

Mayer Brown Snags Cybersecurity Pro From Sidley Austin

By **Shayna Posses**

Law360, New York (November 28, 2016, 9:18 PM EST) -- Mayer Brown LLP has nabbed a former U.S. Department of Defense special counsel from Sidley Austin LLP, bolstering its global cybersecurity and data privacy practice, as well as its national security and government contracts practices, in Washington, D.C., the firm announced Monday.

David A. Simon joins the firm as a partner with a practice centered around complex and sensitive cybersecurity, defense, intelligence and national security matters, expertise he further developed during the nearly four years he spent as special counsel to the DoD general counsel, according to Mayer Brown.

The attorney told Law360 on Monday that it's exciting to be part of a growing office and practice, noting that he is particularly looking forward to working with former National Security Agency General Counsel Raj De, who joined the firm last year to lead its global cybersecurity and data privacy practice.

"The firm's full spectrum global cybersecurity and data privacy practice is ideally suited to assist clients grappling with the challenges of evolving cyber threats," Simon said. "My extensive experience advising companies held hostage by cyber threat actors and how to deal with foreign governments aligns nicely with the firm's existing practice."

The attorney comes to the firm with extensive experience advising on the latest and most pressing cybersecurity and national security matters, according to Mayer Brown. In addition to advising victims of state-sponsored cyber activity, he aids companies in structuring, negotiating and protecting both their commercial and compliance relationships with national security agencies, the firm said.

His work also involves counseling domestic and foreign clients on issues such as economic sanctions, asset controls and transactions that are reviewed by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, Mayer Brown said.

"Cybersecurity is one of the most important and challenging issues facing businesses today," Simon said. "It's going to be interesting to see how the cybersecurity regulatory landscape evolves, especially with the current administration."



David Simon

The attorney said one of the great virtues of private practice is being able to assist companies facing these sorts of issues, building off his time at the Pentagon, where he saw firsthand the critical challenges cybersecurity threats present to U.S. companies and companies around the world, as well as individual customers and users.

While serving as special counsel from 2011 to 2015, Simon advised on legal issues relating to the worldwide activities and operations of the U.S. Armed Forces in addition to DoD policy and planning, addressing issues like cybersecurity policy, plans and operations, as well as matters like social media, counterterrorism and treaties, Mayer Brown said.

Among the highlights of his time at the DoD was serving as lead counsel for the working group that drafted the agency's Directive on Autonomy in Weapons Systems, which laid out the department's policies on developing, acquiring and employing unmanned, semi-autonomous and fully autonomous weapon technologies.

The directive represents the first policy announcement by any country regarding fully autonomous weapons, Simon said, calling it a "major contribution to the discussion about weapons autonomy and artificial intelligence."

Simon said these issues are particularly interesting to him in his private practice, namely how key trends on the horizon, like artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons and the Internet of Things, can be used to improve lives but can also present cybersecurity challenges.

After his time at the DoD, he joined Sidley Austin as counsel in May 2015.

Simon received his bachelor of arts from the University of Minnesota in 2003, his master of philosophy in international relations from Trinity College, Oxford, in 2005, and his law degree from Harvard Law School in 2008.

The attorney is the latest of the more than two dozen high-ranking government officials and notable lateral partners Mayer Brown has added in D.C. over the last two years, according to the office's partner-in-charge, Daniel Masur.

—Editing by Joe Phalon.