

The Wires Under the Gulf

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 13 October 2026

Iran's security chief named a new kind of target. Who guards what nobody sees?

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By Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren

On the night of Sunday, 11 October 2026, Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, sat down with Press TV, Iran's state-owned English channel. Most of the interview was familiar defiance. One passage was not. Speaking of American-linked technology in the United Arab Emirates and around the Strait of Hormuz, he said: "We have not yet included these assets among our targets. But if war breaks out, many of these cables, data centers, artificial intelligence facilities, and numerous other sites will be destroyed."

He said "the pulse of the American economy in this region" runs through his part of the world, and put the value of those assets at more than \$2 trillion. Iran International carried the same threat on Monday, 12 October, and the Washington Times reported it alongside the Foreign Ministry's word that Tehran is still reviewing the latest American proposal through mediators.

The \$2 trillion is his number, not an audited one. The threat itself is on the record, in his own words.

Why should anyone outside the Gulf care? Because the modern economy runs on things we never see. Most of the internet traffic between continents moves through fibre-optic cables lying on the seabed, and the Red Sea and the Gulf are narrow passages for the lines that tie Europe, Asia and Africa together. We already know what damage there looks like. In early 2024, three Red Sea cables were cut after the Rubymar, a cargo ship struck by the Houthis and abandoned by its crew, dragged its anchor across the sea floor. In September 2025, Microsoft told customers that cable cuts in the Red Sea were slowing traffic on its cloud service. Neither was a declared attack. Both showed how thin the margin is.

Now a senior Iranian official has said it plainly: the wires and the server halls are on the list.

Here's the question worth sitting with. For generations, defense meant borders, airspace and shipping lanes. Today it also means a cable no one will ever look at and a building with no sign on the door. Most of these are built and owned by private companies, not armies. A threat against them reaches hospitals, banks and ordinary families on three continents who have no part in this war.

When Nechemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, he did not leave the gates to a distant garrison. He appointed watches from the people of the city, "every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house" (Nechemiah 7:3). Guarding what everyone depends on was not someone else's job.

The countries that host the region's new digital infrastructure now have to decide whether protecting it is a commercial matter or a national one. Tehran has already told them how it sees it.

Sources

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- BBC, 7 Sep 2025: Microsoft cloud services disrupted by Red Sea cable cuts
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