German scientists claims to have broken speed of light – could quantum tunneling allow instant communication?

We’re used to breaking the speed limit laws on our local highways and byways – they’re more like suggested speeds than real, hard limits to us. Unlike these laws governing the speed of our vehicles, the law governing the speed of light cannot ever be broken. Einstein’s Theory of Special Relativity prohibits the transmission light faster than 300,000km per second – and it’s a basic tenet of physics that requires an infinite amount of energy to propel anything past the speed of light.

Apparently, German physicists, Günter Nimtz and Alfons Stahlhofen, from the University of Koblenz are claiming that they have successfully broken the speed barrier – the speed of light. In an experiment involving two prism halves, the pair of scientists claimed to have observed the instantaneous transmission of microwave photons between the two halves of the prism, which were separated by a 3 foot gap. The scientists claim to have taken advantage of a phenomenon known as “quantum tunneling” to force light to move instantaneously across this gap.

The principle of quantum tunneling allows sub-atomic particles to break the speed of light, and allowed for the faster-than-light travel of these photons. But, could this phenomenon be leveraged to develop technology that would allow instantaneous, or almost instantaneous communication between distant locations? As of now, the answer is most likely a resounding “no.” Regardless of the principle of “quantum tunneling,” information still cannot be passed instantaneously through any distance.

Another note – this story has been circulating the internets like wildfire, but we should all take this claim with a grain of salt. Discoveries like this need to be replicated and substantiated by other scientists before we can believe the findings of a single research group. We hope this experiment will prove to be valid, but we just don’t know yet.
As far as instant wireless communication goes, it’s an amazing proposition for now. Hopefully, it’ll become more of a reality in the future. But how cool would that be? “Where you at?” “China.” “Cool.”