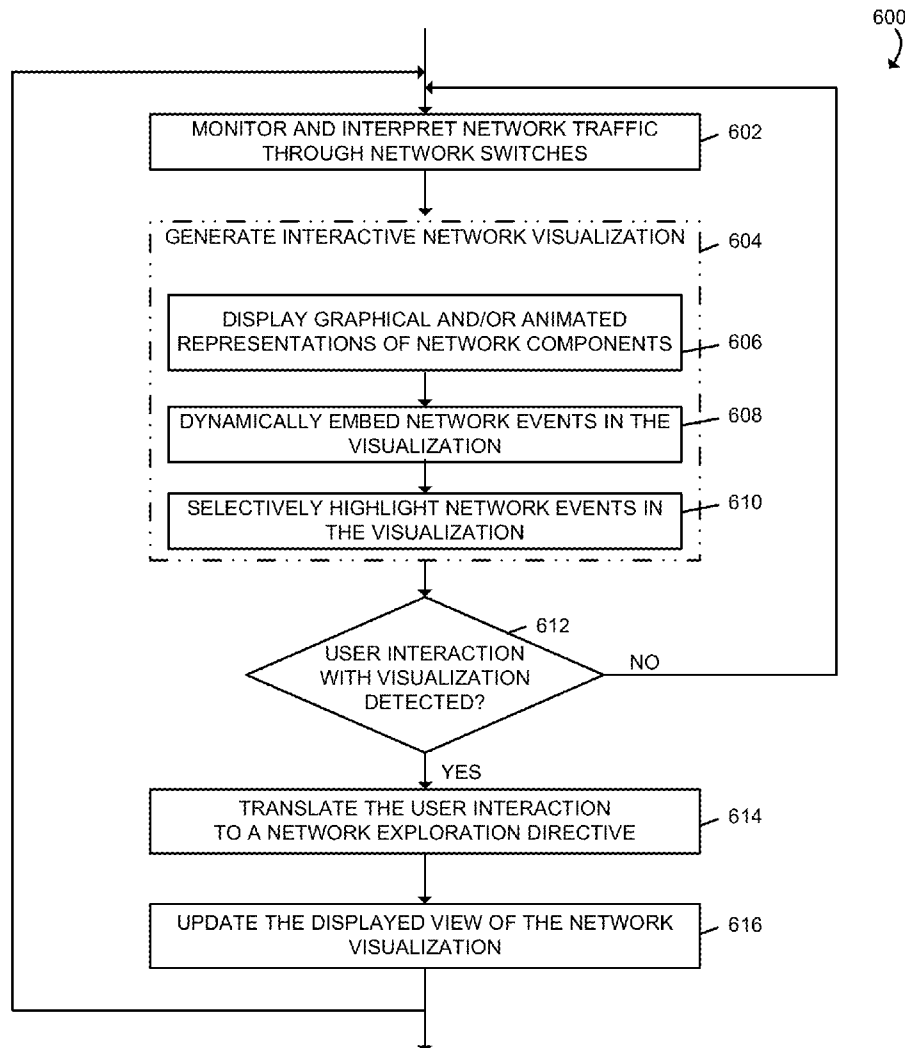




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3/04815 (2013.01); **A63F 13/71** (2014.09)(21) Appl. No.: **14/733,907**(22) Filed: **Jun. 8, 2015****Related U.S. Application Data**(60) Provisional application No. 62/104,517, filed on Jan.
16, 2015.(57) **ABSTRACT**

Network security management technology as disclosed herein generates and dynamically updates an intuitive, interactive visualization of a computer network in live operation. The network security management technology interprets human user interactions, such as gestures, as network directives, and updates the interactive visualization in response to the network directives.



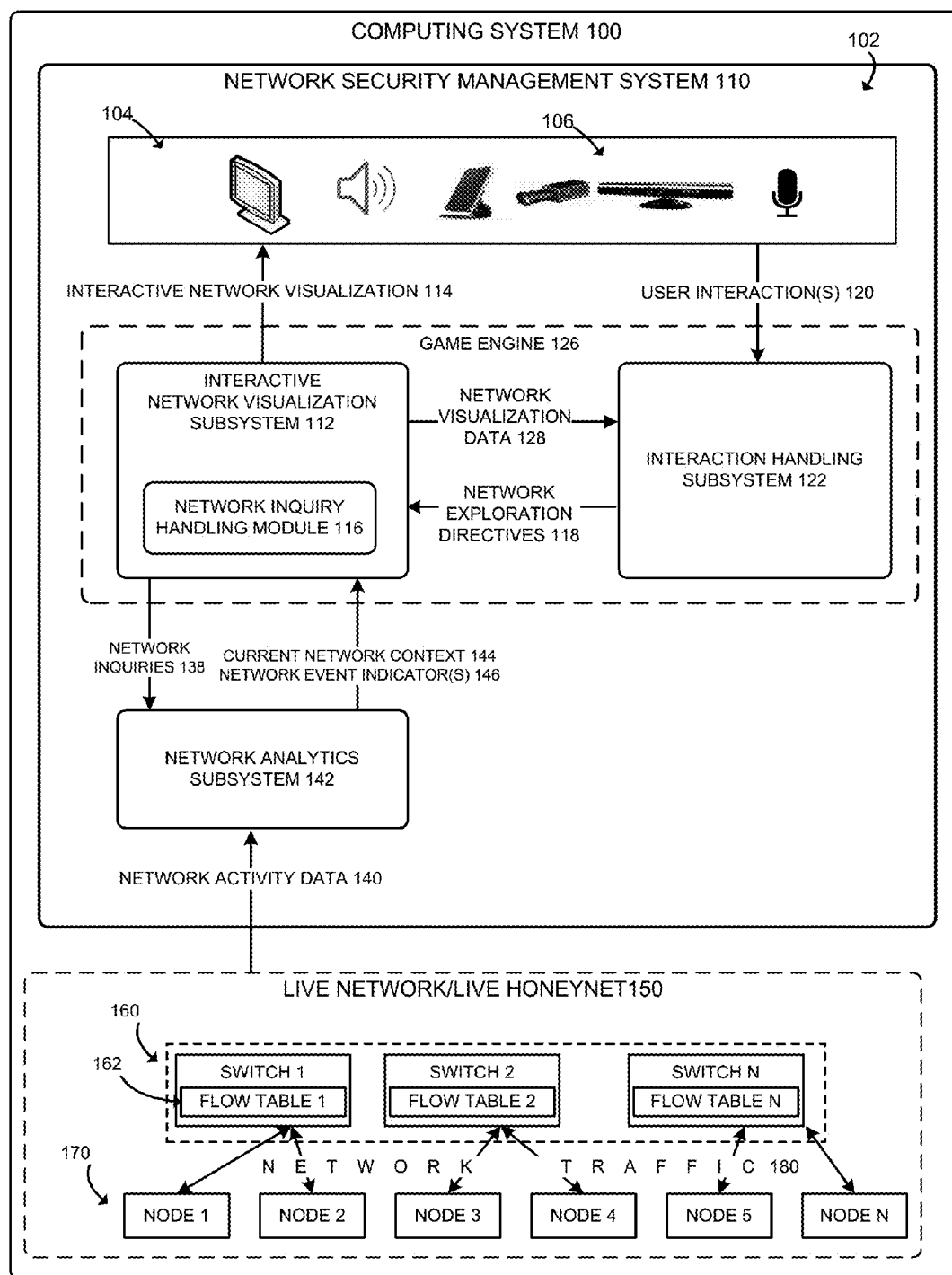


FIG. 1

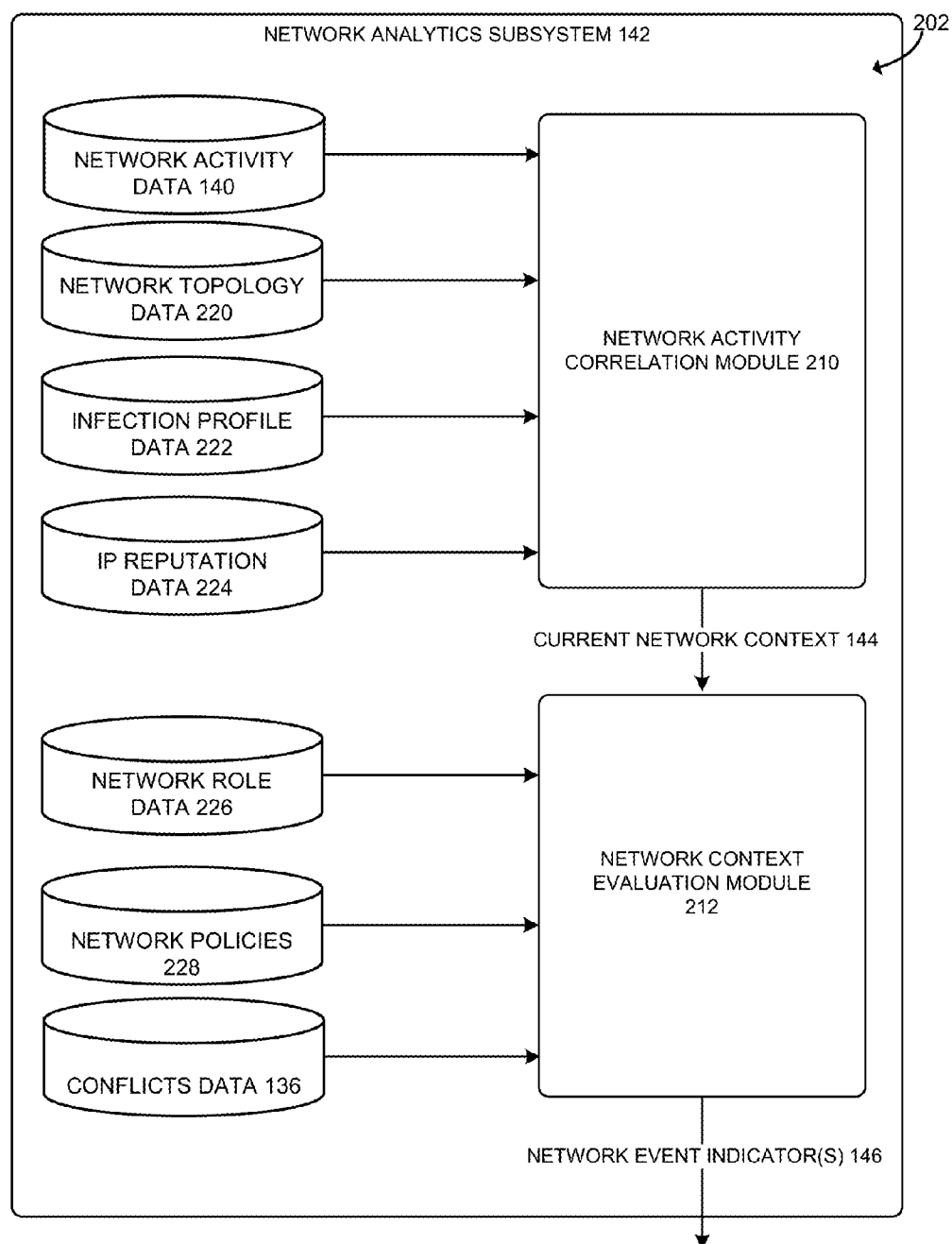


FIG. 2

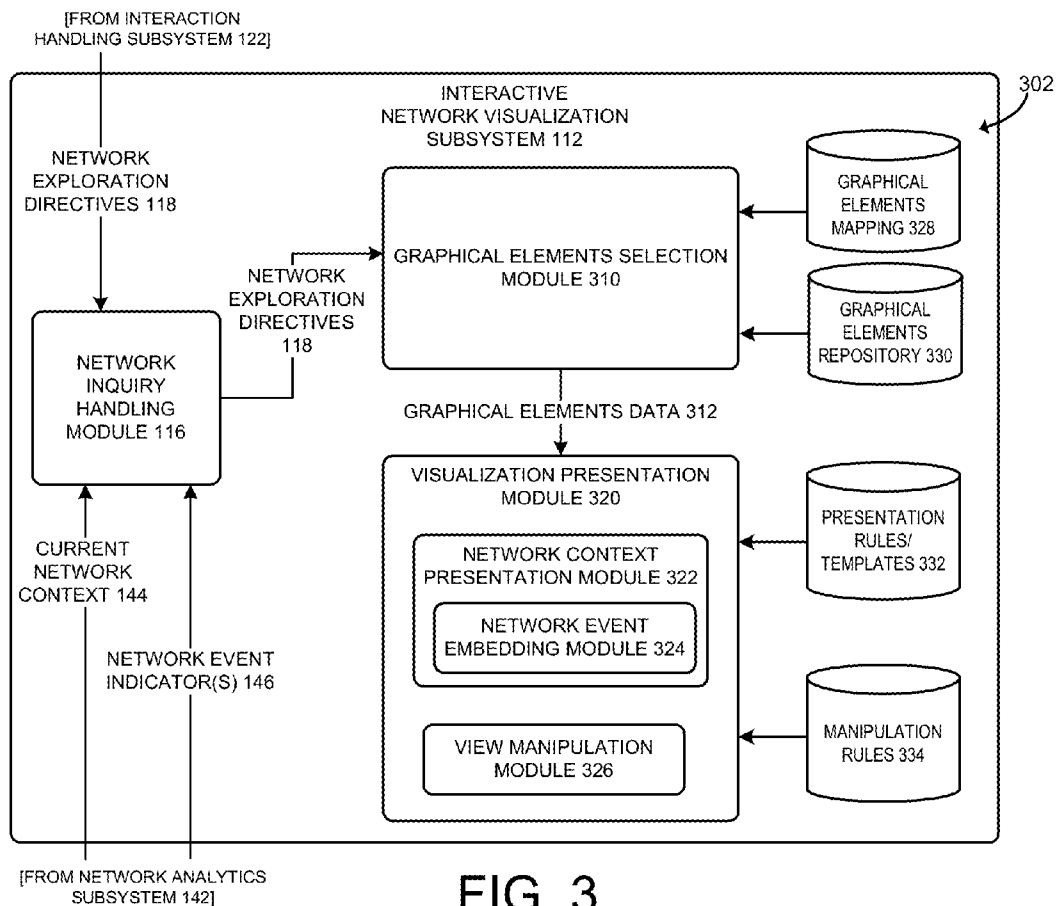


FIG. 3

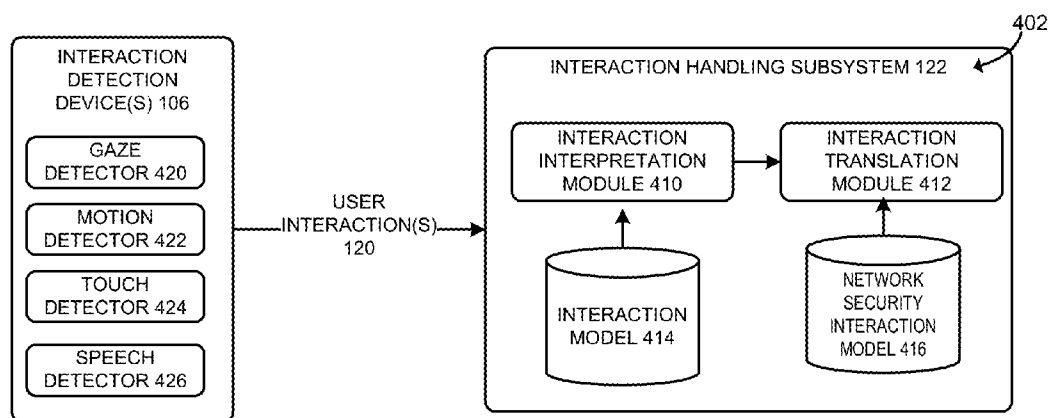


FIG. 4

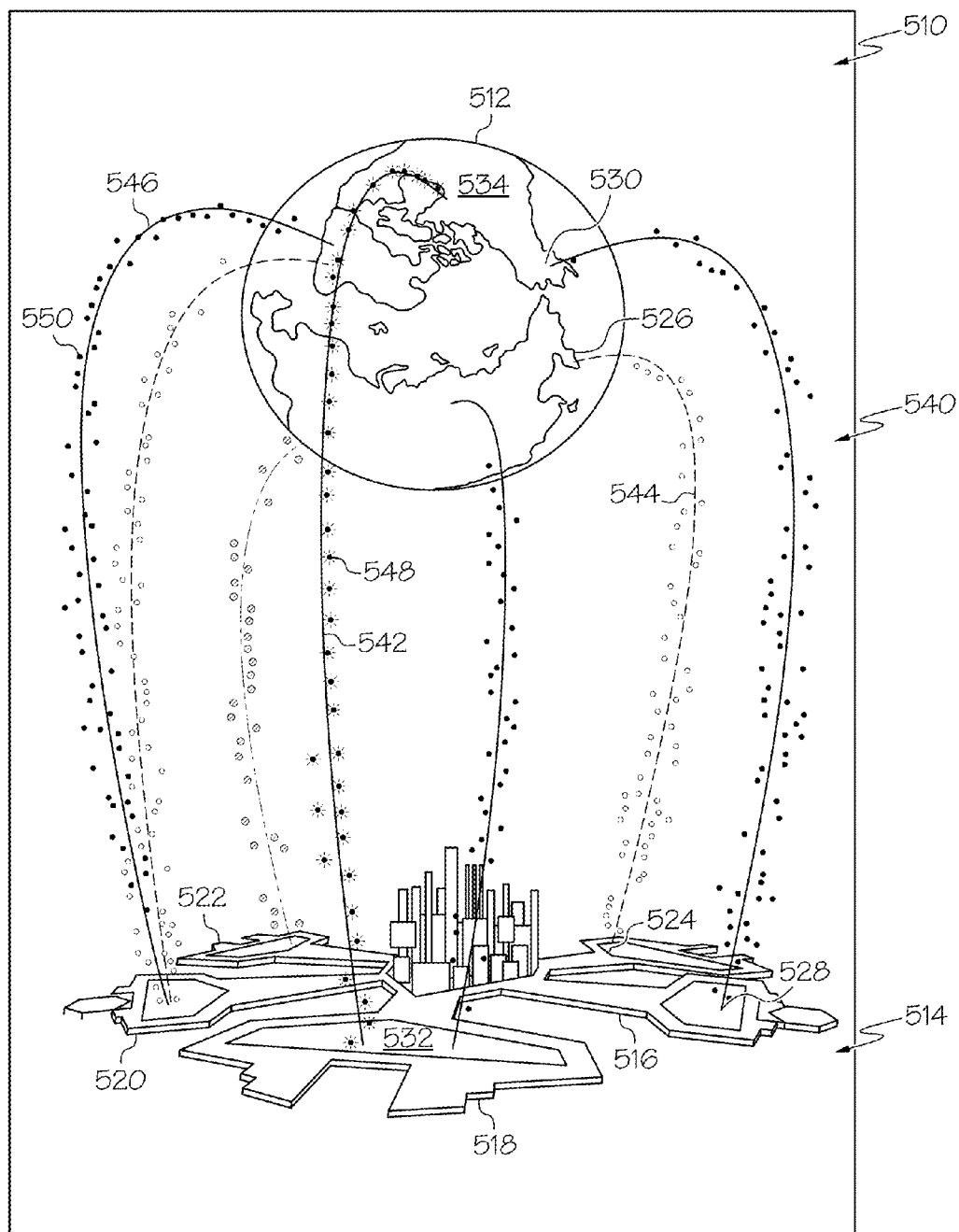


FIG. 5A

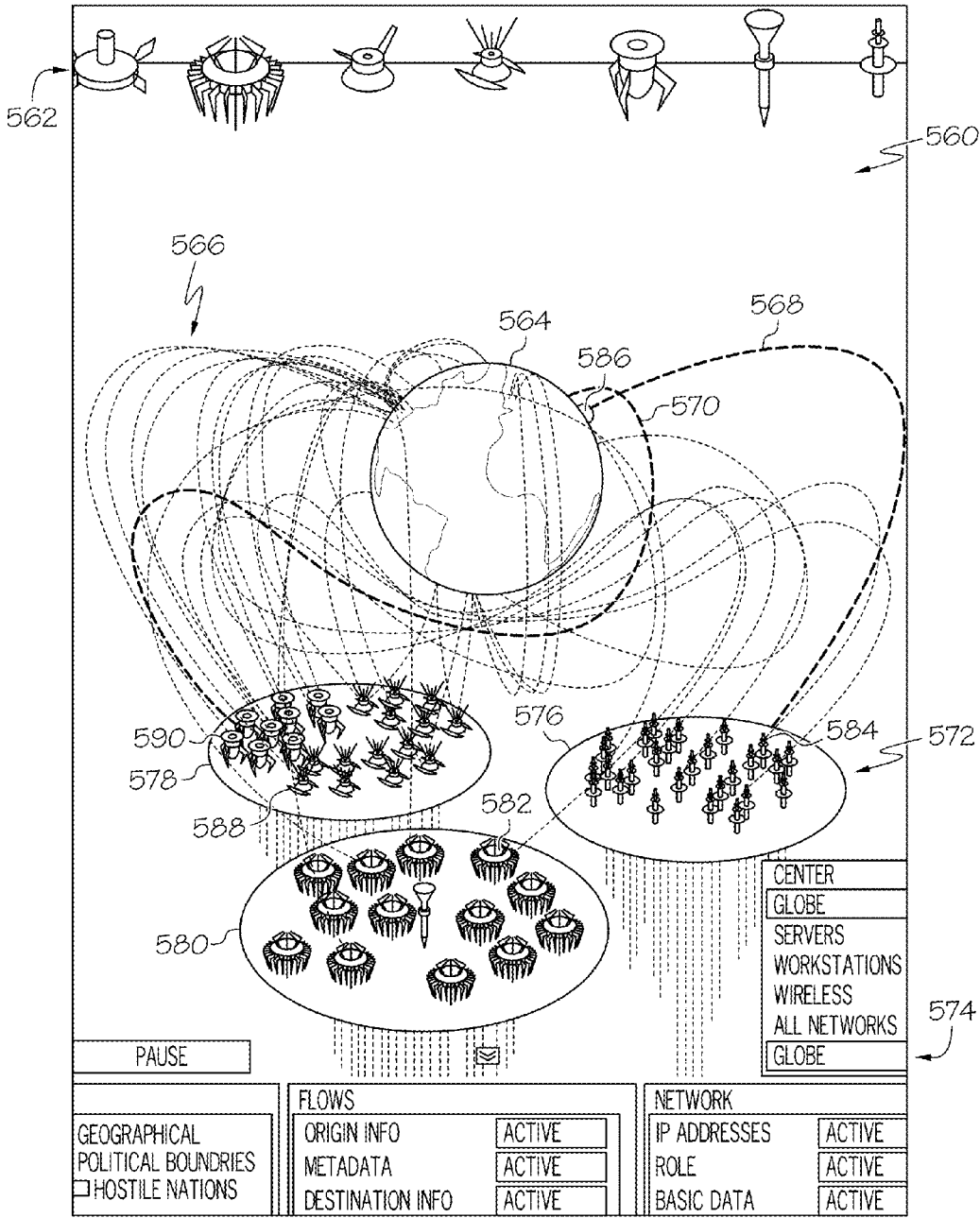


FIG. 5B

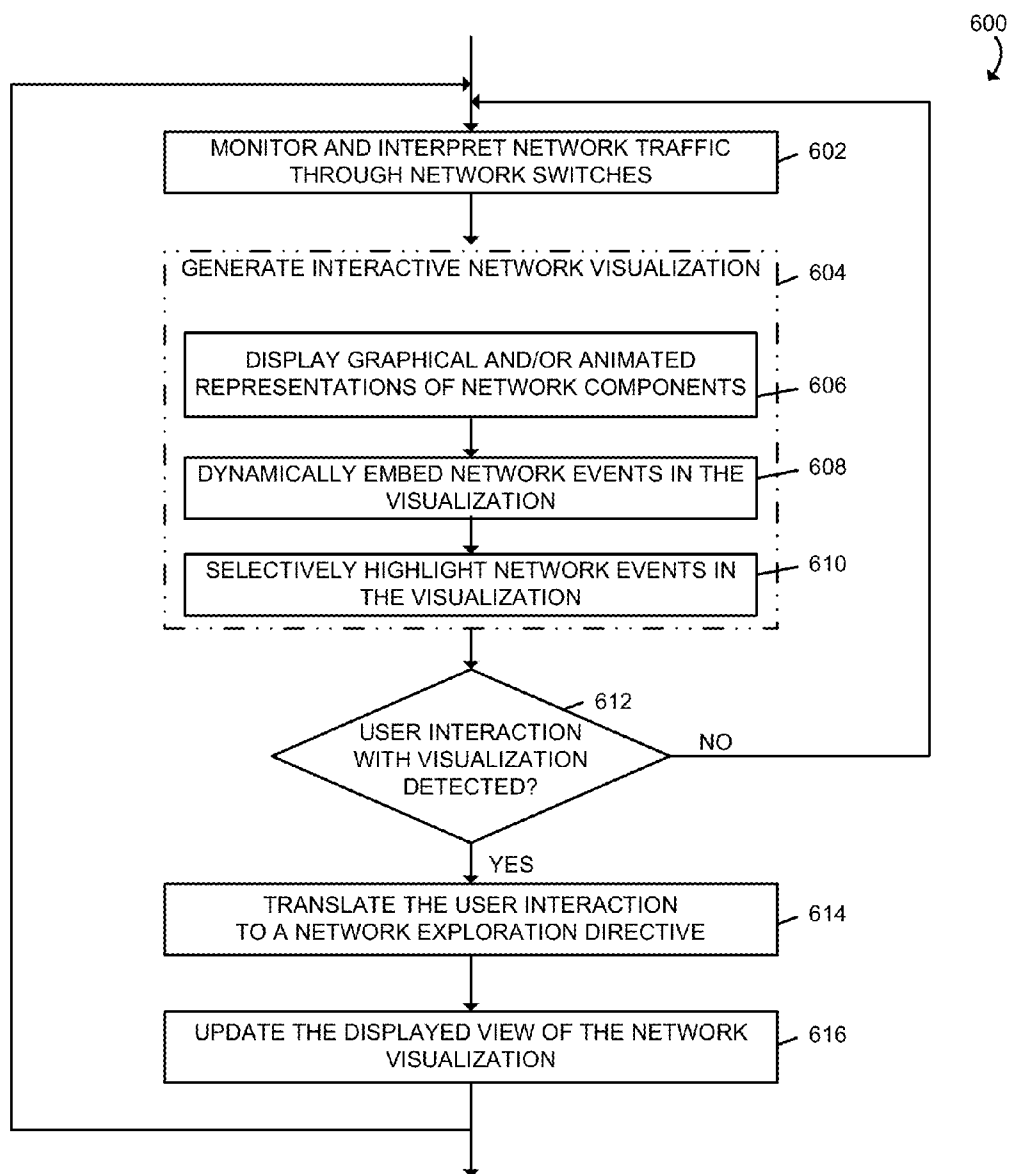


FIG. 6

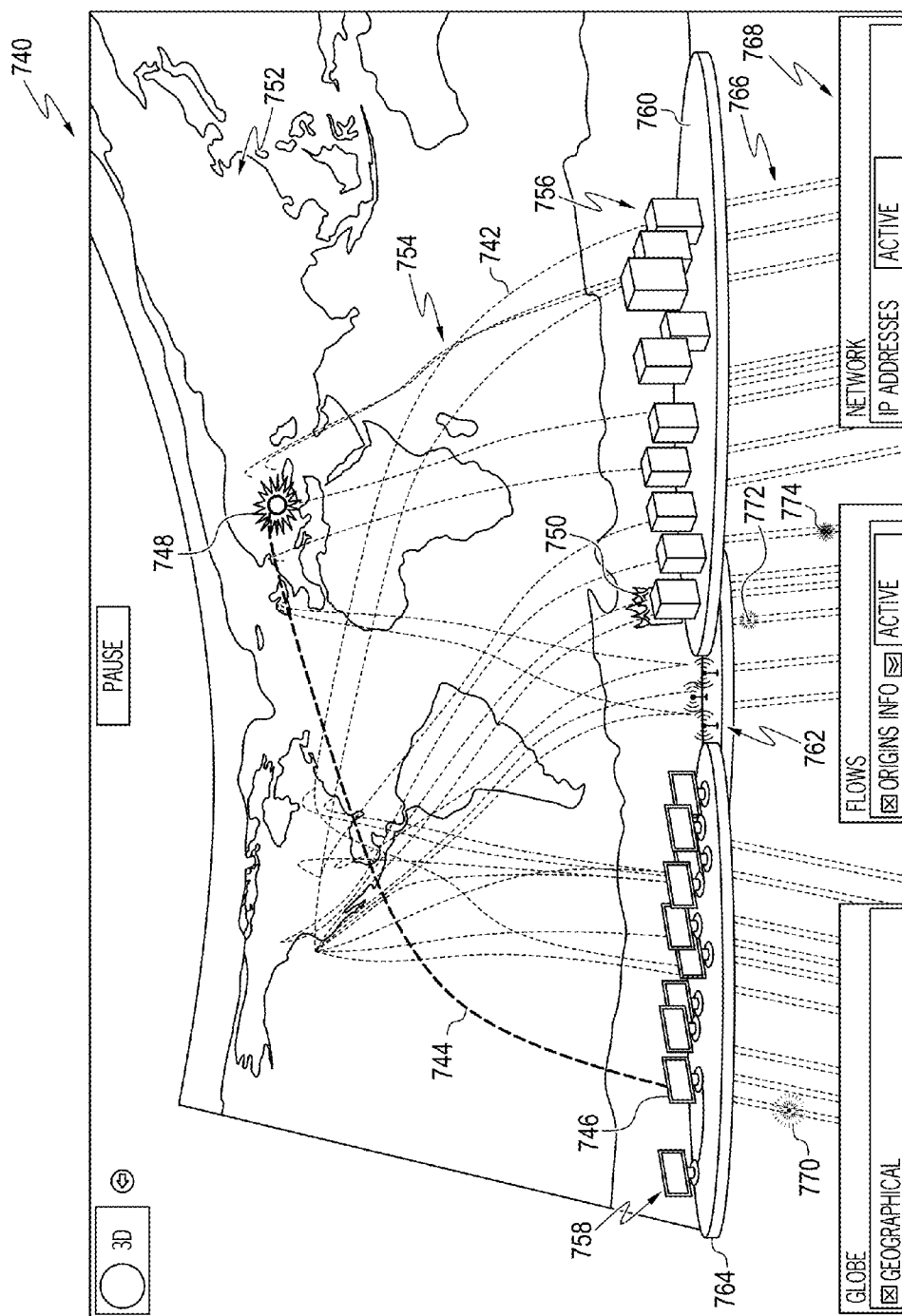


FIG. 7A

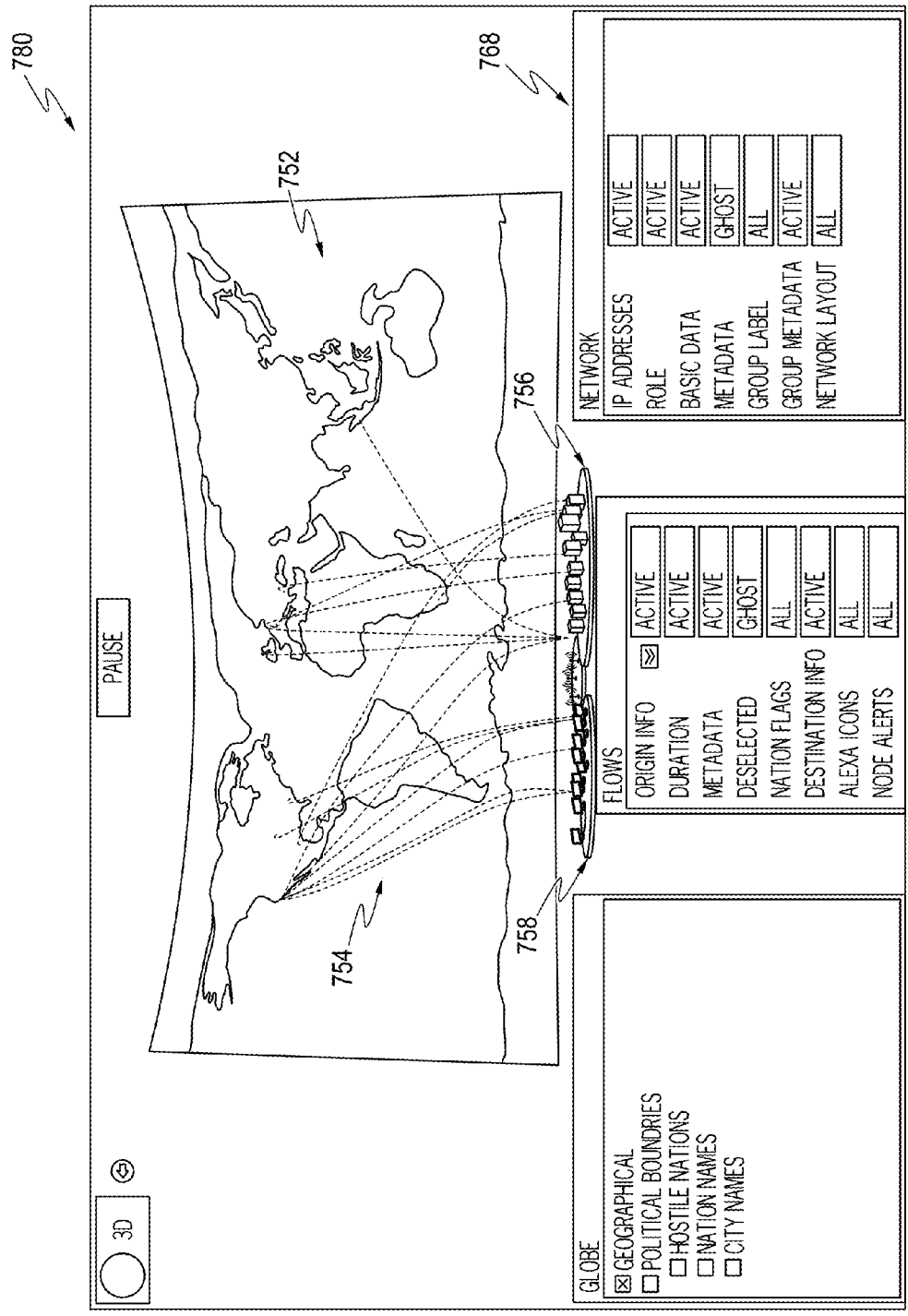


FIG. 7B

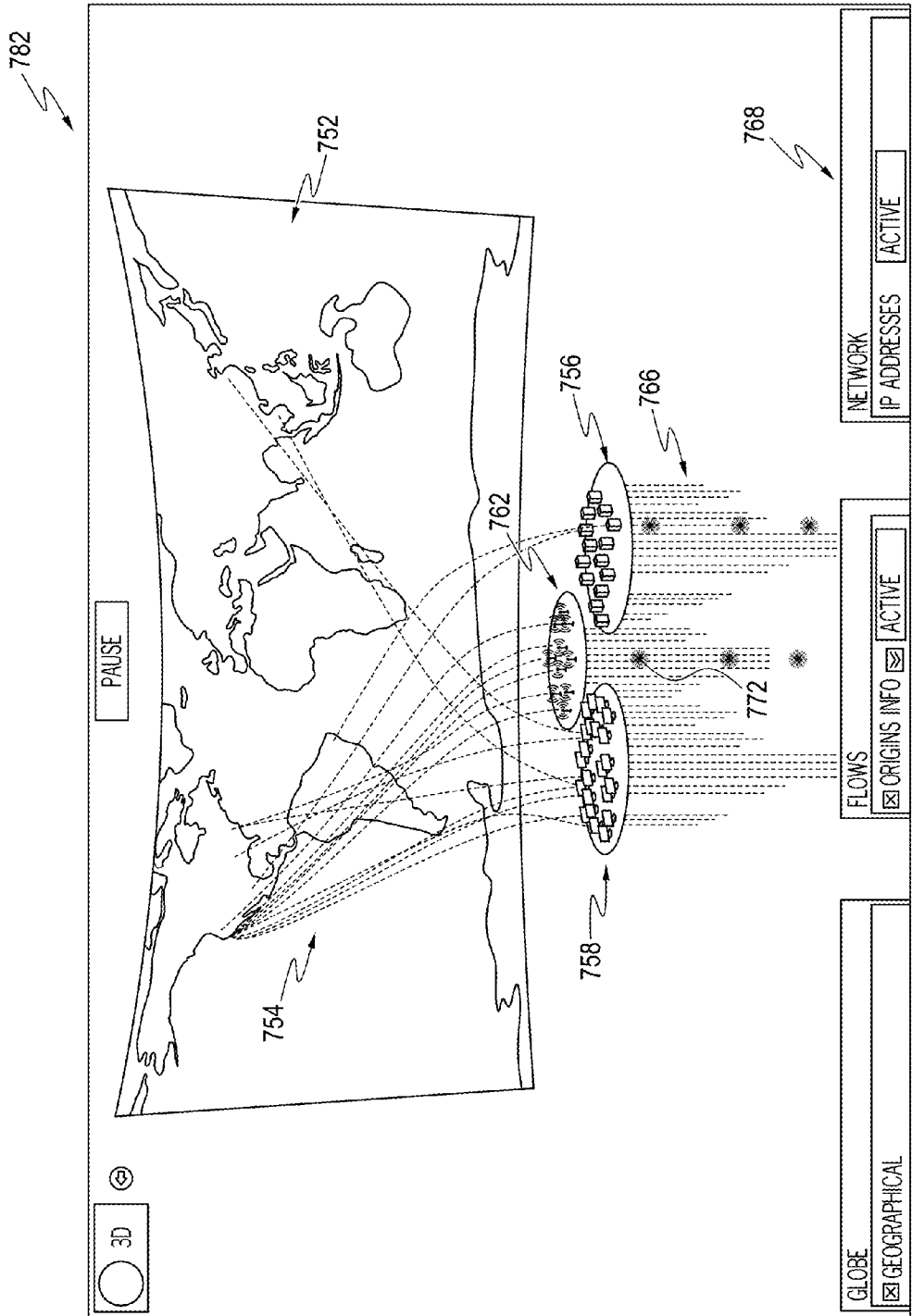


FIG. 7C

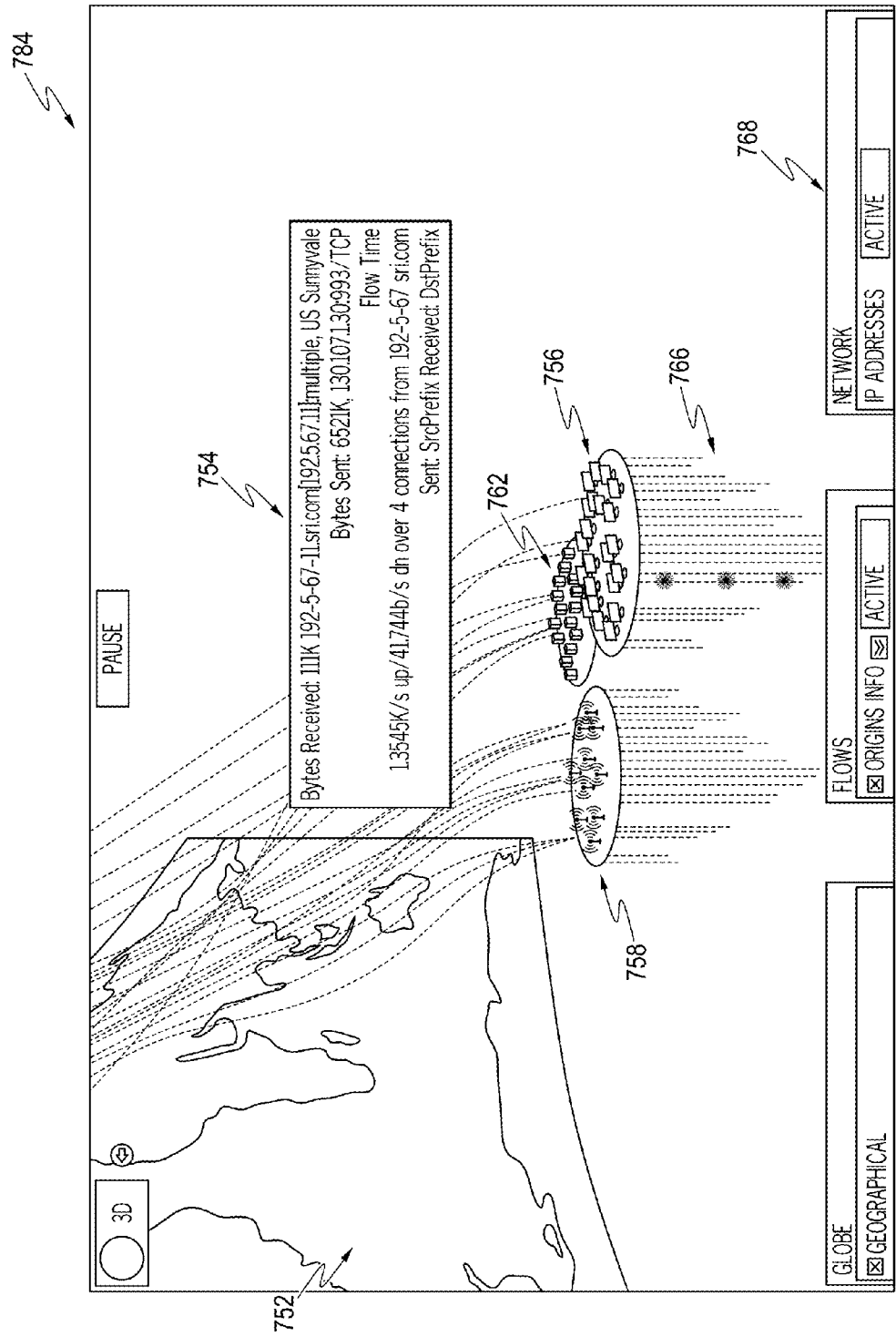


FIG. 7D

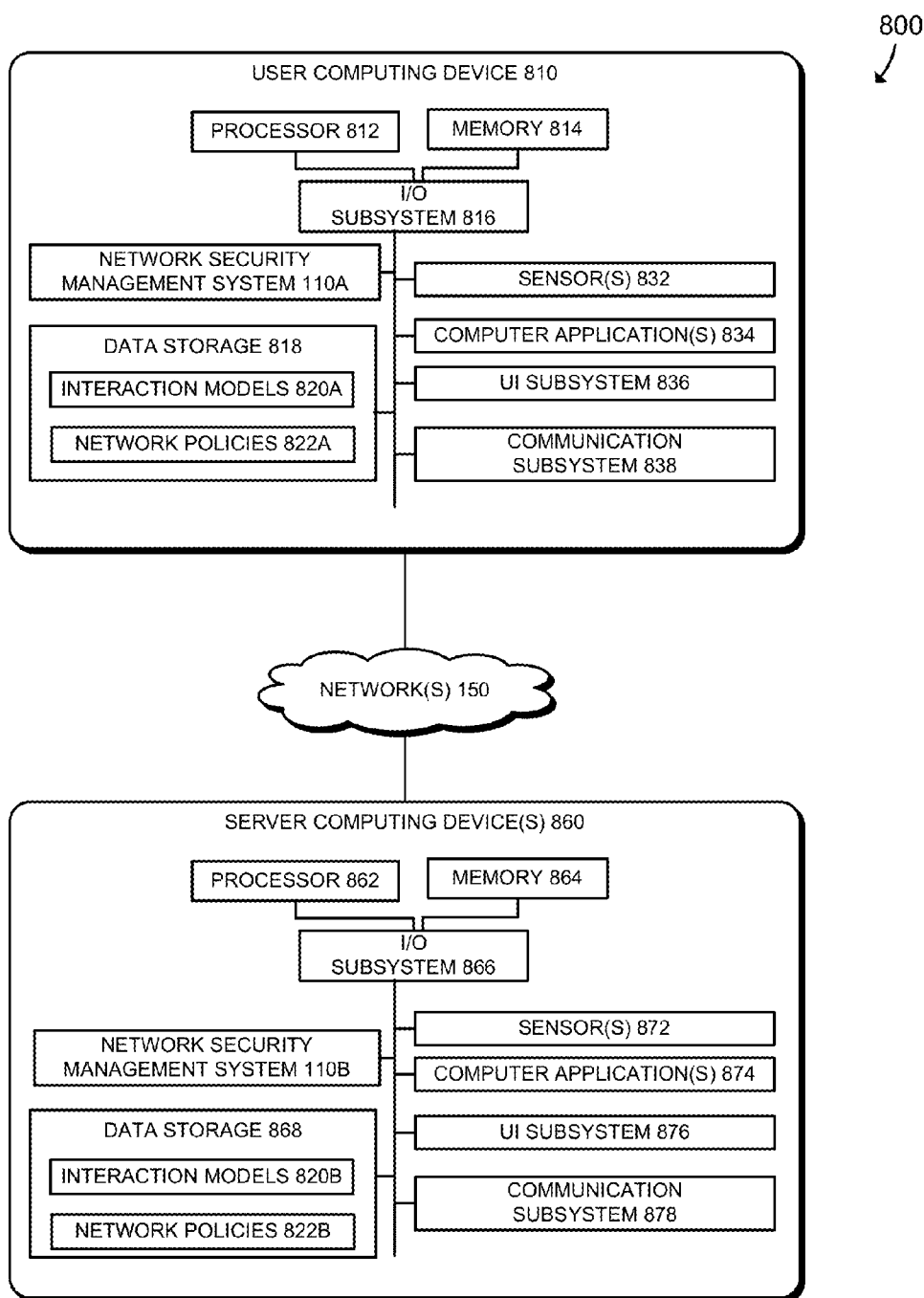


FIG. 8

VISUALLY INTUITIVE INTERACTIVE NETWORK MANAGEMENT

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of and priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/104,517, filed Jan. 16, 2015, which is incorporated herein by this reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

[0002] This disclosure relates to the technical field of computer network security. Computer networks are at risk of a variety of different types of attacks. For example, a network intruder or malicious software may intercept data communications traveling through the network, or initiate commands that disrupt the network's normal operation. Some commonly known types of network attacks include wiretapping, port scanners, idle scans, denial-of-service attacks, spoofing, and cyber-attacks. Traditionally, a network is secured by implementing a well-defined security policy that is instantiated for the particular network topology. In traditional network environments, the security policy is often deployed and enforced statically and consistently across the entire network infrastructure.

[0003] Software-defined networking refers to an approach for building a computer network that allows for programmable network switch infrastructures, in which the rules that determine how the network switches are to process network flows can be dynamically specified and changed. Such programmability is useful, for instance, in the management of virtual computing resources that may be spawned or terminated on demand. The OPENFLOW network model is one example of a protocol that may be used to implement software-defined networking.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] This disclosure is illustrated by way of example and not by way of limitation in the accompanying figures. The figures may, alone or in combination, illustrate one or more embodiments of the disclosure. Elements illustrated in the figures are not necessarily drawn to scale. Reference labels may be repeated among the figures to indicate corresponding or analogous elements.

[0005] FIG. 1 is a simplified schematic diagram of at least one embodiment of an environment of a computing system, including a network security management system as disclosed herein;

[0006] FIG. 2 is a simplified schematic diagram of at least one embodiment of an environment that may be established by a network analytics subsystem of the network security management system of FIG. 1;

[0007] FIG. 3 is a simplified schematic diagram of at least one embodiment of an environment that may be established by an interactive network visualization subsystem of the network security management system of FIG. 1;

[0008] FIG. 4 is a simplified schematic diagram of at least one embodiment of an environment that may be established by an interaction handling subsystem of the network security management system of FIG. 1;

[0009] FIGS. 5A and 5B are illustrative example embodiments of interactive visualizations of a computer network as disclosed herein;

[0010] FIG. 6 is a simplified flow diagram of at least one embodiment of a method by which the computing system of FIG. 1 may provide an interactive visualization of a computer network;

[0011] FIGS. 7A-7D are illustrative example embodiments of interactive visualizations of a computer network as disclosed herein; and

[0012] FIG. 8 is a simplified block diagram of an exemplary computing environment in connection with which at least one embodiment of the network security management system of FIG. 1 may be implemented.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] While the concepts of the present disclosure are susceptible to various modifications and alternative forms, specific embodiments thereof are shown by way of example in the drawings and are described in detail below. It should be understood that there is no intent to limit the concepts of the present disclosure to the particular forms disclosed. On the contrary, the intent is to cover all modifications, equivalents, and alternatives consistent with the present disclosure and the appended claims.

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[0015] Network security management often requires administrators to review and analyze large amounts of network data in order to identify suspicious behavior or network threats. The voluminous data makes it difficult for humans or computers to quickly extract meaningful insights. To the extent that network visualization tools are available, mechanisms for initiating remedial or preventative measures are not well integrated with such tools. As a result, network managers suffer from a complexity burden, which slows their ability to identify problems on the network and implement effective measures to combat those problems.

[0016] Dynamically programmable networks, some embodiments of which may be referred to as software-defined networks or SDNs, can enable a flexible and adaptable network infrastructure, but also present new and unique challenges to the effective enforcement of traditional security policies. Along with its many benefits, SDN technology can create new, unintended opportunities for determined adversaries to invade and subvert network operations by dynamically reprogramming and manipulating the behavior of the network switching infrastructure.

[0017] Referring now to FIG. 1, an embodiment of a network security management system 110 is embodied in one or more computing devices of a networked computing system 100. In the illustrative embodiment, the network security management system 110 establishes an environment 102 during operation (e.g., a native or virtual execution or "runtime" environment). The illustrative environment 102 includes an interactive network visualization subsystem 112, an interaction handling subsystem 122, and a network analytics subsystem 142. In some embodiments, the interactive network visualization subsystem 112 and the interaction handling subsystem 122 may be embodied as components of user interface subsystem, which may include a game engine 126. The game engine 126 may operate the visualization 114 using a video

gaming paradigm. Each of the interactive network visualization subsystem **112**, the interaction handling subsystem **122**, and the network analytics subsystem **142** is embodied as computer software, firmware, hardware, or a combination thereof. For example, any of the components of the network security management system **110** may be embodied as software written in a programming language such as Java and/or Python.

[0018] The network security management system **110** interfaces with a live network or live honeynet (“network”) **150**. As used herein, “network” may refer to a computer network that is managed by a human network administrator. The illustrative network **150** is implemented as a packet-switching digital communications network. As used herein, “packet” may refer to, among other things, a data packet, a network packet, a set of data and/or control communications, or portions of such communications, which are transmitted between nodes or otherwise travel on the network **150**.

[0019] The network **150** may be configured as a public, private or semi-private wired or wireless network defined by a network boundary, where the network boundary may establish a firewall between the network and one or more external networks, such as other private or semi-private networks or public networks, e.g., the Internet. As used herein, “node” may refer to any type of computing device, peripheral component, or other electronic device (e.g., a smart appliance) that is connected to the network **150**, including client machines and servers. An “internal node” may refer to a node that is within the boundary of the network **150**, while an “external node” may refer to a node that is outside the network boundary, such as a cloud server or other computer to which one or more internal nodes can be connected via the Internet.

[0020] In some embodiments, the network **150** may be implemented as a dynamically programmable computer network, e.g., using a software-defined networking approach (such as the OPENFLOW protocol). In some embodiments, the network **150** may correspond to a physical or logical (e.g., virtualized) subset of a larger network, such as a “network slice.” In some embodiments, the network **150** or portions of the network **150** may be embodied as a honeynet. As used herein, “honeynet” may refer to a network or simulated network that is configured for security purposes. For example, a honeynet may appear to be a legitimate network but intentionally set up with security vulnerabilities in order to invite attacks, so that attack activities and their perpetrators can be identified and analyzed in order to improve network security.

[0021] The network security management system **110** generates an interactive network visualization **114** based on network activity data **140** and other information, as described in more detail below. As used herein, “visualization” may refer to the use of computer graphics techniques to present information visually. For example, the visualization **114** may include two-dimensional and/or three-dimensional graphics, images, videos, diagrams, animations, text, audio (e.g., non-speech sounds, music, and/or speech), other forms of multimedia content, or a combination thereof. The illustrative visualization **114** is dynamically adjustable in that the content or presentation of the visualization can change to reflect activities and events that occur on the network **150** during live operation of the network **150**. The illustrative visualization **114** is also interactive in that the view of the visualization **114** that is presented to the user can change in response to user interactions **120**, such as queries and view manipulations, as

described in more detail below. For example, the point of reference from which the visualization **114** is presented can be changed and/or the level of detail of the information presented in the visualization **114** can be dynamically adjusted, in order to facilitate intuitive user exploration of the network **150**.

[0022] The network security management system **110** presents the interactive network visualization **114** to a network administrator (e.g., a human network security manager or “user”) by way of one or more user interface devices **104**. As used herein, the term “network administrator” may refer to a human operator and/or a computerized agent or delegate of a human operator, such as a software application that acts under the direction of or in response to inputs from the human operator. As such, the network security management system **110** or portions thereof may be implemented as a network management software application. The user interface device(s) **104** may be embodied as, for instance, a touchscreen display device, such as may be implemented in a smart phone, desktop, laptop, or tablet computer), a wearable computing device (e.g., smart glasses, virtual reality goggles, or a heads-up display), a computer monitor, a television, a projection system, or another type of display device. The user interface device(s) may also include audio equipment, such as speakers and headphones or earbuds, to provide a multimedia experience.

[0023] The network security management system **110** interfaces with one or more user interaction detection devices **106**, which are configured to detect and capture user interactions **120** made by the user in relation to the interactive network visualization **114**. The user interaction detection device(s) **106** may include the interactive display device **104** and/or other human activity detection devices (e.g., various types of sensors, including motion sensors, kinetic sensors, proximity sensors, thermal sensors, pressure sensors, force sensors, inertial sensors, cameras, microphones, gaze tracking systems, and/or others). The types of user interactions **120** captured by the user interaction detection device(s) **106** can include “contact-free” gestures (e.g., hand waves, pointing, clapping, head nods or head tilts, etc., made at a distance away from the display device **104**), touch-based gestures (e.g., taps, swipes, pinching, circling, etc., in contact with the display device **104**), vocal utterances (e.g., natural language dialog speech or commands), gaze focus, location and/or duration, and/or other types of human activity, or a combination of different types of human activity (e.g., a temporal sequence or contemporaneous occurrence of gesture and voice audio).

[0024] The illustrative network security management system **110** interprets the user interactions **120** and converts the user interactions **120** to network exploration directives **118**. As used herein, “network exploration directive” may refer to a description of an action that the user desires to be implemented by the interactive network visualization subsystem **112** with respect to a current view of the visualization **114**. For instance, a network exploration directive **118** may be embodied as a natural language instruction such as “zoom in to that subnet” or “rotate this view by 45 degrees,” or as one or more device-level instructions corresponding to a higher-level directive. Other examples of network exploration directives **118** involve querying the system **110** for specific data, for example, to request that the visualization **114** display additional details about the current behavior of a network flow or node. In some embodiments, network exploration directives **118** may be implemented directly as executable

instructions. When the network security management system **110** interprets a user interaction **120** as a network exploration directive **118**, the system **110** may utilize a network inquiry handling module **116** to generate a network inquiry **138** and/or proceed to manipulate at least a portion of the view of the interactive network visualization **114** in accordance with the particulars (e.g., arguments or parameters) of the network exploration directive **118**. By presenting the voluminous and complex network data as an intuitive visualization and enabling interaction with the visualization via natural human interactions such as gestures, gaze, and/or spoken dialog, the network security management system **110** can greatly simplify the network management tasks of the human administrator.

[0025] Referring now in more detail to the components of the embodiment of the network security management system **110** shown in FIG. 1, the illustrative network **150** includes a plurality of network switching devices **160** (e.g., switch **1**, switch **2**, switch “N,” where “N” is a positive integer) and a plurality of nodes **170**. The network switching devices **160** each may be embodied as, for example, a switch, a router, a load balancer, a learning switch, or another type of network device. Each of the nodes **170** may be embodied as any suitable type of computing resource, e.g., client device, a server computer, group of server computers, or one or more other devices that are configured to communicate with the switches **160** to send and receive data packets over the network **100**. For simplicity, the illustrative network **150** is shown with a fixed number of nodes **170** per switch **160**; however, the network **150** may include any number of nodes **170** in communication with any number of switches **160**.

[0026] The switches **160** each communicate with one or more of the nodes **170** to effectuate the flow of network traffic **180** across the network **150** in accordance with a network security policy or policies **228** (FIG. 2). As used herein, terms such as “network traffic” and “network flow” may refer to, in the context of the network **150**, groups or sequences of data packets from a source computer to a destination, where the destination may be, for example, another host, a multicast group, or a broadcast domain. In some cases, network flow may refer to a logical equivalent of a call or a connection. A network flow may include all of the data packets in a specific transport connection or media stream. However, a network flow need not be directly mapped to a transport connection. A network flow can also be thought of as a set of data packets that pass an observation point in the network **150** during a certain time interval.

[0027] In a dynamically-programmable network, a security policy **228** may be implemented at the switches **160** as a number of network flow rules, which are maintained at the switches **160** in local flow tables **162** (e.g., flow table **1**, flow table **2**, flow table “N,” where “N” is a positive integer). The local flow tables **162** are used by their respective switches **160** to instantiate flow rules at the switch **160** and direct the network traffic **180** between the nodes **170**.

[0028] During live operation of the network **150**, the network components (e.g., switches **160** and nodes **170**) generate network activity data **140**. The network activity data **140** may be embodied as, for example, security logs, access control logs, etc. For example, the network activity data **140** may be indicative of one or more network flows identified within the network traffic **180**. The network activity data **140** may include data describing attributes, statistics, counters, or other data relating to network flows, individually or collectively,

within the network traffic **180**. The network activity data **140** may include computed data, such as aggregate statistics describing network activity for all or a portion of the network **150** during one or more discrete time intervals. The network activity data **140** may be generated by, e.g., one or more network sensors or passive network monitoring programs.

[0029] Illustrative, non-limiting examples of network activity data **140** relating to network flows include the source and destination Internet address (e.g., the IP addresses associated with the TCP session initiator and TCP server, respectively) of the flows, the source and destination port, protocol (e.g., TCP or UDP (User Datagram Protocol), start time, end time, or duration. The network activity data **140** may include statistical information on data transferred, including the number of zero-length packets sent by the client or the server, the number of nonzero-length packets (i.e., data packets) sent by the client or the server, the total number of bytes produced by the client or the server, the total number of packets produced by the client or the server, or the average size of data packets produced by the client or the server. The network activity data **140** may include geographical data associated with the endpoints (i.e., the client and server) of the network flows. The geographical data may include any data describing the physical location of an endpoint, such as the country name, country code, city, or geographical coordinates. The geographical data may be described using, for example, an IP geolocation database such as MaxMind® GeoIP®. The network activity data may include domain names associated with the endpoints of the identified network flows. In some embodiments, the network flows may be associated with domain names observed in a DNS (Domain Name System) query.

[0030] The illustrative network analytics subsystem **142** is embodied as one or more components or modules that analyze the network activity data **140** over time to determine network flow characteristics and node behaviors that may indicate the existence of a network infection or some other type of network threat. The network analytics subsystem **142** generates data indicative of a current network context **144** and, particularly when an infection or threat is detected, one or more network event indicators **146**. As used herein, “current network context” may refer to data indicative of a current state of the network **150** in which data communications are taking place. The network activity data **140** may include historical records of network activity.

[0031] The data generated by the network analytics subsystem **142** may be diagnostic or predictive. For example, the current network context **144** may include data indicative of the number of local nodes **170**, the hardware or software configuration of the nodes **170**, the endpoints and directions of network flows (where an “endpoint” may be, for example, an internal node or an external node), duration of connections between two endpoints, flow volume, patterns of network flows, patterns of node behavior, security threats detected, infections detected, nodes currently involved in or likely to be affected by security threats or infections, and/or other network activity. Some illustrative, non-limiting examples of technology available from SRI International that may be utilized by the network analytics subsystem **142** to analyze current network conditions, diagnose infections, identify network threats, or predict network events, are described in U.S. Pat. No. 8,955,122 (“Method and Apparatus for Detecting Malware Infection”); U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2009/00064332 (“Method and Apparatus for Generating Highly Predictive Blacklists”); and U.S. Patent Application

Publication No. 2014/0331280 (“Network Privilege Manager for a Dynamically Programmable Computer Network”), all of SRI International. An embodiment of the network analytics subsystem **142** is described in more detail below, with reference to FIG. 2.

[0032] The illustrative interactive network visualization subsystem **112** is embodied as one or more components or modules that convert the data indicative of the current network context **144** and the network event indicators **146**, output by the network analytics subsystem **142**, to the interactive network visualization **114**. For example, components of the interactive network visualization subsystem **112** may be embodied in software using commercially available data visualization software, such as a publicly available runtime library or toolkit. The network visualization subsystem **112** includes the network inquiry handling module **116**. The illustrative network inquiry handling module **116** is configured to generate network inquiries **138** as needed to obtain data such as the current network context **144** and network event indicators **146** from the network analytics subsystem **142**. The network inquiries **138** are embodied as executable queries that are formatted according to the requirements of the respective component of the network analytics subsystem **142**. In some embodiments, the network analytics subsystem **142** may include a suite of different software components that each perform different network diagnostic or analytics functions, and the network inquiry handling module **116** may translate a network exploration directive **118** into a query format that is usable by one or more of these software components. For instance, where a user interaction **120** includes a pointing gesture directed at a specific on-screen element of the visualization **114**, the network exploration directive **118** may include a request to provide more detailed current network context data **144** specifically relating to the pointed-to on-screen element (which may be representative of a data flow or node on the network **150**). In this case, the network inquiry handling module **116** may determine the relevant components of the network analytics subsystem **142** to query in order to provide the requested data, translate the network exploration directive **118** into a set of network inquiries **138** including one or more structured commands to be executed by the relevant components of the network analytics subsystem **142**, and forward the network inquiries **138** to the respective components of the network analytics subsystem **142**.

[0033] The visualization **114** graphically depicts network links and flows, and highlights diagnosed infections and network threats. In some embodiments, such as those shown in FIGS. 5A, 5B, 7A, 7B, 7C, and 7D, the visualization **114** is implemented using a “virtual world” style interface based on a gaming visualization paradigm. An embodiment of the interactive network visualization subsystem **112** is described in more detail below, with reference to FIG. 3.

[0034] The illustrative interaction handling subsystem **122** is embodied as one or more components or modules that detect, capture, and interpret user interactions **120**, including gesture-based interactions, and convert the user interactions **120** to network exploration directives **118**, as the case may be. Some illustrative, non-limiting examples of technology available from SRI International that may be utilized by the interaction handling subsystem **122** to capture and interpret user interactions are described in the following patent applications of SRI International: U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2012/0313854 (“Adaptable Input/Output Device”) and U.S.

Patent Application Publication No. 2013/0311508 (“Method, Apparatus, and System for Facilitating Cross-Application Searching and Retrieval of Content Using a Contextual User Model”). An embodiment of the interaction handling subsystem **122** is described in more detail below, with reference to FIG. 4.

[0035] Referring now to FIG. 2, an embodiment of the network analytics subsystem **142** is shown in more detail. The illustrative network analytics subsystem **142** establishes an environment **202** during operation (e.g., a native or virtual execution or “runtime” environment). The environment **202** includes a network activity correlation module **210** and a network context evaluation module **212**, which interface with data stores containing the network activity data **140**, network topology data **220**, infection profile data **222**, IP reputation data **224**, network role data **226**, network policies **228**, and conflicts data **136**. Portions of the network activity data **140**, network topology data **220**, infection profile data **222**, IP reputation data **224**, network role data **226**, network policies **228**, and conflicts data **136** may be received, accessed or obtained from other systems and stored in computer memory, e.g., in a searchable data structure such as a database, table, data file, or XML (eXtensible Markup Language) data structure. The components and modules shown in FIG. 2 may each be embodied as hardware, firmware, software, or a combination thereof (e.g., software written using a programming language such as Java and/or Python).

[0036] The illustrative network activity correlation module **210** is configured to determine the current network context **144**, continuously or periodically at discrete time intervals. Particularly in embodiments in which the network **150** is implemented as a dynamically programmable network, the current network context **144** may be indicative of the dynamic properties of the network traffic **180**; that is, the current network context **144** reflects, e.g., the current behavior of nodes **170** on the network **150** at a discrete time instance. The current network context **144** may include any data or relationship associated with the current dynamic state of the network flows within the network traffic **180**. The network activity correlation module **210** may determine the current network context **144** based on any combination of network activity data **140**, network topology data **220**, infection profile data **222**, IP reputation data **224**, and/or other data.

[0037] The network activity correlation module **210** may periodically determine the current version of network activity data **140**, network topology data **220**, infection profile data **222**, IP reputation data **224**, network role data **216**, and/or network policies **228**, at a given time instance, and algorithmically correlate portions of such data to identify and/or network threats and infections. Such correlating may involve, for example, querying one or more of the data **140**, **220**, **222**, **224** to determine matching attributes, executing pattern matching algorithms, etc. For example, the network activity correlation module **210** may correlate IP reputation data **224** indicating that a particular external node is on a blacklist with current network activity data **140** indicating that an internal node is currently connected to the blacklisted node. As another example, the network activity correlation module **210** may predict that an internal node may be at risk of a security attack based on its proximity in the network topology to another node that has already experienced the security attack. Illustrative, non-limiting examples of technology that can be used to correlate network threat and/or infection data with current network activity data are described in the aforemen-

tioned U.S. Pat. No. 8,955,122 (“Method and Apparatus for Detecting Malware Infection”); at www.bothunter.net; and in the following patent applications of SRI International: U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2009/00064332 (“Method and Apparatus for Generating Highly Predictive Blacklists”); and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2014/0331280 (“Network Privilege Manager for a Dynamically Programmable Computer Network”).

[0038] The network activity data **140** may indicate, in addition to node behavior and flow information, specific details about the nodes’ current activity. For instance, the network activity data **140** may identify software applications currently running on a particular node and/or connections made by those software applications. The illustrative network topology data **220** may be obtained from, e.g., a network management software system used to configure and manage the network **150**, and may include data indicative of the number, type, and arrangement of nodes **170** and switching devices **160** on the network **150**. For instance, the network topology data **220** may identify nodes by internet protocol (IP) address, and also indicate the device type (e.g., server, desktop, mobile device, etc.), connection type (e.g., wired, Wi-Fi, or cellular), operating system platform (e.g., Android, Windows, iOS), neighboring nodes, etc. The infection profile data **222** includes, for example, statistical information based on historical infection data, or other information which indicates typical patterns or behaviors of known infections.

[0039] The IP reputation data **224** includes a list of known malicious Internet addresses and associated data describing the malicious addresses, the type of threat, and other information relating to the trustworthiness of the malicious Internet address. For example, the IP reputation data **224** may be embodied as a large-scale network address blacklist. Alternatively or in addition, the IP reputation data **224** includes a list of Internet addresses and associated data describing addresses that are known to be acceptable or permitted in accordance with a security policy **228** (e.g., a whitelist). Collectively or individually, the various types of IP reputation data **224** may be referred to as access control data. Along with the malicious or acceptable IP address, as the case may be, the IP reputation data **224** may also identify other data associated with the IP address, such as one or more threat types associated with a malicious address. The threat types may identify the malicious address as associated with, for example, a malware drive-by exploit site, an Internet site associated with malware, a malware command and control site, an aggressive Internet scanner, a site associated with email abuse or spam, a malicious advertisement site, or any other threat type. Also, the IP reputation data **224** may include other data associated with the malicious IP address, such as the associated Internet service provider, domain name, ASN (Autonomous System Number) numeric code, AS (Autonomous System) identity, estimated network speed, geographical data, or business sector. In some embodiments, the IP reputation data **224** may include corroboration data indicating whether other worldwide data sources have also identified the malicious IP address as associated with malware, ASN threat percentile data indicating the relative percentile of malicious IP addresses concentrated within the ASN, or an indication of whether the domain associated with the malicious IP has been created within the last thirty days. The IP reputation data **224** may be updated regularly (e.g., daily) or as new threats are identified.

[0040] The network activity correlation module **210** outputs the current network context **144** for evaluation by the network context evaluation module **212**. The network context evaluation module **212** applies network role data **226** and/or network policies **228** to the current network context **144** to evaluate the current network context **144** based on the role data **226** and/or policies **228**. To do this, the network context evaluation module **212** may determine the network policies **228** and/or role data **226** that match the current network context **144** (e.g., by running queries or similarity algorithms). The network context evaluation module **212** may select applicable network policies **228** based on criteria that match, e.g., the current network activity data **140**, the IP reputation data **224**, and/or the network role data **226**. For instance, the network context evaluation module **212** may apply a matching threshold and/or duration to the applicable security policies **228**. The matching threshold and duration may require that at least a certain number of network flows be matched within a given duration prior to triggering identification of a network event. As another example, the network context evaluation module **212** may require a threshold number of matching network flows originating from the same source address to trigger the identification of a network event. The network context evaluation module **212** may generate one or more network event indicators **146** based on its evaluation of the current network context **144**.

[0041] The illustrative network role data **226** may define abstract network roles and associate the network roles with particular network addresses, subnets, or other address specifiers. The network role data **226** may be prepared by a network administrator to correspond to the topology or other design of the network **150**. For example, the network role data **226** may group addresses into types of machines (e.g., workstation, server, peripheral device, etc.). As another example, the network role data **226** may segment the network **150** into functional tiers or zones (e.g., web tier, database tier, application tier, etc.). Example roles may include workstation, peripheral, application server, network device, ignored device, infrastructure asset, or any other network role that may be defined by a network administrator. Network roles may be defined hierarchically or otherwise tailored to particular network topologies. For example, network roles may be grouped into one or more super-roles or tiers (e.g., a web tier, application tier, and database tier). The network role data **216** may be configured by a network administrator, for example using one or more configuration files.

[0042] The network policies **228** may be defined by a network administrator and may specify the rules for handling various different types of network conditions and events. As noted above, in dynamically programmable networks, the policies **228** can be flexible to adapt to changing network conditions or even to conditions at a particular node **170** or switching device **160**. The network policies **228** may be embodied as any appropriate data format, including, for example, as one or more extensible markup language (XML) files. In some embodiments, each policy **228** may specify a set of criteria to be matched against the current network context **144**. A policy **228** may specify a response to be generated when matching traffic is encountered. The response may include any directive, command, handling decision, or other action to enforce the network security policy. For example, the response may be embodied as a directive to drop all flows matching the criteria, block a particular address, quarantine a particular address, redirect flows from a particular address,

ignore all records matching the criteria, produce a warning for each record matching the criteria, log each record matching the criteria, execute an arbitrary shell command, or any other action.

[0043] The conflicts data 136 may be embodied as, for example, a log file generated by the conflict analyzer module 526 of FIG. 5, discussed below. The conflicts data 136 may include historical data relating to conflicts between candidate network executable actions 132 generated by the security initiative translator module 510 and existing network policies 228, as detected by the conflict analyzer module 526, as well as data indicating how those conflicts were resolved by the conflict analyzer module 526.

[0044] As a result of its evaluation of the current network context 144, the network context evaluation module 212 may identify one or more network events in accordance with the role data 226, conflicts data 136, and/or policies 228. For example, the current network context 144 may include data indicative of a network threat, but the network policies 228 or role data 226 may be defined for the network 150 such that the network context evaluation module 212 concludes that the threat does not currently require any action to be taken to respond to the threat. In this case, the network context evaluation module 212 may not output a network event indicator 146 corresponding to the identified network event, or may output a graphical element indicative of the network event but which indicates that the event is currently of lower priority. As the current network context 144 evolves over time, the network context evaluation module 212 may reassess the identified network event according to the new context 144 and may increase the priority of the network event and then output a corresponding network event indicator 146 at that time.

[0045] The network context evaluation module 212 outputs network event indicators 146 for visualization by the interactive network visualization subsystem 112. As used herein, a “network event indicator” may refer to data indicative of a network event that is to be included in the visualization 114. Such data may include, for example, node and/or flow identifying information (e.g., IP addresses) identifying nodes and/or flows affected or predicted to be affected by a threat or infection, threat or infection indicators (e.g., the type of threat or infection), threat or infection severity or priority indicators, and/or other data that may be needed by the interactive network visualization subsystem 112 to prepare or update the network visualization 114.

[0046] Referring now to FIG. 3, an embodiment of the interactive network visualization subsystem 112 is shown in more detail. The illustrative interactive network visualization subsystem 112 establishes an environment 302 during operation (e.g., a native or virtual execution or “runtime” environment). The environment 302 includes the network inquiry handling module 116, a graphical elements selection module 310, a visualization presentation module 320, a network context presentation module 322, a network event embedding module 324, and a view manipulation module 326. The components and modules shown in FIG. 3 may each be embodied as hardware, firmware, software, or a combination thereof (e.g., software code written in a programming language such as Java and/or Python).

[0047] The network inquiry handling module 116 analyzes network exploration directives 118. For example, the network inquiry handling module 116 parses the network exploration directives 118 and determines whether the directives 118 include a request for information that should be translated to

a network inquiry 138 to be submitted to the network analytics subsystem 142, or whether the directives 118 include a view manipulation command. If the network exploration directives 118 are to be translated to a network inquiry 138, the network inquiry handling module 116 formulates the requisite query, sends the query to the pertinent component(s) of the network analytics subsystem 142, receives the query results from the network analytics subsystem 142, and incorporates the query results in the network exploration directive 118 for inclusion in the visualization 114. The query results may include a user-requested subset of the current network context data 144 and/or network event indicators 146. If the network exploration directives 118 include a view manipulation command that does not require a network inquiry 138, the network inquiry handling module 116 simply forward the network exploration directives 118 to the graphical elements selection module 310.

[0048] The graphical elements selection module 310 analyzes the current network context 144 and the network event indicators 146, and determines the manner in which the current network context 144 and the network event indicators 146 should be represented graphically in the visualization 114, in view of the then-current network exploration directives 118. To do this, the illustrative graphical elements selection module 310 accesses graphical elements mapping data 328. The graphical elements mapping data 328 includes data that associates various different characteristics of the current network context 144 and the network event indicators 146 with graphical elements that may be presented in the visualization 114. For example, if the current context 144 indicates that a client node 170 is currently running a particular operating system platform, the graphical elements mapping 328 may associate the current context 144 with a graphical element that is representative of the operating system platform (e.g., an icon or logo). If the current context 144 indicates that a node 170 is a server node, the graphical elements mapping 328 may associate the current context 144 with a graphical element that visually depicts a server computer (e.g., as distinguished from a client computer or network device). If the network event indicators 146 indicate that a network flow has a destination node that has been compromised by a network infection, the graphical elements mapping 328 may associate the network event indicators 146 with a graphical element that highlights the network flow and/or the compromised destination flow. Many other associations between characteristics of the current network context 144 and/or network event indicators 146 are possible, including associating nodes 170 or switches 160 with graphical elements that visually depict the geographic regions in which such nodes 170 or switches 160 are located, and graphical elements that visually depict different types of network threats, infections, risks, or problem areas. The graphical elements mapping 328 may be embodied as, for example, a searchable database, knowledge base, data file, or mapping table implemented using any suitable form of data structure. The graphical elements mapping 328 may be updated from time to time as new characteristics of the current network context 144 and/or the network event indicators 146 are discovered by the system 110.

[0049] Once the graphical elements selection module 310 has determined, e.g., using the graphical elements mapping 328, which graphical elements to use to depict the current network context 144 and network event indicators 146 in the visualization 114, the graphical elements selection module 310 selects the appropriate graphical elements from, e.g., a

graphical elements repository **330**. The graphical elements repository **330** may be implemented locally or remotely, for example, distributed across a network. The graphical elements repository **330** may store the graphical elements that may be used in the visualization **114** or contain an index that allows the system **110** to access the appropriate graphical elements when needed. Illustrative examples of graphical elements include computer-generated lines, shapes, icons, logos, images, video clips, multimedia objects, color and texture.

[0050] The graphical elements selection module **310** outputs or otherwise allows access to graphical elements data **312** by the visualization presentation module **320**. The graphical elements data **312** includes the graphical elements to be depicted in the visualization **114**, as selected by the graphical elements selection module **310**, or data that allows the visualization presentation module **320** to access the selected graphical elements. The illustrative visualization presentation module **320** generates the visualization **114** based on the graphical elements data **312** and other data as needed, including any then-current network exploration directives **118**. To prepare the visualization **114**, the network context presentation module **322** arranges the graphical elements indicated by the graphical elements data **312** according to presentation rules/templates **332**. The presentation rules/templates **332** may be predefined and interactively modifiable computer-readable rules and/or templates that stipulate aspects of the arrangement of graphical elements in the visualization **114** (e.g., rules/templates corresponding to various network exploration directives **118**). For example, the presentation rules/templates **332** may indicate that all nodes **170** of a certain type be grouped together, or that network flows should be displayed with animation indicating the direction of the network flow. Using the presentation rules/templates **332**, the network context presentation module **322** generates the visualization of the current network context **144**. The network event embedding module **324** embeds the graphical elements depicting the network event indicators **146** in the visualization **114** according to the presentation rules/templates **332** in a similar manner. For example, if a network event indicator **146** indicates that a node **170** has been affected by a network threat, the presentation rules/templates **332** may indicate that a graphical element depicting the particular type of network threat is to be overlaid on the graphical depiction of the node **170** in the visualization **114**. The presentation rules/templates **332** may also specify other aspects of the visualization **114**, such as foreground and background elements, presentation style (e.g., hierarchical tree structure, Sankey diagram, game-like interface, 2D or 3D, etc.). The presentation rules/templates **332** may store in memory using any suitable data structure, e.g., a searchable database or XML data structure.

[0051] The illustrative view manipulation module **326** performs a real time, interactive update of the view of the visualization **114** that is presented to the user in response to the network exploration directives **118**. The view manipulation module **326** matches network exploration directives **118** to manipulation rules **334** and then implements the network exploration directives **118** in accordance with the matching rules. For example, a network exploration directive **118** may include a command to rotate the view of the visualization by 90 degrees. The corresponding manipulation rule **334** may specify the device-level actions that need to be executed to cause the visualization **114** to rotate by 90 degrees. In some

cases, the network exploration directive **118** may be ambiguous, i.e. the system **110** may have a lower degree of confidence that it interpreted the user interaction **120** correctly. In such an event, the manipulation rules **334** may indicate that the system **110** should prompt the user for clarification, e.g., by using a question-and-answer dialog format.

[0052] The interactive network visualization subsystem **112** provides or otherwise makes available network visualization data **128** to the interaction handling subsystem **122** for use in the interpretation of user interactions **120**. The network visualization data **128** includes descriptive information (e.g., arguments, parameters, etc.) relating to the current view of the visualization **114**. Thus, the network visualization data **128** is updated as the view and contents of the visualization **114** are updated (e.g., in response to changing network context and/or implementation of network exploration directives **118**).

[0053] Referring now to FIG. 4, an embodiment of the interaction handling subsystem **122** is shown in more detail. The illustrative interaction handling subsystem **122** establishes an environment **402** during operation (e.g., a native or virtual execution or “runtime” environment). The environment **402** includes an interaction interpretation module **410**, an interaction translation module **412**, an interaction model **414**, and a network security interaction model **416**. The interaction handling subsystem **122** analyzes the user interactions **120** and formulates from the user interactions **120** network exploration directives **118** (or determines that the user interactions **120** should be disregarded as not corresponding to network exploration directives **118**). As shown in FIG. 4, the interaction detection devices **106** used to capture user interactions **120** can include a gaze detector **420** (e.g., a still-image or video camera), a motion detector **422** (e.g. a kinetic sensor, proximity sensor, accelerometer, gyroscope, or any combination thereof), a touch detector **424** (e.g., a touch sensor of a touchscreen display device), and/or a speech detector **426** (e.g., one or more microphones). The interaction detection devices **106** may be embodied in any component of the network security management system **110**, including personal mobile computing devices of the user, enterprise network management devices, standoff sensing devices (such as wall or ceiling mounted cameras and sensors), and/or others. The components and modules shown in FIG. 4 may each be embodied as hardware, firmware, software, or a combination thereof (e.g., software code written in a programming language such as Java and/or Python). Some illustrative technologies for implementing portions of the interaction handling subsystem **122** are described in the aforementioned U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2012/0313854 (“Adaptable Input/Output Device”) and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2013/0311508 (“Method, Apparatus, and System for Facilitating Cross-Application Searching and Retrieval of Content Using a Contextual User Model”).

[0054] The illustrative interaction interpretation module **410** accesses an interaction model **414** and utilizes the interaction model **414** to interpret the user interactions **120**, e.g., “what is this interaction?” in the context of the network visualization **114** as reflected in the network visualization data **128** provided by the interactive network visualization subsystem **112**. The interaction model **414** may be implemented as rules, templates, or classifiers (e.g., probabilistic or statistical classifiers) that associate interaction data or patterns of interaction data with various types of user interactions. For example, using the interaction model **414**, the interaction interpretation module **410** may conclude that a set of motion

data output by the motion detector **422** corresponds to a “swipe” gestures and that a different set of motion data corresponds to a “circle” or “point” gesture. Similarly, using the interaction model **414**, the interaction interpretation module **410** may determine that a set of gaze data corresponds to a sustained focus at a specific part of the visualization **114**. Further, with the interaction model **414**, the interaction interpretation module **410** may analyze combinations of different types of user interactions **120**, in order to interpret a user interaction. That is, in some embodiments, a “user interaction” may encompass a combination or temporal sequence of different types of sensor outputs. For example, the interaction interpretation module **410** may determine, using the interaction model **414**, that a user interaction **120** constitutes a gesture of pointing at a specific part of the visualization **114** and speech containing words including “quarantine that node.” The rules, templates, and/or classifiers of the interaction model **414** may be predefined, developed based on experimentation/observation, or learned by applying e.g., machine learning techniques to training data, such as user interaction data for a large population of users or a subset of a larger user population. Portions of the interaction model **414** may be defined or personalized for specific types of users and/or for specific uses of the system **110**. For instance, if the system **110** is to be implemented on smaller form factor devices, the interaction model **414** may take that into account when associating user interactions **120** with the interpretations of the user interactions **120**.

[0055] The illustrative interaction translation module **412** accesses and utilizes a network security interaction model **416** to interpret the interactions **120** in the context of the network security management system **110**, e.g., what does this interaction mean in the context of this network visualization **114**? The network security interaction model **416** may be implemented as rules, templates, or classifiers (e.g., probabilistic or statistical classifiers) that associate interaction data or patterns of interaction data with various types of actions that may be taken by the system **110** (e.g., network exploration directives **118**). For example, the interaction translation module **412** may, with the network security interaction model **416**, interpret a gesture that includes pointing at a network flow graphically depicted in the visualization **114** as a network exploration directive **118**, or more specifically, as a request for the visualization **114** to “zoom in” or display more information about the pointed-to flow. As another example, the interaction translation module **412** may, with the network security interaction model **416**, interpret a “circling” gesture as a network exploration directive **118** or more specifically as a request for the system **110** to zoom in and show more detailed information about a particular section of the network **150**.

[0056] The rules, templates, and/or classifiers of the network security interaction model **416** may be predefined (e.g., hand crafted), developed based on experimentation/observation, or learned by applying e.g., supervised machine learning techniques to training data, such as user interaction data for a large population of users or a subset of a larger user population. Portions of the network security interaction model **416** may be defined or personalized for specific types of users and/or for specific uses of the system **110**. For instance, different network administrators may have different preferences as to the gestures that they would like to use to initiate

different network view manipulations, and the network security interaction model **416** can be adapted to include those preferences.

[0057] Referring now to FIGS. **5A** and **5B**, illustrative examples of interactive network visualizations as disclosed herein are shown. In FIG. **5A**, a view of a three-dimensional (3D) interactive, virtual world-style game-like visualization **510** is shown. The visualization **510** includes a graphical element **512** depicting geographic regions (e.g., geographic region **534**) with which nodes (e.g., nodes **170**) of a managed network may connect. The illustrative graphical element **510** is a three dimensional depiction of the Earth, which can be rotated in response to user interactions **120**, in order to visualize network flows and connections to different geographic regions of the globe. The visualization **510** graphically represents the internal network topology (e.g., subnets), and/or other criteria. Graphical elements **540** indicate network flows between nodes of the internal network (e.g., nodes managed by the network administrator) and external nodes. For example, a node **528** of the village **516** is currently connected to an external node **530**. A node **524** of a different village is communicating with an external node **526** as indicated by the graphical element **544**, which represents a network flow. The graphical elements **542**, **544**, **546** each represent different network flows, and the elements **542**, **546** are highlighted to indicate that the flows or nodes involved in those connections are currently experiencing a network event. The graphical elements **548**, **550** associated with the flows **542**, **546**, respectively, are configured to represent the different types of network events associated with the flows **542**, **546**. The flow **544** is not highlighted, thereby indicating that no network events have been detected with respect to the flow **544**.

[0058] In FIG. **5B**, another example of a view of a three-dimensional (3D) interactive, virtual world-style game-like visualization **560** including a graphical depiction of the globe **564** is shown. As with the visualization **510**, the visualization **560** can be manipulated (e.g., by zooming in, zooming out, rotating, etc.) to enable the user to visually explore the current network conditions in an intuitive manner. The view **560** represents the current context of a network with graphical elements indicative of current flows **566**, nodes **572**, and external endpoints (e.g., endpoint **586**). Some of the flows **566** are highlighted (e.g., flows **568** and **570**) to indicate that a network event has been detected with respect to those flows. The visualization **560** allows the user to customize the visualization **560** by permitting the user to select from a number of graphical elements **562** those elements to be used to represent different nodes on the network. The visualization **560** groups the network nodes by one or more grouping criterion, and visualizes the node groups as “plates” **576**, **578**, **580**. Within each plate **576**, **578**, **580**, the nodes may be grouped by one or more additional grouping criteria. For example, on the plate **578**, the nodes are grouped by node type as represented by the user-selected icons, e.g., **588**, **590**, representative of the different node types. Other node types, represented e.g., by user-selected icons **582**, **584**, are grouped with similar nodes on plates **580**, **576**, respectively. The visualization **560** also

includes textual data **574**, which includes additional details of the current network context **144**.

[0059] Referring now to FIG. 6, an illustrative method **600** for generating an interactive network visualization and initiating network exploration directives is shown. The method **600** may be embodied as computerized programs, routines, logic, and/or instructions of the computing system **100**, e.g., hardware, firmware, software or a combination thereof, as part of the various components of the network security management system **110**, for example (e.g., software code written in a programming language such as Java and/or Python). In block **602**, the computing system **100** monitors and interprets network traffic passing through the network switching devices (e.g., switches **160**). To do this, one or more of the components of the network analytics subsystem **142**, described above, may analyze network activity data (e.g., data **140**) and correlate the network activity data with network intelligence data, such as network topology data, infection profile data, IP reputation data, and/or other current, historical, and/or predictive information about the behavior of the network **150**. Such data may be obtained from systems that are internal or external to the network security management system **110** and used by the computing system **100** to determine the current network context (e.g., context **144**).

[0060] Block **604** represents a number of functions or processes that may be performed by the computing system **100** concurrently or iteratively in some embodiments, to generate and update the interactive network visualization (e.g., visualization **114**) responsively to the current network context (e.g., context **144**), network events, and user interactions **120**. In block **606**, the computing system **100** displays graphical and/or animated representations of network components in the current network context. To do this, the system **100** maps characteristics of the current network context to associated graphical elements and creates or updates the visualization, accordingly. In block **608**, the computing system **100** dynamically embeds graphical elements representative of network events in the visualization generated in block **606**. The display of graphical elements indicative of network events changes over time as new network events appear and older network events are remediated or discontinued for other reasons, in block **608**. For example, nodes or flows on the network visualization may be highlighted dynamically in response to the occurrence of network events or un-highlighted in response to the network events being remediated (e.g., by user interactions **120**).

[0061] At block **612**, the computing system **100** determines whether a user interaction with the network visualization has occurred. To do this, the computing system **100** may read data output by one or more of the user interaction detection devices (e.g., devices **106**) and interpret the user interaction data (e.g., data **120**) using, e.g., one or more interaction models (e.g., models **414**, **416**). If the computing system **100** does not detect a relevant user interaction in block **612**, the computing system **100** continues the dynamic display of the interactive visualization, by returning to block **602**. If the computing system **100** detects a user interaction with the visualization, in block **612**, the system **100** translates the user interaction to a network directive (e.g., a network exploration directive **118**), in block **614**. To do this, the computing system **100** may utilize an interaction model (e.g., models **414**, **416**) to interpret the user interaction as a request to manipulate the view of the visualization generated in block **604**. In block **616**, the computing system **100** updates the visualization

generated in block **604** to include or modify graphical elements of the visualization as may be needed in order in response to the user interaction detected in block **612**. Following block **616**, the computing system **100** may, for example, return to block **602** or end.

[0062] Referring now to FIGS. 7A-7D, illustrative examples of interactive network visualizations as disclosed herein are shown. In FIG. 7A, an interactive visualization **740** illustrates the current context of a network, including the network topology and the links connecting nodes and peripheral devices. The visualization **740** includes icon-like graphical elements that allow the user to easily visually distinguish the different types of devices on the network. The visualization **740** also allows the user to quickly identify which portions of the network are at risk and which portions are currently running normally. For example, the graphical elements representing nodes or flows may be overlaid with event-indicating graphics (such as a “flame” or other marker) if the node or flow is currently experiencing a network event. The event-indicating graphics may be removed if the status of the node changes. Additionally, intuitive icon-like graphical elements can be used to allow the user to quickly identify various different types of network threats. For example, different graphical elements can be designated as representing different types of network threats. The visualization **740** is interactive using, e.g., touch-based technology. For example, tapping on or pointing to a node or flow graphical element can cause the visualization **740** to present the user with additional details about the current context of the specified node or flow.

[0063] FIGS. 7A, 7B, 7C, and 7D present multiple different exemplary views of a three-dimensional, virtual world, game-like visualization of a computer network. Each of the FIGS. 7A, 7B, 7C, and 7D shows a different presentation of the same computer network from a different point of reference. The point of reference can be changed intuitively by user interactions such as gestures, or by combinations of user interactions such as gestures and speech. In the view **740**, the nodes on the network administrator’s network are arranged by node type, on different “plates.” For example, servers **756** are presented on a plate **760**, client devices **758** are presented on a plate **764**, and wireless devices **762** are presented on a plate **763**. The graphical elements used to depict the nodes intuitively identify the device type. The current network flows between the internal nodes **758**, **762**, **756** and external nodes are shown by flow lines **754**, e.g., line **742** and line **744**. The geographic locations of the external nodes with which the internal nodes are currently communicating are illustrated intuitively by a geographic map **752**. Thus, the network administrator can quickly see whether any nodes are connecting with external nodes in a geographic region that may be of concern from a network security perspective. In the illustrative example, the node **746** has connected with an at risk external node **748**. This network event is depicted by graphical elements highlighting the at risk node **748** and also the network flow **744**. In some embodiments, the network flows, e.g., lines **742**, **744**, may be animated to show the direction of flow (e.g., from source to destination). Another network event is indicated by highlighting the node **750** (e.g., “on fire”). Also shown in FIG. 7A are textual data indicative of the current network context, **768**, and connection duration graphics **766**. The illustrative connection duration graphics **766** indicate the length of time that a node has been connected to another node using a “waterfall” approach in which the length of the graphical elements **766** is representative of the length of time of the

connection (e.g. longer length of waterfall corresponds to longer connection time and vice versa). Graphical elements **770**, **772**, and **774** indicate network events occurring during these connections **766** and the connections **766** associate the events **770**, **772**, **774** with their respective nodes.

[0064] The view **780** of FIG. 7B illustrates a “zoomed out” view of the network shown in FIG. 7A. The user can cause the visualization to move from the view of FIG. 7A to the view of FIG. 7B by a simple gesture or other intuitive form of user interaction with the computing system **100**. As such, the view **780** shows more of the textual details **768**, which are reflective of the current network context **144**. The view **782** of FIG. 7C shows a “zoomed out” view of the network shown in FIG. 7B. In the view **782**, the user can easily see the connection duration information **766**. Again, moving from either of the views **740**, **780** to the view **782** can be initiated by a gesture-based interaction. The view **784** of FIG. 7D illustrates the interactive capabilities of the visualization, in that tapping on the display screen (or performing some other type of gesture-based interaction) results in the display of current network context details **754** relating to a specific network flow. Thus, if the network administrator needs more information about any of the flows represented by graphical elements, the administrator may simply tap on or point to the flow of interest and the system **100** displays the current context details **754**. It should be noted that the current context details **754** are updated in response to changing network conditions, e.g., in real time or as the network analytics subsystem **142** described above updates the current network context **144** and network events **146**.

[0065] Referring now to FIG. 8, a simplified block diagram of an embodiment **800** of the computing system **100** is shown. While the illustrative computing system **800** is shown as involving multiple computing devices, it should be understood that in some embodiments, the computing system **800** may constitute a single computing device, alone or in combination with other devices. The computing system **800** includes a user computing device **810**, which may be in communication with one or more server computing devices **860** via one or more networks or honeynets **150**. The network security management system **110**, or portions thereof, may be distributed across multiple computing devices **810**, **860** that are connected to the network(s) **150** as shown. In other embodiments, however, network security management system **110** may be located entirely on the computing device **810**. In some embodiments, portions of the system **100** may be incorporated into other computer applications. As used herein, “computer application” may refer to hardware, software, a combination of hardware and software, or any level of software application (e.g., operating system, middleware, libraries, frameworks, and/or interactive user-level applications). For example, portions of the system **100** may be incorporated into or accessed by a network application, a network controller, a network switching device, and/or other systems and devices.

[0066] The illustrative computing device **810** includes at least one processor **812** (e.g. a microprocessor, microcontroller, digital signal processor, etc.), memory **814**, and an input/output (I/O) subsystem **816**. The computing device **810** may be embodied as any type of computing device capable of performing the functions described herein, such as a personal computer (e.g., desktop, laptop, tablet, smart phone, wearable device, body-mounted device, etc.), a server, an enterprise computer system, a network of computers, a combination of

computers and other electronic devices, or other electronic devices. Although not specifically shown, it should be understood that the I/O subsystem **816** typically includes, among other things, an I/O controller, a memory controller, and one or more I/O ports. The processor **812** and the I/O subsystem **816** are communicatively coupled to the memory **814**. The memory **814** may be embodied as any type of suitable computer memory device (e.g., volatile memory such as various forms of random access memory).

[0067] The I/O subsystem **816** is communicatively coupled to a number of hardware and software components and/or other computing systems including a “front end” of the network security management system **110A**, a user interface subsystem **836**, which includes one or more user input devices (e.g., one or more microphones, touchscreens, keyboards, virtual keypads, etc.) and one or more output devices (e.g., speakers, displays, LEDs, haptic devices, etc.). The I/O subsystem **816** is also communicatively coupled to a number of sensors **832** (e.g., user interaction detection devices **106**), one or more data storage media **818**, and a communication subsystem **838**. It should be understood that each of the foregoing components and/or systems may be integrated with the computing device **810** or may be a separate component or system that is in communication with the I/O subsystem **816** (e.g., over a network **150** or a serial bus connection).

[0068] The data storage media **818** may include one or more hard drives or other suitable data storage devices (e.g., flash memory, memory cards, memory sticks, and/or others). In some embodiments, portions of the network security management system **110A**, interaction models **820A** (e.g., models **414**, **416**), network policies **822B** (e.g., policies **228**) and/or other data (e.g., network activity data **140**, network topology data **220**, infection profile data **222**, IP reputation data **224**, network role data **226**, mapping **328**, repository **330**, rules and templates **332**, **334**) and/or other data reside at least temporarily in the data storage media **818**. Portions of the network security management system **110A** and/or other data may be copied to the memory **814** during operation of the computing device **810**, for faster processing or other reasons.

[0069] The communication subsystem **838** may communicatively couple the computing device **810** to one or more communication networks **150**, e.g., a local area network, wide area network, personal cloud, enterprise cloud, public cloud, and/or the Internet, for example. Accordingly, the communication subsystem **838** may include one or more wired or wireless network interface software, firmware, or hardware, for example, as may be needed pursuant to the specifications and/or design of the particular computing system **100**.

[0070] The server computing device(s) **860** may be embodied as any suitable type of computing device capable of performing the functions described herein, such as any of the aforementioned types of devices or other electronic devices. For example, in some embodiments, the server computing device(s) **860** may include one or more server computers including data storage media **768**, which may be used to store “back end” portions of the network security management system **110B**, interaction models **820B** (e.g., models **414**, **416**), network policies **822B** (e.g., policies **228**) and/or other data (e.g., network activity data **140**, network topology data **220**, infection profile data **222**, IP reputation data **224**, network role data **226**, mapping **328**, repository **330**, rules and templates **332**, **334**). The illustrative server computing device **860** includes one or more processors **862**, memory **864**, an I/O subsystem **866**, data storage media **868**, sensors **872**, com-

puter applications **874**, a user interface subsystem **876**, and a communication subsystem **878**, each of which may be embodied similarly to the corresponding components of the user computing device **810**, respectively, described above. The computing system **800** may include other components, sub-components, and devices not illustrated in FIG. **8** for clarity of the description. In general, the components of the computing system **800** are communicatively coupled as shown in FIG. **8** by signal paths, which may be embodied as any type of wired or wireless signal paths capable of facilitating communication between the respective devices and components.

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

[0071] Illustrative examples of the technologies disclosed herein are provided below. An embodiment of the technologies may include any one or more, and any combination of, the examples described below.

[0072] In an example 1, a network security management system includes one or more computing devices configured to: receive data indicative of a current context of a computer network in live operation; select a plurality of graphical elements to represent the current context of the computer network; generate a game-like interactive visualization of the live operation of the network including the selected graphical elements; by a display device, present a view of the game-like interactive visualization; interpret a gesture-based user interaction with the computing system in relation to at least a portion of the game-like interactive visualization as a network exploration directive; determine a different view of the game-like interactive visualization responsive to the network exploration directive; and by the display device, present the different view of the game-like interactive visualization.

[0073] An example 2 includes the subject matter of example 1, and is configured to present a three-dimensional view of the live operation of the computer network according to a point of reference, and in response to a gesture-based interaction, generate a different three-dimensional view of the live operation of the computer network according to a different point of reference. An example 3 includes the subject matter of example 1 or example 2, and is configured to represent a network flow of the computer network as one or more animated graphical elements. An example 4 includes the subject matter of example 3, and is configured to represent a direction of a network flow of the computer network by a direction of motion of the one or more animated graphical elements. An example 5 includes the subject matter of any of examples 1-4, and is configured to dynamically represent a duration of a network connection between two nodes of the computer network by increasing a dimension of a graphical element associated with the network connection as the duration of the network connection increases. An example 6 includes the subject matter of any of examples 1-5, and is configured to represent a hardware or software configuration of a network node by a graphical element comprising a logo or icon indicative of the hardware or software configuration. An example 7 includes the subject matter of any of examples 1-6, and is configured to, in response to detection of a network security event on the network, apply a graphical security event indicator to a graphical element that represents, in the interactive visualization, a component of the computer network involved in the network security event. An example 8 includes the subject matter of any of examples 1-7, and is configured to, in response to detection of a network security

event on the network, change the color of a graphical element that represents, in the interactive visualization, a component of the computer network involved in the network security event. An example 9 includes the subject matter of any of examples 1-8, and is configured to update the game-like interactive visualization in an automated fashion as the current context of the computer network changes over time. An example 10 includes the subject matter of any of examples 1-9, and is configured to zoom in to a view of a smaller portion of the computer network in response to a gesture-based interaction. An example 11 includes the subject matter of any of examples 1-10, and is configured to zoom out to a view of a larger portion of the computer network in response to a gesture-based interaction. An example 12 includes the subject matter of any of examples 1-11, and is configured to present a three-dimensional geographic map and graphically represent network flow endpoints at corresponding locations on the three-dimensional geographic map.

[0074] In an example 13, a method for interactively visualizing a computer network in live operation, with a computing system comprising one or more computing devices, includes: selecting a plurality of graphical elements indicative of a current context of a computer network; generating a game-like interactive visualization of the live operation of the network including the selected graphical elements; by a display device, presenting a view of the game-like interactive visualization; interpreting a gesture-based user interaction relating to at least a portion of the game-like interactive visualization as a network exploration directive; responsive to the network exploration directive, executing a query; generating a different view of the game-like interactive visualization, the different view comprising one or more query results; and by the display device, presenting the different view of the game-like interactive visualization of the network.

[0075] An example 14 includes the subject matter of example 13, comprising presenting a three-dimensional view of the live operation of the computer network according to a point of reference, and in response to a gesture-based interaction, generating a different three-dimensional view of the live operation of the computer network according to a different point of reference. An example 15 includes the subject matter of example 13 or example 14, comprising representing a network flow of the computer network as one or more animated graphical elements, and represent a direction of a network flow of the computer network by a direction of motion of the one or more animated graphical elements. An example 16 includes the subject matter of any of examples 13-15, and includes dynamically representing a duration of a network connection between two nodes of the computer network by increasing a dimension of a graphical element associated with the network connection as the duration of the network connection increases. An example 17 includes the subject matter of any of examples 13-16, and includes, in response to detection of a network security event on the network, applying a graphical security event indicator to a graphical element that represents, in the interactive visualization, a component of the computer network involved in the network security event. An example 18 includes the subject matter of any of examples 13-17, comprising updating the game-like interactive visualization in an automated fashion as the current context of the computer network changes over time.

[0076] In an example 19, an interactive network security management system includes, embodied in one or more non-

transitory machine accessible storage media, instructions configured to cause one or more computing devices to: determine a current context of a computer network; generate a game-like interactive visualization of the live operation of the network, including a plurality of graphical elements, the game-like interactive visualization graphically depicting the current context of the network; by a display device, present a view of the game-like interactive visualization; interpret a gesture-based user interaction relating to at least a portion of the game-like interactive visualization as a network exploration directive; determine a different view of the game-like interactive visualization responsive to the network exploration directive; and by the display device, present the different view of the game-like interactive visualization of the network.

[0077] An example 20 includes the subject matter of example 19, and includes, in response to detection of a network security event on the network, applying a graphical security event indicator to a graphical element that represents, in the interactive visualization, a component of the computer network involved in the network security event, and updating the game-like interactive visualization in an automated fashion as the current context of the computer network changes over time.

General Considerations

[0078] In the foregoing description, numerous specific details, examples, and scenarios are set forth in order to provide a more thorough understanding of the present disclosure. It will be appreciated, however, that embodiments of the disclosure may be practiced without such specific details. Further, such examples and scenarios are provided for illustration, and are not intended to limit the disclosure in any way. Those of ordinary skill in the art, with the included descriptions, should be able to implement appropriate functionality without undue experimentation.

[0079] References in the specification to “an embodiment,” etc., indicate that the embodiment described may include a particular feature, structure, or characteristic, but every embodiment may not necessarily include the particular feature, structure, or characteristic. Such phrases are not necessarily referring to the same embodiment. Further, when a particular feature, structure, or characteristic is described in connection with an embodiment, it is believed to be within the knowledge of one skilled in the art to effect such feature, structure, or characteristic in connection with other embodiments whether or not explicitly indicated.

[0080] Embodiments in accordance with the disclosure may be implemented in hardware, firmware, software, or any combination thereof (e.g., software code written in a programming language such as Java and/or Python). Embodiments may also be implemented as instructions stored using one or more machine-readable media, which may be read and executed by one or more processors. A machine-readable medium may include any mechanism for storing or transmitting information in a form readable by a machine (e.g., a computing device or a “virtual machine” running on one or more computing devices). For example, a machine-readable medium may include any suitable form of volatile or non-volatile memory.

[0081] Modules, data structures, and the like defined herein are defined as such for ease of discussion, and are not intended to imply that any specific implementation details are required. For example, any of the described modules and/or data struc-

tures may be combined or divided into sub-modules, sub-processes or other units of computer code or data as may be required by a particular design or implementation of the computing system 100.

[0082] In the drawings, specific arrangements or orderings of schematic elements may be shown for ease of description. However, the specific ordering or arrangement of such elements is not meant to imply that a particular order or sequence of processing, or separation of processes, is required in all embodiments. In general, schematic elements used to represent instruction blocks or modules may be implemented using any suitable form of machine-readable instruction, and each such instruction may be implemented using any suitable programming language, library, application-programming interface (API), and/or other software development tools or frameworks. Similarly, schematic elements used to represent data or information may be implemented using any suitable electronic arrangement or data structure. Further, some connections, relationships or associations between elements may be simplified or not shown in the drawings so as not to obscure the disclosure.

[0083] This disclosure is to be considered as exemplary and not restrictive in character, and all changes and modifications that come within the spirit of the disclosure are desired to be protected.

1. A network security management system comprising one or more computing devices configured to:

- receive data indicative of a current context of a computer network in live operation;
- select a plurality of graphical elements to represent the current context of the computer network;
- generate a game-like interactive visualization of the live operation of the network including the selected graphical elements;
- by a display device, present a view of the game-like interactive visualization;
- interpret a gesture-based user interaction with the computing system in relation to at least a portion of the game-like interactive visualization as a network exploration directive;
- determine a different view of the game-like interactive visualization responsive to the network exploration directive; and
- by the display device, present the different view of the game-like interactive visualization.

2. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to present a three-dimensional view of the live operation of the computer network according to a point of reference, and in response to a gesture-based interaction, generate a different three-dimensional view of the live operation of the computer network according to a different point of reference.

3. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to represent a network flow of the computer network as one or more animated graphical elements.

4. The network security management system of claim 3, configured to represent a direction of a network flow of the computer network by a direction of motion of the one or more animated graphical elements.

5. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to dynamically represent a duration of a network connection between two nodes of the computer network by

increasing a dimension of a graphical element associated with the network connection as the duration of the network connection increases.

6. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to represent a hardware or software configuration of a network node by a graphical element comprising a logo or icon indicative of the hardware or software configuration.

7. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to, in response to detection of a network security event on the network, apply a graphical security event indicator to a graphical element that represents, in the interactive visualization, a component of the computer network involved in the network security event.

8. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to, in response to detection of a network security event on the network, change the color of a graphical element that represents, in the interactive visualization, a component of the computer network involved in the network security event.

9. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to update the game-like interactive visualization in an automated fashion as the current context of the computer network changes over time.

10. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to zoom in to a view of a smaller portion of the computer network in response to a gesture-based interaction.

11. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to zoom out to a view of a larger portion of the computer network in response to a gesture-based interaction.

12. The network security management system of claim 1, configured to present a three-dimensional geographic map and graphically represent network flow endpoints at corresponding locations on the three-dimensional geographic map.

13. A method for interactively visualizing a computer network in live operation, with a computing system comprising one or more computing devices, the method comprising:

selecting a plurality of graphical elements indicative of a current context of a computer network;

generating a game-like interactive visualization of the live operation of the network including the selected graphical elements;

by a display device, presenting a view of the game-like interactive visualization;

interpreting a gesture-based user interaction relating to at least a portion of the game-like interactive visualization as a network exploration directive;

responsive to the network exploration directive, executing a query;

generating a different view of the game-like interactive visualization, the different view comprising one or more query results; and

by the display device, presenting the different view of the game-like interactive visualization of the network.

14. The method of claim 13, comprising presenting a three-dimensional view of the live operation of the computer network according to a point of reference, and in response to a gesture-based interaction, generating a different three-dimensional view of the live operation of the computer network according to a different point of reference.

15. The method of claim 13, comprising representing a network flow of the computer network as one or more animated graphical elements, and represent a direction of a network flow of the computer network by a direction of motion of the one or more animated graphical elements.

16. The method of claim 13, comprising dynamically representing a duration of a network connection between two nodes of the computer network by increasing a dimension of a graphical element associated with the network connection as the duration of the network connection increases.

17. The method of claim 13, comprising, in response to detection of a network security event on the network, applying a graphical security event indicator to a graphical element that represents, in the interactive visualization, a component of the computer network involved in the network security event.

18. The method of claim 13, comprising updating the game-like interactive visualization in an automated fashion as the current context of the computer network changes over time.

19. An interactive network security management system comprising, embodied in one or more non-transitory machine accessible storage media, instructions configured to cause one or more computing devices to:

determine a current context of a computer network;

generate a game-like interactive visualization of the live operation of the network, including a plurality of graphical elements, the game-like interactive visualization graphically depicting the current context of the network;

by a display device, present a view of the game-like interactive visualization;

interpret a gesture-based user interaction relating to at least a portion of the game-like interactive visualization as a network exploration directive;

determine a different view of the game-like interactive visualization responsive to the network exploration directive; and

by the display device, present the different view of the game-like interactive visualization of the network.

20. The interactive network security management system of claim 19, comprising, in response to detection of a network security event on the network, applying a graphical security event indicator to a graphical element that represents, in the interactive visualization, a component of the computer network involved in the network security event, and updating the game-like interactive visualization in an automated fashion as the current context of the computer network changes over time.

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