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

Memorandum

To: The Hon. Mayor Alex Penelas, Miami-Dade County
The Hon. Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, Chair
And Members of the Board of County Commissioners

From: Christopher Mazzella,
Inspector General

Date: October 17, 2003

Re: Istvan "Steven" Fazekas – Former Engineer for the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Dept.

Attached is a news release relating to the extradition of Istvan "Steven" Fazekas, former engineer at the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department. Fazekas was arrested and charged in February 2003, on 38 counts including bribery, money laundering and organized scheme to defraud. The investigation into Fazekas revealed that while he was the County official responsible for reviewing and approving fire sprinkler plans for building structures, he secretly owned and operated two companies that drafted fire sprinkler plans from 1998 through 2002. He then reviewed his own company's plans. Fazekas' companies received approximately one million dollars from other fire sprinkler companies for drafting plans that were ultimately submitted for his approval. Fazekas also accepted approximately \$45,000.00 in bribes from other fire sprinkler companies.

In April of 2003, OIG Special Agents obtained a second warrant for Fazekas' arrest after determining that Fazekas had solicited three of his employees and a client to falsely testify on his behalf. Fazekas fled from court during a hearing on his original charges, upon learning of the pending arrest warrant on the second solicitation to commit perjury case.

The OIG's pursuit of Fazekas and investigation into his whereabouts has culminated in his extradition from Hungary where he fled. U.S. Marshals are scheduled to escort him back to this country today. He will be transferred into the custody of local law enforcement and booked into the Dade County Jail.

cc: Mr. Tony Bared, Fire Chief, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department
Mr. George Burgess, County Manager
Mr. Robert Ginsburg, County Attorney
Ms. Susanne M. Torriente, Assistant County Manager
Mr. Charlie Danger, Director, Miami-Dade Building Department
Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit & Management Services

Clerk of the Board (Copy Filed)



News Release

Fugitive Ex-County Employee Extradited from Hungary

A former County official who fled from Court upon learning he was to be re-arrested was captured in Budapest, Hungary and is to be returned to the United States today to face charges.

Istvan “Steven” Fazekas, age 52, was arrested on February 5, 2003 following an investigation conducted by the Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office. The investigation determined that Fazekas schemed to defraud the citizens of the County of their right to honest government. Specifically, according to an affidavit filed by a Special Agent of the OIG, Fazekas operated two companies that received approximately one million dollars from fire sprinkler companies to draft fire sprinkler plans. Those plans were then submitted to himself for approval. Fazekas was the County official responsible for reviewing and approving plans for building structures within the County. Fazekas then laundered the proceeds he received from his secret companies. Additionally, Fazekas, as a County official, received approximately \$45,000 in bribes from two independent fire sprinkler businesses.

Fazekas was charged with 38 counts, including bribery, money laundering, perjury and organized fraud. While Fazekas was released on bond pending trial on those charges, he solicited three of his employees and one former client to testify falsely on his behalf. A second arrest warrant was obtained by a Special Agent of the OIG for solicitation to commit perjury. While in court arguing for a bond reduction on the original charges, Fazekas learned he would be re-arrested on the solicitation to commit perjury charges. OIG representatives in the courtroom witnessed Fazekas leave. Fazekas was seen going down the up escalator in an attempt to leave the courthouse. When he did not return to the courtroom an “alias capias” or bench warrant was issued for his arrest.

The Inspector General is committed to rooting out corruption, in particular this blatant disruption of the integrity of the judicial system. Efforts commenced immediately to find Fazekas.

Interpol-Washington assisted the OIG in locating Fazekas in his native country of Hungary. The State Department and the Government of Hungary cooperated with special agents of the OIG in the extradition process.

Fazekas was picked up by the U.S. Marshals, who have jurisdiction to arrest fugitives in another country. Defendant Fazekas is expected to arrive in this country this afternoon and should be brought before the Circuit Court Judge he fled from on Monday morning.

Inspector General Mazzella expresses his appreciation to the U.S. Marshal’s office and the officials at the State Department and Interpol-Washington who assisted in bringing this fugitive

to justice. The Inspector General stresses the OIG is and will continue to be relentless in its pursuit of those who seek to evade justice. The OIG's hunt of this absconder should reinforce the continued commitment of the Inspector General to preserving the integrity of our judicial system and rooting out those who would corrupt and defraud the citizens of our County.

Please direct any questions to Ms. Marie Perikles, at the Office of the Inspector General 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 220, Miami, Florida 33130, Telephone: (305) 375-1946.