

Press Release

FORMER ICE ENFORCMENT AGENT PLEADS GUILTY TO ABUSE CHARGES

April 3, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Steven J. Moscardy, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Office of Professional Responsibility, Donald J. Balberchak, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, and Al Lamberti, Sheriff, Broward County Sheriff's Office, announced today that defendant **Wilfredo Vazquez** pled guilty to charges of knowingly causing another person to engage in a sexual act by threatening or placing that other person in fear, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2242(1) (Count 1); and knowingly engaging in a sexual act with another person who was under his custodial, supervisory, or disciplinary authority, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2243(b)(2) (Count 2).

According to court records in the case and statements made during the plea, on Friday, September 21, 2007, the victim, "M.C." was being transferred to the Broward Transition Center from the Krome Service and Processing Center to await deportation to Jamaica. Then-Immigration Enforcement Agent Wilfredo Vazquez, who was armed, volunteered to transport M.C. to the Broward Transition Center. During that transport, Vazquez removed M.C.'s restraints when he initially placed her in the transport vehicle. He then put her in the back section of the van behind a partition. While still waiting to exit the Krome facility, Vazquez told M.C. that he would move her to the front of the vehicle after the van left Krome if she was a "good girl." A short time after the vehicle left Krome, Vazquez pulled the van over, and escorted M.C. up to the passenger seat in the front of the van. Vazquez then allowed M.C. to use his personal cellular telephone to make personal calls. Following these calls, Vazquez asked M.C. to show him her underwear, but M.C. refused. Vazquez then told M.C. that he wanted to have oral sex with her and that he was taking her to his house for this purpose. Vazquez then drove M.C. to his residence in Tamarac, Florida.

M.C., who had lived in Broward County for several years prior to incarceration, described in detail the route Vazquez drove to get to his home and provided law enforcement with a detailed description of both the exterior and interior of the residence. Once in the residence, Vazquez told M.C. to take off her clothes. Vazquez left the room, but soon returned with a condom. Immediately thereafter, Vazquez began to perform oral sex on her. Vazquez then demanded that M.C. perform oral sex on him. Next, Vazquez had sexual intercourse with M.C. Despite M.C.'s request, the defendant did not stop. At all times, Vazquez kept his firearm and gun belt attached to his waist. M.C. stated that although the defendant never hit her or verbally threatened her, she was afraid to resist.

Thereafter, Vazquez and M.C. continued the trip to the Broward Transition Center. Vazquez again placed M.C. in the front of seat the van, where she remained until Vazquez stopped at a gas station next to the Broward Transition Center. At the gas station, Vazquez placed M.C. back in the rear section of the van and drove to the Broward Transition Center, nearly two hours after having left Krome.

Later that evening, M.C. told another detainee at the Broward Transition Center what had happened to her, and stated that she was afraid to report the incident to the officers at the Broward Transition Center because she feared that they would cover for their fellow officer. The next morning, unbeknownst to M.C., the detainee told one of the guards at the Broward Transition Center about what M.C. had recounted the night before.

On September 27, 2007, a search warrant was executed on Vazquez' residence. Pursuant to that search, law enforcement confirmed M.C.'s description of the exterior and interior of the residence. Also, on that same day, Vazquez was interviewed by law enforcement. During the interview, Vazquez denied making any stops between Krome and the Broward Transition Center other than a stop at the gas station. He also denied taking M.C. to his house. Lastly, Vazquez denied having any sexual contact with M.C.

A review of SunPass transponder records of the vehicle used by Vazquez to transport M.C. confirmed that Vazquez exited the Florida Turnpike towards his home before arriving at the Broward Detention Center.

The United States Attorney's Office consulted with the victim in this case regarding the plea offer. After serious consideration, she informed the Office that she was in favor of the plea in order to protect her privacy and in an effort to move forward from this terrible incident.

U.S. Attorney Acosta stated, "When an agent, a police officer, or any one at any level of law enforcement uses his/her position to abuse those in their care, the U.S. Attorney's Office will move swiftly and forcefully to bring justice to those aggrieved. A law enforcement badge is a privilege; we will not tolerate its misuse as a key to assert power or unlawful force over those in one's custody."

Mr. Acosta commended the investigative efforts of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Office of Professional Responsibility, and Office of Detention and Removal, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, and the Broward County Sheriff's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Daniel Rashbaum and Edward Stamm.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>