

Russia has figured out how to mess up Ukraine's crucial Starlink battlefield internet, report says



Ukrainian soldiers patrol the streets in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, on May 20, 2024. NurPhoto/Getty Images

- The Russian military has caused widespread disruptions to Starlink, The New York Times reported.
- Starlink has proven crucial in military operations and for communications among Ukrainian troops.
- Russia appears to have stronger electronic weapons to degrade the service.

Russia's jamming technology appears to be increasingly interfering with [Elon Musk's Starlink service](#) in Ukraine.

[Since the beginning of the war, Ukraine's military has used SpaceX's Starlink satellite internet service](#) to communicate, coordinate attacks, and gather intelligence.

But for the first time, the Russian military has caused widespread disruptions to Starlink, creating serious problems for Ukraine's frontline troops, according to [The New York Times](#).

Members of Ukraine's 92nd Assault Brigade, who spoke to The Times, said Starlink became extremely slow earlier this month as Russian troops advanced across the northern border.

"One day before the attacks, it just shut down," a soldier who goes by the call sign Ajax told the outlet. "It became super, super slow."

"We're losing the electronic warfare fight," Ajax said.

[Mykhailo Fedorov](#), Ukraine's digital minister, said in a recent interview that Russia is testing new, sophisticated tools to "disrupt the quality of Starlink connections because it's so important to us," The Times said.

Mykhailo Fedorov, Ukraine's minister for digital transformation. Global Images Ukraine/Getty Images

He added that Ukraine is [working with SpaceX](#) to resolve the outages.

Brian Weeden, the chief program officer for the nonprofit Secure World Foundation, [previously told BI](#) that Russia has struggled to disrupt Ukraine's Starlink service.

This may be because its satellites operate at a far lower altitude than geostationary satellites, which means their signals are stronger and more concentrated.

Because Starlink satellites are closer to Earth, latency — the delay between a user's action and a network response — is shorter. This speeds up streaming, online gaming, videoconferencing, and other activities.

According to The Times, Russia may have gotten better at interfering with the signal by using more powerful and precise jammers.

A drone pilot who uses the call sign Kartel, told The Times that soldiers had to turn to text messaging apps because Starlink was so slow.

"During the first hours the front line was very dynamic. The enemy was moving. And we were moving as well. We needed to be fast in communicating," he said, adding that "everything was more time-consuming."

Though Russia's defense ministry is yet to comment, an official who leads the country's electronic warfare efforts told state media in April that the military had developed capabilities to counter Starlink, the outlet said.

[The Wall Street Journal](#) reported in April that Russia had illegally obtained Starlink devices from the [black market](#) to coordinate attacks in Ukraine.

The outlet said Russians were purchasing the technology from foreign countries, including the US, before smuggling it to Russian troops in Ukraine.

SpaceX, Ukraine's Ministry of Defense, and the Kremlin did not immediately respond to requests for comment.