

Testimony of Sung Kim
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Wednesday, July 13, 2016

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be United States Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Kerry for placing their confidence in me and if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee to advance our strong relationship with the Philippines.

With the Chairman's permission, I would like to begin by thanking the many friends and colleagues who have played an essential role in my career – some of them are here today. Unfortunately my wife Jae and our two daughters Erin and Erica could not join us today. Erin and Erica are busy with summer activities overseas, but I know they are proud and excited about the prospect of helping me represent the United States in the Philippines. My family, friends, and colleagues have all been a source of tremendous support and inspiration.

Mr. Chairman, just a couple of years ago, I had the privilege of representing our country as the first Korean-American U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea. It was incredibly special to return to my country of birth, and one of our closest allies, as the U.S. Ambassador. And now I am thrilled that, if confirmed, I will have the honor of representing our country in the Philippines, our oldest ally in the region and one of our most special partners.

I am also honored to follow the many distinguished diplomats who served in Manila. One of them was my mentor and friend Steve Bosworth. Ambassador Bosworth sadly passed away earlier this year but I know he would be very proud that one of his mentees will have an opportunity to build on what he and our other outstanding ambassadors accomplished.

The United States and the Philippines are longstanding friends, partners, and allies. Indeed, this is a relationship defined and reinforced by deep people-to-people ties. There are over four million Filipinos and Filipino Americans in the United States and more than 220,000 Americans residing in the Philippines. And together they help build the bonds that unite and strengthen our two countries.

As we mark the 70th anniversary of formal U.S.-Philippine relations, we celebrate our common history of shared sacrifice, values, and interests. We stood together during World War II to fight tyranny and defend democratic values. And since the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty in 1951, our commitment to the defense of the Philippines has remained ironclad and unwavering.

Earlier this year, our security partnership entered an exciting new phase with the implementation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. This important agreement will allow for greater rotational access by U.S. forces in the Philippines. It will expand the opportunities for bilateral training, support the long-term modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and help the United States to rapidly respond to natural disasters.

Our security cooperation with the Philippines also enhances efforts to combat transnational crime and terrorism. The Philippine Armed Forces, police, and other law enforcement agencies are making progress in fighting violent extremists, and continue to arrest and prosecute members of terrorist groups, including the Abu Sayyaf Group. We work closely with the Philippine government to ensure that its forces are trained to uphold human rights and the rule of law in the conduct of their law enforcement operations.

If confirmed, I will work with Philippine President Duterte and his new administration to ensure our security cooperation remains strong and effective. This includes supporting Philippine efforts to peacefully reduce tensions in the South China Sea and help the Philippine Armed Forces better monitor the seas off their shores.

The United States is among the Philippines' top trading partners, and we have traditionally been the country's largest foreign investor. Annual U.S. goods

and services trade with the Philippines total well over \$20 billion. If confirmed, I will continue our economic engagement to the benefit of both countries through support for reforms that we hope will open the door to more U.S. investment. This includes encouraging the Philippines to reduce restrictions on foreign ownership, enforce intellectual property rights, and make it easier for U.S. firms to participate in public-private partnerships. I will also work with ongoing Millennium Challenge Corporation and USAID efforts to ensure inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Beyond security and trade, we are also partnering with the Philippines on climate change and other important global challenges.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I look forward to leading the dedicated Embassy team of Americans and local Filipinos who are working tirelessly to advance the special U.S.-Philippines partnership.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and am pleased to answer your questions.