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'Uncontrollable' Jeffrey Epstein: 5 Takeaways

From Judge's Bail Decision

By Ben Weiser

Mr. Epstein was willing to pay almost anything to stay out of jail. But the judge suggested he could not curb his sexual fixation with minors.

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A federal judge on Thursday [denied Jeffrey Epstein's request for bail](#) pending his trial on sex-trafficking charges in Manhattan. As a result, Mr. Epstein, 66, a wealthy financier who owns a private jet, luxury homes around the world and a private island in the Caribbean, will have to spend months in a Manhattan jail that typically holds accused mobsters, drug dealers and terrorists.

The judge, Richard M. Berman of Federal District Court, agreed with prosecutors that Mr. Epstein was not only a flight risk, but posed a threat to others — particularly teenage girls — if released.

The judge's strong rebuke of Mr. Epstein's conduct and request to be allowed house arrest stood in sharp contrast to how the authorities in Florida had treated the financier in 2007.

That year, he reached [a widely criticized deal](#) that let him avoid federal prosecution on charges he sexually abused and trafficked minors. Instead, he pleaded guilty to state charges of soliciting a minor for prostitution and ended up serving 13 months in jail. [He was allowed to leave the facility six a days a week, ostensibly to work.](#)

Here are five takeaways from Judge Berman's opinion.

Mr. Epstein was willing to pay almost any price to stay out of jail

Unlike so many people charged in state and federal courts, affording bail was not a problem for Mr. Epstein. He had offered to post [a gargantuan bond, secured by his \\$56 million mansion on East 71st Street in Manhattan and his private jet.](#)

"I am authorized to say to the court," one of Mr. Epstein's lawyers told Judge Berman, "that whatever bond you want Mr. Epstein to sign — whether it's \$100 million or an amount close to the amount of the assets that we have provided — Mr. Epstein is prepared to sign it."

Mr. Epstein provided the court with a one-page summary of his assets that placed their value as of June 30 at \$559 million.

His lawyers said he would even pay for 24-hour private security to assure that he did not flee. The government argued he was seeking special treatment, a "gilded cage," as one prosecutor put it in court.

The judge was concerned that if released, Mr. Epstein would again abuse teenage girls

Judge Berman's decision portrayed Mr. Epstein as sex offender who could not be trusted to curb his sexual fixation with teenagers. He pointed to the nature of Mr. Epstein's alleged crimes and his propensity to commit them.

"The crimes Mr. Epstein has been charged with are among the most heinous in the law principally, in the court's view, because they involve minor girls," the judge wrote.

[A federal indictment charged](#) that between 2002 and 2005, Mr. Epstein and his employees paid dozens of underage girls — at least one as young as 14 years old — to give him massages while nude or topless at his residences in Manhattan and Palm Beach, Fla.

During the massages, he engaged in various sex acts with them, the indictment said. He also used some of the teenagers to recruit other girls to abuse, paying the "victim-recruiters" hundreds of dollars for each girl they brought to him, the indictment said.

"Mr. Epstein's alleged excessive attraction to sexual conduct with or in the presence of minor girls — which is said to include his soliciting and receiving massages from young girls and young women perhaps as many as four times a day — appears likely to be uncontrollable," Judge Berman wrote.

"It seems fair to say that Mr. Epstein's future behavior will be consistent with past behavior," the judge added.

**His immense wealth, private planes,
international travel and liquid cash made Mr.
Epstein a flight risk**

Given Mr. Epstein's wealth, the risk of flight was "exceptionally high," the office of Geoffrey S. Berman, the United States attorney in Manhattan, told the judge in court papers.

Besides his [New York mansion](#), Mr. Epstein's asset summary listed multi-million-dollar properties in New Mexico; Palm Beach; Paris and the Caribbean. Prosecutors have said Mr. Epstein's primary residence is a private island in the United States Virgin Islands.

Mr. Epstein's assets also included \$56 million in cash and more than \$300 million in securities and other financial instruments. Prosecutors also said his sex registration documentation (stemming from his 2008 guilty plea in Florida) listed no fewer than 15 motor vehicles, including seven Chevrolet Suburbans, a cargo van, a Range Rover, a Mercedes-Benz sedan, a Cadillac Escalade and a Hummer.

Then there was [a safe that the authorities said they searched](#) in Mr. Epstein's mansion in Manhattan, in which they found more than \$70,000 in cash, 48 loose diamonds ranging in size from approximately one to 2.38 carats, and a large diamond ring.

The judge concluded that Mr. Epstein was "a serious risk of flight" and "no conditions can be set that will reasonably assure his appearance at trial."

**The contents of Mr. Epstein's safe gave the judge
pause**

[Inside that safe, the authorities also found an Austrian passport](#) bearing Mr. Epstein's photograph but another person's name, the judge noted. The judge's opinion made it clear that prosecutors and Mr. Epstein's lawyers disagreed sharply over the passport's significance.

Prosecutors said the passport showed Mr. Epstein knew how to obtain false travel documents or assume other identities.

Defense lawyers told the judge that Mr. Epstein, whom they described as "an affluent member of the Jewish faith," acquired the passport in the 1980s "when hijackings were prevalent," in connection with Middle East travel. The passport expired 32 years ago, the defense wrote, and "was for personal protection in the event of travel to dangerous areas, only to be presented to potential kidnappers, hijackers or terrorists should violent episodes occur."

In the back and forth, prosecutors noted that the passport included numerous stamps showing it was used to enter France, Spain, Britain and Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. The defense said Mr. Epstein was given the passport by a friend, the trips were not his and he had never used it.

The passport was not the only unusual item found inside Mr. Epstein's mansion. The authorities said they found hundreds and perhaps thousands of sexually suggestive photographs of fully or partially nude females, including photos that appeared to be of underage girls. Some of the photos were discovered in the locked safe.

The judge was concerned Mr. Epstein might try to intimidate or buy off witnesses

Judge Berman also made it clear he thought Mr. Epstein might seek to silence witnesses against him if he were granted pretrial release. “Mr. Epstein’s dangerousness is considerable and includes sex crimes with minor girls and tampering with potential witnesses,” the judge wrote.

The judge highlighted the government’s argument that Mr. Epstein had tried to influence possible witnesses against him when he [wired \\$350,000 late last year to two people close to him](#), shortly after the Miami Herald started publishing an exposé about him. The Herald’s series quoted his accusers, described how he had sexually abused teens for years, and laid out the lenient plea agreement he had negotiated with the United States attorney in Miami.

The judge also cited evidence from prosecutors that Mr. Epstein or his representatives had harassed or intimidated witnesses in civil suits.

For instance, he quoted a Palm Beach police report in 2006 about a threat made to one of Mr. Epstein’s accusers. The report said the accuser had claimed that one of Mr. Epstein’s associates had told her that those who helped Mr. Epstein “will be compensated” and those who hurt him “will be dealt with.” In another case, a parent of one of Mr. Epstein’s alleged victims had reported that Mr. Epstein’s private investigator had driven the parent’s car off the road.

“A court may order detention if there is a serious risk that the defendant will attempt to threaten, injure or intimidate a prospective witness or juror,” the judge noted.

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