

FORENSIC MONITORING PROJECT REPORT

Bosansko Grahovo
Republika Srpska Commission on Missing and Tracing
(25 September 1998)

FINDINGS

Report by:
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Tuzla, Bosna i Hercegovina
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International Commission
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BOSANSKO GRAHOVO EXHUMATIONS

Summary of Events

On 25 September 1998, the Republika Srpska Commission on Missing and Tracing recovered the skeletonized remains of at least two individuals from a cemetery in the suburbs of Bosansko Grahovo.

The first set of remains was very fragmentary. At least one individual was represented. What appeared to be military-style clothing was mixed in with the remains.

The second set of remains was fairly complete, and seemed to comprise a single individual. The remains were buried with civilian-style clothing.

A Forensic Monitor from Physicians for Human Rights was present for the duration of work at the exhumation sites. No Forensic Monitor was present for the postmortem examinations of the human remains recovered from these sites.

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Participants and Observers

Republika Srpska Commission on Missing and Tracing

IVANČEVIĆ Milan	Member
JOVANOVIĆ Dragan	Driver
KARAN Dr. Željko	Forensic Pathologist, Banja Luka
KRČMAR Goran	Member
MAKIVIĆ Aleksandar	Morgue Assistant
MARIĆ Milko	Crime Technician
VESELINOVIĆ Slaviša	Morgue Assistant
Laborers	

Federal Commission on Missing Persons – Croat Side

PUŠIĆ Berislav	President
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Office of the High Representative

CHILVERS Peter	Exhumations Officer, Banja Luka
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Physicians for Human Rights

ŠTIKIĆ Sandra	Translator
YORK Heather	Forensic Monitor

Others

International Police Task Force
Local Police

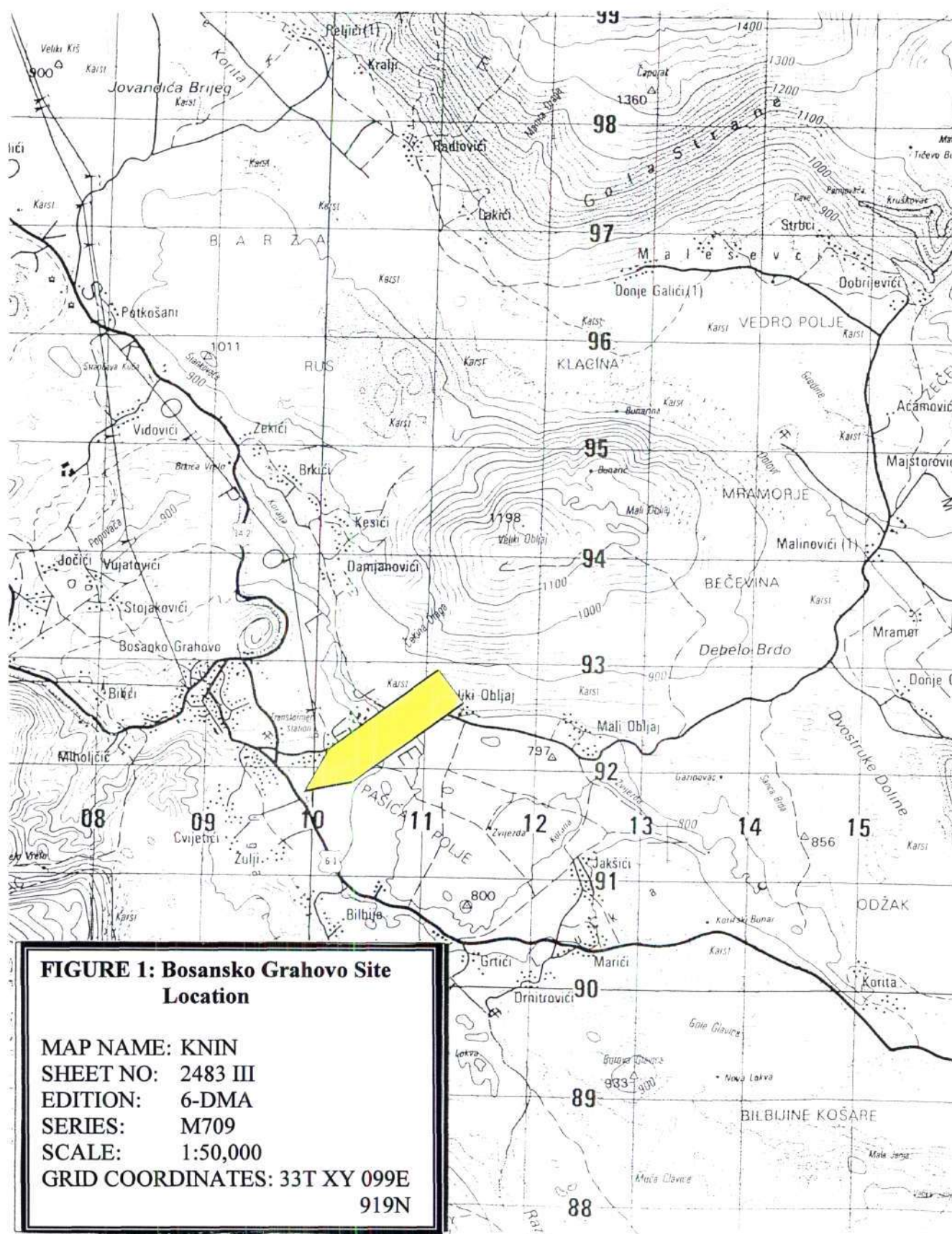
Site Description

Two sites were examined within a cemetery which can be found on the Knin topographic map at grid coordinates 33T XY 09873E 91858N (Sheet 2483 III, Edition 6-DMA, Series M709, and Scale 1:50,000; Figure 1). This well-visited cemetery is located on the southern edge of Bosansko Grahovo. It lies adjacent to National Route 6-1 on the east side.

The first area of investigation was near the east wall of the cemetery, approximately 0.5 m to the east of a wrought-iron fence that enclosed two grave markers (Figure 2). Short, sparse grass and dead leaves covered the immediate area as well as the surrounding cemetery grounds. At the western edge of the digging area was a wooden cross with a black and white cloth tied to its base (Photo 1).

The second area of investigation was approximately 55 m to the east of the first as paced by the Forensic Monitor. This section of the cemetery was enclosed by a wooden picket fence. It contained about 100 graves, most of which were marked and appeared to be more recent than those outside of the section. Witness information led the team to a grave with a wooden cross that bore no inscription. Stones, dirt and flowers covered the grave, but there was no concrete or marble cap (Photo 2).

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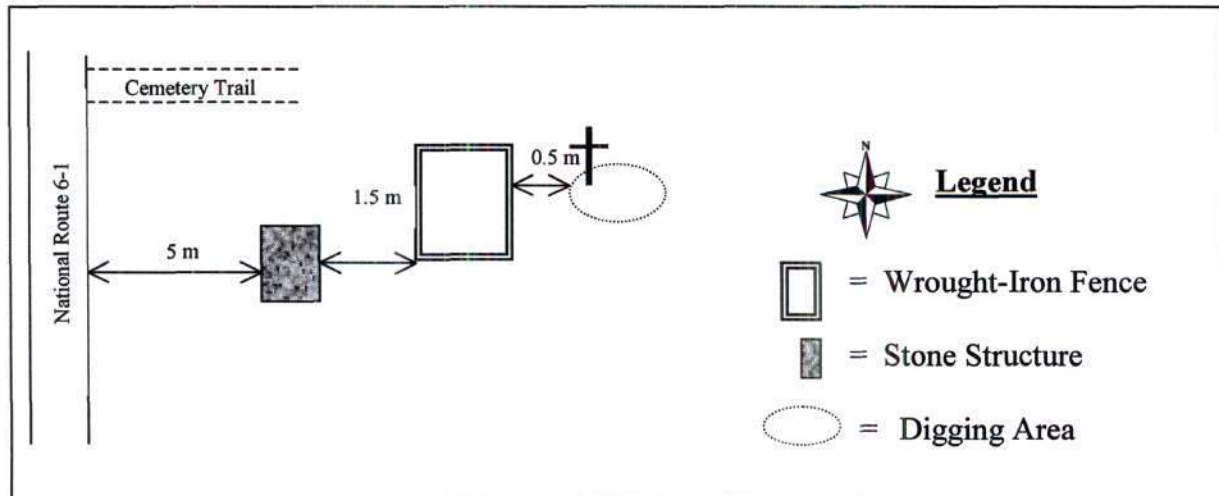


Figure 2: Sketch map of first exhumation area in the cemetery (not to scale)

Site History

Forensic Pathologist Dr. Željko Karan stated that a Cyrillic inscription on the wooden cross at the first site indicated the individuals buried there were soldiers. The bodies were allegedly collected from a battlefield and brought to this location.

According to witness information on the second grave, a body had been buried there in 1994, although the actual death date for the individual was not known.

Exhumation Process and Condition of Remains

At the first location, the wooden cross was removed and placed against the wrought-iron fence. At a depth of approximately 10 cm, two laborers with shovels and picks uncovered a bag, 0.3 m wide and 1 m long, made of plastic fibrous material (Photo 3). The bag was filled with skeletonized human remains that were disarticulated and very fragmentary. It was not possible to assess the minimum number of individuals at that time. A military-style camouflage jacket was in the bag, along with a rather new-looking boot and a pair of civilian-type corduroy pants (Photo 4). A good deal of vegetation had grown through some of the clothing, suggesting that these items had remained on the surface for a period of time before burial inside the plastic bag.

The bag was removed from the ground and placed in a new body bag marked with the label "Grahovo 1." The remains were taken to the Commission's vehicle for transport to the morgue facility in Banja Luka. Work at this location lasted for approximately 10 minutes.

At the second grave, four laborers with shovels and picks began by removing the stone covering and digging into the soil. A piece of red flagging tape was mixed in with the stones. At a depth of 20 cm, a wooden plank was exposed. When the plank was pried up, it proved to be the lid of a wooden coffin. Inside the coffin was a black body bag which was wet and falling apart. It disintegrated even more as the men lifted the bag out of the hole. When the bag was opened, a second bag was found within. Human remains within the inner bag were fairly complete, but skeletonized (Photo 5). The skull had a 2 mm diameter perforation over

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the right eye orbit, and a silver substance coated one tooth and the inferior border of the right mandibular corpus (Photo 6). A pair of boots, pants, and a jacket found with the remains appeared to be civilian type.

The outer body bag was reburied in the grave. The body, still within the inner bag, was placed in a new body bag and taken to the Commission's vehicle for transport to the Banja Luka morgue facility. Work at this location took approximately 40 minutes.

Postmortem Examination Findings

No Forensic Monitor was present for the postmortem examination of the two bodies found at this site.

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Photo 1. View to the north of clearing at the first area. Note the wooden cross with black and white marker tied to its base. (Roll HY-024, Exp. 3)



Photo 2. View to the north of the second grave. (Roll HY-024, Exp.6)

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Photo 3. View to the northwest of the exposed plastic bag at the first area. (Roll HY-024, Exp. 7)



Photo 4. Fragmentary human remains from the first area being placed in a new body bag. Note the camouflage clothing mixed in with the remains. (Roll HY-024, Exp. 8)

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Photo 5. The remains from the second grave after exhumation. (Roll HY-024, Exp.13)



Photo 6. Perforation above the right eye orbit and silver coating a tooth and the inferior right mandibular corpus. (Roll HY-024, Exp. 15)

PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) mobilizes the health professions and enlists public support to protect and promote the human rights of all people.

PHR believes that human rights are essential preconditions for the health and well-being of all members of the human family.

We use medical and scientific methods to investigate and expose violations of human rights worldwide.

We work to stop violations of human rights.

We demand the perpetrators of human rights violations be held accountable for their actions under international law.

Since its founding in 1986, PHR has carried out forensic investigations, including exhumations and autopsies, of alleged torture and extrajudicial executions in Afghanistan, Brazil, Israel, the former Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Iraqi Kurdistan, Kuwait, Mexico, Panama, Somalia, and Thailand. PHR has also devoted considerable energy and resources, under the auspices of its Chicago-based International Forensic Program, to assist the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (and its predecessor the U.N. War Crimes Commission) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, to collect evidence of genocide in those nations.

The President is Charles Clements, M.D., M.P.H., the Vice President is Carola Eisenberg, M.D., the Executive Director is Leonard Rubenstein, J.D., the Deputy Director is Susannah Sirkin, the Advocacy Director is Holly Burkhalter, the Senior Program Associate is Richard Sollom, the Director of Communications is Barbara Ayotte, the Campaign and Education Coordinator is Gina Cummings, the Membership Development Coordinator is Steve Brown. William H. Haglund, Ph.D., is Director of PHR's International Forensic Program. Vince Iacopino, M.D., Ph.D., is Senior Medical Consultant. The director of Bosnia Projects is Laurie Vollen, M.D., M.P.H.