

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

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Michael D. Danti, Allison Cuneo, Marina Gabriel, Susan Penacho,
Kyra Kaercher, Marshall Schurtz, LeeAnn Barnes Gordon, Emily Ham, and John O’Neill

Executive Summary

During the reporting period, various sources alleged that increased airstrikes targeting ISIL had damaged heritage places in Syria, including cultural assets in the cities of Maraat al-Numan, Raqqa, and possibly Tadmor/Palmyra. Additional information is required to verify these claims for Raqqa and Tadmor/Palmyra. New information was obtained that verified the detonation of a tunnel bomb near the entrance of the Aleppo Citadel, which allegedly caused damage to the Citadel’s monumental entrance and the immediately adjacent Khan al-Shouna. Both structures had previously been damaged through combat and earlier tunnel bombs. More analysis is required to determine the full extent of the damage: recently released ground-level photos of the bombsite should provide additional information.

Recently released DigitalGlobe satellite imagery and reports from in-country sources indicate ISIL-linked construction activity at the site of Nineveh in Mosul is potentially causing disturbance to archaeological deposits. Elsewhere in Iraq (Baghdad, Muqdadiah), there was an escalation in attacks directed at civilian populations and worshippers/houses of worship linked to ISIL or anonymous “gunmen.” These attacks follow on the heels of ISIL setbacks in various military theaters and accord with the attested pattern of ISIL conducting revenge attacks following major tactical and strategic setbacks that are ultimately aimed at demoralizing their opponents, escalating sectarian tensions, and diverting attention from ISIL failures and signs of weakness.

Key Points

- ASOR CHI in-country sources report that the Great Mosque of Maraat Al-Numan was damaged by airstrikes ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0147](#)).
- A tunnel bomb damaged the main entrance to the Aleppo Citadel and the immediately adjacent Khan al-Shouna (var. Shouneh, Shoune) ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0148](#)).
- The Raqqa Museum was reportedly struck by Russian airstrikes ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0149](#)).

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.

- ASOR CHI in-country sources report new roads are being constructed within the walls of ancient Nineveh (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0097**).
- A suicide bomber attacked a Shia mosque in Sadr City outside Baghdad (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0098**).
- Gunmen blew up the Abu Hanifa Mosque in Muqdadiah (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0099**).
- Syrian military forces, with the assistance of Russian airstrikes and pro-government forces, advance towards Palmyra.
- Russian airstrikes continue as French forces begin intensive bombing campaigns in the wake of a terrorist attack in Paris, which also resulted in an expansion of US targets to include oil fields and tanker truck convoys.

Heritage Timeline

November 24, 2015

Daily Sabah Investigations published an article entitled “**Artifacts stolen from Syria seized in eastern Turkey.**” Turkish troops recovered several artifacts reportedly stolen from the Palmyra Museum.

<http://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2015/11/25/artifacts-stolen-from-syria-seized-in-eastern-turkey>

- *Al Jazeera* released an article titled, “**Iraq museum tries to recover lost treasures**” (by Imtiaz Tyab). Sources in Baghdad say that thousands of artifacts have been stolen or destroyed by ISIL.
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/iraq-recover-lost-historical-heritage-artefacts-151124043250049.html>
- *Fusion* published an article titled “**Meet the lonely online warriors leading the fight against looted art**” (by Daniel Rivero).
<http://fusion.net/story/234602/blood-antiquities-online-detectives/>
- The blog *Medmak* published a post titled “التنقيب عن الآثار في زمن الحرب..” “عندما تحل الجرافات مكان أدوات التنقيب” which discusses the industry of looting and trafficking of antiquities in Syria since the outbreak of the conflict.
<https://medmakblog.wordpress.com/2015/11/24/زمن-في-الآثار-عن-التنقيب-ت-عندما-الحرب/>

November 23, 2015

Spiegel Online released an article titled, “**Financial sources of the "Islamic State:" The booty economy**” (Florian Diekmann). This intensive review of ISIL’s financial anatomy says that the top sources of income for the group are oil sales, taxes/ levies/ extortion, antiquities, ransom, and finally donations from far away sympathizers.

<http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/islamischer-staat-so-finanziert-sich-der-is-a-1063522.html>

November 22, 2015

Rudaw published an article titled “**Iraqi ministry of culture targeted in twin Baghdad bombings.**” More than 60 people were killed and 100 injured in two bombings in Baghdad, one at a market and the other outside the Ministry of Culture. No casualties were reported at the ministry.

<http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=173575>

- *Palestine Today* published an article titled “**Paris is Searching for Ways to Protect Cultural Heritage in Syria and Iraq.**” The article relates how that Jean-Luc Martinez, Director of The Louvre Museum in Paris, developed a fifty-point plan to protect, preserve, and restore items and sites of cultural heritage throughout Syria and Iraq.

<http://www.palestinetoday.net/culture/pagenews/أليات تبحث باريس وألعات سورفة فف الأثقافف الأراث ءماففة>

- *The Huffington Post* published an article titled “**Culture: ISIS’ New Tool of Warfare**” (by Deborah Lehr).

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/deborah-lehr/culture-isis-new-tool-of- b 8622620.html>

November 21, 2015

The *New York Times* published an interactive map titled “**Inside Raqqa, the Capital of ISIS,**” which highlights heritage sites at risk in the Syrian city.

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/11/21/world/middleeast/inside-raqqa-capital-of-isis.html>

- **Ohrožená architektura města Mosulu/Monuments of Mosul in Danger**, supervised by Karel Nováček, Miroslav Melčák, Lenka Starková, and Ondřej Beránek, submitted a preliminary list of confirmed and suspected destructions of Islamic monuments in Mosul on October 30, 2015. Miroslav Melčák shared this document on the Facebook group “Monuments of Mosul in Danger.”
<https://www.facebook.com/download/465504166980520/Mosul%20-%20Islamic%20-%20preliminary%20list%20of%20destroyed%20buildings%20-%20appendix%201.pdf>

November 20, 2015

Fair Observer published an investigative video by *Channel 4 News* titled “**The Islamic State’s Antiques Roadshow Racket.**”
http://www.faiobserver.com/region/middle_east_north_africa/islamic-states-antiques-roadshow-racket-32887/

- The **Foundation for Defense of Democracies’ Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance** published an article titled “**Monumental Fight: Counter the Islamic State’s Antiquities Trafficking**” (by Yaya J. Fanusie and Alexander Joffe).
<http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/new-report-outlines-ways-to-combat-islamic-states-antiquities-trafficking/>

November 19, 2015

The **American Academy in Rome** held an event entitled “**Cultural Patrimony and Collective Responsibility.**”
<http://www.aarome.org/event/cultural-patrimony-and-collective-responsibility>

- *Hungary Today* published an article entitled, “**Hungary and Flanders Pledge to Cooperate in Restoring Cultural Heritage Sites Destroyed by ISIS.**” This article announces an agreement made at the ninth meeting of the Hungarian-Flemish Joint Committee in Budapest, November 18, 2015 to cooperate in efforts to restore heritage sites damaged by ISIL in the Middle East.
<http://hungarytoday.hu/news/hungary-flanders-pledge-cooperate-restoring-cultural-heritage-sites-destroyed-isis-71787>
- *The Economist* published an online radio broadcast titled “**The Economist asks: Is virtual-reality the future of history?: Project Mosul, part one.**” This report discusses the crowdsourcing initiative to document objects destroyed by ISIL militants using 3D photographic modeling.
<https://soundcloud.com/theeconomist/the-economist-asks-is-vr-the-future-of-history-project-mosul-part-one>
- Podcasts of the “**Conflict and Cultural Heritage Conference**” held at Oxford University on October 31, 2015 were made publically available for download.
<http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/conflict-and-cultural-heritage-conference>

November 18, 2015

ArtNet News published an article entitled “**French President François Hollande Takes Action Against ISIS Trade in Looted Antiquities**” (by Henri Neuendorf).
<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/france-asylum-isis-antiquities-366293>

- *Apollo Magazine* published an article titled “**We have one heritage.’ Syria’s chief of antiquities calls on Europe for help.**” (by Maggie Gray). Maamoun Abdulkarim, Director-General of the DGAM, spoke at an event in London organized by the World Monuments Fund. <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/we-have-one-heritage-syrias-chief-of-antiquities-calls-on-europe-for-help/>
- The Law Firm **Galluzzo & Amineddoleh** published an article titled “**The Role of Museums in Providing Asylum to Antiquities.**” Blogger discusses the right of countries to retain their heritage versus protecting artifacts in places outside of conflict areas. <http://www.artandiplaw.com/role-museums-providing-asylum-antiquities/>
- *Decoded Science* published an article entitled “**Preserving Palmyra: Ancient City In Danger from ISIS**” (by Natasha Sheldon), describing the Palmyra Photogrammetry initiative organized by archaeologist Conan Parsons. <http://www.decodedscience.org/preserving-palmyra-ancient-city-danger-isis/56590>
- The **DGAM** published an article titled “**The start of implementation of the rehabilitation of the old city of Homs plan.**” The Department of Antiquities in Homs will begin to assess buildings of importance and estimate the overall damage in the city. The article outlines which sites will be given particular attention. <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=177&id=1872>
- **The World Monuments Fund** published a speech titled “**Prof. Maamoun Abdulkarim on Syria’s Battle to Protect its Past.**” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSolxbv_61o

November 17, 2015

- **House Committee On Foreign Affairs** held a hearing titled “**Terrorist Financing: Kidnapping, Antiquities Trafficking, and Private Donations.**” ASOR CHI Academic Director, Michael Danti, spoke on how ISIL uses antiquities to finance its terrorist activities. <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-hearing-terrorist-financing-kidnapping-antiquities-trafficking-and-private>
- *UPI* published an article titled “**Hollande proposes that Syrian antiquities be brought to France for safekeeping**” (by Ed Adamczyk). In his speech at the UNESCO conference in Paris, French President François Hollande proposed “bringing Syrian antiquities to France for safekeeping” in accordance with AAMD Protocol. It should be noted that the Louvre is not a member of the AAMD. http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2015/11/17/Hollande-proposes-that-Syrian-antiquities-be-brought-to-France-for-safekeeping/6501447778123/

- AP* published an article titled “**IS militants dig in, anticipating assault on Syria’s Raqqa**” (by Bassem Mroue and Zeina Karam). The article reports Russian airstrikes near the Grand Mosque and the Museum on November 14.
<http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:49c397792a504e2e9f1dc34daab56f17>
- November 16, 2015 *Marketplace* published an article titled “**Where ISIS gets its money**” (by Tracey Samuelson). Following the attacks in Paris, France and ensuing French airstrikes in Syria on Sunday, the article speculates where ISIL is gathering funding for their terrorist activities, including the trafficking and sales of antiquities from looted sites.
<http://www.marketplace.org/2015/11/16/world/where-isis-gets-its-money>
- Lexology* published an article titled “**Despite universal criticism, German cabinet approves stricter cultural heritage law**” (by Nicholas M. O’Donnell). Germany approved a revision to its cultural heritage protection law, which will “lay claim to disputed objects as a litigation tactic to undermine the value of looted cultural property to claimants.” Collectors and pro-market are against these changes, but the new law is widely supported by preservationists and archaeologists.
<http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=9a4c9ebf-bcd1-4bfa-afa1-5edbb95f48e8>
- November 15, 2015 **DGAM** published an article titled “**Open workshop in Paris to commemorate the late Khaled Assad and other killed Syrian archaeologists.**” The workshop, organized by the École Normale Supérieure, occurred on November 9.
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1869>
- November 14, 2015 *BBC World News Service* aired a radio special titled “**Is it too Late to Save Syria’s Antiquities?**” reporting on how Syria’s cultural heritage is being damaged by several factions including the Assad regime, looters, opposition forces, ISIL, and Russia.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p036zqq6>
- November 13, 2015 *Al Jazeera America* released a video titled “**The power of ISIL’s ‘cultural genocide’ in Syria and Iraq**” (reported by Joie Chen). In the video, Chief Curator of the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute, Jack Green, describes ISIL’s actions in Syria and Iraq as a “form of cultural genocide.” Professor of Archaeology Gil Stein estimates that stolen antiquities garner more than 2 billion dollars annually, with the U.S. and U.K. representing the biggest markets.
<http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/america-tonight/2015/11/the-power-of-isils-cultural-genocide-in-syria-and-iraq.html>

November 12, 2015

Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism published a summary of speaker presentations from the event titled “**5th International Conference of Experts on the Return of Cultural Property**” held in Nevşehir, Turkey on October 18-22, 2015.

<http://rcp.culture.gov.tr/pages/summaries.html>

- *Le Figaro* published an interview with Syria’s Director General of Antiquities and Museums, Maamoun Abdulkarim, titled “**Le chef des antiquités syriennes appelle la France au secours**” (by Georges Malbrunot). Mr. Abdulkarim expressed his concern for the archaeological sites damaged in Syria since the beginning of the civil war. By his count, out of the 10,000 archaeological sites in Syria, 300 have been destroyed or damaged.

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/culture/2015/11/12/03004-20151112ARTFIG00345-le-chef-des-antiquites-syriennes-appelle-la-france-au-secours.php>

- **UNESCO** published an article titled “**Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities gives \$200,000 USD for Arab States World Heritage sites conservation.**”

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1386>

- **DGAM** published an article titled “**Heritage and Conflict: Syria Battle to Protect its Past.**” The World Monuments Fund Britain hosted DGAM Director-General Maamoun Abdulkarim who spoke on the current heritage situation in Syria as well as efforts to protect, record, and restore historic sites. During his presentation Dr. Abdulkarim provided new details about ISIL’s intentional damage of the Triumphal Arch in Palmyra, stating that after using explosives, ISIL returned with bulldozers to “destroy” the arch.

<http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1866>

November 11, 2015

Independent published an article titled “**Palmyra will be flattened by Isis within six months, warns antiquities director**” (by Nick Clark).

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/palmyra-will-be-flattened-by-isis-within-six-months-warns-antiquities-director-a6730891.html>

- *ARTnews* published an interview titled “**‘This is a genocide’: Art Historian Zainab Bahrani on ISIS’S Destruction of Cultural Heritage**” (by Hannah Ghorashi).

<http://www.artnews.com/2015/11/11/this-is-a-genocide-art-historian-zainab-bahrani-on-isis-s-destruction-of-cultural-heritage/>

- The *BBC* published an article titled “**The art detective fighting to save Syria's past**”, which included an interview with Christopher Marinello, Chief Executive of the Art Recovery Group, who discussed what actions can be taken to stop the theft of the country’s antiquities.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34732945>
 - *Newsweek* published an article titled “**The New Monument Men Outsmart ISIS**” (by Mary Karmelek), detailing the work of the Institute for Digital Archaeology’s Million Image Database in documenting threatened heritage sites in Syria and Iraq.
<http://www.newsweek.com/2015/11/20/institute-digital-archaeology-preserves-cultural-heritage-middle-east-392732.html>
- November 10, 2015
- World News Blog* published an article titled “**Islamic State group sells ancient artefacts on the black market**” (by Inigo Gilmore). This blog gives a brief synopsis of the looting of antiquities done by ISIL throughout Syria.
<http://blogs.channel4.com/world-news-blog/islamic-state-group-sells-ancient-artefacts-black-market/29174>
- *The Interpreter* published an article entitled, “**UNESCO: On the front line against ISIS**” (by Ammarree O’Keefe).
<http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2015/11/10/UNESCO-On-the-front-line-against-ISIS.aspx>
 - *The Architect* published an article titled, “**Protecting Syria's History in the Face of Conflict**” (by Chelsea Blahut). The article announces the DGAM’s Maamoun Abdulkarim scheduled speech at London’s Royal Geographical Society on Thursday, November 12.
http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/culture/protecting-syrias-history-in-the-face-of-conflict_o
 - **The World Monuments Fund** published an article titled “**Documenting Babylon**” (by Salman Ahmed Soulieman). The article summarizes the efforts of the Babylon Documentation Work Group to document cultural heritage using 3D model and set of AutoCAD drawings.
<https://www.wmf.org/blog/documenting-babylon>

Military and Political Context

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

1. Aleppo Governorate:
 - On November 12, the Syrian army and allied forces captured the town of al-Hader in southern Aleppo Governorate. The town had previously been held by Al-Nusra Front and other Islamist groups. The capture of al-Hader opens the Syrian regime to possible advancement into other rebel-held area of northern Syria.²
 - On November 19, Russian airstrikes hit a market in central Aleppo. Local reporters released video of the aftermath of the attack, which reportedly struck a civilian-populated area.³
 - On November 21, Syrian Turkmen rebels, backed by Turkish and US-coalition airstrikes, seized the villages of Harjaleh and Dalha from ISIL near the Turkish border.⁴
 - On November 21, local media reported ongoing clashes, explosions, and airstrikes in the Old City of Aleppo.⁵
2. Raqqa Governorate:
 - During the reporting period, French warplanes repeatedly carried out airstrikes in the ISIL stronghold city of Raqqa in response to the November 13 attacks on Paris that killed 129 people and wounded hundreds more.⁶
 - On November 13, a U.S. strike in Raqqa targeted the ISIL militant Mohammed Emwazi, aka “Jihadi John.” Emwazi is known for his brutal role as an executioner of American and other foreign captives of ISIL. The strike is believed to have killed Emwazi and another ISIL militant as they entered a car in the city of Raqqa.⁷

² <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/12/us-mideast-crisis-aleppo-idUSKCN0T11KI20151112> ; <https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/30080410/syria-army-takes-key-rebel-town-south-of-aleppo-military-source/> ; https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/syria-its-premature-to-talk-about-presidential-elections/2015/11/12/f7ceef6-8938-11e5-bd91-d385b244482f_story.html

³ <https://www.facebook.com/ramijarah/videos/10153875926797873/?pnref=story> ; <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/667433087672975361> ; <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-november-20-2015-1.3327528/russia-and-france-join-forces-to-fight-isis-syrian-civilians-pay-the-price-1.3327530>

⁴ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/21/Turkey-backed-Syria-rebels-take-two-border-villages-from-ISIS-report-.html> ; <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN0TA0QB20151121> ; <http://news.yahoo.com/least-36-dead-bombing-raids-eastern-syria-monitor-231137389.html>

⁵ https://twitter.com/ANA_Feed/status/668166360673947649

⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/16/world/europe/paris-terror-attack.html> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/16/world/europe/france-islamic-state-syria.html> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/16/French-jets-pound-ISIS-stronghold-in-Syria-.html> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPQiVQfwS2o&feature>

⁷ <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/194311-u-s-air-strike-targets-jihadi-john-in-syria> ; https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-airstrike-targets-jihadi-john-from-is-slaying-videos/2015/11/12/2417606e-89b7-11e5-bd91-d385b244482f_story.html

- On November 17, Russia conducted a “significant number” of airstrikes in Raqqa, possibly using cruise missiles launched from the sea and long-range bombers.⁸
3. Homs Governorate:
- During the reporting period, activists and local sources reported ongoing clashes between ISIL militants and Syrian regime forces, backed by Hezbollah ground forces and Russian airstrikes, in the city of Palmyra.
 - On November 15, *Russia Today* released a video of residents returning to the town of Sadad following the arrival of Syrian and militia defenses. The presence of Russian counselors in Sadad was also reported. The town is now “the last remaining government-held town between the Islamic State . . . and the critical M5 highway.”⁹
 - On November 15, the Syrian army reclaimed the town of al-Hadath from ISIL militants. According to Syrian state media, the Syrian army will continue advancing towards the villages of Hawarin and Maheen, and the town of al-Qaryatain.¹⁰
 - On November 23, the Syrian army and allied militias, along with Russian airstrikes, took control of the towns of Maheen and Hawarin, southeast of Homs, from ISIL militants. The capturing of these towns helps in securing the highway linking Damascus to the city of Homs.¹¹
4. Daraa Governorate:
- During the reporting period, Russia announced its first airstrikes in Daraa Governorate, despite local reports that airstrikes had been ongoing in the area since October 28.
 - During the reporting period, local sources in Daraa reported both Russian airstrikes and Syrian regime attacks in the area, causing mass civilian casualties.¹²
 - On November 15, the head of al-Yarmuk Martyrs Brigade, Abu Ali al-Baridi, an ISIL-affiliate in Syria, was killed in an attack by rival jihadists group al-Nusra Front.¹³
5. Hasakah Governorate:
- On November 16, Syrian Democratic Forces spokesman Talal Ali Sello announced that between October 30-November 13, Kurdish and Arab forces, with the support

⁸ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/16/French-jets-pound-ISIS-stronghold-in-Syria.html>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2kkVtVWgkc>; <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-christians-race-across-war-torn-syria-defend-besieged-town-sadad-1528105>; <http://news.yahoo.com/russian-army-map-shown-tv-suggests-ground-forces-193204791.html>; <http://syriadirect.org/news/christian-town-braces-for-the-worst-as-islamic-state-3km-away>; <http://www.janes.com/article/56134/syrian-government-territorial-gains-just-0-4-since-russian-military-intervention>

¹⁰ <http://sana.sy/en/?p=61679>; <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Nov-17/323399-syrian-army-captures-village-from-isis.ashx>

¹¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34899278>; <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Nov-23/324183-syrian-army-captures-towns-after-russian-strikes.ashx>; http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_SYRIA; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/23/Syria-troops-advance-against-ISIS-in-Homs-province.html>

¹² <http://www.understandingwar.org/background/russia-security-update-november-11-18-2015>; <http://aranews.net/2015/11/dozens-of-civilians-killed-in-renewed-syrian-strikes-in-daraa/>; <http://www.reuters.com/video/2015/11/20/target-daraa?videoId=366400405>

¹³ <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/194517-is-commander-killed-in-nusra-suicide-attack-in-daraa>

of US-led coalition airstrikes, had forced ISIL militants out of 196 towns and villages, including the strategic town of Hol.¹⁴

6. Damascus Governorate:

- During the reporting period, activists and local sources reported continuing bombardment by Russian warplanes and attacks by Syrian forces in the suburb of Douma.¹⁵

7. Idlib Governorate:

- On November 12, local sources reported the use of white phosphorous by Russian warplanes in Idlib. Russian airstrikes have continuously targeted Idlib.¹⁶

8. Latakia Governorate:

- During the reporting period, activists and local sources reported an ongoing large-scale Syrian military operation, with the support of Russian airstrikes, to reclaim rebel-held territory in Latakia.¹⁷
- On November 24, Turkish forces shot down a Russian warplane after it reportedly violated Turkish airspace. The plane went down in Syrian territory, reportedly killing at least one of the pilots.¹⁸

9. Deir ez Zor:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition began Operation Tidal Wave II, resulting in increased airstrikes against ISIL-controlled oil fields in an effort to disrupt a main form of the group's revenue. U.S. warplanes also conducted their first strikes against hundreds of trucks used by ISIL to transport crude oil produced in Syria.¹⁹ This is likely in response to the Paris attacks.

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, Hasakah, Mar'a, Palmyra, and Raqqa.²⁰

¹⁴ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/17/Iran-army-exercise-simulates-response-to-ISIS-attack.html> ; <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article45269595.html> ; <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kurdish-iraqis-set-enter-sinjar-islamic-state-35171884>

¹⁵ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/syria-civil-war-douma-damascus-daily-life-1.3324640> ; <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/667347678997700608> ; <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/11/19/syrian-regime-bombs-douma-despite-ceasefire-talks-with-rebels/> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZ1ar0nedAl&feature=youtu.be>

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49jEqrECTE> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-november-4.html> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34882503>

¹⁷ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/russian-strikes-in-syria-november-9-19.html> ; <http://www.almasdarnews.com/article/breaking-syrian-army-captures-the-al-zahi-mountains-in-northern-latakia/> ; <http://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-army-seizes-the-al-katf-mountains-near-the-idlib-latakia-border/>

¹⁸ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34907983>

¹⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/13/us/politics/us-steps-up-its-attacks-on-isis-controlled-oil-fields-in-syria.html> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/17/world/middleeast/us-strikes-syria-oil.html>

²⁰ <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628630/airstrikes-hit-isil-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628640/strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628831/strikes-target-isil-executioner-other-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628947/operation-inherent-resolve-strikes-continue-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628972/us->

- During the reporting period Russian airstrikes targeted Syrian opposition forces in the provinces of Aleppo, Idlib, Daraa, Latakia, and Hama, as well as targeting ISIL militants in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor.²¹
- On November 14, the U.S. delivered ammunition to the Syrian Arab Coalition in northern Syria. In a change from the previous October 11 airdrop of ammunition, this shipment was carried out via land by unknown actors.²²
- On November 18, Russian military Chief of Staff, Col. Gen. Andrey Kartapolov, announced that “Russian warplanes are now flying on a free hunt” against ISIL oil tanker trucks that travel between Syria and Iraq.²³

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

1. Ninawa Governorate:
 - On November 12, Kurdish and Yazidi forces launched a major offensive to reclaim the strategic town of Sinjar from ISIL militants. The fighters’ efforts were backed by US-led coalition airstrikes that began paving the way for the assault the previous night, as well as American and British advisors located on Mount Sinjar. Peshmerga forces set up positions on Highway 47 in two separate areas, separating Sinjar from Tal Afar and Syria. Highway 47 was previously being used by ISIL as a major supply line between ISIL in Sinjar and the stronghold cities of Mosul and Raqqa.²⁴

[coalition-continue-strikes-against-isil-in-syria-iraq](http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/629013/strikes-continue-against-isil-targets-in-syria-iraq) ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630096/military-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630254/military-strikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630831/strikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630848/coalition-airstrikes-continue-against-isil-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630895/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631075/military-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

²¹ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-november-4.html> ; <http://www.understandingwar.org/background/russia-security-update-november-11-18-2015> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/russian-strikes-in-syria-november-9-19.html> ; <http://news.yahoo.com/least-36-dead-bombing-raids-eastern-syria-monitor-231137389.html>

²² <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/15/U-S-delivers-ammunition-to-Syrian-Arab-fighters-battling-ISIS.html>

²³ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/russian-strikes-in-syria-november-9-19.html>

²⁴ <https://twitter.com/KRSCPress/status/664755677445931009> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34795506> ; <https://www.facebook.com/CJTFOIR/posts/1634476790151789> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628651/airstrikes-support-peshmerga-offensive-to-clear-sinjar> ; <http://news.sky.com/story/1586223/uk-forces-on-frontline-of-battle-for-sinjar> ; https://twitter.com/mike_giglio/status/664778049536327680 ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/13/world/middleeast/sinjar-isis-iraq-syria.html> ; http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_ISLAMIC_STATE ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/12/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-sinjar-idUSKCN0T10AL20151112> ; <https://twitter.com/KRSCPress/status/664904311407837186> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/628778/departments-of-defense-press-briefing-by-pentagon-press-secretary-peter-cook-in> ; <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/12/kurds-assault-isis-in-sinjar-with-eyes-on-mosul/>

- On November 13, Kurdish and Yazidi forces declared Sinjar to be free of ISIL militants. Iraqi Kurdish President Massoud Barzani declared victory and said that this victory would have a “big impact on liberating Mosul.” Kurdish forces reportedly entered Sinjar from all directions and faced minimal resistance from the approximately 600 ISIL militants present.²⁵
 - On November 22, ISIL militants reportedly executed 12 university students in the city of Mosul for criticizing the group online.²⁶
2. Baghdad Governorate:
- On November 12, clashes between Iraqi Kurdish and Shia fighters killed seven people and wounded 22 others in northern Baghdad.²⁷
 - On November 13, two bombings in Iraq killed dozens of people and wounded scores more. In the suburb of Hay al-Amal, a suicide bomber targeted the funeral of a Shia fighter killed in battle against ISIL, killing at least 21 people and wounding 46 others. Another roadside bombing at a Shia shrine in Baghdad’s Sadr City killed at least five people and wounded 15 more. ISIL claimed responsibility for both attacks. Later reports stated that the attacks in Sadr city were carried out by two suicide bombers and targeted a Sadrist militia known as Saraya al-Salam.²⁸
 - On November 20, four bombings in the southern areas of Baghdad killed at least 15 people. A roadside bomb and suicide bomber targeted a mosque in the neighborhood of Nahiyet al-Rasheed, killing 10 people and wounding 38 more. Two more roadside bombs detonated in two commercial areas, killing five people and wounding nine others. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.²⁹
 - On November 22, a bomb, possibly planted in a ministry car, detonated near the Iraqi Ministry of Culture. No one was killed in the attack. Another car bombing occurred in the Baghdad district of Rasafa. Over 60 people were killed and 100 were injured.³⁰
3. Ramadi Governorate:
- During the reporting period, Iraqi security forces continued their advance towards the city of Ramadi, gaining in proximity to infrastructure necessary to reclaim the

²⁵ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/13/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-sinjar-idUSKCN0T10AL20151113> ; <http://www.buzzfeed.com/mikegiglio/kurdish-forces-press-closer-to-key-iraqi-town-of-sinjar> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/34806556>

²⁶ <http://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2015/11/23/university-students-slain-in-iraqs-daesh-held-mosul-for-criticizing-the-group-official>

²⁷ <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/164401.aspx>

²⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/dozens-dead-isil-claims-attacks-iraqi-shias-151113165046854.html> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/34806556> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/iraq-situation-report-november-10-19.html> ; <http://www.iraqakhbar.com/iraq-news/133260.html> ; <http://www.mustaqila.com/news/185205.html>

²⁹ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/20/Bomb-attacks-near-mosque-south-of-Baghdad-kill-9.html> ; http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_IRAQ

³⁰ <http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=173575>

city, such as the Palestine Bridge. Iraqi security forces are using the Habaniya Base as a launching point to retake the city.³¹

4. Diyala Governorate:

- On November 16, unidentified gunmen blew up the Abu Hanifa Mosque in the Bulur area of Muqdadiyah.³²

5. Al Anbar Governorate:

- During the reporting period, Iraqi security forces carried out operations against ISIL militants in the area of Albu Hayat, southeast of Haditha.³³

Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Albu Hayat, Baghdadi, Beiji, Fallujah, Haditha, Hit, Kisik, Makhmur, Mosul, Qayyarah, Ramadi, Rutbah, Sinjar, Sultan Abdallah, Tal Afar, and Tikrit.³⁴
- On November 13, demonstrations calling for reform and an end to corruption took place throughout southern Iraq and in the Karrada District of Baghdad.³⁵

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

- During the reporting period, Turkish military operations were ongoing against PKK militants in the “flashpoint town” of Silvan in the southeastern province of Diyarbakir.³⁶
- On November 17, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry announced plans to secure the Turkish border with northern Syria in cooperation with Turkish forces, reporting that 75 percent of the border had been “shut off.” The border between Turkey and Syria has been used as a “lucrative smuggling route” for ISIL.³⁷

³¹ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/control-map-of-ramadi-november-11-2015.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/13/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-ramadi-idUSKCN0T20V320151113>

³² <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/iraq-situation-report-november-10-19.html>

³³ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/iraq-situation-report-november-10-19.html>

³⁴ <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628630/airstrikes-hit-isil-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628640/strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628831/strikes-target-isil-executioner-other-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628972/us-coalition-continue-strikes-against-isil-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/629013/strikes-continue-against-isil-targets-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630096/military-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630254/military-strikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630686/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630831/strikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630848/coalition-airstrikes-continue-against-isil-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630895/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631075/military-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

³⁵ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/iraq-situation-report-november-10-19.html>

³⁶ <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/164317.aspx> ; <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/0/164261/World/0/Five-people-killed-in-Kurdish-militant-attacks-in-.aspx> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34789798> ; <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/thousands-of-residents-flee-silvan-amid-ongoing-conflict.aspx> ; <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/thousands-of-residents-flee-silvan-amid-ongoing-conflict.aspx> ; <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/12-day-curfew-in-turkeys-silvan-ends-governor-reveals-death-toll.aspx>

³⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/17/us-france-shooting-kerry-idUSKCN0T60YI20151117>

- On November 20, Turkey summoned Russia’s ambassador over “intensive bombing of Turkmen villages” by Russian airstrikes that reportedly struck civilians in the northwestern area of Bayirbucak in Hatay province.³⁸

Other Regional Key Points:

- During the reporting period, a UN report was released describing how Libyan militant groups pledging allegiance to ISIL are “consolidating their hold on parts of central Libya” including Sirte, Harawa, and Nofliya. Clashes between Libyan gunmen and ISIL-affiliated militants are frequent and there has been a significant uptick in violence against minority groups such as Christians in areas held by the group.³⁹
- On November 12, two suicide bombers struck the majority-Shiite southern Beirut neighborhood of Burj al-Barajneh. A third suicide bomber was found dead with his vest intact, and was likely killed during the second blast. At least 43 people were killed in the attack and more than 240 wounded. According to the Wall Street Journal, “southern Beirut is a stronghold of Lebanon’s militant Hezbollah group.” Hezbollah is currently fighting alongside Syrian government forces. ISIL released a statement claiming responsibility for the attack.⁴⁰
- On November 13, at least 8 ISIL-linked gunmen attacked restaurants, a sports stadium, and the Bataclan concert hall in Paris, killing 130 people and wounding hundreds more. In response, France announced a state of emergency and ramped up its airstrikes on ISIL targets, specifically in the militants’ stronghold city of Raqqa. On November 19, French special forces killed the mastermind of the attacks, Belgian national Abdelhamid Abaaoud.⁴¹
- On November 14, a U.S. airstrike on a compound in the Libyan coastal city of Derna killed the leader of ISIL in Libya, Iraqi national Abu Nabil aka Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al-Zubaydi.⁴²
- On November 17, Russia announced that it now believed the Metrojet Airbus that crashed on October 31 was brought down by a bomb. While Russia did not directly name the perpetrator of the attack, it did announce an increase in strikes against ISIL targets and a 50 million dollar reward for any information leading to the capture of those responsible. Previously, on November 14, Russia announced that its decision to ban incoming Egyptian

³⁸ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/20/Turkey-summons-Russian-envoy-over-bombing-of-Turkmens-in-Syria.html>

³⁹ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/16/Libya-groups-clash-with-is-in-eastern-city-.html> ; http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/UN_UNITED_NATIONS_LIBYA ; <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/168818/World/Region/Migrants-in-Libya-risk-brutal-violence-UN.aspx>

⁴⁰ <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Nov-12/322792-two-blasts-heard-in-south-beirut-suburb-of-burj-al-barajneh-witnesses.ashx> ; <http://www.wsj.com/articles/two-bombing-attacks-hit-beirut-suburb-1447348870> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34795797> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/13/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-sinjar-idUSKCN0T10AL20151113> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/13/world/middleeast/lebanon-explosions-southern-beirut-hezbollah.html>

⁴¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34822265> ; <http://europe.newsweek.com/paris-120-dead-336542> ; <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/16/world/paris-attacks/> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/20/us-france-shooting-idUSKCN0T22IU20151120>

⁴² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34823466> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/628955/us-airstrike-kills-senior-isil-leader-in-libya>

flights was directly linked the Russian airliner crash. Two employees from Sharm al-Sheikh airport have been detained in connection with the crash.⁴³

- On November 18, ISIL's official magazine published a photo of a makeshift bomb, planted in a Schweppes soft drink can, that it claimed brought down the Metrojet Airbus on October 31 over the Sinai Peninsula.⁴⁴
- On November 23, France launched its first attacks against ISIL from the Charles De Gaulle aircraft carrier, reportedly striking ISIL targets in Iraq.⁴⁵
- On November 24, a suicide bomber killed four people at a hotel in the North Sinai capital of al-Arish. ISIL-affiliate group Sinai Province claimed responsibility for the bombing.⁴⁶
- On November 24, a suicide bomber targeted a bus full of presidential guards in the capital of Tunis, killing at least 12 troops. ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack.⁴⁷

Satellite Imagery and Geospatial Analysis

While new satellite imagery has become available for areas within Syria, these images are still being evaluated and updates will be forthcoming in later reports. In particular, imagery of Aleppo dating to November 24, 2015 has been released, the first imagery of the area since December 22, 2014. ASOR CHI was able to use this imagery to verify reports of the tunnel bombing that took place near the Aleppo Citadel on November 10, 2015. Given the years of intensive combat in the Aleppo region and dense concentration of heritage places and repositories in the city, processing these new images will take time. ASOR CHI will update previous incident reports and document new episodes in the following bi-weekly reports.

⁴³ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/17/us-egypt-crash-russia-blast-idUSKCN0T60PS20151117> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/18/world/europe/russia-plane-crash-bomb.html> ; <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/166567/Egypt/Politics-/Russia-says-EgyptAir-ban-is-repercussion-of-air-cr.aspx> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/18/world/europe/russia-plane-crash-bomb.html> ; <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Nov-17/323393-egypt-detains-two-airport-staff-in-connection-with-sinai-air-crash-sources.ashx>

⁴⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/19/us-egypt-crash-islamicstate-photo-idUSKCN0T725Q20151119>

⁴⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34899174>

⁴⁶ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/24/Car-bomb-explodes-near-hotel-in-northern-Sinai.html>

⁴⁷ <http://af.reuters.com/article/tunisiaNews/idAFL8N13K1G420151125>

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0147

Report Date: November 14, 2015

Site Name: Great Mosque of Maraat Al-Numan

Date of Incident: November 2, 2015

Location: Maraat al-Numan, Idlib, Syria

Site Description: According to Burns:

“In the main square in the centre of town, you will find the Great Mosque, built on the site of an ancient temple-church and re-using many of its predecessors’ remains. The two domed pavilions in the central courtyard rest on ancient columns. Attached to the mosque is a handsome minaret originally erected in the first half of the 12th century but rebuilt after an earthquake in 1170. The rebuilding is attributed to the Kahir al-Sarmani (signature on the west face) who sought to rival by imitation the tower of the Great Mosque of Aleppo.”⁴⁸

Site Date: Pre-1st Century BCE to the Umayyad Period

Incident Summary: Airstrikes damaged the minaret of the Great Mosque.

Incident Source and Description: According ASOR CHI in-country sources, on November 2, 2015 a series of airstrikes damaged the exterior and roof of the minaret of the Great Mosque in Maraat al-Numan. Photographs provided by in-country sources show what appears to be superficial damage to the exterior of the minaret but the structure itself remains standing. Arabic language news media report that the bombing was conducted by Russian military forces.⁴⁹

Pattern: Military activity/ airstrikes.

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 Great Mosque of Maraat al-Numan given that this area has been subject to a great deal of military activity throughout the conflict.

Sources:

Scholarly:

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

⁴⁸ Burns, Ross *The Monuments of Syria* pp. 194-195

⁴⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4sYAihXD-U>



Damage to Maraat al-Numan minaret (ASOR CHI in-country sources; November 2, 2015)



Damage to Maraat al-Numan minaret (ASOR CHI in-country sources; November 2, 2015)



Damage to Maraat al-Numan minaret (ASOR CHI in-country sources; November 2, 2015)

SHI 15-0148

Report Date: November 12, 2015

Site Name: Aleppo — Citadel (Beroia; Tell es-Soda)

Date of Incident: November 10, 2015

Location: Old City of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: From the UNESCO World Heritage Listing for the Ancient City of Aleppo:

“The monumental Citadel of Aleppo, rising above the suqs, mosques and madrasas of the old walled city, is testament to Arab military might from the 12th to the 14th centuries. With evidence of past occupation by civilizations dating back to the 10th century B.C., the citadel contains the remains of mosques, palace and bath buildings...

A ring of crenellated walls and towers rises rise [sic] 50m above the city from a steep glacis, encircling a mass of ruins of every period. The nail-heads on the doors themselves are beautifully worked, the lintels have comic or enigmatic carvings on them, and there are fine Kufic inscriptions calling upon the power and the mercy of Allah. The interior of the citadel shows all too clearly how it has been ravaged by enemies (the Mongols invaded it twice) and shattered by earthquakes (that of 1822 was particularly devastating).

St George's Cathedral stands behind a labyrinth of narrow streets on a tiny square. The postern gate in the middle of the ramparts (Bab Antakia) is the Antioch Gate. Beyond there are many important monuments - the little domed Byzantine church converted into a mosque; a prison with dungeons dug into the rock; a stretch of wall 4 m thick, the base of a Syrio-Hittite temple; the remains of a great mosque built by Saladin's son; a covered building containing sculpture and objects from various periods found on the site; the tomb of Emir Zaher Ghazi (son of Saladin) in an annex to a *madrasa* founded during the Crusader period.”⁵⁰

Site Date: Bronze Age through Ottoman

Incident Summary: A tunnel explosion to the west of the Citadel caused damage to the main gate.

Incident Source and Description: On November 8, 2015, the DGAM reported that rebel forces blew up a tunnel loaded with explosives to the west of the Citadel of Aleppo, allegedly resulting in heavy physical damage. According to the regional antiquities department in Aleppo, the explosion “took place in the open area between the main gate of the citadel and the entrance of Khan S[h]ouneh facing the citadel, leading to partial damages in both the gate and entrance.”⁵¹

On November 9, 2015, the Organization of Syrian Arab Radio and TV reported that tons of explosives were detonated in a tunnel that targeted the entrance of the Citadel and Khan al-Shoune; however, only minor damages affected the gate of the Citadel. Military personnel interviewed in the report claim that regime forces detected the construction of a tunnel by the opposition, and in response, constructed another tunnel to block the way. This was the tunnel that the opposition

⁵⁰ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/21>

⁵¹ <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1857>

forces blew up. Heavily armed conflict broken out after the explosion and lasted for hours in the area.⁵²

DigitalGlobe satellite imagery shows the location and the aftermath of the tunnel bombing. This is a relatively small tunnel bombing in comparison to previous incidents. The crater made by the bombing is shown directly in front of the citadel entrance.⁵³

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

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 the Citadel of Aleppo.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM : <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1857>

Organization of Syrian Arab Radio and TV : <https://youtu.be/DFVw2xbW618>

Scholarly:

UNESCO: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/21>

⁵² <https://youtu.be/DFVw2xbW618>

⁵³ DigitalGlobe



Small crater directly in front of the entrance to the Citadel of Aleppo (DigitalGlobe; November 24, 2015)

SHI 15-0149

Report Date: November 16, 2015

Site Name: Raqqa Museum

Date of Incident: November 14, 2015

Location: Raqqa, Ar-Raqqa Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Ottoman Seray converted to a provincial museum. Repository for collections of all time periods found in the Raqqa Governorate and headquarters of the Raqqa Department of Antiquities and Museums.

Site Date: According to the DGAM,

The museum hosted in a historical building built in 1861 as a Seray Building (government building) and was founded as a museum in 1981.

Incident Summary: Russian airstrikes allegedly hit the museum.

Incident Source and Description: On November 15, 2015 the human rights group “Raqqa is Being Silently Slaughtered” reported on Twitter that a museum as well as a “Stadium, Foresa area, Clinics Hospital, Political building [sic]” were hit by Russian airstrikes.⁵⁴ No further information or images were provided in this report. Following the terrorist attacks in Paris on November 15, 2015, French military forces initiated an intensive bombing campaign on the ISIL stronghold.⁵⁵

The area of the museum had been hit, and the structure damaged, by SARG airstrikes on November 25, 2014.⁵⁶ For additional information on this episode, see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0090** in **Weekly Report 16-17**.

Pattern: Military activity/ airstrikes.

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 the Raqqa Museum, particularly in light of the intensive bombing campaigns.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

AP: <http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:49c397792a504e2e9f1dc34daab56f17>

⁵⁴ https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/665986966782132225

⁵⁵ <http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:49c397792a504e2e9f1dc34daab56f17>

⁵⁶ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1517> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30191431> <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/raqqa-museum-is-destroyed-in-air-strikes-by-syrian-army-news-photo/459588136>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/665986966782132225

Scholarly:

Syrian Digital Library of Cuneiform, UCLA: http://cdli.ucla.edu/collections/syria/raqqa_en.html

Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 15-0097

Report Date: November 14, 2015

Site Name: Nineveh

Date of Incident: Summer 2015–Present

Location: Mosul, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Nineveh was the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the area was settled about 6000 BCE. The mound is located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River inside the city of Mosul. By 3000 BCE it had become an important religious center for the worship of Ishtar and during the Neo-Assyrian period (900-600 BCE), Nineveh was the capital of the vast empire, until it was sacked by a coalition of Babylonians, Medes, Persians, Chaldeans, Scythians, and Cimmerians in 612 BCE.

Nineveh is made up of two mounds, Kouyunjik and Tell Nabi Yunus. Kouyunjik rises about 20 meters above the surrounding plain of the ancient city. It measures 800 by 500 meters. Its layers contain several Neo-Assyrian palaces and temples, as well as habitation stretching back to 6000 BCE. Nebi Yunus is the smaller mound with a palace built by Esarhaddon, and a later church and mosque constructed on top. The ruins of Nineveh are surrounded by a massive stone and mudbrick wall 12 km in length dating to about 700 BCE. This city wall was fitted with fifteen monumental gateways.

Site Date: 6000 BCE at the earliest occupation levels, with largest architectural expansion beginning 700 BCE, modern habitation also in proximity to the site.

Incident Summary: ISIL has constructed a new road on the southern portion of Nineveh.

Incident Source and Description: According to ASOR sources, ISIL laid the foundations for a road linking the southern bridge (4th bridge across the Tigris) with the Erbil highway. This road runs across the southern portion of Nineveh, cutting the walls on the east and west sides. It is located approximately 150 to 200 meters north of the Ashur Gate. These sources state that ISIL started the project this summer and is nearly finished, but the road does not appear in the August 29, 2015 DigitalGlobe satellite image posted in [ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0095](#). ISIL leveled the ground and laid a substrate of small stones and is preparing to lay asphalt, or may have completed laying the asphalt.

Additionally, according to multiple in-country, ISIL is paving the former dirt access road between Mosul University and Kuyunjik. This road, which traverses the northern half of ancient Nineveh, was used by faculty to access the archaeological site. It is unclear when this construction project was initiated or how much it progressed. The sources allege that ISIL is connecting Route 80 with Route 2, headed towards Dohuk. This paved road also does not appear in the most recent satellite imagery. See [ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0095](#) in [Weekly Report 59-60](#) regarding the recent constructions around Nineveh seen in the DigitalGlobe images dating to August 29, 2015.

Pattern: Development threats/disturbances.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to gather more information on these new constructions via in country sources and determine if this activity is affecting exposed and subsurface archaeological remains. ASOR CHI will also continue to monitor the condition of ancient and historical cultural heritage at the site of Nineveh. As more recent satellite imagery is released, ASOR CHI will further investigate these reports.

Sources:

Scholarly:

R. Campbell Thompson and M E L Mallowan (1933) "The British Museum excavations at Nineveh 1931-32," *Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, vol. 20, pp. 71-186.

A. H. Layard (1894) *Nineveh and Its Remains*, John Murray, 1849

Tariq Madhloom (1969) Excavations at Nineveh: The 1968-69 Campaign, *Sumer*, vol. 25, pp. 43-49.



Nineveh, red lines indicating possible location of the roads in northern area of the site
(DigitalGlobe; August 29, 2015)



Nineveh, area outlined in red indicating possible location of new road construction in southern half of site (DigitalGlobe; August 29, 2015)

IHI 15-0098

Report Date: November 17, 2015

Site Name: Baqiyat Allah Husseiniya

Date of Incident: November 13, 2015

Location: Um Al-Kuber Wa Al-Gazlan neighborhood within Sadr City, Baghdad Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Modern Shia mosque

Site Date: Modern

Incident Summary: Suicide bombing

Incident Source and Description: On November 13, 2015 a roadside bomb detonated outside the Baqiyat Allah Husseiniya, a Shia shrine in Baghdad's Sadr City, killing at least five people and wounding 15 more. This took place the same day as a suicide bombing in the suburb of Hay al-Amal, which targeted the funeral of a Shia fighter killed in battle against ISIL and killed at least 21 people. ISIL militants claimed responsibility for both attacks.⁵⁷ Later reports stated that the attacks in Sadr city were carried out by two suicide bombers and targeted a Sadrist militia known as Saraya al-Salam.⁵⁸ These attacks followed the capture of Sinjar from ISIL forces by Kurdish Peshmerga. No additional information regarding the damage to the mosque itself was available at the time of publication.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to search for additional reports on the damage to the Baqiyat Allah Husseiniya in Sadr City and update the incident report as information becomes available. ASOR CHI is paying particular attention to Islamic places of worship targeted for terrorist attacks.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Al Jazeera: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/dozens-dead-isil-claims-attacks-iraqi-shias-151113165046854.html>

Mustaqila Independent Press Agency: <http://www.mustaqila.com/news/185205.html>

IraqKhbar: <http://www.iraqakhbar.com/iraq-news/133260.html>

⁵⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/dozens-dead-isil-claims-attacks-iraqi-shias-151113165046854.html>

<http://www.iraqakhbar.com/iraq-news/133260.html> ; <http://www.mustaqila.com/news/185205.html>

⁵⁸ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/iraq-situation-report-november-10-19.html>

Institute for the Study of War:

<http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/iraq-situation-report-november-10-19.html>

IHI 15-0099

Report Date: November 19, 2015

Site Name: Abu Hanifa Mosque in Muqdadiyah

Date of Incident: November 16, 2015

Location: Bulur area of Muqdadiyah, Diyala Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Sunni mosque likely modeled after the prominent Mosque of Abu Hanifa in northern Baghdad.

Site Date: Modern, likely built in the 1980s or 1990s

Incident Summary: Gunmen blew up mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On November 19, 2015 the Institute for the Study of War reported that the Abu Hanifa Mosque in Muqdadiyah was blown up by gunmen. No additional information or photographs were available at the time of publication.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives; Military activity: intentional destruction.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to search for additional reports on the damage to the Abu Hanifa Mosque in Diyala and update the incident report as information becomes available. ASOR CHI is paying particular attention to Islamic places of worship targeted for terrorist attacks.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Institute for the Study of War:

<http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/11/iraq-situation-report-november-10-19.html>