

A Look At Norton Rose Fulbright's Global Investigations Team

By **Marco Poggio**

Law360 (October 4, 2021, 4:30 PM EDT) -- Norton Rose Fulbright has hired aggressively this year, drawing heavyweights from competitors and beefing up the ranks of its global investigations team.

Firm leaders say the spate of lateral hires is part of a strategy to gain dominance in markets around the world, particularly in hot regulatory environments such as the United States and the European Union.

Those markets require particularly experienced talent to assist clients that are often investigated simultaneously by government agencies from both regions.

"One thing we were looking at were folks who could not only round out the team but also that could serve as sort of quarterbacks for particular types of matters and particular regions," said Richard S. Krumholz, Norton Rose's global head of litigation and disputes.

Norton Rose already has a fleet of lawyers — at least 150 — working on global investigations around the world. In the United States, the firm has 45 investigations attorneys, 25 of whom are partners working in six different offices. About half of those partners have worked as attorneys in government.

But the firm saw key areas in global investigations practice where they could get an edge over their competitors and pushed through eight hires since the beginning of the year to bolster its global investigation roster.

Since January, the firm has brought on Christopher K. Pelham and Brian A. Sun from Jones Day, Sandeep Savla from Latham & Watkins LLP, Tim Byrne from Shearman & Sterling LLP, Jay Dewald from Jackson Walker LLP, Thomas A. Coulter from Whiteford Taylor & Preston LLP and two in-house attorneys, Julie Searle from Walmart and Celia Cohen from JPMorgan Chase.

A global increase in cross-border, multijurisdictional investigations involving the firm's clients — a plethora of banking and finance institutions, energy industry giants, large manufacturers, health care and tech companies — prompted Norton Rose to shop for highly qualified talent, Krumholz said.

"We really tried to focus on particular sectors and on particular skill sets," Krumholz said. "While they are U.S. hires, they are clearly global hires, which is why I was so interested in each of them."

The firm looked into its capabilities in Asia, and ultimately decided to bring in Pelham and Sun from Jones Day, two attorneys with experience and deep connections with that region. They both work at

Norton Rose's office in Los Angeles.

"We really beefed up our West Coast presence. And of course, California is really a corridor for Asia," Krumholz said.

Pelham led Jones Day's investigation and litigation practice in Shanghai.

A former assistant U.S. attorney for the Central District of California, where he worked for eight years on cases involving racketeering, drug trafficking, securities and consumer fraud, and public corruption, Pelham was one of the few former federal prosecutors to work out of mainland China, according to his bio.

In Shanghai, Pelham represented clients in cross-border criminal proceedings, as well as regulatory matters before U.S. government agencies. He also conducted internal investigations concerning violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

At Norton Rose, which he joined in July, Pelham advises major companies in investigations and regulatory enforcement actions that present special risks to them.

Typical matters involve suspected trade secret misappropriation or responding to investigative requests and subpoenas. Others involve helping clients investigate internal allegations. The clients usually have a West Coast nexus and connections abroad, mainly to China.

"I joined [Norton Rose] because I was excited to work in a globe-spanning platform, join a firm that was serious about expanding its white collar and investigative capacity, and work with a team that has such an outstanding reputation among major international companies," Pelham told Law360 Pulse in an email.

Pelham said he has a "very positive" outlook for the global investigations team.

"I expect to see our group build off of our firm's particular strengths in client service," he said.

Sun, a lawyer with over four decades of civil, regulatory and criminal litigation experience, also had extensive connections to Asia clients and a past as a government attorney. He served as a federal prosecutor in California's Central District targeting drug and related money laundering crimes, then as chief of the Financial Investigations Unit of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Once in private practice, Sun took the defense of high-profile clients, including Wen Ho Lee, a prominent Taiwanese-American scientist accused of stealing secrets about the United States nuclear arsenal for China.

Lee was charged with 59 counts of mishandling information under the Atomic Energy Act. In a deal with prosecutors, he pled guilty to a single count of retaining secret national defense information, in exchange for the government dropping the other charges. He was released after nine months in federal custody.

While at Jones Day, Sun also served as a deputy general counsel to the Christopher Commission, an



Christopher K. Pelham



Brian A. Sun

independent body that investigated the Los Angeles Police Department in the wake of the Rodney King beating.

Sun joined Norton Rose in March, working on white collar criminal defense and litigation on matters involving unfair competition, public corruption, entertainment, shareholder rights, contractual disputes and fraud, and cross-border issues, according to his bio.

In an email to Law360 Pulse, Sun said he was brought in "to further develop, expand and hone the cross-border effectiveness of a talented team of diverse lawyers located around the world."

He was lured to Norton Rose by the firm's collegial culture and prestige as well as its "social responsibility," he said.

Sun and Pelham will give Norton Rose an edge in helping clients that do business in Asia and companies that are based there, Krumholz said.

The other front of Norton Rose's strategy for beating the competition focuses cross-border work involving United States and European countries. For months, the firm looked for lawyers with prime experience on both sides of the Atlantic, eventually hiring Savla from Latham, where he was a top white collar defense attorney, last month.

Savla, a licensed New York litigator and investigations lawyer and a barrister in London, where he grew up, joined the investigation team in the Big Apple.

"He really serves the European-U.S. corridor, and allows us to provide seamless, consistent advice in cross-border, multijurisdictional investigations," Krumholz said.

Earlier in his career, Savla was an in-house counsel to Credit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank, where he managed a cross-border litigation and investigations docket, responded to regulatory inquiries and appeared in court and before government agencies, the firm said.

He also was a senior counsel in the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's Enforcement Division, where he handled numerous investigations.

In London, Savla had an extensive white collar criminal defense practice, taking more than 15 trials to verdict, the firm said.

At Norton Rose, Savla divides his time between white collar and civil litigation, with a focus on financial institutions. He was attracted by the firm's global platform, which he saw as ideal for his cross-border expertise, and by the caliber of its attorneys, he said.

Cohen and Byrne, two other key lateral hires at the New York office, will work in parallel with Savla on complex matters.

"It's great to work with so many talented lawyers who work in the same sort of space," Savla told Law360 Pulse, saying much of the work the global



Sandeep Savla



Celia Cohen

investigation team does involves several lawyers at the time. "We've formed a cohesive team."

Cohen, a former assistant U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of New York, joined Norton Rose in March from JPMorgan Chase, where she worked as an assistant general counsel leading internal multinational investigations.

Krumholz said Cohen's in-house experience makes her a good fit for banking institutions that are among the investigations team's clients because she "can speak their language."

Steven D. Jansma, Norton Rose's co-head of the litigation and disputes team in the United States, echoed how the firm values attorneys with in-house experience.

"We think it's very important for our clients to have that perspective of attorneys who sat in the same type of chairs that they sit in," he said.

Cohen told Law360 Pulse that her earlier work as a federal prosecutor trained her to "have the ability to stand in the middle of a fire and be able to calmly put it out."

Byrne's expertise is in financial regulation. He started his career at the Federal Reserve, then moved to in-house and law firm experience. He joined Norton Rose last month from Shearman.

Investigations into financial institutions necessitate a team effort. Often, they involve arcane regulatory questions. That's when Byrne's experience becomes crucial, he said.

"You have part of the team doing the investigation, strategizing, other parts of the team are focusing on more kind of what's the substantive laws that we're dealing with," Byrne said. "We really do work together."

In the health care investigation practice area, Norton Rose brought in Dewald, a former assistant U.S. attorney with experience in health care fraud prosecutions. He joined the firm's offices in Dallas and San Antonio in May from Jackson Walker, where he headed its investigations and white collar defense practice.

Coulter, an experienced government contracts lawyer with a past as a trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, joined the firm in June.

Searle, another government attorney with over 10 years of experience with both criminal and civil cases, also arrived at Norton Rose in May. Searle brought her experience as an in-house lawyer at Walmart, where she led a team overseeing corporate ethics and compliance issues for the retail giant.

"We have a real consumer markets focus right now," Krumholz said. "She brings a wealth of experience in that context."

Krumholz said this year's laterals fulfilled a hiring strategy that took Norton Rose's



Tim Byrne



Jay Dewald



Tom Coulter

global investigations team where it wished to be in terms of head count, and that there are no current plans to expand it further.

"We've covered the waterfront," he said. "We feel like we have the right team on the field at this stage. The market is very excited about what we've built."

--Editing by Orlando Lorenzo.



Julie Searle