

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the Eastern District of Tennessee

United States of America v.

CHRISTOPHER D. BRUEY

Case No. 3:23-MJ-2034

Defendant(s)

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of January 28, 2023 in the county of Knox in the Eastern District of Tennessee, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section 18 U.S.C. § 2423(a)

Offense Description Transportation with Intent to Engage in Criminal Sexual Activity

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

The affidavit of FBI SA Jason Stewart which is attached hereto and fully incorporated herein.

Continued on the attached sheet.

Complainant's signature

Special Agent Jason Stewart, FBI Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date: 01/29/2023

Jill E. McCook Judge's signature

City and state: Knoxville, Tennessee

Jill E. McCook, United States Magistrate Judge Printed name and title

UNDER SEAL

AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF COMPLAINT

Your affiant, Jason Stewart, a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) being duly sworn, deposes and states the following:

INTRODUCTION AND AGENT BACKGROUND

1. I have been employed as a Special Agent since May of 2017. I am currently assigned to the Violent Crime Squad at the Knoxville Field Office of the FBI. As an FBI Special Agent, I am authorized to investigate violations of the laws, including the criminal drug laws, of the United States, collect evidence in investigations where the United States is or may be a party of interest, serve and execute warrants, as well as to perform other duties. Prior to serving with the FBI, I was an officer in the United States Army for eight years, and a police officer with the Knoxville Police Department in Tennessee for two years. I have investigated federal criminal violations including bank robbery, violent crime and gangs, drug trafficking organizations, criminal enterprises, and violent crimes against children. I have received formal training in investigations at the Knoxville Police Academy in Tennessee, and the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. As an FBI Special Agent, I am authorized to investigate violations relating to child exploitation and child pornography, including the production, transportation, receipt, distribution, and possession of child pornography, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 2251 and 2252A, as well as the enticement and coercion of minors, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2422. Additionally, I have investigated violations of 18 U.S.C. § 2423 and am familiar with how violators entice, communicate with, and prey upon minor victims. I have gained experience in conducting these investigations through training and through everyday work, including

executing search warrants and interviewing individuals who trade child pornography and who seek to sexually exploit children. As part of my training and experience, I have observed and reviewed numerous examples of child pornography, as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 2256, in multiple forms of media. I have been trained and certified by the FBI in the acquisition, imaging, extraction, and analysis of digital evidence from computers, cellular telephones, and other electronic devices. I have been trained by the FBI in digital image and video recovery. I have also attended several courses on cybersecurity and cyber investigations provided by the FBI and private industry.


INVESTIGATION DETAILS

2. As further detailed below, probable cause exists to believe that Christopher Bruey (hereinafter “Bruey”) transported a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2423(a). This affidavit is being offered in support of a Complaint and Arrest Warrant for Bruey for violating Title 18, United States Code, Section 2423(a).

3. On January 27, 2023, Joplin Police Department (JPD), in Missouri, received a report of a missing 14-year-old girl whose initials are [REDACTED], and whose identity is known to law enforcement. [REDACTED]’s parents discovered her missing from her home in Joplin, Missouri, on January 27, 2023. [REDACTED] had last been seen in her house on the evening of January 26, 2023. During their investigation, JPD discovered a Snapchat account for [REDACTED] and was able to access [REDACTED]’s Snapchat account through a JPD-owned smartphone after a family member guessed [REDACTED]’s password. JPD located Snapchat messages between [REDACTED] and a user later identified as Bruey discussing Bruey picking [REDACTED] and getting married. Bruey also expressed concern in Snapchat messages to [REDACTED] that he would be arrested, but said that he “trusted” [REDACTED]. JPD

checked license plate reader (hereinafter, "LPR") data for Bruey's vehicle and discovered Bruey's vehicle had been spotted in Knoxville, Tennessee. JPD then requested assistance from FBI Kansas City and FBI Knoxville.


4. On January 28, 2023, Knox County Sheriff's Office and the FBI-Knoxville Office received the following alert from the Joplin, Missouri Police Department¹:



Joplin Police Department


Special Bulletin, 1/28/2023

Vanessa West Comer • Support Services Bureau • [REDACTED]

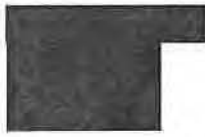



ENDANGERED MISSING JUVENILE

Bruey, Christopher Daniel
W/M, 11/20/1991
5'11", 185lbs
Brown hair/blue eyes
SMT: Tattoos, left arm, right arm, right shoulder
Vehicle: Brown/tan 2002 Ford F-150 XLT Supercab
FL VXR35
VIN 1FTRW07602KD19678



Bruey [REDACTED]





FL VXR35

Juvenile [REDACTED] was reported as missing on the morning of 1/27/2023. Her cell phone was left behind. [REDACTED] may be wearing a black and yellow Nirvana hoodie, black jeans, and red shoes. She is believed to be with Christopher Bruey in a brown/tan 2002 Ford F-150XLT Supercab (FL VXR35). On the back glass of the vehicle there are decals on the upper left and upper right sides, the right side of the back glass, and the bottom center. There is a decal or magnet on the tailgate. Bruey lives in Ft. Myers, FL, but has ties to New Jersey.

If located, stop and hold and contact Detective [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] immediately.

REDACTED INFORMATION IS UNCLASSIFIED. All information obtained by this agency is law enforcement sensitive. The unauthorized disclosure of information in this document is prohibited by law. Any person who discloses information in this document to the media or to the public in any manner is subject to disciplinary action. This document is for the use of law enforcement agencies only. It is not to be disseminated to the public. Any person who discloses information in this document to the media or to the public in any manner is subject to disciplinary action. This document is for the use of law enforcement agencies only. It is not to be disseminated to the public. Any person who discloses information in this document to the media or to the public in any manner is subject to disciplinary action.

On January 28, 2023, FBI Task Force Officer John Sharp circulated the above alert and reviewed LPR data around the Knoxville, Tennessee area. Task Force Officer Sharp found that Bruey's license plate has registered on several LPRs in the East Knoxville, Tennessee area on

¹ The screen shot of the alert is redacted in this filing to protect personal and private information. Law enforcement received an unredacted version.

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January 27, 2023 and on January 28, 2023. The Knoxville Police Department was made aware of the alert and notified that the suspected pickup truck and license plate had been captured on an LPR in the East Knoxville area near Magnolia Avenue and Cherry Street.

5. In the evening of January 28, 2023, patrol officers with the Knoxville Police Department patrolled the area where Bruey's pickup truck last registered on a LPR. Officers spotted Bruey's truck in the parking lot of the Value Inn, off Magnolia Avenue, just south of Interstate 40, Knoxville, Tennessee. As the patrol officers waited for back-up, Bruey exited the hotel and walked to his truck. Patrol officers detained Bruey in the parking lot. Patrol officers then checked with the Value Inn clerk and learned that Bruey had rented room 316 in the hotel. The Value Inn's rooms have exterior doors that open to open-air walkways. Officers approached room 316, knocked and announced. The door was never answered. After several attempts at knocking and announcing, officers made entry into the room using a room key to check on the safety of the minor, [REDACTED]. Upon entry to the room, officers located [REDACTED] who had just exited the shower. In the hotel room, officers saw marijuana and open containers of alcohol in plain view and smelt an odor of marijuana. Officers left [REDACTED] in the room because she did not have a jacket and it was cold outside. A KPD officer stood at the partially-opened hotel room door while an FBI Task Force Officer (TFO) obtained a state search warrant. While waiting for the warrant, FBI Agents received consent from [REDACTED]'s parents over the phone to search [REDACTED]'s phone. [REDACTED] identified her phone as a black Motorola smartphone to FBI Agents who entered the hotel room and seized [REDACTED]'s phone from a nightstand near [REDACTED]. FBI Agents then exited the room and continued waiting for the state search warrant. A search of the hotel room, pursuant to a warrant, revealed two additional cellular phones that were seized by law enforcement: a blue Motorola smartphone, belonging to Bruey, and an LG smartphone later determined to also

belong to [REDACTED] Bruey's blue Motorola phone had a picture of [REDACTED] as the phone background, and appeared to have been smashed. Neither of [REDACTED]'s phones had cellular service, but they were able to connect to Wi-Fi. The LG smartphone and blue Motorola smartphones were also authorized to be searched pursuant to a state search warrant. An FBI Forensic Examiner examined all three phones. Neither of [REDACTED]'s phones had been used much. [REDACTED] disclosed in a later interview that she had not used her phone since Thursday, January 27, 2023. Bruey's blue Motorola smartphone was too damaged to be examined by traditional forensic tools and will undergo further examination at a later date.

6. After Bruey was detained, he was advised of his *Miranda* rights. Bruey admitted that the two had driven from the Joplin, Missouri area. Bruey stated he met [REDACTED] in a Wendy's parking lot in the Joplin, Missouri area and the two had been traveling in his truck together. Bruey further admitted that he and [REDACTED] engaged in sexual intercourse in Missouri, prior to arriving in Tennessee. Bruey then invoked his rights and questioning was ceased.

7. [REDACTED] was asked some limited questions by law enforcement while at the Value Inn. [REDACTED] advised that the two had been traveling from Missouri and had slept in Bruey's truck. [REDACTED] stated that she met Bruey in a church parking lot in the Joplin, Missouri area. [REDACTED] stated that she communicated with Bruey through the social media platform Snapchat. [REDACTED] further stated that when she was meeting Bruey, she did not know what he looked like, but when she went to the church parking lot to meet Bruey, Bruey's pickup truck was the only one there. [REDACTED] advised that January 28, 2023 was the first night that Bruey and her had rented a hotel room to stay in.

8. Bruey's pickup truck was parked in the Value Inn parking lot and a K9 officer alerted to the odor of narcotics from Bruey's pickup truck. Bruey's truck was searched and

several receipts were found. One was a receipt dated January 27, 2023, from a McDonald's restaurant in Cadiz, Kentucky. Another receipt was found from the Value Inn, Knoxville, Tennessee dated January 28, 2023.

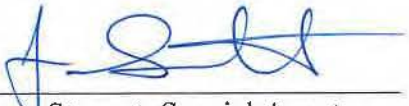
9. On January 29, 2023, a forensic interview of [REDACTED] was conducted by an FBI Child Adolescent Forensic Interviewer (CAFI). [REDACTED] stated that she was from Missouri. [REDACTED] stated that she started talking to Bruey on SnapChat about one month ago. [REDACTED] stated that Bruey was talking to [REDACTED] about getting married to [REDACTED] Bruey told [REDACTED] that he was traveling to Tennessee and [REDACTED] asked Bruey if she could go with him. [REDACTED] stated she packed two backpacks and met Bruey in a church parking lot near her home on January 26 or 27, 2023. [REDACTED] stated they drove for awhile and stopped in Kentucky to sleep in the truck. [REDACTED] stated they could no longer stand the cold in the evenings and began looking for a hotel on Saturday, January 28, 2023. [REDACTED] stated that Bruey knew [REDACTED]'s age. [REDACTED] stated that Bruey told her that Bruey was 31, so [REDACTED] replied that she was 14 years of age. [REDACTED] stated that Bruey and her never touched each other while in Missouri or during the trip to Tennessee. [REDACTED] denied that Bruey and her had sexual intercourse. The interviewer and [REDACTED] took a break and re-engaged in the interview after a five-minute break. After the break, [REDACTED] stated that she and Bruey did engage in sexual intercourse. [REDACTED] stated that Bruey and her had sexual intercourse in the Value Inn, in Knoxville, Tennessee. [REDACTED] detailed that Bruey took a shower in the hotel room. While Bruey was in the shower, [REDACTED] was consuming an alcoholic beverage. Bruey got out of the shower and began kissing [REDACTED] which led to sexual intercourse. [REDACTED] stated she then took a shower and that is when police arrived to the hotel room.

10. Based upon the SnapChat communications for three weeks prior to [REDACTED] and Bruey traveling to Tennessee, and based upon the admission by Bruey that the two engaged in

sexual intercourse, and based upon the admission of [REDACTED] that the two engaged in sexual intercourse in Tennessee, and based upon my training and experience, I believe that Bruey travelled across state lines, specifically from Missouri to Tennessee, with the intent to engage in illicit sexual activity (and did engage in illicit sexual activity) with a minor, which is Aggravated Statutory Rape in violation of Tennessee Code Annotated 39-13-506(c).

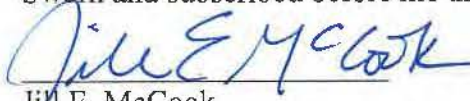
11. Based on the foregoing, there is probable cause to believe the Bruey has committed the crime of Transportation With Intent To Engage in Criminal Sexual Activity, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2423(a).

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NAUGHT.



Jason Stewart, Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Sworn and subscribed before me this 29th day of January, 2023.



Jill E. McCook
United States Magistrate Judge