

FORENSIC ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Consultant Report 1999-034

Sarajevo I

Republika Srpska Commission on Tracing Prisoners and Missing Persons
7 - 9 July 1999

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November 1999

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Financed with support of International Commission on Missing Persons

ICMP
*International Commission
on Missing Persons*

Summary of Events

From July 7 through July 9, 1999, the Republika Srpska (RS) Commission on Tracing Prisoners and Missing Persons investigated seven sites in or near the cities of Sarajevo and Vareš and exhumed a total of 14 individuals. The remains were recovered from five single graves and one mass grave.

A Forensic Consultant from Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) was present for all three days and attended the recovery at all locations.

PHR Forensic Consultant Francine Drayer attended the postmortem examination of all individuals on July 18, 1999. No information regarding postmortem examinations of these remains was available at the time of this report.

(Editor's note: In 1999, it was agreed that the "State Commission on Missing Persons (Bosniak Side)" and the "Federal Commission on Missing Persons – Croat Side" would eventually be referred to as the "Federation Commission on Missing Persons – Bosniak Side" and "Federation Commission on Missing Persons – Croat Side," respectively. For purposes of simplicity and clarity, any reference to either of these commissions in 1999 reports will use the "Federation" names.)

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Participants and Observers (not inclusive)

Republika Srpska Commission on Tracing Prisoners and Missing Persons

BOGDANIĆ Milan	President, Sarajevo Subdivision
AVLIJAŠ Slobodan	Member, Sarajevo Subdivision
ŠKRBA Slobodan	Member, Sarajevo Subdivision
SRETO Crnja	Judge, Srpska Sq.
ČORLIJA Dragon	Judge, Banja Luka
MRŠIĆ Ranka	Prosecutor, Srpska Sq.
KARAN Dr. Željko	Forensic Pathologist, Banja Luka
MARIĆ Milko	Crime Technician, Banja Luka

Federation Commission on Missing Persons – Bosniak Side

ODOBAŠIĆ Jasmin	Member, Sarajevo
DRAGANOVIĆ Kemal	Member, Sarajevo
BEŠO Sejid	Police Inspector, Sarajevo
TARIĆ Ermin	Police Inspector, Sarajevo
MUFTIĆ Ferid	Crime Technician, Vareš
Local Police	

Physicians for Human Rights

KOMAR Dr. Debra	Forensic Consultant, Sarajevo
TORLAKOVIĆ Azur	Field Assistant, Sarajevo

Office of the High Representative

CHILVERS Peter	Exhumations Officer, Banja Luka
KOEHL Knud	Exhumations Officer, Sarajevo
VIZINA Dan	Exhumations Officer, Mostar

Special Visitor

PORTILLO Michael	Former UK Minister of Defence (July 7 only)
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Site Descriptions

A total of seven sites were investigated during the three days of exhumations. A summary of the sites, identified by number in chronological order, is provided in Table 1. The date of exhumation, site name, grid co-ordinates and reference map information are also included in Table 1.

TABLE 1 – Summary of Site Locations

SITE #	DATE	SITE NAME	TOPO MAP	GRID CO-ORDINATE	# EXPECTED	INDIV.	MNI RECOVERED
1	07.07.99	Žuč	2782 I Sarajevo	34T BP 880 607	1		0
2	07.07.99	Žuč II	2782 I Sarajevo	34T BP 884 616	1		0
3	07.07.99	Hotonj	2782 I Sarajevo	34T BP 897 628	1		1
4	07.07.99	Dobrinja 3	2782 I Sarajevo	34T BP 871 564	1		1
5	07.07.00	Dobrinja 2	2782 I Sarajevo	34T BP 869 559	1		1
6	08.07.99	Kunosići	2783 II Vareš	34T BP 927 823	9		9
7	09.07.99	Blaža	2783 II Vareš	34T BP 901 858	2		2

Sites 1 and 2 were reported to be unmarked graves near destroyed homes in the hills north of Sarajevo. Site 3 was a marked grave in a garden beside an occupied house. Sites 4 and 5 were marked graves in small cemeteries adjacent to apartment complexes in Dobrinja. Site 6 was an unmarked mass grave at the edge of a rural cemetery. Site 7 was a double unmarked grave at the edge of a rural cemetery.

Site Histories

At site 1, the RS Commission sought to recover one female who had been killed on June 8, 1992, and buried in her backyard. No information was provided regarding site 2.

At site 3, the decedent was reported to have been a civilian killed in 1992. The individual may have been killed because he had information on paramilitary activities. The decedent was buried by a neighbour.

Site 4 was believed to contain the remains of Milko TERZIĆ, born in 1950. The decedent was reported to have been shot in his nearby apartment in 1992 and was buried by a neighbour.

The grave marker recovered at site 5 bore the inscription "Milan _ivković 1950-1992". The RS Commission provided no additional information.

Site 6 is located near the village of Kunosići. According to the RS Commission, a total of 28 people were originally reported missing from the area. Of those 28, the RS Commission has located 19. The nine individuals buried in the mass grave at site 6 represent the remaining missing persons from this area. The nine decedents are reportedly civilians and soldiers killed on June 10, 1992.

The decedents recovered from site 7 are reportedly a female civilian and a male soldier killed on December 17, 1992. The RS Commission stated that the bodies had been buried by soldiers but did not specify which army.

Exhumation Process and Condition of Remains

Despite probing and the digging of numerous test pits, no remains were located in the areas indicated by the witnesses at sites 1 and 2.

At site 3, the remains of a single individual were exhumed from a manually constructed grave at a depth of 2.1 meters. The fully clothed remains were contained in a wooden coffin. During the exhumation, the mandible and dentures of the decedent were damaged after they were removed by a worker, placed on the edge of the grave and repeatedly stepped on by the workers (Photo 2). The laborers then left the area without retrieving these remains. The PHR Consultant instructed a worker to return and recover the dentures and bones.

The grave at site 4 was of manual construction and was 1 meter in depth. The body was fully clothed in civilian attire and had been wrapped in a blanket and placed in a wooden coffin. The remains were fleshed and saponified. Following the exposure of the remains, the exhumation process was delayed to accommodate the visit of former UK Minister of Defence Michael Portillo (Photo 3). The removal of the body was quickly completed following the departure of the special guest.

Site 5 consisted of a single marked grave of manual construction and a depth of 1.5 meters. The decedent was dressed in civilian clothing, wrapped in plastic and a blanket and deposited beneath a layer of what appeared to be wood flooring with linoleum. The remains were skeletonized and a gold ring was recovered. The recovery of the remains was done quickly and a preliminary examination of the body on scene indicated that several maxillary teeth may have been left in the grave. No additional excavation was conducted once the body was recovered.

At site 6, the RS Commission indicated an area along the cemetery fenceline which was to be exhumed. After three hours, the workers had exposed a wooden top to a large grave. Inside, two elaborate wooden coffins with cloth draped tops were revealed (Photo 5). The RS Commission then stated that a mistake had been made but that the RS Commission had a request to exhume the two bodies contained in the coffins at a later date and should therefore be allowed to removed the bodies. It should be noted that the family and witnesses for these two bodies were present at the exhumation that day. The OHR representative refused permission to remove the bodies, as the identities of the individuals were known, they had been properly buried and they did not represent the individuals the team had come to the site

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to exhume. The Federation Commission also expressed its displeasure with the situation and would not permit the process to go forward. The families held a brief ceremony, marked the grave and assisted in refilling the grave. Because of considerable difficulty in getting the vehicles to the remote location, the PHR Consultant was not present when the exhumation began and is unable to comment on whether this grave had been marked.

The laborers were then directed to clear a second area of the cemetery at site 6. A large mechanically dug grave with a wooden top was revealed at a depth of 2.1 meters. Seven bodies were initially revealed within three wooden compartments (Photo 6). All were fully clothed in what appeared to be military uniforms and had been wrapped in blankets. All bodies were largely skeletonized with some saponified tissue. Upon the removal of the first seven individuals, the laborers expanded the grave and located an additional two bodies in an adjacent compartment.

Two individuals were recovered from one grave at site 7. The first body recovered was a male in full winter military uniform, buried in a wooden coffin at a depth of 1.25 meters. A second body was recovered immediately adjacent to the coffin at the same level. The second decedent was a female, fully dressed in civilian clothing. Both bodies were fully skeletonized.

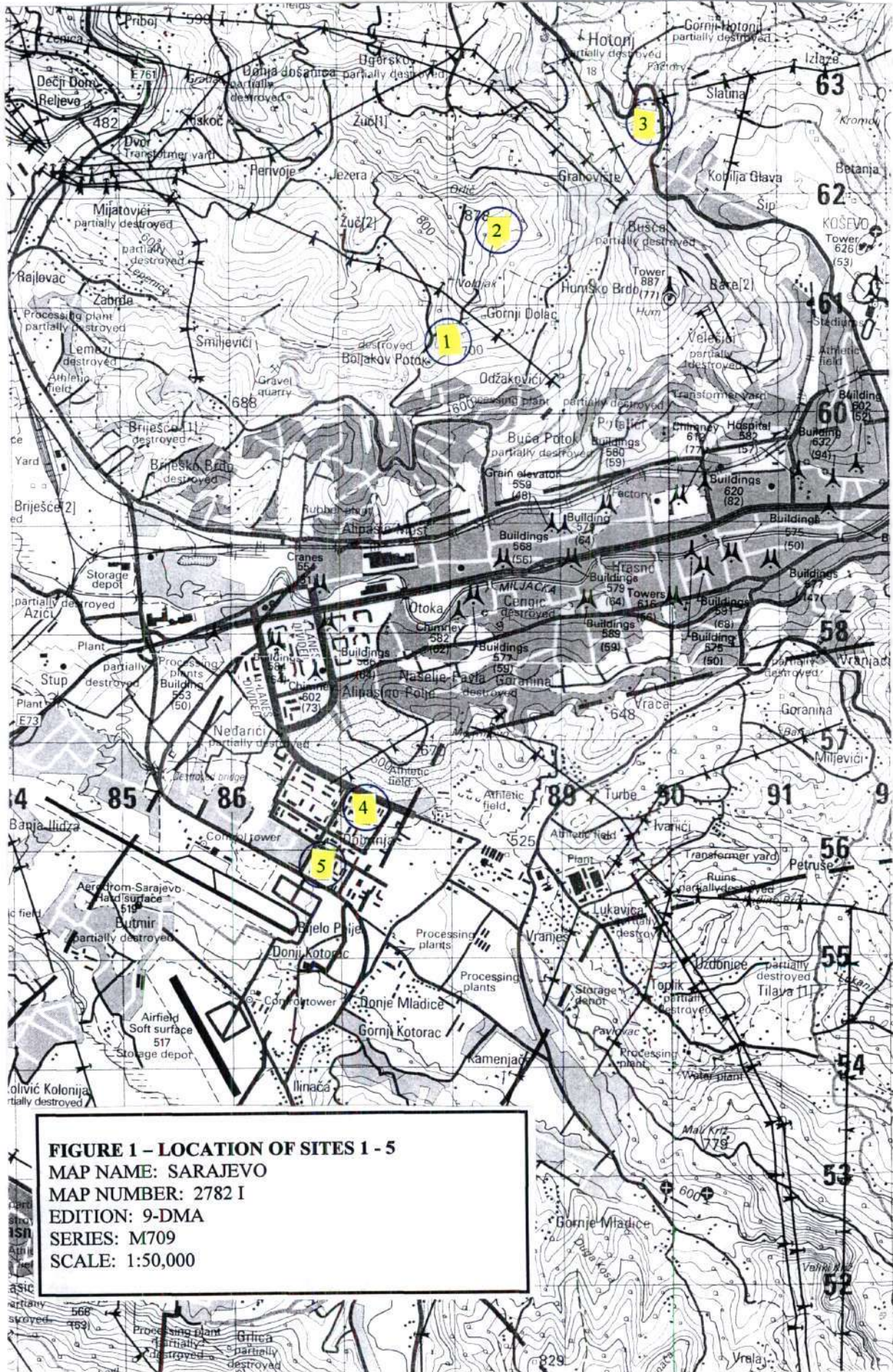
The exhumations were conducted with shovel and pickaxe and followed standard archaeological methods. The use of a backhoe at site 6 would have been more appropriate, given the depth and size of the grave. Under the direction of Dr. Karan, the exhumations were adequate but often rushed.

Postmortem Examination Findings

The postmortem examinations of the remains from site 3 through 7 were conducted at the Lukavica autopsy facility on July 18, 1999. PHR Consultant Francine Drayer attended the examinations.

At the writing of this report, no information is available from the Republika Srpska Commission regarding the autopsies of these remains.

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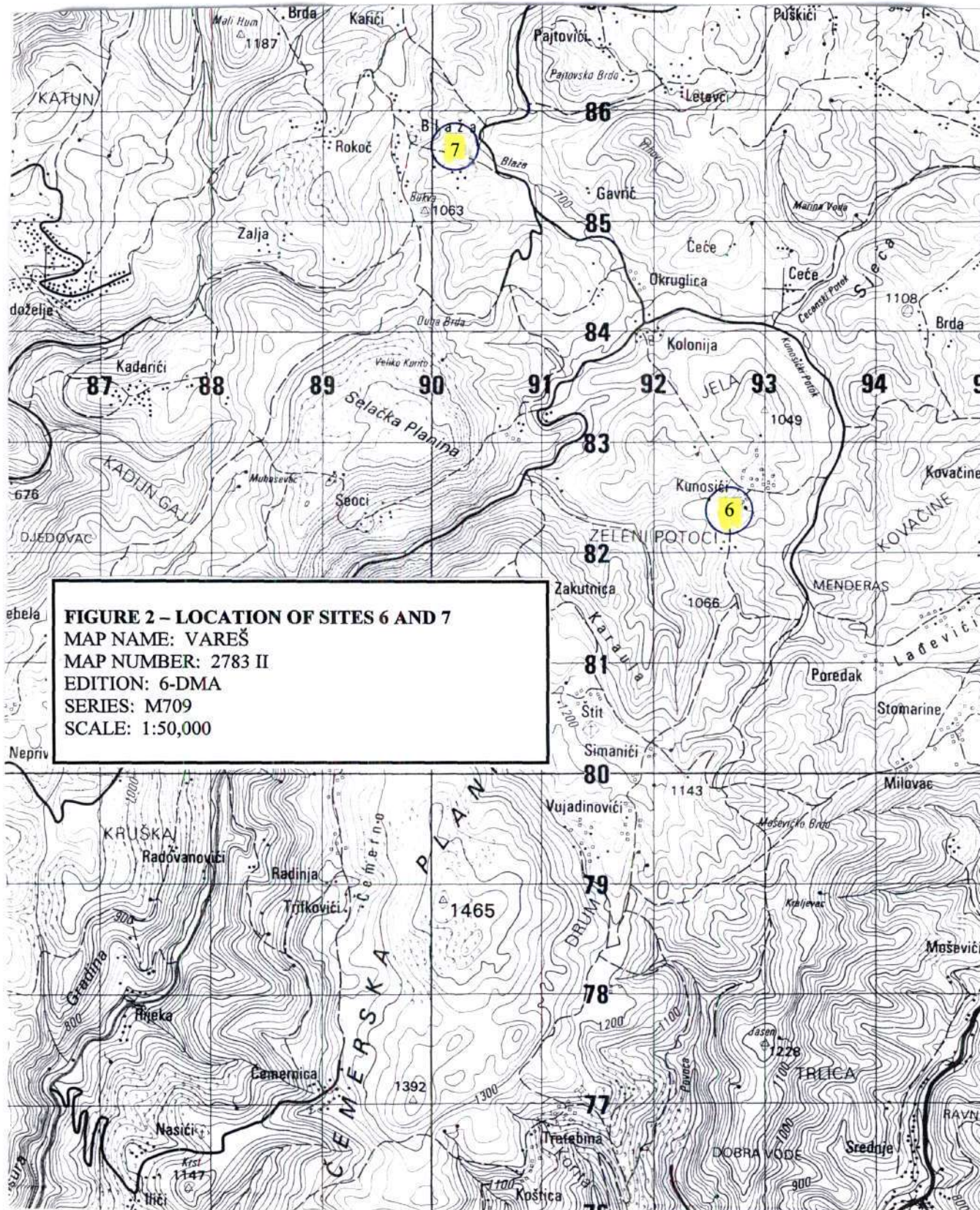




Photo 1. Site 3 (Hotonj), 07.07.99. Laborers remove the remains of HOT 1 from the grave. Remains were saponified (roll 1007, exp. 6A).



Photo 2. Site 3 (Hotonj), 07.07.99. Close-up view of upper denture plate and mandible of HOT 1. Laborers had stepped on these remains during the removal of the body from the grave and failed to retrieve them until they were pointed out by the PHR Consultant (roll 1007, exp. 7A).



Photo 3. Site 4 (Dobrinja III), 07.07.99. Dr. Karan discusses the exhumation with special guest Michael Portillo (roll 1007, exp. 10A).



Photo 4. Site 5 (Dobrinja II), 07.07.99. Laborers remove overburden of the grave, located adjacent to a car park in an apartment complex (roll 1007, exp. 14A).



Photo 5. Site 6 (Kunosići), 08.07.99. First grave exposed, containing two well-made coffins in a wooden crypt. The remains did not represent the individuals the Commission sought to retrieve, and the OHR representative did not allow the removal of these remains (roll 1007, exp. 25A).



Photo 6. Site 6 (Kunosići), 0.8.07.99. Second grave exposed, with first six individuals exposed. Grave depth 2.1 meters (roll 1007, exp. 34A).



Photo 7. Site 6 (Kunosići), 08.07.99. All nine individuals removed and placed in body bags (roll 1256, exp. 12).



Photo 8. Site 7 (Blaža), 09.07.99. Remains of BLA 1, removed from the grave and placed in a body bag for transport (roll 1256, exp. 20).