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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND

THOMAS GATES
UPON HIS DESIGNATION AS
CHIEF OF THE UNITED STATES LIAISON OFFICE
IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

THE OVAL OFFICE

10:10 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: I would like to announce this morning the designation of former Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates as our representative to the People's Republic of China. This is a very, very important post. We feel, of course, that our relations with the People's Republic is one of the most important relations that we have with any country throughout the world, and the fact that a former Secretary of Defense is to be assigned to that position I think reflects our conviction that this relationship is of vital importance.

I have known the new representative to the People's Republic of China since about 1943. We served in the Navy together on the same ship. I had many contacts with him when he was Secretary of Defense--first, Secretary of the Navy--when I was in the Congress and when he was in the Pentagon, so I have known Tom Gates for a good many years.

I know that he did a superlative job in the Pentagon. He has been a good friend ever since, and I am delighted, Tom, that you are undertaking this extremely important responsibility, and I thank you and look forward to the fine job you will do.

MR. GATES: Thank you, Mr. President. Of course, I am greatly honored, and I hope I can discharge my work there in carrying out your policies. I look forward to the experience. I am going to come down next week and get some education, and then in two or three weeks after that, I presume, if the Senate confirms me, I will be on my way.

THE PRESIDENT: I am submitting Tom Gates' name to the United States Senate for confirmation so that we won't call you Mr. Secretary any more, we will call you Mr. Ambassador.

EVD

(AT 10:12 A.M. EST)