True Crime Case Files: Fiber Optic Cable Attack

When: 2014–2015
Location: San Francisco, CA

> *"It is not hard to imagine that a few individuals might be able to locate individual vulnerable fibers and choose attacks to maximize network disruption."*
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> – macro magnon. *Species Traitor no 4*, 2005.[1]

The idea of a wireless society is a presumption, an illusion. WiFi signals permeate the air, but those signals are coming from routers, from networks. The spread of and expectation for constant access is carried in smartphones, tablets, laptops and whatever wearable devices exist or await their markets. Connected as these devices may be, they only play on the notion of decentralization.

The Cloud remains heavily tethered.

Fiber optic cables are a horrifically efficient means of carrying an almost infinite amount of data at inhuman speeds. But they are also fragile and expensive. And, notably, buried in plain sight. This makes them particularly vulnerable.

As of July 1, 2015, the FBI was investigating a string of at least 11 attacks on fiber optic cables in San Francisco within the previous year. The last attack in that string, according to a spokesperson of internet provider Wave Broadband was "coordinated"[2]. The attackers snuck into an underground vault and cut three fiber optic cables, the FBI refused to give an indication of how large the impact area was, but other incidents seem to indicate that a single line in an urban area can support thousands if not tens of thousands of connections. In more densely populated areas, that number will increase exponentially.

Fiber optic cables are essentially thin cables of glass wires transmitting light waves. Those cables are about as thick as a pencil. Their protection lies in a hefty conduit covering the cables, but their locations aren't hidden. The buried lines are marked under the Federal

"Call Before You Dig" registry.[3] The reason is obvious: damage to these cables occurs accidentally and intentionally, both with equal results.

The cables are not easily cut, but they are not invincible. Clearly a backhoe could cause a massive amount of damage, and quite often they do. By pulling the lines with great force, the result could be a break in the line upwards of a mile away from the point of impact, making repairs incredibly difficult to do efficiently.

Accidents, however, are not keeping security firms, corporations and governments up at night. Intentional attacks are. According to a USA Today study from March of 2015, cyber or physical attacks against the national grid occur about once every four days.[4] The constant and ever present connectivity that Modernity has been selling clearly has its opponents.

The response to these attacks has been nothing short of pulling the "terrorist" card. The disruption of data is a matter of national security. It is treated as life threatening, but what is at stake here? Business as usual. That is literally all. Fiber optic cables aren't powering life support systems for your relatives, they are carrying crucial business information, collecting your personal data, and ensuring that you are looking at screens instead of admiring the increasingly wireless views above ground. They are necessary for telecommunications. That is it. No life is harmed in their dismantling. Yet the discussion and fear mongering surrounding their defense indicate how central that constant connection is to this fragile reality.

And fragile it shall remain.

If you look carefully at the emperor's selfie, it is apparent that they have no clothes.

Endnotes

1 macro magnon, "The Word on the Street About Fiber Optic Cables and Networks" in *Species Traitor no 4*, 2005. Pgs 93-96.

2 http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2015/06/30/california-internet-outage/29521335/

3 call811.com

4 http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/03/24/power-grid-physical-and-cyber-attacks-concern-security-experts/24892471/