Block an Application Using Management Center

Revised: June 16, 2026,

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Is this Guide for You?

This guide is for network administrators who manage Cisco Secure Firewall Threat Defense devices using Cisco Secure Firewall Management Center and have enabled Snort 3 as the inspection engine. It provides detailed steps to block an application using an access control policy rule that relies on Snort 3 application detection.

Sample scenario

Alex manages Threat Defense devices running Snort 3 and controlled by Management Center.

Video streaming applications are consuming excessive bandwidth during business hours.

Alex must:

- Block `YouTube`.
- Allow other general web browsing traffic.

Alex creates an access control policy rule using the application condition and sets the action to **Block**, then deploys the policy to the managed devices.

Overview

In Snort 3 deployments, application control is enforced through access control policy rules that use application conditions.

Snort 3 provides:

- Enhanced application detection.
- Improved encrypted traffic awareness (Server Name Indication (SNI), certificate data, QUIC protocol visibility).
- Better performance and inspection accuracy compared to earlier engines.

Application blocking works as follows:

- Traffic matches an access control policy rule.
- Snort 3 performs application identification.
- If the application matches the rule condition and the action is **Block**, the traffic is denied.

System Requirements

This table lists the platforms and versions for this use case.

Product	Version	Version used in this document
Cisco Secure Firewall Threat Defense (formerly Firepower Threat Defense/FTD)	6.2.3 or later	7.6
Cisco Secure Firewall Management Center (formerly Firepower Management Center/FMC)	6.2.3 or later	7.6

Prerequisites

- Ensure that the Threat Defense device is managed by Management Center and is online.
- Ensure that the Threat Defense device is running Snort 3.
- Ensure that you have the required permissions to edit and deploy policies in Management Center.
- Identify the application you want to block (for example, YouTube, WhatsApp, BitTorrent, and so on).

Guidelines

- Rule order: For optimal performance, place rules based on simple criteria—such as protocol, IP address, and port—at the top of the policy. Position computationally intensive rules, such as those requiring complex regex matching, at the bottom.
- Use scope controls: Limit the rule with zones, networks, or users to avoid unexpected outages.
- Enable logging: Logging simplifies validation and troubleshooting.
- Test before wider customer rollout: Start with a pilot group or a limited subnet before enforcing the rule for a wider user base.

Workflow

1. Ensure that the prerequisites are in place.
2. Open the access control policy.
3. Create a new rule to block the application.
4. Configure the application matching condition.
5. (Optional) Restrict the scope of the rule.
6. (Optional) Enable logging.
7. Confirm and verify rule addition and order.
8. Deploy the configuration.

Confirm Snort 3 is enabled

Before you begin

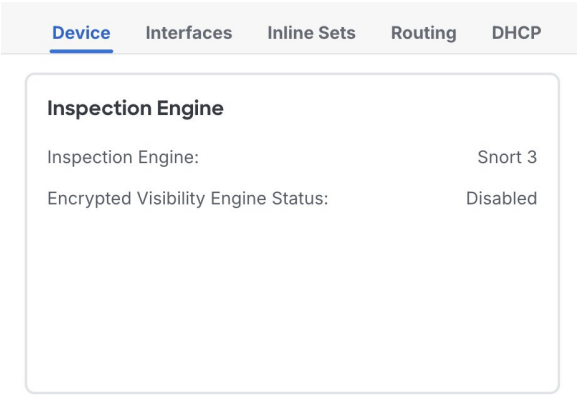
Ensure that you review Prerequisites.

Procedure

Step 1 Choose **Devices** > **Device Management**.

Step 2 Select the Threat Defense device.

Step 3 In the **Device** tab, confirm the **Inspection Engine** is set to **Snort 3**.



Open the access control policy

Procedure

Step 1 Choose **Policies** > **Access Control**.

Step 2 Click the edit icon for the policy applied to the device on which you want to enforce the block. If you have not created a policy, see Creating a basic access control policy for steps on how to create one.

Note
If you are not sure which policy is in use, go to **Devices** > **Device Management**, and check which access control policy is assigned to the device.

Create a new rule to block the application

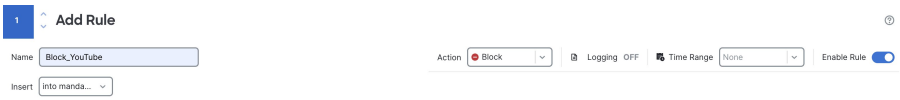
Procedure

Step 1 In the **Policy Editor**, click **Add Rule**.

Step 2 In the **Name** field, enter a meaningful rule name. For example: `Block_YouTube` or `Block_WhatsApp`.

Step 3 Choose where you want the rule placed. We recommend placing block rules at the top.

Step 4 Choose **Block** from the **Action** dropdown list.

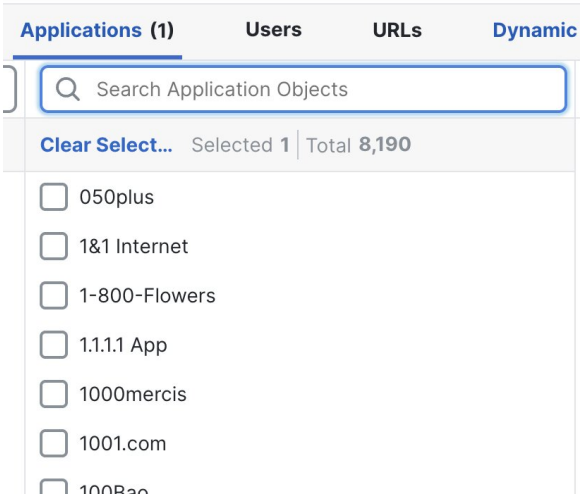


Configure the application matching condition

Procedure

Step 1 Choose the **Applications** tab.

Step 2 Use the **Search Application Objects** field to find the application name.



Step 3 Select the correct application object from the results.

Step 4 Click **Add Application**.

Step 5 Click **Apply**.

(Optional) Restrict the scope of the rule

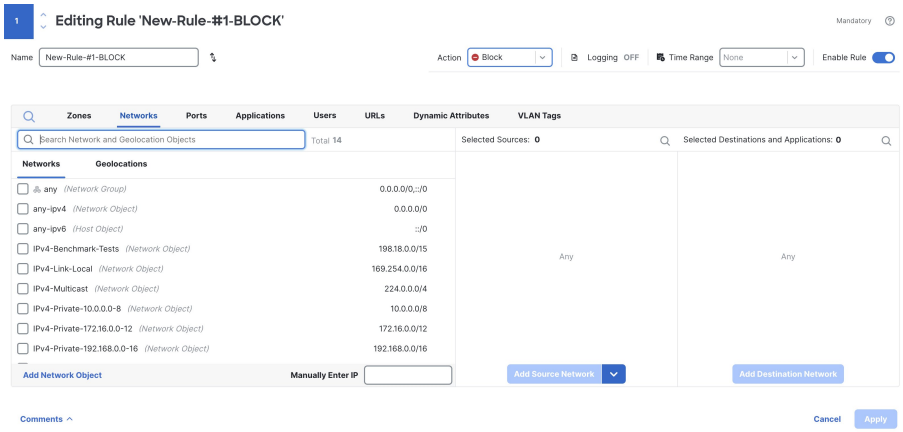
To avoid unintended impact, narrow down where the block applies.

Restrict by source (recommended)

Procedure

Step 1 In the **Policy Editor** window, click the edit icon for the rule that you created.

Step 2 In the **Editing Rule** window, go to **Networks**.



Step 3 In the **Networks** window, select the user subnets or hosts where the application must be blocked.

Example: `209.165.200.224/27`

Step 4 Click **Add Source Network**.

Restrict by destination

To avoid unintended impact, narrow down where the block applies.

Procedure

Step 1 In the same **Networks** window, select the destination servers or subnets if the application uses known destination ranges.

Step 2 Click **Add Destination Network**.

Step 3 Click **Apply**.

Restrict by security zones

To avoid unintended impact, narrow down where the block applies.

Procedure

Step 1 In the **Zones** window, to add a source zone, select the zone, and click **Add Source Zone**.

Step 2 In the **Zones** window, to add a destination zone, select the zone, and click **Add Destination Zone**.

Step 3 Click **Apply**.

Restrict by user

To avoid unintended impact, narrow down where the block applies.

Procedure

Step 1 Choose the **Users** tab.

Step 2 Select the users or groups to which the block applies.

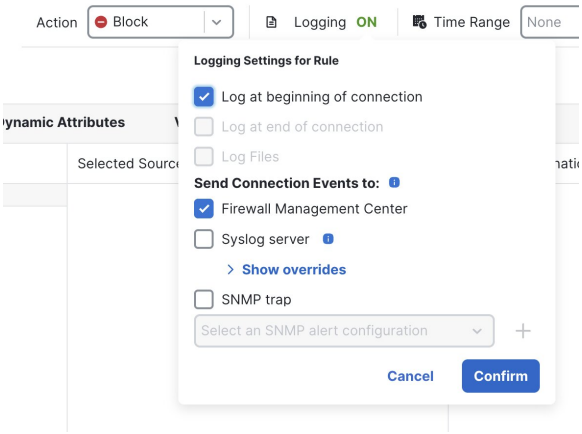
Step 3 Click **Add User**.

Step 4 Click **Apply**.

(Optional) Enable logging

Procedure

Step 1 In the **Editing Rule** window, enable **Logging** and choose **Log at beginning of connection**.



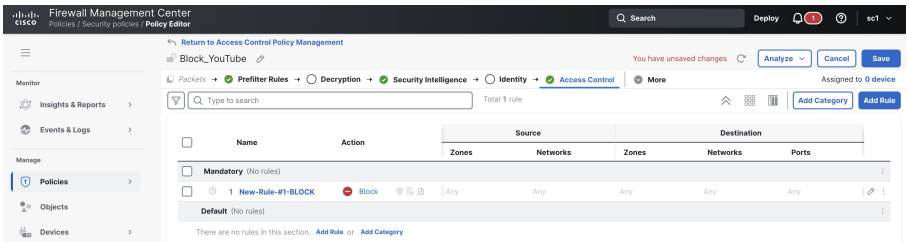
Step 2 Click **Confirm**.

Tip
Enable logging for the block rule to quickly validate rule hits and troubleshoot.

Confirm and verify rule addition and order

Procedure

Step 1 Confirm that the rule appears in the **Policy Editor** under the **Access Control** tab.



Step 2 Verify the rule order. Ensure that the block rule is placed above any allow rule that might match the same traffic.

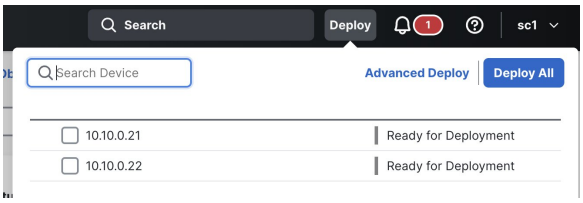
Step 3 Click **Save**.

Deploy the configuration

Procedure

Step 1 In the **Access Control** window, click **Deploy**.

Step 2 In the deployment window, select the devices on which the policy applies.



Step 3 Click **Deploy**.

Step 4 Wait until the deployment completes successfully.

Validating the configuration

After deployment, validate that the application block works and that the Management Center logs confirm enforcement of the block rule.

Procedure

Step 1 Generate test traffic.

a) From a user endpoint in the source network you configured, open the application you blocked. For example, launch a YouTube video, open WhatsApp, or start an application session.

b) Note the timestamp when you performed the test.

Step 2 Verify the block.

a. Confirm that the application fails to load or connect.

b. Confirm expected behavior such as:

- Page does not load
- Connection resets
- App login fails
- Streaming fails to start

Note
Some applications may partially load from cache even when blocked. Always validate with Management Center logs.

Step 3 Confirm block events in Management Center.

a) In Management Center, go to **Analysis > Unified Events**.

b) Filter by:

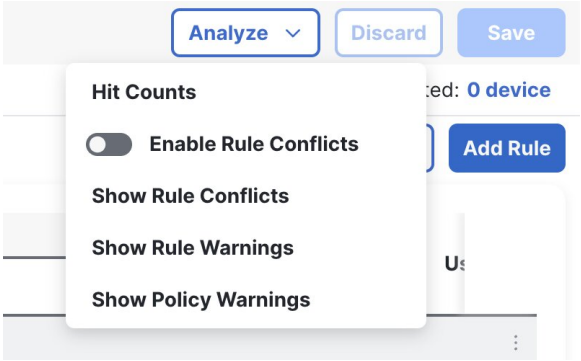
- Time range = last 5–15 minutes
- Source IP address = your test endpoint IP address
- Application = the blocked application

- Action = Block

c) Click **Apply**.
d) Confirm you see events where:
   - The application matches the one you selected.
   - The access control rule is your new block rule.
   - The action shows that the event is blocked.

Step 4 Confirm rule hit count.

a) In Management Center, go to **Policies > Access Control**.
b) Click the **Edit policy** icon of your policy to open the **Policy Editor**.
c) Choose **Analyze > Hit Counts**.



d) Check whether your rule shows the number of hit counts.
e) Confirm that the counter increases when you repeat the test traffic.

Troubleshooting

Use these checks if the application is not being blocked as expected.

The application is still accessible after deployment

- Confirm if the deployment completed successfully.
- Confirm if the correct access control policy is applied to the correct device.
- Ensure the block rule is above any allow rule that matches the same traffic.
- Confirm the rule conditions match your test traffic (zones, networks, users).

No connection events appear for the traffic

- Confirm logging is enabled for the rule or policy.
- Confirm traffic is passing through the Threat Defense device

- Filter events by the source IP and time range to locate the session.

Application is not identified correctly

- If traffic is encrypted, the application may not be detected reliably without SSL/TLS decryption.
- Confirm inspection is enabled for that flow (application detection depends on Snort inspection).
- Confirm you selected the correct application object (some applications have variants or sub-applications)

Unexpected traffic is blocked

- Narrow the scope using zones, networks, or users.
- Ensure you selected a specific application instead of an entire category.
- Review rule hit counts and event details to confirm what is matching.

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