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Hit man 'felt bad' about '82 killing

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Serious but at times tongue firmly in cheek, former Boston hit man John Martorano ended his testimony Thursday unrepentant about his warped gangster sensibility. Committing murders, he insisted, was a way to help his mobster friends -- never done for money. Of the \$50,000 given to him by Italian mobsters after killing a guy nicknamed Indian Al? "That was like a donation," he testified. But Martorano also remembered putting a bullet in his pal John Callahan's head: "I felt lousy. I didn't want to kill the guy. I didn't want to kill a guy I cared enough to kill for the year before." Martorano finished his testimony Thursday in Miami-Dade Circuit Court in the murder trial of former FBI agent John Connolly, who stands accused of helping set up Martorano's slaying of Callahan outside Fort Lauderdale's airport in July 1982. JAI-ALAI OWNER Prosecutors contend that Connolly told Boston gangsters that Callahan -- who pushed for the murder of Miami's World Jai-Alai owner Roger Wheeler the year before -- was going to cooperate with investigators probing Wheeler's slaying. That spurred gangsters James "Whitey" Bulger and Stephen Flemmi to persuade Martorano -- who also killed Wheeler -- to slay Callahan, despite the hit man's reservation about murdering his own friend. Martorano served 12 years in prison for killing 20 people during the 1970s and '80s as part of Boston's Winter Hill gang organization. He is now free. In 2002, Connolly -- a former star FBI agent who used Bulger and Flemmi as confidential informants -- was convicted in federal court of racketeering and sentenced to 10 years in prison. For Callahan's slaying, Connolly is charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit first-degree murder. He faces life in prison if convicted. Defense attorney Manny **Casabielle** spent Thursday verbally sparring with the beefy 67-year-old hit man, trying to undercut his credibility. "You were a ruthless guy, weren't you?" **Casabielle** asked. "I don't know," Martorano said, pausing. "You don't act like I am." The jury and courtroom erupted into laughter. 1982 MEETING Another line of questioning: Martorano's relationship with Winter Hill leader Bulger, still a high-profile fugitive. One key point was a meeting in a New York City hotel in 1982, when Bulger -- after talking with Connolly -- urged Martorano to kill Callahan. "Connolly was concerned that if John Callahan was grabbed by the FBI, that if he didn't [stay silent], we were all going to jail for the rest of our lives," Martorano said. **Casabielle** questioned if the "we" meant Connolly, too. Martorano said he believed Connolly, who had also tipped the gang off to other snitches who ended up murdered, was worried about going to jail, too. Prosecutors contend that Connolly's purported fear of going to jail proves he knew in advance that Callahan would be killed -- evidence supporting the murder conspiracy charge. MARICE COHN BAND/MIAMI HERALD STAFF THAT'S HIM: Assistant State Attorney Michael Von Samft points out Anthony Ciulla during the trial of John Connolly. John Martorano is top row, third from left.