

# Two New York prison guards charged in connection with Epstein death

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Two New York prison guards were arrested on Tuesday and charged with multiple crimes in connection with the death of multimillionaire investor Jeffery Epstein last August. Epstein was being held on federal sex trafficking charges at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York City at the time of his death and was facing up to 45 years in prison if convicted.

The two guards, Tova Noel and Michael Thomas, were charged with making false records and conspiring to defraud the United States. The pair had reportedly failed to conduct mandatory bed checks on Epstein every half-hour and are alleged to have spent several hours of their shift asleep. They are also said to have falsified prison logs to indicate they had conducted the required patrols.

It had previously been reported that both had worked multiple overtime shifts at the understaffed facility that week, and that one had worked a 16-hour shift on the day Epstein was found dead.

Jose Rojas, an official with the federal prison guards union, told the *New York Times* that the crimes the pair are charged with are typically treated as administrative violations and handled internally, and rarely result in criminal charges.

“There's culpability at the top,” Rojas told the *Times*, “They always try to blame the lowest person on the totem pole.”

Epstein died on the night of August 10 and his corpse was discovered the following morning. He had been placed on suicide watch on July 23 after he had been found beaten with bruises on his neck. He was taken off suicide watch on July 29.

Epstein's lawyers and family reported that he had not given any indication that he was suicidal. He had reportedly been working on his case for 12 hours a day

and was looking forward to his trial. In the days following his death more suspicious and still unexplained facts continued to emerge. Epstein's cellmate had been removed the night before, leaving the financier alone. The cameras trained on the corridor outside of his cell were found to be inoperable, and inmates reported hearing screams coming from his cell that night.

At a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing Tuesday, the newly appointed head of the US Bureau of Prisons faced a barrage of hostile questions about the circumstances of Epstein's death. Kathleen Hawk Sawyer, a former head of the federal prison system brought out of retirement by Attorney General William Barr after Epstein's death, revealed that the FBI is investigating whether a “criminal enterprise” played a role in Epstein's death.

A spokeswoman for Sawyer said she was not suggesting that Epstein's death was not a suicide, but that prison employees might have engaged in criminal actions to cover up their negligence in failing to prevent it. This would include the two prison guards arrested Tuesday, but could extend to other officials within the MCC. In her direct testimony before the Senate panel, Sawyer admitted, “This incident was a black eye on the entire Bureau of Prisons.”

Republican senators, including Lindsey Graham, Ben Sasse and John A. Kennedy, pressed Sawyer repeatedly on the Epstein issue. Kennedy stated explicitly that the American people did not believe Epstein had killed himself, and expected answers. Sawyer responded that there was “no indication from anything I know” that Epstein's death “was anything other than a suicide.”

Lisa Boesky, a psychologist and specialist on inmate suicides, told “USA Today” that removal from suicide watch would require the certification of a mental health

professional that the prisoner no longer posed a risk to themselves. “When removing such a high-risk individual from suicide watch, it would be critical to do it in a step-down fashion so that there is still some extra monitoring,” she said.

An examination by the New York state medical examiner concluded that Epstein had committed suicide by tying one end of a sheet around his neck and the other around a bedpost, and then kneeling on the floor and leaning forward to hang himself.

The findings of the medical examiner failed to account for the fact that the autopsy performed on Epstein showed that the hyoid bone in his neck had been broken, an injury most commonly associated with homicidal strangulation. An independent examination conducted by an expert hired by Epstein's legal team concluded that his death was a homicide.

This has also been the conclusion of most observers, both expert and casual, across the political spectrum. Only the major media outlets, most notably the *New York Times*, have endorsed the NY state medical examiner's findings. They have consistently attempted to bury the Epstein story and paint any alternative explanations for Epstein's death as a conspiracy theory.

But the story refuses to die. Most recently an interview of Prince Andrew on the BBC program “Newsnight” ignited controversy when the royal parasite failed to give any adequate explanation of his relationship with Epstein and allegations that he was a long-time client of his sex trafficking ring. The prince was unable to explain why he had stayed at Epstein's home even after his first conviction on sex charges, telling the interviewer that it was merely “unbecoming” for a member of the British royal family to consort with a convicted sex-trafficker.

This came only weeks after a video leaked by the ultra-right Project Veritas showed ABC News reporter Amy Robach discussing the fact that the network had obstructed her from reporting on the Epstein case for three years.

After explaining that the network had been pressured by everyone from the British Royal family to Epstein attorney Alan Dershowitz to drop the story, Robach made the following statement regarding Epstein's alleged suicide:

“So, do I think Epstein was killed? A hundred percent, yes, I do. Because do you want it? He made his

whole living blackmailing people. There were a lot of men on those planes, a lot of men who visited that island, a lot of powerful men who came into that apartment. I knew immediately. And they made it seem as though he made that ‘suicide attempt’ two weeks earlier. But his lawyers claimed he was roughed up by his cellmate around the neck, that was all to plant the seed.”



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