UNPUBLISHED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

No. 24-4594

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff - Appellee,

v.

TYRELL WATTS,

Defendant - Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina, at Charlotte. Robert J. Conrad, Jr., District Judge. (3:23-cr-00071-RJC-DCK-1)

Submitted: March 23, 2026 Decided: August 20, 2026

Before NIEMEYER, RUSHING, and BENJAMIN, Circuit Judges.

Affirmed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

ON BRIEF: John G. Baker, Federal Public Defender, Ann L. Hester, Assistant Federal Public Defender, OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER, Charlotte, North Carolina, for Appellant. Russ Ferguson, United States Attorney, Anthony J. Enright, Assistant United States Attorney, OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY, Charlotte, North Carolina, for Appellee.

Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

In August 2021, Tyrell Watts pled guilty to possession of a firearm by a felon, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1). The district court sentenced Watts to 37 months' imprisonment followed by three years of supervised release. The district court imposed several standard discretionary conditions of supervised release, including one that required Watts to submit his home and residence to searches conducted by a probation officer without a warrant based on reasonable suspicion or Watts's consent. In September 2022, Watts's supervising probation officer, Corey Campbell, received a phone call with a tip. The informant said that she had seen Watts at his residence with firearms and that Watts was selling drugs at the residence. Campbell met with the informant and learned she had been living at Watts's residence, and she could describe the residence, the firearms Watts possessed, and her basis for believing Watts was selling drugs. Later that day, Campbell obtained access to Watts's Instagram account from the lead detective for Watts's 2021 conviction. On Watts's Instagram account, Campbell saw a post from August 2022 depicting Watts with a gun and a red bandana. Campbell believed the red bandana was characteristic of gang-related conduct. Campbell applied for permission to search Watts's residence.

On the day of the search, undercover police officers observed Watts at his residence engaging in what appeared to be hand-to-hand drug transactions, during which several cars drove up to the house, Watts approached the cars, and Watts gave plastic grocery bags to the occupants. Later that day, law enforcement executed a search of Watts's residence, explaining to Watts that the search was being conducted pursuant to the warrantless search

condition included in his conditions of supervised release. During the search, law enforcement found a firearm in Watts's bedroom and drugs in the residence.

A federal grand jury charged Watts with possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, in violation of § 922(g)(1). Watts filed a motion to suppress the evidence gathered from the search of his residence, arguing that it was a warrantless search in violation of the Fourth Amendment. The district court rejected Watts's assertion that authorities were required to have a warrant or probable cause to search his home based on the warrantless search condition and found that Campbell had reasonable suspicion to search Watts's residence. The court thus denied Watts's suppression motion and, at a subsequent bench trial, found him guilty. The court sentenced Watts to 36 months' imprisonment followed by three years of supervised release. Watts appeals, challenging the district court's denial of his motion to suppress.

"In reviewing the denial of a motion to suppress, we review legal conclusions de novo and factual findings for clear error." *United States v. Pulley*, 987 F.3d 370, 376 (4th Cir. 2021) (internal quotation marks omitted). "In conducting this review, [we] evaluate[] the evidence in the light most favorable to the government." *United States v. Runner*, 43 F.4th 417, 421 (4th Cir. 2022) (internal quotation marks omitted).

Watts argues that law enforcement violated the Fourth Amendment by conducting a warrantless search of his residence without probable cause. Watts first asserts that the Government failed to demonstrate an exception to the warrant requirement because the Supreme Court and this court have not determined that supervised release, as opposed to probation or parole, creates a special needs exception to the requirement. In addition, Watts

contends that, even if the warrantless search condition allowed a search based on reasonable suspicion, Campbell did not have sufficient reasonable suspicion that Watts was engaged in criminal conduct at his residence.

The Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable searches and seizures, and "warrantless searches of a residence are per se unreasonable under the Fourth Amendment—subject only to a few specifically established and well-delineated exceptions." *United States v. Everett*, 91 F.4th 698, 709 (4th Cir. 2024) (internal quotation marks omitted). "When evidence is obtained in violation of the Fourth Amendment, the judicially developed exclusionary rule usually precludes its use in a criminal proceeding against the victim of the illegal search and seizure." *Illinois v. Krull*, 480 U.S. 340, 347 (1987).

The Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld warrantless searches of probationers and parolees who were subject to warrantless search conditions or regulations because probationers and parolees have diminished privacy expectations. *See United States v. Hill*, 776 F.3d 243, 248-49 (4th Cir. 2015) (citing *Griffin v. Wisconsin*, 483 U.S. 868, 870-71 (1987) (upholding state regulation requiring probationers to submit to warrantless searches upon reasonable suspicion); *United States v. Knights*, 534 U.S. 112, 114 (2001) (finding a probation officer with reasonable suspicion could conduct a warrantless search of probationer's residence where there was a warrantless search condition); *Samson v. California*, 547 U.S. 843 (2006) (finding a search of a parolee did not violate the Fourth Amendment where parolee was unambiguously aware of the warrantless search condition that allowed warrantless searches with or without cause)). The Court in these cases noted

that searches based on warrantless search conditions or regulations allowing warrantless searches of parolees and probationers represented a special needs exception to the warrant requirement because the state has an interest in supervising probationers and parolees to promote rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. *See, e.g.*, *Griffin*, 483 U.S. at 875-76.

The diminished privacy expectation that applies to parolees and probationers applies with equal force to those serving terms of supervised release. *United States v. Reyes*, 283 F.3d 446, 458-59 (2d Cir. 2002); *see United States v. Riley*, 920 F.3d 200, 206 (4th Cir. 2019) (noting that supervised release is "analogous to and largely indistinguishable from probation and parole"); *see also United States v. Ward*, 770 F.3d 1090, 1098 (4th Cir. 2014) (noting that "[l]ike parolees, individuals on supervised release also enjoy only conditional liberty because they already have been convicted of the underlying offense" (internal quotation marks omitted)). Therefore, a warrantless search based upon reasonable suspicion pursuant to a condition of supervised release does not violate the Fourth Amendment.

Reasonable suspicion requires "a particularized and objective basis for suspecting the particular person." *Navarette v. California*, 572 U.S. 393, 396 (2014). "Judicial review of the evidence offered to demonstrate reasonable suspicion must be commonsensical, focused on the evidence as a whole, and cognizant of both context and the particular experience of officers charged with the ongoing tasks of law enforcement." *United States v. Branch,* 537 F.3d 328, 337 (4th Cir. 2008). "[M]ultiple factors may be taken together to create a reasonable suspicion even where each factor, taken alone, would be insufficient." *United States v. George*, 732 F.3d 296, 300 (4th Cir. 2013). "The degree to

which the police may rely on a tip to establish reasonable suspicion depends on the tipster's veracity, reliability, and basis of knowledge." *United States v. Kehoe*, 893 F.3d 232, 238 (4th Cir. 2018). We "generally presume that a citizen-informant or a victim who discloses his or her identity and basis of knowledge to the police is both reliable and credible." *Id.* In addition, face-to-face interactions with informants produce more reliability, because the officer can assess the reliability of the informant firsthand, and the informant exposes him or herself to accountability for making a false statement. *See United States v. Perkins*, 363 F.3d 317, 323 (4th Cir. 2004).

Here, the informant was not anonymous and the investigation began the same day Campbell received the tip. *Cf. United States v. Drakeford*, 992 F.3d 255 (4th Cir. 2021) (finding warrantless search illegal where generalized tip was from confidential informant who did not provide the name or address of the supervisee and officers did not begin investigation for several months). Moreover, the informant provided her name and address and specific information about Watts and the criminal activity in the residence, and Campbell met with the informant and was able to assess her credibility. In addition, Campbell gathered corroborating evidence that buttressed the details given by the informant. Finally, officers witnessed what they reasonably believed to be drug transactions between Watts and others at the residence the morning of the search, as the informant had stated. Taken as a whole, the information available to Campbell provided a particularized and objective basis for suspecting Watts of violating the conditions of his supervised release. Therefore, the district court did not err in denying Watts's motion to suppress the evidence.

Accordingly, we affirm the district court's judgment. We dispense with oral argument because the facts and legal contentions are adequately presented in the materials before this court and argument would not aid the decisional process.

AFFIRMED