

January 26, 2010

**ANTHROPOLOGISTS' STATEMENT
ON THE HUMAN TERRAIN SYSTEM PROGRAM**

To the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President pro tempore of the Senate, and the Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees:

We, the undersigned anthropologists, want to express to Congress our profound opposition to the Human Terrain System (HTS) program and its proposed expansion. We are heartened and encouraged by the Pentagon's interest in expanding its cultural knowledge, and we believe that anthropologists have an important role to play in shaping military and foreign policy. However, we believe that the HTS program is an inappropriate and ineffective use of anthropological and other social science expertise for the following reasons:

- 1) There is no evidence that HTS is effective. There is no evidence, as some supporters have claimed, that the program saves lives. In fact, a special commission of the American Anthropological Association (AAA)—the largest professional anthropology society in the US—concluded in December 2009 that “there exist no publicly available independent evaluations of the effects of HTS's activities, either positive or negative. Whether, or how, HTS might reduce conflict, in short, has yet to be evaluated.”
- 2) HTS is dangerous and reckless. To date, three embedded social scientists assigned to Human Terrain Teams have been killed in theaters of war. According to the journal *Nature*, “some scientists who have joined the program have complained about inadequate training,” while some military personnel reportedly complain that protecting Human Terrain Team members puts the lives of their soldiers at risk.
- 3) HTS wastes taxpayer money. In addition to its human costs, HTS has been costly. According to one report, approximately \$250 million has been allocated to HTS since its creation in 2006.
- 4) HTS is unethical for anthropologists and other social scientists. In 2007, the Executive Board of the AAA determined HTS to be “an unacceptable application of anthropological expertise.” Last December, the AAA commission found that HTS “can no longer be considered a legitimate professional exercise of anthropology” given the incompatibility of HTS with disciplinary ethics and practice. Like medical doctors, anthropologists are ethically bound to do no harm. Supporting counterinsurgency operations clearly violates this code. Moreover, the HTS program violates scientific and federal research standards mandating informed consent by research subjects.

For these reasons, we ask Congress to halt further appropriations to the HTS program, to cancel plans for expansion of the program, and to carefully consider alternative courses of action for securing peace in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond.

Signed,