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Juan Antonio Villalobos
Director of Information Systems
Port Authority of Algeciras Bay

The Port of Algeciras Bay Improves Security and Access to Its Applications with F5 FirePass SSL VPN Appliance

Industry

Transport and Logistics

Challenges

- Provide different levels of access to data and applications for different users
- Enable sharing of reports and documents without relying on email
- Maintain data and application security

Solution

F5 FirePass® SSL VPN Appliance

Benefits

- Secure external access to the network based on the user and the device
- Reduced demand on the network
- Easy-to-use, remote administration

Overview

The Port of Algeciras Bay in the south of Spain is at the crossroads of the major shipping routes connecting Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia. This strategically located hub handled more than three million containers last year and is the leading Mediterranean container port. It serves as a maritime bridge between Europe and Africa, with over 4.5 million passengers, more than 1 million vehicles, and nearly 200,000 trucks crossing the Strait of Gibraltar through the port each year.

The Port Authority of Algeciras Bay (APBA) needed a secure solution to provide users with access to applications and corporate data in the face of significant growth and increasing communications needs. These users include port employees working from home or traveling as well as administrators working remotely.

With the F5 FirePass SSL VPN appliance in place, the APBA is ensuring the security of its corporate network, providing users with easy access to the data and applications they need, and preparing for future growth.

Challenges

Continuing growth and increasing communication requirements led the APBA to seek a solution that would provide many different types of users with access to applications and corporate data and enable them to share reports and documents with each other without relying on email. The solution had to provide a secure environment that would allow this sizeable organization to remain fully operational while guaranteeing the confidentiality of the data.

The Antea Group provided on-site consulting services for the project. In the first phase of the project, Antea assessed the APBA's needs and recommended the FirePass SSL VPN appliance as the best solution to meet those needs. Antea identified improvements that could be made to the APBA's communication system and performed testing to demonstrate the solution's capabilities.

The technical team then took over in the implementation phase. This included FirePass installation and initial start-up as well as proxy server network installation. Using the FirePass Visual Policy Editor, the team set up a granular user access policy based on the company's security access policies.



Solution

Antea chose to implement the FirePass SSL VPN appliance on dedicated ADSL lines. The FirePass solution provides APBA users with secure access to applications, such as Oracle Financials, and other corporate data. This helps boost productivity for people who are travelling or working from home.

FirePass performs a pre-login integrity check of devices accessing the APBA network to determine if required processes, such as virus scans and patches, are in place and up to date. FirePass can automatically run virus checks and can detect if unwanted processes, such as a key logger, are present. Users are not granted specific access privileges unless they meet the requirements.

Using the FirePass graphical user interface (GUI) based Visual Policy Editor, the APBA administrator can create custom security policies to provide external user access to the corporate intranet based on the type of user or the type of device being used to gain access. The FirePass SSL VPN appliance also enables remote administration.

"FirePass offers the secure solution our business requires," explained Juan Antonio Villalobos, director of the APBA information systems team. "Thanks to its tools and integrated checking processes, we can guarantee the different levels of security required. Depending upon the device used, the user profile, or even the programs installed, we can provide or prevent access to specific applications. This is all done through a management system that is simple for the administrator to use."

With external access to the corporate network and applications, users are now able to share reports and other documents with each other without having to email them. This has reduced the demand on the network from bulky email attachments.

The next priority for the APBA was to ensure the platform's scalability to adapt to employee turnover, new applications, and the growing number of users. Initially, the APBA needed a solution that would allow access to a variety of applications (web, telnet, Oracle, Terminal Services), but it also wanted to be prepared for future growth and new

requirements that might emerge in the dynamic port industry. FirePass provides the APBA with enterprise-class scalability and performance, supporting up to 2,000 concurrent sessions on a single, easy-to-manage device. Multiple devices can be clustered to provide up to 20,000 concurrent users.

Finally, the entire infrastructure had to be easy to use for both administrators and users. With FirePass, users can quickly and automatically access all of their permitted applications through a standard web interface.

"The FirePass solution satisfied the customer's initial needs and also offers new functions that we think are very interesting for them," explained Vanessa Moran, account manager for the Antea Group. "Over the years that we've been working on projects for different types of customers, the F5 platforms have proven to be very reliable and valuable devices. Also, the integration of different functions on the same device allows us to meet the needs of our customers and even improve on their initial requirements."

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