

Russian drones use Starlink, but Ukraine has plan to block their Internet access

Ukraine and SpaceX say they recently collaborated to stop strikes by Russian drones using Starlink and will soon block all unregistered use of Starlink terminals in an attempt to stop Russia's military from using the satellite broadband network over Ukraine territory.

Ukrainians will soon be required to register their Starlink terminals to get on a whitelist. After that, "only verified and registered terminals will be allowed to operate in the country. All others will be disconnected," the Ukraine Ministry of Defense said in a press release today.

Ukraine Minister of Defense Mykhailo Fedorov "emphasized that the only technical solution to counter this threat is to introduce a 'whitelist' and authorize all terminals," according to the ministry. "This is a necessary step by the Government to save Ukrainian lives and protect critical energy infrastructure," Fedorov said.

Fedorov has posted on SpaceX CEO Elon Musk's X social network a few times in the past few days about Russia's use of Starlink and Ukraine's attempt to counter it. On January 29, Fedorov said his agency contacted SpaceX hours after "reports that Russian drones equipped with Starlink connectivity were operating over Ukrainian cities." Ukraine "proposed concrete ways to resolve the issue," he said.

Fedorov said that SpaceX started working on a solution immediately after the outreach. Musk wrote yesterday, "Looks

like the steps we took to stop the unauthorized use of Starlink by Russia have worked. Let us know if more needs to be done.”

Fedorov said yesterday that because of “the first steps taken in recent days, no Ukrainians have been killed by Russian drones using Starlink.” Fedorov said the ministry “will share instructions for Ukrainian users to register their Starlink terminals for verification” in the coming days, and that registration “will be simple, fast, and user-friendly.”

Ukraine’s whitelist plan will require residents to make “one visit to the nearest Administrative Services Center,” a process that Fedorov said will be “free, fast, and without excessive bureaucracy.” Businesses will be able to verify their Starlink terminals online, while the military and service members have separate systems for registration. Service members with personal Starlink terminals will “only need to add the terminal to the ‘whitelist’ to prevent disconnection.”

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