

Cultural Understanding in Counterinsurgency: Analysis of the Human Terrain System

**A Monograph
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Abstract

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN COUNTERINSURGENCY: ANALYSIS OF THE HUMAN TERRAIN SYSTEM by MAJ Grant S. Fawcett, U.S. Army, 52 pages.

In the years following the invasion of Iraq, the United States military did not fully realize or understand the complexity of the situation faced by soldiers operating at the tactical and operational level. Coupled with the presence of multiple insurgent networks throughout the country, sectarian violence along ethnic and religious divides resulted in an escalation of violence. This violence forced a realization that the conflict had entered a new phase, and the military looked to classic examples of counterinsurgency (COIN). Consequently, theater strategy and doctrine development began to focus on identifying the population as the center of gravity (COG) of the COIN effort. Along with this new strategy came the requirement for a deep understanding of the Iraqi culture and the ability to conduct research and learn about the cultural aspects of the Iraqi society. This capability was found to be missing in U.S. combat formations. To address this deficiency, the Human Terrain System (HTS) was created in 2006 as a means for units to better understand and leverage culture at the operational and tactical level. Since the initiation of the program, the HTS has deployed Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) to Iraq and Afghanistan to integrate with brigades and augment existing staff structures with social science expertise. Initial reports from the field indicate the program to be largely successful. Despite reported success, the program has been the subject of much controversy, and questions remain as to whether it is the right solution for integrating cultural understanding into counterinsurgency operations. This monograph finds that although the HTS adequately fills the intended requirement by providing social science expertise down to the tactical level, it is also necessary to increase the cultural competence of the entire force. Additionally, the Army must bolster organic capabilities of tactical formations in order to be prepared for the unexpected challenges of the future.

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Introduction

In the years following the invasion of Iraq, the United States military did not fully realize or understand the complexity of the situation facing soldiers operating at the tactical and operational level. Coupled with the presence of multiple insurgent networks throughout the country, sectarian violence along ethnic and religious divides resulted in an escalation of violence. After increasing violence forced the realization that the conflict had entered a new phase, the military looked to classic examples of counterinsurgency (COIN). Consequently, theater strategy and doctrine development focused on identifying the population as the center of gravity (COG) of the COIN effort. Along with this new strategy came the requirement for a deep understanding of the Iraqi culture and the ability to conduct research and learn about the cultural aspects of the Iraqi society. This capability was found to be missing from existing military organizations. To address this deficiency, the Human Terrain System (HTS) was initiated at Fort Leavenworth in 2006, and was intended as a means for units to better understand and leverage culture at the operational and tactical level. The cornerstone capability of the HTS are Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) which deploy and integrate with combat forces to augment existing staff structures with social science expertise. HTTs were first deployed and tested on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2007, and initial reports from the field indicate the program to be largely successful. Despite reported success, the program has been the subject of much controversy, and questions remain as to whether it is the right solution for integrating cultural understanding into counterinsurgency operations.

Culture and Human Terrain Defined

It is important to begin with a common understanding of culture and human terrain, which will be discussed throughout this monograph. Both share similarities in definition but are distinct from one another by the context of how they are used and who uses them. In general, anthropologists define culture as the “entire way of life of a society: its values, practices,

symbols, institutions and human relationships.”¹ Huntington narrows the definition of culture to the “values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society” in order to provide a useful definition for analyzing how culture influences societal development.² The dictionary defines culture as the “totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population.”³ Therefore, the academic concept of culture includes the contextual history of a population or community and describes how that group developed into the culture in the present. In contrast, the military defines culture as “a feature of the terrain that has been constructed by man...included are such items as roads, buildings, and canals; boundary lines; and, in a broad sense, all names and legends on a map,”⁴ indicating a bias towards viewing the population as a condition to consider when analyzing the battlefield.

If the anthropological definition of culture implies how social characteristics of a population shift and transform over time, then human terrain is more focused on describing social characteristics as they exist in the present and how those characteristics effect behavior of a population. As a concept, the HTS defines human terrain as follows:

Information about the physical security, economic security, ideology and belief systems, authority figures, and organizations relevant to the major social groups in the area under study. This information comes from open source, unclassified collection and is referenced geo-spatially, relationally, and temporally to enable the creation of various ‘maps’ of the human dynamics in areas where the U.S. has committed forces or other U.S. government officials.⁵

¹ Huntington, Samuel P., "Cultures Count," In *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, by Samuel P. Huntington and Lawrence E. Harrison, (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xiii-xvi.

² Ibid., xiii-xvi.

³ *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Second College Edition, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), 348.

⁴ Department of Defense, *JP 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, April 2001), 139.

⁵ *Human Terrain System CONOP*, Proof of Concept (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Human Terrain System, 4 April 2007), 2.

More simply, human terrain is the “human population and society in the operational environment (area of operations) as defined and characterized by sociopolitical, anthropologic, and ethnographic and other non-geophysical information about that human population and society.”⁶ The two most significant aspects of the definition are that the concept describes the sociological aspects of a culture in the present, and that cultural characteristics must be relevant to the operating environment where U.S. forces are deployed.

Hypothesis and Methodology

The purpose of this monograph is to study the cultural component of insurgency and discuss the integration of cultural understanding into military counterinsurgency operations. To begin the analysis, the hypothesis under which this research operates is that the Human Terrain System (HTS) is the optimal solution for incorporating external social science expertise into U.S. military units operating in a counterinsurgency environment. The primary research question is whether the HTS provides combat units conducting counterinsurgency operations with the ability to gain a deep cultural understanding of the population. Secondary research questions examine the cultural component of COIN warfare and the nature of the relationship between the social sciences and the national security apparatus. Finally, additional research includes defining the requirements for cultural understanding in COIN and determining the existing military capabilities available to combat units for gaining cultural understanding. A qualitative evaluation will conclude the monograph and will discuss whether the HTS effectively integrates social science expertise into tactical formations and what other solutions exist for integrating cultural expertise into unit planning and execution of operations.

⁶ Jacob Kipp, Lester Grau, Karl Prinslow, and Don Smith. "The Human Terrain System: A CORDS for the 21st Century," *Military Review*, (September-October 2006), 15.

Although strategic implications are discussed, the focus will be on the tactical and operational levels of war. At the tactical level, the soldier on the ground interacting on a daily basis with the population must possess a deep understanding of the culture in order to be effective. At the operational level, the planner developing and refining the lines of effort (LOE) that provide synchronization throughout an area of operations must ensure the LOEs embrace a cultural awareness specific to the region. Accepting that COIN requires a full-spectrum operational approach and a blend of both lethal and non-lethal action across multiple LOEs, then the importance of culture to the conduct of offensive, defensive and stability operations is critical. Throughout the monograph, cases from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) will be studied to provide examples of how tactical units incorporated cultural understanding into operations.

As a primer, a review of COIN theory from leading historical authorities will provide a better understanding of the cultural underpinnings of insurgency and counterinsurgency. Throughout the past century, the social sciences and the US military have interacted during nearly every conflict, and this relationship will be studied from colonialism through the conflicts today in Iraq and Afghanistan. Characteristic of this relationship is a significant amount of suspicion and tension, and the controversy surrounding the HTS is no different. The next step is to identify whether, in fact, a gap exists between the tactical and operational requirements for cultural understanding and the organic capabilities of the U.S. Army that are employed on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. To accomplish this, it is necessary to define the requirements and then make a comparison to both the tactical capabilities and the nature of the operational planning during OIF. Analysis of existing U.S. Army capabilities dealing with cultural understanding will focus on the U.S. military culture and doctrine, existing capabilities for cultural understanding, and the training of soldiers in cross-cultural competence.

After gaining a better picture of the gap between battlefield requirements and existing capabilities, a review of the HTS is necessary to understand the mission, intent, structure and capabilities of the program. Despite the recent controversy surrounding HTS, this monograph will

attempt to provide an objective analysis of whether the programmatic concept is the right solution, rather than focusing on problems of administration or execution. Interviews with members of the HTS will outline strengths and weaknesses of the HTS and additional interviews of recent practitioners of COIN in Iraq will provide insight into how soldiers on the ground view HTTs and discuss other techniques that have been utilized to integrate cultural understanding into operations. Finally, recommendations will be made as to whether the program is the right solution and how best to integrate cultural understanding into military operations.

The Cultural Component of Counterinsurgency (COIN)

“The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history.”

Mao Tse-Tung, April 24, 1945⁷

Mao Tse-Tung, as one of the most influential theorists on modern insurgency, based his ideas on the primacy of the power of the people in waging insurgency. It is now generally accepted that the population is the COG in a revolutionary struggle, and it is an aspect understood equally well by the insurgent and the counterinsurgent. Acknowledging the population as the COG requires a true understanding of the social and cultural characteristics of the population, providing the insurgent with a distinct advantage. Since most insurgencies begin with a class or group of people disenfranchised by the existing government, the insurgent generally shares the same culture or ethnic background as the population. In the future, the U.S. will normally conduct COIN in regions that do not share a common ethnicity, culture or historical context as Western nations. Regions and countries with a high propensity for revolutionary action where the U.S.

⁷ Mao Zedong, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1966), 118.

might find itself involved includes the African continent, the Middle East, and South East Asia, all areas where Muslim countries exist or predominate. It is inevitable that in future COIN environments the enemy will have a distinct advantage, making the ability to study, research and gain a deep understanding of the population a critical capability. In Iraq, much of the insurgency consisted of foreign fighters led by Al Qaeda, who although not Iraqi, share the Muslim identity and Arab culture of the Iraqi people.

Cultural Understanding and COIN Theory

To understand counterinsurgency, it is important to understand the mind of the insurgent and to recognize the similarities and differences in how the two opposing sides are able to wage the conflict. After rising from a peasant upbringing to lead a successful revolution against the Nationalist government, the theories and methods of insurgency introduced by Mao Tse-Tung and used by the Red Army have been studied and adopted by insurgent forces around the globe. Mao believed the “richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people” and referred to the power of the people as the “real iron bastion which it is impossible, and absolutely impossible, for any force on earth to smash.”⁸ He also knew that in order to mobilize the masses, it is important for the insurgent force to adopt a cause that would “help the masses to realize that we represent their interests, that our lives are intimately bound up with theirs.”⁹ Along with these principles of insurgency is the need to pay attention to the welfare and wishes of the people, an important aspect to which Mao instructed the Red Army to respect. Mao also first introduced the concept that the population is divided into segments, stating the “masses are generally composed of three parts, the relatively active, the intermediate and the relatively backward.”¹⁰ For the

⁸ Ibid., 88-89.

⁹ Ibid., 132-133.

¹⁰ Ibid., 131.

insurgent, the effort is then to unite those active in the revolution, and influence those who are intermediate or backward to not support the existing government or turn to the revolution.

David Galula and Roger Trinquier were officers who served in the French Army during the middle part of the 20th century, and continue to be recognized as two of the leading theorists on counterinsurgency. Both were heavily influenced by insurgencies against French colonial rule in Southeast Asia and North Africa, and were particularly influenced by the French-Algerian War that ended with Algerian independence in 1962. Galula identifies the population as the center of gravity and similar to Mao states that the insurgent requires a “well-grounded cause with which to attract supporters among the population.”¹¹ Although he recognizes the power of a common ideology and identity to the insurgent to mobilize the population, Galula indicates that the population is influenced more by security and by who appears to be winning the conflict at any given time. Like Mao, Galula also identifies the population as falling into one of three categories, the “active minority for the cause, the neutral majority, and an active minority against the cause.”¹² He takes an unemotional stance towards the minority supporting the insurgent and accepts the fact that some of that faction must be eliminated, although he does acknowledge that reconciliation is an acceptable solution. Identifying the tactical level as “where the real battle takes place” for the population, Galula sees a need for constant and consistent contact with the population in order to isolate them from the insurgent and establish trust.¹³ This requires the counterinsurgent to determine what political reforms are wanted and needed by the population, and take measures at the tactical level to implement those reforms. Galula describes intelligence as a critical capability of a counterinsurgent force, and advocates conducting a census using

¹¹ David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1968), 13.

¹² Ibid., 76.

¹³ Ibid., 116.

registration and identification cards. The overall goal of the census is to establish basic knowledge about the composition of the population, which is similar to the ethnographic research capability of the HTS. However, the goal of the census for Galula is for gathering information about the enemy, controlling the population and identifying insurgent activists. For the HTS, the goal of ethnographic research is to understand motivations, loyalties and other social inclinations of the culture to assist the counterinsurgent in building trust and dealing with the population.

Roger Trinquier believed the French experience in Algeria had a much greater significance than was recognized by most people of his time. Trinquier believed that the nature of war had entered a new era he labeled modern warfare, and that conventional wars between nation states were a relic of the past. In the new era, unconventional war would be the new paradigm and that the “sine qua non of victory in modern warfare is the unconditional support of the population.”¹⁴ He criticizes the French Army for its failure to adapt to the new type of warfare it was facing, citing insurgencies such as the Vietminh in Indochina and the FLN in Algeria. As did Galula, Trinquier cites the need for conducting a census of the population, but also focuses on controlling rather than understanding the population. Trinquier is probably known more for his stance on the necessity for ruthless interrogation practices to gather intelligence from suspected insurgents, rather than for the other counterinsurgent aspects of his theory. Perhaps most meaningful to this monograph, Trinquier recognized that conventional militaries generally are not prepared for the economic, social and political aspects of modern warfare either in terms of mentality or equipment. To account for this, Trinquier advocates prior study in depth of the area of operations to provide information on “physical, economic, and human geography” and “the

¹⁴ Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, (London, England: Pall Mall Press, Ltd., 1964), 8.

current psychological climate” which will allow the counterinsurgent to “determine which areas will be more responsive to our action.”¹⁵

The French experience fighting the insurgency in Algeria focused on maintaining control over a colonized country, rather than providing effective governance to the population. Algeria had previously been elevated to a status equal to a French state in the homeland, yet the population was never granted the full benefits or protection that came along with being a French citizen. As a result, the French military did little to understand the Algerians from an ethnic or cultural standpoint. Both Galula and Trinquier allude to the importance of separating the population from the insurgents, but neither theorist points to the need for a cultural understanding or sensitivity towards the population. Both advocate a more heavy handed and harsh approach to waging counterinsurgency. When the U.S. military began to recognize the extent of the insurgencies in Iraq the natural inclination was to turn to the theories of Galula and Trinquier, despite the fact that the situation in Iraq was fundamentally different from the situation faced by the French in Algeria.

David Kilcullen is a leading contemporary theorist on counterinsurgency, and advises political and military leaders from several western nations involved in COIN operations around the world. He also gained experience as a practitioner of COIN in areas of Southeast Asia and the Middle East while serving as an officer in the Australian Army. Kilcullen recognizes the Iraq war as fundamentally different than the insurgencies studied by Galula and Trinquier, and states that “today’s insurgencies differ significantly—at the level of policy, strategy, operational art and tactical technique—from those of earlier eras.”¹⁶ Kilcullen challenges the classical counterinsurgency theory that was written in the mid-20th century, citing several key differences.

¹⁵ Ibid., 106.

¹⁶ David Kilcullen, “Counter-Insurgency *Redux*,” *Survival*. 48, no. 4, (2006), 111.

These include how the conflict was initiated, the effects of globalization and technology, and the objectives of insurgent organizations. An example is Kilcullen challenging the claim of earlier theorists that only the insurgent can initiate a revolution. In contemporary conflict insurgent forces often seize the opportunity of a failed or occupied state such as in Iraq. Additionally, some insurgent organizations in Iraq do not seek to gain political control over the population, but instead desire to simply destabilize the coalition effort to bring democracy to the Middle East. Although Kilcullen distinguishes modern from traditional counterinsurgency, he does state that some aspects of classical counterinsurgency do remain constant. Specifically, that the “operational level counter-insurgency remains a competition among several sides, each seeking to mobilise the population in its cause...the people remain the prize.”¹⁷

At the tactical level, Kilcullen advocates techniques that are heavily reliant on cultural understanding. He published an article on principles for conducting company-level counterinsurgency in 2006, which established clear guidelines for tactical level COIN practitioners. In it, the first principle is to “know your turf,” to “know the people, the topography, the economy, history, religion and culture.” Subsequent principles inform practitioners to “understand what motivates the people and how to mobilize them” and to find a “political/cultural advisor.” He believes that practitioners must be fully aware of the political and cultural dimension of counterinsurgency, but sees this as a different task from the advisor, who should be “able to speak the language and navigate the intricacies of local politics.”¹⁸ According to Kilcullen, cultural understanding is also not the function of intelligence analysts, who seek to answer questions about the environment to target the enemy. The cultural advisor seeks to gain an

¹⁷ Ibid., 117.

¹⁸ David Kilcullen, “Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counter-insurgency,” (Defense and the National Interest, 2006), www.d-n-i.net/fcs/pdf/kilcullen_28_articles.pdf, (accessed January 7, 2009), 2.

understanding of the people in order to shape the environment. Kilcullen provides a theory of counterinsurgency that is useful and relevant to the current operating environment.

Requirement for Cultural Understanding in COIN

Reviewing theory provides critical insight into what is required for cultural understanding in the COIN environment. From these theorists comes the acknowledgment that the population is a center of gravity to the establishment of a legitimate government. In order to influence the people, the first requirement is for a counterinsurgent to gain a deep understanding of the population. Some of this understanding, such as history and context, may be learned from external sources. However, the most effective manner to learn the socio-cultural characteristics that shape behavior in the local area is through firsthand experience. Second, although Kilcullen recommends the counterinsurgent become immersed in the culture, he advocates obtaining a cultural advisor. Next, Galula and Trinquier highlight the importance of intelligence, in particular human intelligence. The gathering of information on the enemy must be differentiated from ethnographic research that gathers relevant socio-cultural information about the population. Since these two functions serve distinct purposes, a third requirement is for the counterinsurgent force to have a staff function separated from intelligence to conduct ethnographic research. Fourth, it is vitally important that the counterinsurgent force is competent in cross-cultural interaction and trained in regionally specific cultural characteristics. Historically, U.S. forces have fallen prey to the pitfalls of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism involves a person focusing on the values and beliefs of his or her own culture and ignoring the intricacies of the social groups that live in the operating environment, and can be detrimental to achieving operational and tactical objectives. Cultural relativism involves evaluating the behavior of a person within the context of his or her own cultural beliefs and values, and is a better approach to interacting with the population in a COIN environment. Finally, in an army that rotates forces on a periodic basis into a COIN environment, it is critical that cultural information is gathered, maintained, and transferred during relief in place

operations to achieve continuity in dealing with the population. Failing to pass on cultural knowledge to a follow-on force can place the bond of trust with local influential leaders and the population at risk, destroying months of positive progress in a short amount of time.

Interaction between Anthropology and the Military

“The point against which I wish to enter a vigorous debate is that a number of men who follow science as their profession, men whom I refuse to designate any longer as scientists, have prostituted science by using it as a cover for their activities as spies.”

Franz Boas, October 16, 1919¹⁹

After World War I, Franz Boas challenged the ethics of using social scientists to assist in the prosecution of war. In the quote above, he refers to four men who under the auspices of scientific research gathered intelligence as agents of the US government. Although written a century in the past, anthropologists continue to debate the ethics and morality of working with national security, defense, and intelligence organizations. Members of the HTS continue to be the subject of considerable controversy, despite the fact that their interaction is fundamentally different from other wars. Social scientists are faced with an individual choice on whether to support military operations that some claim places the ethics of the field in direct conflict with obligations as a patriot. Within the anthropological community, discussion has increased over the past decade as to the need for a more engaged role and greater relevance in addressing global social problems and the structures that produce and maintain them.²⁰ With the emergence of extremism in its many forms, the debate has increased in significance in the contemporary

¹⁹ Franz Boas, "Scientists as Spies (Reprint of Letter to The Nation dated December 20, 1919)," *Anthropology Today*: 21, no. 3, (July 2005), 27.

²⁰ Barbara Rylko-Bauer, Merrill Singer, and John Van Willigen, "Reclaiming Applied Anthropology: It's Past, Present, and Future," *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 1, (2006), 178.

security environment. Fundamentalist Islamic practices are not only a threat to Western society, but also challenge the practice of social science research in the purest sense. Inherently, the responsibility of a social scientist to the people being studied and their identity as a citizen of a country often are in direct conflict. How an anthropologist deals with this conflict can be more a question of personal choice rather than an ethical code established by a professional group. This section will review the historical interactions between the social sciences and national security organizations from the era of colonialism to the present in an effort to find clarity on the topic.

Colonialism and the World Wars

Many have made the case that the colonial era played a significant, perhaps even defining, role in the creation of anthropology as a distinct academic discipline. Ethnology, as the study of people, fed the colonial administrative governments of many countries with information that directly resulted in policy decisions to maintain control of those countries. Academics were employed extensively, primarily as staff researchers, to assist in ethnographic endeavors. During the colonial era, these social scientists often blurred the line between the academic and applied realms, and research was often used to both facilitate government rule of a colony as well as published for academic knowledge and recognition. Reviewing the classic ethnographies that made significant impact on Western views of indigenous populations around the world shows that many of those works originated as government funded applied reports. Domestically, the U.S. federal government established the Bureau of Ethnology (BAE) in 1879 that conducted anthropological research on the American Indians, provided information directly to policy-makers, and led directly to congressional decisions on Western expansion.²¹ In 1973, the respected social scientist Diane Lewis weighed in on the debate and implicated anthropology in

²¹ Ibid., 179-180.

the expansion of colonization. Lewis noted that anthropologists “worked amid the profound economic and political changes which accompanied the confrontation between the West and the rest of the world” and often provided “information and advice to the West in its efforts to manipulate and control the non-Western world.”²² Montgomery McFate, a modern day anthropologist who both supports and fills a leadership role within the HTS, also sees the colonial era as the birth of modern applied anthropology, citing that the discipline was an “intellectual tool to consolidate power at the margins of an empire.”²³

During World War I (WWI), the primary role of anthropologists was in the field of espionage, although many assisted in the war effort as propagandists, analysts, and even fighters on the ground. Primarily, social scientists collected intelligence under the guise of scientific research, which is considered a “prostitution of science” by many leaders in the anthropological field.²⁴ It was not until World War II (WWII) that anthropology experienced widespread application, and was employed by armies on both the Allied and the Axis side of the conflict. Social scientists served as analysts, propagandists, soldiers, officers, and spies and directed efforts at populations both inside and outside the boundaries of their nations.²⁵ For the U.S., social scientists were sent to areas of conflict to gather intelligence for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).²⁶ The Ethnogeographic Board, a think tank that generated “cultural information of relevance to anticipated theaters of war,” also

²² Diane Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," *Current Anthropology* 14, no. 5 (December 1973), 582.

²³ Montgomery McFate, "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship," *Military Review*, (March-April 2005), 28.

²⁴ David Price, "Anthropologists as Spies," *The Nation*, (November 2000), 24.

²⁵ David Price, "Lessons from the Second World War Anthropology: Peripheral, Persuasive and Ignored Contributions," *Anthropology Today* 18, no. 3 (June 2002), 14.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

employed many anthropologists, linguists and cultural geographers.²⁷ Social scientists were also used in the Office of War Information, Office of Naval Intelligence, Office of Economic Warfare, Army Intelligence Division, Army Special Training Program, Air Force Intelligence, and as Presidential advisors.²⁸

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that brought America fully into World War II, nationalism drove many anthropologists and social scientists to join the war effort. Motivation was high to support the war since it constituted an existential threat to the nation. Although some social scientists were involved in intelligence work and a few acted as spies, the vast majority served as linguists, code-breakers, cultural brokers and military advisors.²⁹ Some estimates claim that “over one half of the professional anthropologists in the country” were directly supporting the war effort, but a minority remained vocal about the implications of the activities on the long-term ethical standing of the profession.³⁰ The war effort was so extensive that the AAA passed a resolution that placed “itself and its resources and the specialized skill and knowledge of its members the disposal of the country for the successful prosecution of the war” and actually created a Committee on Anthropology and the War Effort that coordinated anthropological warfare efforts both at home and abroad.³¹ Anthropologists were also used domestically to create propaganda aimed at maintaining popular will and keeping the country on a war footing. Although tensions remained, the relationship experienced a high point of cooperation during WWII. An example of the conflict within the social sciences was the experience of Gregory

²⁷ Ibid., 16.

²⁸ Ibid., 16.

²⁹ Murray L. Wax, "Wartime Dilemmas of an Ethical Anthropology," *Anthropology Today* 19, no. 3 (June 2003), 23.

³⁰ Price, "Lessons from the Second World War Anthropology: Peripheral, Persuasive and Ignored Contributions," 16.

³¹ Ibid., 16.

Bateson, a noted anthropologist who in 1943 enlisted into the OSS. During the war he not only handled the writing of intelligence reports and the creation of 'black propaganda' radio campaigns, but also took part in ground operations with OSS forward intelligence units in the Burmese Arakan Mountains.³² Following the war, Bateson increasingly became disillusioned with the work he did for the government, feeling more and more that he had violated ethical standards and that because of his successes "native peoples were ill treated, manipulated and disempowered."³³

In 1942, George E. Taylor became the Deputy Director for Far East in the Office of War Information (OWI), and he believed culture was a critical aspect of his mission. With this mindset, he employed dozens of anthropologists, and set about a determined study of the "nature of Japanese national character, and to analyze the likely impact of various military strategies against the Japanese."³⁴ After joining the OSS, Bateson recognized a significant insensitivity in the leaflets and attempts at propaganda directed towards the Japanese and believed that the infusion of cultural awareness would lead to an increase in effectiveness. Using the knowledge and experiences of anthropologists and the Nisei, second-generation Japanese Americans, new messages were crafted and delivery methods utilized which significantly raised the surrender rate of Japanese soldiers than had previously been experienced. Despite the success that resulted from the integration of culture into psychological warfare operations, Taylor was unable to influence the political and military leadership of the significance of the cultural component of warfare.³⁵ Towards the end of WWII, the Allies were considering options to bring a decisive end to the war

³² David Price, "Past Wars, Present Dangers, Future Anthropologies," *Anthropology Today* 18, no. 1 (February 2002), 3.

³³ Ibid., 3.

³⁴ Price, "Lessons from the Second World War Anthropology: Peripheral, Persuasive and Ignored Contributions," 18.

³⁵ Ibid., 18-19.

on the Pacific front. Bateson and his team believed the Japanese were nearing the point of surrender, but could not convince national leadership that this was the case. Instead, national leadership had already determined that the Japanese were “incapable of surrender” and were developing plans to exercise a nuclear option.³⁶ Since nuclear bombs were dropped on both Nagasaki and Hiroshima and the Japanese surrendered soon thereafter, it will never be determined whether Taylor and his team were correct. Although marginalized, the influence of social scientists in the Far East Division of OWI did play a role in separating the abdication of the Japanese Emperor from the final terms of surrender. Cultural research found that the Emperor was believed to embody the soul of the country, and allowing him to remain in power was critical to a mutually acceptable surrender.³⁷

Throughout the colonial period and the world wars, social scientists readily provided services to the national security apparatus. Effects achieved by social scientists during this time primarily influenced the national and military strategic level of war. Anthropologists were employed at the tactical level in intelligence roles, but information gathered during these operations met the needs of strategic purposes. Although examples during this timeframe generally relate to the strategic level, the application of a cultural understanding to decision-making is relevant at all levels. Debate about the ethical use of social science to assist in the conduct of war and national security objectives began during this time, in particular after WWI and the letter from Franz Boas denouncing its use during that war. Many justified the use of anthropology during WWI and WWII as ethical since the consequence of losing was considered so great, and most believed that only the full effort the United States would prevent the triumph

³⁶ Price, "Lessons from the Second World War Anthropology: Peripheral, Persuasive and Ignored Contributions," 19.

³⁷ George Packer, "Knowing the Enemy: Can Social Scientists Redefine the 'War on Terror'?" *The New Yorker*. December 18, 2006. http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/12/18/061218fa_fact2 (accessed January 7, 2009).

of German expansionism. After WWII the stage was set for the debate to develop during the latter half of the 20th century.

The Vietnam and Cold Wars

During Vietnam and the Cold War, the divide between the social sciences and the military deepened as covert intelligence and counterinsurgency operations carried out in the name of science led to continued discord. A noticeable split appeared in the anthropological community after WWII, with some scientists continuing to work with the security apparatus and some denouncing the US and the perceived imperialistic approach to foreign policy.³⁸ The military often viewed social scientists as pacifists, and anthropological efforts were often discounted in favor of means that were more lethal. One program enacted in Vietnam was the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program, initiated in 1967. Although the CIA began working revolutionary development in 1965 and civil operations occurred throughout the country, it was not until CORDS in 1967 that all civilian and military pacification efforts were unified under the Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MAC-V).³⁹ The premise behind CORDS was to match “focused intelligence collection with direct action and integrated synchronized activities aimed at winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the South Vietnamese.”⁴⁰ Evidence shows that CORDS drastically reduced violence and enemy activity in areas of Vietnam where effectively implemented. One of the key components of the CORDS program was an information collection and reporting system that focused on factors related to security, economic development, and governance, and information was validated through a variety of cultural,

³⁸ Wax, "Wartime Dilemmas of an Ethical Anthropology," 23.

³⁹ John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 165.

⁴⁰ Jacob Kipp, Lester Grau, Karl Prinslow, and Don Smith. "The Human Terrain System: A CORDS for the 21st Century," *Military Review*, (September-October 2006), 10.

economic, and ethnographic reports.⁴¹ Cooperation between the civil and military personnel of the CORDS program was vital to gaining an understanding of the important meaning behind those factors.

In 1964, the Special Operations Research Office (SORO) initiated a program named Project Camelot that had anthropologists and social scientists researching the human dimension of counterinsurgency around the globe. Overall objectives of Camelot were to “determine the feasibility of developing a general social systems model which would make it possible to predict and influence politically significant aspects of social change,” and specific objectives included “assessing the potential for internal war within national societies” and identifying “those actions which a government might take to relieve conditions which are assessed as giving rise to a potential for internal war.”⁴² SORO also sought to build a computerized repository using a systems analytic approach that would compile hard data of social-scientific information on indigenous populations and regions of the world.⁴³ One of the first studies for Project Camelot was the country of Chile, where Hugo Nuttini, an anthropology professor from the University of Pittsburgh, accepted the assignment to begin social research. Although he attempted to conceal the military backing of his research, the program was quickly exposed. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara canceled the program less than a year after inception after severe outcry from targeted countries, including Chile.⁴⁴

Another scandal surfaced in 1970 involving covert research in Thai villages. Social scientists acted under the guise of preventing harm to villages from insurgents, while in truth they

⁴¹ Ibid., 11.

⁴² Irving L. Horowitz, ed., *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot: Studies in the Relationship between Social Sciences and Practical Politics*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1974), 4-5.

⁴³ Wax, "Wartime Dilemmas of an Ethical Anthropology," 24.

⁴⁴ McFate, "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship," 35-36.

were gathering intelligence for the Department of Defense and the Royal Thai Government. Documents developed out of this program were stolen from the files of a university professor, and eventually were published in an activist student newspaper. Following the controversy surrounding Project Camelot and the Thai scandal, the professional anthropological community regarded government funds that sponsor sociological research with heavy skepticism. In 1971, the American Anthropological Association issued official “Principles of Professional Responsibility” in response to the use of social scientists along with military and intelligence services. The principles state that, “in research, an anthropologist’s paramount responsibility is to those they study,” placing the obligations of an anthropologist to the subjects of study in direct conflict with patriotic obligations to their country.⁴⁵

During this period, the relationship between the social sciences and national security organizations experienced increasing conflict. Social scientists began to denounce providing assistance in matters of national defense in favor of protecting the integrity of the anthropological discipline. The extreme unpopularity of the Vietnam War allowed anti-military sentiment to dominate the national atmosphere, particularly in higher educational institutions and in the academic community. Throughout the Cold War, examples of the interaction between the social sciences and national security organizations generally resulted in international controversy where sovereign, developing nations felt they were nothing more than pawns in the struggle between Western democracy and communism. The relationship continued in this manner until the U.S. military in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq realized a new demand for cultural understanding at the operational and tactical level of war. An interesting side note is that prior to OIF, there is little precedence for placing academics directly alongside the soldier on the front lines. No cases

⁴⁵ Hugh Gusterson, "Anthropology and the Military: 1968, 2003, and Beyond?" *Anthropology Today* 19, no. 3 (June 2003), 25.

were found where the support of social scientists was primarily intended to lead to a better cultural understanding for combat units to more effectively interact with the population.

Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Current Controversy

During the early years after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the U.S. military generally operated with a disregard for the cultural characteristics of the Iraqi population. Without a clearly defined national or theater strategy or a published counterinsurgency doctrine to provide unity of effort, the approach to handling the post-conflict environment was haphazard at best. Some commanders intuitively understood classic counterinsurgency theory and truly understood the population as a center of gravity, and therefore looked for ways to influence the population to support coalition efforts and development of the Iraqi National Government. Strategic policies of disbanding the military and de-Ba'athification ostracized a large portion of the Iraqi population, and led to a Sunni tribal insurgency supported by Sheiks across the country. At the operational level, units did not understand that information in Iraq is passed through word of mouth and focused more on broadcast and print media to transmit messages, missing crucial opportunities to influence the public early in the war.⁴⁶ In general, few attempted to fully understand the culture and leverage cross-cultural interactions to increase effectiveness in influencing the population. The result was an incoherent approach to the conflict at all levels of war. Some commanders emphasized wielding a heavy hand and focusing on lethal operations, while others, often separated by only a few city blocks, emphasized a more non-lethal approach to gaining the support and trust of the population. Beginning in 2005, with violence increasing at a dramatic rate

⁴⁶ Montgomery McFate, "The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 38 (3rd Quarter 2005), 44.

and as Iraqi public opinion of coalition efforts was declining, military leadership at all levels recognized that a change was necessary.

Although the situation faced by the U.S. military on the ground in Iraq was extremely complex, it did not take long for the operational headquarters in theater and units on the ground at the tactical level to recognize the challenges and adapt. In particular, this included elevating cultural understanding as vitally important to the daily interactions with the population of the officers and soldiers on the ground. In 2005 after a tour as a brigade commander, BG Benjamin Freakley recognized that the U.S. military struggled to understand the significance of culture to military operations and acknowledged “the complexity of the contemporary operating environment (COE) demands that we provide our tactical commanders a robust analytical tool” for cultural awareness.⁴⁷ MG Peter Chiarelli commanded the 1st Cavalry Division (1CD) in Baghdad from 2004 to 2005, and one of the significant lessons he noted was a requirement for a “keen understanding of demographics as well as the cultural intricacies of the Iraqi population.” When conducting operational planning, the 1CD also ensured that “the impact of Western actions on a Middle East society were constantly at the forefront.”⁴⁸ Principles of counterinsurgency had been implemented in certain areas around Iraq under several forward thinking commanders, but it was not until 2007 that those principles were applied theater-wide. Primarily, the two influences that initiated this change in theater strategy were the publishing of the *Counterinsurgency* Field Manual (FM 3-24) in December 2006 and the implementation of the “surge” strategy in 2007.

In response to the continued call for an additional asset geared towards cultural understanding, the first Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) deployed to Iraq in 2007, marking the first

⁴⁷ BG Benjamin Freakley, "Cultural Awareness and Combat Power," *Infantry* 94, no. 2 (March-April 2005), 1.

⁴⁸ MG Peter W. Chiarelli and MAJ Patrick R. Michaelis, "Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations," *Military Review* (July-August 2005), 5.

time anthropologists were employed on the ground to conduct localized study of Iraqi culture. Initially, the Human Terrain System (HTS) was a proof-of-concept program designed to meet requirements defined by military field commanders returning from Iraq. The intent of the program was for cultural anthropologists to advise brigade commanders on the local socio-cultural environment, capture the information to minimize impact of unit rotation, and for reach-back support to cultural expertise.⁴⁹ Since inception, the program has been the subject of significant criticism. Most notably, the social science community and the American Anthropological Association (AAA) have revived arguments about the ethical use of anthropology in the prosecution war. In a statement on HTS in 2007, the AAA opposed the program based on the conflict between the responsibilities of the anthropologists to the people they study and the responsibilities to the U.S. military.⁵⁰ Anthropologist Hugh Gusterson voiced concerns with the program based on professional obligations to other anthropologists and the field of anthropology, to not damage the ability to conduct future research, to obligations to informants or subjects they study, and to rules for informed consent.⁵¹

The ethical conflict over whether to support a war in any capacity is ultimately an individual decision, although most in the anthropological community believe the decision must be guided by “the most basic responsibility of the anthropologists to serve, rather than oppress or fight.”⁵² This internal struggle between the responsibility of an anthropologist towards the subjects of study and as a citizen of a nation is as relevant today as it has been throughout the

⁴⁹ *Human Terrain System*. <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil> (accessed February 15, 2009).

⁵⁰ AAA Executive Board, "Statement on the Human Terrain System Project." *American Anthropological Association*, October 31, 2007. www.aaanet.org/pdf/EB_Resolution_110807.pdf (accessed January 7, 2009).

⁵¹ Gusterson, "Anthropology and the Military: 1968, 2003, and Beyond?" 25-26.

⁵² Price, "Lessons from the Second World War Anthropology: Peripheral, Persuasive and Ignored Contributions," 20.

entire relationship between the social sciences and the military. Another dilemma is the potential that if national security professionals do not receive support from a professional body of anthropologists, they will inevitably look elsewhere for that cultural knowledge. If this were to happen, then the DOD would turn to individuals who do not adhere to the same ethical codes and rules that members of organizations such as the AAA follow. Throughout the history of the involvement of the social sciences in national security issues, at best the relationship can be described as contentious cooperation. For most of the academic anthropological community, applying social science techniques alongside military forces is an unacceptable practice, and the HTS will continue to be controversial as long as it remains a viable program.

Overview of the Human Terrain System

The Human Terrain System (HTS) was developed to meet an operational need for social science support to units operating at the tactical and operational level in Iraq and Afghanistan. Commanders at the division level and below returning from deployment consistently expressed a requirement for operationally relevant human terrain knowledge and social science expertise to collect, record, and analyze information for use in planning. To meet this demand, the Joint Chiefs of Staff J3 Science Advisor initiated a program known as Cultural Preparation of the Environment (CPE) in December 2004, which was designed to capture socio-cultural information and provide limited reach-back research capability. Military commanders continued to express an operational need for a cultural advisor on the ground as well as a database collection requirement, and in early 2006 the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence developed the initial concept for HTS. The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) approved and funded the concept in June 2006. By the end of the

year, five HTTs were deployed to Iraq in support of brigade combat teams throughout the country.⁵³ Specifically, the HTS was envisioned as a capability that would provide a commander and staff with an understanding of the population and the impact of the culture on operational decisions, as well as a system to ensure socio-cultural knowledge and expertise of an area is properly transferred during relief in place operations with follow-on forces.⁵⁴

Mission and Capabilities

From the beginning, the intent of the program was to integrate a social science perspective into military operations during the conduct of counterinsurgency. The mission and capabilities of the HTS are focused on incorporating human terrain information into the planning, preparation, execution and assessment of operations. The mission statement of the Human Terrain Team follows:

Conduct operationally-relevant, open-source social science research, and provide commanders and staffs at the BCT/RCT and Division levels with an embedded knowledge capability, to establish a coherent, analytical cultural framework for operational planning, decision-making, and assessment.⁵⁵

To accomplish this mission, the HTS provides three primary capabilities. First, the HTS imbeds “*expert human terrain & social science advice*” into brigade and division staffs in order to address the needs for cultural understanding at the tip of the spear. This expert advice involves applying classic anthropological research and sociological methods to gather and analyze ethnographic data for the counterinsurgent. Second, the HTS provides “*focused study*” on the local area of operations that is tailored to the specific concerns of the commander.

⁵³ Human Terrain System, <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/htstimeline.html>, (accessed February 15, 2009).

⁵⁴ Human Terrain System CONOP, Proof of Concept, 2-3.

⁵⁵ CPT Nathan Finney, *Employing a Human Terrain Team*, Commander’s Handbook, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Human Terrain System, 4 April 2007), 5.

Third, the HTS maintains a “*tactical overwatch reach-back link*” that provides access to a subject-matter expert (SME) network and learning institutions throughout the world.⁵⁶

On the ground at the tactical and operational level, an HTT is required to accomplish five key tasks. Similar to traditional Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB), the HTT conducts Cultural Preparation of the Environment (CPE). CPE is a continuous process that focuses on analyzing the socio-cultural information of the area of operations, and follows a similar process as IPB:⁵⁷

Steps of Cultural Preparation of the Battlefield

- 1) ID physical and human terrain
- 2) Describe civil considerations (ASCOPE, PMESII)
- 3) ID social and political patterns
- 4) ID key friction points or misconceptions.

Second, the HTS integrates human terrain information into the unit planning. This task occurs before specific operations are being planned, by incorporating the CPE into mission analysis, proposing non-lethal courses of action, identifying the second and third order effects of possible courses of action, and taking part in war-gaming from the population perspective. The third task is to support current operations by monitoring events, making on the ground assessments, and assisting the commander and staff with understanding cultural impacts on decision-making. Fourth, the HTT evaluates effects of the human terrain on the unit operations, as well as the effect of unit operations on the human terrain. During continuous full-spectrum operations, the HTT is continually assessing the effect of friendly and enemy operations on the local population, as well as the second and third order effects of those operations. Finally, the HTT provides training on socio-cultural issues relevant to the area of

⁵⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 50.

operations. This training is effective for brigade and division leadership, but is most effective at battalion-level and below where soldiers have the primary responsibility in the operational area and have the most contact with the local population.⁵⁸ An important capability of the HTT is the Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Protocol (REAP), which was developed from a need for immediate information requested by supported BCTs. Initially, BCTs questioned the utility of a team of social science experts who required an extensive amount of time to conduct a detailed study prior to providing analysis. The REAP provides information on current local attitudes and perspectives, organization and leadership of tribal structures, preliminary assessment of social networks, and local economic data in a relatively short amount of time.⁵⁹ In addition to the REAP, the HTT provides a variety of assessments and reports to the commander and staff on the cultural characteristics of the local population.

Organization

Since the intent of the HTS is to provide social science expertise at the operational and tactical level, the program is structured around the HTT. The HTT is a five- to nine-man team that provides a mix of military specialists and academics. At a minimum, the team consists of a team leader, a social scientist, a research manager and two human terrain analysts. The role of the Team Leader (TL) is to integrate the HTT into the unit in an effective manner, and to be an advisor to the commander in cultural issues. Social Scientists (SS) are academically qualified cultural anthropologists or other similar experts who advise the commander and staff in all human terrain matters, including specific anthropological research and analysis methods. Cultural Research Managers (CRM) are responsible for knowledge management,

⁵⁸ Ibid., 16-18.

⁵⁹ CPT Nathan Finney, *Human Terrain Team Handbook*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Human Terrain System, September 2008), 97.

and ensure all human terrain information gathered by the team is properly analyzed, archived and distributed throughout the organization. The CRM integrates the human terrain research plan with the unit activities, participates in de-briefings, and interacts with other key organizations and agencies also operating in the area. Finally, Human Terrain Analysts (HTAs) are the primary researchers and data collectors for the HTT. The HTAs take the research requirements of the team and the supported unit and conduct both field and open-source research. Recognizing that a five-man team is not sufficient to support a brigade, teams deployed in theater generally are increased in size to a nine-man team consisting of a team leader, two social scientists, two research managers and four human terrain analysts.⁶⁰

At the division level, the HTS integrates a Human Terrain Analysis Team (HTAT) that provides the division commander and staff with many of the same functions the HTT provides to a brigade. However, the HTAT is primarily focused on integration of cultural understanding into the division operational planning processes and supporting the subordinate brigade HTTs with an additional analysis capability. At the corps level, a Human Terrain Research and Analysis-Corps (HTRAC) team provides cultural understanding to the Corps commander and staff, and has additional research capabilities not present at the lower levels. Above the corps, two capabilities provide additional research capabilities for the HTS. At the theater level, a Social Science Research and Analysis (SSRA) team conducts operationally relevant qualitative and quantitative research within the area of operations to provide empirical data and analysis of the population. Back in the continental United States, military and civilian analysts staff the Reachback Research Center (RRC) and provide regionally focused research and rapid analysis on human terrain issues. The RRC is manned and available at all times and has

⁶⁰ Ibid., 11-16.

access to a Subject Matter Expert (SME) network from a larger academic community from which to draw information and analysis. In addition to the higher-level research capabilities, a software package was developed to support operations of the HTT. The Map-HT Tool Kit compiles a database that facilitates assembling, archiving, and analyzing the human terrain knowledge harvested by the HTT, and provides the ability to map human terrain, create linkage charts, view changes in human terrain over time, and assist in the visualization of human terrain.⁶¹

Reports from the Field

Success of the HTS during the first few years of employment in Iraq and Afghanistan is subjective and difficult to measure. Since the inception of the program in Iraq largely coincided with the wide scale application of FM 3-24, the Sunni awakening, a drastic increase in the price of global oil, and the addition of U.S. combat troops during the surge, determining causality for the decrease in violence is an impossible task. However, there are numerous success stories from HTTs serving on the ground with brigades. MAJ Philip Carlson deployed as a research manager for an HTT attached to 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (1/1 CAV) from August 2007 to May 2008. Initially, the team underwent a growing period with the brigade before finally settling into a role as a special staff element reporting directly to the brigade leadership. The ideal situation is for an HTT to have an assigned social scientist who is an expert on the culture within the area of operations prior to deployment, and this was true for the HTT attached to 1/1 CAV. One of the social scientists on the team was an Iraqi-American medical doctor, who grew up in Baghdad and left Iraq for the U.S. in the late 1980s after the Iran-Iraq war. He was a cultural and linguistic expert on the area of operations, and proved to be a tremendous asset to the brigade. An example

⁶¹ Ibid., 34.

of a situation where the HTT provided relevant advice to the commander is the reconciliation of the leadership of the Jaysh al Mujahedeen Army (MA). Analysis from the brigade intelligence section considered the fighters as non-reconcilable and predicted they would fight to the death rather than work with coalition forces. In contrast, the HTT believed that most members of the MA were tired of fighting, and although they wanted coalition forces out of Iraq they supported the increased legitimacy of the Iraqi government and security forces. As a result, the leadership of the MA faced the decision between continuing the fight and losing the support of the MA. Through a series of meetings with local sheiks, the HTT was able to coordinate the reconciliation of 10 to 12 mid-level leaders of the MA, along with obtaining a written declaration that fighters would lay down arms and support the local government.⁶² Without the advice and assessment from the HTT, it is likely that U.S. forces would have remained in conflict with the MA for a significantly longer period.

Examples also exist from OIF of units understanding the approach to COIN outlined in FM 3-24 and taking steps to analyze the human terrain without the benefit of an HTT. LTC Jack Marr commanded 1-15 Infantry (IN) in southeast Baghdad from 2007-2008, and knew that “before the counter-insurgent can win the people over, he must take the necessary steps to really understand and know them.”⁶³ With the understanding that the insurgent holds the upper hand in cultural understanding when the counterinsurgent comes from a foreign country, the battalion established a systematic collection and collation process of ethnographic information. This system led not only to a detailed understanding of the population, but also to the development of consequential relationships with significant power brokers in the local community. 1-15 IN

⁶² MAJ Phillip Carlson, interview by author. *Experiences on an HTT* (January 16, 2009).

⁶³ LTC Jack Marr, MAJ John Cushing, MAJ Brandon Garner, and CPT Richard Thompson, “Human Terrain Mapping: A Critical First Step to Winning the COIN Fight,” (*Military Review*, March-April 2008), 18.

labeled the process Human Terrain Mapping (HTM), and utilized the Command Post of the Future (CPOF) battle command system to collect, analyze and disseminate the information. Initial information requirements included tribal boundaries, political and religious leaders, location of mosques, schools and markets, daily routines of the population, economic information, demographics, and a variety of other socio-cultural data. In the end, LTC Marr concluded that the physical process of creating the human terrain map was at least as beneficial as the actual map once complete. Information collected by another unit can be transferred during a relief in place, but relationships and true understanding take time and require extensive experience.⁶⁴

The Gap of Cultural Understanding

“The strategy strives for balance...between retaining those cultural traits that have made the U.S. armed forces successful and shedding those that hamper their ability to do what needs to be done.”

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates⁶⁵

As the civilian in charge of the Department of Defense (DOD), Secretary Gates provides strategic direction for the U.S. armed forces and indicates the need to shift focus to meet the needs of the future security environment. After 9/11, it became readily apparent that U.S. force structure, doctrine and even the culture within the military focused heavily on conventional war between two opposing nation-states. Despite this predisposition, the adaptation displayed on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan to counterinsurgency warfare is remarkable. However, with the irregular and unconventional conflicts in which the U.S. will likely be engaged in the future, it is worth analyzing whether a gap in capabilities for cultural understanding exists. Three areas limit

⁶⁴ Ibid., 18-24.

⁶⁵ Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (January / February 2009): 28.

the capability of the military to achieve cultural understanding in the operating environment. First, as Secretary Gates alludes to above, doctrine and the enemy-oriented culture within the armed forces are significant factors limiting the ability of combat formations to gain cultural understanding. Second, organic capability is lacking for conducting ethnographic research, despite the existence of multiple organizations focused on interacting with the population. Finally, military training and the professional education system do not adequately prepare soldiers or leaders at all levels to understand how cultural differences affect interactions with other people.

Military Culture and Doctrine

Before 9/11, technology, training and doctrine focused on the Cold War and the idea of achieving victory through the application of overwhelming, decisive force. Since there is little interaction with the population in a maneuver war between two symmetric opponents, cultural understanding was never integrated into the doctrine or training of the military. Additionally, no element of national power explicitly addresses the culture of the adversary in the formation of policy, leading to a lack of cultural awareness in the planning and execution of operational and tactical action.⁶⁶ Another influence that reinforces the culture within the military is the social view of culture within the United States. Traditionally, the domestic approach to culture includes “blurring cultural differences and finding common ground among disparate peoples” to break down barriers in an effort to assimilate foreigners into the American way of life.⁶⁷ This attitude is characteristic of contemporary U.S. grand strategy, and leads to challenges of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism for military forces operating abroad. This has resulted in a lack of cultural

⁶⁶ McFate, "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship," 24.

⁶⁷ Andrew W. Stewart, *Friction in U.S. Foreign Policy: Cultural Difficulties with the World*, Thesis, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, June 2006), 6.

competence in both the military culture and doctrinal manuals. After eight years of war, the military has undergone a significant pattern of heuristic learning, and is experiencing a shift away from the traditional mindset. This change is evident in the recent evolution of doctrinal manuals to increase inclusion of cultural understanding.

In general, references to cultural understanding in current doctrine remain cursory, with a few notable exceptions in recently published manuals. FM 3-0, the capstone doctrine on operations, requires a “broad understanding of the strategic and operational environment and their relevance to each mission” and includes “the culture of the local population” as a significant factor in achieving that understanding. Lacking sufficient depth to communicate the importance of culture in military operations, the manual defines culture as the “shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that society members use to cope with their world and with one another.”⁶⁸ No further reference throughout the remainder of the manual explains how to integrate culture into planning or execution of operations. This level of detail may be appropriate for a capstone operational doctrine. However, until 2006 no other manual included any detailed guidance for integrating cultural understanding into operations. FM 3-07, *Stability Operations*, describes the need for “fair treatment of the local populace” and that military policies will vary based on several factors, to include “attitude toward governing forces, socioeconomic conditions, the political system, and local history and culture.”⁶⁹ FM 5-0, *Army Planning and Orders Production*, assigns the civil military operations (CMO) officer the task of “feedback in how the

⁶⁸ Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, February 2008), 1-1–1-7.

⁶⁹ Department of the Army, *FM 3-07, Stability Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 2008), 5-6.

culture in the AO affects each course of action.”⁷⁰ None of these manuals provides any substantive guidance on integrating culture into planning or execution of military operations.

The intelligence war fighting function (WFF) is charged with understanding the enemy and the physical environment within a given area of operations, but a review of the primary intelligence manuals reveals a lack of focus regarding cultural understanding. In all of FM 2-0, *Intelligence*, only one sentence mentions culture, describing the social aspect of PMESII-PT as the “cultural, religious, and ethnic makeup within an operational environment.”⁷¹ FM 34-130, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, only requires intelligence analysts to “identify the effect of local culture on collection” but does not discuss understanding the effects the local culture will have on unit operations.⁷² One example of the how the Army has adapted to counterinsurgency is the tactical intelligence field manual, FM 2-91.6, *Soldier Surveillance and Reconnaissance: Fundamentals of Tactical Information Collection*, published in 2007. This manual outlines the concept of “every soldier as a sensor” and has a section dedicated to regional cultural awareness as part of pre-deployment training. The section contains a series of questions designed to assist a unit or individual in conducting research to gain a more in depth awareness of the culture of a region, and is an excellent resource at the tactical level.⁷³

Two recent manuals that make great strides towards describing the interaction between military operations and the culture of a population are FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, and FM 3-05.130, *Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare*. Infused throughout FM 3-24

⁷⁰ Department of the Army, *FM 5-0, Army Planning and Orders Production*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 2008), 3-44.

⁷¹ Department of the Army, *FM 2-0, Intelligence*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2004), 1-20.

⁷² Department of the Army, *FM 34-130, Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, July 1994), 4-7.

⁷³ Department of the Army, *FM 2-91.6, Soldier Surveillance and Reconnaissance: Fundamentals of Tactical Information Collection*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 2007), 4-7.

is the belief that cultural understanding and the integration of all elements of national power is necessary for a successful counterinsurgency. Negative effects of cultural relativism and ethnocentrism are also recognized:

Cultural knowledge is essential to waging a successful counterinsurgency. American ideals of what is “normal” or what is “rational” are not universal...For this reason, counterinsurgencies—especially commanders, planners, and small-unit leaders—should strive to avoid imposing their ideals of normalcy on a foreign cultural problem.⁷⁴

Chapter 3 discusses intelligence, and instructs that commanders and staffs should “identify and analyze the culture of a society as a whole and of each major group” and describes culture as the identity, beliefs, values, attitudes and perceptions, belief systems, and cultural forms of the society or group,” adding substance to the definition found in FM 3-0 and JP 1-02.⁷⁵ Following theory from Kilcullen, the manual recommends finding a political and cultural advisor in order to provide a staff member whose function is to assist the commander in shaping the environment, rather than merely understanding the environment. The great success of the implementation of FM 3-24 in Iraq is a testament to a foundation built on sound counterinsurgency theory and principles of cultural understanding.

The second manual is FM 3-05.130, which focuses on indirect methods for compelling an enemy during unconventional warfare. As the manual that describes how U.S. Special Forces work through surrogates to influence the outcome of a struggle for power, it is vitally important that cultural knowledge play an important role in this mission. Annex H, *The Role of History and Culture*, is an excellent reference for a tactical or operational level commander or planner to gain an understanding of how culture is developed and how it affects the operating environment. The annex outlines “culture, society, civilization, state, nation, race, ethnic group, tribe, clan, band,

⁷⁴ Department of the Army, *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 2006), 1-15.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-7–3-8.

tradition, mythology, folklore, and religion” as the facets of human terrain, and briefly surveys each concept.⁷⁶ Although not comprehensive, the concepts discussed in this annex provide a broad understanding of the sociological characteristics that define a population. Cultural understanding is increasingly having an impact on the writing of doctrinal manuals. However, the integration of culture into planning processes and procedures for analyzing culture to provide a comprehensive understanding of the operating environment remains a deficiency overcome only by the ability of units learning on the ground.

Cultural Force Multipliers

Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations are the two branches of the Army most relevant to a discussion about the interface between military forces and the population. Civil-Military Operations (CMO) are those activities of a commander that are focused on interaction with the civilian populace in order to facilitate military operations and to consolidate and achieve U.S. objectives. The overarching intent of CMO is to reduce friction between the civilian population and the military force.⁷⁷ Civil Affairs Teams (CATs) attached to brigades are charged with providing an interface between military leaders and the local governance structure of the indigenous population. CATs assist a unit in accomplishing CMO and execute the following core tasks:

- Populace and resources control (PRC)
- Foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA)
- Civil information management (CIM)
- Nation assistance (NA)
- Support to civil administration (SCA)

⁷⁶ Department of the Army, FM 3-05.130, *Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 2008), Annex H.

⁷⁷ Department of the Army, FM 3-05.40, *Civil Affairs Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 2006), 1-1.

Appendix D of FM 3-05.40 outlines the “Civil Affairs Area Study and Assessment.” Significant portions of the survey require a study of the culture and social structure of the area, as well as languages and religious aspects. Although the primary function of civil affairs is to interact with the population, they do not possess a cultural expert as a member of the team or any true ability to conduct ethnographic research. However, the function of civil affairs and the training and experience in the civil affairs branch produce cultural generalists that are significantly attuned to observing, understanding, and interacting with other cultures.

Psychological Operations (PSYOP) are designed to inform and influence a foreign target audience (TA), with the purpose of supporting national objectives. PSYOP accomplish this mission through conveying a message that influences the “emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign audiences.”⁷⁸ Five traditional roles of PSYOP forces are:⁷⁹

- Influence foreign populations
- Advise the commander
- Provide public information
- Serve as the supported commander’s voice
- Counter enemy propaganda, misinformation, disinformation, and opposing information

Similar to civil affairs, PSYOPS forces are often directed to communicate with the population through direct and indirect means, but do not have a function dedicated to understanding the culture organic to the organization.

⁷⁸ Department of the Army, *FM 3-05.30, Psychological Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, April 2005), 1-2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

Training Cultural Awareness

Although the military is often viewed as progressive in regards to integrating diversity, a dichotomy exists between training for cultural awareness in the everyday workplace as opposed to training soldiers to interact with the population during war. To meet the needs of the contemporary security environment, the military must shift the paradigm on cultural training “from one which restrains Americans to one that empowers.”⁸⁰ Cultural awareness training and cross-cultural competence are two distinct concepts. Cross-cultural competence is defined as the “ability to quickly and accurately comprehend, then appropriately and effectively engage individuals from distinct cultural backgrounds to achieve the desired effect.”⁸¹ This type of cultural training has generally been marginalized or non-existent in curriculums of the professional military education (PME) system. Additionally, cultural training is often delegated to lower units and conducted by well-intentioned leaders who do not have the requisite expertise in culture. Training with any level of a regional focus only occurs pre-deployment, and often involves information simply being disseminated down to the lowest level to be digested and taught. Progress is being made in transforming the curriculum of PME, and on 4 December 2008, the TRADOC Commander directed the initial implementation of the Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy (ACFLS). The directive to begin implementing the ACFLS recognizes that cultural and foreign language skills are an “imperative to meet future requirements in an era of persistent conflict in which operations will be frequently conducted among local populations.”⁸² Two initial steps being implemented immediately are the addition of a cultural research

⁸⁰ Stewart, *Friction in U.S. Foreign Policy: Cultural Difficulties with the World*, 18.

⁸¹ Brian R. Selmeski, *Military Cross-Cultural Competencies: Core Concepts and Individual Development*, AFCLC Contract Report 2007-01, (Royal Military College of Canada: US Air Force Culture and Language Center, 2007), 12.

⁸² GEN William S. Wallace, "Culture and Foreign Language Initial Guidance," *Memorandum for See Distribution*, (Fort Monroe, VA: TRADOC, December 4, 2008), 1.

assignment for all officers attending Basic Officer Leaders Course (BOLC) III and the Captains Career Course, and the hiring of culture and foreign language advisors at subordinate TRADOC organizations. This TRADOC strategy eventually will integrate cultural training into the curriculum at all levels of PME, beginning with BOLC I for officers and initial entry training for enlisted.

In February 2006, the TRADOC Culture Center (TCC) opened at the Military Intelligence Institute at Fort Huachuca. The initial vision of the center was to provide TRADOC with a capability for cross-cultural training, education and research and increase collaboration among military and civilian scholars. Under the preliminary charter, the center was to develop Middle Eastern and South East Asian cultural products, develop, refine and assess training standards within TRADOC, produce proficient cultural trainers, expand cyberspace initiatives dealing with cultural understanding, and to build partnerships with civilian and military institutions.⁸³ Although this organization has extensive research capabilities to focus on cultural matters, it does not possess the ability to conduct research on the human terrain in a local area of operations. The TCC developed a Professional Military Education (PME) Training Support Package (TSP) designed to integrate training of cross-cultural competence throughout the curriculum of military schooling beginning with initial entry training. The cultural TSP offers lessons in defining culture, discussions of American and personal culture that facilitates individuals identifying areas of conflict or bias, specific courses on Iraqi and Afghani culture, and the impact of culture on military operations.⁸⁴

⁸³ MAJ Remi Hajjar, "The Army's new TRADOC Culture Center," *Military Review*, (November-December 2006), 90-91.

⁸⁴ *TRADOC Culture Center*, <http://www.universityofmilitaryintelligence.us/tcc/cultural/default.asp> (accessed March 1, 2009).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Several conclusions are drawn from the analysis conducted in this monograph.

As the program currently exists, the HTS is having a significant impact at the operational level. However, at the tactical level the true impact is questionable, since teams are too small to support an entire brigade. They operate at the direction of the brigade commander, yet the true tactical requirement for cultural understanding is at the level where soldiers and officers interact daily with the population. In addition to the HTS lacking assets that support the tactical level, organic cultural capabilities of tactical formations are inadequate. It would be negligent to deploy a unit to a COIN environment that does not possess the ability to meet these requirements with assets organic to the unit. With conflict in every region and the complexity of the global security environment, it is extremely challenging to determine exactly when and where U.S. forces will deploy. This fact makes it questionable that a HTT with a regionally specific cultural expertise will always be available when units receive orders and deploy. Therefore, the solution for integrating cultural understanding at the tactical and operational level must be comprehensive, and focus on strengthening the capabilities organic to tactical units as well as providing external expertise from outside the organization.

The HTS does have weaknesses that must be addressed. More than any other function of the HTS, providing a social scientist who is an expert on the local culture is the most important asset provided to a brigade. However, recruitment of qualified social scientists with expertise on the areas where U.S. forces are deployed is a significant challenge that has plagued the program from inception. This results in social scientists learning right along with the soldiers, and needing a considerable amount of time to understand the population in order to be in a position to advise the commander. This situation is not helpful to the unit, and generates ill feelings towards the program from combat units. Next, the integration of anthropologists with military units inherently inhibits the normal way they conduct research. Generally, anthropologists seek to live amongst subjects and conduct study over an extended period, in an attempt to gain the trust of the subjects.

Military operations are conducted under extreme time-constraints, and trust of subjects is difficult to achieve under these conditions and when the social scientist is carrying a weapon and wearing a uniform similar to the military. Another problematic area is the relationship of the HTT to the brigade. From the perspective of the brigade, the HTT is another combat multiplier on a long list of attachments that they accept responsibility for upon deployment. As a new program, each HTT has had a unique command and control relationship with the brigade headquarters, most probably depending on the competence of the team leader and the personality of the brigade commander. A commander's guide to the HTS was published in an attempt to inform combat units on the function and organization of the HTS to alleviate this issue.

As described earlier, effective integration of cultural understanding in the planning and execution of counterinsurgency operations requires several capabilities assigned or attached to units at the tactical and operational level. These capabilities include having a cultural advisor, possessing the ability to conduct ethnographic research, having a data repository for maintaining and analyzing ethnographic information, and ensuring the force is culturally competent. Although the Human Terrain System does fulfill these requirements, several areas for improvement can be identified. To ensure the military is prepared for future contingencies, this monograph makes several recommendations to continue developing the military into a force adept at cultural interaction and ensuring the appropriate assets for cultural awareness are available when a unit is notified for deployment. First and most importantly, it is vital for every soldier to be proficient in cross-cultural skills and receive adequate regionally specific cultural training prior to any deployment. Second, although current Army publications increasingly recognize the role of culture in conflict, the military will not embrace cultural awareness until capstone doctrine does more to address culture. Third, cultural advisors must be assigned at the level where officers and soldiers interact with the population on a daily basis. Fourth, ethnographic research must be an organic capability of a brigade combat team in the event that a unit deploys without the benefits

of an HTT, and repository for collection of ethnographic data must be integrated with an existing battle command system.

Develop a Culturally Competent Force

Building a culturally competent force is an absolute imperative for the military and is the first area that must be addressed. It is certain that future conflict will involve considerable interaction with the indigenous population, and very likely that success will be directly dependent on the ability of the soldier on the ground to influence the population. Even with an HTT attached to a brigade a new lieutenant or sergeant will rarely have direct support from the team social scientist, and will often find themselves in situations where they must rely on their own ability to influence a member of the population. More than simply training a soldier in cultural understanding, cross-cultural competence manages expectations for situations encountered when operating in a culture with values and beliefs different from their own. Professional Military Education (PME) for both officers and enlisted members must include a progressive curriculum for cultural competence that progresses from entry level throughout the entirety of a career in the military. Numerous models for cross-cultural competence exist, and the Army needs to select one and begin implementation throughout every military school. One model recommends training the military through four levels of cross-cultural competence. At initial entry into the military officers and soldiers receive novice level training, and learn about cultural self-identity. Intermediate training focuses on developing company grade leadership into intra-cultural facilitators and teaches key domains of culture. Advanced training provides field grade officers with a broader context to cultural interaction, developing them further into pluri-cultural leaders. The final level

is to develop senior leaders of the Army into cross-cultural ambassadors, where adept interaction with national level figures is required.⁸⁵

Upon notification of deployment, units must also receive an intense block of training on the local population from experts on cultures within the expected area of operations. This training will build on the cultural skills that soldiers and officers gain during PME courses, and provide them with specific knowledge about the population. Although it will not apply directly to every tribe, village or religious entity encountered during deployment, it will establish a baseline upon which to build knowledge that is more focused to the area after arrival in theater. Training needs to be conducted by social scientists that have direct knowledge of the population and can be from the HTS. If an HTT that will be working with a brigade is identified early enough, this pre-deployment training is an ideal opportunity to get to know and interact with the leadership and the soldiers in the brigade prior to deployment. In the end, the most important recommendation to integrate cultural understanding at the tactical level is for the military to continue to resource training that will produce a culturally competent force.

Infuse Doctrine with Cultural Understanding

After experiencing insurgency in several French colonies, Galula recognized the need to adapt the military to the new mission. He noted that it is “important that the minds of the leaders and men—and this includes civilian as well as military—be adapted also to the special demands of counterinsurgency warfare.”⁸⁶ The U.S. military has adapted well after the first eight years of sustained conflict, but must take steps to ensure cultural understanding is systemically integrated throughout our understanding of operational art and is an enduring aspect of our military culture.

⁸⁵ Selmeski, *Military Cross-Cultural Competencies: Core Concepts and Individual Development*, AFCLC Contract Report 2007-01, 19.

⁸⁶ Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, 94-95.

Doctrinal development is the method to ensure that lessons from the past eight years of battling insurgency are not lost. Currently, doctrine lacks a useful definition of culture and lacks sufficient guidance for inserting cultural understanding into deliberate planning processes. Along with a definition of culture, it is important that a methodology for planning ethnographic research be outlined for use by a battalion and brigade staffs to gather relevant data on the population. Deliberate planning processes also must emphasize culture. In the military decision-making process (MDMP) cultural considerations already have a location during mission analysis (MA), but are rarely emphasized to the point where they play a significant role in development and selection of a course of action (COA). Operational doctrine must more explicitly describe cultural considerations and explain how to integrate those considerations into planning processes. When dealing with the complexity of social interactions, the emerging concept of campaign design is a superb method for gaining situational understanding. At its core, the concept of design is about iterative learning, and when operating within a culture with different values and beliefs this iterative learning is a critical skill.

Cultural Advisors at the Tactical Level

As an asset assigned to a brigade, the HTT is having minimal impact at the tactical level. In COIN it is a reasonable argument that brigades conduct operational planning, and therefore the HTT is invaluable as an advisor to the brigade commander and staff. However, the team of researchers and analysts is too small and has very little interaction with company commanders and platoon leaders who have the most contact with the population. A social scientist is required at the battalion level to advise the commander and staff, along with a research manager to assist in collection and analysis of ethnographic data for the battalion. At a minimum, a competent cultural generalist must be assigned at the company level to advise the company commander about how to interact with and gain understanding of the population. A critical requirement for the social scientists assigned to an HTT is a regionally specific expertise on the local area of

operations. Unfortunately, there is generally a shortage of qualified anthropologists who are experts in the regions where U.S. forces are deployed and who are willing to work alongside the military. HTS began in 2006 and employed teams to Iraq in 2007. This time constraint resulted in recruiting problems, and the program has been unable to fill the social science positions with actual experts on the Iraqi society. Consequently, the right people have not been hired in every case to fill the positions and some HTTs have been forced to learn right alongside the unit on the ground. This is an unacceptable situation that is in direct conflict with the intent of the program. Linguists often serve as the cultural expert for battalion and company commanders in lieu of any other viable option. This is problematic for several reasons, including the fact that linguists lack sufficient training in cross-cultural competence and have the potential for conflicts of interest when hired from the local population. If having a cultural advisor is a true requirement in COIN, then all leaders at the tactical level deserve to deploy with a cultural advisor.

Ethnographic Research Capability at the Operational Level

The next recommendation is for an ethnographic research capability to be integrated into the division and brigade staffs. This function can be incorporated into the civil military operations center or as another function of the operations section. However, it should not be handled directly by either the intelligence section that focuses on targeting enemy combatants or by the civil affairs team that focuses on engagement of local government and community influential leaders. Collection of ethnographic data can be conducted through a multitude of methods, including on the ground collection by subordinate units. In fact, this might be the most effective method since it requires tactical units to comprehensively learn about the environment during collection efforts. If done correctly, the inevitable outcome of the process is relationships with local community leaders, respect of the population, visibility within the area of operations, and a true understanding of the population. After collection, a computerized system is required within an existing battle command system to store and analyze the data. Map-HT Toolkit was developed by

the HTS and facilitates the analysis of ethnographic information through reports and graphical representation of the data. The issue with Map-HT Toolkit is that it is only available to members of the HTT, and in order to gain and share understanding the information must be available on a system accessible to the entire unit. CPOF is the battle command system the Army is adopting, and examples have proved that CPOF can be used to collect and share ethnographic data.

In Conclusion

Since future wars are extremely difficult to predict in terms of the nature and location of conflict, basing the ability to gain cultural understanding on an asset that is not organic within tactical formations is an unacceptable risk. This statement does not mean that HTS as a program should be eliminated, but that units must be prepared to go without in the event that either an HTT is unavailable or the assigned HTT does not have the locally specific expertise required. Even Civil Affairs forces are dealing with critical shortages, and units are not guaranteed those forces are always available. Having the advice of a social scientist is an invaluable asset to a commander, and although still in the early stages of development the HTS provides this expertise. A positive trend is that through ingenuity and creativity units on the ground in Iraq have proved that gaining cultural understanding can be achieved without external augmentation. The true benefit of the HTS is in immature theaters where units are still learning the intricacies of the population. In Iraq, most of the leadership above the rank of sergeant have already deployed at least once previously. Looking beyond Iraq to prepare for U.S. engagements in theaters that cannot be predicted, it is critical that concrete steps are taken to ensure the force becomes competent in cultural matters and are provided with the necessary resources to be successful in complex counterinsurgency environments. This includes continuing to improve and resource the HTS. Like all new ideas, the HTS has faced challenges during the initial years after inception. The operational requirement in Iraq demanded the HTS integrate social scientists with tactical units before the concept had been fully developed, exacerbating the challenges. This turmoil

should not result in the program being prematurely cancelled, since the concept of integrating the social sciences at the tactical and operational level remains sound. The need for cultural understanding in counterinsurgency is critical to success, and HTTs that have deployed with the capabilities intended by the program have proved to be an invaluable asset to tactical and operational commanders.

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