

Europol, DOJ lead the biggest raid against dark web crime in history

Law enforcement trap for darknet users

In early July, AlphaBay – the world’s largest dark web market – was shut down by the FBI. Panicked sellers and buyers sought new darknet markets, including Hansa, another major darknet bazaar. The panic was planned: Dutch authorities had already seized Hansa. For weeks, they operated the market without raising suspicions and collecting data on the site’s visitors, many of whom were AlphaBay refugees.

Sting was headed by the DOJ and the Dutch

The AlphaBay takedown was coordinated by officials from six countries and Europol. American authorities headed the AlphaBay operation, and Dutch police led the takedown of Hansa.



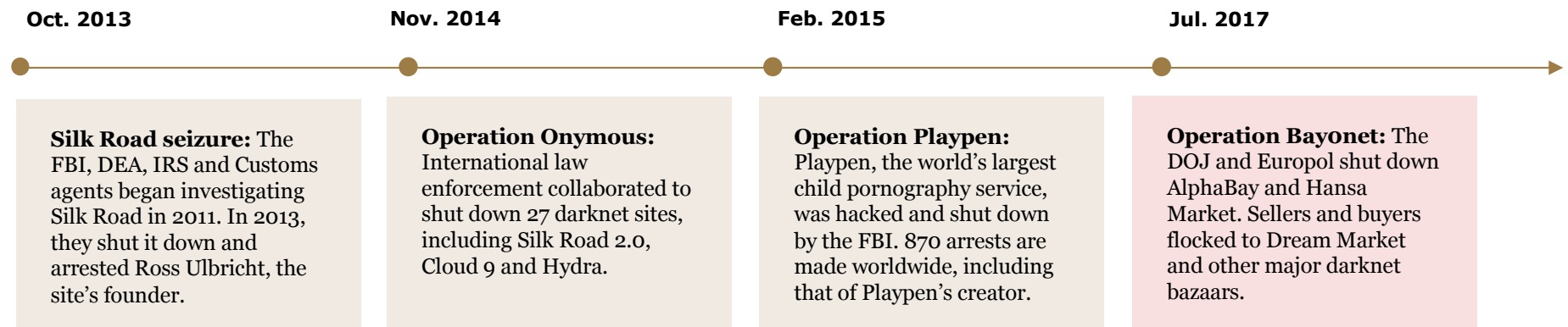
The takedowns were the largest in history

At the time it was shut down, AlphaBay had 200,000 users and 40,000 vendors, making it 10 times the size of the infamous Silk Road marketplace. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said on Thursday that the takedown represented “one of the most important criminal cases of the year.”

Fallout from the operation

Alexandre Cazes, the reported founder of AlphaBay, was arrested in early July, but allegedly committed suicide in his jail cell shortly after. When Dutch authorities seized Hansa Market in June, they arrested two men in Germany accused of running Hansa. According to Dutch police, Europol obtained some 10,000 foreign addresses of Hansa buyers. Dream Market, another darknet bazaar, has spiked in popularity since the takedown of Hansa and AlphaBay.

Major darknet takedowns in history



Sources: “Child-porn website creator accidentally reveals IP address, leading to 870 arrests,” ABC News, May 6, 2017; “How FBI brought down cyber-underworld site Silk Road,” USA Today, Donna Meinwand Leger, Oct. 21, 2013; Joseph Cox, “The FBI’s ‘unprecedented’ hacking campaign targeted over a thousand computers,” Motherboard, Jan. 5, 2016; Nathaniel Popper & Rebecca R. Rutiz, “2 leading online black markets are shut down by authorities,” NY Times, Jul. 20, 2017; “Updated: List of dark net markets (TOR & I2P),” Deep Dot Web, Jul. 19, 2017; “From Tor to Ulbricht: The Deep Web Timeline,” Trend Micro, Feb. 6, 2015; Andy Greenberg, “Hacker Lexicon: What is the Dark Web?,” Wired, Nov. 19, 2014; Andy Greenberg, “Global police spring a trap on thousands of dark web users,” Wired, Jul. 20, 2017; Law enforcement and the dark web: A never-ending battle,” Infosec Institute, Jul. 19, 2016; Jeff Stone, “The online black market exceeds \$100 million in revenue every year,” Business Insider, Aug. 12, 2015.