



INTERPOL

# CREATING A NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE UNIT

THE VALUE OF A NATIONAL UNIT DEDICATED TO FIGHTING  
CRIMES AGAINST CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE ILLICIT  
TRAFFIC OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

JANUARY 2019



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## INTRODUCTION

The removal of cultural and archaeological items from their place or country of origin is an act against both national identity and collective memory, and the destruction of historical knowledge for all of mankind.

Almost 50 years after the first major step at the international level to protect cultural property marked by a 1970 UNESCO convention, the illicit international traffic of cultural items and related offences is sadly increasingly prolific.

This trade is fueled by numerous factors linked to factors specific to the subject, such as a developing art market and increased access to archaeological sites, and general crime-related factors such as organized crime and globalization.

In addition, the violent destruction of cultural property during armed conflicts has been alarmingly common in recent years, with repeated violations of cultural sites. Conflicts for instance in Afghanistan, Libya, Mali, Syria and Iraq have demonstrated that the protection of heritage is inseparable from the protection of human lives.

The destruction of cultural items has been recognized as a war crime under the provisions of the 1998 Rome Statute by the International Criminal Court on the grounds that it weakens the foundations for peace and hinders reconciliation when hostilities end.

The illicit traffic in cultural heritage is a serious and transnational crime that affects countries of origin, transit and final destination. The traffic of items in conflict areas may also be an important source of financing for terrorist groups.

As a result, several countries and international organizations are investing in raising awareness of the importance of protecting cultural heritage. INTERPOL has been fighting crimes against cultural property since 1946, when the first international notice for stolen art objects was issued.

However, INTERPOL's effectiveness is only as strong as its network, and international cooperation on this crime is hampered by the fact that many countries do not have a specialized unit dedicated to cultural property crimes. This hinders a deeper understanding of the issue and ability to fight the crimes effectively.

This brochure outlines the role that a specialized unit can play, provides advice on how this can fit into national structures, and illustrates the successful results that a dedicated unit can achieve.

**PROPERTY STOLEN**

Date of theft: January 12, 1946.  
Country: Germany.

On 15th June 1946, in the Venusberg forest, at Bonn (Germany), was discovered the body of SCHEMITE John, born at Bonn on 14th May 1881, dealer in postage-stamps, residing at 5, Bonnerstrasse, Bessel (Germany), missing from his horse since January 12, 1946.

It resulted from the official investigation that Schmitz has been robbed and murdered. A Belgian soldier, who was suspected of the murder, was identified and arrested, but released for lack of proof.

When he disappeared, Schmitz was in possession of valuable jewelry and collection postage-stamps. Amongst these stamps, there were more particularly some very rare specimens, the list and description of which are given as stated below:

1\*) Postage-stamp no. 1 from Lussenburg, 1852 issue, bearing the effigy of William III, facial value: ten centimes, "W" watermark, cancelled, black-grey variety, silk thread on back, present value estimated at 70,000 RMK. *There would be only one specimen of this stamp.* (The ordinary stamp is mentioned in the Yvert and Teller-Champion catalogue, under the heading "Lussenburg no. 1").  
See the reproduction of this stamp on the same page.

2\*) A series of three German stamps, 1933 issue, in commemoration of the cruise made from Germany to Chicago by the "Graf-Zeppelin" airship, with the words "Chicago-Graf-Zeppelin-Veranstaltung 1933" superimposed, namely:  
1 stamp, facial value 1 mark, red,  
1 stamp, facial value 2 marks, ultramarine blue,  
1 stamp, facial value 4 marks, sepia.  
These stamps have been cancelled again. They bear, on their back, a seal: "Schmitz and Co-BONN", in printed capital letters, about 1 millimetre high. Size of stamp: 13 1/2 millimetres, (Yvert and Teller-Champion catalogue—1942—Germany, memorial stamps n° 1).

3\*) One Czechoslovak stamp, 1938-1939 issue, facial value: 50 heller, green, representing the Skoda works at Pilsen, with the words "Slovenska Slana" superimposed. A very rare stamp, of which only one sheet of 100 copies would have been issued. To the stamp was annexed a cutting from a Czechoslovak newspaper, authenticating the existence of this special issue. The same stamp, but without the superimposed words, is mentioned in the Yvert and Teller-Champion catalogue 1942, Czechoslovakia, no. 343).

The various Central National Offices are requested to take all the necessary steps for the said stamps to be pointed out to the attention of all dealers in postage-stamps, public sales, exhibitions, clubs and publications.

In the event of discovery, or should information be obtained, please notify the Chief of the Belgian Central National Office, (telegraphic address: POLIJUDIG-BRUN-SPLN), and the International Criminal Police Commission, General Secretariat, 11 rue des Saussaies, Paris (INTERPOL, PARIS).

N° 5/01

(First notice – January 23, 1946)

## THE PHENOMENON

Every day, INTERPOL receives information from different sources about intentional attacks against cultural heritage such as thefts, robberies, illicit excavations and fraud. The true extent of the problem can only be estimated; but it is clear to INTERPOL that the rate of this lucrative crime is increasing worldwide and that it affects every region of the world.

The complexity is compounded by the fact that the illicit trade in cultural property involves countless different types of item: different cultures, periods, materials, regions, sizes, meanings, and the different incentives of those behind the trade.

From works of art to cultural monuments, the illicit traffic in cultural items is fueled by numerous factors. Those associated specifically with the subject are the development of the international art market, a trend of using the antiquities market to launder money, and the increasing ease of access to monuments and archaeological sites. General contributing factors are the low-risk high-profit opportunities for organized crime groups, open borders, political instability and corruption in certain countries.

The forgery of art and even archaeological artefacts is also a complex crime with artistic, cultural and economic impact. While auction houses increasingly seek to establish the origin of items for sale, this crime remains generally underestimated by law enforcement.

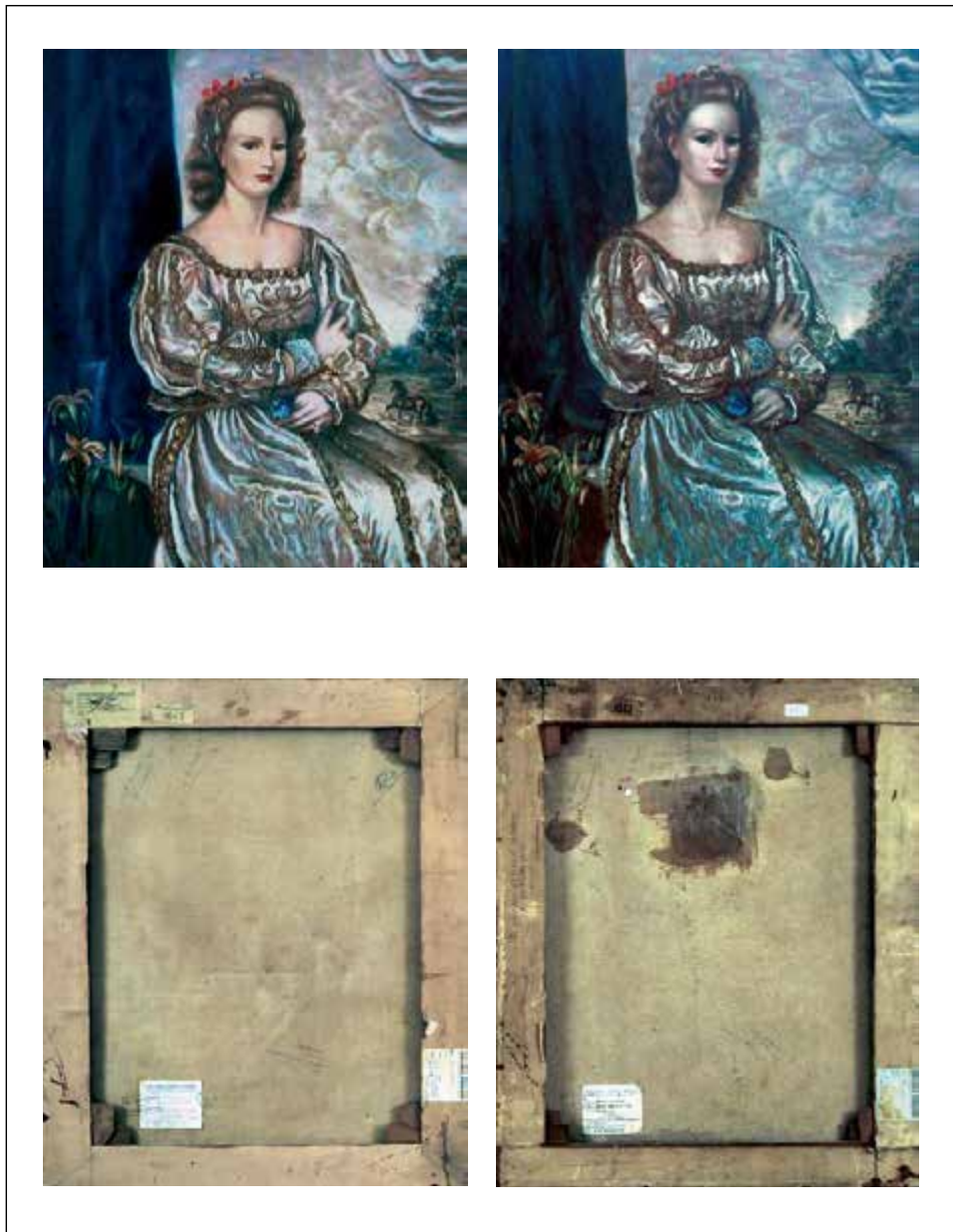
This illicit trade of cultural goods is a well-oiled machine composed of different cogs, and as such, this mechanism should be opposed by national authorities supported by special laws that are rooted in international legislation.

Because of their transnational nature, these crimes often involve several national jurisdictions, and consequently, gaps and loopholes at national level are being exploited by individuals and organized groups.

One of the main challenges facing law enforcement is the lack of public visibility/priority for this type of crime, compared to crimes such as drugs or human trafficking.

Some countries and organizations have taken steps to fight the increasing number of thefts in museums, churches, private collections and archaeological sites. However, despite these efforts, the international community and national governments must keep strengthening their various tools to tackle these issues.





Example of a forged painting (left) and original (right), the Ritratto Femminile by Giorgio de Chirico.  
**Copyright:** Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico

## THE HISTORY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE CRIME

In 1946, INTERPOL began assisting law enforcement agencies worldwide in fighting the theft and trafficking of cultural property, and published the first international notice regarding the most wanted stolen objects of art.

At the national level, Italy was the first country to organize and establish a specialized Unit within the military police "Carabinieri" for the protection of cultural heritage in 1969.

The following year, in 1970, UNESCO adopted the "Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and preventing the illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property": which requires its States Parties to take action in three main areas: preventive measures, return and restitution, and international cooperation.

Furthermore, the Convention binds States "to set up within their territories one or more national services, where such services do not already exist, for the protection of the cultural heritage, with a qualified staff sufficient in number for the effective carrying out of the following functions".

Another important step at the International level was taken in 1995 with the elaboration of the UNIDROIT "Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects". It recognized the importance of private commerce in the trafficking of cultural property and introduced for the buyers the fundamental obligation of "due diligence" in making reasonable efforts to check any accessible means of identifying whether an object was licit.

The same result was achieved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2000, which recognized the importance of extensive international cooperation in fighting trafficking in cultural property and related offences in the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000). This Convention is of great significance in the prevention, investigation and prosecution of trafficking in cultural property as well as the return and restitution of stolen/trafficked cultural objects.

In the same context, the United Nations and its Security Council issued some resolutions to tackle this transnational crime in 2015, of which three are especially significant:

UN Security Council resolutions 2199/2015 and 2253/2015 – these marked an important step in the history of the protection of cultural heritage, since they acknowledged that the illicit trafficking of cultural object is a source of financing for terrorist groups. In turn, the Resolutions required the States Parties to undertake legally-binding measures to prevent "trade in illegally exported Iraqi and Syrian cultural property with the assistance of UNESCO, Interpol and their main partners".

UNSC Resolution 2322/2016, among other things, urges States to develop broad law enforcement and judicial cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking in cultural property that might benefit terrorist groups.

## WHY A SPECIALIZED UNIT AT NATIONAL LEVEL?

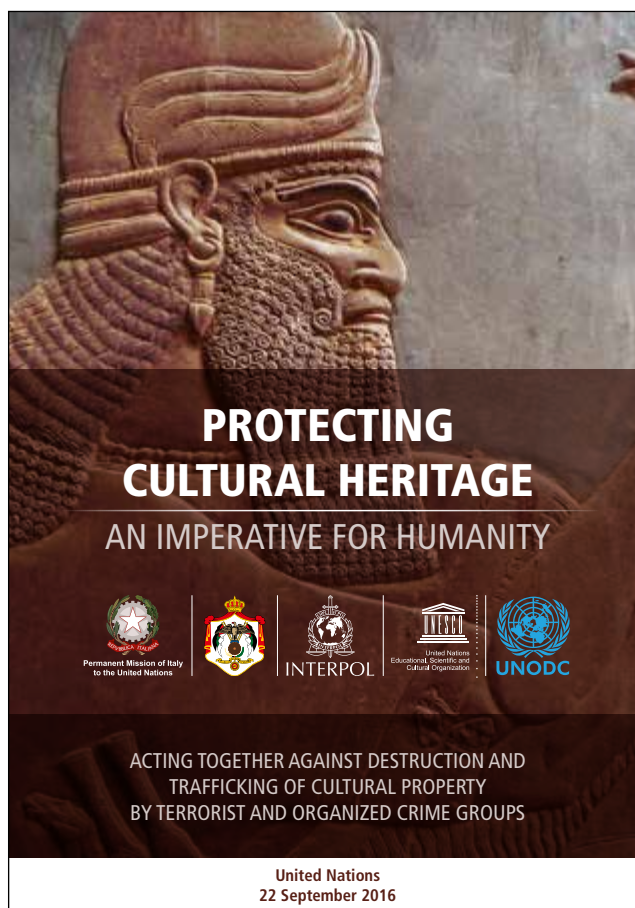
In response to the increasing number of the attacks carried out by ISIS against the cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq, the Permanent missions of Italy and Jordan, together with INTERPOL, UNESCO and UNODC, launched an initiative called “Protecting Cultural Heritage – An Imperative for Humanity: Acting Together Against the Destruction and Trafficking of Cultural Property by Terrorist Groups and Organized Crime”.

The project aimed at developing practical tools and effective solutions in the fight against illicit trafficking and at identifying gaps in national and international legislations in order to protect cultural heritage worldwide.

Four meetings were held from September 2015 to September 2016, at the end of which, they drew up a list of suggested key actions.

One of these was to create, where they do not exist yet, specialized police units at national level exclusively dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage to investigate cases of trafficking of cultural property, with a national database connected with INTERPOL’s “Stolen Works of Art Database”. National governments should also strengthen staff training as well as training new customs officers solely dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage at the borders.

The international experts involved agreed unanimously that the lack of a specialized national unit prevents a deep understanding of this complex issue and hinders the ability to fight the illicit trafficking in cultural property effectively. The network cannot be built without dedicated national points of contacts.



**ADVANTAGES OF A SPECIALIZED UNIT WOULD INCLUDE:**

- Better coordination at both the national and international level between law enforcement agencies by identifying and sharing information on criminal networks suspected of being involved in illicit trafficking of stolen cultural items.
- Increased ability to determine links between such criminal networks and identify the movements of the items tracing their routes and destinations, modus operandi and other related criminal activities.
- Stronger networking and partnership opportunities between policing and government officials for coordinating policies, practices and combined operations. Increased informal conversations and communications at international and interdepartmental levels and more valuable relationships between officers working in the Specialized Units.
- Greater ability to tackle the forgery of art; a complex crime with not only artistic and cultural impact, but also the potential to generate huge profits for criminals for little outlay.
- Increased cooperation regarding the falsification of documents regarding import, export, provenance and acquisition of cultural objects, which is a challenge faced by customs and buyers all over the world.
- Increased ability to prevent and investigate fraud both in the field and on the internet.
- Better analysis of modus operandi of criminal groups involved in art crimes to better understand their procedures and techniques.
- Support in creating public policies to raise awareness in the private sector and among the general public: for example, units could guide prosecutors in punishing this special crime.

The complexity of this crime is extreme and properly tackling the issue requires competency that only a specialized unit with highly-trained personnel could achieve.

Founding a “Works of Art” Specialized Unit should not only be considered as an application and compliance with international treaties or bilateral agreements: it should be a project undertaken by countries all over the world in order to defend and safeguard a nation’s history and cultural heritage, its cultural identity and to conserve and preserve them for future generations to admire and be inspired by it.

The history of mankind is at stake in this fight against the illicit traffic and forgery of works of art worldwide. Every country can and should contribute.

Forgery of art is on the increase and must not be underestimated. This can include simple replication of a piece of art which can sell at high value for little input, and also “touching up” a piece to falsely attribute it to a well-known artist. Both types can leave auction houses with huge compensation payouts if they are discovered after sale to be fake.

Archaeological artifacts are also subject to counterfeiting. One-third of the 16,000 archaeological objects seized on the Turkish/Lebanese borders in 2015-2016 were found to be fake.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF A NATIONAL DATABASE

There are many reasons why a national database is essential in tracking and identifying stolen works of art.

- Stolen or missed objects can be out of the market for an unpredictable amount of time, often years, before reappearing for sale on either the licit or black market. Professional criminals often let stolen works “sleep” in the hope that authorities will forget them, or seek them less actively than immediately after the disappearance - unless it is very well known.
- A missing work of art may also be acquired immediately by a collector after its theft, but can reappear on the market after a long time for a wide range of reasons (death, problems with the justice, attempted sale).
- Criminals may also cut and divide one single painting into several smaller works of art to avoid investigation and the identification of the stolen item.
- One major challenge when working and operating in an international setting is the numerous and different methods of recording thefts and crimes against art implemented by each country involved.

Most law enforcement organizations around the world include art crimes and stolen artworks as a component of a larger and more generic stolen property database system, rather than one specifically designing for categorizing works of art. This makes it harder to apply the notion of due diligence from potential buyers.

For these reason, INTERPOL encourages countries to establish a dedicated national database managed by a specialized law enforcement unit supported by well-trained officers, and to connect this database to INTERPOL's Stolen Works of Art database.

This way, a stronger global network can be established and countries are better placed to implement the international conventions against the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage.

## NATIONAL EXPERIENCES: SPECIALIZED UNITS WITH DIFFERENT STRUCTURES

A specialized unit needs to fit into national structures according to its own jurisdiction to allow it to be as effective as possible and this will vary from country to country. Here, we highlight the experience of three countries who have specialized units implemented in different ways.

In Italy, the Specialized Unit is part of the military police “Carabinieri”, and it shares information and intelligence with the NCB Rome, while in Argentina, the unit is integrated directly within the NCB Buenos Aires and in the US, the FBI’s Art Crime unit operates at the federal level.

### NATIONAL CASE STUDY – ITALY

#### ITALIAN SPECIALIZED UNIT: CARABINIERI



#### HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

The Carabinieri Headquarters for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (TPC) was created in 1969, and its role was formally established in 1992 by a ministerial decree and improved by presidential decree in 2001. As with all Carabinieri Corps’ branches, it has a dual role as both a police and military agency. Because of its specific competences, it is also an advisory council of the Culture Ministry.

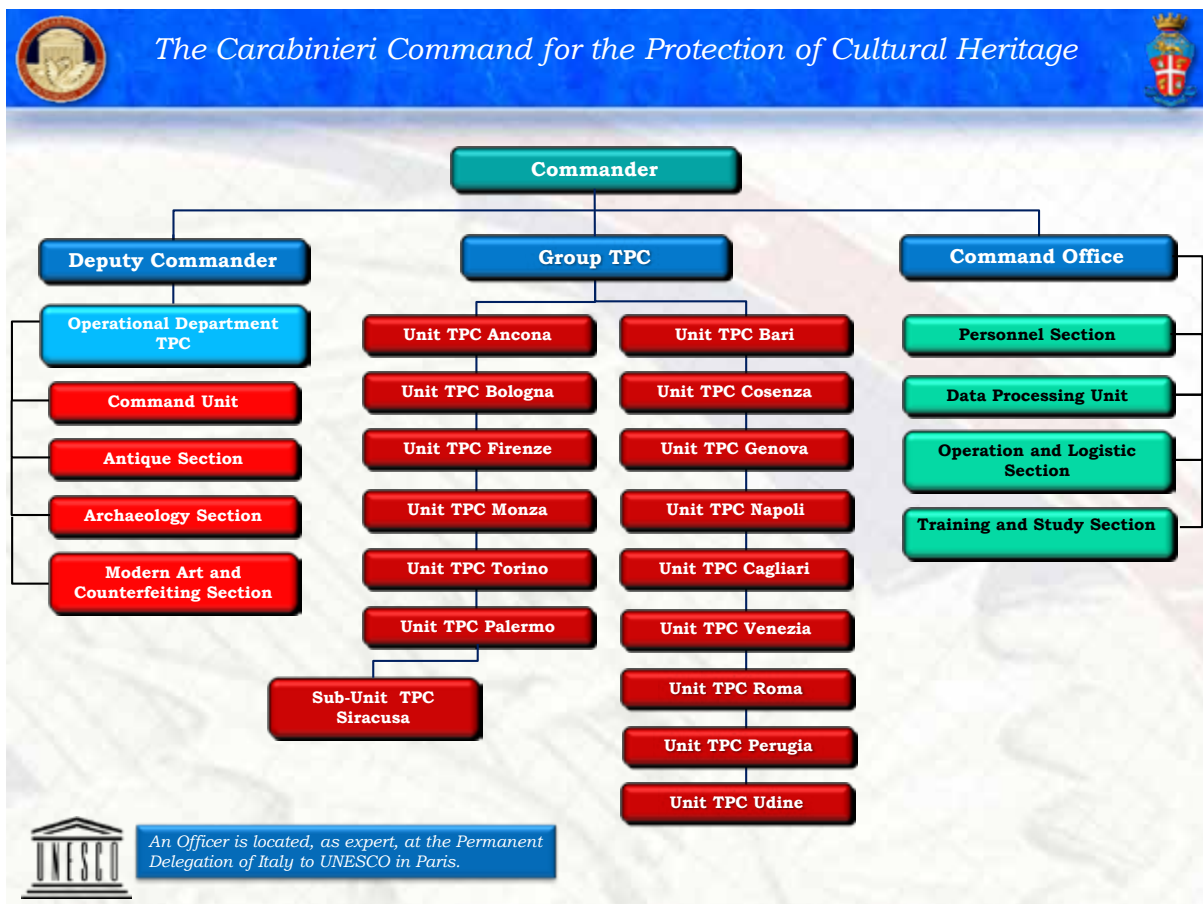
Specific national legislation identifies the TPC as the focal points for both Italian and foreign law enforcement agencies, and international institutions. It operates nationwide in coordination with all other territorial and special branches of the Carabinieri Corps, other police forces, and the territorial offices of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage activities and Tourism (MiBACT).

The TPC comprises a central office with three operational sections (Archaeology, Antique, Modern Art and Counterfeiting) and 15 territorial units called Nuclei, which have regional or interregional jurisdiction, plus a sub-unit in Sicily.

At the international level, the TPC is a liaison point for both INTERPOL and EUROPOL, and provides specialized support to peace-keeping operations, such as in Iraq from 2003 to 2006. It also offers training for police and customs officers in other countries upon request regarding the retrieval of national archaeological relics held in museums and private collections abroad.

**ACTIVITIES**

- Special investigations aimed at identifying perpetrators of crimes against cultural heritage – theft, receiving stolen property, unauthorized archaeological research, counterfeiting and forging – and at recovering unlawfully removed goods;
- Monitoring land and marine archaeological sites, as well as areas of scenic interest and UNESCO World Heritage sites, using aircraft, horse-mounted units, patrol boats and scuba divers;
- Monitoring commercial activities and fairs/markets where the sale and purchase of cultural property occur;
- Checks on security measures in museums, libraries and archives;
- Checks on the catalogues of auction houses and e-commerce sites;
- Management of the database of unlawfully removed cultural assets;
- Providing expert advice to MiBACT and, consequently, to the central and peripheral offices of the Ministry;
- Participating in national and international crisis and coordination units for the safety and recovery of artworks and cultural property in areas affected by natural disasters.





## THE DATABASE

Since the 1980s, a key tool for the Carabinieri TPC’s investigations has been the “Database of illegally removed cultural artefacts”, which contains information on the artefacts to recover, of Italian or foreign provenance, and on related criminal events.

The database includes a record of 176,976 events, some 6.2 million objects and more than 615,220 images.

## THE TASK FORCE UNITE4HERITAGE

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage in collaboration with the Carabinieri TPC recently set up a specialized task force ready to deploy at short notice and with the capacity to operate in hostile environments. It includes 30 Carabinieri and 30 ministry officials, comprising a team leader, a database team, an intervention team and a support and training team.

There are three basic scenarios in which the task force could be deployed: natural disasters, peace-keeping missions and pre/post conflict situations. Deployment abroad is subject to a technical agreement with UNESCO.

The task force was deployed for the first time in central Italy following earthquakes in 2016 to recover all the movable cultural items, catalogue them and store them safely to prevent their damage or disappearance. The team recovered more than 9,000 artifacts.

## SUCCESSFUL CASE - OPERATION GEMINI

In May 2016, Ukrainian police in Odessa found 17 masterpieces that had been stolen from the Castelvecchio Museum in Verona (Italy) in November 2015. Further investigations led to the arrest of the gang members who committed the robbery. This was the result of six months of investigations between police forces in Italy, Ukraine and Moldova and support from INTERPOL, which had recorded the paintings in its stolen works of art database, and published six of them in a special poster.

**19 November 2015**  
**Castelvecchio Civic Museum in Verona, Italy**

**17 MASTERPIECES WORTH EUR 20 MILLION WERE STOLEN**

Italy's Carabinieri for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and the Questura of Verona are leading the investigation.

If you have any information about the theft or the location of these paintings, please contact :

Carabinieri T.P.C. tel: +39 06 69 20 30 1 email: tpc@carabinieri.it  
 INTERPOL General Secretariat tel: +33 (0) 4 72 44 76 76 email: edps-sc-woa@interpol.int

www.interpol.int

Details and photos of other stolen masterpieces can be found at <http://www.interpol.int/News-and-media/News/2015/N2015-205>

Italy’s Carabinieri rescue works of art from a church hit by an earthquake.







## CASE STUDY – ARGENTINA NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE



### HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

In 1994, the national constitution was amended to include laws to protect cultural heritage in Argentina, but it was only in 2002 that the Argentine Federal Police created a National Centre for the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

The Section successfully solved several complex investigations with arrests, seizures of stolen items, and return of items to their legitimate owners. Officers also raised awareness of the subject through organizing and participating in training events, working group meetings and symposiums.

In view of this, the section was upgraded in 2015 to become the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, with two subordinate units: the Division for the Protection of Cultural Property, and the Section for the Investigation of Cultural Crimes.

### OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE





## NATIONAL DATABASE OF STOLEN CULTURAL PROPERTY



Together with the National Ministry of Culture and the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the Argentine Federal Police developed a national database of stolen cultural property items. There are currently more than 4,500 objects in the database.

The database has one special feature in that is an interactive and publicly available source; anyone may consult the database through the website [www.interpol.gov.ar](http://www.interpol.gov.ar), by selecting the option «Protección del Patrimonio Cultural» (Protection of Cultural Heritage).

## ACTIVITIES

To date, the Argentine specialized police have been able to restore more than 10,800 cultural objects, of which some 4,288 are works of art, 4,865 archaeological items and 1,271 are paleontological items, which have been returned to their legitimate owners. In addition, four tons of paleontology fossils have been repatriated, becoming the largest repatriation of fossils around the globe.

## SUCCESSFUL CASE

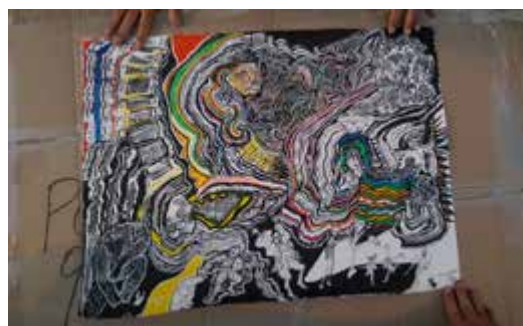
### RESTITUTION OF 5 PAINTINGS STOLEN FROM AN ART GALLERY

In November 2015, court authorities contacted the department to investigate a violent robbery in an art gallery called Rubbers, in the Recoleta neighbourhood of Buenos Aires.

The perpetrator, a young male, held a member of the gallery staff at gunpoint before stealing five paintings by well-known Argentine artist Luis Felipe Noe, which were being exhibited for sale.

Police from the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage asked judicial authorities to immediately issue a document requesting the national and international seizure of the works of art, in order to prevent their sale or illegal exportation, and then asked the INTERPOL General Secretariat to publish and request the seizure of the said works of art, as well as including them in the national database.

Investigators were able to identify a suspect by looking at video footage from the gallery and analyzing telephone call numbers. The five paintings were found in the truck of an accomplice, wrapped in nylon. After verification to comply with legal requirements, they were returned to their rightful owner.









**CASE STUDY: USA****FBI ART CRIME TEAM AND NATIONAL STOLEN ART FILE****HISTORY AND STRUCTURE**

The FBI established a rapid deployment Art Crime Team in 2004 in the aftermath of the looting of the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad. Originally eight members, the team has grown to 22 special agents, each responsible for addressing art and cultural property crime cases in an assigned geographic region.

Several agents on the team investigate art crime matters full-time, the majority of the team participates as a collateral duty; working art crime investigations in addition to their regularly assigned cases.

The programme is managed by the Criminal Investigative Division at FBI Headquarters in Washington, DC. A full-time supervisory special agent manages the programme and a subject matter expert supports the team through analysis and training, and manages the National Stolen Art File. The Department of Justice provides prosecutorial support through the Office of Human Rights and Special Prosecutions. The Department of Justice also provides online training in prosecuting cultural property cases.



## ACTIVITIES

Responsibilities of the team include:

- conducting cultural property crime investigations in their field office area of responsibility;
- providing guidance to investigators in other field offices;
- engaging with local institutions, collectors, and academics;
- providing liaison with other government and local law enforcement agencies;
- participating in training at the national and international level.

Since its creation, the Art Crime Team has recovered more than 14,850 items valued at over 165 million dollars.

The FBI Art Crime Team facilitates communication and coordination in cultural property investigations nationally and internationally. The team has trained undercover agents, a forensic anthropologist and investigators with many years of cultural property investigations to their credit.

## DATABASE

The FBI is responsible for the National Stolen Art File (NSAF), a database of information related to thefts of cultural property in the US and overseas. Begun in 1979, the database was upgraded and expanded in 1998 to incorporate investigative information, including modus operandi, prosecution information, and suspect descriptions with images.

The NSAF is used by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to report stolen cultural property and to identify recovered art and artifacts. Over 600 stolen objects have been recovered since the inception of the NSAF, and over 8,000 remain in the file. The NSAF has been available for public access online at FBI.gov since 2011, and public access has significantly increased the rate of recovery.

**SUCCESSFUL CASE:**

The Art Crime Team assisted in the recovery of the "Odalisque in Red Pants" by Henri Matisse, stolen from the Caracas Museum of Contemporary Art in Venezuela in 2002.

Between December 2011 and July 2012, undercover Art Crime Team agents posing as buyers met with Pedro Marcuello, who agreed to sell them the stolen painting for 740,000 dollars, and to transport it to the US from Mexico, where it was being stored.

Marcuello and his courier, co-conspirator Maria Ornelas, were arrested when the painting was handed over in July 2012, and jailed after pleading guilty the same year.



Image of Paracas textile stolen from the National Museum of Archaeology, Anthropology and History of Peru, Lima. Recovered by the Art Crime Team and returned to Peru in 2013





## INTERPOL'S CAPABILITIES TO SUPPORT SPECIALIZED UNITS ON WORKS OF ART

### GLOBAL TOOLS AND SERVICES

INTERPOL provides a number of tools that facilitate the global exchange of information on criminal activities involving works of art, the details of the artworks and the criminals involved.

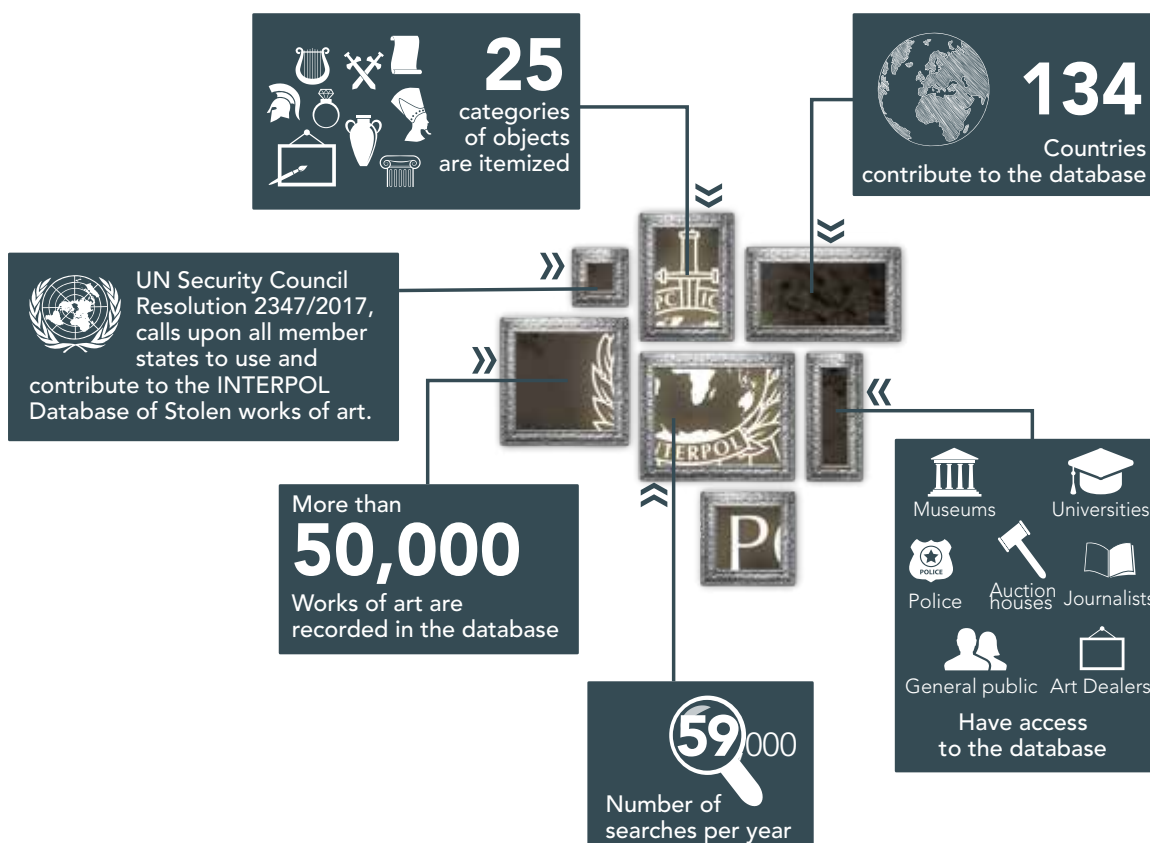
We serve as a central repository for this data, providing analysis to identify emerging trends in art thefts such as the proliferation of counterfeit, faked or forged works, or the use of the Internet for selling works of dubious background.

### INTERPOL STOLEN WORKS OF ART DATABASE

The Stolen Works of Art database, created in 1995, is the most important tool available at the international level to combat the illicit trade in cultural property. It centralizes information gathered by national law enforcement agencies and circulates this information globally.

The database contains more than 50,000 items submitted by 134 countries, with some 60,000 searches being made every year. The Object ID feature uses an international standard for describing cultural objects in simple, non-technical vocabulary which can be understood by specialists and non-specialists alike.

However, one of the most important aspects of fighting the illicit traffic in cultural heritage is the commitment of countries to use the database regularly to enter and delete data, and search for cultural items, and there is scope for improvement here. Since 2018, specialized officers have been able to directly enter, modify and delete data relating to cases in their respective countries – greatly simplifying the process of disseminating information worldwide. The system would also be more efficient if national governments created databases linked to INTERPOL's.



## **PSYCHE (PROTECTION SYSTEM FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE)**

Project Psyche, completed in 2018, was aimed at modernizing INTERPOL's Stolen Works of Art database to make it more useful to member countries and, at the same time, increase the volume of information available about stolen items.

Previously, the database was updated manually by the General Secretariat with the information sent by member countries; a data compiler entered the item(s) in the database after checking that the photo and the description complied with the minimum requirements.

By radically transforming the process of recording information, the new version of the database allows for faster dissemination of information on stolen works of art worldwide. Project Psyche upgraded the database to allow member countries to independently enter, modify and delete information on works of art stolen in their respective countries, and to perform searches more efficiently by means of image search technology.

By increasing the exchange of information on stolen works of art between member countries, the upgraded version of the database makes it easier to search for stolen cultural property and increases the opportunity to recover stolen items.

Psyche was supported by 15 European countries and led by the Italian Carabinieri for the Protection of Cultural Heritage through the Italian NCB in Rome.



## **PUBLIC ALERTS**

The INTERPOL website can be used to highlight a public appeal to help locate or gather information about certain stolen works of art.

## **UNCLAIMED ITEMS**

Unknown items seized by police are listed on our website to help identify their legitimate owners.



## CONFERENCES

International and regional conferences can be organized to bring together experts in the field. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity to share knowledge and best practice and to combine strengths against the illicit traffic in cultural objects.



## POSTERS

Every June and December, INTERPOL publishes a poster highlighting the six most wanted works of art, highlighting a range of type, age or country of original, to raise public awareness of the dimension of crimes related to cultural property.

Special posters can be made to highlight a specific theft, such as significant looting from the Mosul Museum in Iraq and the Artaban tomb in Syria, where cultural items of invaluable cultural heritage were stolen between 2014 and 2015.

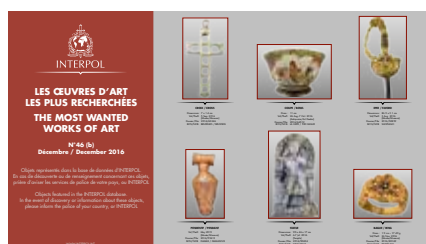
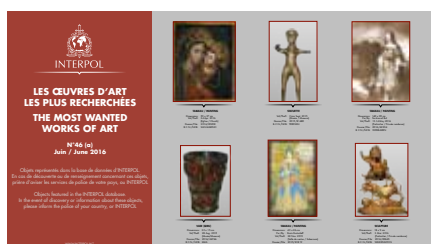
The first poster was issued in 1972. Its value is demonstrated by the fact that 20 per cent of the 300 items that have appeared on posters since 1995 when the database was created have been recovered.



(Special Poster – Mosul Museum - Iraq)



(Special Poster – Artaban Tomb - Syria)



(Last Bi-annual Posters of the Most Wanted Works of Art 2016)

**THE 12 MOST WANTED WORKS OF ART**

Notice publiée par l'O.S.P.C. - INTERPOL 28 Rue Armengaud, 92, Saint Cloud (France)  
Published by the I.C.R.B. - INTERPOL

Juin 1972  
June

N° 1

In cas de découverte ou de renseignements concernant ces œuvres, prière d'enlever les Étoiles de police et l'information leur Bureau Central National Intégré.

If found or anything to know of these Cases, please, cancel the Police Star and inform their Central B.C.N.

<p><b>TITRE :</b> La Vierge au Balcon de Bernini <b>TITRE :</b> The Virgin with Don Don</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Bernini <b>ARTIST :</b> Bernini</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 11.1.1972 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b> 11.1.1972</p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> PARIS F.C.B.</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE :</b> S.120 <b>CONTROL N° :</b></p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Duchêne de Dainville, Musée de Cluses Collégiale Church of St. Remy, in Cluses</p>	<p><b>TITRE :</b> Portrait d'un ambassadeur <b>TITRE :</b> Portrait of a Ambassador</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Hans Memling <b>ARTIST :</b> Hans Memling</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 24.8.1971 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b> 24.8.1971</p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> BOME F.C.B.</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE :</b> S.120 <b>CONTROL N° :</b></p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée de Palazzo Vecchio, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (51410/141)</p>	<p><b>TITRE :</b> Polyptyque de saintes, saintes, saintes et saintes <b>TITRE :</b> Polyptych of saints, saints, saints and saints</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Maître Jeanne, Ecole italienne de la Renaissance <b>ARTIST :</b> Unknown painter of the 15th century, Florence School, unknown</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL/DATE OF THEFT :</b> 18/9/1971</p> <p><b>S.C.N./F.C.B. :</b> PARIS</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE/CONTROL N° :</b> S.120</p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée de la Ville de Paris, Villa de Paris, Paris municipal collection</p>
<p><b>TITRE :</b> Triptyque avec Vierge à l'Enfant et deux saints, Peter Paul Rubens <b>TITRE :</b> Triptych with Virgin and Child and two saints</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Maître Jeanne (17th-18th cent) <b>ARTIST :</b> Unknown master 17th-18th cent, unknown</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 26.4.1971 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b></p> <p><b>S.C.N./F.C.B. :</b> BRUXELLES/BRUSSELS <b>N° DE CONTRÔLE/CONTROL N° :</b> S.120</p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée de la Ville de Paris (51410/141)</p>	<p><b>TITRE :</b> La Sainte Famille <b>TITRE :</b> The Holy Family</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Le Caravage <b>ARTIST :</b> Le Caravage</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 11.8.1970 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b> 11.8.1970</p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> BOME F.C.B.</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE :</b> S.120 <b>CONTROL N° :</b></p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée "GALASSINI" &amp; TATE, Relative House in Paris</p>	<p><b>TITRE :</b> Vierge à l'Enfant, petit saint Jean <b>TITRE :</b> Virgin and Child, small St. John</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Giovanni Bellini <b>ARTIST :</b> Giovanni Bellini</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 21.8.1970 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b> 21.8.1970</p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> BOME F.C.B.</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE :</b> S.120 <b>CONTROL N° :</b></p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée "GALASSINI" &amp; TATE, Relative House in Paris</p>
<p><b>TITRE :</b> Vierge à l'Enfant, saint Jean et sainte Anne <b>TITRE :</b> Virgin and Child, Saint John and Saint Anne</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Giovanni Bellini <b>ARTIST :</b> Giovanni Bellini</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 25.26.8.1971 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b></p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> BRUXELLES F.C.B. BRUSSELS</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE :</b> S.120 <b>CONTROL N° :</b></p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée de la Ville de Paris (51410/141)</p>	<p><b>TITRE :</b> Portrait de Cardinal de Lorraine <b>TITRE :</b> Portrait of Cardinal de Lorraine</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Corneille de Lion <b>ARTIST :</b> Corneille de Lion</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 18.8.1969 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b> 18.8.1969</p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> PARIS F.C.B.</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE :</b> S.120 <b>CONTROL N° :</b></p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée "GALASSINI" &amp; TATE, Relative House in Paris</p>	<p><b>TITRE :</b> Saliotto <b>TITRE :</b> Saliotto</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Le Caravage <b>ARTIST :</b> Le Caravage</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 26.10.1969 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b></p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> BOME F.C.B.</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE :</b> S.120 <b>CONTROL N° :</b></p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée des Louvres - Paris (51410/141)</p>
<p><b>TITRE :</b> La Vierge et l'Enfant <b>TITRE :</b> Virgin and Child</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Raphaël <b>ARTIST :</b> Raphaël</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 12.8.1971 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b></p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> BOME F.C.B.</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE :</b> S.120 <b>CONTROL N° :</b></p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (51410/141)</p>	<p><b>TITRE :</b> "Marcella" <b>TITRE :</b> "Marcella"</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Giulio Romano <b>ARTIST :</b> Giulio Romano</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL/DATE OF THEFT :</b> 27.12.1968 - Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b> 27.12.1968 - Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon</p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> PARIS F.C.B.</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE/CONTROL N° :</b> S.120</p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée d'Art et d'histoire - Palais de la Ville de Lyon - Musée de la Ville de Lyon - Musée de la Ville de Lyon</p>	<p><b>TITRE :</b> Portrait d'un jeune homme <b>TITRE :</b> Portrait of a young man</p> <p><b>AUTRES :</b> Michelangelo Merisi <b>ARTIST :</b> Michelangelo Merisi</p> <p><b>DATE DE VOL :</b> 18/11.8.1970 <b>DATE OF THEFT :</b></p> <p><b>S.C.N. :</b> BOME F.C.B.</p> <p><b>N° DE CONTRÔLE :</b> S.120 <b>CONTROL N° :</b></p> <p><b>PROPRIÉTAIRE/OWNER :</b> Musée "GALASSINI" &amp; TATE, Relative House in Paris</p>

(First Poster - June 1972)

## INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT


We offer targeted support to member countries to help them protect their cultural heritage. For example, we can send assessment missions to countries facing critical situations and natural disasters to review the situation and provide expertise, as was done for Iraq in 2003 and in Egypt in 2011. This can include helping countries to make inventories through photos and the creation of IDs for the WOA database.

## EXPERTS GROUP

A multidisciplinary experts group on stolen cultural property is coordinated annually to make recommendations for preventing the illicit trade of cultural objects. It serves as an advisory body for the Organization.

## PURPLE NOTICES

INTERPOL issues Purple Notices to all member countries to warn about modus operandi, objects and concealment methods used by criminals and to request information about offences to assist in investigations and prosecutions. They can be specifically used for art and cultural heritage crime.

Requesting country:	
Date of publication:	
<b>MODUS OPERANDI</b>	
Type(s) of offence:	_____
Date of last known offence:	_____
Place of offence:	_____
Country of offence:	_____
Circumstances of offence:	_____



## OPERATION PANDORA

### International action against the illicit trafficking of cultural property

Operation Pandora took place in October and November 2016 and brought together 18 European national law enforcement agencies and INTERPOL, EUROPOL, WCO and UNESCO.

It focused on cultural spoliation (underwater and land), illicit trafficking of cultural goods (with special focus on conflict countries) and cultural theft in order to improve the profiling of criminal groups working in this field and identify possible links between criminal groups and other crime areas.

Officials checked 48,588 people, 29,340 vehicles and 50 ships, in actions carried out in coordination with other administrations such as customs, ministries of culture and the church.

As a result, a total of 3561 works of art and cultural goods were seized: almost half of them were archeological objects. Police arrested 75 people and opened 92 new investigations.



Hundreds of coins were included in the haul

**PARTNERSHIPS**

The illicit trafficking of works of art cannot be detected or prevented without the close cooperation of law enforcement agencies, customs and the art industry worldwide.

INTERPOL maintains active collaboration with other international organizations and agencies including UNESCO, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the World Customs Organization (WCO), UNIDROIT, the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), The International Centre for Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), EUROPOL and The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

We work with our partners to hold joint training sessions, conferences and workshops to share knowledge and the best practices. Data on stolen cultural items compiled by our partners – especially UNESCO – is added into our database, and/or disseminated to our member countries, including related information such as lists of cultural experts or of “at risk” objects.



## CONCLUSION

The advantages of a national specialized unit are highlighted in this document, but in addition there are other benefits.

A specialized unit would be able to advise other national law enforcement agencies (such as customs), or art-related specialists such as auction houses, galleries and museums. This strengthens the national and international network.

Countries need a strong legal framework to protect cultural heritage. A dedicated team can help a country to fulfil its obligations regarding international conventions related to cultural property, and assist legislative authorities in the creation of national laws.

Raising awareness of this type of crime is essential in the fight against it; this ranges from museums and auction houses to judicial authorities and the public (potential owners). Conferences and workshops are an excellent way of networking and sharing information about these crimes – as an organizer or a participant.

Countries are encouraged to create a national database of stolen works of art and connect it to INTERPOL's stolen works of art database to further improve their efficiency.

As well as protecting national cultural heritage, having a national unit also shows respect for that of other countries through a reciprocal relationship.

Finally, a unit will help preserve the past, enjoy the present and protect the future. The protection of cultural heritage cannot wait!

For additional information or support on establishing a national specialized unit, or for any matter related to cultural property crime, please contact the Works of Art Unit at the INTERPOL General Secretariat.

Email: [woa@interpol.int](mailto:woa@interpol.int)

Tel: +33 (0) 472447676



## **ANNEX: LIST OF MAIN DOCUMENTS ON CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION**

### **TREATIES AND DECLARATIONS**

- 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention
- 1954 First Protocol to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict
- 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property;
- 1972 UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage
- 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects
- 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict
- 1999 International Convention for Suppression of Financing Terrorism
- 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
- 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage
- 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
- 2003 UN Convention against Corruption
- 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
- 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the Action plan for its implementation, Adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its thirty-first session
- 2003 UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage
- 2015 Bonn Declaration on World Heritage, 39th UNESCO World Heritage Committee
- 2015 Declaration on Culture as an Instrument of Dialogue among Peoples, EXPO, Milano, International Conference of the Ministers of Culture
- 2015, Statement of the 3rd Meeting of States Parties to the UNESCO 1970 Convention, "Stop Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property"

## UN BODIES' RESOLUTIONS

### UN General Assembly

- 2012, Resolution 66/180 "Strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to protect cultural property, especially with regard to its trafficking"
- 2013, Resolution 68/186 "Strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to protect cultural property, especially with regard to its trafficking"
- 2014, Resolution 69/196 "International Guidelines for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Responses with Respect to Trafficking in Cultural Property and Other Related Offences"
- 2015, Resolution 69/281 "Saving the cultural heritage of Iraq"
- 2015, Resolution 70/76 "Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin" (latest on the matter)
- 2015, Resolution 70/178 "Strengthening the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity"

### UN Security Council

- 2003, Resolution 1483, "Situation between Iraq and Kuwait, Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts"
- 2012, Resolution 2056, "Peace and security in Africa"
- 2013, Resolution 2100, "The situation in Mali"
- 2015, Resolution 2199, "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts"
- 2015, Resolution 2253, "Suppressing Financing of Terrorism"

### Economic and Social Council

- 2004, Resolution 2004/34, "Protection against trafficking in cultural property"
- 2008, Resolution 2008/23, "Protection against trafficking in cultural property"
- 2010, Resolution 2010/19, "Crime prevention and criminal justice responses to protect cultural property, especially with regard to its trafficking"

## UNESCO BODIES' DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2015 Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form
- 1962, Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding of Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites
- 1964, Recommendation on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Export, Import and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 19 November
- 1972, Recommendation concerning the Protection, at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage
- 2011, Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, including a glossary of definitions, 10 November
- 2015, Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO's Actions for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict
- 2015, Resolution 3.MSP 11, "Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the 1970 Convention"
- 2015, Resolution 3.MSP 9, "Emergency Actions"
- 2015, Recommendation concerning the protection and promotion of museums and collections, their diversity and their role in Society
- 2015, Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form



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