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**March 11, 2003
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**GEORGIA WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY IN DEATH OF
U.S. PARK POLICE OFFICER**

Greenbelt, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that Jovada Welch, age 20, of Rome, Georgia, pled guilty today to one count of involuntary manslaughter and two related misdemeanors in the death of U.S. Park Police Officer Hakim Farthing who was directing traffic at an earlier accident scene when he was struck and killed by Welch.

In a statement of facts provided to the court as part of the plea agreement, Welch admitted that she had been drinking at the Dream nightclub in Washington, D.C. beginning in the evening of August 9, left the nightclub at approximately 2:30 a.m. on August 10, and was not wearing her prescription glasses when she drove through a line of cones and flares erected by Farthing on the New York Avenue ramp at the interchange with the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. Farthing was running toward her, waving his hands and trying to flag her down when he was struck. After striking and killing Farthing, Welch drove nearly a half-mile before stopping near the scene of the earlier accident. Welch told officers at the scene that she was driving about 70mph when she came upon the flares and cones, and thought she had hit a "barricade." A Maryland State Police forensic

expert estimated that Welch was traveling between 47 and 62mph when she hit Farthing. Welch, who was arrested at the scene, had a blood alcohol level of .10 when she was tested at Prince George's hospital.

In addition to the manslaughter charge, which carries a maximum penalty of 6 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine and 3 years of supervised release, Welch also pled guilty to the misdemeanor offenses of driving under the influence of alcohol and failure to remain at the scene, each carrying a maximum penalty of 6 months and a fine of \$5,000. The plea agreement provides for Welch to be sentenced to 60 months imprisonment. Sentencing is scheduled for June 24 at 1:30pm. Welch is to remain on home detention pending sentencing.

The case is the result of an investigation by Detective Sergeant Ronald Robinson and Detective Robert Scherr, with the assistance of the Criminal Investigation Branch of the U.S. Park Police. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Hollis R. Weisman and David I. Salem.