

NetScreen Technologies, Inc. NetScreen-100 versus Check Point Software Technologies Ltd. FireWall-1/VPN-1, Nokia IP650 and Cisco Systems, Inc. Firewall Series PIX-515 Competitive Evaluation of Enterprise Class Internet Security Devices

Test Summary

Premise: Customers updating their network security infrastructure with access media beyond T1 and even T3 speeds need to verify the performance of Internet security appliances delivering firewall and virtual private network (VPN) services. IT managers accustomed to wire-speed network LAN infrastructures need to ensure that network performance will not suffer degradation when implementing a new security and encryption device. With such devices, sensitive information can be transferred within their own corporate sites, to branch offices, and to telecommuters and should not result in performance loss.

NetScreen Technologies, Inc. commissioned The Tolly Group to evaluate its NetScreen-100, an enterprise class firewall and Internet Protocol Security (IPSec) Virtual Private Network gateway. This purpose-built, Fast Ethernet security device was benchmarked by The Tolly Group and compared to the following three devices: a Check Point Software Technologies Ltd. FireWall-1/VPN-1; a Nokia IP650; and a Cisco Systems, Inc. Firewall Series PIX-515.

For all devices under test, The Tolly Group conducted application throughput and zero-loss throughput tests in an IPSec tunnel configuration. Engineers also measured zero-loss throughput and TCP/IP session-processing rate in a firewall configuration.

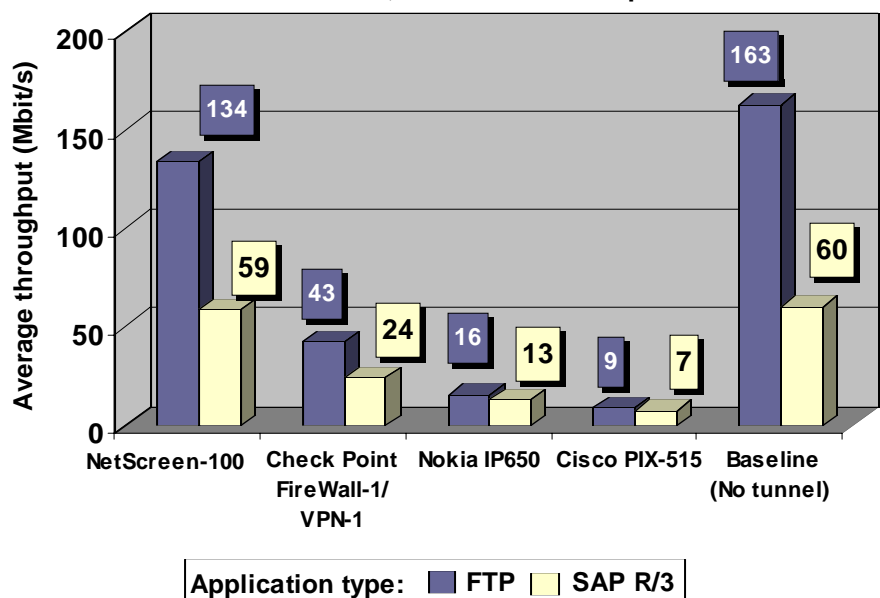
For zero-loss performance tests, The Tolly Group measured the steady-state throughput where loss was less than 0.001%, the same metric The Tolly Group uses to test Layer 2 and Layer 3 networking devices. (Note: Some devices were unable to meet this "no loss" threshold even at 5% offered load.) Testing was performed July through November 2000.

Test results show that in tests of application throughput, the NetScreen-100 forwards more batch and interactive traffic (FTP and SAP

Test Highlights

- Forwards 134 Mbit/s of full-duplex FTP traffic in an IPSec tunnel configuration as compared to 43 Mbit/s from Check Point's FireWall-1/VPN-1, 16 Mbit/s from Nokia's IP650 and 9 Mbit/s from Cisco's PIX-515
- Delivers 59 Mbit/s of full-duplex SAP R/3 traffic in an IPSec tunnel compared to 24 Mbit/s from Check Point's FireWall-1/VPN-1, 13 Mbit/s from Nokia's IP650 and 7 Mbit/s from Cisco's PIX-515
- Sends full-duplex traffic across a Fast Ethernet IPSec tunnel at 65% of the theoretical maximum in tests of 512-byte packets, 95% in tests of 1,024-byte packets and 60% in tests using 1,518-byte packets
- Demonstrates 35% greater packet throughput than its competitors in firewall tests forwarding 64-byte UDP packets and 45% more in tests using 1,024-byte UDP packets
- Processes 19,048 TCP connections per second as compared to 1,600 from Check Point's FireWall-1/VPN-1 and 3,402 from Cisco's PIX-515

Application Throughput Across an IPSec (DES-3, SHA-1) Tunnel: Bidirectional Chariot Traffic, 100 Mbit/s Full-duplex Fast Ethernet



Source: The Tolly Group, January 2001

Figure 1

R/3) than any of its competitors. In addition, the NetScreen-100 proved that it was capable of maintaining zero-loss throughput in IPSec tunnel tests and zero-loss throughput in a single-rule firewall configuration. Test results also show that the NetScreen-100 can sustain the highest number of TCP connections with no packet loss.

Results

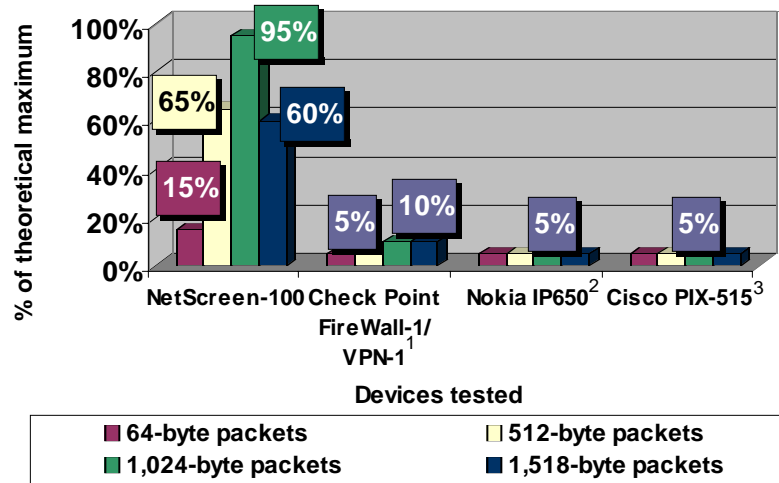
Bidirectional Application Throughput across a Full-Duplex IPSec Tunnel

Engineers paired two NetScreen-100 devices, outfitted with Fast Ethernet interfaces, configured to create an IPSec tunnel between them. The tunnel was built using DES-3 and SHA-1 encryption schemes with a pre-shared secret key. The Tolly Group then measured the application throughput of FTP and SAP R/3 traffic and found that the NetScreen-100 devices outperformed all other competing systems tested in a similar configuration. In full-duplex tests using FTP traffic, the NetScreen-100 IPSec tunnel throughput was 134 Mbit/s while the Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 forwarded traffic at an average of 43 Mbit/s. The Nokia IP650 forwarded traffic at an average of 16 Mbit/s while the Cisco PIX-515 forwarded traffic at an average of 9 Mbit/s. The NetScreen-100 demonstrated in performance tests of SAP R/3 traffic that it could forward traffic at an average of 59 Mbit/s. Results also show that the Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 forwarded traffic at an average of 24 Mbit/s, the Nokia IP650 averaged 13 Mbit/s and Cisco's PIX-515 averaged 7 Mbit/s. See figure 1.

Zero-loss UDP Packet Throughput across a Full-Duplex IPSec Tunnel

When The Tolly Group tested zero-loss throughput in the same IPSec tunnel configuration, the NetScreen-100 had the highest percentage of the theoretical maximum than all other devices under test when forwarding 64- through 1,518-byte packets. In tests of 64-byte packets, the NetScreen-100 forwarded an average of 15% of the theoretical maximum. The Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1, the Nokia IP650 and the Cisco PIX-515 all forwarded an average of 5% of the theoretical maximum. In tests using 512-

Zero-loss* Throughput Across an IPSec (DES-3, SHA-1) Tunnel: Bidirectional SmartBits 100 Mbit/s Full-duplex Fast Ethernet (UDP Packets)

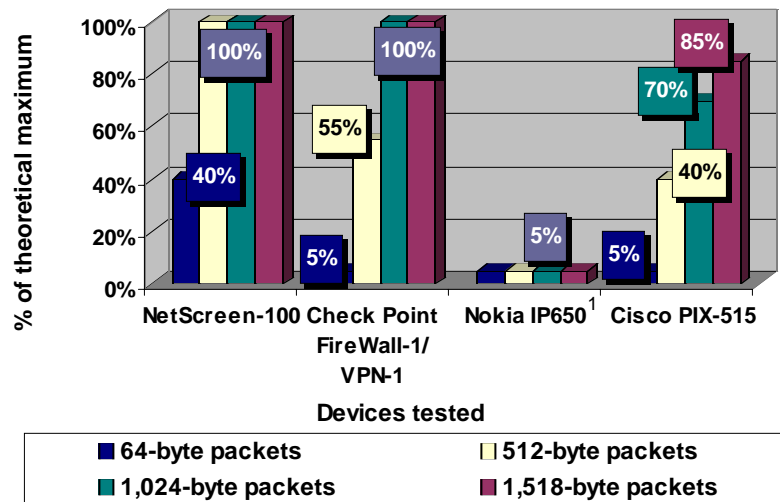


- * Zero-loss, full-duplex IPSec (DES-3, SHA-1) tunnel. All percentages at 5% indicate minimum value tested, but may not indicate zero-loss at that level.
- 1 Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 paired with NetScreen-100 for an IPSec tunnel: 43% packet loss using 64-byte packets.
 - 2 Nokia IP650 IPsec tunnel: 28% packet loss using 64-byte packets, 1.8% packet loss using 512-byte packets, 1.7% packet loss using 1,024-byte packets, and 1.6% using 1,518-byte packets.
 - 3 Cisco PIX-515 paired with a Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 for an IPSec tunnel: 43% packet loss using 64-byte packets.

Source: The Tolly Group, January 2001

Figure 2

Zero-loss* Throughput Across a "Single-Rule" Firewall: Bidirectional SmartBits Traffic, 100 Mbit/s Full-duplex Fast Ethernet (UDP Packets)



- * Zero-loss, full-duplex "single-rule" processing. All percentages at 5% indicate minimum value tested, but may not indicate zero-loss at that level.
- 1 Nokia IP650 Firewall: 0.9% packet loss using 64-, 512-, and 1,024-byte packets, and 0.8% packet loss using 1,518-byte packets.

Source: The Tolly Group, January 2001

Figure 3

byte packets, the NetScreen-100 forwarded an average of 65% of the theoretical maximum while the Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1, the Nokia IP650 and the Cisco PIX-515 all forwarded an average of 5% of the theoretical maximum. When Tolly engineers tested 1,024-byte packets, the NetScreen-100 forwarded an average of 95% of the theoretical maximum. The Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 forwarded an average of 10% of the theoretical maximum and the Nokia IP650 and the Cisco PIX-515 both forwarded an average of 5%. Finally, when engineers tested 1,518-byte packets, the NetScreen-100 forwarded an average of 60% of the theoretical maximum. The Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 forwarded an average of 10% of the theoretical maximum and the Nokia IP650 and the Cisco PIX-515 both forwarded an average of 5%. See figure 2.

Zero-loss UDP Packet Throughput across a Full-Duplex Firewall

Engineers also configured the NetScreen-100 to serve as a firewall with a single-rule processing applied to both inbound and outbound UDP traffic in a full-duplex, Fast Ethernet environment. Test results show that when transmitting 64-byte packets, the NetScreen-100 forwarded an average of 40% of the theoretical maximum. The Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1, the Nokia IP650 and the Cisco PIX-515 all forwarded an average of 5% of the theoretical maximum. When testing with 512-byte packets, the NetScreen-100 forwarded 100% of the theoretical maximum while the Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 forwarded an average of 55%, Nokia's IP650 forwarded an average of 5% of the theoretical maximum, and Cisco's PIX-515 forwarded an average of 40%.

When transmitting 1,024- and 1,518-byte packets, both the NetScreen-100 and the Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 forwarded 100% of the theoretical maximum. The Nokia IP650 forwarded an average of 5% for both 1,024- and 1,518-byte packets and the Cisco PIX-515 forwarded an average of 70% for 1,024-byte packets and an average of 85% of the theoretical maximum when forwarding 1,518-byte packets. See figure 3.

TCP Connection Rate across a Firewall

Engineers configured a NetScreen-100 as a firewall with a single rule in a full-duplex Fast Ethernet environment. Tests were conducted with two client ports with separate IP addresses that simulated multiple TCP connections. Results show that the NetScreen-100 sustained the maximum number of TCP connections with no packet loss at a rate of 19,048 connections per second. The Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 sustained less than one-tenth the number of connections per second at a rate of 1,600 connections per second, and Cisco's PIX-515 sustained less than one-fifth the number of connections per second at a rate of 3,402 connections per second. See figure 4.

The Nokia IP650 was unable to sustain all of the TCP connections even at a low rate of 200 connections per second.

Analysis

Historically, firewalls and VPN devices, which provide protection and security when integrated into legacy, unprotected networks, can exact a significant penalty in terms of performance. The workload added by the filtering, inspection and especially the compute-intensive cryptography functions, performed on each and every packet, would typically bring the effective throughput of a Fast Ethernet link down into the range of legacy 10 Mbit/s Ethernet. Software-based systems typically use general-purpose Intel- or Sun-based platforms to perform these functions. The addition of memory and CPU power improves performance but the flexibility of using a general purpose OS is offset by a loss in performance when compared to purpose-built, hardware-based solutions.

VPNs provide secure network connections from one location to another using a combination of encryption and authentication. DES-3 encryption and SHA-1 data integrity authentication represent one of the highest levels of security and the most common form of IPSec implementation. Encryption adds 50 bytes of header to each packet sent. From an application perspective, this decreases the maximum Ethernet packet size to 1,468 bytes since anything larger must be fragmented into two packets before being transported across an Ethernet-based VPN tunnel. The

NetScreen Technologies, Inc.

NetScreen-100

Competitive Evaluation



**NetScreen Technologies, Inc.
NetScreen-100
Product Specifications***

Performance

- 128,000 concurrent sessions
- 19,000 new sessions/second
- 200 Mbit/s firewall performance**
- 200 Mbit/s DES-3 performance**
- 4000 policies
 - o 256 schedules

Mode of operation

- Transparent mode
- NAT (Network Address Translation)
- PAT (Port Address Translation)

VPN

- 56-bit DES (IPSec)
- 168-bit Triple DES (IPSec)
- SHA-1
- MD5
- X.509 digital certificates
 - o Verisign
 - o Entrust
 - o Microsoft

User authentication

- Built-in (internal) database (1,500 user limit)
- RADIUS (external) database

Traffic management

- Guaranteed bandwidth
- Maximum bandwidth
- Eight bandwidth priority levels

Logging/monitoring

- Syslog
- Webtrends
- SNMP
- E-mail (two addresses)
- Traceroute
- VPN tunnel monitor
- Websense URL filtering

Load balancing

- Round robin
- Weighted round robin
- Least connections
- Weighted least connections

High availability

- Session protection for firewall and VPN
- Device failure protection
- Link failure protection
- Network notification

Power options

- 100-240 VAC, 30 watts
- -48 VDC, 30 watts

**Performance achieved with 400-byte and larger UDP packets.

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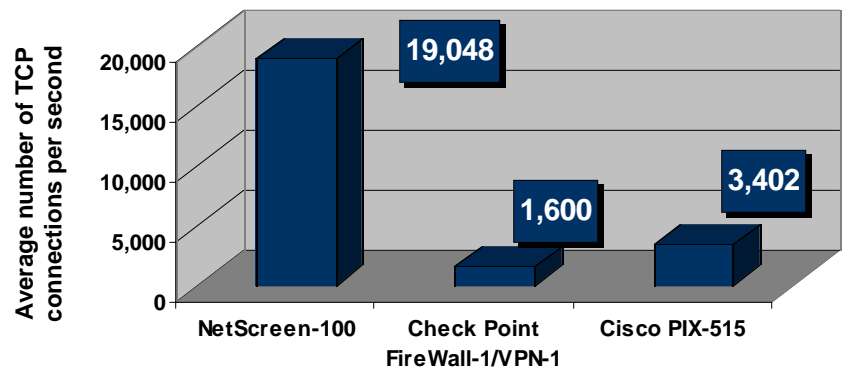
*Vendor-supplied information not verified by The Tolly Group

receiving gateway must decrypt, authenticate and reassemble all such packets. Thus, the application level throughput for, say, 1,518-byte packets is likely to be lower since the IPSec gateways have to process two physical packets for each inbound large Ethernet packet. As packet sizes increase from 64 to 1,400 bytes, the maximum utilization should increase since the device has fewer packets to inspect, and decrease for larger packets that demand fragmentation. The NetScreen-100 operates in such a manner that it is near wire-speed performance with 1,024-byte packets, and more than half wire speed with 1,518-byte packets. FireWall-1/VPN-1, IP650, and PIX-515 do not achieve close to these results. Specifically, the maximum utilization for FireWall-1/VPN-1 is 10% for 1,024- and 1,518-byte packets, while the PIX-515's maximum utilization is 5% for all packet sizes tested, and the IP650 loses packets for each size when offered only 5% load. Vendors verified that these results were accurate. Some vendors contend that the loss threshold used by The Tolly Group is too strict. The Tolly Group believes in this strict standard (<0.001% loss) since it represents what network interconnect devices should attain, as do standard Layer 2/3 switching devices. In fact, The Tolly Group measured at the minimum rate of 5% of the theoretical maximum and reported what the devices could pass.

Application traffic is inherently bidirectional because it waits for responses and acknowledges receipt of information. It is much more sensitive to network conditions like latency and packet loss. Also, the TCP/IP stack residing on stations will usually obey commands from internetwork devices and partner stations regarding appropriate packet sizes for an application. Large transfers of application data seek to use larger packets, while acknowledgments and small amounts of data use smaller packets. Therefore, the results for application traffic would indicate higher throughput for large data transfers than throughput for small transactions.

The NetScreen-100, as an IPSec gateway, achieves 134 Mbit/s of full-duplex throughput with large file transfers. This represents over 82% of the throughput achievable in a baseline Fast Ethernet without a tunnel or firewall present. Transporting simulated SAP traffic, the NetScreen-100 delivered 59 Mbit/s of

TCP/IP Connection Rate Across a "Single-Rule" Firewall: SmartBits Full-duplex, Fast Ethernet



Source: The Tolly Group, January 2001

Figure 4

full-duplex throughput and 98% of the throughput without a tunnel or firewall. The difference between each is that file transfers use large packets to send data while SAP traffic is transaction-oriented using smaller packet sizes. Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1, the next closest competitor, delivered file transfer throughput in the range that would fill a T3 WAN link (44.736 Mbit/s), and the Nokia IP650 and Cisco PIX-515 operate in the range that would represent roughly wire speed of legacy 10 Mbit/s Ethernet LAN.

Firewalls provide protection by inspecting each packet entering its domain and verifying the packet's information based on the policies installed within the firewall. Based on the location and need, each firewall will have a different set of policies to allow and deny different types of traffic that can take time and have a negative impact on performance. Since rule processing is proprietary and a firewall may reorder the rules based on the traffic, one rule is the most basic and sufficient model to test. A firewall will allow certain traffic to pass from its public domain to the private domain as quickly as it can inspect and keep "state" of the packets based on particular header information. Therefore, larger packets will have less negative impact than smaller packets, even though they contain similar header content, because more small packets arrive in a shorter period of time.

As a firewall, the NetScreen-100 achieves wire-speed Fast Ethernet performance for all packet sizes larger than 512-bytes. Firewalls do not fragment large Ethernet packets for encapsulation, and they forward each packet after inspection. FireWall-1/VPN-1 matches the NetScreen-100's

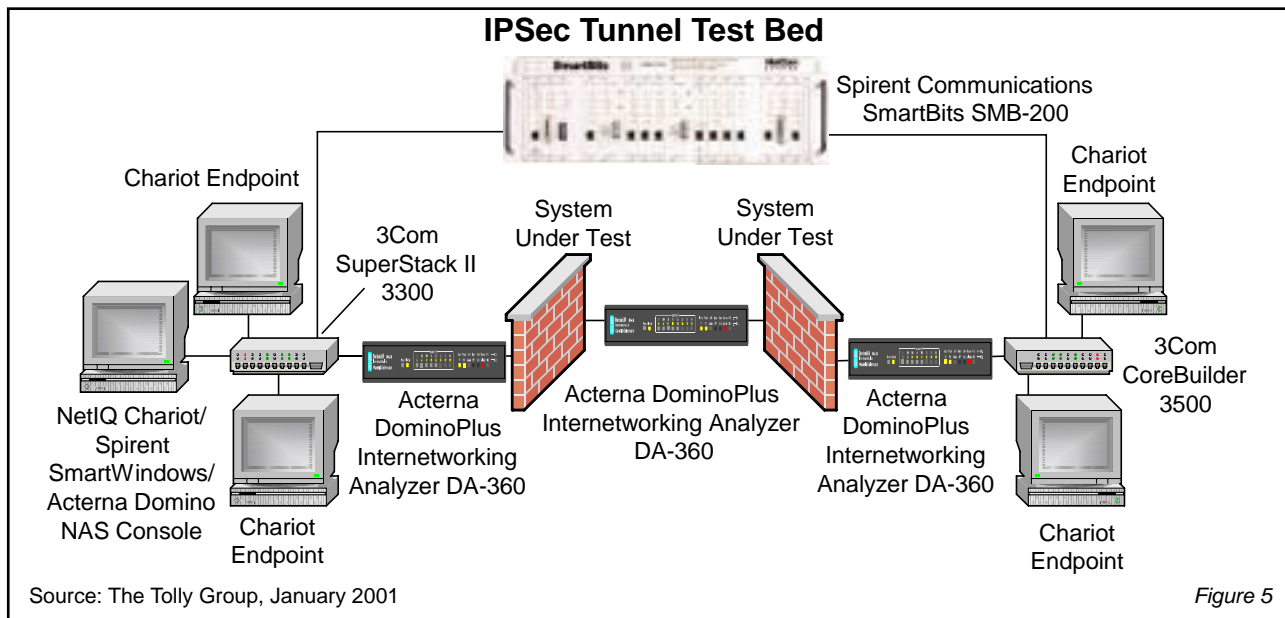
performance with packets larger than 1,024 bytes. The PIX-515 is only able to achieve 85% of wire speed with 1,518-byte packets with performance dropping as the packet sizes decrease. The IP650 is unable to attain zero loss even when tested with 5% of the theoretical maximum. Also, the NetScreen-100 can forward 64-byte packets at 40% of the offered load with no loss while all competitors are at 5% of the offered load.

The NetScreen-100 also performed 19,048 TCP connections per second, five times more connections per second than the Cisco PIX-515, and ten times more connections per second than the Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 without losing a single connection. A firewall that can offer a larger number of connections per second will allow more customers and workers access across the firewall without the hassle of timeouts or lost connections between servers and clients.

These results indicate that the NetScreen-100, a purpose-built hardware-based Internet security appliance, is appropriate for secure enterprise-scale traffic volumes and application loads within campus and Metropolitan Area Networks (MAN) using Fast Ethernet, so that inter-office departments and high-speed connected offices can rely on protection and security at switched, full-duplex Fast Ethernet.

Test Configuration and Methodology Devices Under Test

NetScreen Technologies, Inc. used two NetScreen-100s software versions 2.00r5 and 2.00r3. Tolly engineers also tested a pair of Check Point Software Ltd.



FireWall/VPN-1s, v. 4.1.SP-2 on Sun Ultra 10 with Solaris 7, VPN-1 Accelerator Card; a Nokia IP650 version 4.1; and a Cisco Systems, Inc. Firewall Series PIX-515 version 5.1(2).

IPSec Tunnel Test Bed Configuration

For IPSec tunnel tests, engineers configured a pair of each of the devices under test, one device of which was connected to a 3Com SuperStack II 3300 24-port Ethernet Switch version 2.60 P/N 3C16980 and the other was connected to a 3Com CoreBuilder 3500 Layer 3 Ethernet Switch version 2.10 P/N 3C35100. In between each tunnel under test was an Acterna DominoPlus DA-360 hardware-based network analyzer running DominoCore software version 2.6 and hardware version BN 9316/04 with DominoFastEthernet line interface 2.6 configured for 100Base-TX full duplex. Two identical DominoPlus DA-360 network analyzers were configured in-line between each pair of devices and each 3Com switch.

Each 3Com switch also connected to a Spirent Communications SmartBits SMB-200 Advanced Multiport Performance Tester/Analyzer/Simulator, a four-port network traffic simulator firmware version 6.63 00004 equipped with two ML-7710 10/100 Mbit/s Ethernet interfaces.

A 200-MHz Intel Pentium IBM clone with 32 Mbytes of RAM, a PCI bus card and 2.0 Gbytes of fixed-disk space served as the Chariot console; the DominoPlus console ran Spirent

SmartWindows 6.53. This PC ran Microsoft Windows NT Workstation 4.0 SP5 and ran Chariot 3.2 and Domino NAS 1.0. The console was equipped with a Compaq Netelligent 10/100 Mbit/s Ethernet PCI bus card.

The following devices ran Chariot Endpoint 3.5 software: a K6/400-MHz Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. IBM clone with 64 Mbytes of RAM with a PCI bus card and 6.0 Gbytes of fixed-disk space, was equipped with a 10/100 Mbit/s Compaq Computer Corp. Netelligent PCI adapter with a NetFlex-3 v. 4.25m SP4 driver; a K6/400-MHz Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. IBM clone with 64 Mbytes of RAM and a fixed-disk space of 6.0 Gbytes, equipped with a 3Com 3C905C-Tx 10/100 Mbit/s Ethernet PCI-bus card with driver version EL90xBC4.sys 1.60.00.0000; a 200-MHz Intel Pentium IBM clone with 32 Mbytes of RAM and 2.0 Gbytes of fixed-disk space, equipped with an Intel Corp. PRO/100+ Server 10/100 Mbit/s PCI-bus card with driver version 4.02.25.0000; and a 200-MHz Intel Pentium IBM clone with 64 Mbytes of RAM and a fixed-disk space of 2.0 Gbytes, equipped with an IBM Netfinity 10/100 Mbit/s Ethernet PCI-bus card with driver version 3.37.14.0002. All clients were running Microsoft Windows NT Server 4.0 SP5. See figure 5.

IPSec Tunnel Test Methodology

The Tolly Group engineers tested the systems under test in IPSec tunnel configurations for both application and zero-loss throughput results. For

application tests, engineers configured Chariot to generate bidirectional FTP and SAP R/3 traffic. All traffic was encrypted for DES-3 with a shared secret key. Chariot measured the throughput as effective user/application data in Mbit/s. The two DominoPlus DA-360 devices that were outside the IPSec tunnel verified packet sizes and utilization. The DominoPlus DA-360 configured in-line with the IPSec tunnel verified the encapsulation of each packet. For steady-state, zero-loss, bidirectional packet-per-second tests, engineers measured the percent each system could forward when offering increments of 5% of the theoretical maximum load. SmartBits generated 64-, 512-, 1,024- and 1,518-byte UDP packets in separate tests with each system under test configured in an IPSec tunnel via a 10/100 Mbit/s full-duplex Fast Ethernet link. The Tolly Group considers aggregate zero-loss, packet-per-second throughput to be equal to, or less than, 0.001% of the total transmitted packets. SmartBits measured the percent of traffic forwarded by the tunnel under test. The two DominoPlus DA-360 devices that were outside the IPSec tunnel verified packet sizes and utilization. The DominoPlus DA-360 configured in-line with the IPSec tunnel verified the encapsulation of each packet.

Firewall Test Bed Configuration

To test the systems under test for firewall throughput, engineers removed one of each of the devices in each test system and the DominoPlus DA-360 located in

between these appliances. The remaining test bed was the same as the IPSec tunnel test bed. The Tolly Group engineers measured the percent each device forwarded when offered 100% of the theoretical maximum load. SmartBits generated 64-, 512-, 1,024- and 1,518-byte UDP packets in separate tests with each device under test. The Tolly Group considers aggregate zero-loss packet-per-second throughput to be equal to, or less than, 0.001% of the total transmitted packets. SmartBits measured the percent of traffic forwarded by the firewall under test that was configured for a single rule. The two DominoPlus DA-360 devices that were on either side of the firewall verified packet sizes and utilization.

TCP Session-Processing

Engineers configured each system under test as a firewall with single-rule processing in a full-duplex Fast Ethernet environment. Tests were conducted with two client ports with separate IP addresses that simulated multiple TCP connections. The offered load from SmartBits was adjusted in increments of 100 connections per second to determine the maximum load at which all TCP sessions were sustained without any loss.

Equipment Acquisition and Support

The Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1, Nokia IP650 and the Cisco PIX-515 were acquired through normal product distribution channels. The Tolly Group contacted executives at Check Point, Nokia and Cisco and invited them to provide a higher level of support than available through normal channels. Check Point and Nokia accepted the invitation, Cisco did not accept the invitation.

Check Point and Nokia provided E-mail and phone technical support to assist Tolly engineers to configure/tune the devices for the test suites executed by The Tolly Group.

The Tolly Group verified product release levels and shared test configurations with the vendors in order to give them an opportunity to optimize their devices for the tests. Initial results were shared with the competitive vendors and Check Point challenged the results of the IPSec tunnel packet-per-second and firewall tests using IP packets. Check Point's position was that IP packets represent a small

portion of Internet traffic and that testing with UDP packets would render a more accurate representation of traffic on the Internet (as stated in RFC 2544 Benchmarking Methodology for Network Interconnect Devices).

The Tolly Group thus repeated the IPSec tunnel and firewall packet-per-second tests with UDP packets and reported these results. Some results using IP packets were made public in September, but those results became unavailable when The Tolly Group repeated the tests using UDP packets. Check Point was sent the UDP packet test results and is satisfied with the results since they correspond to their own internal testing.

For a more complete understanding of the interaction between The Tolly Group and Check Point, Nokia and Cisco, refer to the Technical Support Diary for Competitive Products Tested posted on The Tolly Group's World Wide Web site at <http://www.tolly.com> (see document 200225).



The Tolly Group gratefully acknowledges the providers of test equipment used in this project.

Vendor

Acterna Corp.
NetIQ
Spirent Communications

Product

DominoPlus DA-360
Chariot 3.2
SmartBits SMB-200

Web address

<http://www.acterna.com>
<http://www.netiq.com>
<http://www.spirentcom.com>



Since its inception, The Tolly Group has produced high-quality tests that meet three overarching criteria: All tests are objective, fully documented and repeatable.

We endeavor to provide complete disclosure of information concerning individual product tests, and multiparty competitive product evaluations.

As an independent organization, The Tolly Group does not accept retainer contracts from vendors, nor does it endorse products or suppliers. This open and honest environment assures vendors they are treated fairly, and with the necessary care to guarantee all parties that the results of these tests are accurate and valid. The Tolly Group has codified this into the Fair Testing Charter, which may be viewed at <http://www.tolly.com>.

Project Profile

Sponsor: NetScreen Technologies, Inc.

Document number: 200225

Product Class: Enterprise class firewall security

Products under test:

- NetScreen-100 v. 2.00r5 and 2.00r3
- Check Point FireWall-1/VPN-1 v. 4.1
- Nokia IP650 v. 4.1
- Cisco Firewall Series PIX-515 v. 5.1(2)

Testing window: July through November 2000

Additional information available:

- Technical Support Diary

For more information on this document, or other services offered by The Tolly Group, visit our World Wide Web site at <http://www.tolly.com>, send E-mail to info@tolly.com, call (800) 933-1699 or (732) 528-3300.

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