

Uzbek Authorities Crank Up Pressure on MTS

By [The Moscow Times](#)

August 12, 2012

The  **Moscow Times**

Uzbekistan's State Agency for Communications and Information, which suspended the operating licenses of Uzdunrobita, the local subsidiary of Mobile TeleSystems, is now seeking to annul these licenses altogether.

SACI is accusing Uzdunrobita of operating its branches without individual licenses and is petitioning the Tashkent Economic Court to revoke the company's licenses, Interfax reported Friday.

SACI's claims against Uzdunrobita for allegedly not meeting licensing requirements could total about \$210 million.

MTS said the regulator's claims that the branches operated illegally have no legal basis and contradict official documents, including those previously issued to Uzdunrobita by SACI itself. According to MTS, SACI created Uzdunrobita's current branch system in 2002 while it

was a shareholder of the company.

The license agreement issued to Uzdunrobota in 2004, which was signed by Abdullah Aripov, head of SACI at the time and currently Uzbekistan's deputy prime minister, expressly states that the license applies to all branches of Uzdunrobota for its duration regardless of when these branches were established, MTS said.

The Tashkent Economic Court on July 30 issued a ruling to extend the suspension of the operating license of Uzdunrobota for another three months. SACI had earlier suspended the license for 10 days. The company appealed the ruling, and on Aug. 9, SACI responded by filing a new claim seeking to completely annul all of Uzdunrobota's licenses.

A hearing is scheduled for Aug. 13.

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