

## Lawsuit Claims Epstein Trafficked Girls in Caribbean Until 2018

The attorney general of the Virgin Islands says Mr. Epstein and his associates used a database to track victims as young as 11 years old.



By Ali Watkins

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New evidence shows Jeffrey Epstein sexually abused and trafficked hundreds of young women and girls on his private Caribbean island, some as recently as 2018, significantly expanding the scope of his alleged conduct, a top law enforcement official said in a lawsuit filed on Wednesday.

Mr. Epstein, a wealthy financier who died by suicide in a Manhattan jail last year, was bringing girls as young as 11 and 12 to his secluded estate in the Virgin Islands, known as Little Saint James, and kept a computerized database to track the availability and movements of women and girls, the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit, which was filed by Denise N. George, the attorney general of the Virgin Islands, broadened the dimensions of the wrongdoing in which Mr. Epstein was said to have engaged. He had been charged by Manhattan prosecutors in July with sexually exploiting dozens of women and girls in New York and Florida, but they did not point to any actions beyond 2005.

In August, Mr. Epstein hanged himself at the Metropolitan Correctional Center, where he was being held awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking and conspiracy charges. Prison guards had not checked on him for hours on the night he died, and the circumstances surrounding his death are now the subject of at least three federal investigations.

In the weeks before Mr. Epstein killed himself, he and his lawyers vigorously denied the criminal charges. His lawyers had previously said he had been law-abiding since his 2008 conviction in Florida for solicitation.

The suit was filed against Mr. Epstein's estate and seeks the forfeiture of Little Saint James and Mr. Epstein's second private island, Great Saint James, as well as the dissolution of numerous shell companies he established in the territory that officials have said acted as fronts for his sex trafficking enterprise.

As part of its policies, the government of the Virgin Islands could take any assets recovered from Mr. Epstein's estate and consider disbursing them to women and girls who were victimized by him in the region, Ms. George said.

The new accusations — which draw both from independent investigations by Ms. George's office and court documents from cases across the country — argue that Mr. Epstein ran a decades-long sex trafficking scheme that had a primary nexus in the Virgin Islands.



Denise N. George, the attorney general of the Virgin Islands, is suing the estate of Jeffrey Epstein, a wealthy financier. Gabriella N. Baez for The New York Times

“Epstein clearly used the Virgin Islands to be able to expand his activity

a way to be able to conceal and

The suit underscores the legal case. Ms. George’s suit is the first filed by women.

Epstein is said to have committed. Lawsuits filed by more than a dozen

It remains unclear how Mr. Epstein

“We don’t have a long history of Human Trafficking Clinic at the University. The courts are just trying to combat

the director of the Human Trafficking Clinic. “I think this litigation and

Mr. Epstein’s executor, Darren K. Indyke, did not respond to a request for comment.

Ms. George said she believed the case could chip away at the region’s reputation as a notorious haven for the rich and powerful.

“We will not remain complacent, and we will enforce our laws whatever way we can,” Ms. George said. “It doesn’t matter the social status of the person. It’s that the laws apply equally.”



A property on the island of Little Saint James, a private estate where Mr. Epstein is alleged to have trafficked hundreds of girls. Gabriella N. Baez for The New York Times

The court documents said that Mr. Epstein operated with impunity for years at Little Saint James and Great Saint James, which he obtained through a straw purchaser in 2016.

As recently as July 2018, Mr. Epstein refused to permit an investigator from the Virgin Island’s Department of Justice to enter Little Saint James, claiming the island’s dock was his “front door,” according to the lawsuit. The investigator was doing routine monitoring of Mr. Epstein because he was a registered sex offender.

Mr. Epstein’s victims included aspiring models from South America, according to court documents.

Mr. Epstein used a ring of associates to rotate the women and girls in and out of sexual servitude, using fraudulent modeling visas to transport them across state lines and international borders, the lawsuit said. He tracked their availability and proximity using the database, court documents said.

The suit also said air traffic controllers in the Virgin Islands observed Mr. Epstein leaving his private plane in 2018 with girls who looked as young as 11.

In one undated incident detailed in the lawsuit, a 15-year-old girl attempted to swim off Mr. Epstein’s island and escape after she was forced to engage in sex acts with Mr. Epstein and others. The girl was found, and held captive on the island after he confiscated her passport, the suit said.

Prosecutors in New York have said their investigation has continued and anyone who helped Mr. Epstein could face criminal charges.

In addition, the lawsuit said, Mr. Epstein embarked on several illegal construction projects at Great Saint James, which caused damage to native coral and wildlife.

The more than a dozen women who have filed lawsuits against Mr. Epstein's estate in New York City since his death have accused him of exploiting and sexually abusing them when they were young women and girls, according to court documents. Many are seeking financial compensation.

The lawsuit in the Virgin Islands appears to be the first filed against the estate in that jurisdiction. Mr. Epstein maintained his legal permanent residence — and his estate — there. He hastily filed his will in a Virgin Islands court just days before he killed himself.

Ms. George's lawsuit also seeks to head off an effort by Mr. Epstein's executors, including Mr. Indyke, to turn Mr. Epstein's vast wealth into a victim's compensatory fund. That proposal is currently being litigated in a separate Virgin Islands case and imposes confidentiality on any claimants, Ms. George said.

"The estate continues to engage in a course of conduct aimed at concealing the criminal activities of the Epstein enterprise," the lawsuit said.

Administrators of the estate denied that characterization in a statement they released on Wednesday evening, and said the compensatory fund would be wholly independent from Mr. Epstein's estate and its executors.

"Individuals participating in the program have absolutely no obligation to keep confidential any aspects of their claim," it said, on behalf of the estate's coexecutors.

In a statement when that fund was first announced, Mr. Indyke said it would give victims "the opportunity to obtain appropriate compensation and to be heard and treated with compassion, dignity and respect."

Matthew Goldstein contributed reporting.

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