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All change in Kazakhstan

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US firm Squire Sanders & Dempsey has pulled out of Kazakhstan after less than two years, at a time when US firm Morgan Lewis & Bockius is setting up connections in the resource-rich country.

Squire Sanders made its move after deciding the "near-time prospects for that practice" were not strong enough, said former London co-ordinator of the European practice Mark Cusick, now returned to the US and replaced in London by Joseph Markoski this week.

The office was staffed by one partner, who left to set up his own practice after the firm announced its intention to close shop. The firm had acted for the government in its first hard currency privatisation.

One observer said the expected infrastructure boom in Kazakhstan had been hit by a lack of funds and there was less work around for advisers.

Meanwhile, US firm Morgan Lewis & Bockius has signed a mutual referral deal with New York practice Rothstein & Shaw LLP, which has offices in Moscow and Kazakhstan's Almaty. Morgan Lewis will use Rothstein's offices which will also house Morgan Lewis lawyers who joined the firm in April from Coudert Brothers.

Rothstein & Shaw has six lawyers and six paralegals. Daniel Rothstein and Britt Shaw have practised in Russia since the early 1990s. The practice deals with corporate and commercial law, securities, real estate and joint ventures.

Morgan Lewis London managing partner Tom Benz said the experience and knowledge of the partnership would be invaluable.

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