

**Remark by H.E. Mr. Noppadon Pattama,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
At the Reception in honour of H.E. FM, at The Four Seasons,
Washington, D.C. 19 March 2008**

March 23, 2008, 10:50 am

Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. John Negroponte,
Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Christopher Hill,
Senator Jim Webb,
Friends of Thailand,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here in Washington, D.C., on this first visit to the United States after taking office in February. It is truly an honour for me today to be in the distinguished company of such close and steadfast friends of Thailand as Deputy Secretary Negroponte and Senator Webb. Thailand owes them much for their friendship and unfailing support.

This visit to the U.S. has a special importance to me for two reasons: First, it is my first visit to the U.S. after taking office, and I might add, the first visit of a Foreign Minister after our return to democracy. Second, it marks with the 175th anniversary of the Thai-U.S. relations, the precise date of which is tomorrow, March 20. Here, I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to both Houses of the U.S. Congress for their Resolutions to commemorate this historic event and also to commemorate the 80th birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the revered Monarch of all his people. I want to thank Senator Jim Webb in particular, who was the main sponsor of the Senate Resolution.

Thailand and has been a long-standing friend and ally of the U.S. since 1833. We are committed to strengthening this friendship and seeking closer cooperation with the U.S. in all areas. The annual Cobra Gold, for instance, is but one of many showcases of the security cooperation between Thailand and the U.S.; it has now become an important part of regional security cooperation. Our cooperation in counter-terrorism, anti-narcotics, combating trafficking in drugs, humans, and arms are making valuable contributions to regional security and law enforcement.

Our economic relations have always been healthy. The U.S. still remains the largest export market for Thailand, with over 19 billion dollars of exports. The U.S. is also the second largest foreign investor in Thailand. After a volatile year, business confidence in Thailand is now back to normal. And consumer confidence is at the highest level in 20 months. The government has pledged to pursue a pro-business and pro-growth policy, with an aim of 6% percent growth for this year, and has given priority to economic stimulus, such as the so-called mega-projects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The bonds between our two countries run deep and goodwill towards the U.S. remains strong. When President Bush called to congratulate Prime Minister Samak on his election victory, the gesture was very well-received by the Thai people. We

hope that President Bush will accept my Prime Minister's invitation to visit Thailand this year.

The United States has been a key strategic partner for Thailand, and I am certain you will so remain into the future. But looking at the broader perspective of the whole region, especially against the background of the fast changing regional political landscape, I believe that U.S. enhanced profile and role within the region are of vital importance. As Thailand assumes the Chairmanship of ASEAN later this year, our primary goal will be to put the ASEAN Charter into force, and move ASEAN towards a deeper integration. I hope that the U.S. will support and be a part in this important process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here to celebrate the 175th anniversary of our friendship. I know that our relationship and cooperation will continue to thrive and prosper. Future generations should be able to look back at the legacy we leave, 175 years from now, with the same sense of admiration and pride as I do today.

Thank you.
