

Smuggler of Stolen Artifacts From Palmyra Speaks Out About ISIS' Illicit Operation

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Inside this apartment in a Turkish town near the Syrian border, the ISIS smuggler spoke in detail about the lucrative antiquities trade in which he has been involved. Even as Syrian government forces celebrated the recapture of Palmyra, a UNESCO world heritage site, from ISIS last month, the terror network was busy selling off cultural treasures looted from one of the centers of the ancient world.

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NBC News showed pictures of Abu Mustafa's artifact to several leading experts, and while none of them could verify the object's authenticity from a photo, most of them agreed that it most likely comes from Palmyra and dates back to the first or second century A.D.

A similar artifact from the Palmyra museum, used as a reference by some of the scholars, is said to have been unearthed in the renowned Valley of Tombs.

Newly declassified satellite images included in a report released on Monday by the State Department-funded ASOR Syrian Cultural Heritage Initiative reveal the extent of the damage to the archaeological site during the 10-month-long ISIS occupation of Palmyra.