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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Central District of California

United States of America

v.

MICHAEL JAMES CULLIGAN,

Defendant

Case No. **2:20-mj-02804**

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 of June 16, 2020 in the county of Santa Barbara in the Central District of California, the defendant violated:

Code Section

18 U.S.C. §§ 1112(b), 7(3)

Offense Description

Involuntary Manslaughter Within the
Special Maritime and Territorial
Jurisdiction of the United States

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

Please see attached affidavit.

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

/s/ Travis Goetz

Complainant's signature

Travis Goetz, Special Agent

Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date:

Judge's signature

City and state: Los Angeles, California

Hon. Michael Wilner, U.S. Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

AFFIDAVIT

I, Travis Goetz, being duly sworn, declare and state as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. I am a Special Agent assigned to United States Air Force Office of Special Investigations ("OSI"), at Vandenberg Air Force Base ("VAFB"), in California. I have been a Special Agent since March 2019. I received training to be an OSI Special Agent at the United States Air Force Special Investigations Academy and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, in Glynco, Georgia. I was a Security Forces Member for five years performing duties as a Patrolman and Criminal Investigator, wherein I received various forms of law enforcement training to include: the Security Forces Training Academy and California Peace Officer Standards and Training certified courses offered through the California Narcotics Officers Association, Joint Regional Intelligence Center, and California Department of Justice, among others. I have an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice from the Community College of the Air Force and a Bachelor's Degree in Social and Criminal Justice from Ashford University. I have previously participated in driving under the influence investigations.

II. PURPOSE OF AFFIDAVIT

2. This affidavit is made in support of a criminal complaint and arrest warrant for MICHAEL JAMES CULLIGAN, for a violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1112(b), 7(3) (Involuntary

Manslaughter Within the Special Maritime and Territorial Jurisdiction of the United States).

3. The facts set forth in this affidavit are based upon my personal observations, my training and experience, and information obtained from various law enforcement personnel and witnesses. This affidavit is intended to show merely that there is sufficient probable cause for the requested arrest warrant and complaint and does not purport to set forth all of my knowledge of or investigation into this matter. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, all conversations and statements described in this affidavit are related in substance and in part only.

III. SUMMARY OF PROBABLE CAUSE

4. On June 16, 2020, California Highway Patrol ("CHP"), Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office ("SBSO"), and Air Force OSI responded to a traffic collision on Santa Lucia Canyon Road, near Vandenberg Air Force Base, within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States. Law enforcement encountered two cars: a 2016 Lexus sedan and a 2013 Jeep. Inside the Lexus, law enforcement found the driver already deceased and a badly injured passenger. No occupants of the Jeep were present at the scene, though law enforcement recovered from inside the Jeep, among other things, empty alcoholic beverage containers and a California Identification Card for CULLIGAN. An eyewitness at the scene of the collision described that a man got out of the Jeep after the collision and fled the scene. Approximately three hours later, CULLIGAN was

apprehended approximately one and a half miles from the scene. CULLIGAN, after waiving his Miranda rights, admitted to using drugs before operating the Jeep, crashing the Jeep into another car, and fleeing the scene.

IV. STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE

5. Based on my training and experience, and conversations with other law enforcement officers and agents, as well as my familiarity and personal involvement with this investigation, I am aware of the following:

a. On June 16, 2020, at approximately 12:30 p.m., a fatal traffic collision was reported on Santa Lucia Canyon Road, near Vandenberg Air Force Base, within the Special Maritime and Territorial Jurisdiction of the United States. Santa Lucia Canyon Road is double yellow-lined, two-lane, public road that falls within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States. State and local law enforcement, including officers from the California Highway Patrol and emergency services, responded to the scene of the traffic collision.

b. Two cars appeared to be involved in the traffic collision: a 2016 Lexus sedan and a 2013 Jeep. Inside the Lexus sedan was M.M., who appeared to have been the driver of the car. M.M. was pronounced dead at the scene of the collision. Also in the Lexus sedan was a passenger, N.S., who was subsequently transported via helicopter to a nearby hospital.

c. While conducting their on-scene investigation, California Highway Patrol officers interviewed an eyewitness to

the collision. The eyewitness recounted that the driver of the Jeep appeared to have lost control and drove into the oncoming lane of traffic, crashing head-on into the Lexus. The eyewitness explained that following the traffic collision, a man got out of the Jeep and fled the scene.

d. During a search of the Jeep at the scene of the traffic collision, law enforcement determined that the Jeep had been reported stolen and that the license plates on the Jeep belonged to different car.

e. Law enforcement further recovered a wallet on the floor of the Jeep that contained a California Identification Card belonging to CULLIGAN. Also recovered inside the Jeep were empty alcoholic beverage containers and a receipt from the department store Fallas, at 201 Town Center West, in Santa Maria, California. The receipt indicated that the customer paid with \$100 and received \$57.65 in change. As discussed below, at the time of his detention, CULLIGAN was found in possession of exactly \$57.65.

A. Apprehension of CULLIGAN

6. Based on my training and experience, and conversations with other law enforcement officers and agents, as well as my familiarity and personal involvement with this investigation, I am aware of the following:

a. At approximately 3:30 p.m., based on a description of CULLIGAN from his California Identification Card, CHP Officers and SBSO Deputies detained CULLIGAN at the Lompoc-Surf Train Station, located at Ocean Avenue and Park Road, on

Vandenberg Air Force Base. The Lompoc-Surf Train Station is approximately one and a half miles from the location of the traffic collision.

b. Responding officers inquired of CULLIGAN whether he was injured. CULLIGAN responded that he was injured during the crash.

c. CULLIGAN was transported to Lompoc Valley Medical Center for observation based on his involvement in a fatal traffic collision.

B. Post-Miranda Statements

7. Based on my training and experience, and conversations with other law enforcement officers and agents, as well as my familiarity and personal involvement with this investigation, I am aware of the following:

a. At Lompoc Valley Medical Center, CHP Officer Kelly Valdez and Sgt. Robert MacLean advised CULLIGAN of his Miranda rights. CULLIGAN said that he understood his rights and agreed to speak with law enforcement. Officer Valdez and Sgt. MacLean subsequently conducted an audio recorded interview and Drug Recognition Evaluation of CULLIGAN.

b. During the interview, CULLIGAN explained that he borrowed the Jeep from a friend in Lompoc, and traveled to Santa Maria to shop for clothes. After CULLIGAN finished shopping, CULLIGAN drove south toward his Lompoc address. CULLIGAN admitted to being distracted while driving and hitting another vehicle. According to CULLIGAN, he became scared because he did not have a driver's license and fled the scene.

c. CULLIGAN admitted to last using methamphetamine, heroin, and marijuana yesterday, on June 15, 2020.

d. CULLIGAN provided consent to provide a blood sample for testing and a blood sample was taken by hospital personnel.

e. Officer Valdez, who is a trained Drug Recognition Expert for the CHP, examined CULLIGAN's pupil size, vital signs, temperature, and body cavities, and conducted a dark room examination. Based on Officer Valdez's examination, Officer Valdez formed the opinion that CULLIGAN was under the influence of a controlled substance.

C. CULLIGAN Caused the Death of M.M.

8. Based on the investigation, I know that CULLIGAN, who admitting ingesting controlled substances such that they were likely still in his system/blood at the time of the crash, crossed the double yellow lines on Santa Lucia Canyon Road, drove a stolen Jeep into oncoming traffic, and crashed head-on into M.M.'s vehicle. Based on my background, training, and experience, crossing double yellow lines and driving into an oncoming lane of traffic is wanton and in reckless disregard for human life. M.M.'s death was the direct result or a reasonably probable consequence of CULLIGAN's acts.

D. Federal Jurisdiction on Vandenberg Air Force Base

9. Based on my training and experience, as well as my familiarity with Vandenberg Air Force Base, the location of the instant traffic collision - on Santa Lucia Canyon Road, on

Vandenberg Air Force Base property - is within the Special Maritime and Territorial jurisdiction of the United States.¹

V. CONCLUSION

10. For all the reasons described above, there is probable cause to believe that CULLIGAN violated 18 U.S.C §§ 1112, 7(3) (Involuntary Manslaughter Within the Special Maritime and Territorial Jurisdiction of the United States) for his involvement in the fatal traffic collision described above which resulted in M.M.'s death.

Travis Goetz, Special Agent
Air Force Office of Special
Investigations

Subscribed to and sworn before me
this 17th day of June, 2020.

UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

¹ The term "special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States" includes: "any lands reserved or acquired for the use of the United States, and under concurrent or exclusive jurisdiction thereof." See 18 U.S.C. § 7(3).