

CABLES AND TOOBZ, AGAIN

Many of you who kept linking to the news on the cable cuts in CA's South Bay were pointing in this direction. (h/t Susie)

This week in the San Francisco Bay Area, the fiber-optic cable network was purposely sliced at four distinct locations. Where a hacker cannot succeed, bolt cutters will do. Read more in The Wall Street Journal's Digits blog. Once the cables were cut, Internet service was flaky for the region and completely out for 50,000 customers. On top of that, the landlines would not work and the cell-phone towers in the area went dead. [snip] How much work would it take to find some choke points that you could cut for the purposes of disrupting data communications in an area? How would this affect the so-called smart grid? The peculiar nature of the four cuts around the Bay Area indicated to me that someone was mapping how they would affect the region, keeping in mind that by cutting the cable in key areas you might be able to take down half the country. If more cuts are made in the future, then someone is trying to reverse-engineer the network to find the most vulnerable points of disruption.

The MarketWatch article speculates that the intentional cuts were an attempt to map how to shut off parts of the system. But what it doesn't question—but a lot of you already had—was whether these intentional cuts had anything to do with the cable cuts made in the Middle East last year, which took down Egypt and Pakistan, and much of the rest of the Middle East.

We know whoever cut the cables last year (intentionally or not or some combination thereof) demonstrated clear choke points in international internet traffic. Now is someone trying to do the same within the US?