



JURORS IN TRUMP HUSH MONEY TRIAL END 1ST DAY OF DELIBERATIONS AFTER ASKING TO REHEAR TESTIMONY

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The jury in Donald Trump's [hush money trial](#) ended its first day of deliberations without a verdict Wednesday but asked to rehear testimony from key witnesses about the alleged hush money scheme at the heart of the history-making case.

The 12-person jury was sent home around 4 p.m. after about 4 1/2 hours of deliberations. The process is to resume Thursday, when jurors are expected to rehear the requested testimony and at least part of the judge's legal instructions meant to guide them on the law.

The notes sent to the judge with the requests were the first burst of communication with the court after the panel of seven men and five women was sent to a private room just before 11:30 a.m. to [begin weighing a verdict](#).

"It is not my responsibility to judge the evidence here. It is yours," Judge Juan M. Merchan told jurors before dispatching them to begin deliberations, reminding them of their vow during the selection process to judge the case fairly and impartially.

It's unclear how long the deliberations will last. A guilty verdict would deliver a stunning legal reckoning for the presumptive Republican presidential nominee as he seeks to reclaim the White House while an acquittal would represent a major win for Trump and embolden him on the campaign trail. Since verdicts must be unanimous, it's also possible that the case ends in a mistrial if the jury cannot reach a consensus after days of deliberations.

Trump struck a pessimistic tone after leaving the courtroom following the reading of jury instructions, repeating his assertions of a "very unfair trial" and saying: "Mother Teresa could not beat those charges, but we'll see. We'll see how we do."

He remained inside the courthouse during deliberations, where he posted on his social media network complaints about the trial and quoted legal and political commentators who view the case in his favor. In one all-capital-letters post, he proclaimed that he didn't even "know what the charges are in this rigged case," even though he was present in the courtroom as the judge detailed them to jurors.

He did not testify in his own defense, something the judge told jurors they could not take into account.

Trump is charged with 34 counts of falsifying business records at his company in connection with an alleged scheme to hide potentially

embarrassing stories about him during his 2016 Republican presidential campaign.

The charge, a felony, arises from reimbursements paid to [the president's lawyer Michael Cohen](#) after he made a \$130,000 hush money payment to [porn actor Stormy Daniels](#) to silence her claims that she and Trump had sex in 2006. Trump is accused of misrepresenting Cohen's reimbursements as legal expenses to hide that they were tied to a hush money payment.

Trump has pleaded not guilty and contends the Cohen payments were for legitimate legal services. He has also denied the alleged extramarital sexual encounter with Daniels.

To convict Trump, the jury would have to find unanimously that he created a fraudulent entry in his company's records, or caused someone else to do so, and that he did so with the [intent of committing or concealing another crime](#).

The crime prosecutors say Trump committed or hid is a violation of a New York election law making it illegal for two or more conspirators "to promote or prevent the election of any person to a public office by unlawful means."

While the jury must unanimously agree that something unlawful was done to promote Trump's election campaign, they don't have to be unanimous on what that unlawful thing was.

The jurors — a diverse cross section of Manhattan residents and professional backgrounds — often appeared riveted by testimony, including from Cohen and Daniels. Many took notes and watched intently as witnesses answered questions from prosecutors and Trump's lawyers.

Jurors started deliberating after a marathon day of closing arguments Tuesday. A prosecutor spoke for more than five hours, underscoring the burden the district attorney's office faces in needing to establish Trump's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The Trump team need not establish his innocence to avoid a conviction but must instead bank on at least one juror finding that prosecutors have not sufficiently proved their case.

While giving the jury instructions in the law Wednesday morning, Merchan offered some guidance on factors the panel can use to assess witness testimony, including its plausibility, its consistency with other testimony, the witness' manner on the stand and whether the person has a motive to lie.

But, the judge said, "there is no particular formula for evaluating the truthfulness and accuracy of another person's statement."

The principles he outlined are standard but perhaps all the more relevant after Trump's defense leaned heavily on questioning the credibility of key prosecution witnesses, including Cohen.

Jurors asked in the afternoon to rehear at least part of those instructions. They also asked to revisit select key episodes in the trial, though it was not clear why.

The requests covered testimony from Cohen and [former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker about an August 2015 meeting](#) with Trump at Trump Tower where the tabloid boss pledged to be the "eyes and ears" of his fledgling presidential campaign.

Pecker testified that the plan included identifying potentially damaging stories about Trump so they could be squashed before being published. That, prosecutors say, was the beginning of the "catch-and-kill" scheme at the heart of the case.

Jurors also want to hear Pecker's account of a phone call he said he received from Trump in which they discussed a rumor that another outlet had offered to buy former [Playboy model Karen McDougal's story alleging that she had a yearlong affair with Trump in the mid-2000s](#). Trump has denied the affair.

Pecker testified that Trump told him, "Karen is a nice girl" and asked, "What do you think I should do?" Pecker said he replied: "I think you should buy the story and take it off the market." He added that Trump told him he doesn't buy stories because they always get out and that Cohen would be in touch.



The publisher said he came away from the conversation thinking Trump was aware of the specifics of McDougal's claims. Pecker said he believed the story was true and would have been embarrassing to Trump and his campaign if it were made public.

The National Enquirer's parent company, American Media Inc., eventually paid McDougal \$150,000 for the rights to her story in an agreement that also included writing and other opportunities with its fitness magazine and other publications.

The fourth item jurors requested is Pecker's testimony about his decision in October 2016 to back out of an agreement to sell the rights to McDougal's story to Trump through a company Cohen had established for the transaction. Such an agreement is known as an "assignment of rights."

"I called Michael Cohen, and I said to him that the agreement, the assignment deal, is off. I am not going forward. It is a bad idea, and I want you to rip up the agreement," Pecker testified. "He was very, very, angry. Very upset. Screaming, basically, at me."

Pecker testified that he reiterated to Cohen that he wasn't going forward with the agreement.

He said that Cohen told him: "The boss is going to be very angry at you."

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