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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Government of Uzbekistan's Denial of Accreditation to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Tashkent's Bureau

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 22, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My Government is increasingly concerned over continued attempts by the Government of Uzbekistan to stifle freedom of speech and the development of independent media in Uzbekistan. On December 12, the Government of Uzbekistan officially denied accreditation to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Tashkent Bureau. Previously, the Uzbek Government had kept Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's status in limbo for months, failing to answer its accreditation renewal application.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's closure brings an end to the operations of the last remaining major international news broadcaster in Uzbekistan. It follows the persistent harassment and subsequent departure of the BBC World Service and the closure of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting offices and the international NGO Internews. For the people of Uzbekistan, this means they no longer have access to views, analysis and commentary from across the political spectrum, including those that may, or may not, agree with government policy. The administrative harassment and ultimate denial of accreditation for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty represent yet another step backward for freedom of the media and information in post-Andijon Uzbekistan.

The United States calls on Uzbekistan to cease its policy of repressive behavior toward independent news broadcasters, and to live up to its OSCE obligations in support of freedom of the media and information.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.