



PEACE OF MIND IN A DANGEROUS WORLD

XIP1213B: MACSEC AES256-GCM

MACsec (IEEE 802.1AE) IP Core

Product Brief
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Introduction

XIP1213B from Xiphera is a balanced¹ Intellectual Property (IP) core implementing the MACsec protocol as standardized in IEEE Std 802.1AE-2018 [2].

The MACsec protocol defines a security infrastructure for Layer 2 (as per the OSI model) traffic by assuring that a received frame has been sent by a transmitting station that claimed to send it. Furthermore, the traffic between stations is both encrypted to provide data confidentiality and authenticated to provide data integrity.

XIP1213B uses Advanced Encryption Standard [1] with 256 bits long key in Galois Counter Mode (AES-GCM) [3] to protect data confidentiality, data integrity and data origin authentication. The cipher suite is denoted either as GCM-AES-XP-256 if the eXtended Packet Numbering (XP)² is in use, or as GCM-AES-XP-256 if XP is not in use. Both GCM-AES-256 and GCM-AES-XP-256 use Xiphera's IP core XIP1113B as the underlying building block for AES-GCM.

XIP1213B is best suited for traffic on 1 Gbps links, and can be deployed using low-cost FPGA families. XIP1213B can also in selected cases be retrofitted to existing FPGA designs without requiring a board re-spin, either if there are enough FPGA resources available or if a pin-compatible FPGA with additional resources can be used.

Key management (including key exchange) lies outside the scope of 802.1AE, and hence the functionality of XIP1213B is based on the assumption that key management is performed by externally to XIP1213B.

XIP1213B has been designed for easy integration with FPGA- and ASIC-based designs in a vendor-agnostic design methodology, and the functionality of XIP1213B does not rely on any FPGA manufacturer-specific features.

¹Xiphera's balanced (denoted by 'B' at the end of the ordering code) IP cores strike a balanced compromise between performance and FPGA resource usage.

²The eXtensible Packet Numbering (XP), which was added to the MACsec standard in 2013, extends the packet number (PN) to 64 bits from the original 32 bits.

Key Features

- **Moderate** resource requirements: The entire XIP1213B requires moderate resources in FPGA and ASIC implementations and does not rely on any vendor specific functions. For more information please refer to XIP1213B Resource Sheet [4].
- **Performance:** XIP1213B achieves a throughput in the Gbps range³, for example in AMD® .
- **Standard Compliance:** XIP1213B is fully compliant with the MACsec protocol as standardized in IEEE Std 802.1AE-2018 [2]. The cipher suite (GCM-AES-256 or GCM-AES-XPB-256) is fully compliant with the Advanced Encryption Algorithm (AES) standard [1], as well as with the Galois Counter Mode (GCM) standard [3].
- **Test Vector Compliance:** XIP1213B passes the relevant test vectors specified in Annex C of IEEE Std 802.1AE-2018 [2].
- **32-bit FIFO Interfaces** ease the integration of XIP1213B with other FPGA logic and/or control software.

Functionality

The functionality of XIP1213B is divided into the transmit (Tx) and receive (Rx) datapaths, which operate independently of each other. The underlying cipher suite GCM-AES-(XPN)-256 is consequently instantiated twice, both for the Rx and Tx datapaths. The high-level structure of MACsec frame is presented in Figure 1 with the goal of understanding better the functionality of both datapaths.

MACsec operation is based on the concepts of unidirectional Secure Channels (SC) and Security Associations (SA) within each channel. Each SA uses its own Secure Association Key (SAK); establishing and managing keys is not part of the MACsec standard.

A high-level functionality of the Tx datapath (See also Figure 2) includes the SAK key lookup based on the Association Number (AN)⁴ value. Additionally, a monotonically increasing Packet Number (PN)⁵ is calculated, and this will be used as the Initialization Vector (IV) by the cipher suite.

The cipher suite in the transmit datapath of XIP1213B operates in the encryption and Integrity Check Value (ICV) calculation mode, meaning that it encrypts the incoming plaintext blocks into ciphertext blocks, and additionally calculates a 128 bits long ICV value from both the incoming plaintext and associated data. The original Ethernet frame is updated by adding a Security Tag (SecTAG)⁶ starting with the MACsec type (0x88E5), encrypting the original EtherType with the payload, and appending the calculated ICV to the end of the original message.

After receiving an incoming MACsec frame, the first functionality of the Rx datapath is the SAK key⁷ lookup. After the right SAK has been identified, the cipher suite in the receive path of XIP1213B operates in the decryption and tag validity checking mode. This means that the cipher suite decrypts the incoming ciphertext blocks into plaintext blocks, and validates the received ICV by calculating the ICV from the incoming ciphertext and associated data blocks and comparing the resulting value with the received ICV value. As defined by the GCM mode of operation, associated

³The highest throughput is achieved for long messages.

⁴AN is a two bits long value identifying up to four different SAs within the context of an SC.

⁵PN was originally standardized as 32 bits long, but support for XPN has extended it to 64 bits.

⁶The length of the SecTAG is either 8 or 16 bytes.

⁷The number of SAKs is parameterizable in XIP1213B with the default value being eight (8).

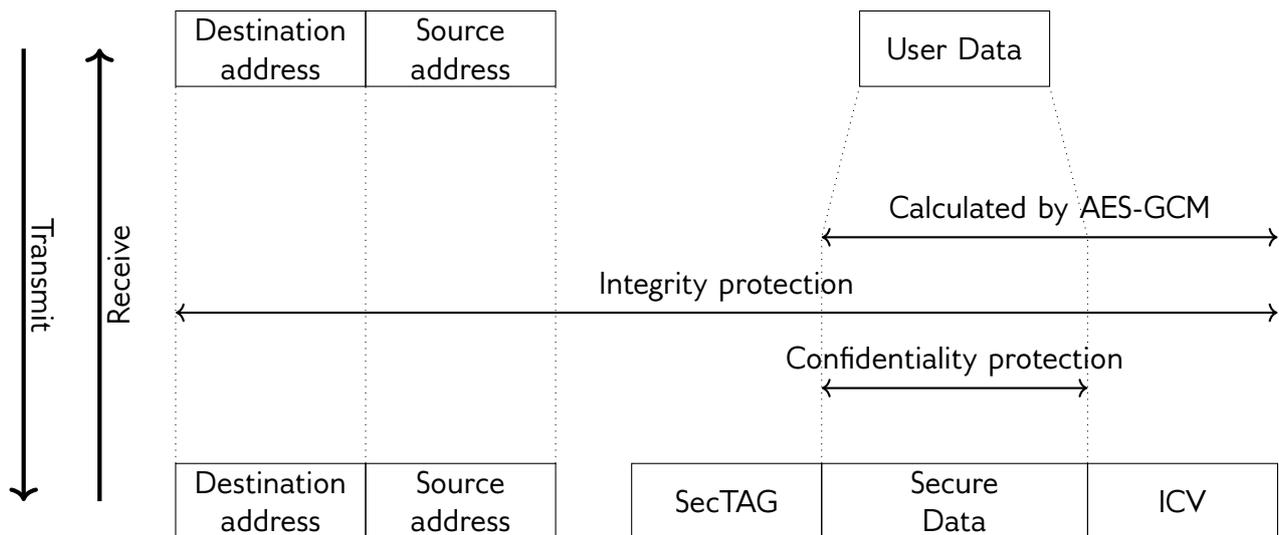


Figure 1: MACsec frame structure. Adapted from Figure 8-1 in [2].

data is included in the ICV calculation. If the ICV checking is successful, the receive datapath returns the original frame by removing the SecTAG and ICV, and replacing the MACsec type with the original EtherType.

XIP1213B also supports the bypass mode, where an incoming packet passes through the XIP1213B unaltered.

Block Diagram

The internal high-level block diagram of XIP1213B is depicted in Figure 2.

Interfaces

The external interfaces of XIP1213B are depicted in Figure 3, and they can be grouped into five logical groups:

- One Control and Status Register interface, I/O signal names beginning with `csr`
- Two Transmit interfaces, I/O signal names beginning with `txin` and `txout`
- Two Receive interfaces, I/O signal names beginning with `rxin` and `rxout`

This Product Brief describes a high-level overview of the functionality and capabilities of XIP1213B. Please contact sales@xipera.com for a complete datasheet with a detailed description of the input and output signals, example simulation waveforms, and the FPGA resource requirements of your targeted FPGA family.

Example Use Cases

The primary application of XIP1213B is provide for confidentiality and integrity of data as well as source authentication for Layer 2. Consequently, XIP1213B is typically connected via an Ethernet

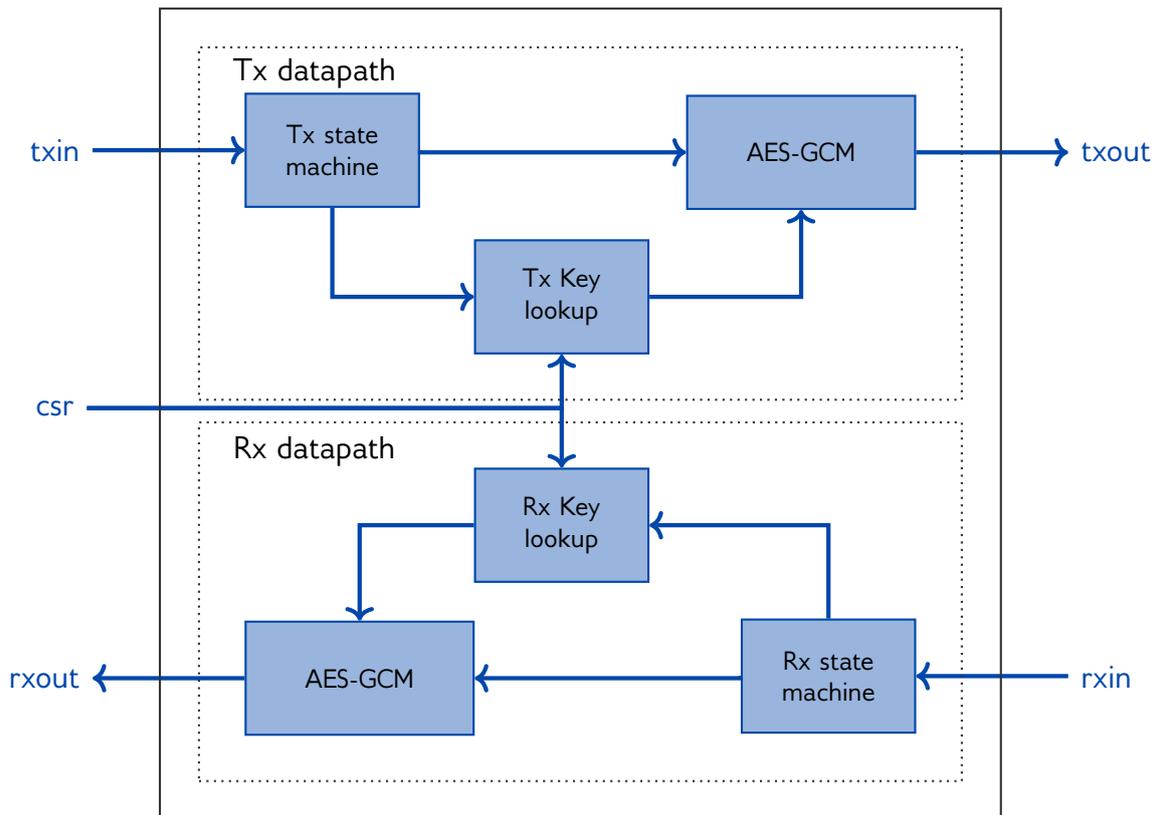


Figure 2: Internal high-level block diagram of XIP1213B

MAC IP core to an external 1Gbps link, and the CSR (Control and Status Register) interface is connected to a processor⁸. An example use case is presented in Figure 4.

If the end application requires higher linerates (for example, 10+ Gbps) than what XIP1213B can support, the high-performance MACsec IP cores XIP1211H and XIP1213H from Xiphra are the recommended design choice.

Ordering and Deliverables

Please contact sales@xiphra.com for pricing and your preferred delivery method. XIP1213B can be shipped in a number of formats, including netlist, source code, or encrypted source code. Additionally, synthesis scripts, a comprehensive testbench, and a detailed datasheet including an integration guide are included.

Export Control

XIP1213B protects data confidentiality and is a dual-use product as defined in the Wassenaar Arrangement. Consequently, the export of XIP1213B is controlled by Council Regulation (EC) No 2021/821 and its subsequent changes.

XIP1213B can be immediately shipped to all European Union member states, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States.

⁸The processor can also be an FPGA-based soft processor.

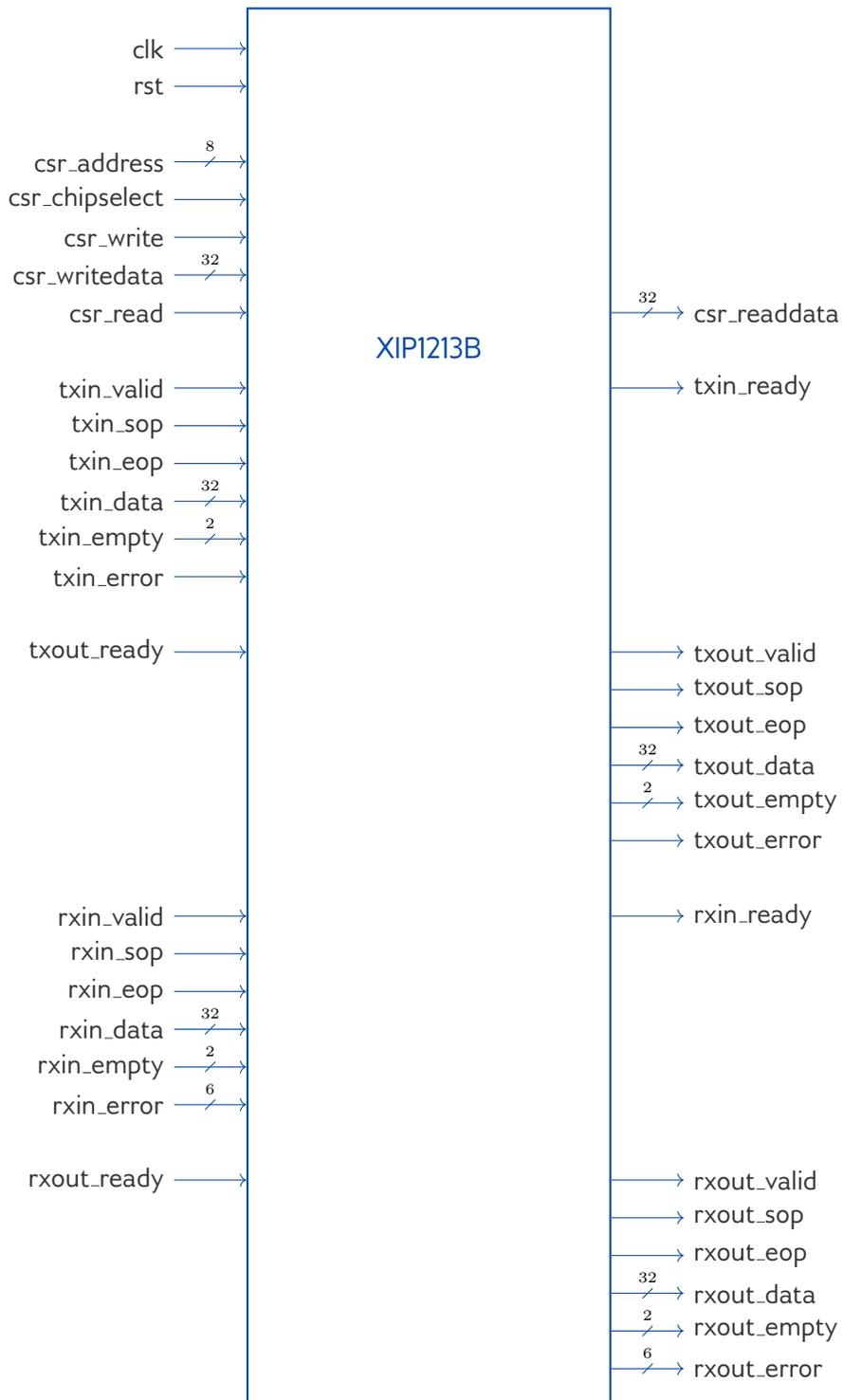


Figure 3: External interfaces of XIP1213B

Export to other countries requires authorization from The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and a typical processing time for an export authorization is a few weeks.

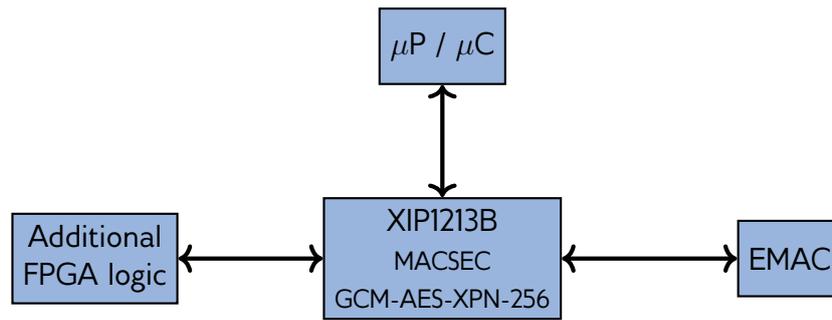


Figure 4: Example use case for XIP1213B.

About Xiphera

Xiphera specializes in secure and efficient implementations of standardized cryptographic algorithms on Field Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs) and Application Specific Integrated Circuits (ASICs). Our fully in-house designed product portfolio includes individual cryptographic Intellectual Property (IP) cores, as well as comprehensive security solutions built from a combination of individual IP cores.

Xiphera is a Finnish company operating under the laws of the Republic of Finland, and is fully owned by Finnish citizens and institutional investors.

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References

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- [3] Morris J. Dworkin. SP 800-38D. Recommendation for Block Cipher Modes of Operation: Galois/Counter Mode (GCM) and GMAC. Technical report, Gaithersburg, MD, United States, 2007.
- [4] Xiphera Ltd. XIP1213B: MACsec AES256-GCM - Resource Sheet. <https://xiphera.com/xip1213b-rs>.