

Highway thieves are spoofing GPS to steal millions in data center-bound cargo



Highway thieves are using sophisticated digital tactics that investigators worry make it easy to rob trucks carrying millions in expensive data center equipment.

NBC News spoke to “several industry leaders, consultants, and investigators advising law enforcement” offices probing the biggest thefts yet and reported that since June, thieves have “made away with more than \$100 million in data center freight.”

Here’s how they said thieves get away with it: First, thieves hack freight brokers’ accounts on shipment-listing websites and post fake shipments to lure real bids, then send a malicious link to any trucking companies that respond. Once victims click, thieves install software to take control of their accounts and start bidding on real shipments. Sometimes, a real delivery driver is hired to collect the cargo, unaware

of the scam, and other times fake driver's licenses are used to get accomplices hired. Either way, the goods are eventually transferred to a driver working with the thieves to resell the gear, and, in one of the largest thefts, tracking coordinates were spoofed to prevent digital monitoring.

Equipment commonly targeted includes "servers, fiber-optic cables, computer memory chips, copper wires, and bitcoin mining machines," NBC News reported.

Some trailers hit seem to be carrying only data center equipment, like two stolen freights found in Illinois. The Cook County Sheriff's Office estimated those contained \$300,000 worth of copper wire spools and about \$1 million in "custom-made data center modular power solutions equipment," NBC News reported. Other trucks impacted were carrying additional freight, like a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department case where "data center cooling equipment" bound for Deepcool AI was recovered among nicotine pouches, televisions, shoes, printers, speakers, and skin care cosmetics. Experts worry that means Americans may be broadly harmed by the thefts, not just the AI industry.

Taking out off-duty cop escorts

While some stolen goods have been recovered, in two of the largest thefts that NBC News found, none of the equipment was found, and off-duty cops hired to escort the shipments were targeted in hit-and-runs.

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