

Rising Star: Covington's Amanda Tuninetti

By **Caroline Simson**

Law360 (August 4, 2025, 4:00 PM EDT) -- Amanda Tuninetti of Covington & Burling LLP was instrumental in convincing courts in Washington, D.C., to deny Venezuela's bid to defeat enforcement of an arbitral award now worth some \$670 million to Spanish affiliates of Mexican tortilla manufacturer Gruma SAB de CV, earning her a spot among the international arbitration practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

The biggest case of her career and what made it challenging:

Tuninetti was a member of the legal team that convinced a D.C. federal court to enforce a more than \$500 million arbitral award to Spanish affiliates of Mexican tortilla manufacturer Gruma SAB de CV, which the companies won in 2017 after Venezuela seized their investments in various plants, factories and flour mills in the country.

With interest, the award issued to Valores Mundiales SL and Consorcio Andino SL is currently worth more than \$670 million.

Venezuela argued in the case that an annulment committee wrongly barred former opposition leader Juan Guaidó's interim government from challenging the award. But as the primary drafter of the written briefing in the district court proceeding, Tuninetti said she and the Covington legal team convinced U.S. District Judge Ana C. Reyes to reject the country's argument in May 2023.

Tuninetti also played a key role in preparing the team for legal argument before Judge Reyes and subsequently was the primary drafter of the written briefing before the D.C. Circuit, which affirmed Judge Reyes' ruling that December, according to Covington. Tuninetti, likewise, took a lead role in preparing the team for oral argument at the appeals court, the firm said.

In its decision, the D.C. Circuit concluded Venezuela could not second-guess the International Centre for Settlement of Investment

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Amanda Tuninetti
Covington & Burling

Age: 35

Home base: Washington, D.C.

Position: Special Counsel

Law school: Harvard Law School

First job after law school: Associate at Covington

Disputes tribunal's findings on the due process issue.

Tuninetti said she remembers the case being particularly challenging since the legal team had to adapt to the procedural framework of being in federal court instead of arbitration. The two frameworks are very different, given that parties in federal court are obligated to comply with the more strict Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

"I think there's also a really fun, substantive challenge to briefing international law issues in domestic law," she said. "The D.C. Circuit opinion in *Valores Mundiales* is the first ever D.C. Circuit opinion addressing the standard for enforcing ICSID awards under the U.S. implementing statute for the ICSID Convention, and we're very proud of the results that we obtained there."

The most interesting case she's worked on lately:

Tuninetti is part of a Covington team working on two cases by Ukrainian billionaire Rinat Akhmetov against Russia — one at the European Court of Human Rights and the other under a Ukraine-Russia investment treaty. The **treaty case** centers on Russia's seizure of assets in Russian-occupied areas of eastern Ukraine, and the ECHR case has a similar focus on Russian aggression, destruction and expropriation of property in Ukraine.

In a statement on the treaty case, Akhmetov, the founder and shareholder of System Capital Management Group, pointed in particular to the Russian bombardment of the Azovstal steel complex in Mariupol, which he owns, saying it was "the site of the final heroic defense of the Ukrainian forces against the Russian aggressor in May 2022."

Tuninetti said the cases are "incredibly interesting to work on."

"They're really groundbreaking because we're working to hold Russia accountable for the expropriation and other damage it's inflicted on private property in the context of its war of aggression against Ukraine," Tuninetti said. "The scope of damage that Russia's actions have inflicted on private Ukrainian citizens and businesses is expansive, and so it's very fulfilling to work for justice on their behalf."

What motivates her:

Tuninetti said she loves being in an advocacy-focused practice where she's driven by a desire to put on the best possible case for her client and continually improve herself and her team throughout that process.

"So I'm always pushing myself and those around me to generate the best possible work product, the most compelling argument, the best written brief, and I love that every single case I work on requires a different type of intellectual rigor and problem-solving in order to be the most effective advocate for my client's interests," she said.

Her proudest moment as an attorney:

Tuninetti was a key member of a Covington team that managed to convince the International Court of Justice that Russia had violated the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination through its actions surrounding its illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

The case related specifically to Russia's failure to stop the supply of weapons to the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine — including the missile used to shoot down Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 — as well as claims of racial discrimination against ethnic Ukrainians and Tatars in Crimea, according to Covington.

Tuninetti was a primary drafter of the briefing and oral presentations on Ukraine's allegations that Russia violated the Terrorism Financing Convention, taking the lead on the alleged violations relating to the downing of Flight MH17, which killed all 298 on board, according to Covington.

She noted that while the ICJ didn't reach the merits of that issue, the European Court of Human Rights did end up holding on July 9 that Russia is accountable for "widespread and flagrant" abuses of human rights arising from the conflict in Ukraine since 2014, including the downing of flight MH17.

"I was very proud to be a part of that team representing the government of Ukraine before the ICJ and in that instance, it was especially meaningful to see that ICJ hearings are open to the public and some of the members of the public that were attending our hearing were family members of the civilians that had been killed on flight MH17," Tuninetti said. "It was a very impactful and a very rewarding case to work on."

Other notable cases she's worked on:

Tuninetti said she is currently representing a subsidiary of U.S.-based construction aggregates company Vulcan Materials in an arbitration against Mexico under the North American Free Trade Agreement, in which it accuses the country of improperly clamping down on its limestone quarrying activities in Quintana Roo.

The arbitration relates to a yearslong dispute over quarrying activities at the site, located just south of Playa del Carmen. Mexican authorities shut down the site in 2022, saying the company's quarrying activities under the water table had caused "serious environmental damage, such as the definitive and irrecoverable loss of the subsoil."

Tuninetti also said she is representing Ukraine in a proceeding against Russia relating to three Ukrainian naval vessels and 24 Ukrainian servicemen detained in the Black Sea in 2018. An international tribunal in 2022 unanimously refused to uphold any of Russia's jurisdictional objections, thereby permitting Ukraine's case, including its claim for reparation, to proceed to the merits, according to Covington.

The firm said Tuninetti continues to play a key role in the case as the lead drafter for briefing on procedural matters and arbitrator challenges.

--As told to Caroline Simson. Editing by Drashti Mehta.

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