**3GPP TSG-SA3 Meeting #102bis-e *S3-210975r3***

**e-meeting, 1 - 5 March 2021** Revision of S3-20xxxx

**Source: Huawei, HiSilicon, Philips**

**Title: Detection of MitM false base station**

**Document for: Approval**

**Agenda Item: 2.1**

# 1 Decision/action requested

***This pCR proposes a solution to detect the man-in-the-middle false base station.***

# 2 References

[1] 3GPP TS 38.211: "NR; Physical channels and modulation”

# 3 Rationale

This document proposes a new solution to detect a MitM FBS, i.e. FBS + Fake UE. It is based on the link parameters between a UE and its gNB. The link parameters can be used to by gNB to verify whether a FBS is sitting in between.

# 4 Detailed proposal

pCR

\*\*\* BEGINNING OF CHANGES (all text are new) \*\*\*

## 6.x Solution #x: Detection of Man-in-the-Middle false base station

### 6.X.1 Introduction

This solution addresses the first requirement of key issue #3 “Network detection of false base stations”.

A false base station (FBS) capable of performing man-in-the-middle (MitM) attacks consists of two parts, i.e. a fake gNB unit and a fake UE unit. The logic between the fake gNB and the fake UE allows an attacker to process incoming message and just forward them, but also drop, manipulate or inject specific messages. These operations require receiving, processsing, and retransmissing the messages and cannot be performed without introducing some processing delay.

This solution is based on the link allocated resource parameters between a UE and the gNB, i.e. UE’s *SFN*(system frame number). The gNB can compare the SFN it has allocated to the UE (it would be the SFN of the “fake UE” if one sits in between) and the “real” SFN that the UE has reported to determine the existence of a FBS.

This solution does not address the scenario where a malicious node RF repeater relays messages of a victim UE to the real gNB. Note that even if such malicious RF repeaters relays are present, those devices cannot perform a MitM attack as such since they cannot drop/inject/manipulate specific messages as such.

### 6.X.2 Solution Details

UE

gNB

FBS

FakeUE

8. RRC (SFN1)

3. RRC (null)

9. Compare SFN1 and SFN2

5. RRC (null)

7. RRC (SFN1)

6. Keep UE’s SFN2

1. RRC security established

2. Time resource allocation (SFN1)

(2a)

SR

(2b) DCI (K2)

4. Time resource allocation (SFN2)

(4a) SR

(4b) DCI (k2’)

3. RRC (null)

Figure 6.x.2-1 – Flow diagram showing detection of man-in-the-middle attack

The steps can be summarized as follows.

1. Assuming a UE has established a connection with a real gNB through a MitM gNB. The RRC security is established, i.e. all RRC messages are protected from the FBS.
2. In order for a UE to send a RRC message (to trigger the FBS detection), the UE requests resource from the FBS according to the current RAN procedure. Assuming the set of SFN parameters allocated by the FBS is indicated by SFN1 (in this solution SFN refers to system frame number, subframe number, timeslot, start symbol as well as parameters in the resource allocation message, in particular, the “k2” value).
3. The UE sends a RRC message to trigger FBS detection. For simplicity, a null RRC message can be transmitted.
4. As usual, the FBS intends to forward the RRC message to gNB. First, the FBS (or the fake UE) needs to request resource from the gNB. Assuming the gNB will allocate a set of SFN parameters, i.e. SFN2 to the Fake UE.
5. The FBS (Fake UE) forwards the RRC message to the gNB according to the scheduled SFN2.
6. The gNB stores SFN2 it allocated.
7. The UE sends the SFN1 value (allocated at step 2) in a RRC message (security protected from FBS)
8. The FBS (Fake UE) unknowingly forwards to the gNB.
9. The gNB compares the SFN1 value with the SFN2 value stored and determine whether there is a FBS

This solution can be adapted to support “on demand” FBS detection by having the base station send a protected RRC message to the UE indicating that the FBS detection procedure needs to be started. This message is included between message 1 and message 2 in the Figure. Since this message is security protected, the attacker is not able to know the content or tell from a normal RRC messeage.

NOTE1: SFNs are not protected by crypto. So, this solution should study whether a resourceful attacker with multiple UEs parts can acquire all SNFs from legitimate gNB and use the one that fits the case.NOTE2: This solution may not work against a resourceful attacker that can surreptitiously drop messages.

### 6.X.3 Evaluation

TBA.

\*\*\* END OF CHANGES \*\*\*