

Biscayne Building  
19 West Flagler Street, Suite 220  
Miami, FL 33130  
Phone (305) 375-1946  
Fax (305) 579-2656  
www.miamidadeig.org

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

# Memorandum

To: The Hon. Mayor Alex Penelas, Miami-Dade County  
  
The Hon. Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, Chair  
and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

From: Christopher Mazzella,  
Inspector General

Date: March 26, 2003

Re: Arrest of Guillermo Joaquin Freixas, aka Billy Freixas

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Attached is a news release regarding the arrest of Guillermo Joaquin Freixas, aka Billy Freixas. For your information, Freixas was a principal in the firm of Paramedia U.S.A., Inc. Paramedia was a County consultant, serving as the supposed operator of the Miami International Airport Trade and Business Development Office in Madrid, Spain and Miami, Florida. As you may recall, in May 2001, the OIG questioned the County's repeated justifications for extending the Paramedia contract that had been initially entered into in May 1994. A subsequent audit of Paramedia by the OIG found serious financial discrepancies. The Aviation Department Director eventually terminated this contract.

Freixas was charged with seventy-five counts of illegal credit card factoring involving the submission of over \$527,000 in false credit card charges resulting in at least \$140,000 in losses to American Express Credit Card Company. The OIG and the State Attorneys Office are continuing the investigation into other allegations of unlawful activities.

cc: Mr. Steve Shiver, County Manager  
Ms. Angela Gittens, Director, Aviation Department  
Mr. Robert Ginsburg, County Attorney  
Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit & Management Services

Clerk of the Board (Copy Filed)

## News Release

### Airport Consultant/Lobbyist Arrested on Fraud Charges

A consultant and lobbyist involved in contracts at Miami International Airport, Guillermo Joaquin Freixas, has been arrested and charged by the State Attorney's Office with seventy-five counts of illegal credit card factoring totaling over \$527,000 in false credit card charges to the American Express Credit Card Company resulting in losses of at least \$140,000. He surrendered to the State Attorney's Office this morning. The scheme to defraud American Express spanned at least a two-year period, from 1998 through 2000, and was detected by the Miami-Dade County Office of Inspector General and the Miami-Dade County State Attorneys Office after an investigation into allegations indicating that the defendant was involved in various unlawful activities, including his business dealings with Miami-Dade County. The OIG and the State Attorneys Office are investigating other allegations of unlawful activity.

According to an affidavit filed by Special Agents of the Office of Inspector General, Guillermo Joaquin Freixas, aka Billy Freixas, age 48, a resident of Miami-Dade County, perpetrated the factoring fraud in the following manner:

From July 8, 1998 through December 30, 2000, Freixas submitted at least seventy-five fraudulent charges totaling over \$527,000 on an American Express Credit Card for which he was a sub-account holder. His daughter was the main account holder. Because of non-payment, American Express closed this account in March 2001 with a balance of \$140,789.00 still owing. The OIG investigation revealed that Freixas used his brother, Jose Freixas, and his brother's business, Tile and Marble Design, Inc., 2769 S.W. 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Miami, Florida, to carry out this fraud. According to the affidavit, Billy Freixas directed his brother, Jose, to submit the seventy-five bogus purchase transactions to American Express for payment despite the fact that nothing was ever purchased. Soon after American Express electronically transferred payments to Jose Freixas' business, Billy Freixas directed his brother, Jose, to disperse the fraudulent payments to Billy Freixas himself, to his family members, and to his associates or their businesses.

If convicted of all charges, Freixas faces 375 years imprisonment and \$375,000 in fines. His bond is recommended at \$375,000.

Miami-Dade County State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle and Inspector General Christopher Mazzella stressed the investigation of Freixas, and the other alleged unlawful activities, is ongoing and that additional arrests are expected.

Copies of the arrest affidavit and the indictment of the 75 charges are available at the Inspector General's Office, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 220, telephone number 305-375-1946 and through the State Attorney's Office, 1350 NW 12 Avenue, telephone number 305-547-0535.