

WikiLeaks Founder Assange Says South America Needs Internet Sovereignty



London, September 30 (teleSUR-RHC) -- 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 could cost UNASUR over \$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 on-line communications.

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

Julian Assange warned: “If you can turn (the Internet) off, you can destroy a whole economy.”

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