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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

NDTX Charges Alleged DarkWeb Drug Trafficker Arrested in DOJ Operation DisrupTor

Today, the Department of Justice, through the Joint Criminal Opioid and Darknet Enforcement (JCODE) team, joined Europol to announce the results of Operation DisrupTor, a coordinated international effort to disrupt opioid trafficking on the Darknet. The operation, which was conducted across the United States and Europe, demonstrates the continued partnership between JCODE and Europol against the illegal sale of drugs and other illicit goods and services.

Operation DisrupTor actions have resulted in the arrest of 179 Darknet drug traffickers and fraudulent criminals who engaged in tens of thousands of sales of illicit goods and services across the United States and Europe — including a 39-year-old alleged Darknet cocaine and heroin trafficker charged in the Northern District of Texas.

121 of Operation DisrupTor arrests were made in the United States, including two in Canada at the request of the United States, 42 in Germany, eight in the Netherlands, four in the United Kingdom, three in Austria, and one in Sweden. A number of investigations are still ongoing to identify the individuals behind dark web accounts.

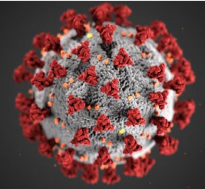
The operation also resulted in the seizure of over \$6.5 million; approximately 500 kilograms of drugs worldwide (including approximately 275 kilograms of drugs in the U.S.); and 63 firearms. Darknet vendor accounts were identified and attributed to real individuals selling illicit goods on Darknet market sites such as AlphaBay, Dream, WallStreet, Nightmare, Empire, White House, DeepSea, Dark Market and others.

By leveraging complementary partnerships and surging resources across the U.S. government and Europol, Operation DisrupTor was used to significantly disrupt the online opioid trade and send a strong message that criminals operating on the Darknet are not beyond the reach of law enforcement.

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“Criminals selling fentanyl on the Darknet should pay attention to Operation Disruptor,” said Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen. “The arrest of 179 of them in seven countries—with the seizure of their drug supplies and their money as well — shows that there will be no safe haven for drug dealing in cyberspace.”

The extensive operation, which lasted nine months, resulted in over dozens of federal prosecutions including:

- Aaron Brewer, 39, of Corsicana, Texas, was charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance and distribution of a controlled substance in a two-count indictment returned by a grand jury in the Northern District of Texas. According to court documents, the defendant allegedly sold cocaine, heroin, and other drugs via the dark web. He allegedly accepted payment in cryptocurrency, primarily bitcoin, and then shipped the drugs to customers’ addresses through the U.S. mail and other shipping services. Following Brewer’s arrest on July 2, agents with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and FBI Dallas Field Office seized roughly 650 grams of black tar heroin, cocaine, and OxyContin, two computers, and more than \$870 in postage stamps, as well as a ledger outlining 757 drug shipments sent to 609 unique addresses between December 2019 and March 2020.
- The Los Angeles JCODE Task Force, in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Central District of California, successfully dismantled a drug trafficking organization that used online monikers such as “Stealthgod” to sell methamphetamine and MDMA on multiple Darknet marketplaces. Investigators have linked the crew to more than 18,000 illicit drug sales to customers in at least 35 states and numerous countries around the world. During law enforcement actions in Southern California earlier this year, members of JCODE arrested five defendants and seized approximately 120 pounds of methamphetamine, seven kilograms of MDMA and five firearms. Two of the five – Teresa McGrath, 34, of Sunland-Tujunga, and Mark Chavez, 41, of downtown Los Angeles – have since pleaded guilty to narcotics-trafficking and other offenses, and each faces a 15-year mandatory minimum sentence. As the investigation continued, the Los Angeles JCODE Task Force made additional seizures, including \$1.6 million in cryptocurrency, 11 pounds of methamphetamine and 14 pounds of pills pressed with methamphetamine. Andres Bermudez, 37, of Palmdale, California, who allegedly was a main supplier of methamphetamine to the “Stealthgod” crew, was charged last week with a narcotics-trafficking offense that carry a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence. He is considered a fugitive.
- Arden McCann, 32, of Quebec, Canada, was charged with conspiring to import drugs into the United States and money laundering conspiracy, in a four-count indictment returned by a grand jury in Atlanta, Georgia. According to court documents, the defendant is alleged to have imported alprazolam, fentanyl, U-47700, and fentanyl analogues such as carfentanil, furanyl fentanyl, 4-fluoroisobutyryl fentanyl, acryl fentanyl, and methoxyacetyl fentanyl into the United States from Canada and China. The superseding indictment alleges that fentanyl analogues the defendant imported into the United States resulted in a non-fatal overdose in April 2016, and fentanyl the defendant imported into the United States resulted in an overdose death in December 2016.
- Khlari Sirotkin, 36, of Colorado; Kelly Stephens, 32, of Colorado; Sean Deaver, 36, of Nevada; Abby Jones, 37, of Nevada; and Sasha Sirotkin, 32, of California,



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were charged with drug trafficking and money laundering conspiracy, in a 21-count indictment returned by a grand jury in Cincinnati, Ohio. According to court documents, the defendants are alleged to be members of one of the most prolific online drug trafficking organizations in the United States and allegedly specialized in the manufacturing and distribution of more than one million fentanyl-laced counterfeit pills and laundered approximately \$2.8 million over the course of the conspiracy. The pressed fentanyl pills, along with heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine, were shipped to the Southern District of Ohio and throughout the country. FBI, DEA, FDA, HSI and USPIS agents seized 2.5 kilograms of fentanyl; 5,095 pressed xanax; 50 suboxone; 16.5 grams of cocaine; 37 grams of crystal meth; 12 grams of black tar heroin; an industrial pill press; 5,908 pounds of dried marijuana with an estimated street value of \$9 million; \$80,191 in cash, 10 firearms and one pound of fentanyl.

- The FBI Washington Field Office's Hi-Tech Opioid Task Force, in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia, successfully thwarted a firebomb attack plot involving explosives, firearms, the Darknet, prescription opioid trafficking, cryptocurrency, and sophisticated money laundering. William Anderson Burgamy, 33, of Hanover, Maryland, and Hyrum T. Wilson, 41, of Auburn, Nebraska, pleaded guilty in the Eastern District of Virginia to charges related to a conspiracy to use explosives to firebomb and destroy a competitor pharmacy in Nebraska. Burgamy, who is not a pharmacist, operated as the Darknet vendor NeverPressedRX (NPRX) since at least August 2019. Wilson, who was a licensed pharmacist, illegally mailed to Burgamy over 19,000 dosage units of prescription medications, including opioids, from his pharmacy in Nebraska. Burgamy illegally sold prescription drugs through his Darknet vendor account to customers nationwide, and claimed at one point that he made nearly \$1 million total. Burgamy and Wilson agreed that Burgamy and another individual would carry multiple firearms during the attack operation and use explosives, specifically Molotov cocktails enhanced with Styrofoam as a thickening agent, to burn the victim pharmacy down in furtherance of their drug trafficking scheme. Law enforcement agents seized thousands of opioid pills, eight unsecured firearms, including two loaded AR-15 assault rifles with high capacity magazines, and over \$19,000 cash. Prior to Burgamy's arrest in April 2020, which uncovered and thwarted the firebombing plot, Burgamy and Wilson fully intended on the attack occurring after COVID-19 restrictions were lifted.

An indictment and criminal complaint merely alleges that crimes have been committed. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Operation DisrupTor was a collaborative initiative across JCODE members, including the Department of Justice; Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS); U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)'s Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN); Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF); Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and Department of Defense (DOD). Local, state and other federal agencies also contributed to Operation DisrupTor investigations. The investigations leading to Operation DisrupTor were significantly aided by essential support and coordination by the Department of Justice's multi-agency Special

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Operations Division, the Criminal Division’s Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section, and Organized Crime and Gang Section, the Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs, the National Cyber Joint Investigative Task Force (NCJITF), Europol and its Dark Web team and international partners Eurojust, Austrian Federal Investigation Bureau (Bundeskriminalamt), Cyprus Police (Αστυνομία Κύπρου), German Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt), Canada’s Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Portuguese Judicial Police (Polícia Judiciária), Dutch Police (Politie), Swedish Police (Polisen), the British National Crime Agency, Australia's Western Australia Police Force and Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission.

Federal prosecutions are being conducted in more than 20 Federal districts, including: the Central District of California, the Eastern District of California, the Northern District of California, the Southern District of California, the District of Colorado, the District of Columbia, the District of Connecticut, the Middle District of Florida, the Southern District of Florida, the Northern District of Georgia, the District of Hawaii, the Western District of Missouri, the District of New Jersey, the Western District of North Carolina, the Northern District of Ohio, the Southern District of Ohio, District of Oregon, the Western District of Pennsylvania, the Northern District of Texas, the Eastern District of Virginia, the District of the Virgin Islands and the Western District of Washington.

JCODE is an FBI-led Department of Justice initiative, which works closely with the DEA-led, multi-agency, Special Operations Division to support, coordinate and de-conflict investigations targeting for disruption and dismantlement of the online sale of illegal drugs, especially fentanyl and other opioids. Additionally, JCODE targets the trafficking of weapons and other illicit goods and services on the internet. Operation DisrupTor illustrates the investigative power of federal and international partnerships to combat the borderless nature of online criminal activity.

Photos of seizures can be obtained by clicking [here](#), relevant court documents can be obtained by clicking [here](#), and graphic can be downloaded [here](#).

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Drug Trafficking

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