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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Minister of Defense of Estonia Jaak Aaviksoo

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 4, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

We are honored to welcome Minister Aaviksoo to this joint meeting of the FSC and the Permanent Council and appreciate his address regarding Estonia's national strategy on cyber-security.

The threat of cyber-terrorism knows no boundaries. As was clearly shown by the aggressive cyber-attacks against Estonia, countries that are more technologically advanced are also more dependent on the Internet and computer networking, and thus are the ones that are the most vulnerable to such attacks. Many sectors of the economy that thirty years ago would have been secure now find themselves fending off attacks against their information systems on a daily basis. We saw this again just a few weeks ago, when Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty suffered a denial of service attack against its Internet sites in Belarus.

In contrast to other crimes or acts of terrorism, the perpetrators do not even have to be physically present in the country to carry out the attack, but can do so from half a world away.

For these reasons, we commend Estonia, as Chair of the FSC, and Finland, as Chair of the OSCE, for focusing much needed attention on this issue, which has broad implications for the OSCE region. Such cyber attacks, whether or not they are undertaken with the acquiescence of a government, can disrupt economies, imperil security and block systems of communication.

The COE's Convention on Cybercrime, to which the United States is also a party, already provides an adequate legal mechanism for addressing this scourge. Other security organizations, such as NATO, have also begun work in this field, and we should ensure that efforts are mutually reinforcing, and not competitive. However, we believe the OSCE should examine possible strategies to strengthen our abilities to defend ourselves against such threats.

Minister Aaviksoo, I want to again thank you for your presence here today.