AMENDMENT TO THE RULES COMMITTEE PRINT
FOR H.R. 4435
OFFERED BY MR. ENGEL OF NEW YORK

At the end of subtitle F of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 1266. FINDINGS AND SENSE OF CONGRESS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Protecting cultural property abroad is a vital part of United States cultural diplomacy, showing the respect of the United States for other cultures and the common heritage of humanity.

(2) Cultural property abroad has been lost, damaged, or destroyed due to political instability, armed conflict, natural disasters, and other threats.

(3) In Egypt, political instability has led to the ransacking of its museums, resulting in the destruction of countless ancient artifacts that will forever leave gaps in humanity’s knowledge of the ancient Egyptian civilization.

(4) In Syria, the ongoing civil war has resulted in the shelling of medieval cities, damage to World Heritage Sites, and the looting of museums and archaeological sites. Archaeological and historic sites
and artifacts in Syria date back more than six millennia, and include some of the earliest examples of writing.

(5) In Mali, the Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist group Ansar Dine destroyed tombs and shrines in the ancient city of Timbuktu, once a major center for Islamic learning and scholarship in the 15th and 16th centuries, and threatened collections of ancient manuscripts.

(6) In Afghanistan, the Taliban decreed that the Bamiyan Buddhas, ancient statues carved into a cliff side in central Afghanistan, were to be destroyed. In 2001 the Taliban carried out their threat and destroyed the statues, leading to worldwide condemnation.

(7) In Iraq, after the fall of Saddam Hussein, thieves looted the Iraq Museum in Bagdad, resulting in the loss of approximately 15,000 items. These included ancient amulets, sculptures, ivories, and cylinder seals. Many of these items remain unrecovered.

(8) The destruction of these and other cultural properties represents an irreparable loss to humanity’s common cultural heritage, and therefore to all Americans.
(9) The Armed Forces have played important roles in preserving and protecting cultural property. On June 23, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas to provide expert advice to the military on the protection of cultural property. The Commission formed Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) teams which became part of the Civil Affairs Division of Military Government Section of the Allied armies. The individuals serving in the MFAA were known as the “Monuments Men” and have been credited with securing, cataloguing, and returning hundreds of thousands of works of art stolen by the Nazis during World War II.

(10) The U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield was founded in 2006 to support the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and to coordinate with the Armed Forces, other branches of the United States Government, and other cultural heritage nongovernmental organizations in preserving cultural property abroad threatened by political instability, armed conflict, or natural or other disasters.
(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the Armed Forces play an important role in preserving and protecting cultural property in countries at risk of destruction due to political instability, armed conflict, or natural or other disasters; and

(2) the United States must protect cultural property abroad pursuant to its obligations under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and customary international law in all conflicts to which the United States is a party.

(e) REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IN REGARDS TO PROTECTING CULTURAL PROPERTY ABROAD.—The Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on efforts of the Department of Defense to protect cultural property abroad, including activities undertaken pursuant to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, other cultural protection statutes, and international agreements, including—
(1) directives, policies, and regulations the Department has instituted to protect cultural property abroad at risk of destruction due to political instability, armed conflict, or natural or other disasters;

(2) actions the Armed Forces have taken to protect cultural property abroad, including efforts made to avoid damage, to the extent possible, to cultural property through construction activities, training to ensure deploying military personnel are able to identify, avoid, and protect cultural property abroad, and other efforts made to inform military personnel about the protection of cultural property as part of the law of war; and

(3) the status and number of specialist personnel in the Armed Forces assigned to secure respect for cultural property abroad and to cooperate with civilian authorities responsible for safeguarding cultural property abroad, as required by existing treaty obligations under Article 7 of the 1954 Hague Convention.