

Christian Missionary and US Marine Veteran Killed in Facebook Marketplace Scam

A U.S. Marine veteran and Christian missionary was killed during what authorities say was a Facebook Marketplace meetup that turned into a robbery and shooting, leading to the arrest of four suspects, including a juvenile.

Four people have been taken into custody in connection with the death of Michael Ryan Burke, 42, as reported by The Christian Post. Police said Burke was shot Jan. 18 at his home in Columbia, Missouri, after agreeing to sell his iPhone through the online marketplace.

According to court documents, the suspects allegedly arranged to buy Burke's iPhone 15 Pro "under false pretenses" as part of a string of robberies targeting people selling phones online.

Police identified the adult suspects as 18-year-olds Alexis Baumann, Kobe Aust and Joseph Crane, along with an unidentified juvenile. Investigators said Baumann drove the group to Burke's home while Crane and the juvenile went inside armed with pistols.

Baumann later told police she heard three gunshots. Court records say Crane and the juvenile then ran back to the vehicle and admitted they had shot Burke and taken his phone. The stolen device was later sold at a Walmart kiosk, according to the affidavit.



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Authorities believe the group had carried out at least two

similar robberies in the days leading up to Burke's death, using arranged meetups to steal phones and quickly resell them. In one earlier incident, the juvenile suspect allegedly threatened a victim, saying, "If you touch me, I'll shoot you," after taking her phone.

Despite being critically wounded, Burke managed to call 911 and describe his attackers to dispatchers, Fox News reported. He also sent a final text message to his mother and sister that read, "Hey, I'm dying and I love you," according to CBS affiliate KRCG.

All three adult suspects were charged with second-degree murder, first-degree robbery and first-degree burglary. Crane also faces charges of armed criminal action and unlawful use of a weapon, police said.

Burke was a U.S. Marine veteran, a graduate of the University of Missouri, a former firefighter and a humanitarian who spent years serving others through missionary work. He had worked in countries including Uganda, Haiti and Iraq, often alongside Christian communities and children.

On social media, Burke regularly shared about his faith in Jesus Christ and the work he believed God had called him to do. Just days before his death, he posted about partnering with C3 Church in West Africa, writing, "Grateful to walk this journey and witness what God is doing. To God be the glory."

Friends and readers alike have since pointed to Burke's life of service and faith, remembering him not for the violence that ended his life, but for the purpose and conviction with which he lived it.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a background in journalism from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A*

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