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**Office of the Inspector General  
Miami-Dade County**

# Memorandum

To: The Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor

The Honorable Chairperson Joe Martinez  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Christopher Mazzella  
Inspector General

Date: April 12, 2005

Re: MIA consultant/lobbyist Guillermo Joaquin Freixas sentenced in Federal and State courts

For your information, Guillermo "Billy" Joaquin Freixas (Freixas), a Miami-Dade County lobbyist, was sentenced Thursday, April 7, 2005 on state charges after receiving a federal sentence on April 5, 2005. Both the federal and state cases were a result of investigations headed by the Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

Freixas was a principal of the firm Paramedia U.S.A., Inc. (Paramedia), which formerly held the contract to operate the Miami-Dade County Aviation Department's (MDAD) Trade and Business Development Office in Madrid, Spain. The probe into Freixas began when the OIG first questioned the County's extensions of a multi-million dollar consulting contract between MDAD and Paramedia. The OIG's scrutiny revealed serious financial discrepancies, which led MDAD to terminate the contract with Paramedia, and uncovered criminal activity by Freixas, one of Paramedia's principals.

On April 5, 2005, Freixas was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Adalberto Jordan to two (2) years in Federal prison, to be followed by two (2) years of supervised release on a Federal income tax evasion case based upon an investigation by the IRS and the OIG. As part of the sentence, Freixas, who had previously pled guilty to four (4) counts of tax evasion, was ordered to pay \$472,970 restitution to the IRS. Freixas was ordered to surrender by August 5, 2005.

The investigation by the Inspector General's Office also culminated in the previous filing of two criminal cases in Miami-Dade County Circuit Court on a credit card factoring scheme and submitting false invoices to an environmental engineering company (EA Engineering), who at the time held a contract with MDAD. Freixas used corporations and bank accounts in the names of current or former family members in an apparent effort to hide his income.

As a result of the OIG probe, the State Attorney's Office charged Freixas with 75 counts of illegal credit card factoring totaling over \$527,000 in false credit card charges to the American Express Credit Card Company. Freixas was also charged with one (1) count of Organized Fraud, nine (9) counts of Grand Theft, and four (4) counts of Petit Theft, in connection with a scheme Freixas undertook in his role as a lobbyist, through which he pocketed hundreds of thousands of dollars given to him by companies seeking business in Miami-Dade County.

Unfortunately, Freixas promoted the damaging perception that doing business in Miami-Dade County required payoffs to public officials. Freixas represented to his clients that money given to him would be used to buy expensive gifts and lavish dinners for public officials. The OIG investigation clearly revealed that Freixas pocketed the money and that public officials did not receive his gifts.

On April 7, 2005, Freixas pled guilty to all state charges and was sentenced by Circuit Court Judge Kevin Emas to two (2) years in custody, to be followed by ten (10) years of probation to run concurrent to the Federal prison sentence. As part of the State sentence, Freixas was ordered to pay \$203,972.49 to cover the investigative costs of the Inspector General's Office and an additional \$6,483.91 in restitution costs to EA Engineering.

The OIG's unique role in examining County contracts allows for it to investigate and audit irregularities and to pursue discovered illegalities through cooperative efforts with law enforcement. Freixas' case is an example of successful prosecutions resulting from the cooperation between the OIG and law enforcement agencies. The OIG will continue to foster such cooperative efforts whenever the appropriate occasion arises.

cc: Mr. George Burgess, County Manager  
Dr. Carlos F. Bonzon, Acting Director, Miami-Dade Aviation Department  
Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit & Management Services

Clerk of the Board (Copy Filed)