Questions from Mitigating DDOS in the Fediverse with Mastodon*

June 28, 2023

Answers to these questions are provided by Renaud Chaput, Brix Gomez, and Hannah Aubry.

Ben: How can Fastly help other Fediverse instances protect against DDOS attacks?

Brix & Hannah: *Protection from DDOS attacks is an inherent feature of deploying a Content Delivery Network because CDNs are built to absorb spikes in requests to websites and apps. They're ideal for Fediverse instances due to the inherent spikiness of inter-instance communication using the ActivityPub protocol. For more advanced protection, our Next-Gen WAF (powered by Signal Sciences) uses the Network Learning Exchange (NLX) and SmartParse to effectively block malicious traffic.*

Our Fast Forward open source program provides organizations like Mastodon, and anyone building the good internet, access to Fastly's CSOC team (who spoke during the webinar) for assistance with mitigation during events DDOS attacks.

Anonymous: Are you permitted to estimate a currency figure ($, €) for how much an open source project would otherwise be billed for this level of service, if they were not on your Fast Forward program? If yes, how much?

Hannah: *Fastly has pledged $50 million in free services to open source projects and the nonprofits that support them through Fast Forward. We're pleased to partner closely with our program members to offer them products from across our lines which best serve them in building fast, engaging, and delightful experiences. We operate with discretion around our partners and customers, so we are not permitted to estimate the exact figure for Mastodon. Anyone interested in learning more about Fastly's pricing can reach out to our sales team, or Fast Forward!*

Anonymous: How much automation [percentage-wise] does CSOC rely on?

Brix: *More than automation, Fastly's CSOC relies more on our highly skilled, diverse, and globally distributed team to provide world class security support services.*

Anonymous: Approximately, in terms of currency, how much does running Mastodon on Fastly cost? With all the instances popping up after the twitter migration, how much does running a larger instance typically cost?

*These are questions we didn't get to in the live airing. Live questions answered can be viewed in the video.

Hannah: *We offer usage-based pricing, and packages for people who want a fixed expense on a monthly basis. You can learn more about each on our Pricing page.*

And through Fast Forward, we're able to offer free services and generous discounts to developers and builders contributing to the open internet ecosystem. If you think your project, instance, or community might be eligible, apply to Fast Forward.

Ricardo: Could something like Crowdsec (open-source Intrusion Prevention System) be used to make the entire swarm of servers/instance hosting different ActivityPub software benefit from a crowdsourced approach to ban bad actors?

Renaud: *Yes, this is something we are looking into for our future spam-fighting features. We are thinking about having a way to configure an external system for this (which could be shared between multiple servers or ActivityPub implementations), and this system could definitely benefit from getting Crowdsec signals, among others.*

Anonymous: What are some common misconceptions or myths surrounding DDOS attacks against Mastodon and their mitigation?

Renaud & Brix: *Some might say Mastodon instances are always the target of DDOS attacks given its open source nature. While Mastodon may come under a DDOS attack, they are not the sole target of attack given its open source nature. Cyber attacks are widespread in nature and anyone can be a target. Another misconception might be that Mastodon automatically handles DDOS attacks without user intervention — Mastodon partners with Fastly to help manage and mitigate DDOS attacks. Fastly CSOC is staffed by a globally distributed, highly skilled and diverse team that are available 24/7 to help mitigate and block DDOS attacks.*