



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC# **079-2015**

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Philip Levine and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: February 20, 2015

SUBJECT: Detective Jennifer Velazquez – Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association Foundation (FLEOA) 2014 Police Officer of the Year

This Letter to the City Commission is to announce that Detective Jenny Velazquez was selected by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA) as their 2014 Officer of the Year. She was awarded this distinguished honor at the annual FLEOA dinner in Delray Beach on February 20, 2015.

Detective Velazquez was selected for this prestigious award based on her extraordinary efforts with the United States Secret Service's Miami Electronic Crimes Task Force (MECTF). This Task Force is multifaceted and investigates crimes that range from identify theft, to fraud, to crimes that are perpetrated against children. Detective Velazquez, who is assigned to latter, investigates cases involving the exploitation of children. When looking back at 2014, there is one case that illustrates the outstanding effort exhibited by Detective Velazquez. This case, which was so disturbing in nature, became the focal point of a nationwide investigation. The goal was to not only arrest the perpetrator of this act but also, and most importantly, rescue a child from the grasp of a predator.

In May 2013, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) sent the Miami Beach Police Department a CYBER TIP regarding disturbing images of Child Pornography that was uploaded via a TWITTER account. The subject used an email account to forward those images to other individuals that shared his obsession with child pornography. These cases begin in a "puzzle-like manner"..... you have to take each piece of the investigative puzzle and put it together and hope that it presents a clear and definitive picture of the crime. Detective Velazquez was tasked with putting together those pieces. The process for her started with the issuance of a subpoena for the email address in question. Through this initial inquiry, the Task Force was able to obtain the IP address of a possible subject. The location of the IP address led Detective Velazquez to a location in Miami Beach. The case was now moving forward.

Detective Velazquez next step was to log into the Miami Beach Child Protection System (CPS). This system can detect Child Pornography activity being traded at IP addresses within the City of Miami Beach. As a result of this inquiry, Detective Velazquez was able to identify a possible subject. Detective Velazquez conferred with AUSA Barbara Martinez and a search warrant was issued for the location in question. On August 21, 2013 a search warrant was executed and evidence of child pornography was located. The subject in possession of these items was taken into custody, confessed to the crime, and was subsequently arrested for being in possession of this material. For many this might have been a successful conclusion to the investigation. For Detective Velazquez, this was only the beginning.

Detective Velazquez was now set to turn her attention to the next piece of the puzzle. This piece involved in the negotiation of a plea arrangement that could potentially lead her to find the victim of this exploitation. As result of this effort, the subject in custody agreed to the plea arrangement and provided additional information pertaining to the sender of the disturbing images. Armed with this new information, Detective Velazquez was off to Nevada.

Detective Velazquez's new lead indentified a potential target in the Las Vegas area. All investigators had to go on was a cell phone number that led them there. Acting on this tip, Detective Velazquez requested the LVPD forensic team to assist by conducting an investigation on this cell phone. The information obtained led them to another person of interest. The subject in Las Vegas gave investigators additional information that led them to another subject by the name of Benjamin Cuadrado. This lead would be the break that they has worked so hard to achieve.

Detective Velazquez, armed with this new information, obtained the IP address supposedly utilized by Cuadrado. The IP address came back to a trailer park in Polk County Florida. On March 21, 2014, the Central Florida ICAC along with USSS and HIS, responded to the trailer park and discovered the registered user of the IP address was not the person depicted in the video committing the acts against the infant. However, investigators were not deterred. On March 24, 2014, Task Force personnel went back to the trailer park and obtained the complete list of everyone that was living in the trailer park for the last six months. On the list was Benjamin Cuadrado.

Cuadrado's home address was obtained and Federal Units, along with officers from the Lakeland Police Department, set up on the location until all elements were in place for the takedown. While conducting surveillance at the location, Cuadrado exited his trailor, entered his vehicle, and left the location. The vehicle was stopped and Cuadrado was taken into custody without incident. Benjamin Cuadrado was later interviewed and gave Detective Velazquez a full confession. Cuadrado, who is incidentally is the grandfather of the victims portrayed in the video, stated he had been sexually abusing the his grandchildren since they were 3 months old. Cuadrado indicated that he committed these acts approximatley forty (40) times over the years and that each time he would sexually abuse the infants he would record the abuse and email it to himself. The purpose of this was "to view it and share it with others." Cuadrado also provided Detective Velazquez access to his online accounts and passwords. Lastly, Cuadrado provided Det. Velazquez with two more leads of possible sexual abuse committed by other subjects. Federal authorities still, to this day are pursuing those leads and will not stop until they too are in custody. I'm sure that Detective Velazquez will see to that.

As a result of this investigation, Benjamin Cuadrado was charged with two counts of Sexual Battery on a Child. Cuadrado was also charged with Production, Distribution, and Possesion of Child Pornography in the Federal Criminal Justice system. Due to the seriousness of the charges, Cuadrado is expected to spend the rest of his life behind bars. The effort by all those involved this case can only be described as exemplary. For many, the opportunity to participate in an investigation like this comes along once in a career. For Detective Velazquez, this type of effort seems to be taking place every year. We have come to expect this from Jenny, and some how she maintains the drive to bring cases like this to a favorable conclusion.

Lastly, and most importantly, the children involved in this investigation, the victims of this heinous act, now have a second chance on life. They no longer have to live in fear of being abused. Their "monster" will be locked away from the rest of his life. Detective Velazquez' tenacity and determination to find these victims and rescue them from their predator constituted a noble and extraordinary effort -- worthy of this award and emblematic of the very best of the Miami Beach Police Department.

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