

The Sun

**Statements will be allowed in murder trial
Defense attorney argues Harding mentally impaired**

by Caitlin Francke

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Attorneys for James M. Harding Jr., who is charged with killing his stepson, have lost a bid to suppress key evidence in the case against the former state trooper.

Harding is charged with first- and second-degree murder in the slaying of Marine Cpl. Andre Boone at Harding's Columbia home in March.

Michael O. Ramsey, Harding's attorney, argued recently that statements Harding gave to police should be excluded from the trial because his client is mentally impaired.

But Howard County Circuit Judge Diane O. Leasure ruled two weeks ago that the direct statements Harding made to police could be used as evidence in the case against him. The trial date is set for Sept. 29.

In February 1993, a few weeks after he began working for the state police, Harding was aiding a motorist on the Capital Beltway when he was hit by a car and dragged 68 feet.

Harding spent about two months in two hospitals and eventually lost his trooper job.

Ramsey has said that he plans to argue that Harding acted in self-defense. He maintains that Boone -- who had been named to the Marine's elite silent drill corps shortly before he was killed -- came to Harding's home looking for a fight.

"There's only two people who could have stopped [Boone] -- God and a bullet," Ramsey has said.

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