



Robert D. Van de Vuurst

Shareholder

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Robert Van de Vuurst has been a go-to lawyer in the aviation industry in the United States and globally since 1987.

For 32 years, Robert's aviation clients have counted on him to oversee nearly every corporate, regulatory and transactional matter that they have. Based out of the Firm's Johnson City/Tri-Cities office, Robert brings an insider's perspective to the industry that allows him to strategically guide clients through opportunities and navigate regulatory hurdles, all while keeping an eye on the bottom line.

Robert has overseen and been directly responsible for more than \$4 billion in aircraft purchases and sales, both domestically and internationally, involving both original equipment manufacturers (OEM's) and private parties. Significantly, he has spent much of his professional career as outside general counsel for major aviation industry clients, including 12 years for Edwards and Associates, Inc., which at the time was the largest independent broker-dealer of used helicopters in the world. Robert was lead counsel and strategic advisor for the transaction for Edwards & Associates, Inc. and its shareholders when the company was sold to Bell Helicopter Textron in 1999.

Robert currently serves as outside general counsel for Dart Helicopter Services, the world's largest aftermarket helicopter accessory manufacturer, and was previously general counsel for Waypoint Leasing, which was the world's largest independent helicopter leasing company and had well over \$1 billion in assets. Robert handles, among other issues, aircraft sales, purchases and leases; finance and debt matters, including secured and unsecured credit and bond facilities, completion contracts and distribution agreements; FAA regulatory matters including the filing and prosecution of Supplemental Type Certificates, Part 91, 135 and 145 regulatory issues; compliance matters; and general litigation supervision. He also assists with tax issues, aircraft ownership structuring, aviation finance and asset securitization matters, and domestic and international aircraft registration.

Robert has a unique wealth of practical, hands-on aviation management experience as well. From 2004 to 2010, Robert was outside general counsel for Era Group, Inc. (now a publicly traded company), and from 2010 to 2012, he served as the COO of the company and as president of Era Helicopters, LLC, one of the largest helicopter operators in the world. In his management positions with Era, Robert was primarily responsible for all day-to-day company activities, including its offshore oil and gas support operations in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska; its tour division in Juneau and Denali, Alaska; its air medical EMS operations in the northeast United States and Florida; its joint venture Part 142 Training Center in Lake Charles, Louisiana; all international and joint venture activities, including a large operation in Brazil; and its international operations and aircraft leasing division. Era had approximately 900 employees, 180 aircraft, and \$300 million in annual revenue, all of which were under Robert's direct supervision. In his role as president, he gained valuable experience in finance and accounting matters (including the negotiation and closing of a \$350 million revolving credit facility) as well as all other parts and parcels of a multi-faceted international aviation company.

Representative Matters

- Oversaw aircraft and equipment leases (both wet and dry) for more than 35 different aircraft types, on both a domestic and international scale as well as regulatory compliance issues for both Part 91 and

Part 135 operators, including the negotiation of maintenance and "power by the hour" contracts. He was also responsible for ensuring clients have the necessary export and ITAR clearances.

- Spearheaded international aircraft and equipment leases and the concurrent equipment securitization in more than 40 countries, including India, China, Australia, Sweden, Indonesia, Scotland and other countries in Europe, Africa, Central America and South America.
- Assisted clients in "cross-border" transactions involving the formation and regulatory approval process for joint ventures to obtain STCs and Part 135-type operating authority in various jurisdictions around the world, including Argentina, Canada, Australia, Spain, China, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, India and the United Kingdom.
- Assisted fixed base operator (FBO) client with branding and franchise agreements, fuel-uptift agreements, as well as hangar and aircraft maintenance issues.
- Lead counsel for a joint venture to own and operate a Part 142-certified training center using Level 6 FTDs.
- Currently outside general counsel to several FAA Part 135 on-demand aircraft charter operators.
- Advised aircraft components manufacturer on a license agreement with a major OEM.
- Represented financial institutions in the origination and securitization of commercial loans involving a variety of pledged collateral types.
- Outside general counsel to the largest independent helicopter leasing company in the world. In less than two years, successfully negotiated and closed equipment acquisition and leases of approximately \$1.2 billion in value, in more than 20 different jurisdictions around the world. Included was a \$450 million portfolio acquisition of aircraft from one of the world's largest private equity firms, representing 31 aircraft in 10 different jurisdictions.



Professional Honors & Activities

- Member – American, Tennessee and Washington County Bar Associations
- Listed in *The Best Lawyers in America*® in the areas of Corporate Law (2009 – 2021) and Mergers and Acquisitions Law since 2009
- Named to *Business Tennessee* magazine's "150 Best Lawyers" in the area of aviation law since 2007
- Listed in *Mid-South Super Lawyers* since 2007



Publications

- Co-author – "Avoiding Issues When Structuring a Corporate Aviation Program," *TerraLex Connections* (April 2013)



Education

- University of Memphis School of Law, J.D., 1986
- East Tennessee State University, B.S., 1983, magna cum laude



Admissions

- Tennessee, 1986
- United States Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, 1986
- United States Supreme Court, 1988