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EDITORIAL: Sleazy perp, sleazier deal

Palm Beach Post Editorial

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On the second page of the secret deal between federal prosecutors and Jeffrey Epstein, we read that the agreement will serve the interests of "the United States, the State of Florida, and the Defendant." Wrong on the first two, right on the third.

Until Friday, the public didn't know the terms of the deal that finalized the case of the Palm Beacher who arranged to have girls brought to his house for sex and massages. Only Epstein's platoon of lawyers, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida and the Palm Beach County State Attorney's Office knew the details. And now we know why the perpetrators of this outrage didn't want the public to know.



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The agreement thus placed the Department of Justice in a role similar to those of the four women who procured girls for Epstein. If there's a precedent in this or any of the other 92 United States attorney's offices, we'd like to hear it. Not surprisingly, R. Alexander Acosta also agreed not to prosecute those women.

If the outcome is frustrating, so is the lack of accountability. Mr. Acosta's name is on the deal, but he's now the dean of Florida International University's law school. A call to his office for comment Monday

The deal is an indictment of a system that did much more for a criminal than for his victims. Jeffrey Epstein - officially a registered sex offender but in plain terms a pervert - escaped what should have been serious prison time. Instead, the federal deal allowed him to plead guilty to light charges in state court. He spent just 13 months - nights only - in the Palm Beach County Jail. Meanwhile, the government tried to help Epstein buy off the young girls whom Epstein had exploited.

Several of those girls have filed civil suits against Epstein. (Their lawyers and lawyers for *The Post* sued to make the plea deal public.) In the agreement, the government proposes to identify all the alleged victims and steer them to a lawyer, whose expenses Epstein would pay. In return, however, the victims would withdraw all lawsuits from state court and agree to a settlement in federal court of no more than \$150,000 each. Even then, of course, Epstein would not acknowledge any "liability."

was not returned. The name of Assistant U.S. Attorney A. Marie Villafana is on the deal. She still works as a federal prosecutor in West Palm Beach, but Alicia Valle, the office's special counsel, said in an e-mail, "We cannot comment on your questions." Didn't she really mean *will not*?

This case got into the federal system because former Palm Beach Police Chief Michael Reiter believed that Palm Beach County State Attorney Barry Krischer wasn't moving aggressively enough. Mr. Krischer retired last year. The assistant state attorney who oversaw the case is no longer with the office.

At this point, the public must hope that the civil suits suck as much money from Epstein as possible. Money seems to be all that he understands. Also, Jeffrey Sloman is serving as the acting U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida until President Obama nominates a permanent replacement for confirmation by the Senate. It would be good to know that whoever follows Mr. Acosta is on record that the Jeffrey Epstein deal did not serve the interests of the United States.

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