

Libya: Treasure of Benghazi Stolen

Robbers Drill Bank's Underground Vault

By [Global Research](#)

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A gang of Libyan looters have raided a priceless collection of gold and silver coins that are believed to date back to the time of Alexander the Great.

The thieves carried off with the pieces, known as The Treasure of Benghazi, having drilled through a concrete ceiling at the National Commercial Bank of Benghazi.

An expert has described the raid as 'one of the greatest thefts in archeological history.'



Silver didrachm, part of The Treasure of Benghazi collection have been stolen by looters in Libya

Whilst the break-in was initially believed to have been part of the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi, Hafed Walada, a Libyan archeologist working at King's College London told The Sunday Times; 'It may have been an inside job.'

'It appears to have been carried out by people who knew what they were looking for.'

Alongside the coins, several artefacts, including monuments and figurines of bronze, glass and ivory, as well as jewellery, bracelets and medallions, are also believed to have been seized by the thieves.



The stolen coins are believed to date back to the era of Alexander the Great

Early leads had initially pointed to neighbouring Egypt, where a farmer had attempted to smuggle 503 gold coins and a golden statue through the port city of Alexandria, however attempts to locate him have thus far failed.

Most of the Benghazi treasures had been on Libyan soil following a mass recovery of the collection between 1917 and 1922 from the temple of Artemis, in Cyrene – an ancient Roman city, now Libyan territory and otherwise known as Shahat.

During the Second World War, much of the treasure was on display at the Museum of Italian Africa in Rome, but eventually returned to Libyan soil in 1961 and was kept at the bank.

Italian archeologist, Serenella Ensoli, from the Second University of Naples insisted the treasure was priceless given its historical value.

‘The collection is not well studied and is a huge loss for Libyan heritage.’

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