

# AG Bondi faces heat from White House, Trump allies over Epstein files release

The release, which was trumpeted by the AG, revealed almost no new information.

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March 4, 2025, 3:13 PM



**AG Bondi releases 'phase 1' of Jeffrey Epstein DOJ files** The Justice Department released some documents connected to the notorious sex trafficker, but now Attorney General Pam Bondi is accusing the FBI of withholding documents.

When more than a dozen MAGA-aligned activists and social media influencers gathered at the White House last week, they had no idea they were about to be [handed binders](#) titled "Epstein Files: Phase 1" -- and neither did senior White House officials who organized the event, according to multiple sources familiar with the event.

Attorney General Pam Bondi and her team did not inform White House officials in advance that she planned to distribute the binders, which contained almost no new information regarding convicted sex offender and financier [Jeffrey Epstein](#) -- and now

the move has ruffled feathers among those closest to President Donald Trump, including his senior White House staff, sources tell ABC News.

The move faced widespread criticism, not only from Democrats but also from some of the president's most loyal supporters.

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White House staff moved quickly to try and contain the fallout, privately reaching out to influencers who were critical of Bondi and the move online, according to sources.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, responding to a request for comment from ABC News, said, "Everyone is working together as one unified team at the direction of President Trump. Any notion to the contrary is completely false."



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Epstein [died by suicide](#) in 2019 while facing federal child sex trafficking charges. The well-connected financier, who owned a private island estate in the U.S. Virgin Islands, has long been rumored to have kept a "client list" of celebrities and politicians, which right-wing influencers have accused authorities of hiding. Multiple sources familiar with both civil and criminal cases against Epstein say no such list has been discovered.



Attorney General Pam Bondi speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference 2025 at National Harbor, Maryland, Feb. 20, 2025.

Will Oliver/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

The night before last week's event, Bondi told Fox News that the Justice Department planned to publish "a lot of flight logs" and "a lot of names" related to Epstein. However, the binders largely consisted of information previously made public through criminal or civil litigation surrounding Epstein and his longtime associate [Ghislaine Maxwell](#), leading senior White House staffers to question why Bondi was even teasing the release of new information in the first place.

Ahead of the Justice Department's public release, Bondi directed her staff to compile binders of the materials to distribute to the influencers at the event, sources said. She also instructed her team not to inform White House officials of the plan, according to multiple sources, apparently thinking the surprise would be well received inside the West Wing.

The White House had organized the event a week earlier to engage influential pro-Trump voices who the president credits with aiding his 2024 campaign. According to multiple sources, the agenda never included distributing Epstein-related materials.

During the gathering in the Roosevelt Room, influencers including Liz Wheeler, Rogan O'Handley and Chaya Raichik, the creator of Libs of TikTok, [met with Leavitt](#) and Vice

President JD Vance. Then, Bondi and FBI Director Kash Patel entered the room and handed out binders labeled "The Epstein Files: Phase 1" with the words "By Order of Attorney General Pam Bondi & FBI Director Kash Patel" printed on the cover and the word "Declassified" stamped across the top -- though the documents did not contain any official government declassification markings.

The information had not yet been posted on the Justice Department website when press cameras, set up to cover British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's visit, captured influencers leaving the West Wing. Some were seen smiling while holding MAGA hats and the binders -- giving the impression they contained new revelations about one of the most infamous sex trafficking criminals in modern history.

The images quickly went viral, generating a mix of speculation, confusion and outrage across the political spectrum.

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"If you look at the traffic online over the Epstein release, I have never seen the Left and the Right come together in a moment on a debacle," Democratic Rep. Jared Moskowitz said on CNN.

Behind the scenes, Trump White House officials pointed the finger at Bondi, who they say quietly arranged the release without notifying senior staff, multiple sources told ABC News.

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, Republican of Florida, who leads a congressional task force overseeing the release of Epstein-related documents, condemned the move on X, calling it a "complete disappointment" and saying she had not been informed of the plan.

Laura Loomer, a far-right activist and one of Trump's most vocal supporters, also blasted the handling of the release, writing on X: "The Epstein files were released in an unprofessional manner with paid, partisan social media influencers to curate their binders for us. I can't trust anything in the binder. Neither should you."

Bondi proceeded to react to the fallout by accusing the FBI's New York office of withholding information about the Epstein investigation, but did not specify what

material she believed the office to be withholding. She demanded that the office "hand over all records in its possession relating to Epstein" by 8 a.m. last Friday.

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The Epstein material released last week contained previously published pilots' logs and included redactions performed by prosecutors on the case to protect the identities of potential victims, as well as Epstein's so-called "black book" that has previously been made public.

One document never before seen is what the Justice Department is calling "Evidence List," a three-page catalog of material apparently obtained through searches of Epstein's properties in New York and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Bondi claimed in an interview Monday night with Fox's Sean Hannity that she has since received "thousands of pages of documents" that she has the FBI sifting through, but did not detail what exactly had been turned over.

On Monday, James Dennehy, the head of the FBI in New York and a well-regarded leader in the New York law enforcement community, told the office he was forced to submit his resignation on Friday as assistant director-in-charge of one of the FBI's most visible posts. Dennehy said he was not given a reason for the decision.

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