

Lincoln County awaits new federal inmates No decision from Marshals Service after escape spurred upgrades.

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Body

TROY, MO. - Immigration prisoners have returned to the **Lincoln County** Jail, but a lucrative deal with the U.S. **Marshals Service** remains inactive **after** an **escape** eight months ago.

"They never took our contract away, but obviously it doesn't really matter if we don't have the prisoners - it's basically the same thing," said Kurt Venneman of the **Lincoln County** Sheriff's Department. "We're trying to talk to them so we know one way or the other."

Rob O'Connor of the **Marshals Service** said, "We haven't made a final **decision**" on whether to resume housing prisoners at the jail. He said **no** inspection of the renovated facility had been planned.

In November, two **federal** prisoners **escaped** from the jail through a drop ceiling, and a short time later, all 34 **federal** prisoners at the jail under a cell-leasing program were moved to other facilities.

Since then, **Lincoln County** officials say they have completed \$150,000 in improvements that include a **new** camera system, replacing several rows of ceiling tile with steel and placing razor wire on the roof.

Representatives with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agreed to return their prisoners to **Lincoln County** **after** touring the facility the first week of June. The immigration agency had removed four prisoners **after** the jail break.

Lincoln County officials have relied on contracts with the **federal** government since at least 2002. It has been one of 13 local facilities that house approximately 400 **inmates** for the **Marshals Service**.

In the past, as many as 70 **federal** prisoners have been held in **Lincoln County** at one time, boosting **county** coffers by more than \$1 million a year.

Lincoln County's most recent contract with the **federal** government, signed in August 2009, called for a per-diem rate of \$55 per prisoner.

Venneman said so far the **county** has not had to lay off or reduce the pay of any of the department's 76 employees because of the loss of revenue.

"But once line items start going over our budget, then we're going to have to figure out what to do," he said.

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The two **inmates** who **escaped** were recaptured within a few days. One, John Wesley Jones, pleaded guilty to the multimillion-dollar ATM Solutions robbery in St. Louis. The other, Corey Durand Cross, was not involved in the ATM heist.

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