

# Partner of Choice

## Cultural Property Protection in Military Engagement

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**I**n today's operational and sociopolitical environment, the ability to partner effectively with military organizations from other countries with diverse cultural backgrounds has become a vital strategic and tactical skill for the U.S. military. We can foresee very few scenarios in which the United States will, or even can, conduct unilateral military action in foreign areas. Whether it is large-scale combat operations, fighting the Islamic State, responding to natural (or man-made) humanitarian

disasters, interdicting weapons and drug traffickers, or executing any number of a wide diversity of other potential operations, the U.S. military will routinely, by necessity, be operating in coalitions within environments where success may largely depend on how well we are able to develop a nuanced understanding of the culture, customs, training, and thought processes of our allied forces, as well as of the populations among whom we will be operating and of the opponents we face. As a consequence,



future operational success may ultimately be a function of how well we develop a sophisticated understanding of what will motivate our coalition partners to sustain their commitment to achieving common objectives.

To achieve such levels of sophistication and depth of cultural understanding, it should be self-evident that we must “train as we will fight” in foreign environments. Such opportunities for cultural training will take many forms: coalition exercises, war games, civil-military projects, executive seminars, and other creatively designed training events. Moreover, planning for each operational activity needs to be more closely considered with regard to the 360-degree cultural impact not only on the immediate discrete military objectives of any given training activity or real-world contingency but also on the wider and longer term operational and strategic impacts our actions may have on other factors woven into the plans.

## Background Context

The United States is a comparatively young nation that has emerged relatively recently in history and as a nation that prides itself on amalgamating and homogenizing the national identity of immigrants from widely diverse backgrounds in an ongoing attempt to forge a single nation unified by a shared, reified national narrative. It has attempted to do so by inculcating into new citizens what Harvard scholar Samuel Huntington referred to as the American creed, a nationalist narrative that attempts to instill a perception that Americans are bound to each other by a peculiar national identity supposedly based on respect for universally shared natural human values and rights, especially individual rights.<sup>1</sup>

For average Americans acculturated over time by the American creed, it is often difficult to understand or relate to older, more ossified cultures that derive their community identity from deep-seated psychological attachments that may not embrace as universal either natural individual values or rights, or the unique American emphasis on abstractions related to individualism and individual human rights. In other cultures,

sacred places and cultural relics often serve as the key emblems and anchors of community identity, especially among communities that have grown up steeped in deeply embedded cultural traditions fortified by ancient rituals and practices, some with roots that are demonstrably hundreds (if not thousands) of years old.

For example, on the first Sunday in May of each year, tens of thousands of Turkish citizens gather at the ancient city of Sardis. The timing of this celebration predates the emergence of Christianity and Islam, reflecting a tradition of seasonal worship linked to the ancient veneration of the goddess Artemis, a temple cult once centered at Sardis. Current celebrations at Sardis are believed to descend from similar rituals practiced in this same place dating back to antiquity.

Participation in such celebrations is not merely traditional community diversion; for many, such celebrations at ancient revered sites reify and reinforce a sense of community continuity and identity that stems back into the dim recesses of time. The response of one young participant who was asked why she had come to the celebration highlights the deep cultural attachment many Turkish citizens have to the site, as she asserted, “We are here to be in the very old places.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, a faith in the power of ancient cultural traditions to bind the inhabitants of present communities with those of the past is evident

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**Previous page:** Dhief Muhsen, curator for the historical sites at Ur, shows U.S. soldiers from the 449th Aviation Support Battalion, 36th Combat Aviation Brigade 18 November 2006 how the Iraqi city used to look several thousand years ago. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Lorin T. Smith, U.S. Army)



throughout the Levant, Iraq and Afghanistan, where it is common to see modern burials in ancient sites. One of the repeating explanations given to outsiders for this phenomenon is that many modern citizens of those countries seek in death to have their remains mingled into the continuity of history and glories found in the ancient roots of their hereditary civilizations.

American military planners should be keenly aware that such entrenched attachment to a community's origins and ancestors is not a quaint or minority view but is the prevailing frame of reference for a majority of people in the world and, therefore, a vital component of understanding how and why people behave the way they do when analyzing them from a security standpoint.

With respect to how these concepts apply to the relative effectiveness of military operations, honed skills to partner effectively with the military establishments of other countries with cultural perspectives and backgrounds much different than our own should be seen not as "added value" but as strategically and tactically essential as the world's cultures crowd even closer together in an overpopulated and very competitive global society. For many of the peoples of the countries we

work with, the trappings of cultural heritage are powerful and vivid symbols of pride in their national identity and are therefore essential components for establishing or restoring effective sociopolitical stability. Consequently, one part of our effort should be making it a priority to understand the

traditional artifacts and features associated with the community heritage of the allied partners with whom we link arms, emphasizing the identification of what physical manifestations and emblems are viewed by them as culturally invaluable and inviolable.

Such an approach is a necessary component of strategy in the modern era for building and sustaining effective partnerships. Moreover, not only does this approach create deeper understanding and bonds among partners, but it also creates an opportunity for U.S. forces to showcase the values behind U.S. involvement in coalition operations—a commitment to the preservation, or restoration, of a peace based on our uni-

versal sense of human decency and respect for others as a means of promoting the stability of their societies.

## Cultural Property Protection

As a consequence of recognizing that protection of cultural legacies is an essential component of a forward-leaning strategy to promote coalition cohesion, some segments of the U.S. military have begun to use



Turkish families gathering for the spring festival 8 May 2011 that takes place at the site of the ancient Temple of Artemis in Sardis, Turkey. These celebrations have probably been taking place for over two thousand years. (Photo by Laurie Rush)



cultural property protection (CPP) as a basis for establishing new partnerships. Using CPP is not only a moral responsibility for preserving a population's heritage in a practical sense, but it also enables U.S. military personnel to gain opportunities for acquiring deep insight into the psyche of their partner or potential partner military organizations by carefully noting what they value most in terms of preserving their own nation's culture and why.

As a result, CPP offers deep cultural intelligence insights as well as a nonthreatening means of achieving common ground by providing an excellent platform for international and cross-cultural engagement. Where practiced, this approach has resulted in an impressive track record of successes. A few examples of lessons learned discussed below illustrate the effectiveness of CPP in a wide range of circumstances and forms of engagement with partners and allies. Examples are drawn from the Middle East, South America, and Africa to demonstrate the global potential of this approach.

### **Cultural Property Protection Engagements in the Middle East**

During combat operations in 2003, U.S. Marines and Polish forces occupied the site of the ancient city of Babylon. Before the war, Babylon was a site that engendered great national pride among Iraqis because

it was seen as palpable evidence of the ancient roots of Iraqi civilization and the contributions Iraqi ancestors had made to the rise of world civilization. Because of its significance, the former regime leader Saddam Hussein placed great emphasis on using the site for propaganda purposes to promote Iraqi national identity and unity. Additionally, Babylon attracted wide global concern as a religious site. The fate of Babylon was of particular concern to the worldwide community of Christians and Jews because of the prominence it has in the accounts noted in the Judeo-Christian Bible. Thus, from both a Western and Middle Eastern historical perspective, the site was distinguished early on as among the most important and iconic locations in the world, justifying that it be singled out for special need of military protection. Consequently, early coalition war planners were prescient enough to at least send forces to this area for the specific purpose of securing the site from looting.

Unfortunately, neither force sent was prepared to occupy any form of an archaeological site, let alone a

Ruins of the Temple of Artemis 8 May 2011 in Sardis, Turkey. The temple site dates back to the sixth century BC. Every spring, thousands of Turkish families gather here for a festival. (Photo by Laurie Rush)





biblical site of global significance. By the fall of 2004, damage to the site by military personnel had become a widely disseminated adverse international news story for the coalition.<sup>3</sup> The damage done to Babylon not only cast the U.S. military in a very negative light globally with regard to apparent insensitivity to indigenous Middle Eastern cultures generally, but it also created a localized impression among the Middle Eastern coalition partners that the United States was neither respectful nor caring of Iraq's ancient Mesopotamian heritage specifically, a devastating blow to coalition prestige and internal trust.<sup>4</sup>

Learning from the damage done at Babylon, the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) environmental engineer and members of the Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff realized that USCENTCOM needed to be more proactive about recognizing and minimizing damage to other archaeological sites during its occupation of Iraq and presence elsewhere for a host of practical political and humanitarian reasons. They also realized that the United States could only regain the moral and information operations high

ground in this area of concern by demonstrating to coalition partners across the Middle East that the United States was making a commitment to take appropriate action to effectively protect Babylon as well as to preclude future problems by establishing a program for CPP to help avoid such situations at other such sites in the future.

In the United States, military protection and stewardship of archaeological sites fall under the environmental portfolio. Within the typical organization of a domestic military installation, the installation archaeologist or cultural resources manager works for the environmental program that is usually found within the Directorate of Public Works. Military environmental programs manage

A Muslim cemetery 3 June 2014 along the Eastern Wall of the Old City of Jerusalem. Many Muslims and Jews throughout the world seek to be buried near Jerusalem as a means of joining their remains to the continuity of their religious and ethnic history. (Photo by Nikodem Nijaki via Wikimedia Commons)





hazardous waste, solid waste, radioactive waste, petroleum, recycling, water quality, air quality, forests, land, and endangered species. Within the combatant commands, military engineers take responsibility for cultural property and all of the other aspects of environmental compliance. Each combatant command should have a full-time environmental engineer serving at the rank of lieutenant colonel or equivalent.

In 2006 and 2007, serious environmental issues beyond the damage at Babylon began to emerge in Iraq. Burn pits, the associated smoke, and issues surrounding waste began to creep into the press. The USCENTCOM environmental engineer, Lt. Col. Daniel Brewer, was tasked with tackling the range of problems. When the Office of the Secretary of Defense presented their list of environmental priorities to Brewer, archaeology made it into the top five. It is possible that First Lady Laura Bush's personal interest in historic preservation may have contributed to this prioritization.

In partial response to USCENTCOM's adverse experience with Babylon, Brewer and his colleagues decided to add CPP concerns as a topic in Middle Eastern exercises, including the long-standing Bright Star war games in Egypt and two sets of Eagle Resolve exercises, one in Abu Dhabi and another in Qatar. In addition, Brewer added the topic of cultural property protection to a series of environmental partnership engagements in Jordan as well as to two environmental

*shuras* (meetings between coalition leaders and prominent regional and local leaders) in Kabul.<sup>5</sup>

**Bright Star, 2007.** For 2007's Operation Bright Star in Egypt, the CPP consisted of small-scale engagement with local Egyptian archaeologists, to include an awareness briefing and field trips to cultural sites for a small group of coalition officers. During one such briefing, one of the Navy divers, in a moment of serendipity, asked about the proposed demolition operations at Abu Qir in Alexandria Harbor. Coordinated naval operations including underwater demolition had traditionally been a part of the games, and Egyptian and U.S. Navy divers planned the event together. Alexandria Harbor,



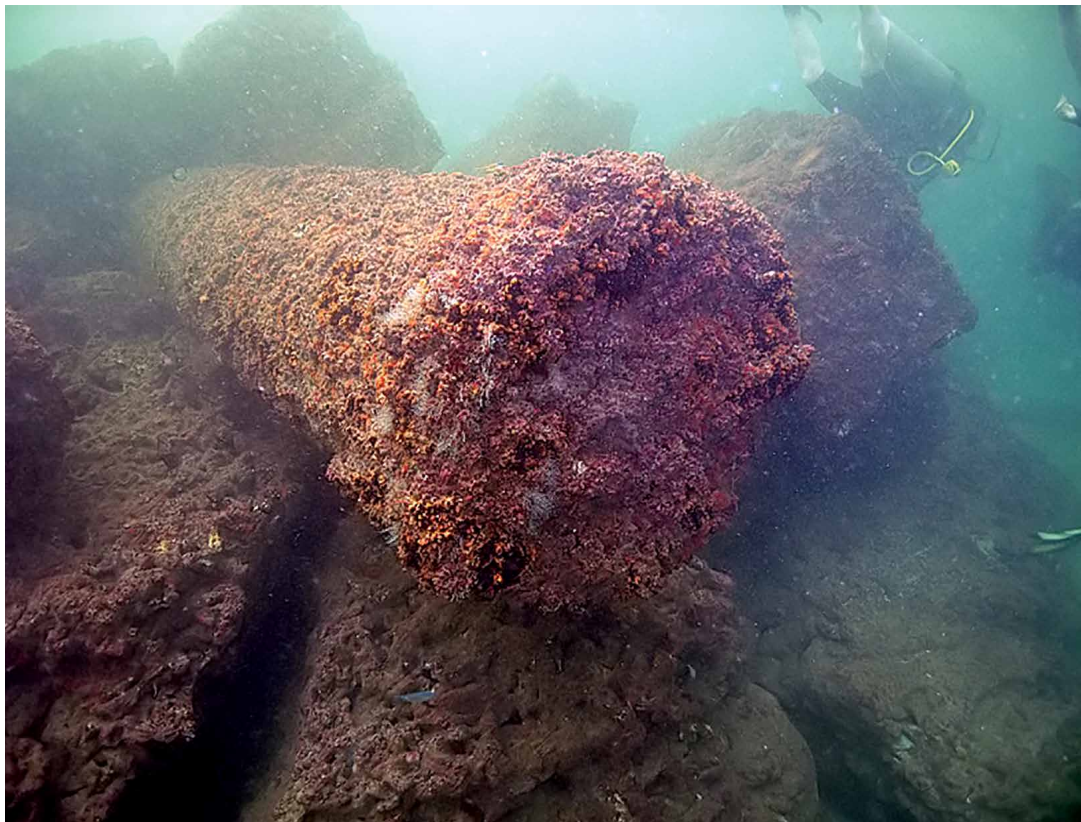
A damaged *Mušhušu* (dragon) relief image on the western wall of the lower Ishtar gate in Babylon, Iraq. Investigators concluded that much of the damage to the *mušhušu* figures was apparently caused at the same time by a person or persons trying to remove decorated bricks from the figures when the area was being used as a base for U.S. and Polish forces. Both a 2009 UNESCO report and a 2010 U.S. State Department report extensively documented damage attributed to the excavation and construction activities related to the establishment of Camp Alpha in 2003 and 2004. (Photo by Jane Sweeney, Art Directors and TRIP/Alamy Stock Photo)

A detailed research effort and report by the U.S. State Department regarding the damage caused at the Babylonian archaeological site during construction directed by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein—followed by the adverse impact of site occupation by U.S. and Polish forces commencing in

2003—may serve as a useful resource for commanders and staff planners faced with missions that involve operations on culturally sensitive terrain such as archaeological sites. The April 2010 *Report on Damage to the Site of Babylon, Iraq* may be viewed at <https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/babylondamagereport.pdf>.



**Above:** A 2013 detailed reconstruction of the Pharos of Alexandria lighthouse based on a 2006 extensive study of the building. (Image courtesy of Emad Victor Shenouda via Wikimedia Commons)



**Left:** Columns at the underwater museum 12 September 2010 near the former lighthouse in Alexandria, Egypt. (Photo courtesy of Roland Unger via Wikimedia Commons)



like many places in Egypt, is a cornucopia of as yet unexcavated archaeological sites dating back perhaps to as much as 3000 BC. Among the most prominent of known sites is the foundation of Pharos, an ancient lighthouse that once served the ancient city of Alexandria, once regarded as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Built between 280 and 247 BC, it not only served to guide ships laden with trade goods bound for the markets of Egypt but also served as an international symbol of Egypt's wealth, sophistication, and accomplishments for all those who came to Egypt, including Julius Caesar. Over time, as Egypt lost prestige and power, the tower fell into disrepair and was finally razed for rock to build other structures. However, it had stood for almost a thousand years, and as such, it had become a well-known component of popular Egyptian tradition and folklore, emblematic of Egypt's past scientific and architectural achievements. By the early twentieth century, most of what remained was presumed to be underwater in Alexandria Harbor. In 1994, French archaeologists discovered the remains of the lighthouse on the floor of the harbor, together with evidence of a much greater abundance of unexamined artifacts. As a result of the interest generated by the concern of the Navy diver, coordinates for the proposed demolition locations were shared with two eminent Egyptologists working in the region. Within twenty-four hours, all of the locations were reviewed and found to pose no risk to archaeological remains.

The involvement by distinguished archaeologists in identifying the potential loss of irreplaceable Egyptian antiquities demonstrated to the Egyptians U.S. respect and concern for protection and preservation of Egypt's cultural heritage in a very visible way. It also demonstrated the viability of the instant reach-back concept for cultural property protection to all of the exercise planners. As a result, the 2007 Bright Star exercise set a precedent and established a model for intelligence gathering and landscape analysis that can be used in a deployed setting anywhere and at any time.

Scheduling such partner awareness meetings and cultural tours is time efficient, with potentially big payoff in terms of fostering good will. For example, without the introductory briefing, the Navy diver would have had no clear channel to report on unidentified threats to key cultural property. Failure to identify these threats could have led to the catastrophic loss of irreplaceable research

and lucrative tourism opportunities for the Egyptian people, as well as to damaged relations with our Egyptian partners. Incorporating such briefings, coordination meetings, and mutual trips to high-sensitivity sites is a low-risk, low-cost method with potentially huge rewards in terms of building trust and a sense of deep partnership among allies and coalition partners.

**Bright Star, 2009.** Due in large measure to the 2007 experience with CPP, in 2009, the cultural property component of Bright Star was expanded to meetings with the secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Egyptian Antiquities and staff rides to Saqqara, El Alamein, the Citadel in Cairo, the Egyptian Museum, and the Egyptian Military Museum. Two valuable lessons emerged from the 2009 Bright Star engagement. First, the engagement revealed to U.S. planners the broader secondary psychological and public relations effects the damage done at Babylon had created among other Middle Eastern partners. When the Egyptian generals planning Bright Star were asked about U.S. plans for staff rides, in their initial response, they described U.S. forces as "The destroyers of Babylon, and the last people we want visiting our pyramids."<sup>6</sup> Loss of respect at this level, especially in the Middle East where memories are long, is detrimental to coalition building and difficult to recover.

The second lesson was much more positive. After the discouraging response from the Egyptian military, the cultural property education team approached the secretary-general, Dr. Zahi Hawass, and requested permission for access to the cultural sites. Hawass understood the goals of the U.S. request and personally approved the military visits with the soldiers as his guests. Once the staff rides to Egyptian sites were underway, the academic facilitators discovered that this method of CPP education was extremely effective. Essentially, the experience illustrated that when the teaching takes place on an archaeological site or at a museum, the sites themselves will do most of the teaching. The general reaction of the military participants on the staff ride to the Step Pyramid at Saqqara was, "Now we understand, just help us get this right. We need maps and information."

**Identification of key secondary effects.** In addition to the basic CPP lessons concerning the identification of and respect for cultural property, the staff ride to Saqqara also illustrated the key role preservation of cultural property may have with regard to building economic stability. As the group traveled from Cairo to Saqqara,



the bus drove through a series of extremely economically stressed communities. However, as the group came closer to the site, the participants began to notice that the communities began to look more prosperous. In the case of Saqqara and the surrounding villages, the tourist economy appeared to have had positive ripple effects throughout the region. The increased prosperity seemed directly related to the ability to attract tourist spending at the site itself, at its museum, and from the purchase of meals and snacks nearby. In addition, an Egyptian rug industry had emerged in the immediate vicinity that appeared to be tenable because it catered to the tourist trade. Of note, tourists purchasing rugs as souvenirs were supporting not just rug merchants near the tourist site but sheep farmers providing the fiber for the rugs.

From this experience, U.S. forces tasked with stability operations missions developed a more thorough understanding of the role that U.S. efforts to respect and protect cultural property might play in achieving desired stability-operation development outcomes. The obverse effect is also true. If cultural property is inadvertently damaged or destroyed during the course of a conflict, economic recovery can be compromised over the long term.

**Jordan, 2009 and 2010.** The bilateral experiences in Jordan were very positive as well. High-ranking Jordanian officers were very receptive to U.S. presentations on CPP and very interested in the concept of domestic cultural resources stewardship on military land. One of the eastern desert castles of Jordan is located in a military training area, and one of the officers mentioned the importance of protecting it. The Jordanians also extended the opportunity to discuss issues related to culture by mentioning the challenges of cultural awareness training for their personnel. As one Jordanian commander pointed out, just as it is beneficial for U.S. soldiers to learn about culture and customs of the Middle East, the Bedouin soldiers under his command had to learn about the culture and customs of Europe for their peacekeeping deployment to coastal communities of Croatia.

Brewer ensured that the Jordanian engagements would also include staff rides to important Jordanian archaeological sites. One of the most valuable learning experiences in this context was a visit to Umm Qais, a Greco-Roman city located on the Jordanian border with Syria. Umm Qais illustrates the concept that “a defensive position six thousand years ago is a defensive position today,” and that modern soldiers may well find

themselves in situations where they will need to occupy an ancient site of great importance. The Jordanian military, in fact, has watchtowers on the site, and its example demonstrates that it is possible to minimize the modern military footprint in such a location.

**Stewardship of Ur.** USCENTCOM’s management of the ancient city of Ur offers a contrast to the events at Babylon. During his military construction phase, Saddam Hussein had strategically placed his airbase at Talil adjacent to the famous Ziggurat of Ur and its associated city ruins. A ziggurat is a sacred Mesopotamian temple platform, and Iraqis had reconstructed the outer walls and ceremonial staircase at Ur, making the structure even more iconic. Hussein’s expectation was that coalition forces would not bomb Talil due to its close proximity to irreplaceable archaeological features that would generate worldwide condemnation, a cynical example of using cultural property as a shield for a military installation.

In 2003, with the fall of Hussein and dissolution of Iraq’s national security forces, looting was endemic across Iraq, but the global community of archaeologists were especially anxious with regard to the fate of the ancient Mesopotamian city sites of southern Iraq, including Ur.

From a force protection perspective, merely separating the ancient city from the base proper using fencing would have created an untenable situation with the potential for criminal behavior going on immediately adjacent to the secure facility. As a result, U.S. forces extended the perimeter of the airbase fence to incorporate Ur. They also began patrolling in the vicinity of the two nearby archaeological sites of Eridu and Ubad. As a result, for the duration of U.S. and coalition presence, those sites were spared most of the damage experienced by many other archaeological properties in the region.

From 2003 to 2008, most of Ur remained inside the protected perimeter. As a matter of course, installation chaplains organized tours to the ziggurat primarily for coalition military personnel and VIPs, and to the reconstructed ruins that were traditionally regarded as the birthplace of Abraham, the biblical patriarch claimed by both Arabs and Jews as the original progenitor of their faiths. However, for security concerns, Iraqi citizens were not permitted access to the city ruins and could only look through the fence as men and women wearing foreign uniforms visited their heritage, a situation that engendered regional resentment.



Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician 1st Class Mark Peters, assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 3, prepares for a dive 11 October 2009 with sailors from Egyptian frogman units during Bright Star 2009 in Alexandria, Egypt. Demolition training locations were approved by two Egyptologists to ensure no damage occurred at underwater archaeological sites. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Brandon Raile, U.S. Navy)



At one point, a young soldier manning the gate denied access to Abdul Amir al-Hamdani, the archaeological site inspector for Nasiriyah. The situation created tension and eventually came to the attention of Gen. David Petraeus, then commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq. At first, the general ended the tours, but security in the area was improving, and al-Hamdani expressed confidence that the Iraqi community was ready to reassume responsibility for the ancient city.

Returning Ur to the Iraqis required moving and reconstructing the existing installation fence and constructing a new building for handling individuals who needed to enter the base. This project was initially alarming to

archaeologists with interest in the site since any form of ground disturbance, like fence and building construction, is always a concern in the vicinity of an archaeological site, especially an ancient city like Ur.

Even though he shared the goal of reopening Ur to Iraqis, Hamdani was worried about potential damage to the site. In response, the U.S. State Department, in partnership with the 10th Mountain Division and the Archaeological Institute of America, sponsored a delegation of Americans to inspect the site and the new construction in partnership with him. The U.S. delegation included Diane Siebrandt, the U.S. State Department Iraq heritage preservation officer from Baghdad; Professor





Brian Rose, the president of the Archaeological Institute of America, one of the most respected archaeologists in the world; and myself, the U.S. Army archaeologist from the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum, New York.

The delegation arrived at Talil where it was hosted by an Italian-led provincial reconstruction team. Upon arrival, the delegation immediately went to the field with Hamdani, who expressed his concern about the ground disturbances resulting from the fence reconstruction and focused on areas where the artifacts had been exposed. The Archaeological Institute of America president was able to provide reassurance that relative to the site deposits, the observed disturbance was minor, and the entire group agreed that the goal of returning the site to Iraqi stewardship outweighed any of the observed effects.

A second goal of the delegation was to provide reassurance that the United States had taken excellent care of the site and that completing the transition to Iraqi stewardship would be a positive outcome for all involved. I, an

archaeologist on the team with experience briefing ranking Army personnel, was able to lead the meeting with members of the Talil garrison command group and the installation military engineers. My major role was to provide the positive results of the site and fence inspection. Subsequent to completion of the delegation mission in April 2009, the fence and new visitor center were completed.

In May 2009, Ur, with its iconic ziggurat, was returned to the Iraqi people. To celebrate the transfer, a rock concert was held on the steps of the ziggurat, and over 350 people attended. Unfortunately, in sharp contrast with the Babylon experience, there was virtually no global media coverage of this story; unfortunate, because it was a very good news story on many levels. A third

A Jordanian army watchtower overlooks the Umm Qais ruins 11 February 2014 on the Jordanian border with Syria. The Jordanians provide a good example of how to minimize military intrusion into a protected site. (Photo courtesy of Man77 via Wikimedia Commons)





lesson learned might be that there be greater diligence in promoting such a good news story to capitalize on efforts to foster more favorable feeling among local as well as regional and global populations.

**Afghan shuras, Kabul.** Another series of engagements that provide tremendous insight into the value of CPP as part of operational planning were environmental shuras held in Kabul in 2010 with cooperation from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Afghanistan, a number of non-governmental environmental and international organizations, and government ministry representatives from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Brewer, in his capacity as USCENTCOM environmental engineer, played a key role in organizing these meetings and ensuring that cultural property protection would be included in the agenda.

Protection of cultural resources also falls within the environmental portfolio in NATO, so with the combined efforts of ISAF and USCENTCOM, CPP emerged as a key topic in these shuras with presentations from the U.S. Army delegation; the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Abdul Wasey Feroozi, director general of the National Institute of Archaeology for Afghanistan; and His Excellency Omar Sultan, the deputy minister of culture for Afghanistan. The Afghans used the opportunity to educate the international forces concerning the wealth of Afghan heritage and its meaning for the people of Afghanistan. The Americans and NATO representatives recognized the importance of these meetings for sharing information about the environmental programs of the western forces along with a discussion of progress and efforts to minimize the environmental impacts of their presence in the host nation.

The U.S. discussion concerning heritage preservation efforts included a report on development of an inventory of significant archaeological sites throughout Afghanistan that was being used as a basis for the Defense Intelligence Agency's "no strike" list for the country. This inventory and associated images of the sites also drove the development of heritage training for 10th Mountain Division personnel preparing to deploy to Afghanistan the following autumn.

Feroozi became the personification of the Army value of "personal courage" as he described his efforts to personally confront Mullah Omar, the infamous Taliban leader, over the issue of destroying the Bamiyan Buddhas.<sup>7</sup> He also described courageous measures taken by members

of the staff of the Afghan National Museum to minimize damage to museum objects done by the Taliban.

The deputy minister addressed the shura on the second day, discussing the importance of heritage to the future stability of the country of Afghanistan. He reminded the participants that the ancient heritage of the country and its glorious legacy of the Silk Road predated the religious issues currently facing the country and thus offered a subject where all Afghan people could find common value and pride. The shura was also reminded of the courage of the *tahilwidar*, the key holders who protected the treasures of the National Museum of Afghanistan from both Russian and Taliban occupation.

These examples reminded the U.S. participants of the importance of heritage as a value for Afghans and as a subject capable of providing a building block toward a foundation for local and national unification. In the ISAF setting, demonstration of a commitment by the United States to establish a CPP program also offered common ground with NATO European partners who shared a passion for heritage preservation.

An additional direct result of Feroozi's presentation was the decision by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to support construction of an artifact storage facility at the ancient Buddhist city of Mes Aynak, where salvage archaeological operations were underway to save as many artifacts and features as possible prior to destruction of the site by a Chinese copper mine.

#### **The power of cultural property at Bala Hissar.**

Another example of the power of cultural property and strategic communication in Afghanistan is a ceremony where the 10th Mountain Division transferred the next level of advisory responsibility to Afghan National Security Forces.<sup>8</sup> News of this event was especially meaningful for me because it reflected on my efforts to bring the lessons learned from the cross-cultural engagements home to the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum. Security Force Assistance Team "Strike 1," Cross Functional Team Warrior, 10th Mountain Division, together with the 1st Battalion, 1st Mobile Strike Force Brigade, Afghan National Army, selected the Bala Hissar Fortress in Kabul as the location for the ceremony. The selection of an iconic Afghan fortification that was once occupied by Genghis Khan provided the Afghans with an opportunity to share their history from the fifth-century construction of the fortress through the nineteenth-century victories of the Afghan Army.

The willingness of 10th Mountain Division to travel to Bala Hissar with their Afghan counterparts for such an important event demonstrated their respect for centuries of Afghan military strength and their confidence in their Afghan partner's readiness to take on the mission. The U.S. soldiers who were fortunate enough to be present described the emotion at this event. They also were clear that the choice of an iconic location demonstrated their belief that the Afghan unit was ready to be independent. All involved also expressed a fundamental appreciation that they were a part of history.

In addition to the lessons learned from the individual CPP events in the Middle East, one component of culturally attuned activity that needs to be incorporated into all such future planning is an assessment of how our military's behavior and attitudes toward cultural sites and cultural relics impact the attitudes of populations and their governments. Not only must we build an institutionalized knowledge base, but we also must develop assessment methods for the impact of CPP engagements.

## U.S. Southern Command's Honduras Engagement

The value of cultural property protection as a subject for engagement is not limited to the USCENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR). Over the past few years, potential partner countries in the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) AOR have made several requests for protection of archaeological sites as a topic for training engagement. The initial response from the command was negative, perhaps because protecting archaeological sites would not immediately come to mind as a USSOUTHCOM military capability.

Soldiers from 17th Fires Brigade make their way up the Ziggurat of Ur 18 May 2010 near Contingency Operating Base Adder, Basra, Iraq. The ziggurat was constructed as a place of worship in the twenty-first century BC, and after more than four thousand years, it is one of the most well-preserved structures of the Neo-Sumerian city of Ur. U.S. protection of the site spared it from most of the damage experienced by many other archaeological properties in the region. (Photo by Spc. Samantha Ciaramitaro, U.S. Army)







It is true that the U.S. military generally does not protect archaeological sites within the United States. In fact, that sort of use of the military could be a potential violation of the Posse Comitatus Act, the law that restricts the participation of the U.S. military in domestic law enforcement activities.<sup>9</sup> However, given the fact that eligible National Register archaeological sites on military land are offered comprehensive protection and stewardship, the U.S. military actually has much more experience with archaeological site protection than many military personnel realize. In addition, effective protection of an archaeological site utilizes basic military skills for establishing secure perimeters.

Just as Brewer played a key role in establishing a CPP program within USCENTCOM, Dr. Amir Gamliel, the USSOUTHCOM environmental engineer, recognized the potential value of adding a more robust cultural property component to the USSOUTHCOM environmental portfolio. Gamliel educated the command, even bringing in the author and an academic expert, Dr. James Zeidler, to provide briefings. He continued to revisit and pursue the idea of responding positively to the requests for archaeology

Soldiers from Security Force Assistance Team (SFAT) "Strike 1," Cross Functional Team Warrior, 10th Mountain Division, overlook the city of Kabul 26 August 2013 during an Afghan staff ride where the SFAT and their Afghan National Army counterpart ventured to the Bala Hisar Fortress to officially transition to the next level of advising to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) from American Forces in Kabul, Afghanistan. This transition showed the ANSF's ability to conduct security operations on their own with limited advising and assisting. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Foss, U.S. Army)

as an engagement topic, and in the summer of 2017, USSOUTHCOM, in partnership with U.S. Army South, the 10th Mountain Division, U.S. Army Civil Affairs, the University of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Embassy in Honduras, planned and implemented the first-ever USSOUTHCOM CPP engagement exercise.

Representatives of the Honduras Ministry of Defense, including the curator of the Military Museum of Honduras; representatives of the ecclesiastical, archaeological, and museum sectors of Honduras; and representatives of Honduras police, border patrol, and customs all met for three days of presentations and field trips. The inclusion of distinguished academic

personnel enriched the experience for all involved. The combination of academic, law enforcement, ecclesiastical, and military perspectives added a tremendous amount of information to the discussion and opened the door to future interdisciplinary partnership at both the intra- and international levels.

The U.S. Armed Forces learned that of the five brigades of the Honduran military, three are assigned to the protection of archaeological sites within the nation. This fact clearly explains why countries in the USSOUTHCOM AOR request training exercises related to archaeological site protection. In addition to gaining a greater appreciation for the priorities and goals of the military mission of Honduras, the United States also had an opportunity to learn more about the use of ancient pathways for drug, weapons, and human smuggling; an improved understanding of the location of and connections between the ancient sites of Central America is of strategic value. Also, criminal smugglers often include illegally excavated antiquities in their cargo, so an appreciation for the archaeology of the region has direct applications for U.S. interdiction missions in the AOR.

From this engagement, both U.S. entities and Honduran ones developed a deeper understanding and appreciation of underlying factors affecting mission success, and all sides were better positioned to develop strategies to achieve desired outcomes in the region. From this example, it is clear that U.S. efforts in South and Central America would continue to benefit immensely from further incorporation of CPP-related exercises and dialogues. The Hondurans and their neighbors recognize the value as well. The Hondurans would like to continue the conversation on an annual basis, and military representatives from El Salvador, Belize, and Guatemala have all expressed an interest in joining the engagement. There are plans for a 2019 meeting in Honduras with the possibility of delegates from the additional countries.

Gamliel is also pursuing the idea of incorporating CPP into plans for future disaster response exercises in the SOUTHCOM AOR. After the earthquake in Haiti, the U.S. Navy played an important role in assisting the Smithsonian effort to save murals from the collapsed Holy Trinity Cathedral, nine thousand paintings from the Nader Museum, and numerous additional works of art and archival documents.<sup>10</sup>

However, the associated “good news” media coverage for the Navy and positive lesson learned has yet to be applied to ensure that the necessary training takes place for increased effectiveness in future disaster response operations, not just in USSOUTHCOM but in any AOR across the world.

## Training for Peacekeepers in Africa

An education and training event for African peacekeepers provides another example of how CPP can play a key role in promoting regional cooperation with prospective partners. In the fall of 2017, the UNESCO office in Harare, Zimbabwe, organized a CPP education and training event for African peacekeepers. Hosted by the Southern Africa Development Community Regional Peace Keeping Training Center, the course was attended by delegates from Zimbabwe, Angola, Mauritania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, and Malawi. The same principles of cross-cultural competency and the ability to “read” the cross-cultural landscape for identification of sacred and valued features apply in every AOR and deployed situation. The success of the UNESCO Harare course offers a model for future Africa Command and U.S. Army Africa consideration.

One of the key factors of this model is the relationships that were built among the U.S. military, UNESCO, African military partners, and prominent academic experts and organizations. Such relationships allow U.S. actors to gain insight into the unique needs and cultural values of any given region. In addition to international faculty, the organizer set up the course with support from the National Museum of Zimbabwe. This partnership resulted in one component of the course being a field trip to the museum where the military participants were able to learn firsthand about museum security, establishing a secure perimeter around a museum, and proper packing of museum objects for implementation of an evacuation plan.

Another key factor of this model is the tangible and immediate benefit to U.S. peacekeeping operations. The military personnel benefited from the hands-on opportunity to learn and practice CPP skills. The museum staff benefited from the military perspective on how to secure their institution and collections. Even more important, both the military and the museum professionals established an ability to work together, a critical skill in times of crisis or disaster response, especially in parts of the developing world where members of other





professions are often frightened of and apprehensive about working with the military.

Another beneficial aspect of the CPP training event was that experienced veterans of peacekeeping operations, especially those conducted in Mali, used the topic of CPP as a jumping off point to initiate discussion of other aspects of deployment with integrity. Discussion of identifying and respecting the sacred sites and property of others lends itself to further discussion of respect for host-nation populations; their women, children, and natural resources; and their valuables. Such discussions need to become incorporated into U.S. military literature and understanding of the region that is available to personnel as they prepare to operate and achieve national security objectives.

## Summary

Using CPP as a subject for international military engagement has turned out to be possibly of even greater value to the United States than to its partners.

Engagement in the Middle East offered U.S. representatives a far more nuanced view of the secondary and potentially tertiary effects of the damage at Babylon and the associated negative media coverage.

Honduran troops guard an expedition team looking for the ruins of a lost pre-Columbian city 22 February 2015 in the Mosquitia jungle, Honduras. Three of the five Honduran brigades are assigned to the protection of archaeological sites within the nation. (Photo by Dave Yoder via Alamy photo)

The diverse U.S. participants gained an appreciation for Middle Eastern pride in the glory of their ancient past and the expectations of respect for that heritage. The Afghans reinforced those lessons with their first-hand accounts of putting their lives on the line to save Afghan cultural property. The opportunity to complete staff rides to ancient sites assisted U.S. Army advisors in the development of CPP curricula and the planning of more effective forms of future CPP training.

These experiences also demonstrate that conversations about CPP, as valuable as they are, can also lead to discussion and education focused on other important issues. The Jordanian perspective on cultural awareness, for example, offered the U.S. delegates a completely new point of view concerning the challenges of leading military personnel with no previous international experience into foreign and challenging

situations. In the UNESCO peacekeeping course, the faculty demonstrated how CPP could open the door to critical discussion of all aspects of ethical behavior for a deploying military force.

All of the CPP exercises demonstrated the value of interdisciplinary participation, not just with customs and law enforcement, but with academics and other cultural property professionals like archaeologists and museum curatorial staff. The subject-matter experts provided valuable cultural information ranging from how to track smuggling routes in Central America using the ancient pathways to how to handle and package a valuable object seized during a customs operation. The academic representative was also able to explain to the U.S. military delegates the current organization of the Honduran cultural sector and some of the political dynamics at play that would not have been obvious otherwise. The museum professionals and archaeologists gained from direct exposure to military personnel, learning about their capabilities and their potential to provide assistance during challenging situations.

In the USSOUTHCOM AOR, when the United States learned via the successful engagement that three of the five brigades of the Honduran army were devoted

to archaeological site protection, the U.S. delegates began to appreciate the importance of CPP for the Honduran military. The U.S. actors gained an increased awareness of the importance of antiquities and archaeological sites for interdiction missions in the region. Even more important was the positive response of the Central American partners leading to requests for expanded engagements at the regional level in both Central and South America. As a result, the United States is gaining an opportunity to be considered a “partner of choice” for additional nations in the AOR.

The experience in Honduras is a reminder that the United States needs to take requests for engagement topics offered by partner countries seriously and be willing to think a bit further outside of the proverbial box when an unexpected suggestion for an engagement focus arises. Recent CPP efforts demonstrate an important beginning to developing our ability to partner effectively across the globe. ■

*The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and may not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. government, the U.S. Department of Defense, or the U.S. Army.*

## Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 66–69.

2. Comment made to Laurie Rush and Christina Luke during the celebration at Sardis, Turkey, 6 May 2011.

3. Rory McCarthy and Maev Kennedy, “US-led Forces Leave a Trail of Destruction and Contamination in Architectural Site of World Importance,” *The Guardian* (website), 15 January 2005, accessed 3 May 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jan/15/iraq.arts1>; “US Reportedly Damaged Ancient Babylon; Museum Claims Military Caused Substantial Damage,” MSNBC News, accessed 3 May 2018, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6829036/> (site unavailable).

4. Lt. Col. Joris Kila (Royal Netherlands Army), personal communication with Laurie Rush, Bright Star cultural property planning meeting, 2009. This sentiment was expressed by ranking Egyptian military personnel in their response to international personnel who requested access to Egyptian pyramids for a U.S. staff ride during Exercise Bright Star 2009.

5. The observations come from Laurie Rush's personal experience and dialogue with Lt. Col. Daniel Brewer.

6. Lt. Col. Joris Kila, a 2009 report back to the Combatant Command Cultural Heritage Action Group after requesting permission for a staff ride to Saqqara be included as part of the war games. When faced with opposition from the Egyptian generals, Kila organized an approach to Dr. Zahi Hawass who understood the goal of

the staff ride and welcomed the U.S. personnel to Saqqara and the other sites in and around Cairo as his personal guests.

7. The Bamiyan Buddhas were monumental and iconic ancient statues carved into niches looking out over the Bamiyan Valley of Afghanistan. Carved in the sixth or seventh century, at 150 feet tall, they were the largest standing Buddhas in the world and considered a treasure for all humanity. As one of the many atrocities Taliban leader Mullah Omar committed, he commanded them to be destroyed in March 2001, with the empty niches left behind.

8. Kenneth Foss, “Ancient Fortress Marks Site for Advisory Transition in Afghanistan,” *The Mountaineer Online*, 12 September 2013, accessed 3 May 2018, <http://www.drum.army.mil/mountaineer/Article.aspx?ID=7804>.

9. Eric V. Larsen and John E. Peters, “Overview of the Posse Comitatus Act,” appendix D in “Preparing the U.S. Army for Homeland Security” (monograph, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), accessed 3 May 2018, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1251/MR1251.AppD.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1251/MR1251.AppD.pdf).

10. Smithsonian Magazine, “About the Smithsonian Institution–Haiti Cultural Recovery Project,” Smithsonian.com, 31 August 2010, accessed 3 May 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/about-the-smithsonian-institution-haiti-cultural-recovery-project-56233582/>.