

U.S. DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
FILED

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
FORT WORTH DIVISION

NOV 10 2022

CLERK U.S. DISTRICT COURT

By: _____
Deputy

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

No. 4:22-MJ- 913

IAN JUSTIN RANNEY (01)

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

**AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF
APPLICATION FOR CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**

I, the undersigned Complainant, being duly sworn, hereby state the following is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief:

Beginning on or about October 30, 2022, and continuing through on or about November 9, 2022, in the Fort Worth Division of the Northern District of Texas and elsewhere, the defendant, **Ian Justin Ranney**, in and affecting interstate commerce, did knowingly and intentionally attempt to aid and abet another to entice, harbor, provide, obtain, and maintain by any means a person, knowing, and in reckless disregard of the fact, that means of force, threats of force, fraud, coercion, and any combination of such means would be used to cause a person to engage in a commercial sex act.

In violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1594(a) (18 U.S.C. §§ 1591(a) & (b)(1)) and 2.

INTRODUCTION

I, Annie Trojacek, being duly sworn, depose and state as follows:

1. I am a Special Agent with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and I have been employed in this capacity since December 2019. I am a graduate of the Criminal Investigator Training Program (CITP) and the U.S. Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent Training (HSISAT) program at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC). As a

result of my employment with HSI, my duties include, but are not limited to, the investigation and enforcement of Titles 8, 18, 19, 21 and 31 of the United States Code (U.S.C.). I am currently assigned to the HSI-led North Texas Trafficking Task Force (NTTTF).

2. In preparation for this affidavit, I have discussed the facts of this case with other law enforcement agents/officers within HSI and the NTTTF. The information contained in this affidavit is based on my personal knowledge, information I received from other law enforcement agents assisting in this investigation, and what I have learned from the other sources specifically discussed herein. Because this affidavit is being submitted for the limited purpose of securing a criminal complaint, I have not included every fact known to me regarding this investigation.

3. This affidavit sets forth facts and suggests reasonable inferences from those facts, establishing that there is probable cause to believe that beginning on or about October 30, 2022, and continuing through on or about November 9, 2022, in the Fort Worth Division of the Northern District of Texas and elsewhere, **Ian Justin RANNEY**, committed the offense of Attempt to Aid and Abet Sex Trafficking in violation of §§ 1594(a) (18 U.S.C. §§ 1591(a) & (b)(1)) and 2.

INITIAL POST BY UCA

4. On October 30, 2022, the UCA communicated via a public discussion post on Website A that he was seeking “an experienced sadist” to train a 21-year-old female.

5. Between October 30, 2022, and November 9, 2022, **RANNEY** engaged with a HSI undercover agent (UCA) representing himself as a human trafficker.

RANNEY communicated with the UCA via social media “Website A,”¹ utilizing username “IAmTheMachine21,” and via a cellular telephone number 661-319-0139.²

POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION OF RANNEY

6. Database queries of telephone number 661-319-0139 indicate this phone number is associated with **Ian Justin RANNEY** of California. HSI Special Agents and Task Force Officers were subsequently able to locate **RANNEY’s** Facebook profile, which displays multiple pictures of **RANNEY**. Law enforcement also observed a photograph of a vaccine card posted to **RANNEY’s** Facebook account that contains **RANNEY’s** name and date of birth. In addition, **RANNEY’s** occupation is listed as a sommelier³. On November 8, 2022, **RANNEY** traveled from San Francisco, California to Dallas Fort Worth International Airport on American Airlines flight number 2665 and met with the HSI UCA in person at a location in Fort Worth, Texas. The UCA confirmed at the meet that **RANNEY** is the same individual using the screen name “IAmTheMachine21.”

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN UCA AND RANNEY ON WEBSITE A

7. Communications between **RANNEY** and the UCA have been summarized and organized for clarity. All definitions and interpretations are based upon my training and experience as a law enforcement agent.

¹ I know the name of the social media platform referred to as Website A, but in the interest of protecting ongoing investigations involving this website, I do not list it here.

² Queries within electronic databases reveal that cellular telephone number 661-319-0139 is linked to **RANNEY**.

³ During communications with the HSI UCA, the individual using screen name “IAmTheMachine21” stated he is employed as a sommelier. In addition, the individual who met with the UCA in person meeting on November 8, 2022, is the same individual depicted in the photographs observed on **RANNEY’s** Facebook profile.

8. On October 30, 2022, **RANNEY** initiated communications with the UCA. The following is a summary of the communications conducted via a messaging application within Website A and does not include every word exchanged. Website A's messaging application works via the Internet, which is a means and facility of interstate and foreign commerce.

9. **RANNEY** initiated communication with the UCA when he responded to the UCA's advertisement. **RANNEY** described himself as "35M 6'4 Sadistic Dom"⁴ and stated, "I'll break use. Use you mercilessly, showing you a world of pain you never imagined." The UCA informed **RANNEY** that a female was refusing to engage in commercial sex under his authority and he was seeking someone with experience in behavior modification to get the female to comply. **RANNEY** stated he is "skilled in behavior control and teaching," has "trained over a dozen girls," and "objectification and degradation is a specialty." **RANNEY** further stated he "can break any bitch."

**CELLULAR COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN RANNEY AND THE UCA
VIA A RECORDED TELEPHONE NUMBER**

10. Between October 31, 2022, and November 9, 2022, **RANNEY** communicated with the UCA via text messages and telephone calls from cellular telephone number 661-319-0139. The text messages and calls exchanged with **RANNEY** were over an HSI recorded telephone number. The following is a summary of the communications and does not include everything said during the exchange.

⁴ "Dom" is a common abbreviation used within the fetish community to refer to someone who identifies as a "dominant."

Text Messages Exchanged Between RANNEY and the UCA on October 31, 2022

11. On October 31, 2022, **RANNEY** communicated with the UCA via text message. The UCA confirmed **RANNEY** was the same person communicating on Website A. During this exchange, the UCA informed **RANNEY** that he had purchased the female victim from her previous trafficker, and now the victim is resistant and refusing to engage in commercial sex. **RANNEY** communicated that he has *“psychologically destroyed a few girls,”* and *“can employ torture when needed.”* **RANNEY** referred to the victim as *“property”* and added *“she should be willing to take extreme pain and thank them for it”* referring to commercial sex customers.

12. **RANNEY** indicated he was located in the Bay area (referring to the San Francisco, California area) while the UCA was located in the Fort Worth, Texas area. After exchanging several additional messages, the UCA and **RANNEY** agreed to have a phone call later that day.

October 31, 2022, Cellular Telephone Call

13. On October 31, 2022, at approximately 3:45 p.m., the UCA called **RANNEY** at 661-319-0139. During the call, the UCA told **RANNEY** that he is the head of a human trafficking organization, and he is interested in hiring a person to compel an unwilling victim to engage in commercial sex under the UCA’s authority. The UCA further communicated that this not a fetish or fantasy act. The UCA went on to explain that the victim is not only unwilling to engage in commercial sex under his authority but has been talking to the other women who work for the UCA and “putting ideas in their head.” **RANNEY** responded by stating, *“Yeah, that could get dangerous.”*

14. The UCA explained that the victim needs to engage in commercial sex and bring the proceeds to the UCA, which will require the victim to be trained to have a level of independence. **RANNEY** stated, *“I hadn’t considered that she might need some level of independence. This is a little bit trickier to train cause it’s really easy to do the initial break, but the rebuild is what takes time,”* and further added, *“I can easily make an example of her, get her a little bit more valuable and complacent, but getting her to be independent is kind of an extra difficult layer on top of that...which I’m up for that challenge. I love a challenge. That sounds fun.”*

15. **RANNEY** confirmed that he would torture the victim for the purpose of compelling her to engage in commercial sex under the UCA’s authority and detailed some of the methods he would use to force the victim into obedience. For example, **RANNEY** stated, *“I especially use chemicals during a lot of my torture scenes,”* and *“one of my favorites is capsaicin.”* **RANNEY** suggested the UCA either record or have others watch the victim being tortured with capsaicin, stating *“It’s interesting to watch. That might be something if you’re trying to make an example of her, either recording or having someone else watch her in that torture is a good way to put them in their place.”*

16. The UCA explained that he does not want the victim to have any permanent scarring to which **RANNEY** responded words to the effect of, *“Right, I will definitely threaten her with it, but I try to leave them undamaged...the worst she might get is like a broken bone or two.”*

17. **RANNEY** told the UCA he is willing to travel to the UCA’s area and asked the UCA if he has a “safe” location he can use that is soundproof or does not have

neighbors as the victim will be screaming during the torture. The UCA informed **RANNEY** there is an unrented warehouse he may be able to use and **RANNEY** stated words to the effect of, *“That’s looking the most likely. Only because it’s also a little bit more, almost degrading for her to be used in a warehouse as opposed to a hotel.”*

18. **RANNEY** further informed the UCA that he is a sommelier and was starting a new job the following week. **RANNEY** advised he may be able to push back his new job’s start date which would allow him to travel to the Fort Worth, Texas area sooner. **RANNEY** also mentioned possibly getting a “burner⁵” phone.

Text Messages Exchanged Between November 1, 2022, and November 9, 2022

18. During text messages exchanged on November 1, 2022, the UCA asked **RANNEY** if he was able to take time off work to travel earlier than expected. In response, **RANNEY** stated *“I’m working with HR about my time off now. I have a rough draft of what I would do for the first encounter with her. I estimate 8 days for my trip and a lot of recovery time for her.”* Regarding the draft of his encounter with the victim, **RANNEY** stated *“It’s very rough, and I still need to write out some more details so I can gather the exact supplies. However I think this is an actionable plan. I’m mixing three main methods to make her the most compliant within 3-4 days.”* **RANNEY** asked if the victim has any allergies and communicated that her diet will be “white food” including bland rice, soy lent powder, and water, and added that *“reducing her input and stimulus helps guide the scene. I’ll also have blackout contacts.”*

⁵ The term “burner” refers to a cellular telephone that cannot be traced back to its user.

19. There was a break in communications from November 1, 2022 until November 3, 2022 when **RANNEY** reinitiated contact. During text messages exchanged on November 3, 2022, **RANNEY** told the UCA *“I have almost all of my tools gathered I’ll be using. My first draft done but not polished. Due to a cancellation I’m also free until the 14th, that may be short notice though. Just found out about it now.”* Regarding the timeline, **RANNEY** advised, *“Right now my drafted plan is 8 days. Number of nights are more important...,”* and *“the minimum number of days for best effectiveness is 4, but I’d like to be there for the day after to see her mental state.”*

20. During text messages exchanged on November 4, 2022, **RANNEY** advised the UCA that he would *“have my finalized plan by tonight.”* The UCA and **RANNEY** further discussed travel dates, with **RANNEY** stating he would fly into Dallas Fort Worth International Airport on November 8, 2022. The UCA agreed to make a hotel reservation for **RANNEY**.

Text Messages Exchanged on November 6 and 8, 2022 Regarding Hotel Room Rental

21. During text communications on November 6, 2022, the UCA advised **RANNEY** that he reserved a hotel room for him at a hotel in Fort Worth, Texas and provided **RANNEY** with the hotel name. **RANNEY** informed the UCA *“I just got my last item I needed today. There’s a few larger size easy things I’ll need when I get there but nothing a quick shopping trip can’t fix.”* **RANNEY** confirmed that he would be taking a rideshare from the airport to the hotel. The UCA told **RANNEY** to let him know when he landed and the UCA would have someone meet **RANNEY** in the lobby of the hotel with the keys to the room.

22. During text communications between the UCA and **RANNEY** on November 8, 2022, **RANNEY** informed the UCA that his flight had arrived and confirmed the address of the hotel. The UCA told **RANNEY** he would have someone meet him outside of the hotel with the keys to the hotel room. The UCA and **RANNEY** agreed to meet in person during the evening of November 8, 2022.

SURVEILLANCE OF RANNEY

23. **RANNEY** was observed by law enforcement personnel arriving at DFW International Airport on November 8, 2022, carrying a black backpack and a carryon size suitcase.

24. **RANNEY** then took an Uber to the designated hotel in Fort Worth, Texas, and at approximately 4:30 p.m., **RANNEY** met with another undercover agent (UCA2) at the hotel and received the room keys. UCA2 identified the room number as “923”.

IN-PERSON MEETING BETWEEN RANNEY AND UCA

25. On the evening of November 8, 2022, **RANNEY** entered the agreed-upon establishment in Fort Worth, Texas, which is in the Northern District of Texas, and met with the UCA for approximately one hour and forty-five minutes, during which time the conversation was recorded with both audio and video.

26. During the meeting, **RANNEY** reassured the UCA of his ability to torture the human trafficking victim into compliance. **RANNEY** confirmed his intent to travel to the Dallas/Fort Worth area to torture the victim for the UCA. **RANNEY** confirmed he understood that the human trafficking victim was not consenting and told the UCA words to the effect of, “*She’s owned. Consent was given by you, not by her*” and described how

he would use the capsaicin he had brought with him on the human trafficking victim's genitals and mouth. **RANNEY** also described how he would waterboard the human trafficking victim. When the UCA asked **RANNEY** how he would keep the human trafficking victim from running away, **RANNEY** responded by saying he had brought three different types of restraints. **RANNEY** told the UCA that if he were doing this "above board" he would charge \$1,000 per day plus travel expenses and a cash tip. The UCA and **RANNEY** agreed on the price of \$1,500 per day to break the human trafficking victim. After the meeting, **RANNEY** returned to the hotel and surveillance was terminated.

ARREST OF RANNEY

27. On November 9, 2022, at approximately 8:47 p.m., HSI Special Agents and Task Force Officers observed **RANNEY** arriving at an address previously provided by the UCA. HSI Special Agents and Task Force Officers maintained surveillance as **RANNEY** exited a vehicle and entered the warehouse. **RANNEY** briefly met with the HSI UCA, unloaded his belongings, and at approximately 9:00 p.m., **RANNEY** was taken into custody without incident.

CONCLUSION

28. Based on the foregoing facts and circumstances, I respectfully submit that there is probable cause to believe that beginning on or about October 30, 2022, and continuing through on or about November 9, 2022, in the Fort Worth Division of the Northern District of Texas and elsewhere, **Ian Justin RANNEY** committed the offense

of Attempt to Aid and Abet Sex Trafficking in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1594(a) (18 U.S.C. § 1591(a)(1)) and 2.

Respectfully submitted,


Annie Trojacek
Special Agent
Homeland Security Investigations

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence this 10th day of November 2022, at 10:36 a.m./p.m. in Fort Worth, Texas.


HAL R. RAY, JR.
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE