

Approved: _____
JENNIFER N. ONG
Assistant United States Attorney

Before: THE HONORABLE JUDITH C. McCARTHY
United States Magistrate Judge
Southern District of New York

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA : **SEALED COMPLAINT**

- v. - : Violations of
RICHARD LEAF, : 18 U.S.C. §§
a/k/a "Alex Bronson," : 2252A(a)(2)(B),
 : (a)(5)(B), (b)(1), and
 : (b)(2).
Defendant. :
 : COUNTY OF OFFENSE:
 : WESTCHESTER
----- X

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, ss.:

ANDREW S. KEARNS, being duly sworn, deposes and says that he is a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and charges as follows:

COUNT ONE
(Receipt of Child Pornography)

1. Between in or about March 2019, and in or about April 2020, in the Southern District of New York and elsewhere, RICHARD LEAF, a/k/a "Alex Bronson," the defendant, knowingly received and distributed material containing child pornography that had been mailed, and using means and facilities of interstate and foreign commerce shipped and transported in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce by any means, including by computer, to wit, LEAF received child pornography through a computer in Westchester County, New York.

(Title 18, United States Code, Section 2252A(a)(2)(A) and (b)(1).)

COUNT TWO
(Possession of Child Pornography)

2. In or about May 2020, in the Southern District of New York and elsewhere, RICHARD LEAF, a/k/a "Alex Bronson," the defendant, knowingly did possess, and knowingly did access with intent to view, a book, magazine, periodical, film, videotape, computer disk, and other material containing an image of child pornography that had been mailed, and shipped and transported using a means and facility of interstate and foreign commerce and in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce by any means, including by computer, and that was produced using materials that had been mailed, and shipped and transported in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce by any means, including by computer, to wit, LEAF possessed images and videos of child pornography on a computer located in Westchester County, New York.

(Title 18, United States Code, Section 2252A(a)(5)(B) and (b)(2).)

The bases for my knowledge and for the foregoing charge are, in part, as follows:

3. I have been a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") since 2017, and I have been assigned to investigate violations of criminal law relating to the sexual exploitation of children, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2252A, among other offenses. I have gained expertise in the conduct of such investigations through, among other things, training in seminars, classes, and everyday work related to conducting these types of investigations. I have conducted or participated in the execution of search warrants; interviews of informants, cooperating witnesses, and other witnesses; and reviews of business and other records. In part through my training, education, and experience, I have become familiar with the manner in which acts of sexual exploitation of children are committed. I also have received training in the investigation and enforcement of federal child pornography laws and offenses in which computers are used as the means for receiving, transmitting, and storing child pornography, and I have participated in the execution of search warrants involving electronic evidence.

4. I have been personally involved in the investigation of this matter, and I am familiar with the information contained in this Complaint based on my own personal participation in the investigation, my review of documents, conversations I have had with other law enforcement officers

about this matter, my training and experience, and numerous discussions I have had with other law enforcement personnel concerning the creation, distribution, and proliferation of child pornography. Because this Complaint is being submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause to arrest the defendant, I have not included the details of every aspect of the investigation. Where actions, conversations, and statements of others are related herein, they are related in substance and in part, except where otherwise indicated.

Definitions

5. The following terms have the indicated meaning in this Complaint:

- a. The terms "minor," "sexually explicit conduct," and "visual depiction," as used herein, are defined as set forth in Title 18, United States Code, Section 2256.
- b. The term "child pornography," as used herein, is a visual depiction of a minor involved in sexually explicit conduct as defined in Title 18, United States Code, Section 2256(8).
- c. "Computer" means an electronic, magnetic, optical, electrochemical, or other high speed data processing device performing logical, arithmetic, or storage functions, and includes any data storage facility or communications facility directly related to or operating in conjunction with such device. See 18 U.S.C. § 1030(e)(1).

Investigation

6. On or about May 18, 2020, special agents with the FBI interviewed RICHARD LEAF, a/k/a "Alex Bronson," the defendant, at his residence. Additionally, on or about May 26, 2020, special agents with the FBI interviewed LEAF at an FBI office after LEAF called the special agents requesting an opportunity to speak with them again and agreeing to be interviewed at an FBI office. On both occasions, LEAF voluntarily agreed to speak with the special agents after being advised of the identities of the special agents and the nature of the interview. Based on my participation in this

investigation, as well as my discussions with law enforcement officers and others, I learned the following:

- a. LEAF admitted to being sexually attracted to teenage boys.
- b. LEAF admitted to creating several fictitious accounts on Chat Avenue, an online chat room website. For example, LEAF maintained accounts with the usernames "15brandon" and "alex15," and for the "alex15" account he used a profile picture of a teenage boy that he found on the Internet.
- c. LEAF admitted to creating several fictitious accounts on Skype where he posed as a teenage boy by, among other things, lying about his age and using a teenage boy's photograph for his account's profile picture. For example, LEAF had a Skype account with a display name of "Brandon W," an account name of "Austinfl19," and a profile picture of an apparent teenage boy. LEAF showed the special agents messages that LEAF exchanged with other Skype accounts using the "AustinFL9" account. In those messages, LEAF told the other users that he was either 18 or 23 years old, and LEAF believed that the users were approximately 15 to 16 years old. In addition, LEAF also had a Skype account with a display name of "Alex Bronson." The account profile picture for "Alex Bronson" was a tanned Caucasian teenage boy with mid-length surfer-style blonde and brown hair with what appears to be the ocean and beach in the background.
- d. LEAF verbally agreed to show the special agents some of the photographs and videos that he had saved to his personal computer. One video was a recorded Skype video chat between LEAF's fictitious Skype account with the display name "Alex Bronson" and a teenage boy. The video displayed as a split screen. The left side of the video was a static profile picture of a teenage male, which LEAF represented as himself. On the right side, there was a running video of an apparent teenage male ("Victim-1") from the

midsection down taking a shower and masturbating. LEAF knew Victim-1's name, where he lived, and believed that Victim-1 was 15 years old.

7. Based on my review of reports and records, my conversations with law enforcement officers and others, and my participation in this investigation, I have learned that law enforcement officers interviewed Victim-1 on or about August 17, 2020. In substance and in part, Victim-1 stated the following:

- a. Victim-1 talked to an "Alex" on Skype. Victim-1 said that "Alex" told him that he was 15 years old, and Victim-1 described "Alex" as being white and tan, having brown hair past his ears, and living near the beach. Victim-1 stated that he sent videos and pictures of himself without clothes on to "Alex."
- b. Victim-1 described "Brandon" as being white, having long blonde hair and living in New York. Victim-1 said that "Brandon" asked for videos without his clothes on and that "Brandon" sent him nude photos.
- c. Victim-1 stated that he sent "Alex" and "Brandon" a video where he was rubbing himself while he was in his bedroom, and a video where he was washing himself in the shower.

8. Based on my review of reports and records, my conversations with law enforcement officers and others, and my participation in this investigation, I know that RICHARD LEAF, a/k/a "Alex Bronson," the defendant, has multiple fictitious accounts across multiple platforms that use a variation of "Brandon." For example, LEAF has a Snapchat account with the username "sportsboi15" with a display name of Brandon Williams; a Chat Avenue account with the username "15Brandon"; a Skype account with the username "Austinfl19" and a display name of "Brandon W."; and another Skype account with the username "sportsboi15" and a display name of "Brandon Williams." The profile picture for LEAF's "sportsboi15" Skype account is an approximately 15-year-old white, Caucasian minor male with dirty blonde/light brown hair past his ears and wearing a grey Hollister shirt. The account says that "sportsboi15" is from New York.

9. Based on my review of reports and records, my conversations with law enforcement officers, and my participation in this investigation, I have learned that on or about May 18, 2020, RICHARD LEAF, a/k/a "Alex Bronson," the defendant," provided special agents with the FBI verbal and written consent to search and seize LEAF's Dell Desktop Computer with service tag number 3ZXXWS1 (the "Dell Computer") and LEAF's Apple iPhone 11 with an assigned phone number ending in 9658 (the "Apple Phone"). LEAF also gave the special agents verbal consent to take custody of a note that was next to the Dell Computer with LEAF's account information and passwords for some of his fictitious accounts.

10. Based on my review of reports and records, my conversations with law enforcement officers, and my participation in this investigation, I have learned that approximately 10 files were found on the Dell Computer that contain child pornography. Based on my review of some of the files containing child pornography, I know that the files included:

- a. A file with the name "f_00045b," which is an image of a white male minor laying in bed with an erect penis. The minor has no chest, body, facial, or underarm hair, has a slender build, and a facial structure of a male approximately 15 years old or younger. The metadata associated with this file shows that the image was stored in the cache for Skype and that the image was created on or about March 3, 2019, at approximately 5:14 p.m.
- b. A file with the name "f_000591," which is an image of a fully nude white or Hispanic male minor who is masturbating and looking down at a camera. The male minor looks distraught or uncomfortable. The male minor has no body or facial hair and appears to be approximately 12 years old. The metadata associated with this file shows that the image was stored in the cache for Skype and that image was created on or about April 21, 2019, at approximately 11:46 p.m.
- c. A file with the name "0000000," which is an approximately 15-minute video of a fully-clothed

adult white male and a small boy who is approximately 5 or 6 years old. The adult male is sitting down in a chair and the small boy sits on his lap. The adult male then kisses, undresses, and masturbates the small boy. The adult male also dry humps the nude bottom of the small boy. The metadata associated with this file shows that the file was stored in the cache for a web browser and that the file was created on or about November 24, 2018, at approximately 4:40 p.m.

- d. A file with the name "vid41a.mp4," which is an approximately 10-minute video of two teenage white or Hispanic males in wrestling leotards, who are approximately 14 to 16 years old. The two teenagers are play fighting/wrestling and the younger teenager's genitalia is rubbed over the leotard until his penis is erect. He is then stripped nude and the older teenager begins to masturbate the younger teenager while rubbing his stomach and chest area. The younger teenager has no chest or facial hair, and is masturbated until completion. The metadata associated with this file shows that the file was saved to the Dell Computer's hard drive in a subfolder labeled "Pictures," which was in a folder labeled "Richard."

11. Based on my review of reports and records, my conversations with law enforcement officers, and my participation in this investigation, I have learned that files with images and videos of Victim-1 were found on the Dell Computer and include child pornography. Based on my review of some of the files, I know that the files included:

- a. A file with the name "f_0009b0," which appears to be a fully nude image of Victim-1 with a flaccid penis that Victim-1 sent to RICHARD LEAF, a/k/a "Alex Bronson," the defendant, on or about March 25, 2020, via Skype. The image was taken in a mirror with a camera phone and appears to be taken in a bedroom with various decorations, including award ribbons and a Pink Floyd album poster.

- b. A file with the name "Video.mp4," which appears to be an approximately 8-minute long video taken of a Skype video call, which coincides with a Skype video call between Victim-1 and "Alex Bronson" on or about April 26, 2020, that lasted approximately 9 minutes. The video depicts a static profile picture for "Alex Bronson" on the left side of the screen. On the right side of the screen, Victim-1 lathers his genitalia and torso and masturbates. The metadata associated with this file shows that the file was saved to the Dell Computer's hard drive in a subfolder labeled "Videos," which was in a subfolder labeled "Pictures" and a folder labeled "Richard."

12. Based on my review of photos received from Victim-1's mother, my conversation with law enforcement officers and others, and my participation in this investigation, I know that the shower that appears in the video Victim-1 sent to "Alex Bronson" is similar to a shower in Victim-1's grandmother's home. In addition, I know that a non-explicit version of the image Victim-1 sent to "Alex" was shown to Victim-1's mother and she confirmed the identity of the awards, posters, and other decorations in the background of the image, which used to be present in Victim-1's bedroom.

WHEREFORE, deponent respectfully requests that RICHARD LEAF, a/k/a "Alex Bronson," the defendant, be arrested and imprisoned or bailed, as the case may be.

/s/ Andrew S. Kearns by JCM with permission
ANDREW S. KEARNS *(known to the court)*
Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Sworn to before me through the transmission of this Complaint by reliable electronic means, pursuant to Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 4.1 this **(By FaceTime)** 19th day of February, 2021.

Judith C. McCarthy
THE HONORABLE JUDITH C. McCARTHY
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK