Database of Atrocities

1. Description: Goals, resources, operations, security
2. How to submit information
3. What makes photo and video evidence most useful for verification

Cameroon Anglophone Crisis
Database of Atrocities

The Database is <u>apolitical</u> and <u>nonpartisan</u>. It is a secure, centralized location that stores information about atrocities perpetrated during the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon. The atrocities violate domestic or international laws and rules of war.

The Database of Atrocities aims to:

- counter the culture of impunity that has pervaded this crisis since it began in 2016;

- secure evidence for future international accountability procedures and a possible national truth, justice, and reconciliation commission;

- assist human rights activists and journalists advocating for human rights in Cameroon;

- constitute an archive for scholarly research on Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis and conflict;

- serve as a deterrent to warring parties from engaging in further atrocities.

The Database is hosted at the University of Toronto for reasons of neutrality and cybersecurity.

- It is staffed entirely by trained volunteers, both in-house and via nonpartisan partners within and outside Cameroon. Our team can work with media in English, French, & Pidgin.

- It does not receive any external funding.

The Database was established in December 2019. As of February 2021, it stores over 730 submissions with more than 1200 photos, videos, audios, and documents.

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What the Database team does:

Securely Store

- Catalogues and securely stores <u>all</u> incident information that is submitted.

Investigate

- Allocates the incidents of most significant value and investigative potential to researchers, who try to verify the incidents through geolocation, chronolocation, and the use of additional evidence such as reports of eyewitness accounts collected by partner organizations.

Publish

- Publishes reports about the verified incidents. These reports are of sufficient quality, credibility, and impartiality to be used in legal proceedings.

Inform

- Meets with relevant international policymakers to inform them of atrocities and highlight key trends, to encourage action for justice.

Even if an incident is not used for a published verification report, all information submitted and catalogued is stored safely and securely for use in a future truth, justice, and reconciliation commission, international accountability proceedings, etc.

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Safety and security

- Security of information, and security of those submitting information, are of the utmost importance.

- The Database employs cutting-edge technologies and processes to protect information.

- The Database includes anonymous and non-anonymous submission methods. If you submit non-anonymously, the Database team deletes all identifying information.

- The Database does not publish submissions online. We only publish verification reports, which do not contain any information that could be used against submitters to the Database or victims of atrocities.

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There are three ways to submit photos, videos, and other evidence/information:

1. Website: https://cameroondatabase.ushahidi.io/posts/create/4

   Click on the link and fill in as many fields as you can. This method of uploading is completely anonymous. There is NO identifying information about the person or device uploading. This method is the most secure.

2. WhatsApp / Signal: +1 437-352-8747

   We delete messages after downloading/recording their information in the Database. We do not record the phone number from which information was sent. Facebook collects information from WhatsApp, and WhatsApp is vulnerable to hacking. Thus, we recommend that people use Signal.

3. Email: cameroondatabase@protonmail.com

   We delete messages after downloading/recording their information in the Database. We do not record the email address from which the information was sent.

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We appreciate all information submitted, and we catalogue all of it.
For verification, the following information is particularly useful:

1. Especially useful information <u>provides visual clues to help identify the location</u>.
  - Videos/photos showing scenery, structures, terrain, buildings, etc.

Our trained researchers can use these features to pinpoint the occurrence of events with great accuracy, which helps convert submissions into viable evidence.

2. Especially useful information shows or contains information about perpetrator(s), although witnesses must always choose safety over recording the perpetrator(s).
  - Also useful is information about the chain of command (who has ordered an incident).

Our research team includes experts in weaponry and uniforms, which facilitates identification of actors.

Example: Photo showing <u>distinctive features</u>:
--terrain
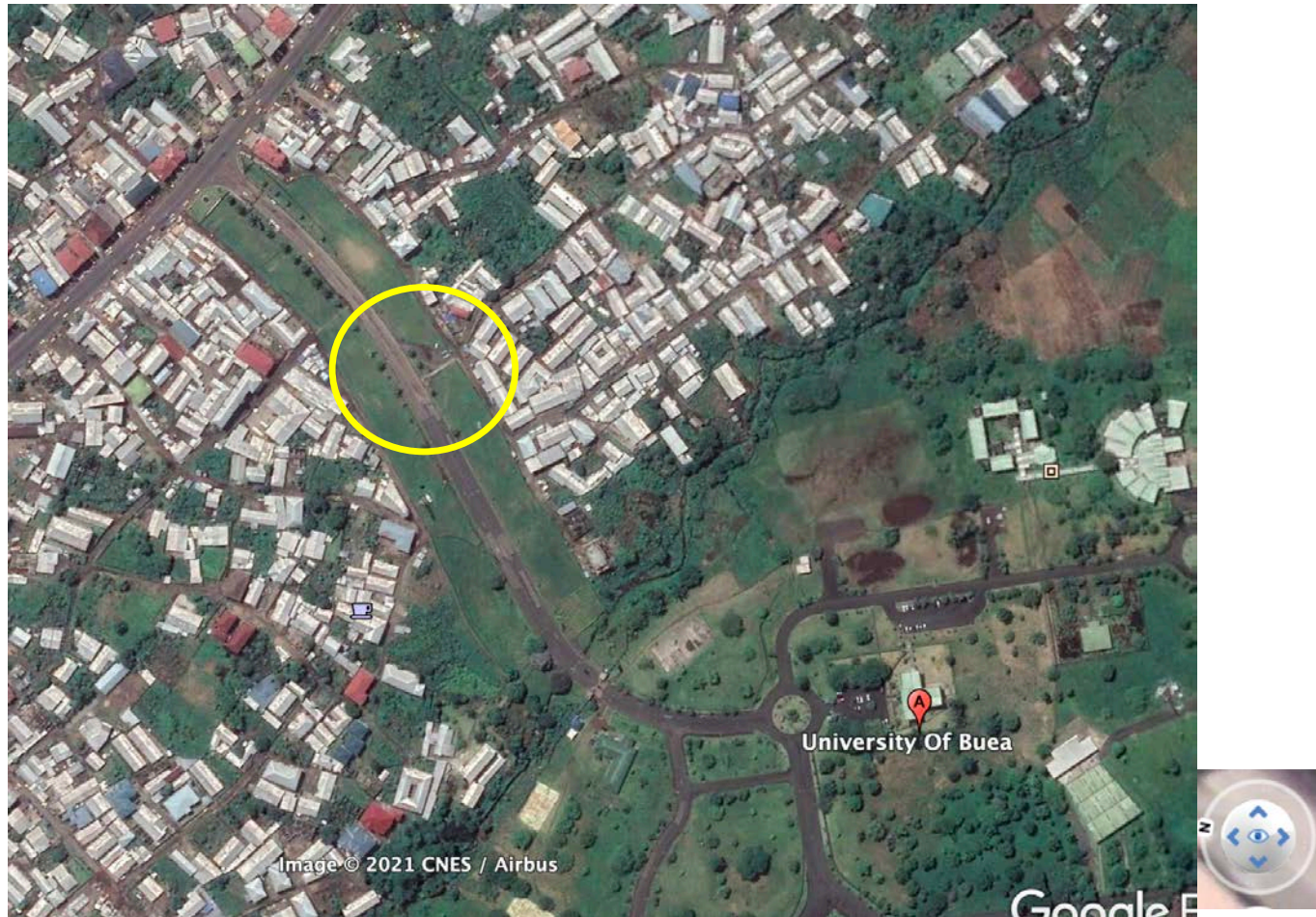--placement of buildings
--shape of roofs
--hills or mountains

Example photograph*

*example only; this image was not a submission to the Database.
It is a stock photo from Getty Images.

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Distinctive features:
--path on ground
--divided road; curvature of road
--layout of trees

Example photograph*

We rely on trained OSINT (open-source intelligence) personnel to verify incidents using a range of sources, including satellite images, weather data, and archived visual data on the Internet, augmented by eyewitness reports.

Google Earth satellite image

*example only; this image was not a submission to the Database. It is a stock photo from Getty Images.

Location: Specific site at University of Buea

Example: Video that <u>scans across scenery</u>
--in a photo, this building is difficult to locate/verify…

Example screengrab from video*

*example only; this video was not a submission to the Database.
It is from a video from the year 2012 that was posted to YouTube.

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Example: Video that <u>scans across scenery</u>
--in a photo, this building is difficult to locate/verify…
 …but a video can help.

These are screenshots from a single video taken as the videographer traveled along a road. The video allows us to see the location of the key building in relation to other features.

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We can confirm distinguishing features of buildings/landmarks (e.g., shapes of roofs; width of buildings)

Just off of Main Road, Tiko

Wide shadow indicates taller building in video

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Photos and short videos in a village can provide valuable visual clues.

The Database was able to verify destruction of numerous structures in Labonge thanks to a short video of the damage. (These are two screenshots from that video.)

Photos and short videos in a village can provide valuable visual clues.

The Database was able to verify destruction of numerous structures in Labonge thanks to a short video of the damage.

Satellite images before and after indicate the long-term damage – numerous buildings still not rebuilt nearly two years after the burning
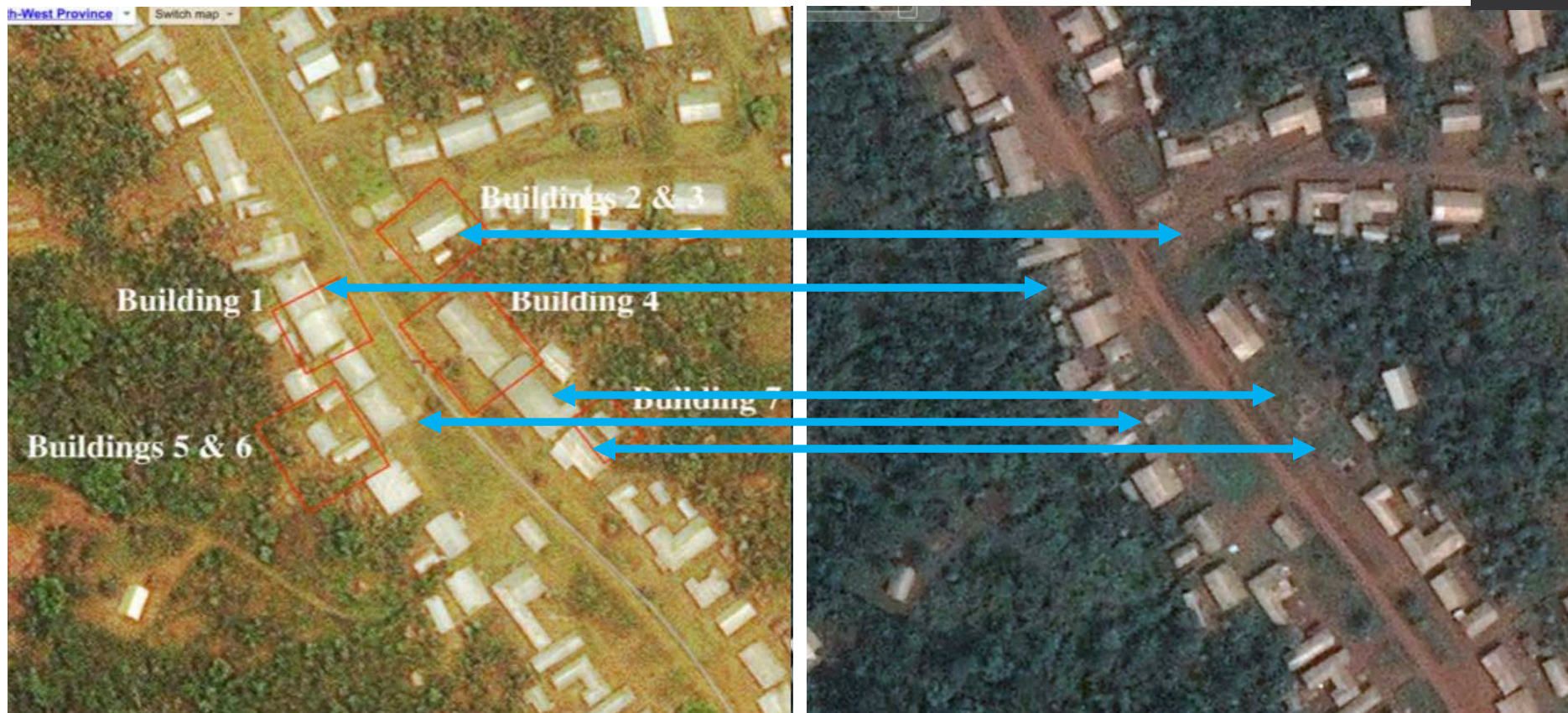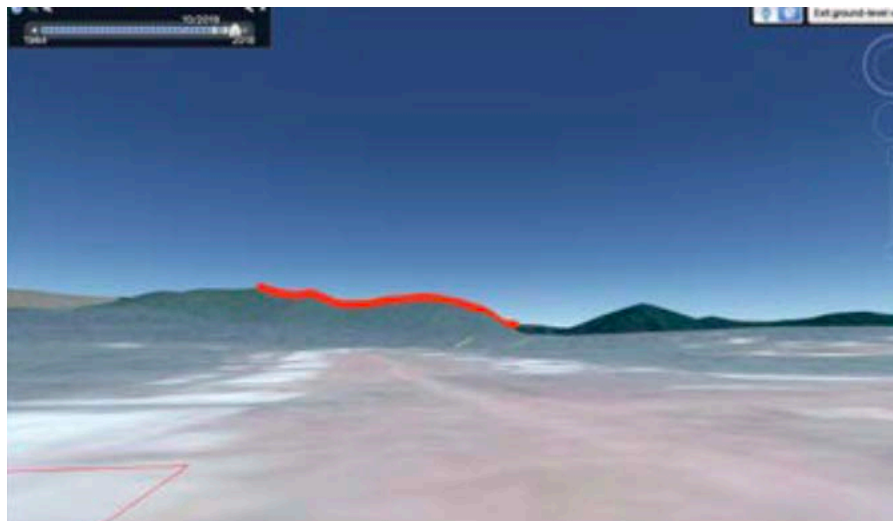

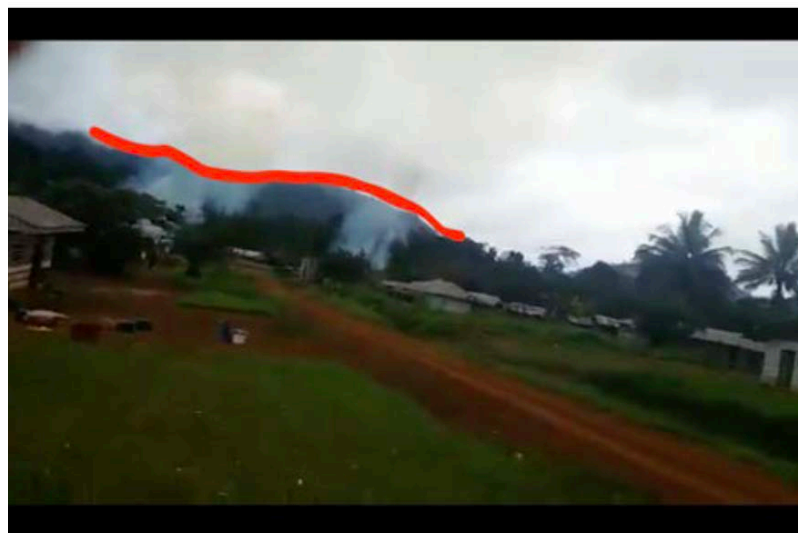Before the burning

18 months after the burning

Hills, mountains, and other features of terrain are also useful, thanks to technology such as Google Earth.

Mountain landmark – Google Earth Pro

Mountain landmark – video screenshot

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Ultimately, this Database securely stores sensitive information about atrocities to support an end to the Anglophone Crisis, so that the suffering of civilians eases, and peace and justice can take over.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Main webpage: https://research.rotman.utoronto.ca/Cameroon/

Database with reports: https://dataverse.scholarsportal.info/dataverse/cameroon

Selected articles about the Database: DW, Forbes, MMI

Twitter: https://twitter.com/CameroonDoA

SUBMISSIONS

Website: https://cameroondatabase.ushahidi.io/posts/create/4

WhatsApp/Signal: +1 437-352-8747

Email: cameroondatabase@protonmail.com