

Highly optimized Curve448 and Ed448 design in wolfSSL and side-channel evaluation on Cortex-M4

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Abstract—The compact key sizes and the low computational latency of the Elliptic Curve Cryptography (ECC) family of curves sparked high interest in their integration into network protocols. The recently suggested Curve448, assuring 224-bit security, is an ideal curve choice for integrating into cryptographic libraries according to a late study on backdoors on other ECC instances compromising their security, which results in the integration of Curve448 into the TLS1.3 protocol. Curve448 and its birationally equivalent untwisted Edwards curve Ed448, used for key exchange and authentication, respectively, present a perfect fit for low-end embedded cryptographic libraries due to their minimal memory requirements. In this work, we deploy optimized Montgomery Ladder point multiplication into the widely employed IoT-focused cryptographic library wolfSSL and present side-channel robust and efficient ECDH and EdDSA based on Curve448 and Ed448. We evaluate the performance of the newly integrated architectures against the NIST recommended Cortex-M4 STM32F407-DK ARM-based platform. We perform thorough side-channel evaluation of the proposed Montgomery Ladder implementation via powerful TVLA analysis revealing DPA data leakage. We integrate countermeasures to protect our design, evaluate their effectiveness and analyze the latency overhead. We achieve SCA robust Curve448 and Ed448 at the cost of around 1.2MCC (1.36× the execution time). Finally, we report the performance of our fully SCA protected Curve448 and Ed448 as part of TLS1.3 wolfSSL, reporting 1.04× performance compared to the original wolfSSL code.

Keywords: Elliptic Curve Cryptography, Curve448, Side-Channel Countermeasures, Cortex-M4.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, technology has become more integrated into our daily lives, increasing the amount of data exchanged through the Internet. The rapid transmission speed and ease of getting information on low- or high-end nodes improve quality of life. Private information cannot be communicated over an insecure network like the Internet without being compromised. Cryptographic algorithms and network protocols use challenging mathematical issues to safeguard our data during transport.

Public Key Cryptography (PKC), also known as asymmetric cryptography, is a major cryptographic primitive because it ensures data integrity, confidentiality, and authentication without a common/symmetric secret key. RSA's and ECC's security is

based on the mathematical problems of factoring big numbers and elliptic curve logarithm. The relatively new ECC provides reduced computational latency and key sizes compared to RSA, resulting in lower transmission costs for same security levels. As an optimal solution for key agreement and digital signature algorithm, ECC has become the most preferred choice for network protocols and cryptographic libraries.

The Elliptic Curve family of schemes consists of curves featuring different security level, CPU and storage requirements. Yet, NIST curves have been a source of concern owing to newly acknowledged security flaws [1]. Consequently, a new family of curves was developed addressing the existing issues. Curve25519 and Curve448, as well as their birationally equivalent Edwards curves Ed25519 and Ed448, grew increasing trust by the NIST and are among the recommended curves for building a cryptosystem based on an ECC primitive since both are suitable for key agreement and digital signature algorithms deployment. In 2018, high security level Curve448 (224 bits) was incorporated into the TLS 1.3 [2] network protocol, leading to their incorporation into cryptographic libraries. This work focuses on high-security Curve448 and Ed448 side-channel analysis protection and optimal design into cryptographic library wolfSSL. We also perform different experiment based on the wolfSSL TLS 1.3 implementation based on a UART server-client communication and report our findings before and after protecting the design.

To minimize data leakage through physical behavior and enable Side-Channel Analysis (SCA), cryptographic system design is extremely demanding for embedded devices. Resource consumption may allow an attacker to reveal confidential information. In addition to time, power consumption may expose secret information. Simple Power Analysis (SPA) can reveal key-dependent power consumption disparities in a cryptographic method. Differential Power Analysis (DPA) shows a more complex link between hidden bits and power consumption than SPA, which may be eliminated by equalizing power usage independent of input key value. Therefore, further precautions should be considered to protect the code implementation against side channel vulnerabilities. This work presents a side-channel resistant design of Curve448 and Ed448 based on Montgomery Ladder that includes the essential countermeasures at the cost of executional overhead, which is reported for both cryptographic primitives and the TLS 1.3 protocol execution. To prove that our countermeasures secure our code, we offer Test Vector Leakage Assessment (TVLA) statistics and compare the unprotected design to the side-channel resilient implementation.

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A. Related Work

Cryptographic primitives, that rely on complex mathematical problems, require a significant amount of processing power on low-end devices; hence, several efficient ECC-based architectures are presented in the literature, along with the adoption of side-channel attack countermeasures. Being the ultimate objective of an optimum and safe implementation design, its incorporation into cryptographic providers is the objective of several academic and industry groups.

The interest in the relatively new Curve25519 proposed by Bernstein [3], and later Curve448 proposed by Hamburg [4] derives mostly from its low executional latency and high security level, respectively. Both curves are useful for key agreement Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman (ECDH), where their birationally equivalent (un)twisted Edwards curves Ed25519 and Ed448 aid in the execution of the Edwards curve Digital Signature Algorithm (EdDSA) [5]. Due to their integration into the TLS 1.3 network protocol standard, they are already incorporated into most cryptographic libraries and have been the subject of optimization and security review.

Elliptic Curve Cryptography's pyramid structure, in which each layer comprises of numerous invocations of a lower layer primitive, enables ECC optimization at many levels. Different algorithms presented in the literature include either low execution delay (Window method [6], Signed Comb [7] method), constant time performance (Double-and-Add-always, Montgomery Ladder [8] method), or compact code size (Double-and-Add [9] method). WolfSSL crypto library bases their Ed448 implementation on the Window point multiplication method, where they show impressive timing results. However, there have been multiple papers discussing the side-channel resistance of this method and the security of the embedded library [10], [11], [12], [13], [14]. Therefore, in this work we integrate Montgomery Ladder multiplication design since it prevents time and SPA attacks and appears to be particularly efficient based on X -only coordinate operations.

Optimizations and enhancements were likewise implemented for the ECC's bottom layer. When constructing target-specific hand-crafted assembly code, finite field arithmetic allows for considerable performance improvements. In [15], Seo provides an efficient design for the 8-bit AVR and 16-bit MSP platforms, which, to the best of our knowledge, is the first low-end target-specific design for Curve448 arithmetic architecture based on Karatsuba multi-precision multiplication technique. Hutter *et al.* introduced the implementation of Operand Caching (OC) in [16], where later its variants Consecutive- and Refined-OC are presented by Seo *et al.* in [17], [18] and [19]. The first customized Curve448 design for the Cortex-M4 ARM CPU is published in [20] by Seo *et al.*, where the authors deploy the R-OC technique. The first EdDSA Ed448 deployment on Cortex-M4 is presented by Anastasova *et al.* [21]. Future multi-precision arithmetic solutions are presented by Anastasova *et al.* [22]. Recently, the same team presented a new speed record for the Curve448-based key agreement and the Ed448 based digital signature algorithm [23], which we use as a starting point for our work aiming at analyzing and protecting the time optimal design

while integrating it into the cryptographic library wolfSSL.

The evaluation of ECC algorithms against side-channel attacks is critical, and it has been a matter of study since 1999, when Kocher introduced the notion of [24]. Current implementations of elliptic curve techniques focus on removing physical behavior that reveals the secret value through the deployment of a series of side-channel attack countermeasures [25], [26], [27], [28], [29]. Point randomization [30] and scalar blinding are two of the most effective as they ensure constant-time and secret-independent calculations. In this work, we focused on protecting the designs of Curve448 and Ed448 on Cortex-M4 by employing point randomization and scalar blinding countermeasures.

B. Contributions

In this paper, we integrate a highly efficient and side-channel protected architecture for Curve448- and Ed448-based key derivation and digital signature algorithms into the embedded device-specific wolfSSL cryptographic library. Our contributions are as follows:

- 1) We implement Montgomery Ladder point multiplication into wolfSSL and examine the most recent multi-precision multiplication and squaring approaches designed for the ARM-based Cortex-M4 architecture for Curve448 and Ed448 ECC primitives. We compare performance gains to prior research using the NIST-recommended STM32F407-DK and STM32F413-DK, with an inbuilt WiFi module, microcontrollers.
- 2) We deploy a side-channel-resistant design for Curve448 and Ed448 by including Differential Power Analysis (DPA) countermeasures. After employing point randomization and scalar blinding, we obtain a side channel-resistant architecture at $1.38\times$ execution time for Curve448 ECDH and $1.37\times$ and $1.22\times$ performance increase for Ed448 key generation and signature. We confirm the efficacy of the countermeasures by supplying TVLA traces.
- 3) We deploy our SCA-robust Curve448 and Ed448 design into the wolfSSL cryptographic library and report a performance of $1.04\times$ time the original TLS 1.3 client, as compared to the unprotected architecture, where we benchmark the timing results via a UART connection among the embedded device and a computer. We conduct our experiment using the STM32F413-DK board.

The remaining sections are grouped as follows. In Section II we discuss the mathematical problems, base of X448 and Ed448 DSA algorithms, present the platform specifications, and resume the side-channel analysis considerations. Section III presents the multi-precision arithmetic architecture for Curve448 and Ed448. Section IV shows the main features of the emerging TLS 1.3 protocol and the wolfSSL cryptographic library. In Section V we show the side-channel analysis setup and countermeasures, the basis of the applied TVLA leakage detection method, and the results after evaluating our protected design. Section VI shows the integration of our design into wolfSSL and the performance improvements as part of the TLS 1.3 network protocol. Finally, we conclude our work in Section VII.

Algorithm 1 Montgomery ladder

Input: $P = (X_P : Z_P)$, $k = \sum_{i=0}^{l-1} k_i 2^i$ where $k_{l-1} = 1$
Output: $R = k \cdot P$

- 1: $R \leftarrow (X_R, Z_R) = (1, 0)$
- 2: $Q \leftarrow (X_Q, Z_Q) = (X_P, 1)$
- 3: **for** $(i = 447; i \geq 0; i - -)$ **do**
- 4: **if** $k_i = 0$ **then**
- 5: $(R, Q) = \text{ladderstep}(X_P, R, Q)$
- 6: **else**
- 7: $(Q, R) = \text{ladderstep}(X_P, Q, R)$
- 8: **end if**
- 9: **end for**
- 10: **return** $x_R = X_R/Z_R$

II. PRELIMINARIES

This section reviews the mathematical background of ECC and in particular the Montgomery and Edwards representation of Curve448–Goldilocks. Finally, we summarize the target specifications and the side-channel analysis evaluation and considered countermeasures.

A. ECC Mathematical Background

Untwisted Edwards Curve448–Goldilocks was proposed by *Hamburg* in [4] and shortly after was chosen as a NIST recommendation for ECC instantiation and is claimed to be preferred over NIST curves. Edwards curve are defined as: $E_{Ed}/\mathbb{F}_p : ax^2 + y^2 = 1 + dx^2y^2$ where Curve448–Goldilocks features the parameter set of $d = -39081$ and $a = 1$ and prime number $p = 2^{448} - 2^{224} - 1$ defining the finite field \mathbb{F}_p . Edwards and Montgomery curves are birationally equivalent, thus Curve448–Goldilocks can be described as: $E_M/\mathbb{F}_p : v^2 \equiv u^3 + 156326u^2 + u$. This allows to simplify and optimize the implementation of scalar multiplication by dropping the Edwards representation and execute a Montgomery Ladder.

Montgomery Ladder Algorithm 1 is an efficient constant time algorithm for computing the group operation point multiplication $P = [k] \cdot Q$ where the secret value is decomposed and processed in a bit-by-bit fashion. Opposite to other point multiplication algorithms, Montgomery Ladder prevents SPA due to the execution of point doubling and point addition independently of the processed bit value. Besides timing and SPA, when adapting adequate countermeasures such as scalar blinding and point randomization to eliminate the data dependency in the swap step, the Montgomery Ladder algorithm becomes robust against DPA.

Additional advantage of applying Montgomery Ladder is the reduced computational latency based on projective coordinates point representation and X -only formula. The mapping between projective and affine coordinates consists of $x, y = (X \cdot Z^{-1}, Y \cdot Z^{-1})$, which is performed at the end of the Montgomery Ladder execution. Thus, Montgomery Ladder, efficient and resistant to side-channel analysis attacks, is a preferred choice in many ECC implementation architectures and presents the base of this work.

Algorithm 2 Ed448 algorithm [31]. H denotes *SHAKE256*. L represents the order of Ed448 curve. G represents the value of the base point

Key Generation

Input: *seed*
Output: $(p, s), pk_A$
 $sk_A \in_R^{seed} \mathbb{Z}/\mathbb{F}_p$
 $(p, s) \leftarrow H(sk_A)$
 $pk_A \leftarrow \text{encode}([s] \cdot G)$

Sign

Input: $pk_A, (p, s), M$
Output: $sign \equiv R||S$
 $r \leftarrow (H(p||M))(modL)$
 $R \leftarrow \text{encode}([r] \cdot G)$
 $k \leftarrow (H(R||pk_A||M))(modL)$
 $S \leftarrow \text{encode}((r + k * s)(modL))$

Verification

Input: $pk_A, M, R||S$
Output: $[S] \cdot G == R + [k] \cdot A$
 $k \leftarrow H(R||pk_A||M)(modL)$
 $A \leftarrow \text{decode}(pk_A)$

B. X448 and Ed448

Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman and Edwards curve Digital Signature Algorithm have as a core operation the point multiplication, where the signature integrates additionally hash functions due to the nature of the arbitrary length message authentication.

The sole operation for the performance of ECDH is scalar multiplication where both communication parties need two invocations of the so called X448 function. At the end of the execution of the entire algorithm, both parties should reach a common shared secret $ss = sk_A \cdot sk_B \cdot G = sk_B \cdot sk_A \cdot G$, which upon success would allow a symmetric key derivation and the application of an efficient encryption cipher.

The key agreement, however, cannot ensure the authenticity of the communication parties. Therefore, in network protocols, an additional cryptographic algorithm is needed, referred to as digital signature. Similar to real-life signatures, the sender should place a unique sign which will allow the recipient to authenticate the addresser of the message. The EdDSA consist of three main functions - Key Generation, Sign and Verify Algorithm 2. The execution of key generation is similar to the ECDH step, integrating a deterministic random number generation based on an additional hashing function. Based on the variable (and unbounded) length of the message being transmitted, the signature involves a hash function. At the end of the algorithm, the verifier obtains a true or false output, depending on the success of the authentication.

C. Target Architecture

ARM embedded devices are a target platform for experimental setup and performance assessment due to their high deployment rate in real-time IoT systems owing to their low power and energy consumption. Instruction pipelining without data dependencies or structural hazard stalls is possible using the Reduced Instruction Set Computer (RISC) architecture. For cryptographic algorithm evaluation, NIST recommends the low-end STM32F407VG microcontroller based on Cortex-M4. Using the provided platform, this study reports side-channel

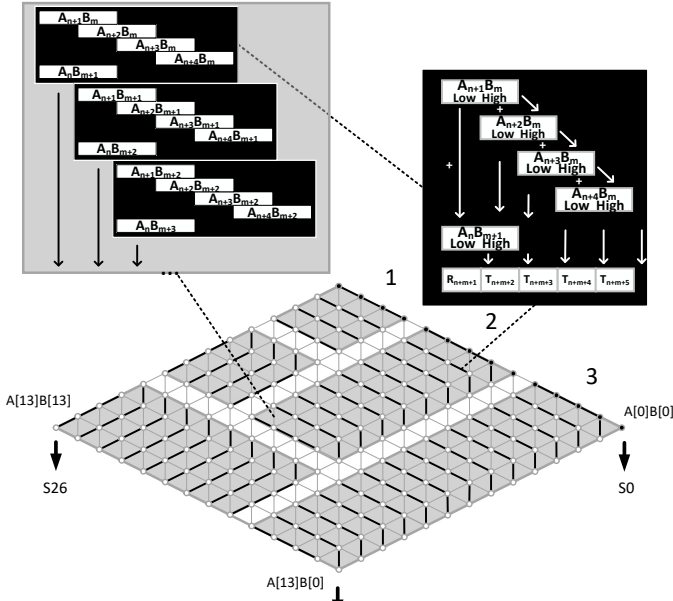


Figure 1. Hybrid² architecture for 448-bit multi-precision multiplication. Black lines denote inner loop execution flow. Each black box presents the instructions executed per black line. The white boxes define the instructions executed per white dot.

analysis countermeasures. Due to the network protocol focus of this work, particularly the wolfSSL cryptographic library and the TLS 1.3 protocol, we choose the Cortex-M4 ARM platform STM32F413-DK, which has a WiFi module for easy network connection and adoption into IoT real-time systems.

The ARMv7-M 32-bit architecture is characterized by 16 General-Purpose Registers (GPRs), denoted as R0–R15 and optionally another 32 32-bit Floating-Point Registers (FPRs) S0–S31. The optimal implementation design relies not only on efficient and scheduled register utilization but also on Multiply ACCumulate (MAC) instruction which perform long accumulative multiplication in a single clock cycle [CC].

The central processing unit (CPU) retrieves an instruction during each cycle, and a stall occurs only when there are data dependencies and inadequate instruction scheduling, resulting in memory access delays.

D. Side-Channel Countermeasures and TVLA Analysis

Constant execution time is a primary SPA countermeasure since the system should not show relationship between the secret value being processed and the physical behavior. More complex analysis, such as DPA, might be used to derive a correlation between these two. To ensure that no data is leaked, a set of countermeasures must be added to a cryptographic architecture. In this paper, we use two countermeasures and demonstrate via TVLA that they eliminate the power consumption dependency with the secret input value.

Point randomization is a DPA countermeasure approach that allows the scalar value to be protected when performing point multiplication. The approach masks the coordinates of the static base point G using a randomly generated value λ . The 448-bit λ is then multiplied by the coordinates of the point, where after converting into projective coordinates the base point becomes defined as $G_r = (\lambda \cdot x_p, \lambda)$. After executing the scalar multiplication and obtaining the result, a

Algorithm 3 Multi-precision multiplication inner loop execution flow. The horizontal space denotes the PS-like execution flow and the vertical UMAAL instructions show OS-fashion execution flow.

```

VMOV R0, S12 // R12
UMAAL R0, R10, R2, R6 // a6b6
UMAAL R11, R10, R3, R6 // a7b6
UMAAL R12, R10, R4, R6 // a8b6
UMAAL R14, R10, R5, R6 // a9b6
LDR R7, [R8, #4*7] // b7
UMAAL R0, R9, R1, R7 // a5b7
VMOV S12, R0 // R12

```

Algorithm 4 Multi-precision squaring inner loop execution flow. The horizontal space denotes the PS-like execution flow.

```

VMOV R0, S12 // R12
LDR R7, [R0, #4*12] // a12
ADCS R7, R7, R7 // 2a12
UMAAL R10, R8, R1, R7 // 2a0a12
UMAAL R12, R8, R2, R7 // 2a1a12
UMAAL R9, R8, R3, R7 // 2a2a12
UMAAL R14, R8, R4, R7 // 2a3a12
UMAAL R11, R8, R5, R7 // 2a4a12
VMOV S12, R10 // R12

```

conversion back to affine representation is executed. In this step the value of λ is being reduced while retrieving the $x_p = X \cdot Z^{-1} = X/Z = \lambda X/\lambda Z$.

Scalar Blinding is another DPA countermeasure that requires the generation of a random number r to conceal the value of the secret scalar. This technique relies on the fact that base point G added to itself l times, where l is the group order, results in the point at infinity: $l \cdot G = \mathcal{O}$. Thus, any multiple of l , e.g. $r \cdot l$, will also end up at \mathcal{O} . In particular, when multiplying the value of $r \cdot l$ and adding it to the secret scalar, the resulting point R will remain the same such as $R = (sk + r \cdot l) \cdot G = sk \cdot G + r \cdot l \cdot G = sk \cdot G + \mathcal{O} = sk \cdot G$. The recommended value for the blinding factor is around half of the secret scalar bit length $\sim |sk|/2$.

To ensure that our countermeasure design is effective and, indeed, prevents DPA attacks, we use Test Vector Leakage Assessment (TVLA) leak detection mechanism. We perform different measurements and report the graphs based on 10,000 traces.

III. FIELD ARITHMETIC ARCHITECTURE

This work is based on the latest finite field architecture for Curve448 arithmetic targeting Cortex-M4 [23]. The authors of the paper show significant optimization of the X448 and Ed448 performance results by proposing a new multi-precision multiplication and squaring functions.

A. Multi-precision Multiplication

The first mixed multi-precision multiplication is the hybrid variant [32] where the inner loop deploys Product Scanning (PS) and the outer processes in an Operand Scanning (OS)-like fashion. Later, more optimal variants have been presented in

Table I
CURVE448 ECDH AND Ed448 DSA SCA UNPROTECTED VS. PROTECTED
IMPLEMENTATIONS [KCC]

Work	Freq. [MHz]	X448	Ed448 KeyGen	Ed448 Sign	Ed448 Verify	Protected
Curve448 ¹	24	6,218	-	-	-	U
	168	6,286	-	-	-	
Ed448 ²	24	-	4,069	6,571	8,452	U
	168	-	4,195	6,699	8,659	
Curve448 ³	24	3,221	3,536	6,038	7,404	U
	168	3,975	4,282	6,787	8,854	
This work	24	3,503	3,826	6,328	7,404	PR
		4,151	4,510	7,012	7,404	SB
		4,465	4,841	7,343	7,404	F
	168	4,344	4,669	7,173	8,854	PR
		5,128	5,472	7,975	8,854	SB
		5,538	5,913	8,417	8,854	F

Refer to: ¹ [20], ² [21], ³ [23]

the literature such as the Operand Caching (OC) [16], where the inner loop execution flow changes to ensure maximum utilization of the loaded operand limbs. A Consecutive- and Refined-OC (R-OC) [17], [18] were suggested in the literature showing more optimal results.

The first implementation design to combine both multi-precision multiplication strategies inside the scope of the inner loop is the one presented by *Anastasova et al.* in [23].

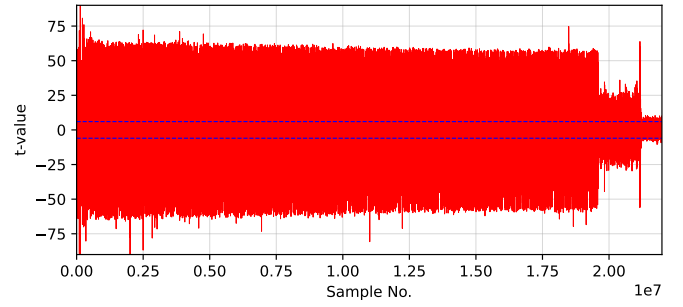
The multi-precision multiplication of this double-hybrid (or hybrid²) strategy (double since it applies hybrid design - R-OC, first to the entire multiplication, similar to previous implementations, and second to the inner multiplication loop) relies on the idea of boosting the inner multiplication loop by increasing the row size (i.e., the number of accumulatively computed 32×32 -bit multiplications in each iteration of the inner loop).

Visual representation of the described steps is presented in Figure 1 where the rows are highlighted in grey color and the inner loop execution flow is denoted by a bolded black line, where each line dots a single iteration of the loop. The execution flow and the instruction scheduling per inner loop iteration is presented in Algorithm 3. A more detailed representation of the computational execution flow is shown in the upper side of Figure 1, where each one of the $k + 1$, with $k = 4$, 32×32 -bit multiplication per inner loop iteration are shown.

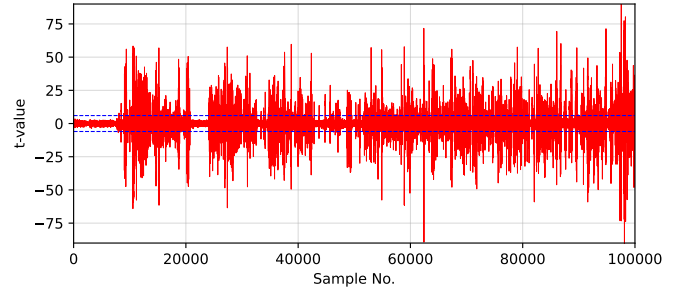
B. Multi-precision square

Multi-precision squaring is also a fundamental building component for ECC calculation. It has similar qualities to multiplication; however, when a number is multiplied by itself, the limbs of both operands coincide. As a consequence, many of the 32×32 -bit multiplications may be removed simply by doubling the results (i.e., the accumulative multiplication of limb n and m of the operand, when $m = n$, is going to be the double of only one of the multiplications, or shifting right by 1). As a result, squaring may be implemented at a far lower cost than multi-precision multiplication.

The authors of [23] offer, to our knowledge, the first and quickest multi-precision squaring design for X448. The architecture is built on a process similar to Product Scanning.



(a) TVLA t -test.



(b) Magnified t -test values for 100,000 samples.

Figure 2. TVLA graphs showing data leak for the unprotected Montgomery Ladder execution using 10,000 traces.

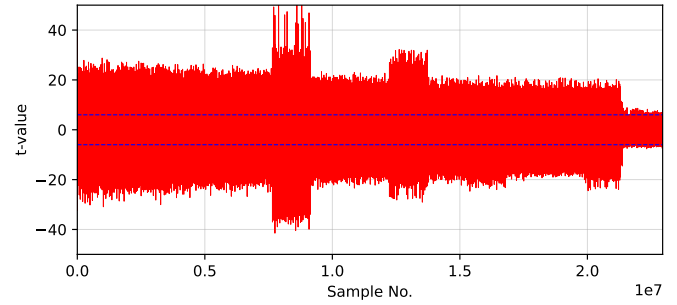


Figure 3. TVLA graphs showing data leak for the protected Montgomery Ladder design based on point randomization DPA countermeasure using 10,000 traces.

However, they combine it with the notion of Refined-OC for execution flow backward.

The implementation of multi-precision multiplication and squaring in [23] shows significant speed record and, thus, is focus of this work adding the required SCA countermeasures and benchmarking into wolfSSL TLS 1.3.

IV. TLS 1.3 AND WOLFSSL

Transport Layer Security (TLS) is the most frequently used network protocol for creating secure communication, and it is implemented and supported by every major cryptographic library. The protocol's widespread adoption opened gap for many attacks to the TLS1.2. The Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) standardized the next 1.3 version [2] of the protocol in 2018, which modified the execution paradigm, increased security, modularity, and execution speed.

Thus, most cryptographic libraries provide TLS 1.3 which simplifies and cleans up the existing TLS 1.2 version, boosting

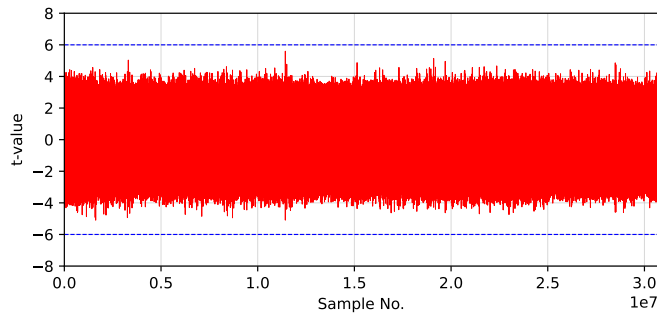
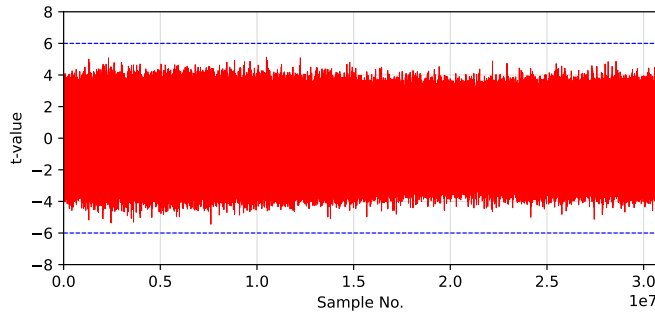
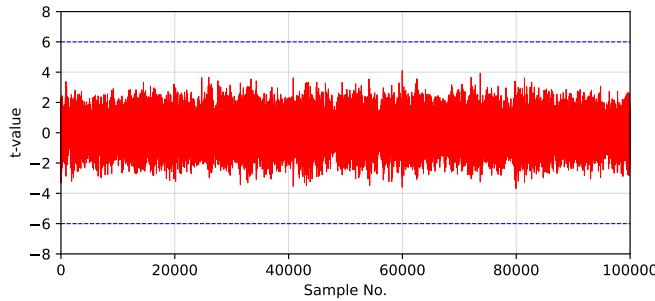


Figure 4. TVLA graphs showing data leak for the protected Montgomery Ladder design based on scalar blinding DPA countermeasure using 10,000 traces.



(a) TVLA t -test.



(b) Magnified t -test values for 100,000 samples.

Figure 5. TVLA graphs showing data leak for the protected Montgomery Ladder design based on point randomization and scalar blinding DPA countermeasure using 10,000 traces.

security and implementation strength while drastically reducing computational and communicational delay due to the one round trip required for the full handshake. TLS 1.3, most crucially in the context of this study, supports Curve448 and Ed448.

Key exchange, server parameters, and authentication are the three steps of TLS 1.3, sometimes known as the TLS handshake. During the key exchange, the client sends a `ClientHello` message with session and feature information. The server learns the highest available TLS version from `ClientHello`. Finally, the client offers a list of supported preferred ciphersuites. It's important to note that the server can bypass ciphersuites if they are not preferred and proceed with others.

The server sends a `ServerHello` message with a nonce and legacy version. This message's ciphersuite, which encrypts transmission, is very important. Extensions include server

name, supported groups, signature techniques and certificates, CAs, pre-shared keys, etc. TLS 1.3 encrypts anything after the `ClientHello`. Thus, some extensions send their `ServerParameters` phase data in ciphertext.

The `ServerHello` message initiates authentication by transmitting its own certificate and possibly requesting client authentication. It's worth noting that the server's signature covers the entire handshake message set, not just the certificate. This stage sends a completion message, which includes a MAC of the complete data length, giving key confirmation or authentication in PSK mode, and the application data may begin to be sent from server to client. The client completes the authentication by checking the server's certificate and, if necessary, submitting its own. Following that, a completion message is sent, and both communication parties can safely share application data.

WolfSSL is a popular cryptography library for low-end embedded devices with limited computation, memory, battery life, and bandwidth. Due to its portable C implementations, wolfSSL reduces execution delay and optimizes code size. Client programs benefit from the library's straightforward APIs, rich documentation, and current crypto primitives. WolfSSL supports TLS 1.3 and experimental post-quantum and hybrid ciphersuites. Other efforts [28] have improved cryptographic algorithm time (Curve25519) and side-channel safety for low-end devices.

This article is the first to combine side-channel protection, TVLA analysis of countermeasure efficacy, and hand-coded ARMv7 assembly implementation of Curve448 arithmetic. We propose secure Curve448 and Ed448 at similar cost as the original wolfSSL design, but at the risk of non-portable platform specific assembly implementation.

V. SCA COUNTERMEASURES, TVLA AND PERFORMANCE IMPACT

Side-channel analysis (SCA) is based on observing a relation between physical behavior of a system and the secret value. Data leak may be produced by non uniform execution time, power consumption, or electromagnetic emissions. Based on the processor resource utilization, a malicious party could recover secret information about a communication party. Therefore, careful analysis should be performed even when constant time implementation is promised.

A. Setup

This study examines the latest Montgomery Ladder-based implementation of the Curve448 key agreement and Ed448 digital signature technology, which use constant-time multi-precision multiplication and squaring. We collected power use data and used TVLA based on t -statistic to assess distinguishability to study the implementation design and potential DPA threats. Welch's t -test calculates a t -statistic from TVLA traces' mean and standard deviation, where a threshold indicates information leakage. We cautiously adjusted the cutoff value at 6 based on [34] and [28] to reduce false positive values.

For the setup of the system we use NewAE CW308T-STM32F board, which features the target Cortex-M4 platform, along with NewAE CW308 UFO. The configuration is linked

Table II
CURVE448 ECDH AND EDDSA SCA UNPROTECTED VS. PROTECTED
IMPLEMENTATIONS IN WOLFSSL BENCHMARK TEST AND AS PART OF THE
TLS 1.3 HANDSHAKE.

Work	Operation	Curve448 ECDH		Ed448 DSA			Protected
		keygen	agree	keygen	sign	verify	
wolfSSL ¹	ops	3	4	6	6	2	U
	sec	1.279	1.698	1.067	1.075	1.004	
	avg ms	426.333	424.500	177.833	179.167	502.000	
	ops/sec	2.346	2.356	5.623	5.581	1.992	
TLS 1.3 Client		44,358,855 [CCs]					
This work (C)	ops	1	2	1	2	2	U
	sec	1.094	2.184	1.169	2.384	4.330	
	avg ms	1094.000	1092.000	1,169.464	1,192.761	2,165.341	
	ops/sec	0.914	0.916	0.855	0.839	0.462	
TLS 1.3 Client		99,408,298 [CCs]					
Curve448 ²	ops	5	6	5	6	2	U
	sec	1.051	1.255	1.063	1.491	1.141	
	avg ms	210.200	209.167	212.600	248.500	570.500	
	ops/sec	4.757	4.781	4.704	4.024	1.753	
TLS 1.3 Client		45,941,404 [CCs]					
This work (ASM)	ops	5	6	5	4	2	PR
	sec	1.146	1.365	1.153	1.067	1.142	
	avg ms	229.200	227.500	230.600	266.750	571.000	
	ops/sec	4.363	4.396	4.337	3.749	1.751	
TLS 1.3 Client		46,095,455 [CCs]					
This work (ASM)	ops	4	4	4	4	2	SB
	sec	1.012	1.008	1.020	1.165	1.149	
	avg ms	253.000	252.000	255.000	291.250	574.500	
	ops/sec	3.953	3.968	3.922	3.433	1.741	
TLS 1.3 Client		46,199,496 [CCs]					
This work (ASM)	ops	4	4	4	4	2	F
	sec	1.086	1.082	1.094	1.236	1.150	
	avg ms	271.500	270.500	273.500	309.000	575.000	
	ops/sec	3.683	3.697	3.656	3.236	1.739	
TLS 1.3 Client		4,6310,749 [CCs]					

Refer to:¹ [33],² [23]

to a NewAE Chipwhisperer Lite board, which allows the target ARM platform to interact with the PC. The test results are based on USB3 oscilloscope Picoscope 3000. To carefully measure the implementation, we operate the target board at 25MHz. To guarantee that the traces are indistinguishable, we randomly choose between using a fixed input scalar value or a random scalar.

When the implementation is unprotected, as seen in [23], we publish the gathered TVLA graphs based on the t -test in Figure 2. It is simple to discover that the obtained traces indicate data leak. We gather another 10,000 traces after applying the point randomization SCA countermeasure and display the TVLA result in Figure 3. The data leak is visually reduced, but not eliminated; so, this single countermeasure is insufficient to secure the design. We incorporate scalar blinding protection into the design and publish the TVLA findings in Figure 4, where, as with point randomization, the effort is insufficient to guarantee the user a SCA protected implementation, however, it is noticeable that the design is better protected. Finally, we provide the gathered data base on the integrated countermeasure design Figure 5, which enables full SCA protected architecture. As can be seen, there is no association between data processing and power usage in the observed numbers.

Only after securing the design, we could proceed to the integration of the code into the cryptographic library wolfSSL since deploying code in industry requires exhaustive security analysis of the design.

B. Protected Design Performance

To evaluate the performance impact of our adopted countermeasure, we test our design on the SMT32F407-DK microcontroller running @24MHz in order to provide precise latency eliminating false stalls produces by memory control unit stalls. We also report out results @168MHz in order to provide a real scenario boosting the speed to the maximum board frequency.

We report the obtained results in Table I, where we report other implementation for comparison purposes. We observe around $300KCC$, $900KCC$, and $1,200KCC$ of execution overhead when considering X448 running @24Mhz applying scalar blinding, point randomization and full SCA countermeasure protection to the design. For Ed448 key generation we observe similar number of clock cycle overhead and around $1.08\times$, $1.28\times$, and $1.36\times$ increased performance for the three SCA countermeasure scenarios, respectively. Signing SCA protection comes at a similar cost.

VI. WOLFSSL TLS 1.3 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

In this work, we report our results after integrating unprotected Montgomery Ladder C in the wolfCrypt cryptographic engine, we analyze the performance and compare it with their previous design. Afterwards, we adopt optimal assembly filed arithmetic and the proposed countermeasures and again measure the performance.

Table II show the benchmarking results when running the wolfSSL test on STM32F413-DK microcontroller. The results obtained after integrating C code Montgomery Ladder point multiplication for Curve448 and Ed448 show a significant drop in the performance for Ed448 ($6.6\times$, $6.6\times$, and $4.3\times$ slower results for key generation, sign, and verify), since the original wolfSSL is based on time efficient but SCA analysis vulnerable window method. Adding arithmetic operations from [23] result in reduced latency, thus, allow more operations to execute in the same time slot. We notice that the X448 performance shows more than $2\times$ optimized implementation compared to our C Montgomery Ladder design. The execution of assembly Montgomery Ladder-based Ed448 shows $5.5\times$, $4.9\times$, and $3.8\times$ improved computational latency compared to the C code, resulting in only $1.2\times$, $1.3\times$, and $1.1\times$ performance drop compared to the original wolfSSL design.

After applying point randomization we observe that the design of X448 drops by less than $18.2ms$, in both the key generation and the agreement. Additionally, the Ed448 point randomization comes at similar cost of around $18ms$ for both the key generation and the signing functions. The adoption of scalar blinding requires around $97ms$ for Curve448 key generate and agree and similar value for Ed448 key generate and agree. Finally, the fully protected design comes at a relative cost of $126ms$ per function and around $1.6\times$ increased execution time compared with the non protected assembly design.

Our fully protected Curve448 design shows $1.3\times$ better performance than the original wolfSSL unprotected design. The fully protected Ed448 design shows around $2\times$ worsen performance compared to the original wolfSSL unprotected design.

Finally, we report the timing and the number of clock cycles required per TLS 1.3 handshake roundtrip, running the client of the STM32F413-DK board and the server on the PC. We use the UART serial connection as a communication channel, therefore, the resulting values are higher than expected, based on the communication latency. Our fully protected design shows 46MCC, compared to 44MCC when running the original code. Thus, we provide side-channel robust Curve448 and Ed448 integration into TLS1.3 at the cost of $1.04\times$ performance loss.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we examine the most recent Curve448 and Ed448 Montgomery Ladder-based architectures for ECDH and EdDSA, with a focus on the Cortex-M4 ARM platform and side-channel analysis attacks. To assess leakage in the unprotected scheme, we set up an experimental scenario and conduct the TVLA test. We secure the Curve448 by using scalar blinding and point randomization DPA countermeasures and analyzing the TVLA findings to confirm that our design is secure. Finally, we incorporate our protected assembly versions of Curve448 and Ed448 into wolfSSL and test their performance as part of the TLS 1.3 protocol.

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