The Iraq War as Lived by Five SIPA Students

For a handful of students at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), debate over war and military intervention isn’t just theoretical. These are the soldiers—highly trained individuals who served in the armed forces—they know firsthand the difficulty of applying ideals to a situation on the ground and the kind of ethical dilemmas war can raise.

Thanks to the efforts of SIPA student Beth Fascitelli, five of these “Ivy League soldiers” recently had a chance to share their reflections on their military service with their fellow classmates.

Fascitelli, who cochairs SIPA’s Conflict Resolution Working Group, was herself eager to hear about the soldiers’ experiences. Ever since a friend of hers, an Amherst College graduate, decided to join the armed forces and serve in Iraq, she has been thinking a lot about America’s military presence in that country.

“I realized that I knew very little about [the military] and that the issues were much more complicated than I thought,” Fascitelli said. “‘Being in academia, it’s very easy to criticize the war in Iraq without really understanding what is going on.’

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