

ATTORNEY AT LAW

MAGAZINE

2024 Veterans in Law Special Issue



THEN & NOW



ATTORNEY AT LAW MAGAZINE highlights lawyers who served their country in any branch of the U.S. Military. We took a look at their time in service and what lessons they carried into their career as an attorney.



John A. Fortin

Law Firm: McDonald Carano LLP in Las Vegas, NV

Military Branch: U.S. Navy

Rank: CTT1 / E-6

MOS: Cryptologic Technician Technical/Information Warfare Specialist

Station: Denver, CO; Mayport, FL; Norfolk, VA

Years Served: 10 Years Active, Currently 8 Years in Naval Reserve

NOW



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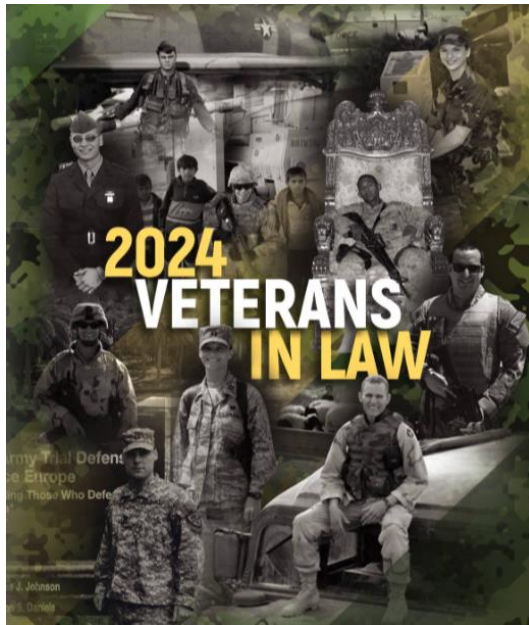
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Tell us about your transition from the military to the practice of law.



After 10 years of active duty service collaborating across the intelligence community but working specifically for the National Security Agency, I had been exposed to lawyers providing advice to commanders and flag officers throughout my operations and deployments.

After speaking with several lawyers, I realized that the same type of analysis I performed for intelligence, cryptology, and information warfare was expected of lawyers. The main difference being that lawyers typically deal with public filings on the docket of the courts and my time in the intelligence community was all behind closed doors.

How do you think your military service impacted your legal career?

When I deployed to Afghanistan, my work product would lead to life and death decisions. Now, my work product leads to monetary, injunctive or declaratory relief. The stakes are both very high, but understanding perspective makes the high stress nature of being a lawyer more manageable as I balance work and life.

What are some lessons you apply to your practice today?

I draw upon the lessons that were engrained upon me in the Navy. Honor, Courage, and Commitment are an ethos that I practice every day as I advance the interests of my clients. Being able to speak truth to power and persuade those decisionmakers to agree with my point of view is something that was taught to me very early in my career and I apply every day I enter a courtroom.

What drew you to the practice of law?

When I was in Afghanistan sitting around the commander's table going through operations, intelligence, communications, and logistics, it always struck me that one of the last people to speak to the commander on a go/no-go operation was legal. I found it fascinating that the lawyers would distill every point of view and apply those facts to the law.