

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
for the
Southern District of Mississippi

United States of America)
v.)
Stephen Spencer Pittman)
)
)
)
)
)

Case No. 3:26-mj-506-ASH

Defendant(s)

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(s) of January 10, 2026 in the county of Hinds in the
Southern District of Mississippi, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section

Offense Description

18 U.S.C. § 844(i) Arson of property used in interstate commerce or used in an activity affecting
interstate commerce.

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See Affidavit.

Continued on the attached sheet.

Complainant's signature

Nicholas Amiano, FBI Special Agent

Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date:

1/12/2026

Judge's signature

City and state:

Jackson, MS

U.S. Magistrate Judge Andrew S. Harris

Printed name and title

AFFIDAVIT

1. I, Nicholas Amiano, being first duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

INTRODUCTION AND AGENT BACKGROUND

2. I make this affidavit in support of a criminal complaint alleging STEPHEN SPENCER PITTMAN (PITTMAN) violated Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(i), which imposes criminal liability against whoever maliciously damages or destroys, or attempts to damage or destroy, by means of fire or an explosive, any building, vehicle, or other real or personal property used in interstate or foreign commerce or in any activity affecting interstate or foreign commerce.

3. The Affiant is currently employed by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Jackson Division, MS, as a Special Agent (SA). The Affiant has been employed by the FBI as a Special Agent since October 2021. While employed with the FBI, I have investigated federal criminal violations related to domestic and international terrorism. I have attended the FBI Academy where I was trained on various types of investigative methods and procedures.

4. Based on my training and experience and the facts set forth in this affidavit, there is probable cause to believe that PITTMAN violated Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(i). This Affidavit is intended to show only that there is sufficient probable cause for the criminal complaint charging PITTMAN with the above violations and does not set forth all of my knowledge about this matter. The information provided is based upon my personal knowledge or that of other sworn law enforcement officers participating in this investigation.

SUMMARY OF PROBABLE CAUSE

5. There is probable cause to believe that PITTMAN damaged religious property by using fire and other means on January 10, 2026, in the Southern District of Mississippi. On

January 10, 2026, the Jackson Fire Department responded to a fire at 5315 Old Canton Road, Jackson, Mississippi, which is a building or property at which both the Beth Israel Congregation and the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) are located. PITTMAN was identified as a person of interest and ultimately confessed to lighting a fire inside the building due to the building's Jewish ties. The ISJL operates in interstate and foreign commerce as it provides services to Jewish communities in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The ISJL provides comprehensive religious school programs to 70 Jewish congregations and offers traveling rabbinical services. Most of these school programs and rabbinical services are delivered in states outside of the State of Mississippi.

PROBABLE CAUSE

6. On January 10, 2026, the Jackson Fire Department responded to a fire at 5315 Old Canton Road, Jackson, Mississippi, which is a building or property at which both the Beth Israel Congregation and the ISJL are located. The fire resulted in extensive damage to a significant portion of the building and rendered it inoperable for an indefinite period time, as depicted below:



7. A review of the building's CCTV footage showed the fire was started by an individual inside the building in the early morning hours of January 10, 2026. A hooded

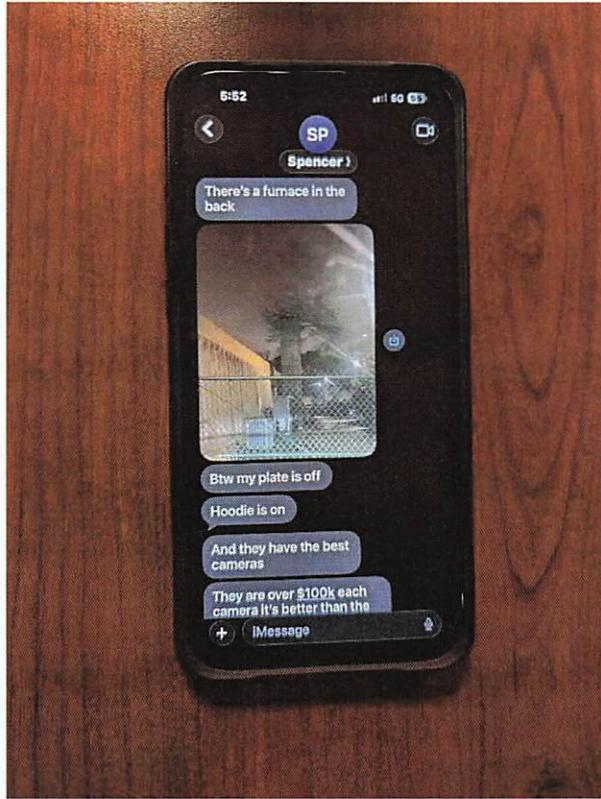
individual can be seen walking in the interior of the building pouring contents from what appeared to be a gas container as depicted below:



8. On January 10, 2026, PITTMAN's father, S.P. contacted the FBI and advised his son confessed to setting the building on fire. This confession was further corroborated by Life360¹ map data that S.P. had from PITTMAN's phone, PITTMAN's text messages to his father during the early morning of January 10, 2025, and burns on PITTMAN's body.

9. In the early morning of January 10, 2026, Life360 map data linked to PITTMAN's phone showed that PITTMAN traveled from his residence in Madison County, stopped briefly at Mac's Gas in Ridgeland, Mississippi, and then went to the Beth Israel Congregation/ISJL building. While there, PITTMAN texted S.P. a photo of the rear of the Beth Israel Congregation/ISJL building, with the messages, "There's a furnace in the back", "Btw my plate is off", "Hoodie is on", and "And they have the best cameras" as depicted below:

¹ Life360 is a family location safety app through real time GPS tracking.



10. Over text messages, S.P. pleaded for his son to return home. PITTMAN replied back by saying he was due for a homerun and “I did my research.”

11. In the morning of January 10, 2026, PITTMAN texted his family and said, “Y’all gotta text this number for right now it’s Spencer. Other phone mia not coming back going to Apple Store today,” indicating he had lost his phone during the commission of the crime. He also texted, “To get my apple account logged in on this one.”

13. During daylight on January 10, 2026, S.P. observed burns on PITTMAN’s ankles, hands, and face. S.P. confronted PITTMAN about what happened during the early morning on January 10, 2026, and PITTMAN told his father he broke a window of the Beth Israel Congregation/ISJL building, went inside, and lit it on fire. PITTMAN laughed as he told his father what he did and said he finally got them.

14. During the evening of January 10, 2026, the FBI, Jackson Fire Department, and Hinds County Sheriff's Office interviewed PITTMAN. During the interview, PITTMAN provided the following information: PITTMAN admitted to starting a fire inside the Beth Israel Congregation/ISJL building which he referred to as the "synagogue of Satan." PITTMAN said on the way to the crime he stopped at Mac's Gas to purchase the gas used for the fire, took his license plate off at the gas station, broke a window out of the Beth Israel Congregation/ISJL building with an axe, poured gas inside the building and used a torch lighter to start the fire. PITTMAN believed he left the torch lighter at the Beth Israel Congregation/ISJL building and that he caught himself on fire during the act. PITTMAN indicated his primary cell phone was inside the Beth Israel Congregation/ISJL building.

15. From the scene of the fire, the FBI was able to recover a burned cell phone believed to be PITTMAN's. The FBI also recovered a hand torch found at the scene by a member of the congregation.

16. The ISJL operates in interstate and foreign commerce as it provides services to Jewish communities in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The ISJL provides comprehensive religious school programs to 70 Jewish congregations and offers traveling rabbinical services. Most of these school programs and rabbinical services are delivered in states outside of the State of Mississippi. As a licensed 501(c) 3 nonprofit, the ISJL website offers a "donate" option to allow for interstate donations to fund their nonprofit. The fire resulted in the closure of the Beth Israel Congregation/ISJL building for an indefinite period of time.

17. Accordingly, there is probable cause to believe that STEPHEN SPENCER PITTMAN maliciously damaged or destroyed, or attempted to damage or destroy, by means of fire or an explosive, any building or other real or personal property used in interstate or foreign commerce or in any activity affecting interstate or foreign commerce in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(i).

Respectfully submitted,


Nicholas Amiano
Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Sworn to and subscribed before me on the 12th day of January, 2026


Honorable Andrew S. Harris
United States Magistrate Judge