

Nuclear security as part of the security of major public events The G20 experience in Argentina

The IAEA defines a major public event as a sporting contest or high level political meeting that presents unique security challenges for the responsible organizations. These kind of events are important because any kind of security problems in them can lead to severe health, social, psychological, economic, political and environmental consequences. The security of a major public event also requires a detailed planning as well as systematic preparation and effective implementation. Decision makers should take into account that sometimes these events are organized by private actor and this fact may have consequences when organizing nuclear security.

Following the idea of the challenges that involve organizing a major public event, thinking a nuclear security operative in these kind of events is also a challenge. Nuclear material used with malicious intentions in a public place could be the following: a radiological exposure device (RED) in a public place, a dispersal of nuclear or other radioactive material (such as a radiological dispersal device –RDD-); a deliberate act to contaminate food or water supplies with radioactive materials, among others. Therefore, for a major public event, the nuclear security system should be an integral part of a bigger security plan for the event and it should also be linked to the nuclear security regime of that State.

On this regard, we should also consider that Argentina is a nuclear country. It has three Nuclear Power Plants (NPPs) in operation and several research reactors spread all over the country. Its nuclear development involves the whole nuclear cycle and it has a mature industry that has built its expertise around it. From a political point of view, nuclear energy in Argentina depends on several actors. From one hand, the independent regulator ARN (Nuclear Regulatory Authority) that has direct link to the Chief of Staff. On the other the Secretariat of Energy that has under its domain the two main operators CNEA (National Atomic Energy Commission) and NA-SA S.A (Nucleoeléctrica Argentina S.A) that are the ones in charge of the research reactors and the operation of the NPPs, respectively. Regarding nuclear security, although the ARN has the enforcement power in terms on regulatory norms, the Ministry of Security is responsible for protecting the civilians and the nuclear facilities. It does it through its four federal forces, the National Gendarmerie, the Federal Police, the Argentinian Prefectura and the Airforce Police.

Regarding nuclear security, in 2018 Argentina held the G-20. This is one of the most important political events in the world where the most important States set goals, agreements and cooperation between them and put some light into the future of the world. All through the year Argentina hosted more than 80 meetings from ministers, diplomats and different senior level politicians. Nevertheless the most important event was the Leaders Summit meeting on November 30th and December 1st. During those days, 38 head of States visited Argentina and held meetings in the City of Buenos Aires. Several major streets and avenues were blocked during both days and the city declared holiday in order to avoid traffic jam and preserve civilians for plausible conflicts during the riots that were programmed for those dates. As it was stated before, nuclear security was part of a bigger security operative and involved several actors in the field.

In light of this event, this paper will describe the challenges Argentina faced in order to conduct the security for that major public event. Those challenges can be well differentiated into three categories. The first one is related to coordination between technical experts and law enforcement agents in the field. The second deals with detection capabilities, how to organize them and how to conduct detection in large areas. Lastly, the third one is connected to updating and preparing protocols of emergency and response in large scale situations.

State

Argentina

Gender

Male

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