



Network Monitoring and Management

NetFlow Overview



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Agenda

Netflow

- What it is and how it works
- Uses and Applications

Flow-tools

- Architectural issues
- Software, tools etc

Lab

Network Flows

- Packets or frames that have a common attribute
- Creation and expiration policy – what conditions start and stop a flow.
- Counters – packets, bytes, time.
- Routing information – AS, network mask, interfaces.

Cisco's Definition of a Flow

Unidirectional sequence of packets sharing

1. Source IP address
2. Destination IP address
3. Source port for UDP or TCP, 0 for other protocols
4. Destination port for UDP or TCP, type and code for ICMP, or 0 for other protocols
5. IP protocol
6. Ingress interface (SNMP ifIndex)
7. IP Type of Service

Network Flows

- Unidirectional or bidirectional.
- Bidirectional flows can contain other information such as round trip time, TCP behavior.
- Application flows look past the headers to classify packets by their contents.
- Aggregated flows – flows of flows.

Working with Flows

- Generate the flows from device (usually a router).
- Export flows from the device to collector
 - Configure version of flows
 - Sampling rates
- Collect the flows
 - Tools to Collect Flows - Flow-tools
- Analyze them
 - More tools available, can write your own

Flow Descriptors

- A Key with more elements will generate more flows.
- Greater number of flows equals:
 - More post processing time to generate reports
 - more memory and CPU requirements for device generating flows
 - More storage needed on the flow processing server
- Depends on application. Traffic engineering vs. intrusion detection.

Flow Accounting

- Accounting information accumulated with flows.
- Packets, Bytes, Start Time, End Time.
- Network routing information – masks and autonomous system number.

Flow Generation/Collection

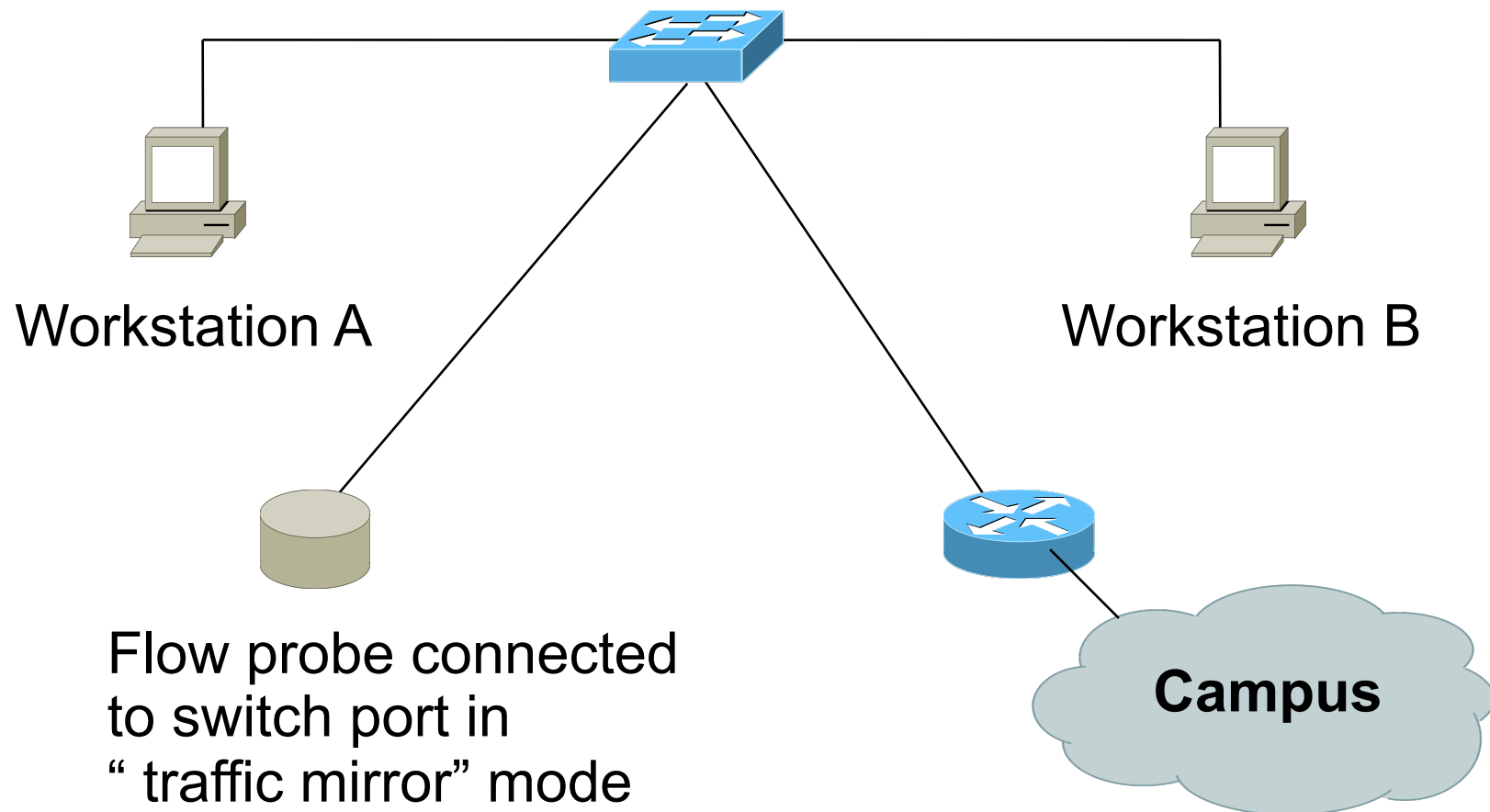
Passive monitor

- A passive monitor (usually a Unix host) receives all data and generates flows.
- Resource intensive

Router or other existing network device

- Router or other existing devices like switch, generate flows.
- Sampling is possible
- Nothing new needed

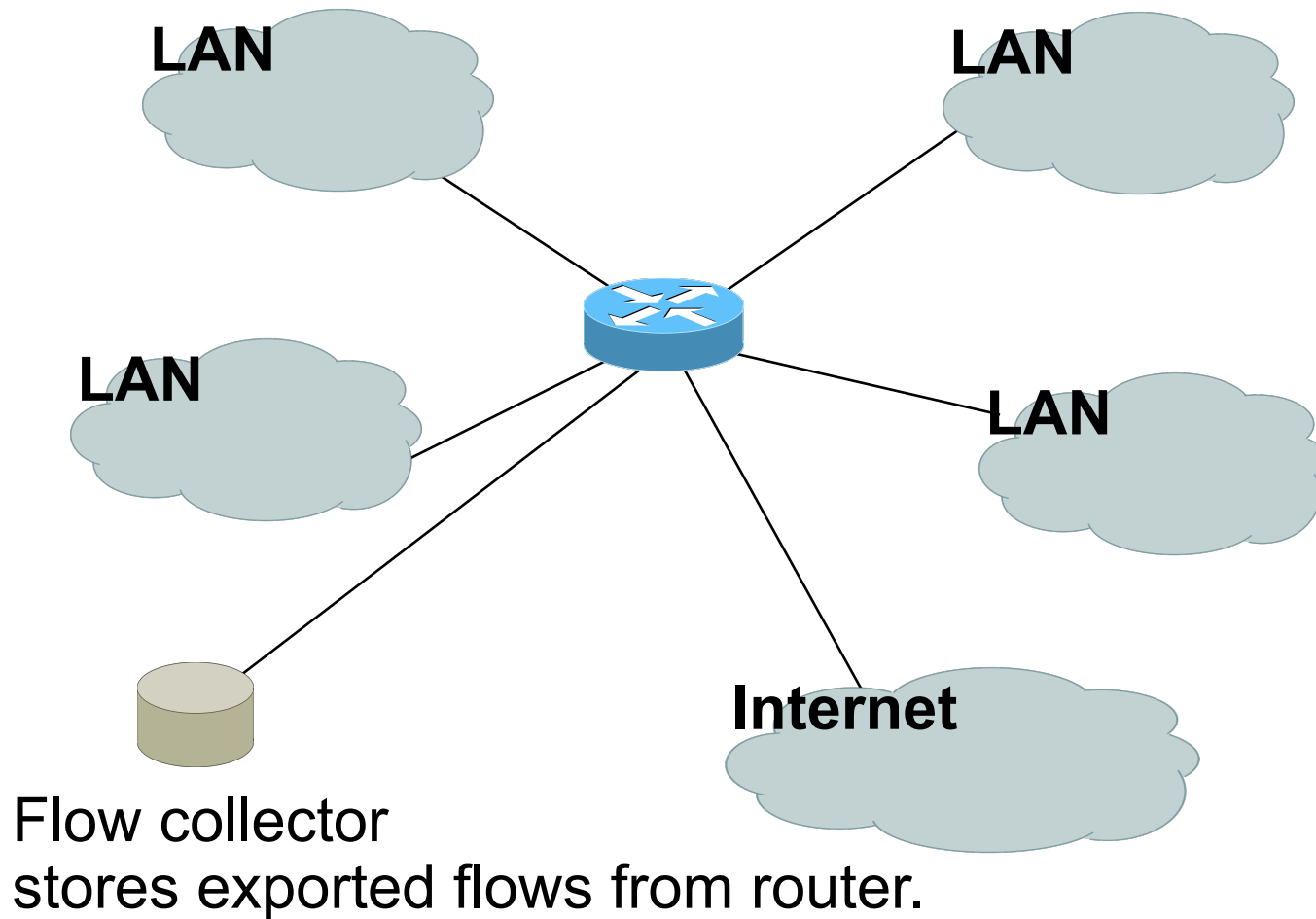
Passive Monitor Collection



Passive Collector

- Using passive collection, not all flows in the network will be seen as opposed to collection from the router
- The collector will only see flows from the network point it is connected on
- However this method does relieve the router from processing netflows and exporting them
- Useful on links with only one entry into the network or where only flows from one section of the network are needed

Router Collection



Router Collection

- With this method, all flows in the network can be observed
- However, more work for the router in processing and exporting the flows
- Optionally, one can choose on which interfaces netflow collection is needed and not activate it on others
- Also, if there is a router on each LAN, netflow can be activated on those routers to reduce the load on the core router

Cisco NetFlow

- Unidirectional flows.
- IPv4 unicast and multicast.
- Aggregated and unaggregated.
- Flows exported via UDP.
- Supported on IOS and CatOS platforms.
- Catalyst NetFlow is different implementation.

Cisco NetFlow Versions

- 4 Unaggregated types (1,5,6,7).
- 14 Aggregated types (8.x, 9).
- Each version has its own packet format.
- Version 1 does not have sequence numbers – no way to detect lost flows.
- The “version” defines what type of data is in the flow.
- Some versions specific to Catalyst platform.

NetFlow Version 1

- Key fields: Source/Destination IP, Source/Destination Port, IP Protocol, ToS, Input interface.
- Accounting: Packets, Octets, Start/End time, Output interface
- Other: Bitwise OR of TCP flags.
- Obsolete

NetFlow Versions 2-4

- Cisco internal
- Were never released

NetFlow v5

- Key fields: Source/Destination IP, Source/Destination Port, IP Protocol, ToS, Input interface.
- Accounting: Packets, Octets, Start/End time, Output interface.
- Other: Bitwise OR of TCP flags, Source/Destination AS and IP Mask.
- Packet format adds sequence numbers for detecting lost exports.
- IPv4 only

NetFlow v8

- Aggregated v5 flows.
- Not all flow types available on all equipments
- Much less data to post process, but loses fine granularity of v5 – no IP addresses.

NetFlow v9

- IPv6 support
- Additional fields like MPLS labels
- Builds on earlier versions

Cisco IOS Configuration

- Configured on each input interface.
- Define the version.
- Define the IP address of the collector (where to send the flows).
- Optionally enable aggregation tables.
- Optionally configure flow timeout and main (v5) flow table size.
- Optionally configure sample rate.

Cisco IOS Configuration

```
ip flow-top-talkers
  top 10
  sort-by bytes
```

```
gw-169-223-2-0#sh ip flow top-talkers
```

SrcIf	SrcIPaddress	DstIf	DstIPaddress	Pr	SrcP	DstP	Bytes
Fa0/1	169.223.2.2	Fa0/0	169.223.11.33	06	0050	0B64	3444K
Fa0/1	169.223.2.2	Fa0/0	169.223.11.33	06	0050	0B12	3181K
Fa0/0	169.223.11.33	Fa0/1	169.223.2.2	06	0B12	0050	56K
Fa0/0	169.223.11.33	Fa0/1	169.223.2.2	06	0B64	0050	55K
Fa0/1	169.223.2.2	Local	169.223.2.1	01	0000	0303	18K
Fa0/1	169.223.2.130	Fa0/0	64.18.197.134	06	9C45	0050	15K
Fa0/1	169.223.2.130	Fa0/0	64.18.197.134	06	9C44	0050	12K
Fa0/0	213.144.138.195	Fa0/1	169.223.2.130	06	01BB	DC31	7167
Fa0/0	169.223.15.102	Fa0/1	169.223.2.2	06	C917	0016	2736
Fa0/1	169.223.2.2	Local	169.223.2.1	06	DB27	0016	2304

```
10 of 10 top talkers shown. 49 flows processed.
```

Cisco Command Summary

- Enable CEF (done by default)

- `ip cef`

- Enable flow on each interface

- `ip route cache flow`

- OR

- `ip flow ingress`

- `ip flow egress`

- View flows

- `show ip cache flow`

- `show ip flow top-talkers`

Cisco Command Summary

- Exporting Flows to a collector

```
ip flow-export version 5 [origin-as|peer-as]  
ip flow-export destination x.x.x.x <udp-port>
```

- Origin AS will include the origin AS Number in the flow while Peer AS will only include the AS Number of the peering neighbor
- Exporting aggregated flows

```
ip flow-aggregation cache as|prefix|dest|source|proto  
enabled  
export destination x.x.x.x <udp-port>
```

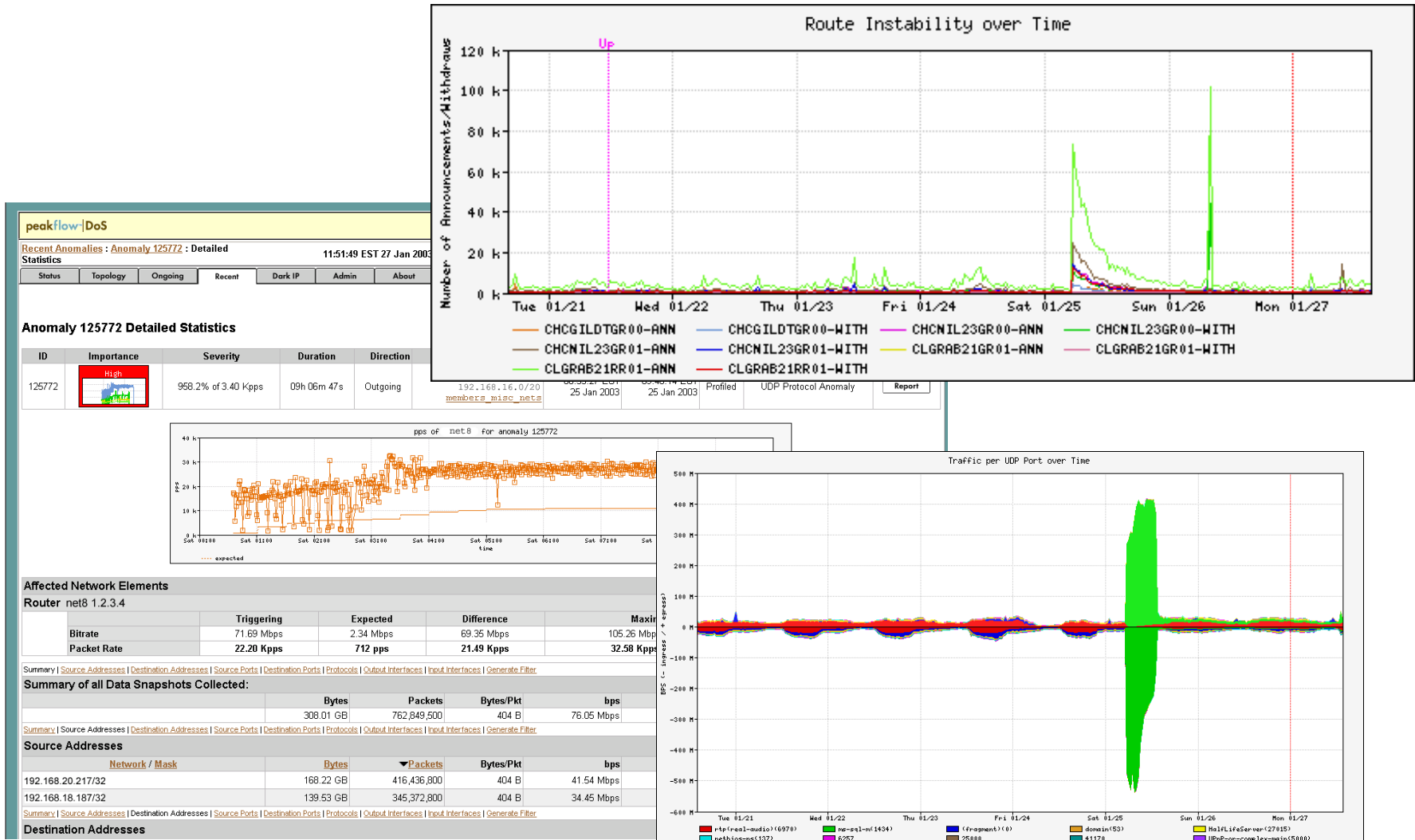



Flows and Applications

Uses for NetFlow

- Problem identification / solving
 - Traffic classification
 - DoS Traceback (some slides by Danny McPherson)
- Traffic Analysis and Engineering
 - Inter-AS traffic analysis
 - Reporting on application proxies
- Accounting (or billing)
 - Cross verification from other sources
 - Can cross-check with SNMP data

Detect Anomalous Events: SQL “Slammer” Worm*



Flow-based Detection (cont)*

Once baselines are built anomalous activity can be detected

- Pure **rate-based** (pps or bps) anomalies may be legitimate or malicious
- Many **misuse** attacks can be immediately recognized, even **without** baselines (e.g., TCP SYN or RST floods)
- **Signatures** can also be defined to identify “interesting” transactional data (e.g., proto udp and port 1434 and 404 octets(376 payload) == slammer!)
- Temporal compound signatures can be defined to detect with higher precision

Flow-based Commercial Tools...*

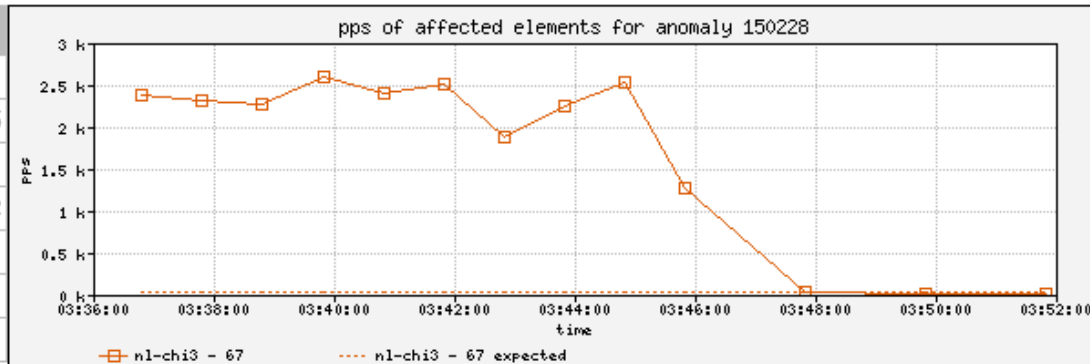
Anomaly 150228

Get Report: [PDF](#) [XML](#)

ID	Importance	Duration	Start Time	Direction	Type	Resource
150228	High 130.0% of 2 Kpps	17 mins	03:34, Aug 16	Incoming	Bandwidth (Profiled)	Microsoft 207.46.0.0/16 windowsupdate.com

Traffic Characterization

Sources	204.38.130.0/24
	204.38.130.192/26
	1024 - 1791
Destination	207.46.248.234/32
	80 (http)
Protocols	tcp (6)
TCP Flags	S (0x02)

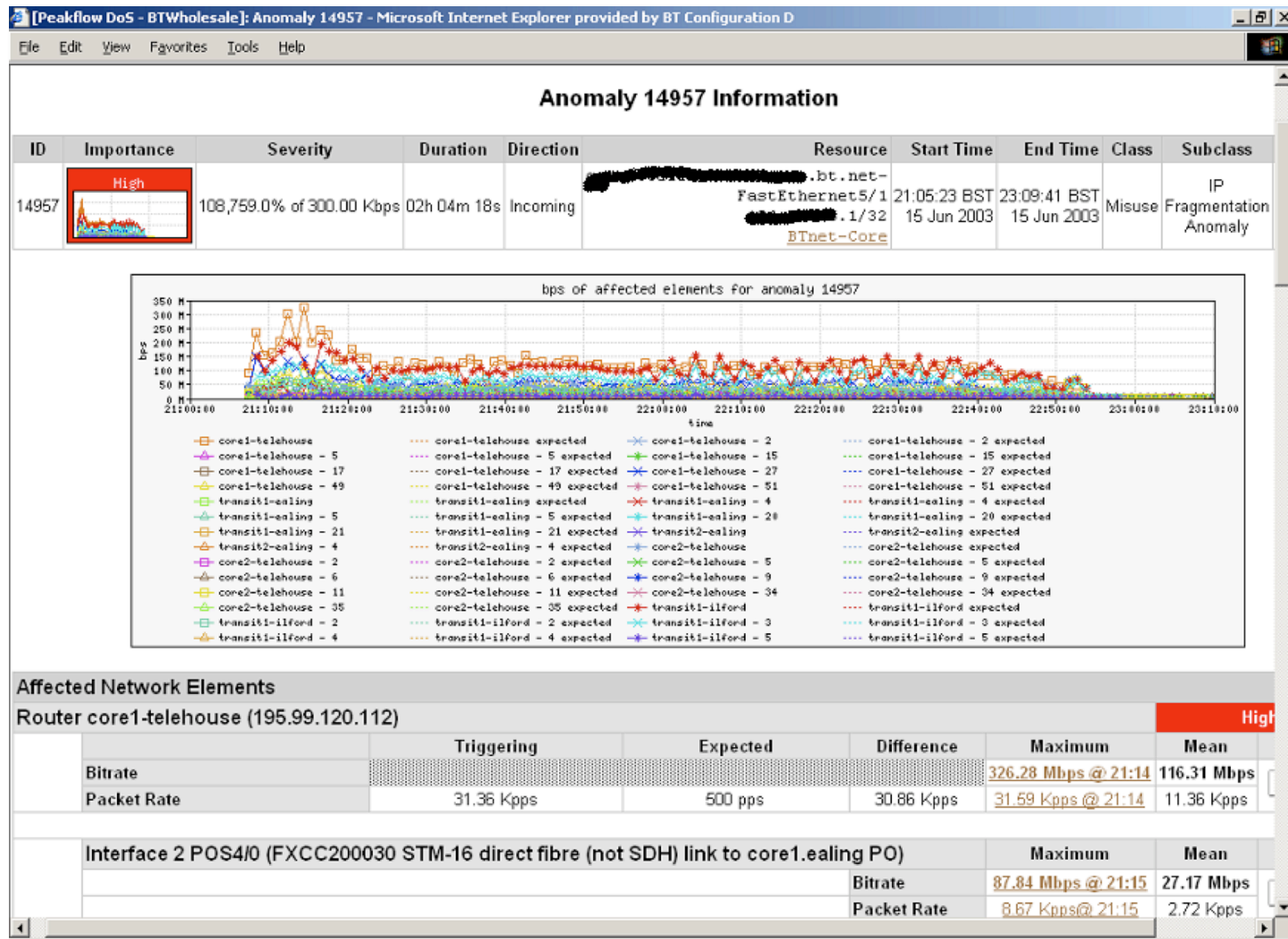


Affected Network Elements

	Importance	Expected	Observed bps		Observed pps		
		pps	Max	Mean	Max	Mean	
Router nl-chi3 198.110.131.125	High						
Interface 67 at-1/1/0.14 <i>pvc to WMU</i>		26	832 K	563.1 K	2.6 K	1.7 K	Details

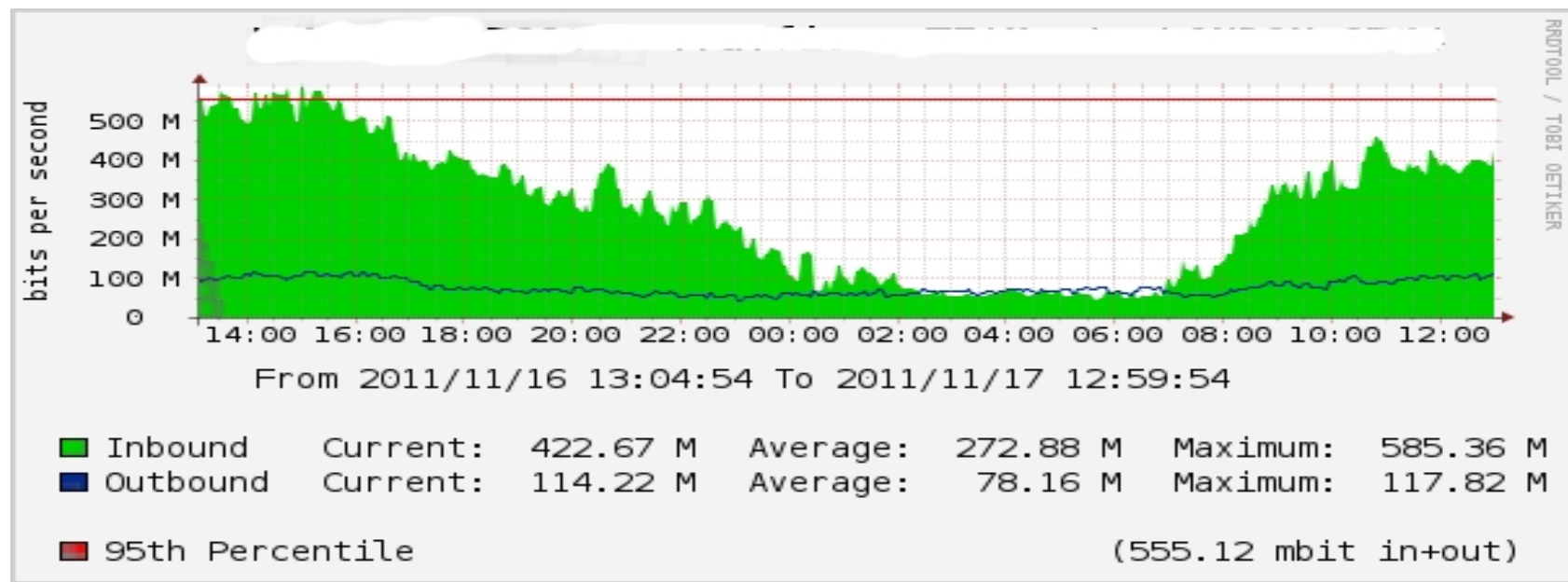
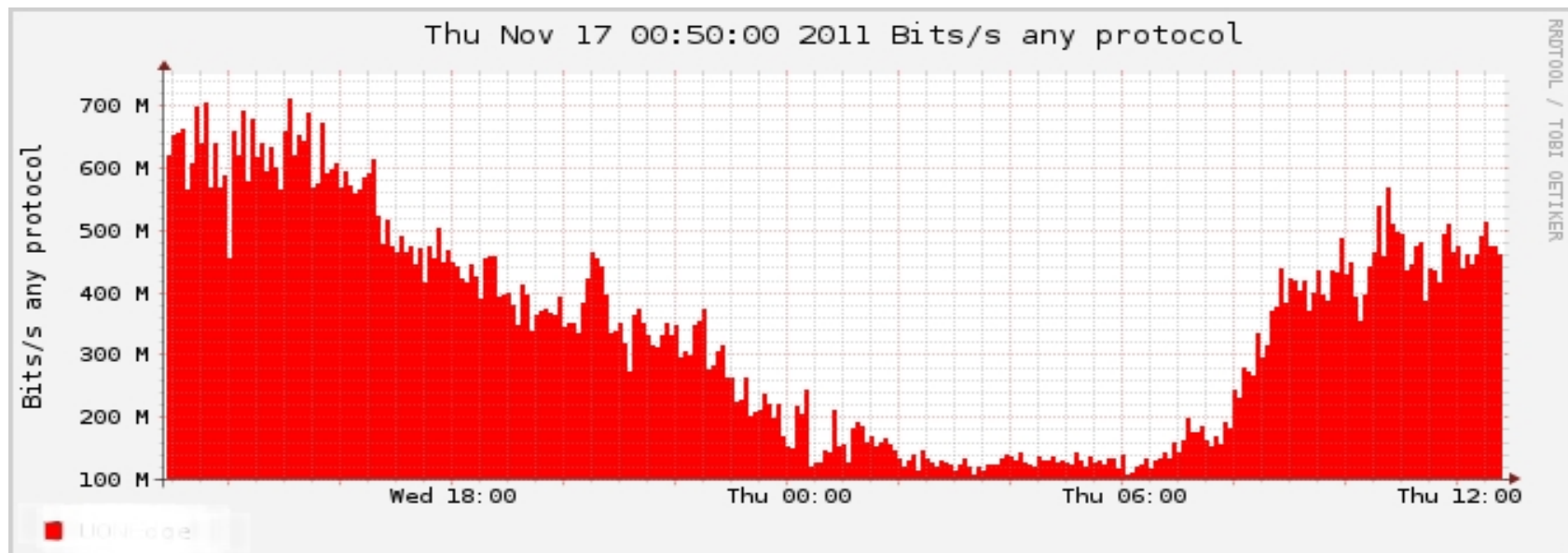
Anomaly Comments

Commercial Detection: A Large Scale DOS Attack



Accounting

Flow based accounting can be a good supplement to SNMP based accounting.



References

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- Netflow HOW-TO
<http://www.linuxgeek.org/netflow-howto.php>
- IETF standards effort:
<http://www.ietf.org/html.charters/ipfix-charter.html>

References

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<http://abilene-netflow.itec.oar.net/>
- Flow-tools mailing list:
flow-tools@splintered.net
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- Cisco NetFlow Collector User Guide
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