Document Details: Clarification Q&A in response to the call for proposals

Challenge: Novel counter drones and ground stations

Deadline for questions: 18th November 2025

#	Question	Answer
1	What is the status of patented information if I submit an application for one of your challenges	All Background IP owned by or licensed to either Party prior to the commencement of the provision of the Services will remain the property of that Party or the licensor to that Party as appropriate.
2	Would you accept a proposition utilising a product that is already in the process of development?	Yes
3	For the concept demonstrator being handed over, would you agree to a loan of the product?	Upon completion of the Services and payment of the Fees and all other sums due to the Solution Provider from Cranfield in full, the Solution Provider will grant to the Funding Party for the Funding Party's sole use a non-exclusive, world-wide, non-transferable licence to use that part of the Solution Provider's Background IP used in the provision of the Services and a non-exclusive world-wide non-transferable licence to use that part of the Project IP which, in each case, is wholly and necessarily required for sole use of the Deliverables.

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4	Where full specifications are supplied, would you respect background IP?	All Background IP owned by or licensed to either Party prior to the commencement of the provision of the Services will remain the property of that Party or the licensor to that Party as appropriate.
5	Can suppliers submit more than one proposal per workstream?	Yes
6	Can equipment already in service be submitted if proposed to be used in a novel manner?	Yes
7	WS2 What is the minimum operationally useful warning time between a drone being detected and reaching its intended drop point, and is there value in systems that provide zero early warning but reliably confirm entry?	The minimum operationally useful warning time depends on the specific operational context and the response protocols in place. Generally, even a few seconds of early warning can enable security staff to take preventative action, such as alerting patrols or activating countermeasures. Systems that provide zero early warning but reliably confirm entry can still be valuable for forensic analysis, incident response, and evidence gathering, but are less effective for immediate intervention. Ideally, solutions should maximise early warning while ensuring high reliability of detection.
8	WS2 Are any sensing modalities—such as radar, acoustic, RF, or optical systems—explicitly prohibited or strongly discouraged in prison contexts?	No sensing modality is universally prohibited, but the solutions that are being sought must present novel technologies or novel uses of existing technologies.

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9	WS2 Are technical solutions that require distributed sensors outside the formal prison boundary (e.g., on adjacent land or buildings) permissible under existing policy and governance constraints?	Deploying sensors outside the formal prison boundary may be permissible but will require explicit agreements with landowners and must comply with data protection, privacy, and security policies. Solutions that minimise reliance on external sites may be operationally simpler to implement.
10	WS2 What are the current methods criminals use to pilot drones into UK prisons, including launch points, flight profiles, and whether they operate singly or in coordinated groups?	This information will not be shared here.
11	WS2 How have drone-drop tactics evolved over time, and what defensive or contextual changes prompted each shift in strategy?	This information will not be shared here.
12	WS2 To what extent do operators attempt to conceal the drone's presence, and do drones usually exit successfully or function as disposable, one-way assets?	Operators often attempt to minimise detection by flying at night, using small or camouflaged drones, disabling lights and limiting flight time. Some drones are intended to exit and be reused, but some are treated as disposable.
13	WS2 How is contraband typically delivered once a drone reaches prison airspace—drop methods, landing strategies, or other techniques—and how is it collected or distributed by inmates?	Contraband is usually dropped via tethered lines, released from the air, or delivered by landing in a pre-arranged location. Prisoners may use signals or markings to guide drops and quickly retrieve items.

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14	WS2 Do UK prisons currently operate any baseline drone-detection systems (e.g., radar, RF scanners, acoustic arrays), and how effective are these?	This information will not be shared here.
15	WS2 What current drone detection technology is deployed at the HMPPS prisons?	This information will not be shared here.
16	WS2 We assume this challenge budget is only for one location, which prison will this project be deployed at?	The specific deployment site will be confirmed during project initiation, based on operational priorities and suitability for the proposed solution. Applicants may be asked to tailor their approach to the selected site's requirements.
17	WS2 Our solution exceeds £60,000 per site, would we still be eligible to participate in the challenge provided we absorb the additional costs during the 12-week project period?	Yes, you may participate if you are willing to absorb costs above the £60,000 budget cap. However, proposals will be assessed on value for money and feasibility within the stated budget.
18	WS2 Our solution costs more than £60,000 per site. However, we are prepared to participate in the challenge at £60,000 to demonstrate that our approach is the most effective option available. Should our solution prove successful, what is the process to secure funding for deployment?	If your solution is successful, further funding and deployment opportunities will be discussed with the sponsor at the end of the 12-week period. This may involve additional negotiations and demonstration of scalability and operational benefit and will be subject to commercial considerations.
19	Is this challenge open to academics in universities or only companies?	Yes, it is open to academics and companies

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20	WS2 we would like to propose an optical solution integrated into the existing camera capabilities (perhaps with some additional cameras) of the prisons. This would work for all types of drones, not just those operated across mobile networks. We believe our solution would answer both the critical requirements listed as well as integration into workflows and partial automation. Would that be a suitable proposition, or is the demand for something more specifically aligned to the mobile network sensing side?	The demand is for specific technology to identify SIMs in drones from mobile phone SIMs, but we are open to other sensing modalities as long as they meet the specific ask.
21	Is this open to companies from Estonia?	The challenge is open to any country not on the UK Government embargo list
22	WS2 would an acceptable deliverable for the end-to-end concept be a “works-like” platform where all the functionality is demonstrated, plus a “looks-like” prototype of the user interface?	Yes, a “works-like” platform demonstrating core functionality, accompanied by a “looks-like” user interface prototype, is acceptable as a deliverable. The focus should be on demonstrating technical feasibility and user experience.
23	WS2 will it be acceptable for the budget to include costs of UX design?	Yes, reasonable costs for UX design can be included in the project budget, provided they are justified and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the solution.

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24	If an applicant is successful, what would be the expected start date and the corresponding end date for the work?	Early February 2026 would be the start and 12 weeks later would be the completion date
25	Can jHub / MoJ provide a size of the market and potential budget for end systems	MOD: If successful, this solution could be adopted across UK Army, Navy, Air, CSOC, and it could also be marketed to NATO partners. No potential budget can be shared at this point.
26	The challenges both state that the end of the programme needs handing over a demonstrator. We assume that this would be on a loan basis - what period would the equipment be required for?	This would be negotiated with the sponsor at the end of the 12 weeks
27	WS2 Who is responsible for checking that the system operates within legal frameworks?	It is the responsibility of both the solution provider and the deploying authority to ensure compliance with all relevant legal frameworks. Providers should seek legal advice as needed and work closely with the sponsor to address any regulatory issues
28	WS2 Can you supply copies of the existing and forthcoming changes to legal frameworks?	Relevant legal frameworks are publicly available through government websites.
29	WS2 I'm sure that you will understand that currently the legal constraints about intercepting mobile traffic by un-authorised operations means that system testing in development outside of the authorised project is a problem. How can organisations carry out pre-project R&D independently outside of an HMGCC-authorised project.	Our focus is on technologies that don't require interception of mobile traffic.

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30	WS2 Technical Developments Outside the Stated Scope We have a design for an interceptor drone which will capture threat drones with no collateral damage threat which we want to include to make you aware of it. Is this OK?	This is out of scope for this call.
31	WS2 Please can you confirm whether you wish for solutions to only use the cellular signal for detection and tracking only, or whether solutions that use radar, acoustics, optics etc are in scope – either standalone or fused together?	While we are especially interested in innovative uses of cellular-based or radio-frequency-derived information, the challenge is not limited to a single sensing modality. Solutions that can integrate or complement existing detection technologies (radar, acoustic, optical, etc.) are in scope provided they do not depend on direct network operator involvement or regulated interception methods. The emphasis should be on novel, scalable, and legally compliant approaches.
32	WS2 Further, would it be acceptable to submit a solution that only used cellular signals to demonstrate the capability – with a view that longer term end users would have a system that is integrated with a range of sensing modes?	Yes. A solution that demonstrates its capability using cellular-based techniques alone is acceptable, provided it can show clear potential for integration with other sensing modes in the future. Proposals should focus on innovative, compliant methods of signal use without relying on privileged operator access, or sensitive data handling that would require statutory authority.
33	Is the Challenge limited to UK companies or other (friendly) nationalities are accepted?	No, any country that is not on the UK embargo list can apply for this challenge
34	WS2 The brief for the MoJ challenge seems to make some assumptions about the solution – in that the kit actively interrogates SIM cards to detect a nefarious drone. This is not	No, the challenge is open to a range of sensing modalities. While active SIM interrogation (with minimal to no data capture) is one

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	the only way to detect and track cellular controlled drones. Is this the only sensing modality you will consider within scope?	approach, other innovative and legally compliant detection methods are welcome.
35	WS1 , to locate the home base of the drones what timeline is allowed i.e. could the area be monitored for a number of days or a number of hours or is it required that the location be found very quickly	Ideally, the location would be found in a matter of hours, in under a day. The faster the localisation, the more desirable the solution.
36	For past competitions, is there any curated database for solution providers or winners?	This information is not shared publicly.
37	For outside of the UK proposers how should we handle the corporation number?	Please provide the registration number of your company in the country your company is registered
38	Can the budget projections in the application mix together funding from the provider themselves or private sources, alongside the HMGCC funding? The total cost may be more than £60,000	Yes but this doesn't give any advantage over proposals operating within the £60k budget
39	Will the Authority be identifying collaboration opportunities across bidders?	Yes we will always consider potential collaboration opportunities and encourage it but it is not always relevant or possible
40	What are the potential follow-on opportunities/ exploitation plan particularly if a TRL 9 solution is obtained?	The sponsor will have the relevant conversations/negotiations at the end of the 12 weeks

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41	Is there any chance for the potential extension considering the delivery of high TRL but within 12 weeks only?	Yes there is the possibility of further phases of work beyond 12 weeks but this is not guaranteed
42	Is it expected that only one winner will be selected for each tasks or will you be funding several solutions	There is always the potential to fund more than one bidder per workstream
43	For unsuccessful bidders or interested parties, would the Authority welcome support from a "Client side" e.g. independence QAT, design assurance, etc?	Thank you but not at this time
44	What proportion of the full Economic Cost (fEC) is typically funded, and is match funding required from the organisation?	We have a set budget for the challenge - up to £60k ex VAT per workstream for this challenge. Potential solution providers can submit proposals up to this figure for consideration. No match funding is required as this is not a grant
45	I wanted to inquire about the requirement to provide a "registration number" at the time of the application. Is this a registration number of our institution? How can I check? Also, will a Principal Investigator be able to submit directly or will this require a submission from the institutional official?	The registration number is the company registration number. If the investigator is a registered entity then they can apply, if not they will need to apply under the auspices of the institution
46	WS1 You mention you wish to detect the command station. Are we assuming the command station and where the drone is being launched from and returning to is the same location as the command station?"	Whilst some launches may come from the Ground Control Station, it is assumed that the pilot may look to mask their location by offsetting their launch and control sites.

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47	WS2 Can you confirm that detection techniques that are designed to detect any drone, regardless of control mechanism, can be considered?	Yes. Detection techniques that can identify drones regardless of their control mechanism are in scope for Stream 2. We are particularly interested in novel or unconventional approaches that can complement, rather than duplicate, established detection technologies (e.g. radar, acoustic, optical). Solutions should not rely on privileged access to cellular networks, or other forms of data capture
48	WS2 My kit doesn't perform RF detection, it's purely acoustic, so it couldn't tell you anything about SIM cards inside phones etc. Could you advise if a passive acoustic detection and tracking system is out-of-scope for this competition?	This challenge requires the ability to detect that a SIM card is present and confirm that it is not a standard mobile phone SIM. We do not require specific details of the SIM card, only confirmation of its presence. If your technology cannot detect the presence of a SIM card at all, then it would fall outside the scope of this challenge.

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