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International Trade Group Of The Year: Covington

By Dylan Moroses

Law360 (February 9, 2026, 4:03 PM EST) -- Covington & Burling LLP's trade practice was able to assist a Toyota unit through a major U.S. emissions fraud dispute and secured several other significant resolutions for clients across a wide range of matters, earning the firm a spot among the 2025 Law360 International Trade Practice Groups of the Year.

Covington's international trade practice is active in offices across the globe, with more than 75 lawyers that make up smaller groups specializing in specific areas of the law, such as export controls, tariff and customs, or matters involving the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

Eric Sandberg-Zakian, a partner and chair of the firm's trade controls enforcement practice group, said Covington is equipped to handle the sensitive and complex nature of international trade law with its group structure.

"We always are looking to make sure that a client with a complex issue has a real specialist on the team for every issue that arises, and the result is that we're able to go very, very deep on the most important issues and also see matters holistically at the same time," Sandberg-Zakian said.

James McCall Smith, also a partner at the firm, said Covington's breadth of regulatory expertise spanning practices allows the trade group to share insight with clients that proves especially helpful when trade matters intersect with other areas of law.

"We are often working with colleagues from unrelated practice groups on issues that implicate both a dispute or corporate deal and an international trade regulation," Smith said.

In January 2025, the U.S. Department of Justice announced that Toyota Motor Corp. unit Hino Motors Ltd. agreed to pay approximately \$1.6 billion in criminal and civil penalties to close out claims it illegally manipulated emissions and fuel-economy test results for more than 100,000 diesel vehicles sold in the United States.

Hino Motors, Toyota's truck-manufacturing unit, agreed to the sweeping deal to resolve accusations it routinely altered, or outright fabricated, emissions test data to get the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to sign off on engine certification applications.



The settlement resolved the EPA's criminal and civil claims under the Clean Air Act against the company, as well as claims from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for fuel economy test violations and from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection for import violations.

The settlement also resolved claims from the California Attorney General's Office and the California Air Resources Board, the Golden State's air pollution regulator, claiming Hino Motors fraudulently obtained low-emission vehicle subsidies from the state in violation of its False Claims Act and Unfair Competition Law.

Smith said Covington's trade practice was able to assist the firm's white collar and environmental regulatory practice groups to also include a resolution on the potential CBP violations that were not implicated at the beginning of the government's investigation.

The Hino resolution is a great example of the cross-practice expertise and collaborative efforts that Covington encourages, Smith said.

"We were able to spot and help them fold into the ultimate resolution of the matter, and we did that through really close collaboration with our colleagues in these other practice groups," Smith said.

Without that comprehensive resolution, Smith added, the federal government could have pursued CBP-related enforcement following resolution of the initial claims involving the DOJ and EPA.

"That would have had a long tail; the statute of limitations and customs investigations is five years, and so it was important to close the door on that aspect at the same time as they were talking to federal officials about the other more active claims at issue," Smith said.

Since October 2024, Covington has represented Integra Technologies, guiding the company through an export control matter involving the company's exports to Russia of avionic and radar transistors, which are under scrutiny at the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security as a result of Russia's invasion of and ongoing war in Ukraine.

Covington's efforts for Integra have led to a favorable settlement resolving the matter over the transistors. The settlement amounts to roughly 5% of the asserted liability and excludes certain nonmonetary settlement terms, such as audit requirements.

Sandberg-Zakian said the government recognized Integra's cooperation with BIS officials in reaching a settlement agreement that included a lesser penalty.

"That's one matter where that very important reality was acknowledged by the government," he said.

More broadly speaking, in matters involving international trade and national security, Sandberg-Zakian said clients often seek results that can convey certainty in several respects.

"They're looking to make sure that the U.S. government and the market knows that they take these issues seriously, that they act in good faith, and that they cooperate with the national security authorities," he said.