

DRI busts drone smuggling racket, kingpin held from Ahmedabad

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AHMEDABAD: An international racket involving smugglers from Pakistan, China, Myanmar and India to import high-end drones (remotely-piloted aircraft) into the country through the north-eastern border, has been busted, the Ahmedabad unit of the DRI has said.

While the shipment of drones and other related items, worth Rs 1 crore, was intercepted and seized by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) in March, the Ahmedabad-based mastermind, whose identity was not revealed, was arrested on Thursday, a release by the DRI.

The drones were smuggled into India from China through Myanmar. It was also revealed that some Pakistan-based smugglers and their firms were also involved in the entire racket.

"After these China-made drones reached Myanmar from China, these items were then illegally transported across the international border into India through Moreh and Imphal," the DRI said.

"Then, these drones were transported to Ahmedabad from Imphal using domestic airlines by misdeclaring the prohibited cargo as camera stand, household goods, electronic items, etc to misguide the agencies," it added.

Once in Ahmedabad, the drones were supplied to various locations across the country by using private couriers, the release said.

The money against the smuggled drones were sent by the Ahmedabad based smuggler, who has been arrested, to the Chinese company through hawala channels operating out of Mumbai, it added.

While part of the smuggled cargo was seized in March from a mini truck near the air cargo complex at Ahmedabad, another lot was seized from the the kingpin's shop in Paldi area of the city, said the release.

According to the DRI, this racket had been operating from 2017 and thousands of drones valued at over Rs 10 crore and involving duty evasion of nearly Rs 3 crore were smuggled into the country.

The agency said "drones can pose a threat to national security as they can be used for espionage and sabotage purposes by the enemy States and anti-national and terrorist groups".

Considering the security risk involved, various permissions, including Equipment Type Approval from the Department of Telecommunication and import clearance from Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) are required for the import of drones into India, the agency said.

It added that the nature of goods and the involvement of Pakistani and Chinese firms and the specialised nature of smuggling operations with different smugglers handling different segments of the operation "give rise to national security concerns".

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NATIONAL

DRI busts drone smuggling network

**Mahesh Langa**AHMEDABAD, MAY 16, 2019 23:26 IST
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The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Thursday arrested one person in Ahmedabad while busting a network operating across India, China, Pakistan and Myanmar that had been engaged in smuggling high-end drones.

Accusing the arrested person Chinmay Anand of being the network's kingpin, the DRI also seized high-end drones and recovered other equipment that is normally used in espionage and surveillance.

According to the DRI, the drones were supplied by Chinese companies, based on orders received from Pakistan-based firms, to a warehouse in Dehong, in China's Yunnan province. From Dehong, which is located close to Myanmar's eastern border, the drones were smuggled into Myanmar and from there to India.

"From Dehong in China, the Myanmarese smugglers were tasked with getting them to and across the China-Myanmar international border into Myanmar," the DRI said in a statement. "Once in Myanmar, these drones were transported hundreds of kilometres to a place called Tamu in Myanmar. From Tamu they were transported across the international border into India through Moreh and on to Imphal," it added.

The seized articles include 85 high-end drones of DJI Mavic, DJI Phantom and MI brands. Besides, 27 DJI Mavic Air Fly More Kit and 34 DJI Ronin S Handheld Gimbal Stabilizer for DSLR and mirror-less cameras used in film shootings were also recovered.

The agency contended that the racket had been going on since 2017 and that drones worth ₹10 crore had already been smuggled into and supplied in the country.

“Illegal drones in private hands can pose a threat to national security as they can be used for espionage and sabotage purposes by the enemy states and anti-national and terrorist groups,” the DRI asserted.

Considering the security risk involved with regard to drones, equipment type approval (ETA) from the Wireless Planning and Co-ordination (WPC) wing of the Department of Telecommunications, import clearances from the DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) and other approvals are required to import drones into the country.

DRI busts drone smuggling racket; kingpin held in Ahmedabad, operating racket from Mumbai

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Representational image

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