

UNICRI'S EFFORTS IN SUSTAINING THE CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL FORENSIC CAPABILITIES OF ITS MEMBER STATES

by Talgat Toleubayev

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Investigation of a crime scene contaminated with chemical, biological or radiological materials poses several challenges to law enforcement authorities in relation to their safe approach and ability to collect and analyze critical evidence, which is vital for a successful prosecution.

The complexity of such scenes requires adequate preparation and planning and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including first responders, specialist police teams, criminal investigators, health and medical experts, staff from laboratories and prosecutors. While many may not be directly associated with the crime scene, understanding the challenges such scenes present will strengthen awareness and interoperability.





While some countries have well developed national Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and guidelines for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) materials, others have limited guidance or experience in developing such tools. In addition, national procedures are explicitly tailored to a country and therefore, the information it provides is not relevant beyond its geographical boundary. To address this gap, international organizations produce and endorse guidelines developed across the CBRN spectrum applicable transnationally. Some of these guidelines and manuals cater to different aspects of CBRN prevention and response.

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The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), was the first to take a step in this direction in 2014 with the publication of the “Radiological Crime Scene Management Implementing Guide”. The Guide was jointly sponsored by IAEA, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL). The Member States of IAEA widely use its Nuclear Security Series No22G Guidance to comply with their obligations under international legal instruments and conventions. One of the objectives of the IAEA’s Implementing Guide is to provide guidance on the investigation of radiologically contaminated crime scenes. Although the IAEA Guide of-

fers a unique support to its end users, its scope is limited to one aspect of CBRN.

To respond to the continued demand for guidance across other aspects of CBRN, UNICRI initiated a new project envisaging the development of the “Chemical and Biological Crime Scene Management Guidebook”. The project is funded by the European Commission within the framework of the European Union’s CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative (EU CBRN CoE), which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2020.

The core objective of UNICRI’s Guidebook is to provide the target audience and end-users with access to guidance on planning and managing crime scenes contaminated



with chemical or biological agents. To support this objective, UNICRI plans to bring together relevant international organizations and experienced subject matter experts to identify and develop the core themes to assist Member States in processing chemical and biological crime scenes, in a safe and effective way, from the crime scene to the courtroom. The project is divided into phases, each providing a different level of engagement and sustainability.

The Chemical and Biological Crime Scene Management Guidebook will be a high-level strategic document outlining essential content and considerations extrapolated from internationally accepted best practices, examples scenarios and basic crime scene templates relevant to these complex investigations.

In addition to the Guidebook, UNICRI's Chemical and Biological crime scene sustainability package will consist of different phases incorporating the development of chemical and biological crime scene management training curricula,

field exercises, moot court and similar practical scenarios, separately covering chemical and biological crime scene management. These practical elements will be adopted in partner countries based on their needs and inputs and will include strategic tabletop exercises and mock trials, as well as operational exercises.

Both training and field exercises will cover operational and tactical components, complementing the Guidebook's strategic guidance. The Guidebook will focus on interagency and multi-agency coordination and cooperation, by providing insights into the challenges and considerations of chemical and biological crime scene management and prosecution.

The Guidebook aims to adhere to the following characteristics:

- ▶ **Adjustable.** The Guidebook provides high-level insights that partner countries can develop and tailor to their existing procedures and/or national legislation and regulation related to the roles and responsibilities of their national CBRN teams, crime

scene processing, and prosecutorial process related to chemical and biological incidents.

- ▶ **User-friendly.** The layout and design of the Guidebook will be produced in a user-friendly way, to ensure quick and easy access to core content and references.
- ▶ **Innovative.** Using current Quick Response (QR) technology, the Guidebook hopes to include easy access links to downloadable templates for field applications.
- ▶ **Visual.** The Guidebook aims to include a number of images and graphics so that end-users can visualize different aspects of the theory.
- ▶ **Multilingual.** Initially, the Chemical and Biological Crime Scene Management Guidebook was going to be published only in English. But as project implementation progresses, the hope is to have additional language versions available, by translating the Guidebook into all official languages of the United Nations, and any other languages required.

THE AUTHOR

Talgat Toleubayev is UNICRI's Regional Coordinator within the CBRN Risk Mitigation and Security Governance Programme for South East and Eastern Europe since 2019. He coordinates the activities of 10 countries in the South East and East Europe region within the framework of the European Union's CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative. Prior to assuming this position, he worked at the headquarters of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) for more than 16 years.