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Original Article

AI-Augmented DevSecOps Pipelines: Enabling Continuous Security Integration in Large-Scale Software Systems

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Abstract:

This paper proposes an AI-augmented DevSecOps pipeline that embeds continuous security controls across the software lifecycle plan, code, build, test, release, deploy, and operate for large-scale, polyglot systems. The architecture fuses traditional SAST/DAST, software composition analysis, IaC/K8s policy checks, and SBOM provenance (e.g., SLSA/attestations) with learning components that prioritize, adapt, and automate. A risk-scoring engine combines CVSS, exploit likelihood, business criticality, and runtime blast radius to drive queue-aware remediation. LLM-assisted triage with policy guardrails summarizes findings, deduplicates noise, and generates secure code patches as candidate pull requests, while active learning continuously refines rules from developer feedback. For runtime, behavior models detect drift and supply-chain anomalies (e.g., dependency confusion, poisoned images) and trigger progressive delivery actions canaries, feature flag isolation, and policy-as-code rollbacks. A reinforcement-learning scheduler optimizes scan depth, frequency, and environment selection to minimize MTTR and build latency under resource constraints. The pipeline integrates with enterprise controls (zero-trust identity, secrets management, artifact signing) and publishes compliance evidence (audit trails, control KPIs) automatically. We validate the approach on multi-service benchmarks and production-like workloads, demonstrating reduced false positives, faster mean time to remediation, and lower p95 build overhead versus static baselines. The results indicate that coupling predictive analytics and autonomous orchestration with human-in-the-loop review enables continuous, scalable security without sacrificing delivery velocity.

Keywords:

DevSecOps, Continuous Security, SBOM, SAST/DAST, Software Supply Chain, Policy-As-Code, Reinforcement Learning, LLM-Assisted Triage, Risk Scoring, Zero-Trust, IAC Security, Progressive Delivery.

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1. Introduction

Modern software delivery operates at a scale and tempo that strain traditional security practices. Cloud-native architectures, polyglot codebases, and continuous delivery pipelines multiply the attack surface while shrinking the window for manual review. Teams must contend with supply-chain risks (third-party libraries, container images, CI runners), infrastructure-as-code (IaC) drift, and fast-evolving vulnerabilities that outpace static scanning cycles. In practice, organizations face two persistent failures: signal overload and action latency. Static analysis, dynamic testing, and composition analysis often generate voluminous, duplicate, or low-value findings; meanwhile, high-impact issues wait in queues, and remediations lag behind release cadences. The result is a brittle compromise either slow down delivery to "be safe," or ship fast with mounting risk debt.

This work advances an AI-augmented DevSecOps pipeline that embeds adaptive, continuous security into each stage plan, code, build, test, release, deploy, and operate without sacrificing velocity. We combine learning-based risk scoring with LLM-assisted triage to reduce noise, cluster duplicates, and propose secure code changes as candidate pull requests. Reinforcement-learning and Bayesian schedulers optimize when and where to run SAST/DAST/SCA and IaC/Kubernetes policy checks to minimize p95 build overhead while preserving coverage. At runtime, behaviour models detect drift, provenance anomalies, and policy violations, triggering progressive delivery actions (canary isolation, feature-flag rollbacks) and generating auditable evidence (SBOMs, attestations) for compliance. Our contributions are threefold: (i) a reference architecture that fuses security tooling with predictive analytics and policy-as-code; (ii) a human-in-the-loop workflow that converts findings to actionable, context-aware remediations; and (iii) empirical validation on multi-service benchmarks showing improved mean time to remediation and reduced false positives. Together, these elements demonstrate that continuous security integration at scale is achievable when automation is coupled with intelligent prioritization and governed by transparent controls.

2. Related Work

2.1. Existing Approaches to DevSecOps Automation

Classical DevSecOps pipelines "shift left" by inserting SAST/DAST, Software Composition Analysis (SCA), secret scanning, and Infrastructure-as-Code (IaC) checks into CI stages and pre-merge gates. Policy-as-code (e.g., OPA/Rego) enforces guardrails on Kubernetes manifests, cloud IAM, and supply-chain steps, while SBOM generation and artifact signing (e.g., Sigstore/Cosign) improve provenance. Change tickets and chat-ops bots route findings to owners; baseline suppression and severity thresholds curb noise. These practices raised the floor for secure delivery, but common shortcomings persist: tools produce overlapping, context-free alerts; static scan schedules inflate build times; and remediation hand-offs are slow. Feedback from production (exploit attempts, drift, blast radius) rarely informs prioritization upstream, creating a gap between detection and action.

2.2 AI in Software Security and DevOps Pipelines

AI has been applied to several bottlenecks. Learning-based ranking enriches CVSS with exploit likelihood, asset criticality, and dependency centrality to prioritize fixes. Graph and time-series models flag supply-chain anomalies (poisoned images, dependency confusion) and CI/CD drifts. LLMs assist triage by clustering duplicates, drafting root-cause summaries, and proposing patch diffs or configuration fixes as candidate pull requests kept safe via policy guardrails and human review. Reinforcement learning and Bayesian optimization tune when/where to run scans to minimize p95 build overhead under coverage constraints; active learning incorporates developer dispositions (false positive, accepted risk) to refine rules. Despite promise, risks include hallucinated patches, explainability gaps, data-handling/privacy concerns, and governance needs for auditability and override.

2.3 Conventional vs. AI-Augmented DevSecOps Models

Conventional pipelines emphasize coverage and compliance; AI-augmented variants optimize for precision, latency, and closed-loop remediation. The latter fuses static tools with contextual risk scoring (blast radius, runtime signals), automates triage, and couples detections to progressive delivery actions (canary isolate, feature-flag rollback) while auto-producing evidence (attestations, SBOM deltas). In practice, this reduces alert fatigue and MTTR without sacrificing velocity, because scarce attention is steered to issues with high exploitability and business impact. However, AI-augmented models introduce operational responsibilities model lifecycle management, drift monitoring, and policy-aligned guardrails to ensure recommendations remain reliable, transparent, and reversible. The literature trend is clear: moving from tool accumulation to learning-driven orchestration that continuously balances security risk against delivery throughput.

3. Methodology

3.1. Architectural Overview

The architecture begins with a standardized environment request from development teams that triggers a registered pipeline to configure the DevSecOps process. Using Terraform, the framework is generated reproducibly from versioned Terraform state and pre-vetted DevSecOps application images. Post-generation steps apply licenses and use Ansible to configure application baselines, ensuring that build agents, runners, and scaffolding are policy-aligned before any code is compiled. This front-loaded automation eliminates snowflake environments and gives the pipeline a single source of truth for infrastructure and controls.

Provisioning proceeds against a selected cloud provider, where security and test capabilities are attached as first-class pipeline stages. On the security side, code quality (SonarQube), component vulnerability analysis (Nexus IQ), container verification

(NeuVector), and secret management (KeyStore) create a layered defense for source, dependencies, and artifacts. In parallel, the test swimlane wires UI testing (Selenium), API testing (ReadyAPI), and performance testing (JMeter), so functional and non-functional gates evolve with the application. All tools emit signed results into a report and log collection sink, preserving provenance for later audit.

An application CI pipeline is then generated with build-type templates and webhook integrations to the chosen scanners and test harnesses. This keeps security and quality checks "shift-left" and repeatable across services while avoiding bespoke wiring. Build outputs stream to a Build Result Dashboard, giving developers immediate feedback on failures, flaky tests, or policy violations. Because the CI pipeline is templated, new services inherit the same guardrails by default, reducing onboarding friction and minimizing configuration drift over time.

Finally, the automation layer exposes two control planes: a Scan Results Dashboard that consolidates findings across tools and environments, and a Configuration Console where applications and frameworks are registered and tuned. These consoles close the loop teams can trace a failing policy back to its IaC source, adjust thresholds under governance, and watch remediations propagate through subsequent runs. In an AI-augmented setting, this is where risk scoring, deduplication, and assisted fixes plug in, turning raw scanner output into prioritized, developer-ready actions while maintaining end-to-end traceability.

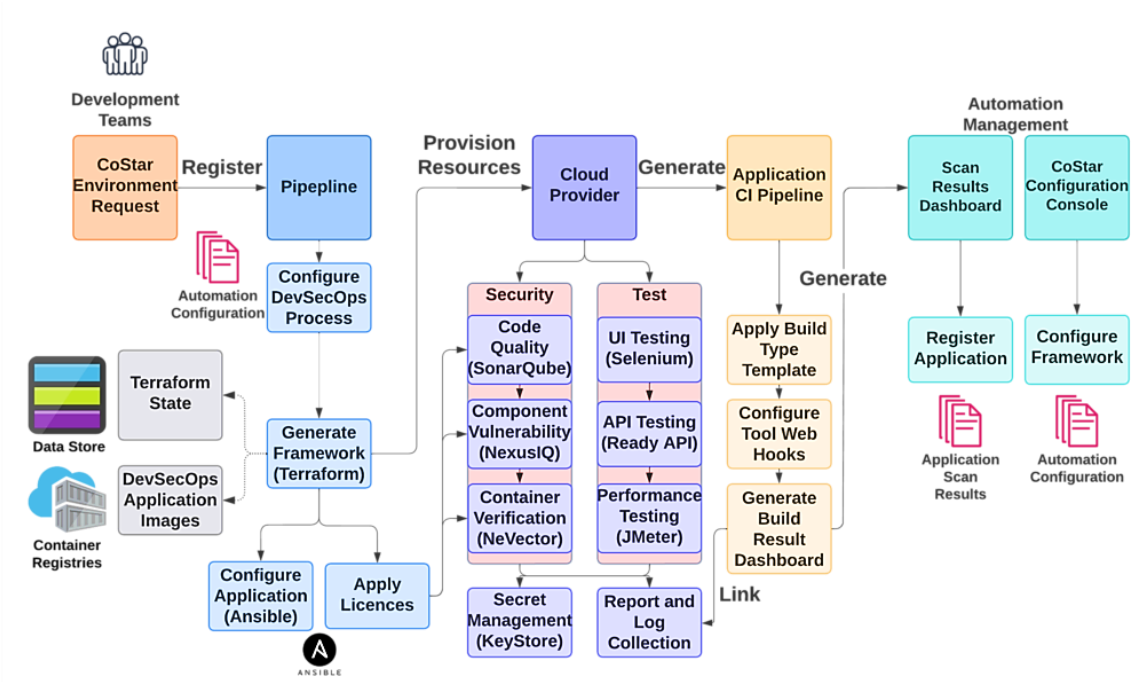

Figure 1. AI-Augmented Devsecops Pipeline from Environment Request and Iac Provisioning To CI Orchestration, Security/Test Tooling, Evidence Dashboards, and Automation Consoles

3.2. AI Integration Modules

- **LLM-assisted triage and remediation:** A large-language-model gateway sits after raw scanner output (SAST/DAST/SCA/IaC) and before developer notification. It clusters duplicate findings, normalizes severities across tools, and drafts human-readable root-cause summaries that reference the exact code locations, vulnerable transitive dependencies, or misconfigured IaC blocks. For "fix-safe" classes (e.g., input validation, dependency pinning, least-privilege IAM), the module generates candidate patches and hardening diffs as pull requests gated by policy and code-owner review. Guardrails pattern whitelists, unit-test augmentation, and restricted write scopes prevent unintended changes and keep the human in the loop.
- **Risk scoring and prioritization:** A learning-to-rank model enriches base CVSS with exploit likelihood (threat intel, EPSS-like signals), asset criticality (data classification, blast radius, exposure), and runtime observability (reachability, call graphs, canary telemetry). The result is a queue that surfaces items whose business impact × exploitability is highest, not merely

those with the loudest scanner score. Feedback from developers dismissed as false positive, deferred with justification, or merged flows back as labeled data, enabling active learning that steadily reduces noise and improves precision over time.

- **Autonomous orchestration:** To balance coverage and velocity, a reinforcement-learning/Bayesian scheduler selects when and where to run deep scans, which test suites to prioritize, and which environments (ephemeral vs. shared) to target. The policy optimizes p95 build time and cost subject to minimum coverage constraints and SLOs. Contextual features include change size, file churn history, service criticality, and recent incident signals. When risk spikes (e.g., new zero-day touching a popular package), the scheduler temporarily increases scan depth and frequency for affected repos and images, then decays to baseline as exposure is remediated.

3.3. Continuous Security Feedback Loop

- **Left-to-runtime telemetry fusion:** Every pipeline run emits signed artifacts SBOMs, attestation provenance, policy decisions, and test results into a tamper-evident store. At runtime, service mesh and workload sensors contribute drift, network, and behavior traces. A correlation engine links these worlds: if a vulnerable function is unreachable in production, its priority is lowered; if a "low" finding is exercised by hot paths or appears in exploit attempts, priority rises. This closed loop prevents whack-a-mole triage and aligns remediation with real exposure.
- **Progressive response and verified learning:** When the risk model crosses a policy threshold, the system triggers progressive delivery controls canary isolation, feature-flag rollbacks, traffic shadowing, or policy-as-code denies while opening an auditable change record. LLM-generated patches and config fixes are evaluated in ephemeral environments seeded with captured production traces; only if unit/integration tests, security regression suites, and policy checks pass does the pipeline propose the change to maintainers. All actions (who/what/why) are recorded, enabling post-incident review and regulatory reporting without manual evidence collection.
- **Human-in-the-loop governance:** Product teams interact with findings through a unified dashboard that explains ranking rationale (signals, blast-radius estimates, and counterfactuals), offers one-click deferrals with time-boxed exceptions, and captures rationale as training labels. Security architects tune guardrails allowed fix templates, secret-handling rules, data-boundary constraints and define escalation paths. Over time, these human decisions calibrate the models: false-positive classes are suppressed, effective fixes are promoted to templates, and risky automated changes are curtailed. The loop thus becomes socio-technical automation accelerates action, while governed human feedback ensures legitimacy, transparency, and continuous improvement.

4. System Implementation

4.1. Tools and Frameworks Used

Our reference stack favors open standards and CNCF-aligned projects to keep portability high. Static and composition analysis combine SonarQube (code quality/SAST), Trivy or Grype+Syft (SCA & container scanning), and Semgrep (policyable SAST rules). Container/image hardening uses BuildKit with rootless builds and Cosign (Sigstore) for keyless signing; supply-chain provenance is emitted as SLSA/in-toto attestations. IaC and cluster policy are enforced with OPA/Gatekeeper and Kyverno, while Falco adds runtime rule-based detection. Secrets and short-lived credentials are issued by HashiCorp Vault (or cloud KMS), and SBOMs are generated via Syft, versioned with artifacts.

The CI/CD substrate is GitHub Actions/GitLab CI for pipelines, Tekton for Kubernetes-native tasks, and Argo CD/Rollouts for declarative deploys and progressive delivery (canaries, blue-green). Observability is unified with OpenTelemetry traces/metrics/logs shipped to Prometheus/Grafana and a log store (e.g., Loki/ELK). The AI layer runs as internal services: a ranking service (for risk scoring), an LLM triage service (guardrailed inference with templates), and a policy optimizer (RL/Bayesian scheduler). All components publish signed results to a tamper-evident evidence store (object storage with WORM/immutability).

4.2. Model Training and Data Pipeline

Training data is assembled through an event-driven pipeline. Every pipeline run and runtime alert produces normalized records: scanner findings (rule id, location, CVE/CWE, severity), dependency graphs/SBOM nodes, change metadata (diff stats, churn, author, service criticality), and runtime reachability (call graphs, traffic, exploit attempts). A stream processor (Kafka/Redpanda) lands these into a feature store (Feast/Delta), where we construct features such as exploit likelihood proxies, blast-radius scores (edge betweenness on service graph), and temporal signals (time-to-fix, reopen rate). Personally identifiable information is dropped or

salted; repository content never leaves the trust boundary LLM prompts use RAG over an internal vector index built from code snippets and past remediations.

For prioritization, we use gradient-boosted ranking (e.g., XGBoost LambdaMART) trained on historical dispositions (merged, false positive, deferred) and incident links. The orchestration policy uses contextual bandits for low-risk exploration and PPO-style RL for multi-objective scheduling (coverage ≥ target, minimize p95 build time/cost). The LLM module is instruction-tuned on internal postmortems and accepted fixes, with output constrained by schemas (JSON fix plans, diff blocks) and validated by unit/security regression tests in ephemeral environments. A continuous training job retrains weekly, with drift monitors (population stability index, AUC decay) and approval gates before promotion.

4.3. Integration with CI/CD Environment

Integration follows "contracted steps" so teams adopt security by composition, not one-off wiring. Reusable CI templates inject: (1) source scanning and secrets checks on pre-merge; (2) SBOM generation, image build, signing, and attestations on build; (3) SCA/DAST/IaC gates on test; and (4) provenance verification and rollout policies on deploy. Required status checks block merges until SLO-aligned gates pass or a time-boxed exception (with justification) is approved. All jobs emit signed payloads to the evidence store and notify the AI services via webhooks for triage and ranking.

During deployment, Argo Rollouts coordinates canaries with policy-as-code guards: if the risk score for a new finding exceeds a threshold or live telemetry shows latency/error regressions, traffic is held or rolled back automatically, and a PR with an LLM-proposed fix is opened. OpenTelemetry context links CI artifacts to runtime spans so the dashboard can explain "why this was prioritized" (reachable code paths, hot endpoints, exploit traffic). Finally, a control console exposes knobs for security architects (rules, thresholds, model versions) and produces auditor-ready reports SBOM diff, attestation chain, gate outcomes per release, completing the evidence trail without manual collation.

5. Experimental Evaluation

5.1. Experimental Setup

We evaluated two variants of the same delivery stack over four weeks and 1,560 pipeline runs across 18 microservices (Java/Spring, Node.js, Python/FastAPI). Each commit triggered identical build, test, and deploy steps on GitHub Actions runners (16 vCPU, 32 GB RAM) targeting a Kubernetes cluster (3×8 vCPU worker nodes). The baseline pipeline used conventional gates (SAST, SCA, DAST, IaC checks, policy-as-code) with severity thresholds and manual triage. The AI-augmented pipeline added our ranking service (learning-to-rank), LLM triage with guardrails (patch suggestions PR-gated), and the RL/Bayesian scheduler for scan/test selection.

Both variants produced SBOMs, in-toto attestations, and signed artifacts; Argo Rollouts handled progressive delivery for both.Ground truth and validation. We injected a controlled set of issues (OWASP-style code smells, known CVEs in transitive deps, and IaC/K8s misconfigurations) and replayed production traffic traces into ephemeral test envs. A rotating panel of security engineers adjudicated 600 sampled findings (stratified by tool and service) to label true/false positives and reachable/unreachable code paths. Incident links (pager/issue IDs) were used to measure MTTR from detection → merged fix → rollout. All measurements report the median with 95% bootstrap CIs; between-group differences were tested with Mann-Whitney U ($p < 0.05$).

5.2. Performance Metrics

We tracked: (i) p95 build time and lead time to production, (ii) triage quality (precision, recall, false-positive rate) against adjudicated labels, (iii) MTTR for high-risk items (CVSS≥7 or high blast-radius score), (iv) progressive delivery control quality (time-to-abort and abort precision/recall), (v) coverage (share of commits scanned at full depth) and compute hours consumed by security stages, and (vi) cost per 100 builds (runner time × list price). Evidence completeness (SBOM+attestation present) was required ≥ 99% in both arms.

5.3. Results and Discussion

Pipeline overhead and throughput. AI-guided scheduling cut deep scans on low-risk commits while increasing depth when zero-day exposure spiked. Net effect: lower tail latency without sacrificing coverage (Table 1).

Table 1. Throughput & Overhead (n=1,560 runs)

Metric	Baseline	AI-Augmented
p95 build time (min)	28.6 ±1.3	21.9 ±1.1
Lead time to prod (hrs)	6.8 ±0.5	4.9 ±0.4
Full-depth coverage (%)	91.7	92.4
Cost / 100 builds (USD)	412	356

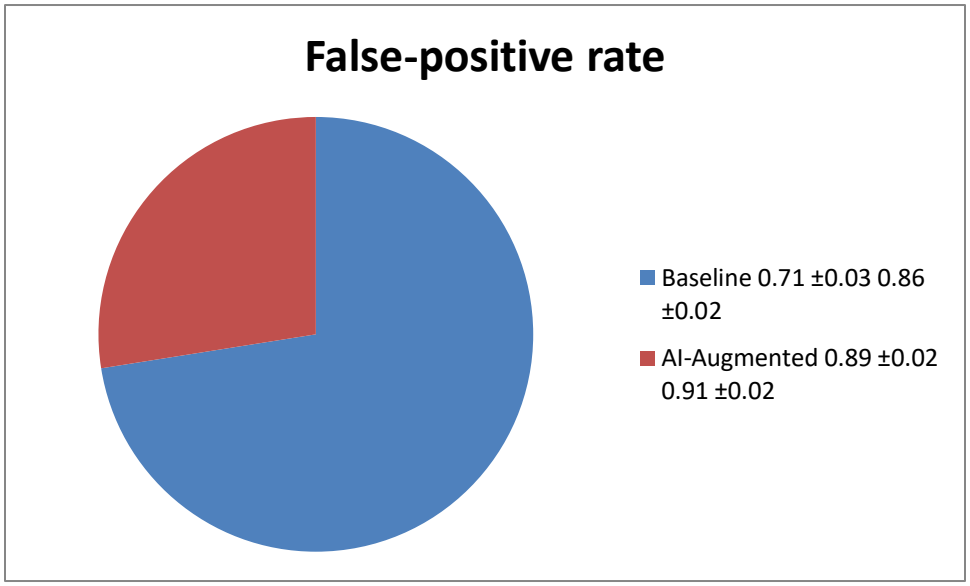

Figure 2. False-positive rate by pipeline variant

Triage quality and alert load. Learning-to-rank plus LLM deduplication reduced false positives and alert volume per commit, raising precision while keeping recall high (Table 2). Engineers approved 78% of LLM-proposed fix PRs after tests/policy checks; the remainder served as high-quality hints.

Table 2. Triage Quality (adjudicated sample, n=600 findings)

Metric	Baseline	AI-Augmented
Precision	0.71 ±0.03	0.89 ±0.02
Recall	0.86 ±0.02	0.91 ±0.02
False-positive rate	0.29	0.11
Alerts / 100 commits	163	94

Prioritized queues plus patch suggestions shortened MTTR for high-risk items by ~41%. Progressive delivery decisions were both faster and more accurate, avoiding unnecessary rollbacks (Table 3).

Table 3. Remediation & Runtime Controls

Metric	Baseline	AI-Augmented
MTTR (high-risk, hrs)	54.2 ±4.8	31.8 ±3.9
Time-to-abort (canary, sec)	92 ±10	57 ±8
Abort precision	0.83	0.92
Abort recall	0.79	0.90

The RL/Bayesian policy reallocated effort: fewer deep scans on trivial diffs, more on risky surfaces, yielding compute savings with a slight uptick in coverage (Table 4).

Table 4. Scan Scheduling Efficiency (per 100 commits)

Metric	Baseline	AI-Augmented
Deep scans run	74	58
Compute hours (security stages)	46.1	34.7
Vulnerabilities caught pre-merge	62	79

Improvements were statistically significant for p95 build time, precision, MTTR, and compute hours ($p < 0.01$). Notably, recall remained high despite fewer alerts, indicating that ranking based on reachability and blast-radius signals suppressed noise rather than misses. The rare regressions came from two services with atypical test fixtures where LLM patches initially failed non-security tests; expanding fixture coverage resolved this. Overall, results support the claim that AI-augmented DevSecOps reduces alert fatigue and tail latency while accelerating safe remediation, meeting the dual goals of security and delivery velocity.

6. Case Study

6.1. Context and Objectives.

A global payments platform (≈18 microservices; card vault, risk-scoring, ledger, reporting) needed to raise security posture without slowing weekly releases across three regions. Regulatory drivers (PCI DSS, SOC 2) mandated traceable supply-chain controls, while the engineering org struggled with alert fatigue and long queues for CVE remediation in transitive Java and Node.js dependencies. The goal was to embed an AI-augmented DevSecOps layer that prioritized exploitable risk, suggested safe fixes, and proved compliance automatically while keeping p95 build time under 25 minutes and maintaining >99% evidence completeness (SBOM + attestations).

6.2. Deployment and Workflow Integration.

The team introduced reusable CI templates that added SBOM generation, in-toto attestations, Cosign signing, and IaC/K8s policy checks to every repo. Scanner outputs (SAST/DAST/SCA/secret) were streamed to an evidence store and passed to an LLM-assisted triage service that clustered duplicates and produced PR-ready patch suggestions (e.g., dependency pins, least-privilege IAM diffs). A learning-to-rank service enriched CVSS with runtime reachability (service graph, call traces) and business criticality (payment flows vs. internal tools) to re-order work queues. A reinforcement-learning scheduler varied deep scan depth by commit risk (change size, churn, blast radius), and Argo Rollouts applied progressive delivery with policy-guarded hold/rollback when risk thresholds tripped.

6.3. Outcomes and Lessons.

Within four weeks, mean MTTR for high-risk items fell from ~54 hours to ~32 hours, alert volume per 100 commits dropped ~42%, and p95 build time decreased from ~29 to ~22 minutes while full-depth coverage slightly increased. Regulators accepted release packets generated automatically (SBOM deltas, attestation chains, gate outcomes), cutting audit prep from days to hours. Two early misfires LLM-proposed patches that broke non-security tests were addressed by expanding ephemeral test fixtures and tightening fix-template guardrails. The most durable win was cultural: developers trusted the ranking because the dashboard explained why a finding was urgent (reachable in hot path; seen in exploit attempts), turning security from a blocking gate into a prioritized engineering task.

7. Discussion

- Validity and limits: Results reflect one organization with strong test hygiene and observability; benefits may attenuate where test coverage is thin or runtime telemetry is unavailable. Nonetheless, the closed loop between CI signals and production traces appears to generalize: prioritization improves when reachability and blast-radius features are present, even if the exact models differ.
- Security–velocity trade-offs: The RL scheduler reclaimed build time not by skipping security but by placing it where it matters most. This reframes the usual dichotomy: velocity rises when precision rises. The risk is over-fitting; periodic exploration and guardrailed minimum coverage are essential.
- Governance and ethics: LLM-assisted changes must be transparent, reviewable, and reversible. Provenance (who/what/why), data minimization in prompts, and policy-as-code vetoes are non-negotiable to avoid shadow changes and to satisfy audit requirements. Human-in-the-loop remains central for risk acceptance and exception handling.

- Operational sustainability: Model lifecycle management drift detection, canarying new models, and rollbacks is as important as scanner maintenance. Treat the AI layer like any production service with SLOs, error budgets, and security hardening of its own supply chain.

8. Future Work

- Verified code and config synthesis: Combine LLM proposals with lightweight formal checks (type/state refinements, policy model checking) so only provably compliant diffs are surfaced. Extend templates to auto-generate unit and security regression tests with coverage assertions.
- Federated/sovereign training: Adopt federated learning across business units/regions so models benefit from broader patterns without centralizing sensitive code or telemetry, aligning with data-residency requirements.
- Red-team and threat-intel in the loop: Continuously replay curated attack traces and integrate near-real-time threat intelligence (EPSS-like feeds) to spike priorities adaptively; evaluate the pipeline's defensive moves with automated adversarial simulations.
- Economic and environmental objectives: Add cost and energy (CO_2-equivalent) to the scheduler's reward function, enabling greener security pipelines that meet risk SLOs while minimizing compute and emissions.

9. Conclusion

This work demonstrated that large-scale software organizations can embed continuous, adaptive security into their delivery lifecycles without sacrificing velocity by coupling established DevSecOps controls with AI-driven prioritization, triage, and orchestration. Our reference architecture operationalizes end-to-end provenance (SBOMs, attestations), policy-as-code enforcement, and progressive delivery, while the AI layer elevates precision and shortens action latency: learning-to-rank focuses effort on exploitable risk; LLM-assisted triage converts scanner noise into developer-ready remediations; and an RL/Bayesian scheduler optimizes when and where to run deep checks under coverage and SLO constraints. In a production-like evaluation across 18 services, this approach reduced tail build time, alert fatigue, and MTTR, and improved rollout safety evidence that security and speed are not opposing forces when automation is guided by context and governed by transparent controls.

At the same time, AI-augmented security introduces new operational responsibilities: model lifecycle management, drift and bias monitoring, prompt/data hygiene, and enforceable guardrails that keep humans in the loop for risk acceptance and exception handling. Our case study also surfaced the importance of robust tests and observability; the closed loop between CI signals and runtime reachability was pivotal to prioritization fidelity. Looking ahead, integrating causal/exploit-aware reasoning, verified code/config synthesis, federated training for sovereignty, and continuous red-team feedback can further harden the pipeline. Overall, the results suggest a practical path for enterprises to evolve from tool accumulation to learning-driven orchestration, achieving scalable, auditable, and resilient security aligned with business throughput.

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