



Report on the situation of cultural heritage in Iraq up to 30 May 2003¹

BACKGROUND

In line with its constitutional mandate in the field of cultural heritage and following diplomatic actions in order to alert the coalition authorities to the damages to the cultural heritage of Iraq as a result from the conflict, the Director-General convened at UNESCO Headquarters the first meeting of high-level international experts on the cultural heritage of Iraq (17 April 2003) to respond to the alarming situation affecting the cultural heritage of Iraq as a result from the conflict. The meeting had the following 3 objectives: (i) to coordinate the international scientific network of experts on Iraqi cultural heritage; (ii) to formulate guidelines for a consolidated strategy in the field of post-conflict intervention and rehabilitation of the cultural heritage of Iraq; (iii) to devise an emergency safeguarding plan.

Following the recommendations of the above-mentioned meeting, a second meeting organized upon the initiative of the British Museum in London (29 April 2003), focusing on the situation of the Iraqi National Museum in particular and the need to restore inventories.

Upon the approval of *Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance* (ORHA) and in close collaboration with the US Observer Mission to UNESCO, the Director-General called for the organization of an urgent expert mission to assess the extent of damage and loss to cultural property in Iraq and elaborate a first report on the state of Iraqi cultural heritage. The UNESCO experts' mission visited Baghdad, from 17 to 20 May 2003.

PARTICIPANTS

The first UNESCO mission to Iraq was led by Mr Mounir Bouchenaki, Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO. The following experts participated in the mission:

- Dr. Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum - who left back to the UK on 18 May;
- Arch. Roberto Parapetti, Director of the Iraqi-Italian Centre for the Conservation of Monuments;
- Prof. Ken Matsumoto, Chief of the Archaeological Mission of Japan in Iraq;
- Prof. John Russell, Dean of the Massachusetts College for Arts.

¹ This report summarizes the information collected by the experts during the first UNESCO mission to Baghdad (17-20 May 2003) and the information received by archaeologists who visited archaeological sites and cultural institutions outside the capital during May 2003 and reported to UNESCO thereon.

Prof. Gibson, from the Oriental Institute in Chicago, who was already in Baghdad with a team of the National Geographic, joined the UNESCO mission.

The UNESCO mission in Iraq was restricted to the city of Baghdad due to security reasons. Nevertheless, this report contains information about the major archaeological sites, which were provided by the following archaeologists in their personal capacities, during their visits to Iraq after the end of the military operations.

On their way to Baghdad, the UNESCO experts met in Amman Prof. Wilkinson, of the Oriental Institute of Chicago. Since he was able to visit the North of the country on 12-15 May 2003 he briefed the team on the results of his mission. He was accompanied by Dr. Mark Altaweel from the Oriental Institute in Chicago, Charles Poe and Randy Olsen from the National Geographic TV and Magazine respectively. Other sites were visited after the 15 May by Mark Altaweel and Randy Olsen (Ashur to Samarra and south).

Prof. H. Trenkwalder, from the Innsbruck University in Austria, informed UNESCO on 9 May 2003 about the conditions of the sites of Borsippa and Babylon.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MISSION

The UNESCO team of experts, which was originally planned to travel to Baghdad via Kuwait, had to reach instead Amman on 15 May 2003. A UN flight to Baghdad was ensured thanks to the direct intervention of the Director-General to the UN Secretary-General, K. Annan. A member from the UNESCO security service joined the mission in Amman. UN close-in security had been ensured by UNSECOORD, Baghdad through the support of Mr. Romero Lopes da Silva. Accommodation was provided in the UN compound and transportation was arranged with two UNESCO vehicles of the *Oil for Food* programme.

On May 16 in Amman, Mr. Wolfgang Reuther, Director of UNESCO Office in Amman, organized a visit to the archaeological sites of ancient Amman (Philadelphia) and a press conference on the situation of Iraqi cultural heritage.

All the experts accepted to sign a consultant contract with UNESCO for a symbolic 1 US \$ fee.

The program of the mission is reported in Annex 1.

AIM OF THE MISSION

The aims of the mission were the following:

- 1 To carry out a first assessment of the conditions of Iraqi cultural heritage, evaluating the most urgent needs of the Iraqi museum, monuments, sites and cultural institutions in Baghdad;
- 2 To start drafting an overall strategy for the protection and conservation of the Iraqi cultural heritage, including immediate measures and short and long-term actions.

OUTPUTS OF THE MISSION

The UNESCO mission was very constructive in particular with regard to the preliminary assessment of the situation of cultural heritage in the city of Baghdad, which included the Iraqi Department of Antiquities, the Iraqi Archaeological Museum, the National Archives, the Baghdad National Library, the al Adhamiya Mosque - the final resting place of one of the four founders of the Islamic school, Abu Khanifa - , the Manuscripts Centre, Bayt al-Hikma and the Abbasid Palace.

Many monuments in Baghdad could not be visited due to security reasons mainly because of unexploded ordnance. At present, the Iraq Museum is the only cultural institution in Baghdad that is watched over and controlled by the coalition's army.

Reports from the archaeological sites in some cases remain uncertain. Different sources suggest that the Iraqi archaeological sites are generally subject to serious risks. The pillage of the brick reliefs of the Ishtar Gate and the dilapidation of bricks from the vault of the throne room in the Sassanian Ctesiphon palace were reported.

It seems that damages are much more severe in the South than in the North of Iraq. In the North and in the South regions the sites have been differently affected by illicit excavation. In the South, the area of Isin, Nippur, Adab and Umma seems to be in more alarming condition. No report has been provided for the Diyalah valley yet.

In almost every area, the problems caused by the war and the looting, combine deep and older problems caused by years of sanctions: sites have been looted for over a decade, conservation and refurbishment neglected, equipment not maintained. The staff of the Department of Antiquities is nervous about their future, reluctant to reveal anything that might suggest past or recent incompetence.

TEMPORARY AUTHORITY IN CHARGE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN IRAQ

UNESCO received information that an interim Iraqi government would not be put in place before mid-July 2003. The administrative authority at the time of the mission was the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)² under the overall supervision of Mr. Paul Bremer (USA). Ambassador Pietro Cordone (ITA) was appointed by ORHA as Civil Administrator for Iraqi Cultural Heritage and Mr. Fergus Muir (UK) was appointed as his collaborator. In the field of cultural heritage however, little is likely to happen until the present Iraqi officials are confirmed in their posts or new officials are appointed. The relationship between ORHA and the UN is slowly becoming clearer but still requires more definition. Some Iraqi former officials in the Ministry of Culture and Department of Antiquities have been called upon to serve as advisers to ORHA, namely: Dr. Muayad S. Damerji (Senior Adviser) and Dr Jabr Ibrahim Khalil.

² The former ORHA is presently called Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)

Meetings with Ambassador Piero Cordone

The UNESCO team held two formal meetings with Ambassador Cordone. The latter also joined the experts during a meeting with the staff of the Iraqi Museum.

On 17 May, Ambassador Cordone, with Colonel Kessel (ORHA), received the team of UNESCO experts on their arrival at the UN compound. Ms Carol Bellamy, the Director-General of UNICEF, and Mr. Romero Da Silva, UN coordinator for Security and Humanitarian Assistance, were also present. See [Annex 2](#): Minutes of the meeting.

Ambassador Cordone insisted on the importance to foster international engagement with Iraqi cultural reconstruction, and mentioned to intend collaborating with UNESCO to ensure international cooperation and to facilitate the work of the Organization towards the rehabilitation of the Iraqi cultural heritage.

Ambassador Cordone, accompanied by Colonel Kessel and the commandants Strubb and Eriksen of the US army, as well by the representative of the Ministry of the Culture of Great Britain, Mr. Fergus Muir confirmed the willingness of the Civil Administration to support the mission of high qualified experts under UNESCO coordination, since he considers that UNESCO "is the curator worldwide recognized of the antiquities".

Ambassador Cordone and Colonel Kessel also accompanied the team of UNESCO experts to the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad to meet with senior officials. There he again underlined the cooperation between ORHA and UNESCO to co-ordinate the international aid efforts.

A last meeting with Ambassador Cordone was held on 19 May to report on the results of the mission. See [Annex 3](#): Minutes of the meeting

Meeting with staff from the Iraqi Antiquities Department

The UNESCO experts met Dr Khalil Jaber, Director-General of Antiquities, Dr. Donny George, Director General, Department of research and studies, and Ms. Nawala Mutawalli, Director of Iraqi Museum of Baghdad..

Ms. Nawala Mutawalli, Director of Iraqi Museum of Baghdad, presented a detailed report on the looting occurred at the museum, as well as at cultural institutions in Baghdad, such as the National Library, the Regional Centre for conservation of cultural heritage, Bayt Al Hikma, the Abbasid palace and the Museum of Modern Arts. She also reported that the Museum hosting musical instruments has not been affected by looting.

Prof. Donny George, Director General, Department of research and studies, informed the UNESCO experts about the assessment of archaeological sites in Northern Iraq carried out by helicopter with Ambassador Limbert (predecessor of Ambassador Cordone). The aim was in particular assess the conditions of the sites of Ninive and Assur.

The lack of communication and of transport have completely paralyzed the Department of Antiquities which had no means to assess the conditions of the archaeological sites and museums at the time of the UNESCO mission.

Ambassador Cordone and his assistants joined the meeting later and the question of salary was approached, as well as the question of the security for female a personnel, for whom was not recommended to return home after 4 pm without security.

ASSESSMENT OF SITES IN BAGHDAD

Iraqi Museum

The UNESCO experts visited the Iraq Museum three times. The first visit, on May 17, was dedicated to the galleries and the administrative offices. The second visit, on May 18, focused on the conservation wing, the incoming objects room, the storage rooms, and the library. The third visit, on May 19, was devoted to ways of assistance and co-operation.

In the museum the situation is as follow:

Infrastructures and facilities

Damage from artillery or gunfire is real, but limited. The security and climate-control systems were damaged by looters and partly smashed. It is not clear if they can be repaired or need to be replaced.

Most offices were comprehensively trashed. There are no phones or computers, very few records, filing cabinets, very little furniture. One of the most pressing needs is the provision of the material and facilities, which would allow the Museum and the Department of Antiquities to run. With the current lack of any telephone, email or postal service, it is virtually impossible for anything to develop at the moment. There are now no cameras or scanners.

Conservation laboratory

Most equipment was stolen or smashed. Jars of chemicals, and other materials are being tidied up. Small microscopes were all stolen. Apart from a few tables, chairs and cupboards, there seems to be only an old Scanning Electron Microscope, a fumigation chamber and two kilns, apparently unreliable, still on site.

Main Galleries Collections

Most galleries are physically intact, as are most showcases. Many glass cases were broken or overturned, but most survive. They are, of course, old displays in poor repair.

Thefts of main-gallery items and damage to the objects on display have been well publicised. The fragments of shattered stone and ceramic objects lie on the floor, loosely tidied to let people walk by, otherwise undisturbed. Some broken objects have been summarily gathered and put on tables, but even major items like the shattered harp from Ur lie jumbled with odds and ends. Everything has yet to be begun in this area of conservation.

Fragments of damaged ivories from Nimrud were lying on the floor. These suffered from flooding some years ago and were not in good condition already before this last war. They appeared to have been on trays, awaiting treatment, and then dropped or disturbed by raiders. A Japanese team, who may still be ready to start work, already planned their conservation.

Looted objects

From the preliminary list of looted and damaged objects compiled by Dr. Donny George and Dr. John Curtis and presented at British Museum meeting on 29 April 2003, a number of about c.28 objects from the galleries display are missing (some of these objects are also published on the web: www.interpol.int/Public/WorkofArt/Iraq/Gallery.asp).

The museum staff declared that the seals, jewels and numismatic collections were not stolen. The museum treasures (Nimrud and Ur royal tombs furniture) had been stored in the vaults of the Central Bank of Iraq, and had not been checked yet at the time of the present report.

Raiders broke into the secure store with high value objects. Dr Mutawali assured us that all the coins were still present (those cases appeared not to have been forced). With a team of Dr Khalil's female students she is checking objects against inventory. So far most of the losses are bead necklaces and amulets, she reports. It is impossible to get more specific information. A report will be published by ORHA under the leadership of Colonel Bogdanos (ORHA). The team of UNESCO experts were assured that the un-looted stores (cuneiform tablets among them) are intact.

On May 24, the official count of missing objects from the museum had reached just above 1,000. On the previous day, the US customs officials had staged a "sting" operation and had gotten about 200 objects from one man. These objects had museum numbers and field numbers on them. Many seemed to be from Iraqi excavations, but some were from foreign operations, such as Abu Salabikh (British initiative). Clearly, some of the items were from the old storeroom, where many of the objects were stored with their dig numbers, not IM numbers.

Stores

The team of UNESCO experts were able to visit the three stores that had been break in. Most of the objects are archaeological ceramics. There has been considerable vandalism, and there will be a long campaign of re-assembling fragments.

Dr. MacGregor notes that there is no way of assessing how much might have been stolen; he thinks that the broken items in each of the three visited stores is probably less that 10% of the total (most of the upper shelves appeared crowded but undisturbed). The personnel are slowly and carefully tidying fragments to allow passage.

Objects evacuated from the Iraqi Museum before the war

The museum staff declared that the exhibited objects had been previously placed into museum's storerooms and some to the vaults of the Central Bank, with the exception of those that were considered unmovable because of their size and weight. It was impossible to receive any information about the location of these sites, nor any reassurance that all are still safe.

Inventories and records

It appears that the key Museum inventories have all survived, which will make checking holdings possible, if labour intensive. Records of all sorts have been seriously disrupted (thrown around offices, etc) and in some cases are thought to have been destroyed.

Since 2000, the Iraqi-Italian Institute for Archaeological Sciences was charged by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq to create a program for the recovery of the objects looted from the Iraqi provincial museum after the Gulf War (Sulaimaniyah, Babil, Kirkuk, Kufa, Qadissiyah, Maysan, Douk, Wasit, Basrah, Assur). The B.R.I.L.A. project (Bureau for Recovering and Investigating the Iraqi Looted Antiquities) has created a database containing, up to December 2002, images and records of 761 objects of the 2,625 apparently missing before this recent war (<http://www.centroscavitorino.it/brila.htm>). Most of the above mentioned looted objects were, in fact, unwarily exhibited either without being inventoried or, if inventoried, without photographic documentation. As declared at the Lyon conference, the coordination of the investigation for the recovery of those objects is a task of the Nucleo dei Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale, a special body of the Italian Army at the service of the Ministry of Cultural Activities (www.beniculturali.it).

Security

U.S. tanks in garden and U.S. troops billeted in library building are ensuring the security.

Senior Officials

Dr Jabr Ibrahim Khalil (Director of Antiquities), Dr Nawalla Mutawali (Director of Iraq Museum) and Dr Donny George (Director of Research) are all awaiting news on their future roles. No decisions could be taken nor plans made until then. The impression is one of paralysis, but this may also be a result of the real transport difficulties, the reluctance of female staff to travel alone, the destruction of office records and furniture, and the absence of communications by telephone or any other mean. Organising anything is hard. Some modest tidying-up has begun, but time is still mostly spent showing journalists around and waiting.

Staff security

As immediate action to tackle the problem of security of women staff in reaching the museum, was taken thanks to the intervention of Mr Bouchenaki to the UNDP Resident Representative in Baghdad, Mr. Dubois. He had offered to carry on the hiring of UN buses and drivers for the women inventory team for at least a period of about 6 months.

Staff salaries

Staff salaries have not been paid for some months. The UNESCO mission donated half its *per diem* allowances (\$4,200) to this cause. On 18th May, Ambassador Cordone and General Kern arrived at the Museum to announce that payment of salaries will be resumed soon.

Pioneers' Museum and Saddam Centre for Modern Art

Both the Pioneers' Museum and the Saddam Centre for Modern Art were looted and most of the works stolen.

According to the declaration of the museum staff, 400 paintings of the Saddam Art Centre, out of more than 2000 pieces of the Iraqi painters collection dating from the beginning of the last century to present, have been recovered and deposited in one of the SBAH rooms. Almost all are paintings, large canvases, and stacked pell-mell. The most common visible damage was tearing. They will need assessment. An important map of Baghdad in 1865 by Felix Jones, originally located in the entrance hall of the SBAH, was apparently stolen.

Baghdadi Museum

Prof. Gibson stated that the Baghdadi Museum, which was the original National Museum until 1967 and has been a city-owned (not Antiquities-owned) ethnographic/folklore museum, has survived virtually intact. The two guards were able to hold off looters until the American troops showed up on 22 April. Troops are now guarding the building.

Al Adhamiya Mosque (Imam Abu Khanifa)

The Al Adhamiya Mosque, an important shrine, suffered a large number of bullet strikes to the interior decoration, but no serious damage. The clock tower was damaged by artillery and the grave-yard seriously affected. American troops entered the mosque. The Imam showed the team of UNESCO experts the (very modest) physical damage to the interior, and explained the depth of distress caused by the violation of a holy place. A bomb has damaged the historic cemetery to the South of the mosque.

National Library and State Archives

The team of UNESCO experts visited the building on 19 May. The foundation of the Library dates to 1920 and it contained, according to its director, before the war it contained 1,500,000 books and 20,000,000 documents. Around 30% of the entire books and files collections were located in a safe place before the fire.

The National Library and State Archives building consists of three floors and a basement. All but the basement had been completely burned during the looting, and the building itself may well have suffered structural damage. An intriguing object, a flame-thrower/fire-extinguisher was recognized on the floor.

Arch. Parapetti do not advice to use the building without an fire engineer expertise. Dr. Muayad S. Damerji, senior advisor to the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, informed the experts about the collections. Part of the book collection and about half of the archive collection (comprising the state archives of Iraq from the late Ottoman period to the present) had been moved to safety prior to the war. Everything that remained in the building was destroyed, including the microfilm copies of the archives, which were housed on the third floor. Only the basement was untouched by the fire, and since no firefighters came, it is still dry.

Dr. Damerji suggested that the library and archives should be relocated to buildings at al-Bakr University, which he said would soon be vacant. These buildings were not damaged in the looting and could be used soon.

Prof. Russell inquired about the existence of a paper and book conservation laboratory, and was told that nothing of that sort existed in Baghdad.

UNESCO Regional Centre for conservation of cultural heritage

The building assigned to the UNESCO Regional Centre conservation of cultural heritage, which was restored, was subject to vandalism and robbery and was partially set on fire.

Qushla

The effect of looting were particular visible on the Qushla (the Ottoman Barracks). Looting was still going on as we visited this complex. Two American soldiers came in and tried to drive off the looters. Not one door or window was left in the entire Ottoman complex.

Bayt al Hikma

This cultural institution, dated to the Abbasid period, was the first Iraqi Parliament place. UNESCO already contributed to its restoration in 1999. The building was looted and burned. The roof has collapsed and the interior is completely gutted.

Abbasid Palace

Some of the Islamic works of art from Samara, located in the Qasr al-Abbasi, were found damaged. Modern reproduction doors and windows all removed by looters.

The Ottoman Customs House complex and the Gailani House

The old Ottoman Customs House complex and the Gailani House (now the Italian Institute) survived. The Customs House now houses a school of video or another kind of acting. The Iraqi-Italian Institute was found pillaged of furniture, equipments and cars during a previous Italian survey mission. Due to the unsafe condition of the area, in the vicinities of al-Rashid street hte building was only saw from the outside.

Universities

Only Prof. Gibson visited the former Saddam University, now the Nahrain University, adjacent to the southern campus of Baghdad University. Nahrain University is a graduate facility, meant to be elite. It is mostly devoted to the sciences and engineering. The south campus of the University of Baghdad has much the same emphases, but is more devoted to undergraduate studies. The President of Narharin, the Deal of Informatics, the Dean of Engineering, and two other faculty members were frank, and informative.

Neither Nahrain nor the southern campus of Baghdad University were looted. US troops took both campuses and they themselves searched offices of several of the faculty, some of whom had already been visited by UN weapons inspectors. Computer boards, laptops, and files were taken. The two campuses showed no signs of disturbance and classes were being carried out.

Prof. Gibson has been informed that the other faculties of Baghdad University (Law, Arts, Humanities, Medicine) all located in the northern parts of the city, have been all looted. Mustansiriya University, also in the north of the city, was extensively looted and burned. For instance, the German Department at Baghdad University was completely destroyed. The Archaeology department was looted and set afire, but the faculty saved the library.

Prof. Gibson visited also the northern campus of the University of Baghdad. The Arts College is in ruins, but is repairable. The Medical College must be entirely re-stocked with equipment, but students had returned and some faculty were in evidence. Elsewhere in Baghdad, the private Mansour University was able to fend off looters and was in session. The Technical University, however, was in total ruin. US troops who carried out detailed searches had entered it, and then looters destroyed the buildings, setting fire to them all. The same can be said of the Institute for Computation, which was extensively looted and partially burned.

Prof. Gibson visited also the campus of the University of Qadissiyah, in Diwaniyah, and it seems to have escaped burning, although there was reported some limited looting.

ASSESSMENT OF SITES OUTSIDE BAGHDAD

The team of UNESCO experts could not carry out any assessment outside Baghdad. The following report realises on information kindly provided by Prof. Gibson and Prof. Trenkwalder for the South region, and by Prof. Wilkinson for the North region.

Mosul Museum

Sculptures in the Hatra gallery have been smashed but apparently not stolen. A total of 5-6 items were taken from the Assyrian gallery- these included the strips from the Balawat gates as well as at least one cuneiform inscribed brick. There was damage to other galleries, but no theft, although the major plate glass windows had been shattered as a result of the impact of cruise missiles on nearby buildings. Conditions of storeroom are not known. American military unit not far from the museum might be redeployed at front and back of museum for protection.

Hadba Mosque (Mosul)

This is the Mosque in Old Mosul with crooked minaret. There is evidence of some deterioration of the building but no war related damage is evident.

Universities in Mosul, Basra, Kufa and Kut

Prof. Wilkinson, who visited the Mosul University, reported that the university was looted on a large scale, including the library with hundreds of manuscripts. Books and furniture were stolen, and many of the academic volumes were looted to some extent. For example most of the SAA volumes (ie the State Archives of Assyria) are now missing. A volume of the translations of the Khorsabad texts have been stolen. Books were also missing as were the copies of Orientalia, the National Geographic series, as well as the Pennsylvania Sumerian dictionary. Overall it looked as if more than half the books and journals were missing from the library, but a number of items were on the bookshelves.

Basra University was badly looted, including the library. The University of Kufa was also looted and the library burned, with the loss of about 100 Islamic and early Christian manuscripts. The University of Kut is also said to have been badly damaged.

Babylon museum

The museum was entered and damaged a bit, but there were no real objects in it. The gift shop was looted and burned.

Archaeological Sites in Southern Iraq

The South region seems to be in more alarming condition than the north.

Babylon

Prof. Gibson visited with the National Geographic team Babylon, before the arrival of the team of UNESCO experts in Baghdad.

Babylon has 2500 US troops on it and is completely secure. The house of the director of the site, as well as the living quarters and working quarters of the staff were completely looted and messed up. The small guesthouse /hotel was also looted. There is some minor damage to the Ishtar Gate's reliefs, with an attempt to take some bricks out of the wall. Saddam's palace to the west of Nebuchodonosor's palace was looted before it was occupied by the US troops, who live here as well as in tents on the archaeological site.

Nippur

Prof. Gibson visited with the National Geographic team Nippur, before the arrival of the team of UNESCO experts in Baghdad.

Nippur has its guards in place, but there are signs of looting. For the first time since 1948, illicit digging has taken place. About 20 men came and since they had more guns than the guards, they proceeded to dig one hole about 1.5x3 m in the top of the mound near the dig house. There are two more small holes in another part of the site, but these have damaged only our dumps. The guards and the local people say that the diggers who did the damage

gave up and went North to another site called Abu Jawan, where they were spotted by a US helicopter team. Since the looters had guns and ran to their vehicles, the helicopter opened fire and killed 7 of the looters.

Umm al-Hafriyat

The site was visited during a survey carried out by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Col. Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson.

Prof. Gibson has excavated this site, east of Nippur, in 1977. This site, an important industrial city, was riddled with recent digging.

Tell Bismaya (ancient Adab)

The site has been surveyed by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Col. Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson. The helicopter did not land on the site. More than 200 men were at work, digging all over the site, which has obviously been worked on for some years.

Umma and Tell Shmid

The site has been surveyed by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Col. Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson. Tell Shmid and Umma are sites that the DG of Antiquities has been excavating for the past few years in order to keep them from being looted. Passing over At Tell Shmid, some recent digging have been noted. The helicopter landed in Umma where extensive looting has been going on

Umm al Aqarib

The site has been surveyed by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Col. Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson. Umm al Aqarib has been also excavated by the DG. Extensive looting was reported on site.

Tello (ancient Girsu) and Tell al-Hiba (ancient Lahash)

The sites of Tello and Tell al-Hiba have been surveyed by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Col. Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson. At Tello the survey confirmed that there had been limited looting, as previously reported by the National Geographic team who saw it a few days earlier. South of Tello, Tell al-Hiba appeared to be untouched.

Madain (ancient Bad Tibira)

The site has been surveyed by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Col. Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson. Madain showed some signs of recent digging.

Ur

The site has been surveyed by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Col. Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson. Ur is occupied by US troops. Some report attempts at pilferage by US troops but not by local people.

Senkereh (ancient Larsa)

The site has been surveyed by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Col. Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson. The Geographic team had been here by road and reported seeing some deep holes but no activities at site during the survey.

Uruk

The site has been surveyed by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Col. Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson. There is no damage at Uruk.

Isin

The site has been surveyed by helicopter by Ambassador Cordone, Kessel, 4 other members of his staff, Wathiq Hindo, and Prof. Gibson who landed at site. Isin was also visited by Ms Susanne Osthoff, a German archaeologist, who also reported observing large-scale looting by a large group of diggers. The site is very seriously damaged.

Archaeological site in Northern Iraq

From the report of Prof. Wilkinson the conditions of archaeological sites in the north are various: illicit excavations have affected some sites while other sites remain still untouched.

Nineveh

The Sennacherib SW Palace is near total destruction and needs immediate intervention. The Museum is only guarded from 8 am to 8 pm by military, so plunderers come after dark. A request was therefore made that they be extended to round the clock. At Sennacherib's SW palace there were three forms of damage: a) general decay of the reliefs which appears to have taken place over the roughly the 10-year duration of the sanctions period and the two Gulf Wars, b) deliberate vandalism of reliefs in the two galleries on display, c) illegal digging in the floor of the chambers (specifically a small room at the SE end of the main hall) apparently for the purpose of recovering artefacts (gold or ivory?) from beneath the floors of the rooms.

The Nergal gate museum at Nineveh was not broken in to (ie the looters failed to get in through the locked doors), and the site of Nebi Yunus was also undamaged. A storage facility at the Nineveh "arak factory" as well as the Nineveh dig house shows no obvious loss of stone relief fragments and we were told that no artefacts remained in the dig house.

Guards need to be increased to 24 hours. Sheet metal roof needs to be replaced before fall rains. Remaining sculptures and walls need comprehensive conservation treatment. Conservators could stay at nearby Nineveh palace hotel, which is safe and is currently being used by UN groups in area.

Nimrud

The Assurnasirpal II Palace site museum had been subjected to targeted theft in three locations. There was one attempted theft (from Room S, ca. panel 20) and two actual thefts. The first theft relates to the removal of a slab from Room I in the NE corner of the palace, and the second to the throne room (B) just to the west of the S door at or near panel 14 or 13 (according to the system of Paley and Sobalewski). During one incident there was the exchange of gunfire between one of the site guards and the thieves. Fortunately there is now a military guard of some 16 US soldiers for 24 hours a day at the NW palace.

Khorsabad

Khorsabad showed evidence of minor damage within the main palace complex at the North end of the site. This damage was from activities associated with a military camp and we recorded a number of trenches that had been dug in various parts of the site. Although these were up to 2-3 m long and 1.5 m deep, they showed no evidence of having damaged stratified cultural material or having thrown up artefacts. Local villages on the Southern part of the palace complex pointed out unexploded bombs.

Tepe Gawra

There was little evidence of damage at Tepe Gawra (since Wilkinson's visit in 1990), but in the last 5 years an olive orchard has been planted on the lower SW slopes. This could threaten any putative lower town at the site.

Tell Billa

It was also was the site of a former Iraqi army military camp. The local villagers have now razed this to the ground, and a number of unexploded bombs were recorded.

Both instances of unexploded bombs (at Khorsabad and Billa) were reported to the bomb disposal unit at the main palace complex.

Tell 'Afar area

Tell Rimah, near Tell Afar is undamaged whereas Qirmiz Dere is damaged by military activity, but only to a limited degree, whereas significant disturbance was caused by bulldozing. In the citadel at Tell Afar there was considerable evidence of general neglect of the archaeological materials in storage, but remarkably life in Tell Afar appears to have been getting back to normal.

A certain amount of non war-related damage was noted to archaeological sites in the vicinity of Tell Afar. Such damage appears to have been as a result of the extension of fields and buildings, which has resulted in major cuts being made into at least one site. Of greater significance is the possibility that the Tell Afar airfield may be extended or landscaped by the new military occupation. Because this airfield contains a number of archaeological sites it is imperative that steps be taken to undertake a full record of the archaeology prior to any such activity.

Hatra

Hatra, like Nimrud, had a round-the-clock US military guard. Damage to the standing remains consisted of the loss of the head of a figure that decorated an arch in one of the smaller northern iwans within the temple complex. This head had been shot off, and had apparently been taken away by the looters. In addition, a small camel in relief from a doorway frieze from one of the outer temples had also been broken off and removed, but this was recovered by the dept. of Antiquities staff and is now in storage.

Samarra

Only the main mosque and minaret (Melwia) were visited. No damage was reported by officials at the site. However, the site is very large it was not fully surveyed.

Assur

The site of Assur was visited by Mark Altaweel (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago) and Randy Olsen (National Geographic Society, Washington DC) on May 15th 2003 as part of a damage assessment of archaeological sites sponsored by the National Geographic Society.

Walking over the site, it was evident that new excavation had been made just to the west of the dig house, but these were apparently by the Department of Antiquities (UTM points were taken using a GPS). Also there were new excavations in the Burnt or East Palace, and area of houses just to the east of the German excavation area. A report was made to the US military based in Saddam's palace in Mosul on the importance of Assur and the need to protect the site.

General comments- Guards reported that US troops did visit the site; however, this was not for site protection. Rather, troops came to confiscate any weapons or search for any potential "problems" that may arise from the site. Guards (20 Iraqi) complained that they need weapons to protect the site and feared that a potentially looting attack was brewing. The

guards also pointed out that they also had not been paid. Memories of previous lootings prior to this war seem to fuel much of their fear.

Tabira Gate- Visit to the main gate revealed that nothing was damaged as a result of the reconstruction or of any illicit excavations near the gate.

New Palace- Visit to the new palace revealed that all the exposed vaulted tombs and areas of the ancient palace seem to be in a similar condition to that in 2001, namely at the time of my last visit.

Old Palace- As with the new palace the area of the Old Palace did not have any evidence of any disturbance.

Ottoman Police Station- This area, which served as a museum prior to the 1991 war, was undisturbed, unlike after the first war.

Burnt Palace or East Palace- This is the new palace discovered and excavated in the last couple of years. Aside from Iraqi Department of Antiquities excavations, no evidence of looting or illicit excavations.

Ishtar Palace- Again no signs of illicit digging.

German Excavation Area (Private Houses in the Old City)- The excavation trenches, aside from natural decay of the trenches, seem not to have been disturbed.

Dig House- The dig house was in relatively good condition with some areas showing some cracking in the walls. The guards brought all excavation items to the dig house compound and all excavation items including artefacts were kept within the main gate of the compound. The doors of the dig house used by the German team were soldered and welded. Also the lower rooms were locked. Artefacts in the courtyard of the dig house were present and there was no sign of any looting apparent. Even the furniture was present. Only noticeable missing item was the large portrait of Saddam. In general, there was no evidence of looting at the house or site, an observation that was supported by the report of the guards.

Guard House on road to Dig House- The guardhouse is missing windows (house on road to dig house when driving into Assur).

Makhul Dam

A visit was made by Mark Altaweel (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago) and Randy Olsen (National Geographic Society, Washington DC) also to the Fatha Gorge, area between the Jebel Makhul and Jebel Hamrin.

There was no major sign of dam construction activity except for some minor construction projects near the bridged highway. Equipment for the construction of the dam was reported to have been looted. Construction activity is not far advanced and there is only minor construction in this area.

Balawat

There are some small holes on site but these are not very deep (about 40 cm), with the largest not measuring much more than a meter. Graves are also apparent on the site and some might be recent (within last few years). Graves are mostly concentrated on South end of main tell. UTM points were taken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the mission the UNESCO team of experts agreed on the following recommendations:

- Any plan to assist with heritage restoration in Baghdad must make allowances for the desperate humanitarian crisis in the city, as this affects every aspect of daily life.
- Among urgent needs of the Iraqi people: electricity (the water supply is variable and difficult to pump without electricity), salary to be regularly resumed (without their salaries being paid, workers are reluctant to risk their personal safety to come to work).
- Many office workers no longer have offices to work in. All of these factors affect the ability of the Iraqi workers to return to productivity, and must be taken into consideration in developing a short-term recovery strategy.

The following recommendations are to be considered as urgent priorities:

- (i) **to secure archaeological sites countrywide from looting with patrols and site guards (heritage police) and establish borders' patrolling to stop illicit traffic still ongoing;**
- (ii) **to supply the Department of Antiquities with vehicles and the fuel to operate them;**
- (iii) **to ensure archaeological site survey and salvage operations as soon as possible;**
- (iv) **to implement archaeological surveys and mappings by experts (co-operation between Iraqi professionals and foreigner institutions which worked in Iraq is sought);**
- (v) **to dispatch as soon as possible a second experts' mission, under UNESCO coordination, for the assessment of archaeological sites, cultural institutions, museums, libraries, and historic buildings;**

The experts also agreed on the following medium term priorities:

Museum:

1. Re-install security system and replace facilities (doors, windows, security system)
2. Restore conservation labs, bring in professional conservators, train local conservators
3. Establish a computerized objects registration
4. Establish an inventory of stolen objects
5. Repair/upgrade HVAC
6. Refurbish galleries and display cases

Other institutions:

1. Establish conservation center for objects, paintings, paper and books
2. Relocate National Library and Archives
3. Reconstitute painting museums
4. Replace roof and conserve palace museum at Nineveh
5. Establish an international scientific Committee for the coordination of the preparation of a plan of action with urgent measures, short- and long-term actions;
6. Organize training programmes for Iraqi personnel, in particular targeting the restoration of selected endangered objects

In the long run they agreed on the following projects:

1. Repair historic buildings
2. Determine status of Assur dam project

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ANNEX 1

Program of the mission

May 16: Amman

Meeting with Prof T. Wilkinson just returned from Mosul

May 17: Baghdad

First meeting with Ambassador Cordone;
First visit to the Iraqi Museum's galleries and offices

May 18: Baghdad

Second visit to the Iraqi Museum's conservation wing, incoming objects room, storage rooms, and library.
Visit to Adhamiya Mosque

May 19: Baghdad

Visit to the National Library.
Visits to Beyt al-Hikma, Kasr Abassid, Kushla, the Regional Centre for conservation of cultural heritage
Third visit to Iraqi Archaeological Museum and meeting with Ms Susanne Osthoff who had just returned from Isin.
Second meeting with Ambassador Cordone.
Meeting with Andrew Lawler who had just returned from his tour of Southern archaeological sites

May 20: Baghdad

Visit to al Adhamiya mosque
Departure from Baghdad midday

Minutes of Meeting held at the Canal Hotel on 17 May 2003 at 10.30 a.m.

Attendants:

HE Ambassador Pietro Cordone, Civil Administrator for Iraqi Cultural Heritage,
Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)
Commander Strub, Assistant, ORHA
Colonel Kessele, Assistant, ORHA
Mr Mounir Bouchenaki, Assistant-Director General, UNESCO Paris
Prof McGuire Gibson, Chicago University, USA
Prof. John Russell, Massachusetts College of Art, USA
Arch. Roberto Parapetti, Director of Iraqi-Italian Center, Italy
Prof. Ken Matsumoto, Kokushikan University, Japan
Mr. Ahmed Ferej, OIC, UNESCO Baghdad Office
Ms. Nayab Al-Dabbagh, UNESCO Baghdad Office
Mr. Belal Ayoob, UNESCO Baghdad Office
Mr. Mohamed Zeroual, Security Officer, UNESCO Paris

Subject: UNESCO Special Mission to Iraq

The UNESCO experts described the UNESCO mission goals and shared initial concerns, in particularly issues raised during the meeting with Prof. Wilkinson the day before in Amman and during prior assessments of the general situation in Iraq.

At the beginning of the meeting, Mr Bouchenaki, head of the UNESCO mission, introduced the experts and stressed the role and objectives of the mission of UNESCO experts. Mr Bouchenaki also spoke about the site of Babylon, mentioning a report received before the beginning of the mission, by an Austrian archaeologist who visited the site during the previous weeks.

Among the aims of UNESCO, Mr. Bouchenaki indicated the followings:

1. To send a second mission to Iraq to complete the current assessment.
2. To coordinate with INTERPOL to recover looted artefacts in accordance with the agreement signed between UNESCO and the INTERPOL.
3. To finance the current endeavours to help and maintain archaeological and cultural sites in Iraq as UNESCO received donations from Japan (\$1,000,000), Italy (400,000 Euro), Switzerland (250,000 Swiss franc), and Canada for this purpose.

Dr. MacGregor stated that he expects the Iraqi experts and staff of the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad to fully support the team of UNESCO experts. He mentioned particularly Dr. Donny George. Dr. MacGregor also requested Ambassador Cordone to support the aims of the current mission. He also stressed the importance of providing training courses to Iraqi experts to enable them rehabilitate, in particular, archaeological sites and the Iraqi Museum.

Prof. Gibson reported about his visit to Babylon and mentioned that the contents of its museum had been transferred to Baghdad before the war. He indicated that the museum building and Ishtar site were both damaged, but that presently the American forces were protecting both of them. As for other sites, especially those located in the south, he stated that severe damage occurred. He also mentioned that National Geographic had taken the initiative to rent two cars to provide transport for the local staff of the Iraqi Museum.

Arch. Parapetti gave a short review of the importance of traditional architecture in Al-Rasheed Street in Baghdad and other buildings like Al-Qashla, Qsar Al-Abasi and Al-Mustansirya University.

Prof. Russell handed to Ambassador Cordone a list of priorities to be taken into consideration in any future planning. The list included the following points, in order of urgency:

1. Pay the Antiquities Department staff, in particular in the north of Iraq where they had not even received the \$20 interim payment given to staff in Baghdad
2. Procure vehicles for the Antiquities Department offices throughout Iraq
3. Establish stable telephone and email communication with the museum
4. Patrol archaeological sites and provide permanent guards to prevent looting
5. Mosul Museum: move military guard to the front and back of the museum, protect storerooms; replace front door and windows throughout
6. Post a 24-hour military guard at Nineveh
7. Central Bank of Baghdad's vault: keep pumping water out, but do not open until appropriate security and conservation measures are taken
8. Increase the amnesty for the return of antiquities and reward it with small monetary compensations
9. Khorsabad and Tell Billa: remove unexploded ordnance
10. Tell Afar and Talil airbases: carry out archaeological survey and salvage excavations before expanding or improving airbases
11. Nimrud and Hatra: posting of a 24-hour military guard had successfully stopped thefts from these sites; maintain this guard
12. Ensure that appropriate archaeological survey and salvage excavations precedes all construction
13. Nineveh: replace metal roof on Sennacherib palace before fall's rains
14. Assur: seek low water level for proposed dam project or cancel it; mount appropriate archaeological survey and salvage operation

Ambassador Cordone expressed his appreciation in receiving such a high level delegation and emphasized his full support to the goals of the team of UNESCO experts and announced his intention to accompany the delegation during their first visit to the Iraqi Museum. He indicated that the main problem facing the various endeavours to protect and maintain cultural heritage in Iraq was the establishment of an infrastructure. It would be crucial for the progress of the work to identify the delegated Iraqi authority in each ministry and office to set the basis for a continuous co-operation and co-ordination. He stressed that the coalition forces were processing rules and regulations on this regard. But despite the difficulties, the international community was ready to provide any kind of help to assist in achieving such aims.

Ambassador Cordone was receptive, and in turn informed us that his first charge from ORHA was to investigate the extent of the involvement of the Antiquities Department official with the Baath party, in order to determine who could remain in their government positions. He cautioned the UNESCO team not to enter into any agreements with any Iraqi officials until this process was complete and the authority of these officials was confirmed by ORHA.

It was agreed to hold a second meeting at the end of the mission, i.e., on Monday at 3.30 p.m. in Canal Hotel.

The meeting adjourned at 11.30 a.m.

**Minutes of the Meeting held at UNOHCI Conference Room in Canal Hotel
on 19 May 2003 at 4.00 p.m.**

The UNESCO experts met again Ambassador Cordone and his staff on their last day in Baghdad to report on the findings of the mission.

Attendants:

HE Ambassador Pietro Cordone, Civil Administrator for Iraqi Cultural Heritage,
Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)
Commander Strub, Assistant, ORHA
Colonel Kessele, Assistant, ORHA
Mr Mounir Bouchenaki, Assistant-Director General, UNESCO Paris
Prof. McGuire Gibson, Chicago University, USA
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Mr. Ahmed Ferej, OIC, UNESCO Baghdad Office
Ms. Nayab Al-Dabbagh, UNESCO Baghdad Office
Mr. Belal Ayoob, UNESCO Baghdad Office
Mr. Mohamed Zerouali, Security Officer, UNESCO Paris

Subject: Briefing of UNESCO Special Mission to Iraq

At the beginning of the meeting, Mr. Bouchenaki outlined the results of the mission, to be considered the first step of a series of actions aimed at providing protection and support to Iraqi archaeological sites and museums, in particular the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad. He mentioned the damage affecting cultural sites during the last two months and highlighted the urgent need to rehabilitate Iraqi cultural heritage as soon as possible. He extended his thanks and appreciation to ORHA, his team of experts and the UNESCO Baghdad team for their support in accomplishing the aims of the mission.

Mr Bouchenaki recommended to move very quickly towards the rehabilitation programme and he pointed out the potential role of UNESCO in this process. He indicated that the funds allocated by the Governments of Japan, Switzerland, Italy, USA and Canada could finance the rehabilitation of the conservation laboratories of the Iraqi Museum, the restoration and protection of damaged artefacts and the training of its staff, as well the protection of archaeological sites outside Baghdad. Concerning archaeological sites, he underlined the essential issue of security.

Afterwards each of the UNESCO experts reported briefly on their findings and recommendations.

Ambassador Cordone also shared with the team of UNESCO experts two very important information: (1) an order had been issued that day authorizing payment of salaries of the Antiquities Department personnel retroactive to April 1, to be implemented within 3-4 days, and (2) Cordone's office had determined that it would work with Dr. Jabr Khalil (Director

General of Antiquities) and Dr. Donny George (Director General for Research, Antiquities Dept.) on the reconstruction of the antiquities infrastructure. The team of UNESCO experts understood this to mean that they had been confirmed in their positions and authority.

Ambassador Cordone also mentioned that girls were resuming their studies at public schools. However, since security was not yet provided 100% systematic excavation programmes could not be resumed. Special teams from the coalition forces would check the archaeological sites reportedly said to be under looting, and take the required measures to stop any further damage.

Ambassador Cordone announced also his visit to most of archaeological sites in the South region, in order to obtain a first hand experience about the conditions.

Prof. Gibson indicated the importance of encouraging efficient Iraqi specialists who left the country because of the sanctions to come back and resume their work in archaeological sites.

Prof. Russel reaffirmed the points on the list presented to Ambassador Cordone on May 17, and added the following urgent recommendations:

1. Establish satellite Internet and telecommunication service at the Iraqi Museum
2. Restore the Iraqi Museum's administrative offices to functional condition
3. Consider establishing grants and international programs officer positions at the Antiquities Department

Col. Kessel suggested using the satellite Internet service in the Canal Hotel UN Complex in Baghdad in the interim. He supported the idea of sending patrols over archaeological sites and also proposed using satellite surveillance to monitor illegal digging activity at archaeological sites.

On behalf of UNESCO Director-General, Mr Bouchenaki thanked the attendees and Ambassador Cordone for their efforts. He also said that the first report would encompass the first impressions of the team whereas the successive reports would include proposals for future work plans.

The meeting adjourned at 5.30 p.m.