

Testimony of Glyn Davies
Nominee for Ambassador to The Kingdom of Thailand
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 23, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand. I thank the President for the confidence he has placed in me by putting me forward to the Senate for consideration, and thank Secretary of State Kerry for his strong support. I am grateful to all the members of the Committee for this chance to speak to my qualifications and intentions.

I joined the Foreign Service in 1980, and have sought throughout my career to develop the experience and skills to lead interagency colleagues in strengthening our country's security and advancing our prosperity. If confirmed, serving as Chief of Mission in Bangkok would be the culmination of that 36-year effort.

My family is my greatest strength. I would like to express my love and gratitude to my wife Jackie, daughters Ashley and Teddie, son-in-law Chapin and granddaughters Josie and Cybbie.

Thailand and the United States share a long and enduring friendship. Thailand is one of our oldest treaty allies in Asia. We collaborate on a remarkably wide range of issues, including advancing regional security, expanding trade and investment, enhancing public health, assisting refugees and displaced persons, countering illegal narcotics and wildlife trafficking, fighting transnational crime, and protecting the environment. Despite the limitations we have had to impose on aspects of our engagement after Thailand's May 2014 military coup, few bilateral relationships are as broad and yield as many benefits to both countries.

Over the past decade, Thailand's internal political divide has dramatically deepened, polarizing not just the political class but society as a whole. We have not taken sides in this debate, but have stressed our unwavering support for democratic principles and our commitment to our historic friendship with the Thai people.

Since the coup, the United States has consistently underscored both publicly and privately our concerns about the disruption of Thailand's democratic traditions and accompanying restrictions on civil liberties, including freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. We maintain that democracy can only emerge when the Thai people freely and fairly elect their own representatives and leaders. As required by law, the United States has suspended certain assistance until a democratically elected civilian government takes office. When that occurs, our bilateral relationship can return to its fullest capacity.

Our call for the restoration of civilian government, a return to democracy, and full respect for human rights, including freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly, does not mean we advocate for a specific constitutional or political blueprint. Those are questions for the Thai people to decide through an inclusive political process that allows for an open and robust debate

about the country's political future. If confirmed, I will continue to support the democratic aspirations of the Thai people.

Mindful of our long-term strategic interests, we nonetheless remain committed to maintaining our security alliance. Thai and U.S. troops fought side-by-side during the Vietnam and Korean wars, and together we hold many bilateral and multilateral exercises, engagements, and exchanges, including Asia's largest multilateral military gathering, Cobra Gold. These interactions provide invaluable opportunities to increase coordination and cooperation, including on providing humanitarian assistance and responding to natural disasters.

The United States is Thailand's third largest trading partner, and American companies are major investors in Thailand. Our Embassy in Bangkok, supported by our Consulate General in Chiang Mai, is a regional hub for the U.S. government and remains one of our largest missions in the world. We collaborate extensively on public health issues, a cornerstone of our bilateral cooperation, including promising research on a possible vaccine for HIV/AIDS.

Our people-to-people ties are strong and growing. Educational linkages help thousands of Thai and American students study in each other's countries. The Peace Corps has deployed volunteers across Thailand for over 50 years. The American people have long admired and respected Thailand's rich traditions and culture. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the only monarch ever born in the United States, has led his people with compassion and integrity for almost 70 years and has been a tireless advocate for the advancement of the Thai people.

Thailand is a founding member and a leading voice in all of the region's multilateral institutions, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the East Asia Summit, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI). The United States will continue to work with Thailand and through the region's institutions to further our mutual goals of stimulating trade and economic growth and promoting regional security.

We work with the Thai government to strengthen its efforts to address the country's human trafficking problem. We also support civil society organizations that help identify and protect victims and promote the rights of migrant workers. If confirmed, I will encourage Thailand to take robust action to combat human trafficking.

For many years, Thailand has been an important partner on humanitarian issues. It hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees after the Vietnam War. Today, Thailand shelters some 110,000 Burmese refugees and asylum seekers in nine refugee camps along the Thailand-Burma border, as well as the Rohingya and vulnerable populations from some 50 nationalities. Thailand hosted a regional conference in May on the migrant crisis in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal. We continue to work closely with Thailand and other affected countries to address the sensitive issue of irregular migration with a priority on saving lives and urging humane treatment of vulnerable migrants. We also work closely with the Thai to respond to natural disasters, including the devastating 2008 cyclone in Burma and the earthquakes in Nepal earlier this year.

We care deeply about our bilateral relationship and about the people of Thailand. If confirmed, I will work closely with this committee to advance our broad range of interests in Thailand. While we will continue to do much together, we look forward to its return to democracy so that our joint efforts can reach their fullest potential. We believe the Kingdom of Thailand can find reconciliation, establish democracy, and fulfill its historic destiny as a great and free nation.

Thank you again for considering my nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.