

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
TENNESSEE, NASHVILLE DIVISION

Douglas Norman v. Vanderbilt University, et al.

Douglas Norman v. Vanderbilt University, et al. · No. 3:25-cv-00296 · Decided March 31, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee denied Defendants’ motion to dismiss claims brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for alleged Fourth Amendment violations involving false arrest and malicious prosecution. The court held that, accepting the complaint’s allegations as true and drawing reasonable inferences in Plaintiff’s favor, the claims were sufficiently plausible to proceed.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee, Nashville Division
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee, Nashville Division
DECIDED	March 31, 2026
DOCKET	3:25-cv-00296
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff brought claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 alleging Fourth Amendment false arrest and malicious prosecution. Defendants moved to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts factual allegations as true, construes the complaint in the light most favorable to the plaintiff, draws reasonable inferences in the plaintiff's favor, and determines whether the allegations state a facially plausible claim for relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; memorandum and order from a federal district court

TOPICS

- motions to dismiss
- section 1983
- fourth amendment
- civil rights
- criminal procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint plausibly alleged that Defendants violated the Fourth Amendment by falsely arresting Plaintiff without probable cause.
2. Whether the complaint plausibly alleged a Fourth Amendment malicious-prosecution claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
3. Whether the complaint sufficiently alleged that each Defendant made, influenced, or participated in the decision to prosecute Plaintiff.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint plausibly alleged a Fourth Amendment false-arrest claim because, accepting its factual allegations as true and drawing reasonable inferences in Plaintiff's favor, it alleged facts sufficient to challenge the existence of probable cause for the arrest.
2. The complaint plausibly alleged a Fourth Amendment malicious-prosecution claim because it included sufficient facts to support an inference that the prosecution lacked probable cause and that Defendants participated in or influenced the decision to prosecute.
3. Dismissal was not warranted because the complaint stated facially plausible Fourth Amendment claims.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“However, accepting Plaintiff’s factual allegations as true and drawing all reasonable inferences in Plaintiff’s favor, the complaint includes enough facts to clear the low bar of plausibility for his claims.”

“Whether these factual allegations hold up when tested will be a determination made a later time.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, who was not enrolled at Vanderbilt, had been told that he needed to contact a campus supervisor before entering campus for most purposes. He alleged that he contacted Vanderbilt Public Safety before entering campus on April 16, 2024, received permission or reasonably believed he had permission to come, and went to the Student Affairs office. Vanderbilt personnel allegedly directed Public Safety officers to arrest him despite his explanations and his offer to leave, and Lieutenant Alan Reed allegedly omitted those facts from the affidavit supporting the trespass charge. The charge was later retired.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff was arrested and charged with criminal trespass after entering Vanderbilt University property. The criminal trespass charge was later retired at the request of the District Attorney's Office. Plaintiff filed this action on March 13, 2025, and Defendants moved to dismiss. The court denied the motion, concluding that the complaint plausibly alleged Fourth Amendment false-arrest and malicious-prosecution claims.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662 (2009)
- Directv, Inc. v. Treesh, 487 F.3d 471, 476 (6th Cir. 2007)
- Guzman v. U.S. Dep't of Children's Servs., 679 F.3d 425, 429 (6th Cir. 2012)
- Alford v. Deffendoll, 165 F.4th 490, 496 (6th Cir. 2026)
- Johnson v. Moseley, 790 F.3d 649, 654 (6th Cir. 2015)

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