



Charles "Chuck" Whitney, managing partner of law firm Duane Morris LLP's Atlanta office, helped launch the firm's new office in Singapore. The firm is opening two additional offices in Vietnam this spring. Photo by Leigh Miller.

## **Duane Morris Opens Office in Singapore, Vietnam to Follow**

*Leigh Miller for GlobalAtlanta*

International law firm **Duane Morris LLP**, which has a major office in **Atlanta**, has opened an office in Singapore and plans to open two offices in **Vietnam** this spring to serve its increasing number of clients in the region.

"Singapore is strategic, Vietnam is opportunistic," **Charles Whitney**, the Atlanta office's managing partner, told **GlobalAtlanta** in an interview.

Mr. Whitney, who is one of the **Philadelphia**-based firm's executive committee members, helped make the decision to open a regional office in Singapore because multinational companies and banks are moving there from **Hong Kong**. "There's more momentum in Singapore, and we can serve clients' needs throughout **Asia** from there," he said.

With the opening of the Vietnam offices, Duane Morris will become one of only two **U.S.**-based firms with a presence in Vietnam. "Everyone looks to **China**, but there is enormous growth right now in Vietnam, as well as the **Philippines**. If you're looking for growth, that's where you're going to go," Mr. Whitney said of the firm's plans to serve clients with interests in Vietnam.

The firm's new operation in Singapore will have heavy emphasis on energy and infrastructure projects in the region, as well as international arbitration and general corporate legal work, Mr. Whitney said. Led by Duane Morris partner and former **Mexican** Ambassador to Singapore **Eduardo Ramos-Gómez**, the office is also to focus on corporate and project finance, cross-border transactions, restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, real estate and telecommunications.

The Singapore office will support the firm's clients in **Malaysia** and neighboring countries, and eventually China, Mr. Whitney added. "I can't say we'll open an office in China, but the Singapore and Vietnam offices are a right first step. We're always looking at new options to serve our clients."

Duane Morris' Atlanta office has already identified at least nine clients who have immediate legal counsel needs in Asia, and the firm as a whole has identified more than 40, Mr. Whitney said.

Atlanta clients with interests in the region include a **Caribbean** coffee company that needs trademark development and protection in Vietnam, a software developer that is seeking intellectual property protection in the region, a hotel chain with regional headquarters in Singapore that is opening a hotel in Vietnam, and a manufacturer of conveyor belt equipment wanting to use Singapore as an Asian distribution center.

Intellectual property protection will continue to be one of Duane Morris' specialties, with the new offices advising on registration, licensing and enforcement of intellectual property in Asia, Mr. Whitney said. "It's what we're good at," he said.

Duane Morris' Vietnam offices in **Hanoi** and **Ho Chi Minh City** are also to focus on business transactions in the region, where manufacturing, information technology and high-tech sectors have experienced significant economic growth during the past decade.

The Singapore office is staffed by five partners: **Rudy Lim**, former partner at **DLA Piper**; **Lian Yok Tan**, former associate at **White & Case LLP**; **Chris Muessel**, formerly a special counsel at **Baker & McKenzie**; **Sandor Schick**, former in-house counsel at **Shearman & Sterling LLP**; and **Adam Summerly**, former counsel at **Jones Day**. Three or four additional associates are expected to join the Singapore office in coming weeks.

The Singapore partners will service clients in, or with interests in, **Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia**, the **Philippines**, Singapore, **Taiwan** and Vietnam. The office and staff are fluent in most of the languages of the countries in which the firm has clients.

Singapore has a per capita gross domestic product equal to that of **Western European** countries. The country has seen rapid growth in recent years, with a real growth rate of 6.4 percent in 2005, aided by government efforts to establish the country as a **Southeast Asia** financial center.

Vietnam has a gross domestic product growth rate second only in the region to China in 2005. Vietnam has substantial investment from Singapore and other Asian countries, as well as the United States.

Duane Morris is one of the 100 largest law firms in the world with more than 600 lawyers. Its **London** office opened some 12 years ago, and Mr. Whitney opened the Atlanta office in 2001.

Contact the Atlanta office at **(404) 253-6900** or visit [www.duanemorris.com](http://www.duanemorris.com) for more information. 015058