

**Statement of Ambassador Robert F. Godec
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
July 13, 2022**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Thailand and the Indo-Pacific region.

I would like to introduce to you my wife, Lori Magnusson, who is here today. Lori has been a source of inspiration, strength, and wisdom through our years together. Lori's constant love, support, and partnership have been extraordinary, and I owe much to her. I would also like to express my profound thanks to my mother, Nancy Dietrich, for all she has done for me.

Thailand has a rich history, remarkable culture, extraordinary beauty, and exceptional people. It has been a partner for the United States since 1833. Together, we have woven a rich tapestry of ties that are government-to-government, business-to-business, university-to-university, NGO-to-NGO, and people-to-people. We have improved security in the region, faced global public health challenges, deepened mutual prosperity, and advanced the fight against human, wildlife, and drug trafficking. Building on our shared values and our just signed United States-Thailand Communiqué on Strategic Alliance and Partnership, we have opportunities in the days ahead to strengthen further our partnership, to renew it, and take it to a new level.

The United States and Thailand have a long-standing commitment to mutual security. Our militaries fought side by side in Korea and Vietnam. Today, Thailand is a treaty and major non-NATO ally, and we have many military engagements and training exercises, including COBRA Gold, the largest in Asia. Our alliance helps to ensure security for Thailand, the United States, and the region. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen it.

Our economic partnership is another vital part of our tapestry of ties. Our total bilateral trade is over \$60 billion a year and growing. U.S. businesses are a major investor in Thailand and Thai companies are increasingly active in the United States. If confirmed, I will work to expand further our commercial ties.

Strengthening democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to U.S. relations with Thailand. We have long supported multi-party democracy, freedom of expression, good governance, and respect for human rights across the world and in Thailand. We recognized that a democratically elected government took office in 2019 after the 2014 coup, but work remains to be done by Thailand. If confirmed, I will vigorously continue our efforts to advance democracy, human rights, and the rule of law and will support civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders who play a critical role in this effort.

We also enjoy robust people-to-people ties. Our connections are enriched by the presence in the United States of almost 350,000 Thais and U.S. citizens of Thai heritage, and by the more than

100,000 U.S. citizens in Thailand. We are strengthened by the close ties our universities and colleges enjoy as well as the cultural exchange programs we support in Thailand. If confirmed, I will work to increase opportunities for Thais and Americans to learn together and from each other.

Thailand plays a vital role in the region. Today, we work closely with Thailand in ASEAN, and in other regional mechanisms including the Mekong-U.S. Partnership. As a key ally, we welcome Thailand's decision to join the discussions on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, which will help build an economic partnership for the future. If confirmed, I will engage robustly with Thailand, the host of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum this year, to facilitate the transition into our own 2023 host year.

Across the years, we have cooperated with Thailand on regional challenges, including law enforcement, the response to natural disasters, and humanitarian relief. We welcome Thailand's commitment to address the threat of climate change; this will be a critical area for further collaboration. We appreciate Thailand's willingness to host refugees and, if confirmed, I would seek to ensure refugees and asylum seekers have all the support they need. And I would engage in Thailand to underscore our call to all countries to condemn the military coup in Burma and end the Burmese military's horrific violence, which has led to worsening human rights and humanitarian crises.

Finally, our Embassy in Bangkok and Consulate General in Chiang Mai have exceptional teams that are doing extraordinary work to advance our partnership. Ensuring they are safe and secure, and have the resources they need, will be a top priority for me if confirmed.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand and to lead our team of capable and committed public servants to advance the U.S.-Thai partnership.

I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.