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PRISON / ANTI-DRONE SYSTEM

'Fuerte Mendizábal' begins testing of anti-drone mitigation system



Ceuta becomes the second penitentiary in Spain to implement this innovative system, which will prevent the use of drones from the outside from bringing in drugs, money, cell phones, alcohol and medicine.

'Fuerte Mendizábal' has started testing this week the new fixed anti-drone detection and mitigation system, making Ceuta prison the second penitentiary center in Spain to install a system with these features, since this same system was installed in the Penitentiary Center of Málaga I in Alhaurín de la Torre at the end of December 2022.

In fact, given the success of this new system, called 'EnforceAir', which was tested for a month in the prison of Malaga I, by the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions under the Ministry of Interior, it has been decided to extend it to other prisons in the country, currently being installed at the 'Fuerte Mendizabal', where it has begun the mandatory testing period, in order to, pending positive results, finally keep it permanently. Although the duration of this testing period has not been disclosed, everything seems to indicate that it will be the same, that is between 20 days to a month, as in the Alhaurín de la Torre prison.

It should be recalled that in recent months, the Anti-Drone Unit of the Civil Guard, in coordination with prison staff, has been operating in the prison on a permanent basis, demonstrating great performance and offering a priceless and invaluable service to the security of the institution.

Now this good work has culminated with the installation of this innovative and sophisticated fixed 'anti-drone' system at the 'Fuerte Mendizábal' Penitentiary Center.

So far, the tests carried out have been a success, and if this continues during this trial period, it could be said that the anti-drone system has been installed to remain in Ceuta.

For some time now, prison officials have been denouncing the significant increase in the delivery of drugs, money, cell phones and other substances into prisons with the use of drones from outside the prison, which has led the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions to study possible countermeasures to be adopted in order to neutralize these drones and thus prevent prohibited objects from entering the prison.

This anti-drone system is manufactured by D-Fend Solutions, and, after Malaga and Ceuta, the authorities intend to continue implementing it in the prisons of Melilla and Cadiz, where drone sightings have also increased and are effectively ongoing.

Specifically, 'EnforceAir' is designed to control the drone threat through cyber takeover technology.

This autonomous 'anti-drone' system can detect, locate, and identify drones with GPS precision, and then take full control of the drone. In the Ceuta prison, the system has been placed on the roof of one of the buildings.

Drones, in addition to carrying contraband of various kinds, can even be "armed or self-destructive", according to experts. That is, they can cause severe damage to facilities. However, what worries prison officers the most is that they could bring in weapons, although no cases have been registered so far. The majority of seizures are of drugs, cell phones and alcohol.

Specifically, in the latest news issued by the prison authorities, it was pointed out that, "in many cases, the entry of drones within the walls is dangerous. For example, one crashed in the employees' parking lot; caused a bleeding injury to an officer, as the propellers are barely visible and move at high speed. Generally, the drones move packages with hashish and medication, but there is a possibility that they may also contain weapons and then this routine becomes much more dangerous".

Those sending the goods are usually ex-convicts who take advantage of nighttime to fulfill orders and go unnoticed. "Then they send the device to a geoposition with exact coordinates. They always look for a window of a specific prisoner. If we see them, it's from the surveillance window. If not, it's because they crashed and end up in the yard." In this sense, one of the last complaints made by the APFP (Professional Association of Prison Officials) and the 'Leaving Me Behind' association, formed in response to increased violence from inmates and a corresponding lack of response from the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions) highlighted that the high level of drugs that could have reached the prison is a "tremendous aggravating

factor", highlighting that "in this situation we have a great problem, because up to today, as far as we know, drones have managed to mainly bring in drugs and cell phones, but who knows if one day a weapon is brought in by this means, then we will have a very severe problem," they acknowledged.

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