

I'm writing this with the hope of two things. One, that it may help someone before they get scammed. Secondly, to try to help myself work past the feelings of being violated, even though I didn't pay any money to the scammers.

On 06/13/23, at approximately 1207, I received a voice mail on my cell phone stating, "This is **Lt. Mason with the Ada County Sheriffs Department**. I'm calling to get in contact with (my name) potential to ongoing legal matters. If you could give me a call back at (208) 445-7681, my extension is 800. Thank you."

At approximately 1211, I called the number back using my state employee office phone. The message said, "You have reached the Ada County Sheriffs Office. If you know your party's extension, you may dial it anytime." I dialed 800 for the extension to Lt. Mason. I didn't receive and answer, but it went to voice mail stating the person was unavailable at the time and to leave a message. I did not leave a message and hung up.

I sat at my desk wondering what I would be in trouble for. As I'm normally someone who worries and overthinks things, especially if they have negative connotations. I called back using my cell phone. Again, the message said, "You have reached the Ada County Sheriff's Office. If you know your party's extension, you may dial it anytime." I dialed 800 to Lt. Mason, and again there was no answer, so I left a voicemail returning his call and to call me back.

A few moments later, my cellphone rang, and it was the (208) 445-7681 number. I answered the phone and Lt. Mason introduced himself. He stated I had failed to report to a grand jury 06/10/24. I told him I had not received a summons for jury duty starting 06/10/24, and I was currently holding my jury summons for 06/17/24-06/21/24. I explained to him I had missed the 10-day window to submit the questionnaire as required, but I completed it on 06/10/24, and had called the phone number to the Ada County Courthouse. I spoke to a lady there who said everything was fine and they had me down starting 06/17/24.

Lt. Mason then proceeded to tell me that a summons was sent to me on April 3rd, 2024, and I had not responded and missed my summons date. He had me on speaker phone and spoke very fast. I was having difficulty hearing and understanding what he was saying, however I was able to make out that I would have to appear in front of a judge today (06/13/24) to answer for my absence, and that I would be escorted to the judge. My anxiety and worry elevated at this time, as I do not like to be in any kind of trouble, especially legally. Lt. Mason asked if I was prepared to hand this "civil" matter to which I said I was. He stated he would have to put me on hold and forward me to his captain to continue the process.

While I was on hold, I sent a text to a friend who works at the Ada County Sheriff's Department. I asked her if there was a Lt. Mason working there. She stated there was not and asked, "What's up?" I text her that I supposedly missed a jury summons for the 10th, but my current jury summons was for the following week. I then stated I was trying not to be in trouble by calling Lt. Mason back. She responded by saying she doesn't know who Lt. Mason is nor did she recognize the name. However, through panic and anxiety, I figured he worked in a part of the sheriff's department and that she just hadn't met him.

A few moments later, a man who introduced himself as a captain (I didn't get his name as I was panicking) got on the phone with me. The captain stated I was also being placed on a "gag order" and should not speak to anyone about the legal matter. He began explaining to me that because I missed jury duty, the federal judge put out two warrants for my arrest. One was for Failure to Appear (FTA) and stated it was for \$2,500.06. He then stated the second warrant was for Failure to Comply (FTC) and it was also for \$2,500.06. The captain went on to explain that I would have to pay the bonds and appear before the judge, but I would get the money back by the end of the day after the judge heard my side of the story as has been "normal." I asked, "I have to pay \$5,000.12 today?! I don't have money for that!" The captain then stated it would be okay, and that I would just have to provide a bank statement to the court showing I didn't have the money in my bank account. He then stated I would need to contact a family member or friend to pay the bond (I assume 10%) or I would be held in contempt and arrested. Again, my anxiety elevated, because up until now, everything to me seemed so real.

The captain then asked if I had an email address to send a packet to explain how the process works, along with my legal documents to take with me. I gave him my email address. The captain sent me an email with 4 regular pdf attachments. (There was no computer link) the email address was, Civilprocessdoj@usa.com. The captain then asked me to look at the documents and he would walk me through step by step. Like Lt. Mason, the captain spoke very fast, and it sounded like I was on speaker phone, and it was hard to hear. I was getting frustrated with this and said, "Do you have me on speaker phone, because I'm having hard time hearing you and understanding what exactly I'm supposed to be doing." The captain said, "you're on a conference call and it's being recorded so we can get this handled." Not knowing who was on the "conference call", possibly a judge and other law enforcement, I just said, "yes sir" and went on with the process.

I opened the attachments in the e-mail and began reviewing them in a panic. The attachments included:

- USPS mail receipt I initially assumed I'd be filling out.
- A court document with the title at the top "The Municipal State of Idaho" with legal wording throughout the page that I didn't have time to read right away as I was in a panic.
- A court document with the title at the top "United States Courts" that appeared to be in letter form. I didn't have time to read it as the captain was still talking and I was trying to make sense of it.
- A packet titled, "Civil Processing Procedure Manual" with 12 pages of information on how to take care of a bond through a kiosk deposit.

- A document in the packet titled, “Instructions for Refund of Cash Bond” from Trial Court Administrator Sandra Barrios. (I learned later that Sandra Barrios is an actual person who works for Ada County according to LinkedIn as a Language Access Coordinator.)

I was able to see that the name on the court documents was for, “_____.” I told the captain that the name on the forms were not mine. He replied, “It looks like we didn’t send you the right packet with your name. It will be fine; we will worry about that once we get you to a kiosk for your bond.”

As the captain continued to speak fast with legalese and on speaker phone, I began to get frustrated and asked what I needed to do in the immediate. I asked if I needed to meet him at the Ada County Sheriff’s Department and get this situation handled. The captain stated that if I stepped foot onto Ada County property that they would have no choice but to arrest me. The process he wanted me to follow, was in the packet he sent, and he would walk me through it. He stated these matters usually get resolved fast because people, like me, don’t have a criminal history, and it was most likely an oversight on my part. I continued to be in a state of panic, as I didn’t want to go to jail, and my wife had just flown out of town and was currently on a plane with no way to contact her.

I asked the captain, “What do I need to do right now?” The captain stated something to the effect of, “I’m going to transfer you to a secure line. You will need to state you intend on handling this matter civilly through a bond, or you’ll have to state you don’t agree and will proceed with an attorney.” I told him “okay”, and he advised me to standby a moment while he switched to a secured line. A few seconds later, there was a “normal” sound of our call being transferred to a secure line. I didn’t question it as I’ve heard the same noise on other calls when they have been placed secure. The captain then told me to go ahead and state how I wanted to proceed. I stated, “I would like to handle this civilly and pay the bond.” The captain then stated I needed to proceed to my vehicle, and not speak to anyone. He told me he was my “Mobile Escort” to the nearest secured federal kiosk where I could pay the bond. The captain claimed it would take approximately an hour and a half, and he would have me back home and the situation cleared up.

It should be noted he stated the kiosks were made during COVID. Like the rest of the call, this seemed to make sense to me because there were a lot of procedural changes for everyone during COVID, so I didn’t question this change.

I packed my belongings from office and began walking to my vehicle. The captain told me I needed to tell him what I was doing as we went to show that I was still complying with the legal matter. I told him I was walking to my vehicle, and I needed to know where the nearest kiosk was. The captain said, I needed to go to an Albertsons that was somewhat far from my location. I told him that was far from my current location and asked for one closer. He said, “You live at (read my correct home address to me) correct?” I said yes, but I’m at work walking through parking lot. I explained I was by the _____ in Boise. He then told me to go to the **Albertsons at 1219 Broadway Ave, Boise, Idaho 83706.**

I got into my vehicle. He asked for my starting mileage which I gave him, as he said earlier in the call that I would be reimbursed for my miles. He then told me to state my full name, and current date to which I did. By this time, I could hear radio traffic that I recognized as normal law enforcement radio traffic. I could hear the captain make a call, but as I was still in a panic state trying to enter the address to Albertsons, I couldn't make out what he was saying. He then said, "Ok _____, you are good to drive to the location. If you get stopped, they will know you're working with me and will let you proceed." I began driving to Albertsons at that time.

While driving, I was trying to think of who I could call to help me financially. I was thinking about how my wife and I were probably going to get in a fight because this would be money she was going to use on vacation, and other options. I was physically shaking because of fear of being in trouble. As I thought about the friend I was going to ask for help from, I began having imaginary conversation with him about asking him for help. In part of the imaginary conversation, I imagined him saying, "_____, are you sure this isn't a scam?" I finally had a moment of clarity.

As I pulled into the parking lot of Albertsons, I had Googled really quick, "jury summons scam" and immediately saw scams come up. One mention was I could not be fined legally over \$1,000 for missing a jury summons. I told the captain I had arrived and was parking. I told him my ending miles as he asked. While he was explaining to me that I would need to stay on the phone with him and how to proceed, I looked up the Ada County Courthouse to find the number to the jury summons office. I asked if I could put him on hold for a moment. The captain said I could not and would prefer I stayed on the line with him. I ignored the captain's request because my irritation began to grow, and I called the jury summons office.

The lady I spoke to (I didn't get her name as I was still very much panicked) and she stated I was not scheduled for 06/10/24, and they had me scheduled and checked in for 06/17/27. She affirmed that I did not miss a jury summons and it sounded like a scam. I thanked her and re-connected with the captain.

I asked, "Are you still there?" Lt. Mason was now on the phone (I recognized his voice as I believe him to be a person of color/black male). Lt. Mason said, "It's a good thing you took us off hold. We were about to terminate the call and just send officers out for your arrest. Growing more irritated and angrier, I unfortunately said, "I just talked to the summons office at the courthouse, and I haven't missed any summons. I'm not paying you a f'ing (I said the whole word) thing, and this is a scam." The captain immediately said, "What did you just say to him?!" I repeated myself that this was scam, and I wasn't paying anything as the courthouse confirmed I didn't miss a summons. The captain said, "What courthouse did you call?" I told him the Ada County Courthouse. He said, "This is a federal summons and you just messed up!"

I removed the phone away from my ear as a much stronger panic just set in as I thought for sure my outburst just made things worse. As I brought the phone back up to my ear, I could hear the captain state something to the effect of, "You are being charged federally and will need a federal lawyer to get you out of this one buddy!"

I replied, "Well if I'm being told I need an attorney then there's no reason to continue speaking to you." This is where the call ended.

I then called the federal courthouse in Boise to speak to the jury summons office. When the lady of the office answered, I gave her my name, explained that I was scared and wasn't sure if I was being scammed. I explained to her that I was told I had missed a jury summons for the 10th, and I currently had two warrants for approximately \$2,500 apiece. The lady said, "Oh honey, that's a scam! That is a scam!" She then proceeded to tell me the federal court would send a follow-up letter if the 10-day questionnaire wasn't completed, and they would go so far as to call the day of to say, "Hey where are you, you're supposed to be here." She then asked, "You didn't give them any money, did you?!" I told her I had not, but I was currently in an Albertson's parking lot about to go to a kiosk when I started realizing this may be a scam. She said, "Yes, that's a scam. We know who's supposed to be here right now, and I assure you it's not you or we would have called." I thanked her for her time and ended the call.

Once back in my office, I began to look up the scam. I came across the U.S Courts, District of Idaho Website. There are several letters from people who have almost been a victim like I was. One person put how I'm currently feeling, which is violated. It's also embarrassing thinking about it the day after of how panicked I was. I've worked in _____ for over 18 years. There were a lot of things in this scam that made sense, or I could justify in my head as to why it would be happening. What set the entire panic in motion is I have a current jury summons on my desk. I wasn't sure how I missed a prior jury summons, but that's where my brain went, and it quickly spiraled downhill until I could start thinking a little clearer.

I truly hope this helps someone to possibly avoid this scam or feel related to. Although embarrassed, I'm beyond grateful and blessed that I'm not out thousands of dollars.