

OFFICE OF THE ANOKA COUNTY ATTORNEY

Tony Palumbo, County Attorney



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January 10, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ANDONII GUILTY ON ALL COUNTS

An Anoka County jury convicted Valentin V. Andonii Jan. 7 of criminal charges related to his possession and intent to sell vaping cartridges containing more than 184 pounds of THC and worth more than \$1 million.

Andonii, 25, was found guilty of possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to sell, and failure to affix tax stamps on a controlled substance – all felonies. He was also convicted of four fifth-degree controlled substance charges that were added during trial. The criminal complaint is attached for reference.

The presumptive prison term for Andonii is between 56 and 74 months. Sentencing is scheduled for March 25.

The case against Andonii was the result of an investigation by the Northwest Metro Drug Task Force. Ultimately, the task force seized more than 76,000 THC vaping cartridges packaged for distribution.

This case was significant not only because of the size of the operation but also because of the potential public health impact. Lab tests performed by the Food and Drug Administration showed the THC concentration of the cartridges ranged from about 17 to 42 percent. The cartridges also contained Vitamin E acetate and other cutting agents. Vitamin E acetate concentrations ranged from 17 to 22 percent. Five forensic analysts and the FDA lab's Director of Inorganic Chemistry testified remotely from Cincinnati during the trial.

The Minnesota Department of Health has raised significant concerns that Vitamin E acetate – which is added as a filler to increase profits – causes illness and lung damage. It is believed that the negative health impact of fillers like this is significant, although hard to quantify. [More information can be found here.](#)

“The facts of this case make clear that, regardless of the future of criminal laws regarding marijuana and THC, public safety and public health must be protected through aggressive regulation and criminal penalties for those who would endanger the community by recklessly adding chemicals or additives that may cause illness or death,” Anoka County prosecutor Paul Ostrow said.

This case was also significant due to the financial impacts of the defendant's activities. Investigators seized more than more than \$144,000 in U.S. currency from his Coon Rapids residence. Although Andonii derived profit from his drug operation, none of this income was reported on his taxes. It is estimated he owes the state of Minnesota more than \$3 million in unpaid taxes, based on a law requiring tax stamps and payments on controlled substance transactions. The state intends to pursue restitution.

“By law enforcement seizing these cartridges, many people have been spared serious health problems if they had inhaled their contents” said Anoka County Attorney Tony Palumbo. “Those seizure efforts were an outstanding example of public safety.”

State of Minnesota
County of Anoka

District Court
10th Judicial District

Prosecutor File No. CA-2019-01890
Court File No. 02-CR-19-6205

State of Minnesota,
Plaintiff,
vs.

COMPLAINT
Order of Detention
 Amended

VALENTIN V. ANDONII DOB: 10/11/1996
11710 Utah Avenue N
Champlin, MN 55316
Defendant.

The Complainant submits this complaint to the Court and states that there is probable cause to believe Defendant committed the following offense(s):

COUNT I

Charge: Controlled Substance Crime in the 1st Degree (Sale) (Marijuana or Tetrahydrocannabinols) (25 or More Kilograms)

Minnesota Statute: 152.021.1(6), with reference to: 152.021.3(a)
Maximum Sentence: 0-30 Years and/or \$300,000.00 - \$1,000,000.00
Offense Level: Felony

Offense Date (on or about): 07/01/2019 to 09/23/2019

Control #(ICR#): 19013575

Charge Description: On or about July 1, 2019 - September 23, 2019, in the County of Anoka, Minnesota, VALENTIN V. ANDONII, did on one or more occasions within a 90-day period unlawfully sell or possess with the intent to sell, one or more mixtures of a total weight of 25 kilograms or more containing Tetrahydrocannabinols.

COUNT II

Charge: Controlled Substance Crime in the 1st Degree (Possession) (50 or More Kilograms of Marijuana or Tetrahydrocannabinols or 500 or More Marijuana Plants)

Minnesota Statute: 152.021.2(a)(6), with reference to: 152.021.3(a)
Maximum Sentence: 0-30 Years and/or \$300,000.00 - \$1,000,000.00
Offense Level: Felony

Offense Date (on or about): 09/23/2019

Control #(ICR#): 19013575

Charge Description: On or about September 23, 2019, in the County of Anoka, Minnesota, VALENTIN V. ANDONII, did unlawfully possess one or more mixtures of a total weight of 50 kilograms or more containing marijuana or Tetrahydrocannabinols.

COUNT III

Charge: Controlled Substance Taxation (possession-no tax payment & no affixed stamps)

Minnesota Statute: 297D.09.1a, with reference to: 297D.09.1a

Maximum Sentence: 0-7 Years and/or \$4,200.00 - \$14,000.00

Offense Level: Felony

Offense Date (on or about): 07/01/2019 to 09/23/2019

Control #(ICR#): 19013575

Charge Description: On or about July 1, 2019 - September 23, 2019, in the County of Anoka, Minnesota, VALENTIN V. ANDONII, did possess marijuana or controlled substances without affixing the appropriate stamps, labels, or other indicia upon which a tax is imposed by section 297D.08.

STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE

During the months of July, August and September 2019 Detective Mike TenEyck and other members of the Northwest Metro Drug Task Force, hereinafter "NWMDTF," investigated the unlawful sale of cartridges containing tetrahydrocannabinols, also known as THC, defined when in excess of 0.3% concentration as an unlawful Schedule I controlled substance. A confidential informant whose identity is known to law enforcement, hereinafter "CI," told detectives that an adult male known to the CI as "Valicious or Valic," was selling large quantities of THC cartridges and that he or she could arrange controlled buys from the Valicious. In July, August or September 2019 the CI contacted Valicious and agreed to purchase 100 THC cartridges for \$1500. While under continuous surveillance an undercover detective, hereinafter "UC" met with Valicious at a pre-arranged location in Anoka County to complete the purchase of the THC cartridges previously arranged by the CI. Valicious arrived in a 2005 Mercedes Benz motor vehicle (Minnesota License No. BPY867), a vehicle registered to an adult male, VVA (DOB 07/21/1964). Detectives witnessed the UC hand an adult male identified by the CI as Valicious \$1500 in recorded NWMDT U.S. currency in exchange for a package. The package was later confirmed to contain 100 cartridges containing information on the label stating that the cartridges contained at least 85% THC and a sample cartridge from the controlled buy field tested positive for THC. Detective TenEyck later confirmed through DVS records that the registered owner of the Mercedes-Benz vehicle, VVA, was an older relative to Valentin V. Andonii (DOB 10/11/1996), the above-named defendant. The CI identified the adult male who sold the THC cartridges to him as the person known to him as Valicious and the UC and the CI positively identified Valicious as the defendant.

In July, August or September 2019 the CI contacted the defendant and agreed to a second purchase of 100 THC cartridges for \$1500. While under continuous surveillance the UC met with the defendant at a pre-arranged location in Anoka County to complete the second purchase of the THC cartridges previously arranged by the CI. The defendant arrived in a 2016 Jeep Cherokee (Minnesota License No. 425UVR). Detectives witnessed the UC hand the defendant \$1500 in recorded NWMDTF US currency in exchange for a package. The package was later confirmed to contain 100 cartridges containing identical information on the label stating that the cartridges contained at least 85% THC, A sample cartridge from the controlled buy field tested positive for THC. Subsequent to the initial controlled purchase of THC the defendant sent a text message to the UC offering "1 for 13.5," understood by detectives as an offer to sell one thousand cartridges for \$13,500.

On September 23, 2019 the NWMDTF executed a search warrant at 3686 Coon Rapids Boulevard NW in the City of Coon Rapids, County of Anoka, confirmed to be the defendant's residence. Upon entry into the residence detectives immediately detained an adult female and an adult male identified by law enforcement from prior contacts as the defendant. Detectives also executed a search warrant on the Mercedes-Benz and Jeep Cherokee used by the defendant during the two controlled buys and on a 2007 Cadillac Escalade (Minnesota License No. 8BB667), a vehicle registered to the defendant and previously seen parked in the driveway. Detectives seized 500 cartridges from the upstairs NE bedroom and 2,370 cartridges from a box located in the living room. Samples taken from the cartridges field tested positive for 1.1 grams of THC **and forensic testing subsequently confirmed a concentration of THC greater than 0.3%**. Detectives seized 11,300 cartridges from the garage. Samples taken from the cartridges field tested positive for 1.1 grams of THC **and forensic testing subsequently confirmed a concentration of THC greater than 0.3%**. Detectives seized 28,800 cartridges from the passenger compartment of the Cadillac Escalade. Samples taken from the cartridges field tested positive for 1.1 grams of THC **and forensic testing subsequently confirmed a concentration of THC greater than 0.3%**. Detectives seized 30,600 cartridges from the garage next to the Cadillac Escalade. Samples taken from the

cartridges field tested positive for 1.1 grams of THC **and forensic testing subsequently confirmed a concentration of THC greater than 0.3%**. Counterfeit currency totaling \$23,800 was found on top of the Escalade. A total of \$144,761.00 in US currency was seized from the residence.

The search of the residence and vehicles resulted in the seizure of a total of 76,972 cartridges each containing 1.1 grams of THC as confirmed from field testing and labeling on the cartridges stated that the cartridges contained **85% or greater THC. Forensic testing on samples conducted by the Federal Drug Agency confirmed that actual concentrations of THC found in the cartridges varied from 17.6% to 42.0%. Laboratory testing also confirmed the presence of Vitamin E acetate and other compounds used as a diluent or “cutting agent” in the samples that were tested.** The total amount of substances **containing THC in a concentration greater than 0.3%** in the cartridges is 84.669.2 grams, in excess of 84 kilograms of THC. Based upon training and experience the NWMDTF believes that the total value of the THC cartridges is in excess of \$6,000,000.

On or about July 1, 2019 through September 23, 2019 the defendant took possession of 76,972 cartridges containing a concentration of greater than 0.3%. Upon inspection of the cartridges on September 23, 2019 law enforcement confirmed that none of the cartridges seized displayed tax stamps and the defendant was not in possession of any tax stamps at the time the cartridges were seized. Minnesota Statutes Section 297D.04 requires the payment of any required taxes under Chapter 297D to be paid upon the taking of possession of a controlled substance to be evidenced by affixing a tax stamp on the controlled substance as set forth in M.S. 297D.11. Minnesota Statutes Section 297D.08 (3) provides that a tax is imposed “on each ten dosage units of a controlled substance that is not sold by weight or portion thereof” at the rate of \$400 per ten dosage units. The unpaid taxes on 76,972 dosage units totals \$3,078,880.

SIGNATURES AND APPROVALS

Complainant requests that Defendant, subject to bail or conditions of release, be:
(1) arrested or that other lawful steps be taken to obtain Defendant's appearance in court; or
(2) detained, if already in custody, pending further proceedings; and that said Defendant otherwise be dealt with according to law.

Complainant declares under penalty of perjury that everything stated in this document is true and correct. Minn. Stat. § 358.116; Minn. R. Crim. P. 2.01, subds. 1, 2.

Complainant

Michael TenEyck
Officer
4401 Xylon Avenue N
New Hope, MN 55428
Badge: 77

Electronically Signed:
04/24/2020 10:29 AM
Anoka County, Minnesota

Being authorized to prosecute the offenses charged, I approve this complaint.

Prosecuting Attorney

Paul T. Ostrow
2100 3rd Ave
Anoka, MN 55303-2265
(763) 324-5550

Electronically Signed:
04/23/2020 03:30 PM

FINDING OF PROBABLE CAUSE

From the above sworn facts, and any supporting affidavits or supplemental sworn testimony, I, the Issuing Officer, have determined that probable cause exists to support, subject to bail or conditions of release where applicable, Defendant's arrest or other lawful steps be taken to obtain Defendant's appearance in court, or Defendant's detention, if already in custody, pending further proceedings. Defendant is therefore charged with the above-stated offense(s).

SUMMONS

THEREFORE YOU, THE DEFENDANT, ARE SUMMONED to appear on _____, _____ at _____ AM/PM before the above-named court at 2100 Third Avenue, Anoka, MN 55303 to answer this complaint.

IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR in response to this SUMMONS, a WARRANT FOR YOUR ARREST shall be issued.

WARRANT

To the Sheriff of the above-named county; or other person authorized to execute this warrant: I order, in the name of the State of Minnesota, that the Defendant be apprehended and arrested without delay and brought promptly before the court (if in session), and if not, before a Judge or Judicial Officer of such court without unnecessary delay, and in any event not later than 36 hours after the arrest or as soon as such Judge or Judicial Officer is available to be dealt with according to law.

Execute in MN Only

Execute Nationwide

Execute in Border States

ORDER OF DETENTION

Since the Defendant is already in custody, I order, subject to bail or conditions of release, that the Defendant continue to be detained pending further proceedings.

Bail: \$
Conditions of Release:

This complaint, duly subscribed and sworn to or signed under penalty of perjury, is issued by the undersigned Judicial Officer as of the following date: April 24, 2020.

Judicial Officer

Nancy J. Logering
District Court Judge

Electronically Signed: 04/24/2020 10:49 AM

Sworn testimony has been given before the Judicial Officer by the following witnesses:

**COUNTY OF ANOKA
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

State of Minnesota

Plaintiff

vs.

Valentin V. Andonii

Defendant

*LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER RETURN OF SERVICE
I hereby Certify and Return that I have served a copy of this Order of
Detention upon the Defendant herein named.*

Signature of Authorized Service Agent: