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## U.S. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **USTDA GRANT SUPPORTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNET DATA CENTER IN THE WEST BANK**

RAMALLAH (September 16, 2008) – Continuing the agency’s commitment to the development of the necessary information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure in the West Bank to serve as a catalyst for growth, USTDA today awarded a grant to Sharekat Safad Engineering & Electronics Ltd. (Safad). The grant will fund investment analysis on the establishment of the first commercial Internet data center (IDC) in the West Bank.

The \$412,093 grant was conferred during a signing ceremony held in Ramallah. Commercial Counselor John Harris, who represents U.S commercial interests in the West Bank, and Safad Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Ibrahim Barham signed the grant agreement on behalf of the U.S. Government and Safad, respectively. Representatives of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem witnessed the signing.

Safad is a major systems integrator and ICT solutions provider with its principal office in Ramallah. The USTDA-funded study for Safad will include strategic advisory and technical analysis related to the establishment of a secure data facility to provide web hosting, web services, managed services and other advanced applications for the local Internet and digital services marketplace.

The implementation of this project will enable the provision of domestic Internet hosting services, which are currently supplied only as an ancillary service by a Palestinian Internet Service Provider. Today, local companies have no choice but to seek hosting solutions in other countries, leading to an outflow of capital and unnecessarily high telecommunications connectivity charges. When implemented, the project will bring substantial economic development benefits to the West Bank and provide a strong commercial opportunity for U.S. equipment and technology suppliers.

The project represents the third USTDA activity in the West Bank since the agency reopened its program there earlier this year. At the Palestine Investment Conference in May, USTDA awarded a \$480,625 grant to BCI Communications and Technology Ltd. for technical assistance on the development of a WiMax network in ten West Bank cities. Additionally, USTDA has approved funding for an orientation visit to the United States for representatives of the West Bank’s marble and stone industry to visit U.S. dimension stone facilities and manufacturers and attend the 2008 StonExpo trade show in Las Vegas, Nevada.

(More)

The opportunity to provide the USTDA-funded assistance to Safad under the grant awarded today will be competed on the Federal Business Opportunities website at [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov). Interested U.S. firms should submit proposals according to the instructions in the Federal Business Opportunities announcement. Safad will select the U.S. contractor that will conduct the study.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency advances economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries. The agency funds various forms of technical assistance, early investment analysis, training, orientation visits and business workshops that support the development of a modern infrastructure and a fair and open trading environment. USTDA's strategic use of foreign assistance funds to support sound investment policy and decision-making in host countries creates an enabling environment for trade, investment and sustainable economic development. In carrying out its mission, USTDA gives emphasis to economic sectors that may benefit from U.S. exports of goods and services.

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