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Russian Man Admits to Smuggling Military-Grade Electronics From U.S.

By AFP

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Hong Kong harbor. **Modlem (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

A Russian man pleaded guilty on Thursday to illegally exporting electronics to Russia for possible military use, in violation of sanctions imposed after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. Department of Justice said.

Maxim Marchenko, who lived in Hong Kong, operated a network with two other unidentified Russians that fraudulently bought large quantities of military-grade microelectronics from American distributors on behalf of Russia-based end users, according to U.S. authorities.

The 51-year-old, who was arrested in September, pleaded guilty to smuggling and money laundering in a New York court on Thursday.

"Marchenko concealed his scheme to funnel these microelectronics — which had an application for use in rifle scopes, night-vision goggles, thermal optics and other weapons

systems — by using shell companies and other elaborate money laundering techniques," U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement.

Marchenko will be sentenced on May 29.

Money laundering carries a maximum jail sentence of 20 years, while smuggling carries up to 10 years in prison, the department said.

Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department's National Security Division said the law enforcement body was "holding accountable those who would enable the Kremlin and its unjust war of aggression against Ukraine."

Marchenko's shell companies moved more than $1.6 million to the U.S. between May 2022 and August 2023 to buy the equipment, according to the Department of Justice.

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