



Hidden In Plain Sight: The Shocking Origins of the Jeffrey Epstein Case



Despite his “sweetheart” deal and having seemingly evaded justice, billionaire sex offender Jeffrey Epstein [was arrested](#) earlier this month on federal charges for sex trafficking minors. Epstein’s arrest has again brought increased media attention to many of his famous friends, the current president among them.

Many questions have since been asked about how much Epstein’s famous friends knew of his activities and exactly what Epstein was up to. The latter arguably received the most attention after it was reported that Alex Acosta — who arranged Epstein’s “sweetheart” deal in 2008 and who [recently resigned](#) as Donald Trump’s Labor Secretary following Epstein’s arrest — claimed that the mysterious billionaire [had worked for “intelligence.”](#)

Other investigations have made it increasingly clear that Epstein was running [a blackmail operation](#), as he had bugged the venues — whether at his New York mansion or Caribbean island getaway — with microphones and cameras to record the salacious interactions that transpired between his guests and the underage girls that Epstein exploited. Epstein appeared to [have stored](#) much of that blackmail in a safe on his private island.



Claims of Epstein's links and his involvement in a sophisticated, well-funded sexual blackmail operation have, surprisingly, spurred few media outlets to examine the history of intelligence agencies both in the U.S. and abroad conducting similar sexual blackmail operations, many of which also involved underage prostitutes.

In the U.S. alone, the CIA operated numerous sexual blackmail operations throughout the country, [employing prostitutes](#) to target foreign diplomats in what the *Washington Post* once nicknamed the CIA's "love traps." If one goes even farther back into the U.S. historical record it becomes apparent that these tactics and their use against powerful political and influential figures significantly predate the CIA and even its precursor, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). In fact, they were pioneered years earlier by none other than the American Mafia.

In the course of this investigation, *MintPress* discovered that a handful of figures who were influential in American organized crime during and after Prohibition were directly engaged in sexual blackmail operations that they used for their own, often dark, purposes.

In Part I of this exclusive investigation, *MintPress* will examine how a mob-linked businessman with deep ties to notorious gangster Meyer Lansky

developed close ties with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) while also running a sexual blackmail operation for decades, which later became a covert part of the anti-communist crusade of the 1950s led by Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI), himself known throughout Washington for having a habit of drunkenly groping underage teenaged girls.

Yet, it would be one of McCarthy's closest aides who would take over the ring in later years, trafficking minors and expanding this sexual blackmail operation at the same time he expanded his own political influence, putting him in close contact with prominent figures including former President Ronald Reagan and a man who would later become president, Donald Trump.

As will be revealed in Part II, after this figure's death, the blackmail operation continued under various successors in different cities and there is strong evidence that Jeffrey Epstein became one of them.

Samuel Bronfman and the Mob

The Prohibition Era in the United States is often used as an example of how banning recreational substances not only increases their popularity but also causes a boom in criminal activity. Indeed, it was Prohibition that greatly increased the strength of the American Mafia, as the top crime lords of the day grew rich through the clandestine trade and sale of alcohol in addition to gambling and other activities.

It is through the bootlegging trade of the 1920s and the early 1930s that this story begins, as it brought together key figures whose successors and affiliates would eventually create a series of blackmail and sex trafficking rings that would give rise to the likes of Jeffrey Epstein, the "Lolita Express" and "Orgy Island."

Samuel Bronfman never planned to become a major producer of liquor but true to his family's last name, which means "brandy man" in Yiddish, he eventually began distributing alcohol as an extension of his family's hotel business. During Canada's Prohibition period, which was briefer than and preceded that of its southern neighbor, the Bronfman family business used loopholes to [skirt the law](#) and find *technically* legal ways to sell alcohol in the hotels and stores the family owned. The family relied on its connections with members of the American Mafia to illegally smuggle alcohol from the United States.

Soon after Prohibition ended in Canada, it began in the United States and, by the time the flow of illegal alcohol had turned the other way, the Bronfmans – whose business ventures were then being led by Sam Bronfman and his brothers – were relatively late to an already flourishing bootlegging trade.

"We were late starters in the two most lucrative markets – on the high seas and across the Detroit River. What came out of the border trade in Saskatchewan was insignificant by comparison," Bronfman [once told](#) Canadian journalist Terence Robertson, who was then writing a biography of Bronfman. Nonetheless, "this was when we started to make our real money," Bronfman recounted. Robertson's biography on Bronfman was never published, as he died under mysterious circumstances [soon after](#) warning his colleagues that he had uncovered unsavory information about the Bronfman family.



Samuel Bronfman pictured in 1927 with his sons Edgar and Charles

Key to Bronfman's success during American Prohibition were the ties his family had cultivated with organized crime during Canada's Prohibition, ties that led many prominent members of the mob in the United States to favor Bronfman as a business partner. Bronfman liquor was purchased in massive quantities by many crime lords who still live on in American legend, [including](#) Charles "Lucky" Luciano, Moe Dalitz, Abner "Longy" Zwillman and Meyer Lansky.

Most of Bronfman's mob associates during Prohibition were members of what became known as the National Crime Syndicate, which a 1950s Senate investigative body known as the Kefauver Committee described as a confederation dominated by Italian-American and Jewish-American mobs. During that investigation, some of the biggest names in the American Mafia [named Bronfman](#) as a central figure in their bootlegging operations. The widow of notorious American mob boss Meyer Lansky even recounted how Bronfman had thrown lavish dinner parties for her husband.

Years later, Samuel Bronfman's children and grandchildren, their family's ties to the criminal underworld intact, would go on to associate closely with Leslie Wexner, allegedly the source of much of Epstein's mysterious wealth, and other mob-linked "philanthropists," and some would even manage their own sexual blackmail operations, including the [recently busted blackmail-based "sex cult" NXIVM](#). The later generations of the Bronfman family, particularly Samuel Bronfman's sons Edgar and Charles, will be discussed in greater detail in Part II of this report.

Lewis Rosenstiel's dark secret

Crucial to Bronfman's Prohibition-era bootlegging operations were two middlemen, [one of whom](#) was Lewis "Lew" Rosenstiel. Rosenstiel got his start working at his uncle's distillery in Kentucky before Prohibition. Once the law banning alcohol was in force, Rosenstiel created the Schenley Products Company, which would later become one of the largest liquor companies in North America.

Though he was a high school drop-out and not particularly well-connected socially at the time, Rosenstiel happened to have a "chance" meeting with Winston Churchill in 1922 while on vacation in the French Riviera. According to [the New York Times](#), Churchill "advised him [Rosenstiel] to prepare for the return of liquor sales in the United States." Rosenstiel somehow managed to [secure the funding](#) of the elite and respected Wall Street firm Lehman Brothers to finance his purchase of shuttered distilleries.

Officially, Rosenstiel is said to have built his company and wealth *after* Prohibition, by following Churchill's advice to prepare for Repeal. However, he was clearly involved in bootlegging operations and was even indicted for bootlegging in 1929, though he evaded conviction. Like Bronfman, Rosenstiel was close to organized crime, particularly members of the mostly Jewish-American and Italian-American mob alliance known as the National Crime Syndicate.

Subsequent New York state legislative investigations would [allege that](#) Rosenstiel "was part of a 'consortium' with underworld figures that bought liquor in Canada [from Samuel Bronfman]", whose [other members](#) were "Meyer Lansky, the reputed organized crime leader; Joseph Fusco, an associate of late Chicago gangster Al Capone and Joseph Linsey, a Boston man Mr. Kelly [the congressional investigator testifying] identified as a convicted bootlegger." Rosenstiel's relationship with these men, [particularly Lansky](#), would continue long after Prohibition and Samuel Bronfman, for his part, would also maintain his mob ties.

In addition to his friends in the mob, Rosenstiel also cultivated close ties with the FBI, developing [a close relationship](#) with longtime FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and making Hoover's right-hand man and longtime assistant at the FBI, Louis Nichols, [the Vice President](#) of his Schenley empire in 1957.

Despite their similar backgrounds as bootlegger barons turned "respectable" businessmen, Bronfman's and Rosenstiel's personalities were drastically different and their relationship was complicated, at best. One example of the dissimilarities between North America's top liquor barons was how they treated their staff. Bronfman was not necessarily known for being a cruel boss, whereas Rosenstiel [was known for](#) his erratic and "monstrous" behavior towards employees as well as his unusual practice of bugging his offices in order to hear what employees said about him when he wasn't present.



Rosenstiel was connected to both the FBI and to organized crime

Such differences between Bronfman and Rosenstiel were also reflected in their personal lives. While Bronfman married only once and was loyal to his wife, Rosenstiel was married five times and was known for his relatively closeted bisexual antics, a part of his life that [was well-known](#) to many of his close associates and employees.

Though for years there were only hints to this other side of the controversial businessman, details emerged years later during a divorce proceeding brought by Rosenstiel's fourth wife, Susan Kaufman, that would back the claims. Kaufman [alleged](#) that Rosenstiel hosted extravagant parties that included "boy prostitutes" that her husband had hired "for the enjoyment" of certain guests,

which [included](#) important government officials and prominent figures in America's criminal underworld. Kaufman would later make the same claims under oath during the hearing of the New York's State Joint Legislative Committee on Crime in the early 1970s.

Not only did Rosenstiel organize these parties, but he also made sure that their venues were bugged with microphones that recorded the antics of his high-profile guests. Those audio recordings, Kaufman alleged, were then kept for the purpose of blackmail. Though Kaufman's claims are shocking, her testimony [was deemed credible](#) and held in high regard by the former chief counsel of the Crime Committee, New York Judge Edward McLaughlin, and committee investigator William Gallinaro and aspects of her testimony were later corroborated by two separate witnesses who were unknown to Kaufman.

These "blackmail parties" offer a window into an operation that would later become more sophisticated and grow dramatically in the 1950s under Rosenstiel's "field commander" (a nickname given by Rosenstiel to an individual to be named shortly in this report). Many of the people connected to Rosenstiel's "field commander" during the 70s and 80s have again found their names in the press following the recent arrest of Jeffrey Epstein.

The "Untouchable" Mobster

Bronfman and Rosenstiel became legendary in the North American liquor business, in part due to their fight for supremacy in the industry, which [the New York Times described](#) as often erupting "into bitter personal and corporate battles." Despite their dueling in the corporate world, the one thing that united the two businessmen more than anything else was their close connection to American organized crime, particularly renowned mobster Meyer Lansky.

Lansky is one of the most notorious gangsters in the history of American organized crime and is notable for being the only famous mobster rising to notoriety in the 1920s who managed to die an old man and never serve a day in jail.

Lansky's long life and ability to avoid prison time was largely the result of his close relationships to powerful businessmen like Bronfman and Rosenstiel (among many others), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. intelligence community, as well as his role in establishing several blackmail and extortion rings that helped him keep the law at arm's length. Indeed, when Lansky was finally charged with a crime in the 1970s, it was the Internal Revenue Service that brought the charges, not the FBI, and he was charged with and acquitted of tax evasion.

Lansky was remarkably close to both Bronfman and Rosenstiel. Bronfman [regularly threw](#) “lavish dinner parties” in Lansky’s honor both during and after Prohibition. These parties were remembered fondly by Lansky’s wife, and Lansky in turn did favors for Bronfman, ranging from exclusive protection of his shipments during Prohibition to getting him tickets to coveted “fight of the century” boxing matches.

Rosenstiel also threw regular dinner parties honoring Lansky. Susan Kaufman, Rosenstiel’s ex-wife, claimed to have taken numerous pictures of her ex-husband and Lansky socializing and partying together, photos that [were also seen](#) by Mary Nichols of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. In addition, Lansky, per Kaufman’s recollection, was one of the individuals that Rosenstiel sought to protect from legal scrutiny as part of his child prostitution and blackmail ring targeting high-ranking officials, and he was [overheard saying](#) that if the government “ever brings pressure against Lansky or any of us, we’ll use this [a specific recording taken at one of the ‘parties’] as blackmail.”

Lansky [was known to address](#) Rosenstiel as “Supreme Commander,” a title that would [later be used](#) to refer to Rosenstiel by another individual deeply connected to the mob and sexual blackmail operations, previously referred to in this report as Rosenstiel’s “Field Commander.”

Lansky also had close ties to the CIA and U.S. military intelligence. During World War II, Lansky — along with his associate Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel — worked with Naval intelligence in what was codenamed “[Operation Underworld](#),” an operation the existence of which the government denied for over 40 years.

Journalist and noted chronicler of CIA covert activities, Douglas Valentine, noted in his book [The CIA as Organized Crime: How Illegal Operations Corrupt America and the World](#) that the government’s cooperation with the Mafia during World War II led to its expansion after the war and set the stage for its future collaboration with U.S. intelligence.

According to Valentine:

Top government officials were also aware that the government’s Faustian pact with the Mafia during World War II had allowed the hoods to insinuate themselves into mainstream America. In return for services rendered during the war, Mafia bosses were protected from prosecution for dozens of unsolved murders. [...]

The Mafia was a huge problem in 1951 [when [the Kefauver Committee](#) was convened], equivalent to terrorism today. But it was also a protected branch of the CIA, which was co-opting criminal organizations around the world and

using them in its secret war against the Soviets and Red Chinese. The Mafia had collaborated with Uncle Sam and had emerged from World War II energized and empowered. They controlled cities across the country.”

Indeed, not long after its creation, the CIA forged ties with Lansky at the behest of CIA counterintelligence chief James J. Angleton. The CIA would later [turn to the Lansky-linked mob](#) in the early 1960s as part of its consistently fruitless quest to assassinate Cuban leader Fidel Castro, showing that the CIA maintained its contacts with Lansky-controlled elements of the Mafia long after the initial meeting with Lansky took place.

The CIA also had [close connections](#) to associates of Lansky, such as Edward Moss, who did public relations work for Lansky and was said to be of “interest” to the CIA by the agency’s then-inspector general J.S. Earman. Harry “Happy” Meltzer was also another Lansky associate that was a CIA asset and the CIA asked Meltzer to join an assassination team in December 1960.

In addition to the CIA, Lansky was also connected to a foreign intelligence agency through Tibor Rosenbaum, an arms procurer and high-ranking official in Israel’s Mossad, whose bank – the International Credit Bank of Geneva – [laundered much of Lansky’s ill-gotten gains](#) and recycled them into legitimate American businesses.



Lansky outside the High Court of Israel where he sought permission to emigrate in 1972.
Photo | AP

Journalist Ed Reid, author of the Virginia Hill biography [The Mistress and the Mafia](#), wrote that Lansky was attempting to entrap powerful people through sexual blackmail as far back as 1939. Reid contends that Lansky sent Ms. Hill to Mexico, where his West Coast connections had established a drug ring that

later involved the OSS, the forerunner to the CIA, to seduce numerous “top politicians, army officers, diplomats and police officials.”

Eventually, Lansky was credited with obtaining compromising photos of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover sometime in the 1940s, which showed “Hoover in some kind of gay situation”, according to [a former Lansky associate](#), who also said that Lansky had often claimed, “I fixed that sonofabitch.” The photos [showed](#) Hoover engaged in sexual activity with his long-time friend, FBI Deputy Director Clyde Tolson.

At some point, these photos fell into the hands of CIA counterintelligence chief James J. Angleton, who [later showed](#) the photos to several other CIA officials, including John Weitz and Gordon Novel. Angleton was in charge of the CIA's relationship with the FBI and Israel's Mossad until he left the agency in 1972 and, as was recently mentioned, he was also in contact with Lansky.

Anthony Summers, former *BBC* journalist and author of [*Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover*](#), has argued that it was not Lansky, but William Donovan, the director of the OSS, who obtained the original photos of Hoover and later shared them with Lansky.

Summers [also stated](#) that “To [gangster Frank] Costello and Lansky, the ability to corrupt politicians, policemen and judges was fundamental to Mafia operations. The way they found to deal with Hoover, according to several mob sources, involved his homosexuality.” This anecdote shows that Lanksy and the CIA maintained a covert relationship, which included, among other things, the sharing of blackmail material (i.e., “intelligence”).

It is also possible that Hoover was ensnared by the mob during one of Rosenstiel's “blackmail parties,” at which Hoover sometimes found himself in attendance with prominent figures of the Mafia. Hoover was said to have worn women's clothing at the some of the events and Meyer Lansky's wife [later said](#) that her husband had photos of the former FBI director in drag. Furthermore, Hoover is [on record](#) showing an unusual concern in the FBI's handling of Rosenstiel's criminal links as early as 1939, the same year that his close associate Lansky was actively orchestrating the sexual blackmail of powerful political figures.

The blackmail acquired on Hoover and the mob's possession of the evidence [has been cited](#) as a major factor in Hoover's decades-long denial that nationwide networks of organized crime were a serious issue. Hoover asserted that it was a decentralized, local issue and therefore outside of the bureau's jurisdiction. By the time Hoover finally acknowledged the existence of national

organized crime networks in 1963, they were so entrenched in the U.S. establishment that they were untouchable.

Congressional crime consultant Ralph Salerno [told Summers](#) in 1993 that Hoover's willful ignorance of organized crime for most of his career as FBI director "allowed organized crime to grow very strong in economic and political terms, so that it became a much bigger threat to the wellbeing of this country than it would have been if it had been addressed much sooner."

J. Edgar Hoover: Blackmail Victim?

Most records place the beginning of Hoover's relationship with Rosenstiel in the 1950s, the same decade when Susan Kaufman reported that Hoover was attending Rosenstiel's blackmail parties. Rosenstiel's FBI file, [obtained by](#) Anthony Summers, cites the first Rosenstiel meeting as taking place in 1956, though Summers notes that there is evidence that they had met much earlier. After requesting the meeting, Rosenstiel was granted a personal face-to-face with the director in a matter of hours. The FBI file on Rosenstiel also reveals that the liquor baron heavily lobbied Hoover to aid his business interests.

During that time, the salacious details of Hoover's sex life were already known to the U.S. intelligence community and to the mob, and Hoover was aware that they knew of his closeted sexuality and penchant for women's clothing. Yet, Hoover apparently seemed to embrace the very type of sexual blackmail operation that had compromised his private life, given that he was seen at many of Rosenstiel's "blackmail parties" in the 1950s and 1960s, including at venues such as Rosenstiel's personal home and later at Manhattan's Plaza Hotel. Hoover's penchant for dressing in drag was [also described](#) by two witnesses who were not connected to Susan Kaufman.



Hoover with Dorothy Lamour on the set of *The Greatest Show on Earth* in 1951

Soon after their first “official” meeting, the public relationship between the two men quickly flourished, with Hoover even sending Rosenstiel flowers when he fell ill. Summers [reported that](#), in 1957, Rosenstiel was heard telling Hoover during a meeting, “your wish is my command.” Their relationship remained close and intimate throughout the 1960s and beyond.

Like Rosenstiel, Hoover was [well-known](#) for amassing blackmail on friend and foe alike. Hoover’s office contained “secret files” on numerous powerful people in Washington and beyond, files he used to gain favors and protect his status as FBI director for as long as he wished.

Hoover’s own propensity for blackmail suggests that he may have associated with Rosenstiel’s sexual blackmail operation more directly, given he already knew he was compromised and his involvement in the operation would have served as a means of procuring the blackmail he coveted for his own purposes. Indeed, if Hoover was merely being blackmailed and extorted by the Lansky-Rosenstiel connected mob, it is unlikely that he would have been so friendly to Rosenstiel, Lansky and the other mobsters at these gatherings and participated in them with such regularity.

According to journalist and author Burton Hersh, Hoover was also tied to Sherman Kaminsky, who ran a sexual blackmail operation in New York involving young male prostitutes. That operation was [busted and investigated](#) in a 1966 extortion probe led by Manhattan District Attorney Frank Hogan, though the FBI quickly took over the investigation and photos of Hoover and Kaminsky together soon disappeared from the case file.

Hoover and Rosenstiel's deep ties would continue to develop over the years, an example of which can be seen in Rosenstiel's hiring of long-time Hoover aide Louis Nichols as the vice president of his Schenley liquor empire and Rosenstiel's [donation of over \\$1 million](#) to the J. Edgar Hoover Foundation, which Nichols also ran at the time.

There is also more than one documented occasion wherein Hoover attempted to use blackmail to protect Rosenstiel and his "field commander," none other than the infamous Roy Cohn, the other key figure in Rosenstiel's sexual blackmail operation involving minors.

The Making of a Monster

Decades after his death, Roy Cohn remains a controversial figure in large part because of his [close, personal relationship](#) with current U.S. President Donald Trump. Yet reports on Cohn, both in recent and in past years, often miss the mark in their characterization of the man who became closely associated with the Reagan White House, the CIA, the FBI, organized crime and, incidentally, many of the figures who would later surround Jeffrey Epstein.

To understand the true nature of the man, it is essential to examine his rise to power in the early 1950s when, at just 23 years of age, he became a key figure in the high-profile trial of Soviet spies Ethel and Julius Rosenberg and later as the right-hand man of Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI).

Cohn's dedication to anti-communist activities in the 1950s is allegedly what first endeared him to J. Edgar Hoover, whom he first met in 1952. During that meeting, as described by Hersh in [Bobby and J. Edgar: The Historic Face-Off Between the Kennedys and J. Edgar Hoover That Transformed America](#), Hoover expressed admiration for Cohn's aggressive and manipulative tactics and told Cohn to "call me directly" whenever he had information worth sharing. From that point on, Cohn and Hoover "traded favors, effusive compliments, gifts and elaborate private dinners. It quickly became 'Roy' and 'Edgar.'" Hersh also describes Hoover as Cohn's soon to be "*consigliere*."

The date and circumstances around Cohn's introduction to Rosenstiel are harder to come by. It is possible that the connection was made through Roy Cohn's father, Albert Cohn, a prominent judge and an influential figure in the New York City Democratic Party apparatus then run by Edward Flynn. It was [later revealed](#) that the Democratic organization dominated by Flynn and based in the Bronx had long-standing connections to organized crime, including associates of Meyer Lansky.

Regardless of how or when it began, the relationship between Cohn and Rosenstiel was close and was [often likened to that](#) of a father and son. They were said to frequently salute each other in public and remained close until Rosenstiel was near death, at which point Cohn [attempted to trick](#) his then-barely conscious and senile “friend” and client into naming him the executor and trustee of the liquor magnate’s estate, valued at \$75 million (more than \$334 million in today’s dollars).

[LIFE magazine reported](#) in 1969 that Cohn and Rosenstiel had for years referred to one another as “Field Commander” and “Supreme Commander,” respectively. Media references to these nicknames appear in [other articles](#) from the period.

Though *LIFE* and other outlets had interpreted this as merely an anecdote about the nicknames shared in jest between close friends, the fact that notorious crime lord Meyer Lansky [also called](#) Rosenstiel “Supreme Commander” and the fact that Cohn and Rosenstiel would later become intimately involved in the same pedophile sex ring suggests that there may have been more to these “nicknames.” After all, the mob to which Rosenstiel was connected often used military-themed titles like “soldier” and “lieutenant” to differentiate the rank and importance of its members.

Once he had made his connection with Hoover, Cohn’s star began to rise even higher in Washington. Hoover’s recommendation of Cohn would become the deciding factor in his appointment as Sen. McCarthy’s general counsel over Robert Kennedy, a rival and bitter enemy of Cohn’s.



McCarthy covers the mic while having a whispered discussion with Cohn during a 1954 committee hearing. Photo | AP

Though Cohn was ruthless and seemingly untouchable as McCarthy's counsel and helped the senator destroy many careers during both the red and lavender scares, his antics in relation to his work on the committee would eventually lead to [his downfall](#) after he attempted to blackmail the Army in return for preferential treatment for committee consultant and Cohn's rumored lover, David Schine.

After he was forced to leave McCarthy's side due to the scandal, Cohn returned to New York to live with his mother and practice law. A few years later New York Judge David Peck, a [long-time associate](#) of former CIA Director Alan Dulles, [orchestrated Cohn's hire](#) to the New York law firm Saxe, Bacon and O'Shea — which would later become Saxe, Bacon and Bolan after Tom Bolan, a friend of Cohn's, became a partner in the firm. Upon his hire, Cohn brought the firm a slew of Mafia-linked clients, including high-ranking members of the Gambino crime family, the Genovese crime family and, of course, Lewis Rosenstiel.

What happened in Suite 233?

The connections Roy Cohn built during the 1950s made him a well-known public figure and translated into great political influence that peaked during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Yet, as Cohn built his public image, he was also developing a dark private life, which would come to be dominated by the same blackmail pedophile racket that appears to have first begun with Lewis Rosenstiel.

One of the "blackmail parties" Susan Kaufman attended with her then-husband Lewis Rosenstiel was hosted by Cohn in 1958 at Manhattan's Plaza Hotel, suite 233. Kaufman [described Cohn's suite as](#) a "beautiful suite...all done in light blue." She described being introduced to Hoover, who was in drag, by Cohn, who told her that Hoover's name was "Mary" in a fit of barely concealed laughter. Kaufman [testified that](#) young boys were present and Kaufman claimed that Cohn, Hoover and her ex-husband engaged in sexual activity with these minors.

New York attorney John Klotz, tasked with investigating Cohn for a case well after Kaufman's testimony, also found evidence of the "blue suite" at the Plaza Hotel and its role in a sex extortion ring after combing through local government documents and information gathered by private detectives. Klotz [later told](#) journalist and author Burton Hersch what he had learned:

Roy Cohn was providing protection. There were a bunch of pedophiles involved. That's where Cohn got his power from — blackmail."

Perhaps the most damning confirmation of Cohn's activities in Suite 233 comes from statements made by Cohn himself to former NYPD detective and ex-head

of the department's Human-Trafficking and Vice-Related Crimes Division, James Rothstein. Rothstein later told John DeCamp — a former Nebraska state senator who investigated a government-connected child sex ring based in Omaha — among other investigators, that Cohn had [admitted](#) to being part of a sexual blackmail operation targeting politicians with child prostitutes during a sit-down interview with the former detective.



Flags fly over the main entrance of the Plaza Hotel in New York City in 1982. Suzanne Vlamis | AP

Rothstein [told](#) DeCamp the following about Cohn:

Cohn's job was to run the little boys. Say you had an admiral, a general, a congressman, who did not want to go along with the program. Cohn's job was to set them up, then they would go along. Cohn told me that himself."

Rothstein later told Paul David Collins, a former journalist turned researcher, that Cohn had [also identified](#) this sexual blackmail operation as being part of the anti-communist crusade of the time.

The fact that Cohn, per Rothstein's recollection, stated that the child sex blackmail ring was part of the government-sponsored anti-communist crusade suggests that elements of the government, including Hoover's FBI, may have been connected at a much broader level than Hoover's own personal involvement, as the FBI closely coordinated with McCarthy and Cohn for much of the red scare.

It is also worth noting that among Hoover's many "secret" blackmail files was a sizeable dossier on Senator McCarthy, the contents of which strongly

suggested that the senator himself was interested in underage girls. According to [journalist and author David Talbot](#), Hoover's file on McCarthy was "filled with disturbing stories about McCarthy's habit of drunkenly groping young girls' breasts and buttocks. The stories were so widespread that they became 'common knowledge' in the capital, according to one FBI chronicler."

Talbot, in his book [The Devil's Chessboard](#), also cites Walter Trohan, Washington Bureau Chief of the *Chicago Tribune*, as having personally witnessed McCarthy's habit of molesting young women. "He just couldn't keep his hands off young girls," Trohan would later say. "Why the Communist opposition didn't plant a minor on him and raise the cry of statutory rape, I don't know." Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that those "planting" minors on their political foes were McCarthy's allies and close associates, not his enemies.

The question that necessarily arises from revelations regarding Cohn's activities in Suite 233 is who else was Cohn "protecting" and servicing with underage prostitutes? One of them could very well have been one of Cohn's [close friends and clients](#), Cardinal Francis Spellman of the Archdiocese of New York, who was said to have been present at some of these parties Cohn hosted at the Plaza Hotel.

Spellman — one of the most powerful figures in the Catholic Church in North America, who was sometimes referred to as "America's Pope" — was accused of not only [condoning](#) pedophilia in the Catholic church and [ordaining known pedophiles](#) including Cardinal Theodore "Uncle Teddy" McCarrick, but also engaging in it himself to such an extent that many New York area priests widely [referred to him](#) as "Mary." Furthermore, J. Edgar Hoover was said to [have a file](#) detailing the cardinal's sex life, suggesting Spellman's involvement in the ring and pedophile protection racket in which Cohn and Hoover were personally involved.



Cardinal Francis 'Franny' Spellman. Photo: Museum of the City of New York

People close to Cohn often remarked that he was frequently surrounded by groups of young boys, but seemed to think nothing of it. Similar off-handed comments about Epstein's penchant for minors were made by those close to him prior to his arrest.

Controversial Republican political operative and "dirty trickster" Roger Stone — who, like Donald Trump, [was also a protégé](#) of Cohn — said the following about Cohn's sex life during [an interview](#) with *The New Yorker* in 2008:

Roy was not gay. He was a man who liked having sex with men. Gays were weak, effeminate. He always seemed to have these **young blond boys** around. **It just wasn't discussed.** He was interested in power and access."
(emphasis added)

Compare this quote from Stone to what Donald Trump, who was also close to Cohn, [would later say](#) about Jeffrey Epstein, with whom he was also closely associated:

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.** No doubt about it — Jeffrey enjoys his social life."
(emphasis added)

Though it is unknown how long the sex ring at the Plaza Hotel continued, and whether it continued after Cohn's death from AIDS in 1986, it is worth noting that Donald Trump [purchased](#) the Plaza Hotel in 1988. It would [later be reported](#)

and [confirmed by then-attendees](#) that Trump “used to host parties in suites at the Plaza Hotel when he owned it, where young women and girls were introduced to older, richer men” and “illegal drugs and young women were passed around and used.”

Andy Lucchesi, a male model who [had helped organize](#) some of these Plaza Hotel parties for Trump, said the following when asked about the age of the women present: “A lot of girls, 14, look 24. That’s as juicy as I can get. I never asked how old they were; I just partook. I did partake in activities that would be controversial, too.”

The Roy Cohn Machine

Roy Cohn was only at the beginning of his career when he waded his way into the underground sexual blackmail ring apparently led by Lewis Rosenstiel. Indeed, when Cohn first met Hoover, he was only 23 years old. Over the next three decades or so, before his death from AIDS-related complications in 1986 at the age of 56, Cohn built a well-oiled machine, largely through his close friendships with some of the country’s most influential figures.

Among Cohn’s friends were top media personalities like [Barbara Walters](#), former CIA directors, [Ronald Reagan and wife Nancy](#), media moguls [Rupert Murdoch](#) and Mort Zuckerman, [numerous celebrities](#), prominent lawyers like [Alan Dershowitz](#), top figures in the Catholic Church and leading Jewish organizations like [B’nai B’rith](#) and the World Jewish Congress. Many of the same names that surrounded Cohn until death in the late 1980s would later come to surround Jeffrey Epstein, with their names later appearing in Epstein’s now-infamous “little black book”.



Reagan meets with Rupert Murdoch, U.S. Information Agency Director Charles Wick, and Roy Cohn in the Oval Office in 1983. Photo | Reagan presidential library

While President Trump is clearly connected to both Epstein and Cohn, Cohn's network also extends to former President Bill Clinton, whose friend and longtime political advisor, Richard "[Dirty Dick](#)" Morris, was [Cohn's cousin and close associate](#). Morris was also close to Clinton's former communications director, George Stephanopoulos, who is [also associated with](#) Jeffrey Epstein.

Yet, these were only Cohn's connections to respectable members of the establishment. He was also known for his deep connections to the mob and gained prominence largely for his ability to connect key figures in the criminal underworld to respected influential figures acceptable to the public sphere. Ultimately, as New York attorney John Klotz stated, Cohn's most powerful tool was blackmail, which he used against friend and foe, gangster or public official alike. How much of that blackmail he acquired through his sexual blackmail operation will likely never be known.

As Part II of this exclusive investigation will reveal, Cohn and Epstein, and the sexual blackmail operations they ran share many things in common, including not only many of the same famous friends and patrons, but also connections to intelligence agencies and consortiums of mob-linked businessmen, the modern-day equivalents of Samuel Bronfman and Lewis Rosenstiel who have since rebranded as "philanthropists."

Part II will also reveal that Cohn's operation was known to have successors, as revealed by a series of scandals in the early 1990s that have since been swept under the rug. The significant amount of overlap between Epstein's and Cohn's covert activities in sexual blackmail and their ties to many of the same powerful individuals and circles of influence strongly suggest that Epstein was one of Cohn's successors.

As will be shown in the final installment of this report, Epstein is only the latest incarnation of a much older, more extensive and sophisticated operation that offers a frightening window into how deeply tied the U.S. government is to the modern-day equivalents of organized crime, making it a racket truly too big to fail.

Feature photo | A composite image shows from left to right, Lewis Rosenstiel, Jeffrey Epstein, and Roy Cohn. Graphic | Emma Fiala

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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TOO BIG TO FAIL

Hidden in Plain Sight: The Shocking Origins of the Jeffrey Epstein Case

Epstein is only the latest incarnation of a much older, more extensive and sophisticated operation that offers a frightening window into how deeply tied the U.S. government is to the modern-day equivalents of organized crime.

by *Whitney Webb*

July 18th, 2019

By **Whitney Webb** Whitney Webb

Follow



Despite his “sweetheart” deal and having seemingly evaded justice, billionaire sex offender Jeffrey Epstein **was arrested** earlier this month on federal charges for sex trafficking minors. Epstein’s arrest has again brought increased media attention to many of his famous friends, the current president among them.

Many questions have since been asked about how much Epstein’s famous friends knew of his activities and exactly what Epstein was up to. The latter arguably received the most attention after it was reported that Alex Acosta — who arranged Epstein’s “sweetheart” deal in 2008 and who **recently resigned** as Donald Trump’s Labor Secretary following Epstein’s arrest — claimed that the mysterious billionaire **had worked for “intelligence.”**

Other investigations have made it increasingly clear that Epstein was running **a blackmail operation**, as he had bugged the venues — whether at his New York mansion or Caribbean island getaway — with microphones and cameras to record the salacious interactions that transpired between his guests and the underage girls that Epstein





Claims of Epstein's links and his involvement in a sophisticated, well-funded sexual blackmail operation have, surprisingly, spurred few media outlets to examine the history of intelligence agencies both in the U.S. and abroad conducting similar sexual blackmail operations, many of which also involved underage prostitutes.

In the U.S. alone, the CIA operated numerous sexual blackmail operations throughout the country, **employing prostitutes** to target foreign diplomats in what the *Washington Post* once nicknamed the CIA's "love traps." If one goes even farther back into the U.S. historical record it becomes apparent that these tactics and their use against powerful political and influential figures significantly predate the CIA and even its precursor, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). In fact, they were pioneered years earlier by none other than the American Mafia.

In the course of this investigation, *MintPress* discovered that a handful of figures who were influential in American organized crime during and after Prohibition were directly engaged in sexual blackmail operations that they used for their own, often dark, purposes.

In Part I of this exclusive investigation, *MintPress* will examine how a mob-linked businessman with deep ties to notorious gangster Meyer Lansky developed close ties with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) while also running a sexual blackmail operation for decades, which later became a covert part of the anti-communist crusade of the 1950s led by Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI), himself known throughout Washington for having a habit of drunkenly groping underage teenage girls.

Yet, it would be one of McCarthy's closest aides who would take over the ring in later years, trafficking minors and expanding this sexual blackmail operation at the same time he expanded his own political influence, putting him in close contact with prominent figures including former President Ronald Reagan and a man who would later become president, Donald Trump.

As will be revealed in Part II, after this figure's death, the blackmail operation continued under various successors in different cities and there is strong evidence that Jeffrey Epstein became one of them.





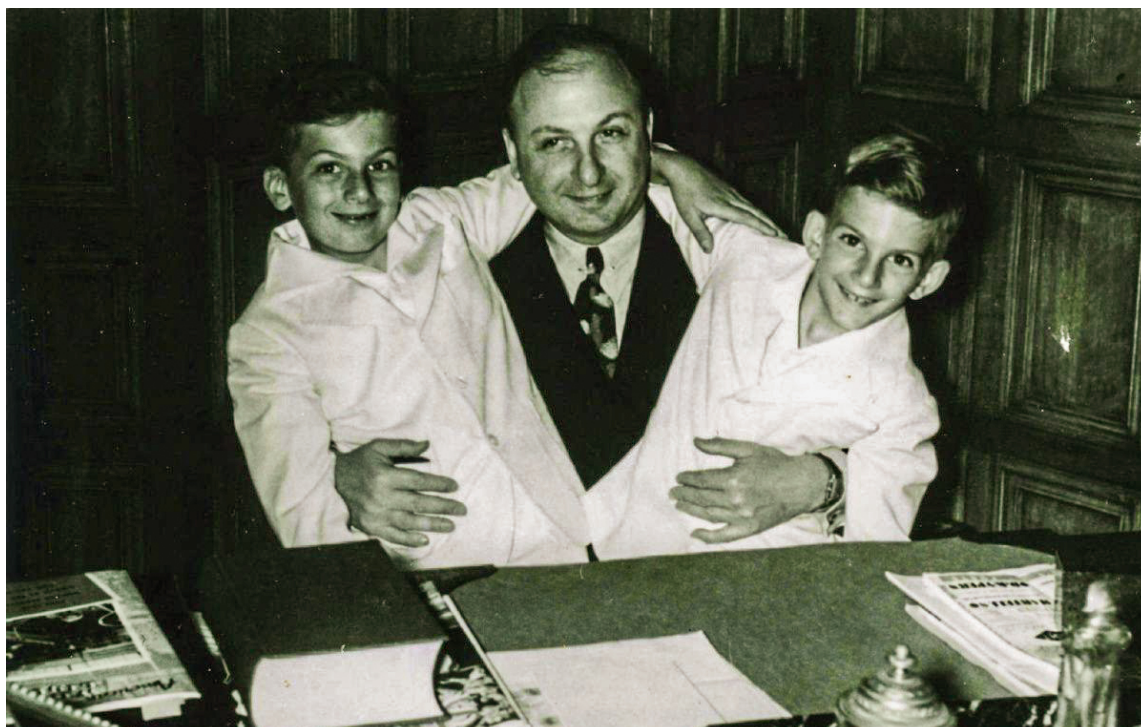
only increases their popularity but also causes a boom in criminal activity. Indeed, it was Prohibition that greatly increased the strength of the American Mafia, as the top crime lords of the day grew rich through the clandestine trade and sale of alcohol in addition to gambling and other activities.

It is through the bootlegging trade of the 1920s and the early 1930s that this story begins, as it brought together key figures whose successors and affiliates would eventually create a series of blackmail and sex trafficking rings that would give rise to the likes of Jeffrey Epstein, the “Lolita Express” and “Orgy Island.”

Samuel Bronfman never planned to become a major producer of liquor but true to his family’s last name, which means “brandy man” in Yiddish, he eventually began distributing alcohol as an extension of his family’s hotel business. During Canada’s Prohibition period, which was briefer than and preceded that of its southern neighbor, the Bronfman family business used loopholes to **skirt the law** and find *technically* legal ways to sell alcohol in the hotels and stores the family owned. The family relied on its connections with members of the American Mafia to illegally smuggle alcohol from the United States.

Soon after Prohibition ended in Canada, it began in the United States and, by the time the flow of illegal alcohol had turned the other way, the Bronfmans – whose business ventures were then being led by Sam Bronfman and his brothers — were relatively late to an already flourishing bootlegging trade.

“We were late starters in the two most lucrative markets – on the high seas and across the Detroit River. What came out of the border trade in Saskatchewan was insignificant by comparison,” Bronfman **once told** Canadian journalist Terence Robertson, who was then writing a biography of Bronfman. Nonetheless, “this was when we started to make our real money,” Bronfman recounted. Robertson’s biography on Bronfman was never published, as he died under mysterious circumstances **soon after** warning his colleagues that he had uncovered unsavory information about the Bronfman family.





crime during Canada's Prohibition, ties that led many prominent members of the mob in the United States to favor Bronfman as a business partner. Bronfman liquor was purchased in massive quantities by many crime lords who still live on in American legend, including Charles "Lucky" Luciano, Moe Dalitz, Abner "Longy" Zwillman and Meyer Lansky.

Most of Bronfman's mob associates during Prohibition were members of what became known as the National Crime Syndicate, which a 1950s Senate investigative body known as the Kefauver Committee described as a confederation dominated by Italian-American and Jewish-American mobs. During that investigation, some of the biggest names in the American Mafia named Bronfman as a central figure in their bootlegging operations. The widow of notorious American mob boss Meyer Lansky even recounted how Bronfman had thrown lavish dinner parties for her husband.

Years later, Samuel Bronfman's children and grandchildren, their family's ties to the criminal underworld intact, would go on to associate closely with Leslie Wexner, allegedly the source of much of Epstein's mysterious wealth, and other mob-linked "philanthropists," and some would even manage their own sexual blackmail operations, including the recently busted blackmail-based "sex cult" NXIVM. The later generations of the Bronfman family, particularly Samuel Bronfman's sons Edgar and Charles, will be discussed in greater detail in Part II of this report.

Lewis Rosenstiel's dark secret

Crucial to Bronfman's Prohibition-era bootlegging operations were two middlemen, one of whom was Lewis "Lew" Rosenstiel. Rosenstiel got his start working at his uncle's distillery in Kentucky before Prohibition. Once the law banning alcohol was in force, Rosenstiel created the Schenley Products Company, which would later become one of the largest liquor companies in North America.

Though he was a high school drop-out and not particularly well-connected socially at the time, Rosenstiel happened to have a "chance" meeting with Winston Churchill in 1922 while on vacation in the French Riviera. According to the *New York Times*, Churchill "advised him [Rosenstiel] to prepare for the return of liquor sales in the United States." Rosenstiel somehow managed to secure the funding of the elite and respected Wall Street firm Lehman Brothers to finance his purchase of shuttered distilleries.

Officially, Rosenstiel is said to have built his company and wealth after Prohibition, by following Churchill's advice to prepare for Repeal. However, he was clearly involved in bootlegging operations and was even indicted for bootlegging in 1929, though he evaded conviction. Like Bronfman, Rosenstiel was close to organized crime, particularly members of the mostly Jewish-American and Italian-American mob alliance known as the National Crime Syndicate.

Subsequent New York state legislative investigations would allege that Rosenstiel "was part of a 'consortium' with underworld figures that bought liquor in Canada [from Samuel Bronfman]," whose other members were "Meyer Lansky, the reputed organized crime leader; Joseph Fusco, an associate of late Chicago gangster Al Capone and Joseph Linsey, a Boston man Mr. Kelly [the congressional investigator testifying] identified as a convicted bootlegger." Rosenstiel's relationship with these men, particularly Lansky, would continue long after Prohibition and Samuel Bronfman, for his part, would also maintain his mob ties.





Despite their similar backgrounds as bootlegger barons turned “respectable” businessmen, Bronfman’s and Rosenstiel’s personalities were drastically different and their relationship was complicated, at best. One example of the dissimilarities between North America’s top liquor barons was how they treated their staff. Bronfman was not necessarily known for being a cruel boss, whereas Rosenstiel **was known** for his erratic and “monstrous” behavior towards employees as well as his unusual practice of bugging his offices in order to hear what employees said about him when he wasn’t present.



Rosenstiel was connected to both the FBI and to organized crime

Such differences between Bronfman and Rosenstiel were also reflected in their personal lives. While Bronfman married only once and was loyal to his wife, Rosenstiel was married five times and was known for his relatively closeted bisexual antics, a part of his life that **was well-known** to many of his close associates and employees.

Though for years there were only hints to this other side of the controversial businessman, details emerged years later during a divorce proceeding brought by Rosenstiel’s fourth wife, Susan Kaufman, that would back the claims. Kaufman **alleged** that Rosenstiel hosted extravagant parties that included “boy prostitutes” that her husband had hired “for the enjoyment” of certain guests, which **included** important government officials and prominent figures in America’s criminal underworld. Kaufman would later make the same claims under oath during the hearing of the New York’s State Joint Legislative Committee on Crime in the early 1970s.

Not only did Rosenstiel organize these parties, but he also made sure that their venues were bugged with





These “blackmail parties” offer a window into an operation that would later become more sophisticated and grow dramatically in the 1950s under Rosenstiel’s “field commander” (a nickname given by Rosenstiel to an individual to be named shortly in this report). Many of the people connected to Rosenstiel’s “field commander” during the 70s and 80s have again found their names in the press following the recent arrest of Jeffrey Epstein.

The “Untouchable” Mobster

Bronfman and Rosenstiel became legendary in the North American liquor business, in part due to their fight for supremacy in the industry, which [the New York Times described](#) as often erupting “into bitter personal and corporate battles.” Despite their dueling in the corporate world, the one thing that united the two businessmen more than anything else was their close connection to American organized crime, particularly renowned mobster Meyer Lansky.

Lansky is one of the most notorious gangsters in the history of American organized crime and is notable for being the only famous mobster rising to notoriety in the 1920s who managed to die an old man and never serve a day in jail.

Lansky’s long life and ability to avoid prison time was largely the result of his close relationships to powerful businessmen like Bronfman and Rosenstiel (among many others), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. intelligence community, as well as his role in establishing several blackmail and extortion rings that helped him keep the law at arm’s length. Indeed, when Lansky was finally charged with a crime in the 1970s, it was the Internal Revenue Service that brought the charges, not the FBI, and he was charged with and acquitted of tax evasion.

Lansky was remarkably close to both Bronfman and Rosenstiel. Bronfman [regularly threw](#) “lavish dinner parties” in Lansky’s honor both during and after Prohibition. These parties were remembered fondly by Lansky’s wife, and Lansky in turn did favors for Bronfman, ranging from exclusive protection of his shipments during Prohibition to getting him tickets to coveted “fight of the century” boxing matches.

Rosenstiel also threw regular dinner parties honoring Lansky. Susan Kaufman, Rosenstiel’s ex-wife, claimed to have taken numerous pictures of her ex-husband and Lansky socializing and partying together, photos that [were also seen](#) by Mary Nichols of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. In addition, Lansky, per Kaufman’s recollection, was one of the individuals that Rosenstiel sought to protect from legal scrutiny as part of his child prostitution and blackmail ring targeting high-ranking officials, and he was [overheard saying](#) that if the government “ever brings pressure against Lansky or any of us, we’ll use this [a specific recording taken at one of the ‘parties’] as blackmail.”

Lansky [was known to address](#) Rosenstiel as “Supreme Commander,” a title that would [later be used](#) to refer to Rosenstiel by another individual deeply connected to the mob and sexual blackmail operations, previously referred to in this report as Rosenstiel’s “Field Commander.”

Lansky also had close ties to the CIA and U.S. military intelligence. During World War II, Lansky — along with his





intelligence.

According to Valentine:

“Top government officials were also aware that the government’s Faustian pact with the Mafia during World War II had allowed the hoods to insinuate themselves into mainstream America. In return for services rendered during the war, Mafia bosses were protected from prosecution for dozens of unsolved murders. [...]”

The Mafia was a huge problem in 1951 [when the Kefauver Committee was convened], equivalent to terrorism today. But it was also a protected branch of the CIA, which was co-opting criminal organizations around the world and using them in its secret war against the Soviets and Red Chinese. The Mafia had collaborated with Uncle Sam and had emerged from World War II energized and empowered. They controlled cities across the country.”

Indeed, not long after its creation, the CIA forged ties with Lansky at the behest of CIA counterintelligence chief James J. Angleton. The CIA would later turn to the Lansky-linked mob in the early 1960s as part of its consistently fruitless quest to assassinate Cuban leader Fidel Castro, showing that the CIA maintained its contacts with Lansky-controlled elements of the Mafia long after the initial meeting with Lansky took place.

The CIA also had close connections to associates of Lansky, such as Edward Moss, who did public relations work for Lansky and was said to be of “interest” to the CIA by the agency’s then-inspector general J.S. Earman. Harry “Happy” Meltzer was also another Lansky associate that was a CIA asset and the CIA asked Meltzer to join an assassination team in December 1960.

In addition to the CIA, Lansky was also connected to a foreign intelligence agency through Tibor Rosenbaum, an arms procurer and high-ranking official in Israel’s Mossad, whose bank – the International Credit Bank of Geneva – laundered much of Lansky’s ill-gotten gains and recycled them into legitimate American businesses.





Lansky outside the High Court of Israel where he sought permission to emigrate in 1972. Photo | AP

Journalist Ed Reid, author of the Virginia Hill biography *The Mistress and the Mafia*, wrote that Lansky was attempting to entrap powerful people through sexual blackmail as far back as 1939. Reid contends that Lansky sent Ms. Hill to Mexico, where his West Coast connections had established a drug ring that later involved the OSS, the forerunner to the CIA, to seduce numerous “top politicians, army officers, diplomats and police officials.”

Eventually, Lansky was credited with obtaining compromising photos of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover sometime in the 1940s, which showed “Hoover in some kind of gay situation”, according to a former Lansky associate, who also said that Lansky had often claimed, “I fixed that sonofabitch.” The photos showed Hoover engaged in sexual activity with his long-time friend, FBI Deputy Director Clyde Tolson.

At some point, these photos fell into the hands of CIA counterintelligence chief James J. Angleton, who later showed the photos to several other CIA officials, including John Weitz and Gordon Novel. Angleton was in charge of the CIA’s relationship with the FBI and Israel’s Mossad until he left the agency in 1972 and, as was recently mentioned, he was also in contact with Lansky.

Anthony Summers, former *BBC* journalist and author of *Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover*, has argued that it was not Lansky, but William Donovan, the director of the OSS, who obtained the original photos of Hoover and later shared them with Lansky.

Summers also stated that “To [gangster Frank] Costello and Lansky, the ability to corrupt politicians, policemen and judges was fundamental to Mafia operations. The way they found to deal with Hoover, according to several mob sources, involved his homosexuality.” This anecdote shows that Lansky and the CIA maintained a covert relationship, which included, among other things, the sharing of blackmail material (i.e., “intelligence”).

It is also possible that Hoover was ensnared by the mob during one of Rosenstiel’s “blackmail parties,” at which Hoover sometimes found himself in attendance with prominent figures of the Mafia. Hoover was said to have worn





The blackmail acquired on Hoover and the mob's possession of the evidence **has been cited** as a major factor in Hoover's decades-long denial that nationwide networks of organized crime were a serious issue. Hoover asserted that it was a decentralized, local issue and therefore outside of the bureau's jurisdiction. By the time Hoover finally acknowledged the existence of national organized crime networks in 1963, they were so entrenched in the U.S. establishment that they were untouchable.

Congressional crime consultant Ralph Salerno **told Summers** in 1993 that Hoover's willful ignorance of organized crime for most of his career as FBI director "allowed organized crime to grow very strong in economic and political terms, so that it became a much bigger threat to the wellbeing of this country than it would have been if it had been addressed much sooner."

J. Edgar Hoover: Blackmail Victim?

Most records place the beginning of Hoover's relationship with Rosenstiel in the 1950s, the same decade when Susan Kaufman reported that Hoover was attending Rosenstiel's blackmail parties. Rosenstiel's FBI file, **obtained by** Anthony Summers, cites the first Rosenstiel meeting as taking place in 1956, though Summers notes that there is evidence that they had met much earlier. After requesting the meeting, Rosenstiel was granted a personal face-to-face with the director in a matter of hours. The FBI file on Rosenstiel also reveals that the liquor baron heavily lobbied Hoover to aid his business interests.

During that time, the salacious details of Hoover's sex life were already known to the U.S. intelligence community and to the mob, and Hoover was aware that they knew of his closeted sexuality and penchant for women's clothing. Yet, Hoover apparently seemed to embrace the very type of sexual blackmail operation that had compromised his private life, given that he was seen at many of Rosenstiel's "blackmail parties" in the 1950s and 1960s, including at venues such as Rosenstiel's personal home and later at Manhattan's Plaza Hotel. Hoover's penchant for dressing in drag was **also described** by two witnesses who were not connected to Susan Kaufman.





Hoover with Dorothy Lamour on the set of *The Greatest Show on Earth* in 1951

Soon after their first “official” meeting, the public relationship between the two men quickly flourished, with Hoover even sending Rosenstiel flowers when he fell ill. Summers **reported that**, in 1957, Rosenstiel was heard telling Hoover during a meeting, “your wish is my command.” Their relationship remained close and intimate throughout the 1960s and beyond.

Like Rosenstiel, Hoover was **well-known** for amassing blackmail on friend and foe alike. Hoover’s office contained “secret files” on numerous powerful people in Washington and beyond, files he used to gain favors and protect his status as FBI director for as long as he wished.

Hoover’s own propensity for blackmail suggests that he may have associated with Rosenstiel’s sexual blackmail operation more directly, given he already knew he was compromised and his involvement in the operation would have served as a means of procuring the blackmail he coveted for his own purposes. Indeed, if Hoover was merely being blackmailed and extorted by the Lansky-Rosenstiel connected mob, it is unlikely that he would have been so friendly to Rosenstiel, Lansky and the other mobsters at these gatherings and participated in them with such regularity.

According to journalist and author Burton Hersh, Hoover was also tied to Sherman Kaminsky, who ran a sexual blackmail operation in New York involving young male prostitutes. That operation was **busted and investigated** in a 1966 extortion probe led by Manhattan District Attorney Frank Hogan, though the FBI quickly took over the investigation and photos of Hoover and Kaminsky together soon disappeared from the case file.

Hoover and Rosenstiel’s deep ties would continue to develop over the years, an example of which can be seen in Rosenstiel’s hiring of long-time Hoover aide Louis Nichols as the vice president of his Schenley liquor empire and Rosenstiel’s **donation of over \$1 million** to the J. Edgar Hoover Foundation, which Nichols also ran at the time.





The Making of a Monster

Decades after his death, Roy Cohn remains a controversial figure in large part because of his **close, personal relationship** with current U.S. President Donald Trump. Yet reports on Cohn, both in recent and in past years, often miss the mark in their characterization of the man who became closely associated with the Reagan White House, the CIA, the FBI, organized crime and, incidentally, many of the figures who would later surround Jeffrey Epstein.

To understand the true nature of the man, it is essential to examine his rise to power in the early 1950s when, at just 23 years of age, he became a key figure in the high-profile trial of Soviet spies Ethel and Julius Rosenberg and later as the right-hand man of Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI).

Cohn's dedication to anti-communist activities in the 1950s is allegedly what first endeared him to J. Edgar Hoover, whom he first met in 1952. During that meeting, as described by Hersh in *Bobby and J. Edgar: The Historic Face-Off Between the Kennedys and J. Edgar Hoover That Transformed America*, Hoover expressed admiration for Cohn's aggressive and manipulative tactics and told Cohn to "call me directly" whenever he had information worth sharing. From that point on, Cohn and Hoover "traded favors, effusive compliments, gifts and elaborate private dinners. It quickly became 'Roy' and 'Edgar.'" Hersh also describes Hoover as Cohn's soon to be "*consigliere*."

The date and circumstances around Cohn's introduction to Rosenstiel are harder to come by. It is possible that the connection was made through Roy Cohn's father, Albert Cohn, a prominent judge and an influential figure in the New York City Democratic Party apparatus then run by Edward Flynn. It was **later revealed** that the Democratic organization dominated by Flynn and based in the Bronx had long-standing connections to organized crime, including associates of Meyer Lansky.

Regardless of how or when it began, the relationship between Cohn and Rosenstiel was close and was **often likened to that** of a father and son. They were said to frequently salute each other in public and remained close until Rosenstiel was near death, at which point Cohn **attempted to trick** his then-barely conscious and senile "friend" and client into naming him the executor and trustee of the liquor magnate's estate, valued at \$75 million (more than \$334 million in today's dollars).

LIFE magazine **reported** in 1969 that Cohn and Rosenstiel had for years referred to one another as "Field Commander" and "Supreme Commander," respectively. Media references to these nicknames appear in **other articles** from the period.

Though *LIFE* and other outlets had interpreted this as merely an anecdote about the nicknames shared in jest between close friends, the fact that notorious crime lord Meyer Lansky **also called** Rosenstiel "Supreme Commander" and the fact that Cohn and Rosenstiel would later become intimately involved in the same pedophile sex ring suggests that there may have been more to these "nicknames." After all, the mob to which Rosenstiel was connected often used military-themed titles like "soldier" and "lieutenant" to differentiate the rank and importance of its members.

Once he had made his connection with Hoover, Cohn's star began to rise even higher in Washington. Hoover's recommendation of Cohn would become the deciding factor in his appointment as Sen. McCarthy's general





McCarthy covers the mic while having a whispered discussion with Cohn during a 1954 committee hearing. Photo | AP

Though Cohn was ruthless and seemingly untouchable as McCarthy's counsel and helped the senator destroy many careers during both the red and lavender scares, his antics in relation to his work on the committee would eventually lead to **his downfall** after he attempted to blackmail the Army in return for preferential treatment for committee consultant and Cohn's rumored lover, David Schine.

After he was forced to leave McCarthy's side due to the scandal, Cohn returned to New York to live with his mother and practice law. A few years later New York Judge David Peck, a **long-time associate** of former CIA Director Alan Dulles, **orchestrated Cohn's hire** to the New York law firm Saxe, Bacon and O'Shea — which would later become Saxe, Bacon and Bolan after Tom Bolan, a friend of Cohn's, became a partner in the firm. Upon his hire, Cohn brought the firm a slew of Mafia-linked clients, including high-ranking members of the Gambino crime family, the Genovese crime family and, of course, Lewis Rosenstiel.

What happened in Suite 233?

The connections Roy Cohn built during the 1950s made him a well-known public figure and translated into great political influence that peaked during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Yet, as Cohn built his public image, he was also developing a dark private life, which would come to be dominated by the same blackmail pedophile racket that appears to have first begun with Lewis Rosenstiel.

One of the "blackmail parties" Susan Kaufman attended with her then-husband Lewis Rosenstiel was hosted by Cohn in 1958 at Manhattan's Plaza Hotel, suite 233. Kaufman **described Cohn's suite as** a "beautiful suite...all done in light blue." She described being introduced to Hoover, who was in drag, by Cohn, who told her that Hoover's name was "Mary" in a fit of barely concealed laughter. Kaufman **testified that** young boys were present and





Burton Hersh what he had learned:

“ Roy Cohn was providing protection. There were a bunch of pedophiles involved. That’s where Cohn got his power from — blackmail.”

Perhaps the most damning confirmation of Cohn’s activities in Suite 233 comes from statements made by Cohn himself to former NYPD detective and ex-head of the department’s Human-Trafficking and Vice-Related Crimes Division, James Rothstein. Rothstein later told John DeCamp — a former Nebraska state senator who investigated a government-connected child sex ring based in Omaha — among other investigators, that Cohn had **admitted** to being part of a sexual blackmail operation targeting politicians with child prostitutes during a sit-down interview with the former detective.



Flags fly over the main entrance of the Plaza Hotel in New York City in 1982. Suzanne Vlamis | AP

Rothstein **told** DeCamp the following about Cohn:

“ Cohn’s job was to run the little boys. Say you had an admiral, a general, a congressman, who did not want to go along with the program. Cohn’s job was to set them up, then they would go along. Cohn told me that himself.”

Rothstein later told Paul David Collins, a former journalist turned researcher, that Cohn had **also identified** this sexual blackmail operation as being part of the anti-communist crusade of the time.





coordinated with McCarthy and Cohn for much of the red scare.

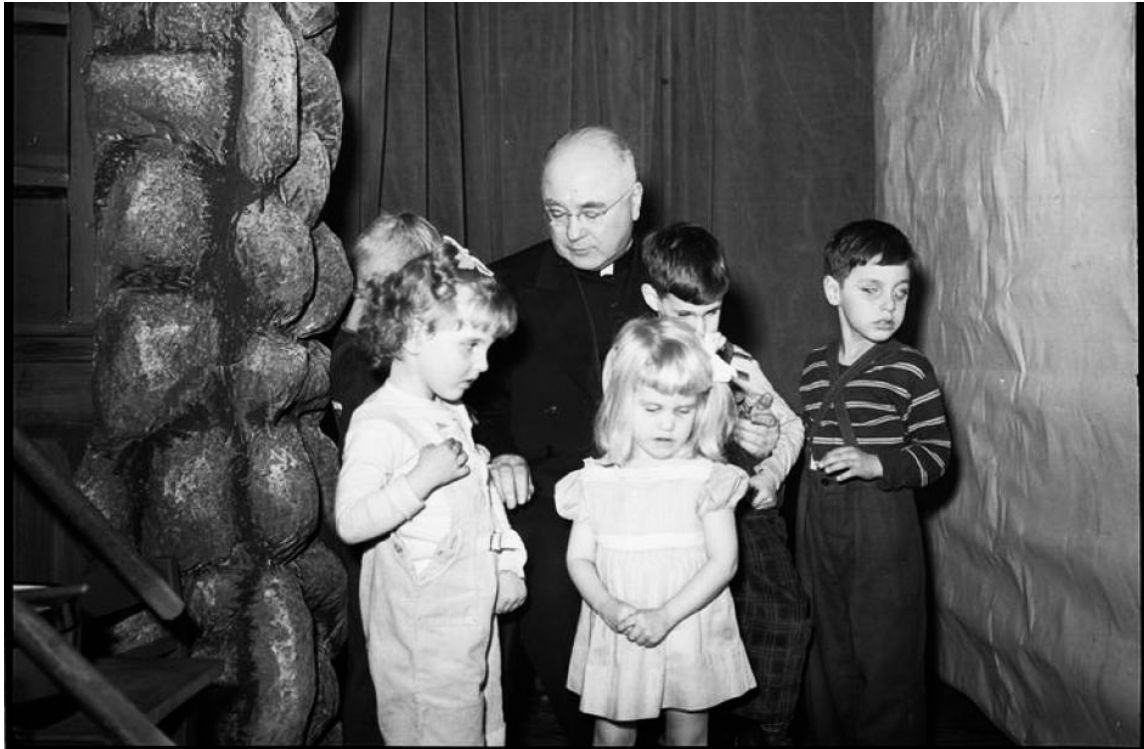
It is also worth noting that among Hoover's many "secret" blackmail files was a sizeable dossier on Senator McCarthy, the contents of which strongly suggested that the senator himself was interested in underage girls. According to [journalist and author David Talbot](#), Hoover's file on McCarthy was "filled with disturbing stories about McCarthy's habit of drunkenly groping young girls' breasts and buttocks. The stories were so widespread that they became 'common knowledge' in the capital, according to one FBI chronicler."

Talbot, in his book [The Devil's Chessboard](#), also cites Walter Trohan, Washington Bureau Chief of the *Chicago Tribune*, as having personally witnessed McCarthy's habit of molesting young women. "He just couldn't keep his hands off young girls," Trohan would later say. "Why the Communist opposition didn't plant a minor on him and raise the cry of statutory rape, I don't know." Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that those "planting" minors on their political foes were McCarthy's allies and close associates, not his enemies.

The question that necessarily arises from revelations regarding Cohn's activities in Suite 233 is who else was Cohn "protecting" and servicing with underage prostitutes? One of them could very well have been one of Cohn's [close friends and clients](#), Cardinal Francis Spellman of the Archdiocese of New York, who was said to have been present at some of these parties Cohn hosted at the Plaza Hotel.

Spellman — one of the most powerful figures in the Catholic Church in North America, who was sometimes referred to as "America's Pope" — was accused of not only [condoning](#) pedophilia in the Catholic church and [ordaining known pedophiles](#) including Cardinal Theodore "Uncle Teddy" McCarrick, but also engaging in it himself to such an extent that many New York area priests widely [referred to him](#) as "Mary." Furthermore, J. Edgar Hoover was said to [have a file](#) detailing the cardinal's sex life, suggesting Spellman's involvement in the ring and pedophile protection racket in which Cohn and Hoover were personally involved.





Cardinal Francis 'Franny' Spellman. Photo | Museum of the City of New York

People close to Cohn often remarked that he was frequently surrounded by groups of young boys, but seemed to think nothing of it. Similar off-handed comments about Epstein's penchant for minors were made by those close to him prior to his arrest.

Controversial Republican political operative and "dirty trickster" Roger Stone — who, like Donald Trump, **was also a protégé** of Cohn — said the following about Cohn's sex life during **an interview** with *The New Yorker* in 2008:

*"Roy was not gay. He was a man who liked having sex with men. Gays were weak, effeminate. He always seemed to have these **young blond boys** around. **It just wasn't discussed.** He was interested in power and access." (emphasis added)*

Compare this quote from Stone to what Donald Trump, who was also close to Cohn, **would later say** about Jeffrey Epstein, with whom he was also closely associated:

*"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.** No doubt about it — Jeffrey enjoys his social life." (emphasis added)*

Though it is unknown how long the sex ring at the Plaza Hotel continued, and whether it continued after Cohn's death from AIDS in 1986, it is worth noting that Donald Trump **purchased** the Plaza Hotel in 1988. It would **later be reported** and **confirmed by then-attendees** that Trump "used to host parties in suites at the Plaza Hotel when he





The Roy Cohn Machine

Roy Cohn was only at the beginning of his career when he waded his way into the underground sexual blackmail ring apparently led by Lewis Rosenstiel. Indeed, when Cohn first met Hoover, he was only 23 years old. Over the next three decades or so, before his death from AIDS-related complications in 1986 at the age of 56, Cohn built a well-oiled machine, largely through his close friendships with some of the country's most influential figures.

Among Cohn's friends were top media personalities like [Barbara Walters](#), former CIA directors, [Ronald Reagan and wife Nancy](#), media moguls [Rupert Murdoch](#) and Mort Zuckerman, [numerous celebrities](#), prominent lawyers like [Alan Dershowitz](#), top figures in the Catholic Church and leading Jewish organizations like [B'nai B'rith](#) and the World Jewish Congress. Many of the same names that surrounded Cohn until death in the late 1980s would later come to surround Jeffrey Epstein, with their names later appearing in Epstein's now-infamous "little black book".



Reagan meets with Rupert Murdoch, U.S. Information Agency Director Charles Wick, and Roy Cohn in the Oval Office in 1983. Photo | Reagan presidential library

While President Trump is clearly connected to both Epstein and Cohn, Cohn's network also extends to former President Bill Clinton, whose friend and longtime political advisor, Richard "[Dirty Dick](#)" Morris, was [Cohn's cousin and close associate](#). Morris was also close to Clinton's former communications director, George Stephanopoulos, who is [also associated with](#) Jeffrey Epstein.

Yet, these were only Cohn's connections to respectable members of the establishment. He was also known for his





As Part II of this exclusive investigation will reveal, Cohn and Epstein, and the sexual blackmail operations they ran share many things in common, including not only many of the same famous friends and patrons, but also connections to intelligence agencies and consortiums of mob-linked businessmen, the modern-day equivalents of Samuel Bronfman and Lewis Rosenstiel who have since rebranded as “philanthropists.”

Part II will also reveal that Cohn’s operation was known to have successors, as revealed by a series of scandals in the early 1990s that have since been swept under the rug. The significant amount of overlap between Epstein’s and Cohn’s covert activities in sexual blackmail and their ties to many of the same powerful individuals and circles of influence strongly suggest that Epstein was one of Cohn’s successors.

As will be shown in the final installment of this report, Epstein is only the latest incarnation of a much older, more extensive and sophisticated operation that offers a frightening window into how deeply tied the U.S. government is to the modern-day equivalents of organized crime, making it a racket truly too big to fail.

Feature photo | A composite image shows from left to right, Lewis Rosenstiel, Jeffrey Epstein, and Roy Cohn.
Graphic | Emma Fiala

***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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Mega Group, Maxwells and Mossad: The Spy Story at the Heart of the Jeffrey Epstein Scandal



As billionaire pedophile and alleged sex-trafficker, Jeffrey Epstein sits in prison, reports have continued to surface about his reported links to intelligence, his financial ties to several companies and “charitable” foundations, and his friendships with the rich and powerful as well as top politicians.

While [Part I](#) and [Part II](#) of this series, “The Jeffrey Epstein Scandal: Too Big to Fail,” have focused on the widespread nature of sexual blackmail operations in recent American history and their ties to the heights of American political power and the U.S. intelligence community, one key aspect of Epstein’s own sex-trafficking and blackmail operation that warrants examination is Epstein’s ties to Israeli intelligence and his ties to the “informal” pro-Israel philanthropist faction known as “the Mega Group.”

The Mega Group’s role in the Epstein case has garnered some attention, as Epstein’s main financial patron for decades, billionaire Leslie Wexner, was a co-founder of the group that unites several well-known businessmen with a penchant for pro-Israel and ethno-philanthropy (i.e., philanthropy benefiting a single ethnic or ethno-religious group). However, as this report will show, another uniting factor among Mega Group members is deep ties to organized crime, specifically the organized crime network discussed in [Part I](#) of this series, which was largely led by notorious American mobster Meyer Lansky.



By virtue of the role of many Mega Group members as major political donors in both the U.S. and Israel, several of its most notable members have close ties to the governments of both countries as well as their intelligence communities. As this report and a subsequent report will show, the Mega Group also had close ties to two businessmen who worked for Israel’s Mossad — Robert Maxwell and Marc Rich — as well as to top Israeli politicians, including past and present prime ministers with deep ties to Israel’s intelligence community.

One of those businessmen working for the Mossad, Robert Maxwell, will be discussed at length in this report. Maxwell, who was a business partner of Mega Group co-founder Charles Bronfman, aided the successful Mossad plot to plant a trapdoor in U.S.-created software that was then sold to governments and companies throughout the world. That plot’s success was largely due to the role of a close associate of then-President Ronald Reagan and an American politician close to Maxwell, who later helped aid Reagan in the cover-up of the Iran Contra scandal.

Years later, Maxwell’s daughter — Ghislaine Maxwell — would join Jeffrey Epstein’s “inner circle” at the same time Epstein was bankrolling a similar software program now being marketed for critical electronic infrastructure in the U.S. and abroad. That company has deep and troubling connections to Israeli military intelligence, associates of the Trump administration, and the Mega Group.

Epstein appears to have ties to Israeli intelligence and has well-documented ties to influential Israeli politicians and the Mega Group. Yet, those entities are not isolated in and of themselves, as many also connect to the organized crime network and powerful alleged pedophiles discussed in previous installments of this series.

Perhaps the best illustration of how the connections between many of these players often meld together can be seen in Ronald Lauder: a Mega Group member, former member of the Reagan administration, long-time donor to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's Likud Party, as well as a long-time friend of Donald Trump and Roy Cohn.

From cosmetics heir to political player

One often overlooked yet famous client and friend of Roy Cohn is the billionaire heir to the Estee Lauder cosmetics fortune, Ronald Lauder. Lauder is often described in the press as a "leading Jewish philanthropist" and is the president of the World Jewish Congress, yet his many media profiles tend to leave out his highly political past.

In [a statement](#) given by Lauder to *New York Times* reporter Maggie Haberman in 2018, the cosmetics heir noted that he has known Trump for over 50 years, going back at least to the early 1970s. According to Lauder, his relationship with Trump began when Trump was a student at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, which Lauder also attended.



President-elect Trump walks with Ronald Lauder after meeting at Mar-a-Lago, Dec. 28, 2016, in Palm Beach, Fla. Evan Vucci | AP

Though the exact nature of their early friendship is unclear, it is evident that they shared many of the same connections, including to the man who would later count them both as his clients, Roy Cohn. While much has been said of the ties between Cohn and Trump, Cohn was particularly close to Lauder's mother, Estee Lauder (born Josephine Mentzer). Estee was even counted among Cohn's most high-profile friends in [his New York Times obituary](#).

A small window into the Lauder-Cohn relationship surfaced briefly in [a 2016 article](#) in *Politico* about a 1981 dinner party held at Cohn's weekend home in Greenwich, Connecticut. The party was attended by Ronald Lauder's parents, Estee and Joe, as well as Trump and his then-wife Ivana, who [had a weekend home](#) just two miles away. That party was held soon after Cohn had helped Reagan secure the presidency and had reached the height of his political influence. At the party, Cohn offered toasts to Reagan and to then-Senator for New York Alfonse D'Amato, who [would later urge](#) Ronald Lauder to run for political office.

Two years later, in 1983, Ronald Lauder — whose only professional experience at that point was working for his parent's cosmetics company — [was appointed](#) to serve as United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Affairs. Soon after his appointment, he [served on](#) the Dinner Tribute Committee for a dinner hosted by the Jewish fraternal and strongly pro-Israel organization B'nai B'rith, the parent organization of the controversial Anti-Defamation League (ADL), in Roy Cohn's honor. Cohn's influential father, Albert Cohn, was [the long-time president](#) of B'nai B'rith's powerful New England-New York chapter and Roy Cohn himself was a member of B'nai B'rith's Banking and Finance Lodge.

The dinner [specifically sought](#) to honor Cohn for his pro-Israel advocacy and his efforts to "fortify" Israel's economy, and its honorary chairmen included media mogul Rupert Murdoch, Donald Trump and then-head of Bear Stearns Alan Greenberg, all of whom [are connected](#) to Jeffrey Epstein.

During his time as deputy assistant secretary of defense, Lauder was also very active in Israeli politics and had already become an ally of the then-Israeli representative to the United Nations and future prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu. Lauder would go on to be one of the most important individuals in Netanyahu's rise to power, particularly during his upset victory in 1996, and [a major financier](#) of Israel's right-wing Likud Party.

In 1986, the year that Roy Cohn died, Lauder left his post at the Pentagon and became the U.S. ambassador to Austria, where his tenure was shaped by [his confrontations](#) with the then-Austrian president and former Nazi collaborator, Kurt Waldheim. Lauder's interest in Austrian politics has continued well into recent years, culminating in accusations that he [sought to manipulate](#) Austrian elections in 2012.

After leaving his ambassadorship, Lauder [founded](#) the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation in 1987 and later went on to run for Mayor of New York against Rudy Giuliani in 1989. Lauder [was encouraged](#) to run by then-Senator Alfonse D'Amato, who had close ties to Roy Cohn and his long-time law partner Tom Bolan, who [was D'Amato's adviser](#). At the aforementioned 1983 B'nai B'rith dinner honoring Cohn, D'Amato was the featured speaker.

The likely reason was that Giuliani, though once an ally of the "Roy Cohn machine," was at the time [deeply disliked](#) by the late Cohn's associates for prosecuting Cohn's former law partner, Stanley Friedman, for racketeering, conspiracy and other charges. Giuliani also had a history of bitter disagreements with D'Amato. Lauder's primary campaign, though unsuccessful, was noted for its viciousness and its cost, as it [burned through](#) more than \$13 million.

A few years later, in the early 1990s, Lauder would join a newly formed group that has long evaded scrutiny from the media but has recently become of interest in connection with the Jeffrey Epstein scandal: the Mega Group.

Lauder, Epstein and the mysterious Austrian passport

Before getting to the Mega Group, it is worth noting one particular act apparently undertaken by Lauder while he was U.S. ambassador to Austria that has recently come to light in relation to the arrest in early July of Jeffrey Epstein, a finding first reported by journalist Edward Szall. When police recently discovered an Austrian passport with Epstein's picture and a fake name after raiding his Manhattan

residence, the source and purpose of the passport came under media scrutiny.

According to [the Associated Press](#), Epstein's defense lawyers specifically argued that "a friend gave it to him [Epstein] in the 1980s after some Jewish-Americans were informally advised to carry identification bearing a non-Jewish name when traveling internationally during a period when hijackings were more common." This claim appears to be related to concerns that followed the [hijacking of Air France Flight 139](#) in 1976 when Israeli and Jewish hostages were separated from other hostages based largely on the passports in their possession.

Given that Epstein was unable to meet the conventional qualifications for an Austrian passport — including long-term residency in Austria (the passport lists him as a resident of Saudi Arabia) and fluency in German — it appears that the only way to have acquired an Austrian passport was by *unconventional* means, meaning assistance from a well-connected Austrian official or foreign diplomat with clout in Austria.



Ronald Lauder, right, and Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima pose with students from the Lauder Chabad School in Vienna, Austria in 1999. Martin Gnedt | AP

Lauder, then-ambassador to Austria for the Reagan administration, would have been well-positioned to acquire such a passport, particularly for the reason cited by Epstein's attorneys that Jewish-Americans could be targeted during travel, and in light of Lauder's very public concerns over threats Jews face from certain terror groups. Furthermore, the passport had been issued in 1987, when Lauder was still serving as an ambassador.

In addition, Lauder [was](#) well-connected to Epstein's former patron — former head of Bear Stearns Alan Greenberg, who had hired Epstein in the late 1970s immediately after the latter was fired from the Dalton School — and Donald Trump, [another friend](#) of Lauder and Greenberg who began his friendship with Epstein in 1987, the same year the fake Austrian passport was issued. In 1987, Epstein also began his relationship with his principal financier, Leslie Wexner, who is also closely associated with Lauder (though some sources claim that Epstein and Wexner first met in 1985 but that their strong business relationship was not established until 1987).

Though Epstein's defense attorney declined to reveal the identity of the "friend" who provided him with the fake Austrian passport, Lauder was both well-positioned to acquire it in Austria and also deeply connected to the Mega Group, which was co-founded by Epstein's patron Leslie Wexner and to which Epstein has many connections. These connections to both the Austrian government and to Epstein's mentor make Lauder the most likely person to have acquired the document on Epstein's behalf.

Furthermore, Epstein and the Mega Group's ties to the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad, also suggest Lauder was involved in procuring the passport, in light of his close ties to the Israeli government and the fact that Mossad [has a history](#) of using ambassadors abroad to procure false, foreign passports for its operatives.

Lauder himself has been alleged to have ties to Mossad, as he is a long-time funder of IDC Herzliya, an Israeli university [closely associated with](#) Mossad and their recruiters as well as Israeli military intelligence. Lauder even [founded](#) IDC Herzliya's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy.

Furthermore, Lauder co-founded the Eastern European broadcasting network CETV with Mark Palmer, a former U.S. diplomat, Kissinger aide and Reagan speechwriter. Palmer is better known for co-founding the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), an organization often described as an accessory to U.S. intelligence, and one whose first president confessed to [the Washington Post](#) that "a lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA." A 2001 report in the *Evening Standard* noted that Epstein [once claimed](#) that during the 1980s he worked for the CIA, but Epstein later backed away from that assertion.

The origins of the Mega Group Mafia

The Mega Group — a secretive group of billionaires to which Lauder belongs — was formed in 1991 by Charles Bronfman and Leslie Wexner, the latter of whom has received considerable media scrutiny following the July arrest of his former protege Jeffrey Epstein. [Media profiles](#) of the group paint it as "a loosely organized club of 20 of the nation's wealthiest and most influential Jewish businessmen" focused on "philanthropy and Jewishness," with membership dues upwards of \$30,000 per year. Yet several of its most prominent members have ties to organized crime.

Mega Group members founded and/or are closely associated with some of the most well-known pro-Israel organizations. For instance, members Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt [formed](#) Birthright Taglit with the backing of then- and current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Steinhardt, an atheist, has stated that his motivation in helping to found the group was to advance [his own belief](#) that devotion to and faith in the state of Israel should serve as "a substitute for [Jewish] theology."

Other well-known groups associated with the Mega Group include the World Jewish Congress — whose past president, Edgar Bronfman, and current president, Ronald Lauder, are both Mega Group members — and B'nai B'rith, particularly its spin-off known as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The Bronfman brothers were major donors to the ADL, with Edgar Bronfman [serving as](#) the ADL's honorary national vice-chair for several years.



Former Israeli president Shimon Peres, second from left, listens to Edgar Bronfman during a 1995 lunch thrown in Peres' honor. From left are: Laurence Tisch, Chairman, President and Chief executive officer of CBS; Israeli Ambassador to the United States. Itamar Rabinowitz and Bronfman. David Karp | AP

When Edgar Bronfman died in 2013, long-time ADL Director [Abe Foxman said](#), "Edgar was for many years Chair of our Liquor Industry Division, Chair of our New York Appeal, and one of our most significant benefactors." Other Mega Group members that are donors and major supporters of the ADL include [Ronald Lauder](#), [Michael Steinhardt](#) and the late [Max Fisher](#). As previously mentioned, Roy Cohn's father was a long-time leader of B'nai B'rith's influential New England-New York chapter and Cohn was later a celebrated member of its banking and finance lodge.

In addition, Mega Group members have also been key players in the pro-Israel lobby in the United States. For instance, Max Fisher of the Mega Group [founded](#) the National Jewish Coalition, [now known as](#) the Republican Jewish Coalition — the main [pro-Israel neoconservative political lobbying group](#), known for its support of hawkish policies, and whose current chief patrons, Sheldon Adelson and Bernard Marcus, are among Donald Trump's top donors.

Though the Mega Group has officially existed only since 1991, the use of "philanthropy" to provide cover for more unscrupulous lobbying or business activities was pioneered decades earlier by Sam Bronfman, the father of Mega Group members Edgar and Charles Bronfman. While other North American elites like J.D. Rockefeller had previously used philanthropic giving as a means of laundering their reputations, Bronfman's approach to philanthropy was unique because it was focused on giving specifically to other members of his own ethno-religious background.

Sam Bronfman, as was detailed in [Part I](#) of this series, had long-standing deep ties to organized crime, specifically Meyer Lansky's organized crime syndicate. Yet, Bronfman's private ambition, according to those close to him, was to become a respected member of high society. As a consequence, Bronfman worked hard to remove the stain that his mob associations had left on his public reputation in Canada and abroad. He accomplished this by becoming a leader in Canada's Zionist movement and, by the end of the 1930s, he [was head](#) of the Canadian Jewish Congress and had begun to make a name for himself as a philanthropist for Jewish causes.

Yet even some of Bronfman's activism and philanthropy had hints of the mobster-like reputation he tried so hard to shake. For instance, Bronfman was actively involved in the illegal shipping of arms to Zionist paramilitaries in Palestine prior to 1948, specifically as [a co-founder](#) of the National Conference for Israeli and Jewish Rehabilitation that [smuggled weapons](#) to the paramilitary group Haganah.

At the same time Bronfman was abetting the illegal smuggling of weapons to the Haganah, his associates in the criminal underworld were doing the same. After World War II, close aides of David Ben-Gurion, who would later become the first prime minister of Israel and was instrumental in the founding of Mossad, [forged tight-knit relationships](#) with Meyer Lansky, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, Mickey Cohen and other Jewish gangsters of the period. They used their clandestine networks to establish a vast arms smuggling network between the United States and Zionist settlements in Palestine, arming both the Haganah and the Irgun paramilitary groups. As noted in Part I of this report, at the same time these gangsters were aiding the illegal arming of Zionist paramilitaries, they were strengthening their ties to U.S. intelligence that had first been formally (though covertly) established in World War II.

After Israel was founded, Sam Bronfman [worked with](#) future Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to negotiate the sale of Canadian armaments at half-price to Israel and the bargain weapons purchase was paid for entirely by a fundraising dinner hosted by Bronfman and his wife. Many years later, Peres would go on [to introduce](#) another future prime minister of Israel, Ehud Barak, to Jeffrey Epstein.

The rest of the Bronfman family's march on "the road to respectability" was undertaken by Bronfman's children, who married into aristocratic families such as [the European Rothschilds](#) and the Wall Street "royalty" of [the Lehmans and the Loeb's](#).

The Bronfmans' newfound respectability did not mean that their association with the Lansky-led criminal empire had dissolved. Indeed, prominent members of the Seagrams dynasty came under fire in the 1960s and 1970s for their [close association](#) with Willie "Obie" Obront, a major figure in Canadian organized crime, whom Canadian professor Stephen Schneider has referred to as the Meyer Lansky of Canada.

However, Edgar and Charles Bronfman were hardly the only members of the Mega Group with deep and long-standing ties to the Lansky-led National Crime Syndicate. Indeed, one of the group's prominent members, hedge fund manager Michael Steinhardt, opened up about his own family ties to Lansky in his autobiography *No Bull: My Life in and out the Markets*, where he noted that his father, Sol "Red McGee" Steinhardt, was [Lansky's jewel fence of choice](#) and [a major player](#) in New York's criminal underworld. Sol Steinhardt was also his son's first client on Wall Street and helped him jumpstart his career in finance.

The ties between the Mega Group and the National Crime Syndicate don't stop there. Another prominent member of the Mega Group with ties to this same criminal network is Max Fisher, who has been described as Wexner's mentor and is also alleged [to have worked](#) with Detroit's "Purple Gang" during Prohibition and beyond. The Purple Gang were part of the network that smuggled Bronfman liquor from Canada into the United State during Prohibition, and one of its founders, Abe Bernstein, was [a close associate](#) of both Meyer Lansky and Moe Dalitz. Fisher was a [key adviser](#) to several U.S. presidents, beginning with Dwight D. Eisenhower, as well as to Henry Kissinger.



Max Fisher, center, and Henry Kissinger, right, meet with leaders of Jewish organizations prior to Kissinger's 1975 Middle East trip. Henry Burroughs | AP

In addition to Fisher, Mega Group member Ronald Lauder was connected to Roy Cohn and Tom Bolan, both of whom were closely associated with this same Lansky-led crime network (see [Part I](#) and [Part II](#)) and who regularly represented top Mafia figures in court. Furthermore, another member of the Mega Group, director Steven Spielberg, is [a well-known protégé](#) of Lew Wasserman, the mob-connected media mogul and long-time backer of Ronald Reagan's film and later political career, discussed in [Part II](#) of this series.

One surprise connection to Cohn involves Mega Group member, and former president of U.S. weapons firm General Dynamics, Lester Crown, whose brother-in-law is David Schine, Cohn's confidant and alleged lover during the McCarthy hearings, [whose relationship with Cohn](#) helped bring about the downfall of McCarthyism.

Another member of the Mega Group worth noting is Laurence Tisch, who owned *CBS News* for several years and founded Loews Corporation. Tisch is notable for his [work for](#) the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the CIA, where Donald Barr, who hired Epstein at the Dalton School, also served and which forged ties with Lansky's criminal empire during World War II.

Wexner's mansions and the Shapiro murder

Leslie "Les" Wexner, the other Mega Group co-founder, also has ties to organized crime. Wexner's ties to Jeffrey Epstein have come under scrutiny following the latter's recent arrest, as Wexner was the only publicly acknowledged client of Epstein's suspicious hedge fund, the source of much of this wealth, and [the previous owner](#) of Epstein's \$56 million Manhattan townhouse, which Wexner transferred to an Epstein-controlled entity for free.

Before Epstein received the townhouse, Wexner appears to have used the residence for some unconventional purposes, noted in [a 1996 *New York Times* article](#) on the then-Wexner-owned residence, which included "a bathroom reminiscent of James Bond movies: hidden beneath a stairway, lined with lead to provide shelter from attack and supplied with closed-circuit television screens and a telephone, both concealed in a cabinet beneath the sink." The *Times* article does not speculate as to the purpose of this equipment, though the allusion to famous fictional superspy James Bond suggests that it may have been used to snoop on guests or conduct electronic surveillance.

The 1996 *Times* article also noted that, after Wexner bought the residence for \$13.2 million in 1989, he spent millions more decorating and furnishing the home, including the addition of the electronic equipment in the "James Bond" bathroom, only to apparently never live in it. The *Times*, which interviewed Epstein for the piece, quoted him as saying that "Les never spent more than two months there." Epstein told the *Times*, which identified Epstein as Wexner's "protégé and one of his financial advisers," that the house, by that time, already belonged to him.

That same year, Epstein was commissioning artwork for Wexner's Ohio mansion. A [recent article](#) from the *Times* noted that:

In the summer of 1996, Maria Farmer was working on an art project for Mr. Epstein in Mr. Wexner's Ohio mansion. While she was there, Mr. Epstein sexually assaulted her, according to an affidavit Ms. Farmer filed earlier this year in federal court in Manhattan. She said that she fled the room and called the police, but that Mr. Wexner's security staff refused to let her leave for 12 hours."

Farmer's account strongly suggests that, given the behavior of his personal security staff at his mansion following Epstein's alleged assault on Farmer, Wexner was well aware of Epstein's predatory behavior towards young women. This is compounded by claims made by Alan Dershowitz — a former lawyer for and friend of Epstein's, who has also been accused of raping underage girls — that Wexner [has also been accused](#) of raping underage girls exploited by Epstein on at least seven occasions.

The presence of the electronic equipment in his home's bathroom, other oddities related to the townhouse, and aspects of the links between Epstein and Wexner suggest there is more to Wexner, who has rather successfully developed a public image of a respectable businessman and philanthropist, much like other prominent members of the Mega Group.



Leslie Wexner and his wife Abigail tour the “Transfigurations” exhibit at the Wexner Center for the Arts. Jay LaPrete | AP

However, bits and pieces of Wexner’s private secrets have occasionally bubbled up, only to be subjected to rapid cover-ups amidst concerns of “libeling” the powerful and well-connected billionaire “philanthropist.”

In 1985, Columbus (Ohio) lawyer Arthur Shapiro [was murdered](#) in broad daylight at point-blank range in what was largely referred to as a “mob style murder.” The homicide still remains unsolved, likely due to the fact that then-Columbus Police Chief James Jackson ordered the destruction of key documents of his department’s investigation into the murder.

Jackson’s ordering of the documents’ destruction came to light years later in 1996, when he was under investigation for corruption. According to [the Columbus Dispatch](#), Jackson justified the destruction of one “[viable and valuable](#)” report because he felt that it “was so filled with wild speculation about prominent business leaders that it was potentially libelous.” The nature of this “wild speculation” was that “millionaire businessmen in Columbus and Youngstown were linked to the ‘mob-style murder.’”

Though Jackson’s efforts were meant to keep this “libelous” report far from public view, it was eventually [obtained by Bob Fittrakis](#) — attorney, journalist, and executive director of the Columbus Institute for Contemporary Journalism — after he was “accidentally” sent a copy of the report in 1998 as part of a public records request.

The report, titled “[Shapiro Homicide Investigation: Analysis and Hypothesis](#),” names Leslie Wexner as linked “with associates reputed to be organized crime figures” and also lists the names of businessman Jack Kessler, former Columbus City Council President and Wexner associate Jerry Hammond, and former Columbus City Council member Les Wright as also being involved in Shapiro’s murder.

The report also noted that Arthur Shapiro’s law firm — Schwartz, Shapiro, Kelm & Warren — represented Wexner’s company, The Limited, and states that “prior to his death, Arthur Shapiro managed this account [The Limited] for the law firm.” It also noted that, at the time of his death, Shapiro “was the subject of an investigation by the Internal Revenue Service because he had failed to file income tax returns for some seven years prior to his death, and he had invested in some questionable tax shelters.” It also stated that his death prevented Shapiro from his planned testimony at a grand jury hearing about these “questionable tax shelters.”

As to Wexner’s alleged links to organized crime, the report focuses on the close business relationship between Wexner’s The Limited and Francis Walsh, whose trucking company “[had] done an excess of 90 percent of the Limited’s trucking business around the time of Shapiro’s murder,” according to the report. Walsh was named in [a 1988 indictment](#) as a “co-conspirator” of Genovese crime family boss Anthony “Fat Tony” Salerno, whose long-time lawyer was Roy Cohn; and the Shapiro murder report stated that Walsh was “still considered associates of the Genovese/LaRocca crime family, and Walsh was still providing truck transportation for The Limited.”

Notably, the Genovese crime family has long formed a key part of the National Crime Syndicate, as its former head, Charles “Lucky” Luciano, [co-created](#) the criminal organization with his close friend Meyer Lansky. Upon Luciano’s imprisonment and subsequent deportation from the United States, Lansky took over the syndicate’s U.S. operations and his association with Luciano’s successors continued until Lansky’s death in 1983.

The “Mega” Mystery and the Mossad

In May 1997, the *Washington Post* broke [an explosive story](#) — long since forgotten — based on an intercepted phone call made between a Mossad official in the U.S. and his superior in Tel Aviv that discussed the Mossad’s efforts to obtain a secret U.S. government document. According to the *Post*, the Mossad official stated during the phone call that “Israeli Ambassador Eliahu Ben Elissar had asked him whether he could obtain a copy of the letter given to [Palestinian leader Yasser] Arafat by [then-Secretary of State Warren] Christopher on Jan. 16, the day after the Hebron accord was signed by Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.”

The *Post* article continued:

According to a source who viewed a copy of the NSA transcript of the conversation, the intelligence officer, speaking in Hebrew, said, ‘The ambassador wants me to go to Mega to get a copy of this letter.’ The source said the supervisor in Tel Aviv rejected the request, saying, ‘This is not something we use Mega for.’”

The leaked communication led to an investigation that sought to identify an individual code-named “Mega” that the *Post* said “may be someone in the U.S. government who has provided information to the Israelis in the past,” a concern that subsequently spawned a fruitless FBI investigation. The Mossad [later claimed](#) that “Mega” was merely a codeword for the U.S.’ CIA, but the FBI and NSA were unconvinced by that claim and [believed](#) that it was a senior U.S. government official that had potentially once been involved in working with Jonathan Pollard, the former U.S. naval intelligence analyst later convicted of spying for the Mossad.

Almost one year to the day after the “Mega” spy scandal broke, the *Wall Street Journal* was [the first outlet](#) to report on the existence of a little-known organization of billionaires that was “informally” called the Mega Group and had been founded years prior in 1991. The report made no mention of the spy scandal that had spread concerns of Israeli espionage in the U.S. only a year prior. However, the

group's distinctive "informal" name and the connections of its members to the Mossad and to high-ranking Israeli politicians, including prime ministers, raise the possibility that "Mega" was not an individual, as the FBI and NSA had believed, but a *group*.

In 1997, when the "Mega" spy scandal broke, Netanyahu had recently become prime minister of Israel after an upset victory, a victory that was [largely credited](#) to one well-connected Netanyahu backer in particular, Ronald Lauder. Beyond being a major donor, Lauder had brought Arthur Finklestein on to work for Netanyahu's 1996 campaign, whose strategies were credited for Netanyahu's surprise win. Netanyahu was close enough to Lauder that he personally enlisted Lauder and George Nader to serve as his peace envoys to Syria.



Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara with Ronald Lauder in 1997. Photo | Reuters

Nader, who was connected to the Trump 2016 campaign and Trump ally and [Blackwater](#) founder Erik Prince, was [recently hit](#) with federal child sex trafficking charges last month, soon after Jeffrey Epstein had been arrested on similar charges. At the time Nader was picked to work with Lauder on Netanyahu's behalf, he had [already been caught](#) possessing large amounts of child pornography on two separate occasions, first in 1984 and later in 1990.

This strong connection between Netanyahu and Lauder during the time of the 1997 "Mega" spy scandal is important considering Mossad answers directly to Israel's prime minister.

Another possible connection between the Mega Group and the Mossad owes to the Mega Group's ties to Meyer Lansky's criminal network. As was detailed in Part I, Lansky had established deep ties to U.S. intelligence after World War II and was also connected to the Mossad through Mossad official Tibor Rosenbaum, whose bank was frequently used by Lansky to launder money. In addition, Lansky collaborated on at least one occasion with notorious Mossad "superspy" Rafi Eitan, who he [helped acquire](#) sensitive electronic equipment possessed only by the CIA but coveted by Israeli intelligence. Eitan is best known in the U.S. for being the Mossad handler of Jonathan Pollard.

Notably, Eitan was [the main source](#) of claims that the code-word "Mega" used by the Mossad officials in 1997 referred to the CIA and not to a potential source in the U.S. government once linked to Pollard's spying activities, making his claims as to the true meaning of the term somewhat dubious.

Given that the organized crime network tied to the Mega Group had ties to both U.S. and Israeli intelligence, the "Mega" codeword could plausibly have referred to this secretive group of billionaires. More supporting evidence for this theory comes from the fact that prominent members of the Mega Group were business partners of Mossad agents, including media mogul Robert Maxwell and commodities trader Marc Rich.

The mysterious Maxwells

The Maxwell family has become a source of renewed media interest following Jeffrey Epstein's arrest, as Ghislaine Maxwell, long described in the media as a British "socialite," was publicly cited as Epstein's long-time "on and off" girlfriend, and Epstein's victims, as well as former wives of Epstein's friends, have claimed that she was Epstein's "pimp" and procured underage girls for his sexual blackmail operation. Ghislaine Maxwell is [also alleged](#) to have engaged in the rape of the girls she procured for Epstein and to have used them to produce child pornography.

Ghislaine was the favorite and youngest daughter of media mogul Robert Maxwell. Maxwell, born Jan Ludvick Hoch, had joined the British Army in World War II. Afterwards, according to authors [John Loftus and Mark Aarons](#), he greatly influenced the Czechoslovakian government's decision to arm Zionist paramilitaries during the 1948 war that resulted in Israel's creation as a state, and Maxwell himself was also involved in the smuggling of aircraft parts to Israel.

Around this time, Maxwell was approached by British intelligence outfit MI6 and offered a position that Maxwell ultimately declined. MI6 then [classified](#) him as "Zionist — loyal only to Israel" and made him a person of interest. He later became an agent of the Mossad, according to several books including Seymour Hersh's *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*, and *Robert Maxwell: Israel's Superspy* by Gordon Thomas and Martin Dillon.

According to [Victor Ostrovsky](#), a former Mossad case officer:

Mossad was financing many of its operations in Europe from money stolen from Maxwell's newspaper pension fund. They got their hands on the funds almost as soon as Maxwell made the purchase of the Mirror Newspaper Group with money lent to him by Mossad."

In exchange for his services, the Mossad helped Maxwell satisfy his sexual appetite during his visits to Israel, [providing him](#) with prostitutes, "the service maintained for blackmail purposes." It was later revealed that the hotel in which he stayed in Israel was bugged with cameras, allowing the Mossad to acquire "a small library of video footage of Maxwell in sexually compromising positions." As with the CIA, the Mossad's use of blackmail against both friend and foe is [well-documented](#) and known to be [extensive](#).

Maxwell was also a close associate and friend of Israeli "superspy" Rafi Eitan, who, as previously mentioned, was Jonathan Pollard's handler and who had previously worked directly with Meyer Lansky. Eitan [had learned](#) of a revolutionary new software being used by the U.S. government known as "Promis" from Earl Brian, a long-time associate and aide to Ronald Reagan. Promis is often considered the forerunner to the "Prism" software used by spy agencies today and was developed by William Hamilton, who leased the software to the U.S. government through his company, Inslaw, in 1982.



Ariel Sharon (right) meets with Robert Maxwell in Jerusalem on Feb. 20, 1990. Photo | AP

According to author and former *BBC* investigative journalist Gordon Thomas, Brian [was angry](#) that the U.S. Department of Justice was successfully using Promis to go after organized crime and money-laundering activities and Eitan felt that the program could aid Israel. At the time, Eitan was the director of the now defunct Israeli military intelligence agency Lekem, which gathered scientific and technical intelligence abroad from both public and covert sources, especially in relation to Israel's nuclear weapons program.

A plan was hatched to [install a "trapdoor"](#) into the software and then market Promis throughout the world, providing the Mossad with invaluable intelligence on the operations of its enemies and allies while also providing Eitan and Brian with copious amounts of cash. According to the testimony of ex-Mossad official Ari Ben-Menashe, Brian [provided a copy](#) of Promis to Israel's military intelligence, which contacted an Israeli American programmer living in California who then planted the "trapdoor" in the software. The CIA was later said to have installed its *own* trapdoor in the software but it is unknown if they did so with a version of the already bugged software and how widely it was adopted relative to the version bugged by Israeli intelligence.

After the trapdoor was inserted, the problem became selling the bugged version of the software to governments as well as private companies around the world, particularly in areas of interest. Brian first attempted to buy out Inslaw and Promis and then use that same company to sell the bugged version.

Unsuccessful, Brian turned to his close friend, then-Attorney General Ed Meese whose Justice Department then [abruptly refused](#) to make the payments to Inslaw that were stipulated by the contract, essentially using the software for free, which Inslaw claimed to be theft. Some have speculated that Meese's role in that decision was shaped, not only by his friendship with Brian, but the fact that his wife was [a major investor](#) in Brian's business ventures. Meese would later become an adviser to Donald Trump when he was president-elect.

Inslaw was forced to declare bankruptcy as a result of Meese's actions and sued the Justice Department. The court [later found](#) that the Meese-led department "took, converted, stole" the software through "trickery, fraud and deceit."

With Inslaw out of the way, Brian sold the software all over the world. Eitan later recruited Robert Maxwell to become another Promis salesman, which he did remarkably well, even succeeding in selling the software to Soviet intelligence and [conspiring with](#) Republican Texas Senator John Tower to have the software adopted by the U.S. government laboratory at Los Alamos. Dozens of countries used the software on their most carefully guarded computer systems, unaware that Mossad now had access to everything Promis touched.

Whereas the Mossad's past reliance on gathering intelligence had relied on the same tactics used by its equivalents in the U.S. and elsewhere, the widespread adoption of the Promis software, largely through the actions of Earl Brian and Robert Maxwell, gave the Mossad a way to gather not just troves of counterintelligence data, but also blackmail on other intelligence agencies and powerful figures.

Indeed, Promis' backdoor and adoption by intelligence agencies all over the world essentially provided the Mossad with access to troves of blackmail that the CIA and FBI had acquired on their friends and foes for over half a century. Strangely, in recent years, the FBI has [sought to hide](#) information related to Robert Maxwell's connection to the Promis scandal.

According to [journalist Robert Fisk](#), Maxwell was also involved in the Mossad abduction of Israeli nuclear weapons whistleblower Vanunu Mordechai. Mordechai had attempted to provide the media with information on the extent of Israel's nuclear weapons program, which was eventually published by the *Sunday Times of London*. Yet, Mordechai had also contacted the *Daily Mirror* with the information, the *Mirror* being an outlet that was owned by Maxwell and whose foreign editor was a close Maxwell associate and alleged Mossad asset, Nicholas Davies. Journalist Seymour Hersh alleged that Davies had also been involved in Israeli arms deals.

Per Fisk, it was Maxwell who contacted the Israeli Embassy in London and told them of Mordechai's activities. This led to Mordechai's entrapment by a female Mossad agent who seduced him as part of a "honey trap" operation that led to his kidnapping and later imprisonment in Israel. Mordechai served an 18-year sentence, 12 years of which were in solitary confinement.

Then, there is the issue of Maxwell's death, widely cited by mainstream and independent media alike as [suspicious and a potential homicide](#). According to authors Gordon Thomas and Martin Dillon, Maxwell had sealed his own fate when he attempted to threaten top Mossad officials with the exposure of certain operations if they did not help him rescue his media empire from crippling debt and financial difficulties. Many of Maxwell's [creditors](#), who had grown increasingly displeased with the media mogul, were Israeli and several of them were alleged to be Mossad-connected themselves.

Thomas and Dillon argue in [their biography](#) of Maxwell's life that the Mossad felt that Maxwell had become more of a liability than an asset and killed him on his yacht three months after he demanded the bailout. On the other extreme are theories that suggest Maxwell committed suicide because of the financial difficulties his empire faced.



Ghislaine Maxwell, far right, Robert Maxwell's daughter, looks on his casket is unloaded from a plane in Jerusalem, Nov. 8, 1991. Heribert Proepper | AP

Some have taken Maxwell's funeral held in Israel as the country's "official" confirmation of Maxwell's service to the Mossad, as it was likened to a state funeral and attended [by no less than six](#) serving and former heads of Israeli intelligence. During his funeral service in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir eulogized him and [stated](#): "He has done more for Israel than can today be said." Other [eulogies](#) were given by future Prime Ministers Ehud Olmert (then Health Minister) and Shimon Peres, with the latter [also praising](#) Maxwell's "services" on behalf of Israel.

Swimming in the same swamp

As he built his business empire — and even became a member of Parliament, Maxwell was also doing work for Israeli intelligence, as several of the Israeli companies in which he invested became fronts for the Mossad. In addition, as he became a media mogul, he developed a bitter rivalry with Rupert Murdoch, a close friend of Roy Cohn and an influential figure in American and British media.

Maxwell also partnered with the Bronfman brothers, Edgar and Charles — key figures in the Mega Group. In 1989 Maxwell and Charles Bronfman [partnered up](#) to bid on the *Jerusalem Post* newspaper and the *Post* described the two men as "two of the world's leading Jewish financiers" and their interest in the venture as "developing *The Jerusalem Post* and expanding its influence among world Jewry." A year prior, Maxwell and Bronfman [had become](#) top shareholders in the Israeli pharmaceutical company Teva.

Maxwell also worked with Charles Bronfman's brother Edgar in the late 1980s to convince the Soviet Union to allow Soviet Jews to immigrate to Israel. Edgar's efforts in this regard [have received more attention](#), as it was a defining moment of his decades-long presidency of the World Jewish Congress, of which Ronald Lauder is currently president. Yet, Maxwell had also made [considerable use](#) of his contacts in the Soviet government in this effort.

Maxwell also moved in the circles of the network previously described in Parts I and II in this series. A key example of this is [the May 1989 party](#) Maxwell hosted on his yacht, the *Lady Ghislaine* — named for his youngest daughter and Epstein's future "girlfriend." Attendees of the party included Roy Cohn's protege Donald Trump and his long-time law partner Tom Bolan. A close friend of Nancy Reagan was also present, journalist Mike Wallace, as was literary agent Mort Janklow, who represented Ronald Reagan and two of Cohn's closest friends: journalists William Safire and Barbara Walters.

The CEO of what would soon become Time Warner, Steve Ross, was also invited to the exclusive event. Ross' presence is notable, as he had built his business empire [largely through his association](#) with New York crime lords Manny Kimmel and Abner "Longy" Zwillman. Zwillman was a close friend of Meyer Lansky, Michael Steinhardt's father, and Sam Bronfman, father of Edgar and Charles Bronfman.

Another attendee of the Maxwell yacht party was former Secretary of the Navy and former Henry Kissinger staffer Jon Lehman, who would go on to associate with the controversial neoconservative think tank, Project for a New American Century. Prior to being secretary of the Navy, Lehman had been president of the Abington Corporation, which hired arch-neocon Richard Perle to manage [the portfolio](#) of Israeli arms dealers Shlomo Zabłudowicz and his son Chaim, who paid Abington \$10,000 month. A scandal arose when those [payments continued](#) after both Lehman and Perle joined the Reagan Department of Defense and while Perle was working to persuade the Pentagon to buy arms from companies linked to Zabłudowicz. Perle had been part of the Reagan transition team along with Roy Cohn's long-time friend and law partner Tom Bolan (another Maxwell yacht guest).

In addition to Lehman, another former Kissinger staffer, Thomas Pickering was present at Maxwell's yacht party. Pickering played a minor role in the Iran-Contra affair and, at the time of the Maxwell yacht party, he was U.S. ambassador to Israel. Senator John Tower (R-TX), who allegedly conspired with Maxwell in the Mossad-bugged Promis software at the Los Alamos laboratories, was also present. Tower died just months before Maxwell in [a suspicious plane crash](#).

Ghislaine Maxwell was also at this rather notable event. After her father's mysterious death and alleged murder on the same yacht that bears her name in 1991, she quickly packed her bags and moved to New York City. There, she soon made the acquaintance of Jeffrey Epstein and, a few years later, developed close ties to the Clinton family, which will be discussed in the next installment of this series.

Jeffrey Epstein and the new "Promis"

After it was revealed that Epstein had evaded stricter sentencing in 2008 due to his links to "intelligence," it was the Mossad ties of Ghislaine Maxwell's father that have led many to speculate that Epstein's sexual blackmail operation was sharing incriminating information with the Mossad. Former *CBS* executive producer and current journalist for the media outlet *Narativ*, Zev Shalev, has [since claimed](#) that he independently confirmed that Epstein was tied directly to the Mossad.



Donald and Melania Trump with Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell at the Mar-a-Lago club, Palm Beach, Florida in 2000. Photo | Davidoff Studios

Epstein was a long-time friend of former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who has long-standing and deep ties to Israel's intelligence community. Their decades-long friendship has been the source of recent political attacks targeting Barak, who is running in the Israeli elections against current Prime Minister Netanyahu later this year.

Barak is also close to Epstein's chief patron and Mega Group member Leslie Wexner, whose Wexner Foundation [gave Barak \\$2 million](#) in 2004 for a still unspecified research program. According to Barak, he was first introduced to Epstein by former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who eulogized Robert Maxwell at his funeral and had decades-long ties with the Bronfman family going back to the early 1950s. Peres was also a [frequent participant in programs](#) funded by Leslie Wexner in Israel and [worked closely](#) with the Mossad for decades.

In 2015, a few years after Epstein's release from prison following his conviction for soliciting sex from a minor in 2008, Barak formed a company with Epstein with the chief purpose of investing in an Israeli start-up then known as Reporty. That company, now called Carbyne, sells its signature software to 911 call centers and emergency service providers and is also available to consumers as an app that provides emergency services with access to a caller's camera and location and also runs any caller's identity through any linked government database. It has specifically been marketed by the company itself and the Israeli press as [a solution to mass shootings](#) in the United States and is already being used by at least two U.S. counties.

Israeli media reported that Epstein and Barak were among the company's largest investors. Barak poured millions into the company and it was [recently revealed](#) by *Haaretz* that a significant amount of Barak's total investments in Carbyne was funded by Epstein, making him a "*de facto* partner" in the company. Barak is now [Carbyne's chairman](#).

The company's executive team are all former members of different branches of Israeli intelligence, including the elite military intelligence unit, Unit 8200, that is often likened to Israel's equivalent of the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA). Carbyne's current CEO, Amir Elichai, [served in Unit 8200](#) and tapped former Unit 8200 commander [Pinchas Buchris](#) to serve as the company's director and on its board. In addition to Elichai, another Carbyne co-founder, [Lital Leshem](#), also served in Unit 8200 and later worked for Israeli private spy company Black Cube. Leshem now works for a subsidiary of Erik Prince's company Frontier Services Group, according to the independent media outlet *Narativ*.

The company also includes several tie-ins to the Trump administration, including Palantir founder and Trump ally Peter Thiel — [an investor](#) in Carbyne. In addition, Carbyne's [board of advisers](#) includes former Palantir employee Trac Stephens, who was a member of the Trump transition team, as well as former Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff. [Trump donor and New York real-estate developer](#) Eliot Tawill is also on [Carbyne's board](#), alongside Ehud Barak and Pinchas Buchris.

Narativ, which wrote the first expose on Carbyne after Epstein's arrest, noted that the Chinese government uses a smartphone app very similar to Carbyne as part of its mass surveillance apparatus, even though the original purpose of the app was for improved emergency reporting. According to *Narativ*, the Chinese Carbyne-equivalent "monitors every aspect of a user's life, including personal conversations, power usage, and tracks a user's movement."

Given the history of Robert Maxwell — the father of Epstein's long-time "girlfriend" and young-girl-procuring madam, Ghislaine Maxwell — in promoting the sale of Carbyne's modified Promis software, which was also marketed as a tool to improve government efficacy but was actually a tool of mass surveillance for the benefit of Israeli intelligence, the overlap between Carbyne and Promis is troubling and warrants further investigation.

It is also worth noting that Unit 8200-connected tech start-ups are being widely integrated into U.S. companies and have developed close ties to the U.S. military-industrial complex, with Carbyne being just one example of that trend.

As *MintPress* [previously reported](#), Unit 8200-linked outfits like Team8 have recently hired former National Security Agency (NSA) Director Mike Rogers as a senior advisor and gained prominent Silicon Valley figures, including former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, as key investors. Many American technology companies, from Intel to Google to Microsoft, [have merged with](#) several Unit 8200-connected start-ups in recent years and have been moving many key jobs and operations to Israel with [backing from key Republican donors like Paul Singer](#). Many of those same companies, particularly Google and Microsoft, are also major U.S. government contractors.

Who was Epstein really working for?

Even though Jeffrey Epstein appears to have had ties to the Mossad, this series has revealed that the networks to which Epstein was connected were not Mossad-exclusive, as many of the individuals close to Epstein — Leslie Wexner, for instance — were part of a mob-connected class of oligarchs with deep ties to both the U.S. and Israel. As was discussed in Part I of this series, the sharing of “intelligence” (i.e., blackmail) between intelligence agencies and the same organized crime network connected to the Mega Group goes back decades. With Leslie Wexner of the Mega Group as Epstein’s chief patron, as opposed to a financier with direct ties to the Mossad, a similar relationship is more than likely in the case of the sexual blackmail operation that Epstein ran.

Given that intelligence agencies in both the U.S. and elsewhere often conduct covert operations for the benefit of oligarchs and large corporations as opposed to “national security interest,” Epstein’s ties to the Mega Group suggest that this group holds a unique status and influence in both the governments of the U.S. and of Israel, as well as in other countries (e.g., Russia) that were not explored in this report. This is by virtue of their role as key political donors in both countries, as well as the fact that several of them own powerful companies or financial institutions in both countries. Indeed, many members of the Mega Group have deep ties to Israel’s political class, including to Netanyahu and Ehud Barak as well as to now-deceased figures like Shimon Peres, and to members of the American political class.

Ultimately, the picture painted by the evidence is not a direct tie to a single intelligence agency but a web linking key members of the Mega Group, politicians, and officials in both the U.S. and Israel, and an organized-crime network with deep business and intelligence ties in both nations.

Though this series has so far focused on the ties of this network to main Republican Party affiliates, the next and final installment will reveal the ties developed between this web and the Clintons. As will be revealed, despite the Clintons’ willingness to embrace corrupt dealings during the span of their political careers, their mostly friendly relationship with this network still saw them use the power of sexual blackmail to obtain certain policy decisions that were favorable to their personal and financial interests but not to the Clintons’ political reputation or agendas.

Editor’s note | The original version of this article incorrectly stated that Rafi Eitan was interested in repurposing the American-made Promise software to restore his standing in Israel’s intelligence community caused by the fall-out from the Pollard Affair. The Pollard Affair occurred three years after Eitan had succeeded in repurposing the software and MintPress has removed that incorrect information from the article and regrets the error.

This article also originally neglected to mention that Eitan, at the time of his collaboration with Earl Brian to repurpose the Promis software, was the director of the now-defunct Israeli military intelligence agency Lekem at the time of those events and that information has been added to the story.

Feature photo | 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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