

Was it a Setup? Strauss-Kahn Case Seen as in Jeopardy: Hotel Maid Lied to Prosecutors

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Strauss-Kahn Case Seen as in Jeopardy

by Jim Dwyer, William K. Rashbaum and John Eligon.

The sexual assault case against [Dominique Strauss-Kahn](#) is on the verge of collapse as investigators have uncovered major holes in the credibility of the housekeeper who charged that he attacked her in his Manhattan hotel suite in May, according to two well-placed law enforcement officials.

Although forensic tests found unambiguous evidence of a sexual encounter between Mr. Strauss-Kahn, a French politician, and the woman, prosecutors now do not believe much of what the accuser has told them about the circumstances or about herself.

Since her initial allegation on May 14, the accuser has repeatedly lied, one of the law enforcement officials said.

Senior prosecutors met with lawyers for Mr. Strauss-Kahn on Thursday and provided details about their findings, and the parties are discussing whether to dismiss the felony charges. Among the discoveries, one of the officials said, are issues involving the asylum application of the 32-year-old housekeeper, who is Guinean, and possible links to people involved in criminal activities, including drug dealing and money laundering.

Prosecutors and defense lawyers will return to State Supreme Court in Manhattan on Friday morning, when Justice Michael J. Obus is expected to consider easing the extraordinary bail conditions that he imposed on Mr. Strauss-Kahn in the days after he was charged.

Indeed, Mr. Strauss-Kahn could be released on his own recognizance, and freed from house arrest, reflecting the likelihood that the serious charges against him will not be sustained. The district attorney's office may try to require Mr. Strauss-Kahn to plead guilty to a misdemeanor, but his lawyers are likely to contest such a move.

The revelations are a stunning change of fortune for Mr. Strauss-Kahn, 62, who was considered a strong contender for the French presidency before being accused of sexually assaulting the woman who went to clean his luxury suite at the Sofitel New York.

Prosecutors from the office of the Manhattan district attorney, Cyrus R. Vance Jr., who initially were emphatic about the strength of the case and the account of the victim, plan to tell the judge on Friday that they "have problems with the case" based on what their investigators have discovered, and will disclose more of their findings to the defense. The

woman still maintains that she was attacked, the officials said.

“It is a mess, a mess on both sides,” one official said.

According to the two officials, the woman had a phone conversation with an incarcerated man within a day of her encounter with Mr. Strauss-Kahn in which she discussed the possible benefits of pursuing the charges against him. The conversation was recorded.

That man, the investigators learned, had been arrested on charges of possessing 400 pounds of [marijuana](#). He is among a number of individuals who made multiple cash deposits, totaling around \$100,000, into the woman’s bank account over the last two years. The deposits were made in Arizona, Georgia, New York and Pennsylvania.

The investigators also learned that she was paying hundreds of dollars every month in phone charges to five companies. The woman had insisted she had only one phone and said she knew nothing about the deposits except that they were made by a man she described as her fiancé and his friends.

In addition, one of the officials said, she told investigators that her application for asylum included mention of a previous rape, but there was no such account in the application. She also told them that she had been subjected to genital mutilation, but her account to the investigators differed from what was contained in the asylum application.

A lawyer for the woman, Kenneth Thompson, could not be immediately reached for comment on Thursday evening.

In recent weeks, Mr. Strauss-Kahn’s lawyers, Benjamin Brafman and William W. Taylor III, have made it clear that they would make the credibility of the woman a focus of their case. In a May 25 letter, they said they had uncovered information that would “gravely undermine the credibility” of the accuser.

Still, it was the prosecutor’s investigators who found the information about the woman.

The case involving Mr. Strauss-Kahn has made international headlines and renewed attention on accusations that he had behaved inappropriately toward women in the past, while, more broadly, prompting soul-searching among the French about the treatment of women.

The revelations about the investigators’ findings are likely to buttress the view of Mr. Strauss-Kahn’s supporters, who complained that the American authorities had rushed to judgment in the case.

Some of Mr. Strauss-Kahn’s allies even contended that he had been set up by his political rivals, an assertion that law enforcement authorities said there was no evidence to support.

Mr. Strauss-Kahn resigned from his post as managing director of the [International Monetary Fund](#) in the wake of the housekeeper’s accusations and was required to post \$1 million bail and a \$5 million bond.

He also agreed to remain under 24-hour home confinement while wearing an ankle monitor and providing a security team and an armed guard at the entrance and exit of the building

where he was living. The conditions are costing Mr. Strauss-Kahn \$250,000 a month.

Prosecutors had sought the restrictive conditions in part by arguing that the case against Mr. Strauss-Kahn was a strong one, citing a number of factors, including the credibility of his accuser, with one prosecutor saying her story was “compelling and unwavering.”

In the weeks after making her accusations, the woman, who arrived in the United States from Guinea in 2002, was described by relatives and friends as an unassuming and hard-working immigrant with a teenage daughter. She had no criminal record, and had been a housekeeper at the Sofitel for a few years, they said.

Mr. Strauss-Kahn was such a pariah in the initial days after the arrest that neighbors of an Upper East Side apartment building objected when he and his wife tried to rent a unit there. He eventually rented a three-story town house on Franklin Street in TriBeCa.

Under the relaxed conditions of bail to be requested on Friday, the district attorney’s office would retain Mr. Strauss-Kahn’s passport but he would be permitted to travel within the United States.

The woman told the authorities that she had gone to Mr. Strauss-Kahn’s suite to clean it and that he emerged naked from the bathroom and attacked her. The formal charges accused him of ripping her pantyhose, trying to rape her and forcing her to perform oral sex; his lawyers say there is no evidence of force and have suggested that any sex was consensual.

After the indictment was filed, Mr. Vance spoke briefly on the courthouse steps addressing hundreds of local and foreign reporters who had been camped out in front of the imposing stone edifice. He characterized the charges as “extremely serious” and said the “evidence supports the commission of nonconsensual forced sexual acts.”

Mr. Strauss-Kahn’s lawyers, Mr. Brafman and Mr. Taylor, declined to comment on Thursday evening.

The case was not scheduled to return to court until July 18.

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