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Bill Clinton, Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell: an uncomfortable connection

Maxwell's arrest raises awkward questions about the former president's friendship with the financier





Jeffrey Epstein with Bill Clinton

Rosie Kinchen Sunday July 12 2020, 12.01am BST, The Sunday Times

Ghislaine Maxwell looked at ease sitting on the Queen's throne next to Kevin Spacey in a photograph that emerged last weekend. But as she appears in a New York court, somebody else who was there that day may be starting to squirm. The other guest on Prince Andrew's palace tour was Bill Clinton.

It was 2002, the year after he was replaced as president by George W Bush. Clinton was in a period of flux as he tried to ignite his post-political career. He was on his way to the Labour conference in Blackpool where he gave a speech supporting Tony Blair's endeavours in Iraq. After arriving in the resort, Clinton craved fast food. He and Alastair Campbell, Blair's spin doctor, set off down the city's golden mile in search of McDonald's golden arches. Campbell writes: "Clinton loving the lights and the trams, he yelled out into the howling wind: 'How can anyone want to be in those big hotels when they can be out here on a night like this with people like this?'"

It would be the company he kept the week before that would prove problematic. Clinton had landed in London after a five-day tour of Africa on Jeffrey Epstein's jet, now known as "the Lolita Express". With him were [Maxwell](#), Epstein, Spacey and the actor Chris Tucker. Also on board was a 22-year-old trainee masseuse, Chauntae Davies, who appears in a Netflix documentary, *Jeffrey Epstein: Filthy Rich*, accusing Epstein of raping her.

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Bill Clinton walking daughter Chelsea down the aisle in 2010. Ghislaine Maxwell, inset, was a guest

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“The weird thing about this case is that everyone has known all this for a very long time and yet no one has done anything,” says the journalist Daniel Halper, author of books on both Clinton and Epstein. “In America the sheer power of money makes people do things that they wouldn’t otherwise have done.”

There have been no allegations from Davies or anyone else that Clinton was involved in the abuse of underage girls, or even that he knew of Epstein’s crimes, but the questions raised by the former president’s associations with Epstein’s sordid world are not going away.

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Clinton has admitted six encounters with Epstein, including one “brief visit” to his New York apartment, all with staff and security detail in tow. Flight logs, however, suggest that he flew on Epstein’s plane at least 26 times in three years. Witnesses put him at several dinners with Maxwell and Epstein. There are two witnesses — Virginia Roberts Giuffre, one of Epstein’s accusers, and Steve Scully, an IT expert who was employed by Epstein — placing him on Little St James, Epstein’s 70-acre private island in the US Virgin Islands.

Clinton, 73, has denied these accusations, but the rumour mill churns. The latest claims, made in Halper’s new book, *A Convenient Death: The Mysterious Demise of Jeffrey Epstein*, written with Alana Goodman, suggest that Clinton and Maxwell had an affair. The book quotes an unnamed source claiming that Clinton “sneaked out” to visit the socialite at her Manhattan home. “[Bill] and Ghislaine were getting it on,” a source who witnessed the relationship said. “That’s why he was around Epstein — to be with her.” Clinton has strenuously denied the claim.



Clinton with Maxwell aboard Epstein's plane

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In the background is Clinton's aide and adviser, Doug Band. Tall and unremarkable looking, Band, 47, is an elusive figure on New York's social scene. But for a long time he was the only gateway to Bill.

Band began his political career as a White House intern at the same time as Monica Lewinsky and would go on to play as big a role in his boss's career. Band became Clinton's bag-carrier, the "butt-boy" in Washington parlance, whose job was to pre-empt the president's needs and ensure he turned up on time. Later he became the svengali who created Clinton's post-Washington profile.

Paul Begala, a former Clinton adviser, has said Band took charge "at a moment when he was dropping from about 60% [approval] to 39%" and managed to turn it around. "Bill is in a league inhabited only by himself and Nelson Mandela and the Pope. He's one of the most beloved people on the planet and an American political colossus

as well. That's just astonishing – and Doug's been central to that." Clinton needed a role on the global stage and Band was the one who made it happen, first under the auspices of the Clinton Foundation, which he helped to set up, and later within the Clinton Global Initiative, his own brainchild. But what they had in prestige, they lacked in cold, hard cash. Clinton claims he was broke when he left the White House, having amassed \$16m of debt defending himself against the Lewinsky scandal.

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His earning power was enormous. In his first year out of office, Clinton gave 57 speeches and earned \$13.7m from his "speaking and writing" business, according to the Clintons' tax return, but philanthropic work of the sort Band and Clinton had in mind would need considerably more. In the early 2000s, Band was busy cultivating a network of rich, powerful businessmen. Band and Clinton were often guests of Ron Burkle, a supermarket mogul, on his Boeing 757 – known as Air F*** One. Burkle took Clinton on as a partner in his private equity firm, Yucaipa. Steve Bing, the Democratic donor and Hollywood producer who died last month, was another

friend, as was Donald Trump, who donated \$100,000 to the Clinton Foundation. By Band's own estimation, he travelled with Clinton to nearly 125 countries and 2,000 cities. When Clinton had heart bypass surgery in 2004, Band was by his side. Clinton does not email. The only way to reach him was to go through Band.

The adviser's judgment was not always crystal clear. In 2005 Band brokered a deal between Clinton and Raffaello Follieri, a charming Italian businessman who turned out to be a crook. When people describe Band, "transactional" is the word that comes up again and again. The fateful trip through Africa on Epstein's plane was also brokered by Band.

When Clinton started cultivating the relationship with Epstein isn't clear. Halper, whose book *Clinton Inc* charted the president's post-Washington career, says "both men offered something the other person wanted. Clinton left the White House in a cloud — he was broke and depressed, he needed friends and money. Epstein certainly had that."



Epstein had a painting in his New York home of Clinton in a dress and heels

PETRINA RYAN-KLEID

Epstein had donated \$10,000 to renovate Clinton's White House in the early 1990s but their relationship developed when both were based in New York — and Band's role was key. He was one of the guests at Epstein's house for dinner in 2002, alongside Peter Mandelson and Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google. Another witness saw him at a private dinner with Maxwell.

The 21 numbers for Clinton listed in Epstein's little black book were under Band's name. Flight logs from January 2002 put Band on a plane with Clinton, Epstein, Maxwell and two women described only as "Janice" and "Jessica". There is also a photograph of Clinton and Maxwell standing at the door of the plane, his arm resting on her shoulder, happy and relaxed.

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There is no suggestion Band or Clinton were involved in any abuse. The question is what, if anything, they knew. That Epstein benefited from his connection to Clinton is clear; the former outsider had the ear of the former leader of the free world. A bizarre painting in Epstein's townhouse — of Clinton in a blue dress, pointing directly at the viewer — suggests the connection gave him a thrill. What Clinton got out of it is harder to explain. In 2006 a charity run by Epstein, COUQ, gave \$25,000 to the Clinton Foundation, which, as transactions go, seems slight.

When the case begins against Maxwell, 58, who is accused of grooming underage victims for sexual abuse by Epstein, a rush of information will come out. Just as telling will be the questions that remain unanswered.

Roberts Giuffre once asked Epstein, who was found dead in a New York prison cell last year aged 66, why it was that he and Clinton were such good friends. "He owes me some favours," Epstein laughed.