The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

If Facebook Sends Its Internet Drones Into Russia, They Could Be Blasted From the Sky

October 04, 2016



Vedomosti

You've probably heard about the projects. If you've been to the movies in the U.S. this summer, there's a chance you saw Facebook's advertisement about it. Silicon Valley has big plans to deploy aircraft around the world that are capable of beaming wireless Internet down at populations that currently lack access to the World Wide Web. If these companies send their drones over Russia, however, there's a good chance they'll be blasted from the sky.

At a government roundtable this week dedicated to Russia's telecommunications industry, a representative from the state-run carrier Rostelecom warned that foreign Internet-sharing drones pose a national security threat, citing plans by the companies OneWeb, Samsung, and others.

"Ground operators might encounter problems. If foreign players win here, it could be an issue

for [Russia's] sovereignty. Whoever controls the information controls the world," the representative said, according to the pro-Kremlin tabloid "Life."

The Russian military will shoot down anything that flies into the country's airspace illegally, government sources told Life. The state has other weapons at its disposal too, such as an arsenal of regulations against providing telecommunications services without a license and conducting "illegal business."

Companies like Google and Facebook would also have to contend with the fact that many satellite Internet systems use frequencies that are reserved for government channels in Russia.

Even if U.S. companies could reach an agreement about frequencies with the Russian authorities, Moscow would almost certainly insist that all Russian web traffic passed through hubs accessible to federal law enforcement, a Russian satellite Internet operator told Life.

Earlier this year, President Vladimir Putin signed legislation tightening regulations on Russian telecommunications. The crackdown requires companies to monitor the content of calls and messages online and on the phone, making this data available to Russian police. The law also compels all Internet sources to tell the government how to decrypt any online information.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/10/04/internet-a55591