

A. Public Corruption Unit

The Public Corruption Unit, consisting of about 20 AUSAs, including two supervisors, had a busy year focusing on both traditional corruption offenses and other abuses of power ~~by~~ both local and national in scope. The Unit charged numerous law enforcement and correctional officers in the New York City area with various abuses of power, including an excessive force prosecution involving a mentally disturbed homeless victim, and multiple federal correctional officers, including one who has since pled guilty to sexually assaulting numerous female inmates under his watch. The Unit also brought charges of national significance, including campaign finance and related charges against Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, among others; extortion and fraud charges against attorney Michael Avenatti, and sex trafficking charges against former financier Jeffrey Epstein.

At the local level, the Unit successfully prosecuted both local and federal officials, including a former NYPD Detective who used his position to facilitate a scheme to steal tens of thousands of dollars from dozens of New York victims. *U.S. v. Bonanno*, 18 Cr. 427 (PGG). Another police officer, Robert Espinel, became the final defendant to plead guilty in the unit's multi-case prosecution of officials at the NYPD's gun licensing division for accepting bribes to approve and expedite gun licenses. *U.S. v. Robert Espinel*, 17 Cr. 398 (ER). The Unit also brought charges against a sitting Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice for obstructing a federal investigation into fraud and corruption at the Municipal Credit Unit ("MCU") whose board she chaired. *U.S. v. Ash*, 19 Cr. 780 (LAK). Finally, the Unit brought charges against three federal correctional officers at the MCC, one for abusing his position to sexually assault numerous female inmates under his watch over a multi-year period, *U.S. v. Akparanta*, 19 Cr. 363 (LGS), and two for falsifying records intended to conceal their failure to conduct routine rounds and checks on the night Jeffrey Epstein, then an inmate at the MCC, committed suicide. *U.S. v. Noel et al.*, 19 Cr. 830 (AT).

At the national level, the unit brought campaign finance and related charges against four defendants, including Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, based on their participation in a scheme to funnel money to political candidates and committees in the hope of gaining access and influence, including with respect to their efforts to cause the removal of the then-U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine. *U.S. v. Parnas*, 19 Cr. 725 (JPO). The unit also charged Stephen Calk, the CEO and Chairman of the Federal Savings Bank in Chicago, with bank bribery in connection with financing he provided to Paul Manafort with the intent of securing a position within the Trump administration. *U.S. v. Calk*, 19 Cr. 366 (LGS). The unit also successfully prosecuted the operator of a fraudulent political action committee ("PAC") for defrauding tens of thousands of victims into making what they believed to be political or cause-specific contributions under false pretenses, obtaining over \$1.5 million in restitution and forfeiture for victims at sentencing. *U.S. v. Tierney*, 18 Cr. 804 (JMF). In addition, the unit charged a second individual with wire fraud in connection with his efforts to steal money from individuals who thought they were donating to prominent political figures such as Bernie Sanders and Beto O'Rourke. *U.S. v. DuPont*, 19 Cr. 791 (ER). Finally, the unit charged and secured a guilty plea from Natalie Mayflower Sours Edwards, a previous high level official at the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network of the Treasury Department, with the unauthorized leaking of suspicious activity reports. *U.S. v. Edwards*, 19 Cr. 64 (GWR).

The Unit's work in 2019 extended beyond the traditional realm of public officials. In early 2019, the Unit brought novel extortion charges against attorney Michael Avenatti for attempting to extort tens of millions of dollars from the athletic apparel company, Nike. *U.S. v. Avenatti*, 19 Cr. 373 (PGG). Avenatti was also charged in a separate scheme to defraud his former client Stephanie Clifford a/k/a "Stormy Daniels," who had been the recipient of hush money payments in connection with the unit's earlier prosecution of Michael Cohen *U.S. v. Avenatti*, 19 Cr. 374 (JMF). In July 2019, the unit brought sex trafficking charges against the former financier Jeffrey Epstein who over a multi-year period abused dozens of minor victims in New York, Florida and other locations. *U.S. v. Epstein*, 19 Cr. 490 (RMB). While Epstein committed suicide while awaiting trial, at a unique hearing held in connection with the entry of an order of *nolle prosequi*, dozens of Epstein's victims were afforded an opportunity to address the Court and publicly confront their abuser. Finally, in 2019, the Unit successfully completed its prosecution of three cases stemming from corruption in the world of college basketball, including trying to verdict bribery charges against two defendants for making cash payments to university coaches. *U.S. v. Evans*, 17 Cr. 684 (ER), *U.S. v. Person*, 17 Cr. 683 (LAP).