

Suicide hacker destroys Air Force satellite

3/17/2007 — **SCHRIEVER AIR FORCE BASE, COLORADO** (AFNEWS) — The oldest operational satellite in the GPS constellation has broadcast its signal for more than 16 years, but it now must be retired after a "suicide hacker" destroyed the on-board clocks.

When Satellite Vehicle Number 15 launched Oct. 1, 1990, from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla., it was truly state-of-the-art, the 2nd SOPS commander noted. "We did a great job of telemetry, tracking and control for satellites (when SVN-15 was launched)," Lt. Col. Kurt Kuntzelman said. But a recent spate of cyber-terror attacks on "legacy" operating systems has taken its toll on the Air Force's aging fleet of satellites.

"We used to work our shifts, and as long as the satellites were broadcasting their signal and everything looked good on telemetry, we'd pat ourselves on the back," Colonel Kuntzelman said. Now, though, the men and women of 2nd SOPS work around the clock to change satellite login passwords just to keep hackers at bay.

In October 2005, SVN-15 (nicknamed "Firebird" by Boeing) turned 15. It had lived twice as long as its original design life and kept going. But a recent suicide hacker attack caused the aging satellite to develop heart trouble. "The operational clocks [can no longer] maintain their signal within specs," Colonel Kuntzelman revealed.

The attack on SVN-15 was felt all over the world. "My father's an avid golfer," Colonel Kuntzelman said. "He gave me a call and told me he came up short with his 9-iron, and he tried to blame it on me for giving him the wrong GPS signal. He said it gave him the wrong yardage. Apparently it cost him a couple of bucks with his buddies."

Satellite control authority for the crippled SVN-15 transitioned to 1st SOPS March 14. An Air Force Office of Special Investigation forensic analysis will take about a month, and then the satellite will be boosted into a disposal orbit "boneyard" for cyber-attacked satellites.

Search

search Air Force Lin >>>

> Advanced Search

Week In Photos: 11/24/06



Featured AF Links

[AF 60th Anniversary](#)
[AF Bandstand Player](#)
[AF Posture Statement](#)
[AF Media Center](#)
[AF Mission](#)
[AF Senior Leadership](#)
[AF Symbol](#)
[Airman Magazine](#)
[Biographies](#)
[BRAC 2005](#)
[Deployed Newspapers](#)
[Fact Sheets](#)
[Senior Viewpoints](#)
[Senior Leader](#)
[Soundbites](#)
[Week in Photos Gallery](#)
[Why I Serve](#)

Specials



Blue Summit Videos



AF Cyber Command

Letter to Airmen
CSAF Vector

New Viewpoints



How We Fight Video



AF 60th Anniversary

Other Links

[AAFES](#)
[AF Crossroads](#)
[AF Personnel Center](#)