



Officials Awaiting ID Of 3 Bodies Found In Iraq

WASHINGTON (AP) Authorities are awaiting identification of the remains of three bodies in Iraq, a U.S. law enforcement official said Tuesday, a day after the remains of two kidnapped contractors were identified.

Four other kidnapped Western contractors have been missing for more than a year. The disappearances received new attention this month when the severed fingers of several men were sent to the U.S. military in Iraq.

Several relatives had taken the discovery of the fingers as a hopeful sign but hopes dimmed Monday when the FBI said the remains of Ronald Withrow of Roaring Springs, Texas, and John Roy Young of Kansas City, Mo., had been identified.

A U.S. law enforcement official, speaking on condition of anonymity because the identification process is ongoing, confirmed that three other bodies are awaiting testing.

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

Munns' mother says she has lost hope that her son is alive after hearing from the FBI that the remains of Withrow and Young had been identified.

"I think at this point, because they already killed the others, (he) is going to be probably dead as well, that's just a mom's intuition," said Jackie Stewart, a resident of Ridgefield, Wash.

Stewart, 45, hopes some good can come out of the story of her son's ordeal. "I was never seeking media attention, but if (it helps) somebody else get their kids back, and get this war over with," she said she would gladly "stand in the limelight."

Cote's father, Francis, said he has not given up hope but expressed anger at the death of Young, one of his son's colleagues.

"How could they hold someone and spend all the resources to keep them in captivity -- feed them, clothe them, bathe them, retain them, provide security for them -- and then finally decide, 'OK, that's it, we're going to terminate his life?' " said Cote, who lives in suburban Buffalo, N.Y. "I just don't understand how that can take place. I just don't have that kind of hatred in my heart. I never will, and I don't understand it."

Johnson-Reuben's family, too, is hoping for the best.

"We're still just praying for everyone involved," said Patrick Reuben, the missing contractor's twin brother. "We love him. He's always in our thoughts and our prayers, and we're praying for his friends that are out there also."

Casey Reuben, one of Paul Johnson-Reuben's daughters, said she continues to pray every day and every night.

"I feel like he's dead. I hope it's not him, but I believe he's gone, that they took his life too," she said.

Patrick Reuben's wife, Jennifer Reuben, added that there are many hostages, and the three additional bodies could be the remains of any of those who have been captured.

She said even if the bodies end up being the remains of the contractors, the fate of a sixth contractor is still unknown.

"This is just really terrible," she said.

The family will hold out hope for Johnson-Reuben until they learn otherwise, Jennifer Reuben said.

"How can you not?" she said.