Judgment Enforcement & Asset Recovery

Our judgment enforcement and asset protection practice is among the best in the world. We enforce and collect on judgments won through hard-fought arbitration and litigation. A favorable judgment or award is just the first hurdle. Collecting the money can be just as, if not more, challenging. We skillfully navigate various domestic and international laws to enforce judgments, including against foreign governments. We have won and enforced arbitral awards and judgments for our clients in the eight, nine, and even 10-figure range that have been enforced both in the United States and abroad.

The best way to enforce a judgment is to secure assets while a claim is pending well before the judgment. We have used these methods to great success. One example is our work for ExxonMobil against Venezuela. We obtained a series of attachments and freezing orders worldwide for ExxonMobil before an arbitral award was issued, including attaching over US$300 million in cash in a proceeding in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. The frozen funds were released— with interest—to ExxonMobil in partial satisfaction of an arbitral award. Recounting the episode in his book Private Empire: ExxonMobil and American Power, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Steve Coll wrote, “For the Steptoe attorneys the late-December Friday afternoon seizure of $300 million belonging to Hugo Chávez’s government was like hitting a walk-off home run in the bottom of the ninth before a full house at Yankee Stadium.”

Steptoe represented Motorola in its claims against the Uzan family, which formerly owned the Turkish telecom company Telsim, concerning fraudulent conduct in connection with a $2 billion loan. The team obtained a worldwide freezing order in the London commercial courts, which was affirmed by the English Court of Appeals; froze and liquidated assets worldwide (including planes, luxury homes and apartments, yachts, bank accounts, and gold deposits plus more); and obtained a fully-contested fraud judgment for $2.13 billion in compensatory damages and a punitive damages judgment for $1 billion in federal court in New York City, and obtained an ICC arbitration award for $2 billion. These judgments were affirmed by the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. The team successfully enforced the judgment and arbitral award in various countries throughout the world, including the United States, England, France, Switzerland, Germany, Israel, Bermuda, and Guernsey. See, e.g., Ben Hallman, Turkish Bath, American Lawyer (Winter 2007); David Segal, Bidders Vie for Family’s Ill-Gotten Digs, Wash. Po. at C1 (Nov. 11, 2004).

We are able to successfully enforce judgments and secure assets through a multistep process that includes:

- Searching for pre-judgment remedies to secure assets, which can often be obtained in support of a court action and/or arbitration in certain litigations. We have developed good working relationships with investigators whose experience is often crucial to successful enforcement when debtors take steps to hide their assets.
- Seeking enforcement of court judgments in various courts across the globe by seeking assets either in the name of the judgment-debtor or against other parties who hold those assets through attempts to camouflage what is owned by the debtor.
- Undertaking enforcement actions in commercial and investor-state arbitrations pursuant to the 1958 New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards as adopted and implemented in the state of enforcement or under other international agreements.
News & Publications

MEDIA MENTIONS

Law360 Quotes Dooley, Gordienko on Biggest Civil Fraud Case of 2020
December 22, 2020

CLIENT ALERTS

Holding a Sovereign in Contempt
First Tuesday Update
December 1, 2020
By: Steven K. Davidson, Michael J. Baratz, Jared R. Butcher, Molly Bruder Fox

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GOTV: This First Tuesday is Election Day
First Tuesday Update
November 3, 2020
By: Steven K. Davidson, Michael J. Baratz, Jared R. Butcher, Molly Bruder Fox

PRESS RELEASES

Steptoe Launches Financial Services University
Video Series to Explore Financial Services Legal, Business and Regulatory Matters
October 21, 2020

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Cryptocurrencies & Judgment Enforcement
First Tuesday Update
October 6, 2020
By: Steven K. Davidson, Michael J. Baratz, Jared R. Butcher, Molly Bruder Fox, Ivan Gordienko, Sara Faber, Alex Green

PRESS RELEASES

New York Law Journal Names Charles Michael a Trailblazer in New York
September 28, 2020

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Witnesses During COVID Times: Remote Depositions, Virtual Testimony, and Unavailability
First Tuesday Update
September 1, 2020
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August 4, 2020
By: Steven K. Davidson, Michael J. Baratz, Jared R. Butcher, Molly Bruder Fox, Michael G. Scavelli
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Litigation Funding Update – Abolishing Common Law Champerty
First Tuesday Update
July 7, 2020
By: Steven K. Davidson, Michael J. Baratz, Jared R. Butcher, Molly Bruder Fox, Chris Paparella, Sara Faber

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Supreme Court Update: Denies Cert in Crystallex v. Venezuela; Compels Non-Sigs in a NY Convention Case
First Tuesday Update
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By: Steven K. Davidson, Michael J. Baratz, Jared R. Butcher, Molly Bruder Fox, Claire Schachter

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