

2 Disputes Lawyers Move To Covington Amid KWM Collapse

By Jack Newsham

Law360, New York (January 17, 2017, 2:19 PM EST) -- Covington & Burling LLP on Monday announced that it has hired two top financial disputes lawyers formerly with King & Wood Mallesons LLP for its London office, making it the latest firm to recruit arbitration and litigation professionals from KWM as the firm's European branch enters administration.

Craig Pollack, formerly KWM's global disputes head, and Louise Freeman, a corporate litigator and advocate for financial companies, have joined Covington's European dispute resolution practice, the firm said. The announcement came just a day before KWM confirmed that it has appointed administrators to run the firm in a process similar to Chapter 11 bankruptcy in the U.S.

The move comes not quite two years after Covington welcomed Alex Leitch, who previously held the top litigation post at KWM. He now co-chairs the practice that Pollack and Freeman have joined, and applauded the move in a statement, calling them "top-notch disputes lawyers who will be terrific colleagues."

"The firm's growing footprint in London is a reflection of client demand that is fueled by the increasingly challenging regulatory and compliance environment, and the fact that London is, and will continue to be, a leading venue for international dispute resolution," Leitch and his co-chair Jeremy Wilson said.

Both new hires are veterans of banking and securities disputes. Pollack has also worked several international arbitrations, including a platinum mine row involving three arbitration proceedings under different rules, according to Covington's website. He has also represented a Russian telecommunications company and the majority shareholders of a company in a dispute related to a Ghanaian port, the website said.

Covington said that Pollack will also co-chair its global disputes initiative with former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder. No information about the initiative was available, and a spokesman for the firm didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday.

Freeman works on complex business disputes, having represented banks, multinationals, asset managers and credit rating agencies, Covington said on its website. She also represents parties in the information technology and telecom industries, and has worked on major competition lawsuits, including a synthetic rubber cartel case and a power cables cartel, according to the website.

Pollack graduated from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and received an LLM from King's College in London, and Freeman studied law and received her degree from Cambridge University, the firm said.

The two are the latest in a string of KWM arbitration, litigation and investigation lawyers to move to Covington. In October, the firm announced that barrister Elaine Whiteford had joined as a partner, a month after Greg Lascelles made a similar move.

Other firms to take on talent from KWM include Goodwin Procter LLP and DLA Piper, although more than a dozen firms have hired laterals and groups of associates as the European side of the China-based megafirm has headed toward insolvency.

--Editing by Stephen Berg.