

Media Contact:

MediaRelations@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release

**FCC SETTLES INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVING NATIONAL SECURITY
REVIEWS AND UNAUTHORIZED CONNECTIONS OF
INTERNATIONAL UNDERSEA CABLES TO THE UNITED STATES**

Settlements Totaling \$2 Million Address Failures by Companies Operating América Móvil Subsea Cable System to Secure Team Telecom Review and FCC Approval

WASHINGTON, May 14, 2024—The FCC’s Enforcement Bureau today resolved two investigations into the América Móvil Submarine Cable System, which connects the United States to two additional cable landing stations located in Colombia and Costa Rica, respectively, without the Committee for the Assessment of Foreign Participation in the United States Telecommunications Services Sector’s (commonly known as Team Telecom) review or the required FCC approval. In addition to admitting the violations, LATAM Telecommunications and Puerto Rico Telephone Company will each pay a \$1 million civil penalty and enter into a compliance plan.

An undersea cable licensee’s failure to obtain prior Commission authorization before connecting and operating new international subsea cable landing stations circumvents Team Telecom’s ability to conduct a review for national security concerns as required by federal law and regulations.

“Undersea cables keep us globally connected and are essential part of the digital economy. But they can pose real security risks if the FCC and its national security partners aren’t properly given the chance to review where new cables may be installed,” **said FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel**. “Across the board the agency has been focused on network security, and careful oversight of undersea cables is a critical part of this effort.”

“As recently described in the Bulk Sensitive Personal Data Executive Order 14117, international submarine cables that connect the United States to other countries are a key piece of technology that facilitates the voluminous transfer and use of sensitive personal and U.S. government information,” **said FCC Enforcement Chief Loyaan A. Egal, who also serves as head of the FCC’s Privacy and Data Protection Task Force**. “We will also work closely with our national security partners and the Commission’s Office of International Affairs to identify and address unauthorized and non-notified transactions that implicate FCC licenses and U.S. national security interests.”

“Team Telecom is designed to review and address national security threats to our critical telecommunications infrastructure,” **said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division**. “When that process is bypassed, it puts the American people, their communications, and their data at risk. Today’s enforcement action makes clear that the Department of Justice, as Chair of Team Telecom, will continue to work closely with the FCC to ensure that applicants and licensees play by the rules.”

The FCC investigation found that construction began on a cable landing station in Isla San Andrés, Colombia, in March 2020, which went into operation in September 2021, and a cable landing station in Puerto Limón, Costa Rica, in May 2021, which began operation in November 2022, with both connecting to the América Móvil Submarine Cable System. Neither company sought FCC authorization until 2023, thus evading vital national security reviews and assessments, among other concerns, that the FCC, in collaboration with the Team Telecom Committee, considers when reviewing new undersea cable landing license applications, as well as requests to modify existing licenses.

Reflecting the increased emphasis on data security issues in the national security sphere, the financial penalties associated with today's settlements are significantly larger than prior enforcement actions for undersea cable rule violations. In addition to critical infrastructure voice and data services, undersea cables also facilitate emerging technologies that are key to the digital economy such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cloud computing. The Enforcement Bureau will continue to prioritize investigations that concern U.S. national security interests involving telecommunications and information and communications technology networks.

###

Media Relations: (202) 418-0500 / ASL: (844) 432-2275 / Twitter: @FCC / www.fcc.gov

*This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).*