

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
for the
Middle District of Tennessee

United States of America
v.
JOSIAH ERNESTO GARCIA
Case No. 23-mj-2033

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 April 12, 2023 in the county of Davidson in the
Middle District of Tennessee, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section Title 18, United States Code, Section 1958
Offense Description Use of Interstate Commerce Facilities in the Commission of Murder-For-Hire

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See the attached statement in support of criminal complaint

Continued on the attached sheet.

Complainant's signature
Special Agent Stephen Hunter FBI
Printed name and title

Sworn to me remotely by telephone, in compliance with
Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1.

Date: April 13, 2023

Judge's signature

City and state: Nashville, Tennessee

United States Magistrate Judge Jeffrey S. Frensley
Printed name and title

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF PROBABLE CAUSE

Stephen B. Hunter, Special Agent (SA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Memphis Division, Nashville Resident Agency, being duly sworn, depose and state the following:

INTRODUCTION

1. I am an investigative or law enforcement officer of the United States within the meaning of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2510(7), that is, an officer of the United States who is empowered by law to conduct investigations and to make arrests for all federal law violations, including violations of Title 18 and Title 21 of the United States Code.

2. I am a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and have been so employed for approximately 14 years. I have authored, executed, and/or participated in numerous search and seizure warrants for violent crime and illegal narcotics. I have conducted numerous controlled purchases of narcotics and firearms. I am experienced in handling CHSs during controlled purchases and utilizing audio/video devices during the transactions. I have participated in the operation and execution of Federal Title III orders. I have arrested and/or participated in the arrest of numerous persons for violations of State and Federal violent crime statutes, including for violations of Title 18. From November of 2009 until October of 2015, I was assigned to investigate violent gangs in the Washington D.C. and Prince George's County, Maryland, metropolitan area as a member of the FBI's Safe Streets Task Force. I am currently assigned to investigate violent crime and gangs in the Nashville, Tennessee, Metropolitan area as a member of the FBI's Violent Crime Task Force. I have received specialized training in the areas of violent crime and illegal narcotics. I have worked a variety of violent crime cases. I have also consulted a length with other law enforcement agents who have specific experience investigating murder-for-hire cases.

3. I am familiar with 18 United States Code Section 1958, which makes it a crime to travel in or cause another to travel in interstate or foreign commerce, or use or cause another to use the mail or any facility of interstate or foreign commerce, with the intent that a murder be committed in violation of the laws of any State or the United States as consideration for the receipt of, or as consideration for a promise or agreement to pay, anything of pecuniary value.

4. I have set forth only those facts that I believe are necessary to establish probable cause. The information contained in this Affidavit is based upon my personal knowledge, my review of documents and other evidence, and my conversations with other law enforcement officers and other individuals. I have not included all of the facts of the investigation and have only included the facts that are necessary to establish probable cause for the requested Criminal Complaint and arrest warrant. Any conversations contained herein are not verbatim and are only related in substance and part, except where a conversation includes quotations.

5. This Statement is submitted in support of a Criminal Complaint for the arrest of **JOSIAH ERNESTO GARCIA (hereinafter “GARCIA”)** for a violation of 18 United States Code Section 1958, Use of Interstate Commerce Facilities in the Commission of Murder-For-Hire.

6. All the events described below took place within the Middle District of Tennessee.

CASE BACKGROUND

7. Rent-a-Hitman: Your Point and Click Solution (<https://rentahitman.com/>) is a website originally created in 2005 to advertise a cyber security startup company. The company never took off, and over the next decade they received many inquiries about murder-for-hire services. The website’s administrator then converted the website to a parody site that contains false testimonials from those who have purported to use hit man services, and an intake form where

people can request services. The website also has an option for someone to apply to work as a hired killer. The website is maintained by an administrator in the state of California.

8. On February 16, 2023, **GARCIA** submitted an employment inquiry to www.rentahitman.com, through the inquiry function on the website, where he indicated that he was interested in obtaining employment as a hitman. **GARCIA** indicated he had “military experience, and rifle expertise” and requested an “in depth job description”. The name entered into the inquiry was Josiah **GARCIA** along with an email address containing his last name, and the following phone number: 615-609-6559. IP address and location information were captured during this communication, which was associated with a T-Mobile account, and placed the sender in the Nashville, Tennessee, area.

9. On February 17, 2023, **GARCIA** reached out again to the website via a service request. In this request, **GARCIA** included his home address, which matches the address on his Tennessee State driver license, as well as his correct date of birth. **GARCIA** indicated he was “looking for employment” but was having technical difficulties with the website. IP address and location information were captured during this communication, which was associated with a Comcast Cable account, and placed the sender in the Mount Juliet, Tennessee, area

10. On February 18, 2023, the website owner, under the alias of “Guido Fanelli, CEO of Rent-a-Hitman” responded to **GARCIA** via email with a request for a resume, headshot, and an image of **GARCIA**’s identification.

11. On February 19, 2023, **GARCIA** replied via email with a resume, photo of his Tennessee State Driver license, and photograph of himself. **GARCIA**’s resume indicated he was employed in the Air National Guard from July 2021 until present. The resume also indicated **GARCIA** was a “Marksman Expert, awarded for not missing a single bullseye on all of the targets

and for shooting expert with 2 (or more) weapons”. The resume indicated **GARCIA** was nicknamed “Reaper,” which was “Earned from Military experience and Marksmanship.”

12. On February 20, 2023, **GARCIA** sent another follow-up email to the website owner and advised that he was following up because he had not heard back after submitting his resume. **GARCIA** added: “*Why I want this Job* Im looking for a job, that pays well, related to my military experience (Shooting and Killing the marked target) so I can support my kid on the way. What can I say, I enjoy doing what I do, so if I can find a job that is similar to it, (such as this one) put me in coach!” I believe that **GARCIA** was stating his skillset matched the needs of a company that hires employees to commit murder.

13. A Facebook account believed to belong to **GARCIA** has a public profile with the name “Josiah Garcia” and photographs that match the headshot and identification card that were sent in the email described above. On February 20, 2023, **GARCIA** posted a photo of an AR-15 rifle on the Facebook profile with the caption “She’s beautiful.”

14. On February 23, 2023, **GARCIA** sent another follow up email stating that he had not heard anything back in a while and wanted to follow-up in hopes of scheduling an interview soon.

15. On March 13, 2023, **GARCIA** sent another follow up email stating that he had not heard back about potential employment opportunities and wanted to check in. **GARCIA** stated that he hoped to hear back soon.

16. On March 16, 2023, at the direction of the FBI, the website owner responded to **GARCIA** with an email stating; “Josiah, a Field Coordinator will be in touch in the near future. You will receive a message when they are ready. Timing is based on client needs.”

17. On April 3, 2023, an FBI Undercover Employee (UCE) contacted **GARCIA** via text message to arrange a telephone call. The UCE sent text messages to 615-609-6559, which is the phone number that **GARCIA** provided in his inquiries described above. The UCE advised they were a recruiter for Rent A Hitman, asked **GARCIA** if he was still interested in a job and if he wanted to schedule a phone interview. The UCE also advised the phone interview was a preliminary interview and an in-person interview would be scheduled if the phone interview was successful. **GARCIA** advised he wanted to do the phone interview. The UCE and **GARCIA** agreed to talk via telephone on April 5, 2023, at 12:00p.m.

18. On April 5, 2023, the UCE placed a monitored and audio-recorded phone call to **GARCIA** at 615-609-6559. During the call the UCE asked **GARCIA** if he was law enforcement of any kind. **GARCIA** stated that he was not, but that he was in the Air National Guard. **GARCIA** stated that he was a trained military sniper and hoped him being in the military would not disqualify him for the job. The UCE told **GARCIA** that talking to the company is not a crime or illegal, but commission of the hired job is a crime. **GARCIA** responded, "Yes sir." **GARCIA** stated that he had two questions, which were, "How soon can I start?" and "What do the payments look like?" **GARCIA** stated that he had more rifle training than training in close quarters combat. When asked if he preferred to shoot people from distance, **GARCIA** replied "Yes sir." The UCE told **GARCIA** that payment was based on **GARCIA**'s skill set and who the "mark" was, and that payment is made half up front and half when the mission is completed. The UCE told **GARCIA** that payment is also based on the number of people you kill. **GARCIA** asked if "fifteen to twenty thousand would be too much to ask?" When asked if **GARCIA** was comfortable with taking fingers or ears as trophies or performing torture at a client's request, his response was "if it's possible and in my means to do so, I'm more than capable." **GARCIA** stated that he would take a job to kill for as

little as twenty-five hundred dollars. The UCE stated that jobs at that price were easier jobs to complete. When asked what guns he owns, **GARCIA** stated that he owns an M4A1 (AR-15) but no other guns. Later in the conversation, **GARCIA** again confirmed that he was comfortable with torture of victims and taking trophies at a client's request. **GARCIA** stated, "I definitely want to meet. I'm ready for this." The UCE asked, "What made you interested in this profession?" **GARCIA** responded, "Being in the military, doing that sort of work already. I was looking into civilian law enforcement but that's not for me. I wanted something more exciting. I started searching the web and then I found this, so here I am." The call ended with the UCE asking, "How quickly are you looking to start working?" **GARCIA** responded "As soon as possible."

19. On April 6, 2023, the UCE met **GARCIA** at a restaurant/bar located in Nashville, Tennessee. The UCE told **GARCIA** that did not have to do this and can walk away at any time. The UCE asked **GARCIA** if he was sure he wanted to do this (accept a murder-for-hire job). **GARCIA** responded, "I've been looking into this for some time now. I was looking for a way to make good money." **GARCIA** was asked again if he was sure he wanted to do this type of work and told he was under no obligation to do so. **GARCIA** responded again that he had been looking into it [killing people for money] for a long time. **GARCIA** stated that he was concerned that the UCE may be law enforcement but is now comfortable the UCE is not. He stated that he was looking for contract mercenary jobs online and that took him to contract hitman jobs. **GARCIA** asked if, after the job is finished, if it would get traced back to him. The UCE told **GARCIA** that if he was sloppy when he killed someone and was caught, the company could not help him. **GARCIA** stated that he was not very worried about that because of the training he received in the Air Force. He stated that the training he received in the Air Force was applicable to this job due to a lot of firearms

training and receiving some of the Air Force “Special Forces” training. **GARCIA** stated that he owned a black BMW that was registered to him.

20. Agents queried public and law enforcement databases and confirmed that a 2020 Black BMW X3, Tennessee Tag 309BLBM, is registered to Josiah Garcia, at an address known to be associated with **GARCIA**’s parents, where **GARCIA** told the UCE that he currently resides.

21. **GARCIA** confirmed that the only gun he owns is an M4A1 rifle and he did not think the bullets would be traceable to him. **GARCIA** stated that he is in the process of trying to buy a handgun and showed the UCE a picture of a Sig Sauer handgun on his phone. **GARCIA** stated that he works one weekend per month in the Air National Guard and is otherwise unemployed. **GARCIA** inquired about the flexibility of the job due to him attending college next year. At this point, the UCE asked **GARCIA**, “You are locked in? This is what you want? Because it sounds like you have a lot going on. You’re in the military. You’ve got college. You’ve got a lot going on, as far as good things in your life to kinda’ get in this world. It is a shady world, and I just don’t want you to have regrets if you come to work for us, because it, I mean it messes with your mind, shooting people.” **GARCIA** stated that he had weighed the psychological effects of killing someone and he was ok with it. **GARCIA** stated that he would prefer to work in another state but is ok to kill some local people. The UCE told **GARCIA** that if he were to kill fifty people, he would make a large amount of money. **GARCIA** responded, “That’s rookie numbers for the Reaper.” Towards the end of the meeting **GARCIA** stated, “My only question is when can I start?” and then stated, “I’m very excited.”

22. On April 9, 2023, the UCE sent a text message to **GARCIA**. The UCE told **GARCIA** that a job was available, if **GARCIA** was interested, and asked to meet with **GARCIA** on Wednesday, April 12, 2023. The UCE stated it was an “easy mark.” **GARCIA** responded,

“Sounds good. Is there a specific time/date it needs to be done?” The UCE told **GARCIA** that they would talk in person about the details. **GARCIA** agreed to meet with the UCE on April 12, 2023, at a location to be determined.

23. On April 11, 2023, the UCE sent a text message to **GARCIA** to confirm the meeting on April 12, 2023. The UCE and **GARCIA** discussed timing but did not settle on a specific time. The UCE told **GARCIA** that he would text him an address on the afternoon of April 12, 2023.

24. On April 12, 2023, the UCE and **GARCIA** again exchanged text messages, wherein, the UCE and **GARCIA** set a time to meet, and the UCE provided **GARCIA** with the meeting location, which was a public park, located in Hendersonville, Tennessee.

25. On the afternoon of April 12, 2023, **GARCIA** sent a text message to the UCE telling the UCE that he was getting off of the exit and arriving at the parking lot of the meeting location. **GARCIA** arrived at the meeting location in the above-described BMW.

26. The meeting was audio recorded and transmitted live to other FBI Agents who participated in the operation. During the meeting, **GARCIA** was presented with a “target package” consisting of photographs and a description of a fictional target’s name, weight, age, height, address, and employment information. The UCE explained that the target was the husband of the client, and he was abusive to her. The client was paying \$5000 for the target to be killed. The UCE told **GARCIA** that the client was going out of town for 7-10 days, and that the husband would be home during that time. The payment offered was \$2500 now, and the remainder when the job was complete. In addition to the target package, **GARCIA** was provided with an envelope containing \$2500 cash. The UCE told **GARCIA** to count it to make sure it was good. **GARCIA** counted the money. The UCE told **GARCIA** that he would meet up with him again in approximately one week

to provide him with the rest of the money. During the conversation, **GARCIA** asked the UCE if he needed to take a photo [of the dead body] as proof that the job was complete. **GARCIA** was subsequently arrested by the FBI.

27. Following his arrest, and after waiving his Miranda rights, **GARCIA** was interviewed by agents of the FBI and provided the following information. **GARCIA** stated that he was looking for work because he needed money and his family could not afford rent. A co-worker at the Air National Guard suggested to **GARCIA** that he look for “contract mercenary jobs.” **GARCIA** searched that term online and came across the rentahitman.com website. On Friday, April 7, 2023, **GARCIA** learned he had been hired by Vanderbilt medical and he was scheduled to start training for the job on Monday April 10, 2023. When he was hired by Vanderbilt, he had second thoughts about the hitman job and changed his mind. **GARCIA** stated that he was meeting the UCE to tell him he had changed his mind and did not want to do this kind of work. **GARCIA** stated that he was going to call the UCE when he got to his car and leave the money on the curb for the UCE to pick up.

28. All of the communications described herein were made via the internet, telephone, or in person. The internet communications were made first through rentahitman.com. Through this investigation, I have learned that rentahitman.com is a website maintained in the state of California. Subsequent e-mail based communication was performed through **GARCIA**'s Google mail account. Through my training and experience, I know that Google LLC is a multinational technology company, which is headquartered in the state of California. The telephone (voice and text) conversations described herein occurred between the UCE and **GARCIA**'s mobile device which is connected to an account held by T-Mobile USA. In my training and experience, I have learned that T-Mobile is a company that provides cellular telephone access to the general public.

I also know that wireless providers such as T-Mobile typically collect and maintain business records, such as cell site data, billing information, subscriber information, payment information, and other account information in their normal course of business in order to use this information for various business-related purposes. In my training and experience, I have learned that the T-Mobile business records described above are maintained or stored in locations outside of the state of Tennessee.

CONCLUSION

29. Based on the aforementioned facts, there is probable cause to believe **GARCIA** committed a violation of 18 United States Code Section 1958, Use of Interstate Commerce Facilities in the Commission of Murder-For-Hire. Accordingly, the undersigned requests that the Court authorize the attached complaint and warrant for the arrest of **GARCIA**.