

Ukraine learns to fight without Starlink as Musk plays politics with satellites

Elon Musk's Starlink satellite service has played a pivotal role in supporting Ukraine's successful resistance to Russia's full-scale invasion for years. But with Starlink having become increasingly unreliable due to Musk's political inclinations and the latest surprise disruptions to service in Ukraine, the Ukrainians and Europe as a whole are now facing urgent questions about how to move forward without it.

As the world's largest communications satellite network, Starlink can typically support high-speed Internet and data streams for any user or vehicle equipped with a relatively compact Starlink terminal. This has enabled Ukraine to maintain vital communications for both civilian purposes and military operations—and has also expanded the Ukrainian military's capability to remotely control or provide guidance to drones used in both air defense against Russian attacks and for striking back at Russian targets.

"Starlink currently offers some of the best satellite coverage available, with virtually no competitors when you consider the combination of cost, availability, and ease of use," according to the head of hardware R&D at the Ukrainian defense company BlueBird Tech, who provided comments to Ars anonymously for security reasons. "In practical terms, the main limitation is the need to position the antenna so it can receive signals from the satellites."

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