

BATAJNICA SUMMARY REPORT

FORENSIC MONITORING ACTIVITIES

Distribution:
General
Sarajevo, April 2004
ICMP.FSD.16.04.2.doc

EXHUMATION AND EXAMINATION

**SUMMARY REPORT ON THE FORENSIC MONITORING ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE
EXCAVATION AND RECOVERY OF HUMAN REMAINS FROM SEVERAL RELATED
FEATURES LOCATED AT**

BATAJNICA

**Serbia and Montenegro
August to December 2002**

1. Summary of ICMP Monitored Exhumations at Batajnica, 2002

1. During the years 2001-2002 a series of five mass graves and three related features at the Anti-Terrorist police (SAJ) training facility at Batajnica, a suburb of Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro (SCG), were investigated by court appointed experts. In 2001, ICMP Senior Forensic Anthropologist Dr. Mark Skinner observed the excavations of Batajnica 01 and 02. Dr. Skinner furnished a summary report, distributed last year, for all investigations ICMP monitored in Serbia including BA01 and BA02. This current report, like Dr. Skinner's...

“...is written to communicate to the concerned general public, including various Family Associations, the nature of these sites, their contents, the methods used to exhume human remains and other evidence, and basic findings. This is not a legal document and does not reflect the views or findings of the governmental agencies or forensic institutes involved in the exhumations that are expected to issue their own statements.”

Skinner, Summary 2001

2. This summary report reviews the 2002 season excavations at Batajnica and contains information on mass graves BA03, BA05, and BA07, and the related features of BA04, BA06, and BA08. For information regarding the excavations and examinations of mortal remains recovered from BA01 and BA02, please refer to Dr. Skinner's 'Summary of ICMP Monitored Exhumations in Serbia, 2001' report.

2. Site Background

3. This report describes the forensic investigation in 2002 of a number of related large machine excavated mass graves and linked features undertaken by the Forensic Institute of Belgrade, Serbia (FIB) and archaeologists/anthropologists from the International Commission for Missing Persons (ICMP). The work was commissioned by the local District Court of Belgrade and was undertaken between June 20th and December 16th, 2002. This work was carried out in accordance with rules outlined by the District Court and formed the final stage of excavations within the Anti-Terrorist Police (SAJ) based within the MUP barracks at Batajnica north west of Belgrade, Yugoslavia (Figure 1).
4. Full authority and responsibility of the excavations and on site autopsies belonged to the Belgrade District Court and not ICMP. However, an agreement regarding the 2002 mass grave excavations was reached between the District Court and ICMP, which allowed ICMP forensic archaeologists and anthropologists to assist in the actual excavations, supported by a team of local archaeologists (the same individuals who worked on BA01 in 2001). As for autopsies of human remains exhumed, ICMP did not oversee or assist in these and only provided spot monitoring. The Belgrade District Court retained all autopsy reports. Bone and teeth samples taken during autopsy have been handed over to ICMP where they are currently undergoing DNA analysis.
5. Area investigations were undertaken at the base to identify and excavate any features or suspected graves that might contain the mortal remains of suspected victims of the Kosovo conflict of 1999. The area thought to contain these graves was within the SAJ firing ranges and consisted of the most northerly end of the easterly placed 300m range. The excavation was initiated by a program of controlled stripping of topsoil to reveal the edges of features within the site area. In addition monitored machine stripping of the area beneath the adjacent on-site autopsy and storage facilities to ensure all sites had been located was carried out at the end of the excavation program by the FIB.

3. Summarized Information and Findings

6. The following lists show the dates the Batajnica excavations took place, the number of recovered human remains, and the number of forensically important artifacts recovered or recorded during the

excavations. Included in these lists is information from excavations that took place in 2001 (BA01 and BA02).

7. An explanation of these summaries must be made. Firstly, the bodies found within the mass graves at Batajnica were subjected to a form of trauma that resulted in their death. Second, while a natural process of decomposition had taken place, some of the recovered mortal remains were also found in a state of cremation, and at times additional damage to the bodies was caused by the construction machine(s) that created the mass graves. The combination of these factors resulted in many remains to be exhumed missing body parts. All bodies, body parts, and associated evidence were excavated, but reassociation of body parts back to their bodies has been left for DNA analysis and the work of forensic anthropologists to resolve.

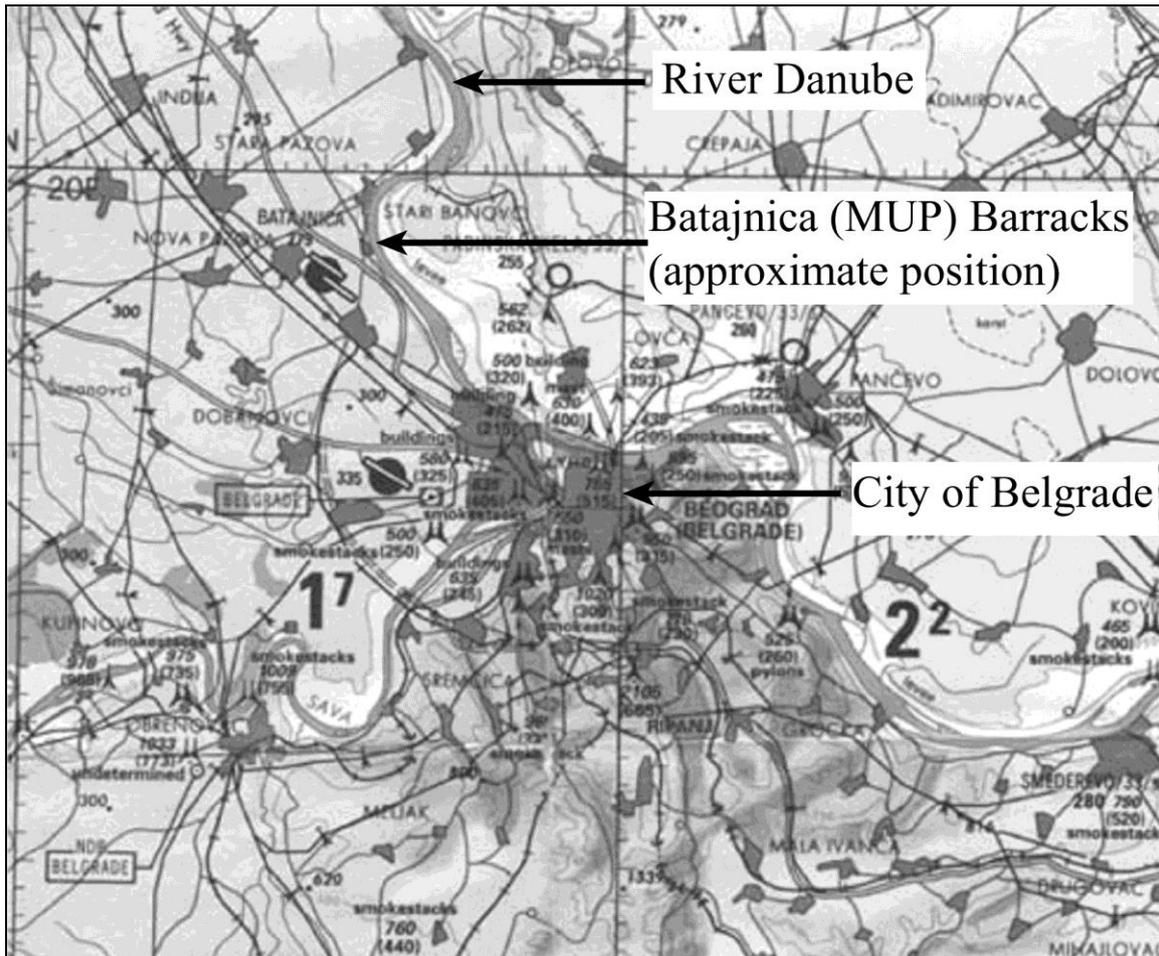


Figure 1:
Approximate location of the MUP barracks at Batajnica

8. As a result, the number of bodies reported here is based on anthropological findings for the minimal number of individuals (MNI) reported by FIB. The number of body parts removed is not listed here and there is a possibility, though highly unlikely, that DNA analysis may discover additional bodies within the various body part collections.
9. The number of forensically significant artifacts removed or recorded from graves is based on archaeological survey data during removal from the grave. Additional artifacts found on the bodies during autopsy do not appear on this list. Due to the fact that only ICMP anthropologists and not archaeologists were present during the 2001 excavations, ICMP does not have a record of recovered artifacts for that year.

<u>Site</u>	<u>Dates of Excavation</u>
BA01	June 2 nd to June 26 th 2001
BA02	July 10 th to 21 st September 2001
BA03	20 th June to 26 th July 2002
BA04	30 th July to 2 nd August - 5 th to 6 th September 2002
BA05	2 nd August to November 26 th 2002
BA06	19 th August to 2 nd September 2002
BA07	4 th November to 16 th December 2002
BA08	21 st November to 26 th November 2002

Complete Bodies Recovered During Excavation (monitor records)

<u>Site</u>	<u># of Bodies</u>
BA01	36
BA02	269
BA03	39
BA04	0
BA05	287
BA06	0
BA07	74
BA08	0U
Total	705

Artifacts of Forensic Importance Recovered (Based on survey data)

<u>Site</u>	<u># of Artifacts</u>
BA01	unknown
BA02	unknown
BA03	112
BA04	5
BA05	187
BA06	23
BA07	46
BA08	7
Total:	380

4. 2002 Site Excavation Summaries

10. BA03 - BA08 were excavated during 2002. BA03, BA05 and BA07 were mass graves. BA04, BA06 and BA08 were features related to the mass graves but not mass graves themselves. However, BA06 and BA08 did contain a small amount of body parts. The map below shows the layout of the mass graves and features excavated during 2001-2002 (Figure 2). As no ICMP archaeologist was present during 2001 to record exact locations, BA01 and BA02 mass graves are approximate.
11. The archaeological task of location and recovery of the remains and artifacts was undertaken through the appointed ICMP Senior Archaeologist Mr. J. Sterenberg and the ICMP Senior Anthropologist Dr. M. Skinner (BA01, BA02, and BA03). A small team of four highly skilled local archaeologists from the University of Belgrade was employed by ICMP to help in the excavations of BA03, BA05, and BA07; three of these had participated in the excavation of BA01 in 2001. A combined ICMP team under the direction of ICMP Archaeologist Mr. Hugh Tuller undertook later excavations at BA07.

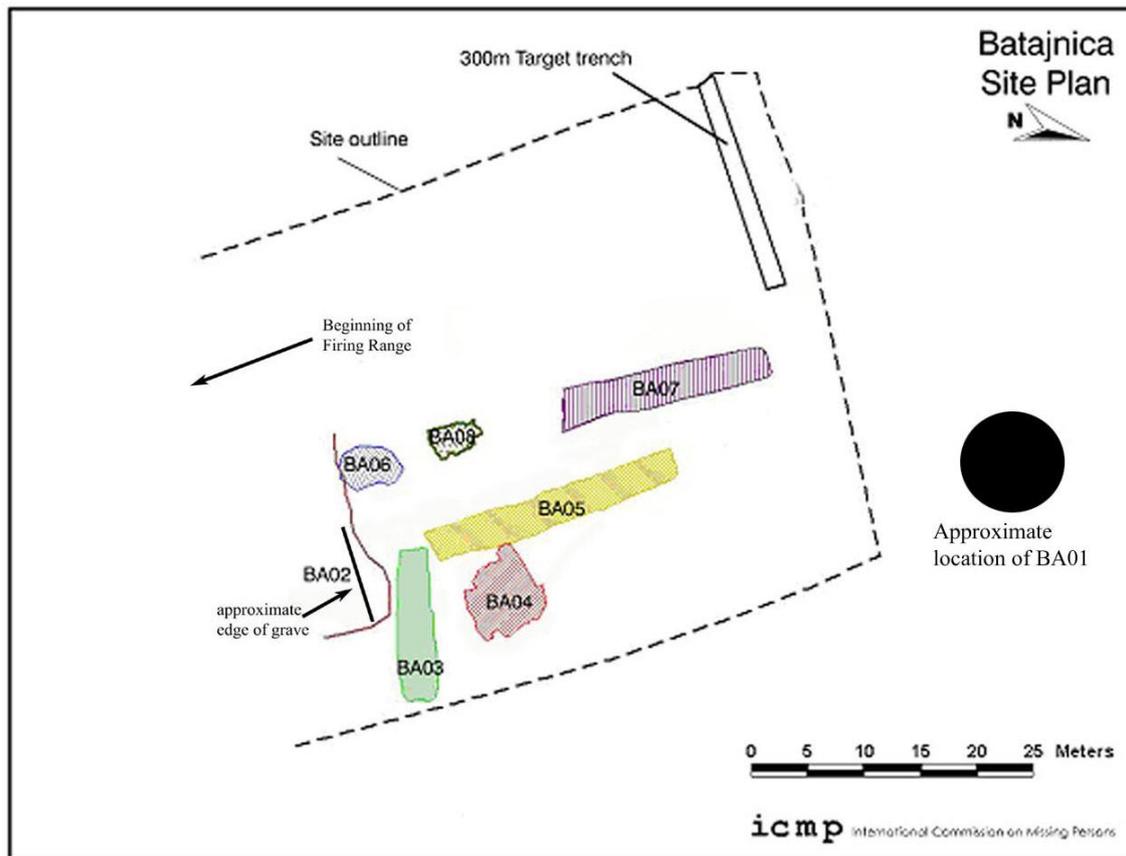


Figure 2:
Batajnica mass grave and feature site plan

12. The objective of the excavation was fourfold:

- To locate the gravesite using machinery and hand tools;
- To carefully expose, clean, record and plot any bodies or associated forensic evidence uncovered during the excavation process in three dimensions using archaeological techniques and methods
- To transfer any recovered human remains and artefacts of forensic interest over to an on-site team from the Forensic Institute for further analysis;
- To ensure that if possible the entire site excavation would be under the control of an experienced archaeologist in order to recover as much as possible, any evidence relating to site formation, body deposition and consequent backfilling or robbing activity within the grave.

13. The plotting of the bodies in three dimensions was undertaken in order to produce accurate maps showing the location of the bodies themselves and any associated evidence that might relate to identification [e.g. loose documents/wallets etc.] or cause and manner of death [e.g. bullets/fragments of ordnance etc.] within the grave context.

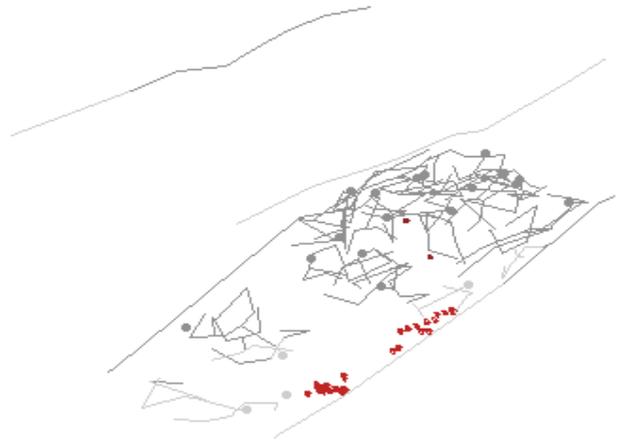
5. Batajnica 3 (BA03)

5.1. Summary Findings

14. In total the remains of approximately 39 individuals were recovered from the grave along with approximately 10 sets of presumptive identification documents.

5.2. Excavation

15. A single large 'ramp' grave approximately 16.70m in length, 2.80m in width and 2.50m in depth was excavated by hand using archaeological techniques.
16. The ramped base of the grave was identified as being at the grave's western end. The grave's deepest point was at its eastern end. The walls of the grave were vertical, giving the grave a wedge shaped appearance when viewed from the side. Deposited in an irregular manner across the eastern deepest end of the base of the grave were the largely intact remains of 39 individuals, many of whom had associated documents for a presumptive identification. A large percentage of the intact human remains were found to be associated with plastic sheeting and black body bags. Many of the remains were clothed, none found to be wearing military style clothing. No ligatures or definite blindfolds were observed during the excavation. The single intact deposit showed no signs of subsequent disturbance and was therefore classed as a 'primary' grave.
17. Evidence that a large wheeled front loader machine had been employed to construct the grave, was recovered; this included impressions formed by the teeth or 'tynes' of a large front end wheeled loading shovel. In addition a large truck panel was recovered from the grave.
18. Evidence of a very intense fire having been lit within the grave at some stage after the deposition of the bodies was observed on all exposed surfaces of the grave walls and to some extent on the graves base or 'ramp'. This fire damage was found to extend into the walls of the grave by a depth of approximately 2cm in some areas.
19. In addition to this evidence plant, soil, and entomological samples were taken from the grave. All evidence in this grave, as with all graves and features excavated at Batajnica were turned over to the FIB.



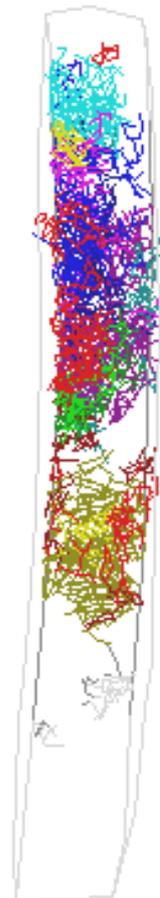
6. Batajnica 4 (BA04)

6.1. Summary Findings

20. BA04 is not a grave, nor was any evidence uncovered indicating it was ever used to house human remains. The site is a disturbed area with machine markings, consisting of tire impressions and intact deformed tires relating to a spoil heap created by the construction of BA03.

6.2. Excavation

21. BA04 was identified through controlled excavation as an irregular shaped area approximately 2 to 3 m's from the northern edge of the BA03 and approximately 6m by 6m in size. Excavation of the feature confirmed it to be the surviving marks of disturbance associated with an area for the stockpiling of the removed soil/subsoil from the construction phase of BA03.
22. Evaluation of the feature indicates that it is the observable remains of machine activity identified by the impressions of tyne and tires left by heavy vehicle traffic in the area. These are regarded as belonging to a front-end loading style earth-moving machine. In addition to the machine markings, several vehicle tires



showing signs of deformation through compaction were found in the disturbance. The greatest depth of the disturbance was 36cm. No bodies or body parts were present. The tyne and tire marks observed in the feature were recorded as artifacts.

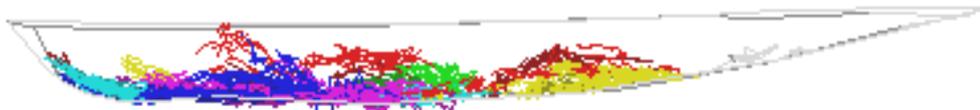
7. Batajnica 5 (BA05)

7.1. Summary Findings

23. In total, the largely intact remains of approximately 287 individuals were recovered from this mass grave. Many of the individuals had associated documents that may lead to a presumptive identification.

7.2. Excavation

24. A single large ‘ramp’ mass grave approximately 25m in length, 2.80m to 2.90m in width and having a depth of 1.50m to 2m at its northern end was excavated primarily by hand using archaeological techniques. Evidence of intense fire activity within the grave feature was observed by the archaeological team on initial surface cleaning of the feature and during the excavation itself. Evidence of this fire damage was confirmed throughout the excavation. Vehicle tires were placed in the bottom and more or less throughout the grave to assist in the cremation of the remains. A number of bodies were damaged by this fire, several severely.
25. A total of thirteen separate deposits of human remains, containing at least 287 individuals, were identified and recorded within this grave. None of the recovered remains within these deposits were observed wearing military style clothing. Nor was evidence of ligatures or other bindings or blindfolds observed or recovered by the archaeological team. However, several bodies did have small numbered cards incased in plastic stapled to the collar of their clothes. Also of interest, the excavation team recovered the remains of one partially intact coffin complete with dislodged body.
26. At least 20 identification documents were recovered from the human remains. These were recovered from within un-associated clothing, within associated clothing at autopsy or loose within plastic sheeting wrapped around bodies. In addition, at least one set of ‘prayer beads’ was recovered during the excavation.



*Figure 3:
BA05 Body Deposit (profile view)*

27. Evidence that a large wheeled front loader machine had been employed to construct the grave, was recovered; this included impressions formed by tynes of a large front end wheeled loading shovel. Tire impression evidence from a construction type machine were uncovered and recorded. Several truck parts and fittings were likewise recovered during the excavation. In addition, both entomological and soil samples were taken. All evidence was turned over to the Belgrade District court authorities.

8. Batajnica 6 (BA06)

8.1. Summary Findings

28. BA06 is not a grave. It is a circular area approximately 6 x 6m in size that was subjected to an intense fire. A small amount of fragmented and cremated human remains were recovered along with small

fragments of burnt clothing, fragments of burnt and charred timber, small fragments of burnt rubber vehicle tires, fragments of metal and glass.

8.2. Excavation

29. An irregular shaped area, defined by burnt clay edges to the north of BA03 measuring approximately 6m by 6 X 6m was excavated using archaeological techniques. All of the recovered material from this area displayed signs of damage through exposure to heat and would tend to suggest that a large bonfire had been lit at this position at some time. The southern edge of the area exhibited a straight edge as a result of the machine activity during the excavation of BA02 in 2001. During the previous year's excavation at mass grave BA02 the Forensic Team created a machined access ramp to the grave, to enable the recovery of excavated human remains. Unbeknownst to the team working on BA02 their access ramp had cut into the southern edge of BA06 leaving the southern edge as a linear west to east line.
30. Three body parts were recovered in this area; all of which displayed signs of being heavily cremated. No evidence of fleshed remains was located in the area. These bones were neither in articulation with each other or were in close enough proximity with matching articulating facets for any association to be made.
31. Tire and tyne mark impressions made by a heavy vehicle were excavated from the visible original surface. These impressions indicated that a large wheeled front loader machine had been active in the area during or immediately afterwards the fire. The excavations results suggested that remains burned at this location were scooped up by a front-end loader and deposited in one of the open mass graves.

9. Batajnica 7 (BA07)

9.1. Summary Findings

32. In all the remains of approximately 74 individuals were exhumed from this 'ramp' style mass grave. A small number of presumptive identification documents were also uncovered during the course of the excavation.

9.2. Excavation

33. A single large 'ramp' grave approximately 14m in length, 2.80m to 2.90m in width and 2.7m in depth at its deepest point was identified and excavated. Five separate deposits with a minimum of 74 individuals were identified and recorded in this grave. BA07 also displayed signs of fire within it. However, the intensity did not reach that of the other graves at Batajnica.
34. Unlike all other graves and features excavated during 2002, a small backhoe, equipped with two different sized smooth buckets was used in this grave. This was done because of time and weather constraints. This construction machine removed soil at a higher rate than would hand excavation, thus saving time. However, certain evidence that could assist in the understanding of the grave formation process may have been lost due to the accelerated pace of excavation. However, geophysical investigation was undertaken using resistivity to produce a series of non-invasive or electronic deep linear cross sections through the suspect feature. The results, allowed the archaeological team to have an understanding of the grave contents before excavation. The backhoe could then be guided to safely remove soil above the body mass formations that the geophysical testing revealed.

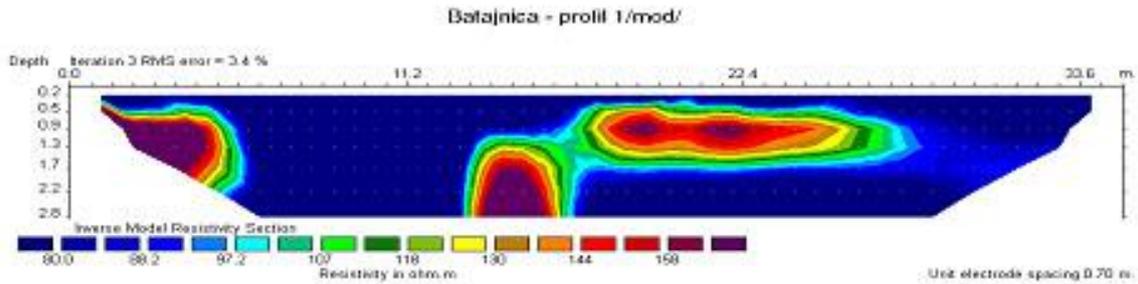
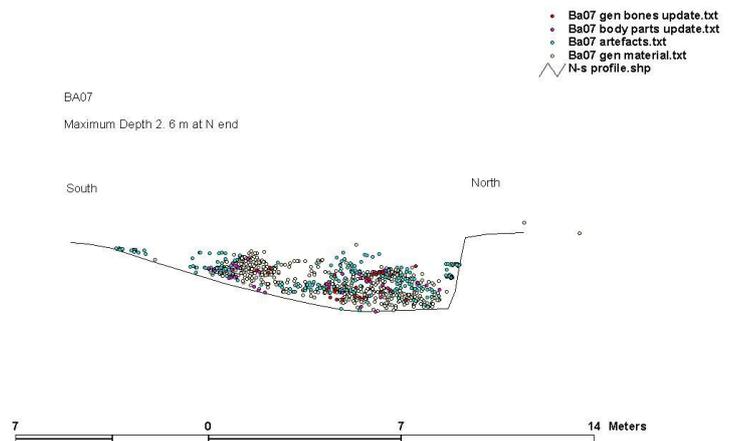


Figure 4:
Resistivity results. Assisted in safe controlled machine excavation

35. Approximately 90% of the remains 74 sets of remains were recovered with clothing intact, none were observed by the archaeological team to be wearing military style clothing. No evidence of ligatures or blindfolds was recovered or observed during excavation. Archaeological observations did reveal the possibility that many of the bodies within this grave had been previously buried and had been subsequently exhumed, transported and reburied within BA07, therefore it is difficult to actually attach a primary or secondary grave definition to this grave. The main evidence of this possible robbing activity are the observation, recording and sampling of three very different types of soil possibly from original burial locations found within this grave.

BA07 N-S Profile



36. Four presumptive sets of identification documents of interest were recovered from different deposits within the grave. Three were recovered within associated clothing on bodies whilst one was recovered alone within the soil matrix of the grave. Other personal items include a set of prayer beads, and two mobile phone 'Sims'™ cards.
37. In addition to the soil samples, two samples of plant material were taken. A very large amount of truck parts were also recovered from the grave, including insulating foam, a door, and paneling believed to be part of a refrigeration truck.
38. Like the previous graves and features, the archaeological team uncovered and recorded evidence of construction machine and truck activity in the form of tire and tyne mark impressions within the grave.

10. Batajnica 8 (BA08)

10.1. Summary Findings

39. BA08 is not a grave. Like BA06, this is an area subjected to an intense fire. A total of five body parts, all with signs of exposure to fire were recovered from this location.

10.2. Excavation

40. An irregular shaped feature approximately 4m by 2.60m, was identified during the course of controlled stripping to the south of BA07. Skeletonised human remains displaying signs of cremation were found concentrated in the north-eastern section of the feature, in addition, scraps of clothing, wood, tire reinforcement wire, ceramic tile and cartridge cases were also recovered. All displayed damage through exposure to heat.
41. Two shallow depressions were uncovered within the burnt area; a small depression in the northeast section of the area in which the majority of human remains were found, and a larger depression in the southeast section of the area. From the scraped surface, the maximum depth of the larger depression was approximately 0.30m. Tire impressions on the original surface indicate that a least two machines were in operation during or immediately after the fire. Construction machine tyne mark impressions indicate that a machine had been active here scooping up items, most likely to be deposited in one of the open graves in the area.

10.3. Processing of Human Remains

42. Autopsies of excavated human remains were processed on site by members of the FIB and under the authority of the Belgrade District Court. A large military style tent was set up at the end of the SAJ firing range a short distance from the mass graves and related features. FIB forensic pathologists performed autopsies on all bodies and body parts removed from the graves and features. Selected items from the remains were then passed onto the forensic anthropologist for sex, stature, and age estimations. A combined report entailing both pathology and anthropology findings were created for each case. The Belgrade District Court retains these individual reports. While ICMP monitors were allowed to review these reports on site ICMP was not allowed to have any copies for its records.

10.4. ICMP Activities Regarding Autopsies

43. ICMP did not have a forensic pathologist available to monitor the autopsies. UNMIK was contacted and invited to send a Kosovar Albanian pathologist to monitor if it so desired. No representative from UNMIK attended the autopsies.
44. ICMP did provide forensic anthropologists to observe the examinations; however, the anthropologists were moving between the excavation where they assisted or conducted the excavations, and making spot checks in the examination tent. Due to ICMP's primary role in assisting with the excavations, and the limited anthropological examinations conducted in the examination tent, much of the ICMP's anthropologists focus was on the graves and features. From the observations that ICMP anthropologists made in the examination tent, all was being done in the best possible manner under the given conditions of working in tents without running water.

10.5. Body Storage

45. After examination, all of the human remains and clothing recovered were stored on the base in a series of tunnels. A record was created as to where each individual remains were placed in the tunnels (for 2002).

10.6. Bone Sampling

46. As noted earlier, in accordance with legal regulations, the exhumation process falls under jurisdiction of the District Court of Belgrade. On the basis of the Agreement signed between the Coordination Center for Kosovo and ICMP, which was reaffirmed by way of exchange of letters, the investigating judge released bone samples to ICMP for DNA analysis.

47. Bone samples from BA 01 and BA 02 were transferred to ICMP ICC on June 21, 2002; samples from BA 03 on February 6, 2003; BA 05 on June 24, 2003; and BA 07 and BA 08 on October 7, 2003.