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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
THOMAS S. GATES  
AT HIS SWEARING-IN AS  
CHIEF OF THE U.S. LIAISON OFFICE  
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

THE ROSE GARDEN

12:52 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Ambassador Gates, Mrs. Gates, and your lovely family, Secretary Kissinger, the Vice President, Secretary Rumsfeld, Ambassador Scranton, General Scowcroft, Director Bush, and I better be sure to mention my wife, Betty:

Let me welcome all of you to this ceremony, conferring on Tom Gates the rank of Ambassador. As he assumes the position of our Chief of Liaison Office in Peking, this is a measure of the importance, Ambassador Han, that we attach to the growing relationship with the People's Republic of China.

Tom is inheriting a well-established tradition of excellence in this new position, a tradition exemplified so well by his predecessors, Ambassador David Bruce and George Bush.

The process of normalizing relations with the People's Republic of China, in which Ambassador Gates will play a very vital role, is now well underway. Our two countries have differences which neither side attempts to hide, but we also share many, many important interests which provide the foundation for a durable and growing relationship.

Through the constructive dialogue between our two countries, now in its fifth year, we are now able to strengthen opportunities for cooperation and parallel action on many global issues. We share a common concern that the world remain free from domination by military force or intimidation and that all nations have the opportunity to develop along their own unique plans.

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At the same time, both sides understand the importance of continuing the process of normalization through joint efforts based on the Shanghai Communiqué. I stressed in my speech in Honolulu last December, just after returning from Peking, the determination of my Administration to complete the normalization process.

This will serve the interest of our two peoples and contribute to the cause of a more stable world order.

Tom Gates has a long and distinguished record of public service to our country and involvement in the global concerns of the United States. During his tenure as Secretary of Defense, he fully realized that America must pursue a policy of peace through strength. The security problems which the United States faces have become increasingly subtle and more complex since the period of the second world war, when both Tom and I served together in the Navy some 34 years ago on the same ship.

The United States must continue to adapt its foreign policy to changing circumstances. Our pursuit of a constructive and mutually beneficial relationship with the People's Republic remains a very cardinal element in our efforts to adjust to this more complex world.

As you prepare, Tom, for Peking, I am very confident that you will do an outstanding job of representing the views of the United States. During your tenure in Peking, you will add another chapter of very distinguished service to the record of our Liaison Office and to Sino-American relations.

I would like at this time to ask the Chief of Protocol, Henry Catto, to administer the oath of office.

(Mr. Catto administered the oath of office.)

MR. GATES: Mr. President, as I told you when you were generous enough to tell me about this assignment in your own office, I am highly honored and I will do the best I can to faithfully carry out your policies in China. I also am honored by the presence here of the Vice President, the United States Secretary of State, Ambassador Han, and my predecessor, Ambassador Bush, and many other distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

You give me a very difficult assignment to follow, Ambassador Bruce and Ambassador Bush. I guess Ambassador Bruce is in our history one of our most distinguished of Ambassadors, and certainly Ambassador Bush's tour of duty in both the United Nations and in China was most distinguished.

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Mr. President, I know that you have given us, my wife and I -- and I am happy some of my children are here, and we have a sample of our grandchildren -- a unique opportunity, a challenge and a privilege. The privilege will be to learn about the background of China and to work with the Chinese people, and we are looking forward to it. We know its reward will be enduring.

Thank you.

END (AT 1:00 P.M. EST)