

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA**

CASE NO. 22-mj-8510-WM

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

WILLIAM MICHAEL SPEARMAN,

Defendant

_____ /


CRIMINAL COVER SHEET

1. Did this matter originate from a matter pending in the Central Region of the United States Attorney's Office prior to August 8, 2014 (Mag. Judge Shaniek Maynard)? **No**
2. Did this matter originate from a matter pending in the Northern Region of the United States Attorney's Office prior to October 3, 2019 (Mag. Judge Jared Strauss)? **No**

Respectfully submitted,

JUAN ANTONIO GONZALEZ
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

By:



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Nov 2, 2022
ANGELA E. NOBLE
CLERK U.S. DIST. CT.
S. D. OF FLA. - West Palm Beach

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Southern District of Florida

United States of America)

v.)

WILLIAM MICHAEL SPEARMAN)

Case No. 22-mj-8510-WM)

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 March 2018 through November 2022 in the county of Palm Beach in the Southern District of Florida and elsewhere, the defendant(s) violated:

<i>Code Section</i>	<i>Offense Description</i>
18 U.S.C. § 2252A(g)	Engaging in a child exploitation enterprise
18 U.S.C. § 2251(d) and (e)	Conspiracy to advertise child pornography

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See attached Affidavit.

Continued on the attached sheet.

David J. Backlund

Complainant's signature

FBI Special Agent David J. Backlund

Printed name and title

Subscribed and sworn to before me in accordance with the requirements of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by telephone (FaceTime).

Date: November 2, 2022

William Matthewman

Judge's signature

City and state: West Palm Beach, Florida

U.S. Magistrate Judge William Matthewman

Printed name and title

AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL COMPLAINT AND ARREST WARRANT

I, David J. Backlund, a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) being duly sworn, depose and state as follows:

1. I have been employed as a Special Agent of the FBI since September 2008, and am currently assigned to the FBI’s Child Exploitation Operational Unit within the Criminal Investigative Division. As part of my duties as a Special Agent, I am assigned to investigate violations of federal law, including the online exploitation of children. This includes violations pertaining to the illegal trafficking, production, transmission, possession, and receipt of material depicting the sexual exploitation of minors.

2. I am submitting this affidavit in support of a criminal complaint and arrest warrant for WILLIAM MICHAEL SPEARMAN, year of birth: 1966, social security number: XXX-XX-5417. I submit there is probable cause to believe that beginning at least in or about 2018, and continuing through in or about November 2022, in the Southern District of Florida and elsewhere, SPEARMAN engaged in a child exploitation enterprise in violation 18 U.S.C. § 2252A(g) and conspired with others to advertise child pornography in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2251(d) and (e). The term “child pornography,” as used in this affidavit, refers to the definition set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 2256(8)(A).

3. Title 18 U.S.C. § 2252A(g) provides that a person engages in a child exploitation enterprise if a person violates Chapter 110 of the United States Code (among other portions of Title 18), as part of a series of felony violations constituting three or more separate incidents and involving more than one victim, and commits those offenses in concert with three or more other persons. As further set forth below, there is probable cause to believe that SPEARMAN violated various provisions of Chapter 110 of the United States Code in such a manner, including the

advertisement of child pornography and conspiracy to advertise child pornography in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2251(d) and (e), and the distribution of child pornography and conspiracy to distribute child pornography in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2252A(a)(2) and (b)(1). Each of the aforementioned is a felony offense. Here, I submit there is probable cause to believe that SPEARMAN violated 18 U.S.C. § 2252A(g) because, as described more fully below, on three or more occasions, SPEARMAN shared numerous URL links via a website with a group of 10 or more other individuals, which links, when accessed, redirected to web pages displaying child pornography files.

4. Title 18 U.S.C. § 2251(d) and (e) prohibit any person from conspiring to knowingly make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed or published, any notice or advertisement seeking or offering to receive, exchange, buy, produce, display, distribute, or reproduce, any visual depiction, if the production of such visual depiction involves the use of a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct and such visual depiction is of such conduct, when such person knows or has reason to know that such notice or advertisement will be transported using any means or facility of interstate or foreign commerce or in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce by any means including by computer, or when such notice or advertisement was transported using any means or facility of interstate or foreign commerce or in or affecting interstate commerce by any means including computer. Here, I submit that there is probable cause that SPEARMAN violated 18 U.S.C. § 2251(d) and (e) because, as described more fully below, he was a member and facilitator of a website that was dedicated to the advertisement, distribution, and exchange of child pornography, and on which, in accordance with the rules of the website, users advertised and distributed child pornography via notices and advertisements in the form of URL links and descriptive text.

5. The statements contained in this affidavit are based in part on information provided by FBI Special Agents; written reports about this and other investigations that I have received, directly or indirectly, from other law enforcement agents; information gathered from the service of administrative subpoenas; the results of physical and electronic surveillance conducted by law enforcement agents; independent investigation and analysis by FBI agents and computer forensic professionals; and my experience, training and background as a Special Agent with the FBI. Since this affidavit is being submitted for the purpose of securing a Criminal Complaint and arrest warrant, I have not included each and every fact known to me concerning this investigation. I have set forth only the facts that I believe are necessary to establish probable cause to believe SPEARMAN has violated 18 U.S.C. §§ 2252A(g) and 2251(d) and (e).

6. The FBI is investigating a website (hereinafter referred to as the “TARGET WEBSITE”) that allows users to engage in online communications with other users. Users of the TARGET WEBSITE traffic in child pornography images and videos via the posting of web links within messages. These links allow a user to navigate to another website, such as a file-hosting website, where images and/or videos were stored in order to download these images and videos. When posting the links, users of the TARGET WEBSITE also generally include descriptive text that provides information about the sexual acts and age and gender of the child victim depicted in the linked-to child pornography files. The TARGET WEBSITE provides rules that instruct users to share child pornography in this manner. The TARGET WEBSITE consists of at least 100 registered members. Registered members of the TARGET WEBSITE, and any user with a higher status than registered member, all have their usernames reserved for their exclusive use and must access their account through a password chosen by the user. Usernames that are taken by registered members or users of higher status cannot be used by any other website user. Until

approximately June 2022, a high-ranking administrator of the TARGET WEBSITE resided in Palm Beach County, Florida, within the Southern District of Florida, and advertised child pornography and took acts to help manage the website from his home.

7. FBI investigation has further revealed that another particular user of the TARGET WEBSITE, acting under a particular online alias and referred to here as the “SUBJECT USER,” acted as a high-ranking administrator of the website. According to communications made over the TARGET WEBSITE, the SUBJECT USER has recommended other users for promotion, welcomed users to the website, provided guidance to users, and recruited other users to serve in positions on the TARGET WEBSITE such as room moderators. The SUBJECT USER has been at least a registered member, or a user of greater status, since this time.

8. The FBI’s investigation further revealed that the SUBJECT USER has, on more than three occasions, shared thousands of URL links to child pornography via the TARGET WEBSITE that were accessible to more than 10 other TARGET WEBSITE users. Below are examples of some of the links shared by the SUBJECT USER. Each of these three examples is from a separate message sent by the SUBJECT USER on separate occasions between July and August 2022:

- a. The SUBJECT USER shared a collection of links, including one link with descriptive text suggesting indicating that the linked-to child pornography files depicted a young girl being sexually abused by an older woman. That link in fact redirected to another website that contained an image depicting an adult female holding a female toddler, estimated to be between one to two years of age, upside down by her feet. The toddler’s legs are spread and the adult female has her tongue touching the toddler’s vagina, which is exposed for the camera.

- b. On another occasion, the SUBJECT USER shared a collection of links, including one link with descriptive text suggesting indicating that the linked-to child pornography files depicted one or more girls performing oral sex. That link in fact redirected to another website that contained an album containing 21 images of females performing oral sex on erect penises. All of these images appear to depict minor girls, including girls who are visibly prepubescent, some estimated to be under the age of five.
- c. On yet another occasion, the SUBJECT USER shared a collection of links, including one link with descriptive text suggesting indicating that the linked-to child pornography files depicted a preteen girl displaying her genitals and performing oral sex. That link in fact redirected to another website that contained 79 images of a known female victim who was estimated to be between the ages of seven and nine at the time of the abuse. The girl exposes her anus and vagina for the camera in many of the images. There are also multiple images where the girl is performing oral sex on her adult abuser's erect penis.

IDENTIFICATION OF WILLIAM SPEARMAN AS THE SUBJECT USER

9. On or about November 2, 2022, the FBI executed a search warrant authorized by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama at SPEARMAN's residence in Madison, Alabama. During the execution of the search warrant, after being advised of his rights, SPEARMAN admitted to FBI agents that he was the SUBJECT USER on the TARGET WEBSITE. He stated that he had been on the TARGET WEBSITE since approximately 2018, had shared child pornography over the site, and had taken steps to manage the site. He also stated that he maintained child pornography on devices in his residence.

10. During the execution of the search warrant at SPEARMAN's residence, FBI agents also discovered evidence of SPEARMAN's involvement with the TARGET WEBSITE. For example, FBI agents encountered SPEARMAN in his garage near a desk with a laptop on it. The screen of the laptop was frozen but had evidence on it of him accessing the TARGET WEBSITE and another website related to the TARGET WEBSITE that is also dedicated to child sexual exploitation. In addition, agents found a thumb drive in a box in the garage where they encountered SPEARMAN. A forensic preview of that thumb drive revealed a large volume of child pornography, including the following files:

- a. A photo of a prepubescent girl who appears to be approximately five to seven years old based on her young facial and bodily features and lack of pubic hair or breast development. The photo depicts an adult male inserting his penis into the girl's vagina and the girl inserting a phallic sex toy into her mouth.
- b. A photo of a prepubescent girl who appears to be approximately eight to nine years old based on her young facial and bodily features and lack of pubic hair or breast development. The girl is depicted nude with her vagina and anus exposed and a sex toy inserted in her anus. An adult male is depicted standing over the girl and appears to be masturbating close to the girl's face.
- c. A photo of a prepubescent girl who appears to be approximately six to seven years old based on her young facial and bodily features and lack of pubic hair or breast development. The photo depicts the girl exposing her naked vagina and anus and she appears to be rubbing a phallic sex toy against her vagina.

CONCLUSION

11. For these reasons, your Affiant respectfully submits that there is probable cause to believe that SPEARMAN violated 18 U.S.C. § 2252A(g) within the Southern District of Florida and elsewhere by violating Chapter 110—including 18 U.S.C. §§ 2251(d) and (e) and 2252A(a)(2) and (b)(1)—as part of a series of felony violations involving three or more separate incidents and more than one victim, and committed those offenses with three or more other persons. Your Affiant further respectfully submits that there is probable cause to believe that SPEARMAN violated 18 U.S.C. § 2251(d) and (e) within the Southern District of Florida and elsewhere by conspiring with others to advertise child pornography. I therefore respectfully request that the Court authorize a criminal complaint for SPEARMAN.

Respectfully submitted,

David J. Backlund

David J. Backlund
Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Subscribed and sworn to me by applicant by telephone (Facetime) per the requirements of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4(d) and 4.1 on this 2nd day of November, 2022.

William Matthewman

HON. WILLIAM MATTHEWMAN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

PENALTY SHEET

Defendant's Name: WILLIAM MICHAEL SPEARMAN

Case No: 22-mj-8510-WM

Count #1:

Engaging in a child exploitation enterprise

18 U.S.C. § 2252A(g)

- * **Max. Term of Imprisonment:** Life
- * **Mandatory Min. Term of Imprisonment (if applicable):** 20 years
- * **Max. Supervised Release:** Life (mandatory minimum term of 5 years)
- * **Max. Fine:** \$250,000 fine and a \$5,000 special assessment

Count #2:

Conspiracy to advertise child pornography

18 U.S.C. § 2251(d) and (e)

- * **Max. Term of Imprisonment:** 30 years
- * **Mandatory Min. Term of Imprisonment (if applicable):** 15 years
- * **Max. Supervised Release:** Life (mandatory minimum term of 5 years)
- * **Max. Fine:** \$250,000 fine and a \$5,000 special assessment

*Refers only to possible term of incarceration, supervised release and fines. It does not include restitution, special assessments, parole terms, or forfeitures that may be applicable.