
Assange Says South America Needs Internet Sovereignty

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WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has described South America's plans to develop internet infrastructure bypassing the United States as a “very important project.”

Dubbed the “digital ring,” the initiative will directly link the 12 member states of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) by 2020. The digital ring will also extend beyond South America to South Africa, India, China and Russia.

Currently, over 80 percent of South America's internet traffic passes through the United States — including traffic between adjacent countries.

“That's...very serious leverage,” Assange told teleSUR English in [an exclusive interview](#) published Monday.

“It's very important that UNASUR (has) a fiber optic cable ring that connects the southern American countries together, so it can't be cut off if there's a significant conflict with the United States,” he explained.

The digital ring is expected to cost UNASUR over USD\$60 billion, but according to Assange, it's a worthwhile investment.



He warned the National Security Agency already exploits the United States' status as an internet infrastructure hub to harvest information from South American online communication.

"But also, if push comes to shove the (United States) could simply disconnect Latin America from the rest of the world," he said.

During the interview, Assange contextualized control of internet infrastructure as part of a global "great game."

"In the past 200 years, we have seen three great games," he said. Assange characterized the first great game as the 19th Century conflict between colonial powers over central Asia.

"The second great game — which has occurred in this century — has been the great game for control of oil pipelines...and we can see that playing out right now, in terms of Ukraine," he said.

"And the third great game is the great game for control over the telecommunications between one country and another — or one great population region and another," he finished.

"If you can turn (the internet) off, you can destroy a whole economy," he warned.