



DARPA Tests Swarm Of 1,000 Handheld Radiation Detectors In Washington, DC

Swarm means that the devices network together as they move about, providing a real-time analysis of radiation in the target area. This technology is expected to roll out to the entire US by 2018. □ TN Editor

The US Department of Defense's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has been working on a number of technologies designed to sniff out radioactive material, and it just deployed 1,000 handheld scanners to test one of those systems in the nation's capitol. The way they did it was pretty unusual, though. As the first large-scale test of the SIGMA program, [DARPA](#) put together a mock kidnapping adventure game.

Participants in the exercise were each given a backpack with a small SIGMA [radiation](#) detector. Each one is connected to a smartphone,

which is used to build up a mesh network with all the other sensors. That's SIGMA, but what about the kidnapping? In the scenario, a geneticist was kidnapped by mysterious masked men, and participants had to complete a scavenger hunt-like game to solve the case. This doesn't actually have *anything* to do with how SIGMA will work, but it was a good way to get everyone to wander around the National Mall for the better part of a day.

The purpose of this test was to see how these smartphone-linked sensors could cover open spaces. If you deploy a sensor net to detect serious nuclear threats, you need to make sure there are no holes in it. The last test of SIGMA mobile detectors was just 100 units, so this one was covered a much larger area of about five square miles. According to DARPA, the collected data will prove invaluable in perfecting the system, allowing law enforcement agencies to have one last line of defense against the threat of radiological attack. Ideally, you want to stop such materials from ever getting anywhere close to an urban center.

[Read full story here...](#)