

CMM:AT
F. #2025R00246

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

COMPLAINT

- against -

(18 U.S.C. § 2251(a) and 2251(e))

JOSEPH GAROFALO,

Defendant.

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EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, SS:

MICHELLE ROYAL, being duly sworn, deposes and states that she is a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”), duly appointed according to law and acting as such.

In or about and between September 2024 and October 2024, within the Eastern District of New York and elsewhere, the defendant JOSEPH GAROFALO did employ, use, persuade, induce, entice and coerce a minor, to wit: John Doe, an individual whose identity is known to the FBI and the United States Attorney’s Office, to engage in sexually explicit conduct, and knowingly and intentionally attempt to do so, for the purpose of producing one or more visual depictions of such conduct and for the purpose of transmitting a live visual depiction of such conduct, knowing and having reason to know that such visual depictions would be transported and transmitted using any means and facility of interstate and foreign commerce and which would be in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce, which visual depictions were produced and transmitted using materials that had been mailed, shipped and transported in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce by any means, including by computer, and which

visual depictions were actually transported and transmitted using a means and facility of interstate and foreign commerce and in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce.

(Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2251(a) and 2251(e))

The source of your deponent's information and the grounds for her belief are as follows:

1. I am a Special Agent with the FBI and have been since August 2016. I am presently assigned to the Long Island Child Exploitation Task Force (the "Task Force"). My duties include the enforcement of federal criminal statutes prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children, including, among others, Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2251 through 2259, the Sexual Exploitation of Children Act ("SECA"); and Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2421 et seq., the Mann Act. I have participated in numerous investigations involving the sexual exploitation of children and the distribution, receipt, and possession of child pornography. In connection with those investigations and related prosecutions, I have conducted searches of premises and gathered evidence, including electronic evidence, pursuant to search warrants. I have received training regarding the investigation of child exploitation offenses and have gained expertise in these types of investigations through training in classes and seminars, and through my daily work related to conducting these types of investigations and assisting in the prosecutions of these offenses. I have been involved in numerous child pornography investigations and am familiar with the tactics used by individuals who collect and distribute child pornographic material. As part of my responsibilities, I have been involved in the investigation of numerous child pornography cases and have reviewed thousands of photographs and videos depicting children (less than eighteen years of age) being sexually exploited by adults. I have also participated in the execution of multiple search warrants relating to child

pornography offenses, including search warrants for electronic devices, and have effectively used the results of the searches in connection with the prosecution of offenders.

2. The facts in this affidavit come from my personal observations, my review of evidence, information obtained from other agents and witnesses, and my training and experience. This affidavit is intended to show only that there is probable cause to arrest and does not set forth all of my knowledge about this matter.

DEFINITIONS

3. For the purposes of this complaint “Child Pornography,” as used herein, means and includes the definition in 18 U.S.C. § 2256(8) (any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct where (a) the production of the visual depiction involved the use of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct, (b) the visual depiction is a digital image, computer generated image that is, or is indistinguishable from, that of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct, or (c) the visual depiction has been created, adapted, or modified to appear that an identifiable minor is engaged in sexually explicit conduct), as well as any visual depiction, the production of which involves the use of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct (see 18 U.S.C. § § 2252 and 2256(2)).

PROBABLE CAUSE

4. As described below and throughout this affidavit, there is probable cause establishing that the defendant JOSEPH GAROFALO used a Snapchat account to sextort a minor, and, based on a judicially authorized search warrant of that Snapchat account, as described below, child sex abuse material (“CSAM”) was found in that Snapchat account. GAROFALO is associated with that Snapchat account in several ways, including that the Snapchat account is subscribed to by his email address, which is in his name, and the Snapchat

account has been accessed through several IP addresses, each of which is associated with GAROFALO. After execution of a premises warrant at GAROFALO's location, and after GAROFALO was Mirandized by law enforcement, GAROFALO admitted in a recorded interview that he solicited CSAM from children, had CSAM on his electronic devices, and recognized several images of CSAM that were associated with the Snapchat account.

5. On October 3, 2024, FBI – Pittsburgh received a tip through the FBI National Threat Operation Center (“NTOC”) from a mother reporting that her 13-year-old son (“MINOR-1”) was a victim of sextortion¹ by an unknown Snapchat account – later identified by law enforcement as an account used by the defendant JOSEPH GAROFALO (the “Snapchat Account”). In particular, and based on my review of reports and the Snapchat Account, on or about June 4, 2024, John Doe informed the Snapchat Account that he was 13 years old. Thereafter, in or around June 2024, MINOR-1 shared naked photos and videos with the Snapchat Account which included MINOR-1's face. The mother further advised that MINOR-1 believed that the user of the Snapchat Account had deleted the images and videos. In October 2024, MINOR-1 made contact again with the Snapchat Account to inquire whether the images and videos had been deleted. During this conversation, the Snapchat Account user – identified by law enforcement in the course of his investigation as GAROFALO – advised MINOR-1 that the images and videos had not been deleted and threatened to share them online unless MINOR-1 sent more naked photos or sent explicit photos of his friends. The threats continued to the

¹ “Sextortion” is a when an individual (the perpetrator) threatens to inflict harm on another individual (the victim) either through distributing private and sensitive material, harming the victim or friends or relatives, etc., unless the victim provides the perpetrator with images of a sexual nature, sexual favors, or money.

extent that the Snapchat Account user – subsequently identified as GAROFALO – threatened MINOR-1 that MINOR-1 had seven days to comply with the sextortion demands.

6. The following is an excerpt of messages between the Snapchat Account and MINOR-1:

APPROX. TIME	INDIVIDUAL	CONTENT
8:54 PM	MINOR-1	do you still have those videos
9:32 PM	GAROFALO	yes y
10:16 PM	MINOR-1	did you send them to anyone
10:16 PM	GAROFALO	Wym
10:28 PM	MINOR-1	did you send the photos to anyone or video
10:28 PM	GAROFALO	Have I before yes
10:28 PM	GAROFALO	Y
10:28 PM	MINOR-1	why bro
10:28 PM	GAROFALO	Wym
10:28 PM	MINOR-1	why did you send them to people
10:29 PM	GAROFALO	What things are u talking about?
10:29 PM	MINOR-1	I sent u nudes like 5 months ago
...		
10:35 PM	MINOR-1	can you delete them
10:37 PM	GAROFALO	Gimme a reason to
10:38 PM	MINOR-1	because I am kinda good at hockey and not trying to be cocky but I might be go pro and it could kinda ruin my career
10:39 PM	GAROFALO	That's j not a reason
10:39 PM	GAROFALO	U blocked me
10:39 PM	MINOR-1	because i was scared
10:40 PM	GAROFALO	So im not gonna delete them for a guy that blocked me unless he gives me a good reason to.
10:40 PM	GAROFALO	Send stuff of ur boys naked n il ldelete
10:41 PM	MINOR-1	o gave you a good reason
10:41 PM	GAROFALO	(Send stuff of ur boys naked n il ldelete) !
10:41 PM	MINOR-1	dude that's basically saying do get a picture me naked to delete the one of me naked
10:42 PM	GAROFALO	huh
10:43 PM	MINOR-1	dude i would never take a picture of my friend naked
10:43 PM	MINOR-1	i would get safe sported
10:43 PM	GAROFALO	Welp then im not deleting

7. The FBI also reviewed a received National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (“NCMEC”) cyber tip.² The NCMEC tip detailed that on May 1, 2024, Snapchat reported that the Snapchat account associated with GAROFALO had uploaded files containing images that appeared to be CSAM.

8. The report described the files uploaded as three files involving a pubescent minor or minors which “depict[] the lascivious exhibition of the anus, genitals or pubic area of any person, where a minor is engaging in the lascivious exhibition or being used in connection with sexually explicit conduct, which may include but is not limited to imagery where the focal point is on the child’s anus, genitals, or pubic area and where the depiction is intended or designed to elicit a sexual response in the viewer.”

9. I reviewed subpoena returns and information provided by Snapchat associated with the account and by the internet user who accessed the account, which tied the account to GAROFALO for several reasons. Those reasons included that the account used an email address associated with GAROFALO. The IP addresses that accessed the account were also associated with GAROFALO, including because the Verizon subscriber for the IP address was JOSEPH GAROFALO and the address was GAROFALO’s residence, where he was arrested today. The IP addresses also include a local high school and university, both of which are associated with GAROFALO – GAROFALO appears to work as an assistant lacrosse coach at the high school and attends the university.

10. Further, on November 15, 2024, the Honorable Christopher B. Brown, United States Magistrate Judge, Western of Pennsylvania, signed a search warrant authorizing

² NCMEC receives complaints via their Cyber Tipline from Internet Service Providers (ISPs), Electronic Service Providers (ESPs), and others. These Cyber Tipline reports are reviewed by a NCMEC analyst and forwarded to law enforcement for further investigation.

the search of the Snapchat account that is controlled by GAROFALO. On November 26, 2024, Snapchat responded to the search warrant. Preliminary review included at least nine separate images and videos of nine separate minors that all appear to contain CSAM based on my training and experience.

11. On April 18, 2025, FBI executed a premises warrant at GAROFALO's residence. GAROFALO was Mirandized at the scene and provided a voluntary interview. GAROFALO admitted that he controlled the Snapchat account, solicited minors for CSAM, had CSAM on his electronic devices, and recognized an image of CSAM that law enforcement officers showed him. GAROFALO also identified himself as GAROFALO.

12. The CSAM on the Snapchat account controlled by GAROFALO included File 1, which was CSAM of a minor child ("John Doe"). I have reviewed conversations between GAROFALO, using the Snapchat account and John Doe. I also interviewed John Doe. John Doe produced the CSAM to GAROFALO between September 2024 and October 2024. I interviewed John Doe and have reviewed date of birth information for John Doe. According to that information, John Doe was 16 at the time that GAROFALO solicited him for CSAM and John Doe produced CSAM. John Doe told me that the Snapchat account solicited the CSAM from him.

13. After the voluntary interview and admissions, the defendant JOSEPH GAROFALO was arrested.

14. Accordingly, I submit that there is probable cause to believe that the defendant JOSEPH GAROFALO used a cellphone to persuade, induce, entice, and coerce John Doe to create sexually explicit images of himself and to send the images to him via cellphone. I further submit that the individual who was arrested by FBI on April 18, 2025 is the defendant.

WHEREFORE, your deponent respectfully requests that the defendant JOSEPH GAROFALO, be dealt with according to law.

/s/

MICHELLE ROYAL
Special Agent
Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Sworn to before me this
18 day of April, 2025

s/ Lee G. Dunst

THE HONORABLE LEE G. DUNST
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK