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From Iraq to a courtroom: Keane's career path is not typical

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Matt Keane certainly didn't take the typical path to becoming an attorney in Shook Hardy & Bacon LLP's global product liability practice.

Keane is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the preeminent officer training school in the United States. It takes the top grades, athletic aptitude and a Congressional nomination to get into the school, making West Point a tougher entrance hurdle than Harvard University.

Keane was a senior at West Point when the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 occurred, and he was only about 50 miles to the north of ground zero. It was a pivotal moment.

"The military was still in more of a garrison mindset than a combat mode at the time, but things changed pretty drastically then," Keane said. "We all knew pretty quick what our future held for our service."

Keane was commissioned as an air defense artillery officer, but there really wasn't much need for those skills in the Middle East. So Keane volunteered for training to become an Airborne Ranger. After training, he joined the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii, and was soon shipped out to Iraq. From 2004 to 2005, he led convoy security patrols in Northern Iraq and then transitioned to training the Iraqi Army and Police.

Keane came home for about a year before he was shipped back to Iraq for

a second tour, for 15 months from 2006 to 2007. This time he was stationed in Tikrit, the birthplace of Saddam Hussein, in North Central Iraq. He was a commander for a headquarters company of a Black Hawk helicopter unit.

"There's some irony there," Keane said. "I was trained to shoot down helicopters and planes, and ended up commanding the headquarters of a helicopter unit."

Keane led about 140 soldiers in his command and earned a Bronze Star for his actions during the entirety of that deployment, which included the Iraq War troop surge in 2007, commonly known as "The Surge," where President George W. Bush vastly increased the number of troops to provide more stability to the country.

After ending his second tour, Keane went back to school to get a master's degree in leadership studies from the University of Texas-El Paso. The Army then sent him to teach military science and leadership at Purdue University in Indiana for two years. After that stretch, Keane decided to leave the Army and go to law school.

"When I was a commander, I realized I really enjoyed helping people solve their problems and work through things," Keane said. "That's what lent itself to pursuing a legal career."

Keane used the G.I. Bill to go to the University of Kansas and get his law degree. While he was a student, he did two summers as an intern at Shook Hardy, which helped him know that



SHOOK HARDY & BACON LLP

Matt Keane, an attorney in Shook Hardy & Bacon LLP's global product liability practice

was a place he wanted to work.

Keane's military experience often comes in handy for his new career as an attorney.

"There's a lot of gamesmanship and tactical decisions involved," Keane said. "It's very similar to the military in how you're always trying to stay two or three steps ahead of your opponent. You're constantly thinking about how an action you take will cause your opponent to react. So military strategy has a lot of uses in other realms. The major difference though is that they're not trying to shoot you while you do it."