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Teenage phone hacker sent to prison for eleven years
Office of Bristol County District Attorney

Notorious Phreaker Gets Sentenced to Eleven Years in Prison

For fraud, harassment and hacking phone lines

Matthew Weigman, a 19-year-old legally blind phreaker from Massachusetts, has been sentenced to over 11 years behind bars for making fake 911 calls, illegally listening to the phone conversations of others and harassing a Verizon investigator. Sean Benton, one of Weigman's partners in crime, also received an 18-month sentence.

Phreaking is a term referring to phone hacking, or the hacking of telecommunication systems. Weigman, going by the handle of "Li'l Hacker," started his career as a phreaker at the age of 14. By the time he turned 15, he was already under investigation by the federal authorities for sending a special weapons and tactics (SWAT) police team to the house of a Colorado girl, who he failed to coerce into having inappropriate phone chats.

Making fake 911 phone calls that result in sending out a SWAT team at a location is an illegal practice known as "swatting." Weigman and his swatting gang are responsible for causing over 60 such costly incidents across the United States.

Weigman, an otherwise talented individual, used his skills and knowledge of phone systems to terrorize "employers, landlords, families and friends of multiple [phone] party line participants." The hacker admitted that, during June 2006, he helped instrument a swatting attack against the father of a party line user from Texas. The gang spoofed their phone number, called 911 and impersonated the victim, saying that he was on drugs and had killed members of his family, while holding others hostage.

In order to avoid paying huge phone bills, Weigman hacked Verizon and AT&T and set up fraudulent lines. Learning that he was being investigated by Verizon, the hacker listened in on the conversations of various company employees and then attempted to blackmail them for information about the investigation.

Weigman was arrested in May 2008, not long after showing up at the house of a Verizon investigator, with his brother and another swatter named Sean Benton, in an attempt to threaten and intimidate him. The gang previously tried to get the same investigator fired by submitting false reports to Verizon.