

Young partners: The class of 2006

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Mert Hifzi, Barlow Lyde and Gilbert

Mert Hifzi joined the aerospace division at Barlow Lyde & Gilbert in September 1997 and was elected a partner in 2006. He handles a wide variety of commercial litigation and insurance matters in various jurisdictions.

Hifzi, a Cypriot, is fluent in Turkish, has a particular interest in Turkey and has acted for a number of Turkish carriers both in the UK and abroad, including the Turkish Airlines accident in Diyarbakir in 2003. Hifzi is also representing the interests of Flash Airlines' insurers regarding the loss of a Flash Airlines aircraft in Egypt in 2004.

Airfinance Journal: How did you end up in aviation law?

Hifzi: More by accident than design, as with most people I suspect. I enjoyed the aerospace seat as a trainee, I found the aviation insurance market a joy to work for and had no hesitation in naming the department as my first choice on qualification. The subject matter is fascinating and considered rather sexy in legal terms, so I guess that was also an attraction.

What is the best part of your job?

The interaction with clients all over the world. This job provides an opportunity to experience countries you would probably never visit. I am always overwhelmed by the hospitality shown by business contacts overseas and have made some good friends in the industry.

What is the worst?

The long hours and the admin.

What is the most interesting part of aviation law?

Dealing with the intricacies and unpredictability of foreign legal systems, some of which seem to have no logical basis.

What helps you sleep at night?

My, very, comfortable king-sized bed. I find that the odd glass of wine also helps sometimes.

What is the funniest thing that has happened when working on a case?

Watching in disbelief as one of my colleagues managed to entangle his overcoat in a glass-cabinet, and pull down and shatter a pane of glass in the boardroom of one of our most important clients. This incident happened just before a sombre meeting to discuss a recent crash involving one of their aircraft.

What is the biggest mistake that you have made?

Underestimating an opponent.

When are you planning to retire?

As soon as my passion for golf overtakes my passion for the law... or that long overdue call from Rafa Benitez to join Liverpool comes along.

Who has been your best mentor?

Richard Gimblett, the best legal brain in the business (apart from Michael Crane).

What is your priority for the next few years?

On a professional level, to consolidate my position as partner, help the aerospace practice grow and contribute to the continued success of BLG. On a personal level, having recently married, some children would be nice.

How did you celebrate making partner?

Champagne, champagne and more champagne, courtesy of some of my fellow partners.

Philip Perrotta, Clyde & Co

Perrotta has been a partner with Clyde & Co's aviation and aerospace group since February, specifically in the aviation finance and leasing practice. He has experience in all types of aircraft financing, leasing and sale and purchase, commercial aviation matters such as airline

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acquisition and disposal, private jet user schemes, airline investment, funding (including stock exchange listing) and joint venture alliances, and restructurings and recovery.

Perrotta was previously legal director of the commercial aerospace business (principally finance and leasing) at British Aerospace/BAE Systems and also legal director of Air Tanker, the EADS/Airbus airborne tanker refuelling business.

Airfinance Journal: How did you end up in aviation law?

Perrotta: I am still trying to work that out.

What is the best part of your job?

Making a positive contribution.

What is the worst?

Having to explain what a positive contribution I make.

What is the most interesting part of aviation law?

The number of people who mistake experience and enthusiasm for competence and effectiveness.

What helps you sleep at night?

The preceding sleepless night.

What is the funniest thing that has happened to you when working on a deal?

Being the only person on a deal to have turned up for the closing meeting in the correct city (Parma in Italy, everyone else was in Palma in Majorca).

What is the biggest mistake that you have made?

No comment. Our PI insurers are reading this.

When are you planning to retire?

Last Wednesday.

Who has been your best mentor?

There has been more than one and they know who they are.

What is your priority for the next few years?

To contribute to the development of our aviation finance and aerospace practice at Clyde & Co while not missing a match at the Emirates Stadium.

How did you celebrate making partner?

Another sleepless night.

▣ **Siva Subramaniam, Clyde & Co**

Identified as a "rising star" in Airfinance Journal's 2005 Guide to Aviation Lawyers, Siva Subramaniam joined Clyde & Co as a partner in January from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer. He has a wide range of leasing and financing expertise relating to a number of categories of large ticket assets (including aircraft, corporate and commercial, rolling stock, film, infrastructure, groundhandling and defence-related assets).

Subramaniam has worked with a number of the main participants within the aviation and rail sectors, and advised manufacturers, lessors, banks and airlines/operators.

Airfinance Journal: How did you end up in aviation law?

Subramaniam: Purely by accident, as is probably the case with most aviation lawyers. While briefly at TNT/Ansett Worldwide in Sydney, I was exposed to aviation finance and leasing and this sparked an interest which appears to have kept me going since then.

What is the best part of your job?

Probably dealing with the structuring of transactions at an early stage (for example, to address a tax issue or the specific requirements of the client or a counter-party and/or other jurisdictional issues). I also enjoy the international nature of these transactions and the characters (often very colourful) that this industry appears to attract.

What is the worst?

The long hours and the personal sacrifices in terms of time with my family, especially as I have two young children.

What is the most interesting part of aviation law?

I specialized in international law while at university. Fortunately, aviation law indulges my academic interest as almost all transactions are cross-border and very often there is a multitude of jurisdictions and parties involved, which adds complexity and presents a challenge.

What helps you sleep at night?

Luckily, I am good sleeper. Exhaustion helps as well.

What is the funniest thing that has happened to you when working on a deal?

Sadly, such occasions are very rare. On one occasion, after three days of difficult negotiations and with a number of outstanding issues, we were suddenly informed that negotiations were over and we were to produce execution copies of the documents for a signing meeting in two hours. We were then picked up at our hotel and taken to a wedding reception where the signing took place, and stayed on to enjoy the rest of the wedding.

When are you planning to retire?

Hopefully soon.

Who has been your best mentor?

I have been fortunate to have worked for and with a number of outstanding lawyers during my career, including Tim Lintott, Robert Murphy, Andrew Littlejohns and Rex Rosales. They all contributed in some way to my career development and the honing of my legal and other skills.

What is your priority for the next few years?

The asset finance team at Clydes has a number of priorities over the next few years. The most important of which is to continue to build the team and develop and expand the existing client relationships so that we become one of the market leaders in this industry.

How did you celebrate making partner?

By buying my long-suffering wife a pair of diamond earrings and taking some time off between jobs to spend time with my wife and children.

Alan Kartashkin, Debevoise & Plimpton

Newly elected partner Alan Kartashkin is resident in Debevoise & Plimpton's Moscow office and is a member of the firm's corporate department. He practices in equipment finance, mergers and acquisitions, and securities. Kartashkin joined Debevoise in 1996 and was based in the firm's New York office until his move to Moscow in June 2001.

Airfinance Journal: How did you end up in aviation law?

Kartashkin: In my second year of law practice at Debevoise in New York, in part due to my Russian background, our aviation partner asked me to assist Aeroflot with the first operating lease of a Boeing 777 aircraft in Russia. During the following nine years, I became involved in practically every aircraft leased or purchased by Aeroflot. I was also fortunate to work with American Airlines on a number of important transactions.

Since moving to Moscow in 2001, I have been involved in many first-time aircraft transactions in Russia (the restructuring of the entire Aeroflot fleet, the first cross-border finance lease, the first finance lease of Ilyushin aircraft, the first RRJ purchase agreement, several largest aircraft purchases, and many others).

What is the best part of your job?

Working with a team of bright and smart lawyers united by the goal of providing the highest quality service to the clients, learning something new every day from my colleagues and clients and finding new and creative solutions necessary to make complicated cross-border transactions happen.

Everyone successful in the industry has a secret passion for aviation: it is a pleasure to work with the people who have a certain glow in their eyes, even when they are on the opposite side of the transaction.

What is the worst?

Like modern aircraft, aviation lawyers have to operate day and night, weekends and holidays.

What is the most interesting part of aviation law?

The Cape Town Convention is having a profound effect on almost every aircraft leasing transaction – this is the most important development in aviation law today.

What helps you sleep at night?

Exciting and sometimes exhausting days and evenings in the office.

What is the funniest thing that has happened to you when working on a deal?

I was flying to a signing ceremony with a top airline executive and the captain invited us into the cockpit (this was before 9/11). The landing was a bit rough and as we were leaving the cockpit after the landing, I asked the executive out loud: "First time landing such a bird?" He nodded affirmatively to the shock of business-class passengers.

We were working on delivery of a new aircraft to an airline customer and the delivery was delayed because a footrest on a business-class seat did not work. Our aviation partner, Darius Tencza, suggested modestly to the manufacturer that they take the footrest from the second aircraft and replace it. The manufacturer only laughed. We waited for 20 hours for a representative of the seat manufacturer to arrive from Europe. He looked at the seat, walked on to another aircraft and took the footrest from the second aircraft and installed it on the first aircraft. Now we were laughing.

What is the biggest mistake that you have made?

You would not be asking me this question if I had a good answer.

When are you planning to retire?

I am having too much fun to start thinking about retirement.

Who has been your best mentor?

John Curry, our partner in New York, knows absolutely everything about aircraft finance and leasing. Geoff Burgess, our partner in London, has done more aircraft leases and purchases for Russian airlines than anyone else.

What is your priority for the next few years?

Helping Russian airlines improve the terms of the leasing transactions as they experience the largest fleet expansion in Russia's history.

How did you celebrate making partner?

A dinner with my partners, a quiet evening with my family and a boat trip with my colleagues and friends from the Moscow office.

□ **James Cameron, DLA Piper Rudnick Cary Gray**

James Cameron is partner within DLA Piper's aviation finance, banking group. He was admitted as a solicitor in 1997 since when he has specialized in asset finance, particularly aircraft finance and leasing. Cameron acts for banks, lessors, manufacturers and airlines on a variety of aircraft and engine leasing and financing transactions. He has also acted on numerous portfolio transactions such as leasing company acquisitions, aircraft portfolio sales and purchases, joint ventures for aircraft and Islamic financing projects.

Airfinance Journal: How did you end up in aviation law?

Cameron: I have occasionally asked myself the same question, but the choice to practice in this area has undoubtedly proven to be the right one.

What is the best part of your job?

There are many positive aspects: the variety and opportunity to be creative in finding solutions to multifaceted problems, having the opportunity to work on stimulating transactions with high-quality lawyers and clients, and the mentoring and teaching responsibilities.

What is the worst?

Most of the practitioners I regularly work with or against in other firms are generally good to deal with, but over-lawyering or failing to distinguish between the real and less significant risks can be a little frustrating at times.

What is the most interesting part of aviation law?

The diversity of the client base (both in terms of corporations and individuals) and transactions.

What helps you sleep at night?

A clear conscience.

What is the funniest thing that has happened to you when working on a deal?

Being asked at three months post-qualification to fly to Bermuda by private jet for a closing, and travelling home via New York on Concorde.

What is the biggest mistake that you have made?

Not going into the mineral water business.

When are you planning to retire?

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If I no longer enjoy the work, or following a lottery win.

Who has been your best mentor?

I have tried to learn from all of the people that I have worked with and against. My training principal, Neville Watkins at Bolitho Way in Portsmouth (whose clients include WH Smith, Granada TV and Hyperion), taught me a lot about client service and really focusing on what clients want. Andrew Littlejohns at Freshfields is a fantastic transactional lawyer and draftsman, and Tom Kinnersley at Slaughter & May sets the benchmark for commercial lawyers.

What is your priority for the next few years?

To continue providing excellent client service on a range of interesting and challenging transactions, and to enjoy it.

How did you celebrate making partner?

Modestly, because it's not so much the job title as what you do with it that matters.

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