

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 161, No. 208

With high-profile hire, firm starts white-collar push

Boutros, known for 'Silk Road' case, leaves U.S. attorney post for Seyfarth

BY ROY STROM

Law Bulletin staff writer

On Andrew S. Boutros' first day as an assistant U.S. attorney in 2007, his boss Patrick J. Fitzgerald told him somewhat cryptically that he would know when it was time to leave the office.

Boutros received a much different message this week when he became co-chair of a fledgling white-collar practice at Seyfarth, Shaw LLP: He will need to convince other lawyers it's time to join his practice.

"The mission is really to build a practice," Boutros said. "To build a group. To build a team."

A trial attorney in Chicago's U.S. attorney's office with many big cases to his name, Boutros said the opportunity to build a white-collar practice from something close to scratch attracted him more than joining one of the city's established practices.

Boutros, whose former colleagues at the federal prosecutors' office included Fitzgerald — now with Skadden, Arps, Meagher, Slate & Flom LLP — and Patrick M. Collins — now with Perkins, Coie LLP — said Seyfarth had an opportunity to "immediately capture" white-collar defense work because it already represents two-thirds of

the Fortune 500.

The other co-chair of the firm's white-collar, internal investigations and false claims team is Karen Y. Bitar, who joined Seyfarth's New York office in September 2014 from Greenberg, Traurig LLP.

"There certainly were lots of opportunities to go in and buy a pre-fabricated home where all you have to do is turn on the lights, get the set of keys and walk in," Boutros said.

"Here, this is an opportunity for me, Karen, the firm's management and the other practice leaders, to build out a custom-made practice that suits the needs of Seyfarth."

"Here, this is an opportunity for me, Karen (Bitar), the firm's management and the other practice leaders, to build out a custom-made (white-collar) practice that suits the needs of Seyfarth."

Boutros worked in private practice in Washington, D.C., for about five years after graduating from the University of Virginia School of Law in 2001. His practice focused on the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) and other white-collar defense work, and, at a point, he managed up to 25



Andrew S. Boutros

lawyers, he said.

A first-generation American son of Coptic Christians from Egypt, Boutros said public service always tugged at him, leading him to apply to U.S. attorney's offices across the country.

After Fitzgerald hired him, Boutros went on to work on a number of high-profile cases, including the conviction last year in the Dirksen Federal Courthouse of a drug trafficker from the online network known as Silk Road.

He said the case he is most proud of was the largest food fraud investigation in U.S. history known as "honeygate."

and reflect on with a tremendous amount of pride," Boutros said, "are the ones that started off as a small seed and through an extraordinary amount of time, work and sacrifice by me and the federal agents with whom I worked, we were able to take that seed and turn it into a giant oak tree."

Boutros' last act as a prosecutor was representing the government in gaining a 21-month sentence for Peter G. Rogan, the former owner of the Edgewater Medical Center who owed \$188 million in civil fines mostly related to Medicare fraud.

That case may have helped Boutros understand Fitzgerald's comment on longevity more than any other. Boutros charged Rogan by complaint in 2008.

"It just felt like the right time," he said.

Kate Perrelli, chair of Seyfarth's litigation department and located in Boston, said Boutros "will be a tremendous asset to our clients and the firm as we continue to expand our white-collar, FCPA and related practices."

Boutros leaves the government at a time when the Department of Justice has at least positioned itself to get tougher on corporate wrongdoing.

In September, the DOJ released a memo outlining a cooperation policy that said corporations must provide the names of individuals involved in wrongdoing in order to obtain any credit for cooperating with a government investigation.

Boutros, who begins his sixth year as a teacher at the University of Chicago Law School this winter, said he looks forward to updating students on how to adapt to what is known as the "Yates memo."

He also had a message for previous students.

"Now that I'm here at Seyfarth and we're building out this group," he said, "I think there will be nice opportunities to reunite with former students who might be looking for a career change."

rstrom@lbpc.com