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Akin Gump

STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP

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The guide to specialist
arbitration firms **2014**

Fully revised and updated
7th annual edition

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld

Pending cases as counsel:	12+
Value of pending counsel work:	US\$40 billion
Treaty cases:	1
Current arbitrator appointments:	6 (of which 2 are as sole or chair)
No. of lawyers sitting as arbitrator:	3

This US firm has won some important settlements for Renova and Vimpelcom

The firm began in Texas in 1945, serving the oil and gas industry. Although it has worked regularly on international arbitrations over the years for clients in that sector, its name grew markedly in 2010 when it acquired a well-established team from Hogan & Hartson in Geneva (ahead of that firm's merger with Lovells).

That brought the highly regarded Charles Adams to Akin Gump. One very famous arbitrator confided to *GAR* in 2009 that Adams – who has some 250 arbitrations under his belt and 38 years in Paris, Geneva and Washington, DC – is one of the most persuasive advocates he knows.

Network

The firm has 19 international offices, including bases in Abu Dhabi, Beijing, Geneva, Hong Kong, London and Moscow, on top of its network in the US. In 2013, the firm also opened in Singapore.

For the international arbitration practice, the key cities are Geneva and London, where partner Justin Williams and his team regularly assist on English law matters. Other practitioners are based in Abu Dhabi as well as several offices in the US.

Who uses it?

The Alstom Group is one long-time client; Adams and his team have conducted over 24 proceedings for it in the past 16 years. Other regular customers include Renova, the Russian conglomerate owned by Viktor Vekselberg; EADS and its Airbus affiliate, Siemens; US hospitality group Carlson; and Swedish food packaging company Tetra Pak.

The team is a decent option too if you have a last-minute instruction. Elektrim Finance called on it very late on during one part of its long-running dispute with Vivendi and Deutsche Telekom over control of a Polish telephone company. The Akin Gump team geared up for the principal merits hearing in less than four weeks.

Similarly, VeriSign retained it with only two weeks to go before AAA/ICDR hearings against RealNetworks.

The Canadian province of British Columbia has also instructed it in connection with an LCIA claim about the contentious softwood lumber agreement between Canada and the US.

Track record

Among other things, Charles Adams and his group are responsible for one particularly spectacular enforcement action. They enforced an

award won by the Eurotrain consortium against Taiwan High Speed Rail Corporation by arresting and impounding the then-largest container ship in the world.

They also steered one of the longest-running investment cases against Poland to a conclusion after taking over the case at the quantum phase. The case eventually settled for less than one-tenth of the €14 billion initially claimed.

Meanwhile, Spencer Griffith in Beijing and Bernd Janzen in Washington, DC, secured a victory for British Columbia in the LCIA claim brought against it by the US government. In 2012, the tribunal dismissed claims that the Canadian province had breached the 2006 softwood lumber agreement.

The firm also advised Renova Holdings in a series of claims arising from BP's attempt to form a US\$16 billion joint venture with Russia's Rosneft to explore oil in the Russian Arctic. BP's Russian partners in its TNK-BP joint venture – the Alfa-Access-Renova consortium – brought an arbitration under their shareholders' agreement to block the Rosneft deal, leading BP to bring two mirror arbitrations against Renova and the other TNK-BP partners. The dispute was resolved in November 2012, with BP paying the consortium a reported US\$325 million to settle all the claims.

In 2012, Adams and his team also helped Alstom resolve its dispute with Endel over a power plant in New Caledonia. The tribunal awarded Endel just €2.35 million – considerably less than the €26 million originally sought.

In addition, the firm obtained an €11 million award on behalf of Carlson Anse Marcel (a French affiliate of The Carlson Group) in a dispute with an engineering company over a €60 million project for the renovation of one of its hotels in the Caribbean.

New York-based partner Steven Pesner also led a team that defended VimpelCom, the world's sixth-largest mobile telephone operator, in an arbitration with Telenor, one of its largest shareholders. Telenor withdrew its claims in early 2012.

Recent events

In Geneva, partners Michael Stepek and Matthew Bate continue to defend Houston-based Virasa Technologies in a US\$700 million ICC claim brought by a Korean industrial manufacturer affiliated with Hyundai.

In addition, Stepek is advising Swiss-controlled investor Bryn Capital Services in a US\$260 million investment treaty claim against Latvia over the expropriation of a bank.

In London, Justin Williams is advising an oil and gas investor on potential treaty claims against Montenegro in relation to the termination of its licences. He is also acting for a Russian private equity investor in a London-seated LCIA arbitration.

The same team is representing Israeli chemicals company Dead Sea Works in another London-seated LCIA claim against a US oil and gas company over a sale and purchase agreement.

Client comment

Philip Ray, senior counsel at Siemens, praises the firm's "willingness to be there for you and brainstorm, even if not representing you on a matter" and the "extraordinary value" of its service.