



CASE STUDY

# Major Transport Company Secures and Stabilizes Network With Fortinet Security Fabric



With roots that extend back to 1958, Coniferal is an urban passenger transport company based in Córdoba, Argentina. Founded by a group of friends who understood the need to connect the city’s northern reaches to its central hub, Coniferal grew from a fleet of 50 buses at its start, to 250, and now issues around 200,000 tickets a day across 20 bus lines.

In 2011, Coniferal began to usher in digital innovation. Automation and information systems were rolled out to support the central transportation service, as well as the company’s accounting, financial, legal, maintenance, and human resources departments.

Yet by 2017, Coniferal still confronted considerable cybersecurity and network challenges. In the face of increased infrastructure complexity and an expanding threat landscape, the company needed comprehensive security visibility across the entire operation, as well as a way to easily manage security and network operations from a central location.

## Moving Toward Secure and Effective Network Management

Coniferal decided to implement Fortinet next-generation firewalls (NGFWs) that could comprehensively filter network traffic and protect the company from external threats.

“When the door of your house is open, you do not know who is going in or out,” says Pablo Gómez, the company’s head of IT department. “We needed to start putting in doors and barriers, to give us business visibility on the IT side.”

As a first step, Coniferal started to manage all its internet traffic using FortiGate NGFWs, with the help of Fortinet partner eMozart. The firewalls perform packet filtering, virtual private network (VPN) support, network monitoring, and Internet Protocol (IP) mapping features, enabling the company to readily identify attacks, malware, and other threats. Next, the FortiWiFi wireless access solution was implemented to secure network access at Coniferal’s branch offices. Having installed a Linux router, Gómez started to find the switch setup unmanageable. “The servers were not armed with redundancy, there was no virtualization,” he reveals.

Working with Fortinet, Coniferal wanted to make sure connectivity would not fail. “FortiWiFi and FortiSwitch, included on the SD-Branch solution, allowed us to work with a second level of redundancy. We wanted at least to have duplicate networks in all branches. We added an extra WAN link in the branches, so that if one fails, it would connect to the other one, giving us the redundancy we needed.”

*“The best benefits of Fortinet solutions have been the security and visibility of the infrastructure. Its scalability is also crucial because it gives us greater agility. If we want to add a new product or respond to a requirement, we can do so and the improvement will be exponential.”*

– Pablo Gómez, Head of IT Department, Coniferal

### Details

**Customer:** Coniferal

**Industry:** Transportation

**Location:** Argentina

### Business Impact

- Improved, device-level security for multifaceted network
- Enabled centralized, intuitive network and security management
- Freed IT staff to focus on more strategic tasks

“With that, we began bringing together all the branches in order to gain visibility over all the traffic and everything that was happening,” explains Gómez. “Then we started to implement FortiSwitch Ethernet switching, establishing connectivity in the main office and bolstering network access in the branches.”

## Securing Every Endpoint

As a second move in its cybersecurity program, Coniferal added the FortiMail messaging security server, followed by FortiClient advanced endpoint security for all end-user devices. “Once we implemented the FortiMail solution, we realized the amount of spam we were receiving,” says Gómez. “Before, we had no idea, since we did not have that kind of visibility. We only had basic antivirus tools—an antivirus installed on every machine. We tried to centralize all this using a different tool from another brand, but could not. It was only when we migrated to FortiClient that we were able to unify everything with fewer human resources.”

With FortiClient endpoint security, Coniferal was able to embed all endpoints into the Fortinet Security Fabric, gaining real-time endpoint visibility for early detection and prevention of advanced threats. “In 2008, there were only about 30 devices connected to the network,” says Gómez. “But today, in 2020, we are talking roughly 900 devices.”

The final piece of the puzzle was the Fabric Management Center, which includes the FortiManager centralized management platform and the FortiAnalyzer logging and reporting solution. “From the management point of view, I think the most important thing about Fortinet is how intuitive the software is,” notes Gómez. “Almost everything can be done through the graphical user interface. We have three people in the IT department, and we needed an easy-to-use tool. The Fabric Management Center is also quite remarkable in that it allows us to manage everything from one centralized place.”

## Better Control, Better Outcomes

Today, all Coniferal’s drivers and line managers are connected to a central hub, allowing safe, simple downloads of route and journey information directly from their mobile devices. Drivers can also use the platform to communicate securely should any incidents occur while en route, leveraging the scalable and secure system that ensures total visibility, communication, and route monitoring capabilities.

“Decision-making in Coniferal is almost real time, whether we are dealing with a detour due to a problem on a route, a damaged bus that needs to be replaced, or a driver who calls in sick,” explains Gómez. Supported by Fortinet solutions, coordinating the changing needs of Coniferal’s extensive bus fleet is now simple, centralized, and secure.

In terms of its business processes, Coniferal has also seen significant improvements. “Many systems started to work better, and we can easily distribute secure communication channels to many branches—even to a person at home.”

Fortinet solutions also simplified load balancing for Gómez and his team. “For example, when we see that a link is overloaded, we increase the bandwidth or request a different link from another communication company to have redundancy.”

## Business Impact (contd.)

- Achieved scalable connectivity and security that grows with business needs
- Gained deeper insight into all aspects of web traffic including deep secure sockets layer (SSL) inspection, device connectivity, and possible threats

## Solutions

- FortiGate
- FortiManager
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiWiFi
- FortiSwitch
- FortiClient
- FortiMail

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## Toward a Secure, Connected Future

Currently, with the help of partner eMozart, Coniferal is in the process of implementing more tools from the Fortinet Security Fabric, ensuring that all the company's solutions will be fully integrated.

"The best benefits of the Fortinet solutions have been the security and visibility of the infrastructure. Its scalability is also crucial because it gives us greater agility. If we want to add a new product or respond to a requirement, we can do so and the improvement will be exponential," emphasizes Gómez.

In addition, Coniferal's Security Fabric solution has positioned it to take advantage of secure software-defined wide-area networking (SD-WAN), including application steering. Implemented through an accelerated overlay VPN network, application steering ensures a high quality of experience (QoE) without compromising security. "We will be able to analyze behaviors, balance between VPN connections, to not only have the possibility to connect, but also the ability to choose the best link at that moment for the user in a transparent way."



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