

What is Cultural Resource Protection and Why Should We Care? - ACT

Written by Commander Michael Hallett, United States Navy, Strategic Plans and Policy

Cultural Resource Protection (CRP) provides a framework both for making the difficult decision that damaging cultural property is justified by military necessity, and for working with local and external actors to protect cultural property prior to, during and in the immediate aftermath of conflict. As such it is a key capability for operationalising NATO's Comprehensive Approach.



NATO is concerned with CRP not only because NATO forces are directed to protect cultural resources in STANAG 7141 and the fact that it is a legal obligation under international Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954). We engage in Cultural Resource Protection because our NATO values demand it. The Washington Treaty establishing NATO says, "[the parties] are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples..." We still recognise the need to both not damage, and help others preserve their common heritage.

Cultural Resource Protection Benefits:

- Reduces ability of insurgent and criminal groups to raise revenue from looting antiquities.
- Provides an assessment capability to examine sites to establish their condition so NATO is not later accused of damage caused by others.
- Enables training for NATO forces and local actors to better protect cultural property.
- Serves as a transition facilitation tool, by providing other local (and international) organisations with the right information at the right time so they can prepare to make larger contributions (when conditions permit) in accordance with their mandates.

For more information see:

- The text of the Convention: <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/FULL/400>
- The International Committee of the Blue Shield www.ancbs.org
- Report by the International Military Cultural Resources Working Group on Libya <http://blueshield.de/libya2-report.html>

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