

"Highly unusual" is how Palm Beach Police Chief Michael Reiter described State Attorney Barry Krischer's handling of the case in a bluntly critical letter to Krischer last year before Epstein was indicted.

Reiter referred the matter to the FBI to determine whether any federal laws had been violated. Epstein's allies countered by attacking the chief personally and professionally.

Reiter's department investigated Epstein for 11 months. Police sifted repeatedly through his trash and conducted surveillance on his five-bedroom, 7 1/2-bath, 7,234-square-foot home on the Intracoastal Waterway.

Police said Epstein paid women and girls as young as 14 to give him erotic massages at his home. Police thought there was probable cause to charge him with unlawful sex acts with a minor and lewd and lascivious molestation.

Epstein responded by hiring a phalanx of lawyers. One of them, Harvard law professor and author Alan Dershowitz, provided the state attorney's office with information about alcohol and marijuana use by some of the girls who said they were with Epstein.

Prosecutors then referred the case to the grand jury rather than file charges directly against Epstein.

Epstein's attorneys deny he had sex with underage girls. The lawyers say the girls' stories are not credible. But if the court file is any indicator, they've made no effort to depose the girls.

Neither prosecutors nor defense attorneys have sought to question ██████ said ██████ her attorney. She recruited teenage girls to visit Epstein for massages and sexual activity, Palm Beach police said, and presumably would be a key witness.

Epstein's attorney Jack Goldberger did not return phone messages.

A source close to the case suggested it is languishing pending a decision by the FBI on whether to refer it to federal prosecutors.

"We still have a pending case," FBI spokeswoman Judy Orihuela said Monday.

State Attorney Krischer did not return a call for comment. His spokesman, Mike Edmondson, declined to say whether federal investigators are delaying the Epstein case. But, he added, "if another agency is looking at something, we wouldn't want to step on their toes."

Attorneys say inertia in a criminal case often points to a pending plea deal.

"It would not surprise me if something has happened that's not reflected in the court file," said Dutko, such as an agreement that will be formalized later.

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