NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

November 12, 2026

Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, D.C. 20554
888.225.5322

In re *Promoting Technological Solutions to Combat Contraband Wireless Device Use in Correctional Facilities*, GN Docket No. 13-111

Comments of the National Sheriffs' Association

With respect to the Third Report and Order and Fourth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, the National Sheriffs' Association appreciates the Federal Communication Commission's continued efforts to combat the longstanding problem of contraband cellphones in correctional facilities—here, by authorizing state and local operation of radio-frequency jamming in correctional facilities. In addition to recognizing contraband-cellphone risks, NSA joins others in asking the FCC to address the risks that cellphone jamming poses to lawful or authorized devices and communications.

1. Recognizing the Risks of the Use of Contraband Cellphones in Correctional Facilities

NSA joins the Correctional Leaders Association, the South Carolina Department of Corrections, and others in recognizing that contraband cellphones in correctional facilities, including state prisons and county jails, present security and crime risks. And NSA supports the FCC's long-time efforts to address contraband cellphones in correctional facilities and its more recent proposal to provide two paths to authorize state and local operation of RF jamming solutions in correctional facilities.

2. Addressing the Risks Jamming Presents to 911 and Other Authorized Communications

NSA joins CTIA, TIA, Verizon, AT&T Services, and others in asking the FCC to promulgate rules that address the risks that jamming technology presents to 911 and other authorized or lawful communications.[1] In light of a fatal air-ambulance crash in New Mexico's Capitan Mountains in May 2026,[2] the GPS Innovation Alliance even raises concerns about jamming technology's effect on GPS positioning, navigation, and timing signals (PNTs).[3]

NSA supports the draft order's key provisions to address jamming risks.

• **Proof-of-Concept Test** – Under an experimental license,[4] a proponent must complete one proof-of-concept test at a correctional facility for each proposed jamming solution.[5] A one-time representative POC test for a given jamming device technology may support applications for jamming licenses or leases for the deployment of the jamming solution at multiple correctional facilities.[6] The FCC expects a solutions provider to "demonstrate that the jamming system works as intended to contain harmful interference to a targeted area, addressing a primary stakeholder concern."[7]

• **Pre-Operational Test** – After the FCC grants a license and before a facility begins to operate a jamming solution, a proponent must complete an on-site, pre-operational test at the correctional facility where the vendor plans to deploy the jamming solution.[8] Along with the POC test, the pre-operational test should demonstrate that a jamming solution will be contained within the licensed area . . . ."[9]

• **Annual Certification** – A facility must certify annually that its jamming solution continues to operate as intended and in compliance with FCC regulations, including a requirement that the solution not cause harmful interference to authorized communications outside the jamming containment area.[10]

• **Safety Features** – A jamming solution must include a network-monitoring component, a locking mechanism, and procedures to resolve interference complaints, including stopping jamming operations pending the resolution of a credible complaint of interference.[11]

• **Authorized Equipment** – An authorized jamming solution must use FCC-authorized equipment.[12]

Notice. NSA recommends that the FCC require advance notice of proof-of-concept tests not only to FirstNet and relevant wireless providers but also to the relevant Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), or analogous representative, and *all* relevant emergency communication centers (ECCs) or PSAPs. Also, NSA recommends that the FCC require advance notice of pre-operational tests not only to "***the*** relevant Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)"[13] but to *all nearby* ECCs. More than one ECC may sit within the range of a particular proposed jamming solution. A sheriff's office and a nearby police department, for example, may operate separate ECCs in close proximity and with overlapping coverage areas.

Standards or Criteria for Harmful Interference. In rejecting recommendations for further pilot testing,[14] the FCC sought to "reassure stakeholders that eligible entities pursuing either of the two licensing paths . . . will be subject to strict technical standards and testing requirements."[15] In key places, the FCC said that proof-of-concept and pre-operational testing would ensure that a jamming solution "does not cause harmful interference" to authorized devices or lawful communications.[16]

In 2019, the National Telecommunications & Information Administration tested a jamming vendor's technology at **Broad River** Correctional Institution in South Carolina. Although NTIA reported that the technology emitted signals that would "likely deny service to other wireless devices within some indoor zone," it was "unclear whether [the jamming signal] was unnecessarily powerful to the detriment of licensed CMRS [commercial mobile radio services] wireless devices outside the targeted prison area."[17] The report noted that further analysis of jamming technology's risks was "not possible without accepted technical criteria for harmful interference thresholds for CMRS wireless devices."[18] In the case of CMRS-type receivers, for example, the report seemed to anticipate that interference criteria would be in the form of a ratio of desired signal power, *S*, compared to jamming-interference power, *I* (that is, an *S/I* ratio).[19]

The draft order does include interference-related rules, including emission limits, a locking-mechanism requirement, a network-monitoring requirement, interference-resolution procedures, an authorized-equipment requirement, and a limitation on the marketing of jamming devices.[20] To the extent that the points from the 2019 Broad River report remain relevant and applicable, however, NSA hopes that the FCC will continue to work with the field, including public-safety associations, jamming-solution providers, correctional facilities, wireless carriers, and other stakeholders, to gather data, set and refine standards, and combat contraband-cellphone use in correctional facilities while also safeguarding lawful or authorized devices and communications.

3. Definition of a Department of Corrections

In at least five new rules, the FCC uses the term department of corrections.[21] For example, to apply for approval as a lessee in a *de facto* transfer-spectrum leasing arrangement, an entity must "either be a department of corrections with authority over the correctional facility for which the lease is sought, or an entity that has entered into a contract with [such a] department of corrections."[22] It doesn't appear, however, that FCC proposed a definition of department of corrections.[23]

A state prison houses individuals who have received a sentence of several years imprisonment after a criminal conviction, and a state's department of corrections usually governs a state prison.[24] In contrast, a jail usually houses individuals after an arrest and during the time their charges are pending (pretrial detainees), as well as individuals who have received a sentence of 365 days or less after a conviction. A jail may be a county jail, a regional jail, or a city jail,[25] and state law often divides the relevant responsibilities and authorities between a county's commissioners court or other governing body (physical facilities & annual budget), on the one hand, and a sheriff (jail supervision and operations), on the other.[26] In the case of a regional jail, officials from more than one county may share the responsibilities and authority,[27] and in the case of a city jail, the municipality's city council or other governing body may have both. A sheriff's authority to sign contracts (especially if state law recognizes only one political subdivision—say, the county—with responsibilities and authority split between various officials[28]) is a question of state law, and a sheriff's contracting authority varies state by state.

In any event, the FCC should ensure that the definition of department of corrections is able to accommodate various states' division of responsibilities and authority relevant to the governance and operation of a jail.

Conclusion

The National Sheriffs' Association appreciates the Federal Communications Commission's continued efforts to combat the use of contraband cellphones in federal and state prisons and in county, city, and regional jails. NSA also appreciates the edits the FCC made to its proposed rules between its September 30, 2025 draft and its October 29, 2026 draft order that would authorize state and local operation of RF jamming in correctional facilities. NSA is confident that the FCC will promulgate rules that will add tools to a state and local correctional facility's ability to fight the use of contraband cellphones and will also protect lawful or authorized devices and communications.

Sincerely,



Sheriff Troy Wellman, President, National Sheriffs' Association



Yesim Karaman, Director, Government Affairs, National Sheriffs' Association

Cc:
Tim Woods, Deputy Executive Director, National Sheriffs' Association

Endnotes

[1] Section 333 of the Communications Act of 1934, for example, prohibits a person from willfully or maliciously interfering with an authorized station's communications. *See* 47 U.S.C. § 333. Section 302a(b) prohibits a person from making, importing, selling, or using devices, which don't comply with certain FCC regulations, and these may currently include jamming devices. *See* 47 U.S.C. § 302a(b).

CTIA—the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association—lodged various objections, including concerns about jamming risks. *See* Reply Comments of CTIA (filed Jan. 12, 2026), https://api.ctia.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/CTIA-reply-comments-1.12.26-final.pdf; Comments of CTIA, at 17–23 (filed Dec. 29, 2025) (arguing that the FCC has no authority to allow jamming; the FCC can't authorize jamming because section 333 forbids interference with licensed or authorized RF communications and jamming technology is indiscriminate; and the Third FNPRM would be arbitrary and capricious if adopted), https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/122962981652/1; *see also* Letter from Michael Mullinix, VP, Regulatory Affairs, CTIA, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC (Oct. 27, 2026) ("First, any order that would enable jammer use in correctional facilities should adopt a safe harbor without conditions making clear that no wireless provider violates the Communications Act or any FCC rule if (i) its network completes a call from a contraband device after a jamming system fails to block that call; or (ii) it operates in the vicinity of a correctional facility and a jammer blocks a lawful communication."), https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/26110083797/1.

TIA—the Telecommunications Industry Association—raised concerns about jamming risks. *See* Comments of the Telecommunications Industry Association (Dec. 29, 2025), https://tiaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/GN-Docket-No.13-111-Comments-Final-12-29-25.pdf.

Recognizing jamming risks, **Verizon** proposed a trust-but-verify system in which the FCC would adopt the current spectrum-leasing and contraband rules to jamming systems by authorizing equipment and requiring compliance with technical rules, as well as issuing a set of rules for state and local prisons and jails to negotiate with vendors for jamming solutions tailored to their facilities. *See, e.g.*, Verizon Reply Comments (Jan. 12, 2026), https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/1011246219349/1.

AT&T Services emphasized the potentially catastrophic consequences of authorizing jamming and recommended that the FCC start with a pilot program before taking further action. AT&T Services also recommended streamlining the approval process for contraband-interdiction systems (CISs). *See* Reply Comments of AT&T Services, Inc. (Jan. 12, 2026), https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/101120791719743/1.

[2] **Fatal Air-Ambulance Crash**. *See* Lisa L. Dyer, Exec. Dir., GPS Innovation Alliance, to FCC: Notice of Ex Parte Communication, GN Docket No. 13-111, et al., at 10 (Oct. 30, 2026) ("August 2026: Preliminary NTSB findings regarding the May 14, 2026, air ambulance loss of life in New Mexico cite government jamming in the area."); *id.* at 11 ("Notice to Airman message valid day of May 14, 2026 tragic air ambulance crash"); Vincent Rodriguez, "NTSB Report: Military GPS jamming was active at time of medical plane crash in New Mexico," KOTA7 Action News (Aug. 7, 2026) ("A medical transport aircraft that crashed in the mountains northeast of Ruidoso, killing all four people aboard, experienced a loss of GPS navigation capability shortly before the accident, according to a preliminary report released by the National Transportation Safety Board."), https://www.koat.com/article/new-mexico-medical-aircraft-crash-military-gps-jamming/73359343.

[3] **GPS Innovation Alliance.** *See* Lisa L. Dyer, Exec. Dir., GPS Innovation Alliance, to FCC: Notice of Ex Parte Communication, GN Docket No. 13-111, et al., at 5, 10 (Oct. 30, 2026) ("FCC action on

contraband cell phones used at correctional facilities. Key concerns: • Proliferation of jamming equipment and its misuse against government and transportation. • Sheer numbers: 6,245 correctional facilities located in the United States. • Locations: Near transportation hubs to serve families, employees, emergency services."), https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/26110083929/1.

[4] *See* FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶ 75 & n.228 (citing 47 CFR 2.805(b)).

[5] *See* FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶¶ 10, 69– 70.

[6] *See* FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶¶ 10, 69.

[7] FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶ 69; *see id.* ¶ 75 ("[E]ligible entities seeking to apply for an overlay license or a lease for a jamming solution will be required to submit, along with their application, POC test results demonstrating that the jamming solution *does not cause harmful interference to authorized devices* located outside the jamming containment area, and that the POC test was representative of, and scalable to, the jamming solution that will be deployed pursuant to the lease or overlay license.") (emphasis added); 47 CFR 90.1409(6) (requiring an entity seeking an overlay license to provide a jamming solution to include a description of the jamming solution and a representation of the jamming containment area associated with the proposed operations within which the jamming solution impact will be contained, such that harmful interference will not occur to authorized users located outside that area").

[8] *See* FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶ 73, ¶ 102, ¶ 111, ¶¶ 117–121; *id.* ¶ 74 ("As such, following POC testing, we anticipate that targeted post-license grant preoperational testing will enable accurate assessment of the impact of a jamming solution on a given RF environment."); *id.* ¶ 117 ("We adopt our proposed approach and will require testing following license grant, but prior to commencement of operations.").

[9] FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶ 91.

[10] *See* FCC Fact Sheet, "Promoting Technological Solutions to Combat Contraband Wireless Device Use in Correctional Facilities" (Oct. 29, 2026), https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-426311A1.pdf; FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶¶ 121, 143; 47 CFR 1.9041(o); 47 CFR 90.1437.

[11] *See* FCC Fact Sheet, "Promoting Technological Solutions to Combat Contraband Wireless Device Use in Correctional Facilities" (Oct. 29, 2026); FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶¶ 37, 179, 182, 186; 47 CFR 90.1423 (locking mechanism), 90.1425 (network monitoring), 90.1427 (interference resolution).

[12] *See* FCC Fact Sheet, "Promoting Technological Solutions to Combat Contraband Wireless Device Use in Correctional Facilities" (Oct. 29, 2026); FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶ 75 ("We will not require an applicant to have equipment authorizations in place at the time it files an application for an experimental license. Rather, equipment authorizations will be required no later than site-specific testing that follows grant of a WTB overlay license or approval of a lease arrangement."); *id.* ¶¶ 196–203; 47 CFR 1.9041(e)(2), 15.201, 90.1411(a), (a)(2). 90.1431.

[13] 47 CFR 1.9041(d)(e) ("The lessee must provide seven days' advance notice of the [pre-operational] test to . . . ***the relevant*** Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) as defined in § 9.3 of this Chapter . . . .")

(emphasis added); 47 CFR 90.1411(a) ("The licensee must provide seven days' advance notice of the [pre-operational] test to . . .
the relevant PSAP as defined in § 9.3 of this chapter . . . .").

[14] FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶ 73 ("[W]e find that implementing a formal pilot program at this time would cause undue delay in bringing this valuable tool to aid the corrections community in combatting this problem. Rather, requiring a POC test at a correctional facility of choice at the outset of the authorization process, coupled with subsequent post-license grant on-site testing at the specific
correctional facility where a jamming solution overlay or lease authorization is sought, will serve the same public interest purpose of ensuring the accuracy and precision of jamming solutions."); *id.* ¶ 111 (discussing the requirements for a proof-of-concept test and a post-grant, pre-operational test as grounds to reject proposals for further pilot testing).

[15] FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶ 7 ("We view the adopted technical rules and testing requirements as safeguards that render unnecessary the establishment of a formal pilot program or other type of phased implementation of this important public safety solution. We strongly emphasize, however, that although today's action expands the options available to the corrections community to combat contraband wireless devices in correctional facilities, we do not sanction jamming solutions that cause harmful interference to authorized users in violation of section 333 of the Act."); *see id.* ¶ 110 ("The overlay license application process to authorize jamming solutions in the narrow context of correctional facilities incorporates strict testing requirements—both POC testing and on-site, pre-operational testing—to ensure that any jamming solution will operate without causing harmful interference beyond the selected jamming containment area.").

[16] FCC, GN Docket No. 11-113, Third Report & Order and Fourth FNPRM, at ¶ 75; *id.* ¶ 110 ("both POC testing and on-site, pre-operational testing . . . to ensure that any jamming solution will operate without causing harmful interference beyond the selected jamming containment area"); *id.* ¶ 117 ("This [pre-operations] test would demonstrate that the system will function as expected and within the boundaries of the licensed jamming containment area, while not causing harmful interference with authorized communications.").

[17] Frank H. Sanders, Geoffrey A. Sanders, & John E. Carroll, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, NTIA Report TR-19-541, "Emission Measurements of a Contraband Wireless Device Jammer at a State Prison," at xiv (Sept. 2019), https://its.ntia.gov/publications/download/TR-19-541.pdf.

[18] Frank H. Sanders, *et. al*, NTIA Report TR-19-541," Emission Measurements," at xiv; *id.* at 31 ("Accepted quantitative engineering criteria for jammer effectiveness and harmful interference do not presently exist. Therefore, we do not know, and cannot currently assess, the extent to which a CMRS wireless device can or cannot perform its intended communications function in the presence of the measured jammer power levels."); *id.* at 2–3 ("Such assessments [that is, technical assessments of a jammer's potential for harmful interference] are currently hindered by a lack of accepted technical criteria for jamming-signal effectiveness against targeted receivers and potential for harmful interference to non-targeted receivers."); *id.* at 3 ("A second, similar problem exists for assessment of harmful-interference thresholds for CMRS-type receivers. Similarly to some sort of *S/J* criterion for jamming effectiveness, a criterion for harmful interference effects would likely be written in terms of desired signal power, *S*, compared to jamming interference power, *I*, (that is, as an *S/I* ratio)."); *id.* at 3 ("But we are not aware of any generally accepted *S/I* criteria for harmful interference thresholds for CMRS-type receivers. Until such studies are performed and *S/I* criteria have been accepted for such receivers, we are unable to quantitatively assess the harmful interference potential for measured levels of jamming power against

CMRS-type receivers."); *id.* at 31 ("Accepted quantitative engineering criteria for jammer effectiveness and harmful interference do not presently exist. Therefore, we do not know, and cannot currently assess, the extent to which a CMRS wireless device can or cannot perform its intended communications function in the presence of the measured jammer power levels."); *id.* at 31 ("[W]e recommend that quantitative engineering criteria for jammer effectiveness against contraband wireless devices (e.g., *S/J* thresholds) and for harmful interference to non-targeted wireless receivers (e.g., *S/I* thresholds) be developed if jamming technology is to be further analyzed for application in prison environments.").

[19] *See* Frank H. Sanders, *et. al*, NTIA Report TR-19-541," Emission Measurements," at 3 ("A second, similar problem exists for assessment of harmful-interference thresholds for CMRS-type receivers. Similarly to some sort of *S/J* criterion for jamming effectiveness, a criterion for harmful interference effects would likely be written in terms of desired signal power, *S*, compared to jamming interference power, *I*, (that is, as an *S/I* ratio)."); *id.* at 3 ("But we are not aware of any generally accepted *S/I* criteria for harmful interference thresholds for CMRS-type receivers. Until such studies are performed and *S/I* criteria have been accepted for such receivers, we are unable to quantitatively assess the harmful interference potential for measured levels of jamming power against CMRS-type receivers."); *id.* at 31 ("Accepted quantitative engineering criteria for jammer effectiveness and harmful interference do not presently exist. Therefore, we do not know, and cannot currently assess, the extent to which a CMRS wireless device can or cannot perform its intended communications function in the presence of the measured jammer power levels."); *id.* at 31 ("[W]e recommend that quantitative engineering criteria for jammer effectiveness against contraband wireless devices (e.g., *S/J* thresholds) and for harmful interference to non-targeted wireless receivers (e.g., *S/I* thresholds) be developed if jamming technology is to be further analyzed for application in prison environments.").

[20] *See* 47 CFR 1.9041(j) (interference-related rules) (listing 47 CFR part 90, subpart Z: §§ 90.1421, 90.1423, 90.1425, 90.1427, 90.1431, and 90.1433).

[21] *See* 47 CFR 1.9041(a) ("An entity seeking Commission approval as lessee in a de facto transfer spectrum leasing arrangement under this section must be either a department of corrections with authority over the correctional facility for which the lease is sought, or an entity that has entered into a contract with a department of corrections with authority over the correctional facility for which the lease is sought."); 47 CFR 20.23(e)(2)(ii) (requiring notification to jamming-solution licensees of certain network changes, including an authorization of service in a "geographic area . . . within which a correctional facility is located where a department of corrections . . . seeks to deploy a jamming solution"); 47 CFR 90.1403 (An entity is eligible to apply for an overlay license for the provision of a jamming solution under this subpart if it is a department of corrections with authority over the correctional facility for which the license is sought, or an entity that has entered into a contract with a department of corrections with authority over the correctional facility for which the license is sought."); 47 CFR 90.1413 ("The license will automatically terminate if the licensee has a contract with a department of corrections for the relevant correctional facility that expires or is terminated by the parties."); 47 CFR 90.1433 (restricting the marketing of jamming devices to "a department of corrections for use at a correctional facility as part of a jamming solution or to a jamming solutions provider that has a contract with such a department of corrections").

[22] *See* 47 CFR 1.9041(a) ("An entity seeking Commission approval as lessee in a de facto transfer spectrum leasing arrangement under this section must be either a department of corrections with authority over the correctional facility for which the lease is sought, or an entity that has entered into a contract with a department of corrections with authority over the correctional facility for which the lease is sought.").

[23] For example, the Third Report and Order doesn't propose to amend 47 CFR 1.9003 (definitions).

[24] *See, e.g.*, New York Laws, COR, Correction Law, article 2. § 5 (establishing the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision); New York State, Dept. of Corrections and Community Supervision, "Vision & Mission" (visited Nov. 12, 2026) ("The vision of the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision is to enhance public safety by having incarcerated persons return home, under supportive supervision, less likely to revert to criminal behavior."), https://doccs.ny.gov/departments-mission.

[25] *See, e.g.*, Sheriff, "Collin County Detention Facility" (visited Nov. 12, 2026), https://www.collincountytx.gov/sheriff/inmate-information; Waukesha County, "Sheriff: Jail Division" (visited Nov. 12, 2026) ("One of the primary duties of the Office of the Sheriff is the management of the jail."), https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/sheriff/jail-division/; Newport News Sheriff's Office, "Jail Information" (visited Nov. 12, 2026) ("The Newport News Sheriff's Office houses incarcerated individuals in both the City Jail and Jail Annex. The City Jail is a maximum-security facility with indirect supervision consisting of 7 floors that include a lockup, dormitory pods, cell blocks, and isolation cells. The Jail Annex is a minimum-security facility with dormitory pods and cells. The Jail Annex provides a host re-entry programs for incarcerated individuals upon their release."), https://www.nnsheriff.org/jail-info; City of Plano, "Plano City Jail" (visited Nov. 12, 2026), https://www.plano.gov/plano-city-jail?contentId=267aaff0-8c0c-4790-9888-a2c2e41168cf.

[26] *Compare, e.g.*, Texas Local Gov't Code, §§ 351.001–351.002 (requiring a county's commissioners court to provide safe and suitable jails for the county according to state standards); *id.* Chapter 111 (authorizing a commissioners court to adopt a county's budget), *with id.* § 351.041 (requiring a Texas sheriff to supervise the county jail and care for the detainees); Waukesha County, WI, "Sheriff: Jail Division" (visited Nov. 12, 2026) ("One of the primary duties of the Office of the Sheriff is the management of the jail. The Waukesha County Sheriff's Department operates the County Jail, a 481-bed maximum security facility consisting of both direct supervision and remote supervision housing pods."), https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/sheriff/jail-division/

[27] *See, e.g.*, Texas Local Gov't Code, §§ 351.031–351.035.

[28] *See, e.g., Darby v. Pasadena Police Dept.*, 939 F.2d 311 (5th Cir. 1991).