



NETWORK INTRUSION PREVENTION SYSTEMS
INDIVIDUAL PRODUCT TEST RESULTS
NSFOCUS® Network IPS 1200



METHODOLOGY VERSION: 6.0
MARCH 2010

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1 INTRODUCTION

During Q1 2010, NSS Labs performed a test of the NSFOCUS NIPS 1200 as a supplement to our independent Q4 2009 test of 15 network intrusion prevention systems (IPS) currently on the market. IPS vendors included in the test voluntarily submitted their products to NSS Labs free of charge and we did not receive any compensation in return for their participation. Each product was subjected to thorough testing at the NSS Labs facility in Austin, Texas, based on methodology v6.0 available on www.nsslabs.com.

While the Network IPS Group Test Report provides comparative information about those products, this Individual Test Report provides detailed information on a specific product not available elsewhere.

NSS Labs evaluated the products configured with the default, “out-of-the-box” settings, then again as optimally tuned by the vendor prior to testing to provide readers with a range of information on key IPS security effectiveness and performance dimensions.

As part of this test, NSFOCUS submitted the **NSFOCUS NIPS 1200**.

NSS Labs’ Rating: Recommended

Product	Effectiveness	Throughput
NSFOCUS NIPS-1200	77.7%	874 Mbps

Using the default policy, the NSFOCUS NIPS 1200 blocked 70.2% of attacks. Using an existing tuned policy configured by an NSFOCUS engineer, the effectiveness improved by 7.5% to 77.7%. The NSFOCUS NIPS 1200 blocked 77.7% of attacks while correctly handling 100% of our evasion attempts without error.

NSS Labs rates throughput based upon tuned settings—averaging the results from the tests described in Sections 6.6.1, 6.6.2, and 6.4.2 of this report: “Real World” Protocol Mix (Perimeter), “Real World” Protocol Mix (Core), and 21 KB HTTP Response, respectively.

The NSFOCUS management interface was simple to use and surprisingly intuitive. It allowed for rapid deployment of devices with effective pre-defined attack categories. For tuned testing, an “All-On” policy was created by adding several attack categories to the drop list. This process only took a few moments. Although tuning the initial setup was simple, ongoing tuning and addition of new attack signatures was more complicated. NSFOCUS lists signatures by attack type, not target type, which is unnatural for most users. NSS Labs accounted for the impact in the cost of tuning and overall TCO results.

Based upon its industry leading protection rate for client applications, overpowering performance in the sub-gigabit category, and excellent TCO, the NSFOCUS NIPS 1200 is a product worthy of consideration. The company currently has a strong market presence in the Asia-Pacific region, where it can deliver better customer service. This may be a limiting factor for users in other regions.

2 SECURITY EFFECTIVENESS

To show the range of expectations a user should have, NSS Labs evaluated the products configured with the default, “out-of-the-box” settings, then again as optimally tuned by the vendor prior to testing.

Live Exploit Testing: NSS Labs’ security effectiveness testing leverages deep expertise of our engineers utilizing multiple commercial, open-source and proprietary tools as appropriate. With 1,159 live exploits, this is the industry’s most comprehensive test to date. Most notable, all of the live exploits and payloads in our test have been validated in our lab such that:

- a reverse shell is returned
- a bind shell is opened on the target allowing the attacker to execute arbitrary commands
- a malicious payload installed
- a system is rendered unresponsive
- etc.

Configuration	Total Number of Exploits Run	Total Number Blocked	Block Percentage
Default Configuration	1,159	814	70.2%
Tuned Configuration	1,159	900	77.7%

2.1 COVERAGE BY ATTACK VECTOR

Because a failure to block attacks could result in significant compromise and impact to critical business systems, network IPS should be evaluated against a broad set of exploits. Exploits can be categorized into two groups: attacker-initiated and target-initiated. Attacker-initiated exploits are threats executed remotely against a vulnerable application and/or operating system by an individual while target-initiated exploits are initiated by the vulnerable target. In target-initiated exploits, the attacker has little or no control as to when the threat is executed.

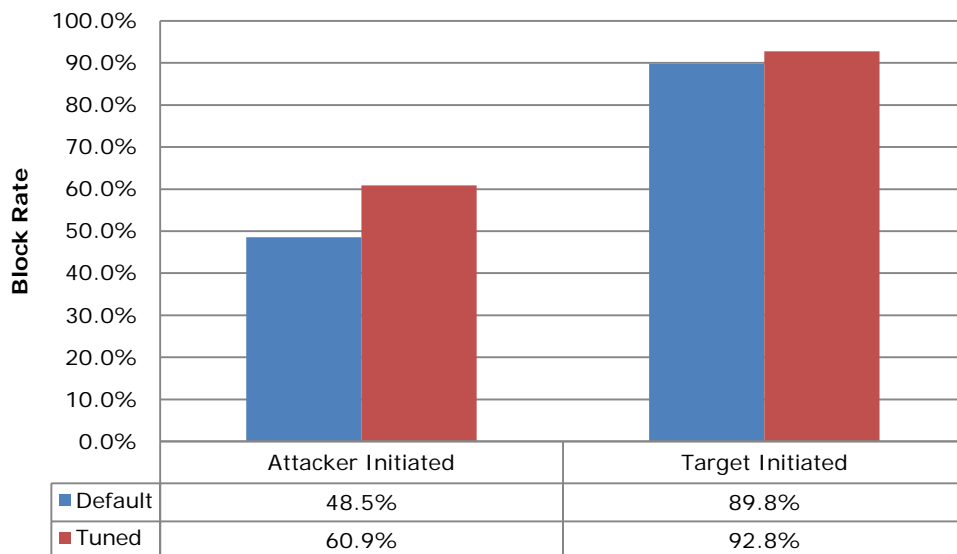


Figure 1: Coverage by Attack Vector – Default vs. Tuned Configurations

2.2 COVERAGE BY IMPACT TYPE

The most serious exploits are those which 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. Typical attacks in this category include service-specific attacks—such as SQL injection—that enable an attacker to execute arbitrary SQL commands within the database service. These attacks are somewhat isolated to the service and do not immediately result in full system-level access to the operating system and all services. However, using additional localized system attacks, it may be possible for the attacker to escalate from the service level to the system level.

Finally, there are the attacks (often target-initiated) which 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. These attacks do not enable the attacker to execute arbitrary commands. Still, the resulting impact to the business could be severe, as the attacker could crash a protected system or service.

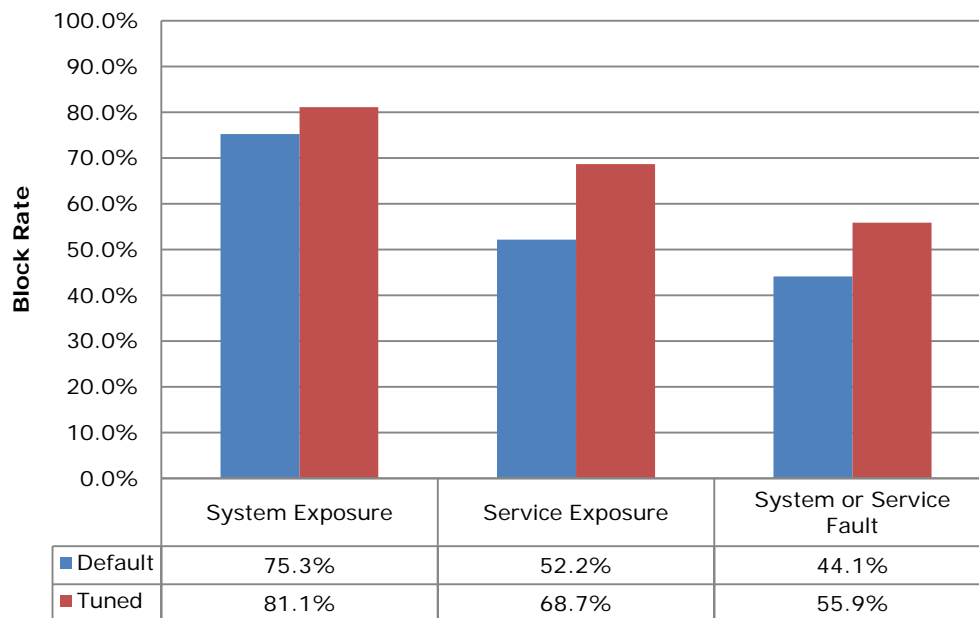


Figure 2: Product Coverage by Impact – Default vs. Tuned Configurations

2.3 ATTACK LEAKAGE

All NIPS devices have to make the choice whether to risk denying legitimate traffic or allowing malicious traffic once they run low on resources. By default, the NIPS-1200 will drop new connections when resources (such as state table memory) are low or when traffic loads exceed the device capacity. This will theoretically block legitimate traffic, but maintain state on existing connections (preventing evasion).

2.4 RESISTANCE TO EVASION

Description	IP Packet Fragmentation	TCP Stream Segmentation	RPC Fragmentation	URL Obfuscation	FTP Evasion	TOTAL
NIPS-1200	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Resistance to known evasion techniques was perfect, with the NSFOCUS NIPS 1200 achieving a 100% score across the board in all related tests. *IP fragmentation, TCP stream segmentation, RPC fragmentation, URL obfuscation, and FTP evasion* all failed to trick the product into ignoring valid attacks. Not only were the fragmented and obfuscated attacks blocked successfully, but all of them were also decoded accurately.

3 PERFORMANCE

There is frequently a trade-off between security effectiveness and performance. Because of this trade-off, it is important to judge a product’s security effectiveness within the context of its performance (and *vice versa*). This ensures that new security protections do not adversely impact performance and security shortcuts are not taken to maintain or improve performance.

3.1 REAL-WORLD TRAFFIC MIXES

Whereas previous tests provide a pure HTTP environment with varying connection rates and average packet sizes, the aim of this test is to simulate a “real-world” environment by introducing additional protocols and real content while still maintaining a precisely repeatable and consistent background traffic load (something rarely seen in a real-world environment). For details about real-world traffic protocol types and percentages, see the NSS Labs IPS Test Methodology, available at www.nsslabs.com.

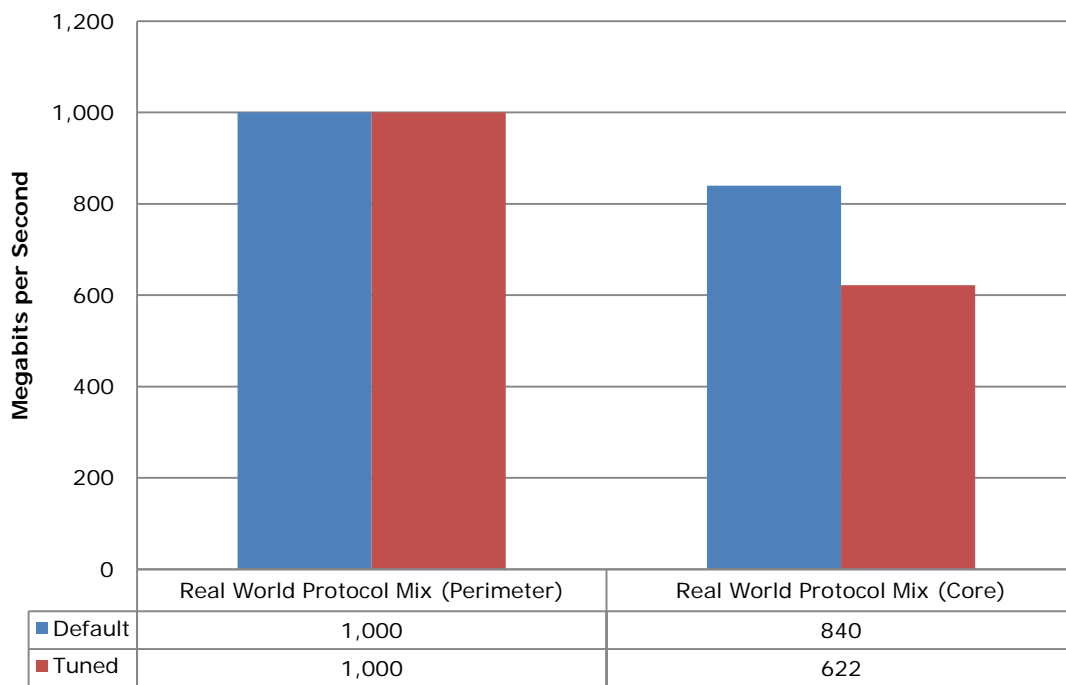


Figure 3: Real-World Traffic Mixes – Default vs. Tuned Configurations

3.2 CONNECTION DYNAMICS – CONCURRENCY AND CONNECTION RATES

The aim of these tests is to stress the detection engine and determine how the sensor copes with large numbers of TCP connections per second, application layer transactions per second, and concurrent open connections. All packets contain valid payload and address data and these tests provide an excellent representation of a live network at various connection/transaction rates.

Note that in all tests, the following critical “breaking points”—where the final measurements are taken—are used:

Excessive concurrent TCP connections – latency within the IPS is causing unacceptable increase in open connections on the server-side.

Excessive response time for HTTP transactions/SMTP sessions – latency within the IPS is causing excessive delays and increased response time to the client.

Unsuccessful HTTP transactions/SMTP sessions – normally, there should be zero unsuccessful transactions. Once these appear, it is an indication that excessive latency within the IPS is causing connections to time out.

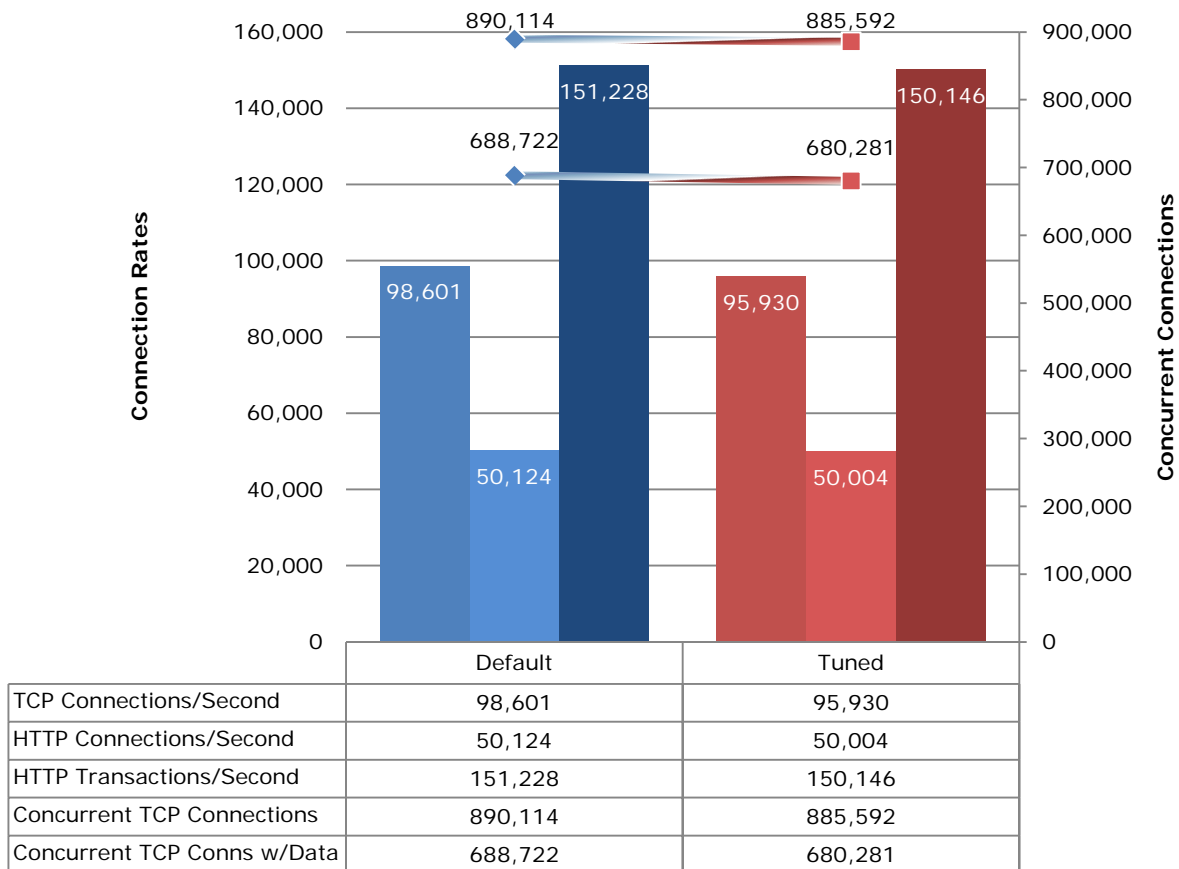


Figure 4: Concurrency and Connection Rates – Default vs. Tuned Configurations

3.3 HTTP CONNECTIONS PER SECOND AND CAPACITY

These tests aim to stress the HTTP detection engine in order to determine how the sensor copes with detecting and blocking exploits under network loads of varying average packet size and varying connections per second. By creating genuine session-based traffic with varying session lengths, the sensor is forced to track valid TCP sessions, thus ensuring a higher workload than for simple packet-based background traffic.

Each transaction consists of a single HTTP GET request and there are no transaction delays (i.e. the web server responds immediately to all requests). All packets contain valid payload (a mix of binary and ASCII objects) and address data. This test provides an excellent representation of a live network (albeit one biased towards HTTP traffic) at various network loads.

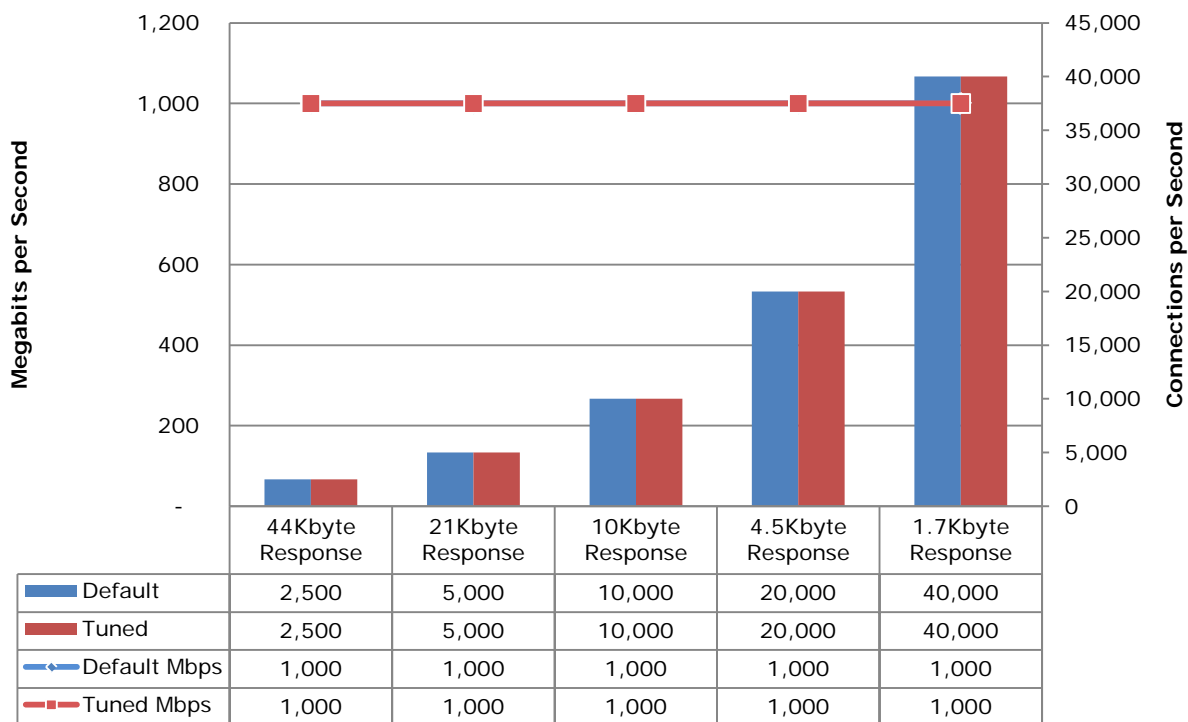


Figure 5: HTTP Connections per Second and Capacity – Default vs. Tuned Configurations

3.4 HTTP CONNECTIONS PER SECOND AND CAPACITY WITH DELAYS

Typical user behavior introduces delays in between requests and responses, e.g. as users read web pages and decide which links to click next. This next set of tests is identical to the previous set except that these include a 10-second delay in the server response for each transaction. This has the effect of maintaining a high number of open connections throughout the test, thus forcing the sensor to utilize additional resources to track those connections.

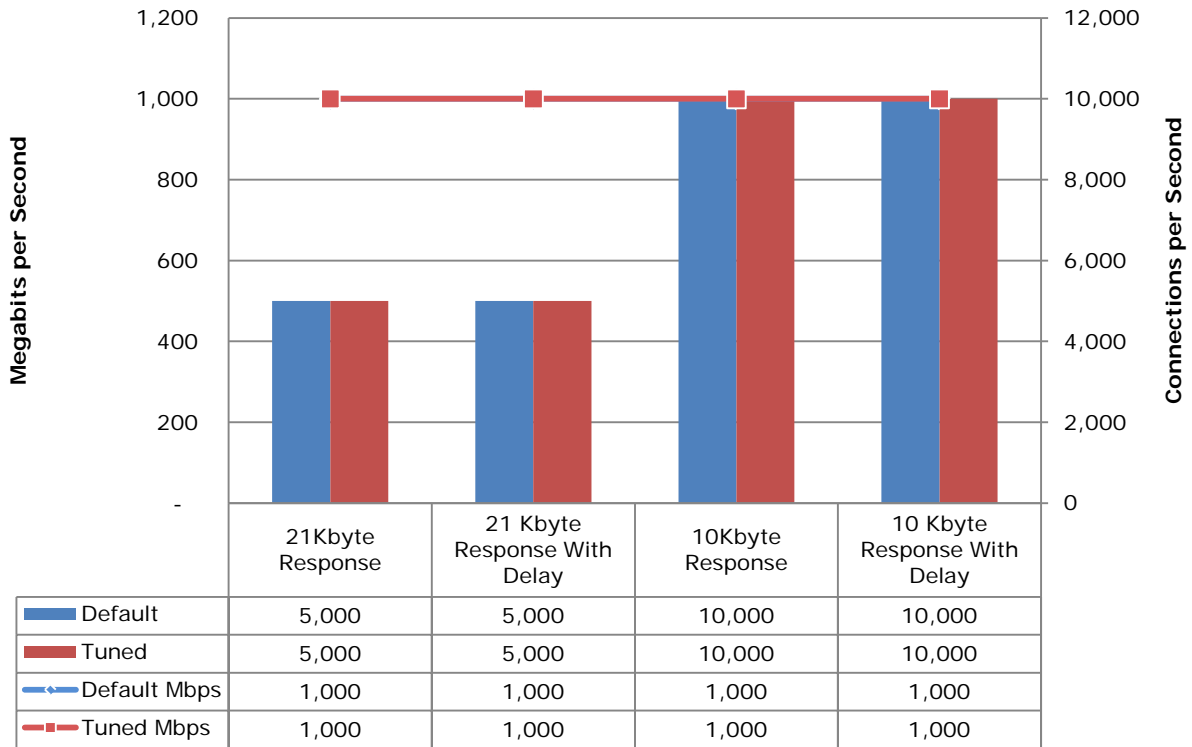


Figure 6: HTTP Connections per Second and Capacity (with/without Delays)

3.5 UDP THROUGHPUT

The aim of this test is purely to determine the raw packet processing capability of each in-line port pair of the IPS. It is not real world, and can be misleading. It is included here primarily for legacy purposes.

This traffic does not attempt to simulate any form of “real-world” network condition. No TCP sessions are created during this test, and there is very little for the detection engine to do in the way of protocol analysis (although each vendor will be required to write a signature to detect the test packets to ensure that they are being passed through the detection engine and not “fast-tracked” from the inbound to outbound port).

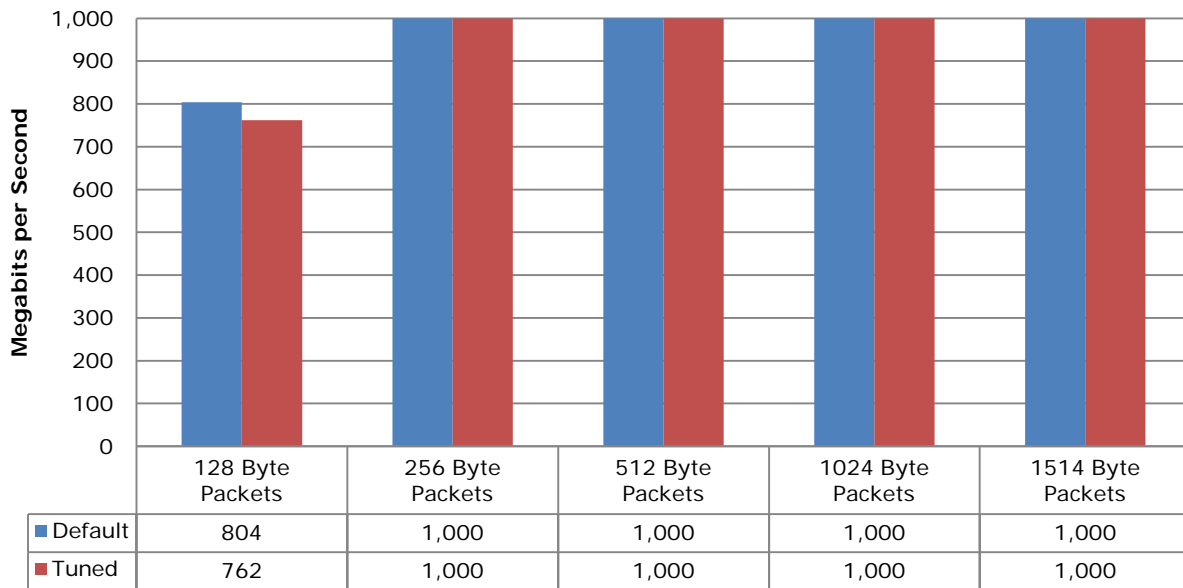


Figure 7: UDP Throughput – Default vs. Tuned Configurations

4 TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

IPS solutions can be complex projects with several factors affecting the overall cost of deployment, maintenance and upkeep. All of these should be considered over the course of the useful life of the solution.

Product Purchase – the cost of acquisition.

Product Maintenance – the fees paid to the vendor.

Installation – the time required to take the device out of the box, configure it, put it into the network, apply updates and patches, initial tuning, and set up desired logging and reporting.

Upkeep – the time required to apply periodic updates and patches from vendors, including hardware, software, and protection (signature/filter/rules) updates.

Tuning – the time required to configure the policy such that the best possible protection is applied while reducing or eliminating false alarms and false positives.

4.1 LABOR PER PRODUCT (IN HOURS)

This table estimates the annual labor required to maintain each device. Since vendors sent their very best engineers to tune, NSS Labs' assumptions are based upon the time required by a highly experienced security engineer (\$75 per hour fully loaded). This allowed us to hold the talent cost variable constant and measure only the difference in time required to tune.

Product	Installation (Hrs)	Upkeep / Year (Hrs)	Tuning / Year (Hrs)
NSFOCUS NIPS-1200	8	25	100

4.2 PURCHASE PRICE AND TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

Each vendor provided pricing information. When possible, we selected the 24/7 maintenance and support option with 24-hour replacement as this is the option most organizations will select.

Product	Purchase	Maintenance / Year	1 Year TCO	2 Year TCO	3 Year TCO
NSFOCUS NIPS-1200	\$32,380	\$4,840	\$47,195	\$61,410	\$75,625

Year One TCO was determined by multiplying the Labor Rate (\$75 per hour fully loaded) x (Installation + Upkeep + Tuning) and then adding the Purchase Price + Maintenance.

Year Two TCO was determined by multiplying the Labor Rate (\$75 per hour fully loaded) x (Upkeep + Tuning) and then adding Year One TCO.

Year Three TCO was determined by multiplying the Labor Rate (\$75 per hour fully loaded) x (Upkeep + Tuning) and then adding Year Two TCO.

4.3 VALUE: COST PER MBPS AND EXPLOIT BLOCKED – TUNED POLICY

There is a clear difference between price and value. The least expensive product does not necessarily offer the greatest value if it blocks fewer exploits than competitors. The best value is a product with a low TCO and high level of secure throughput (security effectiveness x performance).

The following table illustrates the relative cost per unit of work performed: Mbps-Protected

Product	Protection	Throughput	3 Year TCO	Price / Mbps-Protected
NSFOCUS NIPS-1200	77.7%	874	\$75,625	\$111

Price per Protected Mbps was calculated by taking the Three-Year TCO and dividing it by the product of Protection x Throughput. $\text{Three-Year TCO} / (\text{Protection} \times \text{Throughput}) = \text{Price/Mbps-Protected}$.

5 DETAILED PRODUCT SCORECARD

The following chart depicts the status of each test with quantitative results where applicable. A separate product Exposure Report details specific vulnerabilities that are not protected.

Test ID	Description	Default	Tuned
5.1	Detection Engine		
5.1.1	System Exposure	75.3%	81.1%
5.1.2	Service Exposure	52.2%	68.7%
5.1.3	System or Service Fault	44.1%	55.9%
5.2	Threat Vectors		
5.2.1	Attacker-Initiated	48.5%	60.9%
5.2.2	Target-Initiated	89.8%	92.8%
5.2.3	Network	70.2%	77.7%
5.2.4	Local	Not for NIPS	Not for NIPS
5.3	Target Type		
5.3.1	Web Server	* See Exposure Report	
5.3.2	Web Browser	*	*
5.3.3	ActiveX	*	*
5.3.4	JavaScript	*	*
5.3.5	Browser Plug-ins / Add-ons	*	*
5.4	Coverage by Result		
5.4.1	Arbitrary Code Execution	*	*
5.4.2	Buffer Overflow	*	*
5.4.3	Code Injection	*	*
5.4.4	Cross site script	*	*
5.4.5	Directory Traversal	*	*
5.4.6	Privilege Escalation	*	*
5.5	Coverage by Vendor		
5.5.1	3Com	*	*
5.5.2	Adobe	*	*
5.5.3	Alt-N	*	*
5.5.4	Apache	*	*
5.5.5	Apple	*	*
5.5.6	Atrium	*	*
5.5.7	Avast	*	*
5.5.8	BEA	*	*
5.5.9	BitDefender	*	*
5.5.10	Borland	*	*
5.5.11	CA	*	*
5.5.12	Cisco	*	*

Test ID	Description	Default	Tuned
5.5.13	Citrix	*	*
5.5.14	ClamAV	*	*
5.5.15	EMC	*	*
5.5.16	Facebook	*	*
5.5.17	GNU	*	*
5.5.18	Google	*	*
5.5.19	HP	*	*
5.5.20	IBM	*	*
5.5.21	IPSwitch	*	*
5.5.22	ISC	*	*
5.5.23	Kaspersky	*	*
5.5.24	LanDesk	*	*
5.5.25	lighttpd	*	*
5.5.26	Linux	*	*
5.5.27	Macromedia	*	*
5.5.28	MacroVision	*	*
5.5.29	Mailenable	*	*
5.5.30	McAfee	*	*
5.5.31	Mercury	*	*
5.5.32	Microsoft	*	*
5.5.33	MIT	*	*
5.5.34	Mozilla	*	*
5.5.35	Mplayer	*	*
5.5.36	Multiple Vendors	*	*
5.5.37	MySQL	*	*
5.5.38	NOD32	*	*
5.5.39	Novell	*	*
5.5.40	Nullsoft	*	*
5.5.41	OpenLDAP	*	*
5.5.42	OpenOffice	*	*
5.5.43	OpenSSH	*	*
5.5.44	OpenSSL	*	*
5.5.45	Oracle	*	*
5.5.46	Other Misc	*	*
5.5.47	Panda	*	*
5.5.48	RealNetworks	*	*
5.5.49	Samba	*	*
5.5.50	SAP	*	*
5.5.51	Snort	*	*

Test ID	Description	Default	Tuned
5.5.52	Sophos	*	*
5.5.53	SpamAssassin	*	*
5.5.54	Squid	*	*
5.5.55	Sun Microsystems	*	*
5.5.56	Symantec	*	*
5.5.57	Trend Micro	*	*
5.5.58	Trillian	*	*
5.5.59	UltraVNC	*	*
5.5.60	Veritas	*	*
5.5.61	VideoLan	*	*
5.5.62	VMWare	*	*
5.5.63	WinAmp	*	*
5.5.64	WinFTP	*	*
5.5.65	Winzip	*	*
5.5.66	Yahoo	*	*
5.6	Evasion		
5.6.1	Evasion	100%	100%
5.7	Packet Fragmentation		
5.7.1	Ordered 8 byte fragments	100%	100%
5.7.2	Ordered 24 byte fragments	100%	100%
5.7.3	Out of order 8 byte fragments	100%	100%
5.7.4	Ordered 8 byte fragments, duplicate last packet	100%	100%
5.7.5	Out of order 8 byte fragments, duplicate last packet	100%	100%
5.7.6	Ordered 8 byte fragments, reorder fragments in reverse	100%	100%
5.7.7	Ordered 16 byte frags, fragment overlap (favor new)	100%	100%
5.7.8	Ordered 16 byte frags, fragment overlap (favor old)	100%	100%
5.7.9	Out of order 8 byte fragments, interleaved duplicate packets scheduled for later delivery	100%	100%
5.8	Stream Segmentation		
5.8.1	Ordered 1 byte segments, interleaved duplicate segments with invalid TCP checksums	100%	100%
5.8.2	Ordered 1 byte segments, interleaved duplicate segments with null TCP control flags	100%	100%
5.8.3	Ordered 1 byte segs, interleaved duplicate segments with requests to resync sequence numbers mid-stream	100%	100%
5.8.4	Ordered 1 byte segments, duplicate last packet	100%	100%
5.8.5	Ordered 2 byte segments, segment overlap (favor new)	100%	100%
5.8.6	Ordered 1 byte segments, interleaved duplicate segments with out-of-window sequence numbers	100%	100%
5.8.7	Out of order 1 byte segments	100%	100%
5.8.8	Out of order 1 byte segments, interleaved duplicate segments with faked retransmits	100%	100%
5.8.9	Ordered 1 byte segments, segment overlap (favor new)	100%	100%

Test ID	Description	Default	Tuned
5.8.10	Out of order 1 byte segs, PAWS elimination (interleaved dup segs with older TCP timestamp options)	100%	100%
5.8.11	Ordered 16 byte segs, seg overlap (favor new (Unix))	100%	100%
5.9	RPC Fragmentation		
5.9.1	One-byte fragmentation (ONC)	100%	100%
5.9.2	Two-byte fragmentation (ONC)	100%	100%
5.9.3	All fragments, including Last Fragment (LF) will be sent in one TCP segment (ONC)	100%	100%
5.9.4	All frags except Last Fragment (LF) will be sent in one TCP segment. LF will be sent in separate TCP seg (ONC)	100%	100%
5.9.5	One RPC fragment will be sent per TCP segment (ONC)	100%	100%
5.9.6	One LF split over more than one TCP segment. In this case no RPC fragmentation is performed (ONC)	100%	100%
5.9.7	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 1 (MS)	100%	100%
5.9.8	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 2 (MS)	100%	100%
5.9.9	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 3 (MS)	100%	100%
5.9.10	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 4 (MS)	100%	100%
5.9.11	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 5 (MS)	100%	100%
5.9.12	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 6 (MS)	100%	100%
5.9.13	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 7 (MS)	100%	100%
5.9.14	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 8 (MS)	100%	100%
5.9.15	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 9 (MS)	100%	100%
5.9.16	Canvas Reference Implementation Level 10 (MS)	100%	100%
5.1	URL Obfuscation		
5.10.1	URL encoding - Level 1 (minimal)	100%	100%
5.10.2	URL encoding - Level 2	100%	100%
5.10.3	URL encoding - Level 3	100%	100%
5.10.4	URL encoding - Level 4	100%	100%
5.10.5	URL encoding - Level 5	100%	100%
5.10.6	URL encoding - Level 6	100%	100%
5.10.7	URL encoding - Level 7	100%	100%
5.10.8	URL encoding - Level 8 (extreme)	100%	100%
5.10.9	Premature URL ending	100%	100%
5.10.10	Long URL	100%	100%
5.10.11	Fake parameter	100%	100%
5.10.12	TAB separation	100%	100%
5.10.13	Case sensitivity	100%	100%
5.10.14	Windows \ delimiter	100%	100%
5.10.15	Session splicing	100%	100%
5.11	FTP Evasion		
5.11.1	Inserting spaces in FTP command lines	100%	100%

Test ID	Description	Default	Tuned
5.11.2	Inserting non-text Telnet opcodes - Level 1 (minimal)	100%	100%
5.11.3	Inserting non-text Telnet opcodes - Level 2	100%	100%
5.11.4	Inserting non-text Telnet opcodes - Level 3	100%	100%
5.11.5	Inserting non-text Telnet opcodes - Level 4	100%	100%
5.11.6	Inserting non-text Telnet opcodes - Level 5	100%	100%
5.11.7	Inserting non-text Telnet opcodes - Level 6	100%	100%
5.11.8	Inserting non-text Telnet opcodes - Level 7	100%	100%
5.11.9	Inserting non-text Telnet opcodes - Level 8 (extreme)	100%	100%
6	NIPS Performance		
6.1	Raw Packet Processing Performance (UDP Traffic)	Mbps	Mbps
6.1.1	128 Byte Packets	804	762
6.1.2	256 Byte Packets	1,000	1,000
6.1.3	512 Byte Packets	1,000	1,000
6.1.4	1024 Byte Packets	1,000	1,000
6.1.5	1514 Byte Packets	1,000	1,000
6.2	Maximum Capacity		
6.2.1	Concurrent TCP Connections	890,114	885,592
6.2.2	Concurrent TCP Conns w/Data	688,722	680,281
6.2.3	Stateful Protection at Max Concurrent Connections	PASS	PASS
6.2.4	TCP Connections/Second	98,601	95,930
6.2.5	HTTP Connections/Second	50,124	50,004
6.2.6	HTTP Transactions/Second	151,228	150,146
6.3	Behavior Of The State Engine Under Load		
6.3.1	Attack Detection/Blocking - Normal Load	100%	100%
6.3.2	State Preservation - Normal Load	100%	100%
6.3.3	Pass Legitimate Traffic - Normal Load	100%	100%
6.3.4	Attack Detection/Blocking - Maximum Exceeded	100%	100%
6.3.5	State Preservation - Maximum Exceeded	100%	100%
6.3.6	Pass Legitimate Traffic - Maximum Exceeded	100%	100%
6.4	HTTP Capacity With No Transaction Delays	CPS	CPS
6.4.1	44 Kbyte Response	2,500	2,500
6.4.2	21 Kbyte Response	5,000	5,000
6.4.3	10 Kbyte Response	10,000	10,000
6.4.4	4.5 Kbyte Response	20,000	20,000
6.4.5	1.7 Kbyte Response	40,000	40,000
6.5	HTTP Capacity With Transaction Delays	CPS	CPS
6.5.1	21 Kbyte Response With Delay	5,000	5,000
6.5.2	10 Kbyte Response With Delay	10,000	10,000
6.6	"Real World" Traffic	Mbps	Mbps

Test ID	Description	Default	Tuned
6.6.1	Real World Protocol Mix (Perimeter)	1,000	1,000
6.6.2	Real World Protocol Mix (Core)	840	622
7	Management & Configuration Costs		
7.1	Ease of Use		
7.1.1	Initial Setup (Hours)	8	8
7.1.2	Time Required for Upkeep (Hours per Year)	25	25
7.1.3	Time Required to Tune (Hours per Year)	0	100
7.2	Expected Costs		
7.2.1	Initial Purchase	\$32,380	\$32,380
7.2.2	Ongoing Maintenance & Support (Annual)	\$4,840	\$4,840
7.2.3	Installation Labor Cost (@\$75/hr)	\$600	\$600
7.2.4	Management Labor Cost (per Year @\$75/hr)	\$1,875	\$1,875
7.2.5	Tuning Labor Cost (per Year @\$75/hr)	\$0	\$7,500
7.3	Total Cost of Ownership		
7.3.1	Year 1	\$39,695	\$47,195
7.3.2	Year 2	\$6,715	\$14,215
7.3.3	Year 3	\$6,715	\$14,215
7.3.4	3-Year Total Cost of Ownership	\$53,125	\$75,625

6 APPENDIX A: TEST METHODOLOGY

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

7 APPENDIX B: SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks go to our test infrastructure partners who provide much of the equipment, software, support that make this testing possible:


BreakingPoint[™]

Find it before they do.[™]

