

WORK EXPERIENCE DAVID HARRINGTON

Staying on the flight side of the law

After a distinguished 10-year career as a US Navy fighter pilot, David Harrington became an aviation lawyer primarily defending airlines as well as aircraft or component manufacturers following air disasters

What sparked your interest in aviation?

My father was a naval aviator and an airline pilot. Ever since I was very young, he would take me flying with him on the weekends, and I just fell in love with it. Our family would vacation every year in Pensacola, Florida – the cradle of naval aviation – and we would always visit the Blue Angels. I was fortunate enough to meet a few of the Blue Angels pilots over the years and, after speaking with them and watching them fly, I knew that I wanted to fly fighter jets in the US Navy and have a career in aviation.

Tell us about your career to date?

After graduating as a Naval Reserve Officer Training Candidate student from Marquette University with a mechanical engineering degree, I was commissioned as an ensign in the US Navy and began flight school. After primary and advanced jet training, I was selected to fly the Grumman F-14B Tomcat, and was assigned to fighter squadron VF-103 off of the USS *Saratoga* (CV-60), where I logged combat time in support of NATO's intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In total, I logged more than 300 arrested landings, with over 100 of those being night carrier landings. After my tour, I was assigned to the Office of Naval Intelligence outside Washington DC, performing operational intelligence work and developing and delivering threat capability briefs to navy and US Marine Corps units, as well as to senior naval leadership. While



Harrington says he is constantly learning new things about aviation

stationed in Washington DC, I attended law school at night at the Catholic University of America. After graduating, I became an aviation attorney. I am now a partner at Condon & Forsyth, the oldest and largest specialist aviation law firm in the USA.

What have been the highlights?

From my time in the navy, it would definitely be night carrier landings. Night traps are both exhilarating and terrifying at the same time. Also, I was very involved with development and testing of the use of laser-guided munitions with the F-14. From my legal career, being appointed lead trial counsel for Colgan Air after the 12 February 2009 crash of Continental Connection flight 3407, near Buffalo, New York, that resulted in 50 deaths.

The lowlights?

The night carrier landings!

Why did you decide to become a lawyer?

After my military career, I knew I wanted to stay in the aviation industry, but not necessarily as a pilot. I thought becoming a lawyer would provide me with the skills necessary to work in the business world, the legal profession and possibly even enter politics at some point. Being someone that doesn't shy away from a fight, whether a dogfight or a courtroom battle, I decided to pursue aviation litigation.

What does your job involve?

I primarily defend domestic and international airlines and aircraft/component manufacturers in mass disasters, all the way from handling post-accident investigations to conducting civil jury trials on liability and damages issues. I also represent aviation or aerospace-related companies in

commercial litigation and administrative or regulatory matters, and pilots in Federal Aviation Administration enforcement actions.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

I enjoy using my mechanical engineering degree, flying background and law degree to provide the best possible legal advice and counsel to my clients. I also enjoy being able to interact with engineers, pilots, flight department managers, operations specialists and aviation executives. But what I enjoy most is that every case is different, and I am constantly learning new things about aviation.

What are the challenges?

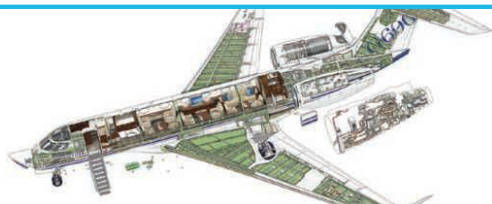
Dealing with opposing counsel, and sometimes clients, who have unrealistic expectations about the value or strength of their case, or believe "scorched earth" litigation is the only way to litigate. And of course working with the families of victims who have suffered such a devastating loss can be very challenging.

What's your next career move?

I have always wanted to write a book on my experiences in the aviation industry, both as a pilot and as a trial attorney. ■

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