Proceedings of the 16th International
Scientific and Practical Conference
«Challenges in Science of Nowadays»
(April 26-28, 2026).
Washington, USA

No
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Multi-level Information Security Model for Data Center Protection

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Abstract. This article presents a comprehensive multi-level information security model designed for data processing centers (DPCs). The proposed model integrates physical, network, application, and data protection layers into a cohesive defense-in-depth framework. Each security level is formally defined, and interdependencies between layers are analyzed. The model addresses current threats including advanced persistent threats (APTs), insider attacks, and supply-chain vulnerabilities. Experimental validation demonstrates a 37% reduction in successful intrusion attempts compared to conventional single-layer approaches. The findings contribute to both theoretical cybersecurity frameworks and practical deployment guidelines for enterprise data centers.
Keywords: *information security, data center protection, multi-level security model, defense-in-depth, cybersecurity architecture, threat mitigation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern data processing centers (DPCs) form the backbone of critical digital infrastructure, hosting sensitive governmental, financial, and healthcare data. The increasing sophistication of cyberattacks demands that security architects move beyond perimeter-based defenses toward holistic, multi-layered protection strategies. According to recent reports, over 68% of organizations experienced at least one data breach in 2023, with DPCs being the primary target in nearly half of these incidents [1].

The concept of defense-in-depth — originally borrowed from military strategy — posits that multiple independent security controls create a resilient architecture where the failure of one layer does not lead to complete system compromise [2]. However, existing implementations often lack formal interdependency modeling, leaving gaps between layers

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that attackers can exploit.

This article proposes a formally defined multi-level security (MLS) model specifically tailored for DPC environments. The model systematically addresses physical security, network segmentation, application-layer controls, and data-centric protection, providing both theoretical grounding and practical implementation guidelines.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Bell-LaPadula model [3], one of the earliest formal security frameworks, introduced mandatory access control (MAC) principles that remain foundational today. Subsequent work by Biba [4] complemented this with integrity-focused constraints. While these models provided rigorous mathematical underpinnings, they were designed for single-system environments and do not address the distributed, heterogeneous nature of modern DPCs.

The NIST Cybersecurity Framework [5] offers a widely adopted risk management approach organized around five functions: Identify, Protect, Detect, Respond, and Recover. However, it remains largely prescriptive rather than formally structured, making automated compliance verification difficult. ISO/IEC 27001 [6] provides a management-system perspective but similarly lacks mathematical rigor for inter-layer dependency analysis.

More recent research has focused on zero-trust architectures (ZTA), which eliminate implicit trust within network perimeters [7]. While ZTA significantly improves lateral movement prevention, studies show that organizations adopting ZTA without structured layering still face vulnerabilities at the physical and data layers [8]. Our work bridges this gap by unifying ZTA principles within a formally structured multi-level model.

3. PROPOSED MULTI-LEVEL SECURITY MODEL

3.1. Model Architecture

The proposed model consists of five hierarchically ordered security layers, denoted L1 through L5. Each layer Li is formally defined as a tuple (Ci, Pi, Di, Ri), where Ci is the set of controls deployed at layer i, Pi is the set of policies governing those controls, Di is the set of detected threat categories, and Ri is the response mechanism set. The overall security posture SP of the system is defined as:

SP = ∩(i=1 to 5) Li, subject to the condition that for all i < j, any threat T mitigated at Lj must also have been evaluated at Li.

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3.2. Layer Descriptions

Layer L1 — Physical Security. This foundational layer encompasses access control to physical DPC facilities, including biometric authentication, CCTV surveillance, environmental monitoring (temperature, humidity, fire suppression), and tamper-evident hardware seals. Threats addressed at this layer include unauthorized physical access, hardware theft, and environmental damage [9].

Layer L2 — Network Perimeter Security. This layer implements firewall policies, intrusion detection and prevention systems (IDS/IPS), DDoS mitigation, and encrypted VPN gateways. Network segmentation through VLANs and micro-segmentation limits lateral movement. All inter-segment traffic is inspected using deep packet inspection (DPI) [10].

Layer L3 — Endpoint and Host Security. Operating system hardening, patch management, endpoint detection and response (EDR) agents, and application whitelisting form the core of this layer. Each host within the DPC is subject to continuous behavioral monitoring to detect anomalous process execution patterns indicative of malware activity.

Layer L4 — Application Security. Web application firewalls (WAF), secure coding standards enforcement, runtime application self-protection (RASP), and API gateway security policies are implemented at this layer. Authentication mechanisms including multi-factor authentication (MFA) and OAuth 2.0-based authorization are enforced for all application interfaces.

Layer L5 — Data Security. The innermost and most critical layer encompasses data classification, encryption at rest and in transit (AES-256 and TLS 1.3 respectively), data loss prevention (DLP) controls, and cryptographic key management. Access to sensitive data repositories is governed by attribute-based access control (ABAC), ensuring the principle of least privilege is maintained at the data level.

4. EXPERIMENTAL VALIDATION

To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed model, a controlled experiment was conducted in a simulated DPC environment comprising 120 virtual machines across three logical security zones. A red team of certified penetration testers performed 200 structured attack scenarios over a six-week period, targeting each security layer independently and in combination.

The results demonstrated that the MLS model successfully blocked or detected 94.5% of all attack scenarios. Critically,

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attacks that succeeded in bypassing one layer were contained at subsequent layers in 98.3% of cases, confirming the defense-in-depth principle. In comparison, a conventional single-perimeter configuration tested in the same environment achieved a containment rate of only 57.2%, representing a 37.3 percentage-point improvement attributable to the multi-layer design [11].

Notably, the integration of formal inter-layer dependency analysis enabled automated detection of three previously unknown configuration vulnerabilities that would not have been identified through standard penetration testing alone. These findings underscore the value of formal modeling as a complement to empirical security assessment.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This article presented a formally defined multi-level information security model for data processing centers, comprising five hierarchically structured protection layers. The model provides both mathematical rigor for inter-layer dependency analysis and practical implementation guidance for security architects. Experimental validation confirmed significant superiority over conventional perimeter-based approaches, with a 37.3% improvement in overall threat containment.

Future work will focus on extending the model to hybrid cloud-on-premises DPC environments and developing automated compliance verification tooling based on the formal layer specifications. Additionally, the integration of artificial intelligence-driven anomaly detection into the inter-layer communication framework represents a promising avenue for further research.

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