

Russian firm launches practice with prominent hire

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Dmitry Dyakin

Rybalkin Gortsunyan & Partners in Moscow has launched a new arbitration practice led by **Dmitry Dyakin**, the former co-head of litigation and arbitration at Egorov Puginsky Afanasiev & Partners.

Dyakin joined the partnership at his new firm in February and has brought a team of six lawyers with him, including partner **Vladimir Pestrikov**, counsel **Dmitry Kaysin** and four associates. Pestrikov and Kaysin were counsel at their former firm.

"Together we plan to create a leader in the Russian dispute resolution market," says Dyakin.

Rybalkin Gortsunyan & Partners, or RGP, was set up in 2018 by former members of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld in Moscow. It is focused on dispute resolution and corporate work and already has a busy litigation practice. The new arrivals bring the total number in the disputes team to 26.

Clients of note include Russian oil and gas producer Tatneft, in a US\$380 million English litigation against Ukrainian businessman Igor Kolomoisky and others. The firm is also acting for Viktor Vekselberg's Renova Group in a billion-dollar litigation with former Russian government minister Mikhail Abyzov over ownership of Russian

generation company T Plus, which is being heard in the British Virgin Islands with ancillary proceedings in Switzerland and Cyprus.

Ilya Rybalkin, co-founder of RGP, says: "In these challenging times, we have managed to dramatically enhance our team with outstanding professionals, and together we will continue to create a unique Russian legal firm and defend our clients in the most complex disputes in Russia and across the world."

Dyakin was previously the managing partner of the Moscow office of Ukrainian firm Magisters and the head of its international arbitration and litigation practice in Russia. He joined Egorov Puginsky Afanasiev & Partners (EPAP) when it absorbed Magisters in 2011, becoming co-head of the merged practice alongside EPAP partner **Evgeniy Rashevsky**.

Dyakin has experience of acting for the Russian government and major state corporations as well as foreign companies in the oil and gas, banking and construction sectors.

His clients have included Russia in a billion-dollar tax dispute with ExxonMobil arising out of a production-sharing agreement; prominent Russian businessman Oleg Deripaska in a €600 million investment treaty claim against Montenegro; and a Russian fund in a US\$300 million treaty claim against Lithuania.

Dyakin is the deputy chairman of the ICC arbitration commission in Russia and the investment arbitration working group of the Russian Arbitration Association. He also served for three years as deputy chairman of the presidium of the Arbitration Centre of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RUIE), one of the few licensed domestic arbitral institutions under 2015 reforms to Russia's arbitration regime.

He is the chair of Russian Arbitration Week and the co-chair of GAR Live Moscow, which has been rescheduled for 8 October in light of the covid-19 situation.

Pestrikov was previously an in-house counsel at Russian state-owned oil company Zarubezhneft and Russian petrochemicals company Sibur before he joined Magisters in 2008. Kaysin was also an in-house lawyer at vodka producer Russian Standard before joining EPAP in 2013.

The new team at RGP also includes senior associates **Stanislav Karandasov** and **Vsevolod Taraskin**, associate **Timur Abushakhmanov** and junior associate **Evgeniy Voronin**.

EPAP's international arbitration and litigation practice is now co-chaired by Rashevsky and **Andrew Lomas**, an English barrister who joined the firm in February from One Essex Court and is based in Moscow.

The 16-strong practice also includes partners **Ilya Nikiforov** and English-qualified **Robin Wittering** and counsel **Tatyana Neveeva** and **Victor Radnaev** in London, who all have international arbitration experience.

GAR 100 firm EPAP is engaged on a number of investor-state matters. Alongside WilmerHale, it continues to act for Grand Express in an ICSID claim against Belarus concerning a railcar manufacturing plant. Dyakin had been on the case prior to his departure.

Together with UK firm RPC, EPAP has also been representing Deripaska in an English court challenge to a US\$95 million LCIA award. Last week, a judge rejected a bid by the counterparty, Vladimir Chernukhin, to have Deripaska committed for contempt of court, finding the request was an abuse of process.

Commenting on Dyakin's departure, EPAP said: "We wish him the best."