

**The Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Illinois - 8/10/2007**

## **Second Attorney Joins Defense for Murder Defendant**

**CHERYL DAGON**

TAYLORVILLE - A 24-year-old Nokomis soldier charged with multiple counts first degree murder appeared in court Thursday morning for a status hearing.

A second attorney, Mark K. Wykoff, Sr., Wykoff Law Office LLC, entered his appearance as defense counsel for Kevin M. Thornton. Wykoff joined attorney Monroe McWard in representing Thornton.

Thornton was indicted in January for allegedly stabbing John A. Burkett, Jr., in December 2006. Burkett, a soldier from Pana, died at Pana Community Hospital from stab wounds inflicted during an attack in Pana Wal-Mart parking lot.

During a probable cause hearing, State's Attorney Brad Paisley had informed the court that Thornton told investigators he had purchased a hunting knife intending to hurt Burkett. He believed that the victim and his wife Sarah had an affair while he was deployed to Iraq.

Judge John Coady imposed an August 20 deadline for the defense team to file motions and scheduled an August 28 hearing to pick a date for a three-hour motions hearing. Coady said a jury trial date of October 9 stands.

In June, Thornton was found fit to stand trial by Springfield psychiatrist Dr. Terry Killian. Killian's finding indicates that Thornton understands the charges and possible penalties and can assist in his own defense.

The psychological evaluation was granted on a motion by McWard, who had requested in March that Thornton be evaluated as to fitness, insanity or guilty but mentally ill as related to post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Thornton has remained in Christian County Correctional Center on \$3 million bond since his arrest.

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