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Overview of Nuclear Forensics in Support of Investigations

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In recognition of the benefits of nuclear forensics to the implementation of national nuclear security infrastructures, the IAEA published in 2006 as part of its Nuclear Security Series, “Nuclear Forensics Support (Nuclear Security Series No. 2),” which was based on a document entitled “Model Action Plan for Nuclear Forensics and Nuclear Attribution,” developed by the Nuclear Forensics International Technical Working Group (ITWG). The Model Action Plan outlined a generalized approach to the conduct of a nuclear forensic examination. Since the original publication, there have been further advances in nuclear forensics. Nuclear forensic examinations have been successfully applied to a number of reported cases involving the illicit trafficking of highly enriched uranium and plutonium, as well as other events involving nuclear or other radioactive material out of regulatory control. Techniques, similar to those used in nuclear forensics, are also used to support nuclear counter-terrorism and compliance with various international legal instruments. As a result, the IAEA is revising the 2006 document which will be titled “Nuclear Forensics in Support of Investigations.” The objective of the revised publication is to describe the role of nuclear forensics in support of investigations of a nuclear security event and provide a context for nuclear forensics within a national nuclear security infrastructure. Additionally, the publication promotes international cooperation by encouraging States to seek or provide assistance, where appropriate, with regard to developing capabilities or during an investigation of a nuclear security event. An overview of the revised publication will be presented.

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