

FBI: Sex offender Epstein provided info in plea deal; Memo released 10 years after raises questions about handling of case. Palm Beach Post (Florida) May 31, 2018 Thursday

Ten years after **convicted** Palm Beach sex offender **Jeffrey Epstein** escaped federal charges in connection with **allegations** that he paid dozens of teenage girls for sex, the FBI last week released what appears to be an explosive explanation for what many have long described as a sweetheart deal.

"**Epstein** has also provided information to the FBI as agreed upon," agents wrote in one of dozens of heavily redacted, decade-old memos that were unexpectedly and inexplicably posted on an FBI website known as "The Vault."

The simple declaration stunned people who have been following the tortuous and celebrity-studded case for years. It rekindled talk that the billionaire's 2008 decision to plead **guilty** to state charges to make the federal investigation disappear was part of a cover up to protect **Epstein's** high-powered friends, including future President Donald Trump, former President Bill Clinton and Britain's Prince Andrew.

"That sentence obviously means something but I, too, am at a loss as to what it really means," said attorney Brad Edwards, who for a decade has been trying to unravel the mystery of **Epstein's** plea deal. "If there was some cooperation I would have expected that we would have been told. However, nothing surprises me at this point."

In recent years, federal **prosecutors** have offered various explanations for why they agreed to drop the case they were building against the 65-year-old enigmatic money manager if he pleaded **guilty** to state prostitution charges. In court papers, they have said they wanted to get justice for **Epstein's** young victims but worried a jury wouldn't believe them.

So, they have said, they negotiated a deal, allowing **Epstein** to plead **guilty** in Palm Beach County Circuit Court to one count of soliciting a minor for prostitution and another charge of soliciting prostitution. In exchange, federal **prosecutors** agreed to close their investigation. They have said they had no idea **Epstein** would only serve 13 months of an 18-month sentence in a vacant wing of the county stockade -- a cell he was allowed to leave 16 hours a day, six days a week.

While voicing dismay at his lax punishment, **prosecutors** have pointed out that the plea deal required **Epstein** to pay the roughly 30 young women who filed civil lawsuits against him. Further, they said his **guilty** pleas force him to register as a sex **offender** for the rest of his life, potentially protecting other girls from **abuse** in the future.

However, over the years, they had never suggested that **Epstein** provided them any information in return.

Like Edwards, two people close to the long-closed federal investigation said they were flummoxed by the sentence in the FBI's memo that was written in September 2008, roughly two months after **Epstein** pleaded **guilty** in state court.

"I have never, ever heard of **Jeffrey Epstein** cooperating in any sense of the word," said one official, who requested anonymity because of the top role the person played in the investigation. "I am stumped. It's totally out of left field."

Another individual with ties to the case voiced similar views. **Epstein** may have been required to talk to FBI agents but it's unlikely he offered anything that would **incriminate** others, said the person, who declined to be identified because of ongoing efforts to help

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