

United States Senate

July 28, 2025

Elon Musk
Chief Executive Officer
Space Exploration Technologies Corporation
1 Rocket Road
Hawthorne, CA 90250

Dear Mr. Musk:

According to an October 2024 report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, transnational criminal groups have used Starlink, a satellite internet serviced owned by SpaceX, to facilitate fraud against individuals in the United States.¹ The U.S. Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network has warned that these groups have caused billions of dollars in losses for Americans.² In addition, since November 2022, the Secret Service has received more than 8,000 complaints related to digital asset scams, many with traces to scam networks in Southeast Asia.³ Given the significant financial consequences for Americans, I write today to request information about SpaceX's efforts to prevent the misuse of Starlink in transnational fraud.

Experts have stated that scam networks in Southeast Asia turn to Starlink for its portability, decentralized infrastructure, and independence from national telecom networks.⁴ In one example, a *Wired* investigation found that across eight scam compounds in Myanmar, at least

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Transnational Organized Crime and the Convergence of Cyber-Enabled Fraud, Underground Banking and Technological Innovation in Southeast Asia: A Shifting Threat Landscape* (Oct. 2024) (www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2024/TOC_Convergence_Report_2024.pdf).

² House Committee on Financial Services, Testimony Submitted for the Record of Associate Director Dara Daniels, Research and Analysis Division, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, U.S. Department of the Treasury, *Hearing on Protecting Americans' Savings: Examining the Economics of the Multi-Billion Dollar Romance Confidence Scam Industry*, 118th Cong. (Sep. 18, 2024) (H. Hrg. 118-BA10).

³ House Committee on Financial Services, Testimony Submitted for the Record of Cyber Policy & Strategy Director Matthew Noyes, Office of Investigations, U.S. Secret Service, *Hearing on Protecting Americans' Savings: Examining the Economics of the Multi-Billion Dollar Romance Confidence Scam Industry*, 118th Cong. (Sep. 18, 2024) (H. Hrg. 118-BA10).

⁴ Stimson Center, *Starlink Can Curb Southeast Asia's Cyber Scam Industry – If They Choose* (Mar. 21, 2025) (www.stimson.org/2025/starlink-can-curb-southeast-asias-cyber-scam-industry-if-they-choose/).

412 devices identified Starlink as their provider and recorded more than 40,000 logins.⁵ In another example, one law enforcement operation in Thailand seized more than 130 Starlink devices from scam compounds around the country.⁶

While SpaceX has stated that it investigates and deactivates Starlink devices in various contexts,⁷ it seemingly has not publicly acknowledged the use of Starlink for scams originating in Southeast Asia — or publicly discussed actions the company has taken in response. Scam networks in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos,⁸ however, have apparently continued to use Starlink despite service rules permitting SpaceX to terminate access for fraudulent activity.⁹ A United Nations report has confirmed that SpaceX can restrict access to Starlink through “geofencing,”¹⁰ making the service unavailable in specific countries or locations, but it is unclear whether the company has done so in Southeast Asia. According to one expert based in the region, “Starlink [is] failing the first basic test of business and human rights, which is to ensure that your operations do no harm.”¹¹

Transnational fraud has imposed significant human and economic costs in the United States, Southeast Asia, and around the world. According to recent estimates, scams emanating from Southeast Asia likely result in more than \$43.8 billion in losses globally each year, with

⁵ *Elon Musk’s Starlink Is Keeping Modern Slavery Compounds Online*, WIRED (Feb. 27, 2025) (www.wired.com/story/starlink-scam-compounds/).

⁶ *Thailand Seizes 3,200 Calls/Sec Simboxes in Call Center Gang Crackdown*, Khaosod English (May 31, 2024) (www.khaosodenglish.com/news/2024/05/31/thailand-seizes-3200-calls-sec-simboxes-in-call-center-gang-crackdown/).

⁷ Starlink, X post (Feb. 8, 2024, 1:53 p.m.) (x.com/Starlink/status/1755666250431443347).

⁸ *Scammers Plan to Use SpaceX Starlink Satellites in Transnational Scam Network Targeting Thailand with Deception*, Thai Examiner.com (Apr. 14, 2024) (www.thaiexaminer.com/thai-news-foreigners/2024/04/14/plan-to-use-spacex-starlink-satellites-in-world-scam-network-thai-laos-mekong-border/).

⁹ Starlink, Starlink Terms of Service (www.starlink.com/legal/documents/DOC-1020-91087-64) (accessed July 14, 2025).

¹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *supra* note 1 (also noting that “organized criminal groups appear to have found ways around existing security protocols in order to access the remote high-speed internet connectivity”).

¹¹ *How Elon Musk’s Starlink Enables a Multibillion-Dollar Online Scam Industry*, The Sydney Morning Herald (June 2, 2025) (www.smh.com.au/world/asia/how-elon-musk-s-starlink-enables-a-multibillion-dollar-online-scam-industry-20250507-p5lxfr.html).

Americans losing \$3.5 billion in 2023 alone.¹² This fraud, often carried out by forced labor, can also cause profound psychological distress that drives victims of scams to suicide.¹³ The United Nations has also reported that scam networks in Southeast Asia force at least 220,000 trafficked individuals to carry out online scams¹⁴ — a situation its experts describe as a “humanitarian and human rights crisis.”¹⁵

To aid Congress in understanding the scope of Starlink’s role in transnational fraud and efforts to prevent related criminal misuse of its devices, please provide responses to the following information requests. These requests cover the time period of January 1, 2020, to the present:

1. Is SpaceX aware of reports that scam networks in Southeast Asia are using Starlink to facilitate fraud? If so, when and how did SpaceX become aware of such use?
2. What are SpaceX’s policies and procedures for investigating, deactivating, or restricting Starlink devices?
3. What guardrails, policies, or procedures are in place to prevent scam networks in Southeast Asia from acquiring — directly or indirectly — Starlink devices?
4. Has SpaceX independently identified, or taken any actions in response to, indications of misuse or improper distribution of Starlink devices by purchasers or third-party intermediaries based in Southeast Asia?
5. How many third-party reports or complaints has SpaceX received concerning Starlink use in scam networks in Southeast Asia? Please break down this number by the entity issuing the report or complaint, including United States federal agencies, United Nations offices or agencies, or multilateral organizations.
 - a. How many of these complaints or reports, if any, led SpaceX to investigate, deactivate, or restrict Starlink devices?

¹² United States Institute of Peace, *Transnational Crime in Southeast Asia: A Growing Threat to Global Peace and Security* (May 2024) (www.usip.org/publications/2024/05/transnational-crime-southeast-asia-growing-threat-global-peace-and-security).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *Online Scam Operations and Trafficking Into Forced Criminality in Southeast Asia: Recommendations for a Human Rights Response* (2023) (bangkok.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/wp_files/2023/08/ONLINE-SCAM-OPERATIONS-2582023.pdf).

¹⁵ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *UN Experts Urge Immediate Human Rights-Based Action to Tackle Forced Criminality in Southeast Asia Scam Centres* (May 21, 2025) (www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/05/un-experts-urge-immediate-human-rights-based-action-tackle-forced).

- b. In total, how many devices has SpaceX investigated, deactivated, or restricted due to their use in Southeast Asian scam networks?
 - c. How many devices has SpaceX investigated, deactivated, or restricted due to their use in fraudulent activity generally?
6. What vulnerabilities, if any, has SpaceX identified in Starlink's security protocols that bad actors, including criminal groups operating scam networks in Southeast Asia, may exploit, and what actions has the company taken to address them?
7. What steps, if any, has SpaceX taken to cooperate and work with U.S. and international law enforcement entities to address Starlink's reported use in scam networks in Southeast Asia?
8. What revenue, if any, has SpaceX generated to date related to Starlink devices that the company later investigated, deactivated, or restricted due to their use in scam networks in Southeast Asia?

Please provide your responses as soon as possible but in no event later than August 18, 2025. If you have any questions related to this request, please contact [REDACTED]. Please send any official correspondence relating to this request to [REDACTED].

Sincerely,



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator