



Advertisement

An advertisement banner for Avis car rental. It features the Avis logo on the left with the slogan "We try harder." in a red circle. In the center, it says "Save \$30 off weekly Avis rentals" in large white text on a red background. To the right of this text is a small icon of an airplane and the words "AIRPORT LOCATIONS". Below that is a button that says "GET THIS DEAL" with a right-pointing arrow. On the far right, there is a partial view of a white car's front end.

Powered by  Clickability

 Click to Print

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

U.N. nuclear agency helping China minimize threat of 'dirty bomb' at Beijing Olympics

By William J. Kole, Associated Press Writer

VIENNA, Austria — The U.N. nuclear agency said Friday it is helping China minimize the threat of a terrorist targeting the Beijing Olympics with a radiological "dirty bomb," although officials stressed they have no intelligence pointing to such an attack.

Anita Nilsson, head of nuclear security for the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, said agency experts were assisting the Chinese authorities with simulated exercises designed to test their response.

Over the past 18 months, IAEA teams have overseen simulations that included a bogus attempt to smuggle a small radioactive device into an Olympics venue, and the abandonment in a restaurant of a package purportedly containing radioactive isotopes, Nilsson said.

Peter Colgan, one of her deputies, said the exercises went "very well." The Chinese will use small, discreet radiation detectors at the Olympic venues, he said.

Colgan said the IAEA has held eight training courses with China's nuclear safety agency, including sessions on how to track missing radioactive materials. China has both atomic energy reactors and a nuclear weapons arsenal.

Nilsson said the IAEA is unaware of any intelligence suggesting terrorists are preparing to strike the Aug. 8-24 games - but she said the international community could take no chances because large spectator events such as the Olympics always are potential targets.

"We can't afford not to take precautions," she told reporters. "It's necessary to do as much as possible to have good, secure games."

She declined to say how well-prepared the IAEA thinks China is in handling such a threat.

A dirty bomb would use conventional explosives to spread radioactive material across an urban area. Experts warn that even a device that released a small amount of low-level material could have significant psychological impact and pose serious economic consequences because of cleanup problems.

The IAEA helped Greece minimize the chances of a similar threat at the 2004 Athens Olympics - the first games held after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the U.S.

The U.N. nuclear watchdog agency also helped Germany tighten security during the 2006 soccer World Cup, and its experts worked with Brazil during last summer's Pan American Games.

After the 9/11 attacks, the IAEA scrambled to improve its efforts to help member states tighten security around nuclear and other radioactive materials. "The overarching goal is to make it very difficult for a perpetrator to steal them," Nilsson said.

Despite the warnings, there have been no dirty bomb attacks, prompting skeptics to question whether assembling such a weapon is as easy as experts suggest it is.

But the IAEA said the Chinese - and the rest of the world - need to become more vigilant as threats evolve.

"It's like an airplane full of petrol flying into a building," Colgan said. "The threat was always there. It's just that no one really thought about it" until after the 9/11 attacks.

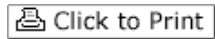
On the Net:

IAEA, www.iaea.org

The Associated Press

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/sports/olympics/2008-05-23-2920776148_x.htm



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright 2008 USA TODAY, a division of Gannett Co. Inc.