

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

FILED

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U.S. DISTRICT COURT
NEW HAVEN, CT.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v. ,

Crim. No. 3:18-cr-171(SRU)

ARBER ISAKU, et al.,

Defendant.

AFFIDAVIT OF SPECIAL AGENT RYAN MENSING
IN SUPPORT OF REQUEST FOR EXTRADITION

I, RYAN MENSING, being duly sworn, hereby depose and state:

1. I am a citizen of the United States.

I am a Special Agent of the Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”) and have been so employed since 2003. I am currently assigned to the Bridgeport High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force (“HIDTA Task Force”), which is comprised of personnel from the DEA, Norwalk Police Department, Stamford Police Department, Stratford Police Department, Milford Police Department, Bridgeport Police Department, Trumbull Police Department and the Connecticut State Police.

3. During the course of my career, I have participated in numerous criminal investigations including investigations into narcotics trafficking and money laundering. My participation in the investigations has included coordinating controlled purchases of narcotics using confidential informants, cooperating witnesses and undercover law enforcement officers; coordinating the execution of search and arrest warrants; conducting electronic and physical surveillance; analyzing records related to narcotics trafficking; testifying in Grand Jury and District Court proceedings; and interviewing witnesses and members of law enforcement

regarding the manner in which narcotics traffickers obtain, finance, store, manufacture, transport and distribute controlled substances.

I. Background on the East Coast Cartel Kings

6. For approximately the past six months, U.S. law enforcement agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) (collectively, the U.S. authorities) have been investigating Arber Isaku (ISAKU) and Vincent Decaro (DECARO) for their operation of a Dark Web fentanyl trafficking organization called the East Coast Cartel Kings (ECCK).

7. ISAKU and DECARO pressed fentanyl analogues purchased from China into counterfeit oxycodone pills that they distributed through the Dark Web markets called Hansa and Dream. As of December 2017, they operated out of DECARO's home in Stamford, Connecticut. A third defendant, David Reichard (REICHARD), helped to press pills and, on at least one occasion, helped to mail the pills to customers via the U.S. Mail.

II. Evidence

8. I personally participated in the execution of a judicially-authorized search warrant and evidence collection of the rear upper garage area and the silo room of DECARO's residence at 77 West Hill Circle in April 2018. During that search, we found and seized various items that later testing determined to be fentanyl analogues as well as numerous items that were deemed to be related to fentanyl processing and distribution, including two pieces of paper that appear to contain instructions on how to manufacture fentanyl; one hazardous material suit and one gas/respirator type mask; three pill presses (each containing powdery residue), inside of which were stamps used to mark pills "A 215;" and numerous empty United States Postal mail

envelopes. Although DECARO was not present at the time of this search, I noticed a German shepherd dog at the house.

9. The next day, law enforcement authorities conducted a videotaped interview of REICHARD, who stated that he began living with DECARO at the 77 West Hill Circle residence in February 2018.

10. REICHARD stated that after approximately one week at the house, DECARO came to him late at night, asked for his assistance, and gave REICHARD a pair of latex gloves and a disposable dust mask. DECARO asked REICHARD to turn on the stove to 170 degrees, which he did. DECARO then went outside to the garage area of the house and came back with two mason jars containing liquid and two sheet pans. DECARO further explained the process to REICHARD in which they took the liquid mason jars, added powder and then hand mixed the contents. They then poured the contents into the baking sheet pans and placed them in the oven. REICHARD stated that DECARO told him that, while he would explain more in the morning, this is how he (DECARO) made his money.

11. The next day, REICHARD stated that DECARO showed him the silo room, which contained the pill presses. DECARO utilized the substances he baked in the oven from the previous night to make blue colored pills stamped "A 215." REICHARD described these pills as 30mg Percocet pills. REICHARD stated that DECARO utilized the Dark Web to purchase the fentanyl and used a Dark Web website to sell the pills to buyers all over the United States. REICHARD also provided WhatsApp chats between REICHARD and DECARO that corroborate REICHARD's statements to law enforcement.

12. In addition, the evidence detailed below is evidence of ISAKU's involvement in operating ECCK with DECARO.

13. More specifically, ISAKU and DECARO were arrested together in Las Vegas on June 17, 2017. At that time, ISAKU had blue 30mg tablets consistent with what was recovered from the search of DECARO's house. These pills were also found to contain fentanyl.

14. Additionally, on August 23, 2017, ISAKU was arrested after state law enforcement authorities made a controlled delivery of a package addressed to him that contained more than 160 grams of fentanyl. After he took possession of the package, law enforcement authorities lawfully searched ISAKU's home at 52 Mitchell Street in Stamford, Connecticut, and recovered just under 200 blue 30mg tablets consistent with what was recovered from the search of DECARO's house. In his post-arrest statements, ISAKU admitted that he received packages of controlled substances for another individual, although he did not explicitly name DECARO.

15. Federal law enforcement authorities also obtained records reflecting that, in June 2017, ISAKU ordered two TDP-5 pill presses from a company called LFA Machines in Texas. Included in the order were various other supplies and parts. On the order form, the intended use is listed as "Starting a supplement company." The order form is accompanied by a copy of ISAKU's Connecticut driver's license and is signed and dated June 7, 2017. The two pill presses seized from DECARO's residence are from the same company and consistent with what ISAKU ordered.

16. U.S. law enforcement authorities lawfully searched a laptop belonging to ISAKU that was seized at the time of his arrest. During the search, authorities found, among other evidence, a number of encryption certificates. Two of those certificates are named "ecckhansa" and "ECCKings."

17. As part of a long-term investigation, federal law enforcement agencies seized the servers used to run the Dark Web market Hansa. Based on information from that seizure,

“eastcoastcartelkings” registered a Hansa account on or about July 6, 2017. The data also contained bitcoin wallet addresses (a) to which refunds would be posted and (b) which acted as the vendor bond for the account. Records from Coinbase, a digital currency exchange headquartered in San Francisco, California, showed that ISAKU owns a Coinbase account in which multiple wallets are organized under the name “Arbyscoins.” One of those wallets was created on or about July 5, 2017, and had the address of 12hsYQJ6QKw1U66pS65GsqVzmsikdtKa3m – the same wallet address used as the refund wallet for the “eastcoastcartelkings” Hansa account. The ISAKU Coinbase account documents also showed a transfer of .05079822 Bitcoins to the 12Bogh3xUUCQ6TMKQvNKsNGnE4pEX38hgG wallet – the wallet used for the “eastcoastcartelkings” Hansa vendor bond.

III. Arrest and Identification of Arber ISAKU

21. ISAKU is a citizen of the United States, born on 19 October 1989. He is described as a white male with brown hair and brown eyes. His passport number is 444810302. ISAKU was arrested on 21 September 2018 in Albania, and is currently in custody pending extradition proceedings. At the time of his arrest, ISAKU was in possession of United States passport number 586454922 as well as his Connecticut driver’s license in his name. This passport number is different than the passport number listed in the Red Notice it had expired and he renewed it in June 2018 in Albania. In addition, when questioned by Albanian authorities, ISAKU admitted that he was in fact ARBER ISAKU and that he was wanted by the United States government.

22. As part of the arrest operation, the Albanian National Police (ANP) tracked the taxi that had transported DECARO and ISAKU out of the city of Tirana toward the Kosovo

border, and subsequently determined that DECARO and ISAKU were residing together at the address was identified as Nd.229, H.24, aP.17, NJESIA Administrative Nr.7, 1023. The ANP then executed a judicially-authorized search warrant at the apartment pursuant to a prior request for mutual legal assistance submitted by the U.S. Department of Justice. I was present for that search pursuant to the MLA request. The search resulted in the seizure of evidence indicating that DECARO and ISAKU had either begun or were about to start synthesizing fentanyl. Among other things, the search revealed multiple kilogram quantities of what are believed to be precursor chemicals from China,¹ along with documents that appear to show a formula to synthesize fentanyl. Also located were tools and dies used in the pressing of Xanax tablets; what appears to be approximately one kilogram of alprazolam powder (the active chemical in Xanax); a USPS parcel sent from a known dark web fentanyl vendor in Ft. Meyer, Florida; and various electronic devices.

¹ Laboratory analysis of the chemicals and drugs recovered during the search is pending.

23. I was present for the search and I noticed a German shepherd at the apartment. The dog seemed to be the same dog I had encountered at VINCENT DECARO's residence in Stamford, Connecticut in April of 2018 during the execution of a search warrant at that location. ARBER ISAKU advised that this dog's name was 'Hunter' and that this was VINCENT DECARO's dog that had been living in Stamford, Connecticut previously. In fact, DECARO advised the ANP that he was living in the apartment in Tirana, Albania with ARBER ISAKU and his [DECARO's] dog named "Hunter."



RYAN MENSING
SPECIAL AGENT
DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

SWORN AND SUBSCRIBED BEFORE
ME THIS 12th DAY OF
OCTOBER, 2018

/s/

SARAH A.L. MERRIAM
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT