This Bluetooth fob turns iPhones or Android devices into two-way satellite messengers

Making its debut at MWC 2023, the new Motorola Defy Satellite Link can enable almost any smartphone to send and receive text messages in places lacking cellular signals. Satellite communications features are being mainstreamed after Apple added Emergency SOS via satellite in the iPhone 14 and Apple Watch Ultra. Qualcomm is also looking to stick similar tech into upcoming high-end Android devices later this year, but Bullitt and MediaTek say their devices will be the first ones you can buy that communicate in both directions.

Outdoorsy users not looking to upgrade to a new iPhone — or who are bummed to see Samsung sitting out the space race with its newest Galaxy S23 series — now have the option to stick with the device they have. The Defy Satellite Link interfaces with the Bullitt Satellite Messenger app on Android and iOS devices and is capable of location sharing, SOS assistance, and two-way messaging via satellites.

The $99 Defy Satellite Link accessory is cheaper than buying a new phone with the tech, including Bullitt's just-announced $599 rugged Motorola Defy 2 smartphone that comes with the same MediaTek chip that we could see in other midrange Android phones soon. The Defy devices can connect to geostationary satellites that are 22,300 miles above the Earth using the 3GPP NTN open standard "direct-to-device" satellite communications technology.

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To use the actual service, you’ll need to pay $4.99 per month (starting) for SOS Assist, which is powered by FocusPoint International. There’s also a $149 bundle that comes with the Defy Satellite Link device plus a one-year subscription to an Essentials Messaging service that includes up to 30 two-way Bullitt Satellite Messenger messages per month in addition to SOS Assist. For folks on the other end of the conversation, they’ll receive a message as a simple SMS to their existing phone with an invite to download the associated Android or iOS app so that they can respond.

According to *CNET*, Bullitt’s Skylo-backed network can rely on geostationary satellites from Inmarsat and EchoStar for connections, while CNBC reports satellite coverage should be live across Europe and North America at launch, followed by Australia and New Zealand, Africa, and Latin America in mid-2023.

Defy Satellite Link can also provide simple SOS and location sending using a physical check-in button, even if the smartphone it’s paired to dies. It contains a 600mAh battery that lasts for “multiple days,” and it’s IP68 waterproof and dustproof, according to the company.

Comparatively, Apple’s one-way service runs off of a 24-satellite low-orbit constellation through a partnership with Globalstar. Purchasing a new iPhone 14 or Apple Watch Ultra includes two years of service that can send messages, SOS alerts, and share Find My locations with loved ones, all with a clear view of the sky using Band 53 / n53 communications.

https://www.theverge.com/2023/2/24/23613446/motorola-defy-satellite-link-bullitt-mwc-2023