



### D31 A Review of the Operations of the Center for International Forensic Assistance (CIFA)

*Nikolas P. Lemos, PhD\*, Head, Forensic Toxicology Service, St. George's Hospital Medical School, University of London, Cranmer Terrace, London, England, United Kingdom*

At this presentation, the participant will learn about CIFA which is an international effort aiming to make available independent forensic assistance at a short notice wherever that may be needed for humanitarian purposes. A brief review of some of CIFA's most recent missions will also be presented for the participants.

The Center for International Forensic Assistance (CIFA) is based at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, U.K., within the Department of Forensic Medicine and Science. Established in 1839, it is one of the largest and oldest departments in Europe. The Center has continuously served the community and contributed to the development of forensic medical sciences. It has already been actively involved in the provision of international forensic expertise in a broad range of missions. These include investigations of war crimes, mass disasters, human right abuses (including the identification of victims for humanitarian purposes), individual cases internationally, and assistance with training of experts abroad and development of their facilities.

The Center maintains a database of experts ready to deploy on a mission when this becomes necessary. Experts have access to the web domain ([www.forensicassistance.org](http://www.forensicassistance.org)) where they may obtain all the latest information on missions. Ready to deploy in missions around the world, the Center has experts from almost 30 countries including the U.S., U.K., Mexico, Canada, Costa Rica, Argentina, Australia, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Austria, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Denmark, Norway, and Malaysia.

Such forensic investigations have already taken place in several countries, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, Sri-Lanka, Cyprus, Chile, South Africa, El Salvador, Guatemala, Romania, Nepal, The Philippines, Italy, Germany, Greece, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Gibraltar.

The personnel associated with the Center comprises of Forensic Pathologists, DNA Experts, Forensic Toxicologists, Forensic Odontologists, Forensic Anthropologists, and Archaeologists, International Law Specialists, Psychiatrists, various technical experts, and others belonging in disciplines related to the forensic work. All of them are committed to achieving high standards of forensic expertise and academic excellence through participation in training courses as part of a continuing professional development program, assisting other countries to improve or establish their forensic capabilities, and participation in research projects as appropriate.

The overall role of the Center is to facilitate the planning and execution of the international forensic work and provide assistance to the humanitarian aspects involved in this field. The Center lends forensic assistance to the International Community by providing forensic science expertise to assist in the investigation of war crime atrocities, mass disasters, individual cases of a political nature and/or human rights abuses and other cases as appropriate.

CIFA formally interacts with other organizations and individuals both nationally and internationally to facilitate mission planning and execution. Moreover, an educational role is provided for the dissemination of knowledge through conferences, seminars, workshops, and other customized institutional, and individual training programs. Finally, the improvement or establishment of forensic capabilities in various countries is assisted and research and evaluating activities in all areas of forensic expertise and other related disciplines are carried out in accordance with the aims of the Center.

Our efforts also include the identification of humanitarian needs in relation to the execution and planning of missions and acting as liaison with other associated disciplines such as the Social Sciences and Mental Health. CIFA provides impartial forensic scientific assistance worldwide at any time.

**Center for International Forensic Assistance, Humanitarian Missions, International Database**