

Remarks by Mrs. Patrawan Vechasart, Charge d’Affaires of Thailand

At the National Day Reception of the Kingdom of Thailand

The Fairmont Hotel, Washington, D.C.

December 5, 2017

Dr. Joseph Felter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asia

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth, Senator for Illinois,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sawasdee ka. Good evening.

It is a great honor for me to extend a very warm welcome to all of you. Thank you for joining us for this special evening. It is a pleasure to see many Friends of Thailand in this room.

Today, we celebrate the National Day of the Kingdom of Thailand and commemorate the Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Today is also Father’s Day for Thailand, and the day that the United Nations marks the World Soil Day in honor of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol for his life-long works in the field of soil resources development, in particular agricultural development.

His Majesty the late King Bhumibol, who was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts and passed away in October last year, had been Father of the Thai Nation. His passing was a great loss to the people of Thailand.

During the period of grief, we appreciated our American friends for being by our side.

The Thai people appreciated Secretary of Defense James Mattis for representing the United States at the Royal Cremation ceremony in Thailand this past October as the Special Envoy of President Donald Trump.

We were touched by the warm personal message that President Trump conveyed to His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn on this occasion. In his message, the President honored His Majesty the late King Bhumibol as “a lifelong friend of the United States”.

The Thai people also appreciated the friendship extended by the U.S. Congress. We were touched by the resolution “Honoring in praise and remembrance the extraordinary life, steady leadership, and remarkable, seventy-year reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand” that the Senate unanimously passed in March this year.

This Senate Resolution Number Nine – which coincided with King Rama the Ninth – will be remembered as an important event in the history of the relations between our two countries.

I wish to pay special tribute to Senator Orrin Hatch, the President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate, for his leadership behind this resolution. I also thank all the co-sponsors, including Senator Tammy Duckworth who is with us this evening, for their support.

Senator Duckworth, thank you very much.

Distinguished Guests,

His Majesty the late King Bhumibol had been a true friend of the U.S. and a strong supporter of the Thai-U.S. relationship throughout his seventy-year reign.

His Majesty had laid a strong foundation for our alliance that has stood the test of time and have grown from strength to strength.

This year, we have seen a series of high-level engagements between the two countries.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited Thailand in August and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross visited Thailand in September. Likewise, Foreign Minister and Commerce Minister of Thailand paid visits to Washington. Secretary of Defense Mattis met with top Thai defense leaders. High level officials of both countries have been in regular contact.

This positive momentum culminated in a successful visit of the Prime Minister of Thailand to Washington in early October.

During the visit, the Thai Prime Minister had extensive discussions with President Trump and many cabinet members on how to strengthen our alliance and work together to tackle many challenges in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

I want to thank my colleagues from various U.S. government agencies for their full support.

The Thai Prime Minister was very touched by the warm welcome from the U.S.

For Thais, sincere friendship means a lot.

Distinguished Guests,

I am confident in the future of the Thai – U.S alliance.

Next year, we will celebrate 200 years anniversary of the first contact between our two countries during the time of King Rama the Second and President James Monroe. Since then, Thailand and the U.S. have always been “Great and Good Friends”.

But our relationship is not just about the past. It is a relationship that is forward-looking and future-oriented.

We must work closer together to achieve “Stronger Alliance for Common Security and Closer Economic Partnership for Common Prosperity” that our leaders envisioned.

This is the spirit that will drive the alliance forward.

Strong and vibrant Thai-U.S. alliance will benefit the Indo-Pacific region, and will contribute to the ASEAN – U.S. partnership.

And here, I would like to pay tribute to Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, former Foreign Minister of Thailand and ASEAN Secretary-General who passed away last week. Dr. Surin was a good friend of the U.S. and a strong supporter of the ASEAN-U.S. strategic partnership.

He believed that, for ASEAN to be successful in maintaining peace and stability in Southeast Asia and beyond, ASEAN must be united and have constructive partnerships with all major powers, not least the U.S.

Distinguished Guests,

I am confident that our defense alliance – a key pillar of our relations – will be further strengthened. Our cooperation on strategic issues of common interest will be even closer.

Our economic partnership has a bright prospect. We will work closely to increase the two-way trade and investment that will benefit our peoples.

Today, investment from Thai companies in the U.S. stands at around 6 billion US dollars and growing, spans across 25 states, and contributes to over 60,000 jobs in America.

Thailand sees the U.S. as a key partner for our future. Thailand is working to upgrade our competitiveness. The U.S. is a world leader in science and technology, innovation, research and development. We look forward to strengthening collaboration with the U.S. on this issue.

We will work to further strengthen the people-to-people ties. Many of you here are good Friends of Thailand and I would like to thank all of you for your contributions.

I would like to give a special recognition to the Thai-American community that has played a very important part in strengthening the ties between our two peoples and cultures.

My special appreciation goes to Senator Tammy Duckworth for honoring us with your presence today. You have been an inspiration for many Thai-Americans, who will one day emerge as future leaders that will take our relations forward.

Distinguished Guests,

I want to conclude with words of wisdom from the speech delivered by His Majesty the late King Bhumibol to a Joint Session of the U.S. Congress in June 1960, which is applicable to our relations, as follows:

“Our two countries have had the best of relations. They started with the coming of your missionaries who shared with our people the benefits of modern medicine and the knowledge of modern science. This soon led to official relations and to a treaty between the two nations. That treaty dates as far back as 1833... In view of the present world tension and the feeling of uncertainty apparent everywhere, it is my sincere feeling that the time is ripe for an even closer cooperation. It will demonstrate to the world that we are one in purpose and conviction, and it can only lead to one thing – mutual benefit.”

Thank you very much. Kob Khun Ka.
