

PROBABLE CAUSE STATEMENT

I, Deputy Curtis Dobbs, a duly commissioned law enforcement officer, being of full age, duly sworn and knowing false statements on this form are punishable by law, state and aver as follows:

1. I have probable cause to believe that Rebecca M. Ruud DOB: 05/01/1978 SSN: [REDACTED] did commit the following offenses on or about the 18th to the 20th day of July, 2017 in Ozark County, State of Missouri;

OFFENSE(S)

STATUTES(S)

Murder in the First Degree 565.020	RSMO
Endangering the Welfare of a Child in the First Degree 568.045	RSMO
Felony Tampering with Physical Evidence 575.100	RSMO
Abandonment of a corpse without notifying authorities 194.425	RSMO

2. The facts supporting this belief are as follows:
3. On July 18, 2017, at 3:43 PM, Rebecca Ruud contacted Michael Williams of the Theodosia Fire Department and asked him if he could bring a fire truck to help her with a fire at her home located at 4118 County Road 905 in Theodosia, Missouri. Ms. Ruud was a member of the Theodosia Volunteer Fire Department and both she and her biological daughter, Savannah Leckie, were known to Mr. Williams. Ms. Ruud told Mr. Williams that both she and Savannah had been burned during the fire. Mr. Williams told Ms. Ruud to contact the Sheriff's Office and have them officially send out the Fire Department.
4. 12 minutes later at 1555 hours, Ms. Ruud contacted The Ozark County Sheriff's Office to report a fire at her home located at 4118 County Road 905 Theodosia, Missouri. At 1556 hours, the Ozark County Sheriff's Office dispatched the Theodosia, Gainesville, Pontiac and Caney Mountain Volunteer Fire Departments along with emergency medical personnel from the Lifecall ambulance services. Theodosia Fire Chief Tim Jeffery arrived at the Ruud farm at 1623 hours. Time from the initial call to Mr. Williams and the arrival of the first Fire Department personal was approximately 40 minutes.
5. After fire department personal arrived they informed Dispatch that the fire was a brushfire and not a structure fire as was first reported. Fire Department units from Gainesville, Pontiac, Caney Mountain and Lifecall ambulance personal were called off prior to arrival. As fire fighters and equipment arrived at the Ruud property, Ms. Ruud directed them away from her residence and toward a logging road up a hill. The fire was

located at the top of the hill and was described by firefighters as being about a ½ to ¾ acre in size.

6. Fireman Norman Jarret first saw Ms. Ruud as she was coming down the hill from the fire area. Ms. Ruud told Mr. Jarrett that both she and Savannah Leckie had gotten burned. Ms. Ruud showed Mr. Jarrett a burn on her left arm. Mr. Jarrett then transported Ms. Ruud back to an area about 40 yards from the residence where he tendered medical assistance. Mr. Jarret asked to see Savannah in order to check on her injuries, but Ms. Ruud said Savannah was fine and she was in the travel trailer taking a shower. The travel trailer was located near a large metal building that served as a barn/workshop. Part of the metal building was converted to living quarters where Ms. Ruud resided. The travel trailer, where Savannah primarily lived, was about thirty feet long and had minimal ventilation. While it was equipped with an air conditioner, it was inoperable. There was no electrical service to the 80 acre farm and the only source of electricity was a gas powered generator located near the travel trailer. The generator was used to charge batteries and, apparently, to power the well pump. The generator was not running while the firefighters were on the farm.
7. The fire department personal extinguished the fire on the hillside. As they came back toward the residence Ms. Ruud would not let anyone check on Savannah or come close to the residence. Firefighters asked for a drink of cold water (which would require starting the generator to operate the well pump) Ms. Ruud refused their request. Ms. Ruud told the firefighters they could not come over by the residence or the travel trailer because she did not want them to see or disturb Savannah. Ms. Ruud said Savannah was naked, and was lying on her bed cooling off. July 18, 2017, was a hot summer day with temperatures in the 90 degree range. At no time did any fire department personal see Savannah at the Ruud property.
8. Ms. Ruud's injuries were described as burns to her left arm and were treated at the scene with the assistance of Fire Chief Tim Jeffery and Robert Peat Sr. On July 20th, Ms. Ruud posted a photograph of the injuries on her Facebook page. The image showed blisters starting just below her shoulder and ending just before her wrist. The injuries appeared consistent with having a short sleeve shirt on and gloves. Ms. Ruud had recently purchased leather cowhide gloves from the Theodosia Hardware store on 07/14/2017 at 1425 hours.
9. Prior to or during the fire, Caney Mountain Firefighters Robert Peat Sr., and Robert Peat Jr. arrived at the Ruud farm. Mr. Peat Jr. has been having a romantic relationship with Ms. Ruud for several months.
10. Fire department personal left the residence at 1819 hours. Mr. Peat Jr. stayed at the residence after the fire. During a police interview on a later date, Mr. Peat Jr. said he lived with Ms. Ruud on the farm from that day forward. Text messages between Ms. Ruud and a witness infer that Mr. Peat, Jr. was living with Ms. Ruud as early as June 30, 2017.

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11. On July 20, 2017, at approximately 1045 hours, Ms. Ruud contacted the Ozark County Sheriff's Office and reported Savannah missing. Ms. Ruud said, "I need to report a missing child, I think she's a runaway". She continued, "I had a fire two days ago, Savannah is blaming herself for the fire, I got burnt, I think that's why she ran away. She took her pillow and blanket and her favorite coloring bag. We can't find her anywhere."
12. During an interview with officers following the missing child report, Ms. Ruud and Mr. Peat Jr. said they last saw Savannah at 11:00 PM on the previous night (July 19, 2017). Ms. Ruud said she first noticed Savannah was missing on July 20, 2017, at about 8:00 AM. Mr. Peat Jr. added that on July 19, 2017, he and Ms. Ruud had not gone directly to bed, but had returned up the hill to where the fire had occurred and stayed there for an unknown amount of time.
13. Later on July 20, 2017 the Ozark County Search and Rescue team was dispatched and a search of the Ruud farm and surrounding area was conducted on foot as well as on utility vehicles. In addition to the ground search team, the Baxter County Sheriff's Office provided a helicopter and conducted an aerial search. A private fixed wing aircraft was provided by firefighter and Ozark County Sheriff's Office employee, Dan Israel. The ground search and aircraft grid search was unsuccessful. During the search, Baxter County Lieutenant Rick Lucy observed, from the helicopter, a fire burning on the hillside in the area where the July 18, 2017 fire had been.
14. At the conclusion of this initial search, Savannah was entered into the National Crime Information Center as missing. Notification was sent to surrounding agencies with missing person's information. Furthermore, The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children posted a photograph with pedigree information to assist in the investigation. No verifiable sightings of Savannah were reported.
15. During the course of the investigation it was learned that Ms. Ruud told some of Savannah's relatives that she received burns to her arm while saving Savannah from the July 18 fire. To others she stated she received burns while attempting to remove chainsaws or a wood splitter from the fire. During interviews with law enforcement officers, Ms. Ruud never said that Savannah had received any injuries as a result of the July 18 fire.
16. At about 1:00 PM on July 24, 2017, Chief Deputy Winston Collins and I arrived at the Ruud property to follow-up with this investigation. We interviewed Mr. Peat Jr. separately from Ms. Ruud. Prior to questioning, Mr. Peat Jr. was informed of his constitutional rights. Mr. Peat Jr. said the last time he saw Savannah was around 11:00 PM on July 19th. He said he and Ms. Ruud then left to check a fire on the hillside of the property. During the interview, Mr. Peat Jr. also told us that a prescription for 30 tablets of Vicodin, prescribed to and filled by Ms. Ruud on July 17, 2017, was found to be missing following Savannah's disappearance. Prior to that time, Ms. Ruud had never mentioned the missing controlled substance to law enforcement officers.

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17. On July 25, 2017, law enforcement officers accompanied by dogs trained in the detection of living and deceased human beings began another search of the Ruud property. This search was conducted with the consent of Ms. Ruud. Due to temperatures reaching near 100 degrees the dogs and their handlers were unable to complete the search of the property. The dog handlers recommend attempting again when the weather was cooler.
18. On August 1, 2017, Ms. Ruud and Mr. Peat Jr. were contacted at 4118 County Road 905 Theodosia and agreed to speak with us. They were then transported to the Ozark County Sheriff's Office. Ms. Ruud was then brought to the interview room and Mr. Peat Jr. was brought to Sheriff Reed's Office. Ms. Ruud was interviewed by Investigator Warren Weidman with the Missouri State Highway Patrol and me. Mr. Peat Jr. was interviewed by Sheriff Darrin Reed and Chief Deputy Winston Collins.
19. At 1442 hours, Ms. Ruud was informed of her Constitutional rights (Miranda). She then acknowledged them in writing and agreed to speak with us. During the Interview, Ms. Ruud stated Savannah Leckie began living with her at 4118 Cr 905 Theodosia in 2016.
20. Ms. Ruud was asked about Savannah's life on the farm and how Ms. Ruud disciplined her. Ms. Ruud said she had smashed Savannah's cell phone and limited her contact through Facebook as a form of control and punishment. She stated she had Savannah roll around in a hog pen on at least one occasion and wade into a muddy pond and dunk under as a forms of punishment. She also stated she would use a water hose on her.
21. Ms. Ruud said Savannah deliberately cut her own arm. (Ms. Ruud pointed to her own left upper arm area) In order to punish Savannah for this transgression, Ms. Ruud said she poured alcohol and salt on the cut twice a day and rubbed it in until the scabs came off. Ms. Ruud also admitted to having Savannah (who was then 15 and 16 years old) take down her pants so that Ms. Ruud could spank her on her bare bottom.
22. On August 4, 2017, at approximately 7:25 AM, officers from the Ozark County Sheriff's Office and the Missouri State Highway Patrol accompanied by dogs trained in the detection of human remains arrived at the Ruud farm with a search warrant authorizing a search of the property for the person of Savannah Leckie or her remains. Both Ms. Ruud and Mr. Peat, Jr. were present when the officers arrived. The officers explained their presence to Ms. Ruud and asked to continue the search that was begun on July 25th. Ms. Ruud refused this request and the search warrant was executed.
23. In previous visits to the farm, most of the gates and buildings were unlocked and open. On August 4th, I saw that the gates, the large metal building and the travel trailer were all chained and padlocked. At the request of police officers, Mr. Peat, Jr. removed the chains and locks.
24. On a hilltop about 400 yards from the large metal building, one of the dogs alerted on a brush pile. A second dog was deployed and it also alerted on the brush pile. The brush pile was at the edge of the area that had been burned during the fire on July 1st and was surrounded by charred earth. The pile was also in the area that both Ms. Ruud and Mr.

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Peat, Jr. said they had been lighting “beacon fires” for Savannah for several nights. The brush pile appeared to have been recently stacked and contained a mixture of partially burned tree limbs and several tree limbs that were not burnt. The brush pile was approximately 8 ½ feet in height and 61 ½ feet in diameter.

25. The brush pile was then photographed and removed. Under the brush pile was an area with light colored ashes about 6 ft. long and 4 ft. in width. The ground surrounding this area was also burnt but the ashes were darker in color in contrast to the 4ft by 6 ft. area.
26. Upon closer examination of the area of light colored ash, small sections of what appeared to be bone were discovered. At one end were bone fragments which appeared flat. In the center were bones consistent with rib bones. Several bones resembling vertebrae were also recovered. The other end contained several more flat pieces of bone along with bones resembling human fingers and toes. Upon closer examination, several items resembling teeth were also discovered. These fragments were collected as evidence to be transported to the Ozark County Sheriff's Office. Also located in the ashes was a metal button consistent with buttons found on pants or jeans. The button had what appears to be small ducks imprinted on it.
27. Approximately 20 ft. from the brush pile area were four cigarette butts within a 3 ft. of each other. The cigarette butts were lying on top of a charred area, but the butts themselves were not burned.
28. While officers were searching the burn pile, Mr. Peat Jr. and Ms. Ruud left the property and were married in Summersville, Missouri. The marriage license was filed at the Howell County Courthouse.
29. On August 5, 2017, I began inventorying the bone fragments and teeth. I located what I believed to be four teeth. I then located what appeared to be the bone of a human fingertip along with other bones consistent with finger and foot bones.
30. On August 7, 2017, I contacted Mr. Mark Beary. Mr. Beary is a PhD. Candidate and teaches anthropology at the University of Missouri-Columbia; he also works for the Boone County, Missouri, Medical Examiner's Office. I sent Mr. Beary images of the some of the suspected teeth and bones. Mr. Beary responded and told me the remains were consistent with human remains. He identified a bone as the distal phalange (human finger bone) and teeth as molar and premolar. I also contacted Eric S. Wilson D.D.S. a forensic dentist from Sedalia, Missouri. Upon reviewing images of the suspected teeth, Dr. Wilson confirmed the teeth were consistent with human teeth.
31. On August 8, 2017, Sheriff Darrin Reed and I, transported the bone fragments and teeth to Dr. Marlene Feisthamel, DDS in Battlefield, Missouri. Dr. Feisthamel is a forensic dentist with a masters degree in anthropology. She confirmed the fragments were human teeth and bone.

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32. On August 9, 2017, at approximately 11:20 AM, another search warrant was issued authorizing a search of the Ruud farm for human remains, DNA and certain chemicals and/or accelerants. Officers executing this warrant were accompanied by Mr. Beary who assisted in recovering additional bones, bone fragments and teeth found in the area where remains were recovered on August 4th. Also recovered as a small section of cloth like material, a decorative flower shaped object and a zipper with the same duck type pattern as the pants button previously located. Neither Ms. Ruud nor Mr. Peat, Jr. were present on the farm on August 9th. I noted that most of the goats that had previously been on the farm were gone. In addition, a four-wheeler, guns, hay bales and other equipment had been removed sometime between August 4th and August 9th.
33. On August 10, 2017, additional bone fragments and teeth recovered on August 9th were transported to Dr. Feisthamel. Dr. Feisthamel said she was able to conclude the remains belonged to a person of small stature who was 13 ½ to 20 years of age at the time of death. At the time of her reported disappearance on July 20, 2017, Savannah Leckie was 16 years old, she was 5 feet, 2 inches tall and weighed about 110 pounds.
34. On August 19, 2017, I again spoke with Dr. Wilson. Dr. Wilson had been communicating with Dr. Feisthamel and was aware of her conclusions. Dr. Wilson told me that he agreed with Dr. Feisthamel's conclusion that the teeth and bone fragments found in the burn pile almost certainly belonged to Savannah Leckie. This finding was based on a comparison of some of the teeth and a section of a maxilla (upper jawbone) recovered from the burn pile to radiographs taken during Savannah's dental exam when she was about 13 years old. The doctors also concluded the bones were consistent with their findings in that they were of a person small in stature and a juvenile between the age of 13 and 20 years of age.
35. Upon her birth in Minnesota, Savannah Leckie was adopted by Tamile Montague (Leckie) and David Leckie. Tamile and David have since divorced. In late 2016, though a mutual agreement, Savannah was sent to live with her biological mother, Rebecca Ruud in Ozark County, Missouri. During conversations with Tamile Montague and her mother, Sandra Montague, I was told that Ms. Ruud continually complained about Savannah's inability to adapt to life on the farm. In a text message to Tamile dated June 30, 2017, Ms. Ruud said that it was difficult to get things done because her daughter was "treating me like crap." She went on to say, "it's to the point that I either need more help to care for her, or I can do nothing with her." She said that most of her time was spent fixing things Savannah had broken and concluded, "(I) am severely limited in the work I can by having Savannah. . ." Around June 3rd or 4th, 2017, Ms. Ruud told Sandra Montague that Savannah was costing her so much money she was afraid of losing her farm.
36. Based on Ms. Ruud's statement, Savannah was to blame for the fire on July 18th and her receiving injuries to her arm, Ms. Ruud's inconsistencies, continued efforts to conceal evidence, continued efforts to mislead Law Enforcement, Ms. Ruud's statement regarding Savannah being burned and Ms. Ruud's extreme form of punishing and abuse she inflicted upon Savannah, I believe Ms. Ruud deliberately and methodically caused

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the death of Savannah Leckie and then attempted to conceal it by destroying evidence and her remains by fire.

37. Mr. Beary has opined that, based on the condition of the bone fragments found in the burn pile, the body had been burned several times. Ms. Ruud and Mr. Peat Jr. both stated they were on the hillside tending a fire the night of 07/19/2017 into the morning of the 07/20/2017, again on the evening of 07/20/2017 and again on the evening of 07/21/2017.
38. At age 9, Savannah Leckie was clinically diagnosed as having a form of autism (Asperger). She was also diagnosed as having ADHD and depression.
39. On 08/19/2017, I was informed by Greyhound Bus services in Springfield, Missouri Ms. Ruud and Mr. Peat Jr. had purchased bus tickets. Ms. Ruud purchased a ticket to Kansas City leaving 08/21/2017 at 1530 hours and Mr. Peat Jr. purchased tickets to Memphis Tennessee leaving 08/20/2017 at 1322 hours.
40. According to her Facebook page, Ms. Ruud is affiliated with groups that disseminate information relating to "living off the grid."
41. Ms. Ruud told me that she has worked as an over-the-road truck driver and has travelled throughout the country. She has significant contacts in several states.
42. Fearing that she was attempting to flee this state, Ms. Ruud was taken into custody in Springfield, Missouri on August 21, 2017, as she was attempting to board a Greyhound bus. Ms. Ruud had in her possession at least three large pieces of luggage the contents of which included blankets and quilts.
43. Location of Incident: 4118 County Road 905, Theodosia Missouri.
44. Referring Department; OZARK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Deputy Curt Dobbs DSN: 875 Date / /

Signature: 

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