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## María Domínguez joins McConnell Valdés to lead white-collar defense practice

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The former First Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico María A. Domínguez recently joined McConnell Valdés to lead the firm's Government Enforcement & White-Collar Defense Team, announced the firm's managing partner Arturo J. García-Solá.

The Government Enforcement & White-Collar Defense Team, which was launched in 2007 at McConnell Valdés and later scaled back following the departure of two key team members, is now poised for expansive growth with Domínguez's arrival, whose 20-year career at the U.S. Attorney's Office in San Juan included several supervisory-level positions as Deputy Chief of the Criminal Division, White Collar & General Crime Chief and Senior Litigation Counsel.

According to García-Solá, McConnell Valdés is breaking new ground in the local legal arena with the establishment of this practice team, since white-collar cases are generally handled by sole practitioners in Puerto Rico. With Domínguez's addition to the team, the firm now has the expertise in-house, and can leverage her knowledge to expand white-collar defense and government-enforcement services to existing clients, as well as attract a slew of new ones. The white-collar team will handle cases involving such crimes as bankruptcy fraud, money laundering, Ponzi schemes, healthcare fraud, and Social Security and Department of Labor disability frauds, to name a few.



From left: Arturo J. García-Solá, managing partner María Domínguez and Juan A. Márquez-Díaz, head of Litigation group

"If I could have hired María back in 2007 when we started the team, I would have, because it is well-known in the San Juan district that she has the best reputation, the most knowledge and has handled the most cases in her field," the managing partner said.

While at the U.S. Attorney's Office, Domínguez served under U.S. Attorneys Guillermo Gil, Humberto García and, most recently, Rosa Emilia Rodríguez, and prosecuted several complex and high-profile white-collar and violent-crime cases, achieving an impressive conviction record. Significant cases include the Instituto del SIDA corruption case, the so-called La Tómbola massacre, the attempted carjacking and murder trial of Stefano Steenbakkers and the Caguas Federal Savings Banks case, which lasted 18 months and remains the longest trial in the history of the First Circuit.

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Her impressive track record has afforded Domínguez rock-star status among her colleagues in Puerto Rico and abroad, as evidenced during a recent meeting the team held at the New York offices of the Sadden, APRs, Slate, Meagher & Flam law firm during a business-development road trip. "We were meeting at Sadden, APRs several doors down from the office of a Puerto Rican attorney who had clerked for Judge Juan Pérez-Giménez and knew María from a case," recalled García-Solá. "When she heard María was there, she said she just had to come over to greet her because she is a rock star. I, of course, proceeded to introduce her as such for the remainder of our trip," he said, adding that the three-city tour included stops in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Miami, where the firm is already practicing and also considering establishing an office.

Domínguez joins an already impressive Litigation group, led by Juan A. Márquez-Díaz and comprised of Judge Héctor M. Laffitte, Of Counsel; Francisco G. Bruno, Counsel; Gustavo A. Gilpin, Counsel; Alejandro J. Zepeda, Income Member; Ernesto N. Mayoral, Capital Member; Rubén Méndez, Counsel; and María Antongiorgi-Jordán, Capital Member.

"Since I started heading the Litigation group a year ago, we established the revitalization of the white-collar team as a business goal and had identified María as a possible candidate to recruit. We have great expectations for the team because it allows us to complement our existing practice and capitalize on talented staff already on our team," Márquez-Díaz said.

Domínguez said she is excited to join McConnell Valdés for the opportunity to continue developing professionally under the mentorship of such esteemed colleagues as Judge Laffitte, for whom she professes a profound respect and admiration. Her extensive knowledge of the White-Collar Defense and Government Enforcement fields, paired with her expansive professional network and a stint at the American Embassy in Colombia, where she took part in the development of that country's Peace Plan, are some of the attributes the firm hopes to leverage to grow in markets outside of Puerto Rico.

"María's experience gives her a very ample scope that will also help us develop other areas of the firm," García-Solá said. "This time around we have a much wider horizon for the team and won't limit ourselves to the practice in Puerto Rico," he said, adding that an expansion of the firm's office in Washington, D.C., as well as the pursuit of business opportunities in Central and South America are in the works at McConnell Valdés.

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