

*Lieutenant Gian Luigi NANNI,*  
Commander of “Fakes and Contemporary Art” Unit  
Carabinieri for the Protection of Cultural Heritage

## **CARABINIERI FOR PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMAND: STRUCTURE AND TASKS**

### **Introduction**

First of all, I wish to thank the Cultural Heritage Protection Office of the Republic of Macedonia and UNESCO Venice Office for inviting to this Regional workshop and to join the representatives of Police present here.

I am Lieutenant Gian Luigi Nanni Commander of “Fakes and Contemporary Art” Unit of Carabinieri Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, a special unit established in 1969, just one year before UNESCO 1970’s Paris Convention, where it was recommended to each country to take into consideration the adoption of specific initiatives in order to protect national cultural property.

### **Carabinieri for the Protection of Cultural Heritage HQ: Structure**

In 1969 with the purpose to face the spread of criminal action to the detriment of the nation’s cultural patrimony, the Carabinieri Corps set up the special department for the Protection of the Nation’s Cultural Heritage. With a an appropriate decree the Corps comes under the overall direction of the Ministry for Cultural Properties and Activities, and it is located in Rome, Saint Ignazio’s Square.

Under the directives of the Ministry and subject to agreement with Regions having their own statute, the Headquarters deals functions concerning the safeguarding of National cultural property, through prevention or repression of criminal activities.

At the moment the Headquarters is composed of 280 peoples and it is structured as follows:

- a Central Office , in which it is also included an Operations unit for the analysis of criminal events;
- an Operative Department made of three units dealing respectively with antiques, archaeology and fakes;
- eleven detachments displayed on the national territory (Milan in Monza, Venice, Torino, Bologna, Genova, Florence, Naples, Cosenza, Bari, Palermo and Sassari);

### **Tasks**

The HQ deals with the following duties:

- recovery of art-works illicitly removed or exported from the National territory, expanding its researches abroad within the limits of Conventions and mutual

legal assistance through Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice as well as Police forces (Interpol, F.B.I., Customs Service, New Scotland Yard, etc.);

- pursuing violation to the rules which regulate counterfeiting;
- controls of exhibitions, antiquities markets or auction houses, restorers and other individuals working in this field;
- carrying out helicopter services, in co-operation together the Carabinieri's naval units; these services are mainly finalised to the prevention of crimes in some archaeological areas particularly at risk;
- during the activity for recovery or intervention in case of localised archaeological items, it cooperates with the established archaeological underwater services (STAS and GIASS), as well as Archaeological Superintendencies functionaries of the Submarine units;
- it uses updated operating systems during investigations, as well as a sophisticated and detailed photographic Data Bank of Stolen Works of Art, which stores contains computerized archives of all criminal acts, including the description of crime modalities to them connected. Our data base is one of the biggest and complete among those at disposal of police forces in the world;
- it has a well equipped room of telephone interceptions and useful equipments for environmental interceptions and satellitar detection;
- it hosts a web site where it is possible to browse for stolen works of art, at the following Internet addresses: [www.carabinieri.it](http://www.carabinieri.it) and [www.beniculturali.it](http://www.beniculturali.it).

### **International Cooperation**

The exchange of information among law enforcement agencies in the different countries is obviously very useful. This is partly done by INTERPOL, for major works of art only, but larger cooperation among police forces, possibly with links to international databanks, would be appropriate and useful.

In Italy the Comando Carabinieri Tutela Patrimonio Culturale (also known as TPC), Police Force Special Unit for the protection of cultural heritage, which I represent today, has created and is operating telematic links with its many centres in the country, with the Central Office for cultural heritage of the French police, and through the latter, with the connected Belgian centre.

The first task for the recovery of illegally exported objects is to register all available information about them: the more information is available and exchanged, the higher is the possibility of recovery.

Moreover, the existence of a police unit specialized in fighting against illicit trade in cultural objects, with jurisdiction on the whole national territory and, in special cases, with the possibility of operating abroad, is doubtlessly a valuable tool to protect a country's cultural heritage.

### **Thefts and Recoveries in Italy: Statistical Data**

To provide you with an insight of the criminal phenomena dimensions connected to national cultural heritage I am going to show you the statistical data related to

committed crimes, stolen objects and recovered artworks. The examination of the data coming from the inquiries, showed us that the origin of objects sold in the illicit market is mainly from:

- thefts in museums, churches and private;
- illegal exportations;
- illicit excavations in archaeological areas.

The systems used to pass through borders controls are many and hardly to classify for their continuous evolution.

Every year in Italy about 1.200 thefts are denounced, for an approximate total of 14.000 objects.

Main victims are the privates with 53% of cases, churches 39%, public and private institutions 6%, private and public museums 2%.

The heritages in danger are mainly those of privates and church either if protected by safety measures.

It is proved, anyway, that the number of theft denounced doesn't respect the reality because often cases remain hidden for different reasons.

### **T.P.C. Data Bank**

Since 1970 the following items have been recovered:

more than 202.924 Italian works of art, 8.032 of which abroad;

1.268 works of art belonging to foreign countries, traced in Italy and returned to their countries of origin.

The T.P.C. can rely on a special Computer Unit employing a highly sophisticated and technologically advanced data bank which stores:

109.379 records pertinent to crimes against cultural patrimony committed in Italy and abroad;

2.544.000 cards (out of which 283.861 providing photos) describing works of art as a result of a 36 years long activity.

This great amount of material has contributed the recovery of high percentage of the artefacts stolen.

### **Purpose**

The CCTPC database goal is to make available:

- an archive of text information on crimes (thefts, robberies, forgeries, illicit exportations, etc.) and of digital images of the works of art;

a search tool aimed at verifying the origin of a stolen item and matching different records stored in the database;

The adoption of the UNESCO Object-ID standard has been strongly recommended for the recording of illegally exported objects; this has proved to be

a useful tool for the exchange of information and for the quick identification of objects.

## **Conclusions**

One of the conclusions of this speech is the goal that each country, interested in protecting its own cultural heritage, has to realize as soon as possible:

- institution of a small operative unit finalized to the recovery of stolen cultural property and to the fight against offences related to the national cultural heritage.

It's very important to stress that to localize a stolen artwork and to find evidences of illegal acts it requires the existence of institutional subjects with professional and judicial capabilities.

The institution of a small operative unit, adequate to internal social conditions, will permit:

- analysis and knowledge of each national crime phenomenon;
- discovery of illicit trade routes of their own countries and towards foreign states;
- co-operation with other similar police forces;
- possibility to prepare a preventive and repressive strategy against crimes related to each cultural heritage due to statistical data;

The experience of 36 years of activity made by the special unit I represent, permits to declare the validity of art. 5 of UNESCO Convention 1970, that invites the states parties to set up one or more national services for the protection of cultural heritage. Concluding my speech, I would like to renew Carabinieri TPC availability in offering collaboration and training to law enforcement agencies and institutions – obviously free of charge.

Thank you.