

Palau, FSM Sign Agreement To Join Submarine Cable Network Between Asia, U.S.

Submitted by PIR Editor on Thu, 05/04/2017 - 16:01

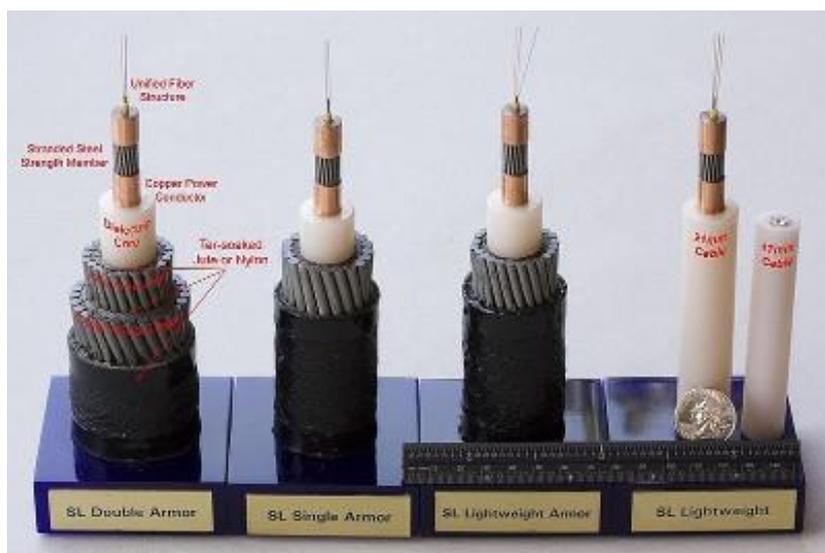


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Cable from Indonesia, Philippines to be connected to U.S. via Guam, Hawaii

HAGĀTÑA, Guam (Marianas Variety, May 5, 2017) – Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia signed an interconnection agreement on Thursday with Philippines and Indonesian carriers that will allow the two Pacific island states to tap into a new submarine cable network that directly connects Southeast Asia and the United States.

“I am delighted to see this milestone marked today. The submarine fiber network will be critical to so many aspects of our life in Palau, from healthcare to education, from social networking to business,” Palau President Tommy Remengesau said following the ceremonial signing at Hyatt Regency Guam.

The high-speed undersea cable system is currently being installed by Japan’s NEC Corp., the cable network supplier, and is anticipated to be up and running by the end of the year.

George Rechucher, chairman of Belau Submarine Cable Corp. or BSCC, signed the agreement with Ernest Cu, Globe Telecom’s CEO, for Palau. On FSM’s side, Transportation, Communication & Infrastructure Secretary Lukner Weilbacher signed a similar contract with Pak Nanang Hendarno, chief technology officer of Telekomunikasi Indonesia International or Telin.

Globe Telecom (Philippines) and Telin (Indonesia) are major owners of SEA-US, a new cable that will link Indonesia and the Philippines to the U.S. via Guam and Hawaii, in partnership with GTA (Guam), Hawaiian Telecom and RAM Telecom International.

The agreements provide for spur submarine fiber optic cables currently under construction from Palau and Yap in FSM to interconnect with the SEA-US cable for onward transport to Guam.

"We are progressing toward our goal of Ready for Service by the end of 2017. We are confident we are on target," Rechucher said.

In a press statement, NEC Corp. said it has commenced construction of three submarine cable links that will connect Palau, Yap and Chuuk to the rest of the world.

Palau's portion of the project is funded through a \$25- million loan from the Asian Development Bank; while FSM has secured a separate grant from the World Bank.

Construction of the spur from Ngeremlengui state in Palau to the SEA-US cable to the north is well advanced, with the modular cable landing station expected to arrive at Koror next week. From there it will be transported by barge to the landing site for installation.

Currently Palau relies entirely on satellite links for Internet connectivity. The high cost and limited bandwidth restrict Internet penetration. In Palau, the Internet is accessed by only 25 percent of the population, while 90 percent have access to mobile phones.

"Palau has seen the need for a submarine cable for many years, recognizing the many national and economic benefits such facilities bring," Rechucher said. "However, the scope for a cost-effective connection for Palau was limited until the SEA-US cable was contracted, SEA-US being a major submarine cable express route passing close to the shores of Palau."

Officials said the Interconnection Agreements provide for five 100 gigabit per second wavelengths to Guam, more than 1000 times the current capacity available in Palau, and will provide a big boost to businesses, schools, hospitals and clinics, government services, entertainment and social networking.

"BSCC has been positioned to deliver abundant capacity to our retail service providers in Palau at cost, ensuring maximum benefit to the community and commerce," Palau's Finance Minister Elbuchel Sadang said. "We expect our service providers will step up to the plate and make the most of this opportunity to transform their businesses."

The extension from Pohnpei, the capital of FSM, to Chuuk branches out of another existing cable linking FSM, the Marshall Islands and Guam. All three routes feature transmission speeds of 100 Gigabit per second per channel.

"FSM has adopted a national policy to connect all four FSM states (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae) with fiber optic cable systems. In 2009, the HANTRU-1 cable system landed in the state of Pohnpei," Weilbacher said

"With the WB grant funded project that became effective in March 2015, and through FSM's collaboration and partnership with Palau and SEA-US, FSM is now on the cusp of securing cable connections to all of the FSM states. By the completion of this project, service providers in the FSM will be able to offer broadband connectivity to virtually the entire population of the FSM at competitive prices."

Source: <http://www.pireport.org/articles/2017/05/04/palau-fsm-sign-agreement-join-submarine-cable-network-between-asia-us>