

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by Prime Minister Yinglāk Chinnawat of Thailand in Bangkok, Thailand

November 18, 2012

Prime Minister Yinglāk. President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me a great pleasure to welcome you to Thailand and to be the first country to receive you after your decisive reelection victory. I hope to make the gala dinner tonight not only a reception for your visit, but also a celebration for your second term in office. I sincerely believe that your Presidency will be a successful one and will be fruitful in enhancing the relationship between our two nations.

I also wish to take this occasion to thank you, you and your team, in particular Secretary Clinton, for all that she has done to advance Thai-U.S. relations and U.S. engagement with Asia. Our partnership is exceptional, not only because of the deep historical roots, but also because of strong people-to-people ties based on shared values of democracy and respect for civil liberties.

We appreciate your support in bringing democracy in Thailand back on track. I hope you continue to do so as Thailand's democracy still faces many challenges ahead.

In terms of economic relations, as the President and I have discussed today, we will continue to build on a strong foundations in expanding our trade and investment to promote growth and create jobs. The world is changing fast, and only through trust, partnership, can we ensure peace and prosperity for both nations.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, for me there is no better way to launch a celebration of our 180th anniversary of relations in 2013 than with this Presidential visit today. May I invite all of you to join me in toast: To the good health and success of President Barack Obama and to the long-lasting friendship between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Thailand.

Cheers.

[At this point, Prime Minister Yinglāk offered a toast.]

President Obama. Well, good evening, everyone. Madam Prime Minister, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen, my visit to Thailand is far too brief, but even in my short stay, I've already felt the extraordinary warmth and kindness and hospitality of the people of Thailand. Everyone knows that this is the Land of Smiles, and I have felt it everywhere that I've gone.

I've also felt the dignity and strength of this country and its people: the tranquility and peace that I felt as I had the privilege of walking around the sacred grounds of Wat Pho and gazing up at the Reclining Buddha; the compassion and wisdom that you felt in the presence of His Majesty the King, who has devoted his reign to the welfare and development of his people. We've seen it in the resilience that has pushed this nation forward, most recently, in the face of devastating floods.

And most of all, I think we all feel here tonight the unique friendship between our peoples. His Majesty once said that since he was born in America, the United States is "half my motherland." And we are just as proud of all the Thai Americans who enrich our country. In

fact, I was mentioning to His Majesty that my friend, Ladda "Tammy" Duckworth, just became the first Thai American woman ever to be elected to our Congress, and she's from my home State of Illinois, so I'm especially proud of her.

Everything that I've felt—your dignity, your resilience, your friendship, your warmth—that is the foundation of our alliance. It's why you were the first Asian nation to reach out to America after we won our Independence. It's why in Asia, to this day, we can say Thailand is our oldest friend. And we are extraordinarily proud of that friendship, and we are especially pleased to see the excellent leadership that, Madam Prime Minister, you are providing as you continue this country's path of democracy, freedom, and development.

So I want to propose a toast: To the friendship between our peoples, to the strength of our alliance, to the peace and prosperity that we seek, and to Their Majesties the King and the Queen.

Chai yo!

[President Obama offered a toast.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:13 p.m. at the Government House. In his remarks, he referred to King Phumiphon Adunyadet and Queen Sirikit of Thailand; and Representative-elect Ladda "Tammy" Duckworth.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Thailand, Prime Minister Yinglak.

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