

US charges three more people in Silk Road website case

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US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Preet Bharara, speaks at a press conference on November 4, 2013 in New York City

US authorities said Friday three more people were charged in connection with the operation of Silk Road, the online black market bazaar for drugs, hacker tools and other illicit goods.

US prosecutors said an indictment was unsealed in New York for the

three, following the arrest of the alleged mastermind of Silk Road in October in San Francisco.

The statement was issued by the office of Preet Bharara, US attorney for the southern district of New York.

Officials said the individuals in the indictment are Andrew Michael Jones, 24, a Virginia resident; Gary Davis, 25, of Wicklow, Ireland; and Peter Phillip Nash, 40, of Brisbane, Australia.

Nash was arrested in Australia and Jones in Virginia, officials said. Davis is believed to be in Ireland, according to the Justice Department.

The news blog TechCrunch reported earlier Friday that one person was arrested in Ireland in connection with the investigation.

The three face charges of money laundering, drug trafficking and conspiracy for their alleged roles as moderators of Silk Road.

Officials in October arrested Ross William Ulbricht, who was said to be "Dread Pirate Roberts," the website's mastermind.

Ulbricht, who is awaiting trial in New York, has denied the charges and also claims he is not "Dread Pirate Roberts."

Last month, a message appeared on the social media site Reddit claiming Silk Road had reopened weeks after it was shut down by the FBI. The message was signed "Dread Pirate Roberts."

The message said Silk Road had implemented "a complete security overhaul" to keep the marketplace out of the reach of authorities.

The site is accessible only through online encryption offered via a

service known as Tor.

Federal agents announced on October 2 they had shut down the website, which used privacy-protecting Tor and Bitcoin digital currency to shield the identities of buyers and sellers.

Authorities said that from about January 2011, Ulbricht ran a marketplace that hawked heroin, cocaine, LSD and methamphetamine, as well as hacker tools such as software for stealing passwords or logging keystrokes on people's machines.

Silk Road took in commissions ranging from eight to 15 percent of sales, raking in at least \$80 million on more than \$1.2 billion worth of transactions, the criminal complaint estimated.

Bharara said the investigation is ongoing. He said US officials have received cooperation from authorities in Ireland, Iceland, Australia and France.

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