

# Two Russian Nationals Charged with Running Massive E-Book Piracy Website

## Defendants Operated Z-Library, Which Offered Free Download of Copyrighted Works

Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, an indictment and a complaint were unsealed charging Russian nationals Anton Napolsky and Valeriia Ermakova with criminal copyright infringement, wire fraud and money laundering for operating Z-Library, an online e-book piracy website. The pair was arrested on November 3, 2022 in Cordoba, Argentina at the request of the United States. At the same time, Z-Library's network of online domains was also taken offline and seized by the U.S. government, pursuant to a court order that was also unsealed today.

Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and Michael J. Driscoll, Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), announced the arrests and charges.

"As alleged, the defendants profited illegally off work they stole, often uploading works within mere hours of publication, and in the process victimized authors, publishers and booksellers," stated United States Attorney Peace. "This Office is committed to protecting the intellectual property rights that enable creative and artistic expression, and holding individuals accountable for threatening those rights."

"The defendants are alleged to have operated a website for over a decade whose central purpose was providing stolen intellectual property, in violation of copyright laws. Intellectual property theft crimes deprive their victims of both ingenuity and hard-earned revenue. The FBI is determined to ensure those

willing to steal and profit from the creativity of others are stopped and made to face the consequences in the criminal justice system," stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Driscoll.

As alleged in the indictment and court filings, Z-Library bills itself as "the world's largest library" and claims to offer more than 11 million e-books for download. Z-Library, which has been active since approximately 2009, offers e-book files in a variety of file formats, stripped of their copyright protections, and encourages users to upload and download titles. Many of the e-books offered by Z-Library are protected intellectual property for which authors hold copyrights and publishers hold exclusive distribution rights, and which Z-Library has no right or license to distribute, and which are available elsewhere only with anti-circumvention measures applied. As such, a central purpose of Z-Library is to allow users to download copyrighted books for free in violation of U.S. law. In addition to its homepage, Z-Library operates as a complex network of approximately 249 interrelated web domains. As part of this action, those domains were taken offline and seized by the U.S. government.

The charges in the indictment are allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The government's case was initiated by the Office's Cyber Crime Task Force. Assistant United States Attorney Chand Edwards-Balfour, Alexander Mindlin, Antoinette N. Rangel and Kaitlin Farrell are prosecuting the case. Brian Morris of the Office's Asset Recovery Section is handling forfeiture matters.

The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs and Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, the FBI's Legal Attachés abroad and foreign authorities in multiple countries provided critical assistance in this case. In particular, the Office extends its appreciation to the Argentine authorities for their assistance in the capture of Napolsky and Ermakova.

Multiple organizations representing the victim authors and publishers also provided critical assistance in this case. The Office extends its particular

appreciation to The Authors Guild in New York and The Publishers Association in London for their assistance. The Office also extends its appreciation to the National Cyber-Forensics & Training Alliance for its assistance in the domain takedown.

**The Defendants:**

ANTON NAPOLSKY

Age: 33

St. Petersburg, Russia

VALERIIA ERMAKOVA

Age: 27

St. Petersburg, Russia

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 22-CR-525 (NM)

John Marzulli Danielle Blustein Hass United States Attorney's Office (718)

254-6323