

**AAA Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the  
US Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC)**

**Final Report on  
The Army's Human Terrain System Proof of Concept Program**

**Submitted to the Executive Board of the  
American Anthropological Association  
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## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CEAUSSIC's Approach to HTS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Sources of Information on the Program</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Brief Description of Human Terrain System</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Sources of HTS Funding</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Reported Activities and Conduct of HTTs</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Training and Methods</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Circumstances of Field Work</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>The Military and Social Science Expertise</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>HTTs and Military Counterparts</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Research Questions and Priorities</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Products</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Data Collection and Storage</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>The Question of Intelligence</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>The Identity of the Program</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>HTS and Relevant Constituencies</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Anthropological Critics</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>DoD and the Intelligence Community</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>HTS and Ethics</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Conclusion: Is it Anthropology?</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Appendix A: CEAUSSIC Request for Information from HTS</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Appendix B: HTS Response to CEAUSSIC Request</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Appendix C: 2007 AAA Statement on HTS</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Appendix D: HTS Timeline</b>	<b>72</b>

## Acronyms

**AFRICOM (US African Command)**  
**AAA (American Anthropological Association)**  
**BAE (BAE Systems North America)**  
**CEAUSSIC (Ad Hoc Commission on Anthropology's Engagement with the Security and Intelligence Communities)**  
**CoE (Code of Ethics)**  
**CENTCOM (US Central Command)**  
**COCOM (any US Combat Command)**  
**COIN (Counterinsurgency Operations)**  
**DoD (Department of Defense)**  
**EB (Executive Board of the AAA)**  
**FAO (Foreign Area Officer)**  
**FOB (Forward Operating Base)**  
**GTRI (Georgia Tech Research Institute)**  
**GWOT (Global War on Terror)**  
**HTS (Human Terrain System)**  
**HTT (Human Terrain Team)**  
**HUMINT (Human Intelligence)**  
**IO (Information Operations)**  
**IRB (Institutional Review Board)**  
**JIEDDO (Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization)**  
**MEDCAP (Medical Civil Affairs Program)**  
**NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer)**  
**OSD (Office of the Secretary of Defense)**  
**PRISP (Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholars Program)**  
**PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team)**  
**PSYOP (Psychological Operations)**  
**RAND (The RAND Corporation)**  
**TRADOC (US Army Training and Doctrine Command)**

## Executive Summary

In December of 2008, the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association asked the Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the U.S. Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC) to thoroughly review the Human Terrain System (HTS) program, so that the AAA might then formulate an official position on members' participation in HTS activities. This report details CEAUSSIC's primary findings, which are summarized in the following key points:

1. HTS and similar programs are moving to become a greater fixture within the U.S. military. Given still outstanding questions about HTS, such developments should be a source of concern for the AAA but also for any social science organization or federal agency that expects its members or its employees to adhere to established disciplinary and federal standards for the treatment of human subjects.
2. The current arrangement of HTS includes potentially irreconcilable goals which, in turn, lead to irreducible tensions with respect to the program's basic identity. These include HTS at once: fulfilling a research function, as a data source, as a source of intelligence, and as performing a tactical function in counterinsurgency warfare. Given this confusion, any anthropologist considering employment with HTS will have difficulty determining whether or not s/he will be able to follow the disciplinary Code of Ethics.
3. HTS managers insist the program is not an intelligence asset. However, we note that the program is housed within a DoD intelligence asset, that it has reportedly been briefed as such an asset, and that a variety of circumstances of the work of Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) "on the ground" in Iraq and Afghanistan create a significant likelihood that HTS data will in some way be used as part of military intelligence, advertently or inadvertently.
4. HTTs collect sensitive socio-cultural data in a high-risk environment and while working for one combatant in ongoing conflicts. Given the lack of a well-defined ethical framework of conduct for the program and inability of HTT researchers to maintain reliable control over data once collected, the program places researchers and their counterparts in the field in harm's way.
5. When ethnographic investigation is determined by military missions, not subject to external review, where data collection occurs in the context of war, integrated into the goals of counterinsurgency, and in a potentially coercive environment – all characteristic factors of the HTS concept and its application – it can no longer be considered a legitimate professional exercise of anthropology.

In summary, while we stress that constructive engagement between anthropology and the military is possible, CEAUSSIC suggests that the AAA emphasize the incompatibility of HTS with disciplinary ethics and practice for job seekers and that it further recognize the problem of allowing HTS to define the meaning of "anthropology" within DoD.

## 1. Introduction

The Human Terrain System (HTS) is a Department of Defense (DoD) proof-of-concept program,<sup>1</sup> first developed in 2005 and implemented in 2007. HTS evolved from ongoing discussions among social scientists familiar with the military about the need for better “Cultural Preparation of the Environment” in support of the military’s operational objectives.<sup>2</sup> As described by the program itself, HTS “was designed to meet the military’s requirements for socio-cultural knowledge across a spectrum of operations that the U.S. may encounter in today’s world” and the program “seeks to integrate and apply socio-cultural knowledge of the indigenous civilian population to military operations in support of the commander’s objectives,”<sup>3</sup> in ongoing interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a current staff social scientist with HTS has recently explained in the *Anthropology News*, “The purpose of the HTS is to provide cultural insight to brigade<sup>4</sup> command staff by interviewing local populations and utilizing social science methodologies to better enable culturally astute decision-making.”<sup>5</sup> Since its inception, HTS has received regular public attention, both praise and criticism, and has been especially controversial within some military circles and among anthropologists.<sup>6</sup>

Responding to concerns raised about this program, in the fall of 2007 the AAA’s Executive Board released a statement on HTS, in which it expressed its disapproval and concluded the program to be “an unacceptable application of anthropological expertise”<sup>7</sup> (see Appendix C). The Board of the Society for Applied Anthropology followed suit with a more restrained resolution, stating “The Board of SfAA expresses grave concern about the potentially harmful uses of social science knowledge and skills in the HTS project.”<sup>8</sup> In its stated capacity of providing information about “the key ethical, methodological,

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<sup>1</sup> In the military context, “proof-of-concept” refers to a program that is funded on a trial basis in order to demonstrate its feasibility, after which it is either terminated or it can become a “program-of-record,” that is, a program in which the military is willing to invest for a more extended period.

<sup>2</sup> McFate, Montgomery and Andrea Jackson, “An Organizational Solution for DoD’s Cultural Knowledge Needs” *Military Review* (July-August, 2005). These conversations began to take place in one form or another, according to several participants, as early as 2001.

<sup>3</sup> HTS official website: <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/overview.html>.

<sup>4</sup> HTTs are primarily designed to work directly with a brigade, which contains between 1,500 and 4,000 personnel, and is a military unit typically composed of two to five regiments or battalions. Three to five brigades typically compose a division. At present, there are thirty-three combat brigades in the U.S. Army. In the Marine Corps brigades are formed only for particular missions and have regimental structures.

<sup>5</sup> King, Christopher, “Managing Ethical Conflict on a Human Terrain Team” *Anthropology News* 50 (6): 16 (2009).

<sup>6</sup> The comprehensive history of HTS has yet to be written. However, this is starting to be filled in by such works as: González, Roberto *American Counterinsurgency: Human Science and the Human Terrain*. Pp. 45-78. Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press (2009); Stanton, John *General David Petraeus’ Favorite Mushroom: Inside the US Army’s Human Terrain System*. Wiseman Publishing (2009); Price, David “From ‘Gentle Persuasion’ to ‘Better Killing’: Anthropology, Human Terrain’s Prehistory, and the Role of Culture in Wars Waged by Robots” *CounterPunch* 16 (17): 1, 4-6 (2009).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.aaanet.org/issues/policy-advocacy/Statement-on-HTS.cfm>.

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, Sarah Ann, “SfAA Board Resolution Concerning the HTS Project” *Newsletter of the Society for Applied Anthropology* 19 (2): 11-13 (May 2008). NAPA’s response, too, was comparable.

and practical/political challenges faced by the discipline and the AAA in its current and future engagement in intelligence/national security,” however, CEAUSSIC has been tasked with further information-gathering about HTS, the result of which is represented by this report. Bringing together original research, using primary and secondary sources, the present report describes the basic characteristics of HTS, compares program claims to program activities (particularly “in the field”), and explores what implications the program might have for anthropology and for anthropologists.

The relationship of anthropology – along with other social sciences – to the goals, actors, agencies, and institutions composing the security sector in the U.S. and globally is at a crossroads. We live in an era of the ongoing “securitization” of public life, which is drawing the social sciences into new arrangements of cooperation and work.<sup>9</sup> We should assume that the context of “security” will continue to inform both research and practice for the foreseeable future. Representing an historical shift in priorities,<sup>10</sup> new national U.S. policy regarding present and future objectives of the military, security, and intelligence communities emphasizes the value of the social sciences in general, and anthropology in particular. Illustrative of this trend is a 2009 RAND report commissioned by DoD, which focuses its attention upon how to leverage the social sciences to craft better approaches to counterterrorism. As the RAND report points out, U.S. defense planning has shifted from the “physics of precision weapons” to challenges of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and irregular warfare, which are understood to be “social science phenomena,” and which “involve people,”<sup>11</sup> a fact often interpreted by policy makers and program managers to entail a more robust appreciation of anthropology.

Consistent with the current Petraeus doctrine of counterinsurgency,<sup>12</sup> the 2009 *Army Posture Statement* is on the same page: “Conflicts are increasingly waged among the people instead of around the people... To secure lasting stability the allegiance of indigenous populations becomes the very object of conflict.”<sup>13</sup> It is also apparent that the Obama Administration supports this approach. This past spring it was reported that the Administration’s Afghanistan strategy incorporates a new “civilian surge,” in addition to more troops, and plans to expand the use of HTTs as one cornerstone of ongoing U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in that country, more specifically, to help “build up necessary

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<sup>9</sup> See: Fosher, Kerry, *Under Construction: Making Homeland Security at the Local Level*. Chicago (IL): University of Chicago Press (2009); Nyers, Peter, ed. *Securitizations of Citizenship*. London: Routledge (2009).

<sup>10</sup> The current active reengagement of the military with the social sciences represents an effort to repair a relationship that fell apart during the Vietnam era. Historically, of course, social scientists have worked with the military in all sorts of ways. For an account of professional contributions of anthropologists in the cause of WWII, see Price, David *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2008).

<sup>11</sup> Davis, Paul K. and Kim Cragin, eds. *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together*. P. 1. RAND: National Defense Research Institute (2009).

<sup>12</sup> COIN doctrine places greater emphasis on skills such as “language and cultural understanding, than does conventional warfare.” See *Counterinsurgency Field Manual F 3-24*, December 15, 2006, 1-125, p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> *A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army*. Submitted by the Honorable Pete Gersen and General George W. Casey Jr. to the Committees and Subcommittees of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives, 1<sup>st</sup> Session 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, May 2009.

institutions in the country and help the fledgling central government extend its authority to rural Taliban strongholds.”<sup>14</sup> What anthropology’s role should be, with respect to these emergent arrangements, deserves our careful consideration.

An assessment by top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan Gen. Stanley McChrystal in late August of this year has reconfirmed the Obama administration’s well established COIN-driven strategy in this country. Gen. McChrystal’s assessment calls for a commitment to “classic counterinsurgency operations.” He notes,

Our strategy cannot be focused on seizing terrain or destroying insurgent forces; our objective must be the population...Gaining their support will require a better understanding of the people’s choices and needs.<sup>15</sup>

While HTS is not named in Gen. McChrystal’s report, HTS personnel have agreed that the program will be in the thick of this effort. Despite ongoing controversy it was recently reported that the HTS program is slated for at least a \$40 million dollar expansion,<sup>16</sup> that the program has plans to “trickle up” from the regiment or brigade to the corps level, and that HTS is “set to become a pivotal element” in many other U.S. combatant commands in addition to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), to include Africa, Asia and the Pacific.<sup>17</sup> HTS, in short, is a program on the move and we need to pay attention.

If these broad developments serve as the immediate background for this report, it should not be understood as a statement about the totality of these arrangements so much as it addresses HTS narrowly, as one development among many. If it has been at the heart of recent disciplinary discussions, in many ways HTS is not representative of this wider state-of-affairs. This report, too, is at best a snapshot of a program still rapidly evolving. CEAUSSIC has undertaken the present effort both because HTS-type scenarios are now being developed for other commands and by other militaries and because HTS does raise some key considerations. These include: 1. what the arrangements between anthropology (and the social sciences) and the security sector should be, 2. the extent to which HTS is or is not representative of these arrangements, 3. the diversifying uses of anthropology’s signature methods (e.g. ethnography) and core concepts (e.g. culture), 4. the relationship of ethics to practice, especially to disciplinary practice, 5. and the range of applications of anthropological knowledge when used as a problem-solving resource. If the “culturally astute decision-making” of HTS represents one development within this trend, the center of gravity of recent disciplinary controversy in particular (including the 2002 report of the El Dorado Task Force), continues to be the challenges posed by determining what a constructively public anthropology might look like. And this is a discussion we continue here.

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<sup>14</sup> Stockman, Farah and Bryan Bender, “Afghan Plan Adds 4,000 US Troops: Obama to Include Hundreds of Civilian Advisors” *Boston Globe* March 27, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> McChrystal, Gen. Stanley A., *Commander’s Initial Assessment*. Unclassified document. Pp. 1-2. August 30, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence, J. P., “Army Deploys Scientists to Study Iraqi Culture” June 4, 2009 <http://www.army.mil/news/2009/06/04/22123-army-deploys-scientists-to-study-iraqi-culture/>.

<sup>17</sup> Stanton, John, “Expanding Human Terrain Systems? A Key Element in Obama’s Smart Power Campaign” *CounterPunch* August 7-9, 2009 <http://www.counterpunch.org/stanton08072009.html>.

## 2. CEAUSSIC's Approach to HTS

When the AAA's Ad Hoc Commission on Anthropology's Engagement with the Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC) submitted its initial report in November of 2007, found at [http://www.aaanet.org/pdf/FINAL\\_Report\\_Complete.pdf](http://www.aaanet.org/pdf/FINAL_Report_Complete.pdf), it made it clear that, despite the increasing media attention given to HTS, CEAUSSIC had not in fact been convened to address the particulars of that program. Originally, we had been convened to address the implications of CIA job advertisements on the AAA on-line job site and the congressionally mandated Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholars Program (PRISP), which offers financial assistance for students committed to a career as part of the intelligence sector. In our report, however, we also elected to begin to describe and to address ethical and other implications of the wider engagement of anthropologists with the expanding security sector as a whole. With our work on the report coming to an end, it was at just that time that the HTS story broke.

Our 2007 report did, however, make note of HTS in several places. It included several memoranda to the AAA's Executive Board that dealt directly with the program, which were elicited by the EB as part of their process of producing a statement on HTS. CEAUSSIC's Report was submitted just days after the AAA statement on November 4, and included these memoranda, which are found on pp. 29-34. With respect to potential ethical problems of HTS, there is significant continuity between the memoranda content and the AAA's statement. At that time, however, little was known about the parameters and activities of the program in any detail. Expressed concerns were raised in advance of having engaged with HTS representatives or systematically examined the organization, goals, and activities of HTS in adequate depth. And particularly given the ethnographic sensibilities of our initial report, we felt it was important for us to take a closer look and to engage more directly with the program itself, a task also supported by AAA president Setha Low and the Executive Board. If modest, the present report represents the outcome of such an effort.

When the AAA's president and the EB asked us to continue our work as a group for several more years, one important action item for us was HTS, which, as of late-2009, continues to generate significant media attention and controversy within the community of anthropologists and more broadly, particularly with the deaths so far of three members of Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, we now possess a body of journalism, academic writing, military responses, primary documents, and public statements by HTS leadership and program employees, for a more comprehensive portrait of HTS, even as it continues to evolve. CEAUSSIC, therefore, made a formal request for more detailed information about HTS to its program management on November 28, 2008 (see Appendix A). We received a reply from HTS on April 27, 2009, which addressed the request (see Appendix B), prepared by HTS senior social scientist Montgomery McFate. This information has been incorporated into the present report, alongside our own efforts to learn about the program over several years, and the work of others who have studied the program in some depth. The report also foregrounds the views and descriptions, both



positive and negative, of HTS employees and HTS clients. The report section on “sources of information on the program,” found below, provides greater detail about this process. Finally, this report reflects the efforts of individual members of CEAUSSIC, but has also been greatly aided by a variety of others to whom we are also grateful.

The present report makes no claim to being comprehensive. There is currently an extensive body of information about HTS in the public domain, if the vast majority has been generated not by HTS employees, or academics, but rather by journalists. We have made use of some investigative journalism, particularly when it has provided additional information about the program not otherwise available, and which bears directly on our concerns here. But we also note that, as a part of our own periodic internal CEAUSSIC discussions, we considered what new contribution, if any, we might make to the ongoing discussions of HTS. We were, in truth, somewhat wary of adding our pebble to the pond, since on multiple occasions throughout our commission work a journalistic preoccupation with HTS has driven, while narrowing, our disciplinary discussions about anthropology and the security sector, in the process derailing an important wider-ranging disciplinary conversation about the relationship of anthropology to security writ large. We hope this report contributes to that broader and necessary conversation.

We have had no interest in adding redundantly to a burgeoning “HTS lit” simply to weigh in, including a now well established fascination with the role of the “warrior-intellectual.” We do not seek to add to an already polarized debate about HTS. Rather, CEAUSSIC has understood its role in part as providing the discipline of anthropology with a descriptive basis to enable our ongoing conversation about anthropology and the security sector as whole by providing a representative sample of what anthropological practice in the different corners of this broad sector in fact entails, which includes HTS. What follows, therefore, is limited to describing the program and to addressing the implications of HTS for the profession of anthropology. This means that we do not deal in any depth with media reports or rumors about HTS – such as charges of financial mismanagement, cronyism, or media hype surrounding key figures, and other reported topics – unless of evident relevance to the profession and the conduct of anthropology.

CEAUSSIC also understands this report in the context of its previous report, as addressing an expanding context, set of institutions, priorities, and relationships that we can identify, collectively, as the “security sector.” We are convinced that the significance of these relationships will outlive both the present U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the “long war” of the Global War on Terror (GWOT).<sup>18</sup> The relevance, therefore, of both reports is not simply what they offer in terms of descriptions and conclusions about HTS, as a particular program so much as they are contributions to providing the discipline of anthropology with the means to continue to discuss and to debate its relationship to these contexts, institutions, and priorities with respect to its identity as a discipline, particular methods and forms of knowledge production, and the shape of its potential contributions to the public sphere. If the present report identifies basic concerns, ethical and otherwise, about the HTS program, these should be taken in the context of CEAUSSIC’s working

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<sup>18</sup> The estimate by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the number of anthropologists and archaeologists presently employed by the US government is 5,250, up by 5.8% from the previous year.

understanding that anthropology is not a static field, but collaborative, diverse in method, topic, as well as application, in ways that have moved the field well beyond simply the academic study of “peoples and places as such.”<sup>19</sup> In our view, anthropology’s dynamic qualities, as a discipline, are in fact a source of its vitality. And we hope that our ongoing discussion of anthropology’s public relevance adds to this vitality.

### 3. Sources of Information on the Program

Since the story first broke in 2007, HTS has received major attention from the mainline media. Media attention has reached such an extent that the program itself now maintains an “In the News” link, listing favorable coverage in the print media, on blogs, in the broadcast media, and through speeches by military policy makers.<sup>20</sup> Particularly early on, military media and journals, such as the *Military Review*, served as sources of information about the HTS concept, often providing more details than has the program itself. HTS has been a program of note in speeches by Secretary of Defense Gates and the face of the Army’s counterinsurgency doctrine, General David Petraeus.<sup>21</sup> HTS has also been a subject of several hearings of the U.S. House Armed Services Committee.<sup>22</sup> In fact HTS has sought to carefully control its public relations. Initially, a condition of our own inquiry about the program was that it first be vetted by the HTS public relations point person, at the time a specialist in strategic communications formerly of the Lincoln Group.<sup>23</sup>

Bibliographies of journalism on HTS, which include academic critiques and more critical writing on the program, are available at the AAA<sup>24</sup> and at *Culture Matters* (a blog hosted by Macquarie University’s anthropology department).<sup>25</sup> Online research groups, such as the Complex Terrain Laboratory, also maintain regularly updated bibliographies on HTS.<sup>26</sup> The multiple sources of information available on HTS, which we have made use of while preparing the present report, can be further broken down into approximately ten categories, accepting some overlap among these:

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<sup>19</sup> This is a quote from George Marcus, also a CEAUSSIC member, from: Jaschik, Scott. “Fieldwork is not What it Used to Be” *Inside Higher Ed*. June 19, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> See <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/inthenews.html>.

<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that in many such speeches and reports, it is difficult to determine if the speaker is referring specifically to the Human Terrain System or to the broader scope of activities and programs that have the phrase “human terrain” in their title or description. The belief that any reference to “human terrain” means HTS is inaccurate.

<sup>22</sup> Statements about HTS have been made in hearings of the House Armed Services Committee at least on February 28<sup>th</sup>, April 24<sup>th</sup>, and again on July 9<sup>th</sup>, September 16<sup>th</sup> 2008, and again on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and April 20<sup>th</sup> 2009.

<sup>23</sup> The Lincoln Group describes itself as “a strategic communications firm that provides our clients with access to cultures which have historically been difficult to reach through traditional Western communications.” See <http://www.lincolngroup.com/>.

<sup>24</sup> See <http://www.aaanet.org/issues/press/Media-Coverage-on-HTS.cfm>.

<sup>25</sup> See <http://culturematters.wordpress.com/2008/08/21/annotated-bibliography-on-hts-minerva-and-prisp/>

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.terraplexic.org/ethnographic-intelligence/>.

1. mainline primarily print journalism (e. g. *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, etc.)
2. reportage in military and related media sources (e. g. *Stars and Stripes*)
3. discussions in military academic journals (e.g. *Military Review*, *Marine Corps Gazette*, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, etc.)
4. active blogging on HTS, both pro and con (e.g. *Savage Minds*, *Culture Matters*, *Open Anthropology*, *Small Wars Journal*, etc.)
5. investigative or alternative journalism and indymedia sources (e. g. *Wired's Danger Room*, *CounterPunch*, etc.)
6. the official public face of the program itself (e.g. the HTS website, the GTRI website, or the appearance of HTS personnel at conferences)
7. occasional publicly circulated statements by HTS managers, including formal statements to congress, responses to different critics, and other interventions
8. other forms of published research on HTS (e. g. Roberto González's short book *American Counterinsurgency*)
9. anonymous sources on HTS (including present and former HTS employees as unnamed sources, unattributed "leaks" of previously unknown information about the program on Wikileaks and elsewhere, non-HTS anonymous experts inside and outside the military with privileged knowledge of how the program works)
10. our own research of the program, which has included: the compiling of public information, our own formal request for information from HTS, and several dozens of interviews with HTS program managers, present and former HTT members, and HTS military clients

Anthropologists who have actively criticized HTS, in particular, have emphasized their frustration with the "mighty Wurlitzer"<sup>27</sup> of what is, in their view, largely uncritical media praise for the program. David Price, a CEAUSSIC member, observed in a recent online article in *CounterPunch* that

the program's existence remains firmly publicly boosted by a seemingly endless series of uncritical mainstream news and features stories that frame the program as America's last best hope to win the hearts and minds of the occupied peoples of Iraq and increasingly Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup>

There is some justification for these observations. HTS has been written up approvingly by the *New York Times*, the *Economist*, *US News and World Report*, and other prominent print media. HTS has also been featured in a positive light on CNN, the BBC, NPR, the Charlie Rose show, among other broadcast media. This said, some media which initially supported HTS, such as the high profile science journal *Nature*, have since become more critical of the program.<sup>29</sup> For those who wish to find it there now exists a healthy set of critical commentaries about the program. Nevertheless, HTS still enjoys regular positive

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<sup>27</sup> González, op cit., p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Price, David, "The Press and Human Terrain Systems – Counterinsurgency's Free Ride" *CounterPunch* April 7, 2009: <http://www.counterpunch.org/price04072009.html>.

<sup>29</sup> See the editorial "Failure in the Field: The US Military's Human-Terrain Programme Needs to be Brought to a Swift Close" *Nature* 456 (676) (December 11, 2008).

coverage from the mainline media in the U.S., as with an early October 2009 story about HTTs as “experts in the fields of culture and negotiation” in Afghanistan, which aired on ABC’s *Good Morning America*.<sup>30</sup>

Another important source of information about HTS has come in fits and starts, as HTS has kept the active attention of various, at times overlapping, blogging communities. Anthropology blogs such as *Savage Minds*, *Culture Matters*, and *Open Anthropology* all have maintained ongoing discussions of the program, including hundreds of posts about HTS. These posts combine journalism, with critique, and sometimes, original research on the contours of the program itself, some of which is featured here. If more focused on the particular problems for anthropology, as broadly critical of HTS, these blogs complement much online “indymedia” or investigative journalism-style reportage of HTS at Wired’s *Danger Room*, *CounterPunch*, *Pravda*, and elsewhere. Military blogs such as the online *Small Wars Journal* have also given substantial attention to HTS, tend to be less critical, and more focused upon the viability of the concept, the organization and promise of the program, and whether it has or has not been a successful tool in the implementation of COIN. These several virtual communities of HTS commentators overlap on such sites as *Mil-Anth-Net*, talking and at times arguing directly with each other, via their blog posts.

Finally, CEAUSSIC has talked with, or interviewed, a wide variety of people with direct experience of the HTS program. Many of these people were part of the program’s development from its earliest inception. Some of these were people in policy positions or HTS program managers in Washington D.C. and elsewhere. A concerted effort was made to hear from military personnel, and not just HTT social scientists. These included HTT team leaders from a military background, military clients in the field who worked closely with embedded HTTs, and both military and civilian personnel active in other programs throughout the military concerned with addressing military cultural deficits. But the great majority of people interviewed served on HTTs, usually in the capacity of social scientist. The experiences of these individuals, both positive and negative, are recorded here. It is also important to stress that we did not seek out only critical voices, but also those with more positive experiences with the program. The responses included are representative of the full range of these conversations. Many who spoke to us did so with the condition of anonymity, which we respect throughout the report. When sources are attributed, this is because they have already taken a public position on the program. If unattributed, this is in order to respect the confidentiality of those who generously offered their cooperation, time, and insights, to help us complete our work.

Taken together, these sources provide multiple and often contrasting points of view on what HTS is basically about, how it works, and its implications for anthropology and for the new counterinsurgency doctrine. In addition to CEAUSSIC’s own research, the present report draws from across all of these sources. If there are sharp and basic disagreements about the value of this program, some of the divergences in viewpoint among HTS commentators are derived not simply from the commentator’s identity (as,

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<sup>30</sup> Cuomo, Chris, Chris Strathmann and Angus Hines, “Inside Afghanistan: Making Alliances and Gaining Trust to Fight the Taliban” *ABC News* October 9, 2009: <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Afghanistan/inside-afghanistan-gaining-trust-fight-taliban/story?id=8786553>.

for example, an anthropological critic, an HTS employee, or an Army supporter of the current COIN doctrine). As a program HTS is also geographically dispersed as well as transnational in scope. Components of the program are found at least in Ft. Leavenworth (KS), Newport News (VA), Washington, D.C., Iraq and Afghanistan. Depending upon one's vantage point, including within the program itself, HTS can look quite different. Except for select government insiders, we do not know of any person who enjoys an intimate or first-hand familiarity with more than two of these several program elements. And we know of no one examining HTS who has also included the point of view of its ostensible "subjects," civilians in Iraq or Afghanistan. This last is an important omission.

If this report therefore offers a partial perspective, nevertheless a primary goal is to provide the AAA a description of HTS – its identity, activities, and the implications of these for our discipline. But HTS's identity is not just being debated by proponents and critics of the program through the several media venues listed above. Rashomon-like, the program also looks different, depending upon whether we apply the frame of reference of sound bytes designed for inside-the-beltway policy or funding circles, of HTS employees training and working at Ft. Leavenworth, or of HTT members who are deployed "in the field." Further, the program continues to evolve, and so cannot simply be described once and for all. As such, the discussion that follows moves back and forth between several viewpoints in order to address the program's multiple identities. At any given point in our discussion, we try to be clear about which vantage point we are examining or privileging.

#### **4. Brief Description of the Human Terrain System**

Since 2007 HTS has grown. According to HTS, as of April 2009, the program employs a total of 417 people, of which 49 hold PhDs. However, the number of HTS employees has also been subject to some reduction this summer, as the status of HTS employees has changed from civilian contractors to government jobs, a change reportedly accompanied by reduced pay scales. This has caused up to one-third of employees to leave the program.<sup>31</sup> How the program elects to address recruiting, moving forward, will in large part also determine its identity. And there are indications that the program will be seeking to train larger cohorts of HTTs to send to the field, as demand rises.

Among those listed by HTS as of April who are currently performing, or training to take up, social scientist roles, six possess a PhD in anthropology. This means that anthropologists compose only a small fraction of the total of HTS employees. Although subfields were not always listed in the provided HTS list, we also know that there is a mix of subfields represented, including at least cultural, archaeological, and biological anthropologists. Five more possess a Master's-level degree in anthropology. Another 47 hold a degree of some kind in other fields. It is important to indicate, based on this, that despite the attention given to the central role of anthropology in the program, the great

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<sup>31</sup> For additional information about the tensions between HTS recruiters, BAE Systems, and HTS program management see: DeYoung, Karen, "U.S. Moves to Replace Contractors in Iraq" *Washington Post* March 17, 2009; Schachtman, Noah, "Mass Exodus from 'Human Terrain' Program; At Least One-Third Quits" *Danger Room* April 6, 2009: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/04/htts-quit/>.

majority of present HTS employees have been trained and hold degrees in other fields of the social sciences and elsewhere. HTS cannot, therefore, be characterized simply as composed of anthropologists or as a military program to recruit anthropologists.

At present the HTS program includes at least seven distinct components, which are also described as part of the program's public profile.<sup>32</sup> Our report has augmented the program's own descriptions when additional information is known and if it is pertinent. It is important to note that multiple interviews with people who are directly knowledgeable about the HTS program concur that not all program components, as described on the HTS website and often as briefed, are in fact functioning as described. Or to quote one source, "None of this really exists." When these apparent discrepancies arise, we indicate them. Briefly, then, we can describe the program, and its several parts, in the following terms:

#### 1) Program Management and Support

This includes the senior leadership of the program, as well as program managers, recruiting and public affairs personnel. Some administrative functions have been carried out by contracting companies or administrative elements of government organizations, such as BAE Systems and CACI International. However, in other ways, HTS also directly employs people in other supervisory roles, for example, to train prospective HTT members. This category appears now to be expanding to include several individuals who had formerly served in social science positions as members of HTTs (see #2 below) and now maintain positions within the program, which includes training, outreach, and development of methodological and ethical approaches, among others. Program management personnel are located primarily in TRADOC at Ft. Leavenworth (KS), but also in Washington D.C.

#### 2) the Team (HTT and HTAT) component

We address key aspects of this component, and their implications – particularly their activities “in the field” – in much greater detail below. But briefly, HTTs are composed of five members,<sup>33</sup> three military and two civilian. As described by the program, teams include “military personnel, linguists, area studies specialists, and civilian social scientists.” These teams are designed to be embedded with army or marine units in combat zones and usually (though not always) at the brigade level. In response to CEAUSSIC's inquiry, as of April 2009 we received the following description:

There are currently 27 teams deployed in the following fashion. In Iraq there are fifteen teams at the brigade level (either USMC or Army), four teams at division level, one team at corps level, and one team at Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq. In Afghanistan, there is one team at battalion level, four at brigade,

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<sup>32</sup> If differing in some of the particulars described here, a brief description of HTS program components can be found on the HTS website at: <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/components.html>. More elaborated details can be found in chapter three of the *Human Terrain Team Handbook* (September, 2008), pp. 11-48.

<sup>33</sup> While “five” is the official number of HTTs, reports from the field indicate that in practice they can range in size from five to ten people, depending on the circumstances and their role within a given brigade.

one at division. There are currently no validated requirements for other teams.

Although, other reports suggest that as part of the “civilian surge,” more HTTs are expected for Afghanistan in the near future. In addition to HTTs, these include HTATs (human terrain analysis teams), which are not in the field but rather in-country and attached to divisional staffs. Their primary purpose is to analyze field data and other information, as it becomes available, in support of military decision-makers at these higher levels.

### 3) the Reach Back Research Cells

Groups of analysts in Leavenworth, KS and Oyster Point, VA which are supposed to provide baseline research in support of the teams in the field in Afghanistan and Iraq respectively. One source describes the reach back cells this way: They are “tasked with producing customized, open-source research on key issues of concern to commanders and forward-deployed social science teams in both Iraq and Afghanistan.”<sup>34</sup> The cells are staffed by military and civilian “analysts,” and generally produce “reports” on a wide range of issues of relevance to the military in Iraq and Afghanistan, using primarily newspaper, academic, and web-based sources, as well as information previously collected by HTTs, and collected by British officers during the era of the *Raj*. Reports address hundreds of categories such as: ethnicity, social structure, resource conflicts, key regional personalities, Iran’s influence in Afghanistan, school attendance, marriage, graffiti, the origins of local conflicts, transhumance, and administrative boundary shifts, among other topics of particular interest to military commanders. This information is archived in a database available to other Human Terrain Teams and brigades. Reports have agreed that the coordination between program management, reach back cells and HTTs has not always been smooth.

### 4) the Social Science Research and Analysis component

HTS has described this component in the following way: “This is a capability provided by a contractor in Iraq and Afghanistan to support deployed teams (and in turn, their supported units) with additional independent research, such as polling and focus groups.” Very little is known about this aspect beyond the basic idea that HTS will contract out for broad “social science” research conducted in theater. This component reportedly received \$28 million in funding in fall 2008.<sup>35</sup> The present lack of information about specific sources and amounts of funding

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<sup>34</sup> Hodge, Nathan, “Inside the Brain of Human Terrain” *Danger Room* March 13, 2009: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/03/the-human-terra-2/>.

<sup>35</sup> According to independent journalist John Stanton, a vocal critic of HTS, “Sensor Technologies, Inc was awarded \$28 million (USD) on 28 September 2008 for development/management of the Social Science Research and Analysis (SSRA) program which will greatly enhance the effectiveness of the HTS program.” We do not know anything further about how this money is being spent. See: Stanton, John. “Law Breaking, Fraud Alleged at Imploding US Army Human Terrain Program” *Cryptome* November 12, 2008: <http://cryptome.info/0001/hts-fraud.htm>.

makes this component harder to assess.<sup>36</sup> The fact of an additional contracted research capacity makes it clear that the question of if, and how, HTTs conduct research in the field does not address the full range of potential HTS research activities. “Research,” in short, encompasses a broader range of activities than those carried out by HTTs alone.

5) the technology aspect, MAP-HT

HTS identifies this technology thusly: “This is a software suite that enables the HTTs to store, organize, and analyze social science and other data.” As currently being developed, MAP-HT is an ensemble of tools for analysis (which potentially includes NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis software package). It is not designed to be a centralized database of material gathered by the teams. As has been reported,

Prime contractor Overwatch Tactical Operations, a unit of Textron in Texas, is developing the [MAP-HT] software with Suntek as a subcontractor, under the guidance of the Army’s Communications-Electronics Research, Development and Engineering Center Intelligence and Information Warfare Directorate in New Jersey. The work is one of the Pentagon’s Joint Capability Technology Demonstration projects, which are designed to quickly solve battlefield problems.<sup>37</sup>

As with any such application suite as applied to socio-cultural information, it has possibilities for the future, but it is also running into problems with the mismatch between technology and the realities of social science “data.” The role of MAP-HT in the repertoire of HTTs in the field also raises questions about the integrity of data collected by HTTs, and where this data might end up. This concern is only enhanced by descriptions of the value of MAP-HT, as with the following:

The capability will provide a database augmented with specific sociocultural objects and an entity extraction capability for tagging narrative and freetext documents for ingestion into the local database.<sup>38</sup>

According to reports, difficulties also remain with fielding the system and training on it. While HTS has briefed that MAP-HT is up and running, other reports from former HTT members and from as recent as September of this year, indicate that “MAP-HT is still far from being fielded”<sup>39</sup> or that MAP-HT “has never worked.”

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<sup>36</sup> The identification of funding sources for HTS is important since these, in turn, significantly determine program tasking and activities, and the status of compliance with military standards for research ethics, all of which are key aspects of identifying what HTS, as a program, is primarily dedicated to achieving.

<sup>37</sup> Gallagher, Sean, “U.S. Human Terrain System Adds More Mapping Software.” April 30, 2009. See: [www.isrjournal.com](http://www.isrjournal.com)

<sup>38</sup> Jay, Erin Flynn, “Mapping the Human Terrain” *Geospatial Intelligence Forum* 7 (4) (July/August), 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Gallagher, op. cit.



6) the Program Development Teams (PDTs)

HTS has described these teams to CEAUSSIC as following: “The PDT is the mechanism whereby HTS captures ‘lessons learned’ in order to understand emergent requirements and improve processes and training. A US Army reservist who was formerly a team leader in Iraq leads the PDT.” This is an assessment component. Former HTS personnel and anonymous government sources report that this aspect has been problematic in terms of potential conflict of interest issues, with assessors and with the design of the assessment instruments, and given a lack of transparency in the results of the teams. Beyond this, at this point we know little about how PDTs have been folded into the regular operations of HTS as a whole.

7) the consortium component

Georgia Tech is at present the lead to build a consortium of academic and other organizations to enhance outreach efforts. This will include the development of a Subject Matter Expert Network (or SME Net). Some HTS personnel report that the consortium is supposed to help improve training and research. Others say this is not the case. The Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) has been given the task of developing HTS’s SME network, and HTS technology director Colonel Daniel Wolfe has described this as “leveraging several national cultural academic institutions as well as recognized experts in cultural terrain.”<sup>40</sup> It is not altogether clear what is meant by a “national cultural academic institution.” GTRI, however, does maintain an HTS website of its own.<sup>41</sup> A variety of sources indicate that the inclusion of GTRI was a promising step, that GTRI began to push for inclusion of IRBs, for more qualified instructors, and for ways to begin to evaluate research conducted down range by HTTs, but that these efforts have been “hamstrung” by program management and that at this point there is “no academic oversight” of the program, a role GTRI was ostensibly supposed to fulfill. At least one source has indicated that the “GTRI Consortium effort was quickly disbanded and there does not appear to be any attempt in the future to re-group.”

In addition to these several official components, the HTS program also appears to have generated resources and research groups, inside and outside of the military, which maintain an active focus upon the program concept. One example is the Laboratory for Human Terrain at Dartmouth College,<sup>42</sup> concerned with the application of computational modeling to the development of “human terrain technology,” which it describes as “an emerging area of study with significant national security and commercial applications.” If the Laboratory has jumped on the HTS bandwagon, it has no official connection to HTS. Such research groups indicate, however, the extent to which “human terrain” is a term that is expanding beyond HTS, the program, as a frame of reference for the development of future research and military priorities.

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<sup>40</sup> Jay, *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> See GTRI’s website at: <http://hts.gtri.gatech.edu/>.

<sup>42</sup> See: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~humanterrain/index.html> for more information about this laboratory.

## 5. Sources of HTS Funding

There is no publicly available comprehensive documentation on the sources of funding HTS currently has or is seeking. The partial account we include here has been mined from the public record and from occasional clarifications by the program itself, and with the help of colleagues (journalists and others who have shared information). Initially HTS was at least partly funded by the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), which is responsible for the development of countermeasures to the threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). An assessment of HTTs in the field in Afghanistan between July and August of 2007 was described as “particularly promising to JIEDDO and its efforts to attack IED networks.” It is now funded differently, however. Subsequently, as well, different components of HTS have been funded under a variety of rubrics. The development of the HTS MAP-HT software, for example, has been funded, reportedly at a level of \$15 million, as a project through the Joint Capability Technology Demonstration Program of DoD’s Department of Defense Science and Technology.<sup>43</sup>

An itemization of the congressional 2008 Global War on Terror Amendment listed the funding of “additional human terrain teams” as part of funding for “military intelligence.” Another \$90.6 million was authorized for further HTTs in the National Defense Authorization act for 2009, this time under the subcommittee that is concerned with “unconventional threats.” This funding authorization also includes the suggestion that HTTs should begin to be trained for additional regional COCOMS. At CEAUSSIC’s request, HTS described its funding sources for us succinctly: “In FY2008, HTS was run on supplemental Global War on Terrorism funding. In FY2009, HTS has run on Army funds.” Writing in August of this year, the independent journalist John Stanton – a sharp critic of the program – noted that “HTS is currently funded by US Army TRADOC’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G2) and CENTCOM.”<sup>44</sup> HTS is housed under the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) G2 (Intelligence). However, this part of the TRADOC staff is primarily oriented toward training and education, rather than toward the collection and production of intelligence. Several sources indicate that HTS is in line for an increased budget for FY2010, particularly for “key technologies supporting human terrain understanding and forecasting.”<sup>45</sup>

The HTS program’s leadership has expressed interest in becoming a “program of record,” which would mean a relatively stable line of funding for the program in future budgets. They also have briefed the notion of becoming a joint program office,<sup>46</sup> which presumably would have similar funding attached to it. There have also been indications that the program has been proactive in seeking new ways to fund itself, for example, as part of a revamped AFRICOM. As late as April of this year, BAE Systems was posting

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<sup>43</sup> Shaffer, Alan R. Statement before the House Armed Services Committee’s Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, May 20, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Stanton 2008, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> Forte, Maximillian, “U.S. Congress and the Human Terrain System” *The Open Anthropology Project* October 4, 2009: <http://openanthropology.wordpress.com/2009/10/04/u-s-congress-and-the-human-terrain-system/>

<sup>46</sup> A joint program is one with management from, and which receives funding from, more than one DoD entity at the same time.

multiple positions for “human terrain analysts” to work with AFRICOM. Some reports, citing unnamed sources, also suggest the HTS pitch to AFRICOM was successful.<sup>47</sup> But lately AFRICOM officials have distanced themselves from HTS, even as AFRICOM is actively developing a new “social science research center,” described in terms similar to many aspects of an HTS-type approach.<sup>48</sup> This suggests that HTS-type arrangements are in the process of being integrated into the military’s future strategic plans and budget, whether through the HTS program itself or as an analogous but distinct effort.

How HTS is funded is not a trivial issue, since funding significantly determines program objectives, for example, whether HTS in fact has any significant intelligence functions, counter to the claims of HTS representatives, or whether it does not. It would be helpful to know if the program was receiving funding from any of the streams either under the National Intelligence Program budget or the Military Intelligence Program budget. But, since the intelligence budget is classified, if HTS does receive any funding from these programs, it is unlikely this information will ever be made public. Receiving these funds would not necessarily mean that HTS was intending to perform intelligence collection or analysis. The funds can also be applied to producing background materials that might then be used by collectors and analysts. But if HTS is a research organization, then it would be required to comply with federal law for human subjects protection, as do all other scientists who receive federal money, including those working within DoD and the intelligence community. This lack of clarity with respect to HTS funding sources is one way that the identity of the program remains up in the air,<sup>49</sup> a question to which we return below in the section about HTS’s “identity.”

## 6. Reported Activities and Conduct of HTTs

### 6a. Training and Research Methods

Employment announcements for HTS circulated by BAE Systems, which has continued to handle recruitment into the program, described HTS as providing “soldiers direct social science support in the form of ethnographic and social research.” Advertised positions for HTS social scientists further emphasized the “opportunity to develop new methods for data collection and analysis.” The program’s own description of standard training of human terrain team members includes training in “field research methods and techniques.”<sup>50</sup> It is clear, in short, that HTT social scientists in particular are expected to carry out ethnographic research as a dimension of their work in theater. HTT training in “research methods” was described to CEAUSSIC this way:

<sup>47</sup> Stanton, John, “Hamis IT Tops Human Terrain System IT in Internet Capability, Savvy” *Cryptome* January 14, 2009: <http://cryptome.info/0001/hts-hamis-it.htm>.

<sup>48</sup> Vandiver, John, “AFRICOM Building Research Center.” *Stars and Stripes* June 15, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> For example the U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command, Redstone Arsenal (Huntsville, Alabama) – which houses elements of the Defense Intelligence Agency and Missile Defense Agency – recently handled a “one bid solicited, with one bid received” contract of \$7.8 million for the training of human terrain teams and human terrain analyst teams for Iraq and Afghanistan.

<sup>50</sup> See <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/faqs.html>. Further elaboration is found in the “leaked” 2008 *Human Terrain System Handbook*, which is available for download at: [wikileaks.org](http://wikileaks.org).

This module is designed to train Human Terrain Teams assigned to the Security, Stabilization, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) mission, on how to collect, process, analyze, fuse, share, and disseminate civil information. Using Civil Information Management (CIM) processes, students are trained to analyze the Political, Military, Economic, Social/Cultural, Infrastructure, and the Information/Media environment at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Special emphasis is placed on understanding and shaping the environment through non-kinetic<sup>51</sup> and interagency capabilities.

CIMs, typically digital information technologies like geospatial information systems, have recently emerged as a new counterinsurgency resource, and are designed to help commanders build a “common operational picture” upon which to base planning and execution.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, prospective HTT members are required to take a course in “Research Methods Training,” which introduces students to “the ‘toolbox’ of rapid ethnographic research tools,” which provide “hands-on small scale practice in research design, data collection, analysis, report write-up, and brigade style presentation of research findings.” Training in methods includes components addressing the ethical and legal frameworks for research in the field (which we address below in more detail), and are designed to help HTT social scientists “better address the socio-cultural data needs of their brigade commanders.” “Methodology” is the topic of chapter four of the *Human Terrain Team Handbook* dating from September 2008, and accounts for a significant proportion of the whole. As detailed in the *Handbook*,

The research methods used to illicit [sic.] this required human terrain information include classic anthropological and sociological methods such as semi-structured and open-ended interviews, polling and surveys, text analysis, and participant-observation.<sup>53</sup>

The *Handbook* also lays out a program of research topics using the acronym ASCOPE (or Area, Structure, Capabilities, Organizations, People, Events), which is derived from the U.S. Army’s current *Counterinsurgency Manual* (FM 3-24). Each topic is further broken down into a series of further subcategories, which, when filled out are meant to provide a working baseline of the “normal” and in order to provide a given commander a “cultural preparation of the environment” in ways quite comparable to the cultural trait lists of the well-known Human Relations Area File. In fact HTS has plans for HTTs to plug into the HRAF database while in the field.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> In military parlance, “kinetic” refers to the use of force for the purpose of inflicting physical damage.

<sup>52</sup> See: Wisse, Pieter, “Civil Information Management, a Short Introduction” University of Amsterdam, Netherlands. *Sprouts Working Papers on Information Systems* 7 (12) (2007) for more details about CIMs.

<sup>53</sup> *Handbook*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Handbook*, op. cit., p. 56.

Training in “research methods” for HTTs is notable insofar as it combines what appears to be field-based social scientific data collection (e.g. use of ethnography of the anthropological sort) with instrumental or soft power goals of “shaping the environment.” This raises a number of concerns regarding the separability, and so ethics, of the research component from the strategic, tactical, and operational goals of military decision-makers, and the role of HTT activities with respect to the goals of these decision-makers. Such an emphasis upon “rapid ethnographic research,” too, suggests an apt comparison of HTTs with other anthropological modes of data collection of the rapid appraisal and assessment sort, which are typically carried out over weeks or months, and which are commonplace in the world of international development, among other applications.

Nevertheless, people with whom we spoke who have gone through the program raised concerns about the match between recruitment and training as well as the quality and relevance of the training received. As one former HTT team leader, and advocate for the program, emphasized to CEAUSSIC, “The concept of the HTT is good. What I think we’re missing is that we’re not recruiting the right people.” And another veteran HTT member volunteered, “The training curriculum was put together in ad hoc fashion by a retired colonel with no social science background.” This individual estimated that “three weeks of methods had a sticking percentage of 2-3% and did not adequately address combat conditions.” Instructors responsible for teaching such courses as methods and ethics, sources noted, often have little or no direct experience with Afghanistan and Iraq. Some of the instructors are from a “marketing background,” and so often “just didn’t get or understand the kinds of situations people would be in.” And according to one observer of the classroom environment, students paid scant attention because they “quickly realize that this doesn’t matter, that it is irrelevant, and that their contract does not depend on it.” The kind of training received by prospective HTT members raises the concern that what is labeled as training in “anthropology” or “ethnographic methods” is not in fact that so much as more akin to an undergraduate-type all-purpose and largely decontextualized introduction to basic or generic social science skills.<sup>55</sup>

How this rapid appraisal mode is combined with the demands of working in a combat zone is also an important consideration in the training of HTTs. In its response to CEAUSSIC, HTS in fact listed seventeen distinct seminars and training modules, which include: Army 101 training, military communications training, COIN training, as well as combat training center exercise, a course that is “designed to integrate HTTs into brigade operations.” But as one HTT veteran noted, “Training was completely inadequate and doesn’t prepare people.” An anthropologist who was able to observe HTS classes at Ft. Leavenworth observed, “It’s generic training. Everything is extremely rushed, in part because they are trying to ramp it up so fast.” In fact, several people were clear that many

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<sup>55</sup> This is in part connected to the challenges posed by recruitment into the program, which is handled by a variety of defense contractors, which might or might not understand the particulars of what trainees will be expected to do. A discussion of the expanding role of independent contractors in the military, for example, observed, “On the skill side, people get in who don’t have the job skills to do the tasks. For example, the U.S. Army found that 35 percent of the interrogators working for the CACI Company at Abu Ghraib were not trained to be military interrogators.” See: Singer, P. W. and Joanne J. Myers, “Corporate Warriors: The Privatized Military and Iraq” December 1, 2005: <http://www.cceia.org/resources/transcripts/5287.html>. CACI is among the recruiters for HTS as well.

HTT-members-in-training did not show up for key segments of the training, and so were not prepared for what they faced in Afghanistan or Iraq. Recruits are quoted as having said, “I don’t need the training,” and were deployed early.” Several people recounted how HTS has sought to deal with problematic recruits. As one source asserted, “Many unqualified people are showing up and getting sheep dipped as legitimate.” “They are not providing the training, but they are not willing to fire people,” notes another such source. For this reason, many deployed HTTs are “not let outside the wire”<sup>56</sup> or “not let off the FOB.” It has been noted that inadequacies in training inordinately raise the risk of HTT and associated casualties. We understand, second-hand, that HTS training will be given a major overhaul beginning in 2010. Although we have inquired, we have been unable to establish what this new regimen will include. Nevertheless, it is clear that HTS training is a work in progress.

Such concerns about the training, methods, and preparedness of HTTs have been noted in the field as well. Reports have focused in particular on the problematic effort to place HTTs in Iraq in significant numbers throughout 2008. According to more than one source, many of these teams were not filled out by appropriate personnel. Nor did they field people competently trained in the right admixture of social scientific and of military skills and awareness. As a result, many of these HTTs were not successful, and/or for the reasons of damage control were located in positions where they could have only minimal impact. Commanders of military units interacting with these teams emphasized a lack of methodological rigor in several cases, with reports generated by HTTs that made “broad generalizations of attitudes based upon a self-selected few from among people [meaning Iraqis] working on base and willing to talk.” In other words, poor training in methods can have direct consequences for effectiveness in the field.

#### 6b. Circumstances of Field Work

What is available in the public record, combined with CEAUSSIC’s discussions with HTT members, make it clear that the activities of HTTs are not easily summarized, and in fact have varied considerably. What specific HTT members do in the field appears to depend on a wide variety of factors, including: whether the team as a whole gels, their relationship as contractors to the military unit with which they work, the shifting vagaries of both combat and security where they have been placed, what their brigade asks them to do, if they can or cannot venture “outside the wire,” among many other factors. These are just some of the factors that determine whether a given HTT is more or less successful. At best we can merely bring together several representative examples of HTT activities, understanding that what we describe here is in no way comprehensive.

This said, a wide range of conventional ethnographic activities and techniques for data collection have been reported as part of the repertoire used by different HTT social scientists. Data collection, therefore, has been reported to include at least the following techniques: surveys, snowball sampling, semi-structured individual and group interviews with both “ordinary Iraqis” (or, presumably, Afghans) and elites, the elicitation of oral-

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<sup>56</sup> That is, going beyond an established security perimeter.

history narratives, kinship and genealogical analysis, as well as diverse “assessments,” all of which typically includes the use of interpreters as full research partners. Depending on the circumstances and objectives, these techniques are applied in different proportion and with different degrees of depth. Sometimes a given technique is simply impractical or impossible to use, as is true of field work everywhere.

Descriptions by human terrain team members of their activities in theater have made it clear that research is one prominent dimension of their work. For example, the following explanation offered by HTT social scientist Marcus Griffin, described activities while deployed in the field in Iraq in 2007-2008 as including “participant observation with everyday Iraqis.” At the same time, during an interview on Wisconsin Public Radio, Griffin also makes clear the extent to which this work is closely integrated with the activities of the brigade unit with which his team is supposed to work:

I put in between 12-15 hours a day, seven days a week. Some of that time is working out the purpose and strategies of team members going out on a patrol or other mission as a ride along. Some of those hours are spent in briefings and other meetings. Some hours are spent interviewing Iraqis and Americans and the occasional foreign national about their experiences. At times I will go with the commander to meet with a Sheik.<sup>57</sup>

As Griffin’s comment suggests, the activities of HTTs are primarily, and not surprisingly, shaped by their immediate surroundings. As noted by one former HTT member, “We live on the military bases, go out with a military security escort, and return home to base after our engagements.”<sup>58</sup> An HTS manager, in an interview about the program, described the work of HTTs as “data gathering while on patrol.” An important part of HTT field work is preparation: briefing a research plan to the brigade, preparing a risk assessment (while asking the question: does the environment let me do this?), and preparing security for the trip off base. And as a team leader explained in an interview, reflecting on his work with an HTT in 2007, “They [the soldiers who accompany HTT members making the rounds] expect you to be fully engaged in the heat of battle, during a course of action, not taking a knee.”

Field work, in short, is something carried out in immediate proximity to and in ways that are largely shaped by the fact of being a social scientific “embed” with military units on the ground and engaged in an ongoing conflict. In similar fashion, for example, another HTT member has referred to conducting “windshield ethnology,” that is, to the work of observation from inside a military vehicle while on patrol.<sup>59</sup> And folklorist Carol Burke, who spent some time with an HTT near Kirkuk, Iraq, has described the work of

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<sup>57</sup> Quote from Marcus Griffin while a guest on Wisconsin Public Radio’s Kathleen Dunn show on October 9, 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Silverman, Adam, “The Why and How of Human Terrain Teams” *Inside Higher Ed*. January 19, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Kavanaugh, Lee Hill, “Human Terrain Teams: Winning Hearts and Minds” *Kansas City Star* October 14, 2008.

HTTs as “combat ethnography.”<sup>60</sup> As one former HTT social scientist observed as part of a CEAUSSIC interview, “Our work was highly collaborative with army colleagues.” This means that “advising” can involve a great deal. HTTs, we are told, are meant “to advise American commanders how to avoid, or co-opt, the cultural tripwires the coalition has been stumbling over since first going into Afghanistan in 2001.”<sup>61</sup> The implications of the relationship between “advising” and “co-optation” are made clearer with reference by at least one army journalist to “the human terrain team process of defeating the enemy,”<sup>62</sup> which suggests that, at least from the military point of view, HTTs can be understood as an asset, to be used by U.S. commanders on the ground to tilt the military conflict – that is, the conventional campaign – in their favor.

While some sources have been clear that “you are doing ethnography within the parameters of a military mission,” other members of HTTs have offered descriptions of field work without any reference to their military counterparts or to the various potential complications introduced by operating in a combat zone while in the field:

In the case of my team, we used very standard research and analysis methods to get at both primary and secondary open source data. At all times we endeavored to engage in best practices, both in terms of methodology and ethics. We essentially used four basic methods of collection: archival, process observation, participant observation, and semi-structured elite level interviews.<sup>63</sup>

Observers of HTTs downrange in 2008 have raised the issue of whether or not individual members of different HTTs understand that, for better or worse, when embedded they are directly and indirectly representing the U.S. military presence there. The issue of research “objectivity,” therefore, is a kind of litmus test for HTT social scientists. If they choose to ignore their immediate surroundings in the name of objective field work, this suggests an unrealistic appraisal of the context of field work. If they embrace the fact that they are in fact conducting field work in a tension-ridden conflict zone, and on behalf of a particular combatant, this, in turn, raises questions about the feasibility of such work.

In the effort to describe and to evaluate the field activities of HTTs, particularly with respect to the application of qualitative methods, we also need to pay attention to what it means, for example, to conduct an “interview” as a Human Terrain Team social scientist. We have a number of accounts. For example, one HTT social scientist noted, “From July 2008 to March 2009, I deployed as a social scientist in Tikrit, Iraq. During this time, my HTT conducted over 650 interviews with local citizens to support various research plans throughout Salah al-Din Province.”<sup>64</sup> These interviews were conducted,

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<sup>60</sup> Burke, Carol, “Combat Ethnography” presented as part of the panel “The Human Faces of the War on Terrorism” International Studies Public Forum of the International Studies program at the University of California-Irvine. March 5, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> McLeary, Paul, “Human Terrain Teams” *World Politics Review* October 14, 2008.

<sup>62</sup> Zumer, John, “Human Terrain Teams Build Friendships, Future” March 2, 2009: <http://www.defenselink.mil/News/newsarticle.aspx?id=53281>

<sup>63</sup> Silverman, op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> King, op. cit., p. 16.



presumably, using a translator. And the interview protocol was ambitious, with 52 short and six longer questions. The circumstances of interviewing have varied for HTTs, with some taking place with groups and occurring among “big crowds” in the street and others with specific individuals, often “at their office.” As one HTT social scientist made quite clear, “Solitariness is not good. It is better and safer to have these conversations in large groups.” The work of a given HTT might have unintended consequences, in other words, both for the interviewer and interviewee.

Some interviewers have been in uniform and carried weapons, while others have worked in civilian garb and unarmed (although still escorted by armed U.S. soldiers). It is difficult to evaluate, without also being embedded with an HTT oneself, to what extent it is feasible to conduct interviews and to ask questions as a social scientist engaged in field work. At least one Marine brigade commander, however, made the following point about the efforts of an HTT with which he worked to design a survey project for Ramadi, Iraq: “When you go out with a bunch of uniforms, this makes the survey something else. You begin to start to look like you are trying to influence a certain outcome. It looks more like push polling.”<sup>65</sup>

HTS designers imagined that HTT social scientists would use hand held data devices linking them with reach back center databases that could look up needed data (on cultural customs, or information about specific individuals encountered in the field) for HTTs in real time. But these high tech visions have not come to fruition. Interviews with HTS personnel indicate that in most instances HTS social scientists are unable to make use of such technology. Therefore, some enterprising HTT members have improvised by accessing and using standard data upload and retrieval resources already available and used by Army personnel in the field, even if these are not official features of the HTS package.

In addition to these are more specialized sorts of activities, often cited as critical parts of “field work,” and which are much more obviously the result of the circumstances of the HTT operating in a theater of combat. Often, too, these activities include regular cooperation between HTTs and other contractors or civilian efforts coordinating with the military presence, including perhaps most notably the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).<sup>66</sup> As with HTTs, PRTs are mixed military-civilian teams tasked with building up the capacity of local government in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>67</sup> While there have been some reports of the lack of cooperation between HTTs and PRTs, others have noted the close working relationship between the two. In other moments, HTTs share information with PRTs on more specific questions, such as a “detailed, heavily footnoted 22-page report on saffron as a potential cash crop for Afghan farmers — and as a potential alternative to

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<sup>65</sup> A “push poll” refers to a technique used, most often if not exclusively during political campaigns, where the attempt is made to influence or to change the view of a respondent while in the context of appearing to be conducting a poll.

<sup>66</sup> HTTs are expected to at least potentially cooperate with patrols, civil affairs, psychological operations, information operations, special operations forces, law enforcement and provincial reconstruction teams.

<sup>67</sup> For more information about the activities of Provincial Reconstruction Teams consult Ruiz, Moses T., *Sharpening the Spear: The United States’ Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan*. Unpublished Master’s Thesis. Texas Tech University (2009).

growing opium poppy,”<sup>68</sup> produced by one HTT. As reported by a journalist, on another occasion, an HTT “consulted the PSYOP on a media campaign to discourage Afghans from becoming suicide bombers.”<sup>69</sup> HTTs are in fact expected to routinely cooperate, and to share information, with a diversity of military and civilian actors in theater, beyond the particular brigade with which they work.

One way in which such collaborations have been institutionalized, at least in the work of several HTTs, is to regularly accompany PRTs on MEDCAPS as a way to gain access to local communities. The abbreviation MEDCAP stands for “medical civil affairs programs,” which are administered by PRTs in cooperation with the local U.S. military presence, at least in Afghanistan. MEDCAPS are typically arranged as an opportunity for local residents to receive basic healthcare and to receive basic supplies such as blankets. MEDCAPS often afford HTTs key opportunities to survey a given community, to engage with members of communities, and to utilize open-ended group interviews to learn about the attitudes and concerns of local residents. Another way is to organize meetings in local communities. One journalist observing the activities of an HTT noted, “The team traveled in relative freedom to dozens of villages, holding impromptu *shuras*, or town meetings, with hundreds of Afghans.”<sup>70</sup> HTT field work takes place, therefore, as one extension of the other work of the brigade in question, including regular patrols, visits to communities, and civil-humanitarian efforts. Much of this is part of the overall U.S. counterinsurgency strategy.

#### 6c. The Military and Social Science Expertise

In order to understand the reception given to HTS by military people, at home and in the field, we must first provide at least a minimal account of how people in the military and intelligence organizations draw distinctions about research, data collection, advising, and intelligence, as well as differences between these activities. The interactions of HTS with other military personnel, especially downrange, take place in an environment with particular expectations. When working with military personnel, HTS employees interact with established communities of practice which use pervasive discursive frames that, in turn, shape what these people assume about, and how they categorize, HTS as a program.

First, the boundaries and meaning of what DoD has traditionally understood to be “research,” “intelligence,” and “advising” have become less clear rather than sharper through recent attention to the social sciences, especially through efforts to incorporate people and perspectives from the social science disciplines that foreground field research. To simplify, for the last several decades, research in DoD largely has been focused upon the potential contributions of the hard sciences and of the applications of new technology. This continues to inform military approaches to cultural information, as indicated by the

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<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Hodge, Nathan, “Army: Battle Taliban with...Saffron?” *Danger Room* June 9, 2009: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/06/army-to-afghan-farmers-trade-opium-for-saffron/#more-13461>.

<sup>69</sup> Featherstone, Steve, “Human Quicksand: For the U.S. Army a Crash Course in Cultural Studies” *Harper’s Magazine* (September 2008), p. 62.

<sup>70</sup> Featherstone, op. cit., p. 62.

emphasis on developing cultural models and simulations. The recent 2008 DoD-funded Minerva Initiative was in part intended to balance military-funded research in support of “basic research” in the social sciences. This is, however, an ongoing process.

Although polling and surveys have begun to be incorporated into research, there has been little of what anthropologists would consider field research. The entire concept of social science done in the field has not been part of the discourse used to think about research within DoD. Social science was something done in libraries or, perhaps, with a few interviews or surveys. It has been incorporated into the intelligence process largely through what we would think of as “library research,” analysts sitting in cubicles reading books, journal articles, and reports,<sup>71</sup> rather than as field workers. As a kind of activity, therefore, field work does not seamlessly fit into the prevailing distinctions drawn within DoD, as it continues to come to terms with the broad implications of the social sciences.

If the military does educate and train some specialists, including the military’s Foreign Area Officers (FAOs),<sup>72</sup> who possess special foreign language training and cultural expertise, it is also common for civilian contractors or civilian employees with special knowledge to work for the military for varying lengths of time. These people may also travel “outside the wire,” interact with local people, while contributing systematic observations. But they generally do not think of themselves as researchers. Nor do they do anything an anthropologist might consider to be designed research. And nor are they commonly described as researchers to local people.

#### 6d. HTT and Military Counterparts

Traditionally people who deploy to bring their knowledge of an area or technical expertise into an area of military operations have been termed “advisors” or “subject matter experts.” And as described in the *Human Terrain Team Handbook*,

The HTT will research, interpret, archive, and provide cultural data, information, and knowledge, to optimize operational effectiveness...and provide the commander with operationally relevant socio-cultural data, information, knowledge and understanding, and the embedded expertise to integrate that understanding into the commander’s planning and decision-making processes.<sup>73</sup>

Indeed, an established and conventional military understanding of expertise appears to inform how human terrain team members are perceived in the field or downrange. Their work is described by HTS itself, as “social science research and advising.” *Stars and Stripes* has also described HTTs as a “newly established team of ‘cultural advisors.’”<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> See: Albro, Robert, “Anthropology and Analysts” June 8, 2009: <http://blog.aaanet.org/2009/06/08/ceaussic-anthropologists-and-analysts/> for a brief discussion of these issues with respect to intelligence.

<sup>72</sup> A May 2009 report indicates “the number of FAOs has increased by 50 percent in the last three years. And in the next five years, DoD expects 1,100 more FAOs to enter the community, which currently has 1,800 officers serving in the field.”

<sup>73</sup> *Handbook*, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Morin, Monte, “Cultural Advisors Give U.S. Teams an Edge” *Stars and Stripes* June 28, 2007.

HTTs have been described as “an intermediary for soldiers,”<sup>75</sup> as a “cultural broker to reduce miscommunication,”<sup>76</sup> and as “non-lethal enablers.”<sup>77</sup> While viewed as advisors, brokers, or enablers, at least in some cases HTTs have played critical roles within their assigned units. An HTT field social scientist, who was assigned to work with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team/1st Armored Division in Iraq in 2008, has noted, “We were able to directly or indirectly conceptualize and influence virtually all of our brigade’s problem sets and provide nonlethal options to resolve them.”<sup>78</sup> These are the success stories.

Some HTTs have not been able to establish rapport with their military opposites. In fact, according to one source, at least one HTT was so ineffectual that a commander initiated a process to have them recalled. In other cases, rapport per se was less a problem than was competence. Another commander described members of an HTT as “wanting to do good things.” “They were nice people with good intentions,” he added, but without the necessary area expertise to make really valuable contributions. But still other HTTs have managed to develop constructive working relationships with their brigade leadership. As a social scientist from an HTT in Iraq in 2008 noted,

We were just another group of civilian contractors who were saddled atop this poor commander. We asked ourselves: What are we going to do? We decided to sell ourselves in the brigade. We asked: What can we do for you to make your life easier?

A team leader for an HTT in Afghanistan in 2007, formerly of the special forces, echoed this noting that the biggest challenge early on is, “How do you make yourself relevant to what a brigade is doing...from a cultural planning perspective.” In both cases these HTTs managed to demonstrate that they could be valued assets to their brigade. As often as not, however, this goal was achieved more through the individual initiative of team members than through their formal association with the HTS program per se. Brigades also often received HTTs without any familiarity with the concept or clear notion of how they might be most appropriately used. Enterprising HTTs, therefore, tend to improvise in effective ways to develop their own niche. In the case of the successful HTT in Iraq noted above, it eventually functioned “as an independent research group” for the brigade, while helping it to “formulate better questions.” And several brigade commanders were clear that HTTs were able both to ask and to receive answers to questions that they, themselves, would not have been able to ask, while also helping them, for example, to look at their mission goals “through Afghan eyes.” Another former HTT member, with a military background, noted how HTT social scientists who are also conversant with the military can be very effective helping brigade commanders, thinking in terms of more conventional Army or Marine priorities, to appreciate the “blinding flash of the obvious”: that is, an otherwise elusive insight or observation from a social scientific perspective.

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<sup>75</sup> Featherstone, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>76</sup> Griffin, Marcus, “Research to Reduce Bloodshed” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 54 (14): B10 November 30, 2007.

<sup>77</sup> McLeary, op. cit.

<sup>78</sup> Silverman, op. cit.

Several former HTT members have emphasized that they conducted interviews designed to address the “critical information requirements” of local military commanders. These requirements were then made into a “survey or an interview for the local people.”<sup>79</sup> One former HTT social scientist, who conducted “hundreds of interviews,” explained he asked “highly targeted, specific questions.” Often, he would explain to interviewees that “I’ve been asked by the army to ask this question.” And when out in the field talking with Iraqis, he first explained to them that his job was to “learn their needs and concerns and to communicate these back to the [U.S. military] commander.” Yet another source noted the ability to “go where the soldiers can’t go and to ask: why?” Finally, at least in some cases, it has been reported that “some HTTs took their commanders’ objectives as their own objective.” This last observation suggests that there is a significant potential for the loss of a critically independent perspective on the researcher’s part, given the urgency of the value of information for local Army or Marine commanders.

#### 6e. Research Questions and Priorities

For HTTs priorities in research, and salient questions, vary from the broad to the specific. In general, these range from the sorts of questions we might classify as designed to establish an all-purpose ethnographic baseline, to a large body of questions comparable to the sorts of concerns familiar to development anthropologists, and including a variety of much more targeted questions, which arise directly from mission priorities of the unit with which a specific HTT is embedded. At least a significant proportion of the kinds of topics HTTs have researched in the field appear to be closely connected to the execution of basic COIN strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan, specifically the provisioning of security, basic economic needs, and essential services.<sup>80</sup> In what follows we offer a representative sample of what HTT members, past and present, have had to say both to us and in other public forums about the particulars of their data collection.

When asked to explain the contours of research activities, members of HTTs have offered descriptions of research that are quite broad. Among others, these include such wide ranging priorities as the task of describing “what life is like in the neighborhoods,”<sup>81</sup> solicitation of basic information “about age, marital status, level of education, and tribal affiliation,”<sup>82</sup> sustained attention to “Iraqi tribal behavior, Iraqi politics, religion, rule of law, as well as the stabilization and reconstruction that is being undertaken,”<sup>83</sup> including “how the Taliban influenced the local population,”<sup>84</sup> ongoing effort to “to “describe *Shia* politics in Northwest Baghdad,” focused attention upon “the counterinsurgency center of gravity: the populace,” and including “everything around economic opportunity issues and political issues.” Equally broad statements of HTT priorities have also been offered, emphasizing a more obviously tactical role, as the

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<sup>79</sup> Lawrence, op. cit.

<sup>80</sup> *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, op cit., p. 55.

<sup>81</sup> Griffin, op. cit., p. B10.

<sup>82</sup> Burke, Carol, “Sons of Iraq: The Unacknowledged Contractors of the War in Iraq” May 4, 2009: [www.afterdowningstreet.org](http://www.afterdowningstreet.org)

<sup>83</sup> Silverman, op. cit.

<sup>84</sup> Featherstone, op. cit.

following suggest: “We describe the environment that the bad guys operate in, [and] build a foundation for units so they can understand their area,” or an effort “to figure out if the Taliban are living in the village or to find out where they might be.” These final two statements are more explicit about the ways that research goals of HTTs can also be brought together with other priorities, such as sorting out “good guys” from “bad guys.”

At the same time, many research questions were formulated from direct requests for information from the leadership of the brigade with which a given HTT was working. “If soldiers want to know, ‘Why are the children throwing rocks at us?’ and ‘Why are they rocketing us?’ That’s what we do,”<sup>85</sup> explained the team leader of an HTT assigned to the 34th Infantry Division in Iraq in mid-2009. Faced with the question of how best to maintain continued stability, the head officer in charge of operations at FOB McHenry, a base found 35 miles southwest of Kirkuk, “instructed the McHenry human terrain team to gather data to answer the question: ‘Where should we be investing money?’”<sup>86</sup> Other questions HTTs have been encouraged to pursue include asking Iraqis: “Are you scared to vote in elections?” “Do you trust the Iraqi police?” and “Are there any disputes in your village?” In these cases the HTT is given the task of how to transform a specific brigade request for information into a topic to be researched.

A large sample of HTT research priorities focuses upon what can be described as basic reconstruction or development goals, and often as these are connected to objectives of the U.S. military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. HTTs have been asked to assess “the impact of poor essential services such as sewage, water, electricity, and trash on a population’s willingness to provide aid and comfort to insurgents” in Iraq, to analyze the relationship between “household expenses” and lack of “essential services,” to evaluate connections between “poverty” and “bonds of social obligation”<sup>87</sup> or between “security” and “jobs,”<sup>88</sup> to identify “ways to tap the textiles and blankets traded through [the Shabak Valley, Afghanistan] to create jobs,”<sup>89</sup> to investigate “how high prices for fuel and food, drought, animal diseases and other economic catastrophes have forced young Afghan men to leave the country in search of work – or to join the insurgency for the money,”<sup>90</sup> and also to identify “key figures in northwest Baghdad who can help rebuild essential services,”<sup>91</sup> among other comparable priorities. These topics represent a small sample of the variety of goals orienting HTT field activities.

## 6f. Products

A basic function of HTTs is not simply to conduct ethnographic-type field work on issues of interest to a given brigade, but also to be able to succinctly and appropriately

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<sup>85</sup> Lawrence, op. cit.

<sup>86</sup> Burke, 2009, op. cit.

<sup>87</sup> Griffin, op. cit., p B10.

<sup>88</sup> Gezari, Vanessa M., “Rough Terrain” *The Washington Post* August 30, 2009.

<sup>89</sup> Peterson, Scott, “US Army’s Strategy in Afghanistan: Better Anthropology” *Christian Science Monitor* September 7, 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Landers, Jim, “Anthropologist from Plano Maps Afghanistan’s Human Terrain for Army” *The Dallas Morning News* March 8, 2009.

<sup>91</sup> Griffin, op. cit.

communicate the results of their investigation to the brigade's leadership. In other words, and as should be clear from what has been described so far, HTTs ideally should maintain an active brokerage role between "ordinary Iraqis and Afghans" and U.S. military units. The responsibilities of HTTs to their brigade (or, if an HTAT, to decision-makers found at a higher level) is a point of repeated emphasis in the *Handbook*. The Human Terrain Team leader, for example, serves as the "primary interface between the HTT and the unit commander,"<sup>92</sup> including the tasks of briefing and of representing the HTT in the course of unit planning. The *Handbook* describes typical HTT products in the following terms:

HTT products are developed through analyzing and synthesizing human terrain data gathered both in the field and through debriefs/interviews. Products are the documentation of the team's human terrain knowledge of specific topics that are of particular concern to the unit, or should be. Together with input to working groups, this is the primary input to the human terrain team portion of the commander's Common Operating Picture.<sup>93</sup>

HTT team leaders and social scientists have described their team's research contributions to CEAUSSIC, emphasizing the imperative of translating between social scientific-type frameworks and the terms more familiar to soldiers. As one HTT social scientist has put it, "Our job was to answer [a] question by taking our research and packaging it in a way that military personnel could easily and quickly digest."<sup>94</sup>

One social scientist team member described their HTT's basic stock in trade in the terms of "briefings, research reports, patrol reports, weekly and monthly summaries." Another explained, "We would write-up short reports and briefings – usually no more than four to five PowerPoint slides." Additional HTT products include the development of "courses of action," which are reports on questions of particular relevance for a given unit. If not made operationally relevant to their military audience, the program stresses, HTT data is worthless. And the language of the military is PowerPoint. One former HTT social scientist compared his work while part of the team to work conducted on behalf of corporate clients: "Put the bottom line up front, use sound bytes, make it useful, and have some rigor behind it." He went on, "This is not ethnography. It is translating abstractions into actionable recommendations."

The *Handbook* itemizes several kinds of HTT products. These include: cultural assessments, internally generated reports to address deficiencies in the overall picture of the unit, media summaries, biographies of particular local leaders (comparable to the use of profiles in intelligence), cultural knowledge reports, trip reports, communications on significant dates and events, and executive summaries for briefing purposes.<sup>95</sup> All HTT products are meant to help the team to provide its unit with what HTS calls an "analytic

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<sup>92</sup> *Handbook*, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>93</sup> *Handbook*, op. cit., p. 86

<sup>94</sup> Silverman, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup> *Handbook*, op. cit., pp. 85-90.

cultural framework for operational planning, decision-making, and assessment.”<sup>96</sup> If this sounds comprehensive, observers and veterans of HTTs have also raised concerns about whether the particular products generated by specific HTTs in fact rise to the level of an “analytic cultural framework.”

At least one former HTT member does not believe “his team members were uniquely qualified to provide the input they did.” And as was further noted, “Many of the officers and grunts he worked with had more relevant knowledge.”<sup>97</sup> Along these same lines, one observer has made the point, “The information I have seen from the HTT is far less sophisticated and locally relevant than what the civil-military and intel [people] already know.” Finally, at least one frustrated HTT member asserted, “I have been here for several months and we have not produced a single product that a few hard working NCOs could not have come up with on their own.”<sup>98</sup> Along similar lines, David Price, a CEAUSSIC member, has reported the following dissatisfactions among HTT personnel:

Many HTS personnel reported frustrations over programmatic dysfunctions that prevented them from engaging in the sort of fieldwork they envisioned doing with the HTS Program. Some HTS social scientists complained that after arriving in Iraq and linked with military units, they were left on the base where they were assigned with little guidance of what it was that they were to be doing, and the military units they were linked with often did not understand the role they were to undertake in the field...Some HTS social scientists reported feeling that they were underused and had actually done very little “out in the field,” instead spending weeks left back at bases where they do little more than email friends, play video games and surf the net.

In such cases, HTTs appeared unable to provide significant products of any sort to military clients.

The issue of quality control with respect to HTT products is an important one. First, it raises concerns about the kinds of training in field methods that HTT members receive. Second, it broaches the question of whether field work is really possible in a combat zone. Third, it suggests that translational requirements into PowerPoint and other formats might significantly undermine the value-added of the kinds of information that ethnographic research could provide. And, finally, it suggests that HTTs can be useful (and that many have), but that some have fared badly, and successful contributions are not in fact much different from the sorts of information already widely available to the military in Afghanistan and Iraq through other more conventional channels.

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<sup>96</sup> *Handbook*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> Ephron, Dan and Silvia Spring, “A Gun in One Hand, A Pen in the Other” *Newsweek* April 12, 2008.

<sup>98</sup> Stanton, John, “US Army Promotes Waste, Fraud and Abuse in TRADOC Human Terrain Program” *Pravda* December 12, 2008: [http://english.pravda.ru/world/americas/12-12-2008/106828-Human\\_Terrain\\_Program-0](http://english.pravda.ru/world/americas/12-12-2008/106828-Human_Terrain_Program-0)



## 7. Data Collection and Storage

HTS has addressed the question of data collection in response to CEAUSSIC's query, noting:

Regarding the issue of informant confidentiality, protection of sources is of primary consideration for all HTTs. Protection of informant confidentiality is strongly emphasized because insurgent groups may target local Iraqis and Afghans if proper measures for securing identity are not maintained. HTTs code their notes, store them securely, and sanitize their information to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. U.S. Army Human Intelligence (HUMINT) does the same regarding their sources so this is not an unusual practice to military staff members.

The reference to the use of "informants" appears to make it clear that HTTs are collecting qualitative responses from counterparts in the field. HTS also emphasized the following with respect to non-HTS personnel's access to data and reports:

The management of HTS has attempted to be as open as possible in sharing HTS data and reports. However, because of the military's security concerns associated with working in a war zone, certain information cannot be released to the general public, particularly information that pertains to community and individual opposition to Al Qaeda and other insurgent groups, which would put these groups at risk.

Both descriptions are notable insofar as they admit the very present possibility that those with whom HTT members work could be vulnerable to "lethal targeting," even if HTS makes it clear that the data collected by HTTs would never be used by the US military for such a purpose. However, ethically, it would not matter who does the targeting. From this description it appears that HTTs do collect sensitive sociocultural data that could be used in ways to the detriment of informants. How this information is handled, then, becomes a fundamental issue about which anthropologists, who might collect such data, would need to have a clear understanding.

Even HTT social scientists with significant experience working in conflict zones have noted they "weren't clear what to do with field notes." According to these sources, this is because as of yet HTS, as a program, has not adequately addressed the issue of the protection of counterparts and the confidentiality of informants. Individuals have made various choices about how to handle this. Some have held back from turning their notes over to HTS management. According to at least one observer of HTTs working in Iraq, some HTTs "have been at great pains to not just keep confidential, but actually destroy any personally identifying data." At the same time, HTT members communicate on, and pass materials along, using SIPRNet (that is, the secret-classified Secure Internet Protocol Router Network), which is a DoD computer network that allows users to circulate both unclassified and classified (up to the Secret level) materials. Again, it is not possible to know whether this is simply for convenience or if HTTs are in fact producing classified

materials. At least one former HTT member has complained that s/he has been unable to retrieve data s/he originally collected from SIPRNet for months.

If HTS fulfills a “research function,” as noted, it should be in compliance with DoD’s ethics and human subjects standards. In most cases, protocols for human subjects protections would require the protection of personally identifiable data. The production of reports or use of data storage protocols that expose the identity of sources is simply at odds with a research function. If the primary identity of HTS is a research function, HTS could then release anonymized reports and some data. However, raw data on specific people could not be released. Hypothetically, an HTT might do a social network analysis of a particular leader. DoD and the intelligence community might be very interested in the raw data, including the names, locations, and activity types of connections. However, if personally identifiable information is removed, the HTT report could provide, for example, only an abstraction of the types of connections and activities likely to be seen in networks of a type of leader but not the names, locations, and activities of the actual people involved.

Reports from HTTs are circulated to all elements of the military, including intelligence assets, both in the field and stateside, although distribution often is ad hoc rather than systematic. As at least one HTT researcher working in 2008-2009 made it clear,

The information we obtained was also packaged and provided to our brigade, the battalions, maneuver companies, as well as the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team and the U.S. Department of State/U.S. Embassy.<sup>99</sup>

The circulation of raw data seems to be less common and some people in the social scientist billets take careful measures to remove personally identifiable information from anything they circulate. However, this is not systematically the case among all HTTs. Since HTS does not use the Army’s IRB process, and research conducted by HTTs does not pass through any standard and approved ethics review process, however, official safeguards to insure informed consent of subjects and data protections are not in place. The ad hoc protections implemented by individuals do not have the force of policy and law that could protect the data from access by others.

This disconnect between performing research and providing data or serving a tactical support function is particularly pronounced in the case of some types of “human terrain databases” or other products which attempt to support social network analysis of specific individuals or groups deemed to be important. It is also important to note that conflicts could arise despite the best intentions of a given researcher, given the ways that data potentially circulate through existing databases and pass through the hands of strategic coalition partners.

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<sup>99</sup> Silverman, op. cit.

Beyond the small amount of reporting from HUMINT collectors, individual military units may develop “databases.” Sometimes these efforts are as simple as a spreadsheet or word document, to store information about the areas in which they work. In other cases, they may involve more sophisticated use, such as developing social network models. This sort of “personal initiative” database may never leave the laptop on which it was created or it may be shared with others. There is no single process by which this sort of information is shared within a service or across services and intelligence organizations.

One of the concerns raised about HTS has been how information is stored for later use, especially in the case of raw data about individuals, relationships, and activities. In normal anthropological research, these kinds of data would be protected by the researcher according to whatever IRB protocol s/he developed. There has been some concern in the discipline that data from HTS may be feeding back into DoD or intelligence community databases where the social scientist has no control over how it is used. The fact that the development of databases within DoD and the intelligence community is a complex and ongoing issue further clouds the circumstances of data (as opposed to reports) collected by HTTs in the field.

There are many initiatives within individual services or intelligence organizations and at the national and coalition levels seeking to find ways to capture, store, and share information related to culture, as well as specific individuals, relationships, and activities. These range from efforts to develop data repositories (not unlike HRAF) built upon lists of categories or traits to portals where existing intelligence reports and other documents can be stored in one, searchable, location. There are databases enabling an intelligence analyst to search through formal reports from intelligence collectors or the work of other analysts. However, none of these are currently linked with the kind of data gathering and analysis being done by non-intelligence personnel, such as civil affairs teams, normal patrols, HTTs, or civilian agencies, such as USAID.<sup>100</sup>

For the purposes of CEAUSSIC’s report, the real issues with respect to data collection and storage are: 1. whether data produced by the HTTs contains information specific enough to pose risk to the communities in which they work, and 2. whether these data are made available in reports or databases that can be used for purposes not intended by the social scientist. The answer to these questions depends on the activities and data protection practices of individual team members. Some teams may never produce these kinds of information. Instead, they may work from patrol reports or other sources rather than original research. Other teams may produce it. There simply is no way of knowing without greater access to the activities of specific teams.

For the teams that do produce such information, some individuals do seem to have taken care to ensure that personally identifiable information was not stored or reported.

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<sup>100</sup> Assuming all the challenges of data classification are met, there remain problems about technological compatibility. The services and intelligence community (let alone coalition partners) do not operate on the same technological “backbones,” making it very difficult to make information available to all interested parties.

However, there does not appear to be a program-wide policy on the issue. Given the desire of supported units, as well as DoD and the intelligence community, for this kind of detailed information, it seems likely that, if the activities of the HTT produce it, it will end up being shared to some degree. The degree to which that happens depends on a variety of technological and procedural issues currently being confronted by DoD and by the intelligence community. The idea of some sort of massive, government-wide HRAF-style data repository being fed from the field does not seem likely to happen, given the messy realities of the data and technological challenges. At the level of downrange units, battalions, regiments, and divisions, where HTTs generally work, it seems inevitable that data produced by the team will flow into whatever local-level repositories are created. Once shared, there is no way to control how information is used anymore than a traditional anthropological researcher can control the use of a journal article.

For all these reasons, the accessibility of an HTT's data depends on the behavior of HTT personnel with regard to how they gather, store, and report information and the policies in place to support that behavior. This would require very strong education in ethical decision-making, given that HTT personnel likely will feel responsibility not only to the local community, but also to their military colleagues. Accessibility of data also depends on which “identity” HTS ultimately chooses. If it serves a research function, IRBs and appropriate training can be put in place. If it chooses instead to serve a tactical support function or as a source of information for DoD and the intelligence community, its personnel will need to accept that their work will become part of general information production for the supported unit (and possibly larger organizations) and consider the implications for their professional identity, their disciplines, and, most importantly, the local people with whom they interact.

## **8. The Question of Intelligence**

The challenges of data collection also include another distinction that is relevant to understanding the context in which HTS was originally designed and implemented. In the intelligence community, traditionally a strong distinction has been drawn between “collectors” and “analysts”. Analysts determine what needs to be collected. Collectors, in their turn, gather the information and submit it back to the analysts. Analysts then process the information and produce finished intelligence in the form of reports or briefs, usually for decision-makers. If in practice the intelligence process is not nearly so clear-cut, the collector-analyst distinction nevertheless is an assumption of the so-called “intelligence cycle,” the model that is most widely used in intelligence training and discussions. This distinction is so prevalent that it colors how professionals in military and in intelligence organizations view the practices of researchers downrange.

If for DoD “research” is assumed to occur in libraries or in laboratories, HUMINT collection, in contrast, is supposed to happen in the field. If you are engaged in the kind of ad hoc observations of the sort that is typical of an advisor, as described above, your activities will be framed in a different way: as a type of advising and not as collection. If you are out systematically gathering information, the frame in which you are seen would

be that of “collector,” unless other expectations and roles are clearly delineated and often reinforced. This state-of-affairs is starting to shift, as more people in these organizations gain a more thoroughgoing understanding of field research and of the sorts of distinctions drawn about field work in discussions of methods in social sciences. However, military discursive space, as mapped onto practice, is still dominated by a conception that people doing what we would think of as field work are perceived to be advisors or collectors.

An additional fact of the relationship between research and intelligence involves the way “intelligence” itself is formally defined. The official definition provided in JP 2-0, the doctrinal source providing “fundamental principles and guidance for intelligence support to joint operations,” is as follows:

Intelligence. The product resulting from the collection, processing, integration, evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of available information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations. The term is also applied to the activity which results in the product and to the organizations engaged in such activity.<sup>101</sup>

Of course, this makes it appear that intelligence is pretty much any form of knowledge production. The reference to collection is important. Intelligence is supposed to arise from information gathered through the formal collection process. However, given the issues raised above, in a moment of the active effort to incorporate the methods of the social sciences into military intelligence, differences and overlaps between “collection” and “research” are fluid and not rigorously maintained.

There is significant variation in the ways that HTTs interact with the intelligence elements in their area. This seems to rely, at least to some extent, on the inclination of the people filling social scientist roles. Some have maintained notable distance. Some have constructed careful means of coordinating while also sheltering data. Others seem to have little concern about how they interact. According to job advertisements and to program briefs, HTS hires its social scientists with the understanding that they will not in fact perform any intelligence collection but conduct only unclassified and open source kinds of research. According to some other program briefs, however, HTS is seen as a source of data for DoD.

In part, the relationship of HTS to intelligence work has been a dynamic one, as the concept for the program itself has moved through various discussions and versions. According to at least one program manager involved in these early discussions, and privy to outlines of the program as it began to take shape in the early 2000s, at that time “it was all about getting after high value targets.” Another source familiar with HTS in its present form has observed that, “all [HTS] analysts are coming out of the intel community.” In fact, several people have suggested, “They [HTS representatives] are not even pretending anymore...When asked, [they say], ‘Yes, we’re supporting the intelligence community.’” One particularly disillusioned early planner lamented that HTS gradually evolved from a

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<sup>101</sup> *Joint Publication 2-0*. Joint Intelligence. June 22, 2007. p. GL-11.

concept of high-risk non-intelligence ethnography, to be conducted not by civilian social scientists but by military personnel into “whatever the J-2 wanted.”<sup>102</sup> The intelligence community would understandably be interested in unclassified HTS materials in the same way they would be interested in journal articles or books on a topic of interest. Classified reports and raw data would also likely be of interest.

Some HTS program advocates and managers described to CEAUSSIC the effort to “fight hard to keep this program open rather than a part of G2 Intelligence,”<sup>103</sup> with the implication being that from the beginning some were pushing for HTS to be a military intelligence asset. Currently, the familiar model of intelligence gathering is used by HTS as a basis for communicating the core features of its own program. One of the key tasks assigned to HTTs in the field is called a “Cultural Preparation of the Environment.” As the *Handbook* explains, “This continuous process is similar to the traditional Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB).”<sup>104</sup> The suggestion is that in practice the relationship between unclassified or open data collection and intelligence collection, especially in the field or downrange, is very close and that the two are perhaps hopelessly entangled. Or, as one observer put it, “Everyone talks to everyone else out here.”

Insofar as we are aware, currently there is no known mechanism for “feeding” raw data from HTS to the intelligence community. At the same time, given that on the ground the differences between HTS-type data collection and intelligence gathering are unclear within HTTs, confusion among military personnel between the activities of HTTs and intelligence work is likely, and at least early on characterized the reception received by HTTs. As at least one report explained, in early 2007 HTTs were “hastily installed in the brigade’s intelligence section, where their talents were wasted in ‘the myopic role of an intel analyst.’”<sup>105</sup> Several HTT social scientists have, nevertheless been clear about this question: “Do I actively get into the targeting cycle? No.” An HTT team leader noted, “The farthest thing we do out there is intelligence.” At other times, however, HTT team members have blurred this distinction, as the following observation by an HTT member working Khost Province, Afghanistan, makes apparent:

It’s not a pristine project. This is not Operation Phoenix or Camelot resurrected. But if there is actionable intelligence that will save soldier and civilian lives from being killed, I’m going to hand it over. I am...But I don’t go out looking for people to target.<sup>106</sup>

While HTS spokespersons have consistently claimed that HTS personnel and data has not been used for the targeting of enemy populations, at least some statements by HTS social scientists support critics claims that HTS data can be utilized for such ends. We have, for

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<sup>102</sup> The J-2, Directorate for Intelligence, supports DoD as the national level focal point for crisis intelligence support for military operations.

<sup>103</sup> In this instance “G2 intelligence” refers to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence

<sup>104</sup> *Handbook*, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>105</sup> Featherstone, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Wynn, L. L. “The Story Behind an HTS Picture” Posted September 22, 2008: <http://culturematters.wordpress.com/2008/09/22/the-story-behind-an-hts-picture/>

example, the comments of one HTT anthropologist from this past spring, who was quoted in the *Dallas Morning News*, to the effect that she

does not worry about what the military does with her information, even if it is fed into the intelligence used by U.S. Special Forces for killing or capturing insurgent leaders. ‘If it’s going to inform how targeting is done – whether that targeting is bad guys, development or governance – how our information is used is how it’s going to be used,’ she said. ‘All I’m concerned about is pushing our information to as many soldiers as possible. ‘The reality is there are people out there who are looking for bad guys to kill,’ ... ‘I’d rather they did not operate in a vacuum.’<sup>107</sup>

And while HTS, itself, might in fact strive to keep their data collection distinct from that of intelligence, this does not mean that other military personnel understand the program in such terms, as references in power point briefs to the role of HTS in the military “kill chain” make apparent.<sup>108</sup> In short, since HTTs work closely with military units, whatever understanding military personnel might have of HTTs is at least as important as the ways HTTs might understand their own roles.

Nevertheless, many current and former HTT members have been very clear that, as one such former team member characterized his work, the activities of HTTs are “open source, non-classified, no intel, no targeting.” A prospective HTT member described his training as having included an unambiguous message with respect to this issue:

We are under orders that if we are asked to expose our respondents for targeting purposes we HAVE to refuse. In fact, the consensus was that we never reveal our informants even if they become persons-of-interest to intelligence or police units.

But at the very least, the fluidity of the distinction between “intelligence” and HTS “data collection” in the field is regularly negotiated in different ways by individual members of HTTs, depending on a wide variety of factors, including quality of training, relationship to military counterparts and how these counterparts understand the HTT’s role, nature of the specific mission of the brigade with which they are working, how rigorously members of HTTs adhere to the ethical standards they bring to bear, pressures that could be applied in the heat of soldiers’ efforts to combat an insurgency, as well as the continued control over data collected by a given HTT.

HTS leadership repeatedly briefed the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence on the program. The intent of these briefings is unknown. The HTS leadership repeatedly briefed the fact that it thinks that military intelligence has a very limited role to play with regard to learning about local culture and “shaping cultural terrain.” This would suggest that, at least at the beginning, program leaders tried to position HTS as a replacement for

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<sup>107</sup> Landers, op. cit.

<sup>108</sup> Vine, David, “Enabling the Kill Chain” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* November 30: B9-B10, 2007.

intelligence activities rather than as a part of them. However, this is a significant element within DoD that understands this very differently. As has been noted,

The Army intelligence manual...clearly identifies the Army intelligence combat staff (S-2 and G-2 sections) as responsible for the collection and analysis of cultural data. The new Army manual on human intelligence collection, the manuals on stability and support operations, intelligence preparation of the battlefield and perhaps most important, the counterinsurgency manual, all require intelligence staffs to become experts in cultural terrain and to provide commanders with cultural analysis.<sup>109</sup>

Given that military doctrine links cultural analysis with intelligence in a variety of ways, the likelihood that HTT's can work closely with both military and civilian colleagues but also remain well clear of pressures – either direct or once or twice removed – to generate any cultural intelligence appears low. In fact the HTS public account dissociating it from any and all intelligence gathering runs contrary to a number of accounts from government insiders suggesting that the initial idea for some sort of human terrain program grew out of a growing recognition of the need to build up precisely that aspect of intelligence collection and analysis.

At least one deployed HTS social scientist was in fact physically located in the intelligence fusion center. It is not clear if this was simply for the convenience of desk space and computer access or if he contributed to processes and products there. Fusion cells incorporate non-intelligence personnel, but the focus is on intelligence production. “Fusion Cell” and “Fusion Center” are generic terms for a variety of organizations the military, intelligence organizations, and civilian law enforcement have all developed to ensure that information is shared across existing structural or normative boundaries.<sup>110</sup> These types of intelligence often are produced by different personnel and run the risk of being “stovepiped” due to security concerns regarding gathering methods or simply due to people not having time to coordinate with other intelligence producers.<sup>111</sup> Fusion cells generally co-locate personnel from the different organizations and might develop specific processes to ensure information is shared. Fusion cells may also focus on the sharing of information across organizational or national boundaries. Since fusion centers generally have power, computers and telephones (and air conditioning), it is not unheard of for people outside the intelligence process to make use of the facilities.

In the confluence of these many circumstances – the relative lack of familiarity with social science field research, the prevalence of the category of the collector as the

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<sup>109</sup> Connable, Ben, “All Our Eggs in a Broken Basket: How the Human Terrain System is Undermining Sustainable Military Cultural Competence” *Military Review* (March-April, 2009), p. 63.

<sup>110</sup> For example, a fusion cell may be dedicated to “fusing” intelligence developed through different methods such as signals intelligence (SIGINT), human intelligence (HUMINT) and imagery intelligence (IMINT).

<sup>111</sup> For example, an interesting pattern of communication discovered through SIGINT might be rendered understandable only with the addition of information from HUMINT. The information is useful only when combined.



only person who systematically gathers information in the field, alongside an extremely broad definition of the term “intelligence” linked to cultural analysis, and the ways that information flows through military and civilian efforts on the ground – there exists ample room for confusion regarding appropriate roles and activities of social scientists, as well as uses of the knowledge they produce. It would require a very carefully designed and monitored program, and effective collaboration on the part of social scientists, to avoid regular confusion between open-source and intelligence data collection, which arise from established doctrine, expectations, and a prevailing status quo for the relevance of social science more generally. Changing this set of preconceptions and relationships is probably best viewed as a long-term undertaking.

## **9. The Identity of the Program**

If we provided a bare bones description of the HTS program in section four of this report, a more complicated picture has emerged through briefings, talks and discussions at conferences, and in press coverage now spanning years, in which HTS representatives have presented the program variously and to different constituencies in several lights and as a way to address multiple priorities. The presentation of HTS, as a program, by HTS leadership and to the policy community can be compared to the activities of HTTs in the field, which we have also explored. Public presentations of the program by managers of HTS appear to differ in important ways from the picture now emerging from activities of HTTs downrange. An important consideration in discussion of the program is that it has tended to describe itself differently to different audiences, while it functions in different ways in the field. If these several identities have yet to be sorted out, we suggest that they include at least the following broad goals for the program, as emphasized by different program representatives:

1. a research function
2. a tactical support function
3. a source of cultural data for DoD

Whether these several functions can unproblematically coexist as coherent parts of a single program, and what implications these several functions (and their occasional confusion) might have for anthropology, is a basic focus of the present report. HTS social scientists, for example, often publicly describe their work as designed to reduce harm, or to reduce “kinetic engagement” between the U.S. military and local populations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which best corresponds to the role of tactical support. This assumption maintains that the reduction of cultural miscommunications and provisioning of military personnel with information on key actors in field settings reduces incidents of violence. There are reasons to question, however, the claims of HTS and their supporters about the extent to which HTS has successfully reduced harm to occupied populations.

These continued questions about what the program in fact is, and does, are made possible by the social and institutional contexts within DoD in particular in which the program emerged. DoD, for example, is at present struggling with the basic idea of field

research in social science and how it is differentiated from intelligence collection. This confusion on the part of DoD organizations makes it possible for HTS to tack back and forth among these identities. It is not possible to know if this shifting is a deliberate effort to manipulate DoD's confusion or if it simply reflects the internal development process of HTS itself, including changes in how the leadership views the program. Intentional or unintentional, this room for maneuver has been further complicated by specific usages of key terms in discussion of HTS across military and academic communities, which often carry very different implications for the respective groups, such as "targeting."

The various descriptions of HTS as fulfilling either a research or tactical support purpose continue to coexist without desirable clarity. These are described differently by different HTS managers and employees, and serve to highlight a problematic ambiguity in the uses of social scientists and techniques of social science to support the function and activities of the program, and of the Army and Marine units hosting HTTs. However, the research component, as described by HTS, appears to be a means to the end of the tactical support function attributed to the program. And these distinctions are fluid, insofar as the program itself continues to evolve and expand in important ways.

## **10. HTS and Relevant Constituencies**

We have debated about the virtues of including the several critics of HTS as part of our report, since we do not wish to be misunderstood. We are not here advocating for one or another of these per se. But we do feel that they form a part of the relevant context for the present report, in fact primarily responsible for the decision to produce the report in the first place. To proceed as if these criticisms do not exist would be to inadequately represent the dialogic framework within which the report itself makes sense. Elsewhere in the report we describe claims of efficacy for HTS as a program. But here we describe in some detail critiques of HTS, which continues to be a controversial program, at once from within the anthropological community as well as the military. The concerns about HTS we describe below should be considered as part of the report's immediate context, as partly responsible for shaping the public sphere of argument about the program along with journalism and the program itself, and as data against which to compare our overall description of the program's several parts and, in particular, of the activities "in the field" of HTTs. These critiques, in fact, help us to address several key goals for this report: 1. to describe to what extent HTS is in the best interest of the established military priorities, in its turn toward anthropology and other social sciences, and 2. to determine whether HTS, in its several parts, is meaningfully engaged in anything that can be described as "anthropology."

### 10a. Anthropological Critics

Soon after the initial public announcements about the Human Terrain System program, anthropologists emerged as the most visible and vocal critics of the program. Anthropological criticisms of HTS have been of three categorical types: epistemological, ethical, and political. These have taken various forms, including the formation of the

Network of Concerned Anthropologists, who gathered over a thousand signatures from anthropologists opposed to HTS as well as other forms of anthropologically informed counterinsurgency.<sup>112</sup> While Ph.D.-level professional anthropologists have participated in the program's design, management and operations, there is little vocal support for the program within the AAA. If anthropologists do actively work in or for different parts of the security sector in the U.S, including the military, increasingly those anthropologists who work in such settings have sought to differentiate between HTS and other forms of engagement both with their military and disciplinary colleagues. We can only emphasize again that HTS-type arrangements represent only one option among the variety of potential relationships between anthropologists and the military.

Anthropologists' theoretical or epistemological critiques of HTS have argued that the extraordinary claims made by HTS's proponents for the program's social engineering "soft power" approach to manipulating other cultures runs counter to widely established anthropological culture theory,<sup>113</sup> as well as a wealth of applied anthropological research that have substantiated the difficulties of success with designed cultural change.<sup>114</sup> Critics of an epistemological bent also question the choice to engage with civilian populations in theaters of war and of conflict described as one part of the "terrain," while emphasizes the potentially dehumanizing consequences of incorporating human beings, for example, simply as part of the topography of a battlefield.<sup>115</sup>

Anthropologists' ethical critiques of HTS primary focus on the programs' unusual avoidance of Institutional Review Board oversight, and the silence of HTS leadership in publicly addressing how core anthropological research ethics concerns are negotiated by HTS ethnographers in field settings. However, several people associated with HTS have addressed how particularly HTTs negotiate the ethics of their fieldwork.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless fundamental concern for at least the AAA's Code of Ethics (CoE) appeared to be have been ignored by HTS personnel when designing the program; among these are concerns that relate to: the establishment of voluntary informed consent, taking care to insure that no harm comes to research participants as a result of HTS research, and full disclosure to research participants what will be done with collected data. Such ethical concerns have been raised by a wide variety of anthropologists, and were part of a statement issued by the AAA (see Appendix C). They have also been basic features of public ethics standards for research with human subjects since at least the establishment of such landmarks as the Nuremberg Code, the Helsinki Accords, and the Belmont Report. The discussion of

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<sup>112</sup> The Network's pledge can be found at: <http://concerned.anthropologists.googlepages.com/NCA-pledge.pdf>

<sup>113</sup> Price, David, "Soft Power, Hard Power, and the Anthropological "Leveraging" of Cultural "Assets": Distilling the Theory, Politics, and Ethics of Anthropological Counterinsurgency." Unpublished manuscript presented at the invited conference "Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency" at the University of Chicago. April 25-27, 2008.

<sup>114</sup> Examples of such discussions can regularly be found in reference to the efforts to incorporate "culture" into the so-called "participatory turn" identified with international development, such as Rao, Vijayendra and Michael Walton, eds. *Culture and Public Action*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Social Sciences (2004).

<sup>115</sup> See, for example, González, Roberto "Embedded: Information Warfare and the 'Human Terrain'" In *The Counter-Counterinsurgency Manual*. Network of Concerned Anthropologists, eds. Pp. 97-113. Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press (2009).

<sup>116</sup> King, op. cit., p. 16.

anthropological ethics sparked by the HTS controversy has led, at least indirectly, to a new AAA comprehensive review of its current CoE.<sup>117</sup> In response HTS managers have indicated that an ethics framework is in development and will soon be made public. We have more to say with regard to HTS and ethics below.

Some anthropologists voiced criticisms that assert the inherently political nature of HTS as a facilitator of counterinsurgency. These critiques connect HTS to historical instances in which anthropological field techniques and theories were used to subjugate native peoples in colonial and neocolonial campaigns. Identifying participants in HTS with such terms as “technicians of power,” these critics pointedly situate the activities of HTS in the context of U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, often described as neo-colonial wars of occupation “in the service of empire.”<sup>118</sup> Ethical and political critiques are sometimes kept distinct and sometimes made together. If CEAUSSIC’s 2007 Report distinguished ethics from politics, and focused on the former, the political character of many critical reactions to HTS has to be acknowledged.<sup>119</sup> If HTS advocates stress the “reduction of harm” by the use of embedded HTS social scientists, anthropological critics reject such arguments, instead focusing on the political context of what can become of anthropology as a discipline, if used as a tool for problematic military occupations, even if designed to reduce violence.

#### 10b. DoD and the Intelligence Community

As within the academic community there is considerable variation in how HTS is viewed in DoD and the intelligence community. Some clearly view it as filling an urgent need for military personnel to have information about “local cultures,” especially in terms of how local people will perceive and interact with U.S. personnel. Others see HTS as a poor solution to the military’s urgent need to build up its cultural competence. Some see violence as counter-productive to the overall mission and hope that HTS will successfully reduce kinetic activity.<sup>120</sup> Others view the information provided by HTS as a way to sort out “good guys from bad guys,” which clearly might connect it to violent targeting.

Critiques of HTS within DoD and the intelligence community are usually offered “on background,” so it is difficult to provide specific examples. However these concerns can be grouped into several categories. As with anthropologists, there is growing push back from within both the Army and Marine Corps that claims made for the possibility of counterinsurgency based victories have been greatly exaggerated, while supporters like David Kilcullen admit that during the last century there have only been a few successful

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<sup>117</sup> See: <http://www.aaanet.org/issues/policy-advocacy/Task-Force-Members-Named-for-Comprehensive-Ethics-Review.cfm> for information on this three year process.

<sup>118</sup> González, *American Counterinsurgency*, op. cit, pp. 124, 109.

<sup>119</sup> See: Price, David, “CEAUSSIC: Anthropological Engagements with Military and Intelligence Agencies” September 11, 2009: <http://blog.aaanet.org/2009/09/11/ceaussic-anthropological-engagements-with-military-and-intelligence-agencies/> for a discussion of the distinction between ethics and politics in CEAUSSIC’s own work.

<sup>120</sup> This is in fact a claim advanced by HTS itself, which emphasizes the program’s role in the “decrease in lethal operations.”

counterinsurgency campaigns waged by occupiers in foreign countries. This skepticism includes direct criticism in particular of the HTS program, and/or it registers concerns about the ways the program has been publicly depicted by advocates.<sup>121</sup>

Another concern is that HTS detracts attention from the need to build a capability among service personnel themselves that promises to be sustainable as contracting dollars decline. As one experienced Marine Lt. Colonel, recently returned from an Iraq tour and reflecting on the value of the HTT with which he was familiar, noted, “You need to build up the organic capacity of a military unit for it to succeed in its mission. To do this, you don’t need another collector.” Critiques such as this point to the ways that HTS is at once redundant but also a lone wolf program not well integrated into the broader effort to build capacity for cultural analysis within DoD, functioning as it does outside of the normal organizational structure of DoD. Ben Connable, formerly a Major in the Marine Corps and trained as a Foreign Area Officer (or FAO), advanced this concern in a recent article in *Military Review*:

The progenitors of HTS took a requirement that called for a comprehensive and sustainable solution – trained combat units to navigate the cultural terrain – and instead created a costly quick-fix response to an immediate need. That response relied heavily on non-organic technology and contracted support...In effect, the fundamental flaws in the HTS concept put the system at cross-purposes with the service’s short-term goals and future needs.<sup>122</sup>

Connable primarily has in mind newly established cultural training centers in both the Army and Marine Corps. He also has in mind such established assets as foreign area officers (FAOs), civil affairs units, and PSYOP capabilities, with which HTS is both redundant and competitive. This theme is also developed by another close-up observer and civilian archaeologist employed by the Army, who was asked by CEAUSSIC to reflect on the impact of HTS within the military:

Human Terrain is one of the most self-serving programs that I have seen in ten years of working with the United States Army. First, the proponents of human terrain failed to study projects and programs within the Department of Defense that were designed to address culture or related issues for deploying personnel. They appear to have bypassed assets and programs within Special Forces, Defense Language Institute, Defense Intelligence Agency, Civil Affairs, the Training and Doctrinal Command Culture Center, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, The Foreign Area Officer Program, the Environmental Cultural Resources Program, and Psychological Operations. Instead of bringing their ideas and assets into the Department of Defense to support and integrate with these entities, they created a brand new program of their own, achieved extremely high

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<sup>121</sup> González, *American Counterinsurgency*, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>122</sup> Connable, op. cit., p. 59.

levels of funding, and blindsided existing and nascent efforts to address the challenges that they claim to care deeply about.

These critics argue, in sum, that HTS undermines a more organic and long-term cultural capacity-building within the military. They note that the program has not been receptive to attempts by other culture-focused organizations to share information and to learn from one another. As such, the experiences of HTT social scientists, if potentially valuable, are not filtered back into the training and education commands in the services in a systematic or cumulative way. Another implication of this lack of better integration into the mission structure of the military itself is that, as non-military and (until recently) as contractors, in many cases “HTTs don’t have the rapport to deliver bad news to a commander.” For this reason, it is not altogether clear whether the arrangement of HTT embeds is conducive to the best advising possible.

Subject matter experts in the military argue that HTS inefficiently duplicates the role that they have traditionally held, which has included briefing and educating military personnel about the cultural and historical background of the people living in areas in which military personnel are operating. We find that the classroom-based approach taken by such approaches does not raise the ethical red flags as the HTS program, because classroom education does not involve instructors in the sort of role confusion (between ethnographer and supporter of military operations) nor the ethical problems necessarily generated when embedding HTS social scientists with troops.

A further concern is that the public prominence of HTS damages the reputations of social scientists working within DoD and the intelligence community in other roles, such as educators or program managers, making it harder to recruit and retain qualified people in these roles. This concern arises both from the reaction of academic colleagues to the program, but also from concern about whether HTS is in compliance with existing military ethics standards. This concern is also connected to a broader concern for civility in the dialogue about what role if any anthropology might constructively have working with different parts of the military. HTS, in fact, has helped to close off more constructive dialogue, goes this argument. Archaeologist Laurie Rush, both a CEAUSSIC member and cultural resources manager at Ft. Drum (NY), reflected on this problem and offered her personal point-of-view for this report, from which we quote at length:

Advocates of the Human Terrain Program failed to engage the anthropological community in a dialogue prior to developing and establishing their program. They developed the program in a final structured form before announcing it to the world and then failed to take any criticisms or concerns seriously. As a result, the program failed to improve and failed to take into consideration special relationships between anthropologists and informants.

Advocates of human terrain, when given access to Army leadership, characterized their program as the *only* solution to the Army’s cultural education and information needs. They also characterized critics of the program as somewhat crazed extremists who did not understand the

military and who could not provide any form of valuable opinion, insight, perspective, or practical advice. I have met ranking Army officers who have made comments to me like, “You aren’t one of those angry anthropologists are you?” One experienced General, prior to addressing a group of archaeologists asked me if the audience was going to be courteous or adversarial because he had heard about “those anthropologists.” He clearly was expecting to be heckled and booed and was visibly relieved and surprised to hear that the archaeologists considered him to be an honored guest. Anthropologists, on the small number of occasions when they did behave badly, played into the hand of this characterization and gave it credibility. Human terrain advocates, by cornering and exploiting their influential access, have made it extremely difficult for any other anthropologist either from academia or from within the military to provide advice or share opinions.

The spirit of this reflection is that constructive dialogue across sometimes charged and difficult boundaries such as between anthropologists and military personnel can be a challenge. But, nobody is served when channels for dialogue cease to exist or when civil discourse disappears. On the contrary, regardless of one’s politics or views about the potential roles for anthropology in the military context, this lack of constructive dialogue and collegial discourse can in fact quickly become anti-democratic.

From the military point of view, one consequence is that HTS controversies have damaged the potential for building bridges with social sciences, which are seen as a necessary part of long-term efforts to change training and education programs. There are, they argue, better ways to do this. Ben Connable again:

The alternative to deploying academics into combat theaters is to enlist their support in training and educating our staff officers. In this role they do not risk endangering their research subjects, provide no direct input into targeting cycles...[or] undermine the military-academic relationship. Keeping them in an academic setting will help build an untarnished and sustainable relationship.<sup>123</sup>

Perhaps concerned with this taint by association, such bridge-building programs as the Minerva Initiative, which funds “basic social science research,” have taken special steps to clarify that they are a “completely separate effort from the Army’s Human Terrain System.”<sup>124</sup> According to at least one source, as well, “some combatant commands have explicitly stated that they want nothing to do with HTS.”

A fourth set of concerns considers the ostensible product. This focuses on the possibility that HTS might not be delivering what it advertises. These critics argue that few teams have PhD anthropologists or other field social scientists, but rather people with backgrounds – sometimes nothing more than a B.A. – in political science, international

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<sup>123</sup> Connable, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>124</sup> See: <http://minerva.dtic.mil/faqs.html> for the FAQs for the Minerva Initiative.

relations, or religious studies, etc. all of which are already well represented in DoD and the intelligence community. They argue that this diminishes HTT's ability to provide needed alternative perspectives, which remains a key gap. Without seeing more detailed team demographics, it is hard to judge whether or not this is the case. A related argument states that the quality of HTS reports and advice is relatively poor in comparison with what can be developed by intelligence or civil affairs personnel with the assistance of HTTs, although, this is difficult to judge without representative samples of HTS products.

Finally, an additional concern is that people filling "social scientist" billets are not adequately trained to operate in a military context. People with this line of argument cite examples where researchers were unable to communicate or coordinate effectively with military personnel. They also cite examples of HTT members not understanding that their research activities would be viewed as part of U.S. policy. The decision to do research on a particular topic or in a particular place might be an individual choice of research design by the HTT member, but might also be perceived as evidence of U.S. interests or intents by local people, with resulting unintended and even lethal consequences.

## 11. HTS and Ethics

Since the basic identity of the program remains unclear, HTS could be said to passively encourage ethical indeterminacy. If HTS carries out a research function as advertised, and if it encourages its social scientists to use ethical research practices, then it should comply with 32CFR219, regulations issued by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) that address human subjects protection. Specific to DoD, 32CFR219 is distinct from the "common rule" 45CFR46, which is issued by the Department of Health and Human Services and mandating human subjects review for federal agencies.<sup>125</sup> And 32CFR219 clearly outlines a DoD IRB process that applies "to all research involving human subjects conducted, supported, or otherwise subject to regulation by any federal department or agency," as well as any research conducted by federal civilian employees and military personnel.<sup>126</sup>

This does not mean that individual HTT members engaged in data collection are actively unethical. In other words, in the significant majority of cases with which we are familiar, those involved are seeking in good faith to pursue ethical conduct and work. In conversations with different HTT social scientists, many indicated their commitment to ethical research conduct despite HTS's lack of an ethics protocol. An HTT social scientist who was deployed in Iraq, explains how ethics has informed his work:

When conducting our elite level interviews, part of a four-month-long tribal study and history, we used formal, documented informed consent. The documents were prepared in English, translated into Arabic, and the interview subject retained once copy and I, as research director, retained

<sup>125</sup> Although, so far as we can tell, the language between the two is basically the same.

<sup>126</sup> See: <http://www.dtic.mil/biosys/downloads/32cfr219.pdf> for a complete description of OSD procedures for human subjects protection, 32CFR219.



one. When requested, anonymity was granted. The Army personnel we worked with never had access to these, to the internal ethical review process of the team, or to the...information of someone's identity when anonymity was requested. In fact, because of the social science backgrounds of many of the officers we dealt with daily, they not only understood the protocols, but respected them.<sup>127</sup>

An HTS trainee and prospective HTT member, blogging about pre-deployment training while at Ft. Leavenworth mere months ago, has described his ethics training as a day-long course, during which it was made clear that HTT members are in fact bound by the government's "common rule," even as the program itself does not yet employ an IRB process to insure compliance. He notes:

The program made it clear in no uncertain terms what ethical guidelines we were expected to uphold and these were firmly rooted in the same sources as the AAA version. The instructor is a well-seasoned applied anthropologist with experience in every aspect of using anthropology ethically in the field...It all rolls into those three catchwords: DO NO HARM.

But as this trainee goes on to note:

I have heard of social scientists (all anthropologists, I might add) who have refused to do projects, left teams voluntarily, or quit the program when INDIVIDUALS within the team began to cross ethical lines.

Such circumstances have been reported to CEAUSSIC by several former HTT members. Several have had to push back hard and/or to walk away from their work in the field for ethical reasons. At least one former HTS anthropologist felt it necessary to move from one HTT in Iraq to another after being asked by his team leader to engage in activities he believed were unethical. What this suggests, as discussed in the section that deals with intelligence, is that in a circumstance in which tactical military goals are preeminent, and in which members of HTTs regularly negotiate circumstances of uncertainty of the battle space, and in which their data can circulate in ways not entirely under their control, ethical practices are, to say the least, challenging to maintain.

However, so far as we can tell, HTS does not currently use an IRB. As a research program, it would therefore be out of compliance. HTS managers have argued that "war zone anthropology" need not submit to an IRB process. At least one HTT anthropologist is on record claiming that adherence to 32CFR219 does not require it.<sup>128</sup> In reference to whether HTS currently falls under the requirements of 32CFR219, CEAUSSIC received this response from the program: "The TRADOC Judge Advocate General is currently

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<sup>127</sup> Silverman, op. cit.

<sup>128</sup> See: <http://savageminds.org/2007/10/18/human-terrain-and-the-irb-puzzle/> and <http://www.institutionalreviewblog.com/2007/10/pentagon-says-irb-review-not-needed-for.html> for more detailed discussion of the "IRB puzzle" vis-à-vis HTS.

reviewing this matter.” Despite an often voiced personal commitment to ethics among particular HTT social scientists, this lack of clarity regarding the status of HTT research and the IRB process – in short, an absence of a well-defined ethics framework built into the program – promotes the idea that HTS potentially operates under a state of exception. The fact that HTS has been a proof-of-concept program for much of its life explains in part a lack of routine oversight. At this time, however, HTS appears to be moving out of the proof-of-concept phase and seeks to become a more permanent program of record. If this is indeed what takes place, we hope that HTS takes decisive steps toward building an ethics component more clearly into its program.

While we have already raised a series of questions about the compliance of HTS both with the military’s and anthropology’s standards of ethics, HTS has in fact described steps it is taking to address the ethical parameters of its work. We include the programs description of this effort here:

Beginning in 2008, five HTS social scientists formed the Ethics Working Group and began drafting the initial document. Comments were solicited and incorporated from an additional group of social scientists who were deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The draft document has been circulated to a group of 40 team members either formerly or currently deployed (social scientists, team leaders, research managers, and human terrain analysts). The Ethics Working Group will review the comments, and come to consensus on which comments will be incorporated into the document. The document will then be circulated to the whole of HTS, comments reviewed, and a final draft produced. The HTS Ethics Guidelines should be available for public release in 2009.

That HTS is taking steps to address an ethical framework for its work is significant. But, of note here is that the HTS ethics process appears to have been undertaken with serious intent three years after the initial development of the concept. It also appears to be largely in-house and experience-driven, rather than a process that has taken stock of the already existing professional ethical and legal frameworks or guidelines for the U.S. government, the U.S. armed forces, or the professional social sciences represented therein. HTS has “read and reviewed” most of the ethical guidelines of relevant professional social science associations, and believes itself to be in compliance. How the HTS ethics process evolves over time will be an important indicator of the program’s fundamental priorities, and this is a process to which we should continue to pay close attention.

## **12. Conclusion: Is it Anthropology?**

It is not clear, in sum, if the overall goal of the HTS program to provide cultural insight to military commanders in the field, or if activities of data collection of HTTs in the field, can be responsibly described as “anthropology.” First, there are in fact relatively few PhD-level anthropologists who are a part of the program. Second, multiple sources have been clear that HTS, as a program, does not particularly care whether their recruits

are in fact anthropologists. It is enough that they have a background in the social sciences of some sort. Perhaps most importantly, several present and former HTT social scientists are unequivocal about the fact that the work of HTTs is not really compatible with that of professional anthropology. As an HTT social scientist deployed in Iraq in 2008 noted as part of an interview, “The HTT does not do anthropology! That’s not the purpose... You can’t do anthropology at the end of a gun. It’s not anthropology. It’s impossible! So why do anthropologists care?” As one Marine commander who worked with an HTT in Iraq noted, “Even when they want to go out, they don’t do classical anthropological research. So that’s off the table...It’s a combat zone, and when you’re in uniform you have all the coercive force of the U.S. government.” Another veteran HTT member was even more succinct: “You can’t put academics in Humvees.” There are other ways, we suggest, the social sciences can engage with the military about the relevance of culture to its practice.

Given the attention paid to the ostensible role of “anthropologists” in HTTs, it is revealing to observe the ways that HTS managers have stressed the value of social scientists more generally as part of HTTs. What follows is one such description, offered by an HTS senior social scientist:

Certain subfields require formal area studies training, but as whole, social scientists are trained to apply their knowledge of analytical frameworks and research methodologies across different locales, based on the premise that the dynamics of human behavior exhibit certain universal features. This does not mean that social scientists cannot be area experts: many are, given their past research. However, what social scientists bring to the table is a way of looking at the social world, studying it, and analyzing it in a way that is distinct from the way the military approaches these issues.<sup>129</sup>

Of note in this explanation is that “anthropology,” treated as indiscriminately comparable to the rest of the social sciences, is of less importance than is the generic idea of a social scientific approach, insofar as it addresses “certain universal features” of human behavior.

These claims for the value-added of the social sciences in the context of the military should be placed alongside regular reports about the HTS program of the lack of area studies or regional specialists in Iraq and Afghanistan, and as integrated into HTTs in the field. The *Handbook* in fact explains the presence of “Human Terrain Analysts,” who at least in theory provide regional, cultural, and linguistic expertise as needed, given that the “availability of social scientists with extensive field experience in these areas is presently lacking.”<sup>130</sup> This suggests that HTS accepts the assumption that “social science” can in fact coherently contribute its perspective as distinct from the thick description of cultural content knowledge, as collected ethnographically. And, given that many social scientists associated with HTTs previously had no direct, or ethnographic, experience either with Iraq or with Afghanistan, an areal familiarity with the region in

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<sup>129</sup> Quoted in Weinberger, Sharon, “Gates: Human Terrain Teams Going Through ‘Growing Pains’” *Danger Room* April 16, 2008: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2008/04/gates-human-ter/>.

<sup>130</sup> *Handbook* op. cit., p. 16.

question is here secondary to the perceived virtues of a characteristically social scientific way of doing things.

In short, anthropology as a “social science” has been formally distinguished from the specifics of cultural “content knowledge.” We might add that such a characteristic, universal, social scientific approach is, in turn, conditional upon the requirement to meet the particular needs of military clients downrange in their own terms. This is not simply the requirement to subsume a given HTT’s ethnographic research objectives to those of a given brigade’s mission objectives. It includes the often sharply different perspectives on what “culturally astute decision-making” entails. The military, as a whole, is currently dedicated to increase its level of sophistication and active awareness of the implications of culture. This is a process that involves significant institutional change. But, as is often made apparent, current prevailing notions of the culture concept, as these come to be a part of policies and programs, going forward, often primarily reflect characteristically military assumptions rather than, say, anthropological ones. This is likely to change only slowly and is itself a good argument for the need for a broader dialogue with the military. In the present case of HTS, however, the concept of culture appears too often to refer to a controllable product and variable, for itemization, manipulation, and which promises, in the words of one Marine brigade commander who recently worked closely with an HTT in Iraq, a “certainty” it cannot really deliver.<sup>131</sup> At present, what this boils down to is perhaps not best described as “anthropology.”

At the same time, an important point raised by people who have been involved in the HTS program, but who are now registering concerns about its direction, is that while it might not be anthropology in any reasonable sense, the program itself has been far too free with the term – “anthropologist.” Regardless of the particular background of a given HTT social scientist, military clients downrange routinely refer to HTT social scientists as “anthropologists.” At present, according to some sources, “Everything in HTS is run by the military,” without any countervailing oversight on the part of civilian academics, who would be more likely to more sharply differentiate among anthropologists and other social scientific practitioners. As has been pointed out, a current problem is that “social scientists are being defined by non-social scientists.” And “HTS has become synonymous with anthropology in DoD, and it is DoD that has all the money.” The potential problem here is that, despite the fact that HTS is just one modest program, among many, to which anthropology might contribute in DoD – and in the security sector broadly conceived – its notoriety is shaping prevailing wisdom about what anthropology is and what the role of anthropology should be among military and security policy makers, in ways that might very well be to the detriment of everyone else, or other more constructive arrangements, collaborations, and ethical applications of anthropological practice and knowledge. Even the most vocal anthropological critics of HTS “are not categorically opposed to work and engagement with the military.”<sup>132</sup> We should be continuing to discuss and to debate how this is best, and most responsibly, done.

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<sup>131</sup> See Price, David, op. cit., “From ‘Gentle Persuasion’ to ‘Better Killing’” for a comparable discussion of how HTS employs the culture concept.

<sup>132</sup> Vine, David, “Engaging the Military” *Inside Higher Ed* September 21, 2009.

What one commentator has called the “combat ethnography” approach employed by HTS can usefully be contrasted with other military engaged forms of ethnography. For example, non-HTS ethnographers have embedded with troops and traveled with them in combat settings without running such ethical risks. These researchers have demonstrated how ethnographers studying the military units with whom they are embedded (rather than other combatant or civilian populations located in a war zone) need not violate anthropological standards of ethical practice.

The key distinction between the sort of military ethnography undertaken by these researchers and that undertaken by HTS social scientists is that while both work under conditions which embed ethnographers with troops in a war zone, the former’s focus of study (and so both ethical commitments and negotiated representational loyalties) are the troops with whom s/he embeds, while HTS ethnographers attempt to juggle dual loyalties both to civilian populations and to their military units, under conditions which almost inevitably lead to conflicting demands. Potentially conflicting demands (between serving occupied, studied populations, and serving the needs of the military with whom HTTs embed) almost necessitates that HTS social scientists choose between multiple interests in ways that stand to undermine basic ethical principles that govern research with human subjects among anthropologists and among government researchers.

The present report is intended to fill a void in our ongoing discussions and debates about the Human Terrain System program. As such, CEAUSSIC has sought to provide an account of HTS, based upon: direct engagement with the program; interviews with both present and former program employees (with particular attention given to the training and experiences of members of Human Terrain Teams), with clients among military units in Iraq and Afghanistan, and with a variety of non-HTS employees with direct knowledge of the program; and a wide variety of additional primary and secondary sources. This report hopefully will serve as a source of detailed information and as a point of reference in the ongoing discussions within anthropology about HTS and within DoD about appropriate and constructive roles for the social sciences with respect to the priorities of the military, of security, and for the intelligence field.

Given that the AAA has already taken a public position with respect to HTS, this report does not aspire to offer recommendations of the sort characterizing CEAUSSIC’s November 2007 report. Rather, we hope that the many details provided in this report help to raise our awareness of important challenges – yet to be entirely recognized or worked through – about how a global anthropology negotiates its relationship (or its lack there of) with the complex arrangements of national security and of ongoing global conflict. At the same time, the report’s details and conclusions in the main support the 2007 statement by the AAA. As we hope the body of this report makes apparent, in different ways the HTS program appears to operate in a state of exception, from the discipline of anthropology but also from other programs in the military. The program is not, in our view, particularly representative, therefore, of the way that anthropology, at least, can most constructively engage with the military. Given the significant attention paid to HTS in the media and in our own debates, CEAUSSIC continues to be concerned that the HTS debate will crowd out a necessary conversation about the potential relationships of anthropology to security

more broadly conceived. We hope that the problematically exceptional status of HTS, as presented here, frees us to move on to this conversation.

And yet HTS provides us a cautionary tale as a laboratory of sorts for examining how the best of intentions for the application of social scientific methods and insights, both in the security sector and in the high-risk environments of conflict that characterize military operations, can relatively quickly become deeply problematic with respect to training, data collection, and ethics. It appears clear that the exigencies of military units operating in a battle space while actively at war are fundamentally incompatible with the Code of Ethics of the AAA, but also with any sort of responsible effort of social scientific research. So far, three HTT social scientists have in fact been killed, a stark reminder that battle zones are first and foremost battle zones and not research spaces. We suggest that anthropology needs to understand its relationship to the military and to such goals as the “cultural preparation of the environment” from a different vantage point of collaboration.

What follow are basic findings that, for us, emerge directly from the detailed considerations found throughout the body of this report:

1. Despite continued questions raised about this program, HTS has been held up as an important part of the U.S.’s counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan and in Iraq. It is currently on track to receive increased budgetary support from DoD. And it anticipates an expanded role in other U.S. combatant commands, including in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. These developments lead us to conclude that HTS, the program, and other HTS-type formulations, are on their way to becoming a greater fixture within the U.S. military. Given the outstanding questions about HTS, in particular, raised here these developments should be a cause for concern.
2. The presentation of the identity of the HTS program changes when what is being funded is compared to how the program is described in different forums, as well as to what the activities of HTTs in particular appear to involve in the field. These disparities point to potentially irreconcilable and irreducible tensions in the basic identity of the program, between HTS: fulfilling a research function, as a data source, as a source of intelligence (if inadvertently), and as performing a tactical function in which the military mission of combating an insurgency is the primary objective of data collection. In the absence of more transparency and clarity that dispel disparities in the program’s identity, methods and goals, it is impossible to determine if HTS meets basic social scientific and military ethical standards for research practice. Therefore, any anthropologist considering employment with HTS will have difficulty determining whether or not s/he will be able to follow the disciplinary Code of Ethics. This should be a basic consideration for the AAA if it wishes to clarify whether AAA members can work for the HTS program.
3. HTTs collect sensitive socio-cultural data that potentially put both HTT members and their counterparts in the field in harm’s way. And given that at present human subject protections have not been systematically incorporated into the program in a formal and unambiguous way, even when individual researchers exercise due

- caution with the protection of human subjects or in cases when data are carefully managed and not widely circulated, at the program level this continues to be an ad hoc state-of-affairs. We are not confident that all HTT research teams can insure “no harm” to those with whom they work, particularly since HTTs are not able to maintain reliable control over data once collected.
4. The role of HTT research in the “cultural preparation of the environment” raises concern about whether HTT research activities can be meaningfully distinguished from the strategic, tactical and operational goals of military decision-makers. The high potential for the loss of a critically independent perspective on the part of the researcher, together with an HTT’s role shaping a brigade’s environment, directly promote a conception of the relevance of cultural information as an instrumental or soft power feature of contemporary counterinsurgency. We should consider the work of HTTs to be sharply different, in its goals, from conventional disciplinary ethnographic pursuits and not to be “ethnography” in any credible sense.
  5. HTS managers have been adamant that the program is not an intelligence asset. However, it is housed under an intelligence asset. And it is now reportedly being briefed as an “intelligence-operations hybrid.” But also, the relationship between HTS and intelligence gathering is largely defined by the circumstances on the ground, including: well-defined expectations among military people about the role of data collectors as intelligence assets, regularity of information sharing among the various and often collaborating specialized civilian and military teams in the field, the relative lack of a well-defined program structure in the field that might provide HTT members with a sharper frame of reference for the parameters of their work, different ways members of HTTs can be subjected to organizational pressures of the military units with which they work to share cultural intelligence, and the circumstances of violent conflict which potentially create apparent zero-sum choices for particular HTT members, making it difficult not to share vital information if it might save a life, and where ethical research practice becomes understandably secondary. There is a significant likelihood that HTS data will in some way be used as part of military intelligence.
  6. As this report establishes, in its considerations of training and research methods, of data collection and storage, and of the relationship of HTTs to intelligence, a variety of fundamental problems arise when anthropological research priorities are determined by military missions, are not subject to external review, and where data collection occurs in the context of war, as integrated into counterinsurgency goals, or in a potentially coercive environment. These problems cannot be gotten around, and are in large part built into the HTS concept and its application. And this sets the goals of the HTS program and the activities of HTTs apart from any legitimate professional exercise of anthropology.
  7. In the public domain, HTS has been broadly associated with anthropology, and military clients often refer to HTT personnel indiscriminately as anthropologists. The program also employs rapid ethnographic techniques and addresses cultural

problem-solving for military commanders. Anthropologists, however, make up only a small minority of HTS employees, and as experienced counterparts have categorically asserted to us, the practice of HTTs in the field cannot credibly be described as “anthropology” in any meaningful way. The extent to which HTS defines anthropology for DoD over the long term, and the use of anthropology’s branding appeal, therefore, are further causes for concern. It is important for DoD to understand that HTS is not representative of anthropology. This underscores the importance of a public effort on the part of the AAA to engage with peers with respect to what training in our discipline entails, as well as strengths and limits of disciplinary methods, topics, and perspectives, when anthropology is incorporated into both policy and practice to help confront problems of national security or otherwise.

To date there exist no publicly available independent evaluations of the effects of HTS’s activities, either positive or negative. A team at the University of Central Florida has completed a comprehensive assessment of HTS training, focusing on the curriculum, team dynamics and the capstone exercise.<sup>133</sup> HTS noted to CEAUSSIC, “In September 2008, a group of faculty members from USMA West Point conducted an independent assessment of HTS, specifically the HTTs, and their role to provide cultural information and analysis for the commander.” This assessment, however, has yet to be released. In a statement before the House Armed Services Committee, Col. Martin Schweitzer testified, “Using HTT capabilities, we reduced kinetic operations by 60-70%” in Afghanistan.<sup>134</sup> However, efforts to use the Freedom of Information Act to obtain records that would provide the basis for such claims revealed them to be no more than quantified expressions of how the military’s shift in engagements after HTS “feels” to military commanders, as admitted by Col. Schweitzer himself via email. Whether, or how, HTS might reduce conflict, in short, has yet to be evaluated. The House Armed Services Committee has called for an independent assessment of the HTS program as part of FY2010’s National Defense Authorization Act.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Eduardo Salas, principal investigator, “Human Terrain System (HTS) & Multicultural Team Training Project” (funded through the Georgia Tech Research Institute), from December 2008 to September 2009.

<sup>134</sup> Schweitzer, Martin. Statement before the House Armed Services Committee as part of a public hearing on “Role of the Social and Behavioral Sciences in National, Security,” p. 4. April 24, 2008.

<sup>135</sup> In calling for an independent assessment, the Terrorism and Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee notes, “In light of the varied reports on the effectiveness and usefulness of HTS or the benefits of the HTS, the committee directs DoD to conduct an independent assessment of the system, including related technology development efforts” p. 28. For the complete statement see: <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/HASCFY10NDAA061709.pdf>



## Appendix A

### MEMORANDUM

**TO: Steve Fondacaro, HTS Project Manager**

**FROM: American Anthropological Association's Ad Hoc Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC)**

**RE: Proposal for CEAUSSIC Examination of the Human Terrain System (HTS)**

**DATE: November 26, 2008**

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The purpose of this memorandum is to formally request information about the present and future status of the Human Terrain System (HTS), in particular as it pertains to the involvement of anthropologists as human terrain team members.

As part of the work of the AAA's Ad Hoc Commission on Anthropology's Engagement with the Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC), the AAA Executive Board has requested that we gather information regarding the Human Terrain System. Initially, CEAUSSIC was convened in 2006 to provide the Executive Board with information and recommendations regarding how to handle requests for the placement of CIA job ads on the AAA online job site. Our eventual Report to the Executive Board, forwarded in 2007, addressed this, while also expanding our consideration to address some implications for a broader engagement with the military, security and intelligence arenas. Despite the fact that HTS has continued to command significant attention among journalists and as part of anthropology's ongoing disciplinary conversation about these matters, CEAUSSIC's own initial report *did not address* HTS, nor did we as a group either solicit information from or approach managers and members of the HTS program at that time.

However, HTS continues to be an important point of reference among anthropologists in the discussion of what the discipline's, and the American Anthropological Association's, position should be with respect to our professional engagement with the military and with military priorities. In the fall of 2007 the AAA's Executive Board issued a statement on HTS that raised some ethical concerns about the program. During the annual meetings of the AAA in 2007 and 2008 respectively, HTS was a center of controversy. At the same time journalists continue to report on HTS as a litmus test for the broader question of the engagement of the social sciences, and the academy, with the military. However, even as these debates continue, the AAA as of yet does not have adequate or detailed information directly from the program itself. In the absence of information, an otherwise constructive discussion about the role of anthropology in such efforts is hampered by speculation and a scant basis in fact.

For these reasons, phase two of CEAUSSIC's work will include a more comprehensive report on HTS, which we hope can serve the constructive purpose of a point of reference in ongoing discussion about it. To this end, we are currently in the process of information gathering. In providing a summary of findings, and in making these available to the AAA membership, we hope to provide a more detailed awareness of how the program works and what its goals are, as well as consider the wider implications of programs like this, among anthropologists and non-anthropologists, including for colleagues in the military and elsewhere.

The Commission understands that at present HTS trains its team members that they are not to participate in targeting or intelligence activities, but also has acknowledged that it cannot prevent its reports from being used in unintended ways. We believe that a public discussion of HTS would benefit from some examples of how HTT members navigate these tensions in the field. We recognize that it may be complex to provide these accounts for security reasons. However, any reports that move beyond "success vignettes" while helping outside social scientists to understand field practices would be welcome.

The Commission recognizes that the Human Terrain System is a program in development and that information may change rapidly. We will do our best to convey both the fluidity of the program and its ongoing evolution, as well as encourage HTS personnel to provide updates to the AAA as the program changes. We also recognize that the obligation of HTS and its contracting companies to provide these data to the AAA, or to any such requesting citizen, is unclear, given the status of the program.

CEAUSSIC interprets the request from the AAA's Executive Board to be a request for the following categories of information, which it is currently in the process of gathering and with which we hope to have the collaboration of the HTS program in helping us to accurately establish:

1. Description of the current and planned scope of activities, including Human Terrain Teams (HTT's), other deployed teams, and related activities conducted by HTS or plans to be carried forward by HTS
2. Description of the current and anticipated funding sources, in particular the status of funding (i.e. whether or not funding will be coming from intelligence or other sources)
3. Current demographics of HTS employees in teams and other positions, in particular, their disciplinary background, degree levels, and pertinent sources of experience, among those filling out social scientist roles
4. Current recruiting practices and any anticipated changes in these
5. Current training programs for team members as well as planned changes
6. Description of the goals and process of the ongoing development of an HTS statement of ethical guidelines
7. Current and past efforts of HTS designers and managers to consult and comply with the ethical guidelines of social science professional associations, including but not limited to the American Anthropological Association

8. Current and planned means of assessing team effectiveness as well as any data that have been generated in past assessments
9. Contractual and normative practices relating to academic freedom and disclosure of program activities
10. Contractual situation with regard to ownership of data and the ability to protect informant confidentiality
11. The program position concerning human subject review status of HTS research, specifically compliance with DoD directive 3216.2
12. HTS's position regarding non-HTS personnel's access to HTS data and reports
13. Past, current, and planned instances of using HTS personnel to identify whether or not specific individuals or groups are aligned with enemy populations

Social Science Advisor, Dr. Montgomery McFate, has informed CEAUSSIC that she is willing to answer questions, but that any questions must first be run through the Strategic Communications Advisor. In addition to sending the list of topics below, we plan to make a specific request that the Communications Advisor arrange for us to speak directly with people in the program, in particular the leadership and staff at Leavenworth as well as the reach back cells. Site visits may be difficult, given the lack of funds to make a site visit, but we hope to hold conference calls and/or to correspond via email.

## Appendix B

### **1. Description of the current and planned scope of activities, including Human Terrain Teams (HTT's), other deployed teams, and related activities conducted by HTS or plans to be carried forward by HTS**

HTS, as a program, has the following components, which comprise the current and planned scope of activities.

- Teams. There are currently 27 teams deployed in the following fashion. In Iraq, there are fifteen teams at the brigade level (either USMC or Army), four teams at division level, one team at corps level, and one team at Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq. In Afghanistan, there is one team at battalion level, four at brigade, one at division. There are currently no validated requirements for other teams.
- Research Reachback Center. There are currently two RRC cells, one at Ft. Leavenworth supporting teams in Afghanistan, and one at Newport News supporting the teams in Iraq.
- Subject Matter Expert Network (SMENet). The SMENet is made up of academics, journalists, NGOs, etc who have pertinent knowledge on subjects requested by teams for research. Members of the SMENet work on a contractual basis.
- MAP HT toolkit. This is a software suite that enables the HTTs to store, organize, and analyze social science and other data.
- Program Development Team (PDT). The PDT is the mechanism whereby HTS captures „lessons learned“ in order to understand emergent requirements and improve processes and training. A US Army Reservist who was formerly a team leader in Iraq leads the PDT.
- Training. The training program is run out of Ft. Leavenworth, and has a number of permanent and temporary staff. See below for more information.
- Social Science Research and Analysis (SSRA). This is a capability provided by a contractor in Iraq and Afghanistan to support deployed teams (and in turn, their supported units) with additional independent research, such as polling and focus groups.

### **2. Description of the current and anticipated funding sources, in particular the status of funding (i.e. whether or not funding will be coming from intelligence or other sources)**

In FY08, HTS was run on supplemental Global War on Terrorism funding. In FY09, HTS has run on Army funds.

**3. Current demographics of HTS employees in teams and other positions, in particular, their disciplinary background, degree levels, and pertinent sources of experience, among those filling out social scientist roles**

Overall, HTS has 417 employees (including deployed team members, personnel in training, RRC members, and program staff, including both military and non-military personnel). Of those, 135 have an MA degree, 11 are ABD, 49 have a PhD, and 33 have other technical or military degrees.

Regarding deployed social scientists, we have the following (last updated in October):

- PhD Anthropology
- PhD Psychology
- MA Anthropology
- MS Anthropology
- ABD Clinical Psychology
- PhD Political Psychology
- MA Mediterranean Studies
- MPS (Master of Professional Studies) in Arabic Language
- PhD Anthropology
- PhD Political Science
- MA International Policy Studies
- MA Religious Studies
- MA Diplomacy
- MA International Relations
- PhD Cultural Anthropology
- MA Statecraft and Security Affairs
- MA Cultural Anthropology
- MA Middle Eastern Studies
- MS International Affairs
- PhD Political Science
- ABD Political Science
- MA Security Policy
- ABD African History
- PhD Political Economy
- MS Foreign Service
- PhD Anthropology
- PhD Government and Foreign Affairs
- MA Security Studies
- PhD Geography
- MA Anthropology
- ABD Near Eastern Languages & Cultures

- MA International Relations
- MA Strategic Intelligence
  
- PhD International Relations
- MA Strategic Intelligence
- MS Foreign Service
- MS Arabic

Social Scientists in Training (last updated in November):

- MA American Studies
- PhD Psychology
- ABD Central Eurasian Studies
- PhD Anthropology and Islamic Studies
- PhD Anthropology
- MA Anthropology
- PhD Sociology
- PhD Anthropology
- PhD Linguistics
- MA International Policy Studies
- MA Economics
- MA International Affairs
- MPhil Middle Eastern Studies
- PhD Interdisciplinary Studies
- MA International Policy Studies
- PhD Psychology
- JD
- MA International Politics
- MA American Studies
- PhD Government
- MA Political Science

#### **4. Current recruiting practices and any anticipated changes in these**

Currently, HTS recruits through job advertisements on the Internet placed by our prime contractor, the HTS website, and through word of mouth. The prime contractor screens civilians who have submitted resumes. (Military personnel on the HTS staff screen military resumes, which are submitted by a variety of means.) Resumes that meet all the requirements in the job description are given further consideration. At that point, HTS social scientists on the program staff review and vet the resumes of people applying for social scientist jobs. Candidates are then interviewed, assessed against program requirements, and hiring offers are made. Each individual hired then becomes a candidate for deployment. During the 4.5 months of training, instructors, peers, and program staff evaluate their performance and capabilities. Team members are then selected and placed

on teams based on a combination of all these inputs. There are no anticipated changes at this time.

## **5. Current training programs for team members as well as planned changes**

The HTS training program currently includes the following modules (see below). The curriculum is currently being reviewed and changes will be implemented this fall.

**Research Methods.** This module is designed to train the Human Terrain Teams assigned to the Security, Stabilization, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) mission on how to collect, process, analyze, fuse, share, and disseminate civil information. Using Civil Information Management (CIM) processes students are trained to analyze the Political, Military, Economic, Social/Cultural, Infrastructure, and the Information/Media environment at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. Special emphasis is placed on understanding and shaping the environment through non-kinetic and interagency capabilities.

**Army 101 Training.** This course is designed to familiarize the non-military student with rank structure in the US Army and the overall organizational structure of the US Army from squad level through division level.

**Military Culture/Military Communications Training.** This course is designed to familiarize the non-military student with the US Army's military culture. Furthermore, it provides the student with a working knowledge of military communications, i.e., information briefings, fact papers, and information papers.

**Group Dynamics and Personality Dimensions Training.** This course is designed to enable the student to interpret, to a limited extent, group dynamics and recognize various personality characteristics in order to facilitate optimal work conditions between different team members.

**Counterinsurgency Operations (COIN) Training.** This course is designed to assess insurgent and counterinsurgent philosophies, strategies, and operational doctrine. This assessment includes appraising components (causes, courses, and outcomes) of insurgent and counterinsurgent conflict, normative rules and other viewpoints, and applications to current or future operations.

**Iraq Regional Studies Training.** Module 1 is designed to provide students with an understanding of the key religious and ethnic forces that have shaped Iraq throughout history. Module 2 is designed to provide students with a review of the fundamental forces that created the current cultural, political, social, and economic operating environment in Iraq. Module 3 is designed to provide students with an understanding of how Iraq has been shaped by a variety of events since the end of the World War I. Module 4 is designed to provide the students with a basic understanding of the events leading up to and following the 2003 invasion of Iraq that have resulted in a fragmented political and social landscape and a troubled economy. Module 5 is designed to provide students with

an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural aspects of the people in their area of responsibility. Module 6 is designed to provide students with an understanding of the tribes in Iraq and the central role that they have played in the history of Iraq. Additionally, this module provides the students with an understanding of the interaction between the tribes. Module 7 is designed to provide the students with an in-depth knowledge of the evolution, makeup, ideology, goals, and operations of the insurgency in Iraq. This module also provides insights on the success and lack of success in Coalition reconstruction and counter insurgency operations in Iraq.

**Afghanistan Immersion Training.** This training is conducted at University of Nebraska at Omaha. (1) Culture Classes: This portion of the course is designed to enable the participants to develop a basic understanding of Afghan culture, such as perception/misperception of cultural phenomena, nonverbal communication (gestures and signs), and language ambiguity. (2) Dari Language Classes: This portion of the course is designed to enable participants to develop basic proficiency in Dari language skills. Participants attend two hours of class instruction and one hour of language lab daily. (3) History Classes: This portion of the course is designed to enable participants to develop a basic understanding of Afghan history to include: the Mahammadzai Period, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, the Communist period, etc. (4) Family Visits: While the participants are in Omaha, they will visit with Afghan families, have a traditional Afghan dinner, and will have the opportunity to discuss the Afghan culture and lifestyle with the members of the family they are visiting.

**Introduction to Social Science Course.** This course is designed to provide students with the basic concepts and the knowledge base of socio-cultural anthropology as they apply to the HTT operating and research environment. The overall objective of the course is to enable students to understand and adopt a cross-cultural perspective. By the completion of this course the students will be able to: understanding the concept of culture and subculture, understand basic elements of social structure such as family, kinship and gender, understand formal and informal social roles, etc. The module has a particular focus on the cultural aspects of conflict, conflict resolution, and normative rules of engagement.

**Research Methods Training.** This course is designed to introduce students to the “toolbox” of rapid ethnographic research tools and provide hands-on small scale practice in research design, data collection, analysis, report write-up and brigade style presentation of research findings. The aim of the course is to make students familiar with a wide range of field-proven research approaches and methods and to enable them to quickly and effectively assess which tools and techniques will address the socio-cultural data needs of their brigade commanders. By the completion of this course students will have an understanding of: research ethics, including the legal and moral framework for research in the HTT context; research design and how adapt design choices to specific HTT research issues and constraints; data and personal security for HTT member and research participants; ethnographic interviewing techniques, including the use of interpreters, etc.



**Combat Life Saver Training.** This course is designed to provide the student with an understanding of some basic life saving techniques. By the completion of the course the student will be able to: evacuate a casualty in a quick and efficient manner, provide medical personnel with essential information about a casualty's injury and treatment, open and manage a casualty's airway, perform trauma casualty assessment, etc.

**Weston Resolve Training.** (1) Staff Organization and Functions Module: The module is designed to provide basic knowledge of the principles and tenets pertaining to command structures, staff organization, staff functions, and staff responsibilities in order to understand how the Human Terrain Team can integrate within the staff to effectively influence planning, preparation, execution, and assessment of military operations from a cultural perspective. (2) Operations Process Module: The module is designed to provide Human Terrain Team members with the framework knowledge necessary to understand the process used by the Brigade Combat Team in the conduct of everyday activities to support the accomplishment of assigned missions. A basic knowledge of the operations process helps facilitates the integration of the Human Terrain Team into Brigade Combat Team activities. (3) All-Source Analysis / Fusion Module: The module is designed to introduce the doctrinal, all-source analysis process and methodologies. Understanding the all-source analysis process will enable Human Terrain Team members to effectively develop products and provide recommendations that address critical gaps in knowledge regarding the socio-cultural environment in the area of operations. (4) Information Operations Module: The module is designed to provide the student with an overview of Information Operations (IO) and its implementation in the Iraq and Afghanistan Theaters of Operation, and integration of Human Terrain Team capabilities into the Information Operations process. (5) Effects-Based Approach to Operations Module: The module is designed to acquaint the training audience with effects based principles, fundamentals, objectives, and process, and to facilitate an understanding of how the Human Terrain Team can assist the commander and staff in planning and executing operations to achieve desired effects. (6) Media Awareness and Engagements Module: This module is designed to provide the student with basic knowledge of the media, public affairs, and the HTS role in supporting the commander and staff in public affairs activities and media engagements. (7) Key Leader Engagement Preparation Module: This module is designed to provide the students with a general understanding of the role HTTs play in preparing commanders and staff members for Key Leader Engagement. (8) Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) Module: This module is designed to provide the students with the knowledge and tools needed to successfully integrate into the MDMP by providing cultural insight for expanding or restricting courses of action under consideration by the commander and staff. (9) Human Terrain System Decision-Making Exercise (HTS DME) Module: This exercise module is designed to teach the student how to apply HTS capabilities in an operational environment. (10) CAPSTONE exercise Module: This exercise module concludes the Weston Resolve Course and is designed to afford students, as members of teams, the opportunity to apply collective knowledge and skills in an operational environment that replicates the operations process used for planning and decision-making.

**Combat Training Center Exercise.** The exercise is designed to integrate an HTT into brigade operations thus providing the student with the opportunity to execute a realistic HTS mission. During the exercise the student is able to apply social science analysis and methodologies with the purpose of enhancing operational planning.

**Language Training Courses.** These courses are designed to enable participants to develop basic proficiency in Dari, Pashtu, and Arabic language skills. HTS uses the communicative approach to class instruction that emphasizes listening and speaking skills. The main emphasis is on practicing a variety of daily conversational situations.

**Radical Islam Training.** The course aims to enhance the students understanding of Al Qaeda's origins, ideology, and practices through an analysis of documents composed by key figures within the organization and the broader radical Islamist movement. The course explores the ways by which Al Qaeda ideologues draw upon select aspects of the Islamic heritage in order to legitimize their struggle ("jihad") against the "Far Enemy," i.e., the United States and its Western allies.

**Team Leader Seminar.** This seminar is designed to bring team leaders together from all the ongoing training cycles in order to provide them with an opportunity to learn from and talk to team leaders who have recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Social Scientist Seminar.** This seminar is designed to bring social scientists together from all the ongoing training cycles in order to provide them with an opportunity to learn from and talk to social scientists who have recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Team Leader & Social Scientist Seminar.** This seminar is designed to bridge the cultural gaps that are inherent to cross-functional teams such as the HTTs. During the seminar, team leaders and social scientists currently in training meet with experienced team leaders and social scientists.

## **6. Description of the goals and process of the ongoing development of an HTS statement of ethical guidelines**

The goals of the HTS Ethical Guidelines are to:

- Develop a common set of enduring principles that provide a framework for standards of professional conduct and responsibilities for members of HTS
- Provide a teaching tool to members in training
- Provide a practical downrange guide for HTT members.
- Develop a document that reflects the unique nature of conducting applied research in an operational environment.

Beginning in 2008, five HTS social scientists formed the Ethics Working Group and began drafting the initial document. Comments were solicited and incorporated from an additional group of social scientists who were deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The draft document has been circulated to a group of 40 team members either formerly or currently deployed (social scientists, team leaders, research managers, and human terrain

analysts). The Ethics Working Group will review the comments, and come to consensus on which comments will be incorporated into the document. The document will then be circulated to the whole of HTS, comments reviewed, and a final draft produced. The HTS Ethics Guidelines should be available for public release in 2009.

### **7. Current and past efforts of HTS designers and managers to consult and comply with the ethical guidelines of social science professional associations, including but not limited to the American Anthropological Association**

The HTS program staff has read and reviewed most (if not all) of the ethical guidelines of social scientific professional organizations and associations. Taken as a whole, most of these guidelines recommend 1) disclosure of research purposes to research subjects; 2) maintenance of research subject confidentiality; 3) disclosure of risk to research subjects; 4) avoiding (or mitigating) harm to research subjects; 5) voluntary participation; 6) dissemination of research to the sponsor and public. HTS believes it is in compliance with all of these elements.

### **8. Current and planned means of assessing team effectiveness as well as any data that have been generated in past assessments**

In the spring of 2007, shortly after the first HTT deployed to Afghanistan, the HTS Program Manager created a Program Development Team (PDT) as a means to better understand emerging practices, evolving requirements, and “lessons learned.”

A Program Development Team deployed to both Afghanistan and Iraq on two different missions. Members of both the BCT staff and the HTT were asked to fill out surveys which covered a variety of topics, including training, logistics, work products, task flow, etc. A pair of Program Development Team members interviewed each member of each HTT currently in theater. A pair of Program Development Team members interviewed selected members of the BCT staff. In a couple of cases, the Program Development Team observed the HTT interacting with the local population.

In September 2008, a group of faculty members from USMA WestPoint conducted an independent assessment of HTS, specifically the HTTs, and their role to provide cultural information and analysis for the commander.

These assessments are internal working documents and not releasable to the public.

### **9. Contractual and normative practices relating to academic freedom and disclosure of program activities**

HTS as a program places no restrictions on its employees regarding publication before, during or after deployment. Nor does HTS restrict employees from disclosing program activities subject to standard security protocols. HTS members are required to submit materials written for publication to a security review to prevent dissemination of classified or sensitive information, which is standard practice in the Army and Department of Defense.

## **10. Contractual situation with regard to ownership of data and the ability to protect informant confidentiality**

A) Regarding ownership of data, all work done as a government employee is considered to be property of the US government. Work done by HTS members on their own time (e.g., articles, books, blogs) is their own property.

B) Regarding the issue of informant confidentiality, protection of sources is of primary consideration for all HTTs. Protection of informant confidentiality is strongly emphasized because insurgent groups may target local Iraqis and Afghans if proper measures for securing identity are not maintained.

HTTs code their notes, store them securely, and sanitize their information to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. US Army Human Intelligence (HUMINT) does the same regarding their sources so this is not an unusual practice to military staff members.

## **11. The program position concerning human subject review status of HTS research, specifically compliance with DoD directive 3216.[0]2**

The TRADOC Judge Advocate General is reviewing this matter.

## **12. HTS's position regarding non-HTS personnel's access to HTS data and reports**

The management of HTS has attempted to be as open as possible in sharing HTS data and reports. However, because of the military's security concerns associated with working in a war zone, certain information cannot be released to the general public, particularly information that pertains to community and individual opposition to Al Qaeda and other insurgent groups, which would put these groups at risk. Other more general research results and professional practice techniques have been with the academic and other professional communities on a limited basis through presentations, blogs, conference papers, print media, and other means.

## **13. Past, current, and planned instances of using HTS personnel to identify whether or not specific individuals or groups are aligned with enemy populations**

No HTS personnel have or are currently engaged in identification of specific individuals for lethal targeting. Lethal targeting of individuals or groups is not part of the HTS mission.

In certain cases, teams have actually engaged individuals known to be hostile to Coalition Forces and through helping commanders understand the complexity of social realities for individuals and their communities during a war, have actually brokered reconciliation and cessation of hostilities. In other cases, teams have explained to military staff members that lethal targeting may result in negative second- and third-order effects on the local

society, and that removing the (economic, political, social) reasons for anti-Coalition acts may possibly turn one's 'enemy' into a neutral party.

## Appendix C

### **American Anthropological Association Executive Board Statement on the Human Terrain System Project**

**(October 31, 2007)**

#### **Preamble**

Since early October, there has been extensive news media coverage of the U.S. military's Human Terrain System (hereafter, HTS) project and of that project's use of anthropologists. Later this fall, the American Anthropological Association's Ad Hoc Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with U.S. National Security and Intelligence Communities will issue its final report. In advance of that report, the Executive Board affirms that it is important that judgments about relationships between anthropology, on the one hand, and military and state intelligence operations, on the other, be grounded in a careful and thorough investigation of their particulars.

The Commission's work did not include systematic study of the HTS project. The Executive Board of the Association has, however, concluded that the HTS project raises sufficiently troubling and urgent ethical issues to warrant a statement from the Executive Board at this time. Our statement is based on information in the public record, as well as on information and comments provided to the Executive Board by the Ad Hoc Commission and its members.

#### **The AAA Executive Board's Assessment of the HTS Project**

The U.S. military's HTS project places anthropologists, as contractors with the U.S. military, in settings of war, for the purpose of collecting cultural and social data for use by the U.S. military. The ethical concerns raised by these activities include the following:

1. As military contractors working in settings of war, HTS anthropologists work in situations where it will not always be possible for them to distinguish themselves from military personnel and identify themselves as anthropologists. This places a significant constraint on their ability to fulfill their ethical responsibility as anthropologists to disclose who they are and what they are doing.
2. HTS anthropologists are charged with responsibility for negotiating relations among a number of groups, including both local populations and the U.S. military units that employ them and in which they are embedded. Consequently, HTS anthropologists may have responsibilities to their U.S. military units in war zones

that conflict with their obligations to the persons they study or consult, specifically the obligation, stipulated in the AAA Code of Ethics, to do no harm to those they study (section III, A, 1).

3. HTS anthropologists work in a war zone under conditions that make it difficult for those they communicate with to give “informed consent” without coercion, or for this consent to be taken at face value or freely refused. As a result, “voluntary informed consent” (as stipulated by the AAA Code of Ethics, section III, A, 4) is compromised.
4. As members of HTS teams, anthropologists provide information and counsel to U.S. military field commanders. This poses a risk that information provided by HTS anthropologists could be used to make decisions about identifying and selecting specific populations as targets of U.S. military operations either in the short or long term. Any such use of fieldwork-derived information would violate the stipulations in the AAA Code of Ethics that those studied not be harmed (section III A, 1).

In addition to these four points about the activities of anthropologists working in the HTS project itself, the Executive Board has this additional concern:

5. Because HTS identifies anthropology and anthropologists with U.S. military operations, this identification—given the existing range of globally dispersed understandings of U.S. militarism—may create serious difficulties for, including grave risks to the personal safety of, many non-HTS anthropologists and the people they study.

## **Conclusion**

In light of these points, the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association concludes (i) that the HTS program creates conditions which are likely to place anthropologists in positions in which their work will be in violation of the AAA Code of Ethics and (ii) that its use of anthropologists poses a danger to both other anthropologists and persons other anthropologists study.

*Thus the Executive Board expresses its disapproval of the HTS program.*

In the context of a war that is widely recognized as a denial of human rights and based on faulty intelligence and undemocratic principles, the Executive Board sees the HTS project as a problematic application of anthropological expertise, most specifically on ethical grounds. We have grave concerns about the involvement of anthropological knowledge and skill in the HTS project. The Executive Board views the HTS project as an unacceptable application of anthropological expertise.

The Executive Board affirms that anthropology can and in fact is obliged to help improve U.S. government policies through the widest possible circulation of anthropological understanding in the public sphere, so as to contribute to a transparent and informed

development and implementation of U.S. policy by robustly democratic processes of fact-finding, debate, dialogue, and deliberation. It is in this way, the Executive Board affirms, that anthropology can legitimately and effectively help guide U.S. policy to serve the humane causes of global peace and social justice.



## Appendix D

### HTS Timeline

#### 2004

The Joint Chiefs of Staff J3 Science Advisor initiated a proof-of-concept program known as the Cultural Preparation of the Environment (CPE) to meet requirements defined by military field commanders returning from Iraq who identified a need to capture socio-cultural information to minimize loss of information on unit rotation, and for reach-back support to cultural experts.

#### 2005

During field-testing of the CPE database, military commanders indicated that they desired expert human advisers in addition to a database of human terrain information.

#### 2006

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) assumed control of the program and began developing an initial concept for providing social science support to military operations. Work began on the design, development, integration, testing, evaluation and training of the first spiral (termed 0.0) of the MAP HT Toolkit. Joint IED Defeat Organization approved HTS for implementation as a Proof of Concept and the deployment of five Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) with tactical units deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan to advise brigade combat commanders and staffs in the field on the local socio-cultural environment.

#### 2007

The first HTT deployed to Afghanistan with the MAP HT Toolkit, version 0.0 (please see Components of HTS for an explanation).

CENTCOM validated a Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statement (JUONS) from the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters, indicating that all the brigade combat teams in these two theaters required operationally relevant cultural knowledge, and expert staff necessary to optimize the military decision-making process.

Five more teams deployed to Iraq with the MAP HT Toolkit, version 0.5.

**Please Note:** This timeline has been taken directly from the HTS website *as is*, and does not reflect either earlier planning stages or the later expansion of the program from 2007 to the present, which includes a significant increase in the number of HTTs in the field.