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Statement of Purpose

Two years ago I made the decision to be a part of what I consider to be the most exciting and difficult endeavor modern civilization has ever attempted: To end the gross injustice and immoral inequity of extreme poverty and extend the intrinsic rights of humanity to all peoples. This extreme divergence in quality of life and a lack of connectivity with the growing, global community are the wellspring of instability. Failed or severely dysfunctional states outside of globalization's unsympathetic embrace have become the staging ground for modern civilization's discontents. It is they who isolate and impoverish their countrymen through zealous ideology and exploitation of resources. Fortunately, this means we can no longer afford to ignore the previously neglected corners of the world. Technology has defeated geography, giving rise to an emerging global culture. Our economies have become permanently intertwined, and the need for a long-term vision rather than a short-term patch is painfully evident. Supporting authoritarian "strong-men" and calling it "regional stability" is finally being rejected as a foreign policy strategy. As a result, "nation-building" has become a reality of the geo-political landscape even as some still dare not speak its name. As we move toward connecting the remaining undeveloped world, it will continue to be necessary to involve a united global community in the domestic affairs of these struggling states to ensure a lasting solution to the poverty and disenfranchisement that currently cripples them.

In recognition of the military's transformation toward asymmetric, counter-insurgent warfare in the context of these future rehabilitative nation-building efforts, I chose to make my contribution in an organization that I feel is destined to play a pivotal role in transitioning failed-state interventions into normalized, functioning and durable economic partnerships: U.S. Army Civil Affairs (CA). As a member of the Special Operations community, CA functions at varying capacities in every operational environment, from full-scale battlefield warfare to permissive, non-invasive consultation and humanitarian assistance efforts. My commitment to joining this mission met immediate as well as long-term challenges. The Civil Affairs branch does not take officers without prior military experience. So, at the age of 32, I gave up a six-figure salary and an officer's commission, to which my degree entitled me, and joined the enlisted ranks to begin my new career in peacemaking – at the very bottom. I am a Reservist, though when my Operation Enduring Freedom tour is completed in June 2006, I will have been on active duty and away from my family and friends for twenty consecutive months. These initial sacrifices of family, comfort, income and personal security best exemplify my commitment and determination to be a part of building a lasting peace.

At present, and for the majority of the last year, I have been serving in a United States Army Civil Affairs Unit as part of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. A "PRT" is a co-location and combination of military assets (Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and Military Police) with U.S. Government Agency resources (USAID, USDA, DOS). Our mission is to stabilize, redevelop and ultimately normalize a given occupied area. It is here where we are defining the future of inter-agency interaction and

collaboration. As a Civil Affairs Non-Commissioned Officer, I act as both administrator and diplomat: nominating and managing over \$2.5 million in reconstruction projects for both military and USAID programs; building relationships with and consulting provincial governors and local leaders; and briefing U.S. military and political leadership on a regular basis. I have briefed four-star generals and Congressional Delegations, a responsibility reserved almost exclusively for officers and unheard of for someone at the rank of Sergeant. It is field experiences such as this and insights gained from those experiences that I will bring into your program and into the classroom discussion.

Prior to my joining the military, I was a software engineer for nine years. Far from being irrelevant in my new profession, my extensive information technology (IT) background provides sound real-world perspectives on, and solutions to, the challenges we face in establishing common protocols and information systems integrations that are integral to any inter-agency success. My formal education, a B.B.A. in Marketing, offers a familiarity with the mechanisms of media and public relations which are an essential part of the fight for hearts and minds, not only abroad but also here at home. For if we are to ask the public to make future investments of time and money and sacrifices of human life toward a just, equitable, and real peace, we must be able to effectively compete against misinformation, ignorance and apathy as well as counter-messages from those who seek to appeal to the more short-term interests of the average voter. Part of my personal mission has been to increase awareness of the Civil Affairs branch and our work through a weblog that has chronicled both my experiences and philosophical motivations: www.fortunateson.org. A short site visit can provide an additional dimension you may find useful in considering my candidacy in your program.

Our involvement in the developing world will be an inescapable reality in perpetuity. Civilian government agency development initiatives will become increasingly interwoven with military security and stabilization efforts and there will be a need for those who understand and have worked in both fields to develop the common doctrine and toolsets that will further this process of inter-agency integration and cooperation. However, increased collaboration has led to and will continue to lead to increased conflict between military and civilian management on the ground. In order to ensure these civil-military relationships remain positive and productive it will be necessary to have leadership that has a studied awareness of the nature of conflict not just at the macro level, but at the interpersonal level as well. Most importantly, it is critical that future leaders in our field have an understanding of the limitations of a military solution and an appreciation for the spiritual in regards to our effort to “connect” the human race. If our efforts toward a real and lasting peace are to be successful, we must pursue a strategy of enlightened self-interest: reclaim our role as champion for human rights, rule of law and liberal, democratic principals; secure and stabilize volatile, lawless regions; and build or reconstitute economic, physical and governmental infrastructure in order to attract foreign direct investment, thus integrating formerly disconnected states into the global economy. I am honored and blessed to be performing my modest function in pursuit of this strategy and I believe that the International Peace and Conflict Resolution Master’s Program at American University School of International Service is the next logical step in my personal and professional evolution toward an increasingly influential role within it.