



## Physical Anthropology Section – 2004

### H90 The ASCLD-LAB Accreditation of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, Central Identification Laboratory

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The process leading to the ASCLD-LAB accreditation of the Department of Defense Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command Central Identification Laboratory, the first forensic skeletal identification laboratory so credentialed, and the issues addressed during the accreditation process will be discussed.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by demonstrating the lessons learned during accreditation of a forensic anthropology laboratory.

Accreditation of forensic laboratories by professional organizations has been a growing trend over the past decade. In August 2003, the Department of Defense Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) Central Identification Laboratory (CIL) became the first forensic skeletal identification laboratory to achieve American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors-Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD-LAB) accreditation. ASCLD-LAB is a voluntary program in which any crime laboratory may participate in order to demonstrate that its procedures, casework, facilities, personnel, and equipment meet established standards.

On 5 September 2002, application for accreditation was submitted to ASCLD-LAB. During the ensuing compliance period, the Quality Manager and Inspection Team Chief solved a variety of problems prior to the inspection that threatened accreditation. In some ways, a forensic identification laboratory is starkly different than a typical crime laboratory. The CIL's mission, to identify war dead from previous conflicts and to lend recovery and identification expertise to military and civilian law enforcement agencies, means that the nature of the evidence is different, casework is more protracted, and the analyses conducted by individual analysts are more diverse. Further, the CIL's disciplines are nontraditional relative to ASCLD-LAB. Accordingly, the CIL's forensic anthropology, odontology and material (artifactual) evidence disciplines were treated as sub-disciplines under the trace evidence discipline and forensic archaeology was equated with crime scene processing. Additionally, the CIL initially sought accreditation for its mtDNA sampling procedures under forensic biology, however ASCLD-LAB declined this request since the CIL only samples teeth and bones for mtDNA and conducts no on-site analysis. ASCLD-LAB later suggested that should forensic anthropology and odontology ever be incorporated as an ASCLD-LAB discipline then criteria could be established for mtDNA sampling procedures.

The inspection took place from 24-27 March 2003. The CIL was inspected against 109 pre-established criteria. Each criterion is designated by ASCLD-LAB as essential (E), Important (I) or Desirable (D). To achieve accreditation, all of the "E" criteria have to be passed, 75% of the "I" and 50% of the "D". The major inspection activities included examination of documentation and casework, staff interviews, and evaluation of evidence storage and security.

Examination of documentation was accomplished through criteria files supplied by the Quality Manager. Each file acted as an index by listing the relevant documentation used to support compliance for a particular criterion. Casework, and in particular note taking, came under intense scrutiny. Altogether, 200 suitable case files were presented to the inspection team. Interviews were conducted with the on-hand staff, approximately 25 people. Interviews focused on selected aspects of casework, the work environment, and knowledge of Laboratory programs and procedures, in particular safety, proficiency testing and other aspects of training. Laboratory Management was similarly interviewed. The results from both sets of interviews were then compared for consistency in order to gauge the communications flow in the Laboratory (bottom-up and top-down), overall morale, and the strengths and weaknesses in management policies. An examination of evidence storage and security, the most stringently enforced criteria, was conducted by one of the inspectors. The focus was the sealing, marking and labeling of evidence, and the physical security of the building.

The CIL passed 105 of the 109 criteria. The inspection team indicated that the four non-compliant criteria were those most often scored as deficient during initial inspections. Of the four criteria designated as non-compliant, two were essential and two were important. Our overall criteria scores were: Essential (E):  $44/46 \times 100 = 95.65\%$ ; Important (I):  $41/43 \times 100 = 95.35\%$ ; Desirable (D):  $20/20 \times 100 = 100\%$ .

The two deficient essential criteria resulted in a 90-day remediation period. The first criterion, marking all evidence with a case number for identification, was deficient since the CIL did not normally mark biological evidence. The other deficient criterion, involved the definition and marking of analytical notes, too many of which were not up to ASCLD-LAB or CIL standards. After the inspection team accepted the remediation plan, a 90-day compliance period ensued. On June 30, 2003, a remediation report, largely containing copies of analytical notes and photographs of marked evidence documenting our compliance of deficient essential criteria, was forwarded to the original ASCLD-LAB inspection team. The team reviewed and approved the report, and recommended accreditation 2003, which was formally granted in August 2003.

**Central Identification Laboratory, ASCLD-LAB, Accreditation**