

“Audit of the Department of Justice’s Efforts to Protect Federal Bureau of Prisons Facilities Against Threats Posed by Unmanned Aircraft Systems,” September 2020

Hello, I’m Michael Horowitz, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today, my office released a report on the Department of Justice’s efforts to protect federal prisons from threats posed by drones. The DOJ’s Bureau of Prisons, or BOP, faces significant and growing challenges related to drones. Drones have been used to deliver contraband to inmates, and could also be used to surveil institutions, facilitate escape attempts, or transport dangerous weapons such as firearms or explosives.

Our report identified several steps that the Department and BOP should take to mitigate these threats. For example:

We found that BOP should enhance its tracking of drone incidents. The BOP formally started such tracking in 2018, and the figures reflect a substantial increase in the number of drone incidents. However, we believe the number of these incidents may actually be underreported. Improved tracking will allow the BOP to better determine the extent of the threat posed by drones, identify areas of highest risk, and more effectively respond to these dangers.

We also found that there have been delays in the Department finalizing guidance on the use of authorities to counter drones, and that these delays have hampered the BOP’s ability to deploy drone counter-measures.

Additionally, we found that while the BOP has worked to secure funding for testing, evaluation, and procurement of drone counter-systems, the BOP faces challenges in identifying and verifying solutions that are reliable, cost-effective, and able to keep pace with rapidly advancing drone technology.

Our report makes seven recommendations to the BOP and the DOJ. To read our report, and to see all of our recommendations, visit our website oig.justice.gov, or go to oversight.gov.

Thank you for joining me today.

(Stock media provided by composer William Pearson and publisher Prolific Two Publishing/Pond5.com, www.pond5.com.)