



Doctor of Laws, honoris causa

Citation

Robert M. Gates, you have dedicated your life to serving your country, answering the call to duty from wherever it came. In a career spanning over four decades and eight U.S. presidencies, you have brought a profound understanding of history and a steadfast patriotism to that fundamental responsibility of government our founding fathers expressed in the preamble to the Constitution: "to provide for the common defense . . . and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

Your strength of character was evident early in life. A native of Wichita, Kansas, you earned distinction as an Eagle Scout, and when you graduated from the College of William and Mary, were recognized for embodying those qualities that would define your life's work: a sharp mind, a caring heart, and the willingness to help others in need.


After earning a master's degree in history from Indiana University, you joined the Central Intelligence Agency, first serving as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force and then beginning your work as a CIA analyst. As if to remind you of the momentous responsibility you had accepted, the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia on your second day at the job. Over the next 25 years, you would play a vital role in bringing freedom to the nations of Eastern Europe, reducing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and supporting U.S. interests abroad.

In 1974, you left the CIA to serve on the staff of the National Security Council, at the same time earning a doctorate in Russian and Soviet history from Georgetown University. You returned to the agency in 1979 and eventually assumed its leadership, becoming the only career officer in the CIA's history to rise from entry-level employee to director.


Retiring from the CIA in 1993, you returned to academic life, wrote your memoirs, and, in 2002, became President of Texas A & M University, where you worked to enhance the university's diversity and enrich the educational experience of its students.

But in 2006, duty called again and you were sworn in as our nation's 22nd Secretary of Defense to guide our nation's forces through a critical and turbulent time. And you have done so with brilliance, compassion, and the selfless devotion you have shown throughout your lifetime. The fact that you were asked to continue as Defense Secretary while the Presidency went from one party to another is a powerful testament to the skill and dedication you have shown since entering public service 43 years ago.

The path that leads to resolving conflict among nations is a narrow and hazardous one and invariably exposes those who travel it to attack from all sides. It takes a special courage to stay that course, and you have demonstrated such courage over a lifetime of defending our republic. For all you have done to protect our nation against those who would do it harm, for the wisdom of your counsel in troubled times, for your integrity, and for the work you have done to restore human dignity to millions of people around the world, the University of Washington is proud to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.



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