

ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI): Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq¹

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Weekly Report 71-72 — December 9-22, 2015

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Executive Summary

During the reporting period, SARG and Russian airstrikes continued to target cultural heritage sites at an increasing rate, particularly in Aleppo, Idlib, and to a lesser extent Homs governorates. The Syrian Network for Human Rights and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights remain the most reliable sources on such airstrikes coupled with additional verification conducted by in-country sources. Multiple places of worship, particularly modern mosques, were severely damaged in these regions. In-country and media sources find it difficult to distinguish between Russian and SARG airstrikes: this ambiguity may be lowering inhibitions over the direct targeting of cultural assets — already fairly minimal given the extent and magnitude of damage to date — and in the future will likely complicate assigning responsibility for attacks within legal contexts. SARG barrel bombing caused severe damage to standing architecture within the UNESCO World Heritage site Ancient City of Bosra in Daraa Governorate. SARG barrel bombings from helicopters represent a manifestly direct form of targeting (aircraft hover above targets before dropping explosives). The current air campaign targeting houses of worship in predominantly Sunni areas will likely fuel reprisal attacks by Sunni belligerents on heritage sites affiliated with SARG, continuing and exacerbating a well-documented cycle of cultural destruction.

The Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums posted two reports on its website detailing extensive damage to the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria — the site is comprised of several expansive parks containing famous standing architecture of Late Antiquity and the Byzantine period. Various sites have been heavily impacted by the conflict. Much of the damage stems from the intensive use and modification of sites by internally displaced persons. The DGAM also released information on archaeological looting at the site of Majduliyyeh in the Quneitra Governorate of southern Syria. ASOR CHI has been receiving much information on the looting and trafficking of antiquities in the south from in-country sources.

ASOR CHI analyses of recently released DigitalGlobe satellite imagery reveal some changes to militarized archaeological sites in Hama and Aleppo Governorates.

¹ This report is based on research conducted by the “Cultural Preservation Initiative: Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq.” Weekly reports reflect reporting from a variety of sources and may contain unverified material. As such, they should be treated as preliminary and subject to change.

Key Points

- Iraqi armed forces continue their efforts to retake the city of Ramadi from ISIL militants.
- The Al Kabir Mosque in Hamima near Aleppo was damaged by airstrikes (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0158**).
- Sheikh Yassine Mosque in the village of Al Najiyeh in Idlib Governorate was damaged by airstrikes (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0159**). The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative has produced a brief, illustrated report on the damage to the site.
- An ISIL-affiliated suicide bomber attacked the Ahlu al-Baiyt Mosque in Baghdad (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0100**).
- Airstrikes land near the Mosque Tekkiye al-Suleimaniye and National Museum of Damascus (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0161**).
- SARG airstrikes cause partial damage to the Bilal Mosque and Abi Thar Al Ghafari Mosque in Tadmor, Syria (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0160**).
- The DGAM reports on-going illegal excavations, construction, and vandalism in several Dead Cities (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0162**).
- The DGAM reports ongoing illegal excavation at sites in southern Quneitra, particularly at Majduliyah (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0163**).
- Airstrikes damage the Al Kabir Mosque and Al Zawyeh Mosque in Saraqib in Idlib Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0164**). The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative has produced a brief, illustrated report on the damage to the Al Zawyeh Mosque in Saraqib.
- The DGAM reports ongoing illegal excavation at sites in Jebel Wastani, in particular that of Kefert Aqab in Idlib Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0165**).
- The Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities reported that SARG forces dropped barrel bombs on the Ayyubid Citadel and Roman Theater in Bosra (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0166**).
- DigitalGlobe satellite imagery shows ongoing military occupation of Tell Jifar near Apamea (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0167**) in Hama Governorate and Tell Jindires in the Aleppo countryside (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0168**).

Heritage Timeline

December 22, 2015

The **Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities** reported barrel bombs dropped from SARG helicopters caused massive damage to the western section of the Ayyubid Citadel and Roman Theater in central Bosra. Damage includes the collapse of the Ayyubid Citadel's West Tower and collapse of some of the columns in the courtyard overlooking the Roman Theater on the western side. There is also a deep hole in the courtyard and some of the corridors encircling the theater have partially collapsed or have been filled with rubble. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0166**.

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1707354929507666&id=1642112122698614

<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/bosra-the-roman-theater-in-bosra-is-severely-damaged-by-two-barrels-of-tnt-dropped-by-the-syrian-air-forces-on-22-12-2015/>

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1891>

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=41021>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3melGaveV-s&app=desktop>

December 21, 2015

United Press International published a report entitled “**Islamic State carves path of destruction through archaeological treasures in 2015**” (by Fred Lambert). The article gives a list of documented instances in which ISIL forces destroyed ancient sites and artifacts in 2015. The sites discussed are: the Mosul Museum, Nimrud, Hatra, the tomb of Muhammad Ali, and the shrine of Shagaf in Palmyra, the lion of Allat in Palmyra, the St. Elian Monastery in Qaryatayn, the temples of Bel and Baal-Shamin in Palmyra, and Roman columns in Palmyra.

http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2015/12/21/Islamic-State-carves-path-of-destruction-through-archaeological-sites-in-2015/8121450205968/

December 20, 2015

Swiss Info published an article entitled “**Security director warns against ‘financing terrorism’.**” Geneva’s security minister Pierre Maudet called for increased vigilance in keeping stolen ISIL art out of Geneva’s Freeport warehouses. 40 percent of the Freeport area is dedicated to the storage of art and antiques.

http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/geneva-free-port_security-director-warns-against-financing-terrorism-/41851414

December 18, 2015

The Antiquities Coalition published a post entitled “**UN Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution in Fight Against Terrorism Financing, Including Illicit Sale of Antiquities.**” The Security Council unanimously adopted a binding resolution to further monitor and control the flow of money to individuals and groups who might engage in terrorism.

<https://theantiquitiescoalition.org/blog-posts/un-security-council-unanimously-adopts-resolution-in-fight-against-terrorism-financing-including-illicit-sale-of-antiquities/>

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Science Magazine published an article entitled “**Scientists work to save antiquities from Islamic State destruction**” (by Earl Lane). Katharyn Hanson discusses her work with the Penn Cultural Heritage Center and the Safeguarding the Heritage of Syria and Iraq (SHOSI) Project, which aim to document cultural heritage destruction and prevent further damage through the training of local antiquities specialists in Syria and Iraq.

<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/350/6267/1485.full>

December 17, 2015

BBC News published an article entitled “**Hi-tech imaging firm to document at-risk Middle East sites**”. A panoramic camera designed

by an Edinburgh firm has been selected for a mission to create digital records of dozens of at-risk heritage sites in Syria, Iraq and the Middle East. The project will work with local experts in the Middle East to record cultural landmarks, using reality-capture technologies such as 3D laser scanning and traditional surveys.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-35120999>

- *Niqash* published an article entitled “**The War Against Idolatry: Extremists in Mosul Force Their Prisoners To Vandalise Graves.**” The article exposes destruction to cemeteries in Mosul by ISIL prisoners.
<http://www.niqash.org/en/articles/security/5180/Extremists-in-Mosul-Force-Their-Prisoners-To-Vandalise-Graves.htm>
- *The Sentinel* published an article entitled “**Refugees become guides to Germany’s historical treasures**” (by Frank Jordans). The Museum of Islamic Art is one of four museums in Berlin training refugees from Syria and Iraq to act as guides for other refugees.
http://cumberlink.com/entertainment/other/refugees-become-guides-to-germany-s-historical-treasures/article_efcfc421-b217-5a63-8bcf-3a1d4fa4f04f.html
<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/kunst-zum-kennenlernen-fluechtlinge-werden-in-berlin-zu-museumsfuehrern/12709722.html>
<http://www.dw.com/ar/مجانبة وجولات السورية للأثار توثيق برلين متاحف للاجئين/a-18919301>
<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/europes-border-crisis/german-museums-are-helping-battle-refugees-culture-shock-n482396>

December 16, 2015

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC published a blog post entitled “Heritage in Peril” (by Thomas P. Campbell). It discusses a recent conference in Istanbul led by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Columbia University, and Koç University focused on crucial issues around cultural heritage preservation in Syria and Iraq. The post gives links to cultural heritage organizations (including ASOR).
<http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/now-at-the-met/2015/heritage-in-peril>

- *Russia Beyond the Headlines* published an article entitled “**State Hermitage gathering materials to help reconstruct Palmyra.**” The State Hermitage museum in St. Petersburg is collecting its materials about the antiquities of Palmyra to aid in the future reconstruction of monuments at the site. The Hermitage’s Palmyra collection includes 10 burial reliefs, several sculptural fragments, a large slab with texts recording customs tariffs in Greek and Aramaic, and coins.

http://rbth.com/multimedia/history/2015/12/16/state-hermitage-gathering-materials-to-help-reconstruct-palmyra_551503

- **UNESCO** published a press release entitled “**United Nations exhibition highlights the protection of cultural heritage.**” The exhibition is co-organized by Italy, Jordan, UNESCO, INTERPOL and UNODC with the aim to highlight the new partnership to act together against destruction and trafficking of cultural property by terrorist and organized crime groups.
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1408>

December 15, 2015

The Permanent Mission of Jordan To The United Nations, in cooperation with the Italian Mission, UNESCO, UNODC, and Interpol, hosted an art exhibition at the United Nations’ headquarters in New York titled “Protection of cultural heritage: a necessity for mankind” (“حماية التراث الثقافي: ضرورة حتمية للبشرية”).
<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/186975/#.VnC1zRqDGko>

- **DGAM** released a report entitled “**Latest News of Damage in Rural Idlib.**” There have been recent reports of continued illegal excavation at sites in Jebel Wastani. The report mentions Kefert Aqab in particular, where stones have been stolen for modern construction, wells have been dug, and other illegal agricultural activities have occurred. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0165.**
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1886>

- **UNESCO** published a press release entitled “**UNESCO Director-General and President Vladimir Putin discuss protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones in Iraq and Syria.**” On 14 December 2015, Ms. Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, and Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, jointly opened the IV Saint Petersburg International Cultural Forum, devoted to the 70th anniversary of UNESCO. The Forum was the largest cultural event to mark the seven decades of the Organization’s role and contribution worldwide in support of culture and heritage.
http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/the_director_general_and_president_vladimir_putin_discuss_the_protection_of_cultural_heritage_in_conflict_zones_in_iraq_and_syria

- *Middle East Eye* published an article entitled “**Thinking of reconstruction amid war: The Aleppo Project**” (by Federica Marsi). The Aleppo Project is conducting surveys within Syria and among the refugee population to take the pulse of citizens’ wishes for reconstruction.
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/thinking-reconstruction-amidst-war-aleppo-project-1653894555>

- The *Los Angeles Times* published an article entitled “**Syrian rebels in the historic city of Homs are leaving behind a panorama of destruction**” (by Patrick J. McDonnell). This article discusses the devastation in Homs following its three-year occupation by various rebel factions and its return to regime control.
<http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-syria-homs-20151215-story.html>
- December 13, 2015

DGAM published a report titled “**Mortar shell hits the Tekkiye Mosque in Damascus.**” Early reports suggested the mosque sustained some damage and several visitors were injured. The mosque is located close to the National Museum in Damascus. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0161.**
<http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1881>
- DGAM** published a report entitled “**Latest news for rural Aleppo**” that discusses ongoing illegal excavations, construction, and vandalism in several Dead Cities: Deir Semaan, Teqla, Refade, and Sitt al-Rum. The colonnade of the church at Batuta has been partially destroyed. Digging has also occurred at Abu Qalqal, al-Rai, and Shash Hamdan. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0162.**
<http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=239&id=1882>
- DGAM** published a report entitled “**The latest news about archaeological sites in the countryside of Quneitra**” that mentions acts of vandalism at Majduliyah. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0163.**
<http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=239&id=1883>
- Le Monde* published an article titled “**Le gouvernement appelle les antiquaires à la vigilance face au trafic d’art de l’EI**” (by Anne Michel). The French government has warned antiques dealers and art professionals against trafficking in cultural goods from Syria and Iraq in order to prevent their resale on European soil.
http://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2015/12/13/le-gouvernement-appelle-les-antiquaires-a-la-vigilance-face-au-traffic-d-art-de-l-ei_4830787_3234.html
- December 12, 2015

The Independent published an article titled “**Jalawla: Iraqi city remains a ghost town after being recaptured from ISIS**” (by Cathy Otten). Most of Jalawla’s 80,000 residents are still displaced after the Peshmerga and Shia militiamen recaptured the town from ISIS in Nov 2014. ISIS blew up a Shiite mosque there, the only one of 59 mosques they damaged.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/jalawla-iraqi-city-remains-a-ghost-town-after-being-recaptured-from-isis-a6770976.html>

December 11, 2015

Al Arabiya News published an article titled “**Syrian antiquities chief says Turkey refuses to return looted art**” (by Shadia Nasralla). Maamoun Abdulkarim has accused Turkey of refusing to return looted objects from ancient heritage sites in Syria or to provide information about them, allegations denied by the Turkish government.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/life-style/2015/12/11/Syrian-antiquities-chief-says-Turkey-refuses-to-return-looted-art.html>

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CNN uploaded a video titled “**How ISIS sells antiquities to fund terror.**” ISIS fighters are encouraged to loot archaeological sites and museums for smaller, portable statuary and other artifacts, which can then be smuggled fairly easily across borders to be sold in countries like Turkey. The scale of looting has increased as other sources of revenue (e.g. oil) have dropped.

<http://money.cnn.com/video/news/2015/12/11/isis-artifact-financing.cnnmoney/index.html>

December 9, 2015

ABC News published an article entitled “**ISIS-Claimed suicide attack on Baghdad mosque kills 11**” (by Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Susannah George). In Baghdad, a suicide bomber attacked a Shiite mosque, killing at least 11 people and wounding 20, an assault that was promptly claimed by ISIS. Interior Ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Saad Maan said the attacker detonated the bomb in the mosque doorway as worshippers were leaving after midday prayers.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/suicide-attack-shiite-mosque-baghdad-kills-11-35664682>

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Government Executive published an article titled “**Multiple Agencies Join Effort to Track ISIS-Damaged Antiquities**” (by Charles S. Clark). The National Geographic Society will host an international summit “Protecting Our Shared Heritage in Syria” on December 11, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and organized by ASOR and the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA). The summit consists of 20 organizations.

<http://www.govexec.com/defense/2015/12/multiple-agencies-join-effort-track-isis-damaged-antiquities/124335/>

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Hurriyet Daily News published an article titled “**Syrian woman faces 12 years in jail for ‘smuggling ancient coins.’**” A Syrian woman stopped at Ataturk Airport in Istanbul was discovered to have 173 “apparently antique” coins in her suitcase, which she claimed to have bought in Beirut. At least 10 of the coins are of the Ottoman era.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syrian-woman-faces-12-years-in-jail-for-smuggling-ancient-coins.aspx>

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The Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY, NYC) opened a new exhibit “**The Missing: Rebuilding the Past**” (curated by Erin Thompson and Thalia

Vrachopoulos). The exhibit showcases the efforts of artists and scholars to resist ISIL and other forms of destruction of the past through creative and innovative reactions, protests, and reconstructions.

<http://www.themissingexhibit.com/>

December 8, 2015

GlobalPost published an article titled “**European states urge action against IS antiquities dealing**” (AFP). Germany, Italy and France called Tuesday for the European Union to crack down on the illegal trade in antiquities used to bankroll attacks by the Islamic State group.

<http://www.globalpost.com/article/6701461/2015/12/08/european-states-urge-action-against-antiquities-dealing>

Military and Political Context

The main theaters of military operations during the reporting period in Syria were:

1. Homs Governorate:
 - During the reporting period, local and international news agencies reported the advance of Syrian forces near the city of Tadmor (Palmyra), as well as ongoing airstrikes on various areas of the city carried out by both Syrian and Russian forces.²
 - On December 9, hundreds of Syrian rebels and civilians began exiting the opposition-held district of al-Waer following a ceasefire agreement with the Syrian regime. Al-Waer was the final opposition-held area in the city of Homs and has been under siege by Syrian regime forces for the past three years.³
 - On December 10, ISIL militants recaptured the towns of Maheen and Hawareen from Syrian regime forces.⁴
 - On December 12, an ISIL car bomb exploded near Al-Ahli hospital in the predominantly Alawite neighborhood of al-Zahraa in the city of Homs, killing 16 people and wounding dozens more.⁵
2. Damascus Governorate:
 - On December 13, Syrian regime airstrikes and bombardments of opposition-held areas in the suburbs of Douma, Sabqa, Harasta, and Arbeen in eastern Damascus killed at least 45 people and wounded hundreds more.⁶

² <https://twitter.com/Nieuwsuur/status/678137952770240512>

³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/evacuation-of-rebels-from-last-stronghold-in-homs-begins/2015/12/09/7548d00e-9e51-11e5-9ad2-568d814bbf3b_story.html ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35048404>

⁴ <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Dec-10/326808-isis-recaptures-central-syria-towns-from-govt-activists.ashx> ; http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_ISLAMIC_STATE

⁵ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Dec-12/327115-blast-in-syrias-homs-city-kills-8-wounds-dozens.ashx>

⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/new-airstrikes-hit-damascus-suburb-day-after-45-were-killed/2015/12/14/b93244ac-a244-11e5-8318-bd8caed8c588_story.html ; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/12048610/Syria-air-strikes-hit-school-and-kill-45-people-in-Damascus.html>

- On December 14, Syrian regime forces, with support from Hezbollah and allied militias, recaptured the town of Marj al-Sultan and its air base from Syrian rebel forces in the Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta.⁷
 - On December 14, Syrian regime helicopters bombed the southwestern Damascus suburb of Daraaya. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that 52 explosive bombs were dropped on the city. The extent of the damage and the number of casualties remains unknown.⁸
 - On December 20, airstrikes on the district of Jarama killed “key Lebanese militant” Samir al-Kintar. Hezbollah and Syrian state media blamed Israel for the attack. Another explosion struck a Syrian military bus in the residential district of Mazzeh in western Damascus, wounding at least 10 people.⁹
 - On December 22, Syrian activist groups reported the use of chemical weapons by Syrian regime forces in the southwest town of Moadamiyet al-Sham. The town of Moadamiyet al-Sham was the site of an August 2013 chemical weapons attack that killed hundreds of civilians, leading to the US-Russian agreement to remove all chemical weapons from the Syrian regime.¹⁰
3. Aleppo Governorate:
- On December 11, Syrian rebel forces recaptured the town of al-Hamzat in northern Aleppo.¹¹
 - On December 15, Russian airstrikes struck a village in an ISIL-held area of Aleppo, killing at least 23 civilians.¹²
 - Between December 18–21, Russian airstrikes repeatedly targeted rebel positions southwest of the city of Aleppo, “enabling pro-regime forces to seize the key town of Khan Touman and several nearby villages” on December 20.¹³
4. Idlib Governorate:
- On December 15, Russian airstrikes struck a fuel market in the village of Maarat al-Naasan, killing at least 16 civilians.¹⁴
 - On December 20, Russian airstrikes struck several areas of the city of Idlib, killing at least 43 people and wounding more than 170.¹⁵
5. Hasakah Governorate:

⁷ http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_SYRIA?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT ; <http://news.yahoo.com/syria-regime-allies-recapture-key-airbase-near-damascus-155432260.html>

⁸ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/new-airstrikes-hit-damascus-suburb-day-after-45-were-killed/2015/12/14/b93244ac-a244-11e5-8318-bd8caed8c588_story.html ; <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/12/52-explosive-barrels-have-been-dropped-on-daraya-city/>

⁹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35144483> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-jaramana-idUSKBN0U301G20151220> ; <https://in.news.yahoo.com/blast-hits-military-bus-syrian-155828956.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/197812-syria-activists-accuse-regime-of-chemical-attack> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Dec-23/328748-heavy-clashes-attacks-in-town-southwest-of-syrian-capital.ashx>

¹¹ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/russian-strikes-in-syria-december-3-12.html>

¹² <http://news.yahoo.com/34-dead-suspected-russia-raids-two-syria-markets-174327304.html>

¹³ <http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-airstrikes-syria-december-13-21-2015>

¹⁴ <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/197131-34-civilians-dead-in-suspected-russian-raids-on-two-syria-markets> ; <http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2015/12/9069/syria-deeply-executive-summary-december-16/>

¹⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35145806>

- On December 10, “a triple suicide car bomb attack” struck three areas in the Kurdish-held town of Tal Tamr, killing at least 50 people and wounding 80 more. ISIL later claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁶
- 6. Daraa Governorate:
 - On December 22, Syrian regime helicopters bombed a UNESCO World Heritage site in Bosra al-Sham, including an ancient citadel and Roman theater, after the town was recaptured by Syrian opposition forces.¹⁷
- 7. Raqqa Governorate:
 - On December 8, Russia announced that it had launched “its first submarine cruise missile strikes” from a location in the eastern Mediterranean, striking ISIL targets in the city of Raqqa.¹⁸
 - On December 14, President Obama announced that a group of “American special operations commandos...[are] now working with local fighters in Syria,” in order to put additional pressure on the city of Raqqa.¹⁹
- 8. Deir ez-Zor:
 - On December 22, ISIL militants shelled a girls’ school in the city of Deir ez-Zor, killing at least nine students and wounding dozens more.²⁰
- 9. Latakia Governorate:
 - On December 16, Syrian regime forces, backed by allied militias, took control of the strategic Jabal Nuba hilltop from Syrian rebel forces.²¹

Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Abu Kamal, Al-Hawl, Ayn Isa, Deir ez-Zor, Kobani, Manbij, Mar’a, and Raqqa.²²
- During the reporting period, activists, local sources, and the Russian Ministry of Defense reported extensive Russian airstrikes across the governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Hasakah, Homs, Latakia, and Raqqa. Activists and local sources reported heavy civilian casualties as a result of these airstrikes. Russian airstrikes against ISIL militants were limited and occurred in Aleppo and Homs governorates.²³
- During the reporting period, activists and local sources reported SARG airstrikes across the governorates of Aleppo, Daraa, Deir ez-Zor, Homs, Idlib, Raqqa, and Rif Dimashq, resulting in high civilian casualties.
- On December 10, Syrian opposition members produced a “statement of principles” for peace talks following a two-day conference in Riyadh. Earlier in the day, the Syrian rebel group Ahrar al-Sham pulled out of the talks. Simultaneously, a Kurdish-Arab coalition in northern Syria announced the formation of a new political wing called the “Syrian

¹⁶ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-northeast-idUSKBN0TU0NS20151211>

¹⁷ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/12068392/Syrian-regime-bombs-UNESCO-world-heritage-site.html> ; <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52904>

¹⁸ <http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russia-security-update-december-1-9-2015>

¹⁹ http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_OBAMA

²⁰ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Dec-22/328532-isis-shelling-of-syrian-school-area-kills-nine.ashx> ; <https://twitter.com/snhr/status/679365565996224512>

²¹ <http://www.france24.com/en/20151216-syria-army-retakes-key-hilltop-coastal-province>

²² See: “US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq”. *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [633458](#), [633604](#), [633797](#), [633945](#), [633951](#), [633994](#), [634218](#), [637117](#), [637383](#), [637504](#), [637576](#), [637700](#)

²³ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-december-7.html> ; <http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-airstrikes-syria-december-13-21-2015>

Democratic Council” following a two-day conference in the northeastern town of Al-Malikiyeh.²⁴

- On December 10, it was reported that Iran has begun withdrawing its forces from Syria following significant casualties.²⁵
- On December 11, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that Russia has been providing support for members of the Western-backed Free Syrian Army in “joint operations with Syrian troops against Islamist militants.” His statement was refuted by members of the Free Syrian Army.²⁶
- On December 17, it was announced that Syrian opposition representatives elected former Syrian Prime Minister Riad Hijab as “a coordinator of a body that is expected to lead future peace talks.”²⁷
- On December 17, US Defense Secretary Ash Carter confirmed that US commandos are now operational in northern Syria.²⁸
- On December 18, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved a new resolution detailing an “international road map for a Syria peace process.” The resolution includes the implementation of a ceasefire and immediate humanitarian aid access; however, differences remain over the future of President Bashar al Assad.²⁹

The main theaters of military operations during the reporting period in Iraq were:

1. Anbar Governorate:
 - On December 10, ISIL militants destroyed a bridge in the city of Ramadi as Iraqi forces continued their efforts to reclaim the city. The bridge was the last northwestern bridge connecting to the city center. ISIL has now reportedly destroyed all the bridges “surrounding central Ramadi” in order to slow the advance of Iraqi forces. Iraqi forces and tribal fighters clashed with ISIL militants in the southeastern Ramadi neighborhoods of Aramal, Dhubat, and Malab. In addition, two ISIL suicide attacks killed at least 27 Iraqi soldiers northwest of Ramadi.³⁰
 - On December 12, a suicide bomber attacked the Hafr Zawiyah border station on the border between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, killing six border guards. No group has yet to take responsibility for the attack.³¹
 - On December 13, ISIL militants “launched several counter-attacks” in and around the city of Ramadi, killing at least 35 Iraqi soldiers and allied Sunni tribesman. In addition, a senior ISIL leader was reported to have been killed east of the city.³²

²⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35060935> ; <http://www.globalpost.com/article/6702811/2015/12/10/syria-kurd-arab-coalition-creates-political-wing> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Dec-11/327034-syrias-assad-says-he-will-not-negotiate-with-armed-groups.ashx>

²⁵ <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2015-12-10/western-officials-iran-retreating-from-syria-fight>

²⁶ <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-putin-says-russia-backs-free-syrian-army-alongside-assad-troops-2015-12> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Dec-15/327456-free-syrian-army-rebels-deny-russian-support.ashx> ; <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Dec-15/327560-russia-names-syrian-rebel-groups-it-says-it-is-supporting-with-airstrikes.ashx>

²⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-opposition-idUSKBN0U026D20151217>

²⁸ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/17/american-commandos-hit-the-ground-in-syria/>

²⁹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-un-idUSKBN0U10J020151219>

³⁰ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/iraq-ramadi-isil-151210110403016.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-8-14-2015.html>

³¹ <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/196825-suicide-bomber-kills-six-on-iraq-saudi-border>

³² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35091680>

- On December 16, ISIL militants attacked the Fallujah University area, but were repelled by Iraqi security forces.³³
 - On December 18, a Coalition airstrike killed 10 Iraqi troops near Fallujah, in an apparent “friendly fire incident.”³⁴
 - On December 22, Iraqi security forces, backed by police officers, Sunni tribesmen, and US-led airstrikes, reached the city center of Ramadi.³⁵
2. Ninawa Governorate:
- During the reporting period, Turkey increased its number of troops in Bashiqa camp, near the city of Mosul, in order to train Peshmerga forces and Sunni Arab fighters in the fight against ISIL. Following increasing anger from Baghdad, Turkey has begun withdrawing its troops.³⁶
 - During the reporting period, it was announced that Italy would be deploying 450 troops to protect the Mosul Dam.³⁷
 - On December 16, ISIL militants fired up to 60 mortars on the Bashiqa training camp, killing three Iraqi Sunni fighters and wounding ten more, including four Turkish soldiers. Other reports stated that Hezbollah took responsibility for the attacks on the military camp.³⁸
 - On December 17, ISIL militants launched an assault against Peshmerga fighters and a contingent of Canadian elite fighters embedded with the group in several areas across “Newaran, Bashik, Tal Eswed, Khazir, and Zerdk Mountain.” The Peshmerga and Canadian forces, backed by Coalition airstrikes, were able to repel the attack, killing at least 180 ISIL militants.³⁹
3. Baghdad Governorate:
- On December 9, a suicide bombing at the entrance of the Shiite Ahlu al-Baiyt Mosque in the northeastern Baghdad area of Obeidi killed at least 11 people and wounded at least 20 more. ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that the target was the Saray al-Salam militia, a “militia affiliated with Muqtada al-Sadr’s Sadrist Trend.”⁴⁰

³³ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-15-21.html>

³⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iraq-says-10-soldiers-killed-in-misfire-by-us-led-coalition/2015/12/19/7aaa83e8-a63b-11e5-9c4e-be37f66848bb_story.html

³⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/23/world/middleeast/iraqi-army-isis-ramadi.html> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35158105>

³⁶ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-turkey-iraq-idUKKBN0TS1UZ20151209> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/world/europe/after-protests-turkey-withdraws-some-troops-from-iraq.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/12/15/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-turkey-idUSKBN0TY1ZD20151215> ; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/20/turkish-troops-move-out-of-northern-iraq-after-obama-appeal-for-calm>

³⁷ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-15-21.html>

³⁸ <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/173693.aspx> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2015/12/16/ISIS-attack-kills-3-Iraqi-fighters-wounds-4-Turkish-trainers.html>

³⁹ <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/161220155> ; <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-iraq-isis-offensive-1.3370820> ; https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/islamic-state-offensive-in-northern-iraq-although-repelled-shows-groups-resilience/2015/12/17/752f207c-a4ec-11e5-b53d-972e2751f433_story.html

⁴⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-attack-idUSKBN0TS1K020151209> ; <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/173040.aspx> ; <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.691718> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-8-14-2015.html>

- On December 12, “Popular Mobilization” members, including Iranian proxy militias and other Shia militias, staged demonstrations in Baghdad against the presence of Turkish troops in Iraq.⁴¹
- 4. Erbil Governorate:
 - On December 9, Turkish forces conducted airstrikes against PKK targets in the areas of Qandil, Hakuk, Zap, and Avasin Baysan.⁴²
- 5. Salah ad Din:
 - On December 14 and 15, ISIL militants launched at least two attacks on Iraqi security forces in the sub-district of al-Alam, north of the city of Tikrit.⁴³
 - On December 17 and 19, light mortar fire fired by ISIL militants struck central Samarra.⁴⁴
- 6. Muthanna Governorate:
 - On December 16, unknown gunmen kidnapped at least 27 Qatari hunters, including members of the Qatari royal family, in the Samawa desert near Iraq’s border with Saudi Arabia. On day nine of their captivity the hunters were released.⁴⁵

Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Albu Hayat, Baghdadi, Beiji, Fallujah, Habbaniyah, Haditha, Hit, Huwayjah, Kirkuk, Kisik, Makhmur, Mosul, Qaim, Qayyarah, Ramadi, Rawah, Sinjar, Sultan Abdallah, Tal Afar, and Tikrit.⁴⁶
- During the reporting period, demonstrations occurred in Baghdad and other cities to protest the presence of Turkish troops near Mosul.⁴⁷
- On December 18, protests against corruption and budget stipulation for federal employee salaries occurred in Baghdad, Babil, Basra, Dhi Qar, Diwaniyah, Karbala, Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, and Wasit.⁴⁸
- On December 22, the US-based Think Thank IHS published a report stating that ISIL lost 14% of its territory in 2015. Areas lost by ISIL include portions of land near Syria’s northern border with Turkey, the Iraqi city of Tikrit, the Beiji refinery complex, and a “stretch of the main highway between Raqqa and Mosul.”⁴⁹

Other significant political and military events during the reporting period:

⁴¹ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-8-14-2015.html>

⁴² <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-kurds-idUSKBN0TS1BM20151209>

⁴³ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-15-21.html>

⁴⁴ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-15-21.html>

⁴⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35112774> ; <http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/nine-kidnapped-qataris-released-in-iraq-1.1639311> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/17/world/middleeast/qatari-safari-members-including-royalty-are-abducted-in-iraq.html>

⁴⁶ See: “US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq”. *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [633458](#), [633604](#), [633797](#), [633945](#), [633951](#), [633994](#), [634218](#), [637117](#), [637383](#), [637504](#), [637475](#), [637576](#), [637700](#)

⁴⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/world/europe/after-protests-turkey-withdraws-some-troops-from-iraq.html>

⁴⁸ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-15-21.html>

⁴⁹ <http://press.ihs.com/press-release/aerospace-defense-security/islamic-states-caliphate-shrinks-14-percent-2015>

- During the reporting period, Turkish security forces conducted ongoing military operations against Kurdish militants in multiple southeastern towns in Turkey, causing extensive damage and over 100 casualties.⁵⁰
- On December 10, the U.S. announced that coalition airstrikes had killed three ISIL leaders in late November, including ISIL's financial minister Abu Salah.⁵¹
- On December 17, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution intended to further block ISIL sources of revenue, including the trafficking of antiquities.⁵²
- On December 14, it was reported that Russian warplanes may be operating from Iranian airfields "to support its military operations in the region."⁵³

Satellite Imagery and Geospatial Analysis

Through the reporting period, the Geospatial Team has been reassessing sites based upon new imagery. This includes new satellite imagery taken between November 15 and December 7, 2015. A few of these images include the area around Aleppo, which was discussed in the previous weekly report (**ASOR CHI Weekly Report 69–70**). Other satellite images were taken over the area of Latakia, Bosra, and Apamea in Syria. In addition, new satellite images were also made available over the site of Nimrud in Iraq. In total, 200 sites were assessed for damage based upon these newly available satellite images. The majority of these sites show no visible change from previous assessments. The city of Bosra did not show new damage based on the satellite image taken December 6, 2015.

The area of Apamea does not appear to have been looted further; however, there was change to the site of Tell Jifar located east of Apamea (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0167**). The site has been used as a military outpost since 2012 as previously discussed by Dr. Jesse Casana.⁵⁴ In addition to the military outpost, looting took place at the site prior to 2008 and continued into 2012. The top of the mound was leveled and earthworks and berms were built on the top. There were also small buildings constructed on the mound. As of November 27, 2015, the tell appears to have gone out of use by the military. All of the buildings have been removed, and the top of the mound has been completely leveled.

Located within the countryside of Aleppo, the site of Tell Jindires has also been badly affected by the ongoing conflict (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0168**). As early as February 2013,

⁵⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-kurds-idUSKBN0TZ1LY20151216> ; <http://www.wsj.com/articles/turkey-launches-military-operation-against-militants-in-kurdish-heartland-1450294160> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Dec-17/327801-turkey-kills-23-kurdish-militants-in-southeast-towns.ashx> ; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/12058691/The-return-of-war-Turkeys-south-east-region-plunged-into-worst-violence-in-years.html>

⁵¹ <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/633751/gains-made-against-isil-in-syria-iraq-coalition-spokesman-says>

⁵² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35120441>

⁵³ <http://www.criticalthreats.org/russia/kagan-donovan-bucala-russo-iranian-coalition-in-syria-deepening-december-14-2015>

⁵⁴ Casana (2015) "Satellite Imagery Based Analysis of Archaeological Looting in Syria." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 78.3: pp.142-152 ; Casana and Panahipour (2014) "Satellite-based Monitoring of Looting and Damage to Archaeological Sites in Syria." *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 2.2: pp.129-152.

modifications were made on the top of the tell: an exterior wall was built around the site. Over time additional changes were made, including small earthwork constructions and a long interior wall, as seen in an image from February 14, 2014. In September 2015, two large horizontal walls were created using earth from the site. The southernmost wall was created with a covering, which shows up as white in the image. In the most recent satellite image from November 19, 2015, the one wall has been knocked down and the earth has been moved to the base of the exterior wall.

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0158

Report Date: December 10, 2015

Site Name: Al Kabir Mosque (المسجد الكبير)

Date of Incident: December 9, 2015

Location: Hamima, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown, possibly modern

Incident Summary: SARG missiles severely damage mosque and minaret.

Incident Source and Description: On December 9, 2015 the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that SARG warplanes fired several missiles at Al Kabir Mosque in Al Hamima town. The missiles damaged the mosque and the minaret, and rendered the mosque unusable.⁵⁵

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

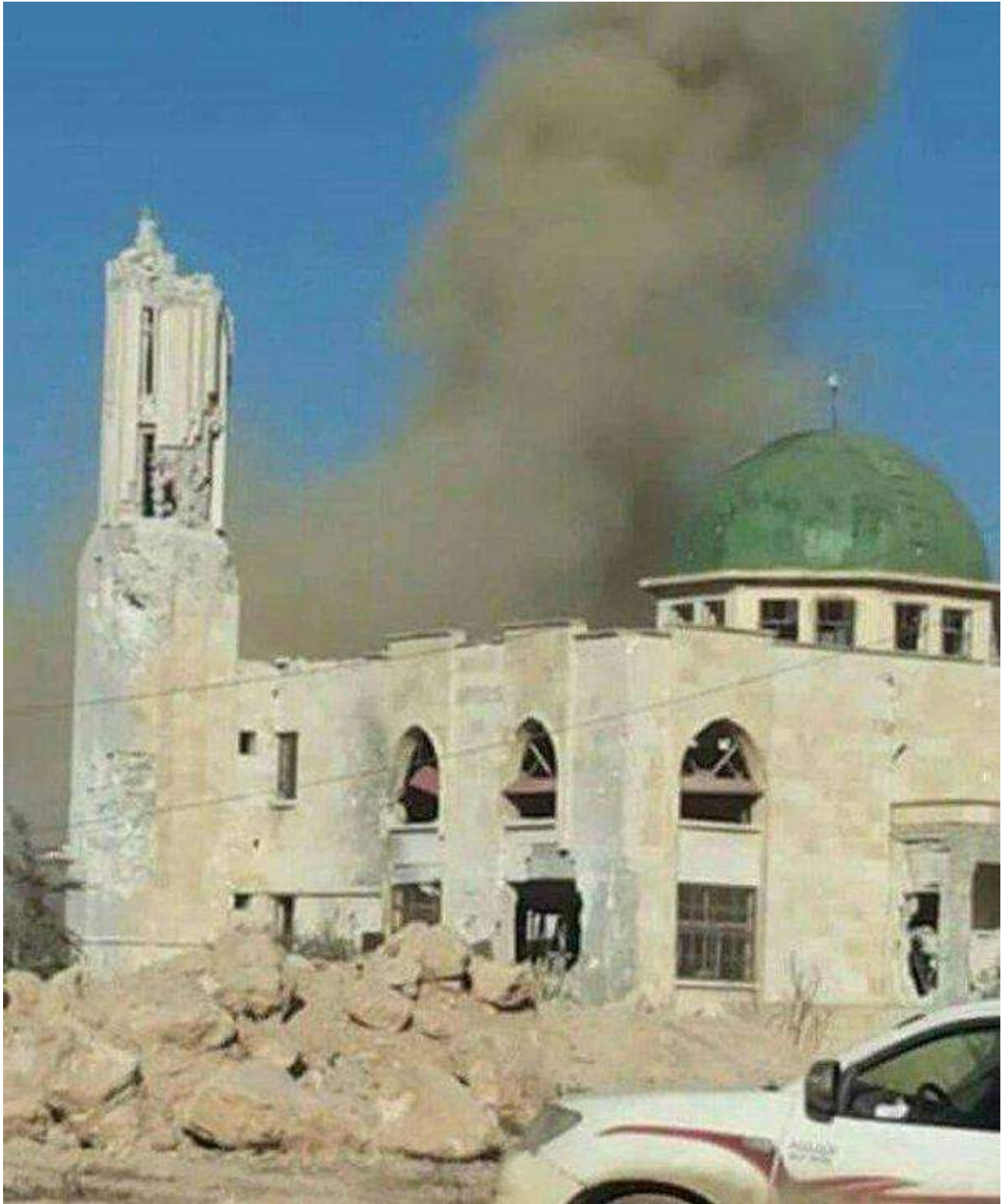
Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR has noticed a rise in attacks on mosques by both Russian and SARG forces. ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to Al Kabir Mosque and other mosques that have been targeted in Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Syrian Network for Human Rights: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/10/15385/>

⁵⁵ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/10/15385/>



Damage to Al Kabir Mosque (Syrian Network for Human Rights: December 10, 2015)

SHI 15-0159

Report Date: December 12, 2015

Site Name: Sheikh Yassine Mosque

Date of Incident: December 11, 2015

Location: Village of Al Najiyeh, Idlib Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Ottoman Era

Incident Summary: SARG warplanes severely damage mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On December 11, the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that SARG warplanes targeted the Sheikh Yassine Mosque in the village of Al Najiyeh, “turning it out of service.”⁵⁶ Images of the mosque after the airstrikes show severe damage to both the exterior and interior of the mosque. The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative has produced a brief, illustrated report of the damage to the Sheikh Yassine Mosque below that cites Russian airstrikes as the cause of damage.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI has seen a rise of attacks on mosques by both Russian and SARG forces. ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to Sheikh Yassine Mosque and other mosques that have been targeted in Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Syrian Network for Human Rights: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/11/regime-forces-shelling-targeted-sheikh-yassine-mosque-in-al-najiyeh-village-in-idlib-governorate-in-december-10/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/Syriaa_freee/status/675298293694484480

⁵⁶ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/11/regime-forces-shelling-targeted-sheikh-yassine-mosque-in-al-najiyeh-village-in-idlib-governorate-in-december-10/>



Site Monitors project Manager: Dr. Amr Al-Azm

The Al-Najeya is strategically located on the highway between Aleppo and Latakia. It lies 22 km southwest of Jisr al-Shughour, 70 km away from Idlib City, 60 km away from the city of Latakia, and 4 km away from Bidama village. It also falls in the area where the borders of Idlib and Latakia governorates meet. In ancient times, it used to be known as “Kafr Najd”. Its Aramaic name, Kafr Najya, means “the famous village.”

A quick survey was conducted on Sheikh Yassin Mosque, a building that dates back to the Ottoman era, after being targeted by Russian jets. The bombing caused extensive damage inside the mosque as well as on its west side as shown in the accompanying photos.



The Sheikh Yassin Mosque following the recent airstrike.



The interior of the Sheikh Yassin Mosque following the recent airstrike.



The interior of the Sheikh Yassin Mosque following the recent airstrike.



The interior of the Sheikh Yassin Mosque following the recent airstrike.



The interior of the Sheikh Yassin Mosque following the recent airstrike.

SHI 15-0160**Report Date:** December 20, 2015**Site Name:** Bilal Mosque (مسجد بلال) and Abi Thar Al Ghafari Mosque (مسجد أبي ذر الغفاري)**Date of Incident:** December 9, 2015; December 19, 2015**Location:** Al Shamali neighborhood, Tadmor, Homs Governorate, Syria; West Quarter, Tadmor, Homs Governorate, Syria**Site Description:** Likely modern mosques.**Site Date:** Unknown**Incident Summary:** SARG airstrikes cause partial damage to mosques.**Incident Source and Description:** On December 9, 2015 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that SARG warplanes “fired a missile near Bilal Mosque”, partially damaging the mosque and its minaret.⁵⁷ On the same date, SNHR also reported that a missile struck a nearby “consumer compound,” rendering it unusable.⁵⁸

On December 19, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that SARG warplanes “fired missiles on Abi Thar Al Ghafari Mosque”, causing damage to the mosque.⁵⁹ ASOR CHI sources describe the Abi Thar Al Ghafari mosque as being located not far from the Palmyra Citadel, in the West Quarter of modern Tadmor.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI has seen a rise of attacks on mosques by both Russian and SARG forces and will continue to closely monitor reports of ongoing airstrikes for any impact on cultural heritage sites. ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the exact locations and dating for both Bilal Mosque and Abi Thar Al Ghafari Mosque and find additional imagery of the incident.**Sources:**Online Reporting:

Syrian Network for Human Rights:

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/09/15361/><http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/09/15367/><http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/19/15716/>

⁵⁷ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/09/15361/>⁵⁸ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/09/15367/>⁵⁹ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/19/15716/>



Bilal Mosque prior to the recent incident (Twitter; May 25, 2015)⁶⁰

⁶⁰ <https://twitter.com/abubttar883/status/601660574540308480>

SHI 15-0161

Report Date: December 14, 2015

Site Name: Mosque Tekkiye al-Suleimaniye; National Museum of Damascus

Date of Incident: December 13, 2015

Location: Damascus, Damascus Governorate, Syria

Site Description: According to the DGAM, the Tekkiye Mosque is a registered historic building and is considered to be “one of the most important historical monuments of the city of Damascus.”⁶¹ The mosque is located next to the National Museum of Damascus. According to Burns:

“The Tekkiye Mosque was ‘Damascus’ first major work in the authorised Ottoman style [although it borrowed] many elements from the local Syrian repertoire. It was the work of the foremost architect of the Ottoman period, Sinan. The complex was intended to service the great annual pilgrimage to Mecca whose custody was one of the most important duties of the governor of the vilayat (province) of Damascus and the income from which was one of the city’s major sources of prosperity. The complex was built on the site of the Qasr al-Ablaq, a Mamluk palace built by Baybars. Earlier, the area from here west to the former fairgrounds had served as a parade or exercise ground (Midan al-Akhdar) for Ayyubid and Mamluk troops and a convenient assembly point for pilgrims as the Hajj set out each year. (The mosque) was begun in 1554 to honour the great Sultan Suleiman I (Suleiman the Magnificent r 1520-66)... The complex consists of three parts:

- the mosque itself
- the arcaded buildings which enclose the courtyard on the north, east and west sides, forming a khan to house the pilgrims with, on the northern side, the former kitchens and refectory
- the compound to the east, now used as a handicrafts suq, the Madrasa Selemiye, actually built as a Koranic school (or hostelry) a decade after the Tekkiye and not the work of Sinan.

Relying to a great extent on Ottoman Turkish designs..., Sinan’s local craftsman interposed local Syrian elements including the function and shape of the courtyard and its central tank, the use of muqarnas work over the entrance to the prayer hall and the alternation of light and dark courses in stone.

In 1554 the design contract was given to Sinan by Sultan Suleiman. The construction took five years. The use of the slim Turkish minarets gives the complex much of its careful sense of proportion. Note that each cell of the accommodation blocks was covered by a dome and provided with a chimney.”⁶²

“The National Museum of Damascus is one of the world’s great collections of archaeological treasures...The museum was founded in 1919 and was originally set up...in the Madrasa al-Adeliye. In 1936, the east wing of the present complex was built. From 1939-1952, the building’s entrance was embellished by the reconstruction of the gateway from Qasr al-Heir West, an Umayyad desert palace of the eighth century. The three-storied west wing of the Museum was added in 1953 and expanded from 1956-1961.”⁶³

⁶¹ <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1881>

⁶² Burns, Ross *The Monuments of Syria: A guide*. pp. 129-130

⁶³ Burns, Ross *The Monuments of Syria: A guide*. I.B. Tauris. pp. 127

Site Date: Tekkiye Mosque: 16th century CE; National Museum of Damascus: Founded in 1919, with renovations and extensions in 1936, 1939-1952, 1953, and 1956-1961.

Incident Summary: Mortar shells land near mosque and museum.

Incident Source and Description: On December 13, 2015 DGAM reported that several mortar shells had struck the Tekkiye Mosque in Damascus, causing damage. As the Tekkiye Mosque is located next to the National Museum of Damascus, it was feared that the museum building sustained some damage as a result of the same mortar shells that struck the mosque. ASOR CHI learned from reliable in-country sources that no direct damage was inflicted upon the Tekkiye Mosque or the National Museum of Damascus

Previously in August 2015, the National Museum of Damascus was hit during a rocket attack that also struck the Damascus Citadel, reportedly causing some ‘material damage’ to the museum (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0115** in **Weekly Report 53-54**).⁶⁴ Assistant Director of laboratories at the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Qasem Abdullah Yehiya, died in the attack.⁶⁵

According to a 2014 interview with the director of the National Museum of Damascus, Professor Abdulkarim Maamoun, museum staff began “hiding the museum’s treasures” when the conflict first began in Syria. The location of these objects is unknown. The museum remains closed and the doors have been “reinforced with massive steel doors” but the sculpture garden remains open.⁶⁶

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI remains concerned as to the condition of the Tekkiye Mosque and the National Museum of Damascus and will continue to monitor reports for additional updates on any damage to both sites.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1881>

Scholarly:

Burns, Ross (2009) *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. I. B. Tauris; Revised and expanded edition.

⁶⁴ <http://sana.sy/en/?p=51212>

⁶⁵ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51674#.Vm8f07RAhWY>

⁶⁶ <http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/culture/saddest-museum-director-world-documenting-syria-s-lost-antiquities-937814716>

SHI 15-0162

Report Date: December 14, 2015

Site Names: Deir Semaan (St. Simeon; قلعة سمعان)
Teqla (St. Takla; Takleh; نكلا; لكنيسة القديسة تغل ا)
Refade (رفادة)
Sitt al-Rum (ست الروم)
Church at Batuta (بطوطة)
Abu Qalqal (نل أبو قفل)
al-Rai (الراعي)
Shash Hamdan (شاش حمدان)

Date of Incident: Unknown, reported by DGAM on December 13, 2015

Location: Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description:

- Deir Semaan – According to Ross Burns,
“Unlike the later cathedrals of medieval Europe, the great church [at St. Simeons monastery] was conceived and executed more or less as a single project over a short space of time. The cruciform church comprising four separate basilica buildings was probably constructed shortly after the death of the ascete, St. Simeon....[who] took up residence on a platform atop a column around the remains of which the great building is centered. Construction of the complex began a few years after St. Simeon’s death (probably spanning AD 476 to 491)....[T]he column and the site of [St. Simeon’s] ascetic deeds was commemorated under imperial patronage, thus encouraging the continuation of the cult of St. Simeon through pilgrimage.¹ The monastery complex is organized in several groups of buildings: 1) the four basilicas (Qalaat Semaan) meeting in a central octagonal courtyard, 2) the monastery complex adjoining the basilicas to the southeast, 3) the baptistry, 200m to the south, and 4) annexes to the baptistry.”⁶⁷
- Teqla – According to Ross Burns,
“This village seems to have comprised a group of reasonably prosperous farmers who exploited the fertile Plain of Qatura below to the west. Tchalenko notes that the houses all belong to the same period (mid fifth century) - modest in scale and of middling execution. The settlement was grouped around the church of the same date. The plan of the church is typical of the columned basilicas of the mid fifth century with the apse flanked by two side rooms - a *diaconicon* or sacristy (north) and martyrrium or burial chamber for a saint (south). Most striking is the west facade which preserves its three tiers of windows. On the south side of the church an arcade leads to a baptistry in the annexe. Note also the two olive presses, one attached to the church, the other accessible to all inhabitants.”⁶⁸
- Refade – According to Ross Burns,
“The limestone highlands, or Limestone Massif, of the Aleppo plateau in northwestern Syria are dotted with nearly eight hundred ancient settlements.¹ Jebel Semaan is one of

⁶⁷ Burns, R. 2009. *Monuments of Syria: A guide*. I.B. Tauris. pp. 272–273

⁶⁸ Burns, R. 2009. *Monuments of Syria: A guide*. pp. 290

three groups of hills that make up the Limestone Massif. In 2011, eight archaeological parks comprised of groupings of these settlements were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria. Three of these parks are located in the Jebel Semaan, and include the sites of Refade, Kirbet al-Rouman, and Qatura.”⁶⁹

- Sitt al-Rum – According to Ross Burns,

“The ruins of Sitt al-Rum (‘Our Lady of the Greeks’) consist of an isolated church and a Roman tomb. The tomb is c200 m southeast of the church, left of the road as it crosses to a small valley before ascending to the northern side. It is marked by two monolith pillars, square in shape, which once carried a classical entablature. Near the top of each column is a framed sunken panel which originally bore bronze plaques or low-reliefs. Butler notes that ‘it is interesting to find so chaste a well-studied a design in Classic style at so early a period and at such a distance from the great artistic centres’ and assumes it is an early example of contemporary work in Antioch. The tomb (entrance 6 m to the north) is rock-cut and dates from AD 152. IT was a family burial place as 15 sarcophagi were found in the chamber but the inscription gives a particular dedication to one Isidotos with explicit directions as to where his body was to be found.”⁷⁰

- Church of Batuta – According to Ross Burns,

The church is “a single-nave chapel wiht rectangular plan and distyle porch intact...[the church] is now ruined. A separate church, of early date, retains its apse and south arcade. Each column capital is a different type.” In Batuta there is a “(v)illa dated AD 363. Hadjar notes that many homes are in polygonal tone and date to the Roman period”.⁷¹

Site Date: Various

- St Simeon: Byzantine (5th century AD)
- Tekla: Byzantine
- Refada: 2nd century CE
- Sitt al-Rum: Roman and Byzantine
- Church at Batuta: Byzantine

Incident Summary: DGAM update detailing various damages.

Incident Source and Description:

- St. Simeon: DGAM reported illegal diggings and excavations at the southwestern side of the main gate leading to the church. At the Eastern church, existing wall stones were broken into smaller pieces for other construction. Unauthorized construction is present on the main pathway leading from the citadel to Afrin, closer to the Arch of Triumph. There are random diggings in different sizes and depths in the yard of the Northern church. There is new construction near the South-Western church that has been constructed with historical stones.

Previous incidents of looting and construction of a military camp on the site have occurred,

⁶⁹ Burns, R. 2009. Monuments of Syria: A guide pp. 142

⁷⁰ Burns, R. 2009. Monuments of Syria: A guide pp. 287

⁷¹ Burns, R. 2009. Monuments of Syria: A guide pp. 77

as well as new construction within and outside the site (**ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0062**).

- St. Tekla: DGAM reported digging and destruction at the north-eastern part of the church. Previous incidents of construction, looting, and reuse of building materials at the site have occurred (**ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0029**).
- Refade: DGAM reported digging and destruction at the site. Previous incidents of residential construction, quarrying, and illegal excavation have occurred at the site (**ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0029**), as well as incidents of militarization and mining of ancient structures (**ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0069**; **ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0122**).
- Sitt al-Rum: DGAM reported digging and destruction at the site. Previous incidents of illegal building, militarization, and destruction of building materials at the site have occurred (**ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0029**; **ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0069**).
- Church at Batuta: DGAM reported that the colonnade has been partially destroyed and several columns have fallen down. Previous incidents of reuse of stones for building material at the site have occurred (**ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0029**).
- Abu Qalqal: DGAM reported minor diggings at the site. Previous incidents of intentional destruction at the site have occurred (**ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0030**).
- al-Rai: DGAM reported minor digging at the site.
- Shash Hamdan: DGAM reported minor digging at the site.

Pattern: Theft; Vandalism; Reuse of ancient/historic building materials (non-combatants).

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on these reports via in country sources as well as DigitalGlobe satellite imagery as it becomes available, and is continuing to monitor the condition of the Dead Cities in the Aleppo countryside.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=239&id=1882>

Scholarly:

Burns, Ross (2009) *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. I. B. Tauris; Revised and expanded edition.

SHI 15-0163

Report Date: December 13, 2015

Site Name: Majdulyah (مجدولية)

Date of Incident: December 13, 2015

Location: Quneitra Governorate, Syria

Site Description: According to the DGAM, Majdulyah is a site with many late Roman and Byzantine remains, including a church, a residential area, and several graves and tombs. Majdulyah is also known as Castle of the Prophet Elijah (بحصن النبي إيليا), and a Byzantine Church (كنيسة بيزنطية)

Site Date: Roman, Byzantine

Incident Summary: The DGAM reports ongoing illegal excavation at sites in southern Quneitra.

Incident Source and Description: On December 13, 2015 the DGAM reported damage and illegal excavation in sites in southern Quneitra, namely at Majdulyah.⁷²

Pattern: Illegal excavation.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on these reports via in country sources as well as DigitalGlobe satellite imagery as it becomes available, and is continuing to monitor the condition of the sites in southern Quneitra.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=239&id=1883>

⁷² <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1883>

SHI 15-0164

Report Date: December 15, 2015

Site Name: Al Kabir Mosque; Al Zawyeh Mosque

Date of Incident: December 15, 2015

Location: Saraqib, Idlib Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosques

Site Date: Unknown but both are likely modern

Incident Summary: Missile strikes damage two mosques.

Incident Source and Description: On December 15, the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported regime airstrikes on Al Kabir Mosque and Al Zawiyeh Mosque in the city of Saraqib in Idlib Governorate.⁷³

In video footage released by SMART News Agency, on the ground witnesses describe several air strikes targeting Al Kabir Mosque and Al Zawiyeh Mosque.⁷⁴

While the original report of damage to Al Kabir mosque by the Syrian Network for Human Rights records the strikes as being carried out by SARG forces, video released of this attack describes the airstrikes as being carried out by Russian forces. Review of the video footage is inconclusive as to the plane's origin.

The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative has produced a brief, illustrated report of the damage to the Al Zawyeh Mosque and cites Russian aerial bombardment as the source of the damage.

Pattern: Military activity; explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI has seen a rise of attacks on mosques by both Russian and SARG forces. ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to Al Kabir Mosque, Al Zayweh Mosque, and other mosques that have been targeted in Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Syrian Network of Human Rights: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/15/15621/>

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/15/regime-forces-targeted-al-zawiyeh-mosque-in-saraqib-city-in-idlib-governorate-in-december-15/>

⁷³ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/15/15621/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN1MpY84RIQ>

SMART News Agency: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN1MpY84RIQ>



Damage to Al Kabir Mosque (SNHR; December 15, 2015)



Airstrikes target Al Kabir Mosque (SMART News Agency; December 15, 2015)

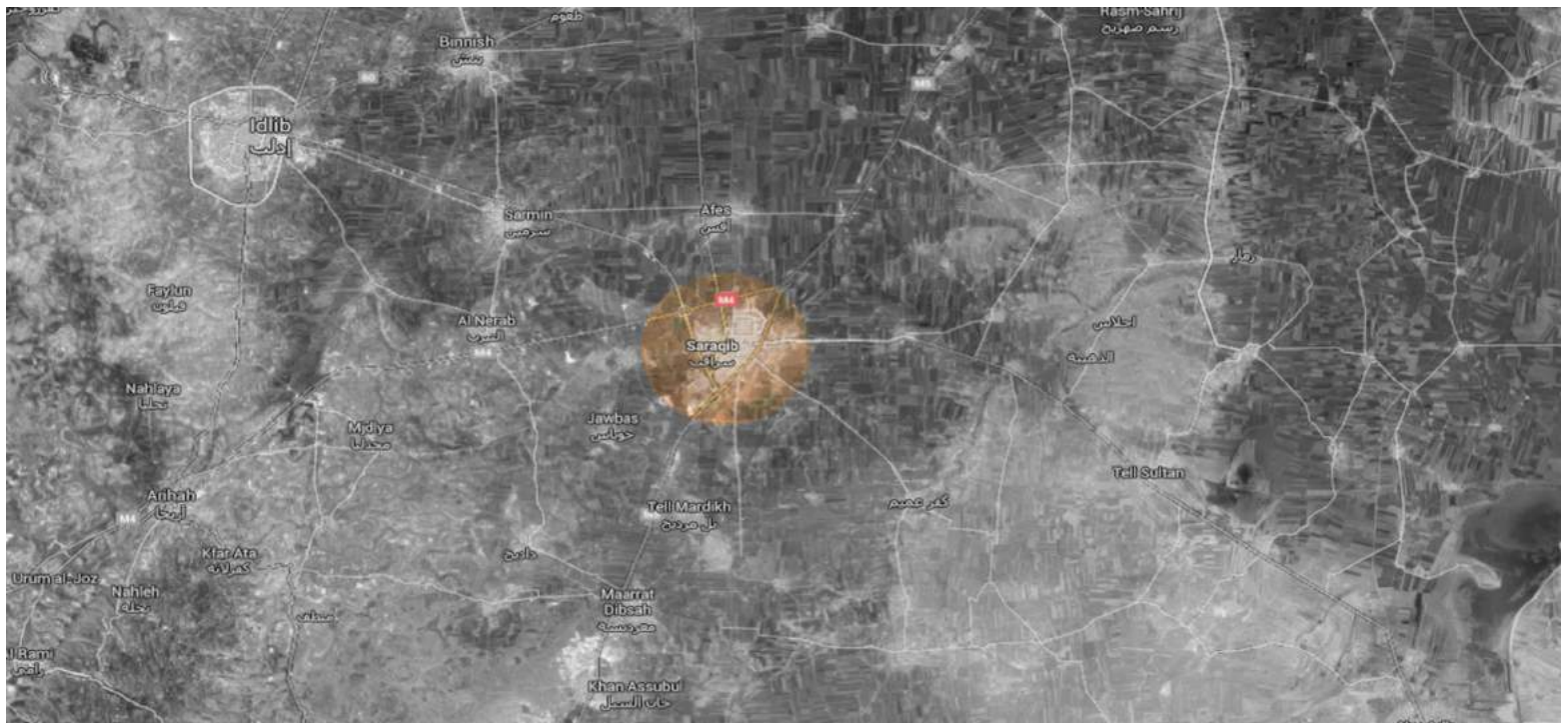


Fire breaks out in Al Kabir Mosque (SMART News Agency; December 15, 2015)

**The Day After “Heritage Protection Initiative”
Site Monitors Project:
Russian Airstrike on the Great Mosque in Saraqib
December 2015**



Site Monitors Project Manager – Dr. Amr Al-Azm



On 24th of December 2015 a site monitor visit was carried out at the Grand Mosque in the city of Saraqib. The Great Mosque in Saraqib originally dates back to the Ottoman period (circa 1850) and was rebuilt in 1985 on the same Ottoman foundations. The mosque was recently targeted by a Russian air strike, which caused extensive damage to the building. The damage is documented in the pictures below:



Airstrike targeted the base of the mosque's dome from the east side.





Scaffolding in place to hold shore up damaged section of the building





The Mosque Entrance from the North Side



The South Side of Mosque



South side of the mosque with the archaeological remains of the original 1850 building



Damage to the south side of the mosque and archaeological remains of the original 1850 building

SHI 15-0165

Report Date: December 15, 2015

Site Name: Dead Cities in Idlib, in Jebel Wastani, in particular Kefert Aqab (Kefr Aqab)

Date of Incident: December 15, 2015

Location: Jebel Wastani, Idlib Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Kefert Aqab is located in the Limestone Massif region of Idlib. The dead cities in this area date to the Roman and Byzantine periods, dating from 100 CE to the tenth century CE. The sites are marked by large limestone blocks, standing architecture, and large oil and wine presses. The area was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011.⁷⁵

Kefert Aqab, known as Niaccaba in antiquity, was inhabited from the mid-2nd century through the Ayyubid era. Located on a Roman military road, the site consists of the ruins of one and two-story porticoed houses, a large administrative building, a 2nd or 3rd century Roman temple, two *pandocheia* (inns), several water tanks, a medieval mosque, three monasteries, and a basilica from the late 5th or early 6th c. Hypogea, sarcophagi, and olive presses are scattered throughout the site.⁷⁶ The site is notable for its long and continuous occupation, and for its examples of architecture from Roman, Byzantine, and later occupation.⁷⁷

Site Date: Roman (ca. 2nd century CE), Byzantine, Ayyubid

Incident Summary: The DGAM reports ongoing illegal excavation at sites in Jebel Wastani.

Incident Source and Description: On December 15, 2015, the DGAM reported damage to sites in the Jebel Wastani area of Idlib, particularly that of Kefert Aqab. Damage includes illegal excavation, leveling and transfer of stones for modern construction, the excavation of wells, and preparation of land for agriculture.⁷⁸ The sites in the Limestone Massif region have also been home to internally displaced people from the beginning of the conflict.⁷⁹

Pattern: Illegal Excavation; reuse of ancient/historic building materials; agricultural threats/disturbances

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on these reports via in country sources as well as DigitalGlobe satellite imagery as it becomes available, and is continuing to monitor the condition of the sites in Jebel Wastani.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

⁷⁵ Burns 141.

⁷⁶ Peña 84 ff.

⁷⁷ Riba 148.

⁷⁸ <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1886>

⁷⁹ <http://www.vdc-sy.info/index.php/en/reports/1404915801#.VklXs7erR1M>

DGAM: <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1886>

Scholarly:

Burns, Ross (2009) *Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Tchalenko, Georges (1953-8) *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord; le massif de Belus à l'époque romaine*. Vols. I - III. Paris: Institut français d'archéologie de Beyrouth.

Riba, Bertrand (2014) "Le village de Kefert Aqab : un site inédit du ebel ani dans le Massif calcaire de la Syrie du Nord" *Semitica et Classica* 7 pp. 147-167.

Peña, Ignacio, Pasquale Castellana, & Romualdo Fernández (1999) *Inventaire du Jebel Wastani*. Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio Minor, 36. Milan: Franciscan Printing Press.



Kefr Aqab showing limestone blocks, and remaining structure (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)



Kefr Aqab showing limestone blocks, and remaining structure (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)



Kefr Aqab showing limestone blocks, and remaining structure (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)



Kefr Aqab showing illegal excavation (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)



Kefr Aqab showing limestone blocks, and remaining structure (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)



Kefr Aqab with truck in background used for drilling wells (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)



Kefr Aqab showing illegal excavation (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)



Kefr Aqab showing limestone blocks, and remaining structure (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)



Kefr Aqab showing illegal excavation (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)



Kefr Aqab showing land cleared for agriculture (DGAM; December, 15, 2015)

SHI 15-0166

Report Date: December 22, 2015

Site Name: Bosra Ayyubid Citadel, Bosra Roman Theater

Date of Incident: December 22, 2015

Location: Bosra, Daraa Governorate, Syria

Site Description: According to Burns, this site consists of a second century CE Roman theater with an Ayyubid-era (13th century) citadel/castle built around it. Perhaps built during the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan, who made Bosra capital of the Roman province of Arabia in 106 CE, the theater is one of the most well preserved structures of its kind anywhere in the Mediterranean world. The seating, for example, is almost entirely intact, in some sections up to the last row before the crowning colonnade. It seats 6000, with standing room for another 2000 to 3000 spectators.

The theater was first fortified during the Umayyad era, with further additions in the Fatimid and Seljuq periods, but most of what remains of the citadel today is Ayyubid construction dating from 1202 to 1251. The Ayyubid fortifications were built as an outer strongpoint to defend Damascus against the Crusader threat from the Jerusalem. They enclose the original Roman theater completely, and include huge towers at the northeast and northwest corners, with five smaller towers between them. The Mamluk sultan Baibars I made further improvements to the structure in 1261.

An initial program of clearance work and research took place from 1946 to 1970. Today, the structure also houses the Folklore Museum.⁸⁰

Site Date: 2nd century CE through 13th century CE

Incident Summary: Barrel bombs dropped from helicopters caused massive damage to the western section of the Ayyubid Citadel and Roman Theater.

Incident Source and Description: The Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities reported barrel bombs dropped from helicopters caused massive damage to the western section of the Ayyubid Citadel and Roman Theater in central Bosra. Damage includes the collapse of the Ayyubid Citadel's West Tower and collapse of some of the columns in the courtyard overlooking the Roman Theater on the western side. There is also a deep hole in the courtyard. Some of the corridors encircling the theater have partially collapsed or been filled with rubble. The Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities has not been able to gain access to the site because many of the passages have been blocked or are at risk of further collapse.⁸¹

APSA reports that the damage was caused by two barrel bombs dropped by SARG helicopters.⁸² The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirm the bombs were dropped by SARG.⁸³

⁸⁰ Burns, Ross (2009) *Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. London: I.B. Tauris. p. 81.

⁸¹ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1707262846183541&id=1642112122698614

⁸² <https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/timeline/story?ut=43&wstart=0&wend=1451635199&hash=8751039026776856994&pagefilter=3>

⁸³ <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=40981>

Previous incidents of destruction and damage have occurred at this site, including damage to the northern wall of the Citadel caused by barrel bombs in September 2015 (see ASOR CHI Incident Reports **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0037**, **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0057**, **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0133**).

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI remains concerned as to the condition of the Ayyubid Citadel and Roman Theater in Bosra, and will continue to monitor reports for additional updates on any damage to the site.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Bosra Al Sham Department of Antiquities:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1707262846183541&id=1642112122698614

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1707354929507666&id=1642112122698614

APSA:

https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/timeline/story?ut=43&wstart=0&wend=1451635199&has_h=-8751039026776856994&pagefilter=3

<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/bosra-the-roman-theater-in-bosra-is-severely-damaged-by-two-barrels-of-tnt-dropped-by-the-syrian-air-forces-on-22-12-2015/>

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights:

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=40981>

DGAM:

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1891>

UN News Centre:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52904>

Scholarly:

Burns, Ross (2009) *Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. London: I.B. Tauris.



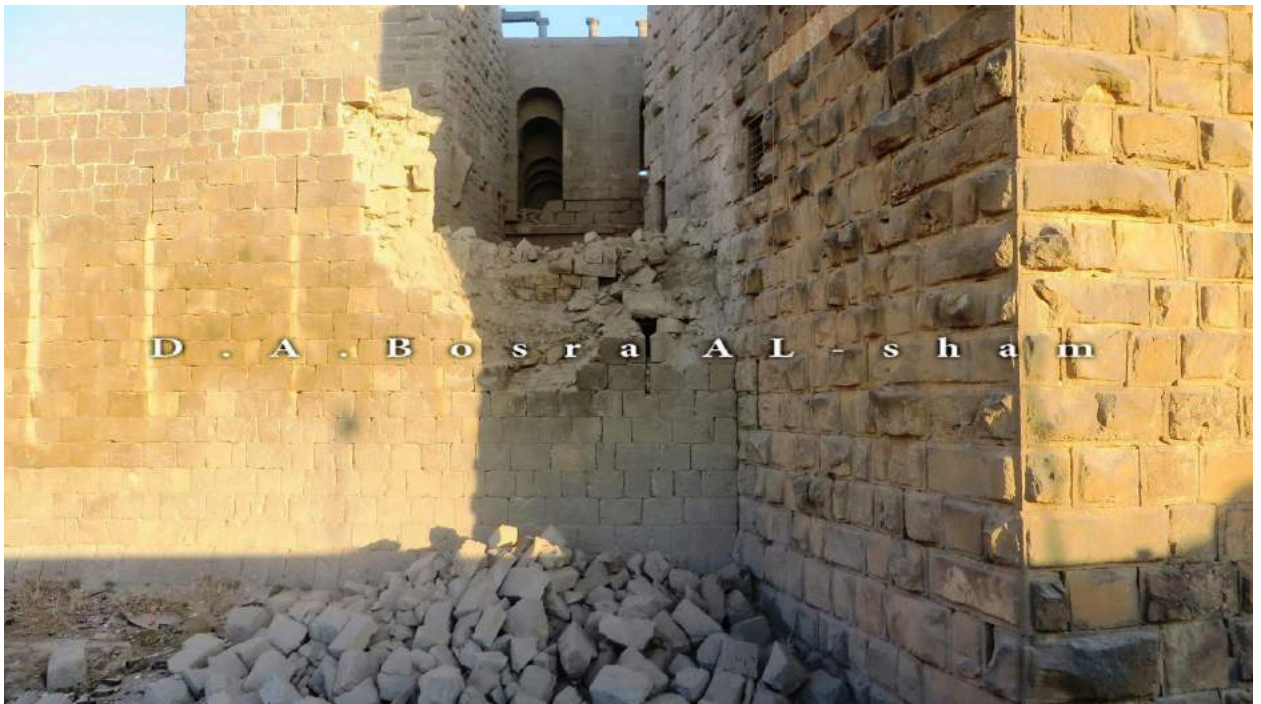
Deep hole in Ayyubid Citadel courtyard (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



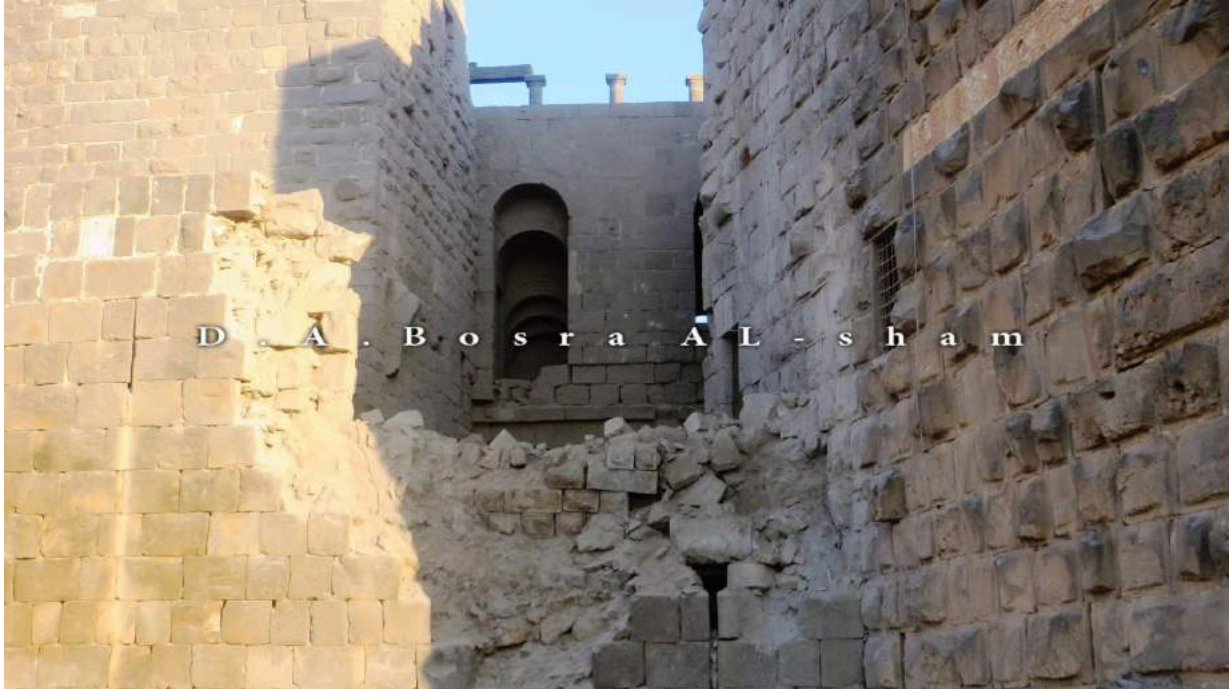
Damage to Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



Collapse of columns in western section of Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



Collapse of western section of Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



Collapse of western section of Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



Damage to corridors in Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



Damage to Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



Damage to Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



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Damage to Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



Damage to Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)



Damage to Ayyubid Citadel (Bosra al-Sham Department of Antiquities; December 22, 2015)

SHI 15-0167

Report Date: December 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell Jifar

Date of Incident: Ongoing since 2012

Location: Hama Governorate, Syria

Site Description: From UNITAR: "The site contains a high mound which dates back to the Bronze Age and Iron Age, as well as a surrounding Hellenistic, Roman, and Islamic settlement, which is largely buried."⁸⁴ Located east of Apamea.

Site Date: Bronze Age through early Islamic.

Incident Summary: Satellite imagery shows military earthworks, leveling, and construction on archaeological site.

Incident Source and Description: The site has been looted continuously since 2008. In 2012 the site was occupied by military forces, resulting in the leveling of the top of the mound and the construction of earthworks and berms as well as a number of small buildings. As of November 27, 2015, the tell appears to have gone out of use by the military. All of the buildings have been removed, and the top of the mound has been completely leveled.

Pattern: Military activity: occupation/militarization; military activity: construction; Military activity: earthworks/roadwork.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on these reports via in-country sources and is continuing to monitor the condition of Tell Jifar.

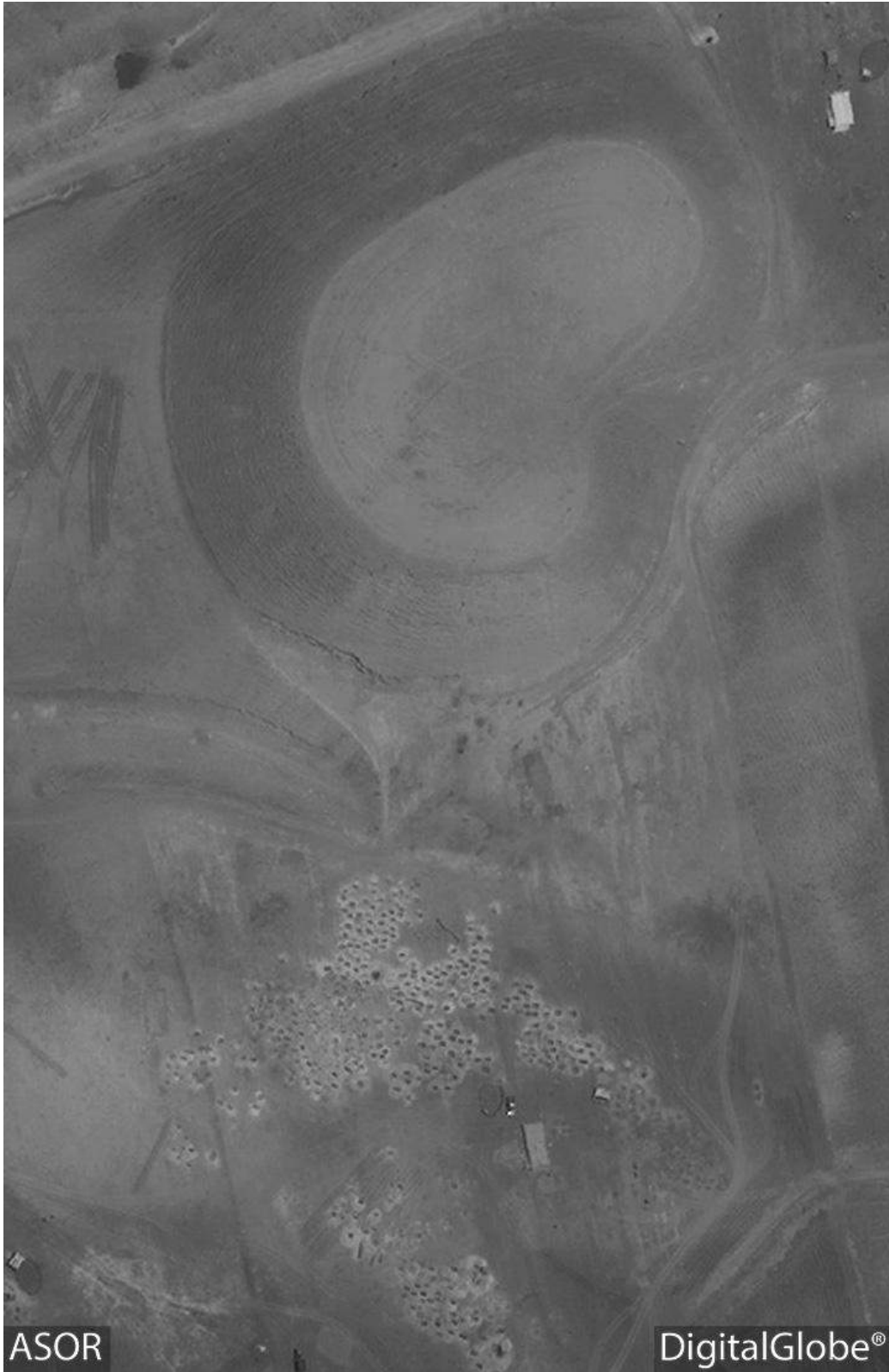
Sources:

Scholarly:

Casana (2015) "Satellite Imagery Based Analysis of Archaeological Looting in Syria." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 78.3: pp.142-152

Casana and Panahipour (2014) "Satellite-based Monitoring of Looting and Damage to Archaeological Sites in Syria." *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 2.2: pp.129-152.

⁸⁴ <http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/unitar/downloads/chs/Apamea.pdf>



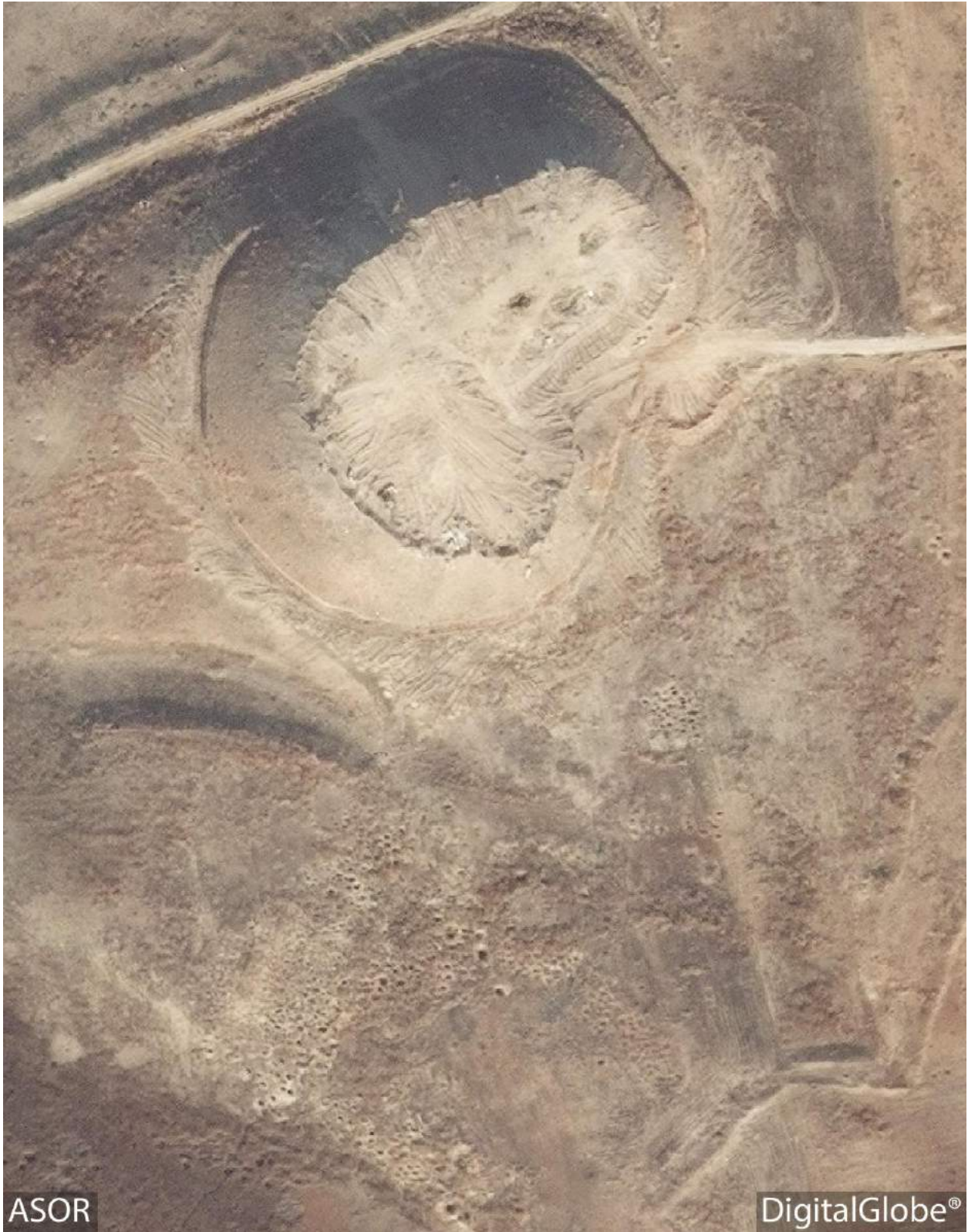
Tell Jifar with looters pits south of the mound (DigitalGlobe; June 2, 2008)



Tell Jifar with military occupation leveling of the top of the mound and the construction earthworks, berms, many small buildings (DigitalGlobe; December 15, 2012)



Tell Jifar with military occupation and leveling of the top of the mound and the construction earthworks, berms, many small buildings (DigitalGlobe; September 20, 2015)



Tell Jifar no longer militarily occupied with buildings removed and the top of the mound leveled (DigitalGlobe; November 27, 2015)

SHI 15-0168

Report Date: December 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell Jindires (Gindaros, Gindarus)

Date of Incident: Ongoing since 2013

Location: Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Jindires is the site of the ancient town of Gindarus or Gindaros, part of the district of Cyrrhestica during the Hellenistic period. In 38 BCE the Parthians were defeated by the Romans in the Battle of Mount Gindarus took place near the town in 38 BCE. During the Roman period the town was under the jurisdiction of Antioch, and the city was fortified during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Great.

Site Date: Hellenistic through Roman/Byzantine with early Islamic occupation

Incident Summary: Satellite imagery shows military earthworks and construction on the archaeological site.

Incident Source and Description: DigitalGlobe satellite imagery reveals that modifications were made on the top of the tell when an exterior wall was built around the site as early as February 2013. Imagery dating to February 14, 2014 shows that over time further changes were made with the addition of small earthwork constructions and a long interior wall. By September 20, 2015 two large horizontal walls were created through the use of earth from the site. The southernmost wall was created with a covering, which appears as white in the image. In the most recent satellite image from November 19, 2015, one wall was leveled and the earth was moved to the base of the exterior wall.

Pattern: Military activity: occupation/militarization; military activity: construction; Military activity: earthworks/roadwork.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on these reports via in-country sources and is continuing to monitor the condition of Tell Jindires.

Sources:

Scholarly:

Cohen, Getzel M. (2006) *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa*. University of California Press, pp. 170-171.



Tell Jindires with open excavation trenches (DigitalGlobe; November 1, 2010)



Tell Jindires with exterior wall built around the site (DigitalGlobe; February 11, 2013)



Tell Jindires with small earthwork constructions and a long interior wall (DigitalGlobe; February 14, 2014)



Tell Jindires with two large horizontal walls (DigitalGlobe; September 4, 2015)



Tell Jindires with one horizontal wall was knocked down and its remains moved to the base of the exterior wall (DigitalGlobe; September 4, 2015)

Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 15-0100

Report Date: December 10, 2015

Site Name: Ahlu al-Baiyt Mosque

Date of Incident: December 9, 2015

Location: Baghdad, Baghdad Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Shia Mosque

Site Date: Unknown, likely modern.

Incident Summary: ISIL suicide bomber attacks mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On December 9, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated near the entrance of the Ahlu al-Baiyt mosque in the 9 Nissan District in the northeastern area of Baghdad area of Obeidi, causing damage to the mosque.⁸⁵ ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that the attack targeted the Saray al-Salam militia, a “militia affiliated with Muqtada al-Sadr’s Sadrist Trend.”⁸⁶

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: Shia mosques are a frequent target of ISIL militants, as the group views Shia Muslims as apostates. ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the extent of the damage to the Ahlu al-Baiyt mosque and will closely monitor any attacks on Shia religious sites in Iraq.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

AFP: <http://www.firstpost.com/world/islamic-state-bombs-shiite-mosque-in-baghdad-kills-eight-injures-19-2539240.html>

Al Ahram: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/173040.aspx>

Al Araby Al Jadeed:

<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/12/9/video-suicide-bomber-kills-eight-near-baghdad-shia-mosque>

⁸⁵ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-8-14-2015.html>

⁸⁶ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-attack-idUSKBN0TS1K020151209> ; <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/173040.aspx> ; <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.691718> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-8-14-2015.html>

Institute for the Study of War:

<http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-8-14-2015.html>

Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-attack-idUSKBN0TS1K020151209>



Exterior of Ahlu al-Baiyt mosque following ISIL suicide attack (Reuters; December 9, 2015)



Exterior of Ahlu al-Baiyt mosque following ISIL suicide attack (Reuters; December 9, 2015)



Exterior of Ahlu al-Baiyt mosque following ISIL suicide attack (Reuters; December 9, 2015)