



Memorandum

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To: The Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor
The Honorable Chairperson Bruno A. Barreiro
and Members, Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners
The Honorable Harvey Ruvlin, Clerk of Courts, Miami-Dade County

From: Christopher Mazzella, Inspector General

Date: October 15, 2008

Subject: OIG Investigation Concludes with Guilty Verdict in Scheme to Steal Homes

An investigation by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), conducted with the assistance of the Miami-Dade Police Department's Elderly Exploitation Unit and the State Attorney's Office, concluded with a jury verdict finding Sameer Muhammad (Muhammad) guilty. Muhammad and his accomplice Carolyn Murphy (Murphy) were charged in June 2005 with Organized Scheme to Defraud, Identity Theft, Grand Theft, Uttering a Forged Instrument and Possession of a False Driver's License. Together, they conducted a scheme to steal homes through the use of fraudulent deeds. Muhammad and Murphy used forged quit claim and warranty deeds filed at the Miami-Dade County Clerk of the Courts to obtain title to the homes of a deceased couple and an infirm elderly woman before selling the properties and pocketing the proceeds of the sales. Due to the forged documents filed with the County, Muhammad and Murphy not only personally profited from their criminal acts but left in their wake family members and innocent buyers who had to untangle the legality of clear title to the properties.

Murphy pled guilty in November 2007 and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors. She will be sentenced next week to three years state prison pursuant to her cooperation agreement. Muhammad, who was taken into custody after the verdict was read, is set for sentencing in November before the Honorable Judge Bertila Soto and faces five minimum mandatory sentences of five years each.

The Inspector General's Office is proud of its accomplishments in protecting our community's disadvantaged citizens from predators such as Muhammad and Murphy. Over recent years, our investigations have resulted in the arrests and prosecutions of a number of scam artists targeting homeowners. We would also like to thank the Clerk of the Courts, who in response to our investigation, implemented procedures to help deter future criminal activity.

cc: Mr. George Burgess, County Manager
Mr. Robert Parker, Director, Miami-Dade Police Department
Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit & Management Services Department
Mr. Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor
Clerk of the Board (Copy Filed)