

U.S. Congress Cites Faculty-Student Research on Antiquities Trafficking

April 27, 2016



Brig. Gen. Russ Howard spoke at the recent MonTREP conference on antiquities trafficking at the Institute, the same topic as the research recently quoted and cited by a special U.S. Congress task force looking into the issue.

Large scale and systematic looting and destruction of antiquities in Iraq and Syria has both enriched terrorist groups such as the Islamic State and resulted in the destruction of cultural heritage in the area. In response, a task force of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services recently convened a hearing on “Preventing Cultural Genocide: Countering the Plunder and Sale of Priceless Cultural Antiquities by ISIS.” The official hearing memo uses a large bloc quote and other citations from the research of Middlebury Institute [Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies](#) students Marc Elliott MANPTS '16 and Jonathan Prohov MANPTS '16 and their mentor and professor, Brig. Gen. (ret.) Russ Howard MBA '74.

Congressional staff contacted Howard, who also serves as the director of the Institute’s [Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program](#) for his personal insight on the matter before the hearing. The resulting [briefing memo](#) quoted from and later cited the article “[Digging in and Trafficking Out: How the Destruction of Cultural Heritage Funds](#),” co-written by the two students and Howard and published in the West Point Combating Terrorism Center’s Sentinel newsletter.

The Institute team also contributed as full and cited members in the Antiquities Coalition

#CultureUnderThreat Task Force Report "[Recommendations for the US Government](#)." Said Elliott: "For my colleague Jonathan Prohov and I, the opportunity to work as researchers and co-authors with General Howard on the MonTREP Antiquities Project allowed us to continually build momentum with our publications and eventually reach policy makers at the highest levels." The grant-funded research on this issue that the students have been working on with Howard through the course of their two years at the Institute will cumulate in the publication of a final monograph on the Islamic State and antiquities trafficking slated by the Joint Special Operations University Press later this year.

"We hope that the piece will continue to reach policy makers in both civilian and military circles," adds Elliott, who will be working in the financial crimes compliance field after graduating in May. Elliott currently serves as the president of the Student Terrorism Studies Club, and worked with Howard to organize a major conference on trafficking in antiquities, "Culture in Crossfire 2016," at the Institute last March. "The recent recognition of our team's work by Congress, the Antiquities Coalition Task Force report and other important stakeholders exemplifies the unique opportunities that students at the Institute have while working with faculty who are also practitioners."