

Ongoing Jabul Saraj Grave Investigation

Jabul Saraj (جبل سراج) District, Parwan Province (پروان)

35°07'20.83"N 69°14'01.34"E

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Incident Date: September 5th, 2021

Fatalities: 300

Injured: UNK

Victim(s) Profile: 300 Tajik people (ages 16-35) from the Panshir, Kapisa, and Parwan provinces

Aggressor(s): Taliban

Following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, the people of Panjshir province established the last major stronghold of armed resistance against the new regime. The Ahmad Massoud Resistance stronghold faced heavy casualties and many young kids and women were killed and injured. On September 4th, 2021 the Taliban started taking hostages and captured young people (ages 16-35) from the Panjshir province.

On September 5th, the Taliban took approximately 300 of these young people to what was reported as the "Tapa Sorkh" (تپه سرخ) area within the Jabul Saraj District. Members of the Taliban then forced the Kapisa Red Crescent team to bury the victims. All victims had their hands bound and eyes blindfolded as they were buried. It was noted that there were no trees in the area and that victims were buried with loose dirt and rocks.

The burial site location is approximated to be around 35°07'20.83"N 69°14'01.34"E and was reported to be composed of loose dirt and rock.

Potential Grave Locations

There is no records of any location within the Jabul Saraj District by the name of "Tapa Sorkh" (تپه سرخ) which translates to "Red Hill". There are mountains with red sediment located to the northeast and to the west of the approximated grave coordinates in the

center of Jabul Saraj, which could indicate that “Tapa Sorkh” is a local name used for an area in those mountains. There is notably also a location 2.5km due south of the approximated grave coordinates named “Quala Sorkh” (قلعه سرخ) translating to “Red Fort/Castle”. In handwriting and to non-native speakers, قلعہ تپہ سرخ could potentially be mistranslated as قلعہ سرخ.



Satellite imagery from Google Earth of two areas of interest (AOI) for potential grave locations.

AOI 1

Medium probability

35°08'08.54"N 69°14'38.14"E

AOI 1 is within the northeast mountain area approximately 1.77km from the approximated grave coordinates provided by witnesses and within what could potentially be a rock quarry associated with the Jabal Al Saraj Cement Factory less than a kilometer away.

Little to no information could be found confirming whether the land surrounding AOI 1 is used by the cement factory. Similarly, no reliable sources were identified to determine whether the Taliban takeover impacted cement production, though brief references appear in blog posts and since-removed articles.

Visible land changes in Google Earth imagery do appear to correspond with the factory's reported reopening in 2016 however, the limited number of images available from 2014–2016 prevents this from being conclusively established. Several pits appear within the area from 2016 to 2021, however in 2021 the pits at AOI 1 appear to be filled. These are the only pits in the surrounding area that appear to have been filled from 2016 to 2025. While what appears to be heavy machinery is visible in September 2021 imagery (date from post-incident), the lack of sufficient images from the 2020–2021 period makes it impossible to determine when or why any changes between December 1st, 2019 and September 23rd, 2021 may have occurred. Therefore, it cannot be determined whether this represents active quarrying or a potential grave site without further investigation.



Satellite imagery from Google Earth of AOI 1 in on December 1st, 2019, and September 23rd. 2021.



Satellite imagery from Google Earth of AOI 1 and surrounding area with pits outlined in 2019, 2021, and 2025.

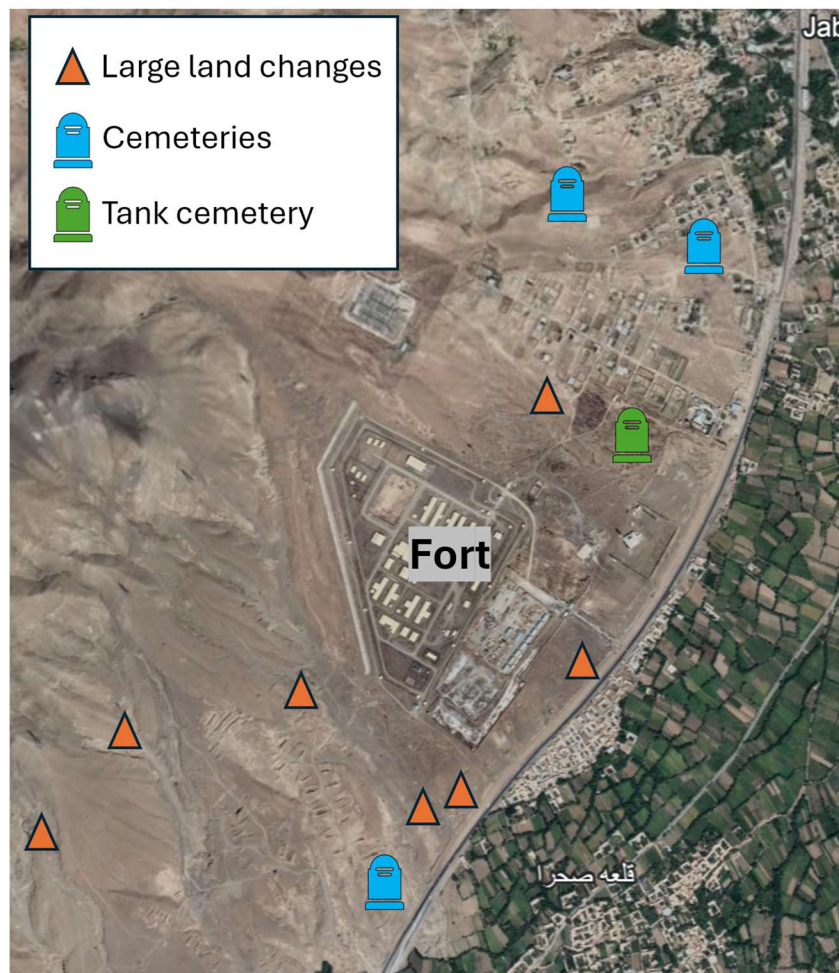
AOI 2

Low to Medium Probabulity

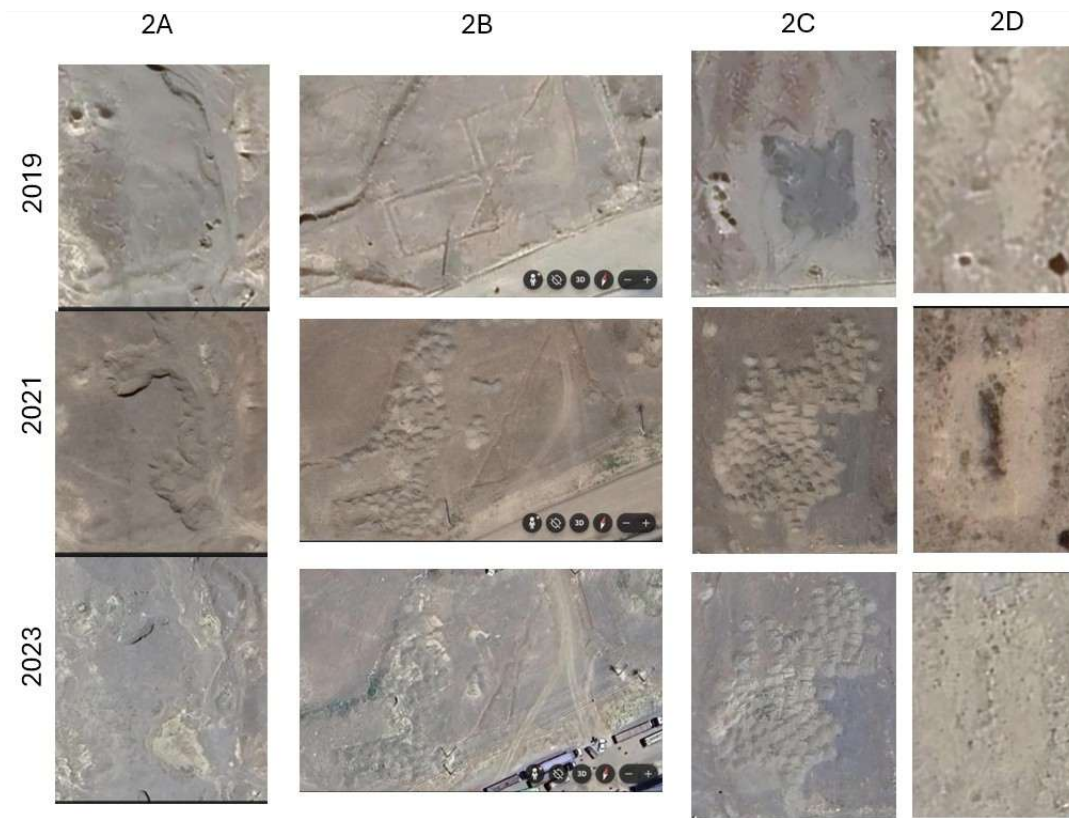
35°06'30.20"N 69°13'12.90"E

AOI 2 is the area surrounding a decommissioned military fort just west of the center of Jabul Saraj (جبل سراج). This area is located near a location named "Quala Sorkh", a potential mistranslation of "Tapa Sorkh" (تپه سرخ) which was the location that the grave was reported to be.

Surrounding the base are multiple human graveyards, a tank graveyard, several construction sites, and several other locations of land change seen in satellite data between before and after the day of the incident. As such, it is difficult to determine if any of the changes in the area are a potential unknown grave, or something else. The timeframe between the imagery surrounding the dates is also quite large (November 2019- September 2021) so it is impossible to tell when each of these individual changes occurred.



Satellite imagery from Google Earth of AOI 2 and surrounding area.



Satellite imagery from Google Earth of 4 example locations of land change seen around AOI 2 from 2019, 2021, and 2023 satellite imagery.