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PRISONS

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Alhaurín de Torre, benchmark test against drug trafficking by drones in prisons

The Penitentiary Institutions assert that several systems are being tested in various prisons to determine which one will be installed.



Image of the device placed in the Alhaurín de la Torre prison // ABC

J.J. MADUEÑO

Malaga 29/12/2022 at 07:05am The Alhaurín de la Torre prison is being used by the Ministry of the Interior as a benchmark test. Penitentiary Institutions have tested a system against drone flights. The objective is to stop the trafficking of drugs and other prohibited products, such as cell phones or cash. Sources consulted by ABC explain that, for some time now, at the prisons of southern Spain, these unmanned vehicles have been used to circumvent the outer walls and security controls. "This type of illicit trafficking is seen in Andalusia, especially in the prisons of Algeciras and Malaga," says Sergio Garcia, spokesman from CSIF, who explains that the drone system is largely related to the level of offenders in these prisons and their significant economic resources.

According to the Union, the capture of large drug traffickers in Andalusia is what leads to this type of practice, "which is costly". "In Madrid's prisons there are almost no drones crossing the perimeter to bring drugs and other prohibited objects, such as cell phones. In Andalucía, yes there are", affirms García. In view of this, the Ministry of the Interior has chosen the Malaga I Penitentiary Center to begin its fight against these new trafficking methods into the prison.

Penitentiary Institutions staff explained to ABC that various systems are being tested. One of them has already been installed in the prison in Malaga. "Several tests are underway. Several systems will be tested. One of them has been tested here, but there will be more systems until it is decided which one will be definitively installed in all prisons," they said.

"This type of illicit trafficking is being seen in Andalusia, especially in the prisons of Algeciras and Málaga."

Sergio García, CSIF spokesman

This is in response to a "serious security problem", which the prison Union officials themselves have denounced on several occasions. In Alhaurín de la Torre, on November 8, seven smartphones and cash were seized in Module 2 of the Malaga I penitentiary center.

These are prohibited objects that crossed the prison walls via drones. Earlier, in January, drones were detected flying over the prison for several days. Officials believe that cell phones were smuggled into the prison for communications with the outside world and for drug dealing.

In February, CSIF requested a system against these drones. On June 27, the officials, in view of the security risk posed by these drones, once again called for a system against this type of illegal flights. The Union did so after a drone was detected by the Civil Guard on June 26.

The drone that day was close to Module 2. It carried drugs and several mobile phones. Despite these examples, security against these flights was still not forthcoming, and on September 7 an anti-drone system was again requested. Now, finally, at the end of 2022, possible solutions are already being tested to tackle this traffic.

EnforceAir, a system developed by D-Fend Solutions, has been tested in Alhaurín de la Torre

In the case of Alhaurín de la Torre, 'EnforceAir' has been chosen. It is D-Fend Solutions' flagship product against unmanned aerial systems. The company explains on its website that it is the world's premier cyber, radio frequency-based anti-drone takeover technology. The system operates in autonomous or manual mode. It can detect, locate and identify hostile drones present in the airspace and neutralize them.

The system being tested in the Malaga prison allows taking full control of the drone and landing it safely in a predefined area. Therefore, it is not only downed, but it also allows for the seizure and examination of the cargo. The company states that this system does not depend on jamming technologies, thus avoiding collateral damage, disruptions and disturbances.

This technology has been tested in Alhaurín de la Torre, according to CSIF, and will be tested in other prisons in southern Spain. Officials explain that more tests will be carried out in Ceuta, Melilla and Cádiz prisons. "This is where more drones are being detected as they deliver drugs into prisons," Sergio Garcia tells ABC, while explaining that officials welcome measures that are being taken to try to solve "the serious security problem" involving the smuggling of prohibited objects into prisons by this method.