

Latham & Watkins Dominates White Collar Arena

By **Martin Bricketto**

Law360, New York (February 10, 2012, 8:02 PM ET) -- With expertise covering an array of government enforcement matters and a deep roster of attorneys spread out across its 31 offices, Latham & Watkins LLP topped Law360's list of the firms with the biggest white collar practice groups.

Latham, which has 196 white collar attorneys, is followed by Baker & McKenzie LLP, which has 150 attorneys who handle investigations and compliance work worldwide, and Covington & Burling LLP, which has a team of 134 white collar lawyers, according to the Law360 White Collar 100 list.

Those numbers are based on information submitted by the firms.

1. Latham & Watkins LLP, 196 Attorneys

The white collar practice at Latham is defined by the plethora of subject areas and geographies that it encompasses, according to white collar global co-chair David Schindler.

The group has a long track record of counseling clients with compliance, internal investigations and outside probes and prosecutions involving issues such as securities fraud, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, criminal antitrust matters, environmental claims and computer intrusions, Schindler said.

Rather than rest on its laurels, the firm fortifies the practice with strategic thinking about where the next wave of government enforcement might hit, according to Schindler, who also noted the group's strong trial experience and how it informs the rest of its work.

"The people that we have in our practice group are people that also try cases," Schindler said. "As counselors and crisis management folks, having people that routinely try cases provides a unique perspective that is helpful to clients."

Like Latham itself, the practice has no "center of gravity," Schindler said.

Depending on the client and the enforcement issues of the day, the hotbed for white collar activity could be Los Angeles or Washington one year and then somewhere in Asia the next, and it's critical that the firm be able to respond rapidly, he explained.

"One of the things we try to do as a firm and certainly within the white collar practice group is make it a global platform, so you can service clients wherever they may be," Schindler said.

The practice has grown exponentially in terms of bodies, offices and the dollar amount of the matters that it handles, according to Schindler.

The growth has been spurred by factors such as increased government regulation and enforcement worldwide, Schindler said. Additionally, larger firms that may have farmed out white collar cases to boutique firms 15 or so years ago are handling that work in-house, given the potentially critical nature of those matters for their clients, he said.

Among its recent work, Latham attorneys represented Tokyo-based engineering company JGC Corp. in its \$218.8 million settlement with U.S. regulators in April to resolve charges that it bribed Nigerian officials for contracts to build liquefied natural gas facilities, in alleged violation of the FCPA. The alleged scandal had snared other companies such as Halliburton Co. and former subsidiary KBR Inc.

The U.S. Department of Justice agreed to hold off on prosecution for two years, during which time JGC must retain an independent consultant to review its compliance program and must cooperate with prosecutors in ongoing investigations. Prosecutors will drop the charges at the end of the deferred prosecution agreement if the company complies with the deal's terms.

--Additional reporting by Hilary Russ, Dietrich Knauth, Sindhu Sundar and Evan Weinberger. Editing by Lindsay Naylor.

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