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Office of the Inspector General
Miami-Dade County

Memorandum

To: The Honorable Alex Penelas, Mayor
Miami-Dade County

The Honorable Gwen Margolis, Chair
and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

From: Christopher Mazzella
Inspector General

Date: April 1, 2002

Re: OIG Final Report of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department and Union Activity
Leave.

The OIG is now finished with its review of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department and its administration, application, and tracking of union activity leave, which is authorized pursuant to Article 22 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between Miami-Dade County (the County) and the Dade County Association of Fire Fighters, Local 1403 of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF). In sum, the OIG review revealed that lax interpretation of CBA contract articles and the non-existence of an effective tracking mechanism administered by MDFR has allowed for abuse of the union activity leave. Our review concluded that county-funded union activities exceeded \$640,000 in a 21-month period. Of this amount, 83.2% of all union activity leave used by MDFR employees was taken by only ten individuals. For a 21-month period reviewed, this amounted to an expenditure of \$534,855 of county funds for only those ten individuals.

The consequential costs to the taxpayers of the County resulting from abusive practices in the use of union time, which we have clearly identified in our report, and documented in our working papers, are certainly disconcerting. Since 1999, the abusive practices at MDFR have been commented on and brought to the OIG's attention. The complaints, among other issues, specifically alleges the abuse of union activity leave by a handful of individuals. And as recently as a few months ago, it was brought to the OIG's attention that abusive, perhaps illegal, leave practices of administrative leave time have been occurring at MDFR for the past several years. The OIG is committed to continue reviewing these and other like allegations.

Enclosed, please find a copy of the OIG's Final Report on this matter. Attached and appended are the responses to the Draft Report received from the Union, Fire Rescue Department, Employee Relations Department, and the Fire Board. After thorough review and consideration of the responses, the OIG did not feel it was necessary to modify the report, except for the recommendations, which were intentionally left out of the Draft. The recommendations are found on page 20 of the report. These recommendations are extremely important and should be carefully considered. The OIG will continue to monitor the implementation of our recommendations.

Cc: Mr. Steve Shiver, County Manager, Miami-Dade County

Mr. Robert A. Ginsburg, County Attorney, Miami-Dade County

Mr. Samuel Williams, Assistant County Manager, Miami-Dade County

Mr. Charles Phillips, Director, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department

Ms. Maria Casellas, Director, Miami-Dade Employee Relations Department

Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Miami-Dade Audit & Management Services Department

Ms. Katherine Fernandez Rundle, State Attorney, Eleventh Judicial Circuit

Dr. Roberto A. Godoy, Chair, Miami-Dade Fire Board

Mr. Dominick Barbera, President, Local 1403, IAFF

Clerk of the Board