



Trump administration

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Howard Lutnick said he had three ‘inconsequential’ meetings with Epstein

In House committee transcript, commerce secretary denied any further contact with disgraced financier

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The US commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, told lawmakers in a closed-door interview earlier this month that he met **Jeffrey Epstein** only three times and had no “personal or professional relationship” with the disgraced financier, according to a newly released transcript of the meeting.

“I unequivocally condemn the conduct attributed to Jeffrey Epstein and everyone who participated in his illegal activities,” Lutnick said in his opening statement before

the [House](#) oversight and reform committee.

The comments came during a closed-door interview before the House oversight and reform committee [earlier this month](#), during which lawmakers questioned Lutnick for several hours about his previous ties to Epstein and his past statements about their interactions.

According to the [transcript](#), released on Wednesday afternoon, Lutnick said he met Epstein, whom he said lived “adjacent to my New York City home”, on only three occasions. Lutnick said that the first meeting occurred in 2005, when he and his wife were invited for coffee at Epstein’s home. The second was in 2011, when he said he briefly visited Epstein’s home to discuss “scaffolding”, and the third, Lutnick said, was in 2012, when Epstein invited him, his family and friends to lunch on his private island.

“To the best of my recollection, those were the only three occasions in which I interacted with Epstein in person,” Lutnick said. “Each and every one was meaningless and inconsequential.”

“I had no personal or professional relationship with this individual, despite the proximity of our addresses,” he added. “Further, at no time during these limited interactions did I witness any conduct, let alone the type of illegal conduct of which we have since become aware.”

Lutnick [agreed](#) to sit for the transcribed interview with the committee in March, after the justice department released millions of documents related to Epstein, including documents showing that Lutnick continued correspondence with Epstein after the disgraced financier’s 2008 conviction of soliciting prostitution from a minor. The revelation also contradicted a previous claim Lutnick made on a podcast last year that he and his wife had severed ties with Epstein in 2005 after visiting his home.

Epstein died in a Manhattan jail in 2019, while awaiting trial on federal sex-trafficking charges.

Much of the questioning in front of the House panel centered around Lutnick’s podcast interview from last year.

Lutnick recounted the 2005 visit to Epstein’s home to the lawmakers, and said that Epstein showed him and his wife around his townhouse, and that at one point he opened a door and there was a massage table.

Lutnick said he asked Epstein why he had a “massage table in the middle of his house” and how often he received massages, to which he said that Epstein responded “every day and the right kind of massage”.

“He said it to me, and my wife is standing next to me, and we looked at each other, and we left,” Lutnick told lawmakers, adding that he interpreted the “right kind of massage” to be “in some form sexual in nature”.

Afterward, he said, he and his wife left Epstein’s home and “discussed that I would not establish a personal nor professional relationship with that individual”. He added that “on a podcast in October 2025, I informally recounted that conversation”.

Democratic lawmakers challenged his statements, noting that Lutnick had said on the podcast that he was “never in the room with him socially, for business, or even philanthropy” after 2005.

Lutnick defended his statements, arguing that “it is accurate as to what I meant, which is I, Howard Lutnick, as a man, would not be in a situation with him because I felt him gross and inappropriate and not having boundaries; that I would not put myself in a room with him socially, which I did not, professionally, in business, which I did not, and philanthropically, which I did not”.

He also described the 2012 lunch on Epstein’s island and said that Epstein’s staff had become aware that he and his family were going to be near his island over the holidays, and reached out to them and invited them for lunch.

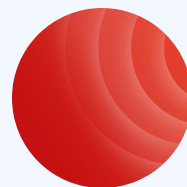
Lutnick said he went, with his wife, their four children and his friends, who were a couple, along with their four children and staff , and had a “brief, meaningless, and inconsequential lunch and then left”.

“So it was probably 15, 16 people went for lunch,” Lutnick said. “We sat outside, had lunch. It was boring. We left.”

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He said he didn’t see any young women or girls on the island.

When asked whether he had ever heard any rumors about the island, Lutnick said, “No, of course not,” adding: “In 2019, we all learned lots of information, but nothing before then,” referring to when Epstein was charged.

Discussing the 2011 interaction, Lutnick said that Epstein’s staff had contacted his office, saying that Epstein had wanted to get in touch with him.

“Our offices attempted to connect us by phone over the course of several weeks but were unable to do so,” he said. So he said he went to Epstein’s home, “sat in his foyer with my dog, waited for him to come down, heard what he had to say, and left”.

“As far as I recall, it was about scaffolding,” he said. “It was meaningless and inconsequential.”

Throughout the interview last week, Lutnick said that he never witnessed Epstein engage in sexual contact of any kind with any young woman or girl, or receive massages from young women, and said he never saw or met any young women or girls at Epstein’s residence or island.

Following the interview with Lutnick last week, Democrats on the committee **lambasted** Lutnick’s performance.

“Now we know why that interview was not videotaped. If Donald Trump had seen the video transcript, he would’ve fired Howard Lutnick,” **said** Ro Khanna, a Democratic congressman of California, who has helped lead efforts in Congress to force the release of the justice department’s files related to Epstein. “It was just contortions and lies ... He made a farce of the English language.”

By contrast, James Comer, the Republican who chairs the House committee, said that he felt that Lutnick had been “very transparent” and “came here voluntarily”, and said that Lutnick corrected previous statements in his interview on Wednesday.

Since the release of the Epstein files, Lutnick has **faced calls from some lawmakers** to resign over his former ties to Epstein.

Lutnick is the first current **Trump administration** official to testify before the panel. The committee also issued a subpoena to Pam Bondi before Trump fired her as attorney general last month. She is scheduled to appear before the committee on 29 May.

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