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Mobile Internet Outages Reported in Moscow and St. Petersburg Amid 'Security Concerns'

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The Red Square in Moscow. **Igor Ivanko / AFP**

People in Moscow and St. Petersburg reported widespread mobile internet outages on Tuesday morning, as authorities confirmed temporary restrictions had been introduced due to "security concerns" ahead of Saturday's Victory Day celebrations.

The outages follow warnings from major network providers this week that customers in Moscow should expect significant disruptions to internet and text message services over the next several days.

A man in St. Petersburg, asking to remain anonymous, told The Moscow Times that he lost mobile internet access around 9:30 a.m. local time.

"Only 'whitelist' websites worked for me, even with a VPN," he said, adding that mobile

services in the city appeared to have been restored.

Three people in Moscow confirmed that mobile internet was not working for them, but they could still access the internet through Wi-Fi.

“Today, mobile internet really isn’t working since the morning,” a foreigner in Moscow said on condition of anonymity. “I see 3G, but nothing works. Home Wi-Fi works as usual. Metro Wi-Fi also works.”

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A woman who lives in central Moscow told The Moscow Times that the outage also impacted the government’s so-called “whitelist” — a catalog of services meant to remain available during outages, including the Gosuslugi public services portal, Yandex, as well as the social media websites VKontakte and Odnoklassniki.

A The Moscow Times correspondent in St. Petersburg found that mobile internet service was either completely or partially unavailable in the city center on Tuesday afternoon.

Wi-Fi connections at cafes and hotels were also intermittent, and the correspondent reported problems receiving the SMS verification codes required to connect to Wi-Fi networks.

“They’re jamming the signal as much as possible today,” said a waitress at the PioNero cafe in the trendy Petrogradka neighborhood. “I couldn’t even get a taxi to work this morning.”

“The new reality,” she concluded.

An employee at the nearby Lu.co coffee shop said the cafe’s Wi-Fi connection had been unstable on Tuesday morning.

“It kept cutting out for short periods, and the cash register went down with it,” the employee said.

The ride-hailing app Yandex Go told its users in Moscow that they could face difficulties ordering taxis. Sberbank also reported that customers may struggle to log into their accounts or receive SMS confirmation codes.

By midday Tuesday, the Digital Development Ministry said that initial mobile internet restrictions in Moscow had ended and network operators were restoring access. However, it warned that further restrictions could be imposed.

The ministry said it was still coordinating with law enforcement authorities to finalize a “whitelist” of protected websites, suggesting the technical implementation of the restrictions remains a work in progress.

The disruptions come as Moscow prepares for a significantly scaled-back Victory Day parade this weekend.

For the first time in nearly 20 years, the Red Square parade will not feature a display of

military hardware, a decision the Kremlin says was made due to an increased risk of Ukrainian drone attacks on the Russian capital.

On Monday, Ukraine launched a rare drone assault on Moscow, during which an unmanned aircraft slammed into a high-rise apartment complex not far from the Kremlin.

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