

## FORENSIC MONITORING PROJECT REPORT

Duljevac Exhumations  
State Commission on Missing Persons  
(15-17 September 1998)

### FINDINGS

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**ICMP**  
*International Commission  
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## DULJEVAC EXHUMATIONS

### **Summary of Events**

The State Commission on Missing Persons (Bosniak) exhumed 24 sets of remains from a single grave near Duljevac, south of Rogatica, on 15-17 November, 1998. The grave was allegedly that of men killed in 1992. The witnesses reported that the men had been taken from a prison near Rogatica, used as a human shield in the fighting, and executed. PHR Forensic Monitor Melissa Connor was present for, and participated in, the exhumations.

The autopsies were conducted at the mortuary in Visoko on 23 and 25 September, 1998. Dr. Hamza Žujo, Forensic Pathologist, presided over the autopsies. Forensic Monitors Melissa Connor and Dr. Jill Gould were present for, and participated in, the autopsies. Of the 24 autopsies monitored, 13 decedents sustained gunshot wounds to the head. Injuries involving the bones were seen in all but one case. Cause of death was documented in all cases with the exception of four. Specific bone abnormalities were documented which may enhance future identification of the remains in several of the other cases.

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### Participants and Observers (not all inclusive)

#### State Commission on Missing Persons (Bosniak)

BEŠIĆ Sead	Crime Technician, Sarajevo
DRAGANOVIĆ Kemal	Member
HRNJIĆ Saudin	Autopsy Assistant, Sarajevo
KLONOWSKI Dr. Eva	Forensic Anthropologist
KOSO Sejid	Member
NIKŠIĆ Muhidin	Judge, Cantonal Court, Sarajevo
MAŠOVIĆ Amor	President
MUJKIĆ Muhamed	Archivist, Crime Technician, Sarajevo
MUSIĆ Adnan	Autopsy Assistant, Sarajevo
SARAJLIĆ Nermin	Forensic Pathology Student, Sarajevo
TARIĆ Ermin	Crime Technician, Sarajevo
ŽUJO Dr. Hamza	Forensic Pathologist, Sarajevo
Laborers from the Visiko City Cemetery	

#### Republika Srpska Commission on Missing and Tracing

ŠKRBA Slobadan	Member
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#### Physicians for Human Rights

CONNOR Melissa	Forensic Monitor
GOULD Dr. Jill	Forensic Monitor
LIVADIĆ Mirela	Translator
SPAHIĆ Lejla	Translator

#### Office of the High Representative

ZOFAL Werner	Exhumations Officer
BECO Abdel	Translator

Representatives from the International Police Task Force (IPTF) and the Stabilization Force (SFOR) were also present.

### Site Description

The town of Rogatica is in a wide portion of the Rakitnica River valley, at the confluence of the Rakitnica and Sutjeska Rivers (Figure 1) (DMA Map Rogatica, Edition 5-DMA, Series M709, Scale 1:50,000, Sheet 2882 I). The town, at an elevation of 600 meters, is surrounded by steep, rugged hills covered in forest and vegetation.

Duljevac is a small hamlet in the mountains to the south of Rogatica. The road to the hamlet goes through Pašić Kula and along a cobble road before disappearing into a dirt two-track road that is difficult for two-wheel drive vehicles. Before getting to the grave site, the road passes a bunker to the left. The grave, at grid coordinates 34T CP 415E 462N, is located just north of a second bunker that can also be seen from the road. The grave is in a grass-covered sheep pasture on a south-east facing slope overlooking the Ljutača valley.



## Site History

Fighting in and around Rogatica was heavy in 1992. According to a 1996 report by the State Commission for Gathering Facts on War Crimes, shelling of Rogatica began on 14 May 1992, and intense fighting continued through June and July 1992 (*Missing Persons – Analysis of Causes and Circumstances in Territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina April 1992 – December 1995*, State Commission for Gathering Facts on War Crimes, Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, Sarajevo, December 1996). The report says that when areas were captured, men would frequently be separated from women and children, and on several occasions, the latter were driven into Bosniak territory. In many cases, the men have not been heard from since and are counted among the missing. Fighting in the villages surrounding Rogatica continued through June, July, and August.

The witness(es) alleged that over 30 men were taken from the prison in Rogatica to the area near Duljevac to be used as a human shield in the fighting near the grave site. The Bosniak position was several hundred meters from the Bosnian Serb position, the area of the grave site. After their use as a human shield, witnesses said the men were executed on the site. The witness(es) were men who had been shot, but survived. They crawled out from under other bodies and escaped after the Bosnian Serb forces left the immediate area.

There were no witnesses to the burial. The exhumation team had talked to people who had seen smoke rising from the general area and believed the bodies might have been burned.

## Exhumation Process and Condition of Remains

Upon arrival at the alleged grave site, the exhumation team showed the de-miner where they thought the grave site was located. This initial location was near a charred tree. The team may have chosen this area because they believed the remains may have been burned. The de-miner used a metal detector and a probe to examine the immediate area around the tree. This area was delimited using police tape (Figure 2). The crime technicians then photographed the area using still and digital photography, as well as video.

Laborers used picks and shovels to excavate trenches along the treeline parallel to the road, as well as several trenches perpendicular to the treeline. No signs of disturbed soil or human remains were found. The next day, the team returned with a backhoe. Additional trenching was completed, concentrating again on the treeline parallel to the road and the perpendicular treeline on the south side of the field. A soil probe was also used to try to locate the remains. Finally, a metal detector was brought out to search the area for a concentration of cartridges that might have resulted from the executions. A concentration of metal detector “hits” was found in the southwest corner of the field, less than 5 m from two of the previous trenches (Figure 3). While excavating these “hits,” human bone was found. The excavations were expanded until the entire grave was uncovered.

The remains were uncovered and cleaned by the Forensic Pathologist, Dr. Žujo, his assistants, Mr. Mašović, the PHR Forensic Monitor, and/ or Dr. Klonowski. The Crime Technicians photographed the exposed remains and any associated artifacts. A combination of the five people listed above lifted the remains into the body bag(s) that had been labeled by the Crime Technicians and/or the Pathologist’s Assistant. Evidence found directly associated with remains was photographed and placed in the body bag with the remains. Evidence



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found not directly associated with remains was photographed and collected separately. Before loading the body bags into the truck and leaving the site, the Crime Technicians photographed the remains inside each body bag.

The grave was a maximum of about 1.1 m deep and 4.5 m north/south by 3 m east/west. Within the grave itself was a large mass of remains running north to south. This is the mass where most of the remains and where the most articulated remains occurred (Area C, Figure 4). To the northeast of this main mass (Area D, Figure 4), disarticulated elements were located with a series of identification documents. Only one document, a credit card, was still legible. The name on this document matched one of the names on the list of people whom the witnesses alleged should be in the grave. This pile of documents gave the impression that the wallets and papers from several of the bodies had been collected and thrown into the grave in one place.

An area to the north – northwest of the main body mass (Area A, Figure 4) contained three crania (Crania 1, 2, and 3) with multiple cervical vertebrae each, but disarticulated from the rest of each body. At the top of the main body mass lay two additional crania that were also disassociated from the post-cranial remains. Several sets of remains in the main body mass were complete except for the crania and some vertebrae, and the articular surfaces on the vertebrae were matched in the field. Other broken, disarticulated, elements were in this island of remains (Area A) and to the northeast of the main body mass (Areas D and E), and added to the impression that the remains were buried after disarticulation had occurred.

The grave taphonomy suggests the bodies laid on the surface for a while after death. This is evident from the maggot cases found throughout the remains. Also, the remains were partially disassociated in a manner consistent with their being decomposed enough to fall apart during the burial. In part of the grave, particularly in the southeast corner, the remains were charred. The soil under these remains was burned, suggesting the remains had been burned in place. Two cartridge cases were found in the grave.

No clothing was found with the exhumed remains. Shoes and boots were recovered, but no determination was made as to whether these were of civilian or military type.

### **Postmortem Examination Findings**

The autopsies were carried out on 22, 23, and 25 September 1998 at the mortuary in Visoko. Dr. Hamza Žujo, Forensic Pathologist, presided over the autopsies. PHR Forensic Monitor Melissa Connor was present the first day, and PHR Forensic Monitor Dr. Jill Gould was present the remaining days. The same pathology assistants were present as were in the field. The first day of the autopsies consisted of associating the commingled remains. Twenty-eight bags of remains were removed from the field, along with an unnumbered body bag of disassociated remains. At the end of the osteological analysis, 24 relatively complete sets of remains were examined (Table 1), and two sets of partial remains were set aside for examination at a later date. The general procedure for the examination was to carry the body into the autopsy room, unzip the body bag, photograph the remains, describe the clothing, and examine the body for sex, age, trauma, and cause of death.



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Table 1. Summary of Postmortem Examination of Remains from Duljevac.

Date of Autopsy	Body No.	State of Remains	Sex	Age Estimate	Gunshot Wounds	Blunt Force Trauma	Other Factors
23/9/98	1	Skeletal	Male	N/A	Head		Possible chest, extremities
23/9/98	2	Skeletal	Male	N/A	Head, chest, upper and lower extremities		Deformed clavicles, dentures, pelvis absent
23/9/98	3	Skeletal	Male	~17-19	Head, upper extremities		Non-fusion of epiphyseal plates
23/9/98	4	Skeletal	Male	~17-19	Head		
23/9/98	5	Skeletal	Male	N/A		Head, abdomen, chest	Old healed fracture of left tibia, fibula; thermal artifact
23/9/98	6	Skeletal	Male	~17-19	Head	R. tibia, femur, scapula	Non-fusion of epiphyseal plates
23/9/98	7	Skeletal	Male	~17-19	Chest	Defect in L. femur	
23/9/98	8	Skeletal	Male	~17-20	Head	R. femur, scapula	7 mm GSW defect
23/9/98	9	Skeletal	Male	~20-35	Head, upper extremities		R. femoral head deformity
23/9/98	10	Skeletal	Male	~30+	Head, Chest	R. ulna, radius	
23/9/98	11	Skeletal	Male	~40-50+			R. iliac crest absent
23/9/98	12	Skeletal	Male	>40	Right hip	R. tibia, fibula, ulna	
23/9/98	13	Skeletal	Male	N/A		Probable soft tissue	Pubic symphysis absent; possible postmortem injuries to extremities
23/9/98	14	Skeletal	Male	>50+	Head, chest, abdomen	R. and L. tibial fracture	Pubic symphysis absent, tooth with gold crown
23/9/98	15	Skeletal	Male	~16-19	Head, chest	L. humerus, scapula	
25/9/98	16	Skeletal	Male	~40+		R. femur L. tibia	Multiple old dental losses
25/9/98	17	Skeletal	Male	~40		L. upper extremities and R. lower extremities	Beveling on internal and external tables
25/9/98	19	Skeletal	Male	>40+		L. fibula, R. tibia, L. rib	Edentulous
25/9/98	20	Skeletal	Male	30-50	Head, R. hip		
25/9/98	22	Skeletal	Male	55		Mandible, vertebra, ulna, radius, humerus, coxal	L. innominate absent, osteoarthritis of spine
25/9/98	23	Skeletal	Male	35-50		Head, clavicle, ribs, femur	Severe osteoporosis of spine

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25/9/98	24	Skeletal	Male	30-50+		Skull, vertebra, mandible, sacrum, pelvis	
25/9/98	25	Skeletal	Male	30-50+	Head	L. humerus, sacrum	Severe osteoarthritis, partially edentulous
25/9/98	26	Skeletal	Male	30-45	Head	R. scapula, rib	Adidas logo

Bodies one (#1) through twenty-six (#26) were examined with the exclusion of Bodies eighteen (#18) and twenty-one (#21). These two bodies consisted of partial remains that would be examined at a later date.

Of the 24 autopsies monitored, 13 decedents sustained definite gunshot wounds to the head. Gunshot wounds were not designated if the actual entrance wound could not be approximated upon reconstruction of bony fragments. These findings may indicate that the blunt force injuries documented may in fact have resulted from gunshot wound origin. Injuries involving the bones were seen in all but one case. Cause of death was documented by Dr. Žujo in all cases with the exception of four (Bodies 13, 16, 17 and 19). Scene investigation indicates homicide in all cases. Specific bone abnormalities were documented which may enhance future identification of some of the remaining cases.







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Figure 2. Site overview of Duljevac grave area. View to east. The road is to the left of the trees seen in the picture. The area within the tape was the area originally examined.



Figure 3. Pinflags center and to the right side of the photograph represented areas where the metal detector sensed something. The crowd gathered to the left side of the photograph is around the initial skeletal elements found in the mass grave. View to east.

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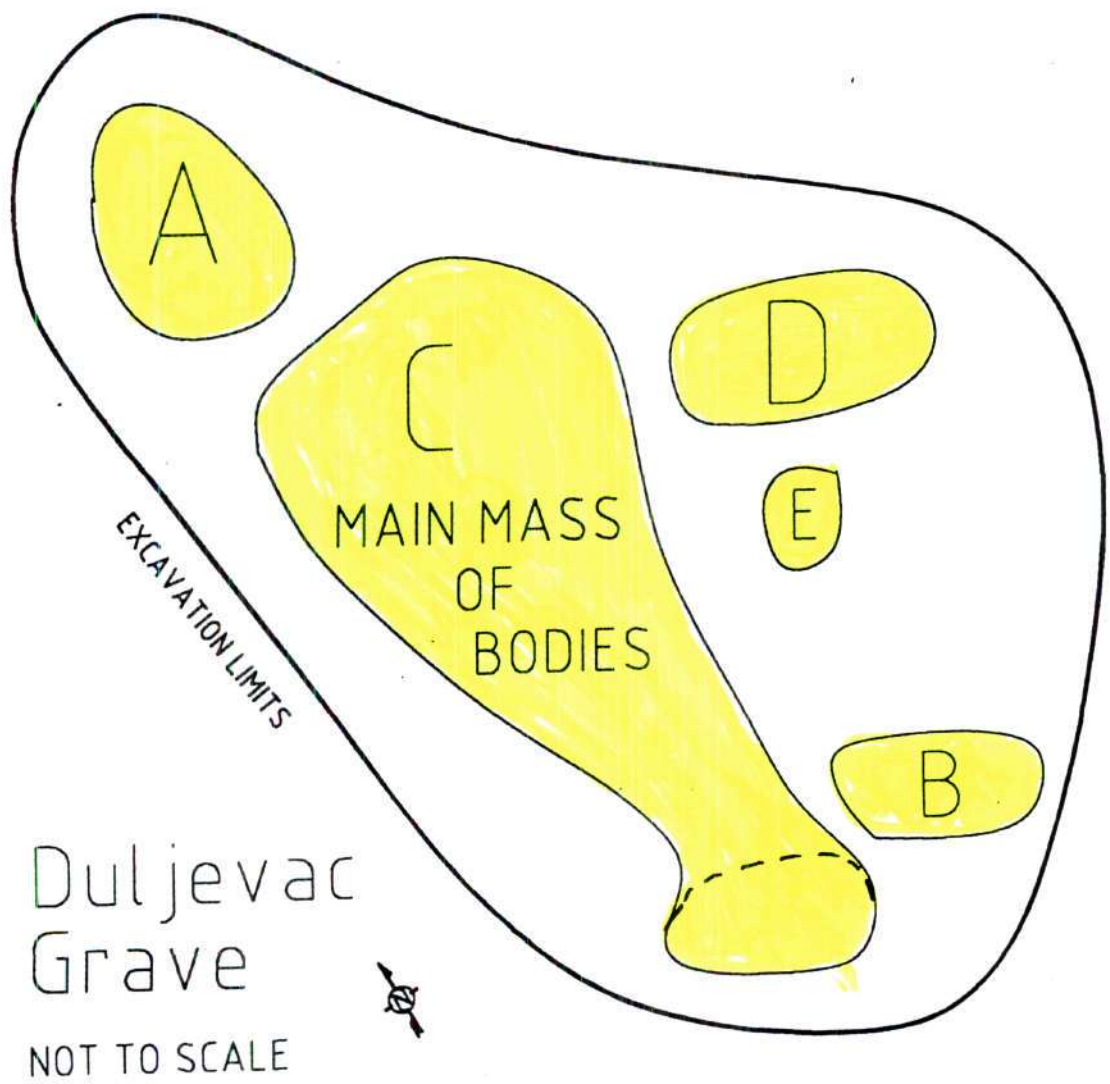


Figure 4. Sketch map of groups of elements in the grave.



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Figure 5. View of the mass grave after cleaning the initial layer of remains. View to northeast. Pinflags mark crania, which are labeled with body numbers.



Figure 6. View of the mass grave after cleaning the initial layer of remains. View to west.

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We work to stop violations of human rights.

We demand the perpetrators of human rights violations be held accountable for their actions under international law.

Since its founding in 1986, PHR has carried out forensic investigations, including exhumations and autopsies, of alleged torture and extrajudicial executions in Afghanistan, Brazil, Israel, the former Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Iraqi Kurdistan, Kuwait, Mexico, Panama, Somalia, and Thailand. PHR has also devoted considerable energy and resources, under the auspices of its Chicago-based International Forensic Program, to assist the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (and its predecessor the U.N. War Crimes Commission) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, to collect evidence of genocide in those nations.

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