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**United Nations Convention against Corruption**



**Corruption in the illicit trafficking of cultural property**

*Captain Francesco Provenza*

## Carabinieri for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (T.P.C.)

The Carabinieri Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage was established in 1969, functionally inserted in the Ministry of Culture, as a Minister's direct collaboration Office.

It performs tasks of security and protection of cultural heritage and it is the national center of gravity for analysis and intelligence, on behalf of all the national police forces.

In the international field it provides, at the request of international organizations or within the Italian military missions (NATO and MSU), a targeted contribution to the protection and preservation of historical and archaeological sites of the country at risk.

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## *The illegal conduct*

In Italy, the public official performing an act contrary to official duties in exchange for money or other benefits, is punishable by a sentence from five years and four months to ten years and eight months of detention.

In the case of cultural goods to be exported, the Italian legislation requests that, before the exportation, the item is checked by the officials of the offices of the Minister of Culture.

In this context, officials may decide to qualify paintings by important artists as less important artists, in order to release export licenses that should not be released.

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## *The illegal conduct*

Another example of illegal conduct is the official who accepts false documentation produced by a private subject, in order to falsely declare that the work of art comes from abroad.

The works of art are legally exported for sale, without the need to go through the control by the competent office.

For heritage buildings, when the official receives offers for a tender, he may inform the company that he seeks to promote about the irregularities found in the documentation, helping the company to be awarded with the work.

The official may also decide to invite to participate in a tender only companies without the requirements, in order not to conclude the procedure and be able to entrust the work directly to the company that he intends to promote.

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## **The illicit trafficking of cultural goods in crisis areas**

Enforcement action against the illicit trafficking in cultural property was carried out by the Carabinieri Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage even in crisis areas, with the training of personnel responsible for protection (2003-2006 in Nassiyria, in 2008 in Beirut, in 2014 and 2015 in Jericho). Including identification of missing cultural objects and cataloging of cultural heritage at risk of theft and illegal export.

Experience has shown that post-conflict or institutional instability, lead to looting and theft of cultural property.

We observe emerging forms of transnational organized crime, sometimes linked to financing of terrorism, which can be countered with the analysis of data and operational information, monitoring of target markets and customs flow analysis.

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## **The illicit trafficking of cultural goods in crisis areas**

To fight these forms of crime, international cooperation has always been fundamental.

The first important mission for the Carabinieri Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage was in Iraq (2003): an officer was sent to Baghdad in order to facilitate, as a government expert at the Ministry of Culture of the Coalition Government, the monitoring and recovery of stolen assets from the Archaeological Museum in Baghdad and the creation of a map of the Iraqi archaeological site.

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## **The illicit trafficking of cultural goods in crisis areas**

The serious threats to the cultural heritage in Iraq, has lead to the organization of international meetings of experts in coordination with INTERPOL, to exchange information and the definition of guidelines to counter the international marketing of cultural archaeological objects illegally excavated in Iraq.

This mission was followed by others, with operating results as the census of 650 archaeological sites, the recovery of more than 1,500 exhibits, the arrest of 53 people and the inclusion in the Department's database of over 4000 stolen archaeological objects.

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Video on duties and functions of the Carabinieri  
Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage

<https://youtu.be/1Uax6-JU2Bo>

Thanks!

Captain Francesco PROVENZA

Commander of the

Nucleo Carabinieri Tutela Patrimonio Culturale in Monza

francesco.provenza@carabinieri.it



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[www.carabinieri.it](http://www.carabinieri.it)

[tpc@carabinieri.it](mailto:tpc@carabinieri.it)