

Three more bodies found in Iraq, raising fears for Cote family

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The remains of three more bodies have been found in Iraq, and his family fears that one of them is former Amherst resident Jonathon Cote.

A family member of Cote told The Buffalo News that the family has been told that the remains of three bodies were found, and the family is awaiting the results of tests to determine their identities.

"If one of them is Jon, we'll deal with that.,.,. Right now, we're waiting for more information, hoping and praying that Jon is still alive," the family member said.

Cote, 25, is a Williamsville North High School graduate who was working as a private security contractor in Iraq. He and four co-workers were abducted on Nov. 16, 2006, while guarding a convoy of supply trucks in southern Iraq.

FBI agents told the Cote family on Friday that the bodies of two men ... believed to be hostages ... had been recovered in Iraq. On Sunday, the family was notified that the two men were John Roy Young, who was abducted with Cote, and Ronald Withrow, another abducted American who was believed to have been held with Cote.

Cote's father, Francis Cote, spent today waiting for additional word from the government.

According to an Associated Press report in Washington, a law enforcement official revealed today that three more bodies have been found. FBI agents said the could not immediately comment on that report.



The other men still missing with Cote are Paul Reuben of Minneapolis; Joshua Munns of Redding, Calif.; and Bert Nussbaumer of Vienna, Austria. A finger from each of those men was received by the military recently.

Young and Withrow, who also had worked as private security contractors in Iraq, were believed to have been held hostage with Cote somewhere in the Basra area of southern Iraq. Authorities in Iraq are trying to determine whether Cote or any of the other hostages who were held with him are still alive.

"[We] are uncomfortably awaiting word on any new development," Cote, 49, a consultant for a computer company, said Monday. "We have no idea when we're going to hear more. I just ask that people in our community continue to pray for the safe return of my son. Those prayers mean a lot to us."

Authorities have said almost nothing publicly since Cote and his co-workers were abducted 16 months ago. Earlier this month, the severed fingers of Cote and four other hostages were sent to American authorities in Iraq.

Authorities said Young, of Kansas City, Mo., was one of the hostages kidnapped with Cote. Withrow, of Roaring Springs, Texas, who worked for another private security firm, was abducted in Iraq about two months later, but authorities believe that he was held with Cote.

"We've received no information on how these two men were killed, how long ago they died, where they were found or how they were found," Francis Cote said.

Jonathon Cote had served with the Army in Iraq and Afghanistan and was honorably discharged before being hired by Crescent Security Group in 2006.

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