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Severed fingers of 5 contractors/hostages delivered to U.S. officials in Iraq

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1 Day Ago

#1

[avedis](#)

Member



Join Date: Oct 2007

Posts: 82

Severed fingers of 5 contractors/hostages delivered to U.S. officials in Iraq

By Hannah Allam, McClatchy Newspapers

Wed Mar 12, 5:46 PM ET

BAGHDAD _U.S. authorities in Baghdad have received five severed fingers belonging to four Americans and an Austrian who were taken hostage more than a year ago in Iraq , U.S. officials said Wednesday.

The FBI is investigating the grisly development, and the families of the five kidnapped contractors have been notified, American officials said on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the case publicly.

Authorities confirmed that the fingers belonged to hostages Jonathon Cote , of Gainesville, Fla. ; Joshua Munns , of Redding, Calif. ; Paul Johnson Reuben , of Buffalo, Minn. ; Bert Nussbaumer of Vienna, Austria ; and Ronald J. Withrow , an American who was kidnapped separately from the others.

No information was available on when or how the fingers were delivered to U.S. authorities. Some relatives of the missing men said that they'd heard weeks ago that the DNA of the hostages had been obtained, but they'd been given no details.

The first four men were security contractors with Kuwait -based Crescent Security and were captured in a brazen ambush of their 43-truck supply convoy in the southern Iraqi town of Safwan, near the Kuwaiti border, on Nov. 16, 2006 .

There was no word on a fifth contractor who was seized with them, John Young , of Kansas City . Contrary to Austrian news reports, none of the fingers belonged to him, authorities said.

"The government is in touch with us, but they said nothing has been verified yet," said Sharon DeBrabander , Young's mother. "I certainly don't understand why my son's wasn't found. What does that mean?"

Withrow, a computer specialist who worked for JPI Worldwide, was kidnapped separately at a phony checkpoint near the southern Iraqi city of Basra on Jan. 5, 2007, according to news reports. Very little information is publicly available about his abduction; the bodies of his Iraqi translator and driver were discovered the next day. His employer is a Las Vegas -based company that provides Internet and technological support to remote or war-torn areas around the globe, according to the company's Web site.

The Austrian weekly magazine News first reported the delivery of the five fingers in Wednesday's edition, citing unnamed authorities working on the case.

Austrian officials said at a news conference in Vienna that U.S. officials had provided information about "fingerprints and DNA traces that were positively matched to Nussbaumer," the Austrian hostage. They didn't confirm that the sample was a severed finger.

Relatives of the American hostages said they received phone calls from U.S. authorities early Wednesday, though initially they were told only that fingerprints or DNA had been obtained. Later, at least one father said he'd been notified that his son's finger had been delivered by the hostage-takers, but there still was confusion among the relatives about the development.

"All we have right now is prayers," said Mark Munns, the father of former Marine Joshua Munns, 25, who has spent his past two birthdays in captivity. "I don't know how to make head or tails of what's going on. Are they still alive? A whole bunch of stuff goes through your head."

State Department representatives check in with the families in a telephone conference call every Monday, though several relatives have complained that they're being kept in the dark about the investigation. The FBI has told them that the information is classified to preserve the integrity of the investigation— little solace for families who've gone 18 months with scant news.

"I know we're in a war on terror, but to not tell the families anything and let us sit out here for 18 months just isn't right," Mark Munns said.

The Crescent contractors appeared in two hostage videos released in December 2006 and January 2007 in which they pleaded for the United States to withdraw troops from Iraq and to free all Iraqi prisoners. In the videos, they appeared in good condition and said that they were being treated well.

No financial demand has been made public, and it's unclear what group is holding the men. All of the hostages were seized in southern Iraq, where powerful Shiite Muslim militias operate with relative freedom.

"I'm hoping this may be a sign that the hostage-takers sent the fingers to prove they have the guys and may want to deal. I'm trying to look at the positive of this," said Mark Koscielski, a Minnesotan who is in close contact with the families of the hostages and maintains a Web site, www.Save5.net, dedicated to the

abducted men. One of the hostages, Reuben, is a former Minneapolis police officer.

READ EARLIER STORIES ABOUT THE HOSTAGES:

Abducted contractors appear in videotape:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/staff/Han...ory/15282.html>

Coalition forces launch search for missing security contractors:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/staff/Han...ory/15043.html>

link: <http://news.yahoo.com/s/mcclatchy/20...latchy/2877385>

I hope for the best



1 Day Ago

#2

[Invisigoth](#)

Member

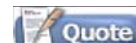


Join Date: Jul 2006

Posts: 939



Pretty grim when getting severed fingers is a positive sign 😊 hope they make it out of there alive.



1 Day Ago

#3

[ren0312](#)

Member

Join Date: Aug 2006
Location: Manila, The Philippines
Age: 22
Posts: 424



Quote:

Originally Posted by [Invisigoth](#) ▶

Pretty grim when getting severed fingers is a positive sign 😊 hope they make it out of there alive.

Are we still dealing with human beings here?



1 Day Ago

#4

[Invisigoth](#)

Member



Join Date: Jul 2006



Depends on how you define human beings.

Posts: 939



1 Day Ago

#5

[meatrabbit](#)

Member



Join Date: Jan 2008
 Location: europe
 Posts: 461

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Invisigoth](#)
*Pretty grim when getting severed fingers is a positive sign 😞
 hope they make it out of there alive.*

Also for me this is a good sign as it shows that they are alive (or that they have been alive just short time ago). It was more than a year ago when they were taken hostage and there have never been any signs for their proof of life but a video showing nussbaumer as a hostage shortly after he was reported missing after a firefight (I don't know of the others, just of nussbaumer because it's been on the news back then). Most people thought that he (and his comrades) are dead. So the hope of the family is raised again (although under horrible circumstances).



1 Day Ago

#6

[AFG](#)

Member



Join Date: Jan 2004
 Location: CA, USA
 Age: 20
 Posts: 760

man, that must of been painful. who knows what other **** those guys have endured. At this point I think the situation is "Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst." I hope their families will continue to be strong.



1 Day Ago

#7

[Jagr](#)

Member

Join Date: Feb 2005
 Posts: 90

Quote:

Originally Posted by [meatrabbit](#)
*Also for me this is a good sign as it shows that they are alive
 (or that they have been alive just short time ago).*

Not necessarily..depends on the level of decomposition and if there is any sign of freezing or re Fridgeration..



1 Day Ago

#8

[9mmRifle](#)

Situational awareness - what's that?



Join Date: Oct 2006
Posts: 537



I hope they get out safe

My sympathy to the families who have to endure such a nightmare



1 Day Ago

#9

[Jelle H.](#)

Member



Join Date: Sep 2005
Location: PANGEA
Posts: 379



Contracting in Iraq, so damn dangerous..



1 Day Ago

#10


[Dominique](#)

BTD - The Dom

Join Date: Apr 2003
Location: USA
Posts: 2,271



Quote:

Originally Posted by [Jelle H.](#) 
Contracting in Iraq, so damn dangerous..

It's one of the reasons contract personnel get paid what they do.

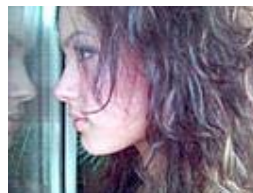


1 Day Ago

#11

[Breakfast in Vegas](#)

Senior Member



Join Date: Sep 2006
Location: Teutonia
Posts: 1,619




My thoughts go out to the kidnapped and their families. An incomprehensibly horrible situation for me.

Quote

21 Hours Ago #12

[lightfire](#)
I think I know everything, but I don't



Join Date: Jan 2006
Posts: 1,449


IRC, soviets, when palestinians (one of their terrorist groups) have kidnaped soviet citizens demanding ransom or smth else, have targeted family members of the kidnapers, sending parts of their bodies to the kidnapers themselves. Cruel, but AFAIK it was quite effective. Seriously, such kidnapers should be treated adectuatelly cruel - chopping of parts of their body's. In musil world, would it be smth extraordinary? I don't think so..

Quote

Quote

20 Hours Ago #13

[Bongopete](#)
Member



Join Date: Feb 2008
Location: Dallas Texas
Posts: 413


And we debate 'torture'?

Quote

Quote


20 Hours Ago #14

[Herman the German](#)
Member



Join Date: Nov 2007
Location: Europe.de
Posts: 268

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Bongopete** 
And we debate 'torture'?

Of course we do...
The fact that our enemies are conscienceless and brutal doesn't give us a free ticket for abandon our values and principles.
I Hope the victims get home soon.

Quote

Quote

20 Hours Ago #15

[SOG](#)
Senior Member

I hate this kind of stuff. Hope they get out alive. Don't know...



Join Date: Aug 2003
Location: I apologize in advance!
Posts: 3,724



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