American Anthropology in Conflict: An Introduction

The concept of "saving lives", for many anthropologists, can devolve into irresoluble moral debate as to what can be considered a "life". For similar reasons, many anthropologists conclude that anthropology is not in and of itself a life-saving discipline. Despite this, humanitarian endeavors such as securing basic utilities, empowering the lowest levels of society, or protecting innocent people from undue harm—actions that improve lives, if not "save" them—have not been condemned by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) as inappropriate or unethical applications of anthropological expertise. Indeed, they are practically enshrined in the organization's Code of Ethics. However, the local population is now the focus in the United States military's new counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan—its *protection*, *service* and *empowerment* now mission critical. Thus, humanitarian endeavors otherwise acceptable to the AAA are enfolded within the military strategy of a widely condemned war. The resulting ethical dilemma serves as the central topic of this thesis.

The dilemma stems from the controversial Human Terrain System (HTS), a new military program that hires social scientists to gather ethnographic data to aid U.S. military commanders in their counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In counterinsurgency, "victory" is often characterized as winning the 'hearts and minds' of the local population. This type of victory is thought to be achieved by establishing national and local governments that are viewed by the surrounding populations as legitimate and representative of their needs, thus depriving the local or transnational insurgencies of their support base in the local population (FM 3-24:37-39). To accomplish this, the military commanders on the ground need cultural savvy and an ethnographic map of what they call the "human terrain," or the social and cultural element of the environment (Human Terrain System CONOP, July 2008 quoted in Finney 2008:3), that they apparently believe only social scientists have the expertise to adequately provide. These Human Terrain System social scientists reveal to military commanders alternative, less violent routes to their mission's objectives (such as job training for widows (Gates 2008)), thus reducing the need for the use of force, and therefore the probability of civilian and military casualties.

In October of 2007, however, the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association, the discipline's largest professional organization, issued a formal opposition to the Human Terrain System on the grounds that the program violates some of the profession's ethics set in place by the Association's Code of Ethics (AAA 2007b). Their report states five ethical concerns they feel make HTS condemnable, worth quoting here at length:

1. "As military contractors working in settings of war, HTS anthropologists work in situations where it will not always be possible for them to distinguish themselves from military personnel and identify themselves as anthropologists. This places a significant constraint on their ability to fulfill their ethical responsibility as anthropologists to disclose who they are and what they are doing.

2. HTS anthropologists are charged with responsibility for negotiating relations among a number of groups, including both local populations and the U.S. military units that employ them and in which they are embedded. Consequently, HTS anthropologists may have responsibilities to their U.S. military units in war zones that conflict with their obligations to the persons they study or consult, specifically the obligation, stipulated in the AAA Code of Ethics, to do no harm to those they study (section III, A, 1).

3. HTS anthropologists work in a war zone under conditions that make it difficult for those they communicate with to give "informed consent" without coercion, or for this consent to be taken at face value or freely refused. As a result, "voluntary informed consent" (as stipulated by the AAA Code of Ethics, section III, A, 4) is compromised.

4. As members of HTS teams, anthropologists provide information and counsel to U.S. military field commanders. This poses a risk that information provided by HTS anthropologists could be used to make decisions about identifying and selecting specific populations as targets of U.S. military operations either in the short or long term. Any such use of fieldwork-derived information would violate the stipulations in the AAA Code of Ethics that those studied not be harmed (section III A, 1) [...]

5. Because HTS identifies anthropology and anthropologists with U.S. military operations, this identification—given the existing range of globally dispersed understandings of U.S. militarism—may create serious difficulties for, including grave risks to the personal safety of, many non-HTS anthropologists and the people they study." (AAA Statement-on-HTS 2007)

Simultaneously, an independent group called the Network of Concerned Anthropologists sent out an online pledge of non-participation in counterinsurgency programs like the Human Terrain System (NCA website, accessed 2009). Public critics of the program, which by all appearances represent the vast majority of anthropologists' opinions on this subject, claim that the HTS program could or does violate anthropological ethics. The resulting conclusion is that the Human Terrain System conflicts with anthropology's primary ethical obligation to protect its informants from harm and is therefore inherently unsupportable. Other anthropologists, however, are already working in the program and the HTS recruitment office is reportedly backlogged (Silverman, personal communication). Consequently, debate arose over the propriety of such an anthropological engagement and it continues to this day, as does the program itself, jeopardizing the reputation of the discipline and placing, or leaving, many people in harm's way.

In this thesis I take an unpopular stance and argue that the AAA's condemnation of the Human Terrain System is misguided. I aim to show that the Human Terrain System, for all its inherent political and associative compromises, so far, has not violated the discipline's ethics, and evidently offers anthropologists the best current opportunity for making U.S. military leaders more deferent to the ethics of the discipline. By escorting social scientists into dangerous war-torn areas, like Baghdad or Khost, the Human Terrain System seems to allow anthropologists to be more than just bystanders conjecturing on the suffering and cultural resilience of the local people from afar. Instead it seems to enable anthropologists to reduce harmful military actions, representing and empowering the local people in a way that traditional anthropology, unescorted by military personnel, has been unable to produce in either country outside of the system. In other words, the program allows anthropologists to uphold their primary ethical obligation by working to protect their informants from the harm they would otherwise suffer had HTS' "non-lethal alternatives" never been presented.

While ethical violations, in and of themselves, are perfectly valid reasons to moderate or mollify support for a program like the Human Terrain System, I argue that the AAA Executive Board's condemnation of the program, and their concerns over its ethical violations, are unfounded in substantial empirical evidence. In fact, more evidence exists for the opposite claim. Therefore, I ask that any condemnation of the program be relocated to grounds other than

"ethical violations" until evidence is obtained that such violations exist. Instead, this thesis suggests that conversation within the discipline should focus on either: A) drawing a clearer, more substantial line between anthropology and war, or, conversely, B) exploring the possibility of blurring this line without losing the critical power of the discipline and its ability to represent the interests of the "underdogs"—the people suffering imperialism or other unjust forms of power.

  The problem I see with current conversations is that many critical arguments seem to reflect confusion over *why* exactly the program is condemnable. For instance, critics of the program frequently cite the lack of evidence that shows HTS has been successful in reducing casualties or producing any of the other positive results that proponents of the program claim it can produce. Would the HTS program be acceptable *if* it worked? The answer to that question depends on two things: 1) if the program violates anthropological ethics or not, and 2) how the anthropologist feels about the greater engagement in which HTS exists. If the anthropologist is *not* politically against the War in Iraq or Afghanistan and the Human Terrain System is able to produce benefits for local Iraqi and Afghan civilians without violating the discipline's ethics, then there is little to no dilemma. Even if the Human Terrain System were to be unsuccessful at producing positive outcomes, if anthropological ethics are not violated, little to no dilemma would exist.

  The Human Terrain System only becomes problematic for anthropologists when either A) the program violates anthropological ethics or B) the anthropologist views the war in Iraq and Afghanistan as inherently unjust, and thus wholly unsupportable, engagements. If the Human Terrain System violates anthropological ethics, then there is little political justification that could justify engagement with the program. In other words, the ends would not justify the means. On the other hand, if the program violates the anthropologist's political, and thus ethical, stance then no means no matter how ethical could justify the end. Under this rubric, however, the Human Terrain System is condemnable even if it is effective and thus it is unclear why critics have brought up the program's supposed ineffectiveness at all.

  By framing the Human Terrain System as a violator of *anthropological* ethics rather than as one acting organization in politically condemned war, I worry that the AAA's ruling has discouraged further investigation into the program's possible merits. Indeed, my conversations with colleagues revealed an apparent consensus of opposition that was sometimes tempered by the presentation of contradicting evidence. For instance, when told that the Human Terrain System did not aid "lethal-targeting" (see Chapter 4) as many were concerned it did, some of my colleagues reconsidered their condemnation of the program. In characterizing the Human Terrain System as a violator of anthropological ethics, it seems the AAA has answered a deeply personal and moral question for a significant portion of the American anthropological community. The AAA's condemnation is no doubt politically agreeable for many American anthropologists and thus seems to have invalidated further inquiry as to validity of its characterization of the Human Terrain System. I found the consensus problematic and, as an anthropologist taught to question dominant ideologies, felt compelled to challenge this status quo. This thesis and its, sometimes sweeping, claims were the result.

  This thesis contains essentially two different types of arguments. The first is based heavily on my research and the evidence is presented in order to show how the Human Terrain System does not violate anthropological ethics as the AAA's Executive Board claims. Such arguments take up the bulk of this paper. Arguments in the second category are based less on empirical evidence than they are a type of moral reasoning. This second category of arguments is crucial

when initiating the sort of conversations necessary for anthropology to remain a truly ethical discipline. I have read the AAA Code of Ethics as a document designed precisely to preserve and promote "life-saving" or "harm-reducing" opportunities, even if solely for the "informants" with whom the anthropologist works. The Human Terrain System certainly enables anthropologists to do more to uphold this ethical end, albeit via politically uncomfortable means, than the AAA's condemnation and lack of alternative solutions ever could.

Situating the Author

When dealing with a topic as controversial and polarizing as the Human Terrain System, which stems in part from an even more controversial war, it is difficult to separate emotional and political bias from "objective" argument. Conversations about the Human Terrain System thus are often also conversations about the War in Iraq. Part of me wishes discussions about HTS could happen without arguing about the War in Iraq, that it could be judged in a political vacuum or with some consideration of the Human Terrain System's applications outside of the War in Iraq. Despite this desire, it seems only appropriate to disclose my own political and emotional biases when dealing with a subject as controversial as this, as well as my reasons for writing this thesis.

In my opinion, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did not result from the Bush administration's benevolence or from some generous desire by the United States to spread democracy around the world. The wars' objectives are, in part, to establish Western-friendly democracies in order to secure geopolitically and economically strategic countries in the Middle East, enabling the United States to further protect and extend its interests around the world. While I believe these engagements stem mostly from the cold logic of *realpolitik*, I also see that there are other moral or benevolent consequences too often overlooked within these engagements that can provide real benefits for the people in the region. I believe Human Terrain System offers an opportunity to expedite the realization of such benefits while lessening the cost. Furthermore, I do not believe political or moral opposition to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq absolves opponents from the obligation of simultaneously attempting to shape the conflict in order to create the most positive outcomes for the innocent Iraqi and Afghan civilians—especially when disengagement or non-engagement would leave only negative outcomes as possibilities.

While I am aware of the ethical pitfalls and compromises of such work as the Human Terrain System, I am admittedly biased in my support of the Human Terrain System, for I see it as an effort to remove innocent civilians from harm's way, reduce the need for combat operations, and make the U.S. military more respectful and attentive to the needs of the local populace. This bias exists with the knowledge that the program's work does not stem from some unconditional concern for the welfare of the locals but from the counterinsurgent strategy to support U.S. strategic interests in the region. In this case, I take a short-term morality, placing the preservation of current Iraqi and Afghan lives at a higher priority than any anti-imperial aspirations. In other words, the ends justify the means, especially because the means are anthropologically ethical. I do not feel like I am, as an American, in a position to place my political opinions higher than the lives of Iraqi or Afghan civilians. If the program did nothing but aid combat and "targeting," with no benefit to the local populations, then my support for the program would be retracted, if not entirely reversed. With each bit of information that becomes available, the Human Terrain System proves more ethical in function and design than any alternative solutions its critics have proposed. Furthermore, the Human Terrain System seems to

employ anthropologists in a unique U.S. effort to counter any of its imperial ambitions in the two countries. That, I definitely can support.

Methodology

In order to understand the HTS controversy I focused predominantly on the published articles or books relating to the engagement of anthropologists with the military, generally, and the Human Terrain System, specifically, rather than my own interviews with such personnel. I felt these public sources most relevant because their authors publicly engage the debate, thus shaping the opinions of many anthropologists, professionals and students alike, in regards to the Human Terrain System. The majority of articles published are in opposition to the program and they largely frame the discussions and perspectives of anthropologists accordingly, determining how far alternative arguments are to be pursued. This thesis takes the less popular arguments a little further.

I also consult primary sources at the center of this debate, including the military's new counterinsurgency field manual, the *FM 3-24*, and a leaked draft of the *Human Terrain Handbook*. These sources are crucial in revealing how the military is actually thinking about how to win the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, I was able to interview only one HTS personnel because most of these individuals are incommunicado, perhaps to avoid professional stigmatization. Many others were still deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan, too busy to answer my questions about the HTS program, did not respond to my e-mails, or were just plain impossible to get a hold of. Thankfully, the one interview with an HTS member that I did obtain rather late in the writing process, from Dr. Adam Silverman, proved a very informative and crucial source. Though both Silverman and General Petraeus are mentioned numerous times, I do not intend to represent the entire diversity of opinion and priorities amongst military and HTS personnel through them but rather, to use them as exemplars of their respective programs' mindset.

I was not able to do participant observation of the work of the Human Terrain System in Iraq or Afghanistan, for reasons both obvious and relevant to this thesis, so instead was forced to rely on these documents in order to understand how both the military and anthropologists are discussing the issue and framing their ideologies. My inability and unwillingness to risk life and limb (and graduation) to go to Iraq or Afghanistan is not an isolated case. For instance, at the George and Mary Foster Library in Kroeber Hall at UC Berkeley, there is a large world map on the wall dotted with pins representing the locations of UC Berkeley dissertations for the past 100 years. There are no pins in Iraq and only one in Afghanistan, representing an ethnography carried out over 50 years ago. With the unprecedented level of anthropologists now in both countries due to their involvement with the Human Terrain System, American anthropology's current lack of alternatives to the program appears to have a historic precedent worth noting.

Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is broken into five brief chapters. Chapter 1 gives a brief history of the events in the War in Iraq that lead to the implementation of the U.S. military's new counterinsurgency strategy for winning the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Chapter 2 shows how this new strategy of counterinsurgency is based on the doctrine outlined in a document known as the *FM 3-24*. This new counterinsurgency field manual revolutionizes military doctrine, attempts to 'culturize' warriors, and creates the ideological and strategic foundation from which the Human Terrain

System arises. I aim to show how this new counterinsurgency doctrine attempts to further its strategic ends by utilizing reconstruction and security for the civilian population, an act normally left to more humanitarian organizations, to further its strategic ends.

In Chapter 3, I provide an outline of the Human Terrain System. As one HTT member complained, it seems that "most of these critics really have the foggiest notion of what we are trying to do. They're not engaging with us" (Silverman, personal communication). In this chapter I engage with the program to correct the misconceptions surrounding the Human Terrain System that seem to obscure avenues for further inquiry. In Chapter 4, I aim to complicate the AAA's condemnation of the program and to defrost the apparent consensus surrounding the Human Terrain System. I show in this chapter that HTS does not violate anthropological ethics, as the AAA claims it does, and is less at-risk of such violation than currently believed.

In Chapter 5 I claim that a program that does not violate the AAA Code of Ethics should not be subject to condemnation on those grounds. I ask that if the program is anthropologically ethical yet politically condemnable, should not the American anthropological community feel compelled to produce alternative engagements? If so, where are these alternative engagements? I suggest that for these areas of the world that have extreme violence, perhaps the Human Terrain System is a form of what I call escorted ethnography. Essentially, the military protects the anthropologist so that he or she can offer witness and voice to civilians who are being (mis)represented by both insurgent and counterinsurgent forces. In condemning escorted ethnography, the AAA seems to be "passively waiting" for the violence to cease before it will allow anthropologists to engage such a region (Nancy Scheper-Hughes 1995:416). I conclude that while this position is politically agreeable, it is anthropologically unethical.

Chapter 1: The 'Surge' and the Shift in U.S. Military Strategy in the Middle East
"The [Human Rights Watch] report concludes that each new photo of an American soldier humiliating an Iraqi could be considered a recruiting poster for al Qaeda. Policies adopted to make the United States more secure from terrorism have in fact made it more vulnerable. America is losing the war for hearts and minds around the world & there is a mounting resentment against the U.S. polices. It is obvious that the 'War against Terrorism' cannot be won by spreading more tyranny & terror." (Saleem 2007:13)

The quote above is from an article by a staunch critic of the war and the 'Surge'(s), Muhammad Saleem (2007:13), yet it might as well have been from an internal report of the Department of Defense. While the quote is critical of failing U.S. policies it simultaneously provides guidance towards a solution and guidance towards victory in the 'Global War on Terror'. In this chapter, I aim to show that U.S. leadership came to a conclusion similar to that of the Human Rights Watch and thus reviewed and altered the way the military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan conduct business. I show how this shift in policy is shown to be successful by an accompanying and sharp drop in civilian and military casualties and the positive shift in the tide of the engagements. Many people are aware of the 'Surge' in Iraq in 2007 yet fewer are aware of the reasons for, and effects of, the decision to increase troop numbers and implement a new strategy across Iraq. This knowledge, however, is crucial to an understanding of the Human Terrain System.

Over the three years following the initial invasion of Iraq and declaration of victory against

Saddam's Ba'athist government in Iraq and five years after the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the U.S.-led Coalition quickly lost control of both countries, particularly Iraq, as violence between different groups increased and the insurgencies emerged. The "impression amongst the masses" was that the U.S. was losing the war in Iraq and Afghanistan (Saleem 2007:22). To make an already volatile situation worse, in February of 2006 "one of Shia Islam's holiest shrines, the al-Askariyya Mosque in the Iraqi city of Samarra, was destroyed" in "a deliberate and successful attempt to exacerbate sectarian tensions and trigger a civil war" (Nicoll et al. 2007:2). Once the dust of the Al-Askariyya Mosque had cleared, it was estimated that "Baghdad's homicide rate tripled from 11 to 33 deaths a day, with 365,000 Iraqis being forced from their homes," making apparent that the situation in Iraq had devolved into a full-on civil war focused mostly "in Baghdad, with 80% of all sectarian violence occurring within 30 miles of the city" (Nicoll et al. 2007:2).

The bombing is viewed as a hinge-event, not only because it focused attention on the growing insurgency and the civil war in Iraq, but also because it forced Washington to reconsider its strategy in Iraq altogether. Economist Michael Greenstone writes:

> Until then, the U.S.'s strategy in Baghdad largely consisted of conducting raids aimed at clearing insurgents from difficult areas and neighborhoods and then turning those areas over to the Iraqi security forces. Over time, it became clear that the Iraqi security forces were not able to effectively protect these neighborhoods after the U.S. raids. Further, the ISF's efforts to build local services that would improve the quality of life within the neighborhoods were also failing. (Greenstone 2007:5)

The desire to use this original strategy came in response to political pressures at home—it wanted "to hand responsibility for security to Iraqi forces as quickly as possible"—which, unfortunately, "resulted in Iraq's descent into civil war during 2006, when previously pacified areas were once again seized by sectarian militias and insurgents" (Nicoll et al. 2007:1). The International Institute for Strategic Studies writes that, "In September 2006, with violence continuing to escalate in Iraq, U.S. President George W. Bush initiated a complete review of his administration's failing policy" (Nicoll et al. 2007:2). The change in strategy and policy "was cemented by the shift in leadership that followed as General David Petraeus replaced General George Casey as commander of Multi-National Forces-Iraq on February 10, 2007" (Greenstone 2007:4). Petraeus had a different approach to Iraq, which I shall outline in Chapter 2, that "was supported by Bush when he publicly committed the government to giving Petraeus, 'whatever forces he needs' (Nicoll et al. 2007:1).

Simultaneously, commanders, military analysts, and Pentagon officials were also demanding a 'surge' of "at least 40,000 more soldiers to Iraq" (around half that number were sent) in order to "provide a political space to al-Maliki regime to go for aggressive national reconciliation and accommodate the interests of all stake holders" and "to allow a breathing space to Bush Administration to broaden its peace initiative & get involved the major regional powers…[and] solicit their active involvement in an early settlement of the on-going war in Iraq" (Saleem 2007:27-28).

Diverse opinions exist on whether or not the Surge was successful in creating such an opportunity, or if that opportunity was indeed wasted, and a stable future for Iraq, and Afghanistan, is still pending. Most agree, however, that the 'Surge' was successful in providing at least one decidedly positive result: a reduction in civilian and military casualties. Muhammad Saleem, a critic of the war and the 'surge(s)', had to admit that it "did reduce the violence in Iraq at least for the time being. For instance, in 2007 the average attacks were over 6000 (P.M). Now

they are reduced to 2000 (P.M)" (Saleem 2007:28). Figure 1 below shows a sharp decline in casualties after the Surge, revealing that *something* was undeniably different in post-Surge Iraq from Iraq before the Surge.
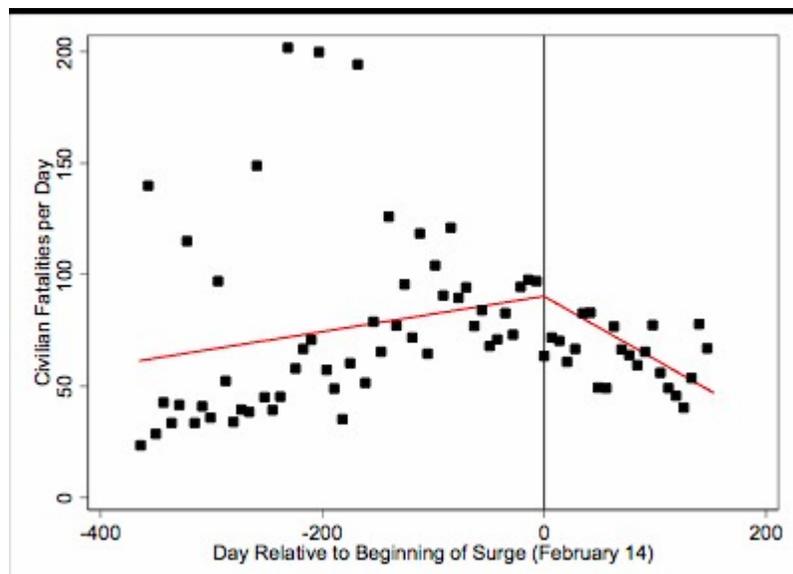

Figure 1: "Daily Fatalities of Iraqi Civilians from 1 Year Before the Surge Began through 153 Days After the Surge Began" from (Greenstone 2007:47).

Michael Greenstone, who constructed the graph above, writes:

It is certainly possible that some of these results are due to the reported increases in migration out of Baghdad and Iraq more generally, but the sharpness of the results makes it unlikely that this is the entire story. In many respects, this result confirms the popular theory of domestic policing that putting more cops on the beat reduces the crime rate. Finally, the source for these data (i.e., IraqBodycount.org) uses only the most reliable reports on civilian casualties, so their numbers likely understate the true number of civilian casualties, perhaps substantially so. (Greenstone 2007:13)

Casualties are just one facet of armed conflict but they are in many ways the most urgent and apparent. While the violence exchanged between combatants is in many ways held to its own standards of propriety, reducing civilian casualties is the imperative of any armed force accountable to national and international publics. In other words, for ideological struggles such as the 'War on Terror' and counterinsurgencies, public opinion at home and abroad will ultimately determine victory or defeat. Therefore, in this context, the 'Surge' was also successful by regaining some high ground, morally and ideologically. Had the U.S. declined to increase troop levels or the shift in tactics to 'cop on the beat' mode, and instead continued with carpet-bombing (dropping large amounts of unguided bombs over an area) and mass destruction of cities *ala* Fallujah (McCarthy 2005), they would have rapidly lost the war. Instead, the tide seems to have turned in Iraq.

There is always the risk that in focusing on casualties, one ignores other forms of violence that might be increasing as a result. For example, Greenstone writes, "The security situation has improved insofar as civilian fatalities have declined without any concurrent increase in casualties among coalition and Iraqi troops. However, other areas, such as oil production and the number

of trained Iraqi Security Forces, have shown no improvement or declined" (Greenstone 2007:27). Furthermore, he concludes his study by showing that, economically, "the Surge is failing to pave the way toward a stable Iraq and may in fact be undermining it" (Greenstone 2007:30). While addressing the financial problems plaguing Iraq is important, it is beyond this limited history. I focus here on casualties in Iraq because the success of a military strategy is often gauged publicly in the lives lost, rather than the bonds lost.

Another possible, perhaps paramount, reason for the 'success' of the Surge was due to a "new alignment amongst the insurgents," groups of "Concerned Local Nationals" who turned against al Qaeda when they realized the group no longer represented their interests (Saleem 2007:28-29 and Yon 2008:156-157). This shifting of alliances, however, came about due to a plan created by General Petraeus known as the "Sahawah Al Anbar" or "The Anbar Awakening," after the Al Anbar region of Iraq, where U.S. forces succeeded in uniting local stake holders with other insurgent groups to remove al Qaeda from this region (Yon 2008:86-97). Saleem writes, "The awakening… has indeed produced dramatic results. Local Iraqis, with American help, have driven the extremist organization out of a province that accounts for almost a third of Iraq's total land mass" (2007:1).

The military's new focus on exploiting local factions and uniting local stakeholders and indigenous insurgent groups is meant to counter the non-indigenous interests of Al Qaeda and Moqtada al Sadr's Tehran-backed militia. Ironically, it has also worked to unify groups heavily committed to an independent Iraqi state, which will likely create future problems for any imperial interests. Despite the various causes for the 'success' of the Surge, the reduction in civilian casualties, the positive shift in the security situation in Iraq and the "Awakening" in al-Anbar cannot be explained outside of the new counterinsurgency strategy that accompanied it.

Chapter 2: FM 3-24: The Army's New Counterinsurgency Doctrine

According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the 'Surge' can be understood as an opportunity and concerted effort of General Petraeus, the newly appointed commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, to apply his new strategy for counterinsurgency across the country (Nicoll et al. 2007:2). As the previous chapter mentioned, one of the main reasons for the reduction in casualties in Iraq was a shift in the U.S. military's strategy from traditional warfare to a new kind of counterinsurgency that works with indigenous insurgents and local stakeholders to promote indigenous interests as a means of establishing grassroots support for the new national governments in Iraq and Afghanistan. This chapter shows how and, more importantly, why the Army's new counterinsurgency doctrine, set down in pages of the *FM 3-24* counterinsurgency field manual, instructs soldiers to be more culturally sensitive and attentive to the needs of the local population as the only known way to wage successful counterinsurgency.

So what is new about this counterinsurgency doctrine? According to International Institute for Strategic Studies, "The ethos is to move away from the kinetic deployment of brute military force that has done so much to alienate the Iraqi population from the U.S. military. Instead of breaking down doors and raiding houses at night, the policy is now centered on 'cordon and knock,' sectioning off areas and then slowly moving through them with a degree of care and precision" (Nicoll et al. 2007:2). Indeed, Petraeus himself is quoted as saying, "An army of liberation has a certain shelf life before it becomes an army of occupation" (Yon 2008:30). In other words, if the United States wants to be seen as fighting 'terror' and 'liberating' Iraqis and Afghans, then it must work as quickly as possible to establish the

legitimacy of the government, rule of law, and hand over the country to the locals. Otherwise, as their message and the legitimacy of the governments they installed come to be viewed as false, resistance to U.S. military presence and action spreads and intensifies. Essentially, according to one embedded reporter, "It is not enough for the message to be pleasing; it must be true" (Yon 2008:31).

Understanding this, General Petraeus and others, including anthropologists such as Montgomery McFate (Gonzalez 2009:10), created the *FM 3-24* to guide the counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. The manual represents the dramatic shift in strategy in Iraq overall that essentially transformed into a "multi-dimensional" counterinsurgency (Yon 2008:95). Its pages were informed by Petraeus' mostly positive experiences employing counterinsurgent tactics in northern Iraq. In the initial invasion of Iraq, before he was commander of the Multi-National Forces, Petraeus was responsible for the 101st Airborne in Northern Iraq where, under his leadership, it "shifted ingeniously from a kinetic force-on-force mode to a sort of 'pre-counterinsurgency'" (Yon 2008:30). By having tea with local retired Iraqi generals every Tuesday and meeting with local leaders, for example, Petraeus gained awareness of the needs and concerns of the local populations.

One example occurred when he was told that "seventeen thousand students" would not complete the academic year and graduate because civil servants, such as teachers, had previously been required to be part of the Ba'ath party and thus were barred from work after the initial invasion (Yon 2008:32). Petraeus was able to suspend this anti-Ba'athist rule, set in place by the Coalition Provisional Authority, until the end of the year, allowing those students to complete their studies—Mosul only began to backslide into chaos after Petraeus' authority was replaced by the CPA, led by Paul Bremmer, who reversed many of Petraeus' pre-counterinsurgent actions (Yon 2008:32-33). If left unchanged, the CPA's leadership likely would have continued to undermine efforts to stabilize Iraq by implementing vengeful anti-Ba'athist policies. It became obvious that it was only by adopting Petraeus-style responsiveness to local needs could the U.S. military have any hope of creating stability out of an already chaotic situation.

The *FM 3-24* has been called a "radical field manual" not only because "the doctrine raises fundamental questions about the legitimacy, purposes, and limits of U.S. power," but also because tactics "such as free-fire zones and carpet bombing" are "precisely what the manual rejects" (Sarah Sewall in *FM 3-24*:xxi-xxiv). In other words, tactics that originally protected and distanced U.S. soldiers from combat and advanced U.S. interests through sheer might are instead dropped for tactics demanded U.S. soldiers to assume more risk so that Iraqi or Afghan civilians could be protected and distanced from combat. Reason being that, "in [counterinsurgency], preserving noncombatant lives and dignity is *central* to mission accomplishment," and thus "in this context, killing the civilian is no longer just collateral damage" (*FM 3-24*:xxv, 246, emphasis added).

The manual, therefore, not only guides soldiers' tactics but also their understanding of their surrounding human environment. In one instance, it instructs soldiers that "American ideas of what is 'normal' or 'rational' are not universal…For this reason, counterinsurgents—especially commanders, planners, and small-unit leaders—should strive to avoid imposing their ideals of normalcy on a foreign cultural problem (*FM 3-24*:27)." There is a greater emphasis in this counterinsurgency on "language and cultural understanding, than [in] conventional warfare" which, for counterinsurgents, "requires immersion in the people and their lives to achieve victory" (*FM 3-24*:40).

This immersion in the lives of the local civilian population, what the military calls the HN (Host-Nation), goes beyond cultural understanding, however, to the point where U.S. soldiers are told "to accept more risk to maintain involvement with the people" (*FM 3-24*:49). In other words, in order to avoid tactics like carpet-bombing and use of tanks, which alienate and harm the civilian population (thus fueling the insurgency), soldiers are ordered to leave the protection of their armored vehicles and walk the streets, amongst a population whose members possibly wish to see them dead—taking the risk away from the civilian population and placing it on themselves. It is a concept absolutely antithetical to traditional warfare ideology, yet a concept that has largely allowed for the positive and sustained post-Surge shift in Iraq.

Indeed, the stated "cornerstone" for this new counterinsurgency is "establishing security for the civilian populace," which means that "Soldiers and Marines must take all feasible precautions when choosing means and methods of attack to avoid and minimize loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, and damage to civilian objects" (*FM 3-24*:42, 247).To accomplish this, the manual gives soldiers the admonition, "Sometimes, the More Force Used the Less Effective It Is," because "an operation that kills five insurgents is counterproductive if collateral damage leads to the recruitment of fifty more insurgents" (*FM 3-24*:45,48). Another of the "paradoxes of counterinsurgency operations" that highlights this distinct departure from traditional military ideology states, "Some of the best weapons for counterinsurgents do not shoot" (*FM 3-24*:47-50).

These paradoxical approaches are not just tolerated but firmly backed by the Bush administration because many believed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could only be won if U.S. forces held firmly to their "moral high ground" (Yon 2008:66). Indeed, having lived it first hand, General Petraeus wrote to every member of the armed forces shortly after taking command of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq, stating:

> We are, indeed, warriors. We train to kill our enemies. We are engaged in combat, we must pursue the enemy relentlessly, and we must be violent at times. What sets us apart from our enemies in this fight, however, is how we behave. In everything we do, we must observe the standards and values that dictate that we treat noncombatants and detainees with dignity and respect. While we are warriors, we are also all human beings. (Yon 2008:67)

Petreaus' belief in the necessity of holding the moral high ground was demonstrated when reports of prisoner abuse by American soldiers in Nineveh province reached him. Journalist Michael Yon writes that Petraeus "handled the problem the way Abu Ghraib should have been handled" by ordering an immediate internal investigation and inviting the Red Crescent (the Middle East's Red Cross) to view his prison's conditions rather than trying to cover it up (2008:70-71). I am not trying to put Petraeus on a pedestal but instead showing that the *morality* of this Petraeus-style counterinsurgency doctrine was adopted and deployed because it seems to work *strategically*.

This 'softer' way of counterinsurgency does not require a suspension of disbelief for those who believe the military command to be composed of amoral hawks leading frightened and ill-trained foot soldiers, or a presidential command that places no value in the Geneva Convention or its own military's code of ethics. Although I have personally known enough military officers to see the former claim as a crude generalization certainly not based in empirical

fact[1], I want to show that regardless of what the American intelligentsia believes to be true or false, the current military command is running on the belief that it is only by holding to such morality (or, in other words, the battlefield morality outlined in the *FM 3-24*) that the U.S. can hope to win the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Some would argue, however, that, in the end, the *FM 3-24* is merely a guiding document that, like the American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics, exists to inform and direct the actions of those personnel 'on the ground' but can in no way guarantee that its word will be followed. The *FM 3-24* is unlike the AAA's Code of Ethics, however, in that the AAA is unable to enforce its doctrine and cannot remove an anthropologist from the 'field' or from the profession just because they do not stick to the code—the military, however, can. If a soldier is not following military doctrine, the disobedient solider is going to be discharged, barring him from future damage to the war effort. Thus the *FM 3-24*, in many ways, *can* guarantee that its doctrine will be followed and any deviation from it will result in severe reprimand. Thus, if we can understand the ideology driving the manual, the kinds of judgment it directs soldiers to make and the aspects of humanity it takes into account, such as culture, as having a direct effect on the way U.S. military forces conduct themselves in Iraq and Afghanistan then we can see how the Human Terrain System is not an isolated exception to the military's rule, but an extension of its doctrine.

As seen in the first chapter, the 'Surge' initiated a severe reduction in civilian casualties but not in Coalition casualties (Greenstone 2007:18-19). While many factors contributed to the 'success' of the 'Surge', the shift in strategy to Petraeus' counterinsurgency is definitively a crucial one. By shifting the "center of gravity" to securing the civilian population, reducing their casualties, at the expense of increasing risk to Coalition personnel, this new counterinsurgency is revolutionizing military strategy and dramatically transforming the nature of the military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. In many ways, the doctrine was a perfect accompaniment to the greater 'cultural turn' that was taking place within Washington and the military. In a speech to the Association of American Universities, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates said that "Too many mistakes have been made over the years because our government and military did not understand – or even seek to understand – the countries or cultures we were dealing with" (2008). In addition to calling for increased cooperation domestically between American universities and the Department of Defense, the administration's turn towards viewing cultural knowledge as a prerequisite to strategic victory also demanded, in many ways, unprecedented involvement in wartime operations by social scientists (Gates 2008) and a new program to help them meet these new demands.

Chapter 3: The Human Terrain System: A Brief Overview

Without cultural savvy, the U.S. civilian and military leadership often undermined its stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, where highly sensitive ethnic, political and religious tensions rendered those societies figurative and literal minefields. The U.S. military thus commissioned the Human Terrain System to provide soldiers and their leaders vital cultural knowledge. In this chapter I give an overview of the HTS program and show how it aids the U.S. military by deploying social scientists to represent the local

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[1] See also Keith Brown's 2008 article "'All They Understand Is Force': Debating Culture in Operation Iraqi Freedom" (American Anthropologist, Vol. 110, Issue 4, pp. 443-453)

populations during mission planning. By providing "non-lethal options," HTS allows the military to avoid the insurgent-generating violence of combat missions as often as possible. I also aim to show how in representing the local populations, the HTS social scientist also works to promote their interests against the interests of the occupying forces.

Composed mostly of social scientists, the Human Terrain System is a program designed to encourage "alternative thinking" that prompts the military towards actions like job training for widows or rebuilding destroyed mosques and churches, which are "not always intuitive in a military establishment that has long put a premium on firepower and technology" (Gates 2008). The program itself is basically comprised of Human Terrain Teams, which are groups deployed in combat zones to collect ethnographic data, and a main headquarters in the United States, known as the Reachback Research Center, to which all information gathered by personnel abroad is channeled and analyzed. According to a recently leaked draft of the program's *Human Terrain Team Handbook*:

> Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) are five- to nine-person teams…composed of individuals with social science and operational backgrounds that are deployed with tactical and operational military units to assist in bringing knowledge about the local population into a coherent analytic framework and build relationships with the local power-brokers in order to provide advice and opportunities to Commanders and staffs in the field. (Finney 2008:2)

The HTTs' social science research "produces a knowledge base that is referred to as the Human Terrain, or "The element of the operational environment encompassing the cultural, sociological, political and economic factors of the local population." (Human Terrain System CONOP, July 2008. quoted in Finney 2008:3). In other words, it conducts "operationally-relevant, open-source social science research, and provide commanders and staffs…with an embedded knowledge capability, to establish a coherent, analytic cultural framework for operational planning, decision-making, and assessment" (Finney 2008:4). The HTT are designed to operate in tandem with *FM 3-24* counterinsurgency, which "encourages bottom-up learning" that is then transferred "into institutional lessons learned, and then into doctrine" (*FM 3-24*:liii-liv). A former member of a Human Terrain Team told me that:

> Eventually the idea will be to have HTS personnel embedded in places before conflict occurs, enabling for the interjection of pertinent and relevant information about the local population into the military, diplomatic, and foreign policy planning cycles, which should further enable the possibility of avoiding hostilities or conflict. (Silverman, personal communication)

Critics of the program often express doubt, however, over how well the social scientist's voice will be heard during mission planning. The manual itself states that, at least in theory, "The team must be tied into all planning processes, including relevant working groups, assessment boards, etc…" (Finney 2008:5). The objective is to allow the U.S. forces to become informed from the "ground up," meaning from the Human Terrain Teams and combat team leaders up to the highest ranks. This is based on the new counterinsurgency manual's understanding that "Learning organizations defeat insurgencies; bureaucratic hierarchies do not" (*FM 3-24*:liii-liv). If the manual is any guide as to the actual functioning of the Human Terrain System, then the social scientist's voice is designed to be, and is thus, audible at every stage of the planning process. An anthropologist who worked in the Human Terrain System, Kathleen Reedy, was on a panel about HTS at the AAA's 2008 annual meeting and said "You can actually see the results of

your work in a day-to-day environment," while her colleague said, "It's a chance to change the military; it's a chance to change the Army. It's a challenge" (Redden 2008). Dr. Adam Silverman, the HTT member I interviewed, similarly witnessed the direct effects of his work in improving the lives of Iraqis on both a short and long-term basis. It seems then that the program puts the social scientist in a position to actually affect the way the mission planning takes shape, injecting a new perspective into the military thinkers' logic, and watching how that perspective changes the way the military conducts business.

The *Human Terrain Team Handbook* states, "One of the most important interactions between the HTT and the staff involves the assessment of the population's needs," which can provide a "grass-roots" or "average persons' perspective" that can then "be infused into planning and military decision making processes to increase positive outcomes" (Finney 2008:34). In other words, while these HTS social scientists are informing overall efforts to combat insurgencies, the Human Terrain System was created for what are called Phase IV operations or "those operations aimed at stabilizing an area of operations in the aftermath of major combat" (Kipp, 2006). This emphasis on post-war reconstruction and attending to the population's needs does not necessarily come from a warm, fuzzy place in the military planner's heart, but rather from the requirements of successful counterinsurgency. By understanding and then meeting the needs of the population, the U.S. military can shift the local populations' support away from insurgents. For example, in the words of Colonel H.R. McMaster, who conducted counterinsurgent operations in Tal Afar,

> The enemy preyed on this community to such a degree that they were the source of all the grievances. And whereas they tried to blame the Coalition it became increasingly clear to the people that the source of all of their problems and all of their grievances were the terrorists themselves, whether it was the lack of basic services, [or] the unemployment situation. (Frontline 60 Minutes 2008)

Essentially, the Human Terrain System was created to enable the U.S. military to be better adept at the reconstruction and "harm-reduction" necessary to win local Iraqis and Afghans over to their side—its creation was an issue of strategy, not morality. This is a distinction in intention necessary to understand because often those who are wary of the program are so predominately because they think it is aiding "lethal targeting". Yet, this concern seems to overlook the *Human Terrain Team Handbook*, which clearly states:

> No Lethal Effects Targeting. The commander has an intelligence section for lethal targeting, what they require is a section that can explain and delineate the non-lethal environment (e.g. tribal relationships and local power structures), as well as the second and third order effects of planned lethal and non-lethal operations. (Finney 2008:81)

Unless the systems handbook is trying to mislead its own personnel in its guiding document, we have to assume that the system is *not* designed to enable lethal-targeting, such as identifying key people for "neutralization". The reason some HTT members carry guns is because, as Adam Silverman, writes, "we do, like everyone, retain the right to self-defense" (Silverman 2009a) which, given the environment of such work, seems quite reasonable. Then what is the Human Terrain System designed for if not "lethal-targeting"? In the *Handbook*'s own words, it seems to be designed to perform the exact opposite function:

> The end-state of Human Terrain Team support is to provide the unit the reasons why the population is doing what it is doing and thereby providing *non-lethal options* to the

commander and his staff. Military units have incorporated systems to identify and address threats for the entirety of its history, and more recently created systems for the inclusion of subject-matter experts in law enforcement, economics, etc. All of these elements gather information and include their recommendations on courses of actions for the commander. The knowledge gap that HTTs counter is population-focused and designed to assist the unit in preventing friction with members of the local population by identifying local dynamics, grievances and motivations, assessing governmental effectiveness and making recommendations on how to address them. (Finney 2008:26, emphasis added)

It seems that the Human Terrain System is instead designed to be a counter to the traditional military thinking that suffers from a "knowledge gap" between U.S. commanders and the local populations. HTS personnel are responsible for closing this knowledge gap by acting as representatives for the local people in mission planning, informing the commanders what they are doing and why they're doing it. By informing soldiers, the HTT member is able to reduce the amount of misguided "good intentions" so that when the military needs to get something done they do not cause short and long-term physical and psychological damage trying to do it.

"Voices Of The Mada'in": *A Human Terrain System Report*

In April of 2009 at the Midwest Political Science Association Meeting in Chicago, Adam Silverman presented a preliminary report on the research he and his Human Terrain Team had been conducting in Iraq since that previous July. Based mostly on interviews "recorded in notebooks, not digitally" with twenty-four sheikhs in the Mada'in Qada administrative district of the Baghdad Province, the preliminary report's conclusions provide a case study of what the end-state of a Human Terrain System can be and, in fact, has been (Silverman 2009b:6). The report is mostly concerned with the dislocation of the national Iraqi government with the local population, and seems to advocate on behalf of the indigenous population. It states:

> Once General Garner was replaced, no one asked the Iraqis what kind of government they wanted. Instead the CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority] took Saddam's government, and later his military, removed the folks they did not like (often using unfaithful and unreliable Iraqi allies to do it), but left the institutional structures in place, imposed them on the Iraqis, and then told them to hold an election in which the majority of parties and candidates were either exiles…with no indigenous base of support and partial or total alliances to non Iraqi masters/movements (Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood) or had an indigenous constituency that is interested in cessation from Iraq (the Kurdish Parties, who also have operational ties to Iran). (Silverman 2009b:14)

This report's language shows that the HTS personnel remain critical of the policies of the military and demonstrate the ability of the program's participants to represent the sentiment and desires of the local population. Indeed, that is their job. The narrative too, of the CPA implementing anti-Ba'athist actions to disastrous effect, is similar to Petraeus' experiences in Mosul and reveals the danger of operating without a more grassroots understanding of the local population. Yet it is not just about representing the local population, it is also about empowering the population and giving it more control over its country. For instance, the report states:

> The lack of tethering… of governmental structures to the most powerful socio-cultural dynamic in Iraq, the tribal system, is worrying. The concern is that unless the population

layer, which is tribally oriented, is fully activated and brought into the mix, the hard work, grounded in the COIN reality of empowering the lowest levels or moving mounted and working dismounted, will fail… For instance, the tribal court and intertribal mediation systems, which are the key social reconciliation structures within Iraq can be adapted, connected to both the government and the courts, and used as the primary forum for national socio-political reconciliation. Without this socio-cultural mediating component in place, the Iraqi government will continue to be viewed as unrepresentative and illegitimate. (Silverman 2009b:15-16)

By encouraging the national government to adapt the local cultural model of the "tribal system," the Human Terrain System is acting to counter the U.S. military and the CPA's original ideas of "what's best for Iraq" with what Iraqis have already determined is best for them. By "empowering the lowest levels," Silverman and his team are articulating that the best way forward in the War in Iraq is to make U.S. counterinsurgency objectives reflective of local civilian interests. Silverman ends the report by stating, "All of that said, the COIN [counterinsurgency] approach of less force, more non lethal planning, and empowering the lowest level is still, to my mind as a practitioner in the field, the best approach" (2009b:17).

While this report makes apparent that the HTS program is a manipulation of local culture for the achievement of the U.S.'s mission objectives, it is also shows how in this manipulation, the local population, the informants, are not being repressed, but empowered, and their interests thus furthered. Furthermore, instead of exploiting local culture to alter it, the program works backwards by using the local culture to alter U.S. military and CPA planning. For instance, the report finds that, "the two groups with indigenous constituencies, Tribal (the Sawha/Sons of Iraq-SOI) and the tribal and often poor Shia and poor Iraqis in general (who seem to associate with the Sadrists), are largely constrained by being out of the government" (Silverman 2009b:12). The subsequent response from the counterinsurgents then is to remove "the elections" law problems… and the attempts by those who have been established in power to insulate themselves from removal" so that the government of Iraq reflects popular indigenous interests (Silverman 2009b:15). In other words, the Human Terrain System creates a situation where indigenous demands change the occupier's planning and alters the installed government to reflect local demands—not the other way around.

Despite the fact that the Human Terrain System is designed to provide "non-lethal options" and alter the occupation to reflect indigenous interests, the close relation of Human Terrain System social scientists to such a lethal organization as the military must give us pause. Regardless of good intentions, in its attempt to reduce violence the program could very well violate anthropological ethics and end up harming the informants whom anthropologists are supposed to protect. Indeed, the employment of anthropologists in Human Terrain Teams is exactly what the American Anthropological Association finds ethically problematic and why it has officially condemned anthropological employment in the program. I argue in the next chapter, however, that these concerns are exaggerated.

Chapter 4: Ethical Violations and Exaggerations

As I have shown in the previous chapters, the Human Terrain System is not only designed to encourage a more and culturally sensitive military but it also designed to be ethical in its own proceedings. By representing the local population's needs and providing non-lethal options to mission planners, the Human Terrain System allows anthropologists the opportunity to

protect the informants. Despite this, in October of 2007, the American Anthropological Association's Executive Board declared "the HTS project as an unacceptable application of anthropological expertise" (AAA 2007b). I will argue in this chapter that their concerns overlook evidence and counterarguments that complicate, if not contradict, their claims and should deflate much of their anxiety. Concerns over disclosure, voluntary consent, managing informant-employer responsibilities, and protecting the informant are common to anthropological engagements and I do not argue here that they are invalid worries. Yet insubstantial evidence exists to warrant the level of anxiety and doubt the AAA has about the Human Terrain System. I first deal with the five concerns stated in the AAA's report of its condemnation of HTS and then gives treatment to some of the predominate concerns not addressed in the report.

1) *Disclosure*:

        The concern that an anthropologist working for the Human Terrain System is unable to be transparent with respect to who they are (meaning whom they work for) and what they are going to do with that information is misplaced. If an anthropologist is dressed in a U.S. army uniform, with an American flag badge, Kevlar vest, perhaps even a side-arm, and is escorted by a unit or more of fully armed U.S. soldiers, it is going to be eminently clear *whom* they work for. Secondly, an anthropologist in such representative garb and company is going to be associated with the short and long-term plans that the United States government has for the nation-states of Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, the associations of the anthropologist are clear before he or she even speaks a word.
        When they do speak, the HTT member informs the individual or group of their identities, their employer, and their aims (Silverman, personal communication). Under such circumstances, an informant who is unsympathetic or hostile to the U.S. cause will react accordingly by giving false information, playing dumb, or refusing to speak with the anthropologist. An informant who is sympathetic to the U.S. cause will respond differently. It is important to understand that HTS anthropologists are not posing as "neutral" anthropologists, deceiving their informants and concealing their military associations. They are in uniform and when they meet an informant they state whom they are working for (HTT Handbook: 67). Disclosure is thus not a concern worth condemning the program over, for disclosure is implicit in almost every phase of their interactions with locals.

2) *First Do No Harm*:

        As shown before, the kind of work that anthropologists embedded with the military would be doing is designed to reduce violence by providing non-lethal options, thus reducing the risk of harm for the informant population as well. An early report given by Colonel Martin Schweitzer, who had recently returned from Afghanistan, stated that a Human Terrain Team there was able to reduce "kinetic operations" (combat operations in which casualties mainly occur) 60-80% (Schweitzer 2008). As evidence to support this is still classified, we can only proceed by assuming for the sake of argument that Colonel's Schweitzer's report of success is true.
        The sad reality remains, however, that the populations in Iraq and Afghanistan would be, and for the most part still are, in harm's way regardless of the presence of the anthropologist. If the program's claims are true, however, HTS anthropologists are not doing the local population harm, but instead working to distance those locals from harm. While they are embedded with

soldiers trained to inflict harm on others, it is important not to fall into the trap of characterizing their employers as a monolithic entity of malice. For instance, General James Mattis commanded the 1st Marine Division during the initial assault on Baghdad under the motto, "No better friend, no worse enemy—*First Do No Harm*" (*FM 3-24*, xvi, emphasis added). Soldiers just itching to kill or commanders anxious to test out new firepower on 'lesser humans' would not proudly embrace, much less go into battle under, a motto like this. While this is just one marine division, we have to remember the new focus on protecting the local populations is now a force-wide imperative, not an isolated experiment. The program's association with the military is not evidence of the lethal nature of its work. On the contrary, it is indicative of the military's new emphasis of counterintuitive, non-lethal ways of protecting and advancing U.S. interests.

3) *Obtaining Voluntary Informed Consent*:

Understandably, obtaining voluntary consent from civilians trapped in a war-zone is problematic because their lives are so coerced by the conflict that any military personnel could seemingly maintain an intimidating aura. Yet, this concern, as a point of critique, ignores the fact that many times the information is offered freely to U.S. soldiers. For instance, Michael Yon, an embedded independent reporter in Iraq writes that there has been "increasing support of citizens" to the point that "Iraqis are e-mailing our guys Google Earth maps to show where the terrorists are" and have "pointed out IEDs and hidden enemy fighters to our troops" (Yon 2008:122, 179). For the HTS project in the Mada'in district of Baghdad, Silverman and his team "also employed standard ethical review protocols;" he writes:

> A review process was established within the research team to determine the risks to the subjects, as well as the researchers, from undertaking the study. As all of the potential interviewees were known to interact and conduct business with the U.S. Army, Coalition Forces, and/or the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, it was determined that either going to meet them at securable locations; their residences, SOI headquarters, NP headquarters, or having them come onto the Combat Outposts (COPs) did not present any extraordinary risks for either subjects or researchers. Moreover, a formal informed consent document, describing the project, its scope and goals, who to contact with questions, risk/reward, and permission to attribute was prepared in English, translated into Arabic by a native Iraqi speaker, and presented to each sheikh at the beginning of each interview. The research subjects kept the descriptions and contact page, as well as one copy of the signed consent document, which also indicated if the interview could be attributed. A second copy of the signed consent document was retained and archived. For those who requested personal anonymity, they will be referred to as a sheikh of the tribe they belong to, but not by given name or by kunya (nickname). (Silverman 2009b:7-8)

In these cases, the participation of the population in informing U.S. counterinsurgency operations, even combat operations, is voluntary and no coercion is necessary. Indeed, coercion is not permitted in the program. For instance, under a section entitled "Fieldwork Best Practices," the *Human Terrain Team Handbook* states: "Avoid direct involvement in tactical questioning. Tactical questioning is a function of the intelligence world and designed to elicit primarily lethal-targeting information. It would also endanger relationships with the local population if HTTs are seen being involved with the "interrogating" of friends/family" (Finney 2008:83).

In other words, despite the threatening and coercive power granted by the presence of the

U.S. military forces escorting the anthropologist, obtaining *involuntary* consent can actually prevent mission accomplishment by breaking the trust between informants and the HTT personnel. Again, the *Handbook* states, "It is the *trust* of the indigenous population that is at the heart of the struggle between coalition forces and the insurgents" (Finney 2008:34, emphasis added). Yet HTS members are not merely told to refrain from such tactics, they are "legally prohibited from performing active intelligence collection" (*Human Terrain System* Website). Under that rubric, an HTS anthropologist *must* get involuntary consent and with people many times eager to offer information if it'll end the violence and allow them to regain relatively normal lives, it should not be too hard to obtain.

4) *Ethnographic Information Used For Lethal-Targeting*:

This popular critique and concern seems to ignore the fact that the United States has an elaborate and well-funded intelligence apparatus, partially composed of co-opted locals, spies, and Special Forces personnel, known as "snake-eaters" because of their tendency to "go native" by "adopting local dress and weaponry when necessary" (Brown 2008:448-449). The idea that such an expansive and imbedded organization would need the help of American social scientists for lethal-targeting is granting a bit too much credit to American social scientists and it ignores the lethal-targeting that has been effectively carried out throughout the history of war.

While the harm-reduction and reconstruction work of the Human Terrain System aids the U.S. military's greater mission, it is not aiding the lethal, combat-oriented actions, for which the military is already well equipped to conduct without the help of probably pacifist anthropologists. Although anthropologists are adept at identifying local power brokers, and this is indeed part of their job in HTS, the U.S. military has been doing fine on their own without the expertise of anthropologists (See: "Al Anbar Awakening" and Petraeus' actions in Mosul, chapters 1 & 2). It is obvious that the military is hiring anthropologists to offer something that the U.S. "snake-eaters" and counterinsurgents are unable to provide. The military is looking for professionals who can accurately represent the local population's needs and build trust and legitimacy for the national government in a way the military and intelligence apparatuses never could. A military machine that only desired lethal means would be spending its money on more powerful munitions, more tanks, and "snake-eater" recruitment—not a two billion dollar social science project designed to provide non-lethal options.

5) *Guilty By Association*:

An American anthropologist is likely going to be, at some point, suspected of working with the United States government or the CIA. If a foreign government will imprison, evict or physically harm an American anthropologist because it is worried about spying, chances are that the government feels so vulnerable to U.S. interference that almost any American scholar could be viewed as an intruder (Abdo et al. 2003:14). As in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), there is an apparent structure of global power in such that it is very often scholars of "the West" who are the individuals studying and classifying the "Rest". Though there are more non-western anthropologists every year, the fact that the majority of practicing anthropologists are based in and writing for scholarly audiences mostly based in Western countries is undeniable. Any population that is going to be hostile to Americans poking around their society is likely going to be hostile to American anthropologists as well.

The AAA's concern that by working with the military HTS anthropologists are risking the reputation of the discipline and future opportunities for fieldwork also stems from the sad historical fact that anthropologists have operated sometimes as spies. Due to this past deceit, anthropologists conducting subsequent ethnographies in those regions are sometimes suspected of spying by local people. Yet, an innocent-looking, plain-clothes anthropologist would be a more likely suspect of subterfuge than a Human Terrain System anthropologist with uniform and full military escort. Kind of hard to hide your associations when you ride in with the cavalry. Preserving future fieldwork opportunities and gaining the trust of the informant requires more than dressing like a friend, it requires an anthropologist to actually *be* a friend, regardless of the clothing they wear or the company they keep.

Other Concerns Not Mentioned in AAA Report

Co-option:

In an article of his called "Subtle Means and Enticing Carrots: The Impact of Funding on American Cold War Anthropology," David Price shows how the military, intelligence, and security communities provided funding to anthropologists during the Cold War as long as they researched along its ideological or strategic lines (2003). This even happened from charities and benefactors like Rockefeller, who would fund those projects that supported or followed his charities' ideological interests. Price argues that such a process is still happening today, under the Minerva program, the Department of Defense's latest 'olive branch' to academia which came as a result of the same 'cultural turn' that birthed the *FM 3-24* and HTS (Price 2008a; Gates 2008). The concern is that in working for the Human Terrain System an anthropologist might bend to the will of his or her employer, protecting the sponsor's interests over the interests of the informants.

Yet this concern has existed throughout anthropology's history. When confronted with a conflict of interests, anthropologists can choose, as they have done before in similar and other settings, to preserve the informants interests by severing financial ties to the sponsor. Indeed it is the primary responsibility of anthropologists to always place the sources of our information before the sources of our funding (AAA 2008). The concern of co-option relies on the cynical assumption that anthropologists inevitably become apologists for the Human Terrain System, even if its functions help to lethally target their informants. If this were the case, however, then the Code of Ethics is a useless document.

Transparency:

In reading articles and having discussions about the Human Terrain System with colleagues and friends, the main concern that arose was over transparency. Through our conversations it became obvious that transparency, or the lack there of, was the biggest barrier to trusting any of the positive claims of the HTS proponents and members. For instance, Colonel Schweitzer can say that a Human Terrain Team was able to reduce combat operations 60-80%, or HTS proponents can say they have provided "non-lethal options," but where is the verifiable evidence? I asked returned HTT member, Dr. Adam Silverman, about transparency and he told me:

We are working very hard to become both more transparent and accessible (I know, I've

been tasked with working out a large part of this…). Part of the reason for the hold up, and seeming lack of transparency, is the result of…having to build a program and go operational at the same time [which] is not an easy thing to do.

The difficulty of multitasking is not the only obstacle to transparency because the Human Terrain System is part of the military and thus, all of their work, even though it is predominately unclassified, ends up being stored at the secret, classified level (Silverman, personal communication). To make HTS findings public simply becomes a matter of wading through the military bureaucracy. "The material is still unclassified, but we have to work with the originating classifier, who is usually a deployed HTS personnel, to get the permissions to distribute the material on the unclassified side" Silverman said, "This can take time".

In the meantime, however, some Human Terrain System personnel, like Silverman, Kathleen Reedy and others, have returned from Iraq or Afghanistan to talk about what they have been doing. "I've now presented research findings from our major project, a four month long, in depth tribal study…at five universities (invited talks) and two professional meetings – one for the graduate applied anthro[pology] program at USF in Tampa" Silverman said, "I'm on the program for two more, have several more invites in the work,…have one article from the field just about to go back on a revise and resubmit, four more articles outlined, and I've started turning the study into a book". This would seem to be a breach of protocol but Silverman told me that the Program Manager and Senior Social Scientist have been "very approachable and positive towards the idea of preparing research findings for presentation and publication. They recognize that this is necessary and I've never had either of them tell me that I shouldn't go ahead with a writing project based on the work I conducted in Iraq."

It would seem then that opacity of the Human Terrain System's work is mostly due to the inefficiencies of military bureaucracy a fledgling program rather than concerted attempts to hide information that would be damning if the public ever discovered it. In this case, a more robust and efficient Human Terrain System would, in many respects, be a more transparent one. That would require, however, greater involvement and support of the American anthropological community.

Advancing Imperial Interests:

Peter Pels writes that before anthropologists adopted the stance that they should "support 'indigenous' peoples in their struggles, to help the latter achieve the modernization that the legacy of colonialism…denied them" they believed their obligation was to help colonial governments "achieve the desired evolutionary progress cheaply and without bloodshed" (1997:165). Comparably, many anthropologists feel that despite the possibility of doing "good" for the local population, the Human Terrain System is condemnable because it works to advance the imperial interests of the United States in the Middle East cheaply and with less blood. This concern shows one of the more complicated aspects of the Human Terrain System, which is its position at the center of various converging interests and its paradoxical response to that placement.

For instance, the program exists to aid U.S. counterinsurgency efforts that have the unusual focus of empowering of the society from the ground up a priority (*FM 3-24 2007:46-47*). While counterinsurgents are using this grassroots empowerment as a tactic to expel Al Qaeda and other, predominately foreign, militant groups from Iraq and Afghanistan, they are also simultaneously uniting indigenous groups heavily committed to their countries' independence.

By establishing governments in Iraq and Afghanistan that are viewed by the local populations as legitimate and representative of indigenous interests, the United States also works against any current or future imperial interests it may have. Perhaps this is just how the U.S. occupational forces can "pull out" of those countries without later being blamed for the creation of another Taliban or Saddam-esque regime that would no doubt take its place unless first defeated. But perhaps this is also the "revolutionary" nature of the *FM 3-24* and the reason the Human Terrain System actually works to protect, if not advance, the interests of the informants against more imperial interests of the U.S. government.

Control Over Information:

There is always the concern that these HTS personnel do not know how the information is being used. This is by far the most valid of concerns and arguments against the program, especially when one considers this information could very well be handed over to the new Iraqi or Afghan government and subsequently used to disempower those populations and entrench illegitimate regimes. Such a lack of control over the information makes the Human Terrain System appear indifferent to the fate of their informants and makes its apparently porous ethnographic archive like a nuclear device, absolutely devastating in the wrong hands. The only counter to this concern is that the information HTS provides is usually related to very specific goals. For instance, when I asked Dr. Silverman if he was able to trace how the information he provided was used he replied:

> Yes, we were able to do this on a number of things. Some things we worked on for extended periods and it took the brigade time to catch up (like purchasing and installing solar powered mobile water purification units). Other things, such as helping to ID and preserve and [sic] archaeological site, get aid for a badly burned Iraqi child, help to vet projects that had been propose – all of these played out in much faster time.

By keeping track of how information is used and focusing on specific projects and using anonymity when dealing with more sensitive topics such as political opinions and associations to insurgent groups, the Human Terrain System can set in place barriers to protect informants from future reprisals. This lack of control remains the biggest flaw in the entire "Human Terrain System is harmless" argument. The Human Terrain System needs to address this by making sure the program has tight control and limits as to how far the information can be used. For information that is useful, but might perhaps be damaging in the wrong hands, perhaps increased anonymity for the informants or destruction of the evidence is preferable. The program would no doubt welcome such guidance as the HTS too has its own demands for ethical conduct.

The Human Terrain System's Own Ethical Concerns

Under a section called "Team Best Practices" the *Human Terrain Team Handbook* instructs HTT personnel to: "Provide focused study on social science, cultural or ethnographic issues of specific concern to the Commander by conducting social science research that *adheres to the ethics of Anthropology* and Sociology" (Finney 2008:81, emphasis added). That is a strange admonishment for a program that has been officially condemned for indifference towards anthropological ethics. Even the counterinsurgency doctrine out of which the Human Terrain System arises instructs counterinsurgents to "document all their activities to preserve, wherever

possible, a chain of evidence" because "Accurate documentation can also be an important means to counter insurgent propaganda" (*FM 3-24*:43). In other words, strategically, counterinsurgents must hold themselves to higher standards than necessary, whether lawfully or ethically, in order to be trusted enough by concerned parties to proceed effectively and avoid losing the locals' trust.

Again, the propriety of enabling the United States military to win the "hearts and minds" of Iraqis and Afghans is an important political and moral question, but whether anthropologists *should* do such work is a completely different question than whether anthropologists *are able to* do such work without violating anthropological ethics. As I have shown, by adhering to the new counterinsurgency doctrine the U.S. military, now a "force-wide" counterinsurgency, is open more than ever to practices that are ethical by anthropological standards. The previously presented counterarguments to the concerns of the AAA Executive Board, the people who issued the formal opposition to HTS, are meant to show that claims or concerns over ethical violations are based on insufficient evidence and sometimes shallow logic.

Chapter 5: Escorted Ethnography

"The fundamental source of the conflict in Iraq is competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources. The question is whether the competition takes place more — or less — violently." - General Petraeus (quoted in Kober 2007:2)

The previous chapters have outlined the history, structure, and desired function of the Human Terrain System. I traced how the U.S. leadership altered the way the military conducts itself in Iraq and Afghanistan, a shift that was made apparent by a sharp drop in civilian and military casualties. This drop in casualties reveals the potentially 'life-saving' effects of this new counterinsurgency strategy and shows how the Human Terrain System emerges from a military mindset focused on protecting the local populations from harm rather than demeaning civilian suffering and death to 'collateral damage'. I also argued that the AAA's Executive Board seems to have had already concluded that the Human Terrain System was condemnable and merely tacked on "concerns" in order to justify its conclusion. Granted, those concerns are valid in and of themselves but they certainly do not reflect a close reading of the *Human Terrain Team Handbook* or the *FM 3-24* counterinsurgency manual or a sufficient consideration of contradicting information. Indeed, after investigating the ethical dilemmas inherent in anthropologists working for military, security and intelligence communities, the AAA's own ad hoc commission found that "issuing a blanket condemnation or affirmation of anthropologists working in national security makes little sense" because "there is nothing inherently unethical in the decision to apply one's skills in these areas" (AAA 2007a: 24). This thesis attempted to emulate such an investigation and similarly concludes that there is insubstantial evidence to necessitate a formal condemnation of the Human Terrain System, particularly on the grounds that it violates anthropological ethics.

While I will not claim the AAA's ruling against the Human Terrain System was, in fact, a politically motivated condemnation, it seems probable that the American Anthropological Association Executive Board and other critics of the program found the ruling so politically agreeable that they neglected to investigate it fully. They appear so satisfied that their condemnation is protecting the interests of possible future informants and the reputation of the discipline that they have not considered how opposing the U.S. counterinsurgency might be

working *against* the interests of Afghan or Iraqi civilians. For instance, while it is obvious that the United States wreaks terrible destruction to advance its interests, I have not seen many anthropologists willing to argue that groups like Al Qaeda, the Taliban, or the Iran-backed Sadr militia offer the swiftest road to stability, inclusive and representative governments. Nor have I seen many anthropologists suggesting that they act in the interest of the Afghan and Iraqi civilians who are frequently and deliberately the targets of their repression and violence. If there is evil in the world then most American anthropologists seem to have implicitly concluded which of the contestants for Iraqi and Afghan 'hearts and minds' is the lesser of the two.

Of course, to officially condone those implicit conclusions and perhaps condone involvement in the Human Terrain System would be to aid a politically unpopular war and advance U.S. power. Thus American anthropology's preferred plan seems to involve crossing their fingers and "passively waiting" (Scheper-Hughes, 1995) for the final body count. This was captured perfectly in a speech by Laura Nader, in which she stated, "When hostilities cease there will be the challenge of rebuilding what we have destroyed, and finding a graceful way out" (Quoted in Scheper-Hughes, 2008). With the United States determined to stay in the region as long as necessary (because premature withdrawal could herald an even worse humanitarian and strategic disaster) and with the apparent ineffectuality of the anti-war movement, I would argue that this response accepts complicity in the attempt to secure American power in the Middle East. Waiting for the U.S. to withdraw has almost the same result as engaging with the Human Terrain System; the significant difference between the two options, however, is how many lives might be lost between now and then. Unless anthropologists are not accountable for the ills that befall American soldiers or Iraqi and Afghan civilians because such people are *technically* not informants (yet) and thus *technically* not anthropologists' ethical responsibility (yet), American anthropology's lack of engagement on their behalf can be seen as in direct violation of the discipline's primary ethical obligation.

While acceptance of the requisite compromises of engagement with the military could be seen as a direct attack at the integrity of the discipline of anthropology, I would ask along with Silverman (2009a) what about the discipline's unwillingness to compromise politically for an engagement that could produce immediate benefits for suffering human beings when it is seemingly unable to produce viable and popular alternatives? Is that not equally, if not more, damaging to anthropology's reputation? Anthropologists are not in the business of "saving lives" but can they truly position themselves, as Robert Redfield put it, "squarely on the side of humanity" if they pass up an opportunity to "save," improve or, at the very least, witness the lives of other human beings (Scheper-Hughes 1995:419, 420)? The discipline's lack of engagement with the people of Iraq and Afghanistan is especially unfortunate considering those people are currently experiencing conditions that anthropologists are quite able to positively affect.

As Maja Fryk writes:

> Anthropologists are particularly well-equipped to critically explore situations in which people are disempowered and victimized…With regard to post-war recovery processes, ethnographies based on long-term fieldwork are the best way of recognizing people's needs and concerns, and thus providing the knowledge needed to support the potential changes coming from within the researched groups and societies. (2003:55)

Along these lines, the Human Terrain System anthropologists are trying to represent and give voice to the local Iraqis and Afghans and thus working to deny the various occupiers and interfering non-state actors the ability to speak for them. For those who think this an overly

idealistic depiction, I would ask, using Nancy Scheper-Hughes words, "Why is it assumed that when anthropologists enter the struggle we must inevitably bow out of anthropology?" (1995:416). Does the anthropologist cease to think and feel like an anthropologist because they begin working with the military? Surely the AAA cannot believe this, for then the AAA's Code of Ethics is a useless document. The Code of Ethics was designed to serve as a standard for the conduct of American anthropologists and thus has had a significant, if profoundly transitive, effect on the people of the world with whom anthropology engages. This thesis and my frustration exist precisely because I believe the AAA's Code of Ethics must continue to be a reliable ethical guide. Thus, if the Executive Board is to make rulings based of the Code of Ethics, it needs to fully investigate the possibility that such a ruling could contradict it. The point at which anthropologists are working against the interests of the population's with whom they work and are instead merely furthering the U.S. military's ideological and tactical status quo, the American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics has failed its mission, its *raison d'être*. The point I have argued in this thesis is that at a point such as this, the mission of the Human Terrain System has also failed.

While critics of HTS would rightly highlight the lack of evidence that the program is able to function as its proponents claim it can, they should also highlight the lack of evidence that the AAA or its members have been able to produce or support equally transformative actions in Iraq and Afghanistan outside of the Human Terrain System. They should point out the appalling lack of evidence that they are even willing to try. Indeed, non-HTS anthropological engagements are seemingly non-existent in Iraq and Afghanistan today. A zone of ethnographic "silence" (Nader 2001) blankets the countries, evaporating particular forms of violence there and leaving the lives of the locals to be (mis)represented by the "unethical" HTS anthropologists or other, non-anthropologically sensitive groups like the Coalition Provisional Authority. The AAA Executive Board is right to be concerned about HTS but their concern should also extend to address the "silence" left by their own inability to devise a productive alternative.

In her call for "militant anthropology," Nancy Scheper-Hughes' is asking for anthropologists to drop concerns over positioning themselves with power, to "take sides and make judgments, though this flies in the face of the anthropological nonengagement with either ethics or politics" because in doing so they can stare back at evil (1995:419). She imagines anthropology "on two fronts: as a field of knowledge (as a 'discipline') and as a field of action, a force field, or a site of struggle " (Scheper-Hughes 1995: 419-420).   Similarly, I have tried to show that if anthropologists can drop their concerns over positioning themselves with power, the Human Terrain System enables anthropologists to engage that second front, to act as a force field between the local informants and the military's predisposition for lethal solutions, while using the military as protection against those who would wish the anthropologists harm. This cooperation between American social scientists and the U.S. military, this escorted ethnography, reportedly reduces casualties and, less contestably, gives voice to the people who otherwise would have had none.

I am not trying to recruit fellow social scientists to the Human Terrain System. I am calling for a genuine engagement with the Human Terrain System as a preferable alternative to blanket condemnation and intellectual neglect. I am concerned that the voices of noncombatant Iraqis and Afghans are drowned out in the din of battle, with few anthropologists who are seriously trying to give them an audience. Anthropologists have bravely, to use Nancy Scheper-Hughes' phrase, "put their bodies on the line" for this very reason in many other contexts. Where are the brave anthropologists willing to put their bodies and reputations on the line in order to walk the

streets of Baghdad and Kabul and give voice to the people there? It would seem, almost entirely, they are in the Human Terrain System.

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