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## 'I got in the back . . . and shot him'

Hit man calmly describes brutal death at Connolly trial



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COHN BAND/ASSOCIATED PRESS Assistant State Attorney Michael Von Samft used a chart depicting the Winter Hill Organization yesterday during the trial of former FBI agent John Connolly. (MARICE COHN BAND/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

By Shelley Murphy

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MIAMI - Aging hit man-turned-government witness John Martorano gave a wide-eyed Florida jury a glimpse into Boston's underworld yesterday as he took the stand and talked about murders, FBI corruption, and the upside-down code of gangsters who kill their own friends on a whim.

Initially, Martorano said, he thought it was "distasteful" to kill Boston business consultant John B. Callahan, a friend who had loaned him his car, let him stay in his Florida condo, and funneled him money while he was a fugitive on the run from race-fixing charges in Massachusetts.

But he told jurors he agreed to carry out the hit because his friends James "Whitey" Bulger and Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi told him they had been warned by FBI agent John J. Connolly Jr. that Callahan was "going to fold" when questioned by the FBI about a murder and that "we're all going to end up in jail for the rest of our lives if he doesn't hold up."

Weeks later, on a summer night in 1982, Martorano said, he picked up Callahan at Fort Lauderdale Airport in his conversion van.

"He got in the front seat. I got in the back seat . . . and shot him," Martorano said.

The next morning, Martorano said, he and a now deceased accomplice were transferring Callahan's body to the trunk of his Cadillac when they heard him moaning and shot him again. They left the car at Miami International Airport and scattered his Rolex and identification papers in the Little Havana area of the city to make it look as if Cubans had killed him, he said. Callahan's body was discovered days later, on Aug. 2, 1982.

The startling testimony, offered in a remarkably calm baritone by the 67-year-old killer, was given on the fourth day of Connolly's murder trial in a Miami-Dade County courthouse. Connolly, 68, who retired from the FBI in 1990 after 22 years, is accused of leaking information to Bulger and Flemmi, both longtime FBI informants, that provoked Callahan's killing.

Connolly is currently serving a 10-year prison term for a 2002 federal racketeering conviction in Boston for protecting Bulger and Flemmi from prosecution and warning Bulger - who remains one of the FBI's 10 Most Wanted - to flee just before the gangster's 1995 racketeering indictment. He faces a possible life sentence if convicted of Callahan's killing.

The mood in the courtroom, which has been jovial at times, grew somber as Martorano - dressed in a tailored navy blue suit, crisp white shirt, and blue tie - took the stand.

Connolly frowned as Martorano described the deal that allowed him to serve just 12 years and two months in prison for killing 20 people between 1965 and 1982. He was released last year.

Martorano said he sought a deal in 1998, when he was awaiting trial on racketeering charges and learned that his codefendants, Bulger and Flemmi, were FBI informants.

"You can't rat on a rat, that's the way I see it," said Martorano, who added that he feared Flemmi and Bulger would provide information that would hurt him and his friends in the future. "I was trying to stop that from happening."

Martorano grew annoyed when defense attorney Manuel L. Casabielle grilled him about a previously undisclosed portion of his plea bargain, which indicates he agreed to cooperate against a list of Bulger's former South Boston crew.

But Martorano said he did not give any information that could lead to indictments against his friends.

"So you put one over on the government?" Casabielle asked. "My lawyers put one over on them," Martorano said.

Martorano said that before he cooperated, he was facing racketeering charges that could have sent him to prison for no more than five years. But after implicating himself in murders, he faced much more time. If he lies, Martorano said, the deal is void and he could face life in prison.

Martorano also testified about the origins of Bulger's relationship with Connolly. He said that in 1975, Bulger told him and other Winter Hill Gang leaders that his brother, William M. Bulger, then a Massachusetts state senator and a childhood friend of Connolly's, wanted him to meet the agent.

Winter Hill gang leaders advised Whitey Bulger to "see what he wants," Martorano said.

After meeting with Connolly, Bulger reported back to the gang that the agent told him he wanted to help him because "he owed Billy Bulger a favor for helping him to go to college and stay on the straight and narrow," Martorano said.

When testifying before a congressional committee in 2003, William Bulger, formerly president of the state Senate and of the University of Massachusetts, said he never asked Connolly to protect his brother.

A year after Whitey Bulger's initial meeting with Connolly, Martorano said, Bulger told the gang he had been warned by Connolly that a Revere bookmaker, Richard Castucci, was an FBI informant.

Martorano told jurors that as a result, he lured Castucci to a Somerville apartment in December 1976, then shot him to death.

Martorano also testified that he killed Tulsa businessman Roger Wheeler in May 1981 at the request of Callahan, who had previously served as president of Wheeler's company, World Jai Alai, and wanted to buy it back.

As Connolly's lawyer questioned him about his morals, Martorano insisted, "I'm honest."

"Let's explore that," said Casabielle, asking Martorano whether he was honest when he lured trusting people to their deaths.

"I was honest to somebody else," said Martorano, adding that he was killing at Bulger's and Flemmi's request. "I mean, usually somebody gets killed and somebody gets helped."

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