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A 40 year-old Atwater man, already in jail on child molestation charges, was arrested today for soliciting the murder of his two alleged victims, Merced County District Attorney Larry Morse II announced today at a press conference in front of the Old County Courthouse.

Matthew Alan Grose was arrested this morning by Merced County District Attorney Investigators following a month-long investigation that culminated in Grose offering an undercover DA investigator, posing as a hit-man, \$20,000 to murder two teenage girls who were allegedly victims of sexual assaults by Grose, Morse said.

During a meeting at the John Lattarocca Correctional Facility yesterday, Grose confirmed to the undercover "hit man" that he wanted both victims, referred to in their conversation as "cars," killed.

The murder for hire investigation began while the sexual molestation case was being prepared for trial. District Attorney Investigator Albert Flores, who headed the investigation, obtained information that Grose was soliciting inmates looking for someone to kill both girls before his trial started.

While trying to confirm Grose's intentions, Flores was approached by an informant who began correspondence with Grose. Flores learned that Grose allegedly had \$20,000 in a settlement from Social Security and wanted to use the money to hire a hit man.

Grose allegedly continued to correspond with the informant, giving him names, addresses and maps to where the victims could be located. In these notes, Grose allegedly acknowledged the informant's reference to the victims as "cars."

The notes were turned over to Flores, the victims were notified of the potential threat and an undercover operation was initiated in cooperation with Merced County Sheriff's Correctional personnel.

Yesterday, an undercover investigator, wired with audio and video surveillance equipment, met with Grose regarding the murder for hire offer. Grose allegedly offered the Investigator \$3,000 “good faith” money to commit the murders. Grose allegedly identified with photographs two members of the victims’ immediate family and confirmed the victims could be found there.

During the meeting at the jail the undercover “hit man” was shown a handwritten note, allegedly written by Grose that contained statements about the murders including “How long from today will it take for the cars to be taken to the wrecking yard?”

“These young girls have experienced untold trauma already,” said Morse. “I am greatly relieved that this plot was uncovered in time to prevent a horrific crime. Albert Flores and the other members of the DA Investigations unit who pursued this case did incredible work and likely saved the lives of these two young ladies. For police officers, it doesn’t get any more rewarding than that,” Morse said.

Grose, whose trial on the molestation charges, was scheduled to begin on September 17, will be arraigned on the new charges sometime next week, Morse said, adding that while no decision has been made yet, he anticipates that solicitation of murder charges would be added to the seven counts of molestation.

If convicted of all the charges, Grose could be sentenced to prison for life, Morse said.