

Politics

## Trump Probe 'Weaponized' by Manhattan DA, Lawyer Says in Calling for Review

- Tacopina says office shows 'animus' toward former president
- He asks investigation department to probe Vance, Bragg conduct




Joe Tacopina *Photographer: Gilbert Carrasquillo/Getty Images*

By [Patricia Hurtado](#)

13 de março de 2023 at 07:10 GMT-7

Updated on 13 de março de 2023 at 15:38 GMT-7

 This article is for **subscribers only**.

A lawyer for Donald Trump has called for an independent review of the Manhattan district attorney's office over its years-long investigation of the former president, claiming prosecutors there have "weaponized" the office.

Joe Tacopina said in a letter dated Friday, and released Monday, to New York's Department of Investigation that DA Alvin Bragg, his predecessor Cyrus Vance Jr. and some senior staff had engaged in misconduct in their "patently political prosecution" of Trump.

Among the concerns Tacopina cited is a book by Mark Pomerantz, a former prosecutor with the office who quit last year and published a book criticizing Bragg for not pursuing Trump aggressively enough. The book has "irreparably tainted" the investigation, he said.

At the same time, Tacopina argued, the book shows that Bragg has "weaponized its office, scouring every aspect of President Trump's personal life and business affairs, going back decades, in the hopes of finding some legal basis – however far-fetched, novel or convoluted – to prosecute him."

### **Threats to Trump**

Even as he runs for president in the 2024 race, Trump is facing legal threats on several fronts. Besides Bragg's investigation, he is contending with a Georgia criminal probe into his efforts to overturn the state's 2020 election results and a US Justice Department inquiry into his handling of classified documents. The focus of Tacopina's letter suggests his defense is likely to stress Trump's own familiar argument that those investigating him are engaged in a political "witch hunt."

Meanwhile Trump is raising money off the Bragg case, asking for donations to fight "the Manhattan district attorney who is trying to destroy me."

[Read More: Trump Prosecutors in NY Are After the Wrong Person, Lawyer Says](#)

Bragg's investigation is based on novel legal theories, Tacopina said in the letter, citing the prosecution of former US Senator John Edwards, which ended in a hung jury and partial acquittal. He said the Bragg probe was just an attempt to derail Trump's presidential run.

[Danielle Filson](#), a spokeswoman for Bragg, declined to comment on the letter.

It isn't clear the investigation department would act on Tacopina's request. It typically looks into cases of fraud, corruption and other illegal activities by city employees and those who do business with the city. Diane Struzzi, a department spokeswoman, declined to comment.



SignadUp

By continuing, I agree to the [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).

The “weaponization” Tacopina cites echoes language House Republicans and other conservative figures have used to suggest Democrats like Bragg are using their offices to persecute Trump and other exponents of the GOP. The House panel looking into the “Twitter Files” – the internal documents Elon Musk unveiled after he bought the social media company – is called the House Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government.

### **Cohen Testifies**

Tacopina's letter was released the same day Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen testified before the Manhattan state grand jury Bragg convened to consider criminal charges against Trump. Bragg has revived an investigation into whether Trump and his company falsified business records to conceal payments to porn star Stormy Daniels, made ahead of the 2016 election, to keep her from going public about an alleged sexual relationship with Trump. Trump has denied the affair.

Bragg's office is considering bringing charges against Trump that he falsified business records tied to the payments, a misdemeanor unless prosecutors can prove he did it to conceal another crime. No former president has ever been charged with a crime.

Cohen went to prison after pleading guilty in 2018 to federal charges including campaign finance violations, for arranging for the payouts to

Daniels and a second woman, Karen McDougal, a former playboy model, to buy their silence.

Cohen, Trump's longtime ally, later said he paid Daniels \$130,000 in hush money and later received a payment from the Trump Organization.

Cohen's lawyer, Lanny Davis, said his client was gratified to be finally telling his story to grand jurors and called it "a very constructive experience." Davis said Cohen would return Wednesday to continue his testimony. Cohen has met with Bragg's office on at least five prior occasions.

"Michael has spent a good afternoon," Davis said as they left the Lower Manhattan office building where the grand jury is located. "We're not making any comments about what he said other than repeat what he's said about accountability and this is about the facts and truth."

Earlier in the day, as he arrived at the building, Cohen insisted he wasn't there to get "revenge" on Trump.

"This is all about accountability," Cohen said. "He needs to be held accountable for his dirty deeds."

[Read More: Manhattan DA Pressing Jailed Former CFO to Flip on Trump](#)

Trump has "no plans" to accept an offer by Bragg's office to testify before the grand jury, Tacopina said Monday on ABC's *Good Morning America*.

Asked if he expected Trump would be indicted, Tacopina said "there shouldn't be an indictment," calling the case "outrageous."

"We are distorting laws to try and bag President Trump," he said.

Tacopina was asked whether Trump had properly recorded any payment to Daniels.

"There was absolutely no false records made, to my knowledge," he said. "This was a plain extortion. When did we start prosecuting extortion victims?"

## Read More

- [Trump's NY Tax Fraud Hit Eclipsed by Impact of Felony Conviction](#)
- [Trump Ex-CFO Weisselberg Gets 5 Months in Jail, \\$500,000 Bonus](#)
- [Quick Take: What Trump's Legal Perils Mean for Trump's Candidacy](#)  
*(Adds ex-Trump lawyer Cohen testifies before grand jury in 11th paragraph)*

[Share feedback](#) 

---

©2024 Bloomberg L.P. All Rights Reserved.

---