7/16/2025

Secure Web App with Public Proxy + Private Backend on AWS

Terraform Project

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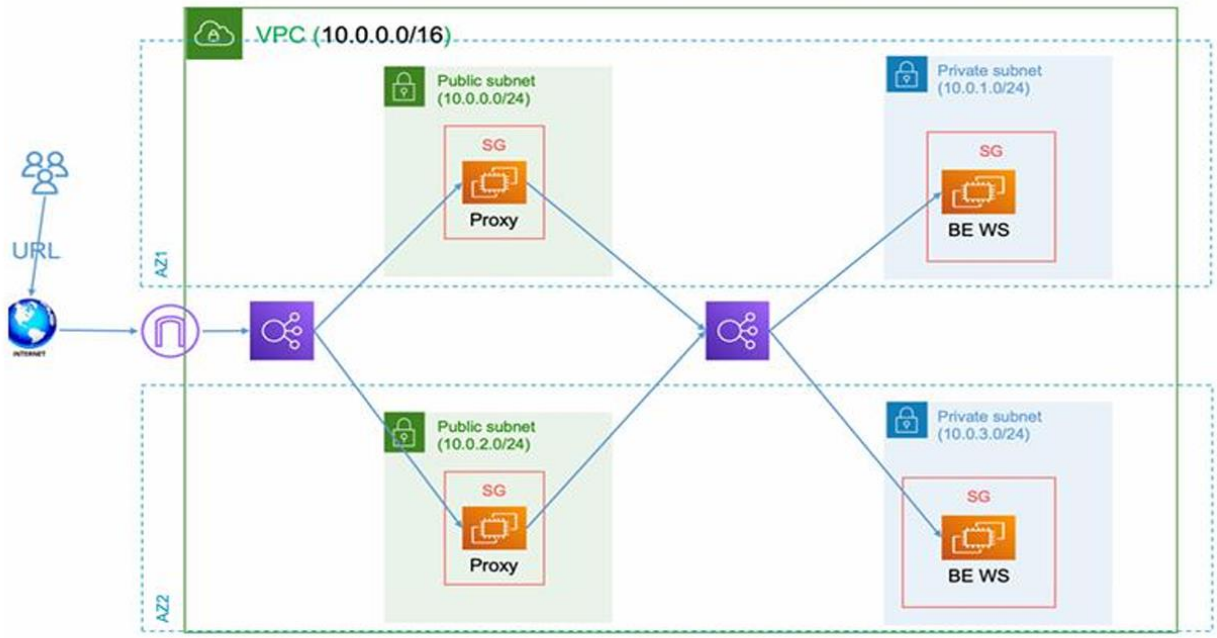
Project Description:

This project consists of a VPC that is deployed in two different availability zones (AZ1 & AZ2). It consists of two public subnets, each containing an EC2 instance that acts as a reverse proxy. They are both connected to a public ALB that takes requests from an internet gateway. The reverse proxy EC2s are connected to two EC2 instances in the two private subnets via an internal ALB.



Since we are using modules to create this project, the following picture shows the hierarchy of the files that contain the project code.

```
[diaa@ITI final project]$ ls -la
total 32
drwxr-xr-x. 5 diaa diaa 4096 Jul 15 21:16 .
drwxr-xr-x. 7 diaa diaa   91 Jul 13 09:18 ..
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa  121 Jul 14 18:53 all-ips.txt
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa  186 Jul 15 21:23 backend.tf
drwxr-xr-x. 4 diaa diaa   75 Jul 14 02:47 files
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa 2009 Jul 14 03:05 main.tf
drwxr-xr-x. 8 diaa diaa   75 Jul 13 09:18 modules
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa  846 Jul 13 09:12 outputs.tf
drwxr-xr-x. 4 diaa diaa   63 Jul 14 02:34 .terraform
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa 2422 Jul 14 02:37 .terraform.lock.hcl
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa  180 Jul 15 21:15 terraform.tfvars
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa  774 Jul 14 03:05 variables.tf
[diaa@ITI final project]$ ls -l modules/
total 0
drwxr-xr-x. 2 diaa diaa 59 Jul 13 09:18 alb
drwxr-xr-x. 2 diaa diaa 59 Jul 13 09:18 ec2
drwxr-xr-x. 2 diaa diaa 59 Jul 13 09:18 nat
drwxr-xr-x. 2 diaa diaa 59 Jul 13 09:18 sg
drwxr-xr-x. 2 diaa diaa 59 Jul 13 09:18 subnets
drwxr-xr-x. 2 diaa diaa 59 Jul 13 09:18 vpc
[diaa@ITI final project]$ ls -l modules/ec2/
total 12
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa 3639 Jul 15 21:11 main.tf
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa  709 Jul 13 22:44 outputs.tf
-rw-r--r--. 1 diaa diaa  725 Jul 14 02:58 variables.tf
```

Now, I will create a workspace named “dev”, and verify that it is created successfully.

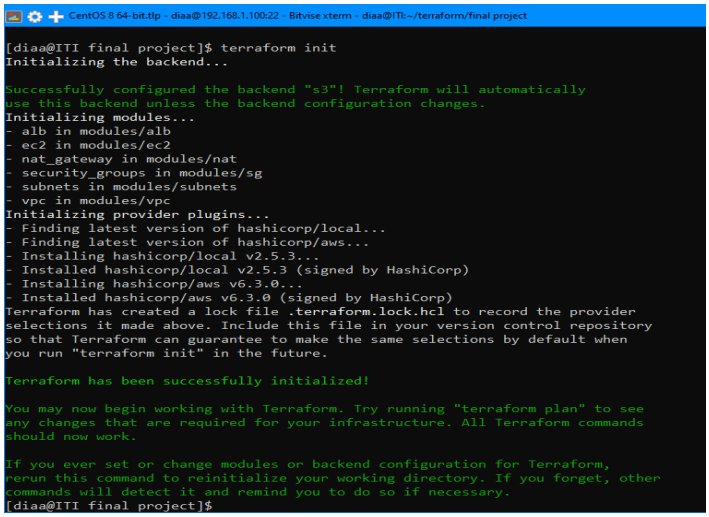
```
[diaa@ITI final project]$ terraform workspace new dev
Created and switched to workspace "dev"!

You're now on a new, empty workspace. Workspaces isolate their state,
so if you run "terraform plan" Terraform will not see any existing state
for this configuration.
[diaa@ITI final project]$ terraform workspace show
dev
[diaa@ITI final project]$
```

I begin with running the “terraform init” command. It initializes the working directory and the backend, setting everything up so Terraform can function properly.

The backend is an S3 bucket and a DynamoDB table that contains a lock ID that prevents two users from making changes on the state file at the same time.

```
[diaa@ITI final project]$ terraform init
Initializing the backend...

Successfully configured the backend "s3"! Terraform will automatically
use this backend unless the backend configuration changes.
Initializing modules...
- alb in modules/alb
- ec2 in modules/ec2
- nat_gateway in modules/nat
- security_groups in modules/sg
- subnets in modules/subnets
- vpc in modules/vpc
Initializing provider plugins...
- Finding latest version of hashicorp/local...
- Finding latest version of hashicorp/aws...
- Installing hashicorp/local v2.5.3...
- Installed hashicorp/local v2.5.3 (signed by HashiCorp)
- Installing hashicorp/aws v6.3.0...
```

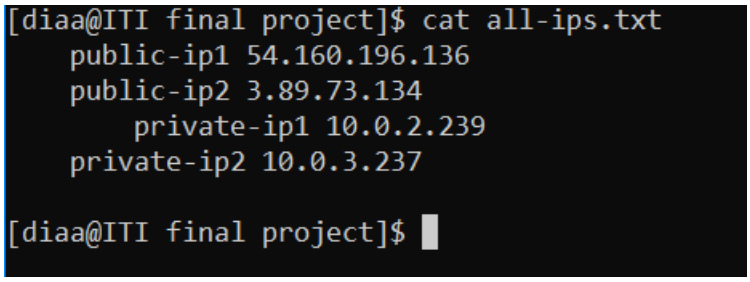
```
[diaa@ITI final project]$ terraform init
Initializing the backend...

Successfully configured the backend "s3"! Terraform will automatically
use this backend unless the backend configuration changes.
Initializing modules...
- alb in modules/alb
- ec2 in modules/ec2
- nat_gateway in modules/nat
- security_groups in modules/sg
- subnets in modules/subnets
- vpc in modules/vpc
Initializing provider plugins...
- Finding latest version of hashicorp/local...
- Finding latest version of hashicorp/aws...
- Installing hashicorp/local v2.5.3...
- Installed hashicorp/local v2.5.3 (signed by HashiCorp)
- Installing hashicorp/aws v6.3.0...
- Installed hashicorp/aws v6.3.0 (signed by HashiCorp)
Terraform has created a lock file .terraform.lock.hcl to record the provider
selections it made above. Include this file in your version control repository
so that Terraform can guarantee to make the same selections by default when
you run "terraform init" in the future.

Terraform has been successfully initialized!

You may now begin working with Terraform. Try running "terraform plan" to see
any changes that are required for your infrastructure. All Terraform commands
should now work.

If you ever set or change modules or backend configuration for Terraform,
rerun this command to reinitialize your working directory. If you forget, other
commands will detect it and remind you to do so if necessary.
[diaa@ITI final project]$
```



After, I'm applying the terraform configurations using the "terraform apply command". Here the number of resources is 7 because I have already applied this file before taking this screenshot.

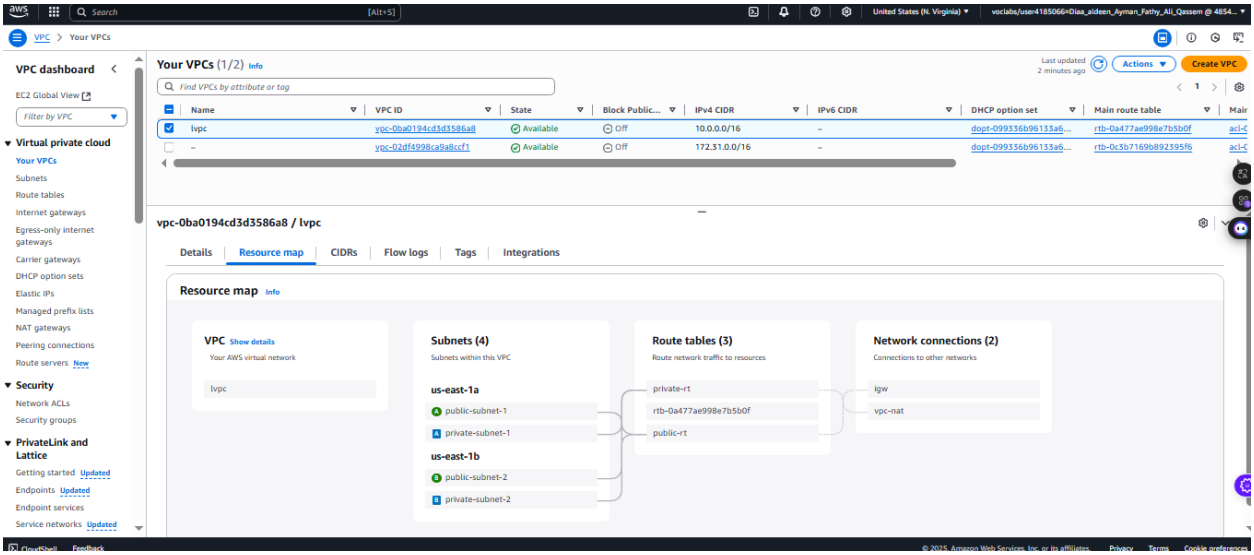
```
module.alb.aws_lb_target_group_attachment.backend_gateway_attachment[1]: Creating...
module.alb.aws_lb_target_group_attachment.backend_gateway_attachment[0]: Creating...
local_file.ips_file: Creating...
module.alb.aws_lb_target_group_attachment.backend_api_attachment[0]: Creating...
module.alb.aws_lb_target_group_attachment.backend_api_attachment[1]: Creating...
local_file.ips_file: Creation complete after 1s [id=f2fad5222497c4aba9a6971e42ba71683e71a7c4]
module.alb.aws_lb_target_group_attachment.backend_gateway_attachment[1]: Creation complete after 1s [id=arn:aws:elasticloadbalancing:u
s-east-1:485492729952:targetgroup/backend-gateway-tg/3491778092c4e9b7-20250714155352399400000003]
module.alb.aws_lb_target_group_attachment.backend_gateway_attachment[0]: Creation complete after 3s [id=arn:aws:elasticloadbalancing:u
s-east-1:485492729952:targetgroup/backend-gateway-tg/3491778092c4e9b7-20250714155352435900000004]
module.alb.aws_lb_target_group_attachment.backend_api_attachment[1]: Creation complete after 3s [id=arn:aws:elasticloadbalancing:us-ea
st-1:485492729952:targetgroup/backend-api-tg/56277297458566bc-20250714155352526800000006]
module.alb.aws_lb_target_group_attachment.backend_api_attachment[0]: Creation complete after 3s [id=arn:aws:elasticloadbalancing:us-ea
st-1:485492729952:targetgroup/backend-api-tg/56277297458566bc-20250714155352456900000005]

Apply complete! Resources: 7 added, 0 changed, 2 destroyed.

Outputs:

backend_private_ips = <sensitive>
igw_id = "igw-0c3ab555f4826b9c7"
nat_gateway_ips = [
  "34.194.52.75",
]
private_alb_dns_name = "internal-internalalb-521345524.us-east-1.elb.amazonaws.com"
proxy_public_ips = [
  "54.160.196.136",
  "3.89.73.134",
]
public_alb_dns_name = "public-alb-256643810.us-east-1.elb.amazonaws.com"
vpc_id = "vpc-0ba0194cd3d3586a8"
[diaa@ITI final project]$
```

this output file contains the IP associations.

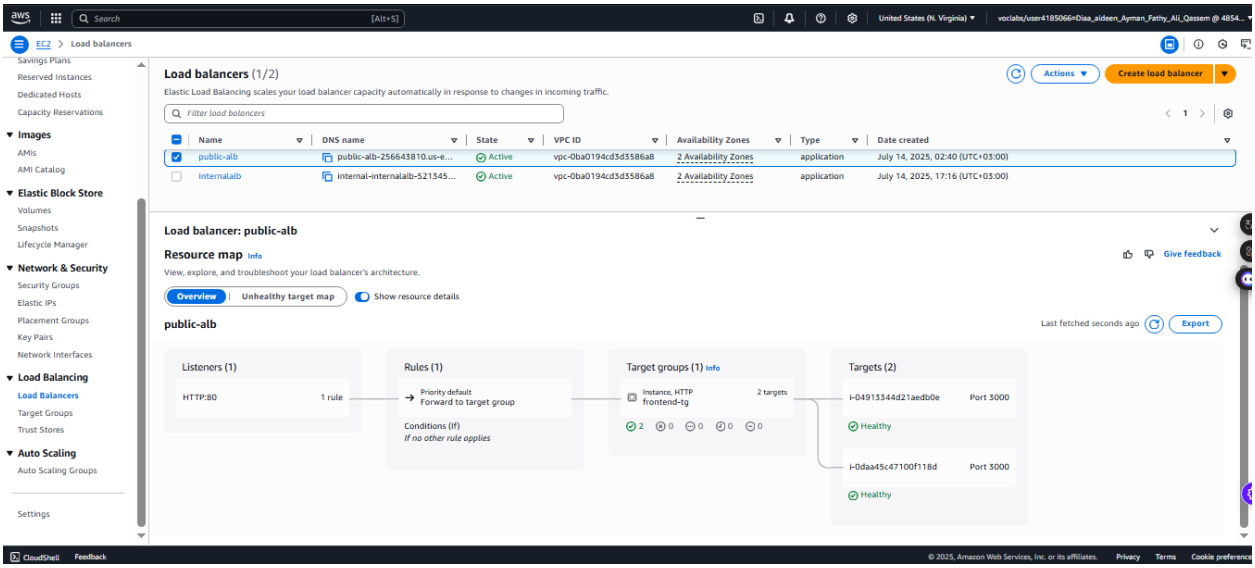


The following picture shows the resources created by Terraform on the console.

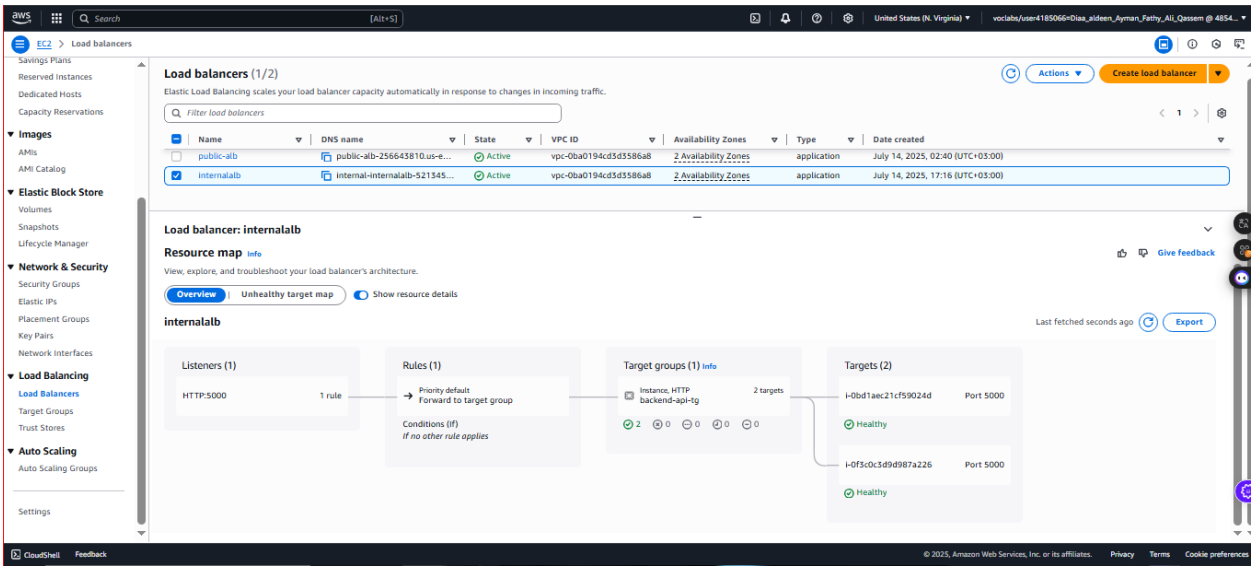
1- Resource Map For VPC

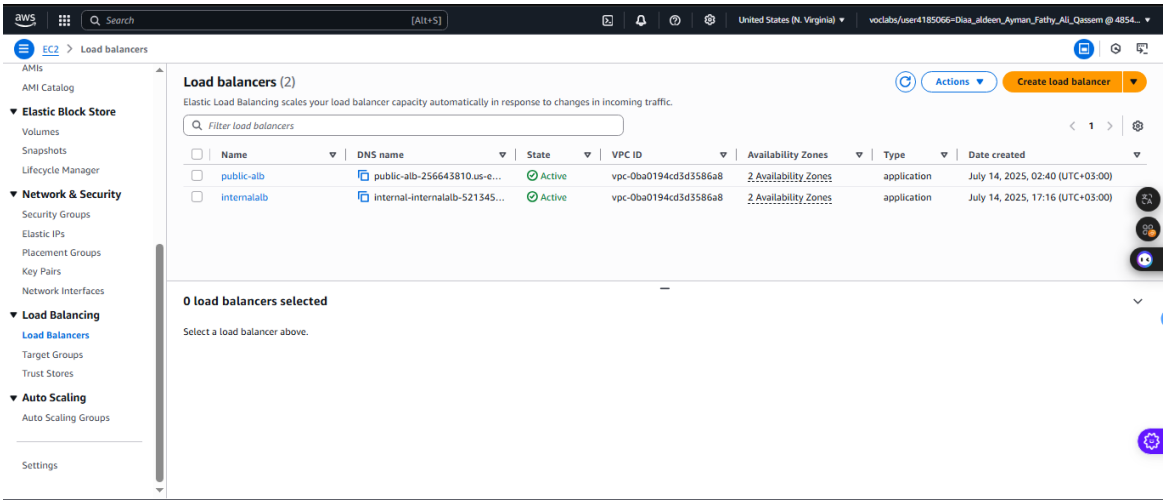


2- Resource Map For Public LB

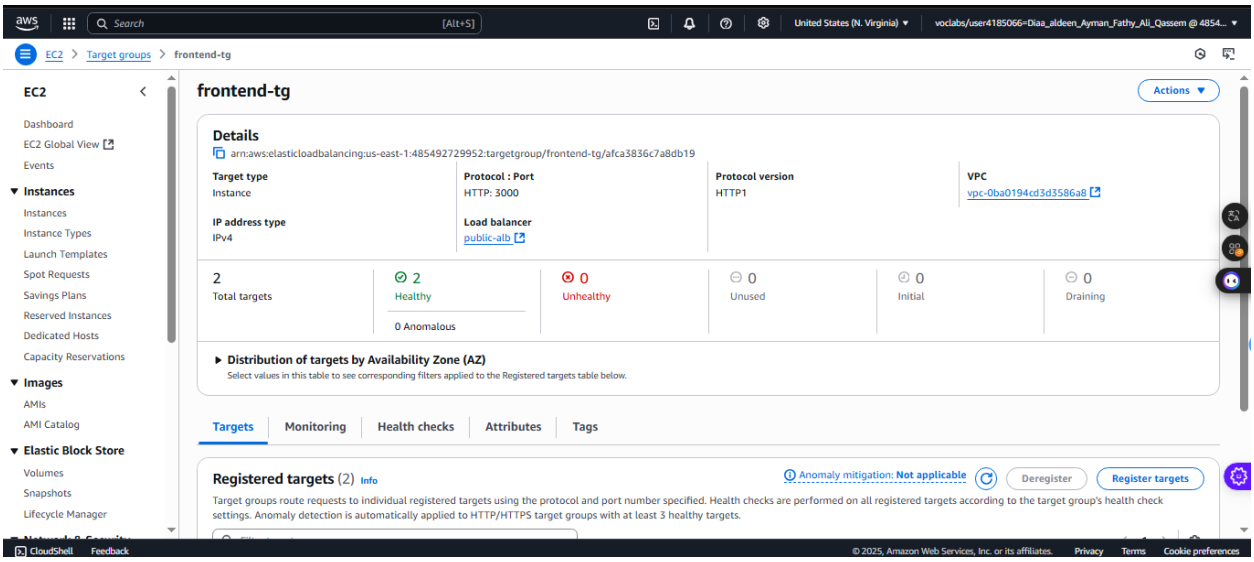


3- Resource Map For Internal LB

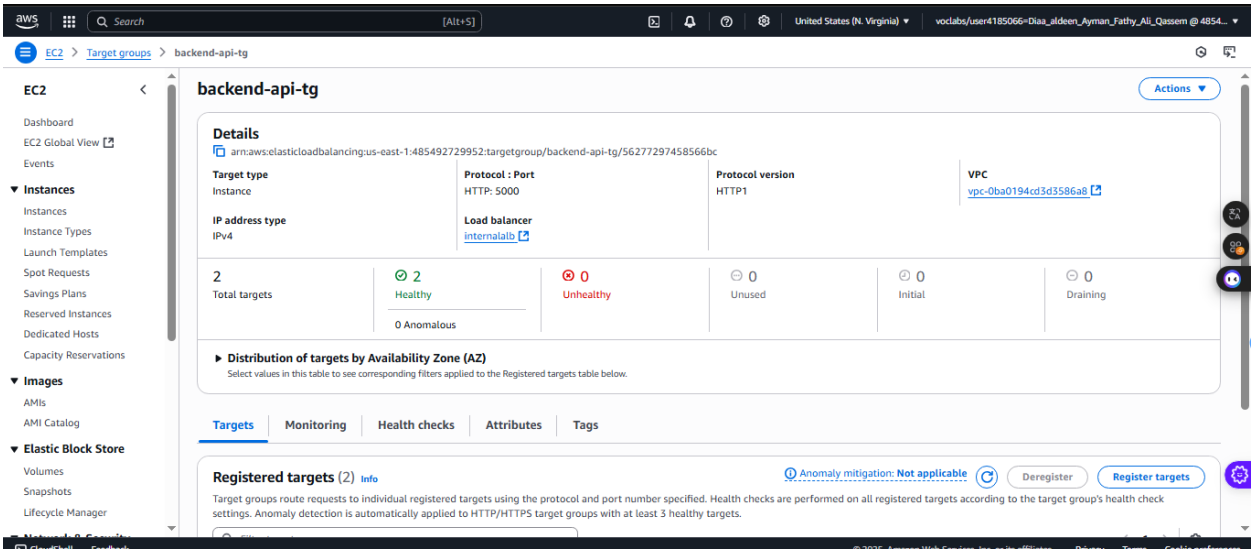




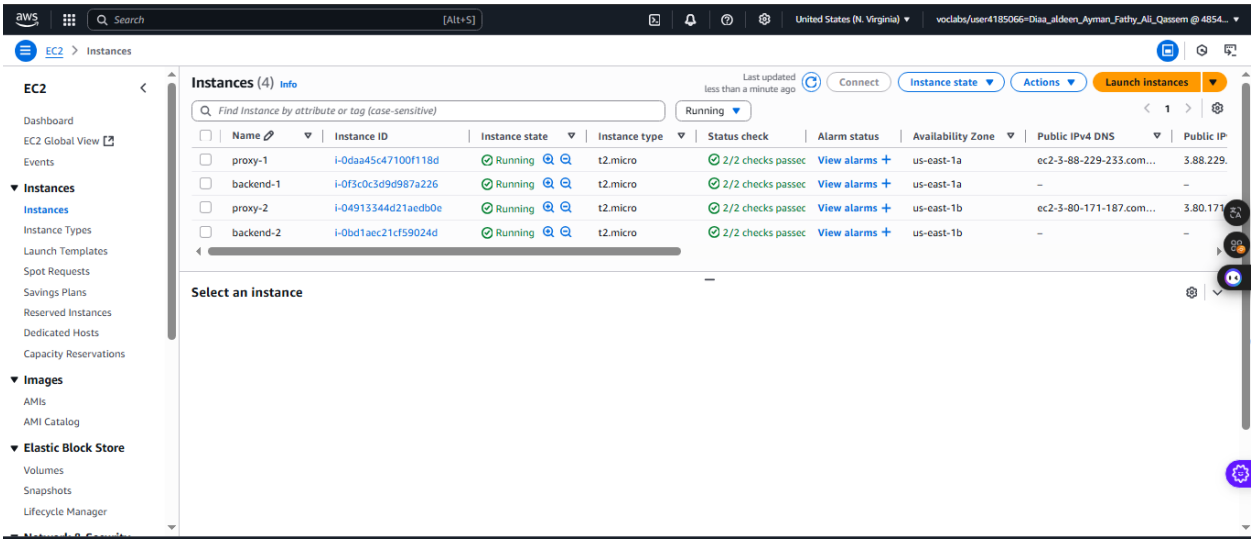
The frontend target group here shows that both servers are in a healthy state.



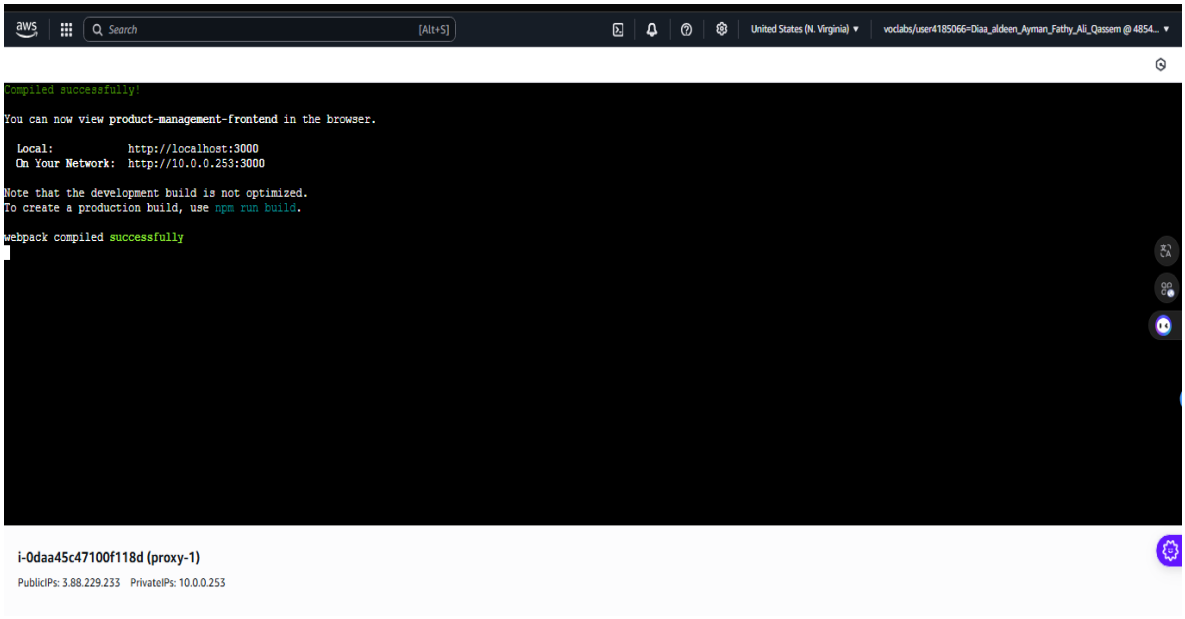
Also, the backend target group shows that both servers are in a healthy state.

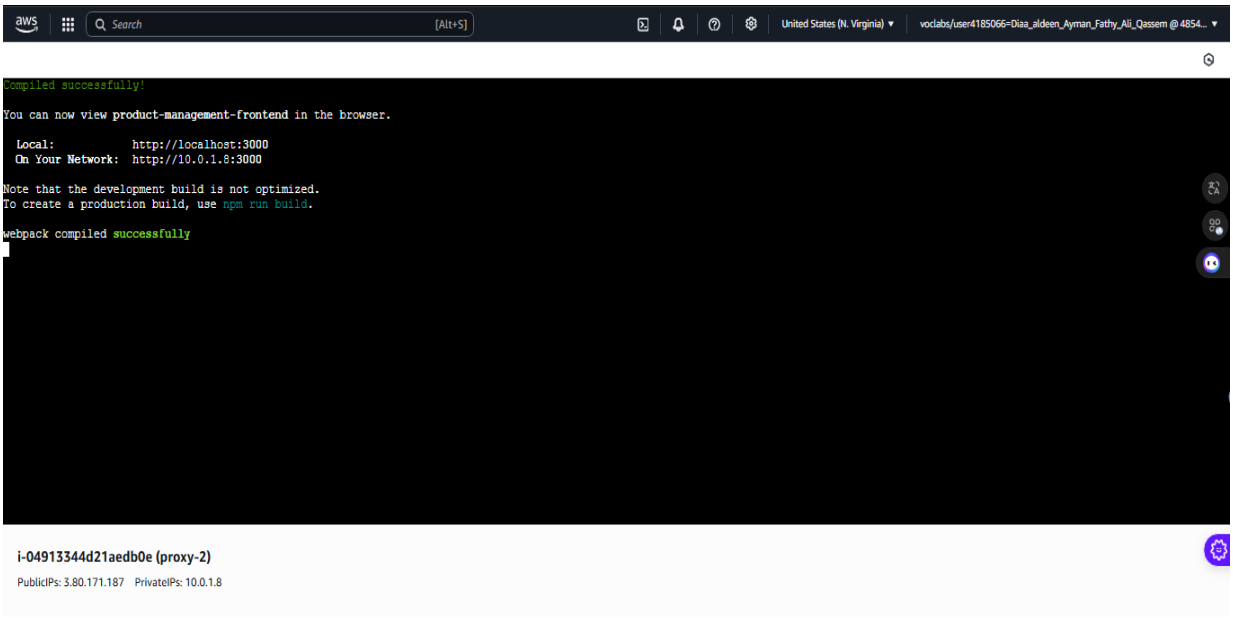


Here, there are four EC2 instances created. Two for the reverse proxy and two for the backend.



The following two snapshots include accessing the two proxy EC2 instances via the console. These instances include the frontend of the application.





Here, I have accessed the backend instances via SSH from the proxy instances by adding the public key of the instances for passwordless access.

```
[ec2-user@ip-10-0-3-237 backend-app]$ npm run start

> backend@1.0.0 start
> node server.js

[dotenv@17.2.0] injecting env (2) from .env (tip: ⚙ write to custom object with { processEnv: myObject })
(node:9358) [MONGODB DRIVER] Warning: useNewUrlParser is a deprecated option: useNewUrlParser has no effect since N
ion
(Use `node --trace-warnings ...` to show where the warning was created)
(node:9358) [MONGODB DRIVER] Warning: useUnifiedTopology is a deprecated option: useUnifiedTopology has no effect s
r version
Server running on port 5000
Connected to MongoDB
```

```
[ec2-user@ip-10-0-3-237 backend-app]$ nvm install 17.2.0
################################################################################################################################
Computing checksum with sha256sum
Checksums matched!
Now using node v17.2.0 (npm v8.1.4)
[ec2-user@ip-10-0-3-237 backend-app]$ npm run start

> backend@1.0.0 start
> node server.js

[dotenv@17.2.0] injecting env (2) from .env (tip: ⚙ write to custom object with { processEnv: myObject })
(node:9358) [MONGODB DRIVER] Warning: useNewUrlParser is a deprecated option: useNewUrlParser has no effect since Node.js
ion
(Use `node --trace-warnings ...` to show where the warning was created)
(node:9358) [MONGODB DRIVER] Warning: useUnifiedTopology is a deprecated option: useUnifiedTopology has no effect since N
r version
Server running on port 5000
Connected to MongoDB
```

Here, I have configured the Reverse proxy for the instances.

```
server {
    listen 4000;

    location / {
        proxy_pass http://internal-internalalb-521345524.us-east-1.elb.amazonaws.com:5000/;
        proxy_http_version 1.1;
        proxy_set_header Upgrade $http_upgrade;
        proxy_set_header Connection 'upgrade';
        proxy_set_header Host $host;
        proxy_cache_bypass $http_upgrade;
    }
}

"/etc/nginx/nginx.conf" [readonly] 97L, 2692B
```

i-04913344d21aedb0e (proxy-2)

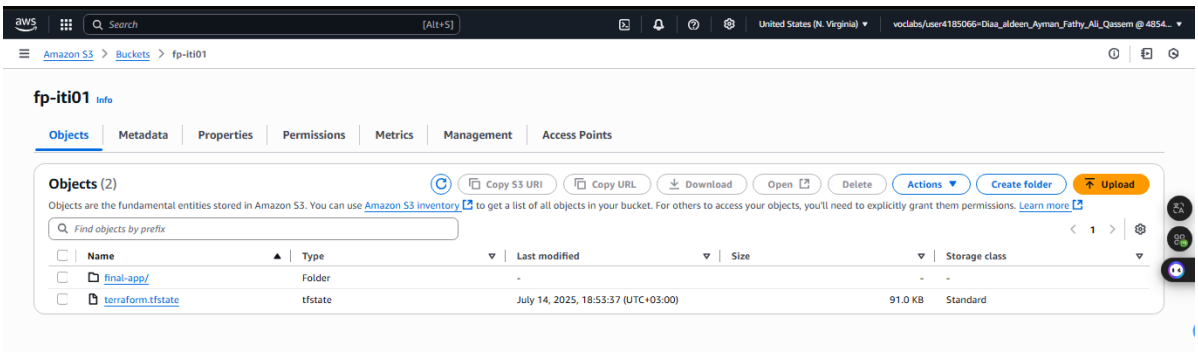
PublicIPs: 3.80.171.187 PrivateIPs: 10.0.1.8

```
    server {
    listen 4000;

    location / {
        proxy_pass http://internal-internalalb-521345524.us-east-1.elb.amazonaws.com:5000/;
        proxy_http_version 1.1;
        proxy_set_header Upgrade $http_upgrade;
        proxy_set_header Connection 'upgrade';
        proxy_set_header Host $host;
        proxy_cache_bypass $http_upgrade;
    }
}

# Settings for a TLS enabled server.
#
#    server {
#        listen       443 ssl;
#        listen       [::]:443 ssl;
#        http2        on;
"/etc/nginx/nginx.conf" 97L, 2696B
```

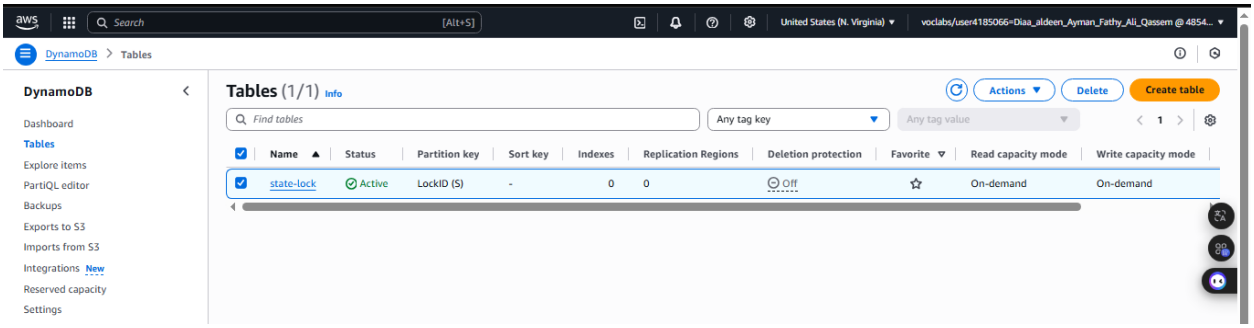
i-0daa45c47100f118d (proxy-1)

PublicIPs: 3.88.229.233 PrivateIPs: 10.0.0.253

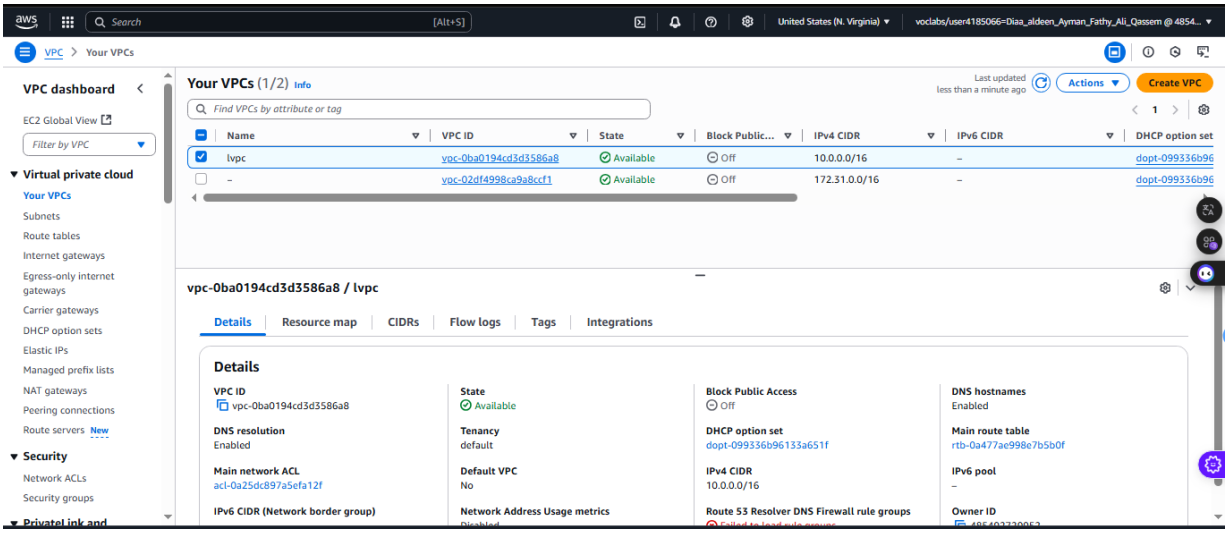
Since we specified the backend as the S3 bucket to store the state file, we can view the state file here.



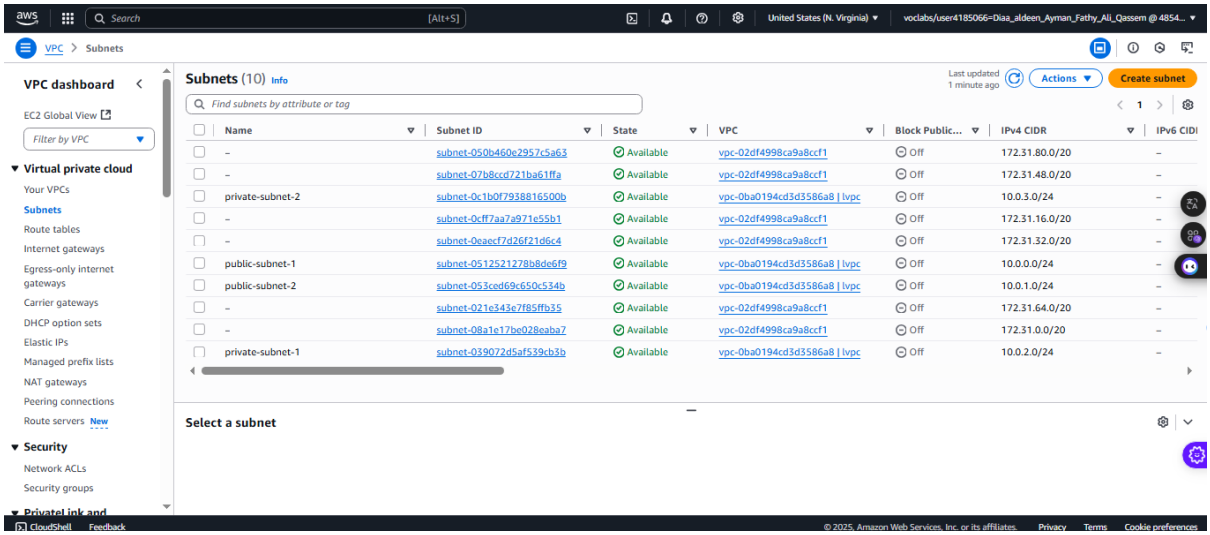
Also, I have created a DynamoDB table to maintain the state of the state file and prevent simultaneous edits on it.



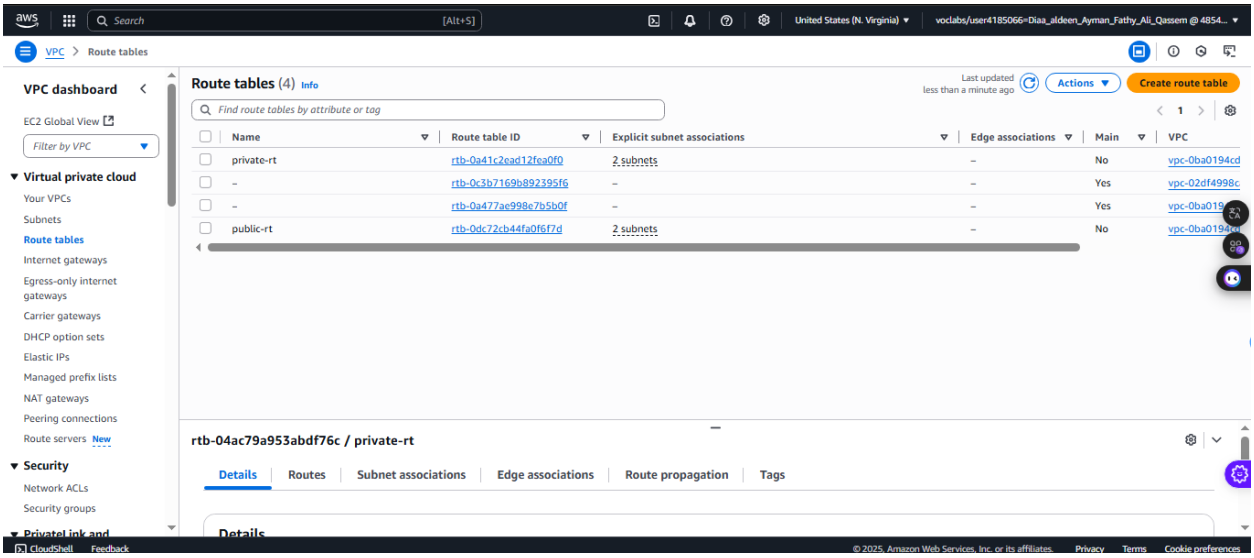
The following picture shows the VPC created.



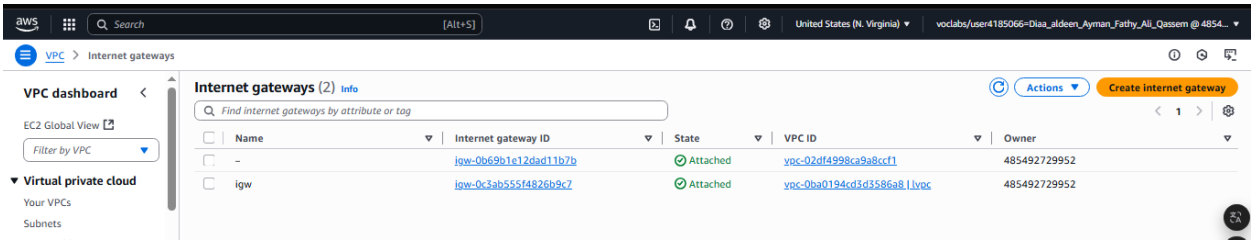
The VPC contains four subnets. Two private subnets and two public subnets.



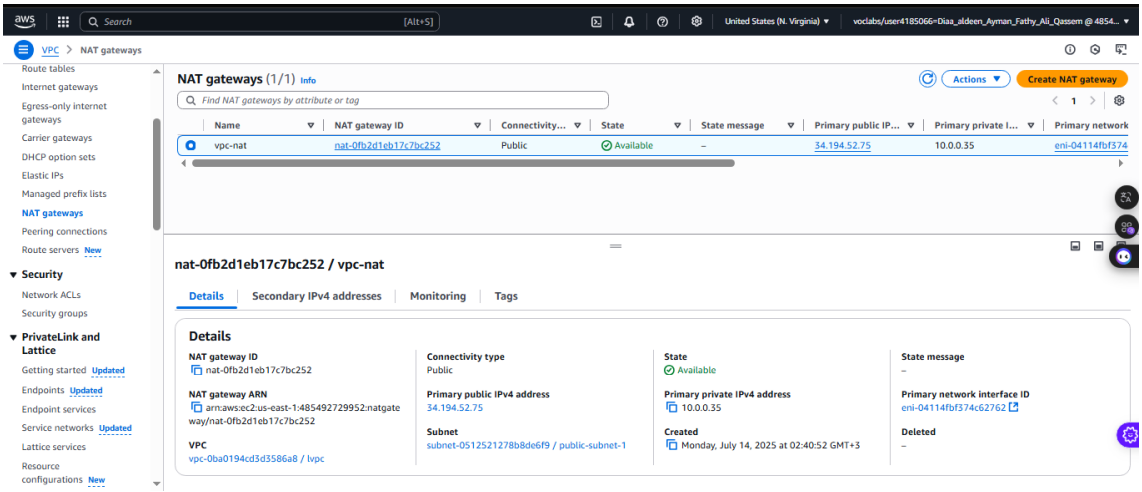
I also associated the public subnet with a route table called “public-rt”, and the private subnet with another route table called “private-rt”



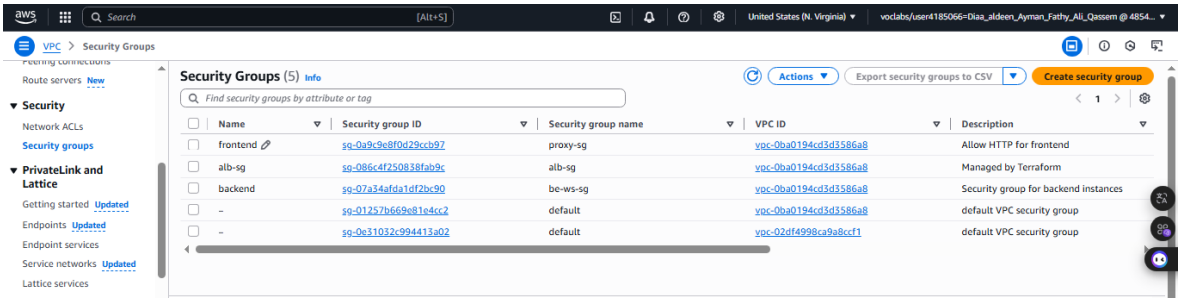
After, I created an internet gateway to allow access for the public EC2 instances on the internet.



The, I created a NAT gateway as well to allow communication for the private EC2 instances



Further, I created security groups for the frontend, the backend, and the ALB, and allowed the needed rules on these SGs.



The below screenshot shows the application running.