China’s snooping around Pacific undersea cables raises risks for Big Tech

The index suggests that the risk to cables is highest around Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines, partly because of China’s claim of sovereignty over Taiwan but also because subsea cables linking the region to the United States must pass through shallow water with busy shipping lanes.

Among the 10 trans-Pacific cables identified as being most at risk, several are still under development with significant ownership stakes from US companies. These include the TPU project, owned by Google, the ORCA cable, owned by Meta, and the E2A cable, co-owned by Verizon along with firms in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. All three of these projects had risk scores in the top five.

The report authors warn that any serious disruption to a single trans-Pacific cable could “risk overwhelming current available capacity on direct routings between the United States, Taiwan, Japan and the Philippines, forcing data onto slower, less direct routes.”

An even greater disruption involving multiple cables, potentially during a geopolitical crisis involving Taiwan, could “significantly reduce headroom and even overwhelm trans-Pacific capacity as a whole,” with communications between the United States and Indo-Pacific region having to reroute through other cables across the globe. That could have major economic consequences for Internet communications, cloud services, and financial trading.

Dual-use technologies and survey tracks

This comes as the world’s major powers continue to build up their fleets of military submarines and undersea drones, along with further developing and deploying dual-use technologies, like undersea cable cutters that could either be used for repair or sabotage.

China has also deployed a fleet of research vessels equipped with seabed-mapping technologies near trans-Pacific undersea cables, according to a separate report published in October 2026 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a think tank based in Washington, DC.

The CSIS analysts found that China-flagged research ships stood out as outliers in the amount of time spent near subsea infrastructure. They analyzed the movements of more than 200 research ships from multiple nations between 2020 and 2025.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/google-and-meta-subsea-cables-among-most-at-risk-from-sabotage-in-pacific/