

Guards on duty the night of Jeffrey Epstein's death accept plea deal

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23 May 2021

Federal prosecutors announced on Friday that charges against two Bureau of Prisons guards who were on duty the night that wealthy New York socialite Jeffrey Epstein was found dead in his Manhattan jail cell will be dropped in exchange for their cooperation with a Department of Justice investigation into the death.

In a letter to New York Southern District Court Judge Analisa Torres, US Attorney Audrey Strauss states, "After a thorough investigation, and based on the facts of this case and the personal circumstances of the defendants, the Government has determined that the interests of justice will best be served by deferring prosecution in this District."

Although they are not named in the letter, the deferred prosecution deal is with Tova Noel, 32, and Michael Thomas, 42, who were charged with conspiracy and records falsification in November 2019, three months after the suspicious death of Epstein was determined by the New York medical examiner to be a "suicide by hanging."

The prosecution letter says that the plea arrangement includes an agreement from Noel and Thomas to provide, "truthful information related to their employment by the Bureau of Prisons, including about the events and circumstances described in the Indictment." The indictment charges that the two guards "willfully and knowingly completed materially false count and round slips regarding required counts and rounds in the Special Housing Unit of the Metropolitan Correctional Center on August 9, 2019 and August 10, 2019."

The terms of the plea deal require Noel and Thomas to "complete 100 hours of community service, preferably in an area related to the criminal justice system." According to court procedures, plea agreements must be approved by the judge and a video

conference of "all parties" is expected to take place on Tuesday, May 25.

Prior to the agreement, Noel and Thomas adamantly rejected any deals and pleaded not guilty to the charges against them. In addition to falsifying 30-minute headcount reports throughout the night in question, the indictment alleges that the two guards were shopping online for furniture and motorcycles, surfing the internet for sports news and sleeping for at least two hours in a common area 15 feet from Epstein's cell.

The legal teams of Noel and Thomas have maintained that the two guards were overworked and being scapegoated by the Bureau of Prisons for both the death of Epstein and the horrendous conditions at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan.

In January 2020, the attorney for Thomas, Montell Figgins, said he would seek to have the charges against his client dismissed because he was being singled out for conduct that other prison guards never get punished for. Figgins told reporters at the time, "The death of a billionaire in the correctional system brings a lot of heat from people in high positions. They've scapegoated, they want to make an example of these two people."

Jeffery Epstein, the Wall Street financier and high-society man who was running an international teenage sex operation from his elite properties in New York City, Palm Beach, Paris and his personal island in the US Virgin Islands, was arrested by the FBI-NYPD Crimes Against Children Task Force at Teterboro Airport in New Jersey on July 6, 2019.

Epstein—66 years old at the time—plead not guilty to two sex trafficking charges and was taken to the Metropolitan Correctional Center. Epstein was denied bail by US District Judge Richard Berman on the grounds that he was "a serious risk of flight" while he awaited trial. Judge Berman also said, "Mr. Epstein's

dangerousness is considerable and includes sex crimes with minor girls and tampering with potential witnesses.”

Epstein’s attorneys argued that the already once-convicted sex offender be placed under house arrest with an ankle bracelet and be allowed to reside at his upper east side Manhattan mansion, which prosecutors estimated at \$77 million. His lawyers also claimed that Epstein had a “clean record” since his plea agreement with the State of Florida a decade earlier.

In that case, federal prosecutors intervened—ignoring the statements of dozens of teenage girls about his depraved sex ring recorded by the Palm Beach police and FBI—and allowed Epstein to walk out of court with a “non-prosecution agreement.” Negotiated by attorney Alan Dershowitz and agreed to by then-US Attorney for Southern District of Florida Alexander Acosta, Epstein was granted immunity from all federal charges and sentenced to 18 months in a private wing of the Palm Beach County Stockade where he was permitted to come and go as he pleased.

The arrest and detention of Epstein in 2019 alarmed many of his elite associates—among them Donald Trump, Bill Clinton, Bill Gates, Prince Andrew, Bill Barr, Larry Summers and Ken Starr (to name just a few)—and it was clear that he was preparing to spill the beans on a number of them in exchange for leniency in court.

After an earlier incident on July 23 when he was found unconscious in his cell with injuries to his neck Epstein was placed on suicide watch. He was placed in an observation cell, surrounded by windows, where lights were left on and anything that he might use to kill himself was removed. Six days later, Epstein was removed from suicide watch following a psychiatric examination and was returned to the special housing unit (SHU), where he was supposed to have a cellmate and be checked in on every 30 minutes.

However, when he was transferred on August 9 back to the SHU, his cellmate had been transferred out of the prison in a routine, prearranged transfer. He met with his lawyers that evening who said he was “upbeat” about his case before being escorted back to his cell by Noel at 7:49 p.m.

Based on an examination of the indictment of Noel and Thomas, CNN reported on November 19, 2019 that no 10:00 p.m. “institutional count” was performed by

the guards. At 10:30 p.m., “Noel briefly walks up to and walks back from the door to the tier in which Epstein was housed, internal video shows. This is the last time anyone walks up to the entrance to the area where Epstein was held until around 6:30 a.m. the next day, the indictment said.”

By the time Noel and Thomas found Epstein’s body with a noose around his neck, at least eight hours had passed since anybody had conducted a routine inmate check in the secure-housing unit of the Metropolitan Correctional Center in downtown Manhattan, according to prosecutors.



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