



Physical Anthropology Section – 2009

H13 Training in Forensic Archaeology and Anthropology on a Shoestring: Is It Possible? Is It Sensible?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an increased understanding of the challenges and possibilities involved in providing training in forensic archaeology and anthropology around the world, as well as the various cost implications of such training.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by presenting a series of real examples that show the overall structure of operational budgets, as well as the individual aspects of planning training programs. The presentation will close with a series of conclusions and propositions which are aimed to trigger more discussion regarding funding and the cost of training and exercising in forensic archaeology and anthropology. This will, in turn, hopefully lead to more training programs.

Many countries have been, and still are, affected by atrocity crimes. Often such crimes have not been investigated enough or at all due to political, security, or other reasons. In some countries, for example Guatemala and Argentina, teams of forensic anthropologists have a tradition of investigating these atrocity crimes. These teams consist mainly of scientists from that particular nation, although most teams have had some international individuals working with them for certain periods of time. In contrast, countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo have had international forensic teams investigating their atrocity crimes with national teams continuing the work later. Whichever model an investigation takes, the thorough training of all team members is of vital importance.

Every aspect of atrocity crimes investigations has a significant impact on many peoples' lives: relatives of the missing who may learn what truly happened to their loved ones; nations that have to come to terms with what atrocities have been committed in their name; criminal court proceedings; insurance claims; etc. The people who have been affected by atrocity crimes through the loss of relatives have experienced extensive emotional trauma. Facing this reality, forensic teams must ensure that every process within their work is carried out to the highest, internationally recognized standards. If a victim is misidentified and repatriated to the wrong family, the trauma the relatives have to go through is simply unacceptable. It is therefore essential that all personnel working on atrocity crime investigations are properly trained in their specific tasks, have up-to-date and comprehensive knowledge of everyone else's roles, and completely understand the overall process and their place within it. This involves significant theoretical knowledge as well as relevant and well-structured training and exercising.

There are a number of organizations in the world that have the expertise and experience to provide high quality training in atrocity crime investigations; and there are many countries that have a substantial need for such training. Why then does so little take place? The answer lies in part in the cost of such training. Other factors, such as security problems or political interference, can rarely be addressed and never solved by forensic archaeologists or anthropologists. The issue of costs, however, may be mitigated.

During this presentation, a series of real examples will be presented that show the overall structure of operational budgets, as well as other individual aspects associated with the planning of forensic training programs. In conclusion, the presentation hopes to trigger more discussion regarding funding and the cost of training in forensic archaeology and anthropology such as: Why is forensic training expensive? Does it have to be? Where can costs be reduced? Where can they not be? This will, in turn, hopefully lead to the creation of more training programs.

Forensic Archaeology, Forensic Anthropology, Training and Exercising