



Russian Plans to Lay Undersea Cable in the Arctic

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Vedomosti* discusses Russian plans to lay the first undersea fiber optic cable in the arctic by 2023. If the project is completed the cable would reportedly be the shortest route to transfer data between Europe and Asia. This would allow Russia to become an undersea cable operator in the global transmission capacity market. Although not mentioned by name, this cable may be a reimagined version of the Russian Trans-Arctic Cable System (ROTAKS) [Российская трансарктическая кабельная система (POTAKC)] that Russia has previously proposed to bridge Europe to Asia.

An additional benefit that Russia sees in this plan is that the cable will have 11 ‘jump-off’ points along the Russian coast. These communication nodes would do much to improve civil and military communications in the region. Former Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media Igor Shchyogolev has stated that “Reinforcing Russia’s northern borders is a strategically important topic...As per the decision of the Security Council, it requires development the information and communication environment in the Arctic.” This can also be considered a further step in the Russian government’s stated desire for centrally controlled, sovereign data and communications infrastructure. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

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Diver Checking Underwater Cable.

Source: The Official CTBTO Photostream / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>); https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Diver_Checking_Underwater_Protection_of_Cable_-_Flickr_-_The_Official_CTBTO_Photostream.jpg

Source: Yekaterina Kinyakina “«Мегафон» начал строить сеть связи в Арктике [‘Megafon’ Starts Building Communication Network in Arctic],” *Vedomosti* Online, 20 July 2020, <https://www.vedomosti.ru/technology/articles/2020/07/19/834927-megafon-nachal-stroit>

The Megafon telecommunications company and Rosgeologiya, the state-owned mineral exploration conglomerate, have announced the start of exploration work to build a transarctic communications line. According to their representatives, a research expedition will start in Murmansk on 5 August and last for three months. During that period the Professor Logachev vessel will have to study 6,500 kilometers of the bottom relief of the Arctic Ocean along the Russian coast...

The line, which Megafon and Finnish infrastructure operator Cinia expect to build by 2023, will be the first in the Arctic, and this will be the shortest route to transfer data from Europe to Asia, says Megafon General Director Gevork Vermishyan. He estimates investments in the construction of the line at \$0.8-1.2 billion. However, the exact amount can only be named after research has been conducted, he adds.

At present, most of the underwater fiber optic lines pass through the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, says the Megafon representative. Meanwhile, data traffic between continents is growing rapidly: In the next five years, it will increase by 200 percent, the Vedomosti interlocutor predicts. Demand is being fueled by digital services, content providers, international telecom operators, and large corporate customers, so the construction of a new underwater communication line from Europe to Asia will help meet this demand, the representative of the operator said...The new line is needed not just for traffic transit. The project provides for the construction of 11 branches from the main line to Russian territory, which would allow users, including fuel and energy companies in Russia’s remote northern regions, to be connected to the Internet, Vermishyan said...