The Interplay between COVID-19 and GEOINT
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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the world. Within a relatively short period of time, individuals, communities, and nations have had to quickly adapt to a rapidly spreading public health threat. Within weeks, and sometimes even days, large populations were required to modify their behaviors, health systems were challenged with surging demands, supply chains were disrupted globally, and transportation systems were brought to a halt. This unprecedented situation was further impacted by a lack of knowledge about the nature of the COVID-19 disease, the mechanisms and rates by which it spreads, and the short- and long-term effects it might have on different segments of the population. While the impact of COVID-19 has been wide and diverse, cutting across many sectors and aspects of the modern world, a common thread among all of them is the reliance on the collection, processing, and analysis of geospatial information and intelligence. The overarching objective of this panel is to examine the role and significance of Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT) on our response to this pandemic.

Specifically, we aim to focus on four prominent aspects of the interplay between COVID-19 and GEOINT. First, we will explore how GEOINT has contributed to the understanding of the nature and characteristics of COVID-19 spread over space and time, and how such intelligence can be used to respond to a highly dynamic pandemic. Second, we will examine the role that GEOINT has played in informing a wide range of stakeholders, from the general public to domain experts, modelers, and policy makers, about the evolution of the pandemic and the effects of various innervations. A third focus area will examine the unique role GEOINT has in responding to the pandemic in large densely populated urban centers, e.g., “megacities”, that have often shown to be more severely impacted. Finally, a fourth focus area will examine some of the opportunities and challenges of utilizing GEOINT in disease surveillance, particularly at a fine granularity (e.g., “contact tracing”).