



# Cloudflare Outage 2025

How One File Took Down 16% of the Internet

Geeks Club

 December 10, 2025

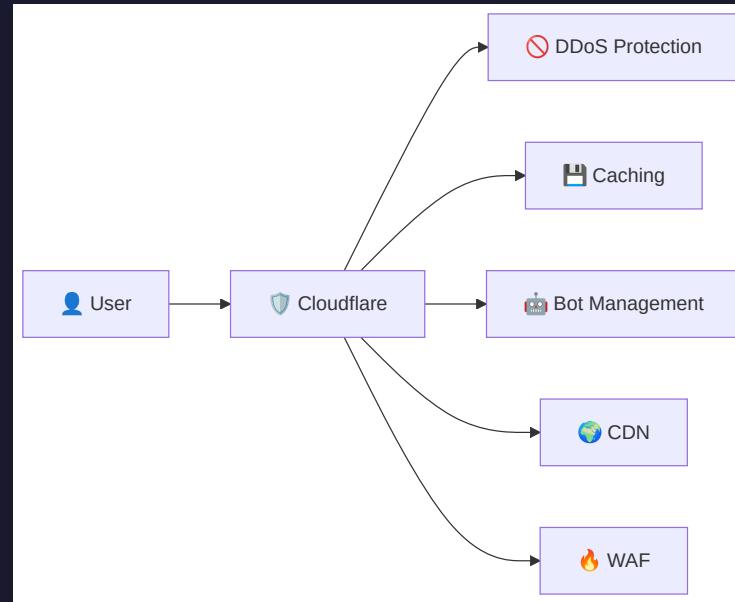


# Agenda

1.  **Why is Cloudflare important?**
2.  **What happened?** - Outage Timeline
3.  **Technical Analysis** - ClickHouse, Rust, unwrap()
4.  **Confusing Factors** - Why they thought it was a DDoS attack
5.  **Conclusions and Remedial Actions**
6.  **Comment** - What do we learn from this?

# 🌐 What is Cloudflare?

Middleware between the client and your application





# Cloudflare Scale

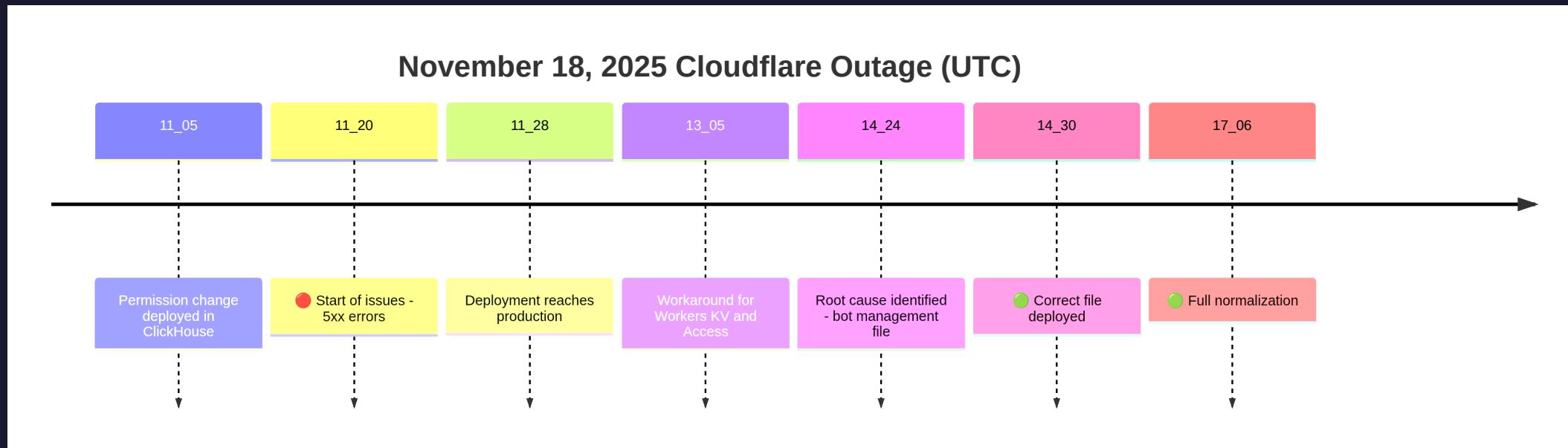
~16% of all internet traffic A small green globe icon.

| Every sixth request on the internet goes through Cloudflare

## Known users:

Category	Companies
Technology	Mozilla, Microsoft Azure, Office 365, IBM
E-commerce	Nike, H&M, Shopify
Social	Reddit, Twitter

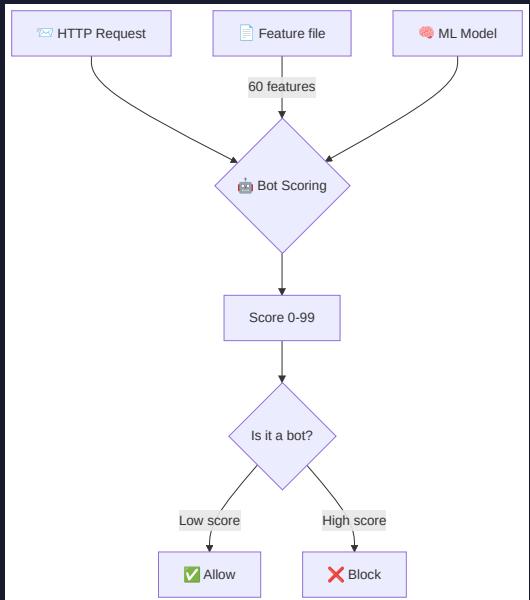
# ⌚ Outage Timeline





# Bot Management - Source of the Problem

How does bot scoring work?

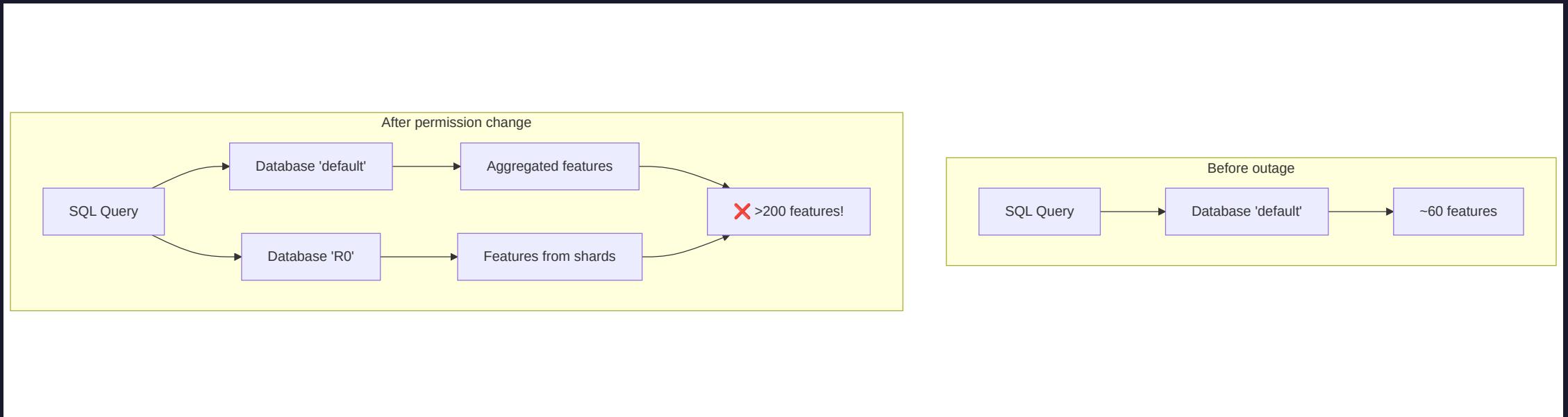


**Bot Score:** 0-99 (higher = greater bot probability)



# ClickHouse Architecture

## Databases and shards



# 🔍 Query without database discriminator

```
SELECT
    name,
    type
FROM system.columns
WHERE
    table = 'http_requests_features'
ORDER BY name;
```

## ⚠ Problem:

- No `WHERE database = 'default'`
- After permission change → both databases visible
- **60 features × 2 = 120+ features**



# Rust and fatal `unwrap()`

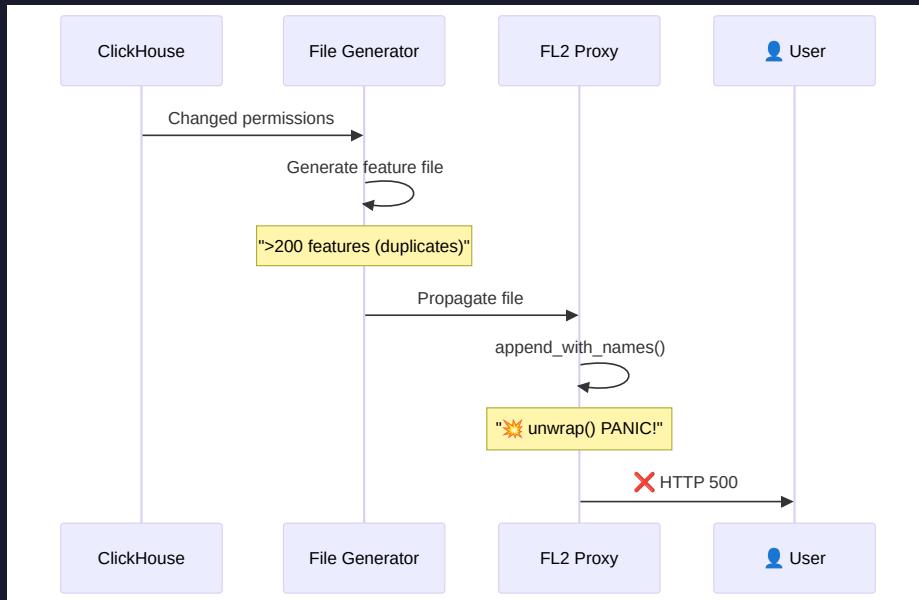
```
// Simplified code that caused panic
fn load_features(config: &Config) -> Features {
    let features = append_with_names(&config)
        .unwrap(); // ⚡ BOOM!

    features
}
```

## Memory preallocation problem:

- **Limit:** 200 features (safety buffer)
- **Expected:** ~60 features
- **Received:** >200 features (duplicates)
- **Result:** `Result::unwrap()` on `Err` → **PANIC** 💀

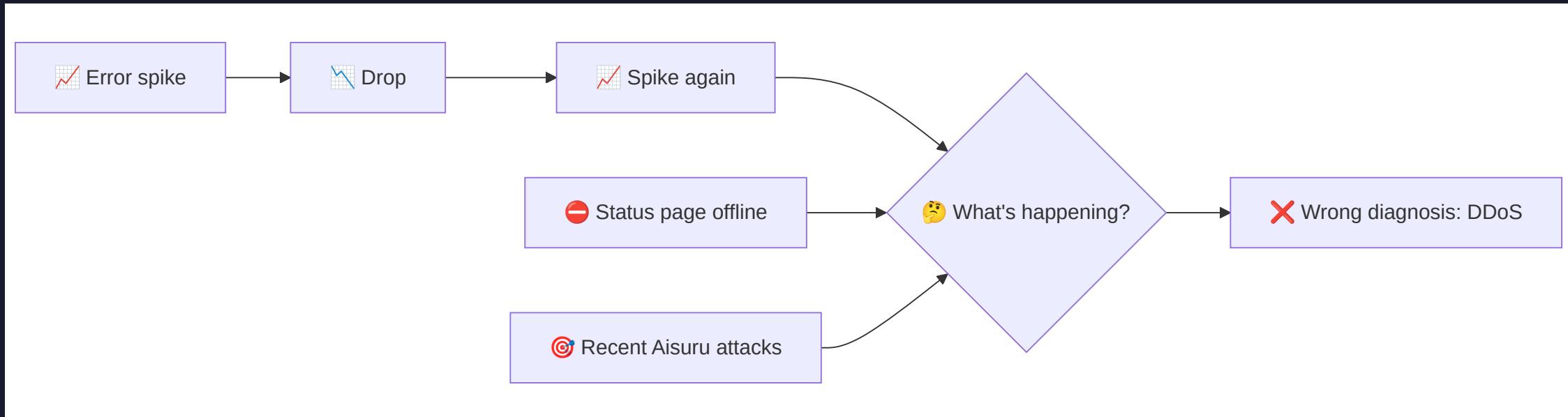
# 💥 Outage Mechanism





# Confusing Factors

Why did they think it was a DDoS attack?



Unusual behavior:

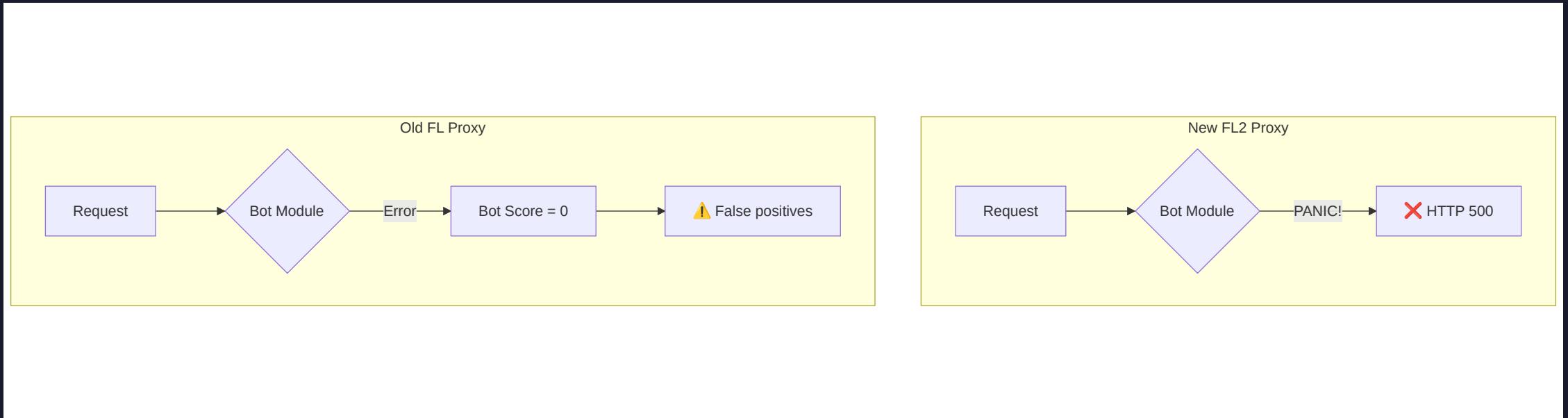
- Fluctuations: old nodes had correct cache
- Status page (independent infra) also offline → **coincidence!**



# Impact on Services

Service	Impact
CDN / Security	HTTP 5xx for all clients
Turnstile	Complete failure
Workers KV	Increased error rate
Dashboard	Unable to log in
Access	Authentication errors
Email Security	Reduced spam detection

# 🔧 FL vs FL2 - Different Impact



**FL2:** Hard 500 errors

**FL:** Everything = "not-bot" → blocking rule issues



# Cloudflare Remedial Actions

Official list:

1. **Hardening** of internal configuration (like user data)
2. **Kill-switches** - global function switches
3. **Core dumps** - cannot overload the system
4. **Review failure modes** of all proxy modules

*"Today's outage was the most serious incident since 2019"*

— Matthew Prince, CEO



# Our Technical Conclusions

What could have been done better?

```
let features = append_with_names(&config).unwrap_or_default();
if features.len() > 200 {
    log::warn!("Retrieved {} features, exceeded limit 200.", features.len());
    features.truncate(200);
}
// ✓ Continue with features
```

Instead of:

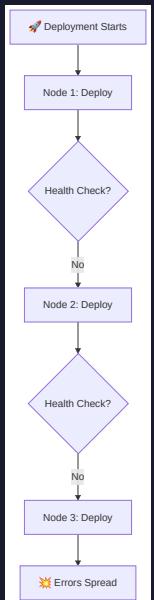
```
.unwrap() // ✗ PANIC!
```

Should be:

```
.unwrap_or_else(|e| { log::error!("{}", e); defaults() })
```

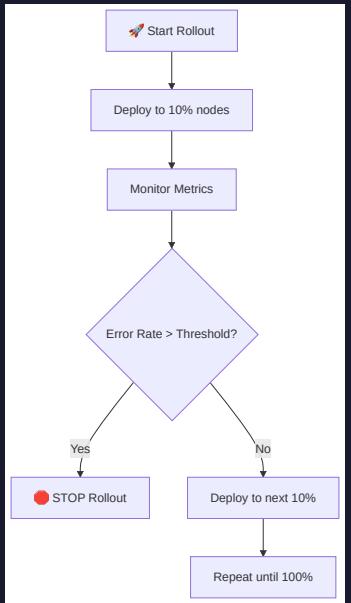
## Preventing Deployment Spread: Circuit Breakers and Rollout Strategies

### Why did the update keep spreading?



**Automated rollouts without real-time monitoring → Errors propagate unchecked**

# Circuit Breaker Pattern for Deployments



Stop propagation if errors exceed safe limits

## Different Strategies for Different Changes

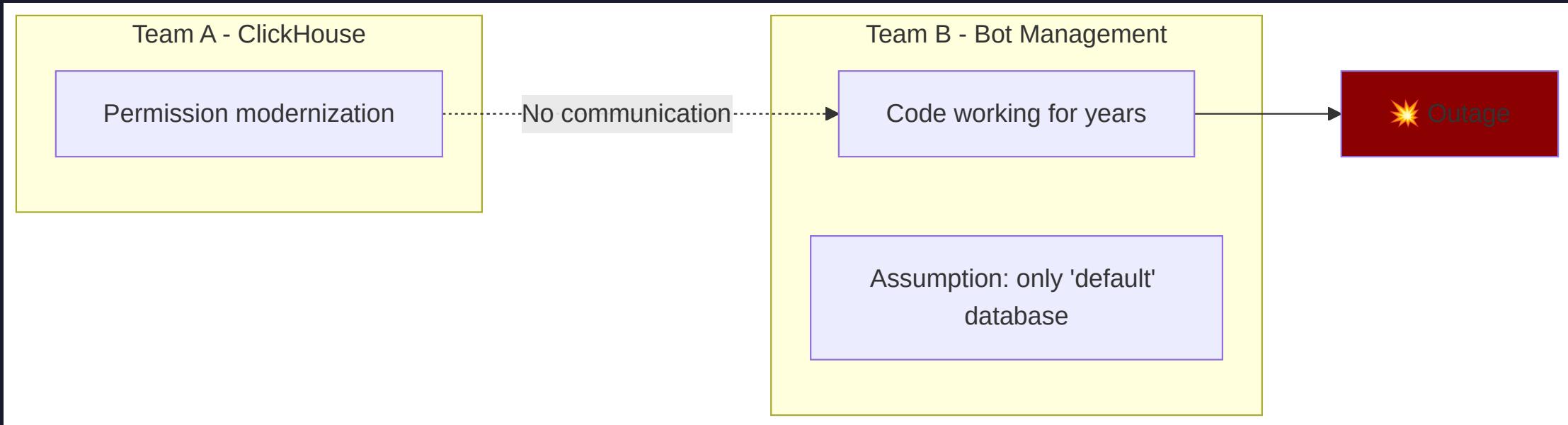
Change Type	Strategy	Speed vs Safety
 Security Patches	Fast rollout	 Speed (counter attacks)
 Infrastructure Changes	Canary / Blue-Green	 Safety (rollback ready)

Balance speed for security with caution for infra





# Organizational Problem



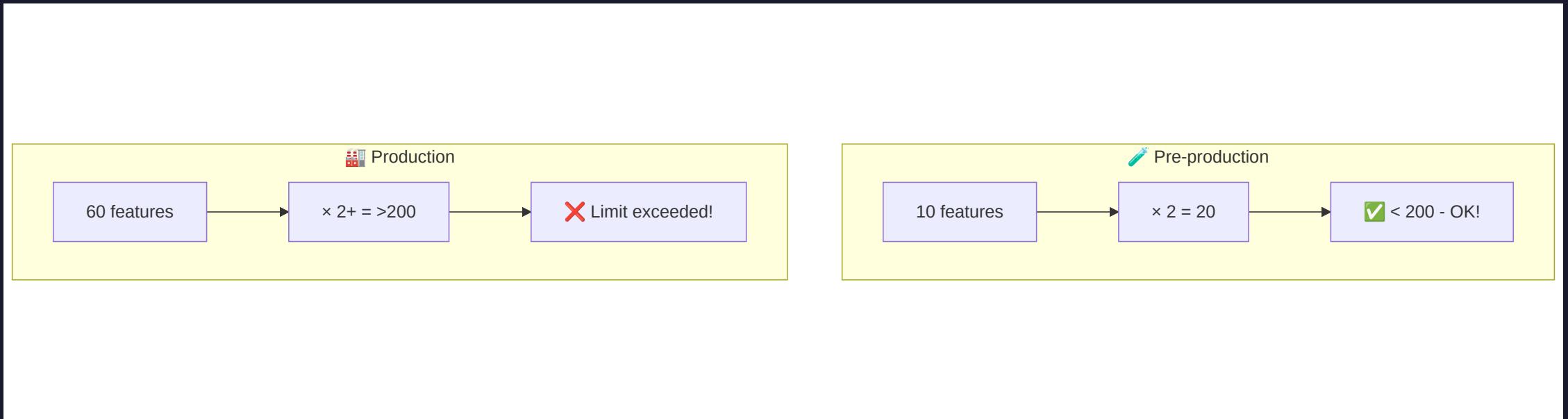
🎯 Key problem:

**Change in one place → explosion in another**



# What about the test environment?

Possible explanation:



**Production scale ≠ Test scale**

# Key Lessons

## 1 Defensive Programming

| Never trust that inputs will be correct

## 2 Graceful Degradation

| System should work limited, not crash

## 3 Inter-team Communication

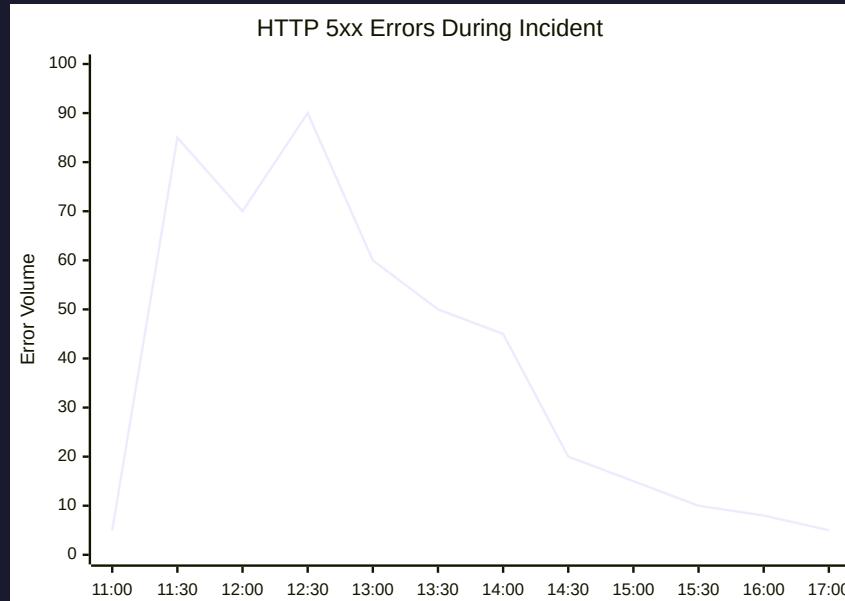
| Changes in one system can affect others

## 4 Production-scale Testing

| Pre-prod must reflect reality



# Outage Visualization



**Fluctuations** = different nodes with different feature file versions



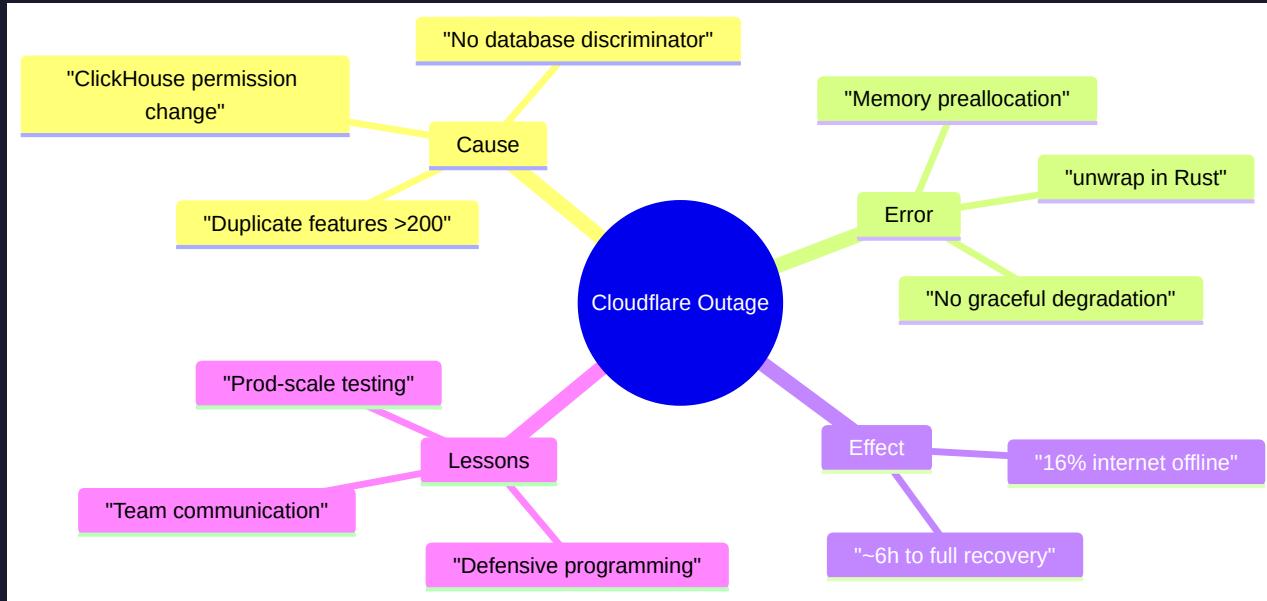
# For Discussion

Questions for the team:

1. 🔎 **Do we have similar "hidden dependencies" in our systems?**
2. 🦀 **How do we handle errors** in critical code paths?
3. 📊 **Do our test environments** reflect production scale?
4. 🚙 **How quickly will we detect** an outage before users?
5. 📝 **Do we do post-mortems** and are they public?



# Summary





# Sources

**Official Post-Mortem:**

🔗 [blog.cloudflare.com/18-november-2025-outage](https://blog.cloudflare.com/18-november-2025-outage)

**Video:**

🎬 [IT News #25 - DevMentors](#)



# Thank You!

Questions?



🛡️ Post-Mortem 18.11.2025 🛡️

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