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Q10

The use of unmanned aerial vehicles(UAVs) by our adversaries across the borders to ferry arms/ammunitions, drugs, etc., is a serious threat to the internal security. Comment on the measures being taken to tackle this threat.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · GS III · 10 marks · Border Security and Organised Crime
Security challenges and their management in border areas - linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

Core demand of the question

- State the UAV threat of arms and drugs across borders
- **Comment on measures:** Border Security Force, Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System, **anti-drone** systems
- Keep the Punjab-Jammu and western border as the operational picture

Revision summary

Small UAVs drop arms, ammunition and narcotics across foggy and riverine borders, especially Punjab and Jammu.

The operator can remain across the fence, which makes attribution hard.

BSF has specialised drone response and works with police and the Narcotics Control Bureau.

CIBMS adds sensors and cameras to high-risk fence stretches.

Anti-drone radars, jammers and DRDO-type systems must sit with criminal cases against handlers.

Introduction

A small **unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)** can cross a fence that a person cannot. Adversaries and criminal groups have used quadcopters to drop **arms, ammunition and narcotics** into Indian border belts, especially along **Punjab and Jammu**. The threat is internal security because the payload is meant for terror modules and drug networks inside the country.

Body**The threat**

- Low-cost drones fly **below many older radars**, at night, and from short range across a riverine or foggy border.
- Payloads have included **pistols, ammunition, explosives and heroin** in documented Border Security Force seizures.
- The operator can stay on the other side; attribution is slow.
- The same method can later carry **better explosives or surveillance**, so the problem scales.

Measures

- **Border Security Force (BSF)** has raised drone squads, night optics, and specialised companies; it seizes drones and payloads and works with State police and the **Narcotics Control Bureau**.
- **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS)** layers fences, sensors, cameras, and command rooms on high-risk stretches so a small flight is not only a human lookout's problem.
- **Anti-drone tools: detection (radar, radio-frequency, electro-optic), and defeat (jammers, nets, spoofing, and in some forces DRDO D4-type systems and directed-energy pilots).** The Ministry of Home Affairs has issued **anti-drone** guidelines for police and vital installations.
- Air-defence and **Indian Air Force** sensors cover higher and longer-range unmanned aircraft; the small commercial quadcopter is mainly a **BSF-police** problem.
- Legal and investigative follow-up uses **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act** and **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act** cases so a drop is not treated as a petty smuggle.
- **Gaps:** cheap drones outpace jammers, civilian drones are dual-use, and riverine fog still blinds sensors. Measures must combine **tech, patrol, and disruption of the handler network**, not only a new gadget on the fence.

Flow diagram

Cross-border UAV -> Arms ammo drugs
 Arms ammo drugs -> Internal security
 Internal security -> BSF patrols seizures
 Internal security -> CIBMS sensors
 Internal security -> Anti-drone detect jam
 BSF patrols seizures -> Handler network cases
 Anti-drone detect jam -> Handler network cases

Conclusion

Cross-border UAVs ferry arms and drugs under the radar of a fence-era border. **BSF** seizures, **CIBMS** sensors, and **anti-drone** detect-and-jam systems are the present reply. They work if handlers are also caught and if the sensor layer is kept ahead of cheap aircraft.

Facts & figures

BSF

Border Security Force: lead land-border guarding force on much of the western and eastern land border; seizes drones and payloads.

CIBMS

Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System: fence plus sensors, cameras and a command network on vulnerable stretches.

Anti-drone

Detect (radar, radio-frequency, cameras) and defeat (jam, spoof, net, kinetic or directed energy) under MHA guidelines and service systems.

DRDO D4

A Defence Research and Development Organisation anti-drone system used at some vital sites and by security forces.

NDPS and UAPA

Drug drops and arms drops are pursued as narcotics and, where the link exists, as unlawful-activity cases, not as lost parcels.

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