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Contact:
*Anne Johnson, Director of Communications, (202) 523-3240, ext. 27*

WASHINGTON - The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is in China August 14-28 for a visit that was agreed to by the United States and China in the December 2002 U.S-China bilateral human rights dialogue. The trip has been a high priority for the Bush Administration, and most recently was raised by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during her July meetings in Beijing. The delegation will have meetings in Beijing, Chengdu, Kashgar, Urumqi, Lhasa, and Shanghai.

The USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan federal commission that advises the President, Secretary of State, and Congress on how to promote religious freedom and related human rights around the world. It was created by the U.S. Congress in the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA). It consists of nine appointed Commissioners.

As part of its annual deliberative process, the Commission assesses religious freedom conditions first hand. In the past, USCIRF has sent official delegations to Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Eritrea, Laos, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and Vietnam, among other countries.