

Work starts on new NPacific communications link

June 5 2009



Roi-Namur Island at the Kwajalein missile range in the Marshall Islands. Work has started on a new 130 million US dollar submarine fibre optic cable that is expected to revolutionise communications in the islands of the North Pacific, officials said

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The US army is leading the project, which will provide super-fast communications between the United States and its missile testing site at Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

The governments of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of

Micronesia are also taking part to improve communications to their isolated nations.

The cable will link Marshall Islands capital Majuro, Kwajalein and Micronesian capital Pohnpei with the US territory of Guam, offering broadband communications to an area that now faces bottlenecks from satellite links.

Marshall Islands National [Telecommunications](#) Authority general manager Tony Muller said work had started on building infrastructure to support the 3,200-kilometre-long (2,000-mile-long) cable, which will be laid from November.

US Army Lieutenant General Kevin Campbell, who commands the Army's Space and Missile Defense Command, said the cable was critical to ensure the Reagan Test Site at Kwajalein meets Washington's changing space and missile defence needs.

Marshall Islands officials said the cable would also revolutionise communications for the nation of about 55,000 people.

"This is what we really need considering the fact the Marshall Islands is disconnected from the rest of the world by large bodies of water," said Carlos Dominick, chief executive of a Majuro construction company.

Health officials say they will be able to use broadband access to improve diagnosis and treatment of patients through "real time" consultations with specialist doctors in the United States and elsewhere.

The new cable is scheduled to go into operation by April next year.

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Citation: Work starts on new NPacific communications link (2009, June 5) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-06-npacific-link.html>

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