



Bodies of two security contractors found; Joshua Munns' fate unknown

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The bodies of two private security contractors who were abducted in Iraq with 25-year-old Joshua Munns of Anderson have been found in Iraq.

Richard Kolko, an FBI spokesman in Washington, D.C., confirmed late this morning that the bodies of John Young and Ronald Withrow had been discovered, but he said he didn't have additional information.

"We're continuing the investigation," Kolko said. "That's really what we want to say at this point."

Young of Kansas City, Mo. was abducted with Munns and three other Crescent Security contractors on Nov. 16, 2006, near the Iraq-Kuwait border by a group of masked and armed men.

Withrow, a contractor with JPI Worldwide from Roaring Springs, Texas, was abducted on Jan. 5, 2007, but he was believed to be held with Munns' group in the Basra area.

Joshua Munns' father, Mark Munns, 45, of Anderson, said the FBI had notified him about finding the bodies on Sunday.

"What a great Easter present," he said ruefully.

He declined to elaborate on the FBI's announcement, other than to say he was frustrated and had to fight back the urge to say unpleasant things about his son's abductors.

"I won't go there because my son was a warrior and a damn good one," Mark Munns said. "I'm not going to tarnish his name by me popping off."

Joshua Munns was kidnapped by men dressed in Iraqi police uniforms who had ambushed the contractor's supply convoy at a fake checkpoint as the convoy crossed the Kuwait border into Iraq.

It's still not clear, however, if the hostages were being held for ransom or whether the kidnapping was a political act.

The five were last seen in January 2007 on a video released by their captors that apparently had been recorded the month before.

Francis Cote, father of Jon Cote, a Buffalo, N.Y. contractor abducted with Munns, wrote on the Cote family's blog that the family learned on Friday that the two bodies had been found in the Basra area.

Francis Cote said the FBI confirmed Young and Withrow's identifications late Sunday night.

"Other families are now uncomfortably awaiting word on any new development," wrote Francis Cote.

Also taken hostage with Munns, Cote, Young and Withrow were Paul Johnson Reuben of Buffalo, Minn. and Bert Nussbaumer of Vienna, Austria.

Earlier this month, the FBI confirmed that five severed fingers, including Joshua Munns', Withrow's, and those of three

other kidnapped private security contractors, had been discovered near Baghdad. Young's finger was not among those found.

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