

# TOP OF THE ISSUE

---

## A Professor at War: An Interview with Joseph M. Skelly

*Carol Iannone*

Joseph Morrison Skelly is an associate professor of history at the College of Mount Saint Vincent in New York City. He specializes in international diplomatic history, international terrorism, and modern European history. Skelly received his Ph.D. from University College Dublin in the Republic of Ireland and studied at Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He has been a member of the National Association of Scholars for more than ten years, and serves on the Board of the New York Association of Scholars. Among his publications are *Irish Foreign Policy, 1919–66* and *Ideas Matter: Essays in Honor of Conor Cruise O'Brien*, along with numerous articles on international terrorism.

Skelly is also a soldier with the 411 Civil Affairs Battalion of the United States Army Reserve. From August 2004 until July 2005 he was deployed with his unit in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was stationed in the city of Baquba, which is 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, in Diyala Province. Decorated for his service, he was awarded the Bronze Star and the Combat Action Badge. In May 2006, *Academic Questions* interviewed him about his experiences as a professor at war, serving on the frontlines in Iraq.

***Iannone:* How did you come to join the Army Reserve?**

*Skelly:* I actually first served in a combat engineering unit of the United States Army National Guard, from 1996 to 2000. Within weeks of 11 September I rejoined the military. I signed on with the 411 Civil Affairs Battalion for two reasons. First, I actively sought out a Guard or Reserve unit that would likely be mobilized should the United States go to war. My goal in the wake of 9/11 was to defend our nation by fighting in a war on the soil of our enemies. The track record of the 411 Civil Affairs Battalion, which by that time had participated in numerous overseas operations since the 1980s, looked promising. After September 11 our country did go to war; the 411 Civil Affairs Battalion deployed once again; and I was fortunate to serve in Iraq with the United States Army. Second, I thought that I might be able to make the strongest

---

Carol Iannone is editor-at-large of *Academic Questions* and an officer of the National Association of Scholars. Her interview with John Agresto will appear in our next issue and will present a contrasting view of our mission in Iraq. Agresto served in Iraq in 2003-04 as Senior Adviser for Higher Education and Scientific Research with the Coalition Provisional Authority under Paul Bremer.

contribution to the Army by correlating my civilian skills to military missions, and civil-affairs soldiering (which is discussed below) enables me to do that.

**Iannone: Were you surprised when it became clear that your unit would be mobilized, that you would be serving abroad?**

*Skelly:* No, not after 9/11. Like many others in the military, I anticipated it.

**Iannone: It's fairly unusual for a college professor to serve in the Army Reserve, no?**

*Skelly:* It is uncommon, but not unheard of. For example, in June 2004, just before I deployed, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* published an article about nearly a dozen professors who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan with reserve units from all branches of the service, including professors from Lehigh, Harvard, the University of South Dakota, and Pepperdine University. That number continues to grow. Still, I think a question for academics to ponder—although many of us in the NAS already know the answer—is why have more professors not joined the military in our nation's hour of need?

**Iannone: Were you ever called up for domestic service, or was Iraq your first tour of active duty?**

*Skelly:* When I was in the Army National Guard, my unit conducted its annual training exercise in 1997 on the California-Mexico border, working with the Border Patrol. Iraq was my first extended tour of active duty, and my first deployment overseas.

**Iannone: Did you find your training a good preparation? Did you feel ready?**

*Skelly:* Yes, absolutely, our training was excellent. We hit the ground running as soon as we landed in Iraq. As a reserve unit, we integrated seamlessly into the active duty units we supported, the 1st Infantry Division (the "Big Red One" of World War II fame) for the first five months, and the 3rd Infantry Division (the "Rock of the Marne" of World War I fame) for the remainder of the tour.

**Iannone: I know you are in a civi affairs unit. What does that consist of?**

*Skelly:* Army civil affairs units provide essential combat support to maneuver commanders across the entire spectrum of military operations, from full-scale combat to operations other than war, in fields such as civil-military relations, foreign nation support, populace and resource control, humanitarian assistance, support to civil administrations, and emergency services.

**Iannone: What would you like the American people to know about civil affairs in Iraq?**

*Skelly:* Civil affairs soldiers are making a significant contribution to the tactical and strategic success of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Through our specialized training, the experience that many have had in previous deployments, and our wide-ranging civilian skills, we serve as force multipliers in the Iraqi theater. As such, we play critical roles in the success of both civil-military operations and conventional combat missions. One of our many responsibilities, for example, is to act as an interface between the U.S. Army's core maneuver

elements—i.e., infantry, armor, artillery—and the local population. We are thus a crucial link to the Iraqi people. This places us on the frontlines in Operation Iraqi Freedom, especially when we consider the nature of this conflict, a terrorist campaign where cells of insurgents terrorize and intimidate civilians, contrary to the laws of war and civilized society. Because of our wide-ranging interaction with so many Iraqi men, women, and children, we are in a position to reassure them, to bolster their morale, to encourage them to resist terrorist pressure and, ultimately, to fight alongside them.

***Iannone: What were your specific duties in Baquba?***

*Skelly:* I was stationed at an installation in the heart of the city called the Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC). One of my primary duties was to serve as the Army's public education officer in Diyala Province. In this capacity I coordinated school reconstruction projects on behalf of the U.S. Army and various American government agencies, such as the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Project and Contracting Office (PCO), which is responsible for managing large-scale infrastructure projects across Iraq.

I communicated closely with my Army colleagues across the area of operations and local education officials at all levels. For instance, I supervised the U.S. Army-sponsored reconstruction of Yarmouk University and Baquba Technical Institute, which were damaged during fighting in June 2004 when terrorists commandeered nearby buildings. I synchronized, with the Army and the Army Corps of Engineers, the PCO's rehabilitation of more than 35 primary and secondary schools throughout Diyala Province. I arranged for the distribution of school supplies across the region that were donated by American and international aid foundations. I channeled funds raised on American college campuses to universities in Baquba. I worked closely with other civil affairs soldiers to refurbish public libraries in the province.

On a related note, I supported information operations in Diyala, particularly by writing articles for the 1st and 3rd Infantry Divisions' public affairs offices, and by collaborating with other tactical units in Baquba. Our main aim was to tell the story of American soldiers and Iraqi civilians who, by working together as partners, are transforming the country into a stable democratic state. I was part of a team at the Civil-Military Operations Center that launched a non-governmental organization outreach program, the first in Diyala. The Army grasps the vital role that NGOs can play in stabilizing post-conflict societies, and thus works closely with them wherever it operates. Likewise, I contributed to the Civil-Military Operations Center's initiative to measure, track, and assist internally displaced persons in the area of operations—another task that is critical in a counterinsurgency environment. And, I was involved in a very successful State Department-funded program that trained Iraqi women to participate in democratic politics.

At the same time, I was constantly on notice to take part in standard military

operations. Occasionally I was called upon to lend civil affairs support to patrols underway in Baquba. I often manned a machine gun in the turret of a Humvee while traveling on convoys. I pulled guard duty at the Civil-Military Operations Center. I went on foot patrols through the back streets and alleyways of the city. And, with other soldiers, I provided outer-cordon security during extended operations on election day in January 2005, which was surely one of the highlights of my tour in Iraq.

***Iannone:* Can you comment on how education is shaping up in Iraq? Parts of the Muslim world purvey anti-American, anti-Israel, and anti-Western propaganda, and I'm sure Americans would like to know that that will not be the case in Iraq. Do you think education there will be solid and serious?**

*Skelly:* I did not witness nor hear of any instances of anti-American or anti-Western propaganda in schools throughout Diyala Province. Nor do I think this will be the case in the future. Education in Iraq is already very solid and very serious, and has been for decades. The Iraqi people are justifiably proud of their commitment to education, at all levels, from elementary school to high school to the university level. They have achieved a great deal. This is so despite the fact that during the Hussein regime the educational system in much of the country suffered from underinvestment not only in the physical infrastructure but in human capital as well.

The Iraqis paid a huge price for this neglect, which I witnessed firsthand. For example, it had a terrible effect on women. Iraq is one of the few countries in the world where mothers are more educated than their daughters. This is why renewing the educational system has been such a high priority for the United States Army and all other American government agencies working in the country, and why the Iraqi people I worked with on almost a daily basis appreciated our support.

***Iannone:* Could you describe more specifically your work in university reconstruction?**

*Skelly:* Yes. I refer you to my article, "Winning, One Student at a Time," in *National Review Online*, 2 November 2005, in which I detail how American soldiers supervised the reconstruction of Yarmouk University in Diyala Province, repairing infrastructure that had been damaged in the conflict, re-equipping scientific laboratories, installing more than 60 personal computers in several locations, assembling a student Internet café, and ensuring a dependable supply of electricity. It is part of the Army's initiative to ensure that universities in Diyala are centers of renewal, not radicalism. And this effort is working: students, faculty, and administrators in the province are extremely grateful for the partnership that we have forged with them; several have risked their lives to work with us; and many regularly communicate their appreciation to me via the computers and internet access provided by the U.S. government. All of this highlights the contrast between the terrorists in Iraq, on the one hand, and the American military and their Iraqi allies, on the other: the

former are agents of educational oppression; the latter are catalysts of academic freedom.

**Iannone: Some Americans fear that instead of bringing liberal democracy to Iraq, we may be fostering fundamentalist Islam and sharia law. Parts of the country have become very religiously orthodox, we hear, with women having to wear veils, and so on. What do you say to that?**

*Skelly:* Reports like these are exaggerated. The Iraqi constitution's recognition of Islam does not portend the imposition of Taliban-like sharia law. In an article in *Foreign Affairs*, Isobel Coleman writes that it is feasible in Iraq "to build a more equitable society that accommodates both Islamic principles and a modern role for women." In addition, representative democracy in Iraq is not threatened by orthodox Muslims, just as its counterpart in the United States is not threatened by orthodox Christians or orthodox Jews, while democracy in India is not threatened by orthodox Hindus. In religious terms, it is extremists wedded to violence and their doctrinal apologists, no matter what faith they adhere to, who pose the real threat to consensual democracy. At the same time, there is underway in Iraq, like in many other parts of the world, a serious effort to reconcile the fundamental principles of constitutional democracy—the rule of law, representative institutions, individual political rights, equality under the law, women's rights, religious toleration, regularly held elections, the peaceful transfer of power, a loyal opposition, etc.—with local religious beliefs, cultural values and social traditions. This process has generated numerous functioning models of representative democracy across the Muslim world—in Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia, for instance—and will, I believe, meet with success in Iraq.

**Iannone: What was a typical day like at the Civil-Military Operations Center?**

*Skelly:* During most days in Baquba, I spoke with local officials, interacted with an array of Iraqi citizens, analyzed pertinent data, wrote reports, and carried out missions with my fellow American soldiers. In the morning I might meet with the Diyala Director General of Education and his construction engineers, often at "the Blue Dome," which was the seat of the Diyala provincial government, to discuss blueprints for school reconstruction projects or to review progress reports. Back at the Operations Center I might hold a meeting with the representative of a local NGO, such as the Charitable Association for Iraqi Children. My goal might be to channel resources directly to this group so that it could help young people in need. In the afternoon I would often discuss education reform with a group of college professors. After that I might review the latest update on the disposition of displaced persons in the Western sector of Diyala and recommend a course of action to my commander that would alleviate their plight—and thus stabilize the area of operations. At the end of every day I would take part in a planning meeting, and, if there was time, I might write an article or essay for an American publication.

***Iannone:* How did all of that differ from a day in the life of Professor Skelly back in New York City?**

*Skelly:* In many respects, a day in Baquba differed substantially from a day on campus in New York City. The starkest contrast resided with the fact that in Iraq I was a soldier. I was fighting a war. I had to be ready at all times to participate in combat missions, something that was always possible, 24 hours a day, in the coiled battle space of a terrorist insurgency. I was working in a foreign environment, one that at times was harsh and unmerciful. Like all Coalition troops, I was a target of those forces in Iraq that wish to halt and then reverse the positive changes that are taking place there. I do not face these conditions in the United States. Yet neither do I have the opportunity at home to work with my fellow soldiers on such an important mission, on the front lines in the war on terrorism. So, without a doubt, I felt honored to be in Iraq, with such a formidable team. In academic terms, I welcomed the unique “sabbatical” I was on.

At the same time, there were parallels with my civilian profession. I worked in the field of education in Iraq. I wrote articles and essays about current events, history and politics, which I do as a professor. I teach history and was engaged in a great event in the history of our time. I study international affairs and participated in a new era in international relations. I write about diplomatic history, and while in Iraq I was a soldier who sometimes had to practice diplomacy in order to achieve my objectives. I have researched the nature of terrorism, and in Baquba I witnessed upfront the evils of terrorism. I likewise observed, via the resistance of the Iraqi people to terrorism combined with the fight Coalition forces are waging against it, a means of defeating the enemy arrayed against us.

***Iannone:* How does your background as a historian affect how you view Iraq?**

*Skelly:* I certainly view events in Iraq through a longer timeframe. I know that we are in the midst of a historical process that will take years to work itself out. By way of a parallel, one of the figures from history I admire most, Edmund Burke, urged the North Atlantic constitutional democracies, in *Letters on a Regicidal Peace*, to prepare for “a long war” against the murderous forces let loose by the radical impulses of the French Revolution in the early 1790s, to prepare for a long battle against Robespierre and the Jacobins, who had launched an all-out assault upon ordered freedom. Edmund Burke was right. But it was not until Wellington defeated Napoleon Bonaparte at Waterloo in 1815 that the ordered liberty that Burke cherished was finally secured. I believe that we are in an analogous situation. Our war will be a *long* one. The war on terrorism has already lasted longer than World War II. But we surely have the means at our disposal to win.

***Iannone:* Some commentators now question if we were right to go to war in Iraq. What is your response?**

*Skelly:* We were absolutely right to launch Operation Iraqi Freedom, for an array of compelling strategic reasons. The aftermath of September 11 necessitated a new security paradigm in the Middle East. Containment and offshore balancing, which were the operating principles before 9/11, were no longer viable options. As such, Saddam Hussein's regime had to be deposed. Why? It represented a lethal center of gravity of one of movements—secular Baathism, in this case—arrayed against the United States, our allies, and the civilized world. The other movements include militant Sunni Islam, in the guise of Al-Qaeda, for example, and radical Shiite extremism, as embodied by the Iranian theocratic regime headed by President Ahmadinejad. They have been waging war against us in one form or another for the past three decades. While not representing a formal alliance against the West, they nevertheless coalesced, beneath our radar screens, into a “perfect strategic storm” that has been raining thunder and lightning down upon us in the form of terrorist attacks against our soldiers and marines, embassy bombings, assaults on our warships, airline hijackings, and the kidnapping and murder of our diplomatic envoys.

September 11 was one manifestation of this atmospheric turbulence, the most devastating to date, but not the only instance, by far. The invasion of Afghanistan, aimed at Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, was therefore a start. More decisive action was necessary, and Iraq was the next step. Whether or not Saddam Hussein actually possessed weapons of mass destruction was not, to my mind, the main issue. The marginal possibility that he may have had them—and his track record over the 25 years preceding the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom indicated that this either might be the case or that he was trending in this direction—combined with the support he was already providing to terrorist groups (such as the PLO) and the possibility that he might cooperate with them at some point in the future regarding WMD proliferation, not to mention the possibility of a rapprochement with Sunni Islamism or Shiite fundamentalism, all justified preventive war against his regime.

What is more, our presence in Iraq offers us greater geostrategic options in the Middle East, while foreclosing the strategic choices of our regional adversaries. It must also be seen as part of our role as the guarantor of stability in the Persian Gulf region. On another front, Operation Iraqi Freedom has presented us with a geopolitical opportunity: we have initiated the gradual promotion of constitutional democracy in the Middle East, which, while fraught with difficulties in the short term, promises to pay dividends in the long run—so long as we maintain the courage of our convictions and understand that this is a deliberate, measured process that will take time. There is, as well, a counterfactual analysis to consider: what would our strategic disposition be if Saddam was still in power? Something more precarious, to be sure. In sum, our national security, and that of our allies, has been enhanced by the removal of the Hussein regime. The civilized world is safer today because of the progress we have made in Iraq.

***Iannone: What about fluctuating public opinion in the United States?***

*Skelly:* I believe we would all do well to keep in mind something very significant: Operation Iraqi Freedom is not simply the President's war. It is America's war. It is a national effort. In the autumn of 2002 the American people, by acting collectively through our representative democratic institutions, sanctioned armed intervention in Iraq. President Bush sought authorization to go to war, and both houses of Congress overwhelmingly granted it. The vote was 77 to 23 in the Senate, and 296 to 133 in the House of Representatives. The men and women of the U.S. military have responded faithfully to this mission. We should not let them down.

We must also remember something else, a stark fact of history: wars are difficult; they traverse through peaks and valleys; there are successes and setbacks. Because we have not yet quelled the terrorist insurgency in Iraq, does that mean we should backpedal now? Is it in the American character to cut and run? No, not in my view. The commentator David Gelernter agrees. In a recent essay in the *Weekly Standard* he challenges the American people to recall our national tradition of resolute determination during wartime:

Most wars bog down in hard fighting at some point or other. When that happens, America must be able to trust itself not to run away. George Washington and his men did not run away after General Howe took Philadelphia for the British in September 1777, and Washington's counterattack on Germantown failed in October, and the brand new American army had to settle into miserable, freezing winter quarters at Valley Forge. Every American schoolchild used to know what Valley Forge meant: Stand firm and fight, no matter how terrible things are. The Union army did not run away in the fall of 1862, although Lee and Jackson had won a huge Confederate victory at Second Bull Run, and Lee had crossed the Potomac into Maryland and was threatening Washington, Baltimore, and (again) Philadelphia, and was expected to capture all of Maryland and a crucial railroad bridge in Pennsylvania—which would just about cut the Union in two. But Lincoln and the Union did not give up. The Confederates didn't run away either. Their cause was wrong, but they stood up heroically and fought till they were crushed to bits. Nor did the American army run away eighty years later in the spring of 1942, although the Pacific fleet had been smashed at Pearl Harbor, Manila had been evacuated, Bataan had surrendered after a desperate, starving defense—and then Corregidor had surrendered too. But MacArthur promised that Americans would return to liberate the Philippines, and that's just what happened. The United States has no tradition of running away.

Indeed, we do not. Gelernter goes on to write that he thinks Vietnam was an aberration. He knows that today we are being tested in Iraq. Our enemies believe that we will reprise a scene from Southeast Asia in the 1970s. Gelernter believes that we will restore an earlier American tradition. I am confident that he is correct. Yet it is the American people who will ultimately decide. In our democratic system, the matter rests in their collective hands.

***Iannone: Are we making progress against the terrorist insurgency?***



*Skelly:* Yes, we are winning. Some readers may be skeptical of this assertion. I am certain of it. This is not to discount the difficulties we are facing, for they are serious, and they are real. And they will continue for some time to come. But I do feel that Americans are not getting a complete picture of the progress that is taking place on the ground. Once they do, I would hope that they have patience. Defeating insurgencies, because of their very nature, takes time. Meanwhile, our counterterrorist tactics are increasingly lethal. The second Battle of Fallujah was a turning point in this respect. Remember this: American soldiers and marines have not lost a single engagement at the platoon level or higher in Iraq.

We have also recently developed a successful overall counterinsurgency strategy for the country, articulated by President Bush in several recent speeches and by scholars such as Frederick Kagan, called "Clear, Hold, Build." In these scenarios joint Iraqi-American military operations clear cities of terrorists; Iraqi forces stay to hold the city centers while Americans move to hold the perimeters; and rebuilding the cities begins immediately. This approach has worked very well in Tal Afar, in Sadr City in Baghdad, and in numerous towns in Al Anbar province situated along the Syrian border. Iraqi forces are playing an increasingly visible role in these operations. In short, we will win the war, so long as we win the battle for public opinion on the home front, which will give us the necessary time to complete the mission.

***Iannone:* Some Americans wonder why at this stage we can't just increase the level of force we are using to defeat the insurgency, why we can't just obliterate our enemies with our superior force, instead of enduring almost daily violence. What do you say in response to that?**

*Skelly:* We actually are using the level of force necessary to defeat the insurgency. We are employing a wide range of weapons systems, from special forces to light infantry to armored units to joint air operations involving Apache helicopters and fighter jets. This stage of Operation Iraqi Freedom, however, is not a conventional conflict like World War II. It is a counterterrorist insurgency being fought in close proximity to civilians. As such, we must keep two vital principles in mind. Civilized militaries, which include all of those in the Coalition in Iraq, do not use force indiscriminately. Nor do we do so in the midst of civilian populations. These principles are what distinguish us from our terrorist enemies, who *intentionally* target civilians, as a matter of policy. In Iraq we must marry the level of force to tactics that hew to the laws of war. As we identify our enemies, who hide among civilians, or isolate them from the civilian population, we apply the level of force that is both necessary to neutralize them *and* acceptable given the specific conditions in the immediate vicinity. We always demonstrate the greatest concern for the lives of innocent men, women and children. Such caution means that sometimes American soldiers are at a greater risk. This is a price we have to pay. Now, we are not

perfect today, and have made mistakes in the past. But as a matter of policy we operate on a higher moral plane than our terrorist adversaries.

**Iannone:** On the other hand, one visitor to Iraq has suggestion that American soldiers may be too up-armored, that they look like “robocops,” which gives the impression that they are in a defensive mode, kind of hunkered down. Whereas, he said, a Scottish-British regiment is walking around in kilts and tasseled hats. He felt that projected more confidence, a sense of being in charge. Any thoughts on that?

*Skelly:* The exact uniform and protective apparatus that soldiers wear is determined by the threat level in an area of operations. The British are doing an excellent job in Basra, their sphere of responsibility. They adhere to the highest standards of ethics and professionalism. Because the threat level in parts of Basra is sometimes reduced, they occasionally patrol the streets in berets. But not always: when two British soldiers were taken hostage in Basra several months ago, their fellow soldiers did not hesitate to don helmets and utilize several armored personnel carriers to free the men, nor in early May did they rush to the scene of a downed British helicopter, which was surrounded by surly crowds, with tasseled hats, but wearing full battle dress. Likewise in Afghanistan, where the British Army is performing extremely well and has just taken control of the NATO force there, British soldiers always wear the appropriate protective gear in high threat conditions. The same goes for American soldiers who patrol dangerous areas of Baghdad and the Sunni Triangle. In Bosnia, however, where the threat level was much lower, American troops sometimes patrolled in berets. That day will eventually arrive in Iraq.

**Iannone:** What is it like to be in danger on a regular basis? Did you see a lot of violence?

*Skelly:* Like all soldiers, I adjusted quickly to the danger around me, due to the wisdom of the military training we receive, which is centered on discipline. Yes, I saw violence, and the effects of violence. There is one thing that I wish to comment on in particular, namely, suicide bombings. Witnessing the gruesome aftermath of a suicide bombing can lead a moral person to only one conclusion: the terrorist organizations and their leaders who send forth their fellow human beings to commit such heinous acts, those men and women who carry them out, and the extremist political and religious cultures that rationalize such atrocities can only be classified as evil. As such, they must be defeated, utterly; they must be destroyed, completely.

**Iannone:** What do you remember about your deployment, now that you are back home?

*Skelly:* Two main, interrelated images from my tour of duty bulk large in my mind’s eye. First and foremost, I recall with the greatest sense of pride and admiration the courage and commitment of my fellow American soldiers, marines, sailors and airmen, the men and women with whom I had the honor

to serve in Iraq. Day-in and day-out, they performed countless missions with skill, discipline and professionalism. They take their place next to the Americans of every generation who have answered our nation's call to defend liberty. They are American patriots, every single one of them.

By the same token, I remember the bravery of so many Iraqi people I met, men and women from all walks of life who are dedicated to defending their new democracy and to changing their country—and, indeed, their region. Their heroism is imprinted on my mind. They, too, are patriots. Given this opportunity by the Coalition forces to alter their fate, they have risen to the occasion. History, I believe, will remember them.

***Iannone:* When does your time in the Army Reserve expire? Do you think you'll be called up again?**

*Skelly:* I will remain in the Army Reserve for the foreseeable future. It is quite possible that I will be called up again to serve in Iraq, Afghanistan, or some other theater in the global war on terrorism. If so, I am ready. My duffel bags are packed, literally.

***Iannone:* Any final thoughts?**

*Skelly:* Yes, two reflections that are relevant to New York City, where the war on terrorism began on September 11. First, at my duty station in the CMOC in Baquba sat a replica of the Statue of Liberty, sent to me by a friend, Sean Sullivan, who served with the Marine Corps in Iraq in 2003. When the Iraqis saw it, they pointed excitedly, and, searching for the correct English translation for "liberty," invariably uttered one word: "freedom." That is what this campaign is about—for Iraqis, for our allies, and for every American.

Second, I would like to thank my colleagues in the New York Association of Scholars, who have created a vibrant intellectual community in New York City. NYAS often meets at the home of two of our members, Erica and Bob Weissberg, in lower Manhattan, within blocks of Ground Zero. That gaping wound in the heart of Manhattan is a sobering reminder of what we are fighting for. While the battle is a tough one, I am certain that we will win if the American people give us the time to complete the mission.

The NAS has assembled a group of distinguished scholars and invited them to comment occasionally on breaking developments in higher education. We have been posting their brief articles as we receive them in our internet publication—the *NAS Online Forum*. Access to this web log is open to all at <http://www.nas.org/forum.html>.