

FORENSIC ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Consultant Report 1999-005

Bosanski Petrovac I

Republika Srpska Commission on Tracing Prisoners and Missing Persons
15 April 1999

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Summary of Events

On April 15 1999, The Republika Srpska (RS) Commission on Tracing Prisoners and Missing Persons collected the surface remains of one individual. Pre-visits were conducted at seven other sites, but no other human remains were found. The team indicated its intentions to return at a later date to these locations for exhumation.

The recovered remains were placed in a body bag and taken to the autopsy facility in Banja Luka for postmortem examination.

A Forensic Consultant from Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) was present for the duration of the recovery and pre-visit, but not for the postmortem examination. Results of this examination had not been forwarded to PHR 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.)

Participants and Observers

Republika Srpska Commission on Tracing Prisoners and Missing Persons

IVANČEVIĆ Milan	Member
BOGDANIĆ Milan	Member
MAKIVIĆ Aleksander	RS worker

Office of the High Representative (OHR)

CHILVERS Peter	Exhumations Officer, Banja Luka
MAGIERA Matthew	Exhumations Officer, Sarajevo

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)

DRAYER Francine	Forensic Consultant
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Site Descriptions, Histories and Recovery Process

1. **Motel Ero-9 east of parking lot**, Bosanski Petrovac. Grid coordinate: 33T XK 086 333 (Site 1, Figure 1; Map: Bosanski Petrovac, Sheet 2484 III, Series M709, Edition 8-DMA). Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI) recovered: 0

A new addition to the motel was under construction to the east of the old building. According to witnesses (not present), approximately 25-30 people were buried here in 1995. It is not known if human remains were found during the excavation of the foundation for the new addition. RS representatives stated that they believe that the new addition is being constructed in an attempt to cover up the mass grave.

2. Approximately 150 meters southeast of **Motel Ero-9**, Bosanski Petrovac. Grid coordinate: 33T XK 087 331 (Site 2, Figure 1; Map: Bosanski Petrovac, Sheet 2484 III, Series M709, Edition 8-DMA). MNI recovered: 0

Twenty-five bodies were exhumed here previously. However, 10 more bodies are believed to have been buried here. At the above grid coordinate, evidence was found of previous a disturbance or excavation, but the area was covered with garbage at the time of the pre-visit. The team stated its intention to return at a later date to excavate the site. The question was raised if the witness may have confused the previous site near Motel Ero-9 with this site since these sites are geographically very close and the estimated number of victims is effectively identical.

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3. **Bara.** Approximately 3 km southeast of Motel Ero-9. Grid coordinate: 33T XK 098 309 (Site 3, Figure 1; Map: Bosanski Petrovac, Sheet 2484 III, Series M709, Edition 8-DMA). MNI recovered: 0.

Jovo Rokvić (son of the decedent) informed the team that his father (Momčilo Rokvić) was killed on January 23 or 24, 1996. However, police records indicate that the correct date was in November 1995. The witness data on this matter is stored in Bihać. Two witnesses--one of them a policeman--have been killed, according to RS sources. There are other witnesses living in the RS and Croatia, but they are reportedly afraid to come forward.

Jovo and his brother have been unable to locate the grave during previous searches around the house, but they had recently received more exact information on the location of the grave. The alleged grave is approximately 30 m west of a destroyed farmhouse; however, probing of the soil by the recovery team proved negative. The house and the surrounding area were videotaped during the visit. The son will show this tape to both his brother and the informant in the hope to discover exactly where the body is buried. After that, the team will return to exhume the body.

4. **Zapoljak, Atlajića kuća house.** Grid coordinate: 33T WK 958 492 Site 4, Figure 2; Map: Bosanski Petrovac, Sheet 2484 III, Series M709, Edition 8-DMA). MNI recovered: 0.

"Biljanja's case": The brother of Biljanja (presently employed at OHR) allegedly escaped with the rest of his unit through the forest, but he became separated from the group not far from this house. It is not known where he went after that. Witnesses, presently living in Banja Luka, report that they saw a soldier in the village, but they don't know the identity of this man. Efforts to find other witness who may have seen the soldier have so far been unsuccessful.

5. **Vrtoc.** Grid coordinate: 33T WK 949 442 (Site 5, Figure 2; Map: Bosanski Petrovac, Sheet 2484 III, Series M709, Edition 8-DMA). MNI recovered: 0.

Although a total of eight soldiers were seen at this site, only five were believed to have been killed in combat and buried here. Three soldiers escaped. No evidence of human remains was found.

6. **Field near farmhouses south of Vodenica.** Grid coordinate: 33T XK 008 429 (Site 6, Figure 2; Map: Bosanski Petrovac, Sheet 2484 III, Series M709, Edition 8-DMA). MNI recovered: 1.

A returning refugee discovered a cranium and partial humerus in a field near her house. The team collected these and the surrounding area was systematically surveyed for other

remains. None were found. The missing person was a 75-year-old male who always carried an umbrella. The collected remains have tentatively been assigned to this individual because the cranium is most likely that of an older person. All maxillary teeth had been lost antemortem, and the right temporomandibular joint (TMJ) showed evidence of severe arthritic changes. Moreover, the handle of an umbrella was found approximately 10 meters from the skull. Evidence of exposure to the elements included weathering of the skull and humerus.

7. **Road near schoolhouse, south of Vodenica.** Grid coordinate: 33T XK 006 430 (Site 7, Figure 2; Map: Bosanski Petrovac, Sheet 2484 III, Series M709, Edition 8). MNI recovered: 0.

Witness reportedly saw three dead soldiers on the road. No evidence of human remains was found during a search of the fields around the schoolhouse and house. However, one pair of unmatched army boots was discovered.

8. **Partizansko Cemetery.** Grid coordinate: 33T XK 077 347 (Site 8, Figure 1; Map: Bosanski Petrovac, Sheet 2484 III, Series M709, Edition 8-DMA). MNI recovered: 0.

Twenty-nine graves with crosses were observed just west of the cemetery. These remains reportedly belong to refugees from Bihać, Krupes and Glamoco who had lived in Bosanski Petrovac during the war. The families buried these individuals on private land next to the Partizansko Cemetery.

The owner of the land has requested that the bodies be removed. The RS commission has sent requests to the families for permission to remove the bodies, and so far 19 approvals have been received. An additional consideration is that, according to witnesses, five other individuals are buried near the cemetery entrance of the Partizansko cemetery. The identities of these individuals are unknown.

Process evaluation

The consultant feels that everything was a bit hectic and disorganized. There was a lot of rushing back and forth and witness statements were very vague. But overall, no negative comments.

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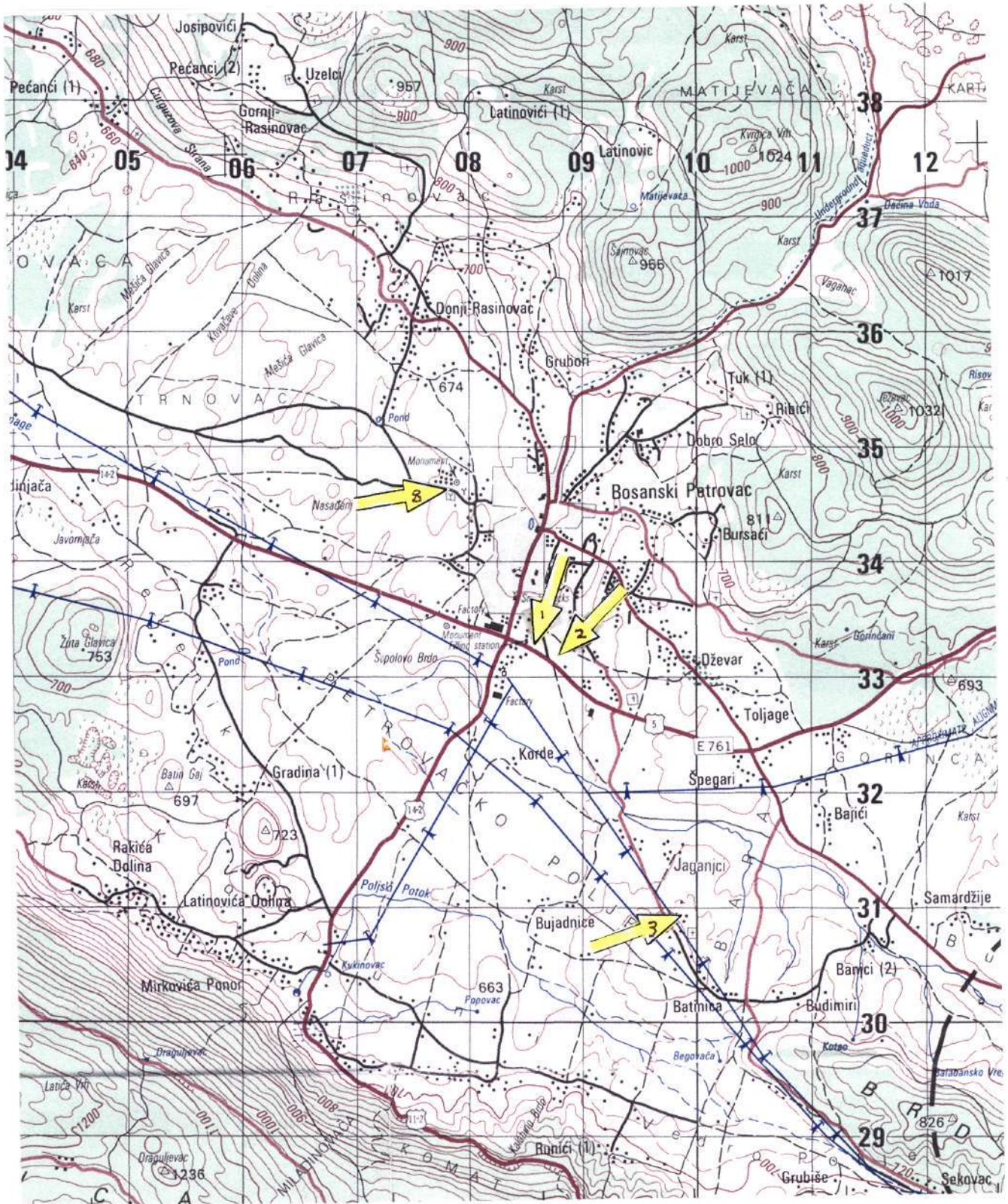


Figure 1. Sites 1, 2, 3, and 8

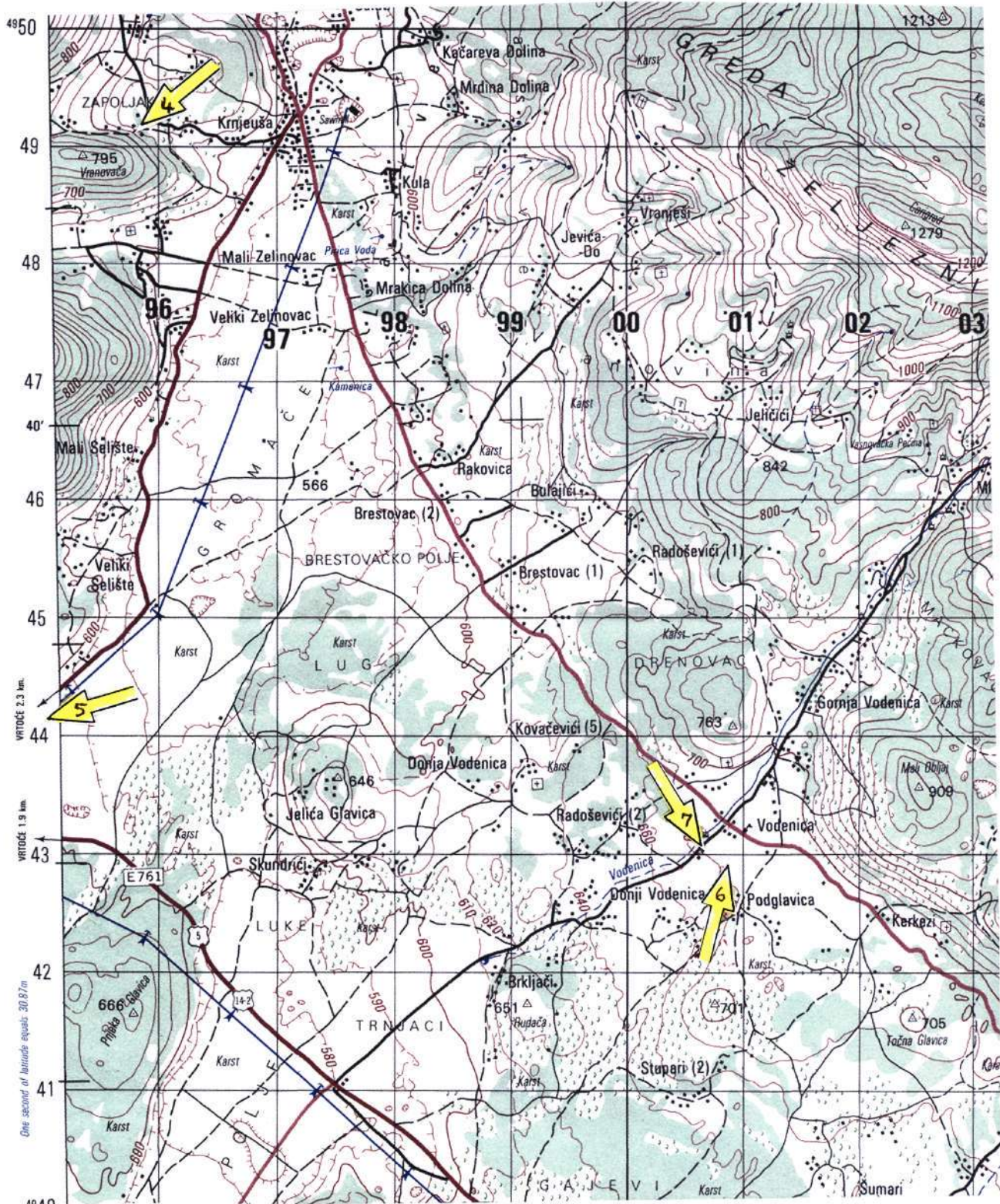


Figure 2. Sites 4, 5, 6, and 7

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Photo 1: View of alleged mass gravesite next to Motel Ero-9 (Photo roll 99-5, exp. 3)



Photo 2: Cranium in field near Vodenica (Photo Roll 99-5, exp. 17).