

Remarks to American Embassy Employees in Beijing

1989-02-26

Well, I want to thank Secretary [of State] Baker for that warm introduction and, on his behalf and mine and Barbara's and all those traveling with us, express our gratitude to each and every one of you in the Embassy. I'm proud to be greeted by the marines, proud to have been greeted before them by several of our Chinese friends, coworkers that worked with Barbara and me right in this very house.

You know, there's something about seeing familiar, friendly faces when you walk in a place that does make you feel at home, and then to see all of you. I don't know who the admin officer is here, who runs the administrative end of things, and those of you poor, suffering souls who work with him or her -- [laughter] -- but I will simply say -- it is a her. I can't see her, but they tell me it is a she. [Laughter] Please stand up. Oh, she is standing up. Sorry. [Laughter] But let me thank you from the bottom of my heart because I know something about surviving a visit from a President. We had one when I was out here, before this was an embassy. [Laughter] And I was sure glad to see him go. [Laughter] And if that wasn't enough, we survived two from Henry Kissinger. Try that one on for size. [Laughter] You think we're bad, now, listen! [Laughter]

But to the Chinese employees here and to the families and to all -- --

[At this point, the President was interrupted by a crying baby.]

Oh, it's not that bad, kid. Wait a minute; it's going to get -- [laughter]. To all of you here, really, I did want to say my special thanks. You serve a long way from home. This relationship, as I told Chairman Deng Xiaoping and others, is vital. It is absolutely essential to the foreign policy interest of the United States and, I'd say, in our own security interests as well. And so, you're doing a wonderful job for our country, and we are extraordinarily grateful to each and every one of you. And sometimes when you're halfway around the world, you expect nobody really gives much of a damn, but I do. And I care about it because I've been a part of an Embassy once, and when you've done that you know how people pull together. I have respect for the Foreign Service. I have respect for those in the military who serve abroad. And I have respect for those in the other departments that make up a great Embassy like this. And I might say, I have great respect for this Ambassador and for what he's done in building on this extraordinarily important relationship. And so, Barbara and I give our thanks to Betty and to Winston.

We're running behind schedule, and so, we've got to go off for yet another meeting. I was looking forward to this one, though, and I apologize. And part of the reason we're late is I had to stop at the International Club. I had to see those guys that I played tennis with because I read in the paper a terrible thing. Mr. Wong -- modest man that he is, and some of you may know him -- the tennis guy up here at the club, reported erroneously that he beat me regularly in tennis. [Laughter] And this was in the New York Times. [Laughter] And I had to stop off and talk to him about that story, and so, I apologize for being late.

But let me end by saying Barbara and I are thrilled to be back here. We've had a wonderful visit. And it is more than the symbolism; it is important that we make clear to our Chinese friends that we value this relationship, that we're going to work to strengthen it. And once again, that's where all of you come in.

So, thank you, and God bless each and every one of you for what you're doing for the greatest, the freest, and the best country on the face of the Earth: the United States of America. Thank you all.

Note: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. at the U.S. Ambassador's residence. In his remarks, he referred to Administrative Officer Dorothy Sampas, Ambassador Winston Lord, and Mrs. Betty Lord.