

sysmocom

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OsmoPCAP User Manual

by Harald Welte

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The AsciiDoc source code of this manual can be found at <http://git.osmocom.org/osmo-gsm-manuals/>

HISTORY

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1 Foreword

Digital cellular networks based on the GSM specification were designed in the late 1980ies and first deployed in the early 1990ies in Europe. Over the last 25 years, hundreds of networks were established globally and billions of subscribers have joined the associated networks.

The technological foundation of GSM was based on multi-vendor interoperable standards, first created by government bodies within CEPT, then handed over to ETSI, and now in the hands of 3GPP. Nevertheless, for the first 17 years of GSM technology, the associated protocol stacks and network elements have only existed in proprietary *black-box* implementations and not as Free Software.

In 2008 Dieter Spaar and I started to experiment with inexpensive end-of-life surplus Siemens GSM BTSs. We learned about the A-bis protocol specifications, reviewed protocol traces and started to implement the BSC-side of the A-bis protocol as something originally called `bs11-abis`. All of this was *just for fun*, in order to learn more and to boldly go where no Free Software developer has gone before. The goal was to learn and to bring Free Software into a domain that despite its ubiquity, had not yet seen any Free / Open Source software implementations.

`bs11-abis` quickly turned into `bsc-hack`, then *OpenBSC* and its *OsmoNITB* variant: A minimal implementation of all the required functionality of an entire GSM network, exposing A-bis towards the BTS. The project attracted more interested developers, and surprisingly quickly also commercial interest, contribution and adoption. This allowed adding support for more BTS models.

After having implemented the network-side GSM protocol stack in 2008 and 2009, in 2010 the same group of people set out to create a telephone-side implementation of the GSM protocol stack. This established the creation of the Osmocom umbrella project, under which OpenBSC and the OsmocomBB projects were hosted.

Meanwhile, more interesting telecom standards were discovered and implemented, including TETRA professional mobile radio, DECT cordless telephony, GMR satellite telephony, some SDR hardware, a SIM card protocol tracer and many others.

Increasing commercial interest particularly in the BSS and core network components has lead the way to 3G support in Osmocom, as well as the split of the minimal *OsmoNITB* implementation into separate and fully featured network components: OsmoBSC, OsmoMSC, OsmoHLR, OsmoMGW and OsmoSTP (among others), which allow seamless scaling from a simple "Network In The Box" to a distributed installation for serious load.

It has been a most exciting ride during the last eight-odd years. I would not have wanted to miss it under any circumstances.

—Harald Welte, Osmocom.org and OpenBSC founder, December 2017.

1.1 Acknowledgements

My deep thanks to everyone who has contributed to Osmocom. The list of contributors is too long to mention here, but I'd like to call out the following key individuals and organizations, in no particular order:

- Dieter Spaar for being the most amazing reverse engineer I've met in my career
- Holger Freyther for his many code contributions and for shouldering a lot of the maintenance work, setting up Jenkins - and being crazy enough to co-start sysmocom as a company with me ;)
- Andreas Eversberg for taking care of Layer2 and Layer3 of OsmocomBB, and for his work on OsmoBTS and OsmoPCU
- Sylvain Munaut for always tackling the hardest problems, particularly when it comes closer to the physical layer
- Chaos Computer Club for providing us a chance to run real-world deployments with tens of thousands of subscribers every year
- Bernd Schneider of Netzing AG for funding early ip.access nanoBTS support
- On-Waves ehf for being one of the early adopters of OpenBSC and funding a never ending list of features, fixes and general improvement of pretty much all of our GSM network element implementations
- sysmocom, for hosting and funding a lot of Osmocom development, the annual Osmocom Developer Conference and releasing this manual.

- Jan Luebbe, Stefan Schmidt, Daniel Willmann, Pablo Neira, Nico Golde, Kevin Redon, Ingo Albrecht, Alexander Huemer, Alexander Chemeris, Max Suraev, Tobias Engel, Jacob Erlbeck, Ivan Kluchnikov

May the source be with you!

—Harald Welte, Osmocom.org and OpenBSC founder, January 2016.

1.2 Endorsements

This version of the manual is endorsed by Harald Welte as the official version of the manual.

While the GFDL license (see Appendix C) permits anyone to create and distribute modified versions of this manual, such modified versions must remove the above endorsement.

2 Preface

First of all, we appreciate your interest in Osmocom software.

Osmocom is a Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) community that develops and maintains a variety of software (and partially also hardware) projects related to mobile communications.

Founded by people with decades of experience in community-driven FOSS projects like the Linux kernel, this community is built on a strong belief in FOSS methodology, open standards and vendor neutrality.

2.1 FOSS lives by contribution!

If you are new to FOSS, please try to understand that this development model is not primarily about “free of cost to the GSM network operator”, but it is about a collaborative, open development model. It is about sharing ideas and code, but also about sharing the effort of software development and maintenance.

If your organization is benefitting from using Osmocom software, please consider ways how you can contribute back to that community. Such contributions can be many-fold, for example

- sharing your experience about using the software on the public mailing lists, helping to establish best practises in using/operating it,
- providing qualified bug reports, work-arounds
- sharing any modifications to the software you may have made, whether bug fixes or new features, even experimental ones
- providing review of patches
- testing new versions of the related software, either in its current “master” branch or even more experimental feature branches
- sharing your part of the maintenance and/or development work, either by donating developer resources or by (partially) funding those people in the community who do.

We’re looking forward to receiving your contributions.

2.2 Osmocom and sysmocom

Some of the founders of the Osmocom project have established *sysmocom - systems for mobile communications GmbH* as a company to provide products and services related to Osmocom.

sysmocom and its staff have contributed by far the largest part of development and maintenance to the Osmocom mobile network infrastructure projects.

As part of this work, sysmocom has also created the manual you are reading.

At sysmocom, we draw a clear line between what is the Osmocom FOSS project, and what is sysmocom as a commercial entity. Under no circumstances does participation in the FOSS projects require any commercial relationship with sysmocom as a company.

2.3 Corrections

We have prepared this manual in the hope that it will guide you through the process of installing, configuring and debugging your deployment of cellular network infrastructure elements using Osmocom software. If you do find errors, typos and/or omissions, or have any suggestions on missing topics, please do take the extra time and let us know.

2.4 Legal disclaimers

2.4.1 Spectrum License

As GSM and UMTS operate in licensed spectrum, please always double-check that you have all required licenses and that you do not transmit on any ARFCN or UARFCN that is not explicitly allocated to you by the applicable regulatory authority in your country.



Warning

Depending on your jurisdiction, operating a radio transmitter without a proper license may be considered a felony under criminal law!

2.4.2 Software License

The software developed by the Osmocom project and described in this manual is Free / Open Source Software (FOSS) and subject to so-called *copyleft* licensing.

Copyleft licensing is a legal instrument to ensure that this software and any modifications, extensions or derivative versions will always be publicly available to anyone, for any purpose, under the same terms as the original program as developed by Osmocom.

This means that you are free to use the software for whatever purpose, make copies and distribute them - just as long as you ensure to always provide/release the *complete and corresponding* source code.

Every Osmocom software includes a file called `COPYING` in its source code repository which explains the details of the license. The majority of programs is released under GNU Affero General Public License, Version 3 (AGPLv3).

If you have any questions about licensing, don't hesitate to contact the Osmocom community. We're more than happy to clarify if your intended use case is compliant with the software licenses.

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2.4.5 Documentation License

Please see Appendix C for further information.

3 Introduction

3.1 Required Skills

Please note that even while the capital expenses of running mobile networks has decreased significantly due to Osmocom software and associated hardware like sysmoBTS, GSM networks are still primarily operated by large GSM operators.

Neither the GSM specification nor the GSM equipment was ever designed for networks to be installed and configured by anyone but professional GSM engineers, specialized in their respective area like radio planning, radio access network, back-haul or core network.

If you do not share an existing background in GSM network architecture and GSM protocols, correctly installing, configuring and optimizing your GSM network will be tough, irrespective whether you use products with Osmocom software or those of traditional telecom suppliers.

GSM knowledge has many different fields, from radio planning through site installation to core network configuration/administration.

The detailed skills required will depend on the type of installation and/or deployment that you are planning, as well as its associated network architecture. A small laboratory deployment for research at a university is something else than a rural network for a given village with a handful of cells, which is again entirely different from an urban network in a dense city.

Some of the useful skills we recommend are:

- general understanding about RF propagation and path loss in order to estimate coverage of your cells and do RF network planning.
- general understanding about GSM network architecture, its network elements and key transactions on the Layer 3 protocol
- general understanding about voice telephony, particularly those of ISDN heritage (Q.931 call control)
- understanding of GNU/Linux system administration and working on the shell
- understanding of TCP/IP networks and network administration, including tcpdump, tshark, wireshark protocol analyzers.
- ability to work with text based configuration files and command-line based interfaces such as the VTY of the Osmocom network elements

3.2 Getting assistance

If you do have a support package / contract with sysmocom (or want to get one), please contact support@sysmocom.de with any issues you may have.

If you don't have a support package / contract, you have the option of using the resources put together by the Osmocom community at <http://projects.osmocom.org/>, checking out the wiki and the mailing-list for community-based assistance. Please always remember, though: The community has no obligation to help you, and you should address your requests politely to them. The information (and software) provided at osmocom.org is put together by volunteers for free. Treat them like a friend whom you're asking for help, not like a supplier from whom you have bought a service.

4 OsmoPCAP Overview

4.1 Package Capturing in distributed telecoms networks

Obtaining raw, binary protocol traces [for later analysis] is an essential capability in order to investigate any kind of problem in any computer networking system.

The very distributed, heterogenous nature of cellular networks (compared to end-to-end IP networks) results in a lot of relevant information being present only at some specific interfaces / points in the network. This in turn means that packet captures have to be performed at a variety of different network elements in order to get the full picture of what is happening.

Recording protocol traces at various different points in the network inevitably raises the question of how to aggregate these.

4.2 About OsmoPCAP

OsmoPCAP is a software suite consisting of two programs, a client and a server component.

- `osmo-pcap-client` obtains protocol traces by using `AF_PACKET` sockets, optionally with a capture filter. It then forwards the captures to a remote server.
- `osmo-pcap-server` accepts incoming connections from clients. It receives captured packets from those clients and stores them.

The server and client communicate using a custom, TCP based protocol for passing captured packets from client to server. Based on your configuration, it can optionally be secured by TLS transport-level encryption and authentication.

NOTE

The `osmo-pcap` programs runs as normal, single-threaded userspace programs, without any specific emphasis on efficiency. It doesn't use any of the advanced zero-copy mechanisms available on many modern OSs. The goal is to capture telecom signaling (control plane) traffic, whose bandwidth is (unlike that of the user plane) typically relatively low compared to the available CPU / IO speeds. Don't expect `osmo-pcap` to handle wire-rate multi-gigabit throughput.

5 `osmo-pcap-client`

The `osmo-pcap-client` program runs at a location of your network where you would like to record some packets. It captures those packets (with or without filter) and forwards them to one or multiple remote servers.

5.1 Running `osmo-pcap-client`

5.1.1 SYNOPSIS

```
osmo-pcap-client [-D] [-c CFG_FILE] | -h | -V
```

5.1.2 OPTIONS

-h, --help

Print a short help message about the supported options.

-V, --version

Print the compile-time version number of the program.

-D, --daemonize

Fork the process as a daemon into background.

-c, --config-file CONFIGFILE

Specify the file and path name of the configuration file to be used. If none is specified, use `osmo-pcap-client.cfg` in the current working directory.

Capturing network packets requires you to be superuser or have the `CAP_NET_RAW` capability.

There are several options to achieve this:

- start the program as root user (strongly discouraged)
- globally enable the `CAP_NET_RAW` capability for the program using e.g. the tool `setcap`
- asking `systemd` to start the program with the required capability

NOTE

This potentially opens a privilege escalation, as `osmo-pcap-client` can be configured via the VTY interface (telnet) which is by default accessible by any user on the local machine (access to the loopback device). Please make sure to protect access to the VTY interface accordingly.

5.2 Configuring the packet capture

The VTY configuration node of `osmo-pcap-client` contains a `client` node, in which the packet capturing is configured

osmo-pcap-client VTY configuration for packet capture

```
client
pcap device eth0 ❶
pcap filter udp port 23000 ❷
pcap detect-loop 1 ❸
```

- ❶ the network device from which to obtain a capture
- ❷ the libpcap filter string (`udp port 23000` in this example)
- ❸ instruct `osmo-pcap-client` to automatically add a filter that prevents capturing the traffic between `osmo-pcap-client` and `osmo-pcap-server`, which would create a loop.

5.3 Configuring the primary server

osmo-pcap-client configuration for the primary remote server

```
client
server ip 192.168.11.20 ❶
server port 54321 ❷
source ip 192.168.11.1 ❸
```

- ❶ IP address of the server to which to send the traces
- ❷ port number of the server to which to send the traces
- ❸ local IP address to use when sending traffic to the server

By default, a custom `osmo-pcap` specific protocol is used to transport the captured packets from client to server. However, the `protocol` VTY configuration command can be used to switch to using a simple `ipip` encapsulation. `ipip` can be transparently decoded by protocol analysis tools like `wireshark`.

5.4 Configuring additional servers

In some use cases, you may want to send the captured packets to multiple remote destinations. The primary and each of the remote destinations each receive a copy of each captured packet.

osmo-pcap-client configuration for an additional remote server

```
client
pcap-store-connection my_server ❶
server ip 192.168.11.10 ❷
server port 54321 ❸
source ip 192.168.11.1 ❹
connect ❺
```

- ❶ a human-readable identifier for this specific connection (`my_server`)
- ❷ IP address of the server to which to send the traces
- ❸ port number of the server to which to send the traces
- ❹ local IP address to use when sending traffic to the server
- ❺ request connection to the remote server specified in this section

5.5 Configuring TLS

By default, the captured packets are sent in plain-text without any additional layer of encryption or authentication. This means that there is no confidentiality, nor any integrity protection, unless the original captured packet already featured such properties.

If desired, `osmo-pcap-client` can be configured to use TLS (transport layer security) on the protocol between client and server.

TLS is configured separately for each remote server, whether primary or additional.

osmo-pcap-client configuration with TLS

```
client
server ip 192.168.11.20
server port 54321
source ip 192.168.11.1
enable tls ❶
tls hostname pcapserver.example.test ❷
tls verify-cert ❸
tls capath /etc/osmo-pcap/ca-certificates ❹
tls client-cert /etc/osmo-pcap/client.crt ❺
tls client-key /etc/osmo-pcap/client.key ❻
```

- ❶ enable TLS for this server
- ❷ set the hostname we expect the server to have a certificate for
- ❸ enable certificate verification
- ❹ path of all CA certificates we consider valid for signing the server cert
- ❺ file containing the client certificate
- ❻ file containing the private key for the client certificate

6 osmo-pcap-server

The osmo-pcap-server program can run anywhere in your network, as long as it can be reached by the remote osmo-pcap-client instances.

6.1 Running osmo-pcap-server

6.1.1 SYNOPSIS

```
osmo-pcap-server [-D] [-c CFG_FILE] | -h | -V
```

6.1.2 OPTIONS

-h, --help

Print a short help message about the supported options.

-V, --version

Print the compile-time version number of the program.

-D, --daemonize

Fork the process as a daemon into background.

-c, --config-file CONFIGFILE

Specify the file and path name of the configuration file to be used. If none is specified, use `osmo-pcap-client.cfg` in the current working directory.

As osmo-pcap-server doesn't capture any packets itself and only receives streams of captured packets from [remote] osmo-pcap-clients, there is no need to run it as root or with elevated privileges.

6.2 Configuring osmo-pcap-server

The osmo-pcap-server configuration consists mainly of the following parts:

- the global server configuration, optionally including TLS related settings
- the per-client (per-connection) configuration

osmo-pcap-server example global configuration

```
server
base-path /var/lib/osmo-pcap-server ❶
server ip 192.168.11.20 ❷
server port 54321 ❸
max-file-size 100000000 ❹
max-snaplen 100000 ❺
```

- ❶ directory to which the pcap files are stored
- ❷ IP address to which to bind/listen
- ❸ TCP port number to which to bind/listen
- ❹ maximum size for pcap files; create a new file once max-file-size is reached
- ❺ maximum pcap snapshot length (per packet, in bytes; default: 9000)

The received packets are stored to a pcap file below the `base-path` using a filename encoding both the client name and the date/time at time of file creation.

osmo-pcap-server example global configuration

```
server
client foo 192.168.100.1 ❶
client bar 192.168.200.2 tls ❷
```

- ❶ Client `foo` connects from 192.168.100.1 and uses no TLS
- ❷ Client `bar` connects from 192.168.200.2 and uses TLS

6.3 Configuring TLS

By default, the captured packets are received in plain-text without any additional layer of encryption or authentication. This means that there is no confidentiality, nor any integrity protection, unless the original captured packet already featured such properties.

If desired, `osmo-pcap-server` can be configured to use TLS (transport layer security) on the protocol between client and server.

TLS is configured separately for each remote server, whether primary or additional.

NOTE

`osmo-pcap-server` uses the `gnutls` library for TLS support. See its documentation in terms of supported file formats for CRL, certificates, keys, etc.

osmo-pcap-server configuration with TLS

```
server
tls allow-auth x509 ❶
tls capath /etc/osmocom/osmo-pcap-ca ❷
tls crlfile /etc/osmocom/osmo-pcap-ca.crl ❸
tls server-cert /etc/osmocom/osmo-pcap-server.crt ❹
tls server-key /etc/osmocom/osmo-pcap-server.key ❺
```

- ❶ require clients to authenticate using a X.509 client certificate
- ❷ path of all CA certificates we consider valid for signing the client cert
- ❸ file containing the certificate revocation list
- ❹ file containing the server certificate
- ❺ file containing the private key for the server certificate

7 Osmocom Counters

The following gives an overview of all the types of counters available:

7.1 Osmo Counters (deprecated)

Osmo counters are the oldest type of counters added to Osmocom projects. They are not grouped.

- Printed as part of VTY `show stats`
- Increment, Decrement
- Accessible through the control interface: `counter.<counter_name>`

7.2 Rate Counters

Rate counters count rates of events.

- Printed as part of VTY show stats
- Intervals: per second, minute, hour, day or absolute value
- Increment only
- Accessible through the control interface
- Rate counters are grouped and different instances per group can exist

The control interface command to get a counter (group) is:

```
rate_ctr.per_{sec,min,hour,day,abs}.<group_name>.<idx>.[counter_name]
```

It is possible to get all counters in a group by omitting the counter name

7.3 Stat Item

Stat items are a grouped replacement for osmo counters.

- Printed as part of VTY show stats
- Replacement for osmo counters
- Not yet available through the control interface
- Grouped and indexed like rate counters
- Items have a unit
- Keeps a list of the last values measured, so could return an average, min, max, std. deviation. So far this is not implemented in any of the reporting options.

7.4 Statistic Levels

There are three levels on which a statistic can be aggregated in Osmocom projects: globally, per-peer and per-subscriber.

7.4.1 Global

These are global statistics.

7.4.2 Peer

These statistics relate to a peer the program connects to such as the NSVC in an SGSN.

This level also includes reporting global statistics.

7.4.3 Subscriber

These statistics are related to an individual mobile subscriber. An example would be bytes transferred in an SGSN PDP context.

This level also includes global and peer-based statistics.

7.5 Stats Reporter

The stats reporter periodically collects osmo counter, rate counter and stat item values and sends them to a backend. Currently implemented are outputting to the configured log targets and a statsd connector.

7.5.1 Configuring a stats reporter

Periodically printing the statistics to the log can be done in the following way:

Example 7.1 Log statistics

```
OsmoBSC> enable
OsmoBSC# configure terminal
OsmoBSC(config)# stats interval 60 ❶
OsmoBSC(config)# stats reporter log ❷
OsmoBSC(config-stats)# level global ❸
OsmoBSC(config-stats)# enable ❹
```

- ❶ The interval determines how often the statistics are reported.
- ❷ Write the statistic information to any configured log target.
- ❸ Report only `global` statistics (can be `global`, `peer`, or `subscriber`).
- ❹ Enable the reporter, `disable` will disable it again.

The counter values can also be sent to any aggregation/visualization tool that understands the statsd format, for example a statsd server with graphite or prometheus using the `statsd_exporter` together with grafana.

The statsd format is specified in https://github.com/b/statsd_spec

Example 7.2 Report statistics to statsd

```
OsmoBSC> enable
OsmoBSC# configure terminal
OsmoBSC(config)# stats interval 10
OsmoBSC(config)# stats reporter statsd ❶
OsmoBSC(config-stats)# prefix BSC1 ❷
OsmoBSC(config-stats)# level subscriber ❸
OsmoBSC(config-stats)# remote-ip 1.2.3.4 ❹
OsmoBSC(config-stats)# remote-port 8125 ❺
OsmoBSC(config-stats)# enable
```

- ❶ Configure the statsd reporter.
- ❷ Prefix the reported statistics. This is useful to distinguish statistics from multiple instances of the same service.
- ❸ Report only `global` statistics or include `peer` or `subscriber` statistics as well.
- ❹ IP address of the statsd server.
- ❺ UDP port of the statsd server. Statsd by default listens to port 8125.

Setting up a statsd server and configuring the visualization is beyond the scope of this document.

8 The Osmocom VTY Interface

All human interaction with Osmocom software is typically performed via an interactive command-line interface called the *VTY*.

Note

Integration of your programs and scripts should **not** be done via the telnet VTY interface, which is intended for human interaction only: the VTY responses may arbitrarily change in ways obvious to humans, while your scripts' parsing will likely break often. For external software to interact with Osmocom programs (besides using the dedicated protocols), it is strongly recommended to use the Control interface instead of the VTY, and to actively request / implement the Control interface commands as required for your use case.

The interactive telnet VTY is used to

- explore the current status of the system, including its configuration parameters, but also to view run-time state and statistics,
- review the currently active (running) configuration,
- perform interactive changes to the configuration (for those items that do not require a program restart),
- store the current running configuration to the config file,
- enable or disable logging; to the VTY itself or to other targets.

The Virtual Tele Type (VTY) has the concept of *nodes* and *commands*. Each command has a name and arguments. The name may contain a space to group several similar commands into a specific group. The arguments can be a single word, a string, numbers, ranges or a list of options. The available commands depend on the current node. there are various keyboard shortcuts to ease finding commands and the possible argument values.

Configuration file parsing during program start is actually performed the VTY's CONFIG node, which is also available in the telnet VTY. Apart from that, the telnet VTY features various interactive commands to query and instruct a running Osmocom program. A main difference is that during config file parsing, consistent indenting of parent vs. child nodes is required, while the interactive VTY ignores indenting and relies on the *exit* command to return to a parent node.

Note

In the *CONFIG* node, it is not well documented which commands take immediate effect without requiring a program restart. To save your current config with changes you may have made, you may use the `write file` command to **overwrite** your config file with the current configuration, after which you should be able to restart the program with all changes taking effect.

This chapter explains most of the common nodes and commands. A more detailed list is available in various programs' VTY reference manuals, e.g. see [\[vty-ref-osmomsc\]](#).

There are common patterns for the parameters, these include IPv4 addresses, number ranges, a word, a line of text and choice. The following will explain the commonly used syntactical patterns:

Table 1: VTY Parameter Patterns

Pattern	Example	Explanation
A.B.C.D	127.0.0.1	An IPv4 address
A.B.C.D/M	192.168.1.0/24	An IPv4 address and mask
X:X::X:X	:::1	An IPv6 address
X:X::X:X/M	:::1/128	An IPv6 address and mask
TEXT	example01	A single string without any spaces, tabs
.TEXT	Some information	A line of text
(OptionA OptionB OptionC)	OptionA	A choice between a list of available options
<0-10>	5	A number from a range

8.1 Accessing the telnet VTY

The VTY of a given Osmocom program is implemented as a telnet server, listening to a specific TCP port.

Please see Appendix A to check for the default TCP port number of the VTY interface of the specific Osmocom software you would like to connect to.

As telnet is insecure and offers neither strong authentication nor encryption, the VTY by default only binds to localhost (127.0.0.1) and will thus not be reachable by other hosts on the network.



Warning

By default, any user with access to the machine running the Osmocom software will be able to connect to the VTY. We assume that such systems are single-user systems, and anyone with local access to the system also is authorized to access the VTY. If you require stronger security, you may consider using the packet filter of your operating system to restrict access to the Osmocom VTY ports further.

8.2 VTY Nodes

The VTY by default has the following minimal nodes:

VIEW

When connecting to a telnet VTY, you will be on the *VIEW* node. As its name implies, it can only be used to view the system status, but it does not provide commands to alter the system state or configuration. As long as you are in the non-privileged *VIEW* node, your prompt will end in a > character.

ENABLE

The *ENABLE* node is entered by the `enable` command, from the *VIEW* node. Changing into the *ENABLE* node will unlock all kinds of commands that allow you to alter the system state or perform any other change to it. The *ENABLE* node and its children are signified by a # character at the end of your prompt.

You can change back from the *ENABLE* node to the *VIEW* node by using the `disable` command.

CONFIG

The *CONFIG* node is entered by the `configure terminal` command from the *ENABLE* node. The config node is used to change the run-time configuration parameters of the system. The prompt will indicate that you are in the config node by a (config) # prompt suffix.

You can always leave the *CONFIG* node or any of its children by using the `end` command.

This node is also automatically entered at the time the configuration file is read. All configuration file lines are processed as if they were entered from the VTY *CONFIG* node at start-up.

Other

Depending on the specific Osmocom program you are running, there will be few or more other nodes, typically below the *CONFIG* node. For example, the OsmoBSC has nodes for each BTS, and within the BTS node one for each TRX, and within the TRX node one for each Timeslot.

8.3 Interactive help

The VTY features an interactive help system, designed to help you to efficiently navigate its commands.

Note

The VTY is present on most Osmocom GSM/UMTS/GPRS software, thus this chapter is present in all the relevant manuals. The detailed examples below assume you are executing them on the OsmoMSC VTY. They will work in similar fashion on the other VTY interfaces, while the node structure will differ in each program.

8.3.1 The question-mark (?) command

If you type a single ? at the prompt, the VTY will display possible completions at the exact location of your currently entered command.

If you type ? at an otherwise empty command (without having entered even only a partial command), you will get a list of the first word of all possible commands available at this node:

Example: Typing ? at start of OsmoMSC prompt

```
OsmoMSC> ?
show      Show running system information
list      Print command list
exit      Exit current mode and down to previous mode
help      Description of the interactive help system
enable    Turn on privileged mode command
terminal  Set terminal line parameters
who       Display who is on vty
logging   Configure logging
no        Negate a command or set its defaults
sms       SMS related commands
subscriber Operations on a Subscriber
```

① Type ? here at the prompt, the ? itself will not be printed.

If you have already entered a partial command, ? will help you to review possible options of how to continue the command. Let's say you remember that show is used to investigate the system status, but you don't remember the exact name of the object. Hitting ? after typing show will help out:

Example: Typing ? after a partial command

```
OsmoMSC> show ?
version      Displays program version
online-help  Online help
history      Display the session command history
cs7          ITU-T Signaling System 7
logging      Show current logging configuration
alarms       Show current logging configuration
talloc-context Show talloc memory hierarchy
stats        Show statistical values
asciidoc     AsciiDoc generation
rate-counters Show all rate counters
fsm          Show information about finite state machines
fsm-instances Show information about finite state machine instances
sgs-connections Show SGs interface connections / MMEs
subscriber   Operations on a Subscriber
bsc          BSC
connection   Subscriber Connections
transaction  Transactions
statistics   Display network statistics
sms-queue    Display SMSqueue statistics
smpp         SMPP Interface
```

① Type ? after the show command, the ? itself will not be printed.

You may pick the bsc object and type ? again:

Example: Typing ? after show bsc

```
OsmoMSC> show bsc
<cr>
```

By presenting <cr> as the only option, the VTY tells you that your command is complete without any remaining arguments being available, and that you should hit enter, a.k.a. "carriage return".

8.3.2 TAB completion

The VTY supports tab (tabulator) completion. Simply type any partial command and press <tab>, and it will either show you a list of possible expansions, or completes the command if there's only one choice.

Example: Use of <tab> pressed after typing only s as command

```
OsmoMSC> s
show      sms      subscriber
```

- ❶ Type <tab> here.

At this point, you may choose show, and then press <tab> again:

Example: Use of <tab> pressed after typing show command

```
OsmoMSC> show
version      online-help  history      cs7          logging      alarms
talloc-context stats      asciidoc     rate-counters fsm          fsm-instances
sgs-connections subscriber bsc          connection transaction statistics
sms-queue smpp
```

- ❶ Type <tab> here.

8.3.3 The list command

The list command will give you a full list of all commands and their arguments available at the current node:

Example: Typing list at start of OsmoMSC VIEW node prompt

```
OsmoMSC> list
show version
show online-help
list
exit
help
enable
terminal length <0-512>
terminal no length
who
show history
show cs7 instance <0-15> users
show cs7 (sua|m3ua|ipa) [<0-65534>]
show cs7 instance <0-15> asp
show cs7 instance <0-15> as (active|all|m3ua|sua)
show cs7 instance <0-15> sccp addressbook
show cs7 instance <0-15> sccp users
show cs7 instance <0-15> sccp ssn <0-65535>
show cs7 instance <0-15> sccp connections
show cs7 instance <0-15> sccp timers
logging enable
logging disable
logging filter all (0|1)
logging color (0|1)
logging timestamp (0|1)
logging print extended-timestamp (0|1)
logging print category (0|1)
logging print category-hex (0|1)
logging print level (0|1)
logging print file (0|1|basename) [last]
```

```

logging set-log-mask MASK
logging level (rll|cc|mm|rr|mncc|pag|mssc|mgcp|ho|db|ref|ctrl|smpp|ranap|vlr|iucs|bssap| ←
    sgs|lglobal|llapd|linp|lmux|lmi|lmib|lsms|lctrl|lgtp|lstats|lgsup|loap|lss7|lsccp|lsua ←
    |lm3ua|lmgcp|ljibuf|lrspro) (debug|info|notice|error|fatal)
logging level set-all (debug|info|notice|error|fatal)
logging level force-all (debug|info|notice|error|fatal)
no logging level force-all
show logging vty
show alarms
show talloc-context (application|all) (full|brief|DEPTH)
show talloc-context (application|all) (full|brief|DEPTH) tree ADDRESS
show talloc-context (application|all) (full|brief|DEPTH) filter REGEXP
show stats
show stats level (global|peer|subscriber)
show asciidoc counters
show rate-counters
show fsm NAME
show fsm all
show fsm-instances NAME
show fsm-instances all
show sgs-connections
show subscriber (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ID
show subscriber cache
show bsc
show connection
show transaction
sms send pending
sms delete expired
subscriber create imsi ID
subscriber (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ID sms sender (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ←
    SENDER_ID send .LINE
subscriber (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ID silent-sms sender (msisdn|extension|imsi| ←
    tmsi|id) SENDER_ID send .LINE
subscriber (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ID silent-call start (any|tch/f|tch/any|sdcc)
subscriber (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ID silent-call stop
subscriber (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ID ussd-notify (0|1|2) .TEXT
subscriber (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ID ms-test close-loop (a|b|c|d|e|f|i)
subscriber (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ID ms-test open-loop
subscriber (msisdn|extension|imsi|tmsi|id) ID paging
show statistics
show sms-queue
logging filter imsi IMSI
show smpp esme

```

Tip

Remember, the list of available commands will change significantly depending on the Osmocom program you are accessing, its software version and the current node you're at. Compare the above example of the OsmoMSC *VIEW* node with the list of the OsmoMSC *NETWORK* config node:

Example: Typing list at start of OsmoMSC NETWORK config node prompt

```

OsmoMSC(config-net)# list
help
list
write terminal
write file
write memory
write
show running-config

```

```

exit
end
network country code <1-999>
mobile network code <0-999>
short name NAME
long name NAME
encryption a5 <0-3> [<0-3>] [<0-3>] [<0-3>]
authentication (optional|required)
rrlp mode (none|ms-based|ms-preferred|ass-preferred)
mm info (0|1)
timezone <-19-19> (0|15|30|45)
timezone <-19-19> (0|15|30|45) <0-2>
no timezone
periodic location update <6-1530>
no periodic location update

```

8.3.4 The attribute system

The VTY allows to edit the configuration at runtime. For many VTY commands the configuration change is immediately valid but for some commands a change becomes valid on a certain event only. In some cases it is even necessary to restart the whole process.

To give the user an overview, which configuration change applies when, the VTY implements a system of attribute flags, which can be displayed using the `show` command with the parameter `vty-attributes`

Example: Typing `show vty-attributes` at the VTY prompt

```

OsmoBSC> show vty-attributes
Global attributes:
 ^ This command is hidden (check expert mode)
 ! This command applies immediately
 @ This command applies on VTY node exit
Library specific attributes:
 A This command applies on ASP restart
 I This command applies on IPA link establishment
 L This command applies on E1 line update
Application specific attributes:
 o This command applies on A-bis OML link (re)establishment
 r This command applies on A-bis RSL link (re)establishment
 l This command applies for newly created lchans

```

The attributes are symbolized through a single ASCII letter (flag) and do exist in three levels. This is more or less due to the technical aspects of the VTY implementation. For the user, the level of an attribute has only informative purpose.

The global attributes, which can be found under the same attribute letter in every osmocom application, exist on the top level. The Library specific attributes below are used in various osmocom libraries. Like with the global attributes the attribute flag letter stays the same throughout every osmocom application here as well. On the third level one can find the application specific attributes. Those are unique to each osmocom application and the attribute letters may have different meanings in different osmocom applications. To make the user more aware of this, lowercase letters were used as attribute flags.

The `list` command with the parameter `with-flags` displays a list of available commands on the current VTY node, along with attribute columns on the left side. Those columns contain the attribute flag letters to indicate to the user how the command behaves in terms of how and when the configuration change takes effect.

Example: Typing `list with-flags` at the VTY prompt

```

OsmoBSC(config-net-bts)# list with-flags
. ... help
. ... list [with-flags]
. ... show vty-attributes
. ... show vty-attributes (application|library|global)

```

```

. ... write terminal
. ... write file [PATH]
. ... write memory
. ... write
. ... show running-config ❶
. ... exit
. ... end
. o.. type (unknown|bs11|nanobts|rbs2000|nokia_site|sysmobts) ❷
. ... description .TEXT
. ... no description
. o.. band BAND
. .r. cell_identity <0-65535> ❸
. .r. dtx uplink [force]
. .r. dtx downlink
. .r. no dtx uplink
. .r. no dtx downlink
. .r. location_area_code <0-65535>
. o.. base_station_id_code <0-63>
. o.. ipa unit-id <0-65534> <0-255>
. o.. ipa rsl-ip A.B.C.D
. o.. nokia_site skip-reset (0|1)
! ... nokia_site no-local-rel-conf (0|1) ❹
! ... nokia_site bts-reset-timer <15-100> ❺

```

- ❶ This command has no attributes assigned.
- ❷ This command applies on A-bis OML link (re)establishment.
- ❸ This command applies on A-bis RSL link (re)establishment.
- ❹, ❺ This command applies immediately.

There are multiple columns because a single command may be associated with multiple attributes at the same time. To improve readability each flag letter gets a dedicated column. Empty spaces in the column are marked with a dot (".")

In some cases the listing will contain commands that are associated with no flags at all. Those commands either play an exceptional role (interactive commands outside "configure terminal", vty node navigation commands, commands to show / write the config file) or will require a full restart of the overall process to take effect.

8.3.5 The expert mode

Some VTY commands are considered relatively dangerous if used in production operation, so the general approach is to hide them. This means that they don't show up anywhere but the source code, but can still be executed. On the one hand, this approach reduces the risk of an accidental invocation and potential service degradation; on the other, it complicates intentional use of the hidden commands.

The VTY features so-called *expert* mode, that makes the hidden commands appear in the interactive help, as well as in the XML VTY reference, just like normal ones. This mode can be activated from the *VIEW* node by invoking the `enable` command with the parameter `expert-mode`. It remains active for the individual VTY session, and gets disabled automatically when the user switches back to the *VIEW* node or terminates the session.

A special attribute in the output of the `list with-flags` command indicates whether a given command is hidden in normal mode, or is a regular command:

Example: Hidden commands in the output of the `list with-flags` command

```

OsmoBSC> enable expert-mode ❶
OsmoBSC# list with-flags
...
^   bts <0-255> (activate-all-lchan|deactivate-all-lchan) ❷
^   bts <0-255> trx <0-255> (activate-all-lchan|deactivate-all-lchan) ❸

```

```

.  bts <0-255> trx <0-255> timeslot <0-7> sub-slot <0-7> mdcx A.B.C.D <0-65535> ④
^  bts <0-255> trx <0-255> timeslot <0-7> sub-slot <0-7> (borken|unused) ⑤
.  bts <0-255> trx <0-255> timeslot <0-7> sub-slot <0-7> handover <0-255> ⑥
.  bts <0-255> trx <0-255> timeslot <0-7> sub-slot <0-7> assignment ⑦
.  bts <0-255> smscb-command (normal|schedule|default) <1-4> HEXSTRING ⑧
...

```

- ① This command enables the *expert* mode.
- ②, ③, ⑤ This is a hidden command (only shown in the *expert* mode).
- ④, ⑥, ⑦, ⑧ This is a regular command that is always shown regardless of the mode.

9 libsmocore Logging System

In any reasonably complex software it is important to understand how to enable and configure logging in order to get a better insight into what is happening, and to be able to follow the course of action. We therefore ask the reader to bear with us while we explain how the logging subsystem works and how it is configured.

Most Osmocom Software (like `osmo-bts`, `osmo-bsc`, `osmo-nitb`, `osmo-sgsn` and many others) uses the same common logging system.

This chapter describes the architecture and configuration of this common logging system.

The logging system is composed of

- log targets (where to log),
- log categories (who is creating the log line),
- log levels (controlling the verbosity of logging), and
- log filters (filtering or suppressing certain messages).

All logging is done in human-readable ASCII-text. The logging system is configured by means of VTY commands that can either be entered interactively, or read from a configuration file at process start time.

9.1 Log categories

Each sub-system of the program in question typically logs its messages as a different category, allowing fine-grained control over which log messages you will or will not see. For example, in OsmoBSC, there are categories for the protocol layers `rsl`, `rr`, `mm`, `cc` and many others. To get a list of categories interactively on the vty, type: `logging level ?`

9.2 Log levels

For each of the log categories (see Section 9.1), you can set an independent log level, controlling the level of verbosity. Log levels include:

fatal

Fatal messages, causing abort and/or re-start of a process. This *shouldn't happen*.

error

An actual error has occurred, its cause should be further investigated by the administrator.

notice

A noticeable event has occurred, which is not considered to be an error.

info

Some information about normal/regular system activity is provided.

debug

Verbose information about internal processing of the system, used for debugging purpose. This will log the most.

The log levels are inclusive, e.g. if you select *info*, then this really means that all events with a level of at least *info* will be logged, i.e. including events of *notice*, *error* and *fatal*.

So for example, in OsmoBSC, to set the log level of the Mobility Management category to *info*, you can use the following command: `log level mm info`.

There is also a special command to set all categories as a one-off to a desired log level. For example, to silence all messages but those logged as *notice* and above issue the command: `log level set-all notice`

Afterwards you can adjust specific categories as usual.

A similar command is `log level force-all <level>` which causes all categories to behave as if set to log level `<level>` until the command is reverted with `no log level force-all` after which the individually-configured log levels will again take effect. The difference between `set-all` and `force-all` is that `set-all` actually changes the individual category settings while `force-all` is a (temporary) override of those settings and does not change them.

9.3 Log printing options

The logging system has various options to change the information displayed in the log message.

log color 1

With this option each log message will log with the color of its category. The color is hard-coded and can not be changed. As with other options a *0* disables this functionality.

log timestamp 1

Includes the current time in the log message. When logging to syslog this option should not be needed, but may come in handy when debugging an issue while logging to file.

log print extended-timestamp 1

In order to debug time-critical issues this option will print a timestamp with millisecond granularity.

log print category 1

Prefix each log message with the category name.

log print category-hex 1

Prefix each log message with the category number in hex (`<000b>`).

log print level 1

Prefix each log message with the name of the log level.

log print file 1

Prefix each log message with the source file and line number. Append the keyword `last` to append the file information instead of prefixing it.

9.4 Log filters

The default behavior is to filter out everything, i.e. not to log anything. The reason is quite simple: On a busy production setup, logging all events for a given subsystem may very quickly be flooding your console before you have a chance to set a more restrictive filter.

To request no filtering, i.e. see all messages, you may use: `log filter all 1`

In addition to generic filtering, applications can implement special log filters using the same framework to filter on particular context.

For example in OsmoBSC, to only see messages relating to a particular subscriber identified by his IMSI, you may use: `log filter imsi 262020123456789`

9.5 Log targets

Each of the log targets represent certain destination for log messages. It can be configured independently by selecting levels (see Section 9.2) for categories (see Section 9.1) as well as filtering (see Section 9.4) and other options like `logging timestamp` for example.

9.5.1 Logging to the VTY

Logging messages to the interactive command-line interface (VTY) is most useful for occasional investigation by the system administrator.

Logging to the VTY is disabled by default, and needs to be enabled explicitly for each such session. This means that multiple concurrent VTY sessions each have their own logging configuration. Once you close a VTY session, the log target will be destroyed and your log settings be lost. If you re-connect to the VTY, you have to again activate and configure logging, if you wish.

To create a logging target bound to a VTY, you have to use the following command: `logging enable` This doesn't really activate the generation of any output messages yet, it merely creates and attaches a log target to the VTY session. The newly-created target still doesn't have any filter installed, i.e. *all log messages will be suppressed by default*

Next, you can configure the log levels for desired categories in your VTY session. See Section 9.1 for more details on categories and Section 9.2 for the log level details.

For example, to set the log level of the Call Control category to debug, you can use: `log level cc debug`

Finally, after having configured the levels, you still need to set the filter as it's described in Section 9.4.

Tip

If many messages are being logged to a VTY session, it may be hard to impossible to still use the same session for any commands. We therefore recommend to open a second VTY session in parallel, and use one only for logging, while the other is used for interacting with the system. Another option would be to use different log target.

To review the current vty logging configuration, you can use: `show logging vty`

9.5.2 Logging to the ring buffer

To avoid having separate VTY session just for logging output while still having immediate access to them, one can use `alarms` target. It lets you store the log messages inside the ring buffer of a given size which is available with `show alarms` command.

It's configured as follows:

```
OsmoBSC> enable
OsmoBSC# configure terminal
OsmoBSC(config)# log alarms 98
OsmoBSC(config-log)#
```

In the example above 98 is the desired size of the ring buffer (number of messages). Once it's filled, the incoming log messages will push out the oldest messages available in the buffer.

9.5.3 Logging via gsmtap

When debugging complex issues it's handy to be able to reconstruct exact chain of events. This is enabled by using GSMTAP log output where frames sent/received over the air are interspersed with the log lines. It also simplifies the bug handling as users don't have to provide separate `.pcap` and `.log` files anymore - everything will be inside self-contained packet dump.

It's configured as follows:

```
OsmoBSC> enable
OsmoBSC# configure terminal
OsmoBSC(config)# log gsmmap 192.168.2.3
OsmoBSC(config-log)#
```

The hostname/ip argument is optional: if omitted the default 127.0.0.1 will be used. The log strings inside GSMTAP are already supported by Wireshark. Capturing for port 4729 on appropriate interface will reveal log messages including source file name and line number as well as application. This makes it easy to consolidate logs from several different network components alongside the air frames. You can also use Wireshark to quickly filter logs for a given subsystem, severity, file name etc.

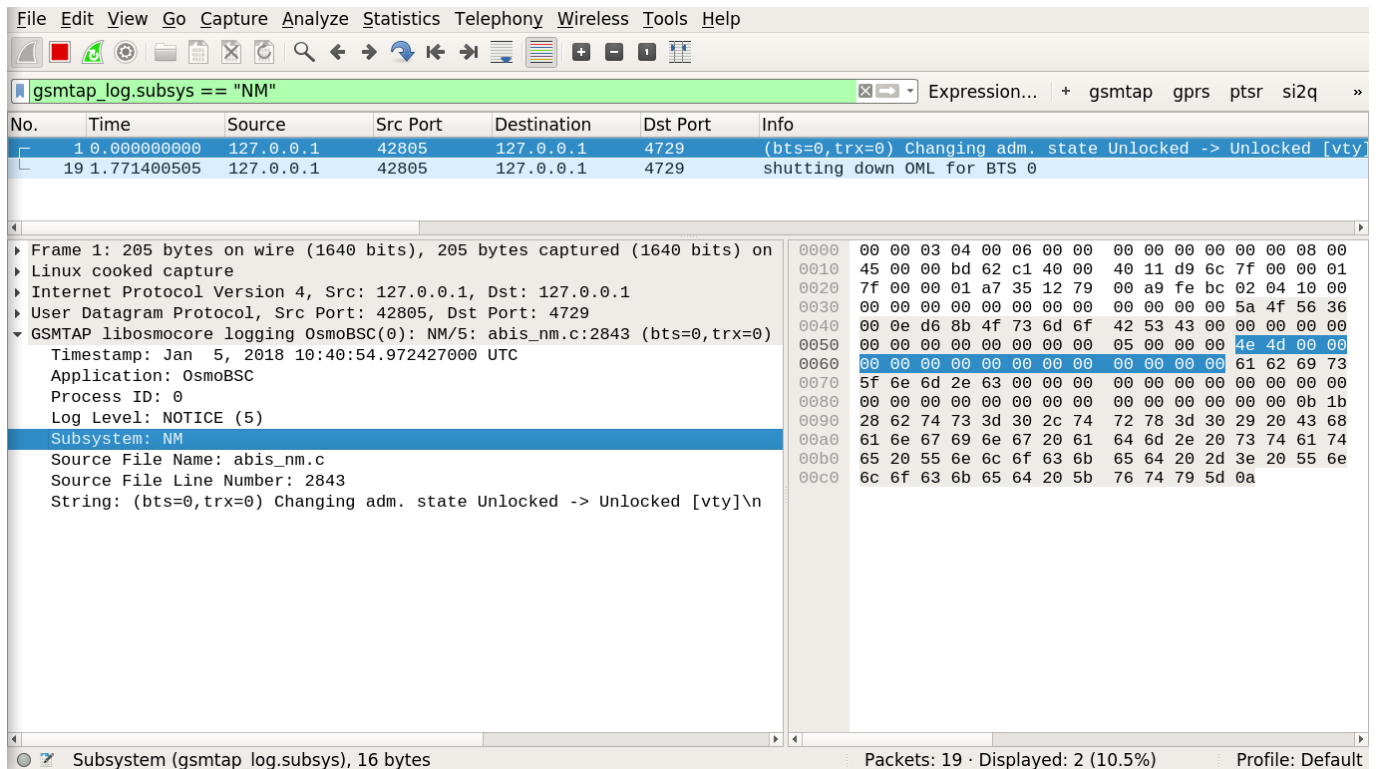


Figure 1: Wireshark with logs delivered over GSMTAP

Note: the logs are also duplicated to stderr when GSMTAP logging is configured because stderr is the default log target which is initialized automatically. To decrease stderr logging to absolute minimum, you can configure it as follows:

```
OsmoBSC> enable
OsmoBSC# configure terminal
OsmoBSC(config)# log stderr
OsmoBSC(config-log)# logging level force-all fatal
```

9.5.4 Logging to a file

As opposed to Logging to the VTY, logging to files is persistent and stored in the configuration file. As such, it is configured in sub-nodes below the configuration node. There can be any number of log files active, each of them having different settings regarding levels / subsystems.

To configure a new log file, enter the following sequence of commands:

```
OsmoBSC> enable
OsmoBSC# configure terminal
```

```
OsmoBSC(config)# log file /path/to/my/file
OsmoBSC(config-log)#
```

This leaves you at the config-log prompt, from where you can set the detailed configuration for this log file. The available commands at this point are identical to configuring logging on the VTY, they include `logging filter`, `logging level` as well as `logging color` and `logging timestamp`.

Tip

Don't forget to use the `copy running-config startup-config` (or its short-hand `write file`) command to make your logging configuration persistent across application re-start.

Note

libosmocore provides file close-and-reopen support by SIGHUP, as used by popular log file rotating solutions such as <https://github.com/logrotate/logrotate> found in most GNU/Linux distributions.

9.5.5 Logging to syslog

syslog is a standard for computer data logging maintained by the IETF. Unix-like operating systems like GNU/Linux provide several syslog compatible log daemons that receive log messages generated by application programs.

libosmocore based applications can log messages to syslog by using the syslog log target. You can configure syslog logging by issuing the following commands on the VTY:

```
OsmoBSC> enable
OsmoBSC# configure terminal
OsmoBSC(config)# log syslog daemon
OsmoBSC(config-log)#
```

This leaves you at the config-log prompt, from where you can set the detailed configuration for this log file. The available commands at this point are identical to configuring logging on the VTY, they include `logging filter`, `logging level` as well as `logging color` and `logging timestamp`.

Note

Syslog daemons will normally automatically prefix every message with a time-stamp, so you should disable the libosmocore time-stamping by issuing the `logging timestamp 0` command.

9.5.6 Logging to systemd-journal

systemd has been adopted by the majority of modern GNU/Linux distributions. Along with various daemons and utilities it provides `systemd-journald` [1] - a daemon responsible for event logging (syslog replacement). libosmocore based applications can log messages directly to `systemd-journald`.

The key difference from other logging targets is that systemd based logging allows to offload rendering of the meta information, such as location (file name, line number), subsystem, and logging level, to `systemd-journald`. Furthermore, systemd allows to attach arbitrary meta fields to the logging messages [2], which can be used for advanced log filtering.

[1] <https://www.freedesktop.org/software/systemd/man/systemd-journald.service.html> [2] <https://www.freedesktop.org/software/systemd/man/systemd-journal-fields.html>

It was decided to introduce `libsystemd` as an optional dependency, so it needs to be enabled explicitly at configure/build time:

```
$ ./configure --enable-systemd-logging
```

Note

Recent libosmocore packages provided by Osmocom for Debian and CentOS are compiled **with** libsystemd (<https://gerrit.osmocom.org/c/libosmocore/+22651>).

You can configure systemd based logging in two ways:

Example: systemd-journal target with offloaded rendering

```
log systemd-journal raw ❶
logging filter all 1
logging level set-all notice
```

- ❶ raw logging handler, rendering offloaded to systemd.

In this example, logging messages will be passed to systemd without any meta information (time, location, level, category) in the text itself, so all the printing parameters like `logging print file` will be ignored. Instead, the meta information is passed separately as *fields* which can be retrieved from the journal and rendered in any preferred way.

```
# Show Osmocom specific fields
$ journalctl --fields | grep OSMO

# Filter messages by logging subsystem at run-time
$ journalctl OSMO_SUBSYS=DMSC -f

# Render specific fields only
$ journalctl --output=verbose \
  --output-fields=SYSLOG_IDENTIFIER,OSMO_SUBSYS,CODE_FILE,CODE_LINE,MESSAGE
```

See `man 7 systemd.journal-fields` for a list of default fields, and `man 1 journalctl` for general information and available formatters.

Example: systemd-journal target with libosmocore based rendering

```
log systemd-journal ❶
logging filter all 1
logging print file basename
logging print category-hex 0
logging print category 1
logging print level 1
logging timestamp 0 ❷
logging color 1 ❸
logging level set-all notice
```

- ❶ Generic logging handler, rendering is done by libosmocore.
- ❷ Disable timestamping, systemd will timestamp every message anyway.
- ❸ Colored messages can be rendered with `journalctl --output=cat`.

In this example, logging messages will be pre-processed by libosmocore before being passed to systemd. No additional fields will be attached, except the logging level (PRIORITY). This mode is similar to *syslog* and *stderr*.

9.5.7 Logging to stderr

If you're not running the respective application as a daemon in the background, you can also use the `stderr` log target in order to log to the standard error file descriptor of the process.

In order to configure logging to `stderr`, you can use the following commands:

```
OsmoBSC> enable
OsmoBSC# configure terminal
OsmoBSC(config)# log stderr
OsmoBSC(config-log)#
```

10 Glossary

2FF

2nd Generation Form Factor; the so-called plug-in SIM form factor

3FF

3rd Generation Form Factor; the so-called microSIM form factor

3GPP

3rd Generation Partnership Project

4FF

4th Generation Form Factor; the so-called nanoSIM form factor

A Interface

Interface between BTS and BSC, traditionally over E1 (*3GPP TS 48.008* [[3gpp-ts-48-008](#)])

A3/A8

Algorithm 3 and 8; Authentication and key generation algorithm in GSM and GPRS, typically COMP128v1/v2/v3 or MILENAGE are typically used

A5

Algorithm 5; Air-interface encryption of GSM; currently only A5/0 (no encryption), A5/1 and A5/3 are in use

Abis Interface

Interface between BTS and BSC, traditionally over E1 (*3GPP TS 48.058* [[3gpp-ts-48-058](#)] and *3GPP TS 52.021* [[3gpp-ts-52-021](#)])

ACC

Access Control Class; every BTS broadcasts a bit-mask of permitted ACC, and only subscribers with a SIM of matching ACC are permitted to use that BTS

AGCH

Access Grant Channel on Um interface; used to assign a dedicated channel in response to RACH request

AGPL

GNU Affero General Public License, a copyleft-style Free Software License

AQPSK

Adaptive QPSK, a modulation scheme used by VAMOS channels on Downlink

ARFCN

Absolute Radio Frequency Channel Number; specifies a tuple of uplink and downlink frequencies

AUC

Authentication Center; central database of authentication key material for each subscriber

BCCH

Broadcast Control Channel on Um interface; used to broadcast information about Cell and its neighbors

BCC

Base Station Color Code; short identifier of BTS, lower part of BSIC

BTS

Base Transceiver Station

BSC

Base Station Controller

BSIC

Base Station Identity Code; 16bit identifier of BTS within location area

BSSGP

Base Station Subsystem Gateway Protocol (*3GPP TS 48.018* [[3gpp-ts-48-018](#)])

BVCI

BSSGP Virtual Circuit Identifier

CBCH

Cell Broadcast Channel; used to transmit Cell Broadcast SMS (SMS-CB)

CC

Call Control; Part of the GSM Layer 3 Protocol

CCCH

Common Control Channel on Um interface; consists of RACH (uplink), BCCH, PCH, AGCH (all downlink)

Cell

A cell in a cellular network, served by a BTS

CEPT

Conférence européenne des administrations des postes et des télécommunications; European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations.

CGI

Cell Global Identifier comprised of MCC, MNC, LAC and BSIC

CSFB

Circuit-Switched Fall Back; Mechanism for switching from LTE/EUTRAN to UTRAN/GERAN when circuit-switched services such as voice telephony are required.

dB

deci-Bel; relative logarithmic unit

dBm

deci-Bel (milliwatt); unit of measurement for signal strength of radio signals

DHCP

Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (*IETF RFC 2131* [[ietf-rfc2131](#)])

downlink

Direction of messages / signals from the network core towards the mobile phone

DSCP

Differentiated Services Code Point (*IETF RFC 2474* [[ietf-rfc2474](#)])

DSP

Digital Signal Processor

dnixload

Tool to program UBL and the Bootloader on a sysmoBTS

EDGE

Enhanced Data rates for GPRS Evolution; Higher-speed improvement of GPRS; introduces 8PSK

EGPRS

Enhanced GPRS; the part of EDGE relating to GPRS services

EIR

Equipment Identity Register; core network element that stores and manages IMEI numbers

ESME

External SMS Entity; an external application interfacing with a SMSC over SMPP

ETSI

European Telecommunications Standardization Institute

FPGA

Field Programmable Gate Array; programmable digital logic hardware

Gb

Interface between PCU and SGSN in GPRS/EDGE network; uses NS, BSSGP, LLC

GERAN

GPRS/EDGE Radio Access Network

GFDL

GNU Free Documentation License; a copyleft-style Documentation License

GGSN

GPRS Gateway Support Node; gateway between GPRS and external (IP) network

GMSK

Gaussian Minimum Shift Keying; modulation used for GSM and GPRS

GPL

GNU General Public License, a copyleft-style Free Software License

Gp

Gp interface between SGSN and GGSN; uses GTP protocol

GPRS

General Packet Radio Service; the packet switched 2G technology

GPS

Global Positioning System; provides a highly accurate clock reference besides the global position

GSM

Global System for Mobile Communications. ETSI/3GPP Standard of a 2G digital cellular network

GSMTAP

GSM tap; pseudo standard for encapsulating GSM protocol layers over UDP/IP for analysis

GSUP

Generic subscriber Update Protocol. Osmocom-specific alternative to TCAP/MAP

GT

Global Title; an address in SCCP

GTP

GPRS Tunnel Protocol; used between SGSN and GGSN

HLR

Home Location Register; central subscriber database of a GSM network

HNB-GW

Home NodeB Gateway. Entity between femtocells (Home NodeB) and CN in 3G/UMTS.

HPLMN

Home PLMN; the network that has issued the subscriber SIM and has his record in HLR

IE

Information Element

IMEI

International Mobile Equipment Identity; unique 14-digit decimal number to globally identify a mobile device, optionally with a 15th checksum digit

IMEISV

IMEI software version; unique 14-digit decimal number to globally identify a mobile device (same as IMEI) plus two software version digits (total digits: 16)

IMSI

International Mobile Subscriber Identity; 15-digit unique identifier for the subscriber/SIM; starts with MCC/MNC of issuing operator

IP

Internet Protocol (*IETF RFC 791* [[ietf-rfc791](#)])

IPA

ip.access GSM over IP protocol; used to multiplex a single TCP connection

Iu

Interface in 3G/UMTS between RAN and CN

IuCS

Iu interface for circuit-switched domain. Used in 3G/UMTS between RAN and MSC

IuPS

Iu interface for packet-switched domain. Used in 3G/UMTS between RAN and SGSN

LAC

Location Area Code; 16bit identifier of Location Area within network

LAPD

Link Access Protocol, D-Channel (*ITU-T Q.921* [[itu-t-q921](#)])

LAPDm

Link Access Protocol Mobile (*3GPP TS 44.006* [[3gpp-ts-44-006](#)])

LLC

Logical Link Control; GPRS protocol between MS and SGSN (*3GPP TS 44.064* [[3gpp-ts-44-064](#)])

Location Area

Location Area; a geographic area containing multiple BTS

LU

Location Updating; can be of type IMSI-Attach or Periodic. Procedure that indicates a subscriber's physical presence in a given radio cell.

M2PA

MTP2 Peer-to-Peer Adaptation; a SIGTRAN Variant (*RFC 4165* [[ietf-rfc4165](#)])

M2UA

MTP2 User Adaptation; a SIGTRAN Variant (*RFC 3331* [[ietf-rfc3331](#)])

M3UA

MTP3 User Adaptation; a SIGTRAN Variant (*RFC 4666* [[ietf-rfc4666](#)])

MCC

Mobile Country Code; unique identifier of a country, e.g. 262 for Germany

MFF

Machine-to-Machine Form Factor; a SIM chip package that is soldered permanently onto M2M device circuit boards.

MGW

Media Gateway

MM

Mobility Management; part of the GSM Layer 3 Protocol

MNC

Mobile Network Code; identifies network within a country; assigned by national regulator

MNCC

Mobile Network Call Control; Unix domain socket based Interface between MSC and external call control entity like osmo-sip-connector

MNO

Mobile Network Operator; operator with physical radio network under his MCC/MNC

MO

Mobile Originated. Direction from Mobile (MS/UE) to Network

MS

Mobile Station; a mobile phone / GSM Modem

MSC

Mobile Switching Center; network element in the circuit-switched core network

MSC pool

A number of redundant MSCs serving the same core network, which a BSC / RNC distributes load across; see also the "MSC Pooling" chapter in OsmoBSC's user manual [[userman-osmobsc](#)] and *3GPP TS 23.236* [[3gpp-ts-23-236](#)]

MSISDN

Mobile Subscriber ISDN Number; telephone number of the subscriber

MT

Mobile Terminated. Direction from Network to Mobile (MS/UE)

MTP

Message Transfer Part; SS7 signaling protocol (*ITU-T Q.701* [[itu-t-q701](#)])

MVNO

Mobile Virtual Network Operator; Operator without physical radio network

NCC

Network Color Code; assigned by national regulator

NITB

Network In The Box; combines functionality traditionally provided by BSC, MSC, VLR, HLR, SMSC functions; see OsmoNITB

NRI

Network Resource Indicator, typically 10 bits of a TMSI indicating which MSC of an MSC pool attached the subscriber; see also the "MSC Pooling" chapter in OsmoBSC's user manual [[userman-osmobsc](#)] and *3GPP TS 23.236* [[3gpp-ts-23-236](#)]

NSEI

NS Entity Identifier

NVCI

NS Virtual Circuit Identifier

NWL

Network Listen; ability of some BTS to receive downlink from other BTSs

NS

Network Service; protocol on Gb interface (*3GPP TS 48.016* [[3gpp-ts-48-016](#)])

OCXO

Oven Controlled Crystal Oscillator; very high precision oscillator, superior to a VCTCXO

OML

Operation & Maintenance Link (ETSI/3GPP TS 52.021 [[3gpp-ts-52-021](#)])

OpenBSC

Open Source implementation of GSM network elements, specifically OsmoBSC, OsmoNITB, OsmoSGSN

OpenGGSN

Open Source implementation of a GPRS Packet Control Unit

OpenVPN

Open-Source Virtual Private Network; software employed to establish encrypted private networks over untrusted public networks

Osmocom

Open Source MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS; collaborative community for implementing communications protocols and systems, including GSM, GPRS, TETRA, DECT, GMR and others

OsmoBSC

Open Source implementation of a GSM Base Station Controller

OsmoNITB

Open Source implementation of a GSM Network In The Box, combines functionality traditionally provided by BSC, MSC, VLR, HLR, AUC, SMSC

OsmoSGSN

Open Source implementation of a Serving GPRS Support Node

OsmoPCU

Open Source implementation of a GPRS Packet Control Unit

OTA

Over-The-Air; Capability of operators to remotely reconfigure/reprogram ISM/USIM cards

PC

Point Code; an address in MTP

PCH

Paging Channel on downlink Um interface; used by network to page an MS

PCP

Priority Code Point (*IEEE 802.1Q* [?])

PCU

Packet Control Unit; used to manage Layer 2 of the GPRS radio interface

PDCH

Packet Data Channel on Um interface; used for GPRS/EDGE signalling + user data

PIN

Personal Identification Number; a number by which the user authenticates to a SIM/USIM or other smart card

PLMN

Public Land Mobile Network; specification language for a single GSM network

PUK

PIN Unblocking Code; used to unblock a blocked PIN (after too many wrong PIN attempts)

RAC

Routing Area Code; 16bit identifier for a Routing Area within a Location Area

RACH

Random Access Channel on uplink Um interface; used by MS to request establishment of a dedicated channel

RAM

Remote Application Management; Ability to remotely manage (install, remove) Java Applications on SIM/USIM Card

RF

Radio Frequency

RFM

Remote File Management; Ability to remotely manage (write, read) files on a SIM/USIM card

Roaming

Procedure in which a subscriber of one network is using the radio network of another network, often in different countries; in some countries national roaming exists

Routing Area

Routing Area; GPRS specific sub-division of Location Area

RR

Radio Resources; Part of the GSM Layer 3 Protocol

RSL

Radio Signalling Link (*3GPP TS 48.058* [[3gpp-ts-48-058](#)])

RTP

Real-Time Transport Protocol (*IETF RFC 3550* [[ietf-rfc3550](#)]); Used to transport audio/video streams over UDP/IP

SACCH

Slow Associate Control Channel on Um interface; bundled to a TCH or SDCCH, used for signalling in parallel to active dedicated channel

SCCP

Signaling Connection Control Part; SS7 signaling protocol (*ITU-T Q.711* [[itu-t-q711](#)])

SDCCH

Slow Dedicated Control Channel on Um interface; used for signalling and SMS transport in GSM

SDK

Software Development Kit

SGs

Interface between MSC (GSM/UMTS) and MME (LTE/EPC) to facilitate CSFB and SMS.

SGSN

Serving GPRS Support Node; Core network element for packet-switched services in GSM and UMTS.

SIGTRAN

Signaling Transport over IP (*IETF RFC 2719* [[ietf-rfc2719](#)])

SIM

Subscriber Identity Module; small chip card storing subscriber identity

Site

A site is a location where one or more BTSs are installed, typically three BTSs for three sectors

SMPP

Short Message Peer-to-Peer; TCP based protocol to interface external entities with an SMSC

SMSC

Short Message Service Center; store-and-forward relay for short messages

SS7

Signaling System No. 7; Classic digital telephony signaling system

SS

Supplementary Services; query and set various service parameters between subscriber and core network (e.g. USSD, 3rd-party calls, hold/retrieve, advice-of-charge, call deflection)

SSH

Secure Shell; *IETF RFC 4250* [[ietf-rfc4251](#)] to 4254

SSN

Sub-System Number; identifies a given SCCP Service such as MSC, HLR

STP

Signaling Transfer Point; A Router in SS7 Networks

SUA

SCCP User Adaptation; a SIGTRAN Variant (*RFC 3868* [[ietf-rfc3868](#)])

syslog

System logging service of UNIX-like operating systems

System Information

A set of downlink messages on the BCCH and SACCH of the Um interface describing properties of the cell and network

TCH

Traffic Channel; used for circuit-switched user traffic (mostly voice) in GSM

TCP

Transmission Control Protocol; (*IETF RFC 793* [[ietf-rfc793](#)])

TFTP

Trivial File Transfer Protocol; (*IETF RFC 1350* [[ietf-rfc1350](#)])

TOS

Type Of Service; bit-field in IPv4 header, now re-used as DSCP (*IETF RFC 791* [[ietf-rfc791](#)])

TRX

Transceiver; element of a BTS serving a single carrier

TS

Technical Specification

u-Boot

Boot loader used in various embedded systems

UBI

An MTD wear leveling system to deal with NAND flash in Linux

UBL

Initial bootloader loaded by the TI Davinci SoC

UDP

User Datagram Protocol (*IETF RFC 768* [[ietf-rfc768](#)])

UICC

Universal Integrated Chip Card; A smart card according to *ETSI TR 102 216* [[etsi-tr102216](#)]

Um interface

U mobile; Radio interface between MS and BTS

uplink

Direction of messages: Signals from the mobile phone towards the network

USIM

Universal Subscriber Identity Module; application running on a UICC to provide subscriber identity for UMTS and GSM networks

USSD

Unstructured Supplementary Service Data; textual dialog between subscriber and core network, e.g. **100* → *Your extension is 1234*

VAMOS

Voice services over Adaptive Multi-user channels on One Slot; an optional extension for GSM specified in Release 9 of 3GPP GERAN specifications (*3GPP TS 48.018* [[3gpp-ts-48-018](#)]) allowing two independent UEs to transmit and receive simultaneously on traffic channels

VCTCXO

Voltage Controlled, Temperature Compensated Crystal Oscillator; a precision oscillator, superior to a classic crystal oscillator, but inferior to an OCXO

VLAN

Virtual LAN in the context of Ethernet (*IEEE 802.1Q* [[ieee-802.1q](#)])

VLR

Visitor Location Register; volatile storage of attached subscribers in the MSC

VPLMN

Visited PLMN; the network in which the subscriber is currently registered; may differ from HPLMN when on roaming

VTY

Virtual Teletype; a textual command-line interface for configuration and introspection, e.g. the OsmoBSC configuration file as well as its telnet link on port 4242

A Osmocom TCP/UDP Port Numbers

The Osmocom GSM system utilizes a variety of TCP/IP based protocols. The table below provides a reference as to which port numbers are used by which protocol / interface.

Table 2: TCP/UDP port numbers

L4 Protocol	Port Number	Purpose	Software
UDP	2427	MGCP GW	osmo-bsc_mgcp, osmo-mgw
TCP	2775	SMPP (SMS interface for external programs)	osmo-nitb
TCP	3002	A-bis/IP OML	osmo-bts, osmo-bsc, osmo-nitb
TCP	3003	A-bis/IP RSL	osmo-bts, osmo-bsc, osmo-nitb
TCP	4236	Control Interface	osmo-trx
TCP	4237	telnet (VTY)	osmo-trx
TCP	4238	Control Interface	osmo-bts
TCP	4239	telnet (VTY)	osmo-stp
TCP	4240	telnet (VTY)	osmo-pcu
TCP	4241	telnet (VTY)	osmo-bts
TCP	4242	telnet (VTY)	osmo-nitb, osmo-bsc, cellmgr-ng
TCP	4243	telnet (VTY)	osmo-bsc_mgcp, osmo-mgw
TCP	4244	telnet (VTY)	osmo-bsc_nat
TCP	4245	telnet (VTY)	osmo-sgsn
TCP	4246	telnet (VTY)	osmo-gbproxy
TCP	4247	telnet (VTY)	OsmocomBB
TCP	4249	Control Interface	osmo-nitb, osmo-bsc
TCP	4250	Control Interface	osmo-bsc_nat
TCP	4251	Control Interface	osmo-sgsn
TCP	4252	telnet (VTY)	sysmobts-mgr
TCP	4253	telnet (VTY)	osmo-gtphub
TCP	4254	telnet (VTY)	osmo-msc
TCP	4255	Control Interface	osmo-msc
TCP	4256	telnet (VTY)	osmo-sip-connector
TCP	4257	Control Interface	osmo-ggsn, ggsn (OpenGGSN)

Table 2: (continued)

L4 Protocol	Port Number	Purpose	Software
TCP	4258	telnet (VTY)	osmo-hlr
TCP	4259	Control Interface	osmo-hlr
TCP	4260	telnet (VTY)	osmo-ggsn
TCP	4261	telnet (VTY)	osmo-hnbgw
TCP	4262	Control Interface	osmo-hnbgw
TCP	4263	Control Interface	osmo-gbproxy
TCP	4264	telnet (VTY)	osmo-cbc
TCP	4265	Control Interface	osmo-cbc
TCP	4266	D-GSM MS Lookup: mDNS serve	osmo-hlr
TCP	4267	Control Interface	osmo-mgw
TCP	4268	telnet (VTY)	osmo-uecups
SCTP	4268	UECUPS	osmo-uecups
TCP	4269	telnet (VTY)	osmo-e1d
TCP	4271	telnet (VTY)	osmo-smlc
TCP	4272	Control Interface	osmo-smlc
UDP	4729	GSMTAP	Almost every osmocom project
TCP	5000	A/IP	osmo-bsc, osmo-bsc_nat
UDP	23000	GPRS-NS over IP default port	osmo-pcu, osmo-ggsn, osmo-gbproxy

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