

September 13, 2007

Memorandum: **Human Terrain Systems Program**
U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command

Dear Chairmen Waxman and Skelton, and Congressmen Davis and Goode:

I am writing to discuss the events surrounding my employment and termination from employment as a contracted Field Anthropologist/Social Scientist with the U.S. Army's Human Terrain Systems Program (HTS). My experiences with HTS in the last six months suggest a systematic pattern of a) mismanagement of the defense contractors supporting the program and b) mis-execution of the security clearance process. Given that I was among the first of a number of Social Scientists that have been and will be hired for deployment to Iraq through HTS, I feel it is important that these concerns be addressed as quickly as possible before these questionable practices stymie the entire intent of the program. Additionally, I feel that the effect of the program's mismanagement of my own security clearance may keep me from an intended career in public service – a career where I feel I have much to offer given my academic focus on Islam in the Middle East, Central Eurasia and Central Asia.

I am a US citizen of Ukrainian decent, currently pursuing a PhD in Islamic Studies at the University of Virginia. Within my general focus on Islam, I am specializing in Shi'ism and comparative religious violence, and as such am proficient in Farsi and a number of other languages relevant to the Islamic world. Having previously completed an Islamic Studies focus as part of a BA in Religious Studies, I returned to graduate school after the attacks of September 11, 2001. I was driven by the feeling that my academic and personal interests left me particularly well-suited to contribute as the United States faced this new and unfamiliar challenge. My father had volunteered for military service in Vietnam, and firmly believed that as an immigrant he had a responsibility to give back to a country that had provided him with so many opportunities; having grown up with his example, it is probably unsurprising that I feel much the same way. Before beginning my doctoral work in Virginia, I earned an MA in Middle Eastern Studies at Columbia University. In the course of my graduate work at Columbia and UVA, I traveled twice to Iran, in 2004 and 2006, to present papers at academic conferences. Beyond these two instances, my contacts with Iranians were and are minimal.

In March 2007, I went on temporary leave from my doctoral program in order to accept a position with a government contractor in support of the US Army in Ft Leavenworth, KS. My specific assignment was to serve as a cultural/religious advisor to a brigade in or near the Baghdad area for a six-nine month rotation beginning in August, as part of TRADOC's new Human Terrain Systems Program. My intent at the time was to alternate periods of six-eight months deployed with HTS with periods of four-six months at UVA completing the remainder of my PhD.

The HTS position required an Interim Secret clearance, not because of the extent of classified information I would be handling, but because of the work location on a Forward Operating Base in Iraq. In mid-June, I was granted an Interim Secret three days after submitting my SF-86 to my contractor, BAE Systems. My SF-86 included detailed descriptions of the nature and duration of my travels in Iran.

On June 9, prior to my Interim being granted, I made a careless comment in a parking lot over a beer in front of a Lieutenant in my program. We were discussing U.S. foreign policy towards Iran, and a bit frustrated at the Lieutenant's somewhat narrow-minded insistence that we should just invade every country in the Middle East, I said jokingly, "Okay, if we invade Iran, that's where I draw the line, hop the border, and switch sides." The comment was made purely in jest, with the expectation that it would be received the way it would have been received by my academic colleagues – as a joke and an expression of frustration that the conversation seemed to be going nowhere. The only point that I was trying to make was that by invading Iran, the U.S. may naively and unexpectedly find itself in a situation similar to our current challenge in Iraq. I in no way thought my comment was exceptional.

Over the previous two months of training I had witnessed a highly regarded Arab-American military officer in HTS joke about "going jihad" on people and having "cousins named Muhammad who like to blow things up". Furthermore, joking queries as to which intelligence agency I really work for were a running theme, due presumably to my being the first "academic" on the project, my proficiency in five languages, and my unusual travels. More often than not, this friendly teasing was instigated mostly by military personnel, and revolved around joking speculation about my working for a foreign intelligence service. The comment I related above was very much consistent with the tenor and content of this existing pattern of friendly banter.

Within days of my making the comment, I was told that the Lieutenant had mentioned it to one of my military teammates as a possible security concern, claiming further that I had been making attempts over the previous two weeks to "spy" on a SIPR-net computer while it was in use. I have never, to this date, been present in a room in which a SIPR-net computer was being used. A SIPR-net computer was positioned in the office in which I worked while the Human Terrain Team supported a two-week Division training exercise at Ft Hood. As soon as the SIPR-net computer was emplaced, my teammates and I established that I would leave the room any time the computer was to be turned on, and I did so.

It is worth noting that the Lieutenant seemed to bear no little resentment towards the terms of my contract with the program, and was considerably unhappy in the program himself—unhappiness punctuated by a number of very emotional outbursts witnessed by many members of the program. This Lieutenant wound up withdrawing from the program a few weeks later. After the incident was raised to my teammate, he and my team leader verbally reprimanded me for the foolhardiness of the comment. Based on their knowledge of and experience with the Lieutenant, they said that they felt the issue

merited no further action; I learned my lesson, and both I and HTS management considered the issue resolved.

Two weeks later, I learned that a Security Officer in the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO), where HTS management is housed, had initiated an inquiry without the knowledge of HTS management personnel. The inquiry itself was conducted in a grossly unprofessional manner: Most interviewees were pulled from a classroom one at a time in full view of each other, "interviewed" outside the classroom door and sent back into the room with the request to "send the next person out". The interviews themselves involved no background or explanation regarding the nature of the inquiry, no formal or prepared questions, no sworn statements, and notes simply jotted on a piece of scratch paper. At one point, the Security Officer even continued to conduct an interview in a garage even after I had entered the room. I immediately brought this to the attention of an HTS manager, after which discussion we again both considered the matter closed.

In late July, other members of my program began to casually inquire or make comments about my "FBI investigation". Concerned, I went to HTS management yet again, who knew nothing of it. At this time, according to BAE Systems, my Interim clearance was still active in JPAS, and they were also unaware of any investigation. It was at some point during this time that my BAE supervisor in Virginia called one day with an unusual question: "Zenia, I hate to ask this, but you are a U.S. citizen, aren't you?" BAE had had a copy of my passport for four months by then, as well as my parents' naturalization information from 60 years ago, but according to this supervisor, someone had carelessly listed me as a non-citizen in DEERS, the Army's online database of military and civilian personnel. It seemed obvious to me that there was some degree of miscommunication and confusion within BAE.

Even though it was not clear what was occurring, everyone seemed aware that something was amiss with my clearance and that some sort of investigation was being conducted. On one occasion, I was informed by an HTS manager that my clearance had been revoked, who, on my questioning, corrected himself to say it had been suspended, even though my contractor continued to claim it was active in JPAS. I was immediately asked to leave the facility by my HTS manager, who seemed to know very little but looked concerned at potentially violating a security procedure.

Because of the confusion, I requested that HTS management pull me off the deployment roster until my clearance was resolved. They agreed, and at my suggestion created an open-source analyst position with HTS in the meantime. The position was physically located within FMSO, to which I had been previously informed I was denied access. However, the first floor is non-secure, and I was to be working alongside two Iraqi citizens in the HTS Iraq Support Group. I was asked to arrive on my first day of employment, Monday, August 6, for a meeting in the afternoon to discuss my work responsibilities.

Immediately upon my arrival, a secretary spotted me and informed me that I had no right to be in the building. My future supervisor and I left the premises when asked to do so,

and proceeded to have our meeting outside. We agreed that I would work from home for now, meaning my hotel suite, until things were sorted out.

On Tuesday afternoon, August 7, I received an email stating that my U.S. Army Common Access Card (ID Card) had been revoked. I called BAE Systems' office in Virginia, and they informed me that a senior security person had just announced, after a meeting or phone conversation, that "the government said we can't employ her anymore". An hour later my clearance was officially suspended in JPAS, with my BAE security advisor expressing complete frustration at not knowing what was going on.

Later that afternoon, I received a phone call from an MI officer at Ft Leavenworth requesting an interview. He sounded surprised that I had been fired and that I was leaving town. He conveyed that he was calling me in for an interview as part of my investigation and that he wanted to clear up "what may potentially all be a big misunderstanding". I contacted my BAE security advisor immediately after this conversation. She insisted that she had been informed that the investigation had been completed and adjudicated, that the results were negative, and that I had been fired on that basis.

My MI/FBI interview took place on Wednesday, August 8. An HTS manager accompanied me, in an effort to stress to MI and FBI that I had been hired precisely because of my foreign travels and academic focus on Iran, but she was not permitted to sit in on the interview. At the time, HTS management was furious that I had been fired, and kept insisting that I didn't even need a clearance to conduct the work that I had volunteered to do.

I found the MI agent in charge of my investigation more than unqualified to be conducting this sort of investigation. I have attached a memorandum describing my perceptions of this interview, and of the agent conducting it. The insinuations during my interview were clearly that I am an Iranian spy, cannot be trusted, and am trying to get myself into Iraq in any way imaginable, presumably to aid Iranian involvement there. The MI officer knowingly claimed that the U.S. is inevitably going to war with Iran and insinuated that I was trying to infiltrate HTS prior to the onset of this war.

The primary concern of HTS management at the time was that HTS was specifically designed to bring academics with extensive foreign contacts and experience to work with the Army as advisors. My primary concern was and remains that at age 31 and on my first "career job", a suspended or revoked clearance and an instance of being fired for security concerns can extensively harm if not ruin my career.

With the support of HTS management, I filed a complaint with the Ft Leavenworth's Inspector General (IG) that a more senior MI officer should have been assigned to my case due to its sensitive nature. I filed an additional report with the IG concerning both the Security Officer and Director of our work site, both of whom, in my opinion, should have recognized the MI agent's inadequacy and not acted on his recommendations without extensive investigation. A final IG complaint addressed FMSO's Security

Officer – both HTS management and I felt that she aggravated the situation at its inception by conducting a highly unprofessional inquiry. Had she conducted the inquiry in a more professional manner and with the cooperation of HTS management, it is unlikely that either MI or the FBI would have had to become involved.

Since leaving Ft Leavenworth on August 9, I have been informed by HR personnel with various contractors that according to JPAS my investigation was not completed until mid-August, and that its adjudication was dropped on August 30 due to lack of jurisdiction. As a result, in the last two weeks I have been actively recruited for five separate advisory positions in Iraq, only to have each contractor eventually express regret at being unable to hire me upon learning the details of my clearance and its suspension – no one is willing to gamble on my ability to maintain a clearance. I also know that of the initial 20 HTS members who deployed in mid-August, at least three deployed without clearance, two of them having been previously denied Interim clearances. One must wonder just how much these individuals – each of whom is earning approximately \$---,000 annually while deployed – are able to contribute to brigade activities in theater (the primary reason why we were required to be obtain a security clearances in the first place was accessibility to the headquarters offices).

I am calling into question TRADOC' s security and termination of employment procedures for the following reasons:

1. I know of nothing in my background that would preclude me from obtaining or maintaining a Secret clearance.
2. I successfully passed a Counter-Intelligence Polygraph Examination as part of the DIA hiring process in March 2007 and expressed the willingness to retake one during my MI/FBI interview on August 8.
3. I willingly created an open-source position for myself in which I would be working alongside two Iraqi citizens.
4. The decision to terminate my employment was made prior to the completion of my investigation, and was thus based on incomplete information.
5. As of early September, there were civilian HTS personnel working in Iraq with no clearances.
6. HTS management, high-ranked military personnel, and TRADOC evaluators repeatedly affirmed that my individual contribution to the program was marked.
7. My enthusiasm for and dedication to the program extended well beyond my work hours – I was one of a handful of HTS members to devote the majority of my personal time on evenings and weekends to projects supporting the program.

My direct supervisor at BAE Systems once mentioned to me that HTS management had put me on the list of HTS civilian personnel that “should be retained on the project at all costs”, a sentiment that was often vocalized to me directly by HTS managers. During our only training event with an actual maneuver Army unit (the Fourth Infantry Division), I was singled out for my exceptional performance by both the Deputy Division Commander (BG James Milano) and a team from TRADOC sent to evaluate the progress of the HTS program. At the time of these commendations, HTS had approximately 20 members preparing for deployment and present at the exercise.

I am currently attempting to clear my name with DSS and am considering a defamation of character lawsuit against the Lieutenant who made the initial allegations, as well as against FMSO's Security Officer. I am also awaiting an official report from Ft Leavenworth's Inspector General regarding his investigation. I am now bringing the matter to the attention of the Committees on Armed Services and on Oversight and Government Reform because I believe these events to be indicative of a broader pattern of mismanagement in the HTS Program. The inability to deploy any teams to Iraq until a year after the inception of the program, the inability or unwillingness to synchronize the requirements of the security clearance process with the need for social scientists with extensive foreign backgrounds, and the resulting decision to deploy uncleared social scientists and cultural advisors who may or may not be able to support their units in any meaningful fashion are all indicative of a program in need of significant oversight. The events surrounding my termination of employment simply illustrate the grossly unprofessional manner in which these issues have been handled by management at TRADOC, FMSO and HTS.

I have devoted the last ten years of my life to the advanced study of Islam, religious violence, the Middle East and foreign languages. I feel that I have something to offer both the U.S. Government and the U.S. Military in their endeavors in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the broader challenges currently facing the nation. My frustration lies in my inability to utilize my expertise and offer assistance due to one comment taken out of context.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this matter in advance.

Sincerely,

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