

Global 20: Cleary

By **Mike LaSusa**

Law360 (August 19, 2019, 2:30 PM EDT) -- Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP represented a slew of prominent international companies in a variety of legal actions around the world this past year, including nabbing a victory for Robert Bosch in a suit over emissions-cheating software, earning the firm a spot on Law360's Global 20 list for the ninth straight year.

Cleary, which has never been left off Law360's annual ranking of top international shops, says it doesn't have a "home" country. Fourteen of its 16 offices are located outside the U.S., and nearly half of the firm's attorneys are based in the U.K., Germany, Italy, Belgium, Russia, France, China, Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina and Brazil.


With a presence in a dozen countries on four continents, it's not hard to see why managing partner Michael Gerstenzang says Cleary's success "is built on our internationalism, which is at the core of our culture and our identity."

"Clients turn to Cleary because of our knowledge of their businesses and the markets in which they operate," Gerstenzang told Law360. "And, of course, at the heart of our firm's success is our ability to attract, develop, retain, and empower the best people."

Over the past year, Cleary has worked on high-stakes, high-profile mergers and acquisitions involving some of the world's largest corporations.

For instance, the more than 1,300-attorney firm worked on antitrust clearance for The Walt Disney Co.'s purchase of a suite of 21st Century Fox entertainment assets in a \$71.3 billion cash-and-stock deal that Gerstenzang said "has reshaped the global media landscape."

The firm also helped guide a \$56 billion merger between Sprint Corp. and T-Mobile, which is owned by Germany's Deutsche Telekom AG.



Cleary

Global headcount: 1,319
 Total offices: 16

Offices by Region:
 North America: 2
 Europe: 8
 Asia-Pacific: 3
 Middle East: 1
 South America: 2

The U.S. Department of Justice cut a deal on July 26 clearing the merger on the condition that Sprint sells off its prepaid mobile brands, though the plan is facing resistance from state attorneys general.

Cleary has also helped big-name companies involved in complex and often multilayered disputes.

For example, the firm has aided German-headquartered engineering company Robert Bosch GmbH as it navigates numerous legal actions related to allegations that it colluded with major automakers to install so-called defeat devices that helped them cheat vehicle emissions tests.

A number of investigations and lawsuits related to the fallout from the emissions cheating scandals are still ongoing, but Cleary did snag a victory for Bosch in June, when a New Jersey federal judge tossed a putative class action against Bosch and BMW, saying the car buyers who lodged the suit hadn't adequately shown that they had bought vehicles containing defeat devices.

Cleary is also representing Brazilian mining giant Vale SA in its continued push for confirmation of a \$1.2 billion arbitration award handed down by the London Court of International Arbitration.

The award against billionaire Beny Steinmetz's BSG Resources Ltd. stems from a soured Guinean mining project. Vale is fighting BSGR's bid for a New York federal court to pause enforcement of the award in light of an English High Court order putting the award on ice until the end of a U.K. challenge lodged by Steinmetz's company.

Gerstenzang, who has been managing partner since 2017 and was based in the firm's Brussels office from 1994 to 1996, said the international aspects of Cleary Gottlieb's practice are "both challenging and exhilarating."

"A vast majority of our firm's work is cross-border or multijurisdictional," he said. "We are regularly called to counsel clients through first-of-their-kind transactions and precedent-setting matters."

Tahir Sarkar is a partner in Cleary's London office whose team represented Dutch chemical company OCI NV in the creation this year of a multibillion-dollar joint fertilizer venture with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, among other matters.

Sarkar told Law360 that Cleary attorneys routinely collaborate among various offices, allowing for effective communication and information sharing. Moreover, he said, the incentive structure for partners "ensures that we retain high-quality lawyers in every jurisdiction we operate in."

Sarkar said that the kind of globe-spanning issues that Cleary works on "tend to have a built-in degree of complexity," involving "cultural nuances and personalities" that can be exacting. But the London-based partner seems to relish the challenges.

"These matters certainly keep you on your toes and entertained," he said.

Methodology: Law360 surveyed law firms about their global attorney headcounts, office locations and cross-border and international work between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019. Headcount and office information for Cleary is as of Dec. 31, 2018.

--Additional reporting by Nadia Dreid, Bryan Koenig, Sophia Morris and Shayna Posses. Editing by Alyssa Miller. All Content © 2003-2019, Portfolio Media, Inc.