



NEXT GENERATION FIREWALL COMPARATIVE REPORT

Security

JUNE 06, 2017

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Tested Products

Barracuda NextGen Firewall F600.E20 Firmware Version 7.0.2

Check Point Software Technologies 15600 Next Generation Threat Prevention (NGTP) Appliance R77.20

Cisco Firepower 4110 v6.1.0.1

Forcepoint NGFW 3301 Appliance v6.1.2

Fortinet FortiGate 3200D FortiOS v5.4.4 GA Build 1117

Fortinet FortiGate 600D FortiOS v5.4.4 GA Build 1117

Juniper Networks SRX 4200 v15.1X49-D75.5

Palo Alto Networks PA-5250 PAN-OS 8.0.0

SonicWall NSA 6600 SonicOS 6.2

Sophos XG-750 Firewall v16.01

WatchGuard Firebox M4600 v11.10.7

Environment

Next Generation Firewall (NGFW) Test Methodology v7.0

Overview

Implementation of next generation firewall (NGFW) devices can be a complex process, with multiple factors affecting the overall security effectiveness of the device. The following factors should be considered over the course of the useful life of the device:

- Deployment use cases:
 - Will the NGFW be deployed to protect servers or desktop clients, or both?
 - How old are the operating systems and applications?
- Defensive capabilities in the deployment use cases (exploit block rate)
- Anti-evasion capabilities (resistance to common evasion techniques)
- Device stability and reliability

In order to determine the relative security effectiveness of devices on the market and to facilitate accurate product comparisons, NSS Labs has developed a unique metric:

$$\text{Security Effectiveness} = \text{Firewall (Firewall Policy Enforcement * Application Control)} * \text{IPS (Exploit Block Rate}^1 * \text{Evasions)} * \text{Stability and Reliability}$$

Figure 1 – Security Effectiveness Formula

By focusing on security effectiveness as a whole instead of on exploit block rate alone, NSS is able to factor in the ease with which defenses can be bypassed, as well as the reliability of the device.

Figure 2 presents the overall results of the tests.

Product	Firewall	IPS	Stability and Reliability	Security Effectiveness
Barracuda Networks	100%	25.8%	100%	25.8%
Check Point	100%	89.6%	100%	89.6%
Cisco	100%	95.5%	100%	95.5%
Forcepoint	100%	99.9%	100%	99.9%
Fortinet 3200D	100%	78.6%	100%	78.6%
Fortinet 600D	100%	78.6%	100%	78.6%
Juniper Networks	100%	37.8%	100%	37.8%
Palo Alto Networks	100%	39.7%	100%	39.7%
SonicWall	100%	26.4%	100%	26.4%
Sophos	100%	90.4%	100%	90.4%
WatchGuard	100%	88.9%	100%	88.9%

Figure 2 – Security Effectiveness

NSS research indicates that NGFW devices are typically deployed to protect users rather than data center assets, and that the majority of enterprises will not separately tune intrusion prevention system (IPS) modules within their NGFWs. Therefore, during NSS testing, NGFW products are configured with the vendor’s pre-defined or

¹Exploit block rate is defined as the number of live exploits (CAWS) and exploits from the NSS Exploit Library that are blocked under test.

recommended (i.e., “out-of-the-box”) settings in order to provide readers with relevant security effectiveness and performance dimensions based on their expected usage.

Evasion techniques are a means of disguising and modifying attacks at the point of delivery to avoid detection and blocking by security products. Failure of a security device to correctly identify a specific type of evasion potentially allows an attacker to use an entire class of exploits for which the device is assumed to have protection. This renders the device virtually useless. Many of the techniques used in this test have been widely known for years and should be considered minimum requirements for the NGFW product category.

The comprehensive *NSS Exploit Library* covers a diverse set of exploits focused on several hundred applications and operating systems. Protection from web-based exploits (live attacks) that are currently targeting client applications can be effectively measured using NSS’ Cyber Advanced Warning System (CAWS). Figure 3 depicts how each vendor scored against live exploits (CAWS) and the *NSS Exploit Library*.

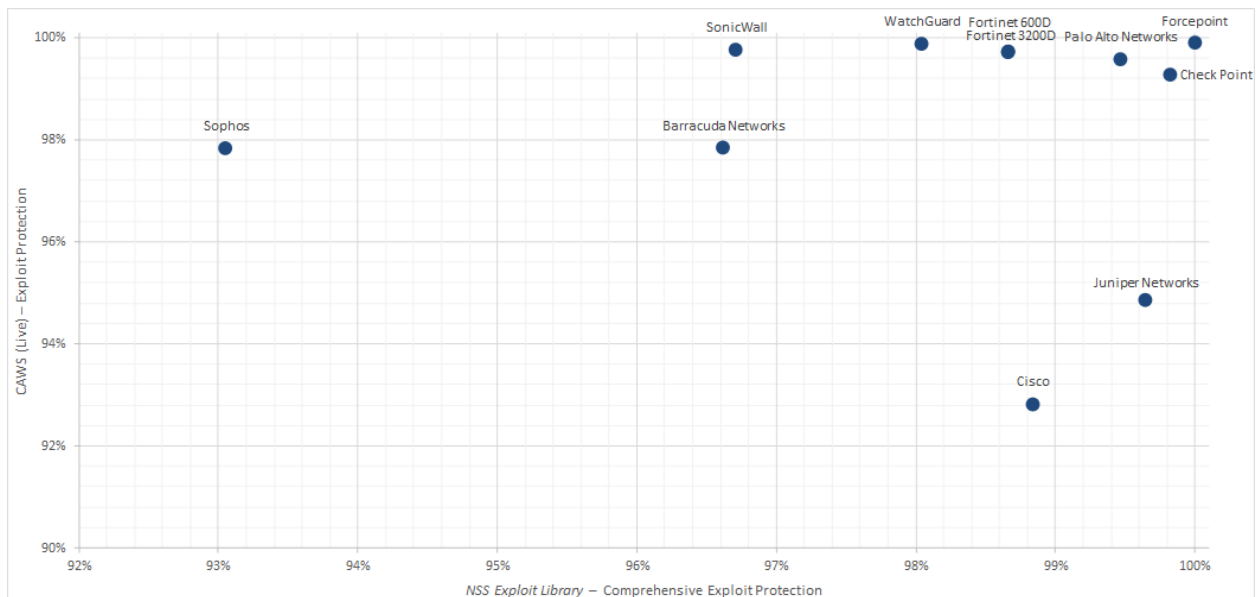


Figure 3 – Protection Against Live Exploits (CAWS) and Exploits from the *NSS Exploit Library*

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Analysis

The threat landscape is evolving constantly; attackers are refining their strategies and increasing both the volume and intelligence of their attacks. Additionally, enterprises now must defend against targeted persistent attacks. In the past, servers were the main target; however, attacks against desktop client applications are now mainstream and present a clear danger to organizations.

Firewall Policy Enforcement

Policies are rules that are configured on a firewall to permit or deny access from one network resource to another, based on identifying criteria such as source, destination, and service. A term typically used to define the demarcation point of a network where policy is applied is *demilitarized zone* (DMZ). Policies are typically written to permit or deny network traffic from one or more of the following zones:

- **Untrusted** – This is typically an external network and is considered to be unknown and not secure. An example of an untrusted network would be the Internet.
- **DMZ** – This is a network that is being isolated by the firewall, restricting network traffic to and from hosts contained within the isolated network.
- **Trusted** – This is typically an internal network; i.e., a network that is considered secure and protected.

The NSS firewall tests verify performance and the ability to enforce policy between the following:

- Trusted to Untrusted
- Untrusted to DMZ
- Trusted to DMZ

Note: Firewalls must provide at least one DMZ interface in order to provide a DMZ or “transition point” between untrusted and trusted networks.

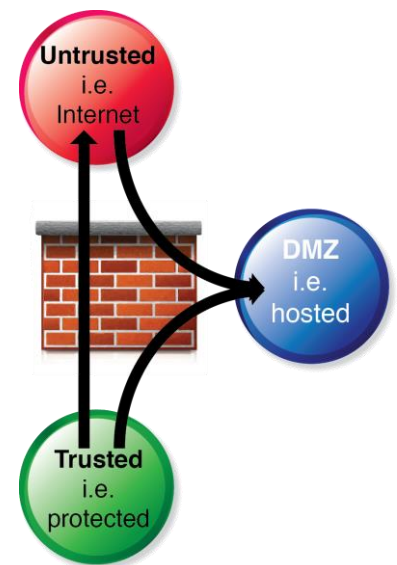


Figure 4 and Figure 5 depict the results from the firewall policy enforcement test.

Product	Baseline Policy	Simple Policy	Complex Policy	Static NAT	Dynamic/Hide NAT
Barracuda Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Check Point	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Cisco	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Forcepoint	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 3200D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 600D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Juniper Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Palo Alto Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
SonicWall	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Sophos	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
WatchGuard	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS

Figure 4 – Firewall Policy Enforcement (I)

Product	SYN Flood Protection	IP Address Spoofing Protection	TCP Split Handshake	Firewall Policy Protection
Barracuda Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Check Point	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Cisco	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Forcepoint	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 3200D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 600D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Juniper Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Palo Alto Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
SonicWall	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Sophos	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
WatchGuard	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS

Figure 5 – Firewall Policy Enforcement (II)

Application Control

An NGFW must provide granular control based on applications as well as ports. This capability is needed to re-establish a secure perimeter where unwanted applications are unable to tunnel over HTTP/S. As such, granular application control is a requirement of an NGFW since it enables the administrator to define security policies based on both applications and ports.

Product	Block Unwanted Applications	Block Specific Action	Application Control
Barracuda Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS
Check Point	PASS	PASS	PASS
Cisco	PASS	PASS	PASS
Forcepoint	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 3200D	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 600D	PASS	PASS	PASS
Juniper Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS
Palo Alto Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS
SonicWall	PASS	PASS	PASS
Sophos	PASS	PASS	PASS
WatchGuard	PASS	PASS	PASS

Figure 6 – Application Control

Intrusion Prevention System (IPS)

In order to accurately represent the protection that is likely to be achieved by a typical enterprise, NSS evaluates a device using the pre-defined default or recommended configuration that ships with the product “out-of-the-box.”

CAWS (Live Exploits)

This test uses NSS’ Cyber Advanced Warning System (CAWS) to determine how effectively products are able to block exploits that are being used in active attack campaigns.²

Protection from web-based exploits targeting client applications, also known as “drive-by” downloads, can be effectively measured in NSS’ unique live test harness through a series of procedures that measure the stages of protection.

Unlike traditional malware that is downloaded and installed, “drive-by” attacks first exploit a vulnerable application then silently download and install malware. For more information, see the Comparative Report on Security – CAWS (Live Exploits).

² [See the NSS Cyber Advanced Warning System™ for more details.](#)

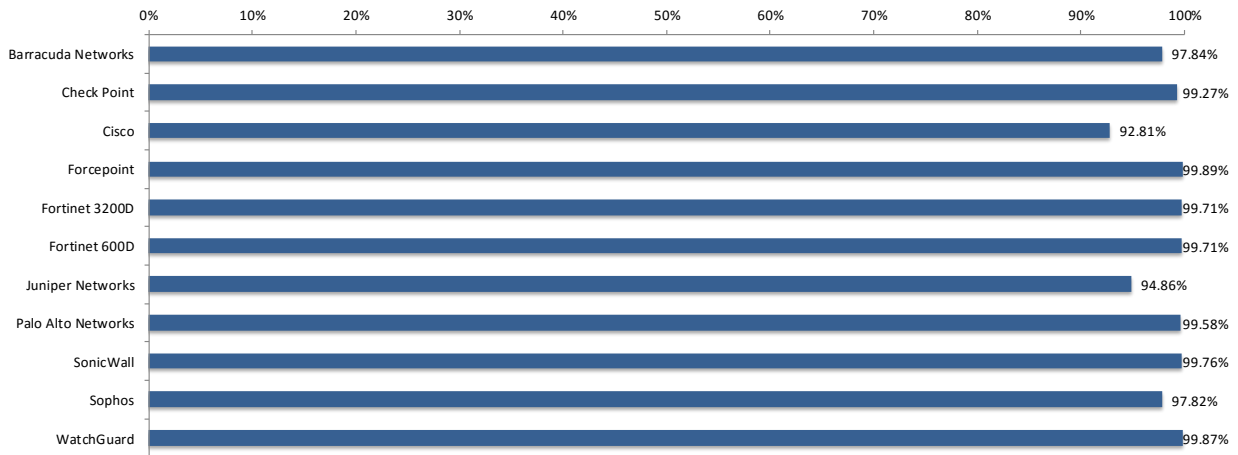


Figure 7 – CAWS (Live Exploits)

NSS Exploit Library

NSS’ security effectiveness testing leverages the deep expertise of our engineers who utilize multiple commercial, open-source, and proprietary tools, including NSS’ network live stack test environment³ as appropriate. With 2,097 exploits, this is the industry’s most comprehensive test to date. Most notably, all of the exploits and payloads in this test have been validated such that:

- A reverse shell is returned
- A bind shell is opened on the target, allowing the attacker to execute arbitrary commands
- Arbitrary code is executed
- A malicious payload is installed
- A system is rendered unresponsive
- Etc.

Exploit Block Rate by Year

Contrary to popular belief, the biggest risks are not always driven by the latest “Patch Tuesday” disclosures. NSS’ threat research reveals that many older attacks are still in circulation and therefore remain relevant.

Different vendors take different approaches to adding coverage once a vulnerability is disclosed. Attempts to provide rapid coverage for vulnerabilities that are not fully understood can result in multiple exploit-specific signatures that may be inaccurate, ineffective, or prone to false positives. Vendors that have the resources to fully research a vulnerability should be able to produce vulnerability-oriented signatures that provide coverage for all exploits written to take advantage of that flaw. This approach provides more effective coverage with fewer false positives.

³ See the NSS Cyber Advanced Warning System™ for more details.

Vendors may retire older signatures in an attempt to alleviate a product’s performance limitations; however, this may result in inconsistent coverage for older vulnerabilities and varying levels of protection across products. Figure 8 classifies coverage by disclosure date, as tracked by CVE numbers. The heat map displays vendor coverage by year (dark green = high coverage; dark red = low coverage).

Product	<=2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Barracuda Networks	86.7%	86.5%	88.9%	92.6%	93.9%	96.2%
Check Point	100.0%	99.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Cisco	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.6%	100.0%	97.8%
Forcepoint	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Fortinet 3200D	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Fortinet 600D	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Juniper Networks	100.0%	97.9%	99.5%	99.2%	99.7%	100.0%
Palo Alto Networks	100.0%	98.4%	99.5%	99.6%	99.0%	97.3%
SonicWall	100.0%	97.9%	98.4%	98.0%	96.8%	97.3%
Sophos	100.0%	98.4%	97.4%	96.1%	97.1%	97.3%
WatchGuard	100.0%	97.9%	96.8%	97.7%	98.4%	96.8%

Figure 8 – Exploit Block Rate by Year – Recommended Policies (I)

Product	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Barracuda Networks	96.0%	94.1%	92.2%	100.0%	98.9%	95.6%	92.1%	93.4%
Check Point	100.0%	99.2%	99.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%
Cisco	98.8%	99.2%	99.5%	100.0%	100.0%	84.4%	65.8%	98.2%
Forcepoint	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Fortinet 3200D	99.4%	98.3%	95.1%	100.0%	98.9%	98.9%	100.0%	99.2%
Fortinet 600D	99.4%	98.3%	95.1%	100.0%	98.9%	98.9%	100.0%	99.2%
Juniper Networks	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	98.7%	100.0%	95.6%	92.1%	99.2%
Palo Alto Networks	100.0%	99.2%	99.0%	100.0%	98.9%	98.9%	100.0%	99.1%
SonicWall	97.9%	89.8%	93.1%	94.9%	94.3%	91.1%	86.8%	96.1%
Sophos	92.4%	83.9%	92.6%	94.9%	93.2%	88.9%	92.1%	94.6%
WatchGuard	98.2%	96.6%	96.6%	100.0%	97.7%	96.7%	97.4%	97.6%

Figure 9 – Exploit Block Rate by Year – Recommended Policies (II)

Coverage by Attack Vector

Exploits can be initiated either locally by the target (desktop client) or remotely by the attacker against a server. Since 2007, NSS researchers have noticed a dramatic rise in the number of client-side exploits, as these can be easily launched by unsuspecting users who visit infected websites. At first, IPS products did not focus on these types of attacks as they were considered the responsibility of antivirus products.

This approach is no longer viewed as acceptable and, despite the difficulty of providing extensive coverage for client-side attacks, the IPS (and NGFW) industry has attempted to provide more complete coverage of these attacks. This is particularly important for NGFW devices, which are typically used to protect client desktops rather

than data centers and servers; the latter comprise deployment scenarios where separate, dedicated firewall and IPS devices are more common.

Attacks can be categorized as either attacker initiated or target initiated.

- Attacker-initiated attacks are executed remotely by the attacker against a vulnerable application and/or operating system. These attacks traditionally target servers (which is why they are often referred to as server-side attacks).
- Target-initiated attacks are initiated by the vulnerable target (which is why they are often referred to as client-side attacks). The attacker has little or no control over when the target user or application will execute the threat. Target examples include Internet Explorer, Adobe Reader, Firefox, QuickTime, and Microsoft Office applications.

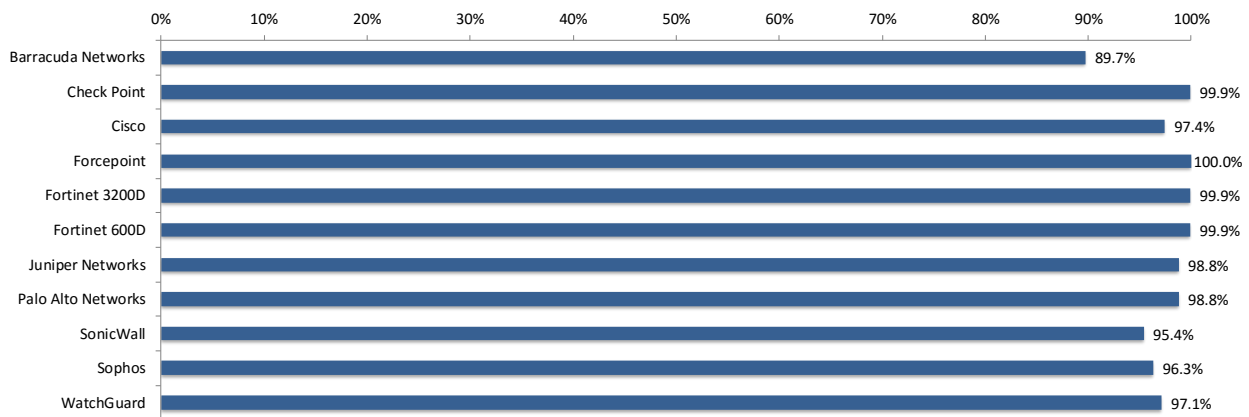


Figure 10 – Attacker-Initiated Exploit Block Rate (Server Side)

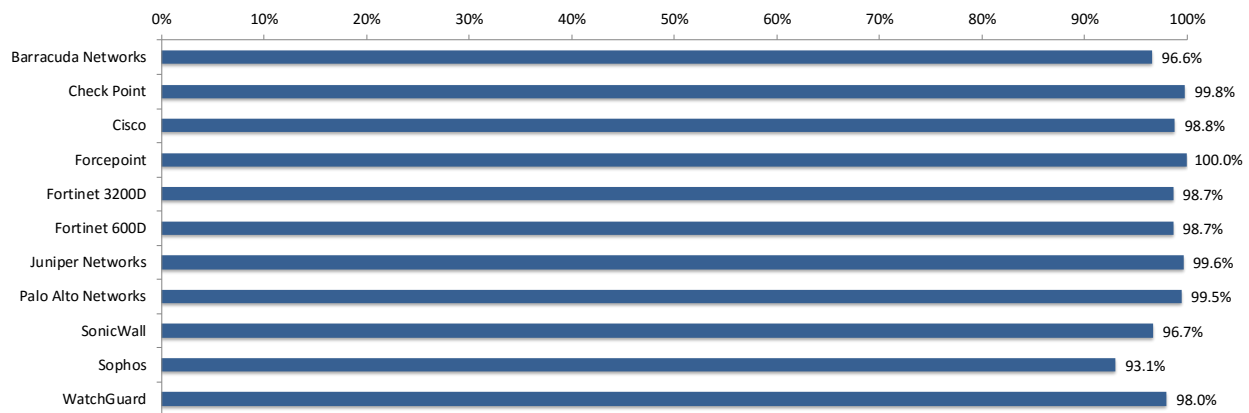


Figure 11 – Target-Initiated Exploit Block Rate (Client Side)

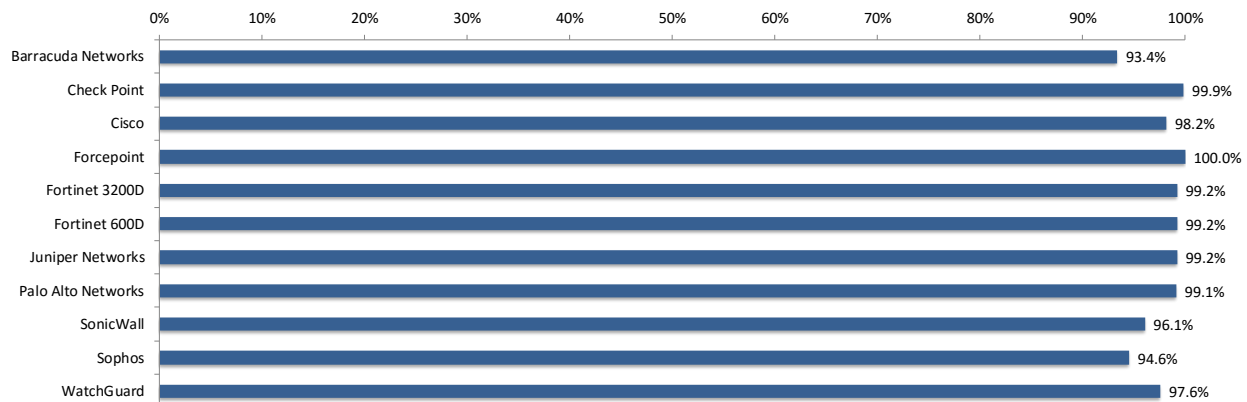


Figure 12 – Overall Exploit Block Rate

NSS research indicates that most enterprises are forced to support a heterogeneous mix of desktop client applications. Further, enterprise IT departments are often unable to positively identify which client applications are running on their employees' desktops, and which are not.

This research provides new clarity regarding tuning best practices and indicates that it is still necessary to tune an NGFW that is protecting servers in a DMZ or data center. Research also indicates that with regard to protecting desktop client applications with an NGFW, it is often best to enable a (nearly) full complement of signatures, since it is not feasible to tune an NGFW based on specific desktop client applications.

Given the rapid evolution of criminal activity targeting desktop client applications, enterprises will need to dedicate more resources to client-side protection in 2017.

Coverage by Impact Type

The most serious exploits are those that result in a remote system compromise, providing the attacker with the ability to execute arbitrary system-level commands. Most exploits in this class are "weaponized" and offer the attacker a fully interactive remote shell on the target client or server.

Slightly less serious are attacks that result in an individual service compromise, but not arbitrary system-level command execution. Finally, there are attacks that result in a system- or service-level fault that crashes the targeted service or application and requires administrative action to restart the service or reboot the system. Clients can contact NSS for more information about these tests.

Evasions

Evasion techniques are a means of disguising and modifying attacks at the point of delivery to avoid detection and blocking by security products. Failure of a security device to correctly identify a specific type of evasion potentially allows an attacker to use an entire class of exploits for which the device is assumed to have protection. This renders the device virtually useless. Many of the techniques used in this test have been widely known for years and should be considered minimum requirements for the NGFW product category.

Providing exploit protection results without fully factoring in evasion can be misleading. The more classes of evasion that are missed (such as IP packet fragmentation, stream segmentation, RPC fragmentation, URL obfuscation, HTML obfuscation, payload encoding, and FTP evasion), the less effective the device. For example, it is better to miss all techniques in one evasion category, such as FTP evasion, than one technique in each category, which would result in a broader attack surface.

Furthermore, evasions operating at the lower layers of the network stack (IP packet fragmentation or stream segmentation) have a greater impact on security effectiveness than those operating at the upper layers (HTTP or FTP obfuscation.) Lower-level evasions will potentially impact a wider number of exploits; missing TCP segmentation, for example, is a much more serious issue than missing FTP obfuscation.

A product’s effectiveness is significantly handicapped if it fails to detect exploits that employ obfuscation or evasion techniques, and the NSS product guidance is adjusted to reflect this.

As with exploits, evasions can be employed specifically to obfuscate attacks that are initiated either locally by the target (client-side), or remotely by the attacker against a server (server-side). Some evasions are equally effective when used with both server-side *and* client-side attacks. See the *Coverage by Attack Vector* section of this report for more detail.

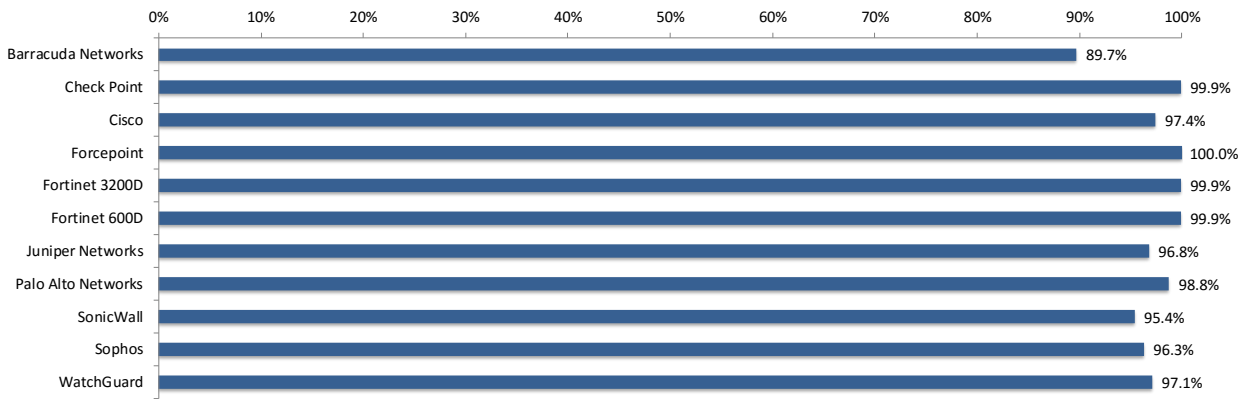


Figure 13 – Attacker-Initiated Exploits and Evasions (Server Side)

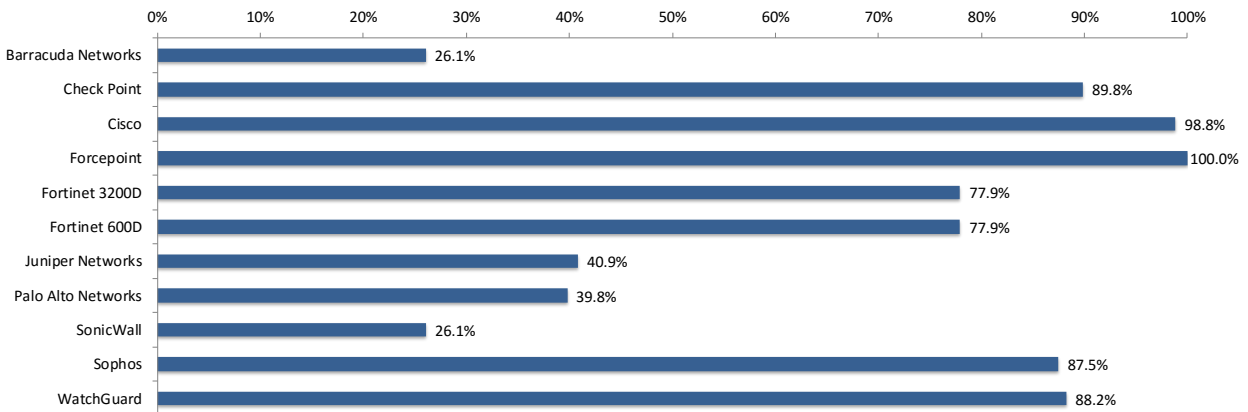


Figure 14 – Target-Initiated Exploits and Evasions (Client Side)

Figure 15 depicts how products fared against combinations of attacker-initiated exploits and evasions.

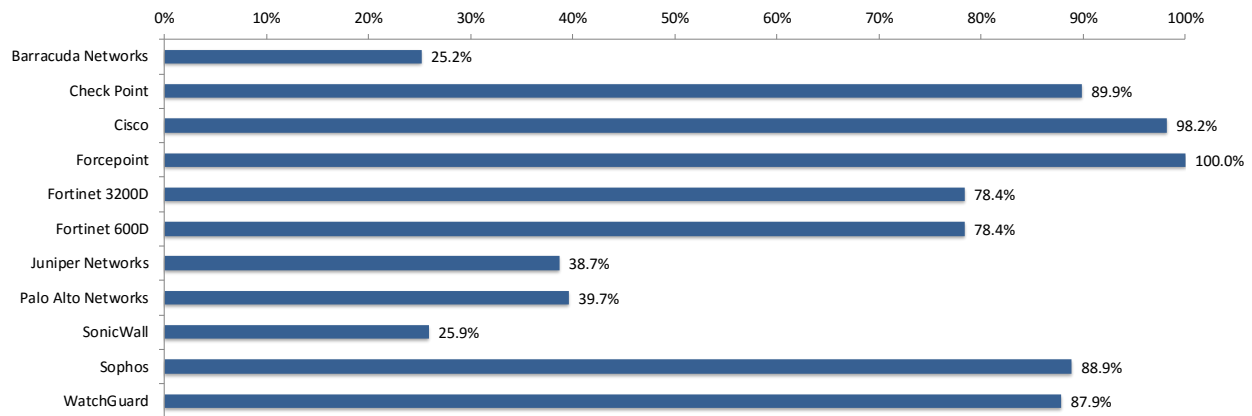


Figure 15 – Exploits and Evasions (Combined)

Figure 16 and Figure 17 provide evasion resistance results for each the tested products. For additional details on which evasions were missed, see the individual Test Reports.

Product	IP Packet Fragmentation	TCP Stream Segmentation	RPC Fragmentation	URL Obfuscation	HTML Obfuscation
Barracuda Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Check Point	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Cisco	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Forcepoint	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 3200D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL
Fortinet 600D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL
Juniper Networks	PASS	PASS	FAIL	PASS	FAIL
Palo Alto Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
SonicWall	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Sophos	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL
WatchGuard	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS

Figure 16 – Evasion Resistance (I)

Product	HTTP Compression	FTP/Telnet Evasion	Payload Padding	IP Packet Fragmentation + TCP Segmentation	HTTP Evasions ⁴
Barracuda Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL
Check Point	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL
Cisco	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Forcepoint	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 3200D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 600D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Juniper Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL
Palo Alto Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL
SonicWall	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL
Sophos	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
WatchGuard	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL

Figure 17 – Evasion Resistance (II)

⁴ In accordance with the industry standard for vulnerability disclosures and to provide vendors with sufficient time to add protection where necessary, NSS Labs will not publicly release information about which previously untested evasion techniques were applied during testing until 90 days after the publication of this document.

Stability and Reliability

Long-term stability is particularly important for an inline device, where failure can produce network outages. These tests verify the stability of the device along with its ability to maintain security effectiveness while under normal load and while passing malicious traffic. Products that cannot sustain legitimate traffic (or that crash) while under hostile attack will not pass.

The device is required to remain operational and stable throughout these tests, and to block 100% of previously blocked traffic, raising an alert for each. If any non-allowed traffic passes successfully, caused either by the volume of traffic or by the device failing open for any reason, it will fail the test.

Product	Blocking under Extended Attack	Passing Legitimate Traffic under Extended Attack	Attack Detection/Blocking – Normal Load	State Preservation – Normal Load	Pass Legitimate Traffic – Normal Load
Barracuda Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Check Point	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Cisco	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Forcepoint	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 3200D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 600D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Juniper Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Palo Alto Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
SonicWall	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Sophos	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
WatchGuard	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS

Figure 18 – Stability and Reliability (I)

Product	State Preservation – Maximum Exceeded	Drop Traffic – Maximum Exceeded	Protocol Fuzzing and Mutation	Power Fail	Persistence of Data
Barracuda Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Check Point	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Cisco	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Forcepoint	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 3200D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Fortinet 600D	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Juniper Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Palo Alto Networks	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
SonicWall	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
Sophos	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS
WatchGuard	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS

Figure 19 – Stability and Reliability (II)

Security Effectiveness

It is possible to rate the *Security Effectiveness* of the individual components of an NGFW. Figure 20 displays the *Security Effectiveness* of the firewall component of the NGFW. NSS factors firewall policy enforcement and application control into a product's overall firewall score.

Product	Firewall Policy Enforcement	Application Control	Overall Firewall Score
Barracuda Networks	PASS	PASS	100%
Check Point	PASS	PASS	100%
Cisco	PASS	PASS	100%
Forcepoint	PASS	PASS	100%
Fortinet 3200D	PASS	PASS	100%
Fortinet 600D	PASS	PASS	100%
Juniper Networks	PASS	PASS	100%
Palo Alto Networks	PASS	PASS	100%
SonicWall	PASS	PASS	100%
Sophos	PASS	PASS	100%
WatchGuard	PASS	PASS	100%

Figure 20 – Security Effectiveness (Firewall)

Figure 21 displays the *Security Effectiveness* of the IPS component of the NGFW. NSS factors exploit block rate and evasions into a product's overall IPS score.

Product	Exploit Block Rate	Evasions	Overall IPS Score
Barracuda Networks	95.6%	27%	25.8%
Check Point	99.6%	90%	89.6%
Cisco	95.5%	100%	95.5%
Forcepoint	99.9%	100%	99.9%
Fortinet 3200D	99.5%	79%	78.6%
Fortinet 600D	99.5%	79%	78.6%
Juniper Networks	97.0%	39%	37.8%
Palo Alto Networks	99.4%	40%	39.7%
SonicWall	97.9%	27%	26.4%
Sophos	96.2%	94%	90.4%
WatchGuard	98.7%	90%	88.9%

Figure 21 – Security Effectiveness (IPS)

Finally, the overall *Security Effectiveness* of the NGFW is determined using the formula in Figure 1. NSS combines a product’s scores relating to firewall *Security Effectiveness*, IPS *Security Effectiveness*, and stability and reliability in order to generate an overall *Security Effectiveness* score for the device.

Product	Firewall	IPS	Stability and Reliability	Security Effectiveness
Barracuda Networks	100%	25.8%	100%	25.8%
Check Point	100%	89.6%	100%	89.6%
Cisco	100%	95.5%	100%	95.5%
Forcepoint	100%	99.9%	100%	99.9%
Fortinet 3200D	100%	78.6%	100%	78.6%
Fortinet 600D	100%	78.6%	100%	78.6%
Juniper Networks	100%	37.8%	100%	37.8%
Palo Alto Networks	100%	39.7%	100%	39.7%
SonicWall	100%	26.4%	100%	26.4%
Sophos	100%	90.4%	100%	90.4%
WatchGuard	100%	88.9%	100%	88.9%

Figure 22 – Security Effectiveness

Test Methodology

Next Generation Firewall Test Methodology Test Methodology v7.0

A copy of the test methodology is available on the NSS Labs website at www.nsslabs.com.

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