

Director's Awards Nomination Form

General Information

Nominating
District

NYS

Award
Category

Superior Performance by a Litigative
Team

Point of Contact Information

Full Name

[type here]

Title

[type here]

Phone Number

[type here]

Email Address

[type here]

Synopsis

Provide a one-paragraph synopsis of 150 words or less describing the matter/work for which the individual or group is being nominated. The synopsis should be suitable for use in the awards ceremony program.

The team members are recognized for their extraordinary work in the multi-year investigation and prosecution of Ghislaine Maxwell and Jeffrey Epstein, the perpetrators of expansive schemes to commit sex trafficking, enticement, and transportation offenses against more than one hundred minor girls. Epstein and Maxwell committed these crimes over many years, between 1994 and 2004, during which they exploited their vast wealth and elevated social status to evade accountability. The team used novel applications of the sex trafficking and enticement statutes, successfully litigated complex legal issues, collected and reviewed millions of pages of documentary evidence, and earned the trust and cooperation of dozens of traumatized victims to hold Maxwell and Epstein accountable. Following a month-long trial, Maxwell was convicted in December 2021 of counts relating to enticement, transportation, sex trafficking, and related conspiracy offenses. Epstein was charged with sex trafficking and conspiracy in July 2019; he died by suicide before trial.

Justification

(1,000 word limit) Provide a detailed justification describing the achievement or work for which the nominee is being recognized. If a group award, be sure to highlight the contributions of each nominee.

The team is nominated for its extraordinary dedication, teamwork, and tireless efforts in the investigation and prosecution of Ghislaine Maxwell and Jeffrey Epstein, who perpetrated and facilitated countless acts of sexual abuse upon hundreds of victims over nearly a decade. Maxwell was arrested in July 2020, and following a month-long trial was convicted in December 2021 of conspiracy to entice minors to travel with intent to engage in sexual activity; conspiracy to transport minors with intent to engage in sexual activity; conspiracy to commit sex trafficking of minors; and substantive counts of transportation and sex trafficking. In June 2022, she was sentenced to [XXX] months of incarceration. Epstein was arrested in July 2019 and charged with sex trafficking and sex trafficking conspiracy; he died by suicide prior to trial.

The indictments and successful trial were the result of an investigation initially conducted by AUSAs [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], in close collaboration with Special Agent [REDACTED], FBI Analyst [REDACTED], and FBI TFO / NYPD Detective [REDACTED] – all members of the FBI Violent Crimes Against Children and Human Trafficking Task Force – and SDNY Victim Coordinator [REDACTED]. The investigation began after a media report described controversy resulting from a state plea agreement for Epstein following previous investigations. Through painstaking efforts to speak with victims throughout the country and abroad, including dozens of victims not previously identified, the investigative team uncovered a sex abuse and trafficking scheme vastly beyond what previously had been known.

The scheme began in the 1990s, when Epstein and Maxwell targeted and sexually abused vulnerable girls, in some instances in the context of years-long coercive relationships. Maxwell and Epstein cultivated their victims carefully,

normalizing predator behavior and gradually crossing boundaries in ever-increasing escalations toward sexual abuse. Over time, the misconduct expanded and ultimately became a pyramid scheme of sexual abuse, in which minor girls were paid to provide Epstein with sexualized “massages,” which escalated to greater and more frequent instances of abuse, after which the girls were then encouraged and paid to bring others to perform “massages” that would lead to additional molestation. In doing so, Epstein and Maxwell established a cycle of abuse that affected hundreds of victims throughout the country. In an exceptionally short period for an investigation of this scope, the team sought and obtained an indictment for Epstein, and coordinated with FBI and the Department of Homeland Security to effect his arrest upon his return to the United States following lengthy travel abroad.

Following Epstein’s suicide, AUSAs [REDACTED], along with Special Agent [REDACTED], Detective [REDACTED], and Analyst [REDACTED] continued to investigate the role and conduct of Maxwell, who had been Epstein’s girlfriend, business partner, and co-conspirator. The team quickly assembled a powerful case against Maxwell, including by discovering and speaking to newly-identified additional victims. The AUSAs, FBI personnel, and Paralegal [REDACTED] also each spent countless hours to ensure that all relevant evidence was secured and reviewed, including dozens of physical items, hundreds of electronic storage devices, and millions of pages of documents. In total, the investigative team obtained over a dozen search warrants, including for multiple properties and an entire private island, leading to the seizure and review of dozens of electronic devices containing many terabytes of materials.

AUSAs [REDACTED] also collectively conducted more than 400 interviews of more than 150 witnesses, including dozens of victims, in close collaboration with Victim Coordinator [REDACTED], Special Agent [REDACTED], and Detective [REDACTED]. Those interviews were undertaken in at least five different U.S. states and territories and two foreign countries. The case was especially challenging because many of the victims previously had experienced difficult interactions with law enforcement, either in the course of prior investigations of Epstein, in connection with their own unrelated personal conduct following their abuse, or both.

The full investigation revealed that Maxwell had recruited, groomed, and enticed multiple minor girls to be assaulted by Epstein, and ultimately that she herself had directly participated in numerous instances of abuse. The investigation culminated in charges against Maxwell in July 2020. Following the indictment, AUSAs [REDACTED] jointly drafted hundreds of pages of briefing addressing numerous defendant pretrial motions, including to dismiss, sever, and suppress evidence.

Each member of the team worked tirelessly to overcome a zealous and well-funded defense case before and during Maxwell’s trial by expertly preparing witnesses for testimony and lengthy cross-examination, navigating complex legal and expert-related issues, and closely coordinating with victims to ensure their stability and security before, throughout, and after trial. At trial, over the course of a month, AUSAs [REDACTED] elicited testimony from more than 20 witnesses, cross-examined several defense witnesses, and introduced approximately 380 exhibits. During the investigation and through trial, the team received invaluable assistance from Victim Coordinator [REDACTED] who skillfully worked to provide crucial support to victims and to minimize additional trauma. Paralegal Specialist [REDACTED] also provided critical help with the hundreds of exhibits, millions of pages of discovery, and well over 100 witness meetings and trial prep sessions.

The efforts of the AUSAs, FBI personnel, and U.S. Attorney’s Office staff assigned to this case were exceptional. The nominees demonstrated extraordinary determination, professionalism, and teamwork in working together seamlessly for years throughout the investigation, ultimately succeeding in obtaining Maxwell’s convictions after a month-long trial. Those efforts are worthy of recognition because they revealed a decade of crime and exploitation by Maxwell and Epstein that had been underestimated or overlooked for years. Through the team’s groundbreaking investigation, the full scope of the criminal enterprise was finally discovered, exposed, and punished. The team also accomplished all of these objectives while being the focus of unprecedented public interest. Finally, all members of the investigative team worked expertly with numerous victims, establishing relationships of trust and confidence with vulnerable individuals who ultimately were able to provide accounts of deep trauma, enabling the prosecution to move forward and ultimately be successful.

Case Status

Is this case closed? If this is a criminal case, have all defendants been sentenced? If this is a civil case, has it been concluded to final order, judgment, decree or stipulation? If this is for an appellate award, has an opinion been issued? **Yes**

If no, please explain why this nomination should be considered.