ArentFox Schiff LLP
Attorneys

David Tafuri

PARTNER AND INTERNATIONAL GROUP CO-LEADER

David Tafuri leads a practice focused on emerging democracies and is a specialist in public international law who draws on experiences in the U.S. government and the United Nations to find solutions for clients facing issues in some of the most challenging forums in the world.



Practices

Government Relations
International Trade & Investment

International

Africa
Latin America
Asia

Education

Georgetown University Law Center, JD
Emory University, BA, magna cum laude

Offices

Washington, DC

Phone

202.857.6128

Email

david.tafuri@afslaw.com

David is recognized as the go to lawyer when you or your organization are facing obstacles in emerging markets and conflict and post-conflict zones abroad. He solves client problems by drawing on multiple experiences overseas and previous positions with the US Government and the United Nations and finds creative, multi-forum solutions to the most difficult crises.

David leads a practice focused on emerging democracies in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and Latin America. He specializes in public international law, transnational litigation, foreign direct investment, US export control and economic sanctions and rule of law matters. He represents US government contractors, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations. In addition, he has assisted foreign nationals in a variety of legal matters, including criminal and civil cases, sanctions, political asylum, and refugee proceedings.

David has written numerous articles based on his experiences on the ground in emerging democracies in a variety of national publications, including *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Politico* and *The Hill*, where he is currently a foreign policy contributor (links to select articles listed below). David also appears frequently on *CNN*, *Fox News*, the *BBC*, *NewsNation* and other news networks to discuss foreign policy topics (featured appearances also linked below).

Client Work

- Currently assisting several US based non-profit organizations that have been providing aid and assistance in Ukraine, since the beginning of the invasion by Russia. Traveled to Ukraine to assist the clients with humanitarian initiatives in the country, in coordination with the Government of Ukraine and the US Government.
- The World Bank recently hired a team led by David for its COVID-19 crisis response for sovereign governments, including the governments of Brazi, Peru, Haiti and Philippines. The legal team worked with governments in emerging markets to provide strategic advice on the pandemic's impact on public private partnerships (PPPs), across a broad array of industry sectors. David headed up efforts by local lawyers in various countries to reform and restructure large transportation and infrastructure PPPs, while working closely with The World Bank, Ministries of Finance, and national PPP units.
-

Legal Counsel to Africa South Business Group (“ASBG”), non-profit consortium of private sector companies in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa, which are seeking to attract foreign investment and to obtain greater access to financing from international financial institutions.

- Leads a large project with former US military officers to implement nationwide reform to the military and defense sectors of a Middle Eastern country, including the creation of a national security council, counter-terrorism center, and disarmament programs.
- Led the legal effort for the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe to resolve a pre-penalty notice issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) in the amount of $386 million. The penalty was reduced to zero and the bank was issued a cautionary letter.
- Represented Libya’s sovereign wealth funds on legal matters, including in negotiations with the UN Security Council relating to its blocked assets. He led a global team of lawyers which assist the sovereign wealth funds with transactional matters including strategic acquisitions and the legal transfer of portfolio companies and other assets.
- Works with the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG) on public international law matters and led a global team that provides advice on legal matters and government relations.
- Serves as legal counsel to the Kurdistan Regional Government on project finance matters. He helped draft the law on public borrowing, which was enacted by the Kurdistan Region Parliament, and he successfully assisted the KRG with its first ever sovereign debt bond offering.
- Represented the Government of Haiti in the United States and assisted the Caribbean nation with foreign investment and project finance, as well as in discussions with the Development Finance Corporation (DFC).
- Represented the Libyan rebels in 2011 and the National Transitional Counsel of Libya (NTC) after the peaceful protests in Libya began. During the revolution that ensued, David led the legal team that helped the NTC convince the US State Department to recognize it as the sole legitimate government of Libya. He was also instrumental in helping the NTC, in coordination with the US and UK Governments, to unfreeze $1.5 Billion USD in frozen Gaddafi assets abroad so that they could be transferred to Libya during the humanitarian crisis of the Summer of 2011. He later served as the US legal counsel to the first democratic government of Libya and then to each successive UN-recognized government thereafter.
- Advised the Government of El Salvador on legal and policy matters related to US-El Salvador relations and led a team that assisted El Salvador in the US.
- Helped create and served as legal counsel to a non-profit organization made up of large agribusinesses in Guatemala that is dedicated to developing the economy in Guatemala, known as the Guatemala Rural Opportunities for Work Organization (“G.R.O.W.”).
- Represents Barron Collier Companies, the largest private landowner and one of the largest developers in the state of Florida.
- Helped found both the Iraq Business Initiative at the US Chamber of Commerce and the US-Kurdistan Business Council, which advises US companies on investing in Iraq. He currently serves as the President of the US-Kurdistan Business Council.
- Led the legal efforts for one of the largest American franchises in Russia as it faced legal challenges from a Russian oligarch and successfully helped them navigate the challenges to achieve a corporate combination that enabled them to embark on further expansion of their business in the region.
- Represents a moderate pro-democracy group in another Middle East nation, that is supported by the US government. David provides this group with advice on public international law issues.
- Assisting the government of another Arab Spring country with stolen asset recovery matters, using multi-forum solutions.
- Represents the government of a Sub-Saharan African nation on legal matters related to the United Nations.
- Advises a US company that is a leading investor in the energy, oil, and mineral sectors in Iraq on legal and regulatory compliance and on market entry.
- Defended the Embassy of Iraq in a litigation matter. He worked closely with both the Embassy and the Iraqi Commercial Office on investment matters in Iraq.
- Represented the largest bank in Iraq on investment and policy matters.
- Assisted a large US government contractor on operations and investments in Afghanistan and on policy matters related to Afghanistan.
-

Represented the transitional government of Madagascar on public international law matters.

Previous Work

David previously served as the US Department of State's Rule of Law Coordinator for Iraq at the US Embassy in Baghdad, during the height of the war in Iraq. In that position, he worked directly with the Chief Justice of Iraq and Iraqi ministries to help rebuild the legal system. He traveled across the country overseeing the State Department's justice assistance programs and managed a number of large US government contracts and non-profit grants. He was awarded the Department of State's Superior Honor Award for his work.

In addition to his position with the Department of State, David draws on his previous experience as an aide to the Senate Judiciary Committee and a staff aide to several Presidential and Congressional campaigns to augment his practice. David was an outside foreign policy advisor to President Obama's campaign in 2008. Before entering private practice, David worked for the United Nations in Turkey. He has also served on the board of directors of USA for UNHCR, which supports the UN Refugee Agency. He is the founder and current President of the US-Kurdistan Business Council.

Professional Activities

David's memberships include:

- Leadership Circle, Foreign Policy for America
- President, US Kurdistan Business Council
- Board of Directors, SEED
- Former member, board of directors, USA for UNHCR

Publications, Presentations, & Recognitions

Publications

Examples of newspapers articles authored by David Tafuri:

- Author, "Choose Atlanta and give Georgia its due at the next Democratic Convention," The Hill, December 18, 2022
- Author, "Putin doesn't fear NATO or Ukraine - he fears democracy," The Hill, February 10, 2022
- Author, "Biden needs a failed states strategy," The Hill, January 1, 2021
- Author, "How Trump and Biden contrast on foreign policy," The Hill, October 22, 2020
- Author, "Will coronavirus help ISIS?" The Hill, May 19, 2020
- Author, "5 most important trends to watch in foreign policy in 2020," The Hill, January 2, 2020
- Author, "The 'big stuff' in Ukraine," The Hill, December 2, 2019
- Author, "Trump in danger of giving the Taliban exactly what they want," The Hill, September 18, 2019
- Author, "We're all on the tarmac waiting for an Iran policy," The Hill, June 24, 2019
- Author, "Trump to Iran: 'So call me maybe'," The Hill, May 17, 2019
- Author, "Mueller found an easy target," Foxnews.com, April 23, 2019
- Author, "Does Mueller report anticipate campaign finance crimes related to Trump's Russia contacts?," The Hill, April 12, 2019
- Author, "David Tafuri: Mueller's findings of no collusion must be accepted, but we must condemn some behavior he exposed," Fox News, March 27, 2019
- Author, "Kurdistan referendum stands on 'solid legal footing" The Washington Times, July 26, 2017
-

Author, "Why Trump's Attack on Syria Is Legal," Politico, April 2017

- Author, "Libya is on verge of implosion," CNN, March 24, 2016
- Author, "Obama and GOP candidates lack strong anti-ISIS strategy," CNN, December 27, 2015
- Author, "Forget Benghazi. What About Libya?" New York Times, October 23, 2015
- Author, "Leaving a U.S. Ally Outgunned by ISIS," The Wall Street Journal, October 13, 2014
- Author, "Libya: A Country in Transition," The Hill, May 18, 2012
- Author, "Following the Libyan Model," Politico, March 19, 2012
- Author, "How President Obama Can Help Libya," The Washington Post, June 24, 2011
- Author, "Egypt's Assault on the World-Wide Web ," The Wall Street Journal, February 9, 2011
- Author, "Wireless in Gaza," The Wall Street Journal, August 25, 2010
- Author, "Americans in Iraq: Occupiers No Longer," The Washington Post, January 30, 2010

Presentations

- Speaker, Discussion on South Africa and Ukraine-Russia presented by Tony Leon and David Tafuri, Plettenburg Bay, South Africa, March 16, 2022
- Moderator, Roundtable with the Representatives of the Kurdish Parties of Iran, Washington Kurdish Institute, February 26, 2020
- Moderator, Roundtable with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Masrour Barzani, US Kurdistan Business Council, Erbil, Iraq, October 16, 2019
- Speaker, Promoting Prosperity Conference, sponsored by US Government and USKBC in Erbil, Iraq, October 14, 2019
- Moderator, "Reconstruction, Job Creation, and Stability in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq," Transatlantic Leadership Network and American-Kurdish Economic Institute, Library of Congress, June 26, 2018
- Speaker, "The Kurdistan Region: Strategic U.S. Ally in a Tough Neighborhood," Rayburn House of Representatives Office Building, Washington, DC, July 28, 2017
- Speaker, "Russian Interference: Past and Present," Hudson Institute, Washington, DC, July 6, 2017
- Speaker, "Trump's Middle East Policy: Analyzing the First Hundred Days," Hudson Institute, Washington, DC, May 9, 2017
- Keynote Speaker, National Contract Management Association, Boston Annual March Workshop, Boston, Massachusetts, March 8, 2017
- Speaker, "Business Opportunities in Iraqi Kurdistan," The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC, November 29, 2016
- Speaker, "USKBC and US Chamber Welcoming for the President of the Kurdistan Region," US Chamber of Commerce, May 5, 2015
- Speaker, PILPG Expert Roundtable Discussion, "Power-Sharing in Iraq: Impossible or Inevitable?," July 2, 2014
- Speaker, Libya Industry Day, Washington, DC, October 3, 2013
- Speaker, "The Role of Natural Resources in Iraq's Kurdistan Region," The Resource Curse and Iraq: Lessons from Other Countries' Approaches to Overcome It and Develop Their Economies, Rand Corporation, May 31, 2013
- Speaker, "Iraqi Federalism: Balancing Federal and Regional Power Under the Constitution," Rule of Law Reform in Iraq and Afghanistan: Challenges for the Coming Decade, Conference, University of Pennsylvania Law School, Philadelphia, PA, September 23, 2012
- Speaker "The People Demand the Fall of the Regime: The Social and Legal Origins of the Arab Spring," American University International 2012 Symposium Law Review, Washington, DC, February 14, 2012
- Speaker, "How to Take on a Dictator," Summit Series, Lake Tahoe, CA, January 28, 2012
-

Panelist, “Iraq’s International Economic Future,” 7th Annual Conference on Iraq: Establish Enduring Institutions, Arlington, VA, June 22, 2011

- Speaker, “Doing Business in Iraq,” US Department of Commerce Conference: Corporate Briefing: Iraq is Open for Business, Baltimore, MD, October 27, 2010
- Speaker, “Regulatory and Legal Overview,” US-Iraq Business and Investment Conference, Washington, DC, October 20, 2009
- Speaker, “Iraqi Federalism: Balancing Federal and Regional Power under the Constitution,” Rule of Law Reform in Iraq and Afghanistan: Challenges for the Coming Decade, Conference, University of Pennsylvania Law School, Philadelphia, PA, September 23, 2010
- Speaker, “Bluebooking In Baghdad: The Role of Foreign Lawyers in Iraq,” International Law Review Symposium, American University Washington College of Law, Washington, DC, April 1, 2008

In the News

The following are select appearances by David Tafuri on national news programs to discuss national security matters:

- “Why New Threats to Israel’s Democracy Are Suspicious,” Scripps News, July 24, 2023
- “Reporting on international incident involving kidnapping in Baghdad, Iraq,” NewsNation, July 7, 2023
- “China’s new retaliation against the U.S. and what comes next,” Scripps News, July 5, 2023
- “U.S. Intelligence on Wagner Group,” NewsNation, June 25, 2023
- “What Ron DeSantis said about Trump and why telling the truth about him matters,” Fox News Channel, June 19, 2023
- “Key Takeaway from High Stakes US China Meeting on The Hill at NewsNation,” NewsNation, June 20, 2023
- “What’s on the agenda for US-China talks when Blinken visit Beijing,” Scripps News, June 16, 2023
- “Three takeaways from the indictment of Trump,” Fox News Channel, June 9, 2023
- “What to know about Putin visit to Belarus and impact on Ukraine,” NewsNation, December 19, 2022
- “The momentum in Ukraine and how to define success,” NewsNation, September 12, 2022
- “BBC Breaking News: FBI raids Donald Trump’s home,” BBC World News, August 8, 2022
- “The value in Biden’s trip to the Middle East,” Fox News Channel, July 13, 2022
- “How to counter Russia’s new tactics in Ukraine,” Cheddar News, April 28, 2022
- “Kicking Russia out of the UN Human Rights Council and the priority for China in the Ukraine conflict,” Fox News Channel, April 8, 2022
- “What Biden should emphasize to NATO for Ukraine and his visit to Poland,” Cheddar News, March 24, 2022
- “Russia is stalled in its goals and has resorted to a terror campaign against Ukrainian civilians,” Fox News Channel, March 23, 2022
- “What we need out of a new Iran nuclear deal and mending the rift with Gulf states,” Fox News Channel, March 23, 2022
- “What to know about Biden’s trip to Belgium to meet NATO and to Poland to discuss Ukraine, Fox News Channel, March 22, 2022
- “Ukraine shows resilience, defiance amid Russian attacks,” Cheddar News, March 22, 2022
- “Russia relations, inside China’s role in Ukraine invasion,” Fox News Channel, March 18, 2022
- “Most intense shelling in Kyiv since war started,” Fox News Channel, March 15, 2022
- “The case for why Putin is a war criminal and how he could be arrested,” News Nation, March 13,

2022

- "Russia attacks Ukraine," Newsy, February 24, 2022
- "Biden orders 3,000 troops to Eastern Europe, Cheddar News, February 3, 2022
- "Ukraine-Russia tensions," Sky News, January 21, 2022
- "Tucker takes on former State Department official defending Biden's airstrike," Fox News Channel, March 1, 2021
- "What President Biden will do in the Middle East and Afghanistan," CNN, February 4, 2021
- "Will coronavirus effect election 2020?" The Hill TV, March 13, 2020
- "Ukraine Quid Pro Quo," Fox News Channel, October 23, 2019
- "Analysis of Congressional subpoena to the State Department," BBC World News, September 27, 2019
- "David Tafuri on BBC World News on March 22, 2019," BBC World News, March 22, 2019
- "Debating why the US should not pull out of NATO with Tucker Carlson," Fox News Channel, January 15, 2019
- "Protecting America: Tucker Carlson and David Tafuri debate," Fox News Channel, April 4, 2018
- "Tucker Carlson v. David Tafuri on how unmasking of intelligence works and whether it's legal," Fox News Channel, April 3, 2017
- "U.S. Foreign Aid May Face Deep Cuts," CNN, February 28, 2017
- "Obama: 'We're not at war with Islam,'" MSNBC, February 22, 2016
- "Is ISIS an imminent threat to U.S.?", CNN, February 27, 2014

Bar Admissions

District of Columbia

Court Admissions

US Supreme Court