

# WHAT NACCHIO TELLS US ABOUT THE NSA

The documents made available by the RMN yesterday provide more details about what the NSA and other government agencies have been doing with fiber optic networks—but it's still not exactly clear what those documents show. As a preliminary, I'm going to try to put the contents of this CIPA filing into a coherent chronology, to clarify some of the issues. The filing is what Nacchio submitted when the judge said his previous CIPA filing was not detailed enough, and it has a timeline going back to the late 1990s.

From reading the filing, I think (though I think others will disagree) that what Nacchio describes as Groundbreaker is at least the physical tap into switches that we know AT&T to have accomplished. That's important, because Nacchio walked out of his meeting on February 27, 2001 willing to do Groundbreaker (at least the hardware side of it), but unwilling to do something else NSA requested at that meeting. Which means the telecom involvement goes beyond simply tapping into the switches, and the switch-related aspect is not the troubling side of it.

The rest of this chronology just describes how Qwest has built several fiber optics networks for our intelligence agencies—potentially global in scale—that they claim are "impervious to attack." While it's not clear whether these networks are connected up with public networks or not (GovNet, the proposed network for the government that got scotched with 9/11, was supposed to be private), it does raise the question of how much of these global networks are for communicating (that is, secure communication within an intelligence agency) and how much are for eavesdropping.

And boy, if I were the rest of the world, I'd be less than thrilled to know Qwest had build a redundant fiber optics network for US

intelligence agencies throughout my country.

Here's the timeline: