



Criminal Investigations  
and Network Analysis  
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# Visualizing the Membership of Organized Criminal Syndicates: A Field Evaluation of the Reporting Information About Networks and Groups (RING) Task

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## SUMMARY

An essential element to criminal and homeland security investigations, in particular that of criminal and terrorist networks, is the collection of accurate, timely, and actionable intelligence from human sources (HUMINT). Informants often have detailed and rich understandings of social groups they observe or are part of, but eliciting a clear picture of these complex relationships and interactions in the course of a debriefing or interview can present a challenge. The Reporting Information about Networks and Groups (RING) technique was developed to improve recall and reporting of information about people involved in groups and networks—and in doing so provide investigators and interviewers with a useful technique for eliciting this kind of information.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Reporting Information about Networks and Groups (RING) task was developed to improve recall and reporting of information about people involved in criminal syndicates. The technique draws on a relatively simple idea—that visually representing the links between people will (i) facilitate recall of individuals who associate with that particular group or network, and (ii) prompt recall of additional individuals and intelligence that might otherwise go unmentioned.

## APPROACH

The overarching objective of the project is to conduct a proof-of-concept field test of the RING task that may aid in combating criminal networks and their activities. The current project partners with the Las

Vegas Metropolitan Police Department for the perspectives of law enforcement officers in using the task. Specifically, the funding will test the feasibility of the RING task in two operational settings, both related to law enforcement intelligence gathering and investigations. Feedback on the RING task and data collected from it will serve as the basis for understanding the task's capacity for use in the field, and the current project year will conclude with a plan to objectively evaluate the contribution of the RING task to extending intelligence and actionable information about criminal groups and organizations.

## ANTICIPATED IMPACT FOR DHS

As the RING task identifies relationships of individuals within and possibly between criminal networks, it addresses criminal network analysis and the topic of criminal network operations. The RING task is also relevant to criminal investigative processes and assessing intelligence gaps in criminal investigations. Such gaps are likely to be individuals who are unknown to the authorities, and the RING task may fill this gap. More broadly, the RING task has the potential to contribute to the DHS strategic priority of preserving homeland security by introducing an easy-to-use, intuitive intelligence collection tool to investigators working in the field. Further, the RING task is science-based—it is built upon solid psychological principles and research, which is at the core of DHS science and technology principles.