



MERIDIAN DIPLOMACY FORUM

COUNTRIES OF THE MEKONG

EXPLORING THE CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LINKAGES
BETWEEN THE U.S. AND MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA

June 6, 2019 | Washington, DC | Meridian International Center

MERIDIAN INTERNATIONAL CENTER

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MERIDIAN DIPLOMACY FORUM: COUNTRIES OF THE MEKONG

The annual Meridian Diplomacy Forum convenes government and business leaders with academic experts and cultural visionaries to examine the position of soft power alongside trade and security in international relations. This year, the Meridian Diplomacy Forum: Countries of the Mekong brings together government, business and artistic leaders to discover and explore the ecological, cultural and economic allure flowing through the subregion. The countries along the Mekong River have much in common, boasting rich cultural heritage and biodiversity, while experiencing significant economic growth and undertaking substantial infrastructure development in recent years. Through featured speakers and panel discussions, today's Diplomacy Forum will address: the state of U.S. relations with the five Southeast Asian nations along the Mekong – Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam; the vast investment opportunity in the energy, transportation and digital economy spaces; how tourism can be leveraged for sustainable ecological development and to maintain cultural heritage; and how the diaspora serves as a cultural bridge raising awareness of the region throughout the United States.

The Meridian Diplomacy Forum: Countries of the Mekong is made possible thanks to the participation of our speakers and the support of our partners. Meridian also extends gratitude to the Royal Embassy of Cambodia, Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Royal Thai Embassy and Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for their generous contributions.



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WELCOME REMARKS

Ambassador Stuart W. Holliday, President and CEO, Meridian International Center

PANEL: ADVANCING U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNTRIES ALONG THE MEKONG

Moderator: Ambassador Stuart W. Holliday

The Honorable Piper Campbell, Ambassador (*retired*) and former Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Mission to ASEAN

His Excellency Ha Kim Ngoc, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

The Honorable Randall Schriver, Assistant Secretary for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense

SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), United States Senator

FEATURED SPEAKER

The Honorable Mark Clark, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State

PANEL: ECONOMIC ALLURE OF THE SUBREGION FROM THE ICT REVOLUTION TO THE INFRASTRUCTURE BONANZA

Moderator: Dr. Prashanth Parameswaran, Senior Editor, The Diplomat

Verinda Fike, Regional Director for Indo-Pacific, United States Trade and Development Agency

Boosara Kanchanalai, Chargé d'Affaires, Royal Thai Embassy

Scott Kicker, Chief Executive Officer, Gen X Energy

Erin Murphy, Founder and Principal, Inle Advisory Group

FEATURED SPEAKER

His Excellency Chum Sounry, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Cambodia

FEATURED SPEAKER

Sammy Samuels, Managing Director, Myanmar Shalom

PANEL: LEVERAGING TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE ECOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Moderator: Brian Eyler, Director, Southeast Asia Program, Stimson Center

Dr. Shorna Allred, Associate Professor, Conservation Social Sciences and Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University

Julia Brennan, Owner, Caring for Textiles

The Honorable Glyn Davies, U.S. Ambassador to Thailand (2015-2018)

FIRESIDE CHAT: THE DIASPORA AND CULTURAL BRIDGE OF U.S.—MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA TIES

Channapha Khamvongsa, Founder and Executive Director, Legacies of War

Niphasone Souphom, President, Lao Heritage Foundation

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The Honorable James Webb, United States Senator (2007-2013)

CLOSING REMARKS

Ambassador Stuart W. Holliday



DR. SHORNA ALLRED

Associate Professor, Conservation Social Sciences and Southeast Asia Programs, Cornell University

 @Shorna1

Dr. Shorna Allred serves on the faculty of Cornell University's Department of Natural Resources and is the Associate Director of the Center for Conservation Social Sciences. She also holds a core faculty appointment with Cornell's Southeast Asia Program. A conservation social scientist, Allred has researched the social dimensions of climate change mitigation and adaption including community resilience to natural disasters in cities across New York State and Southeast Asia. Allred works on cultural resilience with indigenous communities in Sarawak on the island of

Borneo and recently spent her sabbatical investigating flood resilience in Bangkok, Thailand. She teaches courses on community-based research methods, global sustainability, and community organizing for the public good. She also serves as the faculty Dean of Alice Cook House. Her research has been published in scholarly journals such as *Society and Natural Resources*; *Weather, Climate, and Society*; and the *American Journal of Community Psychology*. Allred holds a visiting faculty appointment at Universiti of Malaysia Sarawak and prior to coming to Cornell University was an Assistant Professor of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources at Purdue University.



JULIA BRENNAN

Owner, Caring for Textiles

Julia M. Brennan has worked in the field of textile conservation since 1985. Her company, Caring For Textiles, founded in 1996, is based in Washington, D.C. She is passionately committed to conservation outreach and the protection of cultural property, and providing stakeholders with sustainable skills. Since 2000, she has led multiple textile and preventative conservation workshops in Bhutan, Madagascar, Algeria, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand, in museums, monasteries, and community based collections. From 2008-2018 she served as senior consultant for the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles in Bangkok, establishing the conservation and collections divisions. She is currently

training local staff to preserve the clothing of victims of genocide in Cambodia at Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Brennan received her Bachelor degree from Barnard College, Columbia University, and a Masters in art crime from The Association for Research in Crimes Against Art in 2010.



THE HONORABLE PIPER CAMPBELL

Ambassador (*retired*) and former Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Mission to ASEAN

Ambassador Piper Campbell led the U.S. Mission to ASEAN based in Jakarta as Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., June – December 2018. In that capacity, Campbell served as “senior official” in formal organizing sessions of the East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum and the Lower Mekong Initiative. She negotiated U.S.-ASEAN and multilateral statements adopted at the leaders level and joined the delegations of Vice President Pence (November), Secretary of Defense Mattis (October), Deputy Trade Representative Gerrish (September) and Secretary of State Pompeo (August). Leading a multi-agency team, Campbell also secured agreement with ASEAN Defense Ministers on holding the first U.S.-ASEAN military exercise. Campbell previously served as Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar from 2012-2015, in which capacity she supported negotiations on the development of Mongolia's extractive industries and the agreement on a U.S.-Mongolia Millennium Challenge compact. Campbell is a career member of the Foreign Service with the rank of Minister Counselor, and has a long history of work in both the multilateral field and East Asia. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, with a certificate in Asian studies. She has an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School and an honorary MS in International Strategic Studies from the National War College. Her awards include the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Meritorious Civilian Service Award and multiple Superior and Meritorious Honor Awards from the Department of State. She retired at the end of April 2019 after a 30-year career.



HIS EXCELLENCY CHUM SOUNRY

Ambassador, Royal Embassy of Cambodia

His Excellency Chum Sounry became Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the United States and Ambassador designate of the Kingdom of Cambodia to Mexico in June 2018. Previously, he was Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in Cambodia. Chum has also served as Ambassador to Australia, New Zealand, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Russia. Chum has worked in several capacities within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including as Director of the Personnel Department (2006-2008), Director of the Information Department (1999-2003), Deputy Director of the America Department (1998-1999), and Assistant to the Under Secretary of State (1993-1995). Chum was also First Secretary at the Embassy of Cambodia in DC (1995-1998) and Embassy of Cambodia in Bulgaria (1989-1993). He began his career within the Press Department in 1980. Chum has also received several national awards, including two Medals of National Merit, Royal Order of Cambodia (Grand-Cross, Grand-Officer), two Royal Orders of Monisaraphorn (Commander, Chevalier), and the Medal of Labor. Chum has a Bachelor of Public Laws and speaks English and French.



THE HONORABLE MARK CLARK

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs

[!\[\]\(c3d993ca47bfe2a953c700506ce31fa0_img.jpg\) @USAsiaPacific](#)

Mark D. Clark is currently serving as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast Asia in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the U.S. State Department. Prior to that, he was Director of the Office of Maritime Southeast Asia with responsibility for bilateral relations with six countries: Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Timor-Leste and Brunei. He is a member of the Senior Foreign Service. Clark joined the Foreign Service in 1992 and served much of his career working on Southeast Asia. He completed diplomatic assignments as Political

Counselor in both Indonesia (2014-17) and Malaysia (2006-09), as well as two earlier tours in Indonesia. Clark also served overseas in Haiti, Nigeria and Kenya. As the Department's South Sudan officer based in Nairobi (1999-2002), he helped to restart the South Sudan peace process. In Washington, he previously served as Director for Regional and Security Policy for the East Asia and Pacific Bureau and Deputy Director for Maritime Southeast Asia. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Clark worked with several humanitarian and development assistance NGOs in Indonesia and Morocco. He completed his undergraduate studies at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He holds master's degrees in public policy analysis from Carnegie-Mellon University and in national security strategy from the National War College. Clark has received six individual State Department superior honor awards, the Linguist of the Year award, and other performance recognitions.



THE HONORABLE GLYN DAVIES

U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand (2015-2018)

[!\[\]\(cf531ed27e91483460120fcc057b3901_img.jpg\) @GlynTDavies](#)

Glyn Davies served for 38 years as a Foreign Service Officer in Australia, Africa, Europe, Asia, and in Washington, D.C. He was nominated and confirmed by the Senate three times for ambassadorial assignments: Political Director for the 2003-2004 U.S. Presidency of the G8; Permanent Representative to United Nations Agencies, Vienna (2009-2011); and Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand (2015-2018). Other notable assignments included Deputy Chief of Mission, London during 9/11; Executive Secretary of the National Security Council ('97-'99); and Deputy Spokesman of the State Department ('95-'97). A

graduate of Georgetown University and the National War College, Davies is married and has two daughters and two granddaughters. He lives in Washington, D.C.



BRIAN EYLER

Director, Southeast Asia Program, Stimson Center

 [@aikunming](#)

Brian Eyler is a Senior Fellow and Director of Stimson's Southeast Asia program. Eyler is an expert on transboundary water-food-energy nexus issues in the Mekong region and specializes in China's outbound investment in Southeast Asia. He has spent more than 15 years living and working in China and over the last ten years has conducted extensive research with stakeholders in the Mekong region, leading numerous study tours through China and mainland Southeast Asia. Before coming to the Stimson Center, he served as the Director of the IES Kunming Center at Yunnan University and as a consultant to the UNDP Lancang-

Mekong Economic Cooperation program in Kunming, Yunnan province. He holds a MA from the University of California, San Diego and a BA from Bucknell University. Brian is the co-founder of the influential website EastBySoutheast.com. His first book, *The Last Days of the Mighty Mekong* was published by Zed Books in February 2019.



VERINDA FIKE

Regional Director for Indo-Pacific, U.S. Trade and Development Agency

 [@USTDA](#)

Verinda Fike serves as the Regional Director for South & Southeast Asia for the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), where she is responsible for developing the agency's strategy, infrastructure project preparation activities, and innovative public-private partnerships throughout the region. She also leads USTDA's Global Transportation Sector Team. Fike has travelled and worked in over 50 countries and has managed projects in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Fike began her career at USTDA in 2010, and previously served as Country Manager

for Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and for East Asia. Prior to joining USTDA, Fike consulted U.S. private sector and USAID overseas missions on creating effective public-private partnerships in developing and emerging economies. She also spent three years in China managing patient relations and marketing for several women's health clinics in cooperation with Johns Hopkins Hospital. Fike holds a Master of Science in Foreign Service and a Master of Public Policy from Georgetown University, as well as a B.A. from the University of Colorado in International Affairs and Mandarin Chinese.



THE HONORABLE STUART W. HOLLIDAY

President and CEO, Meridian International Center

[@AMBSHolliday](#)

Ambassador Stuart W. Holliday is President and CEO of Meridian International Center, a leading non-partisan institution that seeks to advance global security and prosperity through effective leadership and diplomacy. Holliday served as U.S. Ambassador for Special Political Affairs at the United Nations (2003-2005), where his primary duties involved representing the United States on issues in the U.N. Security Council. This included responsibility for U.S. policy on U.N. Peacekeeping, Sanctions, and Counterterrorism programs. Prior to serving at the United Nations, Holliday was Coordinator (Assistant Secretary) of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. From 2000 to 2001, he was Special Assistant to the President and Associate Director of Presidential Personnel at the White House advising the President on appointments to the State Department, the Defense Department, the Veterans Department, FEMA, NASA, OPIC, Peace Corps, USAID and Ambassadorships. Following the attacks of September 11, Holliday was tasked by the President's Chief of Staff to work with government agencies to staff the first Office of Homeland Security at the White House. From 1998 to 2000, he served as Assistant (deputy) Policy Director to then Governor of Texas. In this capacity he had specific responsibility for economic development, international trade, technology and military issues. Holliday served on active and reserve duty as an Officer in the United States Navy (Intelligence) from 1988 until 1995 and was recalled to active duty for Operation Desert Storm. He is a recipient of the Joint Service Commendation Medal and other awards. He obtained his B.S.F.S. (International Affairs) from Georgetown University and his M.A. (International Affairs) from the London School of Economics and Political Science.



BOOSARA KANCHANALAI

Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy of the Kingdom of Thailand

[@ThaiEmbDC](#)

Ms. Boosara Kanchanalai has served as Minister to the Royal Thai Embassy in Washington, D.C. and Deputy Chief of Mission since September 2018. Prior to this position, she served as Deputy Director-General of the Department of ASEAN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand. Her other previous overseas assignments included Deputy Consul-General to the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Guangzhou, China; Minister-Counselor to the Royal Thai Embassy in Malaysia. Her first assignment in the United States was during 1994-1997 which she served as Consul at the Royal Thai Consulate-General in New York City.



CHANNAPHA KHAMVONGSA

Founder and Executive Director, Legacies of War

 @channaphasays

Channapha Khamvongsa is founder and executive director of Legacies of War, an organization that seeks to address the problem of unexploded ordnance in Laos, to provide space for healing the wounds of war, and to create greater hope for a future of peace. The organization uses art, culture, education, and community organizing, especially among the Lao diaspora, to create healing and transformation out of the wreckage of war. Legacies has successfully advocated for an increase in U.S. funding for bomb clearance in Laos, from an annual average of \$2M in 2008 to \$30M in 2016. In September 2016, President Barack Obama

acknowledged Khamvongsa's advocacy efforts in Laos, where he became the first U.S. President to visit the country. Khamvongsa has written and spoken widely about the secret war in Laos and its aftermath and has appeared in the New York Times, Democracy Now!, CNN, ABC, PBS and CBS News. She previously worked at the Ford Foundation and NEO Philanthropy on immigrant rights, civil society, civic engagement, capacity building, and transformational leadership. She has served on the Seattle Women's Commission, as well as on the boards of the Refugee Women's Alliance and the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership (CAPAL). She was born in Vientiane, Laos and came to the U.S. as a refugee at the age of seven. Khamvongsa received her Bachelor's of Science Degree in Public Administration from George Mason University. She received her Master's Degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University.



SCOTT KICKER

CEO, Gen X Energy

Prior to Gen X, Kicker served as Senior Vice President at Venture Global LNG, Inc. where he managed EPC contracts for the construction of a 10 MTPA LNG export facility, including related subcontracts. Before joining Venture Global LNG in 2016, Kicker spent 18 years at The AES Corporation ("AES") serving as President of AES Asia through 2015. Prior to his role as President, Kicker held a wide range of responsibilities at the corporate and business level covering the development, construction and management of power projects around the world. Kicker brings with him over 25 years of experience in the development, financing and operation of power and associated infrastructure projects. As President of AES Asia, Kicker was

responsible for the development, construction and operation of AES' portfolio in the region, which included Vietnam, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, India, and China, and he oversaw the streamlining of AES' regional portfolio, resulting in AES' exit from non-strategic businesses in China, India, and Sri Lanka. Before his role as President of Asia, Kicker served as Vice President for portfolio management in Asia where he oversaw the sale of operating businesses and development opportunities in China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia. Kicker also served as Vice President of AES Pacific from 2001-2002, and as Project Director and Country Manager for AES in Bangladesh from 1998-2001 and as Project Director in Taiwan from 1997-1998. During his tenure at AES, Kicker also sat on several advisory boards, investment review committees and internal assessment teams, reviewing and analyzing development opportunities and strategies for the company. Prior to AES, Kicker held various positions at Destec Energy.



HIS EXCELLENCY AUNG LYNN

Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

His Excellency Aung Lynn has served as Ambassador to the United States at the Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar since 2016. Prior to his appointment, he was the Permanent Secretary and Director-General of the ASEAN Affairs Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has also held posts as Director of the Myanmar Department of Protocol, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Myanmar to the United Nations, and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Myanmar Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa, among other public service positions. He graduated from Yangon University in 1979 and earned his Master of Public Policy from the National University of Singapore in 1996. He has

participated in various regional and international forums including the UN, ASEAN and Asia Cooperation Dialogue, and accompanied the Myanmar President and Minister for Foreign Affairs on many bilateral visits. His awards include the Outstanding Public Service Medal, State Peace and Tranquility Medal, and the Law and Order and Rule of Law Medal.



ERIN MURPHY

Founder and Principal, Inle Advisory Group

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Erin Murphy is the Founder and Principal of Inle Advisory Group, Myanmar, an emerging market-centric strategic advisory firm helping businesses and organizations, from Fortune 500 companies to non-profits, to enter and successfully navigate challenging markets. Murphy brings a wealth of private, public, and academic sector experience attained on the ground in Asia and through her tenure with the U.S. government. Murphy's access to political, business, and civil society leaders and decisionmakers in Southeast Asia is grounded in her career with the U.S. government and working in and around Asia for more than

15 years. Prior to founding Inle Advisory Group, Murphy served as the Special Assistant to the Office of the Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar. In that capacity, she participated in the most significant U.S. policy shift on Myanmar in decades that included supporting and joining Secretary of State Clinton on her historic trip to Myanmar in December 2011, playing an integral role in overseeing the easing of economic sanctions, and advising and supporting the Office of the Special Representative during the unprecedented warming of U.S.-Myanmar ties. Prior to her U.S. State Department appointment, Murphy served in the U.S. Embassy in Yangon in 2009 and as an intelligence analyst, garnering awards for excellence in analysis and interagency collaboration. Murphy is frequently solicited for her views and input by Channel New Asia, CCTV, The Wall Street Journal, Reuters, and The Washington Post and her views have been published in The Huffington Post, The Diplomat, China-US Focus, The Raddington Report, and Myanmar's business journal, Crossroads. She was a 2017-2018 Council on Foreign Relations- Hitachi International Affairs Fellow Japan. Murphy is a graduate of Tufts University and holds an MA from the Johns Hopkins' School for Advanced International Studies with a focus on Japan Studies.



HIS EXCELLENCY HA KIM NGOC

Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Ambassador Ha Kim Ngoc has served in the diplomatic service since 1988 in different positions and has much experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. He was appointed by President Tran Dai Quang as the sixth Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to the United States of America in March 2018. He arrived in Washington, D.C. on July 15, 2018 and presented his Credentials to President Donald J. Trump on September 17, 2018. From 2013-2018, Ngoc served as Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of relations with countries in the Americas, especially the United States as well as with the United Nations and other

international organizations. From 2011-2013, Ngoc held the position of Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Director General of Department of Americas, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Before that, he was Director General, Executive Assistant to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Ha Kim Ngoc graduated from the Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam in 1985. He studied Russian in Kiev University, Ukraine from 1986-1987 and earned an M.A. in International Relations at Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam in 2010. Ngoc is married to Mme. Nguyen Thi Phuong Lien and has two children.



DR. PRASHANTH PARAMESWARAN

Senior Editor, The Diplomat

 [@TheAsianist](https://twitter.com/TheAsianist)

Dr. Prashanth Parameswaran is Senior Editor at The Diplomat, based in Washington, D.C., where he produces analysis on Southeast Asian political and security issues, Asian defense affairs, and U.S. foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific. Previously, he worked on Asian affairs at several think tanks, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He holds a Ph.D and an M.A. in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and a BA in foreign affairs and peace and conflict studies from the University of Virginia. Parameswaran's analysis on politics and security issues in the Asia-Pacific

has been widely featured and cited in several leading regional and international publications, including The Financial Times, Foreign Policy, The Straits Times, and The South China Morning Post. He has also authored policy reports, journal articles, and book chapters on Asian security trends, participated frequently in key regional forums and dialogues, and consulted for governments and companies.



SAMMY SAMUELS

Managing Director, Myanmar Shalom Travels

[@MyanmarShalom](#)

Graduate of Yeshiva University in New York City, Sammy Samuels has promoted his country, Myanmar and small Jewish community to all who know him. That's why some of his friends and colleagues call him the "Ambassador of Myanmar." Through Myanmar Shalom, Samuels creates travel programs, products and services that include local communities of all religions and ethnicities to improve the lives of those in the remote areas of Myanmar. In 2017 he was selected as a President Eisenhower Fellow from Myanmar for his work in tourism industry. His goal is to provide a program called "Peace through Tourism," which involves

bringing tourists to areas once affected by conflict in order to revitalize the local community. In addition, as leader of the smallest religious minority in country – Samuels is dedicated to advancing religious freedom and tolerance. Sammy's unique role in the Jewish community of Myanmar & his company has been chronicled in articles in the New York Times, Washington Post, Jerusalem Post, Travel + Leisure, and other newspapers.



THE HONORABLE RANDALL SCHRIVER

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, U.S. Department of State

[@DeptofDefense](#)

Mr. Randall Schriver is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs. Schriver was appointed as Assistant Secretary of Defense by President Donald Trump on 8 January 2018. Prior to his confirmation, Schriver was one of five founding partners of Armitage International LLC, a consulting firm that specializes in international business development and strategies. He was also CEO and President of

the Project 2049 Institute, a non-profit research organization dedicated to the study of security trend lines in Asia. Previously, Schriver served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. He was responsible for China, Taiwan, Mongolia, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. From 2001-2003, he served as Chief of Staff and Senior Policy Advisor to the Deputy Secretary of State. From 1994-1998, he worked in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, including as the senior official responsible for the day-to-day management of U.S. bilateral relations with the People's Liberation Army and the bilateral security and military relationships with Taiwan. Prior to his civilian service, he served as an active duty Navy Intelligence Officer from 1989-1991, including a deployment in support of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. After active duty, he served in the Navy Reserves for nine years, including as Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and an attaché at U.S. Embassy Beijing and U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar. Schriver has won numerous military and civilian awards from the U.S. government and was presented while at the State Department with the Order of the Propitious Clouds by the President of Taiwan for service promoting U.S.-Taiwan relations. Schriver received a B.A. in history from Williams College and a M.A. from Harvard University.



NIPHASONE SOUPHOM

President, Lao Heritage Foundation

 [@LaoHeritage](https://twitter.com/LaoHeritage)

Niphasone Souphom was born in Sayphone, Laos in 1977. She immigrated to the United States of America in 1986 with her family. She grew up in South Bend, WA and moved in 2002 to the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area where she currently resides with her husband and two sons. She graduated from Ohio University with a M.A. in International Studies in the area of Southeast Asia and a M.Sc. in Mild and Moderate Disability from John Hopkins University. She is currently a special education resource teacher at Catherine T. Reed Elementary School. She has been working and teaching students with disability for

the past 16 years. She is one of the founding member and the current president of the Lao Heritage Foundation, a nonprofit organization with a mission to promote, preserve, and transmit Lao culture through the arts.



THE HONORABLE JAMES WEBB

United States Senator (2007-2013)

[@JimWebbUSA](https://twitter.com/JimWebbUSA)

The Honorable James H. Webb, Jr., has been a combat Marine, full committee counsel in Congress, Assistant Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Navy, U.S. Senator from Virginia, Emmy-award winning journalist, filmmaker and is the author of 10 books.

Webb graduated from the Naval Academy in 1968, one of 18 midshipmen to receive a special commendation for “outstanding leadership contributions.” He was the Honor Graduate in his class of 243 Marine lieutenants at Marine Corps Officer’s Basic School. One of the most highly decorated Marines in the Vietnam War, he was awarded the Navy Cross,

the Silver Star Medal, two Bronze Star Medals with combat “V” and two Purple Hearts.

Webb graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in 1975. He was the first Vietnam veteran to serve as a full committee counsel in the U.S. Congress, serving from 1977 to 1981 as minority counsel to the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. In 1982, he led the fight to include an African-American soldier in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

In 1984 Webb became the first-ever Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs and then in 1987 the first Naval Academy graduate in history to serve in the military and then become Secretary of the Navy. In 1992 he was a Fellow at Harvard University’s Institute of Politics.

Elected to the Senate in 2006, Webb served on the Foreign Relations, Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Joint Economic committees, including four years as Chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel and of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

He wrote, introduced and guided to passage the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the most significant veterans legislation since World War II. The Atlantic Magazine spotlighted him as one of the world’s “Brave Thinkers” for tackling prison reform. He also co-authored legislation which exposed \$60 billion of waste, fraud and abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan wartime-support contracts.

Having widely traveled in Asia for decades as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s Asia-Pacific Subcommittee, Webb was a leading voice in calling for the U.S. to re-engage in East Asia. In 2009, he led a historic visit to Burma, becoming the first American leader to visit in 10 years and opening a dialogue that resulted in the re-establishment of relations between our two countries. He speaks Vietnamese and has maintained strong relations with the American Vietnamese community, including decades of pro bono work. He has maintained continuous relations in Thailand for more than thirty years, in and out of government, and has maintained similar relations in Japan.

In addition to his public service, Webb has had a varied career as a writer. Traveling widely as a journalist, with multiple assignments in Japan, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, Webb was the first American journalist allowed access to report from inside the Japanese prison system. Webb is the author of ten books, including six best-selling novels, notably “Fields of Fire,” widely recognized as the classic novel of the Vietnam War.

Webb has received more than 30 national awards for community service, including the Congressional Medal of Honor Society’s Patriot and the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service. Each year, the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation presents The James Webb Award for distinguished fiction dealing with U.S. Marines or Marine Corps life.

Webb has six children and lives in Northern Virginia with his wife, Hong Le Webb, who was born in Vietnam and is a graduate of Cornell Law School.



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COMMON TIDES

LINKING PEOPLE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC AND THE U.S.

The Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy, along with Dr. Scott W. Harold of the Center for Asia Pacific Policy at RAND Corporation, partnered with the U.S. Department of State's Office of Public Diplomacy at the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs to create a compelling exhibition that explores nearly two and a half centuries of relations between Americans and the peoples of the Asia-Pacific. *Common Tides: Linking People of the Asia-Pacific and the United States* highlights exchanges between political leaders, military personnel, sports stars, medical researchers, creative pioneers, educators, and philanthropic organizations. *Common Tides* shows the history and importance of U.S. ties to this region through photographs, posters, paintings, and other visual materials. The exhibition will be displayed in Bangkok in September 2019 and will tour throughout the region in workshop locations of the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative.

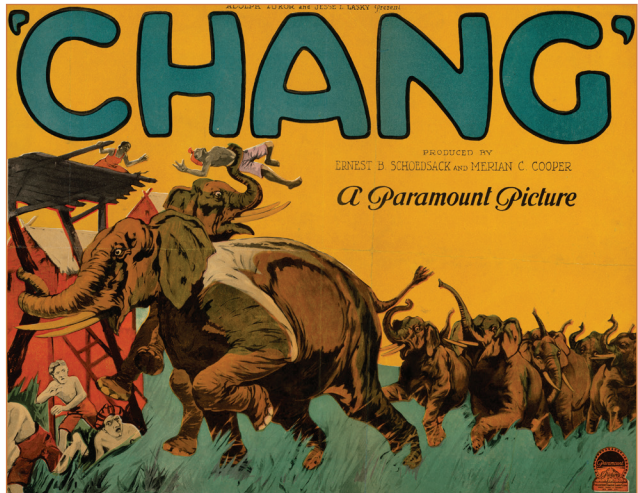
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Photograph by Hank Olen, Courtesy of the New York Daily News



GREAT AND GOOD FRIENDS

200 YEARS OF U.S.—THAI FRIENDSHIP

In commemoration of 200 years of friendship between the United States and the Kingdom of Thailand, the Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy, in partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, organized an exhibition displaying the official gifts exchanged between the two nations at significant moments over the past 200 years. Great and Good Friends: Historic Gifts between the Kingdom of Thailand and the United States of America underscores the significant bilateral ties—in trade, education, health, and people-to-people exchange—that helped established Thailand as America's oldest treaty ally in the region. The exhibition featured royal gifts from Their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit, King Prajadhipok, King Chulalongkorn, and King Mongkut to and from respective American presidents. The exhibition, which was seen by over 100,000 visitors, was open to the public from March 21–June 30, 2018, at the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles in the Grand Palace.

GREATANDGOODFRIENDS.COM



**International Visitor
Leadership Program**
U.S. Department of State

THE INTERNATIONAL VISITOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM, MERIDIAN, AND THE COUNTRIES OF THE MEKONG

Under the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the State Department's Office of International Visitors sponsors the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). First launched in the 1940s, this program builds mutual understanding through short-term visits to the U.S. for up to 5,000 current and emerging foreign leaders annually. More than 355 current or former chiefs of state or heads of government have been IVLP participants.

The exchange program partners with eight National Program Agencies, including Meridian International Center, to help implement and manage it. In the last 10 years, Meridian, working with the Office of International Visitors, has overseen 65 IVLP projects for 520 visitors from the countries of the Mekong. Eight of these were sub regional projects for all of the countries of the Mekong that focused on watershed management, small business development, and women's economic development and other topics. Country specific projects included transnational crime, sustainable cities, and promoting fair and equitable justice. Finally, there was great diversity among the visitors, including the Chief Monk from Myanmar's International Buddhist Educational Center, an archivist from Cambodia's Tuo Sleng Genocide Museum, a Laotian National Radio journalist, a Thai public prosecutor, and a staff member from Vietnam's National Assembly.





GLOBAL GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

For the past four years, Meridian International Center’s GlobalConnect Division has worked in partnership with the US Department of State to support events for the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) in the region. Working with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP) Multilateral Affairs Office, GlobalConnect helped organize the last four LMI Regional Working Group (RWG) meetings in Hanoi, Vietnam (2015), Phnom Penh, Cambodia (2016), Vientiane, Laos (2017), and Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar (2018). The purpose of the RWG meetings is to engage 10-12 government officials from each of the five LMI countries, in discussing issues and best practices related to the key pillars of the initiative, including education, environment, health, agriculture, and connectivity. In addition, this meeting is an opportunity for representatives from the “Friends of the Lower Mekong (FLM)” countries to meet and discuss donor coordination in programming development assistance in the region. FLM members include Australia, South Korea, Japan, New Zealand, European Union, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank. Each of these RWGs drew in 100-125 attendees.

Most recently, GlobalConnect helped implement the first LMI Policy Dialogue on April 9-10, 2019 and the first LMI Quality Infrastructure Training- Energy Series on May 21-23, 2019, which both took place in Bangkok, Thailand. Like the previous four RWGs, the LMI Policy Dialogue brought together LMI government representatives to provide updates on the progress and policy challenges with each pillar faced by each country. Drawing on the goals of the RWGs and Policy Dialogue and with a focus on case studies and application, the LMI Quality Infrastructure Training-Energy Series provided an opportunity for five government representatives from each LMI country to learn about privately funded projects that could help LMI countries meet their infrastructure development needs. Trainers from the U.S. public and private sector led sessions on Masterplans, Best-Value Solutions, Evaluation planning, and Feasibility Studies. Another LMI Quality Infrastructure Training has been tentatively discussed to take place in Vietnam later this year.



PLEASE JOIN US AFTER THE DIPLOMACY FORUM FOR AN EVENING RECEPTION CELEBRATING THE CULTURE AND TRADITIONS OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE MEKONG.

DANCE PERFORMANCES

CAMBODIA

The Apsaras are the divine dancing girls of Cambodian mythology. They are memorialized by the thousands in carvings adorning the walls of the great temple complex at Angkor Wat in Cambodia. The Apsaras act not only as entertainers for the Cambodian (Khmer) king and royal court, they are also believed to be semi-divine and act as intermediaries between the Cambodian gods and the king. Among the Apsaras, none is more revered than Mera. It is believed that the union between Mera and the hermit Kampu gave birth to the nation of Cambodia. In this performance, Mera, dressed in white as a sign of her virtue and purity, is accompanied by her handmaidens in the moment of reflection and celebration of her exalted status.

MYANMAR

The Apyodaw Dance and its musical accompaniment are the purest and oldest form of Myanmar traditional music and dancing. It is a lively opening dance that is performed in Myanmar ceremonies where young dancers pay respect to guardian spirits for the land to be blessed with pleasant weather, free from dangers and other disturbances.

Thingyan is the Burmese New Year Festival that usually falls in the middle of April. Also known as the Water Festival, celebrants will spray water amongst each other to symbolically wash away the sins from the old year and welcome the new with a pure body and mind. A group of young dancers perform the mixture of traditional and modern dance with energetic music.

THAILAND

Somapa Thai Dance Company (www.somapadance.org) have been actively giving performances, presentations, classes, and workshops since 1999. Their dancers have performed in many prestigious locations in the U.S. and abroad including New York Botanical Garden, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Millennium Stage, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, and the Peabody Essex Museum. Their mission is to preserve and promote Thai culture and arts in the Americas and through performances and workshops, they hope to encourage understanding and appreciation of the arts between people of different countries and cultures. Maytinee Pramawat and Warin Tepayayone will perform Rabum Tepbunterng (Joyful Angel Dance).

DEMONSTRATIONS

MYANMAR MAKEUP DEMONSTRATION

A demonstration using organic makeup with natural SPF properties will be provided to guests.

THAI MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

Kamonjit Leekmek (Ranad Ek/Wooden Xylophone), Siriwimon Nonpala (Kong Wong Yai/Big round gongs), Suteera Nagavajara (Saw U/two stringed fiddle, singer), and Ms. Bunsita Kaewsing(Ching/ cymbals) will provide a live Thai classical music performance.

THAI FRUIT CARVING

One carver and one honorary translator will showcase a Mekong-themed fruit and vegetable carving demonstration alongside the musical and dance performance.

PHOTO EXHIBITION

The Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy curated a special exhibition for this evening focusing on the five countries along the Mekong – Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. The displays include photos from the Great and Good Friends exhibition, originally showcased at the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles in the Grand Palace of Bangkok as well as a preview of photos from Common Tides, a forthcoming exhibition linking the people of the Asia-Pacific with the U.S. In addition, the Embassy of Myanmar provided photos showcasing the state's grandiose historic temples and scenic natural landscapes – from mountains and plateaus, to lowlands and coastal plains. The display also features photos from Caring for Cambodia, a nonprofit committed to ensuring a high-quality education for 6,600 children in Siem Reap, Cambodia, and Next Level, an initiative that uses hip hop music, dance and art to foster cross-cultural creative exchange in diverse communities. An initiative of the U.S. Department of State, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Meridian International Center, Next Level has had residencies in 30 countries, including Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand.



Courtesy of Caring for Cambodia



Courtesy of Next Level

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