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## Another debacle for black-eye Cy

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The collapse of former IMF-head Dominique Strauss-Kahn's sex-assault case is the just the latest black eye for Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance Jr., who has overseen a dizzying array of embarrassing losses during just 16 months in office.

Elected in 2009 with the support of legendary DA Robert Morgenthau, Vance, a former Seattle defense lawyer, promised to be a "very active DA" and said, "There are going to be new bureaus, new policies and, in some cases, new directions."

But the direction appears to be down with each new acquittal or botched case.

This past week saw the acquittals of two contractors at the former Deutsche Bank building who were charged with manslaughter for allegedly ignoring severe safety violations that led to the deaths of two firefighters in a 2007 blaze.

And in May, former cops Franklin Mata and Kenneth Moreno were acquitted by a juror of charges of raping a drunken woman in her East Village apartment -- a verdict that appalled the city.

Last July, in another high-profile loss, a judge found a crane rigger not guilty of manslaughter for his work on a crane that collapsed in March 2008, killing seven people.

Even ex-Assemblyman Adam Clayton Powell IV skated with a not-guilty verdict on what seemed like a slam-dunk DWI rap in March 2010. The case had been under Vance's watch, although it began before he was sworn in as DA.

Vance, 57, also fired Lisa Friel, head of the Sex Crimes Unit, this week for her participation in an HBO documentary in which her staff openly discussed active cases.

Friel had been overseeing the Strauss-Kahn case.

"The Manhattan DA's Office is just so highly valued and respected, this is just something New Yorkers are not accustomed to," Mitchell Moss, a New York University professor of urban policy and planning, said about the Strauss-Kahn debacle.

"New Yorkers really expect the DA to be highly professional and organized, and this undermines confidence, and this is something he can't have."

Yesterday, Vance's office said it was undaunted.

"The office's reputation was built on its commitment to doing justice in every case wherever that leads. We will never be afraid to try tough cases," said spokeswoman Erin Duggan.

Vance's former adversary, ex-Judge Leslie Crocker Snyder, was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt.

"You can't rush to judgment. It easy to Monday-morning quarterback," she said. "I happen to like Cy Vance. He happens to do a decent job. He inherited some of these cases, and it's too easy to criticize."

There have been a slew of other mishaps on his watch.

Last month, a judge took just 15 minutes to find opera singer Marcella Caprario not guilty of slapping a fellow shopper in the Upper West Side Trader Joe's -- following a prosecution that was ridiculed for its silliness.

In May, a jury didn't buy the prosecution's contention that Tennessee Titans quarterback Chris Simms was driving while stoned on Manhattan streets.

"Cy Vance is a good man. He actually cares. He was also a defense lawyer. Sometimes these cases are just rotten and you don't know until after you charge," said attorney Jeffrey Lichtman, who won an acquittal for former WPIX reporter Vince Dementri in March on charges that he attacked a chauffeur over a parking spot.

While defense attorneys won't mention Vance's record of losses in courtroom arguments, they may allude to them to sway jurors, Lichtman said.

"How can you take what the government says at face value? Just read the headlines," Lichtman said.

### Try & fail

**Apart from its foundering prosecution of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, DA Cy Vance Jr.'s office has seen other big failures:**

#### Rape Case

May 26, 2011

Ex-cops Franklin Mata and Kenneth Moreno cleared of raping a drunken woman in her East Village apartment. Jurors say

the woman's testimony was unreliable.

**Deutsche Bldg. Fire**

June 28-29, 2011

Jury acquits contractors Jeffrey Melofchik and Salvatore DePaola, who faced manslaughter charges for allegedly ignoring safety violations at the former Deutsche Bank building, where a 2007 blaze killed two firefighters. Jury says city officials were the real culprits.

**Crane Collapse**

July 22, 2010

Judge finds crane rigger William Rapetti not guilty of negligence and manslaughter in a March 2008 crane collapse that killed seven people. The judge offered no reason for the acquittal, but much of the prosecution's case rested on technical testimony.

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