

Implementing IPsec in Windows Domain – part 1



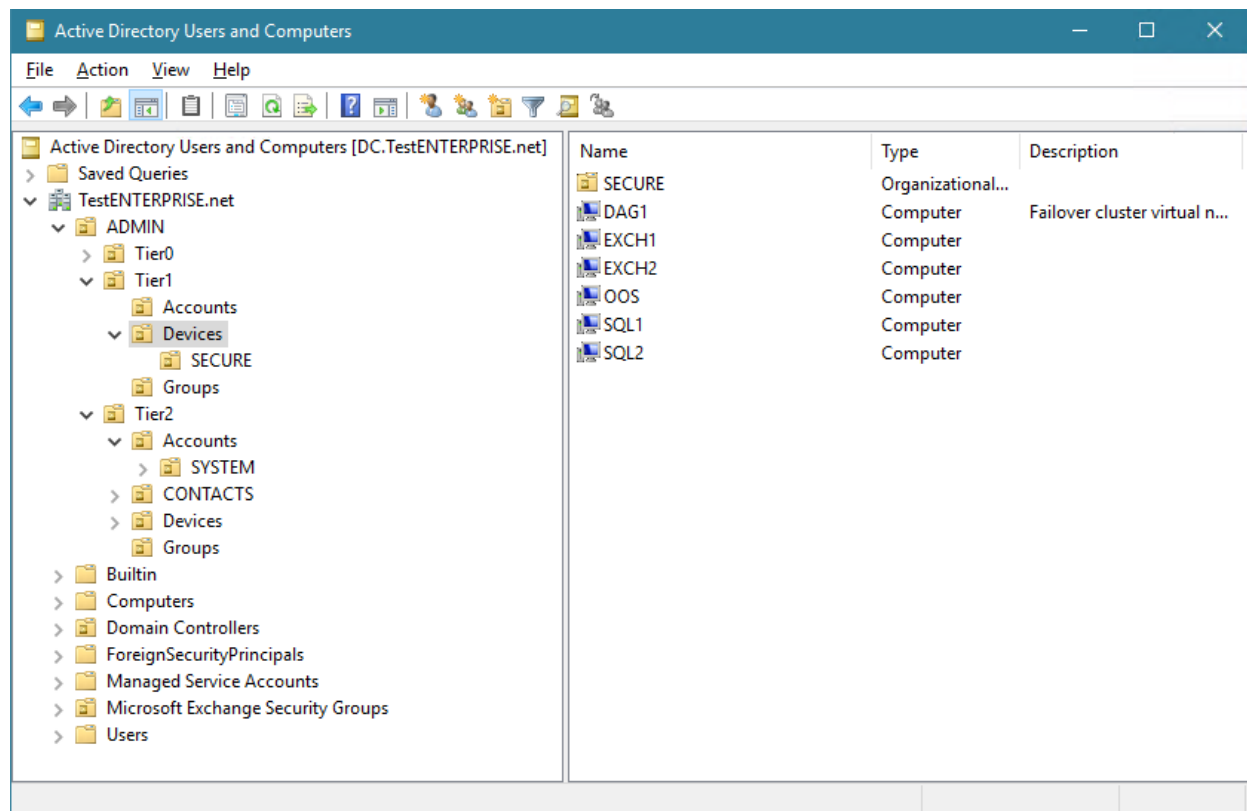
michaelfirsov.wordpress.com/implementing-ipsec-in-windows-domain-part-1

October 31, 2019

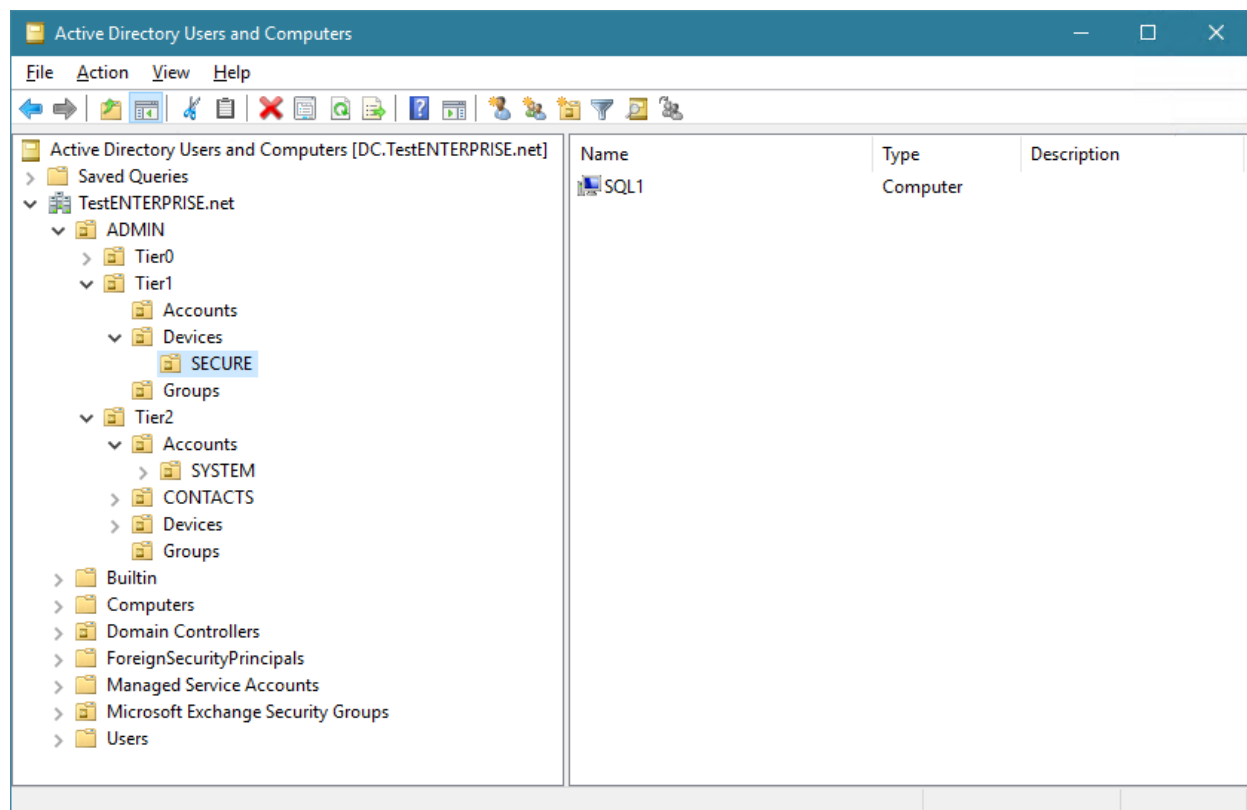
In this article I'd like to show how administrators can use IPsec to protect the most valuable "assets" in their networks – for example, servers that runs HR or financial databases. Lots of articles on msdn/technet offer one of the following methods to secure the traffic – domain isolation or/and server isolation. The first one is supposed to restrict traffic flow only to the domain members while the latter is often regarded as the extra security layer to the domain isolation that further restricts access to some host(s) only to member of certain computer or user groups. My point is that sometimes we may deploy some form of server isolation by not restricting already established security policies (domain isolation) with the additional computer/user checking but simply by applying the connection security rules to the respective organizational units (OUs).

Consider the following task: only specific clients (say HR department users) should have access to the host with HR database. The easiest way to achieve this is to create a server GPO with the connection security rules which would require IPsec protection for all inbound traffic (and only request the protection for outbound traffic) and a client GPO which would request protection for both inbound and outbound traffic. Applying the server GPO to the OU containing the server computer account (or accounts) and the client GPO to the OU with the needed client computer accounts will result in the required server isolation – in this case grouping the server and client computer accounts into specific OUs will serve the same purpose as restricting access based on the computer/user group membership.

Suppose the server that hosts the database with sensitive information is SQL1 –



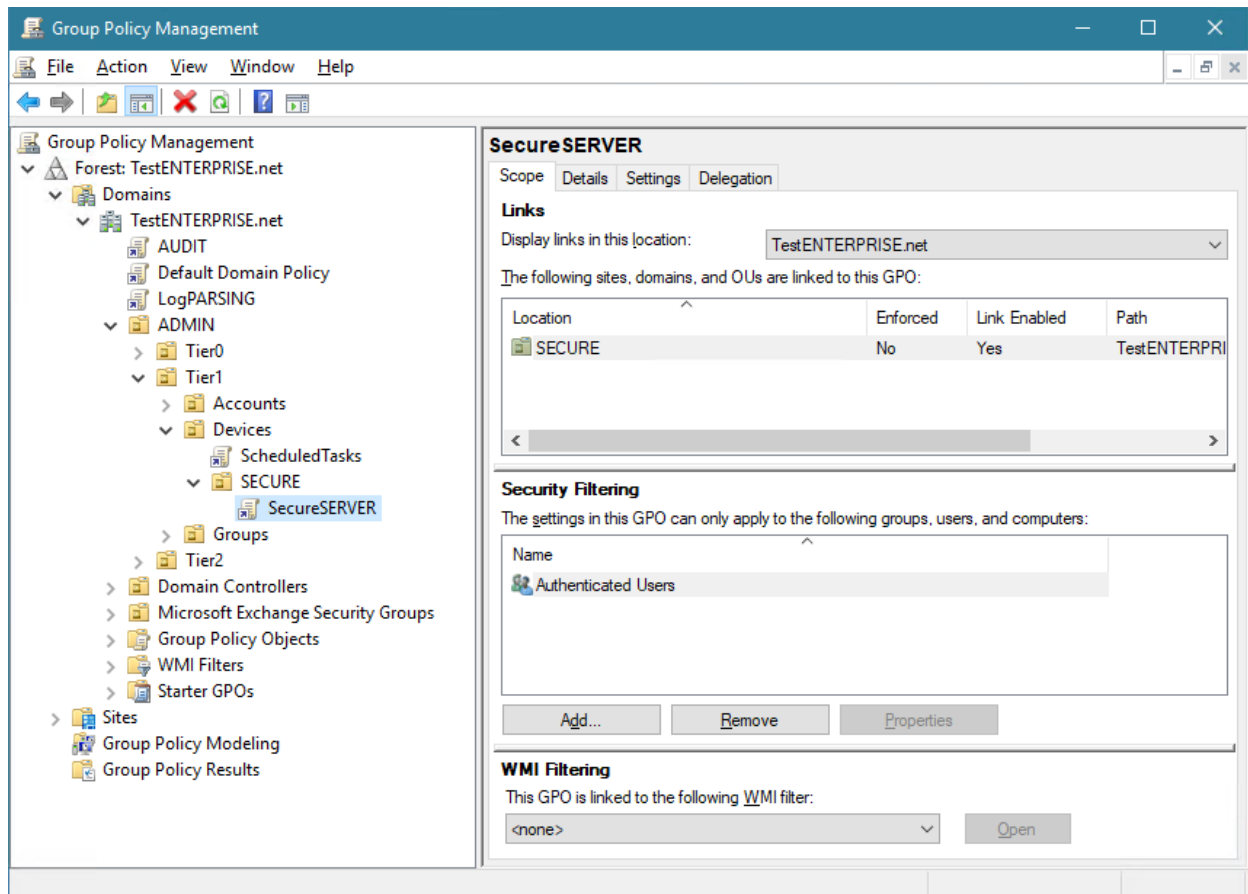
so the first step is to create a new OU – Devices\SECURE – and move the server into it:



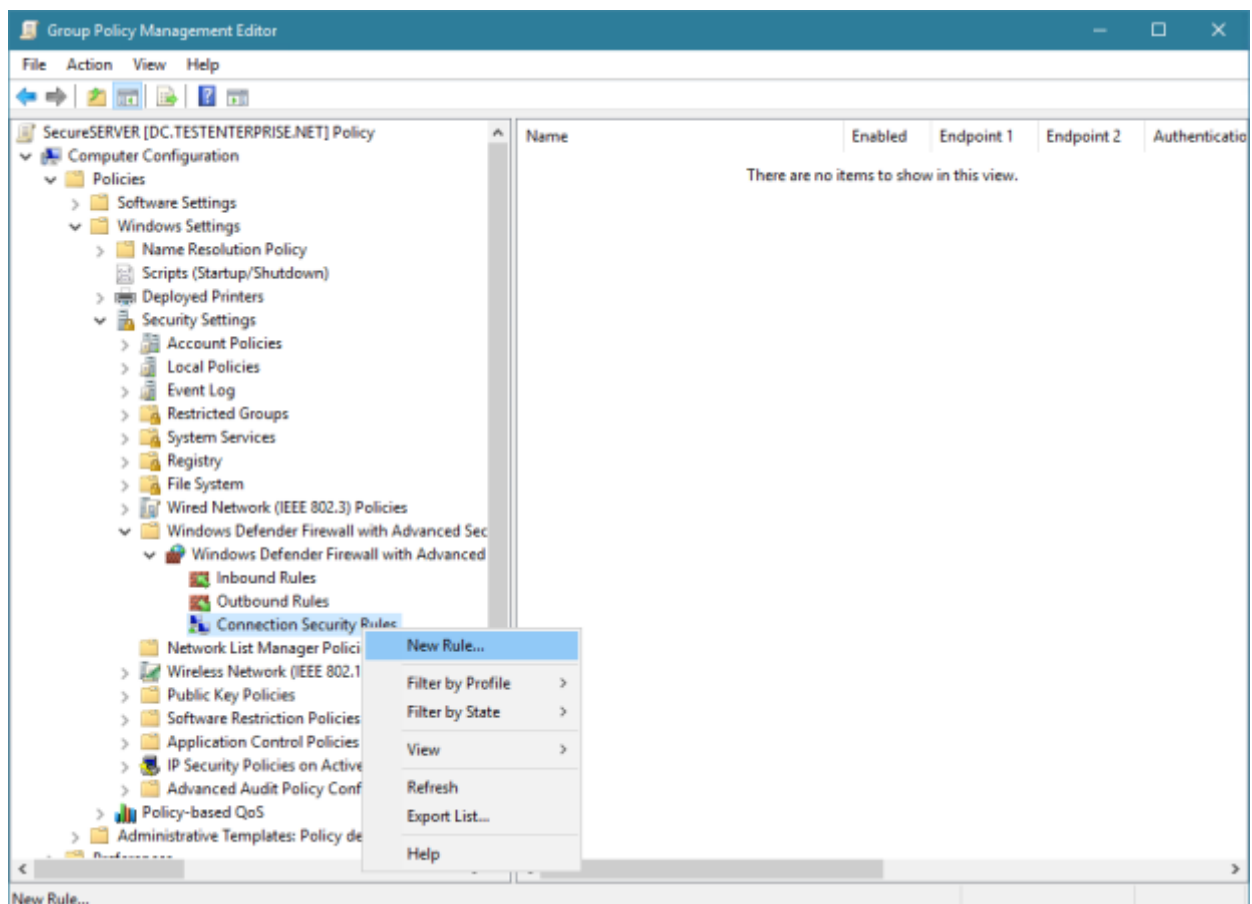
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SecureSERVER is a new GPO for which we'll create the new connection security rule that will require authentication for the inbound connections.



Now let's create the new rule:



New Connection Security Rule Wizard

Rule Type

Select the type of connection security rule to create.

Steps:

- Rule Type
- Requirements
- Authentication Method
- Profile
- Name

What type of connection security rule would you like to create?

☒ **Isolation**
Restrict connections based on authentication criteria, such as domain membership or health status.

☐ **Authentication exemption**
Do not authenticate connections from the specified computers.

☐ **Server-to-server**
Authenticate connection between the specified computers.

☐ **Tunnel**
Authenticate connections between two computers.

☐ **Custom**
Custom rule.

Note: Connection security rules specify how and when authentication occurs, but they do not allow connections. To allow a connection, create an inbound or outbound rule.

< Back Next > Cancel

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On the *Rule Type* page choose the type of the rule – **Isolation** and **Require authentication for inbound connections and request authentication for outbound connections** on the *Requirements* page:

New Connection Security Rule Wizard

Requirements

Specify the authentication requirements for connections that match this rule.

Steps:

- Rule Type
- Requirements
- Authentication Method
- Profile
- Name

When do you want authentication to occur?

☐ Request authentication for inbound and outbound connections
Authenticate whenever possible but authentication is not required.

☒ Require authentication for inbound connections and request authentication for outbound connections
Inbound connections must be authenticated to be allowed. Outbound connections are authenticated whenever possible but authentication is not required.

☐ Require authentication for inbound and outbound connections
Both inbound and outbound connections must be authenticated to be allowed.

< Back Next > Cancel

Since the new rule will use Kerberos authentication there's no need to choose anything except Domain here.

New Connection Security Rule Wizard

Profile

Specify the profiles for which this rule applies.

Steps:

● Rule Type

● Requirements

● Authentication Method

● Profile

● Name

When does this rule apply?

☒ Domain

Applies when a computer is connected to its corporate domain.

☐ Private

Applies when a computer is connected to a private network location, such as a home or work place.

☐ Public

Applies when a computer is connected to a public network location.

< Back

Next >

Cancel

New Connection Security Rule Wizard

Name

Specify the name and description of this rule.

Steps:

- Rule Type
- Requirements
- Authentication Method
- Profile
- Name**

Name:

Secure SQL Server

Description (optional):

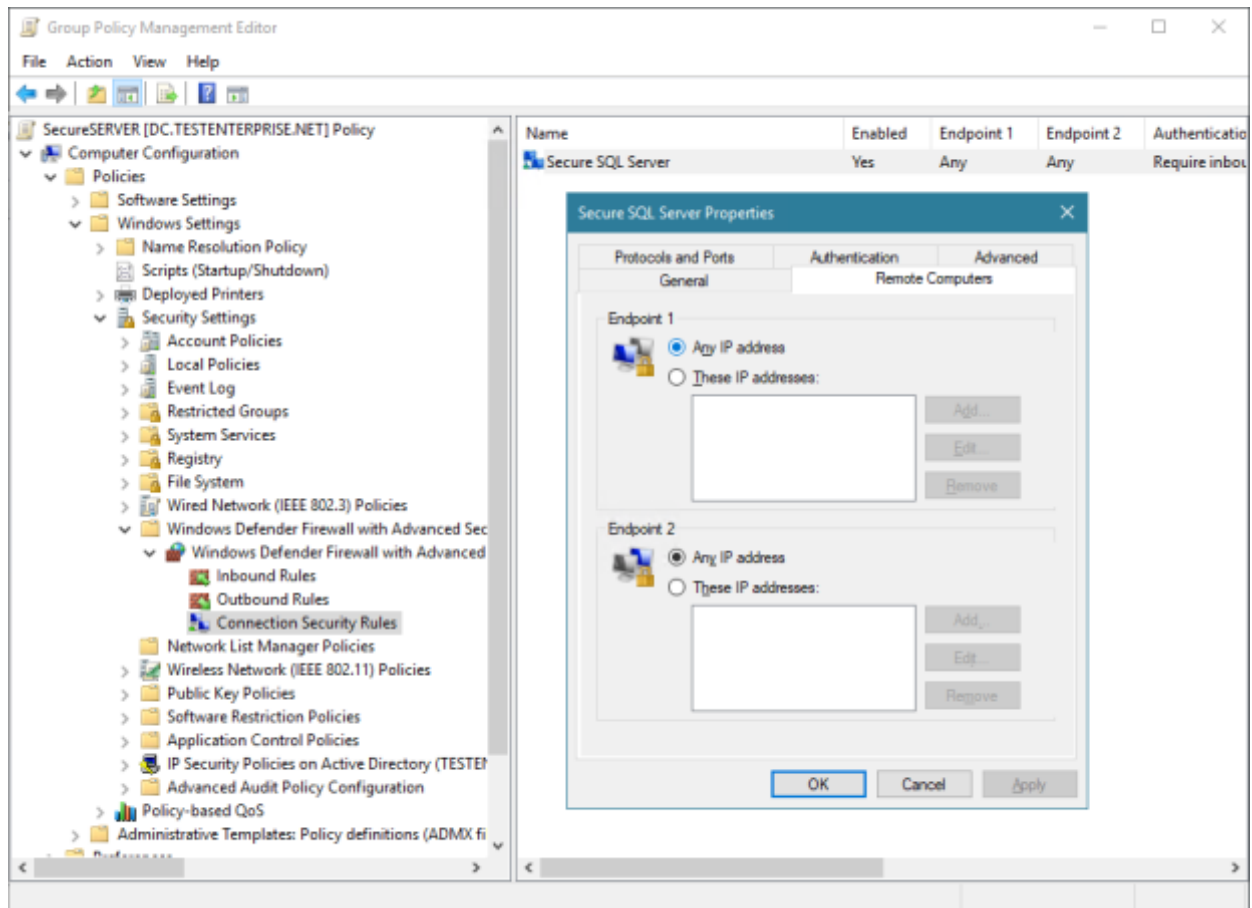
Allows only secured incoming connections.

< Back **Finish** Cancel

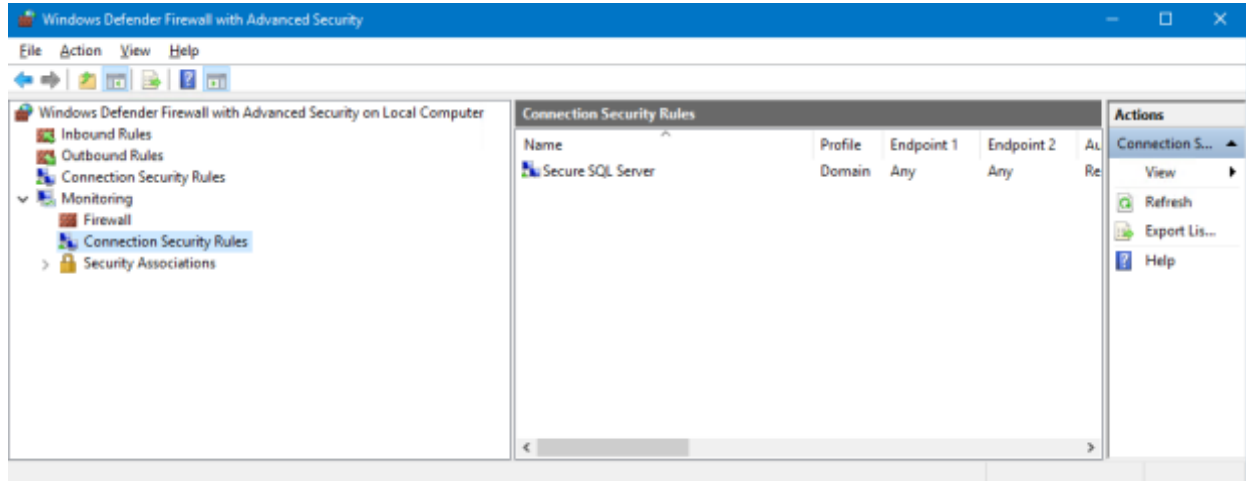
Advertisements

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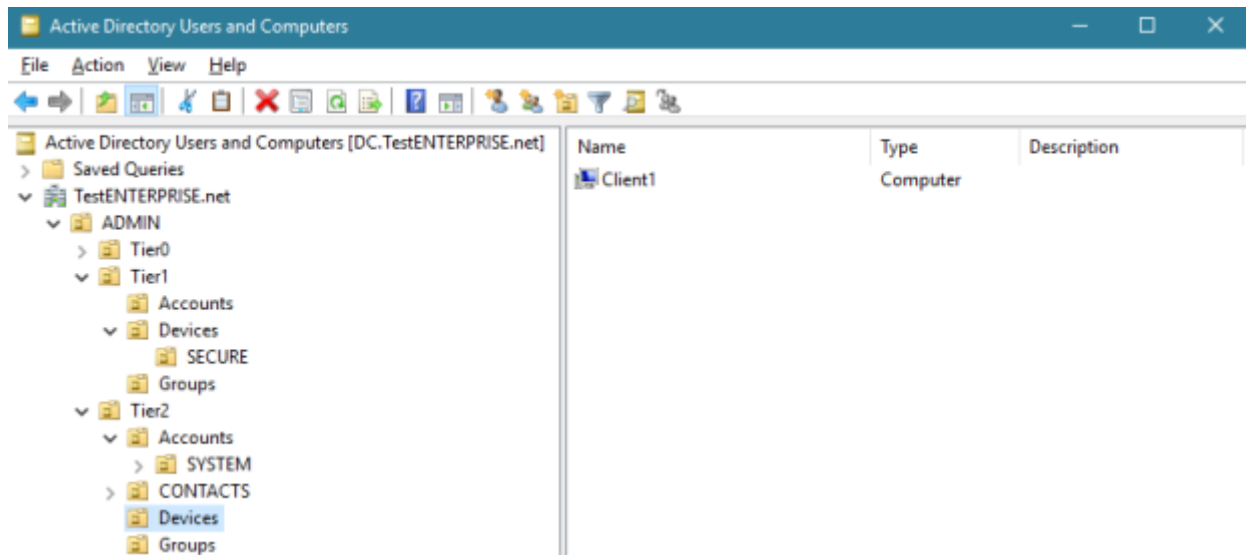
Again, since the target for this policy (and the rule) is defined by applying this GPO only to the specific OU, I won't configure any endpoints for this rule.



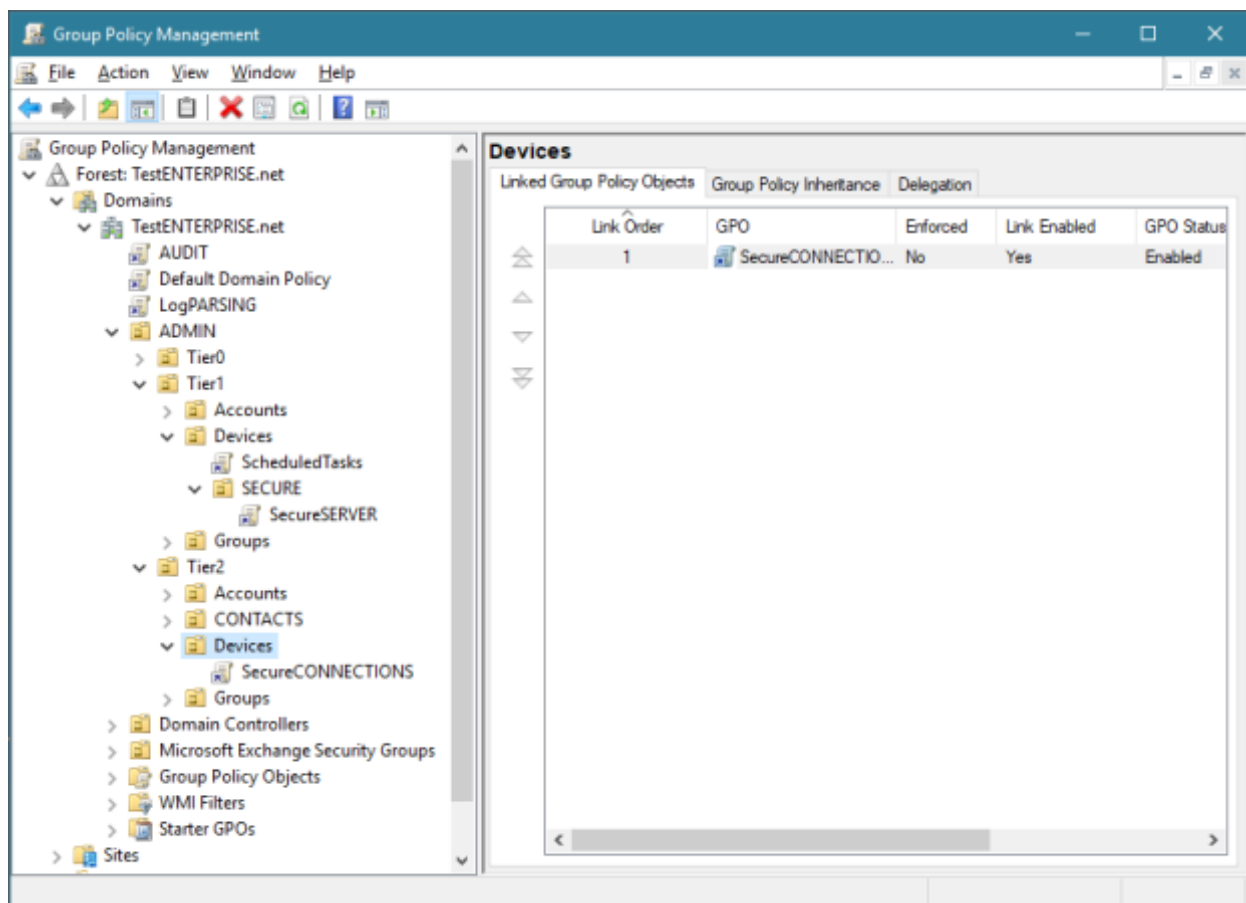
After running `gpupdate /force` on SQL1:



The server-side policy is created – the next step is to create a GPO for users that should be able to connect to the SQL1 and create the client GPO – I'll create the SecureCONNECTIONS GPO and link it to the Tier2\Devices OU. It means any (client) computer which has its computer account placed in this GPO will be allowed to access the secure server (SQL1). In the production network it may be an OU at the deeper level but currently there's only one client computer account in my test network so I'll keep using this OU.



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The new client connection security rule differs from the server one just in the **Requirements** tab (not speaking of the **Name** tab):

New Connection Security Rule Wizard

Rule Type

Select the type of connection security rule to create.

Steps:

- Rule Type
- Requirements
- Authentication Method
- Profile
- Name

What type of connection security rule would you like to create?

☒ **Isolation**
Restrict connections based on authentication criteria, such as domain membership or health status.

☐ **Authentication exemption**
Do not authenticate connections from the specified computers.

☐ **Server-to-server**
Authenticate connection between the specified computers.

☐ **Tunnel**
Authenticate connections between two computers.

☐ **Custom**
Custom rule.

Note: Connection security rules specify how and when authentication occurs, but they do not allow connections. To allow a connection, create an inbound or outbound rule.

< Back Next > Cancel

Clients should not require inbound connections to be authenticated – they just must be able to initiate a secure outbound connections (servers that require inbound authentication will respond with ipsec while all other hosts will reply as usually), so we select the first option here:

New Connection Security Rule Wizard

×

Requirements

Specify the authentication requirements for connections that match this rule.

Steps:

● Rule Type

● Requirements

● Authentication Method

● Profile

● Name

When do you want authentication to occur?

☒ **Request authentication for inbound and outbound connections**
Authenticate whenever possible but authentication is not required.

☐ **Require authentication for inbound connections and request authentication for outbound connections**
Inbound connections must be authenticated to be allowed. Outbound connections are authenticated whenever possible but authentication is not required.

☐ **Require authentication for inbound and outbound connections**
Both inbound and outbound connections must be authenticated to be allowed.

< Back

Next >

Cancel

Authentication Method

Specify how authentication is performed for connections that match this rule.

Steps:

- Rule Type
- Requirements
- Authentication Method
- Profile
- Name

What authentication method would you like to use?

- ☐ **Default**
Use the authentication methods specified in IPsec settings.
- ☒ **Computer and user (Kerberos V5)**
Restrict communications to connections from domain-joined users and computers. Provides identity information for authorizing specific users and computers in inbound and outbound rules.
- ☐ **Computer (Kerberos V5)**
Restrict communications to connections from domain-joined computers. Provides identity information for authorizing specific computers in inbound and outbound rules.
- ☐ **Advanced**
Specify custom first and second authentication settings. Customize...

< BackNext >Cancel

New Connection Security Rule Wizard

Profile

Specify the profiles for which this rule applies.

Steps:

● Rule Type

● Requirements

● Authentication Method

● Profile

● Name

When does this rule apply?

☒ Domain

Applies when a computer is connected to its corporate domain.

☐ Private

Applies when a computer is connected to a private network location, such as a home or work place.

☐ Public

Applies when a computer is connected to a public network location.

< Back

Next >

Cancel

New Connection Security Rule Wizard

Name

Specify the name and description of this rule.

Steps:

- Rule Type
- Requirements
- Authentication Method
- Profile
- Name**

Name:

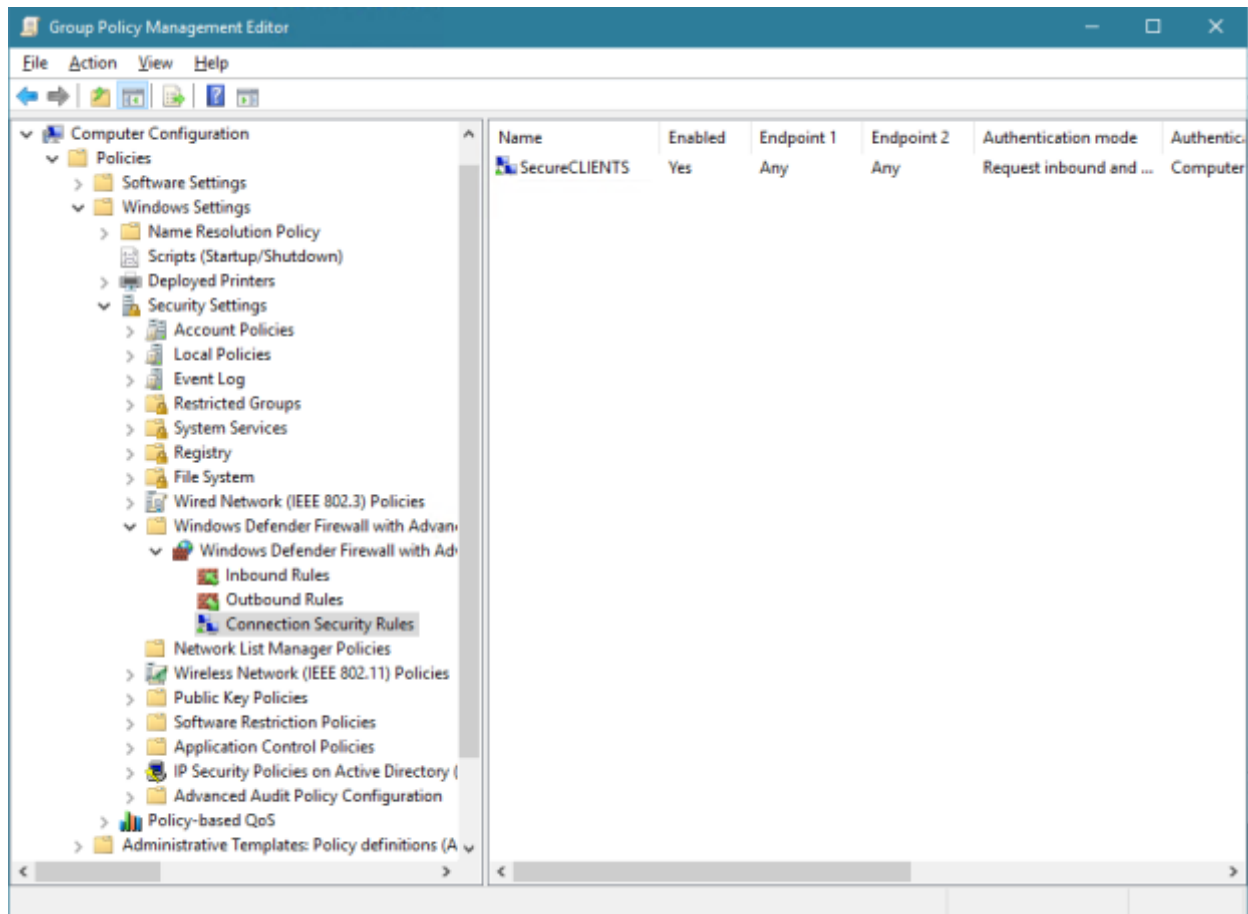
SecureCLIENTS

Description (optional):

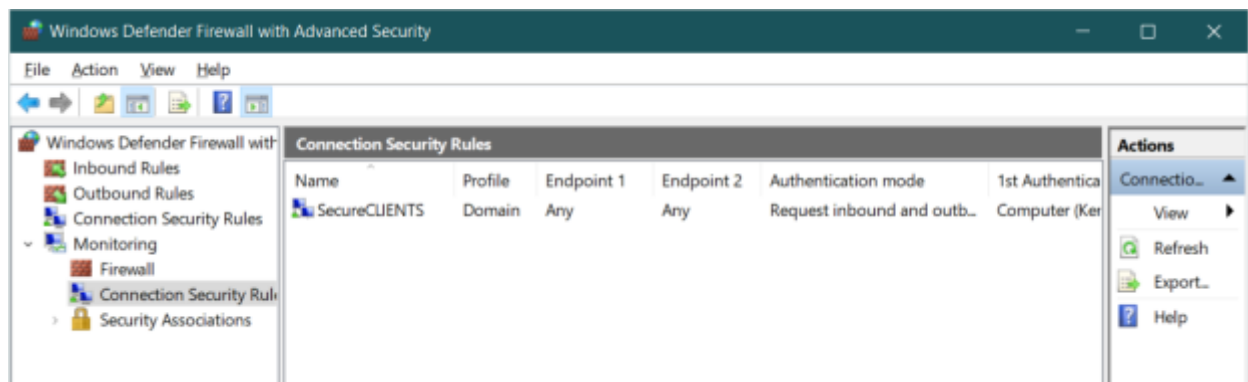
For outbound secure connections

< Back Finish Cancel

Here's the client rule:



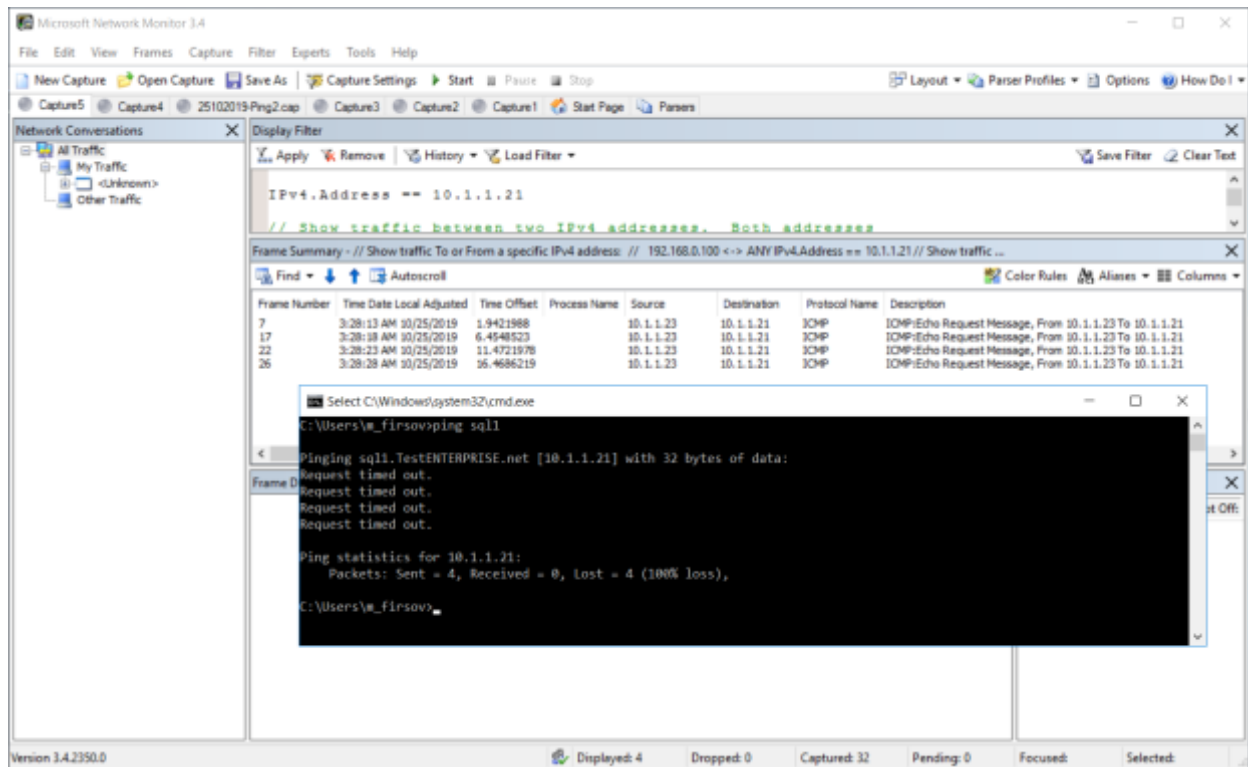
After running gpupdate /force on Client1:



Now let's test it: computers in the Tier2\Devices (currently only Client1) should have access to SQL1 while any computers that are not in the Tier2\Devices OU should NOT. All connection attempts will be traced in Network Monitor.

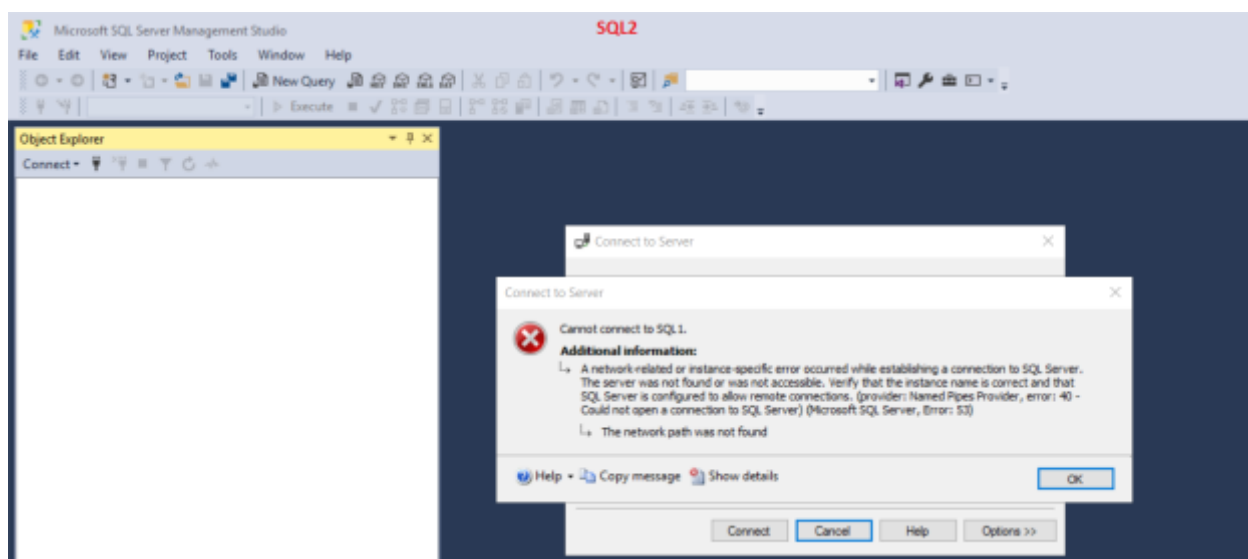
Test 1: Connecting to SQL1 from Tier1\Devices\SQL2

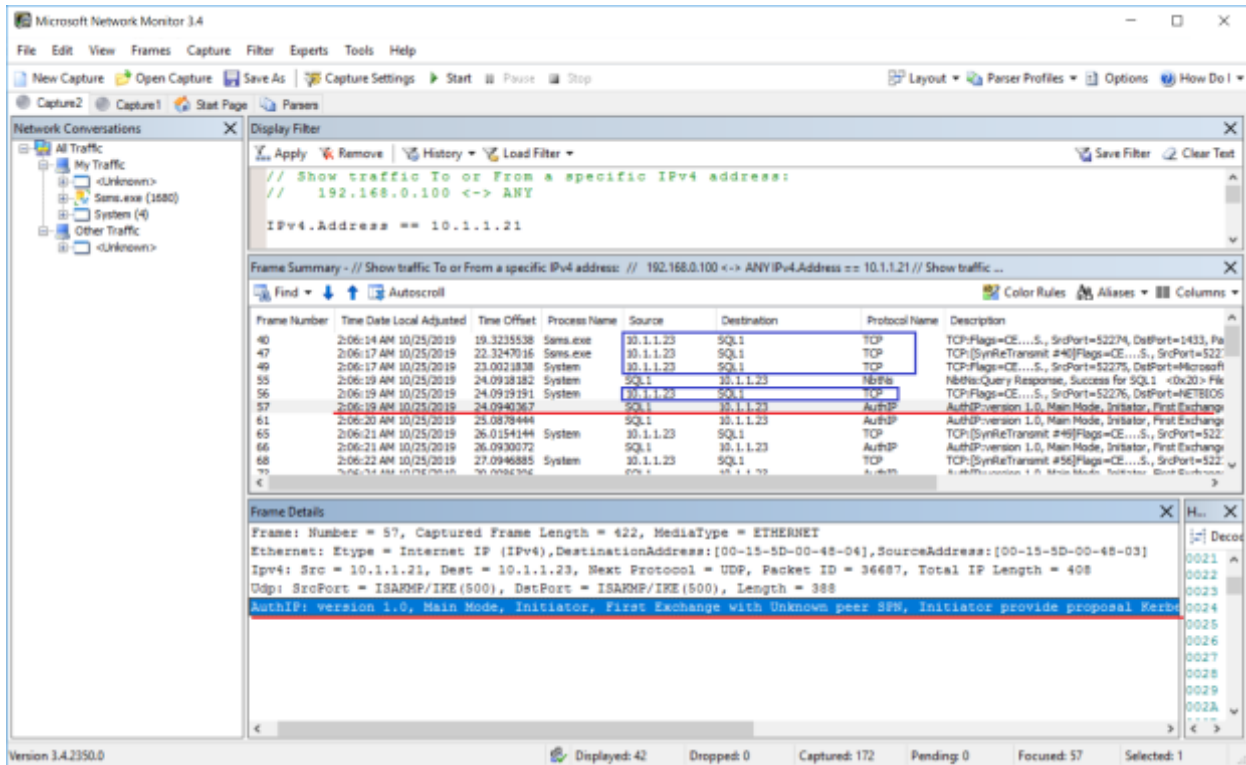
1.1 Pinging SQL1 (the ip of SQL2 – 10.1.1.23):



The result: ping failed as expected – please note the trace does not contain the SQL1's authentication requests (AuthIP).

2.2 Connecting to SQL1 in SSMS



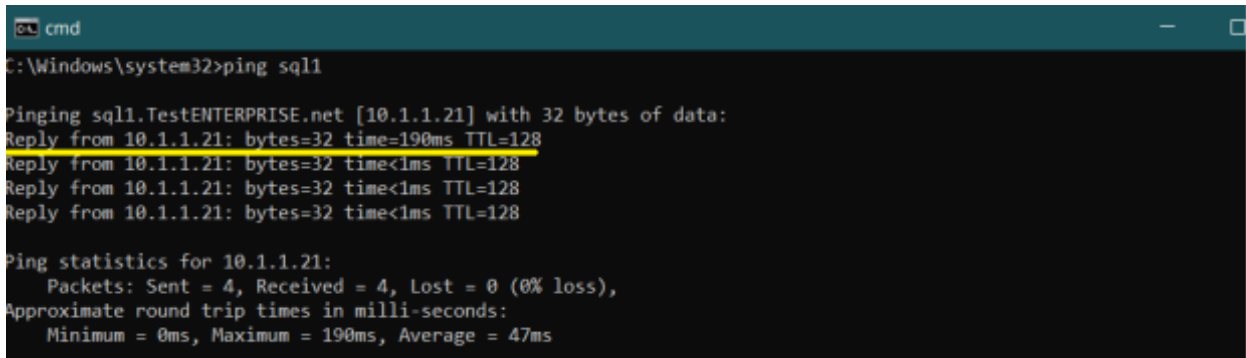


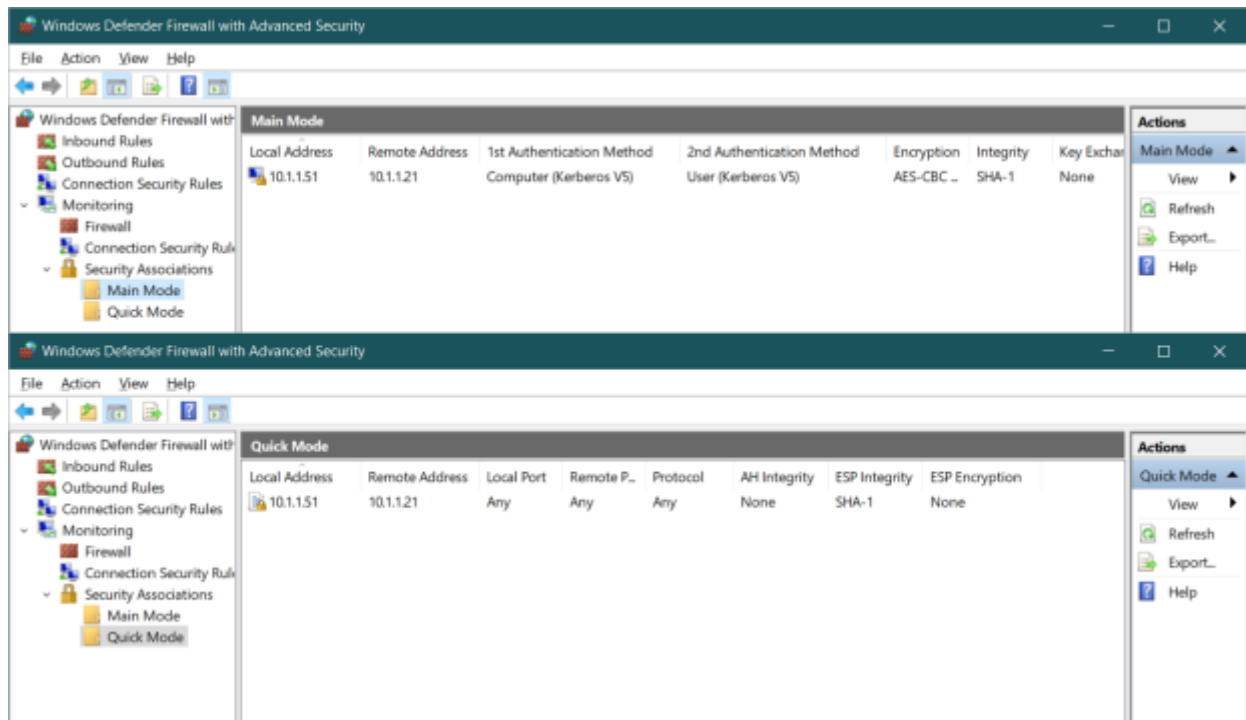
The result: the connection failed as expected and the trace does contain the SQL1's authentication requests (AuthIP) coming from SQL1 to SQL2. As SQL2 does not have any connection security rules applied it can't respond to the authentication requests that result in the failed connection.

Test 2: Connecting to SQL1 from Tier2\Devices\Client1

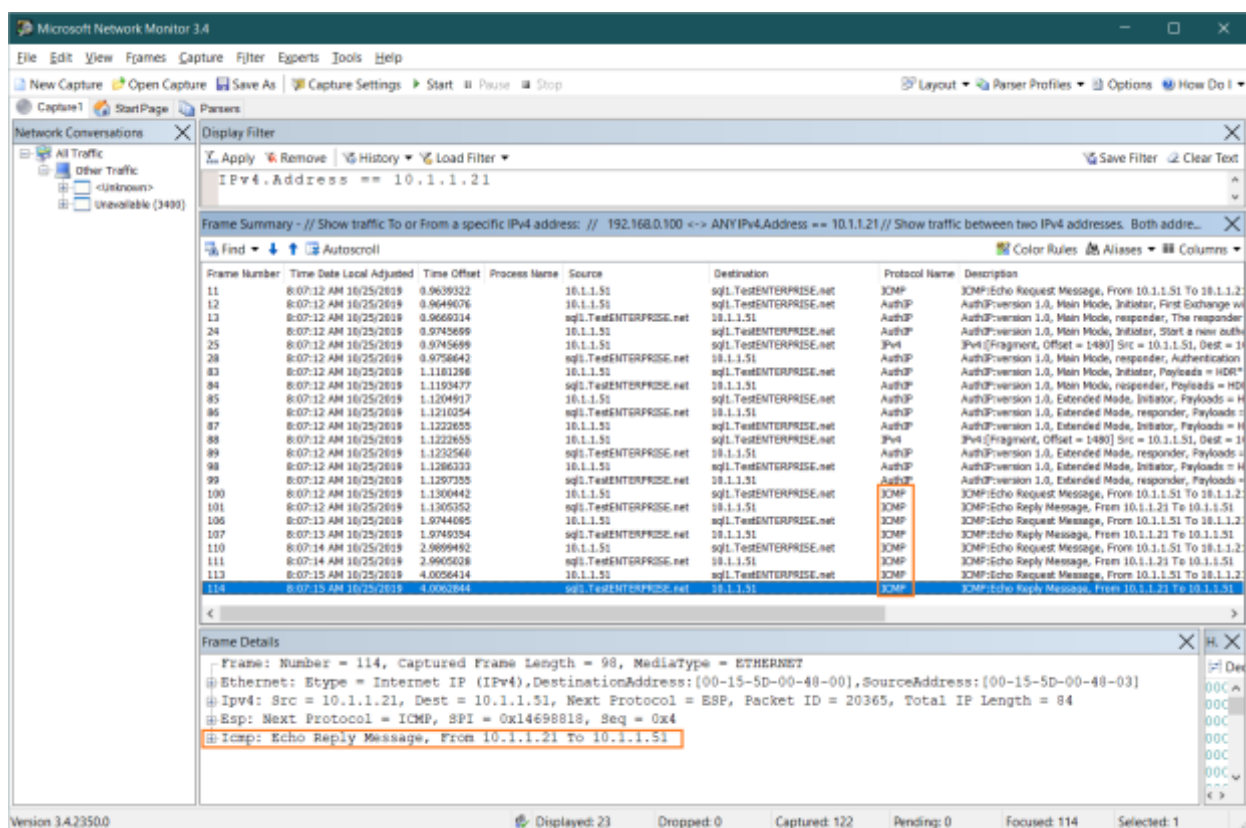
2.1 Pinging SQL1

Please note the first packet's response time – it's due to the ipsec negotiation phase:



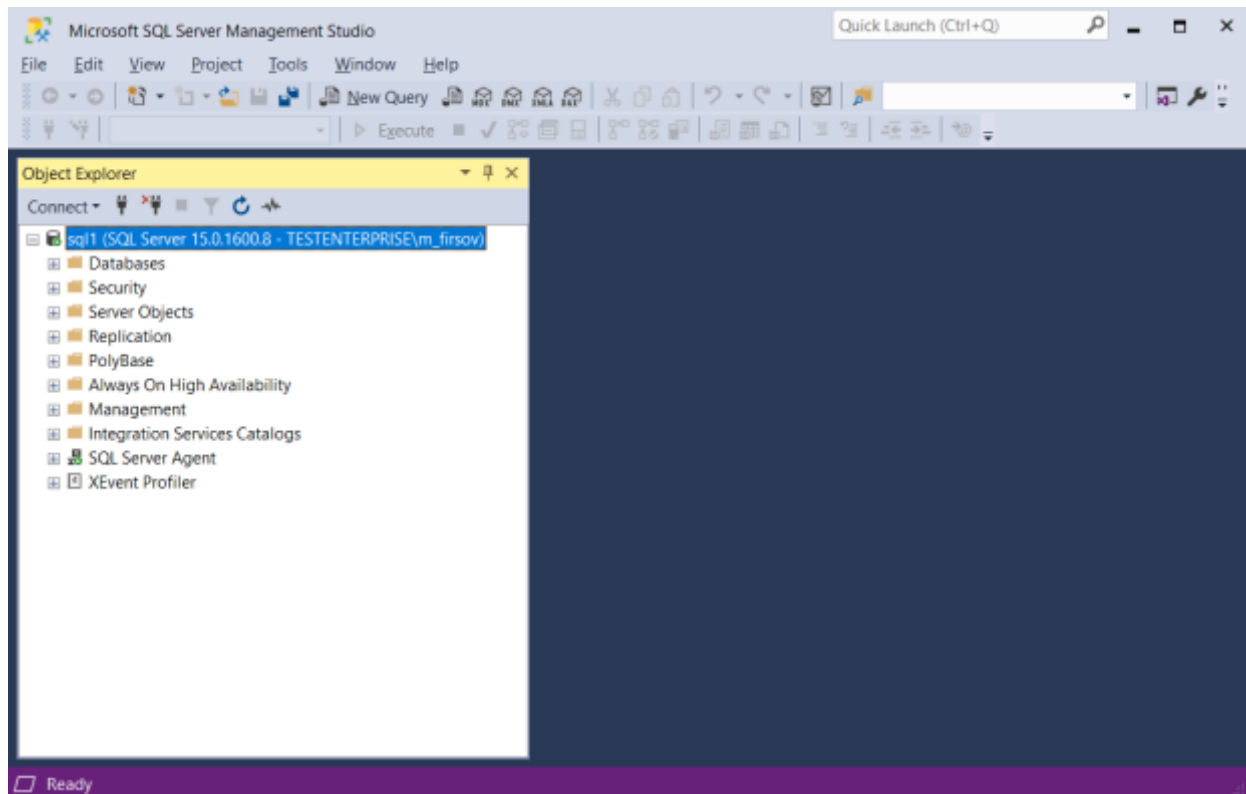


The trace:

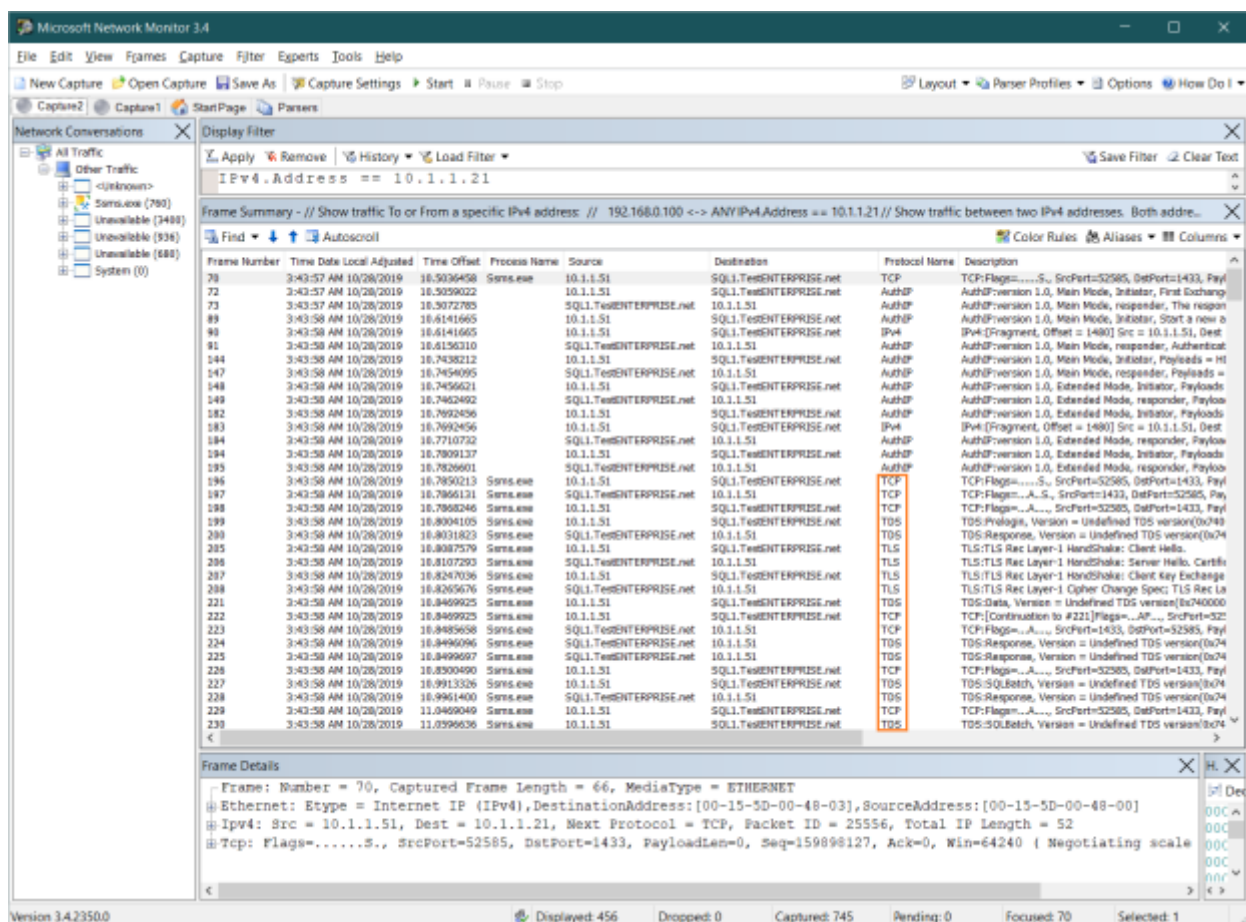


The result: ping succeeds as expected. Please note that the host with the connection security rule applied makes the second connection using AuthIP protocol right after the first unsuccessful echo request. After successful ipsec authentication we can see icmp request/reply packets.

2.2 Connecting to SQL1 in SSMS

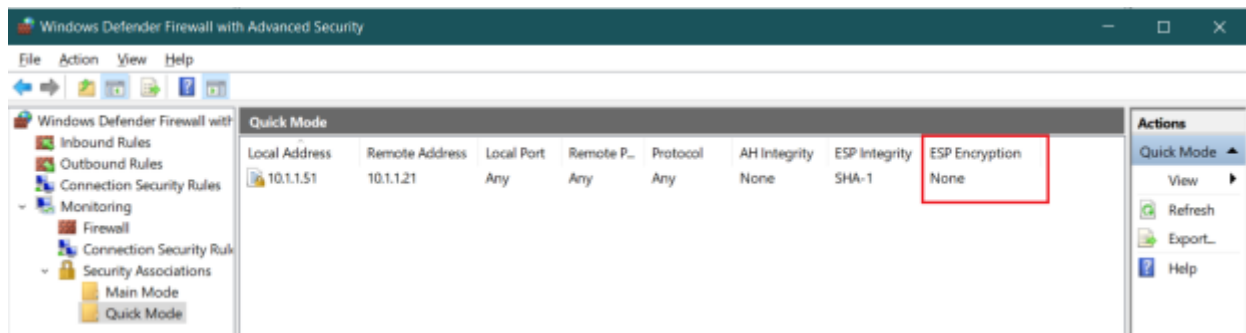


The trace:

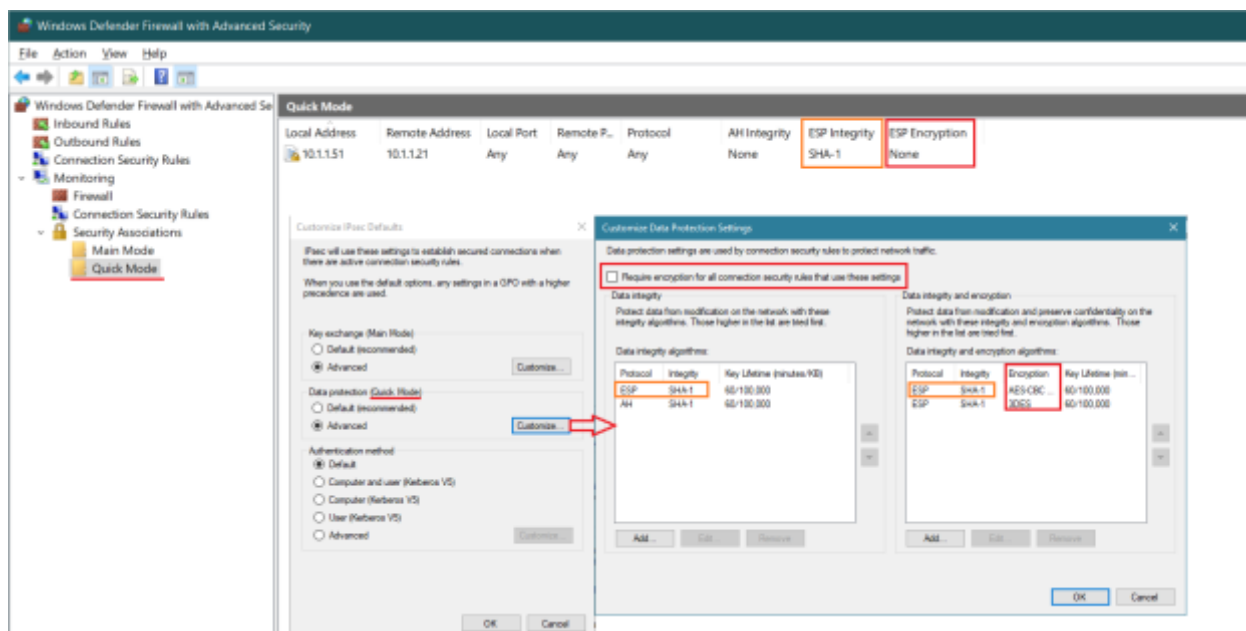


The result: connection succeeded – once ipsec authentication is completed SSMS establishes TDS session with the database server.

You may have already noted that both succeeded secure connections still display all their network-related information in the network parser – that’s because by default no encryption is applied to the packets:



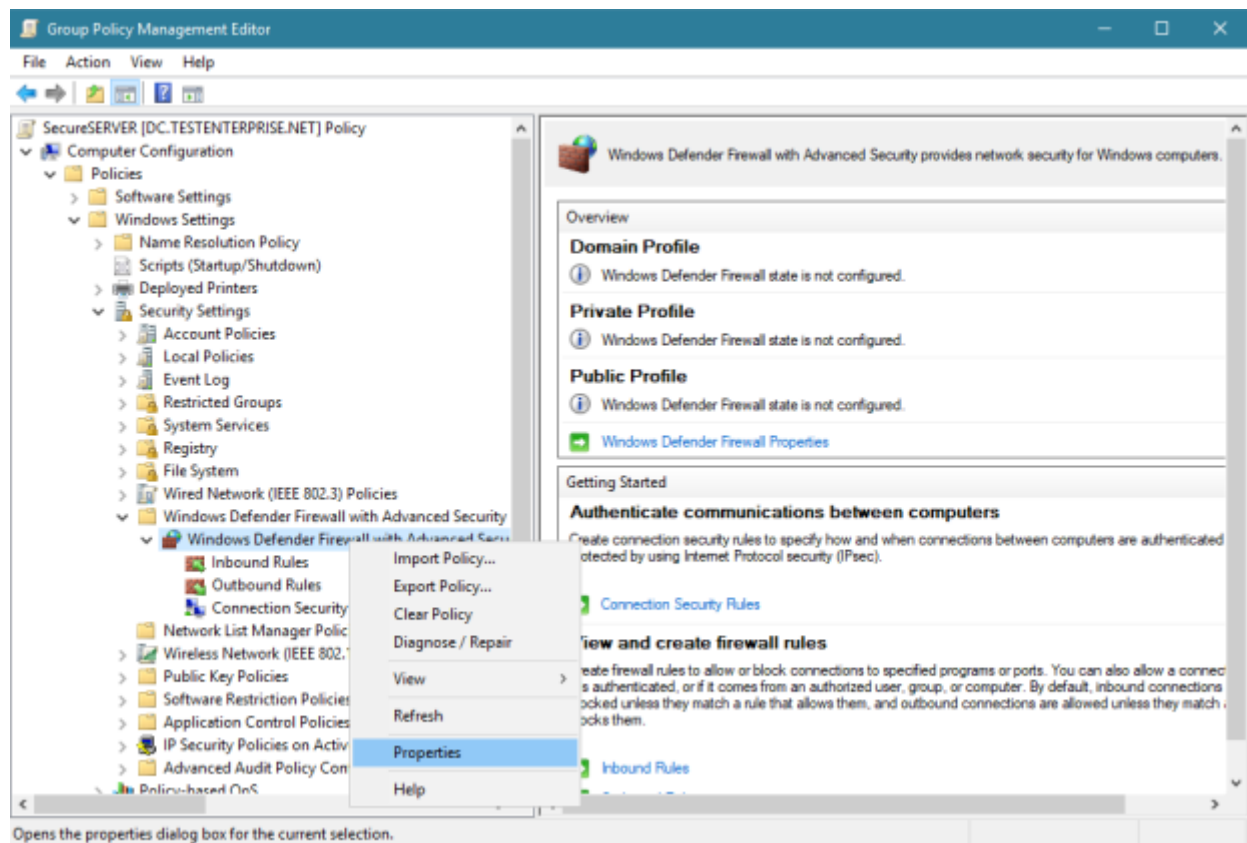
Here’s how the default IPsec settings correlate with the connection security rules applied (I’ll move on to the IPsec defaults right after this screenshot).



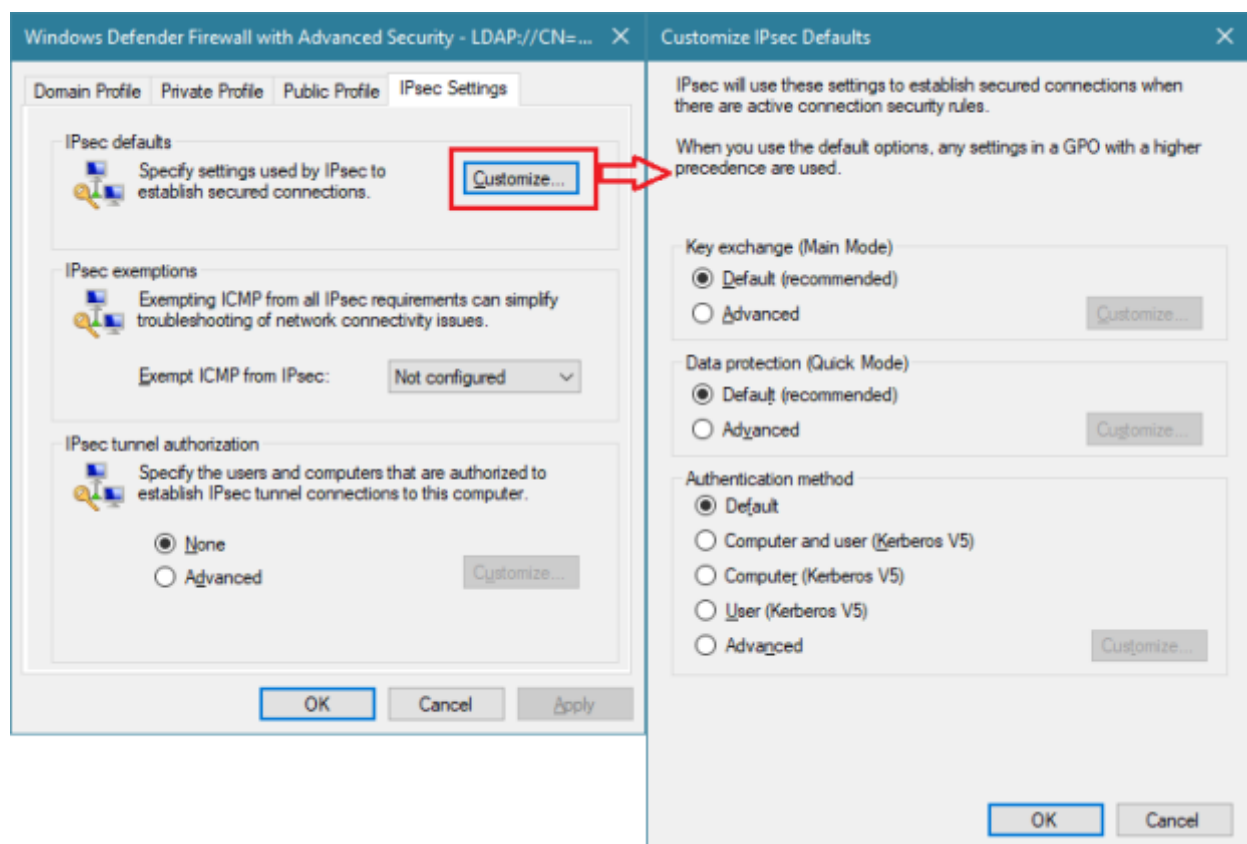
By default the “Require encryption...” checkbox is not checked so no encryption algorithms apply.

What if you want to disclose as little information as possible? It means ESP encryption must be enabled – this can be done either in the Windows Firewall’s IPsec defaults – and thus all connections that satisfy the ipsec rules on this host will be encrypted – or create the main mode rules with different encryption settings using netsh advfirewall mainmode add rule command. In this article I will enable encryption using Windows Firewall.

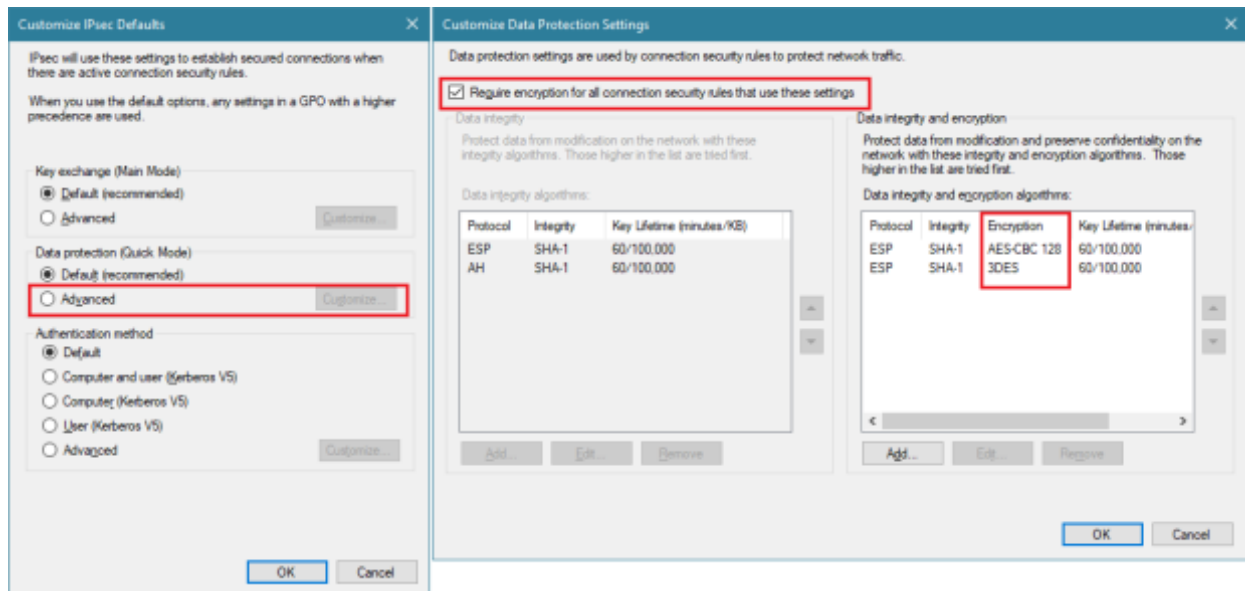
You can enable encryption in any GPO – server, client, or both (the best option, I think) – for example, I’ll edit the SecureSERVER gpo – navigate to Secure Settings\Windows Defender Firewall with Advanced Security, right-click it and select Properties:



Change to the IPsec Settings and click Customize in the **IPsec defaults** section:



It is the Quick Mode settings that define whether the encryption is enabled and if yes which encryption (as well as integrity) algorithms are to be used:



After setting the Quick mode to the Advanced configuration depicted above we can repeat Test 2 (after gpupdate /force on SQL1, of course) and see how network connections will be displayed in Network Monitor with ESP in place:

2.1 Pinging SQL1 from Client1

```

cmd
Microsoft Windows [Version 10.0.17763.379]
(c) 2018 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

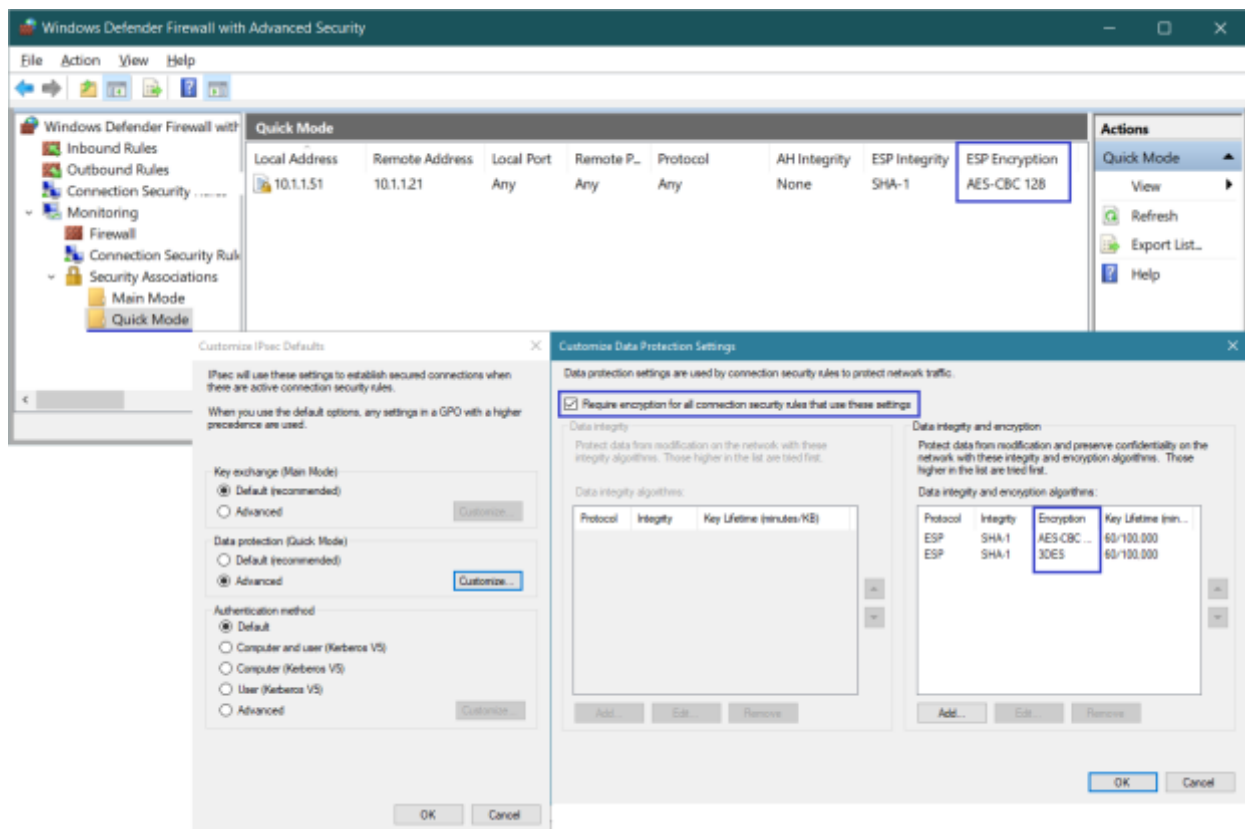
C:\Windows\system32>ping sql1

Pinging sql1.TestENTERPRISE.net [10.1.1.21] with 32 bytes of data:
Reply from 10.1.1.21: bytes=32 time=195ms TTL=128
Reply from 10.1.1.21: bytes=32 time<1ms TTL=128
Reply from 10.1.1.21: bytes=32 time<1ms TTL=128
Reply from 10.1.1.21: bytes=32 time<1ms TTL=128

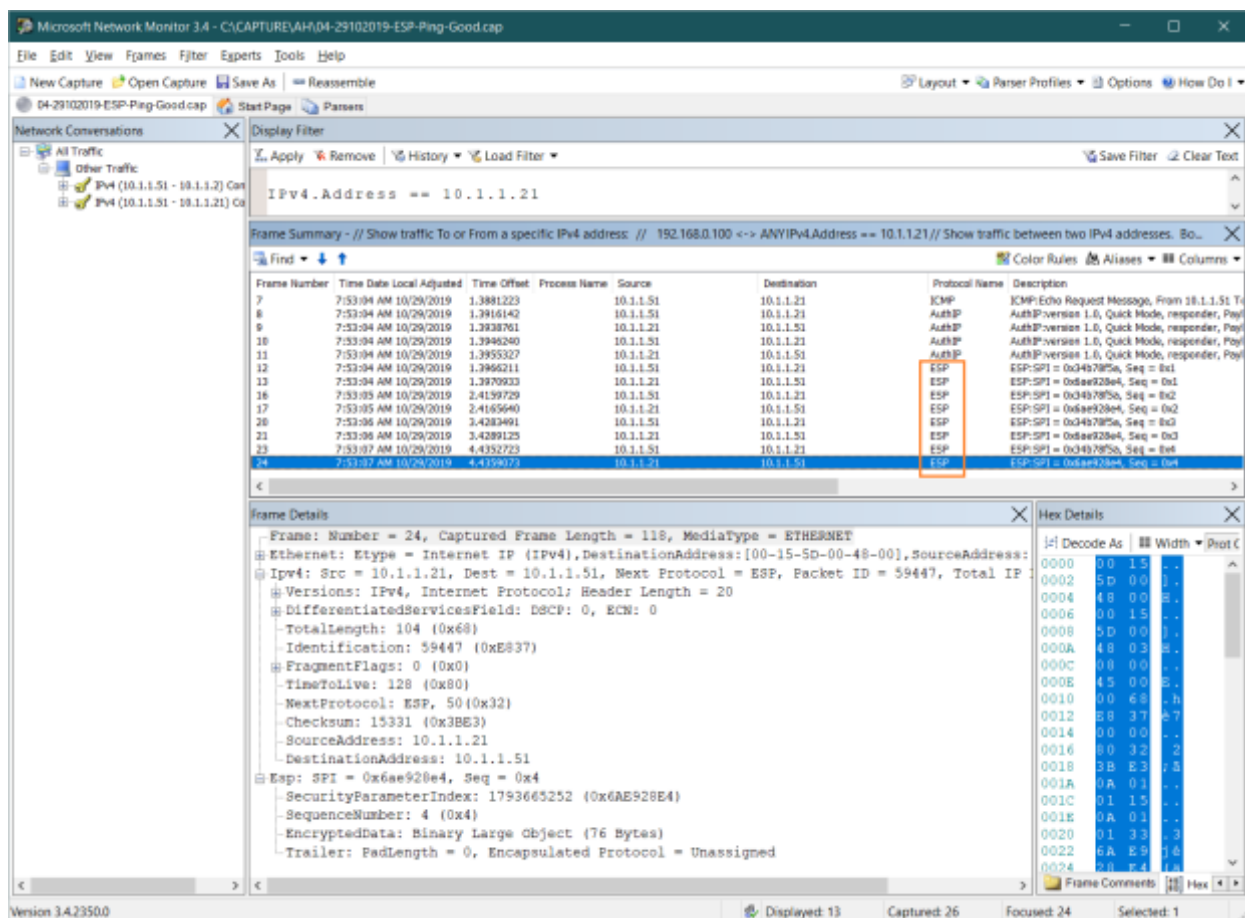
Ping statistics for 10.1.1.21:
    Packets: Sent = 4, Received = 4, Lost = 0 (0% loss),
    Approximate round trip times in milli-seconds:
        Minimum = 0ms, Maximum = 195ms, Average = 48ms

C:\Windows\system32>

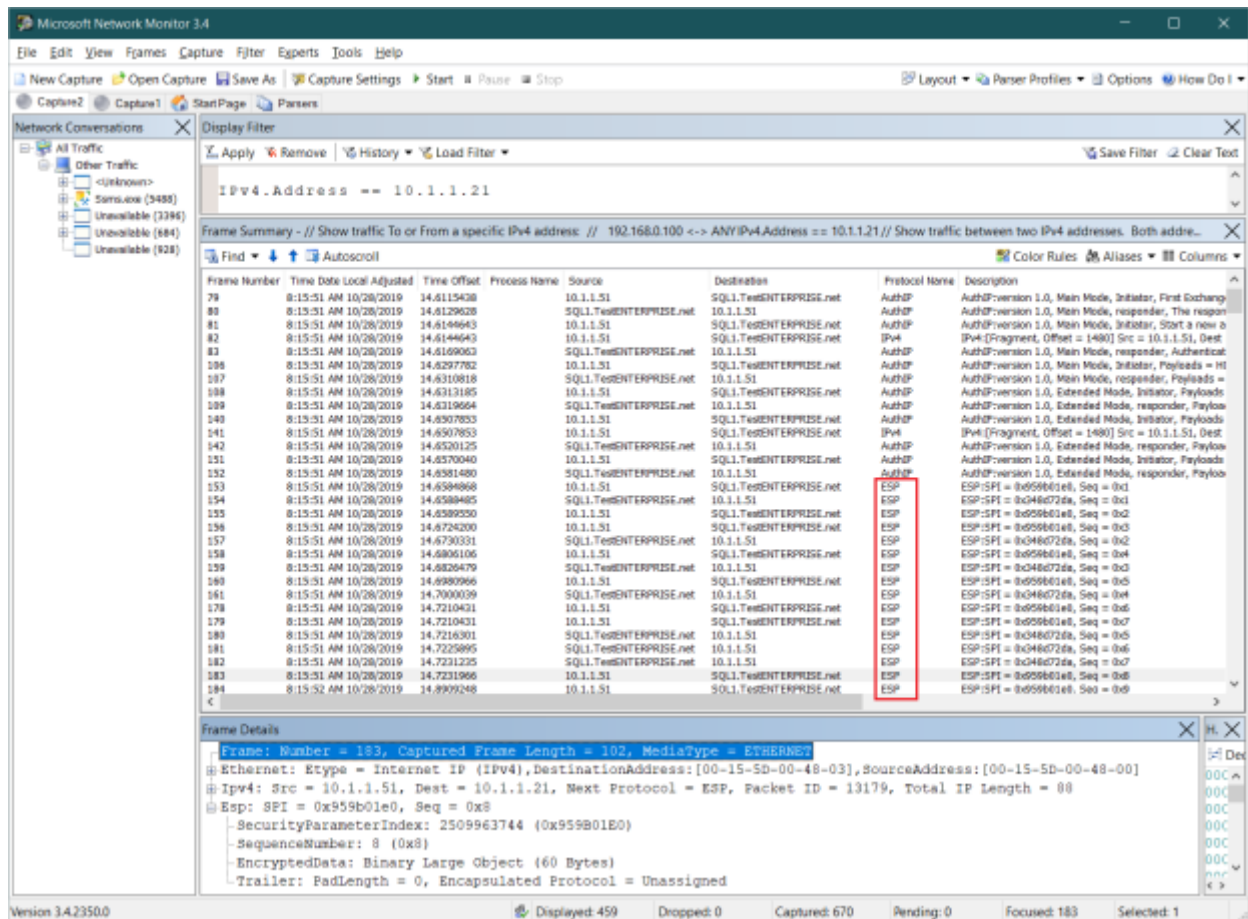
```



The trace:



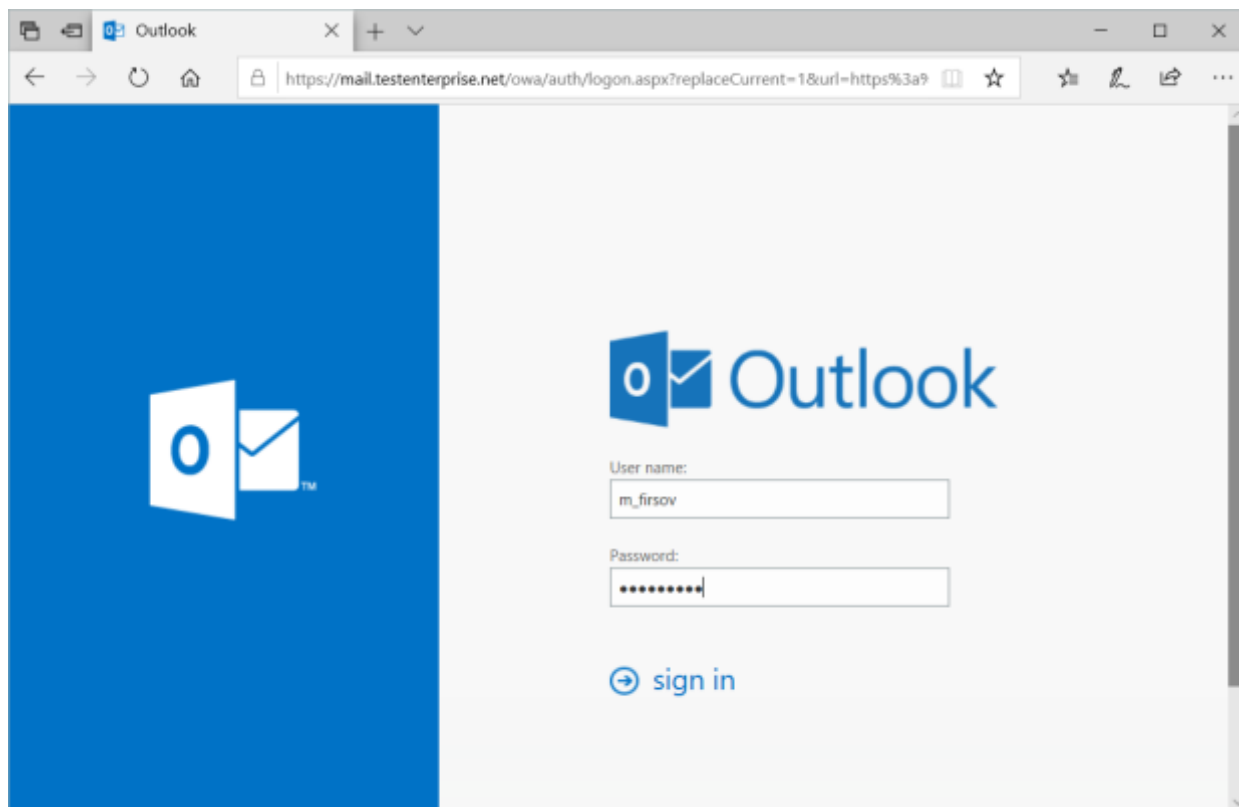
2.2 Connecting to SQL1 in SSMS from Client1



As you see enabling ESP encryption helps disclose only ip-related information, hiding the higher-level packet information from potential network sniffer user.

And the last test: how will the traffic from a secure client to a non-secure host look like?

Test 3: Connecting to Exch1 from Client1



The trace:

Frame Number	Time Date Local Adjusted	Time Offset	Process Name	Source	Destination	Protocol Name	Description
203	4:40:21 AM 10/30/2019	15.8029211	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	AuthIP	AuthIP: version 1.0, Main Mode, Initiator, First Exchange with Unknown peer SPN, Initiator provide proposal Kerberos
217	4:40:22 AM 10/30/2019	15.8041746	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	TCP	TCP:Flags=...S... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
218	4:40:22 AM 10/30/2019	15.8042649	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	AuthIP	AuthIP: version 1.0, Main Mode, Initiator, First Exchange with Unknown peer SPN, Initiator provide proposal Kerberos
219	4:40:22 AM 10/30/2019	15.8056055	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TCP	TCP:Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
220	4:40:22 AM 10/30/2019	15.8057071	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	TCP	TCP:Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
221	4:40:22 AM 10/30/2019	15.8101456	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	TLS	TLS:TLS Rec Layer-1 Handshake: Client Hello
222	4:40:22 AM 10/30/2019	15.8141871	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TLS	TLS:TLS Rec Layer-1 Handshake: Server Hello
223	4:40:22 AM 10/30/2019	15.8141871	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TCP	TCP:[Continuation to #222]Flags=...AP... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
224	4:40:22 AM 10/30/2019	15.8142498	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	TCP	TCP:Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
416	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	23.9558645	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	TLS	TLS:TLS Rec Layer-1 Handshake: Client Key Exchange
417	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	23.9566532	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	TLS	TLS:TLS Rec Layer-1 SSL Application Data
418	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	23.9575847	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	TLS	TLS:TLS Rec Layer-1 Cipher Change Spec
419	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	23.9576258	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	TCP	TCP:Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
420	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	23.9595831	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TCP	TCP:Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
421	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	24.2063327	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TLS	TLS:TLS Rec Layer-1 SSL Application Data
422	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	24.2063327	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TCP	TCP:[Continuation to #421]Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
423	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	24.2063327	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TCP	TCP:[Continuation to #421]Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
424	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	24.2063327	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TCP	TCP:[Continuation to #421]Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
425	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	24.2063327	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TCP	TCP:[Continuation to #421]Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
426	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	24.2063327	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TCP	TCP:[Continuation to #421]Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
427	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	24.2063327	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.31	TCP	TCP:[Continuation to #421]Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443
428	4:40:31 AM 10/30/2019	24.2064135	MicrosoftEdgeCP.exe	10.1.1.51	10.1.1.11	TCP	TCP:Flags=...A... SrcPort=49753, DstPort=443

Frame Details

Frame: Number = 203, Captured Frame Length = 422, MediaType = ETHERNET

Ethernet: Etype = Internet IP (IPv4), DestinationAddress:[00-15-5D-00-47-01], SourceAddress:[00-15-5D-00-48-00]

IPv4: Src = 10.1.1.51, Dest = 10.1.1.11, Next Protocol = UDP, Packet ID = 51787, Total IP Length = 408

Udp: SrcPort = ISAKMP/IKE(500), DstPort = ISAKMP/IKE(500), Length = 388

AuthIP: version 1.0, Main Mode, Initiator, First Exchange with Unknown peer SPN, Initiator provide proposal Kerberos

The result: Client1 first tries authenticated connection and then falls back to the plain session.

In part 2 we'll see how we can further restrict access to the secure servers.