

Trial Winds Down for Bout in N.Y.

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NEW YORK — Russian businessman Viktor Bout was "ready, willing and able" to sell surface-to-air missiles and other heavy weaponry to a Colombian terror group he knew wanted to kill Americans, a federal prosecutor said Monday in closing arguments at the suspect's trial.

Bout told contacts posing as members of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, "We are together," said prosecutor Anjan Sahni. "We have the same enemy."

Bout, once known as the Merchant of Death for his prominence in the international black market for arms, was arrested overseas in an elaborate sting in 2008 and brought to the United States to face federal conspiracy charges. Bout, 44, has insisted he is a legitimate businessman whose primary dealings were in transporting standard air cargo.

At a trial in Manhattan, a jury saw e-mails, listened to wiretaps and heard testimony from government informants that proved Bout "was ready, willing and able to carry out the massive weapons scheme," Sahni said.

The defense was to give its closing argument later Monday.

Prosecutors said Bout was under United Nations travel restrictions when he was approached in Moscow by a close associate about supplying weapons to FARC. Bout was told that the group wanted to use drug-trafficking proceeds to pay for missiles and other weapons, making it clear it wanted to attack Americans who were supporting the Colombian forces fighting the rebels, prosecutors said.

The associate, South African businessman Andrew Smulian, took the witness stand for the government as part of a plea deal and testified that Bout agreed that for a down payment of \$20 million, he would arrange for cargo planes to air-drop 100 tons of weapons into Colombia. The phony deal was finalized at a secret meeting in Bangkok in 2008 involving two Drug Enforcement Administration informants who prosecutors said tricked Bout into believing they were FARC operatives.

The defense claims that Bout only spoke about weapons with the group to lure it into a scam to unload two old cargo planes for \$5 million.

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