



Physical Anthropology Section – 2007

H70 Creating a Standardized Approach to Capacity Building Programs in Forensic Anthropology: Human Rights Investigations in Colombia

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The goal of this presentation is to present a study that focuses on determining needs for investigative teams in nations that have a history of large scale human rights violations. The audience will gain an understanding of four areas:

1. The training needs assessment process conducted by the trainers and trainees.
2. The construction and content of the training course established by ICITAP in Colombia.
3. The evaluation of the training program's success by the trainers and the trainees.
4. The long term prospects for this type of training and the implications for Colombia's changing legal system.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by explaining a new approach to forensic capacity-building programs in an anthropological context.

The U.S. Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigation Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) and the US Department of Defense's Central Identification Laboratory (CIL) are collaborating in the construction and implementation of a training and capacity building program for forensic anthropology in Colombia that focuses upon forensic archeology and recovery techniques. The program's objectives are to enhance the existing capabilities of the Colombian government's human rights teams to effectively identify, process, and recover evidence from the clandestine disposal sites of individuals killed by extra-judicial executions. Built into the original design of this program is an assessment strategy allowing ICITAP and CIL to evaluate the performance of the trainers, the learning success rate of the trainees and the long term impact of this capacity building program on the trainees' day-to-day investigative practices.

The Colombian government is transitioning from an inquisitorial to an adversarial legal system and ICITAP is providing technical guidance, training and supplies to support the transition. Recently, the Colombian government has established a new initiative, the Justice and Peace Initiative, which has allowed human rights investigators and law-enforcement agencies to obtain new information about a series of mass graves in Colombia. The Colombian government wishes to prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes. To support this aim ICITAP has formulated a new training program with technical expertise provided by the CIL.

After an initial assessment of the Colombian human rights team's current operating standards for the investigation of clandestine graves, ICITAP and CIL formulated a comprehensive training program. The assessment was conducted through a direct visit to laboratory facilities in May of 2006 and a desktop review of working practices and case reporting. As a result of this assessment ICITAP and CIL identified the need for a program of textually and graphically supported, lecture and practical based training designed to impart the critical skills and theoretical foundations necessary to conduct forensic recovery of subterranean crime scenes and surface scatters of human remains. The primary aim of the training was to teach a structured and team based methodological framework, incorporating specific recovery skills and techniques.

The course incorporated field and practical classroom exercises designed to demonstrate and develop skills in the following critical areas:

- Site formation processes
- Site disturbance processes
- Taphonomy
- Stratigraphic interpretation of a site
- Excavation and recovery methodologies
- Site recording, documentation and survey
- Evidence identification, handling and management
- Chain of custody
- Long term curation and storage of evidence

The course is designed to impart these skills so that they are implemented by trainees to best



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support criminal justice and the identification of victims. Furthermore the course is structured so that, in the future, trainees can become trainers.

The performance evaluation procedure built into this program is tri-stage:

Stage 1: Defining desired impacts and outcomes from the training by both the trainers and the trainees.

Stage 2: Assessment of the training's initial value by the trainers, trainees and independent observers (through videotape of the training sessions) at the time of the training.

Stage 3: Assessment of the training's actual impact on forensic anthropology in Colombia.

At the time of the presentation the evaluation will be between Stage 2 and Stage 3. A detailed outline of the training program and the results of the second stage of the performance evaluation will be presented.

Although the ICITAP and CIL training program is initially focused on the current specific needs of the Colombian government, it is intended to ultimately be used to support other nations that request technical training for the investigation of large scale human rights atrocities.

Capacity-building, Human Rights, Forensic Anthropology