



The legal peril Rep. Matt Gaetz is facing appeared to increase sharply Thursday after a court hearing indicated that one of Gaetz's close friends, former Seminole County, Fla., tax collector Joel Greenberg, is likely cooperating with federal prosecutors.

The potentially ominous development for the close ally of former President Donald Trump came as prosecutors and a defense attorney for Greenberg appeared before a judge here to discuss the next steps in a recently expanded criminal case charging Greenberg with sex trafficking of a minor, as well as stalking, bribery and defrauding the pandemic-related Paycheck Protection Program.

"I am sure Matt Gaetz is not feeling very comfortable today," Greenberg's defense attorney, Fritz Scheller, said after the hearing.

The federal probe looking into whether Gaetz had a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old girl and paid for her travel began last year and grew out of the Greenberg investigation.

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