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Palo Alto Networks NetSec-Analyst Exam Syllabus Topics:

Topic	Details
Topic 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Object Configuration Creation and Application: This section of the exam measures the skills of Network Security Analysts and covers the creation, configuration, and application of objects used across security environments. It focuses on building and applying various security profiles, decryption profiles, custom objects, external dynamic lists, and log forwarding profiles. Candidates are expected to understand how data security, IoT security, DoS protection, and SD-WAN profiles integrate into firewall operations. The objective of this domain is to ensure analysts can configure the foundational elements required to protect and optimize network security using Strata Cloud Manager.
Topic 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Management and Operations: This section of the exam measures the skills of Security Operations Professionals and covers the use of centralized management tools to maintain and monitor firewall environments. It focuses on Strata Cloud Manager, folders, snippets, automations, variables, and logging services. Candidates are also tested on using Command Center, Activity Insights, Policy Optimizer, Log Viewer, and incident-handling tools to analyze security data and improve the organization overall security posture. The goal is to validate competence in managing day-to-day firewall operations and responding to alerts effectively.
Topic 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Troubleshooting: This section of the exam measures the skills of Technical Support Analysts and covers the identification and resolution of configuration and operational issues. It includes troubleshooting misconfigurations, runtime errors, commit and push issues, device health concerns, and resource usage problems. This domain ensures candidates can analyze failures across management systems and on-device functions, enabling them to maintain a stable and reliable security infrastructure.
Topic 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Policy Creation and Application: This section of the exam measures the abilities of Firewall Administrators and focuses on creating and applying different types of policies essential to secure and manage traffic. The domain includes security policies incorporating App-ID, User-ID, and Content-ID, as well as NAT, decryption, application override, and policy-based forwarding policies. It also covers SD-WAN routing and SLA policies that influence how traffic flows across distributed environments. The section ensures professionals can design and implement policy structures that support secure, efficient network operations.

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Palo Alto Networks Network Security Analyst Sample Questions (Q11-Q16):

NEW QUESTION # 11

An administrator is trying to enforce policy on some (but not all) of the entries in an external dynamic list.

What is the maximum number of entries that they can be exclude?

- A. 0
- B. 1
- C. 1,000
- D. 2

Answer: B

NEW QUESTION # 12

Consider a highly secure environment where outbound DNS traffic must be rigorously inspected for DNS exfiltration attempts and malicious domain lookups. The security team wants to leverage Palo Alto Networks' DNS Security profiles. They have identified several internal DNS servers (e.g., 10.0.0.10) that are authorized for external lookups, while all other internal hosts should only resolve against these internal servers. Malicious DNS requests should trigger an immediate block and log. How would you configure a DNS Security profile and related objects to achieve this, including handling specific known bad domains and unknown domains effectively?

- A. Create a DNS Security profile. Configure 'Domains' to 'block' for 'malware', 'phishing', and 'unknown'. Set 'Sinkhole' to the firewall's management IP Apply this profile to all outbound security policies matching DNS traffic (port 53 UDP/TCP) regardless of source.
- B. Create a DNS Security profile. For 'DNS Query Actions', set 'Domains: Malware' to 'block', 'Domains: Phishing' to 'block'. For 'DNS Tunneling', set 'tunnel-ratio' to 'block'. Configure a custom DNS Sinkhole IP (e.g., 10.0.0.1). Create two security policies: one allowing DNS from internal DNS servers (10.0.0.10) to external with this DNS Security profile, and another blocking DNS from 'any' internal host directly to external DNS.
- C. Create a DNS Security profile with 'Domains' set to 'block' for 'command-and-control', 'malware', and 'phishing'. Configure a custom DNS Sinkhole IP Apply this profile only to security policies where the source is 'any' and destination is 'external-DNS'. Create a separate policy to allow DNS from internal DNS servers to external DNS with no DNS Security profile.
- D. Create a DNS Security profile. Set 'Domains: Malware' and 'Domains: Phishing' to 'block'. Enable 'DNS Tunneling' detection and set the action to 'block'- Configure a DNS Sinkhole IP Apply this DNS Security profile to a security policy rule that permits DNS traffic from internal hosts to the internal DNS servers (10.0.0.10). For traffic from 10.0.0.10 to external, apply a separate DNS Security profile with 'allow' for all categories.
- E. Create a DNS Security profile with 'Domains' set to 'block' for all threat categories (e.g., malware, phishing, command-and-control, known-bad-domains, unknown)- Enable 'DNS Sinkhole' and configure a dedicated sinkhole IP Apply this DNS Security profile to all outbound security policies that allow DNS traffic. For the internal DNS servers (10.0.0.10), create an explicit security policy allowing their DNS traffic to external destinations without this DNS Security profile, ensuring it's evaluated first.

Answer: B

Explanation:

Option C is the most accurate and comprehensive solution for the given requirements- It addresses both the inspection of DNS for malicious activity and the enforcement of internal DNS server usage. By creating two policies, one for allowed internal DNS servers (10.0.0.10) to external, with the DNS Security profile applied for inspection, and another blocking direct external DNS lookups from other internal hosts, the security posture is met. The DNS Security profile should focus on blocking C2, malware, and phishing domains, and importantly, detecting DNS tunneling. A custom sinkhole IP is crucial for analysis of blocked traffic. Option D is incorrect as the internal DNS servers should have the DNS Security profile applied when looking up externally. Option B is incomplete by not applying DNS Security to the internal DNS server's external lookups. Option A applies the profile too broadly without considering the authorized internal DNS servers- Option E misapplies the DNS security profile to internal-to-internal DNS traffic, which isn't the primary concern for outbound exfiltration.

NEW QUESTION # 13

According to a customer's CIO, who is upgrading PAN-OS versions, "Finding issues and then engaging with your support people requires expertise that our operations team can better utilize elsewhere on more valuable tasks for the business." The upgrade project was initiated in a rush because the company did not have the appropriate tools to indicate that their current NGFWs were reaching capacity.

Which two actions by the Palo Alto Networks team offer a long-term solution for the customer? (Choose two.)

- A. Inform the CIO that the new enhanced security features they will gain from the PAN-OS upgrades will fix any future problems with upgrading and capacity.
- B. Recommend that the operations team use the free machine learning-powered AIOps for NGFW tool.
- C. Suggest the inclusion of training into the proposal so that the operations team is informed and confident in working on their firewalls.
- D. Propose AIOps Premium within Strata Cloud Manager (SCM) to address the company's issues from within the existing technology.

Answer: C,D

Explanation:

The customer's CIO highlights two key pain points: (1) the operations team lacks expertise to efficiently manage PAN-OS upgrades and support interactions, diverting focus from valuable tasks, and (2) the company lacked tools to monitor NGFW capacity, leading to a rushed upgrade. The goal is to recommend long-term solutions leveraging Palo Alto Networks' offerings for Strata Hardware Firewalls. Options B and D-training and AIOps Premium within Strata Cloud Manager (SCM)- address these issues by enhancing team capability and providing proactive management tools. Below is a detailed explanation, verified against official documentation.

Step 1: Analyzing the Customer's Challenges

* Expertise Gap: The CIO notes that identifying issues and engaging support requires expertise the operations team doesn't fully have or can't prioritize. Upgrading PAN-OS on Strata NGFWs involves tasks like version compatibility checks, pre-upgrade validation, and troubleshooting, which demand familiarity with PAN-OS tools and processes.

* Capacity Visibility: The rushed upgrade stemmed from not knowing the NGFWs were nearing capacity (e.g., CPU, memory, session limits), indicating a lack of monitoring or predictive analytics.

Long-term solutions must address both operational efficiency and proactive capacity management, aligning with Palo Alto Networks' ecosystem for Strata firewalls.

Reference: PAN-OS Administrator's Guide (11.1) - Upgrade Overview

"Successful upgrades require planning, validation, and monitoring to avoid disruptions and ensure capacity is sufficient." Step 2: Evaluating the Recommended Actions Option A: Recommend that the operations team use the free machine learning-powered AIOps for NGFW tool.

Analysis: AIOps for NGFW (free version) is a cloud-based tool that uses machine learning to monitor firewall health, detect anomalies, and provide upgrade recommendations. It offers basic telemetry (e.g., CPU usage, session counts) and alerts, which could have flagged capacity issues earlier. However, it lacks advanced features like automated remediation, detailed capacity planning, or integration with Strata Cloud Manager, limiting its long-term impact. Additionally, it doesn't address the expertise gap, as the team still needs knowledge to interpret and act on insights.

Conclusion: Helpful but not a comprehensive long-term solution.

Reference: AIOps for NGFW Documentation

"The free version provides basic health monitoring and ML-driven insights but lacks premium features for proactive management."

Option B: Suggest the inclusion of training into the proposal so that the operations team is informed and confident in working on their firewalls.

Analysis: Palo Alto Networks offers training through the Palo Alto Networks Authorized Training Partners and Cybersecurity Academy, covering PAN-OS administration, upgrades, and troubleshooting. For Strata NGFWs, courses like "Firewall Essentials: Configuration and Management (EDU-210)" teach upgrade best practices, capacity monitoring (e.g., via Device > High Availability > Resources), and support engagement.

How It Solves the Issue:

Reduces reliance on external expertise by upskilling the team

Enables efficient upgrade planning (e.g., using Best Practice Assessment (BPA) tool).

Frees the team for higher-value tasks by minimizing support escalations.

Long-Term Benefit: A trained team can proactively manage upgrades and capacity, addressing the CIO's concern about expertise allocation.

Conclusion: A strong long-term solution.

Reference: Palo Alto Networks Training Catalog

"Training empowers operations teams to confidently manage NGFWs, including upgrades and capacity planning." Option C: Inform the CIO that the new enhanced security features they will gain from the PAN-OS upgrades will fix any future problems with upgrading and capacity.

Analysis: New PAN-OS versions (e.g., 11.1) bring features like enhanced App-ID, decryption, or ML-based threat detection, improving security. However, these don't inherently solve upgrade complexity or capacity visibility. Capacity issues depend on hardware limits (e.g., PA-5200 Series max sessions), not software features, and upgrades still require expertise. This response oversells benefits without addressing root causes.

Conclusion: Not a valid long-term solution.

Reference: PAN-OS 11.1 Release Notes

"New features enhance security but do not automate upgrade processes or capacity monitoring." Option D: Propose AIOps Premium within Strata Cloud Manager (SCM) to address the company's issues from within the existing technology.

Analysis: AIOps Premium, integrated with Strata Cloud Manager (SCM), is a subscription-based service for managing Strata NGFWs. It provides:

Predictive Analytics: Forecasts capacity needs (e.g., CPU, memory, sessions) using ML.

Upgrade Planning: Recommends optimal upgrade paths and validates configurations.

Proactive Alerts: Identifies issues before they escalate, reducing support calls.

Centralized Management: Monitors all firewalls from SCM, integrating with existing PAN-OS deployments.

How It Solves the Issue:

Prevents rushed upgrades by predicting capacity limits (e.g., via Capacity Saturation Reports).

Simplifies upgrade preparation with automated insights, reducing expertise demands.

Aligns with existing Strata technology, enhancing ROI.

Long-Term Benefit: Offers a scalable, proactive toolset to manage NGFWs, addressing both capacity and operational efficiency.

Conclusion: A robust long-term solution.

Reference: Strata Cloud Manager AIOps Premium Documentation

"AIOps Premium provides advanced capacity planning and upgrade readiness, minimizing operational burden." Step 3: Why B and D Are the Best Choices B (Training): Directly tackles the expertise gap, empowering the team to handle upgrades and capacity monitoring independently. It's a foundational fix, ensuring long-term self-sufficiency.

D (AIOps Premium in SCM): Provides a technological solution to preempt capacity issues and streamline upgrades, reducing the need for deep expertise and support escalations. It complements training by automating complex tasks.

Synergy: Together, they address both human (expertise) and systemic (tools) challenges, aligning with the CIO's goals of operational efficiency and business value.

Step 4: How These Actions Integrate with Strata NGFWs

Training: Teaches use of PAN-OS tools like System Resources (CLI: show system resources) and Dynamic Updates for capacity and upgrade prep.

AIOps Premium: Enhances Strata NGFW management via SCM, pulling telemetry (e.g., from Device > Setup > Telemetry) to predict and resolve issues.

Reference: PAN-OS Administrator's Guide (11.1) - Monitoring

"Combine training and tools like AIOps to optimize NGFW performance and upgrades."

NEW QUESTION # 14

A network administrator is designing an SD-WAN profile for a branch office that requires strict QOS for VoIP traffic and dynamic path selection based on real-time link quality. The branch has two ISP links: one MPLS and one Internet broadband. The administrator wants VoIP to always prefer MPLS if its jitter is below 10ms, otherwise failover to broadband. For general web traffic, a balanced distribution across both links is desired. Which of the following SD-WAN profile configurations, when combined, would best achieve this, assuming a basic Path Monitoring profile is already defined?

- A. Create a custom application for VoIP, assign it a 'High' priority in the QOS profile, and use a 'Best Quality' path selection profile for the VoIP application, prioritizing MPLS. Configure a 'Session Distribution' method for web traffic.
- B. Define a 'VoIP' application group, create an SD-WAN policy rule with VoIP as the application, set 'Link Quality' as the Path Selection metric with a 'Jitter' threshold of 1 Oms for MPLS, and a 'Weighted Round Robin' load balancing for other traffic.
- C. Define a service route for VoIP over MPLS, and another for broadband. Apply a health-check monitor to the MPLS link for VoIP traffic with a jitter threshold. For web traffic, configure policy-based forwarding to distribute sessions.
- D. Implement an SD-WAN profile with a 'Performance-Based' policy for VoIP, specifying a 'Jitter' SLA of 1 Oms for MPLS. For web traffic, use a 'Load Balancing' policy with 'Session Distribution' across available links.
- E. Configure an SD-WAN policy rule with 'Application: VoIP', a 'Path Quality' profile preferring MPLS with a Jitter threshold, and a 'Dynamic Path Monitoring' profile to constantly assess link health. For web traffic, use 'Session Distribution' with an 'Equal Cost Multi-Path' (ECMP) routing.

Answer: D

Explanation:

Option C correctly identifies the key components for managing VoIP and general web traffic. 'Performance-Based' policies in SD-

WAN profiles are designed to enforce SLAs based on metrics like jitter, loss, and latency, directly addressing the VoIP requirement. Specifying a Jitter SLA of 10ms for MPLS ensures failover if the condition is not met. 'Load Balancing' with 'Session Distribution' is the appropriate method for distributing general web traffic across links. Option A's 'Weighted Round Robin' is less dynamic than session distribution for general traffic. Option B's 'Best Quality' path selection is conceptually similar but 'Performance-Based' is the direct Palo Alto Networks terminology for SLA enforcement. Option D's 'Path Quality' profile is correct but 'Dynamic Path Monitoring' is a prerequisite, not a primary configuration for this scenario. Option E describes routing, not directly an SD-WAN profile feature for dynamic path selection and load balancing.

NEW QUESTION # 15

An organization relies heavily on an internal application that utilizes mutual TLS (mTLS) for secure communication between various microservices. The security team wants to gain visibility into this internal mTLS traffic using a Palo Alto Networks firewall. Implementing standard SSL Inbound Inspection has failed, as it breaks the mTLS handshake. What is the most granular and effective approach to inspect this traffic while preserving the integrity of the mTLS connection, or if preservation is impossible, what is the best alternative for visibility?

- A. Utilize 'SSL Decryption Excluding Server Certificates' by importing only the server certificates (not private keys) of the microservices into a decryption profile, allowing inspection up to the certificate exchange phase.
- B. Configure SSL Forward Proxy decryption with the firewall's root CA distributed to all microservices.
- C. Apply a 'No Decryption' policy for the mTLS traffic and rely on endpoint security for visibility.
- D. **For true mTLS decryption, packet capture and offline analysis are often required, as inline decryption by a firewall breaks the mutual authentication. The firewall should be configured for 'No Decryption' for this specific traffic, and alternative logging (e.g., application logs, NetFlow) used for metadata.**
- E. Implement SSL Inbound Inspection, but manually import both server and client certificates and private keys for all communicating microservices onto the firewall for re-signing.

Answer: D

Explanation:

This is a very tough scenario because mTLS fundamentally relies on both client and server authenticating each other's certificates. An inline device like a firewall, acting as a man-in-the-middle for decryption, will inevitably break the client's ability to validate the server's original certificate and the server's ability to validate the original client certificate. The firewall cannot genuinely present the client's original certificate to the server, nor the server's original certificate to the client, while performing full decryption. While SSL Inbound Inspection (Option C) can decrypt server-authenticated TLS if you have the server's private key, it cannot flawlessly manage mutual authentication for arbitrary clients and servers in an inline fashion without compromising the mTLS chain. Therefore, for true mTLS, inline decryption is usually not feasible without breaking the mTLS trust. The most realistic approach is to exclude this traffic from decryption and seek alternative visibility methods. Options A, C, and D will almost certainly break the mTLS handshake. Option B is partial; Option E provides the best practical advice for such complex scenarios.

NEW QUESTION # 16

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