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THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION / EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## **US EMBASSY STATEMENT ON ELECTIONS**

October 17, 2003

Amid the events surrounding the presidential elections and their aftermath, as well as some inaccurate press reporting, the U.S. would like once again to make its position clear. The U.S. has given over \$2 million to support free and fair elections in Azerbaijan, including funding over 150 international observers for the presidential elections, as well as participating in the OSCE election observation process. We have never supported any candidate in these elections, only a free and transparent process. Our principle objective is to advance democratization. We have long worked toward that democratic goal, and we will continue to do so.

We have made no conclusive assessment of the election outcome.

We would also like to reiterate the statement made by the U.S. Department of State spokesman on Thursday, October 16:

The United States concurs with the preliminary assessment of the Organization of Security and Cooperation for Europe that notes that the voting in Azerbaijan was generally orderly, but the election process still fell short of international standards. U.S. observers noted, specifically, problems with voter lists, cases of coercion and other irregularities. We are also concerned by reports of violent clashes after the election, and we urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint.

As in the past, we call on Azerbaijan's Government to follow through on its OSCE commitments, and to fulfill its duties for the safety of its citizens and the safeguarding of their rights. We also call upon the opposition parties to act peacefully and within the law.

We urge all parties to take all steps to restore public order and avoid further violence.