

COURT OF APPEALS OF GEORGIA

Richard Lamar Martin v. State

437 U.S. 385 (Ga. Ct. App. 2026) · No. A26A0749 · Decided June 3, 2026

SUMMARY

The Georgia Court of Appeals affirmed Richard Lamar Martin’s convictions for sexual exploitation of children following a bench trial. The court held that exigent circumstances justified the warrantless seizure of Martin’s computer because officers reasonably feared that digital evidence could be imminently destroyed before a search warrant was obtained.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals of Georgia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Pipkin, Judge; Dillard, P. J.; Gobeil, J.; Pipkin, J.
JURISDICTION	Court of Appeals of Georgia
DECIDED	June 3, 2026
DOCKET	A26A0749
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	After a bench trial and convictions for numerous counts of sexual exploitation of children, Martin appealed the denial of his pretrial motion to suppress evidence obtained from a warrantless seizure of his computer.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The appellate court defers to the trial court's credibility determinations and factual findings unless clearly erroneous, construes the evidentiary record in the light most favorable to those findings and the judgment, and independently reviews the trial court's legal conclusions by applying the law to the facts as found.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Georgia Court of Appeals opinion
PARTIES	Richard Lamar Martin v. The State

TOPICS

- suppression of evidence
- fourth amendment
- search and seizure
- warrant requirement
- criminal procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the warrantless seizure of Martin's computer violated the Fourth Amendment because no warrant or consent authorized the seizure.
2. Whether exigent circumstances justified the warrantless seizure based on an objectively reasonable concern that computer images of child pornography would be imminently destroyed before a search warrant could be obtained.

HOLDINGS

1. The warrantless seizure of Martin's computer was authorized by the exigent-circumstances exception to the Fourth Amendment's warrant requirement because officers had an objectively reasonable basis to believe that digital evidence of child pornography was vulnerable to imminent destruction before a warrant could be obtained.
2. The appellate court must defer to the trial court's credibility determinations and factual findings absent clear error, while independently reviewing the trial court's legal conclusions.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Although we defer to the trial court's factfinding, we owe no deference to the trial court's legal conclusions. Instead, we independently apply the law to the facts as found by the trial court." (4)

"Whether exigent circumstances existed is a question of fact, and we review police actions from the standpoint of a hypothetical reasonable officer and must measure those actions from the foresight of an officer acting in a quickly developing situation and not from the hindsight of which judges have benefit." (5)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Federal investigators traced an IP address used to distribute child sexual exploitation material through a peer-to-peer network to an efficiency lodge in Austell, Georgia, but could not identify the specific room or resident responsible. Martin acknowledged that he had a computer, used the internet from his room, and used a nickname resembling the network username. He refused consent to search his computer but said officers could search a hard drive, then repeatedly entered and exited his room while claiming he could not find it. Concerned that digital evidence could be destroyed before a warrant was obtained, officers seized the computer and obtained a search warrant the next day.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Law enforcement seized Martin's computer without a warrant or consent after investigating an IP address associated with the online distribution of child sexual exploitation material. The trial court denied Martin's motion to suppress, finding that the seizure was reasonable under exigent circumstances. The Court of Appeals of Georgia affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- State v. Culler, 351 Ga. App. 19, 19 (830 SE2d 434) (2019)
- Mackay v. State, 291 Ga. App. 733, 734-35 (662 SE2d 814) (2008)
- Mincey v. Arizona, 437 U.S. 385, 394(I) (1978)
- Bowden v. State, 376 Ga. App. 746, 748 (921 SE2d 8) (2025)
- Hesrick v. State, 308 Ga. App. 363, 366-67 (707 SE2d 574) (2011)
- James v. State, 294 Ga. App. 656, 660 (670 SE2d 181) (2008)

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