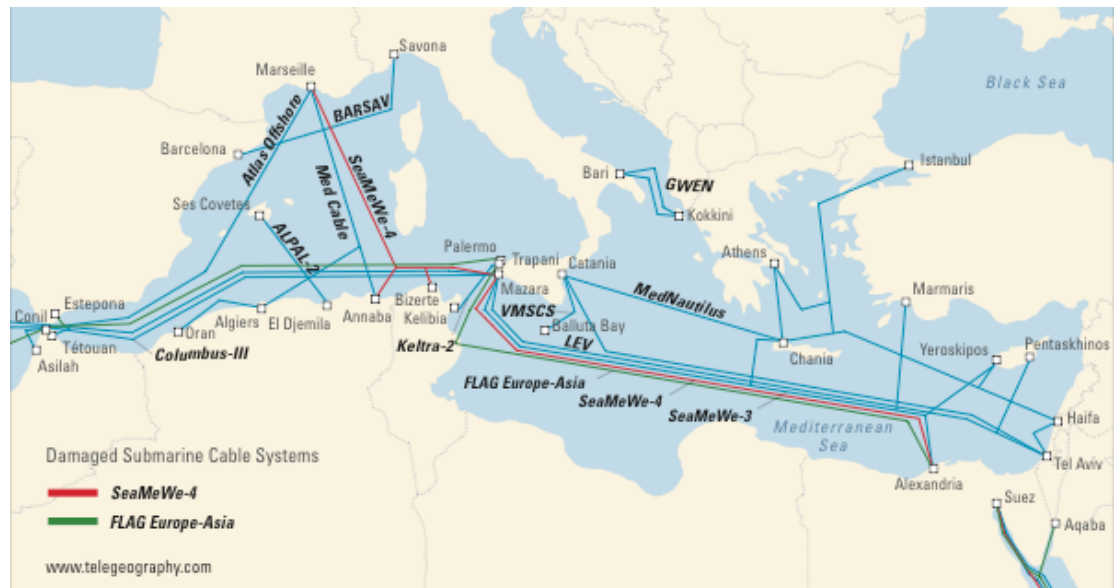


## PRESS RELEASE

January 31, 2008

On the morning of 30 January, two international submarine cables in the Mediterranean Sea were damaged, causing significant disruptions to internet and phone traffic in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India and all of the Gulf states. The two damaged cables are the FLAG Europe-Asia cable, operated by FLAG Telecom, and SeaMeWe-4 (South East Asia-Middle East-Western Europe-4), a consortium cable owned jointly by fifteen telecommunications companies. These two cables account for the majority of international communications capacity between Europe and the Middle East.



The two cable cuts leave the older SeaMeWe-3 system as the only cable in service connecting Europe to the Middle East via Egypt. The cable cuts have reduced the amount of available capacity on this direct route to Europe by 75 percent (620 Gbps). Until service is restored, many carriers in Egypt and the Middle East must now route their European traffic around the globe, through South East Asia and across the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

New cable construction should help to prevent such outages in the future, according to TeleGeography Research Director Alan Mauldin. "Many new cable systems are slated to enter service between Europe and Egypt in the next few years, including Telecom Egypt's TE North cable, Orascom's MENA system, the IMEWE consortium cable, and a new cable by FLAG Telecom." The introduction of these new systems will provide additional routing options and improve resiliency, but multiple cables are no guarantee against outages. In December 2006, seven of the eight cables connected to Taiwan were damaged by an earthquake, disrupting communications in much of Asia. Cable operators needed several months before service was entirely back to normal. Fortunately, the Mediterranean outage is much less severe, and the damaged cables could be repaired within a week.

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