



Naval Criminal Investigative Service

Quantico, Va.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NOVEMBER 13, 2020
www.ncis.navy.mil

CONTACT: JEFF HOUSTON
PHONE: (571)-302-2307

NCIS Seeks Information on Sailor Who Escaped Confinement 15 Years Ago

NCIS is soliciting tips from anyone who may have information on the whereabouts of James Tait Praefke, a former Sailor who escaped confinement from Naval Brig Puget Sound, Wash., 15 years ago.

Upon Praefke's arrival at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash., from Afghanistan in February 2005, Navy security discovered an M33 fragmentation grenade in Praefke's canvas bag during a routine U.S. Customs inspection. Later searches led to the discovery of military grade C-4 explosive. At the time, Praefke served as the command logistics petty officer for packing/loading operations of command items for transport to and from Afghanistan. Praefke was subsequently sentenced at a general court-martial in October 2005 to over three years of confinement for unlawful possession of explosives, larceny of ammunition, and making a false official statement. On Nov. 13, 2005, Naval Base Kitsap, Wash., reported to NCIS that Praefke had escaped from the brig.

NCIS believes Praefke may have acquired an RV or boat and may be traveling around the United States or have sailed to the Caribbean. Praefke is a resourceful survivalist with specialized training and knowledge of firearms. He is likely comfortable living in the woods and may be living in seclusion or with like-minded people. He has family ties in the Beverly Hills, Fla., area and expressed interest in Wyoming, southern Florida, and the Caribbean.

A poster featuring photos, aliases, and physical descriptions of Praefke may be found on the NCIS website at <https://www.ncis.navy.mil/Resources/Have-You-Seen-Us/>. NCIS is offering a reward up to \$10,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Praefke. Tips may be reported to NCIS using the NCIS Tips app or at www.ncis.navy.mil. Tips may be reported anonymously.

"This is NCIS' longest-running active fugitive investigation," said Assistant Director for Criminal Investigations and Operations Dan Simpson. "We are grateful to anyone who may have seen or come into contact with Praefke to step forward and assist us in locating Praefke so he may be brought to justice for the crimes he has committed."

NCIS is a federal law enforcement agency that investigates felony crime, prevents terrorism, and protects secrets for the U.S. Department of the Navy. NCIS employs approximately 2,000 personnel, including 1,000 federal special agents, in 41 countries and 191 locations around the world.

To learn more about NCIS, visit <https://www.ncis.navy.mil> and follow NCIS on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Please send any media queries to ncispublicaffairs@ncis.navy.mil.