

Covington promotes from Ukraine team

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Erin Thomas and Nikhil Gore

Two practitioners who have represented Ukrainian parties in claims against Russia have been promoted to the partnership at Covington & Burling in New York and Washington, DC.

The firm announced yesterday that **Erin Thomas** and **Nikhil Gore** have been promoted from special counsel and associate respectively. They have been with the firm since 2013. A US national, Thomas began her career at Allen & Overy in New York before joining Covington in the same city, where she was made special counsel in 2017.

Thomas practises commercial and investment treaty arbitration. She is part of the Covington team representing Ukrainian state-owned energy company Naftogaz in its US\$5 billion treaty claim against Russia over the seizure of its assets in Crimea. The company prevailed on jurisdiction and liability earlier this year and the tribunal is now assessing damages.

Olga Ivaniv, in-house counsel at Naftogaz, says Thomas is “highly professional” and “passionate” in her work, which “led us to tremendous success with our case.”

Working pro bono, Thomas was also part of the team that helped two labour union federations settle disputes with a global fashion brand under the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague – the first known arbitrations under a business and human rights agreement.

She is active in construction disputes and has had several recent instructions in ICDR and ICC cases relating to mining projects in South America. She also has acted for a US government contractor in a DIFC-LCIA arbitration with a subcontractor in Afghanistan and Dubai.

Gore, a Singaporean national, joined Covington in DC after a year at Jones Day in Singapore, having previously served as a judicial clerk at the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

He is part of the Covington team acting for the Ukrainian state in proceedings against Russia under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea concerning the seizure of three naval vessels and 24 servicemen detained last year in the Black Sea. In support of that arbitration, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea issued a provisional measures order in May, directing Russia to release the vessels and personnel. The servicemen were released last month as part of a prisoner exchange between Ukraine and Russia.

Alfred HA Soons of Utrecht University School of Law, who is also advising Ukraine in the UNCLOS proceeding, says Gore has “demonstrated an excellent grasp of the complex public international issues, both substantive and procedural, as well as impressive drafting and advocacy skills.”

Gore was also part of the Covington team that represented US drugmaker Eli Lilly in a US\$370 million NAFTA claim against Canada that was dismissed in 2017.

He has acted in investment and commercial disputes in the electricity distribution, pharmaceutical and natural resources sectors.

Thomas and Gore both hold JDs from Harvard Law School. Gore is an adjunct professor at George Washington University and has previously coached the law school's investment arbitration moot team.

Marney Cheek, who co-chairs Covington's global arbitration practice from DC, says: “Nikhil and Erin's promotions are a testament to their outstanding legal skills and reflect our busy docket.”

They are part of a round of 14 partner promotions announced by Covington across eight offices in what the firm says is its most diverse partner class ever. Nine of those promoted are women.

In May, **Philip Norman** joined the firm as partner in Dubai from Simmons & Simmons. The firm also recently rehired **Monique O'Donoghue**, who had since become a partner at K&L Gates, as of counsel in London and Dubai.