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Looted Antiquities: Economic Opportunity for Terrorists

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Looted Antiquities: Economic Opportunity for Terrorists

In the post 9/11 world countering terrorism has become a top United States foreign policy priority as well as the subject of much scholarly research. To counter terrorism it is important to understand the inner-workings of such groups. How do terrorist groups fund their operations in order to be able to carry them out continuously? It is often assumed that the arms and drug trade on the black market are the main source of income for terrorists groups (Kaplan). Unbeknownst to many, there is an illegal trade in art and historical artifacts that funds terrorist activities. How do terrorists use art and artifacts to fund their activities? According to the literature there is lack of exploration on how the sale of art obtained illegally facilitates terrorist activity. Terrorist groups use the grey market to sell art and historical artifacts obtained illegally from areas of conflict and then use those funds to support their activities all over the world. This is a multi-case study of how certain terrorist groups use art illegally (stealing and selling art on the grey and black markets) to explore any current counter measures that exist to combat to the illegal sale of art. Research that looks into the sale of illegal art may provide insight for how future terrorist attacks can be prevented.