

INSIDER

Ghislaine Maxwell's brother says the DOJ went after her because Bill Barr was embarrassed by Jeffrey Epstein's death

Jacob Shamsian 29 October, 2021



Ghislaine Maxwell and former Attorney General William Barr.

Laura Cavanaugh/Getty Images; Michael Reynolds-Pool/Getty Images

Ghislaine Maxwell's brother is defending her ahead of her sex trafficking trial.

In an interview with Insider, Ian Maxwell blamed his sister's incarceration on Trump's Attorney General Bill Barr. Barr went after Ghislaine because he was embarrassed by Jeffrey Epstein's suicide on his watch, Maxwell says.

Then-Attorney General William Barr was livid when Jeffrey Epstein killed himself in the Metropolitan Correctional Center, the federal jail in Manhattan, in August 2019.=

"I was appalled – indeed, the entire Department was – and frankly angry, to learn of the MCC's failure to adequately secure this prisoner," he told a police union two days later, announcing the Justice Department had launched two separate investigations into "serious irregularities" at the jail.

Barr's fury is the reason Epstein's fellow accused sex predator, Ghislaine Maxwell, was jailed within the year, according to her brother.

"Bang, a year later, and with great pomp and circumstance, she gets arrested in a great scene with helicopters and so forth," Ian Maxwell told Insider.

In an interview ahead of Ghislaine Maxwell's criminal trial in New York, Ian Maxwell predicted his sister will be acquitted, and said she wasn't as close to Epstein as most people believe.

He also suggested Barr had under-examined motivations for going after Ghislaine Maxwell, who he described as a scapegoat for Epstein. The Justice Department pursued Maxwell and locked her up because of Barr's embarrassment over Epstein's death, her brother alleges.

Since Maxwell's arrest in July 2020, she has been jailed in the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn. The jail's restrictions and poor conditions make it impossible for her to prepare her case and get a fair trial, Ian Maxwell says.

Barr denied any involvement with the prosecution's case against Ghislaine Maxwell, telling Insider his participation extended only to ensuring her security in custody.

"I took steps to make sure she was secure, but I never got involved with the case itself," Barr told Insider.

Still, Ian Maxwell argues the denial of his sister's bail and her treatment in jail speaks to an unfairness in the US justice system.

"She remains in jail, where she's now been for close to 500 days, a near-60-year-old woman with no previous record, no demonstrable instigation of violence towards herself or towards third parties," Maxwell said. "When people like John Gotti and Bernie Madoff and Harvey Weinstein and the policemen who killed George Floyd get out on bail."

Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell were close associates for decades

Ghislaine and Ian Maxwell are both children of Robert Maxwell, the British media mogul. Their family became the subject of scandal in 1991, when Robert drowned in the Atlantic Ocean after he fell from his yacht, the *Lady Ghislaine*, and investigators subsequently found massive discrepancies in his companies' finances.

Prosecutors in the United Kingdom accused Ian Maxwell and his brother, Kevin, of financial crimes related to their father's business practices, but they were acquitted in 1996.

Ghislaine Maxwell's relationship with Epstein began in 1991 and evolved through the 1990s and 2000s. Her role in Epstein's life is variously described as girlfriend, household manager, or business associate in depositions from Maxwell herself, former Epstein employees, and women accusing both Epstein and Maxwell of sexual misconduct.

Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell in 2005. Joe Schildhorn/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images

Epstein rose to prominence through his career as a financier. He got his first job in

that world through a connection he made at a parent-teacher conference at the Dalton School. Ian Maxwell told Insider he believes Donald Barr, William Barr's father, hired Epstein there and "launched Jeffrey Epstein on an unsuspecting world."

But Epstein started teaching in September of 1974, the school year that began just after Donald Barr resigned from his position as headmaster. It remains unclear if the elder Barr had a role in hiring Epstein, and Epstein had not been publicly accused of misconduct at the time.

In 2008, Epstein pleaded guilty to Florida state charges of soliciting and procuring a minor for prostitution, spending 13 months on work release in county jail. His plea deal included a non-prosecution clause for co-conspirators, which some of his accusers, including Virginia Giuffre, say shielded Maxwell and powerful figures like Alan Dershowitz from criminal prosecution (Dershowitz, like Maxwell, has vociferously denied misconduct allegations and is challenging a federal defamation lawsuit from Giuffre).

Epstein was arrested again in 2019, accused by federal prosecutors in Manhattan of sex-trafficking children. He died by suicide before he could stand trial.

More than 225 people ultimately made claims against Epstein, according to his estate, which paid out more than \$121 million to accusers.

"An immensely compartmentalized life"

Ian Maxwell told Insider that while he was "particularly close" with Ghislaine growing up, they were regrettably distant in the years leading up to her arrest. She made her home in the US while he lives in London, running a think tank that studies Jihadi terrorism.

He said Epstein led an "immensely compartmentalized life." He described his sister and Epstein as having "intimacy" for only a few years before their relationship transitioned into a professional one in the 1990s.

At that point, he said, Ghislaine Maxwell offered services as an interior decorator, helicopter pilot, and social connector for Epstein.

"The idea that she would be some kind of a Madame — it really is grotesque," Ian Maxwell said, adding: "What he wanted you to see, you saw; what he didn't want

you to see, you didn't see. The idea that somehow that Ghislaine would spend any time at all in this horrible sleazy, shitty world that we now know he was attracted to, is absurd."



The Maxwell siblings at a family gathering on June 10, 2019, to commemorate what would have been Robert Maxwell's 96th birthday. Ghislaine Maxwell sits in the front row at the center. Ian Maxwell sits on the far right. Maxwell Family Archive

Federal prosecutors for the Southern District of New York disagreed. In July 2020, federal agents arrested Ghislaine Maxwell on charges related to sex trafficking, grooming children for sexual abuse, participating in sexual abuse herself, and lying about her actions in a deposition taken for a civil lawsuit Giuffre brought against her.

While Ian Maxwell says Barr is to blame, the Southern District is known for its independence from the Justice Department headquarters in Washington, DC. Barr was involved in several battles trying to remove the district's leadership while prosecutors there investigated allies of then-President Donald Trump. (Trump, for his part, said "I wish her well" when asked about the charges against Ghislaine Maxwell; he had been friends with Epstein in Palm Beach for years, but their relationship soured in 2004.)

Maxwell has been denied bail 5 times

Ghislaine Maxwell's jail conditions have been "fitting for Hannibal Lector," according to her defense attorneys, who've exchanged hundreds of pages of letters with prosecutors over the details of her detention.

Maxwell's lawyers have complained that she is under onerous 'round-the-clock supervision and that she is underfed, "sustaining hair loss," given meals with melted plastic on the food, and in a cell filled with the stench of overflowing toilets.

Prosecutors say that her experience is in-line with what incarcerated people typically experience at the MDC, that the Bureau of Prisons has in fact given her an unusual amount of time to review evidence in her case, and that Maxwell is to blame for not flushing her toilet often enough.

The jail conditions make a fair trial impossible for Maxwell, her brother says. In court filings, Maxwell's attorneys have complained that she doesn't have the capability to review all the evidence prosecutors have presented so that she can formulate a proper defense. They also said media attention to lurid details like "testimony concerning 'three-way sexual' activity and 'sex toys'" will bias the jury.

"You have to have a weighted shot and equivalence between defense and offense, and that's not happening here," Ian Maxwell said. "How can you look at 3 million pages of discovery in a 6-by-9 cell in the middle of a pandemic with a dumb computer that enables you to look at the page you're looking, but not to mark it reverse it, print it, compare it?"



Audrey Strauss, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, speaks at a news conference announcing charges against Ghislaine Maxwell for her role in the sexual exploitation and abuse of minor girls by Jeffrey Epstein on July 2, 2020.

REUTERS/Lucas Jackson

Ghislaine Maxwell has asked for bail three times since her detention. Her attorneys have said she's willing to post more than \$28.5 million, renounce her citizenship to England and France, wear an ankle bracelet, and pay for her own 24-hour guards. Her applications have been denied five times, including appeals courts.

"Somehow she's supposed to get out of the building, get rid of the anklet, get a plane, get a boat — the most recognized woman in the world," Ian Maxwell said. "And somehow the judge is persuaded by the prosecutors she's a flight risk. I mean, it's grotesque."

Justice Department investigations have concluded overworked guards neglected their duties and didn't properly supervise Epstein before he died by suicide, though conspiracy theories persist that he was murdered to cover up the secrets of his powerful associates.

"I'm not going to speculate except to say this: That whether he killed himself or whether he was interfered with, we will never know," Ian Maxwell said. "The fact is that he died in federal custody in one of the most secure jails in the United States, allegedly under 24/7 guards — the impact of that on Ghislaine has been incalculable." — *C. Ryan Barber contributed to this report*