

Workshop 3 - Including mapped and unmapped heritage in military planning: navigating the landscape

Dr Emma Cunliffe, Newcastle University, UK / Blue Shield International

Dr Tobias Strahl, Traversals Intelligence

Cpt Ankie Peterson and Erik Vriellink, Sectie CAI 1CMIco , Commando Landstrijdkrachten, Ministerie van Defensie

This workshop aimed to assist participating delegates develop their ability to consider the difficulties in including mapped and unmapped heritage of international, national, and local significance in operational military planning. The workshop was split into four parts. It began by introducing the attendees, who were from both heritage and military backgrounds, to each other and to the Blue Shield Movement, before discussing the complexities of heritage listing and cultural landscapes. This was followed by a mapping exercise, and then an introduction to Traversals Intelligence Platform in a real time exercise, finishing with syndicate briefings and feedback.

WORKSHOP GOALS

The exercise was designed to provide an exercise environment in which both military and civilian practitioners can work collaboratively towards this aim.

- To familiarise participants with the complexities of heritage listing in peace and conflict and how it can affect operational planning
- To introduce participants to new tools operating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) for identifying significant heritage
- To develop partnerships between armed forces and heritage professionals to establish how each can inform the other

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES and CULTURAL VALUE

Cultural landscapes are a complicated concept in heritage management. According to UNESCO: “There exist a great variety of Landscapes that are representative of the different regions of the world. Combined works of nature and humankind, they express a long and intimate relationship between peoples and their natural environment. Certain sites reflect specific techniques of land use that guarantee and sustain biological diversity. Others, associated in the minds of the communities with powerful beliefs and artistic and traditional customs, embody an exceptional spiritual relationship of people with nature. Cultural landscapes -- cultivated terraces on lofty mountains, gardens, sacred places ... -- testify to the creative genius, social development and the imaginative and spiritual vitality of humanity. They are part of our collective identity.”¹.

Some cultural landscapes are considered to have Outstanding Universal Value: they possess “cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole”². Sites must also meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity and have a protection and management system to ensure their safeguarding. They are inscribed under the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention), one of the most widely signed international treaties, giving national and international oversight, and significant media attention.

¹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>

² Operational Guidelines for the 1972 World Heritage Convention (2021 edition)

New understandings of culture and heritage propose a netlike structure, stabilizing social communities worldwide and including a wide variety of places and objects – very few of which would ever qualify for national or international listing, but this conflicts against a Western-traditional theory of cultural heritage that has its roots in European monument conservation and the historicism of the Enlightenment. ‘High-level’ heritage can become problematic; it may not reflect the concerns and values of local people, and may even result in the diversion of heritage aid and tourism income away from their community, causing disenfranchisement and resentment.

MAPPING EXERCISE

Participants were grouped into syndicates representing the J9 (CIMIC) advisor to the Battalion Commander on the staff of Headquarters 2nd Infantry Brigade, on peace support operations with a host nation who have asked for support from NATO in combatting the threat from armed extremists. The CIMIC Advisor has been tasked by the Brigade Chief of Staff in support of the host nation to support its efforts to safeguard cultural property, in line with the obligations of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property.

Mission: The community leader at Digvisi has informed NATO that a refugee encampment is in dire need of humanitarian supplies, including food and medicines. The Red Cross is not operating in this area; the supplies have come from the host nation government. Due to earlier attacks on supply convoys in the area, the convoy is to be escorted by a military contingent³. The refugee encampment is in the World Heritage Cultural Landscape of Sukur. Provide a short briefing (5 minutes max) to advise the Commander of the best route.

THE CULTURAL PROBLEM

The Brigade’s area of responsibility includes Sukur World Heritage site⁴ – the Palace of the Hidi (Chief) on a hill dominating the villages below, the terraced fields and their sacred symbols, and the extensive remains of a former flourishing iron industry, which form a physical expression of a society and its spiritual and material culture. Many features of the World Heritage site are not marked on the maps available on the UNESCO website. It is likely that other similar sites are also located outside the World Heritage site boundary. However, new migrant settlements (not visible on the satellite imagery, but identified by locals) have emerged on the hilltop. At least one of these communities have apparently built a mosque. Syndicates were provided with some UNESCO World Heritage site files, maps with possible routes identified, the probable location of the various local heritage, and briefing notes on the political disposition and issues of the various local communities.

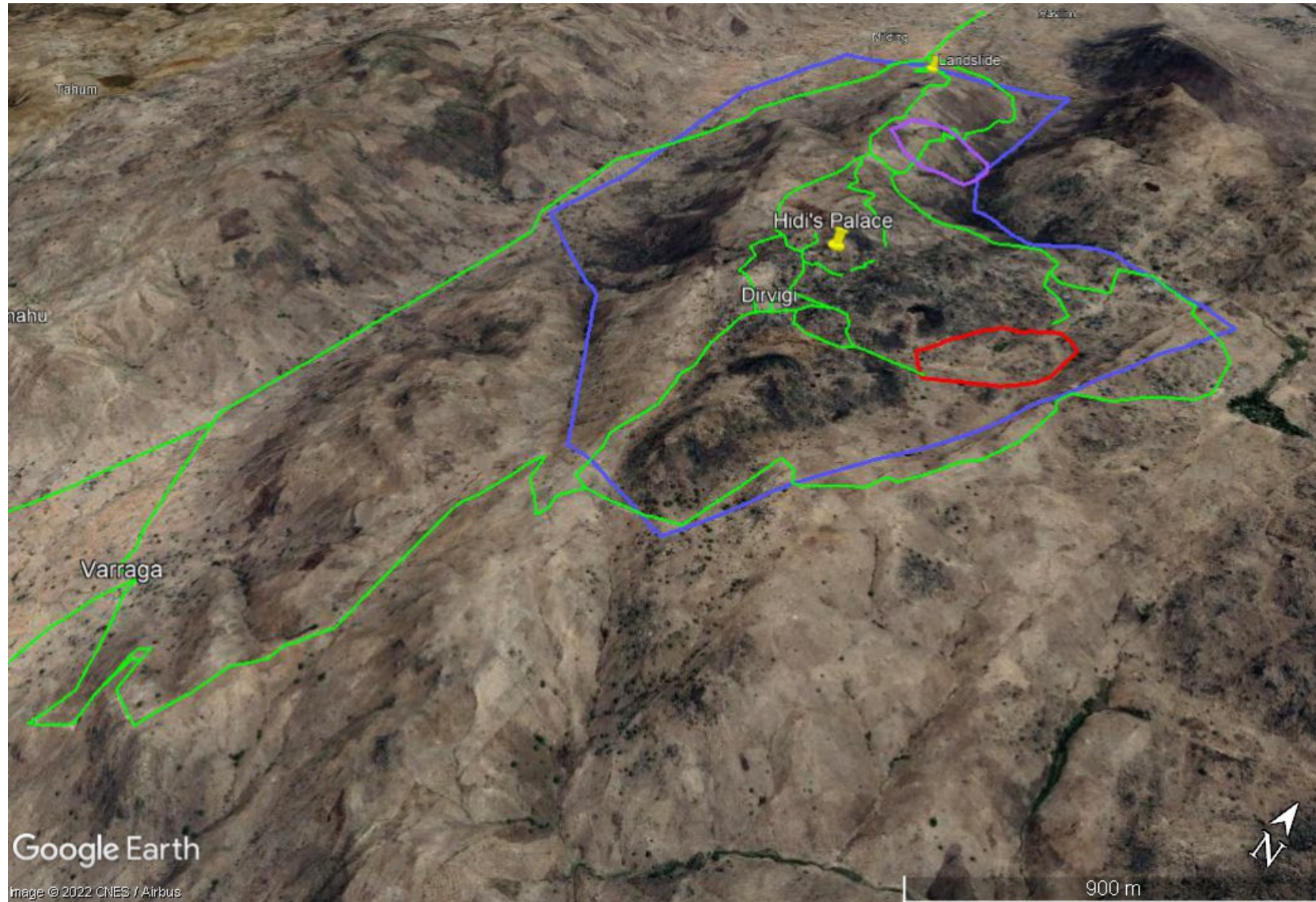
There are three main route options: the first and second go through more of the World Heritage site to reach the refugee encampment, through the suspected new settlement, or through a landslide which may damage the World heritage Site when cleared, whilst the third goes round most of the World Heritage site, through a valley and through a local village, Varraga. Syndicates were tasked to conduct desk-based research to identify what constitutes the heritage of local, national, and international value (considering different types of value). Who are the different stakeholders: what impact could they have on the mission? They evaluated the legal, moral, and operational constraints to plan the potential route. It was emphasised there was no right or wrong answer: what mattered was how delegates justified their choice.

³ For exercise purposes, syndicates assumed the convoy would fit on all routes identified in the exercise pack.

⁴ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/938/>

In reality, Sukur World Heritage Site is located in Nigeria⁴: it was chosen for the exercise as a cultural landscape containing heritage that most participants were likely to be unfamiliar with, including tangible cultural heritage, and the landscape itself is sacred, and for the quality of available data for exercise purposes

Sukur World Heritage site outlined in blue, with the destination refugee camp in red. Roads are green. The suspected settlement is marked in purple.



ROUTE PLANS

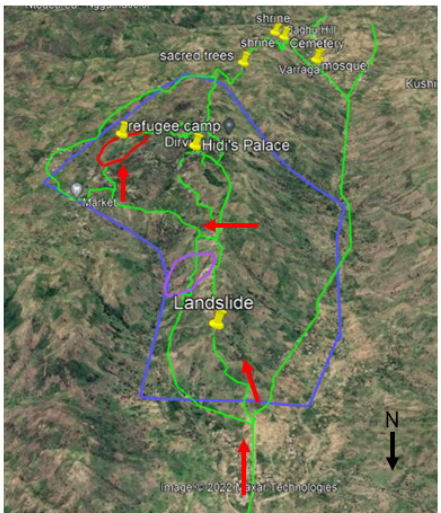
Route 1: Come from the north, all the way through the World Heritage site, clearing the landslide, to the refugee camp by the village

Route 2: Come from the north, all the way through the World Heritage site, through the reported new settlement, to the refugee camp by the village

Route 3: Come from the north through the edge of the World Heritage site, through the valley alongside the site, through the village outside the site, and into the site from the south.

All five civil-military syndicates chose to go through the World Heritage site and took route 1, rather than round it. Key factors included:

- **Security:** the high ground of the World Heritage site was considered a lower security risk than the low ground of the valley round the site; this was the most important concern.
- **Heritage features:** some delegates mapped some of the physical features of the World Heritage site from the UNESCO files: these were primarily located on the southern route.
- **Landscape protection:** Given there was an existing road through the site, delegates hoped that this would minimise any upset from taking a military convoy (albeit with humanitarian supplies) through a sacred landscape.
- **Road quality:** the southern route into the WH site is a switchback road; some delegates identified that if they convoy had to leave the road if it was stuck, there was a significant risk of damaging unmapped heritage in the area.
- **Landslide:** it was agreed by all that it would be easier to clear the landslide than take the other routes; ideally, this would be done with supervision from a heritage expert.
- **Existing communities:** the village to the south was not positive towards NATO and all delegates felt that there was a risk of deterioration in relations if the convoy took the route through the village and its cultural heritage. The size and disposition of the reported new settlement were an unknown factor that delegates preferred not to engage with, particularly, since they may also want humanitarian supplies like those the convoy was carrying. One syndicate chose to ask the commander for financial resources, stopping outside the destination village and not take the convoy inside: they would hire local people to unload the supplies, supporting the local community and taking the opportunity to building key leader engagement (something all syndicates identified as critical).

Phase: OPN DIRVIGI ASSIST		Approval Level: CJTF CDR Approved by: CJTF CDR – YES/NO	
	KEY INFORMATION WHO: J9 to Staff CDR HQ 2IB WHAT: To provide humanitarian supplies to refugee camp WHERE: Sukur World Heritage Site WHEN: 0700L07AUG2022 Vehicles: 6 – 3 Supply vehicles with 2 military escort and excavation vehicle Personnel: 18 – 17 PX and 1 3806V Attachments: 2nd Infantry Btln		
	Mission: Starting 0700L07AUG2022, deliver humanitarian supplies to refugee encampment inside Sukur World Heritage Site under escort by military contingent.		
	Key Tasks: - Deliver Humanitarian Supplies - Security for convoy - Protect cultural property - Minimize risks to World Heritage Site - Equipment to clear landslide	Timeline: N/A	
	End state: - Deliver needed humanitarian supplies to refugee camp while limiting damage and risks to mission.		
Concept of the Operation Humanitarian convoy under military escort will move from FOB to refugee camp departing at 0700L. The team will use three supply vehicles and two HMMWVs for travel and security accompanied by an element from the 2IB and excavation vehicle to clear landslide. Location will be entered from the N of the World Heritage Site taking the middle road towards the landslide which might need to be cleared. Then turn E towards refugee camp arriving 0900. KLE with refugee camp leader to distribute supplies at N edge of camp by 1030. Move out at 1100.			
IO Objectives: Support humanitarian needs of refugees while limiting impact.			

All syndicates prioritised force protection, then community views and needs, then tangible heritage, and the sacred landscape last. None thought to recommend contact with outside agencies, like

UNESCO, or with the host nation government who are responsible for the site. It should not be assumed that the Ministry sending humanitarian aid has communicated with the Ministry of Culture, a frequently excluded ministry around the world. Without such communications, a military convoy on a World heritage site could generate negative PR.

The choices made are not the wrong (or right!) approach: it highlights the difficulties armed forces will face when operating on the ground in heritage landscapes. In this limited scenario, participants were handed local viewpoint briefings, which were entirely fictional, and their actual problems and responses are unknown, but can have significant impact on the operations.

TRAVERSALS INTELLIGENCE PLATFORM

In 21st century conflict scenarios we are facing two major challenges: One is of definition, meaning and importance. Crucial for the stabilization of social communities in conflict zones can be cultural objects which do not match professional Western criteria for cultural heritage worthy of protection. Another one is of asymmetric and migrating conflicts. On the one hand conventional institutions of conflict containment are confronted by a variety of armed and unarmed opponents. That could be insurgencies, terrorist groups as well as other non-state actors. On the other hand, it is no longer possible to contain conflicts within the region of their origin. The conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan the Ukraine etc. have long since involved the societies of Western Europe or Overseas. These circumstances give rise to numerous questions and further problems. Amongst others the most crucial questions are: How can cultural artefacts which are essential for the stability of the cultural nets, i. e. the symbolic systems of knowledge and meaning of social groups affected by conflict, but do not fulfil the normative criteria applied by Western concepts of culture be identified? Whether and how can the amount of conflict projected onto objects of culture be analysed and properly described? How can the relevant objects of culture be effectively charted in regard to their relevance for the stability of the specific community, given the impact that can have on operations?

After a short introduction to the scientific methodology and theoretical fundament rooting on the one hand in the discourse analysis after Michel Foucault and its critical evaluation by Siegfried Jäger (2015) and Achim Landwehr (2008) and on the other hand in the contemporary cultural theory (Andreas Reckwitz, 2006), the participants were introduced to the possibilities of covering cultural objects of different social communities worldwide and in real time based on the OSINT and AI capabilities of the Traversals Intelligence Platform.

Based on a real-time analyse of the global interdiscourse the participants became an insight of how it is possible to identify meaningful objects in different social groups worldwide. The aims were

- to sensitise the participants for the use of AI and OSINT tools as a supplement for existing classical methods of research and analysis; and
- to reveal lacks, caveats and deficiencies particularly of the Traversals Intelligence Platform as well as current AI and OSINT analysis in general.

OUTCOMES

The workshop met its goals successfully. Participants developed a broader understanding of cultural heritage and the competing value systems that underlie it. Heritage professionals were able to work in a collaborative environment with military professionals, each learning from the other, which was perhaps the most valuable outcome. Participants also critically discussed the limitations and abilities within different cultural theories as well as methodologies. Further work is to be done, both theoretically and empirically-practically, to link conventional cultural property protection (especially in less well-documented regions such as the African continent) with contemporary cultural theory and 21st century technological capabilities to meaningful cultural protection.