

## El Chapo's lawyers say there's evidence he was just a cartel middle manager

By Keegan Hamilton

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When Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán was extradited from Mexico to New York last year, federal prosecutors claimed he was “the most notorious drug trafficker in the world” and the “principal leader” of the Sinaloa cartel, “the world’s largest and most prolific drug trafficking organization.”

But in his latest court appearance in the celebrated trial Tuesday, Chapo’s lawyers demanded the government hand over evidence that purportedly shows the infamous drug kingpin was actually just a “middle manager” who “had to take orders from somebody else.”

So which is it? Was Chapo the supreme leader of the Sinaloa cartel or merely a lieutenant obeying the commands of other, unnamed top bosses?

That line of questioning figures to be key to his defense at his upcoming trial, which is scheduled to start Sept. 5, and Judge Brian Cogan is now poised to decide whether to require the prosecution to hand over information that Chapo's legal team says could plant seeds of doubt about his guilt in the minds of potential jurors.

If Chapo himself had any qualms about the efforts to demote from his alleged leadership position in the Sinaloa cartel, he did not express them Tuesday. Wearing a drab, navy blue jail uniform and sporting a fresh shave, he sat in silence and spent most of the proceeding staring at his beauty-queen wife and twin daughters in the courtroom gallery.