

Astaro Security Gateway 220

Editor's Note: To read the full-length version of this review, go to www.windowstpro.com and enter InstantDoc ID 97266.

The Astaro Security Gateway (ASG) 220 is an appliance that can be licensed and configured for a variety of network security functions, including firewall, VPN gateway, and intrusion prevention. Three subscription options enhance the basic functionality: Web Filtering adds virus protection and URL filtering to block access to certain Web sites; Email Filtering adds virus and spyware protection, phishing protection, and spam filtering; and Email Encryption supports digital signing and automated email encryption and decryption.

The ASG 220 is a 2.5GHz Intel Celeron-based system with 512MB memory and an 80GB hard disk. An LCD on the front panel displays basic system status, and seven of the eight 10/100 Ethernet ports are configurable; the eighth port is dedicated to a connection to other ASGs when running in high-availability or load-balancing configurations.

The ASG's WebAdmin is a browser-based interface, developed using Ajax, that lets you move quickly between screens. Astaro manages updates through the ASG's automatic



update service and leaves you with the ease-of-use experience you expect from an appliance. The interface is well organized and gives you granular control. I counted 184 active status and configuration screens, although I needed only nine to initially configure the appliance.

I configured WAN and LAN network interfaces, enabled dynamic Network Address Translation (NAT) and the intrusion prevention system (IPS), and defined three basic packet filters to permit internally originating sessions and drop all other packets.

With basic configuration complete, I enabled the WAN interface. My Skype and T-Mobile Wi-Fi connections came online, indicating a success-

ful configuration. I accessed a few standard (HTTP) and secure (HTTPS) Web sites to further confirm that all was working.

The Network Security status page shows statistics for the top IPS attacks blocked by IPS rule number. Although WebAdmin lets you disable a rule or alter the action taken when a rule is triggered, it has no interface to display individual IPS rule definitions. Astaro plans to add links to IPS rule information within WebAdmin in a future release.

The ASG has full site-to-site and remote-access VPN support for connection via Secure Sockets Layer (SSL), PPTP, IPsec, and L2TP over IPsec. The product supports both local-user and Remote Authentication Dial-In User Service (RADIUS)-based user authentication, as well as certificate-based and pre-shared key session authentication.

The ASG worked well in my tests, although my experience wasn't uniformly perfect. WebAdmin locked up at times; the menu pane updated as I clicked in different areas, but the detail pane didn't update accordingly. An Astaro

spokesperson told me that this problem results from clicking to a new page before the current page finishes displaying; Astaro has a fix in the works.

By default, Web antivirus scanning disables download of several file types, including .exe files, which can be a problem for software distribution. Also, filtering uncategorized Web pages is enabled by default, but WebAdmin shows no sign of that on higher-level configuration screens. A graphical representation (e.g., a grayed check box) when some but not all options are enabled would be helpful here.

In addition to the appliance, Astaro Security Gateway Software Appliance—a software version of the ASG—can be licensed by number of protected IP addresses. Astaro offers a free license for noncommercial home use for 10 IP addresses or fewer, which includes the Web Filtering and Email Filtering subscriptions. Astaro

SUMMARY

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PROS: Broad feature set includes email encryption and signing, VPN, firewall, and antivirus; setup is easy, with many configuration options; Web-based administrative interface is very responsive; product is available both as an appliance and as software; licensing is favorable, including free use for as many as 10 IP addresses in home environment

CONS: Individual intrusion protection rules aren't visible from WebAdmin

RATING: ◆◆◆◆◆

PRICE: \$2,550 for appliance with basic feature set; \$6,645 for appliance and annual subscription to email filtering and encryption, Web filtering, and support five days per week

RECOMMENDATION: The Astaro Security Gateway 220's broad feature set and ability to be implemented on many platforms make it a must-see. Take this flexible, highly configurable perimeter security system for a test drive.

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also sells a VMware-based virtual appliance. The availability of software versions lets you quickly bring a software-based ASG into operation if the appliance fails.

I'm impressed with the ASG's feature set. It isn't the easiest firewall appliance to configure, but it isn't far off the mark—which is really extraordinary considering its broad feature set and plethora of configuration options. The ability to quickly configure a software-based backup unit will appeal to SMBs, and the ability to configure several appliances into a high-availability or load-balancing pool will appeal to larger environments. The inability to see details of individual IPS rules within the WebAdmin interface is the only significant shortcoming I found. The ASG is a must-see. If you're in the market for a perimeter security appliance, you should definitely try the ASG 220.

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—John Green

