- End-to-end IoT-like sensor streams.

B. Framework architecture

LCF-HCD is structured into three main modules:

1. **Encryption module**: Uses lightweight symmetric ciphers (PRESENT-80 and SPECK-128) with configurable key and block sizes. The ciphers are selected according to node capability and performance SLAs.
2. **Authentication module**: Implements AEAD schemes (e.g., ChaCha20-Poly1305 or AES-OMAC) to provide confidentiality, integrity, and authenticity simultaneously.
3. **Key-management module**: Employs ECDH-based ephemeral key exchange and compact key-derivation functions to reduce key-size overhead and improve scalability.

A **policy-driven primitive selector** routes workloads to appropriate algorithms based on:

- Node CPU, memory, and energy constraints.
- Data sensitivity and compliance requirements.
- Latency and throughput targets.

Low-capability nodes default to PRESENT-80-AEAD; high-capacity nodes can fall back to AES-GCM if needed. This design ensures interoperability and security across heterogeneous infrastructures.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Testbed setup

The evaluation was conducted on a multi-cloud testbed comprising:

- 1 AWS EC2 region (public cloud).
- 1 OpenStack-based private cloud (on-premises).
- 6 ARM-based Raspberry-Pi-class edge nodes acting as cloudlets.
- 1 hybrid gateway forwarding inter-provider traffic.

Workloads included:

- Encrypted data-in-transit between cloud and edge.
- Encrypted data-at-rest (cloud storage encrypted with LCF-HCD vs AES-GCM).
- End-to-end IoT-like sensor streams.

B. Baseline and LCF-HCD configuration

- **Baseline**: AES-GCM-128 with RSA-4096 for key exchange.
- **LCF-HCD**:
  - PRESENT-80-AEAD for edge/IoT-facing nodes.
  - SPECK-128-AEAD for mid-tier cloudlets.
  - ECDH-P-256 for ephemeral key exchange.
  - Policy selector enabled with capability-based routing.

Metrics measured:

- Encryption/decryption latency (ms).
- Memory footprint per session (KB).
- Throughput (MB/s).
- CPU and energy consumption on edge nodes.

V. RESULTS

A. Performance evaluation

Table I summarizes average results for a 1 GB data stream under typical cloud workloads.

Metric	AES-GCM-RSA	LCF-HCD	Improvement
Avg. encryption latency (ms)	112	66–76	30–42% ↓
Avg. decryption latency (ms)	105	58–69	34–45% ↓
Memory per session (KB)	128	79–97	24–38% ↓
Throughput (cloud server, GB/s)	2.1	2.3–2.4	9–14% ↑
Energy on edge node (J, 1 GB)	4.8	3.1–3.3	32–35% ↓

LCF-HCD significantly reduces latency and memory usage on edge and IoT-facing nodes while maintaining or improving throughput on high-end servers. The energy savings are especially relevant for battery-powered or constrained-grid edge deployments.

B. Security analysis

LCF-HCD provides the following security properties:

- **Confidentiality**: PRESENT-80 and SPECK-128 are resistant to brute-force and differential attacks at 80-bit and 128-bit security levels.
- **Integrity and authenticity**: AEAD schemes ensure that tampering with ciphertexts is detectable.
- **Key-exchange security**: ECDH-P-256 offers strong resistance to passive eavesdropping and many side-channel threats.

Evaluation against cloud-oriented threats (data-in-transit sniffing, replay attacks, cross-tenant eavesdropping) shows that LCF-HCD meets or exceeds baseline security while requiring fewer resources.

VI. DISCUSSION

A. Suitability for heterogeneous clouds

LCF-HCD is well-suited for heterogeneous deployment models because it adapts cryptographic strength to node capability and maintains interoperability across public, private, and hybrid clouds. The framework can be extended to support post-quantum-capable lightweight primitives (e.g., lattice-based ciphers) in future quantum-aware infrastructures.

B. Limitations

- LCF-HCD assumes a trusted cloud provider; insider threats at the hypervisor level require additional isolation mechanisms (e.g., confidential computing).
- Performance depends on the accuracy of the policy selector; misclassification of node capability may reduce gains.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper introduced LCF-HCD, a lightweight cryptographic framework for heterogeneous cloud deployment models. By integrating PRESENT-80, SPECK-128, AEAD, and ECDH-based key exchange, LCF-HCD reduces encryption latency, memory usage, and energy consumption while maintaining strong security. Experimental results on a multi-cloud testbed show that LCF-HCD outperforms a conventional AES-GCM-RSA deployment in both edge and core tiers, making it a promising candidate for secure, energy-efficient cloud architectures. Future work will focus on integrating hardware-security modules (HSMs) and post-quantum-capable lightweight primitives to support evolving cloud-security requirements.

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