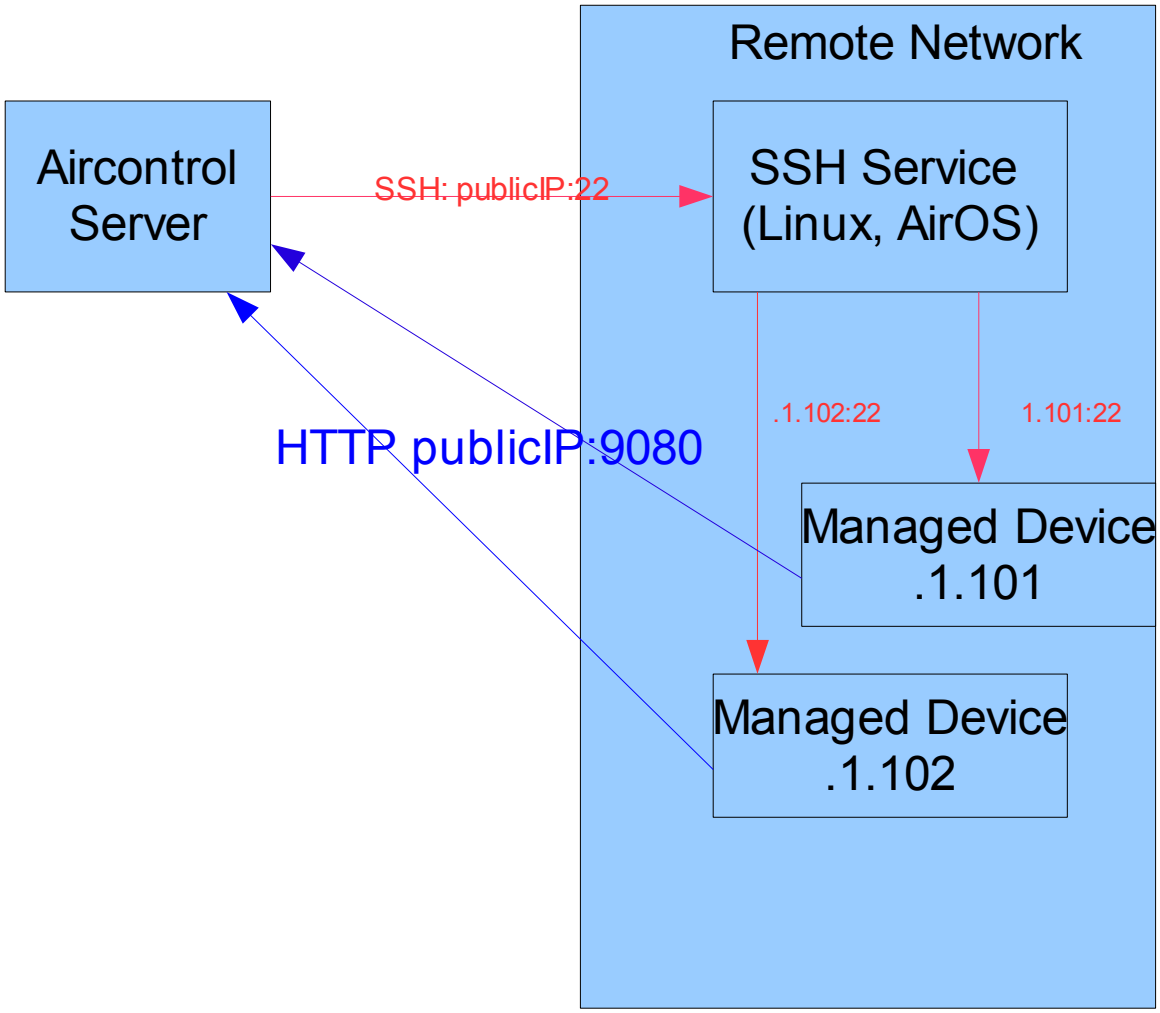
Management of Remote Networks through AirControl

This outlines the solution to manage devices in remote, non-routed networks from a central AirControl server. This is only needed when there is no route to the remote devices from the AirControl host.

How does it work?



AirControl uses SSH port forwarding ("tunneling") through the SSH host/gateway for all operation that require access via SSH to device (connect, firmware upgrade etc.). Note that access to the AirOS web interface is not supported through this mechanism, this is only for AirControl operation.

Managed device reports to AirControl server at public/routed address.

By using SSH port forwarding, the need for the AirControl user to manually forward each device SSH port though iptables or employ other mechanisms on the network adapter level, setup VPN etc. is avoided.

Requirements:

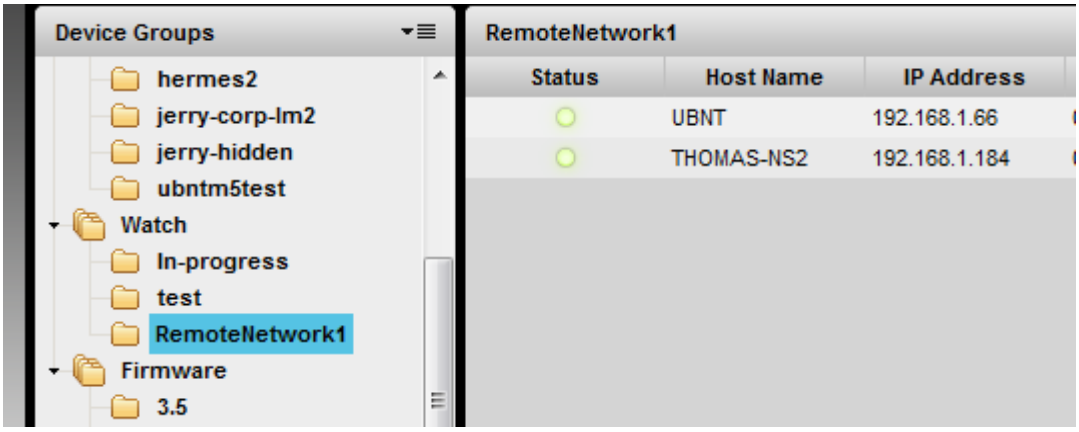
AirControl version 1.3.5 or later.

- Public (or routed private) address/port for AirControl server that can be accessed from the remote network. Managed devices send HTTP traffic to that port.
- Host with SSH service in the remote network: This can be any machine with SSH service that allows port forwarding. The machines SSH port needs to be accessible to AirControl (directly or through port forwarding on upstream router etc.) We have tested with Linux, pfsense and AirOS (AirOS version 3.6+ or 5.3+ required for discovery scan in remote network, 5.3-beta is available from forum).
- Devices you wish to manage through tunnel need to have SSH service enabled.

Setup/Configuration

Create device group for tunnel

Devices need to be grouped to associate a tunnel (it is recommended to use dynamic groups for this). First preference would be to group by private IP scheme (192.168.1.XXX -> Tunnel1, 192.168.2.XXX -> Tunnel2 etc.). If that is not possible because private sub net masks overlap between networks, use a device name prefix scheme or something similar. The point is to not have to manage groups manually once they are created when new devices are added in the remote network. Although for testing and smaller static setups it is also possible to use static groups.



Above shows group “RemoteNetwork” which will be associated to a tunnel.

Configure Tunneling Settings

The tunnel settings will be entered under Admin->Device Management Rules. See AirControl user guide on the Wiki.

SSH authentication will require the AirControl public key on the gateway in authorized_keys. You can extract the public key from any of the already managed devices from ~mcuser/.ssh/authorized_keys

If you are using an AirOS device as SSH gateway, connect it first in AirControl through the public IP and then enter that public IP as “sshGatewayAddress“ and “mcuser” as “sshGatewayUser“ in the tunnel definition. You don't need to manually setup the SSH public key in this case.

Scan through Tunnel

Once tunneling is configured, you can scan for devices through that gateway. In the “Scan” dialog, you will find an additional drop-down to select the tunnel.