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U.S. extradition for arms dealer

- Story Highlights
- Syrian-born arms dealer Monzer al Kassar was arrested in Madrid in June
- U.S.: He tried to sell arms to FARC, which it labels a Colombian terrorist group
- Kassar, who lives in southern Spain, says he has retired from arms dealing

From CNN Madrid Bureau Chief Al Goodman

MADRID, Spain (CNN) -- A Spanish court Friday agreed to allow the extradition to the United States of a Syrian-born arms dealer charged with conspiring to sell weapons to a Colombian terrorist group and conspiring to kill Americans.

A spokesman for Spain's National Court, which handles terrorism cases, said judges agreed to grant the U.S. extradition request for Monzer al Kassar, who was arrested in Madrid in June.

Kassar, who has been fighting extradition, can appeal to a larger panel of judges at the same court, but the Spanish government will still have the final say.

Police arrested Kassar in June as he arrived at Madrid's airport from the southern Spanish city of Malaga. Two other men were arrested in Romania as part of the same case and were extradited to the United States last week.

The U.S. Embassy in Madrid said Kassar and the men conspired to sell millions of dollars' worth of weapons to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or [FARC](#), which the United States has designated a terrorist organization.

The weapons included surface-to-air missile systems, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, thousands of machine guns, and millions of rounds of ammunition, the embassy said.

The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York charged Kassar with five counts: conspiracy to provide material aid to a terrorist group, conspiracy to kill American citizens, conspiracy to kill U.S. officials and employees, conspiracy to acquire and use anti-aircraft missiles, and money laundering.

Some of the charges carry a sentence of life in prison.

The alleged plot was discovered through an undercover operation in which two people working for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration posed as FARC representatives, U.S. officials said.

The men were arrested as they tried to finalize payment for the weapons, District Attorney Michael Garcia said.

Kassar has Spanish residency status and was living in the upscale town of Marbella, on Spain's southern Mediterranean coast, when he was arrested.

Kassar had recently told journalists he retired from arms dealing, but the embassy said he had been involved since the 1970s, providing weapons and military equipment to armed factions in Nicaragua, Cyprus, Bosnia, Croatia, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and elsewhere.

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