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Judge Orders Stacey Plaskett to Stand Trial in Epstein Case; Tosses Claims Against VI Government

Stacey Plaskett remains the only defendant in a federal lawsuit alleging Epstein-linked trafficking complicity, accused of accepting campaign donations, a \$30K loan, and support in exchange for approving \$300M in tax breaks and shielding his operations.

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, center, remains the sole defendant in a federal lawsuit linked to Epstein. She is accused of accepting political support and financial favors in exchange for aiding his business interests in the USVI.

A federal judge has dismissed most of the civil claims brought against former and current U.S. Virgin Islands officials in a high-profile lawsuit alleging complicity in Jeffrey Epstein's sex

trafficking operation. In a ruling issued Friday, Judge Arun Subramanian of the Southern District of New York granted motions to dismiss all claims against the Government of the Virgin Islands, former Governors John de Jongh and Kenneth Mapp, former Attorney General Vincent Frazer, former Senators Celestino White and Carlton Dowe, and First Lady Cecile de Jongh.

However, the court denied in part a motion to dismiss claims against Delegate Stacey Plaskett, allowing several Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and negligence claims to proceed against her in her individual capacity.

The plaintiffs, identified as Jane Does 1 through 6, filed suit in November 2023, alleging that the USVI government and several of its top officials knowingly enabled and benefited from Epstein's sex trafficking operation by providing him a safe haven in the territory. According to the Second Amended Complaint, Epstein used the USVI as a base to traffic women and girls, aided in part by the alleged actions and inactions of government officials.

The claims were brought under the TVPA and New York tort law. Plaintiffs had originally also filed a RICO claim but later withdrew it.

The court found that it lacked personal jurisdiction over most of the defendants, including de Jongh, Mapp, Frazer, White, and Dowe, stating that their only alleged link to New York—receiving money from Epstein's New York bank account—was not enough to establish that they had “transacted business” in the state. In the case of Carlton Dowe, the court noted that plaintiffs' counsel admitted during a September 30 conference that the “sole basis” for jurisdiction over Dowe was conspiracy jurisdiction, and the Second Amended Complaint did not allege that he received any payments from Epstein. As a result, the court determined that it had no jurisdiction over Dowe, leading to the dismissal of all claims against him.

Judge Subramanian also ruled that claims against Cecile de Jongh were barred by a broad legal release the plaintiffs signed as part of earlier settlements with Epstein's estate. Plaintiffs themselves had acknowledged that Cecile de Jongh was covered under the release, which included anyone who worked for Epstein “in any capacity.”

The court determined that the release applied because Cecile de Jongh was employed as an office manager by Epstein's companies in the Virgin Islands.

Claims Against Plaskett Move Forward

In contrast to the other defendants, the court found that Stacey Plaskett, who served as General Counsel at the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority (VIEDA) before becoming a Delegate to Congress, had sufficient ties to New York to justify personal jurisdiction in her individual capacity.

According to the complaint, Plaskett visited Epstein at his New York mansion, solicited campaign donations, and held fundraisers in the state. The judge determined that this conduct constituted “transacting business” in New York and that the claims arose from this activity, thus satisfying the requirements for personal jurisdiction under the New York long-arm statute.

The court also concluded that the TVPA claims against Plaskett were plausibly stated. Plaintiffs allege she received financial and political support from Epstein—including a \$30,000 loan and campaign contributions—in exchange for favorable political action, such as approving over \$300 million in tax breaks for Epstein's companies and using her influence to enable Epstein's continued operations.

These claims, the court said, were sufficiently connected to the alleged trafficking venture to warrant further proceedings.

The court dismissed the RICO claim against Plaskett, but allowed TVPA and negligence claims to proceed.

The court also dismissed claims against the Government of the Virgin Islands, stating that merely receiving funds from a New York bank account—even a \$50 million loan as alleged—did not meet the threshold for personal jurisdiction in New York.

Plaintiffs had argued that the USVI consented to jurisdiction by previously filing suit against JPMorgan Chase in New York in a separate Epstein-related case. Judge Subramanian rejected this theory, explaining that the previous lawsuit involved different parties and occurred long after the alleged misconduct in this case.

The court denied the plaintiffs' request for jurisdictional discovery, finding they had not made a prima facie showing that would justify it. The judge did, however, allow for the possibility that Stacey Plaskett could raise new legal defenses in the future, particularly concerning venue and immunity, if properly filed.

The case will now proceed solely against Plaskett in her individual capacity, and the court has asked the parties to submit any motions for a venue transfer within 14 days.

All other defendants have been fully dismissed from the case.

The clerk has been directed to terminate the pending motions associated with the dismissed defendants.

Plaskett remains the only named defendant still facing legal claims in the high-profile case tied to the broader fallout from Epstein's trafficking operation.