

## Facts for Feds:

*a briefing service of the Federal  
Preservation Institute,  
National Park Service  
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### Cultural Antiquities Task Force

#### **Summary:**

A new organization called the Cultural Antiquities Task Force was created by P.L. 108-199, which was signed into law on January 23, 2004. It is part of the Department of State and includes partnerships with the Department of Justice, INTERPOL-US National Central Bureau, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of Homeland Security. Among its objectives is the requirement to provide leadership in international cultural heritage protection.

#### **Issue:**

The worldwide problem of damage to and looting of cultural heritage sites has been highlighted by events in Iraq. It is clear that international cooperation is needed to prevent these kinds of irreplaceable losses. Effective law enforcement is needed to combat illegal trafficking, which often is a concomitant result with social or political upheavals. Cultural property protection requires effective training, development of coordinated governmental procedures, improved information exchange about threatened antiquities and international heritage preservation laws, and coordinated enforcement operations.

#### **Status:**

While periods of conflict and confrontation focus attention on extreme impacts to international cultural heritage, Federal agencies have an ongoing, affirmative responsibility to ensure that they consider the effects of any of their international programs on significant historic properties. Section 402 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470a-2) requires that

*“Prior to the approval of any Federal undertaking outside the United States which may directly and adversely affect a property which is on the World Heritage List or on the applicable country’s equivalent of the National Register, the head of a Federal agency having a direct or indirect jurisdiction over such undertaking shall take into account the effect of the undertaking on such property for the purposes of avoiding or mitigating any adverse impact (emphases added).”*

To accomplish its purposes, one of the responsibilities of the Task Force will be to provide training for embassy staff to be sensitive to local and regional antiquities and forms of cultural expression as well as to compile reports on the preservation of antiquities and cultures of host nations. Thus, the US embassies around the world can provide technical information to

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concerned Federal agencies about various nations' historic preservation registers. The embassies also administer the "Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation" which annually contributes to the preservation of international cultural heritage. Projects which have received these grants provide a good indication about the priorities for cultural heritage preservation that the United States and specific host countries have mutually agreed upon and undertake cooperation.

**Project:**

The official briefing statement is attached.

Point of contact:

Vivianna Padilla Cowl  
Special Interagency Coordinator for Law Enforcement  
Department of State Cultural Heritage Office  
Room 324, ECA/P/C  
301 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20547  
telephone: 202-260-3247; email: cowlvp@state.gov

*The Federal Preservation Institute (FPI) is part of the National Park Service cultural resources programs. FPI was created to help fulfill the statutory responsibilities of the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service to provide interagency, intergovernmental education, technical information, assistance, and guidelines in the national historic preservation program.*

*Services provided by FPI to all Federal agencies and their programs include--*

- *Monthly training and information meetings, called the "Federal Training Working Group", for Federal Preservation Officers and their staffs to assist program development and effectiveness.*
- *Special Subject Seminars and Conferences, such as, "Balancing Public Safety and Protection of Historic Places and Collections".*
- *Briefings and programmatic information for senior executives, heritage management field conferences, and other identified training or awareness activities.*
- *Technical assistance to Federal agencies in program development consistent with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act Section 110.*
- *Historic Preservation Learning Portal, a discovery engine to locate and organize Internet information, regardless of format and by using plain-language queries. Go to <http://www.historicpreservation.gov>.*

*For further information about FPI, contact Constance Werner Ramirez, Director, telephone 202-354-6967 or email <[constance\\_ramirez@nps.gov](mailto:constance_ramirez@nps.gov)>. Also, find us on the web at <http://www.historicpreservation.gov/fpi>.*

