

Germany's national rail network to use anti-graffiti drones

Vandalism costs Deutsche Bahn an estimated €7 million a year

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The German national rail network, Deutsche Bahn has unveiled potentially controversial plans to use silent mini spy drones to track down and arrest graffiti sprayers who cost the company an estimated €7 million a year in cleaning fees.

Deutsche Bahn said it planned to fit the drones with infra-red cameras and fly them low over train marshalling yards and sidings. It said the filmed evidence could be used to prosecute vandals who repeatedly spray graffiti on trains and other company property.

A company spokesman said the drones cost €60,000 each and were almost silent when operated. He said they would be flown on information gathering missions some 500 feet above ground over Deutsche Bahn property and rail depots.

He stressed that the drones would be tested and that no date had been fixed for their regular deployment.

However the project could face stiff opposition from civil rights and other citizens' groups campaigning in favour of Germany's strict anti-surveillance laws.

Google was obliged to grant German householders the chance to opt out from the company's "Street View" mapping system when it was introduced three years ago. Some 200,000 householders objected to their homes being shown online.