

Oracle® Communications Diameter Signaling Router

Zero Balance Application User's Guide



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The Oracle logo, consisting of a solid red square with the word "ORACLE" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font centered within it.

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Introduction

Zero Balance Application (ZBA) allows network operators to reduce the load (offload) sent to the Online Charging Servers (OCS) by blocking those subscribers whose accounts have exceeded their credit limit, that is, Zero Balance. To achieve this, the ZBA detects the Credit Control Request (CCR) and Credit Control Answer (CCA) exchanged with the OCS and prevents subscribers whose account balance have gone down to zero from repeatedly querying the OCS. ZBA maintains records of subscribers, identified by their Mobile Station International Subscriber Directory Number (MSISDN), whose account balance have gone down to zero.

This document provides information about ZBA and its functionalities. The ZBA menu options allow you to work with:

- Custom MEALS
- General Options
- Trial MPs Assignment
- Application Control
- System Options (SO only)

ZBA is available as a Diameter Custom Application (DCA) framework application. Like other DCA framework applications, you can use ZBA to work with the DCA framework functions. If ZBA is in the DCA framework GUI menu, the application has already been activated.

The document provides the following types of information:

- ZBA tasks
- ZBA application logic
- Procedures to configure and manage ZBA components including configuration parameters and ZBA profile tables
- ZBA components and GUI elements

Audience

This content is intended for personnel using the ZBA within the DCA framework. The content includes procedures for performing tasks using the product GUI. However, it does not describe how to install or replace software or hardware.

The ZBA software interacts with UDR. For this reason, this content includes references to the shared applications, and might describe GUI options that are not visible or applicable to ZBA.

References

The following references capture the source material used to create this document. These documents are included in the Oracle Communications Diameter Signaling Router (DSR) documentation set.

- DCA Programmer's Guide
- DCA Provisioning Interface
- DCA Feature Activation
- Diameter User's Guide

Acronyms

An alphabetized list of acronyms or terms used in this document.

Table 1-1 Acronyms/Terms

Acronym/Term	Definition
API	Application Program Interface
ART	Application Routing Table
CCA	Credit Control Answer
CCA-I/E	Credit Control Answer (Initial/Event)
CCR	Credit Control Request
CCR-I/E	Credit Control Request (Initial/Event)
CTF	Charging Triggering Function
DCA	Diameter Custom Application
DET	Zero Balance Detection Interval (configured)
DRA	Diameter Routing Agent
DSR	Diameter Signaling Router
ECC	Extended Command Code
GUI	Graphic User Interface
MEALS	Measurements, Events, Alarms, and Logs
MMI	Machine to Machine Interface
MP	Measurement Platform
OC-DRA	Online Charging DRA
OCS	Online Charging Server
PCEF	Policy and Charging Enforcement Function
SO	System Options
UDR	Unified Data Repository
ZBA	Zero Balance Application
ZBC	Zero Balance Counter
ZB-DB	Zero Balance Application Database
ZBT	Zero Balance Blocking Timer
ZDT	Zero Balance Detection Timer

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Understanding ZBA Functionality and ZBA Logic

Zero Balance Application (ZBA) is a business logic application that functions within the DCA framework.

The DCA frame must first be active before activating the ZBA to access the ZBA GUI menu functionality.

Note:

The DCA framework is a set of APIs and services made available to DCA developers (internal or external) who need to development application that run in the Diameter application layer of DSR.

When a mobile data service subscriber initiates a data session, a network Element (PCEF or CTF) might attempt to set up a data session for the subscriber and query the OCS for service units. In case the subscriber has no credit in their account, the OCS rejects the request, usually with an indication that the subscriber has no credit. However, in most cases the PCEF, or other Charging Trigger Functions (CTFs), continues to attempt to query the OCS. This can create an overload on the OCS to handle requests for subscribers that are always denied during the period in which the subscriber has no credit.

The purpose of the ZBA is to detect when a subscriber, identified by a MSISDN, has a zero balance in the account, the ZBA under certain configurable conditions, might respond on behalf of the OCS and reduce the number of queries the OCS must handle for subscribers who temporarily have no credit.

ZBA is configured as the owner of a UDR database. To avoid overloading of ZBA, the Application Routing Table (ART) is configured to route only CCR- I/E type messages to ZBA.

ZBA can be enabled and disabled as a DCA framework. Disabling ZBA on a specific site is possible only if ZBA has been disabled on all the DA-MPs on that specific site.

If ZBA is in the DCA framework GUI menu, this indicates that the application is already enabled. However, it does not guarantee that it is provisioned. After ZBA is installed, a manual enablement is necessary on at least one DA-MP server.

Note:

You can enable or disable ZBA from **Diameter**, and then **Maintenance**, and then **Applications** screens on the SOAM GUI. When the application is initially installed, it is disabled and it must be manually enabled.

The ZBA functionality varies between the SOAM and NOAM. The following menu options are available on the NOAM:

- The **Custom MEALs** menu provisions the measurements linked to the ZBA application.
- The **General Options** sets the options of the application.
- The **Trial MP Assignment** chooses the MP to run the application.
- The **Application Control** menu creates a new development environment and modifies them.

The SOAM has the same menu options in read only and an additional menu option called **System Options** where the behavior of the application can be configured in case of errors.

ZBA Functionality

ZBA can inspect ingress Gy/Ro Request and Answer messages to verify if subscribers who might have zero balance accounts must be blocked (based on answer messages). It uses MSISDN to check the subscriber's status in UDR. It forwards the ingress Gy/Ro Request messages to the OCSs if the subscriber's status is not in the "blocking" state.

Subscribers might have zero balance, but their messages might be routed to OCS if the number of Zero Balance events detected is less than a configured threshold during a configured detection interval.

ZBA blocks subscribers whose number of Zero Balance events has exceeded the configured threshold within the configured detection interval and generates a response message (CCA-I/E) on behalf of the OCS when a subscriber is blocked.

ZBA Logic Process

ZBA logic follows this process:

1. The ZBA logic is triggered with the reception of a CCR-I/E message.
2. The ZB reads the MSISDN from the Subscription-ID Grouped or the User-Name AVPs in the CCR-I/E message.
3. ZBA checks if the MSISDN extracted from the AVP already has a record entry in the UDR.
4. If no entry exists for that user, the application forwards the CCR-I/E to OCS using DRL and creates a new entry in the UDR. If a qualified ZB event has been received in the CCA-I/E, that subscriber is then monitored. If the OCS answer contains a result code, which does indicate zero balance, then the Zero Balance counter is incremented in the UDR and detection state is set to ON. ZBA forwards the CCA-I/E received from the OCS using DRL.
5. If an entry for that user exists, the application reads the status of the blocking and detection timers from the UDR to determine whether the subscriber is blocked or being monitored.
6. If the subscriber is not blocked, or blocked with expired blocking timer, ZBA forwards the CCR-I/E to OCS using DRL and resets the record to its initial state, for example, not monitored, not blocked.

7. If a request is received when the subscriber is blocked and not expired (blocking timer is ON, but not expired), the request is not forwarded to OCS, and instead the ZBA sends an answer message with the configurable egress blocking result code to CTF using DRL (the OCS is not involved).
8. ZBA continues to monitor the subscriber and answer on behalf of the OCS until the blocking timer expires.
9. ZBA does not process the Diameter messages in the following cases:
 - Missing MSISDN in the CCR-I/E
 - ZBA UDR Database is unavailable
 - Stack event errors have been generated during processing

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Configuring the ZBA Application

Activate the DCA framework and ZBA.

Note:

Following activation, individual applications are in the disabled state. When disabled, no Diameter traffic is delivered to an application.

- To enable ZBA as an independent application, enable ZBA from the **Diameter**, and then **Maintenance**, and then **Applications** screen on the SO on the desired DA-MPs.

For more information, refer to the *Diameter User's Guide*.

Verifying the ZBA Activation

1. To verify whether ZBA is activated, navigate to the DCA Framework menu. Zero Balance Application must be displayed on the screen.
2. To enable business logic and provision configuration data, by accessing the **DCA Framework**, and then **Zero Balance Application**, and then **Application Control** screen.

Importing the ZBA JSON File

Perform the following procedure to import the business logic, configuration tables, and MEALs from a previously exported json file.

Ensure that ZBA is activated.

1. From the NOAM, navigate to **DCA Framework**, and then **Zero Balance Application**, and then **Application Control**.
2. Click **Import Business Logic** to import the json file.
3. Select the file.
4. Select the **import also config data** check box.
5. Click **Import**.

This creates the configuration data, the custom MEAL templates, and maps the logical and physical U-SBR database if a physical database with the same name already exists.

When imported, the application must be syntax checked and compiled before it can go to the production cycle.

Configuring ZBA Config_Data, Egress_ResultCode, and Ingress_ResultCode Tables

ZBA uses the following tables to collect configuration values:

- Config_Data
- Egress_ResultCode
- Ingress_ResultCode

For information about ZBA tables, refer to [Configured ZBA Database Tables](#). This procedure configures Config_Data, Egress_ResultCode, and Ingress_ResultCode tables. The Config_Data table contains the configurable parameters that determine the detection period, the Blocking period, and the Max Zero Balance allowable Events. The Egress_ResultCode table contains the configurable result code used when ZBA generates an answer during a blocking period. The Ingress_ResultCode table contains the configurable result codes used to determine a Zero Balance event when an answer message contains one of the configured result codes.

Note:

The available GUI choices differ between the SO and the NO. For information about GUI details and functionality, refer to the *DCA Programmer's Guide*.

The fields are described in the associated database tables elements.

1. On the SOAM, navigate to **DCA Framework**, and then **Zero Balance Application**, and then **Application Control**.
2. Select a version name.
3. Click **Config Data**.
4. Select a table name.
5. Select an action, for example, View to view data, Provision Table to populate it.
6. Enter the fields to define or edit the selected table.

Disabling ZBA

Perform the following procedure to disable ZBA from the SO.

Note:

The available GUI choices differ between the SO and the NO. For information about GUI details and functionality, refer to the *DCA Programmer's Guide*.

1. Navigate to **Diameter**, and then **Maintenance**, and then **Applications**.
2. Select the DCA_ZBA on the MP where you want to disable the application.
3. Click **Disable**.

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Customize the ZBA Behavior

ZBA can be customized using the **DCA Framework**, and then **Zero Balance Application** screen or as an independent application on the following DSR menus:

- Custom MEALS
- General Options
- Trial MPs Assignment
- Application Control
- System Options (SO only)

 **Note:**

For specific information about configuration activities, refer to [Configured ZBA Database Tables](#). Also, refer to the *DCA Programmer's Guide* and *DCA Provisioning Interface*.

The ZBA configuration database schema uses the following options to customize the application behavior:

- **Detection Interval:** The time interval during which Zero Balance events are monitored. Range: 1-30. 30. Default is 5 (values are in seconds).
- **Blocking Interval:** The time duration during which a subscriber is blocked after exceeding the number of allowed zero balance events. Range: 60-1800. Default is 60 (values in seconds).
- **Maximum ZB Events:** The number of allowed zero events during a detection interval before blocking a subscriber. Range: 1-5. Default is 1 (value is integer).
- **Egress Result Code:** The configurable egress result code used when ZBA generates an answer during a blocking period (value is string).
- **Ingress Result Code:** One to four ingress result codes can be configured to determine a Zero Balance event when an answer message contains one of these result codes (values are string).

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ZBA Functions

Like other DCA framework applications, you can use ZBA to work with the DCA framework functions. If ZBA is on the DCA framework screen, the application is already activated. However, it does not guarantee that it is provisioned. After ZBA is installed, enable it manually and complete the configuration items, such as DB association, Config_Data parameters, Diameter connections, ART, and so on. For information about specific configuration activities, refer to [Configured ZBA Database Tables](#).

Custom MEALS

A list of any previously configured ZBA custom defined measurements and events (NO view GUI page). Use this screen to insert, edit, and delete custom MEALS.

General Options

Available from the NO and SO (view only), General options allows you to configure the ZBA functionality.

From the NO, this screen enables specifying the Perl Subroutine for Diameter Request and Answer.

From the SO, this screen allows you to view the Perl Subroutine specified for Diameter Request and Answer in the read-only mode.

Trial MPs Assignment

From the NO, this screen allows specifying which MPs run the trial version of an application. If there is a production version, all MPs enabled for the ZBA application run the application regardless of which is the trial MP. If there is a trial application version configured in the system, but no trial MPs are specified, a warning message is generated.

From the SO, this screen allows you to view which MPs run the trial version of an application. The page is accessible in the read-only mode.

Application Control

From the NO, this page allows:

- Listing all application versions configured in the system
- Inserting a new application version
- Copying and modifying an existing application version
- Exporting an application version entirely (business logic + provisioned data from the NO)

- Exporting only the NO provisioned data of an application version
- Importing a previously exported application version (business logic + NO provisioned data)
- Importing only the NO provisioned data to an existing application version
- Accessing the application version configuration tables
- Accessing a flowchart of an application version
- Deleting an existing application version
- Changing the status of an application version (Development, Trial, Production, Archived)

From the SO, this page allows:

- Listing all application versions configured in the system
- Exporting only the SO provisioned data of an application version
- Importing only the SO provisioned data to an existing application version
- Accessing the application version configuration tables
- Accessing a flowchart of an application version (read-only)

You can control a variety of ZBA functions from the Application Control screen, such as creating new application versions, copying and editing existing versions, importing and exporting business logic, and making trials. You can also copy an entire application with the business logic and the NO provisioned data and assign a new version name to it.

System Options (SO Only)

Use this task to work with ZBA Systems Options, which includes the following categories:

- **Run-time error configuration:** Behavior of the DSR application when a Run-time error occurs
- **Resource exhaustion configuration:** Behavior of the DSR application when internal resources are being exhausted
- **Application unavailable configuration:** Action to be taken when the application is unavailable to process messages
- **Configuration for the DCA generated Answer:** To specify a realm and FQDN different from the default one

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Configured ZBA Database Tables

This section describes ZBA application database table content and functionality. Navigate to **DCA Framework**, and then **Zero Balance Application**, and then **Application Control**, and select the current version of the ZBA, and then click **Config Data** to access the configuration table page.

Table 6-1 ZBA Database Table Fields

Field	Description	Single Row Setting	Level
Config_Data	Contains configuration parameters for the ZBA	YES	SO
Egress_ResultCode	Contains the configurable result code used when ZBA generates an answer during a blocking period	YES	SO
Ingress_ResultCode	Contains one to four ingress result codes that can be configured to determine a Zero Balance event when an answer message contains one of these result codes	YES	SO