Book examines U.S. presidents' decisions to engage in war

The struggle faced by American presidents in making the decision to engage the nation in war is the subject of a new book by Gary Hess, Distinguished Research Professor of History; Presidential Decisions for War: Korean, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, published recently by the Johns Hopkins University Press, looks at the effectiveness of presidents Harry S. Truman, Lyndon Johnson and George Bush in their respective crises. A widely known expert on the Vietnam War, Hess is also the author of Vietnam and the United States: Origins and Legacy of War, and The United States' Emergence as a Southeast Asia Power, 1948-1950. Describing the concept of Hess's book as a "stroke of genius," David W. Levy of the University of Oklahoma wrote in a pre-publication review that "Hess gives us a fine sense of how various pressures operated to shape both a president's decision for war and the way in which this decision was carried out... Hess's evaluations are always thoughtful and measured." In Presidential Decisions for War, Hess analyzes the threat to national security; how well the three presidents worked with the United Nations and the country's allies, and the level of popular and Congressional support in each case. He also appraises Truman, Johnson and Bush in terms of their success as Commander-in-Chief in defining the country's objectives in "limited wars," their relations with military leaders and their responsiveness to opportunities for peace.

"Fifty years ago, the Americans were thinking we'd win fighting World War II against the Soviets. But these wars were all against relatively minor countries America didn't think of as its enemies, and they all had a defined objective, unlike World War II, and a limited commitment in terms of American resources," Hess said. "And yet, limited in scope as the three conflicts were, the presidents involved faced terrible consequences in making the decision for war. Hess said. There are lessons to be learned from the three experiences, he added. Presidential Decisions for War is Hess's seventh book; it is part of the Americas Moment series of the Johns Hopkins University Press, which is edited by BGSU alumnus Stanley Butler of the University of Wisconsin, a 1936 graduate of the University. The book is available through Amazon.com and will soon be in the BGSU bookstore. The retail price is $19.95 in hardback and $17.95 in softcover. Hess, a four-time Fulbright Scholar, lecturer in India, is a past president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations and has served on the board of editors of Diplomatic History.

Beliefs can influence mortality, study finds

A new study suggests older hospital patients who are wrestling with religious beliefs during an illness may have an increased risk of dying, according to researchers at Bowling Green State University and Duke University Medical Center. While several previous studies have demonstrated a reduced risk of death with more frequent church attendance, this is the first empirical research to identify religious beliefs that increase the risk of mortality. Results of the study appear in the Aug. 13, 2001 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine.

"The study reminds us that religion is a rich, complex process, one that represents a potent resource for people facing prob-
Beliefs can influence mortality (Continued)