

Drones

Prison's biggest crisis



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With drone incidents tripling in just two years, it's clear that current security measures are failing to keep up.

Drones have rapidly become one of the most significant challenges for prisons in this decade. Inspectors are now labelling them as a national security threat, with contraband routinely delivered to some of the UK's most violent prisons.

According to The Guardian, a Freedom of Information request revealed a staggering **1,296** drone incidents reported at prisons in England and Wales in the first 10 months of **2024**, a tenfold increase since **2020**.

Jails Have Become an Airport

At HMP Garth in Lancashire, windows are being broken faster than they can be repaired to enable drone deliveries of contraband, according to Charlie Taylor, the Chief Inspector of Prisons.

“Prisoners were burning holes in their windows to allow entry for drones laden with contraband; the smell of cannabis was rife,” Taylor reported. Even mops and brooms were being stolen to unhook drugs from the drones.

A prisoner interviewed by The Spectator described the situation bluntly: “The drones. This place is like an airport for them.”

As Taylor put it, “What we’re seeing is that the airspace above our prisons, holding some of the riskiest men in the country, is being ceded to organised crime gangs.”



The Problem is Escalating

Drone incidents at prisons have tripled between early 2022 and late 2024. And since many drones operate under the cover of night, the actual numbers could be much higher.

The lucrative prison drug trade, where substances can fetch three to five times their street value, has driven criminal gangs to recruit and headhunt specialist drone pilots. These pilots are delivering not just drugs but weapons, mobile phones, and even unusual items like tomato ketchup.



“Drone technology is getting bigger and better, so the payloads are getting bigger,” said **Det Supt Andy Buckthorpe** of Greater Manchester Police. “Drones now can fly straight to the window of the cell.”

Police recently intercepted a drone carrying a massive 7kg payload containing mobile phones, drugs, and tobacco, intended for a high-security prison, according to DCI Chris McClellan of the North-West Regional Organised Crime Unit.



A Threat to National Security

A damning report by the prisons watchdog, led by Charlie Taylor, highlighted the struggles of high-security prisons like **HMP Manchester** and **HMP Long Lartin**. These facilities house some of the country's most dangerous individuals, including terrorists, murderers, and organised crime bosses.

The report found 'Zombie' knives inside these prisons, with fears that firearms could soon follow.

"The potential for serious weapons to be able to get into our prisons in increasing numbers means that there is a risk, particularly with these Category A prisons, particularly with some of the riskiest men in the country who are either connected to organised crime gangs or they're terrorists. The potential for them to be able to commit serious offenses within the prison, or potentially to be able to escape or to cause something like a hostage situation is an enormous concern," said Mr. Taylor.



What Is Currently Being Done?

According to **Det Supt Andy Buckthorpe**, it's a "constant battle" for authorities to counter the evolving tactics of criminal gangs and their associates behind bars.

The standard security installations for high-security prisons include CCTV and anti-drone netting. However, reports have shown that these were not up to standard at HMP Manchester and HMP Long Lartin.

The Ministry of Justice has responded by upgrading CCTV systems and anti-drone netting, but critics argue that these measures aren't enough to combat the increasingly sophisticated methods used by criminal gangs.



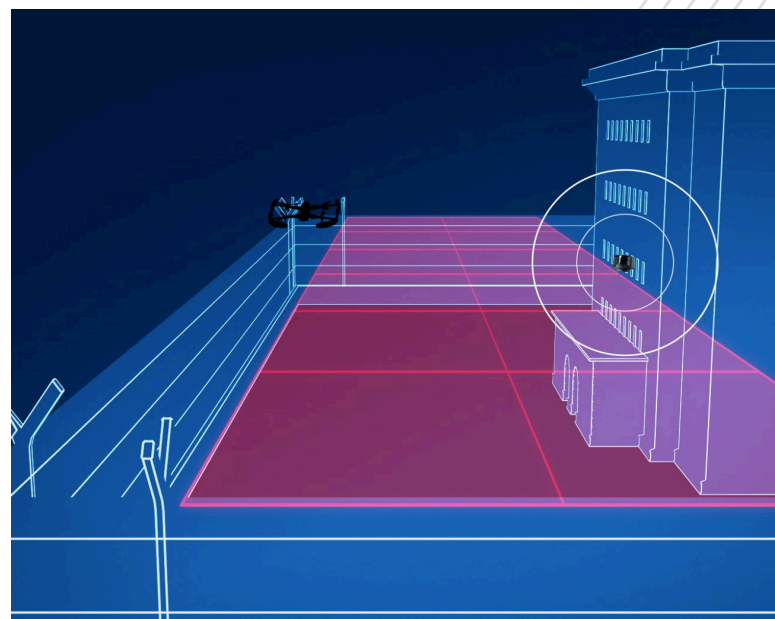
Ministry
of Justice

A Better Solution

Stephen Jordan from GJD, a security industry veteran with over 20 years of experience, believes a more effective and cost-efficient solution exists.

“The GJD D-TECT Laser creates a virtual curtain of up to 25 metres and can be positioned horizontally or vertically, making it ideal for securing prison windows or courtyards,” he explained.

“We have seen in the reports that netting isn’t preventing drones from getting through, and it seems strange that the Ministry of Justice wants to continue with this strategy. GJD believes that having a laser system that can notify the security team when and where a drone has penetrated allows the team to seize the contraband as soon as it comes into the prison before it is given the chance to be distributed to inmates, is a far better solution.”



The D-TECT laser from GJD has already been employed in secure facilities in the UK and across the world. This includes a secure mental health facility in West Yorkshire. The Hospital has an open courtyard and had issues with contraband being thrown in and patients trying to climb out. The D-TECT laser has been employed to create a virtual ceiling across the courtyard without making the patients feel like they are being trapped by netting.

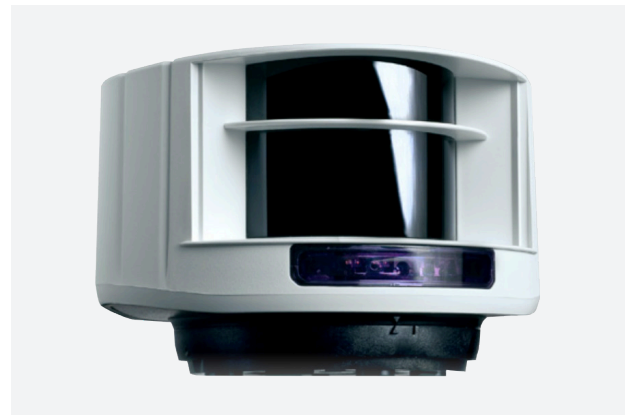
Case Study: Correctional Facility X

Looking further afield, Correctional Facility X located in Wisconsin, North America had been struggling with contraband entering the facility, particularly through drone activity, and sought expert advice from GJD on a more effective solution.

GJD recommended the D-TECT Laser, a cutting-edge security device designed to create a virtual curtain of up to 25 meters. This versatile system can be positioned both horizontally and vertically, making it ideal for securing areas such as prison windows, courtyards, and other vulnerable zones.

The D-TECT Laser offers a more proactive solution by providing real-time notifications when a drone enters a designated area, allowing security teams to intercept contraband before it reaches inmates. This laser-based system is programmable to within 10cm, ensuring a high level of precision for reliable intrusion detection.

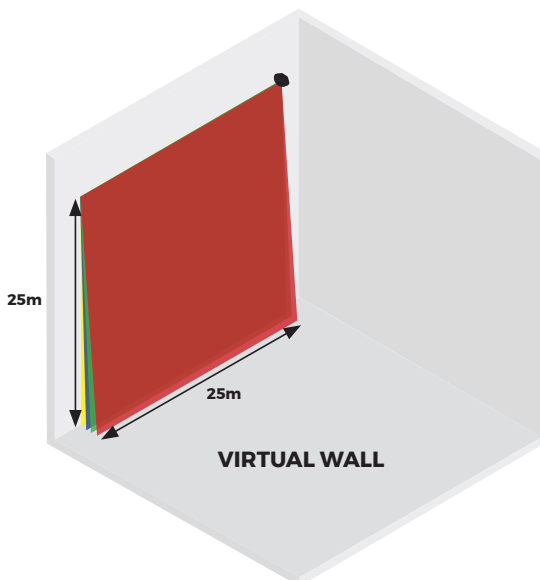
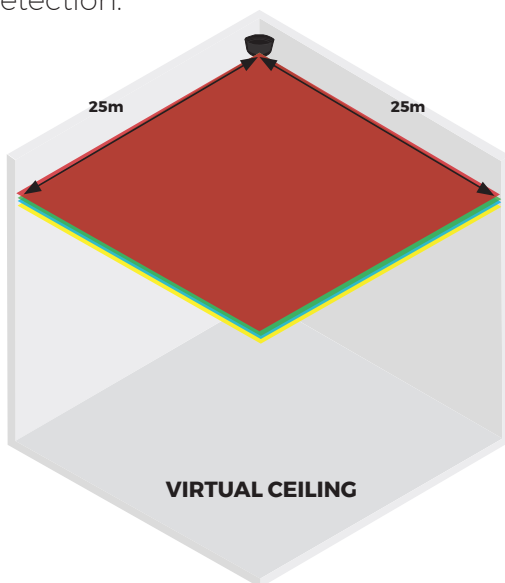
Correctional Facility X is preparing to implement the D-TECT Laser later in 2025 in line with overall security upgrades across the facility. Once in place, it is expected to significantly enhance the facility's security capabilities and provide a more efficient and cost-effective method of preventing contraband entry compared to traditional methods. The facility looks forward to the positive impact this advanced technology will bring.



Stephen says; *“We have examples from across the globe of our D-TECT Laser solving the problems that UK prison service is experiencing, we would welcome the opportunity to talk to anyone involved in prison security about how we can assist them in their perimeter security.”*

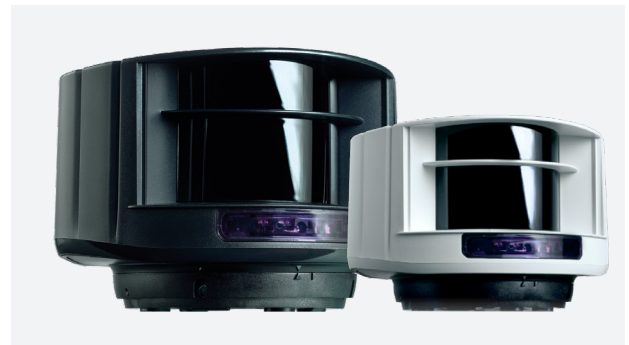
The D-TECT Laser

The D-TECT Laser is a laser-based security device designed to create virtual curtains and surveillance security zones. Easy to set up, the laser can be configured to create either a horizontal or vertical invisible barrier. Programmable to within 10cm, the D-TECT Laser offers the highest level of precision for accurate and reliable intrusion detection.



Ease of installation

- ▶ 3 visible red LASER beams can be activated to align the detection surface and adjust the tilt and rotation angles
- ▶ Teach-in function: self-learning of both environment and background through an automatic adjustment of the detection planes
- ▶ Remote control to easily set the adjustable parameters



Conclusion

The drone problem is getting more prevalent and more dangerous as contraband moves from drugs to nice and potentially guns. It is clear that the current security systems aren't working, and a new solution like GJD's D-TECT Laser is required.

To find out more, contact our team today, sales@gjd.co.uk

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