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# After a year of wrangling, Reagan names ambassador to Indonesia

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The appointment of a career diplomat to be America's ambassador in Jakarta ends a controversy that for some months now has disturbed US-Indonesian relations as well as morale at the US State Department.

Because of the political wrangling over one ambassador-designate and controversy surrounding another candidate, the sensitive and important posting of ambassador to the world's fifth largest nation had been vacant for nearly a year. President Reagan finally ended the dispute by naming Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs John H. Holdridge, a veteran, Chinese-speaking diplomat.

Mr. Holdridge's appointment drew almost universal praise from State Department officials, a good number of whom were angered by earlier reports that the post might go to Kent B. Crane. Mr. Crane, president of an international investment and consulting firm and ex-aide to former Vice-President Spiro T. Agnew, was reported to have ties with a leading Indonesian businessman. Crane has denied press reports that he once served with the US Central Intelligence Agency in Indonesia, stating instead that he was a junior diplomat with the Foreign Service. Whatever Crane's background, many Foreign Service officers were convinced that he did not have the stature needed for the Indonesia job.

Prior to Crane and others, the White House had decided to name Morton Abramowitz, a former ambassador to Thailand, to head the Jakarta embassy. But in part because of a confidential memorandum circulated by some of Mr. Abramowitz's opponents, Indonesian officials decided that they did not want him as ambassador to their country.

The confidential memorandum appeared to be strewn with inaccuracies, but it ended up poisoning the atmosphere for Abramowitz. It charged, for example, that under the Car-

ter administration, he had been the architect of plans for the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea, when in fact Abramowitz had in private administration councils opposed the proposed withdrawal from Korea.

President Reagan announced Holdridge's nomination at a state dinner for visiting Indonesian President Suharto at the White House on Oct. 12. Mr. Suharto seemed to be pleased with the announcement. So did Holdridge.

Some State Department officials saw the hand of Secretary of State George P. Shultz in all this. Some conservatives have demanded that he agree to more political appointments for State Department jobs. But Mr. Shultz has been relying heavily on career diplomats for most key assignments.

But Holdridge's appointment does not end the State Department's problems — one of which is the nomination of Richard R. Burt as assistant secretary of state for European

affairs. That nomination has been held up for weeks by Sen. Jesse A. Helms (R) of North Carolina. Senator Helms has charged that while working for the New York Times in 1979, Mr. Burt wrote a story that disclosed classified information. Democrats have retaliated by holding up the appointment of a Helms protégé, Richard T. McCormack, a former aide who is to be assistant secretary of state for economic affairs.