

Listen To The Jeffrey Epstein Tapes: 'I Was Donald Trump's Closest Friend'

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Elections

THE PREDATOR AND THE PRESIDENT

Explosive tapes recorded by author Michael Wolff show Epstein claiming Trump liked to “f---” his friends’ wives and first slept with Melania on the “Lolita Express.”

Exclusive

Photo Illustration by Thomas Levinson/The Daily Beast/Getty Images

Jeffrey Epstein described himself as Donald Trump's “closest friend” and claimed intimate knowledge of his proclivity for sex, including cuckolding his best friends, according to recordings obtained exclusively by the Daily Beast.

The convicted pedophile even boasted of his closeness to Trump and his now-wife Melania by claiming, “the first time he slept with her was on my plane,” which was dubbed the Lolita Express.

Epstein spoke at length about Trump with the author Michael Wolff in August 2017, two years before being found dead in his jail cell. Wolff was researching his bombshell bestseller *Fire and Fury* at the time.

The recordings cast more light on Trump's long relationship with Epstein, and will add to debate over the character of the Republican candidate, especially his attitudes and conduct toward women, just days before the election.

The tapes tell Epstein's version of the relationship between two former friends and their very different paths: One toward infamy, prison and suicide; the other toward power, the Oval Office and his own criminal conviction for paying hush money to a porn star.

Trump's camp referred to the tapes' release as “false smears” and “election interference.”

The tapes also offer unusual insight into the friendship of two wealthy, powerful men who frequently went out on the town together, prowling for women in New York and Atlantic City.

Epstein painted a complicated portrait of Trump. He called him “charming,” and “always fun,” capable of extraordinary salesmanship, and suggested he was personally in favor of Trump’s policies on “the transgender stuff.” But he alleged Trump was a serial cheat in his marriages and loved to “f--- the wives of his best friends.”



He also claimed that while Trump has friends, he was at heart a friendless man incapable of kindness. And he alleged that Trump had undergone scalp reduction surgery for baldness and called himself “The Trumpster.”



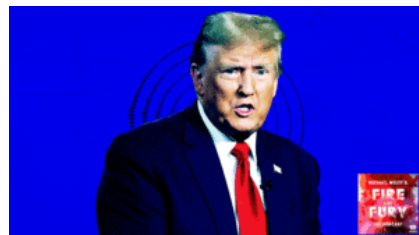
The new tapes shed light on a barely explored part of Trump's past, his long-term friendship with a man who would become one of America's most notorious sexual predators. Trump was in the last three days of campaigning on Saturday in Salem, Virginia. Brian Snyder/Reuters

Asked by Wolff, “How do you know all this?” Epstein replied, “I was Donald’s closest friend for 10 years.”

Wolff shared the tape with the Daily Beast ahead of discussing it on his Fire and Fury podcast on Monday. Last Thursday he caused shockwaves by revealing a few seconds of a separate recording in which Epstein spoke in detail about the inner workings of the Trump administration. Wolff also said Thursday that the pedophile showed off photos of Trump with topless young women sitting in his lap.

Wolff, a veteran journalist and author who was also the biographer of Rupert Murdoch, has long attracted praise and bromides. When *Fire & Fury* was published in January 2018, Trump tried to stop it with a failed cease and desist order, then threatened to sue. No case ever materialized, and it sold 5 million copies worldwide. Wolff, who appears regularly on his Fire and Fury podcast, wrote two more books on Trump after *Fire and Fury*, and about Epstein in 2021's *Too Famous*.

Wolff says he has up to 100 hours of recordings of interviews with Epstein, including from using him as a source for *Fire and Fury*, and from years of meetings when the disgraced financier appeared to want Wolff to write a biography of him. Wolff said he decided to release parts of the archive after a new accuser, a former Miss Switzerland, alleged last week that Trump had groped her in 1992.



The new recording offers extraordinary insights into Epstein, who in 2017 was shuttling freely on his two private jets between his Manhattan townhouse, his Palm Beach, Florida, estate and Little St. James, a private island in the Virgin Islands.



In 2017, Epstein was free to travel between his properties on a choice of two planes—this Gulfstream, and his Boeing 727, dubbed the “Lolita Express,” on which he claimed Melania and Donald Trump first had sex. U.S. Department of Justice

Epstein had been convicted in 2008 in Florida of procuring a child for prostitution and soliciting a prostitute in a plea deal that allowed him to escape prosecution for victimizing multiple underage girls, in return for an 18-month sentence. He spent the years after his release associating with billionaires—including Leon Black, the co-founder of Apollo Global

Management who paid him more than \$150 million for financial advice, and Microsoft founder Bill Gates—and dining behind closed doors with members of the financial and political elite.

In July 2019, however, he was arrested by the FBI and charged with child sex trafficking. Six weeks later Epstein's body was found hanging in his prison cell; authorities said he had died by suicide.

Wolff told the Beast he interviewed Epstein, then 64, in a “gargantuan” study in his townhouse on East 71st Street in Manhattan two years before his death. The Beast has reviewed the entire recording, which is one hour, 44 minutes long. The voice on the tape clearly matches recordings of Epstein's voice from depositions in 2012 and 2016.

The Trump campaign has already attacked Wolff for releasing audio of Epstein, calling the author “a disgraced writer who routinely fabricates lies in order to sell fiction books because he clearly has no morals or ethics.”

A spokesperson renewed that attack Saturday, and said, “He waited until days before the election to make outlandish false smears all in an effort to engage in blatant election interference on behalf of Kamala Harris. He's a failed journalist that is resorting to lying for attention.” Sources in the Trump camp also suggested it was “widely known” that Trump had “kicked Jeffrey Epstein out of Mar-a-Lago” when he learned about the sex-trafficking allegations.



Wolff interviewed Epstein at his vast Manhattan townhouse on a day in August 2017. Just short of two years later it was raided by the FBI. Eduardo Munoz via Reuters

Trump's long friendship with Epstein, which spanned the late 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s has been well documented. In the 1990s, the two publicly partied at Mar-a-Lago and went to a Victoria's Secret Angels show together. In 2002, Trump told *New York Magazine* of Epstein, "I've known Jeff for 15 years. Terrific guy. He's a lot of fun to be with. It is even said that he likes beautiful women as much as I do, and many of them are on the younger side."

Epstein's infamous leaked addressbooks had Trump's own phone number as well as Melania's, while Trump's name appeared seven times in the passenger logs of Epstein's planes. (The books and logs also included princes, politicians and potentates such as Bill Clinton, former British prime minister Tony Blair, former Israeli PM Ehud Barak, Prince Andrew and celebrities and billionaires including Mick Jagger and Les Wexner.)



The long friendship between Trump and Epstein saw them party at Mar-a-Lago, including in February 2000 when they posed with their then-girlfriends, Melania Knauss and Ghislaine Maxwell. Melania became First Lady; Maxwell is serving 20 years in federal prison. Davidoff Studios/Getty Images

In 2022 Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein's former girlfriend who procured him underage girls, would be sentenced to 20 years in federal prison for the sex trafficking of minors. Upon hearing of her arrest in 2020, Trump, then president, said he wished her well. "Her friend or boyfriend was either killed or committed suicide in jail. Yeah, I wish her well... Good luck."

In 2004, Epstein and Trump fell out when they both tried to buy a Palm Beach estate, Maison de L'Amitié, out of bankruptcy. The next year, the FBI began investigating Epstein for child sex trafficking.

In 2019, on the day after Epstein's arrest, Trump said in the Oval Office, "I was not a fan of his, that I can tell you," and that they had not been friends for 15 years. He said it "did not much matter" what the fall-out had been over. This September, asked about Epstein by the tech podcaster Lex Fridman, Trump said: "He was a good salesman. He was a hailing, hearty type of guy. He had some nice assets that he'd throw around like islands, but a lot of big people went to that island. But fortunately, I was not one of them."

However, the financier's version of their relationship has never been heard until now.



The two men fell out in 2004 over the purchase of the Maison de L'Amitié, an estate and mansion in Palm Beach which Trump bought from under Epstein.

He offers a portrait of Trump womanizing, yelling at staff and living a basically friendless life with only his daughter Ivanka, his secretary and his bodyguard truly loyal to him.

Trump, he said, was almost “functionally illiterate” but did read the Page Six gossip column in the *New York Post*. He was “incapable” of reading a balance sheet, and any “act of kindness” would have been an accident, Epstein said

But it is Epstein’s description of Trump’s conduct toward women which is likely to attract most attention, given the pair’s long friendship, and the 28 women who have made accusations against the former president of sexual misconduct (all of which he denies). Many of the attacks are alleged to have occurred when he and Epstein were friends.

On the tape Epstein can be heard saying, “He’s a horrible human being. He does nasty things to his best friends, best friends’ wives, anyone who he first tries to gain their trust and uses it to do bad things to them.”

On one occasion, Epstein alleged, Trump took a woman to what he called “the Egyptian Room” in an Atlantic City casino. Epstein alleged, “He came out afterward and said, ‘It was great, it was great. The only thing I really like to do is f--- the wives of my best friends. That is just the best.’”

He alleged that he and Trump would pick up women by combining to split them from their male companions. “We always used to go to Atlantic City to try to find girls in the casino,” he said. “And if there was a guy, I would say, ‘I’m here to invite the guy to go out to dinner.’ And he’d say, [to the woman], ‘Let me show you the casino.’ And as he walked out, he put his arm around the girl’s shoulder, and the bodyguard would walk up and Donald, whoosh, take the girl away.”

Epstein also alleged that Trump had an elaborate scheme to procure sex with his friends’ wives. He would call the men into his Trump Tower office to ask them about their sex lives and offer them sex with beauty pageant contestants, the pedophile said. He would do this while the wives were—unknown to their husbands—listening on speakerphone, so that he could then seduce the wives on the basis their husbands had betrayed them, Epstein claimed.

“You must have had a better f--- than your wife, tell me about it”

— What Epstein alleges Trump would ask his friends

Epstein can be heard acting out what he alleged was Trump’s elaborate seduction technique to Wolff, using Wolff’s name and that of his wife, Victoria, to demonstrate it. Epstein said, “And he’d say, ‘What’s it like to do that?... Do you like having sex with your wife? How often do you have sex with her?’” Epstein claimed Trump would also say, “You must have had a better f--- than your wife, tell me about it.”

Then, the pedophile alleged, Trump would say, “We can, you and I can go upstairs or tomorrow, come over, there’s this girl’s coming in from Los Angeles, part of the, whatever Hawaiian Tropic contest, so come over, we can have a great time. I promise you, Michael, you know, it’s just me and you, we can have a great time.” Epstein added, “The whole time, your Victoria’s with us on the phone.” Then he would use the wives’ anger to seduce them, he claimed.



In April 1997, Trump and Epstein went to the Victoria's Secret Angels party together in Manhattan. Outside Trump posed with Belgian model Ingrid Seynhaeve. Sonia Moskowitz/Getty Images

The Epstein tape includes an allegation—which is impossible to verify—that Trump had an affair with a politician while in the White House. Epstein offered no proof or sourcing for the claim. He also alleged that Trump cheated on both his first wife Ivana and second wife Marla Maples with “a Black girl.” At one section, Epstein used a Yiddish racial slur to refer to Black women and alleged Trump boasted to him, “I’m f---ing all these Black women.”

The tape mixes sexual allegations with other aspects of Trump’s life. Early in the recording Epstein is heard to say, “You probably know he had a scalp reduction. He’s getting the same male pattern baldness that we all have. He had his scalp reduced. It’s hysterical.” Trump has long refused to release full medical records while his White House medical reports did not disclose any prior surgeries.

“He’s charming. In a devious way, he’s charming. To some extent it’s a typical tragedy where he believes his own bulls---”

— Epstein on Trump

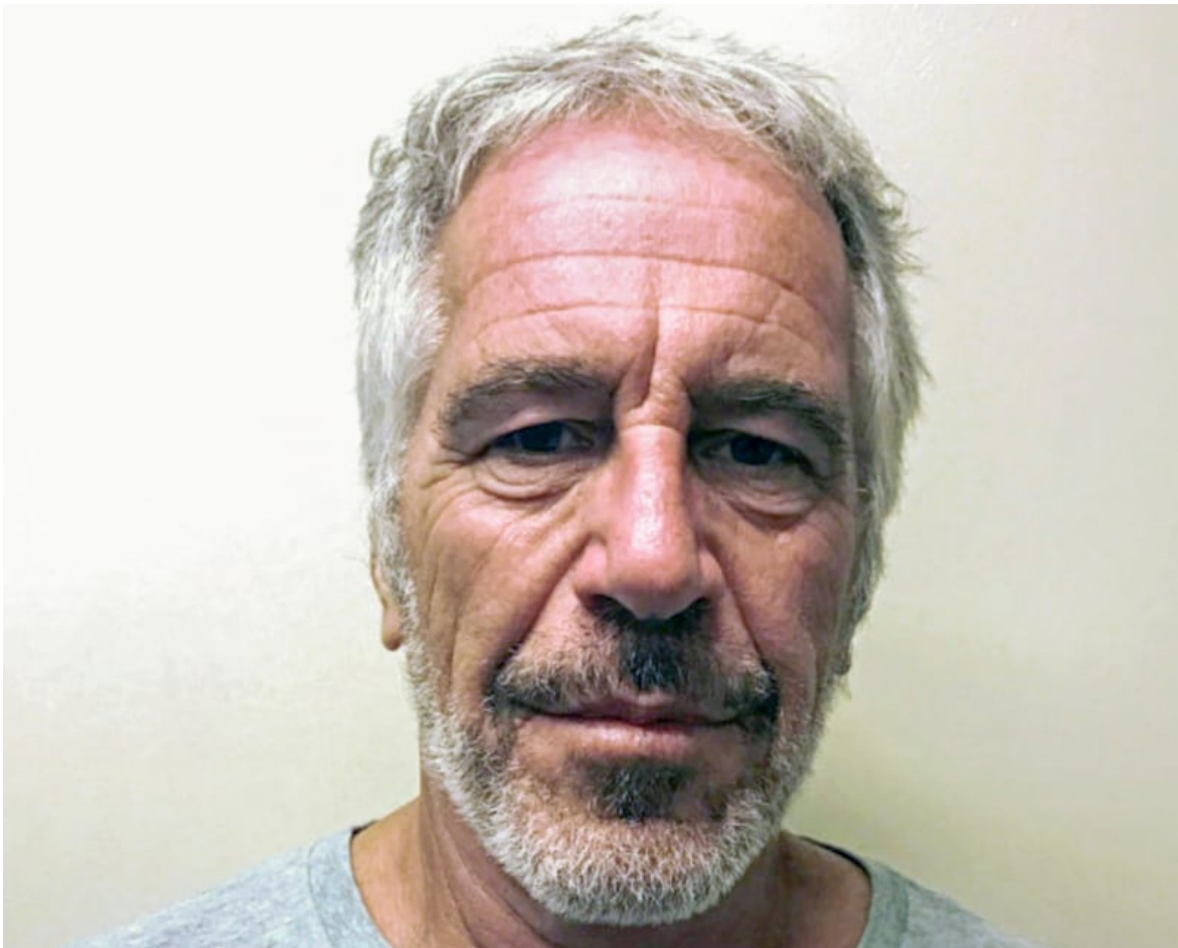
And Epstein offers his eyewitness account of Trump Tower and Trump’s office where, he said, Trump had “fake honors” on the wall. Trump, he claimed, would yell at his personal assistant Rhona Graff, “who’s a loyal, perfect, secretary,” as well as Matthew Calamari Snr., his bodyguard, and Michael Cohen, his attorney who is now an enemy. Epstein compared Trump to “an emotionally challenged 9-year-old,” and said, “He screams and yells at Rhona

more than anybody else. His screaming is how he treats people. He has a tantrum, not a temper. If you don't understand him, it's frightening. Once you understand him, it's sort of silly."

Epstein also told Wolff he had positive things to say about Trump. "He's charming. In a devious way, he's charming," he said. "To some extent it's a typical tragedy where he believes his own bulls---. He has delusions of grandiosity, then he takes it on board." He added that he had a "self-deprecating nature" and was "not vulgar."

"He's funny," Epstein said. "Self-awareness means you're self-aware. He's aware of that person, Donald Trump. He talks about The Trump, The Trumpster. 'Trump's getting laid.'"

Despite Epstein speaking of his "Democratic friends," he offered praise for some aspects of Trump's time in office, and said, "I think he's doing a pretty good job at certain things and he's not getting credit for it. All the transgender stuff, the bathroom stuff, giving police back their weapons."



This is the last public picture of Epstein, the mug shot taken when he entered federal custody after his arrest in July 2019. He died weeks later in his cell. Authorities said it was by suicide.

Kypros/Kypros

On the tape Epstein, speaking in a New York accent, also mentioned the rich and powerful. (In a deposition released after his death Epstein admitted under oath that he dropped the names of people he had never met.) The names he mentioned on tape include: Former president Bill Clinton; Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner; then-Defense Secretary James Mattis; and the billionaires Carl Icahn and Tom Barrack, both of whom are friends of Trump.

Clinton was a long-standing friend of Epstein but has denied any association after the pedophile's disgrace in the mid-2000s. Mattis has no known association with him. Ivanka was photographed with him as a child but Kushner has never been known to be linked to him. Barrack appeared in a leaked appointment diary for Epstein from 2016, while Carl Icahn, a corporate raider and long-time Trump friend, was in Epstein's 1997 address book.

Startlingly for a man who became one of the world's most notorious sex offenders, Epstein on the tapes offers a damning judgment of Trump, telling Wolff, "The moral compass just does not exist."

Editor's note: The Daily Beast's Chief Content Officer Joanna Coles holds an investment in Kaleidoscope, the maker of the Fire and Fury podcast.



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