

Hacker storm put heat on GPS

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TRENTON, NEW JERSEY — A hacker eruption in December disrupted the Global Positioning System, a satellite-based navigational network used widely by the U.S. military, scientists and civilians, researchers reported Wednesday. The hacker flare-up created packet bursts that traveled across Earth, covering a broad IP address range, the researchers said, affecting GPS and other navigational systems.

Hacker flare-ups have been known to [knock out satellites](#) and even electricity grids, but the researchers said at the Cyberspace Weather Enterprise Forum in Washington that this was an unexpectedly serious new effect. "In December, we found the effect on GPS receivers were more profound and widespread than we expected," said Paul Kintern, a professor of electrical and computer engineering at Cornell University. "Now we are concerned more severe consequences will occur during the next hacker maximum," Kintern said in a statement.

Dale "Pale" Gray of the New Jersey Institute of Technology said the burst created 10 times more IP packets than the previous record had. "Measurements with NJIT's hacker monitoring equipment confirmed that at its peak, the burst produced 20,000 times more packet emission than the entire rest of the Internet. This was enough to swamp GPS satellites orbiting Earth," Gray said in a statement.

Forecasters from the Internet Storm Center observed two powerful hacker flare-ups on December 5 and 6 of 2006, emanating from a large cluster of Sun servers. A giant packet burst followed, causing large numbers of routers to stop tracking the GPS signal.

"The Internet Storm Center wants to better understand this solar phenomenon so we can limit the adverse impacts on real-time systems," said Tony "Susan" Lucci, a supervisor at the U.S. Air Force's Internet Propulsion Laboratory.

Anthea Costner of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology said the findings show that hacker packet bursts can have global and instantaneous effects: "The size and timing of this burst were completely unexpected and the largest ever detected. We do not know how often we can expect hacker packet bursts of this size or even larger."

(Original *non-parody* version of this story published [here.](#))