Iran Ties Starlink to Kurdish Militants, Raising Stakes for Ordinary Users

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starlink

Iranians who rely on satellite internet could face terrorism charges

Iran's IRGC Ground Forces said they killed two members of the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) attempting to infiltrate from Iraq. State-linked Fars reported the pair carried weapons, ammunition and Starlink devices and planned "sabotage and terrorist" attacks. The claim has not been independently verified, and PJAK has not commented. The incident follows months of IRGC operations against Kurdish groups, raised readiness on Iran's northwestern border, and Tehran's claim in October that Iraq agreed to remove or hand over Iranian Kurdish militants.

Since the start of 2026, Tehran has treated satellite internet as a security offence, seizing hundreds of terminals and warning that cooperation with hostile states can carry the death penalty. Each claim that armed infiltrators

carried Starlink devices strengthens the case for treating terminals as insurgent equipment rather than censorship workarounds. The likely audience is domestic: the tens of thousands of civilians using smuggled terminals, including in Kurdish areas, risk prosecution under Iranian counterterrorism rather than media law. With Kurdish militants cast as US and Israeli proxies, possession can be treated as wartime collaboration with the enemy, a capital offence.

For ordinary Iranians, Starlink has become one of the few links to the outside world during shutdowns. Terminals are expensive and sometimes shared, a single seizure can cut off several households. Iran has repeatedly shut off internet and social media access, for prolonged periods of time, which have widely been seen as attempts to mask widespread human rights abuses committed by the regime, and to prevent any coordinated Iranian domestic dissent. So, fewer terminals means less independent reporting circulating domestically as well as leaving Iran, and more reliance on pro-regime and state-operated media, whose reporting obscures the true state of affairs on the ground for civilians.

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