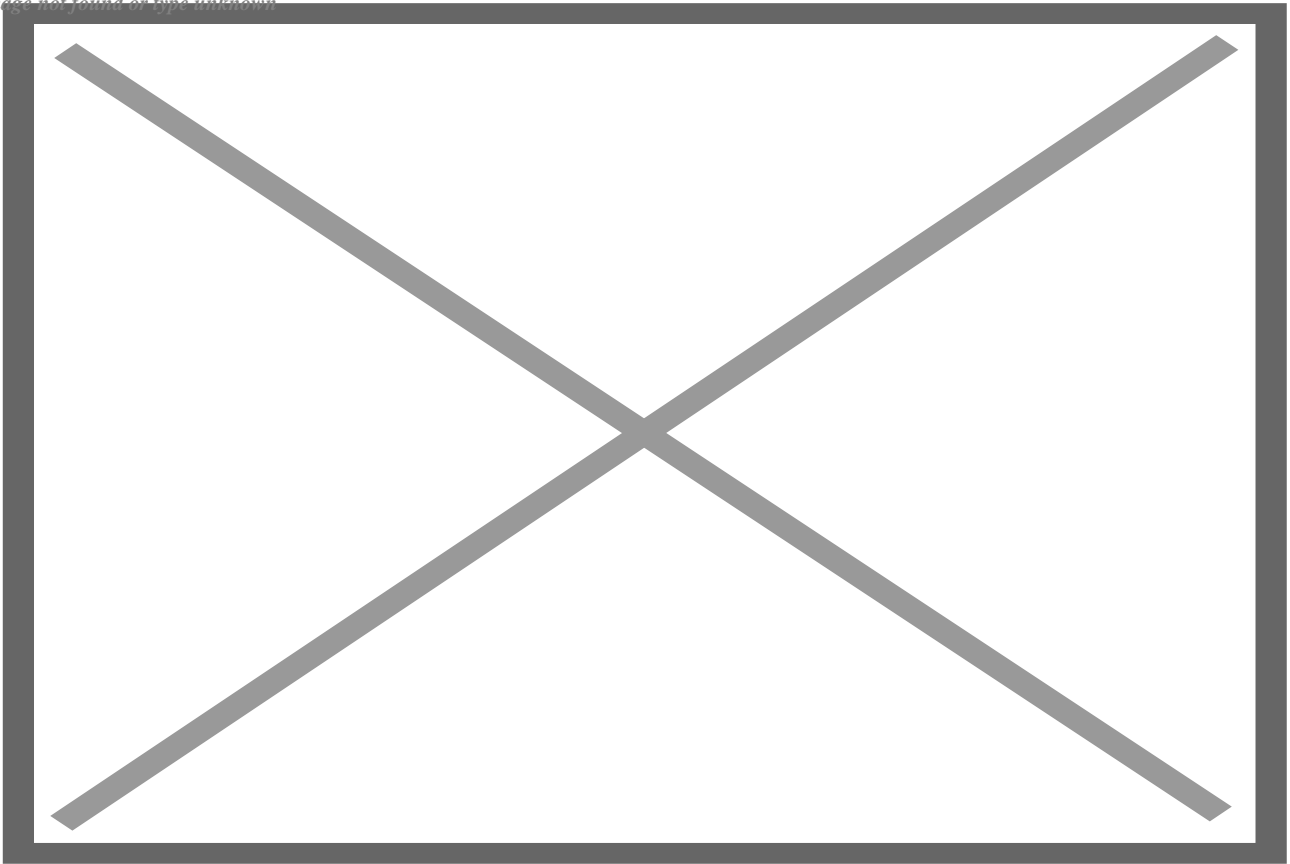


Donald Trump may face criminal charges over Stormy Daniels hush money

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New York, March 11 (RHC)-- Former U.S. President Donald Trump may soon face criminal charges in connection with the payment of hush money to the adult entertainer Stormy Daniels, The New York Times reported Thursday, citing four unnamed "people with knowledge of the matter."

According to the Times, prosecutors with the Manhattan district attorney's office extended an offer for Trump to testify next week before a grand jury considering the evidence in the prospective case against the twice-impeached ex-president, who is seeking the Republican nomination for 2024.

As Times reporters William K. Rashbaum, Ben Protess, and Jonah E. Bromwich noted: Such offers almost always indicate an indictment is close; it would be unusual for the district attorney, Alvin L. Bragg, to notify a potential defendant without ultimately seeking charges against him.

In New York, potential defendants have the right to answer questions in the grand jury before they are indicted, but they rarely testify, and Mr. Trump is likely to decline the offer. His lawyers could also meet privately with the prosecutors in hopes of fending off criminal charges.

Any case would mark the first indictment of a former American president, and could upend the 2024 presidential race. It would also elevate Mr. Bragg to the national stage, though not without risk. At issue is a \$130,000 payment made to Daniels -- an adult film star who claims she had an affair with Trump -- by former fixer Michael Cohen during the last days of the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Trump subsequently reimbursed Cohen for the payment. Cohen has not yet testified before the grand jury, but is expected to do so on an undetermined date.

"Trump has faced an array of criminal investigations and special counsel inquiries over the years but has never been charged with a crime, underscoring the gravity of Mr. Bragg's inquiry," the Times trio wrote.

The journalists further asserted that "Bragg could become the first prosecutor to charge Mr. Trump, but he might not be the last," noting that the Fulton County District Attorney's Office in Georgia is investigating whether the former president interfered in the 2020 election.

"And at the federal level, a special counsel is scrutinizing Mr. Trump's effort to overturn the election results, as well as his handling of classified documents," the reporters added.

Mark Pomerantz -- one of two prosecutors involved with the Manhattan district attorney's investigation of the ex-president who resigned in protest last year -- wrote in his new book, *People vs. Donald Trump: An Inside Account*, that "we developed evidence convincing us that Donald Trump had committed serious crimes" involving his finances and business practices.

"As we put the facts together, many of us came to believe that we had enough evidence to convict him, and we could present a solid case in court that would lead to a guilty verdict," Pomerantz related.

He continued: I believe that Donald Trump is guilty of numerous felony violations of the penal law in connection with the preparation and use of his annual statements of financial condition. His financial statements were false, and he has a long history of fabricating information relating to his personal finances and lying about his assets to banks, the national media, counterparties, and many others, including the American people.

Asked in a recent CBS "60 Minutes" interview what he would advise Bragg in regard to Trump, Pomerantz replied: "This was a righteous case. You should bring it. It's important. And if you made the wrong decision, make a better decision."

Bragg retorted that "after closely reviewing all the evidence from Mr. Pomerantz's investigation, I came to the same conclusion as several senior prosecutors involved in the case, and also those I brought on: More work was needed. Put another way, Mr. Pomerantz's plane wasn't ready for takeoff."

Separately, a New York jury last December found two subsidiaries of the Trump Organization, Trump's company, guilty on all counts of criminal tax fraud. The former president's organization was subsequently ordered to pay a \$1.6 million penalty for what a judge called "systemic, egregious fraud."

Also last December, the former congressional committee that investigated the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol by supporters of the Trump's "Big Lie" unanimously voted to recommend federal criminal charges against the former president and some of his associates in connection with the insurrection.

Given Trump's 2024 presidential run, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland has appointed a special

counsel.

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