

AO 91 (Rev. 11/11) Criminal Complaint

AUSA Sean Franzblau 312 553 5355

**FILED** *YH*

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS  
EASTERN DIVISION

SEP 26 2017 *95*

THOMAS G. BRUTON  
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

BLAKE R. STECKEL

CASE NUMBER  
UNDER SEAL

**17CR 635**

**MAGISTRATE JUDGE VALDEZ**

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

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

From on or about July 25, 2017 to on or about August 21, 2017, at Schaumburg, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere, the defendant(s) violated:

*Code Section*

Title 18, United States Code,  
Sections 1591(a)(1)

*Offense Description*

in and affecting interstate or foreign commerce, knowingly recruited, enticed, harbored, transported, provided, obtained, advertised, maintained, patronized, and solicited by any means a person, namely, Victim A, having a reasonable opportunity to observe and knowing and in reckless disregard of the fact that Victim A had not attained the age of 18 years and would be caused to engage in a commercial sex act

This criminal complaint is based upon these facts:

X Continued on the attached sheet.

*J.P. Peterson*

JENNIFER PETERSON  
Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation  
(FBI)

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date: September 26, 2017

*Maria Valdez*

Judge's signature

City and state: Chicago, Illinois

MARIA VALDEZ, U.S. Magistrate Judge  
Printed name and Title

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS | ss

AFFIDAVIT

I, JENNIFER PETERSON, being duly sworn, state as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. I am a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and have been so employed since 2008. My current responsibilities include the investigation of sex trafficking crimes, including the interstate sex trafficking of minors.

2. This affidavit is submitted in support of a criminal complaint alleging that Blake R. Steckel has sex trafficked a child, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1591(a)(1). Because this affidavit is being submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause in support of a criminal complaint charging STECKEL with sex trafficking of a child, 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 that the defendant committed the offense alleged in the complaint.

3. This affidavit is based on my personal knowledge, information provided to me by other law enforcement agents, and from information provided by other persons with knowledge regarding relevant facts, including Victim A.

## II. FACTS ESTABLISHING PROBABLE CAUSE

A. *On August 21, 2017, Victim A Was Recovered in a Hotel Room in Schaumburg After an Undercover Law Enforcement Officer Set up a Commercial Sex Transaction Through an Online Advertisement; Victim A Reported that BLAKE STECKEL had been Sex Trafficking her Since Late July 2017*

4. On August 20, 2017, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) received a report that a 17 year-old female victim (Victim A) was depicted on an advertisement for sexual services on websites [www.backpage.com](http://www.backpage.com) and [www.explicitchicago.com](http://www.explicitchicago.com).<sup>1</sup> On August 21, 2017, NCMEC alerted investigating agents, who confirmed that Victim A was portrayed in advertisements for sexual services on [www.backpage.com](http://www.backpage.com) and [www.explicitchicago.com](http://www.explicitchicago.com). The advertisements on [www.backpage.com](http://www.backpage.com) stated that customers wanting to arrange a “date”<sup>2</sup> with Victim A should contact [explicitchicago.com](http://explicitchicago.com) or (773) XXX-4750 (“Subject Account 2”)<sup>3</sup>, and according to the website [www.explicitchicago.com](http://www.explicitchicago.com), customers could arrange a

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<sup>1</sup> Based on my training and experience, as well as my involvement in this investigation, I know that [backpage.com](http://backpage.com) is a classified advertising website that is regularly used to advertise various forms of sex work, including prostitution. [ExplicitChicago.com](http://ExplicitChicago.com) appears to be a similar classified advertising website for sex work services in the Chicago area.

<sup>2</sup> Based on my training and experience, I know that “date” is a common term in the commercial sex trade used to refer to an appointment at which commercial sex acts are performed.

<sup>3</sup> The (773) XXX-4750 number is a Google Voice account phone number, which is why it is referred to as a “Subject Account,” rather than a “Subject Phone.” Based on my training and experience, I know that Google Voice is a telephone application that provides call forwarding and voicemail services, voice and text messaging capabilities, and other telephonic services. Google Voice users are provided with a free U.S. based telephone number that they can link to any type of cellular telephone regardless of the type of device or service provider. Calls to the Google Voice number are forwarded to the user’s device or devices. Google Voice users can link multiple underlying cellular telephone numbers and/or devices to a single Google Voice number, which allows for all of a user’s devices to ring simultaneously upon the Google Voice number being dialed.

date with Victim A by contacting email address explicit.ent.usa@gmail.com ("Subject Account 1") or Subject Account 2.

5. Through a brief examination of the www.explicitchicago.com website, it appeared to investigating agents that the website depicted and advertised the commercial sexual services of approximately 15 different females, including Victim A. Many of the 15 females, who were listed as "models" on the website, were depicted in nude or partially nude photographs in positions that lasciviously exhibited their breasts and pubic areas. The contact information listed for each of the 15 different females advertised, as well as the general contact information for the website, was listed as Subject Account 1 and Subject Account 2.

6. Later on August 21, 2017, in an effort to locate and rescue Victim A, an undercover law enforcement officer (the "UC") contacted Subject Account 2 to set up a "date" with Victim A. Through a series of text message communications between the UC and the user of Subject Account 2, the UC arranged a "date" with Victim A at 10:30 p.m. that evening at the Hyatt Place hotel located at 1851 McConner Parkway in Schaumburg, Illinois. Specifically, the UC and the user of Subject Account 2 (SA2) had the following text message exchange:

UC: Hey, who's available tonight near nw suburbs?

SA2: [Victim A]. [Individual C]. [Individual D].

UC: Ok can I do hour with [Victim A].

SA2: At what time.

UC: I get out of work at 10 so whenever after that.

SA2: Does 10:30 work [?]

UC: Ya it should . . . what town[?]

SA2: Schaumburg.

UC: Cool.

SA2: What's your name. Age. Race?

UC: Mike. 29. White.

SA2: What do you do for work?

UC: Paving.

SA2: Hyatt place 1851 McConer Schaumburg

UC: Cool thanks.

7. On August 21, 2017, at approximately 10 p.m., investigating agents travelled to the Hyatt Place hotel in Schaumburg, and recovered Victim A in a hotel room. Victim A provided photographic identification to agents, which stated that Victim A was 17 years old. Victim A told agents that she understood that agents were at the hotel to help her because she was "under age."

8. In summary and in pertinent part, Victim A has also told agents the following<sup>4</sup>: in or around late July 2017, Victim A, who lived in West Virginia, began

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<sup>4</sup> The facts ascribed to Victim A in this affidavit come from her August 21, 2017 interview, a follow up interview on September 25, 2017, and Victim A's testimony under oath before a grand jury on September 26, 2017. There are some discrepancies between Victim A's August 21, 2017 initial statement to law enforcement, and her subsequent statements on September 25 and 26, 2017 (which were themselves consistent). For example, on August 21, 2017, Victim A told law enforcement that STECKEL coerced her into initially traveling to Chicago on July 26, 2017, by threatening to post naked pictures of her online if she refused. In her September 25, 2017 interview, however, Victim A stated that she willingly traveled to Chicago on July 26, 2017, under the false belief that she would be doing modeling and escort services work, which she understood to mean going on dates in exchange for money, but not having sex or

speaking with BLAKE STECKEL via Snapchat and text message. STECKEL told Victim A that he worked for [www.explicitchicago.com](http://www.explicitchicago.com), which STECKEL represented was a modeling agency that also provided “escort services.” Victim A understood “escort services” to mean payment in exchange for companionship (such as a dinner date or hanging out), but did not believe it involved sex or prostitution. STECKEL asked Victim A to send him naked photographs of herself if Victim A was interested in getting a modeling job. Victim A did so by photographing herself and sending the images to STECKEL, using telephone number (815) XXX-3738, via text message.<sup>5</sup>

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prostituting. Similarly, in her August 17, 2017 interview, Victim A told agents that STECKEL coerced her into returning to Chicago on August 17, 2017 by again threatening to reveal embarrassing information to her mother. During the September 25, 2017 interview, however, Victim A stated she did not recall STECKEL coercing her specifically to return to Chicago on August 17, 2017, and stated that she returned because she was unhappy at home and wanted to get away. Consistent with the August 21, 2017, interview, however, Victim A stated during the September 25, 2017 interview, as well as during her September 26, 2017 grand jury testimony, that while Victim A was in Chicago, STECKEL threatened her on at least three occasions to distribute nude photographs of her online if she did not engage in prostitution work for STECKEL.

Based on my training and experience, it is common for child victims of sex trafficking to give partially incomplete or inaccurate information during an initial interview. This can stem from intense feelings of fear, confusion, embarrassment, and shame, and/or psychological trauma.

<sup>5</sup> Investigation has confirmed that STECKEL is the user of telephone number (815) XXX-3738 (“STECKEL Phone”) based on the following: (1) Victim A has identified (815) XXX-3738 as STECKEL’s phone number; (2) during the August 21, 2017 consensual search of Victim A’s phone, agents found telephone number (815) XXX-3738 listed in Victim A’s phone’s contact list under the name “BLAKE STECKEL”; (3) as explained in greater detail below, agents also recovered on Victim A’s phone multiple text message communications between Victim A’s phone and telephone number (815) XXX-3738. The messages included an August 16, 2017 text message communication that contained an image of an Orbitz booking confirmation for an August 17, 2017 flight from Huntington, West Virginia to Chicago in Victim A’s name. Based on subpoena returns received from Orbitz, this flight was booked by BLAKE STECKEL using email account [triple555\\_extreme@yahoo.com](mailto:triple555_extreme@yahoo.com) (which account, according to Yahoo! subscriber records, belongs to STECKEL); (4) on September 9, 2017, the user of telephone number (815) XXX-3738 left four voicemail messages with the Schaumburg Police Department. In several of the messages, the user of (815) XXX-3738 identified himself as BLAKE STECKEL. Based on agents review of the messages, all four messages appeared

Victim A provided agents with a physical description of STECKEL, which was consistent with physical descriptions of STECKEL included in law enforcement databases, as well as photographs of STECKEL obtained from the Illinois Secretary of State.<sup>6</sup>

9. Victim A further told agents the following: in or around late July 2017, STECKEL asked Victim A to come to Chicago to participate in a modeling “photoshoot,” and to perform escort work. Victim A agreed to travel to Chicago because she wanted to travel, to work as a model, and to make money. At STECKEL’s request, Victim A sent him a photograph via text message of her West Virginia driver’s license, which license displayed her birthdate in October of 1999. On or about July 25, 2017, STECKEL booked Victim A a flight from West Virginia to Chicago, and sent Victim A the flight confirmation.<sup>7</sup> On or about July 26, 2017, Victim A flew from West Virginia to Chicago. STECKEL arranged for an Uber to pick up Victim A at O’Hare and transport her to STECKEL’s apartment in Wisconsin. When Victim A

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to have been left by the same individual, who sounds to be an adult male. One of the messages, in summary and in pertinent part, was as follows (the following is a preliminary transcript): “Hey [name of Schaumburg Police Officer], so from what I’ve gained to realize, you’re just a little fucking bitch. So next time you decide you’re gonna like try to push, ‘Oh my God, I’m super fucking awesome [name of Schaumburg Police Officer],’ and try to get me kicked out of a fucking hotel, the first thing that’s going to happen is I’m going to get your fucking police report, and your fucking name . . . [and make a complaint]. My name is BLAKE STECKEL, if you’ve got a fucking problem with me you can god damn fucking call me at my god damn fucking phone number ‘cuz I know you already have it...” Additionally, on September 25, 2017, investigating agents played some of the above voicemail recordings for Victim A, who identified the caller as BLAKE STECKEL.

<sup>6</sup> On or about September 25, 2017, agents showed Victim A a photospread depicting six individuals, including STECKEL, all of whom shared the same general physical characteristics. Victim A correctly identified STECKEL in the lineup.

<sup>7</sup> As laid out below, this is corroborated by travel records.

arrived at STECKEL's apartment, STECKEL again told her that she would be doing modeling and "escort" work, but did not explain that this would involve sex or other forms of prostitution. STECKEL then sent Victim A to a nearby Super 8 motel, where he told her to wait for a few days until he could find her modeling or escort work.

10. Victim A further told agents the following: STECKEL arranged for an Uber or Lyft to transport Victim A from his apartment to a nearby Super 8 Motel. Victim A stayed at the Super 8 motel for at least two nights. During this period, Victim A did not have any money and was unable to buy food for herself. Victim A told STECKEL she needed money to eat, and STECKEL told her he would try to get her money, but never did. After approximately two nights at the hotel, STECKEL contacted Victim A and told her he was sending over a client for escort services. Victim A did not fully understand what was expected of her, but she told STECKEL to send over the client. Shortly thereafter, a man who appeared to be in his 40s arrived at Victim A's hotel room and immediately started kissing Victim A. Victim A then had sex with the man in exchange for money. After having sex, the man left Victim A's room. Victim A was very upset and called STECKEL. Victim A told STECKEL she did not know she was expected to have sex with his "escort" clients, that she did not want to see any more clients, and that she wanted to go home to West Virginia. STECKEL told Victim A that she needed to earn him more money before he would allow her to go back home. STECKEL further told Victim A that he would post her naked photographs on Facebook and Instagram for her friends and family to see if she refused to engage in prostitution work, or tried to go home. According to



Victim A, over the next several weeks, STECKEL threatened to post naked photographs of her online on at least two additional occasions as a means of coercing her to continue working for him as a prostitute.

11. Victim A further told agents the following: for the next approximately two weeks, Victim A engaged in almost daily prostitution work at the Super 8 motel, a Sheraton Suites hotel in Elk Grove, a Westin Hotel in Itasca, and a Radisson hotel in an unknown location.<sup>8</sup> STECKEL arranged all of the “dates” (or prostitution appointments). STECKEL posted advertisements for Victim A and other females who worked for STECKEL on the internet. STECKEL then arranged “dates” for various customers with Victim A and other sex workers. STECKEL sent Victim A information about her upcoming customers, including name, age, race, and sometimes occupation via text message from STECKEL Phone. STECKEL also told Victim A the amount of time and price expected for the date. Victim A never communicated with her dates directly; everything went through STECKEL. STECKEL specifically instructed Victim A to tell people she was 18 years old if anyone asked. On one occasion, STECKEL told Victim A that if she ever sent STECKEL information about her birthdate (i.e. for booking a flight), she should say that she was born in 1998 (in fact, Victim A was born in October 1999).

12. Victim A further told agents the following: after her first few days in Chicago, Victim A and Individual B, an adult female sex worker, traveled to

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<sup>8</sup> Preliminary investigation and initial subpoena returns have confirmed that Victim A stayed in several of these hotels at or around the same dates she reported to agents, in rooms rented and paid for by STECKEL.

STECKEL's apartment in Wisconsin to meet with STECKEL. When they arrived, STECKEL told them that he wanted to start offering his clients joint dates with Victim A and Individual B. STECKEL told Victim A and Individual B that he needed to take photographs of them to advertise their services on [www.explicitchicago.com](http://www.explicitchicago.com). STECKEL, Victim A, and Individual B then went to STECKEL's bedroom, where STECKEL had Victim A and Individual B undress (according to Victim A, she wore her lower underwear but removed her bra, while Individual B was totally naked). STECKEL then told Victim A and Individual B to simulate sex acts on each other while STECKEL photographed them using a digital camera attached to a tripod in his bedroom. After STECKEL took the photos, he gave Victim A a pink iPhone to use while in the Chicago area, because Victim A's personal phone was no longer working.<sup>9</sup> After the meeting at STECKEL's apartment, Victim A and Individual B began regularly having joint "dates" with STECKEL's customers.

13. Victim A further told agents the following: Every few days, STECKEL came to the hotels in which Victim A was staying to collect money from Victim A. Victim A paid STECKEL 20% of all the money she earned through prostitution. In or around early August 2017, Victim A told STECKEL that she wanted to go back home to West Virginia. STECKEL booked Victim A a flight home, and on or about August 8, 2017, Victim A flew from Chicago to West Virginia. A few days after Victim A returned home, STECKEL contacted her and asked when she was returning to

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<sup>9</sup> As explained in this affidavit, the pink iPhone was later consensually searched by agents and substantial evidence of child sex trafficking was recovered.

Chicago. Victim A was having a tough time at home because her mother was upset with her for traveling to Chicago without telling her, and Victim A's friends had largely ostracized her after learning that she had worked as a prostitute. Victim A agreed to return to Chicago to perform sex work for STECKEL. STECKEL again booked Victim A's flight, and sent Victim A the booking confirmation.<sup>10</sup>

14. Victim A further told agents the following: On August 17, 2017, Victim A again traveled from West Virginia to Chicago. After arriving in Chicago, Victim A traveled to the Crown Plaza hotel near the O'Hare airport to meet with Individual B and perform sex work with her for STECKEL's clients. After one night at the Crown Plaza, STECKEL sent Victim A to the Hyatt Place hotel in Schaumburg, where she stayed for three nights until agents met her. Victim A had a total of 5-6 "dates" between August 17 and August 21, several of which were joint "dates" with Individual B. Like the first trip, STECKEL set up all of Victim A's dates when she returned to Chicago, provided her with information on her clients and the session time and price, and later came around to collect 20% of her payments. STECKEL made Victim A pay for some of the costs of the hotel rooms in which she stayed to perform sex work for STECKEL, and also made Victim A partially reimburse him for her flights from West Virginia to Chicago to perform sex work for STECKEL.

*B. Victim A was Corroborated by Hyatt Place Hotel Records and Interviews of Hyatt Hotel Employees*

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<sup>10</sup> As explained below, this is corroborated by travel records.

15. On or about August 21, 2017, at approximately 11:00 p.m., law enforcement officers spoke with the front desk clerk at the Hyatt Place Hotel, who provided the guest registry for the room in which Victim A was staying. The room was registered to BLAKE STECKEL. On August 22, 2017, at approximately 5:00 p.m. investigating officers interviewed a different front desk clerk at the Hyatt Place Hotel in Schaumburg. The second clerk told agents that, in the past 18 months, STECKEL had rented rooms at the hotel on 4 or 5 prior occasions. According to the clerk, he/she had seen STECKEL going in and out of the hotel with various young women during his stays.

*C. Victim A Was Further Corroborated by Evidence Recovered During a Consensual Search of Victim A's Phone*

16. After the August 21, 2017 interview with Victim A, agents obtained written consent to search her pink Apple iPhone 5C, which, according to Victim A, she received from STECKEL when she first traveled to Chicago in July 2017. Inside the phone, agents found multiple partially nude photographs of Victim A. In some of the photographs, Victim A is posing with Individual B, who is totally nude, and they are depicted in lascivious simulated sexual intercourse in which their breasts and pubic areas are exhibited. According to Victim A, STECKEL took all of these photographs at his home in Wisconsin to use for online advertisements for Victim A and Individual B's sexual services. Agents later found several of the same

photographs recovered from Victim A's phone on [www.explicitchicago.com](http://www.explicitchicago.com), and Victim A identified herself, Individual B, and others in the photographs.<sup>11</sup>

17. Based on forensic data recovered from Victim A's phone, several of the images discussed above were taken on July 29 and August 3, 2017. Several of the photographs had GPS locational information attached to them, which included the geographic coordinates of where the photographs were taken.<sup>12</sup> The GPS locational information on several of the photographs showed that they were taken at or near a building within an apartment complex located at 8320 82<sup>nd</sup> St., Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin (the "Pleasant Prairie apartment building").

18. Based on the investigation to date, STECKEL lives at Unit 202 in the Pleasant Prairie apartment building (the "Subject Premises"). Specifically, on September 1, 2017, investigating agents spoke with an officer of the Lake County, Illinois, pretrial bond service. Lake County court records reflected that STECKEL had a recent arrest for driving under the influence and had a schedule court date of September 5, 2017. The pretrial bond service officer provided STECKEL's address as the Subject Premises. Further, on September 21, 2017, investigating agents received

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<sup>11</sup> Based on my training and experience, several of the images depicting Victim A recovered on Victim A's iPhone and on [www.backpage.com](http://www.backpage.com) and [www.explicitchicago.com](http://www.explicitchicago.com) constitute child pornography under federal law, as the images depict Victim A, a minor, engaged in "sexually explicit conduct," including the lascivious exhibition of the pubic area, and simulated oral-genital and genital-genital sexual intercourse. See 18 U.S.C. § 2256(8).

<sup>12</sup> The GPS locational information attachment to photographs is a common feature included on many smartphones. The feature simply attaches to a photograph the longitudinal and latitudinal location of the smartphone at the moment the smartphone is used to snap a photograph. Among other things, the feature allows users to sort their photographs by location. Based on my training and experience, this feature is a reliable means of determining the location where a photograph was taken.

subpoena returns from Orbitz, which returns listed BLACK STECKEL at address 8320 82<sup>nd</sup> St., Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, for several travel bookings from August 2017.

19. Further, on September 23, 2017, investigating law enforcement officers traveled to the Pleasant Prairie apartment building and saw that the name "STECKEL" was listed on the buzzer in the front lobby for the Subject Premises. Additionally, on the same date, investigating officers conducted surveillance of the Pleasant Prairie apartment building. Between 8:30 a.m. and 2:52 p.m., officers observed STECKEL on the Subject Premises' private outdoor balcony on over 10 separate occasions. On each occasion, STECKEL entered the balcony by exiting a patio door to the Subject Premises, and left the balcony by returning through the patio door into the Subject Premises. Finally, on September 25, 2017, investigating agents showed Victim A an unmarked photograph of the Pleasant Prairie apartment building, which Victim A identified as STECKEL's apartment building. In the same picture, Victim A identified the outdoor balcony for the Subject Premises as being STECKEL's balcony.

20. Also on Victim A's phone agents recovered several text message communications between Victim A and STECKEL, using STECKEL Phone. The messages included an August 16, 2017 text message in which STECKEL sent Victim A an Orbitz booking confirmation for an August 17, 2017 flight from Huntington,

West Virginia to Chicago.<sup>13</sup> Several of the text message communications between Victim A and STECKEL corroborated that Victim A had operated as a sex worker employed by STECKEL. For example, the following portions of a text message exchange between STECKEL and Victim A was recovered on Victim A's Phone:

STECKEL: Matt. 40. White. Plumber. New client so be cautious. 2:00 for hour at 300.

Victim A: I really don't want to see a new client, it worries me.

STECKEL: Just do the kids [sic] test. Give him a kiss when he arrives and get him to undress first. You're going to need to see new clients or it's going to be super slow for you.

STECKEL: Arrived. OK to send[?]

STECKEL: ???

STECKEL: Can I send 2:00?

STECKEL: Hello

STECKEL: I had to cancel 2:00 since you're not answering. I am still charging you the agency cut on this date since you missed a client I had booked.

Victim A: I was in the shower. I didn't think you were sending him because I told you I really didn't want to see a new client.

STECKEL: They're not doing Stings anymore. All new clients are still verified. Most repeats are booking [Individual C] since she's new so if you want work you need to see new clients.

Victim A: The reason I didn't see that client earlier today is because I didn't like the fact that he was new . . . It had me worried. Also, I didn't feel good, I think I'm getting sick. I don't feel good at all. I really wanted to see the client that just came here though, I just wasn't

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<sup>13</sup> As explained below, based on American Airline and Orbitz business records, STECKEL booked this flight on August 16, 2017, using email account triple555\_extreme@yahoo.com, which account, based on Yahoo! subscriber records, belongs to STECKEL.

expecting all that and it freaked me out. But I will give you your cut for both of them and I'm probably going to stay a few more days if I start feeling better.

STECKEL: Ok

STECKEL: When it's a repeat client you have nothing to worry about.

STECKEL: And Larry most likely would have stayed for 6-8 hours.

21. Portions of a second text message conversation between STECKEL, using STECKEL Phone, and Victim A recovered from Victim A's phone:

Victim A: [first part of conversation not found in saved screenshots] . . . reaction to some medication and that I didn't feel well.

Victim A: Because it freaked me out.

STECKEL: Can I send him back up?

STECKEL: ???

STECKEL: ???

Victim A: No, it's just too weird for me. I can't be comfortable around him.

STECKEL: I'm charging you for this date also.

STECKEL: Stop fucking with my clients

22. Agents also recovered from Victim A's cellphone a video taken on August 7, 2017 at 10:32 p.m. that depicts STECKEL getting on to a hotel elevator with Individual C (the "August 7 video").<sup>14</sup> According to Victim A, she recorded the video.

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<sup>14</sup> STECKEL was identified as the individual depicted in the August 7 video as follows: (1) according to Victim A, STECKEL is the male individual depicted in the August 7 video; and (2) agents reviewed the August 7 video and compared the male individual depicted in the video to a Illinois driver's license photograph of STECKEL. Based on the comparison, agents determined that STECKEL appeared to be the male individual depicted in the August 7 video. In addition to the facial comparison, a barbed wire tattoo is visible on the male subject's



Also found on Victim A's phone was a photograph that depicts STECKEL lying face down on a hotel bed (the "August 7 photo").<sup>15</sup> The August 7 photo includes a text caption (apparently created using a SnapChat feature that allows users to insert text over photographs) that states: "When your manager comes to your hotel room and passes out [laughing emojis]. The August 7 photo is set out below:

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upper right arm. Law enforcement records list STECKEL as having a barbed wire tattoo on his upper right arm.

<sup>15</sup> STECKEL was identified as the individual depicted in the August 7 photo as follows: (1) According to Victim A, STECKEL is the individual depicted in the August 7 photo; (2) the individual depicted in the August 7 photo appears to be dressed in the same clothes, and shares the same physical features (height, weight, hair color, and the barbed wire tattoo on the upper right arm) as STECKEL displayed in the August 7 video, recorded approximately 7 minutes prior to the time recorded for the capture of the August 7 photo; and (3) the individual depicted in the August 7.



*D. Victim A was Further Corroborated by Law Enforcement and Business Records*

23. On or about August 22, 2017, agents obtained a criminal history report for STECKEL. The report stated that on March 5, 2015, STECKEL was arrested by the Cook County Sheriff's department and charged with promoting felony prostitution. The Cook County Sheriff's case report indicated that STECKEL was advertising prostitution services online via backpage.com, and listing Subject Account 1 and the phone number associated with Subject Account 2 in the prostitution advertisements—the same two accounts used in the advertisements for

Victim A and others that were recovered by law enforcement on August 21, 2017, and the same phone number that the undercover officer communicated with to set up a "date" with Victim A on August 21, 2017. According to the booking report, as STECKEL was being processed after his arrest, a law enforcement officer called the number associated with Subject Account 2 and a telephone in STECKEL's possession rang.

24. On or about September 1, 2017, agents received subpoena returns from American Airlines showing that email account triple555\_extreme@yahoo.com (Subject Account 3) was used to book two flights for Victim A from Huntington, West Virginia, to Chicago, one on July 26, 2017, and the second on August 17, 2017. As explained above, according to Victim A, these were the approximate dates on which she traveled to Chicago at STECKEL's request, where she performed sex work for STECKEL.

25. On or about September 19, 2017, investigating agents received subpoena returns from Yahoo.com showing that Subject Account 3 is registered to BLAKE STECKEL.

26. On or about September 20, 2017, investigating agents received subpoena returns from Uber which showed that on July 26, 2017 (the date on which Victim A first traveled from West Virginia to Chicago at STECKEL's request), an Uber account registered to BLAKE STECKEL was used to book rides from Chicago's O'Hare international airport to the Pleasant Prairie apartment building at which the Subject Premises is located. The records corroborate Victim A's statement to agents

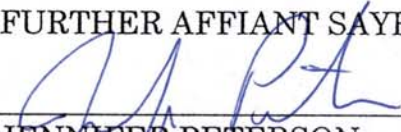
that STECKEL booked her an Uber rides after she arrived in Chicago on July 26, 2017, which ride transported her to STECKEL's home at the Subject Premises.

27. On or about September 21, 2017, investigating agents received subpoena returns from Expedia/Orbitz showing that, between March 2014 and August 2017, BLAKE STECKEL, Subject Account 3, booked over 550 hotel and/or flight reservations, including Victim A's flights from West Virginia to Chicago on July 26 and August 17, 2017, and at least some of Victim A's hotel reservations. The reservations reflect that credit cards in the names of multiple different females, including Victim A, were used to pay for many of the hotel reservations, which is consistent with Victim A's statement to law enforcement that STECKEL made Victim A pay for the hotel rooms in which she performed sex work for STECKEL.

III. CONCLUSION

28. Based on the foregoing, I respectfully submit there is probable cause to believe that from no later than July 25, 2017, until on or about August 21, 2017, BLAKE STECKEL, in or affecting interstate commerce, recruited, enticed, harbored, transported, provided, obtained, advertised, maintained, and solicited by any means a person, with a reasonable opportunity to observe, knowing or in reckless disregard of the fact that the person had not attained the age of 18 years and would be caused to engage in commercial sex acts, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1591(a)(1).

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JENNIFER PETERSON  
Special Agent, Federal Bureau of  
Investigation

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me on September 26, 2017.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
MARIA VALDEZ  
United States Magistrate Judge