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MIAMI-DADE CIRCUIT COURT: Witness outlines plot to buy World Jai-Alai

A confessed hit man testified in the murder trial of an ex-FBI agent that the now-dead John Callahan hoped to buy Miami's World Jai-Alai.

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The deal: John Callahan would buy Miami's World Jai-Alai and hire his Boston gangster pals as muscle to keep away the Mafia or anyone else.

"The Mafia didn't want to get involved with us," one of those Boston gangsters, Stephen Flemmi, testified in a Miami courtroom Wednesday, the eighth day of the trial. "I described to you earlier the array of weapons we had. We were a formidable group."

Flemmi testified Wednesday about plans for World Jai-Alai in the early 1980s -- plans that fell apart but led to a series of murders that eventually landed ex-Boston FBI agent John Connolly on trial in Miami-Dade.

Connolly is charged with murder and conspiracy in the 1982 murder of Callahan, who was found shot to death in the trunk of his Cadillac at Miami International Airport.

Flemmi wrapped up his third and final day on the stand Wednesday, testimony marked by tedious and testy exchanges with Connolly defense attorney Manny **Casabielle**.

Under intense grilling, the 74-year-old Flemmi never wavered.

Flemmi and James "Whitey" Bulger, leaders of the Winter Hill gang, were informants for Connolly in the late 1970s and 1980s. But prosecutors maintain the gang corrupted

Connolly, who for years tipped them off to investigations, indictments and informants.

Callahan, a Boston accountant with a penchant for hanging out with gangsters, had been forced out as president of World Jai-Alai. He tried to buy the gambling company from Oklahoma millionaire Roger Wheeler.

If the sale went through, Callahan wanted Bulger and Flemmi's crew to help keep away the Mafia or any other outfits that might try to shake down the operation.

"We'd be getting [\$10,000 a week] skimming from the parking concessions and possible future consideration in the company," Flemmi testified Wednesday.

When Wheeler refused to sell, Callahan pushed the gang to kill the millionaire. In May 1981, hit man John Martorano shot Wheeler between the eyes at a Tulsa golf course.

But by the next year, a drinking buddy of Callahan named Brian Halloran had gone to the FBI. He implicated the gang in the Wheeler murder. Bulger later gunned down Halloran.

Flemmi insisted Bulger fatally shot Halloran after Connolly tipped the gang off about the man's cooperation with investigators.

Flemmi did not participate in the shooting but said he wished he had.

"I'm part of the team. I should have been available if something had gone wrong," Flemmi testified.

Proving it was Connolly's leaked information that led to Halloran's death is key for prosecutors because it would show a pattern that repeated itself with Callahan.

Flemmi said Connolly warned Bulger that Callahan would probably turn against the gang and cooperate with the FBI. At a meeting in New York City, Bulger and Flemmi persuaded Martorano to kill his pal Callahan.

Back in Boston later, Bulger and Flemmi met with Connolly to talk about Callahan. "We said we were going to take care of it," Flemmi said, suggesting Connolly knew

Callahan would die.

He explained later: "We never mentioned the word 'kill' to anybody."