

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Review of Submarine Cable Landing License Rules and Procedures to Assess Evolving National Security, Law Enforcement, Foreign Policy, and Trade Policy Risks*, OI Docket No. 24-523; *Amendment of the Schedule of Application Fees Set Forth in Sections 1.1102 through 1.1109 of the Commission's Rules*, MD Docket No. 24-524, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (November 21, 2024)

You may not realize it, but modern life depends on submarine cables. They are buried in the deep, dark, depths of the ocean. They are so easy to miss. But more than 95 percent of international internet traffic travels over these facilities, including financial transactions that add up to more than a trillion dollars a day. With the expansion of data centers, rise of cloud computing, and increasing bandwidth demands of new large language models, these facilities are poised to grow even more critical.

There are 84 submarine cables licensed in the United States. They are now a vital part of our national and economic security. But despite the increase in their importance and advancements in technology, our practices overseeing these facilities have not changed much during the last two decades.

At the Federal Communications Commission, I believe it's time to fix this. I am not the only one who feels this way. Last month, Senators Murphy, Young, Kaine, Rubio, Shaheen, Ricketts, Shatz, and Sullivan, all members of the Foreign Relations Committee, wrote the President expressing concern about the security of the global network of undersea communications.

They are right. Last year, Taiwan accused two Chinese vessels of cutting the only two cables that support internet access on the Matsu Islands. More than 14,000 people were stuck in digital darkness for six weeks. Cables in the Baltic Sea used by Germany, Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania, and Finland have been tampered with multiple times, including as recently as this week. An investigation of an earlier incident suggested Russian ships in the area. This year, Houthi attacks in the Red Sea may have been responsible for the cut of three cables that provide internet service to Europe and Asia. While the details of these incidents remain in dispute, what is clear is that these facilities—with locations that are openly published to prevent damage—are becoming a target. Add to this vulnerabilities that come from trawling anchors, aquatic life, and climate disturbances and it is clear we need to do more to protect these facilities.

Efforts are already underway. The Quad partnership of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States has a joint initiative to bolster the security and resilience of undersea communications. It includes sharing information, increasing repair capability, and developing common standards to protect against physical threats and cyber disturbances. At the gathering of the United Nations General Assembly in September, over 30 countries joined the United States in support of the New York Principles on Undersea Cables, which detail shared approaches for the security, interoperability, sustainability and maintenance of submarine cable infrastructure.

Now it is time for the FCC to step up because we have a role, too. Under the Cable Landing License Act, all submarine cable operators need a license from this agency. Integrating these facilities with communications networks requires review under the Communications Act. In addition, foreign ownership interests may lead us to refer a license application to the Committee for the Assessment of Foreign Participation in the United States Telecommunications Services Sector.

With this legal framework in the background, for the first time in more than two decades we propose a comprehensive review of our submarine cable policies. It is designed to improve and streamline our rules to encourage the deployment of these facilities while at the same time supporting the security, resilience, and protection of this infrastructure in a modern way.

As an example, consider that under our current practice a cable landing license is granted for 25 years without requiring any update about who owns and controls the facility. That is a quarter of a century during which information about foreign investment and interconnection essential for the secure flow of data traffic is not updated. That is too long. We propose an update every three years. We do this so that this agency has the information it needs to timely monitor and continually assess any risks to our national and economic security.

We also propose to keep foreign companies that have been denied licenses under the Communications Act on national security grounds from obtaining submarine cable landing licenses. At the same time, we propose to bar the use of equipment or services from the FCC Covered List in these licensed facilities.

As this effort proceeds, we need to recognize that a global challenge like this needs global solutions. We will need to take our approach to multistakeholder communities and engage others. For this reason, I am gratified that we have the Office of International Affairs. Since it was launched a little over a year and a half ago, it has been working hard on security matters and forging global partnerships that are essential. I want to thank them and their colleagues across the agency for their input here, including Stacey Ashton, Denise Coca, Kate Collins, Jodi Cooper, Francis Gutierrez, Desiree Hanssen, Jacqueline Jedrych, Gabrielle Kim, David Krech, Joseph Meyer, Janice Shields, Thomas Sullivan, Svantje Swider, Troy Tanner, and Lisa Williams from the Office of International Affairs; Mohammad Ahmad, Alec MacDonell, Giulia McHenry, Lester Roberts, Steven Rosenberg, Michelle Schaefer, Daniel Shiman, Emily Talaga, and Aleks Yankelevich from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Susan Aaron, Michelle Ellison, Andrea Kelly, Douglas Klein, David Konczal, Wade Lindsay, Erika Olsen, Joel Rabinovitz, Royce Sherlock, Anjali Singh, Elliot Tarloff, and Chin Yoo from the Office of General Counsel; Michael Antonino, Kenneth Carlberg, Deb Jordan, Leon Kenworthy, Nicole McGinnis, Zenji Nakazawa, Austin Randazzo, Jim Schlichting, and James Wiley from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Ira Keltz and Dana Shaffer from the Office of Engineering and Technology; Trent Harkrader, Jodie May, and Terri Natoli from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Hunter Deeley, Loyaan Egal, Peter Hyun, and William Knowles-Kellett from the Enforcement Bureau; Adrienne McNeil and Merissa Velez from the Space Bureau; Jeffrey Tignor and Chana Wilkerson from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities; and Dan Daily, Roland Helvajian, and Dylan Johnson from the Office of the Managing Director.