Frigate NVR

This page lists my unorganized thoughts on Frigate NVR which I plan to turn into a full review eventually.

Thoughts

- Configuration is complicated and error prone. Configuration in the UI is generally great, but more advanced config that's required in the YAML file can be a pain or guesswork. Documentation quality is mixed.
- Base object detection models are okay, but not great
- Training models with Frigate+ improves recognition a lot, but is time consuming. It tool over a year of tagging images and Frigate releasing model improvements before it stopped mixing up my dogs and cats as the wrong species.
- I wish I could get higher quality snapshots. They are taken from the lower resolution detection feed.

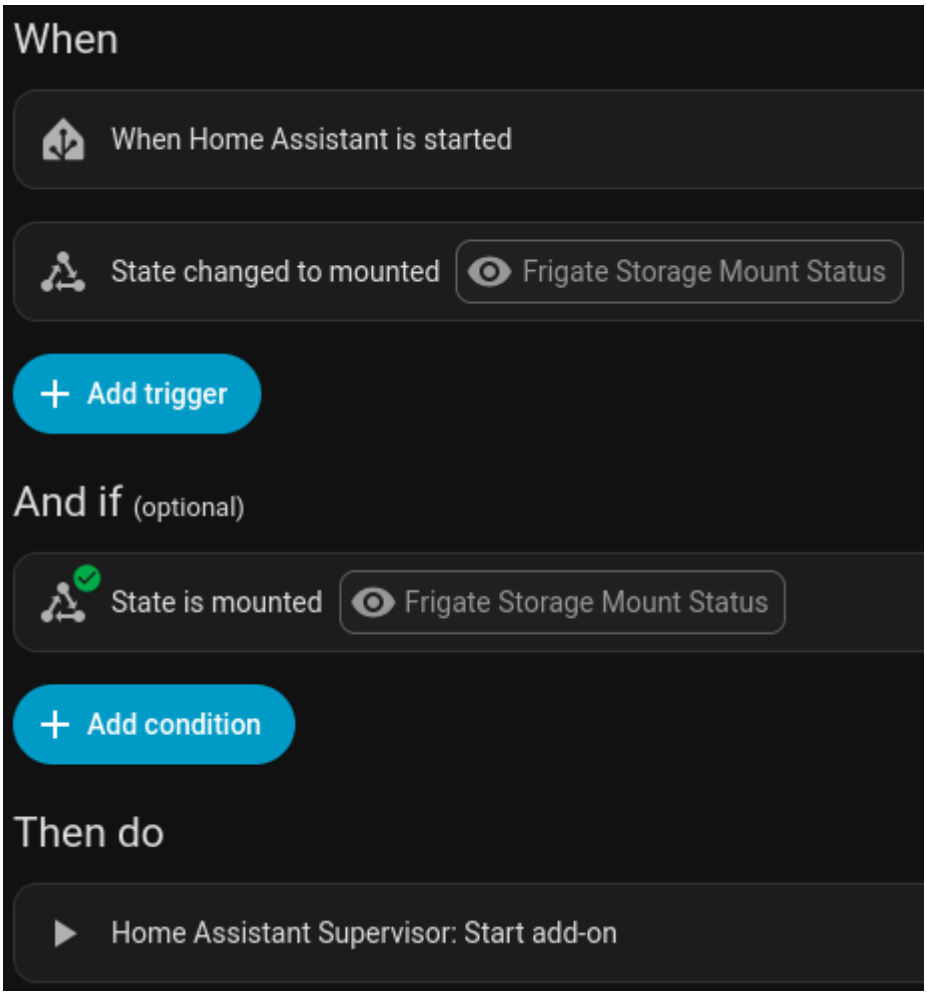
Positives

- Easy to integrate into Home Assistant to power all sorts of custom automations.
- A good variety of detectable objects.
- Very configurable: Masks, Zones, Motion Tuning all work great and are easy to use.
- The Frigate UI and the option within it are generally very good.
- Keep your Frigate+ model forever even if you cancel your subscription.

Issues

- Frigate is very picky about the specific cameras connected. Unless you plan to stick to their recommended cameras, the system may not be very stable, which is not what you want for an NVR or security device.
- Many issues are resolved by restarting Frigate. Frigate often does not do a good job of handling and recovering from issues automatically.
- Some recordings fail to save, even though I get an animation showing the triggered event. Most of my issues are with Frigate failing to save video footage.

- Support is complicated. It is offered through Github even if you subscribe and pay for Frigate+. Support often requires decent technical knowledge and digging which you may or may not want to be required to spend the time on to keep a functioning system. In the end, a lot of times the advice is "try this" and then you don't hear back unless you pester.
  - I understand this is an Open Source project, but this is still an important consideration for an NVR, and you may even be paying for Frigate+ and still not have any better luck.
- Using a network share for Frigate within HA is a little problematic
  - You must create a media share in HA named "frigate"
  - You must ensure nothing ever writes to that directory if the share is not mounted
  - Frigate might start before HA has mounted the drive in which case your local disk will get filled up and potentially thrashed with video files without you noticing (ask me how I know)
  - You NEED to disable the frigate app auto-start and use a custom entity to detect when your share is mounted and use the mount status to start/stop frigate
  - Like this:
    - ```
      # In configuration.yaml
      command_line:
        - sensor:
            name: "Frigate Storage Mount Status"
            unique_id: frigate_storage_mount_status
            # Checks if there's a drive mapped to the frigate media directory
            command: "df | grep -E '/media/frigate' > /dev/null && echo 'mounted'
      || echo 'unmounted'"
            scan_interval: 15
      ```
      ```



Summary

This is my personal experience and I may be in the minority.

While Frigate NVR is a powerful and flexible system, it is far from a stable system that can be relied on for security. If you use Frigate, make sure you are not depending on it to save your footage, and you have a separate process for saving your raw video footage that will work even when Frigate is down.

I'm still on the fence with Frigate. When it works I love it! I have come to not trust it to work reliably to capture events, and various significant issues have come and gone with various updates, so I expect it to just sometimes break.

I'm hopeful to get to a stable point, but I'm also keeping my eyes out for alternatives right now.

Leave a Comment

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