

December 13, 2022

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, D.C. 20544

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Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel:

I write concerning a proposal to provide a direct telecommunication connection between the United States and Cuba via subsea cable. Specifically, I write to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to deny an application by ARCOS-1 USA Inc. and A.SurNet Inc. subsea cable system (ARCOS-1 Cable System) to construct a new segment of undersea cable between the United States and a landing station in Cojimar, Cuba. This proposal would both harm support for a free and open internet in Cuba, as well as embolden the Cuban regime's campaign to destabilize U.S. national security and critical infrastructure. This cable-landing system, which will be owned and controlled by the Cuban regime's state-owned telecommunications monopoly, would also allow the regime to target U.S. communications and private data from U.S. citizens and installations. Given the national security implications posed by the application, I urge you to immediately reject the application.

As you are aware, subsea cables enable global internet connectivity, carrying 99 percent of the world's data traffic. However, their use comes with the threat of exploitation, as malign actors seek to exploit them to conduct espionage activities against the U.S. The FCC has specifically highlighted these dangers in the past. For example, in 2020, FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks stated that the commission "must ensure that adversary countries and other hostile actors can't tamper with, block, or intercept the communications they carry." The FCC must continue this level of scrutiny in all current and future deals.

Establishing a U.S.-Cuba undersea cable connection would provide the repressive, communist regime in Cuba a significant conduit for espionage and intelligence activities against the U.S. The cable-landing system would be owned and operated by Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Cuba S.A. (ETECSA), the regime's telecommunications system, meaning the regime would have the ability to access U.S. data crossing the new cable. This would be tantamount to handing over sensitive U.S. communications to a regime notorious for its extreme censorship and suppression of internet freedom.

The Cuban regime's relationship with near peer adversaries, such as the Chinese Communist Party and the Putin regime, should make approval of this deal a nonstarter. The interagency Committee for the Assessment of Foreign Participation in the United States Telecommunications Services Sector has specifically warned that the nature of the undersea cables could allow ETECSA to redirect traffic not intended for Cuban networks to be "re-routed

over this cable into Cuban territory and the Cuban government's hands," eventually to be shared with Beijing and Moscow.

The long-suffering Cuban people deserve free, unfettered internet access with the rest of the world. However, this proposal would backfire, further enabling espionage activities by the communist regime. Any effort to promote internet freedom for the people of Cuba must not embolden the Cuban regime's counterintelligence operations. As such, I urge the FCC to reject this proposal and, by doing so, protect United States critical infrastructure and sensitive data.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Rubio", is centered on the page.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator