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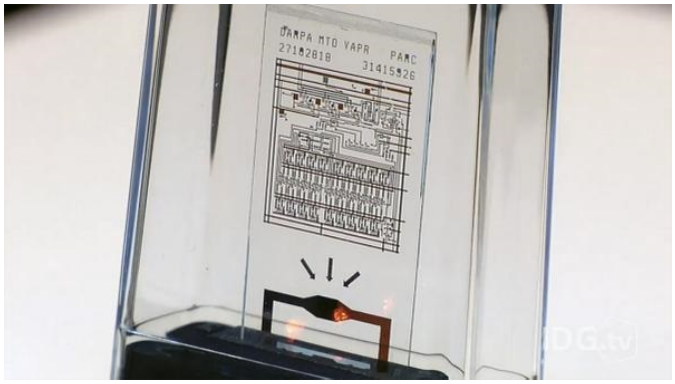
Xerox PARC researchers show off a Mission Impossible-inspired twist on security at DARPA's Wait, What? event-- a chip able to self-destruct into thousands of pieces too small for reconstruction.



Designed to store critical data such as encryption keys, the chip is built using Gorilla Glass, the tough glass used in many smartphone displays. As PARC puts it the glass is "ion-exchange tempered," a process causing the glass to be stressed to the point where it can break through the application of heat.

As such, the chip carries a small resistor that heats up the glass, causing it to shatter. Even the fragments remain stressed, and continue to break down into smaller pieces, rendering the chip all but useless.

The self-destruct mechanism at the DARPA demo was triggered via a photo diode that switched on when a laser shone on it, but PARC says one can switch it on by other means, such as a mechanical switch or a radio signal.

The idea is not actually new-- back in 2014 DARPA awarded a $3.5 million contract to IBM in order to design self-destructing chips.

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