

Intelligence Report

DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force

6 October 1995



Mass Graves in the Former Yugoslavia

Recent discoveries of mass graves in western Bosnia are likely to be followed by more over the next few months as Bosnian Government forces begin to physically search territory they recently reclaimed. Because most mass graves tend to be located in abandoned mine shafts and wooded areas and are difficult to locate [redacted] physical inspection is the only sure way to locate them. Establishing the existence of mass graves may aid ongoing efforts by the UN War Crimes Tribunal to prosecute war crimes suspects by substantiating reported atrocities that the suspects allegedly took part in or ordered. [redacted]



Recently Discovered Mass Graves

On 21 September, Bosnian forces involved in the joint Bosnian-Croat offensive to retake Serb-held territory in western Bosnia discovered a mass grave at Krasulje, six miles from the town of Kljuc, according to press reports. Bosnian Government officials claim the grave contains the bodies of 540 civilians—mostly Muslim, but also some Croats—allegedly killed by Bosnian Serb forces in 1992. Bosnian forces told the press they found bottles of acid at the site used to burn the bodies. Bosnian authorities have limited the access of international organizations to this alleged mass grave, perhaps in response to statements by officials of the UN and other international organizations that Bosnian officials have exaggerated the number of bodies found in this grave. [redacted]

Earlier, in July 1995 [redacted] seven suspected mass graves and two large groups of probable Muslim prisoners immediately after the 10 July fall of the Srebrenica "safe area." These graves may contain the bodies of 8,000 men reported missing from the Srebrenica and Zena enclaves after the Bosnian Serb military assault on these areas last summer, [redacted] an estimated 600 people on a soccer field at Kasaba and another 400 people near a road at Sandici. Suspected mass graves were identified at both of these locations two weeks later. [redacted]



More Discoveries Likely

More mass graves are likely to be discovered as Bosnian Government forces search territory they recently reclaimed from the Bosnian Serbs in western Bosnia.

[redacted] most, if not all, Bosnian Serb ethnic cleansing operations between 1992 and 1993--when most of the worst Serb atrocities in Bosnia allegedly were committed--resulted in large numbers of deaths, mostly through mass executions. The Serbs reportedly used mass graves near such sites to quickly dispose of bodies. As a result, we believe that mass graves will be found in the vicinity of most areas subjected to Serb ethnic cleansing between 1992 and 1993.

- [redacted] reports of varying credibility of over 300 mass graves ranging in size from 3 bodies to over 5,000.
- [redacted] 20,000 to 35,000 persons were buried in mass graves in the former Yugoslavia, the vast majority in Bosnia.
- The largest alleged graves, said to hold several thousand corpses, reportedly are in northwestern and northeastern Bosnia and are the products of Serb detention camps in 1992 [redacted]

Mass Graves Outside Bosnia

Although the vast majority of alleged mass graves appear to be located in Bosnia and probably are the result of Serb ethnic cleansing, a small number are located in Croatia, where both Serb and Croatian forces allegedly have committed atrocities. Moreover, some mass graves throughout the former Yugoslavia contain the bodies of civilians caught in crossfire or during the shelling of cities and towns, according to [redacted]

The best known mass grave site in Croatia is near Vukovar and allegedly contains the bodies of more than 170 wounded Croatian soldiers who were taken from a Vukovar hospital in November 1991 and summarily executed by the Yugoslav Army and Serb paramilitaries, according to Croat refugee accounts. An American pathologist partially examined this site in December 1993 and reported that the bodies he exhumed appeared to be execution victims.

Several mass graves recently located in UN Sector South may be the work of Croatian forces. While Croatian and some UN officials report that these sites contain the bodies of civilians caught in crossfire, other UN officials and two international humanitarian organizations have alleged they may contain evidence of Croatian atrocities. [redacted]

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted]
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 Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force [redacted]

~~Secret~~

Evaluating Evidence of Mass Grave Sites

Establishing the existence of mass graves is difficult. [redacted] numerous mass grave sites probably have escaped detection [redacted] because discerning evidence of disturbed earth is frequently beyond the capabilities [redacted]

[redacted] within weeks of their excavation.

Moreover, most mass graves tend to be located in abandoned mine shafts and wooded areas, making physical inspection the only sure way to locate them. As a result the

[redacted]

Despite these limitations, some refugee accounts [redacted] appear to be highly credible.


- For example, the locations of some alleged grave sites are in close proximity to large detention camps and have been identified in numerous, [redacted]
- Mass graves not located near detention camps sometimes were the result of large-scale prisoner convoy massacres and have been described in detail and independently by several survivors.
- Finally, the existence of some of the few mass grave sites outside of Bosnian Serb-held territory have been verified by UN investigators. [redacted]

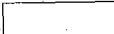
Probable Mass Graves

Based on our evaluation of available data on mass graves, the following are the most credible reports of mass grave sites containing 200 or more bodies in Bosnia and Croatia.

- **Lubija, near Prijedor, Bosnia.** Several hundred Muslim residents from Keraterm, Biscani, Lubija, and other nearby towns were likely buried in a mass grave in several iron ore shafts in the Lubija quarry, [redacted]
- **Brcko, Bosnia.** Multiple mass graves of a large number of bodies of Muslim prisoners from the Brcko-Luka detention camps reportedly are located near a meat packing plant, according to alleged eyewitnesses,




some of whom claim they were forced to help bury the bodies.  the probable location of one of the mass graves; however, the site is no longer discernible because of the growth of crops over it.

- **Omarska, near Bears' Gate Lake.** Up to several thousand male Muslims from the Omarska detention camp are reportedly buried in a former iron ore pit located approximately 2 kilometers from the camp, according to Muslim refugees.
- **Omarska, "Jerene Pit."** A large number of bodies are buried in a pit about 500 meters south of the Omarska detention camp, according to alleged eyewitnesses, one of whom claims he was forced to transport bodies to the pit.
- **"Koricanska Stijena," Vlasic Mountain Range, Bosnia.** Eight witnesses allege that 250 Muslim men were summarily executed and buried in this area on 21 August 1992. Other reported witnesses allege that the bodies of up to several thousand former Muslim prisoners from Prijedor internment camps also were killed and buried in the vicinity.
- **Pakrac, UN Sector West, Croatia.** A large number of Serbs reportedly executed by Croatians in November 1991--perhaps as many as several thousand--allegedly are buried in mass graves near the Croatian town of Pakrac, according to Serb press reports and the humanitarian group Helsinki Watch. In late 1993, Croatian authorities denied UN investigators access to mass grave sites the investigators believed contained as many as 1,700 bodies. 

Implications of Mass Grave Discoveries

Establishing the existence of mass graves in the former Yugoslavia could aid ongoing efforts by the UN War Crimes Tribunal to prosecute war crimes suspects by substantiating reported atrocities that the suspects allegedly took part in or ordered. The existence of mass graves may prove to be especially valuable in trials of military commanders by proving that atrocities were committed in areas under their command.

- Mass graves will likely play a major role in a future UN War Crimes Tribunal trial¹ of Bosnian Serb Army Commander Ratko Mladic, the ranking Bosnian Serb military officer who was reportedly on the scene when Bosnian Serb forces attacked the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves

¹ UN War Crimes Tribunal rules do not permit trials in absentia. Mladic therefore cannot be tried until the UN obtains custody of him. To date, Bosnian Serb and Serbian officials have refused to cooperate with extradition requests made by the Tribunal for any indicted war criminals. 

last summer, and allegedly was also present during at least one mass execution of men and boys [redacted]
The reported large size of these graves--possibly containing over 5,000 bodies--suggests organized mass executions occurred in the area that could not have taken place without Mladic's knowledge and permission. [redacted]

Selected Probable Mass Grave Sites in the Former Yugoslavia, Early October 1995

