



Memorandum



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To: The Honorable Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor, Miami-Dade County
The Honorable Audrey M. Edmonson, Chairwoman
and Members, Board of County Commissioners, Miami-Dade County

From: Mary T. Cagle, Inspector General 

Date: February 21, 2019

Subject: Former ISD Employee Sentenced in Connection with County Store and
Surplus Property Fraud, Ref. IG14-47

A former Internal Services Department (ISD) employee, Mirtha Morejon (Morejon), was sentenced today for orchestrating a scheme to defraud the County through the ISD auctions of surplus vehicles and heavy equipment at the County Store. The County Store, located in Hialeah, is open to the public and provides direct sales of surplus items on behalf of all Miami-Dade County departments and other governmental entities. In addition, the County Store conducts sealed bid auctions and online auctions for larger, more expensive surplus items such as cars, trucks, heavy equipment, computer and office equipment. Morejon was the former manager of the County's Materials Management Unit responsible for the sealed bid auctions of County surplus vehicles.

A joint investigation by the Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the State Attorney's Office uncovered that Morejon used her position at the County Store to alter sealed bids submitted by Ruben Lopez (Lopez), with whom she had a personal relationship. Lopez, is the owner of Action Truck and Equipment Inc., a pre-owned equipment truck dealership. Altering the bids allowed Lopez to save money while depriving the County of funds. ISD terminated Morejon from the County and blocked Lopez from participating in on-line auctions for other surplus property. ISD referred the matter to the OIG for further criminal investigation.

The OIG investigation found an elaborate scheme by Lopez, after he had been blocked, to acquire trucks and other vehicles sold through Public Surplus, the County's third-party administrator for the on-line Auctions. Lopez created fictitious accounts and essentially halted the sale of property by bidding against himself and then defaulting on the items. Lopez ultimately purchased the property using a straw buyer. Morejon and Lopez were jointly charged with one count of Organized Scheme to Defraud (a third degree felony) for the bids altered by Morejon. Lopez was additionally charged with another count of Organized Scheme to Defraud (a 1st degree felony) and a Computer Offense (a 2nd degree felony).

Lopez was sentenced in the fall of 2018 to 90 days jail, one year of house arrest, and three years of probation. As part of his sentence Lopez paid full restitution to the County and costs of investigation to the OIG.

Today, Morejon pled guilty to the court. The judge sentenced her to two years of house arrest followed by two years of probation, with the special condition that she not seek employment with Miami-Dade County nor obtain any employment with money handling responsibilities, and to stay away from Lopez.

The OIG is grateful for the assistance of ISD staff during the course of this investigation.

cc: Alex Ferro, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Edward Marquez, Deputy Mayor
Tara C. Smith, Director, Internal Services Department
Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit and Management Services Department
Yinka Majekodunmi, Commission Auditor