

**Speech as delivered by  
Ambassador Pisan Manawapat  
at Reception of the Royal Thai Armed Forces Day  
Koran Room, Fort Myer Officers' Club  
2 February 2016**

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Ambassador Scot Marciel  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Asian and Pacific Affairs  
Excellencies,  
Honorable men & women in uniform,  
Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me and my wife together with Senior Colonel Phisit, Captain Suvin, and Group Captain Krisda to welcome you all to the reception of the Royal Thai Armed Forces Day.

This is an occasion to salute brave men and women in uniform who are prepared to risk their lives in harm's way to defend their nation.

This is also an opportunity to recognize their broader contribution, from assistance in rural development, disaster relief, to keeping peace in faraway and unsettled parts of the world.

Since Thailand joined the UN in 1946, we have sent over 20,000 Thai peacekeeping personnel on more than 20 UN peacekeeping and related missions, from the early days of the Korean War to conflicts in Lebanon, Iraq- Kuwait, Iraq, Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, Timor Leste, Burundi, the Sudan and South Sudan.

Last September, in response to President Obama's initiative, the Prime Minister of Thailand has pledged at the UN Peacekeeping Summit to contribute civil development, engineering and medical teams to future UN peacekeeping missions.

Based on a solid record of the above participation in UN Peacekeeping missions, and our diplomatic role as a bridge builder, Thailand has offered its candidacy to serve as a non permanent member of the UNSC for 2017-2018, Voting is to take place in June 2016. So when you return to your offices tomorrow, all you have to report to your capitals is just one issue, that is to vote for Thailand!

As far as our bilateral relations with US is concerned, Thai-US security dimension has been a cornerstone of our enduring ties since the end of World War II.

Thailand became a major Non NATO ally of the United States in 2004.

The 2012 Joint Vision Statement for the Thai-US Defense Alliance is a true 21<sup>st</sup> century partnership. It fosters regional and multilateral security cooperation through a variety of initiatives and exercises, including Cobra Gold, the world's largest multilateral military exercise and premier training event in Asia.

35<sup>th</sup> Cobra Gold 2016 will be held in Thailand on 9-16 February. This year, the exercise will bring together almost 30 countries including China as observer, to address regional and global security challenges and promote international cooperation in areas such as piracy and providing humanitarian assistance.

The armed forces of our two nations have proven more ability to provide timely lifesaving assistance in one of the grave natural disasters such as Tsunami in 2014, Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and earthquake in Nepal last year.

It is gratifying to note that last November, Secretary Ash Carter met with Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Defense Prawit in Kuala Lumpur. Defence Strategic Talks (DST) will be held in Thailand in the near future, following the successful meeting of the 5<sup>th</sup> Thai-US Strategic Dialogue in Bangkok on 16 December 2015.

Before I invite Ambassador Scot Marciel to join me in a toast, some of you may have spotted one slide on the screens earlier, showing me donning a Hawaiian Aloha shirt with Admiral Harry Harris, Jr., PACOM Commander. It was I, together with my military attaché colleagues paying PACOM a visit last October. We did not expect anything more than a courtesy call since we gave them rather short notice.

However, Admiral Harris gave us a very warm welcome, a proper lunch in his office and we have a substantive discussion on our long standing security ties and future cooperation in Southeast Asia.

After lunch, we were given a briefing at the operational center. I understand that not everyone is given this privilege. Admiral Harris extended to me, not because it was me, but it was a warm gesture and recognition of Thailand as the United States dependable friend and ally for all these years.

With that here please join me and Ambassador Scot Marciel in a toast to the everlasting relationship between the Kingdom of Thailand and the United States of America. Cheers!

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