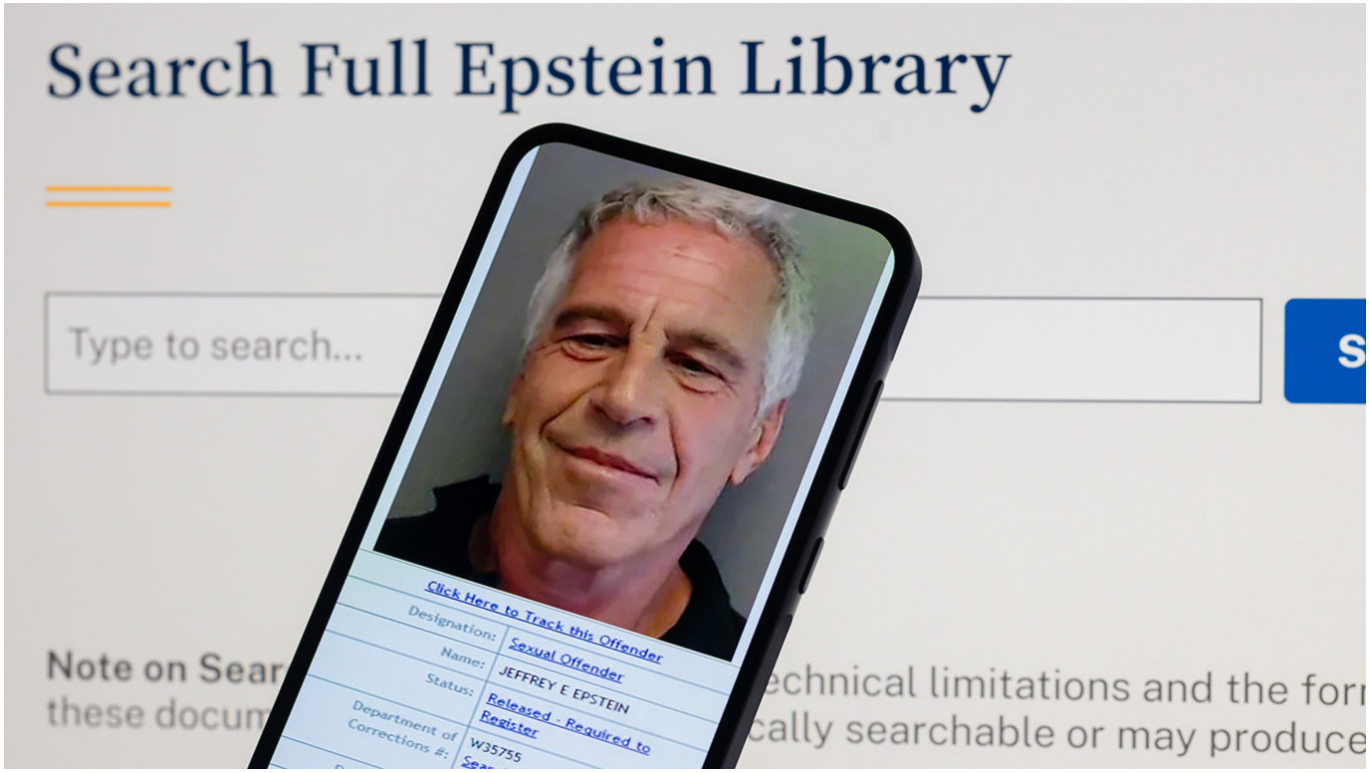
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What the Epstein Files Tell Us – And Don't Tell Us – About His Ties to Russia

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Jonathan Raa / Sipa USA / TASS

The U.S. Justice Department's release of 3.5 million pages of correspondence linked to the late financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein has renewed scrutiny of his alleged ties to Russia.

Russia appears 5,553 times in the documents. Mentions of Russian officials, oligarchs and young women have fueled unproven speculation online that the Kremlin may have played a role in Epstein's crimes or that Epstein worked for Russian intelligence.

As speculation swirls, here is what we know for certain about Russia and the Epstein files — and how Moscow has reacted to the news:

'Russian trace'

President Vladimir Putin's name appears at least 1,005 times in the latest tranche of documents from Epstein's email account. While most of these mentions come from news

reports sent to Epstein's inbox, others appear in emails in which Epstein discussed attempts to arrange a meeting with the Russian leader.

The files show Epstein on multiple occasions expressing a desire to meet Putin, but there is no evidence that any such meeting ever took place.

Poland said on Tuesday that it would launch an investigation into possible links between Epstein and Russian authorities to determine whether the financier may have been working for Russian intelligence services.

The Kremlin on Thursday laughed off the idea that Epstein had acted as a Russian intelligence asset.

"I'm tempted to make a lot of jokes about that theory, but let's not waste our time," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Peskov said earlier this week that the Kremlin had never received a request from Epstein to meet Putin.

Russian state media's reaction

Russian state media have used the release of the Epstein files to attack Ukraine and President Volodymyr Zelensky, accusing him of having links to human trafficking.

State broadcaster Rossia 24 aired a 10-minute segment on Wednesday that named famous people mentioned in the Epstein files, including Bill Gates and Elon Musk, while omitting mentions of Putin or any other Russian figures featured in the files.

"The search for the truth is what thousands of [President Donald] Trump supporters across America are doing now, diving into the millions of rabbit holes of the published files," the channel said.

"Zelensky could also have been involved in human trafficking, according to the files. Epstein was keeping a close eye on Ukraine," Rossia 24's correspondent said.

A correspondent suggested Zelensky "could also have been involved in human trafficking," citing emails in which an unidentified and redacted author made unsupported allegations that Zelensky was involved in trafficking people out of Ukraine and therefore should be investigated.

Rossia 24 also implied, without evidence, that Western celebrities could be linked to trafficking Ukrainian minors.

"How many times did Angelina Jolie, for example, visit Ukraine? After all, [her visits were] also related to children's issues. She also had contact with Epstein. She invited him to movie premieres in 2014 and 2017," the correspondent said.

The state-run RIA Novosti news agency published an article headlined "Zelensky's name is mentioned in the Epstein files in connection with human trafficking," without republishing the emails in full.

Maria Drokova

Maria Drokova, a Russian public relations manager and former press secretary for the Kremlin-backed youth group Nashi (Ours), is mentioned 1,627 times in the Epstein files.

Drokova, who previously drew attention after kissing Putin at a youth educational forum, appears in correspondence related to promoting Epstein and coordinating his contacts with the media.

Weeks before Epstein's arrest in 2019, he sent Drokova a text message asking her to send "nudes," according to the documents. She replied that she would do so the next time.

Young women from Russia

The documents also reveal Epstein's extensive efforts to bring young women from Russia to Europe and the U.S.

Several Russian cities from which girls were allegedly selected for him to meet appear in the correspondence, with Novosibirsk, Russia's third-largest city, mentioned 307 times.

One email sent to Epstein said: "I'm in touch with a girl from Novosibirsk whom you met a while ago, she said she can help me to organize a perfect trip to Novosibirsk for you spring or summer, I think it can be great, she should be sending me pictures soon."

Other messages appear to show Epstein exchanging texts with a young woman from the Siberian city of Omsk, in which he asked her to send "sexy" photos.

Some emails included a resume from a young woman from the southern city of Samara who said she had taken part in modeling competitions.

Another message sent by a person identified as Irina referred to a 21-year-old woman from the same city, describing her as a "nice girl."

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