

Appeal Against the Removal of the Co-chairs of the GEOPRIV Working Group

Basis of Appeal

This document is a formal appeal against the removal of Randall Gellens, Allison Mankin, and Andrew Newton as Co-chairs of the GEOPRIV Working Group by Cullen Jennings, Real-time Applications and Infrastructure (RAI) Area Director, on 23 April 2007.

In summary, the Co-chairs of the GEOPRIV working group conferred via telephone with Cullen Jennings regarding irregularities of the GEOPRIV session at IETF 68. Mr. Jennings participated in the discussion (detailed below) and at the very end of the call, indicated that he desired to remove the Co-chairs. This was interpreted as a type of threat. The Co-chairs then published a message to the GEOPRIV mailing list describing the irregularities of the GEOPRIV meeting at IETF 68, specifically in order to ensure that IETF process would be followed for the WG. Following this message, Mr. Jennings sent a strongly worded message to the IETF list, and he removed the Co-Chairs. This removal occurred during the time period when the Co-chairs were seeking mailing list consensus on the items discussed during the GEOPRIV session at IETF 68.

It is the position of the appellants that this removal violates the IETF process by which working groups are governed. During the GEOPRIV IETF 68 meeting, Mr. Jennings explicitly made his preference for the outcome of consensus known and could no longer be considered a neutral or unbiased official. By removing the Co-chairs while they were seeking mailing list consensus on the items from that meeting, Mr. Jennings inappropriately interfered with the consensus process and the finding of consensus to which he had stated a preference.

Finally, it is the position of the appellants that the actions taken by Mr. Jennings are in conflict with the interests of fairness and neutrality necessary of an IETF official, and that Mr. Jennings in his capacity as Area Director has repeatedly given the appearance of potential conflicts of interest in relation to the GEOPRIV working group.

Remedy

To counteract the issues noted in this appeal, the following remedy is being sought:

1. The GEOPRIV working group should be moved back to the Applications Area.
2. Upon settlement within the Applications Area, an experienced co-chair is to be assigned by the Applications Area Directors. This co-chair should be generally recognized as experienced with many IETF application protocols, not just SIP.

Please note, the appellants do not seek reinstatement of their positions within the GEOPRIV working group.

This remedy is reasonable given the history and nature of the GEOPRIV working

group. The GEOPRIV working group was originally chartered in the Applications Area of the IETF. It was moved to the RAI Area when that area was created. However, the work of the GEOPRIV working group reaches beyond SIP and is a general Internet application. In its work, the GEOPRIV working group has published application protocols using Radius, DHCP, and HTTP. In fact, the one application substrate for which it is forbidden to define protocols is SIP. The GEOPRIV working group fits more naturally in the Applications Area than in the RAI Area.

Removal During Call for Consensus

At the IETF 68 meeting, the GEOPRIV session was rescheduled two days before it was to meet, to a new time when no chairs could be present. During the meeting, both RAI Area Directors, Mr. Jennings and Jon Peterson, oversaw an unscheduled protocol selection process, among the other irregularities of the meeting. The protocol selection was between a proposal known as RELO and a series of documents known collectively as the HELD proposal. These two choices were set forth to satisfy the working group's requirements for a Layer 7 Location Configuration Protocol (L7-LCP). The acting co-chairs of the meeting could not determine rough consensus based on the feedback of the room, and therefore instantiated a plurality vote according to RFC 3929. However, the plurality vote did not meet the preconditions set forth in RFC 3929 for seeking alternative consensus.

Section 3.1 states:

There must be a clear statement of the decision to be reached. This may be in the working group's charter, in requirements documents, or in other documents developed by the working group. Prior to any invocation of an alternate decision making process, the Chair(s) should confirm with the working group that there is general agreement on the decision to be reached. This should include a specific consensus call on whether the working group can advance multiple proposals or must select a single proposal for the work item.

The statement upon which the vote was taken was given verbally during the meeting, and was not written down. It also followed presentations related to one of the proposals for an Internet Draft that was not under consideration. Additionally, although the working group did have a requirements document on the subject, the current version of that document had not achieved working group consensus.

RFC 3929 states in Section 3.4:

In item 3.3 above, it is noted that the Chair(s) should make an explicit call for consensus on the technical issues and should proceed only after that call has yielded no forward progress. A different Last Call on whether to use an alternate decision-making method is required, with a stated period for comments by working group members.

A Last Call regarding the plurality vote did not precede it. In fact, no Last Call to use the plurality vote was ever sent to the GEOPRIV mailing list, nor was the

plurality vote ever issued on the GEOPRIV mailing list. As described below, the GEOPRIV mailing list was not consulted because Mr. Jennings removed the co-chairs before they were able to act on these issues, and the new GEOPRIV chair never took the vote to the mailing list.

The question put to the working group regarding the plurality vote was not that of a technical issue. It was simply a vote for one proposal over another.

During the vote, Cullen Jennings acted as one of the two vote counters but additionally cast a vote in favor of RELO. He then conferred with Mr. Peterson to determine the outcome of the vote.

On 30 March, the co-chairs invited Cullen Jennings and Jon Peterson to a teleconference to discuss the irregularities of the meeting, including the rescheduling of the meeting, the last-minute change in the agenda to add the protocol selection, and the plurality voting process. Mr. Peterson did not attend the teleconference. Instead of being fruitful, the teleconference ended with Mr. Jennings stating his inclination to remove the co-chairs, citing among his reasons that the co-chairs should never have allowed the HELD proposal to remain viable in the GEOPRIV working group.

On 17 April, the co-chairs issued a message to the working group noting the irregularities of the IETF 68 GEOPRIV meeting, and stated that they would seek confirmation on the mailing list of the IETF 68 hums and vote in a series of messages that would immediately follow. Because of the high number of hums taken during the meeting with latter hums dependent on the outcome of preceding hums, the confirmations were to be carried out in multiple messages.

On 23 April, before the end of the consensus call period for the first message, Mr. Jennings removed the co-chairs. Since the vote was never put to the mailing list, Mr. Jennings had interfered with a process for which he had openly shown a preference to the outcome.

Irregularities of the IETF 68 GEOPRIV Working Group Meeting

Both during IETF 68 and after, the GEOPRIV co-chairs received private messages regarding the nature of the GEOPRIV session at IETF 68. Concerned about the irregularities of the meeting, the co-chairs asked Mr. Jennings and Mr. Peterson to join a teleconference on 30 March to discuss what had happened.

During the teleconference, the co-chairs expressed their concerns to Mr. Jennings. Mr. Jennings informed the co-chairs that they were to “stay on message” and informed the co-chairs that he had selected a new document editor for the HELD proposal which had been the focus of an alternate consensus (RFC 3929) plurality vote during the IETF 68 GEOPRIV meeting. Mr. Jennings also gave the co-chairs his preference for the editorship model of the document and detailed how he would like the transition to occur.

The co-chairs told Mr. Jennings that they would consider the request, upon which Mr. Jennings told the co-chairs that he was inclined toward their replacement.

On 17 April, the co-chairs sent a message to the GEOPRIV mailing list noting the irregularities of the IETF 68 GEOPRIV meeting. This message can be found in the IETF archives:

<http://www1.ietf.org/mail-archive/web/geopriv/current/msg03336.html>

Of the private messages, the first was received on Sunday, 18 March, four days before the GEOPRIV session at IETF 68. It indicated that Mr. Jennings and Mr. Peterson were meeting with some GEOPRIV participants and informing them that the agenda would be changed. Mr. Newton, who, along with Ms. Mankin, was unable to travel to IETF 68, sent Mr. Jennings email inquiring about his knowledge regarding a planned change of agenda, and Mr. Jennings responded that he had no knowledge of an agenda change.

However, in a message sent to the IETF list on 18 April, Mr. Jennings states that he had sought, before the meeting, the counsel of the participant who bashed the agenda during the meeting. That message from Mr. Jennings and Mr. Peterson can be found in the IETF archives here:

<http://www1.ietf.org/mail-archive/web/ietf/current/msg45985.html>

Therefore, Mr. Jennings did have knowledge of a planned agenda change but chose not to disclose this information to the co-chairs when queried.

On 21 March (the day before the GEOPRIV session at IETF 68), a second private message was received stating that Mr. Jennings had informed the sender to make a decision regarding RELO vs. HELD. This runs counter to Mr. Jennings's claim that he did not partake in a private orchestration regarding the change of the agenda.

Had Mr. Jennings informed the co-chairs of his planned agenda change, they would have informed Mr. Jennings of the following:

- As early as February (one month prior to the meeting), the GEOPRIV working group had not settled on the differences between an L7-LCP protocol and a Location-by-Reference (LbyR) protocol. See <http://www1.ietf.org/mail-archive/web/geopriv/current/msg02846.html>. Therefore, some of the participants may not have understood the positions they were being asked to take.
- The GEOPRIV working group had a requirements document for L7-LCP, but it had not reached working group consensus on the document.
- Participants had been told that consensus on the L7-LCP requirements would be a gating factor to the selection of an L7-LCP protocol. This is mentioned in the minutes of the IETF 66 GEOPRIV meeting (<http://www3.ietf.org/proceedings/06jul/minutes/geopriv.txt>) and had been repeated as late as March 14 on the mailing list (<http://www1.ietf.org/mail-archive/web/geopriv/current/msg03090.html>).
- Though location signing may have been viewed by Mr. Jennings as an ancillary issue, it had been the subject of many mailing list threads prior to the IETF 68 meeting. Additionally, location signing would need to be supported by any L7-LCP and therefore the subject required due consideration by the working

group in an environment that allows high bandwidth discussions; votes on this could easily have been accommodated on the mailing list.

- And that given the above, at the very least a notice should have been sent to the mailing list regarding the planned agenda change so that the working group participants could properly prepare.

Mr. Jennings notes in his message of 18 April that he sought the counsel of a “set” of participants regarding this agenda change, and that he undertook his actions because consensus on the L7-LCP protocol selection was “long overdue”. However, Mr. Jennings never informed the co-chairs or the working group of his concern. There is no archived mailing list message nor minuted item regarding Mr. Jennings' concern of timeliness for the selection an L7-LCP proposal prior to IETF 68.

After the plurality vote was taken at the IETF 68 GEOPRIV meeting, a number of objections were made. However, Mr. Peterson or Mr. Jennings upheld none. The objections included:

- It was noted that the Mr. Peterson and Mr. Jennings did not ascertain the degree of vehement objections of one protocol over the other. Since both protocols were similar in nature at the HTTP layer, it was unclear why participants favored one proposal over another.
- The vote had not appeared on the agenda before the meeting and therefore a large contingent of participants had not been offered the chance to partake. It was noted that they would be able to state their positions on the mailing list, but the plurality vote was never put to the mailing list.
- The vote did not distinguish between HELD going forward as simply an L7-LCP solution or as the solution for L7-LCP, LIS-to-LIS, etc...

Additionally, the agenda change was not communicated to all interested parties in a timely manner. As stated above, some participants knew of the planned change four days in advance of the meeting. However, the author of the RELO proposal, Henning Schulzrinne, was given less than 24 hours notice. He is heard on the audio recording of the meeting (around 2:20) saying, “I only got [sic] last night found out about [this]...” The GEOPRIV meeting took place in the morning.

The final irregularity with the meeting involves the use of the Jabber chat room. Mr. Jennings stated that he would count the votes of the physical room and the votes of the Jabber chat room separately. And Mr. Peterson questioned the authenticity of the voters in the Jabber chat room through a joke. When the vote was taken, it was unclear how the two votes would be totaled. To complicate matters, the questions put to the Jabber chat room were not the same questions put to the room. In fact, it is unclear if the questions presented to the room were written down for presentation as no agenda slides were ever turned in by Mr. Peterson.

Appearance of Conflict of Interest

Within the GEOPRIV working group, there has long been a sharp and visible controversy regarding location configuration protocols and the vendors offering proposals on the subject. This tension is summarized with a quote from a message

of one of the GEOPRIV participants (<http://www1.ietf.org/mail-archive/web/geopriv/current/msg03413.html>):

Two camps (and I will use company names because it has become obvious that this is what is happening) -

1. Cisco - I want to have location in the home router - presumably because I know how this would work and then I can sell more routers.
2. Andrew Corp - I want to have location in the network - presumably because I know how this would work and then I can sell more boxes.

In the working group, associates of Cisco have consistently backed DHCP solutions for location configuration, while Andrew Corporation associates have consistently backed L7-LCP solutions.

Mr. Jennings' primary affiliation is with Cisco. The vote he cast at the IETF 68 GEOPRIV meeting was against HELD, a proposal authored by Andrew Corporation associates. While Mr. Jennings does have a right to vote in alternate consensus proceedings, he should have avoided counting votes and judging consensus in this matter as it gave the appearance of a conflict of interest. The second vote counter did not cast a vote, and could have been called upon to give a tie breaking vote if necessary, or the votes of the Jabber chat room could have been used to break the tie.

The development of the vote regarding a single HELD document going forward as an L7-LCP means that many of the features of HELD that differentiated it from DHCP with regard to location information are no longer available (as they are in other documents). The associated HELD suite of documents covered transport of the application over two protocols (BEEP and HTTP), location configuration, Location Information Server (LIS) to LIS communication, location signing, location-by-reference dereferencing, and LIS discovery. None of these features are found in DHCP with regard to location information.

Additionally, it was inappropriate for Mr. Jennings to suggest to the co-chairs that HELD should never have been allowed to advance.

Finally, Mr. Jennings used agenda time during the IETF 68 GEOPRIV meeting to seek working group acceptance of a DHCP extension. This extension had not been previously discussed in the working group and had no associated Internet-Draft (it has since been published by a Cisco associate: <http://www.ietf.org/internet-drafts/draft-polk-geopriv-dhcp-lbyr-uri-option-00.txt>).

The agenda slot given Mr. Jennings upon request was to be 10 minutes for validation of the current milestones agreed upon by the working group in November 2006, (<http://www1.ietf.org/mail-archive/web/geopriv/current/msg02571.html>) but that he had not approved.

In lieu of validating the proposed milestones, Mr. Jennings asked the acting chairs to take a series of hums ("I've asked these guys to take a lot of hums." around 18:30 in the audio recording), which resulted in nearly 40 minutes of agenda time. During this time, not only was an undocumented, previously undiscussed DHCP

extension accepted as a working group direction, but Mr. Jennings revisited prior decisions by the working group on L7-LCP.

Notice should be taken that the GEOPRIV milestones are still out of date and have not been updated since IETF 68.

Summary

The removal of the co-chairs during the finding of consensus was inappropriately conducted by Cullen Jennings. Mr. Jennings has acted in a way that can be seen as having an interest in the outcome of the events of the IETF 68 GEOPRIV meeting, and therefore has not acted in a way that shows him to be free of interest in the follow-up consensus calls being conducted on the mailing list.

Additionally, Mr. Jennings conducted himself poorly by hiding his intentions to change the working group agenda, by suggesting that a competitor's proposal should not have been allowed to advance, and by pressuring the co-chairs into assigning a new editor for the competitor's proposal. These actions, regardless of their motives, create an appearance of a conflict of interest by the group's Area Director.

Given these claims, a reasonable remedy is to move the GEOPRIV working group out from under the authority of Mr. Jennings and back to the Applications Area where it was originally chartered and has a more natural fit.

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Date: June 22, 2007

Appeal Submitted to: The IESG