

2006 Norman E. Borlaug/World Food Prize International Symposium
The Green Revolution Redux:
Can We Replicate the Single Greatest Period of Food Production in All Human History?
October 19-20, 2006 - Des Moines, Iowa

BREAKFAST ADDRESS: Food and Security in the 21st Century

October 20, 2006 - 7:45 – 9:00 a.m.

Dr. Robert Gates – Texas A&M University

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn

President - World Food Prize Foundation

Introduction of Robert Gates by Ambassador Quinn

This is a special privilege for me to introduce our speaker this morning. I met Bob Gates for the first time in 1974 in the old Executive Office Building in Washington, DC. And the old executive office building is that big gray, unusual-looking building right next to the White House, and it's where the staff of the National Security Council and many other parts of the White House are located. And you see he and I are about the same age. He's a career CIA officer. I was a career State Department officer, although a lot of people used to always think I was a career CIA officer too. And our offices were right across the hall from each other. So I remember going over and saying hello to him and thinking, well, you know, this is another kind of young guy like me.

And this was during the Ford Administration, and then the election came and President Carter won the election. And we were all, the professional people, were being called in, and most of us expected that we'd get sent back to our agencies and new people would be brought in, which was the way it worked.

So I went down and I got my pink slip – and it really was pink – and so I was back packing up, and I looked over in Bob's office and he wasn't packing up. And he ended up working for four presidents in one way or another, through the National Security Council staff. But the Democrats coming in knew real talent when they saw it, and they kept him there to work closely with the new National Security team and the president. And that was one step on an incredible career that took him from being an entry-level case officer, coming in and being trained, all the way to the top of the agency. That's never happened at the State Department, and it doesn't happen in almost any other department.

And so an incredible achievement has to be due for a reason. And that reason, I think, is the same reason that lets him now be the president of Texas A&M University, and that is – What's most valuable, if you're a career government official committed to our Constitution but not to any political party, is that people from those parties who come in, elected by the people to

run our government, know they can count on you to be straightforward and to be honest and to give your unvarnished view about what's the truth, what's the situation as best you can tell it.

And I can tell you that that's not always welcome when you do that in government. But Bob Gates and the intelligence community, when he directed it, was that type of institution and would serve the president and the members of the cabinet with that – “We're going to tell you, here's how it is, because that's what we're here to do, and that's how we serve our country.” And that, after all, is what a university president is to do, is to preside over an institution where science and knowledge that's obtained from research and appropriate methods can come forward, no matter how much somebody else doesn't like it.

So I've been a great admirer of Bob Gates and his career and what he's done, and I thought this was a unique opportunity to lure him to Iowa. He, of course, is Dr. Borlaug's boss down at Texas A&M, you know. As we were having breakfast, he told me that his relatives, as they made the trek from the east back in the 1840s, had made a stop in Iowa. So he's got some Iowa roots, although they kept going on to Wichita, Kansas. So in a sense, kind of welcoming him back to his old connection to this state.

It's my great privilege to ask you to join in welcoming Bob Gates.
