

## **Md. officials test cell phone detection at prison**

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***Associated Press (AP)***

ANNAPOLIS, Md.\_ Officials from five states observed tests on cell phone detection technology at a closed Maryland prison on Thursday, as states are taking a greater interest in finding ways to halt violence orchestrated by inmates behind prison walls.

Officials from Maryland, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia and Delaware attended the testing. The National Governor's Association also was represented, along with the American Correctional Association and the American Jail Association.

Officials examined technology from six vendors at the Maryland House of Correction, the Jessup prison closed in March 2007 because of its notoriously dark, hard-to-guard halls, broken locks and inmate violence that included the 2006 slaying of a correctional officer.

Gary Maynard, secretary of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, said the tests gave officials a chance to view a variety of different technologies.

"No one of these is going to be the answer for everybody," Maynard said. "It's going to be a combination of these systems."

The technology tested Thursday is designed to enable corrections officials to locate and root out contraband cell phones. It differs from cell phone jamming devices that would block signals and render cell phones useless in prison. Federal law now prohibits states from using the jamming devices, and legislation in Congress would change the law to allow states to use them.

The detection equipment demonstrated Thursday by five of the six vendors would not require a change in the law, because their equipment doesn't interfere with signals. The Federal Communications Commission granted a two-day license to one of the companies, Tecore Networks, because its technology cuts off an unauthorized cell phone call made from within a prison.

"If we can find a way to keep cell phones from being used from within the walls of our prisons to carry out criminal enterprises outside of prisons, I'm for whatever works, so we'll see," Gov. Martin O'Malley, who backs the cell phone jamming legislation in Congress, said Thursday.

Maryland has also requested a cell phone jamming demonstration at the Maryland Correctional Adjustment Center in downtown Baltimore, but the state is still waiting for federal permission to hold it.

"I think it really depends on whether or not there's any technology that works, that's proven and that emerges from these trials," O'Malley said. "There's going to be another time, I think, when we'll be testing the jamming technology."

Last month, legislation that would allow states to seek permission to conduct wireless cell phone jamming in prisons was approved by a Senate committee. The full Senate could vote on the measure as early as this fall. The measure, which has bipartisan support, is sponsored by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas. Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., is a co-sponsor.

The issue has been prominent in Maryland, where a Baltimore drug dealer used a cell phone to plan the killing of a witness from the city jail two years ago. In May, Patrick A. Byers Jr. was convicted of murdering Carl S. Lackl Jr., who had identified Byers as the gunman in a previous killing. In Texas, a state senator's life was threatened by a death row inmate who had a cell phone.

Maryland officials confiscated 947 cell phones in 2008 by using specially trained dogs and other security measures. That's a 71 percent increase in confiscations compared to 2006, according to the O'Malley administration.

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