

Integrating Social Sciences and Intelligence

By 2LT Lindsey Champion

Army leaders recognize the importance of socio-cultural dynamics in Iraq and Afghanistan but are continually facing challenges on how to prepare soldiers for these dilemmas. In 2003, the Pentagon began the Human Terrain System project in hopes of meeting the military's local cultural and ethnographic intelligence needs. Understanding culture in Iraq and Afghanistan is instrumental for the military. With the proper understanding, the military is able to influence the population through non-lethal means by promoting stability, peace and economic and social development. The purpose of this paper is to highlight a solution to the Army's increasing need for accurate socio-cultural intelligence among junior officers and enlisted ranks by requiring anthropology and sociology training in basic courses.

According to then Major General Benjamin C. Freakley, "Cultural awareness will not necessarily always enable us to predict what the enemy and noncombatants will do, but it will help us better understand what motivates them...and how we can either elicit the support of the population or at least diminish their support and aid the enemy."¹ Current forces deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan often lack the cultural knowledge to maximize the effects of the military decision-making process. In the counter-insurgency fight, it has become evident that the civil societies in Iraq and Afghanistan are the center of gravity. The civil society disrupts as unmet expectations emerge and feed a growing insurgency. The people often tolerate insurgencies because of their own dissatisfactions. This toleration often fuels an insurgency. Thus, it is imperative for the military to accurately understand these unmet expectations

¹ Benjamin C. Freakley, "Cultural Awareness and Combat Power," *Infantry* vol. 94, (2005): 1-2.

and frustrations of the civil societies in Iraq and Afghanistan. “It is imperative to view them from the perspective of the cultures in which the insurgencies are being waged.”² LTG Peter Chiarelli, former Commanding General, Multi-National Corps-Iraq further detailed the cultural intelligence gap in Iraq stating, “I asked my Brigade Commanders what was the number one thing that they would have liked to have had more of, and they all said cultural knowledge.”³

In order to meet this need, the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO), a U.S. Army Training and Doctrine command (TRADOC) organization established the Human Terrain System in order to “integrate and apply socio-cultural knowledge of the indigenous civilian population to military operations in support of the commander’s objectives.”⁴ This program is meant to address cultural awareness shortcomings at the operational and tactical levels and introduced the concept of “human terrain.” Human terrain is defined as the social, ethnographic, cultural, economic and political elements of the people among whom a force is operating by Montgomery McFate, one of the main architects of the Human Terrain Team.⁵ The Human Terrain Team (HTT) is the core building block of the Human Terrain System. The HTT includes five personnel (two military and three civilian) that are embedded in each forward-deployed brigade or regimental staff. The team will consist of the HTT leader, a cultural analyst, a regional studies analyst, a human terrain research manager and a human terrain analyst.

² Jacob Kipp, Lester Grau, Karl Prinslow, Don Smith, “The Human Terrain System” *Military Review* (2006): 8-15.

³ Accessed from <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/> 21 November 2008.

⁴ Accessed from <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/> 21 November 2008.

⁵ Noah Shachtman, “Army Anthropologist’s Controversial Culture Clash” *Wired*, 23 September 2008. Accessed from <http://blog.wired.com/defense/2008/09/controversial-a.html>.

The HTT also can employ its reach back connectivity to a network of subject-matter experts (SME). In 2007, Secretary Gates authorized a forty million dollar expansion of the program. As of October 2007, the number of teams in Baghdad was expanded from one to six; thus, HTTs are eventually expected to be assigned to each of the 26 combat brigades in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶

HTTs on the ground are currently contributing to military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Since HTTs were first deployed, several officers have praised their ability to improve socio-cultural understanding. Colonel Martin Schweitzer, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, noted that the unit's combat operations had reduced by sixty percent after the employment of the HTT.⁷ However, HTTs are only at the brigade and regimental levels, which may leave battalions and lower with a disadvantage in the military decision making process. Additionally, the military personnel on HTTs are often majors and above. While HTTs provide key information to brigade commanders, focus should also be given to lower echelons. Each echelon in a brigade has its own respective area of operation (AO) which also has unique human terrain issues. A five person team may not necessarily have the capability to analyze the socio-cultural structures in an entire brigade AO as possible.⁸

HTTs are legally prohibited from collecting actionable intelligence. The HTTs do not collect intelligence or have a role in targeting. The role of the HTTs is to advise soldiers and leaders on how to interact with locals within the area of operations and to help them understand the population. The HTS is an

⁶ Accessed from <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/> 21 November 2008.

⁷ Col. Martin P. Schweitzer, "Report before the House Armed Services Committee, Terrorism, and Unconventional Threats Sub-Committee and the Research and the Research & Education Subcommittee of the Science & Technology Committee, 24 April 2008, Washington, D.C.

⁸ Jacob Kipp, Lester Grau, Karl Prinslow, Don Smith, "The Human Terrain System" Military Review (2006): 8-15.

open-source, non-classified program that uses social scientists. And, while HTTs have found some successes, in the United States, HTTs are still considered controversial. The American Anthropological Association has demonstrated disdain for HTTs stating that the Army program violates the AAA code of ethics. In order to meet these possible structural and ethical challenges, commanders should focus on training military intelligence personnel in anthropology and sociology. While anthropologists and social scientists are legally prohibited from collecting intelligence on the population, military intelligence personnel are not ethically prohibited from gaining a better cultural understanding. HTTs provide great cultural insight to brigades, but are placed in a position that may undermine their effectiveness because of homefront controversy, high level dissemination and an inability to synthesize cultural awareness and intelligence to produce more timely information for military objectives.⁹

It is true that military intelligence officers and enlisted personnel especially need additional cultural awareness training for deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. However, instead of focusing on specific cultures, the Military Intelligence Corps should focus on providing intelligence personnel the framework for how to understand cultures through anthropology and sociology training. This way, intelligence professionals will be able to adapt to the changing contemporary operational environment, analyze differences in sub-cultures within the area of operations, and begin to exploit the socio-cultural intelligence to enhance military objectives.

The first course of action I recommend is to require ROTC and West Point cadets three credit hours of Anthropology and/or Sociology for those

⁹ Jacob Kipp, Lester Grau, Karl Prinslow, Don Smith, "The Human Terrain System" Military Review (2006): 8-15.

entering the Military Intelligence Branch. Currently, ROTC and West Point cadets learn what their branch will be by at least the completion of their junior year in college. This allows for cadets interested in branching military intelligence to plan ahead by taking the required course and for those did not plan ahead, an additional year to take the course. A challenge to overcome in this course of action is that not all colleges have an anthropology or sociology course offered in the course catalog. Additionally, even if all the colleges have the courses they will not all be the same or taught with the same books/materials. One way to overcome that is to develop a curriculum for Anthropology or Sociology and add it to the ROTC program, as well as the core curriculum at West Point. An alternative approach to this course of action is to provide ROTC and West Point cadets incentives for majoring in a social science or taking social science courses.

A second course of action I recommend is to insert Anthropology/Sociology course into the Military Intelligence Basic Officer Leadership Course (MIBOLC). I recommend adding an additional four week long course centered entirely on social sciences and intelligence, and how to exploit cultural understanding in intelligence collection. A possible challenge for this course of action is that there is not enough time or funds to add an additional component to MIBOLC. If an additional phase is not feasible, I would recommend that anthropology or sociology theories be added to the Critical Thinking section and the Van Deman Program. Additionally, MIBOLC should consider recruiting former HTT leaders for guest lectures. A similar program can also be added to the Military Intelligence Advanced Individual Training (AIT), as well as the NCO Academy.

A third course of action I recommend is to require both military

intelligence officers and enlisted personnel to complete an online course for anthropology and sociology. This course would occur after basic training, once soldiers reach their units. S-2 shops or MI platoons could take the course simultaneously, which allows for officers in those units to facilitate the course and discussion on the importance of social sciences in intelligence. The course could occur in cycles as to facilitate the incoming and outgoing personnel. This course of action will be cost effective and will not required additional time away from units. The online program could be ran by a team of experts with a background in Human Intelligence at Fort Huachuca. A possible course of action in the future could entail creating a new MOS intended specifically for the purposes of anthropology or sociology and human intelligence.

These courses of action require funding, development and time in order to be effective. If none of these are feasible at this time, I recommend the HTTs should implement the following actions in order to aid military intelligence personnel's understanding of the battlefield: have briefings with military intelligence officers below brigade in order to familiarize them with anthropological and sociological intelligence, provide military intelligence personnel access to the reachback link which draws on government and academic sources to answer any cultural or ethnographic questions, and train military intelligence personnel on analyzing human terrain through HTT products.

Lastly, as military intelligence personnel continue to use Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) as a framework for military decision-making, focus should be added to Step 2: Describe the Battlefield Effects. This step requires terrain analysis, weather analysis and analysis of other characteristics of the battlefield. IPB should specifically specify human terrain

analysis, how to analyze it and provide patterns for prediction.¹⁰ In addition to designing a Pattern Analysis Wheel, Incident Overlay, and (priority intelligence requirements) PIRs for example, military intelligence personnel should possibly adopt some of the HTTs products such as social network mapping and creating a database of cultural traits.

The Human Terrain System, effectively employed in 2006, has demonstrated the great need for socio-cultural understanding. Human Terrain Teams are aiding brigades and regiments in Iraq and Afghanistan and influencing force protection. The Military Intelligence Corps can take these lessons learned from Human Terrain Teams and exploit them for intelligence collection. In addition to traditional forms of intelligence, socio-cultural intelligence is needed even more in a counterinsurgency fight. United States military leaders recognize that in our modern irregular warfare, victory is not solely a military victory. Instead, stability is the sought after prize. At the heart of stability or political unrest are people's desires and expectations. If military intelligence professionals focus on the human terrain, it will enhance intelligence collection and consequently aid in the stabilization of Afghanistan and Iraq. By synthesizing social sciences and military intelligence, the United States military as a whole will benefit and aid countries towards stabilization in the process.

2LT Lindsey Marie Champion was born and raised in Miami, Florida and attended from Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart for her secondary education. While in highschool, she played tennis and ran cross-country. A graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, LT Champion majored in Comparative Politics. At the academy, she participated in the Gospel Choir, Women's Cross-country and track, and Powerlifting. LT Champion is currently assigned as the assistant S2 to 3-82 General Support Aviation Battalion at Fort Bragg, NC.

¹⁰ FM 34-130

