

GIBSON DUNN



Transnational Litigation Update

January 20, 2026

Alabama Jury Finds Well-Known Plaintiff Lawyer Liable for \$120 Million in Damages for RICO Violations

Damages Anticipated to Reach \$256 Million Post-Trebling, Including Witness Tampering and Bribery, and Defamation Based on Falsified Evidence Used in Personal Injury and Wrongful Death Suits Related to Alleged Funding of Colombian Paramilitaries.

On January 15, 2026, a jury in the Northern District of Alabama awarded Drummond Company \$120 million in damages against Terrence Collingsworth in a consolidated RICO and defamation trial. After the RICO damages are trebled, it is anticipated that the total judgments will be \$256 million. The jury found that the former Conrad & Scherer, LLP partner engaged in witness bribery, witness tampering, obstruction of justice, money laundering, wire fraud, and extortion, as well as making false statements. The jury also found International Rights Advocates liable for the RICO violations.

Drummond, represented by Starnes Davis Florie LLP and Kropf Moseley Schmitt PLLC, alleged violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), 18 U.S.C. § 1961, et seq. against Collingsworth and others, claiming that “[o]ver the span of more than six years, Defendants have engaged in a multifaceted criminal campaign to exert pressure upon Drummond in an attempt to damage Drummond’s reputation and business interests and obtain a fraudulent and extortionate financial windfall.” Compl. ¶ 2, *Drummond Co., Inc. v. Collingsworth*, No. 2:15-cv-00506 (N.D. Ala. Mar. 27, 2015), ECF No. 1. Drummond’s RICO claims arose out of the allegedly fraudulent lawsuits Collingsworth filed claiming Drummond provided financial support to

paramilitary groups in Colombia. Drummond claimed that in prosecuting those fraudulent suits, Collingsworth provided cash payments to witnesses to elicit false testimony.

Drummond also sued Collingsworth for defamation based on Collingsworth's false statements claiming that Drummond was involved in the murder of Colombian citizens, was responsible for human rights violations, and had an unlawful alliance with United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) to equip and train paramilitary soldiers.

In 2010, Collingsworth filed similar claims against Gibson Dunn client Dole Food Company, falsely claiming Dole had provided financial support for the AUC in Colombia, which allegedly led to the deaths of dozens of the plaintiffs' family members. In defending those claims, Gibson Dunn developed evidence of Collingsworth offering bribes to jailed paramilitary witnesses which, when presented, led Plaintiffs to voluntarily and immediately dismiss their false claims with prejudice after years of litigation. After Dole was completely vindicated, in affirming an award to it of more than \$300,000 of costs as the prevailing party, the California Court of Appeal noted that many of these costs were incurred "to prove to the court that plaintiffs' counsel engaged in a pattern of witness tampering." *Perez v. Dole Food Co., Inc.*, 2017 WL 5405729, at *2 (Cal. Ct. App. Nov. 14, 2017). Drummond's suit followed and was based on analogous evidence.

Other companies have not fared so well in defending against similar claims relating to funding the AUC in Colombia. For example, in 2024, a jury awarded \$38.3 million to plaintiffs who claimed Chiquita had funded the AUC in Colombia, which in turn led to the deaths of their clients' family members. See *In Re: Chiquita Brands International, Inc., Alien Tort Statute and Shareholders Derivative Litigation*, No. 0:08-MD-01916 (S.D. Fla. June 10, 2024), ECF No. 3811.

Gibson Dunn has substantial experience defending claims arising out of conflicts in foreign countries such as ATS and ATA claims, and in pursuing claims—including RICO claims—against plaintiffs' counsel who corrupt the litigation process. See *Chevron Corp. v. Donziger*, 974 F. Supp. 2d 362, 383 (S.D.N.Y. 2014), *aff'd*, 833 F.3d 74 (2d Cir. 2016).

The following Gibson Dunn lawyers prepared this update: Andrea Smith, William Thomson, and Joseph Edmonds.

Gibson Dunn's lawyers are available to assist in addressing any questions you may have regarding these issues. Please contact the Gibson Dunn lawyer with whom you usually work, any leader or member of Gibson Dunn's Transnational Litigation practice group, or the authors:

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