

British Army starts recruiting for revived MONUMENTS MEN

On 11 October, *The Telegraph* reported that the British Army had begun recruitment to the newly created Cultural Property Protection Unit (CPPU). Taking inspiration from the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives programme (MFAA – ‘Monuments (Wo)Men’) of the Second World War, creation of the CPPU received early sponsorship from Tracey Crouch, the former Minister for Sport, and follows the UK ratification of the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (the ‘Hague Convention’) in September 2017.

The creation of the Unit is a response, in part, to the targeted destruction of standing archaeological remains at places like the Mar Elian Monastery, Syria, and Nineveh, Iraq, as well as the frenzied and systematic iconoclasm and looting at Iraq’s Mosul Museum between 2014 and early 2018. However, the Unit’s establishment is also an

obligation under the Hague Convention, which requires States Parties to establish, within their armed forces, services or specialist personnel whose purpose will be to secure respect for cultural property and to cooperate with the civilian authorities responsible for safeguarding it – either at home or overseas.

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The CPPU will comprise a 15-strong deployable force tasked with protecting art and archaeology, investigating looting, bringing smuggling gangs to justice and informing allied forces about the location of cultural heritage sites. The new unit will initially draw on members of the Army, Navy, RAF and Royal Marines qualified in the fields of art, archaeology and art crime investigation; civilians who wish to join will have to enlist in the Army Reserves.

More information can be found on the British Army blog – search ‘Monuments Men: Part One’.

