

PRESS RELEASE

Former DOJ Attorney Indicted for Concealment, Theft of Government Records

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida

Fort Pierce, Florida – Carmen Mercedes Lineberger, 62, of Port St. Lucie, has been indicted in federal court for two counts of theft of government money or property, valued less than \$1,000.00; destruction, alteration, or falsification of records in federal investigations; and concealment, removal, or mutilation of public records. John P. Heekin, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida announced the charges.

The indictment alleges at the time of the offenses the defendant served as the Managing Assistant United States Attorney (MAUSA) of the Fort Pierce branch of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida. In separate instances in late-2025, the defendant altered the electronic file names of government records that she received in her official capacity as the MAUSA in order to conceal her unauthorized electronic transmission of those records to personal email accounts belonging to her without being detected. The altered government records included a document compiled by the defendant consisting of portions of internal DOJ electronic messages and an internal DOJ memorandum, and a DOJ report related to a criminal prosecution in the SDFL that had been court-ordered to remain under seal and prohibited from distribution or disclosure outside of DOJ.

As alleged in the indictment, the defendant concealed her actions by saving electronic copies of the government records in question under the misleading file names "chocolate cake recipe" and "bundt cake recipe" before electronically transmitting those records to her personal email accounts. As to the DOJ report, the indictment further alleges the defendant acted knowing that her transmission of the record outside DOJ directly violated the court order and impaired the proper administration of the underlying criminal prosecution.

Lineberger appeared in federal court today for her arraignment before Southern District of Florida Chief United States Magistrate Judge William Matthewman in West Palm Beach, Florida.

If convicted, Lineberger faces up to twenty years' imprisonment for destruction, alteration, or falsification of records in federal investigations, three years' imprisonment for concealment, removal, or mutilation of public records, and up to one year imprisonment on each count of theft of government property valued at less than \$1,000.

The case is being jointly investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Christie S. Utt from the Northern District of Florida, who was assigned as a special prosecutor to avoid conflicts of interest with the investigation and prosecution of this matter.

An indictment is merely an allegation by a grand jury that a defendant has committed a violation of federal criminal law and is not evidence of guilt. All defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](#) website. For more information about the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndfl>.

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Updated May 20, 2026