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Dr. John Morris
Director, Institute of Archaeology
National Institute of Culture and History
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19 May 2015

Dear Dr. Morris,

As a permit holder to conduct excavations at Uxbenká, Toledo district, and director of the Uxbenká Archaeological Project (UAP) I am obligated to report to you an issue regarding on-going damage to the site core of Uxbenká. This damage is to a large architectural platform that I have defined as being inside the site core of Uxbenká (not in a settlement group). It is within 100 meters of the stela plaza, and I would suspect it would be included in any future demarcation of an Archaeological Preserve by NICH (see attached Map 1).

The individual in question is not a resident of Santa Cruz village, but apparently began squatting on village lands in late 2014, without permission of the community. The following information was provided to me by the village leadership, as I was not in Belize when these events occurred:

Initially the individual built a small house on the archaeological platform. He was notified verbally in late 2014 by the village Alcalde, the Chairman of the Village Council, and executive of the Uchbenka Kin Ajaw Association (a registered community based NGO) that he did not have permission to reside in Santa Cruz and that neither he, nor any resident of the community, can build on or damage any part of the ruin. This is in accordance with village policies adopted almost a decade ago that prohibit villagers from building houses, farming, burning, or logging on any part of the archaeological site. These very policies have been well adhered to by members of the community, and they are upset that an outsider has been able to violate them with impunity.

In December 2014 at a village meeting the community voted overwhelmingly not to allow Mr. Rupert Myles to live in Santa Cruz or to build on the ruin. On 26 January 2015 the village leadership notified in writing the individual in question, a Mr. Rupert Myles, that he was being evicted from the location on the Uxbenká ruin (see attached letter). Mr. Myles did not comply, and several villagers have informed me that Mr. Myles has menaced them with a loaded firearm since that time. At that time, the village leadership notified the District Superintendent of Police of the eviction and the menacing of villagers by Mr. Myles with a firearm, but no concrete action has been taken to date.

On my arrival in the village on 18 May 2015, I discovered that driveway had been bulldozed into the side of the archaeological platform by Mr. Myles to facilitate him driving onto the platform to park his vehicle. He has also built new buildings, and has burned vegetation to the very edge of the stela plaza, further endangering the ruin. The bulldozing activity has irreparably damaged the platform (see Map 2 and Images 1 and 2).

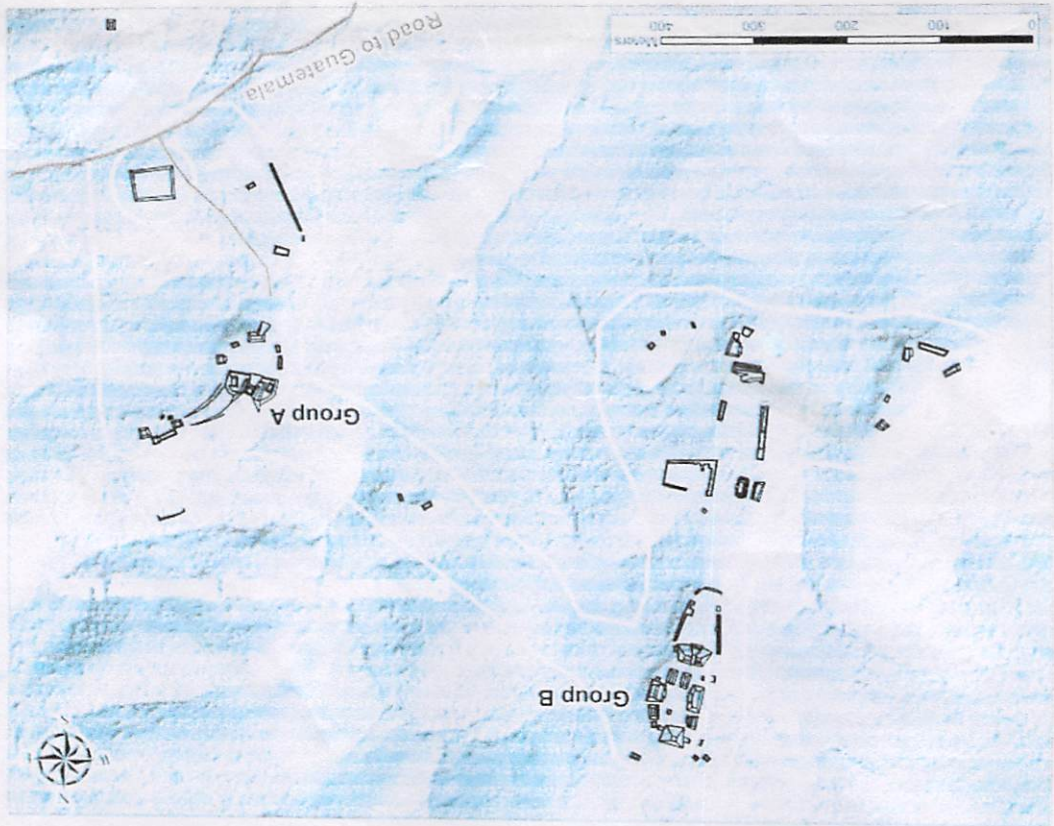
It is worth reiterating that the village leadership and residents have steadfastly supported protecting the Uxbenká site. At the village's request in 2013 the UAP assisted in GPS mapping a boundary around the site core, and the village leadership does not allow residents to build houses, burn farm fields, or log within that boundary. The boundary was to insure that all members of the community know where they cannot farm (see Map 1). The village leadership support this notification to you that the individual in question has irreparably damaged an important part of the site core, and requests assistance from the IA in protecting this important site.

Please do contact me if you need any additional information.

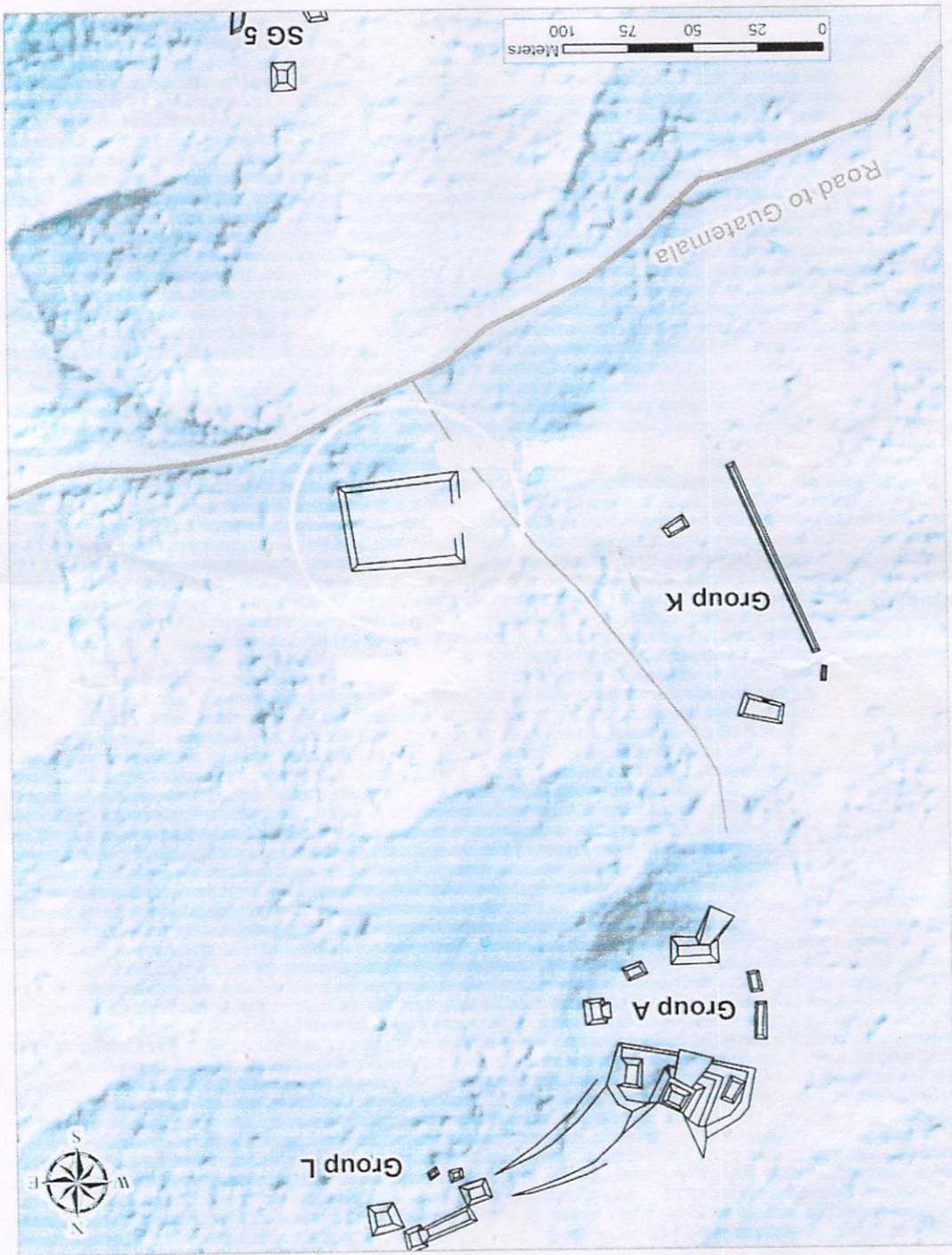
Sincerely,



Dr. Keith Prufer
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Map 1. Uxbenká site core demarcation map and boundary of core architecture.



Map 2. Zoom view of damaged platform, location of bulldozed track, and site access road. Antonio-Jalacte road and site access road.