



We have looked at the *GNAT Box* software here before, both as a software-only solution (which is still available) and as the *GB-1000* appliance.

The *GB-1000* is a low profile (1RU/1.75") high performance firewall/VPN appliance, running the *GNAT Box 3.1* software [Ed note: *The company says version 3.2.1 is now available*] and containing four 10/100 Ethernet interfaces. The system software is contained in flash memory, so it boots fast and can easily be updated, and the system includes enhanced system options such as DHCP server, DNS server and IPsec VPN. Options such as high availability, gigabit Ethernet and token-ring expansion are also available, and the *GB-1000* is also provided with one *GNAT Box* VPN client.

Things keep getting smaller these days, however, and so this time we are evaluating the *RoBoX*, another self-contained firewall appliance based on the *GNAT Box* firewall code, but this time measuring about six inches on each side, and just an inch high – perfect for the desktop or a bookshelf in a small or home office environment. Amazingly, GTA still manages to cram three 10/100 Ethernet interfaces (internal, external and DMZ) and a serial console port onto the rear panel, while the front panel sports just three LEDs showing power, activity and error conditions. The serial port can be used for both serial console access or async PPP connectivity (dial-up modem or ISDN/TA). Inside is a 133MHz AMD SC520 processor, 64Mb RAM and 16Mb flash memory.

As with the *GB-1000*, *RoBoX* runs the same version of the *GNAT Box* firewall code. This is a completely self-contained stateful inspection firewall operating system, and does not require

## RoBoX Firewall



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**FOR** Self-contained appliance; excellent value for money; IPsec VPN included; tiny!

**AGAINST** Some deliberate limitations to ensure it stays within the realms of the small business or home environment.

**VERDICT** Very robust and comprehensive firewall technology housed in a pocket-sized appliance. Very easy to use and good value for money.

Features	★★★★☆
Ease of use	★★★★★
Support	★★★★☆
Performance	★★★★☆
Documentation	★★★★☆
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall Rating	★★★★★

**RoBoX Firewall is a very robust and comprehensive firewall technology housed in a pocket-sized appliance. Very easy to use and good value for money.**

a general purpose OS such as UNIX or NT on which to run. The firewall software is contained in flash memory from which the *RoBoX* appliance boots and runs. The software is identical to the standard *GNAT Box* code except for certain inbuilt limitations that are peculiar to the *RoBoX* appliance, such as a limit of 10,000 concurrent connections, 100 remote access filters, 100 outbound filters, 100 tunnels and five DNS domains.

The *RoBoX* is configured via the Windows-based *GBAdmin* GUI utility, which provides a user-friendly interface that will be instantly familiar to anyone who has worked with any of the other *GNAT Box* products. A web-based interface is also available. Initial configuration of the unit is primarily concerned with assigning IP addresses, whereupon the *RoBoX* will immediately begin to function using a default security policy – disallow all unsolicited inbound connections from the external network, while allowing unfettered access to the Internet for all protected hosts.

Creating a more appropriate security policy is simple enough – the first task is to define the objects that describe various network resources (such as hosts, subnets, and so on) which will be subsequently used in creating firewall rules. The rules themselves are typical packet filters which define source and destination IP addresses, ports and actions which are effected when packets match a particular filter. Actions can include raising alarms, sending emails, pinging a host, pager alerts, SNMP traps and shutting down the interface. NAT is supported, as is a pure ‘pass through’ mode, and aliases can be applied to external interfaces and then ‘tunneled’ through to specific hosts such as web or ftp servers.

A nice feature is the check box to enable or disable a filter to allow rules to be defined then removed temporarily for special cases or testing, without having to delete and recreate them.

All *GNAT Box* firewalls include an IPsec-compliant VPN out of the box, and *RoBoX* is no exception. The *GNAT Box VPN Client* is based on SafeNet, Inc.’s *SafeNet/Soft-PK* VPN client, probably the most widely used VPN client in the industry, although any IPsec client should be suitable. Both client-server and server-server VPNs can be created.



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