

Anti-Drone Security Umbrella Needed for Iconic Temples

By

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In April 2025, a YouTuber from Rajasthan was detained by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) vigilance personnel for allegedly flying a drone, unauthorisedly, in a restricted area near the temple. According to an official release from the TTD, the incident occurred at the Harinama Sankirtana Mandapam, located opposite to the main temple, which is the Srivari temple, in Tirumala. The man was identified as a content creator who was reportedly using the drone, without proper permission, to capture aerial footage of the iconic Temple premises. Flying drones over temple premises in Tirumala is strictly prohibited under the security guidelines issued by the TTD. The temple attracts lakhs of pilgrims every month and is considered a high-security zone. Unauthorised aerial surveillance or photography is seen as a potential threat to the safety and privacy of the devotees as well as the Temple assets.

Many YouTubers, have come in for adverse notice of enforcement agencies for filming sensitive installations and passing it on covertly to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). A Pakistani businesswoman named Naushaba Shahzad Masood, also known as 'Madam N' who runs a travel agency in Lahore, named Jaiyana

Travel and Tourism is suspected to be linked to ISI. Masood's husband is a retired civil services officer. She had cultivated You Tubers Jyoti Malhotra, and Jasbir Singh with the aim of setting up a sleeper cell network in India through social influencers and YouTubers. Masood was attempting to build a network of at least 500 spies in India, and for this purpose had facilitated the visit of nearly 3,000 Indians and 1,500 non-resident Indians (NRIs) to Pakistan in the recent past. Notably, Masood's travel agency was the only one that organised Sikh and Hindu pilgrimages to Pakistan, in collaboration with the Evacuee Trust Property Board. You Tube channels were being covertly misused to pass sensitive information of Indian Army movements and other classified data, which could be utilised for future drone attacks on sensitive installations. With the help of such traitorous spy You Tubers, Pakistan can stage a drone attack, as was recently done with astounding success by Ukraine.

Ukraine destroyed \$2 billion worth of high value Russian military aircrafts by drones valued at a mere \$430. How Ukraine did it? This operation was carried out by Ukraine's secret service SBU. Russia has very powerful air defence systems, so it was risky and futile to hit Russia, directly from Ukraine. So a plan was made to hit Russia from within Russia in order to bypass the formidable Russian air defence. Ukraine smuggled drones into Russia using civilian trucks that innocuously blended with normal Russian highway traffic. These trucks were camouflaged with wooden structures, likely posing as cargo shipments (e.g., lumber or construction materials). Some may have had

false license plates or forged documents to pass Russian checkpoints unnoticed. How it worked?

Russia's vast road network and relatively porous internal transport system make it hard to monitor every vehicle. Pre-assembled Drones were placed in a wooden cabin on the truck's roof, which were opened by remote control and these drones were simultaneously launched to attack Russian air bases. Once launched, the drones relied on GPS/inertial guidance systems to fly autonomously toward distant Russian airbases. Ukraine used NATO-supplied satellite data and ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) to identify exact positions of Russian bases. Once the drones were launched from within Russian territory, they flew several hundreds of kilometres to reach strategic airfields. Russian defences had very little time to react because the drones bypassed border surveillance, and caused massive damages. This is one of the most sophisticated and successful covert air operations of the Russia-Ukraine war so far and this is a wake up call for India also.

In India, things are even more easy. Almost every Indian army/navy/air force/coast guard bases are surrounded by Rohingya and Bangladeshi illegal camps, and other anti-nationals. These camps can easily be used to disrupt movement of defence personnel, and launch a simultaneous co-ordinated attack across India. If such a coordinated attack happens, it can badly damage the country's defence establishments. Since antagonistic political parties are in power in different States, it will be impossible to even conduct a successful legal prosecution or eviction of encroachers.

After the Ukrainian attack on Russia, India needs a massive review and revamp of its internal security architecture, especially the environment and population surrounding each and every military installation. Within a 5 kms radius of every military base/installation, land should be given only on a 11-month lease, after clearance by Police and intelligence agencies.

As tensions between India and Pakistan run high after the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, the mood across the country is one of heightened alert. Military movements have intensified, border towns are being watched like hawks, and security drills are happening across multiple states in the country. Also, engaging the attention of the government is the safety of many iconic religious architectural marvels, that dot across India.

The Taj Security Unit of the Agra Police, in response to heightened tension between India and Pakistan, has intensified security measures in and around the Taj Mahal. A high alert has been issued in the yellow zone of the Taj Mahal in the wake of Operation Sindoor. An AI-proof, drone-neutralising security layer has now been added to shield the Taj Mahal – India's most visited monument. Security agencies have deployed advanced anti-drone technology to guard the Taj Mahal, which is a 17th-century UNESCO World Heritage site, against emerging aerial threats. The installation of this advanced security system, boasting an 8-km detection range, forms part of stringent measures implemented particularly in the wake of Operation Sindoor. The state-of-the-art technology is capable of detecting, disabling, and neutralising hostile UAVs

within seconds; thus, ensuring enhanced protection for the architectural marvel.

But, Taj Mahal is just a 17th century monument, what about the hundreds of massive Temples that are several centuries older? Why no security coverage for them? Swami Narayan Temple, Lotus Temple, Ayodhya Temple, Varanasi, Puri, Tirupathi, Thanjavur, Sri Rangan, Madurai, Palani, Thiruvanthapuram, Sabarimala, Guruvayur, Mysore, Shirdi, Kolhapur, and hundreds of other iconic Temples, that have marvellous architecture and craftsmanship, far superior to the Taj Mahal, do they not deserve anti-drone protection?

Wars in Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Gaza, India-Pakistan have shown how drones can be used to easily destroy civilian infrastructure. In a similar fashion, terrorist organizations will very soon embrace weaponized drones to inflict destruction on vital installations and on security forces, as the use of cheap and efficient weaponized drones is fast spreading beyond war zones.

In India, all Temples and historical monuments are being controlled by local State governments, many of whom are steeped and enmeshed in corruption, communalism, and constantly debt ridden. Money donated to Temples by devotees are embezzled as there is zero accountability, no proper auditing or effective supervision. Devasthanams or Devasom Boards are packed with worthless party functionaries, who are atheists to the core. Foreign religions who have made vote trading into a specialized art, are the only

beneficiaries of government largesse. Every election in India means a free benefits upgrade for followers of foreign religions. Hindu Temples are mostly neglected with little or no security cover. At best, security is just a lone watchman or a few Police constables with lathis.

It is high time that the Central Government, takes over iconic Temples and monuments, in the interests of national security, and to preserve the cultural and religious sanctity by making appropriate legislation. All Temples falling in the Grade 'A' category (grading already in existence, done on the basis of money collections in the Temple Hundis, by the corrupt Devasthanams or Devasom Boards) should be brought under Central Government security coverage.

CISF/CRPF can be easily expanded to have a specialized **Temple Protection Wing**, adequately armed with anti-drone technology weapons. Hundi collections can be utilized to fund this project, in a transparent manner. Even the outgoing Agniveers can be absorbed in the Temple Protection Wing. The government also needs to seriously consider giving compulsory military training to all priests and Temple staff. That apart, NCC and Territorial Army needs to be upgraded and trained to handle anti-drone weapons.

The recent Operation Sindoor witnessed the deployment of a formidable arsenal of new-age weapons that included a range of precision-guided long-range weapons and drones, and loitering munitions. Pakistan, for its part, in its reactive Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos (wall of lead), deployed

a range of UAS, including its indigenously developed Shahpar (feather)-II MALE UAVs, armed Burraq (lightening) drones, Turkish-origin Bayraktar TB2s, and Chinese-supplied CH-4 and Wing Loong II platforms. These assets were complemented by CH-901 and WS-43 loitering munitions from China and domestically produced kamikaze drones, launched at multiple targets across a 1,500-kilometre expanse, stretching from Kashmir in the north to Bhuj in the west.

The next round of conflict, is likely to witness massive swarms of drones, targeting not only military installations but also many iconic cultural and religious structures. In fact, the government should make unauthorized manufacturing, importing, assembling, and flying of drones illegal and punishable. Vladimir Putin, correctly puts it "You need to put drones under control; you need to lay out certain rules of engagement in order to prevent or minimize collateral casualties. It is extremely important".
