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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Suspect in Navy Stabbing to Remain in Pre-Trial Confinement

Norfolk, Va. (CNRMA) – The sailor accused of the June 6 stabbing of another sailor at the Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads Portsmouth Annex, will remain in pre-trial confinement at the Naval Consolidated Brig in Chesapeake, a Navy Initial Review Officer (IRO) decided today.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Wilbur G. Harwell appeared at an Initial Review Hearing at the brig this afternoon. Harwell is being held in temporary administrative segregation, which is standard operating procedure for new detainees. A court date for Harwell has not been set.

An IRO decides if there is probable cause to confine a service member. Factors include if the officer believes the accused committed a serious offense or is considered to be a flight risk.

Federal officials turned Harwell over to the Navy yesterday following a custody hearing in Norfolk. Harwell was taken to the brig where he will remain pending charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) has not completed its investigation of the incident and Harwell has not yet been charged. The UCMJ generally requires a suspect to be arraigned within 120 days.

The military justice system, similar to the civilian justice system, is based on the principle of innocent until proven guilty.

The victim of the assault, Petty Officer 2nd Class Justin D. Powell, has been upgraded to very good condition and remains at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth.

Agents say Harwell fled after stabbing Powell in a barracks room. After the assault, agents say Powell exited the barracks and made his way to the Navy Exchange area for help. NCIS agents said they believe another service member may have assisted Harwell in leaving the installation before the gates were closed, driving him to Virginia Beach where he was apprehended at an oceanfront hotel about 5 p.m. Friday by Navy, local and federal officials.

Agents say there was enough time for Harwell to leave the base before the incident was reported. Emergency services received the report of the stabbing at 8:33. Two minutes later, at 8:35 a.m., the gates to the installation were closed and personnel ordered to shelter in place for more than eight hours while Navy, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies conducted a room-by-room search on the installation for the suspect.

The identity of the service member being questioned, and further details of the investigation, have not been released. The service member being questioned by NCIS agents has not been charged.

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