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(71) Applicant *(for all designated States except US)*: **VERTEX PHARMACEUTICALS INCORPORATED** [US/US]; 130 Waverly Street, Cambridge, MA 02139 (US).

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants *(for US only)*: **BRITT, Shawn, D.** [US/US]; 56 Marilyn Rd., Andover, MA 01810 (US). **COTTRELL, Kevin, M.** [US/US]; 1697 Cambridge Street, #12, Cambridge, MA 02138 (US). **PERNI, Robert, B.** [US/US]; 130 Robert Road, Marlborough, MA 01752 (US). **PITLIK, Janos** [HU/US]; 1 Robin Circle, Westborough, MA 01581 (US).

(74) Agent: **BADIA, Michael, C.**; Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Incorporated, 130 Waverly Street, Cambridge, MA 02139 (US).

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(54) Title: INHIBITORS OF SERINE PROTEASES, PARTICULARLY HCV NS3-NS4A PROTEASE

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to compounds of formula I or formula Ia or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, that inhibit serine protease activity, particularly the activity of hepatitis C virus NS3-NS4A protease. As such, they act by interfering with the life cycle of the hepatitis C virus and are useful as antiviral agents. The invention further relates to pharmaceutically acceptable compositions comprising said compounds either for *ex vivo* use or for administration to a patient suffering from HCV infection and processes for preparing the compounds. The invention also relates to methods of treating an HCV infection in a patient by15 administering a pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of this invention.