# **Generate alerts using Elastalert**

## Step-by-step guide

## Step 1:- Installation

Windows 10:-

- Setup Elasticsearch Instance --> I used version 6.8.2 the instance is hosted in https://www.elastic.co/cloud/
- Install Python 3.6 ----> Install python 3.6.x from https://www.python.org/downloads/windows/
- Install ---> Microsoft Visual Build Tools
- Download Elastalert ----> git clone https://github.com/Yelp/elastalert.git
- From the Elastalert folder --> pip install -r requirements.txt
- From the Elastalert folder --> python setup py install

For Linux:- https://elastalert.readthedocs.io/en/latest/running\_elastalert.html

Note:- We can also run Elastalert on a container

# Step 2:- Create Elastalert indexes in Elasticsearch to store alerts and errors

- From Elastalert Folder use this command to create required meta indexes --> elastalert-create-index
- This will create following indexes try list indexes from the cluster using https://host:port/\_cat/indices?v



# Step 3:- Configure The global Elastalert configuration

- · Rename the config.yaml.example file to config.yaml
- Provide the instance informations like host,port,ssl\_required,username,password,etc..



Step 4:- Dump some data to the Elasticsearch

- · Create a spring boot application from initializer
- You can connect with Elasticsearch either by using Spring data jest/Spring data Elasticsearch
  - Using Spring Data Jest use (Deprecated)
    - Spring boot version---> 2.1.11.RELEASE
    - Spring data Jest version ---> 3.2.2.RELEASE
    - Required properties:-

spring.data.elasticsearch.properties.path.logs=target/elasticsearch/log spring.data.elasticsearch.properties.path.data=target/elasticsearch/data

spring.data.elasticsearch.cluster-name=# clustername

spring.data.elasticsearch.cluster-nodes=#host:port

spring.data.jest.password=#password

spring.data.jest.username=#username

spring.data.jest.readTimeout=100000000

spring.data.jest.uri=#https://host:port

- Using Spring Data Elasticsearch
  - You can use the latest upgrade 4.0 with spring boot 2.3.0
  - Required properties:-

spring.data.elasticsearch.cluster-name=elasticsearch # Elasticsearch cluster name.

spring.data.elasticsearch.cluster-nodes= # Comma-separated list of cluster node addresses.

spring.data.elasticsearch.properties.\*= # Additional properties used to configure the client.

spring.data.elasticsearch.repositories.enabled=true # Whether to enable Elasticsearch repositories

Important Note: The data we dump into an index need a date field with ISO8601 or Unix timestamped format In spring boot we can acheive this by adding:

@Field(type = FieldType.Date, store = true, format = DateFormat.custom, pattern = "yyyy-MM-dd'T'HH:mm:ss.SSS'Z"")

@JsonFormat (shape = JsonFormat.Shape.STRING, pattern = "yyyy-MM-dd'T'HH:mm:ss.SSS'Z"")

Timestamp mapping should look like this in the index:-

private Date timestamp;

Example, Create an index with name Event and dump some data and read using https://host:port/event/\_search?q=\*

```
| Send | Save | Pretty | Raw | Preview | Visualize | JSON | Save | Pretty | Raw | Preview | Visualize | JSON | Save | Pretty | Raw | Preview | Visualize | JSON | Save | Pretty | Raw | Preview | Visualize | JSON | Save | Pretty | Raw | Preview | Visualize | JSON | Save | Pretty | Raw | Preview | Visualize | JSON | Save | Pretty | Raw | Preview | Pre
```

# **Step 5:- Create Alert Rules and configure Alert Types**

Create rules

There are different types of rules you can create like any,new\_term, blacklist, whitelist, frequency etc...,
Refer this for creating a rule --> https://elastalert.readthedocs.io/en/latest/running\_elastalert.html#creating-a-rule
Refer this for rules configurations and types --> https://elastalert.readthedocs.io/en/latest/ruletypes.html
Refer this to know available alerts that you can configure with the alert ---> https://elastalert.readthedocs.io/en/latest/ruletypes.html#alerts

Timestamp configuration

If the timestamp is not a @timestamp you need to explicitly say which field to use as timestamp, provide the below configurations to the rule YAML file:timestamp\_field: timestamp

timestamp\_type: custom

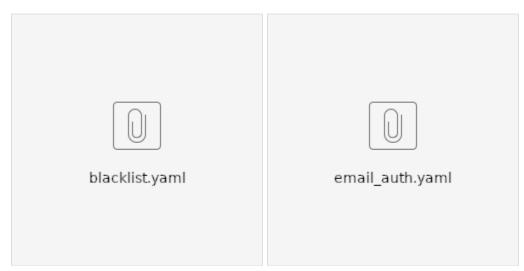
timestamp\_format: '%Y-%m-%dT%H:%M:%S.%fZ'

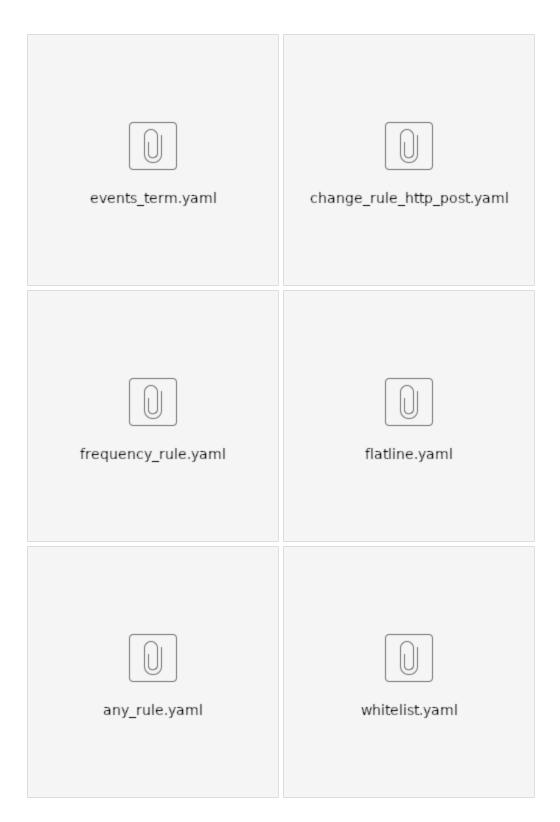
timestamp\_format\_expr: 'ts[:23] + ts[26:]

• Email SMTP Configuration for rules

```
alert:
- "email"
email:
- "xxx.s@xxx.com" (to list)
email_from_field: "alerts"
email_add_domain: "@ucc.com"
smtp_host: "smtp.gmail.com"
smtp_port: 465
smtp_ssl: true
smtp_auth_file: 'email_auth.yaml' (Authentication credentials file)
The email_auth.yaml should contain username and password in YAML format for example:-
user: xxxx@gmail.com
password: xxxxx
     • HTTP POST Alert Type
This will post the resultant alert as JSON, the required configurations are
alert: post
http_post_url: "http://localhost:8080/api/event"
In our server, we need to have a rest endpoint which accepts the JSON body
 @PostMapping("/event")
 public void alert(@RequestBody Event event) {
       log.debug("alert posted successfully with payload {}",event);
```

# **Example Rules**





# Step 7:- Testing the alert rule

Use this command:- elastalert-test-rule your\_rules/your\_rule.yaml
This is only for test purpose this will log the details to the console, this will not send actual alerts if we want to send the real alerts we can specify the --alert flag, below are output logs of some rule types

# **New Term (Email alert)**

• This rule matches when a new value appears in a field that has never been seen before. When ElastAlert starts, it will use an aggregation query to gather all known terms for a list of fields/query\_key

```
INFO:elastalert:Note: In debug mode, alerts will be logged to console but NOT actually sent.

To send them but remain verbose, use --verbose instead.

Didn't get any results.

INFO:elastalert:Found 3 unique values for eventType

INFO:elastalert:Note: In debug mode, alerts will be logged to console but NOT actually sent.

To send them but remain verbose, use --verbose instead.

1 rules loaded

INFO:apscheduler.scheduler:Adding job tentatively -- it will be properly scheduled when the scheduler starts
```

· Elastalert will poll the Elasticsearch according to the configured buffer\_time and print the matched document to the console

```
INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 09:56 India Standard Time to 2020-05-28 09:56 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 09:56 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 11:11 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 10:26 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 10:26 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 10:41 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 10:41 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 10:41 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 11:11 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 11:11 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 11:14 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 11:15 India Standard Time: 0 / 2020-05-28 11:11 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Queried rule New Term Event rule from 2020-05-28 11:11 India Standard Time: 0 / 2020-05-28 12:11 India Standard Time: 0 / 20
```

• At last, the server will write the results to the index for audit purpose

```
would have written the following documents to writeback index (default is elastalert_status):

silence - {'exponent': 0, 'rule_name': 'New Term Event rule.typeqqez', '@timestamp': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 7, 44, 21, 686730, tzinfo=tzutc()), 'until': datetim
e.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 7, 45, 21, 686730, tzinfo=tzutc())}

elastalert_status - {'rule_name': 'New Term Event rule', 'endtime': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 7, 41, 30, 598045, tzinfo=tzutc()), 'starttime': datetime.datetime(20
20, 5, 27, 7, 41, 30, 598045, tzinfo=tzutc()), 'matches': 1, 'hits': 4, '@timestamp': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 7, 44, 21, 691707, tzinfo=tzutc()), 'time_taken': 1
55.0793936252594}
```

# **Change (HTTP POST Alert)**

- · This rule will monitor a certain field and match if that field changes
- Resultant log at the end (real alerts are sending used --alert flag)

```
INFO:elastalert:HTTP Post alert sent.
INFO:elastalert:Ignoring match for silenced rule New region.InsufficientNumberOfOnlineVehicles
INFO:elastalert:Ignoring match for silenced rule New region.InsufficientNumberOfOnlineVehicles
Would have written the following documents to writeback index (default is elastalert_status):

silence - {'exponent': 0, 'rule_name': 'New region.InsufficientNumberOfOnlineVehicles', '@timestamp': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 11, 21, 1, 332327, tzinfo=tzutc()),
    'until': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 11, 22, 1, 332327, tzinfo=tzutc())}

elastalert - {'match_body': {'requiredNumberOnlineVehicles': 10, 'offlineEmployees': None, 'offlineVehicles': None, 'onlineVehicles': 5, 'name': 'InsufficientNumberOfOn
InneVehicles', 'id': 243, 'eventType': 'vehicle', 'region': 'USA', 'nequiredNumberOnlineEmployees': None, 'creationDate': '2020-05-28TI0:20:23.8202', 'onlineEmployees':
None, 'timestamp': '2020-05-28TI0:20:23.8202', 'onlineEmployees':
None, 'timestamp': '2020-05-28TI0:20:23.8202', 'onlineEmployees':
none, 'type': 'event', 'type': 'event', 'type': 'event', 'type': 'event', 'old value': ['Asia'], 'new_value': ['ISA'], 'num_hits': 4, 'num_matches': 3}, 'rule_name': 'New region', 'alert_info': ('type': 'http_post', 'http_post_webhook url': ['http://localhost:8080/api/event']}, 'alert_sent': True, 'alert_time'
: datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 11, 21, 1, 332327, tzinfo=tzutc()), 'match_time': '2020-05-28T09:50:23.8202')

elastalert_status - {'rule_name': 'New region', 'endtime': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 11, 19, 12, 779560, tzinfo=tzutc()), 'starttime': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 11, 21, 1, 437447, tzinfo-tzutc()), 'time_taken': 107.34557
318687439}
```

### Frequency

- This rule matches when there are at least a certain number of events in a given time frame.
- Resultant log at the end

```
INFO:elastalert:Alert for Example frequency rule at 2020-05-28T11:30:19.304Z:
INFO:elastalert:Example frequency rule

At least 2 events occurred between 2020-05-27 17:00 India Standard Time and 2020-05-28 17:00 India Standard Time
__id: 121
__index: event
__type: even
```

#### **Flatline**

- This rule matches when the total number of events is under a given threshold for a time period.
- Resultant log at the end

```
INFO:elastalert:Alert for Example Flatline rule at 2020-05-28T12:42:45.8930277:
INFO:elastalert:Example Flatline rule

An abnormally low number of events occurred around 2020-05-28 18:12 India Standard Time.

Between 2020-05-26 18:12 India Standard Time and 2020-05-28 18:12 India Standard Time, there were less than 10 events.

count: 2

key: all

num_hits: 2

num_matches: 2

timestamp: 2020-05-28T12:42:45.8930272

INFO:elastalert:Ignoring match for silenced rule Example Flatline rule.all

Would have written the following documents to writeback index (default is elastalert_status):

silence - {'exponent': 0, 'rule_name': 'Example Flatline rule.all', '@timestamp': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 12, 59, 13, 565258, tzinfo=tzutc()), 'until': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 13, 0, 13, 565258, tzinfo=tzutc()))

elastalert_status - {'rule_name': 'Example Flatline rule', 'endtime': datetime.datetime(2020, 5, 28, 12, 59, 13, 572072, tzinfo=tzutc()), 'time_take n': 158.060156583786}
```

When using flatline rule or spike this won't work as we expected in a test environment, this needs a minimum\_elapsed\_timeframe to begin the alerts



Results from running this script may not always be the same as if an actual ElastAlert instance was running. Some rule types, such as spike and flatline require a minimum **elapsed** time before they begin alerting, based on their timeframe. In addition, use\_count\_query and use\_terms\_query rely on run\_every to determine their resolution. This script uses a fixed 5 minute window, which is the same as the default.

In order to trigger the alerts, we can increase the timeframe with the configuration

#### timeframe:

days: 2

### Any

- · Any rule will match everything. Every hit that the query returns will generate an alert.
- · Resultant log at the end

```
INFO:elastalert:Alert for Any rule at 2020-05-28T12:47:41.538Z:
INFO:elastalert:Any rule

id: 132

index: event

type: event

type: event

creationDate: 2020-05-28T13:17:41.538Z

eventType: wehicle

id: 132

name: InsufficientNumberOfOnlineVehicles

num_hits: 1

num matches: 5

region: Oceana

requiredNumberOnlineEmployees: None

onlineEmployees: None

onlineEmployees: None

onlineEmployees: None

onlineEmployees: None

onlineEmployees: None

solineEmployees: None

onlineEmployees: None

onlineEmployees: None

solineEmployees: None

solineEmployees:
```

### **Blacklist**

The blacklisting rule will check a certain field against a blacklist, and match if it is in the blacklist.

#### Whitelist

- Similar to blacklist, this rule will compare a certain field to a whitelist, and match if the list does not contain the term.
- Apart from the blacklist, the whitelist had a required field ignore\_null: If true, events without a compare\_key field will not match. If not provided a validation error will throw
- Resultant log at the end

## Common Issues/concerns might face during the test

• Configure Buffer Time

Elastalert checks the data in a range of 15 minutes(comparing with the timestamp we are provided to the document) we can customize this by passing -- start and -- end parameters

We can customize the polling time using "buffer\_time" By default, ElastAlert will query large overlapping windows to ensure that it does not miss any events, even if they are indexed in real-time. In config.YAML, you can adjust "buffer\_time to a smaller number to only query the most recent few minutes.

#### buffer\_time: minutes: 5

• Why did I only get one alert when I expected to get several?

Log:- "INFO:elastalert: Ignoring match for silenced rule Event rule"

There is a setting called **realert** which is the minimum time between two alerts for the same rule. Any alert that occurs within this time will simply be dropped. The default value for this is one minute. If you want to receive an alert for every single match, even if they occur right after each other, use, by default this property is 1

realert:

minutes: 0

• Issue With keyword type fields

Log: INFO:elastalert:Found no values for your\_field (When pulling the data for the first time)

When you're working with term queries, for example writing a **new\_term** rule, by default the string fields mapping type will be the **keyword**, So when you specify a field for filter/querying you need to postfix **.keyword** to the fields. Elastalert provides **use\_keyword\_postfix** boolean configuration to solve this issue, by default this property is set to **true**. another solution here is to change the field type itself in Elasticsearch you can do this by annotating the field **@ Field(type=FieldType.Text, fielddata = true)** 

To see the mapping for the index:- https://host:port/index/\_mapping/

For a String field by default, the mapping will be

A Very helpful resource:- https://awesomeopensource.com/project/Yelp/elastalert

• Issue when testing the HTTP Post Alert type

Issue:- AttributeError: '\_thread.\_local' object has no attribute 'alerts\_sent'

Fix:- Open elatalert.py on the local AppData, make the below change

self.replace\_dots\_in\_field\_names = self.conf.get('replace\_dots\_in\_field\_names', False) self.thread\_data.num\_hits = 0 self.thread\_data.num\_dupes = 0 self.thread\_data.alerts\_sent = 0 #add self.scheduler = BackgroundScheduler()

# Step 8:- Run the Elastalert server

- Use this command:- python -m elastalert.elastalert --verbose --rule your\_rules\_dir/your\_rule.yaml
- Output Log

INFO:elastalert:Queried rule Event rule blacklist from 2020-05-21 16:02 India Standard Time to 2020-05-21 16:05 India Standard Time: 0 / 0 hits INFO:elastalert:Ran Event rule blacklist from 2020-05-21 16:02 India Standard Time to 2020-05-21 16:05 India Standard Time: 0 query hits (0 already seen), 0 matches, 0 alerts sent

INFO:elastalert:Disabled rules are: []

INFO:elastalert:Sleeping for 59.9995 seconds

INFO:elastalert:Background configuration change check run at 2020-05-21 16:06 India Standard Time

INFO:elastalert:Sent email to ['abhilash.s@infospica.com']

INFO:elastalert:Sent email to ['abhilash.s@infospica.com']

INFO:elastalert:Queried rule Event rule blacklist from 2020-05-21 16:02 India Standard Time to 2020-05-21 16:06 India Standard Time: 1 / 1 hits

INFO:elastalert:Background alerts thread 2 pending alerts sent at 2020-05-21 16:06 India Standard Time

INFO:elastalert:Sent email to ['abhilash.s@infospica.com']

INFO:elastalert:Ran Event rule blacklist from 2020-05-21 16:02 India Standard Time to 2020-05-21 16:06 India Standard Time: 1 query hits (0 already seen), 1 matches, 1 alerts sent

INFO:elastalert:Disabled rules are: []

INFO:elastalert:Sleeping for 60.0 seconds

INFO:elastalert:Background configuration change check run at 2020-05-21 16:07 India Standard Time

INFO:elastalert:Background alerts thread 0 pending alerts sent at 2020-05-21 16:07 India Standard Time

INFO:elastalert:Queried rule Event rule blacklist from 2020-05-21 16:02 India Standard Time to 2020-05-21 16:07 India Standard Time: 1 / 1 hits

INFO:elastalert:Ran Event rule blacklist from 2020-05-21 16:02 India Standard Time to 2020-05-21 16:07 India Standard Time: 1 query hits (1 already seen), 0 matches, 0 alerts sent

INFO:elastalert:Disabled rules are: []

INFO:elastalert:Sleeping for 60.0 seconds

INFO:elastalert:Background configuration change check run at 2020-05-21 16:08 India Standard Time

INFO:elastalert:Background alerts thread 0 pending alerts sent at 2020-05-21 16:08 India Standard Time

INFO:elastalert:Queried rule Event rule blacklist from 2020-05-21 16:02 India Standard Time to 2020-05-21 16:08 India Standard Time: 2 / 2 hits

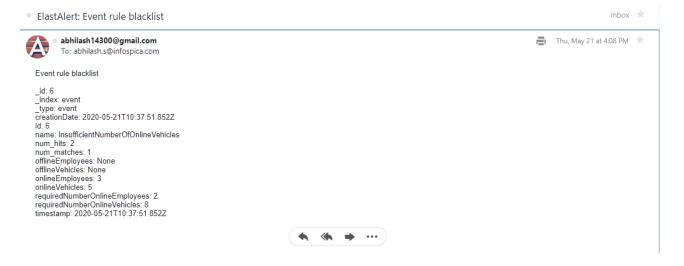
INFO:elastalert:Sent email to ['abhilash.s@infospica.com']

INFO:elastalert:Ran Event rule blacklist from 2020-05-21 16:02 India Standard Time to 2020-05-21 16:08 India Standard Time: 2 query hits (1 already seen), 1 matches, 1 alerts sent

INFO:elastalert:SIGINT received, stopping ElastAlert...

• Email Message:-

The email alert looks like this (We can customize the subject and content)





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