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## Duane Morris partner doffing civilian hat, donning Kevlar helmet

By Jerry Crimmins  
Law Bulletin staff writer

A partner in the Chicago office of Duane Morris LLP is leaving for Afghanistan this weekend for a one-year tour of duty as an Army major.

"I must have gotten 250 e-mails from partners within the law firm," John N. Maher said. "I read every single one of them with a lump in my throat."

The messages, he said, included lines such as, "Thank you for serving our country.... God bless you.... You'll be in our prayers.... Proud to have you as a partner."

Maher, 38, has been in the Army Reserve for 14 years in the Judge Advocate Generals Corps.

He previously served with the Army in Germany, in Washington, D.C., and in 1998 as legal adviser to the U.S. peacekeeping mission in Skopje, Macedonia.

This time, he will be chief government contracts and fiscal law officer for U.S. military forces in Afghanistan. He will work under Gen. Stanley McChrystal, commander of all U.S. forces there.

A trial lawyer, he has participated in more than 40 trials, including more than 20 as first chair, according to his firm. He is also a former Justice Department attorney and former general counsel under President George W. Bush for the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Maher joined Duane Morris in January 2008.

Maher will be based in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.

He said he periodically will leave Kabul and go into the field to tour "various construction sites where we are building infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, buildings, schools, and water treatment facilities."

His job is to deal with the contractors who do business with the U.S. government and conduct "investigations into allegations of contract fraud, which is all over the news."

Asked how safe the job is, Maher said, "It's a combat zone. We take casualties

there every day. But on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being lethal," and 1 not dangerous, "I think mine would be a 4."

Nevertheless, when Maher is in the field, he will wear what soldiers call "battle rattle," including an armored vest, Kevlar helmet and a fire-resistant T-shirt, among other protective gear, and he'll carry a 9mm handgun, he said.

After being in the Army Reserve for 14 years, Maher said, "This time I actually get to do what I've been training to do."

Maher is from the Mount Greenwood neighborhood on the far South Side, St. Christina's Catholic Parish. He graduated from Marist High School and Bradley University.

He is single. His parents, Marian and Norman Maher, still live in Mount Greenwood.

Maher got his law degree magna cum laude from Northern Illinois University College of Law in 1996.

He said he joined the Army after law school "for three reasons. I wanted to do military service. I wanted to see the world. And I wanted to try cases early in my career."

He got his wish "and then some," he added.

He served in the JAG Corps until 2001. Since then, he has practiced law mostly as a civilian, including his time as general counsel for the Office of Personnel Management from last September until the Obama administration took over in January.

At Duane Morris, Maher's practice centers on intellectual property, government contracts and commercial litigation.

After he had been back in Duane Morris' Chicago office for only two months, he said, he received a letter in the regular mail.

"It says, 'Department of the Army...., You are hereby ordered....'"

"Duane Morris has been unbelievably supportive," he noted.

"Duane Morris has a military policy for partners who are mobilized or called to active duty," he said. "It was unusual prior



John N. Maher

to 9/11. I think it's becoming far more commonplace, at least at big firms I've seen."

He spent this week at the Army's Continental United States Replacement Center at Fort Benning, Ga., in a refresher course on everything from "convoy operation to IEDs," or improvised explosive devices, "how to recognize them, how to avoid them, how to call for medevac, how to provide instant first aid..., how to prepare litters and tourniquets." He also spent time on the pistol and rifle ranges.

Duane Morris chairman John J. Soroko sent a message to the firm this week about Maher, which said in part:

"At this time, as always, it is certainly appropriate to remember that our security and safety, and indeed our very liberty, are dependent on the selfless service and sacrifices of persons such as John.... I told John this morning that the thoughts and prayers of everyone at Duane Morris would be with him...."

"As we all celebrate on July 4th, please do take some time to think about our partner, John, and indeed, all our military service members in the U.S. and around the world."

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