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## American troop opens fire on senior cultural adviser to Coalition Provisional Authority touring Iraq's archaeological sites

There on an official visit to gauge the level of damage done by looting, Pietro Cordone came out of the incident unscathed, although his interpreter was killed

**Cristina Ruiz and Jason  
Edward Kaufman**

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On 18 September an American soldier in Iraq fired on Pietro Cordone, senior adviser for culture to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Although the ambassador and his wife escaped the incident unharmed, his Iraqi interpreter, Saad Mohamed Sultan, was shot dead. The US military expressed regret for the shooting, which took place on the road from Mosul to Tikrit.

The car Ambassador Cordone was travelling in was apparently trying to overtake a US Humvee when one of the American soldiers opened fire. The Humvee did not stop.

Ambassador Cordone was on a tour of archaeological sites in North Iraq to see for himself the

damage that is being done to Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, and Babylonian sites which are being ransacked by armed gangs.

In an article written for The Art Newspaper, Ambassador Cordone warns that the CPA is currently powerless to protect archaeological sites because of the deteriorating security situation and the lack of adequate resources.

Ambassador Cordone calls the measures taken by the CPA to protect sites “inadequate” and says that, unless more is done, “the work of generations of archaeologists could be jeopardised”.

This assessment of the damage to Iraq’s archaeological sites was mirrored in written evidence seen by The Art Newspaper, that was presented last month to the UK’s House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee by Harriet Crawford, chairman of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq (BSAI).

In her evidence Ms Crawford says that reports from Iraq suggest that “the looting and destruction of sites... continues more or less unabated.” She goes on to say that a BSAI official in Iraq on secondment to the CPA from June to September found her efforts “thwarted at almost every turn by the chaotic state of the administration. There are no clear divisions of responsibility between the CPA, the military and the emerging Iraqi civilian administration, nor are there any proper lines of command or channels of communication.”

In her recommendations to the committee, Ms Crawford suggests that the Department of Culture Media and Sport “may want to consider if it is cost-effective to second people [to the CPA] until the internal administrative problems have been sorted out.” Speaking to The Art Newspaper, Ms Crawford said that the BSAI would not be sending any more staff to Iraq until the security situation improves.

Ms Crawford also recommended to the committee that efforts be made “to help rebuild the Iraqi police force and army and to help Iraqi archaeologists to get back into the field in order to protect sites.”

MacGuire Gibson, professor of Mesopotamian archaeology at the University of Chicago says he believes “losses from the looting are going to far exceed what was taken from the museums at Baghdad and Mosul. The looting has spread from site to site to site. It is a major tragedy and nobody is talking about it.”

o For Pietro Cordone's article,

see p.25

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