

# Press release: Crackdown on drugs, drones and mobile phones in prisons

- 225kg of illicit drugs recovered from prisons in 2016
- over 20,000 mobile phones and sim cards recovered
- criminals using drones to smuggle phones and drugs into prisons jailed for a combined total of over 40 years

A huge haul of drugs and mobile phones has been recovered since the introduction of new detection measures to crackdown on prison contraband, Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah revealed today.

A £2 million investment has seen every prison across the estate fitted out with hand-held mobile phone detectors and portable detection poles to step up the detection of illegal phones on the landings.

In addition, 300 specialist prison dogs have been trained in drugs detection to help stem the flow of illicit substances into our prisons, allowing officers to focus their efforts on reforming and turning the lives around of offenders.

The measures are part of a much wider strategy to tackle the most pressing threats to security in prisons and backed by a strengthening of the frontline with 2,500 additional prison officers by 2018.

New statistics show that in 2016, hardworking prison staff recovered 225kg of illicit drugs – the equivalent weight of 2 washing machines – across the prison estate.

And in the same year, over 13,000 mobile phones and 7,000 sim cards were recovered from prisons – helping to thwart the attempts of criminals to continue committing crime behind bars.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said:

I have been clear that the current levels of violence, drugs and mobile phones in our prisons is unacceptable. We have put in place a number of measures to help disrupt this illegal activity as it is an issue I am absolutely determined to resolve.

These figures highlight the determination of prison staff to disrupt this behaviour, whilst at the same time sending a clear message that we will push to prosecute anyone who involves themselves in this kind of activity.

The issues within our prisons will not be resolved overnight, but we must make progress in tackling these problems. Bringing in more frontline staff is an integral part of that. The number of prison officers in post is on the rise, meaning we are on track to

achieving the recruitment of 2,500 officers by 2018.

The government has introduced strict measures to prevent drugs in prisons including introducing legislation which makes the possession of psychoactive substances a criminal offence,

Meanwhile, a specialist squad of prison and police officers has been formed to tackle the threat drones pose to prison security.

The team of investigators will work closely with national law enforcement agencies and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to inspect drones that have been recovered from prisons in a bid to identify and track down those involved in attempts to smuggle in contraband.

Figures show that to date, there has been a total of 35 arrests and 11 convictions of criminals involved in drone activity – resulting in those convicted serving a total of more than 40 years in jail.

This includes:

- the longest sentence of this type which was handed down in May, where Tomas Natalevicius and accomplice Dalius Zilinskas were jailed for over a decade collectively
- in December, Dean Rawley-Bell, 21, was jailed for 4 years and 8 months after he used a drone in attempts to smuggle drugs and mobile phones into HMP Manchester
- in October, drug dealer Renelle Carlisle, 23, was jailed for 3 years and 4 months after he was caught outside HMP Risley in Warrington with a drone in his bag, trying to smuggle drugs inside
- in July, 37-year-old Daniel Kelly was locked up for 14 months for trying to supply offenders at HMP Elmley and Swaleside in Sheppey, HMP Wandsworth in London and HMP the Mount in Hemel Hempstead with contraband

## **Notes to editors**

Progress made on making prisons safer and more secure includes:

- rolling out new tests since September for psychoactive substances across the estate, including supporting governors to use drug testing on entry and exit from prison as part of a more extensive testing programme
- 300 dogs across the estate to detect new psychoactive substances with

positive feedback from prison staff

- making the supply of psychoactive substances into prisons, and possession of them, criminal offences
- introducing legislation so we can now apply for Telecommunications Restriction Orders at Court to block specific mobile phones being used in prisons. Since the legislation was introduced in August, we have had more than 150 mobile phones cut off
- establishing a £3 million intelligence hub to tackle gang crime behind bars
- making it a criminal offence to bring a mobile phone into prison, or transmit sounds or images from within a prison using a mobile phone. These offences carry a maximum penalty of 2 years in prison
- working with the mobile network operators to do more, including developing new technological solutions, so we can block mobile phones' signals in prisons