CASE STUDY

Brazilian Attorney General's Office Guarantees Remote Access Security to 14,000 Employees with FortiSASE

Advocacia-Geral da União (AGU) represents the Brazilian government in the legal field. AGU's responsibilities revolve around the judicial defense of the federal government and its public agencies. With approximately 14,000 employees, 6,000 of those being lawyers and prosecutors, inside and outside the country, and 149 units strategically located in the main capitals and some cities in the countryside, AGU manages a vast network to deliver high-stakes legal services while safeguarding sensitive government information.

Given the institution's role, AGU members, civil servants, and employees must deal with extremely sensitive data. Some delicate cases contain highly confidential data or information that presents vulnerabilities for involved parties. Data flowing in and out of AGU must be protected by a strong security layer to prevent leaks or cyberthreats.

A New Network Infrastructure

Guided by the Federal Court of Auditors' standards for cybersecurity in government agencies, AGU embarked on a strategic modernization journey to implement cutting-edge network and security solutions that would reduce the costs allocated to cybersecurity without losing performance. AGU researched SD-WAN solutions and developed an implementation plan to achieve the desired network architecture. As a public agency, the institution conducted a bidding process in three lots, divided into the following categories: network links (internet), SD-WAN solution, and SASE/SSE services. Fortinet won the bidding process for SD-WAN and SASE/SSE services. The winning bidder for the network links (internet) also chose Fortinet technology to support its service, resulting in AGU benefiting from having solutions from the same vendor across its new network architecture.

Before implementing the Fortinet solutions, AGU relied on an MPLS-WAN system centralized in Brasilia. "The old network architecture comprised a centralized internet exit system in Brasilia, which connected all 149 units," states Álvaro da Costa Rondon Neto, IT director at AGU. "While it helped connect all the units, the setup soon proved unsustainable. The MPLS network was expensive and difficult to scale; the system struggled to meet growing demands for bandwidth." Additionally, reliance on VPN access left the network vulnerable to modern cyberthreats. AGU also saw how its MPLS network was causing delays in its operation.

AGU began implementing Fortinet solutions by deploying FortiGate Next-Generation Firewalls (NGFWs), which provide the end-to-end network protection needed to enable the Fortinet Secure SD-WAN. This results in a hybrid mesh firewall that improves threat detection capabilities. AGU deployed Fortinet Secure SD-WAN in 149 locations, with two links each, adding another three dedicated links at its headquarters in Brasilia. "Each unit now has two internet access links, one with dedicated access and full speed, and another broadband link with an 80% bandwidth guarantee," states Rondon Neto.

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"By implementing FortiSASE and Fortinet Secure SD-WAN, we enhanced security while reducing network infrastructure costs by approximately R$1.5 million per year."

Álvaro da Costa Rondon Neto
IT Director, AGU

Details

Customer: Advocacia-Geral da União (AGU)

Industry: Government

Headquarters: Brasilia, Brazil

Number of SASE Users: 14,000

Number of Secure SD-WAN Locations: 149

By replacing the legacy MPLS network with dual internet links, AGU increased bandwidth capacity by two or three times, dramatically improving connectivity while ensuring a robust security layer with centralized management and advanced content filtering. AGU employees have felt the benefits directly in their daily routines. Besides the security, access has become faster, and connection problems have been resolved.

Avoiding Vulnerabilities with Zero-Trust Network Access

Next, AGU deployed the FortiSASE solution to ensure secure access to the agency's internal resources, cloud services, and applications. The solution also effectively addressed potential vulnerabilities from VPN use and hybrid or remote work.

By leveraging the SASE solution, AGU replaced remote access via traditional VPNs with a zero-trust network access (ZTNA) approach. This enabled the IT team to securely connect users to internal resources while enforcing strict access control and safeguarding sensitive data, such as confidential legal files and case information, against unauthorized access.

The secure web gateway (SWG) further bolstered security by monitoring and filtering all web traffic. Employees working remotely or in the office can now safely access online resources without exposing the network to threats. Integrated services such as data loss prevention (DLP) helped protect against inadvertent or malicious data breaches, while threat control provided advanced threat detection and mitigation.

Implementing these solutions helped AGU gain peace of mind. AGU's SASE structure encompasses 14,000 users, two data centers, 149 offices, and private and cloud-based applications. All data is protected with the highest standards of security and reliability. "In a general moment of heightened insecurity in the technological environment, the security gains we have had with the functionalities implemented so far with FortiSASE have already exceeded our expectations during the project's conception," states Rondon Neto.

AGU deployed FortiSASE with the support of Fortinet partner Advanta Sistemas de Telecomunicações e Serviços de Informática (OAKMONT Group). AGU also relied on the FortiCare Advanced Support service throughout the implementation, which helped ensure that the solutions were implemented smoothly, without user disruptions. The service remains available for contingency. "Our main challenge with cybersecurity solutions is the deployment. We need to show results and benefits for the users so they can understand the benefits. We have achieved that with Fortinet," compliments Rondon Neto.

Integrated Fortinet Secure SD-WAN and FortiSASE positively impacted AGU's IT operations. The savings generated by the new solutions further attracted the attention of the AGU IT director. "By implementing FortiSASE and Fortinet Secure SD-WAN, we were able to enhance security while reducing network infrastructure costs by approximately R$1.5 million per year," states Rondon Neto. Furthermore, AGU has observed notable enhancements in the TCU evaluation system, which employs CIS v8 standards to assess government agencies' cybersecurity and network monitoring capabilities.

Unified Management for Seamless Operations

Additional Fortinet solutions enable AGU to reap even more significant benefits. FortiManager enables AGU's IT staff to manage and monitor the entire network infrastructure through a single dashboard, providing a unified view of the solutions and their applications. AGU also employs FortiAnalyzer to monitor and report network access and identify traffic issues primarily affecting remote access users outside Brazil. Finally, FortiMonitor ensured continuous monitoring of network health and availability. "Without Fortinet solutions, it would be impossible for me to have this network visibility and obtain accurate and meaningful data to identify improvement areas," says Rondon Neto.

Business Impact

- Significant savings by reducing costs by R$1.5 million per year
- Improved performance and security by providing remote access to 14,000 employees
- Increased protection of sensitive and confidential data in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation
- Improvement in brand reputation

Solutions

- FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall
- Fortinet Secure SD-WAN
- FortiSASE
- FortiManager
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiMonitor

Services

- FortiCare Advanced Support

The success of the Fortinet deployment isn't the end for AGU. The agency is committed to continuous improvement of its network infrastructure. Following a new bidding process won by Fortinet, AGU is now preparing to deploy FortiSwitch Ethernet switches in its units. The solution is anticipated to enhance the security of both AGU's internal and external networks.

"Monitoring our network activity in real time and optimizing traffic patterns will help further improve network performance. I am excited to see this infrastructure in action," states Rondon Neto. The plans devised by AGU and the improvements made so far demonstrate that a results-oriented approach can drive significant progress with optimized resources.

"It is essential that IT leaders choose solutions that fit their business needs, rather than simply selecting a product. At this stage, vendors offering integrated solutions are best suited to deliver optimal results. Fortinet solutions provide us with a robust and versatile solution capable of identifying areas for improvement and offering a range of options for continuous development," concludes Rondon Neto.

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