

Banking on Reliable Security



Stonesoft's firewall and VPN solution to solve the problem of poor performance of existing firewall

Ahorro Corporación is one of Spain's leading companies providing activities and services within financial and investment management. Its shareholders include savings banks and the Spanish Confederation of Savings Banks (CECA) and its activities range from stock exchange and investment banking, investment management, and specialized brokerage services, to consulting and analysis, and venture capital.

For the private investor the arrival of Internet opened up possibilities that were before only available for the institutional investor. The advantages of the investment online include: the direct access to the market without need of intermediaries, lower mediation costs, real time operation, access to up-

to-date information. Access to prices in real time permits the most active investors to carry out transactions "intraday" (purchase and sale in the same day) taking advantage of 'volatile' fluctuations. While for more 'cautious' investors, the online availability of information such as forecasts, profit value by dividends and market "consensus" aids them in making investment decisions based on well-informed, professional advice.

When Ahorro set up its online service, it had to ensure that it entailed a fast, direct, easy to use system which offered its investors all the advantages of investment online with the guarantees of reliability and professionalism that come from an institution leader.



Grupo Ahorro Corporación

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Ahorro Corporación's
Systems & Communications*

Battling with Poor Performance

When implementing their online services, offering their customers the maximum level of security and high availability were the two major requirements for Ahorro's systems and communications team. The team originally chose a market leading firewall and appliance combination to run on an existing operating system.

"Our existing firewall behaved very strangely. Amongst other things it would suddenly and for no apparent reason stop responding to the adopted policy, create new policies or drop packets and the log management was a complete disaster", explains Juan José Armesto, responsible for Ahorro Corporación's Systems and Communications. "I don't believe that all the odd occurrences were totally the fault of the firewall, I think they were aggravated by the platform it was running on, but unfortunately no one could give us satisfactory explanations or solutions to the problems, so that was when we decided enough was enough."

Reliable, Flexible Solution

As part of the 'shake up' in its security system Ahorro Corporación decided to change the platform for its applications and choose to invest in Linux. This meant that the firewall would also have to run with Linux. The StoneGate firewall and VPN came with its own hardened Linux operating system, which made it totally compatible with Ahorro's new platform while allowing the whole solution to run on any standard hardware. Having met this initial criteria, StoneGate was interesting to Ahorro for a number of other reasons including the high availability which was included as standard and that it offered flexible facilities to define policies. StoneGate also features a centralized, enterprise-wide management system and powerful management tools that allows management of one or more firewalls.

The operating systems on the firewalls do not require separate administration and in fact can remain completely transparent. There is no need for separate

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operating system management of the firewalls themselves after the initial setup. Other supported features include rule base templates, inheritance, sub rule bases, multiple administrator levels, extensive log filtering and pruning tools and the possibility of managing firewalls simultaneously from multiple management GUI's.

"It was very important for us to have a solution which we can control and not one which controls us!" says Armesto. "We found the StoneGate solution configuration very user friendly – the firewall engine runs on Linux and the administration management and log management can be configured independently. The solution also offers us other useful capabilities and benefits such as high availability, load balancing and the ability to select packet filtering or stateful inspection technologies for specific rules in the security policy when required. All-in-all giving us full control over our security system."

The implementation of StoneGate was carried out in November 2002 and the installation was prepared in parallel with original firewall. The configuration was not a simple one since the Ahorro had to migrate from an installation with two independent firewalls to the new StoneGate solution and set about re-defining of all the existing objects and policies.

"We had to make sure that we didn't migrate the same policy problems over to the new firewall so that took us a little time to set up, however, the installation was surprisingly fast." states Armesto. "Without any doubt, since we installed StoneGate we have never encountered the same problems as we had before. In addition we have been able to design more flexible solutions. With respect to the operation as a firewall, my opinion is that StoneGate is an excellent solution."

Ahorro in Brief

Ahorro Corporación is one of the one of Spain's leading banking and investment services companies dedicated to providing investment services. Its shareholders include savings banks and the Spanish Confederation of Savings Banks (CECA) and activities range from stock exchange and investment banking, investment management, and specialized brokerage services, to consulting and analysis, and venture capital. Ahorro Corporación was created in 1973 with the creation of Gesinca, S.A., organization specialized in the management of portfolios. In 1989 merged with Gesmosa, S.A., society created in 1981, and acted like specialized broker in the monetary and capital markets. In Spain the group has offices in Madrid, Barcelona, Seville and Malaga, acting in the rest of the Spanish territory with support of the offices of the Savings banks. Overseas it has offices in Boston (USA) and Bogotá (Colombia).

STONESOFT EXPERIENCE

Stonesoft Corporation (HEX: SFT1V) is an innovative provider of integrated network security and business continuity. Its StoneGate™ Security Platform unifies firewall, VPN and IPS, blending network security and end-to-end availability into a unified and centrally managed system for distributed enterprises where security, uptime, and ease of use are essential. StoneGate incorporates the award-winning load-balancing technology of StoneBeat®.

Enterprises that require advanced network security and always-on business connectivity can choose StoneGate for low TCO, best price-to-performance ratio, and highest ROI of any high-end firewall, VPN and IPS solution.

Founded in 1990, Stonesoft Corporation has corporate headquarters in Helsinki, Finland; Americas regional headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia; and Asia Pacific regional headquarters in Singapore. For more information, go to www.stonesoft.com.



THE STONEGATE PLATFORM

As the first highly available, load balancing network security solution of its kind, StoneGate sets a new standard for FW, VPN and Intrusion solutions. StoneGate provides a unified security platform with active-active clustering, load balancing and bandwidth aggregation for multiple Internet links and ability to transparently fail-over VPNs, all with the security and connectivity of an integrated FW/VPN.

- **Multi-Link Technology™** – Seamless fail-over between multiple ISPs and FW clusters for always-on connections
- **Increased Performance** – Analyzes and utilizes fastest possible connection through integrated intelligent load balancing between ISPs and FWs.
- **Multi-Layer Inspection™** – Combines the best aspects of application proxy firewalls with traditional packet filtering and stateful inspection technologies
- **Reduce Costs** – Eliminate network complexities and costs associated with multiple vendor solutions and travel time
- **Unified, Central Management** – Robust remote management, along with simple remote update, alert center management, reporting, diagram editor and hierarchy policy updates. Also integrates FW and VPN with StoneGate's IDS Plus solution into a unified platform.

StoneGate is available either as a software-based solution that capitalizes on existing hardware investments, or as Stonesoft's own integrated appliance eliminating complexity and costs associated with multiple-vendor solutions. All of Stonesoft's appliances include the standard enterprise level features with the only difference being the number of physical interfaces and performance level.

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