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Sheppard Mullin Lures Trade Guru From Bryan Cave

By **Melissa Lipman**

Law360, New York (January 05, 2010) -- Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP has snagged veteran international trade specialist Curtis Dombek from Bryan Cave LLP for its Los Angeles office.

Dombek started work Monday as a partner in Sheppard Mullin's government contracts and regulated industries practice group.

After 26 years with Bryan Cave, Dombek decided to move to Sheppard Mullin as part of the firm's effort to expand into the international trade regulatory field.

The firm's success in the intellectual property, antitrust and mergers and acquisitions practices, along with its Shanghai office, "quickly convinced" the veteran attorney that Sheppard Mullin had "the level of sophistication" to support an international trade practice, he said.

Sheppard Mullin's intellectual property and high-tech depth provide "natural synergies" for export control work, one of Dombek's specialties and a growing area of regulation for multinational companies as the federal government places limits on the export of civilian and military technology, software and products from the U.S., Dombek said.

"It's something that changes on a regular basis," he said. "As companies are setting up operations in China and India and elsewhere, these controls can loom quite large."

While Dombek spends roughly a third of his time doing export control work, he has also developed a subspecialty focusing on the controls for encryption or cybersecurity, which now affects a broad range of industries and products.

Export controls have become more and more multinational, with Singapore and China, among other major trading partners, joining the list of countries with meaningful export controls for companies to contend with, he added.

Dombek also pointed to Sheppard Mullin's strength in white collar and contracts law, which he said dovetails well with his focus on the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, an "area of significant growth and enforcement activity in recent years."

He also does a fair amount of work on economic sanctions regulations and has significant experience handling international commercial arbitration proceedings, he said.

Sheppard Mullin chairman Guy Halgren pointed out that Dombek's expertise would be a considerable boon to its trade practice, particularly in the Far East, where the firm has worked to expand its China practice.

"Curt brings an exceptional background in international trade compliance and international arbitration, that includes high profile cases and expertise in encryption," Halgren said.

Dombek has already seen that Sheppard Mullin is "a very solid firm that is quite entrepreneurial," he said.

"I look forward to growing the firm's international trade practice, in Los Angeles and overseas," Dombek said. "Sheppard Mullin is a first rate firm dedicated to growing its Shanghai office and global practice, and I'm excited to be part of that."

Dombek earned his bachelor's degree, magna cum laude, from Harvard University in 1980 and graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law School in 1983.