
Introduction

The International Atomic Energy Agency came into existence in 1957. Its dual objectives, as expressed in Article II of its Statute are to

seek to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. It shall ensure, so far as it is able, that assistance provided by it or at its request or under its supervision or control is not used in such a way as to further any military purpose.

From its beginning, therefore, the question of safeguarding nuclear goods and services to prevent their use for certain purposes was a central issue in the Agency's existence.

Its first safeguards system was devised in 1961 (INFCIRC/26) and subsequently revised to form the major safeguards system outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the INFCIRC/66 system (as of 1968, INFCIRC/66 Rev. 2). A second system, elaborated in INFCIRC/153, was devised following the coming into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. A revised version of this second system is applied to nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT.

The Agency has now been engaged in safeguarding nuclear materials and facilities for over two decades. The once-novel principle of verifying national activities through an international organization has become widely accepted within the realm of peaceful nuclear technology. Although there are other examples of verification by international organizations, such as the activities of the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) and of the Armaments Control Agency of the Western European Union, the IAEA is the premier example of such activity. As such, it stands in substantial contrast to the reliance on unilateral, essentially adversarial, verification systems in other arms control realms. It is true that there are co-operative aspects even in verification agreements between adversaries: it may be in the interest of one party to make certain information known to the other. However, such arrangements characteristically depend directly on national monitoring systems and evaluations of information. The IAEA verification systems are developed and applied by an international entity, and their findings are, at least initially, evaluated by that international entity.

The Agency's verification systems present a number of interesting features:

1. They are operated, as already mentioned, by an international organization rather than being a purely national system.

