A Fault-Resistant NTT by Polynomial Evaluation and Interpolation

Application to ML-KEM and ML-DSA

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Abstract. In computer arithmetic operations, the Number Theoretic Transform (NTT) plays a significant role in the efficient implementation of cyclic and nega-cyclic convolutions with the application of multiplying large integers and large degree polynomials. Multiplying polynomials is a common operation in lattice-based cryptography. Hence, the NTT is a core component of several lattice-based cryptographic algorithms. Two well-known examples are the key encapsulation mechanism ML-KEM and the digital signature algorithm ML-DSA. In this work, we introduce a novel and efficient method for safeguarding the NTT against fault injection attacks. This new countermeasure is based on polynomial evaluation and interpolation. We prove its error detection capability, calculate the required additional computational effort, and show how to concretely use it to secure the NTT in ML-KEM and ML-DSA against fault injection attacks. Finally, we provide concrete implementation results of the proposed novel technique on a resource-constrained ARM Cortex-M4 microcontroller, e.g., the technique exhibits a 72% relative overhead, when applied to ML-DSA, and 67%, when applied to ML-KEM.

Keywords: Lattice-Based Cryptography · Post-Quantum Cryptography · ML-KEM · ML-DSA · Kyber · Dilithium · NTT · Fault Countermeasures.

1 Introduction

The Number Theoretic Transform (NTT) is a core building block of a number of cryptographic schemes defined over polynomial rings. It plays a central role in various lattice-based cryptographic schemes that rely on the difficulty of certain computational problems in structured lattices. Both the post-quantum key encapsulation mechanism ML-KEM [28] and the post-quantum digital signature scheme ML-DSA [29] make use of the NTT to efficiently compute polynomial multiplication. Both algorithms have recently been standardized by the US National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) [20]. In this paper, we refer to ML-KEM and ML-DSA but older literature that is still applicable usually

refers to their predecessors Kyber and Dilithium, respectively. Therefore, when citing previous work, we often use both names and write ML-KEM/Kyber and ML-DSA/Dilithium. ML-KEM and ML-DSA were designed with NTT-friendly parameters, in order to allow for an efficient implementation of polynomial multiplication using the NTT. While the NTT provides significant benefits in terms of speed and memory, it is also an attractive target for side-channel and fault injection attacks [23,16,1]. While there have been several studies focusing on protecting the NTT against side-channel attacks [22,19,8,4,6], there has been comparatively little research conducted on the fault resistance of the NTT itself [23,4,11].

Note that, although our proposed countermeasure primarily targets software implementations, it can also be suitable for hardware implementations. However, differently from NTT re-computing strategies that can re-use the same NTT hardware units, our countermeasure may require additional hardware for evaluation and interpolation circuits.

Related Work

Fault attacks Various fault injection attacks against BLISS, ring-TESLA, and the GLP-scheme have been reported in [5]. Differential fault injection attacks against deterministic variants of ML-DSA and Falcon have been presented in [7] and [2]. fault injection attacks against signature verification in ML-DSA/Dilithium and Falcon have been considered in [21,23,3]. In [15], a chosen-ciphertext fault attack against ML-KEM/Kyber is introduced where the fault can be injected during almost the entire decapsulation or at more specific locations during re-encryption. This proposed approach involves manipulating the ciphertext and correcting it by fault injection to obtain inequalities and recover the secret key using belief propagation. It has been demonstrated that this method can bypass several countermeasures such as straightforward shuffling and boolean masking methods [15]. In [30], single instruction skip fault injections during the decapsulation are considered for various KEM algorithms such as ML-KEM/Kyber. More precisely, the attack approach involves exploiting the Fujisaki-Okamoto (FO) transform used in ML-KEM/Kyber. The attacker implements a skipping-the-equality-test attack by carefully injecting faults during the decapsulation process. This fault injection causes the algorithm to skip a critical equality test between the original and re-encrypted ciphertexts, consequently bypassing this security check. It has been shown that this method can be effective in compromising the security of ML-KEM/Kyber implementations. In addition, the attack has been improved in [9] considering single bit flips. In [10] the attack presented in [15] has been improved to include binomial sampling and NTT butterflies and by relaxing the fault model to include random faults and instruction skips. This work also shows that the countermeasure proposed in [15] is not effective against the improved attacks. In [23] a fault attack involving the manipulations of the NTT twiddle factors is proposed. The attack is based on fault injection in the Cooley-Tukey butterfly operation to zeroize the twiddle factor. Therefore, the corresponding

changes result in a significant reduction in the entropy of the NTT's output. By extending this fault to an entire stage of the NTT, and eventually to the whole NTT, the output entropy is greatly reduced.

Countermeasures A number of countermeasures including detection and correction are investigated in previous research works [23,24,1,4,14,11]. The paper [23] presents an integrated redundancy technique within the NTT butterfly operations that detects faults in the twiddle constants. The work [1] introduces an efficient algorithm-level error detection method for FPGA and ARM platforms that minimizes the number of multiplications and latency. The article [25] proposes hardware/software co-design-based detection architectures that guarantee error detection under specific fault models. Different ways of re-computing the entire NTT in hardware to detect fault attacks are presented in [24]. The quasi-linear masking scheme proposed in [4] mitigates side channel leakage and benefits from error detection capabilities to strengthen an implementation against fault injection attacks. The works [11,14] use redundant number representation to detect faults.

Contributions In this work, we present a novel technique to protect the NTT against fault injection attacks based on polynomial evaluation and interpolation. Our main idea is illustrated in Fig. 1.

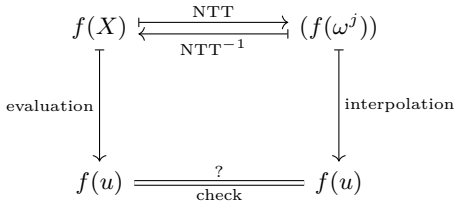

Fig. 1. The basic idea behind our countermeasure against fault injection.

To protect the computation of $\mathrm{NTT}(f)$ against fault injection for some polynomial f, we suggest an implementation of the NTT that evaluates the polynomial f on a selected point u. To verify the correctness of the output of the NTT, the implementation reconstructs the value $f(u)$ by polynomial interpolation. The inverse NTT^{-1} can be protected analogously. This implies that a complete ring multiplication, i.e., NTT transformations and the point-wise multiplication, can be protected with the proposed novel technique, hence providing full protection for this operation.

We describe the details of this countermeasure, the choice of the interpolation point u, the error detection properties of the proposed countermeasure and its adaption to different forms of the NTT with application to ML-DSA and ML-KEM. We also investigate the additional computational effort required by

this countermeasure. Finally, we provide practical evaluations of the proposed method on an ARM Cortex-M4 microcontroller. In the exemplary cases of ML-DSA and ML-KEM, the results indicate that the proposed technique incurs a computational overhead of 72% and 67%, respectively.

Structure This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides background information about the NTT, ML-KEM and ML-DSA. Section 3 presents the proposed method for safeguarding the NTT against fault injection attacks, the error detection properties of the proposed countermeasure and its application to ML-KEM and ML-DSA. Section 4 describes practical evaluation results of the proposed countermeasures on an ARM Cortex-M4 microcontroller with applications to ML-DSA and ML-KEM. Conclusions and an outlook are in Sec. 5.

2 Background

This section provides background information regarding the Number Theoretic Transform (NTT), ML-DSA and ML-KEM. Furthermore, it fixes the notation used throughout this paper.

2.1 The Number Theoretic Transform

Let K be a field and $\phi(X) = X^n + 1$ with $n = 2^k$ for some integer $k \geq 0$. Let us assume that K contains a $2n$-th root of unity ω. Then $\phi(X)$ can be factored as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \phi(X) &= (X^{n/2} - \omega^{n/2})(X^{n/2} - \omega^{3n/2}) \\ &= (X^{n/4} - \omega^{n/4})(X^{n/4} - \omega^{5n/4})(X^{n/4} - \omega^{3n/4})(X^{n/4} - \omega^{7n/4}) \\ &= \cdots \\ &= \textstyle\prod_{j=0}^{n-1}(X - \omega^{2\mathrm{br}_k(j)+1}), \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where $\mathrm{br}_k(j)$ denotes the bit-reversal of a k-bit number j, i.e., $\mathrm{br}_k\big(\sum_{i=0}^{k-1} a_i 2^i\big) = \sum_{i=0}^{k-1} a_{k-1-i} 2^i$. Of course the order of the factors is arbitrary. We use the bit-reversal in the index, because it is consistent with the algorithmic representation of the NTT we will introduce later.

The factorization of $\phi(X)$ in Eq. (1) leads to a series of ring isomorphisms over multiple layers ℓ:

$$\begin{array}{ll} \ell = 0: & K[X]/(X^n+1) \\ & \downarrow \cong \\ \ell = 1: & K[X]/(X^{n/2}-\omega^{n/2}) \times K[X]/(X^{n/2}-\omega^{3n/2}) \\ & \downarrow \cong \\ \vdots & \vdots \\ & \downarrow \cong \\ \ell = k-1: & \prod_{j=0}^{n-1} K[X]/(X-\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_\ell(j)+1}) \end{array} \tag{2}$$

The chain of isomorphisms defined in Eq. (2) is canonical and simply given by modular reduction as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ll} \ell = 0: & f(X) \\ & \downarrow \\ \ell = 1: & (f(X) \bmod (X^{n/2}-\omega^{n/2}), f(X) \bmod (X^{n/2}-\omega^{3n/2})) \\ & \downarrow \\ \vdots & \vdots \\ & \downarrow \\ \ell = k-1: & (f(\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_2(j)+1}))_{j=0,\ldots,n-1} \end{array} ,$$

where in the last layer $k-1$ we identify $f(X) \mod X - \omega^{2\mathrm{br}_2(j)+1}$ with $f(\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_2(j)+1})$

We define the NTT : $K[X]/(\phi) \to K^n$ as the concatenation of the isomorphisms in Eq. (2), so we have:

$$\mathrm{NTT}(f) = (f(\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_k(0)+1}), f(\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_k(1)+1}), \ldots, f(\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_k(n-1)+1})). \tag{3}$$

If we equip K^n with component-wise addition and multiplication, then the NTT is a ring isomorphism. In other words, $\mathrm{NTT}(f+g) = \mathrm{NTT}(f) + \mathrm{NTT}(g)$ and $\mathrm{NTT}(f \cdot g) = \mathrm{NTT}(f) \odot \mathrm{NTT}(g)$, where $\odot$ denotes component-wise multiplication.

The latter property is the reason why the NTT plays such an important role in many cryptographic schemes. It turns the computationally expensive multiplication of two polynomials of degree n into n field multiplications. This comes at the cost of first computing the NTT for the two polynomials and then computing NTT^{-1} of the component-wise product. In many applications, however, one

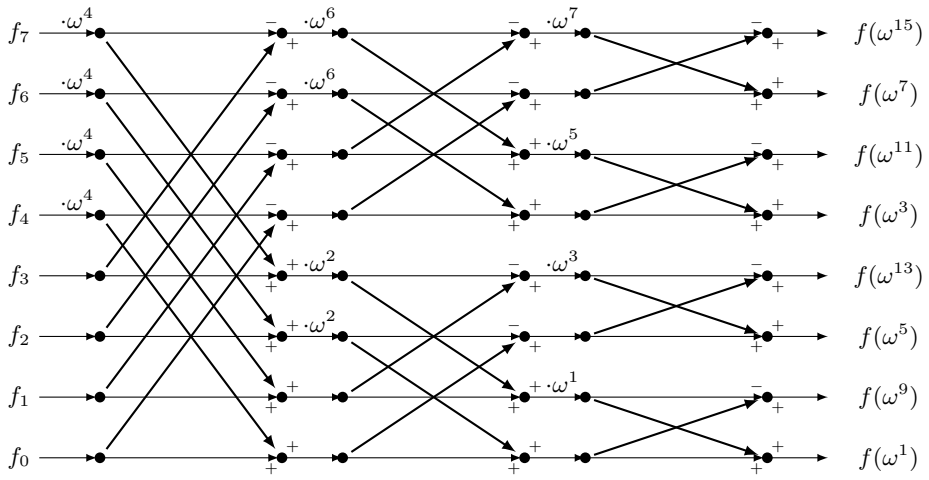

Fig. 2. The Cooley-Tukey algorithm for computing NTT.

of the polynomials is fixed, so an application can simply store and use NTT(f) without recomputing it every time. For this reason, many cryptographic schemes specify explicitly that the NTT of a polynomial is to be stored or transmitted to another party, rather than the polynomial in its usual representation as a string of coefficients.

2.2 Implementing the NTT

The representation of the NTT as a series of isomorphisms in Eq. (2) leads directly to an efficient implementation, namely the well-known Cooley-Tukey butterfly construction. Let $f(X)$ be a polynomial of degree $n-1$:

$$f(X) = \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} f_j X^j, \tag{4}$$

then the modular reductions mapping layer 0 to layer 1 in Eq. (2) are described by the following equations:

$$f(X) \bmod (X^{n/2} - \omega^{n/2}) = \sum_{j=0}^{n/2-1} (f_j + \omega^{n/2} f_{j+n/2}) X^j \tag{5}$$

and

$$f(X) \bmod (X^{n/2} - \omega^{3n/2}) = \sum_{j=0}^{n/2-1} (f_j - \omega^{n/2} f_{j+n/2}) X^j. \tag{6}$$

Repeating this for all layers gives the Cooley-Tukey butterfly structure of a typical NTT implementation, illustrated for $n = 8$ in Fig. 2. Reversing all operations gives the Gentleman-Sande implementation of the inverse NTT. A single butterfly does the following:

$$a' = b - a \cdot \omega^j \tag{7}$$

$$b' = b + a \cdot \omega^j \tag{8}$$

So to recover a, b from a', b' we compute:

$$a = \frac{1}{2}(b' - a')\omega^{-j} \tag{9}$$

$$b = \frac{1}{2}(b' + a') \tag{10}$$

The multiplication with $\frac{1}{2}$ can be deferred by multiplying every result by $2^{-\log_2 n}$ in a final step. Eq. (9) and (10) lead to the inverse scheme of Fig. 2 shown in Fig. 3.

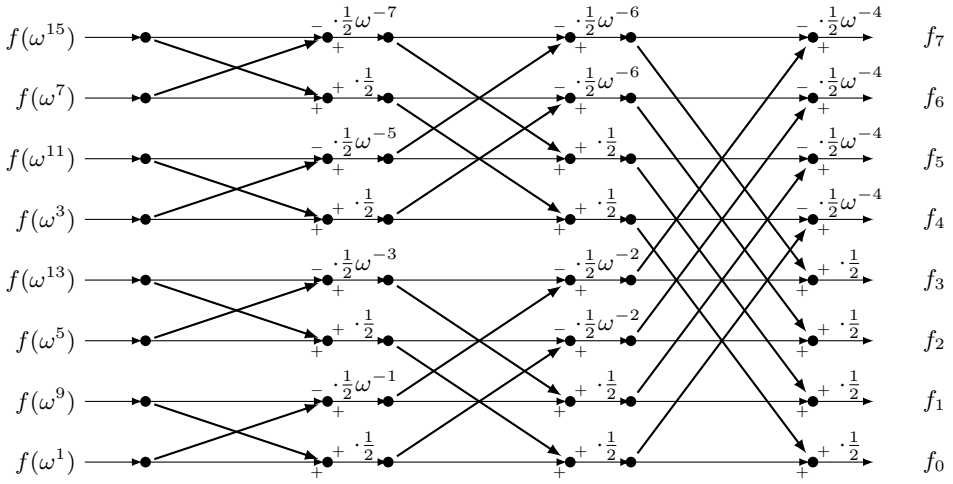

Fig. 3. The Gentleman-Sande algorithm for computing NTT^{-1}.

2.3 ML-DSA

ML-DSA [29] is a lattice-based general purpose digital signature scheme based on the Module Small Integer Solutions (M-SIS) and Module Learning with Errors (M-LWE) problems. The module is of dimension $k \times t$ over the polynomial ring

$\mathcal{R}_q = \mathbb{Z}_q[X]/(X^n + 1)$, where $n = 256$ and $q = 2^{23} - 2^{13} + 1 = 8380417$. We see that $2n$ divides $q - 1$, so the NTT as constructed in Sec. 2 can be applied to multiply elements of $\mathcal{R}_q$. Because $n = 256 = 2^8$, it requires eight butterfly layers like the ones shown in Fig. 2. The reference implementation that is part of [18] implements the NTT in this way. For its inverse NTT^{-1} it uses the Gentleman-Sande algorithm. There are currently three versions ML-DSA-44, ML-DSA-65, ML-DSA-87 targeting the NIST security level 1, 3, 5, respectively. The parameters consist of the module dimension (k, t), the sampling bound of the secret η, and the rejection thresholds β and ω, cf. Table 1. The NTT is used in the key generation, signature generation, and signature verification routines of ML-DSA to perform the $(k \times t) \times (t \times 1)$ matrix-to-vector polynomial multiplications $\boldsymbol{As}_1$, $\boldsymbol{Ay}$, and $\boldsymbol{Az}$, respectively.

2.4 ML-KEM

ML-KEM [28] is a lattice-based key encapsulation mechanism based on the Module Learning With Errors (M-LWE) problem. The module is of dimension $t \times t$ over the polynomial ring $\mathcal{R}_q = \mathbb{Z}_q[X]/(X^n + 1)$, where $n = 256$ and $q = 13 \cdot 2^8 + 1 = 3329$. Note that n divides $q - 1$ but $2n$ does not. Therefore, the chain of isomorphisms in Eq. (2) breaks off at the penultimate seventh layer. Hence, in ML-KEM, the NTT reduces multiplication in $\mathcal{R}_q$ to multiplying a sequence of polynomials of degree one modulo a polynomial of degree two. The reference implementation that is part of [26] implements the NTT in this way. For its inverse NTT^{-1} it uses the Gentleman-Sande algorithm, starting at the second layer. There are currently three versions ML-KEM-512, ML-KEM-768, ML-KEM-1024 targeting the NIST security levels 1, 3, 5, respectively. Each variant is specified by a parameter set, cf. Table 1, where t denotes the module dimension, (d_1, d_2) are the rounding parameters, and η is the width of the centered binomial distribution. The NTT is used in the key generation and encryption routines of ML-KEM to perform the $(t \times t) \times (t \times 1)$ matrix-to-vector polynomial multiplications $\boldsymbol{A}^t\boldsymbol{s}$ and $\boldsymbol{As}'$.

Table 1. ML-KEM and ML-DSA parameter sets.

	NIST	t	(d_1, d_2)	$\eta(s, s')$	$\eta(e, e', e'')$
ML-KEM-512	1	2	$(10, 4)$	6	4
ML-KEM-768	3	3	$(10, 4)$	4	4
ML-KEM-1024	5	4	$(11, 5)$	4	4

	NIST	(k, t)	η	β	ω
ML-DSA-44	1	$(4, 4)$	2	78	80
ML-DSA-65	3	$(6, 5)$	4	196	55
ML-DSA-87	5	$(8, 7)$	2	120	75

3 Fault Resistant NTT using Polynomial Evaluation and Interpolation Techniques

This section presents the proposed method for safeguarding the NTT against fault injection attacks and its error detection capability. Furthermore, it provides

a calculation of the additional computational effort required and shows how to concretely use it to secure the NTT in ML-KEM and ML-DSA.

3.1 Proposed countermeasure

The idea behind our countermeasure is shown in Fig. 1. More precisely, let $u \in K$, where the criteria for choosing u are given in Lemma 3, then our countermeasure consists of the following steps:

1. Compute $w = f(u)$ by evaluating f at u;
2. Compute $\mathrm{NTT}(f) = (f(\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_k(0)+1}), f(\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_k(1)+1}), \ldots, f(\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_k(n-1)+1}))$ with, e.g., the usual Cooley-Tukey algorithm;
3. Compute $w' = f(u)$ by interpolating the n output values $\mathrm{NTT}(f)$;
4. Check that $w = w'$. If this is not the case, then a fault in the computation of $\mathrm{NTT}(f)$ has been detected.

Let us first look at the computational cost of this countermeasure. Its error detection properties will be analyzed in Sec. 3.2.

Lemma 1. *Let $u \in K$ and $f \in K[X]$ of degree $n-1$. Then computing $f(u)$ requires at most $n-1$ multiplications and $n-1$ additions in K.*

Proof. This refers to Horner's method. We write

$$f(X) = \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} f_j X^j = ((\cdots((f_{n-1}X + f_{n-2})X + f_{n-3})\cdots)X + f_1)X + f_0 \quad (11)$$

and count the operations on the right. □

As we have clearly shown in Eq. (3), the NTT maps a polynomial f to n values of f. By interpolation, the polynomial f can be reconstructed from these n values.

In detail, we write

$$L_j(X) = \prod_{\substack{0 \le i < n \\ i \ne j}} \frac{X - \omega^{2i+1}}{\omega^{2j+1} - \omega^{2i+1}}, \qquad j = 0, 1, \ldots, n-1 \quad (12)$$

for the n Lagrange polynomials for the points $\{\omega, \omega^3, \omega^5, \ldots, \omega^{2n-1}\}$. These polynomials form a basis of the K-vector subspace of polynomials of degree at most $n-1$ in $K[X]$ and have the property that

$$L_j(\omega^{2i+1}) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } i = j \\ 0 & \text{if } i \ne j \end{cases} \quad (13)$$

Then

$$f(X) = \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} f(\omega^{2j+1}) L_j(X) \quad (14)$$

```
49      void ntt(int32_t a[N]) {
50          unsigned int len, start, j, k;
51          int32_t zeta, t;
52
53          k = 0;
54          for(len = 128; len > 0; len >>= 1) {
55            for(start = 0; start < N; start = j + len) {
56              zeta = zetas[++k];
57              for(j = start; j < start + len; ++j) {
58                t = montgomery_reduce((int64_t)zeta * a[j + len]);
59                a[j + len] = a[j] - t;
60                a[j] = a[j] + t;
61              }
62            }
63          }
64        }
```

Listing 1.1. Excerpt from `ref/ntt.c` in [27]

For our countermeasure, we do not want to reconstruct f from $f(\omega^{2j+1})_{j=0,\dots,n-1}$ but just evaluate f at a single point u. We note that the values $L_j(u)$ can be precomputed as soon as u is fixed. The interpolated value can then be calculated with Eq. (14). In particular, if the point u is fixed at compile-time and only f varies at run-time, then we can precompute the values $L_j(u)$ and link them as a table to the code.

Lemma 2. *Let $u \in K$ and $f \in K[X]$ of degree $n-1$. Then computing $f(u)$ given $f(\omega^{2j+1})_{j=0,\dots,n-1}$ and $(L_j(u))_{j=0,\dots,n-1}$ requires at most n multiplications and $n-1$ additions.*

Proof. Count the operations on the right-hand side of Eq. (14). □

An algorithmic description of the proposed countermeasures is provided in Appendix A.

3.2 Error detection properties

Let us now have a look at the error detection capability of our countermeasure. We will first discuss how low-level faults like instruction skips or changed register values lead to higher level mathematical faults in the NTT. Listing 1.1 shows a typical example for an implementation of the NTT in software. Let us restrict our attention to the innermost loop body in lines 58–60. This corresponds to a single Cooley-Tukey butterfly as illustrated in Fig. 4:

We assume a single instruction skip or a register fault affects one of the lines 58–60 in Listing 1.1 and hence can cause any of the following types of errors:

1. An error in one of the input coefficients (caused by skipping of loading `a[j]` or `a[j+1]` or a register fault).

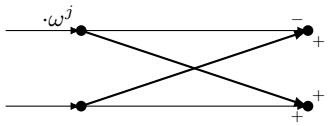

Fig. 4. A single Cooley-Tukey butterfly from Fig. 2.

2. An error in the multiplication with ω^j. This is equivalent to an error in the input coefficient that is being multiplied by ω^j.
3. An error in the subtraction. This is equivalent to an error in an input coefficient in the following layer.
4. An error in the addition. This is also equivalent to an error in an input coefficient in the following layer.

We see that all four types of errors can be reduced to an error in an input coefficient in one of the layers of the Cooley-Tukey implementation of the NTT.

A fault in a single coefficient somewhere in the NTT means that the polynomial in one of the ring isomorphisms of Eq. (2) is changed. Let us assume this happens in layer ℓ and write $g(X) \in K[X]/(X^{n/2^\ell} - \omega^{(2\mathrm{br}_\ell(i)+1)n/2^\ell})$ for the affected polynomial. Then $g(X)$ is changed to

$$\tilde{g}(X) = g(X) + DX^m \tag{15}$$

for some $D \in K$ and some integer m, $0 \le m < n/2^\ell$.

We need to determine how the error propagates through the following layers in the NTT implementation. To do this, we translate the error in layer ℓ to an error in layer 0. Define a polynomial

$$e(X) := D\Big(\prod_{j=0, j\neq i}^{2^\ell-1} \frac{X^{n/2^\ell} - \omega^{(2\mathrm{br}_\ell(j)+1)n/2^\ell}}{\omega^{(2\mathrm{br}_\ell(i)+1)n/2^\ell} - \omega^{(2\mathrm{br}_\ell(j)+1)n/2^\ell}}\Big)X^m. \tag{16}$$

Now

$$e(X) \bmod (X^{n/2^\ell} - \omega^{(2\mathrm{br}_\ell(j)+1)n/2^\ell}) = \begin{cases} DX^m & \text{if } i = j \\ 0 & \text{if } i \neq j \end{cases}. \tag{17}$$

Hence, the error that replaces $g(X)$ with $\tilde{g}(X)$ is equivalent to an error that replaces the input $f(X)$ with

$$\tilde{f}(X) = f(X) + e(X) \tag{18}$$

Therefore, the injected error changes the output of the NTT to

$$\mathrm{NTT}(\tilde{f}) = \mathrm{NTT}(f) + \mathrm{NTT}(e) \tag{19}$$

and the interpolation in our countermeasure will compute $\tilde{f}(u) = f(u) + e(u)$

Lemma 3. *Let $u \in K \setminus \{0\}$ such that $u^{n/2^\ell} \neq \omega^{(2\mathrm{br}_\ell(j)+1)n/2^\ell}$ for any $0 \leq \ell \leq k$ and any $0 \leq j < 2^\ell$. Then the countermeasure described in Sec. 3.1 detects an error in a single coefficient in an NTT implementation as in Sec. 2.2.*

Proof. We have just seen that the interpolation step of the countermeasure computes $\tilde{f}(u) = f(u) + e(u)$, whereas the evaluation step computes $f(u)$. We notice from the definition of $e(X)$ in Eq. (16) that $e(u) \neq 0$. Hence, $\tilde{f}(u) \neq f(u)$ and therefore the error is detected. □

Such a u is easy to find by just picking a random u, testing the condition and, if necessary, repeat the procedure until a suitable u is found.

If an attacker injects several faults or a single fault causes several errors on the mathematical level (e.g., an early loop abort that skips entire parts of the NTT), we cannot provide an absolute guarantee of detecting them with our countermeasure. However, such faults are still detected with a high probability. It seems reasonable to assume that an attack with several faults will affect interpolated value in such a way that the probability of it being correct is the same as for a random guess. In this case, the probability that an attack of this type is detected, is $1 - 1/q$ if K has q elements.

If an attacker can inject several faults, there is of course the possibility that the comparison $w = w'$ in step 4 in 3.1 is attacked. This, however, is a generic problem for any kind of fault detection mechanism. Setting all twiddle constants to zero as in [23] corresponds to many faults of type 2 in Sec. 3.2.

3.3 Applying the countermeasure to the inverse NTT

All the concepts presented in the previous section can be adapted to the NTT^{-1} operation and the Gentleman-Sande algorithm as well.

Specifically, the order of the operations in Sec. 3.1 changes. If the input to NTT^{-1} is $\mathrm{NTT}(f)$ for some polynomial f, then our countermeasure, applied to NTT^{-1} becomes:

1. Compute $w = f(u)$ by interpolating $\mathrm{NTT}(f)$, the input to NTT^{-1};
2. Compute $f = \mathrm{NTT}^{-1}(\mathrm{NTT}(f))$;
3. Compute $w' = f(u)$ by evaluating f on u;
4. Check that $w = w'$. If this is not the case, then a fault in the computation of NTT^{-1} has been detected.

From Eq. (9) and Eq. (10) we see that a single Gentleman-Sande butterfly looks like in Fig. 5.

As in Sec. 3.2, we pointed out that the four types of errors listed there can again each be reduced to an error in a single coefficient. Such an error can again be described by the addition of a monomial DX^m as in Eq. (15). The resulting error in the output of NTT^{-1} is then provided by Eq. (16). The faulty output of NTT^{-1} is given by Eq. (18). So, in this case, the interpolation step of the countermeasure computes $f(u)$, whereas the evaluation computes $\tilde{f}(u)$. The proof of Lemma 3 shows that, if u is chosen as in Lemma 3, then $e(u) \neq 0$. Hence, $\tilde{f}(u) \neq f(u)$ and the error in the computation of NTT^{-1} is detected.

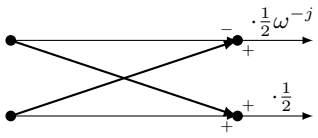

Fig. 5. A single Gentleman-Sande butterfly from Fig. 3

3.4 Compatibility of the countermeasure with ring operations

When used as part of a cryptographic algorithm, the purpose of the NTT is typically to accelerate multiplication. Polynomial addition, although not accelerated by the NTT, is also a common operation in cryptographic algorithms that use the NTT. Therefore, it is worth exploring the compatibility of our countermeasure with these operations and determining if it can be utilized to provide protection for them as well.

The ring multiplication $h = f \cdot g$ can efficiently be computed using the NTT as $h = \mathrm{NTT}^{-1}(\mathrm{NTT}(f \cdot g)) = \mathrm{NTT}^{-1}(\mathrm{NTT}(f) \odot \mathrm{NTT}(g))$. Therefore, our countermeasure can be extended to protect the multiplication and not just the NTT by following the steps outlined below:

1. Compute $w'_1 = f(u)$, $w'_2 = g(u)$, by interpolating the n output values of $\mathrm{NTT}(f)$ and $\mathrm{NTT}(g)$, respectively;
2. Compute $w = h(u)$ by evaluating the result of the multiplication at u;
3. Check that $w = w'_1 w'_2$. If this is not the case, then a fault in the computation of the ring multiplication has been detected.

Note that in some algorithm specifications, e.g., ML-KEM, some inputs are already NTT-transformed, so that the transformations $\mathrm{NTT}(f)$ and $\mathrm{NTT}(g)$ in the first step are not always needed. For error detection to cover the NTT operations as well as the multiplication, the checksums w'_1 and w'_2 have to be verified as described in Sec. 3.1. Otherwise, if, for example, $w'_1 = 0$, errors in the computation of $\mathrm{NTT}(g)$ may go undetected.

Analogously, our countermeasure is compatible with polynomial addition. This is particularly interesting when a polynomial is split into two shares as a countermeasure against side-channel attacks. If $f = f_1 + f_2$ and $w_1 = f_1(u)$, $w_2 = f_2(u)$, then we can check that $f(u) = w_1 + w_2$, hence providing combined side-channel and fault resistance.

3.5 Comparison with other countermeasures

An obvious way of securing an NTT implementation against single faults is to compute the NTT twice and compare the results. Computing the NTT with the Cooley-Tukey method costs $\frac{n}{2}\log_2(n)$ multiplications and $n\log_2(n)$ additions. From Lemmas 1 and 2 we see that the total cost of our countermeasure is $2n-1$

multiplications and $2n - 2$ additions. Hence, the cost of our countermeasure relative to the cost of the NTT in terms of multiplications is

$$\frac{2n-1}{\frac{n}{2}\log_2(n)} = \frac{4 - 2/n}{\log_2(n)} \tag{20}$$

and in terms of additions it is

$$\frac{2n-2}{n\log_2(n)} = \frac{2 - 2/n}{\log_2(n)}. \tag{21}$$

In the case of ML-DSA we have $n = 256$ and hence the cost of our countermeasure is about an extra 50% multiplications and an extra 25% additions. This is significantly less than the overhead of 100% for computing the NTT a second time. In practice, the exact performance cost depends on the implementation details (cf. Sec. 4).

In [13], a different type of countermeasure against fault injection attacks is presented. The authors enlarge the modulus q and use this 'extra space' to introduce redundancy into the coefficients of the NTT. The cost of this countermeasure depends very much on the hardware architecture underlying the implementation. The idea is to use registers which are wide enough to hold numbers significantly larger than q. Similarly, the effectiveness of this countermeasure depends very much on exactly this register width. An important difference between the countermeasure in [13] and the one presented in this paper is that our countermeasure guarantees the detection of a single fault in a coefficient, while the error detection property in [13] is probabilistic.

As we have seen at the end of Sec. 3.2, our countermeasure can also detect errors beyond the guaranteed detection with a certain probability. How this compares to the probabilistic error detection of [13] again depends very much on the concrete implementation. However, if we assume implementation on a 32-bit platform and if we further assume that the size of q is roughly 16 bit, then the probabilistic error detection capability of our countermeasure and that of [13] are similar.

3.6 Adapting the countermeasure to ML-KEM

As far as possible, we will keep our description generic to apply to any 'ML-KEM-like' NTT, i.e., we will continue working with the letters q, n etc. rather than concrete numbers. As we have described in Sec. 2.4, the NTT in ML-KEM leaves out the final layer. In other words, the NTT computes $n/2$ polynomials $a_jX + b_j$ of degree one such that

$$a_jX + b_j = f(X) \bmod (X^2 - \zeta^{2\mathrm{br}_{k-1}(j)+1}), \tag{22}$$

where ζ is an n-th root of unity. So, instead of computing $f(u)$ for our countermeasure as in the previous section, it seems natural to compute $f(X) \bmod (X^2 \bmod u)$ instead.

To adapt our countermeasure, we define polynomials for $j = 0, 1, \ldots, n/2-1$:

$$M_j(X) := \prod_{i=0, i\neq j}^{2^{k-1}-1} \frac{X^2 - \zeta^{2\mathrm{br}_{k-1}(i)+1}}{\zeta^{2\mathrm{br}_{k-1}(j)+1} - \zeta^{2\mathrm{br}_{k-1}(i)+1}} \tag{23}$$

In ML-KEM we have $n = 256$, and the specification of ML-KEM [28] uses the 256-th root of unity $\zeta = 17$ in $\mathbb{F}_{3329}$.

Lemma 4. *With the notation as above:*

$$f(X) = \sum_{j=0}^{n/2-1} (a_j X + b_j) M_j(X) \tag{24}$$

Proof. Observe that

$$M_j(X) \bmod (X^2 - \zeta^{2\mathrm{br}_{k-1}(i)+1}) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } j = j \\ 0 & \text{if } j \neq i \end{cases}. \tag{25}$$

Hence, we have for all $i = 0, 1, \ldots, n/2 - 1$:

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{j=0}^{n/2} (a_j X + b_j) M_j(X) \bmod (X^2 - \zeta^{2\mathrm{br}_{k-1}(i)+1}) &= a_i X + b_i \\ &= f(X) \bmod (X^2 - \zeta^{2\mathrm{br}_{k-1}(i)+1}). \end{aligned} \tag{26}$$

□

Let $u \in K$. Then, before the NTT, we can compute

$$f(X) \bmod (X^2 - u) = \Big(\sum_{j=0}^{n/2-1} f_{2j+1} u^j \Big) X + \Big(\sum_{j=0}^{n/2-1} f_{2j} u^j \Big) \tag{27}$$

Both sums can be computed efficiently with Horner's method again. This requires $n/2 - 1$ multiplications and $n/2 - 1$ additions in K for each sum.

Looking at the definition of $M_j(X)$ in Eq. (23), we see that $M_j(X) \bmod (X^2 - u) =: m_j \in K$ for all $j = 0, 1, \ldots, n/2 - 1$.

Hence, using Lemma 4, we can compute $f(X) \bmod (X^2 - u)$ from the NTT output, i.e., from the polynomials $a_j X + b_j$ as:

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{j=0}^{n/2-1} (a_j X + b_j) M_j(X) \bmod (X^2 - u) &= \sum_{j=0}^{n/2-1} (a_j X + b_j) m_j \\ &= \Big(\sum_{j=0}^{n/2-1} a_j m_j \Big) X + \Big(\sum_{j=0}^{n/2-1} b_j m_j \Big) \end{aligned} \tag{28}$$

Computing both sums on the right requires $n/2$ multiplications and $n/2-1$ additions for each, and so n multiplications and $n-2$ additions in total.

Hence, for polynomial evaluation and interpolation together $2n-2$ multiplications and $2n-4$ additions are required in total. The cost of our countermeasure relative to the cost of the NTT in terms of multiplications is therefore

$$\frac{2n-2}{\frac{n}{2}(\log_2(n)-1)} \tag{29}$$

and in terms of additions it is

$$\frac{2n-4}{n(\log_2(n)-1)} \tag{30}$$

For the concrete parameter $n = 256$ in ML-KEM this gives a cost of about 57% extra multiplications and about 28% additions.

Lemma 5. *Let $u \in K \setminus \{0\}$ such that $u^{n/2^{\ell+1}} \neq \zeta^{(2\mathrm{br}_\ell(j)+1)n/2^{\ell+1}}$ for any $0 \leq \ell < k$ and any $0 \leq j < 2^\ell$. Then the countermeasure as described in this section detects an error in a single coefficient in the ML-KEM NTT.*

Proof. Based on the same arguments as before, any error is equivalent to an error of the type $e(X)$ as in Eq. (16). The checksum in Eq. (28) will be wrong by $e(X) \bmod (X^2 - u)$. We have chosen u such that this is non-zero. Hence, the error will be detected. □

4 Practical Evaluation

To verify the feasibility of our approach and our estimates for its performance impact, we implemented our countermeasure on a 'black pill' board with an `STM32F401CCU6` microcontroller [12]. This microcontroller is based on an ARM Cortex-M4 CPU architecture. Please note that our countermeasure requires storing $n \log_2(q)$ bits if precomputed values are used to speed up the interpolation. This overhead accounts for 5888 bits in case of ML-DSA and 2996 bits in case of ML-KEM. The precomputed values can be stored in ROM or computed on-the-fly at startup and stored in RAM. The results of evaluation w and interpolation w' require $2\log_2(q)$ bits and can be stored in RAM or registers (in total, 46-bit for ML-DSA and 24-bit for ML-KEM, respectively).

4.1 Practical evaluation for ML-DSA

We implemented our countermeasure for ML-DSA. So the field is $\mathbb{F}_q$ with $q = 8380417$, and we are working in the ring $\mathbb{F}_q[X]/(X^{256}+1)$.

We took the NTT from the ML-DSA implementation by the `pqm4` library [17], a well-known library that provides optimized implementations of post-quantum cryptographic schemes for microcontroller-based platforms.

operation	clock cycles (avg.)
evaluate f	2879
interpolate NTT(f) and evaluate	3160
compute NTT(f)	8406

Table 2. Performance numbers for our countermeasure applied to ML-DSA.

The results of our performance measurements for ML-DSA are summarized in Table 2.

The relative cost of our countermeasure applied to ML-DSA can easily be computed from the numbers in Table 2 as:

$$\frac{(\text{cost of evaluating } f) + (\text{cost of interpolating NTT}(f) \text{ and evaluating})}{(\text{cost of NTT})} \equiv 72\%$$

This is close to the expected overhead from the theoretical estimate given in Sec. 3.5. The implementation of our countermeasure has not been optimized for the ML-DSA NTT or a particular point in the evaluation. So there may be some potential for further optimizations. The NTT implementation in the `pqm4` library, on the other hand, is highly optimized.

4.2 Practical evaluation for ML-KEM

We also implemented our countermeasure for ML-KEM. In this case, the field is $\mathbb{F}_q$ with $q = 3329$, and we are working in the ring $\mathbb{F}_q[X]/(X^{256} + 1)$. As we explained in Sec. 2.4, compared to ML-DSA the NTT in ML-KEM is truncated. Again, we took the NTT implementation for ML-KEM from the `pqm4` library [17] to have an optimized implementation in the public domain as a benchmark.

The results of our performance measurements for ML-KEM are summarized in Table 3. We see that the relative overhead of our countermeasure is 67%,

operation	clock cycles (avg.)
evaluate f	1752
interpolate NTT(f) and evaluate	2150
compute NTT(f)	5822

Table 3. Performance numbers for our countermeasure applied to ML-KEM.

and hence our countermeasure is significantly cheaper than re-computation as expected. As with ML-DSA, the overhead is higher than expected from the theoretical estimate in Sec. 3.6. We put this down to the fact that the `pqm4` code is highly optimized.

5 Conclusion

We have presented a countermeasure that protects an implementation of the NTT or its inverse against a single fault in one of the coefficients. We have seen that this fault model also covers faults in a twiddle factor, the multiplication with a twiddle factor and the addition in a butterfly operation. Our countermeasure requires $2n - 1$ multiplications and $2n - 2$ additions in the field K, hence is significantly faster than a redundant computation. We have also shown how to adapt our countermeasure to situations where the computation of the NTT is 'incomplete', as it is the case for ML-KEM. Our countermeasure can be safely combined with further masking and shuffling countermeasures to achieve combined fault and side-channel protections. Finally, it is worth noting that the countermeasure presented in this paper can also be applied to other schemes using the NTT operation, e.g., other cryptographic schemes based on structured lattices.

Acknowledgments. This work was partly funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action in the project PoQsiKom through grant number 13I40V010 and by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research in the project Quoryptan through grant number 16KIS2033.

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A Algorithmic Countermeasure

This section provides an algorithmic description of the proposed fault countermeasure to protect the NTT operation. Alg. 1 describes a fault resistant NTT for $\mathcal{R}_q = \mathbb{Z}_q[X]/(X^n + 1)$ and $K = \mathbb{Z}_q$, while Alg. 2 and Alg. 3 describe algorithms for polynomial evaluation and interpolation using the Horner and Lagrange techniques, respectively. In particular, Alg. 3 takes advantage of a precomputation algorithm specified in Alg. 4.

Algorithm 1 Algorithmic description of the fault resistant NTT for $\mathcal{R}_q = \mathbb{Z}_q[X]/(X^n + 1)$ and $K = \mathbb{Z}_q$.

Require: $f \in \mathcal{R}_q$ with $f = (f_0, ..., f_{n-1})$, $u \in K$ as defined in Lem. 3 (or Lem. 5 in the case of a 'truncated' NTT as in ML-KEM) and $L = \textsc{Precompute}(u)$
Ensure: $\hat{f} \in K^n$ s.t. $\hat{f} = (\hat{f}_0, ..., \hat{f}_{n-1})$ with $\hat{f}_j = f(\omega^{2\mathrm{br}_k(j)+1})$ for $0 \leq j < n-1$

procedure FaultResistant-NTT(f, u, L)
    $w \leftarrow \textsc{Eval}(f, u)$
    $\hat{f} \leftarrow \mathrm{NTT}(f)$
    $w' \leftarrow \textsc{Interpolate}(\hat{f}, L)$
    if $w \neq w'$ **then**
        Error()
    end if
    return $\hat{f} = (\hat{f}_0, ..., \hat{f}_{n-1})$
end procedure

Algorithm 2 Evaluation by Horner's rule for $\mathcal{R}_q = \mathbb{Z}_q[X]/(X^n+1)$ and $K = \mathbb{Z}_q$.

Require: $f \in \mathcal{R}_q$ s.t. $f = (f_0, ..., f_{n-1})$ and $u \in K$
Ensure: $w \in K$

procedure $\textsc{Eval}(f, u)$
    $w \leftarrow f_{n-1}$
    for $i \leftarrow 0$ **to** $n-2$ **do**
        $w \leftarrow f_{n-2-i} + wu$
    end for
    return w
end procedure

Algorithm 3 Lagrange interpolation with immediate evaluation for $K = \mathbb{Z}_q$.

Require: $\hat{f} \in K^n$ with $\hat{f} = (\hat{f}_0, ..., \hat{f}_{n-1})$, $u \in K$ and $L = \textsc{Precompute}(u)$
Ensure: $w' \in K$

procedure $\textsc{Interpolate}(\hat{f}, L)$
    $w' \leftarrow 0$
    for $i \leftarrow 0$ **to** $n-1$ **do**
        $w' \leftarrow w' + \hat{f}_i \cdot L[i]$
    end for
    return w'
end procedure

Algorithm 4 Precompute the $L_i(u)$ for interpolation, where L_i is defined in Eq. (12) and $K = \mathbb{Z}_q$.

Require: $u \in K$
Ensure: $L = (L_0(u), L_1(u), \ldots, L_{n-1}(u))$
1: **procedure** PRECOMPUTE(u)
2: **for** $i \leftarrow 0$ **to** $n - 1$ **do**
3: $L[i] \leftarrow L_i(u)$
4: **end for**
5: **return** L
6: **end procedure**