



**Written Testimony in Support of FY 2011 Appropriations for the
National Endowment for the Arts**

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House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies

“Arts Build Communities”

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Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be here. My name is Nolen V. Bivens. I am a US Army Brigadier General who recently retired after some 32 years of active service. I am also a board member of Americans for the Arts and I am here to support a \$180 million appropriation for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in FY 2011.

I would like to present three policy areas in which my experience in the military has shown that support for arts and culture can improve our national security needs, provide a pathway to stronger cultural diplomacy and quality of life for our wounded warriors and veterans transitioning into a civilian life.

It has occurred to me, and perhaps you, that my background, in the military, is quite different than the others testifying before you today and in the past. Like those of you who also serve on the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, you may see a connection between the arts and defense issues. I think it will become clear that I, like a mayor, like a local arts administrator and like a corporate leader, see the need for federal leadership in the arts. From my efforts in one area of government service, I’ve come to realize the important value and necessity of another part of our government – the National Endowment for the Arts.

The American arts community is a national asset and treasure with tremendous potential to contribute to the United States Government’s ability to deal with the national security challenges it faces. Its arsenal of art forms and capabilities can be shared and exchanged as part of larger government and interagency activities designed to increase cultural understanding between all nations. The arts community can do this in a way other instruments of national power cannot — remember the universal language is music.

Three great revolutions in human history—the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution, and the current information revolution—have shaped generations of military warfare and how militaries protect their country’s national security interests. Complex issues such as globalization, urbanization, climate change, population growth, and the depletion of natural resources are key issues impacting the national security interests of nations in an information age.

Asymmetrical Warfare Requires Creative Solutions and Innovative Thinking

Issues, such as these, according to the Secretary of Defense Robert Gates make today an age where, “we can expect that asymmetric warfare will remain the mainstay of the contemporary battlefield for some time. These conflicts will be fundamentally political in nature, and require the application of all elements of national power.”

Direct combat can only do so much—the military must employ new practices to address non-state actors, terrorists, and irregular warfare techniques. In battle, the US military executes four-phase campaigns to protect U.S. interests. Phase One is to deter. Phase Two, if deterrence fails, seize the initiative. Phase Three, execute decisive operations, i.e. the drive to Baghdad in March of 2003. Phase Four is transition to security and stability.

However, when it is not involved in active combat operations, the U.S. military, along with other federal departments and agencies execute Security Cooperation Operations or “Phase Zero” activities in support of U.S. National Security Strategy. These activities aim to prevent conflicts from initially occurring. The goal is to promote stability and build capacity in partner nations through greater interagency and non-governmental support and coordination.

While conducting operations against adversaries that use asymmetric warfare, vacuums of governance and other problems are created which the military cannot effectively address alone. These voids get filled with non-state actors and terrorists employing irregular warfare techniques, as in Iraq, giving rise to such news headlines as: “Iraqi Looters Tearing Up Archaeological Sites” (New York Times, 5/23/03)—with commentary such as,

“After two days of looting, almost all of the museum’s 170,000 artifacts were either stolen or damaged... ‘It’s catastrophic...It’s a lot like a lobotomy. The deep memory of an entire culture...has been removed...It’s an incredible crime.’” [“The End of Civilization,” Salon, 4/17/03]

As reports uncovered years later, the looting of the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad, and other archaeological sites at the time, provided a funding source for terrorism and insurgent groups. It took members of the Archaeological Institute of America, Iraq’s Cultural Ministry and U.S. Army Reserve soldiers with museum and curatorial skills to address a problem created during Phase 3 and 4. Future conflicts should be approached with a better understanding of how a nation values its cultural heritage, and its arts.

Success in asymmetric warfare, as General David Petraeus Commander US Central Command often states, is about winning the hearts and minds of the people. The arts, through cultural diplomacy, can contribute substantially to this end.

Cultural Diplomacy is a Key Security Strategy

The “Phase Zero” piece of our national security strategy is a necessary effort to respond to vacuums in governance, promote stability and build capacity in partner nations. This emphasis by the Department of Defense has been clearly articulated by the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff and Regional Combatant Commander testimonies, and resourced and demonstrated through

Service Component Commands support to State Department and Country Team plans and activities.

Increased public diplomacy is greatly needed. Exchanges of artists between countries, performances by groups like the Iraqi Philharmonic Orchestra, at home and abroad, and cultural figures that connect to youth are all elements of this strategy.

While this subcommittee does not handle State Department funding, I think it is significant that the 2008 Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication stated the following, “We believe substantial increases should go to the Fulbright; the International Visitor Leadership Program; youth exchanges; English language instruction; increased utilization of ‘cultural diplomats,’ such as American sports and entertainment figures...”

Support for arts through the NEA will help to strengthen our cultural assets in the pursuit of greater cultural understanding worldwide. Through cooperative initiatives the National Endowment for the Arts brings the benefit of international exchange to arts organizations, artists, and audiences nationwide and fosters international creative collaboration. Support of the arts and artists can help to bridge many common values that lead to peaceful resolution of disagreements as well as the sustainment of cordial international relations.

The archeological incidences in Iraq and other cultural lessons learned during combat and Phase Zero activities are examples of what has led the military and other government departments and agencies to conclude that a “whole of government” approach is needed to effectively protect the security interests of the United States. The American arts community can best contribute towards the achievement of national security interests during Phase Zero operations. They are so valuable because they impact the lives of people, which in turn affect their attitudes and perceptions about other countries positively.

I would like to briefly mention a few ways the arts community and government agencies might achieve this goal:

- Participate in the Phase Zero campaign planning undertaken by the eight geographical combatant commands in order to identify the possible areas where arts and cultural initiatives can best support their security cooperation plans.
- Execute art cultural projects during the military to military activities each service’s component command does in support of regional combatant commands. For example as military engineer units build schools; artists or other local and national art organizations can resource the arts center in the school.
- Build relations with military auxiliary organizations such as the National Military Family Association and other grass roots military community support organization efforts
- Engage with military training and education institutions to co-develop cultural educational films that educate service military members prior to deployments.
- Leverage and partner with the Morale, Welfare and Recreation divisions of the armed services to identify how local art organizations and businesses can participate in base and installation arts and crafts programs. Brokering opportunities where by local artists and bands could combine with many of the all volunteer command bands at our bases and posts is a super way to support troop-family deployment and redeployment ceremonies and celebrations.

Arts Help Support Wounded Warriors and Veterans Transition to Civilian Life

Not only can arts leaders and organizations collaborate with Department of Defense security operations and cultural diplomacy, but they can also partner with the federal government to assist our wounded warriors as they transition back into civilian life.

As I'm sure this Subcommittee has heard in previous years, the National Endowment for the Arts began in 2004 Operation Homecoming, to help U.S. troops and their families write about their wartime experiences. Also, from October 2005 through Spring 2007, the NEA's *Great American Voices* featured 24 professional opera companies performing at 39 military bases across the country. Both of these initiatives were designed to connect high-quality arts experiences with our servicemen and their families and provide a sense of community.

In addition to those NEA programs, other elements of the U.S. Government are also providing arts and cultural support to our military:

- Professional music therapy at Walter Reed Army Medical Center helps wounded soldiers heal both emotionally and physically.
- In Chicago, the National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum collects, preserves and exhibits art inspired by combat and created by veterans. NVVAM states that "creating art has provided a chance for [veterans] to express the joy, pain, fear and devastation of their experiences in Vietnam, becoming an outlet for their inner voices."
- The federal Veterans Affairs Department coordinates the annual National Veterans Creative Arts Festival which is a "culmination of talent competitions in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music for Veterans treated in the VA's national health care system."
- The Veterans Affairs Dept also partners with VSA *arts* "to encourage the rehabilitation, recovery, independence, and personal growth of veterans through artist-in-residency programs offering a variety of artistic experiences in creative writing, dance, drama, music, and the visual arts."

Providing support through local community arts and cultural institutions sustains returning soldiers and veterans as they transition back into their family and community life.

Conclusion

I have presented three policy areas in which my experience in the military has shown that support for arts and culture can improve our national security needs and the quality of life for our wounded warriors and veterans transitioning into a civilian life. Our forces are adjusting to a new state of warfare, an asymmetrical threat which demands new and innovative approaches in responding. Protection of valuable and sensitive cultural treasures, such as those looted in the Baghdad Museum can go a long way in helping our forces maintain support among the citizenry. Investments in cultural diplomacy during peacetime or times of strife can help prevent military intervention. Support for our veterans in their healing and post-service can be better supported with creative outlets can help support their path and transition to a civilian life.

All of these efforts can be aided by supporting our nation's leading cultural agency, the National Endowment for the Arts and the investments it makes in developing skills and building communities.