



# Memorandum

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To: The Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor  
The Honorable Chairperson Bruno A. Barreiro  
Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Christopher Mazzella  
Inspector General

Date: February 9, 2007

Re: OIG Investigation into Theft of County Funds Results in Federal Conviction

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On January 27, 2007, Maria Valdes-Burgos (Valdes-Burgos), a former employee of the Port of Miami Crane Management, Inc. (PMCM), a not-for-profit corporation established and fully funded by Miami-Dade County (County), was adjudicated guilty and sentenced by a United States District Court Judge on nineteen (19) counts of wire fraud. Last April, Valdes-Burgos was federally indicted following an OIG investigation which uncovered that she was falsifying payroll records at the PMCM. Valdes-Burgos was sentenced to three years probation, during which she will be under house arrest with a monitoring device for six months, and will be required to pay \$25,280.73 in restitution and a fine of \$1,900.

The PMCM provides maintenance, repair and purchases associated with the operation of the County's gantry cranes at the Port of Miami. The County funds all of the PMCM operational expenditures, including employee salaries. The OIG investigation revealed that while employed as a payroll clerk at the PMCM, Valdes-Burgos was responsible for preparing the crane mechanics' weekly payroll. OIG investigators uncovered that Valdes-Burgos submitted false payroll hours using the name of a prior employee and the name of an employee out on sick leave. Valdes-Burgos then caused the fraudulent payroll checks to be directly deposited into her personal bank account. While the scheme netted Valdes-Burgos over \$17,000, the County's loss exceeded that sum due to union dues payments automatically generated with the fraudulent payroll checks.

This matter was initially brought to the OIG's attention by management for the Port of Miami Crane Management, Inc. and was prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida. The OIG is committed to targeting payroll fraud, which drains government resources and shakes the public's confidence in public servants.

cc: Mr. George Burgess, County Manager  
Mr. Bill Johnson, Director, Port of Miami  
Mr. Ed Bello, Chief Executive Officer, Port of Miami Crane Management, Inc.  
Mr. Vladimir Murad, Director of Operations, Port of Miami Crane Management, Inc.  
Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit & Management Services  
Mr. Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor  
Clerk of the Board (Copy Filed)