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(54) **MULTILAYERED INTRUSION DETECTION SYSTEM AND METHOD**

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249

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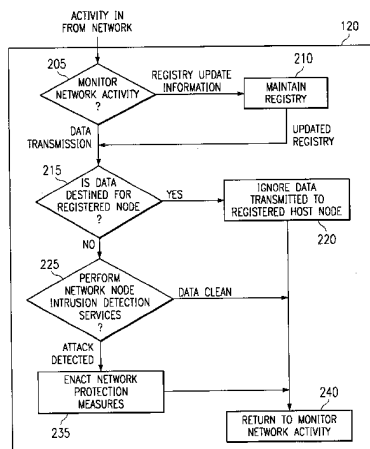
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ABSTRACT

A multilayered intrusion detection system and method are disclosed. The method includes monitoring activity on a network and maintaining a registry of each host node address associated with a host node operable to perform host-based intrusion detection services. The method further includes comparing a destination address of the monitored network activity with at least one host node address in the registry. If an address of the network activity matches an address of a registered host node, the network activity is dismissed and allowed to proceed unencumbered to the registered host node. The network activity not destined for a registered host node has intrusion detection services performed on it. The network activity dismissed to the host node has intrusion detection services performed on it at the receiving host node.

23 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



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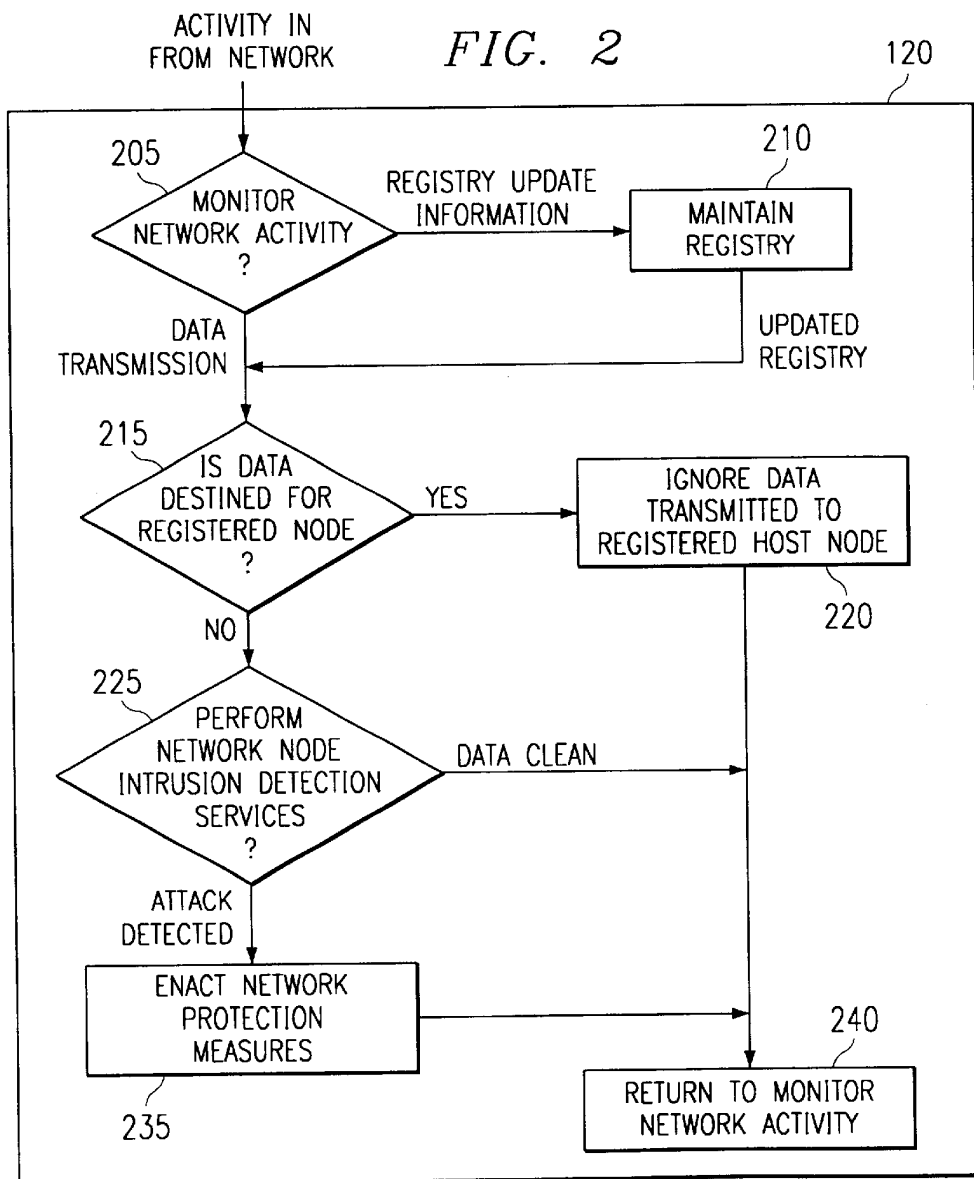
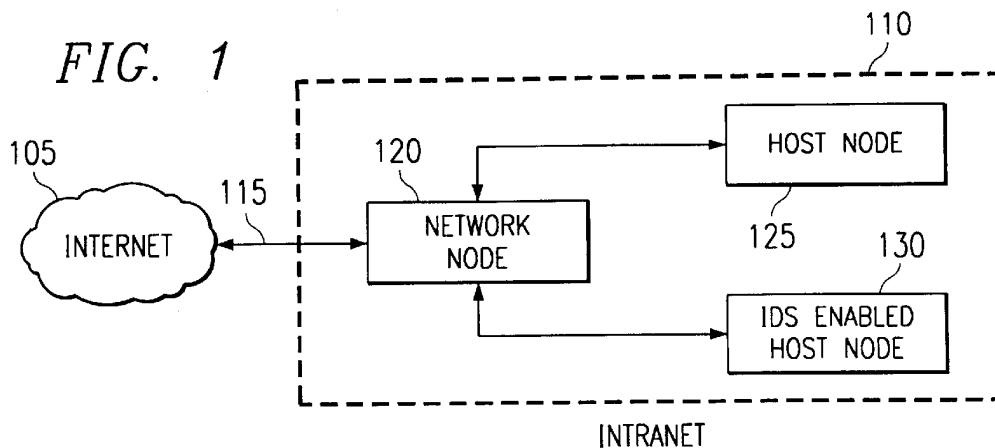
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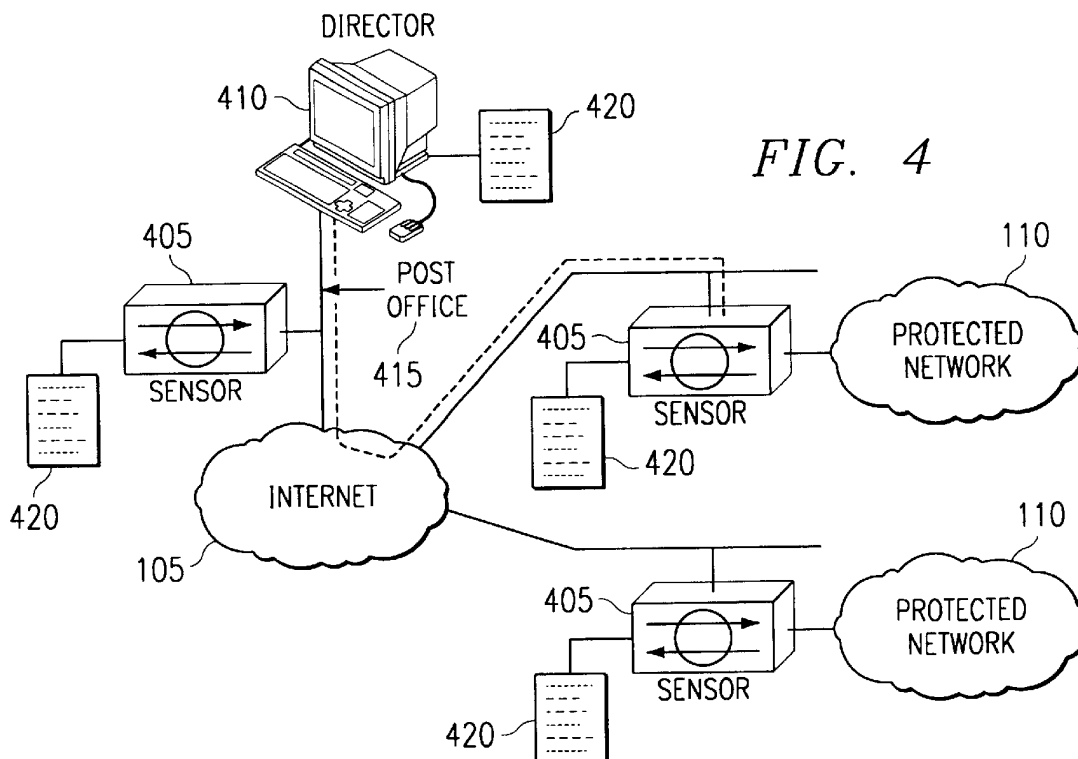
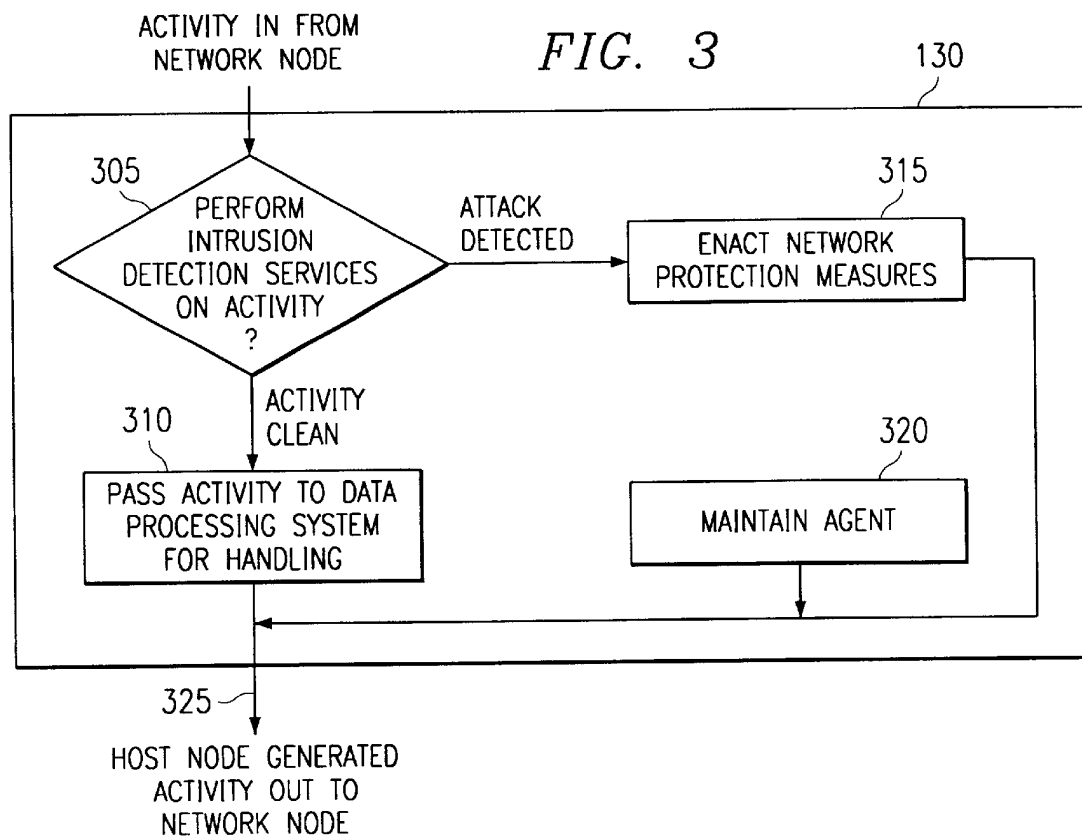
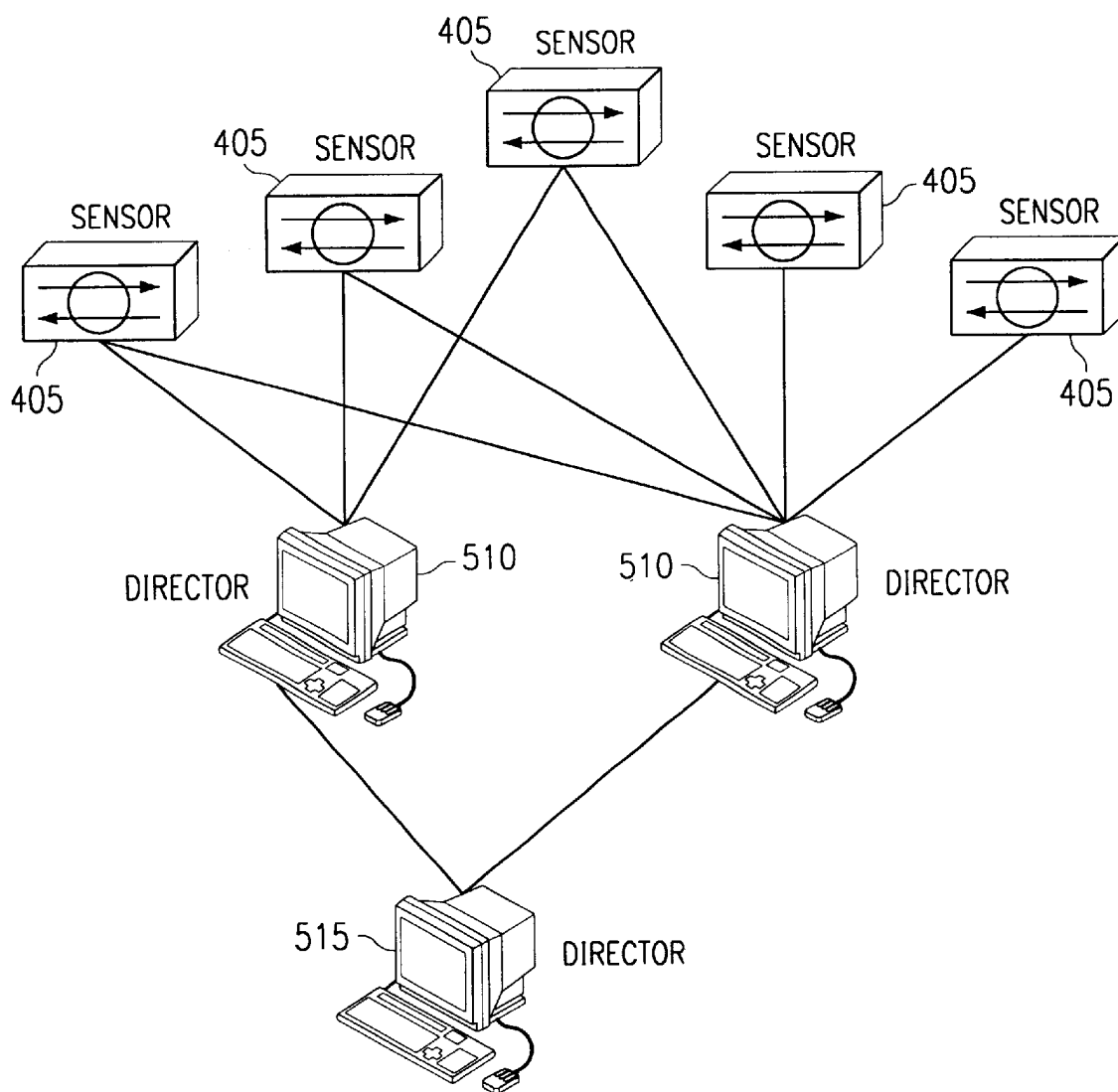


FIG. 5



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MULTILAYERED INTRUSION DETECTION SYSTEM AND METHOD

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to intrusion detection systems and, more particularly, to a multilayered intrusion detection system and method.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Intrusion Detection was developed to extend security visibility into the network and monitor the activity of users while they are on the network. An Intrusion Detection System/Service (IDS) can augment an end-to-end security solution as a dynamic security component by detecting, responding to, and reporting unauthorized activity from data derived directly from the network.

Network intrusion detection is a process that can identify and respond to misuse or policy violations on a network. By placing sensing enabled devices at determined points on the network, network traffic can be monitored and compared against patterns or "signatures" that represent suspicious activity, misuse, or actual attacks. These devices can send alerts to the security management system and, under appropriate circumstances, send commands directly to network equipment such as routers and firewalls, reconfiguring them to deny access to the attacker. The system can automatically and quickly responds in a user-defined manner to send an alert or take immediate action.

Host-based intrusion detection monitors activity on a single system while network-based intrusion detection monitors all activity over a given network connection or segment. Host-based intrusion detection systems can be used to protect critical network servers or other individual systems containing sensitive information. The implementation of these systems is typically in the form of small clients or applications. Intrusions can be detected by analyzing operating system audit trails, application audit trails, and other system activity.

Network-based intrusion detection systems can be used to monitor activity on a specific network segment. Where a host-based intrusion detection system resides on a workstation and shares a CPU (central processing unit) with other user applications, a network-based solution is typically a dedicated platform. Conventional network-based intrusion detection systems can perform rule-based or expert system analysis of traffic using parameters set up by the security manager, and the signatures, which flag suspicious or attack activity. The systems can analyze network packet headers to make security decisions based on source, destination, and packet type. They can also analyze packet data to make decisions based on the actual data being transmitted. These systems scale well for network protection because the number of actual workstations, servers or user systems on the network is not critical. It is the amount of traffic which determines performance. In addition, sensing devices placed around the globe can be configured to report back to a central site, enabling a small team of security experts to support a large enterprise.

There are a variety of technical disadvantages associated with the aforementioned types of Intrusion Detection System/Service (IDS). For example, a host-based IDS cannot detect network wide intrusion attempts. Additionally, host-based systems require the use of a host server's system resources such as disk space, RAM (random access memory), and CPU (central processing unit) time, and, as

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such, it impacts system performance. Host-based intrusion detection systems are ideal if a limited number of critical servers must be protected, however, they do not scale well if enterprise-wide solutions are needed. Alternatively, a network-based IDS might not have the processing power to detect all intrusion attempts on individual hosts.

In addition to the technical disadvantages observed by employing the above types of IDS, a series of other technical disadvantages exist in current IDS technology. As network bandwidth continues to increase, IDS's are falling behind. It is possible that even if the IDS identifies an attack in a packet, a receiving host may have accepted the packet before the IDS has had an opportunity to act upon it. Additional technical disadvantages which occur from utilizing a network-based IDS include wasted processing resulting from the network-based IDS processing traffic which the host will discard without using as well as the network-based IDS's inability to process encrypted traffic.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the teachings of the present invention, a multilayered intrusion detection system and method is provided.

In one aspect, the present invention provides an intrusion detection method which maintains at least one registry indicating at least one host node capable of performing host-based intrusion detection services. The method also includes monitoring activity on a network and comparing at least one characteristic of the monitored activity with at least one host node in the registry. The network activity is dismissed when the monitored activity has at least one characteristic in common with at least one host node in the registry.

Another aspect of the present invention provides an intrusion detection method which includes monitoring activity on a network and maintains a registry of each host node address associated with a host node operable to perform host-based intrusion detection services. The method includes comparing a destination address of the monitored network activity with at least one host node address in the registry and dismissing the network activity having a destination address in common with at least one host node address in the registry. Intrusion detection services are performed on the network activity not dismissed to a registered host node by any of a plurality of network nodes and on the dismissed network activity using the host-based intrusion detection service operable on the host node receiving the dismissed network activity.

In yet another aspect, the present invention provides a computer system for use as an intrusion detection system including at least one processor and at least one computer readable medium communicatively coupled to the processor. A registry is stored on the computer readable medium, the registry operable to maintain entries indicative of at least one host node operable to perform intrusion detection services. The computer system is operable to dismiss network activity having a destination address indicative of at least one entry in the registry.

Another aspect of the present invention provides an intrusion detection system including at least one host node and at least one network node communicatively coupled to the host node including at least one processor and at least one computer readable medium communicatively coupled to the processor. A registry is stored on the computer readable medium, the registry operable to maintain entries indicative of at least one host node operable to perform intrusion

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detection services. The network node is operable to dismiss network activity having a destination address indicative of at least one host node entry in the registry.

In yet another aspect, the present invention provides a computer readable medium comprising at least one program operable to maintain at least one registry. The program is also operable to compare at least one characteristic of monitored network activity to at least one characteristic of the registry and to dismiss monitored network activity having at least one characteristic in common with at least one characteristic of the registry.

One technical advantage provided by the present invention is its ability to reduce the intrusion detection duties performed by network servers or other network appliances by performing intrusion detection duties at appropriately enabled hosts.

Another technical advantage provided by the present invention is its ability to perform intrusion detection monitoring on encrypted network traffic.

Yet another technical advantage provided by the present invention lies in its ability to prevent intruders, undetected by network intrusion detection services, from intruding host devices on the network by performing intrusion detection services at each registered host node.

An additional technical advantage provided by the present invention is its ability to allow a network intrusion detection system to perform primarily network-wide intrusion detection by enlisting hosts to perform host-based intrusion detection services.

Another technical advantage provided by the present invention is its ability to perform intrusion detection services on networks with more traffic than previously possible by sharing intrusion detection duties amongst network nodes and host nodes.

Another technical advantage provided by the present invention is its ability to provide comprehensive intrusion detection services on networks using tunneling services such as those utilized in virtual private networks (VPN).

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding of the present invention, and the advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following written description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates a block diagram of a network according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 illustrates a block diagram of a method performed by a network node according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 illustrates a method performed by a host node according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 illustrates an embodiment of a network node configuration according to the present invention; and

FIG. 5 illustrates a network node hierarchy according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to FIG. 1, a block diagram of a network according to an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. As illustrated in FIG. 1, Internet 105 is communicatively coupled to Intranet 110 via two-way communication medium 115. A standard set of components which might be included in Intranet 110 includes network node

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120, host node 125 and Intrusion Detection Service (IDS) enabled host node 130. Alternative embodiments of the network configuration illustrated in FIG. 1 might include two or more Intranets communicatively coupled together, as well as the addition of firewalls or other network appliances such as routers in either Intranet 110 or Internet 105. Additionally, network node 120 can be any device, such as a server, having processing power and the ability to transmit and receive network activity. Host node 125 and IDS enabled host node 130, like network node 120, are network components having processing power and network communication capabilities. Host nodes 120 and 130 can be servers or personal computers, as well as network appliances such as routers.

Referring now to FIG. 2, an illustration of a block diagram of a method performed by a network node according to an embodiment of the present invention is shown. The present invention achieves its many advantages, in part, by maintaining a registry of host nodes capable of performing intrusion detection services. The present invention begins its methodology implemented in network node 120 by monitoring network activity on the network segment to which network node 120 is attached as indicated at step 205. At step 205, network activity is monitored by performing a series of inquiries on the network activity received by network node 120. At step 205, network activity is monitored to determine whether the network activity is a data transmission or if the network activity is registry information intended to update the registry maintained by network node 120. As a result of this determination, the method of FIG. 2 proceeds either to step 210 for registry maintenance or to step 215 for data transmission processing.

In the situation where it is determined that the network activity is registry information intended to update the registry maintained by network node 120, the network activity or registry information is passed to step 210 for registry maintenance. Upon receipt of the registry information from step 205, maintenance of the registry is performed at step 210. The registry maintained by network node 120 includes entries indicative of host nodes registered as being able to perform intrusion detection services. These entries can include such indicators as the IP (Internet Protocol) address of each registered node, the MAC (media access control) address of each node, the network card address of each node, or any other information which can distinguish one node from another node.

Routine registry maintenance procedures might include first verifying whether or not the node entry to be updated currently exists or not. For example, if the registry update information is intended to add a node to the registry, a determination whether or not the node entry already existed in the registry would be performed at step 210. At step 210, if an entry exists, the registry update information is compared to the existing entry and the existing entry is updated accordingly. If it was determined that entry for the node to be added did not previously exist, a new entry containing all of the appropriate information indicative of the node to be added would be created.

In the situation where the registry update information is intended to delete or disable a node from the registry, verification of the existence of an entry indicative of the node is performed at step 210. If an entry is not found, the registry update information can be discarded or other measures can be taken. If an entry for the node to be disabled is found at step 210, the entry would then be disabled or deleted and the registry updated to reflect the node as no longer being able to perform intrusion detection services.

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Upon completion of the processing associated with the registry update information, an updated registry is made available to network node **120** for the data transmission processing performed at step **215**.

As mentioned above, one possible determination which can be made at step **205** is that the network activity monitored by network node **120** is a data transmission. If this determination is made at step **205**, the characteristics of the data transmission are passed on to step **215**.

At step **215**, characteristics of the data transmission are compared against the entries in the registry maintained by the network node **120**. In order for the network to be protected from potential dangers, measures are taken at step **215** to ensure that the data transmission can be trusted. At step **215**, the data transmission is evaluated to determine whether or not the data transmission is destined for a registered host node. This determination can be performed by reading the destination address contained in the packets which make up the network activity or data transmission and comparing that address with the addresses of the host nodes in the registry, as well as by other means. If the data transmission is determined to be destined for a registered host node or host nodes, the method of FIG. **2** proceeds to step **220**. At step **220**, the data transmission is dismissed and allowed to proceed unencumbered to each registered host node for which it was intended. If it is determined at step **215** that the data transmission is not destined for a registered host node, such as network activity destined for host node **125**, the data transmission is halted for processing at step **225**.

At step **225**, intrusion detection services are performed on the data transmission. These intrusion detection services can be performed either by host-based intrusion detection services available on the network node **120** or by network-based intrusion detection services available on network node **120**. Additionally, the data transmission may be passed by network node **120**, to another node, host or network, having the ability to perform intrusion detections services on the data transmission.

When the network activity is processed at step **225** of FIG. **2**, it looks for patterns of misuse. Patterns can be as simple as an attempt to access a specific port on a specific host, or as complex as sequences of operations distributed across multiple hosts over an arbitrary period of time. The first type of pattern is termed an atomic pattern; the second, a composite pattern.

At step **225**, searches for patterns of misuse are performed by examining either the data portion or the header portion of network packets. Content-based attacks derive from the data portion, and context-based attacks derive from the header portion.

Another methodology for intrusion detection services includes a "three-tier" attack detection capability. Examples include: Named attacks - - - Single attacks that have specific names or common identities, Smurf, PHF, Land, General Category attacks - - - Attacks that keep appearing in new variations with the same basic methodology, Impossible IP Packet, IP fragmentation, Extraordinary attacks - - - Extremely complicated or multi-faceted attacks, TCP hijacking, and E-mail spam.

Such a detection methodology allows for the detection General Category attacks on-the-fly even as hackers launch new variations in an attempt to fool security systems. For example, there are now many variations of the original named "Land" attack which are all variations of the general category "Impossible IP Packet." So even as more variations evolve, over time the general category signature will detect them.

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The results of the intrusion detection services performed at step **225** typically come in one of two forms. If no intrusion attempt is detected by the intrusion detection services, the method of FIG. **2** proceeds to step **240**. If, at step **225**, an attempt at network intrusion is detected, step **235** begins enacting network protection measures. Network protection measures can include sounding an alarm, denying access, creating a log, as well as other measures. Network protection will be discussed in greater detail below.

Once a data transmission has been allowed to proceed to an intrusion detection service enabled host node at step **220**, once data has been determined to be clean by step **225** or once network protection measures have been enacted by step **235**, the method of FIG. **2** returns to step **205** to continue network activity monitoring. Additional method steps as well as methods can be included in the processes performed by network node **120** without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

Referring now to FIG. **3**, a method performed by a host node according to an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. The method of processing performed in an intrusion detection service enabled host node begins at step **305** upon receipt of the data transmission dismissed by network node **120**. In order to reduce the overhead at the network nodes **120**, host node **130** is enabled to perform intrusion detection services on the network activity it receives. Upon dismissal of network activity by network node **120**, intrusion detection services enabled host node **130** performs intrusion detection services on the network activity it receives.

At step **305**, host node **130** performs intrusion detection services, preferably host-based, to determine whether or not the network activity includes a network intrusion attempt. Once the intrusion detection services of host node **130** have been performed, clean activity is passed on to step **310** for processing by the data processing system incorporated into host node **130**. Data processing functions might include e-mail capabilities, word processing, and other applications operable on a host node **130**. If step **305** determines that the network activity includes a network intrusion attempt, the method of host node **130** proceeds to step **315** to enact network security protection measures. As mentioned above, network security measures can include sounding an alarm, changing the configurations on firewalls and routers, denying access, as well as other measures. Network security measures will be discussed in greater detail below.

As mentioned above, when network intrusion detection services are performed on network activity, patterns of misuse are searched for. Patterns can be as simple as an attempt to access a specific port on a specific host, or as complex as sequences of operations distributed across multiple hosts over an arbitrary period of time. The first type of pattern is termed an atomic pattern; the second, a composite pattern.

These searches for patterns of misuse are performed by examining either the data portion or the header portion of network packets are performed. Content-based attacks derive from the data portion, and context-based attacks derive from the header portion.

Another methodology for intrusion detection services includes a "three-tier" attack detection capability. Examples include: Named attacks - - - Single attacks that have specific names or common identities, Smurf, PHF, Land, General Category attacks - - - Attacks that keep appearing in new variations with the same basic methodology, Impossible IP Packet, IP fragmentation, Extraordinary attacks - - - Extremely complicated or multi-faceted attacks, TCP hijacking, and E-mail spam.

Such a detection methodology allows for the detection of General Category attacks on-the-fly even as hackers launch new variations in an attempt to fool security systems. For example, there are now many variations of the original named "Land" attack which are all variations of the general category "Impossible IP Packet." So even as more variations evolve, over time the general category signature will detect them.

Maintained on host node **130** is an agent, configured to perform a variety of functions for host node **130** as indicated at step **320**. One function performed by the agent is to register the host node with the registry as being capable of performing intrusion detection services. The agent sends host node **130** information to network node **120** indicating the various information components required by network node **120** to create an entry indicative of host node **130**. The agent can also be enabled to perform automated service updates to the host node on which it is maintained. For example, if the intrusion detection service operating on host node **130** needs to be updated to detect new versions of intrusion attempts, step **320** requests and manages the updates for host node **130** without requiring interaction from a host node user. The agent maintained at step **320** can also be configured to update other software applications resident on host node **130**, as well as other characteristics of host node **130**.

Activity generated as a result of enacting network protection measures at step **315**, data processing activities at step **310** and agent actions at step **320** are placed on the network for transmission to network node **130** as indicated at **325**.

Referring now to FIG. **4**, an embodiment of a network node configuration according to the present invention is illustrated. An IDS can be implemented as a real-time intrusion detection system that includes sensors **405**, stealthy security appliances that act as "sniffers," and a director **410**, a centralized management console. Director **410** can be configured to collect incoming sensor **405** data, translate it, and present it to security personnel in a map-based and intuitive graphical interface. Users can quickly access additional information about the type of attack from a Director's Network Security Database (NSDB). Director **410** can also be configured to allow security personnel to manage the configuration of remote sensors **405**.

Each sensor **405** is positioned such that each can monitor network activity from host nodes **130** contained on segments of Intranet **110** and Internet **105**. As the present invention teaches, when sensor **405** monitors this activity, it is checking to see if the network activity is destined for an intrusion detection enabled host node **130**. The registry **420** sensor **405** uses to determine whether the destination address of network activity is indicative of a registered host node **130** can reside on sensor **405**, on director **410** or be otherwise accessible by sensor **405**. Post office **415** can be utilized by sensor **405** to communicate with an appropriate registry **420**.

As illustrated, it is possible that each network segment monitored has a dedicated sensor **405**, including the Internet, Intranet, and Extranet. The sensor **405** appliance of the present invention is optimized for specific data rates and interfaces, such as Ethernet (10BaseT), Fast Ethernet (100BaseT), Token Ring (4 and 16 Mbps), and Fiber Distributed Data Interface (FDDI) (Single or Dual mode) as well as others. Sensors **405** can be configured to use an expert rules-based system engine to distill large volumes of network activity into meaningful security events. In this scenario, it is possible that each sensor **405** have a local

registry **420** indicative of host nodes located on each respective network segment to which each sensor **405** is coupled.

Post Office **415** is a communications architecture configured to provide communications between the sensors **405** and directors **410**. Communication is supported by a connectionless-based protocol that can switch between alternate routes to maintain point-to-point connections allowing, at least in part, for at least one copy of a registry **420** to always be accessible.

The high performance of sensor **405** and the sharing of intrusion detection services with host nodes **130** allows sensor **405** to monitor nearly every packet on a network segment. Therefore, it is not required to create profiles and omit signatures, or create other IDS exceptions which entail constant and extraordinary knowledge of a network to ensure that the correct attack signatures are enabled.

As mentioned earlier, after an attack is detected network security measures can be generated by sensor **405** which can respond to an attack in the following user-configurable ways: Generate an alarm—alarms are generated by sensor **405**, and are typically routed to one or more remote director **410**. Log the alarm event—all sensor log data is written to flat files, which are either event logs or IP session logs. Record the session to an IP session log to either gather evidence of an unlawful activity or to record an intruder's knowledge of the network. This capability is commonly used in conjunction with a "fishbowl" or "honeypot" technique where an intruder is vectored into a "safe" network or server that impersonates important applications or information. Other security measures are anticipated by the present invention.

Referring now to FIG. **5**, a network node hierarchy according to the present invention is illustrated. The alternate embodiment of a network node depicted in FIG. **5** illustrates another feature of the director/sensor network node configuration and its ability to build hierarchies of sensor **405** and director **510** and **515** systems through the use of message propagation. Instead of broadcasting events from a sensor onto multiple devices, information can be sent to a single director **510** or **515**, which can then propagate packets onto other platforms defined by local configuration files. Likewise, a single registry can be maintained by director **510** and **515** which is accessible, via post office **415**, by all sensors **405** coupled to the network. Sensors **405** can propagate messages to more than one director **510** and **515**, thereby ensuring fault-tolerant communication.

FIG. **5** illustrates this concept through a simple hierarchy of directors **510** and **515**. In addition to providing performance benefits and fault tolerance of both communications and registry verifications/usage, distribution hierarchies can simplify system management. For example, local director **510** might be responsible for monitoring from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. and then transfer control onto a central director **515** every evening.

Although the present invention and its advantages have been described in detail it should be understood that various changes, substitutions, and alterations can be made hereto without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. An intrusion detection method comprising:
 - maintaining at least one registry indicating at least one host node capable of performing intrusion detection services, the registry operable to distinguish the host node from any other host node;
 - monitoring activity on a network;

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comparing at least one characteristic of the monitored activity with the registry;
 determining based on the comparison whether the monitored activity has the characteristic in common with any of the host nodes in the registry; and
 dismissing the monitored activity having at least one characteristic in common with at least one host node in the registry.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising comparing at least one destination address of the monitored activity with the registry of host nodes.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising maintaining an agent on the host node configured to register the host node in the registry.

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising enabling the agent to update services available to the host node.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising performing intrusion detection services on the dismissed monitored activity received by a host node.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising performing intrusion detection services on monitored activity not dismissed.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the intrusion detection services are performed by a network intrusion detection system.

8. The method of claim 1 further comprising monitoring network activity on a tunneling network.

9. An intrusion detection method comprising:
 monitoring activity on a network;

maintaining a registry of each host node address associated with a host node operable to perform host-based intrusion detection services, the each host node address operable to distinguish the host node from another host node;

comparing a destination address of the network activity with at least one host node address in the registry;

determining based on the comparison whether the monitored activity has the destination address in common with any of the host node addresses;

dismissing the network activity having a destination address in common with at least one host node address in the registry to the host node;

performing intrusion detection services on the network activity not dismissed to a registered host node; and

performing intrusion detection services on the dismissed network activity using the host-based intrusion detection service operable on the host node receiving the dismissed network activity.

10. The method of claim 9 further comprising maintaining at least one agent, by each host node indicated in the registry, operable to perform host node registration.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising enabling the agent to update characteristics associated with the host node.

12. The method of claim 9 further comprising performing network-based intrusion detection services on the network activity not dismissed to a registered host node.

13. A computer system for use as an intrusion detection system comprising:

at least one processor;

at least one computer readable medium communicatively coupled to the processor;

a registry stored on the computer readable medium, the registry operable to maintain entries indicative of at least one host node operable to perform intrusion

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detection services, the registry further operable to distinguish the host node from another host node; and wherein

the computer system is operable to compare a characteristic of network activity to the registry, to determine whether the network activity has the characteristic in common with any of the host nodes in the registry based on the comparison, and to dismiss network activity having a destination address indicative of at least one entry in the registry.

14. The system of claim 13 further comprising:

at least one host node communicatively coupled to the computer system including at least one processor; at least one computer readable medium communicatively coupled to the processor; at least one agent stored on the computer readable medium, operable to register the host node with the registry; and wherein the at least one host node is operable to perform intrusion detection services.

15. The system of claim 14 wherein the at least one agent is further operable to update services available to the host node.

16. The system of claim 13 wherein the computer system is further operable to monitor network activity.

17. The system of claim 13 wherein the computer system is further operable to compare a destination address of the network activity with at least one entry in the registry.

18. The system of claim 13 wherein the computer system is further operable to perform network-based intrusion detection services.

19. The system of claim 13 wherein the computer system is further includes: at least one sensor; and at least one director.

20. The system of claim 19 wherein the computer system further includes at least one post office operable to enable communication between at least the sensor and the director.

21. An intrusion detection system comprising:

at least one host node;

at least one network node communicatively coupled to the host node including at least one processor;

at least one computer readable medium communicatively coupled to the processor;

a registry stored on the computer readable medium, the registry operable to maintain entries indicative of at least one host node operable to perform intrusion detection services, the registry further operable to distinguish the host node from another host node; and wherein

the network node is operable to compare a destination address of network activity to the registry, to determine whether the network activity has the destination address in common with any of the entries in the registry based on the comparison, and to dismiss network activity having a destination address indicative of at least one entry in the registry.

22. An apparatus comprising:

a computer readable medium comprising at least one program operable, when executed on a processor, to: maintain at least one registry indicating at least one host node capable of performing intrusion detection services, the registry operable to distinguish the host node from any other host node;

compare at least one characteristic of monitored network activity to at least one characteristic of the registry;

determine based on the comparison whether the monitored activity has the characteristic in common with any of the host nodes in the registry; and

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dismiss monitored network activity having at least one characteristic in common with at least one characteristic of the registry.

23. A computer system for use as an intrusion detection system comprising:

a means for processing data;

a means for storing data, the means for storing data communicatively coupled to the means for processing data;

a means for maintaining entries indicative of at least one host node operable to perform intrusion detection

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services, the means for maintaining entries stored in the means for storing data, the entries operable to distinguish the host node from any other host node;

a means for determining based on the comparison whether the monitored activity has the characteristic in common with any of the host nodes in the registry; and

a means for dismissing network activity having a destination address indicative of at least one entry in the means for maintaining entries.

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