

Democrats release small group of photos from massive Epstein trove

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Two small batches of photographs were released on Friday by Democrats on the House Oversight Committee that are part of a reported trove of about 95,000 pictures which were turned over to the government by the estate of Jeffrey Epstein on Thursday.

The photos, one group of 19 and another group of 70, depict many wealthy and politically connected individuals who had a relationship with Epstein, the billionaire and convicted sex trafficker who was found dead in his jail cell in August 2019.

The latest release—which is not officially from the “Epstein Files” that are scheduled to be released by the U.S. Justice Department on December 19—is part of the intensifying conflict within the American ruling class over what can be revealed about the depraved conduct of Epstein and his associates for decades involving the criminal exploitation of underage girls.

The ongoing revelations about Epstein are not an exposure of one man’s depravity; they lay bare the criminal, parasitic character of the financial oligarchy and the political institutions that serve it. The disclosures to date—including his email messages—show Epstein functioning as a fixer and racketeer for a layer of billionaires, politicians, bankers and intelligence figures who exchanged services, influence and protection in a network that spans both parties and nation-states.

Democrats on the House Oversight Committee have released the latest images, stating that they were obtained from Epstein’s estate as part of the committee’s ongoing investigation into his criminal network and political connections. The Democrats have said this is an exercise in “transparency” and to pressure the Justice Department and the Trump administration to comply fully with the new Epstein Files Transparency Act, which was passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by the President on November 19.

The Democrats’ public statement emphasized that the photos contain images of “wealthy and powerful men who spent time with Jeffrey Epstein,” along with thousands of photographs of women and of Epstein’s various properties. The Democrats further said that they would “continue to release photos to the public in the days and weeks ahead,” while claiming that they would protect the identities and privacy of Epstein victims and survivors.

According to statements by committee members, the Epstein estate provided a hard drive or digital production of the 95,000 photographs, some of which were taken by Epstein himself and others that were sent to him, documenting his social milieu, travel, properties, and the women and girls around him.

Representative Robert Garcia of California, the ranking Democrat on the panel, told reporters the committee has so far “gone through maybe about 25,000” of the total image set and described many of the unreleased photos as “incredibly disturbing.” He and other Democrats stressed that any public release would be “phased,” heavily redacted and focused initially on well-known public figures, underscoring the highly selective character of Friday’s publication.

Despite the news media hype about the photos, the release is extremely narrow when measured against the scale of what is known to exist. In other words, more than 99.9 percent of the known photos remain under wraps, not counting the additional visual materials in the possession of the FBI, the Justice Department and other agencies as part of the broader “Epstein files.”

The extremely restricted nature of the photo release further underscores efforts by both parties of the ruling class to engage in a calibrated, politically motivated leak operation, in which carefully chosen images are used for factional purposes while the mass of documentary material remains hidden from public view. Still by releasing 89 photos there is no doubt that the Democrats are casting Trump and his Justice Department as the principal obstacles to revealing the full truth about the financier’s connections.

Based on the descriptions in the corporate media, the following figures are depicted among the images released Friday:

- **Donald Trump:** The current US President appears in three of the 19 Epstein estate photos. In one black-and-white photo, Trump is in the center of the frame surrounded by six women, some wearing Hawaiian-style leis; all of the women’s faces are blocked out. In another image, described as likely taken at a 1997 Victoria’s Secret event in New York, Trump is pictured with Jeffrey Epstein, listening while a blonde woman speaks to them; the woman’s face is obscured. A third photo shows Trump seated on what appears to be an airplane next to a woman with long blonde hair, whose face is also covered by a black box.

- **Bill Clinton:** One photo shows Clinton standing in a group with Jeffrey Epstein, convicted associate Ghislaine Maxwell, and another couple, believed to be singer Jimmy Buffett and his wife Jane Slagsvol.

- **Bill Gates:** Two of the newly released photos show Bill Gates. In one, he is standing and smiling next to Jeffrey Epstein’s longtime pilot Larry Visoski, posing in what appears to be an aviation or hangar setting. In the other, Gates is photographed alongside Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor (formerly Prince Andrew), in an undated image from Epstein’s estate that has been circulated with the committee’s release.

- **Steve Bannon:** Bannon appears in three of the newly released Epstein estate photos. In one photo, Bannon is sitting across from Epstein at a desk or table, apparently in Epstein’s office. In the second image, Bannon and Epstein are taking a mirror selfie together, with Epstein holding up a phone to capture both of them. In the third photo, Bannon is seen in conversation with Woody Allen at what appears to be a social gathering.

- **Larry Summers:** Former Clinton Treasury Secretary is in a photo with Woody Allen on an airplane.

- **Richard Branson:** The British entrepreneur is seen on a beach with Epstein.

- **Other unnamed wealthy associates:** The batch reportedly contains additional images of unidentified or lesser-known businessmen, political figures and socialites attending Epstein-linked gatherings, along with numerous photographs of women whose identities are not being disclosed.

• **“Trump Condom” photo:** One photo is of a novelty product, not something created by Epstein himself, but it appears among the items in Epstein’s personal photo collection. The picture shows a bowl or display of joke condoms branded with a cartoon likeness of Donald Trump and the slogan “I’m HUUUUGE!”, next to a handwritten sign reading “Trump Condom, \$4.50.”

The Trump White House has denounced the release as a partisan stunt, asserting that the photos show nothing illegal and that Trump had only “casual” or “incidental” contact with Epstein and his circle. Administration officials and pro-Trump media figures have insisted that if Democrats were serious about exposing Epstein’s network, they would focus on Clinton, Gates and other leading Democrats, as well as figures linked to Wall Street and the intelligence apparatus.

The White House has also portrayed the timing of the release—days before the December 19 deadline for the Justice Department to comply with the transparency law—as an effort to preempt and discredit whatever controlled disclosure the administration intends to make. In this narrative, Democrats are accused of trying to “smear” Trump personally while ignoring what the administration presents as its own commitment to “letting the facts come out” through the Justice Department’s document releases.

The “Epstein files” now at issue consist of several overlapping bodies of material: grand jury transcripts, FBI 302 interview reports, internal Justice Department memoranda, flight logs, financial records, digital communications, seized hard drives, and case files from both federal and state investigations into Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. Until recently, much of this material was shielded under grand jury secrecy rules and protective orders justified in the name of “victim privacy” and “ongoing investigations.”

With the passage of the Epstein Files Transparency Act, compelling the Justice Department to release Epstein-related investigative materials by December 19, the materials are subject to redactions for victim identities and other active probes. An open struggle has emerged between different sections of the state: the DOJ has tried to slow-walk and narrow the release, while federal judges and now congressional Democrats have moved to pry open specific components of the files, using the law as a lever and each seeking to control the political narrative that will flow from the eventual disclosures.

Jeffrey Epstein’s criminal operation developed in the 1990s as he parlayed his role as a money manager for the ultra-rich into building a network dedicated to the sexual exploitation and trafficking of underage girls. Operating out of his mansions in Manhattan and Palm Beach, his private island in the Caribbean and residences in New Mexico and elsewhere, Epstein procured, abused and traded minors, using a combination of cash payments, intimidation and the complicity of local authorities.

By the early 2000s, police in Palm Beach had evidence of a serial sex predator, including victim testimony and physical evidence, yet the case was gradually diverted away from serious prosecution by state and federal officials. In 2006 he was finally arrested in Florida, but the outcome was a travesty.

Instead of being charged in federal court with sex trafficking, Epstein obtained a notorious non-prosecution agreement from federal prosecutors in South Florida, engineered with the participation of then-US Attorney Alexander Acosta. Under this secretive deal, Epstein pleaded guilty to limited state charges of soliciting prostitution, served a minimal “custodial” sentence with extensive work-release privileges, and received immunity from federal prosecution for himself and unnamed “potential co-conspirators,” while victims were kept in the dark.

This arrangement was later condemned by a federal judge as a violation of the Crime Victims’ Rights Act, but no officials were held criminally accountable and the agreement allowed Epstein to continue operating and

rebuilding his networks for more than a decade. The non-prosecution agreement is a concrete example of how the justice system functions to shield the crimes of the ruling elite.

Epstein was arrested again in July 2019, during Trump’s first term, on federal sex trafficking and conspiracy charges in the Southern District of New York. Prosecutors alleged that he had exploited dozens of underage girls between 2002 and 2005 and seized from his Manhattan townhouse a vast cache of photographs and digital media that has since formed a crucial part of the “Epstein files.”

In August 2019, Epstein was found dead in his cell at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan, with authorities quickly ruling the death a suicide by hanging. The circumstances were widely—and justifiably—regarded as suspicious. In a high profile case with enormous implications for the ruling class, guards allegedly fell asleep, cameras malfunctioned or failed to record critical periods, and Epstein had been removed from suicide watch despite a previous reported attempt and clear indications that he feared for his life.

On Wednesday, US District Judge Richard M. Berman, who oversaw the 2019 prosecution, issued an order granting the Justice Department’s motion to unseal grand jury materials and other records from that case, citing the new transparency law. Berman acknowledged that he had previously rejected a similar request out of concern for victim safety but now held that Congress had “unequivocally” directed that Epstein grand jury materials and related discovery be made public, subject to redactions.

Berman underscored that victim privacy and safety remain “paramount,” directing the Justice Department to carefully follow the statute’s redaction requirements and to shield identifying details of survivors. His decision makes him the third federal judge to approve unsealing of Epstein-related government files under the new law, further eroding the wall of secrecy around the case.

On Tuesday, another federal judge in Manhattan granted a Justice Department request to unseal grand jury transcripts and related materials from the government’s investigation of Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein’s longtime associate and convicted co-conspirator. The judge authorized the release of grand jury testimony and exhibits, as well as substantial discovery material previously provided to Maxwell’s defense team, while modifying protective orders to implement a system of redactions to shield victim identities.

This order reverses the stance taken earlier in the year by a different judge, Paul Engelmayer, who had denied a similar request to unseal Maxwell grand jury records on the grounds that grand jury secrecy should not be eroded “casually or promiscuously.” Together with Berman’s ruling and the House Democrats’ selective photo dump, the Tuesday decision demonstrates that the Epstein scandal is being pried open only under conditions of sharp conflict within the state, and even then, in a way designed to manage and contain the explosion of public anger that a full accounting would produce.



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