

## FORENSIC ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Consultant Report 1999-064

**Žavidovići I**

Republika Srpska Commission on Tracing Prisoners and Missing Persons  
30 September 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

On 30 September 1999 the Republika Srpska (RS) Commission on Tracing Prisoners and Missing Persons exhumed the remains of a single individual from a grave near a small creek near the village of Sjenokos in the Žavidovići region of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). These are reportedly the remains of a Bosnian Serb soldier assigned to the Žavidovići region who had been killed by Bosniak soldiers in September 1995. Two other Bosnian Serb soldiers allegedly were killed in September 1995 and buried in the same streamside area. However, these could not be found after searching the ground surface, digging exploratory trenches and probing the soil with a hollow soil-sampling device. The remains of the exhumed victim and clothing were transported to a forensic facility in Banja Luka for storage and subsequent postmortem examination and identification by an RS forensic pathologist. The final autopsy report is pending and will be issued separately.

(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

RADOVIĆ Dragan, Judge, Doboj  
VUJUIĆ Aleksandar, Public Prosecutor, Doboj  
CURKIĆ Ljubomir, Forensic Pathologist, Doboj  
KRČMAR Goran, Member, Banja Luka  
BLAGOJEVIĆ Slvko, Crime Technician, Doboj  
BEGOVIĆ Vojislav, Police Inspector, Doboj

### Federation Commission on Missing Persons - Bosniak Side

HADROVIĆ Safet, Judge, Zenica Canton  
HADZIĆ Ragib, Public Prosecutor, Zenica Canton  
KOBLAR Zaim, Member, Zenica

### Physicians for Human Rights

STUART Dr. Gary, Forensic Consultant (Pathologist)  
ŠKONDRIĆ Dijana, Field Assistant

### Office of the High Representative

CHILVERS Peter, Exhumations Officer

### International Committee of Red Cross

TULEMIJA Branko, Member, Banja Luka

### Police

Policemen from Žavidovići

### Other

Witnesses  
OHR driver

## Site Description

On 30 September the exhumation team investigated a streamside location approximately 30 meters from a fork in a dirt road in an area near the village of Sjenokos in the Žavidovići Region at grid coordinate BQ 853 259 (Figure 1, Map Name: Banovići, Sheet 2783 I, Edition: 5-DMA, Series M709, Horizontal Datum WGS 84, Scale 1:50,000, Grid Zone designation: 34T). This coordinate was determined using a Global Positioning System Unit. The area of the grave is a very damp meadow in a riparian zone about 5 m from and 3 m above small stream. Disturbed soil was noted between the gravesite and the edge of the stream and the actual area of the grave was slightly depressed over and area measuring approximately 0.5 m x 1.5 m.



## **Site History**

According to witnesses and the RS Commission representative, the decedent and two other soldiers were shot and killed by Bosniak soldiers in September 1995 in the region of the village of Sjenokos during hostilities between Bosniak soldiers and Bosnian Serb soldiers. Reportedly the remains of the three soldiers were buried beside the stream mentioned above shortly after they were killed.

## **Exhumation Process and Condition of Remains**

Two laborers excavated the wet loam and clay gravefill using shovels. At a depth of approximately 0.25 m, the top of a clear plastic bag was uncovered. The bag was opened, revealing the remains of single adult in military clothing and boots. The remains were lifted from the grave in the clear plastic bag and placed in a white body bag labeled with the site name, date, and the numeral "1." Exploratory trenches were dug in the adjacent soil in an attempt to locate the remains of the other two soldiers. Test trenches were also dug in other nearby areas. Soil cores were obtained from depths up to 0.6 m in at least seven different nearby locations. No other human remains were found. The recovered remains were transported in a small truck to storage facilities in Banja Luka for subsequent postmortem examination and identification.

## **Postmortem Examination Findings**

The postmortem examination of the remains are expected to be conducted at a future date. The final autopsy and identification reports of the RS forensic pathologist are pending and will be issued separately.

## **Process Evaluation**

The exhumation team demonstrated expertise and professionalism throughout the exhumation process. The excavation and exhumation proceeded smoothly with no apparent damage to the human remains or loss of human material, clothing or artifacts. Even though the two other suspected victims believed to be buried in this area were not found, the team did an adequate search using trenching and probing techniques.

## **Maps and Photos**

Figure 1 is a map of the exhumation site reported here. A photographic log had been compiled and is filed separately. Photos 1 through 3 are photographs cited in this report.



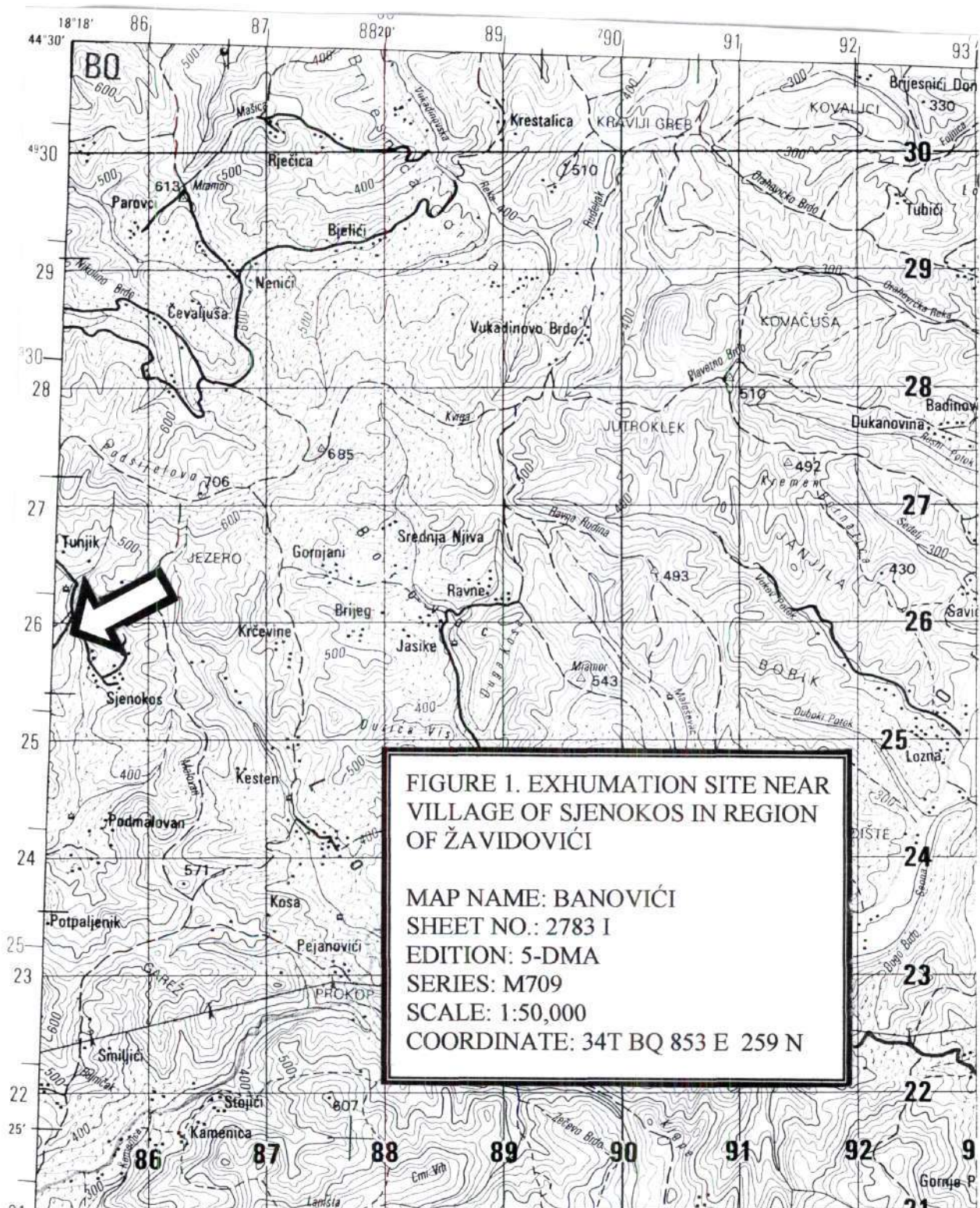






Photo 1. View of laborer beginning to remove muddy soil from riparian grave at Žavidovići.



Photo 2. View of human remains in plastic bag at streamside in Žavidovići area.



Photo 3. View of laborers placing human remains in labeled body bag.