

ssh connections hang; un-hang on subsequent connection

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From: Metal Head (schadsey_at_gmail.com)

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I'm experiencing a strange problem with ssh connections to my ssh server at home. I suspect it might have something to do with either my firewall or my DSL hardware, but as I'm not certain I thought I'd ask here to find out if anyone's seen this behavior before.

In a nutshell, I can make an initial connection to my ssh server fine. The problem is if I make a second connection, and exit, the first connection will frequently "freeze" and the session will not respond. When I re-connect with ssh (or sftp), the first session "thaws" and all the keystrokes I had sent that appeared to not have made it to the server happen all at once. Then both connections operate normally. But if I disconnect the second connection, the initial connection again freezes. I haven't been keeping track of when this occurs, but it's fair to say that it happens every time I make and disconnect a second ssh connection to my server. It also occurs when I connect with a second session and disconnect the first one.

When I re-connect to "thaw" the frozen session, there is no precise point that I can tell when things return to normal. It seems that all I have to do is ssh to my server and hit <Ctrl-C> when the passphrase prompts. The first session will thaw for anywhere from a minute to several minutes before it freezes again.

I experience this most often at work, when I ssh to home. A friend with a different ISP half-way around the country has duplicated the problem connecting to my server too, and I've also duplicated it from home. I think that narrows it down to a problem with my setup.

The ssh server is SSH-2.0-OpenSSH_3.8.1p1 Debian 1:3.8.1p1-4 on a Linux box running kernel 2.4.21. My ssh server runs on my firewall box which uses iptables 1.2.9. Using SSH protocol 2 only. I've experienced the problem with both OpenSSH_3.8.1p1 and Putty clients.

I've run tcpdump to look at the traffic and as best as I can determine there seems to be a problem with "TCP Retransmission" packets at about the same time the session freezes. Interpreting the capture file is

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beyond my abilities though, but I can make it available to anyone who wants to help me figure this out.

Thanks,

– Steve