



SecureIQlab[®]

Cloud Web Application Firewall (WAF) CyberRisk Validation Report – F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition

Product Version: 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12

Published: November 15, 2022

Report Contents:

1	Introduction	2
2	Testing parameters and results	4
3	Security Efficacy	5
3.1	OWASP Score	5
3.2	Bot Attacks.....	7
3.3	Layer 7 DoS Attacks	8
3.4	Resiliency Score	9
3.5	Web Application Protection	9
3.6	WAF Vulnerability Assessment	10
4	Operational efficiency.....	11
4.1	Ease of Deployment.....	12
4.2	Ease of Management.....	13
4.3	Ease of Risk Management	14
4.4	Scalable and elastic.....	14
4.5	Logging, Monitoring, and Auditing	15
4.6	False Positive Avoidance.....	15
5	Differentiators	16
6	Appendix.....	16
6.1	Cloud WAF Test Deployment.....	16
6.2	Test Execution	17
6.3	Attack Types	18
6.4	F5 Web Application Firewall Configuration	18
6.5	F5 Web Application Firewall Rules:	18
6.6	Vendor Participation.....	19
6.7	MITRE Mapped OWASP Attacks	20
6.8	Deduped OWASP Score Calculation	20
7	Contact Information	21
8	Copyright and Disclaimer.....	21

1 INTRODUCTION

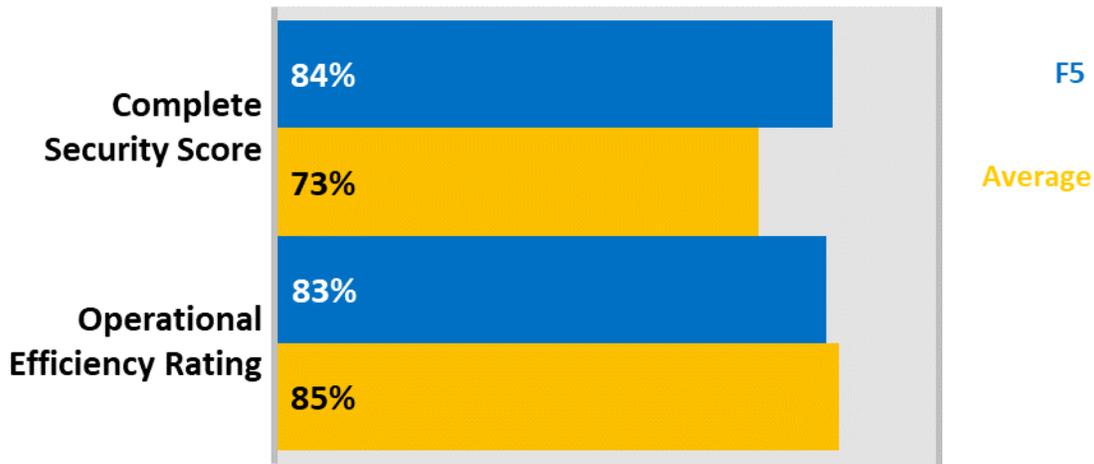


Figure 1. Overall Validation Results for F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall

SecureIQLab completed testing for 14¹ of the leading enterprise class cloud web application firewall (WAF) products to determine their security efficacy and operational efficiency. Testing was conducted in accordance with the standards of the Anti-Malware Testing Standards Organization² (AMTSO). The test used version 2.0 of the SecureIQLab [Cloud WAF CyberRisk Validation Methodology](#) (AMTSO Test ID: AMTSO-LS1-TP054).

This report discusses the test results for the Amazon Machine Image (AMI) deployed F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12. Test results for group minimums, averages and maximum results are also provided in certain categories for additional insight. Because thousands of attacks were simulated during the test, test results have necessarily been simplified and presented for review in a summary format. Figure 1 provides a summary of the product's overall validation results.

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and the remote workforce have dissolved the network perimeter and expanded the enterprise attack surface. Cost savings and operational simplicity drive organizations to adopt cloud-native and cloud-driven application architectures. These cloud-native and cloud-driven application architectures include API-driven, multi-tenant and multiuser applications.

The ubiquitous adoption of the cloud is not without challenges. Web application-based vulnerabilities are among the top breach vectors³ and threats to our cloud and hybrid environments are on the rise. Cloud-based web application firewalls (WAFs) are designed to protect web applications without interrupting business continuity in the cloud-first world. This test of cloud WAFs is intended to evaluate these products' effectiveness in mitigating these challenges.

In this cloud WAF test we measured effectiveness by subjecting products under test to a battery of diverse attacks. We secured cloud applications with the cloud WAFs we were testing. The cloud applications we secured included simple Ecommerce applications, multiuser web applications and applications with known vulnerabilities.

¹ Testing was attempted on a total of 17 cloud WAF solutions. See appendix section 6.6 for details.

² <https://www.amtso.org/>

³ <https://www.verizon.com/business/resources/reports/dbir/2021/masters-guide/summary-of-findings/>

These cloud applications were then used as attack targets. This allowed us to obtain empirically validated data based upon industry frameworks and regulations such as the OWASP Top 10⁴, MITRE ATT&CK and PCI DSS 4.0⁵.

This report covers testing for just 1 of the 14 products. An overview comparative report generally covering all 14 products is also available. Additionally, reports are available for the other 13 products tested.

In addition to cloud WAFs, SecureQLab has also identified the following critical technologies for cloud security:

- Advanced Cloud Firewall (ACFW)
- Application Programming Interface (API) Security
- Extended Detection and Response (XDR)
- Internet of Things (IoT) Security
- Security Service Edge (SSE) and Secure Access Service Edge (SASE)

Because these technologies are critical for cloud security, SecureQLab will test, evaluate and publish its findings about products in the above categories in upcoming tests.

SecureQLab is a cloud security testing lab that was founded in 2019 and works with enterprises, governments, and security vendors to bridge the applied intelligence gap that exists between market analysis and technology research. SecureQLab provides services to operationalize security and define metrics to help organizations improve their return on security investments and lower risk.

The Anti-Malware Testing Standards Organization (AMTSO) is an international non-profit association that focuses on addressing the industry need for improvement in the objectivity, quality, and relevance of cybersecurity testing methodologies. SecureQLab is a member of AMTSO.

The Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) is a nonprofit foundation that works to improve the security of software. “Through community-led open-source software projects, hundreds of local chapters worldwide, tens of thousands of members, and leading educational and training conferences, the OWASP Foundation is the source for developers and technologists to secure the web.”⁶ It publishes the OWASP Top 10 Report. SecureQLab has no affiliation with OWASP.

F5 was founded in 1996 and is an established vendor in the WAF market. The F5 WAF product was selected for inclusion in this test because it meets the SecureQLab WAF validation methodology selection criteria.⁷

⁴ Open Web Application Security Project®.

⁵ Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards.

⁶ <https://owasp.org/>

⁷ Market Leaders – Either in terms of revenue generated, customer numbers globally, or strong channel play.

2 TESTING PARAMETERS AND RESULTS

Cloud-based web application firewalls (WAFs) should accurately detect, prevent, and log attack attempts while avoiding false positives. The majority of the attacks conducted against the cloud WAF product under test were tactics and techniques identified by OWASP for the exploitation of applications. SecureIQLab believes that attack tactics and techniques should be blocked, not just those with malicious payloads. For example, replacing the payload of “evil.com” with “hello world” doesn’t change the fact that an attack technique was missed in some cases in order to avoid potential false positives. SecureIQLab’s testing demonstrates the efficacy of the F5 WAF in this area.

Tests were performed utilizing black-box and gray-box testing. Black-box testing assumes that the internal code structure of the product being tested is unknown to the tester. For this testing approach, testers are not required to know a system’s implementation details. Gray-box testing assumes that part of the product’s internal code structure is known to the tester.

Default configurations and rule sets were used for the majority of the products in this test. However, any “Detect Only” mode settings that were part of default configurations were modified to “Block” mode, with default rulesets used as applicable.

Tuning a WAF can be complex. Tuning was based on industry and marketplace expectations that these solutions will require minimal to no tuning during provisioning, deployment, and management phases, which translates to lower operational expenses and increased revenue for the targeted audience, i.e., SMBs, managed service providers (MSPs), and managed security service providers (MSSPs).

Further, any required tuning was performed (1) according to vendor recommendations publicly available on the F5’s website and (2) according to relevant documentation available on F5’s documentation site to align with the customer experience during the deployment and management of the product. (Enterprises are advised to exercise due diligence during this process to avoid impacting business.)

WAF-protected applications were used during testing by performing standard user transactions that included form submissions, comment writing, ecommerce transactions, and other transactions. See Appendix Section 6 for additional information on the configurations utilized during this test.

More detailed information about our testing methods is contained in version 2.0 of the SecureIQLab [Cloud WAF CyberRisk Validation Methodology](#) (AMTSO Test ID: AMTSO-LS1-TP054).

3 SECURITY EFFICACY

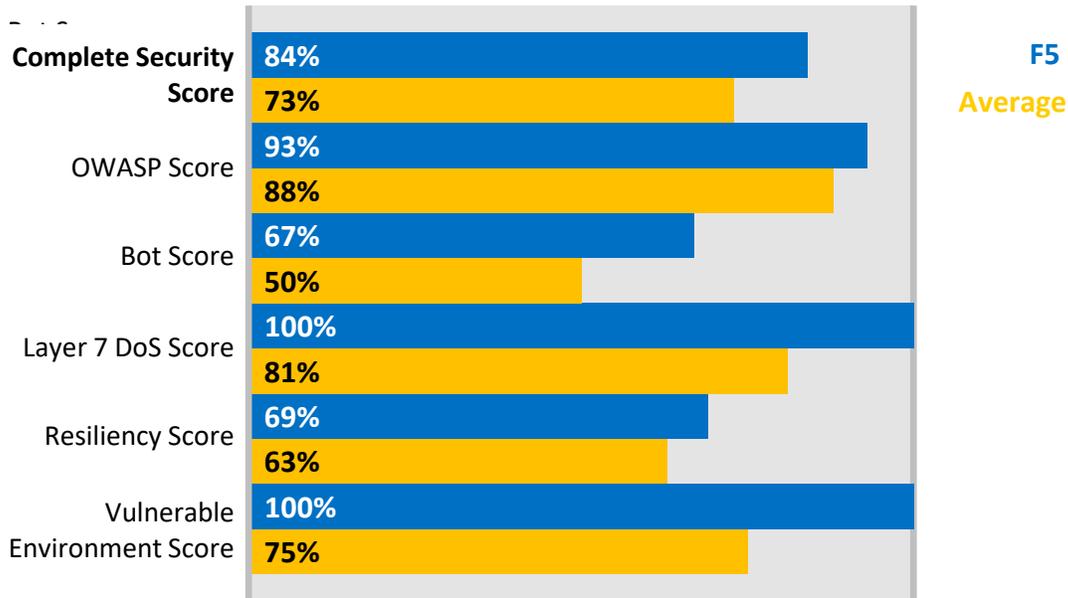


Figure 2. Security Validation Results for F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall

Figure 2 above provides an overview of the SecureQLab findings during the security validation of the F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12. The *Complete Security Score* depicts the average of all five security categories tested, minus any duplicated data in the *OWASP Score*. Equation 1 below depicts the *Complete Security Score* calculation. In this equation, the *Deduped OWASP Score* is the *OWASP Score*, from section 3.1, with the A02, A04, A06, A07 and A09 vulnerability results excluded to avoid duplicating data.⁸

$$\text{Complete Security Score} = \frac{\left(\text{Deduped OWASP Score} + \text{Bot Attack Score} + \text{Layer 7 DoS Score} + \text{Resiliency Score} + \text{Vulnerable Environment Score} \right)}{5}$$

Equation 1. Calculation of Complete Security Score

Every cloud WAF evaluated in this test was subjected to fourteen different categories of more than 400 real world-based operational scenarios targeting small-to-medium businesses and enterprises alike. Over 9100 attacks were used encompassing these scenarios and categories. The depth and scope of the testing performed by SecureQLab carries on our tradition of innovation and improvement. SecureQLab will continue to add attack libraries and other relevant operational metrics in future iterations of this test.

3.1 OWASP SCORE

The Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) is a non-profit foundation dedicated to improving web application security⁹. The OWASP Top 10¹⁰ Report is assembled by security experts from across the globe and describes

⁸ Please see appendix 6.8 for *Deduped OWASP Score* calculation

⁹ SecureQLab is not affiliated with OWASP.

¹⁰ <https://owasp.org/www-project-top-ten/>

the most critical web application vulnerabilities. This year’s testing is based on the OWASP Top 10 2021.

The F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 was tested against nine of the OWASP Top 10 vulnerabilities. The OWASP A08:2021 – Software and Data Integrity Failures vulnerability was not included in testing because it relates to coding and infrastructure practices that are outside the scope of WAF security.

For detailed explanations of each of these attacks, please reference the OWASP Top 10. Table 1 below provides the results from these tests.

	F5 Test Results				Group Test Results		
	Test Case	# Attacks	# Blocked	%Blocked or Score	Test Minimum	Test Average	Test Maximum
A01 Broken Access Control	CSRF	4	4	100%	0%	16%	100%
	Path Traversal	3977	3940	99%	48%	92%	100%
A02 Cryptographic Failures	Feature to implement SSL certificates	NA	NA	100%	100%	100%	100%
A03 Injection	CRLF	103	25	24%	0%	28%	100%
	Cross Site Scripting	2691	2563	95%	3%	87%	100%
	Host Header Injection	10	4	40%	0%	47%	100%
	HTML injection	5	5	100%	0%	40%	100%
	LDAP injection	46	46	100%	15%	94%	100%
	OS injection	324	315	97%	23%	71%	97%
	SQL Injection	1549	1119	72%	31%	70%	97%
	SSTI	123	103	84%	4%	67%	100%
	Xpath	16	7	44%	0%	47%	88%
	A04 Insecure Design	Web scraping bot	1	1	100%	0%	86%
A05 Security Misconfiguration	Unrestricted File Upload	36	36	100%	0%	75%	100%
	XXE	122	122	100%	0%	41%	100%
A06 Vulnerable and Outdated Components	Web Application CVEs	20	16	80%	55%	74%	90%
A07 Identification and Authentication Failures	Credential Stuffing	1	1	100%	0%	36%	100%
	Brute force attack						
A09 Security Logging and Monitoring Failures	Logging, monitoring and provided by WAF	NA	NA	87%	60%	80%	93%
A10 Server-Side Request Forgery (SSRF)	SSRF	15	15	100%	0%	50%	100%
OWASP Score				93%	75%	88%	96%

Table 1. OWASP Vulnerability Testing

Category averages are determined by equally weighting the test case averages within each category. As an example, Equation 2 below provides the formula for calculating the average for the A01 Broken Access Control vulnerabilities category.

$$A01\ Broken\ Access\ Control\ Average = \frac{\left(\frac{\% Path\ Traversal\ Attacks\ Blocked}{\% CSRF\ Attacks\ Blocked} + \frac{\% Path\ Traversal\ Attacks\ Blocked}{\% Path\ Traversal\ Attacks\ Blocked} \right)}{2}$$

Equation 2. Formula for calculating the average for A01 Broken Access Control vulnerabilities OWASP category

The OWASP Score is derived from averaging A02 Cryptographic Failures Score with A09 Security Logging and Monitoring Failures Score, and the combined total block/the combined total attacks for A01 Broken Access Control, A03 Injection, A04 Insecure Design, A05 Security Misconfiguration, A06 Vulnerable and Outdated Components, A07 Identification and Authentication Failures, and A10 Server-Side Request Forgery (SSRF). Equation 3 provides the formula for the calculation of the OWASP Score.

$$OWASP\ Score = \frac{A02\ Score + A09\ Score + \left(\frac{Total\ A01\ Attacks\ Blocked + Total\ A03\ Attacks\ Blocked + Total\ A04\ Attacks\ Blocked + Total\ A05\ Attacks\ Blocked + Total\ A06\ Attacks\ Blocked + Total\ A07\ Attacks\ Blocked + Total\ A10\ Attacks\ Blocked}{Total\ A01\ Attacks + Total\ A03\ Attacks + Total\ A04\ Attacks + Total\ A05\ Attacks + Total\ A06\ Attacks + Total\ A07\ Attacks + Total\ A10\ Attacks} \right) \times 100\%}{3}$$

Equation 3. Calculation of OWASP Score

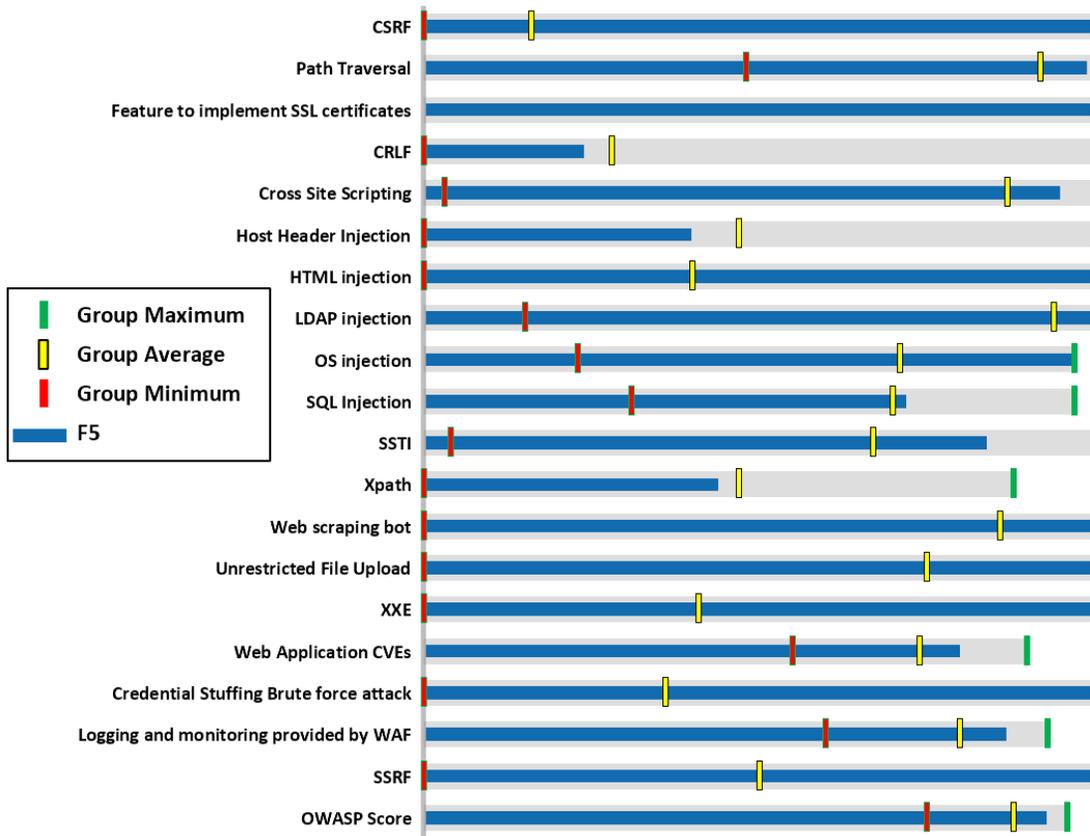


Figure 3. OWASP Score Visual

The OWASP Score visual, Figure 3, shows how the results for the F5 WAF (blue bar) compares to the minimum score from the test group (red line), the average score from the test group (yellow line) and the maximum score from the test group (green line). The gray vertical left and right lines mark 0% and 100% respectively.

Please see appendix section 6.7 for information regarding mapping the OWASP test cases to the MITRE ATT&CK Enterprise Framework.¹¹

3.2 BOT ATTACKS

For purposes of this test, a bot is defined as an automated tool that is used by a remote attacker to carry out automated attacks. The bot tool can exist on the attacker’s computer or a compromised endpoint. F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 was tested against seven types of bot attacks. These attacks were initiated from Asian and North American locations to determine whether the geolocation of an attack source impacts the product’s security effectiveness. Results show that geolocation does not impact the product’s security effectiveness. Six different bot attacks were used while testing. The results and these attacks are mapped in Table 2 to the MITRE ATT&CK framework, as far as possible. The Bot Score is calculated by averaging the seven contributing scores. The maximum Bot Attack Score for the tested vendors was 100%. The minimum Bot Attack Score for the tested vendors was 17%.

¹¹ SecureIQLab is not affiliated with The MITRE Corporation.

 Bot Attacks	ATT&CK [®] Enterprise Techniques			F5	Test Group
	MITRE Tactic	MITRE Technique	Sub-techniques	Test Results	Average Results
Broken Link Checker	Reconnaissance ID: TA0043	Search Victim-Owned Websites ID: T1594	NA	Bypass	36%
L7 DOS with TOR network	Impact ID: TA0040	Endpoint Denial of Service ID: T1499	Application or System Exploitation T1499.004	Blocked	86%
Login Bruteforce	Credential Access ID: TA006	Brute Force ID: T1110	Password Spraying ID: T1110.003	Blocked	50%
User Agent Manipulation	Reconnaissance ID: TA0043	Gather Victim Host Information ID: T1592	Client Configurations ID: T1592.004	Blocked	43%
Web Scraping	Reconnaissance ID: TA0043	Search Open Websites/Domains ID: T1593 Gather Victim Org Information ID: T1591	Search Engines ID: T1593.002 Identify Business Tempo ID: T1591.003	Blocked	50%
Website crawler	Reconnaissance ID: TA0043	Search Open Websites/Domains ID: T1593 Gather Victim Org Information ID: T1591 Active Scanning ID: T1595	Search Engines ID: T1593.002 Identify Business Tempo ID: T1591.003 Wordlist Scanning ID: T1595.003	Bypass	36%
Bot Score				67%	50%

Table 2. Bot Attack Results with Attacks Mapped to MITRE ATT&CK

3.3 LAYER 7 DOS ATTACKS

Layer 7 Denial-of-Service (DoS) attacks are more difficult to detect than other DoS layer attacks because they use a valid TCP connection. Test cases for such attacks are also more infrastructure friendly than Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks and thus avoid the issues that DDoS attacks may trigger with cloud service providers. Below, Table 3 presents the results of testing the F5 WAF against five Layer 7 DoS attacks and maps these attacks to the MITRE ATT&CK framework, as far as possible. The product’s *Layer 7 DoS Score* was determined by taking the average of its scores against the five attacks. The highest *Layer 7 DoS Score* of the group of tested vendors in this category was 100% and the lowest rating was 40%.

 Layer 7 DoS	F5	Test Group
	Test Results	Average Results
DoS Attack	Blocked	64%
Slow DoS Attack	Blocked	93%
Slow DoS Attack	Blocked	93%
Slow DoS Attack	Blocked	79%
Slow DoS Attack	Blocked	79%
Layer 7 DoS Score	100%	81%

Table 3. Layer 7 DoS Validation

Table 4 shows how the attacks used in the resiliency test cases map to the MITRE ATT&CK framework.

ATT&CK [®] Enterprise Techniques		
MITRE Tactic	MITRE Technique	Sub-techniques
Impact ID:TA0040	Endpoint Denial of Service ID: T1499	Application or System Exploitation T1499.004

Table 4. Layer 7 DoS Attacks Mapped to MITRE ATT&CK

3.4 RESILIENCY SCORE

Security products must demonstrate resiliency. Failure to do so will have significant consequences. The prevailing definition of operational resilience is provided by the Department of Defense (DoD), and states it is: “The ability of systems to resist, absorb, and recover from or adapt to an adverse occurrence during operation that may cause harm, destruction, or loss of ability to perform mission-related functions.”¹²

To test its operational resilience, the F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 was tested against 71 total test cases using 25 unique evasive methods were employed to determine whether it could successfully block attacks that would otherwise go unseen. A higher resiliency score indicates a product is more capable of withstanding and absorbing different variations of attacks while a lower resiliency score indicates a product is less likely to detect different variations of attacks.

Table 5 below provides the test cases and F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 results and maps these attacks to the MITRE ATT&CK framework, as far as possible. The *Resiliency Score* is the percentage of attacks blocked out of the total 71 attacks. The maximum *Resiliency Score* for the tested vendors was 90%. The minimum *Resiliency Score* for the tested vendors was 17%.

 Resiliency	F5	Test Group
	Test Results	Average Results
Cross Site Scripting	65%	84%
HTML Injection	86%	39%
OS Command Injection	100%	50%
SQL Injection	59%	62%
Unrestricted File Uploads	100%	79%
XXE	0%	47%
Resiliency Score	69%	63%

Table 5. Resiliency Validation Results

Table 6 shows how the attacks used in the resiliency test cases map to the MITRE ATT&CK framework.

ATT&CK [®] Enterprise Techniques	
MITRE Tactic	MITRE Technique
Defense Evasion ID: TA0005	Obfuscated Files or Information ID: T1027

Table 6. Resiliency Attacks Mapped to MITRE ATT&CK

3.5 WEB APPLICATION PROTECTION

A cloud-based WAF should protect vulnerable web applications. While the proliferation of web application frameworks has made deployment and maintenance of web applications simpler, it has also made it challenging to update these frameworks without affecting the functionality of the web applications. Businesses, MSPs and MSSPs can ill afford downtime and may delay updates to avoid breaking applications. Consequently, applications can remain vulnerable to various known vulnerabilities and exploits. This makes it easier for cybercriminals and script kiddies to compromise these applications.

¹² https://csrc.nist.gov/glossary/term/operational_resilience

The F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 was tested against known exploits on 20 different vulnerable applications. See Table 7 below for the full results. The Vulnerable Environment Score is percentage of attacks blocked out of the 20 attacks. The highest Vulnerable Environment Score of the group of tested vendors in this category was 90% and the lowest rating was 55%.

 Vulnerable Environment	F5	Test Group
	Test Results	Average Test Results
Apisix	100%	79%
Confluence	100%	100%
Django	100%	50%
Flink	100%	68%
Ghostscript	100%	29%
Grafana	100%	100%
Log4J	100%	100%
Metabase	100%	93%
OpenTSDB	100%	71%
PhpMyAdmin	100%	100%
Rails	100%	79%
Shiro	100%	50%
Solr	100%	100%
Struts2	100%	93%
Uwsgi	100%	100%
Vulnerable Environment	100%	75%

Table 7. Vulnerable Web Environment Results

Table 8 shows how the attacks used in the vulnerable environment test cases map to the MITRE ATT&CK framework.

ATT&CK [®] Enterprise Techniques	
MITRE Tactic	MITRE Technique
Initial access ID: TA0001	Exploit Public-Facing Application ID: T1190

Table 8. Vulnerable Environment Attacks Mapped to MITRE

3.6 WAF VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

Security solutions, regardless of their deployment method, should not increase the attack surface of the environments that they are designed to protect. Additionally, privileges often granted to security solutions, should not be exploitable by threat actors. In another groundbreaking test, SecureIQLab has assessed the security of the cloud WAF product itself.

F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 was tested against 9 vulnerability assessment techniques that are commonly used to assess the hardness of applications. Table 9 provides the details of our findings and maps key areas of these attacks to the MITRE ATT&CK framework where possible. All WAFs assessed passed the WAF Vulnerability Assessment.

 WAF Vulnerability Assessment	ATT&CK®			F5 Results	Group Average
IDOR - Insecure Direct Object Reference	Reconnaissance ID: TA0043	Gather Victim Host Information: Software ID: T1592	Software DI: T1592.002	Blocked	Blocked
Cross Site Scripting	Initial Access ID: TA0001	Drive-by Compromise ID: T1189	NA	Blocked	Blocked
Server Side Request Forgery	Credential Access ID: TA0006	Forge Web Credentials ID: T1606	NA	Blocked	Blocked
Privilege Escalation	Privilege Escalation ID: TA0004	Valid Accounts ID:T1078	NA	Blocked	Blocked
Hard Coded Values (URLs, IDs, Passwords etc)	NA	NA	NA	Blocked	Blocked
Back Button Enabled	NA	NA	NA	Blocked	Blocked
Insecure Session Management	Privilege Escalation ID: TA0004	NA	NA	Blocked	Blocked
Sensitive Data Exposure	Reconnaissance ID: TA0043	Active scanning ID: T1595	Vulnerability Scanning ID: T1595.002	Blocked	Blocked
Weak SSL Ciphers	NA	NA	NA	Blocked	Blocked
WAF Vulnerability Assessment Score				Pass	Pass

Table 9. F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition WAF Vulnerability Assessment

4 OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

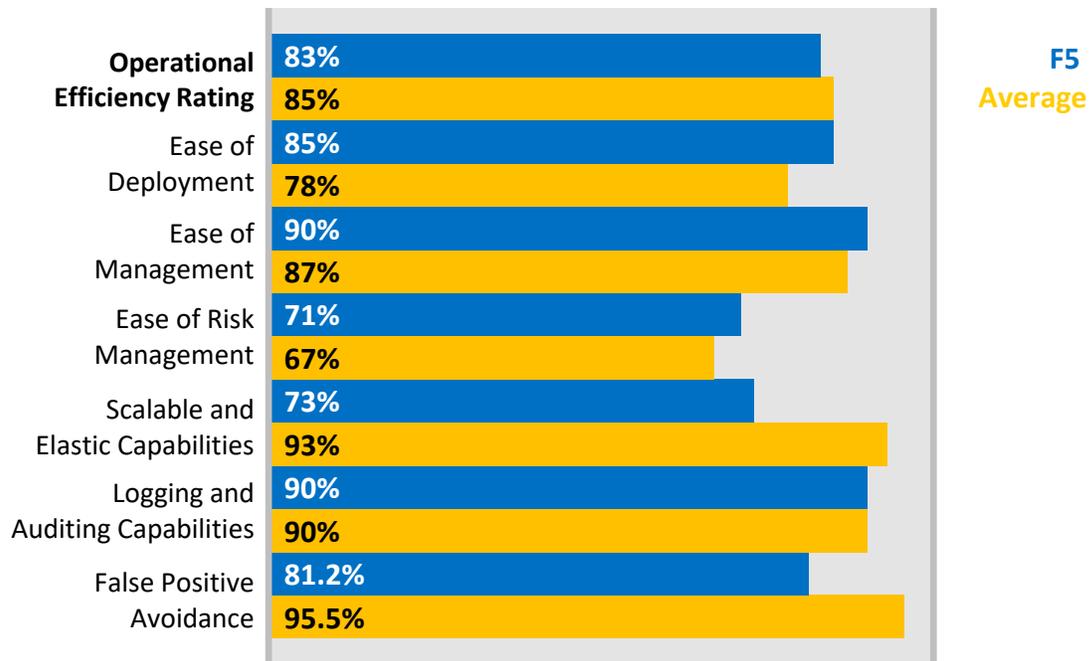


Figure 4. Validation of Operational Efficiency for F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall

Cloud-based WAF technology allows for the creation of customized security, which benefits organizations in the following ways:

- Ease of deployment and integration
- Less complex to manage
- Ease of risk management
- Scalable and elastic
- Monitoring, logging, and control capabilities

- Allows business-related transactions

F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 was validated in each of these areas of operational efficiency. Figure 4, above, displays the product’s high-level results.

Category scores were calculated by aggregating earned points and then dividing this number by the total number of possible points to find a percentage. Points (integers 0 – 3) are earned for each feature within a category as follows:

- High or Yes (Green) = 3 Points
- Med (Yellow) = 2 Points
- Low (Orange) = 1 Point
- NA/No (Red) = 0 Points

The *Operational Efficiency Rating* was calculated by adding together the total points for each category, then dividing this number by the maximum potential points (114) and multiplying that number by 100%. Equation 4 states the *Operational Efficiency Score* calculation.

$$\text{Operational Efficiency Rating} = \frac{\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Ease of} \\ \text{Deployment} \\ \text{Points} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Ease of} \\ \text{Management} \\ \text{Points} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Ease of Risk} \\ \text{Management} \\ \text{Points} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Scalable} \\ \text{and Elastic} \\ \text{Points} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Logging and} \\ \text{Auditing} \\ \text{Points} \end{array} \right)}{114 \text{ points}} \times 100\%$$

Equation 4. Operational Efficiency Rating Calculation

The mode for each feature validated is used to calculate the test group feature results. Group test averages were then calculated by adding the modes for each feature and then dividing this number by the total number of possible points to find a percentage.

4.1 EASE OF DEPLOYMENT

Cloud WAFs typically take less than an hour to a few days to set up and seldom require installation of custom software or hardware.

Cloud WAFs should integrate with other security tools, Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) systems, and data repositories. This typically allows both tasks and alerts to be automated. Typical integrations include DevOps tools like Slack and Jira and can include automated additions to policies as threats are detected.

SecureQLab validated the ease of deployment and integration for the F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition WAF. The overall simplicity of the deployment was high. A minimal understanding of AWS resources is a prerequisite for deployment. Findings for deployment and ease of integration are in Table 10 below.

 Ease of Deployment	F5	Test Group
	Validation Results	Average Results
Simplicity of Provisioning	Med	Med
Ease of Setting Up WAF Service	Med	Med
Ease of Certificate Creations and Management	Med	Med
Application Load Balancing and Monitoring	High	High
Deployment Autonomy/Customer Support Experience	Med	High
Integration with Multi-Cloud WAF	Yes	Yes
Plug and Play Integration with On-prem Firewall	Yes	No
Plug and Play Integration for SIEM/S3 Bucket	Yes	Yes
Plug and Play Integration for API Gateway	Yes	Yes
Rating	85%	78%

Table 10. Deployment and Ease of Integration Findings

Earning 23 of the possible 27 points gave F5 an 85% *Ease of Deployment Rating*. The highest rating of the group of tested vendors in this category was 100% and the lowest rating was 56%.

4.2 EASE OF MANAGEMENT

Cloud WAFs market the promise that they are more easily managed than on-premise solutions. They are less complex and more easily managed because they receive automated updates, automatically deal with spikes in traffic (as discussed below) and work out of the box.

Cloud WAFs are less complex because the cloud WAF provider manages the security details and automatically allocates the resources needed. The cloud WAF provider typically has already tuned the security software. Users typically have a single management console to monitor.

Users can typically create additional policies that allow identity-based access and network segmentation. Because the cloud WAF provider automatically applies policy modifications wherever the cloud WAF is deployed, policy modification is generally simple and rapid. Results from SecureIQLab’s experience while managing F5’s WAF are in Table 11, below.

 Ease of Management	F5	Test Group
	Validation Results	Average Results
Simplicity of Tuning WAF	High	High
Intuitiveness Security Policy	Med	High
Ease of Managing Security Policy	High	High
Customization of Dashboard	High	High
Capability of Asset Management	Low	Low
Facilitation of PCI Compliance	High	Med
Facilitation of Data Sovereignty (GDPR)	High	High
WAF Update Automation	High	Med
Simplicity of Managing Web ACL	High	High
Single Sign On Support	Yes	Yes
Rating	90%	87%

Table 11. Ease of Management Rating

Earning 27 of the possible 30 points gave F5 a 90% *Ease of Management Rating*. The highest rating of the group of tested vendors in this category was 97% and the lowest rating was 63%.

4.3 EASE OF RISK MANAGEMENT

Today’s enterprises typically incorporate an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) program, and Ease of Risk Management is an integral category within such program. In the context of cybersecurity solutions, such as a Cloud WAF, deployed within an enterprise, it is imperative that organizations measure some of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) associated with risk management while deploying, managing, and operating such solutions.

These KPI’s should then be aggregated such that significant cyber threats form a big picture of the enterprise’s risks. Risk management should align with format and measurement scales that can be compared to other types of operational risks.

Table 12 provides F5’s *Ease of Risk Management Rating*. The higher the *Ease of Risk Management Rating*, the easier it is to manage security threats and business continuity risks. This in turn lowers the solution’s operational overhead and hidden costs of ownership.

 Ease of Risk Management	F5	Test Group
	Validation Results	Average Results
Business Continuity Management	Low	Low
Risk Assessment & Mitigation	High	High
Security Metrics Reporting	High	Med
Threat Analytics Dashboard	Med	Med
Alert and Rule Management	Med	High
Automated Alert and Rule Management	Med	High
Incident Management	Med	High
Rating	71%	67%

Table 12. Ease of Risk Management Rating

Earning 15 of the possible 21 points gave F5 a 71% *Ease of Risk Management Rating*. The highest rating of the group of tested vendors in this category was 95% and the lowest rating was 57%.

4.4 SCALABLE AND ELASTIC

Cloud WAFs should help the customer avoid sizing issues planning by providing for automated flexible scaling. Scaling typically occurs in response to changing traffic load patterns. Providers typically allow customers to choose options that balance optimal performance and optimizing costs. Table 13 highlights SecureQLab’s findings in this area.

 Scalable and Elastic Capabilities	F5	Test Group
	Validation Results	Average Results
Load Balancing and Failover Capability	Med	Med
Auto-Scaling Capability	Yes	Yes
Manual Scaling Capability	Yes	Yes
Designed for Static and Dynamic Sites	Yes	Yes
Multi-tenancy Support	No	Yes
Rating	73%	93%

Table 13. Scalable and Elastic Validation

Earning 11 of the possible 15 points gave F5 a 73% *Scalable and Elastic Compatibilities Rating*. The highest rating of the group of tested vendors in this category was 100% and the lowest rating was 67%.

4.5 LOGGING, MONITORING, AND AUDITING

Robust logging capabilities are required for incident response, auditing, and many compliance and regulatory purposes. Cloud WAFs need to provide enough visibility into web traffic and sufficient control capabilities for security teams to spot issues and resolve them. Additionally, Cloud WAFs need to have a means to integrate logged data with other storage devices for redundancy. Below, Table 14 covers our logging, compliance and auditing findings.

 Logging and Auditing Capabilities	F5	Test Group
	Validation Results	Average Results
Log Configuration Simplicity	Med	High
Log Storage Capability	High	High
Web Request Inspection	High	Med
Application Monitoring	High	Med
Infrastructure Monitoring	High	High
Auditing Capability	Med	High
Multi-Factor Authentication	Yes	Yes
Rating	90%	90%

Table 14. Log and Audit details

Earning 19 of the possible 21 points gave F5 a 90% *Logging and Capabilities Rating*. The highest rating of the group of tested vendors in this category was 95% and the lowest rating was 57%.

4.6 FALSE POSITIVE AVOIDANCE

WAFs need to allow business-related transactions while blocking malicious activity. The false positive rate is important because false positives interfere with the operation of the business. Policies need to be adjusted to minimize false positives. False Positives increase alerts for already stretched thin security teams and contribute to alert fatigue. Properly tuned security devices will not detect benign traffic as malicious. Over 300 different false positive test cases were used to validate that the product under test (PUT) would not block simulated consumer purchases. These test cases simulated users that would browse the web application normally while being protected by the cloud WAF. Blocking legitimate user activity constitutes a false positive, increases the operational burden for the enterprise and would require additional tuning to correct. The results for the *False Positive Avoidance* testing are found below in Table 15. F5’s *False Positive Avoidance Score* is the percentage of the total allowed legitimate activity test cases to the total possible 308 test cases. F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition WAF allowed 250 out of 308 test cases for a score of 81.2%. False positives decrease operational efficiency. The higher the *False Positive Avoidance Score*, the less impact on the operational efficiency.

 False Positives	F5	Test Group
	Test Results	Average Results
False Positive Avoidance Score	81.2%	95.5%

Table 15. False Positive Avoidance Results

The highest *False Positive Avoidance Score* of the group of tested vendors in this category was 100.0% and the lowest score was 81.2%. The *False Positive Avoidance Score* will be used in the calculation of the *Return on Security Investment (ROSI)* in the 2022 comparative report.

5 DIFFERENTIATORS

SecureQLab testers and analysts researched the products under test and worked to determine key differentiators for the F5 BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 from other cloud WAFs. Information in this section is sourced from hands on experience, customer feedback and from vendor subject matter experts.

- User interface and configuration flow are consistent throughout F5 products. This simplifies training for and managing security stacks.
- F5 provides improved documentation with video lessons around concepts and products.
- Configuration recommendation based on their learning engine. The F5 WAF analyzes the logs and based on the ongoing analysis of the customer's traffic, will recommend customized actions to improve security. Users may choose to manually update or allow F5 to automatically update their configurations based on these recommendations.
- F5 configuration is highly granular while still providing effective default configuration.
- Logs can be viewed in real-time without latency for quick analysis.

6 APPENDIX

6.1 CLOUD WAF TEST DEPLOYMENT

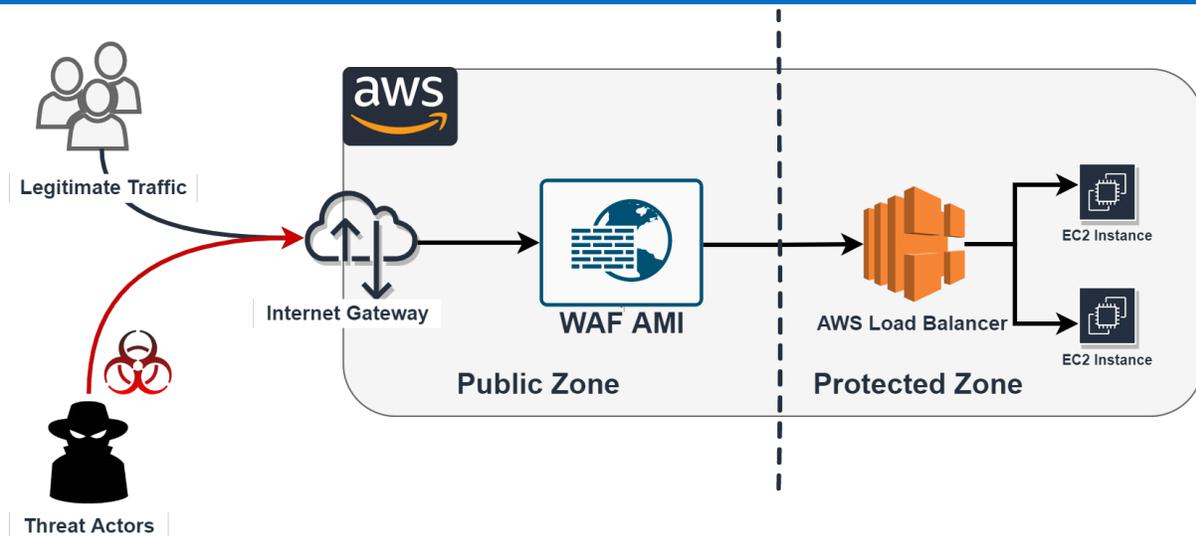


Figure 5. WAF deployment diagram

The cloud WAF was deployed with default policy with an elastic load balancer to protect the web-applications on AWS, see Figure 5. All web-application transactions were inspected by the cloud WAF. In doing so, the cloud WAF was expected to provide protections against threats that were originated by the malicious actors while allowing authorized users to access the web application resources.

During deployment, our engineers noted the time it took to deploy with out of the box controls and the complexity of the deployment. Also noted was whether our engineering team was required to contact the WAF vendor's support team to successfully complete the WAF deployment. See Table 10 for deployment findings.

6.2 TEST EXECUTION

SecureQLab performed security validation using crafted attacks that are relevant to today's cloud application hosted on cloud and cloud native applications. SecureQLab carefully curated such attacks via research generated by our own red team as well as the attacks that are prevalent in the wild. Open-source tool kits were also utilized while performing this assessment.

Before the testing was conducted, SecureQLab validated that the cloud WAF solution was in an operational state by verifying the following:

- Connection Validation:
 - Before any test was conducted, SecureQLab ensured that the Cloud WAF could be accessed by the administrator and was passing normal application traffic. This was to ensure that any dynamic content such as IP blacklist protection could be updated on regular basis by the cloud WAF.
- Logging:
 - SecureQLab asserts that logging is a critical and a crucial component while running a cloud WAF. SecureQLab verified that the cloud WAF being tested had sufficient administrative as well as attack logging to ensure Security Analysts could troubleshoot and fix issues as required.
- Updates:
 - Protocol updates in the form of rules, signatures and reputations were applied as they became generally available. SecureQLab made best efforts to apply these updates to products prior to their evaluation.

The above processes were repeated wherever applicable throughout the test. Once the deployment of F5's WAF solution and baseline testing were completed, the security validation testing began.

The first phase of attack was to gather information and perform reconnaissance against the application. This was done to gather as much information as possible to be utilized when penetrating the target during the vulnerability assessment and exploitation phases. SecureQLab performed vulnerability analysis using automated tools such as Burpsuite and Nessus in addition to performing manual analysis. The main objective of vulnerability analysis is to discover flaws in the systems and applications which can be leveraged by an attacker. These flaws ranged anywhere from host and service misconfiguration to insecure application design. Vulnerability Analysis was based on:

1. Active Scan: Active scan involves direct interaction with the component being tested for security vulnerabilities.
2. Passive Scan: Passive scan involves meta-data analysis and traffic monitoring.

Once information gathering and reconnaissance was completed, we began exploitation as the next phase in this process. Penetration testing was critical in the evaluation of cloud WAF technologies.

Once exploited, "post-exploitation" was undertaken. Post-exploitation refers to the actions taken after the initial compromise of a system or device. It often describes the methodical approach of using privilege escalation or pivoting techniques—which allowed SecureQLab, in this case, to establish a new source of attack from the new vantage point in the system—to gain additional access to systems or network resources. We demonstrate the risk presented by exploitable systems and what post-exploitation may likely occur with web applications.

Additionally, defense evasion is an important tool in an attacker's arsenal. This allows old methods and techniques to be repurposed to evade protection against attacks which might otherwise get blocked by the Cloud WAF. More details on these techniques are covered in the Resiliency section.

The testing demonstrates the effectiveness of the PUT to protect vulnerable assets from targeted threats and exploitation. This asset/target and threat-based approach forms the basis from which PUT security effectiveness is measured.

6.3 ATTACK TYPES

The SecureQLab threat and attack suite contains attacks (including mutations of the same underlying attacks) and proprietary exploits harvested through our test harness or crafted by our threat research team. SecureQLab has a number of complex web applications which have also been constructed to include known vulnerabilities and coding errors. Groups of exploits are carefully selected from this library to test based on the intended attack. Each exploit has been validated to impact the target vulnerable host(s) by compromising the asset, which can range from being the web server, the web application or sites.

The level of compromise can vary between instigating a denial-of-service (DoS) condition, providing administrator/root access to the host server, allowing malicious users to amend system parameters or application data before submission, browse and/or retrieve files stored on the host server, escalating user privileges, and so on.

6.4 F5 WEB APPLICATION FIREWALL CONFIGURATION

F5's BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 was deployed and configured according to the instructions found in F5's *Deployment Guides* section¹³.

6.5 F5 WEB APPLICATION FIREWALL RULES:

F5's BIG-IP Virtual Edition Web Application Firewall, 16.1.3 Build 0.0.12 was configured per the WAF's default configurations.

¹³ <https://www.f5.com/services/resources/deployment-guides>

6.6 VENDOR PARTICIPATION

Table 16 lists the test status for each of the 17 vendors that SecureQLab attempted to evaluate in this test iteration.

Vendor	Test Status
Akamai	Testing Completed
AWS	Testing Completed
Microsoft	Testing Completed
Barracuda	Testing Completed
Citrix	Evaluation terminated due to product issues ¹⁴
Cloudflare	Testing Completed
F5	Testing Completed
Fastly	Evaluation terminated by vendor ¹⁴
Fortinet	Testing Completed
Google	Testing Completed
Imperva	Testing Completed
Oracle	Testing Completed
Prophaze	Testing Completed
Radware	Evaluation terminated by vendor ¹⁴
StackPath	Testing Completed
Sucuri	Testing Completed
Wallarm	Testing Completed

Table 16. Vendor Test Status

¹⁴ Contact SecureQLab for details

6.7 MITRE MAPPED OWASP ATTACKS

Table 17 maps attacks used in the test from the OWASP to the MITRE ATT&CK Enterprise Framework.

	ATT&CK®		
	Tactic	Technique	Sub-technique
CRLF Injection	Discovery ID: TA0007		
XSS	Initial Access ID: TA0001	Drive-by Compromise ID: T1189	
CSRF	Credential Access ID: TA0006	Forge Web Credentials ID: T1606	
Host Header Injection	Execution ID: TA002	User Execution ID: T1204	Malicious Link ID: T1204.001
HTML Injection	Execution ID: TA002	User Execution ID: T1204	Malicious Link ID: T1204.001
LDAP Injection	Discovery ID: TA0007	Domain Trust Discovery ID: T1482	
OS Command Injection	Defense Evasion ID: TA005	Indirect Command Execution ID: T1202	Unix Shell ID: T1059.004
	Execution ID: TA0002	Command and Scripting Interpreter ID: T1059	
Path Traversal	Discovery ID: TA0007	File and Directory Discovery ID: T1083	
SSTI	Defense Evasion ID: TA005	Template Injection ID: T1221	
SQL Injection	Initial Access ID: TA0001	Exploit Public-Facing Application ID: T1190	
SSRF	Credential Access ID: TA0006	Forge Web Credentials ID: T1606	
Unrestricted File Upload	Defense Evasion ID: TA005	Masquerading ID: T1036	
XXE	Execution ID: TA002	User Execution ID: T1204	Malicious Link ID: T1204.001
Xpath	Initial Access ID: TA0001	Drive-by Compromise ID: T1189	

Table 17. OWASP ATTACKS TO MITRE ATT&CK

6.8 DEDUPED OWASP SCORE CALCULATION

Equation 5 demonstrates the calculation of the *Deduped OWASP Score*.

$$\text{Deduped OWASP Score} = \frac{\left(\frac{\text{Total A01 Attacks Blocked} + \text{Total A03 Attacks Blocked} + \text{Total A05 Attacks Blocked} + \text{Total A10 Attacks Blocked}}{\text{Total A01 Attacks} + \text{Total A03 Attacks} + \text{Total A05 Attacks} + \text{Total A10 Attacks}} \right) \times 100\%$$

Equation 5. Deduped OWASP Score Calculation

7 CONTACT INFORMATION

SecureQLab, LLC.

6001 W. Parmer Lane Ste 370, #970

Austin, TX 78704 USA

+1.512.575.3457

www.secureiqlab.com

info@secureiqlab.com

8 COPYRIGHT AND DISCLAIMER

This publication is Copyright © 2022 by SecureQLab®. Any use of the results, etc., in whole or in part, is ONLY permitted after the explicit written agreement of SecureQLab prior to any publication. SecureQLab cannot be held liable for any damage or loss, which might occur as result of, or in connection with, the use of the information provided in this paper. We take every possible care to ensure the correctness of the basic data, but a liability for the correctness of the research results cannot be taken by any representative of SecureQLab. We do not give any guarantee of the correctness, completeness, or suitability for a specific purpose of any of the information/content provided at any given time. No one else involved in creating, producing or delivering research results shall be liable for any indirect, special or consequential damage, or loss of profits, arising out of, or related to, the use or inability to use, the services provided by the website, research documents or any related data.

For more information about SecureQLab and the testing methodologies, please visit our website.

SecureQLab (November 2022)