

## Miami Turns Up the Heat On Corruption

*By: Maria Fehretdinov, Stearns Weaver Miller*

Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) enforcement in Latin America has become such a significant priority that last month the FBI established a new Anti-Corruption Squad in Miami, Florida. The Chief of the FBI's International corruption unit, [Leslie Backschies](#), has focused on combatting corruption in Latin America in her twenty years working with the FBI. Her service in the FBI's International Operations Division (IOD), Americas Unit (where she managed the FBI's Legal Attaché (LEGAT) offices in Brasilia, Mexico City, Bogota, Caracas, Santiago and San Salvador) gave her first-hand experience with the issues gripping this region and its impact on the United States. Miami, which is known as the gateway to Latin America, also acts as a hub to possible money laundering, says Backschies, where the wealthy hide their money in shell companies, real estate, and other assets. Indeed, just earlier this year, law enforcement arrested [Roberto and William Isias](#), who have been accused of embezzling approximately \$661 million from an Ecuadorian Bank and have been hiding in Miami for over a decade to escape their prosecution for their purported role in the collapse of Ecuador's banking institutions. Miami will become the FBI's fourth international field office dedicated to fighting international corruption, after the FBI's success with its other offices in New York, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. The office will be staffed with senior agents, forensic accountants, and personnel who have extensive experience conducting complex white-collar crime and corruption investigations and will work with the Department of Justice's Fraud Section and Money Laundering Asset Forfeiture Section, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida, and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission to prosecute international corruption matters. The [Florida Chapter](#) of the Women's White Collar Defense Association has seasoned FCPA and anti-corruption practitioners who can assist with matters originating from this new field office.