

Life Sentence Sought for Arms Dealer

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NEW YORK — A Russian arms dealer convicted of conspiring to sell weapons to South American terrorists is a "businessman of the most dangerous order" and should be sentenced to life in prison, federal prosecutors argued Friday.

Viktor Bout, a global arms trafficker, who eluded authorities for decades and was sanctioned by the United Nations, was "ready, willing and able to provide a breathtaking arsenal of weapons" to a terrorist organization that planned to target Americans, the U.S. attorney's office said in court papers.

The request was made in a memorandum to U.S. Federal District Court Judge Shira Scheindlin, who is scheduled to sentence Bout on April 5 in New York.

He faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years in prison. Prosecutors also asked the judge to order Bout to forfeit \$20 million.

Bout, known as the Merchant of Death, was convicted in November of selling weapons to a U.S. government operative posing as a go-between for South American terrorists who wanted to shoot down U.S. helicopter pilots.

Defense attorney Albert Dayan said in court papers filed Wednesday that the case against Bout was "the product of outrageous, inexcusable government conduct" and that his client is innocent.

He called on the judge not to sentence Bout and to dismiss the indictment.

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