

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 19, 2026

VIA EMAIL

Mr. Christopher Cardaci
Vice President, Legal
Space Exploration Technologies Corp.,
Legal Department,
1155 F Street NW, Suite 475,
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Cardaci:

On October 14, 2026, without warning and amidst a barrage of attacks from the Russian military, Ukrainian officials reported unexpected restrictions to Starlink and Starshield technologies that the Ukrainian military relies upon for critical capabilities on the battlefield.¹ Recent reporting indicates that the decision to restrict access was made by US government officials and that access to services appear to have partially resumed.² However, the hasty and life-threatening limitation of Ukraine's access to Starlink and Starshield has already had grave consequences for the Ukrainian people.³ It also put at risk the safety of U.S. personnel in Ukraine as these restrictions limited Ukraine's counter drone abilities.⁴ We write to demand answers about SpaceX's involvement in the recent restriction of Ukraine's access to Starshield and the role that SpaceX plays in Ukraine's ongoing access to Starlink technology.

Ukraine has long relied on Starlink for communications and more recently has received access to Starshield services procured by the U.S. Government to support Ukrainian military operations.⁵ Starshield is a military and intelligence product developed by SpaceX and used by the U.S. Government, which leverages Starlink technology and allows for enhanced capabilities like encryption.⁶ On Tuesday, October 14, Ukrainian officials reported that their access to Starshield had been restricted for devices

¹ Constant Méheut, *Ukraine's Exposure Grows as Satellite Use Is Restricted and Russia Escalates*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 15, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/14/world/europe/ukraine-starlink-energy.html>; Ryan Mac, *What Is Starshield, SpaceX's Military-Grade Satellite Internet Service?*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 14, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/14/business/starshield-spacex-ukraine-starlink-satellites-musk.html>.

² Erin Banco & Gram Slattery, *Order to Limit Starshield Came from Inside White House*, REUTERS (Oct. 15, 2026, at 19:07 ET), <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/order-limit-starshield-ukraine-came-inside-white-house-sources-say-2026-10-15/>; Constant Méheut, *Ukraine's Exposure Grows as Satellite Use Is Restricted and Russia Escalates*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 15, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/14/world/europe/ukraine-starlink-energy.html>.

³ See Constant Méheut, *Ukraine's Exposure Grows as Satellite Use Is Restricted and Russia Escalates*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 15, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/14/world/europe/ukraine-starlink-energy.html>.

⁴ Robert Jimison, New York Times, *Senators Demand Investigation Into Ukraine Satellite Disruption*, Oct. 15, 2026.

⁵ Ryan Mac, *What Is Starshield, SpaceX's Military-Grade Satellite Internet Service?*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 14, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/14/business/starshield-spacex-ukraine-starlink-satellites-musk.html>.

⁶ *Id.*

moving at speeds greater than 100 mph.⁷ This restriction was particularly devastating to the Ukrainian military's drone capabilities during an ongoing Russian bombing campaign in Kyiv.⁸ SpaceX's Chief Executive Officer, Elon Musk, has stated that "Starshield systems are owned and controlled by the US government," and that "[a]ny limits on speed or usage are decided by the US military and ultimately POTUS."⁹ At the same time, SpaceX owns and operates the underlying Starlink network and infrastructure upon which certain Starshield services rely. These circumstances raise important questions about the respective technical, contractual, and operational authorities retained by SpaceX and the U.S. government, as well as the ability SpaceX has to restrict access to either Starshield or Starlink services during military operations or national security emergencies.¹⁰

These questions have significant consequences for U.S. national security, U.S. support for Ukraine, and the safety of U.S. personnel. Accordingly, we request the following information on or before November 2, 2026. To the extent that any of the information requested implicates classified material, please disaggregate that information and we will make arrangements to view that information in a classified setting.

- 1) From October 10 to October 15, 2026, please describe any Starshield or Starlink capabilities or access points that were restricted for Ukrainian assets, including the date the restriction went into place and the duration of that restriction.
- 2) For each restriction identified in response to Question 1, please identify all personnel involved in or notified of the decision to restrict Starshield services, including for example, the reported restriction affecting devices traveling faster than 100 mph. In the event that SpaceX was not directly involved in the decision, please detail when and how SpaceX was notified of that decision and how the directive to restrict capabilities was communicated to SpaceX.
- 3) Considering your contract obligations with the Federal Republic of Germany, which funds Ukraine's access to Starlink,¹¹ when did you notify the German government of the decision to degrade Starlink capabilities?
- 4) Under SpaceX's contract with the federal government related to Starshield,
 - a. Who can revoke, limit, or otherwise change the terms of Ukraine's use of Starshield?
 - b. How must changes to Ukraine's access be documented and noticed?

⁷ *Id.*; Mark Saunokonoko, *What is Starshield, SpaceX's Military-Grade Starlink System, and How Will Its Restriction Affect Ukraine?*, THE GUARDIAN (Oct. 15, 2026, at 00:43 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/oct/15/starshield-starlink-ukraine-restriction-explained>.

⁸ Mark Saunokonoko, *What is Starshield, SpaceX's Military-Grade Starlink System, and How Will Its Restriction Affect Ukraine?*, THE GUARDIAN (Oct. 15, 2026, at 00:43 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/oct/15/starshield-starlink-ukraine-restriction-explained>; Constant Méheut, *Ukraine's Exposure Grows as Satellite Use Is Restricted and Russia Escalates*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 15, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/14/world/europe/ukraine-starlink-energy.html>.

⁹ Elon Musk (@ElonMusk), X (Oct. 14, 2026, at 15:00 ET), <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/2110445577184133456>.

¹⁰ Constant Méheut, New York Times, *Ukraine's Exposure Grows as Satellite Use Is Restricted and Russia Escalates*, (Oct. 15, 2026) <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/14/world/europe/ukraine-starlink-energy.html>.

¹¹ See *'We Pay for It': Germany Demands Starlink Restrictions in Ukraine Be Lifted*, KYIV POST (Oct. 16, 2026, at 14:03 ET), <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/87287>.

- c. Does SpaceX have discretion to decline, modify, or delay a government-directed change?
- 5) How does SpaceX determine whether and when to restrict access to Starlink technology?
 - 6) Please list the date, time, and location of any restrictions or modifications that SpaceX has made to Ukraine's access to Starlink technology.

In addition, please provide the following records on or before November 2, 2026.

- 1) All Records¹² documenting, approving, or otherwise referring to the restriction of Ukraine's access to Starlink or Starshield.
- 2) All communications between SpaceX and any U.S. federal government entity related to the restriction of Ukraine's access to Starshield.
- 3) All contracts, including any modifications or addendums, between SpaceX and the federal government for the operation or use of Starshield related to Ukraine or support for countries along NATO's eastern flank. For each contract, please note whether the award was single source, openly competed, or granted under any other set-aside.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

¹² "Records" include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (text messages, WhatsApp or Signal messages, emails, email attachments, and any other electronically-created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).