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## **VSS eases the job of tapping large networks**

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VSS Monitoring has announced a network tap capable of simultaneously copying traffic on 16 Gigabit network ports, and then aggregating, filtering and feeding back the captured traffic to up to eight different analysis devices. Called the 16x8 Distributed Tap, it has almost twice the capacity of the company's previous high-end 12x4 unit.

The device is the industry's highest-capacity tool for network traffic capture, claimed VSS CEO Terence Breslin. Distributed Taps cost from \$6000 to \$60,000, depending on capacity, he said, with a complete packet collection service being anywhere from \$100,000 to \$5 million.

Network taps sit on the line and silently duplicate all the traffic going past, including CRC errors and so on. The new box can tap eight networks or aggregate 16 span ports. More ports can be monitored using multiple 16x8 boxes controlled from a central console. Most organisations will have several different groups using different analysis tools – sniffers for network troubleshooting, IDS/IPS for security, VoIP recorders for regulatory compliance.

"The problem is the limited number of access points – span ports or in-line taps – in the network, so we created a distributed collection service," Breslin said, adding that the VSS boxes in effect put a separate monitoring overlay on top of the production network

"The device has almost no latency – it's all done in silicon, and it has filtering capabilities, so you can monitor a huge network with multiple tools by telling each tap where to send the chosen traffic types," he explained. "In some cases you don't want to filter, for example an IDS, but a VoIP analyser may only need the SIP signalling, say."

Breslin said current VSS customers include BAE Systems, O2, Vodafone, the US military and several major governments.