

## Protecting Cultural Heritage on the Battlefield: The Hard Case of Religion

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URL: <https://www.getty.edu/publications/cultural-heritage-mass-atrocities/part-5/27-hassner/>

SOURCE: Cuno, James, and Thomas G. Weiss, eds. *Cultural Heritage and Mass Atrocities*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2022. <https://www.getty.edu/publications/cultural-heritage-mass-atrocities>.

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PDF GENERATED: July 13, 2022

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## Protecting Cultural Heritage on the Battlefield: The Hard Case of Religion

Ron E. Hassner

Arguments about the protection of cultural assets in wartime are often made in the abstract, drawing on theoretical insights from ethics, international law, and just war theory. How do these principles fare when tested on the battlefield?

General Dwight D. Eisenhower stated the case bluntly in the winter of 1943–44. US forces, fighting their way north along the Italian peninsula, had become bogged down at the foot of the abbey of Monte Cassino, the oldest monastery in the Western world. The abbey was, in the words of General Harold Alexander, situated on “one of the strongest natural defensive positions in the whole of Europe.”<sup>1</sup> It held a central position in the Gustav Line, the German system of high-ground defensive positions that stretched across Italy and controlled the main route from Naples to Rome. Artillery was raining down on Allied troops from the vicinity of the abbey, leading commanders to suspect that the Germans were using the ancient shrine as an observation post, perhaps even as a base of operations. For example, an intelligence report of the 34th Infantry Division of the US Army stated that “enemy artillery was provided with exceptional observation on the high ground all along the line, and particularly by the use as an observation post of the Abbey de Monte Cassino, from which the entire valley to the east is clearly visible. Orders preventing our firing on this historical monument increased enormously the value of this point to the enemy.”<sup>2</sup> In actuality, German observers were not using the abbey to direct artillery, but US forces could not know, and could perhaps not even conceive of, that restraint.

Responding to desperate requests from commanders in the field that the abbey be bombed, Eisenhower responded: “If we have to choose between destroying a famous building and sacrificing our own men, then our men’s lives count infinitely more and the buildings must go.” But he continued: “The choice is not always so clear-cut as that.

In many cases the monuments can be spared without any detriment to operational needs. Nothing can stand against the argument of military necessity. That is an accepted principle. But the phrase ‘military necessity’ is sometimes used where it would be more truthful to speak of military convenience or even personal convenience. I do not want it to cloak slackness or indifference.”<sup>3</sup>

As shown below, these deliberations led Allied forces to hesitate for three months before finally deciding to bomb Monte Cassino. That delay came at a great human cost. Meanwhile, the Germans, equally concerned with the status of this holy site, refrained from accessing the abbey or its grounds, contrary to the Allies’ suspicions. When Allied command determined that the abbey was to be bombed, the Germans exploited images of the destroyed shrine, and the testimony of the monks who fled the destruction, for propaganda purposes.

The challenge of protecting religious sites at times of war provides a unique opportunity for exploring the broader question of protecting cultural artifacts. I propose that sacred sites are a hard case, especially in the context of a conflict such as World War II, for multiple reasons. For one, they are particularly valuable, and not just in the eyes of local constituencies. Significant religious sites are revered by regional or even global audiences. Yet they also pose unique challenges to military decisionmakers. Some are located in city centers, encumbering urban warfare or bombing campaigns. Others are formidable structures that can be exploited by opposing military forces or by insurgents. As the Monte Cassino case shows, the historical record regarding the protection of these sites is decidedly mixed. Their religious status provokes deliberation and hesitation, though not always restraint. Their destruction has significant implications for the conduct of counterinsurgencies and military occupations, especially when occupying forces seek the goodwill and cooperation of local populations.

### **The Nature of Sacred Places**

For religious practitioners, geography is not uniform. Salvation can more easily be obtained at locations where the sacred breaks through into the human realm and becomes accessible. Sacred shrines perform this function and, as a result, become religious centers. They are places with a divine presence at which worshippers can expect blessings, healing, forgiveness, and spiritual merit. At the same time, religious practitioners seek to protect that sacred presence by circumscribing access to holy places and behavior within them. A transgression of these rules, or any damage to the structure itself, is tantamount to desecration.

The most important sacred shrines are often large, ornate, and architecturally vulnerable monuments, located in city centers, that teem with worshippers. Because they have physical properties, they are susceptible to harm.<sup>4</sup> In twentieth-century wars, soldiers tried to minimize damage to sacred sites and to the worshippers in their vicinity. This respect for religious sites is reflected in, and bolstered by, Article 27 of the 1907 Hague Convention, which required armies “to spare, as far as possible, buildings

dedicated to religion, art, science, or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals, and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not being used at the time for military purposes.”<sup>5</sup>

But this convention treats religious heritage sites as one category of structures among many that deserve protection. Why should we expect combatants to afford them unique treatment? In other words, what is religious about protecting sacred space? The answer is twofold. First, damage to sacred sites often provokes a broader audience, and it may do so to a greater extent than damage to other types of monuments and public buildings. With the exception of particularly ancient or artistically valuable structures, most public buildings and monuments are valued by local communities only. Religious sites tend to broaden and deepen that audience. Not only are they revered by global communities of faith, but the rules governing their desecration are crisp and unambiguous.

Second, their vulnerability compounds many of the specific reasons that make “secular” structures susceptible to risk: public structures, like hospitals and schools, are sensitive because civilians tend to congregate in them. Cultural assets are sensitive due to their artistic and historical value. Government buildings and historical monuments have nationalist appeal. Religious centers exhibit all these characteristics together: they have historical, artistic, and nationalist appeal, and they also attract noncombatants in large numbers. Indeed, sacred sites in many religious traditions have the official status of “sanctuaries,” places protected from even the most legitimate sources of violence. If museums, universities, and theaters are deserving of discrimination at times of war, churches are deserving a fortiori. As I show below, one of the implications of this logic during World War II was that the Allied committees that sought to protect “cultural treasures” focused the lion’s share of their attention on churches.

### **Monte Cassino**

Allied commanders, hampered by orders to avoid targeting German facilities near Monte Cassino in a manner that might accidentally harm the abbey, came to see the structure as the primary obstacle to their advance on Rome.<sup>6</sup> Major General Howard Kippenberger, the leader of the New Zealand forces, stated that “it was impossible to ask troops to storm a hill surmounted by an intact building such as this.”<sup>7</sup> Lieutenant General Bernard Freyberg relayed to Lieutenant General Mark Clark that “it was unfair to assign to any military commander the mission of taking the hill and at the same time not grant permission to bomb the monastery.” He told the American chief of staff, General Alfred Gruenther, “I want it bombed. . . . The other targets are unimportant, but this one is vital.”<sup>8</sup>

Despite these pleas, Allied command refused to issue the order to bomb the abbey due in large part to pressure from the Vatican. Alexander informed Clark in early November 1943 of the “urgent importance of preservation from bombing” of the abbey. Clark responded with a promise: “Every effort will continue to be made to avoid

damaging the Abbey in spite of the fact that it occupies commanding terrain which might well serve as an excellent observation post for the enemy.”<sup>9</sup>

By February 1944, however, the Allied situation had turned desperate. A breakthrough at Cassino could have provided the desperately needed relief for the stalled Allied beachhead at Anzio in late January. Casualties from fighting at the base of the unharmed abbey already exceeded ten thousand troops.<sup>10</sup> Even Eisenhower was now convinced that the Germans were exploiting the Allied reluctance to take action against the abbey. In a subsequent statement about the protection of Europe’s cultural heritage, Eisenhower recalled how at Cassino “the enemy relied on our emotional attachments to shield his defense.”<sup>11</sup>

Amazingly, the Germans had done no such thing. The German commander in chief in Italy, Field Marshall Albert Kesselring, had given his personal assurance to the abbot of Monte Cassino that the structure would not be used for military purposes and ordered German troops to stay away from the abbey.<sup>12</sup> German soldiers, aided by monks, drew a circle of three hundred meters from the walls of the monastery, establishing an exclusion zone that soldiers were forbidden to enter. Several military policemen were stationed at the abbey entrance to enforce the order. The monks monitored the exclusion zone and reported violations to the Vatican, which issued formal complaints to the German embassy. German troops also assisted in evacuating to safety nearly eighty monks, as well as many of the abbey’s treasures and relics, prior to the start of the US offensive.<sup>13</sup>

On 15 February, after three months of deliberations, Alexander finally issued the order to bomb the abbey. Leaflets in Italian and English were dropped over the monastery, offering a warning and justification for the assault: “Italian friends, BEWARE! We have until now been especially careful to avoid shelling the Monte Cassino Monastery. The Germans have known how to benefit from this. But now the fighting has swept closer and closer to its sacred precincts. The time has come when we must train our guns on the monastery itself.”<sup>14</sup> Allied pilots with religious scruples were invited to recuse themselves from participating in the operation but none accepted the invitation.<sup>15</sup> Amid the cheers of Allied soldiers, 250 bombers dropped six hundred tons of high explosive on the abbey, followed by shelling from howitzers. The assault continued for three days. The *New York Times* called it the “worst aerial and artillery assault ever directed against a single building.”<sup>16</sup> It reduced the beautiful thousand-year-old abbey to rubble.<sup>17</sup> General Harold Alexander encapsulated the Allied dilemma in his recollections after the war, as indicated by the Right Reverend Dom Rudesind Brookes: “Giving the order to bomb the abbey had been the most difficult decision he had ever had to make but [he] had finally decided that men’s lives must come before stones however holy” (fig. 27.1).<sup>18</sup>

The bombing shocked observers throughout Europe. Vatican secretary of state Luigi Maglione told the American envoy to the Vatican that the bombing was “a colossal blunder . . . a piece of a gross stupidity.” British and American public opinion now



**Figure 27.1** The Abbey of Monte Cassino, destroyed by Allied bombing in 1944. Image: Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo / Alamy Stock Photo

rallied against a possible bombing of Rome. The German Propaganda Office in Rome had taken photographs of the abbey prior to the attack so that, “in case it was destroyed, they could use the pictures to show the barbarity of the Anglo-Americans.”<sup>19</sup> At the insistence of German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, the abbot was brought to a transmitting station to broadcast his condemnation of Allied behavior, and at the request of German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, he was pressured into signing a written statement testifying to German respect for the monastery and its inhabitants. These statements were reproduced and plastered around Rome, and German diplomats abroad were instructed to exploit them to the best of their abilities.<sup>20</sup> German radio followed up with propaganda that accused the Allies of targeting Italy’s patrimony: “The U.S. and Britain no longer even try to hide their anticultural intentions, but quite openly propagate in their newspapers the destruction of all cultural monuments.”<sup>21</sup> A diarist recorded: “All Rome is thickly placarded today with posters showing photographs of the ruins of Monte Cassino with monks and refugee civilians, and reproductions of handwritten signed statements by the Abbot and his administrator. This is certainly a trump card in the German propaganda game.”<sup>22</sup> The outcry was so great it led some in the diplomatic corps to speculate that the German army had somehow tricked the Allies into bombing the abbey in order to reap the propaganda rewards.<sup>23</sup>

In summary, the sacred status of Monte Cassino did not influence the “bottom line”—the abbey was bombed. But it shaped the timing of the attack and the content of the deliberations that preceded it, with tangible effects on the Allied ability to forge their way to Rome. Allied officers and soldiers, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, supported the

bombing with enthusiasm. It was senior Allied decisionmakers who hesitated to destroy the abbey, realizing the harm that such an act would cause to relations with the Vatican, European perceptions of Allied intentions, and support for the war on the home front. The outrage provoked by the bombing, in turn, undermined efforts to persuade Italians to cease fighting and to greet the Allies as welcome liberators. Efforts to undo the reputational damage from Cassino by safeguarding religious and cultural sites would have an enduring effect on Allied targeting policy throughout the liberation of Europe.

### **The Roberts Commission**

Several months prior to the bombing of Monte Cassino, in response to extensive cultural damage caused by military operations in North Africa and in preparation for the invasion of Italy, the American government had started forming an official committee to safeguard these treasures: the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas. It was known as the “Roberts Commission” after its chair, Associate Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts.<sup>24</sup> Its operatives on the ground in European war zones, the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) Section of the Civil Affairs and Military Government Sections of the Allied Armies, were colloquially known as “the Monuments Men.” The Roberts Commission and its Monuments Men faced three difficult tasks: to identify cultural treasures and monuments so that these could be kept out of harm’s way during Allied operations, to document any damage that did occur, and to unearth and repatriate looted treasures after the war. The items to be protected ranged from museums and palaces to paintings, statues, and archives. But the single largest category of protected treasures was religious: cathedrals, churches, and sacred objects. The committee was formed too late to impact decisions at Monte Cassino but, in subsequent months, its work would have a significant effect on the protection of Europe’s religious heritage.

To do so, the Roberts Commission, based in Washington, DC, had to first identify and locate the monuments, structures, and treasures that needed salvaging. Commission members established a master index of monuments by sending thousands of questionnaires to art scholars and educational institutions and by scouring popular guidebooks and libraries. Experts compiled this information into authoritative lists and ranked monuments by priority by conferring one, two, or three stars to the most significant structures. Lists for the eight most important countries were accompanied by handbooks that provided commanders and soldiers with historical background and instructions on respecting and preserving monuments.<sup>25</sup> These lists and handbooks were then forwarded to a second working group, tasked with locating the monuments on 786 maps, supplied by the Army Map Service. Since the greatest danger to monuments was from the air, the commission also asked the US Air Force (then called the US Army Air Forces) to fly special reconnaissance missions over major Italian and French cities so that it could identify and outline key monuments on reconnaissance photographs. These photo-maps were used in planning strategic bombing campaigns.<sup>26</sup>



A survey of the monuments listed in these handbooks and atlases sheds light on the significance of churches among the commission's priorities. Churches appeared as the first category in the commission's definition of cultural treasures (followed by palaces, monuments, and cultural institutions) and as the first category listed in each handbook and atlas.<sup>27</sup> Of the 5,466 sites that the commission identified as particularly valuable, more than 40 percent (2,269 in all) were churches, monasteries, or other religious shrines, the single largest category by far. By comparison, the handbooks listed only 583 museums worthy of protection, amounting to only 10 percent of all sites.

To persuade military decisionmakers to act on these motivations, the commission offered a short-term utilitarian logic and a long-term concern with the Allied legacy after the end of the war. Both views were first expressed in one of the founding documents of the commission, a pamphlet written in the summer of 1942 by art conservation specialist George Stout entitled *Protection of Monuments: A Proposal for Consideration*. Stout used surprisingly religious language in his vision of the committee and its purpose: "To safeguard these things will show respect for the beliefs and customs of all men and will bear witness that these things belong not only to a particular people but also to the heritage of mankind. To safeguard these things is part of the responsibility that lies on the governments of the United Nations. These monuments are not merely pretty things, not merely signs of man's creative power. They are expressions of faith, and they stand for man's struggle to relate himself to his past and to his God."<sup>28</sup>

Robert E. Sherwood, the director of overseas operations in the US government's Office of War Information, urged that the commission's efforts be made public in order to counter Axis propaganda and to "reassure the world" that Americans were not "vandals and ignorant of European culture."<sup>29</sup> Commission members emphasized their role in protecting the US Army from the blame for careless destruction.<sup>30</sup> But they also stressed the long-term contribution of their efforts to America's legacy: "It is a record of which we shall all be proud as Americans and that record should be available for future historians."<sup>31</sup>

In its handbooks, the commission highlighted the positive influence that respect for monuments would have on the US Army's ability to effectively control occupied territories. Several handbooks make an explicit connection between preservation efforts, their positive effects on "the morale of the population," and the army's efforts in "enlisting their cooperation."<sup>32</sup> The commissioners thus conceived of their task as part and parcel of what we would today call a "hearts and minds" campaign. After the war, the commission's final report cited its activities in France as an example: "The most important general aspect of MFA&A [MFAA] work in France is the most intangible, the exhibition of good will on the part of the military authority towards an aspect of French national life and sentiment of which the French themselves are especially conscious. The French have been given a feeling that their national possessions and sentiments are not a matter of indifference to us."<sup>33</sup>

The Roberts Commission's spectacular success in tracking and recovering looted art in the final years of World War II is the stuff of legends. But was the commission able to influence the conduct of the war itself? At the most fundamental level, the lists and maps it drafted provided pilots with the information necessary for avoiding historical, cultural, and religious structures. Allied pilots were not always interested in or capable of taking advantage of that information but, in the absence of the commission, they would have caused extensive damage even in those cases in which they wished to preserve monuments from destruction (fig. 27.2).

The Allied bombing of Rome is instructive in this regard: much as pilots took tremendous care to avoid bombing the four major basilicas in the city, following a promise from US president Franklin Roosevelt to the pope, they were unaware of the presence of other Vatican properties in their flight paths.<sup>34</sup> The unintentional damage caused to the Basilica of San Lorenzo, a "minor basilica" but nonetheless a treasured Vatican property, caused significant outrage among Catholics worldwide. Unlike the sparsely indexed maps that these pilots had used, the list of monuments drafted by the Roberts Commission would ultimately identify 210 sites of significance in Rome, of which 23 were categorized as "highly significant." Most of these were churches, and they included the Basilica of San Lorenzo, but the commission's list arrived too late: it was completed on 29 July, ten days after the city had been bombed.<sup>35</sup>

The bombing of Florence in March 1944 offers a clear contrast to the Rome debacle. Prior to the attack, members of the commission pinpointed fifty-eight of Florence's most important monuments, half of which were churches, on an aerial reconnaissance photograph.<sup>36</sup> To convince Prime Minister Winston Churchill to authorize the attack, British air marshal John Slessor reassured the Air Ministry that only the most experienced American air crews would be used and that Florence's famous cathedral, the Duomo, would not be hit.<sup>37</sup> The detailed briefing of the air crews was documented by a film crew from the US Army Signal Corps in order to show that all necessary precautions had been taken. Bomb runs skirted the Duomo altogether.

The Roberts Commission could not prevent the destruction of Pisa, caused in large part by retreating German artillery. Lieutenant General Clark, deeply concerned over the adverse publicity caused by the destruction, responded quickly to requests from local Monuments Men and rushed engineers, military personnel, and fresco specialists from Florence and Rome to salvage what they could in Pisa. This was the most significant contribution of the Monuments Men to salvaging Europe's cultural heritage: documenting damage, preventing further deterioration (by preventing soldiers from billeting in protected structures, for example), and initiating emergency repairs where needed. The US Army did its part by providing the Roberts Commission with reconnaissance photographs, taken after bombings, so that its experts could assess the scope of destruction in preparation for the arrival of the Monuments Men.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the war the commission also played an important advocacy role, striving to counter arguments about military necessity with claims about the pragmatic value of



**Figure 27.2** Private Paul Oglesby of the US 30th Infantry Regiment stands amid the bomb-blasted remains of the roof of Santa Maria degli Angeli in the southern Apennine town of Acerno, Italy, September 1943. Image: Courtesy National Archives, photo no. 531181 (NWDNS-111-SC-188691)

protecting monuments. One such exchange has been captured in the minutes of a meeting between representatives of the US Department of War and members of the commission, chaired by Justice Roberts himself, on 8 October 1943. Major General John H. Hilldring, chief of the Civil Affairs Division, struck the main theme of the meeting, the moral hazard of declaring certain sites off-limits due to their cultural value: “We have a most important project and that is to beat the German Army. . . . If we said we wouldn’t bomb art objects, we would be giving the enemy an advantage. . . . Every time you tell a

fellow you aren't going to bomb something, they are apt to put an ammunition dump there." Roberts Commission member Archibald MacLeish presented the counterargument: "To win this war under terms and conditions which make our victory harmful to ourselves would hardly be to win it . . . I don't think that it is starry eyed but realistic and of military importance."<sup>39</sup>

It is hard to tell just how much of the preservation of Europe's churches can be attributed to the efforts of the Roberts Commission and the Monuments Men as opposed to military considerations and the vagaries of war. The final report of the commission, composed after the war, conceded this point: "It is difficult to estimate how far the comparative immunity of the greater cathedrals of France from damage was due to the efforts of the Allied Air Forces based on information supplied by SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] but certainly such information was sought by the air staff and supplied."<sup>40</sup> Where the fighting was fiercest, as in Normandy, the US Army was able to make few concessions to sacred sites. The damage to sacred places was heaviest in Britain and Germany, where most of the destruction was the result of massive night bombing from high altitude by the Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force.

Given the scale of destruction across Europe, more churches survived World War II than might have been expected. Where bomber doctrine permitted accurate targeting, as in US daylight campaigns over Italy and France, and where troops advanced more rapidly, the desire to protect churches influenced the use of force. In many cases, the decision to spare holy sites came at some military cost. Nowhere did the Allies target churches intentionally, despite the advantages that such attacks might have provided. The scale of the damage depended primarily on the speed of the Allied advance and the amount of resistance put up by the Axis, which in turn depended on the terrain and on the proximity of cities to axis of attack.<sup>41</sup>

Where units were able to exercise some caution, the care with which they treated sacred sites depended on the religious, cultural, and political significance of those sites. The more important the church, the more likely decisionmakers were to tolerate risks to spare the structure and the more likely it was that experts would be able to guide combatants on how to protect the site. Even where the ultimate decision was to destroy a shrine, as at Cassino, the sacred character of the target affected deliberations and the manner and timing of the attack.

### **Conclusion**

The protection and preservation of sacred places during World War II offers an interesting test for the ability of armed forces to exercise restraint under extreme conditions. On the one hand, this is an easy case: religious sites are among the most culturally sensitive civilian assets and both parties to this conflict to some extent shared a respect for Christian holy places. On the other hand, this was a conflict of extreme significance and high-intensity violence in which neither side could afford to show much restraint. What broader lessons might this case study entail?

The first lesson is that, even under the most extreme of circumstances, decisionmakers have tried to protect sacred sites. There are pragmatic reasons to do so, and these arguments are often incorporated into deliberations about the use of force. The conclusion from those deliberations is not always restraint. But only rarely is it reckless destruction. The historical, social, national, and emotional appeal of religious structures plays into the calculations of military decisionmakers and leads to delayed action, possibly a willingness to adopt risky tactics, perhaps even an increased acceptance of higher casualties, and a desire to mitigate or repair the damage caused to these assets. How great a restraint or risk decisionmakers are willing to accept depends on a long list of factors, including the technology employed in the fighting (for example, the accuracy of weapons), the speed and intensity of military campaigns, the value of the location occupied by a shrine, and the accuracy of the information about sacred sites available to decisionmakers.

The second lesson is that, among these factors, one of the most crucial is the nature of the audience observing the damage and desecration. The greater the audience that values the sacred site, the more cautiously it will be treated in the course of war. This is why holy places pose such an acute challenge to leaders: often their audience is neither local nor regional, but global. Roosevelt worried about Monte Cassino and the bombing of Rome not only because of the effects on Catholics in Italy or Europe more broadly but also because he worried about the perceptions of Catholics in the United States, a core constituency in the ensuing presidential election. Along similar lines, US military engagements in the vicinity of mosques in Iraq and Afghanistan in the last two decades risked offending not only local Muslims but also observers throughout the entire Middle East and, indeed, across the world (fig. 27.3).

Third, the religious identity of the participants matters. Observers are likely to be more tolerant of damage to shrines caused by combatants who share their religious identity than by outsiders. This explains why, for example, the presence of armed insurgents in Iraqi mosques caused less outrage than the presence of the US troops pursuing them: even though the insurgents were responsible for drawing the fighting to the mosques, they were Muslim, while their American opponents were perceived as Christians. Thus, troops are likely to display particular restraint when operating in a “foreign” religious environment. They may blunder, due to lack of information about the centrality or vulnerability of local shrines. But they are likely to realize that their legitimacy is precarious: any damage or offense will be interpreted uncharitably by observers precisely because they are religious outsiders.

Fourth, the intention of the combatant matters. Constraint is most likely in conflicts that include a “hearts and minds” component, where military leaders have good reasons to value the support of the local and regional population. Especially in situations in which leaders envision a prolonged occupation, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, or in situations in which leaders require the cooperation of local communities in the ensuing war effort, as in Italy in the 1940s, they will go to some effort to protect religious sites.



**Figure 27.3** US Marines take up position on the perimeter of a mosque while patrolling in the central Iraqi city of Yusufiyah, December 2004. Image: Odd Andersen / AFP via Getty Images

The fifth and final lesson is that opponents will take advantage of that hesitation. Thus, any reluctance to target sacred heritage sites in wartime will provoke a moral hazard. At the very least, the enemy will use sacred sites as sanctuaries from violence, hiding their wounded, weapons, supplies, and even combatants there. At worst, they will try to provoke attacks on sacred heritage sites by using them as bases of operation, placing sniper nests in church towers or minarets, or seeking refuge from hot pursuit in temples and mosques.<sup>42</sup> As often in war, acting with restraint imposes costs on one's own units and provides some advantage to opponents. The challenge for decisionmakers is to strike a balance between those tactical considerations and the broader strategic costs of damaging holy places.

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8. Parker, *Monte Cassino*, 163.
9. Hapgood and Richardson, *Monte Cassino*, 30, 53, 63–64, citing F. Jones, “Report on the Events Leading to the Bombing of the Abbey of Monte Cassino on 15 February 1944,” Public Record Office, London (now The National Archives, Kew) 1949, 49.
10. In those five weeks, the British Corps lost four thousand men among their three divisions. The French Corps suffered 2,500 casualties. The US 36th Infantry Division lost two thousand and the 34th Infantry Division lost around 2,200 men. See Majdalany, *The Battle of Cassino*, 103–4; and North, ed., *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Earl Alexander of Tunis*, 90.
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21. Edsel, *Saving Italy*, 109; and Hapgood and Richardson, *Monte Cassino*, 181.
22. Majdalany, *The Battle of Cassino*, 181.
23. Hapgood and Richardson, *Monte Cassino*, 81, 169.
24. Similar commissions functioned, on a smaller scale, in Britain, France, and Belgium. The most significant of these was the British Committee for the Preservation and Restitution of Works of Art, Archives, and Other Material in Enemy Hands, also known as the MacMillan Committee.

The primary focus of these committees, unlike that of the Roberts Commission, was on restitution and reparation. See Edsel, *Saving Italy*, 78, 114–15, 142–44; and *Report of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas* (Washington, DC: United States Government Historical Reports on War Administration, 1946), 92 (henceforth *REAC*).

25. *REAC*, 34.
26. William L. M. Burke, “Full Draft Text for the Office of War Information,” Records of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas (henceforth “RAC”), Miscellaneous Records, National Archives and Records Administration, doc. no. NARA M1944, 26 May 1945, 14–15, 26; *REAC*, 19–20; Edsel, *Saving Italy*, 61, 104; and Ronald Schaffer, *Wings of Judgment: American Bombing in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 48.
27. “Minutes of a Special Meeting of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in Europe,” 8 October 1943, 16, RAC.
28. Robert M. Edsel, *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* (New York: Center Street, 2009), 23.
29. “Minutes of a Special Meeting,” 10, RAC.
30. “Outline of the Commission’s Accomplishments and Future Activities for the House Committee on Appropriations,” undated, 3, RAC.
31. “Remarks by David E. Finley, Vice Chairman of RC [Roberts Commission] at Hearing of the Appropriations Committee, House of Representatives,” 6 September 1945, 3, RAC.
32. “Introduction” to “Greece” list, undated, 2, RAC; “Introduction” to “Hungary” lists, undated, 2, RAC; *Civil Affairs Handbook*, “France,” Section 17C: “Cultural Institutions Central and Southern France,” xiv–xv, RAC; and *Civil Affairs Handbook*, “The Netherlands,” Section 17: “Cultural Institutions,” 1, RAC.
33. *REAC*, 123, citing unnamed MFAA report of January 1945.
34. This operation and the deliberations that preceded it are discussed at length in Ron E. Hassner, *Religion on the Battlefield* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 63–72.
35. “Report of Activities to November 1943,” 243, RAC.
36. Colonel Henry C. Newton, “Field Report: Florence,” 13 June 1944, 16, RAC.
37. Richard Overy, *The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War over Europe: 1940–1945* (New York: Viking, 2014), citing British National Archives, doc. no. AIR 19/215, Slessor to Air Ministry, 29 February 1944.
38. Edsel, *Saving Italy*, 104–9, 179–81, 202.
39. “Minutes of a Special Meeting,” RAC.
40. *REAC*, 98–99.
41. Edsel, *The Monuments Men*, 260; and Burke, “Full Draft Text for the Office of War Information,” 16.
42. Ron E. Hassner, “Fighting Insurgency on Sacred Ground,” *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2006): 149–66; and Sumit Ganguly and C. Christine Fair, eds., *Treading on Sacred Ground* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).