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**Media contacts:**

**James Peacock**, chairman, Ad Hoc Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the U.S. Security and Intelligence Communities, 919-966-4106, jlp@email.unc.edu

**Susie Bodman**, media relations associate, AAA, 703-528-1902, ext. 3039, sbodman@aaanet.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Commission probing national security and intelligence appointed, commences work

This summer, a special commission of the American Anthropological Association began examining anthropology's involvement in national security and intelligence work. The eight-member body — known as the AAA Ad Hoc Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the U.S. Security and Intelligence Communities — commences its work at a time when cultural awareness is increasingly being viewed as a strategic asset for national security practitioners and policymakers.

The AAA Executive Board decided to establish the commission in November 2005 as the association was weighing responses to two national security and intelligence matters that had generated considerable debate in the anthropology community: the placement of Central Intelligence Agency recruitment advertisements in AAA publications and the prospective participation of anthropologists in the Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholars Program. The commission is likely to consider these issues in its deliberations while taking a more systematic look at the history and potential future of the complex relationship between anthropology and national security and intelligence.

"It's about time we assessed these matters," said Commission Chairman James Peacock.

Among other issues, the commission will likely study the practice of secrecy and the ethical challenges of research in these areas. It is these two issues that have largely fueled the discipline's historical ambivalence in the national security and intelligence arena, dating back at least to Franz Boas, who was censured by the AAA in 1919 for his public criticism of anthropologists who used their professional credentials as cover for espionage during World War I. This censure was formally reversed in 2005, as the association wrestled with fresh overtures from the national security and intelligence communities.

Slated to conclude its work in November 2007, the commission is asked to provide AAA members with guidance in navigating the complexities of professional engagement in a national security milieu that increasingly recognizes the value of anthropological expertise. Acknowledging the historical significance of this undertaking, AAA President Alan Goodman stated that "in appointing this expert commission, the AAA recognizes that we are at a key moment in which anthropological expertise is needed, yet there are a myriad of potential ethical and political pitfalls in actual practice that we need to avoid." The commission's charge, approved by the AAA's Executive Board in May 2006, is to advise the board and the association by providing information and/or recommendations on the following:

- The varied roles that practitioners and scholars of anthropology currently assume within intelligence and national security entities.
- The state of AAA's existing guidelines and guidance on the involvement of anthropologists in intelligence- and national security-related activities.
- The key ethical, methodological, practical and political challenges faced by the discipline and the AAA in its current and future engagement in intelligence and national security.

Commission members constitute a diverse group of anthropologists who have served in the military, researched the history of anthropology and intelligence, promoted ethical standard-setting in the discipline, and advocated on human rights issues. Two commission members are currently employed in the national security and intelligence communities. Commission members are as follows: James Peacock, chairman, University of North Carolina; Robert Albro, George Washington University; Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, Rhode Island College; Kerry Fosher, Dartmouth College and Syracuse University; Monica Heller, University of Toronto; George Marcus, University of California at Irvine; Laura McNamara, Sandia National Laboratories; David Price, Saint Martin's University; and Alan Goodman, ex-officio, AAA president, Hampshire College.

*Founded in 1902, the American Anthropological Association is the world's largest professional organization of anthropologists and others interested in anthropology, with an average annual membership of more than 10,000. The Arlington, Va.-based association represents all specialties within anthropology — cultural anthropology, biological (or physical) anthropology, archaeology, linguistics and applied anthropology.*

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2200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 600  
Arlington, VA 22201-3357  
Tel 703-528-1902  
Fax 703-528-3546  
www.aaanet.org