Cultural Awareness:
Lessons Learned and A Way Forward

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**Bottom Line:**

- Afghanistan and Iraq highlighted massive gaps in our cultural awareness and cultural training procedures.

- Despite top-down and bottom-up initiatives, cultural awareness training is still ad hoc, stove piped, and often inadequate or off target.

- The *US Government* must pull together a comprehensive cultural training doctrine.
Background: Cultural Lessons Learned

• Marine intelligence experience in Iraq and Afghanistan
• Gaping hole of cultural awareness discovered
  ➢ Culture is an intel job… check in the box
  ➢ No starting point – don’t know what we don’t know
  ➢ No data – old ethnographic studies not enough
  ➢ Cultural terrain just as important as geo terrain
• Cultural Awareness Working Group formed
  ➢ 50 + members: DoD, USG, academic, international
  ➢ Working to develop joint, cohesive ideas and doctrine
Culture and the Intelligence Community

**Working Group Assessment:**

- Cultural awareness and training deficient across the board:
  - No clear understanding as to why culture was important
  - Basic cultural information out of date or non-existent
  - Language not fully linked to culture, vice versa
  - “Five year old soccer match” – everyone follows the ball
  - Culture wasn’t sexy, didn’t target any HVTs

- Cultural initiatives are stove-piped, non-doctrinal, dissociated

- No central resource for unclassified basic information

- Fickle working relationships with academic community
What’s being done… and needs to be done

**Actions in Progress:**
- Marine Corps CAOCL (Brief by LtCol Scott)
- ABCA Cultural Awareness standards and TTPs authorized
- MCIA developing more in-depth, broader cultural studies
- MCIA Tribal Study developed, being modeled by J-3
- Army developing comprehensive program
- Contractors developing training tools, support concepts
- Intel community identified gaps and way forward

**Actions Without Much Action:**
- *Updated* joint cultural awareness and intelligence doctrine
- Formal “connect the dots” between stove-piped groups