

AKAMAI CUSTOMER STORY

Keeping DDoS Threats at Bay Ensures Gamers Can Play

Smilegate West delivers a high-quality game experience for thousands of players, blocking DDoS attacks with Akamai

1B

Global registered CROSSFIRE players in February 2020

24/7

Protection against DDoS attacks

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Reduces number of dropped sessions

Protecting games and gamers against security threats

Smilegate West's revenue and reputation hinge on the speed and stability of its online games, which is why the company takes DDoS attacks very seriously. Amid evolving security threats, the game publisher relies on Akamai to help keep games running smoothly and players coming back for more.

It's all fun and games until a DDoS attack happens

At any given moment, millions of people across the globe are playing CROSSFIRE, one of the world's largest free-to-play online games. CROSSFIRE rewards speed, skill, and strategy in action-packed battles, and players work hard to be the best. Though the basic game experience is free, devoted gamers pay for upgraded weapons, body armor, and other items to boost their scores and rise through the ranks.

It's serious entertainment and big business for Smilegate West. As the publisher of CROSSFIRE for audiences in the Americas, the European Union, and the Middle East and North Africa, the company knows just how immersive the experience can be. Gamers download CROSSFIRE and other games from the company's Z8Games portal to get swept away by the action and escape the routine of everyday life. Any interruptions in gameplay can ruin their state of flow.



Smilegate West
Toronto, Canada
www.smilegategwest.com

Industry
Gaming

Challenge
To keep players engaged, Smilegate West (an authorized branch for Americas, Europe, and MENA) must protect its online games against increasingly sophisticated DDoS attacks.

Solutions

- Prolexic Routed
- Web Application Protector
- Download Delivery



"In games like CROSSFIRE where speed and quick decisions matter, even a one-millisecond lag can have a negative impact on a player's score, and a dropped connection is even worse," says Arash Haghighi, senior manager of IT infrastructure and security at Smilegate West. "We want players to have the best experience possible, so low latency and stable connectivity are our highest priorities."

Haghighi oversees multiple data centers globally, making sure the IT infrastructure can support fast, uninterrupted gameplay for CROSSFIRE and other games – no matter how many players join in. One of the biggest challenges Haghighi faces is the growing threat of DDoS attacks. Over the past several years, attacks have become larger and more sophisticated, and the video game industry is a prime target. Volumetric attacks can take games offline and affect thousands of players in a matter of seconds. Or they can be more targeted, increasing latency just enough to give one player an advantage over others. Either way, unmitigated attacks can leave a dent in revenue and reputation.

"When players have a bad experience with a game, they aren't afraid to tell everyone in the gaming community – and news travels fast in online forums and social media," says Haghighi. "There's a real risk of losing market share to competitors."

24-hour global protection against an evolving threat

Smilegate West has long relied on Akamai to mitigate DDoS attacks and keep its online games performing smoothly for players around the world. With [Prolexic Routed](#), the company has a handle on even the largest, most complex attacks.

"With Akamai's capacity and intelligence, we can mitigate attacks that sometimes exceed 400 gigabits per second and recover almost immediately," says Haghighi. "We're even equipped to defend against DDoS tactics that have never been seen before, as Akamai engineers work 24/7 to analyze traffic patterns and apply new filters."

Haghighi and his teams rely on the Akamai Security Operations Command Center (SOCC) to stay on top of the threat, but they can also monitor the activity through a dedicated portal. That gives them real-time visibility into key metrics such as packet loss, latency, and connection quality – all essential for delivering an immersive CROSSFIRE experience for hundreds of thousands of concurrent users.

"No matter where attacks originate, Akamai has 20 scrubbing centers worldwide that keep the traffic from reaching our infrastructure," Haghighi says. "That prevents our data center bandwidth from saturating and dramatically reduces the number of dropped sessions."

Global reach and scale are crucial for Smilegate West. The company has players around the world and hosts several high-profile live tournaments every year in Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, Turkey, and the United States. No matter where Smilegate West operates, it keeps its servers behind the Akamai shield. As Haghighi says, "Prolexic is always on, which makes us feel safe when we're launching a new event."

That global presence is an important reason Smilegate West is also a long-time customer of Akamai's CDN for fast content delivery at the edge, along with [Download Delivery](#). Whenever the company releases a game update, it goes through the CDN, which makes it easy to distribute a localized version for each region. For players, that means updates and downloads are quick and painless, no matter where they are in the world.



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Arash Haghighi

senior manager of IT infrastructure and security, Smilegate West

A friend and partner to help Smilegate West grow

Today, Smilegate West is adding even more protection to keep its games up and running, adopting Akamai's [Web Application Protector](#) for attacks targeting web servers. But for Haghghi, the value of the DDoS protection solution goes beyond the technology. He sees Akamai as a partner that is just as interested in solving the security challenge as he is. "Our relationship with Akamai is not just customer-and-provider," he says. "They are our friends and partners."

Haghghi believes that relationship, based on mutual trust and shared goals, is key to counteracting the constantly evolving DDoS threat.

"The Akamai SOCC communicates with our engineers as often as possible, and they take the time to explain the root causes of issues," says Haghghi. "There is always an exchange of knowledge that's beneficial to both teams. It's a highly ethical approach to support, and it helps us find and solve problems faster."

That's essential to delivering an enjoyable gaming experience for all the CROSSFIRE fans, from newbies to seasoned gamers and pros. And it gives Smilegate West the stability, speed, and confidence to innovate and grow, introducing new games and expanding into new markets. That's good news for gamers, who are always looking for the next exciting, immersive experience.



Smilegate West is a leading publisher of free-to-play online games. Founded in 2006, Smilegate West's mission is to become the number one online game publisher in North and South America. Smilegate West currently publishes CROSSFIRE in the Americas, Europe, and the MENA region through its proprietary gaming portal Z8Games. Based in Toronto, Canada, Smilegate West employs a staff of widely talented and culturally diverse employees, headed by an experienced management team. In publishing CROSSFIRE, the world's largest first-person online shooter with millions of concurrent users globally, Smilegate West continues to deliver the highest-quality, free-to-play gaming experience.



Akamai secures and delivers digital experiences for the world's largest companies. Akamai's intelligent edge platform surrounds everything, from the enterprise to the cloud, so customers and their businesses can be fast, smart, and secure. Top brands globally rely on Akamai to help them realize competitive advantage through agile solutions that extend the power of their multi-cloud architectures. Akamai keeps decisions, apps, and experiences closer to users than anyone – and attacks and threats far away. Akamai's portfolio of edge security, web and mobile performance, enterprise access, and video delivery solutions is supported by unmatched customer service, analytics, and 24/7/365 monitoring. To learn why the world's top brands trust Akamai, visit www.akamai.com, blogs.akamai.com, or [@Akamai](https://twitter.com/Akamai) on Twitter. You can find our global contact information at www.akamai.com/locations. Published 03/21.