

Hughes Hubbard Adds Sanctions Expert From Treasury OFAC

By Kyle Jahner

Law360, Washington (May 15, 2017, 6:25 PM EDT) --

Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP announced Monday that it has added sanctions expert Sean Kane from the U.S. Department of the Treasury to its international trade practice.

Kane, who started Monday at the firm as counsel, most recently served at Treasury as assistant director for policy in the Office of Foreign Assets Control, where he played a key role in major initiatives such as instituting sanctions on Russia and easing those against Sudan, among dozens of other portfolios. His six years at OFAC came after time at AKE Group and Goodwin Procter LLP in risk management and international trade.



Sean Kane

“We’re obviously thrilled to be bringing on Sean,” Amanda DeBusk, who chairs the firm’s trade group, told Law360 on Monday. “We have a great trade practice here in Washington. We have been looking for someone from OFAC for a number of years, and finally we’re absolutely thrilled to find Sean as the right fit.”

DeBusk praised both Kane’s experience at Treasury and his eight years of private experience in risk management and trade law. She also said his expertise comes with a friendly disposition and a good sense of humor — a rare blend that clients will appreciate.

“It’s hard to find a funny one from OFAC,” DeBusk joked.

Kane left Treasury on May 5 to join the New York-based international firm. He told Law360 that he was excited about the new gig, calling it a “pretty easy decision” given Hughes Hubbard’s caliber of attorneys and the quality of its international trade group.

In sentiments echoed by DeBusk, Kane said sanctions have become increasingly complex and customized; while formerly more of a “blunt instrument,” he said, they’re now more complex to deal with more specific problems with other nations. That creates more complicated rules for companies interested in business in certain countries or with entities tied to them.

“For clients in private sector, it obviously complicates things. It’s no longer a one-size-fits-all policy. Sanctions are calibrated to the problem they’re trying to address,” Kane said. “We’re kind of victims of our own success in a way. [The U.S. and other multilateral groups] got very good at finding ways to use

sanctions to address very discrete problem sets.”

After graduating from the University of Florida with a degree in history in 1998 and George Washington University Law School in 2002, he joined Goodwin Procter LLP in Boston, where he worked from 2003 to 2007. From there he went to London to work for AKE Group, where he moved from intelligence coordinator and risk analyst up to the head of the firm’s risk consultancy.

Kane jumped to Treasury in 2011 and progressed from the licensing division, humanitarian and transactional matters to policy adviser before becoming a deputy assistant director in February 2016.

Kane had more than 30 portfolios at Treasury and is well-read on counterterrorism and counternarcotics sanctions all over the world. He said he imagines that Iran, Cuba and Russia will continue to be focal points, as they remain attractive to businesses but are still affected by varying restrictions.

DeBusk said that with the Trump administration critically re-examining sanctions policies, now will be a crucial time to help clients adjust through a shifting landscape.

“Corporations need to identify their potential exposure, mitigate their exposure and take advantage of authorized opportunities,” DeBusk said.

Ted Mayer, chair of Hughes Hubbard, said most international transactions in some way touch on sanctions-related issues, and he cited Kane’s 14-plus years of experience in international trade law, risk analysis and consulting.

“He brings an in-depth understanding of OFAC’s approach to sanctions implementation and enforcement combined with private sector political risk experience that makes him uniquely qualified to help our clients navigate this growing area,” Mayer said in a statement from the firm.

--Editing by Sara Ziegler.