

Police crack down on Silk Road following first drug dealer conviction (Wired UK)

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By Olivia Solon 01 February 13



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An Australian drug dealer has become the first person to be convicted of a Silk Road-related crime, after using the black marketplace to buy a stash of MDMA, amphetamine, marijuana and cocaine.

People can buy goods from [Silk Road](#) only by connecting with the anonymising Tor network and using [Bitcoins](#). The marketplace has very few restrictions on what people can sell, but is largely used for trading drugs. An August 2012 study by security

researchers at Carnegie Mellon University revealed that the Silk Road trades items worth £1.22 million every month.

According to a report in [The Age](#) Paul Leslie Howard used Silk Road to buy and import the illicit drugs on 11 different occasions. Australian Customs and Border Protection Service officers in Melbourne and Sydney examined mail -- most of which came from the Netherlands and Germany -- destined for his home. They found 46.9 grammes of MDMA and 14.5 grammes of cocaine. The federal police then raided his house in July 2012 and found digital scales, ziplock bags, \$2,300 (£2,000) in cash, 35 stun guns disguised as mobile phones and a money counter. They also found two working mobile phones, and forensically analysed more than 20,000 text messages. In amongst them were incriminating texts such as "I got five grand worth if you want" and "promote the LSD I got more in. I sold 200 cubes last week".

Howard has pleaded guilty to two charges of "importing a marketable quantity of a border-controlled drug", which carries a maximum jail term of 25 years. He also pleaded guilty to possessing controlled weapons. During the trial he said that he had been drawn to the site after reading an article by a journalist called [Eileen Ormsby](#), who regularly covers the Silk Road in Australian newspapers. Since Howard's conviction, the [Silk Road has warned](#) its users via its Twitter account not to follow their feed nor the feed of Ormsby with their real names.

Prosecutor Morgan Brown made it clear that the authorities had a lot of information about Howard from the Silk Road, including access to his profile, which he registered under the name Shadh1 in April 2012. He set up a vendor's account offering up cocaine and speed and saying that he is looking to "branch into more as I get more coin back in my pocket".

At the time of Howard's arrest, the Australian Federal Police and the Customs and Border Protection Service issued a warning to any would-be drug traders using supposedly anonymous marketplaces such as the Silk Road saying they could be identified by police techniques.

AFP manager of crime operations Peter Sykora said [in a statement](#): "Criminals are attempting to exploit the international mail system through online networks, but the recent arrest demonstrates that we are one step ahead of them. The AFP will continue to identify, investigate and prosecute individuals or groups importing narcotics into Australia, including via illicit ecommerce platforms such as Silk Road."

Australian police aren't the only ones to crack down on the Silk Road. The DEA in the United States is also on the warpath, targeting similar sites such as the Farmer's Market. In July 2012 the organisation [told a US news station KXAN](#) that it was investigating the Silk Road and in November 2012, DEA spokesperson Rusty Payne told

[The Verge](#) when quizzed on the Silk Road: "Typically we're not really giving out investigative updates about what we're doing, but it's safe to say we are heavily involved in looking into that." In the UK, the Serious Organised Crime Agency and the Metropolitan Police E-Crime unit have also been digging into the marketplace.

However, despite all of these investigations, the conviction rate isn't looking all that promising for law enforcement.

Don't miss: [Study: Online marketplace Silk Road sells £1m worth of drugs each month](#)

Image: [Shutterstock](#)

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Comments

So in other words, they arrested someone for drugs they found at the border during a routine seizure. They asked who sent him the drugs, and he said he bought them on the silk road. The police then tell the media that they arrested someone buying drugs from the silk road.

Maybe I missed something, but how does this relate to the police "cracking down" on the silk road? Regardless of where the drugs were sent from, he would have been arrested. This article is a fine example of the media distorting the truth in order to sell a story.

|Awesome Possum | Feb 4th 2013

Why would he use his real name, and why would he have it shipped directly to his house?

Plausible deniability. Use a PO Box from a private company in a fake business name. Be creative.

Nothing is 100%, and they may catch a few people here and there. But for the most part, the bulk of it will continue, and always will in some form.

|Mikey | Feb 4th 2013

In reply to Mikey

The best way is to ship it directly to your own address in your real name. It arouses less suspicion that way. If the package is discovered to contain illegal drugs, law enforcement will find you anyway. Using fake info just makes it more likely that your package will be investigated. I know this sounds counter intuitive, but its true. Basically this guy made many mistakes. He got cocky and thought it was always a safe bet. He ordered marijuana with the other drugs. I am pretty sure that is how it was detected. He ordered from the Netherlands, that is how his package was flagged in the first place. You should really only order domestically. But I guess in Australia that isn't really much of an option.

|Anon | Mar 14th 2013

Oh, one more thing. You can Torify your smartphone with Orbot and use Giggerbot for messaging.

|Mikey | Feb 5th 2013

In reply to Mikey

*Gibberbot

|Natanael | Feb 24th 2013

Parabens pela estrutura e conteudo de seu site, Forte abraço Willian camisetas

|camiseta | Feb 13th 2013

LOL HES STUPID I BUY ALL MY ADDERALL ON DER ITS A GUD SIGHT
HE MUST OF ORDERED THE FAKE DANK.

|Remi Spring | Mar 4th 2013

In reply to Remi Spring

You sir, are clearly not in a position to call anyone stupid. "der" "gud"... Really? Are you that dumb? Have fun with your adderall. Which I'm SURE you buy off the internet. Haha

you moron. Any other illegal things you'd like to post all over the Web? Dumbass

|spider-ham | Mar 5th 2013

In reply to spider-ham

Wow you got Trolled by the easiest to spot Troll of all time. Not to start a flame war, but it is you who looks like a dumb ass when you whole hearted reprimand someone who clearly just typed up that comment in a herp derp fashion to point out how big of an idiot the guy who got busted was. Team Canada Internet Police, Over and OUT..... and About

|Troll Buster | Mar 12th 2013

In reply to spider-ham

Wow, please tell me your reply is meant to be ironic or satirical in some way. If not, then I feel everyone is clearly in a position to call you stupid. Dumbass

|wakkafloca | Mar 15th 2013

"Criminals are attempting to exploit the international mail system through online networks, but the recent arrest demonstrates that we are one step ahead of them. The AFP will continue to identify, investigate and prosecute individuals or groups importing narcotics into Australia, including via illicit ecommerce platforms such as Silk Road."

Well obviously, if the buyer was pseudonymous, so was the agent or officer offering to ship to the buyer. They didn't even have to (really) ship it. Just find out the address and trap all incoming packages, duh.

|Joe | Mar 7th 2013

You dont have to go to Silk Road for some drugs. Bitmit auction site has substances for bitcoins, just seen DMAA powder is on there.

|james | Mar 14th 2013

You dont have to go to Silk Road for some drugs. Bitmit auction site has substances for bitcoins, just seen DMAA powder is on there.

|james | Mar 14th 2013

This muppet was sending to his home address from the Netherlands reguarly.
When orders stopped showing up he kept on buying, giving AFP more and more evidence against him.

Had a vendor account and forum account in the same name.
He had personalised number plates on his shitty old BMW with his vendor name in full. He was saving search history / purchase history / photos on his desktop without encryption.

When questioned about buying on SR not only did he admit to it, he showed the pigs how to log into his account and all his passwords.

This guy was thick as pigshit..

Use tails.. Encrypt hard.. Fake names to unrelated drops..

If questioned by the pigs... SHUT YOUR FKN MOUTH..
Lawyer up.. Walk free

|me | Mar 18th 2013

This Guy ^ knows his shit.

|Paul Leslie Howard | Mar 18th 2013

Hai guyz can I buy from Walter White on teh deep webz?

|Ffynn | Mar 18th 2013

...? Someone educate me, please. I must know more. Oh, & you guys sound like gay bitches. LoL Any1 that's ever ran shit will agree with "me" ^^ . Sniatchez is biatchez! Do not correct my grammar.

|MotherSuperior | Mar 21st 2013

These feral "pigs" who are persecuting this poor guy need to pay for their crimes against humanity. It is a VERY BASIC HUMAN RIGHT to consume ANY substance we wish to. The governments of the world, especially the US, have WAY overstepped their authority with this war against us. Line em all up & shoot them. That's the VERY LEAST that DEA & similar scum deserve. The assholes want a war, we're gonna give them a war. Payback is coming soon. ALL anti drug scum will be dealt with VERY severely VERY soon. Enough is enough.

Right on man, this is ridiculous. He's not on the streets selling next to a day care. He's at home. Isn't that one of the biggest gripes of Law Enforcement. "these thugs are on the streets selling drugs to our children"... that's not happening at all. This was an adult selling a substance to another consenting adult through the fucking mail, in the comfort of their homes. There's no peer pressure, there's no exposing drugs to kids. It's educated people knowing exactly what they want, and purchasing it in safe (more) reliable way. No more dealing with shady dealers or middlemen (I'm talking about you Baltimore) Get your product direct from the supplier. There's no harm being done here, so I don't see what the problem is.

prophetsofdoom | Mar 26th 2013

In reply to prophetsofdoom

^ dude... it's anonymous. an intelligent 12 year old could use this to buy a bunch of crack with mommy's dough. Not really for or against SR, but for real, don't say "this was an adult selling a substance to another consenting adult" that is dumb

guy | Mar 27th 2013

@ GUY..last time I checked no drug dealers check for ID of anybody..That is a huge reason why these drugs should be legalized in the first place to keep them away from kids...When I was younger it was always a pain to get booze but other drugs were a snap

scott larned | Mar 30th 2013

In reply to scott larned

If drugs were legalized I'm willing to bet violent crime would decrease a good 90% or more, the police could focus on real crime (larceny, assault, homicide, rape, ect), cartels and street gangs would cease to exist, and you'd know exactly what you're getting without being ripped off / robbed.Of course this will never happen, though, the demand and prices would plummet. Even if the government were to supply the drugs after legalization, they wouldn't be making anywhere near the kind of money they are right now supplying them illegally!

DC | Apr 8th 2013

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