

ALERT

DOJ Names New FARA Unit Chief

February 1, 2021

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has named a new leader of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) unit within the DOJ's National Security Division. According to news reports, Jennifer Kennedy Gellie, a career federal prosecutor who has been involved in a number of espionage cases, will lead the unit. Gellie has been with the National Security Division since 2016.

The unit is tasked with overseeing FARA, a disclosure statute designed to promote transparency in the U.S. political, media, and public relations arenas, among others, with respect to foreign influence. In short, FARA requires every "agent of a foreign principal" engaging in certain political or quasi-political activities in the United States to register as such with DOJ, and to periodically – and publicly – disclose certain details of that agency relationship with the foreign principal.

Gellie replaces Brandon Van Grack, who took over the role in 2019 after working for former Special Counsel Robert Muller. Van Grack oversaw the development of increased FARA enforcement over the last several years. Gellie worked on the team that prosecuted Kevin Patrick Mallory, a former CIA officer who was found guilty of conspiring to provide national defense information to China, and Henry Kyle Frese, who pled guilty to sharing national security secrets with journalists.

The National Security Division is currently led by Trump-appointed Assistant Attorney General for National Security John Demers. The Biden Administration has not yet named an appointee to lead the DOJ's National Security Division.

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Practice Areas

Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA)
International Trade

Wiley has an established FARA practice that has been in existence for well over 20 years and routinely advises a wide range of clients, including foreign governments, lobbyists, public relations firms, law firms, and tourism agencies. Wiley also recently issued an updated 2021 edition of its FARA Handbook.

For more information on FARA and our related capabilities, please contact one of the lawyers listed on this alert.

Nicole Hager, a Law Clerk at Wiley Rein LLP, contributed to this alert.