



# Newsletter

March 2026

CODIN latest news, views, and announcements

## Members

### Announcements

CODIN at Washington, DC

### Awareness

Vigilance on Facility Grounds  
Emerging Communication Gaps  
How K2 is being manufactured and smuggled into prisons

### News Stories

Drug Smuggling Cases on the Rise Nationwide



**CODIN**  
FOUNDED 2025

CORRECTIONS & DETENTION INTELLIGENCE NETWORK

**Breaking Down Silos.  
Enhancing Safety.**

*Connecting Corrections Intelligence Across Jurisdictions.*



## A Message from the Founder & President

Recently I was in Washington, D.C. for a few days, in different rooms having different conversations, but hearing the same issue come up again and again. Drones and contraband cellphones are no longer separate issues. But before anything else, I want to acknowledge the CODIN members doing the work every day to build collaboration across agencies and jurisdictions. What you're doing matters, and I'm grateful for the partnership and commitment each of you brings to this network. Those conversations continue to reinforce that drones and contraband phones have evolved into a connected system, linking criminal activity inside facilities to networks operating across the country and beyond. This is organized, it's accelerating, and it's no longer a localized issue. We are not lacking intelligence, but we do need stronger connection, integration, and alignment in how we use it. CODIN is part of that effort, and together we continue to move in the right direction. The criminals have already connected, and it's on us to do the same.

– Gregory Phillips

Founder & President, CODIN, SA-GDC & Federal Task Force Agent



Rob Green, Executive Director of ACA, Joe Babiec, Chief Commercial Officer VIA, Tyrone Oliver, Commissioner GADOC, John Rutherford, Congressman of Florida, Chase Hallman, Director of Public Safety VIA, Gregory Phillips, Founder of CODIN, Special Agent GADOC, Matthew Wolfe, Director GADOC Officer of Professional Standards





## **Vigilance on Facility Grounds: Your Safety Is the First Priority**

**–5:9 SHIELD GROUP–**

**Travis Sparks, CODIN Georgia State Representative and Founder of 5:9 Shield Group**



Correctional environments demand constant vigilance, especially in an era where many agencies are operating with significant manpower shortages. Criminal networks are increasingly coordinating with inmates to move contraband onto facility grounds, and those operations sometimes include armed accomplices outside the perimeter. In one case we encountered, an individual acting as security for a contraband dropper was carrying a Draco AK pistol. During his interview he revealed that he had explicit instructions to engage if confronted by a single officer, but to disengage if two or more officers were present.

That reality reveals that complacency on prison grounds can quickly become life-threatening. Officers must approach every shift, every exterior patrol, and every perimeter check with a safety-first mindset. When possible, move in pairs, and maintain immediate backup communication. Weapons should be carried loaded and ready in accordance with policy, ballistic vests should be worn at all times.

Officers should be proficient with and carry basic medical equipment such as a tourniquet and trauma kit. In an environment where help may be minutes away, these tools can mean the difference between life and death. Vigilance is not paranoia, it is survival. In corrections, we often work with limited resources, but preparation, teamwork, and disciplined habits can offset those shortages and keep staff safe while protecting the integrity of the institution.



**Alishia McColl, WA DOC Chief Investigator**

## Emerging Communication Gaps Impacting Investigations

Investigators across multiple jurisdictions are encountering a growing challenge with communication methods that are circumventing traditional monitoring capabilities within correctional phone systems.

In certain instances, incarcerated individuals are able to utilize externally managed phone numbers that allow calls to be routed beyond the initial connection. While the call itself is still captured on the recorded line, the system does not consistently identify the final receiving party. This results in investigators being able to hear the conversation, but not reliably determine who is on the outside end of the communication.

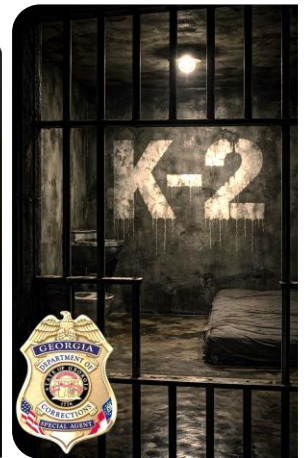
From an investigative standpoint, this creates a significant gap. The inability to associate a verified phone number or identity to a participant limits follow-up, disrupts link analysis, and weakens the ability to build actionable cases. This is particularly concerning in cases involving coordinated criminal activity, including contraband introduction, drug distribution, targeted violence, or external network operations. When layered communication methods are combined with coded language, the challenge is further amplified. Additionally, current detection mechanisms within some phone systems may not consistently flag this type of routing as third-party calling, allowing it to occur without clear indicators during monitoring or review.

These types of communication methods are not difficult to find online and has quickly caught attention of an alternate avenue. Variations of these services are openly marketed online, often described in ways that emphasize privacy, alternative communication, or indirect contact. A basic internet search can provide insight into how these systems function and how they may be leveraged.

This is not a theoretical concern. It is an operational reality that requires awareness. As communication methods continue to evolve, investigators must account for these gaps when analyzing call data, developing intelligence, and identifying external associates. Understanding where visibility is lost is critical. Without that awareness, key connections may remain unidentified, and investigative efforts may be limited in scope.

# Inside the Operation: How K2 Was Being Manufactured, Smuggled, and Mailed Into Georgia Prisons

*A Case Study, Special Agent Justin Fountain,  
Georgia Department of Corrections*



## **It started with a threat.**

When an inmate at Smith State Prison in Glenville made threats against staff, he was placed in segregation, and a contraband cell phone was found on his person. During the subsequent interview, the inmate spoke openly about earning money while incarcerated and hinted at involvement in a larger operation.

He didn't have to say much.  
The phone said the rest.

Forensic extraction of the device revealed a sophisticated, multi-location synthetic cannabinoid (K2) manufacturing and distribution network with roots stretching from Georgia all the way to China and Mexico. Raw chemical precursors were sourced overseas, routed through Mexico, smuggled into the U.S., and delivered to residential manufacturing sites in Paulding, Cobb, and Floyd counties. There, the finished product was sprayed onto paper, carefully disguised as greeting cards, legal documents, and personal correspondence, then mailed directly into correctional facilities...hiding in plain sight inside the daily mail stream.

Special Agent Justin Fountain of the GDC's Special Enforcement Section led the investigation. A eight-year veteran of correctional criminal investigations, Fountain has built his career tracking the criminal networks that don't stop operating just because someone gets locked up. This case was a textbook example of why that work matters. Pulling the operation apart required layering evidence from multiple sources simultaneously. Cellular data mapped the communication network. Banking records traced chemical supply purchases and laboratory equipment acquisitions. USPS and private carrier parcel records confirmed consistent shipping patterns for precursor materials moving across state and international lines. Covert surveillance of the Paulding County residence, where a female resident with no documented employment was listed as a business partner in a fictitious lawn care operation, revealed the same individuals making regular visits, manila envelopes changing hands, and extended activity in a garage with the door cracked open for ventilation.

The picture became undeniable.

The investigation demanded patience that tested everyone involved. Cellular extractions, banking records, and laboratory results all moved on their own timelines. The constantly shifting chemical

formulas used by manufacturers, compounds like 5F-ADB, JWH-018, and SGT-78, created legal gray areas that complicated prosecution at every turn. As a state agent, Fountain lacked administrative subpoena authority over out-of-state vendors, requiring federal partnership to obtain critical business and shipping records. While that cooperation proved essential, it added time....time during which the operation kept running and product kept moving. When the Paulding County warrant was finally executed, investigators found an active K2 lab: industrial solvents, chemical supplies, printers, templates, bulk herbal material soaked in chemical solution and dried for packaging, and finished product ready for distribution. Additional warrants at the remaining two sites confirmed what the evidence had been building toward a coordinated, professional, multi-location operation that had been quietly supplying Georgia's correctional facilities with one of the most dangerous and unpredictable substances currently circulating in institutional environments.

The network was dismantled.

Those responsible were identified and charged. The flow of K2 into the facilities involved dropped significantly. Beyond the arrests, the case strengthened institutional awareness of emerging drug trends, sharpened investigative procedures around synthetic substances, and reinforced the value of digital evidence and financial analysis as core investigative tools. It also served as a reminder that effective correctional law enforcement increasingly looks less like a pat-down and more like a financial crimes investigation, one that requires the same sophistication, persistence, and coordination that criminal networks bring to building their operations in the first place.

The threat doesn't stop at the fence line.  
Neither does the work.

Special Agent Justin Fountain has served with the Georgia Department of Corrections, Office of Professional Standards, Criminal Investigations Division since 2018.

# Drone Smuggling Cases Rising Nationwide

## **In the News: Drone Smuggling Results in 81-Year Sentence**

According to a release from the Florida Office of the Attorney General, a Jacksonville man has been sentenced to 81 years in prison after orchestrating a drone-based contraband smuggling operation targeting multiple correctional facilities. The investigation began in 2022 when a crashed drone carrying cell phones, SIM cards, narcotics, and razor blades was discovered at Century Correctional Institution. Working in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration, investigators traced the drone to Mario Crawford, a repeat offender with an extensive criminal history. Further investigation linked him to additional drone deliveries at other facilities, ultimately resulting in multiple felony charges and a conviction on all counts. The case highlights the increasing use of drones as a coordinated method to introduce contraband, and the level of interagency collaboration required to investigate and prosecute these operations. - Florida Attorney General Release

[Attorney General James Uthmeier Secures 81-Year Prison Sentence for Career Criminal in Prison Drug Trafficking Scheme | My Florida Legal](#)

## **In the News: California man tries, fails to deliver meth-filled balloons via drone**

A California man has been sentenced to 12 years and 7 months in federal prison after attempting to use a drone to deliver methamphetamine into a state correctional facility. According to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California, the individual conducted multiple drone flights over North Kern State Prison, dropping balloons filled with meth into the yard. Correctional staff recovered the contraband, and a subsequent attempt ended when the drone crashed nearby. Investigators were able to identify the operator through video footage recorded by the drone itself, leading to his arrest and guilty plea. The case highlights both the continued use of drones to introduce narcotics into facilities and the role of technology in identifying those responsible. - SFGate Release

[California man tries, fails to deliver meth-filled balloons via drone](#)

## **In the News: Glastonbury Man Sentenced to 9 Years in Federal Prison for Bath Salt Trafficking Offense**

A Connecticut man has been sentenced to nine years in federal prison for operating a large-scale drug distribution network tied to synthetic drugs, marijuana, and other controlled substances. Investigators also linked him to efforts to smuggle narcotics and contraband into a federal prison using drones, though that activity remains under federal investigation.

[District of Connecticut | Glastonbury Man Sentenced to 9 Years in Federal Prison for Bath Salt Trafficking Offense | United States Department of Justice](#)



THE INGRAM GROUP

