

# Cass County Attorney's Office

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## PRESS RELEASE

Cass County Attorney Christopher Strandlie reports the arraignment of a 25 year old Coon Rapids man on charges of Intentional Murder in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree, Criminal Sexual Conduct in the First Degree, Kidnapping and Unauthorized use of a Motor Vehicle in Cass County District Court on August 23, 2016.

The criminal complaint alleges that Zachary Todd Anderson, age 25 abducted a 5 year-old-girl, and stole a 2002 GMC pick-up, from the girl's home in Meeker County, Minnesota prior to 8:30 a.m. on Saturday August 20th. The vehicle was discovered located at a cabin owned by Anderson's family in rural Cass County. Anderson was located and arrested in a swamp a short distance away. He subsequently led officers to a different area of the swamp where he said the girl's body could be located under some debris. Law enforcement officials ultimately discovered the victim submerged in knee deep water and covered by brush and other debris. A preliminary autopsy ruled the cause of death to be homicidal violence due to strangulation and blunt force trauma. The medical examiner also found evidence of a sexual assault perpetrated upon the victim.

2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Intentional Murder carries a maximum penalty of 40 years in prison; Kidnapping carries a maximum penalty of 40 years; First Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct carries a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison; and Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison.

The criminal investigation is ongoing and is being conducted by officers, agents and investigators of the Cass County Sheriff's Office, the Meeker County Sheriff's Office, the Baxter police Department, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and other area law enforcement agencies.

The presiding Judge set bail at two million dollars without conditions and one million dollars with conditions. Anderson's next court appearance is scheduled for October 10, 2016 at 1:30 p.m.

Due to the ongoing nature of the investigation, the Cass County Attorney's Office has no further comment at this time.

State of Minnesota  
County of Cass

District Court  
9th Judicial District

Prosecutor File No. 16-1075  
Court File No. 11-CR-16-1560

State of Minnesota,  
Plaintiff,

**COMPLAINT**  
Order of Detention

vs.

**ZACHARY TODD ANDERSON DOB: 11/26/1990**

3875 119th Ave. NW #52  
Coon Rapids, MN 55433

Defendant.

The Complainant submits this complaint to the Court and states that there is probable cause to believe Defendant committed the following offense(s):

#### COUNT I

**Charge: Murder in the Second Degree**

Minnesota Statute: 609.19.1(1), with reference to: 609.19.1

Maximum Sentence: Not more than 40 years

Offense Level: Felony

Offense Date (on or about): 08/20/2016

Control #(ICR#): 16014304

Charge Description: On or about August 20, 2016, in Cass County, Minnesota, Defendant Zachary Todd Anderson, DOB: 11/26/1990), did unlawfully and feloniously cause the death of a human being with intent to effect the death of that person or another, but without premeditation.

#### COUNT II

**Charge: Criminal Sexual Cond-1st Degree-Penet or Contact with Person Under 13-Actor >36m oldr**

Minnesota Statute: 609.342.1(a), with reference to: 609.342.2(b)

Maximum Sentence: Not less than 12 nor more than 30 yrs prison and a fine of \$12,000-\$40,000

Offense Level: Felony

Offense Date (on or about): 08/20/2016

Control #(ICR#): 16014304

Charge Description: On or about 8/20/2016, in Cass County, Minnesota, the Defendant, Zachary Todd Anderson (DOB: 11/26/1990 (25)), did engage in sexual penetration with another person, and the complainant was under 13 and the actor is more than 36 months older than the complainant. Neither mistake as to the complainant's age nor consent to the act by the complainant is a defense.

#### COUNT III

**Charge: Kidnapping-To Facilitate Felony or Flight**

Minnesota Statute: 609.25.1(2), with reference to: 609.25.2(2)

Maximum Sentence: 40 years and a fine of not less than \$15,000 nor more than \$50,000

Offense Level: Felony

Offense Date (on or about): 08/20/2016

Control #(ICR#): 16014304

Charge Description: On or about 8/20/2016, in Cass County, Minnesota, Defendant Zachary Todd Anderson (DOB: 11/26/1990 (25)), to facilitate commission of any felony or flight thereafter, did confine or remove from one place to another, any person without the person's consent or, if the person is under the age of 16 years, without the consent of the person's parents or other legal custodian.

#### COUNT IV

**Charge: Kidnapping-To Commit Great Bodily Harm/Terrorize**

Minnesota Statute: 609.25.1(3), with reference to: 609.25.2(2)

Maximum Sentence: 40 years and a fine of not less than \$15,000 nor more than \$50,000

Offense Level: Felony

Offense Date (on or about): 08/20/2016

Control #(ICR#): 16014304

Charge Description: On or about 8/20/2016, in Cass County, Minnesota, Defendant Zachary Todd Anderson (DOB: 11/26/1990 (25)), to commit great bodily harm or to terrorize the victim or another, did confine or remove from one place to another, any person without the person's consent or, if the person is under the age of 16 years, without the consent of the person's parents or other legal custodian.

#### COUNT V

**Charge: Theft - Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle**

Minnesota Statute: 609.52.2(a)(17), with reference to: 609.52.3(3)(d)(v)

Maximum Sentence: 5 yrs and a fine of not less than \$3,000 nor more than \$10,000

Offense Level: Felony

Offense Date (on or about): 08/20/2016

Control #(ICR#): 16014304

Charge Description: On or about August 20, 2016, Defendant Zachary Todd Anderson (DOB: 11/26/1990 (25)) did take or drive a motor vehicle without the consent of the owner or an authorized agent of the owner, knowing or having reason to know, that the owner or an authorized agent of the owner did not give consent.

**STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE**

The Complainant, being duly sworn, makes Complaint to the above-named Court and states that there is probable cause to believe that the defendant committed the listed offense(s). The Complainant states that the following facts establish PROBABLE CAUSE:

On or about August 20, 2016 the Meeker County, Minnesota Sheriff's Office was contacted by the parents of AE, hereinafter Victim or V. The parents stated that their 5 year old daughter was discovered missing as was their 2002 GMC Sierra pick-up truck bearing Minnesota license no. 107-KMT.

Parents indicated that on August 19, 2016 an adult male identified as Zachary Todd Anderson, hereinafter Defendant, had played softball with the Victim's father. After playing softball Defendant and V's father had gone out with friends and had arrived at V's and her parents' home, in Meeker County. V's father arrived home at approximately 2:30 am and the Defendant arrived at the residence between 3:30 and 3:45 am on August 20, 2016. The two visited until 4:00 am and the father retired for the evening.

V's mother advised officers that the last time that she had physically seen V was at approximately 2:30 a.m. in her bedroom. Officers learned that V had her own room and was wearing underwear when last seen. V had fallen asleep on the couch and the V's mother carried her to her room at approximately 2:30 a.m. V's mother indicated that V sleeps with a pink Princess Else blanket from the Disney movie Frozen.

At approximately 8:30 a.m. V was discovered missing. At the same time V's parents realized that Defendant was also gone as was their 2002 GMC Sierra. The Meeker County Sheriff's Office was contacted at approximately 9:56 a.m. The Meeker County Sheriff's Office and the Minnesota BCA began to attempt to locate the individuals and the vehicle. Initially, they were able to "ping" Defendant's cell phone but the signal was subsequently lost. A formal stolen vehicle report was also filed at this time.

At approximately 1:58 p.m., the Cass County Sheriff's Office dispatch center was contacted by an individual identified as Defendant's father. Defendant's father advised that he believed that his son was the subject of an "Amber Alert" that had been sent out statewide. He stated that his son had called earlier in the day and wanted to have permission to go to the family's cabin located at 4926 Iroquois Loop Trail SW Motley, MN. This residence is located in the Wilderness Park Homeowners' Association in Cass County, MN. Defendant's father gave officers permission to enter his property and residence to aid in their search.

Cass County Sheriff's Office Deputies Ratz and Collette were in the area and proceeded to the residence. Upon arrival, Deputy Ratz observed the white roof of a truck visible in a ravine at the SW end of the property. Upon closer inspection Deputy Ratz confirmed that it was the stolen 2002 GMC Sierra reported in Meeker County. The vehicle had been pulled into the ravine and into a brushy/wooded area in an apparent attempt to conceal its location. The vehicle was unoccupied. Officers then approached the residence to look for Defendant and Victim. Due to exigent circumstances concerning the welfare of the child, officers made entry into the unsecured residence. Officers announced their presence and swept the residence searching for V and Defendant. Nobody was discovered in the residence. However, in plain view, officers observed a single shot 20 gauge shot gun on the kitchen table with multiple 20 gauge rounds spilled about. Officers also observed numerous 12 gauge rounds but no 12 gauge shot gun. Also on the table was an apparent suicide note with apparent blood on the upper corner. The keys for the 2002 GMC Sierra were also on the table.

During this time, Cass County Investigator Murray and other officers arrived on scene. Officers were able to observe that it appeared that there had been recent foot traffic leading past the residence into the woods to the North as well as to the woods to the SW of the truck. Officers were aware that 2 K-9 units were en-route

and elected to briefly suspend the search so as not to put additional scent in the woods that could confuse the dogs. A short time later a unit from Cass County and a unit for Baxter PD arrived and began to search the two areas where it appeared that there had been recent foot traffic going into the woods. Deputies Ratz, Landreville and Conner and Deputy Conner's K-9 unit Yankee began to search the area past the truck. At approximately 4:23 p.m. officers made contact with Defendant in knee deep water in a swampy area. Officers observed Defendant to have fresh lacerations to his left wrist. Defendant was arrested without incident. He was read his Miranda warning at that time and was asked the location of "the girl". He initially responded, "What Girl?". He was led out of the swamp and placed into a squad car.

Investigators from the BCA subsequently spoke with Defendant. Defendant indicated, when asked, that the child was hidden in the swamp under some debris. Defendant agreed to show officers the approximate location of where she was hidden. He walked with officers to the edge of the swamp and pointed in a general direction indicating that she was "over there". Officers were able to observe areas of freshly trampled swamp grass and began to search in that vicinity. Investigator Murray followed the trampled grass for approximately 80 yards away from the location, previously described by Defendant, where he observed the corner of a pink blanket sticking out from under some brush in knee deep water. He pulled the blanket out and discovered that it was a pink Disney blanket consistent with the blanket described by V's mother. The blanket did not appear to have been in that location very long as it did not have signs of deterioration. Officers continued to search the area and discovered the deceased, naked body of the Victim completely submerged in the water and hidden under some brush and other debris.

Further investigation revealed that Defendant was observed at approximately 8:30 a.m. at a convenience store in Browerville, MN. He is observed, on video surveillance, entering the store alone and purchasing a bottle of water. He is shown to be wearing a softball type uniform. He subsequently appears in video surveillance obtained from a common clubhouse at Wilderness Park. He is seen entering, and subsequently exiting, the clubhouse wearing the same softball type uniform as he was wearing in the convenience store video. During a search warrant executed at the residence located at 4926 Iroquois Loop Trail SW, officers discovered, in addition to the items previously noted, wet clothing. The clothing included a pair of apparent softball uniform pants consistent with the pants that Defendant was wearing in the surveillance video. Officers also discovered wet shoes and socks. Following up on other investigative information, officers went to a seasonal cabin, that Defendant may have had access to, located in Todd County. Officers observed fresh vehicle tracks at that residence but it did not appear that the residence had been entered. Officers also located a broken piece of molding that appears to match a piece that is missing from the tailgate of the 2002 GMC Sierra pick-up.

An autopsy was performed on the Victim. The initial findings of the autopsy indicate that the cause of death was homicidal violence due to strangulation with other evidence of blunt force trauma to the Victim's head. The forensic examination of the Victim also revealed evidence of a sexual assault including sexual penetration.

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT FAILING TO APPEAR IN COURT WHEN ORDERED TO DO SO BY THE COURT IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE. IF YOU ARE CONVICTED FOR FAILING TO APPEAR, IN ADDITION TO THE IMPOSITION OF CRIMINAL PENALTIES, YOU MAY BE REQUIRED TO PAY WHATEVER COSTS ARE INCURRED BY THE PROSECUTING AUTHORITY OR OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY DUE TO YOUR FAILURE TO APPEAR.

**SIGNATURES AND APPROVALS**

Complainant requests that Defendant, subject to bail or conditions of release, be:  
(1) arrested or that other lawful steps be taken to obtain Defendant's appearance in court; or  
(2) detained, if already in custody, pending further proceedings; and that said Defendant otherwise be dealt with according to law.

Complainant declares under penalty of perjury that everything stated in this document is true and correct. Minn. Stat. § 358.116; Minn. R. Crim. P. 2.01, subds. 1, 2.

**Complainant**

Joel Norenberg  
Lieutenant  
303 Minnesota Ave  
PO Box 1119  
Walker, MN 56484  
Badge: 104

Electronically Signed:  
08/23/2016 10:36 AM  
Cass County, Minnesota

Being authorized to prosecute the offenses charged, I approve this complaint.

**Prosecuting Attorney**

Benjamin T. Lindstrom  
Assistant County Attorney  
303 Minnesota Avenue  
PO Box 3000  
Walker, MN 56484  
(218) 547-7255

Electronically Signed:  
08/23/2016 10:34 AM

**FINDING OF PROBABLE CAUSE**

From the above sworn facts, and any supporting affidavits or supplemental sworn testimony, I, the Issuing Officer, have determined that probable cause exists to support, subject to bail or conditions of release where applicable, Defendant's arrest or other lawful steps be taken to obtain Defendant's appearance in court, or Defendant's detention, if already in custody, pending further proceedings. Defendant is therefore charged with the above-stated offense(s).

**SUMMONS**

THEREFORE YOU, THE DEFENDANT, ARE SUMMONED to appear on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM before the above-named court at 303 Minnesota Ave W, Walker, MN 56484-3000 to answer this complaint.

IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR in response to this SUMMONS, a WARRANT FOR YOUR ARREST shall be issued.

**WARRANT**

To the Sheriff of the above-named county; or other person authorized to execute this warrant: I order, in the name of the State of Minnesota, that the Defendant be apprehended and arrested without delay and brought promptly before the court (if in session), and if not, before a Judge or Judicial Officer of such court without unnecessary delay, and in any event not later than 36 hours after the arrest or as soon as such Judge or Judicial Officer is available to be dealt with according to law.

*Execute in MN Only*

*Execute Nationwide*

*Execute in Border States*

**ORDER OF DETENTION**

Since the Defendant is already in custody, I order, subject to bail or conditions of release, that the Defendant continue to be detained pending further proceedings.

Bail: \$  
Conditions of Release:

This complaint, duly subscribed and sworn to or signed under penalty of perjury, is issued by the undersigned Judicial Officer as of the following date: August 23, 2016.

**Judicial Officer** David Harrington  
Judge, 9th Judicial District

Electronically Signed: 08/23/2016 10:47 AM

Sworn testimony has been given before the Judicial Officer by the following witnesses:

**COUNTY OF CASS  
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

**State of Minnesota**

Plaintiff

vs.

**Zachary Todd Anderson**

Defendant

*LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER RETURN OF SERVICE  
I hereby Certify and Return that I have served a copy of this Order of  
Detention upon the Defendant herein named.*

Signature of Authorized Service Agent: