Date: Sat, 28 Nov 2009 23:49:06 -0500
To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy of Sciences Study on Social
& Behavioral Science and Improving Intelligence for National Security"
<baruch@cmu.edu>
From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

Subject: The Afghanistan chapter & the credibility of social/behavioral science

Dear Dr. Fischhoff:

On Tuesday evening President Obama will announce a new comprehensive American strategic plan in Afghanistan. Your Report, with the bold mandate to evaluate and recommend improvements in social/behavioral science data and methods for US intelligence, will be timely and important.

I want to share my perception that your Report also may have an historic impact on the international reputation of American social/behavioral science, on the credibility of the National Academy of Sciences, and on funding for the future of the social and behavioral sciences. I hope that you will get it right.

A Glaring Problem
- America and its intelligence agencies have been in Afghanistan for eight years as part of the US post-9/11 invasion (with earlier experience in the war against Soviet occupiers). There have been many "once we believed . . . now we know" strategy review cycles in Afghanistan. As there were in Iraq. As there were in Vietnam, etc. We are the world's superpower; this is one of the poorest, most remote, places in the world. The Bush Administration's new DNI system - expanded to spend $75 billion/year with 200,000 people - was supposed to learn from past mistakes and it was been supposed to get things right.

Can our National Academy of Sciences diagnose what has gone wrong?

The Bush Administration claimed that it had programs by which social science expertise in anthropology, forecasting, cross-cultural psychology, comparative politics and political development, persuasion/attitude change, etc. was being deployed in Afghanistan. Several strategic reviews in both Iraq and

Afghanistan involved Secretary Rice, the former Provost of Stanford, and a social scientist.<1>

Today, how could the system be doing better, with better social/behavioral science data and analysis?

Lloyd Etheredge

<1> To mention areas that will be known to some National Academy members, there are <u>Wikipedia</u> entries for Human Terrain System, Human Terrain Team, and Synthetic Psychological Environment. You might want to tell Dr. Rice about your <u>Report</u> and ask for her diagnoses and recommendations. You also might want to invite testimony by the Social Science Department at RAND and other social science consultants to the US government.

If, for example, US opponents across all cases have proven to be smarter, more adaptive, and more resilient/motivated than expected, this is an important meta-conclusion, perhaps supporting a theory of *hubris*.

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