



ISIL Antiquities Trafficking



Photos of antiquities courtesy of U.S. Department of State.



Satellite images have shown industrial-level looting at Syrian and Iraqi archaeological sites. The FBI has received reports from credible sources who have been approached by individuals trying to sell objects that appear to have been illegally looted and trafficked from Syria or Iraq, likely by those associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group.

Recognizing art and antiquities trafficking as a terrorist financing tool, in February 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously voted for Resolution 2199, which obligates member states (including the U.S.) to take steps to prevent terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria from receiving donations and from benefiting from trade in oil, antiquities, and hostages.

- Recognizing that the legitimate market for art and antiquities is a component of the U.S. economy, the FBI is asking for help in preventing illicitly obtained art and antiquities from reaching the market and in preventing any transfer of funds from benefiting ISIL.
- The FBI is requesting help from art and antiquities market leaders in halting trade in looted and stolen artifacts from Syria and Iraq by asking them to disseminate the following message to their members, clients, and constituents:
 - Please be cautious when purchasing items from this region. Keep in mind that antiquities from Iraq remain subject to Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctions under the Iraq Stabilization and Insurgency Sanctions Regulations (31 CFR part 576).
 - Purchasing an object looted and/or sold by the Islamic State may provide financial support to a terrorist organization and could be prosecuted under 18 USC 2339A.

- Robust due diligence is necessary when purchasing any Syrian or Iraqi antiquities or other cultural property in the U.S. or when purchasing elsewhere using U.S. funds.

- The US has amended the US Customs and Border Protection regs to reflect new import restrictions on archaeological and ethnological material from Syria, pursuant to the "Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act." The Federal Register on 8/15/16 published the DHS-CBP-Treasury 19 CFR Part 12: "Import Restrictions Imposed on Archaeological and Ethnological Material of Syria" It includes a list and description of the object types/categories that are subject to import restrictions in unlawfully removed from Syria on or after March 15, 2011.

- The UN Security Council issued Resolution 2253 (17 December 2015) also condemns ISIL and it's continuing profit from transnational organized criminal activities -- including ISIL's trafficking in artifacts.

Individuals and institutions in the trade, professional, and academic communities have been instrumental in the success of many FBI cultural property investigations and their continued input and cooperation is needed to prevent ISIL-generated income from looted objects.

The FBI is devoted to combating crime and threats to national security and wants to help keep the market clean for legitimate business.

Please report any suspect solicitations to the FBI at tips.fbi.gov, your local FBI field office, or call 1-800-CALL-FBI.