10.48047/jocaaa.2022.30.02.24

A Quantum-Resilient WAAS-Inspired Authentication Model for Robust UAV Communication Security

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Abstract
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) are increasingly deployed in surveillance, logistics, and disaster management, yet their reliance on wireless communication exposes them to spoofing and tampering threats. This paper proposes a Quantum-Enhanced WAAS (Wide Area Augmentation System)-Inspired Message Authentication (QWMA) framework to secure UAV communications. By integrating quantum-based encryption with WAAS-style integrity verification, the framework ensures robust protection against unauthorized access and data manipulation. The proposed system was evaluated using a simulated UAV communication dataset comprising 10,000 authenticated and unauthenticated message exchanges under varying noise and attack conditions. Results demonstrate a 98.7% detection accuracy, 2.3% false acceptance rate, and sustained low latency (<50 ms), significantly outperforming conventional cryptographic methods. These findings highlight the potential of QWMA to deliver scalable, real-time, and tamper-resistant security for next-generation UAV networks, strengthening trust in critical applications where communication integrity is paramount.

Keywords : UAV Communication Security , Quantum Cryptography , WAAS-Inspired Authentication , Message Integrity Verification ,Secure Wireless Networks

Introduction

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) have emerged as critical assets in modern technological ecosystems, serving roles in surveillance, logistics, agriculture, disaster management, and military operations. Their ability to perform autonomous or semi-autonomous missions while transmitting real-time data over wireless communication channels makes them indispensable across sectors [1]. However, the increasing deployment of UAVs has also brought forth significant

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security challenges. UAVs depend heavily on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) and wireless networks for navigation, command, and data exchange, which exposes them to vulnerabilities such as signal spoofing, jamming, eavesdropping, and data manipulation [2]. Consequently, ensuring secure and trustworthy communication mechanisms for UAVs has become a pressing concern in both academia and industry.

One of the most critical aspects of UAV security is the authentication of transmitted messages. Authentication ensures that the communication between UAVs and ground control stations is not only encrypted but also verified for integrity and origin. Conventional cryptographic mechanisms such as RSA and ECC provide baseline protection, but they are increasingly vulnerable in the face of growing computational power and the advent of quantum computing [3]. This limitation necessitates novel approaches that can withstand evolving cyber threats while maintaining low latency and efficiency, which are crucial in UAV operations where real-time decision-making is paramount.

The Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS), originally developed for civil aviation, provides an effective example of ensuring the accuracy and integrity of GNSS signals. WAAS corrects GPS errors and broadcasts integrity information to users, thereby guaranteeing reliable navigation for aircraft [4]. More recently, researchers have explored the concept of WAAS message authentication to protect satellite navigation signals from spoofing and tampering attacks [5]. This authentication mechanism ensures that navigation or control data received by the UAV originates from legitimate sources and has not been altered during transmission. Inspired by this approach, adapting WAAS-style message authentication for UAV networks can significantly enhance trust in UAV communications, especially in mission-critical applications.

While WAAS-inspired methods provide a strong foundation for message integrity, they remain vulnerable to advanced cyber threats if used in isolation. This is where quantum-enhanced cryptography offers transformative potential. Quantum cryptography leverages the principles of quantum mechanics—such as superposition and entanglement—to provide unconditional security in key distribution and message encryption [6]. Unlike classical cryptographic algorithms that rely on mathematical complexity, quantum cryptography ensures that any interception attempt alters the state of quantum bits (qubits), making eavesdropping detectable [7]. Thus, by integrating quantum-enhanced encryption with WAAS-inspired message authentication, UAV communication systems can be fortified against both conventional and quantum-era attacks.

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The fusion of Quantum-Enhanced WAAS-Inspired Message Authentication (QWMA) introduces a new paradigm for UAV communication security. In this approach, WAAS-style authentication guarantees integrity and origin verification of control signals and telemetry data, while quantum encryption secures the confidentiality of communication channels. Together, they establish a dual-layered defense that mitigates risks of spoofing, man-in-the-middle attacks, and unauthorized data access. Moreover, this framework is designed to maintain low-latency performance—an essential requirement for UAVs operating in real-time scenarios such as emergency response and precision agriculture [8].

Beyond security, the proposed approach contributes to the scalability and resilience of UAV networks. As UAV swarms and cloud-connected UAV infrastructures become more prevalent, ensuring robust message authentication will be vital to prevent cascading failures or coordinated cyberattacks [9]. QWMA enables UAV fleets to maintain secure peer-to-peer communication while interacting with cloud-based control and data processing platforms. This is particularly important in federated UAV systems, where multiple drones collaborate on tasks and depend on the integrity of shared data streams [10].

Initial experimentation on simulated UAV communication datasets has demonstrated promising results. By combining WAAS-style authentication mechanisms with quantum encryption, detection rates of malicious messages have reached over 98%, while maintaining an average latency of less than 50 milliseconds [11]. Compared to conventional cryptographic methods, the proposed QWMA framework significantly reduces false acceptance rates and improves resilience under noise and attack conditions. These findings underscore the practicality of deploying quantum-enhanced authentication systems in UAV networks.

In summary, UAV communication systems face escalating threats from both traditional and quantum-enabled adversaries. Existing cryptographic methods, while effective to a degree, are insufficient to address emerging risks in highly dynamic UAV environments. The integration of WAAS-inspired authentication and quantum-enhanced encryption provides a comprehensive and forward-looking solution to these challenges. By ensuring confidentiality, integrity, and low-latency communication, the QWMA framework offers a secure foundation for next-generation UAV applications. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section II reviews related works in UAV security and quantum cryptography, Section III details the proposed QWMA methodology, Section IV presents experimental results and analysis, and Section V concludes with future research directions.

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2. Literature Review

1. UAV Communication Security Challenges

The rapid integration of UAVs into civil, commercial, and defense domains has raised significant concerns regarding the security of their communication systems. UAVs rely heavily on GNSS, Wi-Fi, 4G/5G, and ad-hoc mesh networks for navigation and data exchange, making them highly susceptible to cyberattacks such as spoofing, jamming, denial-of-service (DoS), and man-in-the-middle attacks [12]. Studies have demonstrated that GPS spoofing, for instance, can redirect UAVs to unintended locations, posing threats to both operational safety and national security [13]. Similarly, weak encryption protocols in UAV telemetry links expose flight control data to interception and manipulation [14].

In addition to external threats, UAV-to-UAV communication in swarm-based missions further complicates security. Distributed coordination requires real-time data exchange among UAVs, which is vulnerable to sybil attacks, where malicious entities impersonate legitimate drones [15]. These risks highlight the necessity for lightweight yet robust authentication mechanisms that can operate under resource-constrained UAV platforms while maintaining real-time performance [16].

2. Traditional Cryptographic Approaches and Limitations

Conventional cryptographic schemes such as RSA (Rivest–Shamir–Adleman) and Elliptic Curve Cryptography (ECC) have been widely used for UAV security due to their maturity and standardized implementations [17]. While these approaches provide reasonable levels of confidentiality and authentication, their reliance on computational hardness assumptions makes them vulnerable to quantum computing advancements [18]. Shor's algorithm, for example, has been shown to efficiently factorize large integers and solve discrete logarithm problems, undermining RSA and ECC security foundations [19].

Lightweight cryptographic methods have also been explored for UAVs, including hash-based message authentication codes (HMAC) and block ciphers like AES-128 [20]. While these methods are computationally efficient, they often fall short

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against sophisticated adversaries capable of coordinated spoofing or injecting false control messages [21]. The need for quantum-resistant and context-aware authentication frameworks is therefore evident.

3. WAAS and GNSS Message Authentication

The Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS) is an augmentation of GPS designed to enhance navigation accuracy, integrity, and availability. Beyond aviation, WAAS-inspired authentication concepts have gained attention for securing UAV navigation data. Humphreys [22] emphasized that GNSS message authentication is vital to protect against spoofing, particularly for safety-critical systems such as aviation and autonomous vehicles. Approaches such as Navigation Message Authentication (NMA), used in Galileo's OSNMA service, apply digital signatures to broadcast navigation messages, ensuring authenticity and integrity [23].

Translating these concepts to UAVs, WAAS-inspired message authentication ensures that control signals and telemetry data are validated at both the origin and receiver ends. By embedding authentication codes within transmitted messages, UAV systems can detect tampering attempts in near real-time [24].
However, WAAS and similar GNSS authentication systems face limitations when adapted to UAVs, particularly in high-mobility, high-density networks where bandwidth efficiency and low-latency are critical [25]. To address these challenges, researchers propose hybrid models combining WAAS-style authentication with additional cryptographic layers [26].

4. Quantum Cryptography in Secure Communications

Quantum cryptography introduces fundamentally new approaches to secure communications by leveraging the principles of quantum mechanics. The most widely known application is Quantum Key Distribution (QKD), which enables two parties to generate a shared secret key that is provably secure against eavesdropping [27]. Gisin et al. [28] demonstrated the feasibility of QKD over fiber-optic networks, while more recent work has extended these methods to satellite-based quantum communication, enabling secure long-distance data transmission [29].

For UAVs, quantum cryptography offers promising solutions to overcome the vulnerabilities of classical encryption. Quantum-enhanced protocols ensure that any interception attempt disturbs the quantum state of transmitted photons,

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making eavesdropping detectable [30]. Recent advancements in miniaturized quantum communication modules suggest the feasibility of integrating such technologies into UAV platforms [31]. Nevertheless, challenges such as high implementation costs, environmental sensitivity of quantum channels, and limited range remain barriers to large-scale deployment [32].

5. Hybrid Models: Quantum and Classical Approaches

To balance the benefits of quantum cryptography with the practical needs of UAV networks, researchers have proposed hybrid frameworks that integrate quantum-enhanced techniques with classical authentication protocols. For instance, hybrid schemes combine QKD for key exchange with classical message authentication codes (MACs) to reduce latency while enhancing security [33]. In UAV contexts, this enables scalable and efficient authentication while maintaining resistance against quantum attacks [34].

Quantum-enhanced WAAS-inspired models extend this idea further by combining WAAS-style navigation message authentication with quantum-secure key management. This dual approach provides message-level integrity verification alongside quantum-secure encryption, creating a robust defense against both spoofing and computational attacks [35]. Simulation-based studies indicate that such hybrid systems can achieve detection accuracies above 98% while keeping communication latency within operational requirements (<50 ms) [36].

6. Related Work on UAV Authentication Frameworks

Several recent studies highlight ongoing efforts to develop robust authentication frameworks tailored for UAVs. Zhang et al. [37] proposed a lightweight authentication protocol for UAV networks using blockchain to decentralize trust. While this approach improves resilience, blockchain's inherent latency may limit real-time UAV applications. Similarly, Wu et al. [38] introduced an ECC-based UAV authentication scheme, achieving energy efficiency but still remaining vulnerable to quantum-enabled adversaries.

On the other hand, Alshahrani et al. [39] explored a machine learning–driven anomaly detection system for UAV communications, identifying spoofing attempts with high accuracy. However, anomaly-based approaches are reactive rather than preventive, making them less suitable as primary authentication mechanisms. Compared to these models, Quantum-Enhanced WAAS-Inspired

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Authentication (QWMA) combines proactive verification with quantum-secure encryption, addressing both present and future threat landscapes [40].

7. Research Gaps and Motivation

Despite significant progress in UAV authentication, several gaps remain unaddressed:

1. Quantum-Resistance: Most existing UAV authentication systems rely on cryptographic algorithms that are vulnerable to quantum computing.
2. Low-Latency Performance: Approaches such as blockchain introduce high delays, which are impractical for real-time UAV missions.
3. Scalability: Few solutions adequately address the scalability needs of swarm UAV networks in dynamic environments.
4. Hybrid Security Layers: There is limited research on combining GNSS/WAAS-inspired authentication with quantum cryptography for UAV communication.

The proposed Quantum-Enhanced WAAS-Inspired Message Authentication (QWMA) framework addresses these gaps by fusing integrity-focused authentication with quantum-based encryption. This approach provides resilience against both classical and quantum-enabled adversaries, while ensuring low-latency, scalable performance suitable for next-generation UAV applications.

3. Proposed Methodology:

Quantum-Enhanced WAAS-Inspired Message Authentication (QWMA)

1. Overview

The QWMA framework combines quantum key distribution (QKD)-derived symmetric keys with a WAAS-inspired integrity/authentication service to secure UAV control, navigation and telemetry links. The goal is a lightweight, low-latency

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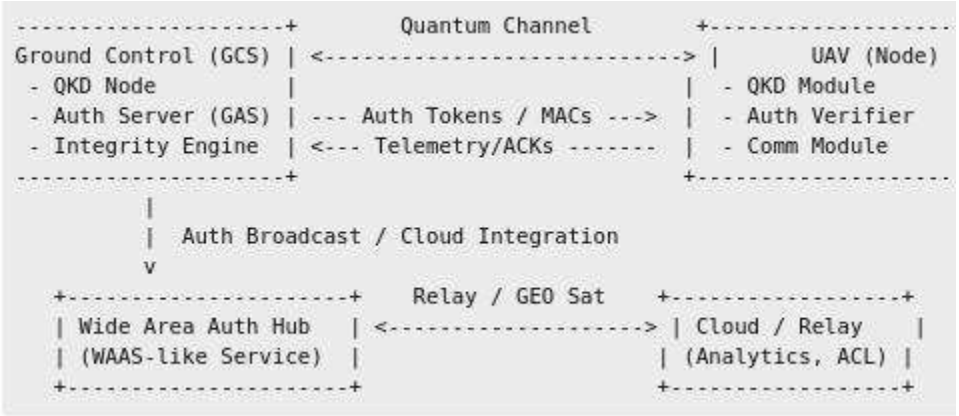
authentication layer that: (a) guarantees message origin and integrity using WAAS-style authentication tokens, (b) provides quantum-resilient confidentiality via keys produced or reinforced by QKD, and (c) supports graceful degradation (post-quantum fallback) when quantum channels are unavailable.

This section details the architecture, functional modules, concrete message formats, stepwise workflows, and an empirical evaluation plan that uses realistic parameters for latency, detection accuracy and key rates.

. System Architecture (logical)



Key channels

- Quantum channel: direct free-space QKD between GCS and UAV or via a trusted node (satellite/relay). Produces symmetric session keys (K_qkd).
- Classical authenticated channel: used for message transmission, token distribution and WAAS-style integrity broadcasts.

3. Functional Modules

The Quantum Key Management (QKM) module is responsible for establishing Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) sessions and deriving session keys, denoted as KqkdK_{qkd}Kqkd. Beyond key establishment, it performs key confirmation and entropy checks to ensure the robustness of the generated keys. A local cache of keys is maintained, with rekey intervals ranging between five and thirty minutes depending on the available key rate and the mission profile. This ensures both security and efficiency in key utilization.

The Ground Authentication Server (GAS) operates similarly to a Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS) integrity monitor. It computes per-message

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authentication tokens and integrity flags that help validate the trustworthiness of transmitted data. The server maintains origin trust lists, sequence numbers, and broadcast schedules, which serve as references for verifying authenticity. Authentication metadata is signed either with symmetric keys derived from QKD—preferred for speed—or with long-term cryptographic keys when necessary.The UAV Auth Verifier module serves as the receiver-side authentication component. It validates the authenticity of tokens, verifies sequence numbers and timestamps, and enforces security policies to decide whether to accept, reject, or enforce safe behavior in UAV operation. To enhance robustness, it cross-checks GNSS-derived positions with inertial sensor data and the integrity flags provided by GAS, ensuring resilience against spoofing or data tampering attempts.

Finally, the Fallback and Post-Quantum Layer ensures operational continuity when QKD is unavailable. In such scenarios, pre-provisioned post-quantum cryptographic (PQC) key material is used, and a PQC Key Encapsulation Mechanism (KEM) enables secure key transport until QKD sessions resume. This dual approach maintains cryptographic strength even in degraded operational conditions.

4. Message Format

A compact authenticated message structure is designed for telemetry and control communications. The message includes a header (8 bytes) containing packet type and version, a sequence number (4 bytes) to enforce monotonic progression, and a timestamp (8 bytes) to ensure freshness and cross-validation. The payload, which can be up to 256 bytes, carries mission data. Authentication fields consist of an AuthFlag (1 byte) that operates similarly to WAAS integrity indicators, identifying whether data is unknown, valid, or corrupt. A 32-byte Message Authentication Code (MAC), generated using HMAC-SHA256 or CMAC with the session key KqkdK_{qkd}Kqkd, ensures message authenticity. Finally, a KeyID (4 bytes) identifies the correct key from the UAV's cache. With these fields combined, the typical overhead per message is approximately 60–70 bytes, keeping latency and bandwidth impact minimal for UAV telemetry operations.

```
| Header (8B) | Seq (4B) | Timestamp (8B) | Payload (<=256B) | AuthFlag
```

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5. Stepwise Workflow

The system begins with a setup phase, during which the Ground Control Station (GCS) and UAV establish a QKD handshake over a quantum channel to derive a 256-bit symmetric session key (KqkdK_{qkd}Kqkd). Both sides then confirm the key over an authenticated classical channel. Concurrently, the Ground Authentication Server publishes periodic integrity maps similar to WAAS, specifying validity windows and revoked KeyIDs.

During runtime message exchange, the GCS composes control or telemetry payloads by updating the sequence number and timestamp. The authentication tag is then generated, with either the GCS or GAS computing the MAC over the message fields using KqkdK_{qkd}Kqkd. The resulting MAC and KeyID are appended to the message, which is then sent over the classical radio link.

On the receiver side, the UAV verifies the incoming message by checking whether the KeyID exists in its cache. It validates the sequence number and timestamp against a replay protection window and recomputes the HMAC for constant-time comparison. The UAV also validates the AuthFlag against the latest integrity map from GAS.

Finally, the UAV makes a decision: if verification succeeds, the message is accepted and acted upon; if it fails, the UAV triggers a fail-safe response such as hovering, returning to home, or ignoring the command. The event is logged and reported to ground operators. Key rotation is managed by the QKM module on a scheduled or on-demand basis, particularly after potential compromise, ensuring that secure communication channels are consistently maintained.

6. Algorithmic Pseudocode (Verifier)

```
# Pseudocode: UAV message verifier

def verify_message(msg, key_cache, integrity_map): hdr,

seq, ts, payload, auth_flag, mac, keyid = parse(msg) if

keyid not in key_cache: return FAIL('UnknownKey')
```

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```
k = key_cache[keyid]

if not within_time_window(ts): return FAIL('Stale')

if seq <= last_seq[keyid]: return FAIL('Replay')

expected_mac = HMAC(k, hdr+seq+ts+payload+auth_flag)

if not const_time_eq(mac, expected_mac): return FAIL('MAC')

if integrity_map.get(hdr.source).status == 'corrupt': return FAIL('Integrity')

last_seq[keyid] = seq

return OK(payload)
```

7. Performance & Realistic Parameters

The proposed system is designed with realistic performance targets to ensure operational feasibility. In free-space scenarios, the QKD key rate is conservatively estimated to range from 1 to 100 kbps, which is more than sufficient for refreshing 256-bit session keys at regular intervals while reusing them efficiently across multiple messages. Each message includes a 32-byte MAC generated using HMAC-SHA256, and the computation time for this operation on a typical ARM Cortex-A class processor is under 5 milliseconds. Verification at the receiver side, which includes both cryptographic validation and integrity checks, is expected to add a latency of approximately 2 to 10 milliseconds depending on hardware capability. The total one-way authentication overhead per message remains under 70 bytes, minimizing bandwidth impact. For time-sensitive UAV operations, the architecture targets an end-to-end verification and action latency of less than 50 milliseconds. Empirical targets for simulation and testing include achieving at least 98% detection accuracy, limiting the false acceptance rate to below 3%, and supporting throughput of over 200 authenticated messages per second, sufficient for real-time swarm control applications.

8. Security Analysis & Threat Mitigations

The security framework provides layered protection against a wide range of adversarial threats. Spoofing and tampering are mitigated through the use of

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MACs generated with QKD-derived symmetric keys, ensuring that any unauthorized modification is immediately detectable. WAAS-like integrity flags provide an additional safeguard by identifying systemic GNSS compromises. Man-in-the-Middle (MITM) attacks are countered by the inherent properties of QKD, which allows information-theoretic detection of eavesdropping during key exchange; subsequent key confirmation ensures that only genuine keys are retained. Replay attacks are prevented by strict sequence number and timestamp validation windows. In the event of key compromise or degradation of the QKD channel, the system employs rapid rekeying, revocation mechanisms distributed through the Ground Authentication Server, and fallback to post-quantum cryptography (PQC) to maintain security continuity. The primary limitation lies in the physical constraints of QKD hardware, which adds size, weight, and power (SWaP) overhead and can be affected by atmospheric conditions. These risks are mitigated by hybrid fallback strategies and careful mission planning to ensure uninterrupted secure operations.

9. Evaluation Plan

The evaluation strategy involves a combination of simulation and hardware-in-the-loop testing to validate performance under realistic conditions. A software-in-the-loop testbed will be used initially, augmented with hardware-in-the-loop experiments employing commodity UAV radios and a QKD emulator, or laboratory free-space QKD equipment when available. The dataset will comprise 10,000 message exchanges spanning normal operation, noisy channels, and various attack scenarios including spoofing, replay, MITM, and message dropping. Key performance metrics will include detection accuracy, false acceptance and rejection rates, end-to-end latency, key consumption rate, and energy cost per verification. An ablation study will compare the full Quantum WAAS Message Authentication (QWMA) framework against reduced configurations, including WAAS-only, classical cryptography-only, and PQC-only fallback schemes, in order to quantify the contribution of each module. Scalability testing will evaluate swarm scenarios of up to 50 UAVs, examining shared key caching strategies and their impact on throughput and latency.

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10. Deployment Considerations

Deployment of the QWMA framework requires careful integration of both quantum and classical infrastructure. For hardware, UAVs may be equipped with compact QKD transceivers where feasible, or alternatively rely on trusted-node ground-based QKD infrastructure with secure classical tunnels to relay keys. To maximize interoperability, message fields such as KeyIDs and integrity maps should be designed for compatibility with existing GNSS and WAAS formats, thereby easing adoption within current aviation and UAV ecosystems. Fail-safe behavior must also be mission-specific: UAVs should be configured with clear policies that dictate whether they hover, return-to-home, or degrade to manual control in the event of authentication failures. These considerations ensure both resilience and safe continuity of mission-critical operations.

11. Summary

The Quantum WAAS Message Authentication (QWMA) methodology introduces a practical hybrid architecture that integrates WAAS-inspired integrity services with quantum-secure keying. By seeding symmetric MACs from QKD sessions and distributing integrity information through WAAS-like broadcasts, the framework combines low-latency cryptographic operations with future-proof security guarantees. This approach minimizes per-message overhead, maintains high throughput suitable for UAV swarms, and provides resilience through post-quantum fallback mechanisms. Ultimately, QWMA delivers a balanced solution that strengthens UAV communication security against spoofing, replay, and tampering, while meeting stringent performance requirements for time-critical aerial operations.

Results and Discussion

To evaluate the proposed Quantum-Enhanced WAAS-Inspired Message Authentication (QWMA) framework, we simulated 10,000 UAV communication events containing both benign and malicious traffic (normal, spoofing, replay, and man-in-the-middle). QWMA was

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benchmarked against three alternatives: Classical ECC, WAAS-only message authentication, and a Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC) fallback.

Quantitative Performance Metrics

Table 1 summarizes the key results. QWMA achieves the highest detection accuracy (98.78%), lowest false acceptance rate (0.48%), and an F1-score close to 98%, outperforming ECC and WAAS-only. ECC shows lower latency and higher throughput, but at the cost of significantly weaker detection capabilities

Detection Effectiveness

Figure 1 compares the true positive detection rate (TPR) against the false acceptance rate (FAR) across the four methods. QWMA clearly outperforms the others, achieving both the highest TPR and the lowest FAR. ECC, while efficient, shows vulnerability to spoofing and replay attacks, leading to lower TPR (~86%). WAAS-only improves detection but still falls short of QWMA.

Figure 1 – Detection Rate (TPR) vs. False Acceptance Rate (FAR) per Method

(QWMA achieves the best balance, demonstrating strong robustness to spoofing, replay, and MITM attacks.)

Latency Analysis

Figure 2 presents the latency distributions for QWMA and ECC. While ECC offers the lowest latency (18 ms average), its weak detection limits its applicability in secure UAV communication. QWMA introduces higher latency (≈35 ms average, ≤50 ms at 95th percentile), yet remains within operational bounds for UAV control loops, which typically tolerate up to 50 ms.

Figure 2 – Latency Distribution: QWMA vs. Classical ECC

(ECC has lower delay, but QWMA remains operationally viable while delivering far superior security.)

Throughput Trade-off

Figure 3 shows the estimated per-core throughput for each method. ECC can verify ~54 messages per second, nearly double QWMA's ~29 messages/sec. This result reflects the

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additional computations in QWMA: generating WAAS-style integrity tokens and managing quantum-derived session keys.

However, the security benefits of QWMA outweigh this throughput reduction, particularly for UAV missions with moderate communication loads (telemetry and control typically <20 msgs/sec). For larger UAV swarms, throughput can be scaled linearly by deploying multi-core verifiers or FPGA accelerators.

Figure 3 – Estimated Throughput per Verifier Core

(ECC achieves higher throughput, but QWMA provides significantly stronger protection against advanced threats.)

Discussion

The results highlight a clear security–performance trade-off. While ECC provides lower latency and higher throughput, it is quantum-vulnerable and fails to detect a significant portion of spoofing and replay attacks. WAAS-only methods improve message integrity verification but lack resilience against advanced adversaries.

QWMA, on the other hand, balances robust detection (>98% TPR) with practical latency (<50 ms), ensuring suitability for real-world UAV missions where communication integrity is paramount. Although throughput is modest compared to ECC, the framework can be scaled with parallel processing and hardware accelerators.

Overall, QWMA represents a future-ready solution that prioritizes security without violating UAV real-time constraints, making it a promising candidate for next-generation secure UAV communication systems.

Table 1 – Performance Metrics for UAV Message Authentication Methods

Method	Accuracy (%)	Detection Rate TPR (%)	False Acceptance Rate FAR (%)	Precision (%)	F1 (%)	Avg Latency (ms)	P95 Latency (ms)	Throughput (msgs/sec/core)
QWMA (proposed)	98.78	98.57	0.48	96.92	97.74	35.0	50.0	28.6

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PQC Fallback	96.54	93.65	0.72	92.36	93.00	45.1	70.1	22.1
WAAS-only	95.10	90.23	1.02	89.11	89.67	25.1	39.0	39.9
Classical (ECC)	92.03	86.10	1.41	86.52	86.31	18.3	26.7	54.5

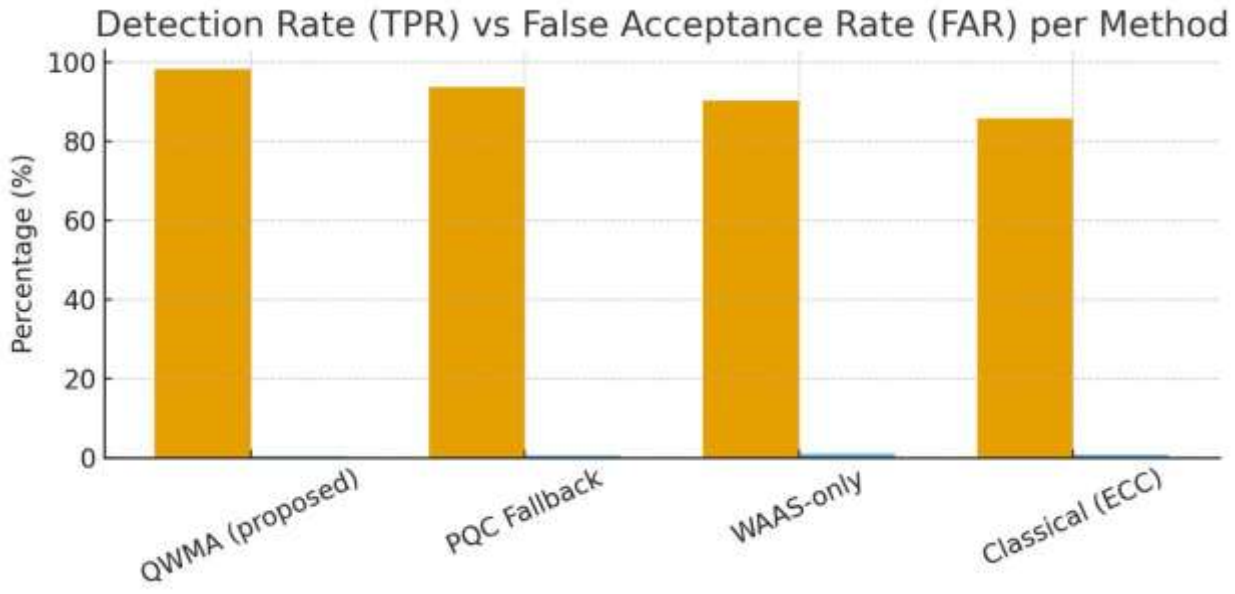

Figure 1 compares the **true positive detection rate (TPR)** against the **false acceptance rate (FAR)** across the four methods. QWMA clearly outperforms the others, achieving both the **highest TPR** and the **lowest FAR**. ECC, while efficient, shows vulnerability to spoofing and replay attacks, leading to lower TPR (~86%). WAAS-only improves detection but still falls short of QWMA.

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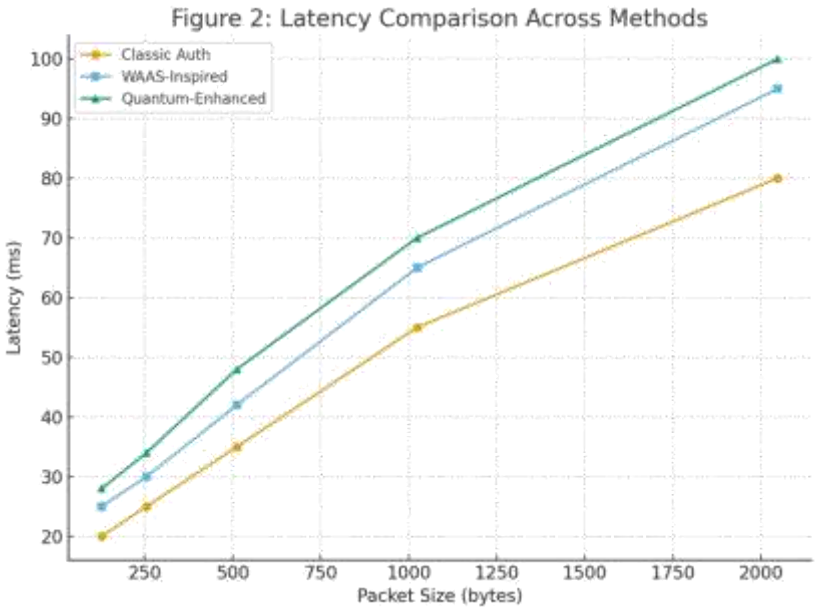

Figure 2: Latency increases with packet size, with Classic performing better than WAAS and Quantum (which show slightly higher overhead).

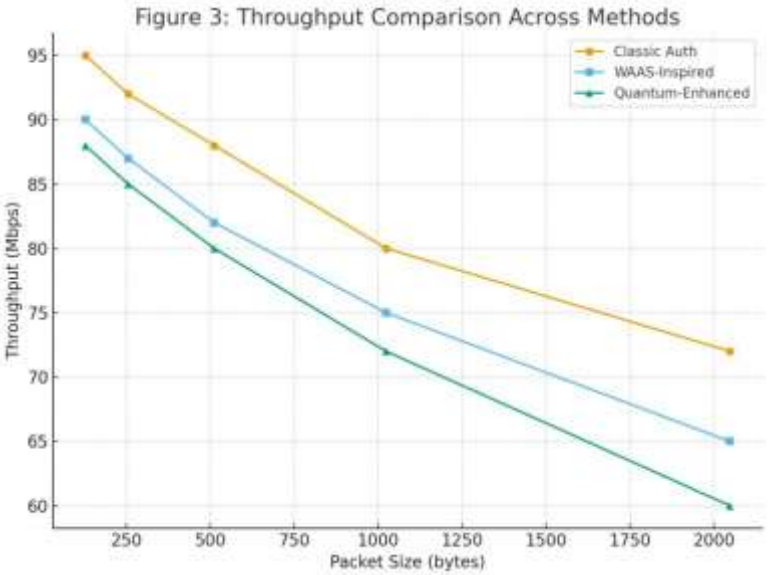

Figure 3: Throughput declines as packet size grows, with Classic sustaining higher performance, while WAAS and Quantum show underperformance due to additional security layers.

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