

Ghislaine Maxwell hinted at Epstein's ties to Trump officials – why wasn't she pressed for names?

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Ghislaine Maxwell said some of the 'characters' around Epstein were 'in [Trump's] cabinet'.
Illustration: Guardian Design/Laura Cavanaugh/Getty Images

Experts raise questions about the DoJ's interview with the Epstein associate that left questions remaining

As deputy US attorney general Todd Blanche announced last week that the justice department would release [transcripts](#) of his [interview](#) with [Ghislaine Maxwell](#), he described this disclosure as being "in the interest of transparency".

"Except for the names of victims, every word is included. Nothing removed. Nothing hidden," Blanche also said of his two-day sit down with Maxwell, who was convicted sex trafficking in relation to [Jeffrey Epstein](#)'s abuse of teenage girls.

That same day, James Comer, the House oversight committee chair, said that the justice department had sent a large tranche of Epstein investigative documents in response to a congressional subpoena. Comer praised justice officials and [Donald Trump](#), [saying](#): "The Trump DoJ is moving at a pace far faster than anything ever produced by the Biden DoJ."

Trump, who has faced extensive political blowback over his administration's handling of the Epstein files, also voiced support for transparency. "I'm in support of them keeping it open. Innocent people shouldn't be hurt, but I'm in support of keeping it totally open," he [said](#).

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While [those supportive of Trump](#) have touted these actions as a show of openness, many others have pointed to the questions [left unasked](#) – and the people who have not been asked anything at all – as indicating that these disclosures about Epstein were more of a show than any real push for truth. For them the Maxwell transcripts, and the ignoring of victim’s voices, are not a sign of openness; they are a sign of a reluctance to pursue any potentially dangerous truth.

For example, Blanche asked Maxwell whether people around Epstein – including the numerous high-profile and powerful men who had known him – were associating with him for the purpose of sexual encounters. In her reply Maxwell said that some of the “cast of characters” around Epstein were “in your cabinet, who you value as your co-workers”.

Despite the fact that Maxwell had just openly mentioned Epstein associates as being in Trump’s current cabinet, Blanche – a hardened lawyer not known for missing a trick in trial argument – did not pause to ask Maxwell to identify the cabinet members she was referring to.

At another point in the interview, Blanche asked Maxwell had ever had contact with Mossad, Israel’s intelligence agency.

“Well, not deliberately,” Maxwell said. Blanche responded: “Pardon me?” She again said “not deliberately” and Blanche then moved on to a question about whether Epstein was receiving money from any intelligence agency.

Blanche also seemed to indulge Maxwell’s repeated professions of spotty recollection, including in response to questions about whether Trump [penned a letter](#) for Epstein’s birthday book, as had been reported by the Wall Street Journal.

Blanche, prefacing a question with the phrase, “I understand you don’t remember anything with President Trump or a lot about the book anyway,” asked: “Do you remember asking President Trump to submit a letter for that?”

[Gislaine Maxwell never saw Trump in ‘any inappropriate setting’, transcript shows](#)



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Maxwell said: “I do not.”

“Do you remember – would you have been the one to do that or could somebody else – would somebody else have done that?” Blanche asked.

“I did ask some people. I don’t remember Mr Trump. I don’t remember who I did ask, but Epstein also asked people himself directly.”

Blanche responded: “OK.” He did not pursue the obvious line of thought that Maxwell’s response suggested: had Epstein reached out to Trump?

Neama Rahmani, a former federal prosecutor who is the founder of West Coast Trial Lawyers, said: “Many of Blanche’s questions were surface-level and didn’t drill down the way lawyers, especially prosecutors, do when they want to catch inconsistencies.”

“She has zero credibility and I don’t believe for a second that she saw nothing and knows nothing,” Rahmani said. “Perhaps Blanche’s questions were more of the softball variety, but there was no world where Maxwell was going to implicate herself when she has her [supreme court appeal](#) pending or anyone in the administration when she is trying to get a [presidential pardon](#).”

For victims’ representatives and advocates, the issue with unasked questions also extends to who hasn’t been asked questions. Several attorneys, representing more than a total of 50 Epstein and Maxwell, survivors told the Guardian that the justice department had not reached out for sit-downs with them.

“Despite the fact that we have successfully represented 11 Epstein victims, no one has reached out,” said attorney Lisa Bloom.

Spencer Kuvin, who has represented multiple Epstein survivors, commented: “We have heard nothing from the DoJ or the house subcommittee regarding request to speak with either the attorneys for the victims or the victims. I have repeatedly advised that I am willing to volunteer to provide testimony at their request. The victims have been ignored in this entire process.”

Another attorney said: “I have received updates from the justice department, but no requests to speak to my clients.”

Gretchen Carlson and Julie Roginsky, who filed sexual harassment suits against former Fox News CEO Roger Ailes and co-founded the non-profit [Lift Our Voices](#), said that the approach has ignored those who were abused by Epstein and Maxwell.

“If they actually had survivors in mind, if you were thoughtful about them, they would be able to talk to them, and then we’d be consulting subscribers and lawyers to make sure inquiries were unfolding in the way they wanted,” Carlson said.

“Nobody is doubting that [Jeffrey Epstein](#) trafficked young girls. Nobody is doubting that Jeffrey Epstein was not the only man who raped these young girls,” Roginsky said. “All we need to do is listen to these survivors as they tell us who these others are.”

[Maxwell honored at Clinton event years after sexual abuse allegations emerged](#)



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“Ghislaine Maxwell is a convicted sex trafficker and felon who has been previously accused of lying under oath. Her conversations with United States deputy attorney general Todd Blanche reveal nothing shocking; Maxwell provided a version of the truth that best suits her agenda, in an attempt to continue concealing her wrongdoings,” said Jennifer Freeman, an attorney for Epstein survivors and special counsel at Marsh Law Firm.

“For far too long survivors have been left in the dark, shut out and shunted aside from receiving vital information in their most painful hours.”

The House oversight committee says it is in contact with Epstein survivors and that there will be a bipartisan meeting with them on 2 September.

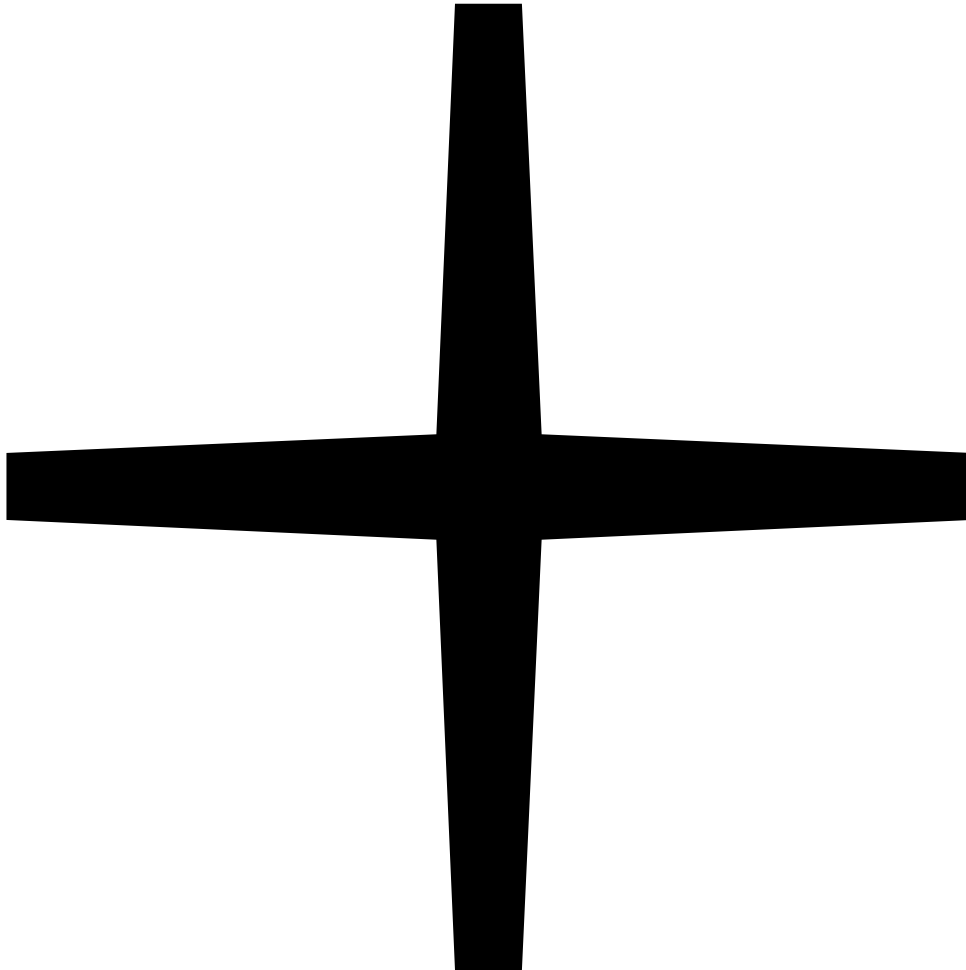
Ro Khanna, a California Democrat on the oversight committee, said in a statement that just 3% of the documents the justice department gave to the committee were new and that “the rest are already in the public domain.”

“Less than 1% of files have been released. DoJ is stonewalling. The survivors deserve justice and the public deserves transparency.” Khanna said he is holding a press conference with survivors on 3 September to “hear from them why releasing this information is so important”.

Asked about Blanche’s interview style or whether there had been any outreach to victims, the justice department said “no comment.”

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