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James Oberstar named Commander in the French National Order of Merit

François Delattre, Ambassador of France to the United States, has bestowed the insignia of Commander in the National Order of Merit upon former U.S. Representative James Oberstar.

Based on a decision by the French President, this appointment illustrates France's profound gratitude for James Oberstar's exemplary commitment to French-American relations, and acknowledges in particular his role in establishing the Congressional French Caucus.

The ceremony took place at the French Residence, with the current members of the French Caucus and other Members of Congress in attendance.

Ambassador Delattre praised the former Congressman as "an outstanding individual and a very special man", noting that "over his long and storied career, Rep. Oberstar has been a true friend of my country, and he has been instrumental in furthering the excellent cooperation between the United States and France."

Rep. Oberstar found receiving the honor "deeply moving." He described the award as "emblematic of the indelible relationship between our two peoples, and of the ideals that link us."

The National Order of Merit was established by Charles de Gaulle to reward distinguished service in the public, civilian or military arena or in the exercise of a private activity for a period of at least 10 years. Entry into the Order of Merit at the grade of Commander, the highest of three, is an exceptional decision made personally by the President of the French Republic, who is also the Grand Master of the Order.

The insignia is composed of a six-double-armed star, and the color blue chosen for its ribbon is in line with the grand tradition of the French Orders. The front of the round medallion displays the Republic and is inscribed with the words "République Française," while the tricolor flag on the back is inscribed with the words "Ordre National du Mérite" and the date of its establishment, "3 décembre 1963." The Commander insignia is silver-gilt, 60 mm in diameter, and suspended from a French blue moiré ribbon that is 40 mm wide, worn around the neck.

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