

**Remarks**  
**by**  
**H.E. Mr. Thani Thongphakdi**  
**Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the United States of America**  
**at the Reception to celebrate the National Day of the Kingdom of Thailand**  
**Wednesday 4 December 2019**

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**The Honorable Atul Keshap, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs,**

**The Honorable Allison Hooker, Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Asian Affairs,**

**The Honorable Ted Yoho, Ranking Member, Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and Nonproliferation, U.S. House of Representatives,**

**Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,**

Sawasdee krub and a warm welcome to all of you. Thank you for joining us this evening to celebrate the National Day of the Kingdom of Thailand in commemoration of the Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great and Thailand's Father's Day.

Having just arrived in Washington a few months ago, I must say how much of an honor it is for me to serve as Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the United States, a country that has been our Great and Good Friend over the past two centuries. When Captain Stephen Williams steered his ship up the Chao Phraya River in the early summer of June 1818, he could little imagine that his trip would be the beginning of an enduring friendship between our two nations. The first recorded American to visit Thailand was received with warmth and openness, which have been characteristic of relations between our two countries to this very day.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This year has been an important one, indeed historic one, for Thailand. In May, we celebrated the Coronation of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua. Two months before that, a general election was successfully held. And throughout this year, we proudly assumed Chairmanship of the Association of South East Asian Nations.

With the formation of a democratically elected government in Thailand, Thai-U.S. relations are now back on an even keel. Our military cooperation has fully resumed, including the International Military Education and Training program for Thai officers, who will benefit from having opportunities to not only study at leading U.S. military institutions, but also to cultivate a sense of camaraderie and life-time personal networks with their American colleagues. This year, the Royal Thai Army also dispatched, for the first time, the largest number of soldiers at the company level to train with the U.S. Army in Hawaii and Louisiana.

To top it all off, just last month, our Ministers of Defense signed the Joint Vision Statement 2020, underscoring the importance of our long-standing defense alliance in an era of new security challenges.

While Thailand is the oldest treaty partner and a long-time treaty ally of the United States in Asia, a more robust Thai-U.S. alliance will help support peace and stability in the region. It is a good example of what can be achieved when two countries join hands and work together on an increasingly comprehensive security partnership which also spans non-military cooperation to address such common challenges as disaster response, pandemics, terrorism and violent extremism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyber threats and various forms of transnational crimes.

Turning now to our economic relations, they have also been equally rewarding. Last year, the United States was Thailand's third largest trading partner with a total trade volume of over 44 billion dollars. The United States also remains one of the Kingdom's top investors, with cumulative investments of over 50 billion dollars. At the same time, investment from Thailand into the United States has increased significantly and now totals around 7 billion dollars, contributing to more than 70,000 jobs in over twenty states. This upward trajectory is expected to rise even further with leading Thai conglomerates planning to invest or expand their existing businesses in the United States.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our mutually rewarding relationship also extend to the regional level. Under Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship this year, we have sought to build upon the already strong Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and the United States, injecting dynamism and innovation into it as we work together to reinforce peace, freedom and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific and the Indo-Pacific regions. This year, we had the inaugural ASEAN-U.S. Maritime Exercise, the first ASEAN-U.S. Cyber Policy Dialogue, the first meeting of the ASEAN-U.S. Smart Cities Networks, and the start of negotiations to link the ASEAN Single Window with the U.S. electronic customs system to further facilitate two-way trade.

And last month, the Thai Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with the USABC and other organizations, successfully co-hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indo-Pacific Business Forum in Bangkok -- a landmark event that will go a long way to help our private sectors connect with each other and hence strengthen the already close economic ties between the United States and countries across the Indo-Pacific.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

While close relations in the political and economic spheres are important, people-to-people ties are indispensable. Our alliance and partnership have always depended upon goodwill and understanding between our peoples. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great put it best in his 1960 address to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress, "Friendship of one government for another is an important thing. But it is friendship of one people for another that assuredly guarantees peace and progress."

I am therefore pleased that over a million Americans travel to Thailand each year. Many have chosen Thailand as their second home. In the United States, growing Thai communities in many states are being welcomed and embraced by Americans with warmth and openness, just like how Captain Stephen Williams was welcomed by the Thai people over two hundred years ago.

Almost 7,000 Thais are currently studying in the United States, experiencing firsthand American friendship and American dreams. At the same time, more and more American are going to Thailand to study, to research and to teach. Many are recipients of the Fulbright Program which will enter its 70<sup>th</sup> year of cooperation with the Kingdom next year.

Looking ahead, it is my intention to work closely with all of you to strengthen even further our wide-ranging relationship, one that is anchored by our shared values of respect for fundamental freedoms and good governance, and driven by our mutual interests and entrepreneurial spirit, thus ensuring that the friendship and collaboration between our two countries will continue to flourish and reach new heights.

Thank you.

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