

CEOs and Counsel Speak: Trial Strategies Behind Gibson Dunn's Historic Acquittal in a Federal Bribery Case

August 11, 2026

Featuring:

Reed Brodsky – Partner, Gibson Dunn

Francesca Broggini – Associate, Gibson Dunn

Simone Rivera – Associate, Gibson Dunn

Meghan Messenger – Co-CEO, Next Jump, Inc.

Charlie Kim – Co-CEO, Next Jump, Inc.

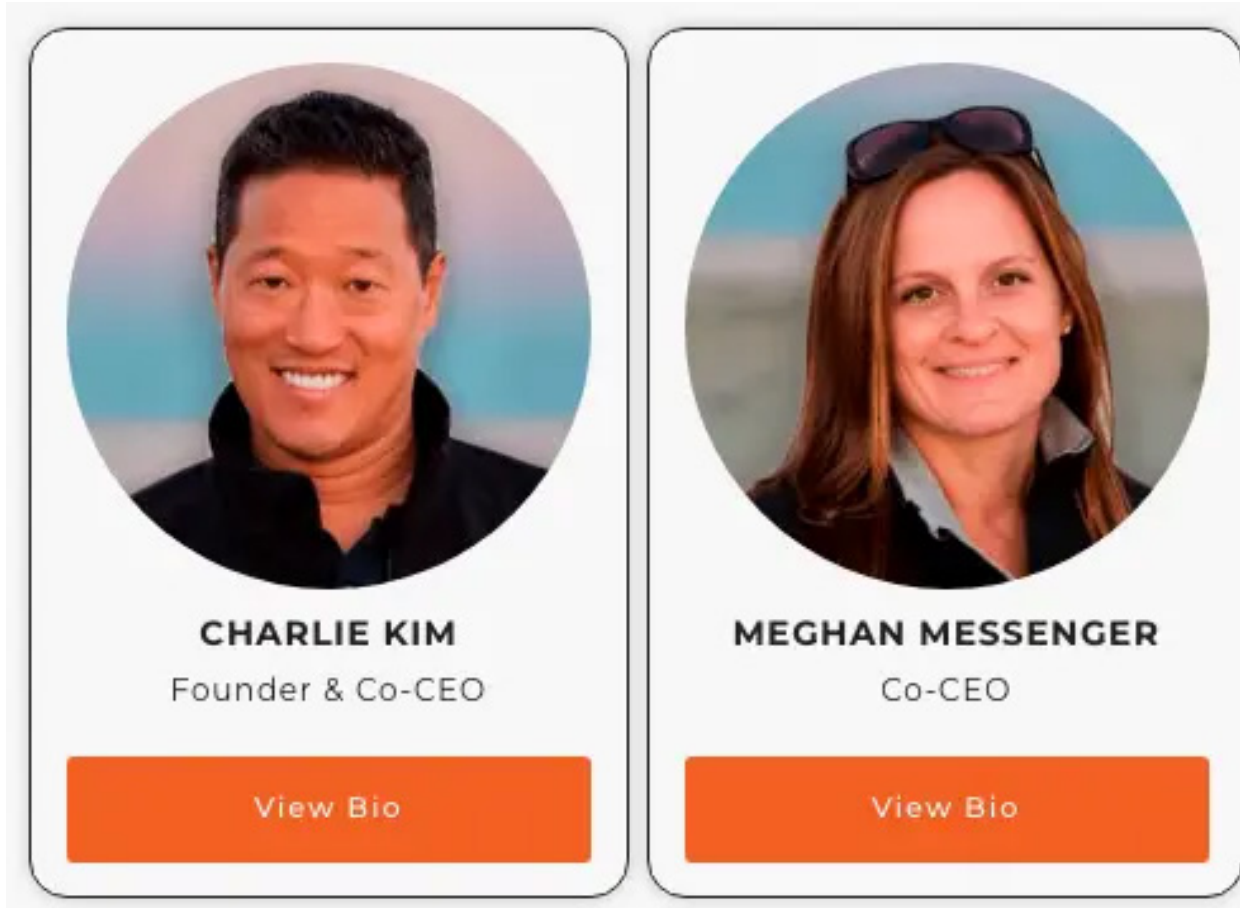
GIBSON DUNN

MCLE Certificate Information

MCLE Certificate Information

- Approved for 1.0-hour General PP credit.
- CLE credit form must be submitted by ***Tuesday, August 18th***.
- Form Link: https://gibsondunn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7V44HAiyjzNqwTQ
- Most participants should anticipate receiving their certificate of attendance in four to eight weeks following the webcast.
- **Please direct all questions regarding MCLE to CLE@gibsondunn.com.**

Next Jump, Inc.



Founded in 1994

Two Lines of Business:

- **Biz 1 – Perks at Work**
- **Biz 2 – Leadership Training**

Navy Engagement and Admiral Burke



- **Reverse bidding process**
- **First two Navy contracts**
- **Employment discussions with Admiral Burke**
- **Third contract**
- **Admiral Burke's brief tenure at Next Jump**

Investigation and Arrests

October 2023 – FBI sweeps, warrants for cellphones

- *Threats and Impact*

November 2023 – Presentation to DOJ

- *Prosecutors surprisingly disinterested*

May 31, 2024 – Arrests

- *Immediate aftermath of arrest*
- *Challenges*

Pre-Trial & Grand Jury Subpoenas

Pre-indictment GJ subpoenas

- *Government subpoena power versus Next Jump*

Post-indictment GJ subpoenas

- *Government use of post-indictment subpoenas and threats*

Severing Trial From Admiral Burke

- *Burke Found Guilty in May 2025*
- *First trial against Charlie & Meghan in August 2025*
- *Burke sentenced to 6 years in September 2025*
- *Second trial against Charlie & Meghan in May 2026*

First Trial: Hung Jury & Lessons Learned

Path to Mistrial – August & September 2025

- Day 1 – *jury selection and opening*
- Days 2-7 – *government's case*
- Days 8-11 – *defense case*
- Day 12 – *jury charge and summations*
- Days 13-18 – *jury deliberations*

Lessons Learned

Retrial: Strategy and Preparation

- ***Challenges for the Accused***
- ***Statistics Favor the Government on Retrials***
- ***Preparation for the Retrial***

Retrial: Jury Selection

- ***Challenges during jury selection process***
- ***Significance of jury selection***
- ***Tailoring jury selection to the case***

Retrial: Government's Case-in-Chief

- ***Split the openings for the defense***
- ***Clear strategy on challenging government narrative***
- ***Clear strategy on the defense narrative***
- ***Power of effective cross-examinations***

FAILED TO MEET BURDEN



Juliet Beyler

**Juliet Beyler testified
Adm Burke
“functioned as the
Navy’s Chief
Ethics Officer”**

FAILED TO MEET BURDEN

Juliet Beyler Testified Navy Treated Meghan and Charlie Unfairly



Juliet Beyler

Executive Director Juliet Beyler

NO LINK

**Tweed Ross testified that
Adm Burke could not have
forced through a contract even
if he wanted to**



 **Tweed Ross**

1 answer: 1000000, 1000000
 2 A. Yes, they are the same
 3 B. No, they are not the same
 4 C. Not sure
 5 D. None of the above
 6
 7 answer: 1000000, 1000000
 8 A. Yes, they are the same
 9 B. No, they are not the same
 10 C. Not sure
 11 D. None of the above
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NO LINK

**Commanders Gave
RAVE Reviews**

Rave Reviews



**Captain
James T. Merchant**

***“...incredible
couple of days!”***



**Captain
Cameron R. Chen**

***“...memorable and
transformational”***



**Captain
Kyle Gantt**

***“I am a different
leader.”***



**Rear Admiral
Ben Reynolds**

***“...truly making a
difference.”***

Retrial: Defense Case

- ***Importance of client-counsel open communication***
- ***Balancing client priorities and counsel advice***
- ***Playing to win vs. playing to not lose***
- ***Maintaining a clear, consistent narrative***

RELIED
IN
GOOD FAITH

RELIED IN GOOD FAITH

CHIEF ETHICS OFFICER



“He was like the **POPE**”

RELIED IN GOOD FAITH



Fleet Master Chief



Chief of Staff



Executive Director



Deputy Fleet Commander



Aides



3 Commander's Action Group



THE ADMIRAL



Executive Assistants



Flag Writer



Flag Secretary



Security



Inspector General



Navy Legal Team



Speech Writer

RELIED IN GOOD FAITH

**The Admiral is
“a pillar of all things good
or supposed to be”**



Agent Sebastian Gardner

1. Based on the information in the passage, which of the following is most likely true?
2. A. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
3. B. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
4. C. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
5. D. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
6. E. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
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11. J. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
12. K. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
13. L. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
14. M. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
15. N. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
16. O. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
17. P. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
18. Q. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
19. R. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
20. S. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
21. T. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
22. U. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
23. V. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
24. W. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.
25. X. The Admiral is a pillar of all things good or supposed to be.

RELIED IN GOOD FAITH

“I’ll sit down with you and Meghan as situations arise and advise you on the Navy/DoD rules anytime.”

- The Admiral [DX 83]

RELIED IN GOOD FAITH

Message

From: Robert Burke [burkerobertp@gmail.com]
Sent: 9/9/2022 4:50:42 PM
To: Charlie Kim [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=cfb01dba9f31422391c7ff8ac8197022-Charlie Kim]
Subject: Re: Space Command....FW: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] RE: space command visit

From: Robert Burke <burkerobertp@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 9, 2022 3:15 PM
To: Charlie Kim <ckim@nextjump.com>; Meghan Messenger <mmessenger@nextjump.com>
Subject: Re: Space Command....FW: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] RE: space command visit

IN NAVY

RETIRED

“...the rules on such matters for Active Duty were a matter of ethics guidelines and policy, administrative in nature, they are a matter of law for retired officers, subject to criminal prosecution.”
- Admiral Burke

“For a period of 1 year after leaving a senior position, former senior officials may not make communications or appearance on behalf of any other person, with intent to influence, before any officer or employee of the agency or agencies in which the individual served within 1 year prior to leaving the senior position, in connection with any official business of the agency or agencies.”

There is more, which clarifies that I am a senior official, and the “agency” is all of DoD for me.

Furthermore, while the rules on such matters for Active Duty were a matter of ethics guidelines and policy, administrative in nature, they are a matter of law for retired officers, subject to criminal prosecution.

So much for me. It is hard to argue I would be there for any reason other than to influence a DoD leader's future decision. How do you show there was no intent to use me (at least in part) to generate business down the line with them? In a year, fair game.

In this first year (two for things considered “lobbying”), I am required to get an OSD legal review. I would fully expect the answer to be unfavorable.

Finally, in the spirit of no LHP - if this is what you brought me onto the team for, solely to be a token or crutch into DoD business, then we need to reconsider our relationship. I was very clear on my legal limitations up front to you. Even law allows me not unwillingly work in that capacity as part of the job, but it's not what I want. I'm not the type of person who would do that. I'm

FOIA CONFIDENTIAL TREATMENT REQUESTED BY NEXT JUMP

DOJ-NXJ-146717
DOJ-0002677274

**TOLD
THEIR**

65 INVESTORS

 Outlook

GX 31

**TOLD
THEIR**

EMPLOYEES

RELIED IN GOOD FAITH

Message

From: Charlie Kim [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=CFB01DBA9F31422391C7FF8AC8197022-CHARLIE KIM]
Sent: 4/9/2021 9:24:34 AM
To: Team MV Class of 2020 [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=853f421c3f5a4348b0f655772d1319d5-Team MV Cla]
Subject: Navy/ Bob Burke

“Then Bob asks, can i be a custodian of NxJ...”

Been just a series of insane, insane days. But quick update on our Bob Burke - Navy meeting yesterday. We had before LIP...

...all the time...v...with...the strong...
...meeting...and he...contin...
...his civilian...which by the way we recommended and he took her with him to Europe
) His 2-star Chief of Staff
) Bob

) Used the LIP presentation - T...\$...to give him an update...additional...
) ...first...showing...
) ...the...de...challenges the...
) ...pricing...what he...
said yes
) He said this is what they need

) At the end, before we left told him about our JV with 3/4-star Navy and AF veterans...that on \$100MM we would give \$10MM and would rather do that than partner with Booz Allen, EY, etc...that they milk these officers for billions in contracts and give them \$100ks and then ditch them after a year or two. He nodded and so did Juliet...told him this would create the intersection of MASTERY (these leaders know leadership skills/ decision making) x PASSION (they care more about sailors and airmen even after they leave) x FINANCIAL NEEDS (income needed after leaving military)...they both lit up
) Then shared Herm (IG) is anxious to start. Bill Moran (former pcNO) seems jittery given his cooling off period, past gmail issues...Bob instantly comments, don't worry, I'll talk to him and get him for you
) Then Bob asks, can i be a custodian of NxJ...to which I say - you mean after you return from 4-star, then 2 years of cooling off period...to which he respond, no right now. He said unless you are a defense contractor (as in selling weapons, plane parts, etc.), I can be an ambassador/custodian...to which Juliet said she will get us the info on this/ cooling off period/ conflict rules...to which we were like - ummm...would be great

Sorry much more going on but sharing quickly - plan on sharing on staff meeting monday...

Sent from my iPad

TOLD THEIR
OUTSIDE
ADVISORS

RELIED IN GOOD FAITH

FW: Next Jump Update...

From: Charlie Kim <ckim@nextjump.com>
To: patrick.rideout@[REDACTED]; "Geier, Jeffrey" <jeffrey.geier@[REDACTED]>
Cc: Meghan Messenger <mmessenger@nextjump.com>
Date: Fri, 09 Apr 2021 20:49:01 +0000

Pat/Jeff – wanted to give you guys an update...I don't know what happened but it's like a nuclear bomb went off in our inbox... want to keep you as partners updated so sharing what we just sent to our investors...

“...asked us if he could be an ambassador/custodian for NxJ”

From: Charlie Kim
Sent: Friday, April 9, 2021 4:46 PM
To: Charlie Kim <ckim@nextjump.com>; Meghan Messenger <mmessenger@nextjump.com>
Subject: Next Jump Update...

We've had several people writing in asking for an update. Our hair is on fire, more going on than ever in more different ways than imagineable.

...asked us if he could be an ambassador/custodian for NxJ...
The activity in the middle east has led to several canceled meetings. Also given US Navy's size/strength, the senior admiral also becomes the Commanding Officer for NATO (29 countries).

Probably the best meeting to date with Bob Burke. Product is spot on to the needs of his sailors and wants to re-up our engagement for HK software. We had to end the hour meeting b/c we teach a weekly Leadership in Practice class where a few hundred people were waiting (otherwise would have of course continued the meeting). He asked for more time. Additionally, we are working on creating a JV partnership with retired 3-star and 4-stars from Navy and Air Force (all relationships we've built over the years) where they would do the sales process into DoD and per \$100MM in sales, we would share \$10MM in revenues. Early discussions have them moving aggressively trying to get more time on our calendars. The former pCNO – Bill Moran, who initially approved our \$100MM engagement, is 6 months away from his “cooling off” period, wanted to wait... however Bob Burke (was Moran's VCNO) said don't worry, “I'll get him for you now”. He then asked us if he could be an ambassador/custodian for NxJ as soon as possible (even while in the position) which we thought would be a conflict, however he said as long as we aren't a defense contractor (selling war fighting materials), he can work around out the details – which his civilian counterpart said would follow up. We explained that “No, we don't sell any jet parts but we do sell we sell diapers and discounted hotel rooms.”

DX 174R

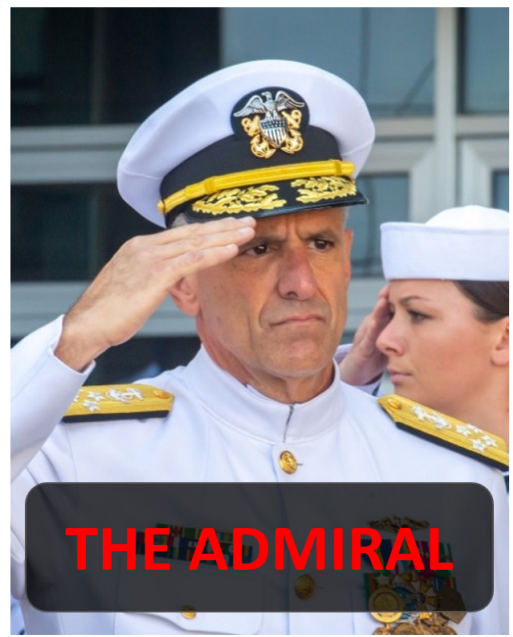
Retrial: Going On the Offensive

- ***Attacking government's rush to judgment***
- ***Exposing hidden evidence***
- ***Subpoenaing government witnesses in the Defense case***

**TOLD
A SENIOR**

NAVY OFFICIAL

BELGA CAFE



THE ADMIRAL



**DEPUTY UNDER
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY**

RELIED IN GOOD FAITH

12022300399@s.whatsapp.net, WhatsApp (Denese M Canedo)

7/23/2021 12:22:36 PM -04:00

I suggest you say I'm an old colleague and friend from your vcr time

12022300399@s.whatsapp.net, WhatsApp (Denese M Canedo)

7/23/2021 12:22:43 PM -04:00

Me in dsn

GX 53A

“She’s deputy director under sec. of navy.” [Charlie, **GX 55]**

Retrial: Meghan's Testimony

- ***Making the decision to testify—role of lawyer and client***
- ***Preparing—focusing on key documents & cross-x***
- ***Responding to cross-x—staying calm and focused***

MEGHAN'S STATEMENTS

Gov't Misread the Email

“negative predictions” = made up
[GX 139]

MEGHAN'S STATEMENTS

Gov't Misread the Text

“When I’ve been shoving down my anger except 1 outburst saying no contract no job. Go screw.”

[GX 138]

Retrial: Character Witnesses

- ***Selecting meaningful character witnesses***
- ***Importance of connecting with the jury***
- ***Furthering factual narratives***

MEGHAN'S STATEMENTS

Instruction 2.213 – CHARACTER OF DEFENDANT

**“evidence of good character
alone may create a
reasonable doubt”**



Shana Echevarría

Senior Enlisted,
Chaplain Corp.
AirForce

follow. As an airman, we have integrity, service and excellence, and that's all that they emulated, especially Meghan to me as a woman.

Q. And do you have an opinion about Ms. Messenger's reputation of integrity?

A. Yeah. To me, is, I don't know, I guess a person's conviction, and that has been really truly, like, seemed to me in the honesty and feedback that she's given me. I thought -- you know, to me that is what integrity looks like and the reputation being known by that alongside the group and everyone.



General Brian Kelly

Lieutenant General Ret.,
AirForce

And the other thing I would just say is, I've seen Meghan now a few times. Whenever I see Meghan, she asks me about my wife before I ever ask Meghan about anything. So

When it comes to honesty, “she lived that all the time”

Meghan has.

Retrial: The Verdict

- ***Mental resilience while awaiting the verdict***
- ***Managing expectations and counsel's role***
- ***Life after a not-guilty verdict***

NOT GUILTY OF CONSPIRACY

Element 1:
Agreement to
Perpetrate



No Agreement - Meghan
and Charlie told the
world.

Element 2:
Intentionally Join
Unlawful Plan to
Bribe



Meghan and Charlie **DID**
NOT Intentionally Join
Anything Unlawful

Element 3: Overt
Act



Meghan and Charlie **DID**
NOT Understand They Did
Anything Unlawful

NOT GUILTY OF BRIBERY

Element 1:

**Directly or Indirectly
give, offer or promise
something of value to
a public official**



No Link - Meghan and
Charlie never linked the
job offer to the contract.

**Element 2: Act
knowingly and
corruptly with intent
to influence an
official act**



**Meghan and Charlie acted
in Good Faith when
Relying on the Admiral**

NOT GUILTY

**OF ILLEGAL
GRATUITY**

Key Takeaways & Advice

TOP NEWS



How They Won It

How 2 Execs Won 'Extraordinarily Rare' Navy Bribery Acquittal

By Phillip Bantz

Attorneys for two consulting company executives accused of bribing a top U.S. Navy admiral shifted and narrowed their core defense strategies in the wake of a mistrial last year, a risky move that paid off earlier this month when a federal jury in D.C. found the pair not guilty on all counts.

Jury acquits 2 business executives of bribing Navy admiral for government contract

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Next Jump Co-Chiefs Acquitted of Bribing Four-Star Navy Admiral

May 19, 2026, 11:09 AM EDT

Bloomberg Law