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DoS Attacks and Their Prevention Techniques

Patel Vraj Mahendrakumar [1], Thakor Soumil Babubhai[2], Vyas Jimish Rahul[3], Kale Vaibhav Romesh[4], Prof. Vijaysinh Jadeja[5], Nagori Adin[6]

[1] Computer Engineering, Sal College of Engineering
[2] Computer Engineering, Sal College of Engineering
[3] Computer Engineering, Sal College of Engineering
[4] Computer Engineering, Sal College of Engineering
[6] Computer Engineering, Sal College of Engineering
[5] Assistant Professor, Computer Engineering, Sal College of Engineering

ABSTRACT :

Attacks known as denial of service (DoS) are among the most disruptive types of cyberthreats that target online service availability. These attacks stop legitimate users from accessing vital services by flooding servers or networks with traffic. From straightforward ICMP floods to AI-powered, multi-vector attacks that take advantage of cloud and IoT vulnerabilities, DoS and its distributed variant (DDoS) have become more complex over time. This study examines the causes, development, and effects of denial-of-service (DoS) attacks as well as cutting-edge mitigation and prevention strategies. Along with the new challenges in cybersecurity, the study also emphasises how AI and ML can be combined to detect and mitigate DoS attacks in real time.

Keywords: Denial of Service (DoS), Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS), Cybersecurity, Network Security, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML)

Introduction

Ensuring the availability and dependability of network services has become crucial in the age of digital transformation, where practically every aspect of life depends on internet connectivity. Organisations that depend on continuous access to digital infrastructures include government databases, healthcare systems, online banking, and e-commerce platforms. Nevertheless, this dependence has also given hackers new ways to take advantage of system flaws, which has resulted in one of the most disruptive types of cyberthreats: the Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack and its more sophisticated variant, the Denial of Service (DoS) attack.

A Denial of Service (DoS) attack is a malevolent attempt to interfere with regular network operations by flooding a server, application, or system with traffic or by taking advantage of flaws that deplete its bandwidth or processing power. This results in downtime, data inaccessibility, and financial losses as legitimate users are unable to access services. These attacks' increasing severity has made them a serious cybersecurity risk, especially for sectors like government services, telecommunications, healthcare, and finance that depend on constant uptime.

DoS attacks have developed over the last few decades from straightforward, easily identifiable techniques like Smurf attacks, Ping of Death, and SYN floods to complex multi-vector DDoS campaigns. In order to create traffic volumes that can reach terabits per second, modern attackers now use botnets, which are frequently made up of millions of compromised Internet of Things (IoT) devices. Even the strongest infrastructures can be rendered inoperable by these massive attacks. Furthermore, attackers can now create automated, adaptive systems that can change attack patterns in real time to get around conventional defences, which presents new challenges as a result of the integration of AI and ML into attack strategies.

The development, workings, and effects of DoS and DDoS attacks are examined in this study, along with contemporary methods for detection and defence. It looks at both cutting-edge AI-driven anomaly detection systems and more conventional mitigation strategies like firewalls, load balancing, and rate limiting. The study also highlights the need for international collaboration, multi-layered defence tactics, and ongoing surveillance to improve cyber resilience and safeguard vital digital infrastructures from the increasingly complex denial-of-service attacks.

Evolution of DoS Attacks

The development of Denial of Service (DoS) attacks demonstrates the increase in the size, complexity, and intelligence of cyberthreats. Simple protocol flaws were used by early attacks in the 1990s, like SYN Flood and Ping of Death, to bring down systems. By the 2000s, hackers had started employing Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, which used botnets of compromised computers to launch coordinated, massive attacks on popular websites.

As demonstrated by the Mirai botnet attack (2016), which produced previously unheard-of traffic volumes, the development of the Internet of Things (IoT) in the 2010s increased attack capabilities. These days, DDoS attacks target several network layers at once and are multi-vector.The use of machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) allows attackers to modify attack patterns in real time, making detection more difficult. These days, DoS attacks have developed into massive, automated, and highly adaptive cyberweapons, highlighting the urgent need for ongoing defence and mitigation strategy innovation to protect vital infrastructures.

Common Types of DoS and DDoS Attacks.

1. Volumetric Attacks: These are the most common kinds of denial-of-service attacks, in which the attackers overload the target network with data, using up all of the available bandwidth. DNS amplification attacks, ICMP floods, and UDP floods are a few examples.

2. Protocol Attacks: These attacks impede communication by taking advantage of flaws in network protocols. SYN floods, Smurf attacks, and Ping of Death are typical instances of overloading servers, firewalls, or load balancers by sending erroneous or incomplete packets.

3. Application Layer Attacks: These attacks imitate normal user behaviour to overload particular services, like web servers or APIs, and target the application layer (Layer 7 of the OSI model). Slowloris, DNS query floods, and HTTP GET/POST floods are a few examples.

4. Amplification Attacks: To increase the volume of attack traffic sent to a victim, attackers take advantage of open or incorrectly configured servers (such as DNS, NTP, or memcached servers). A tiny query overwhelms the target network with an exponentially larger response.

5. Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) Attacks: These attacks are very challenging to identify and stop because they are launched concurrently from several compromised systems or botnets. To increase damage, they employ a variety of strategies, including volumetric and application-layer attacks.

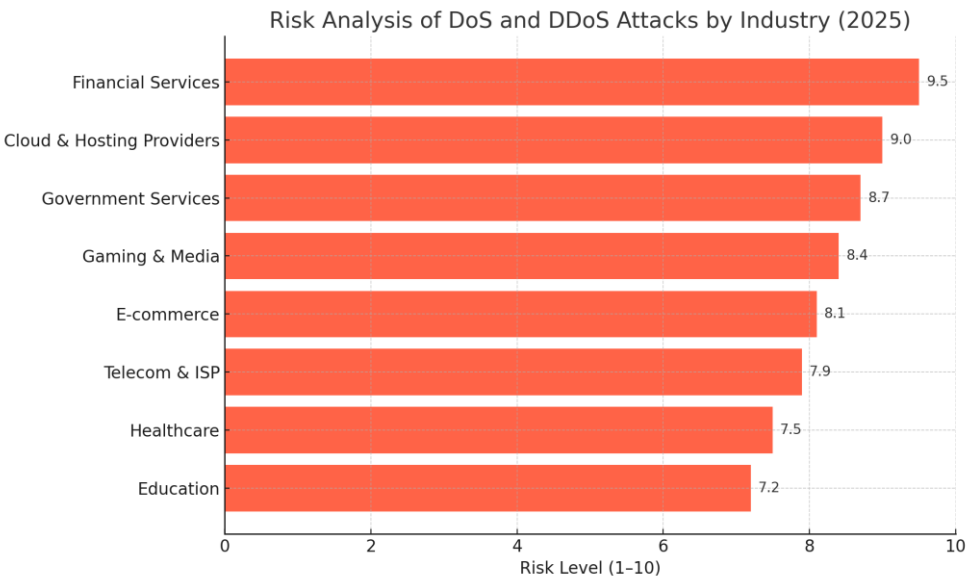
6. Multi-Vector Attacks: To get past security measures and cause extensive disruption, contemporary DDoS campaigns frequently combine volumetric, protocol, and application-layer techniques at the same time.

DoS Attack Trends Report

Attacks known as Denial of Service (DoS) and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) have become more sophisticated, and nearly all significant industries are now more vulnerable because of their reliance on digital technology. Because banks and fintech platforms depend on continuous online transactions and real-time data exchanges, the financial services industry continues to be the most vulnerable. Even brief service interruptions can result in regulatory fines, customer mistrust, and millions of dollars in lost revenue. Cloud and hosting providers , which serve as the foundation for online services for innumerable businesses, are not far behind. Thousands of customers can be impacted by a successful attack on a single hosting company at once, making them desirable targets for attackers.

The provision of vital public infrastructure, e-governance portals, and election systems puts government services at serious risk. These platforms are frequently targeted by hacktivism or political attacks, which disrupt services on a national level. Another common target is the media and gaming sector, where hackers take advantage of periods of high traffic to extort ransom payments or cause outages. Such attacks harm users' reputations in addition to causing an instant loss of revenue. Similarly, because DDoS attacks have the ability to halt transactions and compel businesses to engage in financial negotiations with attackers, e-commerce platforms are particularly vulnerable during periods of high sales.

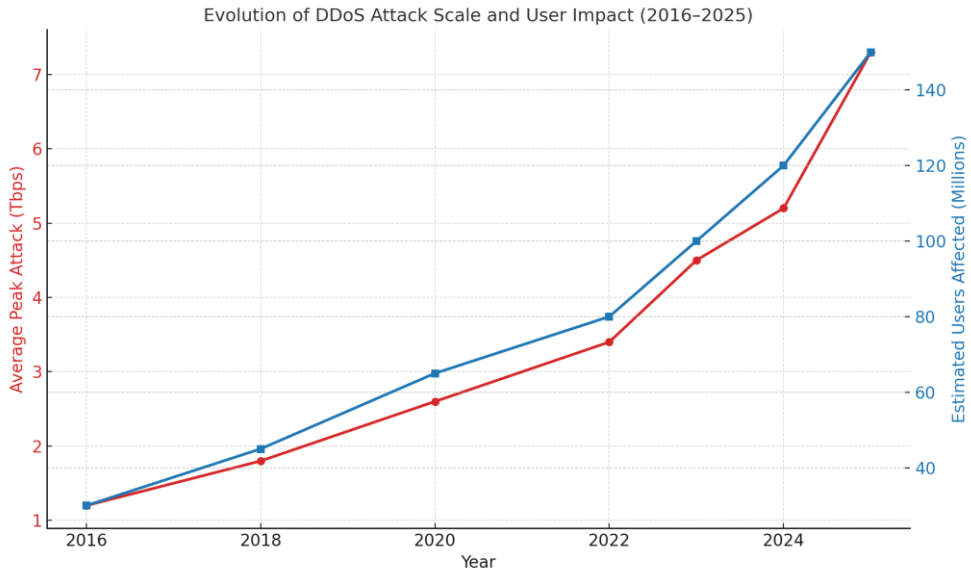
Healthcare organisations are increasingly being targeted because of their reliance on real-time patient data systems and connected medical devices, while telecom and internet service providers are subject to network-level attacks that impact millions of downstream users. Because online courses, portals, and tests offer alluring chances for disruption, educational institutions are also vulnerable.



From roughly 1.2 Tbps in 2016 to 7.3 Tbps in 2025, the average peak size of DDoS attacks has increased significantly, indicating a sixfold increase in attack power.

From about 30 million in 2016 to about 150 million in 2025, the number of impacted users has increased proportionately.
Attacks like the 2016 Mirai botnet incident marked a significant turning point because Mirai affected an estimated 20 to 50 million users globally by infecting almost 600,000 IoT devices and disrupting essential internet services through its attack on the DNS provider Dyn. This incident illustrated the extensive ramifications of DDoS attacks, which can now take down entire internet segments due to their reliance on shared infrastructure rather than just disrupting specific targets.DDoS attacks have grown to previously unheard-of proportions in recent years, especially in 2025. A 6.3 terabit per second (Tbps) attack on the cybersecurity blog KrebsOnSecurity on May 20, 2025, is thought to have been a test run for a new botnet made up of more than a million compromised devices.
With a peak speed of 7.3 Tbps and the ability to move 37.4 terabytes of data to a single IP address in less than a minute, Cloudflare claimed to have mitigated the largest DDoS attack ever documented. These hyper-volumetric attacks highlight the way in which cybercriminals have weaponised bandwidth by exponentially increasing traffic volumes through the use of reflection and amplification techniques. Identified botnets, such as the HTTPBot network, targeted particular industries like technology, education, and gaming. They carried out more than 200 precise Layer 7 attacks that imitated genuine web traffic in order to avoid detection.

It has had a serious effect on all industries. Attackers continue to target the financial services industry in an effort to sabotage transactions and take advantage of outages for financial advantage. A single attack can affect thousands of hosted services, posing serious risks to cloud and hosting providers. Meanwhile, government platforms are subject to politically motivated DDoS campaigns that aim to disrupt public services. Tens of millions of users have frequently been impacted by these attacks, which have resulted in extensive outages, financial losses, and problems with data accessibility. For example, during the spike in DDoS activity, international financial institutions and e-commerce platforms reported multi-hour outages and millions of lost customers.



According to analysis, the impact on users is directly correlated with botnet sizes and attack power. One of the biggest botnets discovered to date, with over 4.6 million compromised devices, is able to launch terabit-scale attacks that could impact up to 150 million users worldwide. When downtime, mitigation expenses, and reputational harm are taken into consideration, the economic losses from DDoS incidents alone are estimated to be in the billions of dollars. Multi-layered security frameworks that incorporate cloud-based scrubbing centres, AI-driven traffic analysis, and real-time threat intelligence sharing between ISPs and businesses are necessary to defend against these attacks. Enforcing security standards for IoT devices is equally important because consumer devices with inadequate security continue to serve as a source of new botnets. Proactive monitoring, robust infrastructure, and international cooperation are crucial to protecting vital digital services and lowering the risk to users globally as DoS and DDoS attacks increase in frequency and intensity.

Prevention Techniques

A multi-layered security strategy that incorporates network defences, intelligent monitoring, and rapid response systems is necessary to counteract DoS and DDoS attacks. In order to reduce disruption and preserve service continuity, DoS and DDoS prevention essentially depends on early detection, intelligent filtering, and robust infrastructure, which are bolstered by AI-driven monitoring and close collaboration with network providers.
Important methods consist of:

1. Firewalls and intrusion prevention systems (IPS) :Before malicious traffic and dubious IP addresses reach servers, firewalls and intrusion prevention

systems (IPS) block them.

2.Rate Limiting: To avoid resource exhaustion, limit the quantity of requests per second.

3.Load balancing: To prevent overload, divide incoming traffic among several servers.

4.Large traffic spikes can be absorbed and rerouted by content delivery networks (CDNs) to preserve service availability.

5.Upstream Filtering (ISP Collaboration): Block attack traffic before it enters your network by collaborating with ISPs.

6.Web application firewalls (WAF): By screening out unusual requests, they defend against application-layer (HTTP/HTTPS) attacks.

7.AI and Machine Learning: Automate real-time responses and identify anomalous traffic patterns.
8.Patch management: To address exploitable vulnerabilities, update network devices and software on a regular basis.

9.Incident Response Plan:Establish precise procedures for attack detection, communication, and recovery in your incident response plan.

10.Redundancy and Backup Systems: To guarantee continuous service, use cloud failover or multi-region hosting.

6. Role of Artificial Intelligence in DoS Detection

Denial of Service (DoS) and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks can now be detected and mitigated with the help of artificial intelligence (AI). AI can detect unusual traffic patterns that indicate possible attacks by instantly analysing enormous volumes of network data. Neural networks and decision trees are examples of machine learning (ML) algorithms that assist in differentiating between malicious and legitimate traffic. By continuously learning from changing attack tactics, these models increase their precision and flexibility. In order to preserve service availability, AI-powered systems can automatically set off alarms, stop malicious traffic, and reroute data. By identifying intricate, multi-vector DDoS patterns, deep learning improves detection even more. AI is used by cloud-based services like Google Cloud Armour and AWS Shield to anticipate and stop massive attacks. AI systems are able to identify new threats more quickly than conventional tools thanks to global threat intelligence. AI guarantees prompt and effective responses by reducing the need for human intervention. All things considered, AI offers automated, proactive, and intelligent defence against contemporary cyberthreats.

Future Trends and Challenges

New vulnerabilities appear as 5G, edge computing, and the Internet of Things (IoT) grow. In order to evade detection, attackers might start utilising AI-powered adaptive DDoS tools that can learn and change on their own.Furthermore, ransom DDoS (RDoS) attacks, in which the attacker demands money to halt or prevent attacks, are growing more frequent. Cybersecurity experts are creating AI-driven autonomous defence systems, blockchain-based traffic validation, and behavioral-based analytics to counter these threats.But there are still issues with maintaining the resilience of crucial online infrastructure and striking a balance between user accessibility and security measures.

Conclusion

Among the most serious dangers to contemporary digital infrastructure are denial of service (DoS) and distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks. Attackers are employing sophisticated tools, massive botnets, and AI-driven techniques to launch potent and unpredictable attacks as technology advances. These risks seriously harm industries' finances and reputations in addition to interfering with services. Organisations must use a multi-layered defence approach that incorporates firewalls, intrusion prevention systems, rate limiting, and load balancing in order to combat them. The combination of machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) enables quicker anomaly detection and real-time traffic monitoring. Cloud-based scrubbing services and Content Delivery Networks (CDNs) aid in efficiently absorbing and rerouting malicious traffic. Additionally, regular security audits and robust incident response plans improve readiness for potential threats. To share intelligence and counteract massive attacks, ISPs, cybersecurity organisations, and agencies must work together globally. Adaptive and AI-driven defences will be essential as DoS and DDoS tactics continue to advance. In the end, proactive monitoring, automation, and security awareness will guarantee digital services' dependability and resilience against these constantly expanding cyberthreats.

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