



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
Miami-Dade County

Date: May 15, 2008

Re: Abuse of Disabled Parking at MIA Results in Arrest - IG07-62

An investigation by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) into workers at Miami International Airport (MIA) abusing a County ordinance that provides free parking in public parking facilities to the disabled resulted in the arrest of a TSA employee. Bernard Olivier Forbes (Forbes) was arrested and charged by the State Attorney's Office with one count each of Cheating, Grand Theft third degree, and Making False Statements to Obtain a Disabled Parking Permit. The OIG investigation, which began at the request of Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) officials suspicious of airport workers occupying public disabled parking spaces, resulted in an OIG report issued on April 9, 2008. The report indicated that a large number of the disabled parking spaces reserved for the public were frequently occupied by employees that work at MIA who appeared to be able-bodied. In addition to inconveniencing disabled airport patrons, the employees were cheating the County of its parking fees. In accordance with Section 30-442 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, fees at public parking facilities are waived upon presentation of a Disabled Parking Permit.

The OIG investigation revealed that Forbes fraudulently obtained a disabled parking permit. From September 2007 through March 2008, Forbes used that permit on 139 occasions to obtain waivers of the parking fees at MIA parking garages near the terminals. The waivers resulted in a total of \$2,367 in fees lost by the County. The OIG's investigation is continuing.

Mr. George Burgess, County Manager
Ms. Ysela Llort, Assistant County Manager
Mr. Denis Morales, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Mr. Jose Abreu, P.E., Director, Aviation Department
Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit & Management Services
Mr. Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor
Clerk of the Board (copy filed)



OIG Probe of Disabled Parking Abuses at Miami International Airport Yields Arrest of TSA Employee

Bernard Olivier Forbes (Forbes), 25, an employee of the United States Transportation Security Administration (TSA) stationed at Miami International Airport (MIA), was arrested today. The arrest is a result of the continuing probe by the Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the State Attorney's Office into the abusive practice of airport workers using disabled parking permits to obtain free parking near the MIA terminals. Forbes was charged with one (1) count of Grand Theft 3rd degree, one (1) count of Making a False or Misleading Statement for issuance of a State Disabled Parking Permit and (1) one count of Cheating. According to an arrest warrant signed by a State Circuit Court Judge, Forbes fraudulently obtained a Disabled Person Parking Permit from the State of Florida. While employed as a baggage screener for TSA, Forbes cheated Miami-Dade County out of \$2,367 in parking fees by presenting the disabled parking permit to cashiers at the MIA parking garages over a seven month period of time.

Miami-Dade County, through Section 30-442 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, provides free parking in public parking facilities to individuals who are disabled and display a disabled parking permit. The OIG investigation began at the request of Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) officials who expressed concern that employees working at the airport were occupying disabled parking spaces in the public parking garages. An OIG report that chronicled excessive abuses of the disabled parking program by many airport employees was issued on April 9, 2008. Through the OIG investigation, which included visual surveillances, investigators determined that Forbes parked at MIA parking facilities near the terminal and appeared to walk without any disability. In addition, Forbes was observed presenting a disabled parking permit to cashiers upon leaving the MIA parking facility to have his parking fees waived. According to the arrest warrant, Forbes was issued a permanent disabled parking permit due to his inability to walk, as certified by Dr. A. Smith. However, Dr. Alan Smith of St. Petersburg, Florida, submitted a sworn affidavit to investigators that he did not sign the application nor is Forbes his patient. Furthermore, as stated in the warrant, Forbes admitted to OIG investigators that he used the disabled permit to waive fees because he was required to pay for parking in the employee lot and because he liked the convenience of parking near the terminal and not having to ride the employee bus.

“While it is not an unusual crime to see someone trying to cheat the County, we prosecute these kinds of offenses almost everyday, it is sad to see someone trying to use a fake handicap as a cloak to hide such actions” commented State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. Inspector General Christopher Mazzella indicated his dismay at the notion that an able-bodied person would burden the truly disabled for the sake of personal convenience. Mr. Mazzella said the investigation into disabled parking abuses at MIA is on-going.

Copies of the arrest affidavit are available at the Office of the Inspector General, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 220, Miami, Florida, telephone number (305) 375-1946, or at the State Attorney’s Office, c/o Ed Griffith, 1350 N.W. 12 Avenue, Miami, Florida, telephone number (305) 547-0535.

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