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CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Twenty-seventh session

Paris, UNESCO Headquarters, Room XII  
30 June – 5 July 2003

**Item 8C of the Provisional Agenda: Nominations of properties to the World Heritage  
List: Information concerning Hatra and Ashur, Iraq**

## SUMMARY

This information document provides the World Heritage Committee with an update on the state of conservation of the sites of Hatra and Ashur in Iraq. This information was obtained further to the mission carried out by UNESCO in May 2003.

# INFORMATION CONCERNING HATRA AND ASHUR, IRAQ

(updated 30 May 2003)

## Hatra

Hatra, like Nimrud, had a round-the-clock United States military guard. Damage to the standing remains consisted of the loss of the head of a figure that decorated an arch in one of the smaller northern *diwans* within the temple complex. This head had been shot off, and apparently taken away by looters. In addition, a small camel in relief from a doorway frieze from one of the outer temples had also been broken off and removed, but this was recovered by the Department of Antiquities staff and is now in storage.

## Ashur<sup>1</sup>

It was evident that new excavations had been made just to the west of the dig house, but these were apparently done by the Department of Antiquities. There were new excavations in the Burnt or East Palace, and area of houses just to the east of the German excavation area.

Guards to the site (20 Iraqi) reported that US troops did visit the site; however, this was not for site protection but rather to confiscate any weapons or search for any potential "problems" that may arise from the site. Guards complained that they need weapons to protect the site and feared that a potentially looting attack was brewing. The guards also pointed out that they also had not been paid. Memories of previous lootings prior to this war seem to fuel much of their fear.

*Tabira Gate-* Visit to the main gate revealed that nothing was damaged as a result of the reconstruction or of any illicit excavations near the gate.

*New Palace-* Visit to the new palace revealed that all the exposed vaulted tombs and areas of the ancient palace seem to be in a similar condition to that in 2001.

*Old Palace-* As for the New Palace, the area of the Old Palace did not have any evidence of disturbance.

*Ottoman Police Station-* This area, which served as a museum prior to the 1991 war, was undisturbed, unlike after the first war.

*Burnt Palace or East Palace-* This is the new palace discovered and excavated during the last couple of years. Aside from Iraqi Department of Antiquities excavations, no evidence of looting or illicit excavations was reported.

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<sup>1</sup> The site of Ashur was visited by Mark Altaweel (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago) and Randy Olsen (National Geographic Society, Washington DC) on 15 May 2003 as part of a damage assessment of archaeological sites sponsored by the National Geographic Society. Therefore the following information about the conditions of the site is from their report.

*Ishtar Palace*- No signs of illicit digging was reported.

*German Excavation Area (Private Houses in the Old City)*- The excavation trenches, aside from their natural decay, seem not to have been disturbed.

*Dig House*- The dig house used by the German team was in relatively good condition with some areas showing some cracking in the walls. The guards brought all excavation items to the dig house compound and all excavation items including artefacts were kept within the main gate of the compound. The doors of the dig house were soldered and welded. Also the lower rooms were locked and the furniture was present. The only noticeable missing item was the large portrait of Saddam. In general, there was no evidence of looting at the house or site, an observation that was supported by the report of the guards.

*Guard House on road to Dig House*- The guardhouse is missing windows (house on road to dig house when driving into Ashur).

### **Makhul Dam<sup>1</sup>**

There was no major sign of dam construction activity except for some minor construction projects near the bridged highway. Equipment for the construction of the dam was reported to have been looted. Construction activity is not advanced and only minor construction was noted in this area.