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60 Charges Filed Against Defendant Stephan Sterns

OSCEOLA COUNTY, Fla. – On Monday, the State Attorney’s Office for the Ninth Judicial Circuit filed a 60-count information against defendant Stephan Sterns, the person associated with the disappearance of 13-year-old Madeline Soto.

Sterns is facing the following charges:

- 8 counts of Sexual Battery on a Child Under 12
- 5 counts of Sexual Battery with a Child 12-18 (Familial/Custodial Authority)
- 7 counts of Lewd or Lascivious Molestation
- 40 counts of Unlawful Possession of Materials Depicting Sexual Performance by a Child Ten or More Images

During law enforcement’s investigation into the disappearance of Soto, Kissimmee Police found several images and videos on Sterns’ phone and arrested him on charges of sexual battery with a child, capital sexual battery and possession of material depicting sexual performance by a child. He is currently being held on no bond in the Osceola Department of Corrections.

State Attorney Bain said, “The State Attorney’s Office has been working closely with KPD and received evidence that gave us cause to file formal charges against Sterns. We appreciate the thoroughness and detailed attention of their investigation and will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to build a strong case against the defendant.”

Sterns will eventually be arraigned on the charges. The latest information on court hearings can be found on the Osceola County Clerk of Courts website.

Sexual Battery on a Child Under 12 is a capital felony, punishable by life in prison if a defendant is convicted. Charges of Sexual Battery with a Child 12-18 and Lewd or Lascivious Molestation carry sentences of up to life in prison if a person is convicted. If convicted, a defendant can receive up to 15 years in prison for each count of Unlawful Possession of Materials Depicting Sexual Performance by a Child.

Charges are merely an allegation, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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