

Nuclear Forensics Engagement Team

*Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation
Office of Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism (ISN/WMDT)*

Continuing reports of nuclear and radioactive materials out of regulatory control highlight the risk that terrorists or other malicious actors could use these materials to cause harm. Nuclear forensics helps governments (1) investigate and prosecute illicit uses of nuclear or other radioactive material and (2) foster cooperation between or among governments investigating transnational crimes like nuclear smuggling. ISN/WMDT's Nuclear Forensics Engagement Team promotes this nuclear security tool through the following activities:

Improve and Facilitate the Sharing of Nuclear Forensics Information: Sharing nuclear forensics information can help governments to better understand connections between material, people, places and events. The ability to share this information within, and between, governments leads to effective investigations and prosecutions. To support information sharing, WMDT has helped articulate the concept of a National Nuclear Forensics Library (NNFL), which is a system of information and expertise that helps determine if nuclear material found outside control is consistent with a country's national holdings. This understanding helps investigators determine whether the diversion occurred inside or outside their country and if cooperation with another government is necessary. Thus NNFLs support investigations and prosecutions of both smugglers and those who diverted material from legitimate control.

Improve Cooperation on Post-Detonation Nuclear Forensics: The United States has made unique investments in effectively responding to the detonation of a nuclear device by terrorists. The Nuclear Forensics Team leverages these investments by ensuring that they can be deployed and utilized effectively overseas. The Team does this by sharing information about these capabilities, e.g. the Ground Collection Task Force, with international partners and by developing mechanisms and procedures to deploy them overseas. The Team routinely participates in exercises of these capabilities.

Coordinate Engagement with International Partners: The Nuclear Forensics Team provides guidance and support to U.S. government programs that engage international partners on nuclear forensics. The Team chairs the interagency Nuclear Forensics Engagement Working Group (FEWG), which facilitates U.S. government engagements, identifies gaps, and articulates desired partner nation capabilities. The FEWG includes representatives from U.S. technical, military, law enforcement and other communities. The Nuclear Forensics Team also engages international partners directly. The Team co-chairs the Nuclear Forensics International Technical Working Group (ITWG), which is the longest standing multilateral effort to identify and socialize best practices. The Team also supports training activities and workshops sponsored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism's (GICNT) Nuclear Forensics Working Group. Finally, the Team serves as the U.S. government's Point of Contact for foreign queries of the U.S. NNFL.