

# Did Ex-Chicago Detective Frame Multiple Suspects?

March 6, 2015



*Ex-Chicago police Detective Reynaldo Guevara in 2013*

An ex-Chicago cop already accused of framing two murder suspects may have railroaded other defendants.

That's according to the Emanuel administration's recently completed probe of misconduct allegations involving Reynaldo Guevara, the retired Chicago police detective who has been called a "frame-up artist."

City Hall asked ex-U.S. Attorney Scott Lassar and his law firm Sidley Austin LLP to review some of Guevara's criminal cases because of accusations that he concealed evidence, and coerced and beat up suspects and eyewitnesses, drawing comparisons to notorious ex-Chicago Police Cmdr. Jon Burge. Two of Guevara's

murder cases have already been overturned and the Better Government Association has identified at least eight other prisoners who claim in court filings that Guevara framed them.

Chicago's municipal government has already paid nearly \$20 million to investigate, defend and settle misconduct allegations against Guevara, who retired from the police department in 2005 and until recently worked for the Chicago Park District.

"Lassar's investigation revealed that there was no widespread pattern of wrongdoing as there had been with Burge," an Emanuel spokeswoman says in a statement. "However, out of the more than 70 cases that were reviewed, there are a handful of cases that the investigators determined merit further review by the [Cook County] State's Attorney and a determination whether further action is needed."

It couldn't be determined what cases Lassar says prosecutors should review. City officials declined to release a copy of his findings, and Lassar declined to comment. Told of the findings, one defense attorney was skeptical.

"I can promise you it's not a 'handful' of cases," says the attorney, Jennifer Bonjean, who's trying to win new trials for five prisoners who claim they were wrongly convicted because of Guevara. On the street, "they called him 'the frame-up artist.' . . . If he framed someone once, he did it again."

Guevara didn't cooperate with the Sidley probe, but attorneys conducted "scores of interviews, including with victims, persons currently incarcerated and witnesses," according to City Hall. The Sidley investigation, initiated in 2013, has cost Chicago taxpayers more than \$1.8 million, records show.

The review concluded late last month and the findings have been turned over to Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez's office.

"We have not yet begun [to review the findings] but will do so as soon as possible [and] . . . take whatever action is required," Alvarez spokeswoman Sally Daly says in an email.

Guevara, 71, declined to speak with a reporter last week, saying, "I got nothing to say to you." In court depositions, he's refused to answer questions, citing his

constitutional right against self-incrimination.

*Guevara at a December 2013 deposition in the Jacques Rivera civil case.*

Guevara joined the Chicago Police Department in the mid-1970s and went on to become a gang crimes specialist and detective at Area 5 Police Headquarters on the Northwest Side. He retired in 2005, records show.

The park district hired him as a part-time security guard in 2004, while he was still a cop. He was assigned to the district's north region and most recently worked at Broadway Armory Park in Edgewater. He retired from the park district last August. Over the last decade, the park district paid him \$276,255 in total.

In an email, a park district spokeswoman says her agency "was not aware of any accusations of misconduct against Guevara" - during his police or park district tenures. City officials said they don't know whether Guevara was ever disciplined, while a cop, for alleged misconduct.

Guevara is now collecting two government pensions totaling \$81,030 a year. His annual police pension is \$73,904, and his park district benefit, which he started collecting last September, is \$7,126 a year, records show.

Guevara hasn't been charged with a crime, so there's nothing illegal about his collecting the public employee pensions.

But some question the wisdom of allowing Guevara to work for the taxpayer-funded park district in a police-type capacity at the same time millions of public dollars were wasted on his alleged police misconduct.

"I don't think that was a wise decision on the park district's part," says Locke Bowman, a Chicago attorney who represents Jacques Rivera, the defendant in one of the two wrongful convictions tied to Guevara. "It's pretty clear that Guevara was a corrupt cop. There's a lot of evidence in disparate cases pointing to that conclusion."

Rivera served 20 years in prison for the 1988 murder of a teenager in Humboldt Park. He was released after the sole eyewitness recanted and the state's attorney's office dropped all charges. In an ongoing civil lawsuit, filed in 2012, Rivera claims Guevara and other officers buried evidence and pressured the

eyewitness into falsely identifying Rivera as the triggerman.

Bonjean and other lawyers draw comparisons between Guevara and Burge, who was accused of overseeing detectives who used electric shock and other torture methods to elicit false confessions from dozens of male black suspects in the 1970s and 1980s. Burge was sent to prison for perjury for lying in a civil case related to torture claims. In all, Burge-related legal claims have cost the city more than \$79 million in payouts and outside attorney fees, according to City Hall.

Guevara's questionable cases mostly involve male Latino suspects, and he's linked to two wrongful convictions: Rivera and Juan Johnson, convicted in a 1989 gang-related murder that he ultimately was cleared of. In a 2005 lawsuit, Johnson accused Guevara of framing him.

Following a jury verdict, the city paid Johnson \$15 million.

Defense attorneys claim there are numerous other cases where Guevara used force, threats and other means to coerce suspects and eyewitnesses.

The BGA identified at least eight prisoners who have alleged in court filings – at least one dating to 2003 – that Guevara framed them for murder. One of them, Gabriel Solache, claims he falsely confessed after Guevara beat and interrogated him for more than 40 hours. The alleged beating caused permanent hearing loss in his left ear, according to court filings.

“Mayor Emanuel has made it clear that the City of Chicago has zero tolerance for police misconduct,” the spokeswoman says in a statement.

Last year, the [BGA reported](#) that the city had spent more than a half-billion dollars, second only to New York, for police misconduct-related claims over the past decade or so. That included some but not all of the Guevara-related costs.

Of the \$19.8 million spent so far by the city on Guevara's alleged misconduct, \$15 million went to the settlement in Johnson's wrongful conviction case, with the rest going for outside legal fees and the Sidley probe, records show.

***This story was written and reported by the Better Government Association's Andrew Schroedter, who can be reached at [aschroedter@bettergov.org](mailto:aschroedter@bettergov.org) or (312) 821-9035.***

***Note: Several misconduct allegations are being made by people represented by Loevy & Loevy, the same law firm employing the BGA's outside general counsel. Also, two BGA board members are attorneys at Sidley Austin.***

*Image courtesy of Chicago Sun-Times*