

Iridium Satellite Network Comes Back to Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S. satellite phone company Iridium has re-entered the Russian market after a 13-year hiatus, Vedomosti reported Thursday.

The operator received all the necessary licenses from the authorities, Iridium Russia CEO Viktor Glushko said.

Iridium plans to invest tens of millions of dollars in Russia, he said. Contracts and phones will be sold through distributors specializing in satellite equipment, such as Sattrans, Stek.kom and Gilat Satcom.

The operator began registering subscribers in late 2012 and has already connected thousands of new users, Glushko said. He added that by the end of 2013 their number is expected to grow by 20 to 25 percent, compared with the beginning of this year, mainly due to corporate clients such as airlines and shipping companies.

To attract new customers, Iridium will register users who have purchased satellite phones abroad and now use them in Russia illegally. According to Glushko, there are about 20,000 to 30,000 such users in the country.

Iridium officially ceased operations in Russia in 2000 after it went bankrupt.

Until recently, Globalstar has been the only provider of satellite phone services in Russia, Izvestiya reported.

The main consumers of satellite phone services in the country are currently insurgents in the North Caucasus, according to law enforcement agencies and the Defense Ministry. Satellite phones have traditionally been used in Russia by those who wanted to avoid being tracked.

Iridium will have to either register or block illegal subscribers in Russia by July, according to Izvestiya.

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