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attempted murder

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A former IRS agent who opened a tax preparation business was sentenced Friday to nearly 24 years in prison for defrauding clients out of more than \$11 million and then attempting to hire a hit man to kill four of them.

Steven Martinez, 51, of Ramona was sentenced in San Diego federal court to 286 months in prison and five years of supervised release. He was also ordered by District Court Judge William Hayes to forfeit all the property, including a home in Mexico, and other possessions that he purchased with clients' money.

When his clients discovered his fraud, some threatened to go to authorities, according to prosecutors. Martinez tried to hire a hit man to kill four of them but the person he tried to hire went to the FBI.

In a conversation taped by the FBI, Martinez told the would-be hit man that he would give him \$100,000 if he "eliminated the lady in Rancho Santa Fe and the lady in La Jolla."

Martinez pleaded guilty to murder-for-hire, witness tampering, mail fraud, filing false tax returns, Social Security fraud, identity theft and money laundering.

Assistant U.S. Atty. Joseph Orabona called Martinez "a cool and calculating individual" who carefully planned the murder scheme and suggested the hit man use a weapon with a silencer.

“These victims were surveilled,” Orabona said. “They were watched. Their habits

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