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Clifford Chance, Pillsbury Add DLA Piper Finance Trio

Brian Baxter, The Am Law Daily

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DLA Piper has been active on the lateral hiring front this year, but the global legal giant saw three finance lawyers leave its robust ranks this week for Clifford Chance and Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman.

Clifford Chance, a Magic Circle firm in the [midst of a firmwide review](#) of its operations, [announced Tuesday](#) its hire of DLA Piper banking and finance partner Gianluca Bacchiocchi, [who joined the latter's Chicago office in 2009](#) from Mayer Brown. Bacchiocchi will now work out of Clifford Chance's New York office, where he'll be a [member of the London-based firm's Americas practice](#) focused on advising sponsors and underwriters on cross-border work emanating from Latin America.

Also on the move are DLA Piper project finance partner Nicolai Sarad and of counsel Fernando Rodriguez-Marin, who have [joined Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman](#) as partners in New York. Both lawyers had been at DLA Piper for more than a decade, where they represented developers, financial institutions, investors and government agencies on project development and finance matters.

Pillsbury—which saw profits per partner rise 6 percent last year to nearly \$1.2 million, [as reported by sibling publication The Recorder](#)—has also been on a hiring spree in 2015. The firm hired 10 lawyers in Austin last week from Bracewell & Giuliani, [as noted by sibling publication Texas Lawyer](#), and last month brought on nuclear energy experts Vincent Zabielski as counsel and Jeffrey Merrifield as partner in London and Washington, D.C., respectively. ([Pillsbury also hired](#) Greenberg Traurig labor and employment litigation partner John Scalia—son of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia—as senior counsel in Washington, D.C.)

Sarad cites Pillsbury's international expertise in the energy and infrastructure space—the firm picked up [two partners in the space from Dewey & LeBoeuf](#) in 2012 and brought on [two more partners in Tokyo last year](#)—as complementing his practice. Sarad, who says he was advised by Cathy Michaelson of New York-based legal recruiting firm [Michaelson Associates](#) on his move from DLA Piper, also praises Pillsbury for its lenders' side finance and debt capital markets and tax work.

Two years ago, Sarad was [mentioned in a high-profile overbilling suit](#) filed [against DLA Piper in](#)

[New York](#) by former client TransGas Development Systems. In court papers, TransGas claimed that Sarad had been the Syracuse-based company's longtime relationship partner, but that as DLA Piper grew in size he spent less time on the company's legal work, which instead went to other lawyers at the firm. [The salacious suit quickly settled](#)—a [lawyer representing TransGas](#) escaped a [court sanction](#) in an unrelated matter that [also involved DLA Piper](#)—and Sarad will only say that the company is no longer a client of DLA Piper or Pillsbury.

A DLA Piper spokesman, when asked about the departures of Sarad, Rodriguez-Marin and Bacchiocchi, said in a brief statement to The Am Law Daily that the firm thanked “them for their contributions” and wished the trio the best in their future endeavors.

DLA Piper remains one of the world's largest firms, despite seeing Dentons claim the “largest” title by attorney head count last week as the [Swiss verein finalized its high-profile combination](#) with China's Dacheng.

The New York Law Journal, a sibling publication, [reported last week](#) on DLA Piper's hire of 10 labor and employment lawyers from Kasowitz, Benson, Torres & Friedman led by practice chair Eric Wallach in New York. DLA Piper added [former federal prosecutor Rodney Villazor](#) as a civil litigation partner in Short Hills, N.J., and expanded its [trade and government relations team last month](#) in London by [bringing on a finance and projects partner](#) from commodities giant Noble Group, as well as [adding a life sciences and regulatory counsel](#) in Washington, D.C. DLA Piper also picked up three corporate partners in Singapore, [according to sibling publication The Asian Lawyer](#).

DLA Piper, which has been [exploring alternative revenue streams through its investment](#) in new technologies that can be used by clients, did see its former Kuwait managing partner Abdul Aziz Al-Yaqout decamp in January to [form his own Middle East boutique](#). Scott Antel, a real estate partner with DLA Piper in Moscow, recently [joined British firm Berwin Leighton Paisner](#) in Abu Dhabi. DLA Piper also saw a [dispute resolution partner in London defect for Bryan Cave](#) and a [well-traveled IP litigator](#) join Reed Smith in New York, [as noted in January by The Am Law Daily](#).

Of course, not all are happy with the firm. [Above the Law reported Tuesday](#) that DLA Piper's year-end associate bonuses didn't match up with some of its competitors on Wall Street.

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