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Jeffrey Epstein charged with federal sex trafficking crimes involving young girls **By Matt Zapposky, Renae Merle and Devlin Barrett**

Merle reported from New York. Kimberly Kindy and Lisa Rein contributed to this report.

Federal prosecutors on Monday unsealed new sex trafficking charges against Jeffrey Epstein, alleging that the politically connected multimillionaire who previously avoided serious legal exposure on similar allegations had abused dozens of young girls at his Manhattan and Palm Beach, Fla., homes and enlisted his victims to bring him others.

The charges, to which Epstein pleaded not guilty, mark a nadir for the jet-setting financier who owns a private island, controls two private jets and counts among his friends President Trump and former president Bill Clinton.

After landing at Teterboro Airport in New Jersey on Saturday, Epstein was taken into custody, held for two nights in the same detention facility that houses the drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman, and then marched into federal court Monday in a blue prison uniform and orange shoes.

Video: https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/national/what-you-need-to-know-about-disgraced-billionaire-jeffrey-epstein/2019/07/08/deaa5dd1-ea5f-45f0-ad34-62942b7569a5_video.html

Jeffrey Epstein was charged July 8 with sex trafficking crimes and pleaded not guilty. The Post's Kimberly Kindy breaks down the charges. (Video: Allie Caren/Photo: Osman Malik/The Washington Post)

Prosecutors, meanwhile, made public the lurid details of how they say Epstein created a network of girls who would be available for abuse on demand, and investigators seized from his Manhattan mansion what they described as “hundreds — and perhaps thousands” of photos showing nude or partially nude female subjects. Some of the images are believed to be of underage girls.

“The alleged behavior shocks the conscience,” U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman said at a news conference to announce the charges.

[*\[Read the indictment: U.S. v. Jeffrey Epstein\]*](#)

A federal prosecutor said in court that officials did not expect any “imminent” additional charges but added that more are “possible down the road.”

Epstein is no stranger to allegations of abuse. In 2008, he pleaded guilty in Florida to state charges of soliciting prostitution, resolving allegations that he molested dozens of girls in an arrangement widely criticized as too lenient. As part of the deal, he spent just over a year in jail and was allowed to leave daily for work. He never faced any federal charges.

At the time, Alexander Acosta, now Trump’s labor secretary, was the U.S. attorney overseeing Epstein’s case. The charges Monday brought renewed scrutiny to Acosta’s handling of the matter, and Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.) renewed her calls for him to resign.

“The new sex trafficking charges announced today make it agonizingly clear that former U.S. Attorney Alex Acosta failed to deliver true justice for the underage girls that Jeffrey Epstein mercilessly exploited,” she said. “Someone with such poor judgment and utter disregard for survivors should not be our secretary of labor. . . . As Epstein now faces a real accounting for his crimes, it’s time for Acosta to be held responsible for letting Epstein elude real justice for so long.”

Acosta, who declined to comment through a spokesman, has previously defended the arrangement as guaranteeing that Epstein would go to jail.

The Justice Department aims to seize Jeffrey Epstein’s home on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, which prosecutors say is valued at



about \$77 million. (Carlo Allegri/Reuters)

Angel Urena, a spokesman for Clinton, issued a statement asserting the former president “knows nothing about the terrible crimes Jeffrey Epstein pleaded

guilty to in Florida some years ago, or those with which he has been recently charged in New York.” He said Clinton took four trips on Epstein’s plane in 2002 and 2003, and staff, supporters and Clinton’s Secret Service detail “traveled on every leg of every trip.” He said Clinton also had one brief meeting with Epstein in his Harlem office in 2002 and made a brief visit to Epstein’s apartment with a staff member and security detail.

“He’s not spoken to Epstein in well over a decade, and has never been to Little St. James Island, Epstein’s ranch in New Mexico, or his residence in Florida,” Urena said.

The Justice Department has taken a more aggressive posture in the recent case than it did years ago. Epstein, 66, is charged in [a 14-page indictment](#) with sex trafficking and sex trafficking conspiracy, two counts that together could lead to a sentence of many years in prison. Prosecutors sought to have him remain incarcerated until he is tried — arguing his wealth gave him “practically limitless” avenues to flee and escape justice. For the time being, Epstein will remain in custody, with a bail hearing set for Monday.

“The defendant, a registered sex offender, is not reformed, he is not chastened, he is not repentant; rather, he is a continuing danger to the community and an individual who faces devastating evidence supporting deeply serious charges,” prosecutors wrote in a court filing.

[Epstein taken into custody in New York on new charges related to sex crimes involving minors]

The allegations for which Epstein is charged span from 2002 to 2005, and prosecutors conceded some of it overlaps with his earlier case. Reid Weingarten, Epstein’s defense attorney, argued in court Monday that his client already was the subject of a “sophisticated” investigation by authorities in Florida, and his team was of the belief that his guilty plea years ago was a “global agreement” that would prevent further Justice Department prosecution.

He sought to distinguish Epstein’s case from other accused sex traffickers, saying, “You may come to the conclusion there was prostitution involved and maybe a lot of it, but that doesn’t mean that the person involved is a pedophile, a rapist or, heaven knows, a trafficker.”

“This indictment is a do-over,” said Weingarten, who questioned its legality. “We’re talking about ancient conduct.”

Weingarten said that Epstein “did his time” and that he had led a “law-abiding life” since then. Prosecutors told a different story.

In court filings and in public statements, law enforcement officials described Epstein as a man of incredible wealth who was able to pay his victims, some as young as 14, hundreds of dollars to find him others to abuse. They said investigators found photographs in his home when they searched it Saturday — some of them in a locked safe on CDs with handwritten labels such as “Misc nudes 1” and “Girl pics nude.”

Prosecutors asserted that Epstein was willing to go to great lengths to cover up his behavior. In his previous case, prosecutors wrote, Epstein’s attorneys contemplated having him plead guilty to an obstruction or witness tampering offense and mentioned to prosecutors an incident in which Epstein

apparently hired a private investigator to follow the father of someone involved in the case and force him off the road while driving.

“This is not an individual who has left his past behind,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Alex Rossmiller said in court.

[*\[Listen on Post Reports: Matt Zapotosky details the new sex trafficking charges against Epstein.\]*](#)

Law enforcement officials credited investigative journalism with helping them bring the charges. The women who prosecutors say were victimized by Epstein have long claimed that the criminal justice system treated him differently because of his wealth and political connections, and in part because of their claims in lawsuits and in public, his treatment has come under significant media and legal scrutiny. The Justice Department office that handles internal disciplinary matters revealed this year that it was looking into whether attorneys handling the case previously committed “professional misconduct.” But a change in attitude also seems to have played a role in the new charges.

In court filings and public statements, law enforcement officials used Epstein’s wealth and connections against him. In seeking to keep Epstein jailed before his trial, prosecutors noted he owns property around the world — including in Manhattan; Palm Beach, Fla.; Stanley, N.M.; and Paris — and has a private island in the U.S. Virgin Islands. His New York mansion, valued at about \$77 million, is believed to be one of the largest residences in Manhattan, prosecutors wrote.

Epstein also has at least 15 vehicles, including seven Chevrolet Suburbans, a cargo van, a Range Rover, a Mercedes-Benz sedan, a Cadillac Escalade and a Hummer II, and access to two private jets — one of which can fly from continent to continent, prosecutors wrote. In the past 18 months, he traveled in or out of the country more than 20 times, prosecutors wrote.

At the news conference to announce the charges, William Sweeney, who heads the FBI’s New York office, said it was the bureau’s mission “to put predators behind bars where they belong, regardless of the predators’ power, wealth, or perceived connections.”

In the new indictment, prosecutors described in graphic detail how underage girls would arrive at one of Epstein’s homes, be escorted to a room with a massage table and then be instructed to partially or fully undress. Epstein, the indictment alleges, would grope the girls and perform other sex acts, then pay them hundreds of dollars in cash.

The indictment also alleges that Epstein “actively encouraged certain of his victims to recruit additional girls to be similarly sexually abused” and that he “incentivized his victims to become recruiters by paying these victim-recruiters hundreds of dollars for each girl they brought to Epstein.”

“This allowed Epstein to create an ever-expanding web of new victims,” Berman said.

[*\[Epstein taken into custody in New York on new charges related to sex crimes involving minors\]*](#)

Epstein sometimes scheduled meetings himself, but often he “directed employees and associates . . . to arrange for these victims to return to the New York Residence for additional sexual encounters with Epstein,” according to the indictment, which says three employees, identified only as Employee-1, Employee-2 and Employee-3, helped arrange the encounters.

When Epstein flew from New York to Florida, an employee or associate would “ensure that minor victims were available for encounters upon his arrival,” the indictment alleges.

It was not immediately clear whether any of those employees will face criminal charges, as Epstein’s previous plea deal struck with federal prosecutors in Florida said his co-conspirators would not be charged in that case. The previous plea identifies potential co-conspirators as Sarah Kellen, Adriana Ross, Lesley Groff and Nadia Marcinkova, none of whom could be reached for comment. Berman declined to discuss possible criminal exposure for anyone connected to Epstein.

Prosecutors could run into challenges if the new charges facing Epstein overlap with the conduct covered by his guilty plea.

In a filing urging that Epstein remain jailed, prosecutors argued that his previous non-prosecution agreement “did not purport to cover any victims outside of the State of Florida,” and the new indictment alleges that there are dozens of victims “abused in this District in addition to dozens of victims who were abused in Florida.”

Rossmiller, the prosecutor, said in court that the Manhattan case does not cover the same conduct, though there is some overlap. The deal worked out by Florida prosecutors did not specifically prohibit a separate case in another jurisdiction, he said. The case is being handled by public corruption prosecutors with Berman’s office, including Maurene Comey, the daughter of former FBI director James B. Comey.

Prosecutors said their evidence is strong. They wrote that “multiple victims” had provided information about Epstein that was “detailed, credible, and corroborated, in many instances, by other witnesses and contemporaneous documents, records and other evidence.”

They said they had found “contemporaneous notes” and “messages recovered from the defendant’s residence that include names and contact information for certain victims, and call records that confirm the defendant and his agents were repeatedly in contact with various victims during the charged period.”

“Put simply, all of this evidence — the voluminous and credible testimony of individuals who were sexually abused by the defendant as minors, each of whom are backed up by other evidence — will be devastating evidence of guilt at any trial in this case and weighs heavily in favor of detention,”

prosecutors wrote.

The Justice Department is seeking to seize Epstein’s mansion on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where prosecutors say some of the crimes occurred.