

## **News Release**

### **County Official Facing Additional Charges – Flees From Courtroom**

A former County official, who was in charge of approving critical fire sprinkler plans for building structures in Miami-Dade County and who was previously arrested on charges of bribery and money laundering, fled from the courtroom upon realizing that additional charges for soliciting perjury were just filed with the Court and that he was about to be re-arrested on the new charges.

By way of background, the former County official, Istvan “ Steven” Fazekas, age 52, a resident of Miami-Dade County, was previously arrested on February 5, 2003 as a result of an investigation conducted by the Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Dade County State Attorney’s Office. The investigation determined that the defendant, Fazekas, schemed to defraud the citizens of the County of their right to honest government services. Specifically, according to an affidavit filed by a Special Agent of the Office of the Inspector General, Fazekas secretly owned two unlicensed companies, SAF International Corporation and Firebyte, Inc., both located at 7470 Miami Lakes Drive, Apartment B206, Miami Lakes, Florida. These businesses received approximately one million dollars from at least seventeen fire sprinkler businesses to draft fire sprinkler plans for building structures in Miami-Dade County. Many of these very same plans were subsequently submitted to the County and, in turn, were reviewed and approved by Fazekas himself in his official capacity as a County official even though it was his own two companies that drafted the plans. Fazekas laundered the proceeds of his secret businesses through bank accounts he clandestinely controlled, or by cashing forged checks. Among other charges, Fazekas was accused of receiving approximately \$45,000 in bribes from two fire sprinkler businesses. The bribes were allegedly paid by Jerome Cohen of A-1 Fire Sprinkler Corporation, d/b/a All Fire Services, Inc., 2027 Sherman Street, Hollywood, Florida and Jorge Carballo, Jr., of Cardel Fire Protection, Inc., 1430 N.W. 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 101, Miami, Florida. On February 7, 2003, Fazekas was released from custody on a \$100,000 bond and was awaiting trial on the bribery and money laundering charges.

The new charges stem from Fazekas’ solicitation of four individuals to commit perjury on his behalf during the course of the investigation. As stated in a second Affidavit in Support of an Arrest Warrant filed by an OIG Special Agent, some of the acts constituting solicitation of perjury took place after February 7, 2003, while Defendant Fazekas was released on bond pending the original set of charges.

The new Affidavit details the facts supporting seven additional charges of solicitation to commit perjury by falsely testifying under oath in an official criminal proceeding. Specifically, Fazekas solicited and caused his employees Danny Heinze, Gene Grant, and Deris Reyes, all of whom were hired to draft fire sprinkler plans and his client, Ron Brown, President of F & R Fire Protection Systems, Inc., 3359 N.W. 154<sup>th</sup> Terrace, Miami, Florida, to falsely testify as to the following:

- that Steve Fazekas had no financial or controlling interest in SAF International Corp., or Firebyte and/or
- that Agnes Nicora, Fazekas' former wife, was in charge of SAF International and/or
- that Danny Heinze was in charge of Firebyte and/or
- that Steve Fazekas never received any financial gains or benefit from SAF International Corp. or Firebyte.

These witnesses subsequently recanted their false testimony and testified as follows:

- that Fazekas was, in fact, the sole principal with the financial and controlling interest in SAF International Corp., or Firebyte and/or
- that Agnes Nicora was not in charge, nor was she involved with SAF International and/or
- that Steve Fazekas did, in fact, receive a major financial gain or benefit from SAF International Corp., or Firebyte.

Today on April 3, 2002, Fazekas, his attorney, and the prosecutor were in court on Fazekas' motion to have his originally set bond of \$100,000 reduced when he learned of the additional charges that were just filed. As described by OIG representatives who were present, the Defendant left the courtroom and was seen going down the up escalator in his attempt to leave the courthouse. Fazekas did not return to the courtroom and an "Alias Capias" a.k.a. bench warrant has been entered into the system.

Referring to the facts supporting the second set of charges, Inspector General Mazzella expressed his dismay with Fazekas' blatant disruption and corruption of the integrity of the criminal justice system by soliciting and causing witnesses to lie. After learning of this morning's courtroom antics, Mazzella reinforced his office's commitment to rooting out such unethical behavior, particularly where it impacts the judicial process.

As to these additional perjury related charges, Fazekas faces an additional 35 years time and \$35,000 in fines. Fazekas already faces 245 years imprisonment and \$2,890,000 in fines on the money laundering and bribery charges for which he was previously arrested.