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Man arrested for sending Nancy Guthrie's family 'imposter ransom demand': court docs

by JESSICA A. BOTELHO | The National News Desk

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This image provided by the Pima County Sheriff's Department, on Monday, Feb. 2, 2026, shows a missing person alert for Nancy Guthrie. (Pima County Sheriff's Department via AP)



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TUCSON, Ariz. (TNND) — A 42-year-old California man was arrested for allegedly sending fake ransom texts to Savannah Guthrie's family in connection to [her missing mother](#), Nancy.

A criminal complaint filed on Thursday identified him as Derrick Callella.



IMPOSTER RANSOM DEMAND made in Nancy Guthrie case; FBI a

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“We have made one arrest related to an imposter ransom demand, and a complaint will be presented to a magistrate judge later today,” FBI Agent Heith Janke said during a news conference earlier on Thursday.

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“My next message is to those imposters who are trying to take advantage and profit from this situation,” he added. “We will investigate and ensure you are held accountable for your actions.”

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**United States District Court**

United States of America
v.

Derrick Callella; DOB: 1983; USC

Complaint for violation of Title 18 U.S.C. § 875a and

COMPLAINANT'S STATEMENT OF FACTS CONSTITUTING VIOLATION

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Callella was charged with transmitting a demand for ransom in interstate commerce, and without disclosing his identity, utilizing a telecommunications device with the intent to abuse,

The criminal complaint noted that Nancy Guthrie's loved ones received two text messages asking for payment confirmation after the family released a video on Wednesday begging for Nancy Guthrie's safe return.

"Did you get the bitcoin were [sic] waiting on our end for the transaction," one of the texts noted, according to the complaint.

Authorities said they traced the texts to Callella's email, which they then linked to this home. He then admitted to sending the texts using a VOIP account.

“ *"Callella stated that he pulled family information from a cyber website, and that he had been following along and watching TV," according to the complaint. "When he said that he sent text messages, he was trying to see if the family would respond."*

The pair of text messages were not linked to a previous ransom demand, per the complaint.

Her family later issued a plea on social media, urging her suspected captor to contact them and prove their mother is alive.



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Bring her home.

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Camron Guthrie, who is Nancy's son, released a new video Thursday night begging for his mother's safe return.

“Whoever is out there holding our mother, we want to hear from you. We haven't heard anything directly. We need you to reach out and we need a way to communicate with you so

“But first, we have to know that you have our mom,” he added. “We want to talk to you and we are waiting for contact.”

Authorities said Nancy Guthrie was last seen inside her home on Arizona on Saturday night. She was reported missing shortly before noon Sunday after she didn’t show up at a church.



CATALINA, ARIZONA - FEBRUARY 3: Pima County Sheriff, Chris Nanos (left), speaks to the media on February 3, 2026 in Tucson, Arizona. He and FBI assistant special agent in-charge Jon Edwards (right) were answering questions about the search for Nancy Guthrie, the missing mother of NBC host Savannah Guthrie.(Photo by Jan Sonnenmair/Getty Images)

Investigators said they have no proof that she is still alive but are holding out hope she's “still out there.

DNA tests showed blood found on her front porch was a match to her. Authorities think she was taken against her will from her home in Tucson over the weekend.

“Right now, we believe Nancy is still out there. We want her home,” Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos said.

The sheriff, however, acknowledged that authorities have no evidence she's OK.

The Pima County Sheriff's Department said [they are yet to identify a suspect or person of interest](#) in connection with her disappearance.

Wednesday.

Authorities also said while they appreciate the public's concern, they urged people to stop sharing incorrect information online.

“*"The sharing of unverified accusations or false information is irresponsible and does not assist the investigation," the department noted. "No suspect or person of interest has been identified at this time."*

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

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