

DISTRICT COURT, BOULDER COUNTY, COLORADO 1777 Sixth Street Boulder, CO 80302	DATE FILED: June 3, 2024 9:59 AM
<b>PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF COLORADO</b> v.  <b>AHMAD AL ALIWI ALISSA</b> Defendant	▲ <b>COURT USE ONLY</b> ▲
Michael T. Dougherty, District Attorney Adam Kendall, Chief Trial Deputy District Attorney 1777 Sixth Street Boulder, CO 80302  Phone Number: (303)441-3700 FAX Number: (303)441-4703 E-mail: akendall@bouldercounty.org Atty. Reg. #38905	Case No. 21CR497  Div: 13
<b>Response to [Defendant's] Re-Filed Motion to Suppress Illegally Seized Evidence from the Unconstitutional Search of [Defendant's] Home (D-033)</b>	

Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa (the “Defendant”) requests that the Court suppress all evidence obtained from the search of his home.<sup>1</sup> As law enforcement recovered evidence from Defendant’s home pursuant to a lawful search warrant, Defendant’s request is without merit. This Court should deny his Motion.

### **I. BACKGROUND**

On March 22, 2021, Defendant drove his Mercedes to the Table Mesa King Soopers store

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<sup>1</sup> Defendant generally mentions evidence from the search, “as well as any additional evidence, statements, or other incriminating evidence obtained as a “result” thereof.” Defendant’s lack of specificity is defective, and the People are not required to address his claim with regard to supposed “additional evidence” at issue. *See People v. Dailey*, 639 P.2d 1068, 1075 (Colo. 1982) (“[F]airness to the prosecution requires that the motion to suppress specify [the evidence] challenged, so that the prosecution can prepare for the suppression hearing.”); *see also People v. Cunningham*, 2013 CO 71, ¶ 12 (“[T]he defendant, as the moving party, bears the burden of going forward to show a violation of his or her Fourth Amendment rights. If the defendant satisfies this burden, it is then upon the prosecution to show that defendant’s Fourth Amendment rights were not violated. [T]he prosecution does not have an initial burden of going forward at a suppression hearing.”).

in Boulder armed with an assault rifle, other guns, large capacity magazines, and a large amount of ammunition. Soon after he arrived at the store, he began shooting victims in the parking lot before continuing into the store and shooting other victims. Ultimately, he murdered 10 people, and shot in the direction of many others. Immediately after the shooting, law enforcement began an extensive investigation into Defendant and his behavior and actions in the months before March 22, 2021. A Jury Trial is currently scheduled to begin on September 4, 2024. A Motions Hearing is scheduled for June 4, 2024.

Defendant filed his Motion to Suppress Illegally Seized Evidence from the Unconstitutional Search of [Defendant's] Home (D-33) (the "Re-filed Motion") on May 28, 2024.<sup>2</sup> Defendant alleges that all evidence seized should be suppressed because the warrant lacked particularity.

However, the warrant obtained by law enforcement, and signed by Judge Thomas Mulvahill, passes Constitutional muster and is legally sufficient.

**A. The facts alleged within the affidavit.**

Because a court's review of a challenged warrant is a four corners review, the People incorporate the warrant at issue, signed by Judge Thomas Mulvahill on March 22, 2021, as part of this response. *People v. Gutierrez*, 222 P.3d 925, 937(Colo. 2009); see Exhibit A ("Ex. A") attached to the Re-filed Motion.

**B. The items to be produced, as articulated in the affidavit, and other relevant information.**

On March 22, 2021, Investigator Kristin Weisbach applied for and obtained a warrant for a search of Defendant's home (the "Warrant"). See Ex. A attached to the Re-filed Motion. The

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<sup>2</sup> Defendant's initial filing on April 26, 2024 attached an incorrect motion. Defendant corrected this on May 28, 2024 and the People are now responding to the corrected Re-Filed Motion

Warrant authorized that the following search:

- a. Still and video photography and/or scanning of the residence;
- b. Proof of residency;
- c. Any and all firearms and ammunition;
- d. Any other improvised explosive devices;
- e. Diaries, ledgers, and evidence of planning, to include but not limited to books, pamphlets, and other written material;
- f. Phones, computers, tablets, SD cards, mini SD cards, flash drives or any other digital devices capable of accessing the internet or storing digital files;
- g. Body armor or tactical gear;
- h. Trace evidence.

The investigation into the mass murder at King Soopers began on March 22, 2021.

Pursuant to the Warrant, law enforcement recovered items from Defendant's home related to this search.

## **II. APPLICABLE LAW AND ARGUMENT**

### **A. The Warrant is Supported by Probable Cause.**

The Fourth Amendment and Colorado Constitution require a search warrant to be supported by probable cause, and this probable cause must exist within the four corners of the affidavit. *People v. Gall*, 30 P.3d 145, 158 (Colo. 2001); *People v. Randolph*, 4 P.3d 477, 481 (Colo.2000). “Under the Colorado Constitution, the facts supporting probable cause must be reduced to writing, and so probable cause must be established within the four corners of the warrant or its supporting affidavit.” *People v. Scott*, 227 P.3d 894, 897 (Colo.2010).

Probable cause to search exists when an affidavit for a search warrant alleges sufficient facts to warrant a person of reasonable caution to believe that contraband or evidence of criminal activity is located at the place to be searched. *People v. Hebert*, 46 P.3d at 482 (internal quotation

marks omitted); *People v. Pate*, 878 P.2d at 689 (Colo.1994). An affidavit for a search warrant must supply a sufficient nexus between criminal activity, the things to be seized, and the place to be searched. *Hebert*, 46 P.3d at 482. Circumstantial evidence and inferences can supply the necessary link between suspected criminal activity and a specific location to be searched. *Id.*

The facts alleged in the affidavit, together with reasonable inferences drawn from those facts, may be enough to establish the requisite link between suspected criminal activity and a specific location to be searched. *People v. Green*, 70 P.3d 1213, 1215 (Colo.2003). Probable cause “depends upon probabilities, not certainties, and upon knowledge grounded in the practical considerations of everyday life on which reasonable and prudent persons act.” *People v. Unruh*, 713 P.2d 370, 381 (Colo.1986) (abrogated on other grounds by *People v. Esparza*, 272 P.3d 367) (internal citations omitted); *see also People v. Washington*, 865 P.2d 145, 147 (Colo.1994). Because probable cause does not amount to certainty, an affidavit need only establish a “fair probability” that officers will find evidence of a crime at the location to be searched. *Green*, 70 P.3d at 1214. Thus, a totality of the circumstances analysis is necessary to determine probable cause. *Illinois v. Gates*, 462 U.S. 213, 230-31 (1983); *People v. Pannebaker*, 714 P.2d 904, 907 (Colo. 1986).

In looking at the totality of the circumstances, a court must make a “practical, commonsense decision whether a fair probability exists that a search of a particular place will reveal contraband or evidence of a crime.” *People v. Pacheco*, 175 P.3d 91 (Colo.2006).

The reviewing court does “not engage in de novo review but rather examines whether the magistrate had a substantial basis for concluding that probable cause existed.” *People v. Krueger*, 296 P.3d 294, 304 (Colo. App. 2012) (internal quotation marks omitted). The question is not whether the reviewing trial court would have issued the search warrant, but whether the affidavit provides a “substantial basis” for the issuing judge to conclude that there was sufficient probable

cause for a valid search warrant. *People v. Hebert*, 46 P.3d 473, 481 (Colo.2002).

Great deference is given to the initial probable cause determination. *People v. Eirish*, 165 P.3d 848, 853 (Colo.App.2007); *Pate*, 878 P.2d at 690; *Gall*, 30 P.3d at 150. This deference was articulated by the Supreme Court in *United States v. Leon*: “[r]easonable minds frequently may differ on the question whether a particular affidavit establishes probable cause, and we have thus concluded that the preference for warrants is most appropriately effectuated by according ‘great deference’ to a magistrate’s determination.” *United States v. Leon*, 468 U.S. 897, 914 (1984) (internal citations omitted). Further, any doubts must be resolved in favor of the initial determination of probable cause “because such deference supports the preference for police to seek a judicial determination of probable cause, rather than resorting to warrantless searches in the hope of relying on consent or another exception to the warrant requirement that might develop at the time of the search.” *Hebert*, 46 P.3d at 481.

Here, the facts alleged in Investigator Weisbach’s affidavit establish probable cause to allow the search of Defendant’s home. The totality of the circumstances established by these facts, among others, provided substantial basis for Judge Mulvahill to conclude that probable cause for a search existed. Using a practical and commonsense evaluation of the facts in the affidavit a reasonable person would conclude that a search of Defendant’s home could produce evidence of a crime.

The affidavit contains a number of facts and events that link Defendant’s home and his personal property with the crime at hand. Defendant entered the King Soopers, began shooting, and murdered multiple people. A green rifle case was observed in the front passenger seat of Defendant’s car. Defendant carried extensive gear with him into the King Soopers, including a long-gun believed to be an AR-15, a tactical vest, and a semiautomatic handgun. This indicates planning and thought went into his attack on the victims in the store. Defendant argues that there

is little nexus between the items sought and seized during the execution of the warrant and Defendant's crimes. However, Investigator Weisbach's goal was to ensure the preservation of the evidence seized and any data, information, or items relating to the planning and commission of the murders. Investigator Weisbach noted that mass shooting events involving multiple casualties and the use of tactical gear and assault weapons require planning and preparation. She further noted that evidence related to planning and preparation is often found in the shooter's home and personal property. As a result, appropriate subject matter constraints were placed within the Warrant. Given the above facts, there is a sufficient nexus to support inclusion of all of the evidence sought by the Warrant.

In sum, the affidavit alleged sufficient facts to warrant a person of reasonable caution to believe that evidence of criminal activity could be associated with the items identified within Defendant's home. Since circumstantial evidence and inferences may supply the necessary link between the crime alleged and the evidence seized, the facts alleged within this affidavit, together with reasonable inferences drawn from them, are more than sufficient to establish the nexus here between the items seized and the crime. *Id.*; see also *Green*, 70 P.3d at 1215; *Randolph*, 4 P.3d 477, 482 (Colo. 2000) (citing *Gates*, 462 U.S. at 241-42).

#### **B. The Warrant is Sufficiently Particularized.**

A court must determine whether the affidavit meets the particularity requirement of the Fourth Amendment, in which it must "particularly" describe the place to be searched or the things to be seized in order to prevent a "general" search. *People v. Staton*, 924 P.2d 127, 131 (Colo. 1996). See also *Marron v. U.S.*, 275 U.S. 192, 196 (1927) (stating the purpose of the particularity requirement is twofold: to prevent the seizure of one thing under a warrant describing another thing, and to prevent leaving discretion at the hands of the executing officer).

"The particularity requirement . . . ensures that a search is confined in scope to particularly

described evidence relating to a specific crime for which there is demonstrated probable cause. The test applied to the description of items to be seized is a practical one. A description is sufficiently particular when it enables the searcher to reasonably ascertain and identify the things authorized to be seized.” *U.S. v. Leary*, 846 F.2d 592, 600 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1988). A warrant that describes the items to be seized in broad or generic terms is valid as long as the description is as specific as the circumstances and the nature of the activity under investigation permit. *U.S. v. Riccardi*, 405 F.3d. 852, 862 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2005), citing to *Leary*, 846 F.2d at 600. Courts are discouraged from taking a “hyper-technical approach” when reviewing warrants due to the Fourth Amendment’s strong preference for searches conducted pursuant to warrant. *Gates*, 462 U.S. at 236; *see also Hill*, 690 P.2d at 859. So long as a warrant and its supporting affidavit constitute one, complete document, “the particularity of an affidavit can cure an overbroad warrant.” *People v. Roccaforte*, 919 P.2d 799, 804 (Colo. 1996), *citing United States v. Leary*, 846 F.2d at 603-04.

An affidavit must demonstrate a connection between the crime suspected and the area to be searched. This requirement is met where the affidavit establishes a fair probability that officers executing the warrant will find contraband or evidence at the location to be searched. *People v. Kazmierski*, 25 P.3d 1207 (Colo.2001).

The sufficiency of the Warrant in terms of a sufficient nexus should be analyzed in terms of “time, crime, objects, and place.” *Id.* at 1211. The affidavit must have more than vague allegations that the Defendant engaged in illegal activity; the affidavit must provide a nexus between the alleged criminal activity and place to be searched. *Randolph*, 4 P.3d at 482. This nexus can be established by circumstantial evidence and proper inferences drawn therefrom. *People v. Hakel*, 870 P.2d 1224, 1229 (Colo.1994). The facts alleged in the affidavit, together with reasonable inferences drawn from those facts, may be enough to establish the requisite link

between suspected criminal activity and a specific location to be searched. *People v. Green*, 70 P.3d 1213, 1215 (Colo.2003).

Here, Investigator Weisbach ensured particularity by requesting a search for specific, defined items. As detailed above, there is a direct nexus between the items sought and Defendant's activities in the time frame immediately before and including the murders.

**C. Alternatively, if the Court determines that portions of the Warrant are defective, blanket suppression is not the appropriate remedy.**

“Blanket suppression is an extraordinary remedy that should be used only when the violations of search warrant requirements are so extreme that the search is essentially transformed into an impermissible general search.” *Eirish*, 165 P.3d at 856 (internal citations omitted). If this Court determines that particular requests within the Warrant are overbroad, the logical remedy here is exclusive suppression of items that lack a nexus with the criminal activity involved, but not a blanket suppression. See *U.S. v. Foster*, 100 F.3d 846, 852 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1996) (“The extreme remedy of blanket suppression should only be imposed in the most “extraordinary” of cases...it is for that reason that the dearth of appellate cases authorizing blanket suppression is neither surprising nor revealing”).

**III. CONCLUSION**

WHEREFORE, the People hereby request that this Court DENY Defendant's Re-Filed Motion.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL T. DOUGHERTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

By:  
*s/Adam Kendall*  
Adam D. Kendall  
June 3, 2024



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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE  
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I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the above and foregoing served via the Colorado e-filing system/hand-delivered on June 3, 2024, and addressed as follows:

Kathryn Herold  
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*s/Adam D. Kendall*  
Adam D. Kendall