

The Telegraph

Duke of York to face fresh questions as Epstein case takes new twist

The Duke of York is braced for fresh questions about his links to Jeffrey Epstein next week, after lawyers in America signalled a “major” development in their attempt to resurrect the criminal prosecution of the billionaire paedophile.



The Duke of York and his daughter Princess Beatrice attend the World Future Energy Summit with UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, left, in Abu Dhabi in 2008 Photo: EPA



By [Jon Swaine](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/jon-swaine/) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/jon-swaine/>), in Palm Beach, Florida, and Gordon Rayner

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Several women who claim they were sexually abused by Epstein are challenging a plea bargain deal that enabled the billionaire to avoid being tried for offences that carried a possible life sentence. They say the deal with prosecutors was unlawful because under US law they should have been consulted, and want Epstein’s convictions for lesser offences to be set aside so he can face a fresh trial.

The Duke, who stayed at Epstein’s home in Florida and flew with him in his private jet, may be one of several high-profile figures from whom lawyers may want to take statements as part of that process.

One of the attorneys involved in the legal challenge has told The Daily Telegraph that a "major new filing" in the case will be made next week, which will increase the likelihood of the Duke being asked to give a witness statement.

The court filing is expected to contain newly-discovered emails showing how Epstein and his circle secured his plea deal – and how the disgraced financier demanded that the negotiations be kept secret from the victims. Lawyers for the victims are continuing an effort to recover all communications made to US government officials by people representing Epstein, including telephone logs and records of meetings.

The legal teams want to get to the bottom of whether any of Epstein's high-profile friends tried to intervene in the legal process, and want to know if the Duke has any knowledge of such claims.

Epstein's meeting with minister

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/theroyalfamily/8378080/Mystery-over-Jeffrey-Epsteins-meeting-with-a-Labour-minister.html>)

Stephen Day's letter (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/theroyalfamily/8375011/Stephen-Days-letter-Royal-envoys-are-crass-and-insulting.html>)

Duke could be called to two Epstein trials

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/theroyalfamily/8374911/Convicted-paedophile-Jeffrey-Epstein-is-facing-a-new-criminal-investigation-and-is-involved-in-a-civil-suit-with-a-lawyer.html>)

Further scrutiny on Duke of York over lobbying

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/theroyalfamily/8372507/Further-scrutiny-on-Duke-of-York-over-lobbying.html>)

Timeline: the Duke of York's questionable friends

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/theroyalfamily/8366227/Timeline-the-Duke-of-Yorks-questionable-friends.html>)

Labour MP: Prince Andrew is 'an embarrassment' (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsvideo/uk-politics-video/8366220/Labour-MP-Prince-Andrew-is-an-embarrassment.html>)

There is no suggestion that the Duke had sexual contact with any of the girls or that he knew Epstein abused any of them. One lawyer said the plea bargain deal "stinks to high heaven", and [REDACTED], who had been lined up as

a key witness against Epstein after alleging she was abused by him from the age of 15, said she had been "appalled" when she was told a plea deal had been struck.

Epstein, 58, pleaded guilty to solicitation of prostitution and procuring a minor for prostitution in 2008, and served 13 months of an 18-month jail sentence, much of it in an open prison.

The deal enabled him to escape more serious charges, including statutory rape, that could have resulted in a life sentence. Prosecutors also agreed not to pursue alleged conspirators.

Aside from the challenge to Epstein's plea deal, the FBI has indicated it might reopen its criminal investigation into his activities as a result of new evidence.

The Duke could be asked to give a statement to the FBI, as lawyers believe he may have been with Epstein at times when under age girls were in the house, and that he could have information helpful to their inquiries.

The Duke could also be asked to give a statement as part of a civil case in which a lawyer is suing Epstein for allegedly seeking to intimidate some of his alleged victims. A royal source said the Duke was "not aware" of any fresh investigation into Epstein, but "would respond appropriately at the time" if he was contacted by lawyers in the US. Buckingham Palace declined to comment.

The Duke has come under intense pressure to stand down from his role as Britain's special representative for trade and investment since details of his friendship with Epstein first surfaced three weeks ago. Epstein and the Duke were photographed in conversation while walking in New York's Central Park, while the Duke was a guest of the financier last December.

It later emerged that Epstein had paid a £15,000 debt owed by the Duchess of York to a former assistant after allegedly discussing the Duchess's dire financial situation with her former husband.

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