



TOO BIG TO FAIL

## From “Spook Air” to the “Lolita Express”: The Genesis and Evolution of the Jeffrey Epstein-Bill Clinton Relationship

Far from being the work of a single political party, intelligence agency or country, the power structure revealed by the network connected to Epstein is nothing less than a criminal enterprise that is willing to use and abuse children in the pursuit of ever more power, wealth and control.

by *Whitney Webb*

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**O**n August 10th, and for several days after, speculation swirled after it was announced that Jeffrey Epstein had been found dead in his cell. His cause of death has officially been ruled suicide by hanging.

Epstein, the billionaire pedophile and sex trafficker with a myriad of connections to the rich and powerful in the United States and several other countries, had told those close to him that he had feared for his life prior to his sudden “suicide,” the *Washington Post* reported, while his defense lawyers claimed that he had planned to cooperate with federal authorities.

coverage of the Epstein case has slowed to a trickle, save for sensationalist stories about his alleged co-conspirator Ghislaine Maxwell and new salacious details of his past. Gone from corporate media are any hints of the larger scandal, revolving around the admission that Epstein had “belonged to intelligence.”

In this four-part series, “[The Jeffrey Epstein Scandal: Too Big to Fail](#),” *MintPress* has revealed that Epstein’s activities — a sexual blackmail operation involving minors and connected to intelligence agencies — was one of many such operations that have taken place for decades, developing from the nexus forged between the CIA, organized crime and Israeli intelligence shortly after World War II.

As [Part II](#) of this series revealed, these sexual blackmail operations proliferated during the Iran-Contra affair, which involved this same dark alliance between U.S./Israeli intelligence and organized crime. Though this series has thus far largely focused on the ties of Republican officials to those operations and associated crimes, the final installment of this series will focus on Democratic politicians, namely the Clinton family, and their ties to this same network as well as Jeffrey Epstein.

The Clintons’ own involvement in Iran-Contra revolved around the covert activities at Arkansas’ Mena Airport, which involved the CIA front company Southern Air Transport and occurred while Clinton was governor. Just a few years into the Clinton presidential administration, Leslie Wexner and Jeffrey Epstein would play a major role in Southern Air Transport’s relocation to Columbus, Ohio, leading to concerns among top Ohio officials that both men were not only working with the CIA, but that Wexner’s company, The Limited, sought to use the CIA-linked airline for smuggling.

During that same period of time, Epstein had already forged close ties to important Clinton White House officials and prominent Clinton donors like Lynn Forester de Rothschild and made several personal visits to the official presidential residence.

Some of these ties appear related to Epstein’s shady financial activities, particularly involving currency markets and offshore tax havens — activities he began to perfect while working for prominent Iran-Contra figures in the early 1980s, several of whom were tied to the CIA-linked

Stearns and prior to the bank's collapse in 1991.

Of particular importance are Epstein's relationship to the Clinton Foundation and the alleged role of Epstein's Virgin Islands-based hedge fund and the Clinton Foundation in money laundering activity, a relationship still under investigation by *MintPress*.

It is this tale of intrigue that fully reveals the extent to which this decades-old alliance between organized crime, the CIA, and Israeli intelligence has corrupted and influenced politicians of both political parties, both through the use of sexual blackmail and through other means of coercion.

Far from being the work of a single intelligence agency or a single country, the power structure revealed by this network connected to Epstein is nothing less than a criminal enterprise that transcends nationality and is willing to use and abuse children in the pursuit of ever more power, wealth and control. Existing for decades and willing to use any means necessary to cover its tracks, this criminal racket has become so integrated into the levers of power, in the United States and well beyond, that it is truly too big to fail.

## Iran Contra, Mena Airport and the Clintons

When one thinks back to the now-famous Iran-Contra scandal, names like Ronald Reagan, Oliver North and Barry Seal comes to mind, but former President Bill Clinton also played an outsized role in the scandal — using his home state of Arkansas, where he was then serving as governor, as a sort of rallying point for the CIA's U.S.-side of the Central American operation.

In fact, during Clinton's reign as governor a small town called Mena, nestled in the Ozark Mountains west of Arkansas' capital Little Rock, would be propelled into the national spotlight as a hub for drug and arms smuggling and the training of CIA-backed far-right militias.

Under the close watch of the CIA, then led by William Casey, the Mena Intermountain Regional Airport **was used** to stockpile and deliver arms and ammunition to the Nicaraguan Contras. The arms were sometimes exchanged for cocaine from South American cartels, which would then be sent back to Mena and used to fund the covert CIA operation.

Though efforts have been made to dismiss Clinton's role in the scandal, his direct intervention in the Contras' attempts to overthrow the Sandinista government of Nicaragua suggests Clinton had some sort of personal stake in the efforts and was unlikely aloof to the major smuggling operation taking place in his state while he had been governor. In fact, while governor, Clinton split with many other state governments in [sending a contingency](#) of the Arkansas National Guard to Honduras to train the Nicaraguan Contras on how to overthrow their Sandinista government. Clinton would also discuss his first-hand knowledge of the operation with now-Trump administration Attorney General William Barr.

Much of this channeling of both weapons and drugs was carried out by notorious drug smuggler and alleged CIA/DEA operative Barry Seal. According to the book [Whiteout: the CIA, Drugs and the Press](#) by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair:

*“A federal investigation aided by the Arkansas State Police established that Barry Seal, a drug dealer working for the Medellin cartel as well as with the C.I.A. and the D.E.A., had his planes retrofitted at Mena for drug drops, trained pilots there and laundered his profits partly through financial institutions in Arkansas. Seal, at this time was in close contact with [Oliver] North, who acknowledged the relationship in his memoir. These were the years in which North was constructing his covert supply lines for the contras.”*

Seal was known to use aircraft that belonged to the company Southern Air Transport and he also employed flight crews that worked for that same company. Southern Air Transport, formerly Air America, was once directly owned by the CIA and today is remembered for being a CIA front during Iran-Contra. Less known is the relationship between the CIA-linked airline and Leslie

Seal seemed to always operate with much less than six degrees of separation from Clinton while the latter served as governor. In his 1999 confessional expose, *Cross-fire: Witness in the Clinton Investigation*, former Arkansas policeman turned personal driver and security guard for Bill Clinton, L.D. Brown, recounts how Clinton encouraged him to seek out a post at the CIA. Clinton allegedly went so far as to edit the essay Brown wrote for this employment application. The essay topic was drug smuggling in Central America. Upon receiving his application, the CIA put Brown in touch with none other than Barry Seal. Seal would later be gunned down in 1986 while serving six-months probation for drug-smuggling charges.

Seal was not the only affiliate of Oliver North running a Contra-connected operation in Arkansas. Terry Reed, who had worked for North since 1983, claimed to have been put in touch with Seal by North and established a base just 10 miles north of Mena — in Nella, Arkansas — where “Nicaraguan Contras and other recruits from Latin American were trained in resupply missions, night landings, precision paratroops and similar maneuvers,” according to Cockburn and St. Clair. Reed further asserted that drug money was being laundered through Arkansas financial institutions.

After Clinton’s half-brother Roger was busted for cocaine smuggling (Clinton would later pardon him while president) the CIA sought to move Contra operations out of Arkansas, hoping to put a damper on the increasingly public and sloppy Arkansas-based operation. According to Terry Reed in his book *Compromised: Clinton, Bush and the CIA*, co-written with John Cummings, a hushed meeting was held in a bunker at Camp Robinson in North Little Rock, Arkansas. During the meeting, William Barr, who represented himself as the emissary of then-CIA Director Bill Casey told Clinton:

*“ The deal we made was to launder our money through your bond business but what we didn’t plan on was you and your n\*\*\*\*r here start taking yourselves seriously and purposely shrinking our laundry.”*

Barr chastised Clinton for his sloppy handling of the delicate operation and his half-brother’s very public fall from grace. He would later tell Clinton, *according to Reed*,

*“ Bill, you are Mr. Casey’s fair-haired boy ... You and your state have been our greatest asset. Mr. Casey wanted me to pass on to you that unless you fuck up and do something stupid, you’re No. 1 on the short list for a shot at the job that you’ve*

Attempts to investigate Clinton's role in the Mena operations and more broadly in the Iran-Contra affair were allegedly axed by Clinton's own confidantes, who consistently denied he played a role in the scandal. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, former IRS investigator William Duncan teamed with Arkansas State Police Investigator Russell Welch in what became a decade-long battle to bring the matter to light. In fact, of the nine separate state and federal probes into the affair, all failed.

Duncan would later say of the investigations, "[They] were interfered with and covered up, and the justice system was subverted," and a 1992 memo from Duncan to high-ranking members of the attorney general's staff notes that Duncan was instructed "to remove all files concerning the Mena investigation from the attorney general's office." The attorney general, serving under George H. W. Bush, at that time was William Barr, who is currently attorney general under Trump.

## The Bank of Crooks and Criminals International

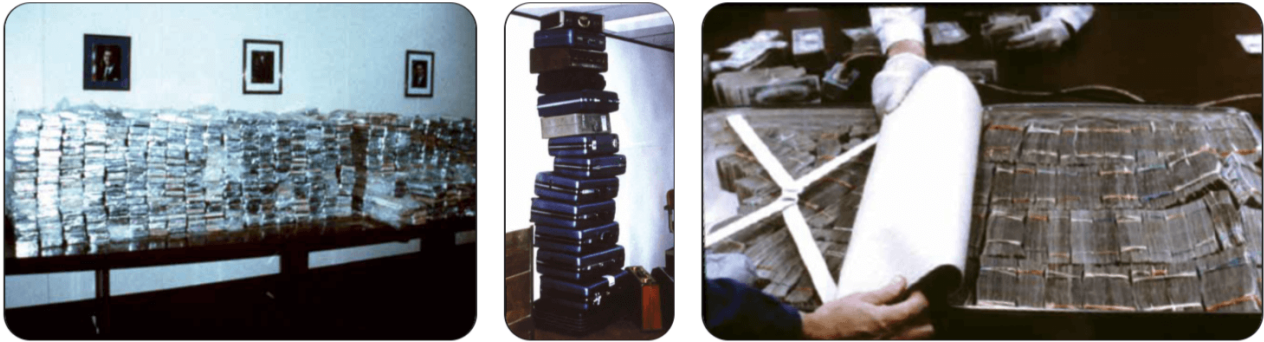
Another Clinton connection to the CIA and the Iran-Contra affair runs through the family's connection to Arkansas financier Jackson Stephens and the CIA-linked Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), which critics nicknamed the "Bank of Crooks and Criminals International." Stephens was among the richest people in Arkansas and was also a major donor and backer of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. He also played a key role in the rise of Walmart.

Jackson Stephens and other members of the Stephens family bankrolled Bill Clinton's rise to political prominence, contributing large sums of money to both Clinton's gubernatorial and his later presidential campaigns. In addition, Worthen Bank, which was majority-owned by Stephens, provided Clinton's first presidential campaign a \$3.5 million line of credit. In addition, Stephens' many businesses were frequently represented by the Rose Law Firm, where Hillary Clinton was a partner.

A redacted FBI report from 1998 describes Stephens as having "lengthy and continuing ties to the Clinton administration and associates" and also discusses allegations that Stephens has been involved in the "illegal handling of campaign contributions to the Democratic National Party."



realized that an international bank could provide valuable cover for intelligence operations.” CIA documents that later surfaced during congressional hearings on the bank’s activities and related scandals **stated that** BCCI was directly involved in “money laundering, narco-financing, gunrunning and holding large sums of money for terrorist groups.”



Evidence in the case against BCCI shows cocaine seized from a warehouse and suitcases full of cash to be laundered. Photo | FLMD District Court

Though BCCI was known for its CIA links, Catherine Austin Fitts — former Assistant Secretary for Housing–Federal Housing Commissioner at HUD during the George H. W. Bush administration, and investment banker with the firms Hamilton Securities Group and Dillon, Read & Co. — believes that those links went well beyond the CIA. Fitts — who was placed on the board of the BCCI subsidiary First American Bank following BCCI’s collapse — told *MintPress* that, after reading through troves of documents regarding the bank’s activities prior to its implosion, it was clear to her that there was “no way” its clandestine activities were carried on without the full knowledge of the Federal Reserve, specifically the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and the White House.

BCCI also played **a key role** in the Iran-Contra affair and accounts of the bank were used to send payoffs to individuals linked to the scheme. Adnan Khashoggi, a key figure and intermediary in the scandal, used one BCCI account to move more than \$20 million related to illegal arms sales and BCCI created fake documentation, including checks signed by Oliver North, allowing the sale to go forward. The bank later, when its activities subsequently came under congressional scrutiny, claimed it had no records of these transactions.

In addition, BCCI appears to have been involved in the sex trafficking of underage girls, including girls that had not yet reached puberty. According to the report entitled “**The BCCI Affair**,” by then-U.S. Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Hank Brown (R-CO), BCCI officials were alleged to have

The report (page 70) **specifically states:**

*“ According to one U.S. investigator with substantial knowledge of BCCI’s activities, some BCCI officials have acknowledged that some of the females provided some members of the Al-Nahyan family [one of the ruling families in the UAE] were young girls who had not yet reached puberty, and in certain cases, were physically injured by the experience. The official said that former BCCI officials had told him that BCCI also provided males to homosexual VIPs.”*

BCCI was largely brought into the United States business community through the efforts of Jackson Stephens and Bert Lance, former budget director for Jimmy Carter, who assisted with BCCI’s acquisition of First American Bank. The law firm **involved in this effort** was Arkansas’ Rose Law Firm and it involved several of the firm’s lawyers, including Hillary Rodham Clinton, Webster Hubbell and C.J. Giroir. Also involved in the effort was Clark Clifford, former Secretary of Defense under Lyndon B. Johnson, and Kamal Adham, former director general of Saudi intelligence.

One of the men added to the BCCI board after the acquisition of First American Bank was Robert Keith Gray, whom **Newsweek described** as often having “boasted of his close relationship with the CIA’s William Casey; Gray used to say that before taking on a foreign client, he would clear it with Casey.” As was discussed in **Part II** of this series, Gray was also an expert in homosexual blackmail operations for the CIA and was reported to have collaborated with Roy Cohn in those activities. Some of Gray’s clients at the powerful PR firm he led, Hill & Knowlton, included BCCI clients and Mossad-linked individuals, such as Adnan Khashoggi and Marc Rich.

While the Rose Law Firm was assisting BCCI’s entrance into the American financial system, it **also represented** the Stephens-owned financial services company, Stephens Inc., as well as the data-processing company Systematics Inc., which Stephens acquired in the late 1960s. According to James Norman in his book ***The Oil Card: Global Economic Warfare in the 21st Century***, Systematics was “a primary vehicle or front company for the National Security Agency in the 1980s and early 1990s to market and implant bugged software in the world’s major money-center banks and clearinghouses as part of the Reagan/Bush ‘follow the money’ effort to break the Soviets.”

The late journalist Michael Ruppert **asserted that** this “bugged software” was none other than the Promis software, which both U.S. and Israeli intelligence had bugged in order to spy on



company founded by Bill Hamilton, to the Department of Justice — which later stole it from Inslaw, forcing it to declare bankruptcy.

According to a [1995 document](#) sent on behalf of Inslaw's founders to then-independent Counsel Ken Starr that asked him to review Inslaw's case, Systematics had “covertly implanted [software] into the computers of its bank customers” that allowed “allied intelligence agencies surreptitiously to track and monitor the flow of money through the banking system” and had done so at “the behest of the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) and its partner in Israeli intelligence.” Inslaw also stated that the software was used by these same intelligence agencies in the “laundering of money, especially drug profits.”

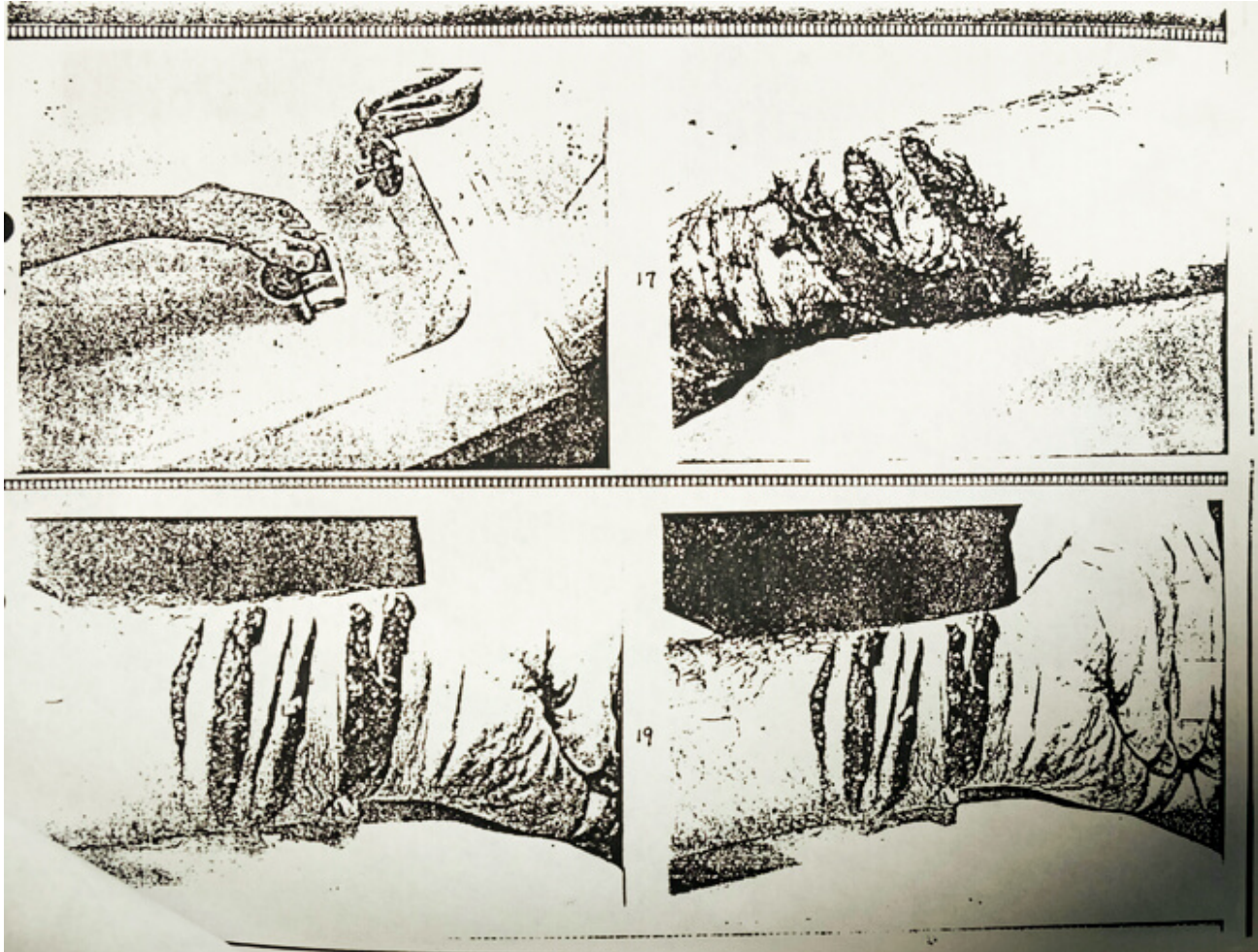
Systematics also had a subsidiary in Israel that, according to a former Israeli intelligence officer, was [operated by contractors for the Mossad](#) and sold software to banks and telecommunications companies. According to Richardson's letter, that Israeli subsidiary of Systematics also had a Massachusetts-based front company, which was partially owned by a former U.S. intelligence official.

Two partners in the Rose Law Firm who would later serve in the Clinton administration, Vince Foster and Webster Hubbell, [acquired significant financial interests](#) in Systematics through ownership in Alltel, which purchased Systematics in the early 1990s. The Hamiltons also provide considerable evidence that Foster's distress prior to his death in 1993 appears to have been related to concerns about litigation involving Systematics and the on-going litigation over Promis' theft.

BCCI itself was known to employ the Promis software after its theft by the DOJ; and one of its subsidiaries, First American Bank, also [“filtered PROMIS money”](#) — i.e., laundered the money generated from the sale of the stolen Promis software — according to the late journalist Danny Casolaro.

Casolaro had been investigating an international crime syndicate he termed [“the Octopus”](#) at the time of his death in 1991. Casolaro believed that this “Octopus” involved powerful individuals in the private and public sectors as well as the criminal underworld and that they were collectively responsible for some of the biggest scandals of the 1980s, including Iran-Contra, BCCI and the theft of the Promis software.

went to Martinsburg, Virginia to meet with some sources to get the final piece of the puzzle and “bring back the head of the Octopus.” Two days after arriving in Martinsburg, Casolaro was **found dead** in his hotel room and his briefcase full of his research notes and evidence was missing. His death was ruled a suicide.



Crime scene photos show deep lacerations in Casolaro's arms

Many, including Casolaro's family, do not believe that Casolaro committed suicide. A week before his death, Casolaro told his brother he had been receiving death threats and the manner in which he died, deep slashes in his arms, was not consistent with Casolaro's well-known squeamishness around even minor amounts of blood. Speculation only grew following **the FBI investigation**, given that the FBI lied to Congress, pressured its own agents not to question whether it was a suicide and lost 90 percent of its files related to Casolaro's death — among other glaring inconsistencies.

In a **1994 letter** provided to *MintPress* by Inslaw Inc., Inslaw lawyer Charles Work told then-Assistant Attorney General John Dwyer that one of Inslaw's confidential sources in government had stated that Casolaro had been injected with a substance that deadened his nerves from the

The same year that Casolaro died, there were several other suspicious deaths involving people directly connected to the Promis scandal or involved in Casolaro's investigation of "the Octopus" — including **Alan Standorf**, one of Casolaro's sources; **Robert Maxwell**, father of Ghislaine Maxwell, Mossad operative, and salesman of the bugged Promis software; and **John Tower** — the former Texas senator **who assisted** Maxwell in selling the bugged Promis software to the Los Alamos laboratories.

## Jeffrey Epstein and "The Dirtiest Bank of All"

While the role Arkansas played in Iran-Contra is one aspect of the scandal that is often overlooked, so too is the key role played by Israeli intelligence-linked arms dealers and smugglers who would later be connected to powerful individuals in the Mega Group and Jeffrey Epstein, such as Marc Rich and Adnan Khashoggi.

One of the key players in the Iran-Contra affair was Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi, uncle of the slain *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi. One lesser known fact about Adnan Khashoggi is that, at the time of his Iran-Contra dealings, he was working for the Israeli Mossad, according to former Mossad agent Victor Ostrovsky.

Ostrovsky, in his #1 *New York Times* bestseller "**By Way of Deception**," notes that Khashoggi had been recruited by the Mossad years before and that his private jet had been fitted in Israel. In relation to Iran-Contra, Ostrovsky **claims that** it was a \$5 million bridge loan that Khashoggi provided that helped to overcome the lack of trust between Israel and Iran during the initial arms deals in the early 1980s, and thus his participation was critical to the success of the scheme.

According to **journalist Vicky Ward**, Adnan Khashoggi was a client of Jeffrey Epstein's in the early 1980s, not long after Epstein's departure from Bear Stearns in 1981. The reason Epstein left the bank remains murky. Though some former Bear Stearns employees claim he was fired, others — including Epstein himself — claimed that he resigned of his own volition.

Ward suggests that Epstein may have left the bank owing to a Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) investigation into insider trading in a case that involved a tender offer placed by the Seagrams corporation for St. Joe Minerals Corp. Seagrams owner Edgar Bronfman, son of

minor “Reg D” violation and rumors that he had an “illicit affair with a secretary.”

Yet, as Ward **noted**:

*“ The SEC never brought any charges against anyone at Bear Stearns for insider trading in St. Joe, but its questioning seems to indicate that it was skeptical of Epstein’s answers. Some sources have wondered why, if he was such a big producer at Bear Stearns, he would have given it up over a mere \$2,500 fine.”*

Regardless of the exact reason for Epstein’s sudden departure, it was immediately after he left the bank that “the details [of Epstein’s work history] recede into shadow. A few of the handful of current friends who have known him since the early 1980s recall that he used to tell them he was a “bounty hunter,” recovering lost or stolen money for the government or for very rich people. He has a license to carry a firearm.”

**Writing in *Salon***, a former friend of Epstein’s, Jesse Kornbluth, also stated that Epstein had claimed to be a “bounty hunter” for the rich and powerful:

*“ When we met in 1986, Epstein’s double identity intrigued me — he said he didn’t just manage money for clients with mega-fortunes, he was also **a high-level bounty hunter**. Sometimes, he told me, he **worked for governments** to recover money looted by African dictators. Other times those dictators hired him to **help them hide their stolen money**.” (emphasis added)*

One of Epstein’s clients after leaving Bear Stearns, per Ward’s sources, was the CIA/Mossad-linked Khashoggi at the very time that Khashoggi was involved in Iran-Contra, an operation involving both U.S. and Israeli intelligence. British journalist Nigel Rosser reported in January 2001 in the *Evening Standard* that Epstein had claimed that he was also working for the CIA during this same time period.

Since Epstein’s arrest, records of Rosser’s article have been scrubbed from British newspaper archives, including the *Evening Standard*’s own. However, *MintPress* independently confirmed with Bob Fittrakis, whom Rosser had interviewed for the article in question, that the article did allege that Epstein used to claim he worked for the CIA. In addition, other reports from the time

Specifically, Rosser's article had included the following passage:

*“ He [Epstein] has a license to carry a concealed weapon, once claimed to have worked for the CIA, although he now denies it – and owns properties all over America. Once he arrived at the London home of a British arms dealer bringing a gift – a New York police-issue pump-action riot gun. ‘God knows how he got it into the country,’ a friend said.”*

Though Epstein denied past connections to the CIA at the time Rosser's article was published, it is worth mentioning that Robert Maxwell — father of Ghislaine Maxwell and long-time Mossad operative — also vehemently denied his now well-documented links to Israeli intelligence until his death. Furthermore, as will be shown later in this article, Epstein and his only known billionaire “client,” Leslie Wexner, would later forge a business relationship with the CIA front company Southern Air Transport and play a major role in the airline's relocation to Columbus, Ohio in the mid-1990s. During that period, two prominent Ohio officials believed that both Epstein and Wexner were working with the CIA, according to Ohio-based journalist Bob Fittrakis.

Past claims and evidence of Epstein's involvement with the CIA, coupled with his time as a “shadowy” financial fixer for double-asset Khashoggi, strongly suggest that, whatever Epstein was doing for Khashoggi during this time, it likely involved BCCI. According to “[The BCCI Affair](#)” report, Khashoggi “acted as the middleman for five Iranian arms deals for the United States, financing a number of them through BCCI” and “served as the ‘banker’ for arms shipments as the undercover scheme developed.” The report continued:

*“ Khashoggi and [another Iran-Contra arms dealer Manucher] Ghorbanifer performed a central role for the U.S. government in connection with the Iran-Contra affair in operations that involved the direct participation of CIA personnel [and both Khashoggi and Ghorbanifer] banked at BCCI's offices in Monte Carlo and, for both, BCCI's services were essential as a means of providing short-term credit for sales from the U.S. through Israel to Iran.”*





Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi arrives at Manhattan Federal Court, New York, April 4, 1990. Photo | AP

This connection is even more likely given the fact that Bear Stearns — Epstein's previous employer right up until he became a financial fixer for Khashoggi and other powerful people — also worked directly with BCCI during this period. Indeed, Bear Stearns **served as a broker** to BCCI, a fact that remained hidden until a lengthy court battle in the U.K. concluded in 2011 and forced the government's "Sandstorm Report" about BCCI's activities to unredact the names of Bear Stearns and other institutions, individuals and countries that had done business with the CIA-linked bank.

Furthermore, there is the additional fact that BCCI trafficked underage girls for sex as a means of obtaining favors from and gaining leverage over powerful individuals, something in which Epstein would later become deeply involved. As was shown in **Part II** of this series, several individuals who were running either sexual blackmail operations involving minors or child trafficking operations were connected to CIA front companies like BCCI, other organizations connected to the Iran-Contra scandal, and several individuals close to the Reagan White House.

The CIA director at the time, Bill Casey, was a close friend of Roy Cohn, who also ran the sexual blackmail operation involving underage boys out of Manhattan's Plaza Hotel, described in **Part I** of this series. According to Cohn's long-time secretary Christine Seymour, Casey was one of Cohn's most frequent callers.



entitled “BCCI: The Dirtiest Bank of All” noted the following:

*“...[T]he CIA may have used B.C.C.I. as more than an undercover banker: U.S. agents collaborated with the black network in several operations, according to a B.C.C.I. black-network “officer” who is now a secret U.S. government witness. Sources have told investigators that B.C.C.I. worked closely with Israel’s spy agencies and other Western intelligence groups as well, **especially in arms deals.**” (emphasis added)*

One of the arms dealers that Epstein apparently knew quite well was the British arms dealer Sir Douglas Leese. Leese was involved in brokering the first of a series of controversial British arms deals that **involved Khashoggi**, known as the Al Yamamah Deal and allegedly involving bribery of members of the Saudi royal family and top Saudi officials. In addition to Khashoggi, several of those officials and royal family members had deep ties to BCCI.

Later iterations of that arms deal were allegedly brokered with the involvement of Prince Charles of the British royal family, and corruption investigations into Al Yamamah were later shut down by the efforts of Tony Blair as well as Prince Andrew. Leese is said to **have spoken of Epstein’s “genius”** and lack of morals when he introduced him to Steve Hoffenberg of Tower Financial, and soon after that introduction Hoffenberg hired Epstein.

Two years after BCCI’s fraud-driven collapse, Tower Financial imploded in 1993 in what is still considered to be one of the largest Ponzi schemes in American history. Hoffenberg **later asserted in court** that Epstein had been intimately involved in Tower’s shady financial practices and had called Epstein the “architect of the scam.” However, by the time Tower Financial had collapsed, Epstein was no longer working for the company. Despite Hoffenberg’s testimony and abundant evidence regarding Epstein’s role in the scheme, Epstein’s name was mysteriously dropped from the case.

Given that Epstein allegedly received his “sweetheart deal” in 2008 as a result of having “belonged to intelligence,” Epstein’s activities in the 1980s and early 1990s suggest that his ability to avoid charges in relation to the Tower Financial Ponzi scheme may have been for similar reasons.

Though Hoffenberg claims that he met Epstein through Leese, Epstein himself **claimed** that he had met the convicted fraudster through John Mitchell, former attorney general under Richard

As was noted in [Part II](#) of this series, *MintPress* was a friend of disgraced Washington lobbyist Craig Spence, according to Spence before his fall from grace. Spence, for much of the 1980s, ran a sexual blackmail operation in D.C. involving underage boys and had taken some of those “call boys” on midnight tours of the White House that he said had been arranged by then-National Security Adviser Donald Gregg. Spence, after his trafficking and exploitation of minors was exposed, died under mysterious circumstances. His death was quickly labeled a suicide, not unlike Jeffrey Epstein’s.

## With Epstein and Wexner’s Help, “Spook Air” Finds a New Home

While the state of Arkansas became a hub for CIA activity during the Reagan years and the Iran-Contra scandal, another state appeared to take its place in the 1990s — Ohio. Just as Arkansas oligarch Jackson Stephens helped attract the CIA to his home state during Iran-Contra, it was also an Ohio oligarch and his close associate that helped attract the CIA to the Buckeye State. Those men were Leslie Wexner and Jeffrey Epstein, respectively.

In [Part III](#) of this series, *MintPress* detailed Wexner’s alleged ties to organized crime and his links to the still unsolved homicide of Columbus, Ohio lawyer Arthur Shapiro. Shapiro, who was representing Wexner’s company “The Limited” at the time of his death, was set to testify before a grand jury about tax evasion and his involvement with “questionable tax shelters.” Columbus police described the Shapiro murder as “a Mafia ‘hit’” and a suppressed police report implicated Wexner and his business associates as being involved in or benefiting from Shapiro’s death, and as having links to prominent New York-based crime syndicates.

However, Wexner and The Limited also appear to have had a relationship with the CIA. In 1995, Southern Air Transport (SAT) — a well-known front company for the CIA — [relocated](#) from Miami, Florida to Columbus, Ohio. First founded in the late 1940s, SAT from 1960 until 1973 was [directly owned](#) by the CIA, which sought to use the company as a cover for covert operations. After 1973, the company was placed in private hands, although all of its subsequent owners would have CIA ties, including James Bastian, a former lawyer for the CIA, who owned SAT at the time of its relocation to Ohio.

SAT was intimately involved in the Iran-Contra affair, having been used to funnel [weapons and drugs](#) to and from the Nicaraguan Contras under the guise of delivering “humanitarian aid,”

dealer Adnan Khashoggi.

Even though the airline's CIA links were well known, Leslie Wexner's company, The Limited, sought to coax SAT to relocate its headquarters from Miami, Florida to Columbus, Ohio, a move that was realized in 1995. When Edmund James, president of James and Donohew Development Services, [told the \*Columbus Dispatch\*](#) in March 1995 that SAT was relocating to Columbus' Rickenbacker airfield, he stated that "Southern Air's new presence at Rickenbacker begins in April with two regularly scheduled 747 cargo flights a week from Hong Kong," citing SAT President William Langton. "By fall, that could increase to four a week. Negotiations are underway for flights out of Rickenbacker to the Far East...Much of the Hong Kong-to-Rickenbacker cargo will be for The Limited," Wexner's clothing company. "This is a big story for central Ohio. It's huge, actually," James said at the time.

The day following the press conference, Brian Clancy, working as a cargo analyst with MergeGlobal Inc., [told the \*Journal of Commerce\*](#) that the reason for SAT's relocation to Ohio was largely the result of the lucrative Hong Kong-to-Columbus route that SAT would run for Wexner's company. Clancy specifically stated that the fact that "[The] Limited Inc., the nation's largest retailer, is based in Columbus ... undoubtedly contributed in large part to Southern Air's decision."

According to documents [obtained by journalist Bob Fittrakis](#) from the Rickenbacker Port Authority, Ohio's government also tried to sweeten the deal to bring SAT to Columbus in order to please powerful Ohio businessmen like Wexner. Orchestrated by Governor George Voinovich's then-Chief of Staff Paul Mifsud, the Rickenbacker Port Authority and the Ohio Department of Development created a package of several financial incentives, funded by Ohio taxpayers, to lure the airline to relocate to Ohio. The *Journal of Commerce* [described](#) the "generous package of incentives from the state of Ohio" as "including a 75 percent credit against its corporate tax liability for the next 10 years, a \$5 million low-interest loan, and a \$400,000 job-training grant." In 1996, then-SAT spokesman David Sweet [had told Fittrakis](#) that the CIA-linked airline had only moved to Columbus because "the deal [put together by the development department] was too good to turn down."

Though SAT had promised Ohio's government that it would create 300 jobs in three years, it quickly laid off numerous workers and failed to construct the maintenance facility it had promised, even though it had already accepted \$3.5 million in taxpayer funds for that and other projects. As the company's financial problems mounted, Ohio's government declined to recoup

day that the CIA's Inspector General had published a comprehensive report on the airline's illicit involvement in drug trafficking.

Furthermore, Fitrakis noted that in addition to Wexner [the other main figures](#) who were key in securing SAT's relocation to Ohio were Alan D. Fiers Jr., a former chief of the CIA Central American Task Force, and retired Air Force Major General Richard Secord, head of air logistics for SAT's covert action in Laos between 1966 and 1968, while the company was still known as Air America. Secord was also the air logistics coordinator in the illegal Contra resupply network for Oliver North during Iran-Contra. Fiers was one of the key individuals involved in Iran-Contra who was later pardoned by George H.W. Bush with the assistance of then-Attorney General Bill Barr. Barr — currently serving as attorney general in the Trump administration, and top of the chain of DOJ command in the investigation of Epstein's death in prison — has refused to recuse himself from the investigation into Epstein's network and his recent death.

Despite the involvement of these CIA-linked men, as well as the organized crime-linked Leslie Wexner, the then-president of SAT [told the Columbus Dispatch](#) that the airline was “no longer connected to the CIA.”

Notably, It was during this same time that Epstein exerted substantial control over Wexner's finances; and, according to Fitrakis and his extensive reporting on Wexner from this period, it was Epstein who orchestrated logistics for Wexner's business operations, including The Limited. As was revealed in the Arthur Shapiro murder file and in ties between SAT and The Limited, much of The Limited's logistics involved figures and companies connected to organized crime and U.S. intelligence. It is also important to note that SAT was well-known for being a CIA front company prior to the efforts of Wexner et al. to bring the airline to Columbus, and that, a few years prior, Epstein himself had previously worked for intelligence-linked figures also involved in Iran-Contra, such as Adnan Khashoggi.

In addition, during this time period, Epstein had already begun to live in the now infamous New York penthouse that had first been purchased by Wexner in 1989. Wexner had apparently installed CCTV and recording equipment in an odd bathroom in the home after his purchase, and never lived in the home, as was noted in [Part III](#) of this series.

In an exclusive interview, Bob Fitrakis told *MintPress* that Epstein and Wexner's involvement with SAT's relocation to Ohio had caused suspicion among some prominent state and local officials that the two were working with U.S. intelligence. Fitrakis specifically stated that then-Ohio

claimed to have worked for the CIA in the past.

Fitrakis also told *MintPress* that Strutz had referred to SAT's route between Hong Kong and Columbus on behalf of Wexner's company The Limited as "the Meyer Lansky run," as he believed that Wexner's association with SAT was related to his ties to elements of organized crime that were connected to the Lansky-created National Crime Syndicate. In addition, Catherine Austin Fitts — the former investment banker and government official, who has extensively investigated the intersection of organized crime, black markets, Wall Street and the government in the U.S. economy — was told by an ex-CIA employee that Wexner was one of five key managers of organized crime cash flows in the United States.

As this series has noted in previous reports, Meyer Lansky was a pioneer of sexual blackmail operations and was deeply connected to both U.S. intelligence and Israel's Mossad. Furthermore, many members of the so-called Mega Group, which Wexner co-founded, had direct ties to the Lansky crime syndicate.

## Marc Rich's Pardon and Israel's "Leverage" over Clinton

Another shadowy figure with connections to the Mega Group, Mossad, U.S. intelligence and organized crime is the "fugitive financier" Marc Rich, whose pardon during the last days of the Clinton White House is both well-known and still mired in controversy years after the fact.

Marc Rich was a commodities trader and hedge fund manager best known for founding the commodity trading and mining giant Glencore and for doing business with numerous dictatorships, often in violation of sanctions. He worked particularly closely with Israel and, according to *Haaretz*:

*"In the years after the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the ensuing global Arab oil embargo, a period when nobody wanted to sell oil to Israel, for almost 20 years Rich was the main source of the country's oil and energy needs."*

It was that trading on Israel's behalf that would ultimately lead to Rich being charged in 1983 for violating the U.S. oil embargo on Iran by selling Iranian oil to Israel. Rich was also charged with tax evasion, wire fraud, racketeering and several other crimes.

instance, his foundation — the Rich Foundation — was run by the former Mossad agent Avner Azulay. Rich was also friendly with prominent Israel politicians, including former Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Ehud Barak, and was a frequent provider of “services” for Israeli intelligence, services he freely volunteered.



Marc Rich, right, is pictured with Israel's Shimon Peres in a photo from Mark Daneil Ammann's "The King of Oil."

According to Rich's biographer, Daniel Ammann, Rich also fed information to U.S. intelligence but declined to give specifics. "He did not want to tell with whom he cooperated within the U.S. authorities or which branch of the U.S. government he supplied with intelligence," Ammann said in an interview with the *Daily Beast*.

One clue as to the nature of Rich's relationship to U.S. intelligence is his apparent ties to BCCI. "The BCCI Affair" report mentions Rich as a person to investigate in relation to the bank and states:

*" BCCI lending to Rich in the 1980s amounted to tens of millions of dollars. Moreover, Rich's commodities firms were used by BCCI in connection with BCCI's involv[ement]"*



Rich was also deeply tied to the Mega Group, as he was one of the main donors to the Birthright Israel charity along with Mega Group co-founder Charles Bronfman and Mega Group member Michael Steinhardt. Steinhardt was particularly close to Rich, first meeting the commodities trader in the 1970s and **then managing** \$3 million for Rich, Rich's then-wife Denise, and Rich's father-in-law from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s through his hedge fund. In the late 1990s, Steinhardt would enlist other Mega Group members, such as Edgar Bronfman, in the effort to settle the criminal charges against Rich, which eventually came to pass with Clinton's controversial pardon in 2001. Steinhardt claimed to have **come up with the idea** of a presidential pardon for Rich in late 2000.

Rich's pardon was controversial for several reasons, and many mainstream outlets asserted that it "reeked of payoff." As **the New York Post noted** in 2016, in the run-up to the presidential pardon the financier's ex-wife Denise had donated \$450,000 to the fledgling Clinton Library and "over \$1 million to Democratic campaigns in the Clinton era." In addition, Rich had hired high-powered lawyers with links to powerful individuals in both the Democratic and Republican parties as well as the Clinton White House, including Jack Quinn, who has previously served as general counsel to the Clinton administration and as former chief of staff to Vice President Al Gore.

However, per **Clinton's own words** and other supporting evidence, the main reason behind the Rich pardon was the heavy lobbying from Israeli intelligence, Israeli politicians and members of the Mega Group like Steinhardt, with the donations from Denise Rich and Quinn's access to the president likely sweetening the deal.

Among the **most ardent lobbyists** for Rich's pardon were then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, then-Mayor of Jerusalem Ehud Olmert, then-former Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami and former Director of the Mossad Shabtai Shavit. According to **Haaretz**, Barak was so adamant that Clinton pardon Marc Rich that he was heard shouting at the president on at least one occasion. Former adviser to Barak, Eldad Yaniv, **claimed that** Barak had shouted that the pardon was "important ... Not only from the financial aspect, but also because he helped the Mossad in more than one instance."

The Israel lobbying effort had considerable help from Mega Group member Michael Steinhardt as well as Abe Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which was at the time heavily funded by Mega Group members, including Ronald Lauder and Edgar Bronfman.

Israeli intelligence had been targeting Clinton's effort to broker a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine and had sought to go to "Mega," likely a reference to the Mega Group, to obtain a sensitive document.

In addition, Israel is known to have acquired phone conversations between Clinton and Monica Lewinsky before their affair was made public. Author Daniel Halper — relying on on-the-record interviews with former officials and hundreds of pages of documents compiled in the event that Lewinsky took legal action against Clinton — **determined that** Benjamin Netanyahu told Clinton that he had obtained recordings of the sexually-tinged phone conversations during the Wye Plantation talks between Israel and Palestine in 1998. Netanyahu attempted to use this information to get Clinton to pardon convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard. Clinton considered pardoning Pollard but decided against it after CIA Director George Tenet threatened to resign if the pardon was given.

Investigative journalist and author Gordon Thomas **had made similar claims years prior** and asserted that the Mossad had obtained some 30 hours of phone-sex conversations between Lewinsky and Clinton and used them as leverage. In addition, **a report** in *Insight* magazine in May 2000 claimed that Israeli intelligence had "penetrated four White House telephone lines and was able to relay real-time conversations on those lines from a remote site outside the White House directly to Israel for listening and recording."

Those phone taps apparently went well beyond the White House, as revealed by a December 2001 investigative report by Carl Cameron for *FOX News*. According to **Cameron's report**:

*"[Israeli telecommunications company Amdocs] helped Bell Atlantic install new telephone lines in the White House in 1997...[and] a senior-level employee of Amdocs had a separate T1 data phone line installed from his base outside of St. Louis that was connected directly to Israel..."*

*"[I]nvestigators are looking into whether the owner of the T1 line had a 'real time' capacity to intercept phone calls from both the White House and other government offices around Washington, and sustained the line for some time, sources said. Sources familiar with the investigation say FBI agents on the case sought an arrest warrant for the St. Louis employee but [Clinton] Justice Department officials quashed it."*

According to [journalist Chris Ketcham](#):

*“ [Both Amdocs and Verint Inc. (formerly Comverse Infosys)] are based in Israel – having arisen to prominence from that country’s cornering of the information technology market – and are heavily funded by the Israeli government, with connections to the Israeli military and Israeli intelligence...*

*The companies’ operations, sources suggest, have been infiltrated by freelance spies exploiting encrypted trapdoors in Verint/Amdocs technology and gathering data on Americans for transfer to Israeli intelligence and other willing customers (particularly organized crime).”*

Given the extent of phone tapping of the U.S. government by Israeli intelligence-linked companies and Netanyahu’s previous use of intercepted phone calls to pressure Clinton to pardon Jonathan Pollard, it is entirely reasonable to speculate that some other trove of intercepted communications could have been used to push Clinton to pardon Rich in the final hours of his presidency.

Also notable is the fact that several figures who heavily lobbied Clinton over the Rich pardon had ties to Epstein, who also had ties to Israeli intelligence and Israeli intelligence-linked tech companies, as discussed in [Part III](#) of this series. For example, Ehud Barak, a close friend and business associate of Epstein, and Shimon Peres, who introduced Barak to Epstein, were [the major players](#) in convincing Clinton to pardon Marc Rich.

underway. Clinton would later fly on Epstein's infamous private jet, nicknamed the "Lolita Express," and Epstein would later donate to the Clinton Foundation and claim to have played a **key role** in the creation of the Clinton Global Initiative.

In addition to the role of figures close to Epstein in securing Rich's pardon, Epstein himself appeared to share some level of connection with Rich's former business partners. For instance, Felix Posen — who ran Rich's London operations for years and **whom *Forbes* described** as "the architect of Rich's immensely profitable but suddenly very controversial business with the Soviet Union" — **appears in Epstein's book of contacts**. In addition, Epstein's offshore structured investment vehicle (SIV), Liquid Funding, has the **same attorney and director** as **several Glencore entities: Alex Erskine** of the law firm Appleby.

The significance of that connection, however, is unclear, given that Erskine **was connected to** a total of 274 offshore entities at the time of the "Paradise Papers" leak in 2014. Catherine Austin Fitts told *MintPress* that it could suggest that Epstein's Liquid Funding — 40 percent of which **had been owned by Bear Stearns**, and which may have received a **"secret" bail-out** from the Federal Reserve — is part of the same shadow economy "syndicate" as Glencore.

This possibility merits further investigation, given that Glencore is **partially owned** by British financier Nathaniel Rothschild, whose father, Jacob Rothschild, is on the board of advisers of Genie Energy, which includes Michael Steinhardt as well as several alleged associates of Epstein, such as Bill Richardson and Larry Summers. In addition, Nathaniel Rothschild's cousin by marriage, Lynn Forester de Rothschild, is a long-time associate of Jeffrey Epstein with considerable ties to the New York City "Roy Cohn machine." Marc Rich had long-standing ties to the Rothschild family, going back to **the early 1970s** when he began commodity trading at Philipp Brothers.

## Lynn Forester de Rothschild's surprising interest in Epstein

After Epstein's arrests first in 2007 and then again last month, numerous media reports emerged detailing the links between Epstein and Clinton, with most asserting that they had met not long after Clinton left office in 2001 and, as recently mentioned, issued the controversial pardon of Marc Rich.

years earlier and were facilitated by powerful individuals who have largely evaded scrutiny in connection with the Epstein case.

One major player who has been largely overlooked in bringing Epstein and the Clintons together is Lynn Forester de Rothschild. Notably, Forester de Rothschild has long been connected to neoconservative Reagan era officials — the Lewis Rosenstiel/Roy Cohn network described in Parts 1 and 2 of this series, as well as the Mega Group, which was detailed in Part 3 of this series.

Lynn Forester de Rothschild became involved in the world of Democratic Party politics in the late 1970s when she **worked on** the 1976 campaign of hawkish Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) alongside now-notorious neoconservatives like **Elliott Abrams**, who would go on to play an important role in the Iran-Contra affair during the Reagan era and later serve in the State Department under Trump. She was also introduced to her second husband, Evelyn de Rothschild, by Henry Kissinger at a Bilderberg conference. Several of the individuals connected to the Mega Group and the Mossad-linked media mogul Robert Maxwell — including Mark Palmer, Max Fisher and John Lehman — were one-time aides or advisers to Henry Kissinger.

Before marrying into the Rothschild family in 2000, Lynn **had previously been married to** Andrew Stein, a major figure in New York Democratic politics, with whom she had two sons. Andrew's brother, James Finkelstein, married Cathy Frank, the granddaughter of Lewis Rosenstiel, the mob-linked businessman who ran a sexual blackmail operation exploiting underage boys, as was discussed in Part 1 of this series. Rosenstiel's protege Roy Cohn **was the lawyer for** Cathy Frank and James Finkelstein and it was at their behest that Cohn attempted to trick a nearly comatose Rosenstiel to name Cohn, Frank and Finkelstein the executors and trustees of his estate, valued at \$75 million (more than \$334 million in today's dollars).

According to **the New Yorker**, Lynn Forester de Rothschild requested "financial help" from none other than Jeffrey Epstein in 1993 during her divorce from Andrew Stein.

As far as Forester de Rothschild's ties to the Mega Group go, she is currently on **the board of directors** of Estee Lauder companies, which was founded and is still owned by the family of Ronald Lauder — a member of the Mega Group, a former Reagan official, a family friend of Roy Cohn, and the alleged source of Jeffrey Epstein's now-infamous Austrian passport. In addition, Forester de Rothschild also **partnered with** Matthew Bronfman — son of Mega Group member Edgar Bronfman and grandson of Samuel Bronfman, who had close ties to Meyer Lansky — in creating the investment advisory firm Bronfman E.L. Rothschild LP.

also introducing Epstein to lawyer Alan Dershowitz in 1996.



**Living History by Hillary Clinton Book Party Hosted Lynn Forester and Evelyn De Rothschild pose with Bill and Hillary Clinton at the Kensington Palace in London. Photo | Alan Davidson**

Forester de Rothschild is a long-time associate of the Clintons and has been a major donor to both Bill and Hillary Clinton since 1992. Their ties were so close that Forester de Rothschild spent the first night of her honeymoon at the Lincoln Bedroom in the White House while Clinton was president. Furthermore, a leaked email between Forester de Rothschild and Hillary Clinton saw Clinton **request “penance”** from Forester de Rothschild for asking Tony Blair to accompany Clinton on official business while she was secretary of state, preventing Blair from making a planned social visit to Forester de Rothschild’s home in Aspen, Colorado. Humbly requesting forgiveness is not something Hillary Clinton is known for, given that her former bodyguard once said she could “make Richard Nixon look like Mahatma Gandhi.”

In 1995, Forester de Rothschild, then a member of Clinton’s National Information Infrastructure Advisory Council, wrote the following to then-President Clinton:

*“ Dear Mr. President: It was a pleasure to see you recently at Senator Kennedy’s house. There was too much to discuss and too little time. Using my fifteen seconds of access*



Forester de Rothschild then states that she had been asked to prepare a memo on behalf of George Stephanopoulos, former Clinton communications director and currently a broadcast journalist with *ABC News*. Stephanopoulos **attended a dinner party** hosted by Epstein at his now infamous Manhattan townhouse in 2010 after Epstein's release from prison for soliciting sex from a minor.

While it is unknown what Forester de Rothschild discussed with Clinton regarding Epstein and currency stabilization, a potential lead may lie in the links of both Forester de Rothschild and Epstein to Deutsche Bank. Journalist Vicky Ward **reported in 2003** that Epstein boasted of "skill at playing the currency markets 'with very large sums of money'" and he appears to have done much of this through his long-standing relationship with Deutsche Bank.

The *New York Times* **reported last month**:

*"[Epstein] appears to have been doing business and trading currencies through Deutsche Bank until just a few months ago, according to two people familiar with his business activities. But as the possibility of federal charges loomed, the bank ended its client relationship with Mr. Epstein. It is not clear what the value of those accounts was at the time they were closed."*

In the case of Forester de Rothschild, she **served** as an advisor to the Deutsche Bank Microfinance Consortium for several years and is currently a board member of the Alfred Herrhausen Society of International Dialogue of Deutsche Bank.

The same year that Forester de Rothschild made the above-noted comments to Bill Clinton about Jeffrey Epstein, Epstein **attended another Clinton fundraiser**, hosted by Ron Perelman at his personal home, that was very exclusive, as the guest list included only 14 people.

## The evolution of the Epstein-Clinton relationship

Even before Forester de Rothschild's 1995 meeting with Clinton, Epstein was already an established Clinton donor. Records obtained **by the *Daily Beast*** revealed that Epstein had

*The Daily Beast* suggests that Bill Clinton's long-time friend from his college days, A. Paul Prosperi, was the facilitator of that early relationship, as Prosperi had a decades-long relationship with Epstein and even visited Epstein at least 20 times while he was in jail in 2008. Prosperi was intimately involved with the 1993 fundraiser for the White House Historical Association noted above.

The relationship between Epstein and Clinton would continue well after Clinton left office in 2001, a fact well-documented by Bill Clinton's now-infamous flights on Epstein's (recently sold) private jet — often referred to as the “Lolita Express.” Clinton flew on the Lolita Express no less than 26 times in the early 2000s according to flight logs. On some of those flights, Clinton was accompanied by his Secret Service detail but he was unaccompanied on other flights.

Arguably the most infamous flight taken by Clinton on Epstein's jet was a lengthy trip to Africa, where actor Kevin Spacey, who has also been accused of raping minors; Ghislaine Maxwell; and Ron Burkle, a billionaire friend of Clinton's who has been accused of soliciting the services of “super-high-end call girls,” were also present. Clinton specifically requested that Epstein make his jet available for the trip well in advance, with Doug Band as the intermediary. President Donald Trump, also a friend of Epstein, is said to have flown on the plane but appears only once on flight logs.

In addition to flights, an Epstein-run foundation gave \$25,000 to the Clinton Foundation according to the 2006 filing tax return of Epstein's former charity, the C.O.U.Q. Foundation. Notably, Epstein's lawyers, Alan Dershowitz among them, claimed in 2007 that Epstein had been “part of the original group that conceived the Clinton Global Initiative, which is described as a project ‘bringing together a community of global leaders to devise and implement innovative solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges.’”

Before the associations between Epstein and the Clinton White House in the early 1990s were made public, Ghislaine Maxwell was thought to have been the bridge between Epstein and the Clinton family because of her close relationship to the family. However, the close relationship between Maxwell and the Clintons appears to have developed in the 2000s, with *Politico* reporting that it began after Bill Clinton left office. Clinton associate Doug Band was also reportedly friendly to Maxwell, appearing at an exclusive dinner party she hosted at her residence in New York in 2005. Maxwell later became particularly close to Chelsea Clinton, vacationing with Chelsea in 2009 and attending her wedding a year later. Maxwell was also associated with the Clinton Global Initiative at least up until 2013.

House during the early Clinton years. In addition, White House social secretary under Clinton, Ann Stock, **appears in Epstein's "little black book"** as does **Doug Band**, once referred to by *New York Magazine* as "Bill Clinton's bag carrier, body man, fixer, and all-purpose gatekeeper." Band also appears several times in the flight logs of Epstein's private jet.

Epstein was **also associated with both** Bill Richardson, former ambassador to the UN and former secretary of energy under Clinton, and Larry Summers, secretary of the treasury under Clinton. Both Richardson and Summers sit on the advisory board of controversial energy company Genie Energy, alongside CIA director under Clinton, James Woolsey; Roy Cohn associate and media mogul, Rupert Murdoch; Mega Group member Michael Steinhardt; and Lord Jacob Rothschild. Genie Energy is **controversial** primarily for its exclusive rights to drill in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Bill Richardson also has ties to Lynn Forester de Rothschild as she was on the Secretary of Energy's **Advisory Board** while Richardson was secretary of energy.

Bill Richardson appears to be among the Clinton era officials closest to Jeffrey Epstein, **having personally visited** Epstein's New Mexico ranch and been the recipient of Epstein donations of \$50,000 to his 2002 and 2006 gubernatorial campaigns. Richardson gave Epstein's donation in 2006 to charity after allegations against Epstein were made public. Richardson was also accused **in recently released court documents** of engaging in sex with Epstein's underage victims, an allegation that he has denied.

## The Jeffrey Epstein scandal: A post-mortem

In 1990, Danny Casolaro began his fateful one-year investigation of "the Octopus," an investigation that played no small role in his untimely death. Shortly after he was found lifeless in a hotel bathtub, Casolaro's friend Lynn Knowles was threatened and told **the following**: "What Danny Casolaro was investigating is a business...Anyone who asks too many questions will end up dead."

Nearly thirty years later, that same "Octopus" and its "business" remains with us and has become ever more wrapped around the levers of power — particularly in the worlds of government, finance and intelligence.

This *MintPress* investigative series has endeavored to show the nature of this network and how the world of "the Octopus" is the same world in which Jeffrey Epstein and his predecessors —

While this network has long been able to ensure its success through the use of sexual blackmail, often acquired by the unconscionable exploitation of children, it has also been a driving force behind many other ills that plague our world and it goes far beyond human and child trafficking. Indeed, many of the figures in this same sordid web have played a major role in the illicit drug and weapons trades, the expansion of for-profit prisons, and the endless wars that have claimed an untold number of lives across the world, all the while enriching many of these same individuals.

There is no denying that such a network is “too big to fail.” Yet, fail it must — otherwise this decades-long cycle of abuse, murder and fraud will continue unabated, destroying and taking even more lives in the process.

Though this report marks the end of *MintPress*’ series on Jeffrey Epstein and the network of which he was part, this is not the end of *MintPress*’ work on the case. Several spin-offs — investigating the real reasons why Epstein was arrested in July; his connections to money laundering and the intelligence “black budget;” and his network’s connections to child trafficking in other countries, particularly the U.K. — are already in the works and will appear in *Mint Press* over the next few weeks.

Correction | This report incorrectly stated that both Donald Trump and Bill Clinton had visited Jeffrey Epstein’s island. Victims of Epstein have reported seeing Clinton at the island, but not Donald Trump. MintPress regrets the error.

Feature photo | A composite image shows from left to right, Jeffrey Epstein, Bill Clinton, Adnan Khashoggi and Robert Maxwell. Graphic by Claudio Cabrera

***Whitney Webb*** is a *MintPress News* journalist based in Chile. She has contributed to several independent media outlets including *Global Research*, *EcoWatch*, the *Ron Paul Institute* and *21st Century Wire*, among others. She has made several radio and television appearances and is the 2019 winner of the *Serena Shim Award for Uncompromised Integrity in Journalism*.



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