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# ASSURED: Architecture for Secure Software Update of Realistic Embedded Devices

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Ahmad-Reza Sadeghi<sup>4</sup>, Gene Tsudik<sup>3</sup>*

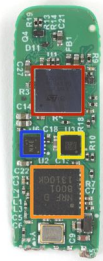
*<sup>1</sup>Aalto University, <sup>2</sup>Trustonic, <sup>3</sup>University of California, Irvine,  
<sup>4</sup>Technische Universität Darmstadt, Darmstadt*

# Software Update Landscape in IoT

- **Adoption of security technology in IoT is lagging**
  - >80% of respondents in 2017 IoT Survey **do not use** Over-the-Air updates!
- **Even **Secure by design** devices need software updates**
  - **Assumptions** may change **after deployment**
  - **New features** may be introduced
- **Existing update mechanisms **not suitable for tiny devices****
  - Solutions for **microcontroller** class devices **ad hoc, often insecure**

[Eclipse Foundation IoT Developer Trends Survey 2017](#)

# Internet of Resource Constrained Things

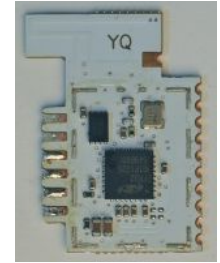


ARM Cortex-M3  
@ 32 MHz

## **Wireless-enabled wearable activity tracker**

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fitbit> (MorePix)

<https://www.ifixit.com/Teardown/Fitbit+Flex+Teardown/16050>

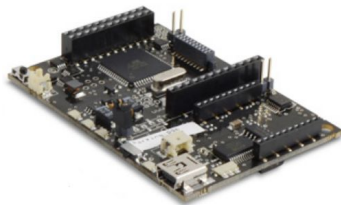


ARM Cortex-M4  
@ 40MHz

## **Remote-controlled consumer smart lighting platform**

<http://www.ikea.com/se/sv/catalog/categories/departments/lighting/36812/>

<https://www.heise.de/make/artikel/Das-steckt-in-Ikea-Tradfri-3597295.html>



ATmega1281  
@ 14.74 MHz



## **Wireless vehicle-presence sensor with 7 to 10 years of battery life**

<http://embedded-computing.com/articles/sensor-enabled-nodes-support-the-iiot-for-smart-buildings-and-smart-transport/>

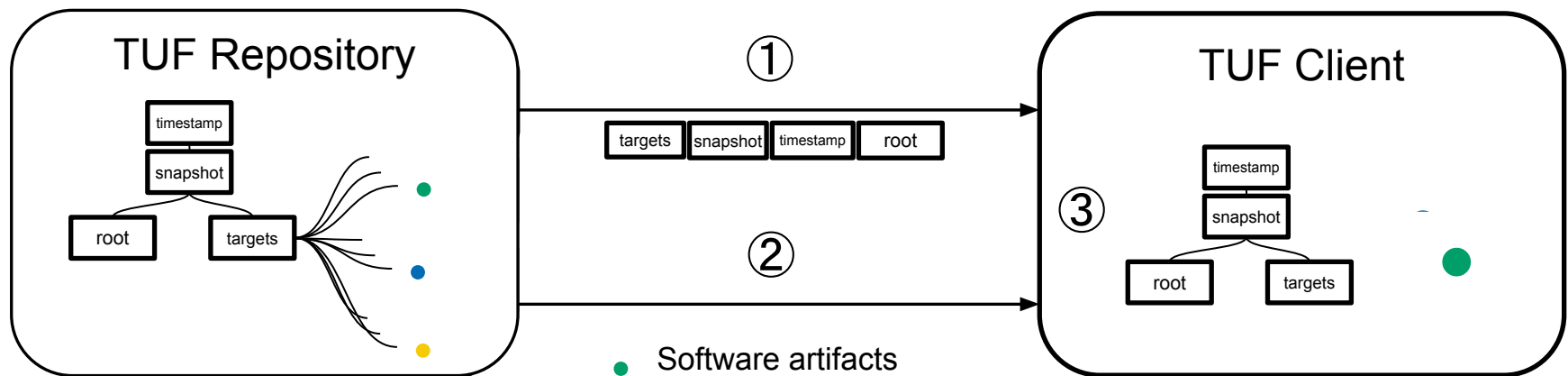
<http://www.libelium.com/products/waspmote/hardware/>

# Challenges for IoT software update

- **Unreasonable expectations of Device capabilities**
  - Update policy decisions deferred fully to **Device**
  - Liberal use of cryptography infeasible for tiny **Device**
- **Direct interaction between Device and OEM**
  - Hinders broadcast deployment of updates
- **Lack of ability to validate correct update installation**

# Example: The Update Framework (TUF)

General purpose update framework for software packages

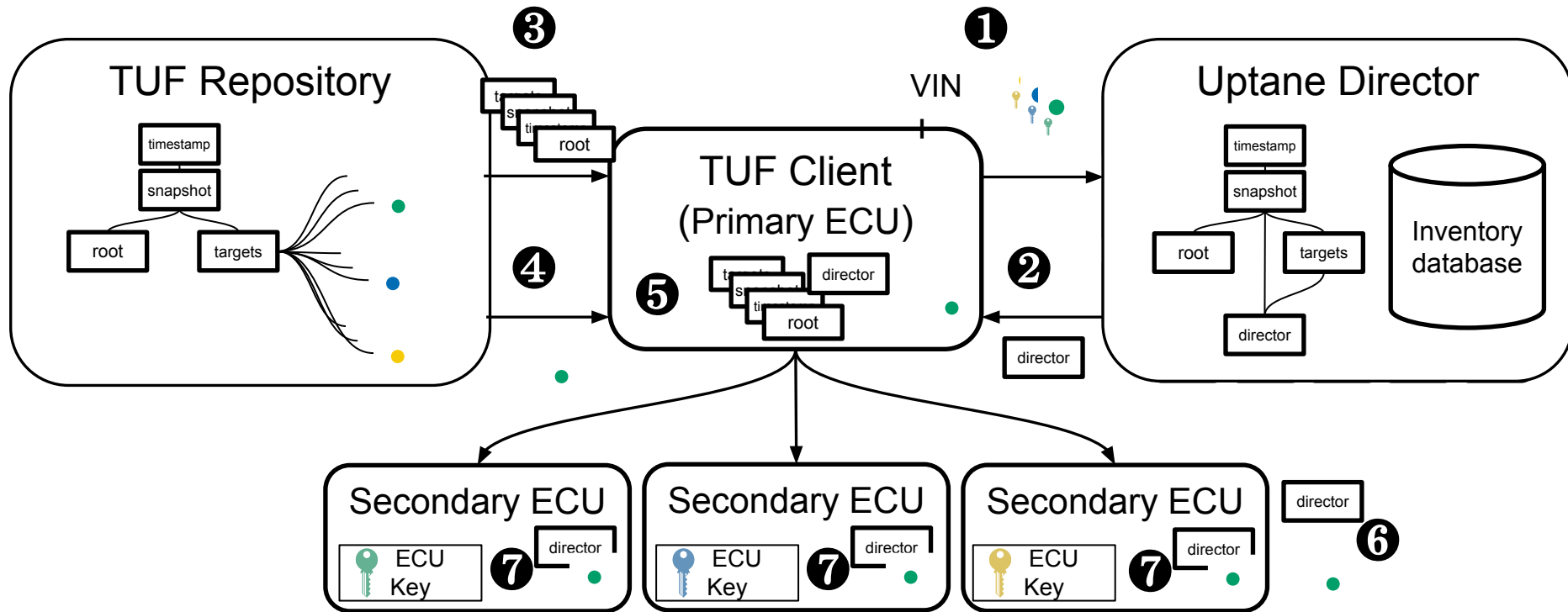


- ① Fetch repository metadata
- ② Fetch software artifacts
- ③ Verify all metadata and software artifacts

Used by companies such as Docker, DigitalOcean, Cloudflare, and VMware

# Example: Uptane

Variant of TUF for automotive ECU updates



- 1 Report *version manifest*
- 2 Sign and send *director metadata*
- 3 Fetch repository metadata
- 4 Fetch software artifacts
- 5 Verify all metadata and software artifacts
- 6 Broadcast to all ECUs
- 7 Verify director metadata

# Stakeholders

- **Original Equipment Manufacturer** (*OEM*)
  - Produces devices, firmware and subsequent updates
  - Can securely provision cryptographic keys during manufacturing
- **Software Distributor** (*Distributor*)
  - Provides infrastructure and logistics for update distribution
- **Domain Controller** (*Controller*)
  - Responsible for configuration, upkeep and operation of end devices
  - Administrative domain may be physical proximity or organizational
- **Connected Device** (*Device*)
  - End-device that receives the updates
  - Strict resource limitations in memory, storage and processing power

# Objectives

## 1. *End-to-end security*

- Update originates from **OEM** and is intended for **Device**

## 2. *Update Authorization*

- Update authorized by **OEM** and **Controller**

## 3. *Attestation of Update Installation*

- Verifiable proof of whether update succeeded or not

## 4. *Protect code & secret keys*

## 5. *Minimize burden for Device*



# ASSURED Overview

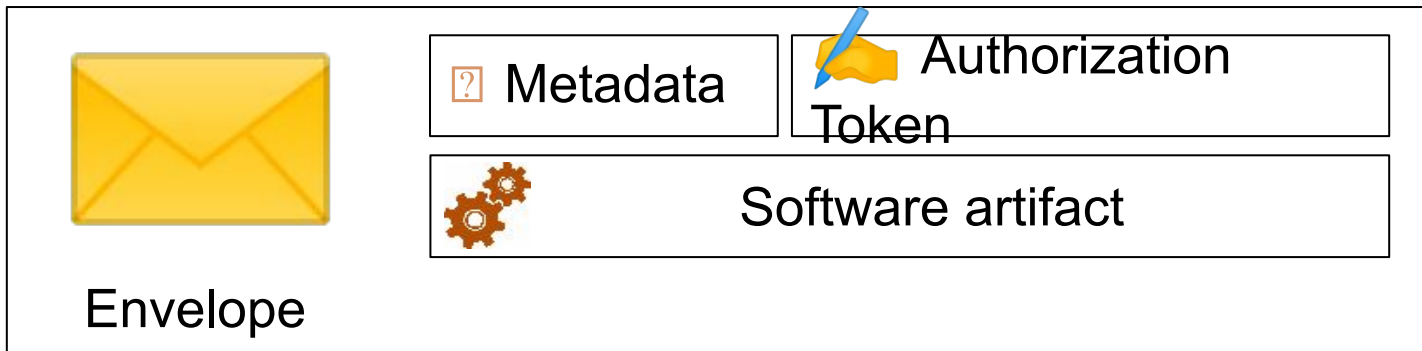
Extends update scheme with *Constraints* and *Authorizations*

- ***Constraints* allow limiting update to set of devices**
  - e.g. device model and/or unique device identifier
- ***Authorizations* validated by *Device* before applying update**
  - encode *Constraints*, cryptographic hash and size of software
  - signed by OEM or Controller

$$Auth_{SA} = [hash(SA), size(SA), C, Sig(K_{OEM}, hash(SA)||size(SA)||C)]$$

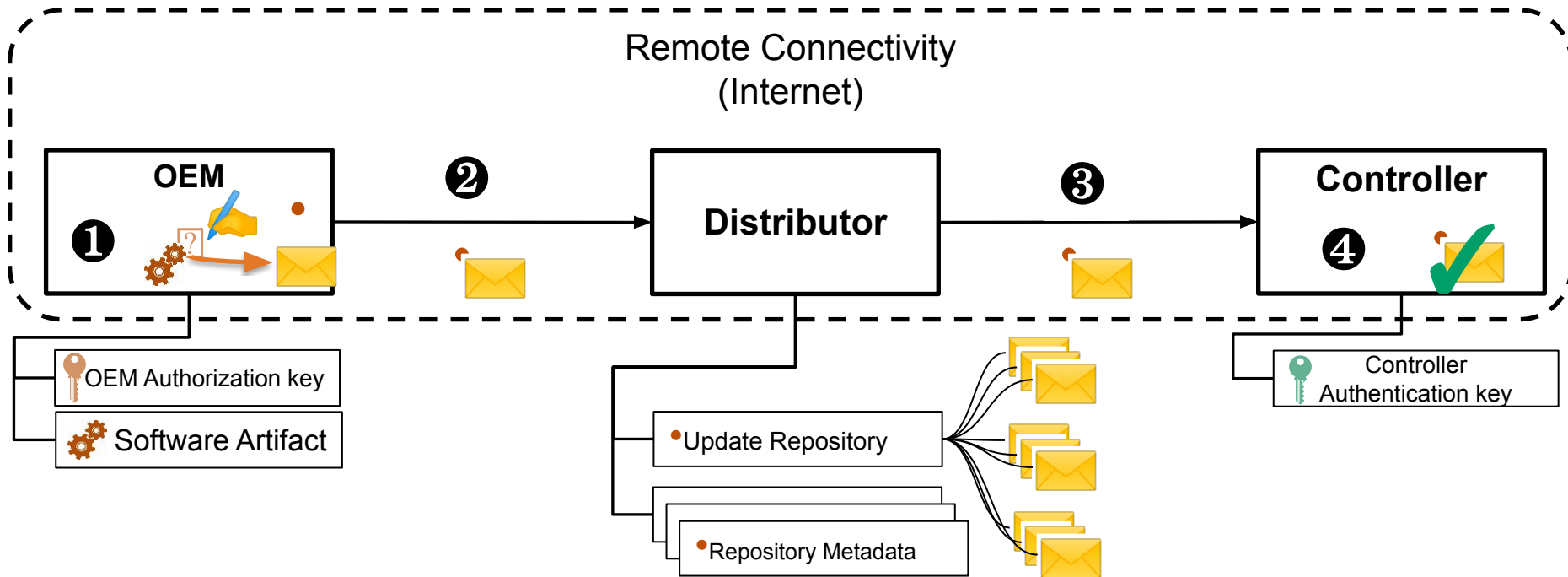
# ASSURED Envelopes





Everything needed by *Device* to decide whether to install update



# ASSURED Sequence of Events

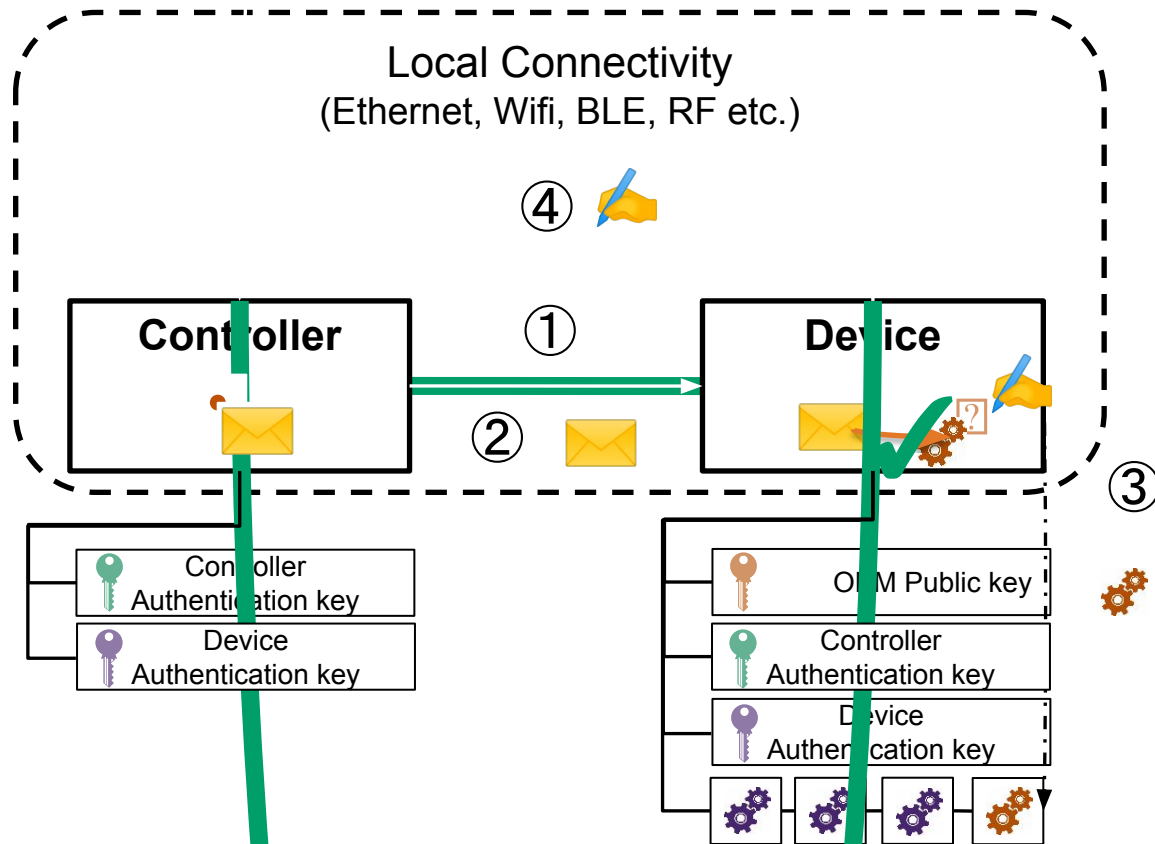
OEM → Distributor → Controller



- 1** OEM creates *Authorization* , *Repository Metadata* • and *Envelope* 
- 2** OEM uploads *Repository Metadata* • and *Envelope*  to **Distributor**
- 3** **Controller** fetches latest *Repository Metadata* • and *Envelope(s)* 
- 3** **Controller** validates *Repository Metadata* • and *Envelope(s)* 

# ASSURED: Sequence of Events

Controller → Device



- ① **Controller** establishes secure channel
- ② **Controller** transmits *Envelope* 📧
- ③ **Device** validates *Authorization* ✍️ and installs Software Artifact ⚙️
- ④ **Controller** attests **Device** state

# ASSURED PoC Implementation

ASSURED PoCs implemented on two commodity platforms



Platform	I.MX6-SabreLite	V2M-MPS2+
Processor	Cortex-A9	Cortex-M23
Root of Trust	ROM Bootloader	TrustZone Bootloader
Isolated execution	seL4 Microkernel	TrustZone-M
Signature Algorithm	ED25519	ED25519
Attestation	HYDRA	Binary attestation

[TrustZone technology for ARMv8-M Architecture Version 1.1](#)

[K. Eldefrawy et al. "HYDRA: hybrid design for remote attestation \(using a formally verified microkernel\). WiSec 2017](#)

# Evaluation: Meeting Security Objectives

## 1. *End-to-end security*

- *Authorization token* incl. *Constraints* and hash of **Software Artifact** signed by **OEM** and validated by **Device**

## 2. *Update Authorization*

- **OEM** authorization through *Authorization token*
- **Controller** authorization either through secure channel or *Authorization token* signed by **Controller**

## 3. *Attestation of Update Installation*

- Provides verifiable proof of whether update succeeded or not

# Evaluation: Verification Time

## I.MX6-SabreLite @ 800MHz

	TUF	ASSURED		
		Expl. Auth.	Impl. Auth.	Total
Verification Time (ms)	<b>14.57</b>	2.46	0.1	<b>2.56</b>
Metadata Size (bytes)	940	136	52	188

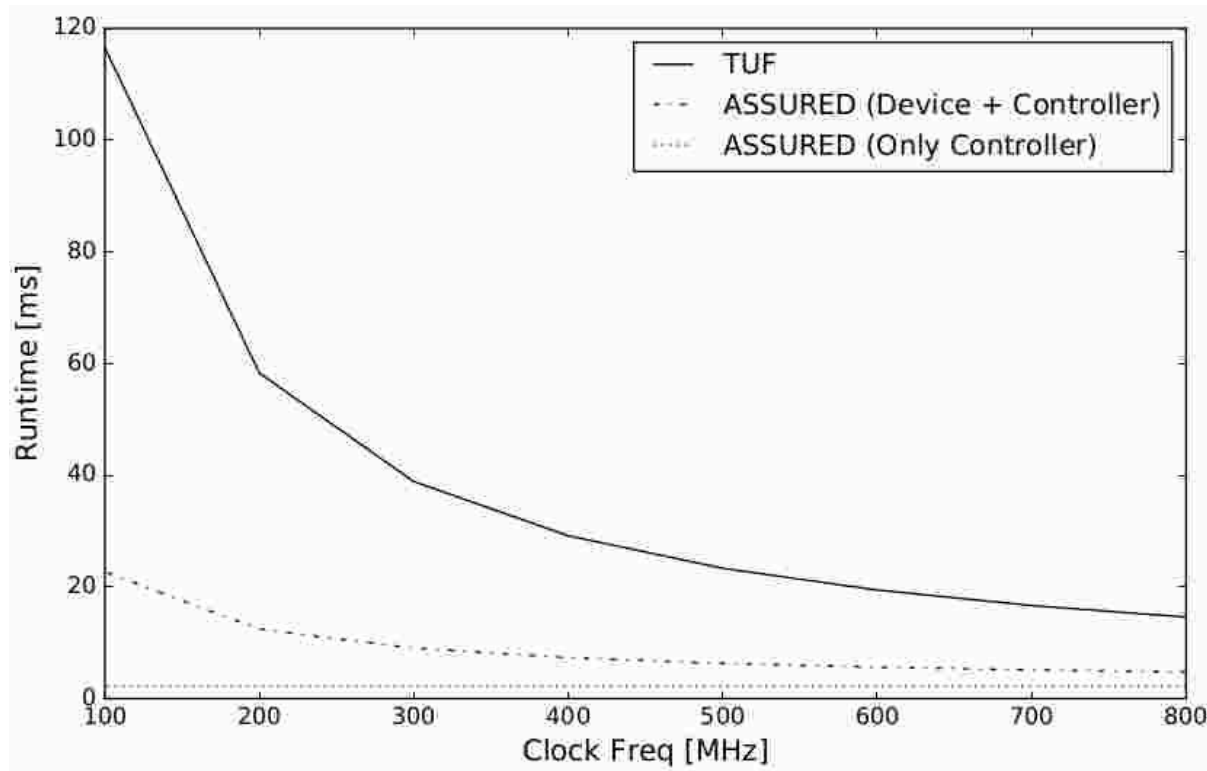
82% reduction in verification time compared to TUF

## V2M-MPS2+ (Cortex-M23) @ 25MHz

	TUF	ASSURED		
		Expl. Auth.	Impl. Auth.	Total
Verification Time (ms)	<b>10723</b>	1816	<i>n/a</i>	<b>1816</b>
Metadata Size (bytes)	940	136	<i>n/a</i>	136

83% reduction in verification time compared to TUF

# Evaluation: Verification Time (cont.)



Comparison of verification time on I.MX6-SabreLite for variable clock frequencies.



# Summary

## Identified **essential roles** in *IoT Update Ecosystem*

- Show why existing secure update methods inadequate for IoT

## Secure Firmware Update Framework: **ASSURED**

## Proof-of-Concept **implementations** for **two commodity platforms**

- I.MX6-SabreLite (seL4), Cortex-M23 (TrustZone-M)

SELIoT: SEcuring Lifecycle  
of Internet of Things



[https://ssg.aalto.fi/research/  
projects/seliot-project/](https://ssg.aalto.fi/research/projects/seliot-project/)

**Backup Slides**

# Internet of Resource Constrained Things



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**Remote-controlled consumer smart lighting platform**

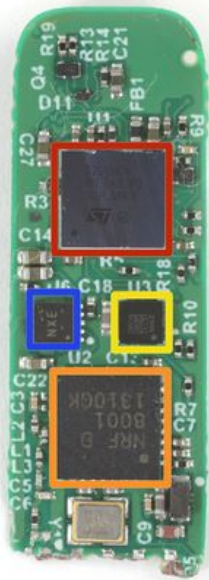
<http://www.ikea.com/se/sv/catalog/categories/departments/lighting/36812/>



**Wireless vehicle-presence sensor with 7 to 10 years of battery life**

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# Workhorses for small IoT devices



## ARM Cortex-M3

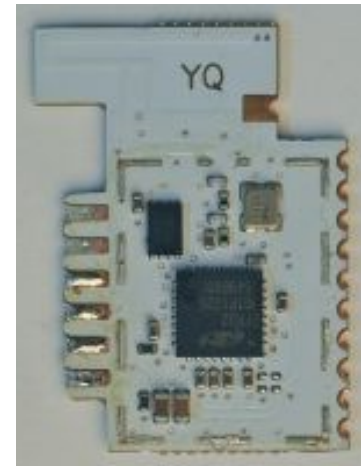
Up to **32 MHz** Clock Speed

Up to **16 kB** RAM

Up to **4kB** EEPROM

Up to **128 kB** Flash

**Bluetooth LE**



## ARM Cortex-M4 + Floating Point Unit

Up to **40 MHz** Clock Speed

Up to **256 kB** RAM

Up to **1024 kB** Flash

**ZigBee** and **Thread** Radio (6LoWPAN)

Hardware Crypto Accelerator w/  
AES-256/128, ECC, SHA-1, SHA-2

## ATmega1281

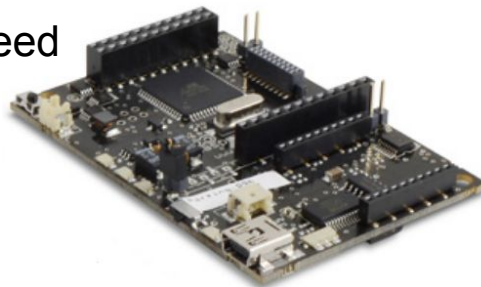
**14.74 MHz** Clock Speed

**8 kB** SRAM

**4 kB** EEPROM

**128 kB** Flash

**ZigBee** (external)



# Characteristics of a *secure-by-design* IoT system

- **Root-of-Trust based in hardware**
  - foundation from which trust in integrity and security can be established
  - immutable except by authorized entities
- **Crypto-acceleration**
  - For securing remote communications
- **Protection of security critical components**
  - A Secure boot loader
  - Secret keys
  - Flash programming support
  - High value assets (personally identifiable information, authorization keys etc.)

**TrustZone-M**

# Security through isolation for IoT devices

- **Hardware-enforced isolation between Trusted and Non-trusted software**
  - Enabled by secure architectures such as **SMART**, **TrustLite**, **TyTan** and **TrustZone-M**
- **Trusted and Non-trusted software can interact, but Non-trusted code only access critical resources through APIs in Secure software**
  - access to **Secure services** subject to authentication
  - reduces attack surface of critical assets
  - **vulnerabilities** in **Non-trusted software** do not compromise entire system

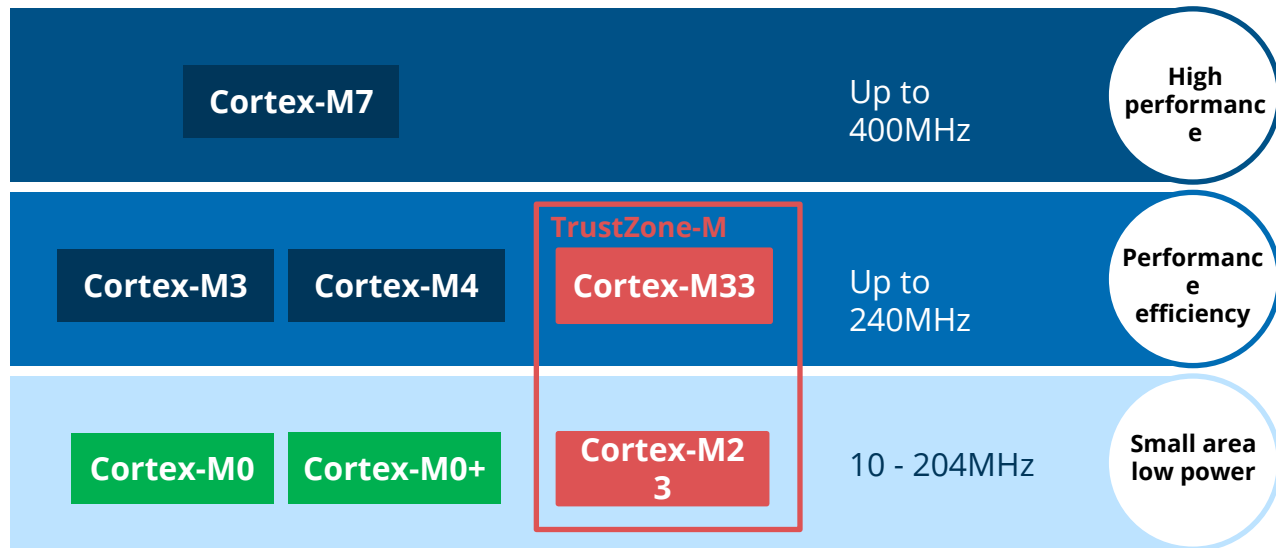
[\*SMART: Secure and Minimal Architecture for \(Establishing Dynamic\) Root of Trust. ISOC Symposium on Network and Distributed System Security \(NDSS\), 2012.\*](#)

[\*TrustLite: a Security Architecture for Tiny Embedded Devices. European Conference on Computer Systems \(EuroSys \), 2014.\*](#)

[\*TyTAN: Tiny trust anchor for tiny devices. Design Automation Conference \(DAC\), 2015\*](#)

[\*TrustZone technology for ARMv8-M Architecture Version 1.1\*](#)

# Working horses for small IoT devices



TrustZone-M: chip-level hardware security architecture for ARM MCUs



# Design characteristics for TrustZone-M

- **Non-secure software** accesses **Secure APIs** with **standard function calls**
  - non-secure code can only call Secure functions using valid entry points
- **Secure software** can call **Non-secure functions**
  - allows **protected middleware on Secure side** to access **Non-secure side device driver**
- **Non-secure interrupts requests** served while **Secure code executes**
  - interrupt handlers remain programmable in C, **minimal impact on interrupt latency**
  - **Non-secure interrupt handlers** are prevented from snooping **Secure operation data**
- **Processor starts in Secure state** by default
  - enables root-of-trust implementations such as **Secure boot**

# Design characteristics for TrustZone-M (cont.)

- **Low switching overhead in cross security domain calls**
  - only one extra instruction (SG) when calling from the **Non-secure** to the **Secure** domain
  - only a few extra clock cycles when calling from the **Secure state** to **Non-secure functions**
- **No separate register banks for **Secure** and **Non-secure** states**
  - significant for **energy efficiency** and **processor area**