Developments since 9/11 have posed ethical challenges for several professions. The American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers all created commissions to evaluate ethical concerns of engagement with military and security agencies (Behnke 2006; NACDL 2003). Issues and perspectives have been complicated, but for those professions remain fairly discrete. For the health professions, debate was about participation in interrogations. For criminal defense lawyers, about representing accused under the rules of military tribunals. For all of them, involvement would touch only a tiny percentage of their membership directly, and would have little if any spillover to the profession at large.

That is not the case for anthropology. Our dilemma is vastly more complex, with a potentially huge impact on the discipline. The types and degree of potential involvement are so varied that they are difficult to comprehend. This complexity is compounded by a range of evaluative frameworks applicable to different kinds of engagement. The impact of engagement on anthropology is incalculable, but quite literally could transform what anthropology means in the
twenty-first century.

By all indicators, the issue is here to stay. The need for ethnographic intelligence has been elevated to doctrine in the new US Army manual Counterinsurgency (Dept. of the Army 2000). David Petraeus is the leading advocate of this approach, and his star is rising in the Department of Defense. Either John McCain, an open admirer of Petraeus, or Barak Obama, the son and brother of anthropologists, can be expected to support this connection, albeit in different ways. When one considers the manifold connections between anthropology and security agencies, already under way, this engagement will quite probably touch every anthropologist in one way or another. As the AAA Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities repeatedly emphasized, we need to collectively discuss this for the long term.

This paper is nothing more than one individual’s effort to think through the current and foreseeable implications of this challenge. The first part is a discussion of the complexity of forms of engagement. The second part is focused on the most significant current manifestation of the new engagement, the Human Terrain System.

To start, however, we must recognized that there is a real mismatch comparing the two halves of security anthropology, the profession of anthropology on one side, and on the other, security agencies from the Department of Defense on down. The AAA Commission took two years to issue its report. It admirably laid out many areas of concern, advocated establishment of an AAA counseling team, and called for general adherence to the established code of anthropological ethics. But it did not specify a clear position on forms of engagement, except regarding embedment in Human Terrain Systems Teams (AAA 2007:25-26). Going forward, we can expect panels, conferences, publications, and countless conversations, as anthropologists in
their own way try to muddle through it. But the military and other security agencies already know what they want. They are hierarchical structures, which set policies to be carried out in a can-do way. They have money and power. We can expect anthropology to be outmaneuvered.

A good example of this is the DOD’s planned Minerva Consortia, announced in April, after anthropological reservations about engagement became prominent. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, former President of Texas A&M University, building on a series of private meetings with leaders of the Association of American Universities, addressed presidents of leading research universities to propose a “spirit of collaboration between the Pentagon and the university leaders.” His goal is to engage intellectual disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, and evolutionary psychology, promising “‘complete openness and rigid adherence to academic freedom and integrity.’” Robert Berdhal, president of the AAU, is quoted as “‘extraordinarily excited’” by this prospect, noting that on the question of funding, the Pentagon is “‘determined to do this right and make this effective’” (Jaschick 2008:1-2).

All who work in universities know how much administrations value grants, how critical these are for promotion and other internal rewards. Landing a quarter of a million for a militarily relevant area analysis, or a half a million for a new degree program for security personnel, expectably will be, for some, an irresistible route for career advancement. If such programs proliferate, the climate and character of anthropology will change. One axiom I have drawn from the anthropology of war is that in any military decision, moral evaluations are brought into line with practical self-interest. That would apply to anthropologists as well as war leaders. Money talks, and in this case, shouts. This is one reason why it is important to firm up professional standards and ethics as soon as possible.
Complexities of Engagement

There are different ways to look at the future range of anthropological engagement.

Leading advocate Montgomery McFate and Andrea Jackson in 2005 before the HTS system was developed, forwarded a proposed “Solution for DOD’s Cultural Knowledge Needs,” under five headings. “Ethnographic field research” is needed because past anthropological research was based on “intellectual whims and the vagaries of philanthropic funding,” leading to a need of directed research on areas of military concern, such as Anbar or Diyala provinces of Iraq. “Cultural training” would replace currently available cultural education in being more specific to actual combat areas and lessons that are practically useful in the operations. “Advisers,” foreseeing the HTS system, would develop battalion level cultural advisers to advise commanders on key leaders, population interests, social differences, and possible courses of development and institution building. “Programmatic applications” involves developing an institutional home for cultural knowledge so it can be widely distributed throughout government agencies and not buried within particular bureaucracies. “Analytic studies” deserves to be quoted in full.

Provide on-the-ground ethnographic research (interviews and participant observation) in all areas of strategic importance (such as Eastern Europe, the Maghreb, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Southwest Asia, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia) to support development of training, education, wargames, Red Teams, planning, and concepts.

Develop and conduct predeployment and advance cultural training on specific countries, help develop PME curriculum as ncedcd, develop and produce computer-bases training on society and culture, design and produce training that units can give in-house at
training facilities, and so on.

Respond to demands from within DOD for sociocultural studies on areas of interest (such as North Korean culture and society, Iranian military culture, and so on), and conduct case studies of coalition partners’ lessons learned on cultural training, such as the British experience in Iraq where cultural knowledge was applied to good effect, particularly in the organization of local councils to co-opt the tribal sheiks in Basra.

Provide cultural advisers for planning and operations to commanders on request and provide reachback as needed and who would also be available to lecture at military educational institutions and military commands, with particular emphasis on operational commands.

Taking the lead in identifying and implementing sociocultural programs, such as the cultural preparation of the environment—a comprehensive and constantly updated database tool designed for use by operational commanders and planners that includes map overlays of tribes, religions, and demographics (McFate and Jackson 2005:20-21).

Nothing in this proposal makes any reference to reducing the number of combat missions or casualties, the centerpiece of many of her later public statements.

The AAA Commission report also has an extensive but very different discussion of the multiple forms and aspects of engagement. The report’s table “Dimensions of Engagement with the Security Sector” has eleven columns, each with multiple possibilities. To illustrate, the combination highlighted as a causing the “most concern” is as follows. Sponsor/funder: US national security organization or contractor. Employer of anthropologist: U.S. national security organization or contractor. From whom is sponsorship and/or employment concealed, if any:
research subjects, academic community and public. Source of material: fieldwork. Type of work: original research. Research subjects: cultural group of interest to sponsoring entity. Intended beneficiary of work or recipient of research results: U.S. national security organization or contractor. From whom are the results of research concealed, if any (with the understanding that this means deliberate concealment): research subjects. From whom is the beneficiary concealed, if any: research subjects, academic community. Intent of research: influence a group or organization through social, cultural, economic, or political means; increase the ability of the U.S. to cause physical harm to or politically destabilize an organization or group.¹

I will not duplicate either these approaches, but offer a different, though overlapping, set of considerations: the situations of anthropological engagement; the kinds of anthropological work done; and the different frameworks for evaluating these combinations of possibilities.

Situations of engagement

This could go off in many directions. I will limit it to areas that have moved into prominence in the recent debate—not the long-established work of anthropologists studying the military from within (e.g. Frese and Harrell 200_); not engagement in other potentially problematic areas, such as with development agencies or the World Bank; not anthropologists who as individuals have become involved in conflict situations, such as Darfur or Rwanda. All are relevant, but there is a limit to any paper.

¹ The total concerns in this summary number 10, because column G, teaching topics, is not included in this combination of greatest concern. The entry highlighted under “intended beneficiary is #1, academic community and public. I assume that is an error, and the actual concern is with #2, U.S. national security organization or contractor, and that is how it is represented here. The final highlighted entry, intent of research, is just the first item, “influence a group...”. I assume the second, “to cause physical harm...” was also left out error, so I include it.
For whom does one work? This refers to major variations in forms of employment, where the paycheck is coming from. The biggest general category for security anthropology is working for the government, but there are a great many important variations under that heading. Most of our discussion has been about working for the government of the United States, but these issues will also apply, with differences, to anthropologists in other nations. (It is ironic that the best forum for discussing issues of U.S. anthropological engagement is the British publication Anthropology Today). Within one government, say that of the U.S., there are different branches, and different agencies within a branch. There are private security agencies, actively advertising for anthropologists (Gonzalez 2007:18). There are independent research institutes, or think-tanks, with varying political leanings and histories. There is the standard academic position within a research or teaching university, and there is limited-time participation in a government or otherwise funded research project.

Each possibility or combination carries its own implications, such as expected deliverable results, ability to chose what to study and what not to study, and freedom to publish or divulge findings— with the important note that just because something is not classified does not mean its author can make it public without consequences. Employment in any category, especially over years, will expectably result in socialization of the anthropologist into the cultural value system of that specific organization or project. In non-academic institutions, the “good anthropologist” will be a team player who furthers its collective goals. Different work situations involve different historical legacies. Working for the Canadian military may be seen quite differently from working for the U.S. military, working for a foreign affairs desk in the State Department is not the same as working for the CIA, or for Blackwater.
What is the political regime? What is the political conflict in question? These two concerns will inevitably go together, as anthropologists do their work in specific historical moments. The AAA Commission took the position that political considerations should be kept apart from general professional ethics, and rightly so. Individual anthropologists will have their own personal assessments of specific situations, and professional ethics are intended to be behavioral guides for all, always. But these questions remain very important for collective deliberation. Much of the current discussion has been framed in terms of the war in Iraq, which many anthropologists see as illegitimate, under the Bush administration, which many see as immoral. Afghanistan is a different situation. It began in response to an attack on the U.S., not chosen because of the regime’s political ideology. For some anthropologists with experience in Afghanistan and awareness of U.S. responsibility for its social collapse, there is a felt obligation to help restore a stable system that respects human rights.

This contrast, however, hardly begins to define the possible situations we may face. In retrospect, what would have been an appropriate response if anthropologists had been called upon under the Clinton administration to help shape diplomatic and military policy involving the former Yugoslavia, or Rwanda? In prospect, what should we do if an Obama administration called upon anthropology for guidance in a U.N. mandated U.S. peacekeeping mission in Darfur, or to help minimize the potential violence attendant upon a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq?

Another situational consideration, almost totally overlooked in these debates but absolutely crucial in the study of violent conflicts, is how far has a conflict progressed? Large scale political violence goes through distinct phases. Once it get past formulation, mobilization, and polarization into full scale bloodshed, it is much, much more difficult to stop (Ferguson
At present, anthropologists are being called in for full-blown wars, when it is already too late to encourage alternatives. Where they might be of more use is situations which have merely the potential of violence. That would involve working for NGOs, or State. A strong disciplinary association with the U.S. military or intelligence agencies might only make that kind of work more difficult.

Types of anthropological work. These are ordered from least to most problematic, and several will receive additional consideration in later discussions.

Security appropriation of published anthropology. This is one of the broadest engagements of anthropological work with security agencies, and the one we can do least about. David Price (2004) has documented the long line of anthropologists whose published research was knowingly or unknowingly supported by U.S. intelligence agencies, but any published research has the potential of being used by military or security agencies, just as George Condominas study of the Montagnards (1964) was used during the Vietnam War, or Raphael Patai’s *The Arab Mind* (1973) was used at Abu Ghraib. The latter case gives rise to two contrasting interpretations. Noting that Patai’s daughters went on record to state their (deceased) fathers’ opposition to such a use, Gonzalez (2007:23) comments that this “should give us pause, for it illustrates how easily scholarship can be subverted for propaganda purposes.” McFate (2005:37) sees in it the danger of letting military professionals use ethnography without anthropological guidance: “The alleged use of Patai’s book as the basis of psychological torment at Abu Ghraib, devoid of any understanding of the broader context of Iraqi culture, demonstrates the folly of using decontextualized culture as the basis of policy.”

In one sense, they are both right. We can expect security agencies to use our publications,
no matter what we do. Personally, I was startled to read McFate’s (200: 43) statement “Across the board, the national security structure needs to be infused with anthropology, a discipline invented to support warfighting in the tribal zone.” Although I have not seen anything besides that suggesting War in the Tribal Zone (Ferguson and Whitehead 2000) has been taken up by security analysts, clearly it could be done, even though at the time of its publication such a fate was never imagined. When anthropologists work in areas of actual potential military engagement, by U.S. or other security organizations, then it is their responsibility to consider to what purposes their finding might be used, for example as Bourgois (1990) did when studying the Miskito during the Contra war, or any student of the Middle East should do today. But when the security planners are looking at the entire indigenous world as possible future areas of conflict (see below), limiting potentially usable “ethnographic intelligence” would amount to closing down much of anthropology.

**Teaching.** This is the other very broad area of engagement, probably the one which will have the most direct contact with individual anthropologists. Teaching anthropology to security personnel comes in many forms. At my school, anthropology is an undergraduate minor only, but I already have students who have been deployed or expect to be deployed taking my course on war. One ROTC Master’s student in another program asked if he could consult with me on the topic of federalism as an alternative to ethnic violence. After some deliberation, I said yes—but then he never showed up. The most troublesome point from an undergraduate perspective, however, involves employment. The most common question I am asked by majors or prospective majors is, “what kind of job can I get with an anthropology BA?” Typically I talk about potential applications in public service fields. But the Human Terrain System, under the category
“Research Analyst,” states its qualifications as: “College graduate, any discipline, is required. MA/PhD, Cultural Anthropologist/Sociologist/Area Studies is preferred.” (MTC Technologies).

Is it ethical to withhold this information?

For graduate education, the issues get much deeper. Major General Robert Scales has called for future military officers to “attend graduate schools in disciplines necessary to understand human behavior and cultural anthropology” (Gonzalez 2008:23). Will graduate schools admit candidates from the military, will professors work with them and write them recommendations? If some departments decide against that, others will not. Even if graduate students do not come in from the military, those who obtain graduate degrees and run into the realities of the academic job market will understandably pay attention to Human Terrain System employment, which may pay $300,000 a year or more (below).

It is all too easy to dismiss paying employment as a valid reason for our students, at any level, to enter into the security field. Easy, because most of us joining this debate are already well and securely situated. In the class stratification of anthropology, those who earn a degree but find few job prospects simply do not count. They quickly disappear off our radar. It should come as no surprise if young anthropologists, trying to start their lives and families, see this as an opportunity, and the scorn of established anthropologists as a reason in itself to reject their moral and professional positions.

Teaching in specialized military schools is another area. “Cultural literacy” and “cultural competence” is becoming more and more a part of standard military training (McFarland 2005). McGuire Air Force Base, for instance, provides its 5,000 officers and enlisted men and women courses on foreign languages, sociology, history, anthropology, comparative religions, and
philosophy, in a program run by an anthropologist (Capuzzo 2007). Such programs, of course, mean more jobs for anthropology instructors. Anthropologists already are providing graduate instruction for officers at schools such as the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School or the U.S. Military Academy's Department of Social Science. As more non-military universities graduate more security anthropologists, the cooperation of civilian anthropologists may become less necessary, and the security field may become more able to provide its own personnel for programs such as the Human Terrain System. It should be noted that some military personnel already are able to produce pretty sophisticated anthropological analyses of "tribal engagement" (e.g. Eisenstadt 2007; Varhola and Varhola 2006).

Another concern raised by the current push for cultural learning for security personnel is the question of "spies in the classroom." The Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholars Program (PRISP), begun in 2004, provides up to $50,000 in scholarship over two years, for students in areas of interest to intelligence agencies; and the Intelligence Community Scholars Program (ICSP), begun soon after that, authorizes unspecified funds (possibly up to $40,000 annually) for four years. Both programs obligate recipients to work for intelligence agencies after attaining their degrees. Neither program requires any recipient to publically acknowledge the source of the scholarship, and to date almost none have. We will be training security personnel without knowing it. Given past history, it is in no way unreasonable to be concerned that these students, unsuspected but contractually dedicated to intelligence careers, will be passing along information about their professors' political proclivities (Glenn 2005; Price 2005).

As educators, it would be ethically impossible to argue that certain kinds of people should not be educated. Who would say that it is a good thing for armed forces personnel to go overseas
ignorant about the peoples and cultures they will encounter? Higher levels of graduate training, however, may bring up questions about the possible harm that might be done to anthropological subjects. But practically, there is no way this higher level of instruction can be walled off from people in security professions. Perhaps the only answer possible is to increase our teaching of critical and ethical perspectives, along with the ethnographic information so desired.

**Non-field analysts and advisers.** This encompasses a great range of positions, from low-level “reach-back” analysts working on data sent from fields of operations, to strategic consultants in the highest level of government. A central fact is that analysts and consultants would not be involved in direct fieldwork with human subjects, and so the ethical strictures involved in human subjects work do not immediately apply. Ethical qualms that might, perhaps, limit some of the things field anthropologists were called to do would not constrain this work. It has not received a great deal of public discussion, yet when we see, below, some of the ambitions for a using ethnographic intelligence network, low level anthropological data processing and analysis may have a greater impact than advising combat battalions.

Higher level advisors and consultants have the greatest possibility of shaping more enlightened and benign policy decisions. The question is, what kind of policy are they helping to shape? Hugh Gusterson, a vocal critic of the current trend toward engagement, attended a public talk by David Kilcullen, an anthropologically oriented political scientist who is the _____ in the State Department ( ). Although Kilcullen has frequently written about anthropological input leading to reduced military destruction, Gusterson relates that this was not part of Kilcullen’s talks. Rather, it was about using the insights of anthropology to better enable the U.S. to dominate others around the world (Gusterson 2007). I will return to this topic in
Field Research. As will be discussed below, the plans of security agencies include both short and long term anthropological field research. This involves embedded anthropologists, moving with combat brigades, and multi-year placement in areas which are deemed possibilities of future conflicts. The latter may come as part of graduate training at civilian or military institutions, or may be funded for post-graduates from other security-linked sources. Although this is one of the most worrisome forms of anthropological work, with the potentially the greatest impact on the reputation of all anthropological field workers, it is also an area with the most clear-cut ethical standards. As the AAA Commission clearly noted, all anthropologists are expected to live by the rules of do no harm to the people studied, and transparent disclosure of sponsors of research and the purposes to which research findings may be put.

It was on these (and other) concerns that the Commission drew its clear disapproval of embedment in HTS teams: participation is unethical because it would be impossible to guarantee these fundamental principles. It is worth noting the response of advocates of HTS and similar engagement to this objection. Kilcullen (2007; and see Gusterson 2007) totally ignores it, maintaining the only ethical question is whether a war is ethical by his peculiar interpretation of just war theory (if a democratically elected government chooses war, it is just). Other objections, he claims, are no more than personal politics. Thomas Mahnken, deputy assistant secretary of defense for policy planning, and an architect of the Minerva Consortia, similarly dismissed these issues as just personal objections (Jaschick 2008b). (One wonders what the reaction would be to an anthropologist saying that military ethics are just personal opinions). Both of these spokesmen are indicating that security agencies do not feel bound to respect the professional guidelines of the
Taking this one major, dark step forward, brings us to espionage, that is, active collection of ethnographic information under a false cover of non-security research. Price (2004) is here again the main source for a long history of anthropological spying. The AAA Commission found no indication of anthropologists engaged in espionage at present ( ). As security related funding for anthropological research becomes more available, this issue will surely grow. One can imagine that a civilian anthropologist doing extended fieldwork in any of the far-flung areas that security planners want to understand, may find it an inconvenience, at least, to inform the people being studied that the work is being done for the U.S. Department of Defense, and will be shared with the CIA, etc. If this happens, all anthropological fieldworkers will come under suspicion, and justifiably so.

**Frames of reference.**

**Criteria of evaluation.** The reaction of any anthropologist to these different situations and types of work depends in large part on the frame or frames used to evaluate them. This has not received much explicit recognition in current debates, but it is one reason why common ground often seems elusive. One issue is the criteria of evaluation. Discipline-wide standards of professional ethics were the criteria of the AAA Commission. Discipline-wide standards of good anthropology are not as clearly defined, but antiquated approaches to culture, ignoring issues of colonialism, and failure to properly cite sources have all been charged against the work of McFate and Kilcullen ( ). The idea of sending anthropologists who are specialists in other areas of the world to do instant analysis situations in Iraq and Afghanistan would not be
countenanced in any other area of anthropological investigation. Even more powerful criteria are
the personal political and moral commitments each of us have, that shape our reactions to calls to
participate, in any way, in ongoing wars

Orienting context. Besides the criteria used to evaluate possibilities of engagement,
anthropologists also have different, sometimes multiple frameworks informing their judgements.
Some anthropologists, such as Felix Moos, designer of the PRIS program, speak in terms of
national duty during a time of war ( ). Others, less gung ho, see our duty as reforming a
system that has, and keeps, making things worse for ourselves and others around the world, the
line taken by some of the most prominent advocates of engagement. The leaders of opposition to
deepening engagement have backgrounds in critical history of U.S. militarism, and the lessons of
that history inform their positions. Anthropologists with area experience are shaped by that, as in
the case of one Afghanistan specialist I know who told me his main goal was to see that country
avoid falling back into the hell it went through from 1979 to 2001. Strikingly absent in the debate
are anthropologists with a background in the anthropology of war, with a few exceptions such as
Marshall Sahlins and Anna Simons (on opposite sides). Many practitioners in this subfield have
espoused a goal of lessening war, which might make them natural supporters of engagement. On
the other hand, the lessons of this subfield, at least as I see them (Ferguson 2006), lead to a
harshly critical stance on U.S. military actions, which would might make them unwanted within
the security realm. Probably the greatest number of anthropologist see these issues primarily in
terms of the broad consequences of deepening engagement for subaltern peoples and the future of
a the discipline. An as yet tiny but sure to grow number of anthropologists will see engagement
first and foremost as a paycheck or career opportunity.
**Time frame.** As the AAA Commission noted ( ), all of the discussion about military engagement has been heavily inflected by current events—the now. Engagement, however, will be long term. Decisions, career choices, made today will shape anthropology’s role in an unknowable future. As noted before—what about an Obama administration? And what if that is followed by a Romney administration? The nub of the issue is that independent, academic anthropologists would be free to choose engagement or not in changing future situations, but those who enter into a career on security salaries will not have that freedom.

**The Human Terrain System**

A major problem in evaluating anthropological engagement is that at the moment, most of what we are discussing is hypothetical. This section focuses on the cutting edge of engagement, the Human Terrain System. The system’s leading advocate, Montgomery McFate ( ), calls the currently fielded teams an experiment, “proof of concept” for the military on the utility of ethnographic understanding. As the main area where anthropologists are actively working in the new push for engagement, it may also serve as “proof of concept” for our profession.

The HTS is comprised primarily of Human Terrain Teams attached to field combat brigades, and Reachback Research Cells (Kipp et al. 2006). (It also is intended to be supported by a broad network of academic subject experts, but there is no other information on that, and it will not be discussed here.) The mission statement of the HTS is “to provide commanders in the field with relevant socio-cultural understanding necessary to meet their operational requirements” (Human Terrain System 2008x:3). In public and recruiting statements, its advocates stress the role of providing field commanders with constructive options for engaging populations, leading to greater cooperation and less need for lethal combat missions ( ).
The field teams are comprised of five individuals. A military Team Leader, responsible for interaction with brigade command, will command four team members, specified as follows.

Cultural Analyst: Specs: Civilian, MA/PhD, Cultural Anthropologist/Sociologist. Duties: Advise HTT and unit staff, conduct/manage ethnographic/social science research and analysis.

Regional Studies Analyst. Specs: Civilian, MA/PhD, Area Studies. Fluency in area language. Duties: Provide local area interpretation of compiled human terrain information and run focus groups with locals.


The HTS program began with a $20 million contract to British Aerospace Engineering, which was then expanded by another $40 or $41 million. In April, Newsweek reported an additional expansion of $120 million, bringing the total to approximately $180 million (Ephron and Spring 2008:3; Gonzalez 2008:21; Schactman 2007a:1). Civilians recruited to HTS teams earn approximately $300,000 for a year, including adjustments for an 80 hour work week, deployment, and plus hazardous duty pay (Ephron and Spring 2008:1; McFate 2008x:3; MTC Technologies 2008). The civilians receive training, serve in uniform, and are issued weapons (MTC 2008). (These were among the circumstances noted by the AAA Commission in concluding HTT members could not guarantee voluntary informed consent by studied populations.
One Iraq team, however, stopped carrying guns after the soldiers they worked with objected (Mulrine 2008:36), another anthropologist does carry one (Ephron and Spring 2008:1), and another reports that he does not (Middle East Online 2008).

The first HT Team was deployed to Afghanistan in February 2007, and five teams were in Iraq by early September 2007. Current plans call for embedding one HTS Team in all 26 of the U.S. combat brigades in Afghanistan and Iraq (Rohde 2007:1). In April 2008, eight social scientists—not just anthropologists—were active in the five Iraq teams (McFate 2008x:2). In May 2008, Michael Bhatia, a political scientist with extensive research experience in Afghanistan, embedded with the Afghanistan HTT was killed, when the Humvee he was in was destroyed by a roadside bomb (Fondacaro and McFate 2008; Weinberger 2008). Beyond these arenas, the HTS plans to send Teams to unspecified locations in Africa and Pacific in the “near future” (MTC 2008)

The HTS program suffered a severe blow when Zenia Helbig, a comparative religion and language scholar who had trained for HTS deployment, turned whistleblower. Helbig’s service with HTS was terminated due to a facetious comment, in response to a lieutenant who advocated bombing and invading Iran, that she would “hop the border, and switch sides.” Her fiancee, Capt. Matt Thompkins, who was then leading an HTS Team in Baghdad, was allowed to return from Iraq, and joined in her critiques. In a March 2008 open letter to several government officials, Helbig describes an incompetent and self-serving program administration, more interested in public relations and maximizing contract dollars than crafting a program serving HTS goals—which Helbig continues to believe in. Several recruited civilians had minimal credentials if that, several military men were administrators’ friends who were openly hostile to cultural
understanding. It would be shocking, if this was not the Defense Department. McFate’s defense is the typical one after the whistle blows: these were disgruntled former employees, and start-up problems have been fixed since they left (Glenn 2007; Gonzalez 2008; Helbig 2008; McFate and Fondacaro 2008a). There is no way to know from the outside. According to Helbig, the problems are so fundamental that, in an address to anthropologists, she concludes, “I would venture to guess that if all of you collectively walk away from this debate, and if the media subsequently stops following, HTS will get washed by the wayside sooner rather than later” (Helbig 2007). Not with another $120 million dollars at stake.

Anecdotes from the field. What do HTS field teams do? One problem is that there are only scattered snippets of information from news stories, and commentaries by commanding officers (whose careers depend on supporting established doctrine) or people involved in the program itself. Biases in the latter sources must be considered. It is important to note that the teams have two basic functions, studying and advising commanders on sociocultural conditions to secure greater support from the population, and gathering and analyzing ethnographic intelligence. They will be considered in that order, followed by discussion of Reachback Analysis.

Iraq. Reports about HTS Teams in the Baghdad area are especially sketchy. Dave Matsuda, with the 82nd Airborne’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team, is described in Fort Hood newsletter as studying and explaining local tribal organization and hierarchy, and counseling on necessary rituals, local scripts, and appropriate symbols—for instance, in a wanted poster, to use two open hands, derived from the Koran, instead of a Western scales of justice. His executive officer comments “It’s great having them. They add a critical dimension to the fight, one that has been missing up to now” (Pryor 2007). Marcus Griffen, with the 1-76 Cavalry’s Charlie Company,
developed indicators of local well-being, such as how well the local market is stocked, and interviewed locals about schools, electricity etc. (Prior to joining the HTS, his work had been on "Freegans," environmentalists who scour dumpsters, and in Baghdad he rummaged through trash for ideas) (Ephron and Spring 2008:2). Griffen’s blog (2007) describes other insights from a helicopter overflight, such as that accumulated rubble in poor neighborhoods, and flooding by stagnant ponds and sewage probably increased stress, and those problems should be addressed.

Another team with the 1st Infantry Division’s 4th Infantry Brigade Combat team, was led by Matt Tompkins, fiancee of Zenia Helbig. When an American officer suggested buying 200 goats for a local sheik, his team suggested finding out first if the sheik wanted goats, or maybe something like work on the power grid (Mulrine 2007:35). When his unit needed to get a local police commander to crack down on subordinates suspected of aiding insurgents, the Team suggested appealing to his pride, by pointing out the subordinates were mocking him, which made him visibly angry (Ephron and Spring 2008:2).

Problems with this team are evident. When commanding officer Ricky Gibbs returned from a home visit to first meet cultural anthropologist Lisa Verdon and area specialist Fouad Lghzaoui, Gibbs wondered how they would operate within the chain of command.

After the team ticks off a few planned projects, for example, Gibbs has a question: “Who told you to study those things?” What he most wants to know, he says, is the following: “How do I make [Iraqis] realize that I’m thinking what they’re thinking?” The questions keep coming. “How do I approach them in a way that helps? How do I get into the clique? How can I win the information campaign using the way they think?” Gibbs ends the exchange with a final query: “Are you all going to help?” “We will try,” answers
Lghzaoui. "Inshallah [God willing.]” Verdon Winces. Gibbs looks at his team. “There is no trying,” he says. “We’re going to do an American inshallah on this one.” That means, he says, “We’re going to do it.” Later Verdon digests the encounter, noting the teams have to be sensitive to the can-do American military culture too. (Mulrine 2007:36).

Gibbs also noted that over time, HTT input has been invaluable, for example understanding that a drawn image of a snake was a positive symbol rather than negative (pg. 37). But the problems evidently did not go away.

Helbig (2008: 3) reports that the cultural advisor to this team “was pulled from Iraq only after five months of her military team leader reporting not only her inability to contribute, but her open refusal to acknowledge his authority, support information requests from the supported unit or coordinate with anyone on the team.” Following Helbig’s criticism of the HTS, Tompkins was returned from Iraq and released from the program (pg. 6). Later, Tompkins was critical of HTS impact.

Tompkins... said he thought his team provided helpful input to its brigade, but the contribution was more superficial than planners of the program had conceived. “Without the ability to truly immerse yourself in the population, existing knowledge of the culture... is critical... Lacking that, we were basically an open-source research cell.”

(The mention of “knowledge of the culture” refers to the fact that social scientists recruited to HTS typically have had no academic experience with Middle Eastern cultures). Tompkins... says that for every success in Iraq, he has suffered multiple frustrations and failures. And he doesn’t believe his team members were uniquely qualified to provide the input they did. Tompkins says many of the officers and grunts he worked with had more-
relevant knowledge and experience than the anthropologists, having served in Iraq twice or three times before. “These are dedicated individuals who are often intimately familiar with many of the nuances of the society and culture they are trying to engage with” (Ephron and Spring 2008:2).

Afghanistan. The contribution of the one HTS Team in Afghanistan with the 82nd Airborne’s 4th Brigade is somewhat more clear, both because it has been in the field longer, and we have information of greater detail. A New York Times story (Rohde 2007) first reported the seemingly compelling point—often repeated by defenders, (as this story is distributed by MTC Technologies as part of its recruitment effort—that HT Team advice led to a 60 to 70% reduction in “kinetic” (bombs and bullets) actions by the military. “Even some HTT members have a hard time believing that figure. And [HTS administrator] Fondacaro cautions that the 4th Brigade’s area of operations was relatively calm, and therefore well suited to social-science research. But the local commander insists that 53 of 83 districts now support the local government—up from just 19” (Schactman 2007).

From the Times (Rohde 2007), one contribution by the anthropologist “Tracy,” has also been repeated many times, including at least twice by the Secretary of Defense ( ). In one incursion into a valley in Paktia Province, “Tracy identified an unusually high concentration of widows in one village, Colonel Woods said. Their lack of income created financial pressure on sons to provide for their families, she determined, a burden that could drive the young men to join well-paid insurgents. Citing Tracy’s advice, American officers developed a job training program for the widows.” Sounds good, although the impact of such a short-lived program is questionable. What is not noted is that Tracy has thus identified widows’ sons as potential insurgents, a point
that will no doubt become of standard profiling techniques in insurgent areas. Will that help their mothers?

In congressional testimony, the commander gave three illustrations of HTT input, now posted on the HTS website. In one, a village had been firing rockets on a local base. On HTT advice, village elders were brought into a discussion, claimed it was not them but the Taliban firing, and pledged to stop them if the Coalition would pay occasional friendly visits to the village, and give them a volley ball net. Both were done, and the rockets stopped. In another area, HTT advised that the military reach out to local mullahs, rather than village elders who were supporting the Taliban (an unusual situation if true), which led to an immediate cessation of attacks. In a third, HTT convinced a company commander that a local village was only supporting the Taliban because of their coercion, and proposed a shura, after which villagers agreed to the construction of a road and employment of local youth as auxiliary police to keep the Taliban out (Human Terrain System 2008).

These examples just sound to good to be true, or at least, enduring. But there is also basis for inferring a more strategic input form the HTT in this case. It aided in identifying a long-standing dispute over timber rights between two divisions of the large local Zadran tribe. Tracy helped interpret Taliban actions as efforts to play this division, and suggested actions to help unify the Zadran—such as building a school for use by different factions, and convoking shuras to discuss problems (Rhode 2007). (It was this Team that suffered HTS’s first casualty, Michael Bhatia, in his brigade’s initial visit to an area, with the goal of understanding local land disputes and initiating negotiations) (Fondacaro and McFate 2008). Deep seated problems like this are unlikely to be resolved by temporary occupiers, but knowing about them is probably better than
not. That is evident in comparing two very different articles about another area of Afghanistan, where no HTS team has yet been deployed. This case may be the best illustration of the potential benefits and limitations of anthropological engagement.

As described by Colonel Michael Coss, the 10th Mountain Division was sent in February 2006 to Kunar to try a new, human terrain based counterinsurgency model of clear-hold-build-engage. Based in the relatively secure lowland Pech River Valley, the target of Operation Mountain Lion was the insurgent stronghold of the mountainous Korengal Valley. The task began, following the new doctrine, by analyzing “political, military, economic, social, infrastructural, and informational (PMESII) factors. Combined with predeployment training in religion, tribal influence, language, and other cultural concerns, this analysis increased the force’s ability to comprehend the human terrain of Afghanistan and address the motivations behind friendly, enemy, and noncombatant behavior” (Coss 2008:22). But no other anthropological engagement is reported, and the rest of this article shows absolutely no anthropological awareness. The Operation involved a massive, coordinated assault on the Korengal, beginning with special operations elimination of high value targets, moving into a massive air assault, followed by invasion by joint Coalition-Afghan forces. As Coss describes it, the insurgents fled, hid, or were killed our captured, and the Afghan flag was raised for all to see. A glowing success. “At this writing, stability and prosperity are emerging in eastern Afghanistan. The effectiveness of JTF-76’s ‘clear, hold, build, engage’ model has been confirmed.”

As reported in the New York Times Magazine (Rubin 2008:82), the 10th was replaced in May 2007 by the 173rd Airborne. The replacements were “spooked by the weird behavior of their predecessors” in the 10th in Korengal “hold” outposts. “Near the end of their tour, many would
sit alone on the fire base talking to themselves. Privates disobeyed their sergeants, and squad leaders refused to step outside the wire to show the new boys the terrain" (42-43) As Rubin encountered the men of the 173rd five months later, they were as bad or worse—something out of *Apocalypse Now*—and suffering heavy casualties. No anthropologist is reported with the 173rd, but its commander was Bill Ostlund, a social scientist and one of the inner-circle that developed the new COIN doctrine (Wikipedia ). In his plan, an $11 million road project would be used to lure supporters away from “the bad guys,” the human terrain mapping would be completed, and young soldiers would be asked to “play killer, cultural anthropologist, hearts-and-minds winner and then killer again” (42).

“By 2007” it was discovered that the 10th had unknowingly blundered into an intense lowland-highland conflict centering on timber, involving tribal, ecological, and economic differences. The local intelligence on which Mountain Lion was based was provided by lowlanders to eliminate highland rivals. This pushed the highland leaders to align with foreign jihad fighters. Having discovered this mistake, negotiations were tried, to no avail. Korengal commander Kearney “tried to dig deeper, sending e-mail messages to anthropologists and Afghan experts to get their guidance.” No change. After more severe attacks, Ostlund approved dropping two 2,000 pound bombs on a main insurgent village. Attacks continued, and Ostlund threatened village elders, “If anything should happen to Captain Kearney, pain and misery will knock on many doors in the Korengal” (82). Attacks continued.

This tale may be read in different ways. It is certainly possible that a competent anthropologist, with at least several months immersion in the regional literature, could have warned the 10th commander about the possibility of being suckered into a local struggle. That,
however, would be major rain on the parade of the new COIN strategy the commander wanted to demonstrate. Instead of an “unprecedented” joint forces operation—shock and awe—it would have been, ‘give me a couple of months to ask around, and then maybe we should work on talking in Korengal without a lot of fireworks.’ If that had happened, maybe many would be alive today, with no Apocalypse Now. On the other hand, once the damage was done, and the fighting was intense, the anthropological input seems inconsequential.

**Reachback Analysis.** That last discussion brings us back to the other function of anthropologists in Human Terrain Teams—gathering information for “mapping the human terrain.” This has been far less discussed, especially by advocates of engagement, but it is at least as troubling for anthropological ethics than advising on social tactics. As just noted, the military can take on mapping itself, but the assumption is that social scientists would do it better, and better understand the significance of what is found.

The HTT’s tool kit is Mapping Human Terrain (MAP-HE) software, an automated database and presentation tool that allows teams to gather, store, manipulate, and provide cultural data from hundreds of categories. Data will cover such subjects as key regional personalities, social structures, links between clans and families, economic issues, public communications, agricultural production, and the like. The data compiled and archived will be transferred to follow-on units. Moreover, although MAP-HT will be operated by the HTTs, the system will regularly transfer data to rear elements for storage in a larger archive, to allow for more advanced analysis and wider use by the military and other government agencies (Kipp et al. 2006:13).

The new *Counterinsurgency* manual (DOA 200 ). Appendix B, gives a general idea of the
specifics to be expected. One map overlay (B-3) displays the location of ethnicities. Another, (B-2) is of “population support,” which marks and labels local population clusters and numbers as “supports host nation,” “supports insurgents,” and “neutrals.” The manual also details kinds of social networks, association matrixes, and event coordination registers, which, among other things, is intended to locate key nodes among insurgents.

**Military Intelligence and Targeting.** In defending HTS, McFate is adamant that the teams do not collect military intelligence or participate in targeting attacks. She “vehemently denied that the anthropologists collected intelligence for the military” (Rohde 2007:3) As posted on the HTS website:

HTTs do not proactively elicit actionable intelligence from the local civilian population. Team members are legally prohibited from performing active intelligence collection. Only Military Intelligence (MI) Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Collectors can answer specific questions from the brigade’s intelligence unit. Furthermore, brigades do not need HTTs to collect intelligence or assist with targeting, since they already have a large intelligence staff that performs this function for them. The role of the HTTs is to help the troops better understand who is NOT their enemy (Human Terrain System 2008b).

The commander over the Afghanistan HT Team told Congress much the same.

Now, let me tell what an HTT is not. The Team is not an intelligence-gathering tool which is used to “target” individuals. My Staff is uniquely organized to run the targeting process and link intelligence systems to time sensitive targeting. The HTT, sourced with Anthropologists and Social Scientists, is not qualified or trained to provide targeting support.
This is not reassuring. Note the hedge in “proactively elicit actionable intelligence.” How real is the legal barrier mentioned when the Terrain Research Manager is specified as having “a military background in tactical intelligence,” and the Terrain Analysis “will also have a military intelligence background.” (Kipp et al. 2006:13) How is it possible for an anthropologist to “better understand who is NOT their enemy” without simultaneously helping better understand who IS their enemy? While the field commander says anthropologists are “not qualified or trained to provide targeting support,” is it remotely conceivable that the commander’s MI and Staff will not use the mapping, network analysis, and other data gathered by HT Teams in their efforts to identify targets?

HTS advocates write as if sociocultural advising and data gathering were somehow isolatable from direct military engagement. “HTTs work primarily with units whose function is explicitly non-lethal, such as medical personnel, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Civil Affairs, etc. When they do work with maneuver units, HTTs improve the units’ abilities to carry out non-lethal aspects of their roles... (Human Terrain Systems 2008b).” This is an illusion. Looking at the “demand side,” military writers calling for increased ethnographic intelligence are very clear that negotiation and cooperation are only components in a unified approach that includes ready application of deadly force. For example, from a pre-HTS commander in Iraq:

[T]he Marines of Fox Company were willing and able to use every instrument at their disposal to kill their enemies and disrupt insurgent activity. Because we demonstrated that we would use targeted violence whenever necessary, tribal attacks on Marines decreased and intelligence about the enemy increased. Soon we were able to broker truces with the formerly hostile tribes. Of course, the use of lethal force is not the only means of
demonstrating power. There were benefits to cooperating with us or even just remaining neutral... The Caragoul tribal leadership recognized that coalition forces could and would take decisive action along a power continuum ranging from the use of deadly violence to economic and social incentives (Mann 2007:105).

Mann goes on to describe the need for the kind of cultural input that HT Teams have been designed to provide.

Understanding tribal organization and leadership is critical to success in rural Iraq... We must make every effort to understand an area’s tribal alignment and disposition in order to focus the appropriate combat, economic, and political power needed to defeat the tribe or change its position regarding the coalition... Just as we develop a combined obstacle overlay when analyzing terrain and enemy mechanized movement, we must develop an overlay to understand tribal influence in the AO. Overlays should display tribe names, boundaries, and dispositions, and indicate which tribes dominate in the AO. Once we understand the tribal relationships in our area, we can leverage our power in the tribal environment. We must collect names, tribal affiliations, photos, and home grid coordinates of all males in the area and meticulously record the information in appropriate computer data bases (Mann 2007:106)

Anthropologists would not themselves be directly involved in targeting individuals or groups to be attacked, but information they elicit, analyze, and present, would. This, in my opinion, is why participation in HT Teams violates the ethical principle of do no harm.

Reachback. The information gathered by HT Teams is forwarded to Reachback Research Cells in the United States, including a Cultural Analyst (anthropologist or sociologist), a Regional
Studies Analyst with language skills, and a Knowledge Manager, along with a leader and three others from the military. (These are examples of the analysts previously noted as not being constrained by anthropological ethics concerning direct contact with human subjects.)

The RRC will systematically receive information from deployed HTTs through the MAP-HT system. Data will be collated, catalogued, and placed into a central database. The RRC will also be able to conduct additional analysis in support of forward HTTs. The RRC’s main purpose is to help HTTs answer forward-deployed commanders’ specific requests for information. Apart from its own institutional expertise, the RRC will be able to access a network of researchers throughout the government and academia to conduct research and get answers (Kipp et al 2007:14).

(These are examples of the higher level consultants previously noted.)

The Reachback system will also make possible the “sharing” of information gathered by HT Teams.

In addition to the capabilities the HTS offers to brigade commanders and other decisionmakers in given areas of operation, the data it compiles will be available for the training, modeling, and simulation communities to better support deploying forces in their mission rehearsal exercise scenario development. Other U.S. Government agencies will also have access to the central database. And finally, to facilitate economic development and security, the compiled databases will eventually be turned over to the new government of Iraq and Afghanistan (Kipp et al 2007:14).

Each aspect of this sharing is cause for concern. “Other decisionmakers in given areas of operation” presumably includes the Air Force. That is very significant. The Air Force is
collectively worried that they will be “shortchanged” given the new emphasis on land
counterinsurgency (Dunlap 200_; Shanker 2008). Major General Charles Dunlap makes this
clear.

Unfortunately, starry-eyed enthusiasts have misread the manual to say that defeating an
insurgency is all about winning hearts and minds with teams of anthropologists,
propagandists and civil-affairs officers armed with democracy-in-a-box kits and volleyball
nets. They dismiss as passe killing or capturing insurgents. Actually, the reality is quite
different. The lesson of Iraq is that old-fashioned force works... Press reports indicate that
the number of Iraqis in prison doubled over the last year, to 30,000 from 15,000, and while
casualty figures are sketchy, military officials told USA Today last September that the
number of insurgents killed was already 25 percent higher in 2007 than in all of 2006.
And while the new counterinsurgency doctrine has an anti-technology flavor that seems to
discourage the use of air power especially, savvy groundforce commanders in Iraq got the
right results last year by discounting those admonitions. Few American are likely to be
aware that there was a fivefold increase in airstrikes during 2007 as compared with the
previous year (Dunlap 2008).

While Dunlap here refers to the period before any HT Team deployed in Iraq, his point is
that air power should be foregrounded as a critical part of the war. This presumably explains a
power point slide in an Air Force-oriented presentation by Assistant Deputy Undersecretary of
Defense James Wilcox (Wilcox 2007; and see Gonzalez 2008:22, 25). The slide begins with the
bullets: “Need to ‘Map the Human Terrain’ across the Kill Chain—Enables the entire Kill Chain
for the GWOT; Target Detection may be Difficult and Require Non-Traditional Means.” McFate
(2008:27) dismisses this by saying Undersecretary Wilcox “is in no way connected with HTS.” The point, however, is that the Air Force will actively push to access human terrain data for airstrikes.

The computer modeling efforts referred to which will use HTS data (Gonzalez 2008:25; Silverman 2007) are on a scale parallel with the entire HTS efforts. The DOD has requested or is planning to allocate $124 million dollars to “Human Social Culture Behavior Modeling” and other “social science modeling over the next six years” (Bhattacharjee 2007). (Combined with HTS funding, this totals $304 million for social science research, not including anything from the Minerva Consortia and other programs.) The kind of training and simulation activities that are being developed are described in chilling detail in ____________.

The “other U.S. Government agencies” which will have access to HTS data are not specified, but it hard to imagine that this would not include the spectrum of intelligence agencies. Iraqi and Afghanistan governments, and presumably governments in future areas of HTT deployment, will get it all this mapping and network information, to use for whatever purposes they see fit. This is where the data that field anthropologists gather will go. It takes blind faith to not see the potential problems involved. Will the people they talk to in the field be informed of this, as established anthropological ethics require?

**Future extensions.** Finally, this kind of data collection and dissemination calls on us to look beyond the current conflict situations, to the larger issues of anthropological engagement discussed in the first part of this paper. The following excerpts from “Networks: Terra Incognita and the Case for Ethnographic Intelligence” (Renzi 2006) could be read as just one Lieutenant Colonel’s opinion. But it reaches larger significance for three reasons: it keys on a report
submitted by anthropologist Anna Simons to the ultra-secret DOD Office of Net Assessment, and the head of that Office has endorsed “an anthropology-level knowledge of a wide range of cultures” (McFate 200_:46); it is entirely consistent with McFate and Jackson’s (2005) proposal for solving DOD “cultural knowledge needs;” and this concept’s development would be greatly supported by expanding use of HTS methods. This is a realistic look into the future of engagement.

The proliferation of empowered networks makes “ethnographic intelligence” (EI) more important to the United States than ever before... I propose that we [look at] amassing EI, the type of intelligence that is key to setting policy for terra incognita... With the United States no longer facing a relatively simple, monolithic enemy, our national interests are found in a confusing cauldron of different locales and societies... Today, we have little insight into which cultures or networks may soon become threats to our national interests. For this reason, America must seek to understand and develop EI on a global scale, before it is surprised by another unknown or dimly understood society or network...(Renzi 2006: 16-17).

(Renzi then discusses three examples, “the blood diamond cartel,” “drug trafficking syndicates,” and Al-Qaeda).

To acquire ethnographic knowledge, there is no substitute for being on the scene. For the U.S. military, the structural solution to EI could be relatively easy... The United States could develop a corps of personnel dedicated to the task and base them out of a more robust military annex to our embassies. There are two key point to developing such a corps: it must be devoted exclusively to the task without distraction, and its personnel
must be allowed to spend extended time in country and be rewarded for doing so... [A] low-key, constant interest in overt ethnographic matters would show that the United States cares and is indeed watching. Perhaps this constant attention would serve to subtly constrict the amount of safe-haven space available for dark networks. The overt information gathered by military ethnographers could complement the covert work done by the CIA (and vice versa)... Ethnographic intelligence can empower the daily fight against dark networks, and it can help formulate contingency plans that are based on a truly accurate portrayal of the most essential terrain—the human mind. United States policymakers must not commit us ever again to terra incognita. The Nation must invest in specialized people who can pay “constant attention” to “indigenous forms of association and mobilization,” so that we can see and map the human terrain (Renzi 2006:20-22).

Discussion

Anthropologists collectively must look at and beyond the HTS to the larger issues of deep and extensive anthropological engagement. Advocates of security anthropology paint a beautiful picture of its potential contribution. U.S. foreign policy would be based on greater understanding of the social organization and values of people very different from ourselves. It would take account of their grievances, better understand why they may be directed at us, and offer suggestions as to what might be done about it. There would be a firmer conceptual basis for diplomacy, and greater appreciation dire consequences of military actions that may be clear to an anthropologist, but off the radar of conventional war planners. In current and future wars, violent actions and killings would be reduced through ethnographically informed strategies to cultivate mutual understanding and respect, that thus avoid generating support for enemies, and encourage
local populations to support our military. Reduced international friction and fewer and less destructive wars.

For me, that would be a dream come true. War is a curse. No matter how brutal and oppressive any lived situation may be, put a shooting war on top of it and it is much worse. But is picture too good to be true? This is the benign image that is presented to anthropology during the current courtship phase. What would the marriage be like? What would security anthropology be, once hundreds of anthropologists were firmly embedded in a range of security institutions? How would it affect indigenous peoples around the world, and anthropology in general?

David Price is the expert on the consequences of direct engagement by anthropologists, and I will leave the subject to him. But some perspective may be gained by another look back in time. The following excerpt is from a piece I wrote in early 1987 (Ferguson 1989:155-156), at the peak of the Reagan cold war. At that moment, the cry for greater involvement—not so much with the military but with the foreign policy establishment—was coming from anthropologists themselves. The establishment remained non-responsive.

A common theme at recent conferences on war is: How can anthropologists become more involved in formulating government policy? Opportunities to influence policy should always be given serious consideration and evaluated on an individual case bases. Nevertheless, there is reason to question this route as a general direction for those wishing to promote peace.

Policy is the result of political struggle. Anthropologists brought in as advisors or low-level functionaries will have no power, and often little understanding of the policy-making process. As Sahlins (1967:75) observed in regard to an earlier episode, when
social scientists thought they could reform war-related policy, “[T]he quixotic scholar enters the agreement in the belief that knowledge breeds power; his military counterpart in the assurance that power breeds knowledge.” Academic opinion is brought in according to its utility in furthering established policy aims. A “good” academic is a technocrat, who does practical, problem-solving work, not the “value-oriented” scholar who questions basic policy premises (Chomsky 1982:89).

Even if an independent-minded anthropologist gets a foot in the door, major obstacles remain if the goal is to change policy makers’ views on the world. Social psychologists have established the (not surprising) fact that influencing basic assumptions behind policy is very difficult and likely to happen only over long periods (Jervis 1980:466-74). Meanwhile, the anthropologist would be exposed to the social and institutional pressures of the policy machine. The more likely result is that the system will change the anthropologist, rather than the reverse (see Coser 1956:27-29). “Realism” may come to mean working within the established limits of policy. “Promoting peace” may be equated with reinforcing the status quo.

Another political concern is the company one keeps. From a governmental view, the ethnographic and other information anthropologists produce may be considered “intelligence.” The CIA has publically assumed the responsibility of seeking out scholars with unorthodox and challenging interpretations of world issues (Engelberg 1986). Even if a scholar purposely avoids the intelligence agencies, it may be impossible to refuse to cooperate with them if employed, say, on an embassy staff. Given the history of these agencies, this raises many political and moral issues. It also evokes the specter of disaster.
for the profession of anthropology.

These are not hypothetical issues. Their reality is shown in the history of Project Camelot (Horowitz 1967). “Camelot” was the code name for a program of “insurgency prophylaxis” developed in 1964 by the Department of Defense (DOD). Social scientists, including anthropologists, were recruited to study the causes of insurgency around the world. The participants saw themselves as reformers, but as a group they lacked any clear conception of their role or goals, and the work in practice was shaped by their employer, the DOD. Project Camelot was terminated in 1965, killed by the scandal it caused in Chile and by political infighting in Washington. One of its legacies was to cast a pall of suspicions on anthropological fieldworkers around the world (Sahlins 1967:73).

Another disturbing illustration of a military application of anthropological insights comes from the 1986 United States bombing of Tripoli. According to investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, the plan included bombing Qaddafi’s family quarters because several senior CIA officers “claimed that in Bedouin culture Qaddafi would be diminished as a leader if he could not protect his home” 1987.

The situation was entirely different, but the structural issues were already quite clear. Now that the demand is coming from the other side, it can be claimed that anthropologists will get a hearing. But two decades later, are the other concerns any different?

As a discipline, we must collectively ask just what it means for the DOD to pour more than $300 million dollars into social science work at this point in time. McFate caustically dismisses discussion of these larger issues: “While long-winded discussions on ‘capitalism’ and ‘colonialism’ may hold great interest for scholars, military personnel have other more pressing
tasks to attend to (McFate 2007:21). No doubt they do not have time to sit around and discuss the general rights and well-being of indigenous peoples around the world, either. But anthropologists must consider such topics. I do not doubt that massive anthropological engagement will enable better management of U.S. global hegemony and smoother implementation of neoliberal economic restructuring. A better managed empire always means less open conflict, less violent resistance. But if we do not simultaneously address the significance of greater U.S. control of the world, are we anything more than hirelings to empire?

The issues that confront us are overwhelmingly complex. There is potential for doing good, and we should not let reflex political reactions blind us to that. Critics must respect advocates' values of patriotism and hope for reducing violence, and the valid interest of finding paying employment. But we must also dig expose the grave problems of deepening engagement, the danger that anthropology could lose its soul, once again becoming an instrument of imperialism, helping to control subaltern peoples.

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