

September 3, 2000**CONTENTS:**

- Re: Burglars steal artifacts (Steve Keller)
- BEIRUT IN TRANSITION; Development vies with archaeology in post-war Lebanon
- Archeological site bombing injures 3
- State Wants Mountain Meadows Artifacts Returned to the Grave
- Mafia moves in as Pompeii gets GBP.25m facelift
- Tax Sum Settled for Stolen Art (the Quedlinburg case)

From: IntlArtCop@aol.com

Date sent: Sun, 3 Sep 2000 00:42:19 EDT

Subject:

Re: Burglars steal artifacts

To: securma@xs4all.nl

In a message dated 9/1/00 4:58:20 AM, securma@xs4all.nl writes:

After disabling layers of complicated alarms, burglars removed a door and its frame to reach the artworks and broke into two cases. "They ripped the entire door off,"

I have no information about the theft reported on in your recent post but I wanted to comment on it because when I read something like this it upsets me very much. If I had a dollar for every time I was told that burglars must be big time high tech criminals because they disabled complicated layers of alarms or some such claim, I'd retire.

People, please understand that it is very very difficult to disable layers of complicated alarms if they are done according to industry standards. Installing a system to industry standard is not too much to ask! In my over 21 years in museum security, I know of only one case in a museum where the alarm system was truly defeated by means I and others have not been able to understand. Alarm systems installed to UL standards are darn hard to beat without first beating the humans who operate them or without having inside help.

And I can also say that I have never seen anyone in a museum theft disable "layers" of complicated electronic security.

Whether this museum's alarm system was really good or was junk remains to be seen. It appears that this museum felt their alarm system is good. Was it a quality system? Was it properly serviced and operating as it should? Was it extensive enough to provide the level of coverage needed? Did the alarm company sell the museum a bill of goods? All these issues need to be addressed.

There is one issue however that could effect all of us, however. It IS possible for a reasonably capable burglar including a teenage hacker or novice electronics hobbyist to defeat an alarm system's phone line to the central station. It used to be that a Grade "C" digital dialer (as rated by Underwriters' Laboratories) was not perfect but good enough. This is not so today. Someone with basic knowledge and a few bucks to spend at Radio Shack can beat 80% of the museum alarm systems because they don't have what is now called "Protected" line security or what used to be Grade "AA". If they are far

enough away from the central station that they feel it is too costly to have this higher , more expensive level of line security, they should at least have a back up system. And most museums are totally unaware of what back up systems are acceptable and which ones are not. In nearly every instance where museums has inadequate line security, it is purely an economic decision. They make a bad decision not to spend the money it takes to properly supervise the line to the central station.

I urge every museum to obtain and read the "Suggested Guidelines for Museum Security" published by ASIS. It sets the standard for line security in museums and for obtaining an exemption for lower line security.

While few people ever defeat a properly installed burglar alarm, they do defeat the line security. The standard is readily available to all of us but most museums have chosen to ignore it. Make sure yours is not one of those or when a theft occurs, don't claim that someone defeated your complex multi layered system. They simply used low tech means to defeat a good system that was improperly monitored, usually because the museum had other priorities.

In the case of stolen Indian items, if local law enforcement people are reading this, I suggest that you look regionally for small time crooks who steal, not for private collections as was stated in the news reports, but for the antique market and eBay auctions. I collect American Indian artifacts and am amazed at the amount of stuff on internet auctions that is questionable. Big time international art thieves don't steal the museum's collection box contents.

I don't intend for this post to reflect negatively on anyone or to imply that this is how or why the theft occurred. But if museums don't get a lot more concerned about their alarm systems, expect a lot more of these small museum thefts.

Steve Keller

Museum Security Consultant

BEIRUT IN TRANSITION

Development vies with archaeology in post-war Lebanon

BY JAMES WISEMAN

How do you provide for the permanent protection of ancient remains once they have been unearthed? Such remains are particularly vulnerable in times of armed conflict, since the protection of antiquities is an unlikely first priority of people being shot at. Today, this is a serious issue for archaeologists in Lebanon, where civil war raged for 15 years between Muslim and Christian forces until 1990. At Beirut's Archaeological museum, some antiquities had been encased in concrete to protect them. The museum itself, severely damaged by artillery and small-arms fire, has reopened with artifacts on display in modern cases; as we admired its handsomely renovated facade, armed soldiers stood nearby. There would be other reminders on my recent visit to Lebanon of threats to the preservation of ancient monuments--indeed, of entire archaeological sites.....

full story:

<http://www.archaeology.org/curiss/abstracts/insight.html>

Archeological site bombing injures 3

By ArieH O'Sullivan

Police believe that an explosion yesterday at an isolated archeological site near the Green Line was