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After long probe, Palm Beach billionaire faces solicitation charge

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Palm Beach billionaire Jeffrey Epstein paid to have underage girls and young women brought to his home, where he received massages and sometimes sex, according to an investigation by the Palm Beach Police Department.

Palm Beach police spent months sifting through Epstein's trash and watching his waterfront home and Palm Beach International Airport to keep tabs on his private jet. An indictment charging Epstein, 53, was unsealed Monday, charging him with one count of felony solicitation of prostitution.

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Jeffrey Epstein

Billionaire financier

Jeffrey Epstein has been indicted

for felony solicitation of prostitution by a grand jury following accusations by teen girls.

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Palm Beach police thought there was probable cause to charge Epstein with unlawful sex acts with a minor and lewd and lascivious molestation.

Police Chief Michael Reiter was so angry with State Attorney Barry Krischer's handling of the case that he wrote a memo suggesting the county's top prosecutor disqualify himself.

"I must urge you to examine the unusual course that your office's handling of this matter

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has taken and consider if good and sufficient reason exists to require your disqualification from the prosecution of

these cases," Reiter wrote in a May 1 memo to Krischer.

While not commenting specifically on the Epstein case, Mike Edmondson, spokesman for the state attorney, said his office presents cases other than murders to a grand jury when there are questions about witnesses' credibility and their ability to testify.

By the nature of their jobs, police officers look at evidence from a "one-sided perspective," Edmondson said. "A prosecutor has to look at it in a much broader fashion," weighing the veracity of witnesses and how they may fare under defense attorneys' questioning, he said.

Epstein's attorney, Jack Goldberger, said his client committed no crimes.

"The reports and statements in question refer to false accusations that were not charged because the Palm Beach County state attorney questioned the credibility of the witnesses," Goldberger said. A county grand jury "found the allegations wholly unsubstantiated and not credible," and that's why his client was not charged with sexual activity with minors, he said.

Goldberger said Epstein passed a lie detector test administered by a reputable polygraph examiner in which he said he did not know the girls were minors. Also, a search warrant served on Epstein's home found no evidence to corroborate the girls' allegations, Goldberger said.

According to police documents:

- A Palm Beach Community College student said she gave Epstein a massage in the nude, then brought him six girls, ages 14 to 16, for massage and sex-tinged sessions at his home.
- A 27-year-old woman who worked as Epstein's personal assistant also facilitated the liaisons, phoning the PBCC student to arrange for girls when Epstein was coming to town. And she escorted the girls upstairs when they arrived, putting fresh sheets on a massage table and placing massage oils nearby.
- Police took sworn statements from five alleged victims and 17 witnesses. They contend that on three occasions, Epstein had sex with the girls.

A money manager for the ultra-rich, Epstein was named one of New York's most eligible bachelors in 2003 by *The New York Post*. He reportedly hobnobs with the likes of former President Clinton, former Harvard University President Lawrence Summers and Donald Trump, and has lavish homes in Manhattan, New Mexico and the Virgin Islands.

He has contributed tens of thousands of dollars to Democratic Party candidates and organizations, including Sen. John Kerry's presidential bid, and the Senate campaigns of Joe Lieberman, Hillary Clinton, Christopher Dodd and Charles Schumer.

Goldberger is one of five attorneys Epstein has retained since he became the subject of an investigation, Edmondson said. Among the others: Alan Dershowitz, the well-known Harvard law professor and author, who is a friend of Epstein. Dershowitz could not be reached for comment.

Police said the woman who enlisted young girls for Epstein was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] has worked at [REDACTED] and said she was [REDACTED] when she was questioned by police last October. She has an unlisted phone number and could not be reached for comment.

[REDACTED] said she met Epstein when, at age [REDACTED], a friend asked her if she would like to make money giving him a massage. She said she was driven to his five-bedroom, 7 1/2 -bath home on the Intracoastal Waterway, then escorted upstairs to a bedroom with a massage table and oils. Epstein and [REDACTED] were both naked during the massage, she said, but when he [REDACTED], she said she didn't want to be touched.

Epstein said he'd pay her to bring him more girls — the younger the better, [REDACTED] told police. When she tried once to bring a 23-year-old woman to him, Epstein said she was too old, [REDACTED] said.

[REDACTED], who has not been charged in the case, said she eventually brought six girls to Epstein who were paid \$200 each time, [REDACTED] said. "I'm like a Heidi Fleiss," police quoted her as saying. The girls knew what to expect when they were taken to Epstein's home, [REDACTED] said. Give a massage — maybe naked — and allow some touching.

One 14-year-old girl [REDACTED] took to meet Epstein led police to start the investigation of him in March 2005. A relative of the girl called to say she thought the child had recently engaged in sex with a Palm Beach man. The girl then got into a fight with a classmate who accused her of being a prostitute, and she couldn't explain why she had \$300 in her purse.

The girl gave police this account of her meeting with Epstein:

She accompanied [REDACTED] and a second girl to Epstein's house on a Sunday in February 2005. Once there, a woman she thought was Epstein's assistant told the girl to follow her upstairs to a room featuring a mural of a naked woman, several photographs of naked women on a shelf, a hot pink and green sofa and a massage table.

She stripped to her bra and panties and gave him a massage.

Epstein gave the 14-year-old \$300 and she and the other girls left, she said. She said [REDACTED] told her that Epstein paid her \$200 that day.

Other girls told similar stories. In most accounts, Epstein's personal assistant at the time, [REDACTED], now 27, escorted the girls to Epstein's bedroom.

[REDACTED], whose most recent known address is [REDACTED], has not been charged in the case.

Palm Beach police often conducted surveillance of Epstein's home, and at Palm Beach International Airport to see if his private jet was there, so they would know when he was in town. Police also arranged repeatedly to receive his trash from Palm Beach sanitation workers, collecting papers with names and phone numbers, sex toys and female hygiene products.

One note stated that a female could not come over at 7 p.m. because of soccer. Another said a girl had to work Sunday — "Monday after school?" And still another note contained the work hours of a girl, saying she leaves school at 11:30 a.m. and would come over the next day at 10:30 a.m.

Only three months before the police department probe began, Epstein donated \$90,000 to the department for the purchase of a firearms simulator, said Jane Struder, town finance director. The purchase was never made. The money was returned to Epstein on Monday, she said.

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