



D33 The Excavation, Recovery, and Analysis of Remains From a Series of Interrelated Sites Containing the Mortal Remains of Kosovar Albanians

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the complexity of undertaking the excavation and recovery of hundreds of victims from a series of interrelated mass graves using archaeological techniques, the problems that these type of highly political sites can produce, and how a combination of teams from different disciplines can work together to effect a common goal i.e., identification and repatriation.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by providing a broader appreciation of the multidisciplinary inter-political process required for the comprehensive investigation of crimes against humanity and genocide.

During the recent conflict in Kosovo 1999 many hundreds of Kosovar Albanians were killed by various Para-military, military and police units. Following their deaths their remains were collected, often in specific groups, loaded into trucks and transported and interred within a series of large primary mass graves located within a military complex north west of the city of Belgrade.

As part of the International Commission on Missing Persons work within the region to assist in the location, recovery, identification and repatriation of remains related to this and other conflicts, a government initiated project was put into place enabling ICMP experts to attend and undertake the recovery, and DNA led identification of these remains. In conjunction with the recovery anthropological and pathological analysis was undertaken by the Belgrade Institute of Forensic Medicine.

Two separate but related mass graves were exhumed by the Belgrade Institute of Forensic Medicine in 2001. With the assistance of archaeological and anthropological experts from ICMP in 2002, a further three mass graves and two small but important stratigraphically related anomalies were excavated to build a picture of the events that occurred at the site.

In total the remains of 870 individuals were recovered in a variety of decompositional states and with a wide range of associated forensic information.

This paper will attempt to briefly outline the political situation at the time of ICMP involvement, the process by which the ICMP archaeological team set about locating the individual sites and remains including the use of non-invasive geophysical 'resistivity' and electrical imaging, the method of recording applied to all sites and remains encountered, the process of DNA sampling and testing and the final political problems encountered during the repatriation process.

Two further linked papers will also be presented, 2] a description of the anthropological data obtained at the sites, and 3] a review of the DNA technology used by ICMP to identify the remains. This will include a brief description of the method of the blood collection from surviving family members and the use of the DNA as a means of support for the archaeological observations made during the excavation.

Mass Graves, Excavation, Political Arena