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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission Enforcement Chief Joins Maalouf Ashford & Talbot, LLP

New York, New York – January 28, 2012 – Maalouf Ashford & Talbot, LLP, one of the world's leading business and corporate law firms, today announced that William J. Thomas, Former U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission Enforcement Chief, has joined Maalouf Ashford & Talbot as a Securities Regulation and Enforcement Advisor. Most recently, Mr. Thomas served as Enforcement Branch Chief for the United States Securities and Exchange Commission's Northeast Regional Office (New York) where he managed complex securities investigations and anti-money laundering cases.

"I'm honored to be joining one of the top finance and securities law firms in the United States and look forward to working closely with John J. Maalouf and the elite team he has assembled at Maalouf Ashford & Talbot " said Bill Thomas.

"I've worked closely with Bill Thomas for several years and know him to be an extremely talented individual who brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience" said John J. Maalouf, Senior Partner of the Firm.

About Maalouf Ashford & Talbot

Maalouf Ashford & Talbot is one of the world's leading financial services law firms with offices in New York City, London, Hong Kong, Riyadh, Shanghai and Boston.

The Firm has been named "Law Firm of the Year" in the United States in an unprecedented **16** separate categories including:

**INTERNATIONAL FINANCE LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
CORPORATE LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
ENERGY LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
M&A LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR**

BANKING LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
PRIVATE EQUITY LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
PROJECT FINANCE LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
CAPITAL MARKETS LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
ASSET FINANCE LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
CROSS BORDER LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
SHIPPING & MARITIME LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
ANTITRUST LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
TAX LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
SHARIA LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR
FULL SERVICE LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR, and
MOST TRUSTED LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR

Maalouf Ashford & Talbot remains at the forefront of the legal profession in structuring complex international business transactions, representing clients in numerous high-profile matters involving international mergers and acquisitions, SEC matters, private equity, project finance, oil & gas transactions, coal, iron ore and mining deals, and cross-border transactions worldwide.

Maalouf Ashford represents some of the world's most respected companies in connection with their complex and sophisticated international business transactions.

About John J. Maalouf

John J. Maalouf has been ranked as one of the Top 10 International Trade & Finance Lawyers in the U.S. by the *United States Lawyer Rankings* for the past seven consecutive years. Mr. Maalouf is an internationally recognized expert in the areas of international business law, oil gas & energy law and banking & finance law. Mr. Maalouf has represented clients throughout the world, including the U.S., China, Middle-East, EU, Japan, India, Australia, Russia and South America in complex matters involving international trade & finance, mergers & acquisitions, public offerings, international banking, private equity and international oil, gas, coal and energy transactions.

In addition, John is co-author of the book: "Inside the Minds: Best Practices for Mergers & Acquisitions in China", published by Thomson West, the world's most respected name in legal publishing.

For more information, please visit: www.maaloufashford.com