



April 2023

## What's News...

### Senator Blasts AT&T for Concealing Cyber Reporting

Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) claims that AT&T is "concealing vital cybersecurity reporting" about its FirstNet network for first responders. In a letter sent to the government's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the NSA, Wyden called for an annual cybersecurity audit of FirstNet. Specifically, he cited the Signaling System No. 7 (SS7) protocol carriers use to connect one network to another. Hackers can presumably exploit it to intercept calls and texts from mobile devices and spy on their users. AT&T operates FirstNet under a contract with the government that provides police, firefighters, and paramedics to transmit data and communications across multiple regions and jurisdictions.



### Chinese Researchers Define Compact "Microwave Cannon"

According to a South China Morning Post report, scientists in the country have developed a compact RF power source that can reduce the size of a high-power "microwave cannon" to something that could sit on a bookshelf. The directed energy system is designed to destroy semiconductor devices, drones, and satellites. It can generate a pulsed energy field of up to 10 GW and is powered by standard AC voltages, according to the report. The device accelerates electrons in two spiral tubes resembling the double-helix structure of genetic material. The tubes are submerged in glycerine to provide insulation.

## A Word from Sam Benzacar

### Havana Syndrome: Case Closed

By Sam Benzacar

It appears that the US has essentially given up trying to pinpoint the cause of



what's now called "Havana Syndrome." As you might remember, diplomats at the US embassy in Havana six years ago began reporting health effects ranging from cognitive impairment to hearing loss, headaches, insomnia, to blurred vision. Since then, these Anomalous Health Incidents (AHIs) have been reported in more than a dozen other countries, and some of the victims continue to experience one or more of these effects. Many have been forced to retire or have been placed on medical leave.

However, after extensive investigative work by 18 federal intelligence agencies, the State Department, academia, and various independent investigators, the cause remains elusive. In what appears to be the government's final pronouncement, a National Intelligence Council report released last month points its finger at "pre-existing conditions, conventional illnesses, and environmental factors" as the most probable causes. The report also says it is "very unlikely" a foreign adversary is responsible."

It's not surprising that electromagnetic energy was the first supposed culprit; it's long been the go-to problem for everything from people not wanting small base stations in their neighborhood to potential health issues. Yes, microwave radiation will damage tissues, especially in the eyes, when exposed to high levels of non-ionizing radiation. And the "Frey Effect" causes the perception of audible clicks induced by pulsed or modulated RF signals that at high levels can cause significant health effects.

However, I find the report's dismissal of a foreign source preposterous. For readers old enough to remember, the Soviet Union in 1976 caused a major incident when the US complained that the



Russians had been irradiating the US Embassy in Moscow between 2.5 and 4 GHz since 1953. The intention was presumably to reap intelligence, and although health effects were initially ruled out, this has since been disputed. For example, US Ambassador Walter Stoessel fell ill in 1975 with symptoms including bleeding from the eyes and later died of leukemia.

While it's likely that existing health issues can explain at least some of the victims' issues, it seems unlikely that pre-existing conditions, conventional illnesses, and environmental factors are entirely responsible. More than 100 people have reported symptoms, many in good health before the symptoms appeared with no pre-existing conditions.

Unfortunately, now that the government has effectively thrown in the towel, we will probably never know the cause or causes of Havana Syndrome.

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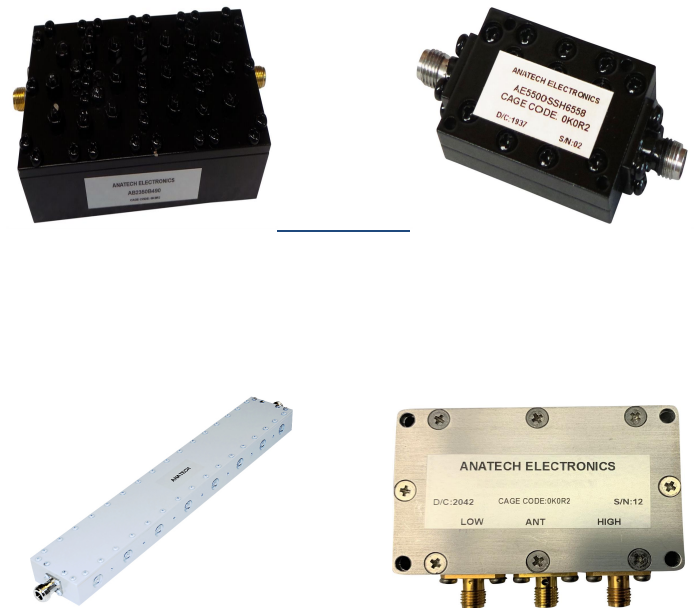
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#### NTIA Wants to Free Up More Spectrum

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) wants to "find" 1.5 GHz of spectrum for fixed wireless access, satellite communications, and "critical government missions." The agency is requesting comments on frequency selection, long-term spectrum planning, and achieving greater spectral efficiency. The problem is that in the "sweet spot" below 7 GHz, where propagation is most favorable, most spectrum has already been allocated. That leaves the millimeter-wave region that is comparatively wide open but presents significant propagation challenges, which is why it's taken so long to develop infrastructure at these frequencies.



#### T-Mobile Teams Up with MLB

T-Mobile and Major League Baseball have signed a six-year contract in which 5G will be used to allow fans to interact better with baseball. T-Mobile will become the official wireless carrier for MLB, minor-league baseball, and little league baseball and softball through 2028. Some features include automating the ball-strike system and working with the

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MLB to bring back the batting practice show for the T-Mobile Home Run Derby and the MLB postseason. AT&T will also sponsor the Little League Baseball World Series and provide free MLB.TV subscriptions to T-Mobile customers.

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