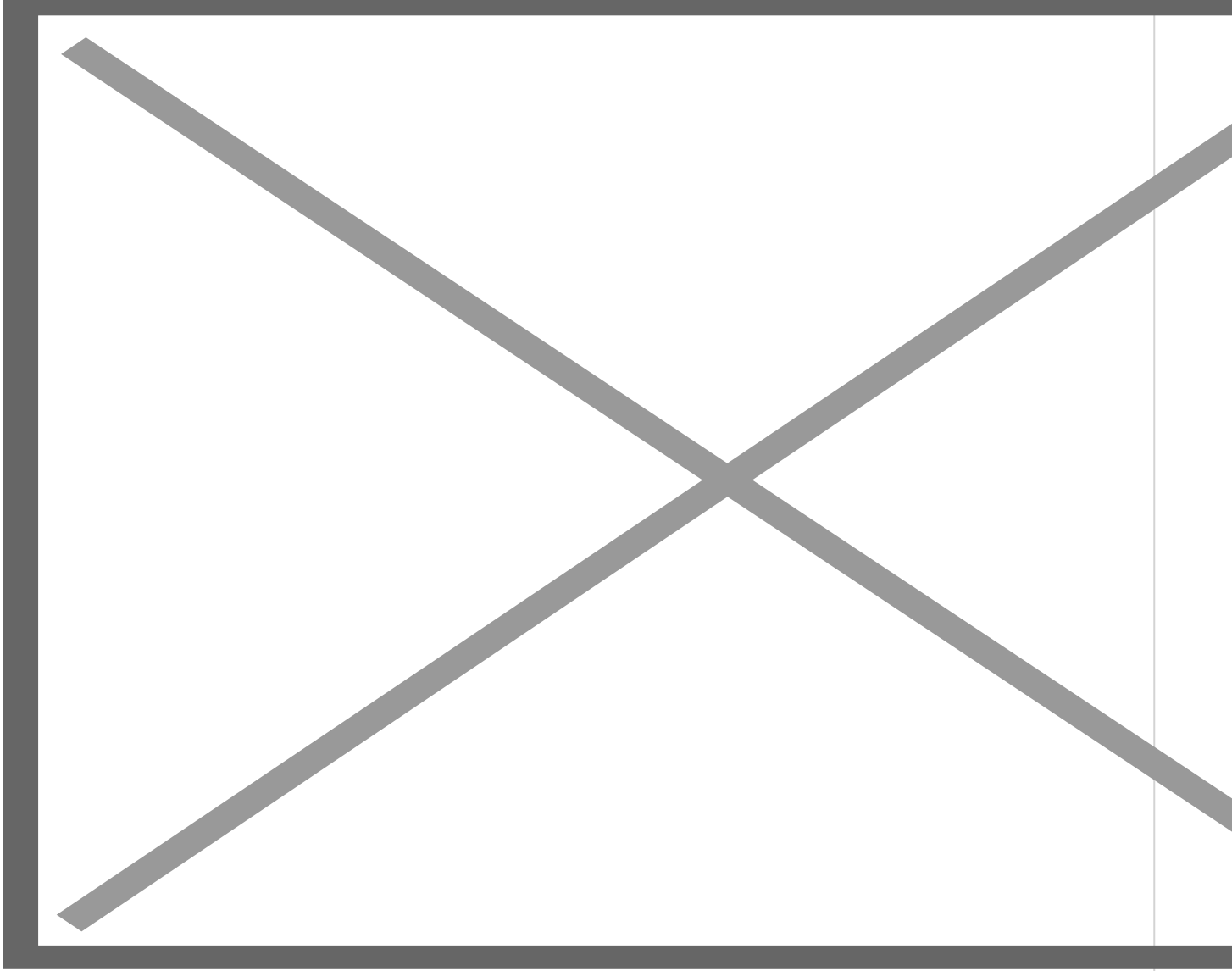


New York begins criminal investigation into Trump Organization

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Trump Tower on 5th Avenue is pictured in Manhattan. New York has begun a criminal investigation into the Trump Organization (File: Caitlin Ochs/Reuters)

New York, May 19 (RHC)-- The New York attorney general's office has said it has begun a criminal investigation into former U.S. President Donald Trump's company, going beyond what was initially a civil probe.

Attorney General Letitia James has been investigating whether the Trump Organization falsely reported property values to secure loans and obtain economic and tax benefits. "We have informed the Trump Organization that our investigation into the organization is no longer purely civil in nature," Fabien Levy, a spokesman for the attorney general's office, said in a statement. "We are now actively investigating the Trump Organization in a criminal capacity, along with the Manhattan DA," he said.

The Trump Organization could not immediately be reached for comment. Trump has said that the investigation overseen by James, a Democrat, is politically motivated. James has been investigating whether the Trump Organization inflated the values of some properties to obtain better loans, and lowered their values to obtain property tax breaks.

Separately, Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance has been investigating Trump's pre-presidency business dealings for more than two years.

Vance's office has said in court filings it was investigating "possibly extensive and protracted criminal conduct" at the former president's Trump Organization, including tax and insurance fraud and falsification of business records.

Vance's probe began after Trump's former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen paid hush money to silence two women before the 2016 election about claimed sexual encounters with Trump. That probe has accelerated since Republican Trump lost his bid for a second term to President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

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