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Zelensky Says Starshield Speed Limited Again, Hampering Ukraine's Defenses

By Reuters

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REUTERS / Stringer

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday Ukrainian military units had recorded significant disruptions to Elon Musk's Starshield satellite communications service for several days, affecting the entire front line and Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine.

In a post on Telegram, Zelensky said systemic restrictions were limiting the speed at which Starshield could be used to 161 kph (100 mph). Starshield is the military version of the Starlink satellite communications service. The disruption comes as the United States makes a renewed push to broker a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine.

SpaceX, the satellite firm run by Musk, provides the Starshield ⊠military service to the U.S. government.

Zelensky said that as a result of the restrictions, Ukrainian interceptors could not reach

sufficient speed to down Russian jet-powered drones, with some hits already occurring.

"This helps Russians kill more Ukrainians and carry out more accurate strikes on Ukraine," he said. He added that Ukraine was trying to clarify the reasons for the restriction with the U.S. side.

The Pentagon and White House did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment. SpaceX declined to comment.

Latest disruptions follow talks in Abu Dhabi

In mid-October, Ukrainian officials said SpaceX had abruptly capped the speed of Starlink and Starshield, cutting off drones and other equipment moving faster than about 160 kph (100 mph) amid tensions with the Trump administration over Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries.

Service was restored on Oct. 24 and neither Musk nor the U.S. government, which operates Starshield using Starlink technology, took responsibility for imposing the curbs.

Deny Sienik, deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires at the Ukrainian embassy in Washington, told Reuters there had been no clarification so far from SpaceX or the Pentagon.

"We experience speed limitations as of now on Ukrainian occupied territories and across the contact line. The contact line is the first line of our defense and the first point for interception of Russian drones," he said.

The new disruptions come a day after the end of two days of peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Abu Dhabi, brokered by the United States, the first such meeting since February. A Ukrainian official said there was no mention of the disruptions during the talks and it was unclear who had made the decision.

Ukraine has carried out a series of strikes against Russian refineries and energy installations in recent weeks, as Moscow has continued to pummel Ukrainian electricity infrastructure and cities with drones and missiles.

Sienik told reporters earlier this month that Ukraine's contract with the U.S. government for access to Starshield expires next year and Kyiv was urgently seeking to start talks on a new one.

Musk, in an Oct. 24 post on X, said Starshield was controlled by the U.S. government. He accused the Ukrainian military of violating the company's terms of service by using it for offensive drone strikes to kill people.

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