

## FORENSIC MONITORING PROJECT REPORT

Orašje Gradsko Groblje Exhumations  
State Commission on Missing Persons  
(11 September 1998)

### FINDINGS

Report by:  
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Tuzla, Bosna i Hercegovina  
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**ICMP**  
*International Commission  
on Missing Persons*

### **Summary of Events**

The victim being sought was a Bosniak in the Croatian Army who was reportedly killed in 1992. In 1993, the Bosnian Serbs claimed they were in possession of a body which they said was that of the suspected victim. At the time, the victim's father stated that he recognized the blue swimming trunks worn by the decedent as well as a necklace as belonging to his son. Subsequently, a pathologist did a postmortem examination and stated that he was relatively certain that the body was that of the son. That pathologist is now dead. Reportedly, the father was not able to collect a full pension from his son's death because the identification was not absolute. The body had been buried in the Orašje Gradsko Groblje (Orašje City Cemetery). The State Commission on Missing Persons became involved at the request of the father, who asked that the body be exhumed for a more definitive identification. The father obtained an exhumation order from the Court in Orašje on the morning of 11 September 1998. The remains were exhumed that day and sent to the Tuzla Clinical Center for autopsy. Results of the autopsy were pending at the time of this report.

## Participants and Observers (Not Inclusive)

### State Commission on Missing Persons (Bosniak)

DOMINKOVIĆ Vlado	Inspector, Orašje Police
HURTIĆ Murat	Member
IVANOVIĆ Ružica	Judge, Orašje City Court
JAHIĆ Asmir	Crime Technician, Orašje Police
MIKIĆ Željko	Representative, Orašje City Court
Three laborers	

### Federal Commission on Missing Persons - Croat Side

No representatives were present

### Physicians for Human Rights

THOMAS George	Forensic Monitor
OVČINA Mirzet	Translator

## Site Description

The exhumation on 11 September 1998 took place in the Orašje City Cemetery along the southern part of Orašje, a short distance from the courthouse. The site coordinate is 34T CQ 184E 893N (DMA Map Županja, Bosna i Hercegovina, Edition 5-DMA, Series M709, Sheet 2885 III, Horizontal Datum WGS84, and Scale 1:50,000; FIGURE 1). The team accessed the cemetery site by driving a few minutes from the courthouse and arrived at 12:35 PM. The site to be exhumed was a grave with a green wooden marker inscribed in white with a name. It also bore the inscription, "1972-1993 Džakule." Growing over the middle of the grave was a small tree. The site was located in the northwest part of the cemetery about 10 m from a cement wall that formed a portion of the cemetery boundary (FIGURE 2).

## Site History

The victim was a Bosniak in the Croatian Army who was reportedly killed in 1992. In 1993, the Bosnian Serbs claimed to be in possession of a body which they said was that of the suspected victim. At the time, the father stated that he recognized the blue swimming trunks worn by the decedent as well as a necklace as belonging to his son. Subsequently, a pathologist did a postmortem examination and stated that he was relatively certain that the body was that of the witness' son. That pathologist is now dead. Reportedly, the father was not able to collect a full pension from his son's death because the identification was not absolute. The body had been buried in the Orašje Gradsko Groblje (Orašje City Cemetery). The State Commission on Missing Persons became involved at the request of the father, who asked that the body be exhumed for a more definitive identification. The father obtained an exhumation order from the Court in Orašje on the morning of 11 September 1998.



## Exhumation Process and Condition of Remains

The exhumation began at 1:10 PM after initial photographs had been taken and the police had made some measurements. A small tree that was growing over the grave complicated the exhumation. At a depth of 1.5 m, a wooden coffin with an inner metal liner was encountered (FIGURE 4). The wood was deteriorating. The wood and metal were removed, revealing a sturdy, green, vinyl tarpaulin that contained bones and some semi-liquid material, but no clothing. This was photographed. The skeletonized body was brought to the surface at 3:25 PM. The bones were photographed lying on the green tarpaulin (FIGURE 5).

Superficial examination revealed at least the majority of a human skeleton, including major skull fragments, pelvis and long bones. After washing the skull fragments, an intact mandible (FIGURES 6 AND 7) and maxilla (FIGURES 8 AND 9) were noted. The teeth of the mandible were all present with the exception of #17 and #32, which were not evident and appeared to have been extracted or had not erupted. Tooth #30 manifested a cruciate-shaped filling along the superior surface. A gap was noted between #24 and #25, as described by the father prior to the exhumation. The father stated that he was not aware of the filling. Along the maxilla, all the teeth were present except for #1, which appears to have been extracted or had not erupted. Tooth #16 was unerupted and was noted within the mandible through a small hole in the side of the mandible. Tooth #7 was broken (about ½ the crown); this could be antemortem or postmortem. The father was not aware of such a fracture. The upper incisors (#8 and #9) appeared big, with #8 set a little lower than #9. No other obvious abnormalities of the teeth were noted on superficial examination. The police and the Forensic Monitor photographed the teeth from various angles.

The body was re-wrapped in the green tarpaulin and then placed in a clean, white body bag. The skull fragments were put in a yellow plastic bag, tied shut, and placed in the body bag. The body bag was marked in black marker with the date, location, exhumation number, and the alleged name of the victim. The inscription was then photographed. The exhumation process ended at 3:55 PM.

The body was transported in the PHR pickup truck to Tuzla and was brought to the Tuzla Clinical Center at about 6 PM, 11 September 1998, by Mirzet Ovčina. The morgue attendant took custody of the body for further examination, autopsy, and identification by Dr. Cihlarž. A written receipt was received for the body.

## Postmortem Examination

At the time of this report, no information was available from Dr. Cihlarž regarding the postmortem examination of these remains.

The father asked about having DNA analysis performed. I explained to him that Dr. Cihlarž would be doing the autopsy and would decide what identification methods would be necessary. Subsequently, the father has called PHR asking about DNA testing. He has been referred to Dr. Cihlarž.



# ORAŠJE GRADSKO GROBLJE EXHUMATION

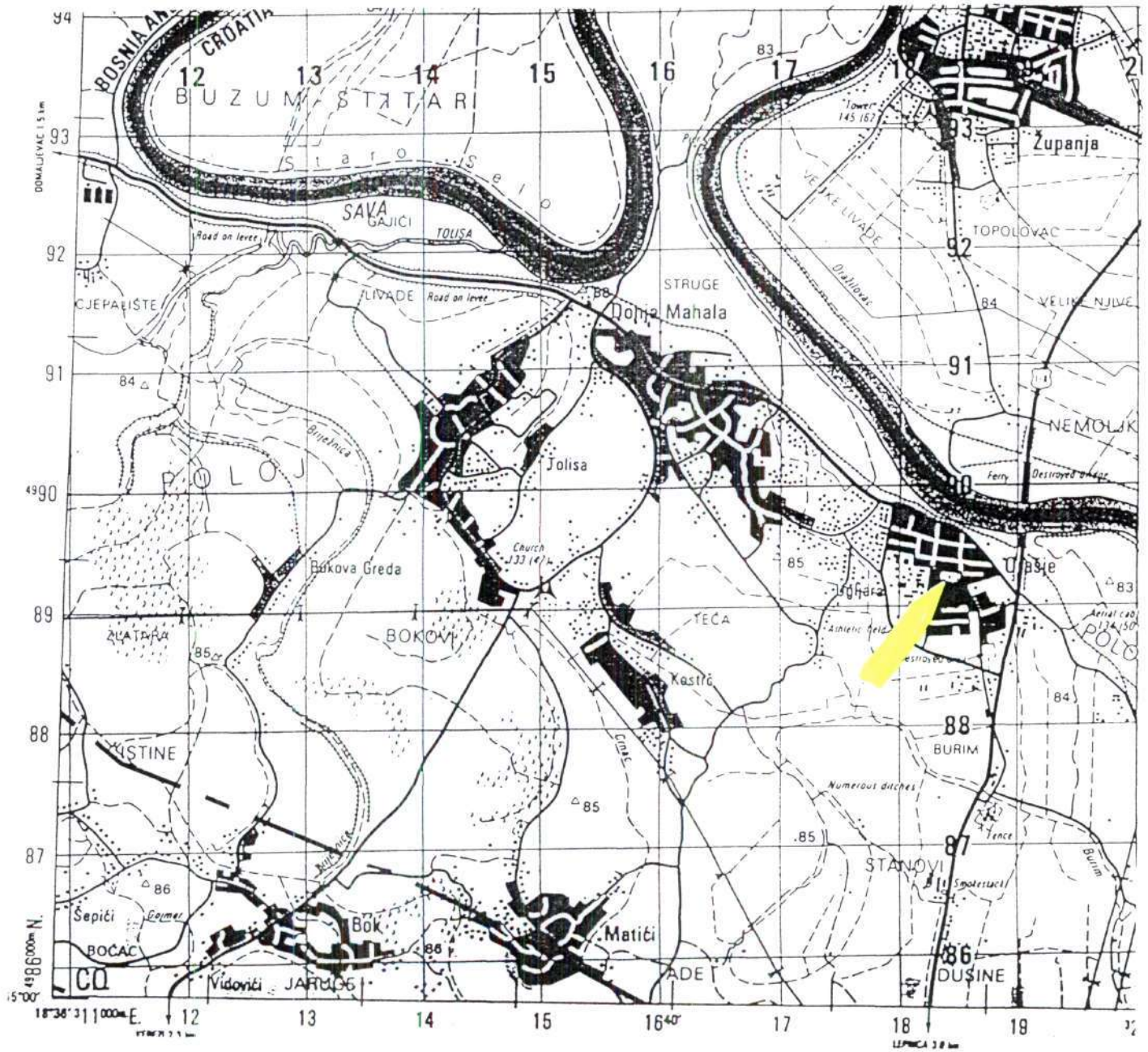


Figure 1. Location of the city cemetery.



## ORAŠJE GRADSKO GROBLJE EXHUMATION



Figure 2. Overview of site location; grave is to left side in photo (Roll 3326, Exp. 22).



Figure 3. Participants in cemetery (Roll 3326, Exp. 23).





Figure 4. View of coffin *in situ*. (Roll 3326, Exp. 5).



Figure 5. Remains on green vinyl tarpaulin after removal (Roll 3326, Exp. 7).



Figure 6. View of lower teeth (Roll 3326, Exp. 10).



Figure 7. View of lower teeth (Roll 3326, Exp. 11).





Figure 8. View of upper teeth (Roll 3326, Exp. 8).



Figure 9. View of upper teeth (Roll 3326, Exp. 9).

## PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) mobilizes the health professions and enlists public support to protect and promote the human rights of all people.

PHR believes that human rights are essential preconditions for the health and well-being of all members of the human family.

We use medical and scientific methods to investigate and expose violations of human rights worldwide.

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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