

Crowell Adds Former Senior DOJ Official To Doha Office

By **Katryna Perera**

Law360 (September 9, 2021, 3:36 PM EDT) -- A former senior U.S. Justice Department official has joined Crowell & Moring LLP and will be based in the firm's Doha, Qatar, office to advise U.S. and international companies and expand Crowell's presence in the Middle East.

Michael Gunnison joins the firm after a three-decade-long career with the U.S. government. He previously served as the resident legal adviser at the U.S. Embassy in Qatar and as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of New York and the District of New Hampshire.



Michael Gunnison

In a phone call with Law360, Gunnison said he has a breadth of experience in civil and criminal matters and initially joined the government due to a desire to live and work abroad.

Gunnison has worked on several matters in the Middle East, including white collar issues, government contracts, anti-money laundering and counterterrorism initiatives, according to a Tuesday press release from Crowell & Moring.

In 2018, the DOJ and the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism tapped Gunnison to implement the U.S.-Qatar Memorandum on Combating Terrorism Financing, according to the release.

He also worked in the DOJ's fraud section, handling cases involving bribery, corruption and defense contract fraud for the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, the release states.

Gunnison will join the firm's white collar and regulatory enforcement group as senior counsel and will "advise U.S. and international companies on compliance with new anti-money laundering standards in Qatar, as well as investigations into sanctions matters throughout the region," according to the release.

The firm said Gunnison will also work on issues related to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, the Foreign Agents Registration Act and defense contract fraud.

When asked why he decided to change to private practice, Gunnison said the reputation and strength of Crowell & Moring were attractive to him.

"I had a great run with the U.S. Department of Justice, and it was time for a new challenge," Gunnison said. "I felt my experience was a good match for the firm, and the depth of experience of the team in

Qatar is unmatched."

Gunnison said that the areas his practice will focus on — white collar, defense contracts and money laundering — are underserved in the region by counsel, and the firm is aware of that.

"The firm understands that basing here in Qatar is the key to building and maintaining important client relationships, and we need to have expertise locally to provide clients with greater access to our full suite of services," Gunnison said.

He hopes his government experience and deep knowledge of the region and its players will lend to his new role.

Charbel Maakaron, managing partner of Crowell & Moring's Doha office, said in a statement that Gunnison's experience has given him a strong and vast network in the region.

"As more and more companies begin to recognize how attractive Qatar is for foreign direct investment, Mike's experience navigating the landscape and ensuring compliance with new regulatory frameworks will be invaluable," Maakaron said.

Crowell & Moring is an international firm that focuses on regulatory, policy, transactional and corporate matters.

--Editing by Robert Rudinger.