

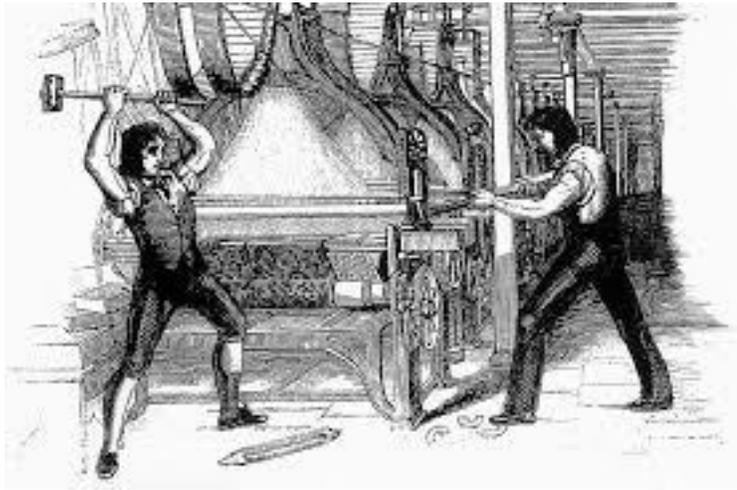
Interagency Crisis: Technology Liberation Front

Introduction

Changes in technology have long unsettled the order of society, making certain groups feel as if they are excluded or left behind. This has meant that any progress has been met with a nearly equal measure of hostility from the workers that it is intended to replace. One of the earliest instances of an organized resistance were the Luddites, a group of disenfranchised textile workers in England during the industrial revolution. They took their name from Ned Ludd, an apprentice who was said to have smashed two weaving machines, but who was in reality a fictional character used to foment rage.¹ Although the Luddites only existed from 1811 to 1816, their societal impact has been felt for centuries, and their name has come to denote any person or group of persons who is against technological progress.

One of the most infamous modern Luddites was the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, an American terrorist who killed 3 people and injured 23 between 1978 and 1995 using homemade bombs and who was the subject of the most expensive and expansive FBI investigation in history.² Kaczynski, a Harvard educated professor of mathematics by trade, followed a particular branch of anarchist philosophy that rejected advances made by the industrial revolution, which advocates for the regression of society to a pre-industrial state because of perceived issues with the human races interactions with the current technological system. Not all those who reject technology are violent, or even militant, as can be seen with the Amish communities of Pennsylvania. Their religious practices dictate the types of tools and technologies that they can and cannot use, limiting them to designs from the 19th century, before the advent of electricity and the industrial revolution.

A new threat has grown inside the United States, directing its anger at the technological and industrial systems of the nation, much as the Luddites or the Unabomber did. This committee has been convened to address the growing threat of the Technological Liberation Front, or TLF, to the United States and is composed of representatives from several federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as well as liaisons from the academic community specializing in counterterrorism.



A cartoon shows Luddites smashing looms.
<https://www.resilience.org/stories/2019-08-05/variety-survival-and-the-revenge-of-the-luddites/>

¹ Conniff, Richard. "What the Luddites Really Fought Against." *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 Mar. 2011, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-the-luddites-really-fought-against-264412/.

² Finnegan, William. "When the Unabomber Was Arrested, One of the Longest Manhunts in FBI History Was Finally Over." *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 May 2018, www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/unabomber-arrested-longest-manhunt-fbi-history-over-180968744/.

History

The Technological Liberation Front (TLF) is an American terrorist organization, founded in the 1970's, whose ideology demonizes the growing use and influence of technology such as computers, the internet, and unified electric grids. Initially they pursued their goals internally, setting up a communal living arrangement in the rural town of Newfield in the state of New York, near Ithaca. The TLF remained isolated and relatively peaceful, save for the occasional demonstration against expanding electrification and telecommunication connection, until the Y2K frenzy of the year 2000. After the hysteria, several militant members of the organization bombed the Cayuga Power Station in Lansing, causing power outages in much of New York state, and killing 12 plant workers. This pivotal moment catapulted the group, and their ideology, into the national spotlight, allowing the TLF to release a manifesto before going underground after police raided their commune and arrested dozens in connection with the attacks.

The TLF has progressed through a number of phases over the years. After its initial attack, the TLF began a decades long campaign of attacking the power grid through sabotaging power substations, which step down the electricity from power plants into a lower intensity able to be used by homes and businesses. Using homemade explosives to disable the substations, the TLF was responsible for blackouts across the northeast, costing millions of dollars in repair costs and lost productivity. Following the attacks, substations saw increased protection and durability regulations, and the TLF switched tactics, instead focusing on explicitly anti-government actions such as firebombing police stations and terrorizing municipal and state officials. These initial actions were localized around the northeast, as the group had not yet recruited around the United States successfully. Ironically, TLF embraced the internet as a way to spread their message, favoring message boards and fringe communities where their message could take hold. They have especially favored platforms such as 4Chan and Reddit, which are easily anonymized and have a broad reach.

The group does not have a rigid organizational structure; it is decentralized and composed of many small cells who in the past have worked independently towards the organizations overarching goals. Because of this, the TLF has been regarded as a low level threat, a nuisance, by the US government. Without coordination and collaboration their attacks have either failed or not caused enough damage frequently enough to warrant the full scope of federal resources. Nevertheless, there are still files maintained on known members of the TLF, and the group is classified as a terrorist organization.

Aside from the TLF, domestic terrorism in the United States has a long history, with some arguing that some of the initializing incidents of national mythology such as the Boston Tea Party



A power substation, much like the ones targeted by TLF.
<https://electrical-engineering-portal.com/download-center/books-and-guides/power-substations/220kv-substation>

amounted to terrorism in their time.³ As time has progressed, domestic incidents of terrorism have largely been motivated by a few factors: racial hatred, anti-government sentiment, and anti-American sentiment. The first category is represented by groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazis, and various alt-right factions. The second category is mostly represented by individual actors such as Timothy McVeigh, although there is frequently overlap with the first category such as in the case of many American mass shooters.⁴ The third category is mostly made up of American citizens radicalized by foreign organizations into taking anti-American action; this is the least common category of terrorism, but it was occasionally seen with double agents during the Cold War.

The US government has not always actively managed terror driven actions. Attempts by the government of the United States to address terror dates back to the westward expansion of the United States and the massively disproportionate responses by the US military to attacks by Native Americans. In the 1800s, the military was the primary enforcement arm of the US federal government, with other organizations such as Sheriffs taking a predominant role in enforcement activities.⁵ US law enforcement expanded greatly during the era of Prohibition, as organized crime and bootleggers were pursued by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, then known as the Bureau of Investigation, formed in 1908.

Current Situation



The aftermath of the Fukushima Nuclear Plant disaster, showing vulnerabilities of power stations.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/22/world/asia/22japan.html>

Five months ago, the TLF launched their most ambitious attack to date, a coordinated campaign of sabotage across the United States that culminated in an unsuccessful assassination attempt on several high-ranking federal officials, including the Director of National Intelligence, the Director of the EPA, and the Secretary of State.

The main targets of the attack were elements of the national power infrastructure including as power plants, both coal and nuclear, as well as transformer stations. The attack succeeded in knocking out power to millions of homes and businesses, and the damage from both the attack and the ensuing loss of productivity was estimated to be worth billions of dollars.

³ Kreamer, Todd A. "Sons of Liberty: Patriots or Terrorists?" *Private Tutoring*, www.varsitytutors.com/earlyamerica/early-america-review/volume-1/sons-liberty-patriots-terrorists.

⁴ Jaffe, Greg. "Angry and Fearful, Americans Struggle to Talk about Guns and Race." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 12 Aug. 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/national/angry-and-fearful-americans-struggle-to-talk-about-guns-and-race/2019/08/11/d040c678-bad2-11e9-b3b4-2bb69e8c4e39_story.html.

⁵ Potter, Gary. "The History of Policing in the United States, Part 1." *The History of Policing in the United States, Part 1*, 25 June 2013, plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/history-policing-united-states-part-1.

The TLF centered the attack on some of the largest power generation stations in the country, damaging the Scherer Coal Power Plant in Georgia, the Palo Verde nuclear plant in Arizona, and the Byron Nuclear Generating Station in Illinois. These plants together produce [power] at full capacity, and their loss of operational status has meant that intermittent blackouts have been an ongoing concern. The TLF used homemade explosive devices in these attacks, which, though crude, were effective at disrupting daily operations. They were also reported to be in possession of an arsenal of firearms that enabled them to quickly carry out their attack. Notably, the explosives used were significantly more complex than those used in previous TLF attacks, raising questions about where the explosives were acquired. In response to the attacks the US government upgraded the threat level of the TLF and noted that the coordination of the attacks was uncommon for the organization, as they had for decades worked independently.

Immediately following the attacks, the TLF claimed responsibility, and confirmed their involvement by citing details that they could only have encountered in the power plants, namely internal employment information of the employees that were present that day. The TLF also threatened another wave of attacks but did not announce any targets or any demands that would cause them to not attack. For this purpose, this committee of various federal law enforcement personnel has been convened, to collect information about the TLF's possible next actions, as well as to assess why they have begun coordinating their actions.

Task Force

FBI: A federal domestic law enforcement and intelligence agency founded in 1908. The FBI has an annual budget of around \$9.6 billion, and 35,000 employees that it uses to counter domestic terrorism, organized crime, and all manner of interstate crimes.⁶ The Bureau has a wide scope, and is involved in hostage rescue, and any crimes occurring across state borders.

Nathan O'Brien – Assistant Director of Intelligence Branch

Juliet Donnelly – Special Agent in the National Security Branch

Marcus Smith – Special Agent in the Science and Technology Branch

NSA: A federal intelligence agency founded in 1952 and specializing in the collection and processing of signals intelligence, it has extensive abilities under the purview of the PATRIOT act. The agency operates in both the domestic and foreign spheres, however most of the techniques and information that it gathers are classified. It was the source of many documents provided to Wikileaks, which gave an insight into the Agency's impressive data gathering abilities.

Jeffrey Luo – Analyst in Research Directorate

Zeynep Matthews – Analyst in Tailored Access Operations

Marcie Mao – Analyst in Special Source Operations

⁶ "FBI Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2019." *FBI*, FBI, 16 May 2018, www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/fbi-budget-request-for-fiscal-year-2019.

US Secret Service: A federal domestic law enforcement agency founded in 1865 that specializes in the protection of high-level public officials and the investigation of counterfeiting operations and electronic crimes. The agency operates with a budget of \$2 billion and more than 5,000 active agents engaging in investigative and protective activities.

Aarya Patel – Special Agent

Matthew Al-Hasso – Assistant Director

Monique Wilson – Special Agent

ATF: The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was established in 1972, after almost a century of serving under the purview of the Internal Revenue Service. The ATF has a broad scope of enforcement, however after they were transferred to the Department of Justice in 2001, they have focused much of their billion dollar budget on gun and explosive regulation and enforcement. They also have a checkered track record with incidents like Ruby Ridge and the Waco Siege tarnishing their reputation.⁷

Dexter Huff – Deputy Director of the Office of Science and Technology

Vanessa Garcia – Agent in the Office of Strategic Intelligence

Natasha Snyder – Agent in the Office of Field Operations

Academics: Selected from several notable institutions, these individuals have been brought onto the task force to aid with specific area knowledge about counterterrorism strategies and familiarity with tactics employed by other groups globally.

Gladys Dawson – Professor of History specializing in Counter Terrorism at Northwestern

Wallace Lee – Professor of Engineering specializing in Power Grids at Harvard

Clifford Patton – Professor of History specializing in Extremism at UCLA

Directive

The ultimate goal of this committee is to take down the TLF and prevent them from staging further attacks on the United States. The committee should accomplish this through collaborative investigations and coordinated enforcement actions. Each member organization of the task force has a unique scope and abilities that will enable them to go after different aspects of the TLF. The task force should also examine whether the new trend of TLF cells working together and with more complex explosives has any relations to foreign actors.

⁷ “Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.” *Remembering Waco | Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives*, www.atf.gov/our-history/remembering-waco.

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