



# BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator and NETSCOUT

SSL/TLS Visibility with Service Chaining



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The Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) protocol and its successor, Transport Layer Security (TLS), are being widely adopted by organizations to secure IP communications. While SSL/TLS provides data privacy and secure communications, it also presents challenges for inspection devices within the security stack. In short, encrypted communications can't be seen as clear text and are passed through without inspection, resulting in security blind spots. This creates serious risks for businesses: What if attackers are hiding malware inside the encrypted traffic?

However, the process of performing decryption of SSL/TLS traffic on security inspection devices, even with native decryption support, can significantly degrade the performance of those devices. This is particularly true given the demands of stronger 2048-bit certificates.

F5® BIG-IP® SSL Orchestrator® is designed and purpose-built to enhance SSL/TLS infrastructure, provide security solutions with visibility into SSL/TLS encrypted traffic, and optimize and maximize your existing security investments. BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator provides SSL/TLS encryption and decryption of live traffic, as well as the ability to send traffic to tools in a service/tool chain.

**Figure 1:** BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator maximizes efficiency and performance for a wide range of inspection devices while maintaining optimal security.



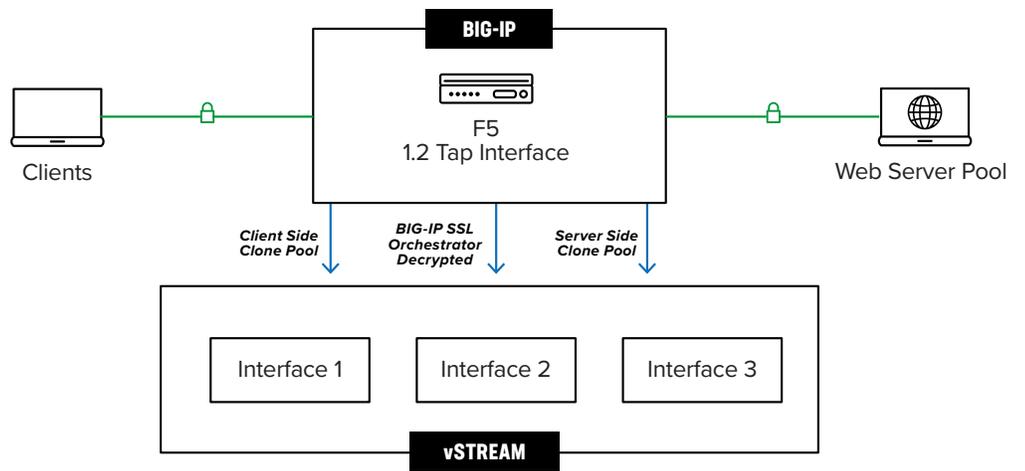
BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator can be deployed as a standalone appliance, a module in an F5® BIG-IP® system, or as a module in an F5® BIG-IP® Virtual Edition (VE) for cloud services such as AWS and Azure. In each deployment model the decrypted SSL/TLS traffic can be passively copied directly to NETSCOUT vSTREAM and InfiniStreamNG (ISNG) instrumentation for inspection to provide smart visibility for service and security assurance. This packet access solution eliminates the blind spots introduced by SSL/TLS and closes any opportunity for adversaries.

The integration between F5 and NETSCOUT vSTREAM/ISNG provides network operations, engineering, network security engineers, and analysts with the ability to collect, investigate,

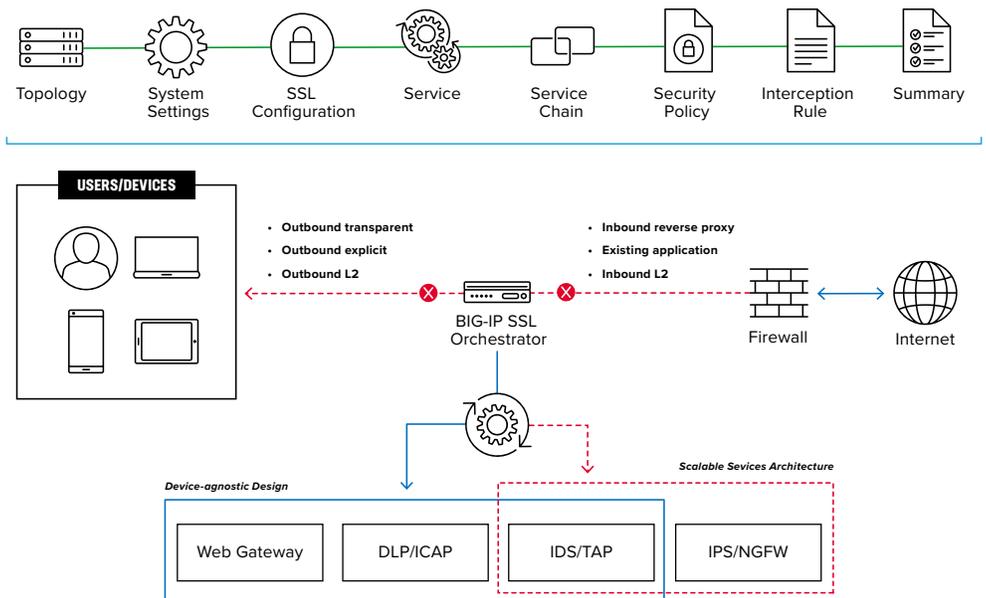
and research unencrypted and encrypted network traffic at the packet level. When used in combination with NETSCOUT nGeniusONE and Omnis security and analytics products, users can perform proactive service assurance, and service triage, analytics, and notifications can be enabled to alert network security engineers of threats to the infrastructure.

In physical environments, BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator can be added as a blade-based function. In a virtual/cloud environment, the BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator module can be enabled as a standalone or an add-on software license to BIG-IP VE. In this model, BIG-IP can provide the ISNG or vSTREAM with copies of client and/or server-side encrypted traffic, through use of clone pools, while BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator provides decrypted copies of traffic.

**Figure 2:** BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator deployment with BIG-IP (physical or virtual)



**Figure 3:** BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator standalone deployment (physical or virtual), where the ISNG is a TAP/ tool in the service chain to receive decrypted copies of traffic that flow through the F5 system



# The F5 and NETSCOUT Integrated Solution

This section provides instructions for configuring BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator with NETSCOUT. This document is not intended to suggest optimum installations or configurations. It is assumed that the reader has both working knowledge of all products involved and the ability to perform the tasks outlined in this section. Administrators should have access to the product documentation for all products in order to install the required components. All BIG-IP components must be installed and working prior to the integration. Perform the necessary tests to confirm that this is true before proceeding.

*Note: The configuration shown in this integration guide is for example and testing purposes only. It is not intended to be the optimal setup for the device. It is recommended that customers make sure that the BIG-IP is properly configured and secured before deploying to a production environment. For more information, please refer to [BIG-IP documentation](#).*

## PREREQUISITES

Careful, advance consideration of deployment can ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the F5 integrated solution with NETSCOUT. This section helps you with information on license components, best practices, and initial steps. Once these steps are complete, you can proceed to the configuration of BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator.

## LICENSE COMPONENTS

The [BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator](#) product line—the i2800, r2800, i4800, r4800, i5800, r5800, i10800, r10800, r10900, i11800, i15800, and Virtual Edition High Performance (HP)—supports this joint solution. The F5® VIPRION® platform and the F5® VELOS® platform are also supported. BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator devices ship with an installed base module that provides both SSL/TLS interception and service chaining capabilities. Please contact your local F5 representative to further understand the licensing and deployment options.

Unless otherwise noted, references to BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator and the BIG-IP system in this document (and some user interfaces) apply equally regardless of the F5 hardware or VE used. The solution architecture and configuration are identical.

Optionally, customers can add the functionality of:

- An **F5 URL filtering (URLF) subscription** to access the URL category database.
- An **F5® IP Intelligence Services subscription** for IP reputation service.
- A network **hardware security module (HSM)** to safeguard and manage digital keys for strong authentication.

- **F5® Secure Web Gateway Services** to filter and control outbound web traffic using a URL database.
- **F5® BIG-IP® Access Policy Manager® (APM)** to authenticate and manage user access.
- **F5® BIG-IP® Advanced Firewall Manager™ (AFM)** to protect against denial-of-service.
- **F5® BIG-IP® Advanced WAF®** to protect against common vulnerabilities (CVEs) and web exploits, targeted attacks, and advanced threats.
- An **F5® BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™ (LTM)** add-on software license mode. This solution's supported on all F5® BIG-IP® iSeries® and older F5 hardware platforms and has no specific restrictions on additional F5 software modules (including the above software services). This option's suited for environments that need to deploy BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator on an existing BIG-IP device or have other functions that must run on the same device.

## Best Practices for the Joint Solution

Several best practices can help optimize the performance and reliability, as well as the security, of the joint solution.

### ARCHITECTURE BEST PRACTICES

To ensure a streamlined architecture that optimizes performance, reliability, and security, F5 recommendations include:

- Deploy the F5 systems in a device sync/failover device group (S/FDG), which includes the active standby pair, with a floating IP address for high availability (HA).
- Further interface redundancy can be achieved using the Link Aggregation Control Protocol (LACP). LACP manages the connected physical interfaces as a single virtual interface (aggregate group) and detects any interface failures within the group.

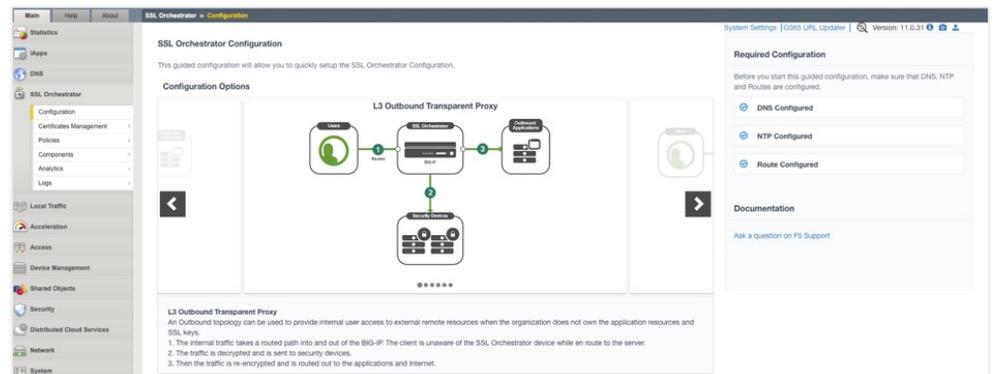
Unlike with some competing solutions, the F5 systems do not need physical connections to the NETSCOUT. All the F5 system requires is L3 reachability to send the copied decrypted and unencrypted traffic. In slow networks, however, we recommend deploying the NETSCOUT not more than one hop away. As a generic guideline, when inspection devices are not directly connected to the F5 system, we highly recommend use of network and VLAN controls to restrict access to the unencrypted data only to the inspection devices.

# Initial Setup

Please follow [this link](#) and perform the initial configuration of the BIG-IP system, including enabling the licenses for both BIG-IP LTM and BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator.

Once the initial configuration is completed and the licenses are applied, the BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator configuration page appears with a menu displayed on the left side of the page.

Figure 4: BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator initial configuration page



You are now ready to proceed to the second part of configuration, where you'll finalize your system for BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator.

## BACK UP YOUR F5 SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

Before beginning the detailed BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator configuration, we strongly recommend you back up the F5 system configuration using the following steps. This enables you to restore the previous configuration in case any issues arise.

1. From the main tab of the F5 management interface, click **System > Archives**.
2. To initiate the process of creating a new UCS archive (backup), click **Create**.
3. Enter a unique **File Name** for the backup file.
4. Optional:
  - If you want to encrypt the UCS archive file, from the **Encryption** menu, select **Enabled** and enter a passphrase. You must supply the passphrase to restore the encrypted UCS archive file.
  - If you want to exclude SSL private keys from the UCS archive, from the **Private Keys** menu, select **Exclude**.

Figure 5: System Archives page for configuration backup

General Properties	
File Name	SSL-Orchestrator-Config
Encryption	Disabled
Private Keys	Include
Version	BIG-IP 17.1.0 Build 0.0.16

Cancel Finished

5. Click **Finished** to create the UCS archive file.
6. When the backup process is done, examine the status page for any reported errors before proceeding to the next step.
7. Click **OK** to return to the **Archive List** page.
8. Copy the .ucs file to another system.

To restore the configuration from a UCS archive, navigate to **System > Archives**. Select the name of the UCS file you want to restore and click **Restore**. For details and other considerations for backing up and restoring the BIG-IP system configuration, reference [K13132: Backing up and restoring BIG-IP configuration files with a UCS archive](#) on MyF5.

## BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator Configuration

This section covers step by step configuration of BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator to provide a packet-by-packet copy of both the unencrypted HTTP and decrypted HTTPS traffic to NETSCOUT vSTREAM configured for TAP mode.

The BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator guided configuration presents a completely new and streamlined user experience. This workflow-based architecture provides intuitive, reentrant configuration steps tailored to a selected topology.

Figure 6: BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator guided configuration workflow



### CONFIGURATION EXAMPLE WHERE THE SERVICE EXISTS IN BIG-IP LTM

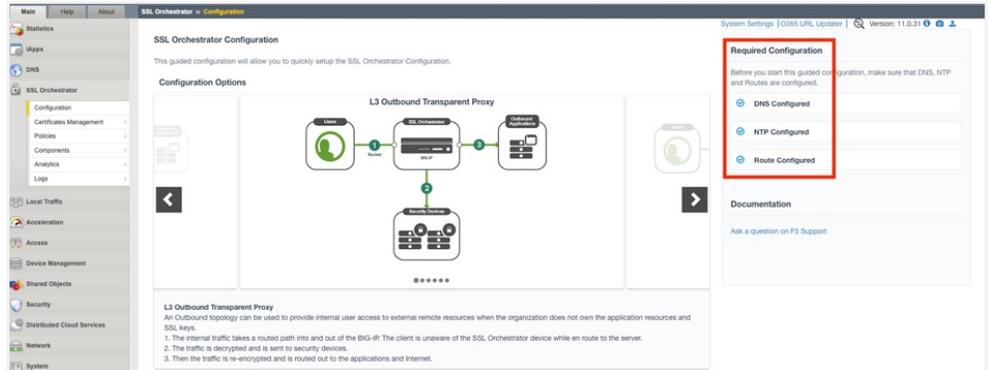
In this example, we will use the Existing Application option for a new BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator topology. This assumes you have already created a Pool and Virtual Server under Local Traffic.

To get started follow these steps:

1. Navigate to the BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator Configuration page and review the list of prerequisites on the right-hand side. Configure each prerequisite to display a blue checkmark.

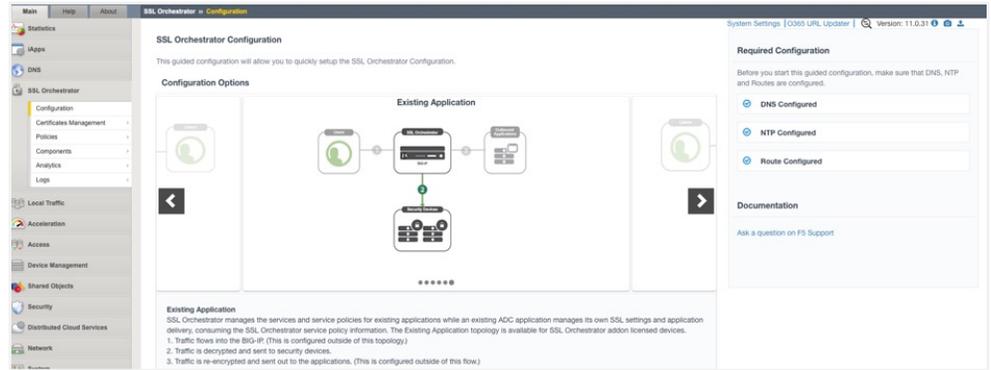
*Note: NTP is required for HA deployments.*

Figure 7: BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator Required Configuration



2. Click on the large arrows to advance through the available topologies. We will be using the Existing Application topology for this example. Select the **Next** button at the bottom of the page.

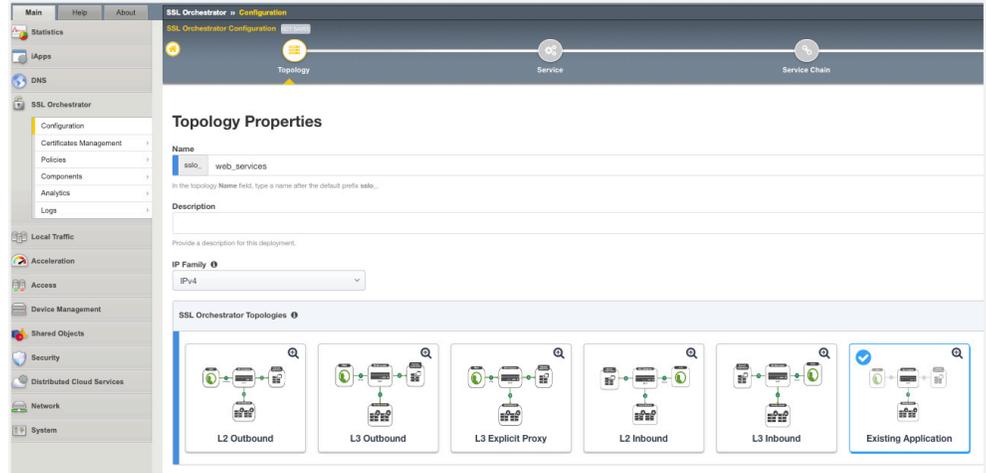
Figure 8: Review available topologies



## Topology properties

1. On the **Topology Properties** page, name your topology and select **Existing Application**.
2. Click on the **Save & Next** button.

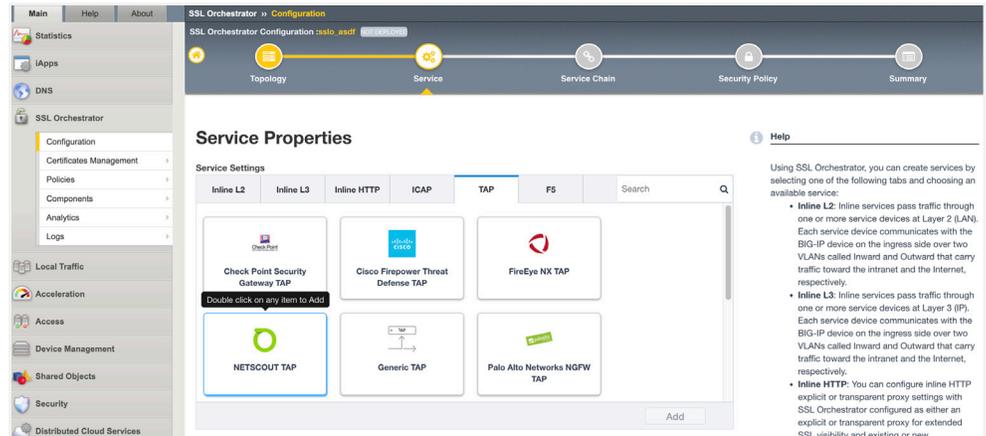
Figure 9: Configure Topology Properties



## Service properties

1. In the **Service Properties** page, click on **Add Service**. Select **TAP** then **NETSCOUT TAP** and click on the **Add** button.

Figure 10: Service Properties page



2. In the **Service Properties Service Settings** page, enter each property pertaining to the TAP service. Name your service and enter the MAC address of the ISNG/vSTREAM monitor port.

*Note: For virtual deployments, the vSTREAM monitor port and the BIG-IP internal port need to be in the same subnet (broadcast domain).*

3. Under **VLAN**, select **Use Existing** and in the dropdown, select the Common/Internal VLAN.
4. Under **Interface**, the internal interface that matches that VLAN will be selected for you.

5. Check the **Enable Port Remap** checkbox and enter port 80. This will send the decrypted traffic to the Monitor port as HTTP.
6. Click on the **Save** button.
7. In the **Service List** page, click **Save & Next**.

Figure 11: Service Properties service settings

The screenshot displays the 'Service Properties' configuration page for a 'NETSCOUT TAP' service. The left sidebar shows the navigation menu with categories like Configuration, Certificates Management, Policies, Components, Analytics, and Logs. The main content area is titled 'Service Properties' and includes the following fields and options:

- Service Settings:** A box containing the 'NETSCOUT TAP' logo.
- Name:** A text field containing 'ssloS\_ NETSCOUT'. A note below states: 'In the TAP inline service settings Name field, type a name after the default prefix ssloS\_.'
- Description:** A text field containing 'Type: tap'. A note below states: 'Type a description for this service.'
- MAC Address:** A text field containing '12:12:12:12:21:12'. A note below states: 'Type the MAC address of the receive-only device. This address must be reachable by a BIG-IP VLAN.'
- VLAN:** Radio buttons for 'Create New' and 'Use Existing' (selected). A dropdown menu shows '/Common/10.0.0.0'.
- Interface:** A dropdown menu showing '2.4'. A note below states: 'Select the associated BIG-IP system interface.'
- Enable Port Remap:** A checked checkbox. A note below states: 'Specify whether you want to enable the Remap Port feature for inline services by selecting the Enable Port Remap check box.'
- Remap Port:** A text field containing '80'. A note below states: 'Specify the remap port number. The default is 80.'

At the bottom of the form are 'Cancel' and 'Save' buttons.

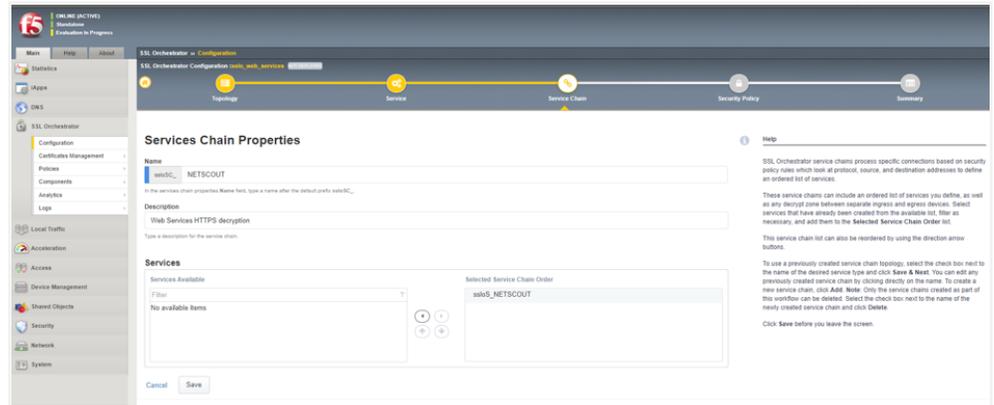
## Services chain

1. In the **Services Chain List** page, click on the Add button.
2. Name your service chain and under **Services**, select the new service you just created. Click on the **right arrow** to add it to the **Selected Service Chain Order**.

Even though we are not creating a chain of devices, BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator needs to have at least one service specified in the service chain.

3. Click on the **Save** button.
4. Click **Save & Next**.

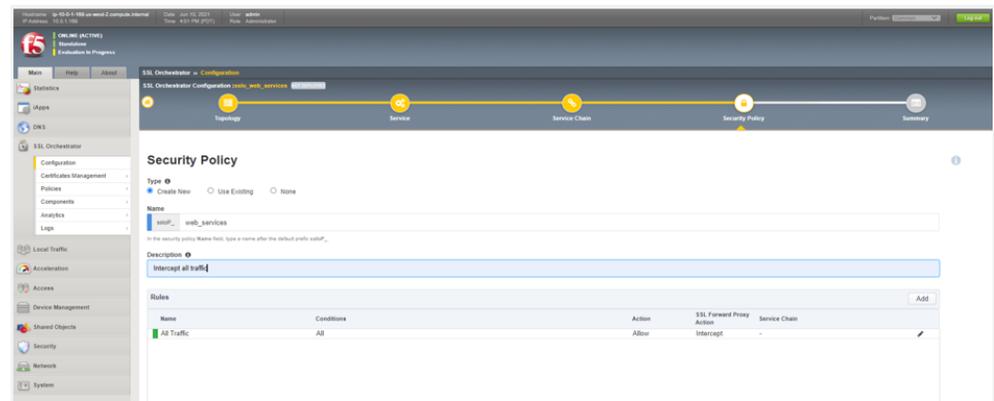
Figure 12: Services Chain Properties settings



## Security policy

1. In the **Security Policy** page, name the Security Policy and under **Rules**, the default is to intercept All Traffic. Edit the default All Traffic rule by clicking on the pencil and selecting the Service Chain.
2. Click **Save & Next**.
3. In the Summary screen, click **Deploy**.

Figure 13: Security Policy settings



4. On the **Local Traffic** menu, select **Virtual Servers**.
5. Click **Virtual Servers List** and click on the Virtual Server that you want BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator to decrypt.
6. On the **Properties** tab, scroll down to **Access Policy | Access Profile** and select the **sslDefault\_accessProfile**.

7. For **Access Policy | Per-Request Policy**, select the security policy that has the same name as the new BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator configuration that you just deployed.
8. Click on the **Update** button at the bottom.

**Figure 14:** Modify Virtual Server Access Policy settings

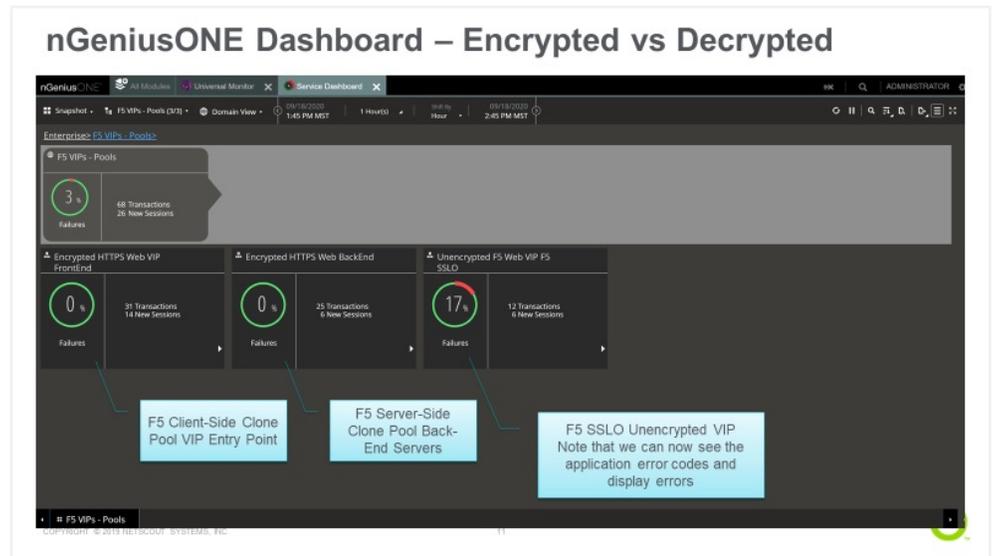
SSL Profile (Client)	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <input type="text" value="/Common clientssl"/> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <input type="text" value="clientssl-insecure-compatible"/> <input type="text" value="clientssl-quic"/> <input type="text" value="clientssl-secure"/> <input type="text" value="crypto-server-default-clientssl"/> <input type="text" value="split-session-default-clientssl"/> <input type="text" value="sslo-default-clientssl"/> <input type="text" value="wom-default-clientssl"/> </div>
SSL Profile (Server)	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <input type="text" value="/Common serverssl"/> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <input type="text" value="/Common"/> <input type="text" value="apm-default-serverssl"/> <input type="text" value="cloud-service-default-ssl"/> <input type="text" value="crypto-client-default-serverssl"/> <input type="text" value="f5aas-default-ssl"/> <input type="text" value="pcoip-default-serverssl"/> <input type="text" value="serverssl-insecure-compatible"/> </div>
SMTPS Profile	None	
POP3 Profile	None	
Client LDAP Profile	None	
Server LDAP Profile	None	
Service Profile	None	
SMTP Profile	None	
VLAN and Tunnel Traffic	All VLANs and Tunnels	
Source Address Translation	Auto Map	
<b>Content Rewrite</b>		
Rewrite Profile	None	
HTML Profile	None	
<b>Access Policy</b>		
Access Profile	ssloDefault_accessProfile	←
Per-Request Policy	ssloP_web_services_per_req_policy	
<b>Acceleration:</b> Basic		
iSession Profile	None	Context: server
Rate Class	None	
OneConnect Profile	None	
NTLM Conn Pool	None	
HTTP Compression Profile	None	
Web Acceleration Profile	None	
HTTP/2 Profile (Client)	None	
HTTP/2 Profile (Server)	None	
HTTP MRF Router	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="button" value="Update"/> <input type="button" value="Delete"/>		

# Testing the Solution

Test the deployed solution using the following options.

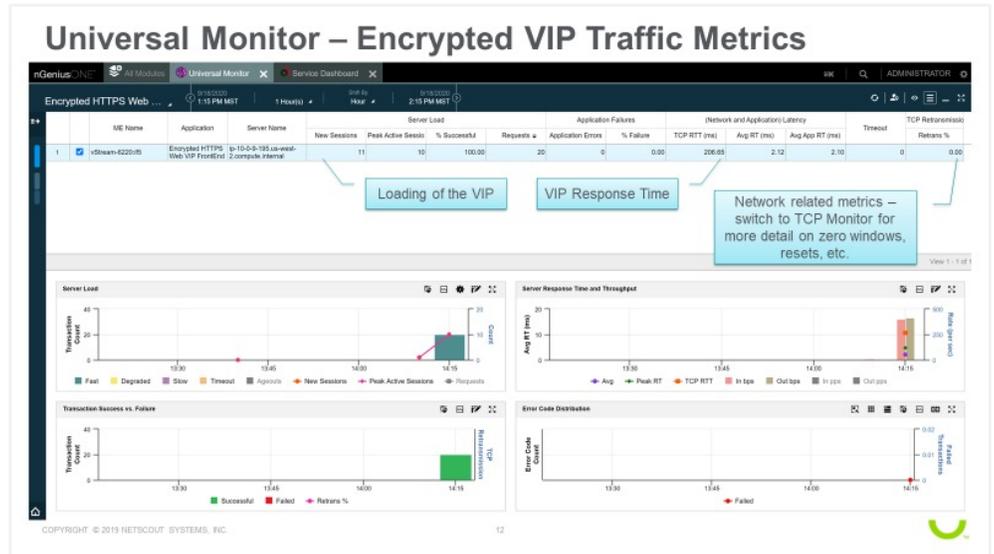
1. To verify receipt of the BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator decrypted SSL packets, log onto NETSCOUT's nGeniusONE.
2. Using nGeniusONE, select the BIG-IP interfaces in the Dashboard. High level visibility in the Dashboard requires that Application Services are created for the load balanced apps. The data can be obtained without any Application Services configured in nGeniusONE by clicking on the Global Search icon (magnifying glass in the upper right corner) and searching for the load balanced application (i.e., HTTPS, HTTP, MySQL, etc.). Either method will provide a drill down into the appropriate Service Monitor to view the traffic volume, application performance, and network performance metrics.

Figure 15: nGeniusONE Dashboard



- From nGeniusONE, drill down into the Universal Service Monitor content collected from BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator to view key performance indicators (KPIs) developed from packet traffic captured by NETSCOUT vSTREAM.

Figure 16: nGeniusONE app performance analytics



- From the nGeniusONE Universal Service Monitor, drill down into the **Packet Analysis** function to view the packets captured by NETSCOUT vSTREAM. Compare the client-side clone pool with the server-side clone pool looking at the time stamps and/or the X-Forwarded-For original client IP addresses.

Figure 17: Session comparison from virtual server to pool

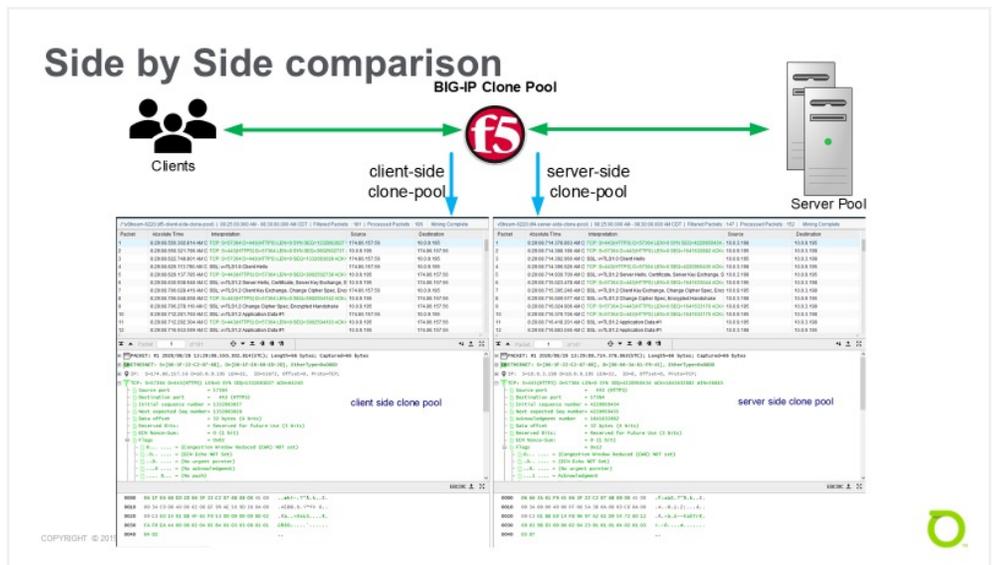
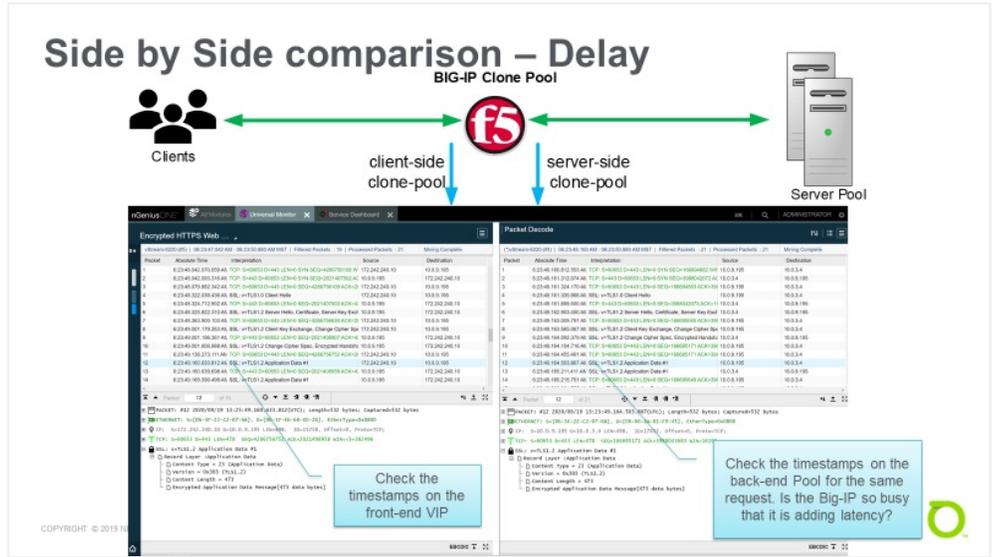
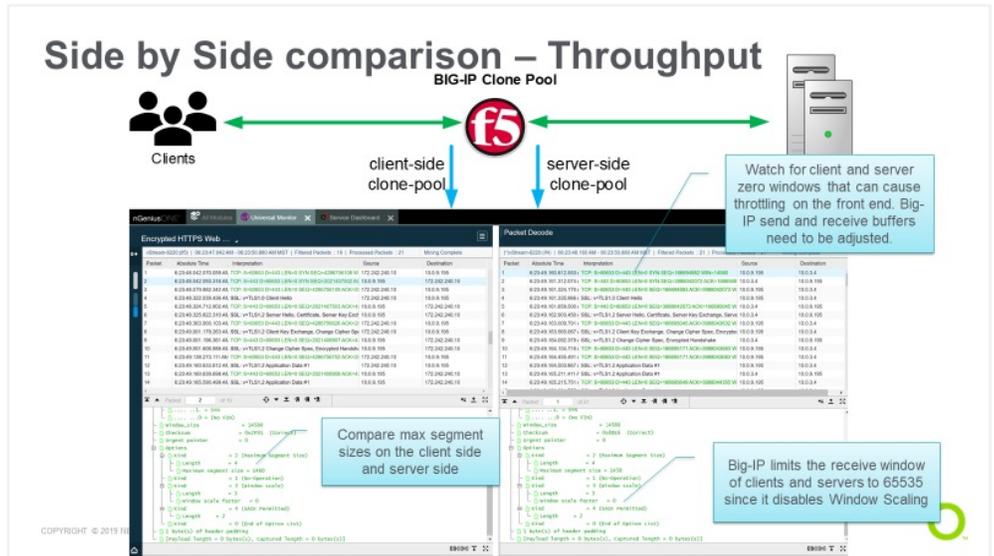


Figure 18: Session comparison from virtual server to pool delay



5. Performing a side-by-side comparison of the client-side and server-side clone pools allows the user to investigate the comparative throughput, as well as the delay of the respective views, to verify the performance and understand if any tuning of the F5 configurations are in order, such as the buffer sizes or default window scaling parameters.

Figure 19: Session comparison from virtual server to pool throughput



# Appendix

## NOTES ON BIG-IP VE DEPLOYMENT IN AWS

To create an Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2) instance of BIG-IP VE, you deploy a version of it from the AWS Marketplace. The list of BIG-IP products (pay-as-you-go (PAYG) or bring-your-own-license (BYOL)) are available in the [AWS Marketplace](#).

A complete example of deployment and provisioning can be seen in this CloudDocs page: [Amazon Web Services: Three-NIC F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition](#).

*Note: The prerequisite is that you have three subnets created in your AWS Virtual Private Cloud (VPC)—one for each interface (external, internal, and management). Edit the external and management subnet route tables to include an Internet gateway.*

To create an account and request a demo license key, you'll need to visit the [F5 website](#).

To apply the license key, follow the instructions found in this F5 support article: [K15055: Using tmsh to view and manage licenses for BIG-IP and BIG-IQ systems](#).

In order for the BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator TAP service to forward unencrypted traffic to the NETSCOUT vSTREAM monitor interface, both the F5 internal interface (Inf 1.2 in the example in Figure 20) and the vSTREAM monitor interface(s) have to be in the same 'internal' subnet (10.0.5.0/24 in the example).

In AWS under EC2 | Network Interfaces, select the BIG-IP internal interface. Click on the **Actions** button and select **Change Source/Dest. Check**. Then select **Disabled** and click the **Save** button. Repeat this step for the vSTREAM monitor network interfaces (ENIs). Make a note of the monitor network interfaces' MAC addresses. You will need these when you create your BIG-IP SSL Orchestrator deployment, the same as if you had a physical NETSCOUT ISNG connected to a physical BIG-IP system.

## Clone pools

The use of BIG-IP clone pools is a method of sending specific client-side and server-side traffic to vSTREAM's monitor network interfaces. To configure BIG-IP clone pools to send traffic to vSTREAM and other security devices, please see this MyF5 article: [K13392: Configuring the BIG-IP system to send traffic to an intrusion detection system](#).

In an AWS deployment, vSTREAM monitor interfaces will be assigned a private IP address, similar to any Elastic Network Interface (ENI). You can use this address as the target for where the clone pool should send the traffic. As in the above, you must set each vSTREAM's monitor port ENI Source/Dest. Select **Disabled**. This ensures that traffic copied to the vSTREAM's monitor port is not dropped by AWS, as it recognizes the traffic is intended for the private IP address of the monitor port.

In a physical deployment, the ISNG monitor ports will not have an IP address by default. You can use the same K13392 article to set up BIG-IP port mirrors instead to direct traffic to a physical ISNG monitor port. The major difference is that with clone pools you can selectively send certain traffic of interest to the vSTREAM, and with port mirrors you will copy all the traffic on a particular BIG-IP interface to the ISNG's monitor port.

Figure 20: Reference example setup in AWS

