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

Memorandum

To: The Hon. Alex Penelas, Mayor

The Hon. Chairperson Barbara Carey-Shuler, Ed. D.
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Christopher Mazzella,
Inspector General

Date: November 13, 2003

Re: Additional Arrests in Building and Zoning Probe

Attached is a news release relating to the re-arrest on additional charges of Mikel Isaac, a plans expediter. Isaac, with the assistance of a County employee, obtained fraudulent certificates of completion related to properties owned by four separate victims. As previously mentioned, the investigation is focusing on a scheme to bypass the building code and obtain false certificates of completion and/or occupancy without first scheduling and passing inspections. More arrests are anticipated. The Planning & Zoning and Building Departments are assisting the OIG in this matter.

cc: Mr. George Burgess, County Manager
Mr. Charlie Danger, P.E., Director, Building Department
Ms. Dianne O'Quinn-Williams, Director, Planning and Zoning Department
Mr. Herminio Gonzalez, P.E., Director, Building Code Compliance

Clerk of the Board (Copy Filed)



ADDITIONAL ARRESTS IN BUILDING AND ZONING PROBE

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) announced today another arrest in its continuing investigation of fraudulent contractors, expeditors, and county employees corruptly violating the County's permit and inspection requirements. According to Inspector General Christopher Mazzella, the investigation continues to disclose victims that have received occupancy and/or completion certificates illegally, thereby exposing them and the community to considerable public safety concerns.

Mikel Isaac (Isaac), age 32, was arrested on four separate warrants and charged with grand theft, practicing engineering without a license, practicing architecture without a license, notary fraud and official misconduct as a principal. Isaac was previously arrested on August 26, 2003 on similar charges involving other properties and victims stemming from the same OIG investigation. According to the arrest warrant affidavits filed by a Special Agent of the OIG, Isaac is the President of Isaac Associates, Inc., 7130 S.W. 5th Street, Pembroke Pines, Florida 33023.

This company, operating since 1998, engages in the business of expediting commercial and residential building plans and obtaining certificates of completion and/or occupancy. All four arrest affidavits allege that Isaac represented himself as an architect or engineer. Moreover, Isaac received money from the victims after contracting to draft plans, obtain proper permits, and certificates of completion but actually delivering fraudulent Certificates of Completion obtained through the complicity of a County employee. Isaac does not hold Florida professional licenses in engineering or architecture.

According to an arrest affidavit filed by an OIG Special Agent, in May, 2002 Miami-Dade County Team Metro cited Mr. Noe Toussaint for failing to obtain a permit for additions to his residence in Northeast Miami-Dade. Mr. Toussaint hired Isaac to legalize the additions and paid him \$2,364.43.

County records show that Isaac obtained an owner/builder permit on October 7, 2002 on behalf of Mr. Toussaint at 3:32 p.m. At 4:42 p.m., on the same date, a Certificate of Completion was issued. The affidavit alleges that no inspections were performed on the Toussaint property in the intervening hour between the issuance of the permit and the Certificate of Completion. Photographs taken by the OIG after the Certificate of Completion was issued show the ceiling with exposed joists, improper electric and an exposed unfinished roof covered by a tarp.

In yet another case, as alleged by a second affidavit, Isaac unlawfully misrepresented himself as a Professional Engineer to Mr. Baron Swaby, a retired blind carpenter. Isaac was paid \$650.00 by Mr. Swaby to legalize an addition to his residence. The affidavit alleges Isaac illegally obtained a Certificate of Completion, and never provided as agreed, an As-Built Certificate, nor did he obtain the necessary inspections.

A third affidavit alleges that victims, Mr. & Mrs. Mathieu, hired Isaac, who represented himself as a licensed architect, to legalize a conversion made to their residence by a previous owner. A permit application, notarized by Isaac, was filed with the County falsely purporting to bear the signature of Marie Mathieu. In addition to the notary fraud, the affidavit alleges that Isaac fraudulently billed the Mathieus \$385.95, which he used to pay a County fee on a property not owned by the Mathieus; and charged the Mathieus \$1,500.00 for a County microfilm fee for which there is no charge. On September 25, 2002, three hours after obtaining an owner/builder permit for the Mathieu residence, Isaac obtained a fraudulent Certificate of Completion. None of the required inspections were done on the Mathieu property.

A fourth affidavit alleges Isaac misrepresented himself as an architect and an engineer to Mr. Vincent Wright. Mr. Wright paid Isaac a total of \$3,500 to legalize additions to two homes in Northwest Miami-Dade. Again, Isaac obtained permits and fraudulent Certificates of Completion without obtaining the required inspections. Photographs taken of one of Mr. Wright's homes after the Certificate of Completion had been issued show exposed concrete block and beams, and unfinished interior walls.

The Building and the Planning and Zoning Departments, at the request of the OIG, issued notices to the owners of suspected structures that required them to provide proof of proper inspection at the time of construction. In April 2003, all the victims received letters from the County. The victims contacted Isaac who advised each that he would take care of the problem. In June 2003, all victims received a second letter from the County and, again, they contacted Isaac. Isaac met Mr. Swaby and took from him all his paperwork; he further victimized the Mathieus by exacting from them additional money. Isaac never responded to Mr. Toussaint or Mr. Wright.

In all cases, the affidavits allege a County employee had to override the computer system and input fraudulent data in order for Isaac to obtain the Certificates of Completion. These additional cases demonstrate the Inspector General's commitment to root out those individuals who would corrupt the system and expose the community to the threat of unsafe structures and dwellings. The investigation continues.

Copies of the arrest warrants and arrest affidavits for Isaac are available at the Inspector General's Office, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite, 220, telephone number 305-375-1946 and at the State Attorney's Office, c/o Ed Griffith, 1350 N.W. 12 Avenue, telephone number 305-547-0532.

Media Opportunity – Inspector General Mazzella will be available for a media opportunity today, Thursday, November 13, 2003 between 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. at the OIG office. Photographs of some of the properties noted in the affidavits will be available upon request.