

International initiatives since 09/11

Feedback from GICNT and other Workshops

Dr. R. Sefzig and G. Stoppa
*Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
Germany*

Abstract

On the background of the G8-Summit 2006, the US and Russia launched the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism to expand and accelerate the development of partnership capacity to combat the global threat of nuclear terrorism. More than 70 partner nations already joined the initiative.

In several Workshops, the need to increase security of radioactive sources and radioactive material has been discussed. Keeping control and regaining control, in particular over High-Activity Sealed Sources (HASS), was one of the main topics. In December 2007, Germany organized the Workshop on "Safety and Security of High-Activity Radioactive Sources - Operation of a National Register" in Munich, where the existence of national registers was seen as one important aspect to reach the goal of increased security. The discussion has been continued in June 2008, during the conference "Security of Radioactive Sources" in Ottawa, Canada, which was focused on best practices for the security of risk-significant radioactive sources in academic, industrial and medical applications. The conference included a very good mix of regulators as well as facility operators, to identify a number of best practices as well as lessons learned in the security of radioactive sources. The "Seminar on preventing illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials", June 2009, Morocco, will give the opportunity to share experiences and best practices on prevention of illicit trafficking, as an important factor to avoid the malicious use of radioactive material.

In 2008 the European Union launched a Task Force to combat the threat of Biological, Chemical, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) terrorism. In 2007 the decision was taken to concentrate the efforts on increasing the security of CBRN materials. The issue is also one of priorities of the "pursue" strand of the EU's overall counter-terrorism strategy and one of the top priorities of counter-terrorism officials across Europe as well as the world. The aim of the radiological/nuclear sub-group was to identify concrete actions which would need to be taken at EU level and at Member State level concerning prevention, detection and response to radiological and nuclear terrorism. The work of the sub-group was designed to contribute to the development of a policy package to be put forward by the Commission in 2009.

The example of Co-60 contaminated stainless steel (~180 tons) found in Germany shows, that control over radioactive sources is an important issue, not only for the prevention of radiological terrorism but for the protection of the public as well.