

16 February 2017

To the members of the Society for Military History,

On 27 January 2017, US President Donald J. Trump signed an [Executive Order](#) on “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States.” In response, on 30 January 2017, the American Historical Association (AHA) issued a [statement condemning the Executive Order](#) and asked if its affiliated societies, including the Society for Military History (SMH), wished to sign on to the statement. To date, about fifty affiliated societies (of approximately 125) have signaled their support for the AHA statement. Other American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) organizations have also issued statements. Additionally, many history departments have also expressed support for the AHA statement.

On 6 February 2017, SMH President, Dr. Jennifer Keene, and SMH Executive Director, Dr. Robert Berlin, queried the SMH voting officers and trustees about whether the Society for Military History should sign on to the AHA statement. Per internal processes, we allowed for a period of discussion and deliberation among voting members before voting on the matter. After several days of discussion, the vote on the motion to sign on to the AHA statement was unanimous. We, the SMH voting officers and trustees, wish to take this opportunity to explain our reasoning to the SMH membership.

First, we acknowledge that this action *is* political. We are also resolute in our conviction that it *is not* partisan. The SMH is home to a broad constituency and welcomes members with a host of political persuasions, and the trustees are committed to the principles of freedom of speech and diversity in all forms. In this case, either action or inaction could be read as political—there is no obviously neutral position. Silence or inaction would signal concurrence, apathy, or irrelevance, none of which we found to be defensible positions.

Second, as a matter of professional ethics, we believe the AHA statement clearly and correctly analyzes the consequences of the Executive Order. As academics, we have a responsibility to speak out in support of fact-based policy making and rigorous analysis. We are confident that the AHA’s statement deals in evidence, fact, and reason and identifies the potentially deleterious effects the Executive Order could have on academics, teachers, scholars, and researchers. Furthermore, the Society for Military History has an international membership and we benefit enormously from the contributions of our international scholars. We support the AHA’s conclusion that this Executive Order threatens these broad ideals.

Third, as a matter of conscience, many trustees expressed a moral obligation to oppose the Executive Order on humanitarian and security grounds. As military historians, we are well-attuned to some of the worst horrors that human beings can inflict on one another. Many of our members also work as experts and practitioners in the field of national security. We believe the Society is well-suited to weigh in on the complicated relationship between security, history, identity, values, terrorism, and war.

Finally, we welcome your feedback on this matter, and other matters of public import. We are open to your questions and feedback during the annual membership meeting to be held at the [2017 Annual Meeting](#) or in correspondence with [officers and trustees](#) of the Society.

Sincerely,

Bill Allison, Trustee

Robert H. Berlin, Executive Director

Tami Biddle, Trustee

John Sebastian Cox, Trustee

Kelly DeVries, Trustee

Ricardo A. Herrera, Trustee

Jennifer D. Keene, President

Wayne E. Lee, Trustee

Peter R. Mansoor, Trustee

Marc Milner, Trustee

Randy Papadopoulos, Vice-President

Katherine K. Reist, Trustee

Janet G. Valentine, Trustee

Bruce R. Vandervort, Editor of the *Journal of Military History*

Jacqueline E. Whitt, Trustee

Andrew A. Wiest, Trustee