

## **Phase Zero Human Terrain System: Firing Staff, Budget Woes**

### **What's with the US Army and US Intelligence?**

**by John Stanton**

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Sharon Hamilton, Program Manager, Phase Zero Human Terrain System.

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*"You're going to see backstabbing and butt kissing on an epic scale as everyone tries to stay on top of a rapidly melting iceberg."*

Using authorities located in the Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System ([DCIPS](#)), the Phase Zero Human Terrain System (PZ-HTS) will begin terminating all Human Terrain Analysts no later than July 31, 2012. According to Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, Michael G. Vickers, the purpose of DCIPS unite the intelligence community under the same "pay bands and grades" and to professionalize the intelligence workforce to meet complex threats that face the United States.

According to Colonel Sharon Hamilton, PZ-HTS program manager, a reorganization of PZ-HTS has been underway for some months now. Deployed teams are to be streamlined and all Human Terrain Analyst (HTA) positions eliminated. The rationale for the accelerated shrinkage is, "Due to the ongoing OEF revision of force structure, Department of the Army guidance, and changing HTS mission requirements, we must pursue a more aggressive approach towards our reorganization plan... We have been given the authority under DCIPS policy to initiate an immediate draw down of all current HTA employees. The target date for eliminating the HTA position is 31 JULY 2012.

No HTAs will remain in theater past 15 JULY 2012 HTS Operations and the TSO will coordinate the staggered return of all HTA personnel over the next few weeks. We will provide all HTA personnel an official notification of this action, and all HTAs will be asked to sign and return a document that acknowledges their understanding... This means all HTA's employment with HTS and the federal government will end not later than 31 July 2012 (no exceptions). This applies to all HTAs deployed, on detail, or on leave/comp time. I know this action is occurring quickly, but it is necessary to ensure the strength and sustainability of HTS in support of ongoing operations... I thank you for your service to our nation."

When actions like this are taken in any organization, rumors begin to swirl about. With HTS 1.0--and now PZ-HTS, however, rumor has largely proven to be fact.

There is word of Pentagon guidance that is aiming for 40 to 60 percent budget reductions in PZ-HTS. But there is a problem. According to sources, firing all the HTA's will not nearly be enough to reach the program manager's reorganization goals. "[PZ] HTS assumed another bloated, expensive contractor though CGI and it is burning through cash...Even with the move to the remodeled building at Fort Leavenworth, [PZ] HTS can't get to the numbers it needs to survive without releasing at least half its current strength. Even then, with the surge of troops coming out at the end of the summer, and no new relevant research being produced, [PZ] HTS faces shutting down school operations, eliminating the useless exercise at the end of training, and relying on refresher training online for sustaining its shrinking program... firing all the HTA's isn't going to get them anywhere near where they need to be if they're looking for a 40 percent reduction. They'll be lucky to hit 17 percent, even with a mass exodus. Even if they cut 50 percent of all [PZ] HTS teams today, they still can't get there."

"The plan and the numbers don't add up. PZ- HTS people have accumulated significant amounts of COMP time," said sources, some of it through (alleged) fraudulent practices. "The United States military often uses acceptable accounting tricks to push budget issues into the next fiscal year," said a source, "but PZ-HTS leadership is not that clever."

### ***Curriculum and Hiring Practices***

Sources point to mismanagement by leadership, lack of foresight, incompetent staff work, and pure greed, as primary causes of the PZ-HTS nosedive. They caution that the hurried and revised edition of the Social Science and Research Operations Curriculum, assembled from "dated textbooks" by "individuals who did no research in Afghanistan", is going to be lambasted by the American Anthropological Association once they get ahold of it and review it. Criticism will likely be piled high on PZ-HTS.

CGI has maintained that they have improved the screening process for the PZ-HTS program ensuring, as much as possible, that the right people are let into PZ-HTS. Yet, according to sources, what is occurring in practice is that CGI screens potential employees and then sends PZ-HTS personnel a list of candidates that are, in turn, voted on for suitability. Allegedly, names are passed around the program and subjected to violations of privacy, rumors, gossip, innuendo, and outright lies. Further, according to one source, "If all they do is pass a list to [PZ HTS on who to admit and who to deny, what's the point?"

Employee verification should fall solely to the human resources element within PZ-HTS. Apparently the only information that should be released is whether the applicant was a Department of the Army Civilian (DAC). Some applicants are former BAE employees (when BAE held the contract), and, evidently, employee verification should pass to BAE. When students graduate from initial training they become DAC's and attend three (**now one**) week of pre-mobilization training. After that it is off to Fort Polk for ten additional weeks of training. Some suggest a solution to this shady practice: All former employees of HTS 1.0 and PZ-HTS should have a final DCIPS evaluation which would then be submitted to the primary contractor (in this case CGI) who would then determine if a former employee was suitable for re-entry.

### ***Dispel the Rumor?***

An example of the PZ-HTS vetting practice is from early 2012 and is provided immediately below. Hamilton's response to an accusation from a private contractor challenging the practice follows after.

"From: XYZ USA CIV (US); Sent: 2012; To: ZYX, ABC, EFG; Subject "Employee Verification...All, The following ex-employees have requested to reenter the HTS program. ...Please let me know if there is any reason why they should be denied.....

From: HIJ; To: KLM; Subject: Employee Verification; Sir, here's my results: XY: No, also ZYX was team leader and he wouldn't bring back, either; OX: Mixed results, most said no, but ZYX said yes. Had an apparent bad rep, with an alleged sexual harassment here; XA: N/A; QZ: N/A; ZZ: His team leader had a bad rep, as the team [the person] was on. ZXO was adamant about not bringing back; XI: Very high reputation, was part of the June 2011 HTA mass dump. Very intelligent, multi-lingual. At least five people said to bring back; O1: apparent RM that was decent. Not much info.

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