

International Arts & Artifacts Security Forum Conference 2023

Secure Transportation of Ancient Antiquities in Uncertain Times - “Operation Ancient”

An Insight to the Black Market:

Antiquities are a highly prized and sought after commodity on the worldwide black market, particularly those that have detailed confirmed provenance. Transporting such significant objects offers a prime opportunity for potential theft. The black market is well known in the antiquities and museum sector and is always on the lookout for any opportunity to unlawfully procure arts and antiquities for sale on the black market, there are always buyers with deep pockets and a passion for collecting.

Demand is primarily driven by wealthy high profile international collectors, facilitated by dealers, auction houses, and organised crime willing to assist in the procurement and fencing of precious contraband. The greater the level of provenance an artifact has, the more highly prized it is by genuine and black market collectors. Those willing to participate in shady acquisition and trading can demand significant fees for service to procure and deliver. This is the stuff that movies are made of, and which so often run very close to reality. All too often the process is willingly assisted through a network of high profile influential people in positions of power, and these are not your average off-the-street criminals. Transporting antiquities (*individually or as part of touring exhibitions*) often provides a prime opportunity for those who operate in the black market world, to take advantage of identified weaknesses in security and strike while objects are vulnerable outside the confines of a museum or gallery. Egyptian artifacts are the international Gold Standard benchmark when it comes to the illegal trade of culturally significant and valuable antiquities closely followed by European and south American artifacts. The worldwide black market in antiquities is estimated to be in the order of \$1-8bpa (Global sources) behind the illegal arms trade only surpassed by the international drug cartels at an estimated \$32bpa (UNODC).

Security in 2023:

In this dynamic, rapidly changing world environment, security is always a contentious subject, often convoluted to risk assess, plan, and deliver effective viable security risk management. The debate over sophisticated high-end technology, silent communication (need-to-know basis), physical versus virtual security, and of course good old fashion locks and chains with boots on the ground, can often be difficult to achieve in a format that is acceptable to multiple stakeholders. The mode of transporting precious cargo has evolved over the past 20 years into a major logistics industry and has a huge influence on the requirements for security risk analysis and planning depending on how the consignment is travelling, whether by road, air, sea, or a mix.

Traditionally touring exhibitions have arrived at the New Zealand boarder by air in crates or by sea in shipping containers, which brings its own set of challenges, such as bio security, customs inspections, and vulnerable physical security provisions at the border. For centuries, the ways that antiquities are obtained, moved, and sold is equally as award-winning and more than often enlists people in positions of power or who have access to travel under diplomatic immunity privileges and/or transport. A common practice is to use Diplomatic pathways to move objects across borders, and while Customs and Interpol may be fully aware there are objects of interest in anything from a diplomatic pouch to a 40 foot shipping container, they either can't or seem unwilling intervene and seize it, because of the international provisions of diplomatic immunity.

Once in the hands of a dealer or auction house it can be sold by private treaty or in a closed door sale, and no one is the wiser as to who has it, where it has gone and how much was paid. The practice and methods are possibly one of the world's worst kept secrets but what's even more concerning, it's tolerated and allowed to continue at a global level.

Domestic based criminals are generally less familiar with how international syndicates extend and operate and are often reluctant to engage in high profile acquisitions because they don't have ready access to sophisticated networks. Whether organised or opportunistic, domestic theft of an object is considerably more difficult to move and offload as it may be a well-known object including where it can or should normally be located, such as in a museum or gallery. Domestic law enforcement also has the added support of local police networks, customs, post-parcel couriers, pawnbrokers and Interpol who can be alerted to try and prevent it being shipped out of the country. The potential of recovery in the short to medium term is far greater than if international organised crime is involved. Sadly, antiquities taken by domestic criminals are also often destroyed or lost forever because the perpetrator cannot move the object on and wants to avoid being caught with it in their possession.

Chain of Custody:

Modern technology, aviation rules, border security and generally the freedom of information make it almost impossible to send anything anywhere domestically or internationally without having to openly declare and share what is being shipped, with the one exception of diplomatic immunity. Workers in the chain of custody can generally be trusted, that's why they are employed, however, organised crime has a major influence in the chain of custody, particularly precious cargo, and contraband. There is always a high risk for a link in the chain (*an insider or informant*) to share sensitive information or allow unvetted unauthorised access to a consignment. Whilst the informant may not be the perpetrator who executes a crime, they are an accessory before and to the fact. The ability of the informant to gather and distribute sensitive intelligence undetected is the highest risk in any chain of custody other than potentially losing a shipping container overboard or being diverted to the wrong port, lost in a mountain of containers, or totally disappearing aided by organised crime engaged dockside.

What is a Chain of Custody:

Chain of custody is one's ability to know, record and demonstrate exactly where an article of interest is and how it is secured, at any given time of day or night as it moves from one custodial control point to the next efficiently, effectively, and confidently. While there are numerous elements of high-tech security that can be deployed, such as GPS tracking, they all have a point of weakness. A strong chain of custody is often reliant on good old fashion processes and procedures with tightly controlled checks and balances. Technology takes its part in the chain of custody by allowing rapid sharing of information and proof of evidence to stakeholders.

The delivery of high-end, high value, often culturally sensitive and complex exhibitions has brought a new dynamic in the management of transport logistics and security arrangements across the world. New Zealand sits at the bottom of the world at the very end of the global transport supply chain and usually poses significant challenges for the movement of objects. The chain of custody from when an exhibition is being packed into crates right through the transport links and unpacked on receipt is paramount. The handover of consignment custody at every step during transit is vital, continuously keeping stakeholders informed on a "need-to-know basis" of where the consignment is at any given time and who is holding it. Any security risk analysis and management plan require a comprehensively detailed strategic risk assessment, identifying any potential or real security threats and vulnerabilities related to transport logistics, and mitigation of those risks to an acceptable level.

A balanced mix of new and old-school methodology and technology should be deployed. But it is also a given that one without the other is prone to failure. It should always be front of mind that insurance is not an effective security risk mitigation, nor should it be high-priority mitigation in any risk assessment. It is impossible to insure a collection object against total loss, particularly ancient or culturally sensitive artifacts, they simply cannot be replaced. Insurance only offers the ability for the insured benefactor such as a museum or gallery to go and start collecting again.

Exhibitions travelling by sea experience significant impacts due to forwarding agents and stevedores in foreign ports. Containers making up a consignment, in some cases 6 to 11 40' long containers have been separated on the docks causing consignments to be only part loaded onto ships, sometimes arriving earlier than scheduled, unannounced, or arriving late which impacts exhibition pack-in. It is clear that shipping companies have no concern with what is in containers or the meaning of keeping a consignment collectively intact. This has significant potential to impact the movement and security of future large exhibitions sent overseas. It also highlights a serious risk in moving arts and artifacts of significance around the world. It is nearly impossible to have security control over a consignment while it is sitting on a wharf in a foreign port, you are totally in the hands of stevedores.

Unlike air freight which generally allows effective security oversight of a consignment door to door, sea shipping does not, due to limitations of port security, despite a high-tech age for the management of container cargo manifests. However, a recent shipment of culturally significant artifacts on air freight was miss managed by the airport ground crews in Egypt. The consignment was split by the ground crew at Cairo airport and left sitting on the tarmac for several days before being forwarded to New Zealand. The ground crew Load Master simply got it wrong by splitting the consignment for no apparent reason without notifying the shipping agent in Cairo, or the Cairo Museum. It wasn't until the scheduled flight arrived in Auckland and it was discovered some crates were missing and still sitting on the ground in Cairo. Fortunately, it did eventually arrive safely and intact several days later.

Tāmaki Paenga Hira – Auckland War Memorial Museum



Tāmaki Paenga Hira (Auckland War Memorial Museum), over 150,000m² of space over 8 levels

Auckland Museum embraces the values of cultural safety and security underpinned through an unshakeable emphasis to ensure *Manaakitanga* (*welcoming, sharing, caring, respectful*), *Kaitiakitanga* (*stewardship, guardians, custodians*) and *Mana whenua* (*partnerships with Auckland iwi*). These are the foundation of *Mana* by which *Tāmaki Paenga Hira* (*Auckland War Memorial Museum*) exists and operates. A thriving Māori identity is Auckland’s point of difference in a world that advances prosperity for Māori and benefits all Aucklanders.



Sundown - Tāmaki Paenga Hira (*Auckland War Memorial Museum*)

Auckland Museum has experienced a heritage evolution since first built and opened as New Zealand’s National War Memorial Museum in 1929 commemorating those who lost their lives to World War 1. The grandeur and distinctly Neoclassic Architecture of this iconic edifice constructed of Portland Blue Stone, Marble, glass, and concrete is truly magnificent to behold.

Major extensions in 1969 plus further additions in 2006 enlarged the building to its current footprint delivering significant additional space across all eight levels including the spectacular event centre under the copper-clad dome on the roof called “Under the Dome”. Situated at its apex, the 1,000m² space commands a 360°panoramic vista of Tāmaki Makaurau (*Auckland City and East Harbour*). In November 2020 a three-year major renovation of the southern and middle spaces of the ground floor and level one enhanced the gallery spaces and included four purpose-built special exhibition halls. Of the 150,000 sqm of museum floor space approx. 70% is being used as public galleries, while the rest comprises collection stores and back-of-housework spaces.

Auckland Museum has evolved from the original War Memorial Museum to what it is today. The priceless collection consists of 4.5 million artefacts. The Museum is the world’s largest repository of Māori Taonga (*artefacts*) and a magnificent Pacific Islands Cultural Collection as well as, stunning natural history specimens enhanced by major social and military history. The Museum is internationally recognised and regarded as a leading museum-based research facility and databank for a wide and diverse range of historical, natural, and human history disciplines, welcoming around a million visitors through the door per year. Its collection is also digitally accessible online in high-resolution images supported by all known historical data. “Auckland Museum Online” is part of the Museum’s vision for the collection to be virtually accessible by anyone anywhere in the world.

Touring Exhibitions

A significant objective of the renovations was to allow the opportunity to bring major international touring exhibitions to New Zealand. The new special exhibition space comprises four separate gallery halls each with the capability to be quickly and sustainably reconfigured to suit a new exhibition. Each hall can be configured individually or collectively with one or all other halls allowing diversity to run multiple exhibitions concurrently, should the opportunity arise to do so. The underlying infrastructure embedded into the spaces is state-of-the-art technology that is adaptable and configurable with plug-and-play audio-visual capability, high accessibility and security technology.

Auckland War Memorial Museum has an acknowledged reputation for delivering exhibitions telling a story as it should be told, in the words of the custodians and or generational ancestors of the story. It is these values that are the underlying principles driving the Museum to bring touring exhibitions of international cultural significance and recognition to run in parallel with local productions that tell New Zealand's histories while providing affordable access to local residents and visitors of Aotearoa.

Tāmaki Paenga Hira has a dedicated team who research, plan, and deliver at least two special touring exhibitions annually, with future planning already stretching into 2026/27, to ensure the people of Auckland and wider Aotearoa New Zealand have the opportunity of enjoying culturally educational and entertaining experiences from all over the world.

Auckland War Memorial Museum is a licensed Bio Security approved "Transition Facility" and has the capability and approval to receive sealed shipping containers directly from the landing port into the museum, subsequently eliminating one major risk, a necessity to open and disgorge containers on the wharf. Without this capability, bringing high-profile, high-value and/or culturally significant objects and touring exhibitions to New Zealand would be too high a risk to accept. With a chain of custody invoked with a shipment being sealed at the point of origin and remaining so until it arrives at the Museum is one of the strongest safeguards that can be applied in a chain of custody.

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Case Study

Ancient Greeks: Athletes, Warriors & Heroes 2020 “Operation Ancient”



The Exhibition

The British Museum developed a magnificent educational and visually entertaining touring exhibition of artifacts and historical information related to Ancient Greek Athletes, Warriors & Heroes to tour the world. The exhibition was made up of 178 well-known and culturally significant objects featuring historically accurate content with relevant storylines to capture the interest of a very wide international audience. The exhibition ran at Tāmaki Paenga Hira from 10th June 2022 to 6th November 2022 and attracted 86,334 ticketed visitors. The exhibition was a major success for the Museum launching it into high profile culturally significant touring exhibitions and was extremely well received by Aucklanders and the wider population of Aotearoa. Currently “Egypt: In the Time of Pharaohs” is running and is equally as impressive, culturally significant and attracting impressive visitation.

The Plan

Tāmaki Paenga Hira in partnership with the West Australian Museum, Perth and the National Australian Museum, Canberra planned to bring the touring exhibition “Ancient Greeks: Athletes, Warriors & Heroes” from the British Museum (BM) in London to the southern hemisphere. The exhibition was originally scheduled to come to Auckland in July 2020 for a four month season before shifting to Canberra and finally Perth before returning to the British Museum or another country as directed by the BM. This would allow much of the long-haul transport logistics to be shared between the three institutions as well as make it more attractive to potential sponsorship with an airline to offset the transport cost on its overall journey down under. Due to the cultural significance, the value of the exhibition, security risk analysis and transport logistics issues due to COVID-19, critical risk mitigation was required to minimise the time that the exhibit was out of the direct control of a museum. Air freight was the most logical, secure and practical way to ship the consignment securely and time efficiently.

The exhibition contained artifacts that were estimated in the order of six hundred million New Zealand dollars (\$600m) with an underwriting insurance premium that was considered beyond the ability of Auckland Museum to furnish and, maintain viability in meeting all the additional costs associated with receiving, showing and protecting an exhibition of this magnitude.

The Museum is generally free to all visitors who reside within the boundaries of Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) and by a voluntary donation from residents of Aotearoa New Zealand who reside outside Tāmaki Makaurau. International visitors currently pay a fixed entry fee of \$28NZD. Special Exhibitions such as Ancient Greeks attract a ticketed entry fee payable by all who wish to see the exhibition. Admission fees are intended to offset the cost of hosting the exhibition. Entry fees vary in accordance with the calibre of the exhibition at the time.

The exhibition was scheduled to arrive in Auckland on or about the 5th of April 2020 and open to the public on 3rd July 2020 running through until October 2020, before moving to The Australian National Museum in Canberra.

Operations Management

Risk Mitigation & Insurance:

The New Zealand Government has a special indemnity provision for not-for-profit organisations. The special provision allows for cultural institutions such as Tāmaki Paenga Hira to apply for a Government Underwriting Deed of Agreement for Insurance Indemnity, in this case, the Ancient Greeks; Athletes, Warriors & Heroes Touring Exhibition, due to the significant insured value of the consignment. The indemnity would underwrite the value of insurance premiums while it was on New Zealand soil and relieve Auckland Museum of a need to cover the cost of an exorbitant insurance premium while at the same time meeting our insurance obligations to the BM.

However, Government underwriting doesn't come easy and is a significantly long-winded process without any assurance of success. There are a lot of influencing factors that can impact the success of what would be considered a very strong application. One is what other projects the Government is already providing indemnity underwriting for that are running concurrently, in this case, the Auckland Museum's application. Equally, a successful application brings a whole new set of provisions and conditions forming part of the indemnity, including high-level Police engagement in the security arrangements of the consignment while on New Zealand soil.

Tāmaki Paenga Hira's application was successful and provided us with un-indemnified insurance cover for the exhibition. Unfortunately, that triggered a whole new set of security requirements well beyond what had already been agreed with the British Museum in 2019/20. The major additional responsibility was a requirement to liaise with national senior operational planners at New Zealand Police, the Exhibition Team, Consignment Forwarding Agents, and the British Museum with a primary focus on aligning the expectation of all stakeholders and creating a workable, robust security management plan!

The British Museum mandated a requirement that due to the physical size and value of the exhibition, it must be separated into three separate shipments moving at different times on different flights. In this case, the chain of custody for critical information being unlawfully shared was very high. There were road transport workers, airside and landside ground crew at airports, command flight crews who were privy to consignment documents and manifests as the shipments moved around. A local shipping agent in New Zealand (Momart), engaged Global Specialist Services (NZ) LTD (GSS) as a Forwarding Agent. GSS are not your average precious cargo logistics specialists and played a critical role in the planning and transport of this consignment. Their global shipping experience provided a reputable capability link in the chain of custody for the movement of the Ancient Greeks – Athletes, Warriors & Heroes exhibition. It was critical that we had reliable, factual physical evidence of where the consignment was, its status and in whose custody it was in at any given time. This was achievable with modern technology that included barcode scanning, detailed manifests, digital photos, and messages transmitted by text and email at each step of the journey.

Well-laid plans can and do go awry:

In March 2020, COVID 19 appeared in New Zealand and the country very soon after went into a total lockdown, nothing was moving globally or in or out of New Zealand. The Government were following the lead of how other countries were dealing with Covid and soon started developing policy as to how Aotearoa New Zealand was going to be managed, with a clear view of minimising death by stamping out the virus on our country with robust biosecurity measures at the border.

The addition of uncertainty as to how and where this now worldwide pandemic was going to take us was totally unclear. We at Tāmaki Paenga Hira had rapidly developed a robust Covid-19 Response Plan and subsequent Business Continuity Plans (BCP) for the management of the Museum, its workers and visitors. But we could not expand our BCP to have any influence or control of what was going to or was already happening at the border. The movement of Ancient Greeks into the country in October 2020 for the scheduled exhibition to open as planned on December 3rd was rapidly becoming a mission impossible, plans had to change.

In May 2020 after intense negotiations, stakeholders agreed that the exhibition would not leave the British Museum until sometime in 2021, there was just too much uncertainty with the pandemic, particularly with lockdowns and transport logistics. Even if the exhibition could have been received and opened to the public, it was highly likely that a major portion, if not all, of the time allotted for the exhibition to be open, could have resulted in closure due to lockdowns. This was assessed an unacceptable business risk.

The Special Exhibition Team went to work on liaising with the British Museum, Western Australian Museum and National Australian Museum to try and work a solution to the dilemma created by the Pandemic. Not only were supply chains seriously disrupted but it also precluded the ability of Courier Escorts to travel with the exhibition while in transit. It was also a significant risk to financial viability in either of the three venues due to international and in the case of Australia, state borders also being closed indefinitely.

By negotiation and mutual agreement between stakeholders it was decided that the exhibition would go to Perth Western Australia first, then Canberra and arrive in New Zealand in May 2022 and stay until November 2022. Sadly, Tāmaki Paenga Hira would be the closing instead of the opening venue in the southern hemisphere. A plan was now in place with the hope that the pandemic and supply chain issues will ease by the time the forecast schedule was due to commence, and new logistics plans could be fulfilled.

Consignment logistics – “Operation Ancient”

The stakeholders engaged in this touring exhibition were, to say the least, extensive. Domestic stakeholders included: The Auckland War Memorial Museum (AM) Trust Board, Head of Security, Security Operations Centre (SOC), Head of Collections & Collection Care, Head of Display & Exhibitions, Head of Property Services, Head of Digital & Technology, Head of Visitor Services and Head of Marketing. However, in so far as the security and transport arrangements, specific detail and the sharing of information were strictly on a “Need-to-Know Basis” which in an organisation like Tāmaki Paenga Hira is a challenge in itself. It was critical that stakeholders only received information on things specifically relevant to them with strict direction not to share with their teams or others involved in the project, until the 11th hour, and even then, only if absolutely necessary to operational requirements. The objective was to ensure that only the Head of Security, Senior Police Planners and SOC Security Operations Team Leaders retained the overall planning knowledge and had full oversight of Operation Ancient.

External stakeholders naturally included the British Museum, The Australian National Museum, Western Australian Museum, New Zealand Government, New Zealand Police, Singapore Airlines (Freight), Air New Zealand (International Passenger) and Global Specialist Services (NZ) LTD the Forwarding Agent – Transport.



Typical precious cargo configuration in an Air Freighter

Operation Ancient transport schedules were closely guarded intelligence only known to GSS, NZ Police, Museum Security, Head of Exhibitions and the carrier airline. Planning for the receipt of aircraft, airside-landside transfers, customs clearance and transport to the Museum from the airport were consistently fluid. This was largely as a result of consignments being bumped to later flights (*particularly scheduled passenger routes*) and the shifting schedules of international freighter flights due to weather and logistic delays. The greatest impact in these circumstances was to local Police and their operational logistics, which was always accommodated in favour of consignment security without question - a testament to their capability and agility.

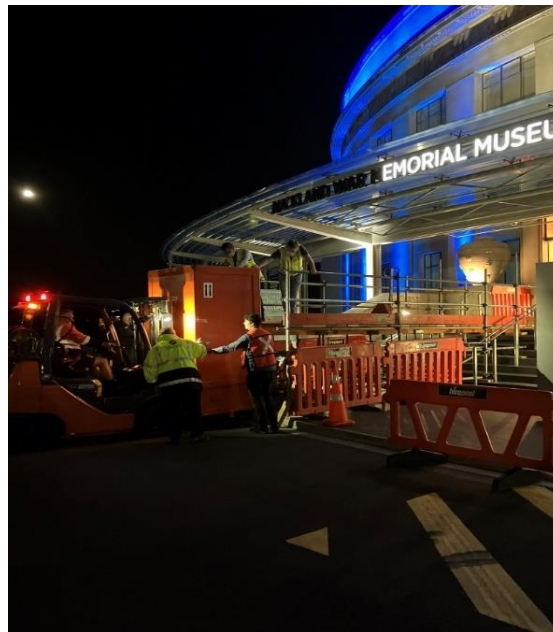
Arrival & Pack-in:

The transport of each consignment from the airport to the Museum was planned carefully and meticulously scheduled as soon after the consignment arrived in New Zealand as possible. Flights were selected that would arrive late at night so that transfers by road and receipt at the museum coincided with off-peak traffic to achieve arrival under the cloak of darkness outside business as usual hours. A major issue that arose in regard to one of the consignments was that several crates were too large to be received through the loading dock. The crates were too tall to fit in the museum goods lift requiring them to come into the building via the main public entrance at the south end of the building. Further complicating the unloading and access into the building, was that this entrance has a significant set of steps and as such required a temporary deck to be constructed over the steps at floor level extending out to kerbside. This would allow the crates to be unloaded off the truck by forklift, placed onto the temporary decking, and rolled into the building.

The temporary structure had to be built in advance and removed again once the consignment was unloaded and secured in the building, adding further clandestine media information to be released to the public and staff.

The storyline alluded to a need for urgent repairs to the glass portico over the entrance which would only be in place for a couple of days. Given the amount of construction and maintenance work previously undertaken around the building, it wasn't a hard story to sell.

The consignment arrived in the dead of night and no one outside those directly involved knew of what had transpired overnight. The consignment crates were secured in the galleries and the wider Museum staff were generally none the wiser. The two other consignments were received via the loading dock and the SOC and Exhibitions Team were the only workers who knew what was coming into the museum. The Police presence was covert and didn't present anything out of the ordinary to the wider public.



Moving oversize crates under the cloak of darkness

At the time of the exhibition consignments arriving, the Museum was undertaking another clandestine project, the filming of a pilot episode for a proposed television series, "A Day at the Museum" similar to BBC shows like "Inside Heathrow Airport" intended to be a multiple episode behind the scenes exposé of a day in the life of working at the Auckland Museum behind the scenes, hidden away from what the public generally experiences. Considerable pressure was brought to bear to try and gain access to the operation and film some of the consignment arriving the security procedures surrounding it. A blanket security embargo on any filming of these arrivals under the approved security management plans prohibited the ambitions of the film producer. In the end, the question was asked, "okay, stop telling us what we can't film and tell us what we can". This resulted in a very straightforward answer, "nothing". It was however agreed that we would do our best to film other activities associated with exhibition movements that could portray and demonstrate complexities of moving the Ancient Greeks exhibition, but this would only take place long after Operation Ancient had left the country.

Despite all the influences of Covid-19 and associated logistics the three consignments eventually arrived safely and most importantly, securely and without incident. The artifacts were decanted and condition-assessed by conservators as undamaged – a testament to the rule of the five (5) Ps: Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.

Exhibition Security:

Tāmaki Paenga Hira has leading technology security systems both physical and electronic. The primary object of the Museum security plan is to prevent potential perpetrators intending to commit a crime from even gaining building access. Access and security control systems, surveillance systems and analytics software are all overseen by the security operations control room (SOC) coupled with a fully staffed, competent and capable team of security operatives, second to none.

The critical elements in the security plan for packing in and staging the exhibition were based on the following principles:

- Access to the exhibition content was restricted to collections and exhibitions personnel only, with authorised security clearances validated by Police Criminal Records checks,
- Access control system settings that only permitted access to any space with exhibition artifacts within by dual custody (*two authorised personnel in company*) at any given time.
- Access control logs are stored and retained indefinitely.
- All areas where the artifacts were located or displayed were under 24/7 high-resolution CCTV with recorded image retained in 25 frames per second full colour HD resolution for a minimum of 90 days.

The exhibition galleries were locked off and sealed to all personnel, even the Head of Security (*the author of this paper*) outside of opening hours, even security access was restricted to two in company. The object of this strategy was to provide peer supervision and ethical integrity in that neither would do anything untoward or inappropriate without detection and immediate intervention by the other. All display cases were fitted with and secured by multiple access control and intruder detection to ensure that objects in a display case were securely managed, monitored, and protected with only dual custody access. Every square inch of each gallery was under 24/7 surveillance with a specific focus on highly sensitive artifacts and display cases. For anyone to access any of the exhibition galleries required approval from the SOC in accordance with the Security Management Plan before access would be granted and logged. Emergency access approval was escalated to the Head of Security.

During opening hours to the public, a security requirement was to have at least one Visitor Services team member in each gallery space supported by random security patrols and dedicated oversight of surveillance cameras in the SOC. Deployment of planned logistics such as cleaning, display and system maintenance was rigorously maintained and monitored.

This procedure was often challenged by those seeking access. However, the Security Plan was specific and absolute in its demand for compliance and would not permit deviation, even from within the most senior levels of management.

Perimeter security of the building is the first and most significant line of defence in keeping the building, artifacts and assets secure from unlawful intent and access. The design and security of the special exhibitions spaces is in effect a security space that can be isolated from other internal spaces and locked down within the wider building security cells.

The building sits in isolation within a major open-air public space or lawns and gardens, and wide-ranging high-resolution surveillance of those open spaces is significant. Effectively an “Onion Ring” multilayer approach to building security has been implemented making it one of, if not the most secure cultural precinct in Aotearoa New Zealand. As part of the “Safer Cities Community Policing Initiative” all external and building access point surveillance camera images are fed in real-time directly to Auckland Police and can be viewed by Police in accordance with any Police operational requirements.

Pack Out:

Pack out of the exhibition was conducted essentially in the reverse format of Pack In. Transfer of each consignment was coordinated with timings at odd hours of the night to arrive and be processed on time for loading directly onto waiting aircraft, cargo hulls closed and locked and the aircraft taking off, all under the immediate watch of authorised personnel with airside access. The exhibition was originally scheduled to return to the British Museum however, arrangements were made for it to travel to another country before being onforwarded and returned to the UK.

Lessons Learned

The biggest lesson learned was that the best-laid plans can go pear-shaped without any influence of the planners, in this case the impact of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic.

Nothing could have been done to expect or plan for the rapid onset and impacts attributable to COVID-19. The expeditious spread of the virus around the world with forecasts of deadly effects on mass populations resulted in the rapid closure of borders around the world. Serious impacts to the ability to travel both internationally and domestically, the introduction of Managed Isolation Quarantine (MIQ) in most countries, inability for freight carriers (air & sea) to leave their aircraft or ship while on the ground or in port in New Zealand was unprecedented and severely impacted everyone and everything, not just supply chains.

Ongoing long-term uncertainty made it impossible to make reliable short to medium-term plans due to not being able to forecast and assure the ability to carry them out. This was demonstrated very clearly when the decision was made to defer the movement of the exhibition under any circumstances for at least a year, while the world scrambled to find a cure or vaccine for the now confirmed very deadly COVID-19.

Domestic lockdowns implemented by various governments including New Zealand and Australia were intended to deliver one primary outcome, to “Stamp Out Covid-19 from the General Population” by closing international borders and isolating the country. This brought further uncertainty and exacerbated transport logistics to the point of almost closing down supply completely.

Manufacturing shutdowns added further complications and the inability to transport compounded the need to develop a means of safe and reliable supply and distribution of essential supplies and services to feed and care for the population. In the end, it was nearly two years before any form of certainty including a viable vaccine was available to assist in relieving the stranglehold the pandemic unleashed upon the world.

Security – “Operation Ancient”:

Planning was already established at the time the Pandemic unleashed its fury on the world. However, the requirements of an Insurance Deed of Agreement with the New Zealand Government were not foreshadowed. Application documents completed and submitted didn’t indicate any specific security arrangement requirements, if successful. It wasn’t until the Deed was approved and New Zealand Police engaged with “Operation Ancient” that new security expectations became clear to us. At the 11th hour a totally new security management plan was requested by Police Operational Planning and needed to be submitted to the District Commander for review and approval. If that authority considered the plan would meet the expectations of the Deed of Agreement, Sensitivity and Cultural Significance, Value and Security Intelligence that this exhibition would attract, the plan would be approved and deployed. Not only did the new security plan need to address the transport of the consignment, but how security would be managed and delivered at the Museum while the exhibition was onsite, protocols already accepted and agreed to by the BM.

The 22 page Security Management Plan (IMS:3HSS-SD-001) encompassed:

- Stakeholders Groups
- Consignment Travel Schedules
- Consignment Transfer Details – AUK airport to AM & Return
- Delivery Entry Points at AM
- Exhibition Pack In
- Marketing & Media
- AM Security Capability
- Special Exhibitions Access & Security in Detail
- Pre-Opening VIP Events Security
- Public Opening
- Exhibition Security During Public Opening Hours
- Cleaning & Maintenance
- Exhibition Pack Out
- Major Incident Response
- Consignment Transfer from AM to AUK Airport
- Risk Summary

The security Plan was subsequently approved by the Police District Commander, adopted and deployed accordingly for every aspect of Operation Ancient. Once the security plan was approved it became the overarching instrument to drive the entire operational outcome, from arrival to departure and was not amended in anyway throughout the entire operational delivery of the exhibition.

Secrecy:

Secrecy and the principles of information on a need-to-know basis was the fundamental instrument in the success of Operation Ancient. The Museum is as a general rule essentially, an open platform for sharing information pertaining to Museum activities and daily operational requirements. “Operation Ancient” created a lot of discontent in some quarters as to why they (*workers*) could not be included, informed and generally made aware (*but not necessarily involved*) in specific operational deliverables for this exhibition. With the assistance of the Internal Communications Manager and Marketing, strategic information was shared in order to keep the wider Museum whanau (*family*) engaged without being made aware of detail and specifics. Internal Comms and Marketing were instrumental in delivering these messages and didn’t question the intelligence they were given by the Head of Security. They were very creative in “sugar-coating” information that was deliberately vague so as to not divulge anything that could or would compromise the integrity of security protocols.

Logistics:

Transport logistics could only be described as a volatile, fluid and highly dynamic element to manage. The influences of the pandemic meant the demands on airfreight to prioritise human welfare cargo over general freight (*no matter the significance, value or timeframe issues*) would be first and foremost in shipping priorities and was overseen by Government. Several times, parts of the consignment were bumped to later flights because of humanitarian freight priorities. I have to say it was never a question by us about being bumped as frustrating as it was, as we were very much aware human welfare was the most critical priority at the time. We just had to continually re-evaluate and adapt accordingly. Overall, the professionalism provided by GSS and the manner in which they kept the Museum and Police informed, allowed rapid short-notice rescheduling of ground-based security logistics both airside and landside.

Conclusion:

Security planning for the transport of precious cargo (*high value, culturally sensitive & rare arts and antiquities*) is a logistical nightmare as one size does not fit all. The onus is on the owner to undertake a detailed security risk assessment for every movement. Consider all the variables, what security measures to use, and how to blend and utilise physical and technological assets to minimise known and potential cultural safety and security risks.

Developing a detailed security management plan, reviewing it and test it before deploying it, is crucial and must include cultural safety and security influences. Are the arts and antiquities the subject of cultural, political or controversial significance? What is the likelihood of potential protests, antisocial behaviour, theft, damage or destruction? What are the external influences that are not directly associated with the arts or antiquities, such as civil unrest or war, like the current Ukraine conflict where a consignment may be transported past, though, in or out of zones involved?

Assess the competency of the people undertaking the security risk analysis and planning. This needs to include knowledge (*training or qualifications*) – references or evidence of what they have done in the past (*experience*) and reliability to deliver. What references can be provided from other clients supporting their capability and reliability?

Finally, don't believe anything you hear and only half of what you see, question every piece of information, secure plans and protocols and verify or discount every piece of intelligence, no matter how insignificant it may seem.

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