

IRAQ

The story of civilization in Iraq spans some 10,000 years. As the birthplace of writing, the wheel, and countless other human inventions, Iraq's past has shaped our present. Iraq, a country in turmoil within an unstable region, is fighting a cultural battle in every sense of the word, as its cultural heritage is deliberately being destroyed.



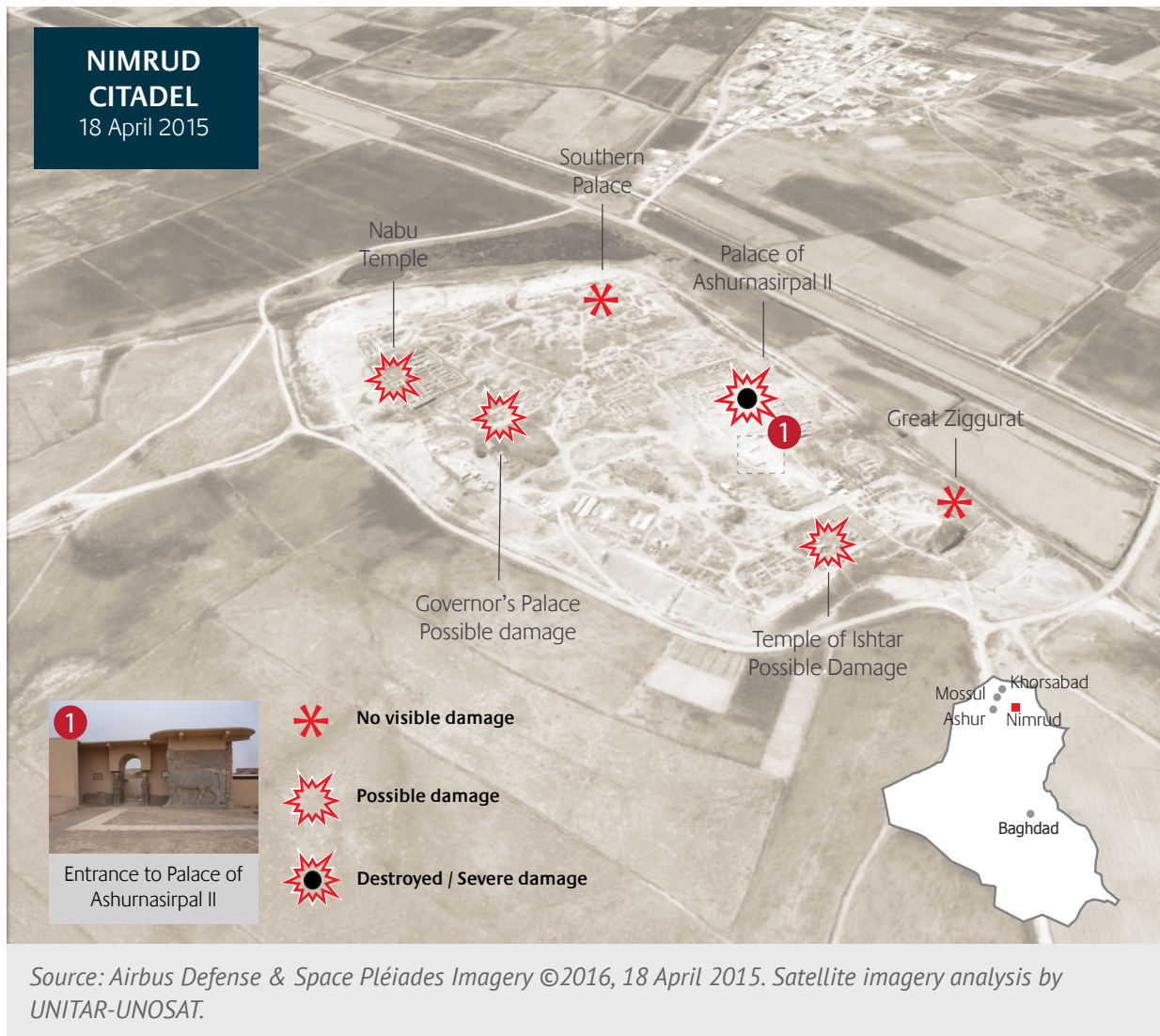
The archaeological site of **Nimrud**, located on the east bank of the Tigris River and 37 km to the south-east of Mosul, was the second capital of the Assyrian Empire, founded in 883 BC and known as Kalhu or Kalah. It had been a well-settled place for a thousand years before it was built as a centre of the kingdom of Shalmaneser I (1273-1244 BC). Under King Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC), the city was first designated as the Assyrian capital in 879 BC and housed up to 100,000 inhabitants. The city had a four-sided wall measuring 8 km, and several buildings raised on mud-brick platforms as high as 12 m above river-level. Some of the buildings included the temple of Ninurta, the North West Palace (Ashurnasirpal II's) and the South West Palace (Esarhaddon's), Sargon's palace, and others, notably the so-called ziggurat, which resembled a conical hill, with its remains rising to a height of 17 m. Some beautiful bas-relief slabs were still featured on the site, though most of them were taken abroad by excavators, including a large number of exquisite ivory carvings, such as the so-called "Mona Lisa of Nimrud" and a gilded lapis lazuli and agate-set piece showing a lioness mauling an Ethiopian, found in the 45.5x10.5m throne room. The Palace of Ashurnasirpal, also known as the North West Palace, was first excavated by the British explorer Austen Henry Layard in the 1840s. His excavations are the source of the winged bull gatekeeper statues currently displayed at the British Museum.

In early March 2015, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) commenced the gradual destruction of Nimrud by bulldozing and hammering down many of the ancient artefacts. This intentional act followed several reports of looting and other destructive activities at the site.

Nimrud has been listed on Iraq's Tentative List of World Heritage since 2000. UNOSAT documented the acts of destruction and looting using a satellite image from 7 March 2015, compared with imagery collected 2 June 2010 identifying a breach close to the main entrance to the Ashurnasirpal II Palace (see image inset in page 5). A month later ISIL/Daesh reportedly placed explosives inside the Ashurnasirpal II Palace destroying the vast majority of the main structure.

Hatra was founded as an Assyrian city by the Seleucid Empire during the 3rd century BC. A religious and trading centre of the Parthian Empire, Hatra flourished during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. Later, the city became the capital of what is believed to be the first Arab Kingdom in the chain of Arab cities running from Hatra, in the north-east, via Palmyra and Baalbek to Petra, in the south-west. The region controlled from Hatra was the Kingdom of Araba, a semi-autonomous buffer kingdom on the western limits of the Parthian Empire, governed by Arabian princes. Hatra became an important fortified frontier city and withstood repeated attacks by the Roman Empire from Trajan (116/117) and Septimius Severus (198/199) before eventually falling to the Sassanians in 241 AD who razed the city.

The remains of the city, especially the temples where Hellenistic and Roman architecture blended with Eastern decorative features, attested to the greatness of its civilization.



They provided, moreover, exceptional evidence of an entire facet of Assyro-Babylonian civilization subjected to the influence of Greeks, Parthians, Romans and Arabs. Impressive examples of Hatran art, with its statues of kings and precious collections of gold, silver and copper objects, can be admired at the National Museum of Iraq.

On 4 April 2015, ISIL/Daesh released a video showing the destruction of Hatra, which has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 1985 and was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2015, owing to its location in the area around Mosul controlled by the extremist group. However, using a 17 October, 2015 satellite image, UNOSAT found no visible signs of damage or looting in the immediate vicinity of Hatra.

The ancient city of **Ashur** is located on the Tigris River in northern Mesopotamia in a specific geo-ecological zone, at the borderline between rain-fed and irrigation agriculture. The city dates back to the 3rd millennium BC. From the 14th to

the 9th centuries BC it was the first capital of the Assyrian Empire, a city-state and trading platform of international importance. It also served as the religious capital of the Assyrians, associated with the god Ashur, and the place for the crowning and burial of its kings. The city was destroyed by the Babylonians, but later revived during the Parthian period in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.

The excavated remains of the public and residential buildings of Ashur provided an outstanding record of the evolution of building practice from the Sumerian and Akkadian period through the Assyrian empire, as well as the short revival during the Parthian period.

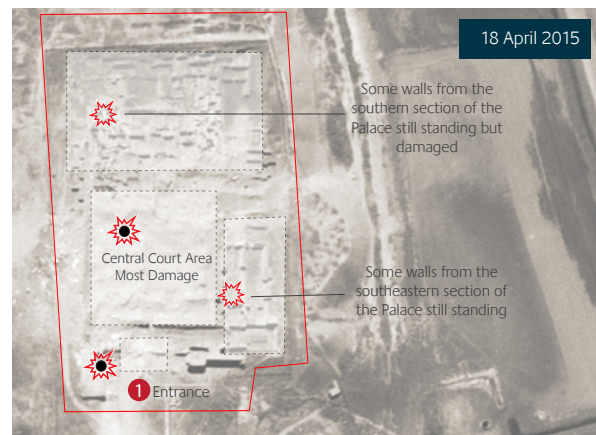
Ashur was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2003. In May 2015, local sources reported the destruction of the site by ISIL/Daesh but satellite imagery analysis using an image collected on 26 February, 2015 detected no visible damage inside the city remains.

Khorsabad or Dar Sharrukin was the fourth capital of the Kingdom of Assyria, located 15 km to the north-east of Mosul, and built by King Sargon II (722-705 BC) as the centre of his reign. It was constructed in a square form surrounded by a fence that comprised 150 towers and 8 entrances. Each of the entrances was decorated with several winged bulls and named after one of the Assyrian kings. The city walls enclosed an area measuring about 1,600 by 1,750 metres. The great palace of Sargon and the temple area were built on a terrace straddling the north-west wall of the city, while the

arsenal lay near the southern corner. Since it was a single-era capital, few objects linked to Sargon II himself were found. However, the site is renowned for shedding light on Assyrian art and architecture.

The most famous buildings in Khorsabad are the Palace of the King, the departments close to it, and several nearby temples such as the recently reconstructed Temple of the Sibitti ("The Seven Gods"). The Ziggurat is situated behind these temples on the north-western side. It has spiral staircases which surround the body of the Ziggurat. The inside walls of the King's Palace were covered with magnificent marble and some bronze bas-reliefs, which were taken by archaeologists to the Louvre Museum in the last century. The massive winged bulls that guarded the doorways were also scattered among a number of museums around the world. Two of them are in the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad.

Satellite imagery collected on 13 March 2015 showed no damage to the palace or any of the structures.



PALACE OF ASHURNASIRPAL II - UNOSAT confirmed the destruction and extent of the damage using satellite imagery from 18 April, 2015 compared to imagery collected on 7 March 2015 (see before and after images). The satellite derived damage assessment showed extensive damage over the Ashurnasirpal II Palace, inside the Nimrud Citadel. The main court area inside the palace and the surrounding building structures, including the entrance, appeared to be completely destroyed. Some of the surrounding corridors walls appeared to be intact, but most likely damaged. (Source: Before image (left) - Airbus Defense & Space Pléiades Imagery ©2016, 7 March 2015. After image (right) - Airbus Defense & Space Pléiades Imagery ©2016, 18 April 2015. Satellite imagery analysis by UNITAR-UNOSAT.)