

# George K. Kontakis

## Partner

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## OVERVIEW

George K. Kontakis is a litigation lawyer in the firm's Commercial Disputes practice group. His practice encompasses a broad range of domestic and international maritime related matters, both civil and criminal. His civil practice includes environmental compliance, civil DOJ investigations, USCG Voluntary Disclosure applications, charter party disputes, maritime arbitration, P&I and FD&D matters, maritime collisions, spills and casualties, OFAC enforcement and compliance, vessel sales and purchases, insurance coverage disputes, and attachment and arrest proceedings. His criminal practice includes USCG investigations, and DOJ prosecutions, of MARPOL/APPS related crimes, including so called “magic pipe” allegations, and CWA and Ports & Waterways Safety Act violations. He is very experienced with environmental compliance, court ordered third-party auditing, and probationary concerns.

George has successfully handled numerous maritime arbitration matters and complex civil litigations. He regularly works with global clients providing advice and strategy in all aspects of these matters. He has significant experience in conducting onboard vessel investigations, having concluded nearly 100 such investigations over the last decade. He frequently interacts with the US Coast Guard and Department of Justice, protecting the rights of vessel owners, operators, and crewmembers. George has concluded numerous plea agreements with the Department of Justice regarding MARPOL/APPS prosecutions and has been a member of the trial team in several high-profile matters challenging the government's case. George has also recently closed nearly US$500M in vessel and yacht transactions.

Prior to law school, George earned his bachelor of science degree in marine transportation (*cum laude*) at the US Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point (USMMA), as well as an unlimited US Coast Guard Third Officer merchant mariner's license and commission in the US States Navy Reserve. Following graduation, George spent several years working as a dry cargo shipbroker with a highly regarded New York based global shipbrokerage firm and as acting Chartering Manager of a New Jersey based vessel Operator. George is also an avid off-shore sailboat competitor, having been awarded The Eugene F. Moran Award upon graduation from USMMA.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- Recognized by *Chambers USA* for Transportation: Shipping/Maritime: Litigation (New York), USA - Nationwide, 2017-2026

- Recognized by *The Legal 500 United States* as a Next Generation Partner for Shipping: Litigation and Regulation, 2017-2026
- Recognized by *The Best Lawyers in America*® for Admiralty and Maritime Law in New York, NY, 2027
- Selected to New York Rising Stars list, Transportation & Maritime, 2018
- Matthew I. DeLuca Sr. award for excellence in chartering and brokerage studies
- Eugene F. Moran award for overall achievement as an offshore sailing team skipper

## PROFESSIONAL / CIVIC ACTIVITIES

- Maritime Law Association
- Connecticut Maritime Association
- American Bar Association
- New York Bar Association

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- "USCG Authority to Conduct Inspections/Investigations and Crewmember Rights", BLG Annual Maritime Law Seminar, Montreal, Québec - December 2018
- "MARPOL Annex I Violations, A Case Study and Anticipated Annex VI Prosecutions in the U.S.", Norbulk Senior Officers' Conference, Riga, Latvia, September 2016
- "MARPOL Prosecutions in the United States", Norbulk Senior Officers' Conference, Riga, Latvia, September 2015

## EDUCATION

- J.D., Hofstra University School of Law, 2007
- B.S., United States Merchant Marine Academy, 2000 *(cum laude)*

## ADMISSIONS

- Bar of New Jersey
- Bar of New York
- United States District Court for the District of New Jersey
- United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York
- United States District Court for the Southern District of New York

## LANGUAGES

- Greek

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP *POWERED BY HUB*

- June 2021, 2020 Legal 500 U.S. Guide Accolades
- 10 June 2021, Crisis Averted: How The USCG Environmental Crimes Voluntary Disclosure Policy Can Shield Against Prosecution
- 31 January 2020, IMO 2020 Is Here: Top 10 Considerations for Foreign Flag Vessels Calling on U.S. Ports and U.S. Flag Vessels Operating Worldwide
- 31 August 2018, 20/20 Vision for the 2020 Global Low Sulfur Requirement for the Shipping Industry
- 9 July 2018, Do You Clearly See What's Coming?

## NEWS & EVENTS

- 10 June 2026, K&L Gates Receives More Than 200 Firm, Individual Recommendations in *The Legal 500 United States* 2026 Edition
- 4 June 2026, K&L Gates Receives Nearly 235 Firm, Individual Rankings in 2026 *Chambers USA* Guide
- 2 February 2026, Nearly 50 K&L Gates Lawyers Recognized on *Thomson Reuters* Stand-out Lawyers List
- 13 June 2025, K&L Gates Receives 200 Firm, Individual Recommendations in *The Legal 500 United States* 2025 Edition
- 5 June 2025, K&L Gates Receives More Than 240 Firm, Individual Rankings in 2025 *Chambers USA* Guide
- 11 March 2025, Nearly 50 K&L Gates Lawyers Receive Global Recognition in *Thomson Reuters*' Stand-out Lawyers List
- 12 June 2024, K&L Gates Receives More Than 225 Firm, Individual Recommendations in *The Legal 500 United States* 2024 Edition
- 6 June 2024, K&L Gates Receives More Than 200 Firm, Individual Rankings in 2024 *Chambers USA* Guide
- 7 June 2023, The Legal 500 Recognizes K&L Gates Practices, Lawyers in 2023 United States Edition
- 1 June 2023, K&L Gates Receives Firm, Individual Rankings in 2023 *Chambers USA* Guide
- 8 June 2022, K&L Gates Practices and Lawyers Recognized in *The Legal 500 United States* 2022 Edition
- 1 June 2022, K&L Gates Receives Firm, Individual Rankings in 2022 *Chambers USA* Guide
- 8 February 2022, 28th Annual HACC-NACC Shipping Conference/Out of the Abyss - Shipping Roars Back?, hosted by HACC-NACC Shipping

- 24 June 2021, Legal 500 Recognizes K&L Gates Policy and Regulatory Practice Among Leaders in the 2021 United States Guide
- 21 May 2021, K&L Gates' Energy, Infrastructure, and Resources Practice, Lawyers Named Among Leaders in 2021 Chambers USA Guide
- 10 July 2020, K&L Gates Energy, Infrastructure and Resources Practice Ranked by The Legal 500 United States 2020 Guide in Eight Categories with 28 Lawyers Recommended
- 25 June 2020, K&L Gates Practices and Lawyers Recognized in 2020 Legal 500 United States Guide
- 23 April 2020, K&L Gates, Lawyers Recognized in 2020 Chambers USA Guide
- 6 June 2019, K&L Gates Earns Practice and Lawyer Recognitions in 2019 *Legal 500 United States* Guide
- 26 April 2019, Chambers USA 2019 Guide Ranks K&L Gates, Lawyers Among Leaders
- 21 February 2019, K&L Gates Names 24 New Partners Across Four Continents
- 19 June 2017, K&L Gates Earns Tier 1 M&A, Six New Practice Rankings in 2017 The Legal 500 U.S. Guide

## AREAS OF FOCUS

- Commercial Disputes
- Maritime Compliance
- Maritime Disputes
- Maritime Transactions and Finance
- White Collar Defense and Investigations

## INDUSTRIES

- Energy
- Maritime
- Transportation and Logistics

## REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

- Represented freight forwarder in claims from carrier for detention and demurrage after cargo rejected at discharge port and returned to port of origin
- Represented owners in civil DOJ claims
- Represented charterer/receiver in claim against Vessel Owner for late delivery of cargo and resultant plant shutdown

- Represented numerous vessel owners in USCG/DOJ criminal environmental violation investigations and prosecutions
- Review and drafted Terminal Tariffs for large fertilizer producer's terminal facility
- Represented charterer in Force Majeure C/P dispute arising out of Hurricane Harvey
- Represented charterer in SMA arbitration in claim from vessel owner for off-spec bunkers and consolidated claim against bunker supplier
- Represented one of the largest U.S. salt importers in SMA Arbitration with full recovery of claim, costs and fees. Also assisted with arbitration award enforcement efforts.
- Represented defendant Shipowner in Rule C Vessel arrest arising out of enforcement of maritime lien claim
- Represented Fortune 500 charterer in C/P dispute arising from vessel breakdown, owner's abandonment of vessel and eventual cargo transshipment
- Represented Shipowner claimant in demurrage dispute against charterer
- Represented garnishee with "close" ties to named defendant in Rule B attachment action
- Represented numerous vessel owners in USCG civil penalty actions
- Represented largest US exporter of soda ash in potential GA claim and eventual C/P dispute
- Closed nearly $500M in second-hand vessel tanker sales for Gener8 fleet pre-acquisition by Euronav
- Represented Charterer in Rule B attachment of Vessel for security from Vessel owner for C/P dispute and cargo claim
- Represented claimant in insurance claim against AIG and insurance broker for freight financing coverage
- Represented numerous vessel owners and managers in USCG Voluntary Disclosure Investigations and Reporting
- Represented Vessel Owner in Constructive Total Loss claim after government improperly detained vessel in excess of six-months
- Represented claimant in Rule B attachment of vessel for outstanding necessaries
- Represented cargo interests in significant GA claim and insurance coverage issues pertaining to same