

International Law Enforcement Operation Targeting Opioid Traffickers On The Darknet Results In 150 Arrests Worldwide And The Seizure Of Weapons, Drugs

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the Department of Justice, through the Joint Criminal Opioid and Darknet Enforcement (JCODE) team joined Europol to announce the results of Operation Dark HunTor, a coordinated international effort on three continents to

disrupt opioid trafficking on the Darknet. The operation, which was conducted across the United States, Australia, and Europe, was a result of the continued partnership between JCODE and foreign law enforcement against the illegal sale of drugs and other illicit goods and services. Operation Dark HunTor builds on the success of last year's [Operation DisrupTor](#) and the coordinated law enforcement [takedown earlier this year of DarkMarket](#), the world's then-largest illegal marketplace on the Darknet. At the time, German authorities arrested the marketplace's alleged operator and seized the site's infrastructure, providing investigators across the world with a trove of evidence. Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) and JCODE have since been compiling intelligence packages to identify key targets.

Following the DarkMarket takedown in January 2021, U.S. and international law enforcement agencies identified Darknet drug vendors and buyers, resulting in a series of complementary, but separate, law enforcement investigations. Operation Dark HunTor actions have resulted in the arrest of 150 alleged Darknet drug traffickers and other criminals who engaged in tens of thousands of sales of illicit goods and services across Australia, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Prior to, but in support of Operation Dark HunTor, Italian authorities also shut down the DeepSea and Berlusconi dark web marketplaces which boasted over 40,000 advertisements of illegal products. Four alleged administrators were arrested, and €3.6 million in cryptocurrencies were seized in coordinated U.S.-Italian operations.

Operation Dark HunTor resulted in the seizure of over \$31.6 million in both cash and virtual currencies; approximately 234 kilograms (kg) of drugs worldwide including 152.1 kg of amphetamine, 21.6 kg of cocaine, 26.9 kg of opioids, 32.5 kg of MDMA, in addition to more than 200,000 ecstasy, fentanyl, oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methamphetamine pills, and counterfeit medicine; and 45 firearms. Darknet vendor accounts were also identified and attributed to real individuals selling illicit goods on active marketplaces, as well as inactive Darknet marketplaces such as Dream, WallStreet, White House, DeepSea, and Dark Market.

Operation Dark HunTor led to 65 arrests in the United States, one in Bulgaria, three in France, 47 in Germany, four in the Netherlands, 24 in the United Kingdom, four in Italy, and two in Switzerland. A number of investigations are still ongoing.

“This 10-month massive international law enforcement operation spanned across three continents and involved dozens of U.S. and international law enforcement agencies to send one clear message to those hiding on the Darknet peddling illegal drugs: there is no dark internet. We can and we will shine a light,” said Deputy Attorney General Monaco. “Operation Dark HunTor prevented countless lives from being lost to this dangerous trade in illicit and counterfeit drugs, because one pill can kill. The Department of Justice

with our international partners will continue to crack down on lethal counterfeit opioids purchased on the Darknet.”

“The men and women of the department’s Criminal Division, in close collaboration with our team of interagency and international partners, stand ready to leverage all our resources to protect our communities through the pursuit of those who profit from addiction, under the false belief that they are anonymous on the Darknet,” said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite Jr of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. “Only through a whole of government and, in this case, global approach to tackling cyber-enabled drug trafficking can we hope to achieve the significant results illustrated in Operation Dark HunTor.”

“The FBI continues to identify and bring to justice drug dealers who believe they can hide their illegal activity through the Darknet,” said FBI Director Christopher A. Wray. “Criminal darknet markets exist so drug dealers can profit at the expense of others’ safety. The FBI is committed to working with our JCIDE and EUROPOL law enforcement partners to disrupt those markets and the borderless, worldwide trade in illicit drugs they enable.”

“Today, we face new and increasingly dangerous threats as drug traffickers expand into the digital world and use the Darknet to sell dangerous drugs like fentanyl and methamphetamine,” said Administrator Anne Milgram of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). “These drug traffickers are flooding the United States with deadly, fake pills, driving the U.S. overdose crisis, spurring violence, and threatening the safety and health of American communities. DEA’s message today is clear: criminal drug networks operating on the Darknet, trying to hide from law enforcement, can no longer hide. DEA, the U.S. interagency, and our valued international partners, are committed to dismantling drug networks wherever they are, including on the Darknet.”

“Illicit darkweb marketplaces represent a significant threat to public health, economic, and national security,” said Acting Director Tae Johnson of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). “By working collaboratively and sharing intelligence across local, state, federal, and international law enforcement agencies, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and its partners are disrupting and dismantling transnational criminal organizations responsible for introducing dangerous narcotics and other contraband into our communities.”

“The dark web has become an underground facilitator of illegal commerce,” said Chief Postal Inspector Gary Barksdale of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS). “Criminals use the dark web to sell and ship narcotics and other dangerous goods

around the world, often relying on the postal system and private carriers to deliver these illegal products. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is committed to finding and stopping these drug traffickers.”

“The Darknet no longer provides a concealing cloak for criminals to operate,” said IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) Chief Jim Lee. “The expertise of our agents and law enforcement partners helped uncover significant quantities of narcotics and money — both cash and virtual currency — derived from illicit means.”

“The point of operations such as the one today is to put criminals operating on the dark web on notice: the law enforcement community has the means and global partnerships to unmask them and hold them accountable for their illegal activities, even in areas of the dark web,” said Europol’s Deputy Executive Director of Operations Jean-Philippe Lecouffe.

The extensive operation, which lasted 10 months, resulted in dozens of federal operations and prosecutions, including:

- Four search warrants were executed in furtherance of a multiagency investigation resulting in the seizure of approximately \$1 million in drug proceeds (including approximately \$700,000 in cryptocurrency), eight firearms, one vehicle, and various controlled substances including MDMA, LSD, and cocaine. The FBI, DEA, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and USPIS jointly conducted the investigation. According to court documents, the targets of the investigation were operating over multiple Darknet marketplaces to traffic methamphetamine, counterfeit pressed Adderall (containing methamphetamine), MDMA, cocaine, and ketamine to customers throughout the United States. The investigation revealed that the organization’s base of operations was in Houston, Texas, and the organization shipped to various cities throughout the United States. Six defendants are charged in a five-count indictment in the Southern District of Ohio with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, distribution of controlled substances, sale of counterfeit drugs, and conspiracy to commit money laundering.
- The FBI in conjunction with the USPIS, FDA, and DEA, had been investigating a criminal enterprise that operated two Darknet vendor accounts. One of the accounts was operated out of the Miami area and the other out of the Providence, Rhode Island, area. According to court documents, the vendors, Luis Spencer, 31, of Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Olatunji Dawodu, 36, of Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Alex Ogando, 35, of Providence, Rhode Island, allegedly advertised and sold pressed fentanyl pills throughout the United States. Agents identified several other co-conspirators and obtained search and arrest warrants for each. During the execution of the warrants, agents seized approximately \$770,000, one weapon and approximately 3.5 kilograms of pressed fentanyl. Spencer, Dawodu, and Ogando

are charged in the District of Columbia with conspiracy to distribute 400 grams or more of a mixture and substance containing a detectable amount of fentanyl.

- Kevin Olando Ombisi, 32, and Eric Bernard Russell Jr, 36, both of Katy, Texas, are alleged to have participated in Darknet controlled substances trafficking activities using the moniker Cardingmaster and are charged in a 10-count indictment in the Western District of Tennessee with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, distribution of controlled substances, attempted unlawful distribution of controlled substances, sale of counterfeit drugs, money laundering conspiracy, and mail fraud. According to court documents, Ombisi and Russell are alleged to have used the moniker Cardingmaster and conspired and attempted to, and did unlawfully distribute the Schedule II controlled substance methamphetamine, which was falsely represented to be Adderall, through the mail in the Western District of Tennessee and elsewhere. In conjunction with their arrests, the government seized more than \$5 million in assets alleged to be connected to the drug trafficking activity. The case was investigated by the DEA, HSI, USPIS, and the FDA, and is being prosecuted by the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Tennessee.

An indictment and criminal complaint are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Operation Dark HunTor was a collaborative initiative across JCODE members, including the Department of Justice; FBI; DEA; USPIS; ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); IRS-Criminal Investigation; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and the FDA's Office of Investigations. This operation was aided by non-operational supporting participation from the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Local, state, and other federal agencies also contributed to Operation Dark HunTor investigations through task force participation and regional partnerships. The investigations leading to Operation Dark HunTor were significantly aided by support and coordination by the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF), multi-agency Special Operations Division, the Criminal Division's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section's Digital Currency Initiative, Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section, the Fraud 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, Australian Federal Police (AFP), Bulgaria's General Directorate Combating Organized Crime (ГДБОП), France's National Police (Police National - OCLCTIC) and National Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie Nationale – C3N), Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt), Central Criminal Investigation Department in the German city of Oldenburg (Zentrale

Kriminalinspektion Oldenburg), State Criminal Police Offices (Landeskriminalämter), State Criminal Police Office of Lower Saxony (LKA Niedersachsen), various police departments (Dienststellen der Länderpolizeien), German Investigation Customs (Zollfahndungsämter), Italy's Finance Corps (Guardia di Finanza) and Public Prosecutor's Office Brescia, the Netherlands' National Police (Politie), Switzerland's Zurich Canton Police (Kantonspolizei Zürich) and Public Prosecutor's Office II of the Canton of Zurich (Staatsanwaltschaft II), and the United Kingdom's National Crime Agency (NCA) and NPCC.

Federal prosecutions are being conducted in more than 15 federal districts, including the Central District of California, the Eastern District of California, the Northern District of California, the District of Columbia, the Southern District of Florida, the District of Massachusetts, the District of Nebraska, the District of Nevada, the Western District of New York, the Southern District of Ohio, the Northern District of Texas, the Eastern District of Virginia, the Western District of Virginia, the District of Rhode Island, the Western District of Tennessee, and the Western District of Washington.

JCODE is an FBI-led Department of Justice initiative, which supports, coordinates, and assists in de-confliction of investigations targeting for disruption and dismantlement of the online sale of illegal drugs, especially fentanyl and other opioids. JCODE also targets the trafficking of weapons and other illicit goods and services on the internet.

[View documents and resources related to this announcement.](#)