Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 22, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

We write to express our serious concern about recent disruptions to Ukraine's access to Starlink and Starshield satellite communications services and to urge the Department of Defense to take immediate steps to restore and sustain Ukraine's access to these critical capabilities.

Reliable satellite communications are essential to Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russia's ongoing aggression. Ukrainian forces depend on these services for command and control, intelligence sharing, battlefield communications, and the operation of unmanned systems. Any degradation in service, including reduced connection speeds, restricted geographic coverage, or interruptions in access, undermines Ukraine's military effectiveness and provides Russian forces with an operational advantage that will extend the conflict and put more civilians in harm's way.

We urge the Department to expand its existing Starshield contract to ensure Ukraine has the satellite communications capacity, coverage, and reliability necessary to sustain its military operations and renew Starshield's unlimited-speed service. In the interim, the Department should take all necessary steps to ensure that Ukrainian forces maintain access to satellite communications at speeds and service levels at least equivalent to those previously available, through whatever combination of Starlink and Starshield services is necessary.

Critically, this should include maintaining the geographic coverage required for Ukrainian military operations, **including connectivity over Russian territory where necessary to support Ukraine's lawful military operations**, consistent with applicable U.S. law and policy. Decisions regarding service availability, coverage, and performance should not be left solely to the discretion of a private provider when they have direct consequences for Ukraine's ability to defend itself.

The Department should also ensure that any transition between commercial Starlink services and government-contracted Starshield capabilities occurs without interruptions or reductions in service. This requires sufficient contracted capacity, clear service-level requirements, and appropriate oversight to ensure that Ukraine's operational needs are met.

We also urge the Department to evaluate the use of authorities under Title I of the Defense Production Act (50 U.S.C. § 4511), in coordination with the Department of Commerce as appropriate, to prioritize the provision and expansion of satellite communications services necessary to support Ukraine's defense. These authorities should be considered alongside existing contractual mechanisms to ensure that Ukraine maintains reliable access to the bandwidth, service levels, and geographic coverage required for its lawful military operations.

The United States and Europe have made significant investments in Ukraine's defense because of how a Russian victory would put our security at risk. Those investments should not be undermined by preventable disruptions to the communications infrastructure on which Ukrainian forces depend. Ensuring reliable access to satellite communications is essential to sustaining Ukraine's defense and protecting U.S. national security interests.

We urge the Department to act expeditiously to expand its Starshield arrangements and ensure uninterrupted satellite communications support for Ukraine.

Sincerely,

Mark Kelly
United States Senator

Thom Tillis
United States Senator

Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

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Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator