

## Egyptian NSSC Experience with Nuclear Security for Major Public Events

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The threat of malicious or criminal acts involving nuclear and other radioactive materials demands constant vigilance at the national, regional and global levels. For that reason, Egypt has and is continuously working to strengthen and sustain its national nuclear security regime, including through the Egyptian Nuclear Security Support Centre (ENSSC). The role of the ENSSC in strengthening and sustaining nuclear security became particularly clear when Egypt recently organized a major public event (MPE).

In 2019, Egypt hosted the Africa Cup of Nations regional football championship.

This biennial sports competition was awarded to Egypt at short notice and the preparation therefore presented a unique security challenge. Egyptian authorities were required to put special systems and measures in place rapidly to prevent, detect, and respond to potential criminal or terrorist acts involving nuclear and other radioactive material during the games.



Recognizing that the football matches would need to be screened for possible illicit use of nuclear and other radioactive material, the Government of Egypt turned to the ENSSC to train and lead a team of officers from multiple organizations who could carry out this effort, building on support

that the IAEA had given the ENSSC through procurement of radiation detection equipment and provision of training. The ENSSC hosted three government-wide meetings to develop and implement the national plan for nuclear security during this MPE. As a part of that plan, the ENSSC was responsible not only for training the MPE team, but also for supplying and maintaining the radiation detection equipment that would be used during the competition. Serving in these roles, the ENSSC was proudly able and ready to provide necessary support for the Africa Cup of Nations using a diverse range of resources: classrooms, equipment, instructors and technical experts. One of the biggest challenges this presented for the ENSSC was the impact on staffing that included technical experts and lecturers working around the clock to prepare, monitor and lead all the MPE teams and equipment stationed at six stadiums in four large cities across different regions of Egypt. ENSSC staff were constantly learning and adapting to a new nuclear security environment as they helped to strengthen nuclear security culture among the people working in the field of sports who had little familiarity with the subject.

On the other hand, the ENSSC gained key benefits through this experience. Of particular note, the ENSSC was able to strengthen its profile and standing within the nuclear security regime and identify new national stakeholders. Based on the successful planning, leadership, and support during the Africa Cup of Nations, the sports federations in Egypt are looking to the ENSSC to help lead in future preparation for sports MPE. This recognition is testament to the valuable contributions that the ENSSC can make to sustaining and strengthening nuclear security among national stakeholders.

The ENSSC experience with nuclear security for MPEs can also serve as a successful case for other States to consider. The primary lesson is that States that have an NSSC would be prudent to view their centre as a key stakeholder when preparing nuclear security systems and measures for an MPE. In line with its core functions, NSSCs can provide training for nuclear security MPE teams, technical support for the maintenance of radiation detection equipment used during the MPE, and scientific support if response to a nuclear security event is required.

Photos: ENSSC staff scan public areas for possible illicit use of nuclear and other radioactive material. Credit: Y. Soliman/ ENRRA

