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Contact: Adam Benson, 202.999.9104 adam@digitalcitizensalliance.org

More Illegal Drugs Now Available on the “Silk Road” than Before Arrests

Six Months after the FBI captured the alleged “Dread Pirate Roberts”, the Digital Citizens Alliance Report Investigates the State of the “Silk Road” and Other Darknet Markets

Washington, DC – There are more drugs for sale on Silk Road now than there were before the arrest of the site’s alleged creator Ross Ulbricht (aka, “the Dread Pirate Roberts”) – that according to a new report by the Internet commerce watchdog, the Digital Citizens Alliance. Researchers found the number of listings for illegal drugs now exceeds the totals from when Ulbricht allegedly ran the site six months ago.

"What we see on Silk Road today is more drugs, increasing vendors, and an even greater commitment by this community to keeping their ‘movement’ alive," said Digital Citizens' Senior Fellow Garth Bruen.

The report, entitled “Busted, but Not Broken: The State of Silk Road and the Darknet Marketplaces” includes several other observations made by Digital Citizens researchers:
As of April 2, there were 13,648 listings for drugs available on the site. That compared to the 13,000 that were listed shortly before the FBI arrested Ulbricht and shut down the site last October. In comparison, Silk Road’s closest competitor, Agora, has just roughly 7,400 drug listings.

Silk Road and other Darknet Marketplaces continue to do steady business despite the arrests of additional alleged operators who authorities say worked for Ulbricht.

A series of scam markets created distrust among customers after the operator’s allegedly stole tens millions of dollars worth of bitcoin. It is speculated that the resulting distrust may be one of the factors helping Silk Road rebuild its user base so quickly.

In chat rooms used by both operators and customers, many believe that the fallout from Ulbricht’s arrest is complete. Some, who claim to be informed insiders, speculate that Ulbricht has surrendered as much information as he has to offer. These same individuals believe Ulbricht’s information led to three high profile arrests earlier this year.

Silk Road operators have turned a February hack, in which hundreds of thousands of bitcoins were stolen, from a crisis to an opportunity by devising a plan to get bitcoins back to many customers hit in the heist. This “customer refund” helped reaffirm that Silk Road is not like the scam markets that failed customers while Silk Road was down.

"Where other Darknet Marketplaces failed or were proven scams, Silk Road 2.0 operators have vowed to repay all those who lost money in the hack,” said Bruen. “Of course, there is always the possibility they are trying to run a longer form con, but at the moment, they turned an event that could have killed their business into a potential positive. They took a hit in credibility, but the promise alone is a definitive departure from Sheep MarketPlace and Tormarket who simply made off with their users' money. The torch has been passed and the new operators seem committed to doing just what Ulbricht was able to do - keep Silk Road the dominant Darknet source for illegal drugs."

The Digital Citizens Alliance, a non-profit organization, has previously researched illegal drug sales and content theft on the Internet. Researchers spent ten months following illicit online marketplaces including Silk Road. The organization’s newest report discusses the fall of Silk Road and its rebirth as Silk Road 2.0
complete with a new Dread Pirate Roberts to operate the site. Besides tracking Silk Road’s activity, researchers followed its competitors like the now defunct Black Market Reloaded and Sheep Marketplace that at one point filled the void left after the Silk Road seizure. Today, a completely new set of Darknet markets with names like Agora, Pandora, and Evolution are providing competition to Silk Road 2.0.

After the arrest of alleged Silk Road creator Ulbricht, many were unsure what would become of the online currency known as bitcoin as its success was often linked to the success of Silk Road. Digital Citizens research indicates that in the wake of Ulbricht’s arrest bitcoin has begun to establish an identity separate from Silk Road in the eyes of investors, financial analysts, regulators, and lawmakers.

**About Digital Citizens Alliance**

Digital Citizens is a consumer-oriented coalition focused on educating the public and policy makers on the threats that consumers face on the Internet and the importance for Internet stakeholders – individuals, government and industry - to make the Web a safer place. Based in Washington, DC, the Digital Citizens Alliance counts among its supporters: private citizens, the health, pharmaceutical and creative industries as well as online safety experts and other communities focused on Internet safety. For more information, please visit [digitalcitizensalliance.org](http://digitalcitizensalliance.org).