

ORIGINAL

AO 91 (Rev. 11/11) Criminal Complaint

## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Central District of California

United States of America

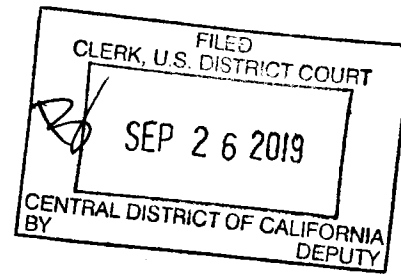
v.

NIKO ALEXANDER TAKOWSKY,

Defendant(s)

Case No.

19MJ04092



## CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of January 11, 2017 through June 8, 2017, in the county of Los Angeles in the Central District of California, the defendant(s) violated:

<i>Code Section</i>	<i>Offense Description</i>
18 U.S.C. § 1028A(a)(1)	Aggravated Identity Theft
18 U.S.C. § 1029(a)(3)	Possession of Fifteen or More Unauthorized Access Devices
18 U.S.C. § 1029(a)(4)	Unlawful Possession of Device Making Equipment

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

*Please see attached affidavit.*

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

*Kimberly Granger*  
Complainant's signature

KIMBERLY GRANGER, U.S. Postal Inspector  
Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date: September 26, 2019 3:45pm

*Mr. Rosenbluth*  
Judge's signature

City and state: Los Angeles, California

JEAN P. ROSENBLUTH, U.S. Magistrate Judge  
Printed name and title

**AFFIDAVIT**

I, Kimberly Granger, being duly sworn, declare and state as follows:

**I. BACKGROUND OF POSTAL INSPECTOR KIMBERLY GRANGER**

1. I am a Postal Inspector with the United States Postal Inspection Service ("USPIS") and have been so employed since July 2014. I am currently assigned to the Los Angeles Division, Pasadena Mail Theft Team, which investigates crimes against the United States Postal Service ("USPS") and crimes related to the misuse and attack of the mail system, including theft of United States mail, fraud, related activity in connection with access devices and identity theft. I completed a twelve-week basic training course in Potomac, Maryland, which included training in the investigation of mail theft, identity theft, and drug distribution. I also completed a six-month basic training course at the Federal Law Enforcement Center. That course included training in the investigation of drug distribution via the United States Ports of Entry. I have received formal and informal training regarding criminal conduct committed using the Internet and during, the course of this investigation, I conferred with law enforcement personnel who specialize in the investigation of illicit Internet market places and the use virtual currencies.

**II. PURPOSE OF AFFIDAVIT**

2. This affidavit is made in support of a criminal complaint to charge NIKO ALEXANDER TAKOWSKY ("TAKOWSKY") with violations of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028A(a)(1)

(Aggravated Identity Theft); Title 18, United States Code, Section 1029(a)(3) (Possession of Fifteen or More Unauthorized Access Devices); and Title 18, United States Code, Section 1029(a)(4) (Unlawful Possession of Device-Making Equipment).

3. The facts set forth in this affidavit are based upon my personal observations; my training and experience; and information obtained from various law enforcement personnel and witnesses. This affidavit is intended to show merely that there is sufficient probable cause for the requested complaint and does not purport to set forth all of my knowledge of or investigation into this matter. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, all conversations and statements described in this affidavit are related in substance and part only and all dates and times are approximate.

### **III. SUMMARY OF PROBABLE CAUSE**

4. As set forth below, an account identified by the username "thematrixhasyou1," later determined to be operated by TAKOWSKY, purchased two "live" hand grenades from a seller on a dark web Internet marketplace, AlphaBay Market ("AlphaBay"), which specializes in the sale of illicit goods, illegal drugs, and weapons. TAKOWSKY directed the seller to deliver the grenades to TAKOWSKY's residence. Unbeknownst to TAKOWSKY, the seller was an undercover law enforcement officer.

5. Following a controlled delivery of two substitution grenades that were inoperable, law enforcement identified TAKOWSKY and searched his residence. During the search, law enforcement discovered access-device-making equipment. Further

investigation revealed that TAKOWSKY, using the AlphaBay account "thematrixhasyou1," purchased at least 69 unauthorized access devices from AlphaBay, 26 of which were active on the date law enforcement searched his residence, and that TAKOWSKY knowingly possessed without lawful authority means of identification TAKOWSKY new belonged to another person.

#### **IV. STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE**

##### **A. Background on AlphaBay**

6. Based on my training and experience, conversations with law enforcement personnel, and open source Internet research, I know that, until its seizure by federal authorities, AlphaBay was the largest online black market through which users bought and sold malicious software, stolen financial information, access device-making equipment, firearms and explosives, counterfeit goods and currency, toxic chemicals, illegal narcotics and other controlled substances, and other illegal contraband.

7. AlphaBay required its users to transact in virtual currencies, including Bitcoin ("BTC"). Virtual currencies are electronically-sourced units of value that exist on the Internet and are not typically stored in a physical form. Virtual currencies are not issued by any government, but instead are generated and controlled through computer software operating on decentralized peer-to-peer networks.

8. On June 1, 2017, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California issued a warrant for the arrest of AlphaBay's founder and primary administrator. U.S.

authorities located the computer servers used to operate AlphaBay, which the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") seized pursuant to a Mutual Legal Assistance Request from a foreign country.

9. The FBI created an image of the primary server used to operate the AlphaBay. From this image, the FBI was able to recover, among other things, purchase and transaction histories, communications, and other information associated with AlphaBay users who transacted and/or communicated on the Market and forum.<sup>1</sup> As detailed below, among this information, I reviewed data associated with the account for AlphaBay user "thematrixhasyou1."

**B. TAKOSWKY Purchases "Live" Hand Grenades on AlphaBay**

10. Beginning in May 2017, the user of "thematrixhasyou1," ("TheMatrixHasYou1"), later revealed to be operated by TAKOWSKY, began corresponding with an AlphaBay account that, unbeknownst to TAKOWSKY, was operated by a federal law enforcement officer acting in an undercover capacity. I reviewed the online communications between TheMatrixHasYou1 and the under-cover account and learned the following:

a. The under-cover account profile, which was visible to AlphaBay users, represented itself as a vendor of illicit weapons and explosive devices.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the FBI agents who seized and are analyzing the data believe that some communications and/or transaction records may have been deleted from the AlphaBay servers—and therefore these records are not entirely complete—based on their training and experience, these agents believe the records reflect actual, completed communications and transactions.

b. On May 24, 2017, TheMatrixHasYou1 responded via private message to the under-cover account's advertisement and asked if the grenade was "active" and "ready to use." The undercover agent confirmed that the grenade was "ready to use." The following day, TheMatrixHasYou1 asked to purchase two grenades.

c. On May 26, 2017, TheMatrixHasYou1 provided the undercover a mailing zip code of "90211" and advised he would send the full mailing address using "Privnote." I know from my training and experience and Internet research that Privnote is an encrypted online messaging application that allows users to send messages that "self-destruct" after they have been read.

d. On May 29, 2017, the undercover received a message from Privnote, the encrypted messaging service TheMatrixHasYou1 referenced in his May 26, 2017 communication, with the following mailing address, "[Roommate's Name] 8549 Wilshire Blvd Suite 247 Beverly Hills CA 90211 USA," (the "Beverly Hills Address").<sup>2</sup> According to a basic Internet search, the Beverly Hills Address is the location of a privately operated mailbox business that rents post office boxes to members of the public.

e. On May 29, 2017, the undercover received a notification from AlphaBay that TheMatrixHasYou1 had placed the purchase order and that AlphaBay had withdrawn the specified

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<sup>2</sup> TAKOWSKY provided the name of his roommate in the Privnote message. Because the complaint does not seek to charge TAKOWSKY's roommate, the roommate is referred to only as his roommate.

Bitcoin amount from TheMatrixHasYou1's account. I know from my training and experience that users begin transactions on AlphaBay by placing a "purchase order" and that users deposit virtual currencies into their accounts to fund purchases. Once a purchase order was created, AlphaBay extracted the amount of virtual currency specified in the purchase order from the purchaser's AlphaBay account and placed those funds in an "escrow" account. AlphaBay would hold the amount in "escrow" for 14 days or until the purchaser notified AlphaBay that the transaction is complete, at which time the funds would transfer to the seller's AlphaBay account or, if the transaction was not completed, the funds would return to the purchaser's AlphaBay account.

f. On June 3, 2017, the undercover informed TheMatrixHasYou1 that he shipped the package and provided TheMatrixHasYou1 with a USPS tracking number.

**C. Controlled Delivery of Two Inert Grenades Identifies TAKOWSKY**

11. On June 8, 2017, the Honorable Mark A. Young, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge, signed a search warrant authorizing (1) the installation and use of a Global Positioning System ("GPS") tracking device and an access alert signal transmitter (the "Devices") on a package identified by a USPS tracking number, for a period of 30 days, including monitoring of the Devices when the parcel enters any structure or private area; and (2) the search of a vehicle or premises where: (a) the GPS device transmitted locational information showing that the

parcel is currently located inside a vehicle or at a premises; and (b) the alert signal transmitter indicates that the speaker box containing the two inert grenades described below had been opened. The warrant authorized seizure of fruits, instrumentalities, and evidence of violations of California Penal Code Section 664 / 18710 (Attempted Possession of a Destructive Devices) and Penal Code Section 664 / 18715 (Attempted Possession of a Destructive Device in a Public Area), (the "Device and Anticipatory Search Warrant").

12. Based on my conversations law enforcement personnel involved in this investigation, I learned that on June 7, 2017, law enforcement concealed two substitute grenades inside a black speaker box. Substitute materials, such as the grenades used in this investigation, are those that cannot be distinguished from real explosives or military ordnance without expert forensic examination, but are not capable of an explosion or detonation. Law enforcement placed the black speaker box containing the two inert grenades inside a package with a second black speaker box ("the Parcel").

13. On June 8, 2017, pursuant to the Device and Anticipatory Search Warrant, law enforcement personnel activated the Devices inside the speaker box contained in the Parcel and sealed the Parcel and delivered the Parcel containing the inert grenades and Devices to a USPS carrier. The USPS carrier then delivered the Parcel to the Beverly Hills Address on June 8, 2017 at approximately 1:30 pm.



14. At approximately 3:00 pm, an individual, later identified as TAKOWSKY's roommate, entered the Beverly Hills Address. At approximately 3:15 pm, the surveillance team observed him depart the Beverly Hills Address holding the Parcel, which was identifiable by the packing tape, and observed him entering a blue BMW, ("Subject Vehicle 1"). Inside Subject Vehicle 1, law enforcement observed a second male, described as a white male with a beard, approximately 5'8", later identified as TAKOWSKY.

15. At approximately 3:20 pm, the surveillance team followed TAKOWSKY and his roommate in Subject Vehicle 1 from the Beverly Hills Address to 8522 Alcott Street, Los Angeles, CA, 90035 ("the Alcott Street Residence"). The GPS tracking device confirmed via locational information that the Parcel was transported from the Beverly Hills Address to the Alcott Street Residence. Law enforcement personnel observed TAKOWSKY and his roommate exit Subject Vehicle 1 and enter the Alcott Street Residence. At that time, the GPS device transmitted locational information showing that the Parcel was located at or near the Alcott Street Residence.

16. Within minutes of TAKOWSKY's and his roommate's arrival at the Alcott Street Residence, the access alert signal transmitted a silent alarm to law enforcement, indicating that the speaker box concealing the two inert grenades within the Parcel had been accessed. Shortly following the alert signal, TAKOWSKY's roommate was observed exiting the Alcott Street Residence. He appeared to be carrying the opened speaker box

that had contained the inert grenades to trash containers located in the driveway attached to the Alcott Street Residence.

17. At approximately 3:25 pm on June 8, 2016, law enforcement detain TAKOWSKY's roommate outside the Alcott Street Residence in the driveway while he was holding the opened speaker box. TAKOWSKY was observed through a ground-floor window and was detained. During law enforcement's sweep of the Alcott Street residence, law enforcement detained a third male.<sup>3</sup> TAKOWSKY and his roommate were later released and the state charges were dismissed.

**D. Law Enforcement Executes Search Warrant of TAWKOSKY'S Residence and Finds Device-Making Equipment**

18. Pursuant to the Device and Anticipatory Search Warrant, law enforcement officers secured the Alcott Street Residence and executed the search warrant. Based on my review of investigative reports, photographs from the search, and my discussions with personnel who participated in the search of the Alcott Street Residence, I learned the following:

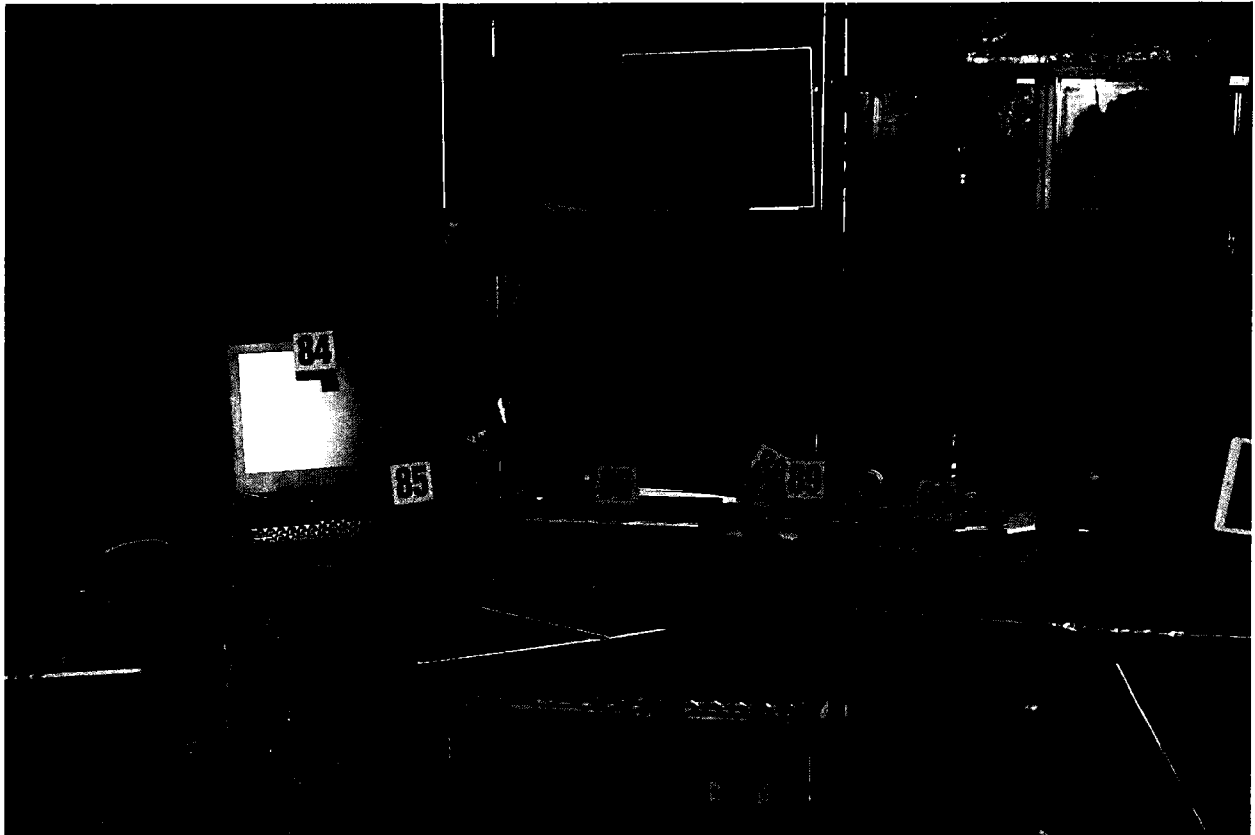
a. The Alcott Street Residence is a three-bedroom, two-bathroom, single-level family home. The front room contained an elaborate and professional-looking array of digital devices, including various sized computer screens, computer towers, hard drives, laptops, keyboards, and USBs devices. The room contained three desks: one large metal desk with multiple screens and digital devices, a smaller wooden desk to the left of the metal desk with an Antec desktop tower underneath, and a

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<sup>3</sup> Law enforcement arrested the third male. The state declined to press charges against him and he was released.

third, wood desk facing the opposite wall, with a single laptop connected to a large screen.

b. On the large metal desk, multiple screens showed a screen saver of descending columns of green zeros and ones, an image I recognize from the popular movie, the Matrix. A prescription bottle for "Niko Takowsky" was found on the large metal desk.



c. Law enforcement officers recovered more than 30 firearms from the Alcott Street Residence. Law enforcement also recovered a tactical Kevlar vest, a ballistic helmet, two large, Samurai-style swords, and multiple knives. Subsequent testing revealed that all of the firearms were lawfully purchased under both California and federal law.

d. Law enforcement personnel also observed devices and materials that I know, from my training and experience, can be used to create fraudulent credit cards and identification documents. Specifically law enforcement personnel observed: a credit card embosser machine used to make credit cards; a box of more than 20 blank, magnetic-strip credit cards; and one credit card in name of "S.A."

**E. Interview of TAKOWSKY**

19. On June 8, 2017, at approximately 3:45 pm, the Los Angeles Police Department ("LAPD") detectives arrested TAKOWSKY and his roommate for violating California Penal Code Section 18715(a) (Possession of Destructive Device) and transported them to LAPD Wilshire Division for booking. Following booking, FBI Special Agent ("SA") James Peaco and LAPD Sergeant ("Sgt.") George Chen interviewed TAKOWSKY, and attempted to interview his roommate, who declined to be interviewed. TAKOWSKY's interview was recorded.

20. Based on my review of the interview transcript, I learned the following:

a. After being advised that his cooperation was voluntary and that he had the rights to have an attorney present and to remain silent, TAKOWSKY agreed to speak with the agents voluntarily and without an attorney present. Over the course of the approximately 75-minute interview, TAKOWSKY stated, in sum and substance, that he did not order the two grenades or have any knowledge that they would be delivered to his roommate. TAKOWSKY stated, "I don't have a need for hand grenades. I

don't know anything about explosives. I live in Beverly Hills. . . . I wouldn't risk my life for grenades . . . I know that they are highly illegal."

b. TAKOWSKY provided multiple explanations for his actions, including that he believed his "haters" were attempting to frame him. TAKOWSKY admitted to opening the speaker box after noticing that the screws on the speaker box looked loose.

c. TAKOWSKY stated that he lived at the Alcott Street Residence with his roommate.

d. TAKOWSKY stated that he is a computer programmer and professional video gamer and that all the computers in the house were his, except for one that was located across from his desk and which belongs to his roommate.

e. TAKOWSKY stated that he is prescribed the anti-anxiety medication Xanax for panic and anxiety attacks and that he takes "two milligrams, four times a day."

**F. AlphaBay Records Show TheMatrixHasYou1 Purchased 69 Unauthorized Access Devices**

21. According to AlphaBay records I reviewed, TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased at least 69 unauthorized access devices on AlphaBay, which included 17 credit/debit card numbers and 52 full social security numbers.

22. TheMatrixHasYou1 account was registered on January 11, 2017. Between January 11, 2017 and June 8, 2017 - the latter being the date of TAKOWSKY's arrest - TheMatrixHasYou1 completed 175 purchases on AlphaBay for a total expenditure of 1.9140 BTC (the approximate equivalent of \$2,548.00).

23. AlphaBay purchase records include the date and time a transaction was completed, buyer username, seller username, order identification number, order title, product description, and seller notes. When a purchaser orders information such as personal identifying information or credit cards, AlphaBay sellers often transmit the information to the purchaser in the "seller notes" section of the purchase record.

24. Four purchase orders TheMatrixHasYou1 completed on AlphaBay contained personal identifying information ("PII") for 52 individuals. The personal information included full names, address, dates of births, known email and phone numbers, and social security numbers. The four orders TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased were advertised as "California-CA-USA-PERSONAL INFO IMMEDIATE DELIVERY = FUCKING\_FULLLZ." The following chart summarizes TheMatrixHasYou1's four PII purchase orders, with the victims' PII sanitized:

Date/Time	Buyer Username	Seller Username	Order ID	Seller Notes (Summary)
2017-06-07; 02:41:01	thematrixhasyou1	Zloy3	9,795,806	Contained PII for 1 individual
2017-06-07; 02:13:09	thematrixhasyou1	Zloy3	9,795,399	Contained PII for 1 individual
2017-06-04; 13:50:43	thematrixhasyou1	Zloy3	9,744,469	Contained PII for 25 individuals
2017-06-04; 13:42:19	thematrixhasyou1	Zloy3	9,744,387	Contained PII for 25 individuals

25. AlphaBay records also include "feedback" or buyer reviews TheMatrixHasYou1 posted on AlphaBay vendor accounts. Following TheMatrixHasYou1's June 4, 2017 purchase the items

advertised as "California - CA - USA - PERSONAL INFO IMMEDIATE DELIVERY = FUCKING\_FULLZ," TheMatrixHasYou1 stated: "the best =around" and "A+ seller fast quality."

26. Seventeen purchase orders TheMatrixHasYou1 completed on AlphaBay contained credit card information for 17 unique credit card accounts. The order titles referenced the sale of credit card information, for example, "FRESH VISA CC/CVV FROM USA (excellent quality)." The sellers transmitted in the "seller notes" section the credit card account number, expiration date, security pin, and the account holder's full name and address. Some records also included the account holders' social security number and email and phone numbers. The following chart summarizes TheMatrixHasYou1's 17 credit card account purchase order records, with the victims' PII sanitized:

<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>Buyer Username</b>	<b>Seller Username</b>	<b>Order ID</b>	<b>Seller Notes (Summary)</b>
2017-06-02; 20:03:05	thematrixhasyou1	ggmccloud1	9,719,424	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-30; 18:47:21	thematrixhasyou1	ggmccloud1	9,650,488	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-06-02; 20:00:55	thematrixhasyou1	oneSellerUsaCC	9,719,386	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-30; 00:50:43	thematrixhasyou1	ggmccloud1	9,634,977	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-30; 00:50:14	thematrixhasyou1	ggmccloud1	9,634,973	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-27;	thematrixhasyou1	ggmccloud1	9,595,559	Contained info on 1

22:15:49				credit card
2017-05-27; 22:14:16	thematrixhasyou1	ggmccloud1	9,595,513	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-26; 02:00:51	thematrixhasyou1	oneSellerUsaCC	9,565,323	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-22; 20:12:30	thematrixhasyou1	GodzillaTM	9,498,067	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-06-02; 19:18:18	thematrixhasyou1	oneSellerUsaCC	9,718,689	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-06-02; 18:51:31	thematrixhasyou1	ggmccloud1	9,718,107	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-26; 02:07:26	thematrixhasyou1	ggmccloud1	9,565,399	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-20; 22:55:16	thematrixhasyou1	oneSellerUsaCC	9,468,544	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-20; 23:04:21	thematrixhasyou1	oneSellerUsaCC	9,468,637	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-22; 20:15:36	thematrixhasyou1	oneSellerUsaCC	9,498,152	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-18; 18:39:25	thematrixhasyou1	oneSellerUsaCC	9,430,396	Contained info on 1 credit card
2017-05-18; 17:30:04	thematrixhasyou1	oneSellerUsaCC	9,429,335	Contained info on 1 credit card

27. Following the May 26, 2017 purchase of order number 9,565,399 (shown in the above chart), TheMatrixHasYou1 provided the following feedback to the vendor's account: "this guy is the



best A+ got 1148\$ from his card." This item was advertised under the title, "GGMCCLOUD1 FAMOUS LISTING 8417 97% VALIDITY LEVEL 8 VENDOR MOST TRUSTED NAME IN DN."

28. On June 4, 2017, TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased a product titled "ALL 50 USA Driver's License Templates-Editable.PSDs" The seller advertised the product as containing "UV + holo templates," which I understand to be a reference to holographic and security features used in driver's licenses. The product description listed the states by common abbreviations and the unique notations summarized in the following chart (e.g., "FL [O21]" and "FL[U21]"):

<b>ALL 50 USA Driver's License Templates - Editable.PSDs</b>					
<b>Product Description</b>					
AK	HI	MD	NJ	PA [O21]	UT
AL	IA	ME	NM [O21]	PA [U21]	VA
AR	ID	MI	NM [U21]	RI	VT [O21]
AZ	IL [O21]	MN	NV	SC [O21]	VT [U21]
CA	IL [U21]	MO	NY [O21]	SC [U21]	WA
CO	IN	MS	NY [U21]	SD	WI
CT	KS	MT	OH	TN [O21]	WV
DE	KY	NC	OK	TN [U21]	WY [O21]
FL [O21]	LA	NE	OR [O21]	TX [O21]	WY [U21]
FL [U21]	MA	NH	OR [U21]	TX [U21]	

**G. Evidence Showing TAKOWSKY Operated the TheMatrixHasYou1 AlphaBay Account**

1. TAKOWSKY'S Antec Desktop Contains Digital Artifacts of TheMatrixHasYou1's AlphaBay Purchases

29. As detailed above, TAKOWSKY identified all the digital devices in the Alcott Street residence as his, except for one computer belonging to his roommate. In the interview with the FBI, TAKOWSKY stated, "they're all mine . . . except for one computer that's across from my desk. That's my roommates'." When asked, "so your roommate has one?" TAKOWSKY reiterated, "and I have the rest." He further explained that he operates the many digital devices found at his residence to further his career as a professional online gamer.

30. According to my review of the photographs taken from the Alcott Street Residence and TAKOWSKY's interview, I believe TAKOWSKY operated all of the digital devices except the one laptop computer belonging to his roommate, which was found on a desk across from TAKOWSKY'S large collection of computer terminals. As detailed above, underneath one of TAKOWSKY's desks was the Antec desktop tower.

31. On June 15, 2017, the Honorable Jacqueline Chooljian, United States Magistrate Judge, signed a search warrant authorizing the search of various digital devices seized from the Alcott Street Residence for evidence, fruits, and instrumentalities, that constitutes evidence or fruits of violations of 18 U.S.C. § 371 (Conspiracy); 18 U.S.C. § 842(a)(3)(A) (Receipt of an Explosive Without A License);

18 U.S.C. § 844(d) (Transportation of Explosives Through Interstate Commerce to Kill, Injure, or Intimidate); 18 U.S.C. § 922(a)(4) (Transportation in Interstate or Foreign Commerce of a Destructive Device); 18 U.S.C. § 1001 (False Statements); 18 U.S.C. § 1029(a) (Access Device Fraud); and 18 U.S.C. § 1028A (Aggravated Identity Theft).

32. Pursuant to the federal search warrant, law enforcement searched the Antec desktop tower that contained a Samsung 500-gigabyte hard drive (the "Antec Desktop"). Based on my conversations with law enforcement personnel and a review of items recovered from the device, I learned the following:

a. The Antec Desktop contained hundreds of files related to creating fraudulent identification documents, including state driver's licenses and international passports. In addition, text files were recovered containing personally identifying information of persons other than TAKOWSKY. For example, two text files contained the full names, phone numbers, emails, addresses, employers, and bank account information for two Los Angeles-based individuals.

b. A review of the Antec Desktop's deleted files show that on June 5, 2017, files were downloaded onto the Antec Destkop matching the same unique naming convention of the files advertised in the "ALL 50 USA Driver's License Templates-Editable.PSDs" that the TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased on AlphaBay on June 4, 2017. For example, the Antec Destkop downloaded files named "FL[021]" and "FL[u21]," which are identical to the AlphaBay product description that TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased. I

know based on my training and experience and conversation with other law enforcement personnel, that digital devices retain digital artifacts of files even after a user has "deleted" them. A forensic review of a digital device can recover digital artifacts from files a user intended to delete.

c. The screenshot below shows some of the deleted files recovered on the Antec Desktop that match the AlphaBay product TheMatrixHasYouI purchased. The "x" mark through the icon on the left indicates the file was deleted; "QLA1\_1" is the control number the FBI assigned to the Antec Desktop; and the created date shows the date the file was downloaded onto the Antec Desktop.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name	Path	Ext	Category	Created	Accessed	Modified
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	50 DL state.psd	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...		Folder	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 1:12:...	6/5/2017 1:12:...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AK.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AR.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AS.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CA.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carned [213616].jpeg	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Pa...	jpeg	JPEG	n/a	n/a	n/a
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CO.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CT.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	DE.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	FL [021].zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	FL [021].zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HL.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	IA.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ID.rar	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	rar	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	IL [021].zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	IL [021].zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	IK.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	KS.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	KL.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LA.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MD.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:39...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ME.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ML.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ML.zip	QLA1_1 (1590).E01\Per...	zip	ASCII 7	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...	6/5/2017 12:40...

2. TAKOWSKY Transferred Bitcoin from his Coinbase Account into his TheMatrixHasYou1 AlphaBay Account

33. I know from my training and experience and discussions with other law enforcement personnel, that Coinbase is an online virtual currency exchange that allows users to exchange U.S. dollars for Bitcoin and Bitcoin for U.S. dollars. A Coinbase user may transfer virtual currencies from their Coinbase accounts to other Coinbase accounts, to other accounts housed on other virtual currency exchanges or directly to virtual currency accounts held by other users, or to Internet marketplaces that accept virtual currencies as a method of payment, such as AlphaBay.

34. In order to register an account capable of exchanging U.S. dollars into a virtual currency, a user must provide Coinbase with personal identifying information, a government-issued identification document for Coinbase to verify a user's identity, and a verified bank account from which Coinbase can withdraw and deposit funds.

35. I reviewed records maintained by Coinbase that show that "Niko Takowsky" created a Coinbase account on February 9, 2015, and provided the following identifying information: Social Security Number XXX-XX-6749; a specific date of birth; an address of 8522 Alcott Street, Los Angeles, CA, 90035 (the above-referenced Alcott Street Residence); a specific Driver's License Number; and an email of nikotakowsy@yahoo.com. All of the personal identifying information provided to Coinbase match TAKOWSKY's personal identifying information maintained by the CA

DMV and law enforcement database. TAKOWSKY also provided to Coinbase a Chase Bank account number and Coinbase noted that the account was verified. I know from my training and experience and a review of Coinbase's website that Coinbase requires account holders to provide legitimate personal identifying information and bank account information, which Coinbase then verifies via credit references and financial institutions.

36. According to AlphaBay records, nine BTC deposits were made into TheMatrixHasYou1's AlphaBay account between January 11, 2017 and June 4, 2017. As detailed above, an AlphaBay user deposits virtual currency into their account to fund future purchases. When a purchase order is made, AlphaBay removes a specified amount from the user's account and holds those funds in escrow pending the completion of the sale.

37. According to Coinbase records, on May 23, 2017, 0.10793215 BTC was sent from "Niko Takowsky's" Coinbase account. That same day, according to AlphaBay records, 0.10793215 BTC was deposited into TheMatrixHasYou1's AlphaBay account. Based on the comparison of TheMatrixHasYou1's AlphaBay transaction records and Niko Takowky's Coinbase account records that show that 0.10793215 BTC was deposited into TheMatrixHasYou1 on the same day that 0.10793215 BTC was sent from Niko Takowsky's Coinbase account, the unique value of the same eight-digit BTC amount, and all the other evidence detailed above and below, I believe TAKOWSKY operated the TheMatrixHasYou1 AlphaBay account.

3. TAKOWSKY's Self-Reported Drug Use Parallels  
Claims Made by TheMatrixHasYou1

38. AlphaBay records I reviewed also include "feedback" or buyer reviews that the TheMatrixHasYou1 posted on AlphaBay. In one feedback message corresponding to a purchase made on May 4, 2017, TheMatrixHasYou1 stated, "great seller A+ I take about 8-12 mg of Xanax a day from the pharmacy." TAKOWSKY told the FBI that he takes approximately 8 milligrams of Xanax every day.

**H. Verification of the Access Device and Identity Fraud**

39. As detailed above, I reviewed the credit card numbers and social security numbers AlphaBay records show the TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased.

40. I contacted the Social Security Administration and requested verification for 20 of the 52 social security numbers the TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased on AlphaBay. The Social Security Administration confirmed that 20 social security numbers were valid.

41. I contacted JP Morgan Chase regarding six of the 17 credit cards numbers TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased on AlphaBay and learned that the account ending in 4789 was active on June 8, 2017 - the date of the search of the Alcott Street Residence.

42. I contacted American Express regarding one of the 17 credit cards numbers TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased on AlphaBay and learned that the credit card ending 2000 was active on June 8, 2017.

43. I contacted Wells Fargo regarding two of the 17 credit cards numbers TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased on AlphaBay and learned

that the credit cards ending 9321 and 5768 were active on June 8, 2017.

44. I contacted Capital One regarding two of the 17 credit cards numbers TheMatrixHasYou1 purchased on AlphaBay and learned that credit cards ending 7013 and 5923 were active on June 8, 2017.

45. Based on this review, I believe TAKOWSKY was in possession of approximately 69 unauthorized access devices, 26 of which were active at the time of the search warrant.

46. On or about April 18, 2019 I mailed the victims identified in this case a USPIS Identity Theft Questionnaire.

47. On or about April 24, 2019, victim P.P. completed the USPIS Identity Theft Questionnaire and indicated she did not know TAKOWSKY. P.P. further indicated she did not give TAKOWSKY permission or authority to possess her personal identification information.

48. On or about May 3, 2019, victim R.M. completed the USPIS Identity Theft Questionnaire and indicated he did not know TAKOWSKY. R.M. further indicated he did not give TAKOWSKY permission or authority to possess his personal identification information.



**V. CONCLUSION**

49. For all of the reasons described above, there is probable cause to believe that TAKOWSKY has committed violations of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028A(a)(1) (Aggravated Identity Theft); Title 18, United States Code, Section 1029(a)(3) (Possession of Fifteen or More Unauthorized Access Devices); and Title 18, United States Code, Section 1029(a)(4) (Unlawful Possession of Device-Making Equipment).

  
KIMBERLY GRANGER  
U.S. Postal Inspector

Subscribed to and sworn before me  
this 26<sup>th</sup> day of September 2019.

  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE