



## Physical Anthropology Section – 2004

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### H85 Exhumation... and What After? ICMP Model in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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This paper introduces a model for the entire process of exhumation, examination and identification in Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted by local authorities in cooperation with the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP). Since 2001 more than 2500 DNA supported identifications have been completed.

ICMP anthropologists are active participants in the exhumation, examination, reassociation, and review of remains for comparison of antemortem and postmortem data, as well as assisting families during the identification process.

In the second part of last century, armed conflicts around the world have taken the lives of millions of civilians. Among the countries impacted by these events are Argentina, Guatemala, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and, recently, Afghanistan and Iraq. In some of these countries people were killed or “disappeared” because of their political views. Others were victims of ethnic cleansing. The problem of prosecuting the perpetrators of these crimes on the basis of recovered evidence and identified victims attracted many scientists and organizations involved in human rights issues.

The first exhumations for the purpose of collecting evidence for genocide took place in late 1990s in Rwanda, Croatia, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina by UN Crime Tribunals. The first exhumations for the purposes of victim identification began in Argentina and Guatemala in 1980s. Unfortunately, these exhumations were not done in continuous way nor conducted under the auspices of local authorities.

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina took the lives of more 250,000 people. Many were killed during ethnic cleansing actions in the beginning of war in 1992, throughout 1993, and after the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995. After the war ended in December 1995, about 30,000 persons were unaccounted for and listed as missing. The first exhumation in BiH occurred in October 1995, and was conducted by local authorities in a northwestern area of Bosnia called Krajina. In the following year all former warring parties were performing exhumations for identification purposes. At this time, the ICTY initiated exhumations in the Srebrenica area in order to collect evidence for war crimes. Since then, the remains of thousands of victims have been exhumed. In eight years of exhumation activities by the ICTY and local commissions, about half of the exhumed cases (usually representing complete remains) were identified using traditional methods. The remainder could not be identified due to the lack of sufficient postmortem and antemortem data.

Since it was established in the summer of 1996, the ICMP has helped address the fate of missing persons in the former Yugoslavia through exhumations and victim identification. The ICMP became a pivotal partner in this process following the introduction of a new strategy focusing on victim identification using DNA.

**Exhumation, DNA Identification, Examination**