A CASE STUDY IN CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION IN A TIME OF WAR

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This presentation provides a first person summary of United States Army activities during Task Force Iron Gimlet (TFIG) formed in December, 2008 to encourage community improvement efforts in the Abu Ghraib and Nassar Wa Salaam communities and surrounding areas west of Baghdad, Iraq. TFIG was intended to empower Iraqis to conduct many of the community development projects themselves, with funding largely provided through Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) initiatives at the Battalion and below levels. Included in the projects TFIG conducted was a contract for improving the tourism infrastructure around the historic Ziggurat at Aqar Quf. Lessons learned from this intervention are reported in this presentation.

Stability and Support Operations (SOSO) and Civil-Military Operations (CMO) call for complex strategies for both cultural heritage preservation practices and economic development activities. The U.S. Army’s CERP is one such program and was developed in Iraq in 2003 to allow rapid response to localized problems at the lowest level possible. CERP is successful because it provides opportunities for the local populace to obtain steady employment while at the same time encouraging shared cultural heritage identity through the protection of cultural heritage sites in a classic win-win scenario.

Preface

Originally written as part of explorations into a topic that is particularly appropriate given the fact the author returned from deployment with the United States Army in Iraq in 2009, this publication is as thorough a look as possible given the lack of current literature dealing with the theme. It is worthy of note that prior to the author’s departure, the topic of cultural heritage protection during armed conflict was discussed at length in classroom discussions as part of the course of study in Historic Preservation at the University of Georgia. This in turn allowed the author to have a more informed experience while serving in Iraq and although the author spent the majority of his time as a Sapper Platoon Leader, Task Force Engineer, and Acting Sapper Company Executive Officer, the subject matter of heritage preservation was never completely forgotten.
While conducting the research for this chapter, the author was disappointed to find that there is a serious lack of literature on the subject, and that some of the items referenced in this work are from magazine and newspaper articles, although several defense review journals and public initiatives by the Departments of the Army and Defense are referenced here as well. Of particular assistance was Dr. Laurie Rush of the Fort Drum, NY Cultural Resources Program, whose groundbreaking training programs will most certainly be models for future projects. It is the hope that this paper will add to the short list of publications on the subject.

**Introduction**

Many Iraqi small businesses and microenterprises were seriously disrupted as a result of the United States invasion in 2003. Not only were major cultural resources damaged or stolen during the period of looting after the fall of Saddam Hussein, but also the economic infrastructure (micro-business) that was dependent upon tourism based upon these resources was equally devastated. Over the course of the past six years the United States Army has been tasked not only to provide security but to also participate in rebuilding much of the infrastructure of the country.

Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) in a Counterinsurgency (COIN) environment have a major impact on cultural heritage resource protection and related small business development. In the context of what the military calls Stability and Support Operations (SOSO) and Civil-Military Operations (CMO), complex strategies have been developed during which both cultural heritage preservation work and economic development activities can be conducted. Successful activities depend upon the guidance set forth from higher echelons of military leadership and are, in turn, based upon the direction that host-country civilian leadership and cultural resource professionals provide.

This paper addresses, through a case study, some of the specific issues of rebuilding entrepreneurial activities that are tied to the preservation of cultural resources at the lowest levels of implementation. Additionally the paper will provide a summary of activities currently going on to support the rebuilding of Iraqi micro-businesses that are dependent upon heritage tourism and cultural resource preservation, with an emphasis on the successes of the U.S. Army’s Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds.

The author, during his deployment to Iraq in 2008–2009 with the U.S. Army, took part in a task force formed to prompt community improvement