Army leaders looking for help

Anthropologists again sought out to assist in solving war puzzles

The goal of working with anthropologists and other social scientists is to develop a climate in which cultural awareness is taught at all levels of training.

By JOHN MILBURN
The Associated Press

FORT LEAVENWORTH — With American troops mired in Iraq and Afghanistan, leaders at the Army post where the military's new counterinsurgency doctrine was written are turning to cultural anthropologists for help.

The relationship rekindles one that existed between the military and academics throughout much of the nation's modern military history but fizzled after the Vietnam War.

"You have to look at things through the lens of the people on the ground to effectively know where you are going," said Robert Kurz, an Eurasia analyst with Fort Leavenworth's Foreign Military Studies Office.

Fort Leavenworth conducted a round-table discussion Thursday among anthropologists and military veterans who have experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was part of an effort to create doctrine on how to conduct military operations with some degree of cultural competence.

One of the tenets of the military's counterinsurgency doctrine, produced last year at Fort Leavenworth, is that success hinges on the government achieving the consent of the people. By gaining an understanding of the culture, the people's basic needs and beliefs, the military can effectively neutralize insurgents who seek to render the government illegitimate, that doctrine says.

Kurz said the goal of working with anthropologists and other social scientists is to develop a climate in which cultural awareness is taught at all levels of training.

Two anthropologists from the University of Kansas, Felix Moos and Bart Dean, acknowledged they are in the minority among their peers because they are working with the military. But Dean said anthropologists through World War II had a seat at the table when leaders planned military operations.

"I'd love to have that opportunity. It's in everybody's interest," Dean said.

During the daylong exchange, officers noted that often the tactics being used by insurgents were similar to Mafia families, using extortion against civilians to keep from being identified and stopping the spread of violence. Not until the coalition and Iraqi forces can show that they can provide reliable security will the civilians stand up to insurgents and support the government, officers said.

Lt. Charles Bartles, an Army Reservist who conducted civil affairs in Iraq, said a challenge is getting Iraqis to understand that working with the military and police to root out insurgents was in the community's best interest, not just that of their immediate family.

Bartles' paper for the project examines efforts to reduce the threat of roadside bombs along the routes near the Anaconda forward operating base, dubbed "Operation Turkey Stomp." Soldiers met with each shopkeeper to explain that if a bomb went off in front of their store, the stores would be closed until they found out who planted the bomb or sold the components.

Each shopkeeper and store was photographed and published in a directory. Soldiers then gathered intelligence about each store, such as what goods were sold and how quickly. Bartles said noticing how dusty some items were or weren't — such as batteries — provided useful information.

"It explains that you need to have a long-term presence for this stuff to be effective," Dean said, adding that such tactics are more effective in rural settings than in Baghdad.
Members of the 2007 University of Kansas peer adviser team include Heidi Waldschmidt of Derby, Catherine Seiwert of Garden Plain and Rachel Glover of Wichita.

The team will assist faculty, staff, students, parents and guests with the advising process; act as a resource for incoming students; assist with placement testing during new-student orientation; and help prepare materials and provide other help as needed for the success of orientation activities.
Army turns to anthropologists

Associated Press

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“This is one of those things that will make it down to the guy in basic training, those in officer training,” Kurz said.

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He noted that he was attacked and tortured in Peru while studying the culture and Maoist rebels.

“I know the feeling,” he said.

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Moos said one barrier to success is changing units in a location every 12 to 15 months, breaking critical bonds soldiers formed with locals.

“The whole concept of rotation is counterproductive to this type of warfare,” said Moos, who has taught at the university and Fort Leavenworth for more than 40 years.

His desire to work with the military stems from a sense of civic duty and belief he can affect a positive outcome, he said.

“We need to see both sides of the coin. I’m doing it for the simple supposition that the country is at war. Every citizen of the republic has a stake in it,” Moos said. “If the country is not mobilized in thinking about the challenge that we have to face, I don’t know that we are doing anybody any favors.

“If you don’t know where you are fighting, how can you possibly come out winning?”
Teens to learn more than pep

Blue Valley Northwest and 1,132 high school leaders will run a Special Olympics field day.

By MELODEE HALL BLOBAUM
The Kansas City Star

Think a national conference of student council leaders beginning today in Overland Park will be all about school dances and spirit weeks?

Think again.

On Monday, the thousand-plus delegates of the National Association of Student Councils will be paired up with Special Olympic athletes for what organizers say is the nation’s largest student-run Special Olympics field day.

Then they will discuss ways students can close the gap between general and special education students in their schools.

On Tuesday, they will travel to the University of Kansas for programs about leadership.

Of course, there will be workshops on school spirit. But that’s only one small part of what student councils do these days.

“You can make student council whatever you want it to be,” said Colin Davidson, one of three Blue Valley Northwest student co-leaders for the event. “If you just want it to be planning dances and spirit week, you can. Our goal is to make sure we don’t limit ourselves to those activities.”

To be sure, the student council at Blue Valley Northwest has stepped beyond dances.

In 2004, the school won the invitation to host this year’s national event. Since then, Davidson said, everyone involved in student government at the school has been part of planning.

Rachel Mattix, another of the student co-leaders, said she’s been heartened to see how her classmates have stepped up to be part of the event.

Former students who helped with planning and fund-raising but graduated before the conference have come back to help, Mattix said, as have students from other schools. In all, 41 Kansas schools are lending a hand with the event.

Businesses and parents have stepped up, as well. Since 2004, fund-raisers and business donations have totaled $140,000, including about $20,000 raised by parent boosters.

The third student co-leader, Chris Chaffee, said he’s learned a valuable lesson about teamwork.

“You can’t do anything alone,” he said. “It’s so much more rewarding when you’re part of something larger than yourself.”

To reach Melodee Hall Blobaum, call 816-234-7733 or send e-mail to mblobaum@kcstar.com

Conference schedule

I Today: “Twister Day”
Registration and opening general session
Speaker: Author and motivational speaker Bill Cordes
I Sunday: “Courage Day”
Workshops
Speaker: Harris Faulkner of Fox News Channel
I Monday: “Heart Day”
Special Olympics field events and Youth Forums
Speaker: Timothy P. Shriver, chairman, Special Olympics
I Tuesday: “Knowledge Day”
University of Kansas
Speaker: Author Chad Foster
I Wednesday: “No Place Like Home Day”
Closing general session
Speaker: David Adkins, University of Kansas Medical Center

BY THE NUMBERS
I 1,132 delegates and 374 advisers
I 48 states and Puerto Rico represented
I 406 host families for delegates
I 72,000 bottles of water
I 3,200 hot dogs
I 4,000 T-shirts
LAWRENCE | EX-KU dean to lead University of Iowa

Sally Mason, a former dean of the University of Kansas’ college of liberal arts and sciences, has become the president of the University of Iowa.

Mason, Iowa’s 20th president, will collect a $450,000 salary. In addition, the university will put $60,000 a year into a trust that Mason will receive if she stays at the university through July 2012. She will receive $50,000 a year in bonuses for achieving performance goals to be set later by Mason and the regents.

Mason will also have a joint appointment as a professor in the biology department.

The Des Moines Register

BRIAN RAY | THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sally Mason, a former dean at the University of Kansas, will become president of the University of Iowa.