

# SECURING MAJOR EVENTS

When asked why the IAEA should provide nuclear security support to countries that organize large public events, Nuclear Security Officer Sophia Miaw answers quickly and without hesitation.

“Imagine any major public event such as the Olympics, a football championship, or an Expo. If a dirty bomb were to be exploded at a site where tens of thousands of people congregate, the radioactive contamination would worsen the effects of the bomb, increase the number of casualties, impede a rapid emergency response, and cause long term disruption in the vicinity,” she said.

Data from the IAEA Incident and Trafficking Database helps States assess potential threats that could arise from illicitly trafficked nuclear or radiological materials.

Avoiding such nightmarish scenarios is the driving purpose behind the assistance the IAEA offers States that host major sporting or other public events. The support can range from a single training course to a comprehensive programme that includes threat assessment, training, loaned equipment and exercises. The type and scope of assistance depends on the host country's needs.

“We incorporate nuclear security measures into their security plan. We don't create anything new,” Miaw said.

A key component of the support offered to host States is relevant data from the IAEA Incident and Trafficking Database, to help States assess potential threats that could arise from illicitly trafficked nuclear or radiological materials.

The IAEA has supported States' nuclear security arrangements for the 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games in Athens and Beijing, the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa and the UEFA European Football Championship EURO 2012 in Poland and Ukraine. Current and future projects include the 2014 International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship in Belarus, the 2014 Olympic Games in the Russian Federation and several events to be held in Brazil from 2013 to 2016.

Organizing events is big business with many private companies involved, yet the IAEA support goes exclusively to the country's government, Miaw said.

In addition to ensuring nuclear security during the event itself, the IAEA support leaves a legacy of expertise and awareness in the country that hosts the event. The nuclear security arrangements during the event can also be a basis upon which a national framework for nuclear security can be built.

With the experience gained, the country will include nuclear security in its planning from the start when organizing future events. Brazil, for example, will not need to start from scratch in planning nuclear security at the FIFA Confederations Cup in June 2013, the World Youth Day in July 2013, the FIFA World Cup in July 2014, the Olympic Games in August 2016 and the Paralympic Games in September 2016. The country's authorities are building on the experience gathered through working with the IAEA in organizing nuclear security arrangements for the XV Pan American Games, held in 2007 in Rio de Janeiro.

Expertise gained during the Pan American Games enabled Brazil to assist Peru in organizing nuclear security at two major events in 2008. In 2009, the IAEA published a report on nuclear security measures at those Games, and in 2012, it published *Nuclear Security Systems and Measures for Major Public Events* (IAEA Nuclear Security Series No.18) to enable States to benefit from each other's experience.

Despite this growing capacity, Miaw sees a continued need for assistance of the type the IAEA is offering. Requests for support come regularly from States. Sports events make up the majority of requests, yet an increasing number relate to non-sporting events such as political meetings. Malaysia, for example, has asked for assistance in providing nuclear security at an Association of Southeast Asian Nations meeting to be held in November 2013.

Miaw's focus is prevention, “everything we do aims to help the host State in preventive measures. We do not want bad things to happen. This is the objective of our assistance,” she said.

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