Criminal Investigations and Network Analysis
A DHS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

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THOUGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Jim Jones

The CINA Center is four years old, the first DHS Center of Excellence was formed 17 years ago, DHS is almost 19 years old, and our constitution was written 234 years ago...and crime and conflict have been with us since before recorded history. Most of life's valuable lessons are learned the hard way, so what have we learned over those years? Since the country's founding, we've learned that it is hard to get on top and even harder to stay there, but that is definitely the position you want to be in. Preparation, long-term thinking, and a lot of hard work are necessary, but the benefits to our citizens, the world at large, and future generations are immeasurable. Since the middle of the last century, and especially since 2001, we've learned that power must be augmented with imagination and creativity. The threats we have been facing, and will continue to face, are increasingly asymmetric, dynamic, and lightning-quick. Gone are the days of assessing the threat by locating your adversary's tanks, planes, ships, and troops. Those things still matter, but the adversaries that will sneak in painful blows don't have armor or large organized forces. Instead, they operate in the shadows, changing form and tactics as necessary, and striking or exploiting opportunities when convenient for them or when the right incentive is offered.

The Center's mission, and our research portfolio based on that mission, is to apply the latest tools and techniques in creative and imaginative ways to discover and understand these asymmetric, shadowy, and dangerous threats to our citizens and our security. We work on teasing out the structure of criminal networks when we have scant information, guessing where connections and entities might be, even if we can't see them yet. The results of these efforts support investigators, helping them to make sense of the data they do have, and pointing to

disruption of a criminal enterprise. The other great lesson from the last few decades is that we must continue to look over the horizon, think critically and objectively, and invest in the research and capabilities that will mitigate threats we have not yet seen. Staying on top means solving today's challenges while also thinking about, and acting on, what's next.

CINA Science Committee Spotlight: Mary Ellen O'Toole

CINA Science Committee member Mary Ellen O'Toole recently announced that the George Mason University Forensic Science Program has further established its place as one of the nation's premier programs in its field with a partnership with FARO Technologies, Inc. that will result in the world's first FARO-certified forensic science laboratory.

According to O'Toole, the former FBI profiler who heads the Forensic Science Program within Mason's College of Science, "This exciting FARO-Mason Forensic Science partnership is the first of its kind in the world, and the opportunities we can now give to our students and develop with our external partners can only be imagined."

Learn about the FARO partnership

Biometric Identity Privacy

A person's identity can be national, biographical or social. A person's physical characteristics or biometrics are an increasingly powerful way of verifying their identity, whether through voice, face, fingermarks, DNA or other features. This raises new opportunities, such as establishing kinship. It also raises important questions about privacy and bias, such as whether there are higher rates of error in identifying women, or how a cigarette vendor can be given proof of a person's age without revealing other key biometric information, to preserve their rights and privacy.

CINA researchers at Michigan State University are examining the frontiers of biometric identity and providing a five-year outlook for biometrics and privacy, and their work will provide the basis for enhancing 21st-century security practices while protecting the public from potential rights violations and identity theft.

Gretchen Peters: "How Organized Crime Weaponized Social Media" - Wednesday, October 13 - Hybrid, in-person

Tune in on **Wednesday, October 13** at 12:00 p.m. when Gretchen Peters, Executive Director of The Center on Illicit Networks and Transnational Organized Crime who will speak about her organization's work on the way organized crime has weaponized social media. In-person attendance is on a first come first serve basis. You must register in advance to attend.

Register Now

Marie Tillyer: "Open Source Data and Predictive Modeling for High-Density Crime Areas" - Thursday, November 11 - Virtual Event

Join us on **Thursday, November 11** at 12:00 p.m. when Marie Tillyer, Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice at the University of Texas at San Antonio discusses open source data and predictive modeling to uncover the indicators of high-density crime areas

Register Now

Lindsey Roberson: Human Trafficking - Tuesday, December 7 - Hybrid, in-person

Join us on **Tuesday, December 7** at 12:00 p.m. when Lindsey Roberson, Executive Director of Legal Engagement at the Human Trafficking Institute speaks about her organizations' work in developing and advocating for innovative and data-driven strategies for combatting human trafficking based on proven victim-centered enforcement models. In-person attendance is on a first come first serve basis. You must register in advance to attend.

Register Now

Visit our website's digital archive to view research and upcoming events hosted by CINA.

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