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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

Case No. 23-20701

Hon. Stephen J. Murphy, III

CONRAD ROCKENHAUS,

Defendant.

STATUS CONFERENCE

BEFORE THE HONORABLE STEPHEN J. MURPHY, III
United States District Chief Judge
Theodore Levin United States Courthouse
231 West Lafayette Boulevard
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Tuesday, October 14, 2025

APPEARANCES:

For the Plaintiff
United States of America:

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STATUS CONFERENCE

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EXHIBITS

Identification

Offered

Received

NONE

1 Detroit, Michigan

2 Tuesday, October 14, 2025

3 — — —

4 (Proceedings commenced at 12:05 p.m., all parties
5 present)

6 THE CLERK: All rise. United States District Court
7 for the Eastern District of Michigan is now in session, the
8 Honorable Chief Judge Stephen J. Murphy, III presiding.

9 The Court calls criminal matter 23-20701, United
10 States of America versus Conrad Rockenhaus. Date and time is
11 set for sentencing on the supervised release violations.

12 Counsel, please state your appearances for the record
13 beginning with the government.

14 MS. LAMBERT: Good afternoon, Your Honor. Corinne
15 Lambert appearing on behalf of the United States.

16 THE COURT: Welcome.

17 MR. PLOTKIN: Sanford Plotkin appearing with Conrad
18 Rockenhaus, Your Honor.

19 THE COURT: Okay. Welcome. Everybody may be seated.

20 So let me just say a couple of things, mainly for the
21 benefit of Mr. Plotkin, and then I'll get reactions from both
22 lawyers. But I went through the chronology the last time we
23 were here together, which I believe was Thursday, and I won't
24 do that again. That hearing, October 7th, was scheduled for
25 sentencing on supervised release violations that were returned

1 in roughly April and to which Mr. Rockenhaus pled guilty in
2 May. As I -- as I also mentioned, during the period of bond
3 awaiting sentencing on those violations, I received a petition
4 from -- from Probation requesting action on supervised release
5 and probation, and that resulted in Mr. Rockenhaus' arrest.

6 I just want to confirm the understanding of everybody
7 because -- because the petition recited additional actions
8 which could be considered as violations of supervised release.
9 But my understanding and sense that I wanted to confirm with
10 everybody in the courtroom is that the petition for actions
11 on -- on -- petition for action on conditions of supervised
12 release filed August 20 resulted in arrest, apprehension and
13 detention of Mr. Rockenhaus and has been fully discharged.
14 We're not going forward on any further or additional supervised
15 release violations, we're just sentencing based on the plea
16 that Mr. Rockenhaus entered in May. Is that correct,
17 Government?

18 MS. LAMBERT: Yes, Your Honor.

19 THE COURT: All right. Correct?

20 MR. PLOTKIN: It's certainly correct from where I'm
21 sitting.

22 THE COURT: Hey, hey.

23 MR. PLOTKIN: Oh, I'm sorry, Your Honor.

24 THE COURT: Yeah.

25 MR. PLOTKIN: Now, may I have two seconds with the

1 government, Your Honor?

2 THE COURT: Okay.

3 MR. PLOTKIN: Thank you.

4 (Brief pause)

5 THE COURT: What's the nature of the delay, Mr.
6 Plotkin? What are you trying to accomplish here?

7 MR. PLOTKIN: Right. So there are just a couple
8 loose ends, one regarding restitution that I just wanted to
9 confirm with the government before I place anything on the
10 record.

11 THE COURT: Well, maybe I should take a break. Let
12 me let the lawyers -- I -- I -- I thought you had met and --
13 and --

14 MR. PLOTKIN: You know --

15 THE COURT: -- and discussed and --

16 MR. PLOTKIN: -- I'm prepared to move forward right
17 now.

18 THE COURT: We'll take a break and make sure we get
19 everything straightened out and then I'll be back very briefly.

20 MR. PLOTKIN: Certainly.

21 (Court in recess at 12:13 p.m.)

22 (Proceedings resumed at 12:15 p.m., all parties
23 present)

24 THE CLERK: All rise.

25 THE COURT: Okay. We're back in session. Everybody

1 may be seated.

2 All right. So today we are to go forward on
3 sentencing for Violations 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, which, as I
4 mentioned last time, do not involve additional criminal
5 activity but deal with things like marijuana usage,
6 restitution, reporting to Probation, new credit charges, and
7 Internet types of -- well, having an -- an Apple iPhone.

8 Okay. So I'm just going to relate the facts for the
9 record, and I think this will mainly be Mr. Plotkin's issue,
10 but I don't -- I don't know, maybe the government as well. So
11 I'm -- as you heard, I'm the chief judge of the district now,
12 and I have a number of administrative duties and a number of
13 things come my way that never came my way previously, and one
14 of the things was a -- a couple of new civil cases which the
15 district executive asked, as she normally does, whether we
16 should poll the district judges to -- to determine whether or
17 not we'd have a bench recusal that would require litigation of
18 the matters in a -- in another district, and those cases or
19 case involved Adrienne Rockenhaus versus the Probation Office
20 and officers in this particular case.

21 And I don't remember if I was named as a defendant in
22 any of those matters -- I may well have been -- but I made the
23 determination as chief judge that my colleagues could make up
24 their own minds about whether or not they'd be fair and
25 impartial in cases like that and whether or not it -- it would

1 be reassigned to judges in other districts, and -- and as far
2 as I know, that -- that matter is under consideration
3 administratively.

4 And the issue is whether or not a judge in this
5 district could fairly adjudicate a matter against a probation
6 officer on whom he or she relies quite often. I advised that I
7 would not undertake to hear that case in any circumstances
8 because the -- the matters complained of in that civil
9 litigation address the events of May, June, July, August in
10 this criminal matter, and good judgment, ethics and so on and
11 so forth I think would preclude me from hearing those matters,
12 and whether or not I could be fair or not, it would give a -- a
13 very poor appearance to the public that I'd be, you know,
14 resolving such -- such a case. That's -- that's pretty
15 evident. That's number one.

16 Number two, as a result of my present position, I
17 receive a courtesy copy, completely confidential, of all
18 judicial complaints filed in the district against -- against
19 any judicial officer on our bench, and I look at these, I don't
20 know, once a week maybe. And so I was quite surprised to -- to
21 see -- not that I would be surprised that -- that a complaint
22 would be filed against me because from time to time all federal
23 judges I think receive complaints, but -- but there was a
24 complaint made against me in the last ten days in Cincinnati
25 with the U.S. Court of Appeals Chief chief judge for my conduct

1 in this case, and that was made by Adrienne Rockenhaus as well.
2 And I haven't responded to that complaint. I likely won't.
3 We're not -- we're not required to. But there's an active
4 complaint pending against me in Cincinnati filed by the wife of
5 the defendant for the decisions that I've made in this
6 particular case.

7 Now, what troubles me here personally, I'm not --
8 people can do whatever they want to do, but -- but ethically I
9 received a packet of letters this morning, and the first letter
10 is from Adrienne Rockenhaus asking for consideration for her
11 husband and her [sic] sentencing, and I don't know about that
12 one. I don't see how I can go forward on this. I mean I --
13 I -- I had in mind some -- you know, what I always like to do
14 in these supervised release violations is to -- to try to help
15 the individual along if he wants to be helped, but I -- I
16 don't -- I don't see it, Mr. Plotkin, frankly.

17 MR. PLOTKIN: May I respond?

18 THE COURT: Of course. That's why I laid all this
19 out.

20 MR. PLOTKIN: Thank you.

21 So, yeah, and I was just appointed last week and have
22 done -- spent an inordinate amount of time both reviewing
23 materials that were sent to me by my client's wife. They're
24 numerous, as the Court knows. And I've also spent a lot of
25 time with my client. And I've also spoken to the government

1 about the situation. My focus has been on Conrad Rockenhaus.

2 THE COURT: Sure.

3 MR. PLOTKIN: My meetings have been with him alone
4 and confidential, and he and I, I believe, now have excellent
5 rapport and trust.

6 From the day that I met Mr. Rockenhaus and Mrs.
7 Rockenhaus and spoke with the government, it -- it seems to me
8 that clearly Mrs. Rockenhaus is -- is upset and is choosing to
9 exercise her rights I suppose to file certain civil matters in
10 response to treatment she finds, whatever, unlawful, offensive
11 and et cetera against her husband.

12 THE COURT: Mm-hmm.

13 MR. PLOTKIN: Her husband has not filed any of these
14 matters. Her husband is not aware of certain of these matters.
15 And her husband really is not focused, frankly, even as of this
16 morning, as of the other day at Milan, he's not focused at all
17 on any of these filings. He's focused on himself, he's focused
18 on taking responsibility for what he's pled to, and he's
19 focused on being a good man in doing what he needs to do to get
20 home, and to get home sooner than later.

21 So I know for a fact the government is, quote, not
22 holding any of her filings against Conrad. I have known this
23 Court for years, decades, and I know the character of this
24 Court, and I'm always comfortable coming in here for that
25 reason. Mr. -- Mr. Rockenhaus and I spoke about this Court

1 earlier this morning in the lockup in a very positive,
2 reassuring context.

3 I know that he is itching to resolve this matter.
4 He's taking responsibility. He wants to move forward. I
5 completely appreciate the dilemma that the Court finds itself
6 in now and it's unfortunate, but he and I -- I just want the
7 Court to know --

8 THE COURT: Yeah.

9 MR. PLOTKIN: -- that he and I are prepared to go
10 forward today.

11 THE COURT: Okay. Well, as a practical matter, I'm
12 happy to do the same, and I -- I -- I would look at the matter
13 independently, as I always do, of the baggage, if you will.
14 And I greatly appreciate your words about me and reciprocate
15 them entirely because as I said the last time we were here,
16 we -- we've been together over the years many, many, many times
17 and have done a lot of wonderful things together, both as
18 lawyers and when I got on this side of the bench.

19 But my issue here is that some individual in Ohio or
20 Tennessee or wherever is going to look at a case and a -- and
21 a -- a discovery motion or request, and I'm -- I -- I don't
22 know, our probation officers are going to have to get
23 representation and so on and so forth. And the chief judge and
24 the judicial council of the Sixth Circuit are going to look at
25 a complaint and they're going to say, "How in the world could

1 he go ahead and sentence that guy?" That's my number one
2 thing. I -- I -- I -- you know, I mean if I did that, I don't
3 think that'd show good judgment.

4 What -- what do you think, Ms. Lambert? Can you help
5 me out here at all?

6 MS. LAMBERT: Your Honor, I trust in your ability to
7 render a fair judgment in this case. However, I understand
8 your concerns and I would defer to you.

9 THE COURT: Well, I guess -- I guess I -- to both
10 lawyers I'd say I don't -- I don't want make it my concerns or
11 my -- I want to look at it as -- as a -- as a legal issue and,
12 you know, as an ethicist or as a law professor or as a council
13 who handles professional matters, you know, to look at the
14 circumstances and say is that the type of case where a federal
15 sitting judge -- a sitting federal judge should sentence an
16 individual relying on -- and I -- I was -- I found the words of
17 Ms. Rockenhaus compelling, but, you know, how are you
18 balancing -- how's the judge going to balance those
19 considerations with the fact that this person's, you know,
20 quite unhappy with him? So, you know, if -- if -- if I -- if I
21 give him jail time, that's -- looks like I'm penalizing him for
22 his -- his -- wife's behavior, and if -- if I give him credit
23 for time served and send him home today, it looks like I'm
24 intimidated by the filings. So I don't -- I don't -- I'm just
25 in a way kind of thinking this through out loud.

1 First of all, I'd also like to say I was out of town
2 Friday, Monday was a federal holiday, and this all came to my
3 attention. I haven't even had a chance -- I would call the
4 Administrative Office and ask for an ethics opinion on this. I
5 haven't even had the chance to do that.

6 So I -- I think at the minimum, I'd like to adjourn
7 this and try to figure out what's going on. I hope you
8 understand, Mr. Plotkin.

9 MR. PLOTKIN: Oh, I do.

10 THE COURT: Okay. Ms. -- Ms. Lambert?

11 MS. LAMBERT: Yes, Your Honor, I do understand.

12 THE COURT: Okay. All right. I think I've tried to
13 frame it as fairly and as objectively as possible. You know,
14 I -- I -- I'm a big believer in getting things resolved for
15 the -- for -- for the benefit of the parties and certainty as
16 quickly as possible, but I -- I -- I -- I don't feel real good
17 right now. I just need to look into this a little bit, okay?

18 MR. PLOTKIN: May I ask Mrs. Rockenhaus a very quick
19 question before we break for the day?

20 THE COURT: Of course.

21 MR. PLOTKIN: Thank you.

22 THE COURT: But don't ask her if she's willing to
23 withdraw all this stuff because that would look like coercion
24 and I...

25 MR. PLOTKIN: I understand.

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THE COURT: All right. Okay.

(Brief pause)

MR. PLOTKIN: Okay. Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. All right. I'm going to take a break, and I appreciate it, and thank you for letting me blather on today. We'll be in a short recess.

THE CLERK: All rise. Court is in recess

(Proceedings concluded at 12:29 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, Linda M. Cavanagh, Official Court Reporter of the United States District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, appointed pursuant to the provisions of Title 28, United States Code Section 753, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages 1 through 13 comprise a full, true and correct transcript taken in the matter of United States of America vs. Conrad Rockenhaus, Case No. 23-20701, on Tuesday, October 14, 2025.

s/Linda M. Cavanagh
Linda M. Cavanagh, CRR, RMR, RDR, CRC
Federal Official Court Reporter
United States District Court
Eastern District of Michigan

Date: November 7, 2025
Detroit, Michigan