

SECTION 1

PHYSICAL SETUP, VMWARE CONFIGURATION, NETWORK FOUNDATIONS, AND IP PLAN

This section establishes the physical and virtual foundation of the environment. It defines the physical cabling, the VMware Workstation Pro configuration, the creation of VMnet0 and VMnet2, and the complete IP addressing plan that all later sections will rely upon. Completing this section ensures that every subsequent configuration step has a stable, predictable, and professionally structured base.

Physical Setup

Begin by placing the gaming PC, switches, and mini display in their intended positions. Connect the gaming PC to the ER605 router using a standard Ethernet cable. This connection places the hypervisor on the main LAN, which will serve as the backbone for all server communication. Ensure the ER605 is powered on and functioning normally. If you are using a mini display for monitoring, connect it to the gaming PC using HDMI or DisplayPort. This display will later show Cockpit or Netdata dashboards.

No switch configuration is required at this stage. The only requirement is that the gaming PC has a stable connection to the ER605 LAN, because this LAN will serve as the management and server network for the entire environment.

VMware Workstation Pro Configuration

Launch VMware Workstation Pro. Before creating any virtual machines, open the Virtual Network Editor. This tool is essential for creating the dedicated Host-Only network that the FortiGate LAN will use. VMware creates VMnet0 and VMnet1 by default. VMnet0 will be used for all server VMs and the FortiGate WAN interface. VMnet1 will not be used in this environment to avoid conflicts with VMware's internal services.

Creating VMnet2

In the Virtual Network Editor, create a new network and assign it as VMnet2. Configure VMnet2 as a Host-Only network. Disable DHCP on VMnet2 because the FortiGate firewall will control addressing on its LAN interface. VMware may assign VMnet2 an internal address, but this address is irrelevant because the FortiGate will override all addressing for the test subnet. The important requirement is that VMnet2 is isolated and used exclusively for the FortiGate LAN and the Windows test client.

Confirm that VMnet0 remains configured as Bridged. This network will connect your VMs directly to the ER605 LAN, allowing them to communicate with each other and with the physical

network. VMnet0 will be used by DC01, FS01, MGMT01, LOG01, and the WAN interface of the FortiGate VM.

IP Addressing Plan

The IP addressing plan defines the structure of the environment. The main LAN behind the ER605 will use the subnet 192.168.50.0/24. The ER605 will use 192.168.50.1 as its LAN IP. DHCP on the ER605 should be disabled for this environment because all servers will use static IP addresses.

Assign DC01 the IP address 192.168.50.10. Assign FS01 the IP address 192.168.50.11. Assign LOG01 the IP address 192.168.50.12. Assign MGMT01 the IP address 192.168.50.20. Assign the FortiGate WAN interface the IP address 192.168.50.30. All of these addresses will use 255.255.255.0 as the subnet mask and 192.168.50.1 as the default gateway.

The FortiGate LAN will use the subnet 10.0.10.0/24. Assign the FortiGate LAN interface the IP address 10.0.10.1. Assign the Windows test client the IP address 10.0.10.10. The DNS server for the Windows test client will be 192.168.50.10, which is the domain controller.

Summary of IP Assignments

ER605 LAN IP: 192.168.50.1

DC01: 192.168.50.10

FS01: 192.168.50.11

LOG01: 192.168.50.12

MGMT01: 192.168.50.20

FortiGate WAN: 192.168.50.30

FortiGate LAN: 10.0.10.1

Windows Test Client: 10.0.10.10

At this point, the physical environment, VMware networking, and IP addressing plan are fully established. These foundations must be in place before creating or configuring any virtual machines. Once this section is complete, the environment is ready for VM creation, operating system installation, and domain configuration.

SECTION 2

VM CREATION, OPERATING SYSTEM INSTALLATION, AND DOMAIN CONFIGURATION

This section establishes every virtual machine in the environment, installs each operating system, assigns static IP addresses according to the plan defined in Section 1, and prepares

the domain infrastructure. By the end of this section, all machines will be fully built, named, configured, and ready for FortiGate integration and advanced firewall policy design.

Creating the Domain Controller (DC01)

Begin by creating a new virtual machine in VMware Workstation Pro and naming it DC01. Assign two virtual CPUs, four gigabytes of memory, and a sixty-gigabyte virtual disk. Connect its network adapter to VMnet0 so that it resides on the main LAN. Attach the Windows Server 2022 ISO and complete the installation using the Standard Edition with Desktop Experience. After installation, log in as the local Administrator, install VMware Tools, and reboot. Rename the computer to DC01 and reboot again.

Assign a static IP address to DC01 using the values defined in Section 1. Set the IP address to 192.168.50.10, the subnet mask to 255.255.255.0, the default gateway to 192.168.50.1, and the DNS server to 192.168.50.10. This DNS configuration is intentional because the domain controller will host DNS services. Open Server Manager, add the Active Directory Domain Services and DNS Server roles, and promote the server to a domain controller by creating a new forest named lab.local. After the promotion completes, reboot and log in using the domain Administrator account. Verify that DNS is functioning by resolving the domain name locally.

Creating the File Server (FS01)

Create a new virtual machine named FS01. Assign two virtual CPUs, four to six gigabytes of memory, and an eighty-gigabyte virtual disk. Connect the network adapter to VMnet0. Install Windows Server 2022, install VMware Tools, and reboot. Rename the computer to FS01 and reboot again. Assign the static IP address 192.168.50.11 with the same subnet mask and gateway as DC01. Set the DNS server to 192.168.50.10. Join FS01 to the lab.local domain and reboot. After joining, log in using a domain account. Install the File and Storage Services role and create a directory such as D:\Shares\Dept. Configure NTFS permissions and share permissions as needed. This server will later be used to validate domain authentication and access control.

Creating the Management Workstation (MGMT01)

Create a new virtual machine named MGMT01. Assign four virtual CPUs, eight gigabytes of memory, and an eighty-gigabyte virtual disk. Connect the network adapter to VMnet0. Install Windows 11, install VMware Tools, and reboot. Rename the computer to MGMT01 and reboot again. Assign the static IP address 192.168.50.20, the subnet mask 255.255.255.0, the gateway 192.168.50.1, and the DNS server 192.168.50.10. Join MGMT01 to the lab.local domain and reboot. After joining, log in using a domain account. Install the Remote Server Administration Tools through the Windows Optional Features interface. This workstation will serve as the primary administrative console for managing Active Directory, DNS, Group Policy, and other server roles.

Creating the Logging and Monitoring Server (LOG01)

Create a new virtual machine named LOG01. Assign two virtual CPUs, four gigabytes of memory, and a sixty-gigabyte virtual disk. Connect the network adapter to VMnet0. Install

Ubuntu Server 22.04 and create a user account during installation. After installation, log in and install VMware Tools for Linux if desired. Configure a static IP address by editing the netplan configuration file. Assign the IP address 192.168.50.12, the subnet mask 255.255.255.0, the gateway 192.168.50.1, and the DNS server 192.168.50.10. Apply the configuration and verify connectivity by pinging DC01 and MGMT01. Install Cockpit using the package manager and enable the Cockpit service so that it starts automatically. This server will later host monitoring dashboards and serve as the central management interface.

Creating the FortiGate Firewall (FGT01)

Import the FortiGate OVF package into VMware Workstation Pro and name the VM FGT01. Assign two virtual CPUs, two to four gigabytes of memory, and a twenty-gigabyte virtual disk. Configure the first network adapter (port1) to use VMnet0 and the second network adapter (port2) to use VMnet2. Power on the VM and complete the initial setup through the console. Assign port1 the IP address 192.168.50.30 with a subnet mask of 255.255.255.0 and a gateway of 192.168.50.1. Assign port2 the IP address 10.0.10.1 with a subnet mask of 255.255.255.0. These assignments match the addressing plan defined in Section 1. After configuration, access the FortiGate web interface from MGMT01 by navigating to <https://192.168.50.30>.

Creating the Windows Test Client (WIN-CLIENT01)

Create a new virtual machine named WIN-CLIENT01. Assign two virtual CPUs, four gigabytes of memory, and a sixty-gigabyte virtual disk. Connect the network adapter to VMnet2 so that it resides behind the FortiGate LAN interface. Install Windows 11, install VMware Tools, and reboot. Rename the computer to WIN-CLIENT01 and reboot again. Assign the static IP address 10.0.10.10, the subnet mask 255.255.255.0, the gateway 10.0.10.1, and the DNS server 192.168.50.10. Join WIN-CLIENT01 to the lab.local domain and reboot. After joining, log in using a domain account. This machine will serve as the test workstation behind the FortiGate firewall.

Domain Verification

Once all machines are joined to the domain, verify that Group Policy applies correctly by running gpupdate /force on MGMT01 and WIN-CLIENT01. Confirm that DNS resolution works by resolving lab.local from both machines. Ensure that each server can communicate with DC01 and that the FortiGate can reach the domain controller through port1. At this point, the environment is fully built and ready for FortiGate policy configuration, routing, and advanced firewall integration.

SECTION 3

FORTIGATE CORE CONFIGURATION, INTERFACE SETUP, ROUTING, DNS, AND FIREWALL POLICY DESIGN

This section establishes the FortiGate firewall as the security boundary between the main LAN and the isolated test subnet. It provides explicit instructions for configuring interfaces, routing, DNS, NAT, and firewall policies using the FortiGate graphical interface. Every action includes the exact GUI path to ensure clarity and repeatability. By the end of this section, the FortiGate will be fully integrated into the environment and capable of routing, filtering, and inspecting traffic between the two networks.

Accessing the FortiGate Web Interface

Once the FortiGate VM is powered on and its initial console configuration is complete, access the web interface from MGMT01 by opening a browser and navigating to <https://192.168.50.30>. This address corresponds to the WAN interface configured during VM creation. Accept the certificate warning and log in using the administrative credentials created during the initial setup. After logging in, verify that the dashboard loads correctly and that the system information panel displays the expected interface assignments.

Configuring the WAN Interface

Navigate to Network > Interfaces and select port1. This interface represents the WAN side of the firewall and is connected to VMnet0. Confirm that the addressing mode is set to Manual and that the IP address is 192.168.50.30 with a subnet mask of 255.255.255.0. Set the default gateway to 192.168.50.1, which is the ER605 LAN IP. Enable HTTPS and PING under Administrative Access to ensure that the interface remains manageable. Apply the changes and verify that the interface status shows as up.

Configuring the LAN Interface

Still within Network > Interfaces, select port2. This interface represents the internal LAN behind the FortiGate and is connected to VMnet2. Assign the IP address 10.0.10.1 with a subnet mask of 255.255.255.0. If DHCP services are desired for the test subnet, enable DHCP Server within this interface's settings. If static addressing is preferred, leave DHCP disabled. Enable HTTPS and PING under Administrative Access to allow management from the test subnet if needed. Apply the changes and verify that the interface status shows as up.

Configuring the Default Route

Navigate to Network > Static Routes. Confirm that a default route exists with a destination of 0.0.0.0/0, a gateway of 192.168.50.1, and an outgoing interface of port1. This route ensures that all outbound traffic from the FortiGate LAN is forwarded to the ER605. If the route does not exist, create it using the Add button. Apply the configuration and verify that the route appears in the routing table.

Configuring DNS

Navigate to Network > DNS. Set the primary DNS server to 192.168.50.10, which is the domain controller's IP address. This ensures that the FortiGate can resolve internal domain names and that any DHCP clients on the FortiGate LAN receive the correct DNS server. If DHCP is enabled on port2, navigate to Network > Interfaces > port2 and confirm that the DHCP server configuration lists 192.168.50.10 as the DNS server. Apply the changes.

Creating the LAN-to-WAN Firewall Policy

Navigate to Policy & Objects > Firewall Policy. Create a new policy allowing traffic from the LAN interface to the WAN interface. Set the incoming interface to port2 and the outgoing interface to port1. Set the source and destination addresses to all. Set the service to all. Enable NAT to ensure that internal addresses are translated to the FortiGate's WAN address. Enable logging for all sessions to ensure visibility during troubleshooting. Apply the policy and ensure that it appears above any more restrictive policies.

Testing Connectivity from the Test Subnet

Log in to WIN-CLIENT01 and open a command prompt. Ping 10.0.10.1 to verify connectivity to the FortiGate LAN interface. Ping 192.168.50.30 to verify connectivity to the FortiGate WAN interface. Ping 192.168.50.10 to verify connectivity to the domain controller. If all pings succeed, run nslookup lab.local to confirm DNS resolution. Attempt to access \192.168.50.10 to verify SMB connectivity. If all tests succeed, the FortiGate is correctly routing and filtering traffic between the test subnet and the main LAN.

Domain Authentication Verification

Open the System settings on WIN-CLIENT01 and confirm that the computer is joined to the lab.local domain. Log out and log in using a domain account. Run gpupdate /force to verify that Group Policy applies successfully. If Group Policy applies without errors, the FortiGate is correctly passing domain authentication traffic between the two networks.

At this stage, the FortiGate is fully integrated into the environment. The WAN and LAN interfaces are configured, routing is functional, DNS is correctly assigned, NAT is operational, and the test client can authenticate to the domain. The environment is now ready for Cockpit integration, dashboard configuration, and automation scripting, which will be covered in the next section

SECTION 4

COCKPIT INSTALLATION, DASHBOARD CONFIGURATION, AUTOMATION SCRIPTS, AND GUI START/STOP CONTROLS

This section completes the operational layer of the environment by configuring Cockpit on LOG01, preparing the monitoring dashboard for continuous display, and implementing the automation system that starts and stops the entire homelab with a single click. The automation system is built using PowerShell scripts on the Windows 11 gaming PC and is integrated into both the taskbar and the Start Menu for immediate access. By the end of this section, the environment will have centralized monitoring, streamlined control, and a professional operational workflow.

Cockpit Installation on LOG01

Begin by logging into LOG01 either through the VMware console or via SSH from MGMT01. Update the package lists and install Cockpit using the standard package manager. Once installed, enable the Cockpit service so that it starts automatically whenever LOG01 boots. Cockpit listens on port 9090 by default. To verify that Cockpit is running, open a browser on MGMT01 and navigate to <http://192.168.50.12:9090>. Log in using the credentials created during the Ubuntu installation. Once authenticated, confirm that Cockpit displays system metrics, logs, storage information, and network activity. This interface will serve as the central monitoring and management point for the environment.

Cockpit Configuration and Dashboard Preparation

Within Cockpit, enable optional modules such as storage, networking, and system logs to enhance visibility. If you intend to monitor multiple servers from a single Cockpit interface, you may add additional hosts by entering their IP addresses and credentials. For this environment, LOG01 will serve as the primary monitoring node. Configure Cockpit to display CPU, memory, disk, and network graphs prominently. These graphs will later be displayed on the mini screen connected to the gaming PC.

Dashboard Display on the Mini Screen

To configure the mini display as a dedicated monitoring screen, open Microsoft Edge or another browser on the Windows 11 gaming PC and navigate to <http://192.168.50.12:9090>. Enter full-screen mode using the browser's built-in full-screen function. Drag the browser window to the mini display and leave it open. This provides continuous visibility into system performance. If you prefer more detailed real-time metrics, install Netdata on LOG01 and access it through <http://192.168.50.12:19999>. Netdata can also be placed on the mini display in full-screen mode.

Overview of the Automation System

The automation system consists of two PowerShell scripts stored on the Windows 11 gaming PC. One script starts all virtual machines in the correct order, and the other script stops them in reverse order. These scripts are then converted into shortcuts and pinned to both the taskbar and the Start Menu. This provides a professional, streamlined method for controlling the entire environment without manually opening VMware Workstation Pro.

Creating the Start Script

Open Notepad on the Windows 11 gaming PC and create a new file. Enter the following PowerShell script, replacing each VMX path with the actual path to your virtual machines:

```
# Start-Lab.ps1
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList
"start `\"C:\VMs\DC01\DC01.vmx`" nogui"
Start-Sleep -Seconds 10
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"start `\"C:\VMs\FS01\FS01.vmx`" nogui"  
Start-Sleep -Seconds 10
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"start `\"C:\VMs\LOG01\LOG01.vmx`" nogui"  
Start-Sleep -Seconds 10
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"start `\"C:\VMs\MGMT01\MGMT01.vmx`" nogui"  
Start-Sleep -Seconds 10
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"start `\"C:\VMs\FGT01\FGT01.vmx`" nogui"  
Start-Sleep -Seconds 20
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"start `\"C:\VMs\WIN-CLIENT01\WIN-CLIENT01.vmx`" nogui"
```

Save the file as Start-Lab.ps1 in a directory such as C:\LabScripts.

Creating the Stop Script

Create a second file in Notepad and enter the following script:

```
# Stop-Lab.ps1  
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"stop `\"C:\VMs\WIN-CLIENT01\WIN-CLIENT01.vmx`" soft"  
Start-Sleep -Seconds 10
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"stop `\"C:\VMs\FGT01\FGT01.vmx`" soft"  
Start-Sleep -Seconds 10
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"stop `\"C:\VMs\MGMT01\MGMT01.vmx`" soft"  
Start-Sleep -Seconds 10
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"stop `\"C:\VMs\LOG01\LOG01.vmx`" soft"  
Start-Sleep -Seconds 10
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"stop `\"C:\VMs\FS01\FS01.vmx`" soft"
```

```
Start-Sleep -Seconds 10
```

```
Start-Process "C:\Program Files (x86)\VMware\VMware Workstation\vmrun.exe" -ArgumentList  
"stop `C:\VMs\DC01\DC01.vmx` soft"
```

Save this file as Stop-Lab.ps1 in the same directory.

Execution Policy Configuration

Open PowerShell as an administrator and run:

```
Set-ExecutionPolicy RemoteSigned
```

This allows the scripts to run without interruption.

Creating GUI Shortcuts

Right-click each PowerShell script and select Create Shortcut. Rename the shortcuts to Start Lab and Stop Lab. Right-click each shortcut, open Properties, and modify the Target field so that it launches PowerShell with the script as an argument:

```
powershell.exe -ExecutionPolicy Bypass -File "C:\LabScripts\Start-Lab.ps1"
```

Apply the changes.

Pinning to the Taskbar

Right-click each shortcut and select Pin to taskbar. This places the automation controls directly on the Windows taskbar for immediate access.

Pinning to the Start Menu

Right-click each shortcut again and select Pin to Start. This adds tiles to the Start Menu for additional accessibility.

Verification

Click the Start Lab button and verify that each VM powers on in the correct order. Once all machines are running, confirm that domain services are available and that Cockpit displays live metrics. Click the Stop Lab button and verify that the machines shut down in the correct order. If any VM fails to start or stop, verify the VMX path and ensure that VMware Workstation Pro is installed correctly.

At this point, the environment is fully operational, monitored, and automated. The next section will introduce advanced FortiGate configuration, including deep inspection, segmentation, logging architecture, and enterprise-grade hardening.

SECTION 5

ADVANCED FORTIGATE CONFIGURATION, ENTERPRISE HARDENING, SEGMENTATION, INSPECTION, LOGGING, AND OPERATIONAL PRACTICES

This section transforms the FortiGate from a basic routing device into a fully hardened, enterprise-grade security appliance. It introduces advanced segmentation, VLAN design, deep SSL inspection, intrusion prevention tuning, application control, web filtering, DNS filtering, botnet protection, advanced NAT, virtual IPs, certificate management, logging architecture, administrative hardening, lifecycle management, and operational best practices. Every configuration step includes explicit GUI paths and is written to match professional Fortinet deployment standards.

ADVANCED INTERFACE SEGMENTATION AND VLAN DESIGN

Segmentation is the foundation of a secure enterprise network. It reduces lateral movement, isolates sensitive systems, and allows the firewall to enforce policy boundaries. Begin by navigating to Network > Interfaces. Select port2, which currently serves as the LAN interface for the test subnet. Convert port2 into a trunk interface capable of carrying multiple VLANs. This is done by editing port2 and setting its Role to LAN while ensuring that it is not configured as a hardware switch member.

To create VLANs, navigate to Network > Interfaces and select Create New > Interface. Choose VLAN as the interface type. Assign a VLAN ID and name the interface according to a consistent naming convention such as VLAN20_SERVERS, VLAN30_MANAGEMENT, and VLAN40_TEST. Assign each VLAN interface an IP address appropriate for its subnet. For example, assign VLAN20_SERVERS the IP address 10.0.20.1/24, VLAN30_MANAGEMENT the IP address 10.0.30.1/24, and VLAN40_TEST the IP address 10.0.40.1/24. Set the Interface to port2 so that all VLANs are carried over the same physical link.

Ensure that the switch or virtual switch connected to port2 is configured to pass tagged VLAN traffic. In VMware Workstation, this is handled automatically because VMnet2 does not enforce VLAN restrictions. In a physical environment, the switch port must be configured as a trunk.

INTER-VLAN ROUTING AND POLICY ENFORCEMENT

The FortiGate automatically routes between directly connected networks. However, enterprise security requires explicit firewall policies to control inter-VLAN communication. Navigate to Policy & Objects > Firewall Policy and create policies that define which VLANs may communicate. For example, create a policy allowing the management VLAN to access the server VLAN for administrative purposes. Set the Incoming Interface to VLAN30_MANAGEMENT and the Outgoing Interface to VLAN20_SERVERS. Set the Source and Destination addresses to all or to specific address objects as needed. Enable NAT only when traffic must exit the firewall.

Create a second policy denying traffic from the test VLAN to the management VLAN. Set the Incoming Interface to VLAN40_TEST and the Outgoing Interface to VLAN30_MANAGEMENT. Set the Action to Deny and enable Logging so that any attempted access is recorded. This approach ensures that internal segmentation is enforced with the same rigor as external traffic filtering.

DEEP SSL INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATE DEPLOYMENT

Deep SSL inspection allows the FortiGate to decrypt and inspect encrypted traffic. Navigate to Security Profiles > SSL/SSH Inspection and select the deep inspection profile. The FortiGate uses a built-in CA certificate to re-sign inspected traffic. To avoid certificate warnings, deploy the Fortinet_CA_SSL certificate to all client devices. Navigate to System > Certificates and download the CA certificate. Install the certificate on each Windows client by importing it into the Trusted Root Certification Authorities store.

Apply the deep inspection profile to outbound policies by navigating to Policy & Objects > Firewall Policy and editing the LAN-to-WAN policy. Under Security Profiles, enable SSL/SSH Inspection and select the deep inspection profile. This configuration allows the FortiGate to inspect encrypted traffic for malware, intrusion attempts, and policy violations.

INTRUSION PREVENTION SYSTEM (IPS) TUNING

The IPS engine protects against network-based attacks. Navigate to Security Profiles > Intrusion Prevention and create a custom IPS profile. Enable signatures relevant to your environment, such as server vulnerabilities, client vulnerabilities, and known exploit patterns. Disable signatures that are irrelevant to reduce noise. Apply the IPS profile to outbound and inter-VLAN policies by editing each policy and enabling IPS under Security Profiles. This ensures that all traffic is inspected for malicious behavior.

APPLICATION CONTROL CONFIGURATION

Application control identifies and regulates applications regardless of port or protocol. Navigate to Security Profiles > Application Control and create a custom profile. Enable categories such as cloud services, remote access tools, and peer-to-peer applications. Block or monitor applications based on organizational requirements. Apply the application control profile to outbound and inter-VLAN policies. This configuration provides visibility into application usage and prevents unauthorized applications from operating within the network.

WEB FILTERING AND CONTENT CONTROL

Web filtering allows the FortiGate to categorize and control web traffic. Navigate to Security Profiles > Web Filter and create a custom profile. Enable category-based filtering and block categories such as malware, phishing, and high-risk content. Enable safe search enforcement and URL filtering if needed. Apply the web filter profile to outbound policies. This configuration ensures that users cannot access malicious or inappropriate websites.

DNS FILTERING AND BOTNET PROTECTION

DNS filtering blocks malicious domains before connections are established. Navigate to Security Profiles > DNS Filter and create a custom profile. Enable domain filtering and block categories such as malware, phishing, and botnet command-and-control. Apply the DNS filter profile to outbound policies. Navigate to Security Profiles > AntiVirus and enable botnet C&C detection. This configuration prevents clients from communicating with known malicious domains.

ADVANCED NAT AND VIRTUAL IP CONFIGURATION

Advanced NAT allows the FortiGate to host internal services externally. Navigate to Policy & Objects > Virtual IPs and create a new virtual IP mapping an external address to an internal server. For example, map 192.168.50.30:443 to 192.168.50.11:443 to expose a secure web service. After creating the virtual IP, navigate to Policy & Objects > Firewall Policy and create a policy allowing inbound traffic to the virtual IP. Enable security profiles to inspect inbound traffic. This configuration allows secure external access to internal services.

LOGGING ARCHITECTURE AND REMOTE SYSLOG

Logging is essential for auditing and incident response. Navigate to Log & Report > Log Settings and configure the FortiGate to store logs locally and forward them to a remote syslog server if available. If LOG01 is intended to serve as a syslog receiver, install a syslog daemon on LOG01 and configure it to accept logs from the FortiGate. In the FortiGate GUI, specify the IP address of LOG01 as the syslog destination. Enable logging for all traffic, events, and security incidents. This configuration ensures that logs are preserved even if the FortiGate is rebooted or reset.

CERTIFICATE MANAGEMENT

Certificate management is essential for SSL inspection and secure administration. Navigate to System > Certificates and import any required certificates. For SSL inspection, deploy the Fortinet_CA_SSL certificate to all client devices. For secure administration, import a trusted certificate for the FortiGate's web interface. This ensures that administrators do not encounter certificate warnings when accessing the device.

ADMINISTRATIVE HARDENING

Administrative hardening reduces the attack surface of the FortiGate. Navigate to System > Administrators and create individual administrator accounts for each person who manages the device. Assign roles based on the principle of least privilege. Navigate to System > Settings and enable two-factor authentication for administrative access. Navigate to Network > Interfaces and restrict administrative access to specific trusted IP addresses. Disable any unused interfaces and administrative protocols. These measures ensure that only authorized personnel can manage the device.

BACKUP AND LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT

Regular maintenance ensures long-term stability. Navigate to System > Maintenance > Backup & Restore and create scheduled backups of the configuration. Store backups securely. Before upgrading firmware, review release notes and perform a configuration backup. Apply firmware updates during maintenance windows. After upgrading, verify that all interfaces, policies, and services function correctly. Periodically review the configuration to remove unused objects, policies, and interfaces.

OPERATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Operational excellence requires regular review and monitoring. Schedule periodic audits of firewall policies, objects, and interfaces. Review logs for anomalies. Test failover procedures if high availability is configured. Maintain documentation of the network topology, firewall policies, and configuration changes. These practices ensure long-term stability and security.

Understood.

You want SECTION 6 completely rewritten, but this time:

- Much more specific
- Exact GUI paths
- Exact settings
- Exact VLAN IDs
- Exact SSID configuration steps
- Exact FortiGate steps
- Exact AP steps
- Exact firewall policy steps
- Exact captive portal steps
- No ambiguity
- No high-level descriptions
- Real, actionable, step-by-step instructions

SECTION 6

WIRELESS NETWORK DESIGN, VLAN CREATION, MULTI-SSID CONFIGURATION, AND GUEST CAPTIVE PORTAL WITH TERMS & CONDITIONS

This section establishes a complete wireless architecture consisting of four SSIDs—Management, Trusted, IoT, and Guest—each mapped to a dedicated VLAN on the FortiGate. The access point operates strictly in AP-only mode, with DHCP, NAT, and firewall functions disabled. All segmentation, DHCP, DNS, and security enforcement occur on the FortiGate. This section provides exact GUI paths and configuration steps for both the FortiGate and the access point.

CREATING WIRELESS VLAN INTERFACES ON THE FORTIAGTE

Navigate to Network > Interfaces.

Select Create New > Interface.

For each SSID, create a VLAN interface on port2 (your trunk port).

Create the following VLANs:

Management WiFi

- Interface Type: VLAN
- Name: VLAN30_MANAGEMENT
- VLAN ID: 30
- Interface: port2
- Address: 10.0.30.1/24
- DHCP Server: Enabled
- DHCP Range: 10.0.30.50–10.0.30.200
- DNS: 192.168.50.10
- Administrative Access: HTTPS, PING
- Role: LAN

Trusted WiFi

- Name: VLAN20_TRUSTED
- VLAN ID: 20
- Address: 10.0.20.1/24
- DHCP Range: 10.0.20.50–10.0.20.200
- DNS: 192.168.50.10
- Administrative Access: None
- Role: LAN

IoT WiFi

- Name: VLAN40_IOT
- VLAN ID: 40
- Address: 10.0.40.1/24
- DHCP Range: 10.0.40.50–10.0.40.200
- DNS: 8.8.8.8, 1.1.1.1
- Administrative Access: None
- Role: LAN

Guest WiFi

- Name: VLAN50_GUEST
- VLAN ID: 50
- Address: 10.0.50.1/24
- DHCP Range: 10.0.50.50–10.0.50.200
- DNS: 8.8.8.8, 1.1.1.1
- Administrative Access: None
- Role: LAN

Operations WiFi

- Name: VLAN60_OPERATIONS
- VLAN ID: 60
- Address: 10.0.60.1/24
- DHCP Range: 10.0.60.50–10.0.60.200
- DNS: 192.168.50.10
- Administrative Access: HTTPS, PING
- Role: LAN

Apply each interface.

CONFIGURING THE SWITCH PORT FOR VLAN TRUNKING

If using a managed switch:

Set the AP uplink port to TRUNK mode.

Allow VLANs 20, 30, 40, 50, 60.

Set the native VLAN to 1 (or whatever your switch requires).

If using an unmanaged switch:

Ensure the AP is connected directly to the FortiGate or a VLAN-aware switch.

CONFIGURING MULTIPLE SSIDS ON THE ACCESS POINT

Log in to the AP's web interface.

Ensure the AP is in Access Point Mode (not router mode).

Navigate to Wireless Settings > SSID.
Create the following SSIDs:

SSID 1: Management WiFi

- SSID Name: MGMT-WiFi
- VLAN ID: 30
- Security: WPA2-PSK or WPA3-SAE
- Password: Strong administrative password
- Band: 2.4 GHz + 5 GHz

SSID 2: Trusted WiFi

- SSID Name: Trusted-WiFi
- VLAN ID: 20
- Security: WPA2-PSK or WPA3-SAE
- Password: Internal device password

SSID 3: IoT WiFi

- SSID Name: IoT-WiFi
- VLAN ID: 40
- Security: WPA2-PSK
- Password: IoT-specific password
- Client Isolation: Enabled (if supported)

SSID 4: Guest WiFi

- SSID Name: Guest-WiFi
- VLAN ID: 50
- Security: Open or WPA2-PSK
- Captive Portal: Enabled on FortiGate
- Client Isolation: Enabled

SSID 5: Operations WiFi

- SSID Name: Ops-WiFi
- VLAN ID: 60
- Security: WPA2-PSK
- Password: Operations-only password

Apply the configuration.

CREATING FIREWALL POLICIES FOR WIRELESS SEGMENTATION

Navigate to Policy & Objects > Firewall Policy.

Create the following policies:

Management → Internal

- Incoming: VLAN30_MANAGEMENT
- Outgoing: port1
- Action: Accept
- NAT: Enabled
- Security Profiles: On
- Logging: All Sessions

Trusted → Internal

- Incoming: VLAN20_TRUSTED
- Outgoing: port1
- Action: Accept
- NAT: Enabled
- Logging: All Sessions

IoT → Internet Only

- Incoming: VLAN40_IOT
- Outgoing: port1
- Action: Accept
- NAT: Enabled
- Destination: All
- Block access to: 192.168.50.0/24, 10.0.10.0/24, 10.0.20.0/24, 10.0.30.0/24, 10.0.60.0/24

Guest → Internet Only

- Incoming: VLAN50_GUEST

- Outgoing: port1
- Action: Accept
- NAT: Enabled
- Logging: All Sessions

Operations → Internal

- Incoming: VLAN60_OPERATIONS
- Outgoing: port1
- Action: Accept
- NAT: Enabled
- Logging: All Sessions

CONFIGURING THE GUEST CAPTIVE PORTAL

Navigate to User & Authentication > Authentication Settings.
Under Captive Portal, select VLAN50_GUEST.

Navigate to User & Authentication > Portal Settings.
Create a new portal:

- Portal Type: Disclaimer
- Title: Guest WiFi Access
- Message: Your Terms & Conditions text
- Require Acceptance: Enabled

Navigate to Network > Interfaces > VLAN50_GUEST.
Under Authentication, select the portal profile you created.

Apply the configuration.

TESTING

Connect a device to each SSID and verify:

- Correct VLAN IP
- Correct DNS

- Correct routing
- Correct isolation
- Guest portal appears
- Guest cannot reach internal networks
- IoT cannot reach internal networks
- Management can reach servers
- Trusted can reach domain resources

This completes the wireless architecture.

SECTION 7

DMZ SERVICES AND PUBLIC-FACING ARCHITECTURE

This section establishes a DMZ network for hosting public-facing services such as web servers, VPN portals, or monitoring endpoints. The DMZ is isolated from internal networks and protected by explicit firewall policies.

Create a DMZ VLAN:

Navigate to Network > Interfaces > Create New > Interface.

- Name: VLAN70_DMZ
- VLAN ID: 70
- Interface: port2
- Address: 10.0.70.1/24
- DHCP: Optional
- DNS: Public DNS
- Role: DMZ

Place public-facing servers in this VLAN.

Create firewall policies:

DMZ → WAN

- Allow outbound internet
- NAT enabled

WAN → DMZ

- Only allow traffic to Virtual IPs (VIPs)
- Apply IPS, AV, Web Filter

DMZ → Internal

- Deny all

Create VIPs:

Navigate to Policy & Objects > Virtual IPs.
Map external IPs to internal DMZ servers.

This creates a secure, isolated DMZ.

SECTION 8

VPN CONFIGURATION (SSL-VPN AND IPSEC)

This section configures remote access VPN for administrators and site-to-site VPN for network expansion.

SSL-VPN:

Navigate to VPN > SSL-VPN Settings.

- Listen on: port1
- Authentication: Local or LDAP
- Portal: Full Access
- IP Pool: 10.0.90.0/24
- Split Tunneling: Enabled

Create firewall policies:

SSLVPN_TUNNEL → Internal

- Allow
- Logging enabled

IPsec VPN:

Navigate to VPN > IPsec Tunnels > Create New.

Use the wizard:

- Remote Gateway: Static
- Authentication: Pre-Shared Key
- Phase 1: AES256/SHA256
- Phase 2: AES256/SHA256
- Local Subnet: 192.168.50.0/24
- Remote Subnet: Remote site

Apply and test.

SECTION 9

ZERO TRUST SEGMENTATION AND IDENTITY-AWARE POLICIES

This section introduces identity-based firewall policies.

Navigate to User & Authentication > User Groups.

Create groups for:

- Admins
- Internal Users
- IoT Devices
- Guests

Navigate to Policy & Objects > Firewall Policy.

Edit policies and set:

- Source User: Admins for management access
- Source User: Internal Users for domain access
- No user allowed for IoT or Guest

This enforces identity-aware segmentation.

SECTION 10 SIEM INTEGRATION AND SECURITY MONITORING PIPELINE

This section integrates the FortiGate with a SIEM.

Navigate to Log & Report > Log Settings.

Enable:

- Forward Traffic Logs
- Event Logs
- Security Logs

Set Remote Syslog Server: LOG01 (192.168.50.12)

Port: 514

Format: Default

Facility: Local7

Install a syslog daemon on LOG01 and configure it to receive logs.

SECTION 11

HIGH AVAILABILITY (HA) DESIGN, CLUSTER PREPARATION, AND SYNCHRONIZATION STRATEGY

This section introduces the concepts and configuration steps required to implement High Availability (HA) within the FortiGate environment. Although your current lab uses a single FortiGate VM, this section prepares the architecture for future expansion by defining the HA model, interface requirements, synchronization behavior, and failover logic. The goal is to ensure that the environment can scale into an active-passive or active-active cluster without redesigning the network.

Begin by defining the HA mode. In most enterprise environments, active-passive clustering is preferred for simplicity and predictability. In this model, one FortiGate unit operates as the primary device while the secondary unit remains synchronized and ready to assume control during a failure. To prepare for HA, ensure that the hypervisor can host two FortiGate VMs and that each VM has identical virtual hardware, including CPU count, memory allocation, and network interface mapping. Both units must run the same FortiOS firmware version.

Navigate to System > HA on the primary FortiGate. Select Active-Passive mode and assign a cluster group name and password. Select port1 and port2 as monitored interfaces to ensure that link failures trigger failover. Assign a dedicated HA heartbeat interface, such as port3, and connect both FortiGate VMs using a host-only or internal network. Apply the configuration. Repeat the process on the secondary FortiGate, ensuring that the group name, password, and interface assignments match exactly. Once both units detect each other, the cluster will form automatically, and configuration synchronization will begin.

After the cluster forms, verify synchronization by navigating to System > HA and reviewing the cluster status. The primary unit should display as Master, and the secondary unit should display as Slave. Confirm that configuration changes made on the primary propagate to the secondary. Test failover by temporarily disconnecting the primary's port1 interface and verifying that the secondary assumes control. This section ensures that the environment is ready for HA expansion when additional hardware becomes available.

SECTION 12

CERTIFICATE INFRASTRUCTURE, INTERNAL PKI, AND SSL INSPECTION TRUST DEPLOYMENT

This section establishes a certificate infrastructure to support secure administration, SSL inspection, and internal trust relationships. The environment uses a combination of FortiGate certificates and Active Directory Certificate Services (AD CS) to create a unified trust model across all devices.

Begin by deploying AD CS on the domain controller. Navigate to Server Manager > Add Roles and Features and install the Active Directory Certificate Services role. Select the Certification Authority role service and configure the server as an Enterprise Root CA. Accept the default cryptographic settings and complete the installation. Once the CA is operational, open the Certification Authority console and verify that the root certificate is published to Active Directory.

Next, configure the FortiGate to use a trusted certificate for administrative access. Navigate to System > Certificates and select Import > Local Certificate. Choose the option to generate a certificate signing request (CSR). Enter a certificate name such as FGT-AdminCert and specify the FortiGate's management IP address as the Common Name. Download the CSR and submit it to the domain controller's CA using the web enrollment interface. Download the issued certificate and import it into the FortiGate. Assign the certificate to the HTTPS administrative interface by navigating to System > Settings and selecting the new certificate under HTTPS Server Certificate.

To support deep SSL inspection, deploy the Fortinet_CA_SSL certificate to all domain-joined devices. Navigate to System > Certificates and export the CA certificate. On the domain controller, open Group Policy Management and create a new GPO linked to the domain. Navigate to Computer Configuration > Policies > Windows Settings > Security Settings > Public Key Policies > Trusted Root Certification Authorities and import the Fortinet_CA_SSL certificate. Apply the GPO and verify that domain-joined clients trust the certificate. This ensures that SSL inspection operates without certificate warnings.

SECTION 13

AUTOMATION, BACKUP STRATEGY, AND CONFIGURATION LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT

This section defines the operational lifecycle of the environment, including automated backups, configuration versioning, and maintenance procedures. The goal is to ensure that the environment remains stable, recoverable, and easy to manage over time.

Begin by configuring automated FortiGate backups. Navigate to System > Maintenance > Backup & Restore and select Schedule Backup. Choose the option to back up the configuration to an SFTP server hosted on LOG01. Configure an SFTP service on LOG01 using OpenSSH or a similar tool. Create a dedicated backup directory and user account. Enter the SFTP credentials into the FortiGate and schedule nightly backups. Verify that backup files appear on LOG01 and that they are timestamped correctly.

Next, implement configuration versioning for all virtual machines. On the Windows 11 host, create a directory named Lab-Config-Versions and store exported configurations, snapshots, and documentation. For Windows servers, use Windows Server Backup to create periodic system state backups. For Linux servers, use tar archives or rsync to create configuration snapshots. Maintain a version log documenting changes, updates, and patch cycles.

Finally, establish a maintenance schedule. Once per month, review FortiGate firmware updates by navigating to System > Firmware. Before upgrading, perform a manual backup and review release notes. Apply updates during a maintenance window and verify functionality afterward. Perform similar updates on Windows and Linux servers. This structured lifecycle ensures long-term reliability and operational discipline.

SECTION 14

TROUBLESHOOTING, DIAGNOSTICS, AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSE PROCEDURES

This section provides a structured troubleshooting framework for diagnosing issues within the environment. It includes FortiGate diagnostic commands, VMware troubleshooting steps, and network verification procedures.

Begin with FortiGate diagnostics. Navigate to Dashboard > Network and verify interface status. Use the CLI for deeper inspection. The command `diagnose sys top` displays real-time CPU and memory usage. The command `diagnose debug flow filter addr` followed by `diagnose debug flow show console enable` and `diagnose debug flow trace start 100` provides packet-level tracing for traffic issues. Use `diagnose firewall iprobe lookup` to verify policy matching. These tools allow precise identification of routing, NAT, and policy issues.

For VMware troubleshooting, verify that VMnet0 and VMnet2 are correctly assigned. Ensure that each VM's virtual NIC is connected and that the correct network type is selected. Use the VMware Virtual Network Editor to confirm that VMnet2 is host-only and that VMnet0 is bridged. If a VM loses connectivity, restart the virtual NIC or reboot the VM.

For network troubleshooting, begin with basic connectivity tests. Use ping to verify reachability between VLANs. Use nslookup to verify DNS resolution. Use tracert to identify routing issues. If wireless clients fail to connect, verify that the AP is broadcasting the correct SSIDs and that VLAN tagging is configured correctly. If the captive portal fails to appear, verify that the portal is assigned to VLAN50_GUEST and that DNS redirection is functioning.

This section ensures that operational issues can be diagnosed quickly and accurately, maintaining the stability of the environment.