MoD tests defences against high-street drones as...WQB braced for jihadi chemical attack on UK

By Mark Nicol

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AGENTS at the GCHQ spy centre are on high alert when equipment that can be used to make chemical weapons is sold or offered on the black market. The threat is so serious that warning lights are activated in the intelligence centre every time heat-resistant glassware, chemical manufacturing equipment or some everyday substances that can be used to produce weapons are bought on eBay or Amazon, a security source has revealed.

Officers then investigate whether the items, some costing less than £10, have been bought by legitimate scientists or by terrorists plotting an atrocity. The astonishing measures were put in place after intelligence reports suggested that British jihadis trained in the production of chemical weapons by Islamic State (IS) had returned to the UK intent on mounting a chemical attack.

Security sources understand that the Islamic State group are working hard to make the deadly weapons at universities and schools and to smuggle some of the chemicals into the UK. They were targeting Britain's public sector in our story last week. 

Defence sources confirmed last night that British-designed system called AUDS - Anti-Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Defence System - was trialled in Scotland earlier this year and proved effective against remotely-controlled drones and autonomous drones which follow pre-programmed flight paths. The manufacturers of AUDS claim it can detect and disrupt multiple drones being flown in a ‘swarm attack’. The technology has been designed to intercept civilian grade mini-drones and would not affect commercial or military aircraft, which are encrypted and more secure.

The MoD said the Civil Aviation Authority have been alerted to the threat following several reports of drones being flown over nuclear power stations and military bases in France last night military expert Elizabeth Quinton, from the Royal United Services Institute, said. "There have been a number of dangerous or suspicious incidents involving drones in restricted areas. The proliferation of drones is a problem that is likely to increase in frequency."

"The Government and Civil Aviation Authority are looking into a variety of measures to mitigate these incidents which involve both technical solutions to spot the drones and deny access and law enforcement approaches. About the trial of the new equipment, a defence spokesman said: "The MoD regularly invests industry to demonstrate capabilities they are developing. These informal open events help build confidence in future technology." According to security sources, GCHQ agents have also been paying particularly close attention to sales of glass funnels, distillation apparatus and measuring cylinders which can be heated to about 500 degrees Celsius. Many chemical weapons are produced at high temperatures. Specialist glassware can withstand this heat without cracking or giving off impurities.

The agents are monitoring shopping websites and publishing information into customers because there are no Government controls over sales of specialist glassware or substances such as sodium sulphide, which is commonly used in the textile industry, but also to produce substances which can then be used to make chemical weapons.

Last night, former British Army officer Hugh Dunne said: "As a world-renowned chemical weapons expert, I have known that British jihadis may have been trained in the art of making chemical weapons and may have returned to the UK, but the security services are absolutely alive to this threat."

The Government is considering how to deal with the threat of drone weapons and believe they will become a part of the international terrorist weaponry in the near future. The UK is already actively fighting the threat of weapons in Syria and Iraq, and perhaps elsewhere, until their arms are in the hands of jihadis.

"I am not going to comment on intelligence matters," the MoD spokesman said only. "We do not comment on intelligence matters."

Ministers eye up superdrone spy in the sky

The MoD has been developing a superdrone capable of flying over the edge of the space for up to three months. The 900-mile Zephyr 8 can fly at altitudes of up to 70,000ft, providing surveillance and communication relays for up to 30 days. The lightweight drone can be used by the armed forces, and can be used in a range of roles.

Experts fear such drones, which are easy and available for sale, could be used to deliver a poisonous liquid or gas. Another concern is for a drone, or drones, could be flown into the engine of a passenger aircraft, causing the plane to crash. The threat is very real as IS has made a breakthrough in its chemical weapons capability and is exporting its knowledge to Britain.

After it emerged that 21-year-old British jihadi Rezwan Khan was killed by an RAF drone strike in Syria last month, the US successfully tested a device in the UK that can detect drones within 300m. The MoD said: "This is a sign of the threat, and we are not sitting idly by."

Defence chiefs are considering a deal to buy a solar-powered drone capable of flying on the edge of space for up to three months. The 900-mile Zephyr 8 can fly at altitudes of up to 70,000ft, providing surveillance and communication relays for up to 30 days. The lightweight drone can be used by the armed forces, and can be used in a range of roles.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is also considering to use the device to detect activities in the region. The MoD has already invested in the technology, and is working with industry to develop the device further. The MoD is also considering to use the device to detect activities in the region. The MoD has already invested in the technology, and is working with industry to develop the device further.

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