

Archaeological Institute of America

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**Resolution by the Governing Board of the Archaeological Institute of America to Support the US Funding Proposal for Archaeological Site Protection in Iraq**

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Background:

The unprecedented magnitude of the current plague of archaeological site destruction by looters in Iraq is documented in satellite images, aerial photographs taken by Coalition personnel, and in accounts by journalists and antiquities officials working in Iraq. Below is the text of a resolution expressing the support of the Governing Board of the Archaeological Institute of America for a proposal for the U.S. Government to provide funding in the amount of \$2,250,000 to protect antiquities in Iraq.

Resolution

Archaeological sites and artifacts inform us about their history only when they are properly excavated. The Governing Board of the Archaeological Institute of America affirms the fundamental importance of Iraq's archaeological heritage for our understanding of the human past, present, and future. We deplore the continuing wholesale destruction of this part of our past through looting of archaeological sites in Iraq, and the resulting infusion of huge amounts of capital into the illegal antiquities trade, thereby fuelling further looting and destruction. Unless action is taken quickly, the looting will continue until these sites are completely destroyed, a process that in some cases will take not years, but months.

The Governing Board of the Archaeological Institute of America, therefore, strongly supports the proposal for the U.S. Government to provide funding in the amount of \$2,250,000 to purchase 100 trucks as well as radios and weapons for 1750 new Facilities Protection Service antiquities rangers whose salaries have already been funded by the Iraqi Ministry of Finance and who have been hired by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, but who need this equipment in order to be effective.

Supporting Information

Below are a summary of the funding request for equipment to stop archaeological looting in Iraq and a very rough estimate of the magnitude of the problem in dollars.

Funding Request

The funding request is for \$2.25 million to purchase vehicles, radios, and weapons for the 1750 new Iraqi antiquities rangers whose salaries have already been funded by the Iraqi Ministry of Finance, but who lack necessary equipment. The full breakdown follows:

\$1,700,000 for 100 4-door 4WD pickups @ \$17,000 each
150,000 for 100 vehicle police radios @ \$1500 each
200,000 for 500 hand-held police radios @ \$400 each
150,000 for 750 AK-47 rifles @ \$200 each
50,000 for 60 BKC medium machine guns @ \$800 each

\$2,250,000 total estimated expense

These costs are estimates based on the prices paid for this equipment through the US government procurement process in Iraq in 2003-2004.

Dollar Amount of Archaeological Looting

Some sense of the magnitude of the looting comes from Micah Garen, a US journalist who spent months documenting the problem (he was the journalist kidnapped and held hostage last August). Briefly, based on his conversations with Iraqi Police who monitor antiquities looting and smuggling in Iraq, the MINIMUM size of the problem is:

* at least 100,000-150,000 cuneiform tablets are smuggled out of Iraq each year, with a value to the looters of \$5-10 million and a market value outside Iraq of \$50-100 million

* a similar number of non-cuneiform artifacts are also smuggled out each year, also worth at least \$5-10 million for the looters and \$50-100 million outside Iraq

* this is a MINIMUM TOTAL VALUE of \$10-20 million paid to the looters and \$100-200 million outside Iraq

* the actual value is probably higher, as these figures are based on the antiquities traffic in only one market center in southern Iraq and does not take account of the much higher figures paid for unusual objects